



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

Reviewed by William Ames (Robert M. Fisher Library, John F. Kennedy University)

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Bhāviveka and Indian Buddhism

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

Bhāviveka, a sixth-century Indian Mādhyamika, was an important figure in the history of the Madhyamaka school. He seems to have been the first to use the formal syllogism of Indian logic to expound Madhyamaka. In his *Prajñāpradīpa*, a commentary on Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, Bhāviveka strongly criticized an earlier commentator, Buddhapālita, for failing to give syllogistic arguments and for failing to refute possible objections by opponents. A later commentator, Candrakīrti, defended Buddhapālita and criticized Bhāviveka. As a result, in Tibet the Madhyamaka school came to be seen as divided into the Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka of Buddhapālita and Candrakīrti and the Svātantrika-Madhyamaka of Bhāviveka and others.[1]

Sources in Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Chinese give more than one form of Bhāviveka's name,

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

Bhāviveka's major independent work is the *MHK*, together with its autocommentary, the *Tarkajvālā* (*TJ*). (The authorship of *TJ* will be discussed below.) *MHK* consists of some 928 verses in the surviving Sanskrit manuscript and 1,024 verses in the Tibetan version; it is not available in Chinese. It is divided into eleven chapters. The first two deal with the bodhisattva path, while the third and longest chapter discusses the bodhisattva's practice of *prajñā* and the nature of Buddhahood. In the context of *prajñā*, Bhāviveka expounds Madhyamaka at length. The remaining chapters of *MHK* are mainly concerned with examining and refuting the doctrines of other schools. The Buddhist Śrāvakas and Yogācāras are dealt with in chapters 4 and 5, respectively. Chapters 6, 7, 8, and 9 take up four non-Buddhist schools, the Sāṃkhya, Vaiśeṣika, Vedānta, and Mīmāṃsā, in that order. These six chapters constitute a valuable source of information on Indian philosophy as it was known to Bhāviveka in the sixth century CE. The tenth chapter deals with the omniscience of the Bud-

dha, while the eleventh and final chapter consists of three verses of praise.

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

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

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

the sDe-dge” (p. 302).

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

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

He also makes the important point that “the job of a translator is to look behind the Tibetan translation to the lost Sanskrit in the hopes of reconstructing its original form” (p. 302). He goes on to say, however, “From the few places where Bhāviveka quotes texts that have survived in Sanskrit, and from the Sanskrit original of his own verses, we can see many places where the Tibetan translation needs correction.... No doubt there are many more” (p. 302). Thus, while getting at the Sanskrit behind the Tibetan is the ideal, it may not be possible if the Tibetan translation is obscure or simply wrong.

Eckel’s introduction, titled “Analysis,” begins with a discussion of religious and philosophical diversity in ancient India and the culture of debate that this diversity gave rise to. He points out the im-

portance of this culture of debate as the context in which Indian philosophical texts were written, especially a text like *MHK*, in which opponents' views are first stated in some detail and then refuted in even greater detail. He notes that *MHK* is the earliest extant Indian doxographical treatise, a genre in which the views of various schools are either simply described or else, as in *MHK*, described and then refuted or affirmed according to the author's own religious/philosophical allegiance.

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

Eckel then turns to a discussion of Bhāviveka's Buddhist opponents, the Śrāvakas in chapter 4 of *MHK* and the Yogācāras in chapter 5. In connection with the Śrāvakas, he points out that for Bhāviveka, the distinctive feature of the Mahāyāna, which makes it superior to the Śrāvakayāna, is its "approach of no-apprehension" (*anupalambhana*). Eckel explains that this involves "the ability to see things (like the individual practices of the eightfold path) without treating them as ultimately real" (p. 80). Chapter 4 also gives a fascinating view of the arguments that other Buddhists made against the Mahāyāna in Bhāviveka's day and the replies that Mahāyānists gave. Moreover, it includes the text of the *Nikāyabhedavibhaṅgavyākhyāna*, which also exists as a separate work in the bsTan-'gyur and which Eckel describes as "one of the most important sources for the history of sectarian movements in Indian Buddhism" (p. 63).

With regard to the Yogācāras, Eckel observes that Bhāviveka considered that they began the quarrel between the Mādhyamikas and themselves by criticizing Madhyamaka as nihilistic. Eckel sees this as a case of rivalry between two traditions that each see the other as "TOO-MUCH-LIKE-US," in Jonathan Z. Smith's phrase. As Eckel puts it, "it is often the 'proximate others' or the near neighbors who pose the problem of difference in its most acute and troubling form" (p. 67). Regarding one of these differences, he later notes that three major nondualistic Indian traditions—Madhyamaka, Yogācāra, and Ad-

vaita Vedānta—"take radically different approaches to the epistemology of awakening. The Yogācāra favors perception, the Madhyamaka favors inference, and the Vedānta favors revelation" (p. 77). (Here he has made it clear that he is speaking of Svātantrika-Madhyamaka specifically.)

For Bhāviveka, though, the role of inference in knowing ultimate reality is only indirect. In verse 5.107, he says, "It is impossible to understand reality as an object of inference, but inference rules out the opposite of the knowledge of reality" (p. 75; Eckel's translation). Thus, reasoning is essential for eliminating false views, but it can give only negative information about ultimate reality. Bhāviveka describes a two-step process in verses 5.105-5.106: "Buddhas use faultless inference in a way that is consistent with tradition to completely reject many different concepts of imagined things. Then, without seeing, they see all objects of knowledge, just as they are, with non-conceptual knowledge and minds like space" (p. 75, Eckel's translation). (Note that when Eckel translates 5.105-5.107 on page 75, he misidentifies the verses as "5.104-5.106.")

How, then, do Buddhas "see without seeing" (*paśyantya adarśanāt*)? Eckel translates *TJ* on *MHK* 5.106 (misidentified as "5.06"): The Buddhas' awareness "is a single moment of non-conceptual, perceptual knowledge. The word 'see' is only metaphorical; [Buddhas] see by the discipline of no seeing" (p. 75, Sanskrit and Tibetan in parentheses omitted). Eckel comments, "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" (p. 75). Discussing the same point in a note to his translation of chapter 5, he observes, "Bhāviveka argues that the Buddha's awakening ... ultimately is no awakening.... The same can be said of anything when it is viewed from the ultimate perspective, especially concepts and activities that are significantly related to the path toward Buddhahood" (p. 289n117). For Eckel, this emphasis on the emptiness of Buddhas' awareness of reality differentiates Bhāviveka's position on this issue from that of the Yogācāras.

Eckel concludes his introduction by making a point that one must always bear in mind when reading Buddhist philosophy: that reasoning and debate are ultimately in the service of a Buddhist path of spiritual development. As he says, "In the rich and intricate details of these chapters, there is an invi-

tation to enter a world ... where theory is a form of practice and where thinkers struggle not only to define and adjudicate their differences but to remove the barriers that prevent them from reaching their highest goal” (p. 87).

Notes

[1]. For more details, see George B. J. Dreyfus and Sara L. McClintock, eds., *The Svātantrika-Prāsaṅgika Distinction* (Boston: Wisdom Publica-

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

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

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

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