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NAGARJUNA AND CHI-TSANG ON THE VALUE
OF “THIS WORLD”: A REPLY TO KUANG-MING
WU’S CRITIQUE OF INDIAN AND CHINESE
MADHYAMIKA BUDDHISM

This paper aims to show that classical Indian and Chinese Madhyamika Buddhism, when properly understood, are not ‘world-negating’ in any sense that precludes the positive fullness of mundane life. My argumentation is intended as a response to Kuang-ming Wu’s depreciation of Buddhism in general and the Madhyamaka in particular, in his otherwise impressive book, *On Metaphoring*.¹ That Kuang-ming Wu, so established a scholar of Chinese philosophy, chooses to be so dismissive when his eye turns to Buddhism has long aroused my consternation. As a Chinese scholar, Kuang-ming Wu must know that all the ‘Great Vehicle’ Buddhist schools explain that ‘pain’ can be (1) a purification of bad karma (in those who are not yet Bodhisattvas and who accept pain with proper intention) or (2) an appropriation gratuitously undertaken to save others (by those who are Bodhisattvic—indeed, the heroic exploits of the Cloth Bag monk [*Pu-tai ho-shang*^a] in this regard are even the stuff of TV-serials in Chinese language communities around the world). Yet Wu generalizes, “For Buddhism, pain is false, vain unwelcome bubbles in the calm Lake of Nothingness.”²

As a Chinese scholar he must know, from the massive presence of the Hua-Yen and T’ien-Tai traditions in Chinese culture, that Great Vehicle Buddhism finds in everything a precious significance, yet he can categorically say that for Buddhism “all is mere fury of deep insignificance.”³ Here let me add parenthetically that with a like precipitateness, Wu says that in Derridean deconstruction, “hermeneutics [seeking] . . . what is really the case and how objectively valid it is, is found to be a useless project . . . ,”⁴ whereas he should know (at least if he chooses to comment on Derrida at all) that Derrida treasures hermeneutics in large part because the ‘remainder’ of

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‘objectivity-as-deconstructed’, far from being a failure, is a precious clue to ‘what really goes on’.⁵ And Wu says that in my recent *On Deconstructing Life-Worlds: Buddhism, Christianity, Culture*,⁶ a book I know he has read, I claim to be a “Buddhist Christian or Christian Buddhist,”⁷ whereas my claim therein is exactly the opposite, *viz.*, Buddhist doctrine and Christian doctrine are, at bottom, “lines-crossing-each-other. Lines have no ‘width’, so when crossing each other they cannot have ground ‘in common’. Let us agree upon disagreeing.”⁸

In short, I can only infer that all of Wu’s above assertions are disingenuous at best, and in the case of his generalizations about Buddhism, I am all the more convinced of the disingenuousness because he shows elsewhere some knowledge of Buddhism (albeit only in its Ch’an/Zen Buddhist form), representing a “Zennist” as admirably showing a relation between emptiness and mercy: “. . . mercy as accommodation is a rooming, which pre-supposes an empty room, and so the merciful *subject* [italicization Wu’s] must become empty to be merciful.”⁹ No doubt Wu tolerates Ch’an/Zen because, as he rightly says, it is “a ‘child’ of Taoism and Buddhism, and owes much to Chuang Tzu. . . .”¹⁰ The other specific Buddhist tradition Wu acknowledges is Madhyamaka, but only to disparage it. Strangely, nowhere in his Trilogy, despite many generalizations about Buddhism, does he distinguish between Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana, or recognize the complicated differences among Buddhist schools of thought.

In *On Metaphoring*, Kuang-ming Wu calls *nirvana* the Buddhist “world Beyond,” and says it “consists *solely* [italicization Wu’s] in a denial of this world, all of what we know, are, and live. All is Nothing, and nothing else. And of course, in Nothing, calm is called ‘Nirvana’.”¹¹ He adds in a footnote, “The meaning of Nirvana as a ‘blow off’ of *our* [italicization Wu’s] desires indicates our subjective (epistemological) route to this (ontological or) neontological Calm.” Elsewhere Wu moves from these sweeping generalizations about Buddhism to a specific linkage with Madhyamika Buddhism, describing meditation as an escapist “flight to the Madhyamika’s transcendental level of nirvanic nothingness”¹² and treating Madhyamaka’s tetralemma as an “Indian ladder” to meaningless Nothingness: “. . . the Tetralemma is an Indian ladder to Nirvana to dissolve in profound Emptiness, where even ‘emptiness’ makes no sense.”¹³

This paper shall demonstrate to the contrary, that especially in its founding document, Nagarjuna’s *Mulamadhyamakakarikas* (“*Verses on the Middle Doctrine*,” usually called the “*Middle Stanzas*”),¹⁴ and in Chi-tsang’s copious commentaries and other references (which in Chinese Madhyamaka faithfully reflect Nagarjuna’s teaching), Madhyamika Buddhism (1) appreciates the concreteness of mundane life;

(2) understands *nirvana* as inseparable from *samsara*; and (3) takes the tetralemma not as a ladder to Nothingness but rather as a means conducive to a supreme awareness of the ‘world’. First, I shall explain the philosophical program of Nagarjuna’s *Mulamadhyamakakarikas*, and then—because the venue of this paper specializes in Chinese philosophy—I shall explain Madhyamaka in terms of Chi-tsang,^b one of the great philosophers of the San-Lun School, which represents Madhyamaka in the Chinese tradition. As we shall see, Chi-tsang is doctrinally faithful to Indian Madhyamaka, i.e., like Nagarjuna himself, he takes the two principal keys to liberation and thus the attainment of *bodhi* to be (1) non-dependency (*wu ai*,^c ‘non-craving’; *wu chu*,^d ‘non-abiding’) and (2) non-holding-onto (*wu ch’ü*,^e ‘non-grasping’; *wu te*,^f ‘non-acquisition’).

The *Mulamadhyamakakarikas*¹⁵ of Nagarjuna (Indian philosopher-monk, ca. 150–250 C.E.)¹⁶ breaks with earlier Buddhist schools in the following way. It wields the technique of *prasangika* (refutation by reducing adversaries to absurd consequence) to show not only that entities are ultimately empty (they don’t have *svabhava*, ‘inherent nature’, i.e., they don’t found themselves nor are they founded by another), but furthermore that all theories of causality, including the Buddhist causality such as the Four Noble Truths, are ultimately empty (*sunya*). The Four Noble Truths are a discursive means operating in *samvrti-satya* (the perspective of conventional truth) in order to gradually lead people toward ultimate *bodhi* (‘awakening’). The perspective of supreme truth, *paramartha-satya*, takes what we conventionally call Reality in Reality’s true condition, which is emptiness, *sunyata* (though of course, somehow to ‘reify’ emptiness into a supreme Entity is to miss the point and is classified as a false view). *Samvrti-satya* and *paramartha-satya* are called Nagarjuna’s *satyad-vaya*, or “two truths.”¹⁷

In one of the most famous passages of the *Mulamadhya-makakarikas*, Nagarjuna states:

Whatever is dependently arisen [*pratitya-samutpada*], That is explained to be emptiness [*sunyatam*].¹⁸ [XXIV:18a]

Though various sub-schools of the Madhyamaka argue with each other over the precise etymology and grammar of the term/concept *pratitya-samutpada*, and contend over its precise workings, the majority of them would agree that Nagarjuna in the *Mulamadhya-makakarikas* demonstrates *pratitya-samutpada* is *paramartha*, the Supreme Truth. And thus most Madhyamikans take *pratitya-samutpada* “to be emptiness [*sunyatam*]” [XXIV:18] in this sense.¹⁹

Yogacarins²⁰ also take Nagarjuna as a teacher,²¹ but they in general do not take his *pratitya-samutpada* to mean Supreme Truth. In terms

of the *Mulamadhyamakakarikas*, most of the Yogacara defines *pratitya-samutpada* as the ‘mutual dependency’ (or ‘relativity’) truly characterizing the ‘mundane’: *pratitya-samutpada* for them is the operative law true for conventionally appearing reality (and ‘mutual dependency’, for them, shows that the ‘mundane’ is deceptive in appearance, since ‘things’ to the ordinary eye appear self-inherent and not dependent). In short, Yogacarins, when commenting on the *Mulamadhyamakakarikas*, in general treat *pratitya-samutpada* as the law truly operating in/for *samsara* (the mundane, the birth-death cycle) and reserve *sunyata* for *paramartha* (the Supreme [Truth]). Most Yogacarins explain this by way of a three-staged series of cognitions called the *trivabhava*: (1) the character of sole imagination (the mundane world falsely cognized as self-inherent entities), (2) the character of ‘mutual dependency’ or ‘relativity’ (the mundane world correctly cognized as non-entitative, i.e., as empty of self-inherence), and (3) the character of ultimate reality (the prior two characters cognized, from the viewpoint of *paramartha-satya*, the absolute Nirvanic perspective, as *sunya*, absolutely empty: and this emptiness is True Mind).²²

To account for *MK XXIV:18*, ‘*pratitya-samutpada* is *sunyata*’, Yogacarins tend to resort to their interpretation of the *MK XXV:20*: “The limits (i.e., realm) of *nirvana* are the limits of *samsara*. Between the two, also, there is not the slightest difference whatsoever.”²³ According to most Yogacarins, that ‘*pratitya-samutpada* is *sunyata*’ (*MK XXIV:18*) just means that *pratitya-samutpada* (the law true for the mundane) is mystically²⁴ one with *sunyata* (Yogacara’s Supreme Truth). And the Yogacaric tradition interprets *MK XXV:20*, ‘the limits of *nirvana* are the limits of *samsara*’, as a proclamation of this mystical oneness. (For both Madhyamikans and Yogacarins, *nirvana* is ‘perfect serenity’ or ‘supreme Bliss’.)

The Madhyamikans also celebrate *MK XXV:20*, of course, but take ‘the limits of *nirvana* are the limits of *samsara*’ in an even tighter or ‘gathered’ mystical way: *pratitya-samutpada* (which is *sunyata*, which is *nirvana*: *pratitya-samutpada* = *sunyata* = *nirvana*) is all at once the same as *samsara*. The Madhyamaka critiques the Yogacara’s *trivabhava* as too elaborately scholastic, and Yogacaric emphasis on consciousness and True Mind as ‘idealistic philosophy’ and thus a ‘false view’: to achieve ultimate *bodhi*, the Madhyamikans insist that ‘mind’, too, must be ‘cut off’, and most Madhyamikans tend to avoid a rhetoric of ‘True Mind’ (because it tempts to hypostasis). Madhyamikans believe that paradoxically the ascetical practice of ‘cutting off’ (of passion, aversion, and false views) is precisely what enables the advanced practitioner to truly realize ‘*nirvana* is *samsara*’ and thus enjoy, unobstructed, the meaningfulness of the samsaric world. In

relation to Kuang-ming Wu’s accusation, what is to be noted thus far is that—because of *MK XXV:20* in particular—for the Indian Yogacarins and *a fortiori* the Indian Madhyamikans, *nirvana* does not at all preclude the positive fullness of mundane life.²⁵ *Nirvana* (Mahayanist ‘Bliss’) is mystically the same as *samsara* (the conventional world).

To ‘cut off’ passion, aversion, and false views, Nagarjuna’s refutation most often uses the Indian mode called the *catuskotika* (‘four-cornered logic’, the ‘tetralemma’): namely, (1) x; (2) non-x; (3) both x and non-x; and (4) neither x nor non-x. Nagarjuna deploys the *catuskotika* such as to show that all extremes must be ‘cut off’ if a person is to be truly *free* to enjoy the world. In short, the Madhyamikan route to supreme awakening is precisely non-attachment, because to be ‘attached’ is to be enslaved, and someone enslaved is not free to celebrate the samsaric world, nor to help others. Only nirvanic status, that is, only the state of liberation, can fully celebrate *samsara*. ‘*Nirvana* is *samsara*.’

For Nagarjuna, Buddhist ‘causality’ (the twelve *nidana*, ‘links’) belongs to the perspective of conventional truth rather than supreme truth, but he deploys it in *MK XXVI* as ‘expedient means’ (*upaya*) to teach non-attachment. He makes clear, as Ernst Bocking well puts it, that “‘ignorance’ in the twelvefold causal sequence means ‘attachment to views about causality’.”²⁶ And attachment, for Nagarjuna, necessarily accretes at two links in particular: link eight, ‘craving’ or ‘dependency’ (*tr̥sna*); and link nine, ‘grasping’ or ‘acquisition’ (*upadana*). These links are represented in the pivot between stanzas 6 and 7 of *MK XXVI*: “He is laid hold of by grasping a fourfold craving” (stanza 6b) and “Where grasping exists, the being who grasps is set in motion. Indeed if there would be no grasping, he would be *released* and there would be no being [who grasps]” (stanza 7, italics mine).²⁷ Attachment accretes at this pivot in particular because *tr̥sna* is craving, i.e., to be inclined-toward and thus be in a mode of dependency-on. This inclination-toward causes *upadana*, grasping (in the sense of holding-onto, acquisition, possession). Once *upadana* is ‘in possession’, the corner is turned, and link 10, the production of a ‘being-who-grasps’, inevitably follows.²⁸ No doubt, for Nagarjuna, it is ignorance which makes deluded action arise (see *MK XXVI:11a*²⁹), but clearly it is action which clinches the matter, bringing on “The entire mass of suffering” (*XXVI:9*). Thus, *tr̥sna* and *upadana* are the pivot expressly inducing *attachment*, and the two keys to liberation are precisely their negation, namely, non-dependency and non-acquisition.

In the first decade of the fifth century C.E., the half-Indian monk Kumarajiva translated into Chinese the *Madhyamaka-sastra* (Ch.

Chung-lun,^g ‘*Middle Treatise*’), in which Nagarjuna’s *Mulamadhya-makakarikas* is embedded and on which it comments. The Madhyamikan school which grew out of Kumarajiva’s work in China³⁰ came to be eventually called the San-Lun^h (“Three Treatise”) school because of its three primary texts, two of which—the *Middle Treatise* and the *Dvadasamukha-sastra* (“*Twelve Gate Treatise*,” Ch. *Shih-erh-men Lun*ⁱ)—were ascribed to Nagarjuna (whose name in Chinese is Lung Shu^j). The third text, the *Sata-sastra* (“*Hundred Treatise*,” Ch. *Pai Lun*^k), was ascribed to Aryadeva, taken to be a pupil of Nagarjuna. The first Chinese Madhyamikan to produce a large body of work of his own was Seng-chao^l (374–414). However, as was the case with the preponderance of ‘early’ Chinese Buddhist scholars, he often resorted to native Taoist terminology to explain Buddhist terms and concepts, a methodology liable to misappropriation and misunderstanding.³¹ The second Chinese Madhyamikan to generate a large and influential body of writings was Chi-tsang (549–623). Writing almost two centuries after Seng-chao, he had the advantage of working with the mature Chinese Buddhist vocabulary that had been developed by countless astute Chinese Buddhist scholars over the intervening period and was clearly distinct from Taoist usage and ideas.³² In China, Chi-tsang’s *Chung-kuan-lun Su*^m (“*A Commentary on the Middle Treatise*”) “is universally recognized as a classic exegesis on the *Middle Treatise*.”³³

That Chi-tsang is doctrinally faithful to Nagarjuna’s ‘two keys to liberation’ is clear from assertions such as “Hence, dependence and attachment are the roots of *samsara*, and non-dependence and non-attachment are the major principles of the sutras and sastras” (Chi-tsang, *San-lun Hsüan-i*,ⁿ “*On the Profound Meaning of the Three Treatises*”).³⁴ In his *Sheng-men-ching Pao-k’u*^o (“*The Treasure of the Srimala Sutra*”), Chi-tsang strongly maintains the teaching of Fa-lang^p (his mentor as a young monk, and a figure in the ‘second wave of Madhyamaka in China’): “Whenever our teacher, the Reverend [Fa]-lang, ascended the high seat and instructed his followers, he often said: [Our] words should take non-abidingness as the point of departure, and [our] minds should take non-acquisition as the principal [guide].”³⁵ As Ming-Wood Liu has shown, non-attachment is the “Central Theme”³⁶ of Chi-tsang’s teaching (whereas, for example, a non-Madhyamikan Buddhist group such as the Ch’eng-shih masters, took “the cessation of suffering” to be central³⁷). The key roles of *trishna* and *upadana* are so important not only because they show Chi-tsang to be a faithful Nagarjunist, but also because they help us to see how—contrary to Kuang-ming Wu’s charges—Chi-tsang appreciates samsaric concreteness and denies a transcendental Nothingness (or any compartmentalized Nothingness or ‘nothingnesses’).

Chi-tsang is famous for his deployments of the *catuskotika* (*ssu chü*⁴), the tetralemmatic formation that Nagarjuna had used with such deft results. Like Nagarjuna himself, Chi-tsang avoids an ontological reading of the “two truths” and calls them instead, after the *Chung-lun*, “the two truths as standpoints” (*yü-ti*^r) which function *epistemologically*.³⁸ Here we shall treat what are usually called Chi-tsang’s “three levels of the two truths.” Ming-Wood Liu diagrams the “three levels of the two truths”³⁹ as follows:

The Three Levels of Two Truths

| Mundane Truth (<i>shih ti</i> ^s) | Supreme Truth (<i>chen ti</i> ⁱ) |
|---|--|
| (1) Existence | Emptiness |
| (2) Duality of ‘existence’ and ‘emptiness’ | Non-duality of ‘existence’ and ‘emptiness’ (neither ‘existence’ nor ‘emptiness’) |
| (3) Duality * of ‘duality’ and ‘non-duality’ | Neither ‘duality’ nor ‘non-duality’ |

*I supply bold print here, to distinguish, in my discussion below, third-level duality from second-level duality.

Chi-tsang explains the third level this way:

Although the deluded ones [, on hearing the second form of two truths,] abandon the two extreme [ideas of “existence” and “emptiness”], they in turn get bogged down in [the idea of] “middle-way.” Hence, [the Buddhas address them] the third time [, and] explain that not to become attached to the “middle-way” after leaving far behind the two extremes [of “existence” and “emptiness”] is the supreme truth, and that the two extremes and the middle-way are all mundane truths.⁴⁰

The second level’s affirmation of ‘both existence (*Ch yü*^u) and emptiness (*Ch k’ung*,^v trans. of Sanskrit *asat*, “non-existence”)’ is the “duality” represented in Liu’s diagram above, in the third-level mundane truth; and the second level’s denial of ‘both existence and emptiness’ is the “non-duality” also represented in the third-level mundane truth: in short, the third-level mundane truth affirms *both* the affirmation *and* the denial of the duality (‘existence and emptiness’), and thus the third-level mundane truth is itself a **duality**.⁴¹ The third level supreme truth declares that the third level mundane truth’s *affirmation* of this **duality** must *also* be cut off.⁴² To achieve ultimate liberation, Chi-tsang makes it a general rule: extremes must be cut off, but the extreme of ‘one-sidedness’ (the extreme of choosing extremes) must be cut off too; extremes must be cut off, but the

extreme of ‘middle-ness’ (the extreme of choosing non-extremes) must be cut off too.⁴³

At first glance, it may appear that Chi-tsang’s argument implies a unitary formation negating the particularities of the mundane world (recall that the ‘mundane’ is Reality according to *samvrti-satya*’s perspective); and/or maybe that Chi-tsang’s argument implies a transcendent Emptiness attained by ladder-like ascent of the three levels. To quote Nagarjuna’s often-cited caveat, a misperception of emptiness is “Like a snake incorrectly seized” (MK XXIV:11b). Chi-tsang’s ‘three levels of two truths’ do not broach a unitary formation; and they do not broach a transcendent Emptiness; and they do not constitute a ‘ladder’ climbing to such an Emptiness. Let us examine why.

First of all, it is crucial to note that the three levels of the two truths—even the supreme truth of the third level—are *representational* and are not to be confounded with *bodhi* (*Ch chüeh*^w) itself. Chi-tsang says they function heuristically, as instruction⁴⁴ (at their best, acting as *prajñapti*, in the sense of ‘privileged clue’ to ‘awakening’), and must be eventually “discarded.”⁴⁵ But, citing a famous line from Seng-chao, he continues, “‘They resemble a man produced by magic: this man is not non-existent, yet, being a product of magic, is not a real man’ . . . This is true of all things. Therefore they are not to be discarded.”⁴⁶ Here Seng-chao was justifying in the Indian Madhyamikan manner the provisional validity of mundane truth for the conventional world (*samsara*). Chi-tsang is in agreement, and is declaring, all told, that the three levels are to be discarded and not-discarded. In terms of samsaric particularity, concreteness, differentiation (*existential* features), what interests us is that the three levels are *not-discarded*. That is, *each* truth of *each* level is not-discarded. At the first level, the mundane truth’s affirmation of *existence* is not-discarded. At the second level, the mundane truth’s affirmation of both ‘*existence* and *emptiness*’ is not-discarded. At the third level, the mundane truth’s affirmation of both ‘*existence* and *emptiness*’ and neither ‘*existence* nor *emptiness*’ is not-discarded. Furthermore, Chi-tsang declares “what is dual is not dual, and what is not dual is dual.”⁴⁷ Later Mahayanistic Chinese schools shift the balance more and more toward ‘oneness’, but the San-Lun school—when in the mode of non-discarded—keeps “what is dual is not dual” and “what is not dual is dual” at parity. ‘*Samsara is nirvana; nirvana is samsara*’.

The three levels are not discarded because they are *not* best conceived as a *climbing-ladder*. They are *prajñapti*, yes, but not a ladder. A ladder suggests that one climbs the rungs, and then leaps from the top to a transcendent, discarding the ladder. It is Ch’an in its Yogacaric variants that most popularizes the rhetoric of ‘throwing away the ladder’ upon ‘awakening’. Chi-tsang’s treatment of this

problematic is much more nuanced. For example, there is an intentional equivocation in Chi-tsang’s remarks about the third level, in relation to the preceding two levels. As formulaic representations of standpoints, Chi-tsang *does* treat the three levels incrementally, so he says in both his *Fa-hua Hsüan-lun*^x (“*Treatise on the Profound [Teaching of] the Lotus*”) and his *Ehr-ti I^y* (“*The Meaning of the Two Truths*”) that the first level of the two truths is for the common folk; that the second level is for Hinayanists and immature Mahayanists; and that the third level is for inferior Bodhisattvas.⁴⁸ However, when the three levels are deployed experientially, as *prajñapti* intended to initiate *bodhi*, they are *not* incremental at all. In fact, Chi-tsang says their function is to push the meditator’s experience into non-abidingness (non-dependency, so there is no ‘thirst’, no ‘craving’) and non-acquisitiveness (no ‘holding-onto’), the Madhyamaka’s two principal keys to *bodhi*,⁴⁹ as we saw earlier. Indeed, Chi-tsang often speaks of the Middle Way (*madhyama pratipad* [Ch *chung tao*^z], whence the name Madhyamaka) and this non-attachment in the very same terms.⁵⁰

Chi-tsang explains “that practitioners of sharp faculties require only the instruction of the first form [level] of two truths, whereas practitioners of dull faculties have to go through the instruction of all three forms [levels] of two truths before they can achieve awakening.”⁵¹ Surely, this indicates that experientially the three levels are not a ladder, nor are they meant to lead to a mystical experience that transcends the ladder. Indeed, regarded from the experiential perspective, the supreme truth of the third level even seems to off/circle back to the first level, ‘existence’ [mundane truth] and ‘emptiness’ [supreme truth]. The practitioner stays with the ‘ladder’, but it is no ladder-to-be-climbed in any teleological sense. Non-attachment is to scramble up and down the ladder at will. (Chi-tsang makes the same case in his *Ta-ch’eng Hsüan-lun*.^{aa})⁵² No wonder Thomé Fang can summarize all of Chi-tsang by saying “Apart from the *sunyata*, there is no materiality, and apart from the materiality, there is no *sunyata*.”⁵³

Thus, in normative Madhyamaka, Indian and Chinese, *bodhi* truly experiences that the mundane is concrete and inseparable from *nirvana*. In the Madhyamikan tetralemma, each phase in relation to the others is both different and the same. Different and the same. Like Kuang-ming Wu and me, I might add. Or, as Nagarjuna himself puts it in his *Bodhisambhara[ka]* (“*Accumulations of Merit*”),⁵⁴ “Those who are disunited should be united, without asking whether they are friends” (stanza 148b).

ENDNOTES

1. Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill, 2001. The other two volumes in Wu's trilogy on Cultural Hermeneutic are *On Chinese Body Thinking* (1997) and *On the "Logic" of Togetherness* (1998), also published by Brill.
2. *On Metaphoring*, p. 321.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
4. *On the "Logic" of Togetherness*, p. 50.
5. For pertaining sources in Jacques Derrida, and discussion, see my *Derrida on the Mend* (W. Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1984; 1986; new pbk. ed., 2000), pp. 38–41, and *passim* Part One.
6. Robert Magliola, *On Deconstructing Life-Worlds: Buddhism, Christianity, Culture* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, American Academy of Religion, 1997; Oxford University Press, 2000).
7. *On Metaphoring*, p. 492.
8. *On Deconstructing Life-Worlds*, p. 191. Irreducible differences establish or 'raise up' whatever sameness function on levels superjacent to the differences (see *On Deconstructing*, pp. 184–85, 190, and *passim* 167–173). Normative Buddhism is at bottom a religion of 'power from self' [*tzu-li*^{bb}] (even Pure Lands and Bodhisattvic help-to-others are meant to help others so they are better positioned to liberate themselves), whereas normative Christianity, be it Orthodox or Catholic or 'Protestant', is a religion of absolute 'power from the Other' [*t'a-li*^{cc}], i.e., Christ alone can save/liberate.
9. *On the "Logic" of Togetherness*, p. 439.
10. *Ibid.*, 237.
11. *On Metaphoring*, p. 319.
12. *On Metaphoring*, p. 547.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 386.
14. Hereafter, abbreviated to *MK* in references to its specific books and stanzas.
15. Scholars have excavated the Sanskrit text of the *Mulamadhyamakakarikas* from Candrakirti's commentary, the *Prasannapada*.
16. An overview of Nagarjuna's *Mulamadhyamakakarikas* can be found in Frederick Streng, *Emptiness: A Study in Religious Meaning* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1967), which also supplies a translation of the Sanskrit text. A more topic-specific bibliography pertaining to the *Mulamadhyamakakarikas* can be found in my *Derrida on the Mend*, Part Three, pp. 87–129, notes pp. 205–217. A recent and thorough-going general bibliography can be found at the rear of Jay L. Garfield's translation of the *Mulamadhyamakakarikas*, entitled *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way: Nagarjuna's 'Mulamadhyamakakarika'* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).
17. For an account of Nagarjuna's "two truths," see Jeffrey Hopkins's treatment in his *Meditation on Emptiness* (Somerville: Wisdom Publications, rev. ed., 1996), pp. 400–403.
18. Garfield's translation. But I have followed Jeffrey Hopkins's etymology for *pratitya-samutpada* (which follows Candrakirti's interpretation), rendering it as "dependent arising" instead of Garfield's "dependent co-arising." See Hopkins, pp. 163–66.
19. See Hopkins's section on "The Two Truths," pp. 405–421, especially pp. 416 and 419.
20. For a concise account of the Yogacara School, see Junjiro Takakusu, *The Essentials of Buddhist Philosophy* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 1947; 3rd ed., 1956), pp. 80–95. For a more detailed explanation of Yogacaric history and doctrines, see Hopkins, pp. 359–397.
21. For a contextualizing of the debate in terms of recent scholarship, see my reply to Harold Coward in *On Deconstructing Life-Worlds*, pp. 143–148.
22. See Takakusu, p. 94.
23. Inada's translation in Kenneth K. Inada, *Nagarjuna: A Translation of his 'Mulamadhyamakakarika', with an Introductory Essay* (Tokyo: Hokuseido, 1970).

24. By “mystical” here, I mean that the identification is accessible only to the full awareness, which is *bodhi*, an awareness that is cognitive but above-and-beyond the merely rational.
25. See Garfield’s detailed discussion, pp. 301–321 and 331–333.
26. Brian Bocking, *Nagarjuna in China: A Translation of the Middle Treatise* (Lewiston/Queenston/Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1995), p. 14.
27. McCagney’s translation in *Nagarjuna and the Philosophy of Openness* (Lanham/Boulder/New York/Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 1997), p. 211.
28. Garfield comments, “The identity of the individual as a grasper—and hence as a deluded actor in the world and an agent of the continuation of *samsara*—depends on this grasping” (p. 338). The deluded actor reifies ‘this’ and ‘that’, “grasping for which binds us to suffering” (p. 341). See also, Garfield, p. 331: “. . . *nirvana* is by definition the cessation of delusion and of grasping. . . .”
29. “With the cessation of ignorance, Action will not arise” (Garfield trans.).
30. For a general history of the transmission of Madhyamaka from India to China, Richard Robinson’s *Early Madhyamika in India and China* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1972) remains a very useful survey.
31. See Ming-Wood Liu’s erudite and enormously serviceable *Madhyamaka Thought in China* (Leiden, New York, Köln: E. J. Brill, 1994), p. 87.
32. *Ibid.*
33. Liu, p. 86.
34. In *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* [hereafter *T*], ed. by Junjiro Takakusu and Kaikyoku Watanabe (Tokyo: 1924–1934), 45.7a26. Cited in English trans. in Liu, p. 100.
35. Liu, trans., p. 99.
36. *Ibid.*
37. Liu, p. 90. For Chi-tsang’s crucial disagreements with the Ch’eng-shih Masters, see Liu, pp. 90–92.
38. See Chi-tsang, *Ta-ch’eng Hsüan-lun* (“*Profound Treatise on the Mahayana*”), *T*.45.15b7–10; trans. in Liu, p. 142.
39. Liu, p. 149.
40. Chi-tsang, *Fa-hua Hsüan-lun* (“*Treatise on the Profound [Teaching of] the Lotus*”), *T*. 34.396b19–29; Liu’s trans. p. 149.
41. Elsewhere in my work I elaborate in detail on the Madhyamaka’s ‘both-and’ and ‘neither-nor’ formulations as ‘undistributed’ in the technical sense (as opposed to ‘distributed’), in order to show Derridean philosophers that the formulations escape a full-blown ‘logocentrism’. Those so interested can see my *On Deconstructing Life-Worlds: Buddhism, Christianity, Culture*, pp. 118, 165, and also its Index-entry, ‘neither x nor non-x (4th lemma)’. In this current paper the ‘distributed-undistributed’ distinction is not necessary for the case I am making. This paper’s focus differs, emphasizing—*contra* Kuang-ming Wu—the Madhyamaka’s appreciation of existential samsaric traits.
42. See also Wing-Tsit Chan’s pertaining treatment, in his compilation, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 360; and Yu-lan Fung’s treatment in his *History of Chinese Philosophy*, Vol. II, trans. Derk Bodde (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), pp. 295–96.
43. Thomé H. Fang in his *Chinese Philosophy: Its Spirit and Development* (Taipei: Linking Publishing, 1988) puts it this way, following Chi-tsang: “Hard dualism and non-duality should not be called the authentic: The wondrous authenticity in Prajñā must surpass the coupling of sheer dualism [the extreme of choosing extremes] with the non-duality [the extreme of choosing non-extremes],” p. 202.
44. See Liu, pp. 150–151, citing Chi-tsang.
45. See Chi-tsang, *Ehr-ti I* (“*The Meaning of the Two Truths*”), *T*. 45.91–92, cited in Fung, trans. Bodde, pp. 297, 298.
46. *Ehr-ti I*, *T*. 45.92, cited in Fung, trans. Bodde, p. 298.
47. Chi-tsang cited in Fung, trans. Bodde, p. 298.
48. See Liu, p. 152.
49. See Liu, pp. 99, 141, 149.

50. “Chi-tsang applies to the middle way the same descriptions he gives of non-attachment,” Liu, p.153. See also Liu’s references to the *Ta-chih-tu Lun*,^{dd} a treatise on the *Mahaprajnaparamita Sutra*, in order to show that the dominant Madhyamikan tradition interprets the Middle Way to mean non-abidingness.
51. Liu’s paraphrase of Chi-tsang, *Chung-kuan-lun Su* (“A Commentary on the Middle Treatise”), T.42.28b11–13, p. 151.
52. Wherein Chi-tsang speaks of a second deployment of the two truths, “the four levels of two truths”: the fourth level represents the equality of all the levels and the specific lesson is again non-attachment. See my discussion in Magliola, “Afterword,” in the forthcoming *Buddhisms and Deconstructions*, ed. Jin Park (Rowman and Littlefield, 2005).
53. Fang, p. 205.
54. *Bodhisambhara[ka]* 148b, trans. in Chr. Lindtner, *Master of Wisdom: Writings of the Buddhist Master Nagarjuna* (Berkeley: Dharma Press, rev. ed. 1986, 1997), p. 148.

CHINESE GLOSSARY

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| a. | 布袋和尚 | p. | 法朗 |
| b. | 吉藏 | q. | 四句 |
| c. | 無愛 | r. | 於諦 |
| d. | 無住 | s. | 世諦 |
| e. | 無取 | t. | 真諦 |
| f. | 無得 | u. | 有 |
| g. | 中論 | v. | 空 |
| h. | 三論 | w. | 覺 |
| i. | 十二門論 | x. | 法華玄論 |
| j. | 龍樹 | y. | 二諦義 |
| k. | 百論 | z. | 中道 |
| l. | 僧肇 | aa. | 大乘玄論 |
| m. | 中觀論疏 | bb. | 自力 |
| n. | 三論玄義 | cc. | 他力 |
| o. | 勝鬘經寶窟 | dd. | 大智度論 |