Introduction

For anyone who sets out to understand the development of Buddhist philosophy in India, it is hard to imagine a more central text than The Heart of the Middle Way (Madhyamakahrdaya) by the sixth-century philosopher Bhāviveka. This is not to say that the text was the most influential or even the most brilliant contribution to the development of Indian Buddhist thought. For sheer historical impact one would have to favor the works of Nāgārjuna or Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, the founders of the major Mahāyāna traditions. To dig deeply into the intellectual puzzles of Mahāyāna philosophy, some might prefer the works of Candrakīrti or Dharmakīrti. But no Indian Mahāyāna thinker played a more crucial role in mapping the landscape of Indian philosophy and defining the relationships of its different traditions. At a time when major branches of Indian philosophy were still in the process of formation, Bhāviveka provided a model of textual classification (the philosophical compendium or doxography) that became the classic vehicle for the study of Indian philosophy. It would be an exaggeration to say that Bhāviveka was India's first systematic comparative philosopher, but it would not be far from the truth. There were earlier attempts to classify the variety of positions in Indian philosophy, and there were many disputes between individual thinkers and between different schools, but Bhāviveka has given us the first surviving example (and perhaps the first example that ever existed) of a genre that defined the systematic comparison of philosophical schools in India until the present day.

The most distinctive feature of Bhāviveka's text is so simple that it is easy to take for granted. Rather than organizing his text by topic (like "the nature of the self" or "the means of valid knowledge"), Bhāviveka organizes it by tradition or school. The text begins with three chapters on his own philosophy, then it devotes two chapters to his Buddhist opponents (the Śrāvakas and Yogācāras), followed by four chapters on his Hindu opponents (Sāṃkhya, Vaiśeṣika, Vedānta, and Mīmāṃsā). It concludes with a brief discussion of Jain arguments about omniscience and three verses in praise of the Buddha. As it is true of later philosophical compendia, Bhāviveka's text says relatively little about the historical development of these traditions. With the important exception of his account of the eighteen schools of the Śrāvakas, Bhāviveka tells us very little about how these traditions came to be. He simply gives us a picture of the traditions as they were known to him in the middle of the sixth century CE. But the text
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has extraordinary historical value, particularly for the study of Bhāviveka’s Buddhist opponents. Buddhist literature before the time of Bhāviveka was ripe with controversy. Sometimes the opponents were explicitly identified; more often their identities remained obscure. But, as far as we know, Bhāviveka gives the first systematic account of the controversies that divided Indian Buddhist thinkers during the classical period of the Indian Mahāyāna. The purpose of this book is to make Bhāviveka’s understanding of these controversies clear.

It is common to begin a Sanskrit commentary with a statement of its subject matter (abhidhēya), its purpose (prayaścita), and the connection (sambandha) between the two. In a narrow sense, the subject matter of this book is obvious. This is a book about a book. Or, more accurately, it is a book about a portion of a book. It provides an edition, translation, notes, and introductory analysis to the two chapters of Bhāviveka’s text that deal with his Buddhist opponents. For some readers, it will be enough simply to gain access to Bhāviveka’s text. These two chapters provide an extraordinarily detailed picture of Buddhist thought and practice in what may have been one of the most creative and diverse periods in the history of the Buddhist tradition. Bhāviveka saw the big picture, but he also had an eye for unusual and telling details. As several scholars have noted, Bhāviveka gives one of the most precise and detailed accounts of the function of mantras, dhāraṇīs, and viyās in any Indian text before the arrival of Tantric traditions. For anyone who has wondered whether a Bodhisattva can ever be justified in committing murder, Bhāviveka gives a thorough analysis of the question based on traditional sources. He also explains what happens when a Bodhisattva who commits murder is scourged, however briefly, by the flames of hell. Is it acceptable for a monk to pay homage to a lay person? Bhāviveka has the answer, as he does to other questions about the relationship between the Śrāvakas and the adherents of the Mahāyāna. Are the different canonical collections of the eighteen schools complete? If not, what is the relationship between their canonical literature and the sutras of the Mahāyāna? Is there anything distinctive about the way Bodhisattvas practice the eightfold path? What is the status of a Bodhisattva vow? In a period when texts seldom seem to come down to earth in the practice of actual Buddhist communities, Bhāviveka gives such a lively account of the arguments that set one Buddhist group against another that it is possible to imagine for a moment how it might have felt to enter a living Buddhist debate.

But the significance of Bhāviveka’s text goes beyond these myriad differences to the status of “difference” itself. In this respect, he helps correct one of the most common misconceptions about Buddhist thought. Buddhism is often viewed as a tradition that tolerates differences. In the first chapter of Walpola Rāhula’s classic introductory text, *What the Buddha Taught*, Rāhula says: “the tolerance allowed by the Buddha is astonishing to the student of the history of religion” (9). Rāhula illustrates this point with a story about Upāli, a disciple of Mahāvira the jina who is sent to the Buddha to engage him in debate. When Upāli and the Buddha finish their discussion, Upāli decides that

the Buddha is right and asks to be accepted as a disciple. The Buddha tells him to slow down, consider his position more deeply, and show respect for his former teacher. Rāhula associates this spirit of cautious tolerance with an edict of the Buddhist emperor Aśoka that reads (in Rāhula’s translation) as follows: “One should not honour only one’s own religion and condemn the religions of others, but one should honour others’ religions for this or that reason. So doing, one helps one’s own religion to grow and renders service to the religions of others too . . . Let all listen, and be willing to listen to the doctrines professed by others” (Rāhula 4-5).

Few readers are likely to be surprised by Rāhula’s message. Many students of Buddhism come to the tradition expecting a message of tolerance and peace. As many scholars have noted, one of the most pervasive stereotypes of Indian religion in general is that it cultivates tolerance of opposing views. But newcomers to the Buddhist tradition soon discover that there was as much variety and disagreement in the early Buddhist community as there is in other religious communities. And these disagreements only intensified with the appearance of the Mahāyāna. Not only did the Mahāyāna differentiate itself aggressively from earlier traditions, it also generated its own internal process of differentiation and critique. It did not take long for these complex controversies to call for something like a Buddhist theory of difference. When the monastery on the eastern mountain develops views that are different from those that are held by the monastery on the western mountain, which differences are significant? Where do the differences come from? Where do the differences lead? How are the differences classified? Are there kinds of differences more threatening than others? Are some ideas or practices right and others wrong, or are all of them equally valid? If so, what determines their validity? Do some differences go so far beyond the pale that they should be suppressed? And does the process of understanding and analyzing differences have any value? Does it give a person more power or more status? Does it make a person more wise?

In the face of questions like these, mere tolerance is not enough. It may work well if another group of monks dyes its robes the color of copper rather than saffron, and little seems to ride on the difference. But if the monks with copper-colored robes think that nirvāṇa is an absence when others think that nirvāṇa is a presence, it is a different story, especially in a tradition where “right understanding” plays a crucial role in the path to nirvāṇa. Differences about “rightness” pose serious questions. An obvious question is how the two positions are related. Is it possible, for example, that the rightness of one position excludes the rightness of the other? In comparative philosophy, this option would be called an exclusive view of truth. Another possibility might be that both positions are right but one position is better, in the sense that it subsumes or replaces the other. This option is often called an inclusive view of truth. A third possibility might be that both positions are right from certain perspectives or in certain ways. This option might be called a relative view of truth. Of these three options, the only one that seems to correspond to what we generally mean by “tolerance” is the third, in the sense that
it treats other positions as having equal value. But this option also is the most problematic. It is not clear that anyone can hold this position in a thorough or rigorous way. Even the idea of a "rigorous relativism" seems to stretch the limits of language. What is clear, however, is that exclusive and inclusive views of truth fall short of an ideal of tolerance, although each view falls short in a different way.

Some kinds of exclusivism preclude conversation. It is not difficult to imagine a situation in which one person finds another's position so deeply mistaken that there is no possibility of further discussion. But it is not impossible for even the most radically exclusive positions to enter into dialogue if they share a common tradition of discourse and a common commitment to truth. Bhāviveka reports, for example, that the Śrāvakas said: "The Mahāyāna is not the Buddha's teaching and was taught by Māra to mislead foolish and ignorant people." This is like calling someone else's scripture the work of the devil; it does not seem to leave much room for negotiation. But in this case the appearances are deceptive. Judging from Bhāviveka's account of this dispute, the Śrāvakas gave reasons for their position, cited examples, and entered into a serious discussion of its truth. They may have disagreed about the authenticity of the Mahāyāna, but they did not disagree about the canons of rationality and the formal requirements of a valid argument. For whatever the reason, they also seem to have agreed that it was worthwhile to argue their position in a public setting. Their approach to the Mahāyāna may have been "exclusive," but it was exclusivism with a difference. They shared enough with their opponents to take part in a common discussion of the truth.

The situation appears even more complex when it comes to the various traditions of Indian inclusivism. Paul Hacker has pointed out that the apparent tolerance of Indian religion usually boils down to some type of inclusivism (Halbfass 1988: 403). For example, the Hindu sage Tulsīdās tells a story about how the god Śiva was so impressed by Rāma that he became one of his worshippers. The effect of the story is to incorporate the worship of Śiva into Tulsīdās's worship of Rāma as an incarnation of Viṣṇu. A more contemporary example of this interpretive strategy is Radhakrishnan's modern reconstruction of Viṣṇu (Halbfass 1988: 405). Radhakrishnan considered other religious traditions to be "equal in their worth or essence or aim," but he understood that "the hidden goal or centre or essence of all religions is the Viṣṇu." This model acknowledges the value of different traditions, but it places them in a larger interpretive whole and reserves the key to interpretation for itself. Kendall W. Folksart has made a similar point about Jain approaches to other traditions (215-27). The Jain doctrine of anekāntavāda ("non-absolutism") has often been interpreted as the most tolerant of Indian approaches to philosophical diversity, but it too presupposes that the Jain perspective has a unique interpretive authority. In the popular Jain parable of the blind men and the elephant, each of the men may touch a different part of the elephant and grasp part of the truth, but only the Jain perspective, like the perspective of an omniscient observer, encompasses all these truths without distortion or partiality.

When people come to Bhāviveka for the first time, they expect to find a classic Indian inclusivist, and Bhāviveka seems to play the part.4 One of his most striking statements about the Buddha equates the Buddha's Dharma Body with Brahman, the ultimate reality of the Upaniṣads. Bhāviveka goes on to say that accomplished Bodhisattvas such as Avalokiteśvara and Maitreya pay homage to it.5 On the surface, this seems identical to the stance Tulsīdās took toward Śiva. What could be more inclusive than to say that great Bodhisattvas worship Brahman? But this is not the whole picture. Bhāviveka says that Avalokiteśvara and Maitreya worship Brahman correctly, and deities like Śiva and Viṣṇu do not. What counts as correct worship? These great Bodhisattvas worship Brahman with the discipline (yog) of no-worship. If this is inclusivism, it is inclusivism with a difference. Bhāviveka may "include" Brahman as an object of worship, but the proper worship of Brahman is not to worship it. Bhāviveka could just as well be saying that the tradition about Brahman is false and his own tradition is true.

Bhāviveka does not single out his Hindu opponents for special punishment. He uses the same approach to deal with the Śrāvakas' argument that the Mahāyāna teaches a different path (MHK 4.3 and commentary). Bhāviveka responds by saying that Mahāyāna practitioners follow the same noble eightfold path, they just follow it differently. Instead of "right vision," Bodhisattvas practice "no vision." Instead of "right thought," Bodhisattvas practice "no thought," and so on. If Bodhisattvas follow the same path, but practice it by not practicing it, what could it possibly mean to say that their path is the "same"? As soon as you ask this question, you have stepped into the landscape of the Mahāyāna as Bhāviveka understood it. More needs to be said about his approach to issues of "identity" and "sameness" before there can be a serious answer to this question, but Bhāviveka's inclusivism seems ironic at best. It seems just as accurate to say that he excludes his opponents' practices by inverting and negating them. But even when he negates them, he does not refuse to engage them. He treats his opponents' arguments as part of a common tradition of analysis, and this tradition allows both Bhāviveka and his opponents to take part in a rational conversation.

To say that Bhāviveka presupposes a common tradition of analysis is hardly surprising. What is language, after all, but a common tradition of discourse? But traditions ramify and become complex very quickly. Bhāviveka's simple gesture of adding a negative particle to his opponents' words invokes a rhetorical tradition of considerable antiquity, going back not only to Nāgārjuna, the founder of Bhāviveka's Madhyamaka tradition, but to the entire corpus of the Perfection of Wisdom Sūtras, the scriptural foundation of the Mahāyāna. The ubiquity of this rhetorical gesture suggests that it is more than a stylistic peculiarity. It involves a relationship between different communities. Jonathan Z. Smith has commented on this issue in his study of taxonomy and difference: "Difference is rarely something simply to be noted; it is, most often, something in which one has a stake. Above all, it is a political matter" (2004: 252). When Radhakrishnan said that non-dualistic Vedanta transcended and subsumed all other
religions, he was talking not just about metaphysics and epistemology, but about his vision of India as a political entity in which different communities could be respected for their differences but also subsumed into a single nation. Along with this claim about India came a claim about status and integrity, about a nation that could hold its own among other nations. The challenges of a twentieth-century struggle for nationhood do not have a strong counterpart in sixth-century India, when Bhāviveka attempted to gain the rhetorical upper hand over his Hindu and Buddhist opponents, but there was no shortage of competition for what Jonathan Z. Smith has called “a hierarchy of prestige and the concomitant political ranking of superordinate and subordinate” (253). In the ironic exclusion / inclusion of Bhāviveka’s “no” lay a claim to intellectual priority: the presumption that he could appropriate others’ words, invert their meaning, and absorb them into his own system of interpretation. Whether this rhetorical practice corresponds to an identifiable social practice remains to be seen. It is enough for the moment simply to note that the rhetoric of Bhāviveka’s argument raises a series of practical questions about Bhāviveka’s cultural setting, beginning with some of the simplest questions of all: Who were these competing thinkers, and why did they compete the way they did?

We pose these questions as if they were ours, but they also must have occupied the minds of Bhāviveka and his contemporaries. To see others as different and to grasp the difference is also to see ourselves reflected in the face or the words of the other. What did Bhāviveka see in himself when he responded to his Buddhist opponents? We have already seen one possible answer. He articulated a practice of negation, with emphasis on the word “practice” as well as the word “negation.” He even referred to it as a form of yoga. Does this mean that his philosophical arguments could be used to achieve a salvific goal? If so, how? And how did the “Śrāvakas” and “Yogācāras” go astray? Were their differences defined by texts, by doctrines, by practices, or by their institutional affiliations? Did the terms “Śrāvaka” and “Yogācāra” represent schools, traditions, sects, or nothing more than a series of isolated thinkers? And how did these opponents become so important that they provoked Bhāviveka’s refutation? All these questions lead us into the intellectual and social world that lies behind Bhāviveka’s text. They also invite us to consider issues that come up throughout the Buddhist world whenever Buddhists differentiate themselves from one another and attempt to set themselves apart as authentic bearers of Buddhist tradition. Bhāviveka’s text is a study in Buddhist “difference,” but it also is a study of Buddhist identity, with all the paradoxical implications raised by the concept of identity in a tradition that so often asserts that there is no identity at all.

THE AUTHOR

BHĀVIVEKA AND THE CULTURE OF DEBATE

To investigate the problem of Buddhist identity, an obvious way to begin is to consider the identity of Bhāviveka himself. Unfortunately, in this corner of the tradition obvious questions often yield shadowy answers. Bhāviveka’s life, like the lives of other Indian scholars, is shrouded in legend. The earliest available account of Bhāviveka comes from The Great Tang Dynasty Record of the Western Regions by Xuanzang, the Chinese scholar-monk who visited India in the early decades of the seventh century. Xuanzang tells us that Bhāviveka lived in south India, in the region that is now Andhra Pradesh, and was a master of scholarly texts. When he heard about the reputation of Dharmapāla, one of the leading Yogācāra philosophers of the sixth century, he decided to travel north to the Ganges Basin to engage him in debate. When Bhāviveka arrived, he sent his students to Dharmapāla to issue the challenge. Xuanzang summarizes Dharmapāla’s response in the following way: “The human world is illusory and life is ephemeral. As I practice religion with diligence and sincerity all day long, I am short of time to have a discussion.” Frustrated by Dharmapāla’s rejection, Bhāviveka returned home and, according to Xuanzang, engaged in a series of practices that were intended to help him stay in this world long enough to greet the arrival of the future Buddha Maitreya.

Like the stories of many Indian scholars, this account of Bhāviveka offers little reliable information, but it does give us a sense of the controversial setting in which Xuanzang placed Bhāviveka. Xuanzang was a student in Dharmapāla’s lineage and was sympathetic to Dharmapāla’s position. It is likely that the details of the story were meant to cast Bhāviveka in an unflattering light. Not only did Bhāviveka fail to defeat Dharmapāla, he failed even to draw him into debate. The idea that Bhāviveka tried to wait for Maitreya just adds further irony to his fruitless journey. Maitreya was considered the source of the Yogācāra tradition. To wait and study the Dharma with Maitreya would be a good way for Bhāviveka to get a stern tutorial about the views he found objectionable in the works of Dharmapāla, or so Xuanzang might imagine. About most of this we can only guess. But Xuanzang’s story is not an isolated legend; it shares important features with other traditions about Indian scholars in Bhāviveka’s time and with the well-known works of Bhāviveka himself. When we put all of this evidence together, we get quite a rich picture of the life that would have been lived by a scholar in Bhāviveka’s intellectual world.

If Bhāviveka traveled north to debate an opponent, he was not the first southern scholar who was reputed to have made such a journey. One of Bhāviveka’s best-known predecessors was Aryadeva, a disciple of Nāgārjuna and a founding figure of Bhāviveka’s Madhyamaka tradition. (Aryadeva’s dates are obscure, but he seems to have been active in the second or third century CE.) According to the Madhyamaka commentator
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Candrakīrti, Āryadeva was born in the island of Sinhala (the modern Śrī Lanka) and came to south India to study with Nāgārjuna (Ruegg 1981: 50). Xuanzang tells us that Āryadeva eventually left Nāgārjuna and traveled north to study and debate his opponents. At one point he came to Prayāga, at the confluence of the Yamunā and the Ganges, joined a monastery, and debated an eloquent but irritating “heretical Brahman,” who was fond of leading his opponents in a process of circular reasoning. The most engaging story about Āryadeva, however, is associated with the city of Pātaliputra, where he came to the rescue of a Buddhist monastery that had fallen on hard times. A group of scholarly “heretics” (the generic word for a non-Buddhist) arrived at the door of the monastery and asked the monks to ring the bell and defend their views in debate. With the king functioning as judge, the Buddhists were defeated and told that they no longer had the right to call an assembly for debate. When news of the defeat reached Nāgārjuna in South India, Nāgārjuna said that he would go to person to defend the monastery. Āryadeva offered to go instead. The heretics in Pātaliputra heard that he was coming and tried to bar him from the city, but Āryadeva entered the city in disguise and spent the night on the terrace that housed the monastery’s bell. In the morning he rang the bell, and a boisterous debate ensued. In less than twelve days, Āryadeva refuted the heretics “through analysis” and restored the prestige of the monastery.

These itinerant southern scholars were not limited to members of the Madhyamaka tradition. Plausible traditions locate the birth of Dignāga (known as “the father of medieval logic in India”) and of Dharmapāla in the vicinity of Kāñci in South India. Both scholars were known as powerful debaters and spent significant portions of their careers traveling, studying, and teaching in the north. Xuanzang showed his reverence for Dharmapāla in one of his most intriguing stories about debate. In this story, Xuanzang tells us that there was a king in the city of Kāśāpurā who supported “heretical” views and tried to humiliate the Buddhists by sponsoring a debate. He invited a talented “Śāstra-master” to compose a text, consisting of a thousand stanzas denouncing the Buddhist Dharma, then he summoned the monks to debate. According to Xuanzang’s account, the stakes were high. If the Śāstra-master won, the Dharma would be destroyed; if the Buddhists won, the Śāstra-master would cut out his tongue. The Buddhists were frightened and could not decide what to do. Like managers of a beleaguered boxing team, they could not think of anyone to send into the ring against such a formidable opponent. Dharmapāla was then just a young monk. When no one else volunteered, he offered to accept the challenge. Since he was so young, he said, it would be no disgrace to lose; and if he won, his victory would show that the monastery enjoyed special “spiritual protection.”

Dharmapāla situated himself on “the seat of discussion” and listened attentively while the Śāstra-master recited his critique. When he finished, Dharmapāla smiled and said: “I have won. Shall I recite your book backwards, or shall I recite it with the phrases transposed in order?” The master said that he would be happy if Dharmapāla would simply recite the text in its normal sequence and explain its meaning. Dharmapāla then gave a perfect imitation of the scholar’s voice, right down to the rhythm and intonation of his words, recited the text, and explained its meaning. The master was so overwhelmed that he gave up the debate and offered to cut out his tongue. Dharmapāla said that he would rather have the master correct his mistaken views. With a little coaching from Dharmapāla, he complied. To complete the transformation, the king also “gave up the erroneous way” and accepted the Dharma.

With these stories in mind, it is not implausible to think that Bhāviveka was one of many scholars who took to the road, like other itinerant debaters, and tried to confront their opponents in debate. Nor is it implausible to think that one of Bhāviveka’s most important controversies took place with the Yogācāra philosophers of the sixth century, represented in Xuanzang’s account by the elusive Dharmapāla. Bhāviveka’s dispute with the Yogācāra also figures in a much later account of Bhāviveka’s life in The History of Indian Buddhism (rgya gar chos byung) by the Tibetan historian Tāranātha (1575-1634). Tāranātha tells us that Bhāviveka (or Bhavya) was born in a princely family in South India, traveled north to study Mahāyāna sūtras and the works of Nāgārjuna, then returned to the south where he became a successful scholar and leader of some fifty monasteries. Tāranātha adds the following comment about his relationship with his Yogācāra opponents:

Before the arrival of these two masters [Buddhapālita and Bhāviveka], all adherents of the Mahāyāna remained under the same teaching. Then these two masters said: “The approaches of Nāgārjuna and Asanga are different. Asanga’s approach does not teach the Middle Path; it is just mind-only. We accept Nāgārjuna’s approach and do not deviate from it.” And they refused the other position. After the death of Bhāviveka (legs ldan), the adherents of the Mahāyāna divided into two schools (od) and began to debate.

Tāranātha goes on to explain that after Bhāviveka’s death, his students focused their critique on Śūraṃmati, a Yogācāra scholar who wrote a commentary on Nāgārjuna’s Root Verses on the Middle Way (Mālamahāyamakahārikāḥ). When copies of Śūraṃmati’s work were circulated in south India, Bhāviveka’s students took offense and traveled north to challenge their opponents in debate. The journey was similar to the one reported by Xuanzang, but Tāranātha’s sources claimed a different outcome: not only did Bhāviveka’s students manage to confront their opponents face to face, but they went home victorious.

These stories help us understand at least one of the striking features of Bhāviveka’s text. While later Indian compendium function largely as summaries of basic teachings (Haribhadra’s Compendium of Six Views, for example, distinguishes each view according
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to its deity and its principles of reality)." Bhāviveka follows the format of a debate. For
ten or twenty verses in each chapter, he presents the opponent's position (like the pos-
tion that Dharmapāla memorized and repeated), then Bhāviveka spends the rest of
the chapter refuting the opponent's arguments. His response often takes the form of
an imaginary dialogue: "If the opponent (whom he sometimes refers to simply as 'you')
says such and such, one (or 'we') should respond as follows." The text gives a useful
account of the basic principles of each tradition, but it reads less like a formal treatise
and more like a manual of debate. It is as if Bhāviveka were attempting to give us a
verbal snapshot of Dharmapāla's encounter with the unruly "heretic." The difference is
that Bhāviveka does more than repeat the opponent's position; he gives a full refutation.

Here Jonathan Z. Smith's comment that difference is a "political matter" takes on
a local habitation and a name. The location is the conflict for patronage and prestige
in sixth- and seventh-century India, and the name is debate. Once the text has been
situated in this context, it provokes a whole new set of questions. How did someone like
Dharmapāla prepare for debate? Had he already memorized parts of the opponent's
position, or did he come to the debate completely cold? What role did kings or wealthy
patrons play in sponsoring the debate or adjudicating its outcome? What could be won
or lost? Were there any regional differences in the culture of debate? (Was the south
Indian origin of many of these debate merely accidental, or did it reflect a regional
variation in scholarly practice?) What issues did the debaters debate? What were the
rules? How were the rules enforced? Could the rules be broken? Were there ways to
pressure opponents apart from sheer intellectual persuasion? What were the schools,
lineages, textual traditions, or modes of affiliation that came most frequently into con-
flict? Why did they conflict? How were they defined? Answers to many of these ques-
tions will emerge in the course of this study. For the moment, it is enough to notice the
complexity of these questions by considering three more stories: one from the closing
months of Xuanzang's journey to India, another from the Tamil Buddhist poetic narra-
tive known as the Manimekalai, and a third from Jain lives of the scholars Haribhadra
and Akalanka.

In his opening comments about Indian culture, at the beginning of the second fas-
cicle of The Record of the Western Regions, Xuanzang explains that debates played a cen-
tral role in Indian monastic life. This was not a culture where monks listened silently
to their teachers and then wrote exams to show how much they understood. They dis-
played their learning in public debate, and the stakes were high. Xuanzang says:

Assemblies for discussion are often held to test the intellectual capacity of
the monks, in order to distinguish the superior from the inferior, and to
reject the dull and promote the bright. Those who can deliberate on the
subtle sayings, and glorify the wonderful theories with refined diction
and quick eloquence, may ride richly caparisoned elephants with hosts

of attendants preceding and following behind them. But those to whom
the theories are taught in vain, or who have been defeated in a debate,
explaining few principles in a verbose way, or distorting the teachings
with language that is merely pleasant to the ear, are daubed with ocher or
chalk in the face, while dust is scattered over the body, and are expelled
to the wilderness, or discarded into ditches. In this way the good and the
evil are distinguished, and the wise and the ignorant are disclosed."

Xuanzang's comments about the significance of debate are confirmed as the narra-
tive unfolds, whether it is in the stories about individual scholars, like Aryadeva or
Dharmapāla, or in Xuanzang's account of the organization of individual monasteries.
Even to enter some of the more important monastic centers required a mastery of basic
dialectical skills. In Nālandā, for example, where Xuanzang spent some of his most pro-
ductive time, scholars visiting from other regions were challenged by the gatekeeper.
Only those who showed knowledge of "ancient and contemporary learning" were
allowed to enter.19 Xuanzang reports that when visitors attempted to join in debate,
"seven or eight out of ten flee in defeat." The rest risk disgrace when they come under
further interrogation. Only a few talented scholars have "the retentive memory and
good virtue" to rise in influence and maintain the reputation of the monastery. Among
these scholars, it seems, was Xuanzang himself.

The best account of Xuanzang's own scholarly prowess comes not from his own
Record of the Western Regions, but, understandably enough, from the Biography of Xuanzang
by his disciple Hui Li. The story begins with a teacher named Prajñāgupta, who once had
been a brahmin in south India and had participated in a royal consecration.20 After
developing expertise in the discipline of the Buddhist Sāṃśārita school, he wrote a text
in seven hundred stanzas attacking the Mahāyāna. When King Harṣa (known in the
story as Śilādiya) was on an expedition in eastern India, a group of scholars showed
him the text and said: "This is our teaching. Could there be any Mahāyāna follower
who could refute a single word of it?" As a patron of Nālandā, King Harṣa accepted
the challenge and asked the monks at Nālandā for someone to defend the Mahāyāna.
Śīlabhadra, the monastery's leading scholar, appointed a committee made up of
Sāgaramati, Jñānaprabha, Śīlāprabha, and the gifted Chinese visitor Xuanzang. The
three Indian scholars doubted whether they could meet the challenge, but Xuanzang
reassured them. He said that he had studied the Hinayāna in China and Kashmir and
knew that they had nothing to fear.

At this point in the story, Hui Li digresses and tells us about a Lokāyata (an Indian
materialist) who arrived at the door of the monastery, posted fourteen points, and said:
"If anybody is able to refute any one point of my argument, I shall cut off my head
to apologize!" Xuanzang asked a servant to take the theses down and trample them,
then he summoned the Lokāyata and gave him a lecture about the shortcomings of a

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series of rival traditions, including Śaiva ascetics and Jains, as well as the Śāṅkhyas and Vaishiskas. Huili pays particular attention to the arguments against the Śāṁkhyas view that material nature (prakṛti) is made up of three strands: luminosity (śāntu), passion (rajas), and dark inertia (tamas). Xuanzang claimed that if material nature is a composite entity, it cannot be ultimately real, and if all things are made up of the same three strands, there cannot be any differences among them. These arguments are relatively commonplace and are not unanswerable, but they were enough, by Huili’s account, for the Lokāyata to concede defeat. In a gesture of magnanimity, Xuanzang told his opponent that he did not have to take his own life. All he had to do was act as Xuanzang’s servant.

This gesture turned out to be fortuitous. To prepare for Harṣa’s debate, Xuanzang asked the Lokāyata whether he had ever studied the Śāṁśītiya text. He said that he had. In fact, he had heard lectures about it on five separate occasions. Xuanzang worked through the text with him and wrote a refutation in sixteen hundred stanzas entitled simply: “The Refutation of Wrong Views.” Unfortunately neither this text nor the one that it criticizes seems to have survived. When they finished studying the text, Xuanzang released the Lokāyata from his obligation and sent him on his way.

This act of generosity, too, turned out to be fortuitous. As Huili turns the page and begins a new fascicle of the text, the Lokāyata has made his way to Kāmarūpa in Eastern India and sung the praises of Xuanzang to the king. The king responds by sending a message to Śrilahadra inviting the Chinese scholar to visit him in Eastern India. After passing messages back and forth, Xuanzang agrees to make the trip and gets caught in a tug of war between two kings: King Kumāra of Kāmarūpa and King Harṣa of Kanyakubija in Magadha. Xuanzang gives a succinct account of their negotiations: “At first I was invited by King Kumāra to proceed from the country of Magadh to the country of Kāmarūpa. At that time King Śrilahadra was making an inspection tour in the country of Kajunghira, and he sent an order to King Kumāra, saying, ‘It befits you to come promptly with the Śramaṇa, a guest from a distant land, to Nalanda, to attend an assembly.’ The purpose of the assembly was to discuss the “The Refutation of the Mahāyāna,” the text to which Xuanzang had already written a reply.

King Harṣa sailed up the Ganges with Xuanzang and called an assembly of eighteen kings, three thousand Buddhist monks, and two thousand brahmins and Jains in a hall specially built for the occasion. When the day came for the debate, King Harṣa and King Kumāra, dressed as the gods Indra and Brahmā, led an immense procession to the debating ground. Behind King Harṣa rode Xuanzang on a royal elephant, surrounded by jewels and flowers. Behind Xuanzang came three hundred more elephants with members of the royal family, chief ministers, and honored guests. At the debating ground, Xuanzang was invited to present his teaching, and opponents were invited to respond. In the face of this display of royal power, it is not surprising that no one rose to the challenge. Huili says that a number of Xuanzang’s disgruntled opponents attempted to assassinate him instead, but they were easily defeated. The story ends with the king offering Xuanzang a large financial reward and declaring that Xuanzang had established the correct doctrine.

Even through the hagiographic haze, it is possible to recognize in this story some of the features that characterized Xuanzang’s own account of monastic debate. Xuanzang had indicated that debate was the key to a successful scholarly career. An effective debater had to be familiar not just with different Buddhist traditions, but also with non-Buddhist rivals, including the Lokāyatas, Jains, Śāivas, Śāṅkhyas, and Vaishiskas. Scholars moved around the country, studying with experts in other traditions and debating with their opponents. Preparation was important. It is conceivable that someone like Dharmapāla could listen to a hundred stanzas and repeat them verbatim, but a more prudent practice would have been to prepare the way Xuanzang did, by studying the arguments in advance. Ideally a debater could rely on someone who already knew the arguments. But in the end, the text yielded to an oral performance, where success depended on eloquence, conciseness, a voracious memory, and careful mastery of the opponents’ positions, to say nothing of the ability to sway an audience and mobilize the support of powerful patrons. Huili may not be entirely trustworthy when he attributes such extravagance to these scholarly confrontations, but it is hard not to be impressed by the prestige that he associated with these public performances. It is as if itinerant debaters were the rock stars and sports heroes of classical India. Their debates seem to have drawn enthusiastic audiences, and the winners were showered with adulation and wealth.

Huili’s picture of the significance of debate is supported by a text that seems at first to be an unlikely source for the study of scholarly practices: the Tamil Buddhist narrative known as the Manimekalai. This text is datable, within a certain margin of error, to the sixth century, when Bhāviveka flourished in South India. It tells the story of Manimekalai, the illegitimate daughter of a courtier, who goes through a series of adventures until she finally enters a monastery and takes up the life of a Buddhist ascetic. The early chapters of the text explore the complexity of karma and the vagaries of love; the final chapters shift register and explore the complexity of religious diversity and the rules of debate.

Manimekalai’s journey begins in the city of Vaṭāri, where her adoptive mother Kaṇṭakī tells her: “Dear child, with your scented hair! The time has now come for you to go and visit the adepts of the various religions, those who use the most skillful arguments. You must try honestly to learn the portion of truth that each religion may include. If it then seems to you that none of them leads to transcendent truth, you may dedicate your life to following unswervingly the rules (yama) announced by the Buddha.” Manimekalai begins with a Mimamsaka who teaches her the means of valid knowledge (pramāṇa). Armed with this basic knowledge, she visits representatives of
nine other traditions: an exponent of Śaivism, a Brahmacādīn (who holds that Brahma is the creator of the world), a worshipper of Vīṣṇu/Nārāyaṇa, an exponent of the Veda, an Ājīvika, a Nṛgrantha or Jain, an exponent of the Sāṃkhya, a Vaishēsika, and a Bhumīvādīn (a variety of Indian materialist). Realizing that none of their doctrines meets the test of truth, she refuses even to engage them in conversation.

Her education takes another step forward when she arrives in Kāśā and meets Aravaṇa, a Buddhist teacher who offers what she considers the definitive teaching. Like the Mīmāṃsaka, Aravaṇa begins with a discussion of epistemology, but this time the focus is not the means of knowledge in general but the structure of a valid syllogism, the principal tool of debate. Aravaṇa tells Manimekalai about the classic five-member syllogism, familiar in Nāya sources, then explains the Buddhist theory of the three-member syllogism. Whether Aravaṇa’s theory of logical procedure is identical to the logical innovations of Dignāga is apparently unclear, but the text certainly reflects the style of argument associated with Dignāga and his followers. Once Aravaṇa has instructed Maṇimekalai about the process of argument, he concludes with an account of the twelve-fold chain of dependent co-arising (pratītyasamutpāda) and the four noble truths. The text ends by saying that Aravaṇa leads Maṇimekalai to the truth through the stages of hearing (śrutī), thinking (cintāṇa), repeated practice (bhāvanā), and vision (dārśana), and “Maṇimekalai, beautiful as a doll, having put on the monastic habit, henceforth led the life of austerity that is indispensable for attaining wisdom and being free of the faults that bind us to the interminable cycle of birth and death.”

For someone who is familiar with Indian Buddhism, the most striking aspect of this story is not that Maṇimekalai would set out on a journey in search of wisdom. This is a feature of Buddhist stories throughout the Buddhist world. (The journey of the young man Sudhana in the Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra is an obvious parallel.) What is striking is that this quest for wisdom involves the study of epistemology, the challenge of religious diversity, and the procedures of logical argument. Anne E. Monius sees this aspect of Maṇimekalai’s story as a general feature of sixth-century Tamil literary culture, which, in her words, was characterized by “rivalry, or more specifically, by competition among various philosophical or religious worldviews.” Monius links this feature of the Tamil tradition to the literary rivalries that were given dramatic expression at the same time in the pages of satirical Sanskrit dramas. With the story of Xuangzang in mind, this aspect of south Indian culture comes as no surprise. Whether we look at southern India or the Ganges Basin, the sixth and seventh centuries seem to have been characterized by intense inter- and intra-religious rivalries. The literary and philosophical traditions not only reflected these rivalries, but provided a setting where these rivalries could be played out. Why would Maṇimekalai learn the rules of logic to lay the groundwork for wisdom? One simple answer is that in sixth- and seventh-century Indian culture it was only the rules of logic that allowed one tradition to claim dominance over another in the sphere of public debate. Without mastering these rules, how could anyone be sure that the so-called “wisdom” being offered by a rival group was not just another form of folly?

When success as a debater depends not just on natural ability but on scholarly preparation, it is no surprise to come across stories of scholars who disguised themselves in order to infiltrate the schools of their rivals. In Phyllis Granoff’s study of the Jain lives of Haribhadra, there is a story about two brothers, Akalanka and Niskalanka, who masqueraded as Buddhists to study with a Buddhist teacher at Mahābodhi (Bodh Gaya). One day the teacher discovered that someone had corrected his quotation of a Jain verse. He took this to mean that a Jain imposter had hidden among his students. To expose the impostor, he tried two tricks. One was to make a drawing of the Jina on the floor and ask his students to step on it. Another was to scatter them in the middle of the night and find out which deity they called on for help. The second trick was the one that worked. The two brothers were caught off guard and called out the name of the Jina. The teacher then imprisoned them, intending to kill them, but the two brothers managed to escape. Niskalanka was caught and killed, while Akalanka took refuge with a sympathetic Jain queen. Eventually a dispute arose with a Buddhist monk over the conduct of a Jain festival, and Akalanka was drawn into debate. At first, with supernatural intervention from Tārā, the Buddhist monk managed to hold his own. But a Jain goddess named Cakravartidevi appeared to Akalanka and told him how Tārā could be defeated. The story ends with a resounding defeat for the Buddhist monk and his protective deity.

According to Phyllis Granoff, this story and stories like it circulated widely in Jain and Buddhist communities. Like the Maṇimekalai and the story of Xuangzang’s triumphant debate, they offer little reliable historical evidence about the lives of the scholars who figure in their pages. But they do help us picture the literary and scholarly practices of the communities that produced them. In this way, they help us understand the significance of the debate culture that formed Bhāviveka’s account of the philosophical controversies of sixth-century India. These controversies had serious intellectual, institutional, and personal consequences, and much was at stake in the debate.

The Problem of Authenticity

One of the perennial problems in the study of Indian Buddhist sources has to do with the authenticity of the text. The chronological relationship of different authors is often uncertain, and textual transmission is obscure. In many cases, it is even unclear what it means to say that a certain person is an "author." As is true of some of the major works in the canon
of Greek philosophy, the Buddhist texts that come down to us may not even be the written work of the masters themselves, but transcriptions of oral presentations, with all of the attendant opportunities for copyists or students to add their own glosses or disrupt the text with their own infelicities or misunderstandings. The "original" texts may then have been supplemented, interpolated, or unwittingly corrupted by the hands of later commentators and copyists. All of these uncertainties are compounded several times over when the original Sanskrit has been lost and we have access only to the Tibetan or Chinese translations.

When we attempt to reconstruct Bhāviveka's response to the philosophical challenges of sixth-century India, it is important to know which works he is likely to have written, but it also is important to recognize that any judgment about authenticity is based only on a complex set of probabilities. In the end, especially when it comes to particular passages, there is no substitute for the hard discipline of philology to distinguish spurious readings from readings that seem to reflect the mind and word of the master.

The gold standard for any discussion of Bhāviveka's works is *The Lamp of Wisdom (Prajñāpāramitā)*, Bhāviveka's commentary on Nāgarjuna's *Root Verses on the Middle Way (Mālamadhyamakakārikā)*, abbreviated MMK.20 This commentary no longer survives in Sanskrit, apart from occasional quotations in other texts, but it was the target of a pointed critique by Bhāviveka's rival, Candrakīrti, and it was the subject of an extensive subcommentary by Avalokiteśvara (śīla ras gege brtul abugs).21 For anyone who has the perseverance to read Avalokiteśvara and Bhāviveka side by side, *The Lamp of Wisdom* is eminently readable and provides one of the most useful resources not only for the interpretation of Madhyamaka thought, but for the study of Madhyamaka approaches to other philosophical traditions.

The second major work that can be ascribed with some certainty to Bhāviveka is *The Verses on the Heart of the Middle Way (Madhyamakabhāratayakārikā)*, abbreviated MHK. *The Lamp of Wisdom* may be Bhāviveka's most important Madhyamaka work, but *The Heart of the Middle Way* gives the most impressive account of the range and depth of his own philosophical scholarship. Freed from the constraints of commenting on the words of the master, Bhāviveka was able to present Madhyamaka thought in a way that reflected not only the distinctive philosophical practices of the sixth century but also his own vision of the relationship between the Madhyamaka and other traditions of Indian thought.

The text begins with three chapters that represent Bhāviveka's own philosophy:

1. Not Giving Up the Mind of Awakening (bodhicittaśaārīryaṃ)
2. Taking the Vow of an Ascetic (muñcitaratvanāśrayaṃ)
3. Seeking the Knowledge of Reality (tattvajñānāśrayaṃ)

These three chapters may have functioned as a separate text entitled "Introduction to the Ambrosia of Reality" (tattvāmyṛtāvataṃ).22 This possibility is supported by the opening verses of the first chapter, where Bhāviveka states the purpose of the text that follows:

1.4 mahābodhayu kṛta śāhāṃ pariñāmīdayādikāyaḥ /
tattvāmyṛtāvataṃ laksitāṃ kīṃcid ucyate //
1.5 bodhicittāparītya muñcitaratvanāśrayaḥ /
tattvajñānāśrayaṃ ceti caryā sarvārthasiddhyāye //

With a vow to bring about the welfare of others and with mind focused on great awakening, I say what I can to introduce the ambrosia of reality. "Not giving up the mind of awakening, taking the vow of an ascetic, and seeking the knowledge of reality" are a practice that is meant to achieve the welfare of all.

Whether these chapters were meant to function as a separate text or not, Bhāviveka clearly thought of them as a unified system. The parts of the text that we are accustomed to calling "philosophy" (including his reflections on the means of knowledge and the nature of reality) are pieces of a larger picture, to be combined with the practice of meditation, devotion, and other forms of moral discipline. Whether the same can be said about Bhāviveka's chapters on the views of his opponents is an issue that will be discussed later in this introduction.

After Bhāviveka has given this account of his own philosophy, he devotes two chapters to his Buddhist opponents:

4. Introduction to the Analysis of Reality According to the Śrāvakas (śrāvakatattvantanāśrayaṃ)
5. Introduction to the Analysis of Reality According to the Yogācāras (yogācāratattvantanāśrayaṃ)

These chapters are followed by four chapters on his Hindu opponents:

6. Introduction to Reality According to the Sāmkhyas (sāmkhyatattvantanāśrayaṃ)
7. Analysis of Reality According to the Vaiśeṣikas (vaiśeṣikatattvantanāśrayaṃ)
8. Analysis of Reality According to the Vedānta (vedāntatattvantanāśrayaṃ)
9. Introduction to the Analysis of Reality According to the Mīmāṃsā (mīmāṃsātattvantanāśrayaṃ)

The longest of these chapters, with 167 verses in the Tibetan translation, is the analysis of the Mīmāṃsā. The text concludes with a brief account of Jain views of omniscience and four verses in praise of the Buddha.
PART I: ANALYSIS

10. Exposition of the Realization of Omniscience (sarvakāyatāsiddhitvānīrodha)

11. Exposition of Praise and Characteristics (rusṭilakṣaṇanīrodha)

It is the distinctive structure of the latter portion of this text—with each chapter devoted to the position of a different opponent—that gives it such a special place in the history of Indian philosophical compendia. The earliest competing example of this type is Haribhadra’s Compendium of Six Views (saḍdharmanasaṃvartakayo), and Haribhadra’s text was not written until the eighth century. Whether there were predecessors for at least some of the key features of Bhāviveka’s text is unclear. In The Collection of the Means of Knowledge (pramāṇasamuccaya), Dignaga (early sixth century) says that a reader should consult his Nyāya-, Vaiśeṣika-, and Sāṁskṛta-parikṣās for more extensive discussion of these traditions. Since these “investigations” (parikṣā) do not survive, we cannot know whether they anticipated the chapters of Bhāviveka’s text. Even if they did, they do not seem to have been collected into a single text. Given the present state of our knowledge of Bhāviveka and his tradition, it seems legitimate to say that Bhāviveka is the source of this distinctive and influential genre of philosophical text.

But to say that Bhāviveka is responsible for the first compendium does not tell us much about what a compendium is or how it functioned in the intellectual context of sixth-century India. Ole Qvarnström has distinguished three types of “doxographical treatises.” The first of these is a familiar component of Indian religious and philosophical literature from at least the time of the Upaniṣads and the earliest Jain and Buddhist scriptures. It consists of a running dialogue between a teacher and an opponent: the opponent asks a question or poses a problem, and the teacher responds. This is “doxographical” in the sense that it records important doctrinal positions. What little we know about doctrinal diversity in ancient India comes to us in precisely this narrative form. These philosophical stories do not, however, attempt to present opponents’ positions as systematic wholes.

In the second type of doxographical treatise, each tradition is discussed in a separate chapter. Chapters begin with accounts of the opponent’s position, in the form of a pārvapakṣa or “preliminary position” (better translated simply as “objection”). Then the author deals with the pārvapakṣa in an uttarapakṣa or “response.” The distinguishing feature of this doxographical type is that it gives a systematic account of the opponent’s views. For a few verses, at least, the opponent gets to take the stage and define the terms of the debate. This type of doxographical writing strives for some degree of completeness, in the sense that it attempts to lay out the major controversial issues that might arise between two schools, and it has a certain kind of intellectual structure. It is not a series of random objections, but a systematic account of alternative philosophical views. By presenting a systematic alternative, it also elicits a systematic response. This second type of doxographical treatise can be called a true “compendium,” since it devotes a separate chapter to each philosophical tradition, and, no matter how abbreviated it may be, it strives for some degree of completeness.

The third type of doxography also presents each system in a separate chapter but does not attempt to refute them. The purpose of this doxography is simply descriptive; it does not probe for the weak points in an opponent’s position and it does not develop any kind of controversial response. The classic example of this third type of doxography is Haribhadra’s Compendium of Six Views, just as the classic example of the second is Bhāviveka’s Heart of the Middle Way.

In the Tibetan canon, Bhāviveka’s verses are accompanied by an “auto-commentary” entitled The Flame of Reason (Tarkajñāla, abbreviated TJ). Tibetan tradition ascribes this commentary to the same author who wrote the verses, and many features of the text support this judgment. The prose style of the commentary follows the precedent of The Lamp of Wisdom, it also does not introduce any obvious philosophical innovations that would associate it with a later period, and it does not seem to diverge in obvious ways from the meaning of the verses. Someone who knows the style of The Lamp of Wisdom would get the strong impression that The Flame of Reason comes from the hand of the master himself, or at least from a student who has learned to follow the master’s commentarial technique.

The most important piece of internal evidence against this impression of authenticity comes from the text’s curious practice of referring to the author of the verses as “the Master” (Tib. slob dpon / Skt. sārjya). The word “Master” is used in this way in the commentary on verse 4.2: “The Master says ‘so they say’ (kila) because he does not agree. He does not want to be defiled by the opponent’s opinions, by their alleged altruism, or even by their words.” The word “Master” is mirrored by the word “author” (Tib. bstan lobs byed pa / Skt. sāstrakāra) in the commentary on 5.2: “So they say” (kila) means that the author himself does not agree.” David Seyfort Ruegg and others have pointed out that while Sanskrit commentators frequently refer to themselves in the third person, Buddhist authors seldom refer to themselves as “Master,” leaving us to wonder whether the “Master” is one person and the author of the commentary is another. V. V. Goldhale responded to this problem by suggesting that references to “the Master” were interpolated by the Tibetan assistant who helped Atīśa with the Tibetan translation, or perhaps even by Atīśa himself. Yasunori Ejima has suggested that the word “Master” was the result of a two-stage process of redaction, in which the “Ur-Tarkajñāla” was written as an auto-commentary by the author of the verses, then the text was revised by the author of The Jewel Lamp of the Middle Way (Madhyamakaranāsāraṇātha, abbreviated MRP). The word “Master” might very well have been inserted as part of this revision.

More will be said shortly about The Jewel Lamp of the Middle Way. For the moment, the question is whether the use of the word “Master” is sufficient to dispute the authorship of The Flame of Reason. While the word is rare in Buddhist auto-commentaries, it is not rare in Sanskrit commentarial literature as a whole, as in Paññāḷi’s Mahābhāṣya
and various works of the Pūrva Mimāṃsā. When a certain point is discussed in the Mimāṃsā, three views are represented: the pārṣāvapākṣa, the uttaraṇā, and the uttarāṇā. These three positions are presented, respectively, by the "student," the "master in training," and the "master" (ācārya). The first gives the naive view, the second refutes it, and the "Master" gives the view that is decisive. We know from Bhāviveka's chapter on the Mimāṃsā that he was familiar with Mimāṃsā exegesis, and we know that he adopted terminology and stylistic conventions from other Brahmanical sources. It does not stretch the imagination to think that he would incorporate a version of this stylistic device in his own work. To add further support to this view, the end of The Flame of Reason identifies the author of the commentary as the author of the verses. The last verse of The Heart of the Middle Way says: "This text has been written in this way as the concise heart of the middle way; it is a mirror in which scholars can see reflected a multitude of sūtras." The commentary on the first half of this verse explains: "Written means that it was composed by me, the one who analyzes with wisdom. In other words, I am the Master (Tib. slob dpon / Skt. ācārya) who wrote the text (Tib. bstan bcos byed pa / Skt. śāstra-kāra)." While it is possible that this passage is an interpolation, and the Tibetan might be subject to other interpretations, it certainly seems that the author of the commentary thought of himself as the author of the verses.

In his discussion of the authorship of Bhāviveka's works, David Seyfort Ruegg cites the principle of parsimony, that "entities should not be multiplied beyond need" (1990: 65). If we follow his advice, 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. Judging from the evidence I have just outlined, 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. Ejima has suggested that portions of The Flame of Reason were revised by later hands. Gokhale made a similar point when he suggested the possibility of interpolation. The truth is that we know much less than we would like about the process of editing, copying, and transmitting a text as complex as The Flame of Reason, and what little we do know suggests that such texts often were subject to significant interpolation. Akira Saito's research on the Dunhuang recension of The Introduction to the Bodhisattva Practice (Bodhisattva-pratimana) shows that this important work went through major changes in the process of textual transmission (Saito 2000). Some of the later chapters of the The Heart of the Middle Way show significant differences between the Sanskrit version and the version that is preserved in the commentary. It seems only realistic to imagine that the commentary on The Heart of the Middle Way was subject to expansion and interpolation. This seems particularly likely in the long prose passage that follows the commentary on verse 4.35. Among other things, this passage discusses a series of "miscellaneous objections" that are introduced after the prose account of the divisions of the eighteen schools and before the resumption of the normal flow of the argument in verse 4.9. These could very easily have been inserted by a student or a later editor. If The Heart of the Middle Way and The Flame of Reason together functioned as a debater's manual, as they seem to suggest, it would have been natural for them to be expanded with the addition of new arguments. What better place to insert new arguments than in this section of unstructured prose in the middle of the text? It is quite possible that some or all of this prose passage was added by another hand. But a possibility is not a certainty. 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.

The list of works that can be confidently ascribed to the sixth-century Bhāviveka would be incomplete without mentioning The Jewel in the Hand (title restored in Sanskrit as *Karatalaratana*). This short text is available only in Xuanzang's Chinese translation (Taishō 1578), but it gives a fascinating glimpse not only of Bhāviveka's logical and rhetorical method but also of Xuanzang's mastery of Madhyamaka thought. The text focuses on only two syllogisms: "conditioned things (samskṛta) are ultimately empty, because they arise from conditions, like an illusion," and "unconditioned things (asamskṛta) are ultimately unreal, because they do not arise, like a flower in the sky." The discussion of these two arguments dwells on the standard logical problems associated with Bhāviveka's arguments, such as the way Bhāviveka claims to "accept" the existence of something that he ultimately denies. It also applies these arguments to the basic categories of the Sāṃkhya, Viśisṭa, Viibhūsika, and Yogācāra. It is possible that this discussion of the Yogācāra was the argument that drew Xuanzang to the text, since it gives a preview of the longer argument in chapter 5 of The Heart of the Middle Way. At one point, the text says that a particular argument has already been elucidated at length in the "Introduction to the Ambrosia of Reality," suggesting that The Jewel in the Hand was written between the first three chapters and the full text of The Heart of the Middle Way. The discussion of the Yogācāra contains at least passing references to many of the important points that appear in chapter 5 of The Heart of the Middle Way, such as the passage in the Bodhisattvabhiṣiktika that describes a "nihilist" (nastika) as someone who falls into bad rebirths and takes others with him. In sum, the text functions as a useful point d'appui for study of the Madhyamaka-Yogācāra controversy, especially for those who approach the controversy through the medium of Chinese.

This discussion of the authenticity of Bhāviveka's works would not be complete without considering the most problematic text in the Bhāviveka corpus: The Jewel-Lamp of the Middle Way (Madhyamkaratnapradipa, abbreviated to "Bhāvya.") This text occupies approximately thirty folios in the sDe-dge edition of the Tibetan canon and is divided into nine chapters:
PART I: ANALYSIS

1. Two Truths (satyadwaitya)
2. Mistaken Relative Wisdom (samoryakhranaprajña)
3. Correct Interpretable Relative Wisdom (nityarthatayasaṃsāntiprajña)
4. Correct Interpretable Relative Wisdom, Part 2
5. Definitive Relative Wisdom (nityārthatayasaṃsāntiprajña)
6. Ultimate Wisdom (paramārthapirajña)
7. Stages of Practice (bhāvanākrama)
8. Statement of the Greatness of the Teacher (ātaryapādamahābhraddhīhāna)
9. Advantages (amśaṃsas)

Arguments in favor of the authenticity of this text rely on two types of evidence: the text's account of its own authorship and affinities between arguments in this text and other recognized works of Bhāviveka. On the positive side of the ledger are two places where the author seems to name himself as the author of The Heart of the Middle Way and The Flame of Reason. In one of these passages, the text says: "We have avoided both extremes, so [we] also negate absence in order to teach the middle path." The text then quotes verse 3.359 of The Heart of the Middle Way: "The idea that things do not exist is not considered correct, because it is brought about by concepts, like the idea that a post is a man." The word "we" (Tib. kho bo) gives the impression that the author of the Jewel Lamp is quoting himself. The connection is stated more explicitly in an earlier chapter: "This point can be examined more extensively in The Five Aggregates of the Middle Way by the reverend Candrakīrti and in my (Tib. bride gsbis bskyod pa) Flame of Reason." The second type of evidence comes from affinities between The Jewel Lamp and other works of Bhāviveka. There are particularly close connections between the argument against the Yogācāra in chapter 4 of The Jewel Lamp, chapter 5 of The Heart of the Middle Way, and the appendix to chapter 25 of The Lamp of Wisdom. The parallels are close enough to at least suggest a common authorship, as Christian Lindner has pointed out forcefully in a number of publications. But these similarities have to be balanced by a series of troubling historical incongruities and with major differences in style and thought.

David Seyfort Ruegg summarized many of the historical problems in his article "On the authorship of some works ascribed to Bhāvaviveka/Bhavya." One kind of problem is associated with The Jewel Lamp's use of quotations from texts that come from a period later than the sixth century. In its account of the "prediction" of Nāgārjuna, the text quotes from the Mahāyānaśīlaśāstra, a text that is dated to the reign of King Gopāla, the founder of the Pāla Dynasty, who reigned in the late decades of the eighth century. The Jewel Lamp also quotes a verse from Saraha's Doṣākkha, a text that can be dated on linguistic grounds to the seventh century or thereafter. These chronological considerations place the The Jewel Lamp considerably later than the sixth-century date of the so-called "Vā-Bhāviveka."

An even more challenging problem has to do with the text's presentation of basic Madhyamika concepts. From the sixth to the eighth century, there was a discernible sequence in the development of Mahāyāna thought. Starting with a date of 500-560 for Bhāviveka, we can assign Dignāga to the early part of the sixth century, based on his importance as a source for Bhāviveka's logical method and for Bhāviveka's argument against the Yogācāra in chapter 5 of The Heart of the Middle Way. Both Dignāga and Bhāviveka were known to Xuanzang, who visited India in the early part of the seventh century. The next stage in the development of the tradition places Dharmakīrti, Dignāga's commentator, and Candrakīrti, who wrote a forceful critique of Bhāviveka's commentary on Nāgārjuna's Root Verses, somewhere in the middle of the seventh century. In the late seventh or early eighth century come two Madhyamikas, Śrīgupta and Jñānagarbha, who accept Bhāviveka's method and extend it by incorporating ideas from Dharmakīrti and perhaps also from Candrakīrti. In the mid-eighth century Śrīgupta and Jñānagarbha were followed by Sāntaraksita and Kamalāśīla, each of whom played a role in the introduction of Indian Buddhism to Tibet.

This period of almost three centuries involved substantial intellectual creativity and cannot easily be distilled into a handful of formulas, but in Bhāviveka's tradition the shift from the sixth to the eighth centuries was associated with at least two major ideas. The first of these had to do with the definition of relative truth (samyrtis). Madhyamaka works of the late seventh and early eighth centuries define relative truth (samyrtis) with a three-part formula: relative truth "satisfies when it is not analyzed" (avicārataramāṇya or avicārakaccāna), "has arisen dependently" (pratītyasamutpāda), and "is capable of effective action" (arthakriyāsamanarthā). The earliest known example of this formula is The Introduction to Reality (sattvāvatāra) by Śrīgupta. This three-part formula reappears in the work of Jñānagarbha, who is said to have been a disciple of Śrīgupta, and then in the work of Sāntaraksita who lived in the early decades of the eighth century and is said to have been a disciple of Jñānagarbha. Apart from the standard reference to the idea that all conventional entities have arisen dependently, this formula appears to be a distinctive artifact from the end of the seventh century. The phrase "capable of effective action" (arthakriyāsamanarthā) is traceable to Dharmakīrti and shows how eighth-century Madhyamikas absorbed one of the distinctive features of his philosophical method into their account of the Madhyamaka. The source of the phrase "satisfies without analysis" is more difficult to pin down, but it might be understood as a response to Candrakīrti's critique of Bhāviveka in the first chapter of his commentary on Nāgārjuna's Root Verses. Whatever its origin may have been, it played an important role in a number of eighth-century texts, including Jayarāśi's Līlagath that Anuśīhata Philological Principles (āttuvapalapāsāpīya), the only surviving text by a Lokāyata or Indian skeptic, and it became a touchstone in later Tibetan accounts of the Madhyamaka approach to relative truth.

The definition of relative truth in The Jewel Lamp follows this classic, three-part formula: "As we see it, samyrti is like the pith of a banana tree; it satisfies when it is not
analyzed, it arises from causes, and it is capable of effective action.” This formula does not appear anywhere in the works of the 6th-century Bhāviveka. If the author of The Lamp of Wisdom and The Heart of the Middle Way developed this three-part definition of relative truth, incorporating Dharmakīrti’s concept of “effective action” and the concept of “no-analysis,” and then bequeathed this definition to the Madhyamikas of the late 7th and 8th centuries, it would almost certainly be a development into the lifetime of a single individual. Such a development is conceivable, but it is not very likely.

A second distinctive feature of 8th-century Madhyamaka has to do with arguments in favor of emptiness. To prove that everything is empty, the Bhāviveka of The Lamp of Wisdom and The Heart of the Middle Way relies largely on arguments drawn from causation. The Lamp of Wisdom begins with Nāgārjuna’s argument that nothing can arise ultimately from itself, from something else, from both, or from nothing at all. The first substantial argument for emptiness in The Heart of the Middle Way also focuses on the process of causation: “Here earth and so forth do not have the identity of the gross elements, because they are created and because they have a cause and so forth, like cognition.”

In the 6th century, Madhyamaka arguments for emptiness shifted toward the problem of “the one and many.” As Tom Tillmans has pointed out (1984: 357), the “neither one nor many argument” became the central idea around which all arguments like Sāntaraksita structured their presentation of the Madhyamaka. Sāntaraksita formulates the argument like this: “The things of which we and others speak actually have no identity, because they are neither one nor many, like a reflection.” This argument is borrowed almost verbatim from his teacher’s argument, Śrīgupta: “Everyday that is internal or external actually has no identity, because it is neither one nor many, like a reflection.” Jñānagarbha’s arguments in this way maintain the reference to “one and many” but reintroduces the idea of causation: “Many do not produce one, many do not produce many, one does not produce many, and one does not produce one.” The origin of these two “one and many” arguments is broad, but it is clear from the sources that both arguments represent a rapprochement between Yogācāra and Madhyamaka traditions. The version in Śrīgupta and Sāntaraksita reflects the Yogācāra argument against the existence of external objects in verse 11 of Vasubandhu’s Twenty Verses (Vimśatikā). Jñānagarbha’s version reinforces Bhāviveka’s concern for causation, but it has to do with the arising of cognitions rather than with the arising of things. This move is consistent with Jñānagarbha’s turn toward Dharmakīrti’s epistemology and away from the ontological preoccupations of Bhāviveka’s arguments against the Yogācāra.

The Jewel Lamp takes the development of these arguments a step further. Rather than choosing one of these arguments over another, it presents all of them together in what it calls a “general” (Tib. sphyar / Skt. śāmānyena) refutation of Hindu and Jain opponents. In this respect, it mirrors the synthesis process that characterized 11th-century works like Atśa’s Lamp of the Path of Awakening and was developed further in the Madhyamaka scholarship of Tibet. Where The Jewel Lamp stands in sequence of intellectual development needs further study, but it seems reasonable to suppose, once again, that it represents a late phase in the evolution of Madhyamaka thought, a phase that was characterized in much the same way by summary and synthesis as it was by original philosophical reflection.

This hypothesis is supported by what must be the strangest feature of this odd text. Not only does The Jewel Lamp quote Dharmakīrti, a philosopher who normally is identified with the 7th century, but it also quotes Candrakīrti, and it quotes him with the same honorific terminology that it uses for Nāgārjuna, Aryadeva, and the Buddha. There is no evidence at all of the bitter, sometimes mocking critique Candrakīrti leveled at Bhāviveka in his commentary on Nāgārjuna’s Root Verses. It is hard to believe that the respectful words of this text could have come from the mouth of the 8th-century Bhāviveka, who was nothing if not a debater, ready to engage his opponents at the slightest hint of controversy. Either we are dealing with a very mellow scholar, who had lived long enough to leave these controversies behind, or we have an author who found it useful to attribute his summary of Madhyamaka to the earlier Bhāviveka, hoping perhaps that he could wrap the text in the authority of an ancient master. Without knowing more about the intellectual development in late Madhyamaka thought, and also about the compositional strategies that were popular in Indian monastic communities at this time, all we can do is speculate. But it seems doubtful that any reasonable calculation of the evidence would now place The Jewel Lamp in the 6th century.

Along with The Jewel Lamp in the category of questionable texts belongs one final work, A Summary of the Meaning of the Middle Way (madhyamakārikāsamgagraha). This text summarizes the doctrine of the two truths in twelve verses. David Seyfort Ruegg has pointed out that this text shows significant affinities with Jñānagarbha’s Distinction Between the Two Truths, including the definition of “correct relative truth” (tathaśamyutī) as “capable of effective action.” This concept shows the influence of Dharmakīrti and locates the text in the eighth century or thereafter.

The Intellectual Structure of Bhāviveka’s Compendium

Once we have considered the authorship of The Heart of the Middle Way and The Flame of Rapture, the next important question has to do with its structure as a philosophical compendium. If the design of the text is as original as it seems, why did the author organize it as he did? What qualifies Bhāviveka’s opponents as opponents? Are they particular individuals? Are they defined by any particular social or intellectual affiliation? Are they grouped by doctrines, systems of thought, traditions, schools, or by something else altogether? If the text is concerned with doctrines or texts rather than with individuals, how are they related? For someone who has been steeped in the long tradition of Indian
compendia, the answers to most of these questions seem obvious. Indian philosophy today is organized most often into six (or more) systems of thought, known as dārśanas (literally, "visions" or "views"). Less frequently, these systems are designated by terms such as māta ("thought") or siddhānta ("established position"). Regardless of the terminology, these systems differ on a series of standard topics, such as the means of valid knowledge (pramāṇa), the nature of the deity (deity), and the categories of reality (tattva). When the different systems are gathered together into a single text, they constitute a coherent body of reflection on the central issues of Indian thought.

What seems obvious to us today, however, was not as obvious at the time of Bhāviveka. The "dārśana system" was just one of several competing models of classification, if it could even be considered a system at all. The best way to understand the innovation in Bhāviveka’s text is to set the terminology of the later compendia aside and look closely at the way Bhāviveka thought about the intellectual situation in his own time. If we base our judgment solely on the texts of The Heart of the Middle Way and The Flame of Reason, Bhāviveka had three important options available to organize his approach to other traditions: a system of sixty-two "wrong views" (Tib. lta ka ngon pa / Skt. kudṛṣṭā), a system (which is actually little more than a list) of 363 views (drṣṭī), and an emerging system of multiple dārśanas.

Of these three options, the most elaborate is the Buddhist system of sixty-two "wrong views." This list is derived from an early canonical text, the Brahmajāla Sūtra, and is prominent enough to be mentioned in a number of later Mahāyāna sources, including Dignāga’s Epitome of the Perfection of Wisdom (prajñāpāramitāśāstra). Bhāviveka gives his own account of the sixty-two views in the commentary on MIHK 11.1ab: "Ordinary people are deluded about conventional reality, and they are disturbed by a network of wrong views (kudṛṣṭa)." The commentary offers the following explanation:

Ordinary people are disturbed by a network of 62 wrong views. What are these 62 wrong views? They are explained in the Brahmajāla Sūtra: There are eighteen kinds of heretics in the first group: four kinds of eternalists (sāsatvādā), four kinds of partial eternalists (etaka-casassatavādā), four kinds of limitists and unlimitists (anuṣṭānātikavādā), four kinds of evasive dissenters (amarātikikhepika), and two kinds of fortuitous originists (adivasamapāpikā). There are forty-four heretics in the second group: sixteen kinds who hold that the soul is conscious after death (sarvātikā), eight kinds who hold that the soul is not conscious after death (asavātikā), eight kinds who hold that the soul is neither conscious nor unconscious after death (netusarātikā), and five kinds of theorists about the attainment of nirvāṇa in this life (dītthādhammanābimāvādā), seven kinds of annihilationists (āchchhatvādā).}

Several scholars have suggested that this list of "views" recalls rival positions that were current in the intellectual environment of early Indian Buddhism, but the historical connection is tenuous at best. The system functions principally as a theoretical model for Buddhist practitioners to avoid errors in their own thinking and to develop a correct understanding of their own doctrinal commitments.

Bhāviveka mentions the number 363 twice in The Flame of Reason. In both cases, the number is used to represent differences of tradition (āgama) and reflects a quarrel between Bhāviveka and his opponents about the relationship of inference (anumāṇa) to other means of valid knowledge (pramāṇa). Near the end of chapter 5, Bhāviveka’s Yogācāra opponent objects to the idea that inference can be used to know ultimate reality:

5.104 tatvasaṃyāta kārayanuyāvāt tadābhino nāṇumāṇaśab / nītās tarkena dvārāṇāṃ ganeṣyāvā dharmateṣi cet //

The Dharma nature of dharma cannot be known by logical reasoning, because reality is not an object of logical reasoning and is not known by inference.

The opponent’s use of the word "logical reasoning" (tarka) in this verse has particular force. Not only does it challenge the title of Bhāviveka’s own text (The Flame of Reason), it also invokes a venerable Buddhist prohibition against the use of reason. Candrakirti quotes a sūtra that places this prohibition in the life of the Buddha: “Not long after his awakening, the Blessed One thought: ‘I have attained a Dharma that appears profound and is profound. It cannot be investigated (atarkaṁ) and is not accessible to logical reasoning (atarkān)..” The verse is subtle and can be known only by the consciousness of a sage.” Bhāviveka echoes these words in a verse of his own: “[The Dharma Body of the Buddha] is as inaccessible to logicians (tāraka) as heaven is to sinners, detachment is to those who are passionate, and the sun is to those who have been born blind.”

If the Dharma is not accessible to logical reasoning, what use is the "flame of reason"? Bhāviveka answers this question by invoking a two-stage process of understanding: first, reason is used to remove misconceptions, then it is possible to see things as they are:

5.105 ibeṣṭhaṃnān nirdeśād āyamāṇvādhiyāyinaḥ / kalpitātiṣyāvāna kalpitāṇaḥkārtenāḥ //
5.106 sahałaśayaḥ śūlāśrayaṃ ākālasanucetasah / jñānena nirvikāpatena buddhāṣṭa pañjanta adhāramāt //

Buddha uses 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 with minds like space.76

Superficially, this verse follows a standard Buddhist sequence, moving from language and concepts to the direct perception of reality. Translated into the language of the pramāṇas, this sequence would mean that inference (anumāna) prepares the way for perception (pratyakṣa). But Bhāviveka undercuts this process (as he did with the worship of Brahman and the practice of the eightfold path), by saying that true seeing is no seeing. In terms of the pramāṇas, this means that true perception is no perception. If perception cannot provide a safe resting place at the end of this epistemological process, Bhāviveka has no alternative but to involve himself again in the practice of inference. By returning to inference, he returns to the problem that calls forth inference in the first place: the differences in understanding (buddhi) that arise from differences in tradition (ágama). These differences in tradition call forth his first reference to the number 363.

5.107 ato 'numānāvāpyayam na tattvam pratipadyate //
tattvādānāvāpyakṣa ya tatha tena mirākṛtya //
5.108 āgamañāraśabdena bhedaśātsau buddhījau //
abhede 'py āgamañāyasah kah parikṣakṣāya vidhē //

It is impossible to understand reality as an object of inference, but inference rules out the opposite of the knowledge of reality. Differences in other traditions cause differences in understanding; even when there are no differences in tradition, what other method is capable of investigating these differences?

Commentary: Other traditions are traditions that differ from one another. Their differences, which consist of 363 doctrines, give rise to differences of understanding. Those who seek agreement have no way to investigate these differences other than by inference (anumāna), which consists of theses, reasons, and examples.79

There is surprising ambiguity in this passage about the actual reference of the number 363. In the verse, the problem of intellectual diversity is attributed to differences of tradition (ágama). In the commentary, these differences are associated with a Tibetan term (grel ba) that I have translated here as “doctrine” (śādā). It could also be translated as “dispute” or “argument,” or it could be taken as a reference to a person who enters into dispute (śādinda). In other words, it could refer to a debater.60 But this ambiguity does not affect the point of the argument. Whether philosophical differences reside in words, actions, or agents, Bhāviveka is persuaded that they can only be resolved by inference.

Bhāviveka returns to the number 363 in the chapter on Mimāṃsā as part of his critique of the authority of the Veda. The Mimāṃsaka begins with an argument in favor of tradition:

9.4 cd sampradāyāpyapacchiddā āgamo 'au tadbhyaye //
9.5 atyantāśparsokṣa hi pratipattih kathāḥ bhavet //
adrśtaśāśtrasambhandaḥ svargāpārāduvairastu //

The Veda is tradition (ágama), because its transmission is unbroken. Without it, how can anyone understand something like heaven or karmic consequences, which are completely beyond the senses and not connected with any visible mark?77

Bhāviveka responds with an argument that mirrors his dispute with the Yogācāra. For him, tradition only has authority if it is investigated by reason. Why? For the same reason that inference was necessary in his dispute with the Yogācāra: without inference, there is no way to resolve differences between traditions.78

9.18 tad atkri pariṇānta yatadānānagavato naḥ //
pakṣāśvāsatiḥ bitośā śvāānānagavavo dāya //
9.19 sampradāyāpyapacchiddā āgamaśāśtraṇavatāḥ //
svarṇāvagamastiddheḥ kim tattvam iti dhāryastam //

Those who seek the truth and know how to reason about the meanings of words avoid the poison of partiality and carry out the following investigation: If tradition has the status of tradition because it has an unbroken transmission, then everything is tradition, and it is necessary to determine which is true.

The commentary explains that the word “everything” refers to “363 views” (the Tibetan la ba can translate either drṣṭi or darśana). The commentary expands this point with a mind-numbing list of what seem to be followers of different teachers or practices. I use the word “seem” advisedly, since determined investigation has yet to reveal any precedent for this list or identify more than a handful of its terms. Qvarnström has pointed out that the list has affinities with an equally obscure list in the Rājaivārttika, an eighth-century Jain commentary on Umasvati’s Tatttvārthā Sūtra.79 But the two are not identical, and the Rājaivārttika list is no help in deciphering the list in the The Flame of Reason.
To make matters worse, the number 363 is attached to a similar list in the second chapter of The Jewel Lamp. The two lists start out the same (leading some scholars to assume that they are identical), but they rapidly diverge, until it is clear that the author, copyist, or translator has incorporated radically different ideas of what the list should contain. The list is sufficiently impenetrable that one begins to suspect that impenetrability is precisely the point, as if Bhāviveka were saying that “tradition” in India is a buzzing, bewildering complexity that can yield its secrets only to the clear light of reason.

In effect, that is what happened to the number 363 in Jain philosophical compendia. Kendall W. Folkert has shown that the number 363 appeared as early as the second or third century in Jain literature as a way of designating the variety of philosophical positions (1993: 229–45). The number eventually came to be associated with a list of four categories that could be used to organize reflection about philosophical differences. These categories were kriyāvāda (to affirm the existence of the world and the soul), akriyāvāda (to deny the existence of the soul), aṣṭabandha (to profess skepticism about these points), and vinaya-vāda (teaching what commentators refer to as “respectful service”). Over a period of time, these four categories evolved (like the 62 “wrong views” in the Brahmajīla Sūtra) into a list of 363 different positions. In its standard form, as outlined by Schrader (1902: 3–4), this list included 180 varieties of kriyāvāda, 84 varieties of akriyāvāda, 67 varieties of aṣṭabandha, and 32 varieties of vinaya-vāda. The first Jain scholar to articulate the full system was Haribhadra (eighth century). In its rational coherence and consistency, Haribhadra’s account of the 363 doctrines goes far beyond anything Bhāviveka was able to accomplish with his seemingly random list. But the complexity of Haribhadra’s account shows the difficulty of the challenge that confronted Bhāviveka and his contemporaries. In the face of such bewildering diversity, not just of philosophical views but even of classification systems, how could a scholar establish any sense of order?

Bhāviveka’s response was to divide the field of possibilities into a series of chapters dedicated to what came to be known in later literature as dārāṇas, a word that can be translated as “visions,” “views,” or simply “philosophies.” The classic statement of the dārāṇa-system comes at the beginning of Haribhadra’s eighth-century Compendium of Six Views (śaṅcārasaṃyogavibhaṅga): “Here, with respect to basic differences, there are only six dārāṇas; scholars should understand them according to the differences in their deities and in their principles of reality.” Haribhadra’s list of six dārāṇas includes the Baudhā (Buddhist), Nyāya, Sāṃkhya, Jaina, Vaiśeṣika, and Mimāṃsā, with a postscript on the Lokāyatas. (In his introduction to the chapter on the Lokāyatas, Haribhadra explains that some scholars group the Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika together, leaving room for separate treatment of the Lokāyatas.) Bhāviveka’s list also includes six philosophies: Śrāvaka, Yogācara, Sāṃkhya, Vaiśeṣika, Vedānta, and Mimāṃsā. The two lists seem to converge on the number six, but Bhāviveka does not treat the number as having any particular significance, and his list differs from Haribhadra’s in significant ways.

Bhāviveka devotes separate chapters to two different Buddhist opponents, he omits the Nyāya and Lokāyata, and he includes Vedānta. While Haribhadra lists his own philosophy as one of the six, Bhāviveka begins his text with a separate account of his own philosophy and presents it in a format that differs significantly from the account of his opponents. Finally, his only account of Jainism occurs in the “Exposition of the Realization of Omniscience” in chapter 10.

The reasons for these differences is not immediately clear. It is possible that Bhāviveka, as a Buddhist, took the challenge of intra-Buddhist debates more seriously than Haribhadra. But it is also possible that these intra-Buddhist debates simply receded in importance in the two centuries that separated Bhāviveka from Haribhadra. Why does Bhāviveka say nothing about the Nyāya but devotes a chapter to Vedānta, while Haribhadra includes a chapter on the Nyāya but says nothing about Vedānta? One possibility is that Vedānta simply did not have enough influence in Haribhadra’s intellectual environment to deserve a place on the list. But why would Vedānta have posed such a challenge to Bhāviveka? It is tempting to attribute the difference to geography, but we know from Xuanzang that students and scholars, to say nothing of texts, circulated widely across India. It is more likely that Bhāviveka’s concern about Vedānta had to do with intellectual rather than geographical proximity. Near the end of the Vedānta chapter, Bhāviveka accuses the Vedāntins of borrowing their approach from the teaching of the Buddha: “Thinking that the Tathāgata’s flawless approach is good, the heretics have developed a longing for it and made it their own.” Perhaps this is a case of “the proximate other,” the near neighbor, who,” as Jonathan Z. Smith observes, “is most troublesome” (2004: 243) and deserves the most thorough response. Similar questions apply to Bhāviveka’s omission of the Nyāya. Again, it is possible that there just were not enough important Nyāyāvikas in Bhāviveka’s neighborhood in the sixth century to demand a response. This seems to be the case in the Māṇimukalai. For logic and epistemology, that text relies on Mimāṃsā and Buddhist logic rather than Nyāya. Bhāviveka reflects this priority when he devotes his longest non-Buddhist chapter to Mimāṃsā. The only point that can be drawn reliably from these different lists is that there was no standard account of significant philosophical traditions. Groups seem to have been included or omitted for reasons that were both practical and intellectual. To be certain about why Bhāviveka or Haribhadra made their choices, we would need to know more about the actual practice of debate in sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-century India than our sources have so far been able to yield.

The trajectory of thought from Bhāviveka to Haribhadra raises further questions, not the least of which has to do with the meaning of the word dārāṇa itself. In a strictly etymological sense, dārāṇa functions simply as a verbal noun that means to “see.” It is common to represent the etymology of dārāṇa by using the English words “vision” or “view,” as if there were a simple correlation between the metaphor of a philosophical “view” in Sanskrit and English. But this correlation cannot be taken for granted.
PART I: ANALYSIS

if only because of the dense history associated with these terms on both sides of the Indian / European divide. How then, did a word that has to do with “vision” or “seeing” come to play such a crucial role in the understanding of Indian philosophy? In his study of Jain compendia, Kendall W. Folkert has traced a long process of evolution that led to the use of darśana as a chapter heading in Haribhadra’s compendium (1993: 113-45). The story begins in early Jain literature, where the word darśana appears as one of three elements in the “way to liberation” (mokṣamārga). It is customary in Jain circles to translate these elements as “right faith” (samyagdarśana), “knowledge” (jñāna), and “conduct” (cārītra). In its original setting, “right faith” had a strong moral meaning: right faith functioned as a way of removing the karma that prevented a soul from seeing the truth. Over time, darśana as a verbal noun became associated with the term tatvā (”reality”) as its direct object. This led to the widely-accepted definition of “right faith” as “firm conviction about reality” (tattvāpratīdhi samyagdarśanam). As Folkert tells the story, this association with “reality” loosened the karmic significance of darśana and made it possible for the word to designate the philosophical “views” of others. Eventually this process of evolution led to Haribhadra’s use of the word darśana to name a “philosophy” in the sense of a body of doctrine or a system of thought. In later Jain compendia this usage was hardened even further by replacing darśana with the term siddhānta, which referred initially to the settled conclusion of an argument but came eventually to mean a system of thought. An example of this usage is the title of the anonymous Jain compendium Sarvasiddhāntapravatika (“Introduction to All Systems of Thought”); other examples are common in Tibet. The process of evolution that led from “right faith” to “system of thought” or, as Folkert puts it, “the transformation of ‘faith’ into ‘a faith’” was a result of many factors, but a key element in the change had to do with the encounter with philosophical diversity. Once it became clear that darśana was something “others” could have, the way was open to using the term as the organizing principle for a philosophical compendium.

Other Indian traditions have reflected this process as well. Wilhelm Halbfass has noted that Bhāviveka, the philosophical grammarian who served as the source for several arguments in Bhāviveka’s chapter on the Mīmāṃsā, shows the “doxographic usage” of the word darśana “in statu nasendi.” Bhārtṛhari sometimes uses the word darśana in a generic sense to refer to different “views” or “ways of thinking.” In Kānda 2 of the Viśvapadiya, for example, he says: “The way of seeing (darśana) a single visible object can be different.” In a discussion of universals in Kānda 3, he refers to a perception of identity (ekatvadarśana), as well as a perception of connection (samsargadarśana). Moving into a doxographic mode in his commentary on the Mababhāṣya, he refers to the Vaiṣeṣika “view” (vaiveṣikadarśana) and the Mīmāṃsā “view” (mīmāṃsadarśana). And in a verse that Halbfass rightly notes could serve as a motto for the entire tradition of Indian doxographical literature, Bhārtṛhari says:

prajñā vivekaṁ labhate bhinnair āgamanadarśaniḥ /
kiyad vā jñāyaṁ unnetum samtaṁ karman anudhāvutā //

Wisdom gains discrimination from different traditional views; how can one lead upward by following one’s own reason?

The question here is whether the word darśana in the compound “traditional view” (āgamanadarśana) has made the transition from its status as a verbal noun, meaning “view” or “way of seeing,” into the designation of a philosophical system. The commentator Pūrṇarāja does not offer much help. He falls naturally into the later usage by glossing darśana as siddhānta (“system of thought”), but the word could just as easily be interpreted as a “way of seeing” that is based on traditional authorities (āgama). But from Bhāviveka’s point of view, the most striking feature of Bhārtṛhari’s verse is not the ambiguity in the meaning of darśana; it is the combination of darśana with the concept of “tradition” (āgama). This is precisely the issue that Bhāviveka addressed with his awkward list of 363 doctrines. For him it was the diversity of “tradition” that required logical analysis. Here āgama and darśana go together as the foundation of the doxographical tradition.

Bhāviveka’s use of the term darśana shares some of Bhārtṛhari’s ambiguity. While there are places where his terminology reflects Halbfass’s “doxographic usage,” there are other places where he avoids the term altogether. An example of the doxographic usage occurs in the objections that start chapter 4, where the Śrāvakas say:

4.7 na buddhakir mabāyānam sūtrānādāv samagrhāt /
māṅgātrāpadesād vā yathā vedāntadarśanam //

4.8ab phalāhetuṇāvāddād vā yathā nāstikadarśanam /

The Mahāyāna is not the Buddha’s teaching, because it is not included in the Sūtānta and so forth, because it teaches another path, like the Vedānta view (vedāntadarśana), or because it improperly denies cause and effect, like a nihilistic view (nāstikadarśana).

In chapter 9, a similar objection comes from the Mīmāṃsā:

9.17 upramāṇam tato buddham trayādantarādāpanāt /
yad yathokṣaṁ tatbokṣaṁ tad yathā nagnātadarśanam //

The Buddha’s teaching is not authoritative, because it attacks the views of the Vedas. Whatever is one is also the other, like the Jain view.
In his commentary on both passages, Bhāviveka equates *darśana* with *siddhānta* ("system of thought"), clearly anticipating the practice of the eighth century. But these examples of Bhāviveka's "doxographic usage" are only part of the picture. If we turn the question around, we get a different answer. Instead of asking whether Bhāviveka uses the word *darśana* as Haribhadra did in the eighth century, it is better to ask what Bhāviveka himself thought was the focus of his chapters. Was it a series of *darśanas*, or was it something else? The Buddhist chapters give a surprising answer. According to Bhāviveka, his Buddhist opponents distinguish themselves by rejecting Bhāviveka’s “approach” (*nīti* or *naya*) and clinging to an “approach of their own.” The Śrāvakas are introduced as “those who have low aspirations and cannot understand this difficult approach” (*nīti*). The commentary glosses “this difficult approach” as “the quest for the knowledge of reality” (attaujanānāśādā) that he explained in the previous chapter. In other words, the “difficult approach” is what we would call Bhāviveka’s own Madhyamsa philosophy.

In chapter 5, Bhāviveka frames his argument against the Yogācāra in a similar way: the Yogācāras are “proud of their own approach (svamānti) and claim to give the best ‘introduction to the ambrosia of reality’ (attvāmśrtāvādā).” “Introduction to the ambrosia of reality” again refers back to the position Bhāviveka laid out in the opening chapters of his text. Bhāviveka uses the term “approach” (*nīti* or *naya*) again when he starts his response to both opponents. In the case of the Śrāvakas, he says: “According to the approach explained earlier, the opponent’s approach has gone wrong. The opponent cannot tolerate this and has spoken out.” In the case of the Yogācāras, he promises to lead the opponent to a correct understanding of the Buddha’s teaching by following a “rational approach” (*yuktinānāśāp*).

To understand Bhāviveka’s own view of philosophical difference, it is crucial to understand what he means by this seemingly modest word “approach.” It should be no surprise that the predecessors are rich and varied, beginning with the Jains. Early Jain sources use a system of seven different *nayas* to explain the significance of the *anekāntavāda* (often translated as “relativism,” but more accurately represented as “non-absolutism” or “non-exclusivity”).* By this they mean that reality can be approached in seven different ways (although it is understood that these seven *nayas* are abstractions from what Folkert calls an “incalculable number of possible *nayas*”). Each *naya* is valid from its own perspective and only becomes an incorrect *naya* (*dharṇa* or *naya*) when it is taken as true to the exclusion of others, hence the doctrine of non-exclusivity (*anekāntavāda*). The term itself is explained in different ways in Jain sources. Padmanabha Jaini (1979: 93) quotes a passage in the *Śūduladamasāhari* that defines *naya* or *nīti* as “that by which an object (artha) is led to (niyata) or ascertained (paricchedyata) in a particular respect (ekadesvinvisya).” Folkert quotes a passage from the auto-commentary on the *Tattvātābhādīgama Sūtra* that says *nayas* “lead to, i.e., obtain, cause, enable, bring about, illuminate, grasp, manifest [etc.] the categories of jiva and the rest.” The nuances of the term are difficult to pin down, as translators have shown by their struggle to find an acceptable English equivalent. Jaini translates *naya* as “a partial expression of the truth.” Folkert prefers “standpoint” or “viewpoint.” But the root meaning has less to do with saying, standing, or seeing than with “leading” (*ni* the mind toward an object. Bhāviveka picks up this meaning in his commentary on MHK 4.1, when he glosses *nīti* as “path” (the Tibetan lam is equivalent to the Sanskrit mārga ox pratipada), and elaborates the sense of “path” more fully in MHK 5.9, where he promises to “follow a rational approach (*naya)* in order to make the opponent understand.” Here the word “follow” comes from the root (*nṛgam* that produces the word “path” (*mārga*), and the word “understand” (*pratipada*) also means to move forward or make progress toward a goal. Whatever else the words *naya* or *nīti* may have meant for Bhāviveka, they clearly were related to his basic understanding of knowledge as movement toward a goal.

Bhāviveka’s use of *naya* and *nīti* also has important resonances with the scriptural tradition of the Mahāyāna, particularly the Perfection of Wisdom literature. We read, for example, in *Ratnagunasamacāryaśāstra* 5.2: “To know all dharmas with the approach (*naya)* of non-arising and emptiness is to practice the Perfection of Wisdom.” The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines makes a similar point when it says: “According to this kind of approach to dharmas (*dharmanuvajaya*), there is no dharma.”* Beyond these early Perfection of Wisdom texts, the terms *naya* and *nīti* lead in two directions, one of which Bhāviveka exploits, the other of which he seems studiously to avoid. The *Teaching of Vimalakirti* (*Vimalakirtinirdeśa*) speaks of a “knowledge of one approach (ekanaya) without grasping or rejecting any dharma.”* The concept of “one approach” had important resonances for Bhāviveka. In his discussion of the Śrāvakas, Bhāviveka argues that the Mahāyāna teaches “one approach” rather than many, and he equates this “one approach” with the “one vehicle” (ekayāna) mentioned in the *Lotos Sūtra* and other Mahāyāna sources.* The connection between “one approach” and “one vehicle” has important implications, not only for the relationship between the Śrāvakas and the Mahāyāna, but also for the relationships between different traditions within the Mahāyāna.* Obviously the verbal affinity between *naya* and *nāma* makes it easy to treat the two concepts as equivalent, but the affinity is more than skin deep. In its root meaning, the word *nāma* also is a verbal noun that has to do with moving along a path. Another way to explore the meaning of *naya* and *nīti* as a mode of classification would be to consider the hermeneutical distinction between provisional meaning (*nayārtha*) and definitive meaning (*uttartha*).* This distinction is found quite often in Mahāyāna literature and has particular significance for the Yogācāra. Like the words *naya* and *nīti*, these terms play on the meaning of the root to “lead” (*ni*). To say that a statement is *nayārtha* means that its meaning (*artha*) needs to be “led to” (*nayā*). In other words, it requires further interpretation. To say that a statement is *uttaratha* means that its meaning (*artha*) has been “led to” (*nītą*). In other words, its meaning is definitive and requires no further interpretation. Strangely enough for such an inclusive thinker, Bhāviveka makes almost no mention of this distinction, even though it is a key feature.
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not only in the Mahāyāna tradition more generally but in sources that he mines deeply for other ideas.89 Why does he ignore it? I will have more to say about this point when I discuss Bhāviveka’s arguments against the Śrāvakas. For the moment, the answer seems to be that Bhāviveka was an ekamāya thinker: he had a deep conviction about the unity of Buddhist thought. He was not interested in developing multiple approaches; he simply wanted to determine the correct approach and defend it against its critics.

TOWARD A THEORY OF DIFFERENCE

With so many possible ways of conceptualizing philosophical differences, it would be easy to get the impression that Bhāviveka was as confused about his classification system as he was about the actual diversity of philosophical views. He knew about 62 wrong views and 363 doctrines, and he was aware of the "doxographic usage" of the term ārāṇyā. He even seemed to pick up an old Jain tradition of distinguishing multiple ājīva and develop it in a distinctively Buddhist way. Could it be that Bhāviveka marked nothing more than a tentative, exploratory stage on the way to the more settled doxographical practice of the eighth century? Certainly it would be no insult to Bhāviveka if this were true. We could think of his text as an early attempt to build something like a philosophical museum, where the collector's mind has gathered a treasure trove of odd doctrines and even a few odd systems of classification, without quite deciding how to put the collection in order. Bhāviveka was indeed an extraordinary collector, and it is not unfair to admire his fascination with odd doctrines and curious details. But it is unfair to think that he did nothing else. He also had an unusually precise mental picture of the practice of philosophy, and with this picture came a precise view of how different intellectual alternatives should be approached and given a place in his mental map. Wittgenstein is well known for saying that "a picture is the end of the world." The picture he had in mind involved the application of words to things. It would be true to say that a picture also held Bhāviveka captive. But it was a picture about the practice of philosophy as a way to see, with emphasis on both the word "way" and the word "see." If the term "theory" can be taken in its Greek sense as "vision," then Bhāviveka saw philosophy itself as movement toward a theory, not just of difference, but of reality itself.

The metaphor of philosophy as a way to see permeates Bhāviveka’s thought, from his choice of words to the architecture of his system as a whole. Perhaps the best way to appreciate the significance of this metaphor is to start at the level of Bhāviveka’s language and watch how carefully he chooses words to explore the connection between going and seeing. A good example comes at the beginning of chapter 9, where the Mīmāṃsā objector compares logicians like Bhāviveka to blind men who run along a dangerous road by feeling it with their feet:

9.13 dūṣayitvā trayāṁgaram bhutābh bhutavānāḥ /
               anumānaprādhdhanāvat sīvagehyatānti ye //

9.14 pādasparśāṁ iśānāṁ vismate pāthi dhāvottām /
               anumānaprādhdhānāṁ pātesvasāṁ na durlabhāḥ //

Logicians who use reasons to criticize the Vedas illuminate their own approach by giving priority to inference. Those who give priority to inference are like blind men who run on a dangerous road by touching it with their feet; it is easy for them to fall.

Shinjō Kawasaki pointed out that the second of these verses is a near-quotations of verse 1.42 of Bhārtrhari’s Vākyapāda:

hasastasparśāṁ iśānāṁ vismate pāthi dhāvottām /
               anumānaprādhdhānet vinipato na durlabhāḥ //

Someone who gives priority to inference is like a blind man who runs on a dangerous road by touching it with his hands; it is easy for him to fall.90

In his expansion of this verse, Bhāviveka has done two striking things: he has changed the word "hands" to "feet," and he has added the image of a blind man attempting to "illuminate" his path. It is possible that Bhārtrhari had in mind a blind man who feels his way along a road by touching it with his cane. Otherwise, it makes no sense to say that a blind man runs and also touches the road with his hands. Bhāviveka seems to be sensitive to this incongruity and changes the image to a blind man who feels the road with his feet. If Bhāviveka were casual about his language or imprecise about his use of imagery, there would be no reason to make the change. But the image is important enough to get just right.

In Bhāviveka’s expansion of Bhārtrhari’s verse, Bhārtrhari’s “road” (pāth) is mirrored by the Bhāviveka’s “approach” (naya), and the blind man’s act of feeling his way along the road is mirrored by the logicians’ act of illumination. The Mīmāṃsāka (as pictured by Bhāviveka) claims that logicians are blind and try to shed light (dyutānti) on their “approach” by using inference. For a blind man to “shed light on” something is clearly an act of futility. And futility is exactly what the Mīmāṃsāka thinks of Bhāviveka’s preference for inference. Not far in the background lies Bhārtrhari’s claim that reason (tarka) alone is incapable of providing reliable knowledge:

nīgamād śī dharmaś tarkaśvyayāvatathāte /
               viśīnām api yajyādānām tad api āgamanāpi rūpam //
Without tradition (śāstra), reason cannot determine what is right. Even the knowledge of the Seers follows tradition.\textsuperscript{190}

Bhāviveka also echoes another of Bhartrhari’s verses on the diversity of tradition:

\begin{center}
prajñā vivekam labhate bhinnair āgamadarśanānāh
\end{center}
\begin{center}
kiyād va lakyam unnetum suvartakam anudhāvāt
\end{center}

Wisdom gains discrimination from different traditional views; how can one lead upward by following one’s own reason?\textsuperscript{200}

The verb to “follow” (anu-dhāya) in this verse comes from the same root (dhā) as the word “run” in the verse quoted by Bhāviveka, and the word translated as “lead upward” (anu-netum) comes from the same root (ni) as Bhāviveka’s word “approach.” While it is not entirely clear what Bhartrhari means by “lead upward,” at least in this context, there would be little obscurity for Bhāviveka. The path that he illuminates with the “flame of reason” (tarkajñādā) does not just lead forward along a road; it also leads upward toward a place where someone can develop a more inclusive view of reality.

What makes Bhāviveka remarkable, both as a thinker and writer, is not simply the presence of these metaphors. It would be easy to multiply examples of Indian philosophers who illustrate or enliven their arguments with metaphorical language. In this respect, Bhāviveka is just one of the crowd. But the metaphors seem to run deeper for him than they do for others. He explores them, develops them, and returns to them again and again as he unfolds the structure of his arguments. They are not just embellishments on the surface of his text; they reflect something much deeper about his vision of the world, and they invite the reader to enter into that world in a way that mere discursive argumentation cannot do. Nietzsche once remarked that “truths are illusions of which one has forgotten that they are illusions; worn-out metaphors which have become powerless to affect the senses; coins which have their obverse effaced and now are no longer of account as coins but merely as metal."\textsuperscript{202} Bhāviveka rubs the grime off the face of these coins and puts them back in circulation. Or, to borrow a metaphor from Howard Nemerov, he shows that the moribund metaphors of Sanskrit philosophy are not dead but merely sleeping.\textsuperscript{202} He wakes them up so that they can walk through his sentences and through the landscape of his thought. As they walk, they start to tell a story about the obstacles they encounter and about the landscape they see.

Bhāviveka’s story about moving and seeing starts in earnest in chapter 3, where the philosopher/lawyer “seeks the knowledge of reality” (tattva-pratijnāṣaṇa).

3.1 yatra jñānāsya yam ca caukṣa ca caukṣa tasyai ca uttarat
yatast tasmat bhaved bhāvavā bhāvakṣa tattvajñānaśaśānaśāt

‘True vision is the vision that consists of knowledge, nothing else; this is why a scholar should focus on seeking knowledge of reality.’\textsuperscript{204}

Even if a scholar is blind, he sees the three worlds without any obstruction; he sees whatever he wants to see, whether it is far away, subtle, or concealed.

3.3 tathārgaṇe niśeṣāma anuvete buddhiśvaratītaḥ
svargātprasādajñātaṁ asaṁjñayatītaṁ mrgasthikṣatāt

Without intelligence, even [Indra] who has a thousand eyes is blind, because he does not see the right and wrong paths to heaven and liberation.

3.4 dvītīyajñāvāśādādhi hi dānādvā abhijnadāta
kāruṇyāt sarvavīrāṇya tattvāpy asthiti māṇiṣāśāt

When he has opened the eye of wisdom, he does not enter into the perfections as if they were thorns poisoned by desire for visible, invisible, special, or favorable results.

3.5 tvamāṇaśādādhi dhi hi dānādvā abhijnadāta
kāruṇyāt sarvavīrāṇya tattvāpy asthiti māṇiṣāśāt

He practices the perfections, pure in three ways, with compassion as the motivation and omniscience as the goal, but he does not set his mind on that goal.

3.6 prajñāmyaḥ tṛpi karo pīdis ṣāristhāparvābhaḥ
mekapraśādāsojanam kilendrojañānātāmāraḥ

Wisdom is the ambrosia that brings satisfaction, the lamp whose light cannot be obscured, the steps on the palace of liberation, and the fire that burns the fuel of the defilements.

3.10 aḷāṣakalpanāñjālaśāpaśadāsāvāyini
śantapratijñātāmahāñjālaśāpaśāvāyini

3.11 vigaśatakṣaṇāṇāntaṁ tatvāpratipravānaṁ
apravāṇapaśāntaṁ ca prajñā śāyā prāmāṇāḥākāśī
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Ultimate wisdom negates the entire network of concepts, and it moves without moving into the clear sky of reality, which is peaceful, directly known, non-conceptual, non-verbal, and free from unity and diversity.

3.12 tattvaprasaddahabhavaham na hi yujyate /
tathyasamvrtiparasmam antarena yatas tatah //

3.13 purvar sampratisyayena pravrutiramatra bhavet /
tato dharmavasamayalakshanam saswamicatam //

Surely it is impossible to climb to the top of the palace of reality without the steps of correct relative [truth]. For that reason, one should first discriminate according to relative truth, then one should analyze the particular and universal characteristics of things.

3.14 abhiyajyeta medhavi samadbhavya cetatah /
tathā īrtanāyajñānāṁ tadanyajñānabhisamātināḥ //

A scholar should practice concentration of the mind and also the knowledge that comes from hearing, because that causes the other forms of knowledge.

3.15 na paśyati yathā vaktram kaṣapracale jale /
tathāsamāhite cīte tattvam nivaranārte //

He cannot see his face in muddy or turbulent water, and he cannot see reality if his mind is distracted and covered with obstructions.

3.16 nibadhyālambanastambhe smṛtirajjya maṇogajam /
unmārgaśārīrāṁ kuryāt prajñāpyukośalāṁ śanātāḥ //

When his mind strays from the right path like an elephant, he should bind it to the post of the object with the rope of mindfulness and gradually bring it under control with the hook of wisdom.

3.17 anyatāśamakāvair uddhataṁ śanāma anyayet /
vipuladombabhyaśāt samṣiptatam vipulatmatām //

If his mind is arrogant, he should quiet it by thinking about impermanence; if it is timid, he should expand it by practicing something vast.

3.18 viṣṇupāt samhāret kṣiptanimitśāttirvidvivekṣanāt /
virūpāsaṁsadvardhivālāṁ uṣṭejyati api //

If it is distracted he should concentrate it by considering the suffering that distraction causes; if it is depressed, he should energize it by considering the advantages of courage.

3.19 viśuddhavatamokaparikṣamalamasam ananyatam /
kJālayaśaśīhāraitripatiyavāsīrī //

If it is undisciplined and stained by the mud of passion, hatred, and delusion, he should wash it with the water of [meditation on] repulsive things, friendliness, and dependent arising.

3.20 viṅktaṁ acalaṁ lāntam ālambanapakṣyeadam /
kṛmanyaṁ mṛdya ca jñātva tatra samyag upekṣayet //

When he knows that it is isolated, immovable, peaceful, intent on its object, skillful, and supple, then he is properly detached.

3.21 samābhivatāś ca yatau prajñāyāvaṁ praktīṣayet /
yo 'yaṁ vibhāvaṁ dharmāny uktate vyavahārataḥ //

3.22 vicāryamānaṁ tu dhījā kim eyam paramākrtahat /
yadi sāt tattvam evavam atra 'nyāt ci satavāt //

After his mind has been concentrated, he should analyze with wisdom: Is the identity of dharmas that is grasped conventionally also grasped ultimately? If so, then it is reality. If it is different from this [reality], then it must still be sought.

The images in these verses are difficult to distill into a single story, but on the most basic level, they tell us that the scholar’s goal is to see and, by seeing, to avoid various hazards, like the thorns that lie at the side of the path or the risk of straying from the right path altogether. But this path does not just lead in a horizontal direction across the landscape; it also leads upwards to “the clear sky of reality” and “the top of the palace of reality.” When the scholar / traveler ascends to this level, vision is not, as it were, merely prudential. It does not just help a person make practical choices about staying on a path. It surveys the landscape in an inclusive way and suggests an experience similar to omniscience. It seems to escape the necessity of sequence (“it moves without moving in the clear sky of reality”), and it is detached from what it sees (it is not “poisoned by desire.”).
for visible, invisible, special, or favorable results” and finally is “properly detached”). These three aspects of the scholar’s vision are strongly reminiscent of Hans Jonas’s account of “the nobility of sight” in Western philosophical literature. Jonas asks why philosophers from the time of Plato and Aristotle have pictured *theoria*, the highest and noblest activity of the mind, in a metaphor of vision. His answer is that sight distinguishes itself from other senses in three significant ways. It comprehends many things in a single, simultaneous field of vision; it is dynamically neutral, in the sense that it is not directly affected by the object it sees; and it is distant from what it sees.

Jonas argues that these three aspects of vision are the starting point for some of the most basic concepts in Western philosophy: “Simultaneity of presentation furnishes the idea of an enduring present, the contrast between change and the unchanging, between time and eternity. Dynamic neutralization furnishes form as distinct from matter, essence as distinct from existence, and the difference of theory and practice. Distance furnishes the idea of infinity. Thus the mind has gone where vision pointed.” Bhāviveka is not so one-sided that he pictures the scholar’s achievement solely in images of vision; he also speaks of wisdom as “the ambrosia that brings satisfaction, the lamp whose light cannot be obscured, the steps on the palace of liberation, and the fire that burns the fuel of the defilements.” He even calls it a hook to bring the mind under control when it rages like a wild elephant. But it is clear that Bhāviveka thinks that the philosopher’s goal is to reach an elevated vantage point and survey reality in a detached and inclusive way.

At least this is the picture that Bhāviveka conveys at the beginning of the journey. As the chapter unfolds, the character of the vision changes. The process of analysis mentioned in verses 3.21-22 gradually leads to the realization that the “identities” of things are not what they seem, and the structures of reality begin to dissolve.

3.254  *samvyādāgatāṁ tadvad tanmitramatikah / aṣṭānāmMICūvadpratibuddho na paśyati //*

Similarly, when someone has opened the eye of wisdom, stopped the sleep of ignorance, and woken up, he does not see things as they are seen conventionally.

3.255  *niṣṭ bhūṣray abhutāthi yathā tamaśi paśyati / pramāṇitākṣa yady arha udeśi ca na paśyati //*

On a dark night, someone may see ghosts that are unreal, but he does not see them when the sun rises and his eyes are opened.

3.256  *na paśyati tathā vidvāṁ śīvācāraś caśa vaśam / sanyāsāyaśubdhiśvatāmsastatājñānavāsanah //*

Similarly, when a scholar has destroyed all traces of ignorance with the sun of true knowledge, he does not see mind and mental phenomena as objects.

As conventional identities dissolve, the palace also dissolves, and with it dissolves the idea that a scholar can ascend through real stages to reach a vision of real things. It is as if the metaphor of the journey has dissolved into the image of a dream, and the scholar’s laborious climb up the steps on the palace has become nothing more than a moment of waking up.

In some accounts of the Mahāyāna path, this moment of awakening constitutes the final stage of the path, but not for Bhāviveka. The image of the dream-palace gives way to a series of images that involve re-engagement with the realm of conventional reality. First the Bodhisattva looks back from the top of the “palace of reality” (here pictured as a “mountain of wisdom”) and weeps for the people who have been left behind.

3.296  *na praśāntaṃ duḥkhaṃ arūḍhah karuṇāsālt / aśkeśaṃ ātmasvarupamā prakṣate duḥkhitam jagat //*

When he has climbed the mountain peak of wisdom and is free from grief, he looks with compassion on ordinary people who suffer and are burned by grief.
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3.297 sa tāda karuṇārdeṇa lokām ālokya caksuṣā /
vidyāpatisamābhistākalpanājālasamvortam //

Then, with eyes moist with compassion, he looks at ordinary people who are covered by the network of concepts that come from the art of conceptual thought.

Here Bhāviveka takes advantage of the same rhetorical device that he uses in his quotation from Bhartṛhari in chapter 9: he incorporates the image of a received verse into his own text and expands its meaning. In this case the verse comes from the Udhānavarga, with a more distant echo of the Mahābhārata:

ponājālasādham anubhya asakṣi nājiniṃ pañjām /
pabhataśṭha va bhavaṃśaśa dīro bāle asekhaṭti //

When he has climbed the palace of wisdom, he is steadfast and free from grief; he looks down on people who grieve, as if he were standing on a mountain and looking down on foolish people who stand on the earth.

Bhāviveka’s most important intervention in this verse is to transform the image from one of detachment to one of compassion and concern. His “looking at” (ālokya) reflects the “looking down” that embodies the compassion of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara (“the Lord who looks down”).

Bhāviveka’s re-engagement with conventional reality is not limited, however, to a compassionate gaze. The image of the palace returns in a discussion of the powers that come to advanced Bodhisattvas in the eighth and ninth stages of the Bodhisattva path.

3.340 samībdhebhya vibuddhebhya jagaddhitavidhau parah /
pitāṃ vihitatte bhaktyādṛṣṭau stobhīṣīḥ staurī caṁkṛt //

To bring benefit to the world, [the Bodhisattva] worships the perfectly enlightened and awakened Buddhas; weeping with devotion, he praises them continually with hymns.

3.341 ratnācchātraurvānudayaṁ muktājālaparipaśripaśīḥ /
apraṇāṇiḥ sphaṛadratnamukrīnāḥ kṣukṣraśrīrūpīn //

He worships them with enormous jewelled parasols and canopies, decorated with nets of pearls and sparkling with jewels, whose rays look like sprouts or teeth.

3.342 ranyabarmojaūjastambhaṁ muktāhāravilambabhiḥ /
vicitrodāravatnamughaḥbhhūtīś citrabarakabhiḥ //

3.343 kīṭāgāraṁ ājvadratnaphrabhādaḥ padatjvalaṁī/
abhānībḥaṁ ca karvaṇābhiḥ sva-prabhābālabādvā //

And he worships them with palaces that have pleasant balconies and radiant pillars, that are hung with garlands of pearls, constructed from a mass of different jewels, and decorated with paintings. They shine with hundreds of lamps, whose light comes from radiant jewels; they are as high as the clouds and fill every direction with light.

Here the Bodhisattva’s eyes are filled once again with tears, but this time the emotion is not compassion for the suffering of sentient beings; it is devotion (bhakti) to the Buddhas. And the palace is no longer a structure to climb or a dream from which to awake, but the active product of the Bodhisattva’s own power to shape reality, to bring benefit to the world and pay homage the Buddhas. To take the image of vision and light to its final stage, Bhāviveka describes the moment when the Bodhisattva becomes a Buddha as an act of illumination:

3.346 bhūtvā samādbuddhavāvitro bhavyabuddhābyambjākarṇam /
buddhaytā ukti-kīrāṇaṁ anālaṁ malabhārībhiḥ //

[The Bodhisattva] becomes a perfect Buddha and opens the minds of fortunate beings with the pure, cleansing rays of his teaching, just as the sun brings a pond of lotuses to flower.

But here it is not the Bodhisattva who is illuminated; the Bodhisattva turns around and illuminates the world. The Bodhisattva’s act of vision is not passive or receptive (and it certainly is not non-existent); it actively illuminates others, and it does so in what seems to be an act of synesthesia. The “rays of teaching” combine the imagery of two senses: the sense of hearing and the sense of sight. They also combine two means of valid knowledge: verbal testimony and perception. The result is an image of supernal and power that transcends conventional categories and draws them into the salvific project of the Bodhisattva, a project that is as much oriented toward others as it is toward the Bodhisattva himself or herself.

When Bhāviveka objects to his opponents’ “approach” (nīti or naya) and characterizes his opponents’ position as a “view” (darśana), he clearly has something more in mind than a handful of tired metaphors. These terms function for him as building blocks in a systematic and coherent view of the world. As R. W. B. Lewis said about the image of the “American Adam” in American literature, they tell “a certain habitual
story, an assumed dramatic design for the representative life” (1955: 3). In other words, they function as a myth, not because they are in some way “false” (although Bhāviveka would be critical of the literal application of these images as he would of any other conventional terminology), but because they provide an imaginative template to guide and interpret experience. In this respect, Bhāviveka’s mythic vision of philosophy is not unlike Plato’s well-known allegory of the cave in Book 7 of The Republic. Socrates begins that book by asking his listeners to “make an image of our nature in education and want of education, likening it to a condition of the following kind” (1991: 193). Then he creates a word-picture of human beings as prisoners who are shackled at the bottom of a cave, with their heads locked in place so that they can only see shadows projected on a screen in front of them. These shadows are cast by a fire at the mouth of the cave. Socrates goes on to explain that the purpose of philosophy, in a metaphorical sense, is to unchain the prisoners and lead them out of the cave and see the light. Eventually, Socrates says, the released prisoners will return to the cave to help others make the same journey into the light.

The similarities between Plato’s image of philosophy and Bhāviveka’s account of the philosopher’s quest are striking, yet so are their differences. Both involve an ascent from darkness to light and from images to reality, both use the sense of sight as a metaphor for knowledge, both treat the sun as the journey’s goal, and both talk about the importance of returning into the darkness to lead others to the light. (Some have pointed out that the opening line of The Republic represents just this movement: “I went down to the Pirceus yesterday with Glauc on, son of Ariston, to pray to the goddess.”) But the two journeys also seem to differ in fundamental ways. Plato emphasizes the elements of struggle and pain, especially when the prisoners are forced to turn around and adjust their eyes to the light. Painful transformations are not unknown in Buddhist tradition (as in Bhāviveka’s image of wisdom as the hook that brings the mind under control), but Bhāviveka does not generally choose to stress them.168 Perhaps the crucial transformation has already taken place before a scholar even starts the journey. There also is nothing in Plato that quite corresponds to the image of the Bodhisattva at the top of the mountain, who first sees reality as empty sky and then turns to weep for those who were left behind. And, while both journeys aim toward the sun, Plato does not suggest that the philosopher actually becomes the sun.

The most intriguing aspect of the comparison, however, has to do not with the myths themselves but with the way they come to life in particular discursive practices. Each mythos represents a distinctive logos, or rational principle, that guides philosophical practice. Socrates articulates the logos in Book 6 of The Republic when he gives his account of “the divided line” and charts the intellectual movement from the level of images to the level of the forms, passing through the levels of sensible things and mathematical objects. Each level is associated with a different kind of knowing: images with imagination, sensible things with trust, mathematical with thought, and the forms with intellec tion. Socrates’s account of these levels is elliptical and difficult to interpret, but the structure of his cognitive system is clear, as is the significance of the “intellec tion” that gives access to the forms. In an exchange with Glaucon in Book 7, Socrates says: “Isn’t this at last the song itself that dialectic performs? It is in the realm of the intelligible, but it is imitated by the power of sight... When a man tries by discussion—by means of argument without the use of any of the senses—to attain to each thing itself that is and doesn’t give up before he grasps by intellec tion itself that which is good itself, he comes to the very end of the intelligible realm just as that other man was then at the end of the visible” (1991: 211). Dialectic, without the use of the senses, leads a person beyond appearances to the realm of reality. If Socrates could interrogate Bhāviveka the way he interrogates his companions in The Republic, his questions would have to do with precisely this cognitive process: How does a philosopher climb the ladder of reality? Does he use the senses, rational argument, or some other means of knowing, and what realities does he find? In what way are they real, and how are they known? Implicit in all these questions is a concern not only about a correct view of philosophy, but also about philosophical disagreement. Given this view of reality and the nature of knowledge, how do some thinkers seem to go wrong, and how can their errors be corrected? Bhāviveka did not answer these questions in a way that Socrates would find persuasive, but he would have recognized the cogency of the questions themselves. They were precisely the questions that drove his encounter with his philosophical opponents.

Bhāviveka’s Dialectical Method

For many years Bhāviveka was best known among Buddhist scholars for a point of logical procedure—for holding what Edward Conze called the “well-nigh incredible thesis” that Madhyamika philosophers should maintain valid, independent (vāstu) inferences (1967: 238-39). Bhāviveka thought it was not enough to respond to opponents by pointing out their errors; he felt that he had an obligation to state Madhyamaka arguments as independent theses (pratijñā) and support them with valid reasons and examples.169 In this way he differed sharply from the practice of his predecessor Buddha-pālita. The first substantive verse of Nāgārjuna’s MMK says: “Nothing arises from itself, from something else, from both, or from no cause at all.” Buddha-pālita explains the first part of this verse as follows: “Nothing arises from itself, because its arising would be useless, and because it would lead to an absurd conclusion. There would be no point for things that already exist in their own right to arise again, and, if something arises after it already exists, it would never cease to arise.”170 Bhāviveka reformulates this argument as a positive assertion: “The internal sense media ultimately do not arise from themselves, because they already exist, like consciousness.”171 By making this logical transformation, Bhāviveka takes an argument that reduces the opponent’s assertion to
an absurd conclusion (prāṣāṅga) and substitutes an independent (nuṣṭantri) inference, with a proper thesis (pratijñā), reason (bṛtya), and example (dṛṣṭānta). From this change grew the well-known distinction between two kinds of Mādhyamikas: Praśāṅgikas who reduce their opponents’ positions to absurd conclusions, and Svātantrikas who formulate arguments in which they hold positions of their own.

The most obvious problem with Bhāviveka’s method is that it appears to contradict the words of Nāgārjuna himself. In The Avoidance of Refutations (Vigraha-vyūha-antaki), Nāgārjuna’s most explicit account of his logical procedure, an opponent accuses Nāgārjuna, in effect, of having nothing to say: “If nothing has any identity of its own, then your statement must have no identity of its own, and it cannot deny that anything has any identity.” Nāgārjuna responds by conceding that his statement has no identity, but points out that it can still function to negate the identity of things, just as a cart or pot can carry water or wood, or a cloth can protect from cold and heat. Then he makes a crucial statement: “If I had any thesis (pratijñā), this fault would apply to me, but I have no thesis, so this fault does not apply to me.”

Taken literally, this statement leaves little room for Bhāviveka’s claim that Mādhyamikas should construct valid, independent inferences. I will not attempt to give a full account of Bhāviveka’s response to this problem, except to say that the form of his response mirrors Nāgārjuna’s response to his critic in The Avoidance of Refutations. Using the Mādhyamaka doctrine of two truths, he acknowledges that there ultimately can be no thesis, just as there ultimately can be no identity, but it is still possible to use words conventionally as if they were making assertions, just as a cart can carry wood, or a blanket can keep someone warm. This conventional possibility is enough for Bhāviveka to open the door to a Mādhyamaka tradition of syllogistic reasoning.

It did not take long for Mādhyamikas to realize that this procedural dispute turned on a question about the status of conventional reality. If words could be used conventionally to construct meaningful arguments, what were the proper guidelines for their use and what kinds of objects could they “conventionally” designate? For that matter, what is conventional “reality”? Candrakīrti posed these questions in a very forceful way a century or so after Bhāviveka in his own commentary on Nāgārjuna’s MĀKK, and these questions have echoed throughout the development of Tibetan Mādhyamaka.

A more important question for our purposes, however, is simply “why?” Why would Bhāviveka risk this kind of criticism by introducing a formal style of syllogistic reasoning into Mādhyamaka tradition? One possible answer to this question comes from the stories Xuănzang told about the role of debate in sixth- and seventh-century India. For the Lokāyata to walk up to the gate at Nālandā, post a series of propositions, and demand a response, he would have to have a proposition. The same was true in the story of the young Dharmapāla. The debate began when the opponent stated his opening position. Dharmapāla showed his mastery by memorizing his opponent’s position and reciting it back to him. To take part in these contests for intellectual status and worldly success (to say nothing of engaging in debate as a quest for truth), a contestant had to deal in the currency of debate, and that currency involved propositions, reasons, and examples.

Another reason for Bhāviveka’s choice comes from traditional Indian rules for debate. In a list of unacceptable forms of reasoning, the Nyāya Sūtras include viśṇāṇḍa. The term viśṇāṇḍa is sometimes translated as “wrangling,” but it has no obvious European equivalent. Viśṇāṇḍa is best understood instead through its definition: “that [form of unacceptable reasoning] that lacks the establishment of a counter-position is viśṇāṇḍa.” According to the Nyāya Sūtras, debate follows a standard pattern. One person begins by stating a position (pakṣa) and supporting it with a proper inference. An opponent then contradicts this position by stating and defending a counter-position (pratipakṣa), which is defined as the attribution of a contradictory property to the same subject. The debate consists of a conflict between these two positions, with both parties pointing out faults in the other’s argument and defending their own positions against the opponent’s critique. A viśṇāṇḍika is someone who does nothing more than negate his opponent’s position and does not establish a position of his own.

On the rare occasions when scholars of Buddhism have discussed the problem of viśṇāṇḍa, they have generally dismissed it as irrelevant to the study of Mādhyamaka. Th. Stcherbatsky took Nāgārjuna’s refusal to affirm a thesis as evidence that he intended to destroy logic: “For a certain class of Buddhists truth consists of the negation of logic. Truth according to the convention of these men will emerge from the destruction of all logic. The truth is the world of the mystic.” Kamaleshwar Bhattacharya followed a different approach but reached a similar conclusion. He argued that the Nyāya Sūtras did not define viśṇāṇḍa as the lack of a counter-position but as the lack of the establishment of a counter-position. If the Mādhyamikas did not even have a position, how could they be accused of failing to establish one?

Evidently Bhāviveka had a different idea. In the commentary on MMK 18:9, Bhāviveka relates the problem of viśṇāṇḍa to the problem of defining ultimate reality: If ultimate reality (tattva) transcends all conceptual expression, is it enough for Buddhist thinkers simply to reject everyone else’s definition of reality, or are they required to state a definition of their own? And if they are required to state a definition, what kind of definition should it be? Can a definition of something undefinable ever be useful or true? Bhāviveka deals with these questions in the following way:

Some Buddhists, along with other opponents, raise the following objection: If you think that reality (tattva) can be known by completely rejecting the identity that others imagine, then you have to state its definition. If you do not, you reject your opponent’s position without establishing one of your own, and you are guilty of viśṇāṇḍa.

Reply: This is true. If the definition could be stated, we would state it,
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but it cannot be stated. However, to encourage those who are just beginning, we state [a definition] using conceptual, analytical cognition:

[MMK 18.9] “Not known through anyone else, peaceful, not expressed by discursive ideas, non-conceptual, not diverse—this is the definition of reality.”

Here [reality] is not expressed by discursive ideas, because it is non-conceptual. Because it is not expressed by discursive ideas, it is peaceful. Because it is peaceful, it is accessible only to non-conceptual knowledge. Because it is accessible only to non-conceptual knowledge, it is not known through anyone else. In this way, the nature of reality completely transcends the application of words.

However, even though [reality] cannot be expressed, statements that negate the identity and the specific attributes of all things help to produce, by not producing, the non-conceptual cognition that understands the nature of reality. [These statements] come from the application of syllables. So we describe reality with skillful means, even though it can only be known directly. In this way, we do state a definition. Since this is not vītyādā, your criticism does not apply.111

Bhāviveka’s strategy in this passage mirrors the two-part strategy in Nāgārjuna’s response to his critic in The Avoidance of Refutations. He acknowledges that there cannot really be a definition of reality, but he says that words can still be used as if they were expressing a definition. He does not give a technical designation of these two approaches; all he says is that the second involves “skillful means” (apāya). But it would be clear to any Madhyamaka reader that they reflect Nāgārjuna’s distinction between ultimate and conventional truth.114

Bhāviveka also discusses vītyādā in his commentary on the first formal syllogism in MHK chapter 3. The verse reads:

3.26 tatra bhūtavakkhānaṃ hi norgyādi paramarthakataḥ / kṛtyakatvā yathā jīvam hetaṃva svāditaṃ ‘pi va //

Here earth and so forth do not ultimately have the identity of gross elements, because they are created and because they have a cause and so forth, like cognition.

An opponent suggests that Bhāviveka’s argument is a form of vītyādā, because he refutes his opponent’s position without establishing a position of his own. Bhāviveka responds by saying: “This is not vītyādā. We have a position, which is emptiness of identity (rokhaṇaviṇ야yati), and this is the nature of dharmaṃ. In this way we establish that our position is free from fault.”115

Reading these two passages side by side shows how seriously Bhāviveka took his responsibility as a logician. We do not know much about the way he lived. We do not know how much he was involved in debate. We do not know who his patrons were, when he won his greatest victories or suffered his most embarrassing defeats. But we can see from the innovations in his commentary on Nāgārjuna that he was committed to bringing Madhyamaka arguments into the mainstream of Indian debate. By formulating his “independent” syllogisms, he could post his own positions on the gate, figuratively or literally, alongside the positions of his competitors, and he could demand a response. This made him not only an innovator in Madhyamaka tradition but very much a man of his time.

THE STANDARD THREE-PART SYLLOGISM

To follow the logic of Bhāviveka’s arguments, the most important requirement is simply to understand the rules of the standard three-part syllogism as it was used by Bhāviveka and his contemporaries.126 We already have seen an example of the standard syllogism in the argument that begins the analytical portion of MHK chapter 3:

3.26 tatra bhūtavakkhānaṃ hi norgyādi paramarthakataḥ / kṛtyakatvā yathā jīvam hetaṃva svāditaṃ ‘pi va //

Earth and so forth do not ultimately have the identity of gross elements, because they are created and because they have a cause and so forth, like cognition.

In the terminology of Indian logic, “earth and so forth” constitute the “locus” (pakṣa) or “property-possessor” (īlaṃ) of the syllogism. “Do not ultimately have the identity of gross elements” constitutes the “inferred property” (sādyadharma). When the “locus” is qualified by the “inferred property,” it constitutes a “thesis” (pratijñā). Rather than using the Sanskrit terminology of “locus” and “inferred property,” I will simplify the terminology and refer to the two parts of the thesis as “subject” and “predicate.”127

In Bhāviveka’s syllogism, the terms “are created” and “have a cause” function as the “inferring properties” (sādhānadharmā). The attribution of an “inferring property” to a subject constitutes a “reason” (pratijñā). “Like cognition” is the “example” (ārtha). The “thesis,” “reason,” and “example” serve as the three members of a standard syllogism.

In the notes to the translation and in the analysis that follows, I will list these three
would need to explain why the opponent’s qualifier (“falsehood”) is contradicted by perception, tradition, and common sense, as he does later in the text when he gives his own account of the cognition of external objects. But the point is sufficiently obvious at this stage in the argument to stand without further explanation. Bhāviveka is saying, in effect, that perception, tradition, and common sense all presuppose that at least some cognitions of material form are true.

The Three Requirements of a Valid Reason
According to Śaṅkarasvāmin, a valid “reason” (bhedā) has to satisfy three requirements: (1) the “inferring property” (ādiṭṭhādharma) has to be present in the subject of the syllogism, (2) it has to be present in another subject that possesses the inferred property (ādiṭṭhādharma), and (3) it has to be absent in any subject that does not possess the inferred property. (In the logical shorthand of this tradition, a “subject that possesses the inferred property” is called a uṣṭakya or “similar locus,” and a “subject that does not possess the inferred property” is called a uṣṭaksa or “dissimilar locus.”) As the logical tradition unfolded after Dignāga and Bhāviveka, it became clear that the second of these three requirements was considerably less important than the third. Bhāviveka observed the need to present a positive example in support of his arguments (to satisfy requirement 2), but the most decisive way to defeat an opponent’s syllogism was to show that it did not satisfy requirement 3. A debater could do this by citing an example in which the inferring property is present but the inferred property is not. For example, in the standard illustration of an Indian syllogism, “There is fire on the mountain, because there is smoke on the mountain, as in a kitchen,” a debater may be able to cite any number of examples of places where fire is associated with smoke and not decisively prove the argument, but if he can cite even a single counter-example, where smoke is present but fire is not, the syllogism fails. In his attack on opponents’ reasons, Bhāviveka generally focuses on requirements 1 and 3.

The Unaccepted Reason
One of the most common ways for Bhāviveka to attack an opponent’s reason is to say that the reason is “unaccepted” or “unestablished” (āṣiddha). This amounts to a claim that the opponent violates requirement 1, the requirement that “the inferring property be present in the subject.” In the context of an actual debate, the word āṣiddha has useful ambiguity. In a strong sense, it can mean that the presence of the inferred property is “unproven” or “unestablished,” but in the process of an actual debate, the word can mean simply that the presence of the inferred property is “not accepted” by one or both of the parties in the argument. When Bhāviveka raises this objection, he usually means that he does not accept the presence of the inferred property in the subject. But he often goes on to support this claim with a valid syllogism, in which he shows that the presence of the inferring property is not established in the subject. He follows this
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procedure in verses 5.33-35, as part of his argument against the Yogācāra interpretation of mind-only (citramītra). Verse 5.33 states a Yogācāra syllogism:

The form of many atoms is not the object of the mind,
Because it is not substantially real,
like a double moon.

In verse 5.35 and in the commentary, Bhāviveka explains that he does not accept the Yogācāra reason:

When the opponent takes the material form of a combination of homogeneous (sūlyajjita) atoms as the subject and gives “not substantially real” as the reason, the reason is not accepted by one of the parties to the argument (abhatāvyāvatātya). Why? [We] think that [a combination of homogeneous atoms] is the object when [atoms] are combined or associated with the material forms of other, homogeneous atoms.

This can only mean that Bhāviveka thinks that “the form of many atoms” (the subject of the syllogism) is not “not substantially real” (the inferring property). At first this sounds like an odd position. It is virtually axiomatic for Buddhists to say that combinations like “the form of many atoms” cannot be real. But Bhāviveka explains that he is thinking of “the form of many atoms” in only a relative sense: “We think that a combination of similar atoms, such as a pot, is real in a relative sense (āsavatā).” In other words, Bhāviveka does not accept that “not substantially real” is a property of “the form of many atoms.” By making this claim, Bhāviveka opens up one of the most intriguing sections of the text. To back it up, he has to show how “the form of many atoms” can function as an object of the mind in a relative sense. This is a major challenge, with enormous consequences for the development of Madhyamaka in India and Tibet.56 But the argument starts in a simple, almost disarming way. It is as if Bhāviveka the debater simply raised his hand and said his Yogācāra opponent: “Stop! I don’t accept that reason.”

THE INCONCLUSIVE REASON
To satisfy requirements 2 and 3 of a valid reason, the “inferring property” has to be present in the sapakṣa (a subject that possesses the “inferred property”) and absent in the vipakṣa (a subject that does not possess the “inferred property”). When the “inferring property” is present in some of the sapakṣa and some of the vipakṣa, the reason is “inconclusive” (anatikāmikha).57 Bhāviveka again provides a useful illustration. In verse 5.27, as part of the argument against the Yogācāra understanding of mind-only, Bhāviveka considers the following Yogācāra syllogism:

External objects have the nature of mind,
because they are objects of cognition,
like an immediately preceding condition.

In verse 5.28, he argues that the reason (“because they are objects of cognition”) is inconclusive. “Being an object of cognition” may mean that something has “the nature of mind,” or it may mean that it does not. According to traditional dharma-theory, an immediately preceding condition can be either the mind itself (citta) or a mental phenomenon (cittotpatti).58 This definition makes the reason ambiguous. To be “an object of cognition like an immediately preceding condition” can mean that something is the mind, or it can mean that it is a mental phenomenon. Obviously the opponent needs to limit the scope of the reason and example to make the syllogism persuasive, if it can be made persuasive at all. In the meantime Bhāviveka has gained at least a temporary advantage in the argument.

THE CONTRADICTED REASON
The “inferring property” is considered “contradicted” (vṛṣrudha) if it proves the opposite of either the “inferred property,” the “subject,” or some aspect of the subject. A good illustration of this fault occurs in Bhāviveka’s response to the Yogācāra argument for the falsehood of a cognition of material form:

A non-conceptual cognition of material form is false,
because it has the image of an object,
like the cognition of a double moon.

We saw earlier that Bhāviveka considered the thesis in this syllogism to be “unaccepted.” The verse and commentary show that he also considered the reason to be “contradicted.”

[Verse 5.15] If [the opponent takes the position that] a cognition of material form is false because it has the image of an object, the reason is mistaken, and the thesis fails.

[Commentary:] “Mistaken” means contradicted (vṛṣrudha). A cognition of material form cannot have any other nature than to have the image of an object. To infer that “having the image of an object” excludes “truthfulness” is contradictory, because it proves the opposite of the nature of the subject.

A more obscure example of a contradicted reason is found in Bhāviveka’s discussion of “dependent identity” (paratantrasamabhava) in verses 5.69–71. The argument begins
with the Yogācāra claim that “imagined (parikalpita) things do not exist, but dependent (paratantri) things do exist.” Bhāviveka anticipates that the objector will support this claim in the following way:

Things are empty,
because they are empty of the identity attributed to them by words.

He interprets this reason to mean that “things” (bhāsa) are only empty of the identity attributed to them by words but not empty in and of themselves. By “thing” he would have in mind something like Dignāga’s concept of a “unique particular” (vatākṣa). Bhāviveka responds to this Yogācāra claim by saying that the reason is contradicted. Why? If something is “empty of the identity attributed to it by words,” then it cannot function as the subject of a syllogism. In other words, the reason proves the opposite of an aspect of the subject.

FAULTS OF THE EXAMPLE

When Bhāviveka objects to an opponent’s example, the objections are often closely related to problems in the reason. If the example fails to show that the “inferring property” is present in the vipaksya and absent in the vipakṣa, it undermines the validity of the reason itself. A good illustration of this fault is the first Yogācāra argument in favor of mind-only:

A cognition of material form and so forth has no object,
because it arises with that kind of image,
like the cognition of material form and so forth in a dream.

The reason in this syllogism is obscure, but it can be clarified by comparing Bhāviveka’s version of the syllogism to its source in verses 1-3 of Vasubandhu’s Twenty Verses (Puratattika): “because it arises with that kind of image” means that it “arises with the image of unreal objects.” With this clarification, we can restate the Yogācāra argument in the following form:

A cognition of material form and so forth has no object,
because it arises with the image of unreal objects,
like the cognition of material form and so forth in a dream.

Bhāviveka objects to this syllogism by attacking the example; he argues that dreams often are based on objects that have been seen before, when the dreamers were awake, so it is not true to say that dreams always have unreal objects.

Dream-consciousness and so forth have objects, because they repeat [objects] that have been seen before, like memory. The traces of things that were seen in previous lives cause a variety of material forms to appear in dreams, with different colors and shapes, even for those who are blind and have lost the use of their eyes. Objects are not absent even in such cognitions. For it is said, “O Bhadrapāla, a blind man sees material form in a dream with his mind’s eye; he does not see with physical eyes.” Because the mind’s eye has a dharma as its object, dream-consciousness, and so forth, have objects. Therefore, your argument (sādhanā) suffers the fault of having no example.

Since the “inferring property” is “arise with the image of unreal objects,” this passage could be translated: “For your inferring [property], there is the fault of there being no example.” Either way, a flaw in the example points to a flaw in the reason.

A Series of Linked Syllogisms

There is very little about Bhāviveka’s use of the standard syllogism that could not be recreated from well-known manuals like Śāntarakṣita’s Introduction to Logic. But there are surprisingly few accounts in Indian literature about what actually took place when debaters put these rules into play in confrontations with their opponents. In spite of all that has been written about Indian philosophical debates, including Xuanzang’s stories and reminiscences, we know very little about what debaters actually said. Simply to leap from the theory of debate to its practice is tempting, but it also is problematic. It would be like assuming that Robert’s Rules of Order give an accurate account of debate in the houses of Congress. It is not that the rules are irrelevant, but there is much more to the practice of debate than rules for motions, amendments, and votes. One of the many reasons Bhāviveka’s text is so valuable is that it takes at least a modest step toward bridging this gap between theory and practice. Bhāviveka does not give us the transcript of an actual debate. He does not say that on such and such an occasion an opponent made the following argument, and that the master responded by pointing out the following errors. But his text does read as if it were preparing a student to confront an actual opponent. First, the opponent presents a syllogism, and Bhāviveka criticizes its errors. Then Bhāviveka presents a syllogism of his own and defends it against the opponent’s criticism. In the give and take of argument and counter-argument, we get a picture of how debaters could use the rules of the syllogism to gain victory over their opponents. An example from the chapter on the Śrāvakas will show how this might be true.

Bhāviveka begins the chapter with a simple statement: “The purpose of this chapter is to prove that the Mahāyāna is the teaching of the Buddha.” The Śrāvakas’ objections
move briefly in other directions, but eventually they come back to this fundamental problem of authenticity. To start the attack, the Śrāvakas formulate the following syllogism:

4.7 na buddhoktir mahāyānam sūtrāntadā avamgrahat /
māyāntaropadeśād vā yathā vedāntadarśanam //

The Mahāyāna is not the Buddha's teaching, because it is not included in the Sūtrāntas and so forth, or because it teaches another path, like the Vedānta view.

Bhāviveka does not respond by pointing out the opponent's errors, as he often does, but immediately states his own counter-position:

4.34 mahāyānam ca na kauddhām na vāmysādiprakāśanat /
ratnātritayamābhīmyapratahanāc chīryāyaṇanat //

According to us, the Mahāyāna is the Buddha's, because it shows that there is no self and so forth, and because it teaches the greatness of the three jewels, like the Śrāvakayāna.

This verse constitutes a contradiction of the opponent's thesis. Rather than merely asserting the contradiction, he supports it with a counter-argument. Once he has given his own position, he gets down to the business of criticizing his opponent's reason ("because it is not included in the Sūtrāntas and so forth"): 4.35 pratītyaścetā bhadhato hetof ca syād asiddhatā /
mahāyānaśtriṣadāsanāmgrahād vinayādiṣyay //

And the reason is not accepted, because it is contradicted by a counter-argument, because the teachings of the Mahāyāna, beginning with the [four] truths, are included in the Vinaya and so forth.

At this point, the burden of the argument shifts to the commentary, where Bhāviveka offers a series of reasons to question the relationship between the opponent's reason ("because it is not included in the Sūtrāntas and so forth") and thesis ("the Mahāyāna is not the Buddha's teaching"). One reason is that the canonical texts of the eighteen schools contradict one another. Another is that the canonical texts of different schools contain references to teachings of the Buddha that were delivered during his lifetime but were not included in the different versions of the canon. All these arguments show that the opponent's reason is inconclusive, since it is possible for something to be accepted as

the Buddha's teaching and not be included in one of the canonical collections.

Verses 4.36-55 respond to the opponent's second reason, concluding with the following argument:

4.55 ayaṃ eva yato mārgah samyagdhyāsaścaraḥ /
mahāyāne 'pi nirdeśas tasmād dīktor asiddhatā //

The Mahāyāna teaches the very same path, beginning with right vision, so the reason is unacceptable.

Then Bhāviveka finishes his response to the opponent's initial syllogism with a critique of the example:

4.56 vedānte ca hi yat stīktam tat sarvam buddhahāṃśiṣam /
dṛṣṭāntaryāṣaṃ tat tvāt samādiṣhām vi pariṣṭayā //

Everything that is well spoken in the Vedānta is taught by the Buddha. Therefore, either the example is deficient or one should analyze its ambiguity.

As is true with many of the earlier verses, this gives rise to an interesting exchange in the commentary about the ambiguity of the word "Vedānta." The opponent argues that the example refers to the parts of the Veda that clearly contradict the teaching of the Buddha. Bhāviveka replies that the Mahāyāna has no such teachings, so the example fails to establish a relationship between the thesis and the reason.

Would an actual debate have followed this pattern? We have no way of knowing. With all of the digressions and the twists and turns in the argument, it is clear that a debater could have entered the dispute at just about any point, concentrating, perhaps, on the example or on the second of the two reasons before turning to the first. But Bhāviveka has given us a clear picture not only of how a debater might have worked methodically through an analysis of his opponent's syllogism, but also how a student might build up a battery of arguments to respond to the thrusts and counter-thrusts of an opponent. In this respect, the text comes much closer to real debate than the rules of a logical manual.

The text comes closer in a second respect as well. In his account of the debating practices in Tibetan monasteries, Georges B. J. Dreyfus comments on the psychological pressure when a defender is slow to answer a question or finds the flow of debate turning against him (2003: 257-59). It is easy for a debater to be rattled, to get angry, or to grope for the right words. Victory might not necessarily go to the person who has memorized the most effective arguments, but to the person who can come up with a sharp rejoinder or a clever comparison to mock the opponent and put him on the
defensive. Along with his systematic analysis of syllogisms, Bhāviveka gives us a taste of the rhetorical tricks a debater could use to make the opponent angry or break his concentration. Bhāviveka starts the chapter on the Śrāvakas with a slighting reference to the “inferior aspirants” (hirādhīṁśāt) of his opponents, echoing the distinction between the “inferior vehicle” of the Śrāvakas and the “great vehicle” of the Mahāyāna. In verse 4.11, the Śrāvaka objector calls the Mahāyānistas “clowns” (vidyāsākha) for saying that the qualifier “in reality” frees them from a particularly egregious fault. If the Mahāyāna argument is correct, the Śrāvaka says, then it would be correct “in reality” to say that a man can have sex with a woman who is forbidden, because she is a woman, like another woman. Bhāviveka has a sharp rejoinder: in verse 4.65: “If you want to refute us, you have to prove that there ultimately can be sex with a woman who is permissible for sex,” and so on. At the beginning of the Yogācāra chapter, Bhāviveka refers to his opponents as “scholars” (dīrgha) who are “proud of their approach” (viniśatā abhihāminānaḥ). The pride of the Yogācāra seems to have become proverbial, at least for Harīhara, who begins the Abhisamayālaṃkāra with a reference to Vasubandhu as “elevated” (we might say “puffed up”) with “pride in his knowledge.” In verse 5.54, Bhāviveka responds to a Yogācāra claim that a person should use the concept of mind-only to remove the idea of external objects, then use the concept again to remove the idea of a separate subject. Bhāviveka responds with a clever proverb about “washing away mud,” stating that the opponent would be better off seeking the truth from the very beginning, rather than covering himself with mud and then washing it away. In 5.82-83, near the end of the section on “dependent identity,” Bhāviveka quotes a passage from the Bodhisattvabhumi that accuses an unidentified “nihilist” (nāśika) of going straight to hell and taking others with him. Bhāviveka takes this passage to be a reference to the Mādhyamikas, and he throws it back in the Yogācāras’ face, saying: “These angry words are like vomit: they show undigested pride.” This line picks up the reference to the Yogācāras’ pride at the start of the chapter and turns it into an insult that seems crude and at the same time unusually apt. What better way to mock a defeated opponent than to compare his arguments to vomit? It seems that there was more to the rhetorical give and take of these debates than the mere analysis of a string of syllogisms.

THE ARGUMENT

BHĀVIVEKA’S BUDDHIST OPPONENTS

Once all of this has been said—once we have a sense of who Bhāviveka was, what works can be reliably attributed to him, and how he formed his arguments—who were his Buddhist opponents, and what were the issues that seemed to divide them?
our understanding of the integrity of Buddhist canonical collections. In a passage that
he appears to borrow from Vasubandhu’s *Logic of Explanation* (*Vyakhyāyukti*), Bhāviveka
points out that some canonical texts refer to teachings of the Buddha that were not
transmitted in any of the existing canonical collections. He goes on to argue that the
canonical texts of different schools contradict one another, so that the teachings that
are accepted as authentic by some schools are rejected by others. All of this shows that
the Śrāvakas themselves acknowledge greater diversity in the Buddha’s teaching than is
found in any particular canonical collection. In a wider sense, it shows that the Śrāvakas
were a far more varied group than we now can observe with the paucity of our resources.

The term “Yogācāra” in the title of chapter 5 presents a different set of historical
issues. In a generic sense, the word can be used to refer simply to a “practitioner of
discipline,” as in a passage from the *Brahmaśāstra Sūtra* quoted by Bhāviveka in
_The Lamp of Wisdom:* “O Blessed One, a practitioner of discipline who has perfect
understanding does not cause the arising or cessation of any dharma, does not seek to
attain any dharma, and does not seek understanding.” Bhāviveka frequently refers to
the Bodhisattva practice as a form of yoga (“discipline”) and to Bodhisattvas themselves
as yogins (“practitioners of discipline”), as in the commentary on MIIK 3.292. This
usage follows the standard terminology of the Perfection of Wisdom literature19 and
is mirrored in other important Madhyamaka works, such as Aśvadīva’s *Four Hundred
Verses (Catubhakata)*, whose long title in the Tibetan edition is *Bodhisattva-yogacarabhā-
sūtra-catubhakata-kārikā* (*Four Hundred Verses on the Bodhisattva’s Practice of Discipline*).190
It is clear, however, that the Yogācāra who is named in the title of chapter 5 is not just
a generic “practitioner of discipline” but the adherent of a rival tradition, as the
Śrāvaka is in chapter 4. Bhāviveka makes this point explicit in the commentary on 5.1,
when he identifies the Yogācāras as “Asaṅga, Vasubandhu, and so forth.” Judging from
Bhāviveka’s arguments about “mind-only” in verses 5.17-54 and his response to the con-
cept of “exclusion-by-the-other” (anyatāpāra) in verses 5.60-68, it is clear that Bhāviveka
also thought of Dignāga as a Yogācāra. He mentions Dignāga’s *Investigation of the Object
(Alambhapanarikṣa)* by name in the commentary on 5.39.

There is no scholarly consensus about why Bhāviveka used the word “Yogācāra” to
name this particular group of Mahāyāna opponents. The old idea that the Yogācāra tra-
dition was known for its distinctive practice of yoga now has to be discarded. The prac-
tice of yoga belonged as much to the Madhyamaka tradition as it did to the Yogācāra.
For that matter, it belonged as much to Indian religion in general as it did to any par-
ticular branch of Buddhist thought. A more likely explanation is that Bhāviveka took
the word from the title of Asaṅga’s Yogācārabhāṣāsūtra (Stages in the Practice of Yoga). We
know from Huili’s biography of Xuanzang that the Yogācārabhāṣāsūtra served as the defin-
ing text for Xuanzang’s own scholarly identity. Huili tells us that Xuanzang under-
took his journey to India specifically to study the Yogācārabhāṣāsūtra, so that he could cut
through the sectarian differences that plagued Buddhist teachers in China.191 When he

finally arrived at Nālandā monastery and was ushered into the presence of the master
Śālavahāra, Xuanzang introduced himself by saying that he had come from China in
order to study the Yogācārabhāṣāsūtra under the guidance of a teacher. If we understand
the word “Yogācāra” this way, it would refer first to a text, then to the teaching derived
from the text and to the scholars who represent that teaching. As the designation of a
building, it would be similar to Bhartṛhari’s word *āgamarājā* (a “tradition-view”). As
the name of a group of scholars, it would be similar to two other Buddhist terms:
Vaibhāṣika, which names the scholars who base their teaching on the *Mahābhāṣā*
and Sautrāntika, which names the scholars who base their teaching on the *Sutrasaṃgīta*.
It is useful to note that Bhāviveka took a similar position about the meaning of the term
madhyamaka in his commentary on the last verse of the MIIK (“This completes the con-
ice heart of the Madhyamaka: for scholars it is a mirror to reflect the meaning of many
śūtras”). Bhāviveka explains that the suffix “ka” refers to “the act (or means) of teaching
and proclaiming the middle path.” Then he goes on to say that the word madhyamaka
can refer to either the Madhyamaka text (*madhyamakāśāstra*) or the Madhyamaka sys-
tem (*madhyamakasiddhānta*).

There has been a great deal of discussion about whether it is accurate to call rival
text-traditions like the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra “schools” in a formal sense. Stanley
Weinstein has pointed out that in China full-fledged Buddhist schools only emerged
during the latter half of the Tang Dynasty (1993: 485). T. Griffith Foulk has argued
that the term “school” should only be used to designate a movement or group “united in
a self-conscious manner by a common set of beliefs, practices, and/or social structure”
(1992: 18-31). Bhāviveka clearly thought that the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra text-tradi-
tions were separated by self-conscious sets of beliefs. To what extent these beliefs were
accompanied by differences in practice or social structure is difficult to determine, but
there are suggestions in the text that point toward significant institutional divisions.
In verses 5.82-83a, Bhāviveka quotes a passage from the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* (a portion of
the Yogācārabhāṣāsūtra) and takes it to be a critical reference to the Madhyamaka. The
passage reads like this:

> When some people hear the difficult and profound Mahāyāna sūtras that
deepest and profound Mahāyāna sūtras that
deal with emptiness and convey a meaning that needs to be interpreted, they
do not discern the correct meaning, they develop false concepts, they have
unreasonable systems, based on logic (tarka), and they say: “All of reality is
nothing but a designation; whoever sees it this way, sees correctly.” For these
people there is no real thing to serve as the basis of designation. This means
that there cannot be any designation at all. How can reality be nothing but
designation? By saying this they deny both designation and reality. Someone
who denies designation and reality should be known as the worst kind of
nihilist (nāstika). Those who are wise and practice a religious life should not
PART I: ANALYSIS

speak or share living quarters with this kind of nihilist. He causes himself to fall, and those who agree with his false views fall as well.\footnote{\textit{144}}

If the word “nihilist” is meant to include Mādhyamikas, as Bhāviveka thought, this passage means not only that the Yogācāras (who are affiliated with the text-tradition of the \textit{Yogācārabhūmi}) disagree with the Mādhyamikas; they should not speak with them or share living quarters. How this prohibition played out in practice in Bhāviveka’s lifetime, we do not know. But the passage suggests that the intellectual rivalry was accompanied by a significant institutional rivalry. Xuanzang’s narrative confirms that these two text-traditions were rivals, and Bhāviveka’s argument assumes it. This rivalry continued to generate important philosophical controversies in India and later in Tibet, where Bhāviveka’s critique of the Yogācāra was a key source of the doctrinal differences that José Ignacio Cabezón has aptly called the “scholias” of Tibetan scholasticism (1994).

Some have argued that Bhāviveka not only chronicled the dispute between Mādhyamaka and Yogācāra but also created it. This point goes back at least as far as Taranātha, who said (in a passage quoted earlier) that, before Buddhapaśāla and Bhāviveka, “all adherents of the Mahāyāna remained under the same teaching.” It was only after the death of Bhāviveka that “the adherents of the Mahāyāna divided into two schools (āśrama) and began to debate.” Bhāviveka’s chapter on the Yogācāras shows that he understood the situation quite differently. In the opening verse and in the following commentary, Bhāviveka says that “other scholars,” beginning with Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, have claimed that their approach is superior to the approach of the Mādhyamikas. The Yogācāra claim of superiority is expressed even more starkly in the last verse of the Yogācāra objection:

\begin{quote}
5.7 prajñāpāramitāśāntaviparyaya
na tatrādhipatipratisedhavāpyanā
\end{quote}

This approach to the Perfection of Wisdom is the means to attain omniscience; the approach that concentrates on the negation of arising and cessation is not.

The commentary on this verse makes clear who follows these two approaches:

This approach to the Perfection of Wisdom—namely the one that we [the Yogācāras] present—is the means to attain omniscience. The approach that concentrates on the negation of arising and cessation—namely the approach of the Mādhyamikas (madhyamavāda)—is tantamount to nihilism (nāstikadṛśa) and is not the means to attain omniscience.

THE ARGUMENT

In verses 5.82–83, Bhāviveka connects this accusation of nihilism to the passage just quoted from the \textit{Buddhisattvabhūmi}. From these verses and their surrounding commentary, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that Bhāviveka himself attributed responsibility for the dispute to the Yogācāras themselves. They were the ones who defended the approach of the \textit{Yogācārabhūmi}, along with its accusation of nihilism. All he was doing was defending his own text-tradition against its critics.

When two traditions are as close as the Mādhyamaka and Yogācāra, it is tempting to minimize or overlook the differences. But it is often the “proximate others” or the near neighbors who pose the problem of difference in its most acute and troubling form. They challenge a person or group not just to identify what sets the other apart, but to look in the mirror and identify what it is that makes them themselves. In other words, they pose the question of identity. If the language of “identity” or “selfhood” seems strange to Buddhist ears (after all, “selfhood” is precisely what others have and Buddhists do not), it is this strangeness that gives the differences among Buddhist philosophers their intellectual edge. Jonathan Z. Smith has said that difference or otherness “becomes most problematic when it is TOO-MUCH-LIKE-US or when it claims to BE-US” (2004: 245). In the case of these two kindred Mahāyāna traditions, the problem of difference is only sharpened by the fact that Mahāyāna philosophy has to do with the absence of identity—things, in selves, in others, and, for that matter, even in traditions and schools.

What is it, then, that made these two TOO-MUCH-LIKE-US traditions so different? Bhāviveka has a great deal to say about the signature doctrines of the Yogācāra, including “mind-only” (citamātra) and the “three identities” (trisvabhūta), but the core of the dispute mirrors his dispute with the Śārvākakas; it has to do with scripture. The problem is not whether the Mahāyāna sūtras are authentic. About this the Mādhyamikas and Yogācāras agreed. The problem is that the Yogācāras made an exclusive claim about their approach to scripture: “This approach to the Perfection of Wisdom is the means to attain omniscience; the approach that concentrates on the negation of arising and cessation is not.”\footnote{\textit{145}} Examples of this kind of exclusive claim are rare in Yogācāra sources, but they are not unknown. One clear example is found in Dignāga’s \textit{Epitome of the Perfection of Wisdom (prajñāpāramitāśānta)}, verses 27–29: “The teaching in the Perfection of Wisdom is based on three [identities]: imagined, dependent, and absolute. The words ‘do not exist’ rule out everything that is imagined. Examples such as illusion (maya) teach dependent [identity]. The fourfold purification teaches absolute [identity]. The Buddha has no other teaching in the Perfection of Wisdom.” The key words here are \textit{nāma\text{\textsubscript{\text{\textcircled{\text{\textdagger}}}}}} buddhāra\text{\textsubscript{\text{\textcircled{\text{\textdagger}}}}} delānā: “the Buddha has no other teaching.” It is possible that more examples of this exclusive claim would be forthcoming if we could examine the commentaries on the Perfection of Wisdom by Asaṅga and Vasubandhu. Haribhadra refers to these commentaries in the introduction to his \textit{Abhisamayālaṃkārakālaka}, but neither of them survives in their Sanskrit original or in Chinese or Tibetan translation.\footnote{\textit{146}}

Dignāga’s verses not only offer an exclusive interpretation of the Perfection of
PART I: ANALYSIS

Wisdom, they also give us an intellectual framework to understand what the interpretation is about. The Yogācāras interpret the Perfection of Wisdom through a doctrine of "three identities" (trisvabhāva). While Dignāga does not mention the corresponding Madhyamakas, his readers would know that the "three identities" do the same philosophical work for the Yogācāra that "two truths" (satyadvaya) do for the Madhyamakas. At its most basic level, the dispute between these two traditions (as it was formulated in the sixth century) can be understood as a conflict between these two interpretive principles: the Yogācāra doctrine of "three natures" versus the Madhyamaka doctrine of "two truths."

Nāgārjuna once said: "Buddhas teach the Dharma based on two truths: mundane relative truth and ultimate truth. Anyone who misunderstands the distinction between these two truths misunderstands the profound point in the Buddhas' teaching." These two verses have provoked an ocean of commentary and no small amount of misunderstanding. Without getting into the technical details of the two truths, perhaps it is enough to say that Madhyamikas like Bhāviveka approach the world from two different perspectives. From a conventional or "relative" (samaya) perspective, they accept things as they are designated in ordinary speech and appear in ordinary experience. From an ultimate (paramārtha) perspective, they look closely at these things and discover that they have no identity in and of themselves. The two truths together constitute a "middle path" (madhyamā pratipada), in the sense that these two perspectives make it possible to say that things both are and are not. From a conventional perspective, the contents of ordinary experience (and the experiences themselves) are; from an ultimate perspective, they are not. In this way, the middle path avoids two extremes: the extreme of "improper denial" (apavada) and the extreme of "improper reification" (samāropena). To "deny" something in the technical sense is to say that it has no reality or moral significance at all. In effect, it is a kind of nihilism. To "reify" something is to attribute so much reality to it that one cannot be free from it. "Reification" functions, in effect, as a kind of fatalism. While these two extremes have to do initially with the reality of things, their greatest significance comes in the realm of ethical practice. To take the requirements of the path seriously, it is important to understand that the things a person does today will have serious consequences tomorrow, as Bhāviveka himself explained: "Someone who is in the habit of denying cause and effect pulls up beneficial roots, enters evil paths, and rejects conventional reality itself. Madhyamikas do not deny cause and effect, which is like magic or a mirage, and they do not enter evil paths." On the other side, it is important to understand that a person is not bound by the past; a person can change and become something new. These two modes of understanding constitute the middle path.

The Yogācāra approaches the same intellectual problems from a very different angle. The Chinese monk, traveller, and translator Yijing explained the difference like this: "For Yogācāra the real exists, but the conventional does not exist; and [Yogācāra] takes the three identities as foundational. For Madhyamaka the real does not exist, but the conventional does exist; and actually the two truths are primary." The difference between the two traditions is more complicated than this, but just barely. The symmetry of the Yogācāra position is evident in the first few verses of The Distinction between the Middle and the Extremes (Madhyamavibhaga), a Yogācāra text attributed to Maitreya and transmitted by Asaṅga:

abhūtaparikalpa 'ṣi dūyaṃ tatra na viśaye /
śāṇyati viśaye tu atra tayām api sa viśaye //
na śāṇyam ca dhīnaṃ tattvam sarvam viśyate /
sattvād asattvād sattvād ca madhyamā pratipada ca sā //

The imagination of what is unreal exists. Duality does not exist in it, but emptiness does exist in it, and it exists in emptiness.

This is why it is said that nothing is empty and nothing is non-empty, because of the existence of the imagination, the non-existence of duality, and the existence of emptiness. This is the middle path.

The categories mentioned in these two verses can be aligned with the three identities in the following way:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>duality</th>
<th>imagined identity</th>
<th>does not exist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>imagination</td>
<td>dependent identity</td>
<td>exists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>emptiness</td>
<td>absolute identity</td>
<td>exists</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In later verses, the text complicates the picture slightly by equating the imagination (parikalpa) with consciousness (vijñāna) and asserting that consciousness both exists and does not exist. This means that it does not exist as it appears, but it is not entirely nonexistent, since it arises in the form of deluded awareness. To use a comparison that is common in other Yogācāra texts, consciousness arises like a dream. The objects seen in a dream are not real, but no one can reasonably doubt the dreaming of the dream itself.

This addition changes the Yogācāra picture of reality in a modest but significant way:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>duality</th>
<th>imagined identity</th>
<th>does not exist</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>imagination</td>
<td>dependent identity</td>
<td>exists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>emptiness</td>
<td>absolute identity</td>
<td>exists</td>
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According to this picture, dependent identity (or consciousness) is a direct expression of
the middle path. From one point of view it is, and from another point of view it is not. As was true with the Madhyamikas, this view of the middle path is directly related to the concerns of Buddhist practice. The Madhyamakas make this point with cryptic precision: “We think that liberation comes from its destruction” (tathāgatān muktiṁ iṣṭaṁ). In his commentary, Vasubandhu draws out the implications: “Why do we not think that this deluded awareness (bhūtān) is non-existent? Because we think that liberation comes from its destruction.” Otherwise there would be no bondage and no liberation, and, in that case, there would be the fault of denying (apavāda) defilement and purification. Here “deluded awareness” is another word for the imaginative capacity of consciousness. In his subcommentary on this passage, Shrīrami adds further explanation by saying that if deluded awareness exists ultimately, defilement must be permanent, and if deluded awareness does not exist at all, there can be no purification. In both cases, there would be no point in making any effort to achieve liberation. These two problems correspond to the formalism and nihilism that concerned the Madhyamikas, but the Yogācāra response turns the response of the Madhyamaka upside down. Instead of affirming things conventionally and denying them ultimately, the Yogācāra denies their imagined identity and affirms their absolute identity, with the intermediate category, dependent identity, sharing elements of both.

The fine points of the Yogācāra position, along with Bhāviveka’s response, can be studied in the translation and notes that follow, but the structure of Bhāviveka’s critique of the Yogācāra is not difficult to grasp. Yijing understood exactly what was at stake. Bhāviveka maps the two basic existence claims of the Yogācāra onto the Madhyamaka doctrine of two truths and asks whether either of them makes sense. If the Yogācāra denial of imagined identity is intended to be ultimate, then the Madhyamaka has no reason to object. But if it is intended to be conventional, the Yogācāra is guilty of an “improper denial” (apavāda) of things that ordinary people consider to be real. Bhāviveka makes this point in 5.55–56, in response to a Yogācāra argument that “imagined [identity] does not exist, because it is imagined, like a snake.” He has in mind the classic Indian comparison of the snake that someone imagines when he walks down a dark road and sees a coiled rope.

5.55 neta bhūujagavac cāsāt kalpitam kalpitatvātaḥ // rajñatmanā by anekāntat pratītiṁ api bhūdhikā //
5.56 tadān drṣṭaḥ na bhūtān anekāntāḥ hi sūyataḥ / sarvānadhīkṣād hāṁ te sūya ca vastuvopāvādāḥ //

We do not think that imagined [identity] does not exist, because it is imagined, like a snake. This argument is inconclusive with regard to the rope and is contradicted by common sense. Imagined identity is not completely illusory, because we observe that this example has more than one part. By negating all objects, you make an improper denial of real things.

Bhāviveka explains that when someone sees a rope as a snake, the cognition has two parts. It is true that the snake is imagined and does not really exist, but the rope is not imagined and actually does exist. He says that there is a general or common sense agreement that there is such a thing as a rope “made by hands and human effort from water, fiber, and other materials.” To say that the whole cognition is false “improperly denies” the cognition of the rope.

After he has criticized his opponent’s position, Bhāviveka’s normal procedure is to offer a positive statement of his own position. In this case, the situation calls for a positive statement about the existence of imagined identity, as Bhāviveka understands it. As it turns out, this simple move had important intellectual implications for the subsequent history of Madhyamaka, especially in Tibet. When the Tibetan philosopher Tsong kha pa (1357-1419) constructed his classification of the varieties of Indian Madhyamaka, he argued that Bhāviveka’s critique of the Yogācāra concept of imagined identity implicitly commits him to the opposite position. Since the Yogācāra says that imagined identity is “empty of identity” (stālaṁ sāvātta), Tsong kha pa interprets this to mean that Bhāviveka implicitly affirms the “identity” (Tib. rgyu ’i rgyan nyid / Skt. stūlaṁ śāstra) of imagined identity conventionally. Whether Tsong kha pa is right in drawing this conclusion from Bhāviveka’s argument is beyond the scope of this book,13 but Tsong kha pa’s argument suggests that readers should pay particularly close attention to the positive position that Bhāviveka puts forward in place of the Yogācāra negation of imagined identity.

In effect, Bhāviveka responds to the Yogācāra negation in two separate ways. Before he even gets to the doctrine of imagined identity, Bhāviveka has already argued that external objects exist conventionally as “combinations of homogeneous atoms” (verses 5.35-36). This argument is the positive side of Bhāviveka’s critique of the Yogācāra interpretation of “mind-only” (cittamātra). Bhāviveka took the Yogācāra position to be a denial of “external objects” (Tib. phyi rol gyi don / Skt. bāhyābhartāḥ); his response is to affirm external objects. Some contemporary interpreters of the Yogācāra say that it is a misreading of the Yogācāra to think that they deny the existence of objects outside the mind. Bhāviveka clearly thought otherwise. The argument about “mind-only” in verses 5.17-54 shows that Bhāviveka had strong textual warrant for his interpretation, and he knew the Yogācāra as a living tradition in his own time. Whether later Yogācāra commentators blurred this position is a point that others can decide, but Bhāviveka leaves no doubt that the Yogācāra scholars who were his dialog partners in the sixth century took “mind-only” as a denial of objects external to the mind.

In his response to the Yogācāra negation of “imagined identity,” Bhāviveka does not need to say anything more about the conventional existence of external objects. He took care of that in the section on “mind-only.” He turns instead to a discussion of language
and explains how words can be used to refer to objects conventionally. The argument begins in the introduction to verse 5.57 with a Yogācāra objection: “External objects do not exist, but defilements arise from concepts of the cognitive marks of objects, based on names and conventions.” After a brief digression to show that the Yogācāra point cannot account for animals, which can be just as angry as human beings, even though they have no ability to speak, Bhāviveka launches into a critique of Dignāga’s view of universals as the “exclusion-by-the-other” (*anyāpāha*). The details of this argument are best understood directly from the translation and the notes. At this point, it is enough to say that Bhāviveka not only identifies a problem with Dignāga’s definition that had an important impact on later developments of the concept of *apoha*. He also develops a striking and, as far as anyone has been able to determine, unprecedented account of language as designating the “emptiness of what is dissimilar” (*visajātyena sānyatvam*). Taken at face value, this means that the conventional nature of a thing (as an object of language) is emptiness of other, while its ultimate nature is emptiness of self. The symmetry of this formulation is one more sign of the elegance of Bhāviveka’s philosophical imagination. Perhaps he also delivered it with the hint of a smile.

When Bhāviveka turns his attention to the concept of dependent identity, he once again interrogates the Yogācāra position from the point of view of two truths. The argument begins with a Yogācāra objection in the introduction to verses 5.69-71, ending with a formula that mirrors the language of the *Mādhyamakabhedāna*: “We accept the existence of dependent identity, because ‘imagined identity does not exist, but dependent identity does exist.’” In verses 5.69-70, Bhāviveka uses this formula as the basis of a Yogācāra syllogism: “Things are empty, because they are empty of the identity that is attributed to them by words.” Bhāviveka interprets this syllogism to mean that things are empty of imagined identity, but not of dependent identity. This Yogācāra formula elicits the response that we would expect, given Bhāviveka’s understanding of the two truths:

5.71 *paratatvānāvadāketa ca samārthya siddhiśuddhanam/tatvataḥ eñca drṣṭaṁ bhetō cāpi vīrudhdhataḥ //*

If [the opponents] are saying that dependent [identity] exists in a relative sense, they are proving something that [we] accept. If [they are saying that it exists] in a real sense, there is no example and the reason is contradicted.

There is no example for the simple reason that the objectors cannot cite an instance of anything that exists “in reality” (*tatvataḥ*). The reason is contradicted because it asserts only that things are empty of imagined identity, not that they are empty of dependent identity. Bhāviveka continues the argument by exploring the Yogācāra claim that dependent identity “arises” (in various forms of the verb *ut-paḍ*). His point again

is that this claim can be taken two ways. From the conventional or relative point of view, no Mādhyamika can object, but ultimately the claim cannot make sense: things can arise and cease to exist if they are not ultimately real. This argument concludes in the most pointed rhetorical exchange of the entire chapter, when Bhāviveka quotes the passage from the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* that implicitly accuses the Mādhyamikas of nihilism. Bhāviveka responds to this charge by saying that the words of the Yogācāra (which are the words of the *Yogācārabhūmi*) are like vomit that shows undigested pride.

Bhāviveka’s critique of the concept of absolute identity is similar to his critique of dependent identity. He moves back and forth between two positions: If absolute identity exists, as the Yogācāra claims, then it must be conventional, and if it exists ultimately, it cannot have the attributes that the Mahāyāna normally ascribes to ultimate reality. Verses 5.85-86, for example, say that absolute identity (here referred to as *dharma-tattva* or “the Dharma nature”) cannot be a real thing and still be “non-conceptual” (*nirvikalpa*) and “inexpressible” (*anabhilāpya*). The argument takes a distinctive turn in verse 5.97, when Bhāviveka focuses on the Buddha’s awareness of ultimate reality rather than on ultimate reality as an object of awareness. We know from an earlier passage in which Bhāviveka thinks that the primary referent of the word “ultimate” (*paramārthā*) is the cognition whose object is ultimate, rather than the object of an ultimate cognition. (This explanation is found in the commentary on verse 3.26.) He also understands that the words “Buddha” or “Teacher” (*ūcita*) refer primarily to a state of awareness. Both of these claims come into play when Bhāviveka says:

5.97 *nirālambo na śāśāt yāt tathātāmam kātavatvataḥ / na cāpi samataḥ bodhis tattvavākkhābhādvedataḥ //*

The Teacher is not free from objects if he objectifies Thisness, and awakening is not [an understanding of] equality if the image of reality is differentiated.

In other words, the Yogācāra objector cannot account for the non-conceptual character of the Buddha’s awareness if he treats absolute identity as a real thing. As far as Bhāviveka is concerned, the Mādhyamika avoids this problem by insisting that there is no reality from the ultimate point of view. If this is the case, the Buddha’s awakening has nothing to conceptualize and nothing to objectify. In fact, the Buddha’s awareness is no awareness at all.

5.99c *adhyatvānāsakalabhāvyavat yuktam nas tad yathādītatam //

5.100 *aśater nirvāṇa tat kṣaṭyam cāpi alipyataḥ / atyanānabhāpyaat ca sarvahāpy agraśād dibhā //*
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(Reality) is not a real thing and cannot be apprehended, so for us it can be what you have said; it is like space, because it does not arise, it has no particulars, and it is unstained. It also is completely inexpressible, because it cannot be grasped by the mind in any way.

In effect, these verses conclude Bhāviveka's critique of absolute identity. He has shown why he thinks absolute identity cannot ultimately exist; he also has shown how his view of ultimate reality allows the Buddha's awareness to be truly non-conceptual. One crucial question remains: how can a philosopher like Bhāviveka be confident that this view of reality is correct?

In the earlier discussion of Bhāviveka's approach to philosophical diversity, particularly to the diversity expressed in the 363 "doctrines" or "views," I mentioned the ambiguity of Bhāviveka's understanding of tarka or "reason." The concept of tarka was important to him; he even used it in the title of his commentary (Tarkajñā). But it was a concept about which he was deeply ambivalent. Now it is possible to understand the nature of that ambivalence and put it in the proper context, not only in relation to his dispute with the Yogācāra but in the structure of Indian epistemology more generally. In verse 5.104, Bhāviveka's Yogācāra opponents objects to the idea that inference can be used to know ultimate reality:

\[ \text{tattvacaryātarkagamyaśo tadbodha mānunātasaḥ} / \text{nātasa tarkena dharmānām gamyate dharmateti cet} // \]

The nature of dhammas cannot be known by logical reasoning, because reality is not an object of logical reasoning and is not known by inference.

Why would the Yogācāra raise this objection at this point in the argument? One reason is that Bhāviveka has just used a logical argument to refute the Yogācāra understanding of absolute identity. This is another way of saying that his argument gives a more accurate understanding of ultimate reality than the approach of the Yogācāra. But the argument goes deeper than this. Bhāviveka also has said that there ultimately is no such thing as absolute identity. This means that the Yogācāra has no epistemological refuge other than the logical procedure that leads to Bhāviveka's negation. Bhāviveka presents the Yogācāra point of view in the objection that introduces verse 5.104. Here the Yogācāra objector says:

When it says in a sūtra that "the ultimate cannot be analyzed (starkya) and is not an object of reason (tarkagocara)," it means that (the ultimate) is an object of perception (pratyaksa). You contradict tradition when you say that (the ultimate) is an object of logical reasoning.

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If absolute identity ultimately does not exist, then there ultimately is no non-conceptual awareness. Translated into the language of the pramāṇa (the means of valid knowledge), this means that there ultimately is no perception, non-dual or otherwise, by which ultimate reality can be known. Without perception, what other authority can there be but inference?

This argument puts Bhāviveka in the anomalous position of saying that ultimate reality is not an object of inference (as the sūtra says), but that there is no decisive way to know this state of affairs apart from reason itself. He makes this point in verses 5.104-6:

\[ \text{dhānānānāṃ nirāsajād agrāmāntaviśayānāḥ} / \text{kālpīkāvīsavidhi-buddhparghaṇānāḥ} // \text{saikalajñāya-thātāmyaṃ śikṣāsasmatetānāḥ} / \text{jañānena nirvikulena buddhāpādyanty adarśanāt} // \text{ato 'namānānājanam na tattvam pratipadyate} / \text{tattvaśāntvapakṣaḥ yas tasya tena nirākṛtya} // \]

Buddha 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 with minds like space. It is impossible to understand reality as an object of inference, but inference rules out the opposite of the knowledge of reality.

On the surface, these three verses seem to outline a two-stage cognitive process leading from conceptual thought to the non-conceptual experience of awakening. Since inference is conceptual, it can only prepare the way; it cannot give direct access to ultimate reality. But if reality is not an object of knowledge—if, in fact, it is not anything at all—the final epistemic authority lies with reason, and the so-called "experience" of awakening is only experience in a conventional or metaphorical sense. Ultimately, what we call "experience" is no experience. Bhāviveka makes this point in his commentary on verse 5.06: "[The Buddha's awareness] is a single moment of non-conceptual, perceptual (pratyakṣa) knowledge (jñāna). The word 'see' is only metaphorical. [Buddha] see by the discipline of no-seeing (Tib. gzi-ga pa med pa'i tshul gyis / Skt. adhānta-vyavhāra)." From a conventional point of view, Buddhas see reality (where the word "see" indicates a form of direct perception), but ultimately there is no seeing and nothing to see. Buddhas see reality by a yoga or "discipline" of no seeing.

Some might say that the formula "see without seeing" implies an intellectual convergence with the Yogācāra, as if Bhāviveka carried his negation almost to the bitter end and then affirmed a form of non-conceptual awareness that could only be named
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paradoxically as “no-seeing.” But this interpretation makes nonsense of the structure of Bhāviveka’s argument. If reality is anywhere for Bhāviveka, it must be in the conventional realm, as Yijing clearly understood when he said: “For Madhyamaka the real does not exist, but the conventional does exist.” The Bodhisattvabhumi reflected Yijing’s point when it said: “When some people hear the difficult and profound Madhyāyana sūtras that deal with Emptiness... they develop false concepts and have unreasonable views based only on logic (cārka), and they say: ‘All of reality is nothing but a designation; whoever sees it this way, sees correctly.’” When Bhāviveka’s argument is understood this way, his apparent convergence with the Yogacāra seems more like his ironic claim that great Bodhisattvas such as Avalokiteśvara and Maitreya worship Brahman by the discipline of no-worship. Bhāviveka “includes” the Yogacāra view of perception, but it does this in a way that inverts and negates it. In the process he also inverts the Yogacāra ranking of perception and inference. For Bhāviveka, it is not perception that transcends inference, but inference that gives the proper rational criterion to understand the nature and limits of perception.

Dan Arnold has called attention to this aspect of the Madhyamaka method in his account of Candrakīrti’s “transcendental” critique of Dignāga’s view of perception. Candrakīrti’s critique was based on the logical requirements of reason itself, rather than on the perceptual content of experience (Arnold 2005: 117-42). It is possible to make the same point in the Madhyamika’s own language by considering how Bhāviveka’s successors in the so-called “Śvātāntika” tradition drew out the implications of his understanding of reason. Jñānagarbha, the eighth-century predecessor of Śāntarakṣita and Kamalāśīla, defines conventional truth as “consistent with what one sees” (yathādārśana)—in other words, consistent with perception. He defines ultimate truth as “consistent with reason” (pratityānā). This formulation of the two truths turns the conventional Yogacāra definition upside down. For Dignāga, there were only two means of valid knowledge: perception and inference. Perception was non-conceptual and gave access to ultimate reality; inference was subject to words and concepts and could give access only to conventional reality. As strange as it may seem, these two Madhyāyana traditions, which shared the same scriptures and the same view of the Bodhisattva path, took radically different approaches to this fundamental question: What does it mean to know reality and, by implication, what does it mean to have the knowledge of a Buddha? Bhāviveka thought that the decisive means of knowledge was inference, while the Yogacāra thought that it was perception.

It would take us beyond the scope of this book, but it would be possible to extend this comparison to the other major non-dualistic tradition in Indian philosophy, Advaita Vedānta. Śāṅkara (eighth century) and his disciples struggled with the same problem of how to know a reality that is beyond the distinctions of language and beyond the ordinary subject-object dualities of perception. Their strategy was to use a rational process of inference to strip away misconceptions about the nature of the self and persuade a

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student that the self cannot be identified with anything that is limited or impermanent. Then it is possible for a teacher to pronounce one of the authoritative statements of the Veda, like “That art thou” or “I am Brahman,” and identify the self with Brahman. While this awareness of identity is not, in a sense, new knowledge, since Brahman is always aware of itself, it comes as a moment of revelation to the person who seeks it, and it functions as a counterpart to the Buddhist moment of awakening. When Śāṅkara’s approach is set side by side with the approaches of the Yogacāra and Madhyamaka, it creates a remarkable picture. These three traditions, which share so many presuppositions and common influences, take radically different approaches to the epistemology of awakening. The Yogacāra favors perception, the Madhyamika favors inference, and the Vedānta favors scriptural revelation. This is a case where traditions that are SO-MUCH-LIKE-US yield some of the most striking and problematic differences.

Finally, what should we make of Bhāviveka’s relationship with the Śārvākas, a loosely affiliated group of Buddhist practitioners who rejected not only the scriptural sources of the Mahāyāna but also its view of the path to Buddhahood? On the one hand, it is not surprising that the Śārvākas carry their criticism a step further. Not only do they claim that the Mahāyāna has the wrong scriptures; it also has the wrong path. This argument is expressed as the second reason in verse 4.7:

na buddhoktir mahāyānam sūtraṁtādāh asaṁgrabhat /
maṁgāntaropadaṭṭhā na yathā vedāntādāram /

The Mahāyāna is not the Buddha’s teaching, because it is not included in the Sūtras and so forth, or because it teaches another path, like the Vedānta view.

What does it mean for the Śārvākas to say that the Mahāyāna teaches “another path” (mārgāntara)? The commentary on verse 4.7 elaborates this claim by listing a series of questionable practices normally associated with brahmanical traditions: “The Vedānta says that one [removes] impurities and attains liberation by bathing at pilgrimage places on rivers such as the Ganges, by fasting, and by reciting mantras in three ways. The adherents of the Mahāyāna also bathe in four rivers called Ganges, Sindhu, Pākṣu, and Sīti, drink from them, and, while standing in them, initiate and repeat dhāraṇīs and mantras to remove impurities and increase merit.” Bhāviveka responds to this argument in the commentary on verse 4.36 and makes some fascinating points about Mahāyāna
pilgrimage practices and the use of fasting to purify the body for the practice of magical chants (üşūdā). He quotes the Anavatapta Sūtra, for example, to show that the benefits of bathing in these four sacred rivers do not come from the power of the rivers themselves, but from the Bodhisattva vow of the Nāga king Anavatapta. Since they come from the help of a "spiritual friend" (kalīyamuntra), they are consistent with the benefits that come from religious teachers in more conventional forms of Buddhist practice. But these points are not central to the argument. The key question is whether the Mahāyāna view of the path differs from the traditional eightfold path of the Buddha.

Bhāviveka introduces the Śrāvakas' objection in verses 4.3-6:

4.3 sanyāgdeśyādīnārgaṇa pratityena pratistate / samādhiprāmukhānām bhūtaḥ / bodhisattvānām abhinirmāṇa-tyāgaḥ //

The great awakening of the Buddhahs is achieved by following the eightfold path, because it is awakening, like the awakening of a student.

4.4 indriyāśayānāhāram dr̥ṣṭaṁ jñānaṁ / mārgāḥ bhārata mamāṁjñānānām kasyaścit pratipatāt //

A Teacher can be omniscient because of the excellence of his faculties, just as we think that someone can have different analytical insights, even though there is no difference in the path.

4.5 etenātva ca mārgena jñyāvaranānām gāthāḥ / ca lajñātve sati eva therṭe kṣetraśūnaṁ iṣyaṁ //

[We] think that the obstacles to knowledge are removed by this same path, because they are mental obstacles, like the obstacles that consist of defilements.

4.6 māthiyānī syāyam mārgah sarvavittāvāpyaye muney / yānāntarāstutrat pratyeka-buddhāyaṁ yathāyate //

[We] think that this path also leads to the omniscience of a Sage in the Mahāyāna, because the Mahāyāna is a different vehicle, like the Pratyeka-buddhāyaṁ.

The text of the commentary on these verses is obscure, but the meaning is clear. The Śrāvakas admit that Buddhahs, Pratyekabuddhas, and Śrāvakas achieve different types of awakening, but they insist that these different types of awakening are achieved by following the same noble eightfold path. In the commentary that introduces verse 4.4, an objector raises a question: if the path to awakening is the same, how can the results be so different? This objector is not identified, but we can assume that the objection comes from the Mahāyāna. The Śrāvakas respond by saying that the different types of awakening are due to differences in the "faculties" (indriyā) of the different practitioners, not to differences in their path. In the commentary that precedes verse 4.5, the Śrāvakas attribute another objection to the Mahāyāna opponent. According to the Śrāvakas' account of the Mahāyāna, the Mahāyāna distinguishes between two kinds of "obstacles" (āvāraṇa): obstacles that consist of defilements (kleśāvāraṇa) and obstacles to knowledge (jñeyāvāraṇa). Of these, the eightfold path removes only the obstacles that consist of defilements. Obstacles to knowledge have to be removed by the vision (śravya) of emptiness. In verse 4.5, the Śrāvakas respond to this Mahāyāna objection with a syllogism, arguing that both obstacles are removed by the same path. The Śrāvaka then concludes the argument in verse 4.6 by playing on the meaning of the word ṣāna ("vehicle"). The Mahāyāna may be a different vehicle, but there is no reason why it has to follow a different path. The terms of this argument are not surprising. The distinctions between the two kinds of obstacles and between different kinds of awakening are well known in Mahāyāna sources. What is surprising is Bhāviveka's response.

Instead of rejecting the Śrāvakas' argument, he agrees with it. He is happy to accept that there is only one path, but he insists that the path should be practiced with the correct approach. This point appears in the commentary on verse 4.20c:

[Śrāvakas' objection] According to the [Buddha's] teaching, full, perfect awakening is attained by the eightfold path (lit. the path that begins with right vision).

[Bhāviveka's reply] This is true, but one attains full, perfect awakening by practicing this path with the approach of no-holding (anupallādamatadāya) and without habitual attachment to things (vastrabhāvanīva). What is the practice of no-holding?

4.20c sanyāgdeśyādīnārgaṇa ca bhavaṁ abhyāsyaṁ yuddha //
4.21 adarśanaṁ asamkṣaṁ gatasyādīnām abhiṣekhaḥ //
4.22 uttānaṁ ca mārgena buddhaḥ abhiṣekaṁ maṁ hi nāḥ / siddhāntadharmadāya 'to bhāvanāṁ vāparikṣayatam //

Someone who practices the path that begins with right vision as no vision, no thought, no speech, no action, no livelihood, no effort, no mindfulness, and no concentration, achieves the awakening of a Buddha. Since
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this is our position, either there is the fault of proving something that we have already accepted, or one should investigate the practice.

The “approach of no-apprehension” (anupalambhanyay) is directly related to the “discipline of no-seeing” (adarṣanayay) in Bhāviveka’s critique of the Yogācāra. Both involve the ability to see things like the individual practices of the eightfold path without treating them as ultimately real. The underlying meaning of “no-apprehension” (anupalambhā) and “no-objectification” (analamdhana) is the same. Both terms have to do with not “grasping” at things in a way that treats them as real objects.

This long and circuitous journey through Bhāviveka’s controversy with his Buddhist opponents makes it possible to return to a question that was raised earlier and answer it with much greater precision. Did Bhāviveka take an inclusive approach to his fellow Buddhists, or did he hold an exclusive view of truth? The answer to this question depends on what Bhāviveka is being asked to include. Bhāviveka resists the noble eightfold path as authoritative for the Mahāyāna as it is for the Śrāvakas. He makes a similar point about other apparent doctrinal innovations in the Mahāyāna. When the Śrāvakas object, for example, to the idea that the Buddha is “eternal,” that Śākyamuni is a manifestation (trīmūrta), or that mantras can be used to remove defilements, he argues that these points are not as distinctive as they seem. As far as he is concerned, they are consistent with the basic doctrinal commitments of the Śrāvaka tradition. Bhāviveka also has an inclusive attitude toward the authority of scripture. He makes this approach explicit in verse 5.8, when he says: “All of the Tathāgatas’ teachings are authoritative for us” (prāṇītān naḥ sarvam tathāgatam vaceḥ). One measure of his commitment to the unity of Buddhist tradition lies in the absence of any substantive reference to the distinction between nītārtha and nīcārtha (definitive and interpretable meanings). If there is a truth to be sought, why be distracted by any partial or provisional trueth? Bhāviveka’s commitment to the unity of tradition also informs his response to the Śrāvakas’ objections about the authenticity of the Mahāyāna. As far as he is concerned, the Mahāyāna is not a separate canon of scripture; it is just one part of a larger scriptural whole.

His problem with the Śrāvakas and Yogācāras is not that they rely on the wrong scriptures or follow the wrong path; it is that they use the wrong approach. The Śrāvakas differ from the adherents of the Mahāyāna not in the path they follow, but in the “vehicle” (jñāna) or “approach” (nayay) they use to follow it. If all Buddhist traditions are following the same “middle” path, how do some of them seem to go wrong? In the case of the Yogācāras, the error takes two forms: they fall into the extreme of “improper denial” (aparajoto) by denying the reality of imagined identity, and they fall into the extreme of “improper reification” (samatāpajñā) by affirming the reality of dependent and absolute identity. In the case of the Śrāvakas, the mistake has to do principally with an act of false reification, as Bhāviveka points out in the commentary on verse 4.24:

THE ARGUMENT

Noble Śrāvakas have an understanding that consists of the vision only of dharmas. Pratyekabuddhas have an understanding of dependent origination (pratītyasamutpāda). They [accomplish this] by practicing the path described earlier [i.e. the eightfold path] as if it were a real thing. A Blessed One achieves awakening by perfecting no-apprehension. This does not happen unless concepts of real things are completely uprooted. Therefore, it is the practice of no-apprehension that causes the noble [eightfold] path to act in a distinctive way to bring about perfect awakening. But [the path itself] is not limited to one group or another.

To practice “the approach of no-apprehension” is to avoid this extreme of improper reification.

In the end, then, did Bhāviveka “include” or “exclude” his opponents? From one point of view, Bhāviveka clearly thinks like an inclusivist. He acknowledges that the Śrāvakas and Yogācāras are following the same path and are part of a single, unified tradition. In fact, it is precisely the “exclusive” aspects of their teaching that provoke his sharpest response. With the Śrāvakas, it is their refusal to acknowledge the authority of the Mahāyāna; with the Yogācāras, it is the claim that people who looked very much like Mādhyamikas were “nihilists” and should be shunned by the community. But Bhāviveka also made a sharp distinction between their “approaches” and his own. They may have been following the same path and interpreting the words of the same teacher, but their approaches were radically different. In this respect, Bhāviveka’s position was not negotiable and not inherently inclusive. Based solely on his treatment of the concept of “approach,” Bhāviveka might very well be considered a principled Buddhist exclusivist; he acknowledges differences, but considers only one “approach” to be correct. In the end, whether we call him an “inclusivist” or an “exclusiveist,” he gives a far more rigorous and nuanced account of Buddhist intellectual diversity than one might glean from the conventional stereotype of a tolerant Buddhist tradition. In this respect, Bhāviveka has a great deal in common with other philosophers of religion who develop comprehensive views of philosophical diversity and give each opponent a place in their system, but who never give up their claim to truth.

TOWARD A BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

Jonathan Z. Smith has remarked that a theory of the other is another way of articulating a theory of the self (2004: 275). It would be unfortunate to leave Bhāviveka’s account of the differences that separate him from other Buddhist thinkers without considering its significance for understanding not only Bhāviveka himself, but the Buddhist
are ultimately no more real than anything else. In one of the most striking passages of the text (verses 5.105-6), he even says that "Buddhas use faultless inference" to remove concepts and see things as they really are. How strange it is to imagine the Buddha as a logician! And yet it was the Buddha himself, according to Buddhist tradition, who insisted that his followers should use their own critical capacities to investigate the truth of the teaching.

Some of Bhāviveka's respect for rationality can be attributed to the controversial requirements of his own intellectual setting: what John Clayton referred to as a "local rationality" (xiii). The stories we glean from Xuanzang and other sources, to say nothing of the intellectual structure of Bhāviveka's own work, depict a situation in which intellectual competition was taken seriously and could be played for high stakes. But Bhāviveka's commitment to reason is also woven into his understanding of what it means to practice a Buddhist path. The critical analysis of opponents' categories not only gave a debater the upper hand in a public dispute, it also helped strip away the subtle forms of reification that defile the mind and block the way of buddhadhātu. As Bhāviveka indicates in his own choice of language, this is philosophical analysis as a form of yogā. Even if there were no Śārvāka or Yogācāra to encounter in debate, the discipline of analysis has a useful function, not only in the sociological sense that it supports the solidarity of an interpretive community, but also in a soteriological sense. It helps a person imagine, seek, and perhaps in some small measure even achieve the tradition's highest goal: the awareness of emptiness or, in Bhāviveka's own words, the knowledge of reality.

When Bhāviveka's respect for reason is translated into the language of Indian epistemology, it involves an assertion of the primacy of inference (anumāna) over perception (pratyakṣa). This is expressed implicitly in Bhāviveka's verses 5.105-10 and stated explicitly by Jñānāgarbha in his definition of reason (yukti) as ultimate (Eckel 1987: 71). Taken seriously, this claim has important implications for the understanding of Buddhist "experience." One of the most fundamental stereotypes about Buddhism in the modern world is that it elevates direct experience over the second-hand testimony of tradition. In some respects, this stereotype is true. Bhāviveka himself describes a path that has an experiential dimension. He even refers to the Buddha's awakening as a moment of non-conceptual awareness. But he makes it clear that this designation is metaphorical, as in verse 5.106:

Then, without seeing, [Buddhas] see all objects of knowledge just as they are, with non-conceptual knowledge and with minds like space.

[Commentary] They attain the name [Buddha] and so forth. Their mind is empty in the sense that they do not grasp the five kinds of objects: past, future, present, unspecified, and uncompounded. This [awareness] is
a single moment of non-conceptual, perceptual knowledge. The word "see" is a metaphor (āpicāra); [they see] by the discipline of no-seeing (adārśanayogena).

Elsewhere in the text, Bhāviveka says that this moment of awareness arises by the discipline of no-arising (anuttapadyogena). These passages indicate that Bhāviveka's understanding of "experience" is paradoxical at best. To say that the ultimate experience is no-experience and that it arises without arising makes it seem that awakening is nothing at all. Is this what Bhāviveka means? He leaves no doubt that this is his intention when experience is considered from the ultimate point of view. Ultimately awakening is no more real than anything else. But what does such a metaphorical awakening look like from a conventional point of view?

Near the end of chapter 3, Bhāviveka completes his account of the Bodhisattva path with a verse that marks the Bodhisattva's transition to the state of Buddhahood. In my translation of chapter 3, I call this the moment when the Bodhisattva becomes a "conventional Buddha." Bhāviveka marks this transition in the following verse:

3.346 bhūtā āsambuddhasavatāra bhavyābhuddhisambhujākaram / bodhayāt uktakirāṇair amalair mahādāvihīb //

[The Bodhisattva] becomes a Buddha and opens the minds of fortunate beings with the pure, cleansing rays of teaching, just as the sun opens the blossoms in a pond of lotuses.

The word "Bodhisattva" that stands in as the subject of this sentence is carried down from the previous verses, as if it were a carry-over from the Bodhisattva path that prepared for this moment of Buddhahood. But it would be more accurate to say that the Bodhisattva has been effaced in the act of becoming a Buddha in the service of others. In a strictly grammatical sense, the subject of the verb bodhayati (which means to "awaken" and also to "open," as in the blossoming of a flower) is the compound "Buddha-sun." But the commentary indicates that the distinctive characteristics of the action are attributable not to the Buddha per se, but to the influence of his previous vow (pranidhāna). Bhāviveka explains the mechanism of the vow in more detail in his commentary on MMK 24.24:

[An opponent objects.] A Buddha who is free from concepts cannot have a Mahāyāna, because such a Buddha ultimately does not teach any Dharma.

[Bhāviveka replies.] The Tathāgata is free from concepts, but because of a promise to seek the welfare and happiness of others and because of a previous vow, a Manifestation Body arises from it that is capable of assisting everyone. On this basis, a teaching arises that consists of words, syllables, and sentences. [This teaching] reveals to the followers of the excellent vehicle the selflessness of dharma and persons—a doctrine that is not shared by heretics, Śrāvakas, and Pratyekabuddhas—in order to complete the perfections. This [teaching] is called the Mahāyāna. The teaching arises in spoken form when the ultimate Buddha is present, so we consider the Teacher to be the agent of this teaching.643

If we take Bhāviveka's account of the Buddha at face value, the "experience" of Buddhahood is austere indeed. The ex-Bodhisattva, now-Buddha has no concept at all; it is the lingering presence of the vow that allows him to function in a way that illuminates others.

This restrained view of Buddhahood is consistent with Bhāviveka's understanding of ultimate reality; from the ultimate point of view, Buddhahood, such as it is, can only arise by not arising. To say anything else would make nonsense of Bhāviveka's approach to reality. But does it make any sense of the stories other Buddhists tell about their awakening experiences? Bhāviveka can only pose this question. Others will have to answer it, based on the sources and experiences of their own traditions. But it might be useful to consider just one example from the Indian tradition that seems to bear the imprint and even the language of Bhāviveka's approach to awakening. The example comes from the life of the Tantric saint Maitriputra (also known as Maitriputra, Advayavajra, "Non-Dual Thunderbolt").644

According to Sanskrit and Tibetan sources, Maitriputra was born as a brahmin in northern India and grew up to become a Buddhist monk. A series of dreams and visions led him on a long and circuitous quest for awakening, to a mountain in south India and to a teacher named Śābara, whose name might be translated simply as "Mountain Man." When Maitriputra asked Śābara for instruction, Śābara told him to eat no food and sit on a rock in the forest until he received a vision. After a few days, Maitriputra saw a woman chase a wild pig out of the forest, shoot it with an arrow, slice a piece of meat from its side, and say:

In the forest of samsāra that has no arising,
Runs the boar of ignorance.
Shooting the arrow of clear wisdom,
I slay the boar of ignorance.
Eat you of the flesh—non-duality;
Enjoy the corpse—the great bliss.

Maitriputra tried to commit this startling verse to memory, but by the time he got back
to meet his teacher, he had forgotten it. In despair, he tried to kill himself. Śābara said:

Where does one find the knowing
Of doctrines that have not arisen?
Where does one find the forgetting
Of doctrines that have not ceased?

Maitrighūpta accepted Śābara's teaching, went back to his monastery, and became not only a respected Tantric saint but a Madhyamaka philosopher. As a scholar he was known for expounding the doctrine of "no thought" (anamastikāra).

This story is cryptic and full of holes. As an expression of historical actuality, it is as elusive as one of Maitrighūpta's dreams, and I have only made the situation worse by summarizing the story so briefly. But it seems to show a pattern that is similar in a formal sense to Bāhireka's understanding of awakening. There is a stage of intense preparation, represented in Bāhireka's case by the signs of practice in the Bodhisattva path in Maitrighūpta's case, this stage is represented by the rigors of his journey. Preparation can involve any number of ascetical practices, including "meditation" (dhāryā), mental concentration (samādhi), "mindfulness" (smṛti), the calming of the mind (śamatha), visualizations, or dreams (or simply hours and hours of tedious practice). Then this practice gives way to a moment of understanding. This understanding may seem anti-climactic, as if it were as much a non-occurrence as an occurrence, but it allows the practitioner to interpret the previous practices in a different way and place them in a new context of understanding. What is the cognitive content of this understanding? Śābara summarizes it in the verse that begins: "Where does one find the knowing?" This is almost a formulaic expression of Bāhireka's concept of no-arising. In more colloquial terms, Śābara's words could be translated by saying simply: "Nothing happens." But in the narrative of Maitrighūpta's life, this no-happening is precisely the turning point that Maitrighūpta was seeking.

The story of Maitrighūpta suggests that there are two significant trajectories in the study of Buddhist experience. One trajectory is the practice that leads up the moment of awakening; the other has to do with the awakening's lingering effects. At the intersection of these two trajectories there is an indeterminate moment that in Madhyamaka terms is called simply "no-arising." Might we call it "no-happening." Does it make any sense to call this "no-happening" an experience? William James used an empiricist model to answer a similar question in his account of religious experience. When he was asked to judge the validity of a religious experience, he said: "By their fruits ye shall know them, not by their roots" (James 20). The story of Maitrighūpta tells us that James's formulation was partly right and partly wrong. If we had the sources, it would certainly be valuable to investigate Maitrighūpta's "experience" by asking how his moment of understanding affected his subsequent life. Unfortunately, the rest of Maitrighūpta's life is not open for study. But it is not impossible to imagine that his understanding of "no-happening" would have given a certain flavor to his life, not unlike the concept of "no thought" that apparently characterized his philosophy. In this respect, James was right: awakenings should be knowable by their fruits. But in this case James was wrong to say that we cannot also study these awakenings by their roots. For Bāhireka, as for Maitrighūpta, the understanding of no-arising is anticipated by many affective, cognitive, and bodily practices, not the least of which is the philosophical practice of Bāhireka's text. These practices are in principle knowable, although Bāhireka would insist that they cannot be confused with the moment of understanding itself.

One final way in which Bāhireka can serve as a catalyst for useful reflection outside the narrow confines of the Indian tradition has to do with the connection between metaphor and thought. Bāhireka's arguments are situated in a much larger picture of the world. He thought of a philosophical argument not just as an "idea," a "position," a "proposition," or any of the other conventional terms that can be used to name the currency of intellectual disputes. He pictured it as a trajectory of thought or an "approach" that led eventually to a distinctive "vision" of reality. The metaphor of vision (of following a path in order to see) generates many of the important features of Bāhireka's thought. How do philosophers typically go wrong? They wander off the path by falling into "extremes," or they are deluded into seeing things that are not there. In one unusually expressive image (in verse 4.1), they can even be terrified of not standing still (aśītāndrakā). It may be difficult to discern the discipline of Buddhist practice and the process of liberation in the intramural disputes that occupy the attention of Bāhireka's two chapters, but they lurk in the background and give the arguments in these chapters a degree of intellectual seriousness that goes beyond the give and take of practical debate. In the rich and intricate details of these chapters, there is an invitation to enter a world, as Pierre Hadot has said of classical Western philosophy (Hadot 2002), 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 achieving their highest goal.