Reconsideration on No-thesis View in Nāgārjuna's Hui Zheng Lun (Vigrahavyāvartanī)

The aim of this paper is to object the no-thesis view in Nāgārjuna's Vigrahavyāvartanī (henceforth VV; for the following commentaries, VVC) based on its Chinese version, Hui Zheng Lun.[1]

> yadi kācana pratijñā syāt tatra eṣa me bhaved doṣaḥ l
> nāsti ca mama pratijñā tasmān naivāsti me doṣaḥ l
>
> If there would be any statement, this would be my fault.
> But my statement is not [existent], therefore there is no fault [ascribed] to me.[2]

According to the Sanskrit text and English translations, it is commonly accepted by modern scholars that Nāgārjuna claims to have no statements at all in VV. They attempt to solve this ambiguous utterance by following the Tibetan commentary tradition in which Candrakīrti plays an influential and decisive role. However, if we fairly consider the Chinese version, Hui Zheng Lun translated by Vimokṣaprajñā-ṛṣi and Gautamaprajñā ruci in the mid 6th century, which has been for long neglected mainly by the western scholars, the debate that in which manner this obscure utterance is tenable is presumably a fake question. In the following sections, I would first present two problems against the interpretation by Jan Westerhoff who follows the Tibetan commentaries composed by Candrakīrti[3]; then I would bring up my own interpretation based on the Chinese translation, which in my point of view can support the argument that Nāgārjuna tacitly accepts and uses statements for arguing at the conventional level.

Two Problems

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[1] For the Chinese version *Hui Zheng Lun* (迴諍論), I resort to 《大正新脩大藏經》(No.32), the English translation of Giuseppe Tucci *Vigrahavyāvartanī by Nāgārjuna: Translation form the Chinese and Tibetan Text* in *Pre-Dinnaga Buddhist Texts on Logic from Chinese Sources* (1981), and the unfinished version by Yamaguchi Susumu published in 『密教文化』8-10, 12. As for the Sanskrit text and translations based on it, I resort to Yoshiyasu Yonezawa *Vigrahavyāvartanī: Sanskrit transliteration and Tibetan translation*, Jan Westerhoff *The Dispeller of Disputes* (2010), Kamaleswar Bhattacharya *The Dialectical Method of Nāgārjuna* (2005), and the Japanese version translated by Kajiyama Yūichi in《大乗仏典》,Vol.14 (1991). For some differences between the Chinese and the English version, I consult Miyamoto Keiichi 〈新校訂本漢訳『迴諍論』〉.

[2] For the Sanskrit text, see Yonezawa (2008: 270). Westerhoff translated this verse into "[i]f I had any thesis, that fault would apply to me. But I do not have any thesis, so there is indeed no fault for me." (2010:29) Claus Oetke, on the other hand, understood this crucial phrase *nāsti ca mama pratijñā* as "there is no assertion of mine" which he argues to be neuter and able to avoid the implication of the existence of svabhāva at the conventional level, which is the point I would like to emphasis later in this paper. See Oetke (2003: 456-458). Both Westerhoff and Oetke (and other scholars such as Bhattacharya) interpreted *mama* and *pratijñā* separately; however, it seems reasonable to me to translate the two word together as "my statement" without being disobedient to grammatical rules.

[3] Westerhoff's arguments, which I object here, are presented in his book *Nāgārjuna's Madhyamaka* (2009: 183-224)

With semantic approach, Jan Westerhoff distinguishes statements into “standard” ones with the assumption of linkage between word and an objective world, which exists independently from human conception, and “nonstandard” ones without it.[4] For Nāgārjuna’s opponent, i.e. the Naiyāyikas, who clearly states in VV9-10 that all *dharmas* exist on their own substance (*svabhāva*) and that any name is meaningful only when a substantial referent is attributed to it, Nāgārjuna’s statement that all dharmas are empty is either self-contradictory if regarded as standard or inefficacious if regarded as nonstandard. Since the statement itself is included among all dharmas, as Nāgārjuna confesses in VV21, it is therefore incompetent to negate the existence of the substance of all dharmas, just like we cannot cut down a tree without an existent axe[5].

According to Westerhoff, Nāgārjuna seems to be aware of this predicament and to admit that all his assertions must be interpreted with nonstandard semantics, which means that when Nāgārjuna claims to have no statements, he simply means that he does not have any thesis with ontological assumptions. It is indeed reasonable enough to consider Nāgārjuna’s statements as the nonstandard ones, in which no reference to an independently existing substance would be admissible. However, this interpretation helps Nāgārjuna neither in responding efficiently the objection raised by the opponent in VV3-4 nor in defending his crucial viewpoint that all dharmas are empty, just like a gun in film cannot be used to shoot the audience in the cinema[6]. If Nāgārjuna accepts that his statements are to be interpreted as nonstandard, which means he must first accept the presupposition that some statement can be committed with substantial mind-independent existence, this does not at all refute the objection proposed by the opponent, for it is exactly what the opponent is waiting for. As a matter of fact, the Tibetan commentaries, based on which Westerhoff constructs his semantic interpretation, would just lead to the conclusion that the whole passage of VV29 would function as nothing more than a supplement in which Nāgārjuna impotently disagree with the opponent on having falsely understood his statement as a “valid” one.

What also makes this semantic interpretation unsatisfactory is that Westerhoff attributes the distinction between standard and nonstandard statements to that between two kinds of pratijñā advanced by Candrakīrti. According to Westerhoff, Candrakīrti separates the statements which Nāgārjuna opposes from those Nāgārjuna considers to be unproblematic. The latter, as stated by Westerhoff, are *propositions*, while the former are *views*. He then further states that propositions, without metaphysical and ontological commitment, i.e. svabhāva, are used by Nāgārjuna, although this two-pratijñā theory is not explicitly presented in his treatises.

However, it is because Nāgārjuna does not seem at all to defend the possibility of the distinction of two kinds of pratijñā in VV that I hold a relatively conservative attitude toward this interpretation based on the Tibetan commentaries. Although Candrakīrti is

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[4] Westerhoff (2009: 191-193)

[5] “若此言語無自體者，唯有遮名不能遮法。譬如無火則不能燒，亦如無刀則不能割；又如無水則不能瀾” “For this reason it is impossible that it [i.e. the utterance] dispels the substance of all things. Why? This is because a non-existent fire cannot burn, a non-existent knife cannot cut, a non-existent water cannot moisten. In the same way, a non-existent assertion cannot negate the substance of all things.” Westerhoff (2010: 20)

[6] Although Westerhoff seems to notice the problem, he still adopts this distinction and ascribes Nāgārjuna’s statements to the non-standard ones, which appears to be contradictory to me. Westerhoff (2009: 192, 195-196)

undoubtedly considered a Mādhyamika, it is never an easy task for him to thoroughly understand someone who lives about four hundred years earlier than he does. Moreover, after Nāgārjuna, there are still Dignāga, Bhāviveka, and etc., who left great impact on the development of Buddhism, precede Candrakīrti.[7] It is possible to say that the reason—and probably the only one —why the Tibetan commentaries are reliable in interpreting Nāgārjuna is that they provide a relatively clear exegetical method which we have the access to. This, however, does not mean that the Tibetan commentaries are the *only* sources which can be helpful in understanding Nāgārjuna's viewpoint. Since the truthfulness of Candrakīrti's commentaries on Nāgārjuna is to some extent debatable, it should be fair enough to resort to Nāgārjuna's own works, even they are translated into other languages.

The Chinese Version: Hui Zheng Lun

Based on the Chinese version, there are two evidences that the no-thesis view is a misreading: first is that in VV 58-59 Nāgārjuna does positively refer his statement to *pratijñā* (宗), which does not differ from the one the Naiyāyikas stand for; the other is that the claim "I have no statements" is never stated throughout the whole treatise.

Positive Usage of Statement

Firstly, as a refutation against the opponent's argument in VV 9 that each name (nāman, 名) exists referentially with the substance, Nāgārjuna objects in VV 58 with the name "non-substance (asvabhāva, 無自性)" :

> If this name [e.g. non-substance, asvabhāva] does not exist, then does it have or not the substance?
> Whether the answer is positive or negative, your statement is invalid either way.
>
> If this name does exist, then does it have or not the substance?
> Whether the answer is positive or negative, your objection is incompetent either way.[8]

In this verse, Nāgārjuna does not rush stating his own viewpoint; instead, he refutes the rejection by pointing out the paradox raised by the opponent's statement. According to the opponent, all dharmas have names. However, if there *is* the name "non-substance," it would be inefficient for the opponent to argue that it is inadequate of Nāgārjuna to state "all dharmas are empty (asvabhāva)."[9] If, on the other hand, "non-substance" does *not* exist, the opponent would disaccord with his own statement that all dharmas have names. Besides, the existence of the name also makes itself a paradox, for it makes no sense that

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[7] Oetke harshly argues that the commentaries composed by Tibetan exegetes are not essential in understanding and interpreting the early doctrine of Madhyamaka, and that the assertion concerning the disowning of any statements with the assumption of an existent entity should only be supported in Prāsaṅgika sources. (2003: 458-459, 464)

[8] "若此名無者，則有亦是無；若言有言無，汝宗有二失。若此名有者，則無亦是有；若言無言有，汝諍有二失。"

[9] "以一切法皆有名故，當知諸法皆有自體。法有自體故不得言一切法空。"

a substantial existent thing could refer to a non-substantial existence. Nāgārjuna further clarifies in VVC 58 that his own statement is not the same case:

> If this name does not exist, [your] statement is inadequate; if it does exist, your objection is incompetent. My statement is not so. [Your statement that] objects [which exist substantially] have names, while objects [which does not exist substantially] does not, and therefore all dharmas have names does not correspond to mine.[10]

Furthermore in VV 59 Nāgārjuna claims that he does not assume the referential relation between names and the substance:

> As I said before, all dharmas are empty. This statement with which I proposed my viewpoint is also [empty]. Therefore I shall not commit any mistake.
>
> What does this verse mean? I have already said that all dharmas are empty and that names [are also] empty. You wrongly grasp the name "non-substance" [as referential], and therefore claim [that there cannot be the name "non-substance"]. If all dharmas lack substance, so do names. For I do not assert the [referential] substance of names, there is no mistake of the statement with which I proposed my exact same viewpoint.[11]

VV 59 is a further explication where Nāgārjuna refutes the objection raised in VV 9, where the opponent argues that the name "non-substance" is established only when there is the name "substance" with substantial referent. After pointing out the problems resulted from the assumption of referentiality, Nāgārjuna then defends his statement by clarifying that he does not assume the existence of substantial referents. According to Nāgārjuna, all dharmas, including names, emptiness, and non-substance, are all empty, which means that names and the substance need not be bound with each other. It is because the opponent persists in referential Realism that he wrongly accuses Nāgārjuna of being self-contradictory by using the name "non-substance" in his statement.

In all the passages stated above, it is evident that Nāgārjuna positively uses the term "statement" and refers it to his own, which indeed functions as an antithesis (which Nāgārjuna suggests to be valid) against the opponent's (which Nāgārjuna suggests to be fallacious for being paradox). The comparison must make sense only when the two statements are interpreted under same semantics. Since the statement proposed by the opponent must be "standard" one, it is unreasonable that we consider that of Nāgārjuna to be "non-standard." Although it is possible that Nāgārjuna sneakily regards his statement as non-standard based on his viewpoint that all dharmas are empty, this would only make him less competent to defend himself and refute the objection. Moreover, it is whether names have substantial referents that the debate here between Nāgārjuna and the opponent

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[10] "若此名無如是宗失，如其是有如是諍師；我宗不爾。有物有名無物無名，如是諸法有自體者，義不相應。"

[11] "如是我前說：『一切法皆空』。我義宗如是，則不得有過。此偈明何義？我前已說一切法空，亦說名空。汝取空名而有所說。若一切法皆無自體，名亦無體。我如是說義宗無過，我不說名有自體故。" Here I translate "空名" into "the name 'non-substance.'" Although the term empty can contain other meanings as well, as the opponent wrongly understands empty as non-existent, it should be reasonably considered non-substance in the context, since Nāgārjuna has already clarified that in VV 21-22.

concerns; we need not to apply the distinction of two statements to understand the viewpoints from each side.

Re-Examination on VV 29: Having No Thesis?

It is surprising yet important to note that Nāgārjuna does not at all deny that he has theses according to the Chinese version. In VV 29, based on which Westerhoff and many other scholars consider Nāgārjuna to refute the objection in an extreme way and form their interpretations in oder to make his viewpoint coherent, Nāgārjuna denies only two things: neither exists his statement(s) substantially nor is he responsible for *pratijñālakṣaṇa,* the deficiency of "the aspect of the statement," which was arbitrarily ascribed to Nāgārjuna by the opponent.

Let me summaries the objection in the context first, for the two denials function as the rejection against the criticism advanced by the opponent that the negation of svabhāva cannot be established as long as Nāgārjuna's statement is non-substantial. The criticism starts from VV 1 all the way to VV 4, and in VV 3 the example "do not make sound"[12] comes into play, which the opponent argues to be incoherent with Nāgārjuna's statement that all dharmas are not substantially existent, for there must be the sound produced by saying the very sentence "do not make sound." If, in the same manner, the negation of the existence of the substance is established, there must at least be the substantial existence of the statement. Based on this ontological assumption of negation, the opponent presumes in VV 4 that Nāgārjuna, in oder to save his crucial statement from being incompetent, would claim "my utterance (i.e. the statement) is capable of refuting the substance of all dharmas." In that case, this expedient would in the other way round make Nāgārjuna contradictory with his own viewpoint as the result of deficiency of pratijñālakṣaṇa.

Nāgārjuna does not reject the criticism in the extreme way by claiming that he has no theses at all; instead, he orderly clarifies that he does not have the pratijñālakṣaṇa, according to which the opponent accuses Nāgārjuna of being self-contradictory. As stated in VVC 29:

> If i have the statement [that my utterance can refute the substance of all dharmas] and its [problematic] aspect, I would commit the mistake as you said. Thus it is not I who has that statement. […] Thus where does the [problematic] aspect of the statement come from? I do not have the [problematic] aspect of the statement, how can you blame me? Thus, what you said, "you commit mistake because of having the [problematic] aspect of the statement," is not the case.[13]

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[12] Nāgārjuna denies that the example is advanced by him in VV 25: the example you mentioned "do not make a sound" is not [proposed by] me, for I do not negate that [future] sound with this sound. (汝言勿聲者，此非我譬喻，我非以此聲，能遮彼聲故)

[13] "若我有宗有宗相者，我則得汝向所說過。如是非我有宗。[...]如是宗相為於何處宗相可得？我無宗相，何得咎我。是故汝言：『汝有宗相得過咎（者）』，是義不然。"According to Chinese, it is possible that pratijñā and pratijñālakṣaṇa do not refer specifically to those advanced by the opponent, but to any statement and any aspect of statement, which means that Nāgārjuna could indeed deny that he has any thesis. However, since VV 29 is considered a response to the objection raised in VV 4, and the opponent does indicate which statement is Nāgārjuna here criticized for, unless we agree that Nāgārjuna keeps chasing red herrings throughout the whole treatise as his method, it seems more reasonable to interpret the two terms as restricted ones.

What exactly pratijñālakṣaṇa means is not clearly stated by both sides.[14] However, based on the debate here, it can be considered the element in deciding whether a statement is valid or not, resembling the three aspects of mark, *triarūpya*, used in Nyāyapraveśa. In other words, the objection proposed by the opponent is as a matter of fact grounded on the deficiency of the aspect of Nāgārjuna's statement. It must be noted that the statement that puts Nāgārjuna into trouble here is not his major one that all dharmas are empty; instead, it is the statement, "my utterance is capable of refuting the substance of all dharmas," presumed by the opponent as a possible response of Nāgārjuna to save his viewpoint that the problematic pratijñālakṣaṇa comes from. The statement "all dharmas are empty" is the doctrine of Nāgārjuna, and *that* statement, with the ontological assumption, that the very utterance can refute the substance of all dharmas is disobedient to the ground[15] where all Nāgārjuna's statements are based[16]. However, Nāgārjuna soundly clarifies that it is not he who has the (latter) statement, therefore neither is he responsible for the deficiency of the aspect of the statement, nor shall he commit the mistake of being contradictory with his own viewpoint.

In VV 29, Nāgārjuna further rejects that the opponent ascribes substantial existence to his statement:

> If my statement exists [substantially in order negate the substance of all dharmas], then I shall commit the mistake [of being contradictory]. [However,] there is nothing substantial in my statement, therefore I commit no mistake.[17]

The Chinese character "有" can mean both "exist" or "have," thus it is also possible to translate the first sentence into "if I have statement(s)." However, the word order of the verb and the object is then unnaturally inverted. Having interpreted as "if my statement exists," the verse not only makes sense, but also functions properly as a refutation against the opponent by clearly denying that his statement has substance. In this verse, there are three possible interpretation for the word pratijñā (宗) : one is the statement ascribed to Nāgārjuna by the opponent, two is the fundamental statement, and the last is all statements proposed by Nāgārjuna. The first does not make much sense since it is not *his* statement at all and there would be an unnecessary reiteration in the following

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[14] Westerhoff claims that pratijñālakṣaṇa means the "'specific character' of Nāgārjuna's system, namely the claim that everything is empty," and since it applies to all statements proposed by Nāgārjuna, he chooses to defend not just a single statement but all the others as well in VV 29. (2009:185, 195) This interpretation would lead to a unnecessary repetition, for it does not seem efficient for the opponent to object the utterance that all dharmas are empty separately as a statement and as a tenet. On the other hand, although Oetke does object the interpretation that the character refers to the presupposition of "the existence of entities endowed with a own nature," for he disagrees with the Tibetan commentaries which suggest the distinction of statements, his own viewpoint is not clearly stated. (2003: 465-468) The interpretation objected by Oetke can indeed make some sense in VV 29, but seems obscure in VV 4.

[15] The wording "ground" here does not mean the base with respect to foundationalism (or antifoundationalism), for Nāgārjuna opposes any ground presupposed in order to know the world rightly. See MMK (13: 9), and Lin Chen Kuo 龍樹《迴諍論》與基礎主義知識論的批判 (2006: 219-244)

[16] If we examine the fault ascribed to Nāgārjuna here from the standpoint of Nyāyapraveśa, the fault should be "being contradicted by one's own statement," *svavacanaviruddha.* Tachikawa Musashi (2005: 122, 141)

[17] "若我宗有者，我則是有過；我宗無物故，如是不得過。"

commentary.[18] It is most reasonable to interpret pratijñā as the fundamental one, If we consider the objection raised by the opponent in VV 4, where the substantial existence of the crucial statement that all dharmas are empty is the core of the debate. Although Nāgārjuna would certainly advocate that all his statements are empty, he states this viewpoint as a supplement in the following commentary:

> For all dharmas are ultimately quiescent and their primary nature are empty, [therefore] where do statements exist?[19]

However, if the fundamental statement and all the other statements proposed by Nāgārjuna do not exist, this refutation would just be as impotent as claiming to have no statements at all, since either way Nāgārjuna's statements are to be interpreted as non-standard. The key to understand how Nāgārjuna justifies himself lies in the two-truth theory stated in VVC 28. By mentioning the two-truth theory, according to Westerhoff, Nāgārjuna argues that the debate on the capability to negate of the utterances "all dharmas are empty" and "do not make sound" takes place only at the conventional level, for at the absolute level, everything is equally empty and no philosophical debates are to be conducted. Although I agree with this interpretation, I do not consider it the essential reason why Nāgārjuna inserts the two-truth theory here. Instead, to make clear that all dharmas are both conventionally and ultimately non-substantial is the purpose of inserting the two-truth theory.

The Two-Truth Theory and the Statement(s)

Two things must first be clarified: one is the function of words (whether verbalized or not), that the ultimate truth is expressible (only) through words[20]; the other is the limitation of words, which means since all we say never get beyond the realm of conventional level, it is impossible for anyone of us to prove that at the ultimate level there is the existence of something mind-independent merely by inference. This viewpoint is clearly stated with the example "there is no Devadatta in the house" in VVC 64:

> For example, there is as a matter of fact no Devadatta in the house. Someone asks: "Is there Devadatta [in the house]?" […] The utterance that [there is] no [Devadatta in the house] does not make Devadatta to be non-existent in that house, but make known [the fact] that the house is empty of Devadatta.

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[18] "若我宗有則有宗相；若我有宗有宗相者，我則得汝向所說過"

[19] "如是諸法實寂靜故、本性空故，何處有宗？"

[20] "[It is because I base myself] at the conventional level that [I] can state that all dharmas are empty. Without the conventional truth, [all] dharmas are inexpressible."（依世諦故能說一切諸法體空。若離世諦，法不可說。" The same standpoint is also stated in the commentary of Mūlamadhyamakakārikā 24: 10: "the ultimate truth is [understood] with words, which is considered conventional. Therefore, if [the Buddha does not base himself] at the conventional level, the ultimate truth is inexpressible."（第一義皆因言說。言說是世俗。是故若不依世俗。第一義則不可說。 [《大正藏》30]）Kajiyama even translated 世俗諦 directly into "語言習慣." (2008:105)

> In the same manner, if one claims that all dharmas have no substance, this utterance does not make all dharmas to be empty of the substance, but make known [the fact] that all dharmas are without substance.[21]

Although statements do not produce truth, this does not prevent them from *making* things *known*, which is considered to be the (basic) function of words. In other words, despite the emptiness of all dharmas, they still posses some function; and in the case of words (and statements), they function as a tool used for communicating and interchanging worldly information, and the truthfulness of words, as Kajiyama states, has nothing to do *directly* with the absolute reality.[22] It is exactly because of this very function that the ultimate truth can be attainable and taught by the Buddha, who has attained nirvāṇa.

The action "has attained" plays an decisive role regarding the limitation of words, I suggest, which means we can never *really* say something without experiencing it. For example, When one claims that Devadatta is not in the house, he must have not seen Devadatta at that particular moment in that particular place. Even to the Naiyāyikas, if one states that there is fire on the top of a mountain, the inference must also be based on his previous experience resembling the present one; and the statement must be proved correct only after the property fire is perceived; otherwise the statement remains meaningless to both the speaker and the hearer. The same thing applies to the ultimate truth. Although it is expressible/ describable and can be taught, we remain ignorant of the *essence* of the ultimate truth and do not attain liberation simply by "knowing it," for we, except the enlightened one(s), never experience it. For instance, although we have the word "death" and are able to define death medically, we never *truly* express anything about it and know nothing about it. We speculate what will be like when one is "experiencing death," whether one stays wandering in this world, whether one becomes invisible but still sees us, whether one can still think, etc., the answers for those can never be found, for it is impossible for anyone to experience death first and to be alive again to answer.

With the understanding about the function and the limitation of words, it is then clear how Nāgārjuna is able to use statement despite his standpoint that all dharmas are ultimately non-existent: Nāgārjuna does not attempt to *prove* that all dharmas are empty; instead, he just makes it known by us. It should be obvious that Nāgārjuna reveals the ultimate truth that all dharmas are empty as an Enlightened One, although we do not know how he attained and experienced it (through intuition[23], perhaps). Although Nāgārjuna

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[21] "譬如屋中實無天得。有人問言：『有天得不？』［...］答言無者語言，不能於彼屋中作天得無，但知屋中空無天得。如此若說一切諸法無自體者，此語不能作一切法無自體，但知諸法自體無體。" The translation from Kajiyama and Tucci also suggest the same viewpoint: "それと同じように、「ものに本体はない」ということばも、ものに本体がないという事実をつくり出すのではなく、すべてのものに本体がないことを知らせるだけである。" (Kajiyama, 1991; p. 179) "In the same way, if one says that all dharmas have no essence, these words cannot be the cause of non-essence of the dharmas." (Tucci, 1981; p. 68) 知 (to make known): jñapayati, causative from √jñā.

[22] "ことばは日常的な世界における情報交換のためだけの道具で、現実の本質や人間の救済に関与するものではないと知ること、それが実は虚構であることばの真理、一般の理解の底にある真理である。" Kajiyama (2008: 109) Oetke suggests that the term pratijñā may contain a looser sense, namely a "non-technical sense" and being free from "any logical form". (2003: 459)

[23] "その真実はそれ自体として直観されるものであって、ほかのもの、つまり、概念やことばや、他人の教えによって知られるものではない。" Kajiyama (1992: 94)

does state in VV 28 what he claims is in accordance with and based on the conventional truth[24], this does not mean that what he claims *only* concerns the worldly convention; instead, his statement(s) should be considered as utterances *concerning* the ultimate truth.

Conclusion

In this paper I object the no-thesis view, which could be a misreading resulted from the Sanskrit text and English translations of VV, accepted widely as the mainstream in interpreting Nāgārjuna The objection is first advanced with two problems raised as we follow the Tibetan commentaries composed chiefly by Candrakīrti, that neither the distinction of two kinds of pratijñā, i.e. the standard ones (views) and the non-standard ones (proposition), does not help Nāgārjuna in defending his own viewpoint in the context, nor should Candrakīrti's commentaries on Nāgārjuna be accepted without further considerations.

Based on Chinese version, I propose another possible translation and interpretation concerning Nāgārjuna's attitude toward statement: first of all, Nāgārjuna indeed positively uses the term statement (pratijñā) to refer to his own assertion in VV 58-59, where he mentions his statement as an anti-thesis in order to reject the one, that all dharmas have names, proposed by the opponent. Accordingly, Nāgārjuna's statement should not and could not be understood as non-standard, which would only make it incompetent in rejecting the adverse argument. As a matter of fact, there should not be the distinction of statements at the first place, for that would imply the acknowledgement of Nāgārjuna that it is admissible of statements with ontological assumption.

Moreover, in VV 29 of the Chinese version, Nāgārjuna does not deny to have statement; instead, he claims that his statement does not exist at the ultimate level. According to the above analysis, it should be clear that VV 29 functions as a refutation against that the opponent wrongly presumes that Nāgārjuna admits the existence of his statement in order to avoid the incapability of the statement to negate the substance of all dharmas. In addition to denying the untrue claim, Nāgārjuna further clarifies the non-existence of his statement, which should be understood with the implication of the two-truth theory. Nāgārjuna does not just defend himself, he also criticizes the opponent, who accepts the emptiness of worldly objects resulted from causation, for presupposing the substance (svabhāva) and arguing that statements constructed with words can refer to something ultimately real.

The interpretations of contemporary scholars are influenced strongly by the Tibetan commentary tradition, and the Chinese translations of Mādhyamika treatises, which are relatively fragmented, are for long neglected. Although we can indeed understand more "completely" the early Madhyamaka with the help of the commentaries composed by Tibetan exegetes, we might, however, unavoidably get into partiality. Through this paper, I suggest that the possibility of interpreting Nāgārjuna's viewpoint from the eyes of Svātantrika (there must be a reason why Bhāviveka having adopted pramāṇa is still considered a follower of Madhyamaka school), and attempt to provide another interpretation based on my understanding on the Chinese version of VV.

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[24] "又我所說不違世諦、不捨世諦"

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VV, VVvṛ, Vigrahavyāvartanī by Nāgārjuna

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