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OF THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF  
BUDDHIST STUDIES

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*Volume 10*

*1987*

*Number 2*

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himself, and of enriched practices for the laity to the ambiguous world of real kings, monks, and laymen. While chronicles clearly have threads of interpretation, they lack the same kind of aesthetic and interpretive capacity one finds in a text like the *Aśokāvadāna*, which does not have to be as concerned about the facts of history but which seeks to relate the classic Buddhist ideals to new historical contexts. The presence of the Buddha in this world, the nature and meaning of a *cakravartin* king, and the increasing practice of merit-making were central to the questions this text addressed. Strong's analysis is extremely useful in a discussion of the larger dharmalogical issues which were alive in the second century A.D. And, as he reminds us, the primary concerns implicit in the text were "the attraction of new converts, the reinforcement of the faith of established followers, and the encouragement of both devotion and donation. And all of this was best accomplished by the telling of popular, appealing stories about the religious exploits of others," especially in this case about Aśoka. As such, this text is a vital one to historians of religion and, as Strong concludes, "belongs to the whole of Buddhism."

Bardwell L. Smith

*Nāgārjuna. The Philosophy of the Middle Way*, translated with an introduction by David J. Kalupahana. Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, SUNY Series in Buddhist Studies, 1986. xv 412 pages.

The blurb on the back of this book credits it with showing that Nāgārjuna's ideas are not original, not an advancement from the early Buddhist period, and that he was not a Mahāyānist. As Professor Kalupahana rightly notes in his preface to this new translation of Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* (MK), his position is controversial. He argues that since "sophisticated Mahāyāna sūtras" such as the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* were unavailable to Nāgārjuna, he used the early discourses in the *Nikāyas* and the *Āgamas* to criticize the sectarian views of "metaphysicians like the Sarvāstivādins and Sautrāntikas" and the "more popular religious teachers like Aśvaghosa, who overemphasized the function of 'faith' in the emerging belief in a transcendent Buddha" (pp.xiv-xv).

Kalupahana bases his argument on "a careful reading" of

Hajime Nakamura's *Indian Buddhism* (Osaka: 1980), but his reading of Nakamura has not been careful enough. He cites p. 159 of Nakamura's book as his source for the statement that early versions of the *Vajracchedikā-prajñāpāramitā* and the *Kāśyapa-parivarta* do not mention *bodhisattvas* (pp. 24, 95 n. 60). Nakamura's statement about the omission of *bodhisattvas*, however, refers only to the opening lines of the *sūtras*, which repeat stock phrases from early Buddhist *sūtras*, and not to the body of these works, in which *bodhisattvas* are mentioned. Kalupahana's claim that Nāgārjuna had no access to the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* or to biographies of a transcendent Buddha, like the *Mahāvastu*, which "probably were not yet written" (pp. 23–24) is also not supported by Nakamura, who refers to a first century C.E. prototype of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* which Nāgārjuna might have known (p. 186), suggests a second century B.C.E. date for the *Mahāvastu* (p. 130), and notes that "the exalted figure of the Buddha" is the subject of Aśvaghosa's *Buddhacarita* (p. 133), though his authorship of the *Mahāyānaśraddhotpādaśāstra* (is this the source of Kalupahana's claim that Aśvaghosa overemphasizes faith?) (pp. 232–3) is doubtful. This is not to say that Nakamura's dates for these works are definitive or that Nāgārjuna read any of them. The problem with Kalupahana's assertion that "Nakamura's work shows it futile to attempt to discover a pure Mahāyāna text that Nāgārjuna might have been able to depend upon" (p. xiv) rests with his unclear standards of purity, since Nakamura does support a pre-Nāgārjuna dating for several Mahāyāna *sūtras*, including the *Kāśyapa-parivarta* (KP) (p. 210).

Kalupahana himself admits that Nāgārjuna was "probably aware" of the KP, although he wonders whether it was "Mahāyānist" originally (p. xiv). He describes its negative and positive descriptions of the middle path as "an abbreviation of the *Kaccāyanagotta-sutta*" (p. 25). This description is misleading. The KP's lengthy discussion of the middle path (§52–63 of A. von Stäel-Holstein's edition [Shanghai: 1926]) is not an abbreviation of the *Kaccāyanagotta-sutta* and does not contain "two discourses" (the section numbers §61 and §62—not §60 and §61 as Kalupahana indicates in n. 17 of p. 94—are added by the editor and can be disregarded) which explain the middle path positively "in terms of the twelve factors of the human personality (*dvādasāṅga*)" and "in negative terms as 'non-ceasing, non-arising, etc.'" (p. 7). Both descriptions are part of a single discussion which defines the true analysis of the middle path as understanding that each of the twelve members and their cessation are

non-dual (*advaya*, *gnyis ma yin*). Kalupahana, moreover, ignores KP §65, which closely parallels MK XIII.8 and has been cited as evidence of Nāgārjuna's knowledge of Mahāyāna sūtras.

Although the MK is the subject of Kalupahana's book, he accepts Nāgārjuna's authorship of the *Vigrahavyāvartanī* (p. 92) and the *Ratnāvalī* (RĀ) (p. 165). He seems unaware that in this latter work Nāgārjuna defends the Mahāyāna (mentioned by name in RĀ III.1, IV.67–70, 78–84, 86, 89, 93, 98, V. 40) against the criticism of orthodox disciples (*śrāvaka*), and discusses the importance of faith, (RĀ I.4–5, IV.97–98), the transcendent character of the Buddha (RĀ III.1–12), and the career of the *bodhisattva* (RĀ III.16, 22; IV.67, 90–91, 93; V.1–99).

Kalupahana regards the MK as "a grand commentary" on the *Kaccāyanagotta-sutta*, in which the metaphysical views of the Sarvāstivāda and the Sautrāntika schools are the extremes and dependent arising (*pratītyasamutpāda*) the middle position (pp. 20–21). His introduction to the MK divides its subject matter into four sections: causation and change, covering chapters I–II (pp. 31–7), the non-substantiality of phenomena (*dharmānairātmya*), covering chapters III–XV (pp. 37–51), the non-substantiality of the human personality (*puṅgala-nairātmya*), covering chapters XVI–XXVI, (pp. 51–78), and the conclusion, namely, chapter XXVII (pp. 78–80). His point that Nāgārjuna did not repudiate "dependently arisen phenomena or dependent arising" but instead demonstrated "the inconsistency in explaining causally conditioned phenomena in terms of self nature" (p. 50) bears repeating, though perhaps not quite as often as Kalupahana does throughout his introduction and in his comments on individual verses. Nāgārjuna drew on many early canonical texts, including the *Kaccāyanagotta-sutta*, and Kalupahana rightly draws attention to the parallels between his ideas and early canonical literature. But it is an oversimplification to consider his philosophical system as built entirely on these early Buddhist sources. Nāgārjuna's philosophy makes the rejection of the concept of *svabhāva* its cornerstone. The early Buddhist sūtras, with the exception of the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* (Ps 178), never mention the importance of seeing all phenomena as empty and without an independent nature (*niḥsvabhāva*), unlike early Mahāyāna sūtras.

My dissatisfaction with Kalupahana's translation of the MK begins with his translation of the dedication verses and extends to his translations of the last verses of chapter XXVII. Due to limited space, however, I must confine myself to pointing out just a few instances of disagreement. About the eight negations

in the dedication verses, he says “modern interpreters of Nāgārjuna, probably following Candrakīrti. . . have assumed that all these terms refer to one doctrine, namely, dependent arising (*paritīyasamutpāda*) (sic);” the Svātrantika standpoint, on the other hand, interprets these eight negations as refutations of “the false views (*mīthyā-dr̥ṣṭi*), primarily the themes of substantial existence (*astitva*) and nihilistic non-existence (*nāstiva*)” and dependent arising as the middle position, “the right view” (*samyag-dr̥ṣṭi*), which results in “the appeasement of obsessions” (*prapañcōpaśama*) and “the auspicious” (*śiva*) (pp. 101–3). Unfortunately, Kalupahana provides no supporting textual evidence, and neither Bhāvaviveka’s *Prajñāpradīpa* nor Ch’ing Mu’s *Chung Lun* interprets the dedication verses in this way.<sup>1</sup>

Kalupahana’s interpretation of MK XVII also is at odds with these commentaries. His text of MK XVII.1 reads *Atma*-(sic, read *Ātma*) *samyamakam cetah parānugrāhakam ca yat, maitram sa dharmah* (sic, read *dharmas*) *tad bījam phalsya* (sic, read *phalasya*) *pretya ceha ca*, which he translates as “self-restraint as well as benefitting others—this is the friendly way and it constitutes the seed that bears fruit here as well as in the next life.” Kalupahana considers *maitram* part of the correlative clause rather than the relative clause. This interpretation, which assumes that *sa* does not mark the beginning of the correlative clause, receives no support from the Tibetan translation of the verse (cited in the *Prasannapadā* [ed. L. de La Vallée Poussin, St. Petersburg: 1903–13], p. 303 n. 1) or the commentaries of Candrakīrti (*Prasannapadā* [PP], pp. 303–4) and Bhāvaviveka (*Prajñāpradīpa*, Tibetan Tripiṭaka Peking edition, v. 95, f. 212a). This verse identifies *dharma* with a mind that is self-restrained, benevolent towards others, and amicable; *dharma*, in the sense of moral practice (which Kalupahana recognizes in his translations of VIII.5 and XXIV.6, 33–35), is the topic of this verse, not a “friendly way.” Kumārajīva’s translation of XVIIa–c, which differs considerably from the Sanskrit text, should be used with caution in interpreting Nāgārjuna’s thinking. It reads (Taishō v. 30, p. 21b) *jên neng Chiang fu hsin, li i yü ch’ung sheng, shih ge wei tz’u shan*<sup>a</sup>, which says “a person who can control his mind, and benefit all beings, this is called compassionate virtue.” Since Ch’ing mu glosses *tz’u shan*<sup>b</sup> as *fu tê*<sup>c</sup> “good virtue/merit” (21c), “friendly way” does not quite fit the Chinese verse either.

Kalupahana disregards commentators’ views also when he associates verses 13–20 with Nāgārjuna’s presentation of the right view of karma and its result (p. 249, 254). Candrakīrti,

Bhāvaviveka, and Ch'ing mu regard vv. 13–19 as the views of Nāgārjuna's Buddhist opponents; according to Candrakīrti and Bhāvaviveka, Nāgārjuna's response begins with v. 21 (PP, p. 324, *Prajñāpradīpa*, f. 218a) and with v. 20, according to Ch'ing mu (p. 22c).

Kalupahana's misunderstanding of the term *pañcadhā* also leads him astray. His text of MK XXII.8 reads *tattvānyatvena yo nāsti mrgyamāṇas ca pañcadhā, upādānena sa katham prañāpyate tathāgataḥ*, which says "how can the *Tathāgata*, who is not identical or different when he is examined in five ways [with regard to the five appropriating aggregates (*pañcopādānaskandha*)] be defined in relation to appropriation?" but which he translates as "he who, sought for in the fivefold manner, does not exist in the form of a different identity, how can that *Tathāgata* be made known through grasping?" Kalupahana comments that the substantialist explanation implies that the *Tathāgata* has become "a different entity, that is, a *tathāgata* having his own-nature (*svabhāva*) with no relation to the person in bondage. However, examining the fivefold aggregates, no such entity can be discovered." (p. 306) This interpretation ignores the fact that *tattvānyatvena* is a *dvandva* compound inflected in the neuter singular as a collective of two abstracts, "identity and difference," and should not be rendered as "different identity" (sic) since it occurs in the singular." The fivefold examination (exemplified in XXII.1), moreover, is not concerned with the aggregates per se. This method examines and rejects the various relations that might exist between a self/person/*tathāgata*/appropriator ( $x$ ) and the five appropriating aggregates/appropriation ( $y$ ), namely,  $x$  is identical to  $y$ ,  $x$  is different from  $y$ ,  $x$  contains  $y$ ,  $y$  contains  $x$ ,  $x$  possesses  $y$ .

This misunderstanding also affects Kalupahana's translations of MK XXVII.4–8. For example, his text of XXVII.8 reads *Evaṃ nānya upādānān na copādānam eva saḥ, ātmā nāsty anupādānaḥ* (sic, read *anupādāno*) *nāpi nāsty eṣa niścayaḥ*, which Kalupahana renders as "thus, he is neither different from grasping nor identical with it. A self does not exist. Yet, it is not the case that a person who does not grasp does not exist. This much is certain." He argues that this verse should be interpreted in a positive manner because in XXVII.7 "Nāgārjuna was clearly asserting an empirically known (= *grhyeta*) *anupādānaḥ* (that is, a person freed from grasping), while at the same time rejecting an *ātman* different from both grasping and non-grasping" and because Kumārajīva renders the verse in that way (p. 381). But in

XXVII.7, *gr̥hyeta* is used in a conditional sense and Nāgārjuna makes a hypothetical statement rather than a clear assertion, namely that a self without appropriation would be perceived (*gr̥hetya*) if it were different from that appropriation. Though Kalupahana interprets *anupādāna* as “a person freed from grasping,” neither Nāgārjuna nor Ch’ing mu uses *anupādāna* in this sense. Kumārajīva’s translation of XXVII.8a–c closely renders the Sanskrit text and has a series of negative statements, *chin wo bu li shou, i bu chi shih shou, fei wu shou fei wu<sup>d</sup>*, which says, “now the self is not different from the appropriation nor is it [identical with] that appropriation. It is not the case that it has no appropriation [and] it is not the case that it does not exist.” I’m unable to see how his translation can support Kalupahana’s positive reading of the Sanskrit verse.

Kalupahana also claims that Nāgārjuna rejects the self as a substantial entity “based on empirical evidence, namely, the perception of an individuality consisting of the five aggregates”, but that he did not necessarily reject an “empirical personality.” He cites S I.135, in which the five aggregates are called a person, (*evaṃ khandhesu santesu hoti satto ti sammuti*), and compares this concept of a person to William James’ explanation of an empirical self (p. 381). Yet the ordinary person’s experience of the five aggregates as a “perceived individuality” or a person remains a conventional opinion (*sammuti*); and according to the *Abhidharma*’s analysis of the impermanent mental and physical phenomena that comprise the five aggregates, “in reality no person is perceived” (*puggala na upalabbhati saccikatthaparamatthena ti*, Kv I.1). Kalupahana describes this *Kathāvattu* passage as a rejection of the Sautrāntikas’ conception of a person (p. 24); Buddhaghosa’s commentary, however, identifies the Puggalavādins as Vajjiputtakas and Sammitiyas and takes *satto*, *puggalo jīvo* and *attā* as synonyms (Kv-A, 8). Kalupahana may mean that Nāgārjuna conventionally (*samvṛtyā*) accepts the existence of a self/person/perceived individuality in the context educating ordinary people about moral behavior, which Candrakīrti’s comments on MK XVIII.6 support (PP, p. 356–57).

Many modern interpreters of Nāgārjuna’s philosophy compare his views with those of Western philosophers. Kalupahana, who interprets Nāgārjuna in the light of James’ pragmatism, is no exception. He comments that MK XVIII.9 indicates empirical methods by which one arrives at a conception of truth rather than a description of characteristics of truth. He argues convincingly that the *Kaccāyanagottasutta*’s statement that the knowledge of

someone who has the right view does not depend upon another person (*aparapaccayā nāṇam evāssa ettha hoti*, S. 2.17) is behind Nāgārjuna's use of the term *aparapratyaya*. But his evidence is less convincing for other terms; the fact that this *sutta* "has no reference to any conceptual proliferation" surely indicates that Nāgārjuna drew on other sources. Moreover, by his reluctance to associate calm (*śanti*) with meditative experience, Kalupahana ignores the importance of meditation as a method of knowing truth. He concludes his commentary on this verse with the observation that the Buddha's statement, "truth is one; there is no second," refers to the "pragmatic criterion of truth based on the notion of dependent arising, not an absolute truth that transcends all forms of duality and plurality." (pp. 271–72) But this *Aṭṭhakavagga* verse occurs in the context of a repudiation of all divisive speculative views (the text never mentions dependent arising), and both the *Mahāniddesa* (Nd I, p. 292) and Buddhaghosa's *Paramatthajoṭṭhikā* (Pj II, vo. 2, p. 555) note that the one truth refers to *nibbāna*. James' pragmatic criterion of truth as what "works" or has "cash value" seems inadequate when applied to *nirvāṇa*.

Because they neglect the rich and extensive commentarial literature both on the *Nikāyas* and on Nāgārjuna's works, Kalupahana's arguments lack force. Even though the traditional commentators are not infallible, if given a choice between Candrakīrti's interpretation and Kalupahana's, my inclination is to trust tradition. Moreover, Kalupahana's judgement that Candrakīrti "moved towards a Vedāntic interpretation" of the MK (p. xv) reflects more the absolutist interpretation of this material by T.R.V. Murti and others, which Kalupahana justly criticizes, than the material itself. Certainly, the extensive Prāsaṅgika literature produced by Tsong kha pa and his followers does not support such an interpretation, and modern Western interpreters also hold quite diverse opinions on this matter.

The book takes almost no account of the recent spate of articles and books published on Madhyamaka; there is just one reference to a publication later than 1980, a 1984 article of Nakamura's. Kalupahana's unfamiliarity with the works of contemporary scholars on Madhyamaka weakens the book. For example, he reports that A.K. Warder first raised the question of whether Nāgārjuna was a Mahāyānist in *Indian Buddhism* (p. 7) but is unaware both of Warder's more detailed treatment of this thesis in "Is Nāgārjuna a Mahāyānist?" in *The Problem of the Two Truths in Buddhism and Vedānta* (Dordrecht: 1973) and the

criticism of it by Jacques May, "Chûgan" in *Hôbôgirin V*, (Tokyo: 1979), D. Seyfort Ruegg in *The Literature of the Madhyamaka School in India* (Wiesbaden: 1981) and Chr. Lindtner in *Nagarjuniana* (Copenhagen: 1982).

This edition of the MK also could have been improved if Kalupahana had consulted J.W. de Jong's edition of the MK (*Nâgârjuna, Mûlamadhyamakakârikâh*, Madras: 1977). The numerous misprints and missing diacritics, moreover, make the Sanskrit text of little value, and plague the indices as well.

Professor Kalupahana has raised the right question when he asks which sources Nâgârjuna relied upon in the formation of his philosophy of the middle way. He provides considerable evidence of the *Kaccâyana*gottasutta's influence on Nâgârjuna, although his arguments against the influence of early Mahâyâna *sûtras* remain unconvincing, at least to this reader. I cannot recommend his work as a philologically sound translation of the MK but his provocative and original commentary should interest some readers.

Karen Christina Lang

### Chinese Terms

- a. 人能降伏心，利益於衆生，是名爲慈善
- b. 慈善
- c. 本福个惠
- d. 今我不離受，亦不即是受非樂受非無

### NOTES

1. On the views of these commentators and others see Mushashi Tachikawa "Pratītyasamutpāda" in the Dedication of the Mûlamadhyamakakârikâ," in *Dr. K. Kunjunni Raja Felicitation Volume* (Adyar: Adyar Library and Research Centre, 1984), pp. 639-53.