

NOTES

- ¹ 'tājanyatve sati tājanyajanako vyāpārah', *Tarkasaṃgraha of Annambhaṭṭa: With the Author's Own Dipikā and Govardhana's Nyāya-Bodhinī*, Y. V. Athalye (ed.), (Bombay Sanskrit Series 55, 1963), p. 40.
- ² Vātsyāyana, in his *Nyāyabhāṣya*, observes that it is impossible to have knowledge of everything 'for the simple reason that the number of things to be known is endless'. G. Jha, *Gautama's Nyāya-sūtras With Vātsyāyana-Bhāṣya* (Poona: Oriental Book Agency, 1939), p. 467.
- ³ Cf. 'padārthajñānasya paramaṃ prayojanaṃ mokṣah', *Tarkasaṃgraha of Annambhaṭṭa*, p. 66. Annambhaṭṭa recognizes only seven categories and thinks that the sixteen categories of Gautama can be accommodated within his seven-fold division. See *Tarkasaṃgraha*, Section 81, and *Tarkadīpikā* thereon.
- ⁴ We shall see below that the *vyāpāravat* definition of *karāṇa* can lead the Naiyāyikas into trouble when it comes to designating a *karāṇa* of *anumiti*, because here the definition yields more than one *karāṇa* in the realm of a *pramā*.
- ⁵ Athalye, pp. 189–191, 280.
- ⁶ C. Bhattacharya, *The Elements of Indian Logic and Epistemology* (Calcutta: Modern Book Agency, 1962), pp. 22–23, 96.
- ⁷ A. B. Keith, *Indian Logic and Atomism: An Exposition of the Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika Systems* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1921), p. 201.
- ⁸ Athalye, p. 280.
- ⁹ Bhattacharya, pp. 22–23.
- ¹⁰ Keith, pp. 113–115, 201.
- ¹¹ Ingalls, on the other hand, calls Athalye's 'modern view' the 'modified theory' and ascribes it, in the context of inferential cognition, to Śivāditya, Raghunātha, and Annambhaṭṭa. (Daniel H. H. Ingalls, *Materials for the Study of Navya-Nyāya Logic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951), pp. 31–32.) He calls the other view, again in the context of inferential cognition, 'Gaṅgeśa's theory' and names Mathura, Visvanātha, and Bhāskara as its other subscribers. (Ingalls, pp. 30–32) According to Keith, however, the modern view was held by Gaṅgeśa and Bhāskara, among others. (Keith, pp. 115, 201) Ingalls takes note of Keith's position on Gaṅgeśa, but he believes that Keith is mistaken on this point. (Ingalls, p. 32, n. 16) It is indeed a good question as to which of the Naiyāyikas held which of the two views regarding the notion of a *karāṇa*. My concern here, however, is to clarify only Annambhaṭṭa's position on this issue.
- ¹² See *Tarkasaṃgraha*, Section 47, and *Tarkadīpikā* thereon.
- ¹³ Incidentally, Govardhana in his *Nyāya-Bodhinī*, which is a commentary on Annambhaṭṭa's *Tarkasaṃgraha* and *Tarkadīpikā*, explicitly accepts the *vyāpāravat* notion of *karāṇa* all along.
- ¹⁴ 'Parāmarśa is a complex cognition which arises from a combination of the knowledge of invariable concomitance (*vyāptijñāna*) and that of the presence of the reason (*hetu*) in the subject (*pakṣa*) — technically known as *pakṣasādharmatājñāna*.' S. Kuppaswami Sastri, *A Primer of Indian Logic* (Madras: The Kuppaswami Sastri Research Institute, 1961), p. 194.
- ¹⁵ *Tarkasaṃgraha of Annambhaṭṭa*, Section 47, p. 40.
- ¹⁶ 'vahnivyāpyadhūmavānāyāmiti śābdaparāmarśasasthale viśiṣṭaparāmarśasyāvāśyakatayā lāghavena sarvatra parāmarśasyaiva karanatvāt.' *Tarkasaṃgraha of Annambhaṭṭa*, p. 40.

THE NOTION OF *SVABHĀVA* IN THE THOUGHT OF CANDRAKĪRTI*

The idea of *svabhāva*, which literally means '[its] own (*sva*) existence or being or nature (*bhāva*)', is of central importance in Mādhyamika Buddhist philosophy. As such, it has been a subject of considerable discussion in recent scholarly literature.¹ It is closely related to the question of the two truths² and the problem of the existence and nature of the absolute³ in Mādhyamika thought. Since the Mādhyamika, like all Buddhist philosophy, is never without a soteriological purpose, the concept of *svabhāva* is also connected with the way in which the Buddhist path and its goal, enlightenment, are understood.⁴

In this paper, I propose to examine the notion of *svabhāva* as it occurs in two major works by Candrakīrti, who was one of the most important figures in the development of Mādhyamika thought. He represents the Prāsaṅgika sub-school of the Mādhyamika, as distinct from the Svātantrika sub-school. The two works are the *Prasannapadā*, a commentary on Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamakakārikās*, and the *Madhyamakāvātāra*, an independent work in the form of verses and autocommentary. The *Prasannapadā* is available both in Sanskrit and in Tibetan, whereas the Sanskrit of the *Madhyamakāvātāra* has been lost. The first of the two works to be written was the *Madhyamakāvātāra*, since Candrakīrti refers to it and quotes from it several times in the *Prasannapadā*.

How, then, does Candrakīrti define *svabhāva*? Perhaps the clearest statement occurs in the *Prasannapadā*: "Here that property which is invariable in a thing is called its *svabhāva*, because [that property] is not dependent on another. For, in common usage, heat is called the *svabhāva* of fire, because it is invariable in it. That same heat, when it is apprehended in water, is not *svabhāva*, because it is contingent, since it has arisen from other causal conditions."⁵ Thus 'intrinsic nature' or 'inherent nature' seems to be a good translation for *svabhāva*. The same applies to the term *svarūpa*, literally, '[its] own (*sva*) form or nature (*rūpa*)', which appears to be used as a synonym of *svabhāva*. In this paper, I will translate *svarūpa* as 'intrinsic nature' and leave *svabhāva* untranslated.

At this point, two technical problems need to be discussed. In Tibetan, *svabhāva* is normally translated by *rang bzhin* or *ngo bo nyid*, while *svarūpa* is normally translated by *rang gi ngo bo*. In a Mādhyamika context, there seems to be no difference in meaning between *rang bzhin* and *ngo bo nyid*. That is, the Tibetan translation appears to use the terms interchangeably, rather than to distinguish different senses of the Sanskrit word *svabhāva*. More troublesome is the fact that *rang bzhin* also translates *prakṛti*, 'original nature' or simply 'nature'. Clearly, the Tibetan translators and their Indian collaborators felt that *svabhāva* and *prakṛti* were synonymous. Also, in a passage from the *Prasannapadā* which will be translated in this paper, Candrakīrti lists *prakṛti* as one equivalent of *svabhāva*. Thus in translating from the *Madhyamakāvātāra*, where the original Sanskrit is not available, I have consistently translated *rang bzhin* as *svabhāva*.

We have seen how Candrakīrti defines *svabhāva*. What does he say about it? In the *Prasannapadā*, we read, "There being no *svabhāva*, because entities (*bhāva*) are dependently originated (*pratīyasamutpanna*) . . ." ⁶ Likewise, in the *Madhyamakāvātāra*, "Because simply the fact of being conditioned by such-and-such (*rkyen nyid 'di pa tsam zhig, idampratyayatāmātra*) is determined to be the meaning of dependent origination, *svabhāva* is not accepted for any entity." ⁷ According to the *Prasannapadā*, ordinary persons impute "a false *svabhāva*, [which] has a nature not at all perceived by the *āryas*" ⁸.

From these quotations, it would seem that Candrakīrti categorically denies that any *svabhāva*, or intrinsic nature, exists. Other passages, however, give a very different impression. In contrast to the last quotation from the *Prasannapadā*, the *Madhyamakāvātāra* states that "*svabhāva* does not in any way appear to those having misknowledge (*avidyā*)." ⁹ In the *Prasannapadā* itself, we read that, without verbal teaching, "the learner is not able to understand *svabhāva* as it really is" ¹⁰ In the *Madhyamakāvātāra*, Candrakīrti goes so far as to say, "Ultimate reality (*don dam pa, paramārtha*) for the Buddhas is *svabhāva* itself. That, moreover, because it is nondeceptive is the truth of ultimate reality. It must be known by each of them for himself (*so so rang gis rig par bya ba, pratyātmavedya*)." ¹¹

Thus it is apparent that Candrakīrti is using the term *svabhāva* in at least two different senses. To explore this further, we will examine in detail two longer passages, one from the *Madhyamakāvātāra* and one from the *Prasannapadā*. Both of these excerpts deal with the first two *kārikās* in

chapter fifteen of Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyakārikās*. The *Madhyamakāvātāra* passage begins by quoting them:

A305—11 The arising of *svabhāva* through causes and conditions is not right.

A *svabhāva* arisen from causes and conditions would be artificial (*kr̥taka*). (15—1)

But how will *svabhāva* be called artificial?

For *svabhāva* is non-contingent (*akṛtrima*) and without dependence on another. (15—2)

[Question:] But does there exist a *svabhāva* of the sort defined by the *ācārya* ¹² [Nāgārjuna] in the treatise [*Mūlamadhyamakārikās*], which is accepted by the *ācārya*?

A306—1 [Answer:] What is called dharma-ness (*chos nyid, dharmatā*) exists, regarding which the Blessed One said, "Whether Tathāgatas arise or do not arise, this dharma-ness of dharmas remains," etc.

[Question:] But what is this which is called dharma-ness?

[Answer:] The *svabhāva* of these [dharmas], such as the eye.

[Question:] But what is their *svabhāva*?

[Answer:] That which these have ¹³ which is non-contingent and without dependence on another; [it is their] intrinsic nature, which is to be comprehended by cognition free from the ophthalmia of misknowledge.

Who [would] ask whether that exists or not? If it did not exist, for what purpose would bodhisattvas cultivate the path of the perfections? Because [it is] in order to comprehend that dharma-ness [that] bodhisattvas undertake hundreds of difficult [actions].

After a quotation from the *Ratnamegha Sūtra*, ¹⁴ Candrakīrti resumes:

A307—9 [Objection:] Incredible! (*kye ma ma la, aho bata*) You do not accept even the slightest entity; [yet] suddenly (*glo bur du*) you accept a *svabhāva* which is non-contingent and without dependence on another. You are one who says mutually contradictory things!

[Answer:] You are one who does not understand the intention of the treatise. Its intention is this: The dependently arising

intrinsic nature¹⁵ of the eye, etc., is graspable by spiritually immature (*byis pa, bāla*) persons. If just this were the *svabhāva* of those [dharma]s, [then] since that *svabhāva* would be comprehended even by one who is in error, the religious life (*tshangs par spyod pa, brahmacarya*) would be pointless. But because just this is not *svabhāva*, therefore, in order to see that [*svabhāva*],¹⁶ the religious life is to the point.

A308–1 Moreover, I speak of non-contingency and non-dependence on another, with regard to the conventional truth (*kun rdzob kyi bden pa, saṃvṛtisatya*). Only that which spiritually immature people cannot see is suitable as *svabhāva*. By that very [fact], ultimate reality (*don dam pa, paramārtha*) is not an entity or a non-entity, because it is tranquil by [its] intrinsic nature (*rang bzhin gyis zhi ba nyid*).

Not only is this *svabhāva* accepted by the *ācārya* [Nāgārjuna], but he is able to make others accept this point as well.¹⁷ Therefore, it is also determined that this *svabhāva* is established for both [that is, Nāgārjuna and his opponent, once he has admitted the force of Nāgārjuna's arguments].

As for those who say that the *svabhāva* of fire is heat,¹⁸ and so on, they are totally wrong, because [heat] is contingent and dependent, due to [its] dependent origination. Nor is it right to say that, because of the existence [of heat], that [heat] exists without contingency and without dependence on another. [This is so] because the entity referred to by this [term] 'that [heat]' does not exist and because a thing (*don, artha*) of such a kind is taught as conventional reality (*kun rdzob tu, saṃvṛtyā*).

First, Candrakīrti asserts that Nāgārjuna does, indeed, accept that a *svabhāva* of the sort which he defines in MMK 15–2cd exists. This is not a trivial question, because to define a term is not necessarily to assert that there exists anything which satisfies the definition. One can define 'unicorn' without believing that unicorns exist. From the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikās* alone, it is far from clear that Nāgārjuna would be willing to use the term *svabhāva* in any positive way, as he occasionally does *tattva* and *dharmatā*. (Unlike Candrakīrti, Nāgārjuna does not explicitly equate *svabhāva* and *dharmatā*.) One possibly ambiguous case, MMK 7–16b, *śāntaṃ svabhāvataḥ*,

'tranquil by *svabhāva*', is glossed by Candrakīrti (B160–6) as *svabhāvavirahitam*, 'devoid of *svabhāva*'. This interpretation is supported by MMK 22–16, which states that the Tathāgata and the world have the same *svabhāva*, but immediately adds that the Tathāgata is without *svabhāva* and the world is without *svabhāva*. However, a study of all of Nāgārjuna's works, with which Candrakīrti was certainly familiar, might lead to a different conclusion about his views.

Candrakīrti goes on to relate the question of *svabhāva* to the idea of a path of spiritual practice. The concept of a path presupposes that one does not ordinarily perceive things as they really are, but that through practicing a path – in Buddhism, conduct, meditative concentration, and discernment (*śīla, samādhi, and prajñā*) – one can come to perceive reality. Thus ultimate reality can neither be what is ordinarily perceived, nor can it be finally unrealizable. Therefore, genuine *svabhāva*, real intrinsic nature, must exist; but it can be directly perceived only by those who are advanced on the path.

Candrakīrti apparently equates this genuine *svabhāva* with ultimate reality (*paramārtha*). Thus although *svabhāva* exists, it, like *paramārtha*, is neither an entity nor a non-entity. Implicitly, this is why it is not an object of ordinary perception, since we perceive the world in terms of entities or their absence. Also, Candrakīrti cautions that the definition of *svabhāva* as non-contingent and independent is conventional truth. Presumably, this is because *svabhāva*, as ultimate reality, is not susceptible of being defined by words and concepts.

Finally, Candrakīrti distinguishes *svabhāva* as ultimate reality from the conventional idea that, for example, heat is the *svabhāva* of fire. He rejects the latter on the grounds that heat originates dependently and therefore is contingent. He then refutes an objection which is not entirely clear. The opponent may mean that if heat is said to arise dependently, then it must exist. To exist, it must be a real entity and therefore not contingent. Candrakīrti's reply would then mean that the opponent makes a false assumption about what the Mādhyamika means by dependent origination. For the Mādhyamika, what is dependent can never be a real entity.

Many of these points are expanded and clarified in the *Prasannapadā*. It seems that, between writing the *Madhyamakāvataṛa* and writing the *Prasannapadā*, Candrakīrti thought further about the questions surrounding the notion of *svabhāva*. Our *Prasannapadā* passage begins immediately after *kārikā* 15–2ab. For the sake of context, the translation of 15–1, 2ab is repeated.

The arising of *svabhāva* through causes and conditions is not right.

A *svabhāva* arisen from causes and conditions would be artificial (*kṛtaka*). (15–1)

But how will *svabhāva* be called artificial? (15–2ab)

B260–4 “Both artificial and *svabhāva*.” because [these terms] are mutually incompatible, this [phrase] has an inconsistent sense. For here the etymology [is] that *svabhāva* is [something’s] own nature (*svo bhāvaḥ svabhāva*). Therefore, in common usage, a thing (*padārtha*) which is artificial, such as the heat of water . . . is never called *svabhāva*. But what is not artificial is *svabhāva*, for example, the heat of fire . . . For that is called *svabhāva* because of not being produced by contact (*samparka*) with other things.

Therefore, since the fixed worldly usage (*lokavyavahāra*) is thus that the non-artificial is *svabhāva*, we now say: Let it be recognized (*gr̥hyatām*) that heat, also, is not the *svabhāva* of fire, because of [its] artificiality. Here one apprehends that fire, which arises¹⁹ from the conjunction of a gem and fuel and the sun or from the friction of two sticks, etc., is purely (*eva*) dependent on causes and conditions; but heat does not occur apart from fire. Therefore, heat, too, is produced by causes and conditions, and therefore is artificial; and because of [its] being artificial, like the heat of water, it is clearly ascertained that [the heat of fire] is not [fire’s] *svabhāva*.

[Objection:] Isn’t it well known (*prasiddha*) to people, including cowherds and women, that the heat of fire is [its] *svabhāva*?

[Answer:] Indeed, did we say that it was not well known? Rather, we say this: This does not deserve (*arhati*) to be *svabhāva*, because it is destitute of the defining characteristic (*lakṣaṇa*) of *svabhāva*. But because of following the errors of misknowledge, the world accepts the whole class of entities (*bhāvajātam*), [which is] totally (*eva*) without *svabhāva*, as having *svabhāva*.

B261–1

For example, those with ophthalmia, due to the ophthalmia as causal condition, believe (*abhiniṣṭa*) that [illusory] hairs and

the like, [which are] purely without *svabhāva*, have *svabhāva*.²⁰ Likewise, the spiritually immature, due to their eye of understanding (*matinayana*) being impaired by the ophthalmia of misknowledge, believe that the whole class of entities, [which is] without *svabhāva*, has *svabhāva*. In accordance with their belief, they declare the defining characteristic. [For instance,] heat is the specific characteristic (*svalakṣaṇa*) of fire because it is just [fire’s] own defining characteristic (*svameva lakṣaṇam*), since it is not apprehended in anything other than that [fire] and thus is peculiar (*asādhāraṇa*) [to it].

And just because of the consensus (*prasiddhi*) of spiritually immature persons, this same conventional intrinsic nature (*sāmvṛtam svarūpam*) of these [entities] was laid down by the Blessed One in the Abhidharma. A generic property (*sādhāraṇam*), however, such as impermanence, is called a ‘general characteristic’ (*sāmānyalakṣaṇa*). But when it is a question of (*apekṣyate*) the vision of those having clear eyes of discernment (*prañā*), free from the ophthalmia of misknowledge, then it is stated very clearly by the *āryas*,²¹ who do not apprehend the *svabhāva* imagined in the opinions of spiritually immature people – as those without ophthalmia do not see the hairs imagined by those with ophthalmia – that this [imagined *svabhāva*] is not the *svabhāva* of entities.

After quotations from the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*, Candrakīrti’s commentary resumes:

B262–8 [Objection:] If, indeed, [you] say that such [things] as this heat of fire are not *svabhāva*²² – since they are due to causes and conditions and thus are artificial – in this case, what is the defining characteristic of the *svabhāva* of that [fire, etc.]? And what is that *svabhāva*? [This] ought to be stated.

[Answer:]

For *svabhāva* is non-contingent (*akṛtrima*) and without dependence on another. (15–2cd)

Here *svabhāva* is [something’s] own nature (*svo bhāvaḥ svabhāva*). Thus that which is some thing’s own character

B263-1 (*ātmīyaṃ rūpaṃ*) is called its *svabhāva*. And what is something's own? That which, for it, is not contingent.²³ But that which is contingent, such as the heat of water, is not its own.

And what is under someone's control (*yacca yasyāyattam*) is also his own, such as his own servants, his own wealth. But that of his which is under another's control is not his own, such as something temporarily borrowed, not subject to himself (*asvatantram*).

Thus what is contingent and what is dependent on another are not considered to be *svabhāva*. For just this reason, it is not correct that heat is fire's *svabhāva* – because it is dependent on causes and conditions, and because it is artificial, since it arises after having previously been non-existent (*pūrvamabhūtṅvā paścādutpādena*). And because this is so, therefore, just that is called [fire's] *svabhāva* which is:

B264-1 [1] [a] invariable (*avyabhicāri*) for fire even in the three times,

[b] its innate nature (*nijaṃ rūpaṃ*),

[c] non-contingent,

[d] which does not occur after having previously been non-existent; and

[2] which is not – like the heat of water, like the farther and nearer shore, or like long and short – dependent on causes and conditions.

[Question:] Does that intrinsic nature (*svarūpaṃ*) of fire, [which is] thus, exist?

[Answer:] It neither exists, nor does it not exist, by intrinsic nature (*na tadasti na cāpi nāsti svarūpataḥ*). Although [this is] so, nevertheless, in order to avoid frightening [our] hearers, we say that it exists, having imputed [it] as conventional reality (*samvṛtyā samāropya*).

As the Blessed One said,

Of the Dharma without syllables (*anakṣara*), what hearing [is there] and what teaching?

Because of imputation (*samāropād*), [that which is] without syllables is heard and also taught.

Here, also, [Nāgārjuna] will say:

'Empty' should not be said, nor should 'non-empty', Nor both, nor neither. But it is spoken of for the sake of conventional designation (*prajñāptyartham*). (MMK22-11)

[Question:] If, indeed, through imputation (*adhyāropato*) you say that that [intrinsic nature] exists, what is it like?

[Answer:] Just that which is called the dharma-ness of dharmas (*dharmāṅgāṃ dharmatā*) is their intrinsic nature (*tatsvarūpaṃ*).

[Question:] Then what is this dharma-ness of dharmas?

[Answer:] The *svabhāva* of dharmas.

[Question:] What is this *svabhāva*?

[Answer:] Original nature (*prakṛti*).

[Question:] But what is this original nature?

[Answer:] That which emptiness is (*yeyam śūnyatā*).

[Question:] What is this emptiness?

[Answer:] Lack of *svabhāva* (*naiḥsvābhāvyam*).

[Question:] What is this lack of *svabhāva*?

[Answer:] Thusness (*tathatā*).

[Question:] What is this thusness?

[Answer:] The being thus, changelessness, ever-abidingness (*tathābhāvo 'vikaritvam sadaiva sthāyitā*). For complete non-origination (*sarvaśa anutpāda*) itself – because of [its] not depending on another and²⁴ [its] being non-contingent – is called the *svabhāva* of such [things] as fire.

This is what has been said: The whole class of entities is apprehended through the power of the ophthalmia of mis-knowledge. With whatever nature [that class] becomes an object – by means of non-seeing – for the *āryas*, [who are] free from the ophthalmia of mis-knowledge, just that intrinsic nature is determined to be the *svabhāva* of these [entities].²⁵ Also, it should be understood that learned teachers (*ācārya*) have laid down this as the definition of that [*svabhāva*]:

For *svabhāva* is non-contingent and without dependence on another. (15-2cd)

And that *svabhāva* of entities, [which is] of the nature of non-origination, is – because of being a mere non-entity, since it is nothing at all – just non-*svabhāva*.²⁶ Therefore, it should be understood that there is no *svabhāva* of entities.²⁷

Candrakīrti begins by showing that there is a contradiction in the conventional view of *svabhāva*. In accepted usage, contingent qualities of a thing are not that thing's *svabhāva*. Heat is not the *svabhāva* of water because water may be either cold or hot and still be water. Fire, on the other hand, is invariably hot. Moreover, at least in ancient Indian physics, heat is not found apart from fire. Thus heat is commonly accepted to be the *svabhāva* of fire. But, Candrakīrti continues, if *svabhāva* must be non-contingent, heat cannot be *svabhāva*. Heat exists only when fire exists; and fire itself is contingent, dependent for its existence on causes and conditions. Thus heat, also, is contingent and hence is not *svabhāva*.

In fact, for the Mādhyamikas, the basic error in the conventional view is its assumption that the world is composed of entities possessing *svabhāva*, so that they exist by virtue of their own intrinsic nature. The Mādhyamikas see this as being incompatible with the fundamental fact that things are dependent on causes and conditions. On the purely conventional level, where the belief in *svabhāva* is taken for granted, it is surely better to say that the *svabhāva* of fire is heat, rather than wetness, since fire and heat are, at least, always found together. But when one is not speaking purely conventionally, it has to be denied that heat qualifies as *svabhāva*, due to the dependent, contingent nature of both heat and fire.

In a criticism of the Mādhyamika's critique of *svabhāva*, B. Bhattacharyya says, "But Nāgārjuna here seems to overlook the simple fact that warmth is an inseparable feature of fire . . . We find no logical difficulty in admitting that the nature of a thing is dependent on the conditions that bring the thing itself into being."²⁸ Nāgārjuna, as far as I know, does not use the example of heat and fire. On the other hand, as we have seen, Candrakīrti is well aware that heat is an inseparable feature of fire. In fact, he holds that, as long as the assumption that things have an intrinsic nature is not questioned, being an 'inseparable feature' is the proper criterion for *svabhāva*. The kind of nature which the Mādhyamikas reject is a nature which would be dependent on nothing else and thus would make the thing possessing it an independent entity. On the other hand, if heat, fire's supposed *svabhāva*, is, like fire,

dependent on other things as causes, then we cannot claim that fire exists through its own intrinsic nature. Thus, according to Candrakīrti, when a certain property and a certain thing are invariably apprehended together, that property is conventionally called the *svabhāva* of that thing. Upon examination, though, this conventional *svabhāva* fails to qualify as a true intrinsic nature.

Thus it may seem that Candrakīrti's final position is a complete and unequivocal denial that *svabhāva* exists. This proves, however, to be not quite the case. After carefully reiterating the definition of *svabhāva*, Candrakīrti says that "it neither exists, nor does it not exist, by intrinsic nature". This differs from his statement in the *Madhyamakāvatāra* that it exists, but it is reminiscent of his saying there that it is neither an entity nor a non-entity.

The last statement offers a clue for understanding what Candrakīrti means here. In the conventional view of the world, whatever exists is an entity possessing *svabhāva*. Thus to lack *svabhāva* is to be nonexistent. Moreover, existence and nonexistence are correlative concepts; the nonexistence of some things stands in contrast to the existence of others. What Candrakīrti is pointing out is that if there is no *svabhāva*, then there is no existence by means of *svabhāva*; and then relative to what are things lacking *svabhāva* nonexistent? Thus the whole conventional understanding of existence and nonexistence 'by intrinsic nature' is wrong.

One might feel uneasy at this point. Isn't the complete nonexistence of *svabhāva* what Candrakīrti wants to assert after all? The nonexistence of a particular entity, like a table, is relative to the existence of other entities. The nonexistence of *svabhāva* itself, though, cannot be relative to the existence of something else which possesses *svabhāva*!

To the Mādhyamikas, the attempt to understand the world in terms of entities possessing *svabhāva* fails fundamentally; and if one has thoroughly understood this, the question of the existence or non-existence of such entities, or their *svabhāva*, simply does not arise. Candrakīrti makes this clear in a passage in the *Madhyamakāvatāra*,²⁹ using his recurrent example of the illusory hairs seen by a person with ophthalmia. In this version of the example, a person with normal vision sees someone with ophthalmia trying to scrape illusory hairs out of a jar. The first person sees no hairs; and so he forms no idea relating to hairs, whether of entity or non-entity, hair or non-hair, etc. Only when the one suffering from ophthalmia explains that

he sees hairs in the jar, does the first person, in order to remove his misapprehension, tell him that the hairs do not exist. Thus the notion of the non-existence of *svabhāva* can arise only in relation to the illusion that *svabhāva* exists. The enlightened are without the illusion and have no need of its negation, but they negate it in order to teach the unenlightened. This negation, however, cannot be the ultimate truth because it is left behind as unnecessary after the illusion has been left behind.

Returning to the *Prasannapadā*, Candrakīrti continues, “. . . nevertheless, in order to avoid frightening [our] hearers, we say that [intrinsic nature, *svarūpa*] exists, having imputed [it] as conventional reality.” What is this imputed intrinsic nature then? Candrakīrti leads us, not without some humor, through a succession of Buddhist terms for ultimate reality, including both *svabhāva* and *naiḥsvābhāvyam*, lack of *svabhāva*! Finally, we are told that “complete non-origination itself . . . is called the *svabhāva* of such [things] as fire,” because it satisfies the criteria given in Nāgārjuna’s definition of *svabhāva*. We should note that a little earlier, Candrakīrti quoted a line from the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* which says, “Oh Mahāmati, I have said that all dharmas are unoriginated, meaning (*sandhāya*) nonorigination by *svabhāva*.”³⁰ Hence the fact that things do not arise through *svabhāva*, intrinsic nature, is their *svabhāva*.

Does this mean that the imputed *svabhāva* is the very non-existence of *svabhāva*? Apparently, this is just what it does mean, since Candrakīrti concludes by saying that the “*svabhāva* of entities . . . is . . . just non-*svabhāva*. Therefore, it should be understood that there is no *svabhāva* of entities.”

Here two apparent contradictions need to be discussed. The first is that between the statement in the *Madhyamakāvatāra* that *svabhāva* exists and the statement in the *Prasannapadā* that “it neither exists, nor does it not exist, by intrinsic nature”. In the *Prasannapadā*, Candrakīrti adds that, through imputation, it is said to exist. Thus we can reconcile the two statements if we suppose that, in the *Madhyamakāvatāra*, Candrakīrti is speaking on the level of imputation and conventional reality (*saṃvṛtyā samāropya*).

This explanation becomes more plausible if we recall that in the *Madhyamakāvatāra*, Candrakīrti lays great stress on the idea of the Buddhist path. This is true, in fact, not only of the passage translated but also of the work as a whole, which deals with the ten *bhūmis* of the bodhisattva and the

stage of Buddhahood. “In order to avoid frightening the hearer” into the nihilistic conclusion that the spiritual path is pointless, Candrakīrti says that a *svabhāva* of things exists. It is their ultimate reality, and the path is the means for comprehending it. According to the *Prasannapadā*, though, one eventually comes to realize – by means of the path – that the notion of existence through *svabhāva* and the corresponding notion of nonexistence are inapplicable to reality.

The second apparent contradiction occurs in the *Prasannapadā* when, after saying that *svabhāva* exists, Candrakīrti later says that there is no *svabhāva*. The first statement is explicitly made on the level of conventional truth; the second presumably is, since Candrakīrti does not want to assert either existence or non-existence as ultimate truth. Thus the contradiction cannot be resolved by appealing to different levels of truth.

After the first of the two statements, Candrakīrti quotes *kārikā* eleven of chapter twenty-two of the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikās*. In his commentary on that *kārikā*, in chapter twenty-two of the *Prasannapadā*, he explains that the Buddha has taught emptiness, non-emptiness, etc., on different occasions in accordance with the needs and capacities of various disciples. Similarly, we may suppose that the statement that *svabhāva* exists is designed here, as in the *Madhyamakāvatāra*, to dispel any tendency to nihilistic negation (*apavāda*) of things. The statement that there is no *svabhāva* is designed to counter the opposite tendency to make the fact that things lack *svabhāva* itself a thing.

It might be objected that, even if this is the intention behind the statements, the statements themselves are still contradictory. One might reply that this is not a problem if the intention is understood. In this case, however, I think that more than this can be said. The two statements are not, in fact, contradictory because “*svabhāva*” does not mean the same thing in both.

To begin with, it seems to be implicit in what Candrakīrti has said that the *svabhāva* of an entity is normally considered to be some positive quality, rather than the mere absence of a quality. Moreover, we have the explicit definition of *svabhāva* as non-contingent and without dependence on another. Thus the statement that *svabhāva* does not exist means that none of the qualities of things can be their *svabhāva*, since things, and therefore all their qualities, are contingent and dependent on causes and conditions.

Now Candrakīrti observes that the fact that things are without *svabhāva* is, itself, invariably true and thus non-contingent. The fact that things lack

svabhāva follows from their being dependent on causes and conditions; but it does not depend on the presence of some particular conditions, rather than others. Thus the fact of the absence of *svabhāva* satisfies the explicit part of the definition of *svabhāva*! However, it differs from such candidates for *svabhāva* as the heat of fire in two ways: (1) Being purely negative, it does not satisfy the implicit condition that *svabhāva* be a positive quality. (2) It is not a quality of things, but a fact about qualities of things, namely, that none of them are *svabhāva*.

Candrakīrti discusses the first of these two differences, but not the second. He says that the imputed *svabhāva* is non-*svabhāva* "because of being a mere non-entity, since it is nothing at all". An absence is a non-entity; thus although we may speak of the absence of *svabhāva* in things as being their *svabhāva*, there is still no entity which is their *svabhāva*. The phrase about *svabhāva*'s becoming an object "by means of non-seeing" probably alludes to this. When we see the absence of *svabhāva*, we do not see any entity.

On the second point, if we say that the *svabhāva* of things is that they have no *svabhāva*, this is analogous to the paradox of the liar. Examples of this paradox are the sentences 'I am lying'. 'This sentence is false', etc., which seem to be true if they are false and false if they are true. Likewise, if lack of *svabhāva* is the *svabhāva* of things, then it seems that things have *svabhāva* if they do not have it and *vice versa*.

The paradox can be resolved by observing that here the *svabhāva* which things lack is a positive quality which would satisfy the definition of *svabhāva*. The *svabhāva* which things are said to have is the very fact that none of their qualities satisfy the definition of *svabhāva*. Thus the *svabhāva* which is affirmed belongs to a higher level of abstraction than the *svabhāva* which is negated. Since what is being negated is not the same as what is being affirmed, there is no paradox.

To sum up, we can distinguish five levels³¹ in Candrakīrti's consideration of *svabhāva*:

(1) On the conventional level, the belief that reality is composed of entities possessing *svabhāva* is not questioned. On this level, it is correct to say that heat is the *svabhāva* of fire, since heat is invariably a property of fire.

(2) Next, it is denied that the conventional *svabhāva* is truly *svabhāva*. Things arise through dependence on causes and conditions. Therefore, they, and all their qualities, are contingent and dependent; but *svabhāva* is defined to be non-contingent and independent.

(3) The fact that things lack *svabhāva* is invariably true and not contingent on any particular circumstances. Therefore, that fact itself could be said to be their *svabhāva*.

(4) The *svabhāva* of level three is purely negative. Thus it is not the same as the *svabhāva* considered on level one; it is, in fact, the negation of it.

(5) Finally, even to say that *svabhāva* does not exist is to imply that either oneself or one's audience is not entirely free from the belief in *svabhāva*. Therefore, ultimate truth, truth as it is for those who are free from misknowledge, cannot be expressed by asserting either the existence or the nonexistence of *svabhāva*.

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NOTES

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¹ Bhattacharyya (1979); Mehta (1979); Sopa (1980); Sprung (1978); Sprung (1979); Wayman (1978); Wayman (1980).

² Matsumoto (1979); Sprung (1973); Streng (1971); Sweet (1979).

³ De Jong (1972a); De Jong (1972b); May (1978).

⁴ Ruegg (1971).

⁵ *Iha yo dharmo yaṃ padārtham na vyabharati sa tasya svabhāva iti vyapadīṣyate, aparapratibaddhatvāt. Agnerausṇyam hi loke tadavyabharitvātsvabhāva ityucyate. Tadevausṇyamapsūpalabhyamānam parapratiyayasambhūtatvātḥṛimatvānna svabhāva iti.* B241-7 through 9.

⁶ B87-1, 2.

⁷ A228-9 through 11.

⁸ B58-1, 2. The *āryas*, "Noble Ones," are spiritually advanced persons, specifically, the Buddhas, the bodhisattvas of the Mahāyāna (from the first *bhūmi* on), and the eight *āryapudgalas* of the Śrāvakayāna and Pratyekabuddhayāna. Here the important point about the *āryas* is that they all have direct experience of emptiness (*sūnyatā*), the absence of *svabhāva* in things. See chapter one of the *Madhyamakāvatāra*, verse five ff. All those who are not *āryas* are called *bāla*, "spiritually immature."

⁹ A107-15.

¹⁰ *Yathāvadavasthitam svabhāvaṃ prattipattā pratipattum na samartha iti.* B444-3, 4.

¹¹ A108-16 through 19. A108-18 has *so sor*. Read *so so* with D128-1-6, P124-2-2. Compare B493-11.

¹² *Ācārya* is a title meaning 'learned teacher'.

¹³ 'di dag ni (A306-6, D157-3-7, P151-2-5). I have read 'di dag gi.

- 14 Identified by Tsongkhapa, 504–1.
 15 Or 'intrinsic nature, dependent origination'. *Rang gi ngo bo rten cing 'brel bar 'byung ba* (A307–15, D157–4–7, P151–3–6).
 16 *De lta ba'i don du* (A307–19, P151–3–7). Derge has *de'i lta ba'i don du* (D158–1–1). Tsongkhapa has *de blta ba'i don du* (506–1).
 17 Or 'besides, he is able to make this point accepted'. See Tsongkhapa 506–4, 5.
 18 Read *me . . . tsha ba* with D158–1–3 and Tsongkhapa, 506–6.
 19 'byung ba'i (D44–3–5, P42–3–5); missing in B260–11.
 20 B261–2, 3 has *yathā hi taimirikāstimīrapratyayādasantameva keśādisvabhāvaṃ sasvabhāvatvenābhiniṣṭāh*. The Tibetan (D44–4–1, P42–4–1) appears to have *niḥsvabhāvameva keśādi svabhāvatvena*. I have read *niḥsvabhāvameva keśādi svabhāvatvena*, as both more intelligible and corresponding to the Sanskrit of the preceding sentence and the following clause.
 21 Omit *parahitavyāpārāḥ* (B261–9) with Tibetan (D44–4–4, 5; P42–4–5, 6).
 22 B262–8, 9 has *niḥsvabhāvam*, "without *svabhāva*." The Tibetan (D44–4–7, P42–5–1) has *rang bzhin ma yin no*. Read with Tibetan.
 23 *Yasya padārthasya yadātmīyaṃ rūpaṃ tattasya svabhāva iti vyapadīsyate*. *Kimca kasyātmīyaṃ yadyasyākṛtrimam*. B262–12 to 263–1.
 24 Read *ca* after *akṛtimatvāt* in B265–2, with Tibetan (*dang*, D45–2–3, P43–1–6).
 25 *Yenātmanā vīgatāvidyātimirāṇāmāryāṇāmadarśanayogena viśayatvamupayāti tadeva svarūpameṣāṃ svabhāva iti vyavasthāpyate*. B265–3 through 5.
 26 *Sa caiṣa bhāvanāmanutpādātmaḥ svabhāvo 'kimcittvenābhāvamātratvādasvabhāva eva* (B265–7, 8). The Tibetan translation (D45–2–5, P43–2–1) has *ngo bo med pa* for *asvabhāva*, apparently taking it as a *bahuvrīhi*.
 27 Tibetan, *loc. cit.*, has *dnogs po'i rang bzhin du yod pa ma yin no*, '[it] does not exist as the *svabhāva* of an entity'.
 28 Bhattacharyya (1979), pp. 341–342.
 29 A109–10 through A110–3.
 30 B262–6.
 31 Compare Sopa and Hopkins (1976), p. 122, three usages of *svabhāva*; Sprung (1979), p. 13, five points.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ABBREVIATIONS

- A *Madhyamakāvatāra of Candrakīrti*. Edited by Louis de la Vallée Poussin. Bibliotheca Buddhica IX. St. Pétersbourg: Académie Impériale des Sciences, 1912.
 B *Mūlamadhyamakakārikās of Nāgārjuna, with the Prasannapadā of Candrakīrti*. Louis de la Vallée Poussin (ed.). Bibliotheca Buddhica IV. St. Pétersbourg: Académie Impériale des Sciences, 1913. As emended in J. W. De Jong (1978), 'Textcritical Notes on the *Prasannapadā*', *Indo-Iranian Journal* 20: 25–59, 217–252.
 D *Sde Dge Tibetan Tripiṭaka Bstan Hgyur*. Vol. 7. K. Hayashima, J. Takasaki, Z. Yamaguchi, and Y. Ejima (eds.). Tokyo: Sekai Seiten Kanko Kyokai, 1978.
 P *The Tibetan Tripiṭaka, Peking Edition*. Vol. 98. D. T. Suzuki (ed.). Tokyo-Kyoto: Tibetan Tripiṭaka Research Institute, 1957.

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