

The Validity of a Robinsonian Interpretation of  
the Nāgārjuna's Logics of *Catuṣkoṭi* :  
Comparing *Prasaṅga* with *Hegel's Dialectics*\*

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**ABSTRACT** [Keywords: *catuṣkoṭi*(*terallemma*), the logics of *catuṣkoṭi*, Hegelian dialectics, *prasaṅga*(negative logic), perspectives, expedient]

Kajiyama Yuich understands Nāgārjuna's logics of *catuṣkoṭi* in terms of Hegelian Dialectics, while interpreting the negation formula of 4th *koṭi* in *tetralemma* as the religious truth of Madhyamika, which cannot be negated as an ultimate truth. And Richard Robinson also posits this proposition as dissolving the entire *dṛṣṭi*.

Examining these approaches, this thesis argues against the dialectical interpretation of *catuṣkoṭi* with reference to its logical structure. For this, reference will also be made to Piṅgala and Candrakīrti's commentary comparing them to Robinson's and Kajiyama's. Here, focus will be put on the aspect of 'perspectives.'

Upon further examination, it was determined that a Hegelian dialectical approach is not plausible for interpreting Nāgārjuna's logic, which is purely negative and skeptical in its character. And through reformulating the structure of *catuṣkoṭi* in terms of *prasaṅga*, this paper compares it with a dialectical formula to more clearly evaluate

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the implication of negative logic for *catuṣkoṭi*.

Thereby, it was seen that Nāgārjuna has neither equated propositions on the basis of identity, nor postulated any hierarchy through classifying the grade of these *koṭis*. Accordingly, on the strength of various perspectives, any proposition in the *catuṣkoṭi* can be understood with logical clarity, without positing any metaphysical or dialectical interpretation.

Further, the possible reconstruction of Nāgārjuna's understanding of the *tetralemma* supports a semantic approach to truth, while revealing the absurdity of perceiving identity or causal relations as possessing intrinsic substance.

## I. Foreword

In my previous paper on the “Validity of Robinsonian<sup>1)</sup> critique of *catuṣkoṭi*” which was presented in *Vol. 44*, an attempt was made to show that Robinson and Kajiyama's charge of violation of the rule of classical formal logic is not plausible. Yet, this time, my argument goes further by claiming that it is not plausible to interpret Nāgārjunian interpretation of *catuṣkoṭi*<sup>2)</sup> as

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- 1) Just like my previous paper in *Vol. 44*, the term ‘Robinsonian’ is used in the sense that Kajiyama Yuich shares a lot of similarities with Richard Robinson on his evaluation of Nāgārjuna's logic in the appropriate context. And the term ‘Nāgārjunian’ will be used to incorporate the view of later Madhyamaka philosophers such as Candrakīrti and Piṅgala.
  - 2) To evaluate the validity of Robinsonian critique on *catuṣkoṭi*, some clarification must be made on the meaning of ‘*catuṣkoṭi*’, as compared to the ‘Nāgārjunian critique’ or ‘negation of *catuṣkoṭi*(*prasaṅga*)’. First, *catuṣkoṭi* is ‘a logical arguments of a series of four discrete propositions’ or ‘philosophical judgements’ made to a certain topic,

a form of Hegelian Dialectics, as Robinson and Kajiyama do. With these two successive critiques, both Robinsonian points can be considered unsuccessful on account of the horizontal structure of *catuṣkoṭi*.

In relation to the 2<sup>nd</sup> critique of the problem of dialectics, this paper focuses on the validity of Robinson and Kajiyama's dialectical interpretation of *catuṣkoṭi* with reference to its logical structure, while repudiating dialectical standings throughout the related verses on *catuṣkoṭi*. Through this examination, we will see why Robinson and Kajiyama's Hegelian presentation of the problem on dialectics is not a plausible interpretation of Nāgārjuna's logic, which is purely negative and skeptical in its character. And through reformulating the structure of *catuṣkoṭi* in terms of Nāgārjunian *prasaṅga*, we can compare it with a dialectical formula to evaluate the implications of negative logic for *catuṣkoṭi* more clearly.

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possessing multiple applications. It has been widely used and shared as an efficient way of proposing one's views in ancient Indian logical context like that of Syādvāda of Jainism, which has a sevenfold logical formulation to convey the insight of *Anekantavada*, or philosophical scepticism of Sanjaya Belatthiputta, as well as that of *Brahmajala Sutta*, recording Budha's teaching in early Buddhist context. Yet, 'Nāgārjunian critique of *catuṣkoṭi*' denotes the Madhyamaka view of emptiness(*śūnyatā*), criticising any view positing identity(*svabhāva*) or qualitative hierarchy(rank) among each *koṭi*(propositions) like that of Robinson and Kajiyama. Later, in Buddhist logico-epistemological traditions of Madhyamaka, this critique(negation) of *catuṣkoṭi* was regarded as a middle way to view the right purport of Buddha as well as Nāgārjuna, while criticizing the view claiming for the substantive identity of each *koṭi*. Here, please note that despite the single usage of the term '*catuṣkoṭi*' in this paper, it mainly denotes the Nāgārjuna's interpretation of it, following 'the real purport of *catuṣkoṭi*' as was used and suggested by Budhha.

## II. The Content and Validity of Robinson and Kajiyama's Dialectical Interpretation of *catuṣkoṭī*

It is well known that Hegelian dialectics consists of multiple mediations of contraries in a continual progression of transcending the former contraries into realizing the state of 'becoming(*das Werden*).'<sup>3)</sup>

Following this line of thought, Robinson and Kajiyama interpret the ultimate truth of the *tetralemma* as something similar to a binary negation formula of the 4th *koṭī*(proposition), according to which the 4th *koṭī* is transcended through the negation of its self-contradiction. Based on this substantialist conception with a Hegelian emphasis on 'progression', Robinson

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3) Hegel(1974; 1977) Introduction; Hegel(1963) pp. 91-92; Hegel(1998) pp. 105-106; While differentiating dialectic from sophistry, Hegel explains his 'dialectic' and 'becoming' as follows, "We call dialectic the higher movement of reason in which such seemingly utterly separate terms pass over into each other spontaneously, through that which they are, a movement in which the presupposition sublates itself. It is the dialectical immanent nature of being and nothing themselves to manifest their unity, that is, becoming, as their truth"; Then he further explains 'the sublation of contraries into becoming' as follows, "Becoming is in a double determination ... the former is coming-to-be and the latter is ceasing to-be. This coming to be is the other direction: nothing passes over into being, but being equally sublates itself and is rather transition into nothing, i.e., ceasing-to-be. They are not reciprocally sublated-the one does not sublata the other externally-but each sublates itself in itself and is in its own self the opposite itself. ... Becoming, as this transition into the unity of being and nothing, a unity which is in the form of being or has the form of the one-sided immediate unity of these moments, is determinate being."

posits the negation formula of 4th *koṭi*, as dissolving the entire *dṛsti*.<sup>4)</sup> And Kajiyama also understands this as ‘the religious truth of Madhyamika, which cannot be negated in that it is a limit of ultimate truth.’<sup>5)</sup>

Then, are these seeming contradictions in *tetralemma* really posited as a form of Hegelian conception of ‘self-contradiction’ implying that they are to be transcended? If not, then how can we eschew this misconception by demonstrating that the seeming contradiction in *catuṣkoṭi* is different from the Hegelian notion of mediation?<sup>6)</sup> With this question in mind, let’s examine

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- 4) Hegel(1963) pp. 93–94; Hegel(1998) pp. 106–107; Hegel explains the dialectical progression into a sublated being as follows; “What is sublated is not thereby reduced to nothing. Nothing is immediate; what is sublated, is the result of mediation; it is a non-being but as a result which had its origin in a being. It still has, therefore, in itself the determinateness from which it originates.”
- 5) Oetike(2003) p. 451; In respect of *paramārtha*, Ruegg argues that “the overwhelming majority of interpretations from the Madhyamaka school have held that, no assertion whatever will be a real, self-existent(i. e. hypostatized) thing.” Yet in my opinion, Kajiyama(and broadly Robinson) can be included in this group in that their views do not represent the real purport of *śūnyatā* and *dharmahiṣvabhāva/dharmānairātmya*. Since their approaches definitely attempt to ascribe an ultimately real status to the entity of Nāgārjuna’s statement, these would fall under the extreme of eternalism, which the Mādhyamaka avoids.
- 6) Related to this topic, please refer to Hegel(1981); Hegel(1963) p. 95; Hegel(1998) pp. 107–108; According to Hegel, this transition is made through ‘moments’: “The more precise meaning expression which being and nothing receive, not that they are moments, is to be ascertained from the consideration of determinate being as the unity in which they are preserved. Being is being, and nothing is nothing, only in their contradiction from each other; but in their truth, in their unity, they have vanished as these determinations and are now something else. Being and nothing are the same; but just because they are the same

how we can respond to this sort of Hegelian interpretation suggested by Robinson and Kajiyama, while reconstructing a possible way of evading its logical and semantic traps.

## 1. Robinson's dialectical interpretation of *catuṣkoṭi*

Despite his criticism on the metaphysical character of Murti's interpretation of Nāgārjuna,<sup>7)</sup> Robinson himself takes a Hegelian understanding of the *catuṣkoṭi* like that of Murti or Stcherbatsky.<sup>8)</sup> According to his interpretation, Nāgārjuna's *catuṣkoṭi* follows Hegelian Dialectic, with hierarchical categorizations in which "the later proposition negates the former one."<sup>9)</sup>

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they are no longer being and nothing, but now have a different significance. In becoming they were coming-to-be and ceasing-to-be; in determinate being, a differently determined unity, they are again differently determined moments. This unity now remains their base from which they do not again emerge in the abstract significance of being and nothing."

7) Robinson(1957) pp. 291-293: Robinson also criticizes Murti's misuse of logical concept like, "Every thesis is self-convicted," while interpreting it as "Every proposition is self-contradictory," which falls into falsity on the grounds of not being true of tautologies.

8) Murti(1977) pp. 45-46: According to Murti, *catuṣkoṭi*, as a 'tetra-lemma,' or 'four-pronged propositions,' have taken Hegel's Dialectic towards the interpretation of Nāgārjuna's *catuṣkoṭi*.

9) Robinson(1978) p. 56; Dialectical sequence of negation consists of; (1) affirmation (2) negation (3) negation of negation, which is, affirmation of something new. And when something is sublated, it is not done away with but retained and preserved in the higher product which supersedes it. Likewise, sublation involves mediation and (determinate) negation. Related to this, please refer to the supplementary discussion

In terms of Robinson's logic, the 1st *koṭi* of the *catuṣkoṭi*, referring to 'p' in its logical form, can be viewed as the thesis, while the 2nd *koṭi* '-p' becomes the antithesis. And the combination of 'p' and '-p' becomes higher level truth as synthesis (which literally means, 'in and for itself'; 'an und für sich' in Hegelian terms), in contrast to the 1st and 2nd *koṭis* where the 2nd *koṭi* (antithesis; which literally means, 'for itself'; 'für sich')<sup>10</sup> is superior or more real than the 1st *koṭi* (thesis; which literally means, 'in itself', 'an sich').

At the 2nd phase of mediation, the 3rd *koṭi* ('p and -p') works as the thesis, with the following 4th *koṭi* '-p & -(p)' as its antithesis. Hence, Robinson's understanding of the purport of Nāgārjuna's *catuṣkoṭi* follows Hegelian Dialectic, characterized by moving toward a higher truth with its dualistic structure of thesis and antithesis located at different phases. Then, is it right to interpret each *koṭi* of the *catuṣkoṭi* as located at a different level, while retaining a dualistic structure?

In Hegelian dialectic, 'p and -p' in a proposition are not just the contraries, but the contradictories located at different phases of progress, while being negated into a synthesis.<sup>11</sup> On the

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of 83 clause of "Logics", in Hegel(1981); and Hegel(1963) pp. 93-95.

10) For Hegel, the 'an sich' is mere potentiality, while actuality requiring determination, negation, relations with other things. '*Für sich*' is a reflective, explicit, self-comprehending, fully developed concept, and '*An und für sich*' is a completely developed concept, both with itself, and finding itself in the other. It contrasts with 'mere being in itself' and 'being for itself'. 'Being in-and-for-itself' is the condition of the Absolute, God, Spirit actualized. Please refer to Inwood(1992); Solomon(1985) pp. 273-87; Hegel(1991) pp. 347-52.

11) Hegelian Dialectics consists of three stages in which contradictions are found, negated, and synthesized through mediation. After the stage of understanding or abstract reason where one or more concepts

contrary, each *lemma* in the *catuskoṭi* is just a parallel juxtaposition of contrary case, where the 1<sup>st</sup> *koṭi* does not have to be negated by the latter through its dialectical movement of mediation.

Now, we will examine the logical structure of *catuskoṭi*, focusing on four-pronged propositions (*tetralemma*) as were suggested by Murti and Robinson.<sup>12)</sup> Then, we will see whether it denotes any progress toward the remaining *koṭis*, step by step.

In case we assume to quantify the proposition of each *koṭi* as (1), (2), (3), (4) and some entity as *x* and existent (*bhāva*) as *p*, then the four kinds of formations would follow like this.

(1) The negative *tetralemma* where any existent (*bhāva*) is negated. ["*x* is *p*"/"*x* is  $\neg$ *p*"/"*x* is not *p* and  $\neg$ *p*"/"*x* is not  $\neg$ *p* and  $\neg$ ( $\neg$ *p*)"]

(2) The affirmative *tetralemma* where any form of something can be qualified. ["*x* is *p*"/"*x* is  $\neg$ *p*"/"*x* is *p* and  $\neg$ *p*"/"*x* is  $\neg$ *p* and  $\neg$ ( $\neg$ *p*)"]

(3) The similarity of the *catuskoṭi*, which does not possess any form of something as; that 'is', 'is not', 'both is and is not', and 'neither is nor is not.' Here, no two forms are identical as to be categorized as four defined propositions. ["*x* is not *p*," "*x* is not *q*," "*x* is not *r*," "*x* is not *s*"]

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are taken as fixed, sharply defined and distinct from one another, there reaches a stage of dialectical reason or self-consciousness in which a contradiction or contradictions emerge through reflection on them, and finally reaches into the stage of speculative reason or spirit where the result is a higher concept which embraces the earlier ones and resolves their contradiction. Related to this issue, please refer to Hegel(1952), Ch. (A.), (B.), (C.).

12) Murti(1977) pp. 44-46; Robinson(1957) pp. 302-303.



Here, whereas Nāgārjuna uses all of these alternately, while frequently using (1), Hegelian Dialectic has a logical structure close to (2). In this respect, let me focus on the positive case (2), while taking 18. 8 as its example among some of the examples(22.11, 25.17, 27.15-18) that Robinson has taken for his consideration.<sup>13)</sup>

“All is real, or all is unreal, all is both real and unreal, all is neither unreal nor real”; this is the graded teaching of the Buddha.<sup>14)</sup>

Here, Robinson points out that these four options are positively manifested before negating these with this formula[ $Ax \vee \neg Ax \vee Ax \wedge \neg Ax$ ], and these options can be quantified universally for ‘x’. And with this affirmative logic, Robinson seems to view the 4th option[“x is  $\neg p$  and  $\neg(\neg p)$ ”], as “No x is I and no x is  $\neg I$ .”

Yet, as he acknowledges, this is only true when x is null.<sup>15)</sup>

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13) R. H. Robinson(1957) p. 302.

14) 18-8. sarvaṃ tathyam na vā tathyam tathyam cātathyam eva ca/ naivātathyam naiva tathyam etadbuddhānuśāsanam.

15) Robinson(1957) p. 302; However, according to Robinson, since negations and conjunctions of the basic proposition do not transcribe regardless of quantification that,  $\neg p$  becomes the contradictory of p, although “some x is I” is not the contradictory of “some x is not I.” Interpreting ‘p,  $\neg p$ ’ as contradiction in this case, he follows Nakamura’s interpretation that the *tetralemma* algebraically is: ‘I’, ‘ $\neg I$ ’, ‘I-I’ and ‘ $\neg(I-I)$ ’. Since ‘I-I’ equals ‘0’ and ‘ $\neg I-I$ ’ equals ‘O’, the third and fourth alternatives are redundant and senseless. But, can we suppose that Nāgārjuna’s purport for negating each of these options is that its terms are null, as defined by his opponents? In other words, is this the real reason that Nāgārjuna has rejected the 4th option? Here, Robinson’s interpretation looks like the hybrid of Aristotelian and Boole Schröder notation, emphasizing more on the

And only in that context, it can have the equivalent value as the 3rd proposition. [“x is p and  $\neg$ p”]<sup>16)</sup>

Yet, in case of Nāgārjuna, it is true that the definitions of the entities vary with each proposition. And since they do not have any intrinsic value, each entity or existent should not be regarded as real. Nor the 4th option be treated as equal to the 3rd one, with any change of the definitions or status of the entities. Here, the case is that “if x denotes the certain entity p, then y and z just reveal different, yet horizontal aspects of x”, unlike the difference of entities corresponding to different phases in Hegelian mediation. Then let’s see the horizontal aspects of these four options:

- 1) The 1st option: “y is p”
- 2) The 2nd option: “z is  $\neg$ p”
- 3) The 3rd option: “y is p”, while “z is  $\neg$ p”
- 4) The 4th option: “x is  $\neg$ p and  $\neg$ ( $\neg$ p)”

Piṅgala is also follows this line of interpretation, while further arguing that Buddha interpreted the same entity with four

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characteristics of conjunctions in 3rd and 4th options than treating it as a simple proposition, while surpassing the explanation both of conjunction of I and O forms as well as E and A forms. And through this way, he might have attempted to enlarge his interpretation including Boole Schröder notation, which Kajiyama also adopts.

- 16) *Ibid.* p. 305; According to Robinson, related to this line of thought, most discussion of *sūnyatā* has centered on whether it is a ‘positive or a negative’ concept, or whether it has a transcendental significance or a nihilist one. On the positive side of interpretation, he mentions on La Vallee Poussin’s view of absolute base of existence and Suzuki’s positive interpretation on ‘*Sūnyathā* and *Tathatā*’, which belongs to the realm of intuition.

different viewpoints to address different people with skillful means. We shall now see his elucidation at the evaluation level and view the point on 4th option to compare it with Robinson's view on four-pronged affirmation of the *catuṣkoṭi*.

All the Buddhas have unlimited powers of skillful means, and dharmas have no fixed characteristics. In order to save all living beings, they may reach 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."

"Neither real nor unreal", "Neither unreal nor not unreal" is taught in order to negate 'both real and unreal.'<sup>17)</sup>

According to Piṅgala, the 1st *koṭi* ("X is p") is manifested from the view of ultimate reality to look at the dharmas (existents). Here, the term 'real' means an 'ultimate.' In the 2nd *koṭi* ("X is -p"), it is taken from the perspective of *pratītyasamutpāda* to denote the *niḥsvabhāva* of dharmas.

The 3rd *koṭi* ("X is p and -p") subsumes both viewpoints of ultimate reality and *pratītyasamutpāda*, featuring the fact that all dharmas possess the same feature, while not retaining *svabhāva*.

And the 4th *koṭi* ("X is -p and -(p)") refutes the 3rd one, following the internal logic of this four pronged affirmation, while also refuting the 1st and 2nd ones altogether. This is because the 1st and 2nd *koṭis* are subsumed under the boundary of the 3rd category. Yet, if the 4th *koṭi* is taken to be as a supreme truth, it contradicts the rules of this four-pronged affirmations since the premise of this affirmation includes that four

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17) MT pp. 282-283.

*koṭis* are equally real and unreal.

Thus, in the four-pronged affirmation of *catuṣkoṭi*, the difference can be seen as the result of different perspectives, rather than different phases of reality based on dualistic dichotomy of *p* and  $\neg p$ . Thus, nonetheless the entities in the four *koṭis* use identical referent, every proposition possesses different entities. Here, even in Piṅgala's interpretation, a commentary which is often supposed to be suspicious of its metaphysical traits, Robinson's interpretation of hierarchical progress does not hold. Since each proposition only represents a therapeutic purpose corresponding to the different objects of edification.

With this question of difference in viewpoint, Candrakīrti's interpretation of expedient also supports Piṅgala's, despite its presupposition of the difference in quality or grade between the four alternatives, since this presupposition works only in the limit of therapeutic strategy corresponding to different levels of understanding and perspective of listeners.

Besides, in Hegelian Dialectic, the process of thesis-antithesis and synthesis can go on when a newly attained synthesis becomes another thesis again. And, this is clearly not the case for the critique of the *catuṣkoṭi*. Since it purports to end all misconceptions or wrong views on intrinsic nature of all theses, without falling into an Infinite Regress. Thus, it can be said that Hegelian dialectic has different logical structure from *catuṣkoṭi*, unlike Robinson's interpretation.

Then, we will examine how Kajiyama addresses this issue of the *catuṣkoṭi* in the following section.

## 2. Kajiyama and Hegelian Dialectics

We have seen that Robinson, following Hegelian dialectic, argued that the aim of Nāgārjuna's *catuṣkoṭi* is to move through the dialectical process to reach into the 4th *koṭi* as a synthesis, which is a higher truth than the other *koṭis*. Related to four-pronged affirmation, he pointed out the logical contradiction within the 3rd and 4th lemmas. Along this line, Kajiyama delineates his view of the *catuṣkoṭi* while agreeing that the *catuṣkoṭi* is not a logic established on the ground of formal logic. Yet, related to the above question on the affirmative case of the *catuṣkoṭi*, he says the following.

Thus, it is problematic to understand *catuṣkoṭi* in the position of formal logic. It should be understood that *catuṣkoṭi* has a dialectical character as a process of negating a proposition established in certain area of discourse at a more multi-dimensional area of discourse.<sup>18)</sup>

Since the four-pronged affirmation cannot all be true and simultaneous with the logical form, each following proposition becomes higher than the previous one, while negating the previous proposition as well. Therefore, there are different levels of truths in the four-pronged affirmation and every proposition that follows is higher than its previous proposition. Hence, the 4th proposition["x is  $\neg p$  and  $\neg(\neg p)$ ]" is the highest proposition which reveals the truth that the *Mādhyamika* school intended to demonstrate. ... Nothing is true and not untrue. The 4th *koṭi* signifies the religious truth of *Madhyamika* as an ultimate truth. Thus, it should not be negated in that limit. Yet, this truth cannot be established in the area of discourse where the 1st phrase is established, and likewise, it is not established in the areas of 2nd and 3rd *koṭis*. *C'est-à-dire*(That is to say), in the area where the 1st, 2nd and 3rd *koṭis* are established, the 4th *koṭi* should be negated.<sup>19)</sup>

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18) 梶山雄一 外(1994) p. 106.

Seen from this sort of dialectical interpretation based either on the degree of development or a synthesis of ontological forms among the gap in the root *primordia*, it might be interpreted as a falsification of Nāgārjuna's view in a way to classify values of each *koṭi*.

On the grounds of this gradational analysis, Kajiyama Yuichi proposes the following thesis.

Since the four-pronged affirmation cannot all be true at the same time in terms of its logical form, every succeeding proposition should be interpreted as higher than the previous *koṭi*, while negating the former. Hence, each proposition should represent different levels of truths accordingly in the four-pronged affirmation that every proposition that follows is higher than its previous proposition.

Yet, here the problem arises related to its interpretation on the gradual progression of each *koṭi*. Following Kajiyama's Hegelian interpretation, the 2nd *koṭi*, which is considered to be a anti-thesis should be higher than the 1st *koṭi* (thesis) in its value. Further, the 3rd *koṭi*, interpreted as a synthesis, transcends both the thesis and antithesis. Accordingly, it constitutes itself as superior or more real than both.

And in the second phase of mediation, synthesis (3rd *koṭi*) becomes a thesis to the fourth *koṭi*, whereas the 4th *koṭi* becomes the antithesis to the 3rd one. In this way, the antithesis always has to be superior or more real than the thesis. And it negates its contradiction within the thesis. As a consequence, the four-pronged propositions are divided into two separate levels from which begins another progression and etc. Yet, this

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19) 梶山雄一(1988) ; 梶山雄一 外(1994) p. 110.

corresponds to an infinite regress in terms of Nāgārjuna's logic.

To prevent this kind of regressio ad infinitum, Kajiyama proposes that the fourth proposition (*koṭi*), 'X=¬p ∧ ¬(¬p)' should be the most supreme proposition which reveals the truth that *Mādhyamikas* intended to demonstrate. Yet, he does not explain the logical inconsistency between this final phase of supreme truth and the possibility of reaching a synthesis which becomes another thesis in the next cycle of mediation.

Explaining the 4th *koṭi* of 18.8<sup>20)</sup> which delineates the graded teaching of Buddha in *MMK*, Kajiyama just states this.

Since the 4th *koṭi* is the supreme religious truth of *Mādhyamika*s, it cannot be negated in that limit. Yet, that truth is neither established in the area of discourse where the 1st *koṭi* is established, nor in the area where the 2nd and 3rd *koṭis* are established. In other words, the 4th *koṭi* is the kind of thing to be negated in the area where the 1st and the 3rd *koṭis* are established.<sup>21)</sup>

Thus, Kajiyama proposes that, "if we see the 4th *koṭi* as corresponding to a synthesis, it should not be negated in that limit."<sup>22)</sup> And this is actually the point where the *Pudgalavādins* and most East Asian Buddhists have regarded the 4th *koṭi* as the ultimate form of truth.

In this respect, Kajiyama's substantial understanding of *cātuṣkoṭi*, emphasizing on 'its gradational progression into the

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20) 18-8) sarvaṃ tathyaṃ na vā tathyaṃ tathyaṃ cātathyaṃ eva ca/naivātathyaṃ naivatathyaṃ etadbuddhānuśāsanam (All is real, or all is unreal, all is both real and unreal, all is neither unreal nor real; this is the graded teaching of the Buddha)

21) 梶山雄一 外(1994) pp. 109-110.

22) 梶山雄一 外(1994) p. 110.

highest truth' does not seem to share any affinities with Nāgārjuna than *Pudgalavādins* or East Asian Buddhists who share certain degree of Hegelian characteristics.

Then let's see Nāgārjuna's way of rehabilitating the purport of *catuṣkoṭi*, while evaluating the implication of negative logic in his concept of emptiness. To support my claim of the implausibility of a dialectic interpretation, I will also examine some viewpoints of the different stages from Piṅgala and Candrakīrti's commentaries like Robinson and Kajiyama have done. Yet I will propose a semantic interpretation of focusing on 'perspectives' and 'expedient', as against their metaphysical interpretation.

### III. Possible Reformulation of *Catuṣkoṭi* with *Prasaṅga* and its implications

#### 1. 'Perspectives' in interpreting *tetralemma*. Piṅgala and Candrakīrti

In chapter II, we have seen that Robinson and Kajiyama use Hegelian dialectic to claim, that after negating all perverted false views, emptiness reveals itself in the form of ultimate truth. This ultimate truth, despite being called emptiness turns out to be something real, i.e., a synthesis of 4th *koṭi*. Yet, the fact that emptiness is viewed as the expedient to get rid of all metaphysical views in Nāgārjuna<sup>23)</sup> shows why Robinson and



Kajiya's metaphysical interpretation of ultimate truth corresponding to the 4th *koṭi* turns out to be a misconception.

Meanwhile, the explanation in terms of Buddha's skill in teaching, as an 'expedient' in Piṅgala and Candrakīrti's commentaries denotes the way in which the four-pronged affirmation can be interpreted against Hegelian tone. We have also seen that Candrakīrti in his Commentaries, argues that four propositions portray the object from different perspectives.

To Candrakīrti, 'the 1st perspective' shows the view from the conventional reality or from common people, while 'the 2nd perspective' demonstrates the view from the ultimate reality or the view from an awakened one. Further, whereas 'the 3rd perspective' shows both conventional and ultimate reality, 'the 4th perspective' manifests the inner state of an awakened one like Buddha.

Related to this state, when Piṅgala explains the 4th *koṭi*, he describes it as 'the absence of the definite feature of all dharmas'. And he explains that the true character is 'neither falling into permanence nor annihilation', and goes on to say that "there is within this character, no dharmas to be grasped or relinquished so as to be called the characteristic of calm extinction."<sup>24)</sup>

Here, although Piṅgala's position is that 'reality is ineffable', his interpretation of the emptiness of the 4th *koṭi* like Candrakīrti's,<sup>25)</sup> is still to insist that 'all dharmas are utterly empty.'<sup>26)</sup> Likewise, even in Piṅgala's interpretation, it is more

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23) 13-8) śūnyatā sarvadṛṣṭināṃ proktā niḥsaraṇaṃ jinaiḥ/ yeṣāṃ tu śūnyatādrṣṭistānasādhyān babhāṣire

24) MT pp. 282-284.

25) M. Siderits(2007) p. 190.

valid to interpret this four-pronged affirmation in terms of ‘absence of intrinsic nature.’ For Piṅgala, everything can be interpreted from different perspectives due to this ‘absence of intrinsic nature’(niḥsvabhāva), and this seems to be applicable to Buddha’s *tetralemma*.

Taking different perspectives into account, Piṅgala suggests that the 3rd *koṭi* embraces the 1st and 2nd *koṭi*. And it can be interpreted as, ‘All dharmas come from both perspectives of ultimate reality and pratīyasamutpāda’, while the 4th *koṭi* negates the 3rd one. And since the 4th *koṭi* negates the former, the 1st and 2nd *koṭis* are automatically negated because the 3rd *koṭi* encompasses both the 1st and 2nd *koṭis*.

While this sort of gradational interpretation can be problematic without considering the different perspectives and non-intrinsicness, it does not include Kajiyama and Robinson’s claim that the 4th *koṭi* is superior and the most real. Rather it just signifies the fact that, with various perspectives, one ought not adhere to any *koṭi* as the most definite because every *koṭi* represents the same Buddha’s teaching.

Therefore, Robinson and Kajiyama’s valuing of the 4th *koṭi* as supreme should also be rejected on a basis of an understanding of all the *koṭis* as being equal and non being higher than any other. Apart from ‘a graded teaching as an expedient by Buddha’, there are no different levels making the *tetralemma* a vertical hierarchy like that of Hegelian dialectic.

This is more evident when trying to reformulate the *tetralemma* into logical form and thus seeing the relationship between the subject and the predicate in a *koṭi*. As is shown in

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26) MT p. 284.

Piṅgala's Commentary, despite the fact that the subjects of the statements in the *tetralemma* use the same referent, every *koṭi* comes to possess different subjects due to different perspectives.

Moreover, unlike Robinson's interpretation, the very definitions of the subjects vary with every *koṭi* due to different combination of positive and negative concomitance by which the characteristics of whole *koṭis* vary in their respective contexts. And these variations show how each case addresses different perspectives in a binary form of horizontal sequence of concomitance.

Now, let us reformulate the *tetralemma* case of 18. 8 in *MMK* in a way to show this sort of multi-faceted horizontal perspective.

[Here, S denotes the subject/ p denotes different perspectives/ p<sup>^</sup> denotes another perspective/ Sp denotes different perspectives of S/ r denotes the predicate/ I denotes 'inexpressible'/ and X denotes the presupposition that "there are such things as 'everything'"].

1. "Everything(Sp1) is real(r)." [With X, p1=r]
2. "Everything(Sp2) is unreal(r)." [With X, p2=-r]
3. "There is some respect(p) that everything(Sp1) is real(r) and t here is another respect(p<sup>^</sup>) that everything(Sp2) is unreal(r)." [With X, p1/Sp1=r and p2/Sp2=-r]
4. "Neither real nor unreal." [With X, S=-r and -(-r)=I]

Logically speaking, we can further diversify this combination in terms of concomitant sequence of each variable from the same subject/object to different subjects/objects, seen from various perspectives. Likewise, from the differences of per-

spectives among subjects we can deduce a logical form without violating any law of classical logic.

Meanwhile, it also shows that this sort of horizontal understanding differs from hierarchical structure of Hegelian dialectics. And due to the absence of hierarchy, Robinsonian dialectical interpretation of the *tetralemma* fails to the ground.

Now, let us examine into the implication of Nāgārjuna's negative logic. Using the Nāgārjunian method of reduction ad absurdum(*prāsāṅga*) we will reformulate a possible way of negating each affirmation proposed by an opponent.

## 2. Possible Reformulation of the Negative Logic (*Prāsāṅga*) in *tetralemma*

As we have seen above, Robinson and Kajiyama's analyses lie in the presupposition that *catuskoṭi* consists in a dialectical formula emphasizing the 4th *koṭi*. Yet, Nāgārjuna does not follow this dialectical progression, in that he is mostly using the *prāsāṅga* method to deduce contradictions inside the appropriate discourses of *catuskoṭi*, considering each proposition with different perspectives. Here, every item has to be negated without equating the above items, nor violating the basic rules of formal logic. Upon these speculation on the characteristics shown above, we can see that Nāgārjuna's use of *catuskoṭi*, is neither a deviation of classical formal logic, nor an ancestor of Hegelian dialectics.

Then, with this possible reformulation, we can deduce Nāgārjuna's idea of negation from the general features of his

logical scheme of *reduction ad absurdum*(*prasaṅga*). Thereby, we find support for my claim of the implausibility of the dialectic interpretation of *catuṣkoṭi*.

Let's assume that the opponent asserts, "If p, then q". For this, Nāgārjuna would deduce a contradiction that p has to be negated by *prasaṅga*, while saying, "Yet it's not q, thus, not p". Further, if the opponent argues that "If not p, then r", Nāgārjuna deduces the contradiction by showing that "It's not r, thus, not  $\neg p$ ".

Likewise, when the counterpart argues on the negation of p, which is  $\neg p$ , Nāgārjuna might deduce the contradiction by negating  $\neg p$  with double negation. Yet here, the law of double negation is not acknowledged so that the 3rd *koṭi* can be negated. In other words, even though the opponent asserts that the implication of "double negation is affirmation" (The Principle of Equality), Nāgārjuna can deduce p with a new perspective to evade the contradiction. ['Negation of (p and  $\neg p$ ): Principle of Contradiction vs. perspectives]

In this manner, the fourth *koṭi* ('neither, nor' thesis) can also be rejected as containing a premise with substantial affirmation, while evading the Law of Excluded Middle. [Negation of {' $\neg p$  and  $\neg(\neg p)$ ': The Principle of Excluded Middle vs. pre-suppositions}]

In turn, if the counterpart evaluates this result, then he will find that he cannot assert The Principle of the Excluded Middle any more. Because, either case(p, or  $\neg p$ ) is provided with certain presupposition that the assertion of either case(p or  $\neg p$ ) will lead to contradiction. And  $p \wedge p$  and  $\neg(p \wedge p)$  should accordingly be rejected by showing non-intrinsicness of that

presupposition. Thus, there is no reason to elevate  $p$  and  $\neg p$  or  $p \wedge \neg p$  to a higher stage of  $\neg(p \text{ and } \neg p)$  as a synthesis, not to be negated in that limit.

Here, Nāgārjuna critiques the *catuṣkoṭi* is to show the self-contradiction of all possible options for the opponent. Hence, it does not represent a process of dialectical elevation, which criticizes the previous phrase while heading towards the 4th *koṭi*.

In chapter 2(2.24 and 2.25) of *MMK*,<sup>27)</sup> for instance, the goer can only be classified as; ‘goer as an affirmation’, ‘goer as a negation’, ‘goer both as an affirmation and negation’, while omitting the 4th *koṭi*, which can be one of the most negative evidences against Robinson’s interpretation of *catuṣkoṭi*.

Furthermore, Nāgārjunian usage of negative logic(*prasaṅga*) is mainly come to be made of syllogism deducing a conclusion of the categorical proposition from each corresponding presupposition. Consequently, several variations, consisting of hypothetical and disjunctive proposition, could be drawn to raise one’s own chance of winning the debate, which is definitely not a dialectical process.

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27) 2-24) *sadbhūto gamanam gantā triprakāram na gacchati/ nāsadbhūto 'pi gamanam triprakāram gacchati*(One who is a real goer does not perform a going of any of the three kinds. Neither does one who is not a real goer perform a going of any of the three kinds); 2-25) *gamanam sada sadbhūtam triprakāram na gacchati/tasmādgatiśca gantā ca gantavyam ca na vidyate*(One who is a both-real-and-unreal goer does not perform a going of any of the three kinds. Thus there is no going, no goer, and no destination)

#### IV. Conclusion

Tuck distinguishes three phases in the Western interpretation of Nāgārjuna and the Mādhyamaka school: German idealism (Kant, Hegel), Anglo-American analysis and post-Wittgensteinian linguistic functionalism. And like Stecherbatsky or Murti's understanding on the line of Hegel, which sees the reality of a transcendent world of the thing-in-itself, along with the contradiction and duality of the Phenomenal and the Noumenal,<sup>28)</sup> Robinson and Kajiyama take this sort of dialectical view on *tetralemma*, while retaining analytical method of Anglo-American philosophy based on classical formal logic.

Accordingly, Robinson and Kajiyama propose that ' $-(p \wedge \neg p)$ ' is similar to the 3rd *koṭi*, while formally denoting the negation of the 3rd proposition. And they further argue that this corresponds to the negation process of thesis-antithesis and synthesis in Hegelian dialectics." Yet, is it fair to judge Nāgārjuna's scheme as corresponding to Hegelian gradational dialectics?

Responding to this problematic interpretation, I have argued that none of these *koṭis* in *tetralemma* can be understood as 'the identity in difference' thesis of Hegelian dialectics, possessing gradational formulations. Rather, as against Robinson and Kajiyama's Hegelian interpretations on the 4th *koṭi*, I have also

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28) Tuck(1990) Introduction.

argued that Nāgārjuna's scheme does not find its culminating form in 'the reality is ineffable' approach of emptiness based on hierarchical and metaphysical conception of truth.

Following their dialectical interpretation, 'neither, nor thesis' of 4th *koṭi* becomes the true representation of ultimate truth, in the sense that "each *koṭi* is nothing but a different aspects of one identity as true synthesis or inexpressible." For this, they use Candrakīrti and Piṅgala's Commentaries, explaining the gradational elevation of each perspective to the ultimate.

Yet, this does not do justice to these commentator's understandings, which regard each *koṭi* as representing different perspectives without valuing the 4th *koṭi* as the ultimate. Nor does it respond fairly to the implication of negative logic found in Nāgārjuna's *prasaṅga*, which does not posit any identity. In this respect, Nāgārjuna's horizontal scheme of reduction ad absurdum(*prasaṅga*) seems to allow no room for accepting dialectic interpretation in evaluating *catuṣkoṭi*.

From this point of view, the possible reconstruction of Nāgārjuna's interpretation of *tetralemma* would be closer to semantic and non dualistic approach of truth, saying that "we must abandon the very idea of an ultimate truth."<sup>29)</sup>

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29) Siderits(2007) p. 191.



## Abbreviation and Bibliography

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- Pr: *Mādhyamikavṛtti of Candrakīrti(Prasannapadā)*. (Ed.). Poussin, La Vallee. Leningrad: *Bibliothica Buddhica*, IV.
- MT: *Nāgārjuna in China: A Translation of the Middle Treatise, Studies in Asian Thought and Religion*, Vol. 18. ed.. Bocking, B. Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1995.
- VV: *The Dispeller of Disputes: Nāgārjuna's Vigrahavyāvartanī*. ed.. Westerhoff, Jan. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- KV: *Kathāvatthu*. ed. Taylor A. C. tr. Aung and Mrs. Davids, R. PTS, 1915.
- TD: 大正新脩大藏經  
中論 TD 30.  
三彌底部論 TD. 32.  
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## 요약문

### 용수 사구 논리에 대한 로빈슨식 해석의 타당성 —귀류논법과 헤겔변증법의 대비를 중심으로—

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카지야마 유이치는 용수의 四句論理가 헤겔 변증법의 특성을 지니는 것으로 보고, 4번째 구(4句)의 부정 형식을 승의제로서 더 이상 부정될 수 없는 중관의 종교적 진리로 제시한다. 로빈슨 또한 4句를 제 견해를 종식시킬 수 있는 명제로 상정한다.

이러한 해석에 대해, 본 논문에서는 용수가 사용한 사구 논리구조에 변증법을 적용하는 점은 타당하지 않음을 제시했다. 종합적 검토를 위해, 청목과 월칭의 주석 또한 참조했다. 다만, 로빈슨·카지야마의 해석과 달리, 무자성에 기반한 관점의 차이에 주목하는 해석방법을 취했다. 이로써, 부정과 회의의 방식을 사용하는 용수 논리와 헤겔 변증법의 차별성을 드러내고자 했다.

나아가, 귀류논증 방식에 따라 사구부정의 논리구조를 재해석함으로써, 변증법과 대별되는 용수의 부정 논법에 담긴 함의를 의미론적 맥락에서 추정해 보았다. 무자성 공의 함의를 드러내기 위해 상이한 관점을 활용한 용수는 각 구들이 동일성을 지닌 것으로 보지 않았을 뿐 아니라, 각 구들 사이의 수직적 위계를 설정하지도 않았다.

이로써, 사구 안의 어떤 명제 또한 형이상학이나 변증법적 해석을 상정하지 않고도 논리적 명증성을 갖고 이해할 수 있다. 즉, 사구에 대한 용수의 부정은 동일성을 지닌 실체가 존재한다거나, 연기적 조건이 자성을 지닌 것으로 오인하는 무지를 드러내기 위한 방편적 함의를 지닌 것으로 이해할 수 있는 것이다.

**주요어** : 四句, 사구 논리, 헤겔 변증법, 귀류논법(부정의 논리), 관점, 방편

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