THE SVĀTANTRIKA-PRĀSAṄGIKA DISTINCTION

Studies in Indian and Tibetan Buddhism

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What Difference Does a Difference Make?

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2. Was Candrakīrti a Prāsaṅgika?

C. W. HUNTINGTON, JR.

Madhyamaka—understood as a philosophical system or "school" *(darśana)* founded by Nāgārjuna—is the central preoccupation of virtually all doxographic literature written in Tibet.[1] Tibetan authors were passionately interested in defining the fundamental tenets of this school and establishing, within it, dependable and true subdivisions of doctrine.[2] Whether or not the *grub mtha'* literature may be studied as an accurate portrayal of Indian Buddhism is a matter of one's perspective. David Seyfort Ruegg refers to Tibetan scholars as "Indologists avant la lettre,"[3] while Katsumi Mimaki walks a more circumspect line in pointing out that *grub mtha'* is itself not Indian, since it was written by Tibetans, but neither is it wholly Tibetan, because they are Indian schools that are described.[4] The distinction may be moot, but two relevant facts are not: first, a sizeable majority of the terminology used to classify subschools of Indian Madhyamaka is now recognized to have been an invention of the Tibetans;[5] and second, many of the terms coined by Tibetan writers are routinely adopted—via Sanskrit forms not attested in any classical source— by modern scholars involved in the historical analysis of Indian Buddhist texts. This practice is so common that most contemporary Buddhologists not only use these unattested Sanskrit forms routinely, but many scholars in the field would probably not immediately recognize the actual Tibetan terms without mentally "translating" them into Sanskrit. The two words that serve as the focus for this volume—Prāsaṅgika and Svātantrika—are no doubt the most widespread examples of such neologisms, and they have exerted a profound and subtle influence on our understanding of early Indian Madhyamaka.[6]

It is likely to remain a matter of conjecture as to who first used the original Tibetan terms. What is certain, however, is that the philosophical justification for the distinction embodied in this vocabulary finds its locus

classicus in the first chapter of Candrakīrti's *Prasannapadā* (PPMV).[7] It was there that Candrakīrti criticized Bhāvaviveka's use of a form of "autonomous reasoning" *(svatantraprayoga, rang rgyud kyi sbyor ba)* in defense of what was later taken by Tibetan authors to be the philosophical view *(lta ba)* of the Madhyamaka.

In the present paper, I intend to take a close look at several of those passages from the PPMV that seemed most relevant to Tibetan doxographers in general, and to Tsong kha pa in particular, and to reexamine, from a critical, historical point of view, Candrakīrti's own words. In the end, I shall claim that a close reading of the original Sanskrit of his work, understood in its proper historical context (that is, in terms of what came before, and not after it was composed), strongly suggests that Candrakīrti would have had very specific and trenchant objections to his being referred to as a "Prāsaṅgika-Mādhyamika."

We will probably never know who coined the enormously influential terms *Rang rgyud pa* (*Svātantrika) and *Thal 'gyur ba* (*Prāsaṅgika). They do not figure among the vocabulary used during the early dissemination of Buddhism in Tibet, but it seems likely that it was the translator Pa tshab nyi ma grags (1055–1145?) who began to use them in conjunction with his study of Candrakīrti.[8] An earlier concern with "pragmatic" versus logical argumentation was preserved in these new terms, which apparently were then applied to the same two groups of Indian authors.[9] The shift in terminology was no doubt seen as a refinement based on further study of Candrakīrti.[10] There is certainly no question about the fact that it was due to the force of Candrakīrti's writing that Tibetan scholars felt compelled to revise the old classifications. Moreover, although to a certain extent scholarly opinion varied on the meaning and implications of Candrakīrti's work, the Tibetans were virtually unanimous in judging his texts to be the pinnacle of Madhyamaka thought. Where Candrakīrti was perceived to disagree with another commentator—either explicitly or implicitly—his word was invariably taken as the final authority. This was especially significant in the context of his criticism of Bhāvaviveka, for it was there, in the first chapter of the PPMV, that he drove home the central features of his interpretation of Nāgārjuna that figured so prominently in later Tibetan doxographical literature. The distinction between Bhāvaviveka and Candrakīrti—that is, the twofold division of Indian Madhyamaka into *Rang rgyud pa* and *Thal 'gyur ba*—became, in a very real sense, the linchpin around which the Tibetan doxographical tradition revolved.

In this literature, schools and subschools are defined on the basis of the

tenets they hold. According to a prominent eighteenth-century dGe lugs pa doxographic manual, these tenets are to be regarded as "established conclusions" that one "will not pass beyond."[11] The minimum requirement for membership in a school or subschool is that an author must actively promote his own views, both defending those views against the views of his opponents and seeking to establish them on their own merits. The most obvious significance of the names *Rang rgyud pa* and *Thal 'gyur ba*—and the one most relevant to the present discussion—has to do specifically with the method by which a Mādhyamika philosopher accomplishes this purpose. In its most fundamental (etymological) sense, the difference between the two schools is said to rest on their distinctive rhetorical styles, and on the philosophical implications of this rhetoric. Bhāvaviveka insists on the necessity for a formal autonomous argument through which the Mādhyamika's tenet or thesis is established as an independently valid conclusion. Bhāvaviveka further insists that the argument through which the Mādhyamika's thesis is established must be explicitly stated to his opponent. Candrakīrti, on the other hand, rejects Bhāvaviveka's use of inferential reasoning. For the most part he favors a type of reductio ad absurdum where one's thesis is not developed through the use of independently valid arguments, but rather by using the opponent's own words against him. When the untenable consequences *(prasaṅga)* in his assertions are drawn out, the opponent is left "logically speechless," and for Candrakīrti—within the doxographic context—this very inability to respond is taken as sufficient evidence that the Mādhyamika's thesis has been established.

In turning toward an historically grounded understanding of Candrakīrti, and away from the scholastic view of Indian Buddhism presented by Tibetan doxographers, the first thing we want to notice is that, strictly speaking, *grub mtha'* texts contain no account of "early Indian Madhyamaka." Louis Dumont has defined history as "un ensemble de changements significatifs, un developpement,"[12] but here we find authors whose work defines a span of half a millennium or more of spirited philosophical activity placed side by side under the same rubric, as if nothing of real significance had occurred during the intervening years.[13] What is important about these authors, from the Tibetan perspective, is that they can be interpreted as saying essentially ("in essence") the same thing. And although Candrakīrti is fiercely critical of Bhāvaviveka, even this potentially fractious difference is resolved by assigning both of them to the same overarching school. Tibetan doxographers (like their Indian predecessors) were interested in what Mimaki calls "a synthetic understanding" of doctrinal positions,[14] and

what we find in their scholastic manuals is the description of two sub-schools, each defined first of all by the assertion of its own tenets and second by its acceptance of a common nucleus of tenets that characterizes the all-encompassing school. The pieces (schools, subschools, and tenets) all fit neatly together in a single, seamless picture called "Madhyamaka"—an aerial photograph taken from the high Himalayas, untouched by the disruptive influence of time.[15]

We have seen that a tenet *(siddhānta, grub mtha')* is literally an "established conclusion," a hypothesis marking some point "that one will not pass beyond." Tenets are not fluid lines of thought that change and develop, nor are they merely a style of conversation, like Socratic dialogue. They are, in effect, timeless atomic units of meaning ("resolved, established, fixed"), and the schools that take shape around them stand outside of history in a timeless realm created by the doxographers' imagination and presented as explanation or exegesis. In *grub mtha'* taxonomic schemes these schools and their tenets are set into a hierarchy that presumes "a certain uniformity to the [Indian] textual tradition,"[16] itself reflecting the uniformity of truth and reality in which the exegetical project as a whole is anchored. Clearly this does not mean that Tibetans always agreed among themselves on how best to analyze and interpret Indian texts, only that the presuppositions embodied in their method of analysis (what Gadamer calls "the interest bound together with knowledge")[17] preclude recognition of any authentic change over time, and so of anything that could meaningfully be referred to as an early period in the development of Indian commentaries. By "early period" I mean a period of time defined by historically unique ideas or methods, a period significantly distinct—that is, cut off or hidden—from subsequent exegesis. From the perspective of Tibetan *grub mtha'* the Indian tradition may incorporate any number of competing interpretations, each one more or less distant from "the correct view of emptiness;"[18] what it may not contain is an early period separated from later exegesis by an unbridgeable intellectual or methodological rupture in which something significant was left behind, lost, or forgotten.

In direct contrast to the concerns of orthodox scholasticism, critical historiography is founded on the presupposition that history is irredeemably shaped by inconsistency, imperfection, change, and loss. Historians strive to uncover and display the very deeds and events that are most problematic for the writing of orthodox exegets. In discussing how traditional scholars dealt with inconsistencies in the Gospels, Elaine Pagels comments, "Jewish teachers in antiquity, like many Christians after them, turned to theological

ingenuity rather than historical or literary analysis to account for contra-
dictions in the texts."[19] Johannes Bronkhorst cites this comment and adds,
"This directs our attention to an important feature of religious traditions:
they may preserve inconsistencies, but are at the same time likely to explain
them away."[20] For Darwin "the primary proofs of evolution are the oddi-
ties and imperfections that must record pathways of historical descent,"[21]
and this is precisely the sort of thing Lambert Schmithausen has in mind
when he insists that for the historian "instances of incoherence must be
taken seriously and explained."[22] Inconsistency and imperfection are marks
of the individual acting in history, and for the historian of ideas the primary
act is the act of writing. Schmithausen acknowledges this in his own method-
ological manifesto: "I presuppose that the texts I make use of are to be
taken seriously, in the sense that one has to accept that they mean what they
say, and that what they mean is reasonable within its own terms."[23]

In working to develop a critical intellectual history of early Indian
Mahāyāna, then, the focus of our attention must shift from "tenets" and
"schools"—the fundamental categories of Tibetan scholastic doxography—
to individual authors and their own original words. To accomplish such a
shift in attention is unquestionably much more difficult than it may seem at
first glance, for the stability and eloquence of the later tradition's view of
itself is mesmerizing. And yet, the world revealed through the lens of critical
historiography is far removed from the "carefully contrived ideal paradigm"[24]
presented by orthodox Tibetan scholars. No doubt something is sacrificed in
turning away from this timeless image, but the effort to recognize and map
isolated periods in the development of Indian Buddhist thought can only
proceed through "the very complex task of textual analysis."[25]

Given Nāgārjuna's severely skeptical attitude toward anything that might
have been taken as a metaphysical ground for the Buddhist doctrine of his
time, it seems reasonable to assume that his writing would not have found
an immediate and secure place in any orthodox tradition. Furthermore,
although the scriptures on which his ideas were based had probably attained
quasi-canonical status by the first or second century C.E., it is likely that they
would not have been accepted as the authentic Word of the Buddha by
the community at large. In fact many of the most important Prajñāpāramitā
texts were being actively composed during this period. It was a time of
immense turmoil and change within the Indian Buddhist world. Discussion
of the bodhisattva, the supremacy of the Buddha and his supranormal per-
ception, the welfare of all beings, and of course, the "perfection of wisdom"
had set in motion a groundswell of new ideas that was sweeping away the

ancient and hard-won sense of a uniform Buddhist tradition fostered in the canon. All the evidence currently available suggests that the Buddhist intelligentsia were divided among themselves not simply on minor points of interpretation, but on fundamental issues of religious practice and philosophical orientation. Several centuries were required before the revolutionary changes underway would be assimilated, categorized, and comfortably assigned their respective niches in an all-embracing Mahāyāna orthodoxy.

It is historically significant that we find no reference to a philosophy called "Madhyamaka" either in the writings of Nāgārjuna or in those of his immediate disciple, Āryadeva.[26] But there is more, for if we take them at their word (take what they say "seriously," as Schmithausen has it), then there is every indication that these authors were philosophically and religiously indisposed to the promulgation of any "established conclusion beyond which one will not pass"—not to mention the founding of an orthodox school of systematic, speculative thought built around the defense of such tenets. In his *Yuktiṣaṣṭikā,* Nāgārjuna wrote,

> It is strange indeed that exponents of universal impermanence, those who follow the Buddha's path, should so desperately cling to things by quarreling.

> When, on close inspection, neither "this" nor "that" can be found, what wise man will argue for the truth of either?[27]

These are not the words of a system builder, piling up tenets like bricks. Nor are these:

> Convinced that impermanent things are like the moon's reflection in water, neither true nor false, one is not carried away by philosophical views.[28]

Almost fifteen centuries later the Tibetan doxographer dKon mchog 'jigs med dbang po will tell us that the "insider" (i.e., the orthodox Buddhist) is distinguished from other philosophers or religious practitioners not because he sees clearly the pointlessness of all such disputation, but precisely because he espouses a particular set of tenets.[29] And yet, for Nāgārjuna himself,

> Great men have no position and therefore no quarrel; for those who have no position, where is the opposing position?

> In taking any stand whatsoever one is seized by the writhing snakes
> of emotional attachment. They alone are free, whose mind has no
> place to stand.[30]

And finally, a well-known verse from the *Vigrahavyāvartanī* (VV):

> If I had any thesis *(pratijñā, dam bca'),* then I would have some
> fault. Because I have no thesis I am entirely faultless.[31]

The list could be extended indefinitely by culling passages from Nāgār-
juna's other compositions, but the verses cited above are sufficient insofar
as they contain instances of three key terms that express, very explicitly,
what is to be shunned by the wise man. The last verse is particularly rele-
vant, and deserves close attention. The Tibetan word for "thesis" *(dam bca')*
is a noun corresponding to the past passive participle *dam bcas pa* (literally,
"bound" or "fixed," from the root *'cha' ba*). *Dam bcas pa* is used as an adjec-
tive in a key passage from the *Grub pa'i mtha'i rnam par bzhag pa rin po
che'i phreng ba,* where a tenet is defined as a "fixed meaning" *(dam bcas pa'i
don).* In that text the Buddhist is described as a proponent of specific tenets,
that is (to be etymologically precise), the Buddhist is said to hold and
defend "a meaning derived from scripture and reason that has been
resolved, established, and fixed in the manner of a thesis." But to go about
one's philosophical business in this way is exactly the "fault" that Nāgārjuna
strives to avoid—or so it would seem on the basis of his own words.

The three centuries following Nāgārjuna saw the production of a num-
ber of commentaries on his major treatise, the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*
(MMK). Unfortunately many of these are presently unavailable. Accounts
of the content of these lost treatises, combined with the study of other texts
that have survived, paint a heterogeneous picture in which no consensus
was reached on the interpretation of his thought. As Ruegg explains, "The
existence of such commentaries by leading authorities of the Vijñānavāda
clearly indicates that Nāgārjuna's work was not considered to be the exclu-
sive property of the Mādhyamikas in the narrow sense of a particular school,
and that it was regarded as fundamental by Mahāyānist thinkers of more
than one tendency."[32] In fact, once we free ourselves from the uncritical
habit of reading Indian sources through scholastic categories provided by
later doxographers it becomes immediately evident that there were no
Mahāyāna schools during this early period, only "Mahāyān-ist thinkers"
who represented various "tendencies." From roughly the second through

the fifth centuries there was obviously a tremendous interest in Nāgārjuna's work, but it is equally obvious that his ideas had not yet been clearly distinguished from those of Asaṅga and Sthiramati,[33] much less codified into an individual school with its own uniquely authoritative tenets. At this stage in the intellectual history of Indian Buddhism Nāgārjuna had not yet been conscripted to serve the interests of any particular philosophical thesis or view. A good deal of historical and philological research remains to be done before the significance of this observation will take hold.

In tracing the historical origins of the idea of a "school of Madhyamaka," one particular author commands our immediate attention: while framing his own critical reading of Buddhapālita's *Mūlamadhyamakavṛtti,* Bhāvaviveka simultaneously developed a comprehensive interpretation of Nāgārjuna's thought that marked a profound and irreversible exegetical turn, for from that time on the MMK was safely incorporated into the mainstream Indian Buddhist tradition, where it could only be understood as the presentation of a fixed thesis or system of tenets, that is, the authoritative view of an orthodox philosophical school.

So far as we know at present Bhāvaviveka is responsible for first appropriating the word *madhyamaka* as the name of a philosophical system or school that advocated specific tenets. Shotaru Iida suggests that the Madhyamaka did not become a "full-fledged school of thought" until Bhāvaviveka wrote his *Madhyamakahṛdayakārikā* (MHK) in which he formulated his "basic position" and defended it against other Buddhist and non-Buddhist schools.[34] However, if we accept the definition of a school provided in Tibetan doxographies, then it would not be going too far to say that Bhāvaviveka invented both the name and the school in a single stroke, for he not only lifted the term *madhyamaka* from the title of Nāgārjuna's primary work, but he seems also to have been the first of Nāgārjuna's commentators explicitly to associate this term with the formulation of a specific philosophical thesis *(pratijñā/dam bca')* or position *(pakṣa/phyogs).*[35] This required the working out of a complicated system of formal inferential reasoning that had not played a part in Nāgārjuna's own treatises, where, as we have seen, the assertion of any thesis, position, or view was self-consciously eschewed. In accomplishing this task there is no doubt that Bhāvaviveka sought to align his interpretation of Nāgārjuna ideologically and methodologically with his own elder contemporary, the logician and epistemologist Dignāga (ca. 480–540). Dignāga represented a powerful current of thought that was ascendant among Indian intellectuals during the first centuries of the common era. He had already abbreviated the five-stage inference of the *Nyāyasūtra* as part of an overall

effort to incorporate the use of autonomous reasoning into Buddhism, and Bhāvaviveka simply adopted this logical form to his own ends.[36]

Bhāvaviveka's relationship with the Tibetan definition of a school as a collection of "tenets" is not merely formal or coincidental, however. He is the acknowledged progenitor of the entire genre of doxographical literature in India and Tibet, although in this project as well he was following the lead provided by Dignāga's *Pramāṇasamuccaya.*[37] Both authors were almost certainly influenced by Bhartṛhari, whose *Vākyapadīya* is clearly a *saṃgraha,* or collection of views or philosophies (*darśana*s).[38] Having forged the conceptual tools necessary to shape the intellectual tendencies of Mahāyānist thinkers into "tenets," in his extensive scholastic treatises Bhāvaviveka then set about organizing these tenets into schools and placing the schools themselves into an overarching taxonomic scheme that incorporated the ancient Buddhist principle of hierarchical truth values embedded in one all-encompassing Truth.[39] He needed to find a thesis and a position in Nāgārjuna's work because these are the terms in which a tenet is defined; without a thesis there would be no tenet, and without any tenet there would be no school of Madhyamaka and therefore no place for Nāgārjuna in the Buddhist tradition. Given the intellectual context in which he was writing, he was very likely also inspired by Bhartṛhari in his appropriation of the word *darśana* as the generic term for a "way of seeing" and so, by extension, a particular fixed philosophical system or school.[40] In all of this Bhāvaviveka was evidently laboring on behalf of conservative elements in the community to organize, harmonize, synthesize, and domesticate the welter of ideas that were circulating freely about in the Buddhist world of his day. His success in this respect was astounding, but it was achieved at a cost, and so far as we know only one individual seems to have had any idea just how steep the price may have been.[41]

Candrakīrti lived almost a century after Bhāvaviveka, but the intervening years were decisive. By the first half of the seventh century Nāgārjuna's potentially dangerous proclamations had been almost completely domesticated by Buddhist exegetes and any real threat to orthodoxy was largely a thing of the past. Despite severe criticisms of his predecessor's "addiction to logic" *(prīyānumānatā)*[42] Candrakīrti's ideas nevertheless took shape in an intellectual environment structured around an uncritical acceptance of the ahistorical, scholastic view of tradition presented in Bhāvaviveka's writing. He took for granted Bhāvaviveka's use of the word *madhyamaka,* which he further associated with a particular philosophical system or school called *śūnyatādarśana* or *madhyamakadarśana.*[43]

Nāgārjuna had referred in his writing to *sūnyavāda*,[44] but never to *śūnyadarśana*. The words *vāda* and *darśana* seem to have been used inter-changeably by Bhāvaviveka,[45] but there are sound historical arguments against Ruegg's recommendation that they be treated as synonyms for the purpose of interpreting Nāgārjuna's own writing. First of all, according to Halbfass *darśana* is not a part of the vocabulary of ancient Indian sūtras and their commentaries, including those of Nāgārjuna.[46] Bhartṛhari himself did not use the word in any strict doxographic sense; rather, "his work shows us this doxographic usage *in statu nascendi* and in preliminary stages of development."[47] *Vāda* (from the root *vad,* to speak) means simply "speech," "discourse," or "discussion," and in the centuries preceding Bhartṛhari the term had "obviously no specific reference to the method or subject-matter of philosophy."[48] There is every indication that for Nāgārjuna a *śūnya-tāvādin* was merely "a person who talks about emptiness." Whether he intended the word to be understood in any more technically binding sense is especially doubtful given his persistent warnings about identifying one-self with any particular philosophical stance. The word *darśana* would have been especially suspect to him in this respect because of its close etymo-logical association with another Sanskrit word, *dṛṣṭi*.[49]

In the excerpts from Nāgārjuna's writing cited above, the wise man, con-vinced that things are impermanent and so neither true nor false, "is not carried away by a *dṛṣṭi*." Even more than the other two terms with which it is aligned, *dṛṣṭi* functions throughout the corpus of Nāgārjuna's work as the paradigmatic emblem of what is to be avoided.[50] Moreover, all of his Indian commentators down through the centuries were careful to follow the Master's lead in this respect. Candrakīrti himself was adamant about the dangers of holding any *dṛṣṭi,* but this did not stop him from using the word *madhyamaka* as the formal name of a *darśana*.[51] In his time it had become commonplace to speak in terms of philosophical schools or systems (*darśana*s), and it was equally commonplace to understand Nāgārjuna's thought as defining one such system—albeit the "highest"—among others. All of this was Candrakīrti's unacknowledged inheritance from Bhartṛhari, Dignāga, and Bhāvaviveka; but it came with invisible strings attached, for every diatribe he penned against their addiction to logic and their reifica-tion of Nāgārjuna's thought was vitiated by metaphysical presuppositions about truth and reality epitomized in his own use of the word *darśana*. Candrakīrti sits uncomfortably on the cusp between two worlds: behind him lie some five centuries of enormous creativity, the intellectual fruits of a loosely structured community of strikingly original "Mahāyānist

thinkers"; ahead of him the orthodox tradition stretches away into a future
when Tibetan scholars translating his own writing would not consistently
distinguish between the two words *dṛṣṭi* and *darśana.*[52] For the modern his-
torian of ideas his work is a bridge thrown up between these two worlds
and, not surprisingly, a minefield of irony and contradiction.

According to Candrakīrti, Nāgārjuna's analysis *(vicāra)* is not conducted
"out of fondness for debate"[53]—that is, out of any desire to assert and
defend one's own thesis against that of an opponent. Rather it is intended
solely as a means to liberation from the compulsion to grasp at one view
while pushing away another:

> Attachment to one's own philosophical view and aversion to the
> view of another is itself evidence of reified thinking. When one sets
> aside attachment and aversion and analyzes [all views], he will
> quickly find liberation.[54]

In Candrakīrti's writing the Middle Path emerges as an attitude of non-
clinging based on the understanding that there is nothing (no form of onto-
logical reality or epistemological truth) that should be held onto and
defended, either conventionally speaking or in any deeper (ultimate) sense.
"Truth" and "reality" are seen as equally indeterminate at both levels, and
the search for any kind of absolute certainty *(niścaya)*[55]—logical or other-
wise—is soteriologically misguided, as it only perpetuates the root problems
of attachment and aversion. This is evident in the following passage from
the PPMV, part of an imaginary conversation with a Buddhist philosopher
who, given the context, is almost certainly intended to represent the posi-
tion of Bhāvaviveka. Candrakīrti speaks first:

> If we allowed for any real certainty *(niścaya)* whatsoever then either
> it would have to arise from some valid means of knowledge or else
> it would not. But we do not allow for any certainty. How is that?
> There could be certainty if there were some possibility of uncertainty
> as its opposite. When we do not allow for any real uncertainty, how-
> ever, then, in the absence of its opposite, how could there be cer-
> tainty? [Discussion of certainty] without reference to its partner
> would be like [arguing whether] a donkey's horn is long or short.
> Moreover, when we do not allow for any certainty then why would
> we imagine some valid means of knowledge? What would it serve
> to establish? How many such valid means of knowledge would there

be? What would be their characteristics, their objects? Would they arise out of themselves, out of another, or from both? Or perhaps from no cause at all? None of this is of the slightest concern to us.

[Bhāvaviveka] If you allow for no certainty whatsoever, then why does your statement about things not arising from self, etc., appear to be certain?

[Candrakīrti] This statement is certain for worldly people who interpret it in terms of arguments familiar to them. It is not certain for those with deep insight (*ārya*s).

[Bhāvaviveka] Do those with deep insight really have no conclusive argument (*upapatti:* proof, demonstrated conclusion)?

[Candrakīrti] Who can say whether they do or they don't? For those with deep insight the truth of the highest meaning is a state of silence. This being so, how is there any possibility of discursive thinking out of which we might find either a conclusive argument or no real argument at all?[56]

According to Candrakīrti, it is absolutely essential that this compulsive desire, or need, for certainty—and its contrary, the fear of uncertainty—be seen for what they are, insurmountable obstacles to any real appreciation of Nāgārjuna's philosophy, for they only serve to reinforce the tendency to crave and cling:

In asserting a conclusion one expresses the desire to establish in others the same certainty *(niścaya)* that he himself possesses. [To fulfill this desire] one must convince someone else through that very argument by which his own conclusion was reached. The operating principle is, in this sort of activity, that in order to assert any conclusion one must compel the other person to accept the argument accepted by oneself. This is not so [for a Mādhyamika]. When he addresses someone else there is no possibility of resorting to any reason or example [of his own], so the inference by which his conclusion is reached necessarily corresponds to a thesis [held only by his opponent]. He therefore [provisionally] accepts a position that is unproven and is to that extent in contradiction even with himself

(svātmānam evāyaṃ kevalaṃ visaṃvādayan); under the circumstances he is surely incapable of establishing any certainty in someone else. Is there, however, any clearer problem than the incapacity to prove the conclusion asserted on one's own behalf? What purpose is served by producing a counter inference [of our own]?[57]

Not only would a counter inference serve no purpose, it would expose the Mādhyamika to the very difficulties he seeks to uncover in his analysis of other people's views, positions, or theses:

> Others may be confounded by the unfavorable consequences [of their own arguments], but not us. We have no thesis of our own, and so it is impossible for us to fall into contradiction with any tenet (*siddhānta:* "established conclusion").[58]

Any thesis can be shown to rest on irresolvable internal contradictions, and when that thesis underlies a tenet that itself forms the cornerstone of one's philosophical system, then those internal contradictions fatally compromise the integrity of the project as a whole. Therefore, the Mādhyamika confines himself to a critique that depends on no thesis or tenet that might itself be subject to further critique. But if this is true, then it is essential to note that the words of a "Mādhyamika" must themselves lack the defining characteristic of any philosophical school or system of thought *(darśana),* an "unfavorable consequence" that lands Candrakīrti—and the entire doxographical tradition that endorses his writing as the most authoritative expression of Madhyamaka thought—in just the sort of predicament he was determined to avoid in the first place by not holding a thesis.

Either Nāgārjuna founded a school, or he did not. Candrakīrti clearly wants it both ways: he wants the Madhyamaka to be a school without tenets. Of course—as Bhāvaviveka well knew—this is impossible, and so we find Candrakīrti periodically attempting to slip a tenet in through the back door by treating Nāgārjuna's lack of thesis as if it were a formula or an abstract philosophical principle instead of an entirely pragmatic, ad hoc procedure. As if, to put it another way, Nāgārjuna's writing was rooted in the methodical application of fixed rules or the conviction that one is in the presence of "established conclusions," rather than in a particularly acute sensibility for the nuances of human emotion and thought—a difference that is analogous in significant respects to the difference between a logical proof and a poem, painting, or literary work.[59]

And yet in fairness to Candrakīrti one must acknowledge that the tension is unavoidable. We can feel it throughout the MMK. There can be no question that Nāgārjuna saw himself as carrying on the work of the Buddha, and to this extent he was confronted with a similar problem—both Nāgārjuna and Candrakīrti belonged to a tradition that could perpetuate itself only through a strategy that simultaneously undermined its own claim to convey some form of absolute (logical or otherwise ahistorical) truth. Nāgārjuna, however, was in one important sense a revolutionary. He embraced this disturbing irony and placed it at the center of his work, and in doing so he self-consciously placed himself at the beginning of tradition—or completely outside of it—for in a very real sense he was not "explaining" or "interpreting" the Buddha's words, but rather, doing with language what the Buddha had done. Unlike Candrakīrti his Buddhism is not self-consciously framed as exegesis or commentary. Certainly both of them are walking a rhetorical tightrope, weaving and bobbing high above the audience of readers on a precarious string of words. The difference is that for Nāgārjuna the whole project has the appearance of a virtuoso at work. He seems to delight in the danger, never committing himself to any particular conceptual formulation, always regaining his balance at the last moment with an unanticipated turn of phrase. As Robinson puts it in commenting on the MMK: "Its elements are few and its operations are simple, though performed at lightening speed and with great dexterity."[60] In contrast, reading Candrakīrti one cannot avoid the impression that he is secretly afraid of falling. One senses in his work the apprentice's characteristic lack of confidence. What is a source of inspiration and delight in Nāgārjuna continually threatens to become, for Candrakīrti, a matter of teeth-clenching principle, as if he were constantly fighting the urge to crouch down and grab the rope. In his writing the ironic tension is occasionally a palpable distraction. At times we can not help feeling that, despite the exaggerated tone of polemical confidence, behind it all Candrakīrti is haunted by the fear that far below there really is a cold, hard ground—the thesis, tenet, or "view," something to be proved, something that must be there, just out of sight, along with its ontological referent, the reality expressed by the word.

Nevertheless, some of Candrakīrti's most provocative writing is directed at his preeminent foil, Bhāvaviveka, and where the critique rages most fiercely he forgets his fear of heights and almost dances on the wire. Bhāvaviveka's assertion of nonerroneous conventional statements *(avitathāloka-vyāvahāra)* is for Candrakīrti a paradigmatic example of clinging, as is his belief in a kind of "real conventional experience" *(tathyasaṃvṛti)* containing

both truth *(satya)* and valid knowledge *(pramāṇa)*.[61] Any such belief implies the possibility of making conclusive statements expressing a true thesis about a real object, but Candrakīrti repeatedly stresses that this is not the business of the Mādhyamika. His statements have as their only function the annulment of someone else's thesis *(parapratijñāniṣedhaphalatvā)*.[62] They have no independent ontological or epistemological force; such language is of exclusively practical value and is to be understood entirely on the basis of its success in undermining someone else's claim to knowledge and certainty. Like the teaching of the buddhas, the Mādhyamika's statements are motivated by compassion *(anugraha)*[63] and not by a desire to prevail or "get it right"—to out-logicize the logicians. Their purpose is merely to serve as an aid to liberation by destablilizing the linguistic/conceptual grounds of attachment and aversion. This purpose is the sole and final aim of a very strict soteriological pragmatism that is radically incommensurable with Bhāvaviveka's logical method. To appreciate just how distrustful Candrakīrti was of this method we need to look closely—and with a fresh, historically attuned eye—at the language he uses in chapter 1 of the PPMV, where his remarks are directed explicitly at Bhāvaviveka's use of autonomous reason intended to establish an inferential thesis. Here we find him at his best, entirely caught up in the activity of a pure critique. He has no fear of falling, no time to worry about principles, tenets, or ground:

> If someone else will not relent even though confronted with an admitted self-contradiction, then he is shameless and is not about to relent when presented with new reasons and examples. We should not bother engaging in discussion with a person like this, who is incapable of thinking clearly. It follows that the Ācārya [Bhāvaviveka] merely displays his own addiction to inferential reason by introducing it where it has no place. It is inappropriate for a Mādhyamika to use independently established inferences because it is impossible [for him] to accept either a position of his own or one of another.[64]

Candrakīrti then quotes a verse from Āryadeva's *Catuḥśataka* (CŚ) regarding the difficulty of refuting someone who holds no position, followed by two stanzas from Nāgārjuna's VV. The passage closes with a rhetorical question:

> When a Mādhyamika does not set forth any independently estab-
> lished inference, why then does [Bhāvaviveka] bring to bear an
> independent thesis against the Sāṃkhya?[65]

For a definitive answer to his own question we need only look a few pages
ahead.

In the relevant passage Bhāvaviveka has just suggested that it is the duty
of commentators to present cogent and binding logical arguments in sup-
port of Nāgārjuna's writing. Candrakīrti denies this uncategorically. After
first pointing out that Nāgārjuna himself did not do so in his own auto-
commentary on the VV, he goes on to say,

> Even though a Logician may take the side of the Madhyamaka
> school out of a desire to parade the extent of his own dialectical
> skill, it is evident that the presentation of autonomous reasoning
> becomes, for him, an enormous reservoir where faults pile up one
> after another.[66]

Here we have it: as far as Candrakīrti is concerned, Bhāvaviveka is not a
Mādhyamika at all, he is merely a Logician *(tārkika)* taking the side of the
Madhyamaka school *(aṅgīkṛtamadhyamakadarśana)* out of a desire to show
off his mastery of the canons of logic *(tarkaśāstrātikauśalamātram āviści-
kīrṣayā)*. Like Dignāga, who was the reference point for virtually every
important methodological choice he made, Bhāvaviveka is, in Candrakīrti's
eyes, nothing but a Logician. And, like all Logicians, he is primarily moti-
vated not by compassion *(anugraha)* but rather by a profound desire, or
need, for philosophical certainty.

If we can educate ourselves to read Candrakīrti's words as they must
have appeared in their own historical context, and not through the lens of
subsequent ahistorical doxographic exegesis, then the text of the PPMV is
unambiguous on this point. Candrakīrti does not recognize, either implic-
itly or explicitly, two subschools of Madhyamaka:

> Whoever speaks in terms of independently valid logical arguments
> (inferences) reaps some fault. We do not rely on them, because the
> only fruit of our arguments is the annulment of someone else's thesis.[67]

Let us presuppose for the moment, along with Schmithausen (whom I
cited earlier), "that the texts [we] make use of are to be taken seriously, in

the sense that one has to accept that they mean what they say, and that what they mean is reasonable within its own terms."[68] At least two conclusions are apparently inescapable:

First, the labels *Thal 'gyur ba* and *Rang rgyud pa*—commonly translated into Sanskrit by contemporary Western scholars as Prāsaṅgika and Svātantrika—must be judged not only anachronistic but philosophically problematic as applied to a period in the intellectual history of Indian Buddhism when, so far as we know, not one of Nāgārjuna's commentators was prepared to acknowledge, even provisionally, the existence of two distinct and viable interpretations of the MMK. From approximately the second up through the seventh century as preserved in extant sources, there is not the slightest suggestion that any of Nāgārjuna's commentators would have been sympathetic to the idea that there were any "subschools" of Madhyamaka. And in particular, from Candrakīrti's point of view, to say that there are two kinds of Madhyamaka is like saying that there are two kinds of baseball: one in which the ball is struck with a bat, and another where the players kick it around the field. This is not a trivial point. Which brings us to the second conclusion:

If as rigorously critical historians we are interested in understanding Candrakīrti through the medium of his own words in the context of his own time and place, and not in terms of a conceptual grid fastened upon him by later generations of Tibetan doxographers, then I believe we must begin by seeing and accepting the fact that he excluded uncategorically Bhāvaviveka from membership in this school. In Candrakīrti's eyes Bhāvaviveka does not represent some kind of viable (albeit inferior) alternative reading of Nāgārjuna. In Candrakīrti's eyes Bhāvaviveka is a Tārkika, not a Mādhyamika, and if his use of independently valid logical arguments in the *Tarkajvālā* and other treatises were to be accepted as authoritative— even in some qualified sense—it would amount to a fatal subversion of Nāgārjuna's entire project. In other words, according to Candrakīrti it's not that Bhāvaviveka doesn't get it right, or even that he doesn't quite get it right. He simply does not get it.

For my part, I am persuaded that Candrakīrti's uncompromising refusal to allow the MMK to be reduced to a series of doctrines, tenets, or logical formulas is an attempt to read Nāgārjuna as "soteriologically pragmatic," in the spirit of the *Kalama Sutta* and the *Majjhima Nikāya*.[69] In any case, his rejection of Bhāvaviveka's logical reading was clearly sabotaged largely by his own uncritical acceptance of a powerful new doxographic vocabulary that effectively transformed Nāgārjuna's writing into a "philosophical

system" or "school" *(darśana)*. Where there is a system or school there must be tenets, and where there are tenets there is most definitely something to prove. This same vocabuarly—as appropriated and elaborated upon by the Tibetans—would eventually be turned to a particularly curious purpose when it was used to extol Candrakīrti as the preeminent interpreter of Nāgārjuna's work. And so—in what amounts to a deeply ironic twist of fate—Candrakīrti was posthumously awarded highest honors from an orthodox scholarly tradition that could sustain its authority only by refusing to take seriously what he had himself insisted upon: Nāgārjuna is not in the business of providing rational arguments designed to substantiate, prove, establish, or make certain anything.

It seems to me that, in the present context, the most serious problem with the doxographic project in general is that it is predicated on the assumption that Buddhist philosophy must, by definition, be concerned with the preservation and explication of tenets *(siddhānta, grub mtha')*. The terms Prāsaṅgika and Svātantrika cannot do otherwise than embody this premise, and despite (or better: because of) the fact that they further imply that there is more than one kind of Madhyamaka, the force of Candrakīrti's central point continues to be either diminished or altogether lost.

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Notes

1 Notable exceptions are certain rNying ma pa and Bon po schemes; see Mimaki (1982): 8.

2 Ibid.: 38.

3 Ruegg (1981): viii. See also his remarks in Ruegg (1980): 279.

4 Mimaki (1982): 3.

5 Ibid.: 53. Tibetan doxographers derived the new terminology through a process of extrapolation from Indian sources that were considered provide the philosophical justification for its use.

6 It is the opinion of the present author that the expression "Indo-Tibetan Buddhism," which has achieved common currency among contemporary Buddhologists, derives its authority largely on the basis of a tacit assumption that Tibetan scholars stand in some sort of historically privileged position vis-á-vis the Indian sources. If this were not the case, then one wonders, for example, why the corollary "Indo-Chinese Buddhism" has no place in academic discourse, despite the fact that the Chinese Buddhist tradition is in every respect based on the translation and interpretation of Indian literature. Fortunately all

of this is beginning to be subjected to critical reflection. In addition to the present volume, cf., for example, the introduction to Dreyfus (1997); Tillemans (1990): 14ff.; Tillemans (1995): 641–642; and my own earlier discussion in Huntington (1995b): 693–696. The following comments of José Cabezón are relevant: "It is interesting that disciplines that pride themselves on critical distance from their object of study often implicitly incorporate many of its assumptions and presuppositions without being aware of the fact that this is the case. Buddhist Studies is no exception here, uncritically recapitulating in its scholarly literature many traditional Buddhist presuppositions." Cabezón (1995): 261. In the accompanying note Cabezón specifically mentions "the adoption of the fourfold siddhānta schema as an explanatory mechanism." He also provides a number of useful references on the subject.

7 Tsong kha pa makes this explicit in his *lHag mthong chen mo,* where he discusses the development of Madhyamaka in India and Tibet. Cf. Tsong kha pa, *rJe tsong kha pa'i gsung dbu ma'i lta ba'i skor,* vol. 1 (Sarnath ed.): 17.

8 Mimaki (1982): 44–45. Mimaki also holds out the unlikely possibility that Tsong kha pa was responsible for inventing these terms. Ibid.: 38–39.

9 See the charts in ibid.: 27–29 for distribution of these two groups.

10 This is the explanation given by Tsong kha pa. He refers in particular to certain passages in PPMV. Cf. Lopez (1987): 57.

11 The expressions shown here are lifted from the translation of dKon mchog 'jigs med dbang po's *Grub pa'i mtha'i rnam par bzhag pa rin po che'i phreng ba* in Hopkins and Sopa (1976): 53–54. The full passage reads as follows: "The etymology for 'tenet' *(grub mtha', siddhānta)* is: a tenet is a meaning which was made firm, decided upon, or established in reliance on scripture and/or reasoning and which will not be forsaken for something else…. 'Established conclusion' *(grub mtha')* signifies one's own established assertion which is thoroughly borne out by scripture and reasoning. Because one will not pass beyond this assertion, it is a conclusion." Cf. dKon mchog 'jigs med dbang po, *Grub pa'i mtha'i rnam par bzhag pa rin po che'i phreng ba* (n.d.): 4: *grub pa'i mtha ste / rigs pa'i lung gis rab tu bstan par rang gi 'dod pa grub pa ni / de las phar yang 'gro ba med pas na mtha'o / zhes gsungs pa ltar lung rigs gang rung la brten nas thag bcad cing grub pa 'am dam bcas pa'i don de nyid rang gi blo ngor tshul de las gzhan du 'dod pa med pas na / grub pa'i mtha' zhes brjod pa'i phyir //.*

12 Dumont (1964): 32.

13 Cf. Qvarnström (1988): 13: "…the doxographical genre neglects historical developments and presents a fixed system…"

14 Mimaki (1982): 38.

15 In her presentation of Tsong kha pa's distinction between "Mādhyamikas of the model texts" *(gzung phyi mo'i dbu ma pa)* and "Partisan Mādhyamikas" *(phyogs 'dzin pa'i dbu ma pa),* Elizabeth Napper speaks of "the chronology of the commentators who commented on Nāgārjuna's thought." Napper (1989): 164 and 268ff. However, what this distinction refers to is not historical change, but rather the classical Indian rubrics of "root text" (*mūlagrantha,* in this case the

original compositions of Nāgārjuna and Āryadeva), and a whole variety of exegetical literature *(vṛtti, bhāṣya, chāya)* that is necessarily parasitic (here, the commentaries of Buddhapālita, Bhāvaviveka, Candrakīrti, etc.).

16 Cabezón (1990): 15.

17 Gadamer (1976): 92: "One of the fundamental structures of all speaking is that we are guided by preconceptions and anticipations in our talking in such a way that these continually remain hidden and that it takes a disruption in oneself of the intended meaning of what one is saying to become conscious of the prejudices as such…the basic prejudices are not easily dislodged and protect themselves by claiming self-evident certainty for themselves, or even by posing as supposed freedom from all prejudice…the interest that is bound together with knowledge is overlooked." The most fundamental "interest" of the doxographical project—what amounts, in that literature, to a "self-evident certainty"—is a view of the Indian Buddhist tradition in which nothing essential is ever changed, much less lost.

18 Hopkins (1983): 321.

19 Pagels (1988): xxii.

20 Bronkhorst (1993): 64.

21 Ibid.: 63, referring to the writing of Stephen Gould, whom he goes on to cite: "'This principle of imperfection is a general argument for history, not a tool of evolutionary biologists alone. All historical scientists use it…'"

22 Schmithausen (1981): 200.

23 Ibid.

24 The phrase here is borrowed from Schopen (1991): 5.

25 Hayes (1986): 167. The full context of his remarks is worth citing at length: "Despite the efforts of later Indian and Tibetan academics to classify Buddhist doctrines into a highly artificial schema of four schools—two Hīnayāna and two Mahāyāna—with well-defined dogmatic boundaries, Indian philosophical schools were constantly evolving. Particularly in the highly creative period to which Vasubandhu, Diṇnāga and Dharmakīrti belonged, it can practically be said that each of the men whose works survive down to the present day was a school unto himself…. To settle a problem of how to interpret a specific passage or how to construe a particular technical term, we must set stereotypes aside altogether and engage in the very complex task of textual analysis." Elsewhere he continues (ibid.: 172): "If the book [under review] succeeds in anything it is to show, albeit inadvertently, the bankruptcy of treating the philosophers under discussion as spokesmen of doctrinaire schools rather than treating the schools as heuristic categories into which individuals, who differ considerably from one another, can provisionally be placed for pedagogical purposes."

26 Murti (1960): 87, and Iida (1980): 30.

27 *Yuktiṣaṣṭikā: / sangs rgyas lam la brten nas ni // kun la mi rtag smra ba rnams // rtsod pas dgnos rnams mchog gzung bas // gnas pa gang yin de rmad do /* (41) / *'di 'am de 'o zhes gang du // rnam par dpyad nas mi dmigs na // rtsod pas 'di 'am de bden zhes // mkhas pa su zhig smra bar 'gyur /* (42). Lindtner (1987 repr.): 112.

28 *Yuktiṣaṣṭikā:* / *gang dag brten nas dngos po rnams* // *chu yi zla ba lta bur ni* // *yang dag ma yin log min par* // *'dod pa de dag bltas mi 'phrog* / (45). Ibid.: 114.

29 dKon mchog 'jigs med dbang po, *Grub pa'i mtha'i rnam pa bzhag pa rin po che'i phreng ba* (n.d.), 4–5: *grub pa'i mtha' zhes brjod pa'i phyir* / *de la dbye na gnyis* / *phyi rol pa dang* / *nang ba'o* /.

30 *Yuktiṣaṣṭikā: che ba'i bdag nyid can de dag* // *rnams la phyogs med rtsod pa med* // *gang rnams la ni phyogs med pa* // *de la gzhan phyogs ga la yod* / (50) / *gang yang rung ba'i gnas rnyed nas* // *nyon mongs sbrul gdug g.yo can gyis* // *zin par gyur te gang gi sems* // *gnas med de dag zin mi 'gyur* / (51). Lindtner (1987 repr.): 114–116.

31 VV: *yadi kā cana pratijñā syān me tata eṣa me bhaved doṣaḥ* / *nāsti ca mama pratijñā tasmān naivāsti me doṣaḥ* //. Ibid.: 80.

32 Ruegg (1981): 49.

33 Ibid.

34 Iida (1980): 32.

35 See, e.g., PrP 1.1, p. 11, quoted by Candrakīrti in PPMV 1.1 (Vaidya ed.) 25ff; re: position, see: TJ 3.26, f. 64b. Cf. Ruegg (1981): 65, on both terms. He may have been following an earlier commentator, Devaśarman (ibid.: 62), but we will probably never know for sure.

36 Cf. Qvarnström (1988): 3, and Lindtner (1987 repr.): 78, n. 24. Bhāvaviveka's TJ and *Madhyamakaratnapradīpa* contain frequent references to Dignāga's PS. See TJ 8.68 for an instance of Bhāvaviveka's own distinctive threefold argument: thesis *(pratijñā):* there is fire on the mountain; cause *(hetu):* because of smoke; example *(dṛṣṭānta):* as in a kitchen. See Ruegg (1981): 36–37, n. 93, and 64–66 for further details.

37 Qvarnström (1988): 6 and (1989): 99–100.

38 Cf. Kelly (1992): 172–173. Dignāga actually quotes at least two verses from the *Vākyapadīya* in chapter 5 of his PS, as well as *Vākyapadīya* 3.53–85 in his *Traikālyaparīkṣā.* On this last reference (for which I am indebted to Sara McClintock) see Frauwallner (1959): 145ff, and Biardeau (1964): 256. Also cf. Lindtner (1993): 200 and 205: "I have no doubt that future research will show that Dignāga and Dharmakīrti are heavily indebted to Bhartṛhari for much of their technical terminology."

39 Cf. the distinction between *nītārtha* and *neyārtha,* found in the Pāli suttas and throughout the Mahāyāna corpus.

40 Halbfass (1988): 268.

41 Lopez (1987): 57–58, where he is discussing the *Legs bshad snying po:* "Tsong-kha-pa writes…that although Bhāvaviveka found many faults with Buddha-pālita's commentary to Nāgārjuna's *Treatise on the Middle Way,* he did not disagree with him on the selflessness of persons and phenomena. Bhāvaviveka's commentator, Avalokitavrata, also finds no disagreement between Buddha-pālita and Bhāvaviveka concerning the conventional and ultimate nature of phenomena…. Tsong-kha-pa goes on to note that none of the great Svātan-trikas—Jñānagarbha, Śāntarakṣita, Kamalaśīla—found any difference between the selflessness of their own system and that of the system of Buddhapālita and

Candrakīrti. Candrakīrti did not assert that there was any difference between himself and Buddhapālita concerning the ultimate and conventional. However he, and he alone among the great Mādhyamikas, distinguishes the system that he shares with Buddhapālita from that of the other Mādhyamikas.… Candrakīrti thus contends that his understanding of the doctrine of emptiness is unique and is not shared by others.…"

42 PPMV (Vaidya ed.) 5,23.

43 Ibid.: 150,10 and 217,27; also Ruegg (1981): 1, n. 3; 2, n. 6.

44 VV 69, *Vaidalyaprakaraṣa* 1. See Lindtner (1987 repr.).

45 Qvarnström (1988): 7.

46 Halbfass (1988): 265.

47 Ibid.: 268.

48 Ibid.

49 *Dṛṣṭi* is an abstract noun made by the addition of a suffix (one of a class of *kṛt pratyaya*s*) directly to the verbal root *dṛś,* whereas *darśana* is a present active participle made from the same root by a different process. In this sense, *dṛṣṭi* may be understood as a particular "view," whereas *darśana* is "a way of seeing."

50 Cf. Halbfass (1988): 272: "*Dṛṣṭi,* 'speculation,' 'theorizing,' 'conceptualization,' implies soteriological negligence and irresponsibility, and in general a waste of time. Beyond that, it also stands for the representational, reifying and possessive positing of objects and the relations between objects, the projection and reflection of that primeval 'thirst' which attaches us to the world of passion and pain, the formation of a network of ideas in which the owner himself, the thinking and theorizing subject, gets caught."

51 Ruegg (1981): 2, n. 6.

52 See Yamaguchi (1974): part 1, 96; part 2, 110.

53 MAv 6.118: *bstan bcos las dpyad rtsod la chags pa'i phyir/ ma mdzad.…*La Vallée Poussin (1907–1912): 231; trans. in Huntington (1989): 171.

54 MAv 6.119: */ rang gi lta la chags dang de bzhin du // gzhan gyi lta la 'khrug gang rtog pa nyid // de'i phyir 'dod chags khong khro rnam bsal te // rnam dpyod* (LVP has *dbyod*) *pa na myur du grol bar 'gyur/.* La Vallée Poussin (1907–1912): 232; trans. in Huntington (1989): 171.

55 This important word, used repeatedly in the first chapter of the PPMV, carries the following connotations: ascertainment, fixed opinion, conviction, resolution, resolve. Cf. Monier-Williams Sanskrit-English Dictionary, 561.

56 PPMV (Vaidya ed.) 19,16–29: *yadi kaścin niścayo nāmāsmakaṃ syāt, sa pramāṇajo vā syād apramāṇajo vā / na tv asti / kiṃ kāraṇam ? ihāniścayasaṃbhave sati syāt tatpratipakṣas tadapekṣo niścayaḥ / yadā tv aniścaya eva tāvad asmākaṃ nāsti, tadā kutas tadviruddhāviruddho niścayaḥ syāt saṃbandhyantaranirapekṣatvāt, kharaviṣāṇasya hrasvadīrghatāvat / yadā caivaṃ niścayasyābhāvaḥ, tadā kasya prasiddhyarthaṃ pramāṇāni parikalpayiṣyāmaḥ ? kuto vaiṣāṃ saṃkhyā lakṣaṇaṃ viṣayo vā bhaviṣyati—svataḥ parata ubhayato 'hetuto vā samutpattir iti sarvam etan na vaktavyam asmābhiḥ // yady evaṃ niścayo nāsti sarvataḥ, kathaṃ punar idaṃ niścitarūpaṃ vākyam upalabhyate bhavatām—na svato nāpi parato na*

dvābhyāṃ nāpy ahetuto bhāvā bhavantīti ? ucyate / niścitam idaṃ vākyaṃ lokasya svaprasiddhayaivopapattyā, nāryāṇām / kiṃ khalu āryāṇām upapattir nāsti ? kenaitad uktam asti vā nāsti veti / paramārtho hy āryāṇāṃ tūṣṇīṃbhāvaḥ / tataḥ kutas tatra prapañcasaṃbhavo yadupapattir anupapattir vā syāt ?

57 Ibid. 6,17–22: *yasmād yo hi yam arthaṃ pratijānīte, tena svaniścayavadanyeṣāṃ niścayotpādanecchayā yayā upapattyā asāv artho 'dhigataḥ saivopapattiḥ parasmai upadeṣṭavyā / tasmād eṣa tāvan nyāyaḥ—yat pareṇaiva svābhyupagataprati-jñātārthasādhanam upādeyam / na cāyam (cānena ?) paraṃ prati / hetudṛṣṭāntā-saṃbhavāt pratijñānusāratayaiva kevalaṃ svapratijñātārthasādhanam upādatta iti nirupapattikapakṣābhyupagamāt svātmānam evāyaṃ kevalaṃ visaṃvādayan na śaknoti pareṣāṃ niścayam ādhātum iti / idam evāsya spaṣṭataraṃ dūṣaṇaṃ yaduta svapratijñātārthasādhanāsāmarthyam iti kim atrānumānabādhodbhāva-nayā prayojanam ?*

58 Ibid. 7,24–25: *prasaṅgaviparītena cārthena parasyaiva saṃbandho nāsmākam / svapratijñāyā abhāvāt / tataś ca siddhāntavirodhāsaṃbhavaḥ /.*

59 Cf. Sells (1994): 216 *et passim* on the distinction between kataphatic and apophatic writing, and Huntington (1995a) on both Sells and the application of literary critical (anti-) theory to the interpretation of Nāgārjuna. More recently, Jeff Humphries, a professor of Comparative Literature at Louisiana State University, has published a book titled *Reading Emptiness,* which he describes, in part, as follows (1999: 31–32): "It was conceived in answer to a graduate student's question. All of her teachers, she said, read works of litera-ture in quite different ways, according to different theories or methods, includ-ing the antitheory theory, according to which all theories are bad; most of these theories led to contradictory, even mutually exclusive results when applied to the same text. One professor gleefully embraced every theory, applying each, willy-nilly, to the poor poem until his students reeled in dizzy confusion. Where then, she asked, was the truth of the literary text? Must not only one of these readings really be the best one? How to tell which? And what about the text itself? How can it have any value unless there is only one correct reading of it?… Buddhist thought may even provide Western literary theory with what the graduate student…found missing from her education: insight into the nature of literary truth." In this context he explains that "Buddhist thought has not often been considered by students and scholars of literature, partly because of the pervasive idea that textuality implies a kind of mediation inimical to the 'direct experience' that Buddhist practice seeks to achieve, and also because of the traditional disciplinary boundaries, according to which Buddhism is the exclusive province of a small community of specialists in religious studies." Ibid.: 31. The book explores, from the perspective of a literary critic whose ear-lier publications are on Villon, Proust, Stendahl, Poe, and Flannery O'Connor, many issues directly relevant to the present paper.

60 Robinson (1972): 326.

61 Cf. TJ 3.12, f. 60a. Cited in Ruegg (1981): 75, n. 244.

62 PPMV (Vaidya ed.) 11,7.

63 Ibid. 11,22.

64 Ibid. 5,21–24: *atha svābhyupagamavirodhacodanyayāpi paro na nivartate, tadā nirlajjatayā hetudṛṣṭāntābhyām api naiva nivarteta / na conmattakena sahāsmākaṃ vivāda iti / tasmāt sarvathā priyānumānatām evātmanaḥ ācāryaḥ prakaṭayati asthāne 'py anumānaṃ praveśayan / na ca mādhyamikasya sataḥ svatantram anumānaṃ kartum yuktaṃ pakṣāntarābhyupagamābhāvāt //.*

65 Ibid. 6,7–8: *yadā caivaṃ svatantrānumānabhidhāyitvaṃ mādhyamikasya tadā kutaḥ…svatantrā pratijñā yasyāṃ sāṃkhyāḥ pratyavasthāpyante /.* Notice that Candrakīrti has here treated the words *anumāna* and *pratijñā* as synonyms.

66 Ibid. 8,13–14: *ātmanas tarkaśāstrātikauśalamātram āviścikīrṣayā aṅgīkṛta-madhyamakadarśanasyāpi yat svatantraprayogavākyābhidhānaṃ tad atitarām anekadoṣasamudāyāspadam asya tārkikasyopalakṣyate /.*

67 Ibid. 11,6–7: *svatantram anumānaṃ bruvatām ayaṃ doṣo jāyate / na vayaṃ svatantram anumānaṃ prayuñjmahe parapratijñāniṣedhaphalatvād asmad anumānānām /.*

68 Schmithausen (1981): 200.

69 There is abundant evidence to suggest that among the earliest followers of the Buddha were those who more or less side-stepped any theoretical problems by interpreting his teaching in entirely practical terms: truth is whatever "works" (whatever is conducive to liberation), and what works for one person may very well not work for another. This is, for instance, the position of the *Kalama Sutta,* where we are told to "reject any doctrine when you yourself realize that its acceptance leads to misfortune and suffering.…" (*Aṅguttara Nikāya,* II.191). It follows that truth is not necessarily one or many in any significant sense. A radical version of this position might dispense altogether with the notion of truth, looking upon any sustained concern with the issue as symptomatic of an unhealthy attachment to what is, in the final analysis, nothing but a theoretical abstraction that will inevitably distract one from the real problem of liberation. According to the *Majjhima Nikāya* (I.431) certain questions were not answered by the Buddha because "they were not practical, not related to what is fundamental to the spiritual life, not conducive to *nibbidāya,* dispassion, cessation, peace, higher knowledge, awakening or *nirvāṇa.*"

This approach is also suggested by two well-known parables found in the same text. In the first a man is counseled by the Buddha that some types of questions are not conducive to living the spiritual life; to insist on pursuing such purely theoretical questions is pointless and, indeed, altogether misguided—as if, being wounded by an arrow, one were to insist on knowing "how and by whom the shaft was made, what was the material, who shot it and so forth before having the point removed." (Ibid., I.429.) The second is the famous parable of the raft: "I preach a doctrine *(dhamma)* comparable to a raft, useful for crossing over but not to be clung to.… Those who understand [my] doctrine to be like a raft should discard it as well, to say nothing of what is not [my] doctrine *(adhamma)*.…." (Ibid., I.134.) From this perspective all doctrinal formulations are of exclusively pragmatic value. Any actual statement of doctrine

is always potentially dispensable and, indeed (as is the case with Candrakīrti), both the desire for or the belief in the absolute truth or certainty of such statements is ultimately viewed as an obstacle to liberation.