

研討會舉辦之緣起與背景說明

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## **Language in the Traditions of Madhyamaka Thought**

*Background: The Significance of Language in Madhyamaka Thought*

Since its early days, Buddhism has always been concerned with the question and significance of language in relation to the soteriological, epistemological, and ontological tenets of its teachings. This is evident from the ancient *Nikāya/Āgama* texts where the issue of language is related to the topic of the ineffability arising in the context of the questions left unanswered by the Buddha (*avyākṛta vastu*) (Peter Harvey, 1995). In the Mahāyāna traditions, language becomes an important object of inquiry; particularly, in the Yogācāra analysis of the weakness of linguistic reference, and in the Madhyamaka claim that phenomena exist as “imputations by name and thought.” The Madhyamaka position has often been understood as “Buddhist nominalism” by Western scholars (Mark Siderits and Tom Tillemans 2011).

So far, no comprehensive modern study has ever traced the development of different views of language in all traditions of Buddhist thought; nor is there any work that examines the diachronic development and constructs from these pieces a complete picture of the Buddhist views toward language. Even though the issue of language is a central and persistent concern in all of Buddhist thought, such a project, indeed, would be a huge challenge even for a cooperating group of scholars specializing in different fields of Buddhist studies.

Hence a first and meritorious step into this direction could be the accomplishment of a study which focuses on only one of the many textual traditions transmitted by the various Buddhist canons. Obviously, the traditions of Madhyamaka thought, which developed in Sanskrit, Chinese, and Tibetan, would be a worthwhile object of such an inquiry, since this influential Mahāyāna school particularly examines the linguistic issue and develops a unique view on it. One of its essential tenets stresses that our world and all things which exist in it are constituted by constructions arising from our epistemic-propositional references and, in this specific sense, exist as imputations by name and thought. To be fully aware of the linguistic concern in this constructivist tradition of Buddhist thought is tantamount to finding

the crucial access to its philosophical gist. Despite the tremendous influence that Madhyamaka thought has exerted in Tibet and East Asia, no modern academic work has accomplished this task so far. (For some first steps in this direction, see Jose Ignacio Cabezon, 1994; Mark Siderits, 2003).

*Differences in terms of Modern Approaches and Scope of the Ancient Sources*

In modern academia, very few English, French, German, Chinese, or Japanese monographs which deal with particular thinkers of this school – in most cases with Nāgārjuna (150-250) or Tsongkhapa (1357-1419) – discuss the issue of language in Madhyamaka thought. (Those who do are Jan Westerhoff, 2009; Jay Garfield, 1994, 2006; Wan Jinchuan 萬金川 1995, Takasaki Jikido 高崎直道 2012, Huntington 1995, Schlieter 2000). Only a limited number of short articles or sections in book chapters examine the view of language developed by the Indian Mādhyamika Āryadeva (3<sup>rd</sup> century), Buddhapālita (470-550), Bhāviveka (500-578), Candrakīrti (600-650), Śāntideva (8<sup>th</sup> century), Śāntarakṣita (728-788), Kamalaśīla (713-763), Jñānagarbha (8<sup>th</sup> century), whose works, originally composed in Sanskrit, often survived only in Tibetan or Chinese. (For instances, see William Edelglas and Jay Garfield, 2009; Mark Siderits 2003; Tom Tillemans 1999; Jay Garfield *Philosophy East and West* 2007, Mattia Salvini *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 2011, Malcom David Eckel, 2008).

The same can be said regarding the modern study of the group of Chinese Madhyamaka thinkers, which mainly includes the famous translator Kumārajīva (334-413) who translated and edited the *Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa*, and also left a fragmentary commentary to the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa-sūtra*; his disciple Seng Zhao (374-414) and all the later commentaries on his foundational *Treatises*; the Sanlun master Jizang (549-623), who produced the only extant Chinese commentary on Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*; the Tiantai master Zhiyi (538-597), together with the vast corpus of Tiantai texts, and many others also influenced by Madhyamaka thought. (For more precise examples, see William Edelglas and Jay Garfield, 2009, Ming Liu-Wood 1994, Hans-Rudolf Kantor, *Philosophy East and West* 2014, *Asian Philosophy* 2009, *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 2011, He Ch'ien Hsing, *Asian Philosophy* 2008, Chang-Qing Shih, 2004).

Moreover, those in the modern international academia of Buddhist studies who explore the philosophical aspects of this teaching from a cross-cultural point of view, focus predominantly on the Indo-Tibetan traditions. Surprisingly, the important Chinese traditions only play a marginal role in that scope of inquiry. For instance, Oxford University Press' 2011 published collection of articles on the Madhyamaka

doctrine of “conventional truth,” called *Moonshadows – Conventional Truth in Buddhist Philosophy*, (composed by renowned scholars, such as Georges Dreyfus, Jay Garfield, Mark Siderits, Tom Tillemans, Graham Priest and others), does not even include one single article regarding the Chinese tradition - in which that doctrine has been so eminently influential and further developed in a rather unique way. The same is true with regard to another collection of essays on language in Buddhist and Madhyamaka philosophy published by almost the same authors and the same publishing company in 2009. The only monograph that focuses on the philosophical significance of language in the Gelupka school of Tibetan Madhyamaka is Jose Ignacio Cabezon’s book *Buddhism and Language – A Study of Indo-Tibetan Scholasticism* from 1994, published by SUNY.

Another remarkable and conspicuous point is the fact that Madhyamaka and other topics of the Indo-Tibetan tradition are mostly discussed through the lens of analytic philosophy, as also the (related) philosophy of mind. This is particularly true of Dan Arnold’s books from 2005 and 2012, Mario D’Amato’s studies from 2000 and 2003, as well as Jan Westerhoff’s work on Nāgārjuna from 2010, and also Jay Garfield’s work on Nāgārjuna and Tsongkhapa (1996, 2006, 2010). An exception seems to be Robert Magniola’s post-structuralist approach to Nāgārjuna’s thought (Magniola, 1984) and to the thought of some other Madhyamaka. Mark Siderit’s fundamental books about Indian and Buddhist philosophy, such as *Indian Philosophy of Language* (1991), *Personal Identity and Buddhist Philosophy* (2003), *Buddhism as Philosophy* (2007), *Apoha – Buddhist Nominalism and Human Cognition* (2011), as well as his journal articles, mostly consider theories, terminology, and ideas that point back to the world of analytic philosophy. Similarly Tom Tillemans’ and George Dreyfus’ works are predominantly indebted to arguments’ from the same field of philosophy (see Tom Tillemans, 1990, 1997, 1999, 2000; George Dreyfus 1997).

In contrast to this, academic studies of the philosophical thought in Chinese Buddhism often choose the post-modern approach and mostly focus on the Chan traditions. Particularly, the issue of language and compositional structure in the Chinese and Japanese Chan sources has been examined from the viewpoint of rhetoric and linguistic strategy (Wang 2003, Wang 2001, McPhail 1996, Anderl 2012, Heine 1999, 2000, 2004, 2008). This approach, which could also be called linguistic pragmatics, has rarely been applied to Madhyamaka and other Chinese Buddhist texts (Kantor, 2013, 2014). A certain group of Indian Madhyamaka and Yogācāra texts, translated by Kumārajīva (344-413), Paramārtha (499-569), and Xuanzang (599-664), has been discussed in Wang Youxuan’s book which explores and develops a type of Buddhist semiotics incorporating the post-structuralist philosophy of Derrida. There are several other books and articles that compare Chinese Buddhist thought (Chan)

with Derrida's "deconstruction" (Jin Park 2009, Wang 2003, many articles in *Philosophy East and West*). The doctrinal development and philosophical thought in the Chinese Madhyamaka tradition, represented by the Tiantai and the Sanlun schools, has been investigated by Wu Rujun (NG Yu-kwan) 1994, Paul Swanson 1989, Daniel Stevenson 1993, Brook Ziporyn 2000, Daniel Getz 2000, Chang-Qing Shih 2004, and Liu Ming-Wood 1994. However, except for Wu Rujun's comparative study on the doctrinal development from Nāgārjuna to Zhiyi, these works as well as many others in Chinese and Japanese do not really discuss the issue of language in detail, even though the texts of the Tiantai and Sanlun masters develop a unique type of linguistic pragmatics, crucial to the realization of the soteriological goal of detachment and liberation.

Another characteristic difference between the Tibetan and Chinese developments of Madhyamaka thought concerns the scope of Sanskrit sources that have been translated into the respective languages. The Chinese Buddhist canon contains early Madhyamaka texts (*Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa*, and Piṅgala's commentary to the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*) which have not been transmitted in the Tibetan tradition and are also lost in Sanskrit, while Chandrakīrti's works, for instance, as well as those of many others from later periods which were very influential in Tibet, have never been translated into Chinese. Moreover, Bhāviveka's and Sthiramati's commentaries on the *Kārikā*, even though translated into Chinese, had no significant influence on the indigenous Buddhist masters.

Hence, Indo-Tibetan and Chinese Madhyamaka developed in different periods and thus without any mutual influence; similarly, the two approaches in modern research have also been developed separately and independently from each other. Given this fact, one of the major intentions of this conference is to create a point of intersection in the modern studies of Madhyamaka thought, by reviewing both the ancient sources and recent studies in this field with a particular focus on the issue of language. What does the study of Chinese Madhyamaka contribute to the research in the Indo-Tibetan traditions? And what about the reverse? Furthermore, could this also disclose or open up new perspectives for discussions in the philosophy of language? In fact, the focus on the issue of language seems to be the proper point of departure for this direction of international Buddhist studies, since it has played such an important role in all the diverse traditions of Madhyamaka thought. Therefore, the conference intends to start with this topic, using the subsequent five issues to promote academic discourse. (see *Focus, Approach, Inquiry and Goal of the Conference*)

### *Focus, Approach, Inquiry and Goal of the Conference*

The Indian Mādhyamika between the second and ninth century, the Tibetan Madhyamaka thought based on the translations of Śāntarakṣita (728-788), Kamalaśīla (713-763), Jñānagarbha (8<sup>th</sup> century), as well as the Gelupka (=dGe lugs pa) school after the 14<sup>th</sup> century in Tibet, and the Chinese Sanlun and Tiantai schools during the Sui and Tang dynasties examine, discuss and deal with the issue of language from a variety of viewpoints:

- (1) the soteriological aspects of language as well as the rhetorical and linguistic strategies, or linguistic pragmatics (language functioning as one of the tools and sources of cultivation and liberation),
- (2) scripture and language related to theory and practice of interpretation and hermeneutical strategies (for example, doxographic hierarchies),
- (3) language and its relationship to existence (logical and ontological concerns),
- (4) the dynamics between discursive analysis and the practice of meditation (theory of action, communication, speech act theory), as well as that between silence and speech, and also
- (5) the question of the specific respect in which language and its psychological concomitant, conceptual thought, could be upheld as modes of knowledge and expression of truth (epistemological concerns and semantics).

All of these five aspects have been treated differently in the Indian, Tibetan, and Chinese Madhyamaka sources. The conference “Language in the Traditions of Madhyamaka Thought” plans to approach the topic from those five aspects (1. linguistic pragmatics, 2. hermeneutical strategy, 3. ontology, 4. communication, 5. epistemology and semantics) and, furthermore, tries to specify the differences and similarities in the development of the three traditions. On the basis of this comparative perspective, the project expects to come to more specific conclusions regarding the way Indian, Tibetan, and Chinese Mādhyamika used and speculated about language. An additional question is to what degree the respective languages of the three traditions might have played a role in shaping both the specific way of speculating about this topic and the specific form of language use and linguistic expression.

In addition to this, we shall reflect on the chronological development of doctrines; this concerns the intellectual and doctrinal relationship between Madhyamaka thought and other Buddhist schools. For instance, to what extent do the various Madhyamaka views on *prajñāpti* (假名;施設; designation) and *prapañca* (戲論; conceptual proliferation) rely on the Abhidharma sources and other important Buddhist doctrines, such as the two truths, emptiness etc.? In brief, the breadth of the conference embraces philosophical, philological, and chronological approaches.

