

13.

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Knowledge and truth in the thought of Jizang (549–623)

Background: Madhyamaka on Knowledge and Truth

Buddhist epistemology and philosophy of language is widely considered as one of the subtlest traditions in this philosophical area and obviously one of the most prominent currents in the philosophy of the East at all. There are various reasons for this state of affairs. Firstly, according to Buddha, the majority of metaphysical questions are meaningless. They are purely theoretical and uncertain, because one should rather obtain salvation in a sorrowful world. As a result, metaphysics cannot be Buddhist *philosophia prima*. Secondly, Buddha insisted on individual practice and meditation. Any philosophical concept should be tried in practice to decide whether it is (or not) an expedient mean to salvation¹. It is not empirism in the Western sense, because we are *trying*, not *proving*, the concept: it has more pragmatical and ethical, not only epistemological, character. Nevertheless, we could say that experience and knowledge of oneself tends to be the measure for merely intellectual ideas.

¹ It was later developed in the doctrine of expedient means (scr. *upāya*), based on the Lotus Sutra.

Thirdly, Buddhists denied the substantive view of the world and the soul, represented by Brahmans. The fundamental doctrine of co-dependent arising shows us that every view ought to be conceived as linked with one's karma and his (or her) individual experiences. Epistemology seems to be a good tool to criticize such substantive systems as Astika. The last reason, probably the most skeptical one, is basic to understanding Nagarjuna's philosophy of language.

Madhyamaka is a widely varied philosophical school with a half-millennium tradition and long-lasting influence. Nevertheless I would delimit my subject to the thoughts of Nagarjuna and Aryadeva, because Jizang, who lived between 549 and 623, could not have known later thinkers. It concerns also Buddhapālita and Bhāvaviveka, because the time needed for reception of their ideas (especially of the division of Madhyamaka into the Prāsaṅgika and the Svātantrika) was too short. The main idea of Nagarjuna's philosophy is that all phenomena are empty; videlicet there is no substance (*svabhāva*). It means that all things arise and perish in dependence on other things, that everything is conditioned. There is no being existing by its own nature or essence, like God, and no being existing apart from other beings, like spirit. *Śūnyatā* can be treated as a reinterpretation of the fundamental Buddhist doctrines, such as dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*) and no-self (*anātman*)². This philosophical explication of Buddha's teaching helped Nagarjuna with the refutation of metaphysics of non-Mahayana schools: Sarvastivāda and Sautrāntika. Nevertheless, the main aim of his endeavour was not particular, because his most famous conclusions, especially the epistemological ones, are as general as it is possible.

If there are no intrinsic natures, words cannot have constant referents appertaining to them from the act of birth in perpetuity. Words do not have *svabhāva*. Enclosing the complexity of the chain of conditions in simple words is the first step to the illusion of essentialism. Grasping the meaning, we tend to think of it as something outside our minds; not changing them, we conceive the things in the same way as their names: as unchangeable, distinguishable atoms of the world. Such was the ontology of dharmas, enunciated in Vasu-

² J. Westerhoff, *Nagarjuna's Madhyamaka. A Philosophical Introduction*, Oxford University Press, New York 2009, pp. 21–32.

bandhu's *Abhidharmakośa*. In fact, our language is about any thing, because of the bankruptcy of the idea of denoting, as long as „thing” means the same as „substantion”; in Jay Garfield's translation: “whatever grasping there is, does not exist through essence”³. Moreover, Nagarjuna shows the demise of the correspondence conception of truth. It stems from the impossibility of comparison between the sphere of thought and the immutable sphere of things. Greatness of Nagarjuna relies on the fact that he showed the self-contradiction of this concept of truth, disregarding his own statements: we call it *reductio ad absurdum*, Mādhyamikas called it *prasanga*. In the „Reversal of Dismissal”, *Vigrahavyāvartani*, the Buddhist philosopher writes that criteria of correct cognition should be proved, but they cannot be proved by other criteria because these criteria also ought to be proved by other criteria, and so ad infinitum: this mistake is called by him *anavasthā* (*regressus ad infinitum*). They cannot also be unproved because this is dogmatism. Nagarjuna called it the wrong argument, (*upanyāsa*), inasmuch as criteria established apart from the objects of the correct cognition are the criteria of nothing. Finally, they cannot be proved by themselves because this is a vicious circle (*svataḥ siddhi*)⁴. This commentary is key in the perspective of the thought of Jizang. The question is: is Madhyamaka itself free from this reflection? Is *śūnyatāvāda* true?

Of course, it cannot be true in the abandoned sense. If we still think of truth as of a correspondence between things and thought, the answer is: Madhyamaka is neither true, nor false, neither true and false, neither true nor false. The fourfold negation or *catuṣkoṭi* shows us that even the last option shares the premises of the classical concept of truth. The answer is possible thanks to Nagarjuna's theory of two truths: “a truth of mundane conventions (*samvṛti-satya*) and a truth of the ultimate (*paramārtha-satya*)”⁵. Differently from earlier Buddhists, Nagarjuna does not think of *paramārtha-satya* as of a hidden essence of the universe, but rather

³ J. Garfield, *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way*, Oxford UP, New York 1995, p. 61.

⁴ Nagarjuna, *Vigrahavyāvartani* 31–33.40–51. Source: J. Westerhoff, *The Dissembler of Disputes. Nagarjuna's Vighra-vyāvartani*, Oxford UP, New York 2010, pp. 30–35.

⁵ J. Garfield, *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way*, p. 68.

regards it as an emptiness. An acquaintance with conventional truth leads to the knowledge of the ultimate truth, which is necessary to achieve the *nirvāṇa*. Because of this relation Nagarjuna could say that truth about emptiness is empty itself and there is no self-contradiction. Self-reference, which has blown so many philosophical systems, is not the problem of the Middle Way.

Āryadeva held that point of view. Later controversy between the Prāsaṅgika and the Svātantrika involved the problem of the nature of *samvṛti-satya*. The Svātantrika Madhyamaka claims that things are causally efficient because of their conventionally intrinsic reality. The Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka, namely Candrakīrti, argues that things are causally effective just because they are empty and their *niḥsvabhāva* is the conventional truth. The disputation is eventually about whether the ultimate truth denies or clarifies the conventional truth, which is overdrawn.

Three Treatises School: Chinese Madhyamaka

Madhyamaka school was introduced to China as one of the first schools of Buddhist philosophy, at a time when Buddhism was being rapidly sinicized: in 374 Dao An (*Dào Ān*, 道安), who lived between 312 and 385 AD, compiled the very first Chinese version of Tripitaka canon. His translations largely influenced on Kumarajiva; he himself accepted the main points of Madhyamaka view, saying that, original emptiness is the true nature of all phenomena, the Absolute, which is a basis for the mundane truth⁶. Dao An wanted Chinese Buddhists to know not only philosophical treatises, but also practical rules concerning everyday life of monk (namely Vinaya). This dream was embodied by famous pilgrimage of Faxian (*Fǎ Xiǎn*, 法显). He had been travelling throughout Asia for about fourteen years, covering circa 15,000 km; when he came back to Chang'an, he was seventy six years old. Faxian believed that Maitreya was watching over spreading the Buddhist faith in China⁷.

⁶ H. Dumoulin, *Zen Buddhism: A History. India and China*, Macmillan Publishing, New York 1988, p. 67.

⁷ Fa-hien, *A Record of Buddhist Kingdoms*, transl. J. Legge, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1886, pp. 18–28.

Faxian wrote his „Record of Buddhist Kingdoms” because of recommendations made by Kumarajiva. Undoubtedly, the latter was inspired by great monk⁸. Kumarajiva (scr. *Kumarajiva*, chin. *Jiūmóluóshí* 鳩摩羅什), who lived between 344 and 413, is just as concerned as the first patriarch of the Three Treatises School. Born in Kucha (in what is now the province of Xinjiang), from an early age showed uncommon abilities: it is rumoured that he was learning by heart about a thousand lines of Buddhist scriptures per day⁹. At the age of nine, Kumarajiva and his mother came to Kashmir, when he became a disciple of Indian monk, Bandhudatta. After arriving in Kashgar, he started to study scriptures of Sarvastivāda school, but he converted to Mahayana; then he came back to Kucha. When the late Jin dynasty (chin. *Jìn Cháo*, 晋朝) conquered his home town, he learned to speak Chinese; in 401 he moved to the contemporary capital city, Chang’an, when at king Yaoxing’s bidding, he devoted himself to the work of his life – translation of Buddhist canon. It is estimated that Kumarajiva had translated up to 300 Buddhist texts, 51 of which were lost, while 61 have survived to our times in a pristine condition. Needless to say, Kumarajiva did not translate on his own: when translating *Mahāprajñāpāramitāsūtra* he was helped by about five hundred monks, in turn when translating one of the most important sacred text of Mahayana Buddhism, the Lotus Sutra, he was supported by all over two thousand monks¹⁰. For the purpose of this paper the most important is that Kumarajiva translated the three treatises of which Chinese Madhyamaka took its name: *Mūlamādhyamakakārikā* – *Zhōnglùn* (中論), Nāgārjuna’s *Dvādaśanikāyaśāstra* – *Shíèrménlùn* (十二門論) and Āryadeva’s *Śatakaśāstra* – *Bǎilùn* (百論). Usually *Māhaprajñāparamitopadeśa* – *Dàzhìdùlùn* (大智度論) is added as the fourth text. Kumarajiva, unlike Xuanzang (*Xuánzàng*, 玄奘), who preferred to translate Indian texts literally, tried to convey the essence of the Buddhist writings using vernacular notions. Nevertheless, it did not mean the defection of original ideas. For instance, Kumarajiva did

⁸ J. Edkins, *Chinese Buddhism*, Truebner & co., London 1880, p. 91.

⁹ Chou Hsiang-Kuang, *History of Chinese Buddhism*, Indo-Chinese Literature Publications, Delhi 1956, p. 57.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 60.

not choose Chinese *wú* (無) for *sūnya*, because this word had its very special meaning in the Neo-Daoist metaphysics (chin. *Xuànxué*, 玄学); he used *kōng* (空) instead. Translation of main Mahayana concepts looks as follows¹¹:

Sanscrit	Chinese
<i>śūnya</i>	kōng, 空
<i>prajñā</i>	bōrě, 般若
<i>mahāparinirvāna</i>	dà bān nièpán, 大般涅槃
<i>dharmamudrā</i>	fǎyìn, 法印
<i>bhūtatathātā</i>	zhēnrú, 真如
<i>ṣadhetu</i>	liù yīn, 六因
<i>saṃsāra</i>	lúnhuí, 輪迴
<i>bodhisattva</i>	púsà, 菩薩

We can also rebuild Kumarajiva's own philosophy from the letters between him and Huiyuan (*Huiyuǎn*, 慧遠, 344–416), named First Patriarch of the Pure Land School of Buddhism, which were rushed into „The Essentials of Mahayana”, *Dàchéng dàyīzhāng* (大乘大義章). Huiyuan is asking Kumarajiva for explaining dharma-dhatu. Kuchanian monk answers that dharmas do not have their own nature or rather: their nature is lack of nature, emptiness. They all arise and cease in dependence on each other. Kumarajiva claims that also dharma of arising has no real being (*sadbhūta*) and all the dharmas are non-arising, non-ceasing and having the nature of nirvāna. He argues that a different point of view leads to contradiction: to regress to infinity in tracking the ultimate basis of reality or to absurd questions about what was before the beginning. Indeed, he rejects most of ontological categories, including such pairs of concepts as being/non-being, cause/effect, past/future, which seem to be inadequate tools to describe the emptiness¹².

¹¹ Source: S. Beal, *The Buddhist Tripitaka as it is known in China and Japan. A Catalogue and Compendions Report*, Clarke & Son, Devonport 1876.

¹² R. Robinson, *Early Madhyamaka in India and China*, Wisconsin UP, Madison 1967, pp. 92–7.

The most significant disciple of Kumarajiva, Sengrui (*Sēngruì*, 僧睿), who lived between 352 and 436 and became the succeeding patriarch of the Three Treaties School Distinctive feature of Sengrui was exceptional piety, which he had for Amitabha Buddha – at the end of his life he officially joined the community of Huiyuan. Sengrui lamented that Buddhist tradition of meditation, dhyana (which will be later known for its Chinese name *chan* and Japanese *zen*), had been neglected. Sengrui expounded his views in the prefaces to translated works, and above all, in the preface to „Zhonglun”. As he noted, the doctrine of emptiness, rejecting all dualities, was primarily created as a remedy for pervasive suffering. Similarly, the notion of the unity of samsara and nirvana is opposed to the rationalist soteriology of Hinayana and the Neo-Taoist speculation¹³.

Nevertheless, the greatest and, according to the tradition, also the first disciple of Kumarajiva was Sengzhao (*Sēngzhào*, 僧肇), living between 384 and 414. He is the link in the chain between Jūmóluóshí and Jizang. Originally fascinated to Neo-Taoism, he converted to Buddhism after he had read the Vimalakirti Sutra. Despite early age and Taoist past, he rapidly mastered Buddhist philosophy, to such extent, that at the age of twenty seven he assisted Kumarajiva at the one of his journeys; then he became his private secretary during translation of Madhyamaka texts. His main work entitled „Treatise concerning the Cause” (chin. *Zhàolùn*, 肇論) consists of four parts:

- first part – „Things do not change” (*Wùbùqiānlùn*, 物不遷論)
- second part – „The Emptiness of the Non-Absolute” (*Bùzhēnkōnglùn*, 不真空論)
- third part – „Prajñā is not knowledge” (*Bōrěwúzhīlùn*, 般若無知論)
- fourth part – „Nirvana has no name” (*Nièpánwúmínglùn*, 涅槃無名論).

The third part is the most interesting one: it is devoted to the attempt of explication of prajñā: divine knowledge of every buddha, transcending temporal and spatial borders, independent and absolute. Prajñā, conceived in such a way, would interfere with the doctrine of emptiness (co-dependence of everything). Sengzhao

¹³ *Ibidem*, p.119.

states that there is no contradiction there, because prajña is not the same as knowledge. Emptiness excludes the existence of objects (resp. objective substances), but objects are always the objects of knowledge, not of prajña¹⁴. In his treatise Sengzhao alleges some further arguments for his thesis:

1. Something that is known is related to something that is not known: temporarily or fundamentally. But in wisdom there is no ignorance, so it is not knowledge.

2. Wisdom is nameless and formless (empty of *namarupa*), therefore it cannot be said that it exists or not, just like knowledge. So wisdom is not knowledge.

3. Holy Mind intuitively knows everything, but it is not knowledge, because he cannot make a mistake and without not knowing there is no knowing. So etc.

4. In the intuition the knowing and the known exist conjointly, but knowledge is defined as generated by the object. So etc¹⁵.

The conclusion is simple and quite startling: names do not have designations; prajña cannot be expressed in language. In this sense prajña is identical with epistemological emptiness, being the topic of Nagajuna's „*Vigrahavyāvartani*”. What is more interesting, Sengzhao expressed his conclusion concerning the nature of wisdom in language of Neo-Taoist metaphysics, which (as we can see) was not finally left by him. He wrote that in wisdom there is no difference between substance and function (noumenon and phaenomenon), namely: between the Way in which the world exists independently from the subject and the Way of how the world manifests to the subject. Notwithstanding, the content of his thought is undoubtedly Buddhist: in „The Emptiness of the Non-Absolute”, Sengzhao argues that emptiness cannot be treated as non-existence and identified with the original non-being (*běnwú*, 本無).

Sengzhao gives us some very general statements (or maybe rather counterstatements) about cognition and knowledge at all; he emphasizes also soteriological dimension of Madhyamaka's epistemology. All of the thinkers above, from Nagarjuna to Sengzhao, were

¹⁴ Chan Wing-tsit, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*. Princeton UP, New York 1963, pp. 343–4.

¹⁵ R. Robinson, *Early Madhyamaka...*, pp. 123–126.

necessary to mention to understand the thought of Jizang correctly. His philosophy surmounts some period and the problems he had to cope with gain their mature and subtle form.

Jizang's Theory of Knowledge and Truth

Jizàng (549–623 A.D.), born in Jinling (金陵), according to the “Further vitae of the famous monks” (续高僧传, *Xù gāosēng zhuān*), became a monk at the age of seven. After the succession of the Tang Dynasty in 617 he became the head abbot of four new Buddhist temples in metropolitan Chang’an. He was very prolific writer: it is estimated that he wrote about fifty books, mainly commentaries, which is quite peculiar for such a sceptical thinker. The most important are: “Meaning of the Two Levels of Truth” (*Èrdí yī*, 二諦意), “Treatise on the Mystery of the Mahayana” (*Dàchéng xuánlùn*, 大乘玄論), “Essay on the Two Levels of Truth” (*Èrdí zhāng*, 二諦章), “Profound Meaning of the Three Treatises” (*Sānlùn xuányī*, 三論玄義) and the commentaries on three treatises: *Zhōnglùn*, *Bǎilùn* and *Shìerménlùn*¹⁶.

Jizàng’s contribution to the development of Mādhyamaka embraces both ontology and epistemology. In the first point of *Sānlùn xuányī* he criticizes existing Buddhist concepts of causality, using technically *catuṣkoṭī*¹⁷. It is not possible that there are effects without causes, i.e. that spontaneity of phenomena does not need a Creator (as preach Taoists), or that there are only causes (as teach materialists), because the cause exists only in relation to the effect and vice versa. The cause is not the same as a result, too, whereas the abandonment of both the causes and effect is equal to the rejection of the law of karma. Nagarjunian tetralemma, applied to the critique of the recent doctrines of causality looks as follows: neither causes, nor effects, neither causes and effects, nor neither causes nor effects:

¹⁶ A. Fox, *Jizang* [in:] I. McGreal (ed.), *Great Thinkers of the Eastern World*, HarperCollins, New York 1992, pp. 105–106.

¹⁷ Jizang, *Profound Meaning of the Three Treatises*, pt. 1 [in:] Chan Wing-tsit, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*. Princeton UP, New York 1963, pp. 361–367. Also in *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō*: TSD 45: 1–7.

$$\neg\exists x[C(x)] \ \& \ \neg\exists x[E(x)] \ \& \ \neg\exists x[C(x) \ \& \ E(x)] \ \& \ \neg\exists x[\neg C(x) \ \& \ \neg E(x)]$$

Jízàng also criticized the concept of the four causes in abhidharma: if they are produced by something else, they are not the ultimate cause. If they (C) have their own causes (C'), these causes (C') also have another causes (C''), and so on ad infinitum. If we settle ourselves in some cause, it means that this cause has self-existence, therefore it does not need anything except itself to be itself; but if it does not need an effect to be itself, namely: the cause, this is no longer a cause. In the next part of the text created adversary attacks Madhyamaka itself: the Middle Way assumes the nonexistence, for instance preaching the nonexistence of being and non-being (this method resembles by the way Plato's *Parmenides*). Jizang replies that this non-being is adopted pragmatically and temporarily as a remedy for the contrary statement; when the disease recedes, the cure will be postponed. To sum up, co-dependent arising can be understood neither in the category of (self-)existence nor non-existence. "The true nature of all dharmas is not directly expressible in language and realizable in thought", writes Chinese¹⁸.

This pragmatism provides us to the central concept of "refutation of erroneous views as the illumination of right views", *bóxiè xiànzhēn* (驳谢现真), which was enunciated in the "Profound Meaning of the Three Treatises". As we remember, Prāsaṅgikas claimed that Mādhyamaka is only a negative method of refuting views, but Svātantrikas believed that it has also its own, undoubted view. Although Jízàng cannot have been a witness of this dispute, he subverted the salience of this argument: refutation of erroneous views is always the illumination of right views, and *vice versa*. All beliefs are empty because they depend on their rejections. Two opposite beliefs (statements) share the same premises and the horizon of possible continuations. Tetralemma is transcending these artificial oppositions, such as nothingness/absolute, false/truth, samsara/nirvana, and so on.

Nevertheless, Madhyamaka is also empty; we already know it from *Zhōnglùn* (XIII, 8): "if someone thinks of emptiness as an existing thing, he cannot be saved even by all Buddhas". Jízàng

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 368.

writes about malignant attachment to the doctrine of emptiness in quite poetic words: “it is like water able to extinguish the fire, if the water itself could ignite, what would be used to extinguish it? Nihilism and eternalism are like fire and emptiness can extinguish them. But if someone insists on adherence to emptiness, there is no cure which could help him”¹⁹. In this perspective, the doctrine of emptiness seems to be the reinterpretation of the doctrine of expedient (skr. *upāya*, ch. *fāngbiàn*, 方便) means. *Śūnyatā* means that we are not attached to any extreme view, because it won’t help us with our liberation. Jízàng quotes the “Fame for Purity”: “The Buddha is unattached to the mundane world and is like the lotus flower. He is always skilful in entering into the paths of emptiness and silence”²⁰. Although the method of Jízàng is called *bóxiè xiànzhēn*, we cannot treat *xiè* and *zhēn* as falseness and truth in criticized sense; Jizang knew it – he asked himself: „if there is no statement and counterstatement, there is no *zhēn* and *xiè*; so why it is written here about the refutation of *xiè* and the illumination of *zhēn*?”²¹. *Zhēn* and *xiè* should rather be translated as “appropriate”, “advisable” and “inappropriate”, “inadvisable”. Jízàng is not nihilist (despite the fact that he is to some extent a sceptic), because he does not forbid us to have our own beliefs. They probably have personal, emotional, maybe also pedagogical, value, but we cannot be excessively tied to them: we cannot on the basis of our beliefs judge other beliefs as incorrect. “If the illness of attachment to the being went down, the cure of emptiness is abandoned and finally it is known that sacred way has nothing to do with being and non-being. Originally there was nothing to affirm and there is now nothing to negate”²².

Jizang shows also his pragmatic approach to the crucial doctrine of two truths: “the

two truths are just means of instruction and are not concerned with objects and principles”²³. If two truths were opposite principles,

¹⁹ Jizang, *Meaning of the Two Levels of Truth*, pt. 1 [in:] Hsueh-li Cheng, *Empty Logic*, Motilil Banarsidass Publ., Delhi 1991, p. 49.

²⁰ Jizang, *Profound Meaning of the Three Treatises*, p. 368.

²¹ Jizang, *Meaning of the Two Levels of Truth*, p. 50.

²² *Ibidem*.

²³ Jizang, *Profound Meaning of the Three Treatises*, pt. 2 [in:] Liu Ming-Wood, *Madhyamaka Thought in China*, Brill, Leiden 1994, p. 140.

Madhyamaka would into substantialism. Adversaries of Madhyamaka would also say that dualism of two truths is not in fact different from other dualisms, which were eradicated by Middle Way. According to Cuma Ozkan, “the essence of the Buddha’s teachings is the rejection of dualistic thinking, the ontological understanding of two truths poses a serious threat to emptiness. In addition, Jizang points out the soteriological function of two truths because it helps people understand the Buddha’s message”²⁴. Jizang claims that to prevent misunderstandings we should distinguish four levels of two truths²⁵:

1. *First level.* “Existence” is taken as the mundane truth and “emptiness” as the supreme truth.

What is taken by Svatantrikas as Madhyamaka’s conclusion, Jizang faces as a starting point. „Ordinary people” claim that dharmas possess being, whereas „saints and sages” know that all dharmas are empty. This level should enable people to renounce worldly truth.

2. *Second level.* “Existence” and “emptiness” are mundane truths and “non-duality” is the supreme. “Non-duality” means “neither emptiness nor existence”. Applied to the famous conclusion of the twenty-fifth chapter of the „Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way”, non-duality sounds: „neither the cycle of life and death nor Nirvana”.

3. *Third level.* “Duality” and “non-duality” are mundane truths, “neither duality nor non-duality” is called the supreme truth. According to Jizang, duality is one-sided, while non-duality is central, but both are extremes: they are called worldly truth.

4. *Fourth level.* “Differences” are the mundane truth, “non-difference” and “non-dependence” is the supreme truth and the principle. By “differences” Jizang understands tetralemma created from the negation of the third level: “neither duality, nor non-duality, neither duality and non-duality, nor neither duality nor non-duality”. In fact, the tetralemma itself is abandoned for non-difference and non-dependence on any doctrine.

²⁴ C. Ozkan, *A Comparative Analysis: Buddhist Madhyamaka and Daoist Chongxuan (twofold mystery) in the early Tang (618–720)*, MA thesis at University of Iowa, Iowa 2013, p. 37.

²⁵ Jizang, *Essay on the Two Levels of Truth*, pt. 1 [in:] Chan Wing-tsit, *A Sourcebook...*, p. 360–1. TSD 45:90–1.

In my opinion, Jizang's list of levels is not finite, and it could not be finite, because – according to *bóxiè xiànzhēn* method – every view has its opposition. Jizang writes: „The four kinds of Two Levels of Truth all represent the principle of gradual rejection, like building a framework from the ground”²⁶. The *sizhōng èrdí* concept shows that justifying the assumptions of our beliefs (in this case non-directly, by showing that the opposite views are false), we fall into the trap of infinite regression. Nāgārjuna and Jízàng raise an issue of the limits of our knowledge, demonstrating that the classic model of truth and rationality is self-contradictory. We could compare it with the so-called Münschausen trilemma, created by the contemporary philosopher, Hans Albert, to prove self-contradiction of the principle of sufficient reason. Justifying belief, we have to choose between [1] infinite regress (A because B, because C, ad inf.), [2] vicious circle (A because B, B because A, or: D, because B, etc.) and [3] dogmatism, which is refuted from the starting point²⁷. As we have already seen, Nāgārjuna used this trilemma explicitly in *Vigrahavyāvartani*, writing about [1] *anavasthā*, [2] *svataḥ siddhi* and [3] *upanyāsa*. Jízàng also used this approach in his critique of causality, writing that [1] chain of causes leads to infinite regress, [2] ultimate causes cannot be established by ultimate causes, [3] causes do not have self-existence. In fact, whole philosophy of Jizang resembles this trilemma: [3] he refuted dogmatism because of his doctrine of emptiness, close to the doctrine of skilful means; [2] he showed a vicious circle in the method of refutation of erroneous views as the illumination of right views (A because not-B, not-B because A); [1] finally, he demonstrated infinite regress of our assumptions in the *sizhōng èrdí*. What is interesting, according to Jízàng, Madhyamaka itself is not free from these limitations: [3] it is also empty, [2] it is right only when nihilism and eternalism are wrong and vice versa, [1] its basic notion of two truths leads to *regressus ad infinitum*. As we can see, the thought of Jizang is very

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 90.

²⁷ In Polish: H. Albert, *Nauka i poszukiwanie prawdy. Krytyczny realizm i jego konsekwencje dla metodologii*, transl. D. Sadowski, W. Bensari, [in:] P. Dehnel (red.), *Krytyczny racjonalizm*, Wrocław 1992, p. 63.

consistent and coherent. At the same time, his scepticism has not nihilistic, but rather pragmatic and soteriological face.

Jizang is at the same time the greatest and the last philosopher of Sanlun school, brought to Japan by his disciple Ekan (kor. *Hyegwan*) as Sanron, when it eventually died out. According to Chan Wing-tsit, there are three reasons for this state of affairs: firstly, his philosophy was too Indian; secondly, it was too abstractive; thirdly, it was also too sceptical for incipient Chinese Buddhism²⁸. In my opinion, it is quite an injurious remark, also for Chinese. Even if Jizang's philosophy is Indian in its core, it very often uses many notions typical for Chinese philosophy. Just like Sengzhaio, Jizang relates to the fundamental Neo-Daoist division into substance and function: „Correctness in substance means that it is neither absolute nor worldly, and correctness in function means being both absolute and worldly”²⁹. Personally, I doubt that Jizang had no disciples not because he was too abstractive, it is rather because there was nothing left to say in Chinese Madhyamaka after him. We cannot talk for a long time about the limits of our knowledge; therefore the rest was left for practice (“the rest is silence”), which has been done by Chan Buddhism. Apart from the historical significance of his philosophy, which is obvious, I tried to emphasize its intercultural importance and original contribution to the development of epistemology at all.

SUMMARY

The aim of this paper is to evoke the Jizang's theory of knowledge and truth in terms of contemporary philosophy. Firstly, I am presenting main parts of Madhyamaka thought, especially those concerning human knowledge and cognition, enunciated in Nagarjuna's "*Vigrahavyāvartani*". Secondly, I am raising an issue of the acceptance of Madhyamaka in the area of Chinese thought, which provides us with the question of inception and development of the *sānlùn zōng*, Three Treatises School. Thirdly, I am expounding main points and key notions of the Jizang's philosophy: the crucial concepts of "refutation of erroneous views as the illumination of right views" (*bóxiè xiànzhēn*) and „the Four Levels of the Two Kinds of Truth" (*sìzhōng èrdī*).

²⁸ Chan Wing-tsit, *A Sourcebook...*, p. 359.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 368.

I try to explicate and develop these ideas in terms of modern epistemology, which is in the first instance related to the Münschausen trilemma.

KEY words: Jizang, Sanlun, Three Treatises, Madhyamaka, Nagarjuna, Buddhist epistemology, theory of two truths, Chinese Buddhism, Münschausen trilemma

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