Intellectual History: Pivoting on Historicity in Philosophy
_An Example from Buddhism_
Jo Sokhyo*

Introduction. I Historicity of Maitreya(nātha) and Vasubandhu. II Historicity: Logic of Pivoting in Intellectual History. Final Remark

요약문[주요어: 지성사, 역사적 실재성, 철학의 역사성, 유식 철학자들, 논리적 순환]
Introduction

Historical research in the modern period features increased accessibility to various language sources and an ensuing knowledge expansion into a global context with understanding through the examination of synchronic and diachronic histories, etc. Thereby, knowledge and belief that have long been fixed have begun to be questioned by modern critical thinking, and scholarly works have appeared in line with the development of intellectual history.

Modern Buddhist studies also witnessed remarkable development in historical research on the basis of the intellectual historian mindset. First, by textual study, historians have inspired criticism on the unquestioned acceptance and convictions that had long constituted the received wisdom. For example, John Brough (1917-1984), who posited the influence of the
Dharmaguptaka sect in Gāndhāran Buddhism through the decoding of the Gāndhārī Dharmapada, has facilitated the theory that some of the early Chinese Buddhist texts were translated from Gāndhārī texts, contrary to the uncritical belief that they had been translated from Sanskrit texts.¹)

Next, the perception that texts are media containing information on specific temporal and historical circumstances relates to broader theoretical debates and concerns regarding historical evidence. For example, Gregory Schopen, who made provocative assertions that Mahāyāna Buddhism originated from the cult of the book, rebutting the widely believed presumption that it originated from the stūpa cult, threw fresh light on the development of Buddhism in India.²) Being equipped with a modern mindset, he, by relating textual study based on epigraphical study to historical theory, showed the significance of historicity in elucidating Buddhist intellectual history.

Next, it is assumed that philosophical texts can be understood as existing within a temporal frame of historicity, and philosophical interpretations are inseparable from the historical layers of the intellectual historian’s research. For example, the historicity of Yogācāra Buddhist philosophers, which is my topic in this essay, typically shows history’s own role in triggering a variety of philosophical discourses. The historicity of Maitreya, who is deemed the source of religious authority as

1) See Brough (1962).
the author of the Five Treatises of Maitreya (Tib. Byams chos sde Inga) in the Tibetan tradition, has been challenged. Also, that of Vasubandhu, who was another source of religious authority and showed various layers of thought, has been confronted by criticism in terms of the consistency and coherence of thoughts, bringing up the issue of whether there is one Vasubandhu or more than one.

In the following essay, my aims are two-fold: I first summarize the historical and philosophical rationale that scholars present in order to clarify the historicity of the early Yogācāra masters. Without adding new discoveries to the historicity of Maitreya(-nātha) and Vasubandhu, I rather show logical assumptions of the previous scholarly achievements. Secondly, I ultimately aim at bridging the approach to intellectual history as seen in the issues in this essay, to intellectual history in general.

3) The Five Treatises of Maitreya (Byams chos sde Inga) include Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra (Mdo sde ’i rgyan), Abhisamayālaṃkāra (Mngon rtogs rgyan), Madhyāntavibhāga (Dbus mtha’ rnam ’byed), Dharmadharmaṭvibhāga (Chos dang chos nyid rnam ’byed), and Ratnagoṭrabībhāga (Rgyud bla ma). Davidson (1985: 37–9) holds that the Byams chos sde Inga had not been mentioned by Tibetan doxographers until the twelfth century and suggests that the Tibetan numbering could have originated from Dunhuang. However, Turenne (2015) suggests on the basis of the previous philological achievements that “a notion that the Five Treatises had been composed by Maitreya” existed in eleventh century India and Tibet, and that especially in Tibet, the earliest “notion” of the Byams chos sde Inga is seen in Rngog Blo ldan Shes rab’s (1059–1109) Thig pa chen po rgyud bla ma’i don bsdus pa, as proposed by Kanō Kazuo’s dissertation submitted to Universität Hamburg in 2006. In addition, this Tibetan “notion” was influenced by Indian, rather than Chinese, texts, traditions or scholars.
I. Historicity of Maitreya(nātha) and Vasubandhu

1. Historicity of Maitreya(nātha)

Tibetan tradition holds that Asaṅga received the teachings of the Byams chos sde Inga texts in a direct encounter with Maitreya (Ajitanātha) in the Tuṣita Heaven. These kinds of statements are often found in the Byams chos sde Inga texts and their commentaries. For example, as is found in Haribhadra’s (T. Seng ge bzang po, 8th c.) Abhisamayālamkārāloka, one of the influential commentaries on Abhisamayālamkāra.4) They may be a way of obtaining rationality that Tibetan religious texts aim at. So, pointing out a lack in historical consciousness in them may be a mere modern opinion,5) but it is also true that they presuppose the historicity that cannot be verified. Western opinions are largely divided into two groups: either there was a historical human teacher of Asaṅga who wrote the Byams chos sde Inga texts and whose name is Maitreya(nātha), or Asaṅga wrote them himself and pseudoepigraphically attributed them to the bodhisattva Maitreya for spiritual authority.6) In the following, I will

5) For this context, see Cabezón (1992).
6) Ui, Tucci (1930) and Frauwaller (1956) belong to the former; Obermiller
briefly sketch both opinions chronologically.

Ui Hakujū (1882–1963), who initiated the debate of the historicity of Maitreya(nātha), maintained throughout his life that there existed a historical Maitreya(nātha). His articles presented in 1928 and 1929 argue that the *terminus ad quem* of Maitreya(nātha) was C.E. 350. However, even if he tried to support his argument by bits of information gained from literary sources, it is essentially a circular reasoning: his argument was not that which verifies that Maitreya(nātha) lived a life in the fourth century. Rather, he presented the possible date of Maitreya(nātha) if he had existed in this world. Maitreya(nātha) as a historical person is presupposed in his argument.

In 1930, Giuseppe Tucci (1894–1984), one of the chief propo-

(1932), Demiéville (1954), Tucci (1956), and Mukai (1976) belong to the latter. Either is aloof of logical conclusion. Logical pitfalls in each are as follows: in the former, the fact that the so-called Maitreya(nātha) was not the only teacher of Asaṅga needs to be considered. Maitreya’s authority as the author of the Byams chos sde Inga texts may be closely tied to the historicity and thoughts of the other masters. In the latter, it is not necessary for Maitreya to exist only as future Buddha. Chances are that Maitreya(nātha) might have existed even if Asaṅga wrote the texts attributed to Maitreya.

7) As far as I know, his first argument appears in 1924: “… as for the date of the three, it turns out that Maitreya is around from 270 to 350, Asaṅga is around from 310 to 390, and Vasubandhu is around from 320 to 400. Therefore, the Yogācāra school is considered to be one that prospered from around the same time as the rise of the Gupta Empire, i.e. the year of 320.” In 1928, he reiterated his argument in a more concrete way. Page 223: “… Maitreya once stayed in Ayodhyā where he composed some of his works and instructed Asaṅga who came from Gandhāra … . … the *terminus ad quem* of Maitreya cannot be later than 350, but may not be much earlier than that.” See Ui (1929) p. 101.
nents of the historical Maitreya(nātha), accepted Ui’s argument uncritically. He asserted that he found more evidence to corroborate Ui’s contention: “... the Abhisamayālaṃkārāloka and the commentary by Sthiramati upon the ṭīkā of Vasubandhu on the Madhyāntavibhaṅga of Maitreya.” Moreover, he tried to prove consistency among the Byams chos sde lnga texts which he believed is a sine qua non to decide the date of the so-called historical Maitreyanātha. However, it was not workable. Although Eugéne Obermiller (1901–1935) found common features among Maitreya’s works, he presented a different opinion from that of Tucci in which the works were actually written by Asaṅga.

... the Uttaratantra and the Abhisamayālaṃkāra ... We have little reason to doubt of their having been composed by one author ... The difference in the points of view which we have noted, can be explained as being either due to an evolution in the conceptions of Asaṅga, whom we consider to be the actual author of the works, or to the habit of writing different treatises from different points of view which was familiar to so many teachers of India.

The contrast in opinions between Tucci and Obermiller, who tackled the same texts, might prove that the coherence of the texts is one thing, the interpretation of the historicity of the author is another.

9) Tucci (1930) p. 7.
10) Tucci (1930) p. 18.
Paul Demiéville (1894–1979), in 1954, denied the historicity of Maitreya(nātha). Analyzing religious narrative in the *Datang xiyuji*, he asserted,

Il s’agit d’une révélation reçue en extase, comme en admettent toutes les religions, toutes les littératures.\(^\text{12}\)

He hypothesized that Asaṅga’s encounter with Maitreya is a kind of religious experience.\(^\text{13}\)

Around the same time as Demiéville, Erich Frauwallner (1898–1974) (1956) joined the debate, distinguishing Maitreya(nātha) from Asaṅga both of whom he assumed were historical.\(^\text{14}\)

Since Demiéville and Frauwallner presented their opinions in the 1950s, no further progress was made until Alex Wayman joined the debate in 1969, arguing that extant literature would not make it possible to ascertain whether Maitreya(nātha) lived

\(^{12}\) Demiéville (1954) p. 381.

\(^{13}\) Mukai (1976), who gives prominence to the transmission and development of the Maitreya cult in India, made a similar claim to Demiéville. On page 28, where he relates Asaṅga’s explication of the *śūnyatā* to Maitreya, he criticizes Ui: “Dr. Ui Hakujū, who consistently maintained Maitreya as a historical person, placed Maitreya as Asaṅga’s teacher, or the real master who is to become the founder of the Yogaçāra school, in the history of Indian Buddhism, … the characteristic of the bodhisattva as the future Buddha in the heaven being ruled out as that which was fabricated mythologically.”. Also, on page 32, he adds his religious interpretation toward Asaṅga’s encounter with Maitreya in the Tuoṣita Heaven: “ … [it] means a specific mystic experience that Asaṅga, as a Yogaçārīn, had when he reached the extreme stage of the *vipaśyanā-carita* and dhyāna.”.

\(^{14}\) Frauwallner (1956) p. 296.
or not:

One need only compare statements in this *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra* with Asaṅga’s developed position of the *Yogācārabhūmi* to see numerous disagreements. This *bhāṣya* by Asaṅga could be his early survey work which established him as a master of the Mahāyāna. The verses were probably written by his teacher, whether or not that teacher is to be called Maitreyanātha.¹⁵)

He asserted that it is impossible to prove that Maitreya(nātha) was a historical personage. Thus, he presented the hypothesis that given the disagreements seen in the writings ascribed to Asaṅga, *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra* must have been written by his unidentified teacher.

In Japan, Suguro Shinjō, based upon the introductory verse of Parahitabhadra’s (9th c.) *Sūtrālaṃkārādiślokadvyayākhyāna* which clearly states that Maitreya “taught” the treatise¹⁶), unlike previous commentaries on the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra*, carefully shows that:

Because Parahitabhadra looks to have lived around the 9th century … there is a possibility that the content of the legend of Maitreya-Asaṅga changed [later] … it appears as if the content of the legend understood by Dr. [Ui] is the thing of the developed stage.¹⁷)

---

As for the historicity of Maitreya(nātha), Suguro tentatively says: 18)

"It turns out that Maitreya, being considered as the representative of high bodhisattva-s without being a historical person, ... the treatises were composed by means of being attributed to his (= Maitreya’s) teachings. 19"

His argument is plausible because the Abhisamayālamkārālokā, which could have been later attributed to the lineage of Maitreya-Asaṅga for legitimacy, was not mentioned by Xuanzang (602-664) who is a savant in the Maitreya-Asaṅga tradition.

All in all, some earlier modern scholars with different textual evidence presented the following trifurcated opinions: 1) there was one historical Maitreya(nātha). 2) one historical teacher existed, whose name may be / may not be Maitreya(nātha). 3) no historical Maitreya(nātha) existed and all of the texts were authored by Asaṅga. These opinions derive from modern historical consciousness leading to the verification of historicity, but also are inevitably based on subjective reading of philosophical thoughts, ideas, styles, etc. of the Byams chos sde lnga corpus. Consequently, whichever stance among the three

---

18) For the same argument made by him, see also Suguro (1985) pp. 337-8: "However, as for the content of the legend of Maitreya-Asaṅga that Dr. [Ui] took as a basis of his argument, it appears as if it is that of the relatively developed and organized stage ... As for the Tibetan transmission, it is considered that it indicates the most developed stage of the legend of Maitreya-Asaṅga ... ."

is taken, each cannot refute its counterparts. Further, as will be mentioned below in the case of Vasubandhu, the circular logic between the explanation of philosophical ideas and their attendant issue, i.e. the determination of their authorship, is inevitable.

2. Historicity in the Case of Vasubandhu.\(^{20}\)

In 1904, Takakusu Junjiro (1866–1945), based upon the *Biography of Vasubandhu* by Paramārtha (499–569),\(^{21}\) presented an article which posits Vasubandhu’s date as 420–500. In 1911, Noël Péri (1865–1922), based upon Chinese sources, repudiated it, presenting an article which places the death of Vasubandhu at 350.\(^{22}\) The so-called theory of two

\(^{20}\) In this section, I firstly briefly present major scholarly suggestions. I focus on the logical circulation between historicity and philosophical descriptions and ultimately aim at making a transition to the part II which tackles the nature of intellectual history in general. Gold (2015: 6–21) is a nice summary of the previous research into the historicity of Vasubandhu /Vasubandhu-s. However, in it, as in previous scholarship before him, Gold’s upholding of one Vasubandhu theory is tautological to his upholding of the continuity of Vasubandhu’s Yogācāra philosophy.

\(^{21}\) T. 2049: *Posoubandoufashizhuan*

\(^{22}\) See Péri (1911) pp. 279–390. One of key factors enabling Péri to decide Vasubandhu’s dates is Kumārajīva’s (383–412 in China) dates of the translations of Vasubandhu’s texts (works attributed to Vasubandhu in Chinese tradition). Péri (1911) p. 372: “…il me semble sûrement établi que le Čaṭa-čāstra (Bailun) et Bodhicittopādana-čāstra (Faputixinlun) traduits en 404 et 405 par Kumārajīva sont bien des œuvres de Vasubandhu, et que par conséquent celui-ci, qui a dû être antérieur à
Vasubandhu’s had not been presented until the time the two scholars disputed each other.23) And then, some scholars realized that many descriptions in the works ascribed to

son traducteur, a vécu au IVe siècle.” Péri (1911) p. 375: “Le Çata-çastra ne peut donc être qu’une œuvre relativement tardive, de la vieillesse de Vasubandhu et Kumārajiva l’a connu sûrement assez longtemps avant 380: c’est qu’il circulait et était parvenu jusqu’à Koutcha bien avant cette date.”

23) As for the issue of the Tibetans’ dealing with historicity as well as their history of textual criticism, it is certain that they had a sense of historicity comparable to that triggered by modern historical consciousness. For example, ’Gos Lo tsā ba Gzhon nu dpal’s (1392-1481) Deb ther sgon po exhibits a two person theory for Vimalamitra (Dri med bshes gnyen). This position was evaluated and rejected by Faber (1989). However, in general, Tibetans attach weight to religious reality as differentiated from modern historical reality, namely historicity. It may be claimed from a modern perspective that the Tibetans’ sense of historical reality was overshadowed by religious authority. Also, it may be safely assumed that the Tibetans’ defense of religious authority, being connected to the issue of religious reality, is in a different dimension from that of the modern historians maintaining that faulty ideas and thoughts have been uncritically accepted in the Tibetan tradition because of religious and sectarian authority. For a defense of Tibetan voice, see Cabezón (1992). It is not difficult to list examples. To give a few examples, the two G.yu thog Yon tan mgon po-s, Elder and Younger, were presented to establish the religious authority of Tibetan medicine rather than the clarification of historicity. For more information, see Martin (2016). Another example is the life story of Nya dbon pa Kun dga’ dpal who is described to have outlived G.yag phrug Sangs rgyas dpal (1348-1414) and Red mda’ ba Gzhon nu blo gros (1349-1412). See Rgyal ba Jo bzang dpal bzang po ([n.d.]: 22a). It is an example used to show that the justification of sectarian and doctrinal superiority was dominant, and thereby caused modern scholars to be confused when dating him. For more information, see Huang (2014) and van der Kuijp (2016). Lastly, it should be noted that while modern historians are well aware of the way Tibetan historians dealt with historical strata, they still focus on revealing faulty factual strata by questioning the veracity of records.
Vasubandhu and Paramārtha’s *Biography of Vasubandhu*, resist fitting together in the formation of one Vasubandhu. Kimura Taiken (1881–1930), who, as far as I know, first brought up the possible conflation of two or more distinct Vasubandhu-s, presented the famous phrase of Yaśomitra (T. Rgyal po’i sras grags pa’i bshes gnyen, 8th c.), “*sthaviro vasubandhur ācārya manorathopādhyāya evam āha.*” (“Sthavira Vasubandhu, who is the teacher of ācārya Manoratha, says so”) 24), to substantiate his argument.

In the *Abhidharmakośa* … . The words “another commentator” here are rightly explained by Pukuang [Puguang], a pupil of Hiuentsang [Xuanzang], as the older Vasubandhu. Further, Yaśomitra too, in his *Abhidharmakośavyākhyā*, explains it in the following words: “*sthaviro vasubandhur ācārya manorathopādhyāya evam āha.*” 25)

No further rejoinders concerning the theory seem to have been made since then. Eventually, Frauwallner (1951) drew out the matter from oblivion. 26) He was a strong proponent of the theory of two Vasubandhu-s. Since he raised the issue, scholars have been fractured into two camps in opinions: either there existed more than two Vasubandhu-s because one Vasubandhu is not enough for the dates or to find coherence in thoughts, or there existed only one Vasubandhu because one Vasubandhu is enough to expound his thoughts or to

---

24) See Wogihara ed. (1934) p. 289.
26) For a summary of the article, see Jaini (1958) pp. 48–9.
identify his date.\(^{27}\)

Frauwallner, who is a staunch exponent of the first group, first located the three dates of Vasubandhu: 900 years after the Nirvāṇa (a.N.), 1100 a.N. given by Paramārtha, 1000 a.N. given by Xuanzang.\(^ {28}\) And then he, through the analysis of Paramārtha’s Biography, Vasubandhu’s commentary on the Madhyāntavibhāga, and Péri’s and Takakusu’s arguments, pointed out that the first date is one thing, and the last two dates can be grouped as another.\(^ {29}\) In other words, he hypothesized the theory of two Vasubandhu-s: one is Vasubandhu the elder (“Vasubandhu der Ältere 320–380”) who is a brother of Asaṅga and wrote the commentary to the Śataśāstra, the Bodhicittotpādanaśāstra,\(^ {30}\) Daśabhūmi-kabhāsya, Vajracchedikāprajñāpāramitāśāstra, etc.; the other is Vasubandhu the younger (“Vasubandhu der Jüngere 400–480”) who is the author of the Abhidharmakośa.\(^ {31}\) To

---

\(^{27}\) Some scholars have found convincing or unconvincing evidence to refute Frauwallner. However, they, basically, could not simply dismiss Frauwallner’s evidence, and showed discrepancy in terms of interpretive assumptions and attitude: some were very cautious. For example, Schmithausen is a moderate thinker who thinks highly of ideas that can be philologically accepted given the development philosophical ideas. Others were more aggressive. I assume that presumption of the continuity of Yogācāra philosophy in Vasubandhu decided their stance.

\(^{28}\) Frauwallner (1951) pp. 3–4.

\(^{29}\) See also Jaini (1958) pp. 48–9. Frauwallner (1951: 32) approved Péri (1911) and disapproved Takakusu (1904).

\(^{30}\) For Péri’s dating of the two śāstra-s, see note 22.

\(^{31}\) Especially see Frauwallner (1951: 46–57). As for the Vīṃśatikā and the Trīṃśikā, he conjectured that they are the works of Vasubandhu the younger, and Schmithausen also concurred with it. See Frauwallner (1956 edition) p. 351: “...eines in zwanzig Versen (Vīṃśatikā), das andere
substantiate his theory, he presented such expressions seen in Yaśomitra’s *Sphuṭārthā* as “vṛddhācārya-vasubandhu” (“old master Vasubandhu”), and “pūrvācāryā yogācāra āryāsaṅga prabhṛtayah” (“old Yogācāra masters beginning with Asaṅga, etc.”). He regarded these expressions as evidence that Vasubandhu the younger considered Asaṅga as one of the older masters.

Next, providing a new bit of information about the so-called Vasubandhu the younger, Jaini put forth a slightly different opinion from Frauwallner.

The Vṛddhācārya Vasubandhu certainly existed, as is clear from the statements of Yaśomitra … But we certainly are not justified, in the light of the evidence of the *Abhidharmadīpa*, in limiting the activities of the younger Vasubandhu to Hinayāna alone, in crediting him only with the authorship of the *Kośa* and thus relating the last part of Paramārtha’s *Biography* to the life of Vasubandhu the elder.

---

32) For the former, see Wogihara ed. (1932) p. 35; for the latter, see Wogihara ed. (1934) p. 281.
33) See Frauwallner (1951) pp. 21-3. As for “sthāviro vasubandhur ācārya manorathopādhyāya evam āha”. Frauwallner (1951: 45-6) presented a slightly different interpretation from Kimura: “… But Manoratha was hardly the teacher of the younger Vasubandhu … the teacher of the younger Vasubandhu was Buddhamitra … But in no case can we place him at a much earlier date; otherwise it would be difficult to understand how he could later take the place of Buddhamitra. Besides, the date of 1000 a.N. in Hsüan-tsang was attributed to him too.”
However, basically, he contended that there were two Vasubandhu-s. He did not negate Frauwallner’s argument.35) However, many scholars are skeptical of Frauwallner’s theory. Some think that there is no need for two persons from a doxographical viewpoint. Wayman repudiated Frauwallner’s hypothesis because he thinks that one Vasubandhu would suffice to give counterargument to the theory of two Vasubandhu-s. For the “pūrvācāryā” at stake, he stated:

Yaśomitra might well be mistaken in his interpretation of what Vaubandhu means by the expression, but it is certain that Yaśomitra takes Asaṅga to be a pūrvācāryā with respect to Vasubandhu … Asaṅga belongs to the immediately preceding generation. Furthermore, he “converted” Vasubandhu to the Mahāyāna … 36)

Later, he reiterated his opinion about the “pūrvācāryā,” attributing Asaṅga’s Abhidharmasamuccaya to the Sautrāntika School in order to provide scholarly connection between Asaṅga and Vasubandhu.

It would be a reference to Asaṅga’s Abhidharmasamuccaya, a kind of Sautrāntika work … He would add a few remarks about Yogācāra theories, the reference to an “old master”, perhaps some of the references to “others” (apare).37)

34) Jaini (1958) p. 53. By ‘the last part ~ Vasubandhu the elder,’ he means Vasubandhu the elder’s conversion from Hinayāna to Mahāyāna Buddhism. See Jaini (1958) p. 49.
Wayman claimed that the so-called works of Vasubandhu the younger and those of Vasubandhu the elder do not show “significant contrast” in terms of thoughts, and thus can be regarded as one person’s.\(^{38}\) Also, he supported his ideas with historical conundrums seen in several biographies of Vasubandu, which he suggests are contrary to Frauwallner’s theory.\(^{39}\)

Anacker, another opponent of Frauwallner, tried out various possibilities that “\textit{vrddhācārya}” and “\textit{pūrvācārya}” might have indicated so as to disarm Frauwallner’s opinions.

“\textit{Vṛddha}” in “\textit{vrddhācārya}” does not necessarily mean “old”: it may simply mean “eminent” (Apte [Dictionary], p. 1491). Similarly, much has been made of the fact that Yaśomitra calls Asaṅga a \textit{pūrvācārya}, “ancient master.” … But, besides, the expression may mean simply “previous master,” i.e. a master prior to Vasubandhu.\(^{40}\)

\(^{39}\) Schmithausen (1967: 110, n. 5) shows reservations about Frauwallner’s theory with criticism on Wayman’s counterargument to Frauwallner: “Nach Wayman’s Auffassung ist der Verfasser des \textit{Abhidharmakośaḥ} mit dem Bruder Asaṅgas identisch. … scheint mir Wayman’s Argumentation gegen Frauwallner nicht ganz schlüssig zu sein. Es ist zwar merkwürdig, dass Paramārtha den Bruder Asaṅgas für identisch mit dem Verfasser des \textit{Abhidharmakośaḥ} hält, sein jüngerer Zeitgenosse Yaśomitra ihn hingegen von diesem zu unterscheiden scheint, und es mag gleichfalls merkwürdig sein, dass offenbar beide Vasubandhus vom Hinayāna zum Yogācāra übergetreten sind: aber unmöglich ist das doch nicht! Und es mag Verdacht erregen, dass wir jeweils nur von einem der beiden Vasubandhus Geburtsort, Abstammung usw. kennen: aber eine Verschmelzung der Biographien zweier Vasubandhus zu einer einzigen wäre doch ohne eine solche Vereinheitlichung kaum möglich gewesen!”
This kind of argument is far from compelling. He cannot confirm that the gloss should be like that in this case.

Recently, Fukuda, based upon a comprehensive research into the Abhidharmakośabhāṣya, Yaśomitra’s Sphuṭārthā Abhidharmakośavyākhyā (P. 5593: Chos mgon pa’i mdzod kyi ’grel bshad), Sthiramati’s (Blo gros brtan pa) Abhidharmakośabhāṣyaatikā Tattvārtha (P. 5875: Chos mgon pa’i mdzod kyi bshad pa’i rgya cher ’grel pa don gyi de kho na nyid), Pūrṇavardhana’s (Gang ba spel ba, 8th c.) Abhidharmakośatīkālakṣānānusārī (P. 5597: Chos mgon pa mdzod kyi ’grel bshad mtshan nyid rjes su ’brang ba), and Saṅghabhadra’s (Dge ’dun bzang po) Apidamo shunzhenglilun (T. 1562 < S. Nyāyānusāra), Puguang’s (7th c.) Jushelunji (T. 1821), Fabao’s and Jushelunshu (T. 1822), concludes that Frauwallner’s hypothesis is not convincing: first, there are discrepancies and difficulties in identifying Vasubandhu among different traditions, and the “sthavira” in the famous Yaśomitra’s phrase is not confined to addressing Vasubandhu, rather, its usage is found elsewhere.\(^{41}\) Also for the “Vasubandhu the elder,” (Ch. Gu Shiqin) seen in Puguang’s Jushelunji,\(^{42}\) two possibilities may be raised: one is that “gu” can be interpreted as “long ago”, the other is that Puguang himself heard of it from his teacher Xuanzang. However, the linguistic obscurity of Chinese language cannot legitimize any historical facts. Also,

---

41) For more information, see Fukuda (2003) pp. 258-9. n. 10.
42) For “Vasubandhu the elder, a dissident Sarvāstivādin,” which is indicated by Fukuda (2003), see T41n1821_p0167c20(00)~T41n1821_p0167c22(18).
whether Xuanzang’s information is right or wrong cannot be verified even if we assume that it was conveyed to Puguang without distortion of memory.

3. Vulnerable Footing for the Sake of Historicity: Philosophical Interpretation or Historical Facts?

The historicity of early Yogācāra masters is pivotal in the construction of early Yogācāra philosophy.43) However, limited textual records have inevitably caused philosophical interpretation to play a big part in deciding the historicity. For example, scholars have presented different opinions on the Mahāyānasūtrālāṃkāra and its commentary, the Sūtrālāṃkārabhāṣya.44) However, the following hermeneutical issues may need to be considered when the historicity is suggested from philosophical interpretation.

In the case of Maitreya, whether he is a historical or imaginary person is unknown. In the case of Vasubandhu, he is a historical person but the historicity is associated with the transition of philosophical thoughts. Roughly, two camps exist concerning the historicity of the latter: the first camp maintains that the transition of philosophical thoughts was made in one person, which is historicity. Simultaneously, one person is

43) For the significance of this issue, see Gold (2015: 251-2, no. 24).
It describes the possibility of being one person but does not prove that one and the only Vasubandhu existed. The second camp holds that the transition of thoughts is historicity, but the transition in one person is not historicity. It follows that two or plural persons should be historicity. Then, who could be designated? How could it explain the historicity of the transition of thoughts without pinpointing the two or more persons? At any rate, either camp does not rebut the possibility raised by the other camp. Each side cannot disprove the other side. Commonly in both camps, the historicity of the transition of philosophical thoughts is explained, being associated with the issue of the historicity of a person (persons). Both are bound to admit a repetitive double layer of historicity because historicity of person(s) should be mentioned to explain that of transition, and vice versa. In other words, recursive circularity is unavoidable because the historicity of the transition of thoughts and that of person are intertwined. From a different perspective, the claim made by the first camp is identical to traditionally accepted ideas and supposition in that it may not question the historicity. In it, there is no circulation between the historicity of an individual and that of the transition of thoughts. However, the issue of chronology of Vasubandhu and his texts remains unsolved. In the second camp, on the other hand, modern historical consciousness is certainly at full play. However, this causes a problematic situation when it comes to identifying the works written by plural Vasubandhu-s.

Another fundamental issue caused by philosophical reading
is that the reading of texts evades resolution. Sanskrit, Chinese, and Tibetan depictions may be different, and may thus make researchers’ opinions diverge according to the texts they rely upon. Also, issues about how readers positively involve in incorporating those texts into a coherent system may emerge. For example, when Seyfort Ruegg came across such discrepancies in Ratnagotrabhāṣya between the Chinese and Tibetan traditions, he suggested subjective and ungrounded reading in which the name Sāramati (Suoluomodi; Jianhui) in Chinese sources is an epithet for Maitreya given as the author in the Tibetan sources. However, historicity based on philosophical research may be a mere speculation. Further, some scholars took different stances as they found more evidence, regardless of its being contrary or cooperative to the previous stance. For example, Hakamaya (1973) inferred that the author of the Sūtrālāmārkārabhaṣya is Asaṅga because “ity ācārya asaṅga” from Vimuktisena’s (6th c.) Abhisamayālāmkāravṛtti is also seen in the commentary in the second chapter of the Mahāyānasūtrālāṃkāra. However, he later withdrew his opinion and accepted Odani’s suggestion following Yamaguchi Susumu’s (1895–1976) opinion that the author of the Mahāyānasūtrālāṃkāra is Asaṅga, and that of the Sūtrālāṃkārabhaṣya is Vasubandhu, which may ironically state the insolubility of the issue of historicity by philosophical speculations.

Essentially, clear-cut chronological unfolding of philosophical tenets may not have taken place, unlike chronological historical evidence. Schmithausen once stated the difficulty of
working out canonical chronology in which philosophical interpretations must tally with historical facts.

... If he [Vasubandhu] is also the author of Tr [Trimśikā], and if Tr is rightly believed to be his latest work, or at least one of the latest, the fact that Tr has been utilized already in the LAS [Laṅkāvatāra sūtra] version on which Guṇabhadra’s translation of 443 is based excludes 400-480 as Vasubandhu’s life-time. This date, however, is based upon Vasubandhu’s connection with two successive Gupta rulers called Vikramāditya and Bālāditya, and identified by Frauwallner with Skandagupta (ca. 455-467) and Narasimhagupta (ca. 467-473). One way out of these difficulties would be to doubt the sequence of the works of Vasubandhu according to which Tr is among his last works and rather consider her a quite early one.45)

According to him, the so-called Vasubandhu the younger maintained the sautrāntikan viewpoint when writing the Abhidharmakośa and then turned to the Yogācāra standpoint, thus he still had the sautrāntikan presuppositions when writing the Karmasiddhiprakaraṇa, the Viṃśatikā, and the Trimśikā.46)

46) See Schmithausen (1967) pp. 109-36. Schmithausen accepted Lamotte’s view (1936: 151-263) that the Karmasiddhiprakaraṇa was written on the basis of the sautrāntikan ideas. Lamotte (1936: 176) clearly states that “Le Karmasiddhiprakaraṇa est un traité du Petit Véhicule exposant le point de vue des Sautrāntika.” Note that contrary to Lamotte and Schmithausen, Tibetan tradition, especially Bu ston Rin chen grub (1290-1364), holds that the Karmasiddhiprakaraṇa belongs to the sems tsaṃ. See Skilling (2000); Zhuang (2006). Concerning the so-called Vasubandhu’s sautrāntikan presuppositions, Kritzer (2003) and Kritzer
In other words, Schmithausen (1967) is opposed to Frauwallner’s theory that Vasubandhu, Asaṅga’s brother, is different from Vasubandhu, the author of the *Abhidharmakośa*.

In a similar way to Schmithausen who considers the consonance between philosophical analyses and historical facts, one may think that the latter contributes to solving the unsettled historicity, and the former is strengthened by them. It is imperative that the transition of philosophical ideas seen in works cannot be in conflict with historical facts. Therefore, historicity is certain to be a decisive factor to ascertain masters’ teachings and the shift of their thoughts which is also a temporal sequence of events. The more factual it is, the stronger its admissibility of evidence is. It limits and conditions the possibility of philosophical interpretations. That is why intellectual historians cannot relinquish critical evaluation of historical data and searching for new data as well. However, I think historical facts merely provide a weak footing for the issue at stake in this essay. The hitherto revealed historical facts are neither decisive nor definite. Being merely fragmental, they do not provide an integral picture of the historicity of Vasubandhu in its entirety. Rather, the historical facts are not aloof of, or separable from, the underlying philosophical pre-

---

(2005) made a provocative claim that Vasubandhu derives the sautrānti-kan positions seen in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* from the *Yogācārabhūmi*, and Park (2007) refuted them by presenting Dārṣṭāntika precedents for the Sautrāntika positions in the *Abhidharmakośa*. See also Gold (2015: 251).
sumptions, and thereby make a never-ending circulation between the former and the latter. To deduce one Vasubandhu through philosophical analyses, without the support of historical facts, is tautological to the constructed philosophy based on the premise that there is one Vasubandhu. Likewise, to argue plural Vasubandhu-s through textual study, without being buttressed by historical strata, is effective as long as we are based on the supposition that there are plural Vasubandhu-s. We have yet to distribute Vaibhāṣika, Sautrāntika, and Yogācāra to plural Vasubandhu-s. In both cases, a conclusion imbued with historical assumptions is presumed, which witnesses a circular logic that presupposes what should be proved, and the descriptions of Vasubandhu’s philosophy are unfolded from it. All in all, neither philosophical interpretations nor historical facts, which have yet to be further accumulated and synthesized together, are not invulnerable.

II. Historicity: Logic of Pivoting in Intellectual History

4. Philosophy in a Pas de deux with History

Some may ask, “isn’t the issue of historicity merely an invention made within the frame of modern historical consciousness?” In the following, I briefly defend intellectual history by means of raising the following questions: How is his-
Historicity redefined and mapped within the frame of temporality in explaining intellectual history? Do readers’ epistemological assumptions underlie their approach to historicity? What logical structure may be involved in the relationship between historicity and philosophical ideas? What role does historicity play in it?

Essentially, historicity is based on factual stratum, but it is more than factuality. Past events are inherently constructs. Therefore, inevitably different layers are involved in the formation of historicity. As the case of Vasubandhu drastically shows, a lacuna in historicity is combined with interpretive layers.

In terms of an interpretive layer, factuality goes together with temporality in the construction of historicity. Temporality is the presupposition which influences the understanding of text. Historicity at one point is contained in the temporality in the middle of the evolution of thoughts of an individual philosopher. Simultaneously, it may be influenced by the temporal strata accumulated in each text.

Factuality is defined with reference to temporality. Conversely speaking, it means that factuality may be confused and complex when a stratum of temporality is involved. Further, temporality involves interpretation from the point of the present. Historicity, which is in the interpretive layer, is accompanied with a temporality that is constructed, and for something to be interpreted, it must be already in the layer of temporality. In that sense, intellectual historians assume that text itself is history-laden and the philosophical system of an
individual is placed in the history of philosophy. If it can be safely assumed that thoughts are history-laden, the expression of “the transition of thoughts” is redundant because thoughts are already history-laden, being located in the stratum of temporality.

Another issue at stake is historicity in conjunction with interpretation by readers. Texts are not read without perception on historical cognition and its associated epistemological presuppositions. By ‘historical cognition,’ I mean that an objective history independent of historical and philosophical minds cannot be constituted. The interpretation of the historicity of two Vasubandhu-s or one Vasubandhu may be related to the readers’ different epistemological foci, i.e. accepting either historicity in philosophy or an independent segmentation between philosophy and history. Simply put, it may be that emphasis on historical aspects or emphasis on philosophical theories causes the bifurcation.

47) The term “theory-laden” has been used in the history of science, which is linked to Michel Foucault’s (1926-1984) theoretical work. My use of the term “history-laden” is also Foucauldian in that it considers the possible conditions enabling human cognition to work. Foucault’s “archaeological” method of investigation explained in his The Archaeology of Knowledge (L’Archéologie du Savoir) presents the concept of the statement (énoncé) in order to elucidate how the discourses (discours), which are the object of archaeological investigation, are formed. The former does not independently exist because it has meanings only if it is related to the other statements and is placed in certain discourses in which certain rules are dominant. On the basis of these ideas, Foucault presents the concept of the historical subject, arguing that knowledge constitutes human beings as subject according to historical periods. About how Foucault’s archaeological thoughts are applied to intellectual history, see my upcoming articles.
At any rate, epistemological presuppositions are already inherent in both cases. Epistemological involvement influences the way of approaching the issue of historicity, which I assume is the way in which intellectual history works. In the case of Vasubandhu, scholars only have different emphatic readings with presuppositions in the texts which are a mixture between philosophy and history. Each stance explains each hypothesis from individual epistemological assumptions, with no verification of historicity but the different descriptions given. Scholars have made plausible assumptions to make sense of their findings, but their opinions on the continuity and discontinuity of thoughts among the texts attributed to Vasubandhu are nothing but the reiteration of each pre-assumption related to epistemological preconceptions without their being proved.

The scholarly explications made up to now may appear to deduce the historicity of Vasubandhu(s) from the transition of philosophical thoughts, but they are, conversely, nothing but following logical conjunctions: in the case that one person is historicity, the transition of thoughts in one person can be explained as historicity. In the case that two persons are historicity, the transition of thoughts between two different persons can be explained as historicity. Basically, historicity is presupposed, being unproven. Even if conclusions on historicity drawn from philosophical analyses look plausible, how could further issues be proved under the situation that there is no verification of historicity? There only exist epistemological preconceptions.
For the explanations of the philosophical transition which is associated with the historicity, historicity should be established. When we say *his/ her/ their* thoughts, we already utter the historicity by the genitive cases. In other words, philosophical analysis on philosopher(s) cannot be made without putting the pre-assumed questions of historicity aside. The historical domain cannot be left unsettled. In other words, there is an interpretive circle recursive to the layer of unanswered historicity in the case of Vasubandhu. To explain the transition of thoughts, the historicity of person(s) should be verified. However, because the latter has not been verified, we will be continuously recurring to the former with the latter being put aside. The repetitive structure, moving back and forth in the loop of circularity, is bound to be unfolded in explaining Vasubandhu(s)’ philosophy.

However, I assume that this is the point where philosophy is history-laden, showing the inherent relationship between philosophy and history. Philosophical interpretations may be ahistorical, historical, or trans-historical, and it may be commonsensical that as a doctrinal and interpretive approach becomes more dominant, history moves into oblivion and the layer of history fades. However, such an understanding may be implausible and infeasible because philosophical interpretations and historicity are inseparable. The historicity of a person and that of his or her thoughts are firmly interlocked. Therefore, when historical points are clarified, philosophical points are also clarified. The clarification of historical issues are no different to the understanding of temporality in philos-
ophy which is essential in intellectual history.

Now, when someone asks, “to what extent do historical facts contribute to clarifying the philosophical issues and elucidating philosophical ideas and thoughts?,” we could reply, “temporality is already deeply involved in philosophy. How can philosophy be atemporal? Historicity and philosophical doctrines cannot be separated.” Philosophy is interlocked to history, and historicity is pivoting in the pas de deux.

**Final Remark**

Historical consciousness plays an important and significant role in modern fields of studies which feature a clear perception of the historicity of persons and events.

Intellectual history has an unclear and expansive border. It has an inseparable relationship with philosophy, oscillating between compatibility and incompatibility with the same goal of clarifying philosophical issues. Methodologically, it relies on philology. Because historicity is combined with the temporal structure of philosophical and religious issues, philology and philosophy are involved, being centered on historicity. Technically, it directs us towards textual criticism which assumes that faulty interpretations and transmissions are verifiable or provable.

Someone may ask fundamental questions as to the reliability
of sources of intellectual history: What is credible historical fact? What is believable as veracity? What is written in text that conforms to historical facts? Those questions may bring about a fundamental skepticism in intellectual history. We may align with Hayden White (1928–2018) who argues that historical writing is prefiguratively written.\textsuperscript{48)\textsuperscript{48}} Even if it is the case, I maintain that intellectual historians should prioritize investigation into historicity based on the assumption of factuality. Why? All the issues such as epistemological presuppositions, circular logical structure, etc. begin from the underlying layer of historicity. The idea of historicity conforming to facts should be pursued even if not real. Thereby, intellectual historians would cast questions, making historicity into a stepping stone.

Another point of fundamental skepticism that can be raised in intellectual history is whether text in paper book format is sufficient as the sole source for intellectual history. Actually, intellectual historians also rely on other materials such as epigraphy, coins, stamps, artworks, etc.\textsuperscript{49)\textsuperscript{49}} Of course, inevitably,

\textsuperscript{48)\textsuperscript{48}} White inherits Giambattista Vico’s (1668–1744) ideas that tropes exist in the fundamental layer of the historical imagination. According to the former, historians have access to historical data in a prefigurative way, because linguistic structure, which constitutes the foundation of historical imagination, has tropes including metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, irony, etc. He proceeds to connect the tropes to emplotment subsumed under certain genres, argument which is historians’ worldview, and to the ideology of the age.

\textsuperscript{49)\textsuperscript{49}} I have no space to explain this topic, but note that there are quality scholars such as D.C. Sircar (1907–1985), Richard Salomon, Gregory Schopen, Dieter Schuh, etc. who have dedicated themselves to increasing our knowledge on Buddhism by expanding the volume and type of
temporality and an interpretive layer of historicity are still a concern.

Intellectual historians aim at a bigger theory from limited bits of philological and philosophical proof. Therefore, they are alert to the fact that their interpretations are innately subject to fallibility. It may be natural that no fixed theory may be posited although this is the way intellectual history is vindicated. As seen in the examples in the Introduction and in the case of the early Yogācāra masters, intellectual historians see issues from different perspectives with the eyes of a connoisseur who detects the transmitted traditional views as having been wrongly and uncritically established for a long time.

Of course, their own theories may be hypothetical and interim. Even if intellectual historians appear to attempt consistent and coherent interpretations, when confronted with inconsistent, incoherent and contradictory elements they are not hesitant to indicate discordance. Basically, in the mixed strata of contested elements, consonant conclusions are rare. Unavoidably, they make issues more complex and even insoluble. In that sense, a possible answer as to why historicity matters in intellectual history may be the fact that it contains discordant diversities and multiple possible interpretations, thereby enabling intellectual history to stand shoulder to shoulder with other fields, especially classics and philosophy, in pursuit of achieving the wholesome integrity of an individual tradition.

---

materials and texts available for academic research. See my upcoming articles for their research.
Lastly, I think that if intellectual history is innately related to the issues pertaining to historicity and temporality, epistemological presuppositions, the history-ladenness of philosophy, and historicity in philosophy, etc, it may be safely assumed that intellectual historians acknowledge them at least to an extent while grappling with historical materials, and intellectual history includes the way in which historians think and investigate these issues. My point is that intellectual history is reflective knowledge on knowledge through thought experiments, and historicity is a crucial part of it.
Abbreviations

BEFEO  Bulletin de l'école française d'extrême-orient

c.      century

Ch.     Chinese

ed.     edited

IsMEO   Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente

JIABS   Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies

P.      Peking edition of the Tibetan Bka’ gyur and Bstan ’gyur

S.      Sanskrit

T.      Taishōzō 大正蔵

trans.  translated

Bibliography

Primary Sources


Haribhadra


Secondary Sources

Asian Sources


1989 『初期唯識思想の研究』. 東京: 春秋社.


European Sources


Frauwallner, Erich
1951 On the Date of the Buddhist Master of the Law Vasubandhu. Rome: IsMEO.


Kritzer, Robert


Schmithausen, Lambert


Schopen, Gregory


Tucci, Giuseppe.


Ui Hakujū


Wayman, Alex

Abstract

Intellectual History: Pivoting on Historicity in Philosophy:
An Example from Buddhism

Jo, Sokhyo
(Research Institute of Korean Studies, Korea University)

Historical consciousness of the modern period, which shows a clear distinction from that of the previous periods, is well displayed in intellectual history, which is investigation into the development of ideas and transmission of knowledge. To understand the academic issues that are grappled with in intellectual history, it is necessary to understand how it interacts with other relevant academic disciplines.

Firstly, it is connected to classics and philology, in which historicity is regarded as part and parcel of their research. Critical investigation into them leads intellectual historians to take the stance that perception on historicity lies not in a factual stratum but in an interpretive stratum. Further, they usually focus on coherently organizing inconsistent, inessential, contradictory elements of interpretation within the frame of temporality on which all texts have a footing.

Next, intellectual history is closely tied to philosophy and the history of philosophy because it is a historiography of ideas and thinkers. On the basic assumption that the histor-
licity of philosophy should be involved for a proper understanding of philosophical texts, intellectual history focuses on diachronic influences and changes of ideas which are intertextually detected. Clearly, intellectual historians assume that texts may be considered as ahistorical or even trans-historical when historicity was not a concern between traditions nor is it in modern interpretive traditions of philosophy.

As a result, a tension between intellectual history and philosophy is inevitable, and the former has conditioned and simultaneously fostered understanding of the latter. Taken together, it may look as if intellectual history, being based on classics and philology, attempts a risky *pas de deux* with philosophical traditions which may be understood as ahistorical where their foci are given to doctrinal sides.

The hitherto mentioned issues of intellectual history raised by Western critical approaches to historicity are also inherent in Buddhist studies and Buddhist intellectual history which have developed on Western soil. For example, the historicity of person(s) as seen in such examples as the historicity of Maitreya(-nātha), and the transition of philosophical thought in the works attributed to Vasubandhu/Vasubandhu-s—which have become controversial since the 20th century, can be understood within the bigger frame of modern historical consciousness and how its coupled intellectual history unfolded.

Specifically regarding these issues, efforts have been consistently made to construct a proper intellectual history in spite of limited sources of inner- and outer-textual evidence. The seemingly diversified opinions and cacophony in the development of interpretations of the issues epito-
mizes intellectual history, including the theoretical process which explores ways of thinking about various possibilities and the presuppositions of those possibilities.

Keywords: intellectual history, historicity, historicity in philosophy, Yogācāra philosophers, logical circularity

投稿 일자: 2018년 11월 27일
심사 기간: 2018년 12월 7일~21일
게재 확정일: 2018년 12월 21일