Buddhapālita’s Metaphorical Expression

SAITŌ Akira

As was pointed out by previous articles, 1) Buddhapālita (ca. 390–450), one of the best known commentators on Nāgārjuna’s Mūlamadhyamakakārikā (MK), uses a rather fixed form of metaphorical expression when he criticizes his opponents’ objection. His commentary (BP) on the MK had long been accessible only in Tibetan translation before Ye [2007] and [2008] made it available in Sanskrit, which corresponds to only approximately one ninth of the whole text. 2) Although the part accessible in Sanskrit is unfortunately limited in quantity, it serves well for clarifying the meaning and structure of Buddhapālita’s fixed usage of metaphorical and ironical question directed to his opponents’ objection or criticism.

1. An Analysis of the Fixed Form of Buddhapālita’s Metaphorical Expression

Of more than 30 examples of Buddhapālita’s fixed form of expression, five are now available in Sanskrit. 3) Here let us see an instance of them found in his commentary on MK 2.14. In the following, the underlined shows an example of which both Tibetan and corresponding Sanskrit are available, MK 2.14 runs as follows:

“When the commencement of going
Is not in any way observed,
What can be imagined as that which has already been gone over,
That which is being gone over, and that which has not yet been gone over?”

\[
gatam \text{ kim gamyamānam kim agatam kim vikalpyate/}
adrṣyamāna ārambhe gamanasyaiva sarvathā! (MK 2.14)\]

After explaining the above verse in prose, Buddhapālita introduces an objection as well as his answer to it as follows:

“[The opponent] objects: First, there exists ‘that which has not yet been gone over’ (agata).”

“[Buddhapālita] answers: Are you now suffering from the death [of your son] though he has not yet been born because you imagine ‘that which has not yet been gone over, i.e., traversed’ when there does not exist ‘that which has already been gone over’ (gata)?”

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ähā/ agatāṁ yāvad asitii//
ucyate/ kim idam bhavāṁ ajātapaṭramaranāṁ samtaṣyate/ yas tvam asati gate agatāṁ kalpayasī/ (Ye [2011] pp. 24, 103)
smras pa/ re zhig ma song ba yod do//
bshad pa/ ci khyod bu ma btsas par ’chi ba’i mya ngan byed dam/ khyod song ba med par ma song
ba la rtog go/ (D Tsa 171b5; P Tsa 193b2–3)

According to Buddhapalita, “what has not yet been gone over” (agata) is possible only when there exists “what has already been gone over” (gata). Therefore, he replies that those proposing a possibility of agata without gata can be compared to one who is suffering from the death of his son even though the son has not yet been born. This can easily be understood as absurd. The above underlined is an example of Buddhapalita’s typical answer of a rather fixed form. The interrogative particle “kim” is therein used as making a negative answer to be expected. Therefore, the interrogation directed to the opponent is a kind of ironic metaphor in order to make him realize the absurdity to be resulted in by the opponent’s objection or criticism.

2. The List of Buddhapalita’s Metaphorical Expression

The following is the list of the above-mentioned metaphorical expression adopted by Buddhapalita in his commentary on the MK, the total number of which is 32. In the following, the number placed at the head refers to chapter no. and, when more than one example is found in a chapter, sub-numbers such as -1, -2, -3, etc. are also given in order.

1-1 bshad pa/ ci khyod nam mkha’ la khu tshur dag gis brdeg gam/ (D Tsa 164a1–2; P Tsa 184b8) [BP ad MK 1.4]: “Do you beat the air with your fist?”
-2 bshad pa/ ci khyod bu ma byung ba’i nor gyis bu’i ma kha drang bar ’dod dam/ dngos po med pa’i rkyen mi ’thad do zhes smras te/ rkyen mi ’thad pas dngos po skye ba bkag bzhi du khyod ma ’ongs pa’i dngos po skye bas rkyen nyid bsgrub par ’dod do (ko P)6// (D 164b2–3; P 185b2–3) [ad MK 1.6]: “Do you wish to marry the mother of your [unborn] son with the wealth of the unborn son? . . . .”
-3 bshad pa/ ci khyod rang gi chung ma ma blangs par bu’i chung ma blang bar sems sam/ dngos po yod pa skye ba’i rkyen mi ’thad de rkyen mi ’thad pas dngos po skye ba bkag bzhi du khyod snam bu skyes pa’i rkyen ston par byed ’dod ko/ (D 164b5–6; P 185b6–7) [ad MK 1.6]: “Do you intend
to get your [unborn] son’s wife, though you have not yet got a wife? . . . .

2-1 bshad pa/ ci khyod ming gzhan du bsgyur bas sems rmongs nas rang gi bu ngo mi
shes sam/ khyod don de nyid la blo phyi mas brjod pa gzhan gyis brjod
kol/ (D 171a3; P 192b6–7) [ad MK 2.12]

= ucyatel kim idam bhavāṇ samjñāntareṇa sammohitaṇ cetāḥ 7) svaputramukham
na jānāti/ yas tvam tam evārtham abhidhānāntaretottarabuddhi braviṣṭ/ (Ye [2011] pp. 24, 100): “Having your mind obscured, do you now not recognize
your own son under another name because you just state by means of this latter
idea the same thing in different words?”

-2 bshad pa/ ci khyed nam mkha’ /di la ldang bar bskyod dam/ (D 171a7; P 193a4–5)
[ad MK 2.13abc]

101): “Do you now, standing up in the sky, move about?”

-3 bshad pa/ ci khyod bu ma btsas par ‘chi ba’i mya ngan byed dam/ khyod song ba
med par ma song ba la rtog go/ (D 171b5; P 193b2–3) [ad MK 2.14]

= ucyatel kim idam bhavāṇ ajātaputramaranāt samtapyate yas tvam asati gate a-
gatam kalpayasi/ (Ye [2011] pp. 24, 103): “Are you now suffering from the
death [of your son] though he has not yet been born because you imagine ‘that
which has not yet been gone over, i.e., traversed’ when there does not exist ‘that
which has already been gone over’?”

-4 ’dir smras pa/ ci khyed (/khyod P) gsod pa po nyid la dbang ’dzugs sam/ (D 173a6;
P 195b1) [ad MK 2.21]: “Do you subdue only a murderer?”

-5 bshad pa/ kho bo ni gsod pa po nyid la dbang mi ’dzugs kyi/ khyod nyid lag pa
brkyang ste tshegs chen por g’yob cing khong pa dbugs kyiis brdzangs
bzhin du smig rgyu’i chu la rkyal bar byed dam/ khyod de nyid dang
gzhan ma gtogs pa med pa’i phyogs la yod pa’i blos gnas par byed ko/
(D 173a7–b1; P 195b3–4) [ad MK 2.21]: “We do not subdue only a
murderer. However, do you, stretching your hands and moving about out
of breath, swim in the mirage-water? With the idea of its existence, you
settle yourself in a viewpoint which does not exist apart from identity and
difference.”

-6 bshad pa/ ci khyod bu ’dod la ma ning la spyod dam/ khyod ’gro ba po med pa la

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'(gro ba por rtog go// (D 173b3–4; P 195b7) [ad MK 2.21]: “Do you, wishing for a son, live together with a eunuch because you imagine a non-existent goer as a goer?”

3 bshad pa/ (N 190b) ci khyod sa mkhan med par ’brog dgon par ’thom mam/ khyod lta ba po med par bbla bar bya ba dang lta ba yod par ’dod ko// (D 176b7; P 199b3–4) [ad MK 3.6]: “Are you blinded in a forest without a guide because you regard as existent the objects of seeing and the visual organ apart from a seer?”

7-1 smras pa/ ci khyod mtshan thabs la mkhas zhes te ma nyid la ’debs par byed dam/ khyod ’gyed pa la chags pas rten cing ’brel par ’byung ba’i rigs pa nyid sun ’byin ko// (D 191b6; P 216a4–5) [ad MK 7.16]: “Being skilled in arms, do you strike your mother because, excited at the dispute, you refute the very principle of dependent-origination?”

-2 bshad pa/ ci khyod nam mkha’i me tog sogs par byed dam/ khyod snam bu med pa’i rgyu dang rkyen dag la brten nas bya ba rtsom par byed ko// (D 192a5; P 216b4) [ad MK 7.17]: “Do you collect sky-flowers because you undertake the action with dependence upon the causes of non-existent cloth?”

-3 bshad pa/ ci khyod ri mo’i me gsod par byed dam/ khyod skye ba med pa la ’gag pa ’dod ko// (D 196a5; P 221a7–8) [ad MK 7.29]: “Do you put out the fire of a picture because, there being no origination, you ask for extinction?”

-4 bshad pa/ ci khyod *la log rtog* ma skyes par legs so zhes sgros sam/ khyod skye ba dang gnas pa dang ’jig pa med pa la ’dus byas kyi mtshan nyid ston par byed ko// (D 197a7–b1; P 222b5–6) (* = DCPN; read lo tog (= sasya), see Ye [2011] p. 130, n. 7) [ad MK 7.33ab]

= ucyate/ kim idam bhavān ajātasyasampadam varṇayati/ yas tvam anutpanna-śātyātasya[āniruddhasya]a samskṛtalakṣaṇāpadeśaṁ karosi (Ye [2011] pp. 24, 130): “Do you now praise the abundance of unproduced crops because, there being no origination, duration, or destruction, you teach the characteristics of the conditioned?”

-5 bshad pa/ ci khyod sgron mas nyi ma tshol lam/ khyod ’dus ma byas kyis ’dus byas ’grub par ’dod ko// (D 197b3–4; P 223a1) [ad MK 7.33cd]

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= ucyate/ kim idam bhavān ulkayādityam anveśate/ yas tvam sam[skrtas]yāsam-

skrtena siddhim icchasi/ (Ye [2011] pp. 24, 131): “Do you now search for the
sun by a lamp because you regard the conditioned as established by the non-con-
ditioned?”

8 bshad pa/ ci khyod til mar ’dod la dgon pa’i ti-la-ka tshol lam/ khyod byed pa po
dang las zhes bya ba’i ming tsam gyi dga’ zhing ci yang mi byed pa
byed pa por ’dod la mi bya ba las su ’dod ko// (D 201a3–4; P 227a3–4)
[ad MK 8.12]: “Although you want seed-oil (tāla), do you look for a
Tilaka tree because you, pleased with the mere names (nāman) of ‘doer’
and ‘deed,’ you regard one who does not do anything whatsoever as a
doer, and that which is not to be done as a deed?”

11 bshad pa/ ci khyod kyis sbrang rtsi mthong la g’yang sa ma mthong ngam/ khyod
kyis ’khor ba ring ba dang zad par gsungs pa mthong la/ gang gi phyir
bcom ldan ’das kyis bka’ stsal pa gzhan ’di ma mthong ko// (D 211a2–3;
P 238b4–5) [ad MK 11.1]: “Do you see the honey (*madhu) and not the
precipice (*prapāta) because you see the statement that transmigration
is long and is to be extinguished, but you do not see this other statement
by the Glorious One?”

9)

12 bshad pa// ci khyod shing ljor pa rtsa ba rul ba la chu ldugs par byed dam/ khyod
gang zag nye bar len pa med pa ’ba’ zhig pa rnam pa thams cad du mi
’thad pa la sdu bsngal gang zag bdag gis byas so smra ’am/ (D 216a1; P
244a8–b1) [ad MK 12.7]: “Do you water a tree with rotten roots? Al-
though an isolated person without the objects of clinging is not in any
way possible, do you say that suffering is produced by one’s own per-
son?”

10 bshad pa/ ci khyod sgyu ma’i glang po ches ’gro bar ’dod dam/ khyod rnam pa bzhi
po dag gis ma byas pa’i dngos po rnam pa yang dag par yod par rtog go//
(D 217b2–3; P 246a5–6) [ad MK 13.1]: “Do you think that an illusory
elephant moves because you imagine things, which are not produced by
means of the four kinds, to be existent in reality?”

14-1 bshad pa/ ci khyod skrod par byed pa nyid kyi rjes su ’gro ’am/ khyod gzhan nyid
zlog par byed pa’i gtan tshigs kyis gzhan nyid sgrub par sms ko// (D

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221b2–3; P 250b3–4) [ad MK 14.6]: “Do you follow the one who drives you out because you intend to establish difference with a reason which denies difference?”

-2 bshad pa/ ci khyod ’jag rtas rgyug par rtsom mam/ khyod gzhon nyid med pas gzhon bsgrub par rtsom ko// (D 222b4–5; P 252a1) [ad MK 14.7]: “Do you make an effort to gallop off by a grass-horse because you make an effort to establish a different thing by the non-existence of difference?”

-3 bshad pa/ ci khyod ma ning la phrag dog za ’am/ khyod phrad pa med par phrad pa po yod pa nyid du ’dod ko// (D 223b5–6; P 253a4) [ad MK 14.8]: “Do you envy an eunuch because, there being no combination, you regard a combiner as existent?”

15 bshad pa/ ci khyod rta la zhon bzhin nyid du rta ma mthong ngam/ khyod dngos po rnam rten cing ’brel par ’byung ba zhes kyang smra la/ de dag gang gi ngo bo nyid med pa nyid kyang ma mthong ko// (D 224a3; P 253b2–3) [ad MK 15.1]: “Do you not see the horse though you are riding on it because, though you say that things are produced dependently, you do not see their absence of own-nature?”

16 bshad pa/ ci khyod snod stong pa srung bar byed dam/ khyod bcings pa dang thar pa mi ’thad pa dag la/ ’khor ba dang mya ngan las ’da’ ba yod par ’dod ko// (D 231a1–2; P 261a8) [ad MK 16.10]: “Do you preserve an empty vessel because, though neither bondage nor release is possible, you assert the existence of transmigration and nirvāṇa?”

17-1 bshad pa/ ci khyod dri za’i grong khyer gyi ra ba ’chos pas g’yen spyo ’am/ khyod las mi ’thad bzhin du las kyi ’bras bu’i phyir rtsod ko// (D 235b5; P 266b7) [ad MK 17.21]: “Do you construct the walls of Gandharva-city, i.e., a mirage, because, though an action is not possible, you dispute about the result of an action?”

-2 bshad pa/ ci khyod rtsig rmang ma bres par pu shu ’dogs par byed dam/ khyod byed pa po dang las dang ’bras bu dag rab tu ma grub bzhin du las kyi ’bras bu la longs spyod pa’i za ba po sgrub par byed ko// (D 238b6–7; P 270a5–6) [ad MK 17.29]: “Do you place the wall though it is not sustained by its foundation because . . .?”

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20-1 bshad pa/ ci khyod lam du zhugs bzhin du lam 'dri 'am/ khyod dngos po yongs su 'gyur ba 'bras bu zhes bya'o zhes zer bzhin du rang gi tshig gi don khong du ma chud do// (D 252a4; P 285a2–3) [ad MK 20.10]: “Do you ask the way though you have already entered it because, though you say that ‘result’ is the change of a thing, you do not understand your own words?”

-2 bshad pa/ ci khyod grong stong du mkhar ldan 'bebs sam/ khyod 'bras bu yod pa ma yin na tshogs pa yod par 'dod ko// (D 255b1; P 288b6) [ad MK 20.24]: “Do you construct walls for the empty city because, there being no result, you regard the assemblage [of causes and conditions] as existent?”

21 bshad pa/ ci khyod shing bi-du-la'i shing tog dag 'dod dam/ khyod 'byung ba dang 'jig pa dag yod pa ma yin par dngos po yod par 'dod ko// (D 257a6; P 290b7–8) [ad MK 21.8]: “Do you search for the fruit of Vidula plant [which, as a kind of reed, lacks fruit] because, there being neither origination nor cessation, you regard a thing as existent?”

22-1 bshad pa/ ci khyod legs par sbyar ba'i phyed kyis gar byed dam/ khyod brten nas de bzhin gshogs pa gdags par yang smra la/ de bzhin gshogs pa ngo bo nyid las yang 'grub par yang 'dod ko// (D 262a5; P 296b2–3) [ad MK 22.2]: “Do you dance on the half of well-prepared [cloths] because...?”

-2 bshad pa/ ci khyod mdza/ bshes kyi blo sgron dgra bo dpang du len tam/ khyod gang kho nas nye bar len pa po dang nye bar blangs pa dag rab tu 'grub par mi 'thad pa de kho nas de dag rab tu bsgrub pa'i phyir rtsom par byed ko// (D 263b3–4; P 298a3) [ad MK 22.7]: “Do you take an enemy’s evidence as a friend’s opinion because...?”

-3 bshad pa/ ci khyod chu bo shugs drag pos khyer ba na rtsa drungs phyung la 'ju'am/ khyod nye bar blangs pas nye bar len pa po rab tu bsgrub par 'dod ko// (D 264a3; P 298b4) [ad MK 22.9]: “Do you hold on to the root though it was flushed away by the raging flood because...?”

Conclusion

From the above investigation, we may draw the following conclusions: First, it is interesting to note that Buddhapālita uses a rather fixed form of metaphorical expression when
he criticizes opponents’ objection and, as is found in the above list 2-4 and 7-1, he occasionally applies it also to the opponents’ discussion. Secondly, of those 32 examples shown in the above list, five are now accessible in Sanskrit. Thirdly, the Sanskrit expression tells us, more clearly than its Tibetan rendering, the meaning of each expression directed to the opponent. Fourthly, the typical and fixed form can be explained as follows:

The complex sentence is composed of both principal clause and subordinate one. Having a fixed form, i.e., *kim idam bhavān* . . . , the principal clause is an ironic interrogation directed to the opponent in which the interrogative particle “*kim*” is used as making a negative answer to be expected. The subordinate clause beginning with *yas tvam* . . . shows the reason for the ironic question as expressed by the preceding principal clause.

Lastly, it can also be noted that Buddhapālita’s metaphorical criticism as mentioned above plays an important role in reducing the opponents’ assertion to absurdity. In this regard, the metaphorical criticism of the above form well fits in with Buddhapālita’s typical logic, i.e., the so-called *reductio ad absurdum*, or more precisely, mixed hypothetical syllogism.

Notes

3) All the five examples belong to chapters 2 and 7, i.e., those underlined sentences numbered 2-1, 2-2, 2-3, 7-4, and 7-5 in the list.
4) de Jong [1977] p. 3.
7) Read *sammohitacetāḥ* (?).

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(Professor, University of Tokyo, Ph.D.)

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