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An Opaque Pun

Tentative Notes on Kāśyapaparivarta § 68

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Abstract

Various interpretations of *Kāśyapaparivarta* § 68 have been attempted in the Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda tradition. This passage, which consists in a simile likening a magician devoured by his own creation to a monk involved in meditation practice, appears prima facie absurd, insofar as the similarity between the tenor and the vehicle is not readily apparent. This article mainly consists of two parts: The first part examines the received interpretations of the simile and reconstructs their interrelationship from a historical perspective. The second part explores the literary dimension of the simile and argues that its ostensible absurdity is rooted in a pun which is visible only in Middle Indo-Aryan and seems to serve no purpose. Coming to terms with the opaque and pointless pun, this essay is aimed at a new interpretation of *Kāśyapaparivarta* § 68 and, it is hoped, a deeper understanding of the literary playfulness inherent in the making of the *Kāśyapaparivarta* as a so-called early Mahāyāna sūtra against the backdrop of the Sanskritization of Buddhist sūtra literature.

Keywords

Sanskritization – Mahāyāna literature – *Kāśyapaparivarta* – Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda – *Madhyāntavibhāga-bhāṣya* – *Madhyāntavibhāga-ṭīkā* – **Buddhadhātuśāstra* – **Kāśyapaparivarta-ṭīkā* – Middle Indo-Aryan – Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit – puns – play and seriousness

1 Introduction

[P]lay is positive, earnest negative. The significance of ‘earnest’ is defined by and exhausted in the negation of ‘play’—earnest is simply ‘not playing’ and nothing more. The significance of play, on the other hand, is by no means defined or exhausted by calling it ‘not earnest’, or ‘not serious’. Play is a thing by itself. The play-concept as such is of a higher order than is seriousness. For seriousness seeks to exclude play, whereas play can very well include seriousness.¹

Buddhist literature boasts a high degree of rhetorical and literary sophistication. This is especially the case with the earlier sūtras, both Mainstream and Mahāyāna, which had been transmitted in Middle Indo-Aryan (henceforth MIA) for a longer or shorter period of time before some were translated into Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit. As is well known, the MIA languages abound in homonyms due to their phonological peculiarities. Words of different origins occasionally converged into a single form in MIA, giving rise to ambiguity as to the meaning of the form. Previous scholarship has made a convincing case that the Buddhist tradition “deliberately capitalized on,”² or, to say the least, “took advantage of,”³ the ambiguity with which some MIA forms are endowed. As a result, we are left with numerous cases in which a single form can have two or more divergent meanings permitted by the context. This phenomenon can be heuristically described in modern English as ‘pun’.⁴

When the Buddhists transmitting those texts shifted to Sanskrit in the first few centuries of the Common Era,⁵ an unprecedented difficulty emerged,

1 Huizinga (1949): 45.

2 Gethin (1992): 72.

3 Norman (1997): 102.

4 While an appropriate definition of ‘pun’ is not easily forthcoming, I content myself here with the reference to the OED on an *ad hoc* basis: “The use of a word in such a way as to suggest two or more meanings or different associations, or of two or more words of the same or nearly the same sound with different meanings, so as to produce a humorous effect; a play on words.” Whether a humorous effect is the *sine qua non* may be disputable. For keen and witty remarks on this entry in the OED, see Bates (1999): 421–438. For a collection of essays that tackle the pun from various perspectives of literary criticism, without reaching any standard definition or taxonomy, see Culler (1988).

5 It was during this period of time that two developments coincided: the Buddhist adoption of Sanskrit on the one hand, and the Sanskritization of Buddhist textual and epigraphic languages on the other. These two developments went hand in hand and were probably motivated by more or less the same historical and societal factors, not all of which have become clear so far; see Bronkhorst (2011): 122–142. For a case study of the incipient Sanskritization

namely, the untranslatability of puns.⁶ This is understandable in terms of the mechanism by which Sanskritization works: While translating a deliberately ambiguous form in MIA, the Sanskritizing redactor is bound to choose between two or more words which are not homonyms in Sanskrit. In other words, once the form is translated into Sanskrit, we lose the point of the pun.⁷ If at least one version of the sūtra is extant in a MIA language, whether or not with partial Sanskritization, the silhouette of the pun may be better discernible. But if the sūtra, as is the case with many Mahāyāna sūtras, has come down to us only in Sanskrit and/or through the medium of translations in other languages, we are no longer in a position to capture the point of the pun, which has become, as it were, an opaque pun.

The opacity of the pun partially obscures the context in which it occurs. Such a nebulous context not only poses a thorny problem to exegetes and scholars in various strands of Buddhism, but also provides the latter with room for maneuver. Equally obscure is the functionality of puns of that nature, which intrigues but eludes modern philologists and literary critics: Are they used as a means to produce a humorous effect, for instance, to poke fun at the interlocutor(s) in the narrated world?⁸ Or, do they serve an earnest intent, for instance, as an integral part of a well-designed rhetorical vehicle for doctrinal/apologetic argumentation?⁹ Questions of this kind cannot be appropriately answered on

of Gāndhārī in the first and second centuries with intriguing remarks on the circumstances under which this process took place, see Salomon (2001): 241–252. It should be kept in mind that this was by no means a linear, continuous process, and that regional differences and local choices and understandings of religious authority may also have influenced the degree of Sanskritization; see Fussman (1988): 17, (1998): 757; and Schopen (2009): 191.

6 On the (un)translatability of puns in general from the perspective of Post-Structuralism and Translation Studies, see Davis (1997): 24; Delabastita (1994): 223–243, (2004): 600–606.

7 See Norman (1997): 109. For two cases of punning and etymologizing (gleaned from the *Dhammapada*) which worked in MIA but no longer in Sanskrit or in a partially Sanskritized MIA variety (e.g. Pāli), see Norman *ibid.*: 103. For puns and cases of paronomasia that have been obscured and obliterated even in the older Sanskrit manuscripts of the *Vajracchedikā*, see Harrison (2006): 141.

8 On the humorous effect and satirical rôle of etymologizing or punning in the *Aggaññasutta*, see Collins (1993): 313–316, Gombrich (2009): 186 f. For the puns and crafty playing with Sanskrit grammar in the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*, which are believed to poke fun at the Buddha's disciples, see Fussman (2009): 647. For a prudent remark on humor as one of the possible aims of the redactors of the *Dirghāgama* of the (Mūla)Sarvāstivādins, see Hartmann (2014): 158–161.

9 For a critique of the reading of the *Aggaññasutta* by Gombrich and Collins and on the rhetorical function of puns and etymologizing as skillful means employed by the Buddha to win over his interlocutors; see Visigalli (2016): 809–832. For a critical and nuanced reappraisal of the presumption of a sole humorous intent in the case of the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*, see Silk (2014): 177–180.

the basis of a single version of a given sūtra, which is at best a freeze-frame of a highly fluid textual tradition characterized by authorial anonymity. To understand something of the intent of those who produced such a sūtra, a holistic approach, which combines a comparative study of the sūtra's extant versions and testimonia with a historical survey of its reception in various Buddhist cultures, proves more effective.

The present paper offers a few remarks on an abstruse passage occurring in an early Mahāyāna sūtra, the *Kāśyapaparivarta*.¹⁰ By unveiling a hitherto unnoticed pun embedded in this passage, I present an alternative solution to an exegetical problem which vexed Buddhist thinkers and commentators of yore, and venture a hypothesis as to what is the point of punning in this particular case, which might cast new light on the functionality of puns in Buddhist sūtra literature in general.

2 An Absurd Simile

The passage under discussion (§ 68) belongs to a section of the *Kāśyapaparivarta* (§§ 64–71),¹¹ which illuminates various aspects of Emptiness (*śūnyatā*) with a series of similes. About half of this section (§§ 66–69), including the present passage, is missing from the otherwise almost complete Sanskrit manuscript (SI P/2; 7th or 8th century). However, since the prose part of the lost half is quoted in the *Madhyāntavibhāga-ṭīkā*,¹² we can reconstruct its Sanskrit text with some certainty. According to the quotation, the passage I examine below reads as follows:¹³

10 It is most likely that an earlier name of this text was *Ratnakūṭa* (Khot. *Ratnakūla*; for the hybrid spelling see Martini [2011]: 164), while the title *Kāśyapaparivarta* does not seem to be attested in any Indian sources before the 11th century (for its occurrences in the *Ratnakaraṇḍodghāṭa-nāma-madhyamakopadeśa* by Atiśa, see Miyazaki [2007]: 25, 27; but even this might be a case of later Tibetan interpolation). In order to avoid confusion I continue to refer to it as *Kāśyapaparivarta* throughout the present paper. For a useful comprehensive survey of the textual sources and witnesses of this text with special focus on its circulation in Khotan, see Martini (2011): 165–176. Her survey is now supplemented by a recent investigation of the Old Tibetan version, see Apple (2017): 205–230, (2018): 335–357; and by a newly identified folio in Old Khotanese, see Maggi (2015): 102–142.

11 The passages are numerated after the *editio princeps* by Staël-Holstein (1926). For a meticulous treatment of another simile occurring in the same section (i.e. the simile of the *yakṣa* painter; cf. § 67), see Martini (2008): 91–97.

12 See Yamaguchi (1934): 245–248.

13 Ed. Yamaguchi (1934): 247, lines 12–16.

tadyathā kāśyapa māyākāraḥ puruṣo māyākṛtan nirmimīte, atha sa māyā-nirmitas tam eva māyākāraṃ khādetā; evam eva kāśyapa yogācāro bhikṣur yad yad evāmbanaṃ manaskaroti tat sarvam asya riktakam eva khyāti ...

sa māyānirmitas] em. Stanley; *samayā nirmitas* Yamaguchi. evāmbanaṃ] em. Yamaguchi; *evārambaṇa* Ms. manaskaroti] *manasikaroti* Stanley.

It is just like this, Kāśyapa. Suppose a magician fabricates a magical creation. Then the magical creation may devour that very magician. Just so, Kāśyapa, when a monk involved in practice¹⁴ contemplates any object whatsoever, all of them appear to him absolutely void ...¹⁵

Notwithstanding its seemingly plain wording, the passage makes no sense at first glance, inasmuch as it contains an absurd simile: What does a magician falling prey to his own creation have in common with a monk involved in meditation practice? Does it imply that the monk who has awoken to Emptiness of all objects is also, in some sense, 'devoured' by the void objects? To me the quality shared between the tenor (i.e., the magician) and the vehicle (i.e., the monk-practitioner) of this simile is unclear. Apparently, I am not the only one baffled by the absurd simile, since, as is demonstrated below, Buddhist thinkers and commentators in ancient times were also at pains to recuperate the meaning of *Kāśyapaparivarta* § 68.

3 Attempts at Recuperation

Vasubandhu explicitly alluded to the magician simile (*māyākāradṛṣṭānta*) in his commentary (*bhāṣya*) on the *Madhyāntavibhāga*, one of the fundamental treatises of the Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda school. The passage in which the allusion occurs identifies the false conceptualization (*vikalpa*) of the object of perception (*grāhya*) as one extreme, and that of the perceiving activity (*grāhaka*) as the other. It is in the context of abandoning the two extremes, which constitute the conceptual duality of the object and subject, that Vasubandhu interpreted this simile, as follows:¹⁶

14 On the term *yogācāra bhikṣu*, see Silk (1997): 233–250, (2000): 265–314.

15 Tr. Silk (unpublished draft). For translations of this passage in German, Japanese and English, see Weller (1965): 103, Nagao and Sakurabe (1974): 54, and Pāsādika (2015): 138. See also Stanley (1988): 337.

16 Ed. Nagao (1964): 72, lines 13–16; cf. Yamaguchi (1934): 247, lines 17–20. For a Japanese translation of this passage, see Nagao et al. (1976): 347 f.

vijñaptimātrajñānakṛtaṃ hy arthābhāvajñānaṃ | tac cārthābhāvajñānaṃ
| tad eva vijñaptimātrajñānaṃ nivartayati | arthābhāve vijñaptiyasam-
bhavād ity etad atra sādharmaṃ |

The tertium comparationis [of the simile] is this:¹⁷ The gnosis that the object has no real existence is indeed¹⁸ caused by the gnosis that there is nothing other than representation, and [then] that gnosis that the object has no real existence destroys that very gnosis that there is nothing other than representation; for, if the object (*artha*) has no real existence, representation (*vijñapti*) [which perceives that object] is impossible.

Following the same line of thought, Sthiramati, in his sub-commentary (*ṭīkā*)¹⁹ containing the aforementioned quotation, elaborated on the interpretation of his predecessor, as follows:²⁰

māyākāraśtānīyaṃ vijñaptimātrajñānaṃ | nirmīṭayakṣasthānīyaṃ
arthābhāvajñānaṃ | vijñaptimātrajñānaprabhāvitatvād arthābhāvajñā-
nasya | yathā nirmīṭo nirmātāraṃ bhakṣayed evam arthābhāvajñānaṃ
tad eva vijñaptimātrajñānaṃ bhakṣayati | asaty arthe vijñaptimātrasyā-
sambhavād arthopalabdhir vijñaptir iti kṛtvā |
vijñaptimātrajñānaṃ || em.; *vijñaptimātratājñānaṃ* | Yamaguchi.

The gnosis that there is nothing other than representation is likened to the magician, [and] the gnosis that the object has no real existence is likened to the magically created *yakṣa* [sic]; for the gnosis that the object has no real existence is produced by²¹ the gnosis that there is noth-

17 For the use of *etat/d (atra)* as a resumptive pronoun in Sanskrit, which often occurs after a phrase ending in *iti*, see Verpoorten (1991): 92, §15.

18 The Sanskrit particle *hi* does not seem to be used as a particle of causality in this occurrence, where it is out of place to assume such a meaning as ‘for (the reason that)’. Hence I treat it alternatively as an emphatic particle. Nagao et al. (1976): 347 did not opt for a causal interpretation, but rendered it as ‘in that case’ (そのばあい). There is no counterpart for *hi* in the Tibetan translation either (cf. *ṛnam par rig pa tsaṃ du shes pas don dngos po med par shes par byas nas* [...]).

19 On Sthiramati’s putative authorship of the *Madhyāntavibhāga-ṭīkā* and for a critique of the scenario of a sole author who composed all the commentaries ascribed to Sthiramati, see most recently Kramer (2016): 47–63.

20 Ed. Yamaguchi (1934): 247, line 20–248, line 2. For another English translation of this passage, see Stanley (1988): 337 f.

21 On the polysemy of the technical term *prabhāvita* in the earlier Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda literature, see Schmithausen (1969): 109–111 (especially 109, *sub* B. a, referring to the present

ing other than representation. Like the magical creation may devour the magical creator, just so the gnosis that the object has no real existence 'devours' that very gnosis that there is nothing other than representation; for, if the object (*artha*) is non-existent, mere representation (*vijñaptimātra*) is impossible, given [the premise] that representation is the perception of the object.²²

The commentators seem to have exploited the flexible semantics of the term *vijñapti* 'representation', which fluctuates between an active aspect (i.e., 'cognition') and a passive/resultative aspect (i.e., 'appearance, manifestation').²³ The flexibility makes room for a logically coherent theory of the mutual annulment of *artha* and *vijñapti(mātra)*, identified in this context as *grāhya* and *grāhaka*, respectively. The theory is an integral part of the doctrine of the preparatory path (*prayogamārga*)²⁴ expounded in the earlier Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda treatises, as is summarized by Schmithausen:²⁵

This crucial part of the path [i.e., the *prayogamārga*] starts from the perception of the object being *vijñaptimātra*, i.e., mere appearance, which entails that an object (*artha*) to be grasped (*grāhya*) and believed to exist outside the mind is no longer perceived. This, however, in its turn leads to the non-perception even of *vijñaptimātra* because without an object to be grasped or perceived the grasping (*grāhaka*) perception itself is not possible. At this stage, *vijñaptimātra* is equivalent to *grāhaka* and thus clearly refers to the grasping activity of the mind (which itself turns out to be a mere appearance).

occurrence); see also Schmithausen (2014): 507–568, §§ 463–518. Stanley (1988): 338 renders it as 'is characterized by', which is not quite accurate in this context.

22 The last sentence of this passage is rendered by Stanley (1988): 338 as follows: "[...] considering that the perception of the object is a representation, because, if the object does not exist, that it is representation-only is not possible." In two points I take issue with Stanley: First, he seems to have reversed cause and effect by regarding the impossibility of *vijñaptimātra* in the non-existence of the object as the reason for the identification of representation with the perception of the object, while the direction of causation is, to my mind, the other way around. Second, he seems to have interpreted *vijñaptimātra* to be a proposition that the object is nothing other than representation. This interpretation is not only grammatically problematic, but also misses the point of *vijñaptimātra* being here the modifier of *grāhaka* rather than of *grāhya*, as is argued below.

23 On the two aspects of *vijñapti*, both encompassed by the semantic field of English 'representation' and German 'Vorstellung', see Schmithausen (2014): 410, § 357.4.

24 For the description of the *prayogamārga* in the Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda sources after the *Sandhinirmocanasūtra*, see Schmithausen (2014): 607, § 568.

25 Schmithausen (2014): 410 f., § 357.4.

It is probably within the same theoretical framework that the commentators brought the simile in question back into the fold of meaning, taking advantage of the polysemy of *vijñapti*, which makes the magician represent different things at the two stages of the cognitive process. The theory is well contrived to be sure, but nothing similar is made explicit in the *Kāśyapaparivarta*; therefore, its root is rather to be sought in the incipient Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda doctrine, although such commentators as Vasubandhu could have drawn inspiration from their scriptural antecedents.²⁶

A slightly different interpretation of the simile occurs in the **Buddhadhātuśāstra* (*Foxing lun* 佛性論), which was allegedly translated into Chinese by Paramārtha (fl. 499–569)²⁷ and is traditionally attributed to Vasubandhu.²⁸ Judging from its content, the treatise is based on the *Ratnagotravibhāga*²⁹ and centers on the doctrine of Buddha-nature, as its title indicates. The magician simile is quoted in the last chapter of the treatise, which is aimed at a proof of Buddha-nature's conformity with the doctrine of the Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda school. Thus it comes as no surprise that the six pairs of extremes to be abandoned, including the aforementioned *grāhya* and *grāhaka*, are enumerated in that context to exemplify one of the five aspects of the Buddha's body of reality

26 In *Kāśyapaparivarta* § 69, the passage that immediately follows the present one, the simile that fire produced by the attrition of two pieces of wood burns up the very wood is used to illustrate the idea that true comprehensive examination (*bhūtapratyavekṣā*) gives birth to wisdom (*prajñā*) and is then consumed by the very wisdom. It is not impossible that the logical structure of § 69 was generalized by the commentator to § 68, by way of an attempt at harmonization.

27 The rôle played by Paramārtha as 'translator' should be taken *cum grano salis*, since the text contains quite a number of elements which are at least untypical of a genuine translation; see Hattori (1955): 16–30. It cannot be excluded that this text, as it stands, incorporates some comments by Paramārtha himself; see Sakamoto (1935): 264–267, Funayama (2010): 151 f. But it is extremely difficult to disentangle Paramārtha's contributions from those which are not; see Funayama (2012): 20, 52 f. The idiom of this text seems to be heterogeneous: On the one hand, it does exhibit many phraseological features peculiar to the corpus translated by Paramārtha; but on the other, there are some idiosyncrasies which distinguish it from the latter, and numerous remarkable characteristics which suggest an affinity with the apocryphal *Dasheng qi xin lun* 大乘起信論 (T1666); see Ishii (2012): 109–115.

28 Takasaki Jikidō has demonstrated that the received attribution is problematic, and that the treatise was probably composed in the 5th or 6th century by someone who must have been familiar with some genuine works by Vasubandhu; see Takasaki (1966): 47–49; Takasaki and Kashiwagi (2005): 60 f.

29 For the intertextuality between these two texts, see Matsuura (1928), Ogawa (1990): 225–258, Suemura (2010): 355 f. (= 1447 f.), Kim (2014): 235–258, and Li (2015): 114–121.

(*dharmakāya*),³⁰ which is not tainted by duality at all. While the quotation of the simile seems to derive from an intriguing version which will be discussed below, a few remarks on the tenor of the simile are noteworthy:³¹

How can one abandon these two extremes [i.e. *grāhya* and *grāhaka*]? Dependent on awareness (*vijñāna* / yìshí 意識), the gnosis that there is nothing other than representation (*vijñaptimātra-jñāna* / wéishí zhì 唯識智) arises. The gnosis that there is nothing other than representation is, *videlicet*, the gnosis that the object has no real existence (*arthābhāva-jñāna* / chénwútǐ zhì 塵無體智). Once this gnosis that there is nothing other than representation is acquired, it turns about and destroys its origin, [namely] awareness. Why is that? For the object has no real existence, awareness does not arise. For awareness does not arise, [it being] mere representation destroys itself. Hence awareness is like the magician, and the gnosis that there is nothing other than representation is like the magically created tiger [sic]; for awareness gives rise to [the gnosis that] there is nothing other than representation. Once the insight [into the doctrine that] there is nothing other than representation is acquired, it turns about and destroys awareness. Why is that? For the object (*artha*) etc. do not exist, awareness does not arise; it is like the magically created tiger turns about and devours the magician.

The main difference between this interpretation and the preceding one is as follows: The pseudo-Vasubandhu who composed the **Buddhadhātuśāstra* expressly regarded the two kinds of gnosis as two sides of the same coin. These two kinds of gnosis, which Vasubandhu and Sthiramati likened to the magician and the magical creation respectively, are identified as the magical creation only, while awareness (*vijñāna*) assumes the rôle of the magician. In spite of this modification, the interpretative framework is by and large a Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda one, and the pseudo-Vasubandhu, active in the 5th or 6th century, seems to have been inspired by a text not substantially different from, if not identical to, the *Madhyāntavibhāga-bhāṣya*.

30 For the interpretation of *dharmakāya* as the body of reality, i.e., “the body which represents [the true nature of] phenomena,” see Almogi (2009): 61f.

31 Cf. T1610, 31.809b26–c3: 云何能得離此二邊？由依意識，生唯識智。唯識智者，即無塵體智。是唯識智若成，則能還滅自本（v.l. 大）意識。何以故？以塵無體故，意識不生。意識不生故，唯識自滅。故意識如幻師，唯識智如幻虎，以意識能生唯識故。唯識觀成，還能滅於意識。何以故？由塵等無故，意識不生。譬如幻虎還食幻師。

The matter is still more complex in the case of the **Kāśyapaparivarta-ṭikā* attributed to a probably different Sthiramati from the author of the *Madhyāntavibhāga-ṭikā*.³² This commentary, preserved in a 9th-century Tibetan translation and a considerably earlier Chinese one,³³ gives a duplex interpretation of the simile in question, due to the fact that it is actually an idiosyncratic patchwork of two commentaries. These two commentaries are quite different in character: “The first, referred to in Japanese scholarship as the ‘abbreviated commentary’ (*ryakushaku* 略釈), is the more closely textual, offering a largely word-by-word commentary on the exact terms in the sūtra. Following this, the commentary offers a reprise in what Japanese scholars called the ‘extended commentary’ (*kōshaku* 広釈), more abstract and philosophical. This extended commentary closely reflects the wording of the *Viniścayasamgrahaṇī*.”³⁴ The magician simile is also interpreted differently in the abbreviated and extended commentaries. The interpretation preserved in the abbreviated commentary is introduced by an objection:³⁵

[An opponent may ask:] “If these are mere delusions of the mind, how does that very mind recognize itself?” In order to eschew this objection, the magician simile is taught. What is likened to the magician in that [simile] is the gnosis that there is nothing other than contemplation (**manas[i]kāramātra-jñāna*). What is likened to the magical creation should be the gnosis that the object has no real existence (*arthābhāva-jñāna*). What is likened to the act of devouring is the gnosis that even mere contemplation has no real existence; [thus, everything] appears as void and so on.³⁶

32 For the authorship of the **Kāśyapaparivarta-ṭikā* and the discrepancies between it and the *Madhyāntavibhāga-ṭikā*, see Silk (2009): 384, Kramer (2016): 50.

33 The Chinese translation is attributed to the first Bodhiruci, who arrived at China in 508. There was allegedly a separate translation by Ratnamati. Both translations are mentioned in a catalogue compiled by Baochang in 518, so the **Kāśyapaparivarta-ṭikā* should have been translated twice into Chinese between 508 and 518 CE. See Ōtake (2008): 21f.

34 Silk (2009): 385.

35 Cf. Staël-Holstein (1933): 129 (= T1523, 26.217c28–218a4): *gal te 'di dag ni sems kyi nor ba tsaṃ du ji ltar sems de nyid kyi sems de nyid yongs su shes zhes rgol ba spang ba'i phyir sgyu ma mkhan gyi dpe bstan to || de la sgyu ma mkhan lta bu ni yid la byed pa tsaṃ gyi shes pa'o || sprul pa lta bu ni don med par shes par bya'o || za ba lta bu ni yid la byed pa tsaṃ yang med par shes pa ste | gsog la sogs par snang ngo ||*. The reason I base my translation on the Tibetan translation is not that I consider the Tibetan translation more authentic or more faithful, but that its Chinese counterpart, albeit intriguing in its own right, seems to me more difficult to translate.

36 For a Japanese translation of this passage, cf. Ōtake (2008): 163.

The logical structure of this interpretation, despite its laconic style, is highly redolent of the theory of Vasubandhu, which may well have served as its source of inspiration. The sole innovation is the substitution of contemplation (*manas[i]kāra*) for representation (*viññapti*), which testifies to the word-for-word approach adopted by the author of the abbreviated commentary, since *manas(i)-kar-* is precisely the verb used in the Sanskrit text of *Kāśyapapari-varta* §68 to designate the act of cognizing the object (*ālambana*). But no significant difference is discernible as regards the meaning, insofar as the term **manas(i)kāramātra* is, to the best of my knowledge, not attested elsewhere in the corpus of the Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda school. Thus, an *argumentum e silentio*, as uncertain as it may be, can be made that the innovation is not so much doctrinal as redactional in nature. This interpretation, however, seems to be a far cry from its counterpart in the extended commentary:³⁷

The gnosis that the individual has no substantiality (*puḍgalanairātmya-jñāna*) is the cause of the gnosis that the factors of existence have no substantiality (*dharmanairātmya-jñāna*), for [the latter] exists when [the former] exists. It is just like, for example, the magician being the cause of the magical creation. In the same way as the magical creation devours the magician, the gnosis of a practitioner (*yogācāra*) that the factors of existence have no substantiality ‘devours’ the gnosis that the individual has no substantiality: [It] is devoid of the nature of what is endowed with the pragmatic and discursive usage (*vyavahāra*) and thus empty (*śūnya*). [It] is there[by] devoid of imagination (*parikalpa*) and thus void (*rikta*). [It] is a characteristic (*lakṣaṇa*) to be abandoned and thus hollow (*tuccha*). [It] is instantaneous (*kṣaṇika*) and thus free from substance (*asāra*). The comprehensive examination (*pratyaवेक्षणā*) is [thus] likened to the act of devouring.

The purport of this interpretation is the comprehensive examination bringing home to the practitioner the non-substantiality (*nairātmya*) of all the factors

37 Cf. Staël-Holstein (1933): 149f. (= T1523, 26.219b17–23): *de yod na yod pa'i phyir gang zag la bdag med pa'i ye shes ni chos la bdag med pa'i ye shes kyi rgyu yin te | dper na sgyu ma mkhan ni sgyu ma'i sprul pa'i rgyu yin pa bzhin te | ji ltar sgyu ma sprul bas sgyu ma mkhan zos pa bzhin du rnal 'byor spyod pa'i chos la bdag med pa'i ye shes kyi gang zag la bdag med pa'i ye shes zos so || tha snyad can gyi rang bzhin dang bral bas stong pa'o || de yongs su rtog pa dang bral bas gsog go | spang bar bya ba'i mtshan nyid yin pas gsob bo || skad cig pa yin pas snying po med pa'o || so sor rtog pa ni za ba lta bu'o ||*. For a Japanese translation of this passage, cf. Ōtake (2008): 228f.

of existence (*dharma*), which include the gnosis that the individual (*pudgala*) has no substantiality. The comprehensive examination consists in a process of negation, in which all the factors of existence are devoured and demolished metaphysically. The mental series leading to this process takes as its point of departure the realization of the non-substantiality of the individual, which is not only the 'cause' of the comprehensive examination but also becomes subject to it later on. The sense of 'cause' here, if one may quibble about the comparison, is not quite the same as in the case of the magician, who is the efficient cause of the magical creation. It seems that the author of the extended commentary made no distinction between 'condition' and 'agent' in the Aristotelian sense. Be that as it may, this interpretation is *prima facie* valid, insofar as it accounts for the dialectical relationship between the two kinds of gnosis, drawing on the monk-practitioner's contemplation on Emptiness of all objects, which is identified in this context with the comprehensive examination.

The co-existence of the two interpretations of the magician simile points to the composite nature of the **Kāśyapaparivarta-ṭikā*, which was compiled on the basis of the *Viniścayasamgrahaṇī* with the addition of significant material of different origins, while the wording of the *Kāśyapaparivarta* was analyzed in a word-for-word fashion.³⁸ This duplex structure is evinced in the double meaning of the simile in question: The symbolism of the magician and his creation is not only explained through the comprehensive examination of the gnosis of non-substantiality, an idea which goes back to the *Viniścayasamgrahaṇī*,³⁹ but also explicated from the perspective of the gnosis that there is nothing other than contemplation, probably modified from the gnosis

38 See Silk (2009): 386 f.

39 For the parallel in the *Viniścayasamgrahaṇī*, see Ōtake (2008): 478 (= T1579, 30.744a3–6): 'dzin pa la so sor rtog pa ni 'di yin te | bdag med pa'i shes pa de nyid la tha snyad las byung ba'i ngo bo nyid dang bral ba nyid dang des kun brtags pa dang bral ba nyid dang | mtshan nyid med pa nyid dang | skad cig ma nyid kyis btang bar bya ba yin par so sor rtog pa gang yin pa'o | 'The comprehensive examination of the *grāhaka* is the comprehensive examination of precisely the gnosis of non-substantiality [that turns out to be] devoid of the nature of what has arisen from the pragmatic and discursive usage, thereby devoid of imagination, without characteristic, and to be abandoned due to [its] instantaneity.' All the predicates of the gnosis also occur in the extended commentary, whose author seems to have analyzed the compound consisting of these predicates in a slightly different manner. Although there is no explicit reference to the magician simile in the *Viniścayasamgrahaṇī*, something similar to the interpretation preserved in the extended commentary may be implied in the passage translated above, given the treatise's reliance on and indebtedness to the *Kāśyapaparivarta* in overall terms.

Magician stands for A
Magical creation stands for B

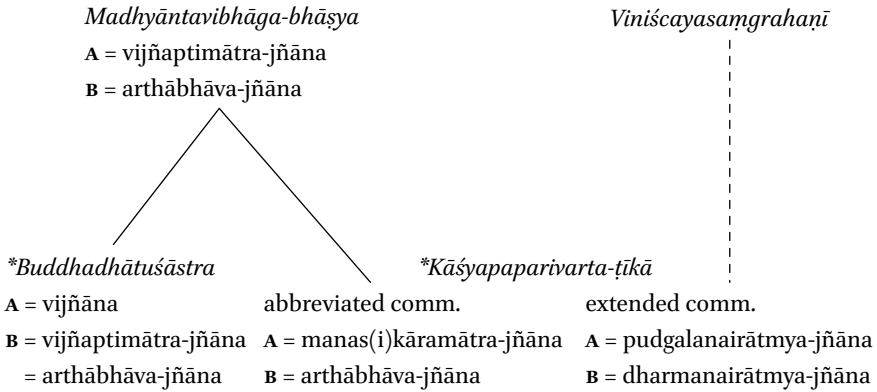


CHART 1 The interrelationship between the various interpretations of the magician simile

that there is nothing other than representation. In the latter case, the additional material may have been the *Madhyāntavibhāga-bhāṣya* or a text under its influence.⁴⁰

I round off this section by presenting in Chart 1 the findings with regard to the interrelationship between the various interpretations surveyed above. While none of these theories seem to predate the earlier layer of the Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda literature, the original meaning of the simile remains obscure and is to be investigated further below.

4 The Man-Eater Conundrum

All the interpretations surveyed above take for granted the verb *khād-* ‘to eat, devour’ that becomes the canvas on which the macabre imagery of the miserable magician takes root. This imagery invites philosophical speculations, insofar as it is not readily comprehensible what the tragic demise of the magician has to do with Emptiness of all objects in the eyes of a monk-practitioner. But how far can the verb form be traced back in history? The given passage of the *Kāśyapaparivarta* has demonstrable textual parallels in the canonical sources of the Mainstream schools, on which the magician simile is modeled.

⁴⁰ See Takasaki (1989): 486 f.

The *locus classicus* in the *Phenapiṇḍūpama* of the *Samyuttanikāya* in Pāli, for example, reads as follows:⁴¹

seyyathāpi bhikkhave māyākāro vā māyākārantevāsī vā mahāpathe māyaṃ vidamseyya, tam enaṃ cakkhumā puriso passeyya nijjhāyeyya yoniso upaparikkheya. tassa tam passato nijjhāyato yoniso upaparikkhato rittakaññeva **khāyeyya** tucchakaññeva **khāyeyya** asārakaññeva **khāyeyya**, kiñhi siyā bhikkhave māyāya sāro. evam eva kho bhikkhave yaṃ kiñci viññānaṃ atītānāgatapaccuppannam ... yaṃ dūre santike vā tam bhikkhu passati nijjhāyati yaniso upaparikkhati. tassa tam passato nijjhāyato yoniso upaparikkhato rittakaññeva **khāyati** tucchakaññeva **khāyati** asārakaññeva **khāyati**, kiñhi siyā bhikkhave viññāṇe sāro.

Suppose, monks, a magician or a magician's apprentice would display a magical illusion at a crossroads. A man with good sight would inspect it, ponder it, and carefully investigate it, and it **would appear** to him void, hollow, insubstantial. For what substance could there be in a magical illusion? So too, monks, whatever kind of consciousness there is, whether past, future, or present ... far or near: a monk inspects it, ponders it, and carefully investigates it, and it **appears** to him void, hollow, insubstantial. For what substance could there be in consciousness?⁴²

This passage, in all likelihood, testifies to the embryonic stage of the magician simile in the *Kāśyapaparivarta*. Its affinity with *Kāśyapaparivarta* § 68 is, first and foremost, borne out by the stock phrase *rikta(ka)/tuccha(ka)/asāra(ka) + khyā-* 'to appear as void/hollow/insubstantial', which, though not quoted in its entirety by Sthiramati, occurs also at the end of *Kāśyapaparivarta* § 68.⁴³ While the canonical parallel lays stress on the insubstantial nature of con-

41 Ed. Feer (1890): vol. 3, 142, lines 10–21 (emphasis added). For its parallel in one of the Chinese translations of the *Samyuktāgama*, see T99, 2.69a7–14. The whole passage is quoted in the *Abhidharmakośa-upāyikā* by Śamathadeva (preserved in a Tibetan version), cf. Peking Tanjur (Ōtani no. 5595), *tu* 274a6–b2; see also Honjō (1994): 38, (2014): vol. 2, 599. Some words from a Sanskrit version of this passage are quoted and commented upon in a fragment of the *Paryāyasamgrahāṇī*, see Matsuda (1994): 97, *sub* § I.8.viii.c.9.

42 Tr. Bodhi (2000): vol. 1, 952. See also Woodward (1924): vol. 3, 120.

43 For the end of *Kāśyapaparivarta* § 68 in the Tibetan version, see Staël-Holstein (1926): 101 (emphasis added): *gsob dang stong pa dang snying po med pa nyid du snang ngo*; see also the extended commentary of the **Kāśyapaparivarta-tikā* quoted above (p. 379, which not only bears witness to the same stock phrase, but also elucidates it as through the qualities of the comprehensive examination according to the *Viniścayasamgrahāṇī*.

sciousness (*viññāna*), the *Kāśyapaparivarta* doctrinally takes it a step further by tracing its freedom from substance back to the root, namely, Emptiness of sense-objects which are the ‘foundation’ (*ālambana*) of consciousness *in sensu litterali*. What merits more attention is the fact that there is no counterpart of *khād-* ‘to devour’ whatsoever in the Mainstream prototype, where the finite verb occurring in lieu of it is *khyā-* ‘to appear’. It transpires that the substitution of the former for the latter was a Mahāyāna innovation, which, as is argued below, probably took place at a stage when the *Kāśyapaparivarta* was still in a MIA language.⁴⁴

It is noteworthy that the two finite verbs of *Kāśyapaparivarta* §68 are not distinguished in the **Vevulla-Maniratana(sutra)*,⁴⁵ the earliest Chinese translation dating from the 2nd century. The translator, be it Lokakṣema or not,⁴⁶ rendered the magician simile as follows:⁴⁷

Suppose a magician conjures up a human being, [who] turns about and **devours** the magician. Just so, forms, sounds, smells, tastes, [and] tangible objects, from which mental concentration⁴⁸ arises, **devour** [things] empty [and] devoid of other peculiarities.

Admittedly, the Chinese translation is such a mess that the passage, as it stands, hardly makes any sense. But if the mess is anything to go by, the forms of the two finite verbs must have been so close that the translator was unable to tell them from each other. His blunder is all the more telling, since it is almost impossible to confuse *khyā-* with *khād-* in Sanskrit, while a breeding ground for this kind of muddle is easily located in MIA.

Judging from a historical linguistic perspective, there is a strong likelihood that these two verbs are homonyms in MIA. In the ambiguous MIA form *khā-*

44 It must be added that the postulate of such a MIA stage merely applies to the prose part of the text, while the verses seem to have a far more complex history than hitherto assumed; see Silk (2013): 181–190. For linguistic evidence of a MIA substrate of the Hybrid Sanskrit in which the main manuscript of the *Kāśyapaparivarta* is written, see Karashima (2002): 43–66. For critical reflections on Karashima’s work, see Silk (2013): 183 f.

45 For the reconstruction of the MIA form of this archaic title, see Pelliot (1936): 69 f., Nagao (1974): 13 f. For the linguistic arguments that justify reconstructing **vevulla-*, see Karashima (2015a): 118 f.

46 For the issues of the attribution, see Nattier (2008): 84.

47 Cf. T350, 12.191a19–21 (emphasis added): 譬如幻師化作人，還自取幻師噉。如是色、聲、香、味、對，從中出念，噉空，噉 (v.l. Ø) 無他奇。 For a slightly different German translation, see Weller (1968/69): 125, § 54.

48 See Karashima (2010): 340, s.v. 念 (niàn)³.

yati, at least two verbs in Sanskrit could have converged, i.e., *khādate* (pres. \bar{A} . sg. 3)⁴⁹ and *khyāyate* (pass. sg. 3).⁵⁰ The seemingly active form *khyāti*, attested in *Kāśyapaparivarta* § 68 in the medio-passive voice, must have derived from Old Indic *khyāyāte* through an early MIA vowel contraction,⁵¹ while the root present *khyāti* ‘relates, tells’ proves a later innovation of Epic Sanskrit, possibly in analogy to the archaic aorist forms.⁵² In other words, *khyāti* ‘appears, is seen’ is morphologically possible only on the assumption of a MIA origin.

In light of the evidence adduced above, what seems to have happened in the first place is a playful reinterpretation of the MIA verb form **khā(y)-*, which, in *Kāśyapaparivarta* § 68, is construed as *khād-* on the one hand and as *khyā-* on the other, along with the recasting of the first half of the simile. This reinterpretation had resulted in an ornate paronomasia in MIA, the contour of which was still discernible in the 2nd century, but became hazy in the course of the Sanskritization of this Mahāyāna sūtra, a process which most of the extant versions seem to have undergone.

This is, however, not the whole story. In the 6th-century Chinese translation of the *Kāśyapaparivarta* which, for some reason, was incorporated into a version of the *Ratnameghasūtra*,⁵³ the first sentence of *Kāśyapaparivarta* § 68 is rendered as follows:⁵⁴

49 For intervocalic *-d-* : *-y-* and the *yaśruti* phenomenon, see von Hinüber (2001): 151–155, §§ 171, 174, 177.

50 For *-te* > *-tī/ti*, see von Hinüber (2001): 275 and 295, §§ 416, 459.

51 Scenario: *khyāti* < **khāti* < MIA *khāyati* < OIA *khyāyate*; cf. Pāli *jhāti* < *jhāyati*, see von Hinüber (2001): 135, § 142.

52 See Oberlies (2003): 209, § 7.2.3. There is no present form of the verb root *khyā-* or *kśā-* attested in Vedic due to the suppletion with the root *caḥ-*. For the root aorist forms (e.g. *ākhyat* etc.), see Narten (1968): 122, Cowgill (1969): 28–30. Vedic *khyāyāte* is unequivocally identified as passive in terms of diathesis; for a systematic treatment of this verb form (with preverbs; especially with *sām*, which introduces a special meaning ‘to become spiritually or sexually united with’) in Vedic, see Kulikov (2012): 73–79.

53 Despite the received attribution to Saṅghapāla (or -varman) and Mandra(sena), two monks from Funan 扶南 (present-day Cambodia; Pelliot [1903]: 284f.), the translation (T659) was probably done by Subhūti (fl. 561–578), a compatriot of the two monks mentioned above; see Sakurabe Bunkyō’s contribution to Ono and Maruyama (1933–1936): vol. 10, 136. It differs from the other three Chinese translations of the *Ratnameghasūtra* in a number of points and shows intriguing traces of textual extension, such as the addition of *dhāraṇīs* and the incorporation of the *Kāśyapaparivarta*, which entails the change of the interlocutor from Sarvanivāraṇaṣṅkambhin to Ratnakūṭa (not Kāśyapa!). Whether these idiosyncrasies tell us something about the Buddhism prevailing in Funan at that time cannot be judged with certainty from the current state of our knowledge; see most recently Itō (2012): 13–23, (2013): 21–39.

54 Cf. T659, 16.279a5–6 (emphasis added): 善男子，譬如幻師幻作猛虎，幻虎成已，

Suppose, son of good family, a magician conjures up a **ferocious tiger**. Having come into being, the magically created tiger turns back and devours the magician.

Here the magical creation is specified as a tiger. The image of tiger has also found its way into the aforementioned quotation in the **Buddhadhātuśāstra*, which dates back to more or less the same time period. In all likelihood, it is an innovation peculiar to a version of the *Kāśyapaparivarta* which was influential around the 5th and 6th centuries. This innovation, which brings a tiger into play, makes good sense in the overall context, inasmuch as not every magical creation is such a man-eater that, by breathing life into it, the magician is digging his own grave.

An Indian origin of the image of tiger is not to be excluded. The plot that a magician is devoured by a tiger which he raised to life is also known from the story of the young Brahmin Sañjīva preserved in Pāli, the moral of which is that favoring an unworthy being (*asantapaggaha*) incurs great mischief.⁵⁵ Similar stories with a lion in lieu of a tiger are found in several Indian collec-

還食幻師。 This idiosyncratic image, neither attested in Sanskrit nor in any other versions, has already been pointed out by Nagao (1974): 18.

- 55 Cf. Fausbøll (1877): vol. 1, 510: *atīte bārāṇasīyaṃ brahmadatte rajjaṃ kārente bodhisatto mahāvībhava brāhmaṇakule nibbattitvā vāyapatto takkasīlaṃ gantvā sabbasippāni uggaṇhitvā Bārāṇasīyaṃ disāpāmokkho ācariyo hutvā pañcamāṇavakastāni sippaṃ vāceti. tesu māṇavesu sañjīvo nāma māṇavo atthi. bodhisatto tassa matakutthāpanamantam adāsi. so utthāpanamantam eva gahetvā paṭibāhanamantam pana agahetvā ekadivasaṃ māṇavehi saddhiṃ dāruatthāya araṇṇaṃ gantvā ekaṃ matavyagghaṃ divā māṇave āha bho imaṃ matavyagghaṃ utthāpessāmīti. māṇavā na sakkhissasīti āhaṃsu. passantānaṃ ṇeva vo utthāpessāmīti. sace māṇava sakkosi utthāpehīti evañ ca pana vatvā te māṇavā rukkhā abhirūhiṃsu. sañjīvo mantaṃ parivattetvā matavyagghaṃ sakkharāya pahari. vyaggho utthāya vegenāgantvā sañjīvaṃ galanāliyaṃ ḍasitvā jīvitakkhayaṃ pāpetvā tatth' eva pati. sañjīvo pi tatth' eva pati. ubho pi ekaṭṭhāne yeva matā nipajjīṃsu.* “Once on a time when Brahmadatta was reigning in Benares, the Bodhisatta was born into the family of a wealthy brahmin. Arriving at the age of discretion, he went to Takkasilā, (where he) acquired all crafts. In Benares he became a teacher famed far and wide and instructed five hundred young men in craft. Among these was one named Sañjīva, to whom the Bodhisatta taught the spell for raising the dead to life. But though the young man learned this spell, he did not learn the counter charm. One day he went with his fellow-pupils to the wilderness wood-gathering, and there came on a dead tiger. ‘This dead tiger, my friends, I will bring to life again,’ said he. ‘You can’t,’ said they. ‘You look and you will see me do it.’ ‘Well, if you can, do so,’ said they and climbed up a tree forthwith. Then Sañjīva repeated his spell and struck the dead tiger with a potsherd. Up started the tiger and quickly sprang at Sañjīva and bit him on the throat, killing him outright. Dead fell the tiger then and there, and dead fell Sañjīva then and there too. So the two lay dead at the same spot.” Tr. Chalmers (1895): 321, slightly modified.

tions of edifying narratives.⁵⁶ In spite of minor variations in content, the stories have the same lesson to impart: Intellect (*buddhi*) is more important than magical skill (*vidyā*). It is thus conceivable that the redactors of the version of the *Kāśyapaparivarta* prevailing in the 5th and 6th centuries were au fait with this narrative trope, which inspired them to add the image of tiger into the magician simile so as to make the latter more concrete and cogent. Such literary refinements were by no means isolated.⁵⁷

5 Conclusions

To be sure, through the lens of a single passage, however telling it may be, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to see a coherent picture which does justice to the complexity of such a text as the *Kāśyapaparivarta*. Nevertheless, I hope to have shed light on a significant aspect of this Mahāyāna sūtra, namely, its connate literary playfulness. Wordplay in this text sometimes takes on a more overt form and seems to serve a clearer intent,⁵⁸ but at other times words are punning on the sly, with no discernible point or purpose. While instances in the former case are readily accepted as ‘good’ puns which are not arbitrary but purposeful and motivated, those in the latter case raise eyebrows and are condemned as black sheep in the flock: What is the point of the play on words? Is it germane to the context? Does it solely serve a humorous intent? Does it qualify as a pun at all? These are the questions that the critic who always keeps puns to the point may well ask, and that I attempt to tentatively answer in the following remarks.

Kāśyapaparivarta § 68 contains two finite verbs which are etymologically distinct but homonymous in MIA. Only the second of the two verbs (*khyā-*) can

56 A parable of a magician slain by a lion that he restored to life is found in Bhāvadevasūri's *Pārśvanātha-Caritra*, a Jain collection of edifying stories; see Bloomfield (1917): 25, (1919): 75. For the kindred story that four Brahmin brothers resuscitated a lion, which then immediately became a threat to their lives, see *Pañcatantra* v 4 (ed. Kosegarten [1848]: 243–244, tr. Benfey [1859]: vol. 2, 332–334), Śivadāsa's *Vetālapañcaviṃśatikā* 21 (ed. Uhle [1881]: 55–56), and Somadeva's *Kathāsaritsāgara* xii 29 (ed. Durgāprasād et al. [1889]: 528–530, tr. Tawney in Penzer [1924]: vol. 7, 108–111).

57 See the passage quoted above (p. 374) from the *Madhyāntavibhāga-ṭikā*, where the magical creation is explicitly referred to as a *yakṣa*.

58 For instance, the double meaning of *buddhajñāna-/yāna* ‘Buddha-Gnosis-/Vehicle’ intended in *Kāśyapaparivarta* § 12 apparently has an ideological point; see Karashima (2002): 60. For the wordplay *jñāna-/yāna-* in the Mahāyāna literature, see Karashima (2001): 215 f., (2015b): 163–196.

be traced back to its Mainstream canonical prototype, the first half of which is reconfigured in *Kāśyapaparivarta* §68 so as to make possible an alternate reading of the same form as the first verb (*khād-*). This reconfiguration, while exploiting the homonymy between the two verbs in MIA, adds nothing obviously relevant to the context in question and creates difficulties in understanding the simile as a whole. That is to say, the opaque pun has no point and thus can only be described and understood in terms of play *tout court*. If a borderline between ordinary and literary languages can be drawn, 'good' puns are straddling the borderline and can easily be naturalized on both sides, while 'bad' puns merely belong to the literary side. The latter are part and parcel of literary language and, compared with the former, are more representative of how literary language deviates from ordinary words, insofar as such a pun as the present one is based on the polysemy of a single syllable, the smallest unit of linguistic deviation. "A pun is literariness writ small," as Catherine Bates put it, "its supposed difference from the so-called ordinary words explains why it ... is marked as other and derives its status as such from being measured against an everyday, sober method of expression treated as the norm."⁵⁹ It is along similar lines that the ostensibly purposeless pun under discussion is to be appreciated.

The purposelessness of the pun should, however, not be taken to imply that it is intended merely for fun or not meant seriously. This can easily be taken for granted due to the fact that the word 'playful(ness)' in English has connotations of amusement and lightheartedness. But, as Johan Huizinga argued in his *Homo ludens*, quoted above, play and seriousness are not incompatible, and it is impetuous to proceed from "play is non-seriousness" to "play is not serious"; on the contrary, play can be performed with the most profound seriousness.⁶⁰ In the religious sphere, Huizinga plausibly demonstrated the existence of the play-element in ritual, magic, liturgy, sacrament, mysteries etc., the subsumption of which under the category of play does not undercut their holiness.⁶¹ Hence, it may come as no surprise that authoritative texts of a religion contain puns intended in no less pious seriousness. This is all the more the case with the Buddhist tradition, which places great emphasis on the oral recitation of scriptures. "One can well imagine that," as Paul Harrison astutely remarks, "practitioners devoting a lot of their waking time to rehearsing texts ... would also dream of doing so, in the process of reforming the texts in more creative ways,

59 See Bates (1999): 425. The idea that literary language is characterized by its degree of deviation from ordinary words goes back to Aristotle and is thus not a modern notion.

60 See Huizinga (1949): 5–8. This is a point emphasized over and over again throughout the *magnum opus* of Johan Huizinga.

61 See Huizinga (1949): 18–27.

by dint of free association, condensation, recombination etc., to the extent that they would be apprehended as new texts.”⁶² This hypothesis, as speculative as it may seem, outlines the possible ways in which the pun in question may have come into being, by virtue of playful but by no means unserious engagement with the scriptural tradition. This is a process of automatic creation, in which the outcome emerges spontaneously, without a blueprint or plan. The outcome of this process is, to quote Romano Guardini’s description of liturgy, “pointless but significant.”⁶³

On the receiving end, the opaque pun finds considerable resonance among the Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda thinkers and commentators, who, as is shown above, made various attempts at recuperating the meaning of the simile so as to restore priority to the serious business of making sense. They all seem to have been absorbed in an engaging game set in motion by the opaque pun, which, by dint of its supra-logical and lateral forms of thinking, destabilizes the system of meaning established in the Mainstream canon and thus paves the way for doctrinal developments and new philosophical ideas. The game never ends, as the Oxford philosopher Bimal K. Matilal (1935–1991) still drew on the same simile to formulate his theory on the proliferation (*prapañca*) of concepts and linguistic conventions, which both hail from and gnaw at the humans.⁶⁴ We have good reasons to expect more ingenious interpretations from future generations, but the genesis of *heteroglossia* began with, as it were, the Big Bang moment, when somebody was inspired to make an experimental move by reinterpreting an ambiguous verb form and thus created a pun in MIA. We have no idea what he/she actually had in mind, and we may never know. The only thing we know is that he/she did it, and that the results turn out to be fruitful.

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62 Harrison (2003): 135. For more textual evidence substantiating this hypothesis, especially on the use of dream in Buddhist practice, see Harrison *ibid.*: 135–141.

63 See Guardini *apud* Huizinga (1949): 19 (“zwecklos aber doch sinnvoll”).

64 See Matilal (1986): 309 ff., who seems to have known the simile from a version with tiger.

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