AN ANNOTATED TRANSLATION OF THE CHUNG-LUN,

with Nāgārjuna's Middle Stanzas, a basic text of Chinese Buddhism

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Abstract

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'AN ANNOTATED TRANSLATION OF THE CHUNG-LUN with Nāgārjuna's Middle Stanzas, a basic text of Chinese Buddhism (2 vols.)

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The thesis comprises a critical introduction and complete translation into English of the Chinese Buddhist text 'Chung-lun' (Middle Treatise), T.1564, Kumārajīva's translation of a commentary on Nāgārjuna's mūlamadhyamakakārikā (Middle Stanzas) by Vimalākṣa (or Piṅgala), dated 409AD. The translation consists of twenty-seven chapters corresponding to the divisions of the kārikā. The notes to the translation discuss ideas, arguments and allusions in the Treatise as well as textual issues and points of translation.
Acknowledgements

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Volume I: Introduction, Notes to the translation, Chinese Text, Bibliography

Volume II: Seng-jui's Preface

The Middle Treatise: Translation

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1. Introduction

1.1 The Chung-lun (Middle Treatise)

The Chung-lun or Middle Treatise is a Chinese text consisting of a translation in four hundred and forty-nine verses of the Madhyamakakarikā, the 'Middle Stanzas' or 'Verses on the Middle Doctrine' of the Indian philosopher-monk Nāgārjuna (ca 150 - 250 AD), together with a prose commentary. This commentary, which comprises the major part of the text, was composed originally in an Indian or Central Asian language, although neither a text nor a title of the original has been traced so far, but it was revised, probably extensively, by the eminent Central Asian translator and scholar Kumārajīva during the process of issuing the Chinese version, the Chung-lun, in or about 409 AD in Chang-an, the capital of China under the later Chin dynasty.

Notes to section 1.1

1. Four hundred and forty-six if the repeated opening verses (l1v1,l1v2) and the verse quoted from Āryadeva at 27/24 are discounted.

2. The two sources for the date of issue of the text are the notes at the end of T'an-ying's preface to the Chung-lun (CSTCC,T.2145,p.77b8) and at the end of Seng-juī's Preface to the Shih-erh-men-lun (CSTCC,p.78a5) where the date is given as Hung-shih 11 (409AD). According to a note appended to T'an-yīng's preface to the Chung-lun, Kumārajīva issued the translation at the same time as the Shih-erh-men-lun (T.1568). The date of 409 is not necessarily correct, but it is the only date we have, and for a number of other
reasons both historical and textual set out in the discussion of the authorship below, I think that it is probably correct. However, other scholars have assumed that the Chung-lun was published earlier than 409, and that Kumārajīva possessed a text of the Middle Stanzas from the time of his arrival in Ch'ang-an. Prof. Tsukamoto Zenryū, for example, believes that Seng-chao 'drew upon' (Jap. inshō, not inyō, suru) a version of the Chung-lun for his work 'Prajñā has no knowing'. See Robinson, p.250, n.14, Tsukamoto, Z. (Ed.), Jōron Kenkyū, pp.144-5. My thanks are due to Prof. M. Saigusa for clarification of this and other points relating to the authorship of the Treatise.

1.2 The Text

The text used as the basis for the present translation is T.1564 in Vol. XXX of the Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō, which is the standard Japanese edition of the Chinese canon, largely based on the Korean Tripitaka. The Taishō text lists or incorporates variant readings from a number of Chinese versions of the text. Many changes could, of course, have taken place in the early stages of transmission of the Chinese text, but the edited version of the text in the Taishō Tripitaka shows remarkably few variants, and most of these are obvious copying errors. In only one case (at 22c15 – see note 249 to the translation) where the stream-winner is placed above the arhant in the spiritual hierarchy) was the reliability of the text in all versions called seriously into question. In several cases, where ambiguous readings seemed as good as each other and Hatani, Ui or Walleser preferred variant readings listed in the Taishō edition, I followed, as a rule, the reading in the Korean text.
1.3 The Authenticity of the Middle Treatise

When the Middle Treatise is considered from the point of view of its 'authenticity' as a statement in Chinese of Nāgārjuna's śūnyavāda (teaching of emptiness), several questions are raised in respect of the verses and the commentary, which may be considered separately.

Firstly, are the verses in the Middle Treatise those of Nāgārjuna in the Middle Stanzas?
Secondly, is the translation of these verses accurate?
Thirdly, would a Chinese reader understand Nāgārjuna's meaning from reading the Middle Treatise verses?
And fourthly, is the commentary a reliable exposition of Nāgārjuna's views?

The answer to each of these questions is 'yes and no', as follows:

With regard to the first question, we do not know which verses Nāgārjuna wrote; we only have extant versions of his Middle Stanzas in Chinese, Sanskrit and Tibetan. The Chinese text is the earliest known text, and the Chinese version may be closest to Nāgārjuna's own words. It seems reasonable, however, to assume that there are some errors in the Chinese, and that some of these errors may be corrected from the Sanskrit or Tibetan sources. Equally, there may be errors in the Sanskrit which could be corrected from the Chinese and Tibetan texts, and so on. There are minor differences in the placing and numbering of
verses in the Chinese, Sanskrit and Tibetan versions of the Middle Stanzas, but the arrangement of verses in the Chinese has as much claim to 'authenticity' as the arrangement of verses in the Sanskrit and Tibetan versions, since no-one knows which version is the earliest, or the most correct.

Regarding the second question, the translation of individual verses is generally accurate, as noted above. This is not to say, however, that the Chinese translation transmits every nuance of the Sanskrit (or Central Asian) original, and omits every wrong implication. In particular, terms like pu k'o te (cannot be, untenable), ying (ought, should), yu (is), wu (is not), etc., are not used systematically to render specific Sanskrit terms. Robinson, in Early Mādhyamika in India and China, pp. 83-88 compares Nāgārjuna's stanzas in chapter one as preserved in the Middle Treatise and the Prasannapadā with a view to determining the accuracy of the Chinese translation. He states that

The Chinese is often more explicit than the Sanskrit. It relies less heavily on anaphora and so is clearer. It sometimes supplies explanatory phrases such as one finds in the prose paraphrases of Sanskrit commentaries. In verses 6 and 11 the Chinese reflects Sanskrit variants which are as good as, or perhaps better than, those in the extant Sanskrit text. The Chinese copes successfully with syntactic features ... it possesses a device for handling the highly-important abstract-noun suffixes.

As for the defects: There are several lexical mistakes, and a number of renderings that misrepresent the meaning of the original. The terms yu and wu do duty for all the derivatives of as and bhū as well as for upapadyate, yujyate, vidyate, and their negatives ... The worst defect in this chapter and also in the other is the handling of the logical operators - upapadyate, yujyate, and prasajyate. When the latter occurs, it is usually rendered by shih shih h pu jan (this thing is not so/true) which fails to indicate
the exact sense - the ensuing of a logical consequence that is unwelcome to the opponent. The translations of these three terms are not consistent, however, and pu to (is not got) may render na vidyate (is not found, does not exist) as well as nopapadyate and na yujyate ... This confusion of the existential, the modal, the logical and the epistemological prevents anyone who does not know the Sanskrit from grasping the subtler points of the text.

But Robinson's conclusion is that the reader 'will be more likely to miss right ideas than to conceive wrong ones', and this broad conclusion applies to the verses throughout the Treatise.

On rare occasions Kumārajīva's rendering of the verses is clearly wrong. For example, in 1v13, Kumārajīva apparently mistranslates vyāsta-samāsta (separately and together) by lüeh-kuang (briefly and at length), and in 24v18 he translates śūnyatā (emptiness) by ṡu (nonexistence). Both of these mistakes are in fact corrected by glosses in the commentary. In some cases Kumārajīva's version is substantially different from the extant Sanskrit. For example, 24v40 in the Sanskrit reads: 'One who sees all things as arising in dependence sees suffering and its origin, its cessation and the path to its cessation as they truly are', whereas Kumārajīva has: 'This is why it is said in the sutras/ That if you perceive the dharma of causality/ Then you can perceive the Buddha./And perceive suffering, accumulation, cessation and the Way. On other occasions the Middle Treatise version may be a more reliable version of the original than has come down to us in the Sanskrit or Tibetan. Robinson asserts that the meaning is often clearer in Chinese than in Sanskrit (this is clearly illustrated by the often
considerable divergence amongst the different Western-language translations of the Sanskrit and Tibetan karika) but it should be said that this clarity in the Chinese version may be illusory, since by the very nature of the language, ambiguities in the Chinese verses have often to be resolved one way or the other by reference to the commentary before any meaning for the verse as a whole can be appreciated.

In reply to the third question, 'would a Chinese reader understand Nāgārjuna's meaning from reading the Middle Treatise verses?', this hypothesis remains untested, since in Chinese the Middle Stanzas are never found without an accompanying commentary. Indeed, traditional Sino-Japanese Buddhist scholarship made no distinction between the 'Middle Stanzas' and the 'Middle Treatise'. Both were (and still are), referred to as 'the Chung-lun (Jap. Chūron). But a Chinese reader would hardly be able to understand the verses without the commentary. An example of the difficulty in understanding verses on their own is provided by 14v5, which runs (even in English translation, which is already to some extent an interpretation):

```
Difference is difference because of difference.
Difference without difference is not difference.
If a dharma issues from a cause,
That dharma does not differ from its cause.
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The meaning of 'difference' can only be determined in this case by reference to the commentary.
Fourthly, in answer to the question 'Is the commentary a reliable exposition of Nägärjuna's views?', we may say that the commentary is both less, and more, than a reliable exposition. On the one hand the commentary fails, in the same way as the verse-translations, to bring out some of the finer meanings of the Sanskrit. It sometimes employs similes which do not work very well and are perhaps unworthy of Nägärjuna, and it often confuses the epistemological and ontological frames of reference when speaking of emptiness. On the other hand, the commentary adds much to what Nägärjuna says. It emphasises and expounds ideas that are not conveyed in the verses, such as the reasons for Nägärjuna writing the Middle Stanzas, and the purpose of individual chapters, and there are many other additional features of the commentary outlined below in the 'survey of contents'. But its particular contribution is that it places the whole of Nägärjuna's discussion of Mādhyamika in a Mahayanist context, critical of the vehicle of the Śrāvakas. This is in sharp contrast to Nägärjuna's verses which make no reference to the Mahayana. The 'Mahayanisation' of Nägärjuna is perhaps the most obvious means by which the commentary diverges from Nägärjuna's own views, but it is a two-edged sword. The commentary makes Nägärjuna a Mayahanist, in the developed sense in which Mahayana was understood in fifth-century China, which he is not; but it also shows Nägärjuna's philosophy as Mahayanist, which it has to be in order to survive within Mahayana Buddhism.
1.4 Previous Translations of the Treatise

Although the Treatise is mentioned in several bibliographies of Mādhyamika works, its content is more or less neglected in Western studies of Mādhyamika. Nevertheless it has been translated, in full and in part, into Western languages and of course into Japanese. The first translation of any part of the Treatise into English was a rendering of Chapter 25 (on Nirvāṇa) by the missionary and Buddhologist Samuel Beal, which appeared in The Indian Antiquary of 1881, some thirty-seven years after Burnouf had first introduced Candrakīrti's version of Mādhyamika to Europe in his 'Introduction a l'Histoire du Bouddhisme Indien'. Beal's translation of 25v1 ran:

If all things are unreal,
Then how is it possible to remove
From that which does not exist
Something which, being removed, leaves Nirvāna?

In 1911 and 1912 Max Walleser produced translations of, respectively, the Tibetan Akutobhayā and the Chung-lun. These translations have remained the only complete version of either text in a Western language. Walleser's German translation is virtually unannotated and has not been found helpful in preparing an English translation. In 1928 Miyamoto, Shōson, then a student at Oxford, presented a D.Phil. thesis entitled 'A Study of Nāgārjuna' which included an incomplete translation of the
Treatise in an excellent English style. Soothill, in his Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms actually records that 'an English translation (of the Middle Treatise) by Miyamoto exists and publication is promised' (p.111), but the translation was apparently never completed, and ends abruptly at 20v7. Miyamoto's translation is mentioned in Streng's bibliography\textsuperscript{3} but appears to be otherwise unknown, even to Buddhist scholars in Japan.\textsuperscript{4}

In the 1930's two Japanese versions (not translations) of the Treatise were produced within the space of a few years by Ui, Hakuju in the Kokuyaku Daizōkyō series, and by Hatani, Ryotai in the Kokuyaku Issaikyō,\textsuperscript{5} using the technique known as kaki-kudashi bun in which the characters in their Chinese meanings are rearranged and supplemented with hiragana to form Japanese sentences which Buddhist scholars can read. The present translation however is done directly from the Chinese; where the Chinese was difficult I referred to the Japanese versions and when (as was often the case), the Japanese versions faithfully preserved the ambiguities of the original, I referred to the translations of Miyamoto or Walleser.

I have tried to avoid using Sanskrit terms except, following standard practice, in those cases where Sanskrit terms have become English terms, or where the Chinese transliterates, rather than translates them.\textsuperscript{6} The style of the present translation has emerged naturally and I think that it reflects Kumārajīva's
plain form; if it reads like a translation this is at least partly because the Treatise is itself a translation. The vocabulary is as consistent as I could make it while preserving a readable style, and as far as possible I have followed the rule that someone reading the English translation who is familiar with Kumārajīva's style should be able to reconstitute an approximation of the original with reasonable ease. I have interpolated, distorted and supplemented the text as little as possible, with the hope that the result is both readable and accurate.
Notes to section 1.4


2. The reference to Burnouf is in Robinson, Early Mādhyamika, p.3.


5. See the Bibliography, under Ui and Hatani.

6. In translating Sanskrit terms (i.e. where the Chinese has a technical term having only the meaning of the Sanskrit which it translates), I have tried where practicable to conform with Conze's translations in his Materials for a Dictionary of the Prajñāpāramitā Literature
2 The Problem of the Authorship of the Middle Treatise

2.1 Traditional Attribution to Piṅgala

Information about the Treatise and its author prior to its translation into Chinese is limited. The Middle Treatise has no particular recoverable Sanskrit title; it is only one of many commentaries on Nāgārjuna's 'Middle Stanzas' written by Indian and Central Asian monks after his death. We know something of the circumstances of its translation into Chinese however from the preface by Kumārajīva's contemporary and disciple Seng-jui, which is preserved in the Ch'u-san-tsang-chi-chi (T.2145). In his preface Seng-jui states that the commentary and verses were revised by Kumārajīva before translation, because the original text had a number of faults in it. According to Seng-jui:

The (text) that we are now issuing is the commentary by the Indian Brahman named Pin-chia-lo (or Pin-lo-chia; see below), in the Ch'in language 'Blue-eyes' (Ch'ing-mu). Though he believed and understood the profound Dharma, his language is not elegant and apposite. The Dharma-master (Kumārajīva) edited and amended all the errors, deficiencies and redundancies in it, interpreting it according to the
stanzas, so that the principles are definitive, though in some places the language is not entirely excellent.\footnote{4}

For later reference, it should be noted that the Chinese does not specify whether both of Ch'ing-mu's eyes are blue, nor does it specify whether Ch'ing-mu 'believes and understands the true Dharma' (that is, is still living) or whether he 'believed and understood the true Dharma' (at the time of writing the commentary). How we translate the preface depends upon who we believe Ch'ing-mu was, and whether he was contemporary with Seng-jui, even perhaps known to him.

In the version of Seng-jui's Preface to the Middle Treatise which appears in Taishō Vol.XXX (see the translation of this Preface reproduced on pp.ii-iv of Vol.2 of this thesis), Ch'ing-mu 'blue-eyes' is said to be the name by which Pin-chia-lo, the commentator, is known in the Ch'in language, or Chinese. Here is the crux of the problem of the authorship of the Chung-lun, for no Sanskrit reconstruction of the syllables pin-chia-lo means 'Blue-eyes'. Since this problem has not been satisfactorily resolved, it is often ignored. The traditional reconstructed Sanskrit reading of pin-chia-lo has been Piṅgala, so for instance Prof. Nakamura refers to the Chung-lun as "Piṅgala (םי) 's commentary".\footnote{5} This reading of pin-chia-lo as Piṅgala dates back at least to 1898 when Suzuki Daisetsu, writing in the Journal of the Buddhist Text Society, identified Blue-eyes with "Piṅgala-netra, otherwise called Kaṇadeva or Candrakīrtti".\footnote{6}
Five years later, however, Takakusu Junjiro pointed out that Ch'ing-mu means blue-eyed, whereas Piṅgala means tawny, or reddish-brown. In fact, said Takakusu, 'Blue-eyes' meant Candrakīrti, otherwise known as Āryadeva; there was never a Piṅgala. In 1937, by which time no-one believed that the seventh-century Candrakīrti was responsible for the fifth-century Chung-lun, Teramoto, Enga tried to show that Ch'ing-mu was so-called on account of his one blue-eye. The other eye was different, being tawny-coloured. Ch'ing-mu, according to Teramoto, was another name for Kaṇadeva, the squint-eyed, also Āryadeva.

This ingenious solution would have been preferable had Max Walleser not already pointed out, in the introduction to his 1911 German translation of the Chung-lun, that pin-chia-lo is only a conjecture of the editors of the 1881 Tokyo edition of the Chinese tripitaka, and that all the oldest sources give the syllables of the transliterated name in the order pin-lo-chia, which is also the reading preserved in the Ch'ū san-tsang-chi-chi version of Seng-jui's Preface in the Taishō tripitaka.

Walleser is not correct in saying that all the oldest sources have pin-lo-chia, for the Korean tripitaka on which the Taisho is based has pin-chia-lo in Seng-jui's preface. This means that the Korean Tripitaka and the 'three editions' of the Sung, Yūan and Ming have preserved different traditions about Ch'ing-mu's name since, probably, the twelfth century. Both readings are
very old, and unfortunately it is not possible to know which reading is the 'original' one; it is of course possible that both are wrong.

2.2 Piṅgalakkha and Vimalākṣa

The name 'pin-lo-chia' Walleser reconstructed in two possible ways; as Piṅgalakkha (a Prakrit form of Piṅgalākṣa), or as Vimalākṣa. Walleser pointed out that no person named Piṅgalakkha is encountered in the rather copious Tibetan histories of Buddhism, and he suggested that Vimalākṣa, Kumārajiva's vinaya-master in Kucha, who came to Ch'ang-an to join Kumārajiva in 406 AD, could have been the author of the commentary, perhaps revising an earlier commentary, traces of which survive in the Tibetan Akutobhayā. 9

However, Walleser thought that this Vimalākṣa, whose biography is preserved in the Kao-seng-chuan came from Kabul, whereas Ch'ing-mu is said to be an Indian Brahman. Moreover Ch'ing-mu in Chinese means 'blue-eyed', whereas Vimalākṣa in Sanskrit means 'pure-eyed'. If Ch'ing-mu was indeed Vimalākṣa, said Walleser, then Seng-jui made a mistake in the colour-word 'ch'ing', substituting 'blue' for 'pure' or, if the author were called Piṅgalakkha, then Seng-jui confused the Sanskrit words for 'blue' and 'tawny'. Robinson follows roughly this line of argument in his brief discussion of the author's identity. He suggests that through a scribe's error, the water radical was
omitted from the character ch'ing 青 of ch'ing-mu, and that the character should have been ch'ing 清 meaning 'pure'. In this case Ch'ing-mu 濟目 would mean Vimalākṣa (pure eyes).

According to Robinson, however, this Vimalākṣa need not be Kumārajīva's vinaya-master, for "it is not a rare type of name and probably designated some otherwise unknown Indian". However, for both these solutions a residual problem remains; why is Vimalākṣa's name transliterated in the Kao-seng-chuan, the 'Biographies of Eminent Monks' by the syllables pei-mo-lo-ch'a 頡摩羅 and not, as in the Preface to the Middle Treatise, by pin-lo-chia 金羅伽? Like Walleser, Robinson answers that inconsistencies are not rare in Kumārajīva's works, although strictly speaking, of course, only the term Ch'ing-mu appears in works by Kumārajīva, and that only marginally in the title colophon of the Chung-lun. The characters pin-lo-chia appear in Seng-jui's Preface to the Chung-lun, and pei-mo-lo-ch'a in Vimalākṣa's biography in the Kao-seng-chuan.

Some definite pieces of information emerge from this review of the debate so far. One is that the original reading of Ch'ing-mu's Indian name may be constructed either from the syllables pin-lo-chia, or from pin-chia-lo. The second is that all the solutions to the problem of Ch'ing-mu's identity based on the reading pin-chia-lo have involved the supposition that a mistake, - either by Kumārajīva, or by Seng-jui, or by some unknown scribe - has been made, although the only verifiable
alteration to the text seems to have been the one made in 1881 when the editors of the Tokyo edition of the canon changed pin-lo-chia to pin-chia-lo. Walleser offers two possible renderings of the syllables pin-lo-chia, Piṅgalākkha, and Vimalākṣa, but neither of these translates into 'Blue-eyes'. This seems about as far as we can go without assuming a fault in the tradition. What other evidence is available?

2.3 Review of the Evidence

Kumārajīva arrived in Ch'ang-an and began his translation work in 401 AD. According to Robinson, "the order in which works were translated corresponds roughly to how highly Kumārajīva valued the texts, perhaps with the exception of the dhyāna texts requested by Seng-jui". If so, then the delay of eight years - from 401 to 409 - in the production of translations of the Chung-lun and the Shih-erh-men-lun represents a remarkable exception to this rule. The Hundred Treatise (Pai-lun, T.1569) which belongs to the same Mādhyamika genre as the Chung-lun and the Shih-erh-men-lun was translated in 402, immediately after Kumārajīva's arrival, and revised in 404. Why not also the Chung-lun, which was a more important and systematic statement of śūnyavāda? The usual answer is one inferred from Seng-jui's remark in the Preface that Kumārajīva had to alter the phrasing, remedy various deficiencies and (re)interpret Ch'ing-mu's commentary according to the meaning of the stanzas before issuing
it as a translation. Most scholars have assumed that Kumārajīva had a copy of the original version of the Middle Treatise text when he came to Ch'ang-an, but in fact there is no evidence for this. "As two Mādhyamika texts (Chung-lun and Shih-erh-men-lun) are mentioned in Kumārajīva's biography in the episode of his conversion to Mahayana" says Robinson, "they are established as sufficiently precious to him that he would naturally (sic) have taken his copies with him (to Ch'ang-an), or have carried them in his memory,"15 but it goes without saying that if Kumārajīva did carry the Chung-lun in his memory he would not need to spend eight years correcting it. However, it seems unlikely that Kumārajīva did spend eight years revising a text as important to his understanding and exposition of Mahayana as the Chung-lun. He was dissatisfied with his first version of the Hundred Treatise but he revised it within two years. The Great Perfection of Wisdom Treatise (T.1509) which has occupied Prof. Lamotte for forty years is twenty-five times the length of the Chung-lun, and it includes a great deal of Kumārajīva's own work of editing and revision16 as well as all the difficult Mādhyamika terminology. Kumārajīva translated it in about two years.17 It took him less than five months to translate the Lotus Sutra. Thus a long delay of eight years in publishing a translation of the Chung-lun simply does not fit in with Kumārajīva's pace of work. Moreover, the evidence suggests that the text arrived late in Ch'ang-an, perhaps only a short time before it was published in 409. Amongst the textual evidence supporting this view is the absence of direct quotations from the
Chung-lun in any work produced in Ch'ang-an before 409, when the Chung-lun appeared. The Great Perfection of Wisdom Treatise of course contains many verses which refer to, or echo, the contents of the Chung-lun, but a comparison shows that whatever borrowing took place was completed before the work was translated into Chinese. More significantly, Seng-chao 信筆 in his 406 AD treatise 'Prajñā has no knowing' 謀若無知論 and later works shows hardly any knowledge of the Middle Treatise, and relies for his understanding of Mādhyamika on the Hundred Treatise and Great Perfection of Wisdom Treatise. Seng-chao was a disciple of Kumārajīva and we may assume that he received direct instruction in Mādhyamika ideas from Kumārajīva, but he does not quote directly from either a Sanskrit or Chinese version of the Middle Treatise. This strongly suggests that no written text of the Middle Treatise was available during the first five or six years of Kumārajīva's stay in Ch'ang-an, and lends support to the historical evidence of a date of 409 AD for the translation of both the Middle Treatise and the Twelve Topic Treatise.

If we suppose, as a working hypothesis, that the text of the Chung-lun which Kumārajīva revised and issued in 409 was brought to Ch'ang-an some years after Kumārajīva himself arrived there, the otherwise inexplicable delay in translation of this important text is explained. Can the late arrival of the text in Ch'ang-an, however, throw any more light on the problem of its authorship?
2.4 Vimalākṣa the Vinaya-Master

If, following one of Walleser's suggestions, we tentatively identify the author as Vimalākṣa, Kumārajīva's old Vinaya-master from Kucha, then we have a date for the arrival of Vimalākṣa in Ch'ang-an, (perhaps bringing his copy of Nāgārjuna's Middle Stanzas with his own commentary), of 406 AD. This would give Kumārajīva between two and three years, amongst the pressure of other work, to substantially revise Vimalākṣa's commentary and complete the translation into Chinese. Vimalākṣa was an Indian monk from Kashmir (not Kabul, as Walleser wrongly supposed) and he was a specialist in the Sarvāstivāda Vinaya. Since Mādhyamika was not his special interest it may be doubted whether he would write a commentary on Nāgārjuna's verses. However, he had a close attachment to Kumārajīva, close enough to bring him to Ch'ang-an after a long separation, and it is quite possible that he was amongst those converted to Mahayana by Kumārajīva in Kucha. If he was amongst the seventy or so monks who, according to Chi-tsang's sources, tried their hand at a commentary on the verses we would certainly expect the result to be exactly as Seng-jui describes it; the work of a non-specialist, badly-phrased and containing various errors and omissions which Kumārajīva had to repair. At the same time if Vimalākṣa, Kumārajīva's old teacher, was actually present at the time when the Treatise was issued in Ch'ang-an and Seng-jui published his preface, we would expect Seng-jui to say exactly what he does, namely that imperfections in the writing-style of the author in
no way reflect on his understanding of Buddhism. How otherwise
could Seng-jui know that, despite all the errors and omissions,
Ch'ing-mu "believes and understands the profound
dharma" 堅解深法?

2.5 The meaning of Ch'ing-mu

There remains, however, the problem of the meaning of the name.
Pin-lo-chia may be a transliteration of Vimalākṣa, but Vimalākṣa
means 'pure eyes' whereas Ch'ing-mu 青 目 means 'blue-eyes'.
Despite the various solutions put forward, however, it is not
necessary for Ch'ing-mu 青 目 to translate as 'pure eyes' in
order to establish that Vimalākṣa is Ch'ing-mu. In Vimalākṣa's
biography in the Kao-seng-chuan the meaning of the Sanskrit name
Vimalākṣa is given as "pure (spotless) eyes" 無垢眼. But
almost as an afterthought, the biographer adds that because
Vimalākṣa actually had blue eyes (ch'ing-yen 青眼) people at
the time called him "the blue-eyed Vinaya-master" (ch'ing-yen
lu-shih 青眼律師). 23 'Blue-eyes' has hitherto been
taken as a translation of a Sanskrit name 'pin-lo-chia', but it
seems not to be a translation, nor even a proper name, but a
descriptive nickname. If Ch'ing-mu is not a proper name, it
makes no difference that ch'ing-mu 青 目 in Seng-jui's preface,
and ch'ing-yen 青眼 in Vimalākṣa's biography, are synonyms for
'blue-eyes' rather than homophones. The translation of that
part of Seng-jui's preface which refers to Ch'ing-mu should
therefore be read as follows .
The commentary which is now issued is by the Indian Brahman Vimalākṣa, called in Chinese 'Blue-eyes'. Though he believes and understands the profound Dharma, his language (in the commentary) was not elegant and precise....

In this way, the identity of Ch'ing-mu can be established without recourse to the hypothesis that either Seng-jui, or Kumārajīva, or an unknown scribe made a mistake. One problem, however, remains and this is the inconsistency between the transliteration of Vimalākṣa as pin-lo-chia in Seng-jui's preface, and its rendering as pei-mo-lo-ch'a in Vimalākṣa's biography in the Kao-seng-chuan. Neither of these transcriptions is the responsibility of Kumārajīva, but both seem to derive from Seng-jui, whose Erh-ch'in-lu (Catalogue of translations made under the former and later Ch'in) provided one of the sources for Hui-chiao's sixth-century compilation of the Kao-seng-chuan. Seng-jui was with Kumārajīva from 401 AD until Kumārajīva's death (in 414), he participated in the translation of the Middle Treatise in 409, and he became an authority on Sanskrit phonology. We may assume from this that Seng-jui would not be careless in rendering Sanskrit names, and indeed this is one very good reason for believing that the equation of pin-lo-chia with 'blue-eyes' is not an error. On the other hand, Seng-jui's concern with the problem of the
transcription of foreign names would presumably lead him to make improvements in the system whenever possible. A new system of dealing with Sanskrit words was developed by Seng-jui (alias Hui-jui) in conjunction with the layman Hsieh Ling-yun in Ch'ang-an in 417-418. This might account for a discrepancy in the records left by Seng-jui, who died more than twenty years after Kumārajīva, in 436.

2.6 Implications

If Vimalākṣa was the author of the Chung-lun, then Kumārajīva's relationship to the writer of the commentary was that of a pupil to his old teacher. On the other hand, we know that Kumārajīva was an expert in Mādhyamika from his other writings, whereas Vimalākṣa, though he had been Kumārajīva's vinaya-master in Kucha before Kumārajīva was abducted by the Chinese in 383, was a teacher of the vinaya and not a Mādhyamika philosopher. It is probable, though not certain, that he learned Mādhyamika from Kumārajīva, who had been converted to Mahayana some six years earlier on the way back from his travels in India. We can only speculate about Kumārajīva's attitude to a commentary written by Vimalākṣa, but we know already that Kumārajīva made very thorough-going revisions to texts which were not canonical - a practice exemplified in his treatment of the Great Perfection of Wisdom Treatise (T.1509). If the assessment of Kumārajīva's relationship to Vimalākṣa which I have outlined is correct, then Kumārajīva was Vimalākṣa's pupil in Vinaya, but his
teacher, or at least his equal, in śūnyavāda.

It is thus doubtful whether Kumārajīva would consider himself bound in any way to Vimalākṣa's commentary on the stanzas, unless perhaps he thought that parts of the commentary represented an older tradition, traceable to Nāgārjuna himself. Before Vimalākṣa's arrival in Ch'ang-an, Kumārajīva may have been prevented from issuing a Chinese translation of Nāgārjuna's major Mādhyamika work because he did not have a manuscript of the Middle Stanzas, but there is no reason to doubt his ability to write a commentary of his own, given the verses upon which to base his commentary. Enough is preserved of Kumārajīva's other writings to show that his understanding of Mādhyamika was complete. With due respect to Vimalākṣa (which is what he receives in the preface by Seng-jui), it seems highly probable that the Chung-lun comprises verses by Nāgārjuna and a commentary which is almost wholly the responsibility of Kumārajīva.
Notes to section 2

1. Chi-tsand's sources mention that up to seventy commentaries were written on the stanzas. Chi-tsan; Chung-lun-shu, T.1824,p.5a7-8. Robinson,n.27.

2. The Preface is reproduced in Robinson's translation at the beginning of volume II of this thesis.

3. T.2145,p.76c14-77a5, also in the Fan-i-ming-i-chi, T.2131, pp.1066c-1067a, and reproduced at T.XXX,p.1.

4. T.XXX p.1a26-b7

5. Nakamura, H. Indian Buddhism p.237


7. Takakusu, J. Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society,1903,p.182


10. Robinson, pp.29-30


12. See the account of Kumārajīva's life and translation activities in Robinson,Ch.3, and Kumārajīva's biography in the KSC, T.2059,pp.330-333, translated in Bagchi, Le Canon Bouddhique in Chine, T.1, and Shih, Robert, Biographies des Moines Éminents, pp.60-84

13. Robinson,76-7

14. Robinson,77
15. Robinson, 75

16. Robinson, 34-39. See also Ramanan, p. 335n6, and Rahder and Demiéville's reviews of Lamotte, TGVS.

17. Robinson, 76

18. This judgement is my own; the Mmk verses in the GPWT are identified by Saigusa, M. in an appendix in his Studien zum Mahāprajñāpāramitā (upadesa) sāstra, Tokyo, 1969.

19. Robinson, 123-155, especially p. 142. Cf. also the contents of Kumārajīva's correspondence with Hui-yuan (Robinson, 89) and see note 2 to sec. 1.1 of this thesis.

20. See note 2 to sec. 1.1

21. The biography of Vimalākṣa is in the Kao-seng-chuan, T. 2059, p. 333b-c

22. T. 1824, p. 5a6-8.


24. Robinson, 247-8, n. 4


26. Robinson, 72

27. See n. 16 above
3.1 The Middle Treatise and the Prasannapadā

As a work which is in large part a translation from a Sanskrit or other Indic original, the Treatise, from the point of view of studies of Indian Buddhism, throws some light upon the development of the Mādhyamika commentarial tradition, subsequent to Nāgārjuna who wrote the Middle Stanzas, probably in the early part of the third century AD, and prior to the later division between the Svātantrika and the Prasāṅgika Mādhyamikas which is documented in the seventh-century commentary on the Middle Stanzas, the well-known Prasannapadā Madhyamakavṛtti (Clear-Worded Exposition of the Middle Way) by the Indian Candrakīrti. The Middle Treatise throws less light than could perhaps be hoped for on the development of Indian Buddhist thought in relation to Nāgārjuna's Mādhyamika position, because Kumārajīva's emendations to the text, and the process of rendering the text into Chinese have undoubtedly obscured the true form of the original commentary, and it cannot therefore be said with any certainty that the Middle Treatise version of Mādhyamika really represents an interim stage in a linear development of Indian Buddhist Mādhyamika thought. All that we can say with certainty about the text from the standpoint of the Indian tradition is that the date of its translation, 409 AD, gives us a fixed terminus ad quem for its composition, and it is therefore definitely earlier than the Prasannapadā. This, however, does not tell us how much earlier than 409 AD the original commentary was composed, nor what relationship the
original commentary, preserved in its revised form in the
Treatise, bears to lines of thought which culminated in
Candrakīrti's efforts to reassert the prāsaṅgika (reductio ad
absurdum) interpretation of Nāgārjuna's verses against the
arguments of Bhāvaviveka and in support of the position of
Buddhapālita three or more centuries later. The problem of
finding out how the Middle Treatise fits in to the Indian
development of Mādhyamika thought is not simply a matter of
reconstructing a Sanskrit text from Kumārajīva's Chinese, and
placing the newly-reconstructed Sanskrit into its appropriate
place within the Indian tradition, as has been attempted with
other of Kumārajīva's translations, for the process of revision
and translation, carried out by Kumārajīva, is, in practice, not
reversible. This is clearly shown by Richard Robinson in his
book Early Mādhyamika in India and China, which focuses on the
problem of the transmission of Mādhyamika from India to China,
via Kumārajīva's translations and expositions of Mādhyamika in
the form of letters and treatises. Robinson takes, as an example
of Kumārajīva's translation method, the Sanskrit and Chinese
versions of Chapter One of Nagarjuna's verses (without
commentary), comparing their meanings when read from Sanskrit and
from Chinese. In many cases the meaning of the Chinese is simply
different from that of the Sanskrit. This happens for a variety
of reasons. The Chinese may have used a different Sanskrit
original from the Sanskrit (or Tibetan) versions we have now; the
Chinese may correct a wrong (or apparently wrong) Sanskrit word;
the Chinese translation may be in error; Chinese may have no
word(s) equivalent to certain Sanskrit terms (this is particularly true of logical terms used in arguments by Nāgārjuna) or Kumārajīva may change a verse in order to make what he thinks is the meaning clearer.

The result of these various transmutations of form and content may be that the meaning of the original text is not reliably transmitted by the translation, or that it is reliably transmitted. Robinson, summing up the results of his comparison concludes; "I do not think that the mistranslations prevent the reader from understanding the Mādhyamika system in the aggregate. Individual verses are wrong or misleading, but there is sufficient repetition in the text that if the student takes over-all consistency as his standard he will not be misled very much by blemishes in the translations. He will be more likely to miss right ideas than to conceive wrong ones ..."

Robinson's conclusion, which applies here to the rather narrow field of Nāgārjuna's verses themselves, is broadly true of the whole Middle Treatise. It may seem presumptuous to claim that we can distinguish 'right ideas' in Mādhyamika from wrong ones, but insofar as we can know what Nāgārjuna originally meant to say in his Middle Stanzas, the Middle Treatise commentary, in aggregate, preserves these 'right ideas' and leads the reader away from wrong ones.

In fact, one of the major virtues of the Middle Treatise is that
it presents an exceptionally clear, uncluttered and readable account of Nāgārjuna's Mādhyamika position, though this clarity may be at the expense of many finer logical points and connections which Nāgārjuna presupposes and which Candrakīrti, as a logician, cannot allow to pass unnoticed. An example of the differences between the two commentaries may be found in the opening remarks to Chapter Four, (the whole of the Prasannapadā and Middle Treatise versions of this chapter are presented for comparison below). The Chinese opening remark is simply: Question "The sūtras state that there are five skandhas. What do you say about this?" There are implicit assumptions here about the authority of the Buddha's teaching as preserved in the sūtras, but these are not elaborated. Candrakīrti's preamble to this chapter takes a different tack: "Some may argue that, although vision and the other sense-faculties are not real, the skandhas are, because they have not been explicitly denied. The sense-faculties, however, belong to the skandhas and therefore will exist as well. We reply that they would if the skandhas were real ..." Here Candrakīrti unpacks several of the assumptions implicit in the Chinese question. The sense-faculties, says Candrakīrti, have already been shown to be empty (in the preceding chapter three of Nāgārjuna's Middle Stanzas) but the skandhas have not been explicitly denied (read: by the Buddha) and what is not explicitly denied is real. Candrakīrti here is referring to the Buddha's teaching that 'the self' is no more than the agglomeration of the five skandhas. It may be said authoritatively that the self is not real - but
the skandhas surely are ...? Moreover, pursues Candrakīrti, presenting an imaginary opponent's view; if the skandhas are real, the sense-faculties will be real as well, since the sense-faculties belong to the skandhas. If this were so, it would undo all of Nāgārjuna's argument about the unreality of the sense-faculties in Chapter Three. It may thus be seen that, although the Middle Treatise's and Candrakīrti's approach are the same in substance, Candrakīrti's commentary is both more complex and more alert to logical connections and implications than the Chinese commentary.

Notes to section 3.1


2. See Inada, K. Nāgārjuna: Mulamadhyamakakarika p. 24 for a useful diagram of commentaries on the Stanzas, also Nakamura, Hajime, Indian Buddhism, pp. 236-7
3.2 Comparison of one chapter of The Middle Treatise and the Prasannapadā

The differences between the Middle Treatise and the Prasannapadā commentaries may be illustrated by a comparison of their treatments of one chapter of Nāgārjuna's kārikā. Chapter Four is entitled 'Contemplation of the Five Skandhas' in the Middle Treatise and 'Examination of the Skandhas' in the Prasannapadā. Chapter Four of the Prasannapadā has been translated into English by Sprung in his 'Lucid Exposition of the Middle Way' (pp. 98 - 102), and into French by Jacques May in Candrakīrti Prasannapadā Madhyamakavṛtti, pp. 88 - 96, and it is these translations which are used below in the comparison with my translation of the Middle Treatise. A translation of Walleser's German translation of the Tibetan Akutobhayā commentary on the Middle Stanzas is also provided for comparison in the appendix.

Chapter Four is a brief and relatively straightforward statement of the śūnyavādin position on the skandhas, the 'five aggregates' or what Sprung calls 'the constitutive factors of personal existence'. The argument, in this chapter as in the whole work, centres on causality and its ineffability. It first analyses causality objectively from the point of view of śūnyavāda, then addresses itself to the one who forms theories (views) about causality, and finally turns to a consideration of the role of emptiness as an instrument of debate and a means of liberation.
The comparison which follows takes the form of a synoptic presentation of the Middle Treatise and Prasannapadā commentaries in sections, each section followed by my comments. The Middle Treatise follows a rather strict format in its presentation of Nāgārjuna's stanzas, presenting each verse as a whole and then commenting on the whole verse, or on a group of verses taken consecutively. The Prasannapadā commentary often takes only a line or section of one of Nāgārjuna's verses as a starting-point for its exposition of Mādhyamika. Where this occurs, I have adapted the notation used for the Middle Treatise so that, for instance, 4v3(d) means the fourth line of verse 3 of Chapter 4, and 4/3(a-b) means the commentary to the first two lines of the same verse.

**Middle Treatise**

4/0

Question: The sutras state that there are five skandhas. What do you say about this?

**Prasannapadā**

4/0

Some may argue that, although vision and the other sense-faculties are not real, the skandhas are, because they have not been explicitly denied. The sense-faculties however, belong to the skandhas and therefore will exist as well.

We reply that they would if the
The Chinese introduction is brief and to the point; the Buddha has (authoritatively) taught that there are exist five skandhas. How can a Buddhist deny this? The Sanskrit commentary takes up the topic just dealt with in chapter three, that of the six sense-faculties of eye, ear, etc. and makes substantially the same point but in a different way. The reality of the skandhas has not been explicitly denied (which can mean both that the Buddha speaks of the five skandhas, and that they have not (yet) been refuted by Nāgārjuna), and as a consequence the earlier refutation of the reality of the sense-faculties may not succeed, since the sense-faculties' reality is contingent upon that of the skandhas. The Chinese commentary therefore frames the question as 'what does it mean for the skandhas to exist?', the Sanskrit as 'the skandhas do not exist; in what way do they not exist?'
Middle Treatise

4v1

Form that is separate from the cause of form is inconceivable.

A cause of form separate from form is inconceivable.

Prasannapadā

4v1

Objects are not perceived apart from matter as their cause.

Matter as cause is not perceived apart from objects.

Comments

The Sanskrit distinguishes matter from objects, the Chinese speaks of form which has the meaning of physical form, but 'the cause of form' is not a standard term and is not glossed in the subsequent commentary. Where the Sanskrit has 'are not perceived', the Chinese has pu k'o te which I have rendered 'inconceivable'. It may also mean 'never found' or, in a logical sense 'untenable'. This term is used throughout the Middle Treatise to render a number of logical operators in a way which obscures any distinction between the logical and the ontological.

Middle Treatise

4/1

As for 'cause of form'. It is like threads being the cause of

Prasannapadā

4/1

Here 'objects' means particular material objects (bhautika
the cloth. If you take away
the threads, there is no cloth,
and if you cast away the cloth,
there is no thread. The cloth
is like form, the threads are
like its cause.

Comments

Both commentaries employ analogies to refute the notion that particular forms (matter, material objects) can exist without (material) causes. The Chinese employs the analogy of cloth to show that the whole (form) is at least the sum of its parts (the 'cause of forms'), but without specifying what the cause of forms refers to. The Sanskrit identifies the four elements as the 'matter' referred to in the verse; particular objects are not perceived without the elements of earth, water, fire and air. The Sanskrit analogy is a counter-example. Form and its cause cannot be divorced, they are interdependent and cannot be considered in isolation and unrelated as a cloth and a jar are unrelated.
Middle Treatise 4v2

Form which existed separately from the cause of form
Would be form without a cause
A dharma which exists without a cause?
This is not correct.

Comments
This is a statement of Nagarjuna's axiom that all dharmas are caused. The meanings are identical.

Middle Treatise 4/2

It is like a cloth existing separately from its threads, which would be a cloth without a cause. Things which are uncaused and yet exist are not found anywhere in the world.

Prasannapada 4v2

If objects exist apart from matter as their cause, objects must be uncaused: but nothing is ever without a cause.

Prasannapada 4/2

As a piece of cloth, being another thing than a pot, cannot be caused by the pot, so objects - material particulars - cannot be caused by the four elements if thought of as separate from them. But 'Nothing is ever without a cause'. Therefore, because causelessness is logically
absurd, it cannot be accepted that objects are separate from matter as their cause.

Comments

The Middle Treatise passage quoted here which parallels Candrākīrti's commentary is only the first part of a longer disquisition on uncaused dharmas (see below, 4/2 contd.). The Middle Treatise employs the analogy of cloth and threads to show that cause and effect of form are inseparable. There is an appeal to empirical evidence here for proof that acausal events do not happen, even though elsewhere empirical evidence is regarded as unreliable (see n. 30 to the translation). The following section of commentary (4/3) picks up this loose end and eventually concludes that dharmas are by definition caused, which is a logical argument. The Sanskrit avoids the empiricist trap - it uses the analogy of cloth and pot to show that A (the pot) - cannot cause B (the jar), if A is different from B. This is a standard argument which is encountered again and again in the Middle Treatise. Candrākīrti then states that all things (i.e. all dharmas) have causes. This is axiomatic or, as Candrākīrti expresses it, 'causelessness is logically absurd' (in Sprung's translation. May translates: 'the evil of causelessness follows as a necessary consequence' which is perhaps closer to the notion of 'axiomatic').
Middle Treatise

4/2 (contd.)

Question: In the Buddha-Dharma, in the doctrines of outsiders (non-Buddhists) and in worldly teachings there are dharmas which are uncaused. Buddhism has the three inactive (dharmas) which, being inactive are permanent and therefore without causes. In the non-Buddhist teachings they have space, time, direction, soul, atoms, nirvāṇa and so forth. In the teachings of the ordinary world there are emptiness, time, direction and so on. These three dharmas, being nowhere non-existent are consequently called 'permanent'. Being permanent, they are uncaused, so how can you say that uncaused dharmas do not exist in the world?
Reply: These 'uncaused dharmas' only exist as figures of speech. If we ponder and analyse them we find they are non-existent. If dharmas have their being through causes and conditions, we ought not to say that they are uncaused. If they have no causes and conditions, then it is as we have said.

Question: Causes are of two kinds: one is the actual cause, the other is the 'figurative cause'. These 'uncaused dharmas' have no actual cause, they merely have a figurative cause, to make people know of them.

Reply: Although they have figurative causes, you are not correct. Just as 'space' is refuted, in the (next chapter on the) six elements, so the remaining items will be refuted later. Moreover, since even
visible things can be refuted, how much more so atoms and other invisible things? This is why we state that there are no uncaused dharmas in the world.

Comments
This extended discussion of 'uncaused' dharmas finds no parallel at this point in the Prasannapadā. It is a denial of the notion of uncaused or unconditioned dharmas, the argument being simply that if something is a dharma (and there is nothing which is not a dharma) then it is the product of causes — in other words, a restatement of the fundamental Buddhist teaching of pratītya-samutpāda, dependent origination. The two assumptions that a) dharmas are caused, and b) reality consists of dharmas, when taken together leave no room for 'uncaused dharmas' such as nirvāṇa, space, time and so on (the 'unconditioned' dharmas of the Abhidarmists and non-Buddhists). Nāgārjuna abandons the notion of unconditioned dharmas, and this is why he can subsequently equate nirvāṇa with saṁsāra. A 'figurative cause' (or 'revealing cause', see n. 86 to the translation) is put forward by the opponent as an example of a cause which is not really a cause — in other words, a device is proposed which would enable the opponent to maintain that there are permanent (uncaused) dharmas without thereby relinquishing dependent origination. The Middle Treatise refuses to have anything to do with this suggestion. Dharmas are dharmas, and the opponent is
referred to the next chapter where space (supposedly one of the uncaused dharmas), will be refuted in exactly the same way that ordinary down-to-earth dharmas such as goers, eyes and tathāgatas are refuted in other chapters.

Middle Treatise

4/2 (contd.)

Question: If (we said that) the cause of form existed separately from form, what would be wrong with that?

Reply:

Prasannapadā

4/2 (contd.)

Now, to show that matter as cause cannot exist apart from objects, Nāgārjuna says:

Comments

These brief introductions to verse 3 demonstrate very clearly the way in which the Middle Treatise is structured as a dialogue, the Prasannapadā as a monologue. The interlocutor in the Middle Treatise represents the voice of the Abhidharmist, or the voice of the sūtras, the basic teachings of the Buddha. The questions posed by the opponent are straightforward, and designed to elicit some clearer meaning from the brief and often aphoristic stanzas. Candrakīrti's task is somewhat different; he is defending his understanding of Nāgārjuna's 'original' insight against rival commentators within the overall 'Mādhyamika' tradition, particularly Bhāvaviveka. He has not only to make clear what
Nāgārjuna originally said but also to anticipate and meet objections to his interpretation put forward by others, including those who take Nāgārjuna as an authority. In the Middle Treatise the presence of the commentator, whether Blue-Eyes or Kumārajīva, is an unobtrusive one. In the Prasannapadā the predominant voice is that of Candrakīrti, to such an extent, indeed, that the formula 'Nāgārjuna says...' or 'the master says ...' is even used to introduce the remarks of Nāgārjuna's putative opponent in the kārikā.(see, for example, the opening verses of Chapter 24). The author of the Middle Treatise does of course supplement both Nāgārjuna's argument and, we may suppose, Nāgārjuna's world-view, especially in respect of the Mahayanist content of the Treatise, but the commentator's voice is seldom distinguishable from Nāgārjuna's, when the Mādhyamika point of view is being put, and equally seldom distinguishable from the Abhidharmist's, when objections are being framed.

Middle Treatise
4v3

If its cause existed, separate from form,
Then this 'cause' would be without an effect.
If you are saying that there are causes without effects,
This circumstance does not exist.

Prasannapadā
4v3(ab)

If matter as cause were separate from objects
4/3ab
If, that is, matter as cause were separate from object as its effects, then, just as the frying pan taken as separate from the pot cannot be the
If we eliminate the effect, i.e. 'form', and merely have the cause of form, this would be a cause without an effect. Question: What is wrong with there being a cause with no effect? Reply: Nowhere in the world do you find a cause without an effect, and why? It is by virtue of its effect that we call something a cause. If there is no effect, how can you call it a cause? Moreover, if there is no effect within the cause, why should things not arise from no-cause? This topic is similar to that dealt with in chapter one, on the refutation of causality. Therefore, no cause exists without an effect.

cause of the pot, as if matter as cause is conceived as existing separated from its effects.

Matter as cause would be without any effect.

It would be effectless. The condition for the causality of a cause is that it produces an effect. There is no production of an effect if this is thought of as separated from a material cause unrelated to the effect. Nāgārjuna says that a cause without an effect, because it does not cause anything, does not exist, like the horns of a man or of a snake or of a horse. There is no cause without an effect.
Comments

The Sanskrit commentary breaks up the verse and intersperses sections of commentary. The Middle Treatise never does this; it invariably presents the verses in their entirety which underlines the fact that while the Prasannapadā uses Nāgārjuna's verses to substantiate Candrakīrti's argument, the Middle Treatise sees itself rather as clarifying and restating what is considered to be the authoritative statement of Mādhyamika by Nāgārjuna. The Middle Treatise does of course regularly take up a verse line by line in its commentary. Here, as in the previous section of commentary, the Middle Treatise tends to emphasise the empirical, the Sanskrit the logical. The Middle Treatise says that we do not find effectless causes in the world (and that this is because an effect implies a cause); the Sanskrit addresses itself only to the incoherence of the notion of a cause with no effect. It is an impossibility, driven home by the analogy of horns on a snake, etc. The Middle Treatise commentary, perhaps anticipating v5, raises the additional topic of things arising from no-causes, and refers us to Ch 1 (lv3, lv14 ff) where 'non-causes' are said not to exist anyway. This is evidence either of a rather mechanical approach designed to exhaust all possibilities or, which is perhaps more likely, evidence of the Middle Treatise's concern with the moral and soteriological implications of particular theories of causality. If there were no causes and yet there were effects, says the Middle Treatise at 1/3, "then giving alms and keeping the precepts etc could drag you down into the hells, while the ten evils and five rebellious acts could lead to rebirth in the heavens, because there would be no causal link".
Moreover:

If form were already existent, then it would have no use for 'cause of form'. If form did not exist then, too, it would have no use for form.

In neither case is there a cause for form. If form pre-existed in the cause, the cause would not be called the cause of form. If no form pre-existed in the cause, in

Further, what is taken to be the material cause of objects must be taken as the cause either of an object which exists or of one which does not exist. Nāgārjuna says that neither way is logically possible.

Matter as cause of an object which exists is not logically possible; matter as cause of an object which does not exist is not logically possible.

If an object is in being (sant) that is, factually exists (sanvīdyamana), what would be the point of its having a material cause? If an object is not in being, that is, does
that case, too, the cause would not be termed the cause of form. not factually exist, what could be the meaning of its 'cause'? What would one suppose such a cause to be the cause of? So, if an object does not exist, its cause is not logically possible.

Comment

The Chinese version of the verse incorporates an empirical reason for the (logical) incoherence of the notion of a material cause of an existent or nonexistent object. It does this by placing the cause-effect sequence firmly in a temporal context and asking what need an already existing form would have for a cause. The Sanskrit discussion does not require that cause-effect be seen as a temporal sequence in order for the logical point to be made, and it may be considered a weakness in the Middle Treatise commentary that it is only the 'temporal sequence' model of cause followed by effect which is identified and refuted here although other possible models of causality are later dealt with at length in Ch 20 (see esp 20/7)

Middle Treatise
4/4 (contd.)

Question:
If both these cases are wrong, then what is wrong with there

Prasannapadā
4/4 (contd.)

You may say: Although a material cause of objects is in this way not logically
being simply uncaused form?

Reply:

For form to exist and yet be uncaused -

This is altogether wrong.

For this reason one who has insight

Should not analyse form.

An object without a material cause is not, repeat not, logically possible.

Whether the effect inherent in the cause, or whether no effect inheres in the cause: such matters remain inconceivable. How much more so the existence of form without cause? This is why it is said: "for form to exist and yet be uncaused - this is altogether wrong", and therefore one who has insight should not analyse form.

How it is that there is no material cause has been shown? But if there is no material cause, how could there be an object as an effect which has no cause? By the double rejection of the not, repeat not, 'Nāgārjuna makes clear the harmfulness of the view that things can be without cause.

And thus, on being considered
'Analyser' is a name for the common man who, bound by ignorance, desire and attachment to form, consequently develops from his perverted views distinctions and vain argument, speculating that the effect inhere or does not inhere in the cause, and so forth. If you search for form in this way, it is never attainable, and therefore a man of insight should not analyse. from every aspect, a perceptible material object (rūpa) is not possible. Therefore the wise one (yoga) who sees things as they really are 4v5(cd) Should not form any theories at all concerning objects. The meaning is that he does not take objects to be the external base (alambana) to which are attributed such characteristics as penetrable or impenetrable, veridically perceivable or not veridically perceivable, past or future, light or dark. Comment The range of possible interpretations to be laid on verse 5 is very limited: it contains two assertions; that objects (form) exist and cannot not have material causes, and that one should not analyse or theorise about the forms. The two commentators draw slightly different emphases, the Middle Treatise seeing evil
particularly in sophisticated arguments about causality, the
Prasannapada interpreting 'theories' as the attribution of
distinctive properties to externalised material forms, a theme
which is taken up again in the commentary to v 6.

**Middle Treatise**

4/5 (contd.)

Further:

**Prasannapada**

4/5 (contd.)

Whether one thinks that matter as cause gives rise to an
effect which is identical with or not identical with itself,
neither alternative is logically possible. Nāgārjuna says:

4v6

If (you say that) the effect resembles the cause,
This is not correct.
If (you say that) the effect does not resemble the cause
This too is incorrect.

4/6

If (you say that) the effect and the cause resemble each other, this is not correct,

4v6

It is not logically possible that an effect is identical with its cause. It is not logically possible that an effect is not identical with its cause.

4/6

It is commonly supposed that matter (rūpakārana) is by its inherent nature solid, liquid,
because the cause is subtle, the effect gross. Cause and effect, form and function, etc, are different from each other. Just as cloth is similar to thread, but we do not call thread 'cloth' for threads are many but cloth is one, so we cannot say that cause and effect resemble each other. To say that cause and effect do not resemble each other is also wrong, for just as hempen thread does not make thin silk, and coarse thread will not produce fine cloth, so we cannot say that cause and effect are dissimilar. Both ideas are wrong, so there is neither form nor cause-of-form. warm and mobile. Particular material objects (bautika), however, whether they are personal like the eye and the other sense-faculties which are by nature of a subtle matter and are the base of visual and the other types of sense-consciousness, or whether they are the external sense fields like the visible whose nature it is to be perceived in the various types of sense-consciousness, do not possess the inherent nature of the four elements. It follows that, because they have different characteristics, cause, i.e. matter, and effects i.e. material objects, are not identical, as in the case of nirvana. "It is not logically possible that an effect is identical with its cause." Further, one never sees the real dependence in the relationship of cause to
effect, even when they are identical, like the rice seed and the ripe grain. "It is not logically possible that an effect is identical with its cause.

And again, 'It is not logically possible that an effect is not identical with its cause'. The meaning here is that it is so because they have different characteristics, as in the case of nirvana. So perceivable material objects, on being investigated, are not logically possible in any way at all.

Comments

The Middle Treatise proceeds entirely by analogy to show that cause and effect can be neither identical nor different from each other. In line with the previous section, the discussion refers to the causal relationships which are ignorantly attributed to things; we do not call thread 'cloth', ... we cannot say that cause and effect resemble each other. The reference to subtle cause and gross effect indicates that a relationship between the
four (or six) elements is not the only possible model, as the reference to "form and function" which is a metaphor of Chinese origin, makes clear. The Middle Treatise makes no attempt to relate this argument to particular Buddhist teachings, whereas Candrakīrti refers specifically to nirvana as something which can be neither different from nor identical with its cause (namely samsara). For his part, Candrakīrti leans heavily on arguments from experience of the real world (things perceived, the grain of rice) and an example drawn from the Buddhist teaching (that nirvāṇa is attainable) to illustrate Nāgārjuna's assertion that causal relationships are unfathomable by the ordinary person. His approach here closely resembles that of the Middle Treatise as he follows, rather than propounds, Nāgārjuna's argument.

**Middle Treatise**

The skandha of reception, the skandha of conception
The skandhas of predisposition and consciousness
And all remaining dharmas,
May be taken together with the skandha of form.

**Prasannapadā**

4/6 (contd.)

Nāgārjuna extends this conclusion to feeling and the other skandhas as well.

4v7

The inquiry into material objects holds in every essential for feeling, consciousness, ideation and personal dispositions - for all the skandhas.
The (other) four skandhas and all dharmas should also be contemplated and refuted in the same way.

Feeling and all the skandhas may suitably be considered in the same way as material objects have been. Precisely as śūnyatā, as conceived by Mādhyamika, is expounded for one thing (dharma), precisely so is it to be expounded for all things. And so:

Comments
Verse 7 is a natural conclusion to this discussion of Nāgārjuna's analysis of form as representative of the five skandhas. But in both the Middle Treatise and the Prasannapadā there are a further two verses concerning emptiness and its use in debate with an opponent. The Middle Treatise regards these verses as a departure from the preceding discussion, the skandhas are no more mentioned. Candrakīrti, however, prepares the reader for this change of mood by showing a parallelism between the extension of the critique of form to the other four skandhas, and the extension of the critique of one dharma by means of śūnyatā to all other dharmas.
Middle Treatise

4v8

If a man has a question
And you try to answer it
without emptiness
You will be unable to make an answer
It will be wholly the same as the other's doubts.

(Note

The Middle Treatise takes vv 8 and 9 together and comments on both. For purposes of comparison the commentary here has been divided into 4/9 (up to 7a25) which refers to 4v 8, and 4/9 7a25ff, which refers to 4v9.)

Prasannapada

4v8

If a counter-argument has been given in terms of śūnyatā and someone would offer a refutation of it, he refutes nothing because everything he says presupposes what has to be proved.

4/8

If, during a discussion, each party seizes on to a particular position and they debate without reference to the idea of emptiness they will never

4/8

Here 'counter argument' means discrediting the view of another; 'in terms of the absence of being' (śūnyatā) means by showing that objects
conclude the debate, and all will be together in doubt. For example, a man says 'a jug is impermanent'. His opponent says 'Why is it impermanent?' and he replies 'because it arises from an impermanent cause'. This is not what one would call an answer. Why not? Because there is still the uncertainty of not knowing whether the cause is permanent or impermanent.

are without a self-existent nature so the view that they have a self-existent nature is ruled out. If an opponent would offer a refutation of this, saying, 'but as feeling, ideas and so on are real, so objects must be real too', everything he says lacks the force of a refutation because the actual existence of feeling, ideas and so on must be known in the same way as the actual existence of objects: which is what has to be proved.

Even as material objects, on being thoroughly investigated, do not actually exist whether they are one with their material cause or different, so feeling, which is dependent on contact with objects, ideation which is simultaneous with consciousness, personal dispositions which are dependent on ignorance, and
consciousness which is dependent on dispositions, on being thoroughly investigated, do not exist either as being one with their cause or different. They are like contact and the other factors of the death-birth cycle: all of these are just what has to be proved. And as feeling and so on are the same as what has to be proved, so attributes and the subject of attributes, effect and cause, whole and part and such concepts are things which, like material objects, are just what has to be proved. How could an opponent offer a refutation? His every assertion will be just what has to be proved. Throughout this treatise Nāgārjuna teaches that for Mādhyamikā it is to be taken as a rule that refutations offered by opponents are instances of petitio principi.
Comment

The Middle Treatise's point is rather straightforward – that any discussion of the nature of things in terms of the nature of their causes, will inevitably lead to an infinite regression of assertions which omits reference to the idea of emptiness.

Candrakīrti's point is the complementary one (based on a different version of the kārikā) in which the connection with the preceding discussion in this chapter of cause and effect in the skandhas is far more apparent. His argument is that if one does employ the notion of emptiness, the opponent's argument will always fail, because everything is causally interdependent and hence non-existent (in the sense of being empty of own-being). Both commentators of course presuppose that dharmas and causality are axiomatic.

**Middle Treatise**

4v9
If a man makes a criticism
Explaining the other's errors without recourse to emptiness,
He will not succeed in his criticism
It will be wholly the same as the other's doubts.

**Prasannapadā**

4v9
If, after an exposition has been made in terms of emptiness, someone were to offer a criticism, nothing he says will be a criticism because it will be just what has to be proved.
If, wishing to explain the other's erroneous views, he simply declares, without relying on emptiness, that all dharmas are impermanent, this is not what one would call a criticism, and why? Because you by your 'impermanence' have refuted my 'permanence' but I by my 'permanence' can refute your 'impermanence', saying that if things truly were impermanent there would be no karma and consequences, that the dharmas of eye and ear, etc., would cease every instant and that there would be no distinctions (between sin and merit etc.). Such fallacies as these will never succeed as criticisms, being at the same level as the opponent's doubts.

However, if one relies on emptiness to refute permanence, if during an exposition some pseudo-disciple raises a critical objection, that objection, it should be known, will be just what has to be proved, as in the case of a counter-argument.

To quote: "Who sees one thing truly, it should be remembered, sees all things truly. The emptiness in one thing is emptiness in all things."

And from the Gaganagañjasamādhi Sūtra: "The one who by examining one putative element realizes that all putative elements are like a magical show, like a mirage: unintelligible, false, deceptive and perishable, he is the one who progresses directly to the haven of enlightenment."

And from the Samādhīrāja Sūtra: "Just as you have understood the concept of the self, so
no error is involved, and why? Because such a man does not cling to the mark of 'emptiness'. Therefore if one even wants to debate, he should rely upon the idea of emptiness; how much more so if he desires to seek the characteristic of release from affliction, and calm extinction.

should you turn your mind to all things; all putative elements have the same nature as the self: they are as transparent as the heavens. The one who from one thing knows all things and from one thing sees all things, in him, whatever the paths of his thought, there will be no egomania [attachment to self]."

Comments
Both the Middle Treatise and the Prasannapadā, though speaking in different ways, agree that the notion of emptiness is the means by which one can resolve debates about the nature of being without being drawn into fruitless arguments. Both commentators then indicate that employing emptiness in debate is not in principle different from seeing things as empty.

Candrakīrti's argument is that to see one thing as empty (which he seems to equate with asserting the emptiness of one dharma) is to see all things as empty, and he quotes sūtras in support of this view. The Middle Treatise regards reliance upon emptiness as a prerequisite for both success in intellectual debate and success in attaining liberation; this makes sense in the light of
the Treatise's earlier equation of evil (ignorance) with these very debates about causality etc, but the relationship between argument and extinction is not made entirely clear. "If one even wants to debate, he should rely upon the idea of emptiness; how much more so if he desires to seek the characteristic of release from affliction, and calm extinction."

4.1 The Middle Treatise in the Sino-Korean-Japanese Tradition

From the point of view of the Sino-Korean-Japanese Buddhist tradition, the Middle Treatise, together with companion texts such as the 'Hundred Treatise' (T 1569), the 'Twelve Topic Treatise' (T.1568) and the Great Perfection of Wisdom Treatise (T.1509), represents the first lucid, systematic and reliable expression of Mādhyamika thought in Chinese, and thus stands at the beginning of a long development of 'Middle Way' thought in
the sects and schools of Far Eastern Mahayana. In particular, the Middle Treatise, Hundred Treatise and Twelve-topic Treatise (Chung-lun, Pai-lun and Shih-erh-men-lun) were known collectively as the 'Three Treatises' (san-lun) and a school of thought based on these treatises flourished for a time in China, and was amongst the earliest forms of scholastic Buddhist thought to be introduced into Korea and Japan. The T'ien-t'ai (Jap: Tendai) school to some extent based its philosophy on Mādhyamika, using it to develop a theory of the 'sandal' or 'three truths' of emptiness, conventional reality, and the middle way. This philosophy of a middle way between appearance and disappearance of forms had a tremendous impact upon many subsequent developments in Buddhist thought, especially in Japan, where the greatest reformers and innovators - Nichiren, Hōnen, Shinran and the Zen masters Dōgen and Eisai - were all trained initially as Tendai monks.

The position of the Middle Treatise itself within all these subsequent developments is, however, more difficult to evaluate, for while the complete text of the Middle Treatise was presumably always available in the canonical collections of Buddhist scriptures from the time of Kumārajīva onwards, Sino-Japanese interest in the text was mediated almost entirely through the heavily interpretive writings of the Chinese monk Chi-tsang (549-623), a prolific systematiser of the san-lun tradition. As Inada points out:
"Special attention must be called to (Chi-tsang's) famous two-fold analytical division of the ideas of the Karika (Nagarjuna's Middle Stanzas), i.e., into the famous p'o-hsieh-hsien-cheng (破邪顯正) which can be rendered as refutation (or critique) is at once an awakening to the true dharma or reality as such. The influence of this thought on subsequent Far Eastern Buddhism cannot be underestimated. (p. 27).

The phrase p'o-hsieh-hsien-cheng may also be translated as 'refutation of wrong and demonstration of right' (for example in De Bary's The Buddhist Tradition p. 144), but this obscures the rather important point that the one is the other. The statement is of course self-negating, as Chi-tsang recognises, and his discussion of this point leads him, eventually, back to the statement of first principles in the Middle Stanzas:

'Objection' If there is neither affirmation nor negation [this is a reference to Chi-tsang's propounding of the Madhyamika idea of 'no viewpoint'], then there is also no wrong and no right. Why, then, in the beginning section do you call it 'The Refutation of Wrong and the Demonstration of Right'

Answer: [The idea that] there is affirmation and negation, we consider 'wrong'. [The idea that] there is neither affirmation nor negation, we call 'right'. It is for this reason that we have thus called the section explaining the refutation of wrong and the demonstration of right.

Objection: Once there is a wrong to be refuted and a right to be demonstrated, then the mind is exercising a choice. How can one say then that it 'leans on nothing' [Equivalent to 'non-grasping' in the Middle Treatise].

Answer: In order to put an end to wrong, we force ourselves to speak of 'right'. Once wrong has been ended, then neither does right remain. Therefore the mind has nothing to which it adheres...

Objection: If wrong and right are both obliterated, is this not surely a 'view' of emptiness?

Answer: The Treatise on Right Views (i.e., the Middle Treatise) says:
The Great Sage preached the Law of Emptiness.
In order to separate men from all views.
If one still has the view that there 'is' emptiness,
Such a person even the Buddhas cannot transform.

(DeBary, pp.147-148.) The verse quoted from the Middle Treatise is 13v9 (De Bary's translation from Chi-tsang).

Chi-tsang's idea that 'refutation is at once an awakening to the true dharma' is not incompatible with the teaching of Nāgārjuna's kārikā or the Middle Treatise, but this is not to say that the idea is explicitly stated in these earlier works. The significant point about Chi-tsang's contribution to Mādhyamika or, more correctly, Three-Treatise, thought, since he based his interpretation of Mādhyamika on the Middle Treatise, the Hundred Treatise and the Twelve Topic Treatise, all translated by Kumārajīva, is that he presupposes a familiarity with certain Mahayana teachings, particularly those of the Nirvāṇa-sūtra which was translated into Chinese only a few years after Kumārajīva's death, and which preaches the innate buddhahood of all beings (including the worst sinners). Such teachings are, on the face of it, alien to Nāgārjuna's way of thinking and indeed to the Middle Treatise as well. Chi-tsang's aim, however, in the context of his overall attempt to systematize a variety of Mahayana teachings in seventh-century China, was to set Mādhyamika and Prajñāpāramitā thought firmly within a Mahayana context provided by the teachings of the Nirvāṇa Sūtra, by showing how the Mādhyamika method of intellectual debate might further the cause of attaining enlightenment. His approach may have been somewhat pedantic and rationalistic but his style and
his conclusions are not very different from those of the earlier Mādhyamikas. Much of the force of Nāgārjuna's attack on received notions derives, after all, from the very repetitive, systematic application of the same Mādhyamika critique to a number of different topics. As Sprung points out, for Nāgārjuna, as also for Candrakīrti,

'...reasoning is not ontologically bound; yet they proceed unshakably assuming that what fails the tests of reason—what is less than utterly intelligible—cannot exist... For thinkers often held to be 'mystical' the Mādhyamikas understanding of thinkability is surprisingly narrow and unyielding. Mādhyamika will not, and cannot, agree that the utterly intelligible is the truth; and for a simple reason: there is nothing utterly intelligible...' (Sprung, Lucid Exposition p.9.)

It has to be said that the nature of the relationship which Chi-tsang tried systematically to elucidate, between the Mādhyamika dialectic on the one hand, and liberation or nirvāṇa on the other, is not easy to grasp, either from a reading of Nāgārjuna's stanzas or in the Middle Treatise itself. This is one of the elusive aspects of Mādhyamika which contribute to its appeal and help to give it its peculiarly subversive Buddhist flavour.

As a result of the introduction of ideas drawn from the Nirvāṇa-sūtra, Chi-tsang and the later Three Treatise schools were, as Aaron Koseki points out, more deeply influenced by this sūtra, by later problems of the conceptualization of the two truths and by the distinction between empty and non-empty aspects
of the Buddha-nature than by Nāgārjuna and the Middle Treatise per se.' (Koseki, p.56)

From the point of view of traditional Sino-Japanese Buddhist scholarship, which developed out of the academic schools of Chinese Buddhism, therefore, the Middle Treatise itself has not occupied a particularly significant place. Apart from Chi-tsang's role in drawing attention away from the Middle Treatise and towards a more eclectic Middle Way philosophy, expounded in much larger and more systematic works than the Middle Treatise, such as the san-lun hsuan-i (Profound Meaning of the Three Treatises), (T.1852) the relative neglect of the Middle Treatise has undoubtedly been due also to the fact that in its expression of Buddhist ideas it is neither fully Indian nor fully Chinese. This is because in its final form it reflects the work of at least three authors: Nāgārjuna, who wrote the verses on which the work is based; 'Blue-Eyes', the Indian or Central Asian author of the original commentary (of whom more below) and Kumārajīva. These three authors wrote at different times, in different circumstances and for different audiences.

In his preface to the Middle Treatise the monk Seng-jui tells us that the translator and editor of the final work, Kumārajīva, 'edited and emended' the text in Chang-an for the benefit of the Chinese sangha in conformity with his own understanding of Mādhyamika, but the text, even though written in Chinese, remains essentially Indian in its style and approach, vastly different
even from Buddhist treatises by Kumārajīva's close contemporary
and aide, Seng-chao, which are written in a literary, allusive
style of Chinese. Robinson has translated a number of
Seng-Chao's Treatises; one example drawn from 'Prajñā has no
Knowing' (Chao-lun pt. III, T. Vol. 45, pp. 153a-154c) will amply
illustrate the differences between his work and the Middle
Treatise.

Seng-chao is quite capable of quoting accurately from the Indian
sūtras (in Chinese translation); it is his glosses and
commentary on the canonical material which depart so markedly
from the style of the commentary in the Middle Treatise.

Embarking on an explanation, Seng-Chao begins with a sūtra
quotation:

The Fang-kuang says, "In Prajñā there are no marks at
all; there are no marks of arising and ceasing." The
Tao-hsing [another Buddhist work] says, "In Prajñā
there's nothing that is known, and nothing that is
seen."

This specifies [holy] knowledge's function of
intuition, but why do we say that it has no marks and
has no knowing? It is evident that there is a markless
knowing and an unknowing intuition.

For what reason?
If there is something that is known, then there is
something that is not known. Because in the holy mind
there is nothing that is known, there is nothing that
is not known. The knowing of unknowing is termed
all-knowing. Thus the sūtra is to be believed when it
says, "In the Holy Mind, there is nothing that is known
and nothing that is not known.
Therefore the holy man empties his mind and fills
(makes real) his intuition. Though he always knows,
he never knows. Thus he can muffle his brilliance
and sheathe his light. His empty mind mirrors the
metaphysical. Shutting up his Knowledge and blocking
his hearing, all alone he perceives the inscrutable.
Consequently, in holy knowledge there is a mirroring that probes the abstruse, yet there is no knowing in it. In the Spirit there is the functioning of responding to occasions, yet there is no deliberation in it. Because there is no deliberation in the Spirit, it is able to reign alone beyond the world. Because there is no knowing in Knowledge, it is able to intuit metaphysically outside of events. Knowledge, though outside of events, is never devoid of events. Spirit, though beyond the world, is always within the world. Therefore, looking down [to Earth] and looking up [to Heaven], he adapts himself to the transformations. His intercourse [with living beings] is illimitable. There is nothing abstruse that he does not discern, yet he has no process (results) of intuition. This is what no-knowing knows, and what the Holy Spirit meets. (R.p.213)

This brief passage contains, apart from sutra material, two quotations from the Tao Te Ching (Therefore the holy man empties his mind and fills his intuition'...'Though he always knows, he never knows. Thus can he muffle his brilliance and sheathe his light'), one quotation from and one allusion to the Chuang-tzu ('His empty mind mirrors the metaphysical. Shutting up his knowledge and blocking his hearing, all alone he perceives the inscrutable'...'His intercourse with living beings is illimitable'), and one ambivalent allusion to the I-Ching, ('Therefore, looking down [to Earth] and looking up [to Heaven] he adapts himself to the transformations').

Quite apart from these allusions to the Chinese classics there is free use of 'un-Buddhist' terms such as '(holy) spirit', and several references of a Taoist kind to a spirit apart from the world, though also in it, 'reigning alone beyond the world'...'able to intuit metaphysically outside of events'.
The fact that Seng-Chao writes differently does not mean that he does not understand Buddhism. It does show however what was considered by the Chinese literati of the time to be a well-written Buddhist text. By comparison, Kumārajīva's translations must have seemed to some extent alien, and inaccessible, and this perhaps explains why the Middle Treatise achieved its influence in the later tradition through Chinese interpreters such as Chi-tsang rather than in any more direct manner.

To say that a text is 'Chinese' or 'Indian' as far as Buddhism is concerned, of course raises many problems about cultural identity, since the penetration of Buddhist ideas and practices into the Chinese intellectual tradition over a period of some ten centuries from about the end of the Han dynasty (200 AD) onwards meant that Chinese Buddhist thought became progressively more 'Indianised', with concepts such as reincarnation, emptiness and the existence of multiple Buddhas and world-systems, each with its own Mount Sumeru at the centre becoming the common currency of philosophical debate and inquiry, but in Kumārajīva's time there was a clear distinction to be made - it might be said that it was Kumārajīva's authentic translations which made the distinction possible - between those texts which presented Buddhism in an Indian way, and those which presented Buddhism in a Chinese way. The distinction stemmed partly from the text itself - either it was written in China by a Chinese or it came
from India - and partly from the translator. It might seem
invidious to single out Kumārajīva as the only translator up to
the 5th century who both understood Indian Buddhism and could
ensure that his understanding survived the process of translation
into Chinese, but it is a fact that Kumārajīva is widely regarded
as the greatest translator of Buddhist texts on precisely these
grounds.

4.2 The Middle Treatise in Studies of Mādhyamika

From a slightly different point of view, that of modern Japanese
studies of Mādhyamika, the Middle Treatise tends again to be
neglected because of the overriding concern amongst Japanese
scholars to obtain access to Nāgārjuna’s 'original' meaning by
establishing an ur-text of the mūlamadhyamaka-kārikā through
comparative investigation of the Chinese, Sanskrit and Tibetan
texts. This investigation takes place within the context of a
wider 'quest for the historical Buddha' which tends to equate
'earlier' with 'better' and indeed, 'Sanskrit-text' with
'authentic text'.

From this point of view, Chinese materials understandably tend to
be treated as secondary, rather than original sources. My own
interest in the Chung-lun developed from a rather different, and
perhaps from the Japanese point of view rather elementary,
perspective. All major studies of Mādhyamika in the West have
been carried out on the basis of Indian and Tibetan materials, and the contents of the Middle Treatise have remained virtually unknown and unacknowledged. Although several Chinese and Japanese Buddhist schools trace their intellectual roots to Nagarjuna, Nagarjuna's works were only known to them through Chinese translations and commentaries such as the Middle Treatise. I wanted to know what 'Nagarjuna's Middle Treatise' actually meant for those Chinese who received in the early 5th Century for the first time Kumarajiva's translation of it and who had no knowledge of any Sanskrit or other Indic versions of the text, or access to any other author's commentary on Nagarjuna's verses. The Middle Treatise is seldom, if ever, viewed in isolation in this way by Japanese scholars of Madhyamika, as is reflected in the way that the term 'the Middle Treatise' (Jap: Churon) is used in an all-embracing way to denote all versions of Nagarjuna's Middle Stanzas, with or without their commentaries.

5. Mādhyamika

5.1 Levels of Mādhyamika in The Treatise

Nāgarjuna's Middle Stanzas, in all versions, are aphoristic. Their meaning is not obvious, and in the early years of Western
studies of Mādhyamika learned battles were fought over the basic meaning of the Mādhyamika texts. The problem lay in the Buddhist world-view which the Middle Stanzas presupposed. Was it nihilistic, or absolutist? Was Nāgārjuna a crypto-Vedantist (as Śankara was a crypto-Buddhist)? Are the psychological categories of early Buddhism such as are elaborated in the Abhidharma to be abandoned, or is Nāgārjuna's prāsaṅgika (reductio ad absurdum) method predicated on the basis of deep faith in the words of the Buddha? There is no end to the questions that can be asked about Nāgārjuna's purpose and presuppositions, and no limit, too, to the number of commentaries that could be composed around his verses. According to one source, the Middle Treatise was one of seventy commentaries on the Middle Stanzas written in the two centuries after Nāgārjuna. Presumably in Nāgārjuna's own time, he himself explained what Mādhyamika was, but no commentary by Nāgārjuna himself has been preserved. We do not know, therefore, what 'basic Mādhyamika' was; we have only different versions of it according to different commentators.

Nevertheless, within the Chung-lun we can discern at least two levels of discourse. One level is the discourse by Nāgārjuna, including on occasion the voice of his opponent(s), found in the verses themselves and in the straightforward recapitulation of these verses in prose form in the commentary. The other is the discourse of the Middle Treatise commentator, 'Blue-Eyes' or Kumārajīva, expanding and elaborating on the text, drawing out
conclusions, clarifying presuppositions, providing analogies and
eexamples, extending the argument to deal with new objections, and
generally making the text accessible to a contemporary Buddhist,
or indeed non-Buddhist, Chinese reader. In the following
sections (5.2ff), the term 'basic Mādhyamika' will therefore be
used to refer to the familiar basic Mādhyamika argument developed
in Nāgārjuna's stanzas and recapitulated in the commentary.
Section 6, 'Survey of Contents' will focus on the Middle Treatise
Commentary, indicating those points at which the commentary
diverges from, or adds something to, the discourse of Nāgārjuna's
stanzas; in other words, it will highlight those sections of the
Chung-lun which are distinctively its own.

5.2 Basic Mādhyamika in the Treatise

Different authors have presented the basic tenets of Mādhyamika
in different ways. Among recent works, T.R.V. Murti's The
Central Philosophy of Buddhism takes up, first of all, causality
as the central Mādhyamika and indeed Buddhist, problematic, and
then discusses in turn the following topics: motion and rest;
the Abhidharmika categories (the āyatanas, skandhas, dhātus
etc.); conditioned (saṁskṛta) dharmas and dependent
origination; the Self, the nature of the Tathāgata, and finally,
'philosophy as Prajñāpāramitā'. F. Streng, in his exposition of
Nāgārjuna's thought examines Mādhyamika under the headings of
dharmas, causal relationships, nirvāṇa, and wisdom or insight
(prajñā). Sprung, in the introduction to his recent English
translation of the Prasannapadā, adopts a more thematic approach. He identifies the Mādhyamika method as that of dichotomizing and destroying concepts; ideas are unthinkable; being is repudiated; no thesis or standpoint is advanced; reason is king, and the mind’s knowing, conceptualisation, is an obstacle. Sprung then analyses Mādhyamika under the six headings of Being, Emptiness (or 'the truth of things'), the Two Truths, the Boundaries of Language, Nirvāṇa, and the Middle Way.

Basic Mādhyamika in the Middle Treatise could be analysed under any combination of the above headings, but the major preoccupations of the stanzas may be conveniently gathered under three broad headings, namely (1) causality; (2) the true character of things; and (3) what it is to be a Buddha.

These three are of course interdependent. The true character of things is that they are entirely subject to causality, by which is meant dependent origination, and this is how a Buddha sees them. These relationships will be explored in more detail.

5.3 Mādhyamika and the Buddha’s teaching

If these three headings can summarise Mādhyamika however, they can of course also be said to summarise the Buddha’s earliest discourses, preserved in the Pali Canon and the Chinese Āgamas.
Yet the Middle stanzas are more than just a restatement of the Buddha's description of the world, for Nāgārjuna deals with questions which the Buddha did not answer. For example, the Buddha in the earliest texts denies the ātman but apparently asserts the existence of the skandhas and of dharmas (factors of experience). Only later, when his teaching became formulated into a general theory of the insubstantiality of things could the question be asked, 'Do the skandhas themselves exist, have self-ness, in the way that the ātman does not? Since this line of questioning is based on two assumptions, one, that the skandhas, and other dharmas are substantial entities having, in Nāgārjuna's words, own-nature or self-nature and the other, that all such dharmas are part of a universal process of dependent origination, as taught by the Buddha, it could and did lead in Abhidharmist thinking to an infinite regression into an increasingly ramified atomism, wherein entities are asserted to be insubstantial and selfless, on the grounds that they are composed of constituent parts, but these constituent parts are themselves selfless for the same reason, and so on. This regression of dissolving causes was intended to preserve the general principle that all dharmas are caused (the principle of dependent origination, pratītya-samutpāda), as well as the notion of dharmas as substantial things.

There are four intellectual paths which seem to promise a way out from this infinite and complex regressional impasse. One way is not to discuss or think about the problem beyond the first
stage, that of the insubstantiality of the ātman, composed of skandhas and dharmas. This was the Buddha's way, but it involves mental restraint and, as the subsequent proliferation of Buddhist philosophies testifies, it was not for many a satisfactory intellectual solution. A second way is to pursue the atomistic model, without however examining too carefully the contradictory presuppositions of that model, namely that everything is caused, but that substantial entities (dharmas conceived as finite particles) do ultimately exist. Some Abhidharmists and the 'Satyasiddhi' or 'Tattvasiddhi' (a reconstructed name for the Chinese Cheng-shih) school took the view that by subdividing entities one would eventually arrive at emptiness, the basic characteristic of reality. A third way, favoured also by Abhidharmists was to assert that although most dharmas are entirely the product of causality (i.e. 'conditioned' dharmas), there are some ultimate 'unconditioned' or 'inactive' dharmas, such as nirvāṇa. In a discussion of this way of thinking the Treatise lists at 4/2 'three inactive (dharmas) which, being inactive are permanent and therefore without causes'. In this way the all-important principle of dependent origination could be upheld, and dharmas deemed to exist, as the Buddha taught, but only the 'unconditioned' ones, such as nirvāṇa, are ultimately real.

The fourth way out of the impasse, at least up to the time of Kumārajīva in China, was the Mādhyamika way, which is summed up by Kumārajīva in one of his letters to the Chinese monk Hui-yuan:
The Great Perfection of Wisdom Treatise explains the matter at length. It says that dissociation from all verbalism and quenching all workings of thought is termed the real character of all the dharmas.

This is Nāgārjuna's Mādhyamika approach. It takes a sideways step, neither trying through the operation of thought to understand the nature of things (like the Abhidharmists) nor exemplifying mental restraint (like the Buddha), but instead advocating an intellectual path or method which leads, by a process of reductio ad absurdum, to an abandonment of standpoints, including the standpoint of emptiness from which all other standpoints are seen to be erroneous. This, says Nāgārjuna, is 'the Middle Path'.

Whether or not Nāgārjuna's method 'works' is a difficult question to answer. The Mādhyamika method of exposing the incoherence of all views definitely induces a kind of intellectual vertigo in one who pursues it, but whether this is enough, in the sense of being an adequate intellectual concomitant to the meditative insight into the way things really are which distinguishes Buddhas from ordinary unenlightened people, is beyond judgement. If Nāgārjuna is correct to advocate emptiness as a unique and universal panacea for all wrong views, then naturally emptiness cannot be evaluated as one 'view' among others. On the other hand there is a difference between the doctrine of emptiness and properly understanding the doctrine of emptiness. The view of the Treatise is overwhelmingly that only one who already has
Let us examine, then, the three components of the Middle Path according to Nāgārjuna: causality, the true character of things, and what it is to be a Buddha.

5.4 Causality

Causality is the topic dealt with in the first chapter of Nāgārjuna's Middle Stanzas, and the examination of the causal process is central to the whole work. The notion of causality is susceptible to unlimited analysis and interpretation. In the Treatise it means in particular Buddhist causality, or dependent origination, expressed in the standard and unvarying formulae of the twelve causal links and the four holy or noble truths. Causality in the Mādhyamika context always refers to the process by which one achieves, or fails to achieve, spiritual liberation, the 'calm cessation of things'. All events and processes in the material and psychological realms are considered and evaluated from this point of view. Nāgārjuna's interest in causality is not therefore scientific or philosophical in the sense that he wants to establish a hypothetical causal process and test it against experience or revelation. The causal sequence is 'given' by the Buddha, and its components are not in question. The 'twelve causes and conditions' are detailed in the chapter of that title, chapter twenty-six, as follows:
Living beings, obscured in delusion
Subsequently give rise to the three actions
And through producing these three actions
According to their predispositions they fall into the
six destinies.

Conditioned by the predispositions
Consciousness receives a body of the six ways
When consciousness becomes attached
Name and form develop

Name and form developing
Cause the six avenues to arise
When senses, objects and consciousness combine
There arises six-fold contact.

On account of the six contacts
The threefold reception arises
On account of the threefold receiving
Craving is produced.

On account of craving there are the four graspings
And because of grasping there is existence.
If the grasper would not grasp
Then would be liberation, and no existence

From existence there is birth
From birth comes old age and death
Because of old age and death there are
All the afflictions of sorrow and ill.

All such things as these
Arise from birth
Only through these causes and conditions
Does the great suffering of the skandhas accumulate

The basis of birth and death
And predispositions just described
Is created by the unenlightened man
The man of insight does not create it.

When these things cease
They do not arise
This suffering assemblage of the skandhas
Thus simply ceases.

At two points the chain of causation may be broken; these are
ignorance or delusion (v1) and grasping (v5). The breaking of
the causal circle is itself achieved by a causal process, that of
following the path or Way, also 'given' by the Buddha. This is described in the formula of the four holy truths. The four truths are that there is suffering, accumulation of karma, cessation of suffering and a Way to be practised which will eliminate suffering. This 'Way' is traditionally formulated as the noble eightfold path, but this particular formula is not found in the Middle Stanzas or the Treatise, where emphasis is laid instead upon the fact that this Way is itself a causal process, consisting of the implementation of the four noble truths:

"...The four truths involve cause and effect' says the commentary, 'If there were no arising and ceasing there would be no four truths, and if there were no four truths there would be no perception of suffering, cutting-off of accumulation [of karma], realisation of cessation [of suffering] or cultivation of the Way, and without perception of suffering, cutting off of accumulation, realisation of cessation and cultivation of the Way there would not be the four śramaṇa-fruits...
(32b27)"

The path or Way is a causal process because it involves directed change, change in which particular actions lead to intended results. Unless directed change is possible, argues Nāgārjuna, there can be no liberation - or at least such liberation could not be achieved by methodically following the Buddha's instructions. If causality operated capriciously (which is to say not 'causally' at all), there would be no possibility of successfully acting towards a goal. Actions tending towards nirvāna and actions tending towards rebirth would be
indistinguishable in their effects. As Nāgārjuna puts it in chapter eight:

(8v6) Where there is no recompense for sin or merit
There is also no nirvāṇa
And whatever one may do
Is completely vacuous and without effect.

It is quite clear that Nāgārjuna accepts without reservation the Buddha's account of the causal sequence leading to nirvāṇa. But there is another important dimension of causality, namely the actual mechanism of causality; how it works. The 'twelve causal links' describe the circular causal sequence 'A causes B causes C causes D...' and so on up to...causes A', but the Buddha did not make it clear how A, 'ignorance' can cause B, 'actions' and so on up to existence and old-age and death. Extremely complex models ('views') of psychophysical interaction could be, and were, developed by Buddhist thinkers on the basis of the Buddha's teaching of causality, but for Nāgārjuna it is attachment to these very views or models of causality which itself constitutes the barrier to following the path laid out by the Buddha. It would not be putting it too strongly to say that for Nāgārjuna 'ignorance'in the twelfefold causal sequence means 'attachment to views about causality'. He identifies 'perverted views' or 'sophistries', theories about the causal process, as the very stuff of ignorance and delusion. These views themselves give rise to actions, craving, and grasping and hence perpetuate the whole miserable round of birth and death.
The Buddha, according to Nāgārjuna, taught what he taught precisely in order to extinguish such views. At the beginning of the Stanzas this is forcefully stated in a verse in which a representative selection of views about causality is presented. Each view or aspect of causality is negated at once:

(1v1) No arising and no ceasing
No permanence and no severance
No identity and no difference
No arriving and no departing

And these so-called 'eight refutations' are immediately followed by a verse of homage to the Buddha and the intention of his teaching:

(1v2) To the one who can expound this matter of causality
And completely extinguish all sophistries
I bow my head in reverence
The Buddha, greatest of all teachers.

Similarly, at the close of the Stanzas, Nāgārjuna once again makes clear his view that the Buddha's teaching was motivated by the desire to extinguish all views:

(27v30) To Gautama, Great Sage and Master,
Who from pity and compassion preached this Dharma,
Entirely cutting off all views;
We now bow our heads in reverence.

The method which Nāgārjuna adopts in order to destroy all these 'views' and 'sophistries', and to re-present to those who have misconstrued it what he conceives to be the spirit of the
Buddha's teaching, is to take up, one by one, the views to which his opponents allegedly adhere, (such as that living beings transmigrate in samsāra), and then to show that such views are incoherent. To begin with he creates a dichotomy, identifying within a single process two or more constituent parts or dharmas, to each of which he provisionally attributes 'self-nature' or 'own-being'. In chapter sixteen for example, the process being examined or contemplated is that of transmigration. This process is axiomatic in the Buddha's teaching; without transmigration and the law of karmic recompense which is implied in it, self-transformation (directed change) cannot take place, and nirvāṇa cannot be attained.

The Buddha's account of transmigration includes of necessity several overlapping or synonymous terms and concepts such as 'predispositions' (Sanskrit: saṃskāra) which are said to carry through from one life to the next; the 'living being' who of course 'possesses' the predispositions, in a manner of speaking; the 'skandhas, realms and avenues' (Abhidharmic categories and constituents of the living being); 'the body'; 'extinction'; 'bondage' (to the passions); 'liberation' (from the passions); 'the one who is bound'; 'dharmas'; 'reception' (another of the five skandhas); 'birth and death' (samsāra) and finally, nirvāṇa. These terms have been misunderstood, says Nāgārjuna. They are merely words used by the Buddha in his teaching to assist beings to attain liberation. They do not refer to real, separate 'things' or 'objects' which, added together, constitute
transmigration. Transmigration no doubt takes place, but its operation is ineffable, and attempting to comprehend it intellectually by subdividing and analysing the process is exactly what the Buddha means by 'delusion'.

The essentially delusory nature of such subdividing and analysing, of grasping onto concepts and generating views, can, says Nāgārjuna, be demonstrated by showing that the picture or model of transmigration thus obtained is incoherent, full of contradictions and incongruities. It is important to remember that Nāgārjuna presupposes that all views will be misleading and inadequate. He does not consider for a moment the possibility that transmigration and other features of the Buddhist world-view described by the Buddha might be susceptible to analysis in other terms than dharmas, skandhas, and so on ('emptiness' and 'thusness' are terms which might from our point of view be said to supersede the Buddha's own terminology, but their meaning, says Nāgārjuna, cannot be grasped by one who is given to analysing). These were the terms sanctioned by the Buddha himself, and Nāgārjuna does not question their validity. But the Buddha's teaching is seen by Nāgārjuna as somewhat analogous to a fairy tale. It conveys a meaning which is real, by means which are fabricated. In the fairy tale, there is no castle in which a princess is sleeping, but nevertheless awakening is a real possibility. In the same way, there are no five skandhas, but the living being may attain nirvāṇa. This understanding of the Buddha's teaching as an expedient, a means,
is characteristic of the developed Mahayanist understanding of the Buddha-Dharma and it is made explicit by Nāgārjuna in a number of places in the stanzas, though the term 'skilful means' which figures so prominently in Mahayana canonical works and which refers not only to what the Buddha taught but to his very appearance in the world, does not itself occur in the stanzas, and occurs only once in the Middle Treatise commentary (at 25a15-18) in a long passage in chapter eighteen, which was almost certainly written by Kumārajīva (see nn.53,270,339 and 340 to the translation). A less developed version of the skilful means idea is however found in the concept of 'two truths' which Nāgārjuna discusses in chapter twenty-four:

(24v8) All Buddhas rely on two types of truth In order to teach the Dharma to living beings. One is conventional worldly truth, The other is the truth of the ultimate meaning.

These will be discussed further below.

In chapter sixteen of the Stanzas, in his discussion of bondage and liberation, Nāgārjuna demonstrates the delusory nature of words understood as referring to real entities by taking up pairs of terms: predispositions and transmigration; living beings and skandhas, to show that they cannot co-exist, if each is considered to be an entity, an own-nature, distinct from the other entity.
(16v1) As for the predispositions transmigrating, 
If they are permanent they should not transmigrate. 
Nor should they if impermanent. 
It is the same too, with living beings.

(v2) If living beings transmigrate 
Within the skandhas, the realms and the avenues, 
Seek them five ways; they are utterly nonexistent. 
Who is it that transmigrates?

(v3) If something transmigrates from a body to a body, 
It will be bodiless. 
If it has no body, 
Then there will be no transmigration.

(v4) The predispositions becoming extinct? 
Such would never be the case. 
Living beings becoming extinct? 
This too could not be right.

(v5) Predispositions have the characteristics of arising 
and ceasing, 
Not bound, and not liberated. 
Living beings too, as formerly explained, 
Are not bound and not liberated.

(v6) If bondage means the body 
Then having a body is not bondage. 
Not having a body also is not bondage, 
How then can there be bondage?

(v7) If bondage preceded the one who is bound, 
Then it would bind the one who is bound. 
But in reality no pre-existent bondage exists 
The other (aspects) may be answered as in 'going and coming'.,

After verse 8 the argument shifts from a destructive analysis of held concepts to a comment on the person who holds them -the one who generates views. Nāgārjuna will argue in his stanzas that standpoints only reside in people holding particular views, and absence of views therefore means that there is no-one holding views.
Since all dharmas are empty
Views about the permanence, etc. of the world —
In what place and at what time
And by whom, would such views be generated?

To achieve cessation of views is to achieve selflessness, which, all are agreed, is what the Buddha taught. As Nāgārjuna puts it in the chapter on Nirvāṇa (chapter twenty-five):

All dharmas are inconceivable.
Extinguish all futile thoughts.
There is no person and no place,
And there is nothing taught by the Buddha.

By contrast, those who seek to preserve selfhood while abandoning views can never succeed, because their desire to enjoy the satisfaction of having abandoned views (in the language of the Treatise, to 'receive dharmas' or 'grasp onto concepts as real') is itself bondage — in this particular case bondage to a deeply-rooted concept of 'nirvāṇa', the cessation of views, as something which the self can 'have'. In fact, argues Nāgārjuna:

"If we do not receive dharmas
We will attain nirvāṇa".
Such persons as these
Are themselves the ones in bondage to receiving.

Nirvāṇa and samsāra are ultimately the same, because to attain nirvāṇa is to abandon the idea of samsāra and nirvāṇa being different:
(16v10) Nirvāṇa is not something special, Separate from birth and death...

In nirvāṇa all distinctions are seen to be unreal. The real character of things is 'thusness':

(16v10) ...The meaning of thusness [the true character] being thus,
' How can there be any distinctions?

This reference in the final verse of chapter sixteen to the 'true character' of things leads into the second major topic in the analysis of basic Mādhyamika in Nāgārjuna's stanzas, the concept of 'The true character of things' and its synonym 'emptiness'.

5.5 The True Character of things

Emptiness is another word for causality, in the Buddhist sense, outlined above, of the ineffable process of dependent origination. This is made explicit in chapter twenty-four:

(24v19) There has never existed a single dharma
Which did not arise from causes and conditions
Therefore no dharma exists
Which is not empty

(24v20) If everything were not empty
There would be no arising or ceasing
And thus there would not be
The Dharma of the four holy truths.

And in 24v14 it is said that things can only happen where there is emptiness (i.e. the process of causal change):

By virtue of the principle of emptiness
All dharmas are established.
If there were no principle of emptiness
Nothing would be established.

To deny emptiness is to deny causality and the causal relationships upon which karmic responsibility and the possibility of following the Way are predicated:

(24v36) If you reject the idea of emptiness
Then there will be nothing which is done,
There will be doing without doing [i.e. without anything done]
And a non-doer will be called a doer.

'Emptiness' has the meaning of causality, but it also has a non-meaning. At one level, emptiness describes the way things are according to the Buddhist world-view, in which the whole of existence (using the term in a non-technical sense) is seen as a seamless web of causality, empty of any distinguishable moments or separate entities - an Indra's net of infinitely reflecting jewels, in which everything depends entirely upon everything else and nothing has independent substance or own-being.

Speaking conventionally, the Buddha described this reality in terms of 'dharmas' which 'arise' and 'cease', each dharma being
both the effect of the dharma which causes it and the cause of
the dharma which it brings about. The sequence of causation is
not necessarily to be conceived of as temporal, though a
temporal model of cause followed by effect is adequate to convey
the general idea of causality.

In the first chapter of the Stanzas Nāgārjuna reviews a rather
more complex model of causality (which in the commentary is
attributed to the Abhidharmists) in which four types of cause
are said to operate on each dharma.

(lv5) Causal condition, sequential cause
Objective cause, predominant cause.
Four causes produce all dharmas
There is no fifth beyond these.

Nāgārjuna is not concerned with showing exactly how these four
types of cause are supposed to interact; his purpose is only to
show that any model of causality which involves the elements of
dharmas arising and ceasing and causing each other is
inconsistent and internally contradictory. Although he deals
with each of the four types of causes individually in verses six
to twelve of chapter one, his conclusion applies to all models
of causality involving dharmas as causes and effects:

(lv13) In causes and conditions, whether summarised or at
length,
You search in vain for an effect.
If an effect does not exist within conditions
How can you say that it issues from them?
This argument, with minor variations, is repeated time and again throughout the Treatise. If dharma A is said to cause dharma B, or if the two are said to operate interdependently in any process such as seeing, going, burning, suffering and so forth, then either dharma A already presupposes the existence of dharma B, in which case A has not 'caused' B, or dharma A can exist without dharma B, in which case the two dharmas are not in fact interdependent. But the Buddha has taught that dharmas are entirely dependently arising, so neither of these possibilities, argues Nāgārjuna, conforms with the Buddha's teaching.

Nevertheless the Buddha has taught that the causal process operates, and it involves dharmas. How, then, are we to understand it as operating? Nāgārjuna's answer is that the process of causality is incomprehensible to the unenlightened mind. Only 'one who has insight' can comprehend it, and one who has insight does not 'analyse', 'conceptually discriminate' and 'generate sophistries and views' about causality. In other words, the one who has insight not only sees that the causal process is empty in the sense that it contains no elements with own-being (the first meaning of the term emptiness), but he also abandons even the 'view' that the causal process is empty, (acknowledging that even emptiness is empty). This can be accomplished only at the level of praxis, by cultivating the Way, and acquiring insight by means of meditative disciplining of the mind through the techniques taught by the Buddha. But the way things really are can also be hinted at by descriptions of
the causal process which are in a sense more true or accurate than even the Buddha's powerful myth of dharmas arising and ceasing; certainly more true than the rationalised and embroidered versions of that myth propagated by the Abhidharmists. To establish a distinction between explanations which are more true and less true, Nagarjuna posits two levels of truth, a 'conventional truth' and 'a truth of the supreme meaning' or 'highest truth'. The conventional truth is, in general, the account of dharmas, skandhas, nirvana and so forth, although its meaning can be extended to cover all statements made for purposes of communication, especially communication by the Buddha:

(18v6) The Buddhas may teach that there is a self, Or teach that there is no self...
  -While the 'truth of the highest meaning' is a description of the 'true character of things' as seen by the Buddha.-
(18v6) ..,Within the true character of dharmas There is neither self-nor non-self.

But since the account is not the experience, Nagarjuna's description of things as they really are oscillates between, on the one hand, straightforward descriptions, such as that things are actually empty, ineffable, like things which the mind cannot grasp

(27v22) The constant succession of the five skandhas Is like the flame of a lamp Because of this the world Can be neither bounded nor unbounded
and on the other hand warnings against regarding this
description as a better conventional account of reality than
that given by the Buddha. To appreciate the highest truth one
has to have insight. Otherwise

(24v11) If he is unable to perceive emptiness correctly,
A dull-witted man will injure himself.
It is like a spell unskilfully-invoked
Or a poisonous snake unskilfully grasped.

Such warnings are made because the highest truth can easily slip
into conventional truth if it is apprehended without the insight
of a Buddha, and it is actually misleading and perhaps
dangerous for an unsuitable person to encounter the teaching of
'the true character of things'. For the ordinary person, the
'analyst', the Buddha's simple teaching on dharma and skandhas
is safe and true for all practical purposes.

Nāgārjuna's motivation here appears somewhat equivocal. On the
one hand he is effectively demythologising the Buddha's and the
Abhidharmists' accounts of causality which are couched in terms
of dharmas and skandhas arising and ceasing, but on the other
hand he is warning that the real character of things - which he
describes - cannot be intellectually grasped because the real
character of things is not a model of the way things really are,
but actually is the way things really are, and this being the
case, only a Buddha, or one who has insight can comprehend the
highest truth. Nāgārjuna's 'real character of things' is the highest truth, but unlike the conventional truth 'grasped' by analysing, unenlightened beings, this truth cannot be grasped.

(18v7) The true character of dharmas
Is severance of mind, actions and speech.
With no production and no cessation
Calm extinction, like nirvana.

(18v8) All things are real, unreal,
Both real and unreal, and
Neither unreal nor not unreal,
This is called the Buddha's Dharma.

(v9) To know for oneself, not following others,
Calm extinction, without sophistries,
No differences and no distinctions
This is termed the 'true character'.

(v10) If dharmas arise from conditions,
They neither are, nor differ from, their conditions.
This is why we call the real character
'No arising and no ceasing'.

(v11) Not one and not different,
Not permanent and not cut off;
This is the flavour
Of the sweet nectar of the Buddha's teachings.

Since the real character of things is non-grasping, the perceiver of truth has to change, in order to apprehend the highest truth, from an analysing, conceptualising, unenlightened being into a Buddha, a Tathagata, or, in Chinese, a 'Thus-Come One'. The nature of the Thus-Come One or what it is to be a Buddha, is, therefore, a central concern of both the stanzas and the Treatise.
5.6 What it is to be a Buddha.

There are three Buddhas in the Middle Stanzas; one is the Buddha Gautama, who taught causality, another is the Buddha that one can become, by following the prescriptions of the Middle Path, and the third is the Tathāgata, the 'Thus-Come' whose nature is contemplated in chapter twenty-two of the Treatise.

To the first Buddha, Gautama, Nāgārjuna pays homage in the first and last verses of the stanzas, and in scattered references throughout the stanzas his characteristics and motivations are recorded. For example, in chapter twenty-four Nāgārjuna reports that:

The world-honoured One knew that this Dharma,
Extremely profound and subtle in character
Could not be approached by the dull-witted.
This is why he was unwilling to teach.

Gautama's presence is always felt, of course, in the teachings on dharmas, the four holy truths, the 12 causal links, the skandhas, nirvana and so on, drawn from his early sermons.

But Nāgārjuna also knows the Buddha's mind in a way that his opponent apparently does not, for he is able to draw a distinction between what the Buddha says, and what he sees, such that, for instance, he is able to identify the teaching of non-self as merely one of a set of alternative teachings which the Buddha could have employed if the circumstances had been different:
(18v6) The Buddhas may teach that there is a self,  
Or teach that there is no self.  
Within the true character of dharmas  
There is neither self, nor non-self

Similarly, although the Buddha taught that dharmas arise and cease, Nāgārjuna asserts that in fact the Buddha taught emptiness, although he is not able to give any examples. He does however quote from a sutra source the phrase 'separate from existence, separate from nonexistence' several times, for example in 15v7:

The Buddha is able to extinguish both existence and nonexistence.  
As it says in the sutra,  
In the 'Instruction to Katyāyana';  
Separate from existence and separate from nonexistence'

The Buddha's teaching is, in any case, a teaching about what is already there; he does not reveal a new truth, but apprehends by his insight and conveys to others a truth which others can also perceive.

(18v12) If the Buddha had not emerged in the world,  
And the Buddha-dharma had utterly ceased.  
The insight of the Pratyekabuddhas  
Would have arisen quite separately.

This understanding of the Buddha-dharma as 'what is true' rather than 'what the Buddha said' enables Nāgārjuna to interpret the Buddha's teaching on causality as an expedient or provisional teaching, and to propound the doctrine of emptiness as a 'higher'
truth than that of the Buddha's first sermons. This distinction between what a Buddha says and what is the case did not necessarily originate with Nāgārjuna, but it became an important element in the defence of Mahayana doctrines which could not be supported by teachings shared by all the Buddhist schools.

Once a distinction is made between what the Buddha says and what is the case, the problem arises of the status of the teachings which the Buddha does convey. What is true, and who is to judge? Nāgārjuna asserts that all Buddhas (including Gautama)

(24v8) ...rely on two types of truth
In order to teach the Dharma to living beings.
One is conventional worldly truth,
The other is the truth of the ultimate meaning.

Of these two truths, the truth made public by the Buddha is classed as conventional; what the Buddha would have said if his hearers had not been 'dull-witted' becomes the 'truth of the highest meaning', and in the stanzas this 'truth of the ultimate meaning' is equated with the teaching of emptiness, the 'non-arising and non-ceasing' of dharmas, and absolute causality. However, it remains the case that this teaching, which is 'profound and noble in character' can therefore still be misconstrued by the dull-witted (see section 6.5, discussion of chapter 24). Such persons may be identified by their tendency to 'grasp on to' or become attached to emptiness itself. They make emptiness itself into a dharma (even though, as Nāgārjuna points
out, the Buddhas only teach emptiness to wean us away from all views), and they say that this is how things really are, without being aware of the need to distinguish between statements made at the conventional level, and statements made at the highest level of truth. One of the characteristics of a Buddha is that he has the compassion and the wisdom to select appropriate teachings for different levels of receptivity in his hearers. The implication of this however is that only one who has insight can really apprehend the highest teaching. Only a Buddha, in fact, can understand a Buddha.

Apart from Gautama the Buddha, who is representative of 'all Buddhas' to Nāgārjuna, there is the Buddha that one can become by following the Middle Way propounded by Gautama and re-presented by Nāgārjuna. The characteristics of this Buddha are that he possesses insight, has no outflows, does not analyse, and perceives the 'true character' of dharmas, which is calm cessation and nirvana. In other words, this Buddha is the being who really sees things as they are, just as they are described at the highest level of truth; empty, like a mirage, like a flame, and so on. While Gautama is the exemplar of the teacher, the saint, sage, or 'man of insight' is the one who holds out hope that an ignorant person can become a Buddha. Nāgārjuna's entire critique of 'fixed natures' is predicated on the belief that transformation can take place, and also on the belief that viewing things from the standpoint of emptiness contributes towards the ultimate realisation of nirvāṇa.
As well as describing the Buddha Gautama and the 'one who has insight', Nāgārjuna devotes a chapter of the stanzas to an examination of the 'Thus-Come', the Tathāgata. Although the chapter is in one sense simply another exercise in creating a dichotomy (in this case between 'the Tathāgata' and 'the five skandhas'), and showing that any attempt to analyse the being of a Tathāgata is bound to fail, chapter twenty-two is nevertheless also a fitting summary of Nāgārjuna's teaching on causality, emptiness and the true character of dharmas, for it is only the Tathāgata who actually perceives things as they really are, and the Tathāgata's characteristic is that he has no self. The Tathāgata thus exemplifies Nāgārjuna's teaching of 'no standpoint'. The truth of things cannot be grasped, for the real character of things is non-grasping, but a Buddha's experience is reliable, because he does not grasp. Nāgārjuna intends to convey the quality of this experience, the 'sweet nectar of the Buddha's teaching', but ultimately it cannot be conveyed unless it can be received. Thus the perceiver has to change, in order to perceive the highest truth, from an analysing, conceptualising, unenlightened being into a Buddha, a Tathāgata, a 'Thus-Come'.
6. Survey of Contents

6.1 Chapters 1-5

The first Chapter, 'Contemplation of Causality' begins with Nāgārjuna's 'eightfold negation' in lv1,lv2, introducing the central topic of the verses and of the Treatise, the nature of causality. The subsequent commentary (1/0) explains in general terms Nāgārjuna's motives for writing the Stanzas, thus introducing a second major theme, the question of how things really are. 'The true character of things' is the phrase most often used in the Treatise) to signify what the Buddha sees, and hence what he is really referring to in his teaching, the 'True Dharma'. The 'True Dharma' is here identified variously first with the Śravaka-dharma, then with the Mahayana and finally with the teaching of the Treatise itself, which is intended to cut off attachment to any 'characteristic of emptiness' (that is to say, any notion that emptiness is itself a doctrine or viewpoint to which one should adhere) apprehended in the Mahayana. The notion of 'True Dharma' in the Treatise functions in much the same way as 'highest truth' in the Mādhyamika device of two truths (see Chapter 24, below), in the sense that it is true only insofar as it is not misconceived, 'grasped' or hypostatised by one who is inadequate to the task of understanding or dealing with it. Even emptiness itself is not foolproof, as the commentary points out, and indeed Nāgārjuna is here said to have written his stanzas precisely in order to refute the errors of those who cling to
emptiness as a 'characteristic', that is, who regard emptiness as itself a viewpoint or position. For those whose faculties are dulled, hearing either the doctrine of the Sravakas or the Mahayana provokes attachments to concepts. The purpose of the Treatise therefore is to wean even these hardened cases away from grasping at characteristics, by spelling out again and again, topic by topic, the meaning and purpose of emptiness.

The commentary at 1/2 addresses itself to the content rather than the purpose of Nāgārjuna's verses, elaborating systematically upon 'no arising', 'no ceasing' and the negation of the other six ways in which the causal process (the process described by the Buddha in terms of the twelve causal links from ignorance to old age and death) might be conceptualised. The section from 2a8ff. invokes 'direct worldly perception' as a reliable means of knowing things, though in other contexts ordinary perception is held to be inherently unreliable. The Treatise invokes empirical verification in support of Nāgārjuna's argument, but when the same evidence is brought in defence of the 'opponent's' point of view it is dismissed on the grounds that what is perceived by the senses is illusory. "What you see with the physical eyes cannot be trusted" says the commentator at 2/17, and:

5v8 The superficial see dharmas
As having the characteristics of existence or non-existence
And thus are unable to perceive
The calm serenity of the cessation of views.
and at 21/10:

If someone says 'arising and ceasing exist since we see them with our eyes; how can they be refuted by words and teachings?' this is not correct, and why? Seeing arising and ceasing with one's eyes is due to ignorance and delusion ... the unenlightened man has attained his eyes on account of his delusion in a former world. Because of his false conceptualisation and discrimination in the present world, he says that his eyes see arising and ceasing....

1v3 is concerned with the nature of arising, and the commentary additionally draws out the implications of a false view of arising for Buddhist morality and soteriology and the operation of karma. This is another major preoccupation of the Treatise, perhaps too easily overlooked in the context of the intellectual argument. 'Where there is no cause there is no effect' is a truism no doubt, but it has ramifications beyond the purely logical:

(2b10ff.) Where there is no cause there is no effect; if there were no causes and yet there were effects, then giving alms, keeping the precepts and so forth could drag you down into the hells, while the ten evils and five rebellious acts could lead to rebirth in the heavens, because there would be no causal link.

This concern to preserve the possibility of moral cause and effect ties in with a third major preoccupation of the Treatise, the importance of the possibility of directed change within the causal process. Nāgārjuna is delineating a path between absolute fixedness on the one hand and total randomness on the other. In
a world where things are fixed, bondage cannot be transformed into liberation. In a world where nothing is fixed, there is no possibility of liberating wisdom, because there is no connection between events. But the Buddha has said that causal co-arising describes the way things are, and he also says that liberation is possible:

26v5 ... If the grasper would not grasp
There would be liberation and no existence

Following on from the discussion of cause and effect is a more detailed discussion of the four types of cause mentioned by Nāgārjuna in lv5. The Treatise follows Nāgārjuna's lead in rejecting these theories, which are identified as products of the Abhidharmist schools, although it should be borne in mind that, later on in the Treatise, the explanatory value of the Abhidharmist account is explicitly approved:

(36c19) ..The meaning of the arising and ceasing of these twelve causal conditions is just as explained in detail in the Abhidharma-sūtra.

From lv5 to 1/10 the Treatise refutes the four types of cause listed in lv5. Here, as throughout the Treatise, a double standard is applied in cases where the Buddha-word is involved. The Commentary invokes the Buddha's word on behalf of the Mādhyamika: (1/10 'The Buddha has taught that 'all active dharmas cease in successive instants. There is not one single instant
when they abide', so how can you say that a present dharma is both on the point of cessation and not on the point of cessation? ' and 1/11 'The Buddha teaches in the Mahayana that the characteristics of dharmas — whether they have form or do not have form, whether they have outflows or do not have outflows, whether they are active or inactive and so forth — all these characteristics enter into the Dharma-nature; everything is entirely empty and so there are no characteristics and no conditions...'). but a similar appeal to the scriptures by the opponent is not allowed, for 'You may believe in the True Dharma, but what is taught as an expedient does not constitute true reality'(1/11). The opponent, according to the Treatise, has misinterpreted the Buddha's intention, appealed in one context to a teaching intended for another, mistaken an expedient teaching for the 'true dharma', or hypostatized a process which is fundamentally inconceivable (1/12 'In relation to the sūtras' teaching of the twelve causal links, to say that 'because this thing exists, therefore that thing exists' is wrong, and why? ... It was only in accordance with the distinction made by ordinary people between existence and nonexistence that the Buddha spoke of them).

'Dharma' is a term best left untranslated, since it covers a range of meanings for which there is no corresponding single term in English, but in the sense in which it is most often used by Nagarjuna, to signify a component in the process of dependent arising, the most appropriate translation is probably 'factor of
experience'. Dharmas feature prominently in the Buddha's teaching, in the Abhidharmists' elaboration of that teaching and in Nāgārjuna's refutation of the Abhidharmists' theories. Dharmas are a 'given', like the twelve causal links and the whole Buddhist teaching of causality. This is why Nāgārjuna can say that there are no dharmas—if by that is meant something which has 'own-being' or 'self-nature' or 'substance'—since nothing which is thus 'fixed and settled' could participate in a process of causality. The notion that dharmas have no self nature, because they are causally produced, is expounded in 1v15 - 1/16, where it is explicitly stated that something which is caused and hence has no self-nature is not (i.e. cannot be) a dharma. Since there are no uncaused dharmas (because all dharmas are caused, according to the Buddha's teaching), there are no dharmas or, as the commentator notes in a rare reference to the Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras in 1/10, 'when a Bodhisattva is established in the seat of enlightenment, he views the twelve causal links as like the inexhaustibility of empty space'.

In chapter two, the 'going and coming' of the title refers to 'wandering in samsāra', hence the chapter has here more of a 'Buddhist' significance than the rather arid content of the verses alone might suggest. The commentary in the Treatise lends weight to this interpretation of the subject-matter of the chapter by using the example of the twelve causal links to illustrate 'movement' and 'stopping'.

...It is like the process of ignorance, causing predispositions and so on up to old age and death, being called 'movement', and when the predispositions and so forth cease because of the cessation of ignorance this being called 'stopping'.

The central soteriological significance of the chapter however lies in its refutation of any conceivable relationship between the components of going, such as goer, moment of going, place of going, action of going, characteristic of going, and other elements said by the opponent to be involved in the process of 'going'. The refutation of the 'three periods of time', the gone, the not-yet-gone and the moment of going, is significant because the model of causality which perhaps seems most 'natural, even though it may not stand up to close examination, is that of a temporal series of cause-effect. While the final verse (2v25) states that the components of going 'do not exist' the commentary is careful to gloss this 'nonexistence' as 'false and insubstantial ... empty ... being merely unreal designations, like illusions or apparitions'. 'Illusory' in the sense of 'only apparently existent' is one of two different meanings of emptiness which are not strictly separated in the Treatise. The first is ontological emptiness, the view, as here, that things are empty in the sense of being insubstantial and only apparently real.

(7v35) Like an illusion, like a dream
Like a Gandharva-city
The arising, abiding and ceasing of which we speak
Have characteristics such as these.
While the other meaning of emptiness is the epistemological version of emptiness, the 'emptiness which is itself empty' (24/13) Because you say that we are attached to emptiness, you produce errors and attribute them to us. But the emptiness of natures of which we speak -this emptiness is itself empty. There are no such errors. 

(33b17) Emptiness moreover is itself empty. But in order to guide all beings, it is taught by means of conventional designations. Because it is separate from the extremes of both existence and nonexistence, it is called the middle path. 

This emptiness which is itself empty is an instrument of debate. The Treatise argues that it does not refer to anything and should not be understood as a viewpoint. This argument is difficult to uphold, but also difficult to knock down. In the context of a discussion in chapter thirteen about the inconceivability of dharmas which are non-empty (i.e. which have self-nature), the opponent accuses Nagarjuna of holding a view of emptiness.

(18c11) Question: You say that because no non-empty dharmas exist, empty dharmas do not exist either. If so, this is a doctrine of emptiness. But since there is no reciprocal dependence there should not be any clinging (to a position) ... It is in this way that we regard your doctrine of emptiness.

To which Nāgārjuna replies:

(13v9) The Great Sage speaks of the emptiness of dharmas in order to wean us from all views. If you then reinstate a view of 'emptiness', You cannot be taught by all the Buddhas.
From the Treatise's perspective, 'emptiness' held as a doctrine is actually of no more value than, say, a doctrine of the substantiality of dharmas.

It was in order to destroy the sixty-two views, as well as ignorance, craving, etc., and all the afflictions, that the Buddha spoke of emptiness. If a person produces further views about emptiness, such a person is incorrigible. As an example, a sick man has to take medicine to be healed. If the medicine makes him ill again he cannot get better. Or it is like a flame coming out of firewood which can be extinguished by water. If it had been produced by water, what could one use to extinguish it? In the same way emptiness is the water which can extinguish the fires of affliction. There are some people who, because they carry a heavy load of karma, have a mind steeped in craving and attachment and are dull in insight, produce views of emptiness. They either say that there is emptiness, or that there is not emptiness, and through (these ideas) they again generate afflictions. If one tries to instruct this kind of person in emptiness, he will say 'I have known this emptiness for a long time'. But without this emptiness there is no way to nirvana, for as the sutra says, 'Unless you pass through the gate of emptiness, marklessness and non-doing, your liberation will be nothing but words'.

In the concluding part of this passage, the description of emptiness as an instrument of debate shades off almost imperceptibly into the idea of emptiness as the means of liberation. The relationship between these two senses of 'emptiness' is never made explicit in the Treatise, but the Treatise insists nevertheless that there is a close relationship between understanding what emptiness means and attaining release from suffering. Following a rather technical discussion of criticism and counter-criticism in debates based on emptiness in chapter four, the Treatise seeks to establish a close parallelism
between the intellectual deployment of the concept of emptiness, on the one hand, and the attainment of nirvāṇa on the other.

(7bl) ...If one relies on emptiness to refute permanence, no error is involved, and why? Because such a man does not cling to the characteristic of 'emptiness'. Therefore if one even wants to debate, he should rely upon the idea of emptiness; how much more so if he desires to seek the characteristic of release from affliction, and calm extinction.

The relationship between using the idea of emptiness in argument and seeing the ultimate of emptiness of things can only be clarified in the end by reference to the idea of levels of insight, and the assumption that the 'man of insight' (see below) uses the notion of emptiness in order to teach others, from which it may be concluded that to understand emptiness is to partake of insight. But the seemingly intractable problem is that even a proper understanding of emptiness is not possible unless one has insight. Nāgārjuna's final word on this problem, as quoted above, is that those who do not, or cannot, understand emptiness except as a 'view', 'cannot be taught by all the Buddhas' (13v9). The Treatise's view is more equivocal; although such people are 'incorrigible', they are only so in their present state due to their karmic burden. If they cannot see the point of emptiness it is regrettable, 'But without this emptiness there is no way to nirvāṇa ...'

Chapter four deals with the five skandhas, beginning with the sūtra's assertion that there are five skandhas. Form,
representing the five skandhas of form, reception, conception, predispositions and consciousness, is analysed in terms of its being an effect of a cause, in this case the 'cause of form'. What this 'cause of form' is, is not specified in the Treatise, but the analogy of cloth and threads in the commentary makes it clear that it is not a temporal causal sequence which is being examined here but the notion of form (as a dharma) being itself a fabrication of causes. Thus 'form' stands not only for the five skandhas but for all dharmas, which are taught to be causally dependent. The Treatise's argument rests on the assumption that 'things which are uncaused and yet exist are not found anywhere in the world', which is another way of saying that uncaused dharmas are inconceivable, since the Treatise does not recognise any distinction between a logical, and empirical, impossibility. This assertion, that all dharmas are uncaused, raises a question in the Treatise which is not dealt with by Nāgārjuna in his stanzas. The opponent asks about uncaused dharmas. There are three Buddhist ones, he states, and also in non-Buddhist philosophical systems there are said to be uncaused dharmas such as space, time, soul and so forth. Curiously, the three Buddhist uncaused dharmas are not specified, though this is probably a reference to the Abhidharmist notion of space and two forms of nirvāṇa which are said to be uncaused, or unconditioned (see n.85). The axiom that all dharmas are caused, nirvāṇa as much as samsāra, is fundamental to Nāgārjuna's argument in the Middle Stanzas. It is therefore important for the Treatise that the notion of uncaused dharmas is refuted, since uncaused dharmas
might appear, if they did appear, to be exceptions to the rule that all dharma are caused. The Treatise states that 'uncaused dharma are mere figures of speech; they are not in fact dharma but mere terms. But if this is true, it is no less true of all other dharma, according to Nāgārjuna, and the Treatise in fact can do little more than restate the axiom:

(6c3) These 'uncaused dharma' only exist as figures of speech. If we ponder and analyse them we find they are non-existent. If dharma have their being through causes and conditions, we ought not to say that they are uncaused. If they have no causes and conditions then it is as we have said.

The commentary on 4v5 picks up the theme earlier introduced in the Treatise in section 1/0, of the distinctions between different degrees of insight. Since the relationship between form and its cause is inconceivable, argues Nāgārjuna, the man of insight does not analyse form, whereas one who is bound by ignorance and desire develops distinctions and sophistries, about form as about everything else. Here the distinction is not simply between those who 'know' and those who do not, rather it is between those who remain aloof from conceptual traps and those who are snared by them; in other words, the man of insight is characterised by mental detachment, whereas the common unenlightened man, analysing and grasping at forms, is enslaved by mental attachments. A rather literal metaphor for this polarity between detachment and attachment is furnished by the notion of the 'eye of insight' which may either be focused and
'without outflows' like the Arhat's, able to see the Dharma-Body of the Buddha, or inverted, with outflows, pursuing sophistries, and seeing dhammas as discrete self-natures. Dhammas vary in their nature according to the eye of insight of the perceiver, and if the eye of insight is not veiled by thoughts of 'I' and 'mine' one can perceive the true character of dhammas. There is a hierarchy of spiritual beings based on the opposition between 'with outflows' (the haemorrhaging of the attention into forms and shapes) and 'without outflows', which is the state of the Arhat or Buddha. A clue to the purpose of Madhyamika may be found in Nagārjuna's assertion that 'Sophistries destroy the eye of insight':

(22v15) The Thus-Come (Tathāgata) transcends sophistries Yet men still produce sophistries Sophistries destroy the eye of insight Such as these do not see the Buddha.

The Treatise's gloss on this verse elaborates on the notion of 'sophistries'

(22/15) 'Sophistries' means recollected thoughts, grasping of characteristics, distinguishing this from that, saying that the Buddha is extinct or is not extinct, and so forth. Since man in order to pursue sophistries inverts his eye of insight, he is unable to see the dharma-body of the Thus-Come.

And seeing the dharma-body of the Thus-come means seeing things as a Buddha sees them for
... The nature of the Thus-Come ... is in fact the nature of all the worlds.

Question: What kind of thing is this nature of the Thus-Come?

Reply: The Thus-Come has no nature. Equally, the world has no nature.

Space, in chapter five, 'Contemplation of the Six Elements' was referred to in chapter four as one of the 'uncaused dharmas', but in this chapter it is analysed as an ordinary dependent dharma representing all of the six elements, earth, water, fire, wind, space and consciousness, and is shown to be an untenable mental construct on the grounds that it cannot be conceived to exist either independently of or together with its 'characteristic', i.e. that which gives space the quality of spaceness. Nor, argues the Treatise, can space be termed nonexistent, for existence and nonexistence are, in the view of the Treatise and of Nāgārjuna, reciprocally dependent, and it has already been shown that there are no existents (i.e. self-natured dharmas).

The commentary in this chapter does little more than recapitulate the verses, although it does put forward two explanations of why space is chosen to represent the other elements, the first being that space is the least obviously impermanent and changeable of the six elements, and therefore the element most likely to be construed by the unenlightened as an 'existent', the second being that, from the point of view of Buddhist cosmology, space 'supports' the four elements of earth, water, fire and wind, and consciousness in turn exists because of them. 'Therefore we first refute the basic thing, and the others are automatically
refuted' (5/7). The assertion that consciousness is dependent upon the four bodily elements seems curiously materialistic. The order of priority seems to be better reflected in the traditional listing which puts earth lowest and consciousness highest, and in the standard sequence of the twelve causal links consciousness precedes name and form, which would be equivalent to the four elements.

The conclusion to chapter five returns once more to the theme of the true character of dharmas, exploring once again the relationship between seeing things as empty, on the one hand, and generating views and vain arguments on the other.

(5v8) The superficial see dharmas
As having the characteristics of existence or non-existence.
And thus are unable to perceive
The calm serenity of the cessation of views.

(5/8) When a person has not yet attained the Way, he is unable to perceive the true character of dharmas, and because of his desires and false perceptions he generates all kinds of vain arguments. Seeing a dharma as it comes into being he asserts that it is 'existent'. Clinging to its characteristics he says that it exists. Seeing a dharma ceasing to exist he asserts that it is cut off, and clinging to this characteristic he says that it is inexistent. The man of insight, seeing that dharmas arise, extinguishes the view that they are non-existent, and seeing that they cease extinguishes the view that they exist. Consequently, although there is something in regard to dharmas which he sees, it is like an illusion or a dream, so that he ceases even to hold a view of 'a Way free of outflows'. How much more so other views? Therefore, someone who does not perceive the calm tranquility of the cessation of views, will only see them existing or see them as not existing.
6.2 Chapters 6-10

The Treatise commentary at 6/0 prefaces Nāgārjuna's argument concerning the conceptual aspects of the relationship between passion and the impassioned one with a brief account of the causal process which relates desire, hatred and delusion (the three poisons) to existence. This account is put in the mouth of the opponent, but, as an alternative version of the twelve causal links it is knowledge which is presumed on the part of the hearer, and it is against this background that Nāgārjuna's argument proceeds.

The opponent quotes from a sūtra: desire, hatred and delusion have various names such as love, attachment and passion. 'Such obsessions depend upon living beings, and these living beings are 'impassioned'. Desire means the dharma of passion. Because of the dharma of passion and the impassioned one, there is desire. It is the same with the other two passions. Where there is anger there is an angry being, and where there is delusion there is a deluded being. It is because of these three poisons that the three forms of karmic activity arise, and it is because of the three forms of karmic activities that the three realms arise, and all dharmas have their existence'.

The three poisons, three kinds of karmic activity, three realms, and existence are interdependent. The three poisons of desire, hatred and delusion function in the three worlds or realms of
Buddhist psycho-cosmology, the material realm of desire, the realm of form, and the spiritual realm of no-form, through three types of actions, the 'three forms of karmic activity'. Although at another place in the Treatise these three are described as actions of body, speech and mind, the reference here is almost certainly to the three forms of action described in chapter seventeen in connection with a discussion of the Abhidharmist notion of the 'non-disappearing dharma', which is an entity rather like a soul, bound to the three worlds (see nn. 114-117). Here, the three types of karmic activity are good and bad actions in the world of desire, and 'neutral' or 'unmoving' actions in the worlds of form and non-form. The three realms and their corresponding actions constitute existence, and the motivating forces for action in these realms are the three poisons. Nāgārjuna, however, argues in this chapter that 'the three poisons' cannot be conceived of as entities distinct from the being who is a victim of these poisons, for the impassioned one and the passions must be either combined (that is to say, a unity), or they must be different.

(6/4) If they are one then they do not combine, and why? How can one dharma combine with itself? It is like a fingertip which cannot touch itself. As for them combining as different dharmas, this too is impossible, and why? Because they are different. If each dharma is already complete then there is absolutely no need for further combination, for even though combined, they will still remain different...
The Treatise once again asserts that what the Buddha says is true, but all explanations are untenable.

(6/10) As with passion, so it is with hatred and delusion. As with the three poisons, so it is with all the afflictions and all dharmas, which neither precede nor succeed each other and are neither combined nor separate, but are wholly established through causality.

Chapter seven examines the 'three marks' of dharmas, beginning with the authoritative sutra statement that dharmas arise, abide and cease, but denying any further reification of these characteristics. In Nāgārjuna's verses, the three marks of dharmas are refuted on the grounds that they themselves are neither 'active' nor 'inactive', since active (caused, conditioned) marks would themselves be dharmas, and inactive marks could not achieve anything. The line of argument reveals how extremely narrow are the parameters of thought in Mādhyamika; either something is a dharma or it is not; if it is a dharma, it is caused, and if it is caused it has no own-nature and is therefore simply a conventional term used by the Buddha. If there were any second-order terms in the Mādhyamika repertory which were not subjected to this kind of destructive analysis, (the most likely candidates would be dharmas, causality and emptiness) we could say that Nāgārjuna was inconsistent and that his method fails, but he is insistent that these are just terms amongst others. He maintains that there is causality, but two chapters of the Stanzas (chapters one and twenty) are devoted to showing that the notion of cause and effect is untenable. He
analyses processes only in terms of dharmas, but shows in Chapter eighteen that dharmas are inconceivable. Finally, he rests his whole system on emptiness, but is insistent that it is only emptiness properly understood which describes the true character of dharmas. Only a Buddha, a man of insight, can penetrate this reality, and a Buddha does not rest his perception of how things really are upon right views, (such as that things are 'empty') but upon non-views. Indeed, in one verse Nāgārjuna remarks that even 'perverted views', normally held to be the mark of the unenlightened being, can be held by a Buddha. So long as there is no attachment, no self 'clinging' to these views, they are not wrong:

(23v16) If there is no dharma of clinging
Incorrectly speaking, these are perverted views.
Correctly speaking, they are not perverted views.
For who is there to have these things?

Chapter seven is itself an attack on causality, echoing themes which arose in the first chapter, such as the possible ways in which 'arising' might be conceived, and in the second chapter, where the idea of causality as a temporal sequence was discussed ...

(7v15) Arising is not produced after it has arisen
Nor is it produced before it has arisen.
Nor is it produced at the same time as it arises
This has already been dealt with in 'going and coming'.

... and the Treatise once again emphasises the soteriological significance of this discussion of causality at 10b9ff.

Moreover, if a dharma not yet arisen could arise, all dharmas in the world not yet arisen should arise. All the ordinary people in whom enlightenment has not yet arisen could now produce the dharma of imperishable bodhi. An arhat freed from the afflictions would now develop the afflictions...

Verse seventeen anticipates the concept which is no more than an application of Nāgārjuna's axiom that all dharmas, including nirvana, are equally caused and conditioned, of the identity of what is produced by causes, and nirvāṇa.

(7v17) If a dharma arises from conditions
Its nature will be calm extinction.
Therefore arising and the moment of arising
Would both be nirvānic.

This concept is developed more fully in chapter twenty-five in the well-known formula

(25v19) Between nirvāṇa and the world
There is not the slightest distinction
Between the world and nirvāṇa
There is not the slightest distinction.

But in chapter seventeen the nirvāṇa-quality of dharmas is examined from, as it were, the standpoint of dharmas. Dharmas, being produced by conditions, have no self-nature and are consequently nirvānic, says the commentary, and it goes on to
describe all dharmas as like cloths composed of threads, mats made of rushes, and fire which is indistinguishable from what is burning. 'All dharmas are like this; therefore dharmas arising from causal conditions have no self-nature, and having no self-nature are empty and unreal like a mirage.' The idea being developed here is that nirvāṇa is 'no-self-nature', whether this is applied to views, to beings or to any other dharmas. This current of thought is taken up once again towards the end of the present chapter when the opponent asks, in the light of Nāgārjuna's denial of arising, abiding and ceasing:

(7/34) If these (marks of) arising, abiding and ceasing are absolutely non-existent, how can you speak their names in this treatise?

Nāgārjuna's reply is less forthcoming than that of the Treatise commentary. He says:

(7v35) Like an illusion, like a dream
Like a Gandharva-city;
The arising, abiding and ceasing of which we speak
Have marks such as these.

But the commentary expands this considerably by reaffirming the distinction between, on the one hand, unenlightened people who cannot use such terms as 'arising' and 'ceasing' without clinging to them, and on the other hand, saints and sages whose 'minds are different', the difference being of course that saints and sages do not cling, and do not perceive self-nature in dharmas.
The characteristics of arising, abiding and ceasing are not fixed and real. Unenlightened people with their voracious attachments assert that they are fixed and real, so saints and sages, out of pity and compassion and a desire to bring to an end their perverted views, revert to using those terms to which people are attached. Though the expressions are the same, their minds are different. To speak thus of arising, abiding and ceasing should not attract criticism, just as the acts of an illusionist should not be censured, because of his motive. There should be no feelings of grief or joy in this regard; one should simply see with one's eyes and that is all, just as one should not seek in the world for something seen only in a dream, and just as, for example, a Gandharva-city, manifesting with the sunrise is not real, but merely a conventional designation which soon ceases to be. 'Arising', 'abiding' and 'ceasing' are also like this. The unenlightened man differentiates them as existents; the sage investigates and finds them untenable.

Both groups, therefore, see the same 'dharmas', but they differ in that the unenlightened conceive of dharmas as existent or nonexistent, while the sage has no views about such dharmas and, being devoid of attachment to dharmas is free to employ conventional designations for the purpose of teaching others.

The eighth chapter examines the relationship between doer and deed. The now-familiar argument ('You should not raise these questions again, yet being deeply immersed in mental attachments, you have raised more questions, to which me must now give more replies' says the commentary) develops by first dichotomising the process of doing into ostensibly separate dharmas such as 'doer', 'doing' and deed' and then arguing that since each of these components inevitably presupposes all of the others, none can exist in and of itself, and something which does not exist independently does not, in Nāgārjuna's terms, 'exist' at all:
If there is a fixed, existent doer
He does not do a fixed deed.
If there is no fixed, existent doer,
He does not do a fixed deed.

The Treatise prefaces Nāgārjuna's text with a brief discussion of both active and inactive dharmas, adopting here a slightly different argument to refute non-active or unconditioned dharmas, namely that 'the three marks ... have been negated, and since the three marks do not exist, there are no active dharmas. Since active dharmas do not exist, there are no non-active ones ...'

This refutation of non-active dharmas via active dharmas is once again no more than a repetition of the axiom that everything can be described in terms of dharmas which are entirely subject to causality. That this axiom is important for Buddhist soteriology is however underlined by the way in which Nāgārjuna's argument develops. Having shown that a 'fixed deed' and a 'fixed doer' are untenable (within the overall presupposition of causality) he argues that

If there are no dharmas of doing
Then there is no sin or merit.
Where there is no sin or merit
No recompense for sin or merit exists either.

and

Where there is no recompense for sin or merit,
There is also no nirvāṇa.
And whatever one may do
Is completely vacuous and without effect.
The relationship between sin and merit, on the one hand, and nirvana on the other, is difficult if not impossible to characterise. In the Buddhist view actions (karma) are binding, 'good' actions as much as 'bad' ones, since it is cessation of ignorance or cessation of grasping alone which can effectively break the round of the twelve causal links leading to successive rebirth and suffering. Later in the Treatise, in Chapter seventeen, this matter is dealt with at considerable length, but in the present chapter Nāgārjuna's argument is simply that causelessness entails, in general terms, the impossibility of traversing any path governed by relationships between cause and effect. The Treatise perhaps too hastily makes the path to nirvāṇa somehow contingent upon the process of karmic retribution.

(8/6) ... Also there will be no sin or merit, and because there is no sin or merit there will be no recompense or retribution for sin and merit and thus no path to nirvāṇa ...

For in chapter seventeen it becomes clear that the path to nirvāṇa is not of the same order as the paths of good and bad actions. For the present, however, the Treatise is content to refute the opponent's assertion that there are doers and there are deeds, by the argument that, if this were so, sin and merit and the operation of the karmic process would be nullified. This could itself be taken for a description of nirvāṇa, of course, but the matter is not taken further. Nāgārjuna's view about the issue of doers and deeds is made clear in verse eleven:
The doer exists by virtue of the deed,  
The deed exists by virtue of the doer.  
This is how we establish the meaning of 'deed'  
There is nothing to add beyond this.

And lest this is taken to be an assertion that there are such things as 'deeds' the commentary explains that it is only because of a 'doer' that there can be a 'deed', and 'if something emerges from a combination then it has no self-nature, and having no self-nature it is empty ... Because it is empty there is nothing which is produced'. In what sense, then, are there doers and deeds? The Treatise asserts that in one sense there are doers and deeds, and in another, true, sense there are not. It appeals to the distinction between unenlightened and enlightened perception, and also to the distinction between what is conventionally said to be the case, and what is actually the case in 'the highest sense', thus anticipating the more detailed examination of the 'two truths' used by the Buddhas to teach the unenlightened which appears in chapter twenty-four. Finally, the analysis of doer and deed is extended to cover 'all other dharmas' and the commentary makes a very clear statement about emptiness (though the term is not used in this particular passage) in relation to the Buddha's original teaching of non-self.

Just as deed and doer cannot be separated from each other and, not being separable, are therefore non-fixed, and having no fixed (nature) therefore have no self-nature, so it is with reception [one of the five skandhas]. Reception stands for the body of the five skandhas; the recipient is the person. There are no five skandhas
apart from the person, and no person apart from the five skandhas, which merely arise from causality. Just as with receiving and the recipient, so it is with all other dharmas, which should be negated in the same way.

Chapter nine is titled 'Contemplation of a Substrate'. The Chinese term translates literally as 'originally abiding' and is intended to be synonymous with 'self' conceived of as permanent and unchangeable. It is, to all intents and purposes, the atman denied by the Buddha, or the 'doer' refuted in the previous chapter. The opponent's argument (9vvl-2) is that there must be someone who 'has' all the mental and sensory faculties, and that someone must be some kind of soul. Nāgārjuna's reply is at first tantalising. He asks,

If...
There were a pre-existent substrate,
How could we know it?

And the Commentary enters into an extended debate on this question in the form of a dialogue in which, amongst other theories, the Vaiśeṣika reasons for asserting the existence of the soul are put forward and refuted. There is a long disquisition (from 13b25) on the possible relationships between body and soul, in the course of which several humorous possibilities are ventured;

If such a soul does exist, then it must be either inside the body, like a pillar within a wall, or outside the body, like armour worn by a man. If it were inside the body, then the body could not be perishable, since the soul would always be dwelling inside it. Therefore to
say that a soul dwells in the body is mere words, absurd and unfounded. If it dwells outside the body, covering the body like armour, then the body ought to be invisible, because the soul would closely cover it ... If you say that when an arm is cut off the soul shrinks back inside and cannot be cut off, then when the head is cut off (the soul) should also shrink back in and one should not die, but in fact one does die ... If you say that where the body is big, the soul is big, and where the body is small, the soul is small, ... then if the soul follows the body in this way it should not be permanent ...

These arguments, which surely qualify as 'sophistries' in their preoccupation with the physical attributes of a soul rather than with the logical impossibility of a permanent soul as a component of a causal process characterised by impermanence, contrast rather markedly with Nāgājuna's answer to his own question, 'If there were a pre-existent substrate, how could we know it? He points out a simple flaw in the opponent's argument:

(9v4) If, separate from eye and ear etc.,
There were a substrate   
Then also, without a substrate
Eyes and ears etc., should exist.

And it is this argument, which concentrates on the untenability of the idea of a permanent and unchanging substrate which takes part in yet is unaffected by mental and perceptual processes, which dominates the chapter from here onwards, until at 9v10 the argument is extended to cover not only the substrate but any of the other elements involved in seeing, hearing and so forth.
All the functions of eye and ear, etc.,
And all the dharmas of pain, pleasure, etc.,
—The elements from which they are produced
These elements have no souls

'These elements' refers to the four elements of earth, water, fire and air, as the commentary makes clear, but the critique of course applies to all dharmas, which, since they have 'no souls' (no substrate, no self, no self-nature) do not, in that sense 'exist'. But Nāgārjuna's argument is not completed when he has shown that dharmas do not exist. The view that they do not exist is as one-sided as the view that they do. The Buddha's words which come closest to Nāgārjuna's own formulation of the meaning of emptiness are those quoted (in this case from the Samda-Kātyāyana-sutra), at 15/7 'Separate from existence and separate from nonexistence'. Here in chapter nine Nāgārjuna in effect asserts that 'separate from existence and nonexistence' means 'not to make any distinction between existence and nonexistence':

In eyes, etc. there is no substrate,
Now and in the future there will be none.
Since there is none in the three periods of time
There is no distinction between existence and non-existence.

And the commentary expands upon this brief statement by explaining that 'no distinction' means 'not making vain distinctions', in other words, not generating sophistries about causality
Though we contemplate and search for a substrate, it never existed in the eye, etc., and does not exist now, or in the future. Not existing in any of the three periods of time, it is the nirvana of non-arising, in which there should be no obstacles. If there is no substrate, then how can there be the eye, etc.? Debates and vain arguments such as these consequently cease, and when vain arguments have ceased, all dharmas are empty.

'Fuel' in chapter ten, 'Fire and Fuel' is perhaps a misnomer (though no more appropriate word exists) for by fuel Nāgārjuna means that which is actually burning and itself constitutes the fire. For the purposes of Nāgārjuna's argument, the other meaning of fuel as 'that which may be used for burning' has to be set aside. When this is understood, it becomes obvious that 'fuel and fire' is simply another version of 'doer and deed', 'goer and going' and so forth; in other words fuel and fire are two components of what is actually a wholly interdependent and indivisible process; a metaphor for causality itself, and the Treatise makes this point in some detail at the outset of the chapter. The objection which the opponent brings forward here is of interest; his argument is that the Mādhyamika critique of fire and fuel, which is developed in terms of the identity or difference of the two 'dharmas' presupposes a recognition that fire and fuel exist. 'We can see with our worldly eyes that things do exist', says the opponent.

'If there were no fire or fuel, we would not be able to examine them in terms of identity and difference. If you allow that there is unity and difference of dharmas, then you must recognise that fire and fuel exist, and if you allow that they exist, then this is to consider them as already existent' (14b18).
The reply makes use of the concept, developed later in chapter twenty-four, of 'conventional worldly expressions'.

(14b24) ...'Apart from conventional worldly expressions, there is nothing with which to argue. If we did not speak of fire and fuel, how could anything be refuted? If nothing is spoken about then meanings cannot be clarified. Thus, if a commentator wishes to refute existence and non-existence, inevitably he has to speak of existence and non-existence. He takes up (the terms) existence and non-existence but does not thereby accept existence and non-existence. He is following conventional worldly usage so there is no error involved. If putting words in one's mouth was at once to accept them, then for you to say 'destroy' would constitute self-destruction. It is the same with 'fire' and 'fuel'. Although the expressions exist, these are not accepted either. Therefore we may consider whether fire and fuel are one dharma or different dharmas, (and say) that neither can be established ...' This line of argument once again applies a double standard; it defends the deployment of conventional terms to refute the 'grasping' use of terms, with the implicit assumption that the Madhyamika is able to use terms as mere 'conventional expressions' while the opponent, (read: the unenlightened person), takes words to be references to things which they embody. This is partly a common-sense argument about language which recognises that words like 'destroy' do not in themselves carry destructive force, and partly a foreshadowing of a more fundamental point about the Buddhas employing skilful means and
using conventional truths to convey ultimate truths. The two are not entirely separate, for at the heart of the Treatise's attitude to 'sophistries' and 'vain arguments' is the belief that intellectual but unenlightened Buddhist minds such as those of the Abhidharmists have woven for themselves a web of linguistically-based reality, a Buddhist world-view based on Buddhist words, which does not conform to the true character of things, and that sweeping away this web of illusion based on false conceptualizing is the concomitant of enlightenment or nirvāṇa, at least to the extent that nirvāṇa is unattainable without abandonment of such views.

In the concluding commentary to this Chapter there are, unusually for the Treatise, references to specific Buddhist schools, in this case the Sarvāstivādins and their offshoot, the Vātsiputrīyas. The beliefs generated by adherents of these schools exemplify, according to the Treatise, the vacillating dogmatism of 'vain arguments'.

If a person asserts that there is a characteristic of 'self' as the Vātsiputrīya school teaches, he cannot say that there is a self apart from form, but only that self resides in the 'fifth indescribable storehouse' [a reference to the doctrine ascribed to the Vātsiputrīyas that the self exists but is inexpressible]. This is like the Sarvāstivādins who teach that each of the dharmas has its own characteristics, distinguishing this one as skillful, this one as unskillful, this as neutral, this as outflowing or not outflowing, active or inactive, and so on. Such people as these do not attain the nirvāṇa-quality of dharmas, but fabricate various kinds of sophistries, using the Buddha's words.
Chapter eleven, 'Contemplation of Original Limits' deals with the beginningless round of samsāra. The Buddha has taught, argues the opponent, that beings come and go in beginningless birth and death. Therefore there are beings, and there is birth and death. Nāgārjuna argues however that the Buddha refers to beginninglessness because the concept of a beginning is untenable—and for the same reason that a middle, and an end are inconceivable. Nāgārjuna's argument is based on the assumption that opposite and complementary categories are interdependent:

(11/2) Beginning exists because of middle and end, and end exists because of beginning and middle. Where there is no beginning and no end, how can there be a middle? Within samsāra there is no beginning and no end, hence we say that before, after and simultaneity cannot be. Why is this?

(11v3) If we suppose that first there is birth, And afterwards there is old age and death; Then there will be birth with no old age and death, And old age and death with no birth.

In other words, birth and death is a chicken-and-egg situation. One cannot exist without the other, nor can they exist simultaneously, for they are part of a causal sequence. This argument is extended in verses seven and eight to all dharmas, for as the Treatise explains, what applies to one dharma applies to all dharmas.
'All dharmas refers to cause and effect, marks (characteristics) and what is marked, receiving, recipient and so on. All are without original limits. It is not only birth and death that has no ultimate limits, but in order to summarize all the details he talks only about birth and death having no original limits.

The interdependence of opposites is a theme which is explored again in chapter twelve, 'Contemplation of Suffering'. Suffering means 'the five skandhas' in the Buddhist view. To exist, to be embodied is to suffer. As the first of the four truths asserts: 'Existence is suffering'. In this chapter Nāgārjuna investigates four possible ways of characterising the source of suffering:

(12v1) 'Self-created, created by anotherJointly created or created by no cause'. In these ways they describe suffering But in fact these are wrong.

They are wrong from the point of view of the Mādhyamika critique because each of these explanations presupposes a being who 'receives' suffering. But, asks the Treatise

... in what other situation, apart from in the suffering of the five skandhas, do you find a person who could create his own suffering? You should give an account of such a person, but you cannot give an account of him...

Since there is no person apart from this 'suffering assemblage of the skandhas' (26v9) suffering cannot be caused or originated by anyone who is not already subject to suffering. The possibility
is raised (in 12/9) that suffering arises without a cause. This is perhaps a logical possibility but within the Buddha's teaching of causality, causelessness is an error. The Treatise speaks of the 'numerous errors' of causelessness and refers back to chapter eight, where, in the discussion at 8/6 the implications of causelessness were discussed. There, the main argument was that causelessness entailed the loss of karmic recompense, 'and thus no path to nirvāṇa'. Once again, therefore, the point is made that without causality there can be no directed change, no 'path'.

Chapter thirteen examines the predispositions, one of the five skandhas, which here represents them all (13/2: 'Predispositions' means the five skandhas). The opponent describes predispositions in traditional terms: they are false deceptions, and their mark or characteristic is 'misapprehension'. In contrast to them, nirvāṇa is that dharma which is not characterised by misapprehension. If what the Buddha says is true, then the predispositions exist, just as nirvāṇa exists. Nāgārjuna's argument turns on the interpretation of 'false' in this description of the predispositions.

False deception and misapprehension;
What is apprehended in these?
The Buddha has spoken thus
In order to point to the meaning of emptiness.

The argument is somewhat analogous to Śaṅkara's parable of the rope misperceived as a snake. Since the reality perceived by
misapprehension is only apparent — there is no snake — it is not a 'reality' at all. By reality Śāṅkara means that which is permanent, while for Nāgārjuna the equivalent term is 'the true character of things' or its synonym, as here, 'emptiness'. The Treatise explains what emptiness means in respect of another skandha, the skandha of form, in a series of analogies in 13/2, ranging from the stages of growth (from infant to toddler, youth, adult and old age) to the lump of clay and the pot, firewood which burns, a banana tree consisting entirely of bark and leaves, and the flame of a lamp. Within each of these examples it is impossible says the Treatise, to distinguish any fixed stages of transformation, any 'fixed forms' within fluid processes. Therefore, '... form has no nature and is empty, existing only through conventional expressions', by which the Treatise means the conceptual discriminations generated by the unenlightened. By contrast, a sage or wise man investigates the skandhas in various ways, but 'since they are sequential and similar, it is difficult to distinguish their arising and ceasing; they are like the succession of flowing water' (17c11). The critique which has been applied to the predispositions is applied to each of the other skandhas, reception, conception and consciousness, and the argument is developed in a passage of commentary which is exceptionally rich in analogies of emptiness. Such analogies, however, demonstrate only that forms are difficult to isolate, not that fixed entities are logically impossible. Rather, fixed entities are assumed to be impossible in a world whose character is that of impermanence
and change, as described by the Buddha. The characteristic of impermanence is graphically evoked in the description (at 18a5) of 'diminishing' and 'increasing' predispositions (a reference to diminution and increase of quality rather than amount). Beings are on a razor's edge - they may ascend or descend in the cycle of rebirths; at any moment they can neither be said to be going forward, or to be going back:

Those with pure predispositions, since they have already received their rewards either as humans, or in the heavens of desire, or in the heavens of form or the formless heaven, are 'diminishing', but now in resuming their activities they are called 'increasing'. Those with impure predispositions are also like this. Having already received their deserts in the hells, in animal births, and amongst the hungry ghosts and asuras they are 'diminishing', but in resuming their activities they are called 'increasing'. Therefore, since all predispositions are increasing and decreasing they never abide. It is like a man who is ill. If he is given suitable treatment his illness will subside, but if it is unsuitable his illness will get worse. Predispositions are like this. Because they increase and diminish they are not fixed, but exist only through conventional worldly expressions. It is by means of the worldly truth that we manage to perceive the supreme truth.

The concluding sentence echoes the earlier assertion in the Treatise that one has to adopt conventional expressions in order to refute wrong views, but adopting conventional terms does not have to involve grasping apprehension of those terms, such that one takes the word for the reality, and generates sophistries. Since, in the Treatise, generation of sophistries and vain arguments is virtually equated with 'ignorance' in the twelfeold causal chain it is not surprising that the Treatise here restates
the twelve causal links (at 18a12), asserting that ignorance causes predispositions, and therefore ... 'all sufferings have their origin in predispositions'. Since ignorance causes predispositions, ignorance is the link in the causal chain which has to be broken.

The Buddha's teachings rely on conventional worldly truth, but if you attain to the truth of the supreme meaning and develop true insight then ignorance will cease...

Here, attaining to the truth of the highest meaning is equated with insight (see n. 26 to the translation for a discussion of the two truths), but a merely intellectual attainment is not intended. The Treatise assumes that cutting-off of ignorance will be accompanied by

(18a19) ... that which meditation cuts off, namely attachment and craving, anger, contamination by forms, contamination by non-form, lust and ignorance ... Because these are cut off, each link (of causation) ceases, which is to say that ignorance, predispositions, consciousness, name and form, the six avenues, contact, reception, desire, grasping, existence, birth, old age, death, sorrow, grief, suffering, affliction, the pain of separation from those you love, and the pain of associating with those you hate, and so forth, all cease. Because of this cessation the five skandhas completely cease, with nothing at all remaining, only emptiness.

The commentary to verse three of this chapter (18b5ff) explains the usefulness and use of emptiness in debate, rather in the manner of chapter four. 'It is solely to refute their (presumed) nature that we say dharmas have no nature'. Finally, the
commentary at 13/8 discusses briefly (and dismisses) the charge of the opponent that the Madhyamika holds 'a doctrine of emptiness'. Since the Treatise in its preamble (1/0) has already recognised that not all those who hear about emptiness are capable of dealing with it, it can hardly sustain the argument that Nagarjuna's teaching of emptiness is effective per se.

Emptiness has to be held in a non-grasping manner, and it is not given to all to be non-grasping and to have the 'great mind'. Nagarjuna's verse 13v9 recognises this fact; even a Buddha cannot teach (the Chinese word also means 'transform') one who cannot be taught.'

The Great Sage speaks of the emptiness of dharmas
In order to wean us from all views.
If you then reinstate a view of 'emptiness',
You cannot be taught by all the Buddhas.

And the Treatise takes the same view, explaining that

... There are some people who, because they carry a heavy load of karma, have a mind steeped in craving and attachment and are dull in insight, produce views of emptiness. They either say that there is emptiness, or that there is not emptiness, and through (these ideas) they again generate afflictions. If one tries to instruct this kind of person in emptiness, he will say 'I have known this emptiness for a long time'. But without this emptiness there is no way to nirvana, for as the sutra says, 'Unless you pass through the gate of emptiness, marklessness and non-doing, your liberation will be nothing but words'.

The implication seems to be that unless one is already ready to understand emptiness, it will not be effective. And if one is
required to be already a saint or sage in order to understand emptiness correctly, what is its practical value? To this question, neither Nāgārjuna nor the Treatise gives an answer, but if there is an answer, it must lie in the preoccupation of the Treatise with the question of what it is to be a Buddha. Rather as the Prajñāpāramitā literature describes the state of being (and non-being) of a Bodhisattva, so Nāgārjuna's teaching on emptiness seems to foreshadow the experience of liberation of the Thus-Come.

'Combination' is the subject of chapter fourteen. Nāgārjuna's argument is a straightforward refutation of the Abhidharmist analysis of seeing and knowing which bases itself on the idea that by a combination of, for example, 'self, mind, sense-function (or faculty) and object, knowing is produced'. The method of refutation is by now routine; knowing only takes place when all function together, and without all, none contributes to 'knowing'. Therefore, they are all utterly interdependent and none exists by and of itself. Moreover, combination, properly speaking, can only take place amongst things which are 'different' (i.e. separate from each other), but the so-called components of seeing and knowing, such as seer, seeing, thing being seen, etc., are all comprised in the process of seeing. The Mādhyamika definition of 'difference is 'being a different dharma', but it is presupposed that all dharmas are combinations of conditions and causes. The analogy of a house which is the same thing as its beams and rafters is employed to illustrate
this assumption, and the analogy of a fist which is not different from its five fingers to illustrate the point that dharmas are not different from each other. The Treatise at \(14/6\) introduces a concept of a 'universal characteristic' which is not found in Nāgārjuna's stanzas, but which is found in Abhidharmist works (see n. 202). The Treatise deals with this concept by reinterpretating particular characteristics (subsets of this 'universal characteristic', and therefore deemed to be neither the same as nor entirely different from each other) as 'causally conditioned dharmas. To the Treatise, everything can be described as a dharma, and refuted accordingly.

Chapter fifteen, 'Contemplation of Existence and Nonexistence' deals with the concept of 'self-nature' or 'own-being' of dharmas. 'Existence' in the Treatise means 'having self-nature'. The notion of a self-nature is incompatible with the notion of a dharma, and since it is axiomatic in Mādhyamika thought that everything consists of dharmas, the argument proceeds on the assumption that natures are either dharmas (in which case they are not unconditioned self-natures) or that they are self-natures, in which case they cannot be dharmas, and therefore cannot be, if the Buddha's teaching on dharmas and causality is true. Nāgārjuna states the alternatives in verse one:
That a nature exists within conditions
Is not correct.
And a nature issuing from conditions
Would be termed a 'created dharma'.

A wrong understanding (an understanding couched in terms of
self-natures) is characteristic of one who is 'deeply attached to
dharmas', says the Treatise at 15/6. Such a person

...will inevitably pursue a view of existence. If you
refute self-nature then he will see other-nature. If you
refute other-nature he will see existence. If you refute
existence he will see nonexistence. If you refute
nonexistence he will become confused. But if he is
clear-witted and his mental attachments are slight, and
he knows the calm serenity of the cessation of all views,
he will nevermore generate these four kinds of
sophistries. Such a person sees the Buddha-dharma.

Once again, perceiving the true requires that one already has
insight. The next verse, therefore, provides an example of such
a one:

The Buddha is able to extinguish both existence and
nonexistence.
As it says in the sūtra
In the 'Instruction to Kātyāyana'
'Separate from existence and separate from
nonexistence'.

In a rare reference to the eightfold path, the Treatise explains
that in this sutra the Buddha expounds the meaning of 'right
view' as 'separate from existence and separate from
nonexistence'. The meaning of this statement is expanded in
terms of permanence and severance, (the idea that things last for
ever or the idea that there is a complete break between one dharma (as 'cause') and another (as 'effect'). The danger of these views is that one who holds them has abandoned moral (karmic) responsibility. 'If you have views of severance or permanence, then sin and merit, etc., will not exist and you will negate all worldly processes. For this reason you should relinquish them.'

Chapter sixteen, 'Contemplation of Bondage and Liberation' has already been discussed in section 5.4 of this introduction in the context of the discussion of causality. The argument here is similar to that of chapter fourteen, on 'Combination'; the process of transmigration is analysed into component parts and these component parts are then shown to be interdependent and therefore not 'parts' at all, but the product of an analysing and conceptually discriminating mind. The argument may be summed up by one brief quotation from 16/7:

If the living being existed separately, prior to the five skandhas, then the living being would be bound by the five skandhas, but in reality there is no separate being apart from the five skandhas. If the afflictions existed separately, apart from the five skandhas, then the five skandhas would be bound by the afflictions, but in reality there are no separate afflictions apart from the five skandhas.

The chapter contains the first statement of the equality of nirvāṇa and samsāra;
Nirvāṇa is not something special
Separate from birth and death

The Commentary adds a quotation from the (Prajñāpāramitā) sūtras:
'Nirvāṇa is saṁsāra, saṁsāra is nirvāṇa' and asks, rhetorically;
'Within this true character of all dharmas, how can you say "This is saṁsāra, this is nirvāṇa"?'.

Karma and moral action is a particular concern of the Treatise,
and the commentary considerably amplifies Nāgārjuna's argument in
chapter seventeen, 'Contemplation of Karma', with details of
Buddhist teaching about actions and rewards. The commentary
begins with a sūtra quotation by the opponent:

'As the sutra says, 'all living beings take birth according to their karma'. An evil person goes
into the hells, one who cultivates merit is reborn in heaven, and one who traverses the path attains
nirvāṇa. Therefore, these dharmas are not empty.

And the first five of Nāgārjuna's verses are devoted to the same
theme. In the Middle Treatise translation, the first verse and
its commentary bring out very clearly the relationship between
cultivation of the mind and moral action (see n. 223):

(17v1) A person can subdue his mind
And benefit living beings.
This is called compassion
The seed and fruit of the two worlds.

(17/1) The three poisons in a person cause distress to others
and give rise to actions, so the good person first of all
destroy his own evil. This is why it is said that
subduing one's own mind benefits others. 'Benefiting others' means almsgiving, holding to the precepts, humility, etc., and not harming others.

Verses two to five outline types of karma, such as 'mental karma' (thoughts and mental configurations) and body and speech karma. There is an extended explanation of the seven types of karma mentioned in 17v5 which is not entirely consistent with the account in the verses (see n. 229). The commentary explores different aspects of sin and merit such as intention, action and effect arising from the action. The commentator is clearly interested in transmitting the Buddhist teaching here; there is no suggestion that this knowledge is useless, but in the final sentence of 17/5 the opponent draws his conclusion: 'Therefore there are fixed, real (karmic) actions and their results. Hence, dharmas cannot be empty'.

In 17v6 and 17/6, Nāgārjuna's response to this view is expounded. He argues and demonstrates that actions and rewards cannot ever meet because actions arise and cease momentarily. If they lasted up to their reward they would be 'permanent', but all dharmas are by definition fleeting. On the other hand, if actions cease once performed (are 'severed'), they cannot cause rewards in the future. The opponent then proposes the analogy, taken up by the commentary, of the seed and the fruit. One cannot say that the seed is separate from the fruit, or that the seed is the same as the fruit. The process of maturation is ineffable and 'there is no severance and no permanence involved. The analogy is followed
up with a reference to the 'ten paths of 'white' actions'.

'White', says the commentary, means 'good and pure'. Following these ten paths results in 'no-killing, no-stealing, no-lewdness, no lying, no deception, no evil speech, no useless gossip, no jealousy, no anger and no perverted views' (see n. 36 to the translation).

Nāgārjuna, however, is unimpressed by the analogy of seed and fruit, even though the Treatise had employed a virtually identical analogy (seed and sprout) to dismiss alternative views of the causal process in chapter one (2a8ff.) The Treatise interprets Nāgārjuna's reference to 'extremely numerous errors' to mean that the opponent wishes to establish some 'continuity of characteristics' (read: some model of causality) in the process of action and reward. The Treatise argues that even if seed growing into fruit seems to embody an observable causal process, being tangible, observable, having form, and so forth, this does not mean that the causal process is as the opponent has described it. 'How much less so with thoughts and actions, which are intangible, formless and invisible?' This is another example of empirical evidence brought by the opponent being dismissed as unreliable (see n. 30)

Verses fourteen to nineteen outline the Sāmmatiya doctrine of the 'non-disappearing dharma', a neutral, permanent entity, likened in the stanzas to a bond in relation to which actions are like the goods owing. The commentary explains all the references in
this theory, culminating in the distinction made between those
with outflows and those without outflows (a reference to the
outflowing of the attention into the worlds of form, etc.). The
text is almost certainly corrupt here, since the commentary
places the stream-winner, the srotāpanna, at the top of the
hierarchy of spiritual attainers, in a position which should be
occupied by the Arhat (see n. 249).

This account, however, falls into the same errors of 'severance'
and 'permanence', according to Nāgārjuna. His view is stated as
follows:"

(17v20) Although empty it is not severed.
Though it exists it is not permanent.
Karma and reward never disappear.
This we call the teaching of the Buddha.

The Treatise attributes the 'non-disappearing dharma' doctrine to
the opponents' 'attachments to perverted views and ignorance of
the true character', which lead them to say that 'this is the
teaching of the Buddha'. Nāgārjuna's somewhat enigmatic
statement of his own view is expanded in the commentary along
familiar lines. The Mādhyamika avoids severance and permanence
(with their attendant dangers) by perceiving that

... karma is utterly empty and has the characteristic of
nirvāṇa. Its self-nature being separate from existence,
what dharma is there to be cut off, and what dharma is
there to disappear?
This view receives classic statement in the verse following:

(17v21)

All dharmas are fundamentally non-arising  
Since they have no fixed nature.  
All dharmas are also non-ceasing  
Because they do not arise.

The next four verses turn the argument upon the opponent, showing how, if dharmas were permanent, if they had self-natures, there could be separate and unconnected entities co-existing in the world; without acting there could be sins, without lapsing from pure conduct there could be impurity, and 'doing evil and doing good would not be distinguished'. The absurdities consequent upon a theory of 'fixed' and self-existent dharmas are illustrated in the commentary; if there were non-acting actions (i.e. actions which did not have an actor attached), then this man could commit a sin, and that man would receive the retribution. This would negate all moral action.

From showing how the opponent's theory leads to absurdity, Nagarjuna moves to a statement of how things really are, the Treatise invoking 'saints and sages' (17/27) to substantiate his view. Since action (karma) arises from the afflictions of lust, anger, greed and so forth, and the afflictions are not real, which the commentary says is because they in turn arise from conceptualised distinctions (see n. 251 and the discussion of the afflictions in chapter twenty-three), actions themselves are not real. Moreover, if actions are not real, and actions are the
cause of bodies (i.e. of rebirth), then bodies are not real either. By 'not real' the Treatise means 'not having a fixed nature', hence 'empty'.

The opponent, however, insists that there must be, as the sutras assert, an 'originator of karma', and if this being exists, then actions and rewards exist as well. In reply, Nāgārjuna agrees that there is such a one, but that the one who performs an action cannot be said to be the same as, and cannot be said to be different from, the one who experiences the reward, for, as the commentary explains

If he were the same, then when a man who did evil received the form of an ox, the man would not become an ox [i.e. he would have to remain a man], and nor would the ox become a man. If they are different, then all action and reward is lost and we fall into causelessness, and causelessness is annihilation. Therefore the present recipient is neither the same as, nor different from, the former doer.

In a final appeal to empirical evidence the opponent points out that regardless of what Nāgārjuna has said about karma and rewards, nevertheless 'we can see that all living beings manifestly perform actions and receive their rewards. What about this?' (23b24)

Nāgārjuna replies with the analogy of an illusionary man created by the Buddha's spiritual power, who then transforms into another illusionary man. The point of this analogy (for it is an analogy
and not a description of how things are) is that an illusionary man has no consciousness of self. Similarly, says the commentary, 'all karmas ... are empty and without nature, like an illusion, like a dream, like a flame or like an echo'.
Nāgārjuna's argument in chapter eighteen is first set out in the stanzas, uninterrupted by commentary. The chapter is entitled 'Contemplation of Dharmas' but is as much about the 'real character' and about no-self as it is about dharmas (although of course the real character of dharmas is that they are without self). 'How do you know that all dharmas are without self?' asks the opponent in the commentary. Nāgārjuna replies that there is no self but the five skandhas, that the five skandhas arise and cease (being dharmas), that without self there can be no 'I' and 'mine', that the extinction of 'I' and 'mine' is called 'attaining the insight of non-self', and that 'viewing reality', is the mark of an enlightened one. Such a one is rarely found.

There is another illustration at 18v6 of Nāgārjuna's view that what is true is not what the Buddhas say, but what is actually the case:

   The Buddhas may teach that there is a self,
   Or teach that there is no self.
   Within the true character of dharmas,
   There is neither self, nor non-self'.

And he goes on to explain that

(18v7)   The true character of dharmas,
   Is severance of mind, actions and speech.
   With no production and no cessation
   Calm extinction, like nirvāṇa.
At 18v12 there is an interesting allusion to Pratyekabuddhas. Clearly Nagarjuna regards them as equal to other types of Buddhas. They are not ranked lower than the bodhisattvas, for:

If the Buddha had not emerged in the world,  
And the Buddha-dharma had utterly ceased.  
The insight of the Pratyekabuddhas  
Would have arisen quite separately.

The commentary in chapter eighteen is the most interesting and wide-ranging in the Treatise. Since it is not interleaved in the verses, it reads as a continuous piece, and it covers a number of topics in addition to the points raised in the stanzas. Chief among these are the discussions of self as analogous to empty space, at 24a25ff. and 24b24ff., a rather thorough discussion of (Nyāya) pramāṇas as possible means to knowledge of a self in the five skandhas at 24a7ff., a discussion of the 'eye of insight', the attainments of saints and the types of nirvāṇa at 24b29ff., the concept of expediency as applied to the selection of appropriate teachings by the Buddhas (cf.25a15), the dialectical relationship between teacher and hearer and the use of conventional designations such as 'self' at 24c10ff., a reference to the Prajñāpāramitā denial of both self and non-self at 24c20ff., and a discussion of the true character of dharmas as the cessation of mental activities (based on 18v7) at 24c25ff. The section from 24c29 onwards refers to different types of samādhi (see n. 269) and in doing so reaches the pragmatic heart of Mādhyamika. 'If one's mind were real (i.e. enlightened), what
use would be such ways to liberation as emptiness, etc.?'

The only explicit reference to skilful means in the Treatise occurs here at 25a15, in a context which emphasises that compassion is the motivation of Buddhas. 'All the Buddhas have unlimited powers of skilful means, and dharmas have no fixed characteristics. In order to save all living beings, they may teach that everything is real, or they may teach that everything is unreal, or that everything is both real and unreal, or that everything is neither unreal nor not unreal'. The following passages examine each arm of this tetralemma in an interesting way, relating each type of teaching to a particular level of insight. "Everything is both real and unreal", for example, is explained as follows:

There are three levels of living beings; superior, average, and inferior. The superior person sees that the characteristic of dharmas is that they are neither real nor unreal. The average person sees the characteristics of dharmas as either all real, or all unreal. The inferior man, since his powers of perception are limited, sees the characteristics of dharmas as a little real, and a little unreal, regarding nirvāṇa, because it is an inactive dharma and does not perish as real, and regarding samsāra, because it is an active dharma, empty and false, as unreal.

25b4ff. discusses the nature of firm faith in the Buddha's teachings to explain the reference to 'knowing for oneself, not following others' in verse 9. One who does not follow others, says the commentary, is one who,

... when non-Buddhists, even though they display supernatural powers and teach that this is the way and
this is not the way, has faith in himself and in his own mind and does not follow them. Even if they transform their bodies so that he does not know that they are not the Buddha, his mind cannot be diverted because he well understands the true character.

At 25b13 the Treatise rebuts the charge that emptiness is either nihilism or eternalism, repeating that emptiness is not a view. Rather, emptiness, which is the true character 'has no sophistries ... the characteristic of mind is calm extinction and ... it cuts off any ways of verbal expression'. At 25b17ff. the practical advantages of emptiness for the traveller on the Buddhist path are explained. If he can penetrate the meaning of emptiness, then all dharmas will be neither identical nor different, neither cut off nor permanent (in other words, he will avoid 'views' about causality and dharmas). Thus he will achieve 'the cessation of all afflictions and sophistries', and attain lasting bliss and nirvana. The Buddha's dharma is likened to a sweet nectar, for just as a divine elixir will prevent someone from growing old or dying, so the Buddha's teaching leads to nirvāṇa. 'This dharma of the true character is the true taste of sweet nectar'.

Finally, the difference between the śrāvaka, Mahayana and pratyekabuddha-Dharmas is explained. Here no mention is made of arhants and stream-winners, and the hierarchy is of the 'three-vehicle' kind found in the Lotus Sūtra and other Mahayanist works. It is interesting to note that the description of the śrāvaka-dharma corresponds most closely to the teaching of
Nāgārjuna, though the characteristics of the Mahayana dharma, compassion and wisdom, are recognisably the motivating force of the Buddha described in the Treatise. The account of the three types of dharma is given here in order to explain the reference in verse 12 to the pratyekabuddhas, and it devotes most space to them:

The true character taught by the Buddha is threefold. To attain the true character of all dharmas and end all the afflictions is termed the śrāvaka-dharma. To produce great compassion and arouse the unexcelled mind is called the great vehicle (Mahayana). If a Buddha does not enter the world and there is a time when there is no Buddha-dharma, pratyekabuddhas because of their isolation develop insight independently, for even if a Buddha, after saving living beings enters nirvāṇa without residue, and the dharma he bequeathed completely dies out, if there are any who from a previous world are supposed to attain the Way, then if they meditate a little on the causes for despising and leaving samsāra and go alone into the mountains and forests remote from any bustle and confusion, they will attain the way. These are called pratyekabuddhas.

In contrast to the previous chapter, chapter nineteen is an entirely straightforward presentation of Nāgārjuna's critique of time. Time is conventionally conceived of in terms of past, present and future. Nāgārjuna argues that if these three together constitute time, then, like any other components refuted in the Treatise, they must be interdependent, in which case each presupposes the other and none exists in and of itself. And if none exists, how can we say that time is comprised of them? The commentary in this chapter merely supplements the stanzas with two analogies: light and lamp in 19/1, and pots and clothes at 19/2.
The commentary to Chapter 20, on 'Cause and Effect' is a similarly straightforward recapitulation of the argument. The argument takes the two elements of 'cause' and 'effect' separately and demonstrates that they cannot possibly be separate entities which combine to comprise the process of 'cause and effect', since a cause presupposes its effect, and an effect presupposes its cause. The argument presented in verse one of this chapter

If causes and conditions combine
And an existent effect is produced,
It already existed within the combination.
What need has it to be produced by combination?

is no different from the argument presented in chapter one:

(1v8) An effect already given in a cause
Can neither exist nor not exist.
If previously non-existent, what would the cause produce?
If already existent, why would the cause be needed?

The present chapter however explores some versions of cause and effect not previously encountered, such as the notion that a cause changes into its effect (20v9), or that a cause does not completely cease, only its designation as 'a cause' ceases (27a2). From verse sixteen onwards the concept of an 'empty' cause is discussed, but 'empty' here is not the Mādhyamika emptiness, rather it refers to the idea of a nonexistent,
ineffective or vacuous cause, one which does not produce an effect, compared by the Treatise to someone who is not pregnant and therefore cannot produce a child. Such a cause is not a cause at all, of course. The discussion proceeds with a refutation of the ideas both that cause and effect become one and that they are different, and concludes with an argument which is intended to destroy the notion of combination of causes resulting in effects, on the grounds that no effects possessing 'self-substance' are to be found.

Chapter twenty-one is a critique of becoming and dissolution, which are alternative terms for 'arising' and 'ceasing'. The Treatise sets out the opponent's view in the form of an empirical observation: 'Everything in the world manifestly has the characteristic of dissolution. Therefore dissolution exists'. Not so, says Nāgārjuna, for;

21v2 If separate from becoming, How can dissolution exist? It would be like death without birth. This is not correct.

In other words, a restatement of the same argument that has been applied to all pairs of opposites throughout the Treatise. The Treatise supplies a useful example which exploits the interdependence of terms:
If there were dissolution apart from becoming, then with no becoming, what would dissolve? It is just as when there is no jug, we cannot say that the jug has dissolved. Hence, there is no dissolution apart from becoming.

There is a reference in 21/5 to dharmas being 'exhausted and ceased' and yet manifestly existing, and 'exhausted and ceased' is said in 212/6 to refer to the constant flow of dharmas. The commentary likens the process to a mirage which cannot be grasped, and this description applies generally to the way things are according to the Treatise.

All dharmas, morning noon and night, instant by instant, are constantly ceasing, becoming exhausted and passing away, like flowing water which never stands still. This is termed 'exhaustion'. This process cannot be grasped, and cannot be explained. Like a mirage, which has no fixed nature to get hold of, so exhaustion has no conceivable fixed nature. How can one subdivide it and assert that becoming exists?...

The problem with such analogies is that they show only the difficulty, not the logical impossibility, of comprehending such processes. Time, cause and effect, and so forth are abstract concepts which Nāgārjuna has to refute logically, and compared to them, mirages and flowing water are relatively 'graspable'. Nevertheless, images of illusion and flow are clearly useful to Nāgārjuna, since he employs them himself in the stanzas (cf. 17vv31-33).

At 21/10 the commentary offers an explanation for the opponent's
mistaken perception of things. The opponent had argued at 21/0 that 'everything in the world manifestly has the characteristic of dissolution. Therefore dissolution exists'. Nāgārjuna now answers that

(21v10) If you say that arising and ceasing
Are seen by the eyes to exist,
Seeing arising and ceasing as existent
Is considered a delusion and a deception.

And the commentary explains that when one sees the (real) nature of dharmas they are empty and have no fixed nature; they are like an illusion, like a dream.

It is only that the unenlightened man has attained his eyes on account of his delusion in a former world. because of his false conceptualisation and discrimination in the present world, he says that his eyes see arising and ceasing. In the ultimate sense, there is, in reality, no arising or ceasing ... .

By the end of the chapter, the argument has moved away from the initial topic of becoming and dissolution, via arising and ceasing, to the broader subject of the continuity of existence. This means in Buddhist terms existence within one of the three realms of desire, form and formlessness (see n. 287), but Nāgārjuna argues that a continuity of existence cannot be found through the three periods of time (past, present and future have already been refuted), and hence cannot be found at all. The Treatise explains this in terms of the opposition between 'true insight' and 'delusion'. 'It is because one is unable to attain
true insight within beginningless samsāra and death, that the three existences eternally succeed each other... You should know that the continuity of existence exists only by virtue of delusions and perverted views. In reality, it does not exist.

Chapter twenty-two is an analysis of the Tathāgata, the Thus-Come. A Tathāgata is incomprehensible, because although he appears in the world and has a body and so forth, the defining characteristics of a Buddha are that he is not afflicted by lust, anger, delusion and the other passions, is not the slave of the five 'receptive' (grasping) skandhas, has no karmic burden, and in general does not belong within the twelvefold causal chain.

How, then, does one characterise a Buddha? Nāgārjuna's answer is that a Buddha is to be understood just as any dharma is to be understood. The argument proceeds as follows.

The opponent asserts that the Buddha exists; '...He is called 'King of the Dharma' and 'omniscient one'. But the Treatises' definition of existence is suffering; that is to say, bondage to the skandhas. 'Now examine and consider this.: If he exists, then he must be grasping. If he does not exist, what is there which grasps?'

The Thus-Come...

...is neither the skandhas nor separate from the skandhas. He and they are not in each other. The thus come not having the skandhas In what place does the Thus-Come exist?
The Treatise commentary then expands on all possible ways in which the Thus-Come could or could not be combined with the skandhas, using logical arguments (if the Thus-Come existed separately from the five skandhas ... the Thus-Come would have the error of permanence) and analogies (If the five skandhas were within the Thus-Come, this would be like fruit in a bowl, or fish in water; they would be different from each other. If the Thus-Come were within the five skandhas, this would be like a man being in bed ...). Once having established that the Thus-Come cannot be found in any way apart from the five skandhas, Nägärjuna then denies that the Thus-Come is the product of the combination of the five skandhas, for 'If the Thus-Come exists by the combining of the five skandhas, then he has no self nature' (22v2). Arguments to the effect that the Thus-Come exists prior to the skandhas, or that he exists in a relationship of difference from or unity with the skandhas are also refuted in the usual way, and Nägärjuna concludes that

(22v10) By such interpretations
(The skandha of) receiving is empty, the receiver is empty...

The opponent charges that this is 'a fixed, existent, emptiness'
but Nägärjuna has recourse to the device of the two truths:

(22v11) Emptiness cannot be expressed
Non-emptiness cannot be expressed.
Both, and neither, cannot be expressed
They are discussed merely as conventional names.
Which the Treatise glosses as 'merely for refuting their opposites ...' In the next verse Nāgārjuna refers to the 'four views' of permanence, impermanence, etc., and limit, no limit, etc. These are views about the nature of the Tathāgata which derive from the Buddha's 'unanswered questions' about whether or not the Tathāgata exists or does not exist after death, etc. (see n.300). Although the following discussion in the Treatise concerns the permanence of 'the world' the world is to be understood as the realm of existence experienced by the living being. The Treatise's view is that all such views are misapprehensions of the reality:

(22/12) In calm quiescence none of these exists at all, and why? The true character of all dharmas is utter clarity and purity, and cannot be grasped ... These four views all arise on account of reception, but within the real character of all dharmas there is nothing which is caused by receiving. Through these four kinds of views we regard ourselves as noble and regard others as base, but in the true character of dharmas there is no 'you' or 'I', and this is why it is said that in calm quiescence the four views do not exist.

In 22/13 there is a discussion of different types of false views regarding the existence or nonexistence of the Tathāgata. Although Nāgārjuna's verse (22v13) clearly refers to Buddhists who speculate on the nature of the Buddha's being in the world in terms of 'existence' or 'nonexistence', the commentary chooses to interpret the view that the Buddha is nonexistent as a rejection of the Buddha's teachings by the 'coarse, immature man' who says that there is no sin and merit, no saints and sages such as
Thus-Comes, etc. and who therefore 'forsakes good and does evil'. One who believes in the existence of the Buddha is described as 'denying the path to nirvāṇa' - in other words he regards the Buddha as eternally self-existent, - which implies that no-one can become a Buddha by following the path. Doing good, he attains worldly bliss, but not nirvāṇa. His approach is flawed because 'the Thus-Come has the characteristic of calm quiescence yet you are making various distinctions, differentiating within the characteristic of calm quiescence, the Thus-Come as existing or not existing'. Once again, the only remedy for one who habitually discriminates and makes distinctions is to acquire 'the eye of insight':

(22v15) The Thus-Come transcends sophistries
Yet men still produce sophistries.
Sophistries destroy the eye of insight,
Such as these do not see the Buddha.

Which the commentary glosses:

'Sophistries' means recollected thoughts, grasping of characteristics, distinguishing this from that, saying that the Buddha is extinct or is not extinct, and so forth. Since man in order to pursue sophistries inverts his eye of insight, he is unable to see the dharma-body of the Thus-Come.

'The dharma-body of the Thus-Come' points to the Mahayanist concept of the eternal Buddha, revealed in the Lotus Sūtra.

Nāgārjuna's conception of the Buddha's nature carries different connotations. Just as nirvāṇa is not something special,
different from birth and death (cf. 25v19ff.), so

(22v16) The nature of the Thus-Come
Is the very nature of the world.
The Thus-Come has no nature.
The world, also, has no nature.
Chapter twenty-three deals with perverted views (see n. 304). 'Perverted' in relation to views means much the same as 'inverted' in relation to the eye of insight. One whose perception is inverted or perverted has outflows into the world of desire, the world of form or the formless world; he grasps or receives dhammas and does not see things as a Buddha does, in their real aspect or character of calm quiescence. Nāgārjuna's interest in perverted views is almost entirely academic; he is not interested in the details (knowledge of which must be presumed on the part of the hearer) but on the logical relationships between such entities as 'lust' and 'the self'. Nāgārjuna agrees with his opponent that the defilements and passions arise from conceptual discriminations, but he does not agree that they therefore 'exist'.

(23v2) If you say that perverted views of purity and impurity produce the three poisons, then the three poisons are without self-nature. Consequently, the defilements have no reality.

Moreover,

(23v4) Who has these defilements? Such a one cannot be established.
And if the defilements exist apart from this (self)  
Then they are not part of it.

The argument, in short, is identical to that applied to the  
Tathāgata in relation to the five skandhas.

The opponent puts forward a further argument in verse seven,  
claiming that the sense-faculties, their realms and their objects  
are at the root of evil. This is an inversion of the usual  
Buddhist model of perception, in which the mind flows out into  
the realms of form etc., since it suggests that external objects  
affect the senses and thence the mind. Nagarjuna's response is  
to assert the illusory and empty quality of the play of the  
senses. They are all empty, he says,

(23v8)  
... like flames or dreams  
Or like a magic Gandharva-city.

(23v9)  
... They are just like an illusionary man  
Or a reflection in a mirror.

The commentary repeats these analogies but emphasises also the  
primacy of mind. Sense-experiences it says 'are merely  
deceptions in the mind and have no fixed characteristics'  
Lust, anger and the other defilements breed on the distinction  
between purity and impurity, according to the opponent.  
Nāgārjuna's points out however that purity presupposes impurity,  
and that both presuppose someone making the conceptual  
distinctions between purity and impurity. Therefore, purity and  
impurity are based on (false) conceptual distinctions made by
Specific examples of perverted views are then put forward by the opponent. The four referred to in 23/12 and represented by 'clinging to permanence in impermanence' in 23v13 are those views which are the antitheses of the four characteristics of all conditioned things taught by the Buddha, namely impermanence, suffering, emptiness, and non-self (see nn. 286,313) To regard things as permanent when they are actually impermanent is the perverted view of permanence; other perverted views are that things are blissful, pure and possessed of a self. From Nāgārjuna's point of view it is not the view but the clinging which constitutes the perversion. The opponent is caught up in 'correct' views, but Nāgārjuna asks; since everything is empty, who is there to hold views? Even a view of permanence, if held without clinging, is not a perverted view, because one who does not cling to views has perceived the real character of things.

If there is no dharma of clinging
Incorrectly speaking these are perverted views.
Correctly speaking, they are not perverted views,
For who is there to have these things?

This is a rather subtle argument, for the term 'views' is here being used in a way that suggests that one can hold views and at the same time be non-clinging. Ordinarily, Nāgārjuna reserves the term 'views' for products of the unenlightened mind; here the term is being used to denote something much more like the disinterested use of conventional terms by the Buddha in his expedient teaching of self or no-self, etc. In subsequent
verses, however, Nagarjuna reverts to using 'views' to denote 'perverted views', arguing however (from 23v20 onwards) that if perverted views such as that things are permanent, blissful etc., had any substance (i.e. if things really were permanent and blissful), then these views would not be 'perverted', they would be true perceptions, but since things are not permanent and blissful, such views are illusions and as such have no substance. This being the case, however;

(23v21) If permanence, self, bliss and purity
In reality do not exist
Impermanence, suffering and impurity
Should also not exist.

Because, the commentary explains 'there is no reciprocal dependence'.

Nagarjuna then implicitly equates the refutation of perverted (and non-perverted) views with the cessation of such views, and hence with the cessation of ignorance, which is of course the root cause in the twelve causal links:

(23v22) When perverted views cease in this way
Ignorance also ceases.
By the cessation of ignorance
Predispositions and so forth cease.

The Treatise also makes the connection between (intellectual) refutation and 'cessation'. 'In this way', it says, 'means by this kind of interpretation.'
When perverted views are extinguished, ignorance which is at the root of the twelve causes and conditions is also extinguished. Through the extinction of ignorance the three kinds of predispositions and actions etc. up to old age and death and so forth are all extinguished.

Chapter twenty-four 'Contemplation of the Four Truths' is the best-known chapter of the Middle Stanzas and is often regarded as a definitive statement of Nāgārjuna's position. The commentary in the Treatise adds very little to the verses, following Nāgārjuna's argument closely and merely clarifying minor points along the way. The commentary at 24/5 restates the opponents opening argument in verses one to five, which is that Nāgārjuna's doctrine of 'emptiness' and 'no arising and no ceasing' completely negates the Buddha's teaching summed up in the four truths (see n. 330) of suffering, accumulation of karma, cessation of suffering and the Way to the cessation of suffering, but is also careful to emphasise that 'the four truths involve cause and effect' and to couch the opponent's argument accordingly. Nāgārjuna's reply begins at verse seven. Despite the previous twenty-three chapters expounding emptiness, he says,

(24v7) You really cannot understand (lit. 'lack the capacity to know').
Emptiness, or the reasons for emptiness.
Or understand the meaning of emptiness.
Therefore you create difficulties for yourself

And he proceeds to explain that the Buddhas employ two types of truth in order to teach the Dharma to living beings (v.8), and
that someone who does not realise this and is unable to sift conventional from ultimate truth will not 'know the real meaning of the profound Buddha-Dharma' (v9).

The commentary interprets conventional and ultimate truth in terms of two realities. Because of our perverted perceptions 'we produce false and illusory dharmas and this is worldly reality'. On the other hand, the saints and sages who know the true nature of these perverted perceptions 'know that all dharmas are utterly empty and that there is no arising, and this is the truth of the ultimate meaning which constitutes reality for the saints' (24/9).

On the face of it, the Middle Treatise's account of the two truths does not correspond to Nāgārjuna's understanding. There is a complex dialectical interaction here which involves two types of reality, (a) false and (b) real, being (c) described, and (d) comprehended, by two types of beings, (e) enlightened saints and sages, Buddhas, and (f) unenlightened grasping ordinary people. At one extreme, an enlightened saint can effortlessly comprehend and skilfully describe (teach) in terms of both, conventional truth (expedient falsehood) and the real character of things (emptiness). At the other extreme, an ordinary unenlightened being is incapable of comprehending, except by grasping, even the expedient conventional description of reality offered by the Buddha. Somewhere in between is the person who realises that there are two levels of truth but 'grasps' at
reality (emptiness), and the teacher who describes reality but realises that he is addressing a mixed audience, which is essentially Nāgārjuna's situation. Clearly, the way forward is by stages; those who are grasping and ignorant should first put into practice the Buddha's expedient teaching (that there is no self, that dharmas arise and cease, etc.,) in order to develop a clearer perception of the way things are. Therefore, Nāgārjuna says:

(24v10) Unless you rely on the conventional truth
You will not attain the ultimate meaning.
Unless you attain the ultimate meaning
You will not attain nirvana.

Developing a clearer perception involves learning that words and expressions are merely conventions. Only when this is understood is it possible for someone to receive, without grasping at the concepts, the description of the way things really are. The meaning will be conveyed in words and phrases, but the words and phrases themselves will not constitute the meaning. As the Treatise puts it:

(24/10) The ultimate meaning is entirely dependent on words and expressions, and words and expressions are mundane and conventional. Therefore, without reliance on the conventional and the mundane, the ultimate meaning cannot be expounded. Unless one attains to the ultimate meaning [i.e. unless one can become non-grasping], how can one attain nirvāṇa? Therefore, although dharmas are non-arising, there are these two levels of truth.
The next five verses and their commentary (24v11 - 24/15) concern the dangers of mismatching the teaching and the hearer. It was this danger which, says Nāgārjuna, caused the Buddha to hesitate before teaching the Dharma, and it is a danger which persists for those who take on the doctrine of emptiness without suitable mental preparation. Nāgārjuna then turns the opponent's initial argument (that emptiness negates the Buddha's teaching) against him, using the argument that dharmas which are not empty must be conceived to have own-nature, and

(24v16) If you perceive all dharmas
As having fixed, existent natures
Then you will see all dharmas
As without causes and conditions.

A denial of causality is of course a denial of the possibility of directed change, the 'path', outlined by the Buddha. Therefore, argues Nāgārjuna, it is emptiness which makes the path possible, not a doctrine of existent dharmas.

(24v20) If everything were not empty
There would be no arising or ceasing
And thus there would not be
The dharma of the four holy truths.

Verses eighteen and nineteen, which equate emptiness with dependent origination or causality, are often quoted as cardinal statements of Nāgārjuna's position. They are significant in chapter twenty-four taken on its own, but for anyone who has read this far in the Treatise, they offer little that is new, except
perhaps the reference to the 'middle path' in verse eighteen. The assertions that emptiness means causality, that causality is what the Buddha taught, and that the Buddha taught the 'Middle Way' are hardly controversial, and the meaning of 'dharmas ... constitute conventional names' has been hammered home in every chapter of the Treatise. The commentary adds that 'emptiness moreover is itself empty', which is another way of saying that the way things really are cannot be apprehended by grasping at the notion of 'emptiness'. This is in recognition of the fact (already referred to in the commentary's discussion of Nāgārjuna's reasons for composing the Middle Stanzas, in chapter one) that unsuitable people 'seized hold of the characteristic of emptiness' when they heard it taught in the Mahayana-Dharma

(1b29ff.)

The rest of chapter twenty-four consists of a detailed resumé of the arguments for adhering to the notion of emptiness, in relation to various aspects of the Buddhist path and the four truths. All these arguments take as their premise that fixed, self-existent things cannot change, whereas the path presupposes change, and the transformation of one thing into another; for example, an unenlightened person into a Buddha.

(24v39) If there is not emptiness
One who has not yet attained will never attain
Nor will the defilements be cut off,
Nor will there be termination of suffering.
'And why?' says the commentary; 'Because of fixed natures'.

Finally, verse forty reads; 'if you perceive the dharma of causality, then you can perceive the Buddha', which is explained as 'the Buddha's dharma-body' in the commentary. This reference to the dharmakāya is unique to the Chinese version of the stanzas and perhaps reflects a Mahayanist interpolation in the text (see n. 366).

The examination of nirvāṇa (see n. 368) in chapter twenty-five takes a predictable course. As has already been stated many times in the Treatise, nirvāṇa is a dharma like any other, and all dharmas may be nirvānic or samsāric, depending upon whether they are perceived with grasping or without grasping. The opponent starts from the assumption that nirvāṇa, since it has the meaning of extinction or cessation, must entail the cessation of something, and that something must therefore exist, and cannot be empty. However, this view is based on a misconception of the meaning of 'empty' (as 'nonexistent'). Nāgārjuna therefore reasserts the meaning of emptiness as causality, on which the operation of the twelve causal links relies. 'Neither existence nor nonexistence' says the commentary, quoting the Buddha's words (see 25v10), 'is the gate that leads to nirvāṇa' (25/2). By this is meant that nirvāṇa is empty, just as all other dharmas are empty and have always been so.
... since the five skandhas have been utterly empty from the beginning, when one attains the Way and enters nirvāṇa without residue there is nothing which is cut off ...

In verses four to eight Nāgārjuna argues against various conceptions of nirvāṇa as either 'existent' or 'nonexistent'. In 25v9, when the opponent asks what kind of thing nirvāṇa is if it is neither existent nor nonexistent, Nāgārjuna answers:

(25v9) Because we receive causes and conditions We revolve in samsara. Nor receiving causes and conditions Is what constitutes nirvāṇa.

And the commentary explains:

(25/9) Because we do not know our perverted views for what they really are, we wander in samsāra, on account of the five receptive skandhas. When we recognise our perverted views for what they really are, then we no longer wander in samsāra on account of the five receptive skandhas. When there is no longer any succession of the nature-less five skandhas, this is said to be nirvāṇa.

'Not knowing our perverted views for what they are', like 'ignorance', has of course a double meaning in the Mādhyamika context, where the whole burden of Nāgārjuna's argument is that 'views' are the hindrance par excellence and emptiness is the remedy, but this change of perception equally refers to the practice of meditation and the proper orientation of the 'eye of insight' which, when inverted, generates perverted views. This statement about nirvāṇa and its attainment, like the later
reference (at 25/19) which identifies 'the world' with 'the succession of the five skandhas' well illustrates the indivisibility of ontology and psychology in the Treatise as a whole. From a similar point of view, the Treatise at 25/21 discusses various views about the existence, limits and permanence of the world in relation to the Thus-Come's experience of the world, since it is only the Thus-Come's experience of the world which is a reliable guide to its true character. Verse nineteen is the well-known statement of the identity of nirvāṇa and samsāra:

Between nirvāṇa and the world
There is not the slightest distinction.
Between the world and nirvāṇa
There is not the slightest distinction.

Which of course means that nirvāṇa and the world are both dharmas, factors of experience, without any fixed nature of their own.

Verse twenty-four is a rather radical statement of the view that what the Buddha said differs from what he knew and what is the highest truth:

(25v24) All dharmas are inconceivable.
Extinguish all futile thoughts.
There is no person and no place
And there is nothing taught by the Buddha.
But the teaching is actually familiar. 'There is no person and there is no place' means that there is no self apart from the constantly fluctuating five skandhas, which are like a dream or a mirage. All views which seek to establish some substantial entity in the psyche are to be dismissed. In the Treatise such views are referred to as the 'sixty-two wrong views' (see nn. 198,392); they include such ideas as that the body contains a soul. The section of commentary which concludes the treatment of nirvāṇa in this chapter is a brief summary of the Treatise's approach to views in general; the way things really are is incompatible with the existence of views, and this is the true meaning of the Buddha's teaching.

(36b9) What body is there to be the same as a soul, and what body to be different from soul? It is the same with all of the sixty-two wrong views; within utter emptiness they are all untenable. When every existence which is conceived is at rest, futile thoughts entirely cease, and when futile thoughts cease one penetrates into the true character of dharmas and attains the Way of calm serenity...

As already seen from the chapter on causality (chapter one), if we discriminatingly investigate dharmas we find that they are neither existent, nor nonexistent, nor both existent and nonexistent, nor neither existent nor nonexistent. This is what is meant by 'the true character of all dharmas' and it is also termed thusness, dharma-nature, real-limit and nirvana. This is why the Buddha, at no time and in no place, ever taught anyone any fixed characteristics of nirvana, and this is why we say that when every existence which is conceived is at rest, all futile thoughts are extinguished.

Chapter twenty-six, like the following chapter, is identified in the Treatise's introductory commentary as pertaining to the
śrāvaka-dharma, as opposed to, or in the Treatise, incorporated into, the Mahayana-dharma. The 'way of the ultimate meaning' mentioned in the commentary perhaps goes beyond both yantras, and is to be identified with the teaching of the Treatise, although it might equally well refer to the Mahayana in general. As in chapter eighteen, the verses are presented all together, followed by a commentary on the whole chapter, which is an entirely straightforward account of dependent origination and the twelve causal links. The tone is so different from that of the preceding chapters that it seems likely that this chapter, and perhaps the following one on 'Wrong Views' were originally appendices to the Middle Stanzas, which would otherwise have concluded on a rising note, with the contemplation of the goal, nirvāṇa, in chapter twenty-five. This chapter provides a definitive account of the twelve causal links, which are an important presupposition of Nāgārjuna's exposition of emptiness. The commentary to chapter twenty-six adds little to the verses; it emphasises the role of ignorance and also its remedy, namely seeing things as they really are;

(36c19) ... By assiduously cultivating insight which views the arising and ceasing of the twelve causal conditions, these things cease, and because they cease, all of them including birth, old age and death, sorrow, ill, and the great suffering of the skandhas really and completely cease.

Chapter twenty-seven is a refutation of wrong views 'in the śrāvaka-dharma' (27/0), which deals almost entirely with the
concept of the self and errors associated with various theories of the self. Verses one to three deal with the idea of a self which continues from the past to the future, verses four to five with possible relationships between self and body, and verse eight with the self and (the skandha of) reception. The chapter is rich in analogies; the cāṇḍāla and the brahman, Devadatta, a washerman and a reaper, a man who becomes a god, and so on. Once again the Treatise commentary relates Nāgārjuna's primarily conceptual problematic to moral and soteriological factors such as sin and merit, the operation of the twelve causal links (37b14), the results of deeds (37b21), suffering (37c4), disruption of the social order (37c24, cf.13/3;17b15ff. both of which deal with the father-son relationship, important in China), and keeping the precepts (37c28). There is a reference at 39all to the 'Four Hundred Contemplations', which is the original version of the Hundred Treatise by Āryadeva (see n.443), and a verse is quoted which is not preserved in the Chinese version of that treatise. In verse twenty-nine Nāgārjuna restates his argument that all views are insubstantial because they derive from delusory perceptions by beings who have no self-nature:

Since all dharmas are empty
Views about the permanence, etc. of the world -
In what place and at what time,
And by whom, would such views be generated?

The commentary spells out the implications of this argument with definitions of 'place' and 'time'. Although the chapter deals
with wrong views, Nagārjuna's critique, it says, applies to 'all views:

(39b18) If there are fixed views of permanence, impermanence, etc., there must be a person who generates these views. When self is destroyed there is no production of views by such a person. There must be a place for manifestly observed dharmas to be negated; how much more a time? If all these views exist they should have a fixed reality, but if they were fixed they could not be destroyed, and we have already negated them on various grounds in what has gone before; therefore you should know that views have no fixed substance; how can they arise? As the verse says: 'In what place, and at what time, and by whom would such views be generated?

The final verse of the stanzas is a verse of obeisance to the Buddha, which links compassion, wisdom, and the cessation of views:

(27v30) To Gautama, Great Sage and Master, Who from pity and compassion preached this dharma, Entirely cutting off all views; We now bow our heads in reverence.

The commentary makes no reference to compassion, although this is implied in the Buddha's decision to preach the Dharma. Instead, the Buddha's insight is emphasised.

(27/30) ... It was in order to cut off all these views that he preached the Dharma. The Great Sage and Master, Gautama, has immeasurable, unbounded and inconceivable wisdom and insight, and this is why we bow our heads to him in reverence.
6.6 Conclusion

The commentary therefore functions in two ways in the Treatise as a whole; it reaffirms or clarifies what is said in the verses, but it also interprets and draws out the Buddhist meaning of the text, in some cases introducing new material. The commentary's major concerns can be classified in a number of ways; it seeks to preserve Buddhist morality and soteriology, which is only possible in the context of absolute causality, to clarify the nature of the enlightened one without falling into extreme views, and to re-establish a proper understanding of the emptiness taught in the Mahayana-Dharma.

In order for actions to receive their rewards, for causes to have effects, change must take place, and change is only possible if dharmas have no fixed nature and are empty, as taught in the Mahayana-Dharma. However, the Treatise is not simply reaffirming the Mahayana-Dharma, which has been irretrievably misconceived; it states that although things are empty, as taught in the Mahayana, there are two levels of truth. Emptiness is something which cannot be conveyed either in words and expressions or apart from words and expressions; it is an emptiness, in other words, which can only be attained by the man of insight. Insight is gained through the perception of truths and meditation, through samādhi and cultivation of the Way, for which the prerequisite is holding to the precepts, and it is defined as, amongst other
things, perceiving the true character of dharmas, cutting off all views, and calm cessation. Unenlightenment, by contrast, is to cling to and produce views, including a view of emptiness, to generate sophistries, and to invert the eye of insight. Views are the antithesis of enlightenment and the substance of ignorance. They lead to I and mine, to self-aggrandising evaluations and conceptual discriminations, and ignorance itself is the first link in the twelvefold chain of existence. Once these facts are not grasped, bodhi is achieved.
Appendix

A draft English translation of Walleser's German translation (1911) of the fourth chapter of the Tibetan Akutobhayā, Nāgārjuna's Middle Stanzas with a commentary traditionally attributed to Nāgārjuna himself but almost certainly by another author.

4/0 Question: The five skandhas exist, because acknowledgement of them is taught.
Answer:

4v1 Form is not found apart from form-cause
Cause of form is not found separately from form.

4/1 Without form-cause, form is not perceived. Free from form also form-causes will not be seen. Also with reception, cognition, predispositions, consciousness (the other four skandhas) is this proof to be taken into consideration. Like seeds and sprouts.
Question: If form could be perceived, free from causes of form, what errors would occur?
Answer:

4v2 If you had form without form-causes, then form would be without cause.

4/2 If someone thinks 'if without cause, all the better' then it should be said:

4v2(contd) Nothing exists anywhere without a cause

4/2 No causeless thing exists anywhere—as in the case of space. Seed and sprout.
Question: If however separate from the thing called 'form the cause of form is present, what errors then occur?
Answer:

4v3 If apart from form the form-cause were to exist, this would be causes without effects
If, separate from form, there were causes of form, the causes would be without effects. If one said, holding fast to the proposition 'the cause is without effect, that 'it is so', then we should reply:

'Effectless causes do not exist'

No causes without effects exist. Like father and son. Further:

If form exists, the cause of form is untenable (upapadyate)
If form does not exist, the cause of form is also untenable

In neither case does the cause of form occur. If form exists, the cause of form is untenable, and if form does not exist, the cause of form is equally non-existent. Like the burnt and not-yet-burnt. If at this point someone thinks: 'form is without cause' then the answer should be:

Causeless forms are untenable.

Because this is so,

Therefore one should not discriminate forms.

'Therefore' signifies the conclusion. 'Form' means 'standing/resting upon form'. Because we have investigated it in this way, form is in every respect untenable. Therefore, no differentiations which rest upon forms should be undertaken. Like empty space. Further:

An effect identical with its cause does not occur. An effect not identical with its cause does not occur.

If correctly examined, the sentence 'The effect is identical with the cause' is not correct, and 'the effect is not equivalent/identical to the cause' is not tenable (either). Like seeds, sprouts, and fruit.

Vedana,......,...... and all things (bhava) Are in every way, in respect to the method, equal to rupa.
The groups/skandhas and all things are in every way in the teaching of the method of nonapplicability of cause and effect and of the method of the nonoccurrence of form, to be observed/seen as equivalent. Like Canaka-gold.

When a counter-refutation is raised in a debate on the basis of emptiness With this person, everything is without counter-refutation, and is equivalent to the contention.

When somewhere in a dispute employing emptiness someone utters a (counter) refutation through non-emptiness, with this person everything is without counter-refutation (lit: not contradicted). This is to be understood as just the same as the thing to be arrived at (the contention).

One who in an explanation expounds errors by means of emptiness; with this person everything is without ('with' - some texts) error-exposition and is equivalent to the contention, which is to be arrived at.

Wherever at the time of teaching by means of emptiness someone expounds the errors via non-emptiness, with that person everything is to be understood as a failed/without error-exposition and as equivalent to that which is to be arrived at.

The two last slokas of this chapter are to be observed as the kernel of all debates bound up with emptiness. Like the emptiness of a Gandharva-city.

Comments

The above translation is third-hand, from Walleser's rather difficult German translation of 1911 of the Tibetan original. Even so, certain similarities and differences between the Chung-lun, the Prasannapadā and the Tibetan Akutobhayā may be distinguished. The arrangement of verses is identical in all three versions (although this is not true of all chapters), but whereas the Chung-lun presents Nagarjuna's ideas as an argument
for a Mahayanist Buddhist understanding of the true nature of things, and Candrakirti argues for a particular interpretation of Nagarjuna's thought over against his Madhyamika adversaries, the Tibetan commentary emphasises debating points in the text, in line with the Tibetan tradition of learned monastic debate. These differences of emphasis do not outweigh a rather fundamental similarity of outlook in all three texts. Each version presents the basic Madhyamika argument in two stages: First, nothing which is part of the process of dependent origination can exist by itself, without cause or effect. Second, the assertion that things are empty is a non-assertion, and can safely be employed to negate all views without the danger of constructing an alternative view. 'Emptiness' is the key to the successful determination of views, debates, and conceptual discriminations. It may therefore be employed with equal effect to destroy the wrong views of others, and of oneself.
Notes to the Translation

References to verses in the Treatise take the form 6v9, etc. References
to sections of commentary take the form 6/9, but in the case of long
sections of commentary an additional references to the Taishō text is
given, e.g.: 6/9; 10b23 means 'commentary 6/9, page 10, column b, line 23'.

1. The Middle Treatise 中論 is the name given to this work in Seng-
   jui's preface. In Japanese studies of Mādhyamika the term
   中論 is often used to indicate both the present Treatise and
   Nāgārjuna's stanzas, which were of course unknown to the Chinese
   except through the medium of their translation and explanation
   in the Treatise. This reflects the Sino-Japanese assumption that
   the Treatise faithfully transmits the thought of the stanzas.
   The relationship between the verses in Sanskrit and Chinese is
   in many ways analogous to the relationship between cause and
   effect analysed in the Treatise; the verses are not the same,
   but they are not different either. There are however significant
differences between the Treatise as a whole and the Sk. verses
taken alone, and in this sense the Chung-lun is not 'Nāgārjuna's
Middle Stanzas'. The problem of the transmission of Mādhyamika
thought to China from India is the focus of Robinson's 'Early
Mādhyamika in India and China'.

2. 'verses' is supplied, since the Chinese has only 造 'composed by'.

3. The Bodhisattva Dragon-Tree 龍樹菩薩 is the usual translation
   of Nāgārjuna.

4. Brahman = 梵志, Nakamura (hereafter Nak.) 1271b gives several
equivalents such as brāhmaṇa, brahma-cārin, parivṛṣajaka etc.

6. Sk. title 'pratyaya-parīkṣā' (pratyaya = condition, Conze, Dict. 280), trans. by Inada as 'Relational Condition'. 因 and 緣, both mean cause or reason. The chapter is concerned with causality, but in particular with Buddhist causality, which is to say the train of events leading towards or away from liberation, expressed in the standard formulae of the 12 causes and conditions 十二因緣和 the four truths 四諦(cf.1/0;1b25ff.) Elsewhere 因緣 is translated as 'causes and conditions' or, where context demands, as 'grounds' or 'reasonings'.

The Treatise accepts and invokes causality as axiomatic. cf.2/20.

7. (Verses 1v1 and 1v2 are repeated after commentary 1/0). Nāgārjuna's 'eight negations'八不 refer to a representative selection of ways in which dharmas might be said to come into existence (if dharmas were existent). 'Arising'生 means a dharma which was not previously existent becoming existent, while 'ceasing'滅 means the reverse. 'Permanence'常 means that a dharma which existed in the past continues to exist after its successor has arisen and beyond the instant of its existence, (its 'abiding'住 as a dharma). 'Severance'斷 means that there is a cut-off point when the previous dharma has ceased and before its successor arises, such that they are not connected. 'Identity'一 (or oneness, unity) means that the previous dharma is itself also the subsequent one, and 'difference'異 means that the two dharmas are quite separate and distinct. 'Arriving'來 (lit: coming) means that a dharma appears (comes from somewhere) and
in this sense exists at a particular time and place, and
'departing' means that it becomes inexistent by going away from
that time and place. The eight negations are examined again at
1/2 after verses 1v1 and 1v2 have been repeated. There the
derivation of dharmas from Īśvara, prakṛti and atoms is loosely
associated with 'arriving'. Since all these possibilities and
by implication all others (see 1/2) are negated, it adds nothing
to our understanding to define them more closely. Any view,
however precise, about the way in which dharmas come into existence
is to be similarly rejected, because dharmas do not exist in any
conceivable sense. The meaning of 'no arising' etc., also depends
on the level of truth in the context of which it is asserted.
Cf. 24/10 'although dharmas are non-arising, there are these two
levels of truth'.

8. >h i Sophistries (Sk. prapanca. Conze. Dict. 283 = 'futile
discoursing, multiplicity, that which delays'). Hurvitz has
'frivolous assertions' (pp. 276, 89, 216) and 'discourse
frivolously' (p. 217) (=LS 67b16, 27d11, 53c13, 53d8). In the
Treatise it has the meaning of fruitless mental activity, whether
expressed in words and arguments or not. In 25/24 sophistries
are said to cease when things are no longer conceived as
existents, and when they cease one attains the 'way of serenity'

Hence sophistries is a more pejorative term for 'views' (cf. 27/31). At 18/12; 24c5 all afflictions (defile-
ments) and actions are said to arise from conceptual
discriminations which in turn originate in 'vain thoughts' but if one attains to utter emptiness, the true character
of all dharmas, then such vain thoughts cease and this is termed
'nirvāṇa with residue'. At 18/12; 25b10ff. sophistries are
described as being of two types, the first being 'argument from desire', the second 'argument from opinion'. Neither of these two can encompass, or survive within, 'the characteristic of calm extinction'. At 18/12;25b18 whoever achieves 'the cessation of all afflictions and sophistries' will also 'attain lasting bliss and nirvana'; this seems to be the highest goal of the sravaka-dharma (25b23) but falls short of the Mahayana, which requires more in terms of great compassion and an unexcelled mind. According to Nagarjuna; 'the Thus-come (Tathāgata) transcends sophistries/ Yet men still produce sophistries./ Sophistries destroy the eye of insight,/ Such as these do not see the Buddha' (22v15) and Blue-Eyes in his commentary (22/15) offers a definition of sophistries as 'recollected thoughts, grasping at characteristics, distinguishing this from that, saying that the Buddha is extinct or not extinct, and so forth'. He says that to pursue sophistries it is necessary to have 'inverted the eye of insight' as a result of which one is unable to see the Dharma-Body of the Buddha (22/15).

9. Great Self-Being 大自在 = Sk. Maheśvara S.94a

10. See ch.14 for a discussion of combination 納合 in the context of seer, eye and object etc., but combination here refers to a (non-Buddhist?) doctrine of existence brought about by the coalescence of elements. In 20v12 - 20/15 combination of cause and effect is examined. See Nak.1466a-c for various possible meanings of 納合.

11. A non-Buddhist view; ch.19 refutes time 時 as an existent entity, and in 7/15 time and space are mentioned by the opponent
as necessary for the arising of dharmas.

12. 世性 Sk. prakṛti. A Sāńkhya doctrine, though not identified as such in the Treatise. R.68 refers to T.1509 (the Great Perfection of Wisdom Treatise, hereafter GFWT) p.545c17-29 which explains the Sāńkhya principles.

13. R.68 has 'modification' (Sk.vikāra). This presumably refers to the Sāńkhya concept of the transformations from prakṛti to gross nature in which nothing is lost, cf. Radhakrishnan and Moore, p.431 'there is the unmanifest as the cause gone before; it operates through the three attributes, by blending and modification....'.

14. 自然 R.68 has 'the self-so (svabhāva, svayambhū)'. See Nak. 557d and 558b 'The 自然外道 are those who deny (Buddhist) causality, believing that things arise spontaneously out of themselves'. 自然 differs from the notion of 自性 which in the treatise means svabhāva but in the more static sense of 'own-being, self-nature'.

15. 微塵 Sk. āpu or paramāṇu. 'the smallest visible particle' (Nak.1294b). Refers to non-Buddhist materialist theories but is also applicable to the idea of real atoms forming the basis of all matter in the Abhidharma-Kośa (JEBD 84r).

16. The twelve causal links 十二因縁 are detailed in ch.26 which is unique among the 27 chapters of the Treatise in being a straightforward traditional non-Mahayana account of Buddhist soteriology without any mention of emptiness. The 12 causal
links are given there as 1. ignorance 2. predispositions 3. consciousness 4. name-and-form 5. the six avenues 6. contact 7. reception 8. craving 9. grasping 10. existence 11. birth and 12. old age and death (cf. Nak. 656c-d). The same sequence of 12 causal links is found at 13/2; 18a10ff. The relationship between two of the twelve elements - birth and old age and death - is examined at 11/Off. Cf.n.171

17. 聾聞 (lit: the hearers) See ch.26 in toto and 18/12; 25b23 where the distinction made here between the śrāvaka-dharma and the Mahayana is repeated. The term 小乘 ('hinayāna') does not occur in the Treatise.

18. Mahayana is translated as 大乘 (great vehicle) throughout except for 26/0 where it is transliterated. cf.18/12; 24c1ff.

19. This is one of only two overt references in the Treatise to the Perfection of Insight literature (cf.18/12; 24c22). It is invoked here to demonstrate that the Buddha himself taught emptiness, in the sense in which 空 is used in the Treatise.

20. Seat of enlightenment 坐道 Sk. bodhimaṇḍa. Nak. 1015c. In LS 14a1 the term occurs and is rendered 'platform of the path' by Hurvitz (p.23) but almost certainly means 'the Tao' (= enlightenment, bodhi) here, in accordance with Kumārajīva's usage.

21. cf. LS68a3,68a10 (Hurvitz.280) where virtually the same phrase is used, implying a standard formulation known to Kumārajīva of 500 years of 正法 followed by 500 years of 仏法. Nevertheless, the
phrase could mean that the five hundred years after the Buddha's death constituted the period of the 'patterned' (i.e. formalized) dharma, since no 正法 is mentioned here.

22. For (決) is Miyamoto uses 'real' but this pre-empts its use for 真 etc., (cf 2/4) but n.b. 23/20 where 真 and 定 are synonymous. 'Fixed', which is used frequently throughout the Treatise, means reified, having an essence grasped, appropriated, received, clung to by the subject, having a nature, or having a self, and its obverse 不決定 as 'really nonexistent from the beginning' 本無. The term is normally used in a disparaging way - if something is 'fixed' then it is not really fixed, but only seems to be to the unenlightened (cf.24v16). It is used in a different way at 27/8;38a18 'these are definite principles so you must realise them' 此是定義是故當知 and at 24b26 as 'firm insight' with the connotation of samādhi 決定智慧.

23. see n.80

24. These are the six sense-faculties and either their six realms, or consciousnesses or objects. See chapter 3.

25. The six sense-faculties, and their corresponding consciousnesses and objects. see JEBD 147b-148a, Nak.660c. cf. ch3 and previous note. These categorisations are part of the Abhidarmist analysis of consciousness.

26. Worldly truth 世俗 is any form of words sanctioned by the Buddha to lead beings to enlightenment. This may include apparent heresies, cf. 18/12;24c10ff. It means the Buddhist teaching as a
whole. However, Nāgārjuna/Blue Eyes considers himself to be
addressing Buddhists who have misunderstood Buddhist teaching,
as a result of which Buddhist truths including that of emptiness
do not lead them to enlightenment but simply provide fuel for
their 'voracious attachments' (cf. Murti p.50,n.1.). The 'truth
of the supreme meaning' therefore has to be a truth
which does not involve words and concepts to provoke attachments,
which preserves ordinary Buddhist morality and soteriology (the
twelve causal links) and which corrects existing false views. In
a limited sense emptiness can itself be described as 'the truth
of the supreme meaning' (as at 1/2). Nāgārjuna holds that it
can preserve Buddhist morality and soteriology (because it explains
how things can change (cf.24v20ff) and it can rectify false views
in the limited sense of exposing their internal contradictions.
If 'emptiness is itself empty' as Blue Eyes asserts (24/13) then
when emptiness as a concept finally dissolves out of the realm of
worldly truth, the 'emptiness' that remains is 'the truth of the
supreme meaning', but to achieve this degree of insight requires
that one becomes a saint or sage (24/9) in order to see perverted
perceptions for what they really are. 24v6ff. offers a full
account of the two truths.

27. 相 is throughout translated as 'characteristic' except in ch.7
where it is rendered 'mark' for economy of style and in
實相 which is rendered 'true character'. A characteristic
(Sk. lākṣaṇa, nimitta) is, conventionally speaking, an attribute
or property of a dharma, and by extension it is that by which
something exists and is known to exist. 'Characteristic' and
'dharma' are in fact interchangeable; one might say that
characteristics exist by virtue of their dharmas, or as the
opponent puts it: 'The sutras say that dharmas have the three marks of arising, abiding and ceasing. Things arise through the dharma of arising, they abide through the dharma of abiding, and they cease through the dharma of ceasing, and this is how the various dharmas exist'. (7/0). For something to possess or display a characteristic is for it to be reified or hypostatised by the subject. To regard emptiness, for example, as a characteristic is to regard emptiness as a dharma (in this case also a doctrine), an existent thing. cf. 22/10.

28. The verses are repeated, but each is counted only once in the numbering of verses.

29. 不可得 is best rendered 'untenable' though the context sometimes demands that it is rendered 'inconceivable' 'cannot be found' 'cannot be obtained' etc. This and 不然, 應, do service for a number of Sankrit logical operators, (cf. Robinson's discussion of this topic in Early Madhyamika pp. 85-88), none of which was known to Chinese readers of the treatise. It is virtually interchangeable with 无所, 'nonexistent' in the sense of 'is not found'. It is not possible to match Kumārajīva's use of these terms with their Sk. originals since no text of Blue-Eye's commentary has survived.

30. direct worldly perception 世間現見 is invoked against the opponents of emptiness, and by the opponents against the Treatise's teachings. In the former case empirical observation is held to be a reliable guide to what is or is not the case (cf. the following passage), but in the latter case ordinary perception is said to be inherently perverted and unreliable. (cf. 5/8, 21/10,
2/18, 2/1. What constitutes 'reality' depends on the degree of insight.

31. the meaning is not clear unless we substitute 'inference' for 'direct worldly perception', in which case Blue-Eyes is saying that corn cannot have arisen \textit{ex nihilo} at the beginning of the kalpa (time-period during which the universe evolves and dissolves) because, as we can see, it does not arise now except as a result of already-existing seed-corn.

32. continuity of characteristics also translates as 'succession', 'continuity' according to context. \textit{相續} means both 'characteristic' and 'reciprocal', so that \textit{相續} may equally well mean 'succeed each other'.

33. shoots of corn, stalks of corn, etc... The argument is obscured here by the intrusive parallelism of corn shoots and tree shoots, etc., which is irrelevant. Blue Eyes means to say that if such things as the shoot, the stalk and the leaf are really completely unrelated to each other, why do we regard them all as pertaining to, e.g. one 'tree'.

34. Here, as throughout the treatise, Nāgārjuna takes the fact of causality as axiomatic while at the same time rejecting any view about how it operates.

35. 'No causes' here implies a constant reality, with no changes taking place due to the operation of causes. Permanence is a Buddhist heresy and needs no further condemnation. This vista is then extended for 'where there is no cause there is no effect'
and therefore good actions would not affect one's destiny any more than bad ones. Almsgiving and holding to the precepts etc. represent merit-producing activities and Buddhist morality in general. A more comprehensive list of good actions (the 'ten paths of pure actions') is given at 17/11.

36. The ten evils and five rebellious acts 十惡五逆. The ten evils are traditionally killing, stealing, adultery, lying, bad language, slander, double-tongue, coveting, anger and false views (S.50a, JEBD 146a, Nak.651b). Their opposites are listed at 17/11 as 'no-killing, no-stealing, no-lewdness, no lying, no deception, no evil speech, no useless gossip, no jealousy, no anger and no perverted views'.

The five rebellious acts are parricide, matricide, killing an arhat, shedding the blood of a Buddha and destroying the harmony of the Sangha. (S.128a, Nak.357a, JEBD 79b)

37. 'self-nature' or own-nature 自性 is the attribute or property of anything which exists in and of itself. Its synonyms are 'fixed', 'existent', 'self-substance', 自體 etc. According to Nāgārjuna dharmas are conceived by the unenlightened man to be like this, but are not really so.

38. This statement anticipates the better-known formulation of 24v18 and the commentary to that verse (24/19) recapitulates what is said here. The 'merely' obscure the problem of whether the combination of causes and conditions 'really' takes place and the argument stands or falls by whether 自性 designations may themselves be hypostatised.
39. An unspecific reference to the Abhidharma. Although there are some references to specified writers (Kātyāyana, Sarvāstivādins, Vātsiputriyas) most of the canonical and commentarial quotations in the Treatise are unattributed.

40. The four types of cause are:
1. causal conditions 因緣
2. next-number condition 次第緣
3. condition-condition 繼緣
4. increase-over condition 增上緣

These are Robinson's literal translations (R.84). The Sk. verse is translated as: 'There are four conditions; the cause, the object-basis, the immediate, and the dominant. There is no fifth condition' (R.84). The four causes are explained as follows:

1. Sk. hetu-pratyaya. The direct cause.
2. Samanantara-pratyaya. This cause refers to the necessity of the first moment of thought passing out of existence before the next moment of thought can occur in the mind, i.e. the disappearance of the first moment of thought serves as the cause for the appearance of the second moment of thought.
3. Ālambana-pratyaya. This refers to the necessity for an object to be present before a consciousness can function, e.g. sight can function only when there is an object to be seen.
4. Adhipati-pratyaya. All causes, apart from those above, which contribute to the emergence of a thing or at least do not hinder its emergence.

(JEBD 276a-b, Nak.508d). 1/12 however indicates that in the Treatise no. 4 should be understood as a general principle of causality ('this exists, therefore that exists'). I have translated as 'cause' rather than 'condition', following the
internal logic of the Treatise and supported by Nakamura (綾はこの場合因に同じ) who provides a diagram to explain a relationship between the four causes and five effects (Nak.508d).

The Treatise however shows a thoroughgoing lack of interest in the precise meaning of these terms. No. 1, it says applies to 'all active dharmas' while 3 and 4 apply to 'all dharmas'. All dharmas are in fact 'active' (有為, which is often translated 'conditioned' for the Sk. samskrta, but which I have translated throughout as 'active'), for as the Treatise later reveals, 'inactive' 無為 dharmas exist only in the sense that there are not 'active' dharmas. (25/5: 'All the myriad things arise from conditions; they are all active. There is not a single dharma which may be termed an inactive one...'). Cf.n.85.

'Next-number condition' I have translated as 'sequential cause' because it refers to an event immediately preceding and thereby occasioning another. Arhats (see n.41) by virtue of attaining nirvana, step out of the causal sequence. Each of these types of cause is refuted individually in what follows (1v9-1/11).

41. An arhat is one who, as the context here makes clear, has passed beyond thought and mental configurations 心數. He is free from all cravings and rebirth, has attained the fourth (highest) level of spiritual attainment, is free of defilements, perfect in knowledge and worthy of respect and offerings. According to the GPWT, which is thoroughly Mahayanist, Arhats (and Pratyeka-Buddhas) are something less than Bodhisattvas (T.1509,p.267c26ff., Ramanan pp.288,371n56) but the Treatise mentions Bodhisattvas on only two occasions, at 1/0;1b28 in a
quotation from the Prajñāpāramitā, and at 11/1 in a rather rudimentary hierarchy in which the Buddha is ranked highest amongst the various types of Buddhist and non-Buddhist saints and sages. Arhats are mentioned on a number of occasions without (but n.b.n. 249) any suggestion that they belong anywhere below the highest rank of spiritual attainment. (7/15; 10b9ff, 17/19; 22c15ff, etc.) Most frequently mentioned are 'saints and sages' or holy men in general. See n.249 for the four stages leading to arhatship.

42. Indeterminate 無決定 'not fixed' in the sense of having no definite own-nature. See 1/0(1c1ff.)

43. 四因 here = 四因 the first of the 四因 referred to in 1v5. existent, inexistent, both existent and inexistent... are the first three propositions of the tetralemma. The fourth, 'neither x nor not x' occurs less often and adds nothing to the argument. See the discussion of these four terms in e.g. 25/16, 27/29. Once the first two mutually exclusive terms (x and not x) are negated there is no possibility of 'both x and not x' being tenable, or of 'neither x nor not x' being tenable.

44. refers to the 次第緣 of 1v5, and requires that the cessation of the previous dharma be the precondition or occasion for the arising of the subsequent dharma.

45. the three periods of time 世 past, present and future, lit: already-past, present and not-yet-come.

46. inactive dharmas see n.40, n.85.
active dharmas always have the characteristic of cessation because cessation is one of the three characteristics of all dharmas. See 7/0.

If there is no permanence there can be no sin and merit, because actions cannot operate causally on effects, hence actions and rewards would be independent of each other.

You deny your own dharma: one of several suspected puns in the chung-lun, since dharma means both 'doctrine' and 'concept of a dharma' cf. 13/3; 17c5, 16v10, 27/8, 37b14)

Dharmas being factors of experience vary in their nature according to the level of insight of the one who observes the dharmas. Thus, some perceive dharmas as having a form or shape while the srotapannas or the saints see dharmas 'without outflows' which is to say their perception of dharmas does not involve any haemorrhaging of attention into forms and shapes. Since their eye of insight is not inverted or veiled by 'I' and 'mine' (18/12; 24c1ff.) they can see the true character of dharmas (which transcends the characteristics listed above at 1/11). The Treatise distinguishes the Arhat from the other stages of sainthood on the basis of the distinction between 'with outflows' and 'without outflows' (17/19; 22c17ff.)

This is the language of mysticism, typical of the commentary rather than of the verses.
53. cf. the Treatise's sole reference to skilful means (18/12; 25a16) and nn.339,340.

54. In contrast to the lengthy analysis of sequential condition in 1/10 'objective cause' is merely rejected as an 'expedient' यथासाधीन . The Sk. verse is itself problematic; it states that true dharmas do not have objective causes, so where would objective causes exist? but the text may be corrupt (R.85,v11, Inada.41,v8). Kumarajiva's reading (R.86) refers to the 'True Dharma', hence the commentary speaks of the Mahayana doctrine that dharmas of all kinds are empty and enter into the 'Dharma-nature'. This is not in itself a refutation of the concept of objective cause.

55. This verse deals, though not explicitly, with the fourth of the conditions mentioned in 1v5, the 增上缘, which is a general principle of causation operating as and within the twelve causal links, (see 1/0,1625ff.n.) and expressed in the traditional formulation 'this being, that becomes' (Majjhima Nikāya II,32, Samyutta Nikāya II,28. Inada p.17)

56. What the Buddha said was in accordance with his hearers misperceptions. The implication is that nothing of what the Buddha said can be taken at face value.

57. 'summarized or taken at length' is a mistranslation, corrected in the commentary by redefinitions of the two terms. (see R.36, remarks on V. 13)

58. 'Going and coming' is Kumarajiva's rendering of the Sk. title 'gatagata' (Gone and not gone). 'Coming' is not mentioned in the
chapter after this, but the phrase 来 means transmigration, or wandering in samsāra (cf. 27v19). Hence this chapter, which in the Sk. is a purely technical discussion of 'what has and what has not transpired' (so Inada) is imbued with soteriological significance in the Chinese, for it now deals implicitly with the reality or otherwise of transmigration, rebirth and karma, and explicitly with the twelve causal links (2/17).

59. 三世 past, present and future. See n.45.

60. Action of going 去業 i.e. an act of going in addition to the process of going. Other terms which the opponent attempts to introduce as disparate but conjoined elements in the process of going include dharma of going 去法 (2/1,2v3); place of movement 動處 (2v2,2/2); situation of karmic activity 作業處 (2/2); a goer 去者 (2v6ff); a beginning (of going) 發 (2/11,2v12ff); characteristic of going 去相 (2/16) and movement of the body 身動 (2/25). The treatise accepts none of these but identifies going, like movement 行 as a designation for 'continuity of characteristics' or 'succession' 相續 (2/17;5a16).

61. at rest 住 (abiding) is one of the three marks (see n.27). It is not used here as the antithesis of going 去 but as a situation in which a goer or non-goer might be identified. (cf.2/15).

62. A reference to the 12 causal links. see n.16

63. On the untrustworthiness of (the opponent's) perception see n.30

64. 人常法無常 A curious assertion for any Buddhist unless taken
in this limited context of a refutation of the identity of 'goer' and 'dharma of going'.

65. see n.22

66. 'these three' 三種 lit: 'three kinds' but the verse has only 三 and the 'three editions' of the Tripitaka omit 三(T.1564, p.5,n.22).

67. Anything neither existent 有 nor nonexistent 無 is illusory 幻, apparitional 幻 and 'exists' only as an unreal designation
cf. the 大知 in the Diamond Sutra (T.235,p.752c27) 'like a dream, phantasm, bubble, shadow, dew, lightning'.

68. These are listed in 3v1

69. The sutra's description of the elements of perception is straightforward, the Treatise however rejects any explanation of how these elements co-operate, if it involves existents. The six objects

70. mind 意 (Sk. manas). Here used as an abbreviation of 意識(Sk. vijñāna) (JEBD 123a,278b). Nak. (40b) gives as equivalents

71. See ch. 2
These are listed in the commentary at 3/7.

See 3/7

See 3/7

The four dharmas are nos. 3, 6, 7, and 8 of the list of twelve causal links given in ch. 26. Omitted in the sequence are 4. name-and-form and 5. the six avenues, which may therefore be considered as equivalent to the six faculties and their seeing of objects, etc. refuted here.

Attachment or grasping (Sk. upādāna) is the ninth of the twelve causes and is subdivided into four kinds.

1. attachment to desire
2. attachment to views
3. attachment to non-Buddhist practices
4. attachment to ideas of selfhood (Nak. 514d, JEBD 289a). Other commentators give (Nak. 515a). Cf. Treatise 26v5 'On account of craving there are the four grasplings. And because of grasping there is existence. If the grasper would not grasp, there would be liberation and no existence'. 26/9 adds: 'When the four graspings grasp, sin and merit are generated by the actions of body, mind and speech'. At 23/16 grasping is defined as 'discriminative conceptualising of this and that, being and non-being and so on'.

See 3v1

See 3v1, n. 69
79. Hearer is included in seer, etc. 3v5ff.

80. The five skandhas: 五陰 陰 is the usual translation of skandha in Kumārajīva's works. The list of five is not given until 4v7. Up to 4/6 the treatise deals with form色 the first skandha, as representative of the five, which are:

1. form (Sk.rūpa) 色
2. reception (vedanā) 受
3. conception (saṃjñā) 想
4. predispositions (or: volition, saṃskāra) 行
5. consciousness (viññā) 識

(cf. 4v7, Nak. 355d). Predispositions, consciousness, (name and) form, and reception are common to both the five skandhas and the twelve causal links. See 26v1ff. where causal links and skandhas are integrated into the account of dependent origination, and the discussion in 13/2.

81. no specific cause of form is referred to. Inada p. 54 proposes as causes the four great elements 四大 earth, water, fire and wind, but the 色因 seems more likely to be consciousness 識which 'precedes' it in the 十二因緣 and which is itself said (in 5/7) to exist by virtue of the four great elements. 4/1 makes it clear that 因 here means not a temporally precedent but an integral part or aspect of the effect, like threads which 'cause' cloth. 4/5 however indicates that the cause is subtle 細, the effect gross 鹿, which could apply equally to 因 or the 四大.

82. See 4v1, n. 81
That dharmas are caused is axiomatic. Otherwise they would be permanent, which is a heresy, and the principle of causality would be negated (cf. 2/20).

An appeal to empirical evidence. see n. 30

These inactive dharmas are not elaborated upon in the text. Nak. 491c has 1. 虚空無為 (Sk. अकाश); 2. 拘破無為 (pratisamkhya-nirodha) and 3. 非拘破無為 (appratisamkhya-nirodha). 1. is 'empty space'; 2. is 'nirvāṇa attained through selection/ nirvāṇa attained through the exercise of prajñā' (JEBD 29a) and 3. as one of the three non-created elements in the Abhidharma-kośa means 'extinction and non-reproduction due to the lack of a productive cause, as distinct from that gained through intellectual power' (JEBD 104a). At 7/34 however the Treatise argues that 'inactive dharmas' is a figure of speech which depends for its meaning on 'active dharmas'. 'The inactive has no special marks of its own' (but see 5/2; 7b18). Hatani, p. 257 says that space, time, direction and atoms are conceived to be permanent and uncaused by the Vaiṣeṣika school (勝論) and both the Vaiṣeṣika and Sāmkhya (數論) conceived the soul to be a spirit. Hatani reads 僚 instead of 神 (p. 84).

The two kinds of causes are 1. actual cause 作因 (lit: effective cause) 2. figurative cause 言説因. The Treatise dismisses figurative causes but without saying why, and promises (4/2; 6b28ff) to refute time, direction, soul, atoms, nirvana etc., later. These are presumably references to chs. 9, 19 and 25. Atoms, which are not separately refuted in the Treatise, are regarded as real dharmas in the Kośa. (JEBD 84r). Nak. (429c)
says that 言説 means the same as 了因 (ryōin, 1422d 'a revealing cause'), (S.20a) and he gives as an example 'smoke in relation to fire'.

87. i.e. the unenlightened man

88. cf. n.8

89. 色力 This compound appears in LS 37a11 as 'physical strength' (Harvitz, 142) but clearly has a different meaning here.

90. The argument is that coarse thread only makes coarse cloth, and that cause and effect, even though not identical, are intrinsically related.

91. Verses 4v8 and 4v9, like the commentary following them are difficult to understand without the Sk.; Inada's translation gives, (v8) 'When a refutation is based on śūnyatā, and an opponent counter-refutes, he is not able to counter-refute everything since the counter-refutation will be the same (nature) as the contention' (p.56). Kumārajīva puts the argument the other way round: if you do not use śūnyatā, you will not succeed. The Sk. v.9 gives: "When an exposition is based on śūnyatā and an opponent censors (censures) he is not able to censor everything since the censorship will be the same (nature) as the contention' (Inada.56).

92. The six elements 六種 (lit: six kinds) are, like the five skandhas in ch.4, investigated through one as representative of all. The full list is given at 5/7 as:
1. earth
2. water
3. fire
4. wind
5. space
6. consciousness

where the commentary states that space supports the four great elements which in turn are the causes and conditions of consciousness (5/6; 7c27ff).

93. 論者 Miyamoto has 'the (writer of the) Abhidharma' (p.35)

94. for 業故 read 相故。 (T. text)

95. The treatise argues at 4/2 that non-arising, etc. are not characteristics. See 4/2; 6b28ff.

96. Fire and water are two of the six elements.

97. 'then it would be uncaused' because every active dharma has the characteristics of arising, abiding and ceasing by virtue of being a component in the causal process.

98. That which has characteristics

99. The characteristics

100. Characterisation 可相 (lit: 'the being-characterised') of ch.10 燃可燃 'fire' and the 'being-burnt' (i.e. fuel) but 'the being characterised' is awkward and conceptually indistinguishable from
有相. See n.103

101. Entity 物 = 'thing' (Sk. bhāva)

102. 一切法皆無 this is either a misunderstanding of the fourth line of the stanza (5v5) ('no other entity exists') or a mistake for 空 (cf.24v18). The Treatise accepts neither existence nor nonexistence of dharmas (cf.5/5;7c16ff)

103. Characterisable 可相

104. See . n. 92

105. That earth, water, fire and wind are, as the Treatise states, causally combined can mean either that (e.g.) gross earth is seen to be a mixture of mud, water, stones, etc., or that the element earth 地 is itself composed of atoms or some other entity, as the Kośa holds (JEED.84b). The former seems to be indicated here since it is 'the ordinary man' who misapprehends the nature of space.

106. 四大因縁有識 I can find no explanation for this view, since in the 十二因縁 consciousness precedes name-and-form which are equivalent to the 四大. It seems to anticipate the Shingon view of the identity of the six elements. The statement does not occur in the Prasannapadā. (cf.Sprung.103-108).

107. 滅滅見空隠法 Nak.25c, = Sk.Draṣṭavyopāsāṇaḥ sivaṃ which Inada translates as 'the wonderful quiescence of things' (p.59).of25/24.

109. 諸法實相 True character of dharmas; a synonym for Tathatā (thusness).

110. See n.51

111. The view that they exist... The use of 即 indicates immediacy, but a temporal sequence is clearly not intended, since the 'man of insight' does not alter his views but is aloof from all views of existence and nonexistence.

112. 'a way free of outflows' 無漏道 or 'Bodhi without outflows' i.e. enlightenment, nirvāṇa. LS29a9, Nak.1352c. cf. n.51 cf. nn. 249,302.

113. Passion 染 is a generic term for the afflictions or defilements (see n.114)

114. 無欲, 貪患, 愚癡 are the 'three poisons' 三毒 (see n.115). In LS 41a2 Bodhisattvas manifest the three poisons as an expedient device. (Hurvitz 160). This is a way of thinking not found in the Treatise, though the Buddhas may teach doctrines according to the capacity of the hearers. (cf.18/12;25a16)

115. The three poisons 三毒 (Nak.484b) are given above (8/0). In Sk. rāga, dveṣa, moha, they are associated here as in LS 54c1 with the 'three worlds' (see n.117) which are the worlds or realms of desire, form and no-form. Cf. 滅三毒出三界 'annihilating the three
poisons, leaving the three spheres' in the Lotus Sutra (Hurvitz 219)

116. The three forms of karmic activity 三業 are referred to at 26v1 as the 三行 which are somewhat ambiguously glossed (since 行 usually means predispositions) at 26/9 as 'actions of body, speech and mind. 身口意業. This accords with Nak. 462b; 身口意. The 三業 here are however more likely to be the three forms of action at 17/19; 22c7 which refers to deeds classified in the Abhidharma as good, bad or neutral 善、不善、無記 and bound to the three worlds (cf. Nak.462b(3)).

Nak. 462b(2) lists another Abhidharma version from Kosa 15.12 in which three types of action correspond to the three worlds: 福業 (善業), 非福業 (悪業), 不動業 (色.無色界に属する禅定).

'Good actions (skilful actions in the world of desire), bad actions (evil actions in the world of desire) and non-moving actions (dhyānas belonging to the worlds of form and non-form').

117. The three realms or worlds 三界 are the world of desire 欲界, the world of form 色界 and the formless world 無色界. 欲界 includes the six heavens of desire, the human world and the hells (cf. the 六道 six paths, 26v2) or 六趣 six destinies, 26/9.

The world of form is above the realm of desire and those who dwell in it are free from desire for sex and food; it contains seventeen heavens 十七天. The world of no-form is 'a realm which transcends all forms, a purely spiritual existence'. (Nak. 456d-457b, S.70b, JEBD.252a)

118. In the discussion which follows 'unity' means 'combination into a
combination without any associating...lit: 'a comrade, associate, keeping another company'. 'Combination is equivalent to 'oneness'. The terminology is bound to be confusing here because the argument is directed at the internal self-contradiction of the notion of oneness in diversity.

Although dhammas have marks (characteristics) the marks, for the purposes of Nāgārjuna's argument are also considered as dhammas, i.e. as having own-nature 自性. These three are the marks of 'active' 有為 dharmas. cf. Nak.480d.

有為 = 'conditioned' (Sk. saṃskṛta)
無為 = 'unconditioned' (Sk. asaṃskṛta).

operate is 作 lit: make, do, constitute, become.

arising of arising, etc. A reference to the theory of secondary characteristics (anulaksana) expounded in the Kośa (K.I.224-6; T.XXIX,27b8ff.) The Kośa holds that there is no infinite regression. cf. R.257.

This is an Abhidhammā analysis. cf.n.123

self-substance 自體 a synonym for 自性, 自相, 有 etc.

because light 'reaching' darkness means that darkness becomes light; the two cannot co-exist.
127. Because the thief, once caught, can no longer steal and is thus no longer a thief, cf. the Japanese haiku: 'We chased the thief and caught him; he was our son'.

128. Imperishable bodhi.

129. Arhat (supra n. 41).

130. We do not exactly say 我定言 here also imputes a fixed existence to arising.

131. Calm cessation. 洗滅 (Nak. 618d 'calm' (Sk. संत) Conze, Dict. 379 'calmly quiet'. It is equivalent to nirvāṇa.

132. 洗滅 see previous note.

133. as n. 132.

134. Reasonings 因緣 i.e. grounds, causes. cf. n. 6.

135. 三世 see n. 45.

136. Hatani and Ui both take line three (in my trans.) together with lines 1 and 2. 'If... apart from arising of arising, then dharmas can produce themselves' (Hatani, 109, Ui, 277).

137. Presumably a reference to 5v6ff. Existence and nonexistence is discussed later in this chapter at 7v3lf, and at 8/7 and passim.

138. For T. text, see previous note. 舍離等. read 舍離等. 舍離等.
(following Hatani, p.109)

139. 去故非住 Hatani reads 去 but asks whether 去 should not be 生 (p111n53). But the opposition movement-rest makes sense.

140. 求减法 Hatani reads 'according to our investigation of cessation, dharmas are non-arising'. I follow Ui's phrasing.

141. cf.25v5,25/5.

142. Gandharva-city. 乾闥婆城 (Sk. Gandharva-nagara). A Gandharva is a heavenly musician, one of the (eight kinds of beings) who protect Buddhism. A Gandharva-city is 'an illusory thing lacking any real substance used for analogies' (Nak.325c). Gandharvas, but not Gandharva-cities, are mentioned in the LS passim, and Gandharva-cities in CPWT (T.1509) at 325a2,691a11, etc.

143. sin or merit... For the Treatise's definition of sins and merits and their rewards and retributions see 17/1ff. Ten specific merits (the ten paths of 'white' actions) are listed at 17v11ff, with their obverse, the ten evil deeds. A Sutra quotation at 17/0 says 'all living beings take birth according to their karma' and the Treatise (the opponent) continues: 'An evil person goes into the hells, one who cultivates merit is reborn in heaven, and one who traverses the path attains nirvana'.

144. reception 悟 represents all the five skandhas (cf.18/12).

145. substrate. 住本 means 'originally-abiding'. The Sk. title has
pūrva which Inada translates as Antecedent State of the Self, May as 'pre-existent' and Sprung as 'Self as Subject of Perception'. The term is a synonym for a permanent 'self' conceived as spatially and temporally located and existent, and to that extent resembles the 'doer' of ch.3

146. eye, ear etc. are the 六根 see 3v1ff.cf9/2.

147. pain and pleasure are the 'objects' of consciousness see 9/2, and 5/7, 7c27ff.

148. cf.1/5. Nak.767c gives 'Mind and operations of the mind (Sk. citta-cait asika)'.

149. 有論師言 Miyamoto has 'Abridharmists' but this quotation is from Vaiśeṣika-sūtra III,2,4.(R.69).

150. 異相而分別 Miyamoto has 'discriminate by their different qualities', and Hatani 異相にして分別す which is ambiguous. The Sk. verse translates as 'By means of the different functions of seeing, etc., the entity appears in different moments' (Inada.78). The commentary (9/6) glosses: 諸根各自能分別 'each of the functions can discriminate individually'.

151. 尘 'objects' but also with the connotation of the world, worldly dust.

152. 五向 i.e. via any of the 六根 six faculties.
lit: difficulties. This may refer to the nature of nirvāṇa or to the opponent's criticisms of the concept of non-arising nirvana.

lit: fire and what is being burnt, that is to say, fuel as an active component of fire. There is no fire without fuel. The concept is analogous to that of doer and deed (cf.10/1) and the 'person' of the five skandhas (cf.10/14; 15c14ff).

ineffectual fire 無作火 i.e. fire which does not burn. see 10/2.

in vain 空 lit: 'empty'.

effect 功 is shorthand for 'this phenomenon of human effort having an effect'.

i.e. if you say that nothing changes, only the designation.

i.e. when is fuel not fuel? When it is afire.

'extinguish' 灭 (elsewhere 'cessation'), is a reminder that the discussion is related to the Buddhist analysis of existence and how to leave it; the world is a burning house, and the fire must be either escaped from or extinguished. (cf. Lotus Sutra. Ch.3).

own-mark 自相 is equivalent to 自性 own-nature, etc.

In the Sk. the verse has 'woman' and 'man' and is a reference to sexual union but Prof. Saigusa tells me that Chinese propriety prevented Kumārajīva from attributing such a risqué analogy to
Nāgārjuna; instead the genders are revealed by Blue-Eyes in 10/6.

163. ch. 2. This passage parallels the discussion of future, past and present going, place and dharma of going etc. see n.60

164. A five-line verse. Both Hatani and Uo place 可燃中無燃 at the beginning of the commentary (10/14) but the T. text follows the Korean text's arrangement of five lines, and the translation of the Sk. verse is incomplete without the fifth line. 'Again, fire is not wood, nor is it in something else than wood. Fire does not contain wood. There is neither wood in fire nor fire in wood' (Inada. 84).

165. 犧子部 The Vātsāputriyas are a school derived from the Sarvāstivāda about 300 years after the death of the Buddha, which claimed to have been founded by Śāriputra. (JEBD320a). Like the Jains it advocated a concept of the pudgala (individual) as neither identical with nor different from the states (e.g. body), a doctrine examined in chs. 9 and 10 of the Treatise. Murti reproduces (from Stcherbatsky) the debate between the Vātsāputriya and Vasubandhu on the relationship between the living being and the soul, (Murti 42-3, 205), cf. Nak. 1184. See also T.1509 (GPWT) where there is disapproving mention of 'the Vātsāputriyas inclusion of the empirical self under the category of the inexpressible' (Ramanan, 363a). This explains the reference to the 'fifth indescribable storehouse' 第五不可說藏 in the Treatise. (10/16; 15c29). The T.1509 passage is at p.61a24ff.

166. Sarvāstivādins S.468. One of the major Abhidharma sects descended from the Sthaviras about 300 years after the
Buddha's decease. The Sarvāstivādin analysis of existence reached final form in the Abhidharma-Kośa of Vasubandhu (T.1552). 'Sarva does not mean that they accepted the reality of everything, but only of the elements variously understood in the Buddhist scriptures' (Murti.185) (cf. the meaning of 'worldly truth' n.26.) These elements include skandha, āyatana, the sense-functions etc. dealt with in successive chapters of the Treatise. Sarvāstivādin texts came to China but not the school.

167. 本際 means any ultimate ('original') starting-point of things, and by implication an end, since what begins must end; cf.25/21; 36a24.

168. I can find no reference to a 無本際經 in the present canon or in the usual sources, and it is not mentioned in the GPWT according to the T. Index, vol.13.

169. This is obviously a hierarchy but it lacks enough detail to bear analysis. 三種聖人 seems not to be a formula in the Treatise, though it later became one, cf.3.74b.

170. 共 Simultaneity i.e. birth and death together in one instant.

171. This refutes the 十二因緣 conceived as a temporal sequence. see n.16.

172. suffering 苦 the first of the four truths 四諦 (see ch.24), which analyse the causes of suffering and its remedy. Again, causality is admitted, but distinctions made within or about causality (such as in v.1) are rejected.
173. 'These skandhas' refers to the sequence of skandhas, cf 12/2. For the five skandhas see n.80.

174. the five receptive skandhas 五受陰 i.e. the five skandhas characterised by receiving or grasping. cf. 27v27.

175. predispositions 行 fourth of the five skandhas. see n.80. It represents all the five skandhas here. cf.13/2;17b7ff.

176. false deceptions 虚詛 Nak.349b. '偽り' (falsehood, deception). (Sk. mṛṣa).

177. misapprehension 妄取相 Nak.1363b has for 妄取; 虚妄なる法 'a delusory dharma' (Sk. moṣa-dharma).

178. form 色 the first of the five skandhas. n.80

179. 'core' 實 which means both truth, reality, and a small black fruit. Possibly a play on words since neither is found in a banana-tree.

180. receiving 受 second of the five skandhas. n.80

181. 'learned it'; Miyamoto (p.97) has 'perception' but is rarely used and may be taken in its non-Buddhist sense, with of course the implication that we see what we have learned to see.

182. the three receivings 三受 refer to the reception of pleasure, 楽楽, the reception of pain 苦, and the reception of neither pleasure nor pain 不楽不苦 Nak.470c.
183. conception 'third of the five skandhas, defined here as 'the discriminative knowledge of names and terms'.

184. The shadow following the substance is perhaps a literary allusion (given in Math. 7484.22) since it does not occur in the GPWT, LS or Buddhist dictionaries.

185. consciousness fifth of the five skandhas.

186. form, sound ... mouth, body etc., cf. 3v1, 3/1.

187. predispositions; see n. 175.

188. humans ... formless heaven; cf. the 'three worlds' n. 117

189. hells ... asuras; see the 六道 'six paths, 26v2.

190. see n. 26

191. i.e. through the twelve causal links listed here. The predispositions are however caused by ignorance.

192. perception of truth 見諦 Nak. 322b: 真理を見に明らかにする こと諦は真理のこと... which is probably the meaning here, although acceptance of the 四諦 of suffering, etc., (ch. 24) is also possible. cf. 17v15, 17/19; 22c5ff.

193. meditation 思惟 can mean rational investigation, thinking etc., but here I follow Miyamoto's 'meditation'. Nak. gives Sk. 'buddhi' etc., (541c). Cf. 22v14 where the term is used for Sk.
cintā 'reasoning', but clearly reasoning cannot cut off lust, ignorance, craving etc., since they determine its direction.

194. vary 有異 that is to say, things change and become different over time. cf.17v15,17/19;22c5ff.

195. This is curiously expressed; it means that for A to become B, either A has to remain as A whilst becoming B, or A has to change into B. Either way, A cannot 'become' B because A is defined as A, and B is defined as B.

196. This charge by the opponent which is developed in 13/8;18c11ff and then answered anticipates 空亦復空 'emptiness is itself empty' at 22/13 and 24/19;33b17.

197. The opponent identifies a view of emptiness; his evidence is that Nāgārjuna has put forward an argument. see previous note.

198. The sixty-two views are listed in various canonical sources such as the Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra, the Nirvāṇa-sūtra, and in the Daśabhūmika-vibhāṣā etc. They refer to sixty-two Indian views regarding the self and the world, permanence and nihilism etc. considered erroneous at the time of the Buddha (Nak.1454d). They are referred to again at 27/31, 25/24 as representing all views (sophistries, vain arguments) which are to be abandoned.

199. Combination,合 or 和合 refers to the combination of the elements of seer, seeing, eye, object etc. discussed in Ch.3 which makes sight possible, according to the Abhidharmists.
realm 方 lit: direction, quarter.

Difference is difference because of difference... means: if A is completely separate and distinct from B, it is 'different'. If there is not complete separateness, they are not 'different'.

Universal characteristic 總相 Nak. 877c (Sk. sāmānya). The reference to sutras is perhaps misleading since the term belongs to the commentarial tradition of treatises such as the Kosa. It does not occur in the MMK themselves. A scheme of 六相 (whole, parts, unity, diversity, established, dissolved) of which 總相 is the first derives from later Hua-Yen philosophy. (Nak. 1456b).

Function 力用. A rare term, the precise meaning of which is not clear. Nak. (1418d) has "作用 (effect, action), 機能 (function), 活動 (operation), はたらき (operation) (Sk. kriyā?)" "The commentary (150) indicates that 力用 is equivalent to 性 (nature) 'a pot has the nature of a pot' etc. The term may be an alternative for 作用 (operation, etc.) which occurs in Kosa, 5.16-17 etc. (Nak. 439b).

'created dharma' 作法 Sk. kptaka 'made or manipulated' (Inada 97) Also 'effect' (Sk. karana). Cf. 24v17, ch. 4, passim etc. It means a dharma viewed as the result of causes. Cf. 15/1

'nature' 性 defined

serenity 安隱 Nak. 25c. Cf. 5v8, 5/8.
207. The Kātyāyana referred to here is one of the Buddha's disciples. Cf. Sāmañña-phala sutta, SBB, vol II, p.74 (Dialogues of the Buddha, Pt.1, Rhys Davids). Another Kātyāyana is an Abhidarma-master, author of the Jñanaprasthāna (T.1543/1544) whose teachings were supposedly refuted by Aśvaghoṣa. He is mentioned frequently in the GPWT. Lamotte (TGVS) Vol. I, p.109 n2 discusses the traditions relating to both Kātyāyanas. Cf.T.1509p.70a10,303b18, etc. (T. Index p.18). References to a Kātyāyana-sūtra (sic) are found at T.1509p.292b,110b. (Cf.n.412 below) Kumārajīva in his 'Chief Ideas of the Mahayana (T.1856) states that 'it is Kātyāyana's disciples who say that conditioned dharmas have four marks, and not the Buddha who says so' (R.182). cf. Treatise 7/4; 9b10. The four marks are arising, abiding, alteration and cessation (R.257n.1). (Abhidharmasāra 心論 T.1150 pp.811b18-28).

208. Existent characteristics. Both Ui and Hatani have 有性相. I read 有有相 with the Korean text.

209. bondage and liberation; see nn.238-40.

210. going and coming 來去, the title of ch.2 of the Treatise. See n.58.

211. skandhas 陰 see n.80
    realms  界 see n.117
    avenues 入 see n.24

212. five ways 五種 i.e. through any one of the five skandhas conceived as a 'self'
213. fire and fuel ch 10.

214. 'it will be bodiless' i.e. that which transmigrates is a disembodied entity (and therefore not an 'entity')

215. Hatani reads 若 as 若 (p. 159, n. 6). The Korean has 若 'or'.

216. predispositions have no nature; see ch. 13

217. having a body is not bondage; because the living being is not itself the body, and only the body is bound, cf. 16/6

218. going and coming see ch. 2.

219. receiving in the sense of grasping. Cf. 16/9, and Ramanan's use of 'grasp' for 舍 throughout his exposition of T. 1509.

220. thusness; lit. 般相. The true character or 'real mark' as translated elsewhere, but it is also a synonym for thusness (tathatā, JERD 140), hence my translation. Cf. 18v9, 18/12, 24c10ff, Nak. 598a-b. Neither term is in the Sk. verse which translates: 'Where nirvāṇa is not (subject to) establishment and saṁsāra not (subject to) disengagement, how will there be any conception of nirvāṇa and saṁsāra?' (Inada. 103)

221. Cf. 25v19

222. 'karma' and 'action' are used interchangeably for 色 in the translation.
223. More clearly than the Sk. (in Streng or Inada's translations) the Treatise equates subduing the mind with benefiting others. Cf. 7/1: 'the three poisons in a person cause distress to others' with Streng: 'The state of mind which is self-disciplined, being favourably disposed towards others, and friendship; that is the dharma' (Streng. 201).

224. Cf. Inada's schematic explanation of the two kinds of karma, bodily and mental (Inada. 104). These are later subdivided, see 17v5.

225. ...third of the five skandhas. see 1/5, n.80.

226. configurations or 'functions' see n.41

227. performed and non-performed karmas; 作業 is usually a synonym for 表業 (as in the Sk. verse) 'manifest actions' (Sk. viññāpatti), which is to say, bodily and verbal actions. 無作業 is 無表業 'unmanifest actions' (Sk. avijñāpatti), i.e. thoughts. (T.1564p21n. 17,18, cf. JEBD 122b). However, in 17/5 作 and 無作 are explained differently. See n.229.

228. effect 用 lit: 'use' (u.f. Sk. paribhoga 'enjoyment'). It means 'making use of', 'enjoying the benefit of'.

229. These seven dharmas. In the Sk. verse these are listed in vv.4 and 5. Streng's translation has: (v4) 'Sound, gesture, and that which does not rest which is considered as unknown, Also the other unknown which is considered to be at rest. (v5) That which is pure as a result of enjoyment, that which is impure as a result of
enjoyment, And volition; These seven basic elements (dharma) are considered (by the tradition) as the modes of actions'. The Treatise lists (v4) good and bad body and speech karma, and performed and non-performed karma, and (v5) their effects both good and evil, and conception, as seven 'kinds' of karma. The commentary 7/5 then refers to four kinds of speech karma and three kinds of body karma to arrive at the total of seven. In the subsequent discussion body and speech karma are subdivided into 'active' 有作 and 'nonactive' 有無作 with the meaning of 'initial' and consequential' actions, in a quite different sense than that expressed by 'performed and non-performed' 作/無作 in 17v4, where the distinction is between thought and subsequent deed.

The 'six kinds of karma' referred to in 17/5; 22a2 are thus six kinds of body karma (1. active, 2. non-active, 3. good, 4. evil, 5. benefit (good effect), 6. sin (evil effect)). The seventh kind of karma is conception. The discrepancy between the Treatise's account and the Sk. vv4 and 5 occurs because 作/無作 in v.4 (performed/non-performed, vijñāpita/avijñāpita) is understood by Blue-eyes/Kumārajīva as 有作/有無作 (initial action/ consequential actions), rather than as thought/action.

The four kinds of speech karma are not discussed further. This is perhaps a reference to nos. 4-6 of the ten evils and their opposites (see n.36) which are all concerned with speech. See below, 17/11.

Continues up to its reception of reward 至其受報 i.e. if the action is not 'cut off' before its effect occurs, then it must be 'not cut off', which means permanent, any middle state being excluded.
232. The sprout, etc. Cf. 1/2; 2a8ff and 17/10.

233. The initial mind acquired the sense of 'the first thought of enlightenment' but in the Treatise it has no technical meaning. Cf. Nak. 679c.

234. Initial thought = initial mind, n. 233

235. Ten paths of 'white' actions. These are listed in the commentary at 17/11. See n. 36

236. 'Among gods or men' This could mean either 'honoured by gods and men' or 'honoured as a god, or as a man'. The translation preserves both meanings.

237. Even so... cf. 1/2; 2a8ff, and n. 30.

238. The 'non-disappearing dharma' is a Sāmmatīya (正量) doctrine (Prasanna padā. 148, Nak. 705b) of a neutral, imperishable entity (Nak. 1161c) which, like the predispositions may be bound to the realms of desire, form and no-form, and the non-outflowing realm, which fourth realm, being unbound (i.e. characterised by liberation) is referred to as 'unbound' in the Treatise (17/19; 22c5).

239. i.e. neither good nor bad.

240. 'Fourfold' means bound to the realms of desire, form, etc. See n. 238, and 17/19; 22c5ff.

241. cf. 13/2; 18a19ff, and the explanation in 17/19; 22c5ff. It
is equivalent to the cessation of views.

242. its practise cuts off the 'non-disappearing dharma' between one instant and another.

243. reached similar rewards (i.e. appropriate rewards), actions still producing effects resembling themselves. The Sk. verse has instead of 'similar' samkrama 'transformation' (Inada. 108), or 'transference' (Streng. 202). The meaning of this verse in Chinese is obscure, and the commentary simply repeats it, stating that this topic is fully explained in the Abhidharma. The Sk. verse runs 'If (the imperishable force) were that which is destroyed by (usual) destruction or by transference of action, fallacies (like) the destruction of action would logically result' (Streng. 202).

244. i.e. the disparate karmic effects are consolidated to issue in one realm-body.

245. i.e. similar and dissimilar actions.

246. This verse is interpreted at 17/19 to mean that for arhats and ordinary people the rewards of actions are exhausted only at death, but in the case of Srotāpannas (see n. 249) each reward is exhausted as it manifests; that is to say the Srotāpanna creates no 'new karma' with his actions. 17/19 however may be a corrupt text, since arhats rank higher than srotāpannas who are not even 'once-returners'.

248. This echoes the 17/5 account of 'active' and 'inactive' dharmas.

249. The stages of sainthood. If the text is correct, Blue-Eyes' account places 'the srotāpannas etc.' at the apex of the spiritual hierarchy, as being 'without outflows' with arhats and ordinary people in another category 'with outflows'. Since the srotāpanna is the first, and the arhat the fourth stage of attainment it is difficult to understand the meaning of this passage except as an error. The traditional hierarchy is given in the Lotus Sutra Ch.18: 'The srotāpanna (the first-stage śrāvaka), ... the sakṛdāgāmin (once-returner), ... anāgāmin (non-returner) ... arhant...' (Hurvitz, 259). Cf. Nak.628d. The T. text follows the Korean at this point and notes no variants in any of the editions on which it draws. Ui follows the text but Hatani (p.167) alters the reading (without comment) to give 'for the srotāpannas and arhats etc., they cease at fruition, but for ordinary people they cease at death' (願陀洹及阿羅漢等是果乃至滅), perhaps the most likely explanation is that 'srotāpanna' and 'arhat' have been used in place of each other, and that the text should read 'for the arhats they cease at fruition, but for ordinary people and srotāpannas etc. they cease at death ... (and) that all the stages of sainthood should be distinguished from the Arhat...'

250. pure conduct: Sk. brahmacarya; spiritual discipline. cf.23v9 - 23/12.

251. conceptualised distinctions: These are distinctions between things as pure and impure, from which lust, anger and delusion arise. Cf.23v1ff.
252. No 無始經 is mentioned in the GPWT, etc. It is probably the same work as the 無本際經 referred to at 11/0 where a similar passage is cited.

253. Because a man who remains the same cannot become an ox, he can only remain a man. Any theory of transmigration is untenable, as indeed is any theory.

254. Karma has three aspects 業有三種 could equally be read 'karma is of three kinds (i.e. body, speech and mind)', but almost certainly it refers here to the triad of the originator of karma, the action, and the reward or the carrying out of the action, comparable to the doer, doing and deed done whose refutation is a central concern of the Treatise.

255. Nāgārjuna's verses (17v31; 17v33) are 'secular' in the sense that they refer to any magical apparition. The Treatise however hints at the Mahayana Buddha or bodhisattva who, though illusionary observes the precepts, preaches the Dharma, etc. Cf. Lotus Sutra Ch.11 (Hurvitz. 186-7 etc.)

256. See n. 114

257. These are various Abhidarmist versions of the defilements or afflictions (lust, anger, greed, etc.). There is no standard list. (JEBD 34b). The 九十八使 (not in Nak.) are given in the GPWT under various names at 110b, 131c, 546a etc., (S.16a, T.Index p.30). The 九結 are given at Nak.253c as 爱、恚、慢、無明、取疑。(Nak. 146 2b) The 九結 are given at Nak.253c as 爱、恚、慢、無明、取疑。(Nak. 146 2b). The 九結 are given at Nak.253c as 爱、恚、慢、無明、取疑。(Nak. 146 2b). The 十使 are listed at Nak.656c, and the 十使 are equivalent to the 十八使.
258. cf. 5/8ff., 18/0.

259. The insight of non-self 無我慧 is equivalent to 無我智 in 18v2, and means that state of prajñā-consciousness where 'I' and 'mine' no longer obtains. (Nak. 1317b). Cf. T. 1509p. 266b (無我智), 252b (無我智慧).

260. Viewing reality 観 The Sk. verse has been turned round here. 'Whosoever sees (it with) non-individuality and non-self-identity cannot see or grasp (the Truth)' (Inada. 114). But cf. T. 1509 215c (Lamotte TGVs IIIp. 1298)

261. 'Belief' 信 here renders Sk. pramāṇa (means of knowing, verification) and the reference is to the Nyāya doctrine 'since it posits four pramāṇas while the Vaiśeṣikas only admit two, and the Sāṁkhya three' (R. 69). Robinson translates the four as verification by: 1. manifestation of the thing (Sk. pratyakṣa), 2. comparative knowledge (anumāna), 3. analogy (upamāna) and 4. the statements of the holy ones (śabda). (p. 69). The second pramāṇa is further discussed at 18/12; 24b7ff.

262. uttara-kura 鬱單由 or 鬱單越. The continent to the north of Mt Sumeru, greatest of the four continents of Buddhist cosmology, whose inhabitants enjoy a lifespan of a thousand years (Nak. 94b, S. 491a).

263. The sun. This argument of course rests on the assumption that the sun does in fact 'go' but that its motion is imperceptible.

264. See ch. 3
265. See ch.24, and n. 330.

266. Firm insight, a non-perjorative use of 聲定 with the connotation of 定 samādhi. Cf. n.269.

267. Cf. the discussion of this passage in Pye, Skilful Means, where 有我 / 無我 is rendered 'asserts the existence of self/asserts non-self' (p.113).

268. i.e. cessation does not mean extinction, but nirvāṇa.

269. samādhi 禪定 lit: meditation-concentration (Nak.855b-c). The samādhi of cessation, or cessation-samādhi 滅盡定 'resembles death except for a sense of warmth, life and consciousness. Classified as one of the citta-viprayukya-saṃskāra (one of the five categories into which the seventy-five dharmas, according to the Kośa, are classified). It is practised by non-returners (anägāmin) or higher, i.e. those in the third or fourth stage leading to arhatship. (JEBD 196b,66a,60b). Not listed in Nak. Cf. Kośa I,203-14 where a definition of nirodhasamāpatti is given, and alternative Abhidharmist interpretations are noted. It is, according to Lamotte 'un dharma qui arrête la pensée et les mentaux' (p.203).

270. Power of skilful means 方便力 occurs only once in the Treatise. It is discussed by Pye (Skilful Means, p.113) who identifies a parallelism of thought between the selection of possible teachings about self, non-self etc., by the Buddha and the idea of 'provisional' and 'absolute' truth expounded by Nāgārjuna in 24vv8-10. This passage (25a15-18) makes clear the Treatise's
view that the exercise of skilful means is founded upon compassion for living beings. Cf.18/12; 24c14ff.

271. The reference is to the four views or theses just discussed.

272. Follow others. The ref. is to 18v9.

273. Conceivable 可意知 i.e. knowable through thought.

274. Preceding producing cause 前生因 is 'a cause which is temporally prior, the effect arising subsequently' (Nak.845a). Inada has 'already originated cause' (p.121). 'Co-operative producing cause' 共生因 suggests a cause simultaneous with but different from the effect. This is refuted at 20/9; 27a2ff on the grounds that a particular cause is itself and cannot be anything else.

275. i.e. there is more to clay than its designation. It has 'substance' (cf. 20/9; 27a6ff.)

276. 'Seeing the effect' is tantamount to saying that the effect has begun to exist while the cause still persists, such that both are 'visible' to each other. Inada has 'projected and unprojected' which he describes as 'peculiar translations for दृष्टवा and adर्ष्टवा respectively'. दृष्टवा and adर्ष्टवा mean 'seen' and 'not seen'.

277. 'Empty' 空 here means vacuous, in other words not a cause at all. Cf. 'ineffectual fire' in 10v2,10/2. 'Empty' is used in this sense from 20v16 to 20v19. It means 'there is nothing which exists' (20/19).
278. See previous note.

279. Becoming and dissolution are analogous to 'arising and ceasing' but refer to existence as well as dharmas, if the two concepts can be meaningfully distinguished. (Cf. 21/11; 28c6 'dharma means an existent').

280. Or possibly 'if it did exist he (the Buddha/Nagarjuna) would surely say so' but this rendering seems unlikely.

281. Exhausted and ceased refers to 21v6, corresponding to the Sk. 21v7, and is defined in 21/6 as the constant flux. Sk. kṣayasya is rendered 'épuisement' (exhaustion) by Lamotte (Kosa I.285) but 'ceased' by Inada (p.127), 'destructible' by Streng. Candrakirti takes 'indestructible' to be the opposite of production; therefore, a thing which has the characteristic of exhaustion cannot be produced (May. Prasannapadā, p.62). The allusion 'dharmas are said to be ...' refers to either an Abhidharmist or sutra source, more probably the former.

282. See previous note.

283. Empty in the sense of vacuous (cf. n.277). Its opposite (non-empty) means 'having a fixed existence'; both are rejected here. cf. 24/19; 33b19

284. Disappear or reach refers to the cause disappearing before the effect is produced (= severance) or persisting into the effect (= permanence).
Accepts 識 is the skandha of receiving, so that 'accepting dharmas' means mentally grasping and being attached to them.

Impermanent ... without self. The four characteristics of existence according to the first of the four truths, the truth of suffering (cf. ch.24). Nak.526a gives them in the order 苦,空,無常,非我 (ref. Kośa, T.XXIX,137a). Some other variants of two, three and four marks are given in the GPWT (T.1509, 324a,650c etc.), and this formula appears frequently in the GPWT. (193a,195c and passim.) (T.Index,p.183, p.31). These four characteristics are to be distinguished from the four marks of active dharmas (arising, abiding, changing and ceasing) although they are predicated upon these characteristics of dharmas. See also n.348.

The three existences 三有 are defined at 21/20 as desire-existence, form-existence and non-form existence, in other words the 'three realms' 三界 of desire, etc. Cf. 17/9. The following verse (21v17) analyses these states of existence in a temporal series, i.e. in terms of the three periods of time 三世, anticipating 21v20.

i.e. the first existence in any series; the previous existence. This is explained at 21/17.

See n.287.

Past, present and future. Cf.7/18.

Thus-Come 如來 or Thus-Come One, a translation (rather than transliteration) of Tathāgata, the Buddha. The chapter is
concerned with what kind of 'existence' such a being has, whether in the past, present or future, a legacy of the 'unanswered' questions' about the nature of nirvāṇa.

292. 'Honoured in all the worlds' is an extended (perhaps earlier) form of 世界尊 'world-honoured (one)', Sk. bhagavat.

293. Right and perfect knowledge 正遍智 = Sk. samyak-sambuddha. A later tradition ascribes ten epithets 十號 to the Buddha (cf. the 十號經 T.782, trans. by 大息災 between 980-1000 AD) (Hobgögrin pp.44,51, Nak.653a-b, JEBD 147b). The ten include 如來 and 正遍智 but not 法王 or 一切智 (see next note).

294. 法王 an epithet of the Buddha not included in the 十號 (see n. 293)

295. Grasping 取 is the ninth of the 十二因縁 and here equivalent to 受 receiving (see 22/1) as representative of the five skandhas. Cf. 4/0

296. 'By the combination'. The Chinese is less specific: lit: 'five-skandhas - combine - exists - thus-come'.

297. On account of another.. The question at 22/1;30a3 about the combination of the five skandhas is answered in the first two lines of this verse, and subsequently commented on in 22/2, but the 'question' to which lines 3 and 4 of 22v2 are the answer is not posed until after the verse, in 22/2;30a8.

298. If the Tathāgata needs to receive the five skandhas in order to
be the Tathāgata, then he does not exist until he receives them, and, if he does not exist, he cannot receive anything. See 22/9.

299. Empty here means having no own-nature 自性 in the śunyavādin sense, rather than vacuous, as at 20v16, etc.

300. These four views depending on the past, and those depending on the future may be understood in various ways, but in the context of this discussion about the Tathāgata they are to be understood to refer to the Buddha's 'unanswered questions' about whether or not the Tathāgata exists after death (see 22v14 where this is made explicit). Here the Treatise extends the question to whether the Tathagata existed in the past (i.e. before coming into the world). Cf. 22v13 about whether the Tathāgata exists in the present. The Treatise is interested in living beings, not material processes (cf. 27/24, and n442)

301. 'Does not exist' is a play on words and concepts, since the worldly man who denies the existence of Buddhas in principle is denying their existence in a different sense from one who accepts that there are Buddhas but holds that the Buddha is not 'existent' after his decease in the ordinary sense of the world.

302. See n.366, to 24v40. Inverting the eye of insight is like inverting a cup - the result is outflows. Cf. 249, n.112.

303. Cf. 25v19-21 on the relation between nirvāṇa and the world, and these four views.

304. Perverted views 眠倒 lit: perversions (cf. n.302 where the imagery
is also of 'turning upside down'). Sk. is viparyāsa and it has the meaning of erroneous or delusory perception, arising (cf. 23/1) from conceptual discriminations (see Ramanan 352a-353a), Sk. samkalpa 'false representation (of what is not)' (Conze. Index p. 392). In this chapter the conceptual discrimination or dividing is into two categories of pure and impure on the basis of which certain dharmas are accepted and grasped, others rejected and denied; in other words they become the objects of lust, anger, and delusion, the 'three poisons' (23/1). Cf. 23v12: 'if there is no purity how can there be lust? If there is no impurity how can there be anger?' In 23v7 perverted views are said to arise from the six sense-avenues 六入 and in 23/12 they are specified as the four views of permanence, etc. discussed in Ch. 22. Cf. 27/31.

305. The phrasing of this verse is questionable. Streng (from the Sk.) has 'It is said that desire, hate and delusion are derived from mental fabrication, because they come into existence presupposing errors as to what is salutary and unsalutary' (p. 210). Inada reads: 'Covetousness, enmity and delusion are said to arise from ideation... Indeed they come about in virtue of the perverse relational play of purity and impurity' (p. 137). Sprung: 'Desire, aversion and illusion are born of volitive thought and... arise in dependence on the 'good', the 'bad' and 'misbelief' (p. 207). May agrees with Inada for the first half, then 'en effet, elles viennent a l'existence en raison du bon, du mauvais, et des méprises' (p. 179). Hatani (p. 205) and Ui (p. 372) (from the Treatise) both have 'From conceptual distinctions, lust, anger and delusion arise. They are perverted views of purity and impurity (浄不浄顛倒). They arise entirely from
conditions'. In neither the Sk. nor the Chinese nor in any of these translations is the precise relationship between the three terms 1. conceptual discrimination, 2. the three poisons, and 3. perverted conceptions of purity and impurity, made clear. Perhaps this is why Kumārajīva adds (Whatever the causal process) 'all are produced from conditions'. The commentary (23/1) suggests that lust, anger and delusion arise because of conceptual discrimination which consists in perverted ideas of purity/impurity, and 23v2 that the perverted views of purity/impurity produce the three poisons. Cf. 25/9 for a discussion of the relationship between the perverted views, the five skandhas and nirvāṇa.

306. Lust, anger and delusion, the 'three poisons'. See 23v2.

307. See previous note.

308. The defilements. (or; the afflictions) See note 257. They are summarised here as the 'three poisons'. See 17/33 for the various lists of defilements referred to in the Treatise.

309. Body-as-self The (false) view that the body contains or is itself a substantive self; that it exists. (Nak. 771b-c)

310. Form... dharmas i.e. the sense faculties, their realms and objects. Cf. Ch.3 and note. Perverted views are said to arise because of these (23v7), but cf. also 23v1.

311. Gandharva-city; see 7v35,7/35.
312. 'Could one speak of impurity; this presupposes that in order for there to be distinction there must be one who distinguishes, cf. 27v30ff.

313. The four perverted views 四顛倒 are the opposites of the four characteristics of things according to the truth of suffering (see n.286). They are that things are permanent, blissful, possessed of self我and pure淨. (So Nak.528a-b, T.1509 p.560c), but the 'four marks' in the Treatise are impermanence, suffering, emptiness and non-self (21/14). The four perverted views are however listed at 23/20 as views of permanence, self, bliss and purity.

314. 諏法性空中。The makes it clear that this is not the concept of法性(dharmatā, a synonym for śūnyatā, prajñā, bhūtakoti, bhuddatā, etc. Cf.R.108, Murti.5) which is Candrakīrti's understanding of the term, and Kumārajīva's. Cf. Hui-yüan's question: 'When the sutras talk about dharma-nature then they say that whether there is a Buddha or is not a Buddha, the nature abides in suchness' (T.856p.122a, trans. in R.184). Cf.23/14; 31c17-18 below.

315. Clings著 is translated also as attachment. (e.g. 24v23).

316. This passage introduces the idea that in order for views to exist there must be a viewer, and hence that no contradictions exist except those which are a result of 悟想分別conceptual discriminations. See 23/0 above.

317. See n.315.

318. The meaning of所用著法 is unclear since the conventional triad
of doer, doing and deed has already encompassed the whole process of grasping. The commentary (23/15) adds nothing to the meaning. Sk. has (Inada, 140) 'That which depends on perceiving', (Streng. 211) 'That by which a notion is formed'.

319. Ref. is to Ch. 22.

320. If I understand this verse correctly, it is saying that even the view that everything is permanent, if held without clinging, is not incorrect (perverted). (In fact, however, non-clinging means no 'views' as such, at all).

321. And so on.. See 23v1

322. Properly 善 lit: skilfully, well.

323. Because all the ways in which perverted views could be produced (from self, other, etc.) have been refuted in 23v17-18, the Treatise now refutes the notion of non-produced (i.e. non-arising 不生) perverted views, on the implicit standard premise that all dharmas, even the non-outflowing dharmas (see 17/19; 22c17ff, 10/16; 16a1ff) have the characteristics of arising, abiding and ceasing. See ch. 7 on the 三相 three marks, and cf. 24/9; 32c23ff 'to say that 'dharmas are non-arising' is the truth of the ultimate meaning and that the other conventional truth is not necessary, is not correct'.

324. see n. 313

325. Real and existent natures. 實 = 定 Cf. n.22
326. See n. 286.

327. And so forth: i.e. the remaining ten causal links. See 23/22

328. see n.22

329. Predispositions and actions. There is some ambivalence in the Treatise about the difference between 'actions' (but more usually predispositions) and 'actions, karma' of which there are three kinds, those of body, speech and mind (but see n.229). Cf.26/9;36a9ff. I have translated 'predispositions' here to conform to its use in the verse (and from the Sk. samskāra). The 'three kinds of predispositions' is very rare; Nak.460a refers back to the Treatise 26v1 which is where the elision of meaning between 行 and 积 occurs most markedly in the Treatise, (cf.26/1). He suggests also good, 捕 bad 罪, and non-moving 無動 predispositions, applicable only to the realms of form and non-form. Cf.24/27;34a1 where 行 refers to 'practising, faring' (or as Conze would say, 'coursing'), in the context of implementation of the four truths Cf.n.401.

330. The four Truths taught by the Buddha soon after his enlightenment are common to the whole Buddhist tradition, and expounded in numerous canonical works, e.g. Lotus Sutra Ch.3 (Hurvitz.74-5) Refs. to the Pali sources are given in Ramanan 344a. They are the truths that 1. all existence is suffering, 2. there is a cause of suffering (in Kumārajīva's works this is 'accumulation', i.e. the accumulation of karma, etc., 3. there is a cessation of suffering (i.e. nirvāṇa) and 4.
there is a Way to the cessation of suffering which is, in the traditional formulation the 'noble eightfold path' 八正道 (JEBD.101b,Nak.1109b), the first element of which is right view 正見, which is to say true perception of the 四諦 four truths. The concept of a 'path' assumes the possibility of directed change and progress, hence the pivotal role of a theory of causality (cf. Ramanan pp.47-8) which is the focus of the Treatise's interest in the four truths. Cf. the discussion of the path as a cause-and-effect series in 24/5. 'The four truths involve cause and effect'.

331. the four śramaṇa-fruits. śramaṇa 沙門 is a generic term for a Buddhist monk; the term is transliterated rather than translated by Kumārajīva. The four fruits, 'fruits of the Way' (24v3) are attained by putting into practice the four truths (cf. 24/5; 32b27ff); perceiving suffering, cutting-off accumulation, realising cessation and cultivating the Way. (Cf.24v2). They are the states of 'stream-winner (Sk. srotāpanna), 'once-returner (sakṛdāgāmin) non-returner (anāgāmin) and (enlightened) worthy (arhat), which are further subdivided (in 24v3) into those who have attained these fruits and those who are aspiring to them. Those who have attained and those who yet aspire to the four fruits are termed 'the eight types of holy person' 八賢聖 in 24v4. Cf. Nak.四向四果 512c-d). Cf.Lotus Sutra ch.18 (Hurvitz p.259). Kośa (Lamotte Vol I, p.134-6) has a detailed account of the aspiration to and achievement of the four fruits. Cf.Treatise 1/5.

332. see n. 331
333. four fruits of the Way: see n. 331

334. attains or aspires see n. 331

335. see n. 331

336. Saṅgha-Jewel. The 'Three Jewels' are Buddha, Dharma and Saṅgha, the three essentials of the Buddhist path.

337. Dharma meant in the sense of 事业 (affairs) but it carries also the sense of duty (hence: dharma)

338. cannot understand; 不能知 lit. 'lack the capacity to know' cf 24/7

339. cf. 25a15(n) and the discussion of the audience at whom the treatise is directed in 1/0,1c5ff. According to the treatise, the two truths constitute two realities (cf.24/8), because the ontological realm is an epistemological misconstruction, and is composed of 'false and illusory dharmas', Cf. Pye's discussion of these verses in 'Skilful Means' pp.124-6.

340. Pye, in his discussion of 24v11,12 points out that 'nevertheless the verses are based on the premise that he did proclaim it' (the dharma) (Skilful Means p.125). The Treatise preserves the ambiguity of the stanzas in not overtly identifying 'The Dharma' with 'the teaching of emptiness'. As we have already seen (1/0, 1c1ff) the Prajñāpāramitā sutras are invoked as canonical evidence for the Buddhas own teaching of emptiness, but the treatise itself says in this connection (1/0) that the Buddha first taught the Śrāvaka-dharma (the twelve causal links etc.) and then to those who were
capable (who had the 'great mind') he taught the Mahāyāna Dharma of utter emptiness. The treatise addresses itself to those who, having heard the Mahāyāna Dharma, conceive doubts and views about emptiness (1/0,1c1ff) and in this sense one can say that it presupposes a Buddha-Dharma which consists in the teaching of emptiness; on the other hand the Dharma, which as all the legends testify, the Buddha was reluctant to teach, refers equally clearly to the Śrāvaka-dharma, and it may be that Nāgārjuna's verse refers merely to this Dharma, and not to a Mahāyāna Dharma of emptiness.

A.K. Warder in 'Is Nāgārjuna a Mahāyānist?' argues for the view that Nāgārjuna's verses were written without reference to any conception of a Mahāyāna Dharma. 'The M.K. nowhere mentions Mahāyāna nor does it appear to make reference to any Mahāyāna sutra (canonical text), either by name or by quoting. On the other hand, it does refer, in both these ways, to sūtras found in the Tripitaka as accepted by the early schools' (p.79) Wayman, in his scathing review of this paper points out evidence drawn from other works attributed to Nāgārjuna which places him in a Mahāyānist context, but he does not refute Warder's argument on the basis of the M.K. alone. The Treatise, of course, which is to all intents and purposes a 5th century Chinese work, presupposes the truth of the Mahāyāna. 'For him (Kumārajīva) Mādhyamika was simply Mahāyāna in śāstra form' (R.95). V.12 presupposes that a Dharma was taught, but does not itself specify which Dharma.

341. 'This emptiness is itself empty'. This phrase repeated at 24/19 (see below), echoes 22v11,22/11 that emptiness is a 'conventional name' taught only to refute its opposites. Cf. the opponent's charge 13/8, its commentary (18c11ff), and Nāgārjuna's reply 13v9: 'The Great Sage speaks of the emptiness of dhammas/in order to wean
us from all views. If you then reinstate a view of 'emptiness'/
You cannot be taught by all the Buddhas'. (Cf. Ram. 342b, 359a
(n. 2)). Hachiriki, Hiroki 八力廣喜 in 'Chüron ni okeru
mujishō to mu' 中論における無自性と無 ('No-self-nature and
nothingness in the Chung-lun') discusses the passage in relation
to the concepts of own being and dependent origination and
suggests that the phrase 'emptiness is itself empty' can be
interpreted "as referring to the idea of 'making emptiness empty'
in the sense of a remedy for the erroneous tendency to interpret
it as nothingness" (p. 722), though his interpretation draws on a
variety of Mādhyamika sources including Candrakīrti. The
treatise's intention in this phrase is, I believe, made clear at
13v9, 13/9. The phrase occurs in T1509 at 314b, 327a, 581b (T. index
p. 34).

342. This is a curious example of 無 (nothingness, nonexistence) being
used for Sk. सून्य, emptiness (the commentary glosses 無 as 空
(emptiness) (but cf. 空: non-existent at 24/19, 33b19)). The reading
is common to the Korean text and to all ms. used for the Taishō
text. The verse became important as a doctrinal starting point
for the later Tendai doctrine of the 'three truths' 三諦 and
consequently came to be interpreted in a variety of ways. Since
the treatise talks elsewhere of two truths and not three, there
seems no reason to follow the Tendai interpretation here and make
空/equivalent to both 空 and 假; rather, the middle path is the
path of the two truths employed by the Buddhas who exemplify it.
Cf. 24v8, ff.

343. Conventional names 假名 cf. 24c12ff, 18v6, 18a10, 13a14 etc.
344. What arises causally is empty, but just as no particular interpretation of causality is tenable, so no particular view of emptiness is tenable either. Cf. 27, 13v9ff.

345. see n. 341

346. Vacuous 空 lit: empty. see n. 277

347. i.e. in 24/0-24/6.

348. Suffering and impermanence are two of the four characteristics of existence listed at 21/14, now considered as two aspects of one characteristic. The first of the four holy truths, that of suffering, is referred to here. See n. 286

349. 集 = accumulation of karma, second of the four holy truths. 'Principle' 義 in the same sentence is 'idea', 'meaning', cf. 24v7

350. Cessation 滅 is the third holy truth, also translated 'extinction'.

351. This verse and 24v25 deal with the fourth holy truth of the way to the extinction of suffering.

352. 24v26 and 24v27 deal with the implementation of the four truths. Cf. 24v2.

353. not occur 不然 lit: not so, not thus.

354. Four fruits 四果 see n. 331

355. Cf. 24v4
356. Cf. 24v5

357. Putting into practice 行, lit: 'coursing in' with the connotation of religious practice.

358. Tao 道 stands for bodhi (enlightenment) in Kumārajīva's writings. Here it is partly redundant since bodhi is also transliterated 菩提 in anuttara-samyak-sambodhi, lit: 'unexcelled perfect enlightenment'. Bodhi and Buddhas are inseparable, see 24v31. Tao is used in the reduced sense of 'path' in conjunction with bodhi in 24v32.

359. No-one, in the sense of a doer who is separate from the deed done.

360. The translation of the first half of the verse is uncertain. It may be read either (following Hatani) 'if you deny the causes and conditions/causality and the meaning of emptiness, of dharmas...' or, (following Ui), as an ambiguous 'If you deny the meaning of the emptiness of causality of dharmas...'. My translation tries to preserve both meanings, since the commentary 24/36 does not clarify the relationship between 因緣法 and 第一空義 (both Hatani and Ui evade the problem there by reproducing 梵... without anymore syntactical information, Hatani p.222, Ui p.387). The Sk. verse is also ambivalent. Inada has 'The śūnyatā of relational origination' (p.152). 24v18 presents a similar problem with the relationship between 空 and 假.

361. 無作而有作 i.e. there will be a fixed dharma of 'doing' even
when nothing is being done. Cf. 24/37.

362. Strictly speaking, or perhaps in the sense of 23v16 'incorrectly speaking', the Buddhist version of karma does not require a 'doer' in the sense of a self. The notion of actions, rewards, retributions and reception without a doer here assumes that these would be disparate entities, which is incorrect because it negates Buddhist morality based on causal processes. Any explanation of how these elements might be associated, especially under the aegis of a separate 'doer' would of course be equally untenable.

363. Cf. the three marks (ch.7) of 生,住 and 滅 to which a fourth, decay, now appears to be added. It is a synonym for 滅, cessation and occurs in 27v23, 27v24 with that meaning. But 坏 is not a fourth mark, and nor is 住 'abiding' in this context. It is included here only to emphasise the permanency of non-arising, non-ceasing dharmas (as opposed to their non-existence).

364. Characteristics 相 here is equivalent to 性 'natures'. On the relationship between characteristic and nature according to the GPWT see Ramanan, p.77.

365. See n.257

366. 'Then you can perceive the Buddha' (glossed as 'the Buddha's Dharmakāya' in 24/40) is not found in the Sk. (or Tibetan) verse which reads: 'He who perceives dependent co-origination/Also understands sorrow, origination and destruction, as well as the path (of release)' (Streng,215). The dharmakāya is mentioned also at 22/15 (only in the commentary) but is a favourite theme
of the GPWT (see T. Index p.166) as is 'seeing the Buddha' (T. 
Index p. 38.) Ramanan (p.313) quotes; 'when one's heart is pure 
then does one see the Buddha; when one's heart is dirty then one 
is not able to see him' (T.1509p.126b). 'The Buddha knows the 
time when one's faculties have matured (Cf. Treatise 22/13) and 
then he renders His help' (p.126c). The elements that 
constitute the dharmakāya, 'being undefiled are truly no 
occation for clinging; even these are not anything substantial; 
these are also conditionally originated and impermanent...
(Ramanan 314). At 22/15 one whose eye of insight is inverted is 
unable to see the Dharma-Body of the Buddha.

367. See n. 366

368. Nirvāṇa in the Treatise is equivalent to cessation (of views, of 
the defilements, of conceptual discriminations), 'cutting off the 
afflictions and extinction of the five skandhas' (25/1) and 
liberation 25v11. Nirvāṇa may be 'without residue' (18/12;24cff) 
when I and mine, the afflictions inner and outer and reception 
have ceased, along with the innumerable future bodies, or 'with 
residue' (18/12;24c5ff) when vain thoughts have ceased and one 
has attained to utter emptiness and the true character of dharmas. 
Its synonyms are calm extinction 灵伏, anuttara-samyak-sambodhi, 
and (in a different sense, cf. this chapter) samsara 生死.

Cf. Nak. 1076b-c and Treatise 8v6,9/12,16v10ff,17/20,18v7,21v11 etc. 
As neither arising nor ceasing (18/12;25a5ff) it is an 'inactive' 
dhrama, which is how the Abhidharmists (e.g. the Vātsiputriyas 
mentioned at 10/16) conceived of it, (cf. Kosā I.7,n.2 and the 
Abhidharmist definition of nirvāṇa at Kośa IV.205,n.5) but 
according to the Treatise there are no inactive dharmas, since
there are no active ones in relation to which inactive ones exist. 
Cf. 7v34ff, 25v5.

369. Cf. the argument in 24v25

370. Cf. 24/19

371. Cf. Kosā IV.205 'comment peut-on 'faire'le Nirvāna... De même que l'on dit: 'Fais l'espace! Fais tomber la maison!'

372. Cf. 18/12; 24c1ff.

373. Cf. s.105a 'emancipated from desire'. S. refers to Lotus Sutra Ch.25 in which Kuan-yin (Avalokiteśvara) does not accept an offering from the Buddha. 'This attitude is attributed to his 不受 samadhi...' which, as 不受三昧 is referred to in GPWT, T.1509p.367b, etc. (T. Index p.153). The discussion there is couched in the language of the Prajñāpāramitā. Nak. gives 不受 = 不取 and refers to the Treatise 25v8 which has 不受. (1162b-c).

374. Old age and death represent the 十二因缘 in general (see n.16) as well as the characteristics of arising and ceasing common to all dharmas, and old age and death in the bodily sense.

375. Cf. 7v34ff. and n. 368.

376. Cf. n. 373.

377. 'Because we receive causes and conditions'. The Sk. verse is aphoristic, as evidenced by the variety of renderings by Streng
(p. 216), Inada (p. 156), Sprung (p. 255) and Stcherbatsky (p. 195).
The commentary suggests that it is not causes and conditions which
are the object of reception so much as reception which is the
cause and condition of wandering in samsara, and this is what the
verse might be expected to say as well. Kumārajīva clearly takes
諸因縁 to be the object of 爭 (so too Inada p. 228). Uī differs
but not, I think very convincingly: 爭と諸の因縁との故に...
'because of receiving, and causes and conditions...' (p. 392).

378. Cf. Ch. 23. 'Sūtras' are not mentioned in the Sk.

379. The three existences 三世 are the three realms三世 of desire,
form and no-form. See n. 117.

380. Cf. Ch. 22

381. Cf. the dialogue between Sāriputta and Yamaka referred to by
Murti p. 53 on the nature of the Tathāgata.

382. This comment subtly anticipates 27/30 'by whom would such views
be generated?' by stating that only the one who does not
discriminate nirvāṇa as existent, nonexistent, etc., attains it.

383. Cf. 25/21, 16/10, both references to the Prajñāpāramitā sūtras.

384. i.e. in 4vff, 8/12, 13/2 etc.

385. i.e. because of the concept of nirvāṇa as being either existent
or nonexistent.
That is, the future of the Tathāgata after his death.

i.e. whether past dharmas (or selves, or Tathāgata) persist into the present, and hence are 'permanent'.

Cf. Ch. 11 on the 本際

Status 等 or: level, category, kind, class. Cf. also n. 383

Inconceivable 不可得 lit: tenable, but in English views are tenable, not dharmas.

Neither the Sk. nor Chinese verse makes clear the subject of 'extinguish(es?) all futile thoughts'. (Cf. Inada, p. 159, Streng, p. 217) 'The cessation of accepting everything (as real) is a salutary (śiva) cessation of phenomenal development (prapañca)...' Stcherbatsky has 'Our bliss consists in the cessation of all thoughts, In the quiescence of plurality...' (p. 208). Hatani takes refuge once more in the -te form; 諸法は不可得にして一切の戸論を滅す。 (p. 232), as does Ui (p. 396). Since the inconceivability of dharmas does not extinguish futile thoughts automatically, I have translated the verse as an instruction or exhortation, in line with the rhetorical style of 25/24.

See n. 198. Cf. 13/9, 27/31

The Way of calm serenity 安隷道 see n. 107. Cf. 15/6

Ch. 1
395. This is why we say...we' is not specified in the text, but this statement repeats an earlier one in the commentary (at 25/24;26b11) rather than recapitulating 25v24, q.v.

396. See n.16. This chapter is a straightforward, traditional account of dependent origination. Inada identifies the influence of 'Hinayânistic' teachings and finds śūnyatā 'hinted at' in the last two verses. In fact neither the Treatise nor the Sk. kārikā mention Hinayâna (though the Treatise at 26/0 does mention 'the ultimate meaning' and its relation with the śrāvaka-Dharma). Mahayâna and Hinayâna are not terms which, as the Treatise might say, are reciprocally dependent. I agree with Rawlinson: 'I hesitate to use the term 'Hinayâna' because a) it's impolite, b) we have no hard evidence that the Hinayâna preceded the Mahâyâna - more likely the activities of what we now call the Mahâyâna served to define both yânas'. (Lancaster, Ed. Prajñâpâramitâ and Related Systems, p.26n.67). In the context of the Treatise as a whole this account of causality does serve to emphasise that emptiness and dependent origination are compatible.

397. Mahâyâna is here transliterated摩訶衍. Elsewhere in the Treatise it is invariably 大乘 'Great Vehicle' which I have translated as Mahâyâna because Mahâyâna is by now an English term meaning 'Great Vehicle'.

398. See n. 17

399. See n. 26

400. delusion here stands for the three poisons, see ch. 306.
401. 'Actions' and 'predispositions' (see Ch. 13) are perhaps confused here, cf. 23/22 and the commentary at 26/9. The Sk. verse introduces both predispositions and actions in 26v1, and I have followed suit, but it is impossible to square the account in 26v1 and 26v2 with the gloss in the commentary (26/9) since there is no formula of the '三行' meaning 'three predispositions' (Cf. n.329).

402. These are the hells, hungry spirits, animals, asuras, human birth and heavens. (JEBD 238) Cf.13/2; 16a5ff,16/1. From here 26v2-26v9 runs through the remaining causal links.

403. See n.24

404. See Ch. 14

405. 鬆, contact of, e.g. eye with object of vision, ear with sound, etc. up to mind with dharmas. (Nak.1456c).

406. i.e. of pleasure, pain, and neither pleasure nor pain.

407. Another name for the afflictions; they are given as 1.欲取 desire (for forms, sounds, etc.) 2.見取 views, 3.戒禁取 (non-Buddhist) rituals and observances and 4.我說取 assertion of self (Nak.514d, JEBD 289a).

408. 大苦陰 is not listed as a formula in Nak., or found in the GPWT. The Sk. translates as 'That single mass of sorrow' (Streng.218) or 'This simple suffering attached to the Skandhas' (Inada.163). Perhaps a scribe misheard 大 for 但 which is included with 大 at although this is rather unlikely.
26/9; 36c16, though it could be used there to fill the line.

409. See n. 401

410. *Here 三界 means the *三界* of desire, form and no-form, but also the temporal succession of these existences in the *三世* of past, present and future. See 21/20.

411. See n. 408.

412. *Abhidharma-sūtra.* Sūtra is transliterated 修多羅 here, elsewhere it is 經. This is probably a reference to the *Abhidharma-jāna-prasthāna-śāstra,* T1543 also known as the 阿毘曼經八犍度論 (T. mokuroku p. 4, cf. R. 72). It was composed by Kātyāyana (of n. 207) (not the Buddha's disciple of the same name mentioned at 15v7), and translated into Chinese by Chu Po-nien who worked in Ch'ang-an from 365AD. (Höb6girin, Fasc. Annexe, pp. 91,140). It was therefore known to Kumārajīva and his contemporaries in Chinese. 'the meaning of' (義) refers to the relationships between the twelve elements, etc., not, presumably, to the ways in which causal relationships are there hypostatised.

413. *Wrong views* 邪見 lit: harmful views, vicious, depraved or heterodox views. 'Heterodox' is probably too formal in this context since 'all views' are ultimately rejected, including Buddhist ones. Cf. LS31b20, Hurvitz pp. 106-7, the parable of the rain cloud. The Buddha teaches those of right views 正見 and of wrong views 邪見. 'Wrong views' in fact includes 'right views' (27/29) Cf. also 22v13 where false views are said to be of two kinds, and 27/31 where all views are said to be the five or
sixty-two views rejected by the Buddha. (Nak.611b-d)

414. Cf. the similar introductory passage at 26/0.

415. This verse and the next spell out the 'four views depending on the past' dealt with at 22v12, 27v3ff, and the 'four views depending on the future' analysed at 25v17, 27v21ff. These views refer to the nature of the enlightened one.

416. This is the burden of the whole argument about the indivisibility of doer, means of doing, action and deed done, etc. Cf. Ch.9 on the substrate.

417. Cf. the discussion at 13/2, esp. 17c10ff.

418. The following argument shows that this process cannot in fact take place since if 'man' and 'god' are defined as such, they cannot be interchangeable.

419. A candala is a member of the lowest caste whose members are fishermen, jailers, slaughterers, etc. (JEBD 263a). They are mentioned in the Lotus Sutra (Hurvitz pp.209-10) as amongst those whom a bodhisattva does not approach with familiarity - along with Brahmans.

420. Which is self-contradictory, because a candala is a candala.

421. Sravasti is one of the two cities of Uttara-Kosala at the time of the Buddha. JEBD 266b, 191a.
Though no particular Devadatta is intended here, using the name of the Buddha's infamous cousin lends drama to the analogy. He became the Buddha Devaraja. (Hurvitz pp. 196-7). Interestingly enough the Buddha in the Lotus Sutra insists that the relationship between such former and later selves is one of identity;

'Now what do you suppose, O mendicant monks? Was the king at that time and on that occasion anyone else? Such a view is not to be taken! For what reason is that? I was the king at that time and on that occasion...(etc.)'. But this passage is not found in Kumārajīva's Chinese translation. (Hurvitz p. 378, n. 3).

Rājagṛha is the capital of Magadha, where the Buddha preached the Lotus Sutra etc., LS9a4.

i.e. the 六道 of 13/2; 16a5ff. n. 402.

Equanimity is perhaps a play on words since 家 is both 'level', 'equal' and an indicator for a list of terms. Perhaps 'disturbance and the rest' would better convey the sense.

不豫出家人 lit. without first having left the household'.

does not occur in T. 1509 but several synonyms do occur such as 出家沙門 (77b) and 出家菩薩 85a, 111a, 271b, 623b, etc.

The point of this statement is unclear and it seems superfluous, or perhaps misplaced from the discussion of body and self preceding the analogy. The translation follows Ui (p. 402).

creative power 作力 of 15/0. I have used 'creative' here for 作 only to distinguish the meaning from 有為 'active' (conditioned).
thinker (念者) this term is introduced in a non-technical fashion as equivalent to 'knower' (cf. 27/8; 37b23), i.e. the doer as a conscious being. Cf. 'power of thought, not power of self' (27/8; 37c22).

'What you said before about the seer being the self': since the opponent has not stated that the seer is the self this must be a reference to 27/8; 37b21ff, 'Surely the knower is the self'? without a self; i.e. a barren woman's child (a non-existent entity) could be a 'doer' since being a doer would not involve actually 'doing' anything (such as seeing, etc.)

Evil error of the perverted view; strong language perhaps because it is a Buddhist view (albeit a misconception) which might place a Chinese son above his father in the present life by identifying him as a returned grandfather. Cf. the reference to 'loss of any family structure with no fathers and no sons' at 13/3; 17b15ff.

Grape juice or possibly 'grape or peach juice', if peach vinegar exists.

The view that skandhas function intermittently and are continuous only in this sense seems wholly Abhidharmist and not worthy of the Treatise. Do they cease to function before starting to function again? If so, this is severance etc. The same criticism applies to the grape juice/wine/vinegar example.

'You earlier said', a ref. to 27v7 and the discussion at 27/8; 37b1ff.

'Reach it', i.e. it should have some function in the process of
seeing, etc.

437. Definite principles 因義 Because they are the Buddha-word?

438. operate 作 do, act, become.

439. Cf. ch.2 where the Treatise identifies coming and going with movement in samsåra.

440. prajñä-insight: 智慧 is equivalent in other texts to Sk. prajñā (Nak.950b-c). Cf. the references to the Prajñāpāramitā sūtras, n.19.

441. Cf. 21v17

442. 'The final body' clarifies the relationship between this discussion and the existence or nonexistence of the enlightened one after death (cf. 1/5 on the last thoughts of arhats). 'The world' means living beings rather than the physical world (see following).

443. The Four Hundred Contemplations is the original of what is now known as the 'Hundred Treatise' 百論 T.1509. In Sk. it consisted of 400 stanzas in 16 chapters (preserved in Tibetan). As an abbreviated version with a commentary on Āryadeva's stanzas by 'Vasu', it was translated into Chinese twice by Kumārajīva and has been translated into English by Tucci (Pre-Dīnāga Buddhist Texts on Logic). See Murti.93, R.33,34). Kumārajīva was particularly fond of this text (perhaps because it was the only Mādhyamika treatise he possessed until the arrival of Vimalākṣa - see 'The Authorship of the Chung-lun' in this thesis).
This verse is a quotation from the 'Four Hundred Contemplations' and as such is not numbered amongst Nāgārjuna's verses. It does not occur in the Sk. kārikā but is quoted in the Tibetan commentary Akutobhayā according to Hatani (p.246n.24). It is not quoted (and the boundedness or otherwise of the world is not dealt with) in those sections translated into Chinese as the Hundred Treatise 百論 (see previous note).

This verse identifies 'views' not as particular views but as the generation of views. Cf.23v1.

right views cf.n. 413

Gautama is transliterated here, conforming with the Sk. 'Great Sage and Master' is added.

Cf.1v2 The five views are listed by Nak. as:
1. 有身見 (the false view that the self is a substantial reality)
2. 辯執見 (the false view of holding to extremes of nihilism or eternalism)
3. 邪見 false views
4. 見取見 attachment to heresies
5. 戒禁取見 attachment to heretical observances (Nak.358d-9a, JEBD 83b)

The Kośa mentions five and sixty two drṣṭis (v.15,ix.265). The five are briefly explained as 'the view of I and mine, the view of eternity and severance, the view of negation, the view which takes as high what is low, that which takes as cause and path that which is not cause and path; (K,IV.15) The five are then discussed. (also by Lamotte p.15nnlff). See 13/9, and n.198 for the 62 views.
Chinese Text of the Middle Treatise
(with Seng-ju'i's Preface).

Korean Edition
減以減果故如減如是修習觀十

二日縞生滅故果故是事當是事減故

乃至生亦是故果故是事當是事減故

減法果故異經減是十一日縞生滅

義如何統聚諸多羅中謂說

聞偈復驚聞佛子言曰：

為作背發言也。若作未世

有邊等見皆作未世

我以過去世為作為願為為非

於未來世為作為願為為非

有非作非願為名故等偽皆

為未世異等諸聖見佛所

為背子等事 SUPPORT 0
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注：
- 这是一个示例表格，用于展示数据的比较。
- 表格中的数字仅供参考。
无法自然阅读该文档。
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中文文本内容
### List of Abbreviations

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