

The Mahā-vibāṣā Arguments for Sarvāstivāda, by David Bastow

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THE MAHĀ-VIBHĀṢĀ ARGUMENTS FOR SARVĀSTIVĀDA

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I

The Sarvāstivādins believed that there is a sense in which basic entities, dharmas, of the past and future are real, that is, are real now. Dharmas are short-lived or momentary happenings. The Sarvāstivādins claimed that the present happening of a dharma is merely one phase in its existence. Hitherto it has existed in its future phase; when causes and conditions are ripe, it moves into its present phase, and then when the moment of its actualization is past it moves into the third phase of its history and becomes a past dharma. So at the present moment there exist not only present dharmas, that is, dharmas in their present phase (*bhāva*), but also dharmas in their past and future phases. The experienced difference between these three modes of present existence is explained by a complex theory of different types of causal efficacy; the present *bhāva* is characterized by a particularly strong kind of causality called *kāritra*; dharmas in past and future *bhāvas* are also causally efficacious, but in a different way. So, in this sense, past, present, and future dharmas are contemporaneous; but it is a 'reduced contemporaneity', for dharmas in past and future phases are less forceful than dharmas in the present phase. This doctrine was in direct opposition to the opinion of the Sthaviras and the Sautrāntikas, that before its present moment of existence a dharma was nothing, and after this moment it will become nothing (*abhūtvā bhavati, bhūtvā ca prativigacchati*).¹

Why did the Sarvāstivādins hold their peculiar view about the real existence of past and future? This question expresses two linked types of puzzlement: to the philosopher the Sarvāsti position may well seem inherently implausible, even bizarre; and the historian of Buddhist thought may find it difficult to understand why the matter should have been of any special concern to Buddhists. Why *as Buddhists* should the Sarvāsti philosophers have been concerned to assert the present existence of past and future dharmas? While I am addressing the question of the Buddhist importance of the theory, I am also, especially in the final section, concerned with the more general philosophical question. A first step in understanding why the Sarvāstivādins held their '*sarvāsti*' position must be to look at the arguments they themselves produced to defend this position.

Historically we know of three phases in the development of their views: the original abhidharma texts (second century B.C.); the great commentary on these known as the *Mahā-vibhāṣā* (first century A.D.); and the vigorous debate which arose from Vasuhandhu's account of their views, with mainly hostile commentary, in the *Abhidharma-kośa* (fifth century A.D.).

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Four types of argument are to be found in these various sources. One of these types is the subject of this essay, but the other three should first be identified.

1. The one most commented on by modern writers occurs in various forms in the abhidharma text called the *Vijñānakāya*,² and is the basis of three of the four arguments presented in the *Abhidharma-kośa*. This argues to the present reality of past and future dharmas from present abilities to know the past and future, or to have them as objects of consciousness (*vijñāna*).³

2. The *Vijñānakāya* also gives a series of arguments about the present true descriptions of a person's mental state. On the one hand one may refer to what is straightforwardly present, the thoughts currently going through the person's mind. But one can also truly say of a person that he has a certain virtue or vice, or is at a certain stage on a path of development, when what is currently going through his mind may have nothing to do with these. Such 'dispositional' descriptions refer, the argument implies, to past and future manifestations; for the descriptions to be true now, these past and future dharmas must in a sense be real now.

3. The final argument presented in the *Kośa* claims that if past dharmas were not real, they could not be causally efficacious in bringing about a present effect.

Each of these arguments raises deep philosophical issues; none can be summarily dismissed. In the present essay I wish to concentrate on a further type of argument, perhaps simpler and more profound than any of the ones above. As far as I know it has not been commented on at all in the modern literature, perhaps because it has been confused with one or other of the types of argument presented in the *Kośa*.

II

My interest is in the principal argument propounded in the *Mahāvibhāṣā*. It is put in three different ways. I shall first present the three variants with little comment, and then present my own explanations of and philosophical observations on them.

The first version of the argument is about the relation between a karmic action and its consequence in experience. I quote from Louis de la Vallée Poussin's translation (Poussin [1937], pp. 9–10):

Quand existe une cause de rétribution (*vipākahetu*) présente, le fruit obtenu par cette cause est-il présent, passé ou futur? Si vous dites qu'il est passé, nous concluons que le passé doit exister; si vous dites qu'il est futur, nous concluons que le futur doit exister; si vous dites qu'il est présent, nous concluons que la cause de rétribution et son fruit doivent être simultanés. Contradiction, car la stance dit:

Celui qui fait le mal ne le sent pas aussitôt. . .

Si vous dites que le fruit de cette cause ne se trouve dans aucune des trois époques, nous concluons que cette cause n'a pas de fruit, car le fruit de rétribution n'est pas inconditionné; si elle n'a pas de fruit, la cause aussi n'existe pas, comme une deuxième tête ou une troisième main.

De même nous demandons à quelle époque appartient la cause qui correspond au fruit de rétribution (*vipākaphala*) présent. . .

If it can be truly said of a present dharma that it is cause or fruit, then its corresponding fruit or cause cannot also be present; and to say that this corresponding fruit or cause does not exist in past, present, or future is tantamount to saying that it does not exist at all. Being a conditioned dharma, it certainly does not exist out of time. And if the existence of past cause or future fruit is denied, then the original hypothesis must be denied, of the existence at the present time of dharmas which are cause or effect, *vipāka-hetu* or *vipāka-phala*. So, given this hypothesis—which surely is noncontroversial—past cause or future fruit must exist.

Several of the arguments for the Sarvāsti position relate in one way or another to the karmic relation between cause and effect, between action and its fruition. One of the arguments in the *Vijñānakāya* rests on a cognitive possibility, that of seeing the future latent, as it were, in the present. The fourth of the arguments in the *Abhidharma-kośa* rests on the present efficacy of past causes. But the *Vibhāṣā* argument is even simpler than these. Its point is that the very nature of the present as cause (*vipākahetu*) incorporates the future as *vipākaphala*. The very nature of the present as *vipākaphala* incorporates the past as *vipākahetu*. The present is what it is only in virtue of its relations to past and future. It exists as conditioned present only if there is something nonpresent to which it is related.

The same idea is pursued in the next *Vibhāṣā* argument. It is explained not in abhidharmic terms but in ordinary religious language. The argument is again very straightforward (Poussin [1937], p. 10):

Si le passé et le futur ne sont pas réels, il ne peut y avoir sortie du monde et profession religieuse (*pravrajyā* et *upasampad*). Il y a une stance:

Si on soutient que le passé n'existe pas, le Bouddha passé n'existe pas: donc manqueront sortie du monde et profession.

Encore, si le passé et le futur ne sont pas réels, il faut que les religieux (*pravrajīta*), qui possèdent le savoir exact, tiennent des discours de mensonge. Il y a une stance:

S'il soutient que le passé n'existe pas et si, cependant, il parle d'années peu nombreuses ou nombreuses [depuis la profession], il doit, de jour en jour, accroître son savoir exact (samyajjñāna) et ses discours faux et trompeurs.

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The point here is not about the monk's ability to grasp the past in his thoughts, but about what is true—in particular what is true about the present. In many ways the monk's present status, for example that he is indeed a monk, a *pravrajita*, rests on the reality of a past event, his own decisive action and commitment. The fact that he is now ordained depends on the possibility of tracing back a line of ordination to the Buddha himself. In these ways, we may say, the past lives on in the present.

The final version of the argument puts it in a more abstract form (Poussin [1937], pp. 10–11).

Si le passé et le futur ne sont pas réels, le présent aussi n'existe pas. Car le présent 'est désigné' (*prajñāpyate*) en considération (*apekṣya*) du passé et du futur. Si les trois époques manquent, manquent les *dharma*s conditionnés. Donc manquent aussi les inconditionnés qui sont établis en considération des conditionnés. Les uns et les autres manquant, manquent tous les *dharma*s. Donc manquent aussi la délivrance, la sortie, le Nirvāṇa.

The use of '*prajñāpyate*' might suggest that the argument was about the logical interdependence of the *concepts* of present, past, and future; but the surrounding text makes it clear that what is at issue is the real, not the nominal, existence of past and future. Past, present, and future are essentially related, such that the reality of the present is impossible without the reality of past and future.

In fact, if we are to take seriously the position adopted at the beginning of this section of the *Vibhāṣā* (and perhaps confirmed in the third sentence of the quotation above) that time is not a separate thing from temporally existing conditioned (*saṃskṛta*) dharmas, then this third variant is not really about past, present, and future as such, but about the interrelation of past, present, and future dharmas. In that case the third variant relies on the force of the first two variants.

Of course, the Sautrāntikas and the Sthaviras complained that if dharmas exist in a future phase, then in a present phase, and finally in a past phase, they have a history, in fact an endless history; and this makes dharmas eternal substances, quite contrary to the fundamental Buddhist doctrine of *anitya*, transience.⁴ The Sarvāstivādins always said in reply that they fully accepted the conditionality, the *saṃskṛta* nature, of ordinary dharmas. In fact it seems to me that their clear appreciation of the implications of conditionality was a major motivation for their theory about the reality of past and future. For present conditioned dharmas are, by their very conditionedness, internally related to the past conditioned dharmas which together were their cause, and to the future conditioned dharmas for which they are a contributory causal factor.

III

It follows that if we are to take further our understanding of the Sarvāsti position, we need to appreciate the significance for the Buddhist

ābhīdharmikas of the concept of conditionality. ‘*Samskṛta*’, the standard term for this concept, recurs throughout the *Vibhāṣā* argument and its context. The importance of the doctrine of conditionality is emphasized at the beginning of the relevant section of the *Vibhāṣā* text (Poussin [1937] p. 9):

L’auteur [here the *Vibhāṣā* commentator refers to the author of the original abhidharma text, the *Jñāna-prasthāna*] veut montrer que la ‘nature propre’ du passé et du futur est réelle (*dravyasaṭ*) et que le présent est conditionné (*samskṛta*).

The doctrine is also addressed specifically after the abstract argument I have just described (Poussin [1937], p. 11):

Le présent n’est pas un *dharma* inconditionné; car il naît des causes et conditions, car il possède activité (*kāritra*): tel n’est pas l’inconditionné.

This characterization of (worldly) dharmas as *samskṛta* is fundamental to all abhidharma theorizing. It expresses both sides of the Buddha’s basic metaphysical insight: that reality is transient (*anitya*) and insubstantial (*anātman*), but also that this insubstantial reality is not entirely fragmented and chaotic, but is bound together not by abiding substance but by causal order (*pratītya-samutpāda*). This order makes possible the explanation of suffering and the path to liberation, the cause of suffering and the cause of the extinction of suffering—the second and fourth of the Noble Truths.

How can one concept express at the same time these negative (*anitya* and *anātman*) and positive (*pratītya-samutpāda*) doctrines? It is because the causal relationships which provide the order of *pratītya-samutpāda* are themselves an aspect of *anātman*, of insubstantiality. This is why, in the early suttas, *paticca-samuppāda* is said to be a middle way between existence and nonexistence.⁵

One way of expressing this is to contrast two theories of causality. One is that entities are basically self-subsistent; if left to themselves they remain as they are, unchanged and unmoved. Causal influences, if there are any, irrupt on them contingently, from the outside. Causal relationships are external, do not concern an entity’s innermost nature. This is perhaps the metaphysics of everyday common sense, which inhabits a world of (relatively) stable, middle-sized objects such as stones and tables, and looks for causal explanations only when these objects suffer some change.

The other theory, more realistic and more scientific as well as more abhidharmic, is that an entity’s causal relations with other entities express its innermost nature. What it is is determined by a multiplicity of causes and conditions; and its nature is to be understood as functional, interacting with other beings and leading always to future effects.

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A similar point is made by Nyanaponika Thera about the Pali Abhidhamma, in his *Abhidhamma Studies*.⁶ There he emphasizes how what he calls the “two methods” of abhidhamma, the analytic and the synthetic, complement each other. The two principal books of the Abhidhamma, the *Dhammasaṅgāṇī* and the *Paṭṭhāna*, respectively represent these two methods, the analysis of the experienced world into its basic elements, but also the specification of the conditionality linking these elements. Nyanaponika examines the basic forms of the propositions in the two works, and concludes (ibid., p. 21):

The mere juxtaposition of these two basic schemata of the Abhidhamma already allows us to formulate an important axiom of Buddhist philosophy:

A complete description of a thing requires, besides its analysis, also a statement of its relations to certain other things.

This causal reinterpretation of the notion of substance is particularly important when the basic elements of existence are momentary. If things are long-lasting, it may be thought that although causal operations are necessary to bring them into existence, thereafter they survive by a kind of existential inertia. But if the world has constantly to be remade, it is the more obvious that every aspect of its existence rests on the complexities of conditioned coproduction. There are then no self-subsistent entities; everything exists in and as a network of interrelationships. These are as much in operation when things are apparently stable as when change is occurring. On this, the abhidharmic view, causal relations are internal; the very being of a dharma is interpenetrated by those other dharmas which are causally responsible for its arising; it partakes in the being of those dharmas to whose future arising it contributes.

The significance of the concept of conditionality as interdependence is brought out in several places in the *Abhidharma-kośa*. Vasubandhu introduces the notion of *saṃskṛta dharma* thus:

saṃskṛta, conditionné, s’explique étymologiquement: “qui a été fait (*kṛta*) par les causes en union et combinaison (*sametya, saṃbhūya*).” Il n’y a aucun *dharma* qui soit engendré par une cause unique.⁷

The discussion of *pratītya-samutpāda* in the *Abhidharma-kōśa* includes, among various accounts of the meaning of the doctrine, the “*sāṃbandhika*” interpretation that it concerns the (general) relationship between causes and effects (*Abhidharma-kōśa* III.24d–25b). Vasubandhu quotes from the abhidharma texts the view that *pratītya-samutpāda* is to be identified with all *saṃskṛta dharmas*, not just those relating to living beings;⁸ that is, it is not just a twelve-limbed account of the origins of human birth and rebirth, but constitutes a general theory of causality.

Philosophy East & West And *pratītya-samutpāda* and conditionality are explicitly linked to *anāt-*

man, to insubstantiality at least as regards the self, by a quotation from the Sūtra:

Quiconque connaît par la Prajñā le Pratīyasamutpāda et les *dharma*s produit en dépendance, il ne se tourne pas vers le passé en se demandant s'il a existé...⁹

Vasubandhu's explanation of the various kinds of causal relationships—*hetu*, *pratyāya*, *phala*—gives the different dimensions of the intertwining of conditioned dharmas. The most important relationships are of course between karmic action and its fruition, and between the various dharmic participants in the causal complex which leads from perception to motivated action. But though the causal relations of any particular dharma link it 'thickly' to a limited number of other dharmas, its 'thin' causal relationships extend much further. In fact the abhidharmic position is that the causal relations of every dharma extend throughout reality; *karṇa-hetu* (*Abhidharma-kośa* II.50a) or *adhipati-pratyāya* (*Abhidharma-kośa* II.62d) is a type of causality which relates every conditioned dharma with every other. The point here is that the very existence of a dharma shows that there is a causal compatibility between it and every other coexisting dharma. The web of causal interrelationships is seamless.

IV

It is against the background of this fundamental Buddhist insight about conditionality that the author of the *Vibhāṣā* makes the simple point that causal relations unite dharmas from the three times; they link past, present, and future. How, then, can a complete account of reality contain only the present? The reality of past and future is necessary to make the present what it is. The opposing view, that the present dharma has emerged from and passes immediately into nonexistence, dramatically expresses the transience of dharmas; but at the price, the Sarvāstivādins would say, of obscuring the intimacy of the relations between what is now and what has been and will be.

We may now represent the form of the *Vibhāṣā* arguments as follows: (1) The present (that is, present *saṃskṛta* dharmas) exists only in and through its relationships with past and future (*saṃskṛta* dharmas). (2) The existence of these internal relationships requires the reality of their relata—that is, not only the present, but also past and future dharmas. (3) Since the existence of the present as *vipākaphala* etc. is non-controversial, the relevant past and future dharmas must exist, must be real.

Is this a sound argument? It seems to me, as I have tried to indicate in the previous section, that there is much to be said for the Buddhist theory of conditionality, and so for the present argument's first premise.

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The second step in the argument gains what force it has from the extension of a principle which in general seems to be noncontroversial: that the existence of a relation demands the existence of its terms.¹⁰ Of course we are concerned here with internal and therefore 'real' rather than merely 'nominal' relationships; that is the relationship concerns how the relata are in themselves, it exists 'in re' and not just 'in mente'. (I can in my thoughts contrast what is with what is not, but *this* 'relationship' does not imply the existence of what is not.) How, for example, can there be a 'being the husband of', unless there are in existence a man and a woman to be so related? In this case, of course, the satisfaction of the relation demands the coexistence of man and woman in the strong sense of contemporaneity. But what should be said about relations which allow, or even require, the existence of their terms at different points in time; such as being the great-great-grandfather of, or the karmic cause of?

It would seem inappropriate to abandon altogether the force of the principle, to say that the operation of a relation between present and past things or events requires only the existence of the present thing. There must surely be some sense in which we must demand the existence of past (and future) relata, for such relations to hold.

It will not do to classify these relata as nonexistent. There was never a time at which my great-grandfather and I were both alive, but it does not do justice to the relationship between us to say that it links myself, who exists, with him, who does not exist. The fact that he is (was) my great-grandfather implies that his hold on reality is more positive than that. We may say that the fact that there 'is' such a relationship between him and me implies our 'co-reality'; even though he died before I was born. How should this co-reality be understood? The Sarvāstivādin position as expressed in the *Vibhāṣā* arguments provides an answer that is in some ways straightforward: co-reality consists of a 'reduced' form of contemporaneity.

But surely, one may say, an alternative and less metaphysically startling account of co-reality is ready at hand. Simply, A and B are co-real if there is some time at which A exists or occurs and there is some time at which B exists or occurs. But this interpretation also contains its metaphysical surprises. The verbs in the expressions 'are co-real' and 'there is some time' (in the previous sentence) are obviously not referring to the present time; contemporaneity is not being claimed. Rather the claims about the existence of these two times must themselves be timeless. The theory of time implied here gives primacy to what modern philosophers have referred to as McTaggart's B-series, in which time-orderings are unchanging and are to be expressed using the tenseless relations of 'earlier than', 'later than', 'simultaneous with'. The alternative view is that the primary time relationships involve the tense-notions of past, present,

and future (the A-series), and what falls into these three classes is always changing.¹¹

Interpreting co-reality in terms of the B-series provides us with a clear (timeless) sense of 'everything exists', and also a clear alternative to the '*abhūtvā bhavati*' position.

It is certainly beyond the scope of this paper to attempt to decide between the two theories, that giving logical primacy to the A-series and that giving primacy to the B-series. But should we say that if the latter theory prevails, then an account of co-reality is available which makes the complications of the Sarvāsti theory unnecessary?

An alternative would be to claim that the B-series account of co-reality is in fact that adopted by the Sarvāstivādins. Something like this position is taken by Paul Williams (Williams [1981]). If I understand Williams correctly, his theory is as follows: The Sarvāstivādin notion of *svabhāva*, as the defining characteristic of a dharma, which it possesses whether or not it is presently actualized, should be understood as a kind of atemporal essence, rather like a Platonic form, which legitimizes talk about past and future individuals, and also timeless discourse about the general nature and taxonomy of dharmas.

The fact that x is a primary existent which can always be referred to and thought of was felt to require some sort of existence, but not the sort of existence that a present entity enjoys. Such is a perfectly reasonable and defensible position, albeit perhaps mistaken. In fact for Sarvāstivāda existence *svabhāva* is of a different *type*, on a higher level, a metalinguistic or meta-systematic category necessary for the atemporal systematisation of primary existents in the dharmic list.¹²

It is unclear how far Williams wishes to press this interesting interpretation as a motivation for the Sarvāstivāda *traikālyavāda*. He says that in their theory of *svabhāvatā*, "the Sarvāstivādins were *half-consciously* [my italics] indicating a difference in the given between talking tenselessly about x and talking in the present tense" (ibid., p. 241); and later: "The critics of the Sarvāstivāda failed to realise that the *real* existence of past and future *dharmas* was *in part* [sic] a derivative of an atemporal use of the verb 'to be'" (ibid., p. 245). It would be difficult to prove that this consideration played no part in the *svabhāvatā* theory, but it is surely not the whole of the matter. It seems to me that most if not all of the arguments by which the Sarvāstivādins explicitly defended their position, and in particular those which have been considered in this essay, relate not to timeless talk, ranging indifferently over past, present, and future, but rather to the intimate relations which the '*saṃskṛta*' doctrine postulates between present dharmas and specific past and future dharmas, that is, between dharmas which are all very much in time, a part of history, of *saṃsāra*.

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In fact, there seems little doubt that the classical Sarvāsti theory fits best into a tensed theory, in which change is real, so that dharmas are definitely thought of as becoming present, and there is a real difference between dharmas in the three *bhāvas* or phases. In that case, the form of the *Vibhāṣā* arguments may be reexpressed as follows: 1) the *saṃskṛta* doctrine shows that present dharmas are intimately related to past (and future) dharmas; 2) these relations, without which present dharmas could not be what they are generally acknowledged to be, imply the co-reality of past, present, and future dharmas; 3) the Sarvāstivādin theory of ‘reduced contemporaneity’ offers an account of co-reality which does justice to the intuition that what is future becomes present, and what is present becomes past.

NOTES

- 1 – This powerful summary of the anti-Sarvāstivāda position comes in *Abhidharma-kośa* V.27 (Louis de la Vallée Poussin, trans., *L’Abhidharmakośa de Vasubandhu*, 6 vols., new ed. [1st ed. 1923–1931; Bruxelles: Institut Belge des Hautes Études Chinoises, 1971], vol. 4, p. 59 n. 3), where it is said to be quoted from the *Paramārtha-sūnyatasūtra*; the text is discussed by Saṃghabhadra (Louis de la Vallée Poussin, “Documents d’abhidharma—la controverse du temps,” *Mélanges Chinois et Bouddhiques* 54 [1937]: 56–57).
- 2 – Translated in Louis de la Vallée Poussin, “La controverse du temps et du pudgala dans le Vijñānakāya,” *Études Asiatiques publiées à l’occasion du 25^{me} anniversaire de l’École Française d’Extrême Orient*, 1 (Paris: Publications de l’École Française d’Extrême Orient, 1925), pp. 343–376.
- 3 – Several modern commentators, including Bareau and de la Vallée Poussin, have claimed that the Sarvāstivāda position rested on the naive assumption that if x can be thought about, x must have real existence. Bareau speaks of “that coarse and even puerile realism on which their doctrine down the centuries has been based” (André Bareau, “The notion of time in early Buddhism,” *Philosophy East and West* 7 [1956]: 355–356). Similarly Poussin: “étrange confusion de l’idéal et du réel, curieuse survivance d’une ‘psychologie primitive,’ on affirme l’existence ‘objective’ de tous les objets (*āḷambana*) de la pensée” (Poussin, *Mélanges*, p. 134). This assumption may play a part in some versions of this type of argument, but it by no means exhausts the argument’s force.

- 4 – *Kathāvatthu* I.6, §7 (Shwe Zan Aung and Mrs. C.A.F. Rhys Davids, *Points of Controversy, Being a Translation of the Kathāvatthu* [London: Published for the Pali Text Society by Luzac, 1915; reprint, 1960], pp. 87–88); and *Abhidharma-kośa* V.27 (Poussin, *L'Abhidharmakośa*, vol. 4, pp. 57–58).
- 5 – “Everything exists—this is one extreme. Nothing exists—this is the other extreme. Not approaching either extreme the Tathāgata teaches you a doctrine by the middle [way]: Conditioned by ignorance. . . .” (*Samyutta Nikāya* II.17, translated in Mrs. C.A.F. Rhys Davids, *The Book of the Kindred Sayings, Part II: The Nidāna Book* [London: Pali Text Society, 1972], p. 13).
- 6 – Nyanaponika Thera, *Abhidhamma Studies* (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1965), chap. 2.
- 7 – *Abhidharma-kośa* I.7, in Poussin, *L'Abhidharmakośa*, vol. 1, p. 11.
- 8 – *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 65.
- 9 – *Abhidharma-kośa* III.25c–d, in Poussin, *L'Abhidharmakośa*, vol. 2, p. 68; compare, for example, *Nidāna Samyutta* §12, *Samyuttanikāya* II.25–27, in Rhys Davids, *Book of the Kindred Sayings*, p. 22.
- 10 – This principle is stated explicitly by Saṃghabhadra: “En effet, il n’y a pas de relation possible de l’existant avec le non-existant” (Poussin, *Mélanges*, p. 115). This is noted by Paul Williams in his article “On the Abhidharma Ontology,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 9 (1981): 232 n. 26. Williams himself does not discuss the truth of this principle, for his concern is to show, with respect to the Sarvāstivādins’ ‘*viññāna*’ argument, that the grasping of something in thought is not a relation between the thought and the object grasped. In fact, Saṃghabhadra uses the principle only in passing, in the course of a more specific argument about how one can presently be bound by past passions. But the principle does seem to lie behind the *Vibhāṣā* arguments.
- 11 – The distinction is very clearly stated in the Introduction to Robin Le Poidevin, *Change, Cause and Contradiction* (Basingstoke, England: Macmillan, 1991).
- 12 – Williams, “On the Abhidharma Ontology,” p. 245.