

THE SOCIAL MEANING OF THE MIDDLE WAY

The Madhyamika Critique of Indian Ontologies of Identity and Difference

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Introduction

The essays of Bibhuti Singh Yadav (1943-1999) represent Buddhism as a social invective against various Indian ontologies that either directly underwrote caste society or did nothing to upset the status quo.¹ Specifically, Madhyamika Buddhism, of Nagarjuna's and Candrakirti's Prasangika variety, rejects both the hierarchical essentialism of caste society and the escapism of a reclusive, renunciate and metasocial *nirvana*, leaving the individual to demand social equality on religious grounds.² The real significance of dissolving the boundaries between *samsara* and *nirvana* in Madhyamika lies in its opening the way for Buddhists to return from the forests to their homes and speak to society in its own language, but speak as reformers, so that the call to social justice could re-enter the Indian life-world on Indian terms.³

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¹The major title of this article is taken from a quotation of Yadav's most prominent essay, in which he wrote that, according to Buddhism, "existence is relational to the core, and it is in this relationality alone that *Tathagata* dwells. Such is the social meaning of the middle way" ("Methodic Deconstruction." *Interpretation in Religion*. Shlomo Biderman and Ben-Ami Scharfstein eds. E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1992, 129-168; 162.

²*Ibid.*, 162. Yadav's vision of the role of Buddhism in Indian intellectual history is very much in the spirit and tradition of Bhim Rao Ambhedkar (1891-1956), the former Minister of Law in Nehru's first cabinet and co-drafter of India's Constitution, who resigned his post, and eventually presided over a mass conversion to Buddhism in Nagpur, Maharashtra shortly before his death. Although Yadav never wrote anything extensive on Ambhedkar, he did devote some of his lectures on Buddhism to Ambhedkar's writings, and quoted him approvingly in places (see "Mispredicated Identity and Postcolonial Discourse." Unpublished Manuscript, 23).

³Yadav wrote in many places about the need for "immanent criticism." "I believe in immanent criticism, which means reflection in terms of Sanskrit categories of thought. Nagarjuna, the founder of Madhyamika Buddhism, believed that

It is Yadav's social vision of Madhyamika Buddhism that I wish to emphasize in this expository essay, as I believe it offers a significant contribution to English-language studies of Indian Buddhism and its implications. It has become common in English scholarship to view Prasangika Madhyamika as a Buddhist school of adherents to *vada-vitanda*, the "refutation-only" style of philosophical debate, the adherents devoting themselves to the undoing of Hindu and Buddhist metaphysical and epistemological theses while cunningly avoiding any implications of holding their own positions, as this style of debate demanded.⁴ Yadav was quick to add to this view that there were no such things as socially or politically innocent metaphysical or epistemological theories (*prameya-pramanasastra*) in the Indian philosophical context. The builders of ontological systems, including for Yadav the Hindu Naiyayikas and Purva and Uttara Mimamsikas as well as the Buddhist Madhyamika Svatantrikas, Sarvastivadins and Yogacara-Sautrantikas, constituted different "group thinks" of a socio-ideological conservative "circle."⁵ Behind all the

criticism can neither be imported nor performed from outside. Criticism is authentic if it is immanent in its textual field, if it emanates from the problematics it seeks to understand, and if it is done in terms of indigenous categories of thought" ("Mispredicated Identity," 4.) India has its own discourse of social justice, in its oldest form from the Buddhist tradition, and therefore does not need to import it from the West. The fact that Buddhism was an indigenous reform movement is also what appealed to Ambhedkar (see Gerald James Larson, *India's Agony over Religion*. SUNY Press, Albany, 1995, 26-7. We shall return to this issue of "immanent criticism" later.

⁴This interpretation is, as far as it goes, certainly accurate, and has a long list of capable expositors and defenders. See for instance T.R.V. Murti (Yadav's doctoral advisor), *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism: A Study of the Madhyamika System*. George Allen & Unwin, Ltd. London, 1960, 131-2; Sitansu Cakravorty, "The Madhyamika *Catuskoti* or Tetralemma." *Journal of Indian Philosophy*. vol. 8, 1980, 303-06; B.K. Matilal, *Perception: An Essay on Classical Indian Theories of Knowledge*. Clarendon, Oxford, 1986, 48, 66-7, 88-9; Mark Siderits, "The Madhyamika Critique of Epistemology I." *Journal of Indian Philosophy*. vol. 8, 307. These treatments are rather technical, the most recent issue in the debate being whether or not Nagarjuna's logical structures in the *Mulamadhyamikakarika* and *Vigrahavyavartani* amount to a kind of Austinian or Searlian "illocutionary negation."

⁵Yadav's very elegant and supple prose often argues with elliptical metaphors, and the notion of the "circle," or the inventors and defenders of Indian logic.

technical objections this "circle" had to *vada-vitandikas* like Nagarjuna and Candrakirti, namely that they can neither refute their opponents nor establish their own aims with "empty terms" (*sunyavada*) but must submit to propositional and referential assertions or denials,⁶ lies according to Yadav a more fundamental social concern.

Happy with the status quo, the circle excludes the middle. It finds comfort in ontological commitments, shying away from the ego-centric concerns that get refleshed in categories like being and non-being. The circle calls for a world where identity has privilege over difference, the one over the many, the whole over the part, the caste over the individual. Positive posture, which at bottom is a form of self-assertion, determines the form and content of negation; the conditions that make saying "yes" possible also determine the means and limit of saying "no." The circle likes unity and coherence; fearful of inner contradiction, it regulates deviation and dissent. It does not deny difference or plurality, but it relegates them to attributes of identity. No wonder the circle insists upon methodological consensus. It talks of inside and outside, the law-abiding "I" and the liminal "other." It recognizes the other in contrast to itself, in its own image and on its own terms. Inside the border there is syllogistic coherence, traditions of ontological commitment and the harmony of hierarchical society.⁷

Ontologically, Indian realists believe that differences between things are possible by virtue of distinct particulars possessing an identity (*tadatmya*) of substance and attributes (*dharmin*) in a locus (*dharma*). Vedantins hold the inmost "self" (*atman*) to be free of all internal differentiation, and relegate difference to an ultimately illusory status.

epistemology and ontology, was used liberally. At one point he even calls it the "logocentric" or "syllogistic circle (*hetu cakra*)," punning on the great logical innovation of Dignaga ("Methodic Deconstruction," 141).

⁶See "Methodic Deconstruction," 148-52. I have myself defended these objections on technical grounds; see Douglas L. Berger, "Illocution, No-Theory and Practice in Nagarjuna's Skepticism: Reflections on the *Vigrahavyavartani*," *Proceedings of the Twentieth World Congress of Philosophy*. <http://www.bu.edu/wcp/Papers/Asia/AsiaBerg.htm>.

⁷Yadav, "Methodic Deconstruction," 153-4.

Sarvastivada Buddhists take up the cause of difference, namely the difference between *Tathagata* and *samsara* through a doctrine of "self-nature" (*svabhava*). All these groups, regardless of their seeming philosophical oppositions, are nonetheless using logic and epistemology to buttress theories of the world that justify various socio-political agendas. In the case of Hindu realists, the mission is to support caste distinctions through a doctrine of essences. The Vedantins, both of the classical and "neo" persuasions, equate Indian national identity with Brahminical tradition. The Sarvastivada eschew social participation with the distinction of being the disciples of "the One who has come and gone" (*Tathagata*). Madhyamika Buddhists like Nagarjuna and Candrakirti reject caste society, but not the social responsibilities that are of a piece with the *bodhisattva* ideal. It is for this reason that they must shun the patterns of thought and language that create the ontologies of identity and difference, which in their turn underwrite social inequality.

The *bodhisattva* is not interested in going to *nirvana*, let alone in proving the existence of *nirvana* as a positive or negative entity. Existence is relational, and it is in such relationship, in society itself, that salvation is to be found. A *bodhisattva* cannot exit the world, and in the world he demands social equality in the name of *Tathagata*. Such commitment enjoins that no Buddhist shall ever concede the world to an epistemology of (the) static present. Neither can a Buddhist concede meaning to the logocentric discourse, which insists that all speech is entitative... The point, according to Mahayana, is not to do more epistemology, however corrective, and replace the metaphysics of eternal entities with that of static moments. Doing so would be to succumb to the Hindu ideology of the status quo. The point is that Buddhism is about changing the world, not knowing things as they are in themselves.⁸ This essay will be an examination of Yadav's representations of Madhyamika's critiques of the social implications of Hindu realism, Vedantic "atomology" and Buddhist essentialism. Through this examination, a greater appreciation can be gleaned of why Yadav believed that the Prasangika Madhyamika of Nagarjuna and Candrakirti served as a

⁸Yadav, "Vallabha's Positive Response to Buddhism." *Journal of Dharma*. vol. 18, no. 2, 1994, 113-137; 117.

corrective to these implications. It was Yadav's conviction that rendering unsupportable the classical Indian ontologies of identity and difference offers a way to break the stranglehold "the circle" has had on Indian intellectual and social life. Some critical assessment of these arguments will be footnoted along the way, but for the most part this paper carries the purpose of adding to current scholarship Yadav's emphasis on the social dimensions of critical Buddhist thought.

The Social Essentialism of the Hindu Realists

Yadav singles out two primary targets for his attack on Indian realism, the thought of the Bhatta Mimamsika Kumarila and the system of classical Nyaya. They are also respectively representatives of the two basic ontological orientations in the Indian philosophical tradition, those of difference and identity. Kumarila's brand of realism is instrumental; it verifies the realities of objects through our ability to use them for practical ends (*pravrttisamarthya*). By extension, Kumarila's denigration of Buddhism is based on the suspicion that its lack of realist commitment is indicative of its lack of respect for "common sense" and thus the assumptions that make a harmonious society possible. Buddhism does not acknowledge difference, and difference for Kumarila is the necessary condition for successful practical actions, distinctions between castes, and successful social functioning. The Naiyayikas, on the other hand, are philosophers of identity, and they are so in two senses, one metaphysical and the other methodological. They believe that objects are wholes (*avayavin*), that is to say, particular instantiations of universal substance-quality relations. Things are identified based on a correct apprehension of essences in which certain qualities inhere, and this holds true whether one is attempting to properly locate a tree or a *brahmin*, since both are examples of natural kinds (*jati*) and not constructed kinds (*upadhi*). This metaphysical essentialism, which serves as a support to the traditional social structure, is backed up by the Naiyayikas with a methodological bias, which assumes that realistically grounded forms of reference are the only valid forms of discourse and debate. Buddhism on this view is not only disingenuous in its attempt to "refute by saying nothing,"⁹ but is also

⁹Recall Nagarjuna's famous 29th verse of the *Vigrahavyavartani*, in responding to the accusation that *sunyavada* must be his logical thesis (*pratijna*): "*nasti ca mama*

unfit for admission into dialogue, given its "refusal to play the language game."¹⁰ Despite their various ontological prioritizations of difference and identity then, Kumarila and Nyaya close a logical and methodological "circle" around things as they are in themselves, society as it is in itself, and how one intelligibly speaks about both.

Kumarila's picture of the self is that of an agent, a practical being who uses objects different from himself to attain practical goals. More specifically, for the Mimamsikas, *brahmins* use the Vedic texts as their "instrumental reason (*sadhana*)" in order to realize "material and moral ends (*abhyudaya*)."¹¹ Yadav therefore identified the "three keys to Kumarila's system of thought" as "common sense, epistemology and scriptural authority."¹² Indeed all of these elements hang together for the Bhattas, as the everyday perceptions of "common folks" are enabled in the first place by sensations that owe their input to distinct objects among which there are real differences.¹³ Success in worldly matters is thus dependant on the sharpness and accurateness of a person's perceptions, and these perceptions are themselves apprehensions of differences between things.¹⁴ The Vedic texts are a scriptural corpus which contains the instructions for success for all of society, because they reveal things, that

pratijna / tasman naivasti me dosah // "I have gone into these issues in more depth in "Illocution, No-Theory and Practice."

¹⁰B.K. Matilal, *The Word and the World*. Oxford, Delhi, 1990, 155.

¹¹Yadav and William C. Allen, "Between Vasabandhu and Kumarila." *Journal of Dharma*. vol. 20 no. 2, 1995, 154-77, 156.

¹²Ibid., 159.

¹³Ibid., 160.

¹⁴In Kumarila's system, it will be remembered, *dravya*-s or substances are only the supports of *guna*, *karma* and *samavaya* or *jati*. One distinguishes among objects as well as among members of different castes, according to Kumarila, based upon the recognition of specific qualities and actions that typify various things or persons. Yadav did not write about these concepts and their implications in Kumarila's system, primarily because the essay he co-authored with William Allen on Kumarila and Vasabandhu was focussed on their differing views of consciousness. A thorough explication of the relationship between Kumarila's metaphysics and social philosophy can be found in the last chapter of the late Wilhelm Halbfass' *Tradition and Reflection: Explorations in Indian Thought*. SUNY Press, Albany, 1993.

is, elucidate differences, as they are in themselves, and therefore can give consequent guidance for human conduct. Yadav observed:

Kumarila was a convinced man. He believed that a good form of life was a prerequisite for a clear and convincing form of thought. Category mistakes, misleading analogies, incomplete or incoherent argument, defiance of common sense—such anomalies ensue from moral failure. There is a causative relation between *dharma* and *sastra*, being good and the ability to see things as they are in themselves (*dharmaja*)...In Kumarila's view, Vedic texts are the key to the good life; loss of faith in the texts entails confused and deceptive forms of discourse (*adharmaja*)...As long as the Vedas are present, people can differentiate the unpleasantly true from the pleasantly false, *dharma* from *adharmā*, truthful speech from the politically correct speech.¹⁵

The Vedas are the ultimate *pramana* for those who desire heaven (*svarga-kama*), for heaven cannot be attained by the mere worldly pursuit of *artha* and *kama*, but must be procured through "eternal deeds" (*nitya-karma*) enjoined by the only texts that are infallible on issues of *dharma* and *adharmā*.¹⁶ These eternal duties include observance of one's *varnasramadharmā*.

While Kumarila holds Gautama Sakyamuni in high esteem for his stern warnings against a superficial and egoistic materialism,¹⁷ he believes that the Mahayana Buddhists, who have proclaimed themselves his followers, have erred in their rejection of practical common-sense knowledge, its ultimate extension in the Vedas, and therewith comes their refusal to answer the call to social responsibility. In a poignant passage, Yadav recounts how this dilemma, and Kumarila's attempt to overcome it, led to the great exegete's tragic suicide.

Kumarila lived in an era when conflicts about the world and (the) worth of human work had hit home, generating much reflection on the nature of family and the relations it entails. The deeds of

¹⁵Ibid., 165.

¹⁶See Kumarila's *Tantravartika*, I, iii, 2.

¹⁷Yadav and Allen, "Between Vasabandhu and Kumarila," 162.

Siddhartha Gautama still dominated the forms of life and thought. Ought an individual exit the family—and civil society—to discover the meaning of being in time? Kumarila had a first-hand experience of the divide. His nephew, Dharmakirti, left the Vedic fold; like most great Buddhist *acaryas*, he studied Vedic thought and found it wanting. Dharmakirti became a monk and later turned out to be the greatest logician in the history of Buddhist thought. Kumarila was a family man. In his view the father was a father, the son a son, and the former had power over the latter by virtue of sheer difference...He saw no good in a renunciate form of life which he believed the philosophers justified through a theory of metasocial consciousness. Human relations are commanded by the transcendent Vedas...Kumarila takes an objectivist stance in defense of Hindu society, the *sanantana dharma*. He sees meaning in social stability, in the ideology that a *Brahmin* is a *Brahmin*, a *Shudra* a *Shudra*.¹⁸

The legend has it that, in order to undermine the unsocial Buddhist doctrines, Kumarila pretended to become a monk, learned the Mahayana philosophy inside and out, and then emerged from his mask to defeat his teachers in debate, "a sin in Sanskrit discourse."¹⁹ Kumarila was so vexed by the resulting pangs of conscience that, instead of accepting Sankara's invitation to him to write commentaries on Advaita, Kumarila immolated himself near Prayag. Kumarila's philosophy and life were a systematic attempt to keep the utilitarian possibilities of difference circumscribed within Brahminical society.

The Naiyayikas approved of this vision of the rational life, which had the individual pragmatically oriented based on a true knowledge of things and their relationships in the real world.²⁰ Indeed, Vatsyayana had appropriated for Hindu logic the role of *anvikshiki* as it was defined in Kautyilia's *Arthashastra*, the analytical reflection that was the ultimate ground of all other sciences, including agriculture, politics and, going beyond the Mimamsikas, even *dharma* itself. This raised realistic epistemology to the level of meta-method for all social and political life.

¹⁸Ibid., 157-58.

¹⁹Ibid., 158.

²⁰Yadav, "Vallabha's Positive Response to Buddhism," 115.

Such is the enlightened *cogito* of Nyaya philosophy. It does epistemology in the name of constituting a rational order of things, equating meaningful speech with entitative speech. Its discourse is replete with signs and signifiers, its world thick with definite and indubitable referents (*vacya-vacaka*). Epistemology constitutes a world of certitudes, methodically determining the existence and non-existence of things. Epistemology is the foundation, the mind and eye of all other sciences such as ethics and economics, politics and law, religion and rituals. Such disciplines are practical, as they are interested in doing things with things, rather than the means of determining their existence or nonexistence. Epistemology offers tools for political management of the world, including the religious world. It grants benefits to practical sciences in the same way a king affirms his sovereignty by doing beneficial things for his servants. Epistemology is the key to all discourse, ranging from the affairs of kings to those of (Gods).²¹

In accord with the social and political ascendancy of epistemology, anyone wishing monetary gain and communal influence should acquire them through obeying the rules of discovery and language which the theory of knowledge reveals.²² These rules entail on the one hand an ontology of identity, in which particulars can be identified as the hosts of qualities, and subjects as the apprehenders of these particulars. They also entail on the other hand a practice of identity, in which logical problems are to be thematized and decided in formalized and regulated ways that will affirm and reaffirm the legitimacy of "the circle." In short, Nyaya theory and method provide an essentialist foundation for hierarchical society.

The Naiyayikas define knowledge as a cognition which conforms to reality faithfully.²³ Error consists in mistakenly seeing or attributing a quality in a substance that doesn't belong there (*anyathakhyati*), as when for example a rope is taken to be a snake because of its length, or conch is taken to be silver because it shines in the sun. But a perception is

²¹Ibid., 116-17.

²²Yadav, "Methodic Deconstruction," 138.

²³See Annambhatta's *Tarka-samgraha*, *Karikavali* 135: "Tadvati tat-prakarakam jnanam prama."

knowledge when a thing is apprehended as a snake because it is seen to have snakesness; an inference is knowledge when a substance is fire because smoke indicates its presence; verbal testimony is knowledge when a trustworthy authority witnesses to the truth of his assertions. Truth is correct and determinate qualification, where substances possess, or are the loci of, their attributes. Some substances are accidentally or contingently qualified (*upadhi*), as when for instance I say that a person is a cook; for that person does not cook all the time, and not all persons can cook. But some substances are naturally qualified (*jati*), as a tree is of leaves and tallness. In deciding on what it is that actually stands before me in any given case, I must follow certain procedures that will identify for me the unvarying natural inherence relations of substances and their qualities. But just as with objects in the natural environment, people have certain inherent qualities (*gunah*) that naturally equip them for membership in a caste (*varna, jati*). Intelligence and goodness reside in *brahmins*, passion in warriors, and laziness in *sudras*. These qualities in their turn serve as social qualifications and disqualifications; the *brahmins* must on account of their magnanimity and wit educate the society in religion and values, while the *sudras*, owing to their sloth, can be taken to be suffering *karmic* retribution, and must because of their ignorance serve society without polluting its sacred texts by learning how to read and study them. For Nyaya philosophy, logic becomes hierarchy, ontological essences solidify into fixed social structures.

Existence is a matter of law and order. The world is a place where people follow their station in life, where unity is more important than equality, where the particular makes sense by virtue of bearing the universal and where individuals are ritually ranked in relation to the social whole. There is a determinable relation between cause and effect, agent and act, knowing and doing, being and social existence. The circle justifies inequality in the name of *karmic* coherence: to each according to the ethical quality of his *karmic* will; from each according to the social worth of that very will. The game of life is played according to rules. There is no rupture in human relations, no gap in what one does and what happens to be, and therefore no room for revolution in the name of social justice. Ontologically speaking, X is Y because of Z; socially speaking, life is as smooth as syllogistic reasoning. "Logic," said the founder of Nyaya, "is the

ground of all thinking, the tool of all successful actions, even moral actions."...Ontology...encloses the meaning of the world in scriptural texts, and restricts access to the texts only to those who do *yajna* by virtue of their moral superiority. Hermeneutical reflection is not a natural or fundamental right. It is a matter of morally acquired rights, and it is confined to an ethical aristocracy for the good of society.²⁴

In addition to this philosophy of identity which amounts to an ontological essentialism, Nyaya is also the practice of identity. The purpose of philosophical debate, where logic or "inference for others" (*parartha-anumana*) is employed, is to dispel doubt (*samsaya*). Doubt for Nyaya consists in seeing or considering an amorphous object and, through corrective perception or inference based on a special mark or characteristic, doubt can be eliminated.²⁵ What formal logic in debate does is to establish truth among competing objective theses (*pratijnah*). Debate is a place, as Yadav puts it, where doubt is "staged," and it is staged in order for philosophers to "make questionable what they themselves believe to be true, and where they dramatize the indubitability of the ego by showing that it is presupposed in the methodic dubitability of all thought."²⁶ Doubt is in the end useful for philosophers, for it establishes the identity of the doubting subject.²⁷

²⁴Yadav, "Methodic Deconstruction," 143.

²⁵J.N. Mohanty has nicely explained the different models of doubt in his "Nyaya Theory of Doubt." *Essays in Indian Philosophy: Traditional and Modern*. Oxford, Delhi, 1993, 101-25. These models, *dharmijnana*, *visesasmrti* and *pramanyasamsayat visayasamsayah* are all objective forms of doubt.

²⁶Yadav, "Methodic Deconstruction," 145.

²⁷Yadav's Cartesian representation of doubt in Nyaya has been disputed recently, though in a different context, by Mark Siderits, who has claimed that nothing like a Cartesian formulation of doubt existed in the Indian philosophical tradition; see Siderits' "Matilal on Nagarjuna." *Relativism, Suffering and Beyond: Essays in Memory of Bimal K. Matilal*. P. Bilimoria and J.N. Mohanty, eds. Oxford, Delhi, 1997, 69-92; 71. As Siderits says, "to attribute knowledge to a subject is to remark on the causal history of that subject's cognition. It is not to attribute to that subject the ability to grasp whatever evidence would be required to rule out skeptical hypotheses" ("Matilal on Nagarjuna," 74). If Siderits is right, and there are very

The ego is appetitive to the core. It posits a "this" as a locus on which to affirm its "I." The relation of "I" and "this" is fundamental; it gets formalized in subject-predicate discourse. The ego incarnates its alterity in the epistemological field where the holding of "I am this" is the ground for beholding the truth of "This is a jar," and where the *cogito* is believed to present things as they are in themselves (*svabhava vastu nibandanam*)...Space is a recognitive medium through which the ego confers knowness to an object in order to infer its own existence as the knowing subject. It is a sphere where man hears echoes of the words of which he himself is the speaker. The ego posits space to ascertain its existence through staged referents, to disperse its deceptions in propositional assertions and confessions of faith.²⁸

Debate becomes in this way for the Naiyayikas a self-affirming activity, for the same subject of knowledge is both the doubter and the knower. Now, Nagarjuna and Candrakirti have proposed to enter the field of debate, but they have done so without believing in the two fundamental assumptions of debate the logicians hold most essential. The first is that

good grounds for his contention, then Yadav's polemical treatment of Nyaya in this case would have to be fundamentally questioned.

²⁸Yadav, "Methodic Deconstruction," 144; 145. Again, Yadav's continual use of the word "*cogito*" and his representation of how Naiyayikas eradicate objective doubt does not seem, as Siderits has hinted at, to apply to the actual Nyaya model of selfhood and cognition. True, the logicians thought that the permanent self was the basis for all activity and thought, and the possessor of all the individual's cognitions and feelings. But whether we possess objective knowledge does not depend on anything like a *cogito*, but rather on apprehension (*anuvyavasaya*) of a thing based on sense-object contact, and both of these events were thought by the Naiyayikas to be contingent and followed strictly on causal factors. Knowledge was not for them affirming the existence of the knowing subject, but rather determining what external causal factors and possibilities for fruitful action existed. The Nyaya school held a theory of truth known in Indian philosophy as *paratahpramanavada*, which has been long rendered the thesis of "extrinsic validity" and what Siderits has referred to as an "extensionalist theory of knowledge" ("The Madhyamika Critique of Epistemology I." 329). Cartesian epistemology is more of an intrinsic model, and Yadav's invocation of it to describe and critique Nyaya epistemology calls to a certain extent into question his commitment to "immanent criticism" of "Sanskrit categories of thought." We will return to this problem again later.

language is referential and signifies real objects that in any instant case are either being affirmed or denied. The second is that a debater must have a position which he believes to be true, and on the basis of that truth he assents or objects to contrasting positions. The name of the game in Indian logic, on this view, is commitment. The problem with *vada-vitandikas* like the Prasangika Madhyamikas is that they want to debate without committing, either to the objective realism that grounds the Hindu theory of language or a definite position that they themselves wish to establish; the Buddhists wish to use the rules of the game without believing in the rules.²⁹ But, the Buddhists are represented as responding, that is the whole problem. It is really the Naiyayikas, and not the Buddhists, who debate in bad faith, for despite their insistence that philosophical argument is about truth, what is really important to them is commitment, and that means commitment to rules that have been agreed upon in advance, not that have been proven in debate. This insistence on commitment to the assumptions of the rules rather than merely playing by the rules is a symptom, according to the Madhyamikas, of the social anxiety of the Hindu logicians about the identity of their community memberships, as logicians and as Hindus.

The ego uses space to collectivize itself in a group-think. It carves a cognitive boundary, places its identity inside the boundary and then looks for a competing "other" across the border. Competing collectivities defend their identity in the face of difference, none recognizing the other for what it is, and each requiring all others to witness the superiority of its own claims. Space thus becomes a dialectical stage, a forum for identity play and inter-ontological discourse. Candrakirti thematizes the discourse. He wants to look at the psycho-social reasons that force philosophers to formalize the status quo. The need is to return philosophy to the everyday world; the *cogito* to the *ego*; *logos* to *eros*; Being to the desire for immortal identity; singularity of the first cause to sociality of causes and conditions...His strategy is to do immanent criticism, to deconstruct ontological discourse in terms of the rules of that very discourse.³⁰

²⁹Yadav, "Methodic Deconstruction," 144.

³⁰Yadav, *Ibid.*, 146. Yadav's attacks frequently shift almost imperceptibly between different opponents, especially in the "Methodic Deconstruction" essay.

By using logic to dismantle the conclusions of the logicians, the Buddhist seeks to uncover the craving (*tanha*) that parches the throat of the Nyaya "group-think," and that craving is a craving for their professional identity and the superiority of their social status.

The Conservative Traditionalism of Advaitic "Atmalogy"

In his final, to date unpublished, but in the author's opinion most brilliant essay, Yadav unravels the central doctrines of Sankaracarya's Advaita Vedanta and relates them to the political agenda of "Neo-Hindu" thought. Advaita represents in the Indian tradition the philosophical and cultural culmination of the ontology of identity. Advaita is after all the search for the eternal, undifferentiated "self" (*atman*). It seeks to show, through its philosophical elaboration of the *Upanisads*, that reality is at bottom utterly free of difference, and that the unitary self is the basis of all consciousness, experience and worldly life. These contentions are supported by Sankara in his much analyzed *adhyasabhasyam*, which opens his obligatory commentary on the *Brahmasutra*. *Adhyasa*, "misplacement," or as Yadav translates it, "mispredication," is Sankara's explanation for how human beings mistake the eternal self for the finite, changing physical body, and so it reveals to us how on the one hand difference is unreal and identity is real, while on the other how human beings live in their self-created world of difference. Human experience requires that there be at least two elements in cognition which are distinct, the self, or "this" (*idam*) and the not-self or "not-this" (*anidam*). However, in everyday experience, these two become confused through a projection of the properties of the one on the other, such that when what qualifies objects becomes attributed to the self, the *atman* assumes the form of an ego-consciousness (*ahamkara*), that is, it becomes wrongly objectified. This process of mispredication is evidenced by language. In common

This quotation, which was certainly directed against the practice of Hindu logic, as the pages that follow it show, is actually interrupted by a swipe at Yogacara-Sautrantikas, who were criticized by Candrakirti for trying to supply a better model for logic than the Hindus had formulated. At the beginning of the essay, he pits Candrakirti against these Buddhists, and then begins the major sections of his article with critiques of Vedic thought, Hindu logic and Yogacara-Sautrantika, and then Madhyamika Svatantrikas. As the goal in the article is to "deconstruct ontology," these opponents are understandably selected, but very often a sharp eye is needed to determine who precisely the arguments in any given part of this essay are pointed at.

expressions such as "I know" (*jñami*), the act of perceiving (*upalabdhi*), which takes place by virtue of the psycho-physical apparatus, becomes imposed upon or attributed to *atman*, which does not act; while the perception (*dr̥sti*, *avabodha*) of *atman* becomes attributed to the empirically individuated mind (*buddhi*).³¹ In expressions like "I do" (*karomi*), the activities of the body are projected upon the changeless (*kūtastha*) self, and that self is just as wrongly said to be the agent (*kartr̥*) of the acts. Still other sentences like "I am a man" attribute qualities of the bodily substance to the self, or fabricate changing internal states of feeling to the self which is changeless (*nitya*) as in "I am happy." All transcendental error then rests upon the mistaken identification of the self as in one way or another an empirical "I" (*aham*) rather than *atman*, which for Advaitins is eternal and unchanging. But we cannot do this, for as Sankara famously states at the beginning of his commentary, the notions of self (*asmadpratyaya*) and not-self (*yusmadpratyaya*) are opposed to one another like light and darkness. They cannot be identified without committing logical error. But then again, it is precisely this ongoing logical error that makes life in the world possible, for that is how the self becomes incarnated as a distinct individual with a body, will and aims. It is of course one thing to attack this doctrine on logical and epistemological grounds,³² but it is much more illuminating, Yadav believed, to see into the very utilitarian opportunities of the doctrine of *adhyasa*. He wrote:

"S is P" is a case of *adhyasa* if P signifies properties that are alien to S, and which nevertheless ought to be imposed on S, if it is to be a site of material and moral interest. "S is S" is true, but it is also a tautology and meaningless. *Adhyasa* means discovering meaning

³¹"*atmanam upalabdhyabhasphalavasana*" *Upadesasahasrī*, II,2,79.

³²Critiques of this kind go all the way back to the famous and powerful one of Ramanuja of course. Recent treatments dealing with various difficulties of Sankara's *adhyasabhyam* can be found in J.N. Mohanty, "Can the Self Become an Object?" *Essays on Indian Philosophy: Traditional and Modern*. Oxford, Delhi, 1993, 68-74; notably Daya Krishna, "Adhyasa-A Non-Advaitic Beginning in Sankara's Vedanta." *Indian Philosophy: A Counter Perspective*. Oxford, Delhi, 1991, 156-63; and Purushottama Bilimaria, "On Sankara's Attempted Reconciliation of 'You' and 'I' (*Yusmadasmatsamanvaya*). ." *Relativism, Suffering and Beyond: Essays in Memory of Bimal K. Matilal*. P. Bilimoria and J.N. Mohanty, eds. Oxford, Delhi, 1997, 252-77.

through mispredicated identity, which necessitates replacing "S is S" with "S is P." Logically speaking, S and P are altogether different (sorts) of entities; the presence of one entails (the) absence of the other in the same place. Difference is the truth, but in it there is no material and moral good. Therefore truth must make room for the false, difference for the imagined identity. Being must be altered into Being-as, self into self-as. There is no material or moral good in self-in-itself; it must be construed as something else. Imagined identity is logically odd, but it is also the condition for our being in the world. Life, after all, is larger than logic.³³

The strange thing about the implications of the doctrine of *adhyasa* as it expounds on the relation between self and world is not merely what Daya Krishna has noticed, namely that ultimately for Sankara, the absolute difference or dualism between the two is the truth, *a la* Samkhya, and their false identification is the mistake.³⁴ It is rather that Sankara posits the identity of the self can only be reclaimed when the falsity of the useful has served its purpose. "The efficacy of *adhyasa*," Yadav asserts, "is total. Shamara's agenda is clear. Being in the world...means letting the self be defined in terms of the alien, especially a beneficent alien, that helps promote material and moral interests...The self must first live through non-otherness with the other before it reclaims immediacy with itself in silence."³⁵ Advaita not only has a spiritual strategy of release, but also a political means of liberation, and subsequent identity-founded domination.

And this means we have seen played out in the history of the independence and concurrent conservative nationalism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For the nationalists who headed the Independence Movement, from Roy and Aurobindo to Gandhi and Nehru, India was India and not the West, but India could take to itself the language, thought, religious values and material profits of the West, only to reclaim national identity under the banner of the Brahminical heritage, which means among other things a nation of privileged and underprivileged castes. The

³³Yadav, "Mispredicated Identity," 5.

³⁴Krishna, 156-58.

³⁵Yadav, "Mispredicated Identity," 5.

Colonial Period represented an eerie convergence between the externally colonial West and the internally colonial *bhadraloka*.

The Indian postcolonial discourse, too, is a case of mis-predicated identity...the self-colonizing subjectivity must find salvation in the discovery and end of difference, be it Buddhist, Islamic or Euro-Christian. The irony is that such self-alienation does not alienate; it only reinforces the political and social hegemony of elite Brahmanism, lately known as *bhadraloka*. The name of the game is self-colonizing modernity which triumphed gloriously in the 19th century. Always post-colonial, one step ahead of the rest of society, the *bhadraloka* embraced the colonial knowledge. With active support from Orientalists like Max Mueller and William Jones, they also rediscovered the old Shamkaracharya, elevated the *Upanishads* to texts of salvation, and instituted the neo-Vedantic discourse of India as a spiritual civilization. There was, in the 19th century, a remarkable coincidence of interests between the colonial West and the self-colonizing agency of the *bhadraloka*. The convergence produced national heroes like Rammohan Roy, Keshab Chandra Sen, Swami Vivekananda, Shri Aurobindo, Sarvapali Radhakrishnan, the Tagores and the Nehrus.³⁶

Yadav's essay traces this history, showing how these "national heroes" used in the most subtle and invisible ways *adhyasa*, for they were the class that "understood the relation between language and power," taking on Western forms of culture and values and even identifying them with their own heritage, in order to procure their own material and moral interests as cultural elites.³⁷ Yadav protests bitterly against Ashis Nandy's representation of the "unheroic *Brahmin*," who was forced to appropriate the colonial will in order to survive and protect his nation.³⁸ "History shows that this was not the case," Yadav retorted, for not only did the *brahmins* "inherit the legacy of pre-modern India," but they were "the

³⁶Ibid., 2.

³⁷Ibid., 17.

³⁸See Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: The Loss and Discovery of Self under Colonialism*. Oxford. Delhi, 1983, 107.

greatest beneficiaries of the *raj*," and their self-conscious imitation of the West assured them political and cultural leadership.³⁹

The fruits of independence meant that the *bhardraloka* inherited political power. *Brahmins* are the head of society, and their call for national identity turned out, after all of their dissembling to the contrary, to be all along the reassertion of the Vedic order in which the *sudras* and Dalits were its feet. Now what is required, according to Yadav, is not more blaming of the removed colonists, more "psychopathology of victimized self-hood," but to return the critical gaze on the old order of Brahminical society itself.⁴⁰

What matters in the Indian postcolonialist discourse is national identity, not social justice. The immense rurality of India, the poor orient, and the subaltern remains as voiceless as ever. It is not surprising that the neo-Vedantic postcolonialis(s) now demand a return to the old Brahminical social order, making India a Hindu nation. And it is no small irony that the poor millions see more good in modernity, the Enlightenment type of modernity, which at least afforded them the right to political self-representation in postcolonial India. They can now have a tryst with their own destinies.⁴¹

Alarmed with the political ramifications of Indian nationalism, criticism should now be directed inward; "it is time to recognize that the enemy is within India herself,"⁴² so that social justice and not national identity becomes the order of the day.

If Orientalism means production of knowledge as an instrument of power, then it was invented by the Sanskrit discourse. There certainly is an oriental Orientalism, a precolonial colonialism, and this too is as systematically oppressive as any. Did not Manu and Shamkaracharya say that the hands and throats of the untouchable are to be cut if they cite the scripture?...The postcolonial discourse

³⁹Ibid., 23.

⁴⁰Ibid., 3.

⁴¹Ibid., 4.

⁴²Ibid., 24

has to return home. It has to be a discourse about authentic identity, not the mispredicated one.⁴³

An authentic sense of identity here does not dismiss difference, but instead decries the predilection of the Brahminical tradition to identify the *sanantana dharma* with caste society, and then disown the results of that identification with "the politics of *karmayoga*."⁴⁴

The Antisocial Essentialism of Indian Buddhists

Madhyamika emerged as a result of events which took place inside the Buddhist tradition. It has been interpreted as a response to the appearance of metaphysical theories propounded by various Buddhist schools wrestling with such notions as causation, movement, time, personhood and the relationship between the world, *nirvana* and *Tathagata*. Nagarjuna, the great logician and founder of the school, is said to have gone to the bottom of the ocean to rescue the *Prajnaparamita* texts from the serpents dwelling there, and thereafter devoted himself to saving the great doctrine of *pratityasamuttpada* from ontological corruption.⁴⁵ Yadav believed that, by emphasizing the relativity of all causes and conditions, Buddhism over time became obsessed with the ontology of difference, an ontology that reified the existence and ontically singular natures of *samsara* and *nirvana*. This process did not merely have intellectual implications, but as with all ontological conundrums, wreaked social confusion as well. The difference between *samsara* and *nirvana* justified the difference between a Buddhist's search for enlightenment and social responsibilities, the demands of the latter being sacrificed to the urgency of the former. The "middle way" is not only non-commitment to all ontological claims, including ones about *Tathagata*, and the conceptual means (*prapanca*) used to establish them, but also a course between the

⁴³Ibid..

⁴⁴Ibid., 20.

⁴⁵David J. Kalupahana has long insisted that Nagarjuna's whole work can be considered to be a commentary on the Buddha's discourse to Kaccayana, and a systematic logical attempt to eradicate the very kinds of metaphysical questions the Buddha thought hindrances to practice: see *A History of Buddhist Philosophy: Continuities and Discontinuities*. University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 1992, 161.

essentialism of caste society and the essentialism that justified social separatism.

Nagarjuna's *Mulamadhyamikakarika* is a prolonged argument against the doctrines of the Sarvastivada and Sautrantika schools, with special emphasis on the former's doctrine of substance (*dravya*). Specifically, the Sarvastivada philosopher Dharmatrata felt the need to account for the continuity of things given the Sautrantika principle of "momentatiness" (*ksanikavada*). If *dharmas* could only be said to exist for a mere moment each, then how should we account for the stability of objects, the continuity of persons and their *karma* or even the semantic senses of sentences through the passage of time? Dharmatrata's answer was that, while the phenomenal being (*bhava*) of a thing changes constantly, all *dharmas* have an "intrinsic nature" (*svabhava*) that exists in all three times, the past, present and future, and this intrinsic nature was also thought to be the foundation of all causality, the central principle and concern of Indian Buddhist philosophy.⁴⁶ Nagarjuna's *Karika* responded to the metaphysical tensions between these schools with *sunyavada*, which was in many respects a non-substantialist theory of causality, or better, a non-theoretical acknowledgement of the causal dependence of all phenomena.⁴⁷

⁴⁶See Kalupahana, 162.

⁴⁷Specifically, the four limbs of the *catuskoti* as employed in Nagarjuna's major work are meant to apply the attack on causality to all the issues of contemporary Buddhist philosophy, as well as Jain and skeptical thought. The first limb refutes the *satkaryavada* of Sarvastivada, the second attacks the *asatkaryavada* of the Sautrantikas, the third assails the advocacy of both the *satkaryavada* and *asatkaryavada* in the attempted Jaina synthesis, and the fourth denies the adherence to neither view, argued for by the Lokayata: see A.L. Herman, *An Introduction to Buddhist Thought: A Philosophic History of Indian Buddhism*. University Press of America, Lanham, 1983, 283-86. These refutations are leveled without a view towards establishing another position by implication; hence the labeling of Nagarjuna as a *vada-vitandika*, even by fellow Buddhists, and hence the name of the school, *sunyavada*, which literally means "theoretical value of zero," or simply, "no theory." The fact however that Nagarjuna's *Karika* was meant to be a comprehensive destruction of the causal theories of metaphysics, and the *Vigrahavyavartani* similarly a destruction of all causal theories of epistemology, is one of the reasons for Siderits' objection to the notion that Cartesian brands of epistemology existed within

There is a special reason, on Yadav's view, that causality was so central to the project of Nagarjuna and Candrakirti. In the Indian tradition, all ontologies, whether they were extrapolated in terms of identity or difference, were built upon the foundation of making theoretical inquiries into causality. *Pramanaprimeyasastra* consisted in asking what things were and how one can know them to be so. But more than this, to ask what a thing is in Indian philosophy is to ask where it came from, how it came about, just as inquiring into the nature of knowledge means asking questions about how one's awareness is brought about and through what means certainty about each awareness results. This fundamental connection of the questions of Being and causality in Indian thought has deep-seated religious roots, for even the *Nasadiya* hymn of the *Rigveda* (x, 129) fused, even with all of its skeptical texture, the issues of how the world came to be and who knows how the world came to be. And the creation story of the *Brihadaranyakopanisad* carried this logic a step further, witnessing that the world owed its existence to *brahman's* urge to have his own identity reflected in the world's plurality, to create all Being merely to be able to look at it and say, "this am I." The philosophical and the religious meet at the inevitable dependence of the desire for ontological knowledge on the compulsion to affirm one's own existence.⁴⁸

This means that to ask about Being is to ask about causality, and to ask about causality is to ask about where I came from and where I am

the Indian tradition, and for mine to Yadav's Cartesian representation of the Naiyayikas (see *Vigrahavyavartani* xxxii-lvi..

⁴⁸See Yadav, "Methodic Deconstruction," 135. One of the pervasive desires among the last twenty years worth of foremost commentators on Indian thought in the English literature has been to separate the theoretical sophistication of Indian philosophical methods from the religious commitments that each *darsana* makes to a particular religious tradition. Yadav thought that such a separation was impossible, for philosophy in the Indian context, for the reasons cited, has such deep roots in the scriptural foundations of both the Vedic and Buddhist traditions (see "Methodic Deconstruction," 134-43, 154-55). He would certainly have added to this view the suspicion that the attempt to separate philosophical and religious ideas in the Indian context is also symptomatic of the conflicts in social ideals that these traditions have fostered or evaded. This suspicion is precisely what makes Yadav's emphasis on the social aspects of Buddhist thought a significant contribution to contemporary scholarship, as the social dimensions of philosophical theorizing are written into the very texts of the Sanskrit tradition themselves, and cannot be lost sight of.

going. Hence Yadav's contention that philosophy is undertaken for "atmological" or "egological reasons;" "to mediate an immediate truth and to reiterate identity through ontological questions. I must ask 'What is Being?' because I cannot stop asking 'Who am I?'"⁴⁹ And this is precisely where the Buddhist philosophers, according to Yadav's interpretation of Nagarjuna, have gone astray. Buddhism was conceived by Gautama Siddhartha precisely as a means of extinguishing (*nirvana*) the untenable notion of selfhood and the anxious and desirous roots from which that notion arises and for which it is constructed. The Sautrantikas and Sarvastivadins have committed the grave error of continencing the attachment to selfhood, indeed legitimating it as consistent with Buddhist discourse, by formulating philosophical systems that reified substances, persons, and even *nirvana* and *Tathagata* themselves.⁵⁰ Nagarjuna and Candrakirti take upon themselves the task of uncovering this infectious ontological disease that has covertly found its way into a tradition that was based on a flat rejection of ontology.

Methodic deconstruction...discerns the "I" as an empty term, a signifier without any referent. No "I," no "this," no subject, no object. So too is the case with "*Tathagata*" and "*dharmā*," if they are used as terms in propositional assertions. Deconstruction draws attention to the mutuality of *ego* and *cogito*, being in the world and doing. In a chapter in his *Prasannapada*, entitled "Examination of the Noble Truths," Candrakirti faces the accusations squarely, raising fundamental issues. Must Buddhism be bound to things about which one can say either that they exist or do not? Should not

⁴⁹Yadav, "Methodic Deconstruction," 139.

⁵⁰In this sense, Yadav can certainly be taken as aligned with the notion of "critical Buddhism," as defined by Hakamaya Noriaki and Matumoto Shiro, which struggles against "substance doctrines" (*dhatuvada*) within the tradition. This conflict is thoroughly explored from all different perspectives in *Pruning the Bodhi Tree: The Storm over Critical Buddhism*. Jamie Hubbard and Paul L. Swanson, eds., University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 1997. But Yadav's alignment with critical Buddhism would have to be qualified by his general rejection of the logical tradition of Dignaga and Dharmakirti based on Candrakirti. Even some of Yadav's former students had more sympathy with the Yogacara-Sautrantika tradition; see Dan Lusthaus' "Critical Buddhism and Returning to the Sources." in *Pruning the Bodhi Tree*. 30-55.

Buddhism, in fidelity to *Tathagata*, liberate itself from the status quo that either/or logic entails? What happened to the claim that existence is function, that to exist is to change, and that knowledge is born out of emancipatory praxis? Should the Madhyamika be accused of stealing the Buddha from Buddhists merely because he shows how the metaphysical independence of *Tathagata* is no more than a cover for the possessive anxiety of the Buddhists themselves?⁵¹

And so Nagarjuna sets to work on the whole table of Abhidharma categories; *skandhas*, *dhatus*, *karma-karaka*, *Tathagata*, *nirvana*, the Noble Truths and above all *svabhava* are emptied of theoretical plausibility by the *catuskoti*. Then, in order to bury the tools with which metaphysical systems are built, he writes the *Vigrahavyavartani* to show that all the putative "means of knowledge" (*pramana-s*) as theoretically explicated by the Naiyayikas could be shown to be either argumentatively circular, vacuous, or leading to infinite regress.⁵² Five hundred years later, his commentator Candrakirti takes up arms against the Yogacara-Sautrantikas for attempting to improve on Hindu logic, as well as against the rival Madhyamika school of Svatantra, whose most prominent exponent was Bhavaviveka. Bhavaviveka had made the case that, while not true in the "ultimate" sense (*paramarthatasya*), the agent-action, subject-predicate assumptions that abound in our common language made the most conventional sense as an explanatory model of the structure of the world.⁵³

⁵¹Yadav, "Methodic Deconstruction," 132-3.

⁵²It should be noted that Nagarjuna forgoes the adoption not only of the assumptions of Hindu logic, as Yadav emphasizes, in his *Vigrahavyavartani*, but also its method. This is witnessed in this work by his "trilemmic" refutation procedure as well as his insistence that he has no "thesis" (*pratijna*). Once again, this calls into question how seriously we can take the claim Yadav makes that Nagarjuna deconstructs ontology by using the rules of ontology, for the tetralemmic and trilemmic structures of *prasanga* are clearly his own, and not taken from another system.

⁵³See his *Prajnapradipa*, 1:3. Once again, Siderits has recently advocated the case of Bhavaviveka against the attacks leveled by Candrakirti, which Yadav goes into in some detail but which are merely rehearsed here. Siderits wrote: "Where Candrakirti merely seeks to show how the opponent's views lead him, through the exercise of philosophical rationality, to unacceptable consequences, Bhavaviveka takes the further step of trying to bring out the grain of (conventional) truth in the

This would mean that categories like *Tathagata*, *nirvana* and *samsara* would be just as legitimate candidates as any for inclusion in causal explanatory models of reality; even if they were conventional only, these kinds of models would allow us to use the concepts of *Tathagata*, *nirvana* and *samsara* as reified subjects and predicates in propositional assertions for the benefit of the learning masses. Candrakirti will have none of it. Faithful to his master, who had devoted so much time to the "deconstruction" of these categories as referential terms in causal relationship with one another,⁵⁴ Candrakirti devotes himself to the Prasangika principle that there are no explanatory models, no theoretical formulations that a Buddhist will endure; there are only either empty views or the acknowledgement that all views are empty.⁵⁵ In his counterattack, Candrakirti critically examines sentences such as "*Tathagata* speaks the *dharma*" and "*Tathagata* exists" and concludes that these most basic forms attributing agency are tautological, for they only predicate agency to a being who by definition possesses the capacity to act. These sentences reduce, according to Candrakirti to "the speaking *Tathagata* speaks the *dharma*" and "The existing *Tathagata* exists" where all action verbs are only possible if adjectival capacities are assumed of the subject.⁵⁶ Even our simplest sentences can metaphysically reify their grammatical parts. Candrakirti believes that we must remain vigilant about such claims, for as Yadav says, "the shift from the grammatical to the logical is made in the interests of an ontological stance."⁵⁷

opponent's metaphysical views. This then paves the way for the opponent's ultimate acceptance of the final result—that there is no ultimate fact of the matter concerning the relation of cause and effect" ("Matilal on Nagarjuna," 85).

⁵⁴See the *Mulamadhymikakarika*, xxv: 1-24.

⁵⁵This reaction by Candrakirti has been seen by some scholars as odd, especially since he seems to endorse the conventional account of the Nyaya *pramana*-s against Dignang's revised version: see *Prasannapada*, 20:2-4.

⁵⁶ See Yadav, "Methodic Deconstruction," 157-160. Yadav relies here on Candrakirti's text as well as on V. Suba Rao's *The Philosophy of the Sentence and its Parts*. Munshiram Manoharial, New Delhi, 1969. This reduction is obscure and not very compelling, but Yadav finds these objections definitive.

⁵⁷"Methodic Deconstruction," 158.

To allow ontology into Buddhism is to corrupt the mission of the *bodhisattva*. Nagarjuna had enunciated in the *Karika* that the Buddha had never preached anything to anyone at any place anytime,⁵⁸ and that there were no boundaries between *nirvana* and *samsara*.⁵⁹ This does not only mean that there should be no metaphysical dualisms constructed through the use of Buddhist terminology, or any terminology, but also, as Yadav puts it, the Buddha cannot be separated from the very worldly concerns of the Buddhists.

What then does "*Tathagata*" signify? If it does not refer to the agent of "speaks," then whose words did the people hear in Shravasti? Who spoke the *dharma*, a ghost or a real person born of Shuddhodana and Maya? Does not Candrakirti steal *Tathagata* from the Buddhists? The questions have an ontic slant, implying the belief that if *Tathagata* was not there to speak then the people could not have heard a word (of) the *dharma* at all. Candrakirti responds to the questions in light of his stance on ontology...The panic of identity seeks shelter in decisive transcendence...The desire for religious certainty gives itself a spatial anchorage, incarnating itself in the claim that "*Tathagata* is over there and speaks the *dharma* for us." This assertion implies that *Tathagata* is over there, the listeners here, and that a distance prevails between the speaker and the listeners. Hence the duality between the Buddha and the Buddhists for egological reasons...It projects *Tathagata* as an "other" in space, ascribes ontological independence to the other, clings to the words that it itself has ascribed to the other and gives the words the power to define the true and the false...There is no point in stealing the referent of "*Tathagata*," of Buddha from the Buddhist. There indeed is no such referent, no Buddha apart from the Buddhists...It is not that there are people who are Buddhists by virtue of hearing the words of *Tathagata*. The opposite is the case. It is because there are people who wish to establish their identity by thinking in categories and speaking the language that they do, that there is an ontic *Tathagata* who speaks about the things he does, in the language he

⁵⁸ *Mulamadhyamikakarika*, xxv; 25.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, xxv, 19-20.

does and in the place that he does. The underworld is older than the world, the listeners prior to the speaker.⁶⁰

It is by tracing the ontological compulsions of human beings to their psychological desire to affirm their own identity, even if as here this is attempted through the difference posited between *Tathagata* and the world, that the *bodhisattva* justifies his return. "His mission is to "discern the mutual dependence of the *ego* and the *cogito*, of *eros* and *logos*, of 'I' and 'other.'"⁶¹ "His aim is to return transcendence to the everyday world, the referents to the self-referential ego, and the ontology of being and non-being to the anxiety of living and dying."⁶² To use language in Buddhism is not to make *nirvana* into an object of practice, *Tathagata* into a being who achieved enlightenment and then left the world behind, and Buddhism into a discipline that rejects the affairs of suffering beings. "That would dissolve the worldliness of *Tathagata* in metaphysical silence, the sociality of truth in institutional secrecy, salvation in elite mysticism. It would be the Vedantization of Mahayana."⁶³ On the contrary, to use language in Buddhism is to always take one's place within the world, within tradition, history, social relationship, and the radical contingencies of human life. The *bodhisattva*'s task is to "deconstruct ontology" within the world, and this task is the "middle way" (*madhyama-pratipad*).

Beyond Identity and Difference: Buddhism and Society

The dilemma of the Prasanga Buddhist as a *vada-vitandika* is for Yadav risky, but in the end not really a dilemma at all, but an opportunity to transcend the social implications of ideological essentialism, which has taken so many different forms in Indian ontologies of identity and difference.

Candrakirti...has no language of his own, no methodological independence, no epistemology or syllogistic logic and no center. Nor has he any ontological commitments. He gives no privilege to identity or difference, universal or particular, being or nothingness,

⁶⁰"Methodic Deconstruction," 160-61.

⁶¹Ibid., 155.

⁶²Ibid., 155-6.

⁶³Ibid., 162.

self or no-self, eternity or time. He has no alternative set of assumptions, separate criteria of truth and falsity, or standard of criticism alien to the logocentric circle.⁶⁴

Hindus and Buddhists united in spurning this approach; Vasubandhu and Dignaga and Dharmakirti joined hands with Vatsyayana, Kumarila and Udayana in rejecting this method, which is no-method, this stance, which is no-stance. But we must remember, Yadav warns, that they were the champions of ontologies of identity and difference, epistemologies of privilege and elitism, socio-political hierarchy and escapist, irresponsible reclusivism. In this philosophical and social environment, we must appreciate that a rejection of metaphysical alternatives offers new social possibilities.

Deconstruction is an argument for staying in the middle. It takes a stance against the social implications of either/or logic, which is either that one stays in society and accepts its hierarchical structure or finds solace in a metasocial *nirvana*. Consistent with the middle way, the *bodhisattvas* do neither. They do not move into the mountains to save their individual conscience, and in the world they demand social equality on religious grounds. There is no curtain between *nirvana* and *samsara*, between *Tathagata* and the people...*Tathagata* keeps on wandering in a multitude of linguistic fields, knowing well that people cannot transcend their language. No meta-language or linguistic hegemony, no silence in a worldless emptiness, only the dispersal of *Tathagata* in a plurality of texts and tongues. There is a radical sociality between *Tathagata* and the people.⁶⁵

This is Yadav's social vision of Prasangika Madhyamika, where criticism goes hand in hand with social belonging, where the Buddha and *nirvana* belong to the people and *samsara*.

Such is methodic deconstruction. It dissolves questions about beginnings and ends, and lets people face *Tathagata* in the middle of their world. Being and Nothingness give in to becoming, God to the

⁶⁴Yadav, "Methodic Deconstruction," 147-8.

⁶⁵Ibid., 162-3.

emancipatory possibility of man. Deconstruction implies courage and hope. People cannot accept death and destruction as their destiny, neither can they harbor illusions about a pure land where the city of *nirvana* is located and where there is a total absence of suffering. There is no such thing as a pure land in the land of human beings... "Tathagata" signifies no more than the inevitability of effort and the risk of faith. The world keeps on dying in spite of *bodhisattvas*, just as *bodhisattvas* keep on returning to the world.⁶⁶

There are many questions that could be asked of Yadav's vision. His Cartesian representation of Nyaya, which has been critiqued in the notes of this paper is one point of departure. Another could be his accusation that the Neo-Vedantins were traditional defenders of caste society, for the early representatives of this tradition in the nineteenth century claimed that caste distinctions had no Vedic foundations, and the twentieth century members of the Independence Movement abolished caste in their first Indian Constitution.⁶⁷ In terms of its larger framework, while Ambhedkar's idealization of Indian Buddhism as a social justice movement can be seen to override Murti's interpretation of the same as "absolutism" in Yadav's work, there are some obvious European premises there as well. Despite his repeated commitment to "immanent criticism" and "reflection in terms of Sanskrit categories of thought," Yadav's vocabulary abounds with post-modern neologisms. "Logocentric," "deconstruction," "embedded *cogito*" and many other expressions betray the recent trend in Western scholarship, found among other places in David Loy, Harold Coward and Glen Martin, to see strong affinities between classical Indian and contemporary Continental thought. The ever-present suspicion in Yadav's work that the desire for philosophical knowledge is based on a will to political and social power seems to be a deeply Nietzschean and Foucaultian assumption. The notion that a particular ontological doctrine, such as realism or idealism necessarily leads to a philosophy of one type or another of social

⁶⁶Ibid., 163.

⁶⁷Still, even accepting these facts, the nationalism of the Independence leaders, the clashes between Gandhi and Ambhedkar over creating separate congressional electorates for untouchables and the acknowledgement of the legal status of Scheduled and Backward Castes through aid programs in the Constitution compromise the integrity of this objection (see Larson, 185-206, 214-26).

domination was not merely believed by Yadav to be a fact of Indian philosophical history, but was an inevitable result of doing philosophy as such. To a certain extent then, any overall assessment of Yadav's work depends in part on what sorts of sympathies or disagreements one may have with these more contemporary European traditions of scholarship and thought.

Still, what the essays of Bibhuti Yadav bring to contemporary scholarship is a call to recognize that, within the Sanskrit philosophical heritage, powerful social concerns are inlaid into the intellectual sophistication of ontological and epistemological argument. Furthermore, these concerns are not only paramount in the different schools of Hindu thought, but also within the Buddhist camp, and they are at the forefront of the confrontations between these traditions. Further disclosure and examination of these issues and confrontations in the history of Indian thought will certainly miss Professor Yadav's voice, but they will just as certainly benefit from what his work and life offered.