

What is *Svabhāva-vikalpa* and with Which Consciousness(es) is it Associated?

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Introduction

Buddhists have a strong tendency to think that a cognition into the Reality cannot involve any conceptualization. Moreover, they have a tendency to champion sensory consciousness over mental consciousness, for the obvious reason that it is the latter that conceptualizes. But does this mean that for the Buddhist tradition, sensory consciousnesses never conceptualize? When I see something *as* large or small, *as* blue against a yellow background, does this involve no conceptualization at all? For example, E.J. Lowe (2000) in his *Introduction to the Philosophy of Mind* remarks, “it seems that one must attribute to the child at least *some* concepts if one is to attribute to it a perceptual experience of seeing a table to be rectangular, because an ability to enjoy such an experience seems to require an ability to recognize tables as objects of some kind (even if not as tables) and likewise an ability to distinguish between rectangularity and other shapes that objects can possess.” (Lowe: 133) This line of thinking seems to me to be the mainstream in the European philosophical tradition that can be traced at least to Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) if not all the way to Plato.

In sharp contrast, the Buddhist Yogācāra tradition holds that pure perception without concepts is possible.¹ In fact, Yogācāra thinks the whole weight of practice

¹ This is most clear in Dignāga’s *Pramāṇasamuccaya* verse I. 3c where Dignāga claims that “Perception is free from conceptual construction (Hattori 1968, p. 25)” [*pratyakṣam kalpanāpoḍham* (Steinkellner 2005, p. 2)].

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lies in removing concepts from pure perception, which alone reaches the Reality. To the extent that Yogācāra has a very different view about perception than contemporary philosophy, an engagement with Buddhist philosophy should be very useful for better understanding perception and conceptualization. To start a dialogue between Buddhist philosophy and contemporary philosophy, however, we need to clarify what the Buddhist tradition really claims in the first place. A point of interest is that the Sanskrit term *vikalpa*² is commonly translated as “discrimination” or even “conceptualization,” but if so, then the Abhidharma notion that sensory consciousnesses are associated with a certain kind of *vikalpa* (namely, *svabhāva-vikalpa*) becomes an issue. Does this mean that for the Abhidharma philosophers sensory consciousnesses are associated with conceptualization, just like the mental consciousness is?

This paper seeks to answer this question by investigating what *svabhāva-vikalpa* could originally mean in its Abhidharma context. To better understand *svabhāva-vikalpa*, I also bring in the Yogācāra position that sensory consciousnesses are not associated with conceptualization. By comparing these two views, I argue that *svabhāva-vikalpa* does not involve concepts but concerns the non-conceptual cognition of the shape of an object. I end this paper with a call for a better appreciation of the ambiguity embedded in the Sanskrit term *vikalpa*.

Three remarks are in order before I begin. First, since the purpose of this paper is to investigate what the notion of *svabhāva-vikalpa* is, I intentionally leave it un-translated until I have depicted its rough meaning later in this paper (Section “*Svabhāva-vikalpa* and *Vitarka*”).

Second, for the sake of comparison with Abhidharma, the Yogācāra tradition that I focus in this paper is the Yogācāra that endorses the existence of pure perception. This mainly, but not exclusively, refers to the Yogācāra after Dignāga, including also the *Cheng Weishi Lun* 成唯識論 (T1585; which was represented as being based mostly on Dharmapāla’s teachings (ca. 6th century), henceforth abbreviated as CWSL) compiled by Xuanzang 玄奘 (602–664) and Xuanzang’s disciples. I do not claim that the whole Yogācāra tradition unanimously endorses the idea of pure perception.

Third, in this paper I refer quite often to the Chinese Buddhist sources such as the CWSL and the discussions by Xuanzang’s disciples Kuiji 窺基 (632–682) and Huizhao 慧沼 (648–714). This raises the concern about whether these later Chinese sources are trustworthy in their construal of Indian Buddhist notions such as *svabhāva-vikalpa*. My defense is that I refer to these Chinese sources not because they should be regarded as representatives of the main stream of Indian Yogācāra or as having unquestioned authority but because they provide extensive relevant discussions, more extensive, at least as far as I know, than extant Sanskrit and Tibetan sources. These discussions in my opinion serve as useful clues for better understanding *svabhāva-vikalpa*.

² I shall address the ambiguity embedded in the Sanskrit term *vikalpa* towards the end of this paper.

Svabhāva-vikalpa and *Vitarka*

The *Abhidharmakośa* together with its commentary, the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (henceforth abbreviated as AKBh), by Vasubandhu (ca. 5th century CE) claim that there are three kinds of *vikalpa*-s (*svabhāva-vikalpa*, *anusmaraṇa-vikalpa* and *abhinirūpaṇā-vikalpa*), and the five sensory consciousnesses have only one of them, namely, *svabhāva-vikalpa*. Similar to the AKBh, the *Mahāvibhāṣā* also holds that the five sensory consciousnesses in the realm of desire have *svabhāva-vikalpa* and the mental consciousness in the realm of desire has all three kinds of *vikalpa*-s.³

According to the AKBh, two reasons explain why sensory consciousnesses are considered to have *svabhāva-vikalpa*: First, the AKBh identifies *svabhāva-vikalpa* with *vitarka* (“gross investigation”; Chn.: *xun* 尋; Tib.: *rtog pa*);⁴ second, the AKBh claims that the five sensory consciousnesses are associated with (*saṃ-√yuj*) *vitarka* and *vicāra* (“subtle investigation”; Chn. *si* 伺; Tib.: *dpyod pa*), as the AKBh comments on *Abhidharmakośa* verse I.32 as follows:

How many *dhātus* are associated with *vitarka* and with *vicāra*, free from *vitarka* and associated with *vicāra*, or free from both *vitarka* and *vicāra*?

32a-b. Five consciousnesses always include *vitarka* and *vicāra*.

They are always associated with *vitarka* and with *vicāra*, for they are gross, being turned towards externals.⁵ The word *hi*, “always,” indicates restriction; they are exclusively dharmas which include *vitarka* and *vicāra*.

32c. The last three *dhātus* are of three types.

These *dhātus* are the mental organ, the object of mental consciousness, and the mental consciousness.

1. In *Kāmadhātu* and in the First *Dhyāna* (viii.7, 11), (1) the *manodhātu*, (2) *manovijñānadhātu*, and (3) that part of the *dharmadhātu* which is associated with the mind (ii.23), with the exception of *vitarka* and *vicāra* themselves, are associated with *vitarka* and *vicāra*.
2. In the intermediary *dhyāna* (*dhyānāntara*, viii.22d), these same are free from *vitarka*, but associated with *vicāra*.
3. In the higher stages up to and including the last stage, these same are free from both *vitarka* and *vicāra* (viii.23c-d).
4. The part of the *dharmadhātu* which is disassociated from the mind (ii.35) and the *vicāra* of the intermediary *dhyāna* are free from both *vitarka* and *vicāra*.⁶

³ For how the *Mahāvibhāṣā* discusses three kinds of *vikalpa*-s, see: T1545(XXVII) 219b7-23.

⁴ The Sanskrit text reads: *tatra svabhāvavikalpo vitarkaḥ*. See Pradhan (1967, p. 22, lines 21–22); Pruden (1988–1990, Vol. I, p. 97).

⁵ Also see *Mahāvibhāṣā*: T1545(XXVII) 377a28-b6; *Nyāyānusāra*: T1562 (XXIX) 350a3-12. Note that although Saṃghabhadra (5th century CE) agrees with the verse of the *Abhidharmakośa*, he disagrees with the reason provided by Vasubandhu about why sensory consciousnesses are accompanied with *vitarka* and *vicāra*.

⁶ Pruden (1988–1990, Vol. I, p. 96). For the Sanskrit text, see Pradhan (1967, p. 22, lines 2–9). For Xuanzang’s Chinese translation, see T1558 (XXIX) 8a9-19.

This passage claims that the five sensory consciousnesses in our ordinary experience (i.e., in the realm of desire (*kāmadhātu*)) are always associated with *vitarka* and *vicāra*.⁷ So is the mental consciousness in the realm of desire and in the first *dhyāna*. The AKBh also says that mind in the realm of desire (*kāmāvacaracitta*) must have *vitarka* and *vicāra*,⁸ which means that all six consciousnesses in the realm of desire are associated with *vitarka* and *vicāra*.

In sharp contrast, Yogācāra thinkers beginning with Dignāga explicitly claim that sensory consciousnesses are without *vikalpa*.⁹ So the question is: why do Yogācāra and Abhidharma philosophers hold different opinions regarding whether sensory consciousnesses are with *svabhāva-vikalpa* or not? What exactly is the nature of the *svabhāva-vikalpa* depicted by the *Abhidharmakośa*?

To answer, the first thing to note is that in this context the *svabhāva-vikalpa* should *not* be understood as the kind of *vikalpa* involved in the cognition of a collection of atoms (*paramāṇu*). That is to say, given the Abhidharma ontological framework, only atoms are really existent (*dravya-sat*), but since ordinary people cannot perceive atoms, a certain degree of *vikalpa* seems to be involved when they see a blue and round object of a certain size. But the reason why I think this should not be interpreted as *svabhāva-vikalpa* is because both Abhidharma and Yogācāra philosophers invented the notion of “*āyatana-svalakṣaṇa*” (“particulars *qua* sense fields”) to avoid this conundrum.¹⁰ Namely, although in the strict sense only atoms are admitted as particulars (*svalakṣaṇa*), still a collection of atoms as a perceptible sense field (*āyatana*) for ordinary human beings is recognized as a particular.¹¹ In this sense, a cognition of a collection of atoms does not involve *svabhāva-vikalpa*.¹²

⁷ This refers to the five sensory consciousnesses in the realm of desire because in the first *dhyāna* nose-consciousness and tongue-consciousness cease; and in the upper *dhyāna*-s the other three sensory consciousnesses cease.

⁸ The Sanskrit text reads: || *tatra tāvat kāmāvacaracittamavaśyaṃ savitarkaṃ savicāram* || Pradhan (1967, p. 51, lines 11–12). Xuanzang’s Chinese translation reads: 然欲界心定有尋何故 (T1558 (XXIX) 20b3-4).

⁹ See above footnote 1.

¹⁰ See AKBh *ad Abhidharmakośa* I. 10. The Sanskrit text reads: || *nanu caivaṃ samastāmbanavāt sāmānyaviśayāḥ pañca vijñānakāyāḥ prāpnuvanti na svalakṣaṇaviśayāḥ | āyatana-svalakṣaṇam pratyete svalakṣaṇaviśayāḥ iṣyante na dravyasvalakṣaṇam ity adoṣaḥ* || Pradhan (1967, p. 7, lines 22–24). For the English translation, see Pruden (1988–1990, Vol. 1, p. 67). Xuanzang’s Chinese translation reads: 有說：極多總緣一切十一觸起。若爾，五識總緣境故，應五識身取共相境非自相境？約處自相許五識身取自相境非事自相，斯有何失？(T1558 (XXIX) 3a8-11). For the Yogācāra position, an example is from Dignāga’s *Pramāṇasamuccaya*, verse I. 4cd. See Hattori (1968, p. 26).

¹¹ Dhammajoti explains the notion of *āyatana-svalakṣaṇa* as follows: “The Sarvāstivāda Ābhidharmikas distinguish two kinds of *svalakṣaṇa*: The first, *dravya-svalakṣaṇa*, is the intrinsic characteristic of the dharma as a unique entity in itself, for instance: that of a particular color, say, blue. The second, *āyatana-svalakṣaṇa*, refers to the intrinsic characteristic of the dharma as a member of a unique class—an *āyatana*—of which it is a member, for instance: the particular blue color as a unique class of dharma-s known as “visibles” (*rūpa*), i.e., the *rūpa-āyatana*. We can see from this example that, in this context, the *āyatana-svalakṣaṇa* is, in a sense, a common characteristic in relation to the *dravya-svalakṣaṇa*.” (Dhammajoti 2007, pp. 25–26) I think Dhammajoti here misses the point: The main point behind this distinction between *dravya-svalakṣaṇa* and *āyatana-svalakṣaṇa* is that the former falls at the micro-level (i.e., the level of *paramāṇu*-s) but the latter falls at the macro-level (i.e., perceptible level).

¹² Dharmakīrti also claims that the fact that the five sensory consciousnesses have a universal (*sāmānyalakṣaṇa*) as their object (*sāmānyagocara*) does not imply that they are associated with conceptualization.

Then how do we understand *svabhāva-vikalpa*? Yaśomitra (6th century CE), a classical commentator on AKBh, simply gives the explanation that *vitarka* refers to the kind of mental murmuring (*manojalpa*) that is a gross (*audārika*) state of mind; in contrast, *vicāra* refers to the kind of mental murmuring that is a subtle state of mind (*sūkṣma*), and that in the state of no reasoning (*anabhyūhāvasthā*), *vitarka* is *cetanā*; in the state of reasoning (*abhyūhāvasthā*), *vitarka* is *prajñā*. Finally, *vitarka* is *svabhāva-vikalpa* because it has the mark of being gross (*audārika-lakṣaṇatvāt*).¹³ This is not very helpful since it simply points out that *svabhāva-vikalpa* is related to *vitarka* and refers to some gross mental state that is associated with sensory consciousnesses. But precisely why sensory consciousnesses should thereby be treated as being associated with *svabhāva-vikalpa* is not clear at all.

Dhammajoti, a leading authority in Abhidharma, defines *svabhāva-vikalpa* as “discrimination which is in the very nature of consciousness itself. It is *vitarka* and *vicāra* — or *vitarka* according to Samghabhadra”¹⁴ and explains it as follows:

The first five consciousnesses can have only *svabhāva-vikalpa*. Although they are also always associated with *smṛti* and *prajñā*, their functions of recollection and discrimination, respectively, are feeble therein. Accordingly, although they can discriminate in a general manner the object proper to their specific domain — visual consciousness can know a *rūpa*, say, a blue color — it cannot know “This is blue”. In contrast, mental consciousness can have all the three types of distinctional functions. Sthiramati explains that the *prajñā* conjoined with a sensory consciousness is not named a [*sic*] *abhinirūpaṇā-vikalpa* on account of the fact that it does not take name as its object. (Dhammajoti 2007, pp. 296–297)

Dhammajoti’s explanation is based on his understanding of the distinction between *citta* and *caitta*¹⁵ and is close to the interpretation (β) of *svabhāva-vikalpa*

Footnote 12 continued

Cf. PV I.194–196 (Tosaki 1979, pp. 296–298), also see the conclusion on p. 307. But there Dharmakīrti does not mention any role played by the mental perception (*mānasa-pratyakṣa*). I propose that in the examples given by Dharmakīrti such as a butterfly of many colors, a painting of many colors, it is the mental consciousness simultaneous with the sensory consciousnesses that cognizes the “many-colored-ness” of the butterfly or of the painting.

¹³ Yaśomitra’s *Sphuṭārthā Abhidharmakośavyākhyā* reads: || *katham avikalpakā ity ucyanta* iti. cakṣur-vijñāna-samaṅgī nīlam vijñānīti nōhati nīlam iti vacanāt. *tri-vidhaḥ kila vikalpa* iti. kila-śabdaḥ paramata-dyotanārthaḥ. svābhīprāyas tu cetanā-prajñā-viśeṣa eva vitarka iti na svabhāva-vikalpo ’nyo dharmo ’stīti. tathā hy anena Paṃcaskandhaka uktaṃ. vitarkaḥ katamaḥ. paryeṣako mano-jalpaḥ cetanā-prajñā-viśeṣaḥ yā cittasya’ audārikatā. vicāraḥ katamaḥ. pratyavekṣako mano-jalpas tathāiva yā cittasya sūkṣmatā. anabhyūhāvasthāyāṃ cetanā abhūhāvasthāyāṃ prajñeti vyavasthāpyate. *tad eṣāṃ svabhāva-vikalpo* ’stīti. *tad* iti vākyōpanyāse nipātas tasmād-arthe vā. svabhāvenāiva vikalpa audārika-lakṣaṇatvāt. *svabhāva-vikalpo vitarkaḥ*. sa eṣāṃ paṃcānāṃ vijñāna-kāyānāṃ saṃprayogato ’sti tasmāt sa-vikalpā uktāḥ. *nētarāu abhinirūpaṇā*’nusmarāna-*vikalpāu eṣāṃ staḥ*. *tasmād avikalpakā ucyante* || Wogihara (1989 (1936), p. 64, lines 22–32) Yaśomitra was influenced by the *Yogācārabhūmi*’s distinction between *cetanā* and *prajñā*, see below footnote 21.

¹⁴ Dhammajoti (2007), p. 296.

¹⁵ As Dhammajoti says, “Thus, in a visual perception, the *citta*, i.e., visual consciousness in this case, can only apprehend a blue object. It is only in conjunction with the *caitta* called *saṃjñā*, whose function it is to categorize, and *prajñā* whose function it is to discriminatively conceptualize, that the mind apprehends

discussed later in Section “The Nature of *Vitarka* and *Vicāra*: Both Conceptual and Non-conceptual”. As indicated below, this interpretation is far from satisfactory. Under his interpretation, *svabhāva-vikalpa* is reduced to the function of *citta* as the minimal cognitive function of a sensory consciousness to be aware of its proper sense field (such as a visual consciousness cognizes a color blue without cognizing the name “blue”). But if so, then why do the AKBh as well as Saṃghabhadra also emphasize that *svabhāva-vikalpa* is *vitarka*, which is a *caitta*?

Different from Dhammajoti’s interpretation, I suggest that *vitarka* here might be the key because the AKBh and the CWSL hold contrasting views about the relation between sensory consciousnesses and *vitarka*: The AKBh claims that sensory consciousnesses have *svabhāva-vikalpa* and the nature of *svabhāva-vikalpa* is *vitarka*; but the CWSL clearly claims that the five sensory consciousnesses are not associated with the mental concomitants (*caitta*) of *vitarka* and *vicāra*. In Fascicle 7 of the CWSL, there is a long discussion about whether *vitarka* and *vicāra* are associated with five sensory consciousnesses. Two views are provided there: (a) *vitarka* and *vicāra* are also associated with the five sensory consciousnesses in addition to being associated with the mental consciousness; (b) *vitarka* and *vicāra* are only associated with the mental consciousness. After dismissing the textual support for (a), the CWSL concludes that *vitarka* and *vicāra* are only associated with the mental consciousness.¹⁶

Based on these different opinions held by the AKBh and the CWSL about the relation between sensory consciousnesses and *vitarka*, we can hypothesize that the reason why Yogācāra philosophers claim that the five sensory consciousnesses do not have *vikalpa* is because they assign the function of *vitarka* not to sensory consciousnesses but to the mental consciousness, and hence Yogācāra maps AKBh’s *svabhāva-vikalpa*—which is identified with *vitarka*—to mental consciousness instead of to sensory consciousnesses. For this reason, sensory consciousnesses for Yogācāra operate completely without *svabhāva-vikalpa*.

A preliminary support for this hypothesis can be found in a passage of Kuiji, where he remarks that the reason why the five sensory consciousnesses are not named “being associated with *vikalpa*” (*sa-vikalpa*) is because they are not associated with *vitarka* and *vicāra*; and the reason why the sixth consciousness—despite having the same cognitive object with the five—is named “with *vikalpa*” is because it is associated by *vitarka* and *vicāra*.¹⁷

This paper seeks to investigate what kind of *vikalpa* corresponds to the *svabhāva-vikalpa* as depicted in the *Abhidharmakośa*. To qualify as such *svabhāva-vikalpa*, the kind of *vikalpa* must meet two criteria: First, when it is associated with the five sensory consciousnesses, their cognitive objects must be particulars (*svalakṣaṇa*) instead of universals (*sāmānya-lakṣaṇa*) as far as *āyatana-svalakṣaṇa* is

Footnote 15 continued

specifically: ‘This is blue.’” (Dhammajoti 2007, p. 293) Dhammajoti’s interpretation of the distinction between *citta* and *caitta* is influenced by Vasubandhu’s distinction between sensory consciousnesses and mental consciousness. See below footnote 70.

¹⁶ T1585 (XXXI) 36a25-b11.

¹⁷ T1829 (XLIII) 198c5-12. Also cf. Kuiji’s another passage: T1861 (XLV) 256b24-28.

concerned.¹⁸ This is because both Abhidharma and Yogācāra philosophers agree that the cognitive objects for sensory consciousnesses are particulars instead of universals. Second, it must be related to *vitarka* because the AKBh claims that *svabhāva-vikalpa* is *vitarka*.

More broadly, at the end of this paper I explore possible reasons for why Yogācāra philosophers map such *svabhāva-vikalpa* not to sensory consciousnesses but to the mental consciousness. What does this change tell us about how Abhidharma and Yogācāra philosophers understand the function of sensory and mental consciousnesses in their different ways? And what can this show us about how Buddhists understand *vikalpa*? These are the questions that I shall address. But before that, what is the nature of *vitarka* and *vicāra*?

The Nature of *Vitarka* and *Vicāra*: Both Conceptual and Non-conceptual

Vitarka and *vicāra* both belong to the category of mental concomitants (*caitta*). According to the AKBh, *vitarka* and *vicāra* are, respectively, gross and subtle functions of the mind. In the AKBh, there is a long discussion about whether these two can be associated (*samprayukta*) with the same mind, i.e., arise at the same time. One reason why the AKBh devotes such a long discussion to this is probably that the *Mahāvibhāṣā* claims that these two can arise at the same time.¹⁹ But the answer given by the AKBh is that these two cannot arise at the same time.²⁰

In Yogācāra, in contrast, it is explicitly claimed that *vitarka* and *vicāra* are not really existent (*dravya-sat*) dharmas but are merely nominally existent (*prajñapti-sat*). Regarding the nature (*śarīra*) of *vitarka* and *vicāra*, the *Yogācārabhūmi* says: their nature is thinking (*cetanā*) when one does not deeply ponder on the object; their nature is discrimination (*prajñā*) when one deeply ponders on the object.²¹ This should not be taken to mean that the nature of *vitarka* is *cetanā* and that of *vicāra* is *prajñā*. Rather, this should mean that both *vitarka* and *vicāra* have *cetanā* and *prajñā* as their nature, as suggested by the CWSL.²²

A major difficulty with defining the precise nature of *vitarka* and *vicāra* is that *vitarka* and *vicāra* seem to work both conceptually and non-conceptually. In the Abhidharma tradition, *vitarka* and *vicāra* are clearly said to be related to language

¹⁸ The AKBh also claims that sensory consciousnesses merely cognize present objects, I think this also implies that they cannot have universals as their cognitive objects. Sanskrit: *|| caṣkūrādīni pañca vartamānaviṣayātāvāt pūrvam uktāni ||* Xuanzang's Chinese translation reads: 於六根中，眼等前五，唯取現境。是故先說 (T1558 (XXIX) 5c24-25).

¹⁹ T1545 (XXVII) 219a13-23.

²⁰ T1558 (XXIX) 21b14-c9. For this reason, the claims in the AKBh Chapter One cited above that *vitarka* must always be associated with *vicāra* and vice versa (T1558 (XXIX) 8a19-27) should be understood to mean that *vitarka* must be associated with *vicāra* at a different moment; and vice versa.

²¹ The Sanskrit text reads: *|| vitarkavicārāṇāṃ śarīraṃ katamat | ālambane anabhyūhataś cetanaśarīrāvī-tarkavicārāṇ | ālambane punar abhyūhato jñānaśarīrā vitarkavicārā vedītavayāḥ || Bhattacharya (1957, p. 112, lines 12–13).* Xuanzang's Chinese translation reads: 尋伺體性者，謂：不深推度所緣，思為體性；若深推度所緣，慧為體性應知。(T1579 (XXX) 302b23-25).

²² T1585 (XXXI) 35c28-36a5.

and hence are conceptual. (See below) But in later Yogācāra such as in the CWSL, *vitarka* and *vicāra* are also regarded as being related to mental perception (*mānasa-pratyakṣa*) that is non-conceptual. (See below) This makes the notions of *vitarka* and *vicāra* extremely complicated.

Huizhao, the foremost disciple of Kuiji, explicitly claims that the operation of *vitarka* and *vicāra* can belong to both direct perception (*pratyakṣa*) and to inference (*anumāna*). As he says:

Regarding *vitarka* and *vicāra*: (a) if [they operate] in a concentrated state of mind (*samādhi*), then all [kinds of *vitarka* and *vicāra*] belong to direct perception; (b) if [they operate] in an unconcentrated state of mind, then (b1) if they arise simultaneously with the five sensory consciousnesses and grasp the particulars (*svalakṣaṇa*) of the object, then they belong to direct perception (*pratyakṣa*);²³ (b2) if they cognize objects that are universals (*sāmānyalakṣaṇa*), then they belong either to inference (*anumāna*) or to an invalid means of knowledge (*apramāṇa*).²⁴

To further pinpoint the precise function of *vitarka* and *vicāra*, I therefore divide the following discussion into four situations: (a) conceptual *vitarka-vicāra* in an unconcentrated state (*asamāhita*); (b) conceptual *vitarka-vicāra* in a concentrated state (*samāhita* or *samādhi*); (c) non-conceptual *vitarka-vicāra* in an unconcentrated state; (d) non-conceptual *vitarka-vicāra* in a concentrated state. “Conceptual” here means that the cognition in question has universals (*sāmānyalakṣaṇa*) as its objects; “Non-conceptual” instead means that the cognition has particulars as its objects. As shown below, Abhidharma and early Yogācāra agree with each other regarding situations (a) and (b); but later Yogācāra further adds situations (c) and (d), namely, the non-conceptual function of *vitarka-vicāra*. It’s not so clear whether Abhidharma agrees with (c) and (d) up to this point. And since *svabhāva-vikalpa* concerns particulars and its nature is *vitarka*, *svabhāva-vikalpa* should have something to do with situations (c) and (d).

Situation (a): Conceptual *Vitarka-vicāra* in an Unconcentrated State: Linguistic

Both Abhidharma and Yogācāra agree that *vitarka* and *vicāra* are related to language. In the AKBh, it is said that “a scripture says that only by means of *vitarka* and *vicāra* can one speak language.”²⁵ In the *Yogācārabhūmi*, the cognitive object (*ālambana*) of *vitarka* and *vicāra* is said to be “name-collection, phrase-collection and syllable-collection” (*nāmakāya-padakāya-vyañjanakāya*).²⁶ The relation

²³ Also compare Huizhao’s another passage: X882 (LV) 162a14-21.

²⁴ 尋伺二種，若在定心，一切現量。若在散心，與五識同時起者，得境自相即是現量；緣共相境或比、非量。(X882 (LV) 161b9-11).

²⁵ The Sanskrit text reads: || *anye punar āhuḥ—vāksaṃskārā vitarkavicārāḥ sūtra uktāḥ—vitarkya vicārya vācam bhāṣate, nāvicārya’ iti* || (Pradhan 1967, p. 61, lines 4-6). Xuanzang’s Chinese translation reads: 復有釋言：尋伺二法是語言行。故契經言：要有尋伺，方有語言。非無尋伺，此語言行。(T1558 (XXIX) 21b27-29).

²⁶ The Sanskrit text reads: || *tatra vitarkavicārāṇām ālambanam katamat / nāmakāya-padakāyavyaṇjanakāyāsrito artha ālambanam* ||” Bhattacharya (1957, p. 112, lines 14–15). Xuanzang’s Chinese translation reads: 尋伺所緣者，謂依名身句身文身義為所緣。(T1579 (XXX) 302b25-26).

between *vitarka/vicāra* and language can also be attested in the close relation between *cetanā/prajñā* and language because, as mentioned above, both *vitarka* and *vicāra* have *cetanā* and *prajñā* as their nature. In the *Yogācārabhūmi*, *cetanā* and *prajñā* are defined respectively as “construction of/by the mind” (*cittābhisamkāra*) and “investigation along with dharma” (*dharmāṇā pravīcayā*), and their action (*karma*) are respectively “arousing the action of *vitarka*, body-karma and speech-karma” (*vitarka-kāya-vāk-karmādi-samutthāna-karmikā*) and “to investigate the operation of the conceptual elaboration in accordance with whether it is defiled or pure” (*prapañca-pracāra-saṃkleśa-vyavadānāmukūlasantīraṇa*).²⁷ It is clear that both actions are closely related to language (*vāc*) and conceptual elaboration (*prapañca*).

In the CWSL, the action (*karma*) of *cetanā* is described as “taking the forms of ‘the main cause,’ etc. of the objects.”²⁸ After taking these forms, *cetanā* also constructs good or bad karma.²⁹ Hence *cetanā* concerns both the theoretical and practical aspects. Regarding *prajñā*, the CWSL says that its nature is to make distinction (Chn.: *jianze* 簡擇; Skt.: *pravīcayā*). Its action is to cut doubts because *prajñā* via investigation (Chn.: *tuiqiu* 推求; Skt.: *saṃtīraṇa*) arrives at a decision.³⁰ These do not seem to be quite relevant to language. But the CWSL also claims that *vitarka-vicāra* has name-collection (*nāma-kāya*), etc. as their cognitive objects (*ālambana*).³¹ Fascicle 7 of the CWSL defines the objects of *vitarka* and *vicāra* as “the object of mental murmur” (Chn.: *yīyan jīng* 意言境; Skt.: **manojalpa-viśaya*).³² In Kuiji’s comment, “the objects of mental murmur” includes every object up even to *nirvāṇa*, covering a wider range than what is designated by name-collection (*nāma-kāya*), etc.³³

Taking all these together, it is clear that both *cetanā* and *prajñā* have a strong connection with language. For this reason, *vitarka* and *vicāra* that have *cetanā* and *prajñā* as their nature are also closely connected with language. But since language concerns universals and cannot be cognized by sensory consciousnesses, the conceptual function of *vitarka* and *vicāra* that is related to language does not correspond to *svabhāva-vikalpa* that is ascribed to the five sensory consciousnesses by the AKBh. Hence we move to the next situation.

Situation (b): Conceptual *Vitarka-vicāra* in a Concentrated State: *Nirukti*

Now we move to the conceptual function of *vitarka* and *vicāra* in a concentrated state of mind. The first thing to note is that both Abhidharma and Yogācāra philosophers agree

²⁷ Bhattacharya (1957, p. 60, line 1- p. 61, line 2). For Xuanzang’s Chinese translation, see T1579 (XXX) 291b27-c16.

²⁸ T1585 (XXXI) 11c24-26.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ T1585 (XXXI) 28, c11-14.

³¹ T1585 (XXXI) 36, b4-6.

³² T1585 (XXXI) 35c28-36a5. The Chinese term *yīyan* 意言 can be reconstructed as *manojalpa* based on the following passage of the *Abhidharmasamuccayabhāṣya*: || *vitarkaḥ katamaḥ | cetanāṃ vā niśrītya prajñāṃ vā paryeṣako manojalpaḥ | sā ca cittasyaudārikatā*||” (Hayashima 2003, Vol. 1: 68); “*vicārah katamaḥ | cetanāṃ vā niśrītya prajñāṃ vā pratyavekṣako manojalpaḥ | sā ca cittasya sūkṣmatā* ||” Hayashima (2003, Vol. 1: 72) For Xuanzang’s Chinese translation, see T1606 (XXXI) 699c24-700a2.

³³ T1830 (XLIII) 468a1-11.

that *vitarka* and *vicāra* do not cease in meditation but subsist as far as the first *dhyāna* of the realm of Matter (*rūpa-dhātu*). The shared view regarding the relation between *vitarka/vicāra* and the levels of *dhyāna* is that in the realm of desire (*kāmadhātu*) and the first *dhyāna*, there are both *vitarka* and *vicāra*. In the next stage, namely, the interval *dhyāna* (*dhyānāntara*) between the first and the second *dhyāna*, there is only *vicāra* but no *vitarka*. Beginning with the second *dhyāna*, both *vitarka* and *vicāra* cease.³⁴

How could there be *vitarka* and *vicāra* in the first *dhyāna*? The AKBh defines *dhyāna* as “one-pointedness” (*ekāgratā*), which is further glossed as “one-object-hood” (*ekāmbanātā*).³⁵ This means that the minds are in *samādhi* as long as they focus on the same cognitive object. As long as the object remains one, mental concomitants such as *vitarka* and *vicāra* can operate to ponder upon that object.³⁶

What then is the function of *vitarka/vicāra* in a concentrated state? A clue can be found in the discussion of the four unhindered knowledges (*pratisaṃvid*). In the AKBh, unhindered knowledge is divided into four kinds: regarding *dharma*; regarding objects (*artha*); regarding etymology/regional language (*nirukti*) and regarding eloquence (*pratibhāna*). Based on the discussion of *Abhidharmakośa* verses VII.37c-40c, and AKBh, I summarize the four unhindered knowledges as follows:³⁷

	Objects (<i>ālambana</i>)	Stages (<i>bhūmi</i>)
<i>dharma</i> -unhindered knowledge	name-collection (<i>nāmakāya</i>), phrase-collection (<i>padakāya</i>), syllable-collection (<i>vyañjanakāya</i>)	the realm of desire and the four <i>dhyāna</i> -s in the realm of form because there do not exist names, etc. above
<i>artha</i> -unhindered knowledge	<i>artha</i> (all things including <i>nirvāṇa</i>)	available from all stages (<i>sarvabhūmi</i>) ^a
<i>nirukti</i> -unhindered knowledge	speech (<i>vācīta</i>)	the realm of desire and the first <i>dhyāna</i> because there is no <i>vitarka</i> ^b above
<i>pratibhāna</i> -unhindered knowledge	speech (<i>vāc</i>) and the Path (<i>mārga</i>)	available from all stages (<i>sarvabhūmi</i>)

^a The realm of desire all the way to *bhavāgra* (the highest stage of the realm of formless)

^b The current Sanskrit has “no *vitarka* (*vitarkābhāva*)” (Pradhan 1967, p. 419, lines 16–17) but both Chinese translations by Paramārtha 真諦 (499–569) (T1559 (XXIX) 293b17) and by Xuanzang (T1558 (XXIX) 142b4) have “no *vitarka* and no *vicāra*.” Since here the intermediate *dhyāna* (*dhyānāntara*) between the first and the second *dhyāna*—where there is *vicāra* but no *vitarka*—is excluded from the stages of *nirukti*-unhindered knowledge, it seems that the *nirukti*-unhindered knowledge needs both *vitarka* and *vicāra*, and the reading in the Sanskrit manuscript is better

³⁴ *Abhidharmakośa* verse I.32 cited above. Also see *Abhidharmakośa* verses VIII.7-8; VIII.23.

³⁵ AKBh on *Abhidharmakośa* verse VIII.1; T1558 (XXIX) 145b1.

³⁶ Based on the passage from the *Mahāvibhāṣā*, even in the *dhyāna*-s, a distinction can still be made between a concentrated mind (*zai ding* 在定) vs. a non-concentrated mind (*bu ding* 不定), see T1545 (XXVII) 219b14-23.

³⁷ Pruden (1988–1990, Vol. IV, pp. 1151ff). For Xuanzang’s Chinese translation of the verses and the commentary, see T1558 (XXIX) 142a16-b13.

What is noteworthy here is that *nirukti-pratisaṃvid* is related to *vitarka*. A difficulty, however, arises regarding how to distinguish *nirukti* here from *dharma* and *pratibhāna* because all three are related to language. Usually the term *nirukti* denotes “etymological interpretation of a word.”³⁸ But the AKBh explains that according to the *Shiše zu lun* 施設足論 (**Prajñapti-pāda* or *Prajñapti-pāda-śāstra*), *dharma* concerns name-collection, phrase-collection and syllable-collection; *artha* concerns the objects that are designated by name-collection, phrase-collection and syllable-collection; *nirukti* concerns inflection such as singular, dual, plural, masculine, feminine, etc. of the objects; and *pratibhāna* concerns an unhindered teaching about the objects and the Path (*mārga*) that is the basis of such teaching.³⁹

So *nirukti*-unhindered knowledge operates roughly like this: When one has picked up a name of the object in concentration (*via dharma*-unhindered knowledge), the mind investigates the kind of questions that must be answered under the grammatical analysis of that name: Is it masculine, feminine or neuter? Is it singular, or are they dual or plural? etc. And this kind of investigation corresponds to the function of *vitarka* and *vicāra*. What is interesting here is that according to the AKBh, one speaks language only up to the first *dhyāna* because *vitarka* and *vicāra* do not exist in the above stages.⁴⁰

Now back to our main concern: Is this function of *vitarka/vicāra* related to the *nirukti*-unhindered knowledge conceptual or non-conceptual? In so far as what *vitarka/vicāra* searches for, namely, singular, dual and plural, are all universals, I think this must be considered conceptual. For the same reason, this conceptual function of *vitarka* and *vicāra* in a concentrated state cannot be ascribed to the sensory consciousness but must be ascribed to the mental consciousness. Hence, this function could not have been what corresponds to *svabhāva-vikalpa* in the AKBh. We need to move to situation (c).

Situation (c): Non-conceptual *Vitarka-vicāra* in an Unconcentrated State: Mental Perception

In the passage by Huizhao quoted above, Huizhao mentions a somewhat mysterious passage saying that “*vitarka* and *vicāra*...if, in an unconcentrated state of mind, arise simultaneously with the five sensory consciousnesses and grasp the particulars of the object, [then *vitarka* and *vicāra*] belong to direct perception.”⁴¹ This refers to the *vitarka* and *vicāra* that are associated with the mental consciousness because according to Huizhao, who follows the CWSL, *vitarka* and *vicāra* are associated only with the sixth consciousness. In a previous paper, I argued that this must be taken as the function of the mental consciousness simultaneous with the five sensory

³⁸ Monier-Williams (1899): 553, right column.

³⁹ T1558 (XXIX) 142b10-13.

⁴⁰ Same thing with the *Nyāyānusāra*: T1562 (XXIX) 751c12-21. Kuiji also holds a similar view: T1861 (XLV) 317a25-29.

⁴¹ 若在散心，與五識同時起者，得境自相即是現量 (X882 (LV) 161b10-11). Also cf. Huizhao's Chapter on the Two *Pramāṇa* 二量章: X882 (LV) 160b8-13.

consciousnesses (*wu ju yishi* 五俱意識). Following Kuiji and Huizhao,⁴² I identified this function as the best candidate for the notion of mental perception (*mānasa-pratyakṣa*) in Dignāga's *Pramāṇasamuccaya* I.6. Here I briefly summarize the thesis in that paper.⁴³

For Dignāga, sensory consciousnesses only cognize particulars that are really existent (*dravya-sat*). But in our ordinary perceptual experience, the aspects (*ākāra*) of the objects presented to us include both what is really existent and what is not. The former includes colors; the latter includes shapes, size, etc.⁴⁴ In order to explain how these two aspects are grasped at the same time, Dignāga stipulated the notion of mental perception: The cognition by the mental consciousness arises at the same time as sensory perception and grasps the aspects that are nominally existent. This function of mental consciousness is designated as “mental perception” because although shapes are not really existent, they are nevertheless particulars instead of universals given that the shape of each object is always unique.

This function of the mental consciousness simultaneous with the five sensory consciousnesses is also explicitly claimed by Kuiji to be associated with *vitarka* and *vicāra*.⁴⁵ And for this reason, we now have a good candidate for *svabhāva-vikalpa* in the AKBh because mental perception meets both criteria for *svabhāva-vikalpa* mentioned earlier: (a) its cognitive objects are particulars; (b) it is related to *vitarka*. Understood in this way, then, the *svabhāva-vikalpa* in the AKBh can be construed as the function of *vitarka* as a mental concomitant (*caitta*) associated with a sensory consciousness to discern the shape or demarcate the boundary of a sensory object. For example, the *vitarka* associated with an eye-consciousness must demarcate the boundary of a blue object against a yellow background in order for the following cognitive function to focus on this blue object.⁴⁶ Without such *vitarka*, the eye-consciousness simply *looks* but actually does not *see* any specific object. Thus, I interpret *svabhāva* in *svabhāva-vikalpa* as referring to the nature of *vitarka*, and for this reason, I suggest to translate *svabhāva-vikalpa* as “discernment (*vikalpa*) that is the nature (*svabhāva*) [of *vitarka*].”⁴⁷

⁴² T1829 (XLIII) 198c5-12 and T1861 (XLV) 258a4-21.

⁴³ Keng (2016).

⁴⁴ In his *Ālambanaparīkṣā* verse 5, while challenging his third opponent, Dignāga claims that shapes (such as the form (*ākāra*) of the neck of a pot, a cup, etc.) are not really existent because once we analyze a cognitive object of a certain shape all the way to the level of atoms that alone are ultimately real, the perception of that shape would cease. Hence shapes must be merely nominally real properties, unlike colors that are regarded as essential parts of atoms. See Tola and Dragonetti (2004, pp. 35–36); for Xuanzang's Chinese translation, see T1624 (XXXI) 888c09-14.

⁴⁵ T1829 (XLIII) 198c5-12. Same as footnote 17 above.

⁴⁶ It should be noted that to discern the shape of an object, a cognition of at least two colors are necessary: The color in the foreground and the color in the background. Having cognized these two colors at the same time, one can demarcate the boundary of the color in the foreground, compare the shape with the images of a cow, a cup, etc. that have been stored in memory, and then makes a conceptual and verbal judgment “this is a cow.” This process begins with being non-conceptual but ends with being conceptual.

⁴⁷ My translation of *svabhāva-vikalpa* here was inspired by Puguang 普光 (7th century CE), who interprets it as follows: “*Svabhāva-vikalpa* refers to *vitarka*. *Vitarka* moves and jumps like a fish leaps over water. The substance (*ti* 體) [of *vitarka*] is *vikalpa*, and hence this is named *svabhāva-vikalpa*.” 自性是尋，尋求動踴，如魚躍水。體即分別，名自性分別。(T1821 (XLI) 38c19-20).

The reason why I translate *vikalpa* as discernment instead of conceptualization is because conceptualization implies two things in Buddhism: The involvement of error (*bhrānta*) and the employment of concepts. But for the AKBh, shapes are particulars and are really existent (*dravya-sat*), and hence a cognition thereof does not involve error. Moreover, the discernment of the shape or boundary of an object (without naming it “This is round”) arguably does not involve any employment of concepts because even pre-linguistic infants can manage it.⁴⁸

Situation (d): Non-conceptual *Vitarka-vicāra* in a Concentrated State: Image-meditating

Finally, there is the last function of non-conceptual *vitarka-vicāra* pinpointed by Huizhao, as he says “if [they operate] in a concentrated state of mind, then all [kinds of *vitarka* and *vicāra*] belong to direct perception.”⁴⁹ This is somewhat mysterious and difficult to understand. Since *vitarka* and *vicāra* cease in the second *dhyāna* as mentioned above, I focus my discussion on the first *dhyāna* and the intermediate *dhyāna* between the first and the second *dhyāna*.

A clue comes from Huizhao’s passage where he discusses whether a cognition in a meditation belongs to direct perception or not. As he says,

First, regarding consciousnesses: all types of consciousness at the resultant stage of Buddhahood and at the status of concentration can either be defiled or undefiled, but all belong to direct perception. Yet, regarding defiled concentration, there are two interpretations. First, in a concentration in the realm of desire (*kāmadhātu*), while one meditates on fire, etc., if the constructed image (*jiaxiang* 假相) has not been established, then [the cognition thereof] does not belong to direct perception. If the constructed image has been established, then [the cognition thereof] belongs to direct perception...[The] second [interpretation] says: all concentration *via* constructed images in the realm of desire are named “not established” and are merely named “appearance of likelihood” (*sixian* 似現). All concentration *via* constructed images in the upper realms (i.e., in the realm of form (*rūpa-dhātu*) and in the realm of formless (*ārūpya-dhātu*)) that are accompanied by pliancy (Chn.: *qingān* 輕安; Skt.: *praśrabdhī*) are named “being established.” The mind in the realm of desire serves as an expedient means for it. Between these two interpretations, the latter is superior.⁵⁰ (omitted by this author)

Here the key is the idea of a “constructed image.” In my understanding, this means that in preparation for meditation one tries to construct a specific mental image of fire, etc. and then to focus on that image. Such an image is called a constructed image. And Huizhao here claims that one still does not arrive at direct

⁴⁸ As cited in the beginning of this paper, E.J. Lowe (2000), among others, would not agree with this view.

⁴⁹ X882 (LV) 161b9-10.

⁵⁰ 第一約識者：諸識若在佛果位中及識處定，通漏、無漏，皆唯現量。然有漏定略有二解。一、等持定。在欲界地作火觀等，假相未成，非現量攝；若假相成，即現量攝…二云：欲界諸假想定皆名未成，[但>但]名似現；諸上界定與輕安俱諸假想者，即名為成，欲界心作任為方便。二解後勝。(X882 (LV) 160a24-b8). Also compare T1828 (XLII) 412c24-413a14.

perception before the image has been constructed, but the cognition of the completed image in the concentration belongs to direct perception.

Based on this idea, I suggest that the non-conceptual *vitarka* and *vicāra* in a concentrated state function in a similar way to the non-conceptual *vitarka-vicāra* in a non-concentrated state because both concern the cognition of nominally existent aspects of an image. In a concentrated state, to focus on a single object, one still needs to demarcate the boundary of that object in the first place, and this function of demarcation would be the non-conceptual function of *vitarka* and *vicāra*. And if one has demarcated the object and asks herself whether that object is singular or plural (involving *nirukti* and the conceptual function of *vitarka* and *vicāra*), then this would belong to the conceptual function of *vitarka* and *vicāra* mentioned in the previous situation (b).

Various Interpretations of *Svabhāva-vikalpa* in the Yogācāra Sources

Now it is time to consider various interpretations of *svabhāva-vikalpa* available in Yogācāra texts. First, (α) “the discernment of the nature of things”: the *Yogācārabhūmi* and the *Xianyang shengjiao lun* 顯揚勝教論 (T1602) interpret *svabhāva-vikalpa* as discernment (*vikalpa*) or judgment about the nature (*svabhāva*) of a thing (*vastu*), such as “it is matter (*rūpam iti*).”⁵¹ Second, Huizhao provides two interpretations of *svabhāva-vikalpa*: (β) “discernment as the nature of sensory consciousnesses”: *svabhāva-vikalpa* is simply the nature (*svabhāva*) of each consciousness to cognize (*vikalpa*) its own proper object; (γ) “the discernment as the nature of *vitarka*”: *svabhāva-vikalpa* is the function of *vitarka*,⁵² whose nature (*svabhāva*) is the discernment (*vikalpa*) of a present object. According to Huizhao, the former is endorsed by the CWSL and the *Mahāyānasamgraha* and the latter is endorsed by the *Abhidharmasamuccaya-bhāṣya* (henceforth abbreviated as ASB).⁵³ Between these two, the former is interpreted as being identical to the function of the consciousness itself and is ascribed to all types of consciousness. The latter suggests that *svabhāva-vikalpa* is a further cognitive function (namely, *vitarka* as mental concomitants) than the consciousness itself.

Here I suggest that neither (α) nor (β) can be a good candidate for *svabhāva-vikalpa* in the AKBh. The reason for rejecting (α) is that discernment or a judgment about characterizing the nature of a thing such as “it is matter” must necessarily involve discrimination (*prajñā*) as a mental concomitant. And among the three kinds

⁵¹ *Yogācārabhūmi*: || *tatra svabhāvavikalpaḥ katamaḥ rūpādike vastuni rūpam ity evamādir yo vikalpaḥ ayam ucyate svabhāva-vikalpaḥ* || Bhattacharya (1957, p. 51, lines 21–23) Xuanzang’s Chinese translation reads: 云何名爲自性分別？謂於一切色等想事，分別色等種種自性所有尋思，如是名爲自性分別。(T1579 (XXX) 489c29-490a2). For the *Xianyang shengjiao lun*, Xuanzang’s Chinese translation reads: 一、自性分別，謂於色等想事分別色等所有自性。(T1602 (XXXI) 558b16-17).

⁵² Note that the AKBh defines *svabhāva-vikalpa* as *vitarka* alone but Huizhao associates it with both *vitarka* and *vicāra*. (X882 (LV) 162a7) I tend to disagree with Huizhao because I believe *svabhāva-vikalpa* should be rough (instead of fine) discernment, which would exclude *vicāra*.

⁵³ X882 (LV) 161c22-162a10. Here I reverse the order of (b) and (c) in Huizhao for the convenience of discussion here.

of *vikalpa*-s in the AKBh, this should correspond to the *abhinirūpaṇā-vikalpa*, which belongs to the mental consciousness in an unconcentrated state of mind,⁵⁴ but not to *svabhāva-vikalpa*.

The reason for rejecting (β) is also straightforward: According to the AKBh, *svabhāva-vikalpa* is identified with *vitarka*, which is a mental concomitant and a further cognitive function beyond consciousness (*citta*) itself. As shown earlier, this is the interpretation that Dhammajoti endorses.

Option (γ) is worth careful consideration. The ASB interprets it as: “*tatra svabhāvavikalpaḥ pratyutpanneṣu saṃskāreṣv anubhūyamāneṣu yaḥ svalakṣaṇākāro vikalpaḥ*,”⁵⁵ which roughly translates to: *svabhāva-vikalpa* is discernment regarding present conditioned things (*saṃskāra*) that are being experienced (*anu-√bhū*), having particulars as its form (*svalakṣaṇākāra*). Huizhao interprets this as the function discerning a present object through *vitarka* and *vicāra* in the form of direct perception.⁵⁶

ABS’s emphasis on particulars is quite noteworthy. Bear in mind that the *Abhidharmakośa*’s ascription of *svabhāva-vikalpa* to sensory consciousnesses suggests that its objects are particulars because sensory consciousnesses always have particulars as their objects. Huizhao also refers to the ABS to emphasize that the *svabhāva-vikalpa* ascribed to the mental consciousness must belong to direct perception,⁵⁷ meaning also that it has particulars as its objects. In addition, Huizhao’s association of (γ) with *vitarka* and *vicāra* echoes the AKBh’s claim that *svabhāva-vikalpa* is *vitarka*. With these clues, it seems likely that the ASB interprets *svabhāva-vikalpa* along the same line as the *Abhidharmakośa*. The major difference from the *Abhidharmakośa*, however, is that the ASB ascribes (γ) to the mental consciousness rather than to sensory consciousness. In this way, ASB agrees with Dignāga’s notion of mental perception indicated in the previous section: There exists a cognitive function of mental consciousness that has particulars as objects.

In view of these two different interpretations of *svabhāva-vikalpa* between *Abhidharmakośa* and ASB, I suggest that what happened between the *Abhidharmakośa* on the one hand and Dignāga, ASB on the other is: A particular kind of *vikalpa* involved in the operation of *vitarka*—what one needs in order to successfully discern the shape (as a particular) of a present object via direct perception—was originally ascribed to the five sensory consciousnesses under the name of *svabhāva-vikalpa* by the *Abhidharmakośa* but was later ascribed to the mental consciousness by Dignāga under the name of mental perception. Having made this move, Dignāga can move on to claim that the five sensory consciousness are totally devoid of *vikalpa*, as he claimed in his *Pramāṇasamuccaya* I.3c.

⁵⁴ The *Abhidharmakośa* verse I.33c defines *nirūpaṇā-vikalpa* as “*prajñā mānasī vyagrā*” (the discrimination of the mental consciousness in an unconcentrated state of mind). See Pradhan (1967, p. 22, line 23); Pruden (1988–1990, Vol. I: p. 97); Xuanzang translates this as “意地散慧” (T1558 (XXIX) 8b1).

⁵⁵ Hayashima (2003, Vol. I: 111).

⁵⁶ X882 (LV) 162a7.

⁵⁷ X882 (LV) 162a14-17.

Why did Dignāga make such a move? I have suggested⁵⁸ that there are two keys: (1) Shapes are treated as really existent (*dravya-sat*) in the *Abhidharmakośa* but as not really existent in the *Ālambanaparīkṣā*;⁵⁹ and (2) Yogācāra scholars have a tendency to maintain that sensory consciousnesses only cognize what is really existent (at the conventional level, because ultimately every cognitive object is merely a mental image arising from the *ālayavijñāna* and is not ultimately real in the sense of being dependent upon the mind); and the mental consciousness is responsible for cognizing what is not really existent in cognition: shapes (*qua* particulars), names (*qua* universals), etc.

What Kind of *Vikalpa* Accompanies Sensory Consciousnesses for Yogācāra, if any?

In the above, I have suggested that the Yogācāra philosophers shift *svabhāva-vikalpa* that was originally assigned to sensory consciousnesses by the Abhidharma philosophers to mental consciousness, the next question is: Do Yogācāra philosophers still think sensory consciousnesses have any kind of *vikalpa*? The answer given in the ASB is that sensory consciousnesses still have “*vikalpa* carrying its own taste towards objects (Skt. *ālambane svarasavāhī vikalpaḥ*; Chn. *renyun fenbie* 任運分別; Tib. *dmigs pa la rang gi ngang gis 'jug pa'i rnam par rtog pa*).⁶⁰ This notion appears in the context of seven kinds of *vikalpa*.⁶¹ And the ASB glosses it as follows:

The first *vikalpa* is the five consciousness-groups (*vijñāna-kāya*), due to, by not changing (*acitrayitvā*) each of their own cognitive objects (*ālambana*), their [each] carrying [each's] own-flavor (*svarasa*) with respect to those objects.⁶²

I take this to mean that the five sensory consciousnesses operate in their proper sense fields and themselves become “like the object” or “taking the forms (*ākāra*) of the object” In this sense, *vikalpa* simply means the same thing as *vijñāna*.

⁵⁸ Keng (2016).

⁵⁹ See above footnote 44.

⁶⁰ Hayashima (2003, Vol. 1: 111).

⁶¹ The *Manobhūmi* of the *Yogācārabhūmi* also cites these seven *vikalpa*-s, with the order slightly different, as follows: *naimittiko 'naimittikaḥ sva-rasa-vāhī paryeṣakāḥ pratyavekṣakāḥ kliṣṭo 'kliṣṭo*, and also gives slightly different interpretations of each *vikalpa* from the ASB. See: Bhattacharya (1957, p. 12, lines 9–13); T1579 (XXX) 280c2-18. It also claims that all seven *vikalpa*-s belong to *vitarka* and *vicāra*. 尋伺差別者，有七種差別。謂有相、無相乃至不染污，如前說 (T1579 (XXX) 302b28-c1). It remains a future study to compare these two lines of interpretations of seven *vikalpa*-s in the *Yogācārabhūmi* and the ASB.

⁶² The Sanskrit of ABS reads: || *ādyo vikalpaḥ pañca vijñānakāyāḥ acitrayitvālaṃbanaṃ yathāsvaṃ viṣayeṣu svarasenaiva vahanāi* ||; Tib.: | *de la rnam par rtog pa dang po'i rnam par shes pa'i tshogs lnga ste | dmigs pa la bkra bar ma bzung bar rang gi yul ji lta ba bzhin du rang gin gang gis 'jug pa'i phyir ro* || (Hayashima 2003, p. 111 and 113); Xuanzang's Chinese translation reads: 初分別者，謂五識身如所緣相無異分別，於自境界任運轉故 (T1606 (XXXI) 703a21-22).

What is also noteworthy here is that the ASB ascribes all three *vikalpa*-s (*svabhāva-vikalpa*, *anusmaraṇa-vikalpa* and *abhinirūpaṇā-vikalpa*) mentioned in the *Abhidharmakośa* to mental consciousness instead of to sensory consciousnesses. It also explicitly claims that the last four of the seven *vikalpa*-s all correspond to the *abhinirūpaṇā-vikalpa*. Thus, the mapping among the six consciousnesses, three *vikalpa*-s and seven *vikalpa*-s according to the ASB can be summarized as follows:⁶³

	Three <i>vikalpa</i> -s	Seven <i>vikalpa</i> -s
Five sensory consciousnesses		<i>ālambane svarasavāhī vikalpaḥ</i>
Mental consciousness	<i>svabhāva-vikalpa</i> <i>anusmaraṇa-vikalpa</i> <i>abhinirūpaṇā-vikalpa</i>	<i>sanimitta-vikalpa</i> <i>animitta-vikalpa-</i> <i>paryeṣaka-vikalpa</i> <i>pratyavekṣaka-vikalpa</i> <i>kliṣṭa-vikalpa</i> <i>akliṣṭa-vikalpa</i>

Interestingly, the ASB also mentions *sanimitta-vikalpa* in this context and interprets it as follows: “the *svabhāva-vikalpa* and the *anusmaraṇa-vikalpa* make clear (*citrī-√kr*) regarding past and present objects.”⁶⁴ I think *sanimitta-vikalpa* towards a present object maps to mental perception (*mānasa-pratyakṣa*; namely, the non-conceptual function of *vitarka* in both unconcentrated and concentrated states) discussed above in situations (c) and (d).

The *paryeṣaka-vikalpa* and *pratyavekṣaka-vikalpa* here are translated by Xuanzang as *xunqiu fenbie* 尋求分別 and *sicha fenbie* 伺察分別 respectively, which also agrees with Xuanzang’s way of translating *vitarka* and *vicāra*. From Kuiji’s citation of these two types of *vikalpa* to support the CWSL’s claim that *vitarka* and *vicāra* belong only to mental consciousness, we can also tell that Kuiji takes *paryeṣaka-vikalpa* and *pratyavekṣaka-vikalpa* to be the same thing as *vitarka* and *vicāra*.⁶⁵ From our earlier discussion, then, *paryeṣaka-vikalpa* and *pratyavekṣaka-vikalpa* that map to *abhinirūpaṇā-vikalpa* would correspond to the conceptual function of *vitarka* and *vicāra* in both unconcentrated and concentrated states. (The above situations (a) and (b))⁶⁶

⁶³ For the Sanskrit text, see Hayashima (2003, Vol. 1: 111). For Xuanzang’s Chinese translation, see T1606 (XXXI) 703a13-27. Also cf. Huizhao’s interpretation: T1832 (XLIII) 764b1-5.

⁶⁴ The Sanskrit text reads: || *sanimittaḥ svabhāvānusmaraṇavikalpo vartamānāṭīvaṣayacitrīkaraṇāt* || (Hayashima 2003, Vol. 1: 111). Xuanzang translates this as “take various forms of past and present objects” (取過現境種種相 (T1606 (XXXI) 703a23-24)).

⁶⁵ T1830 (XLII) 469b25-c2. Huizhao also reports that there are three views regarding the relation between the seven *vikalpa*-s and *vitarka*-*vicāra*, see: T1832 (XLIII) 764a7-20.

⁶⁶ The ASB takes both *paryeṣaka-vikalpa* and *pratyavekṣaka-vikalpa* to be conceptual and does not explicitly claim that *vitarka*-*vicāra* can have a non-conceptual function. This may be a clue that this text precedes Dignāga’s notion of mental perception.

To summarize, among the seven *vikalpa*-s mentioned in the ASB, the first is non-conceptual and is ascribed to sensory consciousnesses. Part of the second is non-conceptual and is ascribed to the mental consciousness.⁶⁷ The last four are conceptual and are also ascribed to the mental consciousness.

Conclusion: Various Senses of *Vikalpa*

This paper begins with the contrast between two different views about whether the five sensory consciousnesses are accompanied by *vikalpa*. For the Abhidharma philosophers, the five sensory consciousnesses have *svabhāva-vikalpa* whose nature is *vitarka*; but for Yogācāra philosophers, the five sensory consciousnesses are without that particular kind of *svabhāva-vikalpa* because *vitarka* is regarded as belonging merely to the mental consciousness. My hypothesis for explaining this difference is that Yogācāra assign that particular kind of *svabhāva-vikalpa* to mental consciousness rather than to the five sensory consciousnesses. I then look for possible functions of *vitarka-vicāra* that could map to *svabhāva-vikalpa* in the *Abhidharmakośa*: (a) conceptual *vitarka-vicāra* in an unconcentrated state; (b) conceptual *vitarka-vicāra* in a concentrated state; (c) non-conceptual *vitarka-vicāra* in an unconcentrated state; (d) non-conceptual *vitarka-vicāra* in a concentrated state. I argue that the *svabhāva-vikalpa* in the *Abhidharmakośa* should map to (c) and (d), which in Yogācāra maps to mental perception (*mānasa-pratyakṣa*) stipulated by Dignāga. This refers to, for example, the discernment of the shape of something in the foreground against the background.

In the *Abhidharmakośa*, *vitarka* is still held to be associated with the five sensory consciousnesses; but in Yogācāra, *vitarka* and *vicāra* merely belong to the mental consciousness. Under this Yogācāra shift, the only kind of *vikalpa* associated with the five sensory consciousnesses (i.e., *ālambane svarasavāhī vikalpaḥ* according to the *Abhidharmasamuccaya-bhāṣya*) would be: The consciousness' grasp of its proper sense field such as the eye-consciousness grasps blueness. But this should not involve the discernment of a blue object against its yellow background because such discernment involves *vikalpa* (i.e., *svabhāva-vikalpa* according to the *Abhidharmakośa* and (part of the) *sanimitta-vikalpa* according to the ASB).

This brings us to a note about various senses of *vikalpa* in the Abhidharma-Yogācāra lineage. As far as this paper is concerned, at least three different senses of *vikalpa* should be distinguished:⁶⁸

(1) The consciousness' grasp of its proper sense field such as the eye-consciousness grasps the blueness of an object. In this sense, *vikalpa* means the same thing as *vijñāna*, both in the sense of mind (*citta*) rather than mental concomitant (*caitta*). But note that in the Yogācāra framework, this *vikalpa* simply means that a sensory consciousness grasps whatever that is proper to its cognitive

⁶⁷ I am not certain yet, but it seems to me that *sanimitta-vikalpa* towards past objects (that corresponding to *anuṣmaraṇa-vikalpa*) and *asanimitta-vikalpa* should be conceptual.

⁶⁸ In a more elaborate way, we need to take into account the seven *vikalpa*-s in the *Yogācārabhūmi* and in the ASB. Eventually, we also need to take into account the sense of *vikalpa* as "duality in cognition" in the Yogācāra notion of *nirvikalpa-jñāna*.

function. While grasping blueness together with yellowness, the eye-consciousness does not arrive at the awareness of the distinction between blueness and yellowness nor the distinction between what lies in the foreground and what lies in the background.

(2) The function of *vitarka* as a mental concomitant that distinguishes between two colors, demarcates the boundary, and decides what is *the* object to be focused upon and what lies in the background. The Abhidharma and the Yogācāra philosophers disagree with regard to whether *vitarka* should be associated with sensory consciousnesses or the mental consciousness.

(3) The mental consciousness seeks names, phrases, syllables, *nirukti*, etc. from its memory to apply to the object that has been focused upon.

For Yogācāra, (1) and (2) are non-conceptual but (3) is conceptual because (1) and (2) do not involve concepts or universals. So two tentative conclusions can be drawn: First, in the Abhidharma-Yogācāra lineage, the term *vikalpa* does not always suggest what is meant by “conceptual” in the European philosophical tradition. Second, to tell whether a cognition is conceptual in the European philosophical tradition, a better criterion is to ask whether the cognitive object in question is a particular or a universal.

Further, the distinction between “knowing blue” and “knowing ‘this is blue’” has commonly been adopted to explain various kinds of things: (a) the distinction between sensory consciousnesses and the mental consciousness;⁶⁹ (b) the distinction between *citta* and *caitta*.⁷⁰ This paper suggests that the above distinction may not be precise enough. To arrive at a better understanding of the mechanism of consciousnesses, we also need to take into account the differences between “knowing blue” and “knowing blue *against* yellow” and the different functions among various *citta* (such as the differences between sensory consciousness vs. mental consciousness) and among various *caitta* (such as the differences between mental consciousness vs. its mental concomitants such as *vitarka-vicāra*). So further differentiation can be made among (1) knowing blue in the sense that the eye-consciousness grasps the “blueness” of the object; (2) knowing blue in the sense that *vitarka* distinguishes between the blueness in the foreground and the yellowness in the background; (3) knowing blue in the sense that the content of sensory consciousness is picked up and shared by the mental consciousness; (4) knowing “this is blue” in the sense that various *caitta*—*vitarka*, *vicāra*, *cetanā*, *prajñā*, etc.—glean from the memory and employ the notion “it” (neuter singular according to *nirukti*) and “blue” (as a concept) to the object. We may also need to take into account how the Yogācāra model of five minds⁷¹ plays into this complex game.

⁶⁹ AKBh: || *yathoktaṃ cakṣurvijñānena nīlaṃ vijānāti no tu nīlaṃ manovijñānena nīlaṃ vijānāti nīlaṃ iti ca vijānātīti* || (Pradhan, 1967, p. 144, lines 2–4). Also compare the earlier appearance of this idea in the **Vijñānakāya* (*Shi shen zu lun* 識身足論): T1539 (XXVI) 559b27-c28.

⁷⁰ Dhammajoti (2007, p. 293).

⁷¹ Namely, the occurring directly (*aupanipātika*) mind, the investigating (*pariyeṣaka*) mind, the determination (*nīścita*) mind, moral mind of defilement or purification (*saṃkleśo vyavadānaṃ ca*) and the homogeneous (*naiṣyandika*) mind. Xuanzang translates these five as follows: “*shuaier xin* 率爾心; *xunqiu xin* 尋求心; *jueding xin* 決定心, *ranjing xin* 染淨心, *dengliu xin* 等流心.” For further details, see Keng (2018).

Finally, earlier in this paper I have suggested that the reason why the Yogācāra thinkers shifted *svabhāva-vikalpa* to the mental consciousness is that later Yogācāra scholars have a strong tendency to maintain that the sensory consciousnesses only cognize what is really existent, and for this reason, they ascribe all types of cognition of what is not really existent to the mental consciousness. The doctrinal differences between Abhidharma and the Yogācāra discussed in this paper can be summarized in the following diagram (with the disputed aspects in shades):

objects: real or unreal	Objects: particulars or universals	Cognition: <i>sa-vikalpa</i> or <i>nir- vikalpa</i>	Abhidharma	Yogācāra as discussed in this paper
Real (<i>qua</i> <i>āyatana- svalakṣaṇa</i> under Realism):	particulars	<i>nir-vikalpa</i> (non-conceptual in the European sense)	sensory consciousness	sensory consciousness
unreal: e.g., the shape of an object	particulars	<i>sa-vikalpa</i> (non-conceptual in the European sense)	<i>vitarka</i> associated with sensory consciousness (i.e., <i>svabhāva- vikalpa</i>)	<i>vitarka</i> associated with the mental consciousness (<i>mānasa- pratyakṣa</i>)
unreal: names, etc.	universals	<i>sa-vikalpa</i> (conceptual in the European sense)	mental consciousness (i.e., <i>anusmaraṇa-</i> and <i>abhinirūpaṇā- vikalpa</i>)	mental consciousness

From this diagram, we can define *vikalpa* as whatever unreal that is superimposed by consciousness on what is real, whether involving concepts/universals or not. For this reason, we need to remain cautious about the correspondence between “*vikalpa*”

in the Abhidharma-Yogācāra context and “conceptualization” in the European sense.

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