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**THE MIND (MANAS) AND THE ILLUSORY PROJECTION OF THE
AFFLICTED (KLIṢṬA) INDIVIDUAL SELF (ĀTMAN),
IN VIJÑĀNAVĀDA BUDDHISM**

- Abstract -

According to Vijñānavāda, the idealist school of Buddhism, individual being represents an erroneous limited projection of the universal consciousness, of the storehouse consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*). The sphere of human experience does not represent a mere type of experience among many others, but a specific one which represents a “deviation” from the authentic reality.

The function of projecting the individual, when looked upon from the perspective of the universal level of the storehouse consciousness, is described as the “appropriation” (*upādāna*) of an individual identity by the universal consciousness; when it is looked upon from the perspective of the individual himself, the function of projecting and maintaining individuality is described as “mind” (*manas*). In Vijñānavāda, the mind represents that function of consciousness which, appropriating a determined sphere of experience as its own identity, gives birth to the individual being.

As the mind represents the very condition through which the person is projected, the personal experience automatically includes the activity of the mind. The mind is the one that, in a non-deliberate, non-conceptual manner, appropriates the person, the individual self; nevertheless, at its level, the experience of the ego is still conceptually undetermined, irrational, unconscious, instinctual, subliminal. The attachment to ego, as it is experimented at the level of the mind, manifests as irrational instincts or natural urges. Only at the level of the mental consciousness, the ego, the individual self, is rationally, conceptually depicted, acquiring a clearly determined conceptual identity.

When a certain series of factors is ascribed the status of “individual self” (*ātman*), of “person” (*pudgala*), the entity thus created is nothing else but an ontological fiction. The consciousness affected by the error (*viparyāsa*) of the individual self projects itself within a sphere of ontological illusion, a sphere wrongly identified as reality. What is truly real, i.e. the ultimate reality (*dharmadhātu*) and the conditional flow (*pratītyasamutpāda*) of an ideatic nature, gets out of comprehension when the person, the individual self are considered as real and the whole experience starts to be structured according to the tendencies induced by the individual identity.

The activity of the mind creates the “fundamental error” (*viparyāsamūla*), the “fundamental ignorance”, its veiling activity which engenders that background ignorance affecting the human being during all his experiences. The absence of the

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absolute knowledge in case of the human beings is explained precisely by the fact that their experience is constituted on the basis of the experience of the mind.

The attitude of the subject towards those components of the experience that have been assumed as his own self changes and becomes one of "elevation" (*unnati*), of "pride" (*māna*). The attitude meant by these terms is that of a special importance paid to certain components of experience, due to the new status that has been ascribed to them. Once his own nature has been identified within the fleeting experience, this experience stops being only experience and illusorily becomes his own nature. He is no longer indifferent to the transformations of the experience, which are no longer mere experiences, but appear as alterations of his own nature. This way, the subject undergoes affliction (*kleśa*), gets entrapped in his own experience. The anxiety and the suffering that characterize human existence are due to this erroneous identification of the human nature with the illusory identity appropriated by the mind.

Keywords: Buddhism, Vijñānavāda, mind, *manas*, individual self, *ātman*, affliction, *kleśa*.

MINTEA (MANAS) ȘI PROIECTAREA ILUZORIE A SINELUI INDIVIDUAL (ĀTMAN) PERTURBAT (KLIṢṬA), ÎN BUDHISMUL VIJÑĀNAVĀDA

- Rezumat -

Conform Vijñānavādei, școala idealistă a budhismului, ființa individuală reprezintă doar o proiecție iluzorie și limitată a conștiinței universale, a „conștiinței-depozit” (*ālayavijñāna*). Registrul experienței umane nu reprezintă o simplă formă de experiență între multe altele, ci una specifică, care reprezintă o „deviație” de la condiția firească a realității.

Privită dinspre registrul universal al conștiinței-depozit, funcția constituirii individului este descrisă ca „apropriatie” (*upādāna*) a unei identități individuale de către conștiința universală, atunci când este privită dinspre individul însuși, funcția constituirii și menținerii individualității este descrisă ca „minte” (*manas*). În Vijñānavāda, mintea reprezintă acea funcție a conștiinței, acea ipostază a conștiinței care, apropiind un registru determinat al experienței ca identitate proprie, dă naștere ființei individuale.

Deoarece mintea reprezintă însăși condiția prin care se constituie persoana, experiența personală include, în mod automat, activitatea minții. Mintea (*manas*) este aceea care, în mod non-conceptual, apropiază persoana, sinele individual, însă la nivelul minții experiența egoului este încă ne-delimitată conceptual, irațională, inconștientă, instinctuală, subliminală. Atașamentul față de ego, așa cum este el experimentat la nivelul minții, se manifestă sub forma instinctelor iraționale, a pornirilor naturale. Doar la nivelul experienței conștiinței mentale, egoul, sinele individual, este înfățișat în chip rațional, conceptual, dobândind o identitate conceptuală clar delimitată, determinată.

Atunci când o anumită serie de factori a dobândit un statut de „sine individual” (*ātman*), de „persoană” (*pudgala*), entitatea astfel creată nu reprezintă altceva decât o ficțiune ontologică. Conștiința afectată de eroarea (*viparyāsa*) sinelui

individual se stabilește pe sine într-un registru al iluziei ontologice, registru care este considerat în mod eronat drept realitate. Ceea ce există în mod autentic, adică realitatea ultimă (*dharmadhātu*) și fluxul condițional (*pratītyasamutpāda*) de o natură ideatică, sunt pierdute din vedere atunci când persoana, sinele individual sunt considerate drept reale și când întreaga experiență începe să fie structurată pe baza tendințelor induse de identitatea individuală.

Activitatea minții deține un statut de „eroare fundamentală” (*viparyāsamūla*), de ignoranță fundamentală, activitatea sa de ocultare producând acea ignoranță de fond care afectează ființa umană pe parcursul tuturor experiențelor sale. Absența cunoașterii absolute la nivelul experienței ființei umane se explică tocmai prin faptul că această experiență se constituie pe baza experienței minții.

Atitudinea subiectului experienței față de acele componente ale experienței ce au fost asumate ca identitate proprie (*ātman*) se schimbă și devine una de „elevație” (*unnati*), de „mândrie” (*māna*). Atitudinea avută în vedere prin acești termeni este aceea de importanță specială acordată anumitor componente ale experienței, importanță datorată atribuirii unui nou statut lor. Odată ce natura sa proprie a fost identificată la nivelul experienței fluctuante, această experiență încetează a mai reprezenta doar experiență, și dobândește, în mod iluzoriu, substanțialitate, natură proprie. Transformările experienței nu îi mai sunt indiferente subiectului, nu mai constituie simple experiențe, ci apar drept alterații ale însăși naturii sale. În acest fel, conștiința ajunge să fie afectată de perturbație (*kleśa*), ajunge înlănțuită în propria sa proiecție. Tensiunea și suferința specifice vieții umane se constituie tocmai pe baza acestei identificări eronate a naturii umane cu individualitatea iluzorie apropiată de minte.

Cuvinte cheie: budhism, Vijñānavāda, minte, *manas*, sine individual, *ātman*, perturbație, *kleśa*.

1. The individual self (*ātman*) appropriated by the mind (*manas*)

According to Vijñānavāda, the sphere of human experience does not represent a mere type of experience among many others, but a specific one which represents a “deviation” from the authentic reality. The erroneous self identity, the bonded, afflicted condition (*kliṣṭa*), characterized by suffering (*duḥkha*), infringes the undetermined (*nirvikalpaka*, *aparicchinna*), free (*mukta*), quiet, calm (*śanta*, *nirvāṇa*), beatific (*sukha*) condition of the genuine reality (the ultimate reality - *dharmadhātu* and the causal flow - *pratītyasamutpāda* identified with the storehouse consciousness - *ālayavijñāna*). Thus, the human sphere means more than a mere experience, it means alteration, it means getting out of what is real. Even if human existence is based in the ultimate reality and in the conditional flow manifested by it through a process which is difficult to understand for the human intellect, it breaks out from the sphere of reality and projects a sphere of alteration.

The mind (*manas*) and the individual self (*ātman*) appropriated by it

Given the overlapping between the sphere of individual experience and the sphere of altered experience, the first stage of alteration is the very act of constituting the human individuality (*ātman*). The human individual is constituted through the process of appropriation (*upādāna*) which takes place at the level of the storehouse consciousness, i.e. through that process in which consciousness assumes for itself a certain determined sphere as self identity and, thus, it projects itself as an individual. The function of projecting the individual, when looked upon from the perspective of the universal level of the storehouse consciousness, is described as the “appropriation” (*upādāna*) of an individual identity by the universal consciousness; when it is looked upon from the perspective of the individual himself, the function of projecting and maintaining individuality is described as “mind” (*manas*). The mind represents that function of consciousness which, appropriating a determined sphere of experience as its own identity, gives birth to the individual being¹. An individual being is nothing else but what the mind (*manas*) appropriates (*upādā*) as individual self (*ātman*)².

Although the Vijñānavāda philosophers took great efforts to separate the universal experience of the storehouse consciousness from the altered experience of the mind, they never fully succeeded in this. Even if it develops a totally specific type of experience, of attitude towards that sphere of the universal consciousness it appropriates, hence transforming it erroneously into its self identity, nevertheless, the mind is based in the storehouse consciousness, it experiences it as the object (*ālambana*) of its appropriation. In it is precisely in this sense that the texts of the school say that the mind is “established/grounded” (*āśrita*) in the storehouse consciousness.

“I.3.....the beings (*sattva*) are established in it as in their own self (*svātman*).”³

“The beings experience Ālaya (*ālayarata*), enjoy Ālaya (*ālayārāma*), rejoice in Ālaya (*ālayasaṃmudita*), assume Ālaya (*ālayābhirata*).”⁴

¹ For a study on the concept of “mind” (*manas*), see Swati Ganguly, *Treatise in Thirty Verse son Mere-consciousness*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1992, pp.43-44!

² For a discussion about the function of the mind in the process of projecting an individual self (*ātman*), see William S. Waldron, *The Buddhist Unconscious: The ālaya-vijñāna in the Context of Indian Buddhist Thought*, RoutledgeCurzon, London, 2003, pp.120-121!

³ Asaṅga – *Mahāyānasamgraha*, I.3, E. Lamotte, *La Somme du Grand Vehicule d’Asaṅga (Mahāyānasamgraha)*, Publications de l’Institut Orientaliste de Louvain, 8, 1973, pp.13-14.

⁴ *Āṅguttara-Nikāya*, II, apud. *Mahāyānasamgraha*, I.11, Lamotte, *op.cit.* 1973, p.26.
“ālayārāmā bhikkhave pajā ālayaratā ālayasa[m]uditā”

“«The beings experience Ālaya (*ālayarata*)» the meaning of this is the general adherence (*abhiniveśa*) to the storehouse consciousness.”⁵

“In that plan (*dhātu*), in that stage (*bhūmi*) where [karmic] maturization (*vipāka*) [takes place], where the storehouse consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*) [is actualized], in the same plan or stage, the afflicted mind (*kliṣṭa manas*) [is also born]. Since the activity (*vr̥tti*) [of the mind] is closely associated (*pratibaddha*) to this [storehouse consciousness], [the mind] functions being established (*āśritya*) in it.”⁶

The object of the mind is the same as that of the storehouse consciousness, except that the mind supplements the neutral nature of the objects experienced by the storehouse consciousness with the erroneous, afflicted feeling of self identity. The object experienced by the mind is no longer a mere experience, as it was at the level of the storehouse consciousness, but it becomes the own identity of the experiencing subject. The mind selects certain parts of the universal experience and makes them its own, appropriating them, transforming them into the personal identity of the experiencing consciousness.⁷

“5.....Being established (*āśritya*) in it and having it as its object (*ālambana*), that consciousness (*vijñāna*) whose name (*nāman*) is «mind» (*manas*) and whose nature (*ātmaka*) consists in mentation (*manana*) evolves (*pravṛt*).”⁸

Pāli text quoted in Louis de la Vallee Poussin, *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi. La Siddhi de Hiuan-Tsang*, Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, Paris, vol. I, 1928, p.180.

⁵ Asvabhāva – *Upanibandhana*, ad. *Mahāyānasamgraha*, I.11, Lamotte, *op.cit.* 1973:26; Etienne Lamotte, *L'Ālaya-Vijñāna (Le Réceptacle) dans le Mahāyāna-samgraha (chap.2)*, “Melanges Chinois et Bouddhiques”, 1934-1935, p.210.

⁶ “*athavā yasmindhātau bhūmau vālayavijñānaṃ vipākastadapi kliṣṭaṃ manastaddhātukaṃ tadbhūmikaṃ ceti tatpratibaddhavr̥ttitvāttadāśritya pravartate* /”
Sthiramati – *Triṃśikābhāṣya*, ad.5bcd, K.N. Chatterjee, *Vijñaptimaatrataa-siddhi*, Kishor Vidya Niketan, Varanasi, 1980, p.51.

⁷ For the storehouse consciousness as an object upon which the mind focuses, see Whalen Lai, *The meaning of "mind-only" (wei-hsin): An analysis of a sinic Mahaayaana phenomenon*, “Philosophy East and West”, nr. 27, vol.1, 1977, p.70!

J. Kennedy, *Buddhist Gnosticism, the System of Basilides*, “The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland” 1902, pp. 390-393 discusses the manner in which the theme of the “non-personal” nature of the appropriated individual self appears in Buddhism and Christian gnosis, especially in Basilides. In both schools of thought, personality is something that does not belong naturally to that person who, by an unfortunate accident, comes to identify himself with it. It is precisely this “foreign” nature of personality that makes successive reincarnation in human bodies, in animals or even in plants possible.

⁸ “5.....*tadāśritya pravartate tadālambanaṃ mano nāma vijñānaṃ*”

Vasubandhu – *Triṃśikā*, 5, S. Anacker, *Seven Works of Vasubandhu. The Buddhist Psychological Doctor*, Motilal Banarsidas, Delhi, 1998, p.422.

“«Having this [storehouse consciousness] as object (*ālambana*)» – this is said. Having the storehouse consciousness itself as an object, because of the association (*saṃprayoga*) with the view of the reality of the body (*satkāyadrṣṭi*) and with others, the object of the storehouse consciousness [is considered] as «I» (*aham*) or as «mine» (*mama*).”⁹

“The storehouse consciousness represents the object (*nimitta*) of the view of the self (*ātmadrṣṭi*), of grasping the self (*ātmagrāha*), which are characteristic to the afflicted (*kliṣṭa*) mind.”¹⁰

The object appropriated by the mind (*manas*) is constituted both by the actual factors manifested by the storehouse consciousness and by the seeds (*bīja*), by the potentialities that subsist latently in the storehouse consciousness. Although in later texts one may accidentally come across passages suggesting that only the actual factors constitute the object appropriated by the mind, the contexts which discuss the experience of appropriation (*upādāna*) – which is nothing else but the experience of the mind under a different name (when looked upon from the perspective of the storehouse consciousness) – state explicitly that both the factors and the seeds represent the objects of the appropriation.

“Of the seed and maturation parts of Ālaya-Vijñāna, it is the latter which is its objective support (*ālambana*).”¹¹

“Again, the equivalents (*paryāya*) of the seeds are the appropriation (*upādāna*), the basis of the view of the reality of the body (*satkāyadrṣṭyadhiṣṭhāna*), the basis of considering the personal existence (*asmimānādhiṣṭhāna*). As such, the equivalents (*paryāya*), the divisions (*bhāgīya*) [of the seeds] should be known.”¹²

A person consists not only of a hump of factors, of a psycho-corporal complex, but equally of certain tendencies, certain potentialities, which are nothing else but the seeds (*bīja*) appropriated by the mind. As Sthiramati explains, the actual factors (*dharma*), when becoming the object of the mind, turn into the “self”,

⁹ “*tadālambanamiti / ālayavijñānālambanameva satkāyadrṣṭyādibhiḥ saṃprayogādahaṃ mametyālayavijñānālambanatvāt* /”

Sthiramati – *Triṃśikābhāṣya*, ad.5bcd, Chatterjee, *op.cit.* 1980, p.51.

¹⁰ Vasubandhu – *Mahāyānasamgrahabhāṣya*, ad. *Mahāyānasamgraha*, I.59, Lamotte, *op.cit.* 1973, pp.81-82.

¹¹ Tsong-Khapa – *Yid dang kun gzhi dka'ba'i gnas rgya cher'grel pa legs par bshad pa'rgya mtsho*, Gareth Sparham, *Ocean of Eloquence. Tsong Kha Pa's Commentary on the Yogācāra Doctrine of Mind*, Sri Satguru Publications, Delhi, 1995, p.107.

¹² “*bījaparyāyāḥ punar upādānaṃ satkāyadrṣṭyadhiṣṭhānam asmimānādhiṣṭhānaṃ cety evaṃbhāgīyāḥ paryāyā veditavyāḥ*”
Yogācārabhūmi, 26,18f, in Lambert Schmithausen, *Ālayavijñāna: On the Origin and the Early Development of a Central Concept of Yogācāra Philosophy*, Studia Philologica Buddhica Monograph Series, International Institute for Buddhist Studies, Tokyo, 1987, p.332, note 391.

into the “own individuality” (*ātman*), while the seeds (*bīja*) turn into the attributes of the self (*ātmīya*), into the individual potentialities.

“Sthiramati thinks that mind (*manas*) has as its object both the storehouse consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*) in itself and its seeds (*bīja*); it turns the storehouse consciousness in a self (*ātman*) and its seeds (*bīja*) into its possessions (*ātmīya*).”¹³

The etymology of the term “*manas*”

Vijñānavāda elaborates a specific sense of the verb “*man*” which, in Sanskrit, has the general meaning of “to think”; in the texts of the school, the root “*man*” refers to whatever is related to the appropriating activity, to finding and accepting a determined identity. This explains the choice of the term “*manas*” to designate that instance of the consciousness which performs the appropriation. Generally speaking, in Sanskrit, the term “*manas*” has a very large semantic sphere, being able to designate any instance of psychic or mental nature.

The experience specific to mind is also designated by compounds of “*man*”, such as “*manyānā*”, “*manana*” or finite verbal forms such as “*manyate*”, etc. Obviously, in this case too, the root “*man*” still has a meaning that is related to the act through which consciousness not only experiences something, but also appropriates the experienced object. The translation of these terms raises problems because, in order to remain consistent with the interpretation of “*man*”, which appears in “*manas*”, almost always translated by “mind”, “mental”, the only possible equivalents are “mentation”, “minding”. These English terms do not naturally suggest their specific meanings from Vijñānavāda, but, in order to maintain a certain consistency in the semantic equivalence of the root “*man*”, they represent the only acceptable variants.

In general, the acts of appropriation, the specific acts of the mind, designated by “*manyānā*”, “*manana*”, etc. are considered as the aspect (*ākāra*) of the mind, its object (*ālambana*) being represented by the storehouse consciousness. The conceptual pair “aspect” (*ākāra*) – “object” (*ālambana*) is taken by Vijñānavāda from Abhidharma and it designates, in case of the object, the object that the consciousness intends, upon which it is focused, and in case of the aspect, the manner in which this object reveals itself to consciousness.

“5.....Being established (*āśritya*) in it and having it as its object (*ālambana*), that consciousness (*vijñāna*) whose name (*nāman*) is «mind» (*manas*) and whose nature (*ātmaka*) consists in mentation (*manana*) evolves (*pravṛt*).”¹⁴

“116. by the mind (*manas*), mentalization (*manyate*) is done....”¹⁵

¹³ Hiuan-Tsang – *Ch’eng-wei-shih-lun*, Poussin, *op.cit.* 1928, p.251.

¹⁴ “5.....*tadāśritya pravartate tadālambanaṃ mano nāma vijñānaṃ*”

Vasubandhu – *Triṃśikā*, 5, Anacker, *op.cit.*, p. 422.

¹⁵ “116....*manasī manyate*.....”

Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra, cap.II, vers 116, Bunyiu Nanjio, *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra*, Bibliotheca Otaniensis, Otani University, Kyoto, vol.1, 1956, p.48.

“There, the mind (*manas*) is the one whose aspect (*ākāra*) is the permanent (*nitya*) mentation (*manyānā*).”¹⁶

“The aspect of mentation (*manyānākāra*) [is considering] the object (*ālambana*) of the storehouse consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*) as «[I] am that [object] itself», «I am [that]».”¹⁷

The determined and limited nature of the individual self (*ātman*) appropriated by the mind (*manas*)

The mind (*manas*) – as the consciousness responsible for the experience of the ego – and the storehouse consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*) are innovations of Vijñānavāda; on the other hand, the mental consciousness (*manovijñāna*) and the sensorial consciousnesses can be met in the Abhidharma schools as well. The fact that the mind is included in the philosophical system of Buddhism at the same time with the storehouse consciousness is not incidental, but the introduction of the concept of “*ālayavijñāna*” requested the introduction of the concept of “*manas*”.

The philosophical approach of Abhidharma was restricted to a phenomenology of the individual experience; the constitution of individuality posed no question because, for the authors of these schools, the individual represented an ultimate datum. The epistemic foundation of Abhidharma philosophy involved the ascertainment of the existence of the individual and of some of his experiences; the minute analysis of the Abhidharma philosophers started from here.

On the other hand, Vijñānavāda expands the perspective to the universal level of experience and, under these circumstances, the individual ceases to be an ultimate datum. Therefore, once the universal level of experience, represented by the storehouse consciousness, is introduced, the introduction of the mind (*manas*), as the instance which accounts for the individualization of a being at the level of the universal experience, becomes necessary.

The mind has a restrictive function; it does not appropriate the entire sphere of the universal experience, but only a determined, limited part of it¹⁸. This way, it alters the universality and the undetermined nature of experience, in its natural condition. Once it appropriates only a determined part of experience, only a limited self (*ātman*), its entire experience focuses on that self. Even when experience

¹⁶ “*tatra mano yannityaṃ manyānākāram*”

Vasubandhu – *Madhyāntavibhāṅgabhāṣya*, ad. III.22, Anacker, *op.cit.*, p.445.

¹⁷ “*tad dhy asmīty aham ity (ātmety) ālayavijñānālambanamanyānākāram*”

Yogācārabhūmi, Tibetan version, Zi6a7f, in Schmithausen, *op.cit.*, p. 444, note 945.

The reconstruction of the Sanskrit text belongs to Schmithausen.

¹⁸ The mind as an alteration of the storehouse consciousness in Ashok Kumar Chatterjee, *The Yogācāra Idealism*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1999, p.102.

expands beyond the strict limits of the appropriated individuality, this expansion happens only to the extent where the universal level of experience affects the self. Thus, what does not interact with this self remains outside the experience of the individual. In a more common terminology, everything that a being experiences is mediated by his individuality, his body, his person. No being can experience objects situated outside the interaction field associated with his/her body, but only the existence of an interaction between an object and the being itself makes the experiencing of that particular object possible.

The universality of experience is regained only when, as a result of the mystical practice, the mind (*manas*) is reversed (*parāvṛtta*); once the mind ceases its activity, the subject reaches the state of “uniformity” (*samatā*), where no part of experience is privileged any longer, considered as having a special “personal” status. As this focus upon a determined sphere of experience ceases, the subject revolves into a state in which the entire manifestation is experienced uniformly (*samatājñāna*). At that moment, he rediscovers the undetermined universality.

“The difference between the non-reversed mind (*manas*) and the revolved mind is justified; error is limited, while knowledge is unlimited. The absence of the self (*nairātmya*) is universal, while the self (*ātman*) is not universal.”¹⁹

“When not yet revolved (*parāvṛtta*), it carries its mentalization (*manyate*) only upon the constructed self (*ātman*); after being revolved, it carries its mentalization upon the condition devoid of self (*nairātmya*).”²⁰

Individual identity (*ātman*) as the ground of duality (*dvaya*)

The limited identity of the individual conveys a dual nature to his experience; the individual being identifies at the level of his experience both a part that constitutes his own identity and another part which is distinct from this. The condition of limited individual being, living within the flow of the universal experience, determines a dual structure of experience, divided between the subject and the object. The object, although experienced, is considered as distinct, as exterior to the self, to the nature of the aware subject. The identity of a “subject” leads to the discrimination of its correlate, the “object”; the discrimination of a self (*sva*), of an ego (*ātman*) leads to the discrimination of the “other” (*para*).

“When the self (*ātman*) exists, the notion (*saṃjñā*) of an «other» (*para*) [also appears].”²¹

¹⁹ Hiuan-Tsang – *Ch’eng-wei-shih-lun*, Poussin, *op.cit.* 1928, p.253.

²⁰ Hiuan-Tsang – *Ch’eng-wei-shih-lun*, Poussin, *op.cit.* 1928, p.254.

²¹ “*ātmani satī parasamjñā*”

Maitreyanātha – *Bhavasamkrāntīṭīkā*, quoting from *Ratnāvalī*, but without explicitly mentioning it; Aiyaswami N. Sastri, “Bhavasamkranti-sutra”, *Adyar Library Bulletin*, Adyar, 1938, p.35.

“Here, the discrimination (*vikalpa*) of the object of perception (*grāhya*) means the apparition (*pratibhāsa*), within the consciousness (*viññāna*), of objects (*artha*) and beings (*sattva*). The discrimination of the subject of perception (*grāhaka*) means the apparition of the self (*ātman*) and of [its] ideations (*viññapti*).”²²

“The comprehension (*grāha*) of the subject (*grāhaka*) means the certainty (*niścaya*) regarding the idea (*grhyata*) that consciousness (*viññāna*) is the one which perceives (*grh*), the one which knows (*viññā*).”²³

“The comprehension (*grāha*) of the object (*grāhya*) means the superimposition of the existence of the object (*grāhyamasti*) as the superimposition (*adhyāsita*) of an own series (*svasantāna*) [of factors] existing separately (*prthag*) from the consciousness (*viññāna*).”²⁴

This duality alters the universality of reality and illusively projects two conditions, the subject (*grāhaka*) and the object (*grāhya*), both imagined as having their own substantiality.

“Duality means considering the subject and the object as substances.”²⁵

Later on, this way of structuring the experience will play a decisive role in producing the suffering, due to the fact that the dynamic nature of manifestation will always place the self (*ātman*) under the threat of the “other” (*para*) means²⁶. The duality self-other (*sva-para*), subject-object (*grāhaka-grāhya*), internal-external (*adhyātma-bāhya*), positions the individual in front of what is distinct from himself and which may represent a threat to his individual condition.

This newly assumed condition of the consciousness, the condition of a limited individual subject, is the origin of all the subsequent forms of personal experience and of the bondage as well.

“63. Established in this [duality] other series [of factors are also born]; hence [takes place] the connexion between cause and effect (*hetuphalānvita*), the

²² “*tatra grāhyavikalpo 'rthasattvapratibhāsaṃ viññānam / grāhakavikalpa ātmaviññaptipratibhāsaṃ /*”

Sthiramati – *Madhyāntavibhāgabhāṣyaṭīkā*, ad. I.1 (I.2), R.C. Pandeya, *Madhyānta-vibhāga-śāstra. Containing the Kārikā-s by Maitreya, Bhāṣya by Vasubandhu and Tīkā by Sthiramati*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1971, p.12.

²³ “*tatra viññānena pratīyate viññāyate grhyata iti yo 'yam niścayaḥ sa grāhakagrāhaḥ /*”

Sthiramati – *Triṃśikābhāṣya*, ad.19, Chatterjee, *op.cit.* 1980, p.107.

²⁴ “*tatra viññānātpṛthageva svasantānādhyāsitaṃ grāhyamastītyadhyavasāyo grāhyagrāhaḥ /*”

Sthiramati – *Triṃśikābhāṣya*, ad.19, Chatterjee, *op.cit.* 1980, p.107.

²⁵ Dignāga – *Ālambanaparīkṣā*, Susumu Yamaguchi, Mayer Henriette Mayer, “Examen de l'objet de la connaissance”, *Journal Asiatique*, 1929, p.50.

²⁶ According to Chatterjee, *op.cit.* 1999, p.102, alterity, otherness (*paratva*) is the most fundamental type of discrimination, the basis of all other categories.

apparition (*pratibhāsa*) of the non-existent (*abhāva*). Due to the apparition of these, the absolute (*dharmatā*) doesn't show (*ākhyatā*) anymore."²⁷

Plurality, multiplicity result from this condition which involves duality; i.e. from the condition of subject assumed by the consciousness. This is more than a mere relation of succession between duality and multiplicity; the subject-object duality represents rather a condition for the appearance of multiplicity (*nānātva*). The discrimination of multiplicity happens only when the consciousness erroneously assumes a determined individual condition, a limited condition that brings it in front of what is "other" than it.

The subject-object (*grāhaka-grāhya*) duality

Most experiences of a subject reflect his dual condition. There is also an objective aspect, besides its subjective ones, in almost any manifestation. Only a few of the experiences of a subject are exclusively related to him and, most often, an objective counterpart is also involved.

"In fact, whenever there is the conception «an object apprehended», a duality is implied: e.g., «visible» implies visual consciousness as well."²⁸

"Here, the object of perception (*grāhya*) means form (*rūpa*) and so on. The subject of perception (*grāhaka*) means the visual consciousness (*cakṣurvijñāna*) and so on."²⁹

The ideations of the human consciousness have the tendency of distinguishing two components as their parts: (i) the subjective one, which consists of the content of perception, of a representation (*darśana*) and (ii) the objective one, which consists of an "object" (*nimitta*) having the characteristics displayed by the representation. However, the discrimination of these two components is done in an illusory manner, they being, to an equal extent, "just ideation" (*viññaptimātra*).

"II.11. How is the «only ideation» (*viññaptimātra*) character of the ideations of a consciousness established?

.....

2) From the point of view of duality (*dvaya*), by the fact that these ideations involve an aspect of object (*sanimitta*) and an aspect of representation (*sadarśana*)."³⁰

²⁷ Asaṅga - *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga*, 63, Jules Levinsion, *Distinguishing Dharma and Dharmata by Asanga and Maitreya*, Sri Satguru Publications, Delhi, 2001, p.76.

²⁸ *Dharmadharmatāvibhāgavṛtti*, Karl Potter (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies. Volume VIII. Buddhist Philosophy from 100 to 350 A.D.*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1999, p.588.

²⁹ "tatra grāhya rūpādi / grāhakaṃ cakṣurvijñānādi /"

Sthiramati – *Madhyāntavibhāgabhāṣyaṭīkā*, ad. I.1 (I.2), Pandeya, *op.cit.*, p.12.

³⁰ Asaṅga - *Mahāyānasamgraha*, II. 11, Lamotte, *op.cit.* 1973, p.99.

Consequently, the human mind tends to analyse the visual ideations (*cakṣurvijñapti*) both from an objective perspective (*nimitta*) – identifying forms and anything else that might constitute the object of the visual perception – and from a subjective, representational perspective (*darśana*), as the ideations themselves. Although only the representational component (*darśana*) displays in an explicit way its status of ideation, the objective component is also of an ideatic nature, but presents itself as something else and, in this sense, it represents an error.

“II.11....2) Since [the ideations] comprise both a representation and an object, they are double. Hence, the visual or other type of ideations (*cakṣurādivijñapti*) have, as their object aspect (*nimitta*), the ideations of form and so on (*rūpādivijñapti*), and, as representation aspect (*darśana*), the ideations starting with those of the visual consciousness (*cakṣurvijñānavijñapti*) and until those of tactile consciousness (*kāyavijñānavijñapti*).”³¹

The category of the “object”, of the “objects” that a certain subject interacts with, includes other subjects as well; due to this, Vijñānavāda does not constitute a type of solipsism. In Vijñānavāda the entire manifestation is reduced to consciousness but this consciousness is not an individual consciousness; it is a consciousness which transcends the individual. It is precisely due to this thing, that trans-individual manifestations are possible, that something distinct from the individual may exist, something that the individual only gets in contact with.

Therefore, for each particular subject, the category of the “object” can contain other subjects as well, recognised as “subjects” due to the similarity between the manners in which their bodies appear and the manner in which the body of the subject that perceives them appears.

“Here, the notion (*vikalpa*) of «object of perception» (*grāhya*) means the apparition (*pratibhāsa*), within consciousness (*vijñāna*), of objects (*artha*) and beings (*sattva*).”³²

“Here, [in case of the object of perception], the apparition of the objects (*arthapratibhāsa*) represents whatever manifests (*pratibhā*) as being (*bhāva*) form (*rūpa*) and so on. The apparition of beings (*sattvapratibhāsa*) means [whatever manifests] as being the five sense organs (*pañcendriya*), both in case of one’s own personal series (*santāna*) and in case of others’.”³³

Due to the limited nature of the individual consciousness, there are manifestations outside of it even if, by virtue of the absolute idealism of the

³¹ Asaṅga - *Mahāyānasamgraha*, II. 11, Lamotte, *op.cit.* 1973, p.100.

³² “*īatra grāhyavikalpo ‘rthasattvapratibhāsaṃ vijñānam’*”

Sthiramati – *Madhyāntavibhāgaśāstra*, ad. I.1 (I.2), Pandeya, *op.cit.*, p.12.

³³ “*tatrā ‘rthapratibhāsaṃ yad rūpādibhāvena pratibhāsatē / sattvapratibhāsaṃ yat pañcendriyatvena svaparasantānayoḥ /’*”

Vasubandhu – *Madhyāntavibhāgaśāstra*, ad. I.3, Anacker, *op.cit.*, p.425.

Vijñānavāda school, these, on their turn, are also of an ideatic nature (but being ideations of the universal consciousness).

The fact that the subject participates in a universe characterized by alterity and that the self is constantly interacting with the non-self, with what is different from it, determines the vulnerability of his nature and all the afflicted (*kliṣṭa*) experiences resulting from this³⁴.

2. The mind as a subconscious structure

The mind as an unconscious substratum of the conscious individual being

As the mind represents the very condition through which the person is projected, the personal experience automatically includes the activity of the mind. The mind is intrinsic to the person and none of the modifications that appear at the level of the individual consciousness affects the mind at all³⁵.

Once constituted as an individual being, a person has certain intrinsic essential determinations, as a result of his being a “person”, and other determinations which have only a contingent, non-essential character. The conscious experience of a being is produced at the level of the mental consciousness and of the operational consciousnesses; this experience has, in any of its forms, a contingent, non-essential character. There is a certain freedom any being has in relation with what he experiences and this is due precisely to the fact that the experiences of the mental consciousness and those of the operational consciousnesses do not flow directly from the intrinsic nature of that being. Everything that is referred to as “awareness” in common speaking, as experience upon which the individual has a certain control, owns this status precisely to its non-essential nature.

On the other hand, the activity of the mind involves the very essence of beings; it is through this activity that a being is projected as an individual and thus it is intrinsically present in any experience of an individual being. Being not a product of the free, conscious activity of the being, it is unconscious or, better said, subconscious³⁶. The same status is enjoyed by the storehouse consciousness which,

³⁴ On the importance of annihilating the duality during the soteriological practice, see Thomas A. Kochumuttom, *A Buddhist Doctrine of Experience. A New Translation and Interpretation of the Works of Vasubandhu the Yogācārin*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1999, pp.11-14!

³⁵ Waldron, *op.cit.*, p.123 explains the individual character of everything that individual experience means precisely by the fact that these experiences presuppose the continuous and subliminal experience of the mind.

³⁶ The mind (*manas*) as an unconscious substratum at Chatterjee, *op.cit.* 1999, p.103.

being the substratum of the universal experience, is intrinsically present in any experience of a being.

“The five [sense]-consciousnesses have a gross and unstable aspect³⁷; they depend on conditions which are often missing. Therefore, they don’t produce all the times, most of the time being absent.

The mental consciousness also has a gross and unstable aspect; but generally, the conditions on which it depends are present. Nevertheless, at times, due to some contrary conditions, it does not produce.

The seventh and the eighth consciousnesses (*vijñāna*) have a stable aspect; they depend on conditions which are always present and there is no contrary condition preventing their production.”³⁸

“In case of all beings, two consciousnesses (*vijñāna*) are always simultaneous (*sahavartin*): the storehouse consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*) and the mind (*manas*).”³⁹

Therefore, the attachment to the self (*ātmasneha*) is inborn (*sahaja*), does not depend on the conscious activity of the mental consciousness, it exists through itself (*svarasena*) in case of any being. It is produced by the characteristic seeds (*bīja*) which always exist within the storehouse consciousness. Of course, this inborn attachment could not have originated in the individual being itself but only in something that ontologically precedes it, since the appearance of the attachment to the self represents the very constitutive act of an individual being.

“The innate view of the self (*sahajātmadrṣṭi*) is born as a result of perceiving compact objects (*piṇḍagrāha*), of its own seeds (*svabīja*) and of the tendencies towards it (*tadanuśaya*).”⁴⁰

“The comprehension of the self (*ātmagrāha*) is of two types: innate (*sahaja*) and conceived (*vikalpita*).

The first one is produced as a result of some intrinsic causes (*abhyantarahetuvaśāt*), of [its] seeds (*bīja*), of the beginningless (*anādikālika*) impregnations of the comprehension of the self (*ātmagrāhavāsanā*), which are impregnations of the error (*vitathavāsanā*). [This] is always to be found in case of an individual, without depending on a false teaching (*mithyādeśanā*) or on a false concept (*mithyāvikalpa*). It exists by itself (*svarasena*). That’s why it is labeled «innate» (*sahaja*).”⁴¹

³⁷ “Gross” means accessible to the individual awareness, while “subtle” means not accessible to it.

³⁸ Hsuan-Tsang – *Ch’eng-wei-shih-lun*, Poussin, *op.cit.* 1928, p.399.

³⁹ Hsuan-Tsang – *Ch’eng-wei-shih-lun*, Poussin, *op.cit.* 1928, p.411.

⁴⁰ “*tatra sahajātmadrṣṭi[h] piṇḍagrāhāt svabījā ca tadanuśayāj jāyate /*”

Asaṅga – commentary on *Paramārtha-gāthā* I.31, Schmithausen, *op.cit.*, p. 236.

⁴¹ Hsuan-Tsang – *Ch’eng-wei-shih-lun*, Poussin, *op.cit.* 1928, p.16.

The mind and the storehouse consciousness as intrinsic conditions of any individual being

The mind delineates the individual being at the universal level of the storehouse consciousness in a manner inaccessible to the individual consciousness which will come into existence only subsequent to the projecting act of the mind. The operational consciousnesses (*pravṛttivijñāna*), i.e. the mental consciousness (*manovijñāna*) and the five sensorial consciousnesses, will come into existence only at the level of the individual basis (*āśraya*) projected through the activity of the mind.

“With the appropriating consciousness as a basis, six other types of consciousness evolve – the visual, auditory, olfactory, gustative, tactile and mental consciousnesses.”⁴²

“What is mind (*manas*)? It is that whose nature (*ātmaka*) is always (*nityakāla*) the mentation (*manyānā*), who has as an object (*ālambana*) the storehouse consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*), that consciousness (*vijñāna*) which is the immediate antecedent [condition] (*samanantaraniruddha*) of the six consciousnesses ...”⁴³

Thus, the appearance of the six operational consciousnesses is preceded by two other levels of experience: the level of the storehouse consciousness, through which the Universe, as a whole, is projected, and the level of the mind, through which the individual sphere of experience is delimited.

“269. Being established (*saṁśritya*) in the storehouse (*ālaya*) [consciousness], mind (*manas*) evolves (*saṁpravṛt*). Being established in the consciousness (*citta*)⁴⁴ and in the mind, the [operational] consciousnesses (*vijñāna*) evolve.”⁴⁵

To put it differently, as long as a being exists, in his case, the storehouse consciousness and the mind form continuous, uninterrupted series, inaccessible to

⁴² *Samdhinirmocana-sūtra*, V.5, E. Lamotte, *Sandhinirmocana Sūtra. L'explication des mystères*, Institut Orientaliste, Louvain, 1935, p.183.

⁴³ “*manah katamat / yan nityakālaṁ manyānātmakam ālayavijñānālambanaṁ yac ca śaṅṅāṁ vijñānānām samanantaraniruddhaṁ vijñānam /*”
Asaṅga - *Abhidharmasamuccaya*, 12,2ff, in Schmithausen, *op.cit.*, p. 443, vol.II, note 943.

⁴⁴ In *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra*, the term “*citta*”, whose literal meaning is of “consciousness”, is used as a synonym for the “storehouse consciousness” (*ālayavijñāna*).

⁴⁵ “269. *ālayaṁ hi saṁśritya mano vai saṁpravartate / cittaṁ manaś ca saṁśritya vijñānaṁ saṁpravartate /*”
Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra, *Sagāthakam*, 269, Nanjio, *op.cit.*, p.300.

the individual awareness characterized by contingent activities, instability and, to a certain extent, by freedom⁴⁶.

“The seventh and the eighth consciousnesses (*viññāna*) don’t have simultaneous supports (*sahabhū-āśraya*) because, as a result of their big force, they evolve as a continuous series.”⁴⁷

“The seventh and the eighth consciousnesses (*viññāna*) constitute series by themselves.”⁴⁸

The inborn (*sahaja*) attachment to self and the conceptually discriminated (*vikalpita*) attachment

The mind (*manas*) is the one that, in a non-deliberate, non-conceptual manner, appropriates the person, the individual self; nevertheless, at its level, the experience of the ego is still conceptually undetermined, irrational, unconscious (it is not accessible to the regular states of conscience of a human being), instinctual, subliminal. The attachment to ego, as it is experimented at the level of the mind, manifests as irrational instincts or natural urges. Only at the level of the mental consciousness, the ego, the individual self, is rationally, conceptually depicted, acquiring a clearly determined conceptual identity. Here, the individual self takes the shape of determined conceptual construction, becomes an object having its own categorically determined nature, similar to all the other objects discriminated by the mental consciousness.

The inborn attachment to the self, produced by the mind, can be moulded into a conceptual (*vikalpa*), discursive (*deśanā*) shape through the activity of the mental consciousness. Thus, the experience of the ego can take a conscious and conceptual shape (*vikalpita*)⁴⁹. In case of a being, the existence of the attachment to ego, in its conceptual form, is contingent as it depends on conditions not pertaining to the very essence of a person.

“The second [type of the view of self, namely the conceived one] is not produced as a result of some intrinsic causes; it also depends on some external conditions. Hence, it is not to be always found in case of a person. It is produced due to some false teachings or due to a false concept (*vikalpa*). Being this produced, it is labeled as «of a conceived type» (*vikalpita*).

⁴⁶ Waldron, *op.cit.*, p.121 draws attention to the continuous nature of the experience of the mind, to the unconscious nature of the act of permanent appropriation of an individual self performed by the mind.

⁴⁷ Huan-Tsang – *Ch’eng-wei-shih-lun*, Poussin, *op.cit.* 1928, p.232.

⁴⁸ Huan-Tsang – *Ch’eng-wei-shih-lun*, Poussin, *op.cit.* 1928, p.242.

⁴⁹ For a study of the two types of attachment to self, the inborn one (*sahaja*) and the reflection-type one (*vikalpita*), see Waldron, *op.cit.*, p.118!

This is characteristic exclusively to the mental consciousness (*manovijñāna*).⁵⁰

The conceptual type of the perception of the self, consisting in certain discursive, conceptual contents, may be easily eliminated through approaches of cognitive nature. It is enough to eliminate those conditions that favor the production of such a piece of knowledge and to replace them with pieces of knowledge that oppose the error of the self. The conceptual attachment to self can be eliminated through adequate learning; as a result, this form of attachment is labeled as “to be eliminated by knowledge” (*darśanaheya*).

The inborn attachment to self does not depend on conditions pertaining to the aware individual experience and, due to this fact, it cannot be eliminated by means of discursive knowledge. However, Buddhism has never considered bondage as implacable and, as a matter of fact, Buddhism owns its existence as a religion precisely to the existence of a possibility to get out of bondage. The way to eliminate the inborn attachment, the inborn afflictions (*sahaja kleśa*), is the meditation (*bhāvanā*), the mystical practice. The mystical exercises succeed in going beyond the conscious level of the individual being and thus they can operate changes, can annihilate even instances not accessible to the mental consciousness, such as the mind (*manas*). Therefore, the Buddhist soteriology labels the inborn attachment as “to be eliminated through meditation” (*bhāvanāheya*)⁵¹.

“The conceived (*vikalpita*) afflictions are to be eliminated through knowledge (*darśanaheya*), since they are gross and easy to discard.

The innate (*sahaja*) afflictions are to be eliminated through meditation (*bhāvanāheya*), since they are subtle and difficult to discard.”⁵²

“The innate (*sahaja*) view of the reality of the body (*satkāyadr̥ṣṭi*) is to be eliminated by meditation (*bhāvanā*)....”⁵³

The fact that liberation from bondage also involves other approaches than cultivating a specific type of discursive knowledge has significant philosophical consequences as far as the status of human knowledge is concerned. First of all, since liberation cannot be reduced to a practice that is strictly of a cognitive nature, this justifies the necessity of mystical exercises, of ascetic exercises, as a part of the

⁵⁰ Hiuan-Tsang – *Ch’eng-wei-shih-lun*, Poussin, *op.cit.* 1928, p.16.

⁵¹ A discussion on what is “to be eliminated by knowledge” (*darśanaheya*) and what is “to be eliminated through meditation” (*bhāvanāheya*) in Sukomal Chaudhury, *Analytical Study of the Abhidharmakośa*, Firma KLM Private Limited, Calcutta, 1983, pp.90-91. For the inborn attachment to self and for the conceptually discriminated one, as well as for the means through which these can be annihilated, see Ganguly, *op.cit.*, p.34!

⁵² Hiuan-Tsang – *Ch’eng-wei-shih-lun*, Poussin, *op.cit.* 1928, p.359.

⁵³ “*sahajā satkāyadr̥ṣṭiḥ bhāvanāprahātavyā....*”

Sthiramati – *Abhidharmasamuccayabhāṣya*, 62,3ff, Schmithausen, *op.cit.*, p.440.

soteriological practice⁵⁴. It is not only the conscious part of the human being that has to be liberated, disciplined, but also the one not accessible to common awareness. Secondly, as the inborn forms of the attachment to self are intrinsic in any conscious condition, this attachment is intrinsic in any form of conceptual knowledge as well. The most that conceptual knowledge can do, in its most “correct” forms, is to avoid the conceptual error of conceiving the self but it cannot elude the inborn experience of the ego. In all its forms, conceptual knowledge is produced within a being affected by error and, therefore, conceptual knowledge implacably emerges from a determined, limited, particular perspective. It cannot elude the limitations and the determinations characteristic to individuality.

3. The ontological error involved by the individual self

The superimposition of the experience of individual identity (*ātman*) on the experience of the storehouse consciousness and the new illusory ontologic status ascribed to it

The experience of the mind is not exactly a new type of manifestation, but rather it means considering the experience of the storehouse consciousness, of the factors (*dharma*) composing the series of the dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*), in a specific erroneous manner. The factual content of the experience of the mind is not distinct from that of the storehouse consciousness; the mind does not supplement the universal experience with a new type of factors. The object of the mind is constituted by the factors manifested by the storehouse consciousness, which it considers erroneously as its own self. The novelty brought by the mind is not a new type of factors but rather a perception of the factors manifested by the storehouse consciousness in an erroneous manner. The object of the mind is included in the universal sphere of the storehouse consciousness but the mind ascribes to it a new erroneous ontological status. The error is of an ontological nature; it mainly consists in substituting the real ontological status of certain experiences with a new erroneous status. At the level of the storehouse consciousness, their condition was that of phenomenon, of dependant (*pratyaya*, *paratantra*), transitory (*anitya*), non-substantial, even illusory (*māyāvat*) entities. The mind however confers them a new condition, that of self (*ātman*), of

⁵⁴ For a detailed study on the meditative practices in Buddhism, see Marion L. Matics, *Entering the Path of Enlightenment. The Bodhicaryāvatāra of the Buddhist Poet Śāntideva*, The Macmillan Company, London, 1970, pp.68-79!; see also Har Dayal, *Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhist Sanskrit Literature*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1999, pp. 221-236; Edward Conze, *Buddhism: Its Essence and Development*, Harper Colophon Books, 1975, pp.96-101, Edward Conze, *Buddhist Meditation*, George Allen and Unwin, London, 1956, pp.113-118!

substantiality, of persistent (*nitya*) entity, of entities having an own-nature (*svabhāva*). Once the experiencing subject assumes certain phenomena as its own nature, they stop being only phenomena, only experience, and start sharing the reality of the subject, its substantiality.

The mind superimposes error upon the experience of the storehouse consciousness and confers it a new illusory status.⁵⁵ Therefore, there are two components that could be found within the experience of personality, of individuality, of the individual self which the mind is responsible of: the factors manifested by the storehouse consciousness, which have a relative, dependant existence (*paratantra*), and their absolutely erroneous interpretation as the own identity of the subject. According to the old cosmologies from Abhidharma, Vijñānavāda identifies sometimes the first component with the five aggregates (*skandha*) which, according to early Buddhism, represented the ultimate elements of any analysis of experience. This component has a relative, conditioned existence, but different from the absolute non-existence; in fact, it shares the general status of the manifestations of the storehouse consciousness.

The second component involved in the experience of personality is the identification with this component; this second aspect represents the specific contribution of the mind. Once an experience is considered to be the self identity of the experiencing subject, its ontological status becomes one of “substance”. After it becomes the own identity of the experiencing subject, the appropriated person takes over the substantiality, the autonomy, the persistence that any subject experiences regarding his condition. This identification with a certain set of factors constitutes pure error (*viparyāsa*, *mithyā*), there being nothing real about it. Vijñānavāda, embracing a previous tradition, generally designates this erroneous identification through the terms “*satkāyadr̥ṣṭi*” (“the perception of the reality of the body”), “*ātmadr̥ṣṭi*” (“the perception of the self”) etc.

“These five internal aggregates (*skandha*) are born due to conditions (*pratyaya*) and, as such, they exist, even if [only] as something illusory (*māyāvat*). But the self (*ātman*), which is nothing else but a erroneous interpretation of the aggregates, represents absolute non-existence.”⁵⁶

⁵⁵ For a detailed analysis of the function of alteration ascribed to the mind (*manas*), according to Chinese sources, see Ming-Wood Liu, *The mind-only teaching of Ching-ying Hui-Yuan: An early interpretation of Yogācāra thought in China*, “Philosophy East and West”, no. 35, vol.4, 1985, pp.358-359! For the mind as an instance characterised by ignorance, by ontological illusion, by error, by non-existence, see Liu, *op.cit.*, pp.359-360!

⁵⁶ Huan-Tsang - *Ch'eng-wei-shih-lun*, Poussin, *op.cit.* 1928, p.20.

“Perceiving (*darśana*) a self (*ātman*) in the appropriated aggregates (*upādānaskandha*) means «the view of the self» (*ātmadr̥ṣṭi*), «the view of the reality of the body» (*satkāyadr̥ṣṭi*).”⁵⁷

“Here, the view of the reality of the body (*satkāyadr̥ṣṭi*) means perceiving (*darśana*) a self (*ātman*) or the properties of a self (*ātmīya*) within the five appropriated aggregates (*upādānaskandha*).”⁵⁸

“What are the concepts (*vikalpa*) of «I» (*aham*) or «mine» (*mama*)? They are the unreal (*vitatha*) concepts [through which] the view of the self (*svaṃ dr̥ṣṭi*) is established in case of an object (*vastu*) that is born from conditions (*pratītyotpadyate*).”⁵⁹

Buddhism, especially in its early versions, had the tendency of considering the transitory (*anitya*), momentary (*kṣaṇika*) character as the specific mark of the phenomenal, of the relative; in opposition to this, there stands the persistent, permanent (*nitya*) character as a mark of the ultimate reality, of the absolute, of the substantial. At times, multiplicity (*aneka*, *nānātva*) and unity (*eka*) have also played this role of indicators of the relative, respectively of the absolute. In the absence of other terms for conveying the ideas of “necessary existence” and of “contingent, relative existence”, of “substantial” and “phenomenal”, Buddhist texts have often used the “transitory” (*anitya*) – “persistent” (*nitya*) pair in order to express the phenomenal – absolute opposition.

This terminology is also used in Vijñānavāda; accordingly, the ontological aspects of the activity of the mind (*manas*) can be described as the illusory superimposing of the idea of persistence (*nitya*) upon certain experiences whose characteristic is precisely lack of persistence (*anitya*), momentariness (*kṣaṇika*), hence projecting the “person” (*pudgala*), the “individual self” (*ātman*). The transitory factors, when wrongly identified as the subject’s own nature, become a “person” (*pudgala*), a “self” (*ātman*) and, in doing so, they are conferred, in an erroneous manner, the characteristic of permanence, of substantiality.

“The person (*pudgala*) is not different (*vyatirikta*) from form (*rūpa*) and from the others, since it doesn’t manifest (*apratibhāsa*) [separately from them]. The idea (*pratyaya*) of «I» (*aham*) is born in regard to form and the others.

⁵⁷ “*upādānaskandheṣvātmēti darśanamātmadr̥ṣṭiḥ satkāyadr̥ṣṭir.....*”

Sthiramati – *Triṃśikābhāṣya*, ad.6cd, Chatterjee, *op.cit.* 1980, p.54.

⁵⁸ “*tatra satkāyadr̥ṣṭiryaṭpañcasūpādānaskandheṣvātmātmīyadarśanam /*”

Sthiramati – *Triṃśikābhāṣya*, ad.11ad, Chatterjee, *op.cit.* 1980, p.76.

⁵⁹ “*ahamiti mameti ca vikalpaḥ katamaḥ / svaṃ dr̥ṣṭisthānīyaṃ vastu pratītyotpadyate vitatho vikalpaḥ /*”

Bodhisattvabhūmi, Tattvārthapaṭalam, part IV, J.D. Willis, *On Knowing Reality (The Tattvārtha Chapter of Asaṅga’s Bodhisattva Bhūmi)*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 2002, p.169.

Moreover, the person is not of the nature (*svabhāva*) of the aggregates (*skandha*), of form and so on, since their nature, of the form and so on, is transient (*anitya*) and multiple (*aneka*), while [the nature] of a person is imagined (*upakalpita*) in a different way, as a permanent (*nitya*) and unitary (*eka*) nature (*rūpa*).⁶⁰

The ontological error (*viparyāsa*) and the illusory individual (*ātman*)

Therefore, the function of mind consists mainly in changing the ontological status of the factors representing its object. The mind brings no additional factual content to these factors, but only substitutes their true ontological status, that of dependant, phenomenal, relative, illusory entities, with an erroneous status which involves their own substantiality and own nature. To this extent, the mind does not produce a new type of manifestation but rather gives birth to a certain error (*viparyāsa*), casts ignorance (*avidyā*) upon the ontological condition of the already existing experiences. Once the mind has interfered, the experience does not represent a mere manifestation anymore, a mere apparition, but is veiled by error, by ignorance. Based on this error, later on, the bondage will appear.

“XVIII.92. It must be said about person (*pudgala*) that it exists only as a designation (*prajñapti*) and not substantially (*dravyataḥ*), since it cannot be found [as a substance], since it represents error (*viparyāsa*), since it represents affliction (*saṃkleśa*), since it is the cause of affliction (*kliṣṭaḥetu*).⁶¹

Therefore, from an ontological point of view, the mind is responsible for the error (*viparyāsa*) of ascribing substantiality, which characterizes the ultimate subject, to certain components of experience. An important aspect of this process is the appearance of ignorance (*ajñāna*, *avidyā*). “Ignorance” refers to not knowing what is truly real, to the erroneous identification of reality, to finding it in the illusory sphere of individuality.

When a certain series of factors is ascribed the status of “individual self” (*ātman*), of “person” (*pudgala*), the entity thus created is nothing else but an ontological fiction. The consciousness affected by the error (*viparyāsa*) of the individual self projects itself within a sphere of ontological illusion, a sphere wrongly

⁶⁰ “na tāvad rūpādīvyatiriktaḥ pudgalo 'sti tasyā pratibhāsanāt rūpādiṣvevāhamiti pratyayotpattiśca / na cāpi rūpādiskandhasvabhāvaḥ pudgalaḥ / teṣāṃ rūpādīnāmanityānekaśvabhāvatvāt / pudgalasya ca nityaika rūpeṇa parairupakalpitatvāt /” Kamalaśīla – *Bhāvanākrama III*, Nandal Gyatsen, *Bhāvanākrama*, Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, Sarnath, 1985, p.256.

⁶¹ “XVIII.92. prajñaptiastitayā vācyaḥ pudgalo dravyato na tu / nopalambhādviparyāsāt saṃkleśāt kliṣṭaḥetutaḥ //”

Asaṅga – *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra*, XVIII.92, Surekha Vijay Limaye, *Mahāyānasutralankara by Asaṅga*, Sri Satguru Publications, Delhi, 2000, p.441.

identified as reality⁶². What is truly real, i.e. the ultimate reality (*dharmadhātu*) and the conditional flow (*pratītyasamutpāda*) of an ideatic nature, gets out of comprehension when the person, the individual self are considered as real and the whole experience starts to be structured according to the tendencies induced by the individual identity.

Therefore, there is a double aspect involved in the ontological error of the individual self (*ātman*), of the person (*pudgala*). There is a positive aspect, through which an absolutely fictitious entity is projected as real, and a negative aspect, which consists of hiding what is real.

Vijñānavāda texts associate the activity of the mind (*manas*), the appropriation, with the attribute “obstructed” (*nivṛta*). Literally “*nivṛta*” means “covered”, “veiled”, and the idea here is precisely this obstruction, this occultation of the authentic reality performed by the mind.

The ontological fiction of the individual self (*ātman*)

The ontological fiction of the individual self (*ātman*), of the person (*pudgala*), of the individual being (*sattva*), looks like a determined, limited and unitary entity which represents the basis, the foundation (*āśraya*) of an entire set of experiences. This unitary and persistent substratum (*adhiṣṭhāna*) is the place where all “inner”, “individual” experiences (*ādhyātmika*) allegedly happen, i.e. all those transformations that the consciousness affected by ignorance experiences as related to its very nature. The individual self comes to life by superimposing the idea of “unity” (*eka*), of “persistence” (*nitya*), of “substantiality”, of “foundation” (*āśraya*), upon something that is only a series (*santāna*) of dispersed, momentary, factors (*dharma*) with no substance. This self presents itself as that unitary and persistent substance which constitutes the foundation, the substratum of knowledge (*jñātr*, *vedaka*), of action (*kartr*, *kāraka*), of experience (*bhoktr*), of the biological feeding processes (*poṣa*), of life (*jīva*) and so forth. The person is imagined as the “possessor”, the “master” (*svāmin*) of such processes. Therefore, the idea of “person” involves substantiality, temporal persistence, continuity.

“III.15-16. The self (*ātman*) is perceived (*darśana*) as a unique causal agent (*ekahetutva*), as the subject of experience (*bhoktr*), as the subject of action (*kartr*), as the controller (*vaśa*), as the active one (*virtana*), as the one which determines (*ādhipatya*), as a persistent (*nitya*) entity (*artha*); it is also [perceived] as the substratum (*āśraya*) of affliction (*kleśa*) and of purification (*śuddha*), as the one

⁶² See Robert F. Thurman, *Essential Tibetan Buddhism*, HarperCollins Publishers, 1996, pp.190-191!

practicing the ascesis (*yogin*), as the not liberated one (*amukta*) or the liberated one (*mukta*).”⁶³

“The three kinds of grasping after self are grasping for one central entity, grasping for an «enjoyer», and grasping for a «doer».”⁶⁴

The human being as a series (*santāna*) of momentary (*kṣaṇika*) factors (*dharma*)

Mahāyāna considers this stable, persistent, autonomous “person” as a pure ontological fiction⁶⁵. What is truly real within the person is a series (*santāna*) of momentary factors (*dharma*), that only an erroneous act of the mind (*manas*) gathers together in an illusory unitary entity. The inner, personal (*ādhyātmika*) spheres acquire this specific “personal” status, this unity, only in an illusory manner, they being as isolated and without persistence as any other type of experience.

“Here, there are no beings (*satva*), no selves (*ātman*), but only factors along with their causes (*sahetuka dharma*).”⁶⁶

“Hence, for the ultimate reality (*paramārtha*), there is no owner (*svāmin*), no subject of action (*kāraka*), no subject of knowledge (*vedaka*), but only causes and effects (*hetuphalamātra*).”⁶⁷

“The certain knowledge (*adhimuktijñāna*) is knowing that in case of the factors (*dharma*), there is no self (*nairātmya*), no beings (*niḥsatva*), no living creatures (*nirjīva*), no living organisms (*niṣpoṣa*), no persons (*niṣpudgala*), but only causes and conditions (*hetupratyaya*).”⁶⁸

The activities performed by the body or by the senses are in fact only successions, characterized by a certain regularity, of some momentary and

⁶³ ”III.15. ekahetutvabhokṛtṛtvakṛtṛtvavaśavartane /

ādhīpatyārthanityatve kleśasuddhāśraye 'pi ca //

III.16. yogitvāmuktamuktatve hyātmadarśanameṣu hi /”

Asaṅga – *Madhyāntavibhāga*, III.15-16a, Anacker, *op.cit.*, p.442.

⁶⁴ Vasubandhu – *Pañcaskandhakaparakaraṇa*, 5, Anacker, *op.cit.*, p.74.

⁶⁵ Waldron, *op.cit.*, p.190 (note 4) also brings as an argument in favour of the Buddhist conception according to which the individual self is nothing but an illusion the conceptions of some contemporary researchers in the field of cognitive sciences.

⁶⁶ ”nāstīha satva ātmā vā dharmāstivete sahetukāḥ”

Vasubandhu – *Viṃśikāvṛtti*, ad.8, quoting *Majjhima-Nikāya*, I.138, Anacker, *op.cit.*, p.415.

⁶⁷ ”evaṃ paramārthataḥ svāminy asati kārake vedake vā hetuphalamātre ca sati.....”

Asaṅga – Commentary at *Paramārtha-gāthā*, I, in Schmithausen, *op.cit.*, p.234, vol.1, appendix II.

⁶⁸ ”yad idaṃ hetupratyayajñānaḥ nairātmyeniḥsatvaṃnirjīvanīṣpoṣaṇiṣpudgaleṣu dharmeṣv adhimuktijñānam /”

Kāśyapaparivarta, 97, Alexander von Stael-Holstein, *Kāśyapa-parivarta-sūtra*, Commercial Press, Shanghai, 1926, p.142.

dispersed factors. For instance, the moving of an object with the hand is nothing but the succession of a certain combination of factors (the object in a certain location) after another combination of factors (the hand plus the mental factor of the intention to modify the position of the object). It can not be the case, here, of a real movement of the object by hand as a consequence of a certain intention because the object exists only for a single moment, the moment when it is in the initial location. The object situated in a new location is a new object whose appearance was determined by some specific previous factors, but, nevertheless, it is a new and different object, not the old one that has undergone a movement.

“.....though it is true that compounded events are without progression to another locus, because they are destroyed by their own-natures, yet there arises, in a hand, etc., a special event as a cause for something’s arising in another locus immediately subsequent to a previous thing at the first locus, which event has a certain *citta* as its cause. It is (conventionally) called both «motion» and «manifest action».”⁶⁹

Similarly, the activities of the sense organs and even the intellectual activities are nothing else but regular successions of factors, the activity per se being impossible.

“6-7. The eye (*cakṣuṣ*) doesn’t see (*drś*) any form (*rūpa*), the ear (*śrotra*) doesn’t hear (*śrū*) any sound (*śabda*); the nose (*ghrāṇa*) doesn’t smell any odour (*gandha*), the tongue (*jihvā*) doesn’t taste any savour (*rasa*), the body (*kāya*) doesn’t feel (*sprś*) any touch (*sparśa*), the mind (*manas*) doesn’t conceive (*klp*) any entity (*dharma*). There is no substratum (*adhiṣṭāta*) of these and no instigator (*preraka*) [of these] can be found.”⁷⁰

Birth is not the incarnation of a “soul” which remains constant during transmigration and is entitled to represent the subject of this process, but the actualization in a bodily, incarnated form of some karmic residues which have existed this far only as seeds (*bīja*), as karmic imprints (*vāsanā*). The human person is nothing else but a flow (*pravāha*) of seeds, of karmic traces which during the intermediary period between two successive reincarnations exist only as a potentiality, whereas during the period of a life they exist actualized as a embodied living being.

⁶⁹ Vasubandhu – *Karmasiddhiprakaraṇa*, 11, Anacker, *op.cit.*, p.100.

⁷⁰ “6-7. *cakṣuḥ paśyati no rūpaṃ śrotram śabdāṃ śṛṇoti naḥ / ghrāṇam jighrati no gandhāṃ jihvā nāsvādayed rasāṃ / kāyāḥ sprśati no sparśā mano dharmān no kalpayet / nāsti caiṣāṃ adhiṣṭhātā prerako vidyate na ca //*”

Asaṅga – *Yogācārabhūmi, Śrāvakabhūmi, Paramārtha-gāthā*, 6-7, George Elder (ed.), *Buddhist Insight: Essays by Alex Wayman*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 2002, p.336.

Liberation as the annihilation of the illusory experience of the individuality and not as purification of an individual substratum

Liberation is not the purification of a real individual substratum from certain forms of bondage but simply the annihilation of the illusion, of the error claiming the reality of the individual. No real individual is involved in the process of liberation or transmigration; everything sums up to a series (*santāna*) of impersonal appearances, gathered together in an illusory unity. However, these appearances are not random but determined by the karmic traces, by the karmic seeds (*bīja*) left by the previous experiences. Thus, Mahāyāna opposes the common conception about beings, which identifies them with a certain substratum, replacing it with a new doctrine which presents the beings as chains of appearances determined by the karmic traces.

“There is nobody that exists in this world (*loka*) and goes (*gam*) to the other world (*paraloka*) when passing beyond (*saṃkram*) death (*mṛtu*), but the actions (*karma*), whenever done, don’t get annihilated (*naś*), produce their [bad or good] effects (*phalu*) and transmigrate (*saṃsr*).⁷¹

“Mahāmati, here, there is nobody in bondage (*badh*) and nobody liberating (*muc*), but only that bondage (*bandha*) and liberation (*mokṣa*) are discriminated (*prajñā*) by those whose understanding (*buddhi*) is affected by error (*vitathapatitā*).⁷²

Within the series (*santāna*) of factors which constitute a person there are both karmic seeds, which ensure the continuity of bondage, and pure seeds (*śuddhabīja*), which constitute “influences” (*niṣyanda*) of the ultimate reality; this kind of seeds make the series tend to its own annihilation, to liberation. Liberation and bondage are not so much consequences of a personal attitude, of a personal decision, but rather the effects of the mere presence or absence of a certain type of factors, without the involvement of any personal substratum or personal activity. As it is frequently stated in the Hīnayāna canon, “there is only suffering, not the one who suffers”. The conversion to Mahāyāna is not, as it might seem, the act of a conscious soul which consigns to certain truths, but, simply, the orientation of a series of factors towards its own annihilation.

Nothing gets purified in the process of liberation; the process of liberation does not consist in purifying a subject representing the stable substratum of this

⁷¹ "na ca asmi loki mṛtu kaści [naro] paraloka saṃkramati gacchati vā /
na ca karma naśyati kadāci kṛtaṃ phalu deti [kṛṣṇaśubha] saṃsarato //"

Maitreya-nātha – Bhavasamkrāntiṭīkā, citānd Samādhirāja-sūtra; Śāstri, op.cit., p. 32.

⁷² "nātra kaścinnmahāmate badhyate naca mucyate, anyatra vitathapatitayā buddhyā
bandhamokṣau prajñāyete //"

Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra, chapter III, Nanjio, op.cit., p.162.

process, but everything is reduced to a succession of factors, less and less accentuated in their afflicted character.

"41. Since what is afflicted (*kliṣṭa*) is absolutely (*atyantāt*) [afflicted] and what is pure (*śuddha*) is of a translucent nature (*prakṛtibhāsvara*), nothing gets purified (*śudh*) by anything."⁷³

"Since the benefic (*kuśala*) or the non-benefic (*akuśala*) [states] of consciousness (*citta*) appear one by one (*ekacaratva*), there is no contact with another [state] of consciousness, through their union (*yoga*) or conjunction (*abhisamdhāna*)."⁷⁴

"All factors, pure (*vaiyavadānika*) or afflicted (*sāṃkleśika*), are devoid of movement (*āniñjya*), devoid of personhood (*nihpudgala*). That's why I state that they are totally devoid of action (*kriyārahita*). The afflicted factors are not now afflicted and later on purified; the pure factors are not now pure and later on unpurified. But common immature people (*bālaprthagjana*), being affected by malefic, adhere to erroneous beliefs, that involve the imagined concepts of an own-nature of things and persons. They adhere to concepts such as «I», «mine» etc...."⁷⁵

The possibility of the individual to liberate forever

This ontological status of the person, of the individual self, allows the fulfillment of the soteriological ideal of Vijñānavāda, which is the permanent extinction of the entire suffering generated by the erroneous identification with the person, even if Vijñānavāda necessarily associates the absolute with a certain tendency towards the manifestation, towards the emanation of the causal flow (*pratītyasamutpāda*). Vijñānavāda, unlike other absolutist philosophical currents, does not dissociate the absolute from all the forms of manifestation, but associates the absolute reality with the causal flow, with the dependant nature (*paratantrasvabhāva*). However, this does not make liberation from the individual bondage impossible because the individual is something else than the causal flow, something else than the dependant nature. Individual identity is related to the constructed nature (*parikalpitasvabhāva*), which is absolutely unreal (*atyanta abhāva*) and thus the necessary association between the ultimate reality and the

⁷³ "41. yat kliṣṭaṃ tad ihātyantāc chuddhaṃ prakṛtibhāsvaram / na ceha śudhyate kaścit kutaścid vāpi śudhyate //"

Asaṅga – *Paramārtha-gāthā*, 41, Schmithausen, *op.cit.*, p.232, vol. I, Appendix II.

⁷⁴ "kuśalākuśalayościttayorekacaratvād dvitīyacittānabhisamdhānayogena paramuṣprativēdhyam //"

Asaṅga – *Uttaratantravyākhyā*, ad. I.15, E.H. Johnston (ed.), E. Obermiller (tr.), *The Sublime Science of Maitreya*, Sri Satguru Publications, Delhi, 1991, p.139.

⁷⁵ *Samdhinirmocana-sūtra*, X.8, Lamotte, *op.cit.* 1935, p.267.

causal flow (the dependant nature), does not imply any necessary association between the ultimate reality and the illusion of individuality.

The individual represents only the error, the illusion of the unity of a certain set of factors; even if the factors themselves represent the dependant nature (*paratantrasvabhāva*), to which Vijñānavāda attributes a certain degree of reality, the experience of their unity in terms of “person” (*pudgala*), “individual self” (*ātman*), is a pure illusion, an absolute error, whose permanent annihilation raises no ontological problems.

For that matter, final liberation of the individual is possible even if the potentiality for the manifestation of the causal flow is always present. As the human individuality represents nothing else but a compositum of factors gathered together in an illusory unity, individual liberation is nothing else but simply the annihilation of the illusion of individual unity superimposed upon the factors. Individual liberation is irreversible (*avivartya*, *avaivartika*) because when this illusion of individual unity disappears, it does so completely and leaves nothing behind, nothing on the basis of which a new state of bondage may be revived.

It is true that the absolute reality which represents the foundation of the individuality remains and, in addition, the potentiality for the causal flow to manifest always exists at its level, but Vijñānavāda insists upon the fact that these levels of reality, the ultimate reality and the causal flow, are entirely free of everything that represents individuality. The individual is an illusion and when it disappears, everything related to his individuality is totally annihilated. When the individual series is interrupted, it can no longer restart because it was nothing more than an illusion of unity and continuity.

Even if other individuals are born, they simply represent other individualities. Any individual, when annihilated, is annihilated for good; therefore, the final liberation of any individual, which is the soteriological ideal of Vijñānavāda, can be achieved.

The experience of the mind as the “fundamental error” (*viparyāsamūla*) which affects the entire human being

The state of ignorance produced by the mind also affects the operational consciousnesses which are all born at the level of the individuality created through the activity of the mind. As they are produced subsequent to the mind, they share the ignorant condition created by the latter. This explains the ignorant condition of the entire human experience. The activity of the mind creates the “fundamental error” (*viparyāsamūla*), the “fundamental ignorance”, its veiling activity which engenders that background ignorance affecting the human being during all his experiences. The absence of the absolute knowledge in case of the human beings is

explained precisely by the fact that their experience is constituted on the basis of the experience of the mind.

“Here, ignorance (*avidyā*), the fundamental error (*viparyāsamūla*) [is produced]. The error is the view of the reality of the body (*satkāyadr̥ṣṭi*)”⁷⁶

“The state of transposed substance that has the obscuring indeterminate nature is the connection between the sentience and the basis. According with conditions and attached to self, its mode of knowledge is fallacy. Day and night it reduces sentient beings to a state of confusion.”⁷⁷

The authors of Vijñānavāda did formulate an argument in favour of the existence of the mind on the basis of the ignorant nature of human experience. Even when a being does not have any kind of determined experiences, when his operational consciousnesses are not active, he is still affected by a state of “pure ignorance”, of “solitary ignorance” (*avidyā āveṇikī*), a state where absolute knowledge is missing. Given the absence of the experience of the operational consciousnesses, only another form of consciousness, distinct from the operational consciousnesses, which exists even when they are absent, may explain the production of this ignorant condition. Hence, the authors of Vijñānavāda bestow to the mind this role of veiling, of covering (*nivṛta*) the ultimate reality. The mind produces that condition of “pure ignorance”, of “solitary ignorance” (*avidyā āveṇikī*), a purely negative state which consists only of the absence of absolute knowledge.

“If the existence of the afflicted mind (*manas*) is denied, there could be no solitary ignorance. The characteristics (*lakṣaṇa*) of the solitary ignorance are a state of confusion (*moha*) that prevents (*āvṛṇoti*) the apparition of the knowledge of the ultimate reality (*tattvajñāna*).”⁷⁸

“..... the ignorance labeled «solitary» (*āveṇikī*) produces the confusion (*moha*) regarding the absence of a self (*nairātmya*), obstructs the ultimate reality (*bhūtatathatā*), obstructs the eye of the ultimate knowledge (*āryaprajñācakṣus*).”⁷⁹

4. The afflicted nature (*kliṣṭa*) of the experience of the mind

The entrapping of the individual being in his own experience

The afflicted, bonded condition is constituted on the basis of the state of ignorance (*avidyā*, *ajñāna*) or, better said, of error (*viparyāsa*) projected by the

⁷⁶ “*tatra viparyāsamūlam avidyā / viparyāsaḥ satkāyadr̥ṣṭir....*”

Yogācārabhūmi, 199, 16f, Schmithausen, *op.cit.*, p.449.

⁷⁷ Hiuan-Tsang – *Pa-shih kuei-chu sung*, R. Epstein, “Verses Delineating the Eight Consciousnesses”, *Vajra Bodhi Sea*, dec.1997-nov.1998, p.33,36.

⁷⁸ Asvabhāva – *Upanibandhana*, ad. *Mahāyānasamgraha*, I.7, Lamotte, *op.cit.* 1973, p.17.

⁷⁹ Hiuan-Tsang – *Ch’eng-wei-shih-lun*, Poussin, *op.cit.* 1928, p.277.

mind (*manas*). Afflictions (*kleśa*) seem to be as inherent to the mind as ignorance; sometimes, Vijñānavāda texts, refer to the mind not as much by the simple term “*manas*”, but by the compound “*kliṣṭa manas*” (“the afflicted mind”).⁸⁰

“39. Always (*sadā*), the afflicted mind (*kliṣṭamanas*) is born (*utpanna*) and ceases (*niruddha*) along (*saha*) with the afflictions (*kleśa*).”⁸¹

The apparition of bondage (*saṃsāra*), of the afflicted condition (*kliṣṭa*), is due to ignorance, by means of which the own nature of the subject is identified somewhere where it does not really exist. The own nature of the subject, his substantiality, is identical with the ultimate reality but the mind illusorily transfers this own nature to the sphere of the fleeting factors. Due to the veil of ignorance, the own nature of the subject does not appear to him as the ultimate and unchanging reality, but as a sum of fleeting factors. Once his own nature has been identified within the fleeting experience, this experience stops being only experience and illusorily becomes his own nature. Or, to put it more precisely, the subject illusorily transfers his own nature somewhere in the fleeting sphere of experience and starts getting involved in this experience. Representing his own nature, the subject stops being indifferent to experience and thus he gets existentially involved in experience. He is no longer indifferent to the transformations of the experience, which are no longer mere experiences, but appear as alterations of his own nature. The permanent fluctuation of the factors, the permanent risk that any set of factors, including the ones involved in his own identity, might get annihilated become essential experiences for the subject, and not only phenomena, not only appearances which do not affect his nature. This way, the subject undergoes affliction (*kleśa*), gets entrapped in his own experience. The anxiety and the suffering that characterize human existence are due to this erroneous identification of the human nature with the illusory identity appropriated by the mind.

The afflicted condition of the consciousness is much accentuated by the transient, dynamic nature of the entire experience. Since no state persists, the effort of searching and settling the elements favorable for the self and even the effort of maintaining this self, of preventing it from being destroyed, is a perpetual one. This

⁸⁰ The term “*kleśa*”, translated here as “affliction”, was translated in Tibetan and in Chinese in more suggestive ways than the Sanskrit original. The Tibetan translators interpreted it as “wrapping”, “bondage”, and it was similarly translated into Chinese as well. See Tom Johannes Frank Tillemans, *Materials for the study of Aryadeva, Dharmapala and Candrakīrti : the Catuhsataka of Aryadeva, chapters XII and XIII, with the commentaries of Dharmapala and Candrakīrti*, Universite de Lausanne, 1990, p.207 (note 32)!

For the afflicting role of the mind (*manas*), see Waldron, *op.cit.*, pp.148-149!

⁸¹ “39. *sahotpannaniruddhaṃ hi kleśaiḥ kliṣṭam manas sadā* /”
Paramārtha-gāthā, 39, Schmithausen, *op.cit.*, p.232, vol.I, ap. II.

way, the individual consciousness experiences a perpetual agitation which alters the state of tranquility, peace (*śānta*, *śama*), which characterizes his essential condition.

The elevated state of consciousness (*cittonnati*), the pride (*māna*) whose object is the self (*ātman*)

The attitude of the subject towards those components of the experience that have been assumed as his own self (*ātman*) changes and becomes one of “elevation” (*unnati*), of “pride” (*māna*). The terms most frequently used to refer to this attitude are “*unnati*” (“elevation”) or “*cittonnati*” (“elevation of consciousness”); some texts prefer the use of “*māna*” – “pride”, “vanity”, “consideration”. The attitude meant by these terms is that of a special importance paid to certain components of experience, due to the new status that has been ascribed to them. This status is one of “self” (*ātman*), of “belonging to self” (*ātmīya*).

The term “*māna*” (“pride”, “vanity”, “consideration”) renders suggestively enough the attitude towards those components of experience that have been identified as the own self. Pride involves not only an acceptance of its object, but also its exultation, a total dedication to it, a total dependency on it; analogously, the subject conforms to his assumed self, enters a dependency relationship with what has been identified as his own self. The object of pride gets a maximum degree of reality and importance for the subject experiencing it and so does the object identified as “self” (*ātman*).

“What is pride (*māna*)? It is an elevation (*unnati*) of the consciousness (*citta*) through [its] establishment (*sannīśraya*) in the view of the reality of the body (*satkāyadr̥ṣṭi*).”⁸²

Another term frequently met in Vijñānavāda texts is “*asmimāna*”, a compound made of the 1st person singular of the verb “to be” (*as*) and “*māna*” (“pride”, “vanity”, “consideration”). This compound could be translated by “the pride that I am”, “the pride of being I” and suggests the idea of attachment to a certain self identity, to that identity which constitutes the “I” and the consideration shown for this identity.

“The elevation of the consciousness (*cittasyonnati*) through the attachment (*abhiniveśa*) to the self (*ātman*) and to the characteristics of the self (*ātmīya*) [perceived] within the five appropriated aggregates (*upādānaskandha*) which are

⁸² “*mānaḥ katamaḥ / satkāyadr̥ṣṭisannīśrayeṇa cittasyonnatiḥ*”

Asaṅga – *Abhidharmasamuccaya*, 7,4, Schmithausen, *op.cit.*, p.438.

devoid of self and of those characteristic to the self, this is «the pride that I am» (*asmimāna*).⁸³

“There being confusion (*sammūḍha*) regarding the nature (*svarūpa*) of the storehouse consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*), the view of the self (*ātmadr̥ṣṭi*) regarding the storehouse consciousness is born (*utpad*). Due to the view of the self (*ātmadarśana*) and of the others [takes place] the elevation (*unnati*) of the consciousness (*citta*); this is «the pride that I am» (*asmimāna*). When these three exist, the attachment (*abhiśvaṅga*) to the elements (*vastu*) considered as the self (*ātmābhimata*) represents «the attachment to the self» (*ātmasneha*).⁸⁴

“Hence, it is considered (*man*) that, superimposing (*adhyāropya*) the existence (*bhāva*) of the self (*ātman*) and of those characteristic to the self (*ātmīya*) upon the aggregates (*skandha*) [and claiming] «I am this (*ayam aham*)», «this is mine (*idaṃ mama*)», through these particular ways (*viśeṣa*), the individual self (*ātman*) is raised (*unnam*) above (*adhika*) the others (*anya*).⁸⁵

This “raising of the individual self beyond the others” (*ātmānam.....unnamayati anyebhyo 'dhikam*) represents the premises on the basis of which the afflicted condition (*kleśa*) appears.⁸⁶ Once certain components of experience have a special status, a favored status, the subject starts searching for them and tries to preserve them. He will try to ensure the persistence of his nature, of his self (*ātman*) and of whatever belongs to this self (*ātmīya*), of whatever favors this self. The permanent effort to find and perpetuate these elements represents the afflicted condition (*kleśa*).⁸⁷

⁸³ “*pañcasūpādānaskandheṣvātmātmīyarahiteṣvātmātmīyābhiniveśādyā cittasyonnatih so 'smimānaḥ* /”

Sthiramati – *Triṃśikābhāṣya*, ad.11, Chatterjee, *op.cit.* 1980, p.75.

⁸⁴ “*tatrālayavijñānasvarūpe sammūḍhaḥ sannālayavijñāne ātmadr̥ṣṭimutpādayati / ātmadarśanādyā cittasyonnatih so 'smimānaḥ / etasmintraye sati ātmābhimate vastuni yo 'bhiśvaṅgaḥ sa ātmasnehaḥ* /”

Sthiramati – *Triṃśikābhāṣya*, ad. 6cd, Chatterjee, *op.cit.* 1980, pp.54-55.

⁸⁵ “*tathā hyātmātmīyabhāvaṃ skandheṣvādhyāropyāyamahamidaṃ mametyātmānam tena tena viśeṣeṇonnamayati anyebhyo 'dhikam manyate* /”

Sthiramati – *Triṃśikābhāṣya*, ad. 11, Chatterjee, *op.cit.* 1980, p.74.

⁸⁶ A long discussion on the afflictions (*kleśa* - which are 6) and upon the minor afflictions (*upakleśa* - which are 20) in Chatterjee, *op.cit.* 1999, pp.118-122. See also Har Dayal, *op.cit.*, p.104!

For a study on the various ways of classifying afflictions (*kleśa*) and minor afflictions (*upakleśa*) in various Buddhist texts, see Potter, *op.cit.*, pp.38-39!

⁸⁷ For a discussion on the nature of afflictions (*kleśa*), according to the *Abhidharmakośa*, see Chaudhury, *op.cit.*, p.106!

A study of the term “*kleśa*” and of the ways in which the term was translated in Tibetan and Chinese, in Anacker, *op.cit.*, pp.146-147. Anacker also offers a number of arguments in favour of translating the term by “afflicted”, “distressed”, “troubled”, and not by “defilement”, as it is usually done.

The tendency towards the proliferation of the individual self (*sāsrava*)

All this process implies a metaphysical presupposition which the Buddhist texts do not generally give many details about. The presupposition is about a certain attachment, a certain tendency of preserving its own essence, its own nature, tendency which would characterize any form of existence. Once the own nature has been identified within the transient experience, this tendency manifests very clearly as the effort of perpetuating the own self. In case of the ultimate reality this tendency loses itself in the unity of the absolute, which due to its substantial reality, has this tendency always fulfilled. At this level it does not appear anymore, it does not manifest in any way precisely because it is always fulfilled through the substantial being of the ultimate reality. The ultimate reality is its own essential nature and consequently has this tendency naturally fulfilled.

However, as soon as the own nature of a being has been identified within the sphere of transient phenomena, this tendency becomes manifest as the effort the beings feels compelled to make in order to preserve his own nature. The survival instinct, the attachment to life (*abhiniveśa*) from Yoga, would be nothing else but the biological hypostasis of this metaphysical tendency.

Buddhism designates this attitude, this tendency, by means of the term "*sāsrava*"; "*sa*" means "with", "accompanied/characterized by", and "*āsrava*" derives from the verbal root "*ā-sru*" - "to flow", "to leak".⁸⁸ Literally, "*sāsrava*" designates something that has the tendency of flowing, leaking, of manifesting itself in a continuous flow. For the purpose of the present paper, we decided to translate "*sāsrava*" by "characterized by the tendency towards proliferation". The meaning of this term, in Buddhism, is that of a tendency towards maintaining its continuity, towards a continuous perpetuation. One can use "*sāsrava*" to designate something that not only exists at this moment but, more than this, something that has the tendency of "flowing" towards the future, of perpetuating its existence beyond the present moment.

The human being can be labeled as "*sāsrava*" because the existence of the human individual is not characterized simply by assuming a certain present condition, but is equally characterized by the tendency of perpetuating this individual condition. The instinct of survival and the attachment to his own person are ways in which this tendency towards proliferation (*āsrava*) manifests itself. Although Vijñānavāda texts do not discuss this aspect, the instinct of preserving the species could be also considered as a way the tendency towards proliferation manifests.

⁸⁸ See Monier Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1997, p.162, col.1.; Dănilă Incze, *Dicționar sanskrit-român. Rădăcini verbale. Forme și sensuri*, Editura Universității București, 1995, p.309.

The presence of this tendency bonds the consciousness as a result of its association with the compulsion of preserving that sphere of experience which is assumed as its own self⁸⁹. The ultimate reality is labeled in the Buddhist texts as "*anāsrava*", as "lacking the tendency towards proliferation", because its stable, immutable condition excludes the presence of any unfulfilled tendency that needs to be fulfilled at its level; the proliferation of its nature is accomplished naturally, due to its substantial being. Given the fact that the presence of the tendency towards proliferation bonds as well as the fact that the ultimate reality is not characterized by this tendency, the Buddhist texts sometimes assimilate the *sāsrava* - *anāsrava* opposition with that between impure and pure.

The afflicted individual condition characterized by desire (*trṣṇā*)

The afflicted condition is characterized first of all by "desire", by "thirst" (*trṣṇā*); this is nothing else but the longing of the subject towards those experiences that are favorable to his self, to the assumed own nature. The object of desire is situated at the level of the universal experience, at the level of the experience of the storehouse consciousness. Thus, the subjects comes to experience a "thirst for the storehouse consciousness" (*ālayatrṣṇā*)⁹⁰. Due to the existence of desire, the storehouse consciousness stops representing only experience, only phenomenon. When the self identity is erroneously transferred to the level of experience, experience stops being only a non-essential phenomenon.

The existence of desire (*kāma*), of the thirst whose object is the storehouse consciousness (*ālayatrṣṇā*), afflicts (*kliś*) the subject, entraps him in the experience which has become as real as his being.

The thirst for the storehouse consciousness, for those states that are favorable, that are in conformity with the assumed individual self, is never satisfied due to the momentary (*kṣaṇika*), transient nature of experience which denies persistence to any of its states. This is how one comes to experience suffering (*duḥkha*) which, according to Buddhism, is not accidental, but rather belongs to the very nature of experience. Even from its incipient forms, Buddhism equated experience and suffering, the first noble truth of Buddhism (*āryasatya*) stating precisely that "life is suffering" (*jīvaṃ duḥkham*).

⁸⁹ For a discussion regarding to the absence of the tendency towards proliferation (*anāsrava*), respectively its presence (*sāsrava*), according to *Abhidharmakośa*, see Chaudhury, *op.cit.*, pp.70-71!

⁹⁰ *Śrāvakaḥmūlī*, 16, 15-18, apud. Schmithausen, *op.cit.*, p.165.

The appropriation of an individual identity as the main condition for the apparition of suffering

What Vijñānavāda brings new into the matter is that it offers a precise presentation of the stages of the process of the apparition of suffering, presentation which highlights the decisive importance of the appropriating function of the mind.

“And it was said⁹¹: «Due to these four – namely, ignorance (*avidyā*), the view of the self (*ātma-drṣṭi*), the pride that I am (*asmimāna*) and thirst (*trṣṇā*) – the mind (*manas*), whose characteristic (*lakṣaṇa*) is mentation (*mananā*), gets afflicted (*saṃkliś*). The mind is always afflicted (*kliṣṭa*), has as [its] characteristic (*nimitta*) the error (*viparyāsa*) and is always the cause (*kāraṇa*) of the sense of the ego (*ahaṃkāra*) involved in the beneficial (*kuśala*) or indeterminate (*avyākṛta*) [states of] consciousness (*citta*).»”⁹²

Buddhism had suggested a gradual process of the appearance of suffering even from its early phases. This process was expressed by the series of the dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*). Vijñānavāda neither elaborates a theory that would become as consecrated as the theory of the dependent origination, nor delineates very precisely the stages of the appearance of suffering. However, one can identify, as it results from the fragment of Sthiramati's *Triṃśikābhāṣya* previously quoted, a certain order within this process as follows: the appearance of ignorance (*avidyā*) regarding the real self, the own nature, the perception of the self as an individual self (*ātma-drṣṭi*), the elevated state of consciousness (*cittotonṇati*) or the pride of being I (*asmimāna*), the appearance of afflictions (*kleśa*), of thirst (*trṣṇā*), all of these ending with the appearance of suffering (*duḥkha*).

Moreover, Vijñānavāda explicitly indicates the connection between affliction, suffering, and the view of the individual self (*ātma-drṣṭi*) or, using a terminology specific to Vijñānavāda, the perception of the reality of the body (*satkāyadrṣṭi*)⁹³.

An important element of novelty involved by the theory regarding the appearance of suffering elaborated by the authors of Vijñānavāda is the mention that not any form of experience is necessarily accompanied by suffering, but only

⁹¹ Sthiramati quotes, without explicitly mentioning it, *Yogācārabhūmi*, 11,6f. According to Schmithausen, *op.cit.*, p.442.

⁹² “āha ca avidyayā cātma-drṣṭyā cāsmimānena trṣṇayā /
ebhiścaturbhiḥ saṃkliṣṭaṃ mananālakṣaṇam manaḥ //
viparyāsanimittaṃ tu manaḥ kliṣṭam sadaiva yat /
kuśalāvyākṛte citte sadāhaṃkāra-kāraṇam //”

Sthiramati – *Triṃśikābhāṣya*, ad. 6cd, Chatterjee, *op.cit.*, pp.54-55.

⁹³ For the primordial role that the attachment to self has in the apparition of bondage, see Matics, *op.cit.*, p.91!

the one which involves appropriation (*upādāna*), which involves the afflicting function of the mind (*manas*). Thus, the experience of the storehouse consciousness, being devoid of appropriation, is characterized by the sensation (*vedanā*) of indifference (*upekṣā*).

“The view of the reality of the body (*satkāyadrṣṭi*) has as [its] characteristic (*lakṣaṇa*) the affliction (*kleśa*), the affliction (*saṃkleśa*) of «I» (*aham*) and «mine» (*mama*).”⁹⁴

“Therefore, passion (*rāga*) and the other afflictions (*kleśa*) are born (*prabhū*) from the view of the self (*ātmadṛṣṭi*).”⁹⁵

The correlation between suffering (*duḥkha*) and the individual self (*ātman*) has an important soteriological consequence, namely that the understanding of the illusory, erroneous nature of the individual self is equivalent to the understanding of the unreality of suffering and, through this, to its annihilation.

“The one in suffering (*duḥkhita*) doesn’t exist (*as*) due to the non-existence (*asatva*) of the self (*ātman*) which is associated with suffering (*duḥkhayukta*).”⁹⁶

5. The states of consciousness (*caitta*) associated with the mind

The experience of the mind as pure affliction (*kleśa*)

The only experience that the Vijñānavāda texts associate with the mind is that of affliction (*kleśa*). The mind represents pure affliction and not the afflicted experience of something. At the level of the individual experience, the pure experience of the mind, unassociated with other types of experience, can be hardly found. The experience of the mind is to be found within any type of experience whose subject is an individual being; however, it cannot be found in a pure state but only as the affliction which affects the entire experience. Affliction can be found only at the level of afflicted experience and not in itself. The individual experience is a mixture between the empirical experience of the six operational consciousnesses (the sensorial material produced by the five sensorial consciousnesses and its conceptual form taken at the level of the mental consciousness) and the experience of affliction produced at the level of the mind. These types of experience cannot be disassociated, separated, but they always exist together at the level of any human experience. The five sensorial consciousnesses

⁹⁴ “*satkāyadrṣṭikleśalakṣaṇo hyeṣa saṃkleśo yaduta aham mameti* /”

Vasubandhu – *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkārabhāṣya*, ad. XVIII.103, Limaye, *op.cit.*, p.448.

⁹⁵ “*iathā hyātmadrṣṭiprabhavā rāgādayaḥ kleśāḥ*”

Sthiramati – *Triṃśikābhāṣya*, înainte de 1, Chatterjee, *op.cit.*, p.27.

⁹⁶ “*na duḥkhito duḥkhayuktasyātmano 'satvāt* /”

Vasubandhu – *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkārabhāṣya*, ad. VI.4, Limaye, *op.cit.*, p.70.

produce the brute sensorial material which will be conceptually framed by the mental consciousness (*manovijñāna*), and this experience will undergo affliction through the activity of the mind (*manas*).

To afflict experience means to ascribe value connotations to it, to determine it (*vyākṛ*) from the point of view of its subjective value, to make an object of desire (*trṣṇā*) or of aversion (*dveṣa*) out of it. All these are the results of the activity of the mind because they require an individual self in relation to which they are operated. Only when experience is considered from the perspective of an individual self, it can acquire value connotations, can be turned into an object of desire or aversion.

“The mind is the support of affliction and purification (*saṃkleśavyavadānāśraya*), because affliction and purification depend on it.”⁹⁷

Because it wraps the subject in ignorance (*avidyā*), because it leads him into the error (*viparyāsa*) of perceiving the reality of the body (*satkāyadrṣṭi*), because it subjects him to affliction (*kleśa*), the mind is associated with an obstructed (*nivṛta*) type of experience. The obstructed nature can be interpreted as referring both to the “covering” (this is one of the meanings of “*nivṛta*”) of the ultimate reality, and to the “obstruction” (another possible meaning of “*nivṛta*”) of the mystical path (*āryamārga*) that leads to the ultimate reality.

The appropriating experience (*upādāna*) of the mind as a standard for value determination (*vyākṛta*) and for sensorial evaluation (*vedanā*)

The mind creates the self which is the instrument, the standard, the measure in relation to which experience is determined from the point of view of its value (*vyākṛta*), is assessed as pleasant (*sukha*) or painful (*duḥkha*), but mind itself lacks value determinations (*avyākṛta*), and the sensation (*vedanā*) associated with it is neither pleasure, nor pain but indifference (*upekṣā*). Experience is evaluated both from a moral point of view and from the point of view of its sensation, depending on the way it conforms with the tendencies of the individual self (*ātman*) appropriated by the mind. Such an evaluation requires an individual self on the basis of which to be performed and precisely due to this reason the individual ego itself, the standard, cannot be subjected to this kind of evaluation.

“There, [in case of mind], the sensation (*vedanā*) is only that of indifference (*upekṣā*); [the mind] is obstructed (*nivṛta*) and indeterminate (*avyākṛta*).”⁹⁸

Hiuan-Tsang, associating the sensations of pleasure (*sukha*) and of pain (*duḥkha*) with the modifications, the alterations (*vikāra*) of experience, alterations which can be favorable or unfavorable to the experiencing individual self, shows

⁹⁷ Hiuan-Tsang – *Ch’eng-wei-shih-lun*, Poussin, *op.cit.* 1928, pp.239-240.

⁹⁸ “*tatropekṣaiva vedanā anivṛtāvyākṛtaṃ ca*”

Stthiramati – *Triṃśikābhāṣya*, ad. 14, Chatterjee, *op.cit.* 1980, p.93.

that the mind cannot be associated with another sensation but that of indifference (*upekṣā*), because the object of the mind is only the individual self, not the transformations of experience having this self as a subject.

“The mind functions continuously, homogenously, having as its object the inner self (*ātman*) devoid of transformations; therefore, it cannot be associated with sensations (*vedanā*) that involve alteration (*vikāra*).”⁹⁹

Hiuan-Tsang also mentions two theories referring to the type of sensation associated with the mind, but they seem to be only some accidental deviations, not very well founded, from the consecrated doctrine of Vijñānavāda.

The four “fundamental afflictions” (*mūlakleśa*) associated with the mind

Being strictly associated with the affliction, the mind is related to a relatively small number of states of consciousness (*caitta*). It is true that on the basis of the attachment to self produced by the mind quite a large number of afflicted attitudes are engendered, but these require also the activity of the mental consciousness and that of the operational consciousnesses; therefore, they do not represent experiences directly produced by the mind. Even if it creates the possibility for numerous types of afflictions (*kleśa*) to appear, the mind is intrinsically associated only with those afflictions which consist strictly of the attachment to self and not with those consisting in the evaluation of the experience on the basis of this attachment¹⁰⁰.

Vijñānavāda texts consider this attachment to the self from four perspectives and, consequently, ascribe four afflictions to the mind. These are called “the fundamental afflictions” (*mūlakleśa*), because they represent the basis of all other afflictions¹⁰¹. Their names vary from text to text but they are always four. Nevertheless, this number may be somehow random and not based on philosophical grounds because, essentially, it is the same attitude looked upon from four different perspectives.

Triṃśikā calls these four afflictions associated with the mind as follows: “the view of the self” (*ātmadrṣṭi*), “the confusion of to self” (*ātmamoha*), “the pride of the self” (*ātmamāna*) and “the attachment to self” (*ātmāsneha*).

“6. It always exists along (*sahita*) with the four afflictions (*kleśa*) known as «the view of the self» (*ātmadrṣṭi*), «the confusion of the self» (*ātmamoha*), «the pride of the self» (*ātmamāna*) and «the attachment to the self» (*ātmāsneha*). It is obstructed (*nivṛta*) and indeterminate (*avyākṛta*).”¹⁰²

⁹⁹ Hiuan-Tsang – *Ch’eng-wei-shih-lun*, Poussin, *op.cit.* 1928, p.264.

¹⁰⁰ For a discussion upon the types of experience associated with the mind, upon the forms the attachment to self may take, see Waldron, *op.cit.*, p.121!

¹⁰¹ See Chatterjee, *op.cit.* 1999, p.103!

¹⁰² “6. *kleśaiścaturbhiḥ sahitaṃ nivṛtāvyākṛtaiḥ sadā / ātmadrṣṭyātmamohātmamānātmāsnehasaṃjñitaiḥ //*”
Vasubandhu – *Triṃśikā*, 6, Anacker, *op.cit.*, p.422.

There is however little difference among these four perturbations because each one of them implies the others, hence their individual identity counting less; what is really important are they as a totality, their assembly, because the individual experience is afflicted by their cumulated activity.

“Perceiving (*darśana*) a self (*ātman*) in the appropriated aggregates (*upādānaskandha*) is «the view of the self» (*ātmadr̥ṣṭi*), is «the view of the reality of the body» (*satkāyadr̥ṣṭi*) – this is the meaning (*artha*). «Confusion» (*moha*) means ignorance (*ajñāna*). The ignorance regarding the self (*ātman*) is «the confusion of the self» (*ātmamoha*). The pride (*māna*) whose object (*viṣaya*) is the self is «the pride of the self» (*ātmamāna*), «the pride that I am» (*asmimāna*) – this is the meaning. «The attachment (*sneha*) to the self» is the love for the self (*ātmaprema*) – this is the meaning.”¹⁰³

Explaining the four fundamental afflictions (*mūlakleśa*)

The explicit definitions of the four afflictions as well as their mention under different names in other texts suggest the fact that they consist of the following four aspects.

The most basic of all seems to be the ignorance, the confusion of the self (*ātmamoha*) and the erroneous view of the self (*ātmadr̥ṣṭi*) or, more simply, ignorance, non-knowledge (*ajñāna*, *avidyā*) and error (*viparyāsa*). Then, there would be the more active aspects of the experience of the mind, namely the pride of the self (*ātmamāna*) or the elevated state of consciousness (*cittonnati*) and the attachment to the self (*ātmāsneha*) or the desire, the thirst (*tr̥ṣṇā*).

“Its associated [mental factors] are contact (*sparśa*) and the other four [omnipresent factors], along with attachment, ignorance, pride and opinion about self: in total nine.”¹⁰⁴

Sthiramati, immediately after defining the four fundamental afflictions, offers a presentation in stages of the process through which, as a result of the activity of the mind, the afflicted condition is produced¹⁰⁵. Four stages of this process are indicated and, even if they are not called exactly as the four

¹⁰³ “*upādānaskandheṣvātmēti darśanamātmadr̥ṣṭiḥ satkāyadr̥ṣṭirityarthaḥ / moho 'jñānam / ātmanyajñānamātmamohaḥ / ātmaviṣaye māna ātmamāno 'smimāna ityarthaḥ / ātmani sneha ātmapremetyarthaḥ /*”

Sthiramati – *Triṃśikābhāṣya*, ad.6, Chatterjee, *op.cit.* 1980, p.54.

See the definitions of the four fundamental afflictions from Hiuan-Tsang – *Ch'eng-wei-shih-lun*, Poussin, *op.cit.* 1928, p.255; the text associates “the pride of the self” (*ātmamāna*) with “the elevated state of consciousness” (*cittonnati*).

¹⁰⁴ Tsong-Khapa – *Yid dang kun gzhi dka'ba'i gnas rgya cher'grel pa legs par bshad pa'rgya mtsho*, Sparham, *op.cit.*, p.109.

¹⁰⁵ Sthiramati – *Triṃśikābhāṣya*, ad. 6 cd, Chatterjee, *op.cit.* 1980, pp.54-55.

fundamental afflictions, both their description and the terms of these descriptions allow a correlation between each stage with one of the fundamental afflictions.

“There being confusion (*sammūḍha*) regarding the nature (*svarūpa*) of the storehouse consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*), the view of the self (*ātmadr̥ṣṭi*) regarding the storehouse consciousness is born (*utpad*). Due to the view of the self (*ātmadarśana*) and of the others [takes place] the elevation (*unnati*) of the consciousness (*citta*); this is «the pride that I am» (*asmimāna*). When these three exist, the attachment (*abhiśvaṅga*) to the elements (*vastu*) considered as the self (*ātmābhimata*) represents «the attachment to the self» (*ātmāsneha*).”¹⁰⁶

Thus, the first stage, the existence of the confusion regarding the nature of the storehouse consciousness (*ālayavijñānasvarūpa sammūḍha*) may be correlated, both ideologically and terminologically, with the “confusion of the self” (*ātmamoha*). Then comes the stage of the “view of the self” (*ātmadr̥ṣṭi*, *ātmadarśana*), in whose case the correlation with the affliction bearing the same name is obvious. Moreover, Sthiramati himself equals the third stage, the “elevation of consciousness” (*cittasyonnati*), with the “pride of I am” (*asmimāna*), which also implies an equivalence with the “pride of the self” (*ātmamāna*). The situation is similar in case of the last stage, where Sthiramati himself equates the attachment (*abhiśvaṅga*) with the “attachment to the self” (*ātmāsneha*).

Further on, Sthiramati offers a quotation from *Yogācārabhūmi* which clearly and briefly presents also four stages of the process of affliction, stages which can be easily matched with the previously mentioned stages and, in doing so, with the four fundamental afflictions (*mūlakleśa*). In the paragraph quoted from *Yogācārabhūmi* the four stages are mentioned as the “ignorance” (*avidyā*), the “view of the self” (*ātmadr̥ṣṭi*), the “pride of I am” (*asmimāna*) and the “thirst” (*tr̥ṣṇā*).

“And it was said¹⁰⁷: «Due to these four – namely, ignorance (*avidyā*), the view of the self (*ātmadr̥ṣṭi*), the pride that I am (*asmimāna*) and thirst (*tr̥ṣṇā*) – the mind (*manas*), whose characteristic (*lakṣaṇa*) is mentation (*mananā*), gets afflicted (*saṃkliś*).”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ “*tatrālayavijñānasvarūpe sammūḍhaḥ sannālayavijñāne ātmadr̥ṣṭimutpādayati / ātmadarśanādyā cittasyonnatiḥ so 'smimānaḥ / etasmintraye sati ātmābhimate vastuni yo 'bhiśvaṅgaḥ sa ātmāsnehaḥ /*”

Sthiramati – *Triṃśikābhāṣya*, ad. 6cd, Chatterjee, *op.cit.* 1980, pp.54-55.

¹⁰⁷ Sthiramati quotes, without explicitly mentioning it, *Yogācārabhūmi*, 11,6f. According to Schmithausen, *op.cit.*, p.442.

¹⁰⁸ “*āha ca avidyayā cātmadr̥ṣṭyā cāsmimānena tr̥ṣṇayā / ebhiścaturbhiḥ saṃkliṣṭaṃ mananālakṣaṇam manaḥ //*”

Sthiramati – *Triṃśikābhāṣya*, ad. 6cd, Chatterjee, *op.cit.* 1980, pp.54-55.

The problematic association of the five omnipresent factors (*sarvatraga*) with the mind

Without giving though too many details on the matter, Vijñānavāda texts associate the mind with the five so-called “omnipresent factors” (*sarvatraga*) as well, namely with the sensorial contact (*sparsā*), the sensation (*vedanā*), the concept (*saṃjñā*), the volition (*cetanā*) and the mental act (*manaskāra*).

“It says in the *Guhyārtha-vyākhyā*: «It has only nine mental factors associated with it – the four afflictive emotions and the five omnipresent ones taught earlier...»”¹⁰⁹

“The afflicted mind (*kliṣṭa manas*) [is associated] with the five omnipresent [factors] (*sarvatraga*) and with the four afflictions (*kleśa*) starting with the confusion of the self (*ātmamoha*).”¹¹⁰

The association of the mind with the five omnipresent factors, just like in the case of the storehouse consciousness, does not seem to be made on another ground than the omnipresent status ascribed to the five factors. This alleged omnipresence imposed their correlation with any type of experience, including the experience of the mind. The omnipresent status of the five factors mentioned above is problematic and it seems to be just an inheritance taken uncritically from Abhidharma. In case of the mind also, as in the case of the storehouse consciousness, the association with the five factors considered as omnipresent is problematic. It is true that the mind is closer to individuality, it even represents the decisive factor in projecting individuality, but most omnipresent factors seem to apply only to the already constituted individual existence, when the experience of the sensorial consciousnesses and that of the mental consciousness are also involved.

Accidental deviations of the theory regarding the states of consciousness (*caitta*) associated with the mind

Hiuan-Tsang also mentions some other opinions regarding the types of afflictions associated with the mind¹¹¹. These alternative theories however have not managed to go beyond the status of accidental deviations from the classical form of the doctrine and are known only from indirect sources. What they do is to simply associate the mind also with other afflictions than the fundamental ones, afflictions which are constituted by the application of the fundamental afflictions to the experience of the operational consciousnesses. Moreover, the mind is sometimes

¹⁰⁹ Tsong-Khapa – *Yid dang kun gzhi dka'ba'i gnas rgya cher'grel pa legs par bshad pa'rgya mtsho*, Sparham, *op.cit.*, p.109.

¹¹⁰ “*kliṣṭam manaḥ sarvatragaiḥ pañcabhiścaturbhiśca kleśairātmamohādibhiḥ* /”

Sthiramati – *Triṃśikābhāṣya*, ad. 14, Chatterjee, *op.cit.* 1980, p.93.

¹¹¹ Hiuan-Tsang – *Ch'eng-wei-shih-lun*, Poussin, *op.cit.* 1928, pp.257-262.

associated with some of the minor afflictions (*upakleśa*); these are nothing else but more particular forms of the afflictions (*kleśāvasthā*) or “influences”, “outflows” (*niṣyanda*) exerted by the afflictions upon some particular experiences. Given the similar status of the fundamental afflictions (*mūlakleśa*), of afflictions (*kleśa*) in general, and of the minor afflictions (*upakleśa*), one may consider that the alternative theories mentioned by Hiuan-Tsang do not bring significant philosophical changes to the consecrated doctrine.

6. Proofs for the existence of the mind (*manas*)

The mind (*manas*), as the consciousness responsible for the appearance of the experience of the ego, does not appear in Buddhist philosophy prior to Vijñānavāda; this is why, as in the case of the storehouse consciousness, which is another innovation of the authors of Vijñānavāda, the need was felt to present arguments for the acceptance of this new type of consciousness.

The arguments for the existence of the mind are in general six and they are presented in rather similar ways in all the texts that mention them. Hiuan-Tsang tries to add an extra scriptural argument for the existence of mind and in *Ch'eng-wei-shih-lun* this constitutes argument number one. He reaches the number of seven arguments precisely because the other six are added after this scriptural argument. As a matter of fact, the scriptural argument brought by Hiuan-Tsang is not a very well founded one, since he only notices the presence of the term “*manas*” in the canonic texts of Hīnayāna and interprets it, erroneously, as bearing, in those scriptures, the same meaning it has in Vijñānavāda.

The mind as accounting for the “solitary ignorance” (*avidyā āveṇikī*), the basic ignorance which affects human condition

The first and the last of the six arguments are somehow correlated. Both refer to the erroneous nature (*viparyāsa*) of the experience of the mind, error which consists of ascribing own being, selfhood, to a certain limited sphere of the phenomenal, which is illicitly bestowed the status of substantial self. The first argument takes its stand on the absence of the knowledge of reality in case of human experience, on the fact that human experience is wrapped in ignorance (*avidyā*, *ajñāna*). The sixth argument takes its stand on the presence of the error of the determined self, of the sense of the ego, in case of all human experiences. Based on these remarks, both arguments state the need to introduce the mind (*manas*) as the structure accounting for concealing the reality, respectively for substituting it with a limited phenomenal identity. The first argument starts from noticing the negative function of the mind, namely from the concealing of reality,

the apparition of non-knowledge, of ignorance (*ajñāna*, *avidyā*) regarding reality, while the sixth starts from the positive aspects of the activity of the mind, namely the production of the illusion, of the error (*viparyāsa*) of the limited self identity.

The first argument starts from the acknowledgment of the so-called “solitary ignorance” (*avidyā āveṇikī*), i.e. the ignorance consisting only of concealing the reality. This type of ignorance is labeled as “solitary”, “un-associated” (*āveṇikī*) because it simply represents a state of not knowing the reality, without being associated with a particular type of error (*viparyāsa*). In most cases, in common human experience, this type of ignorance is accompanied by the perception of different types of error. However, its existence is indicated by the perpetual state of ignorance characterizing a human being, even in the moments when he does not experience any determined content.

“*Pratītyasamutpādasūtra* states: «Solitary (*āveṇikī*) ignorance (*avidyā*) is subtle, always manifesting, being the one that veils reality, that obstructs the knowledge of reality».

This type of ignorance would be missing if the seventh consciousness, the mind (*manas*), missed.”¹¹²

“Common people (*prthagjana*) are always influenced by the ignorance known as «solitary» (*āveṇikī*), which engenders confusion (*moha*) regarding the non-self (*nairātmya*), that veils the ultimate reality (*bhūtatathatā*), that obstructs the eye of ultimate knowledge (*āryaprajñācakṣus*).”¹¹³

“[The beings] would experience reality (*bhūtārtha*) if there were no solitary ignorance, which is always present and always obstructs consciousness.”¹¹⁴

“If the existence of the afflicted mind (*manas*) were denied, solitary ignorance could not exist. The solitary ignorance is that state of confusion (*moha*) that obstructs (*āvṛṇoti*) the apparition of the knowledge of reality (*tattvajñāna*).”¹¹⁵

The solitary ignorance cannot be produced at the level of the mental consciousness or at the level of the operational consciousnesses because it exists even when these are not active. In case of human experience, the absence of conceptual thinking and perception, namely the absence of the activity of the operational consciousnesses, does not lead to the manifestation of the absolute knowledge, and this indicates the existence of a distinct form of ignorance, which exists independently from the sensorial consciousnesses and from the mental consciousness.

At the same time, the production of the solitary ignorance by the mental consciousness would compromise the possibility of liberation because in this case

¹¹² Hiuan-Tsang – *Ch’eng-wei-shih-lun*, Poussin, *op.cit.* 1928, p.276.

¹¹³ Hiuan-Tsang – *Ch’eng-wei-shih-lun*, Poussin, *op.cit.* 1928, p.277.

¹¹⁴ Asaṅga – *Mahāyānasamgraha*, I.7, Lamotte, *op.cit.* 1973, p.22.

¹¹⁵ Asvabhāva – *Upanibandhana*, ad. *Mahāyānasamgraha*, I.7, Lamotte, *op.cit.* 1973, p.17.

the mental consciousness would be ignorant by its own nature and thus would no longer have the capacity to produce the antidotes (*pratipakṣa*) of ignorance. If solitary ignorance were established in the mental consciousness, ignorance would be intrinsic to it, would be related to its very nature and thus the mental consciousness would not have had the liberty to produce the antidotes of ignorance. It is true that in many cases the mental consciousness is affected by ignorance, but this is only an extrinsic influence, exerted upon it by the mind. Vijñānavāda claims that the mental consciousness is the one which initiates and keeps going the process of liberation; this process consists in the production, by the mental consciousness, of the antidotes (*pratipakṣa*) to the ignorance generated by the mind (*manas*). Precisely for this, in order to maintain the possibility of liberation, it is essential for the mental consciousness not to have an ignorant nature, not to be intrinsically ignorant; in such a situation, there would be no instance able to unfold the process of liberation.

“In case we consider that this kind of affliction, [the solitary ignorance], is established in the non-afflicted mental consciousness (*akliṣṭamanovijñāna*), we should also accept that this [mental consciousness] is, by its own nature, absolutely (*atyanta*) afflicted.”¹¹⁶

“The ignorance cannot be established in the non-afflicted mental consciousness (*akliṣṭamanovijñāna*) because, as a result of this ignorance, the mental consciousness would be afflicted by its own nature The consciousness [which has as its content] the charity and so on (*dānādicitta*) would not be beneficial anymore since it would be associated (*saṃprayukta*) with the afflicting ignorance.”¹¹⁷

The mind (*manas*) as the structure responsible for the error of the individual self

The sixth argument for the existence of the mind starts from the remark that human experience, under all its aspects, involves the perception of an ego (*ātma-grāha*). In case of any experience, there is a limited ego which appears as the subject of that experience¹¹⁸.

“I.7. [The mind must exist] because it is noticed that [in case of any] consciousness (*citta*), beneficial (*kuśala*), non-beneficial (*akuśala*) or indeterminate

¹¹⁶ Vasubandhu – *Mahāyānasamgrahabhāṣya*, ad.II.4.3 Lamotte *op.cit.* 1934-35, pp.191-192.

¹¹⁷ Asvabhāva – *Upanibandhana*, ad. *Mahāyānasamgraha*, I.7, Lamotte, *op.cit.* 1973, p.17.

¹¹⁸ The afflicted nature of any human experience as an argument for the existence of the mind is studied in Waldron, *op.cit.*, p.149.

(*avyākṛta*), the perception of the self (*ātmagrāha*) is always (*sarvakāla*) at work (*samudācāra*).¹¹⁹

“In the absence of mind (*manas*), the perception of the ego in any circumstance could not be explained anymore..... Charity and all the other beneficial conditions (*kuśalāvasthā*) of the consciousness always include the perception of an ego, since people state: «I am the subject of this act of charity» etc.¹²⁰

Even in the cases of the beneficial states of the operational consciousnesses, states in which the conceptual (*vikalpita*) view of an individual self is absent, the attachment to self, the tendency for self proliferation (*sāsrava*) is present and this indicates the existence of a certain type of attachment to ego, more fundamental than the one generated at the level of the operational consciousnesses.

“If the perpetual existence of that view of the self (*ātmagrāha*) which is specific to mind (*manas*) were not accepted, the beneficial [states of consciousness] (*kuśala*) or the unobstructed and indeterminate ones (*anivṛtāvyākṛta*) would have to be considered as free from the tendency towards the proliferation [of the ego] (*anāsrava*).¹²¹

“The beneficial factors and the others can have the tendency towards proliferation (*sāsrava*) due to the mind (*manas*), which continuously engender the perception of the self (*ātmagrāha*). If mind were missing, the beneficial factors couldn’t have the tendency towards proliferation.”¹²²

Hiuan-Tsang reformulates the argument¹²³ in a different way, namely he claims that the division of each experience into a representation component (*darśanabhāga*) and an object component (*nimittabhāga*) – division also advocated by Dharmapāla and by other late authors of Vijñānavāda – would not be possible in the absence of a certain experience of the self, inherent in any experience, which could constitute the ground for that division. The representation component (*darśanabhāga*) would be the one the individual self experiences directly while the object component is that element of experience considered to be exterior to self, something else than it.

The mind as the structure which determines the activity of the mental consciousness (*manovijñāna*)

The second argument in favour of the existence of the mind takes its stand on the relation of determination between the mind and the mental consciousness

¹¹⁹ Asaṅga – *Mahāyānasamgraha*, I.7, Lamotte, *op.cit.* 1973, p.21.

¹²⁰ Asvabhāva – *Upanibandhana*, ad. *Mahāyānasamgraha*, I.7, Lamotte, *op.cit.* 1973, p.21.

¹²¹ Hiuan-Tsang – *Ch’eng-wei-shih-lun*, Poussin, *op.cit.* 1928, pp.285-6.

¹²² Hiuan-Tsang – *Ch’eng-wei-shih-lun*, Poussin, *op.cit.* 1928, p.287.

¹²³ Hiuan-Tsang – *Ch’eng-wei-shih-lun*, Poussin, *op.cit.* 1928, p.285.

(*manovijñāna*). More precisely, once the necessity of the existence of an object (*ālambana*) of the mental consciousness, of a simultaneous support (*sahabhū āśraya*) of it, is acknowledged, it can be stated that only the mind can be this support. The argument shows, based on the analogy with the five sensorial consciousnesses, that in the case of the mental consciousness too there has to be a regent condition (*adhipati pratyaya*) accountable for its production, able to contain and mature its seeds. The fact that this condition has to be a particular, individual and not a universal one (the mental consciousness being specific to each individual) excludes the possibility that the storehouse consciousness might represent this condition. Thus, the argument points towards the existence of a consciousness such as the mind (*manas*) as the only solution in this issue.

“I.7. There would be no similarity [between the mental consciousness] and the five [sensorial consciousnesses] (*pañcasādharmya*), and that would be a mistake. The five sensorial consciousnesses (*pañca vijñāna*) have as their simultaneous support (*sahabhū āśraya*) the eye (*cakṣus*) and the others.....”¹²⁴

“These [five] consciousnesses have, each of them, the eye and the others as their specific simultaneous support. These organs are their regent conditions (*adhipatipratyaya*) The same should be the situation regarding the mental consciousness as well; it should have its own specific support. It is true that the storehouse consciousness represents a simultaneous support of the mental consciousness, but it cannot be said that it also represents its specific support.”¹²⁵

The existence of the mind (*manas*) justified on the basis of the usage of the terms "man" and "manas" in the current language

The third argument, following the order from *Mahāyānasamgraha*, claims that, since the root “*man*” and its verbal derivatives (“*manyate*”, “*manyati*”, “*manyata*” etc.) are used in current language, this implies the existence of a characteristic experience to which they are applied. Implicitly, the argument also justifies the existence of a specific type of consciousness accounting for the apparition of that experience. This etymological (*nirukti*) argument states simply that the mind (*manas*) is that instance responsible for the experiences meant by the compounds and derivatives of “*man*”; the existence of the mind would be implied, trivially, by the existence of the respective experiences. The experience of the mind (*manas*) would be no more than, in general, the experiences meant by the compounds of “*man*”, since the term “*manas*” is just an etymological derivative of the root “*man*”.

¹²⁴ Asaṅga – *Mahāyānasamgraha*, I.7, Lamotte, *op.cit.* 1973, p.18.

¹²⁵ Asvabhāva – *Upanibandhana*, ad. *Mahāyānasamgraha*, I.7, Lamotte, *op.cit.* 1973, pp.18-19.

“I.7..... If mind didn’t exist, the etymology (*nirukti*) of the word «*manas*» couldn’t explain anymore and that would be a mistake.”¹²⁶

“It is said: «Mentation is done by the mind » (*manyata iti manas*); [if mind didn’t exist], what would be the meaning of this etymology?”¹²⁷

“116.again, by the mind (*manas*), mentalization (*manyate*) is done....”¹²⁸

The mind and the states of *asaṃjñīsamāpatti* and of *nirodhasamāpatti*

The fourth and the fifth argument make use of certain concepts from Abhidharma, adopted by Mahāyāna as well.

The fourth argument shows that the only difference (*viśeṣa*) between certain two stages of the mystical practice, namely between “the attainment of the unconscious state” (*asaṃjñīsamāpatti*) and “the attainment of cessation” (*nirodhasamāpatti*), depends only on the presence, respectively the absence, of the mind in those two states¹²⁹. In both states the conscious activity is absent, the operational consciousnesses being suppressed. Only the presence of the mind (*manas*) in the state of *Asaṃjñīsamāpatti* and its absence in the even more elevated state of *Nirodhasamāpatti* would be able to account for the existence of a distinction between them.

“I.7. There would be no difference (*viśeṣa*) between «the attainment of the unconscious state» (*asaṃjñīsamāpatti*) and «the attainment of cessation» (*nirodhasamāpatti*), and this would be a mistake. In fact, while during the attainment of the unconscious state, the mind is present, during the attainment of cessation, it is not.”¹³⁰

The mind as the sole structure which can account for the condition of “unconscious being” (*asaṃjñīsattva*)

The fifth argument appeals to a certain individual condition whose existence is stated by Buddhist cosmology. It deals with a certain class of beings, very elevate, whose experience is lacking any form of conceptual knowledge, of consciousness (*asaṃjñīsattva* or *asaṃjñīn*). Despite their elevated level, these beings that are no longer affected by the conceptual experience are still not fully liberated. The condition of “unconscious god” (*asaṃjñīsattva*, *asaṃjñīn*) represents a superior stage of transmigration (*saṃsāra*) but it is still transmigration, bondage

¹²⁶ Asaṅga – *Mahāyānasamgraha*, I.7, Lamotte, *op.cit.* 1973, p.19.

¹²⁷ Vasubandhu - *Mahāyānasamgrahabhāṣya*, ad. I.7, Lamotte, *op.cit.* 1973, p.19.

¹²⁸ “*manasā manyate punaḥ*”

Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra, cap.II, verse116, Nanjio, *op.cit.*, p.48.

¹²⁹ For a study upon the conditions of “*Asaṃjñīka*”, “*Āsaṃjñīsamāpatti*” and “*Nirodhasamāpatti*”, see Potter, *op.cit.*, p.71!

¹³⁰ Asaṅga – *Mahāyānasamgraha*, I.7, Lamotte, *op.cit.* 1973, pp.19-20.

(even if in a very subtle and soft way). As the operational consciousnesses and their conscious experience are totally suppressed in case of these beings, only the mind (*manas*), the inborn attachment to ego, could account for their bonded condition.

“I.7. In case of the unconscious gods (*āsaṃjñika*) there would be no perception of the self (*ātma-grāha*) and no pride of «I am» (*asmimāna*). During their whole lives, due to the absence of [conscious] experience, they would be free from affliction (*kliṣṭa*) [in case the mind went missing].”¹³¹

“If in case of the unconscious gods (*āsaṃjñika*) there were no view of self, they would be free from bondage.”¹³²

¹³¹ Asaṅga – *Mahāyāna-saṃgraha*, I.7, Lamotte, *op.cit.* 1973, p.21.

¹³² Tsong-Khapa – *Yid dang kun gzhi dka'ba'i gnas rgya cher'grel pa legs par bshad pa'rgya mtsho*, Sparham, *op.cit.*, p.147.