

CHAPTER III

The “*dhyāna*-Master” Aśvaghōṣa on the Path, Mindfulness, and Concentration

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In two recent publications, I have attempted to show that Aśvaghōṣa (1st–2nd cent. CE), while composing the *Buddhacarita* (hereafter BC), relied heavily on (Mūla)sarvāstivāda recensions of the biographical sūtras.¹ Even more recently, I have come to the conclusion that the poet was likely familiar with textual materials that, though probably considered Sarvāstivādin in his time, later (?) came to be labelled *Mūlasarvāstivādin*.² This may look little surprising given the traditional accounts that consistently portray Aśvaghōṣa as a Sarvāstivādin hierarch ordained by Pārśva (or Pūrṇa/Puṇyayaśas) and/or involved in the redaction of the *Mahāvibhāṣā*. However, since E.H. Johnston, who regarded the poet as a Bahuśrutīya, several scholars have doubted Aśvaghōṣa’s Sarvāstivāda affiliation, insisting instead on his doctrinal proximity with Sautrāntika, Dārṣṭāntika and/or Yogācāra ideas. The Yogācāra connection was made especially attractive by the fact that early fifth-century Central Asian and Chinese traditions regarded Aśvaghōṣa as a *dhyāna*-master, a claim plausibly supported by the poet’s repeated mentions of Yogācāra(s) in his *Saundarananda* (hereafter SNa). However, there is little doubt that the Sautrāntikas, the Dārṣṭāntikas and the Yogācāras were not ordination lineages, sects or monastic orders in their own right. In other words, they most probably had no independent “canon”—neither a *vinaya* nor *sūtras*—which means that Aśvaghōṣa could very well have

¹ See Eltschinger 2012 and 2013. Unless otherwise stated, all translations of the BC and the SNa are tacitly borrowed from Johnston 1984 and Johnston 1932, respectively. References are provided in full whenever I have modified Johnston’s translation.

² See Eltschinger forthcoming a.

been a (Mūla)sarvāstivādin in terms of monastic lineage *and* an occasional opponent of Sarvāstivāda(/Vaibhāṣika) dogmatics, or the perfectly orthodox representative of a certain (non-Kashmirian?) Sarvāstivāda community that later came to regard itself as Mūlasarvāstivāda.³ Be that as it may, it has become increasingly clear to me that Āśvaghoṣa was indeed a Sautrāntika *at least in the most literal sense of the expression*, i.e., a specialist of Buddhist sūtra literature⁴ who relied on sūtras and reasoning alone and who either criticized Abhidharma dogmatics or remained uncommitted to it. The poet's ideas on the path abundantly confirm this conclusion, showing that, personally committed to Buddhist practice as he may have been according to Chinese traditions, Āśvaghoṣa did not venture beyond sūtra accounts of the path while describing the Buddhist soteric practices.

1. Āśvaghoṣa as a *dhyāna*-Master

1.1. Legendary accounts of Āśvaghoṣa (Bodhisattva) likely reached China before any of his works. One of the earliest Chinese references to Āśvaghoṣa Bodhisattva occurs in Sengzhao's (僧肇, 384–414) commentary on the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* (hereafter Vkn; T. 1775), which records numerous exegetical explanations by Kumārajīva (344–413). According to the great Kuchean translator, the non-Buddhist Āśvaghoṣa (**īrthika*, 外道師, T. 1775, 399b12) was converted to Buddhism by Pārśva, who after composing an exegesis of the Threefold Canon (三藏論議, T. 1775, 399b6-7), received and practised the methods of *dhyāna* (禪法, T. 1775, 399b8). Āśvaghoṣa “had sharp faculties, wisdom, [...] completely understood all of the scriptures [...], was [...] greatly eloquent and could refute all arguments”⁵; but when he invited Pārśva to debate with him, the latter remained silent, which eventually led to Āśvaghoṣa's subjugation and subsequent conversion.⁶ A fairly similar account appears in the *Tradition of Āśvaghoṣa Bodhisattva* (馬鳴

³ Note, albeit in a different context, Schmithausen 1987: 340: “denn es spricht, soweit ich sehe, nichts dagegen, daß nur ein Teil der Anhänger der Vinaya-Schule der Mūlasarvāstivādins dogmatisch gesehen Yogācāras war, ein anderer dagegen die Sarvāstivāda-Position vertrat.”

⁴ See, e.g., BCAP 434,18–435,2 on BCA 9.44.

⁵ T. 1775, 399b12-13: 利根智慧一切經書皆悉明練。[...] 有大辯才。能破一切論議。 Translation Young 2015: 46.

⁶ On this biographical account, see Lévi 1927: 113–116 and Young 2015: 45–47.

菩薩傳) found at Nanatsu-Dera in Nagoya and which could go back to the time of Kumārajīva.⁷ Here, it was Pūrṇa's silence that led to the conversion of the brahmin Āsvaghoṣa by causing him to acknowledge that he had "not yet escaped the fetters of words" (未免於言). In fact, the only writings of Āsvaghoṣa certainly known in China in the first years of the fifth century CE likely were the sixty-five stanzas⁸ quoted by Kumārajīva in a manual of *dhyāna* that he compiled upon arriving in Chang'an in 401, the *Dhyāna Essentials of All the Schools* (眾家禪要), alias the *Scripture on Seated Dhyāna Samādhi* (T. 614, 坐禪三昧經).⁹ Sengrui (僧睿, 371–438?), one of Kumārajīva's Chinese associates, accompanied his revision of the work (completed early in 407) by a *Preface to the Dhyāna Scriptures Translated within the Passes* (T. 2145, 關中出禪經序). Here is Sengrui's oft-quoted description of Kumārajīva's meditation treatise:

The first forty-three verses were composed by Kumāralāta. The concluding twenty verses were composed by Āsvaghoṣa Bodhisattva. Therein the five gateways came from among the compiled *Dhyāna Essentials* of Vasumitra, Saṅgharakṣa, Upagupta, Saṅghasena, *bhikṣu* Śide (Pārśva), Āsvaghoṣa and Kumāralāta. The verses within the [section on the] six kinds of thought are those cultivated by Āsvaghoṣa Bodhisattva in order to explain these six thoughts. The initial contemplations of the marks of desire, anger and delusion and then of their three gateways were all compiled by Saṅgharakṣa. The six elements of *ānāpānasmṛti* were spoken by all [of these] discourse masters. The middle and latter bodhisattva methods for practicing *dhyāna* were all based on the *Vasudharasūtra* and [used to] augment the *Twelve Causes and Conditions* in one scroll and the *Essential Exposition* in two scrolls, which were compiled and published at another time.¹⁰

⁷ See Young 2015: 251–263, with bibliographical references to the numerous studies by Ochiai Toshinori 落合俊典 (Young 2015: 316–317).

⁸ As far as I can judge from Yamabe and Sueki's references (2009, *passim*), the following stanzas of the SNa are quoted in Kumārajīva's treatise (the BC seems not to be quoted at all): 15.8, 15.9, 15.11–21, 15.31–49, 15.54–62, 15.64, 15.66, 15.67, 16.49–69.

⁹ For an English translation of this sūtra, see Yamabe/Sueki 2009.

¹⁰ T. 2145, 65a28–b6: 初四十三偈。是究摩羅羅陀法師所造。後二十偈。是馬鳴菩薩之所造也。其中五門。是婆須蜜僧伽羅叉漚波崛僧伽斯那勒比丘馬鳴羅陀禪要之中。抄集之所出也。六覺中偈。是馬鳴菩薩修習之。以釋六覺也。初觀婬恚癡相及

Aśvaghōṣa was thus famed as a *dhyāna*-master even before the BC reached China or at least was translated into Chinese (by Dharmarakṣa [385–433] in 420 CE),¹¹ even though his great skill as a writer might have been already well known by that time.¹² His expertise in *dhyāna* meditation finds another early echo in Huiyuan's (慧遠, 334–416) *Comprehensive Preface on the Cultivation of Expedient Means Translated at Mount Lu* (廬山出修行方便禪經統序). As Huiyuan has it,

I always grieved that since the great teaching had been disseminated eastward, techniques of *dhyāna* were very rare, the three trainings [of *śīla*, *samādhi*, and *prajñā*?] thus lacked their complete order, and the Way was in danger of dying out. Then Kumārajīva promulgated Aśvaghōṣa's exposition, such that this discipline [of *dhyāna* (*samādhi*)] appeared [in China]. Although his Way has not yet been fully disseminated, [it can eventually be established just as] a mountain starts with but a single basket [of earth]. It is a joyous occasion to encounter this timely arrival, as we can [finally] experience the wondrous purport of such a person. He relinquished his arguments for overcoming [opponents] and instead embraced the wordless teaching. Thereupon he vowed to take on the *saṃnāha* (armor) [of the *bodhisattva*'s resolve to liberate beings], and made it his personal charge to achieve ultimate tranquility (i.e., *nirvāṇa*). Embracing the virtues and never forgetting them, he bequeathed his teachings to this land.¹³

其三門。皆僧伽羅叉之所撰也。息門六事諸論師說也。菩薩習禪法中。後更依持世經益十二因緣一卷要解二卷。別時撰出。 Translation Young 2015: 55. On the scriptures referred to at the end of Sengrui's description, see Young 2015: 55, n. 98, and especially the useful synoptic table in Yamabe/Sueki 2009: xvi–xvii. On this passage, see also Demiéville 1951: 354, n. 2, and Yamabe 1999: 78–79. Kumārajīva also translated Harivarman's **Tattvasiddhi* (T. 1646), which quotes (372a15–16) two verses of Aśvaghōṣa's SNa (16.14 and 15cd). On this quotation, see Johnston 1984, part II: xxxvi–xxvii.

¹¹ Provided, of course, as everybody seems inclined to accept nowadays, that the 大莊嚴論經 (T. 201) alias **Sūtrālaṅkāra*/**Mahālaṅkāra(śāstra)*, i.e., the *Kalpanāmaṇḍitikā*, is a work by Kumāralāta and not Aśvaghōṣa, a work, moreover, that was never translated by Kumārajīva. See, e.g., Tomomatsu 1931. On traces of a genuine *Sūtrālaṅkāra* of Aśvaghōṣa, see Hanisch 2007.

¹² See Young 2015: 263, and 260–261.

¹³ T. 2145, 65c28–66a4: 每慨大教東流禪數尤寡。三業無統斯道殆廢。頃鳩摩耆婆宣

Huiyuan's *Preface* thus also portrays Āsvaghoṣa as a skilled debater who eventually converted to the “wordless teaching” (不言之辯) of the Mahāyāna, thus confirming Mañjuśrī's opinion, in the Vkn, that “all *dharma*s are without words, without explanations, without purport, without cognition, removed from all questions and answers.”¹⁴ As Stuart Young points out, then,

in addition to the conception of Āsvaghoṣa [...] according to which he was a master of non-Buddhist learning converted to Buddhism through debate with his silent interlocutor Pārśva (Pūrṇa), as well as a great champion of the True Dharma at a time when the teaching had fallen into decay, Āsvaghoṣa was also seen as a purveyor of *dhyāna* essentials to a Chinese *saṅgha* that had long been deficient in this regard.¹⁵

1.2. Now of course, Āsvaghoṣa's close relationship to the (predominantly Sarvāstivāda¹⁶) milieu(x) of meditators (*yogācāra*, SNa 14.19 and 15.68) that eventually gave rise to the Yogācāra tradition(s) and whose representatives composed meditation treatises such as Saṅgharakṣa's *Yogācārabhūmi* (T. 607, T. 606) has long been recognised. But as scholars such as Harada Wasō 原田和宗, Honjō Yoshifumi 本庄良文 and Yamabe Nobuyoshi 山部能宜 have noted, these early Yogācāras were at times also very critical of Sarvāstivāda orthodoxy. This can be seen from Kumārajīva's *Scripture on Seated Dhyāna Samādhi*, which, as pointed out by Yamabe, exhibited

馬鳴所述乃有此業。雖其道未融。蓋是爲山於一簣。欣時來之有遇感。寄趣於若人。捨夫制勝之論而順不言之辯。遂誓被僧那。以至寂爲己任。懷德未忘。故遺訓在茲。 Translation Young 2015: 58–59. On Huiyuan's *Preface*, see also Demiéville 1951: 396.

¹⁴ T. 475, 551c18–19: 於一切法無言無說。無示無識離諸問答。 Translation Watson 1997: 110, as quoted in Young 2015: 47. See also Lamotte 1987: 317, and n. 43, pp. 317–318, and Nagao 1955, for useful materials on this “wordless teaching”.

¹⁵ Young 2015: 57. See also Young 2015: 59.

¹⁶ On Sengrui's list of authorities, note Yamabe/Sueki 2009: xvii–xviii: “Most of the authors [...] were affiliated with the Sarvāstivāda tradition, though not all of them were faithful to the orthodox tenets of this tradition [...] [M]any of the [...] masters [...] were active in northwestern India. Therefore, by and large the methods described in the Traditional [i.e., non-Mahāyāna, VE] portion of this manual were based on the meditative tradition within the Sarvāstivāda community in that area. Kumārajīva probably based his manual on the meditation methods he learned while he was there.” On the Sarvāstivāda connections of early Yogācāra authors, see Demiéville 1951.

significant deviations from Sarvāstivāda orthodoxy. Its negation of pleasant sensation (*sukhā vedanā*, T. 614, 278c12-279a1),¹⁷ for instance, is clearly reminiscent of a Dārṣṭāntika doctrine found in Harivarman's **Tattvasiddhi* (T. 1646, 281c-282c) and fairly well represented in Aśvaghōṣa's BC (11.36 and 39-42) and SNa (9.40 and 17.19).¹⁸ Moreover, Kumārajīva's compilation contained a quotation from the *Paramārthaśūnyatāsūtra* (勝義空性經) to the effect that an entity "did not exist before but now exists; having existed [for the present moment], it will again not exist."¹⁹ This doctrine obviously contradicts the "school's" very name, "Sarvāstivāda," which postulates the existence of the three times. Here again, Aśvaghōṣa's SNa (17.18ab) contains a very similar statement which was already labelled "Sautrāntika" by Johnston (1984, part II: xxv): "Since inevitably in this world all phenomena come into being from not-being and pass away again from being into not-being."²⁰ As a matter of fact, the above-mentioned Japanese scholars have shown that Aśvaghōṣa's SNa contains several other doctrines that frontally contradict Sarvāstivāda orthodoxy and can be termed "Sautrāntika", "Dārṣṭāntika" and/or "Yogācāra". This is the case of Aśvaghōṣa's interpretation of *anuśaya* in SNa 15.5-6, which states, in Yamabe's translation (2003: 232), that

[t]he potential (*anuśaya*, i.e., the potential of the *kāmas*) remains, like a fire covered up with ashes. O friend, you should quench that [*anuśaya*] with practice, like fire with water. For those [*kāmas*] arise again from that [*anuśaya*], like sprouts from a seed (*bīja*). [But] those [*kāmas*] would not exist when that [*anuśaya*] is destroyed, as sprouts [do not exist] when the seed is destroyed.²¹

It is well known that, contrary to the Sautrāntikas (AKBh 278, 18-24), the "Sūtrakāra" (T. 1562, 596c24-597a2), the Dārṣṭāntikas (ADīpa 222,3-223,1) and the *Viniścayasāṅgrahaṇī* of the *Yogācārabhūmi* (P Zi 118b1-3/T. 1579, 623a22-24), the Vaibhāṣikas did not acknowledge the *anuśaya* as the latent

¹⁷ See Yamabe/Sueki 2009: 49–50.

¹⁸ On this point, see Yamabe 2003: 234–238.

¹⁹ T. 614, 279a2-3: 本無今有已有還無. Translation Yamabe 1999: 79–80; see also Yamabe/Sueki 2009: 50. On the *Paramārthaśūnyatāsūtra* and the wording of this sentence, see Yamabe 1999: 80, n. 64.

²⁰ SNa 17.18ab. For the Sanskrit, see below, n. 162.

²¹ SNa 15.5-6: *tiṣṭhaty anuśayas teṣāṃ channo 'gnir iva bhasmanā | sa te bhāvanayā saumya praśāmyo 'gnir ivāmbunā || te hi tasmāt pravartante bhūyo bījād ivāṅkurāḥ | tasya nāśena te na syur bījanāśād ivāṅkurāḥ ||*.

or “dormant” form of a defilement.²² Similarly, Aśvaghoṣa’s understanding of the *abhūtaparikalpa* and related notions in SNa 13.49-53 (see below, §6.3) bears close affinities with doctrines labelled “Dārṣṭāntika” in the **Nyāyānu-sāra* (T. 1562, 639b4-10) and the *Mahāvibhāṣā* (T. 1545, 288b16-27) and well represented in Yogācāra sources.²³ Yamabe concludes (2003: 243–244) that

it seems very likely that Aśvaghoṣa was close to the meditation tradition that later formed the Yogācāra school [and that his] texts contain many points that are akin to the Dārṣṭāntika or Sautrāntika tradition. Further [...], many of these Sautrāntika-like elements are also found in the *Yogācārabhūmi*. Considering these points, it appears that the Yogācāra tradition and the Sautrāntika-like elements were almost inseparably interconnected long before the compilation of the *Yogācārabhūmi*. [...] The critiques of the orthodox Sarvāstivāda theories transmitted to us as Dārṣṭāntika or Sautrāntika views were perhaps the opinions of more practice-oriented people who found the Sarvāstivāda system at times too artificial to follow. Of course, there would have been variant opinions even among these practice-oriented people, and so it is not surprising that scholars have noticed very different opinions within the Dārṣṭāntika or Sautrāntika tradition.

1.3. If Aśvaghoṣa belonged to this early, pre-Mahāyānist Yogācāra environment, one may be justified in expecting his ideas on the path to reflect a personal commitment to ethical-behavioural, meditative and soteric practices rather than to consist in a mere arrangement of scriptural materials of a stereotyped character. Before focusing on the poet’s ideas on meditative practices, let me deal with his views on the eightfold path (*aṣṭāṅg[ik] amārga*), which possibly reflect yet another deviation from “orthodox” Sarvāstivāda conceptions.

2. The Eightfold Path

2.1. Aśvaghoṣa’s understanding of the noble eightfold path confronts us with two important problems from the very outset. For not only do the poet’s two accounts of the path look mutually contradictory; they also seem to disagree with the little we know of the (Mūla)sarvāstivāda versions of the eightfold

²² See Yamabe 2003: 231–234.

²³ See Yamabe 2003: 238–242.

path. In the BC, to begin with, Āśvaghoṣa describes the eightfold path immediately after presenting the Buddha's exposition of the middle way:²⁴

The sun of right views illumines it, the chariot of pure right thought fares along it, the rest-houses (*vihāra*) are right words rightly spoken, and it is gay with a hundred groves of good action. It enjoys the great prosperity (*subhikṣa*) of noble livelihood, and has the army and retinue of right exertion; it is guarded on all sides by the fortifications of right mindfulness and is provided with the bed and seat of concentration. Such in this world is this most excellent eightfold path, by which comes release from death, old age and disease; by passing along it, all is done that has to be done, and there is no further travelling in this world or the next.²⁵

This passage apparently presents the eight constituents of the path in the following sequence: (1) insight (*prajñā*, two items: right views [*samyagdrṣṭi*] and right thought [*samyaksaṅkalpa*]); (2) morality (*śīla*, three items: right speech [*samyagvāc*], right activity [*samyakkarmānta*], right livelihood [*samyagājīva*]); (3) concentration (*samādhi*, three items: right exertion [*samyagvyāyāma*], right mindfulness [*samyaksmṛti*], right concentration [*samyaksamādhi*]). Āśvaghoṣa's second formulation of the eightfold path appears in chapter 16 of the SNa. Here it is in Johnston's translation (slightly modified) and according to the Nepalese manuscript(s):

The means to attain this end is the path with its threefold insight and double tranquillity. It should be duly cultivated by the prudent man, governing himself by the pure threefold morality. Right action of voice and body and right livelihood, these three, based on morality, should be practised in the department of conduct for the mastery of

²⁴ See BC_{Weller} 15.27-34 (BC_{Tib} D57a4-b4), and Johnston 1984, part III: 11.

²⁵ BC_{Weller} 15.35-37 (BC_{Tib} D57b4-6/): | *yañ dag lta ba'i ñi mas rab tu gsal byas śiñ* | | *rnam dañ yañ dag rtog^a pa'i śiñ rtaś drañs pa ste* | | *yañ dag brjod pa'i yañ dag ñag ni gtsug lag khañ* | | *dge ba'i bya ba'i skyed tshal brgya phrag mñon par dga'* | | *smad pa med pa'i 'tsho ba lo legs chen po ste* | | *yañ dag rtsol bas stobs dañ rjes su 'gro ba can* | | *kun tu yañ dag dran pa'i sbas pas sbas pa ste* | | *tiñ 'dzin gzims mal dañ ni gdan dañ bzugs pa yis* | | *de ltar mchog gi yan lag brgyad 'dir 'di lam ste* | | *'chi dañ rga dañ na ba rnams las 'dren pa'o* | | *gañ las drañs nas bya ba thams cad byas pa ste* | | *'di dañ che ge mor ni śnar yañ 'gro ba med* | ^a*rtog* em.: *rtogs* BC_{Weller} BC_{Tib}. Translation Johnston 1984, part III: 12, with "action" for "conduct", "exertion" for "effort", "mindfulness" for "attention", "concentration" for "concentrated thought"; see also Weller 1928: 155.

the actions. The noble view with respect to the truths regarding suffering, etc., right thought and exertion, these three, resting on insight, should be practised in the department of knowledge for the abolition of the defilements. Right mindfulness used in accordance with the plan in order to approach the truths and right concentration of thought, these two, based on tranquillity, should be practised in the department of Yoga for the mastery of the mind.²⁶

Even a superficial look at the two accounts reveals a fairly diverging distribution of the eight factors into the three headings (*śikṣā*, “courses”, *skandha*, “groups/aggregates”) of morality (*śīla*, *vr̥tta*), concentration (*samādhi*, *praśama*, *yoga*) and insight (*prajñā*, *jñāna*),²⁷ even though the BC is not explicit about this. For while the two texts agree on the three factors belonging to morality, i.e., right speech, right activity and right livelihood, they reflect different understandings of concentration and insight, depending on the place allotted to right exertion (*samyagvyāyāma*, *parākrama*): with right views and right thought (*samyaksaṅkalpa*, *vitarka*) to form a threefold insight (and a twofold concentration) in the BC, but with right mindfulness and right concentration to form a threefold concentration (and a twofold insight) in the SNa. Did, then, Aśvaghōṣa hold two different and partially contradictory doctrines of the eightfold path and its tripartition?

2.2. There is in fact every reason to believe that he did not, for as has been shown in detail by Hartmann and Salomon, the above-quoted version of the SNa passage, based on the Nepalese recension, is very unlikely to reflect the original wording of SNa 16.30-33 and can be shown to have undergone transmission errors and corrections/revisions. Essentially closer to Aśvaghōṣa’s composition is indeed the reading of a fragment of a second- to

²⁶ SNa 16.30-33: *asyābhyupāyo ’dhigamāya mārgaḥ prajñātrikalpaḥ praśamadvikalpaḥ | sa bhāvanīyo vidhivad budhena śīle śucau tripramukhe sthitena || vākkarma samyak sahakāyakarma yathāvad ājīvanayaś ca śuddhaḥ | idaṃ trayam vṛttavidhau pravṛttaṃ śīlāśrayam karmaparigrahāya || satyeṣu duḥkḥādiṣu dṛṣṭir āryā samyag vitarkaś ca parākramaś ca | idaṃ trayam jñānavidhau pravṛttaṃ prajñāśrayam kleśa-parikṣayāya || nyāyena satyādhigamāya yuktā samyak smṛtiḥ samyag atho samādhīḥ | idaṃ dvayam yogavidhau pravṛttaṃ samāśrayam cittaparigrahāya ||*. Translation Johnston 1932: 91–92, with “insight” for “wisdom”, “morality” for “discipline”, “view” for “doctrine”, “defilements” for “vices”, “mindfulness” for “attention”.

²⁷ On the eightfold path and its tripartition, see Eimer 1976: 18–25 and 34–41; see also *Traité* III.1129-1132, AVSū 34,17-42,13 (Samtani 2002: 26–30) and 231,1-233,3 (Samtani 2002: 161–166), Gethin 2001: 190–226, and especially pp. 207–212.

third-century palm-leaf manuscript written in Kuṣāṇa script and discovered in Šorcuq in the framework of the third German Turfan expedition.²⁸ Initially published by Waldschmidt (1971), the fragment has been identified by Hartmann (1988) and discussed in great detail by Salomon (1999) and Choi (2010).²⁹ In the light of this important fragment, SNa 16.30-33 might have originally read as follows (with the main variants underlined and adapting Johnston's translation accordingly):

The means to attain this end is the path with its twofold insight and triple tranquillity. Both should be duly cultivated by the prudent man, governing himself by the pure threefold morality. Right action of voice and body and right livelihood, these three, based on morality, should be practised in the department of conduct for the mastery of the actions. Mindfulness used in accordance with the plan in order to approach the truths as well as concentration and exertion, these three, based on tranquillity, should be practised in the department of Yoga for the mastery of the mind. The noble view with respect to the truths regarding suffering, etc., as well as right thought, these two, resting on insight, should be practised in the department of knowledge for the abolition of the defilements.³⁰

As we can see, SNa 16.32 and 33 appear here in reverse order, with the result that concentration is described before insight, which accords well with the sequence of the description of the three groups found in SNa 16.34-36 and, though in reverse order, with the sequence as it is spelled out in SNa 16.30. More importantly, concentration turns out to be threefold (*smṛti*, *samādhi*, *parākrama* ≈ *vyāyāma*) instead of twofold, as in the Nepalese recension,

²⁸ For brief descriptions of the manuscript, see Hartmann 1988: 67/(15) and Salomon 1999: 223.

²⁹ See especially Hartmann 1988: 66/(14)–70/(18), Salomon 1999: 231–241 and Choi 2010.

³⁰ *asyābhyupāyo 'dhigamāya mārgaḥ prajñādvikalpaḥ praśamatrikalpaḥ | tau bhāvanīyau vidhivad budhena śīle śucau tripramukhe sthitena || vākkarma samyak sahakāyakarma yathāvad ājīvanayaś ca śuddhaḥ | idaṃ trayam vṛttavidhau pravṛttaṃ śīlāśrayaṃ karmaparigrahāya || nyāyena satyādhigamāya yuktā smṛtiḥ samādhiś ca parākramaś ca | idaṃ trayam yogavidhau pravṛttaṃ samāśrayaṃ cittaparigrahāya || satyeṣu duḥkhādiṣu dṛṣṭir āryā samyag vitarkaś ca^a | idaṃ dvayaṃ jñānavidhau pravṛttaṃ prajñāśrayaṃ kleśaparikṣayāya ||* ^aThese five syllables cannot be reconstructed on the basis of the available materials. Sanskrit text according to Salomon 1999: 258; see also Hartmann 1988: 69/(17)–70/(18) and Choi 2010: 33–34.

while insight is now twofold (*dr̥ṣṭi*, *vitarka* ≈ *saṅkalpa*) instead of threefold, a situation that is reflected in the wording of SNa 16.30, where the path is said to be twofold as regards insight (*prajñādvikalpa*) and threefold with respect to tranquillity (*praśamatrikalpa*). The original wording of SNa 16.30-33 thus exhibits the same tripartition of the eight items as BC 15.25-26 (twofold insight, threefold morality and threefold concentration). There is little doubt, then, that this pattern faithfully reflects Aśvaghōṣa's understanding of the eightfold path.

2.3. As already suggested by Salomon (1999: 238) and substantiated by Choi, however, at least part of the correction/revision process that resulted in the wording of the Nepalese version might have been dictated by doctrinal and maybe sectarian imperatives, for this version closely matches (Mūla)sarvāstivāda materials concerning the eightfold path and its tripartition. Thus it is that Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (hereafter AKBh) contains a clear statement to the effect that insight is threefold: "Right view, right thought and right exertion are referred to as the group of insight."³¹ Even more striking are the two (Mūla)sarvāstivāda recensions of the **Dharmadinnābhikṣuṇīsūtra* (法樂比丘尼經) hinted at by Choi.³² Here is the Chinese version (Sarvāstivādin) of the relevant passage:

[The Upāsaka Viśākha] further asked: 'Are the three groups included in the noble eightfold path or is the noble eightfold path included in the three groups?' The nun Dharmadinnā replied: 'The three groups are not included in the noble eightfold path; [rather, it is] the noble eightfold path [that] is included in the three groups. Right speech, right activity and right livelihood, these three members of the path are included in the group of morality; right mindfulness and right concentration, these two members of the path are included in the group of concentration; right view, right thought and right effort, these three members of the path are included in the group of insight.'³³

³¹ AKBh 55,14-15: *samyagdr̥ṣṭisaṅkalpavyāyāmāś ca prajñāskandha uktāḥ* |. See Johnston 1932: 91, note on SNa 16.31, Salomon 1999: 237-238, and Choi 2010: 36.

³² Since Choi's references are somewhat difficult to follow and the author neither quotes nor translates the two texts, I allow myself to provide the materials in full. See also Honjō 1983 and Honjō 1984: 2-3 (item no. 5). For remarks on the different versions of the *Dharmadinnābhikṣuṇīsūtra*, see Schmithausen 1987: 337-343.

³³ T. 26, 788c7-12: 復問曰：賢聖，八支聖道攝三聚，爲三聚攝八支聖道耶。法樂比丘尼答曰：非八支聖道

A Mūlasarvāstivāda version of the *sūtra* exhibiting a distinct wording but a similar doctrinal content is quoted by Śamathadeva while commenting on AKBh 4,7 (*asabhāgo nirodhaḥ*):

O noble lady, [as regards] the three groups (*skandhatraya*?), [i.e.,] the group of morality (*śīlaskandha*), the group of concentration (*samādhiskandha*) and the group of insight (*prajñāskandha*), and what is called the noble eightfold path, is the noble eightfold path included in the three groups, or are the three groups included in the noble eightfold path? O Venerable, the noble eightfold path is included in the three groups, but the three groups are not included in the eightfold path. [O noble lady,] how is the noble eightfold path included in the three groups and the three groups not included in the eightfold path? O Venerable, among them, the Blessed One has presented right speech, right activity and right livelihood as [forming] the group of morality; the Blessed One has presented right mindfulness and right concentration as [forming] the group of concentration; and the Blessed One has presented right view, right thought and right exertion as [forming] the group of insight.³⁴

攝三聚，三聚攝八支聖道。正語正業正命，此三道支聖戒聚所攝。正念正定，此二道支聖定聚所攝。正見正志正方便，此三道支聖慧聚所攝。

³⁴ AKUṬ D Ju 7b2-6: 'phags ma gaṇ 'di phuṇ po gsum po tshul khrims kyi phuṇ po daṇ | tiṇ ñe 'dzin gyi phuṇ po daṇ | śes rab kyi phuṇ po daṇ | gaṇ yaṇ 'phags pa'i lam yan lag brgyad pa zes 'byuṇ ba ci phuṇ po gsum gyis 'phags pa'i lam yan lag brgyad bsduṣ sam | 'on te 'phags pa'i lam yan lag brgyad kyis phuṇ po gsum bsduṣ | tshe daṇ ldan pas ga phuṇ po gsum gyis 'phags pa'i lam yan lag brgyad bsduṣ kyi | 'phags pa'i lam yan lag brgyad kyis ni phuṇ po gsum bsduṣ pa ma yin no | ji ltar phuṇ po gsum gyis 'phags pa'i lam yan lag brgyad bsduṣ śiṇ'phags pa'i lam yan lag brgyad kyis phuṇ po gsum ma bsduṣ śe na | tshe daṇ ldan pas ga de la yaṇ dag pa'i ñag daṇ | yaṇ dag pa'i las kyi mtha' daṇ | yaṇ dag pa'i 'tsho ba dag ni bcom ldan 'das kyis tshul khrims kyi phuṇ por bśad do | gaṇ yaṇ yaṇ dag pa'i dran pa daṇ | yaṇ dag pa'i tiṇ ñe 'dzin ni bcom ldan 'das kyis tiṇ ñe 'dzin gyi phuṇ por bśad do | gaṇ yaṇ yaṇ dag pa'i lta ba daṇ | yaṇ dag pa'i rtog pa daṇ | yaṇ dag pa'i rtsol ba ni bcom ldan 'das kyis śes rab kyi phuṇ por bśad do | . To these witnesses, one should add ŚrBh I.230,5-7 (see also Eimer 1976: 36, n. 8): *tatra yā ca samyagdrṣṭir yaś ca samyaksaṅkalpo yaś ca samyagvyāyāmo 'yaṃ prajñāskandhaḥ | tatra ye samyag-vākkarmāntājīvā ayaṃ śīlaskandhaḥ | tatra yā ca samyaksmṛtir yaś ca samyak-samādhir ayaṃ samādhiskandhaḥ |* . "Among them, right view, right thought and right exertion, this is the group of insight; among them, right speech, activity and livelihood, this is the group of morality; and among them, right mindfulness and

As pointed out by Choi, the “original” wording of SNa 16.30-33, to which we must add the doctrinally homogenous BC 15.25-26, reflects a tripartition that is similar to the one found in the Theravāda counterpart of the **Dharmadinnābhikṣuṇīsūtra*, the *Cūḷāvedallasutta* (MN I.299-305). Here, the *śīlakkhandha* consists of *sammāvācā*, *sammākammanta* and *sammā-ājīva*, the *samādhikkhandha* consists of *sammāvāyāma*, *sammāsati* and *sammāsamādhi*, and the *paññākkhandha* consists of *sammādiṭṭhi* and *sammāsaṅkappa*.³⁵ Far from being restricted to Theravāda conceptions, however, this pattern is also reflected in Vasubandhu’s (?) commentary on MSA 18.64-65,³⁶ a text of undetermined sectarian affiliation.

3. Morality (*śīla*)

3.1. Morality, the first of the three above-mentioned groups of the path-factors, is traditionally regarded as the foundation of the other two (concentration and insight), hence of Buddhist soteriology if not of Buddhism as a whole.³⁷ His insistence on the priority of faith notwithstanding,³⁸ Aśvaghōṣa fully agrees with this, making the earth—the ground—(*vasundharā*, Tib. *sa*, **prṭhivī*/**bhūmi*, etc.) his dominant metaphor for morality: “As the earth is the support of all beings, moving and stationary, so morality is the best support of all virtues.”³⁹ Or else: “For by taking your stand on morality all actions take place in the sphere of the supreme good, just as standing and other actions of the body are performed by taking your stand on the earth.”⁴⁰ Passages such as SN V.45-46 are the likely source of the poet:

Bhikkhus, just as whatever strenuous deeds are done, are all done based upon the earth, established upon the earth, so too, based upon

right concentration, this is the group of concentration.”

³⁵ MN I.301; see Choi 2010: 35 and 37, n. 7, and, for a discussion, Gethin 2001: 211–212.

³⁶ See MSABh 145,20-146,5 (Johnston 1932: 91, note on SNa 16.31).

³⁷ See Gethin 2001: 255–257.

³⁸ See below, §4.

³⁹ BC 23.17 (BC_{Tib} D80b6/P97b1-2): |’byuñ po rgyu dañ mi rgyu yi| |rten ni ji ltar sa yin pa| |de ltar yon tan thams cad kyī| |rten ni tshul khrims dam pa’o|. Translation Johnston 1984, part III: 70, with “morality” for “discipline”.

⁴⁰ SNa 13.21: *śīlam āsthāya vartante sarvā hi śreyasi kriyāḥ* | *sthānādyānīva kāryāṇi pratiṣṭhāya vasundharām* ||. Translation Johnston 1932: 73, with “morality” for “discipline”.

morality, established upon morality, a bhikkhu develops and cultivates the Noble Eightfold Path. [...] Bhikkhus, just as whatever kinds of seed and plant life attain to growth, increase, and expansion, all do so based upon the earth, established upon the earth, so too, based upon morality, established upon morality, a bhikkhu develops and cultivates the Noble Eightfold Path, and thereby he attains to growth, increase, and expansion in [wholesome] states.⁴¹

According to Aśvaghoṣa, morality consists, “to sum up, in good behaviour” (*ācāro* *’yaṃ samāsataḥ*, SNa 13.19b); as a religious observance (*vrata*), it is equivalent to (good) conduct (*cāritra*, *vr̥tta*⁴²), i.e., to “recognising the danger of even the smallest faults”⁴³; as a word, *śīla* is a derivative of the verbal root $\sqrt{\text{śīl}}$, “to practise repeatedly” or “to be intent upon” in the sense of exercising or cultivating (*śīlana*, “repeated practice”).⁴⁴ Morality can be characterized as the purification of bodily and vocal actions⁴⁵ so that (s)he

⁴¹ SN V.45-46: *seyyathāpi bhikkhave ye keci balakaraṇīyā kammantā karīyanti sabbe te pathaviṃ nissāya pathaviyaṃ patiṭṭhāya evaṃ eva te balakaraṇīyā kammantā karīyanti | evaṃ eva kho bhikkhave bhikkhu sīlaṃ nissāya sīle patiṭṭhāya ariyaṃ aṭṭhaṅgikam maggam bhāveti ariyaṃ atthaṅgikam maggam bahulīkaroti | [...] seyyathāpi bhikkhave ye keci bījaḡamā bhūtagāma vuddhiṃ virūlhiṃ vepullaṃ āpajjanti sabbe te pathaviṃ nissāya pathaviyaṃ patiṭṭhāya evaṃ ete bījaḡamā bhūtagāma vuddhiṃ virūlhiṃ vepullaṃ āpajjanti | evaṃ eva kho bhikkhave sīlaṃ nissāya sīle patiṭṭhāya ariyaṃ aṭṭhaṅgikam maggam bhāvento ariyaṃ aṭṭhaṅgikam maggam bahulīkaronto vuddhiṃ virūlhiṃ vepullaṃ pāpuṇāti dhammesu*. Translation Bodhi 2000: 1553, with “morality” for “virtue”. On ideas about the earth as a foundation and the earth simile, see Anālayo 2015: 66, n. 21.

⁴² *vr̥tta* in SNa 13.10d.

⁴³ Cf. SNa 13.20: *tasmāc cāritrasampanno brahmacāryaṃ idaṃ cara | aṇumātreṣv avadyeṣu bhayadarśi dṛḡhavrataḥ* ||. “Therefore live the holy life, endowed with good conduct, firmly attached to your vows and recognising the danger of even the smallest faults.”

⁴⁴ MW 1079ab s.v. *śīl-* and *śīlana*. Note SNa 13.27: *śīlanāc chīlam ity uktam śīlaṇaṃ sevanād api | sevanam tannideśāc ca nideśaś ca tadāśrayāt* ||. “Discipline is so-called from its disciplining, disciplining comes from habitual repetition, habitual repetition from keen desire for a thing and keen desire from dependence on it.”

⁴⁵ Cf. SNa 13.11ab: *prayogaḥ kāyavacasoh śuddho bhavati* [...] |. The notion of a purification of actions occurs repeatedly in the context of morality, e.g., in BC 26.27ab (BC_{Tib} D90a5/P108b4): *lus dan ṇag gi las ni rnam par dag ’dod pas*, “(s)he who desires to purify her/his bodily and verbal actions”, or in SNa 13.13: *śārīravacasoh śuddhau* [...] *ājīvasamudācāraṃ* [...] *saṃskartum arhasi*, “you should perfect

who cultivates it becomes candid (*uttāna*) from giving expression to the feelings, open (*vivṛta*) from not concealing anything, guarded (*gupta*) from concentration on self-government, and without defect (*anavacchidra*, *acchidra*) from sinlessness.⁴⁶

3.2. If it is comparable to the earth, what is morality the basis for, then? As we have just seen, it is the foundation of all good qualities/virtues (Tib. *yon tan thams cad*, **sarvaguṇa*).⁴⁷ But morality is also described as what is relied upon by the yogins in all their different undertakings toward liberation (*etat sthānam anyeṣu ca mokṣārambheṣu yoginām*, SNa 13.29cd), as that in the absence of which “there can be no proper life either as a mendicant or as a householder”,⁴⁸ as the means to obtain deathlessness (*amṛtasyāptaye*, SNa 13.10c), and as that which, “when observed and adorned, removes all danger of the evil spheres of existence below and cannot but raise a man to the heavens above.”⁴⁹ In short, “morality is the refuge, the guide as it were in the wilderness, the friend, the kinsman, the protector, wealth and strength.”⁵⁰ However, Aśvaghōṣa’s most striking statement concerning morality as the touchstone of soteriology and salvation is SNa 13.22-26:

[your] practice of [right] livelihood in the purification of [your] body and language.” See also SNa 13.18, below, §3.3.

⁴⁶ SNa 13.11cd. Cf. SNa 13.12: *uttāno bhāvakaraṇād vivṛtaś cāpy agūhanāt | gupto rakṣaṇatātparyād acchidraś cānavadyataḥ* ||. On *uttāna*, see BHSD 124b s.v.; on being open and candid, see also BC 26.29, below, n. 58.

⁴⁷ See above, n. 39. In BC 26.32cd (BC_{Tib} D90b2/P109a1) morality is the support of good qualities (*yon tan dam pa rnams kyi rten yin no*). Note BC 23.9-10 (BC_{Tib} D80b2-3/P97a4-5): *|gzugs dan dpal dan stobs la sogs| |bkur mañ rnams dan ldan pa ni| |khyed kyi chos la gus 'di gañ| |de las lhag par mdzes pa ñid| |tshul khirms la sogs yon tan gyis| |ji ltar 'jig rten mdzes de ltar| |lus ni sna tshogs gos sam rgyan| |phreñ ba rnams kyis^a ma yin no|*. ^aD: P kyi. “This devotion of yours to the Law far exceeds in value your distinction such as beauty of form, sovereignty and strength. Neither your beauty, nor your magnificent clothes, nor your ornaments or garlands, have the same brilliance as the virtues of morality and the like have.” Translation Johnston 1984, part III: 70, with “morality” for “discipline”.

⁴⁸ Cf. SNa 13.19cd: *asya nāśena naiva syāt pravrajyā na grhasthatā* ||.

⁴⁹ BC 18.6bd (BC_{Tib} D64b7-65a1/P78b1-2): *|(tshul khirms ñid ni) bsruñ ba dan ni rgyan yin zñi| |'og tu soñ ba rnams kyi rnam par ldog byed do| |nam mkha'i steñ gi ñes par rdzogs pa po ñid yin|*.

⁵⁰ SNa 13.28: *śīlaṃ hi śaraṇaṃ saumya kāntāra iva daiśikāḥ | mitraṃ bandhuś ca rakṣā ca dhanam ca balam eva ca* ||. Translation Johnston 1932: 74, omitting the initial “For” (*hi*).

My friend, comprehend that salvation is based on freedom from passion, freedom from passion on right understanding, and right understanding on the apprehension of knowledge. Realise that knowledge is based on mental concentration and mental concentration on bliss of body and mind. Bliss of body and mind is based on supreme serenity, and know too that serenity is based on joy. Similarly joy is deemed to be based on pre-eminent cheerfulness and cheerfulness on freedom from remorse over misdeeds and omissions. But the freedom of the mind from remorse is based on purity of morality. Therefore purify your morality, realising that morality goes in front of the foremost.⁵¹

By making remorse impossible, morality prompts various states of ease which are themselves responsible for psychic concentration, discernment, and liberation. In the perspective of Buddhist monasticism, morality finds expression in the prescriptions of the *vinaya*, itself an amplification of the *prātimokṣa(sūtra)* regarded by the Buddha as an epitome of his teaching and the very teacher of the *saṅgha* once he has passed away into *parinirvāṇa*.⁵² Encapsulated in the *prātimokṣa*, morality is nothing but the Law and serves as the foundation of all subsequent attainments:

In this way the Prātimokṣa is the summary of morality (*śīla*), the root of liberation; from it arise the concentrated meditations, all forms of knowledge and the final goals. For this reason he has the Law, in whom is found pure inviolable morality neither rent nor destroyed; and without it all these (advantages) are absent.⁵³

⁵¹ SNa 13.22-26: *mokṣasyopaniṣat saumya vairāgyam iti gr̥hyatām | vairāgyasyāpi saṃvedāḥ saṃvido jñānadarśanam || jñānasyopaniṣac caiva samādhir upadhāryatām | samādher apy upaniṣat sukhaṃ śarīramānasam || praśrabdhīḥ kāyamanasaḥ sukhasyopaniṣat parā | praśrabdher apy upaniṣat prītir apy avagamyatām || tathā prīter upaniṣat prāmodyaṃ paramaṃ matam | prāmodyasyāpy ahr̥llekhaḥ kukṛteṣv akṛteṣu vā || ahr̥llekhasya manasaḥ śīlaṃ tūpaniṣac chuci | ataḥ śīlaṃ nayaty agryam iti śīlaṃ viśodhaya ||*. Translation Johnston 1932: 74, with “morality” for “discipline”, “serenity” for “buoyancy”, and “joy” for “ecstasy”. For sources and parallels, see Johnston 1932: 74, n. 22 (e.g., AN V.311-312); for *upaniṣad* in this and similar contexts, see Renou 1978: 149–151.

⁵² See MN III.10/MĀ no. 145 (Anālayo 2011, II: 625), MPSū III.386 (41.1-2), BC 26.26, and Eltschinger forthcoming b, §3.2.

⁵³ BC 26.30-31c (BC_{Tib} D90a7-b2/P108b7-109a1): *|rnam pa de ltar tshul khrims yañ dag bsduṣ pa 'di| |thar pa'i rtsa ba ṣes pa so sor thar pa ste| |'di las tiñ ñe 'dzin rnams rab tu skye ba ste| |ye ṣes thams cad rnams dañ mthar thug rnams^a 'di'o^b ||de*

3.3. As we have seen above (§§2.1–3), morality as a group comprises right speech, right activity, and right livelihood. As far as I can see, Aśvaghōṣa never discusses right speech and right activity separately. But in two closely parallel passages, he singles out right livelihood, and this in the footsteps of the Buddha himself, to whom he ascribes the following statement:

This livelihood is explained by Me separately from the physical actions, namely those of body and voice, because it is so difficult to purify. For it is difficult for the householder attached to many varied doctrines to attain purity of doctrine and for the mendicant whose means of existence are dependent on others to obtain purity of livelihood.⁵⁴

The second stanza also appears in the *Mahāvibhāṣā*⁵⁵ and in AKBh 255,7-8, where Vasubandhu makes the doctrinal context more explicit than Aśvaghōṣa has. Here is the relevant passage:

When the Blessed One says ‘Right speech, right action, [and] right livelihood,’ [does it mean that] this right livelihood is [something] distinct from the [first] two [i.e., from right speech and right action]? [Answer: No,] it is not [something] distinct [from them]. Rather, wrong livelihood consists of that bodily and verbal action alone that is born of greed. But [when they are] born of hostility and error, they are [termed wrong] bodily and verbal actions. This [wrong livelihood] is singled out [from the other two] because it is [especially] difficult to purify. For the greed factor (*lobhadharma*) is a thief (*hārin*), [so that] thought is not easy to guard from the action it generates. Therefore, since livelihood is [especially] difficult to purify, [the Blessed One] has taught it separately in order that one gives rise to the endeavour [necessary to purify it]. And in connection to this he’ has uttered [the following stanza]: ‘For it is difficult for the householder attached to many varied doctrines to attain purity of doctrine

phyir ma ral ma ṇams dbrog bya ma yin pa'i | *gañ giṣ tshul khrims gtsaṇ ma yod pa de yi chos* | *de med gal te 'di yi thams cad med pa ste*. ^aP: D *rnam*. ^bP: D *'da'o*. ^cP: D *gis*. Translation Johnston 1984, part III: 95, with “morality” for “discipline”.

⁵⁴ SNa 13.17-18: *karmaṇo hi yathādr̥ṣṭāt kāyavākprabhavād api* | *ājīvaḥ prthag evokto duḥśodhatvād ayaṃ mayā* || *grhasṭhena hi duḥśodhā dr̥ṣṭir vividhadr̥ṣṭinā* | *ājīvo bhikṣuṇā caiva pareṣv āyattavrttinā* ||. Translation Johnston 1932: 73, omitting the initial “For” (*hi*).

⁵⁵ T. 1545, 605c14.

and for the mendicant whose means of existence are dependent on others to obtain purity of livelihood.⁵⁶

In other words, insofar as it arises from greed—a manifestation of craving, the cause of suffering—wrong livelihood is so difficult to correct that it deserves being designated by an expression of its own. According to Yaśomitra (AKVy 420,9), the “superstitions of the laymen” (La Vallée Poussin) alluded to in the stanza are the beliefs (*dṛṣṭi*) in (the favourable influence of) ceremonies (*kautuka*), magical rituals (*maṅgala*), the stars (*nakṣatra*), the lunar days (*tithi*), and the (auspicious?) moments (*muhūrta*), etc.⁵⁷

3.4. But what does right livelihood consist of, then? In the BC, Aśvaghoṣa characterizes it as follows:

In order to purify your bodily and vocal actions give up all worldly concerns (*vyavahāra*), and, as from grasping a fire, refrain from accepting lands, living beings, grain, wealth and the rest. The proper means of livelihood is to abstain from the cutting and felling of what grows on the earth, from digging and ploughing the surface of the ground, and from medicine and astrology. There is neither moderation nor contentment nor life in resorting to the knowledge of go-betweens, in the practice of charms and philtres, in not being open and candid, or in the attainments not forbidden by the Law.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ AKBh 254,23-255,8: *yad bhagavatā mithyāvān mithyākarmānto mithyājīva ity uktaṃ ko 'yam anyas tābhyāṃ mithyājīvaḥ | nāyam anyo 'sti | yad eva tu lobhajaṃ kāyavākkarma mithyājīvaḥ* [AK 4.86ab.] | *dveṣamohajau tu kāyavākkarmāntau | sa caiṣa tābhyāṃ prthak kṛtaḥ | duḥśodhatvāt* [AK 4.86b,c.] | *hārī hi lobhadharmaḥ | tatsamutthāt karmaṇaś cittam na surakṣyam | ata ājīvo duḥkhaśodha ity ādarot-pādanārthaṃ tatrāsau prthañ nirdiṣṭaḥ | āha cātra – duḥśodhā grhīṇāṃ dṛṣṭir nityaṃ vividhadṛṣṭinā | ājīvo bhikṣuṇā caiva pareṣv āyattadṛṣṭinēti* | See also Kośa III.188-190.

⁵⁷ On *kautuka* and *maṅgala*, see YBh 159,13-15 and Eltschinger 2015: 226.

⁵⁸ BC 26.27-29 (BC_{Tib} D90a5-7/P108b4-7): |*lus dan ṇag gi las ni rnam par dag 'dod pas*| |*de bzin 'jig rten tha sñad thams cad 'dor ba dan*| |*sa dan srog chags sa bon rdzas la sogs rnams kyis^a*| |*rab tu 'dzin pa las ni me bzin ldog pa'o*| |*sa la skye ba gcod dan 'byed pa dag las dan*| |*sa yi lgos la rko dan rmo ba dag las dan*| |*gso ba dan ni skar rtsis mtshan ñid rnams las^b ni*| |*ñes par ldog pa bza' ba'i cho ga dus yin no*| |*pho ñavi rig^c pa sman dan sñags ni bsñen rnams la*| |*sbyor min ñid dan 'chab pa ñid ni med pa ñid*| |*chos las ma bkag pa yi sgrub pa rnams la ni*| |*ts'hod śes ñid dan tshim dan srog^d pa ma yin no*. ^aD: P *kyi*. ^bD: P *la*. ^cP: D *rigs*. ^dem.: DP *sogs*. Translation Johnston 1984, part III: 94–95, with “wealth” for “treasure”.

Here is the description in the SNa:

You should sanctify the conduct of your livelihood in the purification of your body and speech and in the sevenfold work, [b]y not giving way to the five faults, hypocrisy etc., and by abandoning the four destroyers of good conduct, astrology and the rest, [b]y refusing what is to be avoided, living beings, rice, wealth etc. and by accepting the authorised rules of mendicancy with their definite limits. Contented, upright, pleasing in voice and pure in livelihood, you should practise the remedy for suffering till you reach emancipation.⁵⁹

The two passages have various elements in common. Both refer to things that are forbidden to monks—lands (Tib. *sa*), living beings (*prāṇin*), grain/ rice (Tib. *sa bon*, **bīja*; *dhānya*), and wealth (Tib. *rdzas*, **dravya*; *dhana*). All items mentioned by Aśvaghoṣa feature in the detailed list given at DN I.5: fields and plots (*khattavattū*), women and young girls (*itthikumārīka*), male and female slaves (*dāsīdāsa*), sheep and goats (*ajelaka*), cocks and pigs (*kukkuṭasūkara*), elephant, cattle, horses and mares (*hatthigavāssavaḷavā*), seed (*bījagāma*) and grain (*dhañña*), gold and silver (*jātarūparajata*).⁶⁰ The SNa's "four destroyers of good conduct" (*ṛttighātin*), which apparently include astrology (*jyotiṣa*), plausibly coincide with the BC's "(im)proper means of livelihood," i.e., "cutting and felling of what grows on the earth, [...] digging and ploughing the surface of the ground, [...] medicine and astrology", all of which have literal or close equivalents in the *Brahmajālasutta*.⁶¹ The five faults alluded to in the SNa most likely refer to the five attitudes traditionally taken to characterize wrong livelihood (*mithyājīva*), i.e., hypocrisy (*kuhanā*, a "display of behaviour designed to stimulate lay-

⁵⁹ SNa 13.13-16: *śarīravacasoh śuddhau saptāṅge cāpi karmaṇi | ājīvasamudācāraṃ śaucāt saṃskartum arhasi | doṣāṇāṃ kuhanādīnāṃ pañcānāṃ anīṣevanāt | tyāgā ca jyotiṣādīnāṃ caturṇāṃ ṛttighātināṃ || prāṇidhānyadhaññādīnāṃ varjyānāṃ apratigrahāt | bhakṣāṅgānāṃ nīrṣṭānāṃ niyatānāṃ pratigrahāt || parituṣṭaḥ śucir mañjuś cauḥsayā jīvasampadā | kuryā duḥkhapratikāraṃ yāvad eva vimuktaye ||*

⁶⁰ See also MN I.179-180 (Anālayo 2011, I: 191), 345, and the tenfold list of SN V.470-472 (mentioned in Johnston 1932: 73, note on SNa 13.15): dancing (*nacca*), beds (*sayana*), money (*rajata*), grain (*dhañña*), meat (*maṃsa*), young girls (*kumārīya*), slaves (*dāsī*), goats and sheep (*ajelaka*), cocks and pigs (*kukkuṭasūkara*), and elephants (*hatthino*). Aśvaghoṣa's "lands" do not appear in the list.

⁶¹ On cutting and felling of what grows on the earth and digging and ploughing the surface of the ground, see DN I.5 and I.180; on medicine, see DN I.11; on astrology, see DN I.10.

men to give gifts”, BHSD 189b s.v.), boasting (*lapanā*, “of one’s own religious qualities, to extract gifts from patrons”, BHSD 461a s.v.), hinting (*naimittikatā*, “at desires to get particular gifts”, BHSD 312a s.v.), extracting of gifts (*naiṣpeṣikatā*, “[from laymen, by monks] by means of threats”, BHSD 313b s.v.), and extraction of a profitable gift by referring to a gift received from others (*lābhena lābhaniścikīrṣā*, or *°niṣpādanatā*, see BHSD 306b s.v. *niścikīrṣā*).⁶² As for the SNa’s “sevenfold work” (*saptāṅgaṃ karma*), it must refer to the inauspicious courses of bodily and verbal action (*akuśalakarmapatha*), i.e., taking life (*prāṇātīpātā*), theft (*adattādāna*), and illicit sexual conduct (*kāmamithyācāra/abrahmacarya*, “unchastity”), and lying (*mṛṣāvāda*), harsh speech (*pāruṣya*), slander (*paiśunya*), and frivolous talk (*sambhinnapralāpa*), several of which are alluded to in SNa 3.30-34.⁶³ Finally, I am not aware of any definite *locus classicus* for the last items mentioned in the BC, i.e., “the knowledge of go-betweens (**dūtavidyā?*), the practice of charms and philtres, not being open and candid, or the attainments not forbidden by the Law”, even though, again, the knowledge of go-betweens is prohibited at DN I.8 and the practice of charms and philtres, e.g., at DN I.11.

3.5. The descriptions of morality considered so far were concerned mainly with the ethical code and religious expectations of Buddhist monastics. But as we have seen, morality is also said to remove “all danger of the evil spheres of existence below and cannot but raise a man to the heavens above.”⁶⁴ These match the eschatological expectations of laymen and ordinary people (including non-Buddhist sectarians and ascetics, brahmins, etc.)

⁶² These five elements are listed in BoBh 168,21-23 and discussed by Wogihara (BoBh 21-26); see also MVy 2493-2497, *Kośa* III.165, n. 4, and *Kośa* III.189, n. 3; AVSū 38,14-41,1 (Samtani 2002: 28–29) contains interesting definitions of the five items.

⁶³ *prāṇātīpātā* in SNa 3.30, *adattādāna* in SNa 3.31, *kāmamithyācāra/abrahmacarya* in SNa 3.32, *mṛṣāvāda*, *pāruṣya* and *paiśunya* in SNa 3.33. Johnston (1932: 18, note on stanza 3.37) conjectured that “a verse has dropped out between 33 and 34; it must have described the two missing vocal actions, the opposites of *pāruṣya* and *sambhinnapralāpa*.” If SNa 33b (*rtam api jajalpa nāpriyam*) could be interpreted to point to (*a*)*pāruṣya* (cf. AVSū 37,9: *paraduhkhacikīrṣor anīṣṭavacanaśrāvanam pāruṣyam*, “To address hurtful words to another desiring to cause anguish is harsh speech”, translation Samtani 2002: 27; see also DN I.4 and I.179-180, 345), the whole passage (SNa 3.30-37) certainly lacks an allusion to frivolous talk.

⁶⁴ See above, BC 18.6bd, n. 49.

such as the Licchavis and general Simha, to whom the Buddha preaches the many advantages of morality in BC 23: “This morality should be ever present in you, so that your riches (*svārtha*?) in this world and the next cannot be snatched away by the passions. Great is the reward of morality, – a contented mind, honour, gain, renown, trust and delight, and in the hereafter bliss.”⁶⁵ The following part of the sermon provides us with a masterly illustration of Aśvaghoṣa’s style in interreligious controversy—note, in particular, the polemical allusions to the Brahmanical practices of religious mendicancy (*parivrāj*), ablutions (*tīrthasnāna*), and oblation (*agnihotra*), as well as to various forms of severe asceticism and, to crown it all, the poet’s *pastiche* of the Vedic idea according to which the sacrifice is the ship leading to heaven (*nauḥ svargā*)⁶⁶:

The man who, having renown and beauty and wealth, resiles from morality, resembles a tree loaded with flowers and fruit, yet covered with thorns. A man may live in a palace and wear gorgeous clothes and ornaments, but, if he have morality, his way of life is equal to that of a seer. All are to be known as shams, who, though they wear dyed or bark garments and dress their hair in the various ascetic styles, have ruined their morality. Though he bathe three times a day at a sacred spot (*tīrtha*), though he pour oblations twice in fire, though he be scorched by fiery heat, if he have no morality, he is nothing. Though he deliver his body to beasts of prey, though he cast himself down a mountain, though he leap into fire or water, if he have no morality, he is nothing. Though he subsist on a modicum of fruit and roots, though he graze the grass like a deer, though he desire to live on air, if he have no morality, he is not cleansed. The man, whose morality is vile, is like the birds and beasts; he is not a vessel of the Law, but like a leaky vessel of water. In the present life he reaps fear, ill report, mistrust and discontent, and in the hereafter he will incur

⁶⁵ BC 23.15-16 (BC_{Tib} D80b5-6/P97a8-b1): *[khyed cag rnam la tshul khrims de] | rtag par 'gyur bar 'os pa ste | [bdag gi don ni 'dod rnam kyī] | 'dir dañ soñ nas dbrog bya min | [yid ni tshim žiñ bkur mañ dañ] | rñed dañ grags dañ yid ches ñid | [dga' ba ñid dañ soñ nas bde] | [tshul khrims kyī ni 'bras bu che]*. Translation Johnston 1984, part III: 70, with “morality” for “discipline.”

⁶⁶ See, e.g., ŚB 4.2.5.10 (as quoted in Lévi 2003: 87, n. 6): *sarva eva yajño nauḥ svargyā*, “the sacrifice, as a whole, is the heavenly ship.” “The heavenly ship”, or: “the ship that leads to heaven”. See also Lévi 2003: 87–88.

(lit. eat) calamity. Therefore morality, like the guide in the desert, should not be killed; morality, which is self-dependent and hard to acquire, is the boat that conveys man to Heaven. He whose mind is overcome by the sins loses everything in life. Taking your stand on morality, make (every) effort to destroy the sins.⁶⁷

4. Faith (*śraddhā*) and energy (*vīrya*)

4.1. Several items of the noble(s') eightfold path such as right speech and right thought are not dealt with separately in Aśvaghoṣa's extant works. On the contrary, two mental dispositions that, literally at least, do not belong to the list are offered detailed treatment, i.e., faith/belief in SNa 12.30-43 and energy/endeavour in SNa 16.93-98.

4.2.1. Aśvaghoṣa's concept of *śraddhā*, *śraddadhānatā*, *śrad\dhā* is significantly broader than that of "(to have) faith".⁶⁸ It of course covers "confidence", as in SNa 12.30, where the Buddha exhorts Nanda to have faith "in the ultimate immaterial good" (*naiṣṭhike sūkṣme śreyasi*). But it also

⁶⁷ BC 23.19-28 (BC_{Tib} D80b7-81a5/P97b2-98a1): |me tog 'bras bus khyab pa'i śiñ| |tsh-
er ma can gyur ji lta bur| |thos dañ gzugs don phun tshogs pa| |tshul khrims 'chal ba
de ltar ro| |sna tshogs gos dañ rgyan ldan žiñ| |khañ bzañs rnams su gnas na yañ|
|tshul khrims dañ ldan skye bo gañ| |de yi drañ sroñ dañ mñam 'gros| |ñur smrig
śiñ sun zur phud dañ| |gtsug phud spyi bo ral pa rnams| |tshul khrims ñams pa kun
rnams kyī| |bcos ma ñid du šes par bya| |stegs las dus gsum khrus byas nañ| |me la
lan gñis bsregs nas dañ| |gduñ ba drag por gduñs nas kyañ| |tshul khrims med na
bdag ma yin| |ša za rnams la lus byin nañ| |ri yi logs nas bor nas sam| |me 'am chur
ni bdag mchoñs na| |tshul khrims med na bdag ma yin| |'bras bu rtsa ba chud^a za žiñ|
|ri dags bžin du rtsa za'am| |rluñ gi bza' ba 'dod pa yañ| |tshul khrims med na dag^b
mi 'gyur| |mi gañ tshul khrims kyis dman pa| |de ni bya dañ ri dags mtshuñs| |rdol
ba'i snod ni chu yi^c bžin| |de ni chos kyis snod ma yin| |'jigs pa dañ ni gtam ñan dañ|
|yid mi ches dañ mi dga^d ñid| |mñon sum 'dir ni thob pa ste| |soñ nas don med za
bar 'gyur| |de phyir tshul khrims gžom mi bya| |'brog dgon dag na lam mkhan bžin|
|rañ dbañ dag ni rñed dka' ba'i| |tshul khrims mtho ris dag na gru| |skyon rnams
kyis bcom sems kyis ni| |thams cad bcom nas 'jug pa ste| |tshul khrims rab tu gnas
byas nañ| |ñon moñs 'joms la 'bad^e pa gyis|. ^aP: D chu. ^bP: D bdag. ^cP: D yis. ^dD:
P dga'i. ^eD: P dad. Translation Johnston 1984, part III: 70–71, with "morality" for
"discipline". In the last *pāda*, I have read 'bad pa with D and not dad pa with P, and
translated accordingly "and make (every) effort to destroy the sins" for "destroy the
sins and cherish faith."

⁶⁸ For a detailed discussion of the concept of *śraddhā*, see Gethin 2001: 106–115.

includes the sense of “(*hic et nunc* unverifiable/unfalsifiable) belief”, as in the examples of someone believing that there is water underground (SNa 12.33), of the man who does not believe that fire comes from firesticks (SNa 12.34), and of the farmer who does not believe that corn grows in the earth (SNa 12.35). Finally, *śrad\dhā* and its derivatives entail a distinctly volitional/desiderative and conative aspect: having faith or confidence in the law also means aspiring to the law (*dharmacchanda*), “for desire is specifically the originating cause of all the elements of existence”⁶⁹: Someone proceeds to walking when (s)he wants to move (*gamanabuddhi*), to lying down when (s)he wants to lie down (*śayyābuddhi*), and to standing when (s)he wants to stand (*sthānabuddhi*, SNa 12.32).

4.2.2. According to Aśvaghoṣa’s Buddha, “faith is the chief agent in the production of the law” (*dharmasya cotpattau śraddhā kāraṇam uttamam*, SNa 12.40a₂b). Therefore, says the Buddha,

take heed to cherish this shoot of faith; for as it grows the Law grows, as a tree grows with the growth of its root. As for the man whose doctrinal sight is dim and resolution weak, his faith is unreliable; for it does not work to the desired end. For so long as the real truth is not seen or heard, so long faith does not become strong or firm, but when a man by restraining his senses with self-control sees the real truth, the tree of his faith bears fruit and becomes the vehicle [of further advance].⁷⁰

This primacy of faith is the reason why the Buddha has designated it with many different names (*tathā tathā*, “so and so”) in different contexts (*ta-tra tatra*, i.e., in different teaching circumstances) on account of its effect (*kāryatas*):

Therefore I call faith especially the Hand since it grasps the Holy Law of itself, as a hand takes a gift. It is described as the Faculty from its being the most important, as Strength from its steadfastness, and as Wealth from its abolishing poverty of virtue. It is called

⁶⁹ SNa 12.31bd: *sarvadharmā hi [...] niyamāc chandahetavaḥ* |. On *chanda* and its relationship with *śraddhā*, see also below, n. 76.

⁷⁰ SNa 12.41-43: *śraddhāṅkuram imaṃ tasmāt saṃvardhayitum arhasi | tadvyṛddhau vardhate dharmo mūlavṛddhau yathā drumah || vyākulaṃ darśanaṃ yasya durbalo yasya niścayaḥ | tasya pāriplavā śraddhā na hi kṛtyāya vartate || yāvat tattvaṃ na bhavati hi dṛṣṭaṃ śrūtaṃ vā tāvac chraddhā na bhavati balasthā sthirā vā | dṛṣṭe tattve niyamaparibhūtenndriyasya śraddhāvṛkṣo bhavati saphalaś cāśrayaś ca* |.

the Reed-arrow from its power of protecting the Law, and is named the Jewel from the difficulty of finding it in this world. Further, it is said to be the Seed in that the highest good originates from it and the River too from its property of cleansing from sin.⁷¹

4.3. If faith “is the chief agent in the production of the law”, “[i]t is indolence, not his enemy, that is the cause that a man capable of success, on hearing of the method, fails to progress, that, knowing the supreme Law, he does not gain an abode above and that, having left his home, he does not attain peace in Salvation.”⁷² In other words, practitioners who are eager to reach liberation should cultivate energy,⁷³ “for it is the foundation for carrying through

⁷¹ SNa 12.36-39: *ataś ca hasta ity uktā mayā śraddhā viśeṣataḥ | yasmād grhṇāti saddharmaṃ dāyaṃ hasta ivākṣataḥ || prādhānyād indriyaṃ iti sthīratvād balaṃ ity ataḥ | guṇadāridryaśamanād dhanam ity abhivarnitā || rakṣaṇārthena dharmasya tattheṣikety udāhṛtā | loke 'smin durlabhatvāc ca ratnam ity abhibhāṣitā || punaś ca bījaṃ ity uktā nimittaṃ śreyasotpadā | pāvanārthena pāpasya nadīty abhihitā punaḥ ||*. For canonical references concerning some of these metaphors, see Johnston 1932: 70, n. 36. *indriya* and *bala* are ubiquitous; Vism 464 (also quoted in Gethin 2001: 115, n. 51) knows of the similes of *hattha*, *vitta*, and *bīja*; on *vitta/dhana*, see also SN I.42, Bodhi 2000: 485, n. 597, Uv 10.3 and 10.9; on *bīja*, see also SN I.172 and Bodhi 2000: 450, n. 461. I have not succeeded in locating the similes of *iṣṭikā*, *ratna*, and *nadī*. ThaG 694 and 1090, AN III.346, and Mil 413 contain yet other similes.

⁷² SNa 16.96: *nayaṃ śrutvā śakto yad ayam abhivṛddhiṃ na labhate paraṃ dharmam jñātvā yad upari nivāsaṃ na labhate | grhaṃ tyaktvā muktau yad ayam upaśāntiṃ na labhate nimittaṃ kausīdyaṃ bhavati puruṣasyātra na ripuḥ ||*. According to AN III.3, bad destinies (*duggati*, *niraya*) come from being lazy (*kusīta*), whereas good destinies (*sugati*, *sagga*) come from being energetic (*āradhaviṛiya*).

⁷³ *vīrya* could possibly be interpreted as a functional (if not strictly semantic) equivalent of *vyāyāma* (“exertion”), one of the three items included in the group/course of *samādhi* (see above, §2.1–3). In SN V.268, the verbs *vāyamati* and *viriyam ārabhati* seem to be equivalent: *chandaṃ janeti vāyamati viriyam ārabhati cittaṃ paggaṇhāti padahati*, “he makes an effort, arouses energy, applies his mind, and strives” (translation Bodhi 2000: 1730); passages such as this are often regarded as providing a definition of *samyagvyāyāma* (see *Traité* III.1130–1131). Recall also that in SNa 16.32b, Aśvaghoṣa refers to (*samyak*)*vyāyāma* (see above, n. 26) by means of the word *parākrama*, apparently a synonym. In MN I.356 (see also MN II.95), the expressions *āradhaviṛiya* and *dalhaparakkama* are closely related: *āradhaviṛiyo viharati akusalānaṃ dhammānaṃ upasampadāya, thāmaṇā dalhaparakkamo anikkhittadhuro kusalesu dhammesu*. “He is energetic in abandoning unwholesome states and in undertaking wholesome states; he is steadfast, firm in striving, not

what is to be done and without energy nothing can be accomplished; all success in the world arises from energy, and if there be a lack of it there is nothing but sin.”⁷⁴ As a consequence, says the Buddha, “be ever energetic and control your minds; with diligence practise the deeds that lead to good. For life is like the flame of a lamp in the wind, flickering and subject to much suffering.”⁷⁵

4.4. Interestingly, the two factors of faith and energy appear together in a passage of the MN:⁷⁶

Bhikkhus, for a faithful disciple who is intent on fathoming the Teacher’s Dispensation, it is proper that he conduct himself thus: ‘The Blessed One is the Teacher, I am a disciple; the Blessed One

remiss in developing wholesome states.” Translation Ñāṇamoli/Bodhi 2001: 463; see also Anālayo 2011, II: 484. The same can be said of MN I.480-481 (see below, n. 77, and Anālayo 2011, I: 386–387), where (*purisa*)*viriyena* and (*purisa*)*parakkama* are somehow equivalent.

⁷⁴ SNa 16.94: *vīryaṃ paraṃ kāryakṛtau hi mūlaṃ vīryād ṛte kācana nāsti siddhiḥ | udeti vīryād iha sarvasampan nirvīryatā cet sakalaś ca pāpmā* ||. Translation Johnston 1932: 99, omitting the initial “(Energy) is of the greatest import”. Note also SNa 16.95 and Johnston 1932: 99. See also AN I.10 (cf., e.g., AN I.153, III.2, IV.234, 332-335, 352, 358, V.24, 27-28, 91; SN I.217) and SN II.29.

⁷⁵ BC 25.80 (D88b5-6/P196b7-8): *de phyir brtson ’grus ma spaṅs bsdams pa’i sems rnam kyis | dge ba’i las rnam la ni bag daṅ ldan par gyis | sdug bśhal du ma ñe bar ’dus śiṅ g.yo ba ste | srog ni thor ṇas mar me daṅ ni mtshuṅs pa ṇid* ||. Translation Johnston 1984, part III: 90, omitting the initial “Therefore” (*de phyir*). Note also SNa 16.98d: *tad vīryaṃ kuru śāntaye vīriyatam vīrye hi sarvaddhayaḥ* ||. “Therefore show energy for the sake of tranquillity; for of a certainty all prosperity lies in energy.”

⁷⁶ As pointed out by Gethin (2001: 114), the AS’s definition of *śraddhā* is interesting in this regard (AS 48b4-5): *dad pa gaṅ ze na | yod pa ṇid daṅ yon tan can daṅ nus pa rnam la mñon par yid ches pa daṅ dad pa daṅ ’dod pa ste | ’dun pa’i rten byed pa’i las can no* | (AS_{Skt. Rec.} 6,9-11: *śraddhā katamā | astitvaguṇavattvaśaktatveṣv abhisampratyayaḥ prasādo ’bhi-lāṣaḥ | chandasanniśrayadānakarmikā* |). “What is *śraddhā*? *śraddhā* is confidence (*abhisampratyaya*), trust (*prasāda*) and wish (*abhi-lāṣa*) with regard to existence (*astitva*), worthiness (**guṇavat*; ASBh 5,10 *guṇatve*; to be read **guṇavattva*?) and capacity/(realizability) (**śakti*/**śakta*/**śakya*; ASBh 5,10 *śakyatve*), respectively]. It serves as/(provides) a basis for [one’s] desire to act (*chanda*, cf. AS 48b2).” Tib. *byed pa’i las* is attested as a translation of Skt. *kāritrakarman* (Negi 2002: 3870b s.v.); *byed pa’i las can* could, then, render **kāritrakarmika*. The Sanskrit equivalents are borrowed from ASBh 5,9-10. See also Rahula 1980: 8.

knows, I do not know.’ For a faithful disciple who is intent on fathoming the Teacher’s Dispensation, the Teacher’s Dispensation is nourishing and refreshing. For a faithful disciple who is intent on fathoming the Teacher’s Dispensation, it is proper that he conduct himself thus: ‘Willingly, let only my skin, sinews, and bones remain, and let the flesh and blood dry up on my body, but my energy shall not be relaxed so long as I have not attained what can be attained by manly strength, manly energy, and manly persistence.’ For a faithful disciple, who is intent on fathoming the Teacher’s Dispensation, one of two fruits may be expected: either final knowledge here and now or, if there is a trace of clinging left, non-return.⁷⁷

Could these two dispositions have been somehow connected in Aśvaghoṣa’s view as well? To answer this question, let me compare the metaphorical repertoires associated with faith and energy in some detail. In SNa 12.33-35, Aśvaghoṣa adduces three examples for *śraddhā*:

For instance, when a man believes that there is water in the earth (at a particular spot) and he has need of it, then he makes the effort of digging the earth there. Again, no one rubs the fire-stick, if he has no need of fire or does not believe in its existence in the fire-stick; if the contrary is the case, he does so. Similarly the husbandman would not sow seed in the earth, unless he believes in the growth of corn in the ground and has need of it.⁷⁸

Now consider SNa 16.97ab and 98a:

⁷⁷ MN I.480-481: *saddhassa bhikkhave sāvakaṃ satthu sāsana pariyogāya vattato ayam anudhammo hoti: satthā bhagavā sāvako ’ham asmi; jānāti bhagavā nāhaṃ jānāmīti. saddhassa bhikkhave sāvakaṃ satthu sāsane pariyogāya vattato rumhaniyaṃ satthu sāsanaṃ hoti ojavantaṃ. saddhassa bhikkhave sāvakaṃ satthu sāsane pariyogāya vattato ayam anudhammo hoti: kāmāṃ taco ca nahāru ca aṭṭhī ca avasissatu; sarīre upasussatu maṃsalohitaṃ, yaṃ taṃ purisatthāmena purisaviriyena purisaparakkameṇa pattabbaṃ na taṃ apāpuṇitvā viriyassa santhānaṃ bhavissatīti. saddhassa bhikkhave sāvakaṃ satthu sāsane pariyogāya vattato dvinnāṃ phalānaṃ aññataraṃ phalaṃ pāṭikaṃkhaṃ: ditthe va dhamme aññā, satī vā upādisese anāgāmitā ti.* Translation Ñāṇamoli/Bodhi 2001: 583–584; see also Anālayo 2011, I: 386–387.

⁷⁸ SNa 12.33-35: *antarbhūmigataṃ hy ambhaḥ śraddadhātī naro yadā | arthitve sati yatnena tadā khanati gām imāṃ || nārthī yady agnīnā vā syāc chraddadhyāt taṃ na vāraṇau | mathnīyān nāraṇiṃ kaścīd tadbhāve sati mathyate || sasyotpattiṃ yadi na vā śraddadhyāt kārṣakaḥ kṣītau | arthī sasyena vā na syād bijāni na vaped bhuvi ||.*

A man obtains water if he digs the earth with unremitting energy; he produces fire from the fire-sticks by continuous friction; [...] by ploughing the soil and by guarding [his field] with infinite pains man obtains a splendid crop.⁷⁹

There can thus be no doubt that faith/belief and energy/endeavour were closely related in Aśvaghōṣa's view. The three similes are the same, but they are considered from a cognitive perspective in the context of faith, and in connection with the resulting action in the context of energy. In other words, faith/belief is the cognitive event stimulating a practical answer in the form of energy/exertion. Recall also that rivers, jewels, and arrows were to be found in the metaphors resorted to by the Buddha to refer to faith. Now, these expressions also occur in the context of *vīrya*: "For streams, by ever running swiftly, wear away even mountains. [...] [b]y diving strenuously into the ocean he rejoices in splendid jewels; by overwhelming the might of his enemies with arrows he enjoys the splendour of sovereignty."⁸⁰ The two similes of the stream/river and the fire-sticks are also (already?) to be found in the BC:

A stream, whose waters ever flow, however softly, in time wears away the surface of the rock. Energy finds nothing impossible of attainment. Therefore be strenuous and do not put down your loads. The man who stops repeatedly in drilling with fire-sticks finds it hard to get fire from wood, but by the application of energy it comes easily. Therefore where there is diligence, the task is accomplished.⁸¹

⁷⁹ SNa 16.97ab and 98a: *anikṣiptotsāho yadi khanati gām vāri labhate | prasaktaṃ vyāmathnan jvalanam araṇibhyāṃ janayati | [...] kṛṣṭvā gām paripālya ca śramaśatair aśnoti sasyaśriyam [...] |*.

⁸⁰ SNa 16.97d and 98bc: *drutaṃ nityaṃ yāntyo girim api hi bhindanti saritaḥ || [...] yatnena pravigāhya sāgarajalaṃ ratnaśriyā kṛḍati | śatrūṇāṃ avadhūya vīryam iṣubhir bhuṅkte narendraśriyam [...] ||*.

⁸¹ BC 26.60-61 (BC_{Tib} D92a2-3/P110b6-7): *| rtag par rab žugs chu yi rgyun ni mñen na yañ | rdo yi^a logs la dus su rnam par 'bigs pa ste | bṛtson 'grus kyis ni rñed par dka' ba ci yañ med | de phyir khur rnams mi 'bor bar ni bzod bgyis dañ | gañ žig yañ yañ ñal gso^b nas ni srub byed pa | de yis^c śiñ la me ni rñed par sla min žiñ | bṛtson 'grus bṛtsams pas rñed par sla bar 'gyur ba ste | de phyir sbyor ba yod na bya ba 'grub^d pa ñid |*. ^aD: P ba'i. ^bP: D bso. ^cP: D yi. ^dD: P grub.

5. Insight (*prajñā*)

5.1. Unfortunately, Āśvaghoṣa provides no detailed account of his views on insight, the third group of factors.⁸² The following is meant as a brief and partly conjectural reconstruction of his ideas on the matter. Āśvaghoṣa twice compares insight with a boat (Tib. *gru* [*po*]) sailing on, and enabling one to cross, the ocean of ignorance (Tib. *mun pa'i rgya mtsho*) whose waves are wrong views (**kudrṣṭi*?) and whose water is craving (**trṣṇā*?), or the great ocean of old age and death (Tib. *rga dan śi ba'i mtsho chen*), i.e., nescience and *saṃsāra*. This boat's two oars are mindfulness (*smṛti*) and energy (*vīrya*). The antinomy between insight and nescience is reflected in a second metaphor, that of insight as a lamp (Tib. *sgron ma*) in the darkness of delusion (Tib. *rmoṅs pa'i mun pa*). Needless to say, insight is also compared with an eye (*cakṣus*), i.e., with true, nonphysical vision.⁸³ In safely bringing its passengers to the other side of transmigration, insight brings about salvation. This is cer-

⁸² I allow myself to deal with *prajñā* before *samādhi* due to the comparably scarce treatment of the former in the extant works of Āśvaghoṣa.

⁸³ Cf. BC 20.52 (BC_{Tib} D74b4-5/P90a6-7): *|mun pa'i rgya mtsho la ni lta ṇan dba' rlabs can| |sred pa'i chu la srog chags rnam par 'phyo rnams su| |śes rab gru po dran dan brtson 'grus skya^a ba ni| |gañ gi^b yod pa de ni de las^c sgröl ba yod|*. *P: D *skye*. ^bem.: DP *gis*. ^cem.: DP *la*. “Among the folks struggling in the ocean of ignorance (*tamas*), whose waves are wrong views and whose water craving*, only he who has the boat of insight (*prajñā*) with the oars of mindfulness and energy is rescued therefrom.” Translation Johnston 1984, part III: 55, with “insight” for “mystic wisdom”, and “mindfulness” for “awareness”. *I read “craving” with DP *sred* (**trṣṇā*?), and not “existence” with Johnston, who must have read *srid* (**bhava*?); T. 162, 39c10 (群生隨愛流, “Beings follow the currents of desire”, translation Willemen 2009: 149) corroborates this reading. BC 26.67-68 (BC_{Tib} D92a7-b2/P111a5-7): *|śes rab rga^a dan śi^b ba'i mtsho chen dag la gru| |rmoṅs pa'i mun pa rnams la ji ltar sgron ma ste| |nad rnams thams cad 'joms pa dag gi^c sman yin zin| |ñon moṅs ljon sin 'joms byed mtshon cha rnon po yin| |de phyir thos pa bsam^d pa bsgom pa rnams kyi ni| |śes rab rnam par 'phel la rab tu 'jug par bya| |gañ gi^e śes rab ran bzin lta byed mig yod pa| |de ni mig dan bral yañ mig dan ldan pa ñid|*. *P: D *dga*'. ^bP: D *'chi*. ^cD: P *gis*. ^dD: P *bsams*. ^eD: P *gis*. “Insight is the boat on the great ocean of old age and death, a lamp, as it were, in the darkness of delusion, the medicine that smites all illnesses, the sharp axe that cuts down the trees of the sins. Therefore practise learning (*śruta*, VE), reflection (*cintā*, VE) and cultivation (*bhāvanā*) for the increase of insight; for he who has the eye that is of the nature of insight, though without ocular vision, has indeed sight.” Translation Johnston 1984, part III: 99-100, with “insight” for “mystic wisdom”, “reflection” for “knowledge”, “cultivation” for “meditation”.

tainly due to its capacity to eliminate whatever binds one to painful existence, i.e., wrong views (*[ku]dr̥ṣṭi*), defilements (*kleśa*, including *rāga*, desire), moral faults (*doṣa*), and influxes (*āsrava*). Indeed, as Aśvaghōṣa has it, “insight completely cuts away the faults, like a river the trees of its banks in the rains. Burnt up by it, the faults cease to grow, like trees burnt by the fire of the thunderbolt which strikes them.”⁸⁴

5.2. The poet is well aware of the tripartition of insight into “born of learning/hearing” (*śrutamaya*), “born of reflection” (*cintāmaya*), and “born of cultivation” (*bhāvanāmaya*).⁸⁵ The first stage of insight, which Aśvaghōṣa does not comment upon, is best illustrated by Nanda developing understanding through the teaching of the Buddha.⁸⁶ As for the third one, which is generally said to presuppose mental concentration, it seems to overlap with liberating insight, as the following excerpt testifies (keeping in mind that, in the formulation of the eightfold path, insight coincides with right view): “For when anyone sees that name-and-corporeality is impermanent, his views are correct, and seeing correctly he attains complete detachment and by the abolition of complaisance [in the things of this world] his desire is abolished.”⁸⁷ Extrapolating from this passage, one should not be too far off the mark in conjecturing that insight consists in the practitioner’s discernment of all factors, physical (*rūpa*) as well as nonphysical (*nāman*), as impermanent, painful, selfless, etc., i.e., under both their general (*sāmānya*-) and their specific (*sva*-) aspects or characteristics (*lakṣaṇa*). This is the exact import of SNa 16.46–48, with its typical allusion to dependent origination:

For I say that for him who recognises and understands the nature of name-and-corporeality, its cause and its disappearance, the influxes are abolished. Therefore, applying your utmost energy, strive quickly for the destruction of the influxes, and in especial examine the elements which are full of suffering, impermanent and devoid of self.

⁸⁴ SNa 16.36: *prajñā tv aśeṣeṇa nihanti doṣāṃs tīradrumān prāvṛṣi niageva | dagdhā yayā na prabhavanti doṣā vajrāgninevānusṛtena vṛkṣāḥ* ||. Translation Johnston 1932: 92, with “insight” for “intuitive wisdom”, and omitting the initial “But” (*tu*).

⁸⁵ SNa 26.68a; see above, n. 83.

⁸⁶ See also, by way of contrast, SNa 17.13–14 (Johnston 1932: 102).

⁸⁷ SNa 16.44: *yadaiva yaḥ paśyati nāmarūpaṃ kṣayīti tad darśanam asya samyak | samyak ca nirvedam upaiti paśyan nandīkṣayāc ca kṣayam eti rāgaḥ* ||. Translation Johnston 1932: 93, with “name-and-corporeality” for “corporeality”, and “desire” for “passion”.

For he who understands the six elements, earth, water, fire, etc., both in their general and their specific characteristics and understands that there is nothing other than them understands complete liberation from them.⁸⁸

This passage also enjoins Nanda to examine (*parīkṣ*) the true nature of reality in order to generate and to nurture liberating insight. As I have emphasized elsewhere, *parīkṣā* is one of the most important concepts in Aśvaghoṣa.⁸⁹ In the present context, this examination likely coincides with the second type of insight, the one born of rational reflection (*cint[an]ā*), of which the poet gives us a remarkable overview in SNa 17.15-22:

Then in possession of his soul and devoted to escape from being, he duly examined the elements of existence according to their prerequisites, their causation, their nature, the sensations with which they are experienced and their individual defects. He investigated the body in order to see its entire material and immaterial substance. Then he deemed it to be impure, subject to suffering, impermanent, without owner or self. For from a consideration of the body's impermanence, its absence of individuality, its lack of self and its liability to suffering he made the tree of the vices shake by the supreme mundane Path. Since inevitably in this world all phenomena come into being from not-being and pass away again from being into not-being, and since they all have a cause and that a transitory cause, therefore he concluded that the world is impermanent. Since the union with *karman* of whatever is born is continually operative and is the cause of bondage and destruction, and since what is called pleasure is but the means of countering suffering, he saw that mundane existence is suffering. Since the individual is a mere creature of the *saṃskāras* and there is neither agent nor knower and active being originates from the complex [of the causes], he saw that this world is devoid [of

⁸⁸ SNa 16.46-48: *yathāsvabhāvena hi nāmarūpaṃ taddhetum evāstagamaṃ ca tasya | vijānataḥ paśyata eva cāhaṃ bravīmi samyak kṣayam āsravāṇāṃ || tasmāt paraṃ saumya vidhāya vīryaṃ śighraṃ ghaṭasvāsravaśaṅkṣayāya | duḥkhān anityāṃś ca nirātmakāṃś ca dhātūn viśeṣeṇa parīkṣamāṇaḥ || dhātūn hi śaḍ bhūsalilānālādīn sāmānyataḥ svena ca lakṣaṇena | avaiti yo nānyaṃ avaiti tebhyaḥ so 'tyantikaṃ mokṣaṃ avaiti tebhyaḥ ||*. Translation Johnston 1932: 93, with “name-and-corporeality” for “corporeality”, and “influxes” for “infections”.

⁸⁹ See Eltschinger 2014b: 6–12.

individuality]. Since the world has no motive force of its own and is not self-dependent, and since there is no one being who exercises paramouncy over actions, and since states of being arise from dependence on other states, he understood the world to be without soul. Then he reached the inaccessible supermundane Path, as one might obtain a breeze in the hot weather by fanning or the fire which abides in the wood by friction or the water in the ground by digging.⁹⁰

Nanda is seen to proceed to the examination prescribed above (*vidhivat*, SNa 17.15; cf. SNa 16.47-48). Enquiring into the *dharmas*, he identifies, mostly by way of inferences, the characteristic features of reality—the body’s being impure, painful, impermanent, and selfless, the contrary of the four wrong notions (*viparyāsa*). This examination seems to coincide, or at least to bear close relationship, with the “supreme mundane path”, and is the surest cathartic-purgative method before reaching the supermundane path. Note, however, that the acquisition of the four aspects by means of rational examination seems to bring the practitioner to the threshold of the supermundane path (recall that Nanda was said to be desirous to see the supreme noble path, *panthānam* āryaṃ *paramaṃ didṛkṣuḥ*, SNa 17.13c).⁹¹

⁹⁰ SNa 17.15-22: *sambhārataḥ pratyayataḥ svabhāvād āsvādato doṣaviśeṣataś ca | athātmavān nihsaraṇātmataś ca dharmeṣu cakre vidhivat parīkṣām || sa rūpiṇaṃ kṛtsnam arūpiṇaṃ ca sāraṃ didṛkṣur vicikāya kāyaṃ | athāśuciṃ duḥkham anityaṃ asvaṃ nirātmakaṃ caiva cikāya kāyaṃ || anityatas tatra hi śūnyataś ca nirātmato duḥkhata eva cāpi | mārgapravekeṇa sa laukikena kleśadrumaṃ sañcalayāṃ cakāra || yasmād abhūtvā bhavatīha sarvaṃ bhūtvā ca bhūyo na bhavaty avaśyaṃ | sahetukaṃ ca kṣayihetumac ca tasmād anityaṃ jagad ity avindat || yataḥ prasūtasya ca karmayogaḥ prasajyate bandhaviḡhātahetuḥ | duḥkhaḥpratīkāraavidhau sukhākhye tato bhavaṃ duḥkham iti vyapaśyat || yataś ca saṃskāragataṃ viviktaṃ na kārakaḥ kaścana vedako vā | sāmagryataḥ sambhavati pravṛtīḥ śūnyaṃ tato lokam imaṃ dadarśa || yasmān nirīhaṃ jagad asvatantraṃ naiśvaryaṃ ekaḥ kurute kriyāsu | tat tat pratītya prabhavanti bhāvā nirātmakaṃ tena viveda lokam || tataḥ sa vātaṃ vyajanād ivoṣṇe kāṣṭhāsritaṃ nirmathanād ivāgnim | antaḥkṣitistaṃ khanaṇād ivāmbho lokottaraṃ vartma durāpam āpa ||.*

⁹¹ On the supermundane path, see below, §8.2.

6. On mindfulness (*smṛti*)

6.1. In order to understand Aśvaghōṣa's description of mindfulness,⁹² one must get first an idea of his views on the senses (*indriya*, or sense organs/faculties). Quite unsurprisingly, frequent epithets of the senses are “restless” (*capala*, e.g., SNa 13.33) and “roving” (*lola*, SNa 9.23). The senses are compared with the ocean (*samudra*) since they can never be “filled to satisfaction with their objects, though perpetually supplied with them” (*na tṛptim adhigacchaty ajasraṃ pūryamāṇo 'pi*, SNa 13.40), and with hungry dogs (*śunām āśāvatām*), which “in their greed can never have enough” (SNa 13.39). In SNa 13.35, Aśvaghōṣa compares the five senses with arrows (*śara*) “tipped with the poison of fancies” (*saṅkalpaviṣadigdha*); they “have anxieties for their feathers and pleasure for their target and fly in the air of the objects of the senses. They are discharged by Love the hunter and strike men, the deer, in the heart and, if they are not warded off, men fall pierced by them.”⁹³ As this extended metaphor suggests, the senses constantly “strike” (*vi√han-*) human beings, a recurrent description of their action in the SNa (note the verbs *√han-*, *√bādh-*, *√pīd-* in SNa 13.31, 33, 34, 42). And indeed,

[r]abid foes oppress some people sometimes or they may not do so, but everyone is always everywhere harassed by the senses. And a man does not go to Hell when killed by foes etc., but he is dragged there helplessly when beaten down by the restless senses. The man who is struck down by the former may or may not suffer in soul, but the man who is harried by the senses suffers in body and soul alike.⁹⁴

⁹² Literature on mindfulness is increasing dramatically. See, first and foremost, Anālayo 2003 and Gethin 2001: 29–68. On *smṛti/sati* especially, see Gethin 2001: 36–44 and Anālayo 2003: 44–66. Note Gethin 2001: 44: “To sum up, it seems to me that there are basically four elements to the notion of *sati* in the literature: (i) *sati* remembers or does not lose what is before the mind; (ii) *sati* is, as it were, a natural ‘presence of mind’; it stands near and hence serves and guards the mind; (iii) *sati* ‘calls to mind’, that is, it remembers things in relationship to things and thus tends to know their value and widen the view; (iv) *sati* is thus closely related to wisdom; it naturally tends to seeing things as they truly are.”

⁹³ SNa 13.35cd-36: *cintāpuṅkhā ratiphalā viṣayākāśagocarāḥ || manuṣyahariṇān ghnanti kāmavyādhērītā hṛdi | viḥanyante yadi na te tataḥ patanti taiḥ kṣatāḥ ||*.

⁹⁴ SNa 13.32-34: *dviṣadbhiḥ śatrubhiḥ kaś cit kadā cit pīḍyate na vā | indriyair bādhyate sarvaḥ sarvatra ca sadaiva ca || na ca prayāti narakam śatruprabhṛtibhir hataḥ | kṛṣyate tatra nighnas tu capalair indriyair hataḥ || hanyamānasya tair*

Aśvaghoṣa's representation of the senses as arrows naturally leads us to his central metaphor for them, that of enemies (*ari*, *śatru*, SNa 13.32, 33, 38) who have to be defeated on the battlefield. These enemies or “archenemies” (*dgra bo chen po*, **mahāśatru*? BC 26.34, BC_{Tib} D90b4/P109a3) are portrayed as hostile (*dviṣat*, SNa 13.32) and ferocious (*viṣama*, SNa 9.46, BC 26.35, BC_{Tib} D90b4-5/P109a5 [*dgra bo ma ruṅs*]), as people wishing others' misfortune (*anarthakāmaḥ... janaḥ*, SNa 9.46) and in whose hands one suffers bitterly (*sdug bsñal 'thob par 'gyur te*, BC 26.34, BC_{Tib} D90b4/P109a4) if one falls into their power (*dbañ du soñ ba*, *ibid.*). One has to wage war (*kuruṣva yuddhaṃ saha... indriyaiḥ*, SNa 9.23) against their army, which is equipped with horses, chariots and elephants (*sāśvarathadvipa*, SNa 9.23), and crush it on the battlefield (*ajira*, SNa 13.37, *rañājira*, SNa 17.23). However, men “may overcome foes, [...] yet they are not counted such heroes as the wise men who overcome the six restless senses.”⁹⁵ And indeed, “a man should not so fear an enemy, fire, a snake or a thunderbolt as he should his own senses; for the latter are ever aggressive.”⁹⁶

6.2. It does not come as a surprise, then, that Aśvaghoṣa's dominant metaphors for mindfulness revolve around battle and protection. SNa 13.36 warned men to ward off the arrows of the senses lest they fall pierced by them. In SNa 13.37, mindfulness becomes part of the fighter's equipment: “[The arrows] should be kept off as they fall by the strong man who stands on the battle-ground of self-control and is armed with the bow of steadfastness and the armour of mindfulness.”⁹⁷ Armour (*varmaṇ*) is indeed Aśvaghoṣa's

duḥkhaṃ hārdaṃ bhavati vā na vā | indriyair bādhyamānasya hārdaṃ sārīram eva ca ||

⁹⁵ SNa 9.23: *tathā hi vīrāḥ puruṣā na te matā jayanti ye sāśvarathadvipān arīn | yathā matā vīratarā mañiṣiṇo jayanti lolāni ṣaḍindriyāṇi ye ||*

⁹⁶ SNa 13.31: *bhetavyaṃ na tathā śatror nāgner nāher na cāśaneḥ | indriyebhyo yathā svebhyas tair ajasraṃ hi hanyate ||*. In BC 26.36 (BC_{Tib} D90b5-6/P109a5-6), Aśvaghoṣa speaks in a very similar fashion of the restless mind: [*rañ gi g.yo ba'i sems las 'jigs^a pa ji lta bar | stag^b rnams las dañ sbrul dañ 'bar ba'i me las dañ | dgra bo las ni de ltar 'jigs par mi bya ste | gañ giṣ^c sbrañ rtsi dañ ni yañ dag rtog pa med*]. ^aD: P 'jig. ^bD: P rtag. ^cD: P gi. “One should not fear tigers or snakes or blazing fires or enemies in the world so much as one's own restless mind, which sees the honey but overlooks the danger (*śaṅkā*).”

⁹⁷ SNa 13.37: *niyamājirasamsthena dhairyakārmukadhārīṇā | nipatanto nivāryās te mahatā smṛtivarmaṇā ||*. Translation Johnston 1932: 75, with “mindfulness” for “attention”.

favourite metaphor for mindfulness, as is made clear, e.g., in SNa 14.38: “[H]e who lacks the armour of mindfulness is a target for the vices, as the unarmed man is a target on the battlefield for the enemy.”⁹⁸ The metaphor recurs in the BC in a most eloquent way:

When mindfulness is present, the faults do not enter into activity; there is no friend or protector equal to mindfulness, and if mindfulness is lost, all certainly is lost. Therefore do not lose hold of mindfulness directed toward the body. The firm in mind, putting on the armour of mindfulness towards the body, conduct themselves in the battlefield of the objects of sense like heroes, who gird on their armour and plunge fearlessly into the ranks of their foes.⁹⁹

This applies, first and foremost, to Nanda himself, of whom Aśvaghoṣa declares that, “holding the bow of holy knowledge, girding on the armour of mindfulness and taking up his post on the chariot of the vows of pure discipline, he prepared for victory, ready to join battle with the foes of vices arrayed on the battlefield of the thoughts.”¹⁰⁰ Mindfulness is further said to protect against the vices as a doorkeeper’s (*dvārādhyakṣa*, SNa 14.36), being mindful of the door, guards (*√gup-*) a town (*pura*) from its foes (*ari*).¹⁰¹ Other similes involving protection and guidance include mindfulness towards the body (*kāyagatā smṛtiḥ*, SNa 14.37) being regarded as guarding a

⁹⁸ SNa 14.38: *śaravyaḥ sa tu doṣāṇāṃ yo hīnaḥ smṛtivarmaṇā | raṇasthaḥ prati-śatrūṇāṃ vihīna iva varmaṇā* |. Translation Johnston 1932: 79, with “mindfulness” for “attention”.

⁹⁹ BC 26.62–63 (BC_{Tib} D92a4-5/P110b8-111a2): *|dran pa yod na skyon rnams 'jug pa ma yin te| |dran pa dañ mñam mdza' po med ciñ bsruñ ba med| |dran pa ñams las ñes par thams cad ñams pa ste| |de phyir lus la soñ ba'i dran pa spañ mi bya| |ji ltar dpa' po rnams ni go cha bzuñ nas su| |dgra bo'i sde la 'jigs pa med rnams 'jug pa ste| |de bñin lus la dran pa'i go cha bgos nas su| |brtan pa rnams ni yul gyi gyul rnams la spyod do|*. Translation Johnston 1984, part III: 99, with “mindfulness” for “awareness”.

¹⁰⁰ SNa 17.23: *sajjñānacāpaḥ smṛtivarma baddhvā viśuddhaśīlavratavāhanasthaḥ | kleśāribhiḥ cittarañjirasthaiḥ sārddham yuyutsur vijayāya tasthau ||*. Translation Johnston 1932: 103–104, with “mindfulness” for “attentiveness”. See also below, §8.2.

¹⁰¹ The simile may be inspired from SN IV.194–195 (Bodhi 2000: 1252–1253) or, perhaps more likely, AN IV.110–111 (Bodhi 2012: 1078), both too long to be quoted here in full. See Anālayo 2003: 55–56, and especially Anālayo 2013: 28–30 (T. 99, 315c19–28 and T. 26, 423c14–29).

person's thoughts "in all circumstances, as a nurse guards a child" (*sarvāsv avasthāsu bālaṃ dhātṛīva rakṣati*);¹⁰² (s)he whose mind "is not guarded by mindfulness is to be recognised as unprotected, like a sightless man walking over uneven ground without a guide"¹⁰³; finally, mindfulness goes after the virtues (*guṇa*), discipline (*śīla*), etc., "like a herdsman after his scattered cows" (*vikīrṇā iva gā gopaḥ*, SNa 14.41).¹⁰⁴

6.3. The armour of mindfulness acts thus as protection against the arrows of the senses. As such, mindfulness is closely connected to the restraint of the senses (*indriyaśamvara*) that forms an important part of morality (*śīla*).¹⁰⁵ For it is due to a wrong cognitive and affective reaction to sensory stimulation that false conceptions, erroneous decisions and hence bad actions and retributions take place. An important statement to this effect recurs with high frequency in the sūtras and is, as we shall see, the basis of Aśvaghōṣa's elaborations of restraint and mindfulness:

On seeing a form with the eye, he does not grasp at its signs and features. Since, if he left the eye faculty unguarded, evil unwholesome states of covetousness and discontent might invade him, he practises the way of its restraint, he guards the eye faculty, he undertakes the restraint of the eye faculty. On hearing a sound with the ear... On smelling an odour with the nose... On tasting a flavour with the tongue... On touching a tangible with the body... On cognizing a mind-object with the mind, he does not grasp at its signs and features. Since, if he left the mind faculty unguarded, evil unwholesome

¹⁰² The image, which I have been unable to trace in the canon, recurs in T. 614, 272a18-19; see Yamabe/Sueki 2009: 13.

¹⁰³ SNa 14.39: *anāthaṃ [...] mano jñeyam yat smṛtir nābhirakṣati | nirṇetā dṛṣṭirahito viṣameṣu carann iva ||*. Translation Johnston 1932: 79, with "mindfulness" for "attention". I have not succeeded in locating a canonical parallel.

¹⁰⁴ A very likely source for this simile is MN I.116-117: *seyyathāpi bhikkhave gimhānaṃ pacchime māse sabbasassesu gāmantasambhatesu gopālako gāvo rakkheyya, tassa rukkhumūlagatassa vā abbhokāsagatassa vā satikaraṇīyam – eva hoti: etā gāvo ti; evam eva kho bhikkhave satikaraṇīyam – eva ahoṣi: ete dhammā ti*. "Just as in the last month of the hot season, when all the crops have been brought inside the villages, a cowherd would guard his cows while staying at the root of a tree or out in the open, since he needs only to be mindful that the cows are there; so too, there was need for me only to be mindful that those states were there." Translation Ñāṇamoli/Bodhi 2001: 209; see also Anālayo 2003: 53 and Anālayo 2011, I: 139.

¹⁰⁵ On this aspect, see, e.g., Anālayo 2003: 50, 60 (and n. 71), 71, 122-123, 145, 225-226.

states of covetousness and discontent might invade him, he practises the way of restraint, he guards the mind faculty, he undertakes the restraint of the mind faculty.¹⁰⁶

Like several other scriptural statements on (non)restraint,¹⁰⁷ this sūtra makes no explicit mention of mindfulness. But while commenting on “he left the eye faculty unguarded”, Buddhaghosa explains: “remained with eye door unclosed by the door panel of mindfulness” (*satikavātena* [...] *apihita-cakkhundvāraṃ hutvā*, Vism I,56 [21,12-13], translation Ñāṇamoli 1991: 24); and commenting on “he practises the way of its restraint”, he says: “he enters upon the way of closing that eye faculty by the door panel of mindfulness” (*tassa cakkhundriyassa satikavātena pidahanatthāya paṭipajjati*, Vism I,56 [21,15-16], translation Ñāṇamoli 1991: 24). In much the same way, other sūtras make the relationship between sense restraint and mindfulness quite explicit:

And how, bhikkhus, is there nonrestraint? Here, having seen a form with the eye, a bhikkhu is intent upon a pleasing form and repelled by a displeasing form. He dwells without having set up mindfulness of the body, with a limited mind, and does not understand as it really is that liberation of mind, liberation by wisdom, wherein those evil unwholesome states cease without remainder. [...] It is in such a way that there is nonrestraint. And how, bhikkhus, is there restraint? Here, having seen a form with the eye, a bhikkhu is not intent upon a pleasing form and not repelled by a displeasing form. He dwells having set up mindfulness of the body, with a measureless mind, and he understands as it really is that liberation of mind, liberation

¹⁰⁶ MN I.180-181: *so cakkhunā rūpaṃ disvā na nimittaggāhī hoti nānubyañjanaggāhī. yatvādhikaraṇaṃ enaṃ cakkhundriyaṃ asaṃvutaṃ viharantaṃ abhijjhādomanassā pāpakā akusalā dhammā anvāssaveyyuṃ tassa saṃvarāya paṭipajjati rakkhati cakkhundriyaṃ cakkhundriye saṃvaraṃ āpajjati. sotena saddaṃ sutvā [...] ghāṇena gandhaṃ ghāyitvā [...] jivhāya rasaṃ sāyitvā [...] kāyena phoṭṭhabbaṃ phusitvā [...] manasā dhammaṃ viññāya na nimittaggāhī hoti nānubyañjanaggāhī. yatvādhikaraṇaṃ enaṃ manindriyaṃ asaṃvutaṃ viharantaṃ abhijjhādomanassā pāpakā akusalā dhammā anvāssaveyyuṃ tassa saṃvarāya paṭipajjati. rakkhati manindriyaṃ manindriye saṃvaraṃ āpajjati.* Translation Ñāṇamoli/Bodhi 2001: 274. Parallels include MN I.223, 273, AN I.113, SN IV.104, 112, 176. See also Anālayo 2003: 225 (and n. 35). Buddhaghosa has devoted an important explanation to this passage in Vism I,53-59.

¹⁰⁷ See, e.g., SN IV.79-80 (Bodhi 2000: 1180–1181).

by wisdom, wherein those evil unwholesome states cease without remainder. [...] It is in such a way that there is restraint.¹⁰⁸

The expression “door panel of mindfulness” (*smṛtikavāṭa*) used by Buddhaghosa is precisely the one Aśvaghoṣa resorts to in the present context: “Then, closing up the dam of the senses with the door panel of mindfulness [...]” (*atha smṛtikavāṭena pidhāyendriyaśaṃvaram*, SNa 16.1). The same type of relationship between restraint and mindfulness is suggested by another of Aśvaghoṣa’s statements on the subject: “Then you should hold back your senses from their objects by resting upon mindfulness, since they are by nature restless.”¹⁰⁹ Thus according to both Buddhaghosa and Aśvaghoṣa, mindfulness is the instrument of sense restraint, that which, so to say, prevents and neutralizes the conceptual and emotional (mis)appropriation of the raw sensory data. For of course, as Aśvaghoṣa insists, the senses cannot—and most certainly should not—be expected *not* to operate (*√vṛt-*) anymore (SNa 13.41ab).¹¹⁰ Rather, they should not grasp (*√grah-*) the characteristics (*nimitta*) and the secondary marks (*anuvyañjana*) when something visible is seen by the eye (*ālokyā cakṣuṣā rūpam*, SNa 13.42). In other words, upon seeing something visible, one should refrain from conceptualizing it *as a woman* or *as a man*—or, if one does (*sacet strīpuruṣagrāhaḥ*, SNa 13.43), one should at the very least abstain from “looking on their hair, teeth, etc., as beautiful” (*śubhataḥ keśadantādīn*

¹⁰⁸ SN IV.198 and 199-200: *kathaṃ ca bhikkhave asaṃvaro hoti. idha bhikkhave bhikkhu cakkhunā rūpaṃ disvā piyarūpe rūpe adhimuccati. appiyarūpe rūpe vyāpajjati. anupaṭṭhitakāyasatī ca viharati parittacetaso. tañca cettovimuttim paññāvimuttim yathābhūtaṃ nappajānāti. yathassa te uppannā pāpakā akusalā dhammā aparisesā nirujjhanti. [...] evaṃ kho bhikkhave asaṃvaro hoti. kathaṃ ca bhikkhave saṃvaro hoti. idha bhikkhave bhikkhu cakkhunā rūpaṃ disvā piyarūpe rūpe nādhimuccati. appiyarūpe rūpe na vyāpajjati. upaṭṭhitakāyasatī ca viharati appamāṇacetaso. tañca cettovimuttim paññāvimuttim yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti. yathassa te uppannā pāpakā akusalā dhammā aparisesā nirujjhanti. [...] evaṃ kho bhikkhave saṃvaro hoti.* Translation Bodhi 2000: 1255–1256. The whole sūtra with its simile of the six different animals (the six senses) and their respective dietary preferences (the six domains) as well as the role of mindfulness is relevant here.

¹⁰⁹ SNa 13.30: *tataḥ smṛtim adhiṣṭhāya capalāni svabhāvataḥ | indriyāṇāṇdriyārthebhyo nivārayitum arhasi |*. Translation Johnston 1932: 74, with “resting upon mindfulness” for “fixing your attention”.

¹¹⁰ See Anālayo 2003: 225 (referring to MN III.298, on which see also Anālayo 2011, II: 849).

anupra¹¹¹sthā-, SNa 13.43). What should be avoided is not the per se unavoidable sense perception itself, but (mental) conceptualization (*manasaḥ parikalpaḥ*, SNa 13.49, 50, 53), false conceptualization (*abhūtaparikalpa*, SNa 13.51) or imaginings (*saṅkalpa*, SNa 13.35).¹¹¹ Upon perceiving something, one should care for (*vyavasthita*, or “limit oneself to”) its component elements alone (*dhātumātra*, SNa 13.42) and keep to its true reality (*tattva*, SNa 13.45). In short, to quote a stanza that Mādhyamika authors from Nāgārjuna onward would be very fond of, “nothing should be subtracted from the object, nothing added to it; it is to be seen as it really is according to its nature and kind.”¹¹² For according to Aśvaghoṣa, “the senses, even though in activity, do not adhere to their objects, so long as imaginations about the latter are not conceived in the mind.”¹¹³ Or, put in terms of dependent origination, “as fire flames when wind and fuel are both present, so the fire of defilements arises when the objects of the senses and imaginations about them are both present.”¹¹⁴

6.4. Indeed, what is really at stake in restraining the senses and mindfulness as components of a Buddhist salvational dispositif is the elimination of the defilements (*kleśa*). Now both in the above-mentioned sūtra pericope and in the SNa, what is to be neutralised, or deprived of a foothold (*padasthāna*, SNa 13.45), is covetousness (*abhidhyā*) and discontent (*daurmanasya*), which SNa 13.46-47 defines in the following way:

¹¹¹ See Yamabe 2003: 238–242, with abundant parallels and a discussion.

¹¹² SNa 13.44: *nāpanetum tataḥ kiñcit prakṣepyaṃ nāpi kiñcana | draṣṭavyaṃ bhūtaḥ bhūtaṃ yādṛśaṃ ca yathā ca yat ||*. On this stanza, see La Vallée Poussin 1932: 393–395. Stanza 7 of (Nāgārjuna’s?) *Pratītyasamutpādhṛdaya* reads as follows: *nāpaneyam ataḥ kiñcit prakṣeptavyaṃ na kiñcana | draṣṭavyaṃ bhūtaḥ bhūtaṃ bhūtaadarśi vimucyate ||*. “Nothing should be subtracted from the [object], nothing added to it; it is to be seen as it really is, [for] he who sees it as it really is is liberated.” To be connected with Ud 8: *diṭṭhe diṭṭhamattaṃ bhaviṣṣati, sute sutamattaṃ bhaviṣṣati, mute mutamattaṃ bhaviṣṣati, viññāte viññātamattaṃ bhaviṣṣati*. “When in the seen will be only what is seen, in the heard only what is heard, in the sensed only what is sensed, in the known only what is known [...]” Translation Anālayo 2003: 230. Anālayo 2003: 229–232 also refers to Sn 793, 798, 802, 812, and 914, MN III.30, MN I.136 and MN III.261.

¹¹³ SNa 13.49: *nendriyaṃ viṣaye tāvat pravṛttam api sajjate | yāvan na manasas tatra parikalpitaḥ pravartate ||*.

¹¹⁴ SNa 13.50: *indhane sati vāyau ca yathā jvalati pāvakaḥ | viṣayāt parikalpāc ca kleśāgnir jāyate tathā ||*. Translation Johnston 1932: 76, with “defilements” for “sin”.

Covetousness destroys the passion-filled world by means of attractive forms, like an enemy with friendly face, having pleasant words on his lips and evil in his heart. But what is known as discontent is repulsion with regard to any object; by giving way to it out of delusion a man is ruined in this world and hereafter.¹¹⁵

As Aśvaghōṣa's reference to *kāma* and his gloss of *daurmanasya* as *pratigha* make sufficiently clear, covetousness and discontent stand here for desire¹¹⁶ (*rāga*; *lobha*, “greed”) and hostility/hatred (*dveṣa*), the two roots of evil traditionally regarded, together with *moha* (“delusion”), as the source of all other faults and vices. In other words, the type of sense restraint made possible by mindfulness prevents the defilements ultimately conditioned by delusion (*moha*, i.e., *avidyā* or “nescience”) from occurring and hence triggering detrimental actions and rebirth. The cognitional, moral and eschatological aspects of sense restraint and mindfulness are best expounded in the concluding stanzas of canto 13:

On seeing a certain form one man is attracted, another dislikes it and a third is indifferent, while yet another feels compassionate disgust for the same object. Hence an object of the senses is not of itself a determining cause either of bondage or of emancipation. Association with a special imagination may make it such or it may not. Therefore one should strive one's hardest for the control of the senses; for unguarded senses lead to suffering and the continuance of existence.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ SNa 13.46-47: *abhidhyā priyarūpeṇa hanti kāmātmakaṃ jagat | arir mitramukhe-neva priyavāk kaluṣāśayaḥ || daurmanasyābhidhānas tu pratigho viṣayāśritaḥ | mohād yenānurvṛttena paratreha ca hanyate ||*. Translation Johnston 1932: 76, with “Covetousness” for “The desire of possession”, and “discontent” for “desire of avoidance”.

¹¹⁶ See SN II.271 (Bodhi 2000: 711), and MN I.462, DN II.141, Anālayo 2003: 57, as well as, for a more detailed (involving *ayoniśomanasikāra*) SĀ parallel (T. 99, 345c14-17), Anālayo 2013: 22.

¹¹⁷ SNa 13.52-54: *dṛṣṭvaikaṃ rūpam anyo hi rajyate 'nyaḥ praduṣyati | kaścid bhavati madhyasthas tatraivānyo gṛhṇāyate || ato na viṣayo hetur bandhāya na vimuktaye | parikalpaviśeṣeṇa saṅgo bhavati vā na vā || kāryaḥ paramayatnena tasmād indriyasamvaraḥ | indriyāṇi hy aguptāni duḥkhāya ca bhavāya ca ||*.

7. *Yoga, samādhi and bhāvanā*

7.1. Āśvaghoṣa devotes important parts of cantos 15 and 16 of the SNa to the issue of “meditation” or “cultivation” (*bhāvanā*). As suggested by the dominant metaphor for this topic, the refining of gold by the goldsmith,¹¹⁸ mental cultivation consists of various procedures (or methods, *vidhi*, SNa 16.6; *krama*, SNa 16.70) aimed at eliminating defilements (*kleśa*), faults (*doṣa*) as well as unwholesome/bad (*aśubha*, SNa 16.70, 73; *asat*, SNa 16.82; *akuśala*, SNa 16.77) thoughts (*vitarka*).¹¹⁹ The good practice¹²⁰ (*guṇavān prayogaḥ*, SNa 16.70; *samyakprayoga*, SNa 16.71) of mental cultivation is a daunting task insofar as the habit of these thoughts has become very strong (*svabhyastabhāva*, SNa 16.70) due to their being accumulated from a beginningless time (*anādikālocitātmaka*, SNa 16.71). The various meditative procedures described in this passage are nothing but *yoga* (SNa 16.49, 52, 86, 92), the path (*mārga*, SNa 16.85-86) for the elimination of the defilements (*kleśaprahāṇa*, SNa 16.86) which, via the attainment of the four *dhyānas* and the six *abhiññās* (SNa 16.1-2), leads to the “seisin of the noble Truths” (*āryasatyādhigama*, SNa 16.85). From a psychological point of view, Āśvaghoṣa’s ideas on the topic rely on two basic doctrines, that of the *anuśayas* (“[latent] tendencies”, “proclivities” of the defilements), which he understands in a way that strongly echoes Sautrāntika/Dārṣṭāntika/Yogācāra, i.e., non-Vaibhāṣika interpretations, and that of the *pratīpakṣas* (“counter-agents”), which relies on the opposition between the defilements and their respective antidotes.¹²¹ From a text-historical point of view, Āśvaghoṣa’s elaborations on the subject can be shown to be little more than a recast of various sūtras whose recensions have been preserved in the *Āṅguttara*-, the *Samyutta*- and the *Majjhimanikāya* as well as in the *Madhyamāgama* and the *Samyuktāgama*.¹²² This does not come as a surprise, however, for Āśvaghoṣa

¹¹⁸ For an in-depth study of this metaphor in the SNa, see Covill 2009: 184–214.

¹¹⁹ On *vitarka* in the context of “purgative” cultivation, see MN I.118-122 (Ñāṇamoli/Bodhi 2001: 211–214, Anālayo 2011, I: 140–143, and Anālayo 2013: 149–154).

¹²⁰ *Prayoga* occurs very frequently in the context of Buddhist meditation in the sense of “exercise” (“*Übung*”); it is, then, semantically very close to *parīkṣā*, “consideration, contemplation” (“*Betrachtung*”). See Schlingloff 1964: 26–29, and n. 4, p. 29.

¹²¹ On counterbalancing unwholesome factors with wholesome ones, see Anālayo 2003: 192–200 and 2013: 149–159.

¹²² Āśvaghoṣa borrows the overall structure of his account from a sūtra that was very

puts the entire exposition in the mouth of the Buddha, who is traditionally regarded as having full command of the revelation of salvific means and their judicious application.¹²³

Thus the Blessed One spoke to him of the right plan and of abandoning the wrong one and, knowing all the varieties of behaviour, He further explained the processes for the elimination of thought. As the physician prescribes the treatment for the cure of disease according to which one of the three humours it is that has become deranged, so the Buddha prescribed the treatment for the faults.¹²⁴

7.2.1. SNa 15.5-6 have been shown by Honjō and Yamabe to reflect an interpretation of *anūsayas* that contradicts the orthodox Vaibhāṣika doctrine according to which no distinction between actual (the so-called *paryavasthāna*)

similar in wording to AN I.253-258 and SĀ no. 1246. Both the SNa and the sūtra open with a detailed comparison between the goldsmith refining gold and the yogin cleansing his mind (SNa 15.66-69; AN I.253-255 [Bodhi 2012: 335–336]; T. 99, 341b26-c24 [Anālayo 2013: 155–156]). The simile extends to the result of the two operations, i.e., reaching such a wieldiness of gold that “whatever kind of ornament the goldsmith wishes to make from it [...] he can achieve his purpose”, and such a malleability of mind that the yogin “is capable of realizing any state realizable by direct knowledge toward which he might incline his mind”. Like his model, but in a much shorter way, Aśvaghōṣa then turns to the six supernatural knowledges (*abhijñā*) that are now within easy reach for the yogin’s mind (SNa 16.1-2; AN I.255-256). After a short introduction (SNa 16.49-52; SNa 16.3-48, which are mostly dedicated to the four nobles’ truths and insight into them, are entirely independent from the AN/SĀ passage), Aśvaghōṣa deals with the pragmatics of meditation and the choice of a meditation subject, which he does first by following the AN/SĀ and its exposition of the three *nimittas* to be chosen by a yogin according to his psychological dispositions (SNa 16.53-58; AN I.256-257), then by drawing on additional sūtras on the same topic (SNa 16.59-64; SN V.112-115; MN I.424-425, on which see Anālayo 2011, I: 349–352). Aśvaghōṣa then reverts to the AN/SĀ passage and borrows its second formulation of the goldsmith-yogin simile (SNa 16.65-66; AN I.257). The last part of his exposition, which takes place after a short transition (SNa 16.67-69) is modelled on yet another sūtra of the MN/MĀ; it deals with the dangers inherent in the choice of a wrong subject of meditation (SNa 16.70-83; MN I.119-122/MĀ no. 101).

¹²³ See SN V.112, one of Aśvaghōṣa’s sources, and Bodhi 2000: 1605.

¹²⁴ SNa 16.68-69: *ity evaṃ anyāyanivartanaṃ ca nyāyaṃ ca tasmai sugato babhāṣe | bhūyaś ca tat tac caritaṃ viditvā vitarkahānāya vidhīn uvāca || yathā bhiṣak pittakaphānilānāṃ ya eva kopam samupaiti doṣaḥ | śamāya tasyaiva vidhiṃ vidhatte vyadhatta doṣeṣu tathaiva buddhaḥ ||*.

and virtual (the *anuśayas* proper) forms of the defilements can be justified.¹²⁵ Suspensive wisdom¹²⁶ (*pratisaṅkhyāna*, SNa 15.4) of any kind only neutralizes the actual occurrence of the defilements, not their root (*mūla*, SNa 15.7), their seed (*bīja*) or their proclivity (*anuśaya*), which mental cultivation alone can destroy. But what should be cultivated in order to uproot them? Their antidote, because all negative psychological events or thoughts (*akuśalā dharmaḥ/vitarkāḥ*) stand in opposition (*virodha*, SNa 15.13) to a specific counteragent which is capable of weakening and ultimately eliminating them. For just as “through habit a man’s thoughts become inclined to whatever he reflects on continually” (SNa 15.18), this person will eliminate this if (s) he repeatedly practises the opposite thought. In SNa 15.12-19, Aśvaghōṣa expounds the counteragency principle by discussing the examples of malevolence (*vyāpāda*) and desire to hurt (*vihiṃsā*) as opposed to benevolence (*maitrī*) and compassion (*karuṇā*)¹²⁷; other examples include muddied water (*ākulaṃ jalam*) and a jewel (*maṇi*, SNa 15.12), light (*prakāśa*) and darkness (*tamas*), wedge (*kīla*) and counter-wedge (*pratikīla*, SNa 15.29),¹²⁸ and disease (*gada*) and antidote (*agada*, SNa 15.65).¹²⁹

7.2.2. Aśvaghōṣa’s treatment of mental cultivation opens with the following simile:

Just as a man, who washes dirt to obtain gold, first eliminates the grosser pieces of dirt and then the finer ones for its cleansing and, having cleansed it, retains the particles of gold, [s]o the man, who has concentrated his mind for the sake of emancipation, first eliminates

¹²⁵ See above, §1.2, and Yamabe 2003: 231–234.

¹²⁶ On *pratisaṅkhyā(na)*, see Eltschinger 2014a: 287–289, and n. 151, p. 288, for definitions and references.

¹²⁷ See MN I.424, T. 125, 581c-582c, and Anālayo 2011, I: 349.

¹²⁸ See also SNa 16.72, below, n. 148.

¹²⁹ In SNa 15.30-63, Aśvaghōṣa successively considers the counteragents of thoughts regarding the prosperity and adversity of one’s kinsfolk (*jñātijana*, SNa 15.30-41), one’s country (*janapada*, SNa 15.42-51), and one’s own life and person (SNa 15.52-63). This provides additional evidence for Aśvaghōṣa’s indebtedness to a passage very close to AN I.254, which terms “subtle defilements” (*upakkilesa*) to be thoughts “about [one’s] relations, thoughts about [one’s] country, and thoughts about [one’s] reputation” (*jātivitakko janapadavitakko anavaññattipaṭisaṃyutto vitakko*; according to Bodhi [2012: 1668, n. 557], the Chinese parallel at SĀ [T. 99, 341c12-13] reads “thought about rebirth in heaven” [生天覺]; see Anālayo 2013: 156).

the grosser vices and then the subtler ones to cleanse his mind and, having cleansed it, retains the constituents of the Law. Just as the goldsmith in this world heats in the fire and turns over repeatedly the gold, after it has been gradually separated from the dirt by washing it with water, so the Yoga adept cleanses his mind from the defilements till it is completely separated from the sins in this world, and then he brings it to tranquillity and concentrates it. And as the goldsmith at his will reduces the gold in many ways so as to be easy to work in the various kinds of ornaments, so when the mendicant's mind is cleansed and has also secured control of the supernatural sciences, he reduces it to tranquillity and employs it as he will and where he will.¹³⁰

Let us now turn to Aśvaghōṣa's short introduction to the topic of mental cultivation in SNa 16.49-52:

And he who has set his mind on the abolition of the defilements must consider the time and the method; for even Yoga, when practised out of season and by the wrong method, leads to calamity and not to its proper result. For if a man should milk a cow which has not calved, he would not obtain milk, because he would be milking at the wrong season; or again, given the right season, he would not obtain milk if through ignorance he were to milk a cow by the horn. And a man who wants a fire will not obtain one from damp wood, however much he tries, nor because of using the wrong method will he obtain a fire even from dry wood, if he merely throws it down.¹³¹ Examining duly

¹³⁰ SNa 15.66-69: *suvarṇahetor api pāmsudhāvako vihāya pāmsūn brhato yathāditaḥ | jahāti sūkṣmān api tadviśuddhaye viśodhya hemāvayavān niyacchati || vimokṣa-hetor api yuktamānaso vihāya doṣān brhataḥ tathāditaḥ | jahāti sūkṣmān api tadviśuddhaye viśodhya dharmāvayavān niyacchati || krameṇādbhiḥ śuddhaṃ kanakam iha pāmsuvyavahitaṃ yathāgnau karmāraḥ pacati bhṛṣam āvartayati ca | tathā yogācāro nipuṇam iha doṣavyavahitaṃ viśodhya kleśebhyaḥ śamayati manaḥ saṅkṣipati ca || yathā ca svacchandād upanayati karmāśrayasukhaṃ suvarṇaṃ karmāro bahuvidhaṃ alaṅkāravidhiṣu | manaḥśuddho bhikṣur vaśagataṃ abhijñāsv api tathā | yathecchaṃ yatrecchaṃ śamayati manaḥ prerayati ca ||* Translation Johnston 1932: 87, with “defilements” for “vices”.

¹³¹ As Johnston (1932: 94, n. 50) remarks, Aśvaghōṣa may have borrowed these two similes from III.141-142 (see Ñāṇamoli/Bodhi 2001: 999); see also MSABh 4,13-15 (see Lévi 1911: 9–10). For the parallel in MĀ no. 173 and a useful comparative chart of the similes, see Anālayo 2011, II: 724–725.

the conditions of time and place as well as the scope and method of Yoga, a man should strive his utmost while having regard to the strong and weak points of his self and not doing what is contrary thereto.¹³²

With its emphasis on timeliness and expediency, this short introduction again reveals Aśvaghōṣa's indebtedness to AN I.253-258/SĀ no. 1246, a sūtra in which the Buddha spells out some of the requirements of mental concentration. To this end, the Blessed One mentions three *nimittas* ("subjects of meditation," Johnston 1932: 94, n. 58)¹³³: *samādhinimitta*, "subject of meditation inducing concentration"; *paggāhanimitta*, "subject of meditation inducing exertion/energy"; and *upekkhānimitta*, "subject of meditation inducing equanimity".¹³⁴ The Buddha warns the monks against practising any of these *nimittas* exclusively (*ekānta*); rather, they should pick them up alternately, practising each of them "from time to time" (*kālena kālam*). The alternate cultivation of these three *nimittas* most likely corresponds to the time (*kāla*) and the expedient (*abhyupāya*) Aśvaghōṣa has in mind in this passage which, as we have seen, he puts in the mouth of the Buddha prescribing the "right plan" or method (*nyāya*).¹³⁵ But Aśvaghōṣa's introduc-

¹³² SNa 16.49-52: *kleśaprahāṇāya ca niścitenā kālo 'bhyupāyaś ca parīkṣitavyaḥ | yogo 'py akāle hy anupāyataś ca bhavaty anarthāya na tadguṇāya || ajātavatsām yadi gām duhita naivāpnuyāt kṣīram akāladohī | kāle 'pi vā syān na payo labheta mohena śrṅgād yadi gām duhita || ādrāc ca kāṣṭhāj jvalanābhikāmo naiva prayatnād api vahnim ṛcchet | kāṣṭhāc ca śuṣkād api pātanena naivāgnim āpnoty anupāyapūrvam || taddeśakālau vidhivat parīkṣya yogasya mātṛām api cābhyupāyam | balābale cātmani sampradhārya kāryaḥ prayatno na tu tadviruddhaḥ ||*. Translation Johnston 1932: 94, with "defilements" for "vices".

¹³³ For another use of *nimitta* in the context of Buddhist meditation, see Schlingloff 1964: 47-49, and n. 6, p. 47. On *nimitta*, see Deleanu 2006: II.473, n. 17, and Anālayo 2003: 237, n. 21. Deleanu proposes the following definition: "In its basic usage, *nimitta* refers to the characteristic(s)/mark(s)/sign(s) (as directly perceived but more often as defined *a priori* by the Buddhist doctrine) which is/are grasped and internalised through meditation or reflection." Note also Schmithausen 1982: 63, n. 15a: "Der Terminus *nimitta* bezeichnet [...] zunächst das charakteristische Merkmal oder die typische Erscheinungsform des als Übungsobjekt gewählten (äußeren) Gegenstandes, das man zu Beginn der Übung 'aufnimmt' (*(ud-)grah-*), oder einfach dieser selbst."

¹³⁴ On the three *nimittas*, see also ŚrBh I.54,12-13 and 56,9-10 (*śamathanimitta*, *pragrahanimitta*, *upekṣānimitta*).

¹³⁵ See also SNa 16.67. In addition, SNa 16.52 mentions place (*deśa*) and "scope"

tion also mentions untimeliness (*akāla*) and the need, for the yogin, to adapt the method to his own strengths and weaknesses, i.e., to his psychological dispositions (in SNa 16.68, the Buddha is said to know “all the varieties of behaviour”, *tat tac caritaṃ veditvā*).¹³⁶ These two features of his introduction to *samādhi* are missing in AN I.253-258, but appear in SN V.112-115, a sūtra addressing a similar topic. This sūtra does not allude to the three *nimittas*, but speaks instead of (*sam*)*bojjhaṅgas* (“factors of awakening¹³⁷”), distinguishing two sets of them: on the one hand, *passaddhi* (“tranquillity”, Skt. *praśrabdhi*), *samādhi* (“concentration”), *upekkhā* (“equanimity”, Skt. *upekṣā*), and on the other hand *dhammapavicaya* (“discrimination of states/factors”, Skt. *dharmapравicaya*), *virīya* (“energy”, Skt. *vīrya*), and *pīti* (“rapture”, Skt. *prīti*). Whereas using the first set of factors is untimely when one’s mind is sluggish (*līna*) and the second, when one’s mind is excited (*ud-dhata*), using the first set of factors is appropriate when the mind is excited and the second, when the mind is sluggish.¹³⁸ Contrary to AN I.253-258, SN V.112-115 relates the prescribed subjects of meditation to different states of mind; in addition, SN V.112-115 adduces examples for each case examined. As I mentioned above, the overall structure of SNa 15.66-69 and 16.49-69 is borrowed from AN I.253-258. In SNa 16.53-58, which immediately follows the above-quoted introduction, Aśvaghōṣa merges the two sūtras in the following way: the threefold *nimitta*-structure and terminology is maintained, but it is now distributed into the psychological dispositions of SN V.112-115, themselves subdivided into timely and untimely; the examples are drawn mostly from the SN passage:

But when the soul is excited, he should not resort to the subject of meditation known as “inducing energy”; for thus the mind does not

(*mātrā*, Johnston; “extent”, Covill 2007: 305). Whereas the precise meaning of the latter remains unclear to me (does it refer to the “measure”, i.e., to the duration of the practice?), the former may refer to solitary places such as a forest, which Aśvaghōṣa evokes several times in the SNa. See also SNa 15.1-2, SNa 14.46-52, and SNa 16.84-86.

¹³⁶ The *locus classicus* for the adaptation of meditation subjects to the various temperaments is Vism III.121; see also AKBh 337,9-341,6 and *Kośa* IV.148-158.

¹³⁷ On the *bodhyaṅgas*/*bojjhaṅgas*, see also below, §8.2.

¹³⁸ For a parallel in the SĀ, see T. 99, 191c25-192a23, translated in Anālayo 2013: 202; see also Anālayo 2003: 235–239.

reach tranquillity, as fire fanned by [the wind] does not die down.¹³⁹ It is when the mind is excited that it is the time for the subject of meditation which is prescribed for tranquillity; for thus the thoughts can assume tranquillity, as a blazing fire would be quenched by water.¹⁴⁰ When the mind is sluggish, he should not resort to the subject of meditation for inducing tranquillity; for thus the mind becomes still more sluggish, like a fire of little substance when not fanned.¹⁴¹ It is

¹³⁹ Cf. SN V.114: *seyyathāpi bhikkhave puriso mahantam aggikhandhaṃ nibbāpetukāmo assa. so tattha sukkhāni ceva tiṇāni pakkhipeyya sukkhāni gomayāni pakkhipeyya sukkhāni ca kaṭṭhāni pakkhipeyya mukhavātañca dadeyya na ca paṃsukena okireyya. bhabbo nu kho so puriso mahantam aggikhandhaṃ nibbāpetun ti. no hetam bhante. evam eva* [...]. “Suppose, bhikkhus, a man wants to extinguish a great bonfire. If he throws dry grass, dry cowdung, and dry timber into it, blows on it, and does not scatter soil over it, would he be able to extinguish that great bonfire? – No, venerable sir. – So too, bhikkhus [...].” Translation Bodhi 2000: 1606. T. 99, 192a6-7: 譬如熾火欲令其滅。足其乾薪。於意云何。豈不令火增熾燃耶。“It is just as a blazing fire which one wants to extinguish by adding dry firewood. What do you think, would the fire not burn even more?” Translation Anālayo 2013: 202.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. SN V.114: *seyyathāpi bhikkhave puriso mahantam aggikhandhaṃ nibbāpetukāmo assa. so tattha allāni ceva tiṇāni pakkhipeyya allāni ca gomayāni pakkhipeyya allāni ca kaṭṭhāni pakkhipeyya udakavātañca dadeyya. paṃsukena ca okireyya. bhabbo nu kho so puriso mahantam aggikhandhaṃ nibbāpetun ti. evam bhante. evam eva* [...]. “Suppose, bhikkhus, a man wants to extinguish a great bonfire. If he throws wet grass, wet cowdung, and wet timber into it, sprays it with water, and scatters soil over it, would he be able to extinguish that great bonfire? – Yes, venerable sir. – So too, bhikkhus [...].” Translation Bodhi 2000: 1607. T. 99, 192a19-20: 譬如燃火欲令其滅。足其焦炭。彼火則滅。“It is just as a blazing fire that one wants to extinguish by adding burned-out charcoal. That fire will indeed die out.” Translation Anālayo 2013: 203.

¹⁴¹ Cf. SN V.112-113: *seyyathāpi bhikkhave puriso parittam aggim ujjaletukāmo assa. so tattha allāni ceva tiṇāni pakkhipeyya allāni ca gomayāni pakkhipeyya allāni ca kaṭṭhāni pakkhipeyya udakavātañca dadeyya paṃsukāna ca okireyya bhabbo nu kho so puriso parittam aggim ujjaletum. no hetam bhante. evam eva* [...]. “Suppose, bhikkhus, a man wants to make a small fire flare up. If he throws wet grass, wet cowdung, and wet timber into it, sprays it with water, and scatters soil over it, would he be able to make that small fire flare up? – No, venerable sir. – So too, bhikkhus [...].” Translation Bodhi 2000: 1605–1606. T. 99, 191c28-192a1: 譬如小火。欲令其燃增以焦炭。云何比丘。非爲增炭令火滅耶。“It is just as a small fire that one wants to flare up by adding burned-out charcoal. What do you think, O monks, would adding [burned-out] charcoal not make the fire die out?” Translation Anālayo 2013: 202.

when the mind is sluggish that it is the time for the subject of meditation prescribed for inducing energy; for thus the mind can become capable of action, like a sinking fire through fuel.¹⁴² The subject of meditation inducing indifference is not recommended when the thoughts are either sluggish or excited; for thus it might bring about a grievous calamity, like the illness of a sick man if it is neglected. When the thoughts have attained equilibrium, then is the time for the subject of meditation inducing indifference; for thus there would be application to the duty in hand, like a chariot starting off with well-trained horses.¹⁴³

Aśvaghōṣa has more such cases to present, however; these he borrows for the most part from MN I.424-425. The cases considered here are also three. That the former ones amounted to three was obviously due to the fact that Aśvaghōṣa conformed to the three-*nimitta* structure of AN I.253-258. The rationale behind the number of the new cases is to be sought in the fact that they refer to persons afflicted with the three basic defilements of desire (*rāga*), malevolence (*vyāpāda*, or hatred/hostility,

¹⁴² Cf. SN V.113: *seyyathāpi bhikkhave puriso parittam aggim ujjaletukāmo assa. so tattha sukkhāni ceva tiṇāni pakkhipeyya sukkhāni gomayāni pakkhipeyya sukkhāni kaṭṭhāni pakkhipeyya. mukhavātāṇca dadeyya paṃsukena okireyya. bhabbo nu kho so puriso parittam aggim ujjaletun ti. evam bhante. evam eva [...]*. “Suppose, bhikkhus, a man wants to make a small fire flare up. If he throws dry grass, dry cowdung, and dry timber into it, blows on it, and does not scatter soil over it, would he be able to make that small fire flare up? – Yes, venerable sir. – So too, bhikkhus [...].” Translation Bodhi 2000: 1606. T. 99, 192a12-14: 譬如小火欲令其燃足其乾薪。云何比丘。此火寧熾燃不。“It is just as a small fire that one wants to get to flare up by adding dry firewood. What do you think, O monks, will this fire flare up and burn?” Translation Anālayo 2013: 203.

¹⁴³ SNa 16.53-58: *pragrāhakaṃ yat tu nimittam uktam uddhanyamāne hṛdi tan na sevyam | evaṃ hi cittaṃ praśamaṃ na yāti [---]nā vahnir iveryamāṇaḥ || śamāya yat syān niyataṃ nimittam jātodbhave cetasi tasya kālaḥ | evaṃ hi cittaṃ praśamaṃ niyacchet pradīpyamāno 'gnir ivodakena || śamāvahaṃ yan niyataṃ nimittam sevyam na tac cetasi līyamāne | evaṃ hi bhūyo layam eti cittaṃ anūryamāṇo 'gnir ivālpasāraḥ || pragrāhakaṃ yan niyataṃ nimittam layam gate cetasi tasya kālaḥ | kriyāsamarthaṃ hi manas tathā syān mandāyamāno 'gnir ivendhanena || aupekṣikaṃ nāpi nimittam iṣṭam layam gate cetasi sodbhava vā | evaṃ hi tīvraṃ janayed anarthaṃ upekṣito vyādhir ivāturasya || yat syād upekṣā niyataṃ nimittam sāmyam gate cetasi tasya kālaḥ | evaṃ hi kṛtyāya bhavet prayogo ratho vidheyāśva iva prayātāḥ ||*.

dveṣa) and delusion (*moha*), which parallel the three roots of demerit (*akuṣalamūla*, i.e., greed, *lobha*, hatred, and delusion) and can be easily compared with persons subject to the three “humours” of Indian medicine, i.e., phlegm (*śleṣman*, *kapha*), bile (*pitta*), and wind (*vāta*).¹⁴⁴ Here is the passage in question:

When the mind is disturbed by the excitement of desire, the method of cultivating the idea of benevolence should be avoided; for the man of passionate nature goes wrong through benevolence, like a man disturbed by phlegm through unctuous treatment. But when the mind is excited by desire, the subject of meditation called “impure” should be selected so as to reach steadfastness; for thus the man of passionate nature obtains relief, like the man subject to phlegm who uses astringent remedies. But when the mind is agitated by the vice of malevolence, do not choose the subject of meditation known as “impure”; for that meditation tends to the destruction of the man whose nature is full of hate, just as pungent treatment does for the man of bilious temperament. But when the mind is troubled by the vice of malevolence, practise thoughts of benevolence by considering the application [of hurt] to yourself; for benevolence tends to tranquillising the nature full of hate, like cooling treatment the man of bilious temperament. When the working of the mind is subject to delusion, the subjects of benevolence and impurity are unsuitable; for from them a man is overtaken by further delusion, as a man of windy temperament is overtaken by further unconsciousness, if given astringent treatment. When the working of the mind is affected by delusion, the subject of reflection should be causality; for this is

¹⁴⁴ Remember that the Buddha prescribing the right method of eliminating polluting and evil thoughts was compared with a physician prescribing “the treatment for the cure of disease according to which one of the three humours it is that has become deranged” (SNa 16.69; see above, n. 124). Aśvaghoṣa’s examples, the origin of which I am unaware of, become intelligible once one knows that each humour has three dominant properties: phlegm is cold (*śīta*), unctuous (*snigdha*), and heavy (*guru*), hence weakened/eliminated by a dry (*rūkṣa*) treatment, and strengthened by an unctuous one; wind is cold, dry, and light (*laghu*), hence weakened/eliminated by an unctuous treatment, and strengthened by a dry one; finally, bile is hot (*uṣṇa*), pungent and strong (*tīkṣṇa*), hence weakened/eliminated by a cold treatment, and strengthened by a strong one.

the path to peace for the deluded mind, like unctuous treatment for the man of windy temperament.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁵ SNa 16.59-64: *rāgoddhavavyākulite 'pi citte maitropasaṃhāravidhir na kāryaḥ | rāgātmako muhyati maitrayā hi snehaṃ kaphakṣobha ivopayujya || rāgoddhate cetasi dhairyam etya niṣevitavyaṃ tv aśubhaṃ nimittam | rāgātmako hy evam upaiti śarma kaphātmako rūkṣam ivopayujya || vyāpādadoṣeṇa manasy udīrṇe na sevitaṃ tv aśubhaṃ nimittam | dveṣātmakasya hy aśubhā vadhāya pittātmanas tīkṣṇa ivopacāraḥ || vyāpādadoṣakṣubhite tu citte sevyā svapakṣopanayena maitrī | dveṣātmano hi praśamāya maitrī pittātmanaḥ śīta ivopacāraḥ || mohānubaddhe manasaḥ pracāre maitrāśubhā caiva bhavaty ayogaḥ | tābhyāṃ hi sammoham upaiti bhūyo vāyvātmako rūkṣam ivopanīya || mohātmikāyāṃ manasaḥ pravṛttau sevyas tv idampratyayatāvihāraḥ | mūḍhe manasy eṣa hi śāntimārgo vāyvātmake snigdha ivopacāraḥ ||* Translation Johnston 1932: 95, with “desire” for “passion.” SNa 16.59-64 can be usefully compared with ŚrBh I.50,14-52,1: *katham anurūpa ālambane cittam upanibadhnāti | saced revata bhikṣur yogī yogācāro rāgacarita eva sann aśubhāalambane cittam upanibadhnāti | [...] dveṣacarito vā punar maitryām | mohacarito vedampratyayatāpratītyasamutpāde | mānacarito vā dhātuprabhede | saced revata sa bhikṣur yogī yogācāro vitarkacarita eva sann ānāpānasmṛtau cittam upanibadhnāti | evaṃ so 'nurūpa ālambane cittam upanibadhnāti |* “How does [the monk, the yogin, the yoga-practitioner] fix his mind on the proper object-support? O Revata, the monk, the yogin, the yoga-practitioner, if he is inclined to desire, fixes his mind on the loathsome as an object-support. Or [if] he is inclined to hatred, on benevolence; or [if] he is inclined to delusion, on causality and dependent origination; or [if] he is inclined to conceit, on the division [of what seemingly exists] into [constitutive] elements; O Revata, the monk, the yogin, the yoga-practitioner, if he is inclined to [distracting and polluting] thoughts, fixes his mind on being mindful of breathing in and out.” As remarked by Johnston, Aśvaghōṣa’s description of the treatment of the deluded mind by means of causality (*idampratyayatā*) has no clear equivalent in MN I.424-425. In my opinion, Aśvaghōṣa likely conflated the antidote to delusion and the antidote to doubt as it is prescribed in a SĀ passage such as T. 99, 192c14-16: 何等爲疑蓋不食。彼緣起法思惟。未生疑蓋不起。已生疑蓋令滅。“What is the de-nourishment from the hindrance of doubt? Giving attention to dependent arising, the not yet arisen hindrance of doubt does not arise, the already arisen hindrance of doubt is removed.” Translation Anālayo 2013: 184. Note also AN IV.358 (quoted Vism III.122 as part of the *Meghiya Sutta*): *bhikkhunā [...] cattāro dhammā uttarimā bhāvetabbā. aśubhā bhāvetabbā rāgassa pahānāya mettā bhāvetabbā vyāpādassa pahānāya ānāpānasati bhāvetabbā vitakkūpacchedāya aniccasaññā bhāvetabbā asmimānasamugghātāya. aniccasaññino [...] anattasaññā saṇṭhāti anattasaññī asmimānasamugghātāṃ pāpuṇāti diṭṭh’eva dhamme nibbānanti.* “The bhikkhu should develop further [another] four things. [The perception of] unattractiveness should be developed to abandon lust. Loving kindness should be developed to abandon ill will. Mindfulness of breathing should be developed to cut

AN I.253-258 ends with a comparison between the choice of a subject of meditation by the yogin and the goldsmith's concern for the proper operations in his treatment of gold:

Suppose, bhikkhus, a goldsmith or his apprentice would prepare a furnace, heat up the crucible, take some gold with tongs, and put it into the crucible. Then from time to time he would blow on it, from time to time sprinkle water over it, and from time to time just look on. If the goldsmith or his apprentice were to exclusively blow on the gold, it is possible that the gold would just burn up. If he were to exclusively sprinkle water on the gold, it is possible the gold would cool down. If he were exclusively to look on, it is possible the gold would not reach the right consistency. But if the goldsmith or his apprentice from time to time blows on it, from time to time sprinkles water over it, and from time to time just looks on, the gold would become malleable, wieldy, and luminous, pliant and properly fit for work. Then whatever kind of ornament the goldsmith wishes to make from it—whether a bracelet, earrings, a necklace, or a golden garland—he can achieve his purpose.¹⁴⁶

off thoughts. The perception of impermanence should be developed to eradicate the conceit 'I am'. When one perceives impermanence, the perception of non-self is stabilized. One who perceives non-self eradicates the concept 'I am,' which is nibbāna in this very life." Translation Bodhi 2012: 1250. However, MN I.424-425 is not entirely without correspondence to SNa 16.64 provided one takes the perception of impermanence (*aniccasaññā*) to be symmetrical with causality (*idampratrayatā*), and the conceit "I am" (*asmimāna*) to be equivalent to delusion (*moha*): "Rāhula, develop meditation on the perception of impermanence; for when you develop meditation on the perception of impermanence, the conceit 'I am' will be abandoned." (*aniccasaññāṃ rāhula bhāvanāṃ bhavehi, aniccasaññāṃ hi te rāhula bhāvanāṃ bhāvayato yo asmimāno so pahīyissati* |. Translation Ñānamoli/Bodhi 2001: 531). As we have just seen, also the ŚrBh regards causality and dependent origination (*idampratrayatāpratītyasamutpāda*, I.70,18 and 72,1) as the counteragent of delusion. After having defined them, the ŚrBh (I.72,1-3) states: *yad ālambanāṃ manasikurvan mohādhikāḥ pudgalo mohacarito mohaṃ prajahāti tanūkaroti mohacaritāc cittam viśodhayati* |. "Meditating on this (*yat*) object-support, a person with much delusion [and] inclined to delusion abandons [and] weakens delusion, purifies his(/her) mind from the inclination for delusion."

¹⁴⁶ AN I.257: *seyyathāpi bhikkhave suvaṇṇakāro vā suvaṇṇakārantevāsī vā ukkaṃ bandhati ukkaṃ bandhitvā ukkāṃmukhaṃ ālimpeti ukkāṃmukhaṃ ālimpetvā saṇḍāsena jātārūpaṃ gahetvā ukkāṃmukhe pakkhipitvā kālena kālaṃ abhidhamati*

Aśvaghōṣa's indebtedness to this or a very similar passage is obvious:

Compare the goldsmith in this world who, placing gold in the mouth of the forge, applies the bellows at the proper time, wets it with water at the proper time and gradually at the proper time allows it to cool off. For by using the bellows at the wrong time he would burn it too soft and by letting it cool off at the wrong time he would not bring it to maturity properly.¹⁴⁷

As Aśvaghōṣa strongly insists, once again in close reliance on a sūtra (MN I.119-122), a wrong subject of meditation (*akuśalaṃ nimittam*, SNa 16.72; *aśubhaṃ nimittam*, SNa 16.74; *asan nimittam*, SNa 16.78) should by no means be resorted to, “by attachment to which disaster might ensue” (*ya-trāvasaktasya bhaved anarthaḥ*, SNa 16.78). As in the sūtra, five successive alternatives are considered. (1) Rather than cultivating a wrong subject, one should try another method (*dviṭīyaṃ kramam ārabheta*, SNa 16.71) and pick up a new one: “As a man, skilled in the job, uses a small wedge to knock out another bigger one, so a subject of meditation that has bad results should be driven out by selecting another one.”¹⁴⁸ (2) If this still does not yield the expected result, one should weaken the evil thoughts “by examining the faults

kālena kālaṃ udakena paripphoseti kālena kālaṃ ajjhupekkhati. sace bhikkhave suvaṇṇakāro vā suvaṇṇakārantevāsī vā taṃ jātārūpaṃ ekantaṃ abhidhamēyya ṭhānaṃ taṃ jātārūpaṃ daheyya. sace bhikkhave suvaṇṇakāro vā suvaṇṇakārantevāsī vā taṃ jātārūpaṃ ekantaṃ udakena paripphosēyya ṭhānaṃ taṃ jātārūpaṃ nibbāpeyya. sace bhikkhave suvaṇṇakāro vā suvaṇṇakārantevāsī vā taṃ jātārūpaṃ ekantaṃ ajjhupekkheyya ṭhānaṃ taṃ jātārūpaṃ na sammā paripākaṃ gaccheyya. yato ca kho bhikkhave suvaṇṇakāro vā suvaṇṇakārantevāsī vā taṃ jātārūpaṃ kālena kālaṃ abhidhamati kālena kālaṃ udakena paripphoseti kālena kālaṃ ajjhupekkhati taṃ hoti jātārūpaṃ muduṃ ca kammanīyaṃ ca pabhassaraṃ ca na ca pabhaṅgu sammā upeti kammāya yassā yassā ca pilandhanavikatiyā ālaṅkhati yadi paṭṭakāya yadi kuṇḍalāya yadi gīveyyake yadi suvaṇṇamālāya taṃ c'assa atthaṃ anubhoti. Translation Bodhi 2012: 338.

¹⁴⁷ SNa 16.65-66: *ulūkāmukhasthaṃ hi yathā suvarṇaṃ suvarṇakāro dhamatīha kāle | kāle pariprokṣayate jalena krameṇa kāle samupekṣate ca || dahet suvarṇaṃ hi dhamaṃ akāle jale kṣīpaṃ saṃsamayed akāle | na cāpi samyak paripākam eṇaṃ nayed akāle samupekṣamāṇaḥ ||*

¹⁴⁸ SNa 16.72: *aṇvyā yathānyā vipulāṇīr anyā nīrvāhyate tadviduṣā nareṇa | tadvat tad evākuśalaṃ nimittaṃ kṣīpeṇa nimittāntarasevanena ||* Aśvaghōṣa's source here is MN I.119 (Ñāṇamoli/Bodhi 2001: 211). For a parallel in the MĀ, see T. 26, 588a10-c21 and its partial translation in Anālayo 2013: 149–150. Note, however, that Aśvaghōṣa's simile is closer to the one in the MN than to the one in the MĀ.

inherent in them” (*taddoṣaparīkṣaṇena*, SNa 16.73) or, as the sūtra says, by examining the “danger” in those thoughts, “[f]or men of noble birth are ashamed of the active workings of the mind towards impurity, the invisible, unholy desires, as a spirited and handsome youth is ashamed of unsightly and ill-arranged objects attached to his neck.”¹⁴⁹ (3) Should this method remain ineffective, the yogin should try to obliterate¹⁵⁰ the evil, distracting thoughts “by some other means such as study, action, etc.” (*kāryāntarair adhyayanakriyādyaiḥ*, SNa 16.77). (4) It might be that trying to forget or “obliterate” these thoughts does not work either; then one ought to “driv[e] them out in the order of their grossness” (*yathāsthūlanibarhaṇena* [...] *praheyāḥ*, SNa 16.80), “like the impurities of gold” (*suvarṇadoṣā iva*, SNa 16.80).¹⁵¹ (5) And

¹⁴⁹ SNa 16.76: *vyapatrapante hi kulaprasūtā manahpracārair aśubhaiḥ pravṛttaiḥ | kaṇṭhe manasvīva yuvā vapuṣmān acākṣuṣair aprayatair viṣaktaiḥ ||*. Aśvaghōṣa’s source here is MN I.119-120 (Ñāṇamoli/Bodhi 2001: 211–212). See also Anālayo 2013: 150 (MĀ; same simile).

¹⁵⁰ The term Johnston translates as “obliteration” is *vismaraṇa*, i.e., literally “forgetting”. This is an allusion to MN I.120: *tassa ce bhikkhave bhikkhuno tesam pi vitakkānaṃ ādīnavaṃ upaparikkhato uppajant’eva pāpakā akusalā vitakkā chandūpasamhitā pi dosūpasamhitā pi mohūpasamhitā pi tena bhikkhave bhikkhunā tesam vitakkānaṃ asati-amanasikāro āpajjitabbo*. “If, while he is examining the danger in those thoughts, there still arise in him evil unwholesome thoughts connected with desire, with hate, and with delusion, then he should try to forget those thoughts and should not give attention to them.” Translation Ñāṇamoli/Bodhi 2001: 212. Note that the sūtra does not allude to *adhyayanakriyādi*. The MĀ parallel (see Anālayo 2013: 151) is quite different: “It is just like a clear-sighted person who, not wishing to see forms that are out in the light, either closes the eyes or turns the body away and leaves” (T. 26, 588b15-16: 猶有目人色在光明。而不用見。彼或閉目或身避去。).

¹⁵¹ SNa 16.81: *drutaprayāṇaprabhṛtīṃś ca tikṣṇāt kāmaprayogāt parikhidyamānaḥ | yathā naraḥ saṃśrayate tathaiva prājñena doṣeṣv api vartitavyam ||*. “As a man exhausted with strenuous erotic practices takes to walking quickly, etc., so does the wise man deal with the vices.” Aśvaghōṣa’s illustration remains somewhat obscure to me due to the lack of any allusion to love-making (is *kāmaprayogāt* a corruption?) in the poet’s obvious source, MN I.120: *seyyathā pi bhikkhave puriso sīghaṃ gaccheyya tassa evam assa: kin nu kho ahaṃ sīghaṃ gacchāmi yan nūnāhaṃ saṇikaṃ gaccheyyan ti. so saṇikaṃ gaccheyya tassa evam assa: kin nu kho ahaṃ saṇikaṃ gacchāmi yan nūnāhaṃ tiṭṭheyyan ti. so tiṭṭheyya tassa evam assa: kin nu kho ahaṃ ṭhito yan nūnāhaṃ nisīdeyyan ti. so nisīdeyya tassa evam assa: kin nu kho ahaṃ nisinnō yan nūnāhaṃ nipajjeyyan ti. so nipajjeyya, evaṃ hi so bhikkhave puriso*

[i]f evil thoughts are not allayed owing to failure to find the correct counteragent, still they must not be tolerated for a moment without opposition, any more than snakes in the house would be. A man may do his best by setting the teeth, pressing the edge of the gums with the tongue and restraining the mind with the mind, but in any case they will not be readily docile.¹⁵²

Aśvaghōṣa concludes his treatment of *yoga* in SNa 16 with a short appendix on energy (*vīrya*, SNa 16.93-98) motivated by his praise of the courage (*vikrama*) of the sixty-two chief disciples of the Buddha (SNa 16.87-92), and

oḷārikaṃ oḷārikaṃ iriyāpaṭhaṃ abhinivajjetvā sukhumaṃ sukhumaṃ iriyāpaṭhaṃ kappeyya. evam eva [...]. “Just as a man walking fast might consider: ‘Why am I walking fast? What if I walk slowly?’ and he would walk slowly; then he might consider: ‘Why am I walking slowly? What if I stand?’ and he would stand; then he might consider: ‘Why am I standing? What if I sit?’ and he would sit; then he might consider: ‘Why am I sitting? What if I lie down?’ and he would lie down. By doing so he would substitute for each grosser posture one that was subtler. So too...” Translation Ñāṇamoli/Bodhi 2001: 212. Note also T. 26, 588b29-c6: 猶人行道進路急速。彼作是念。我何爲速。我今寧可徐徐行耶。彼即徐行。復作是念。我何爲徐行。寧可住耶。彼即便住。復作是念。我何爲住寧可坐耶。彼即便坐。復作是念。我何爲坐。寧可臥耶。彼即便臥。如是彼人漸漸息身羸行。“It is just as a person who walks on a path, hurrying along quickly, and then reflects: ‘Why am I hurrying? Wouldn’t I rather walk more slowly now?’ and so the person walks slowly. Then that person reflects again: ‘Why am I walking slowly? Wouldn’t I rather stand still?’ and so the person stands still. Then that person reflects again: ‘Why am I standing? Wouldn’t I rather sit down?’ and so the person sits down. Then that person reflects again: ‘Why am I sitting? Wouldn’t I rather lie down?’ and so the person lies down. In this way that person gradually quietens the body’s gross activities.” Translation Anālayo 2013: 163. In the MN I.120-121 and its MĀ parallel, the method thus exemplified is that of “giving attention to stilling the thought-formation of those thoughts” (*tesaṃ vitakkānaṃ vitakkasaṅkhārāsanthānaṃ manasikātabbam*, translation Ñāṇamoli/Bodhi 2001: 212), which has no equivalent in SNa 16.80-81.

¹⁵² SNa 16.82-83: *te ced alabdhapratipakṣabhāvā naivopaśāmyeyur asadvitarkāḥ | muhūrtam apy aprativadhyamānā gr̥he bhujaṅgā iva nādhivāsyāḥ || dante ‘pi dantaṃ praṇidhāya kāmam tālvagram utpīḍya ca jihvayāpi | cittena cittaṃ parigrhya cāpi kāryaḥ prayatno na tu te ‘nuvartyāḥ ||*. Cf. MN I.120-121 (Ñāṇamoli/Bodhi 2001: 213). See also the MĀ parallel in Anālayo 2013: 153–154. The example adduced in the MN and the MĀ (two strong men grabbing a weak man, taking hold of him, and subduing him) is not echoed in the SNa.

by the fact that “the task of right effort is precisely to overcome what is unwholesome and cultivate what is wholesome.”¹⁵³

8. The four applications of mindfulness and the supermundane path to salvation

8.1. The instigator(s) of the Sarvāstivāda *abhisamayavāda* somehow relegated most of the Buddhist meditation practices to the status of more or less remote preliminaries of the path *stricto sensu*. This is in particular the case of the four applications of mindfulness—application of mindfulness to the body (*kāya*), to the affective sensations (*vedanā*), to the mind (*citta*), and to the *dharma*s.¹⁵⁴ In the new path structure, the four applications of mindfulness are little more than one of several (admittedly high) steps toward the clarification of the nobles’ truths and the removal of any remaining doubt concerning them with the *darśanamārga*.¹⁵⁵ However, there are reasons to believe that the four applications of mindfulness played a more prominent role in Aśvaghōṣa’s ideas on the path, this, again, in close dependence on sūtra materials. Consider the following description:

Then he reached the inaccessible supermundane path, as one might obtain a breeze in the hot weather by fanning or the fire which abides in the wood by friction or the water in the ground by digging. Hold-

¹⁵³ Anālayo 2013: 148. On *vīrya*, see above, §§4.3–4. Skt. *vikrama* is semantically close to *parākrama*/Pali *parakkama*, “energy, exertion”, etc., which is a nearly synonymous with *virīya* and *thāma* in the Pali canon (see above, n. 73). Aśvaghōṣa’s intention in listing the 62 chief disciples of the Buddha was to depict them as paragons of Buddhist *yoga* worthy to be taken as models by Nanda (on the list of the Buddha’s chief disciples, see Thomas 1929, Johnston 1932: 97–99, n. ad 87, and Johnston 1984, part II: xxvii–xxviii (referring to T. 125, 557–558 and T. 126, 831–833; see also AN I.23–26 and Jāt. IV.158).

¹⁵⁴ For a discussion of the Pāli expression *satipaṭṭhāna*, see Gethin 2001: 30–36 (see also above, n. 92) and Anālayo 2003: 29–30. As pointed out by Anālayo, the fourth application of mindfulness does not refer to *dharma*s as “mental objects/factors”, but rather as “classificatory schemes” or “categories” (at least in the context of the two *Satipaṭṭhānasuttas* (MN I.55–63, DN II.305–315; see Anālayo 2003: 15, n. 3 for further scriptural references) serving as “frameworks or points of reference to be applied during contemplation” (Anālayo 2003: 183).

¹⁵⁵ See AKBh 341,7–343,9 and *Kośa* IV.158–162; see also Eltschinger 2014a: 260–270, esp. 262–264, and Schmithausen 1976, Hurvitz 1977, Cox 1992a.

ing the bow of holy knowledge, girding on the armour of mindfulness and taking up his post on the chariot of the vows of pure morality, he prepared for victory, ready to join battle with the foes of the defilements arrayed on the battlefield of the thoughts. Then taking the sharp weapons of the constituents of enlightenment and standing on the excellent chariot of right efforts, with an army containing the elephants of the constituents of the Path, gradually he pierced the battle-line of the defilements. With the four arrows of the application of mindfulness working each along its own line of activity, he destroyed in a moment his foes, the four wrong notions, the causes of suffering. With the five unequalled noble powers he burst asunder the five obstructions of the mind¹⁵⁶ and he put to flight the eight elephants of the constituents of the false path with the eight elephants of the constituents of the true Path.¹⁵⁷

This passage makes clear that according to Aśvaghoṣa, the path toward salvation, besides consisting in the *aṣṭāṅgamārga*, can validly be accounted for in terms of another, no less venerable canonical description, that of the factors/conditions favourable to awakening (*bodhipākṣikadharma*, *bodhipakṣyadharma*, Pāli *bodhipakkhiyā dhammā*) whose standard formulation includes thirty-seven factors distributed into seven sets.¹⁵⁸ Verses 24-26 successively allude to the factors of awakening (*bodhyaṅga*, generally seven), the right endeavours (*samyakpradhāna*, *samyakprahāṇa*, generally four),

¹⁵⁶ On the five *cetokhilās* (mental “barrennesses”, i.e., doubt concerning the Buddha, the law, the community and the training, and anger against one’s fellow disciples), see, e.g., DN III.237-238 and 278, SN I.101-104, AN III.248-249, 460, and V.17.

¹⁵⁷ SNa 17.22-26: *tataḥ sa vātaṃ vyajanād ivoṣṇe kāṣṭhāsritaṃ nirmathanād ivāgnim | antaḥkṣitisthaṃkhananādivāmbho lokottaraṃvartmadurāpamāpa || sajjñānacāpaḥ smṛtivarma baddhvā viśuddhaśīlavratavāhanasthaḥ | kleśāribhiś cittarañājirasthaiḥ sārddhaṃ yuyutsur vijayāya tasthau || tataḥ sa bodhyaṅgaśitāttaśāstras samyakpradhānottamavāhanasthaḥ | mārgāṅgamātāṅgavatā balena śanaiḥ śanaiḥ kleśa-camūṃ jagāhe || sa smṛtyupasthānamayaiḥ prṣatkaiḥ śatrūn viparyāsamayān kṣaṇena | duḥkhasya hetuṃś caturaś caturbhiḥ svaiḥ svaiḥ pracārāyatanaḥ da-dāra || āryair balaiḥ pañcabhir eva pañca cetaḥkhillāny apratimair babhaṅja | mithyāṅganāgāṃś ca tathāṅganāgair vinirdudhāvaśṭābhīr eva so 'ṣṭau ||* Translation Johnston 1932: 103–104, with “mindfulness” for “attention”, “morality” for “discipline”, “defilements” for “vices”, and “wrong notions” for “perversions of knowledge”.

¹⁵⁸ On the 37 factors contributing to awakening, see Gethin 2001.

the constituents of the path (*mārgāṅga*, generally eight; see above, §§2.1–3), the four applications of mindfulness, and the powers (*bala*, generally five). Considering that the five faculties (*indriya*) overlap with the five powers, only one among the seven sets is missing in Aśvaghōṣa’s description, i.e., the four bases of success (*rddhipāda*). But something else is striking about this description. In verse 25, the four applications of mindfulness are claimed to counteract all four misconceptions or wrong notions (*viparyāsa*), which the poet regards as the very causes of suffering, i.e., taking what is impermanent (*anitya*) to be permanent (*nitya*), what is painful (*duḥkha*) to be pleasurable (*sukha*), what is impure (*aśuci*) to be pure (*śuci*), and what is selfless (*anātman*) to be a self (*ātman*).¹⁵⁹ In so doing, Aśvaghōṣa apparently departs from traditional accounts of these factors, thus providing additional evidence for his close connection with (one denomination of) the Sarvāstivāda. As pointed out by Schmithausen, the Sarvāstivādins were responsible for a “decisive transformation” (“*entscheidende Umgestaltung*”) of the four *smṛty-upasthānas* in that “they brought to its completion a tendency to transform this exercise into a form of contemplation interpreting its objects in the sense of the Buddhist analysis of existence.”¹⁶⁰ A first step in this direction likely consisted in reinterpreting the four applications of mindfulness in such a way that the mindful yogin was now taken to contemplate the body as impermanent, painful, empty, and selfless. This conception is attested in early Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma literature, e.g., in the *Dharmaskandha*, which associates the application of mindfulness to the body with *anitya*, *duḥkha*, *śūnya*, and *anātman*.¹⁶¹ It seems to underlie SNa 17.16 as well: “He investi-

¹⁵⁹ Just before introducing the four applications of mindfulness in great detail, Kumārajīva’s T. 614, 278c3–5 declares: 身實無常苦不淨無我以身顛倒故常樂我淨。以是故事事愛著其身。是則底下衆生。“The body is in fact impermanent, painful, impure, and without self. Due to perverted views on the body, one thinks that it is permanent, blissful, having self, and pure. For this reason, one is attached to one’s body on every occasion. This is the lowliest sentient being.” Translation Yamabe/Sueki 2009: 48.

¹⁶⁰ Schmithausen 1976: 257: “[...] sie die Tendenz der Umformung dieser Übung in eine ihre Gegenstände im Sinne der buddhistischen Daseinsanalyse bewertende Betrachtung [...] zuende führten.”

¹⁶¹ See T. 1537, 476b4–6 (無常苦空非我, 476b6). Note also AKBh 341,11–13: *kāyaṃ svasāmānyalakṣaṇābhyāṃ parīkṣate vedanāṃ cittaṃ dharmāṃs^a ca | svabhāvaś caīśāṃ svalakṣaṇaṃ | sāmānyalakṣaṇaṃ tv anityatā saṃskṛtānāṃ duḥkhatā sāśra-vāṇāṃ śūnyatānātmate sarvadharmāṇāṃ |*. ^a*dharmāṃs* em.: *dharmās* Ed. “He ex-

gated the body in order to see its entire material and immaterial substance. Then he deemed it to be impure, subject to suffering, impermanent, without owner or self.”¹⁶² As for SNa 17.25, it reflects a second stage in the reinterpretation of the four *smṛtyupasthānas*, according to which each of them counteracts one of the four misconceptions.¹⁶³ That this was Aśvaghōṣa’s firm conviction is made clear by a very interesting passage from canto 24 of the BC, in which the Buddha comforts Ānanda by instructing him on the way and the attitude to be adopted after his demise. In the Sanskrit ([Mūla] sarvāstivādin) *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, Aśvaghōṣa’s obvious source for cantos 22-28, the Buddha exhorts his followers to “have themselves as an island, themselves as a refuge, the law as an island, the law as a refuge, nothing else as an island, nothing else as a refuge”,¹⁶⁴ and regards the four applications of mindfulness as the privileged means for religious autonomy.¹⁶⁵ This

amines the body under its specific and general characters, [and so also] the affective sensation, the mind and the factors. Their intrinsic nature is their specific character. As for [their] general character, [it consists in] the impermanence of conditioned [things], the painfulness of impure [things, and] the emptiness and selflessness of all factors.”

¹⁶² SNa 17.16: *sa rūpiṇaṃ kṛtsnaṃ arūpiṇaṃ ca sāraṃ didṛkṣur vicikāya kāyaṃ | athāśuciṃ duḥkhaṃ anityaṃ asvaṃ nirātmakaṃ caiva cikāya kāyaṃ ||*. This first conclusion is then generalized to the world/existence in its entirety, an analysis Aśvaghōṣa refers to as the supreme mundane path (*mārgapravekeṇa laukikena*, SNa 17.17c; is the initial conclusion already part of this supreme mundane path?). See SNa 17.17-21.

¹⁶³ The same idea is reflected in Nett. 83,19-20 and 28-29, 84,5-6 and 14-15: *kāye kāyānupassī viharanto asubhe subhaṃ ti vipallāsaṃ pajahati [...] vedanāsu vedanānupassī viharanto dukkhe sukhaṃ ti vipallāsaṃ pajahati [...] citte cittānupassī viharanto anicce niccaṃ ti vipallāsaṃ pajahati [...] dhammesu dhammānupassī anattāni attā ti vipallāsaṃ pajahati*. “One who dwells watching body with regard to body abandons the perversion [that sees] the beautiful in the ugly ... One who dwells watching feeling with regard to feelings abandons the perversion [that sees happiness in suffering] ... One who dwells watching mind with regard to mind abandons the perversion [that sees] the permanent in the impermanent ... One who dwells watching *dhamma* with regard to *dhammas* abandons the perversion [that sees] the self in what is not-self.” Translation Gethin 2001: 42. See also Anālayo 2003: 25–26, and n. 27, p. 25.

¹⁶⁴ MPSū II.200 (§§14.23): *ātmadvīpā ātmaśaraṇā dharmadvīpā dharmāśaraṇā anyadvīpā anyāśaraṇāḥ*.

¹⁶⁵ See MPSū II.200-202 (§§14.24–26). This passage also appears in the GASū 369,3-371,9 (see Kritzer 2014: 100–102); see also, e.g., Gethin 2001: 66–68. On the no-

description, however, does not precisely say how the *smṛtyupasthānas* are soteriologically relevant. Consider now Aśvaghoṣa's version of the last part of the sermon:

For obtaining the highest bliss, there are four spheres of action (*go-cara*), to wit, the body, the affective sensation, the mind, and selflessness. There is no attachment to the body for him who sees the impurity in the body, enveloped as it is with bones, skin, blood, sinews, flesh, hair, etc. The idea of pleasure is overcome by him who sees that the affective sensations are but suffering, each arising from their respective [causes and] conditions. For him who sees with tranquil mind the birth, duration and decay of the factors, the belief in permanence ceases. For him who sees that the constituents arise from [causes and] conditions, the belief in a self which is prompted by egotism ceases to be active. This path is the direct path (*ekāyana*) to take to annihilate suffering; accordingly, the path [consists in] the applications of mindfulness with respect to these four. Today or after my passing, those who take their stand on this will obtain the excellent stage that does not pass away, the *summum bonum*.¹⁶⁶

Let me mention only three among the many interesting features of this excerpt. First, Aśvaghoṣa replaces the *dharma*s, the object traditionally ascribed to the fourth application of mindfulness, by selflessness (*nairātmya*), a substitution which, as far as I can see, is unparalleled at least as far as the wording of the fourth *smṛtyupasthāna* is concerned.¹⁶⁷ Second, Aśvaghoṣa

tions of “internal”, “external” and “internal and external”, see Gethin 2001: 53 and Anālayo 2003: 94–102.

¹⁶⁶ BC 24.24-30 (BC_{Tib} D84a1-4/P101a3-8): |*dge legs ñe bar thob bya'i phyir*| |*de dag rnams kyi spyod yul bži*| |*lus dan tshor ba ñid dan ni*| |*sems dan bdag med pa ñid do*| |*rus lpags khrag dan rgyus pa dan*| |*śa dan spu sogs rnams kyi dkris*| |*mi gtsaṅ lus su mthoṅ bas ni*| |*lus la chags pa ma yin no*| |*de lta de ltar rkyen rnams kyi*| |*'jug pa'i tshor ba rnams su ni*| |*sdug bśnal žes de ltar mthoṅ ba'i*| |*bde ba'i šes rab rab tu 'joms*| |*skye ba dan ni gnas pa dan*| |*chos kyi 'god pa ñid dag ni*| |*ži ba'i sems kyi mthoṅ ba yi*| |*rtag par 'dzin pa ldog pa'o*| |*rkyen rnams las ni skyes pa rnams*| |*phuṅ po rnams ni mthoṅ ba yi*| |*ñar 'dzin gyis ni skyed pa po*| |*bdag tu 'dzin pa 'jug ma yin*| |*sdug bśnal ñe bar ži ba'i phyir*| |*bgrod^a pa gcig pa'i lam 'di ni*| |*lam ni bži po de rnams su*| |*de ltar dran pa ñe bar gžag*| |*da^a ltar ram ni bdag 'das tše*| |*gaṅ rnams 'di la gnas 'gyur ba*| |*de rnams 'god med go 'phaṅ mchog*| |*ñes par legs pa thob par 'gyur*|. ^aP: D *yin*. ^bD: P *'grod*. ^cem.: DP *de*. Cf. Johnston 1984, part III: 78–79.

¹⁶⁷ T. 614, 279a12-23 clearly reflects this doctrinal stance; see Yamabe/Sueki 2009: 51.

distinctly describes the path of the four applications of mindfulness as “the direct path to take to annihilate suffering” (*sdug bsñal ñe bar ži ba’i phyir bgrod pa gcig pa’i lam ’di ni*, BC 24.29ab),¹⁶⁸ a claim that was not made, at least not explicitly, in Aśvaghōṣa’s model, the MPSū. It most probably stems from a famous sūtra dedicated to the four applications of mindfulness, for there we read: “Bhikkhus, there is a one-way path for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, for the passing away of pain and displeasure, for the achievement of the method, for the realization of Nibbāna, that is, the four applications of mindfulness.”¹⁶⁹ There can be no doubt that Aśvaghōṣa conflated parts of the two sūtras in order to emphasize the salvational relevance of the four applications of mindfulness.¹⁷⁰ Third, and more importantly in the present context, each of the four applications of mindfulness is regarded as counteracting one of the four wrong notions and bringing about, *mutatis mutandis*, the first four of the sixteen real aspects of the nobles’ truths: being mindful of the body counteracts the notion of something pure; being mindful of the affective sensations counteracts the notion

¹⁶⁸ As Gethin (2001: 59) points out, the expression *ekāyana* only applies to the four applications of mindfulness in the Pāli Nikāyas. Gethin (2001: 59–66) and Anālayo (2003: 27–29; see also 2013: 8–12) have criticized the fairly common translation of *ekāyana* as “the one (i.e., only) way” (see Gethin 2001: 60, n. 132, for references), partly on the basis of a traditional fivefold interpretation of *ekāyana* (Gethin 2001: 60–61, summarized in Anālayo 2003: 27). Anālayo concludes (2003: 26) that “*ekāyano*, conveying a sense of directness rather than exclusiveness, draws attention to *satipaṭṭhāna* as the aspect of the noble eightfold path most ‘directly’ responsible for uncovering a vision of things as they truly are. That is, *satipaṭṭhāna* is the ‘direct path’, because it leads ‘directly’ to the realization of *Nibbāna*.” On the question of *ekāyano magga*, see also Nattier 2007.

¹⁶⁹ DN II.290 ≈ MN I.55–56 ≈ SN V.141, 167, 185: *ekāyano ayaṃ bhikkhave maggo sattānaṃ visuddhiyā sokapariddavānaṃ samatikkamāya dukkhadomanassānaṃ atthagamāya ñāyassa adhiḡamāya nibbānassa sacchikiriyāya yad idaṃ cattāro satipaṭṭhānā*. Translation Bodhi 2000: 1627, with “applications” for “establishments.” See also MN I.340 (Ñāṇamoli/Bodhi 2001: 444).

¹⁷⁰ Note also AN IV.459–460: *imesaṃ kho bhikkhave pañcannaṃ macchariyānaṃ pahānāya [...] cattāro satipaṭṭhānā bhāvetabbā ti*. “These four applications of mindfulness are to be developed for abandoning these five lower fetters.” Translation Bodhi 2012: 1328, with “applications” for “establishments”. Other claims to the decisive importance of the four *smṛtyupasthānas* include MN II.11, SN IV.363–364, and AN IV.457–461. See also Gethin 2001: 56–58, with references (n. 124, p. 59) to AN V.194–195, DN II.83 = 101 = SN V.161, AN III.387, and Nett. 94.

of something pleasurable; being mindful of the factors counteracts the notion of something permanent; and being mindful of selflessness counteracts the notion of (something possessing) a self.¹⁷¹ Āśvaghoṣa's conception of the four applications of mindfulness and their soteriological relevance reflects distinctly Sarvāstivāda ideas as they can be found, e.g., in the *Samyuktābhidharmahrdaya*:

The application of mindfulness to the body has been preached in order to counteract [one's] wrongly taking [something] impure [to be] pure; the application of mindfulness to the [affective] sensations has been preached in order to counteract [one's] wrongly taking [something] painful [to be] pleasurable; the application of mindfulness to the mind has been preached in order to counteract [one's] wrongly taking [something] impermanent [to be] permanent; the application of mindfulness to the *dharma*s has been preached in order to counteract [one's] wrongly taking [something] selfless [to be/(have)] a self.¹⁷²

The closest parallel to Āśvaghoṣa's ideas I am aware of occurs in the pseudo-Nāgārjuna's *Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa*, whose author notoriously was well acquainted with Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma, and whose translator—provided the MPPU was ever translated—Kumārajīva, regarded Āśvaghoṣa as a doctrinal authority (see above, §1):

Question: What are the four applications of mindfulness? Answer: The application of mindfulness to the body and the applications of mindfulness to the affective sensation, to the mind and to the *dharma*s, these are the four applications of mindfulness. [A yogin] considers these four things under four modalities: he considers the impurity of the body; he considers the painfulness of affective sensation; he considers the impermanence of the mind; and he considers the selflessness of the *dharma*s. Even though all of these four things possess the four modalities, he should mostly consider impurity in the body; painfulness in affective sensation; impermanence in the mind; and selflessness in the *dharma*s. Why? When ordinary persons have

¹⁷¹ On the sixteen aspects and the four wrong notions, see Eltschinger 2014a.

¹⁷² T. 1552, 908c11-14: 彼治不淨淨想顛倒故說身念處。治苦樂想顛倒故說受念處。治無常常想顛倒故說心念處。治無我我想顛倒故說法念處。 Cf. Dessein 1999: I.316.

not yet entered the path, they are mistaken with regard to these four things and produce four wrong notions: the wrong notion of purity with regard to impure things, the wrong notion of pleasure with regard to suffering, the wrong notion of permanence with regard to impermanence, and the wrong notion of a self with regard to what is selfless. In order to destroy these four wrong notions, [the Blessed One] has preached the four applications of mindfulness: he has preached the application of mindfulness to the body in order to destroy the wrong notion of purity; he has preached the application of mindfulness to the affective sensation in order to destroy the wrong notion of pleasure; he has preached the application of mindfulness to the mind in order to destroy the wrong notion of permanence; and he has preached the application of mindfulness to the factors in order to destroy the wrong notion of a self. This is the reason why he has preached four [of them], not less, not more.¹⁷³

In this perspective, the four applications of mindfulness of SNa 17.25 as well as their result—counteracting the four wrong notions and replacing them by the right ones—can be read as intrinsically connected to the nobles’ truths, whose true or real aspects they implement.

8.2. As far as I can tell, Aśvaghoṣa shows no awareness of what has come to be known as the *abhisamayavāda* (“doctrine of the [gradual] comprehension [of the nobles’ truths]”), the influential path structure plausibly developed, or perhaps rather systematized, even before the *Vibhāṣā*, by Dharmaśreṣṭhin/Dharmaśrī.¹⁷⁴ This fully rationalized description of the path famously entails two major phases, a predominantly gnostic/illuminative path of vision (*darśanamārga*) and a mainly cathartic/purgative path of (mental) cultivation (*bhāvanāmārga*, or “path of contemplation”). The absence of any clear hint at the *abhisamayavāda* can, but needs not be ex-

¹⁷³ T. 1509, 198c10-20: 問曰。何等是四念處。答曰。身念處受心法念處。是爲四念處。觀四法四種。觀身不淨。觀受是苦。觀心無常。觀法無我。是四法雖各有四種。身應多觀不淨。受多觀苦。心多觀無常。法多觀無我。何以故。凡夫人未入道時。是四法中邪行起四顛倒。諸不淨法中淨顛倒。苦中樂顛倒。無常中常顛倒。無我中我顛倒。破是四顛倒故。說是四念處。破淨倒故說身念處。破樂倒故說受念處。破常倒故說心念處。破我倒故說法念處。以是故說四不少不多。 Cf. *Traité* III.1150-1151. The association between the four wrong notions and the four applications of mindfulness is anticipated at MPPU 192b23–26 (*Traité* II.1076).

¹⁷⁴ See Frauwallner’s classic study of the *abhisamayavāda* in Frauwallner 1995: 149–184; see also Cox 1992b: 74–77.

plained in terms of Āśvaghoṣa's hypothetical unfamiliarity with the new system, for he may just as well have decided not to mention it, either because the doctrine had originated in a concurrent Sarvāstivāda milieu, or (and?) because it was not attested in canonical Abhidharma, or because the poet could find no scriptural support for the *abhisamayavāda* (after all, a given idea's traceability to the sūtras would indeed have been a minimum requirement to someone whose "Sautrāntika" leaning has often been highlighted). There was, however, a description of the path to salvation that, in contradistinction to the *abhisamayavāda*, could claim scriptural support and actually did find frequent expression in the sūtras. One of its formulations is as follows:

In one case a monk, having abandoned three fetters, becomes a stream-enterer, not liable to states of woe, firmly set on the path to enlightenment. Again, a monk who has abandoned the three fetters and has reduced his desire, hatred and delusion, becomes a once-returner who, having returned to the world once more, will make an end of suffering. Again, a monk who has abandoned the five lower fetters takes a spontaneous birth [in a higher sphere] and, without returning from that world, gains enlightenment. Again, a monk through the extinction of the corruptions reaches in this very life the uncorrupted deliverance of mind, the deliverance through wisdom, which he has realised by his own insight.¹⁷⁵

This path structure operates with ten fetters (*samyojana*) and does not resort to proclivities (*anuśaya*): (1) personalistic false view (*satkāyadr̥ṣṭi*), (2) attachment to (non-Buddhist) practices and observances (*śīlavrataparāmarśa*), (3) doubt (*vicikitsā*), (4) desire for lusts (*kāmacchanda*), (5) malevolence (*vyāpāda*), (6) desire for (subtle) corporeality (*rūparāga*), (7) desire for incorporeality (*ārūpyarāga*), (8) indolence (*auddhatya*), (9) conceit (*māna*),

¹⁷⁵ DN I.156: *idha bhikkhu tiṇṇaṃ samyojanānaṃ parikkhayā sotāpanno hoti avinipātadhammo niyato sambodhiparāyano [...]. puna ca paraṃ bhikkhu tiṇṇaṃ samyojanānaṃ parikkhayā rāgadosamohānaṃ tanuttā sakadāgāmī hoti sakid eva imaṃ lokaṃ āgantvā dukkhass' antaṃ karoti [...]. puna ca paraṃ bhikkhu pañcannaṃ orambhāgiyānaṃ samyojanānaṃ parikkhayā opapātiko hoti tattha parinibbāyī anāvattidhammo tasmā lokā [...]. puna ca paraṃ bhikkhu āsavānaṃ khayā anāsavaṃ ceṭovimuttiṃ paññāvimuttiṃ diṭṭhe va dhamme sayaṃ abhiññā sacchikatvā upasampajja viharati [...].* Translation Walshe 1995: 145–146, with “stream-enterer” for “Stream-Winner”, and “desire” for “greed”.

and (10) nescience (*avidyā*).¹⁷⁶ Among them, the first five are considered lower fetters (*avarabhāgiyā*) because they relate to the realm of desire (*kāmadhātu*), whereas the last five are upper fetters (*ūrdhvaabhāgiyā*) relating to the two higher realms of (subtle) corporeality (*rūpadhātu*) and incorporeality (*ārūpyadhātu*).¹⁷⁷ According to this and similar accounts of the path, a Buddhist practitioner becomes a stream-enterer (*srotaāpanna*) by eliminating the first three lower fetters, a once-returner (*sakṛdāgāmin*) by reducing the next two lower fetters (plus delusion in certain formulations), a non-returner (*anāgāmin*) by eradicating them entirely, and an *arhat* by giving up the five upper fetters.¹⁷⁸ To put it in slightly different but conceptually equivalent terms, one does not eliminate the personalistic false view, the attachment to (non-Buddhist) practices and observances and doubt unless one correctly sees the four nobles' truths (in *abhisamayavāda* terms: unless one goes through the *darśanamārga*).¹⁷⁹ Desire for lusts and malevolence are held responsible for the fact that one does not go beyond the realm of desire (*kāmadhātuṃ nātikrāmati*, AKBh 310,7). As for the five upper fetters, they

¹⁷⁶ On the fetters, see Anālayo 2003: 219–222 and 251.

¹⁷⁷ See DN III.234, AN IV.459–460, AN V.17, AKBh 309,24–311,13, and *Kośa* IV.84–87.

¹⁷⁸ See, e.g., DN II.92 and DN II.251–252.

¹⁷⁹ See AKVy 492,7–14, which quotes a sūtra: *kiyatābhadantasrotaāpanno bhavati | yataś ca mahānāman āryaśrāvaka idaṃ duḥkham āryasatyam iti yathābhūtaṃ prajānāti | ayaṃ duḥkhasamudayaḥ | ayaṃ duḥkhanirodhaḥ | iyaṃ duḥkhanirodhagāmini pratipad āryasatyam iti yathābhūtaṃ prajānāti | trīṇi cāsya samyojanāni prahīṇāni bhavanti pariññātāni | tadyathā satkāyadṛṣṭiḥ śīlavrataparāmarśo vicikitsā ca | sa eṣāṃ trayāṇāṃ samyojanānāṃ prahāṇāt srotaāpanno bhavaty avinipātadharmā sambodhiparāyaṇaḥ saptakṛdbhavaparamaḥ saptakṛtvo devāṃś ca manuṣyāṃś ca saṃsṛtya sandhāvya duḥkhasyāntaṃ kariṣyatīti |*. “O Venerable, what makes one a stream-enterer? Because, O Mahānāman, a noble disciple correctly discerns that such is the nobles' truth of suffering, such [the nobles' truth] of the origin of suffering, such [the nobles' truth] of the cessation of suffering, [and] such the nobles' truth of the path leading to the cessation of suffering, his three [lower] fetters are known [to be] eliminated, i.e., the personalistic false view, attachment to (non-Buddhist) practices and observances, and doubt. Since he has eliminated these three [lower] fetters, he becomes a stream-enterer who is not liable to fall [to evil existences], who tends towards perfect awakening, who is destined to be reborn not more than seven times, and who, having been reborn (*saṃsṛtya*) and having had rebirth (*sandhāvya*) seven times among gods and humans, will put an end to suffering.” In *Kośa* IV.85, n. 4, La Vallée Poussin refers to the EĀ (T. 125, 630a8ff.) and the SĀ (T. 99, 264b24ff. and 342b25ff.).

are thus called “because one does not proceed to the higher realms without abandoning them” (*eṣāṃ aprahāṇenordhavadhātvanatikramāt*, AKBh 311,13).

That this salvational scheme underlies Aśvaghōṣa’s account of Nanda’s salvation is easily demonstrated:

Then by shaking off entirely the false view of the self, by becoming free from doubt in the four Truths and by taking the true view of pure morality, he reached the stage of the first fruit of the Law. He rid himself of hesitation in the practice of the Law by means of his understanding of the noble Tetrad [...].¹⁸⁰

The first fruit is none other than that of a stream-enterer, which Nanda secures by seeing the four nobles’ truths (*darśanād āryacatuṣṭayasya*) and driving away the false view of a self (*ātmadṛṣṭi* ≈ *satkāyadṛṣṭi*), freeing himself of doubt (*akathāṅkatha*) concerning the four truths, and perceiving the characteristics of the pure practices and observances (*viśuddhaśīlavrata*). Then, as a stream-enterer,

[f]irm in himself, with the same Yoga he reduced to small proportions desire for lusts and hostility, and so he, whose body was broad-chested, by reducing these two obtained the second fruit of the noble Law. The small remains of the great foe, desire, whose bow is greed and arrows imaginations, he overwhelmed by the missiles of the weapon of Yoga, the arrows of meditation on impurity, which are acquired by considering the very nature of the body. Malevolence, the foe who is pregnant [of evil], whose weapon is hate and who discharges the arrows of wrath, he struck down by the arrows of benevolence which are placed in the quiver of firmness and fitted to the bowstring of patience.¹⁸¹

¹⁸⁰ SNa 17.27-29: *athātmadṛṣṭiṃ sakalāṃ vidhūya caturṣu satyeṣv akathāṅkathāḥ san | viśuddhaśīlavrataḍṣṭadharmā dharmasya pūrvāṃ phalabhūmim āpa || sa darśanād āryacatuṣṭayasya [...] niḥsaṃśayo dharmavidhau babhūva ||*. Translation Johnston 1932: 104, with “false view” for “theory of the existence”, and “pure morality” for “discipline to be followed”.

¹⁸¹ SNa 17.37-39: *sa kāmarāgapratighau sthirātmā tenaiva yogena tanū cakāra | kṛtvā mahoraskatanus tanū tau prāpa dvitīyaṃ phalam āryadharme || sa lobhacāpaṃ parikalpabāṇaṃ rāgaṃ mahāvairiṇaṃ alpaśeṣaṃ | kāyasvabhāvādhigatair bibheda yogāyudhāstrair aśubhāpṛṣatkaiḥ || dveṣāyudhaṃ krodhavikīrṇabāṇaṃ vyāpādam antaḥprasavaṃ sapatnam | maitrīpṛṣatkair dhṛtitūṇasaṃsthaiḥ kṣamāadhanurjyā-*

The second fruit consists in the state of a once-returner. In strict conformity with the above-mentioned sūtra description of the path, Nanda obtains it by reducing (*tanūḥkr-*) desire for lusts (*kāmarāga*) and hostility (*pratigha*), i.e., desire and malevolence (described in association with its secondary defilement [*upakleśa*] wrath or anger [*krodha*]), according to the method of *yoga*, i.e., by cultivating their respective counteragents consisting in the loathsome (*aśubha*) and benevolence (*maitrī*).¹⁸² SNa 17.40-41 next describes Nanda's reaching the stage of a non-returner:

Then the hero cut away the three roots of evil with the three bases of liberation, as an enemy cuts down with three steel-tipped arrows three enemies standing at the head of the hostile array and holding bows. Having overcome those foes who attack from the rear, in order to pass out of the Kāmadhātu sphere, and having reached by Yoga the fruit of not being subject to rebirth on earth, he stood as it were at the gate of the city of Nīrvāṇa.¹⁸³

As a once-returner, Nanda has uprooted desire and hatred—the two fetters which impeded his progression towards the two higher realms—in addition to the two false views and doubt already given up by seeing the truths. In other words, Nanda has now eliminated the five lower fetters in their entirety and moves out of the sphere of desire to become a non-returner. As Aśvaghoṣa says, Nanda is now at the gate of the city of *nīrvāṇa*, for only two steps still keep him away from the fourth fruit, the state of an *arhat*, i.e., going through the four *dhyānas*¹⁸⁴ and eliminating the five upper fetters. Here is the description of Nanda's achievements as a non-returner:

Then relying on the fourth trance, he set his mind on attaining Arhatship, like a king, wishing to conquer hitherto unconquered provinces, who unites himself with a strong noble ally. Then he cut entirely through the five upper fetters, the hindrances of the supreme good, the final bonds, with the sword of insight which he wielded

visṛtaṛ jaghāna ||. Translation Johnston 1932: 105–106, with “desire for lusts” for “desire”, “hostility” for “hatred”, and “desire” for “passion”.

¹⁸² See above, §7.2.

¹⁸³ SNa 17.40-41: *mūlāny atha trīṇy aśubhasya vīras tribhir vimokṣāyatanaṁ cakarta | camūmukhasthān dhṛtakārmukāṃs trīn arīn ivāris tribhir āyasāgraiḥ || sa kāmadhātōḥ samatikramāya pārṣṇigrahāṃs tān abhibhūya śātrūn | yogād anāgāmi-phalaṃ prapadya dvārīva nīrvāṇapurasya tasthau* ||.

¹⁸⁴ The four *dhyānas* are minutely described in SNa 17.42-55.

through cultivation. And with the seven elephants of the constituents of enlightenment he crushed the seven evil latent tendencies of the mind,¹⁸⁵ as Time with the seven planets crushes the seven continents when the time of their destruction has arrived. For Nanda applied to the faults, by extinguishing, uprooting, burning and drying up, the same action that clouds, wind, fire and the sun exert on fire, trees, ghee and water respectively.¹⁸⁶

This overview of Āśvaghoṣa's ideas on the path deliberately leaves several aspects of the original account out of consideration. Some of them, such as the four *dhyānas*, are well known and appear in a stereotyped way in the SNa and the BC. Others require further research but are not directly relevant for our understanding of the basic features of Āśvaghoṣa's position.

¹⁸⁵ Āśvaghoṣa's allusion to the "seven evil tendencies of the mind" (*saptaiva cittānuśayān*) might provide an additional clue to the fact that the poet either was not aware of, or deliberately ignored, the Sarvāstivāda *abhisamayavāda*. For as demonstrated by Frauwallner (1995: 155–158), the *abhisamayavāda* presupposes a conscious reformulation of the old sevenfold list of *anuśayas* into a tenfold one. In the canonical list of seven proclivities, i.e., desire for sensual pleasures (*kāmarāga*), hostility (*pratigha*), desire for existence (*bhavarāga*), conceit (*māna*), nescience (*avidyā*), false view (*drṣṭi*), and doubt (*vicikitsā*), Dharmaśreṣṭhin/Dharmaśrī—or whoever it was who reorganized the dispositif—coalesced the two forms of desire (thus making the list sixfold) and replaced false view by the five "classic" false views (thus making the list tenfold), viz. personalistic false view, false view consisting in the belief in (the two) extremities (*antagrāhadṛṣṭi*), erroneous (nihilistic) view (*mithyādrṣṭi*), attachment to false views (*drṣṭiparāmarśa*), and attachment to (non-Buddhist) practices and observances. Needless to say, Āśvaghoṣa may also have resorted to the sevenfold list for the sake of symmetry with the seven constituents of enlightenment, but he would not have done so at the cost of doctrinal consistency.

¹⁸⁶ SNa 17.56-59: *dhyānaṃ sa nīṣṛitya tataś caturtham arhattvalābhāya matim cakāra | sandhāyamaitrambalavantamāryaṃrājevadeśānjitānjigīṣuḥ || cicchedakārtsnyena tataḥ sa pañca prajñāsinā bhāvanayeritena | ūrdhvaṅgamāny uttamabandhanāni samyojanāny uttamabandhanāni || bodhyaṅganāgair api saptabhiḥ sa saptaiva cittānuśayān mamarda | dvīpān ivopasthitavipraṇāśān kālo grahaiḥ saptabhir eva sapta || agnidrumājyāmbuṣu yā hi vṛttiḥ kabandhavāyavagnidivākaraṇām | doṣeṣu tām vṛttim iyāya nando nirvāṇaṇotpāṇanadāhaśoṣaiḥ ||*. Translation Johnston 1932: 108, with "insight" for "intuitive wisdom", and "cultivation" for "meditation". For an explanation of the cosmological motifs alluded to in SNa 17.58cd, see Johnston 1932: 108, n. ad v. 58.

9. In Lieu of a Conclusion

Aśvaghōṣa's SNa has not only been, as a tale of human passion, conversion and redemption, an inexhaustible source of inspiration for Buddhist painters and sculptors throughout "Greater India". As a story about salvation, it has also been regarded, at least in Central Asia and China, as a treasure trove of spiritual advice, meditative exercises and soteric techniques. To what extent does the SNa reflect first-hand personal experience, on the part of Aśvaghōṣa, of the practices he describes with such a wealth of similes and technical details? Close scrutiny of the text reveals that a large part of the descriptions as well as the soteriological programme itself are built on sūtra materials. Were, then, Kumārajīva and those who took the poet as a *dhyāna*-master acquainted with now lost works dedicated to the same topic? But if their representation of Aśvaghōṣa relied on the SNa, one may wonder what was expected from a work to be labelled a "meditation treatise". Was it supposed to commit to language "private" non-linguistic experiences of a psychophysiological character, or, rather, to provide an epitome of graded exercises in self-restraint, mindfulness and visualization, borrowing if needed from scriptural descriptions? At this point, we would do well not to forget that the sūtras are nothing but the word of the supreme physician and ultimate authority concerning salvational means. As such, this word is credited with the highest possible degree of soteriological relevance, a truth grounded in, and legitimated by, the successful personal experience of the (future) Buddha. In this regard, the predominantly modern dichotomy between direct personal experience and scripturally based knowledge loses much of its cogency, if it ever had any. Aśvaghōṣa can be considered a *dhyāna*-master in the sense that, through the medium of his medicine-like poetry, he made the salvational truth again present and palatable to contemporary practitioners. Adding to the sūtras or altering their teaching could only threaten the fragile possibility of salvation. And this might well be the deepest and most obvious meaning of "Sautrāntika" when—anachronically—applied to Aśvaghōṣa.

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- (My numbering of the stanzas follows Johnston even when the text quoted is the one edited by Weller.)
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- BC_{Weller} *Buddhacarita* (Aśvaghoṣa), Tibetan Text of BC 9-17 as edited in Weller 1928.
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- SN IV *Samyutta-Nikāya*, Part IV: Saḷāyatana-Vagga, ed. Léon Feer. London: Pali Text Society, 1894.
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