

Ten Aspects of the Mahayana

as presented in Arya Asanga's Mahayanasamgraha (Summary of the Great Vehicle)
(10 themes found only in the Great Vehicle, to be realized in the sequence presented here;
aspects 1-3 are upheld only by Yogachara School; 4-10 are upheld by all of Mahayana)

- 1. Alaya-vijnana** (storehouse/repository/container consciousness) – 8 consciousness system; see below
- 2. Trisvabhava / trilakshana** (3 natures / 3 characteristics) – paratantra (other-dependent – all manifestations of consciousness, born of alaya), parikalpita (imputational/completely imagined/conceptually grasped – as something established by way of its own character), parinishpanna (thoroughly-established/completely perfected/perfectly real); parinishpanna is the absence of parikalpita in paratantra – this is suchness, ultimate essencelessness, the object of observation for purification
- 3. Vijnaptimatra** (mere concept/consciousness-only/cognition-only) – realization of parinishpanna and that all objects of experience are therefore just manifestations of consciousness, born of alaya; darshana-marga (path of seeing) is entered at first direct cognition of vijnaptimatra - this is 1st bodhisattva bhumi
- 4. Paramita** (6 or 10 perfections) – dana (giving), shila (morality), kshanti (patience), virya (diligence), dhyana (meditation), prajna (wisdom), upayakaushalya (skillful means), pranidhana (aspiration), bala (power), jnana (knowledge); these paramitas are both the condition and the result of realization
- 5. Bodhisattva-bhumi** (10 grounds/levels/stages of awakening beings) – pramudita (joyous), vimala (stainless), prabhakari (luminous), arcismati (radiant), sudarjaya (unconquerable), abhimukhi (directly facing), durangama (far going), achala (immovable), sadhumati (good intellect), dharmamegha (cloud of teachings) – 10 paramitas are practiced on 10 bhumis, successively, on bhavana-marga (path of cultivation); this is applying vijnaptimatra (nonduality of subject and object) to each paramita
- 6. Bodhisattva-shila** (precepts of awakening beings) – embracing and sustaining discipline and deportment, embracing and sustaining wholesome qualities, embracing and sustaining living beings
- 7. Mahayana samadhi** (great vehicle concentrations/absorptions) – Heroic March, Ocean Seal, etc.
- 8. Nirvikalpa-jnana** (nonconceptual/nonimaginative wisdom/knowledge) – same as prajna-paramita (perfection of wisdom); direct realization of suchness (6,7,8 are Mahayana version of the basic path)
- 9. Apratishtita-nirvana** (non-abiding liberation/cessation/unbinding) – complete non-attachment to both samsara and nirvana; this is ashraya-paravrtti (transformation/conversion/revolution of the basis) – paratantra is converted from imputation to reality, alaya-vijnana is transformed into perfect mirror jnana
- 10. Trikaya** (3 bodies of Buddha) – dharmakaya (inconceivable truth body), sambhogakaya (enjoyment/bliss body – appears only to bodhisattvas), nirmanakaya (illusory/transformation body); these 3 bodies manifest at ashraya-paravrtti – Buddhahood is ashaiksha-marga (path of no more learning)

Eight Consciousnesses of the Yogachara School

as presented in Sandhinirmochana Sutra (ch.5), Lankavatara Sutra, Asanga's Mahayanasamgraha (ch.1),
Vasubandhu's Vijnaptimatratasiddhi; early Buddhism taught only first 6 consciousnesses

- 1-5. Chakshur/shrotra/grahna/jihva/kaya-vijnana** (eye/ear/nose/tongue/body consciousness)
- 6. Mano-vijnana** (mental consciousness) – awareness/cognition/discernment which ascribes names to objects, directly perceives emptiness, misconceives duality, etc.; awareness of activity of klishta-manas
- 7. Klishta-manas** (afflicted mind/intellect – the mental sense organ, afflicted with view of self, confusion regarding self, pride in self, attachment to self; it is the source of the imputational character; it conceives alaya to be the self of the person, until hinayana stream-entry or 1st bodhisattva bhumi
- 8. Alaya-vijnana** (storehouse/repository/container consciousness) – the basis into which karmic actions leave vasana (permeations) or bija (seeds), which in turn give rise to sense organs, objects, the 7 other consciousnesses, and habits (the whole dependently arisen world of experience) – all pervaded by a sense of duality of perceiver and perceived; alaya is what “flows” through deep sleep, transmigrates in rebirth, and connects body and mind – though it is not a permanent self; it continues until arhatship or 8th bodhisattva bhumi (when no more seeds are deposited and all stored seeds have come to fruition), when it is called fruition consciousness – at Buddhahood it is transformed into perfect mirror jnana

3 Characteristics of all Phenomena (in Chapters 6&7 of the Samdhinirmochana Sutra)

1. Imputational Character (parikalpita - completely imagined, mere fantasy, conceptually grasped, projected; this is a non-existent imputational character - there are existent imputational characters, like un compounded space, which are also referents of words, but do not exist by way of their own character)

It is that which is imputed as (imagined as, posited by) a name or symbol (to the objects of conceptual activity, the signs of compounded phenomena) in terms of the own-being (svabhava - identity, essence, entity) or attributes (particulars) of phenomena in order to subsequently designate (impute) any convention whatsoever.

It is known in dependence upon names that are connected with signs (nimitta).

It is a lack of own-being in terms of character (marks, characteristics, traits, features - lakshana-nihsvabhavata)...It is posited as (defined by) names and symbols, but it does not subsist by way of its own character (by inherent definition).

(Jang-gya definition): It is the (false) establishment of an (other-dependent) phenomenon by way of its own-character (svalakshana) (from its own side) as the referent (ground, base of imputation) of a conceptual consciousness or of a word (name, designation, apprehension), and the (false) establishment of object (perceived, phenomena) and subject (perceiver, consciousness) as separate entities.

(Svabhava: inherent existence, entity, substance, essence, own-being, intrinsic being, self-existence, self-nature; basically equivalent to svalakshana: natural existence, own-character)

2. Other-Dependent Character (paratantra – other-powered, dependent origination; objects of conceptual activity, bases of the imputational character, signs (or that which has the signs) of compounded phenomena)

It is simply the dependent origination (dependent co-arising) of phenomena .

It is known in dependence upon strongly adhering to the other-dependent character as being the imputational character (being superimposed on the imputational character).

It is a lack of own-being in terms of self-production (birth - utpatti-nihsvabhavata)...It arises through the force (dependent on the power) of other conditions and not by itself.

(Asanga's definition): It is all the consciously constructed differentiations (vijnapti – concepts) that have alaya as their seed...They correspond to the (6 sense organs, 6 sense objects, 6 consciousnesses).

3. Thoroughly Established Character (parinishpanna - completely perfected, perfectly real, consummate; its realization is equivalent to realizing that all objects of experience are mere consciousness; this is vijnaptimatratā - mere concept, consciousness-only, perception-only, ideation-only, cognition-only, mere representation of consciousness, mere denomination, pure information, only constructs of consciousness; it is realized directly and non-conceptually on the Path of Seeing)

It is the suchness (tathata - thusness) of phenomena. Through diligence and proper mental application (it is realized)...It is the other-dependent char. not thoroughly established as being the imputational char.

It is known in dependence upon absence of strong adherence to the other-dependent character (dependent co-arising, interdependent origination) as being the imputational character.

It is an ultimate lack of own-being (essence - paramārtha-nihsvabhavata)...It is the selflessness of phenomena...the object of observation for purification...ultimate truth.

Other-powered (characters) are permanently and forever thoroughly not established as (having) the imputational (character), and are without that inherent nature; just that non-establishment or lack of inherent nature is to be viewed as the thoroughly established character.

(Jang-gya definition): It is the emptiness (absence) of an (other-dependent) object's establishment by way of its own character as the referent of a conceptual consciousness or of a term (word) and the emptiness of its being a separate entity from the consciousness apprehending it (of object and subject being different substantial entities, of subject-object duality, of perceiver-perceived duality).

(The thoroughly established character is the absence of the imputational character in the other-dependent character. Other-powered characters are not established by way of their own character as the referents of conceptual consciousnesses or as the referents of words.)

Mind-Only (Chittamātra / Vijñaptimātra / Yogāchāra) Reading List

"The three realms [the desire, form, & formless realms; all of existence] are mind-only (*chitta-mātra*)."
Avatamsaka Sūtra, Chapter 26: the Ten Stages (pages 746, 751, 1047)

"I have explained that consciousness is fully distinguished by [the fact that its] object of observation is cognition-only (*vijñapti-mātra*)... The appearances of the forms of sentient beings and so forth are not different from the mind. However, because childish beings with distorted understanding do not recognize these images as cognition-only, just as they are in reality, they misconstrue them... What is the one-pointed mind? It is the realization that: 'This image which is the focus of samādhi is cognition-only.' Having realized that, it is mental attention to suchness."

Samdhinirmochana Sūtra, Chapter 8: the Questions of Maitreya (pages 155, 157)

"There are those who have fallen into the dualistic way of thinking, being unable to comprehend the truth of mind-only (*chitta-mātra*); they desire to discriminate a world which is of mind itself. Body, property, and abode have their existence only when measured in discrimination."

Lankāvatāra Sūtra, Chapter 2: Collection of all the Dharmas (page 47 plus many others)

Samdhinirmochana Sūtra:

*The Wisdom of Buddha – translated by John Powers, 1994 (Sutra, from Tibetan)

*Buddhist Yoga: a Comprehensive Course – trans. by Thomas Cleary, 1995 (Sutra, from Chinese)

The Scripture on the Explication of Underlying Meaning – trans. by John Keenan, 2000 (Sutra, from Ch.)

The Central Philosophy of Tibet – Robert Thurman, 1991 (Tsongkhapa's commentary on Chapter 7)

Emptiness in the Mind-Only School – Jeffrey Hopkins, 1999 (same as above)

*Reflections on Reality: the Three Natures and Non-Natures in the Mind-Only School – Jeffrey Hopkins, 2002 (same as above, plus extensive reflections on three natures, etc.)

Absorption in No External World: 170 Issues in Mind-Only Buddhism – Jeffrey Hopkins, 2005

Hermeneutics and Tradition in the Samdhinirmochana Sutra – John Powers, 2004

Lankāvatāra Sūtra:

*The Lankāvatāra Sūtra – trans. by D.T. Suzuki, 1932 (Sutra, from Sanskrit and Chinese)

Studies in the Lankāvatāra Sūtra – D.T. Suzuki, 1930

Maitreya Bodhisattva & Arya Asanga (310-390 CE):

Principles of Buddhist Psychology – David J. Kalupahana, 1987 (pp. 149-171) (Madhyāntavibhāga, section 1, from Sanskrit)

Distinguishing the Middle from the Extremes (Madhyāntavibhāga, from Tibetan) – with commentary by Thrangu Rinpoche, 2000

*Maitreya's Distinguishing Phenomena and Pure Being (Dharmadharmatāvibhāga, from Tibetan) with commentary by Mipham – trans. by Jim Scott, 2004

Distinguishing Dharma and Dharmata (Dharmadharmatāvibhāga, from Tibetan) – with commentary by Thrangu Rinpoche, 1999

*On Knowing Reality: the Tattvartha Chapter of Asanga's Bodhisattvabhūmi – trans. by Janice Dean Willis, 1979 (from Sanskrit and Tibetan, excellent introduction on mind-only as well)

*The Summary of the Great Vehicle (Mahāyānasamgraha, from Chinese) by the Bodhisattva Asanga – trans. by John P. Keenan, 1992 (summary of Yogāchāra, based on Samdhinirmochana Sūtra)

Arya Vasubandhu (320-400 CE):

*Principles of Buddhist Psychology – David J. Kalupahana, 1987 (pp. 173-214) (Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi in Thirty Verses & Twenty Verses, from Sanskrit)

*A Buddhist Doctrine of Experience – Thomas A. Kochumuttom, 1982 (Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi, Trisvabhāvanirdeśa, Madhyāntavibhāgabhāshya, from Sanskrit)

Seven Works of Vasubandhu – trans. by Stefan Anacker, 1984 (includes above texts plus more)

*Empty Words: Buddhist Philosophy and Cross-Cultural Interpretation – Jay L. Garfield, 2002
(Trisvabhāvanirdeśa, from Tibetan)

Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi: Thirty Verses of Vasubandhu – commentary by Tenshin Reb Anderson, 1994
Understanding Our Mind (formerly called Transformation at the Base), plus "sequel": Buddha Mind,
Buddha Body – Thich Nhat Hanh, 2001, 2007 (new verses based on Vasubandhu)

Hsuan-Tsang Commentary on Vasubandhu's Thirty Verses (600-664 CE):

Ch'eng Wei-Shih Lun: Doctrine of Mere Consciousness by Hsuan Tsang – trans. by Wei Tat, 1973

Three Texts on Consciousness Only – trans. by Francis H. Cook, 1999

General:

*Appearance and Reality: the Two Truths in the Four Buddhist Tenet Systems - Guy Newland, 1999
(pp. 41-57) (good summary, Tibetan version)

A Buddhist Doctrine of Experience – Thomas A. Kochumuttom, 1982 (includ. trans. of Vasubandhu)

Buddhist Thought in India – Edward Conze, 1962 (pp. 250-260)

Cutting Through Appearances – Geshe Lhundrup Sopa and Jeffrey Hopkins, 1989 (pp. 249-278)
(formerly called Practice and Theory of Tibetan Buddhism 1976, pp. 107-121)

*Empty Words: Buddhist Philosophy and Cross-Cultural Interpretation – Jay L. Garfield, 2002

Living Yogācāra: An Introduction to Consciousness-Only Buddhism – Tagawa Shun'ei, 2009

*Luminous Heart: The Third Karmapa on Consciousness, Wisdom, and Buddha Nature – Karl
Brunnholz, 2009 (especially pp. 3-78, for a thorough overview of Indian Yogacara teachings)

Madhyamika and Yogācāra: A Study of Mahayana Philosophies – Gadjin M. Nagao, 1991

*Meditation on Emptiness – Jeffrey Hopkins, 1983 (pp. 365-397) (good summary, Tibetan version)

Ocean of Eloquence: an Extensive Commentary on the Difficult Points of Alaya-Vijñāna and Klistā-
Manas – trans. by Gareth Sparham, 1993 (Tsongkhapa's commentary on 8 consciousnesses)

Principles of Buddhist Psychology – David J. Kalupahana, 1987 (pp. 122-147)

*Progressive Stages of Meditation on Emptiness – Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso, 2001 (pp. 27-43)

*Stars of Wisdom – Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso, 2010 (pp. 32-46) (from "meditation" perspective)

The Yogācāra Idealism – Ashok Kumar Chatterjee, 1962

Chan and Zen:

The Zen Teaching of Bodhidharma – trans. by Red Pine, 1987 (Wake-up Sermon, pp. 47-75)

Sun Face Buddha: the Teachings of Ma-Tsu – trans. by Cheng Chien Bhikshu, 1992 (pp. 62-68) – Mazu

*On the Transmission of Mind – trans. by John Blofeld, 1958 (pp. 29-38) sections 1-10 – Huangbo

Timeless Spring: a Soto Zen Anthology – trans. by Thomas Cleary, 1980 (p. 35) – Shitō

The Blue Cliff Record – trans. by Thomas & J.C. Cleary, 1978, Case 80 – Chao Chou's Newborn Baby

Book of Serenity – trans. by Thomas Cleary, 1990 (pp. xii-xv, Introduction)

Case 32 – Yangshan's Mind and Environment

Case 88 – The Surangama's Not Seeing

Case 91 – Nanquan's Peony

*Eihei Dōgen's Shōbōgenzō (Treasury of the True Dharma Eye) – trans. by Kazuaki Tanahashi, 2010

6 – The Mind Itself is Buddha (Sokushin zebutsu) – vol. 1 in Nishijima & Cross

19, 20 – Ungraspable Mind (Shin fukatoku) – vol. 1 in Nishijima & Cross

38 – Body-and-Mind Study of the Way (Shinjin gakudō) – vol. 2 in Nishijima & Cross

41 – Painting of a Rice Cake (Gabyō) – vol. 2 in Nishijima & Cross

48 – Three Realms are Only Mind (Sangai yuishin) – vol. 3 in Nishijima & Cross

*Keizan Jōkin's Denkōroku (The Record of Transmitting the Light) – trans. by Francis H. Cook, 1991

Case 23 – Manorhita (also in Transmission of Light trans. by Thomas Cleary)

Case 52 – Dōgen (same)

(* = Kōkyō's most highly recommended texts on Mind-Only)