



Malcolm David Eckel. *Bhāviveka and His Buddhist Opponents: Chapters 4 and 5 of the Verses on the Heart of the Middle Way (Madhyamakahrdayakarikā) with the Commentary Entitled the Flame of Reason (Tarkajvala).* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009. xv + 496 pp. \$60.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-674-03274-3.

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Published on H-Buddhism (September, 2009)

Commissioned by Daniel A. Arnold (University of Chicago)

Bhāviveka and Indian Buddhism

Malcolm David Eckel's *Bhāviveka and His Buddhist Opponents* is a major contribution to the study of Indian Buddhism. It makes available in English an important source for the state of Buddhist thought, particularly the Madhyamaka school, in India in the sixth century CE. The translation is greatly enhanced by the years of labor that Eckel has devoted to unearthing Bhāviveka's sources and elucidating his arguments. The book includes a lengthy introduction (94 pages), copiously annotated translations of chapter 4 (110 pages) and chapter 5 (86 pages) of Bhāviveka's *Madhyamakāhādayakārikā* (MHK) and its autocommentary, and an edition of the available Sanskrit text and the Tibetan translation of those chapters (143 pages). It also has a very useful 30-page bibliography, a list of texts named or quoted in chapters 4 and 5 of the autocommentary, and an index to the Sanskrit verses of those two chapters.

Bhāviveka, a sixth-century Indian Mādhyamika, was an important figure in the history of the Madhyamaka school. He seems to have been the first to use the formal syllogism of Indian logic to expound Madhyamaka. In his *Prajñāpāradā*, a commentary on Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, Bhāviveka strongly criticized an earlier commentator, Buddhapaṇita, for failing to give syllogistic arguments and for failing to refute possible objections by opponents. A later commentator, Candrakīrti, defended Buddhapaṇita and criti-

cized Bhāviveka. As a result, in Tibet the Madhyamaka school came to be seen as divided into the Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka of Buddhapaṇita and Candrakīrti and the Svātantrika-Madhyamaka of Bhāviveka and others.[1]

Sources in Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Chinese give more than one form of Bhāviveka's name, as Eckel discusses briefly (p. 88n1). The Sanskrit manuscripts of Candrakīrti's *Prasannapadā* seem to use *âBhāviveka* and *âBhāvaviveka* equally often.[2] In contrast, as Yoshiyasu Yonezawa has shown, the one extant manuscript of the *Lakṣaṇāśāstra* uses *âBhāviveka* consistently. The relevant Chinese and Tibetan translations support *âBhāviveka*/*Bhāvivikta* or *âBhavya* or *âBhavyaviveka*, but not *âBhāvaviveka*. Thus, Eckel's choice of *âBhāviveka* seems to be supported by the preponderance of evidence currently available, though the question cannot be regarded as definitively settled. One hopes that future manuscript discoveries will shed more light on the matter.

Bhāviveka's major independent work is the MHK, together with its autocommentary, the *Tarkajvalā* (TJ). (The authorship of TJ will be discussed below.) MHK consists of some 928 verses in the surviving Sanskrit manuscript and 1,024 verses in the Tibetan version; it is not available in Chinese. It is divided into eleven chapters. The first two deal with the bodhisattva path, while the third and longest chapter discusses the bodhisattva's

practice of *prajā* and the nature of Buddhahood. In the context of *prajā*, Bhāviveka expounds Madhyamaka at length. The remaining chapters of *MHK* are mainly concerned with examining and refuting the doctrines of other schools. The Buddhist Ārjavakas and Yogācāras are dealt with in chapters 4 and 5, respectively. Chapters 6, 7, 8, and 9 take up four non-Buddhist schools, the Sākhya, Vaiśeṣika, Vedānta, and Mīmāṃsā, in that order. These six chapters constitute a valuable source of information on Indian philosophy as it was known to Bhāviveka in the sixth century CE. The tenth chapter deals with the omniscience of the Buddha, while the eleventh and final chapter consists of three verses of praise.

The authorship of *Tj* has been the subject of some scholarly controversy. Some have held that the author of *MHK* is indeed the author of all or essentially all of *Tj*. Another view has been that the author of *MHK* wrote an *Ur-Tj* which was later expanded by a second Bhāviveka, as argued most recently by Kevin Vose.[3] Eckel states his position as follows, translating the title of *Tj* as *The Flame of Reason* and the title of *MHK* as *The Heart of the Middle Way*: *the question is whether there is any need to suppose that The Flame of Reason was written by someone other than the sixth-century Bhāviveka ... the answer seems to be no, at least with regard to the work as a whole. There is no need to be quite so parsimonious, however, when it comes to the authorship of individual passages.... It seems only realistic to imagine that the commentary on The Heart of the Middle Way was subject to expansion and interpolation* (p. 22, underlining original). This places him in the second camp, though without necessarily positing a second Bhāviveka. Methodologically, however, he tends toward the first camp. After discussing a passage that may well have been an interpolation, he says, *Rather than multiply authors unnecessarily, it seems best to begin with the assumption that this portion of the text belongs to the author of The Heart of the Middle Way, unless there is strong textual and historical evidence to prove otherwise* (p. 23).

MHK survives in Sanskrit in a single palm-leaf manuscript found by Rāhula Śākyāyana at Zha lu monastery in Tibet. Eckel's edition of chapters 4 and 5 of the Sanskrit text of *MHK* is based on Christian Lindtner's edition of the entire text, along with Robert A. F. Thurman's unpublished edition of chapter 4 and Paul Hoornaert's edition of chapter 5. Thus, it is based on other editions rather than directly on the manuscript or the published photographs of it.

No Sanskrit manuscript of *Tj* is known to exist. Both *MHK* and *Tj* were translated into Tibetan by Atiśa and Nag tsho Tshul khrims rgyal ba. Eckel has edited the Tibetan translation of chapters 4 and 5 of *Tj*, as well as *MHK*, based on the sDe-dge, Peking, and Golden editions of the bsTan-āgyur. He explains, *My procedure has been to follow the wording and text-divisions of the sDe-dge version and adopt the readings of the Peking or Golden bsTan-āgyur only when they offer a clear improvement on the text of the sDe-dge* (p. 302).

Regarding the overall purpose of his translation, Eckel says, *In this translation I have not tried to make Bhāviveka speak like a contemporary philosopher. I have tried instead to lead scholars of Buddhism or Indian philosophy into Bhāviveka's intellectual world with as few barriers as possible.... My goal has simply been to make Bhāviveka's work intelligible so that a thoughtful and attentive reader can understand* (p. 99). To this end, Eckel's translation has been done with great care and a conscientious attempt to find the best rendering of key terms. An excellent example of this is his sensitive discussion of the meanings and possible translations of *bhāva* and *abhāva* (pp. 215-216n4, in the latter part of the note). While one may not always agree with his choices for translation terms, one can be sure that those choices have been made with careful consideration.

Another way in which Eckel has sought to make his translation intelligible is through the use of annotation. As he explains, *The notes are more extensive than usual and deserve some explanation. They are meant to do three things. Their most important function is to elucidate the logical structure of the argument.... The second function is to fill in some of the intellectual background that Bhāviveka could assume in his original audience.... I use the word 'some' deliberately. A vast amount of the cultural lore that lies behind this text is now lost. But I have tried to draw on the resources of every aspect of Buddhist (and non-Buddhist) scholarship to construct a picture of Bhāviveka's sources.... The third.... function of the notes is to explain why I have interpreted certain technical terms in the way I did* (p. 101).

He also makes the important point that *the job of a translator is to look behind the Tibetan translation to the lost Sanskrit in the hopes of reconstructing its original form* (p. 302). He goes on to say, however, *From the few places where Bhāviveka quotes texts that have survived in Sanskrit, and from the Sanskrit original of his own verses, we can see many places where the Tibetan translation needs correction.... No doubt there are many*

moreâ (p. 302). Thus, while getting at the Sanskrit behind the Tibetan is the ideal, it may not be possible if the Tibetan translation is obscure or simply wrong.

Eckelâs introduction, titled âAnalysis,â begins with a discussion of religious and philosophical diversity in ancient India and the culture of debate that this diversity gave rise to. He points out the importance of this culture of debate as the context in which Indian philosophical texts were written, especially a text like *MHK*, in which opponentsâ views are first stated in some detail and then refuted in even greater detail. He notes that *MHK* is the earliest extant Indian doxographical treatise, a genre in which the views of various schools are either simply described or else, as in *MHK*, described and then refuted or affirmed according to the authorâs own religious/philosophical allegiance.

Eckel goes on to discuss the ways in which Bhâviveka categorized philosophical views and the ways in which he used âseeingâ and âmotionâ as metaphors to describe the spiritual and philosophical quest of a Buddhist scholar. There follows a helpful and detailed discussion of Bhâvivekaâs dialectical method, including a survey of some of the logical faults with which Bhâviveka might charge his opponent or that the opponent might charge in turn.

Eckel then turns to a discussion of Bhâvivekaâs Buddhist opponents, the Âravakas in chapter 4 of *MHK* and the Yogâcâras in chapter 5. In connection with the Âravakas, he points out that for Bhâviveka, the distinctive feature of the Mahâyâna, which makes it superior to the Âravakayâna, is its âapproach of non-apprehensionâ (*anupalambhanaya*). Eckel explains that this involves âthe ability to see things (like the individual practices of the eightfold path) without treating them as ultimately realâ (p. 80). Chapter 4 also gives a fascinating view of the arguments that other Buddhists made against the Mahâyâna in Bhâvivekaâs day and the replies that Mahâyânists gave. Moreover, it includes the text of the *Nikâyabhedavibhââgavyâkhyâna*, which also exists as a separate work in the bsTan-âgyur and which Eckel describes as âone of the most important sources for the history of sectarian movements in Indian Buddhismâ (p. 63).

With regard to the Yogâcâras, Eckel observes that Bhâviveka considered that they began the quarrel between the Mâdhyamikas and themselves by criticizing Madhyamaka as nihilistic. Eckel sees this as a case of rivalry between two traditions that each see the other as âTOO-MUCH-LIKE-US,â in Jonathan Z. Smithâs phrase. As Eckel puts it, âit is often the âproximate othersâ or the

near neighbors who pose the problem of difference in its most acute and troubling formâ (p. 67). Regarding one of these differences, he later notes that three major non-dualistic Indian traditions—Madhyamaka, Yogâcâra, and Advaita Vedânta—âtake radically different approaches to the epistemology of awakening. The Yogâcâra favors perception, the Madhyamaka favors inference, and the Vedânta favors revelationâ (p. 77). (Here he has made it clear that he is speaking of Svâtantrika-Madhyamaka specifically.)

For Bhâviveka, though, the role of inference in knowing ultimate reality is only indirect. In verse 5.107, he says, âIt is impossible to understand reality as an object of inference, but inference rules out the opposite of the knowledge of realityâ (p. 75; Eckelâs translation). Thus, reasoning is essential for eliminating false views, but it can give only negative information about ultimate reality. Bhâviveka describes a two-step process in verses 5.105-5.106: âBuddhas use faultless inference in a way that is consistent with tradition to completely reject many different concepts of imagined things. Then, without seeing, they see all objects of knowledge, just as they are, with non-conceptual knowledge and minds like spaceâ (p. 75, Eckelâs translation). (Note that when Eckel translates 5.105-5.107 on page 75, he misidentifies the verses as â5.104-5.106.â)

How, then, do Buddhas âsee without seeingâ (*paâyanty adarâanât*)? Eckel translates *Tj* on *MHK* 5.106 (misidentified as â5.06â): The Buddhasâ awareness âis a single moment of non-conceptual, perceptual knowledge. The word âseeâ is only metaphorical; [Buddhas] see by the discipline of no seeingâ (p. 75, Sanskrit and Tibetan in parentheses omitted). Eckel comments, âFrom a conventional point of view, Buddhas see reality (where the word âseeâ indicates a form of direct perception), but ultimately there is no seeing and nothing to seeâ (p. 75). Discussing the same point in a note to his translation of chapter 5, he observes, âBhâviveka argues that the Buddhaâs awakening ... ultimately is no awakening.... The same can be said of anything when it is viewed from the ultimate perspective, especially concepts and activities that are significantly related to the path toward Buddhahoodâ (p. 289n117). For Eckel, this emphasis on the emptiness of Buddhasâ awareness of reality differentiates Bhâvivekaâs position on this issue from that of the Yogâcâras.

Eckel concludes his introduction by making a point that one must always bear in mind when reading Buddhist philosophy: that reasoning and debate are ulti-

mately in the service of a Buddhist path of spiritual development. As he says, "In the rich and intricate details of these chapters, there is an invitation to enter a world ... where theory is a form of practice and where thinkers struggle not only to define and adjudicate their differences but to remove the barriers that prevent them from reaching their highest goal" (p. 87).

Notes

[1]. For more details, see George B. J. Dreyfus and Sara L. McClintock, eds., *The SvĀtantrika-PrĀsāā'gika*

Distinction (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2003); and Kevin A. Vose, *Resurrecting CandrakĀrti* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2009).

[2]. I am grateful to Yoshiyasu Yonezawa for checking the Potala Palace manuscript of the *PrasannapadĀ* and to Anne MacDonald for checking four of the other manuscripts.

[3]. Vose, *Resurrecting CandrakĀrti*, 25, 31-32. Vose refers to earlier work by David Seyfort Rugg and Yasunori Ejima.

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Citation: William Ames. Review of Eckel, Malcolm David, *Bhāviveka and His Buddhist Opponents: Chapters 4 and 5 of the Verses on the Heart of the Middle Way (Madhyamakahrdayakarikah) with the Commentary Entitled the Flame of Reason (Tarkajvala)*. H-Buddhism, H-Net Reviews. September, 2009.

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