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Buddhist Theories of Causality

(karma, *pratītyasamutpāda*, *hetu*, *pratyaya*)

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Introduction

This entry covers four models of causality: karma, *pratītyasamutpāda*, *hetu*, and *pratyaya*. The English terms *causality* and *causation* are used here as generic terms. As Buddhist interpretations of causality are complex and controversial, only general features of causation theories are delineated. Buddhist expositions of causality stem from and corroborate Buddhist doctrines and soteriology. In terms of doctrine, Buddhism rejects the existence of a permanent self (*ātman*), and denies the existence of a first cause in any form. The nature of existence is interpreted in terms of the two truths: conventional and ultimate. Conventionally, there exist beings and things, but only as conceptual entities (*prajñaptisat*). Ultimately, they do not exist, because they have no permanent core. So how does the inexistent world function? Conceptual entities are dissected into impersonal phenomena or *dharmas* as ultimate units. The *dharmas* are momentary, and they arise and vanish in space and time in conformity with definite principles that regulate their flow and interdependence: karma and dependent origination. The term *karma*, literally “action” or “deed,” as a technical concept, denotes the principle of ethical causation: there are no agents, but there are actions and their consequences. Karma as action denotes an act of mental volition (*cetanā*), and the bodily and verbal actions that stem from it. Volitional actions are ethically qualified, depending on whether they stem from the three wholesome roots or the three unwholesome roots. Such actions accumulate and yield their fruits: particular body-mind configurations evolving in cyclic rebirths (*samsāra*). The principle of *pratītyasamutpāda* (dependent origination), denotes the conditionality or interdependence of existential phenomena. Essentially, it accounts for the conditioned flux of phenomenal existence, in particular the interdependent flow of the five aggregates with no ontological substratum. The terms *hetu* (cause) and *pratyaya* (condition), occur as a compound or separately. As a compound, *hetupratyaya* denotes the principle of causes and conditions applicable to all aspects of existence. When included in lists of conditions, it denotes the first condition, the condition qua cause. Individually, they are virtually synonymous, or form either separate or correlated models of causality. In terms of soteriology, causality is integrated into the four noble truths. The second truth teaches the origin of suffering, identified by the Buddha as craving. Otherwise, the origin is interpreted in terms of karma and dependent origination. The third noble truth, the cessation of suffering, teaches the eradication of karma leading to rebirths, and the cessation of suffering: appeasement of dependent origination.

General Perspectives on Causality

The citations here include thematic and general sources. Doniger O’Flaherty 1980, Newfeldt 1986, and Krishan 1997 deal with various aspects of karma theories in India. Edelglass and Garfield 2011 surveys doctrinal identities of Buddhist schools. Hirakawa 1990 treats Indian Buddhism up to the emergence of early Mahayana. Ronkin 2005 deals with Theravada doctrines, including causation. Sakamoto 1981 studies important Abhidharma concepts. Williams 2009 sketches the principal features of Mahayana doctrines. Hayes 2015 sketches the doctrinal positions of six Mādhyamika masters. Kalupahana 1975 surveys pre-Buddhist and Buddhist causation theories.

Doniger O’Flaherty, Wendy, ed. *Karma and Rebirth in Classical Indian Traditions*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980.

Out of the twelve contributions on karma topics, three papers focus on Buddhism: “Karma and Rebirth in Early Buddhism,” “The Medical Soteriology of Karma in the Buddhist Tantric Tradition,” and “Rebirth Eschatology and Its Transformations.”

Edelglass, William, and Jay L. Garfield. “Indo-Tibetan Buddhist Philosophy.” In *The Oxford Handbook of World Philosophy*. Edited by Jay L. Garfield and William Edelglass. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Seven chapters deal with Buddhist schools in Indian and Tibet, including Abhidharma, Madhyamaka, and Yogācāra philosophies.

Hayes, Richard. “Madhyamaka.” In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Edited by Edward N. Zalta. Stanford, CA: Stanford University, 2015.

Hayes portrays six Madhyamaka thinkers: Buddhapālita, Bhāvaviveka, Candrakīrti, Śāntideva, Jñānagarbha, and Śāntarakṣita. Nāgārjuna is portrayed by Jan Westerhoff in a separate entry.

Hirakawa, Akira. *A History of Indian Buddhism from Śākyamuni to Early Mahāyāna*. Translated by Paul Groner. Asian Studies at Hawaii 36. Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1990.

Translation of *Indo Bukkyō Shi*, published in Tokyo in 1974. Hirakawa surveys early Buddhism in India. Chapters eleven and twelve treat the doctrines of karma and dependent origination. His main sources are Sarvāstivāda works.

Kalupahana, David J. *Causality: The Central Philosophy of Buddhism*. Honolulu: University Press of Hawai‘i, 1975.

Initially, Kalupahana sketches pre-Buddhist causation theories, and then surveys Buddhist interpretations of causality, mainly focusing on the principle of dependent origination.

Krishan, Yuvraj. *The Doctrine of Karma: Its Origin and Development in Brahmanical, Buddhist, and Jaina Traditions*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1997.

Krishan offers a comprehensive survey of karma theories in the classical period of India. Karma in Buddhism is discussed in Section II, pages 59–90.

Newfeldt, Ronald, ed. *Karma and Rebirth: Post Classical Development*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986.

The eighteen papers on karma are divided into three sections: Hindu, Buddhist, and Western. The Buddhist section contains five papers on karma and rebirth in Sri Lanka, Tibet, China, and Japan.

Ronkin, Noa. *Early Buddhist Metaphysics: The Making of a Philosophical Tradition*. London: Routledge-Curzon, 2005.

Chapter 5 discusses the early Buddhist notion of causation, and the Abhidhamma theory of causal conditions. See also Ronkin's "Abhidharma," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2014).

Sakamoto, Yukio. *Abidatsuma no Kenkyū*. Tokyo: Daitō Shuppansha, 1981.

In this substantial research output, Sakamoto studies Abhidharma concepts of karma, dependent origination, phenomenal existence (*samsara*), and defilements.

Williams, Paul. *Mahāyāna Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations*. London and New York: Routledge, 2009.

Williams surveys the doctrines of Mahayana Buddhism in India and beyond. Chapter three and four deal with Mādhyamika and Yogācāra schools. Revised version of the first edition, published in 1989.

Reference Works

Malalasekera and Weeraratne 1961–2007 provides the widest coverage of Buddhist doctrines and technical terms. Jones 2004 offers a range of updated entries on Buddhist doctrines and schools. Buswell 2003 includes fairly comprehensive entries on Buddhist schools, literature, and concepts. Buswell and Lopez 2014 contains numerous entries on texts, terminology, and schools. Nyanatiloka 1980 defines a range of seminal Pali terms. Emmanuel 2013 provides a survey of Buddhist philosophy. Potter 1995 provides an updated bibliography.

Buswell, Robert E., ed. *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*. New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2003.

This encyclopedia contains approximately 470 entries, including entries on Abhidharma, karma, Sarvāstivāda, Theravada, Madhyamaka, and Yogācāra.

Buswell, Robert E., Jr., and Donald S. Lopez Jr. *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014.

This dictionary of over 5,000 entries covers texts and concepts, including karma, *hetu*, *hetupratyaya*, *pratyaya*, and *pratītyasamutpāda*.

Emmanuel, Steven, ed. *A Companion to Buddhist Philosophy*. Blackwell Companion to Philosophy 50. Chichester, UK: John Wiley, 2013.

This companion covers Buddhist philosophy in India and beyond. Chapter three deals with the notion of dependent origination as mental and bodily processes. Available online.

Jones, Lindsay, ed. *Encyclopedia of Religion*. 2d ed. 16 vols. New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004.

Volume 2 covers Buddhist history, literature, and doctrine. Entries also include Buddhist philosophy, soteriology, and *pratītyasamutpāda*. First edition published in 1987, Mircea Eliade, editor-in-chief, New York: Macmillan.

Malalasekera, G. P., and W. G. Weeraratne, eds. *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*. 8 vols. Government of Sri Lanka, 1961–2007.

This encyclopedia contains a comprehensive range of entries on Buddhist history, doctrine, and terminology; particularly strong on Theravada doctrines.

Nyanatiloka Mahāthera. *Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines*. Kandy, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 1980.

This dictionary covers a fair range of Pali terms related to Buddhist doctrines and practices. First edition 1950.

Potter, Karl H., comp. *Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies*. 3d ed. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1995.

The bibliography in this volume contains sections on Theravada, Sarvāstivāda, Mahayana, Madhyamaka, and Yogācāra.

Causality in the Buddha's Discourses

The Buddha accepts the concept of karma current in his lifetime, but he recasts its interpretation. He denies the existence of the self, but affirms moral responsibility for human actions. He defines karma as an act of mental volition (*cetanā*), and the bodily and verbal actions that stem from it. These three actions are integrated into the scheme of the ten unwholesome paths of karma (*akuśalakarmapatha*), and their opposites, the ten wholesome paths of action (*kuśalakarmapatha*). These two paths of actions broadly integrate the entire spectrum of human actions. The Buddha affirms that karma entails inevitable consequences, but denies determinism. The kernel of the Buddha's teaching is captured in a single stanza voiced by Aśvajit, one of his first five disciples: "Of all phenomena that issue from causes, the Tathāgata foresaid their cause, and he also stated their cessation, the great mendicant" (*Mahāvagga* I.39; *Mahāvastu* III.62). There are two principal formulae of dependent origination: abstract and standard. The abstract formula: "When this is, that comes to be. From the arising of this, that arises. When this is absent, that does not arise. From the cessation of this, that ceases" (*Majjhima* I.262–64, II.32, III.63; *Samyutta* II.28). The standard formula consists of twelve interconnected factors: ignorance, formations, consciousness, mentality-materiality, six sense-bases, contact, sensation, craving, grasping, becoming, birth, and old age and death. The Buddha does not claim the formulation of *pratītyasamutpāda*, but only its discovery. With reference to it, he maintains that the nature and stability of the causal patterning of phenomena remains constant, whether the Tathāgatas appear or whether they do not appear in this world. Thus, dependent origination constitutes a kind of universal principle that regulates the flux of all phenomena: things and beings.

Karma in the Buddha's Discourses

As the Theravada Suttapiṭaka is available in the original Pali and in translations, one can access all of the Buddha's discourses on karma and dependent origination. The Sanskrit Sūtrapiṭaka survives only in fragments, and consequently fewer of his discourses are available. It exists in its Chinese version, but it is accessible only if one can read Chinese. The citations in this section include one comparative study and a selection of nine of the Buddha's discourses: eight are included in one of the Nikāya collections, and one is published in a separate volume. *Analāyo 2011* compares the Buddha's discourses included in the Majjhima-nikāya with their counterparts translated into Chinese and other languages. *Cūlakammavibhaṅga*, *Mahākammavibhaṅga*, *Kukkuravatika*, and *Sāleyyaka Sutta* are included in the Majjhima Nikāya translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi (1995). They are considered to be important discourses on kamma. *Bhava*, *Mahāli*, and *Mūla* are included in the Aṅguttara Nikāya translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi (2012). These three discourses discuss particular aspects of kamma. *Moliyasīvaka* is included in the Samyutta Nikāya translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi (2000). This discourse deals with kamma retribution. *Karmavibhaṅga* is published in a separate volume edited by Kudo (2004). It is a rare survival from the Sanskrit literature.

Analāyo. A Comparative Study of the Majjhima-nikāya. 2 vols. Taipei: Dharma Drum, 2011.

Analāyo compares the Majjhima discourses and their Chinese counterparts. For Chinese versions of *Sāleyyaka*, *Cūḷakammavibhaṅga*, and *Mahākammavibhaṅga*, see pages 263–268, 767–775, and 775–781, respectively.

Bhava. In *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Aṅguttara Nikāya*. Translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi, 309–310. Boston: Wisdom, 2012.

The Buddha states that if there were no three worlds and no kamma to mature in them, existence would not become manifested. In the case of beings affected by ignorance and craving, kamma is the field, consciousness is the seed, and craving is the moisture.

Cūḷakammavibhaṅga. In *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Majjhima Nikāya*. Translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi, 1053–1057. Boston: Wisdom, 1995.

The Buddha states, “Beings are owners of their actions, heirs of their actions; they originate from their actions, are bound to their actions, have their actions as their refuge. It is action that distinguishes beings as inferior and superior” (Bodhi’s translation, 1053, 1057).

Karmavibhaṅga. In *The Karmavibhaṅga: Transliterations and Annotations of Original Sanskrit Manuscripts from Nepal*. Edited by Noriyuki Kudo. *Bibliotheca Philologica and Philosophica Buddhica* 7. Tokyo: International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology, 2004.

This is the Sanskrit version of the *Cūḷakammavibhaṅga*. Kudo provides annotated transliterations of two Sanskrit manuscripts found in Nepal. French translation in Sylvain Lévi, *Mahākarmavibhaṅga (La Grande Classification des Actes) et Karmavibhaṅgopadeśa (Discussion sur le Mahā Karmavibhaṅga)*, Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1932.

Kukkuravatika. In *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Majjhima Nikāya*. Translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi, 493–497. Boston: Wisdom, 1995.

The Buddha explains four categories of action: dark action with dark result; bright action. . .; dark-bright action. . .; neither dark nor bright action. . . The fourth category destroys the preceding categories; in the Aṅguttara II.36 it is equated with the noble eightfold path.

Mahākammavibhaṅga. In *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Majjhima Nikāya*. Translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi, 1058–1065. Boston: Wisdom, 1995.

The Buddha refutes faulty interpretations of actions and their results, and explains that good and evil actions do not automatically lead to happy and unhappy destinies.

Mahāli. In *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Aṅguttara Nikāya*. Translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi, 1398. Boston: Wisdom, 2012.

There are ten causes and conditions of good and bad kamma: the three wholesome roots, the three unwholesome roots, careless and careful attention, and wrongly and rightly focused mind. If these ten things did not exist, there would be no right and wrong conduct.

Moliyasīvaka. In *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Saṃyutta Nikāya*. Vol. 2. Translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi, 1278–1279. Boston: Wisdom, 2000.

The Buddha refutes that all pleasant and painful experiences are results of past actions. He states that some feelings originate from bile and the other humors, some from climatic changes, and some from kamma.

Mūla. In *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Aṅguttara Nikāya*. Translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi, 292–294. Boston: Wisdom, 2012.

The three unwholesome roots generate bad qualities, and the three wholesome roots generate excellent qualities. Once the bad qualities are eradicated, one attains *nibbāna* in this very life.

Sāleyyaka Sutta. In *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Majjhima Nikāya*. Translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi, 379–385. Boston: Wisdom, 1995.

The Buddha teaches the workings of kamma by way of the ten unwholesome and the ten wholesome paths of action (*kammaṭṭhāna*). Similar discourses in Majjhima III.45–53; Aṅguttara V.263–68, 292–97; *Mahāvastu* II.99; *Daśabhūmika* 23–27.

***Pratītyasamutpāda* in the Buddha's Discourses**

The citations listed in this section include Pali and Sanskrit discourses. The *Kaccānagotta Sutta* is included in the *Nidānasamyutta* of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*, but it is listed here separately because of its importance. *Nidānasamyutta*, translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi (2000), contains a collection of discourses on dependent origination. *Mahānidāna Sutta*, translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi (1984), provides an extensive treatment of dependent origination. *Mahātanhāsankhaya Sutta*, translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi (1995), discusses three models of dependent origination. *Arthaviniścaya Sūtra*, translated by Samtani (2002), provides an exposition of the standard formula of dependent origination. *Daśabhūmika Sūtra*, edited by Rahder (1926), teaches how the bodhisattva should understand the innate permutations of dependent origination. *Mahāvastu*, translated by Jones (1952–1956), discusses the nature of dependent origination in three different passages. *Nidānasamyukta*, edited by Tripāthī (1962), includes a modest collection of discourses dealing with different aspects of dependent origination. *Pratītyasamutpāda-ādi-vibhaṅga-nirdeśa-sūtra*, edited by Sastri (1950), represents one of the earliest treatments of dependent origination. *Śālistamba Sūtra*, translated by Schoening (1995), appears to be a compilation based on some other discourses.

Arthaviniścaya Sūtra. In *Gathering the Meanings: The Arthaviniścaya Sūtra and its Commentary Nibandhana*. Translated by N. H. Samtani. Berkeley, CA: Dharma, 2002.

Vīryaśrīdatta's *Nibandhana* is dated to the 8th century. Chapter 5, pages 67–106, interprets the standard formula of dependent origination. Sanskrit texts edited in N. H. Samtani, *Arthaviniścaya-Sūtra and its Commentary Nibandhana* (Patna: K. P. Jayaswal Research Institute, 1971).

Daśabhūmika Sūtra. In *Daśabhūmikasūtra*. Edited by Johannes Rahder, 47–52. Leuven, Belgium: J.B. Istar, 1926.

Chapter 6 explains how the bodhisattva understands the forward and reverse sequences of dependent origination. Translated by Megumu Honda in *Studies in South, East, and Central Asia*, edited by Denis Sinor (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1968), 185–192. Another Mahāyāna exposition in *The Saddharmapundarīka*, translated by H. Kern (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1989), 172–173.

***Kaccānagotta Sutta.* In *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Saṃyutta Nikāya.* Vol. 1. Translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi, 544. Boston: Wisdom, 2000.**

Dependent origination is taught as the Middle Way that avoids the extremes of existence and nonexistence. A similar Sanskrit text in the *Nidānasamyukta*, translated in Mattia Salvini, “The Nidānasamyukta and the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā: Understanding the Middle Way,” *Thai International Journal of Buddhist Studies* 2 (2011): 57–95.

***Mahānidāna Sutta.* In *The Mahānidāna Sutta and Its Commentaries.* Translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi. Kandy, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 1984.**

This is the fullest exposition of dependent origination, although three links are omitted. This version is also given in the *Mahāpadāna Sutta*, Dīgha 14; and in the Sanskrit *Mahāvadāna Sūtra*, edited by Kamichi Fukida (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003).

***Mahātaṇhāsāṅkhaya Sutta.* In *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Majjhima Nikāya.* Translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi, 349–361. Boston: Wisdom, 1995.**

The Buddha teaches three configurations of dependent origination: the process of cognition, four nutriments linked with the dependent origination, and the standard formula. Chinese version in Analāyo, *A Comparative Study of the Majjhima-nikāya* (Taipei: Dharma Drum, 2011), 251–256.

***Mahāvastu.* In *The Mahāvastu.* Translated by J. J. Jones. Vols. 2–3. London: Luzac, 1952–1956.**

Two passages describe the standard version. One passage lists the factors from ignorance to craving and then states, “Because of grasping men pass from one life into another. Hence there come to be birth, old age, death and sickness” (Jones II.315). Jones: Volume II, 267–268; II, 315; Volume III, 449–450. Sanskrit text in È. Senart’s edition: Volume II, 285; II, 345–346; Volume III, 448–449.

***Nidādasamyutta.* In *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Saṃyutta Nikāya.* Vol. 1. Translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi, 532–620. Boston: Wisdom, 2000.**

This chapter includes around ninety discourses on dependent origination and its variations.

***Nidānasamyukta.* In *Fünfundzwanzig Sūtras des Nidānasamyukta.* Edited by Chandra Tripāthī. Sanskrittexte aus den Turfanfunden 8. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1962.**

This publication contains twenty-five discourses included in the Sanskrit *Nidānasamyukta* discovered in Turfan.

***Pratītyasamutpāda-ādi-vibhaṅga-nirdeśa-sūtra.* In *Ārya Śālistamba Sūtra, Pratītyasamutpādavibhaṅga Nirdeśasūtra, and Pratītyasamutpādagāthā Sūtra.* Edited by N. Aiyaswami Sastri. Madras, India: Adyar Library, 1950.**

Treated as one of the oldest texts on dependent origination. Studied in Marek Mejer, “On the Formulation of the *Pratītyasamutpāda*,” in *Aspects of Buddhism: Proceedings of the International Seminar 1994*, edited by Agata Bareja-Starzyńska and Marek Mejer (Warsaw: Oriental Institute, 1997), 125–137.

***Śālistamba Sūtra.* In *The Śālistamba Sūtra and its Indian Commentaries.* 2 vols. Translated by Jeffrey D. Schoening. Wiener Studien zur Tibetologie und Buddhismuskunde 35.1–2. Vienna: Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien, 1995.**

This text equates the *pratītyasamutpāda* with the Dharma, and the Dharma with the Buddha. It appears to be a digest of different discourses. This study includes an annotated translation of Śālistamba and Kamalaśīla's commentary. Also translated in N. Ross Reat, *The Śālistamba Sūtra* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1993).

Karma and *Pratītyasamutpāda* in *Abhidharma* Sources

The *Abhidharma* is a systematization of the Buddha's teachings, but it also advances new doctrines. One of them is the analysis of all of existence in terms of *dharmas* as ultimate units or realities. As stated in the Introduction, conventional entities do not exist, because they depend on their components. The Sarvāstivāda asserts that these components, *dharmas*, have their inherent nature or identity (*svabhāva*) and exist as real entities (*dravyasat*). Similarly, the Theravada maintains that the *dharmas* are the ultimate entities (*paramattha*) that exist from their own side (*sarūpato*). The implied meaning is that they are not mere concepts, but mentally discernible entities that cannot be dissected into smaller units. All *dharmas* are divided into conditioned (*saṃskṛta*) and unconditioned (*asaṃskṛta*). The conditioned *dharmas* make up the empirical world: matter, consciousness, and mental concomitants. The *Abhidharma* is mainly concerned with the human being as a complex of psychophysical stream (*saṃtāna*) that evolves without any ontological substratum. All things and beings, as complexes of conditioned *dharmas*, are subject to change and evolution. They are propelled by the force of karma, and coordinated by the principle of *pratītyasamutpāda*. Thus the *Abhidharma* completely depersonalizes conventional entities, and treats them in terms of impersonal *dharmas*. The unconditioned *dharmas*, including nirvana, are exempt from causation; they exist but have no cause. In addition to systematic treatments of karma and dependent origination, the *Abhidharma* masters also formulate new models of causality, as discussed below.

Kamma and *Patīccasamuppāda* in Theravada *Abhidhamma*

One of the salient features of the Theravada interpretation of kamma is the assertion that all bodily, verbal, and mental actions are essentially volitions. The exposition of dependent origination largely focuses on explaining the causal structure of cyclic rebirths, and on detailing the conditions that regulate the process of birth and death. The Theravada masters postulate a type of consciousness called life-continuum (*bhavaṅga*), which is interpreted as the continuity of the individual from birth to death. According to Theravada sources, in its cognitive aspect (*vīthiccitta*), the stream of consciousness apprehends and interacts with the surrounding world, and in its latent aspect (*vīthimuttacitta*), it performs the functions of rebirth consciousness, life-continuum consciousness, and death consciousness. The citations include *Abhidhamma* books and authored treatises. [Anuruddha 1993](#), translated by Bodhi, [Buddhaghosa 1956](#), translated by Ñānamoli, and [Upatissa 1961](#), translated by Ehara, constitute seminal *Abhidhamma* manuals. [Buddhaghosa 1921](#), translated by Tin, contains a detailed exposition of kamma. [Dhammasaṅgani](#), translated by Rhys Davids (1900), methodically classifies and defines mental and physical phenomena. [Kathāvatthu](#), translated by Aung and Rhys Davids (1915), treats a wide range of controversies. [Buddhaghosa 1987–1991](#), translated by Nyanaponika, treats the nature of dependent origination. [Vibhaṅga](#), translated by Thiṭṭila (1969), analyzes the nature of dependent origination as taught by the Buddha and as interpreted in *Abhidhamma*.

Anuruddha. *Abhidhammattha-saṅgaha*. In *A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma: The Abhidhammattha Saṅgaha of Ācārya Anuruddha*. Revised

translation by Bhikkhu Bodhi. Kandy, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 1993.

Chapter 5, pages 185–233, deals with the nature and categories of kamma. Chapter 8, pages 292–324, explains the nature of dependent origination.

Buddhaghosa. *Atthasālinī*. In *The Expositor*. Translated by Pe Maung Tin. 2 vols in one. Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1921.

This is Buddhaghosa's commentary on the *Dhammasaṅgaṇi*. Part Three, pages 109–140, provides a detailed exposition of kamma.

Buddhaghosa. *Visuddhimagga*. In *The Path of Purification*. Translated by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoḷi. Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1956.

This text was composed in the 5th century. Chapter 17 provides a detailed exposition of dependent origination. The nature of kamma is explained in connection with specific links of dependent origination.

Buddhaghosa. *Sammohavinodanī*. In *The Dispeller of Delusion*. 2 vols. Translated by Nyanaponika and revised by Lance Cousins. Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1987–1991.

This is Buddhaghosa's commentary on the *Vibhaṅga*. In this text Buddhaghosa provides a detailed exposition of dependent origination.

***Dhammasaṅgaṇi*. In *Buddhist Psychological Ethics*. Translated by C. A. F. Rhys Davids. London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1900.**

This is the first book of the Abhidhamma Piṭaka. It classifies mental and physical phenomena, in terms of their ethical qualities: good, bad, and undetermined.

***Kathāvattu*. In *Points of Controversy*. Translated by S. Z. Aung and C. A. F. Rhys Davids. London: Pali Text Society, 1915.**

This book includes debates on kamma and *paṭiccasamuppāda*. See James McDermott, "The Kathāvattu Kamma Debates," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 95.3 (1975): 424–433.

Upatissa (or Upaṭiṣya). *Vimuttimagga*. In *The Path of Freedom by the Arahant Upatissa*. Translated by N. R. M. Ehara, et al. Colombo, Sri Lanka: Saman, 1961.

This text is dated to the 5th century. Chapter 11, pages 259–267, explains two kinds of conditioned origination: mundane and transcendent.

***Vibhaṅga*. In *The Book of Analysis*. Translated by Ashin Thiṭṭila. London: Pali Text Society, 1969.**

This is the second Abhidhamma book. Chapter 6 treats the dependent origination as taught in the Buddha's discourses, and as treated in the Abhidhamma.

Karma and *Pratīyasamutpāda* in Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma

The Sarvāstivāda Vaibhāṣikas maintain that everything exists in all three times: past, present, and future. Karma by its nature exists in all times, but its mode of existence varies. They further maintain that mental actions are mental volitions, and that bodily and verbal actions stem from mental volitions, but otherwise appertain to the material aggregate. In this context they formulated a particular interpretation of the concepts of *vijñapti* (intimation) and *avijñapti* (non-intimation). Bodily and verbal actions are manifested intimations of mental volitions. Mental, bodily, and verbal actions produce non-intimations, understood as their karmic potentialities that have an impact on the ethical character of the performer's consciousness. The Vaibhāṣikas maintain that the actions of individual beings lead to their individual rebirths, and that the combined actions of all beings regenerate and maintain the physical world. Like the Theravada,

the Sarvāstivāda largely interprets the dependent origination in terms of the processes of birth and death. [Cox 1993](#) studies the concept of *pratītyasamutpāda*. [Dharmaśrī 2006](#), [Dharmatrāta 1999](#), [Ghoṣaka 1977](#), and [Vasubandhu 1923–1931](#) are comprehensive manuals of Abhidharma doctrines and practices. [Skandhila 2008](#) treats the classification of *dharmas*.

Cox, Collett. “Dependent Origination: Its Elaboration in Early Sarvāstivādin Abhidharma Texts.” In *Researches in Indian and Buddhist Philosophy: Essays in Honour of Professor Alex Wayman*. Edited by Ram Karan Sharma, 119–141. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1993.

Cox surveys the interpretative evolution of the concept of dependent origination. This volume also includes two other papers on dependent origination: “Dependent Origination and Elements,” and “Dependent Origination in the Buddhist Tantra.”

Dharmaśrī. *Abhidharmahrdaya*. In *The Essence of Scholasticism: Abhidharmahrdaya T1550*. Translated by Charles Willemen. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2006.

Dharmaśrī’s treatise is viewed as one of the earliest expositions of the Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma. Chapter 3 treats the theory of karma. Chapter 8, verses 179–181, encapsulates the nature of dependent origination. French translation by I. Armelin, *Le Coeur de la Loi Suprême: Abhidharmahrdayasāstra* (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1978). First edition 1975.

Dharmatrāta. *Samyuktābhidharmahrdaya*. In *Samyuktābhidharmahrdaya: Heart of Scholasticism with Miscellaneous Additions*. 3 vols. Translated by Bart Dessein. Buddhist Tradition Series 33–35. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1999.

Dharmatrāta is dated to the 4th century. Chapter 3, pages 149–237, contains a detailed exposition of karma: categories of moral and immoral conduct, and the ten paths of action.

Ghoṣaka. *Abhidharmāmṛtarasa*. In *La Savour de l’immortel (A-p’i-t-an Kan Lu Wei Lun): La Version Chinoise de l’Amṛtarasa de Ghoṣaka (T. 1553)*. Translated by José van den Broeck. Publications de l’Institut Orientaliste de Louvain 15. Louvain-La-Neuve, Belgium: Institut Orientaliste, 1977.

Ghoṣaka is tentatively dated to the 2nd century. Chapter 4 deals with the nature of actions and their results. Chapter 7 explains the mechanism of dependent origination. English translation from the French by Migme Chodron. Downloadable from [Dharma Wheel, Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma: Translations & Studies](#).

Skandhila. *Abdharmāvatāra*. In *Entrance into the Supreme Doctrine: Skandhila’s Abhidharmāvatāra*. Translated by Kuala Lumpur Dhammajoti. Hong Kong: Centre of Buddhist Studies, 2008.

Translated from the Chinese. Skandhila’s work treats the Sarvāstivāda theory of conditioned and unconditioned phenomena. Tibetan version translated in Marcel van Velthem, *La Traité de la Descente dans la Profonde Loi: Abhidharmāvatārasāstra* (Publications de l’Institut Orientaliste de Louvain 16; Louvain-la-Neuve: Institut Orientaliste, 1977).

Vasubandhu. *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*. In *L’Abhidharmakośa de Vasubandhu: Traduction et Annotations*. 6 vols. Translated by Louis de La Vallée Poussin. Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1923–1931.

This treatise constitutes the pinnacle of the Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma developments in India. The Vaibhāṣika interpretation of dependent origination is in chapter 3, verses 20–44, pages 60–138. Chapter 4 details the Vaibhāṣika theory of karma and its

critique. Translated from the French in Leo M. Pruden, *Abhidharmakośabhāṣyam* (4 vols., Berkeley, CA: Asian Humanities Press, 1988–1990).

Hetu and Pratyaya in Abhidharma Sources

The Abhidharma analysis of existence into *dharmas* as ultimate realities and the Buddhist notion of impermanence are deeply incompatible. If all phenomena are impermanent and evolve in momentary events, then *dharmas* cannot exist and endure for any period of time. If they are momentary events, evolving in phases of origination, duration, and cessation, it is a challenge to account for the continuity of physical and mental processes. The coordinated flow of such processes is subjected to causes and conditions. But as causes and conditions are equally momentary events, it is difficult to demonstrate how they generate fruits the very moment they vanish. Then again, as phenomena evolve in momentary flashes, it is difficult to account for their causal capacity and efficacy. Faced with such problems, the Abhidharma masters formulated theories of causal contiguity and efficacy in terms of coordinated sets of causes (*hetu*) and conditions (*pratyaya*).

Hetu and Paccaya in Theravada Abhidhamma

The Theravada theory of conditionality, as detailed in the *Paṭṭhāna*, postulates a set of twenty-four conditions that embrace all possible configurations in which phenomena may function and interact. Among these conditions, the first one, *hetupaccaya* (condition qua cause), includes the primary roots or causes: the three unwholesome and the three wholesome roots. The existence of all conditioned phenomena depends on these six roots. The twenty-four conditions are not mutually exclusive, and their number can be reduced to four. *Paṭṭhāna* (Nārada 1969) constitutes the primary source for the study of the twenty-four conditions. *Dhammasaṅgani*, translated by Rhys Davids (1900), provides definitions of the root causes. Nyanaponika 2010 deals with mental phenomena. Buddhaghosa 1956, Sayādaw 1986, Nārada 1969, and Nyanatiloka 2008 explain the twenty-four conditions largely on the basis of the *Paṭṭhāna*. Van Gorkom 2010 offers an insightful sketch of the twenty-four conditions.

Buddhaghosa. *Visuddhimagga*. In *The Path of Purification*. Translated by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoḷi. Kandy, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 1956.

Buddhaghosa incorporates the twenty-four conditions into his treatment of dependent origination (chapter 17, paragraphs 66–104).

Dhammasaṅgani. In *Buddhist Psychological Ethics*. Translated by C. A. F. Rhys Davids. London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1900.

Paragraphs 1053–1071 define the unwholesome and wholesome roots (*mūla, hetu*).

van Gorkom, Nina. *The Conditionality of Life: An Outline of the Twenty-Four Conditions as Taught in the Abhidhamma*. London: Zolag, 2010.

Van Gorkom provides a narrative exposition of the twenty-four conditions.

Nārada, U. *Conditional Relations (Paṭṭhāna)*. Part 1. London: Pali Text Society, 1969.

Part 1 and 2 cover only the initial 141 pages of the *Paṭṭhāna*, which in some editions spreads over 2,500 pages. Part 2 published in Rangoon: Religious Affairs Department, 1986.

Nyanaponika, Thera. *Abhidhamma Studies: Buddhist Exploration of Consciousness and Time*. Edited by Bhikkhu Bodhi. Boston: Wisdom, 2010.

Nyanaponika discusses Abhidhamma tenets, and analyzes the Abhidhamma treatment of mental phenomena. Bodhi provides an instructive introduction.

Nyanatiloka, Mahāthera. *Guide through the Abhidhamma Piṭaka: A Synopsis of the Philosophical Collection of the Buddhist Pāli Canon*. 5th rev. ed. Kandy, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 2008.

An analysis of the twenty-four conditions as taught in the *Paṭṭhāna* is given on pages 152–206. Contains an essay on the dependent origination. First published in 1938.

***Paṭṭhāna*. In *Conditional Relations (Paṭṭhāna)*. Translated by U. Nārada. 2 vols. London: Pali Text Society, 1969–1981.**

This is the seventh book of the Abhidhamma Piṭaka, and the seminal source of the twenty-four conditions.

Sayādaw, Ledi. Mahāthera. *Paṭṭhānuddesa Dīpanī*. In *The Buddhist Philosophy of Relations*. Translated by Sayādaw U. Nyāna. Kandy, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 1986.

Ledi provides a detailed résumé of the twenty-four conditions as taught in the *Paṭṭhāna*.

Hetu and Pratyaya in Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma

The Sarvāstivāda school interprets the causal contiguity and efficacy in terms of four conditions (*pratyaya*), and six causes (*hetu*). These conditions and causes form two models of causality and account for all phenomenal experiences. All conditioned *dharma*s are momentary, yet they perdure in all three times but in different capacities, and evolve in causal relations in conformity with the four conditions and the six causes. None of these conditions and causes entails a direct impact or collision between different *dharma*s, but only determines a particular aspect of their causal relationship. For instance, the first of the six causes, the efficient cause, is characterized as presence or non-obstruction: all *dharma*s are efficient cause with regard to all other *dharma*s, because no *dharma* constitutes an obstacle to the arising of the *dharma*s susceptible of arising. In addition to causal relationships determined by the above causes and conditions, the Sarvāstivāda-Vaibhāṣikas postulate that the momentary *dharma*s have four characteristics: origination, duration, decay, and evanescence. The Sarvāstivāda adepts also assert that no conditioned *dharma* arises from one single cause or condition, but from a complex or combination of causes. The above conditions and causes produce five specific types of fruition, which are resultant outcomes of different causal interactions and processes. Among them, the retributive fruition denotes the maturation of past actions, and the disconnection fruition (nirvana) stands for the attainment of disconnection from all defilements through the practice of the path, although ultimately it is causeless. As the four conditions are included in the Pali list of conditions, it is postulated that they predate the formulation of the six causes. The set of the six causes is a Sarvāstivāda innovation, which is inaugurated in the *Jñānaprasthāna*. Some masters say that there is no difference between the six causes and the four conditions, and some say that the four conditions have a wider scope. [Cox 1999](#) summarizes Saṅghabhadra's defense of the Sarvāstivāda exposition of the six causes and the four conditions. [Dhammajoti 2009](#) surveys the Sarvāstivāda interpretation of causality. [Dharmaśrī 2006](#) provides one of the earliest Sarvāstivāda expositions of the four conditions. [Dharmatrāta 1999](#) provides an elaborate exposition of the six causes, the four conditions, and their fruits. [Ghoṣaka 1977](#) makes an original contribution to the interpretation of causality. [Lamotte 1980](#) translates a treatise that assesses the six causes and the four conditions. [Vasubandhu 1923–1931](#) is a repository of Sarvāstivāda doctrines.

Cox, Collett. “Nyāyānusāra.” In *Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies*. Vol. 8, *Buddhist Philosophy From 100 to 350 A.D.* Edited by Karl H. Potter, 650–716. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1999.

Cox provides summaries of the first two chapters of Saṅghabhadra’s *Nyāyānusāra*. In this work, Saṅghabhadra reinstates the Sarvāstivāda Vaibhāṣika Abhidharma tenets, and debunks their Sautrāntika criticism as recorded in Vasubandhu’s *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*. Chapter 2 sums up the debates about the six causes and the four conditions. It also discusses the controversy over the seed theory.

Dhammajoti, Kuala Lumpur. “Theory of Causality.” In *Sarvāstivāda Abhidhamma*. Authored by Kuala Lumpur Dhammajoti, 143–185. Hong Kong: Centre of Buddhist Studies, 2009.

Chapter six and seven detail the Sarvāstivāda theory of causality: the six causes, the four conditions, and the five fruits. First published in 2002.

Dharmaśrī. *Abhidharmahr̥daya*. In *The Essence of Scholasticism: Abhidharmahr̥daya T1550*. Translated by Charles Willemen. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2006.

The six causes and the four conditions are explained in chapter 2, verses 25–32 and their commentaries.

Dharmatrāta. *Samyuktābhidharmahr̥daya*. In *Samyuktābhidharmahr̥daya: Heart of Scholasticism with Miscellaneous Additions*. 3 vols. Translated by Bart Dessein. Buddhist Tradition Series 33–35. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1999.

The six causes, the four conditions, and their fruits are explained in chapter 2, stanzas 68–88, pages 109–138.

Ghoṣaka. *Abhidharmāmṛtarasa*. In *La Savour de l’immortel (A-p’i-t-an Kan Lu Wei Lun): La Version Chinoise de l’Amṛtarasa de Ghoṣaka (T. 1553)*. Translated and annotated by José van den Broeck. Publications de l’Institut Orientaliste de Louvain 15. Louvain-La-Neuve: Institut Orientaliste, 1977.

The six causes and four conditions are explained in chapter 6. English translation from the French by Migme Chodron.

Lamotte, Étienne, trans. *La Traité de la Grande Vertu de Sagesse de Nāgārjuna: Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra*. Vol. 5. Louvain, Belgium: Institut Orientaliste, 1980.

Chapter 69 of this treatise, pages 2163–2230, provides an exposition of the four conditions and the six causes according to the Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma, and their critique from the position of this treatise. In a preliminary note, Lamotte gives an overview of the treatment of the four conditions in the canonical texts, Abhidharma, and Mādhyamika.

Vasubandhu. *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*. In *L’Abhidharmakośa de Vasubandhu: Traduction et Annotations*. French translation by Louis de La Vallée Poussin. 6 vols. Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1923–1931.

Chapter 2 includes a comprehensive treatment of the causes, conditions, and their fruits: verses 49–73, pages 244–331. Translated from the French by Gelong Lodro Sangpo, *Abhidharmakośa-Bhāṣya of Vasubandhu: The Treasury of the Abhidharma and Its Commentary* (4 vols., Delhi, India: Motilal Banarsidass, 2012).

Sautrāntika Theory of Seeds (*bīja*)

The seminal formulation and conceptual development of the theory of seeds are obscure prior to its exposition by Vasubandhu. In his *Abhidharmakośa*, Vasubandhu attributes the theory of seeds to the Sautrāntikas—first a branch of the Sarvāstivāda school, and later viewed as independent. In terms of causality, Vasubandhu

(Vasubandhu 1935–1936) refutes the Vaibhāṣika and some other Abhidharma theories of causality. Instead, he postulates the theory of seeds as a more viable alternative to explain the constantly evolving stream of consciousness. The seeds are identified with mentality and materiality: the five aggregates having the capacity to produce effects. The seeds are not entities but denote the mental and physical complex that forms the stream of conscious life. In their latent state, the seeds are transmitted as potentialities that flow within the stream of consciousness. When appropriate causes and conditions occur, the seeds mature by way of transformation within the stream of consciousness. Vasubandhu postulates that the process of seeds and fruits explains the causal capacity and efficacy of karma and other varieties of causality, as well as the continuity of the life-stream. This theory is viewed as the precursor of the Yogācāra theories of subliminal consciousness and of buddha-nature. Cox 1995 sums up Vasubandhu’s seed theory. Jaini 1959 assesses a controversy about the seed theory. Park 2014 traces the historical and doctrinal development of the *bīja* theory. Vasubandhu 1935–1936 favors the seed theory in preference to other early Buddhist theories of karma. Yamabe 1989 traces the source of the seed theory.

Cox, Collett. “Theory of Seeds.” In *The Disputed Dharmas: Early Buddhist Theories on Existence*. Authored by Collett Cox, 93–97. *Studia Philologica Buddhica* 11. Tokyo: International Institute for Buddhist Studies, 1995.

Cox encapsulates Vasubandhu’s theory of seeds, and its refutation by Saṅghabhadra.

Jaini, Padmanabh. “The Sautrāntika Theory of *Bīja*.” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 22.1–3 (1959): 236–249.

Jaini assesses Vasubandhu’s seed theory and its critique by a Vaibhāṣika master.

Park, Changhwan. *Vasubandhu, Śrīlāta, and the Sautrāntika Theory of Seeds*. Wiener Studien zur Tibetologie und Buddhismuskunde, Heft 84. Vienna: Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien, Universität Wien, 2014.

This is a published version of Park’s PhD thesis submitted at the University of California at Berkeley in 2007. He investigates the historical and conceptual stages of the theory of seeds. He also endeavors to establish possible affinities between different masters who contributed to the formulation of this theory.

Vasubandhu. “Le Traité de L’Acte de Vasubandhu: *Karmasiddhiprakaraṇa*.” Translated by Étienne Lamotte. *Mélanges Chinois et Bouddhiques* 4 (1935–1936): 151–287.

Vasubandhu critiques the Vaibhāṣika and other Abhidharma interpretations of karma. In contrast, he introduces the seed theory and the concept of the subliminal consciousness as a more effective way of explaining the mechanism of karma. Translated from the French by Leo M. Pruden, in *Karmasiddhi Prakaraṇa: The Treatise on Action by Vasubandhu* (Berkeley, CA: Asian Humanities Press, 1987).

Yamabe, Nobuyoshi. “*Bīja* Theory in *Viniścayasamgrahaṇī*.” *Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies* 38.2 (1989): 931–935.

Yamabe attempts to show that Vasubandhu’s seed theory can be traced to the *Viniścayasamgrahaṇī*, a Yogācāra work.

Causality in the Mahayana

Some five hundred years after the Buddha’s demise, there emerged a body of scriptures proclaiming new doctrines, jointly known under the name of Mahayana Buddhism. In distinction to Abhidharma doctrines formulated by the early Buddhist schools, the Mahayana sets forth new doctrinal and soteriological horizons. While the Abhidharma affirms the nonexistence of the self, the Prajñāpāramitā texts propound

both the nonexistence of the self, and the nonexistence of *dharmas*. This nonexistence of the self, and of the *dharmas*, having no inherent nature (*svabhāva*), is articulated in the notion of emptiness (*śūnyatā*). *Pañcaviṃśati* (46.10–47.7) teaches that *śūnyatā* does not arise and does not subside. It does not become defiled or purified. It does not decrease or increase. It is neither past, present, or future. Having this particular character, *śūnyatā* has no form, sensation, perception, formation, or consciousness. There is no arising and no cessation of ignorance. There is no arising and no cessation of the twelve links of dependent origination. There is no suffering, origin, cessation, or path. There is no spiritual realization (*abhisamaya*), no arhatship or its fruit, no Buddha and no enlightenment (*bodhi*). Since all phenomena are empty and have no inherent nature, the texts assert that empty phenomena arise from empty phenomena, and that ultimately phenomena have no origination and no cessation. Some texts teach that the seed of buddha-nature abides in all sentient beings, and some teach about pure lands. In terms of soteriology, the Mahayana texts advocate the bodhisattva ideal. In contrast to the *arhat*, who strives to abandon samsara and to realize nirvana, the Bodhisattva strives to gain enlightenment, and to aid other living beings, without ever abandoning samsara. He practices the six perfections in order to attain an enlightened-body (*dharmakāya*) that comprehends all intricacies of emptiness, and to acquire a buddha-body (*rūpakāya*) that conveys the Dharma to other beings. The diverse Mahayana doctrines, interspersed in different texts, are eventually systemized by the adepts of two major Mahayana schools: Madhyamaka and Yogācāra. Emulating the Prajñāpāramitā texts, Madhyamaka formulates its interpretation of karma and dependent origination in the context of emptiness. Ultimately, karma and dependent origination are inoperative because of being empty of ontological bases (*svabhāva*), but conventionally they do exist and function. Yogācāra accepts the notion of emptiness, and interprets it as an elimination of an erroneously asserted duality of perceiving subjects and perceived objects. Karma seeds sown by ignorance must be eliminated, and dependent origination, the hub of phenomenal existence, must be understood.

Causality in the Madhyamaka

Nāgārjuna is viewed as the founder of the Madhyamaka school. In his works he asserts that he is only reestablishing the Buddha's teaching on the Middle Way. In terms of causality, he examines the existing metaphysical theories of causality, and concludes that nothing can arise from itself, from another, from both, or from no cause. Essentially, he demonstrates that no sound metaphysical theory of causation can be formulated, because all such theories can be deconstructed. Thus he does not reject causation, but only its metaphysical interpretations. He affirms the principle of dependent origination, liberates it from the (Abhidharma) interpretations, and equates it with emptiness. In terms of the two truths, conventionally, the empirical reality as everyday experiences evolves within the nexus of dependent origination. Ultimately, all phenomena within the causal nexus are empty of inherent nature or existence (*svabhāva*). Nāgārjuna identifies dependent origination with emptiness: phenomena arise in dependence because they are empty, and they are empty because they are interdependent. Since there are no phenomena that are not dependently arisen, there are no phenomena that are not empty. Since everything is dependently arisen, the extreme of annihilation is avoided. Since everything is empty, the extreme of permanence is avoided. Thus the empirical world is simultaneously interdependent and empty: one reality having two aspects. Emptiness is the true nature of things: not

produced and not destroyed. Emptiness itself is also empty, and ultimately it is the appeasement of all verbal proliferations and the dualistic mind.

Nāgārjuna's Seminal Works on Causality

This subsection lists Nāgārjuna's works that encapsulate the notion of emptiness, and demonstrate its centrality for understanding and interpreting the nature and function of karma and dependent origination. [Nāgārjuna 1995](#) and [Nāgārjuna 2013](#) constitute the seminal or root text, which covers the entire spectrum of Buddhist teachings. Nāgārjuna claims doing no more than restating the Middle Way taught by the Buddha. [Nāgārjuna 2002](#) demonstrates the emptiness of dependent origination. [Nāgārjuna 1987](#) shows how *pratītyasamutpāda* is empty of ontologically existent entities.

Nāgārjuna. "Śūnyatāsaptati: The Seventy Kārikās on Voidness." Translated by Fernando Tola and Carmen Dragonetti. *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 15.1 (1987): 1–55.

The twelve factors of dependent origination are explained as being empty of real entities. All things are impermanent, but this does not presuppose any entities as being impermanent.

Nāgārjuna. *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*. In *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way: Nāgārjuna's Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*. Translated by Jay L. Garfield. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.

This translation is based on the Tibetan version, and is provided with commentary rooted in Tibetan sources.

Nāgārjuna. *Pratītyasamutpādahṛdayakārikā*. In *Causality and Emptiness: The Wisdom of Nāgārjuna*. Translated by Peter Della Santina, 58–64. Singapore: Buddhist Research Society, 2002.

This text declares dependent origination to be empty of inherent nature, and hence in reality there are no beings (*sattva*).

Nāgārjuna. *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*. In *Nāgārjuna's Middle Way: Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*. Translated by Mark Siderits and Shōryū Katsura. Boston: Wisdom, 2013.

Nāgārjuna is dated to the 2nd century. In this seminal treatise, Nāgārjuna formulates a new vision of the Buddha's teaching. The verses are translated from the Sanskrit, and the commentary is distilled from Indian commentaries. Chapter 1 examines the four alternative modes of causation, and the four conditions. Chapter 26 treats the character of dependent origination. Chapter 24.18 equates dependent origination with emptiness.

Commentaries and Studies on Nāgārjuna

This subsection includes the commentaries on Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* and related studies. [Saito 1984](#) and [Bhāvaviveka 1993](#) are important commentaries on Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, respectively composed in the 4th and the 6th centuries. [Candrakīrti 1959](#) and [Candrakīrti 1979](#) form the most important and comprehensive commentary on Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*. [Candrakīrti 1991](#) is a commentary on Nāgārjuna's *Yuktiśaṣṭikā*. [Lamotte 1976](#) surveys the concept of emptiness. [Ruegg 1981](#) offers a philosophical analysis of the principal Madhyamaka texts. [Sprung 1973](#) contains five papers on the two truths. [Westerhoff 2009](#) analyses Nāgārjuna's philosophy.

Bhāvaviveka. “Bhāvaviveka’s *Prajñāpradīpa*: A Translation of Chapter One: ‘Examination of Causal Conditions’ (*Pratyaya*).” Translated by William L. Ames. *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 21.3 (1993): 209–259.

Continued in *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 22.2 (1994): 93–135. Bhāvaviveka lived in the 6th century. His *Prajñāpradīpa* comments on Nāgārjuna’s *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*. Chapter 2 is also translated in the *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 23.3 (1995): 295–365. Several subsequent chapters are translated in the *Journal of Buddhist Literature* 1 (1999) and *Journal of Buddhist Literature* 2 (2000).

Candrakīrti. *Prasannapadā Madhyamakavṛtti*. In *Candrakīrti: Prasannapadā Madhyamakavṛtti*. Translated by Jacques May. Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1959.

May provides a French translation of twelve chapters of Candrakīrti’s commentary on Nāgārjuna’s *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*.

Candrakīrti. *Prasannapadā Madhyamakavṛtti*. In *Lucid Exposition of the Middle Way: The Essential Chapters from the Prasannapadā of Candrakīrti*. Translated by Mervyn Sprung. Boulder, CO: Prajñā, 1979.

Sprung provides an English translation of seventeen chapters of the *Prasannapadā*.

Candrakīrti. “*Yuktiṣaṣṭikāvṛtti*: ‘Commentaire a La Soixantaine Sur Le Raisonnement’ ou ‘du Vrai Enseignement de la Causalité’ par le Maître Indien Candrakīrti.” Translated by Cristina Anna Scherrer-Schaub. *Mélanges Chinois et Bouddhiques* 25 (1991).

Nāgārjuna’s *Yuktiṣaṣṭikā* interprets the *pratyayasamutpāda* as being free from the extremes of existence and nonexistence. Candrakīrti’s commentary demonstrates the incompatibility between permanent entities and dependent origination. English translation of *Yuktiṣaṣṭikā* in Christian Lindtner, *Master of Wisdom: Writings of the Buddhist Master Nāgārjuna* (Berkeley, CA: Dharma, 1986).

Lamotte, Étienne. “Les Dix-huit Vacuités.” In *La Traité de la Grande Vertu de Sagesse de Nāgārjuna: Mahāprajñāpāramitāsāstra*. Vol. 4. Translated by Étienne Lamotte, 1995–2151. Louvain, Belgium: Institut Orientaliste, 1976.

In the introduction to chapter 48, pages 1995–2042, Lamotte surveys the interpretation of emptiness in the canonical and other texts. The *Śāstra*’s exposition of the eighteen kinds of emptiness is given on pages 2033–2151.

Ruegg, David Seyfort. *The Literature of the Madhyamaka School of Philosophy in India. A History of Indian Literature* 7.1. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1981.

Ruegg covers the entire spectrum of the texts of the Indian Madhyamaka. It is largely a textual and philosophical analysis.

Saito, Akira. “A Study of the *Buddhapālita-Mūlamadhyamaka-vṛtti*.” PhD diss., Australian National University, 1984.

Buddhapālita is dated to the 5th century, and his work is a commentary on Nāgārjuna’s *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*. Saito translates the first sixteen chapters. For a study of this commentary, see William L. Ames, “Buddhapālita’s Exposition of the Madhyamaka,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 14 (1986): 313–48.

Sprung, Mervyn, ed. *The Problem of the Two Truths in Buddhism and Vedānta*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: D. Reidel, 1973.

Five papers deal with Buddhist interpretations of the two truths. They aim to establish the relationship between the two truths, and to determine whether they represent two levels of awareness or two realities.

Westerhoff, Jan. *Nāgārjuna’s Madhyamaka: A Philosophical Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Chapter 2 discusses the concept of inherent nature, and chapter 5 assesses the permutations of causality.

Causality in the Yogācāra

Some Yogācāra texts interpret the principle of dependent origination in modified Abhidharma terms. In the mature Yogācāra, causality is integrated into the theories of consciousness and the three natures. A subliminal consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*) underpins the experiences of samsaric existence. It serves as a repository of karmic seeds or potentialities deposited in it by the cognitive and conditioned complex of conscious experiences. When the appropriate causes and conditions occur, the seeds in the subliminal consciousness mature as experiences, producing the evolving consciousness and its objects. In terms of the three natures, they subsume all phenomena of existence. The constructed nature denotes the world of imagined objects as if existent apart from consciousness. The dependent nature encompasses all phenomena arising in dependence on causes and conditions: the subjective flow of karma-generated and karma-generative experiences. The perfected nature denotes the absence of the constructed nature in the dependent nature: suchness, or emptiness. The acquisition of liberation postulates the elimination of the duality of consciousness bifurcated into subject and object: the dependent and constructed natures. This is done through the correct understanding of the emptiness of the constructed nature, and of the conditioned arising of the dependent nature. Alternatively, it is the elimination of the constructed nature in the dependent nature, and the transmutation of the dependent nature into the perfected nature. Considered as truths, the perfected nature reflects the absolute truth. The interactive dependent and constructed natures reflect the conventional truth. The dependent nature is the phenomenal propensity of the perfected nature, and the constructed nature is mere imagination.

Selected Yogācāra Texts

This subsection includes a selection of works attributed to Maitreya-nātha, Asaṅga, and Vasubandhu, the champions of Yogācāra doctrines and practices. [Asaṅga 1971](#) and [Asaṅga 2001](#) represent unique specimens of Mahayana Abhidharma. [Asaṅga 1938](#) provides a comprehensive and systematic exposition of Yogācāra system. [Anacker 2005](#) translates seven important works of Vasubandhu. [Kochumuttom 1984](#) studies Vasubandhu's philosophy on the basis of four texts. [Lévi 1932](#) translates two seminal texts of Vasubandhu. [Maitreya-nātha 2012](#) provides a particular exposition of Yogācāra system. [Vasubandhu 1983](#) treats the Yogācāra theory of the three natures.

Anacker, Stefan. *Seven Works of Vasubandhu: The Buddhist Psychological Doctor*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2005.

Anacker sketches Vasubandhu's philosophy and translates seven of his works. The texts that are important for understanding the nature of causality are *Viṃśatikā*, *Triṃśikā*, *Mādhyāntavibhāga*, and *Trisvabhāvanirdeśa*.

Asaṅga. *Mahāyānasamgraha*. In *La Somme du Grand Véhicule d'Asaṅga: Mahāyānasamgraha*. 2 vols. Translated by Étienne Lamotte. Louvain-La-Neuve, Belgium: Université de Louvain, Institut Orientaliste, 1938.

Translated from the Tibetan. This text details Yogācāra philosophy and practice. The first two chapters encapsulate the Yogācāra exposition of causality. Translated from the Chinese in John P. Keenan, *The Summary of the Great Vehicle* (Berkeley, CA: Numata Center for Translation and Research, 1992).

Asaṅga. *Abhidharmasamuccaya*. In *Le Compendium de la Super-Doctrine (Philosophie): Abhidharmasamuccaya d'Asaṅga*. French translation by Walpola

Rahula. Publications de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient 78. Paris: Adrien Maisonneuve, 1971.

This compendium is a rare example of a Mahayana Abhidharma. The nature of karma is explained in the context of the second noble truth; pages 82–98. Dependent origination and the four conditions are explained in the section on the aspects of the aggregates; page 42–47.

Asaṅga. *Abhidharmasamuccaya: The Compendium of the Higher Teaching. Translated from the French by Sara Boin-Webb. Fremont, CA: Asian Humanities Press, 2001.*

Asaṅga explains the nature and working of karma in the context of the second noble truth. The origin of suffering consists of defilements and the actions dominated by defilements; pages 94–132. The nature of dependent origination is explained from ten perspectives; pages 55–59. After explaining the twelve links of dependent origination, Asaṅga ascertains the four conditions; pages 59–63.

Kochumuttom, Thomas A. *A Buddhist Doctrine of Experience: A New Translation and Interpretation of the Works of Vasubandhu the Yogācārin. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1982. Revised edition of 1984.*

Originally a PhD thesis submitted in 1978 at the University of Lancaster, United Kingdom. Essentially, this publication includes translations of four texts, along with their philosophical analysis and interpretation. The overall aim is to formulate a portrayal of the Yogācāra system. The translated texts include the first chapter of *Mādhyāntavibhāga*, *Trisvabhāvanirdeśa*, *Viṃśatikā*, and *Triṃśikā*.

Lévi, Sylvain. *Matériaux pour l'Étude du Système Vijñaptimātra. Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études 260. Paris: Librairie Ancienne Honoré Champion, 1932.*

French translation of Vasubandhu's *Twenty Verses* and *Thirty Verses*, and Sthiramati's commentary on the latter. The Sanskrit texts in Sylvain Lévi, *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi: Deux Traités de Vasubandhu: Viṃśatikā Accompagnée d'une Explication en Prose et Triṃśikā avec le Commentaire de Sthiramati* (Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études 245; Paris: Librairie Ancienne Honoré Champion, 1925).

Maitreyaṅgala. *Madhyāntavibhāga. In Maitreya's Distinguishing the Middle from the Extremes: A Study and Annotated Translation of the Madhyāntavibhāga, Along with Its Commentary, the Madhyāntavibhāga-bhāṣya. Translated by Mario D'Amato. New York: American Institute of Buddhist Studies, 2012.*

This seminal treatise propounds the nature of existence and the path of liberation. The first two chapters are central to Yogācāra interpretation of causality.

Vasubandhu. "The *Trisvabhāvakārikā* of Vasubandhu." Translated by Fernando Tola and Carmen Dragonetti. *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 11.3 (1983): 225–266.

This text focuses on the dependent arising of consciousness. Variant interpretations of *trisvabhāva* in Alan Sponberg, "The Trisvabhāva Doctrine in India and China: A Study of Three Exegetical Models," *Bukkyō Bunka Kenkyū-jo Kiyō* 21 (1982): 97–119.

Selected Studies on Yogācāra

This subsection includes a handful of studies on Yogācāra doctrines, including the interpretation of karma and dependent origination. [Chatterjee 1975](#) provides an overview of the main tenets of the Yogācāra system. [Gold 2014](#) depicts causality in Vasubandhu's philosophy. [Hsüan-tsang 1928–1929](#) details the Vijñaptimātratā system. [Lusthaus 2002](#) studies Yogācāra Buddhism. [Urban and Griffiths 1994](#)

analyzes selected Yogācāra terms. Waldron 2003 traces the formulation of *ālayavijñāna*.

Chatterjee, Ashok Kumar. *The Yogācāra Idealism*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1975.

This book, in eleven chapters, sketches the main doctrinal features of the Yogācāra system. Chatterjee's interpretation of Yogācāra theory of different types of consciousness, and of phenomena, provides a good intellectual background to Yogācāra exposition of karma and dependent origination.

Gold, Jonathan C. *Paving the Great Way: Vasubandhu's Unifying Buddhist Philosophy*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2014.

Gold demonstrates the conceptual continuity between Vasubandhu's Abhidharma and Yogācāra texts. Causality issues stand at the heart of this study.

Hsüan-tsang. *Ch'eng Wei -shih Lun*. In *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi: La Siddhi de Hiuan-tsang*. 2 vols. Translated by Louis de La Vallée Poussin. *Buddhica* 1 and 5. Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1928–1929.

This text, composed in the 7th century, ascertains several models of causation, including the four conditions, the seed theory, and dependent origination. English translation in Francis Cook, *Three Texts on Consciousness-Only* (Berkeley, CA: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 1999).

Lusthaus, Dan. *Buddhist Phenomenology: A Philosophical Investigation of Yogācāra Buddhism and the Ch'en Wei-shih lun*. London: Routledge-Curzon, 2002.

The major sections of this rich and diversified study cover Buddhism and phenomenology, models of Indian Buddhist thought, and karma and epistemology.

Urban, Hugh, and Paul Griffiths. "What Else Remains in Śūnyatā? An Investigation of Terms for Mental Imagery in the Madhyāntavibhagā-Corpus." *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 17.1 (1994): 1–25.

The authors study Yogācāra terms expressive of the nature of consciousness, such as *kalpana* and *abhūtaparikalpa*. The concept of *vijñaptimātratā* is studied in Bruce Cameron Hall, "The Meaning of Vijñapti in Vasubandhu's Concept of Mind," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 9.1 (1986): 7–23.

Waldron, William. *The Buddhist Unconscious: The Ālaya-vijñāna in the Context of Indian Buddhist Thought*. London: Routledge-Curzon, 2003.

Waldron studies the evolution and character of the concept of *ālayavijñāna*.

Karma in the Mahayana

The Mahayana schools affirm the Buddha's teaching on karma, but undermine its Abhidharma interpretations and formulate their own. Madhyamaka explains the nature of karma in the context of the two truths. From the perspective of the ultimate truth, all beings and their actions are empty of any ontological basis (*svabhāva*). Being empty, they are inoperative and lack inherent capacity to act. Due to such factors, Madhyamaka asserts that all phenomena are without origination and cessation. Since it is impossible to formulate a sound metaphysical interpretation of the agent and his actions, without postulating some kind of entity, and since any such interpretation would undermine the notion of emptiness, Madhyamaka postulates the nonexistence and inefficacy of the agent and actions. On the level of the conventional truth, Madhyamaka affirms the existence of the agent and actions. There are agents and their ethically qualified actions, and the conditional relations that moderate all existential experiences. In contrast to Madhyamaka's somewhat negative stance

Yogācāra formulates a positive exposition of karma. The notion of emptiness is accepted, but the consciousness is attributed an existential status, but not permanent. Karma as existential experiences is explained as being embedded in the activities of consciousness. All beings and their activities are in fact particular modifications of consciousness. The consciousness that undergoes modifications consists of three strata: (1) the subliminal consciousness that is the repository of the impregnations (*vāsanā*) of past existential experiences in the form of the seeds (*bīja*) of future experiences, (2) the subjective or tainted consciousness that is entangled in existential activities, and (3) the six kinds of consciousness that cognize objects. While the subliminal consciousness is latent, the subjective and cognitive strata of consciousness, being involved in manifest activities, are jointly called the active consciousness. The subliminal and active levels of consciousness interact and depend on each other. The active consciousness arises from the seeds stored in the latent consciousness. Then, in turn, it deposits its karmic impregnations in the subliminal consciousness. Another Yogācāra theory of karma is integrated into the Yogācāra theory of the three natures, briefly explained in the section on Causality in the Yogācāra. Bayer 2010 studies karma's exposition in *Abhidharmasamuccaya*. Dharmachakra Translation Committee 2006 translates *Madhyāntavibhāga* and two commentaries. Garfield 1995 translates Nāgārjuna's seminal work. Kragh 2006 studies Candrakīrti's treatment of karma. Lamotte 1935–1936 translates Vasubandhu's important work on karma. Lamotte 1974 and Lamotte 1976 study karmic permeations. Nagao 1991 discusses the doctrinal character of *Mādhyamika and Yogācāra*.

Bayer, Achim. *The Theory of Karma in the Abhidharmasamuccaya*. Tokyo: International Institute for Buddhist Studies, 2010.

This is a textual study of the section on karma in Asaṅga's work. Bayer offers editions of Chinese, Tibetan, and Sanskrit texts, a translation of the text and one of its commentaries, and a broad survey of issues relating to the text and its doctrinal configuration.

Dharmachakra Translation Committee. *Middle beyond Extremes: Maitreya's Madhyāntavibhāga with Commentaries by Khenpo Shenga and Ju Mipham*. Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion, 2006.

Madhyāntavibhāga is in five chapters. Chapter 1 expounds the nature of false ideation and emptiness. Chapter 2 deals with the categories of obstacles (*āvaraṇa*) that impede on the Bodhisattva's progress. Chapter 3 discusses the three natures and the truths of suffering and origination. Chapter 4 deals with the antidotes that eliminate defilements, and the last chapter treats the supreme vehicle.

Garfield, Jay L., trans. *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way: Nāgārjuna's Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.

Chapters 3 and 17, respectively, examine the agent and action, and actions and their fruits. Nāgārjuna refutes the inherent existence of the agent and action, but affirms their conventional interdependence and function. If there are no actions and no effects, then the practice of morality and the Buddhist path make no sense. Translated from the Tibetan and provided with a commentary rooted in Tibetan sources.

Kragh, Ulrich Timme. *Early Buddhist Theories of Action and Result: A Study of Karmaphalasambandha Candrakīrti's Prasannapadā, Verses 17.1–20*. Wiener Studien zur Tibetologie und Buddhismuskunde, Heft 64. Vienna: Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien, Universität Wien, 2006.

Kragh provides editions and translations of Sanskrit and Tibetan texts of chapter 17 of Candrakīrti's *Prasannapadā*, a commentary on Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamakārikā*. In addition he also provides an extensive commentary on a range of relevant issues. Essentially, Candrakīrti critiques two theories on karma and its fruit on the basis of Nāgārjuna's seminal text. Originally a PhD dissertation submitted at the University of Copenhagen in 2003.

Lamotte, Étienne. "Le Traité de l'Acte de Vasubandhu *Karmasiddhiprakaraṇa*." *Mélanges Chinois et Bouddhiques* 4 (1935–1936): 151–288.

Vasubandhu critically assesses a number of early Buddhist theories of karma, and then introduces the theory of seeds, and the concept of subliminal consciousness. Lamotte's introduction encapsulates different theories of karma, including those of the Vaibhāṣika, Sautrāntika, Yogācāra, and Mādhyamika schools. Translated from the French by Leo M. Pruden, *Karmasiddhi Prakaraṇa: The Treatise on Action by Vasubandhu* (Berkeley, CA: Asian Humanities Press, 1987).

Lamotte, Étienne. "Passions and Impregnations of the Passions in Buddhism." In *Buddhist Studies in Honour of I. B. Horner*. Edited by L. Cousins, A. Kunst, and K. R. Norman, 91–104. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: D. Reidel, 1974.

Lamotte discusses the distinction between the nature and function of the *kleśas* (defilements), and the character of the *vāsanās* (latent impregnations of defilements). While the śrāvakas gain the state of liberation through the elimination of the *kleśas* but retain their *vāsanās*, the buddhas eliminate both the *kleśas* and their *vāsanās*, and thus gain omniscience.

Lamotte, Étienne, trans. *Le Traité de la Grante Vertu de Sagesse: Mahāprajñāpāramitāsāstra de Nāgārjuna*. Vol. 4. Louvain, Belgium: Institut Orientaliste, 1976.

In chapter 52, pages 1755–1783, this treatise discusses the nature of the *vāsanās*, and explains their elimination in the context of the Bodhisattva's ten stages. It also demonstrates that the elimination of *vāsanās* is crucial for the attainment of omniscience. In a preliminary section, Lamotte provides an overview along with important references.

Nagao, Gadjin M. *Mādhyamika and Yogācāra: A Study of Mahāyāna Philosophies*. Edited and translated by Leslie S. Kawamura. New York: State University of New York Press, 1991.

This publication contains sixteen of Nagao's articles. Taken together they cover the crucial theoretical configurations of the Mādhyamika and Yogācāra schools: ontology, emptiness, three natures, and several other technical terms. Nagao also discusses the doctrinal relationship between these two schools, and postulates that while Mādhyamika philosophy represents one of the highest attainments of Buddhist thought, Yogācāra philosophy brings the Mādhyamika system to completion.

Academic Papers on Karma

Bronkhorst 2011 discusses the origin and nature of karma. Dhammajoti 2009 details the Sarvāstivāda interpretation of karma. Fujita 1982 studies the critique of heretical theories of karma. Keyes and Daniel 1983 contains ten papers on karma. McDermott 2003 studies karma in canonical and other sources. Ryose 1987 interprets the Sarvāstivāda theory of karma.

Bronkhorst, Johannes. *Karma: Dimensions of Asian Spirituality*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011.

Bronkhorst ascertains the origin and interpretation of karma in Indian traditions. In his previous book he discusses teleological explanations of karma: *Karma and Teleology: A problem and its Solutions in Indian Philosophy* (Tokyo: International Institute for Buddhist Studies, 2000).

Dhammajoti, Kuala Lumpur. “The Doctrine of Karma.” In *Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma*. Authored by Kuala Lumpur Dhammajoti, 369–431. Hong Kong: Centre of Buddhist Studies, University of Hong Kong, 2009.

Chapters 13 and 14 detail the Sarvāstivāda doctrine of karma.

Fujita, K. “The Doctrinal Characteristics of Karman in Early Buddhism.” In *Indological and Buddhist Studies: Volume in Honour of Prof. J. W. de Jong on His Sixtieth Birthday*. Edited by L. A. Hercus, F. B. J. Kuiper, T. Rajapatirana, E. R. Skrzypczak, 149–159. Canberra, Australia: Faculty of Asian Studies, Australian National University, 1982.

Fujita studies the Buddha’s constructive criticism of heretical theories of karma held in his lifetime.

Keyes, Charles F., and E. Valentine Daniel, eds. *Karma: An Anthropological Inquiry*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983.

Comprises ten papers dealing with karma in present-day Hindu and Buddhist traditions. Topics include karma and moral responsibility, destiny and responsibility, and merit transfer.

McDermott, James Paul. *Development in the Early Buddhist Concept of Kamma/Karma*. Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 2003.

McDermott studies karma in the Theravada Tipiṭaka, *Milindapañha*, and *Abhidharmakośa*. Originally a PhD thesis examined in 1971.

Ryose, Wataru. “A Study of the *Abhidharmahrdaya*: The Historical Development of the Concept of Karma in the Sarvāstivāda Thought.” PhD diss., University of Wisconsin–Madison, 1987.

Part 1 surveys the conceptual development of karma. Part 2 provides an annotated translation of two texts.

Academic Papers on *Pratītyasamutpāda*

Bucknell 1999 traces the formation of the *paṭiccasamuppāda* formula. La Vallée Poussin 1913 studies the nature of *pratītyasamutpāda*. Nakamura 1980 searches for the origin of *pratītyasamutpāda*. Payutto 1994 details the Theravada interpretation of dependent origination. Shulman 2008 proposes a corrected interpretation of dependent origination. Sopa 1986 studies the Indo-Tibetan interpretation of dependent origination. Wayman 1980 also studies the Indo-Tibetan interpretation but uses different sources. Garfield 1994 ascertains Nāgārjuna’s insights into causality. Kritzer 1999 studies causation in selected Yogācāra texts. Lai 1977 sketches the Buddhist perceptions of causality in China.

Bucknell, Roderick S. “Conditioned Arising Evolves: Variation and Change in Textual Accounts of the *Paṭicca-samuppāda* Doctrine.” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 22.2 (1999): 311–342.

Bucknell studies four versions of dependent origination, and attempts to establish the formative phases of the standard formula.

Garfield, Jay L. “Dependent Arising and the Emptiness of Emptiness: Why did Nāgārjuna Start with Causation?” *Philosophy East and West* 44.2 (1994): 219–250.

Garfield analyzes Nāgārjuna's treatment of the relationship between dependent origination and emptiness, and their status in the context of the two truths.

Kritzler, Robert. *Rebirth and Causation in the Yogācāra Abhidharma*. Wiener Studien zur Tibetologie und Buddhismuskunde 44. Vienna: Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien Universität Wien, 1999.

Kritzler studies rebirth and *pratītyasamutpāda* in selected Yogācāra texts, and in Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośa*.

Lai, Whalen. "Chinese Buddhist Causation Theories: An Analysis of the Sinitic Mahāyāna Understanding of *Pratītyasamutpāda*." *Philosophy East and West* 27.3 (July 1977): 241–264.

Lai discusses four causation theories that the Buddhist thinkers in China correlated in an ascending order: karma, store-consciousness, buddha-womb, universal principle.

La Vallée Poussin, Louis de. *Théorie des Douze Causes*. Gand, Belgium: Librairie Scientifique E. van Goethem, 1913.

This study still commands authority. It interprets the standard formula, and reproduces five texts.

Nakamura, Hajime. "The Theory of 'Dependent Origination' in its Incipient Stage." In *Buddhist Studies in Honor of Walpola Rahula*. Edited by Somaratana Balasooriya, Andre Bareau, Richard Gombrich, Siri Gunasingha, Udaya Mallawarachchi, Edmund Perry, 166–172. London: Gordon Frazer Gallery, 1980.

Nakamura analyses cryptic formulas that embody the notion of dependent origination.

Payutto, Prayudh. *Dependent Origination: The Buddhist Law of Conditionality*. Translated from the Thai by Bruce Evans. Bangkok: Buddhadhamma Foundation, 1994.

Chapter four deals with the Theravada interpretation of the standard formula, and chapter five with alternative interpretations.

Shulman, Eviatar. "Early Meanings of Dependent-Origination." *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 36.2 (2008): 297–317.

Shulman argues that initially the dependent origination was understood as applicable only to mental conditionality.

Sopa, Geshe Lhundub. "The Special Theory of *Pratītyasamutpāda*: The Cycle of Dependent Origination." *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 9.1 (1986): 105–119.

Sopa explains the standard formula on the basis of Indian and Tibetan sources. He studies the wheel of life in "The Tibetan Wheel of Life: Iconography and Doxography," in *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 7.1 (1984): 125–45.

Wayman, Alex. "Dependent Origination: The Indo-Tibetan Tradition." *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 7 (1980): 275–300.

Wayman interprets the standard formula as a fundamental doctrine, and as applicable to rebirths of living beings. See also his earlier study, "Buddhist Dependent Origination," *History of Religions* 10.3 (1971): 185–203.

Academic Papers on Selected Topics

The listed citations address specific topics that enrich the treatment of causality. Boucher 1991 studies the cultic function of dependent origination. Gómez 1975 discusses the free-will problem. Hayes 1993 sketches Dharmakīrti's defense of rebirth. Khantipālo 1970 portrays the wheel of life. Sayadaw 2004 treats the five

niyāmas. Streng 1975 ascertains the centrality of the mind in causality. Walters 1990 discusses the Buddha's bad karma. Watts 1982 elucidates the inner permutations of the dependent origination.

Boucher, Daniel. "The *Pratityasamupādagāthā* and its Role in the Medieval Cult of the Relics." *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 14.1 (1991): 1–27.

Boucher studies the cultic role and interpretation of the versified formula of dependent origination (*ye dharmā hetuprabhavā*. . .). This formula was placed inside images and stūpas in order to endow them with the Buddha's presence.

Gómez, Luis O. "Some Aspects of the Free-Will Question in the Nikāyas." *Philosophy East and West* 25.1 (1975): 81–90.

The author interprets the free-will question in the context of the Buddha's teaching on karma and dependent origination.

Hayes, Richard P. "Dharmakīrti on Punarbhava." In *Studies in Original Buddhism and Mahāyāna Buddhism*. Vol. 1. Edited by Egaku Maeda, 111–130. Kyōto: Nagata Bunshodo, 1993.

Dharmakīrti flourished in the 7th century. Hayes studies his defense of rebirth against the materialists who deny it. The focus is on the causal relationship between bodily and mental events, and on the question of whether death has a cause.

Khantipālo, Bhikkhu. *The Wheel of Birth and Death*. Kandy, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 1970.

The wheel of life (*bhavacakra*) is an iconographic depiction of the standard formula of dependent origination. Kantipālo studies its history, symbolism, and interpretation.

Meyers, Karin. "Freedom and Self-Control: Free Will in South Asian Buddhism." PhD diss. University of Chicago, 2010.

The thesis is based on two works of Vasubandhu and on the Theravada Abhidhamma. Meyers argues that Western notions of free will cannot be readily imposed on Buddhist theories of karma and soteriology. Her sources admit that persons have the ability to choose their actions, but they deny personal causation, and explain the control of actions by way of impersonal mental events that stem from actions.

Sayadaw, Ledi. "Niyāma-Dīpanī." Translated by C. A. F. Rhys Davids. In *The Manuals of Buddhism*. Edited by Mother Ayeyarwaddy, 177–248. Yangon, Myanmar: Mother Ayeyarwaddy, 2004.

The Pali commentaries formulate a list of five cosmic principles (*niyāma*) operative in the physical and mental realms: seasons, seed-germination, karma, mind, and nature. Sayadaw interprets their character in the context of dependent origination and other related teachings.

Streng, Frederick. "Reflections on the Attention Given to Mental Construction in the Indian Buddhist Analysis of Causality." *Philosophy East and West* 25.1 (1975): 71–80.

Streng demonstrates the centrality of consciousness in the Buddhist treatment of causality. To perceive causality, one must realize that all thought is participation in, and construction of, interrelated arising of phenomena.

Walters, Jonathan S. "The Buddha's Bad Karma: A Problem in the History of Theravāda Buddhism." *Numen* 37.1 (1990): 70–95.

Walters studies the tradition that speaks of twelve wicked actions committed by the Buddha in his previous existences. The Buddha suffered due to these actions, despite the fact that he was enlightened.

Watts, Jeffrey D. “Necessity and Sufficiency in the Buddha’s Causal Schema.” *Philosophy East and West* 32.4 (1982): 407–423.

Watts postulates that the relevant texts are ambiguous in their interpretations of the relations between the twelve factors of dependent origination. He analyzes the functions of the twelve factors, and ascertains their real relations.

Causality and Soteriology (*Mārga*)

The early Buddhist path essentially consists in eradication of defilements, and in understanding, through wisdom (*prajñā*), the nature of phenomena as they really are (*yathābhūta*). The wisdom that grasps the nature of karma and *pratītyasamutpāda* is equated with the attainment of enlightenment. Briefly, karma that leads to rebirths must be eliminated, and *pratītyasamutpāda* must be understood and appeased. Nirvana is the cessation of suffering: stoppage of causality, namely of existence. Mahayana sources postulate the realization of *apraṭiṣṭhita-nīrvāṇa* (interpreted as elimination of defilements, but not as abandonment of phenomenal existence), of buddha-nature (inherent in all beings), or of buddha-bodies (three aspects of buddhahood). In these cases the defiled form of existence is discarded, but existence as such is not rejected. Bodhi 1995 details transcendent dependent origination. Lamotte 1980 discusses the *pratītyasamutpāda* in the context of the Buddha’s enlightenment. Cox 1992 summarizes the Sarvāstivāda path. Candrakīrti 1989 details the Mādhyamika interpretation of the bodhisattva career. Griffiths and Hakamaya 1989 studies the fruition of the Yogācāra path. Hakamaya 1980 portrays the categories of Yogācāra purity. Grosnick 1981 evaluates the central concepts of the *tathāgatagarbha* theory. Takasaki 1966 contains an exposition of the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine.

Bodhi, Bhikkhu. *Transcendental Dependent Arising: A Translation and Exposition of the Upanisa Sutta*. Kandy, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 1995.

The *Upanisa Sutta* is included in the Saṃyutta Nikāya. The members of the transcendent origination start with faith and conclude with the knowledge of the destruction of the influxes.

Candrakīrti. *Madhyamakāvatāra*. In *The Emptiness of Emptiness: An Introduction to Early Indian Mādhyamika*. Translated by C. W. Huntington and Namgyal Wangchen. Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1989.

This is a philosophical treatise that explains the Mādhyamika tenets within the framework of the ten bodhisattva stages.

Cox, Collett. “Attainment through Abandonment: The Sarvāstivādin Path of Removing Defilements.” In *Paths to Liberation: The Mārga and its Transformations in Buddhist Thought*. Edited by Robert E. Buswell and Robert M. Gimello, 63–105. *Studies in East Asian Buddhism* 7. Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1992.

Cox details the Sarvāstivāda phases of the path. The full treatment of the Sarvāstivāda path is given in the *Abhidharmakośa*, chapter 6.

Griffiths, Paul, and Noriaki Hakamaya, trans. *The Realm of Awakening: A Translation and Study of the Tenth Chapter of Asanga’s Mahāyānasamgrāha*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.

This chapter provides the Yogācāra exposition of the three Buddha-bodies: absolute, celestial, and manifested bodies.

Grosnick, William. “Nonorigination and *Nirvāṇa* in the Early *Tathāgatarbha* Literature.” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 4.2 (1981): 33–43.

Grosnick studies the notions of buddhahood and nirvana, and their correlation. He also discusses the concepts of cessation and non-origination.

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Lamotte postulates that the Buddha formulated the *pratītyasamutpāda* doctrine in his previous existences, and that his experience under the bodhi tree was the acme of his progress toward enlightenment.

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Takasaki provides an annotated translation of the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, and a philosophical study of the *tathāgatarbha* theory.