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Buddhism and Language: A Study of Indo-Tibetan Scholasticism. Jose Ignacion Cabezon (Foreword by Frank E. Reynolds), SUNY Series, *Toward a Comparative Philosophy of Religions*, Frank E. Reynolds and David Tracy, editors, Albany, N.Y., State University of New York Press, 1994, xiii + 299 pages, ISBN 0-7914-1900-2 (pbk.)

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This work is a case study in comparative philosophy of religion that uses an examination of the dGe lugs pa school of Tibetan Mahāyāna Buddhism in order to show that the concept of scholasticism, which has its home in medieval European Christian thought, may when properly decontextualized serve as a useful category in the study of other religio-philosophical systems. Cabezon's choice of dGe lugs pa is appropriate, given that their overall project was to effect a grand synthesis of all the major strands of Indian Mahāyāna philosophy. The book begins with an attempt at determining the contours of a properly abstracted concept of scholasticism. It then sets out to show that the concept has useful application to the case of the Indo-Tibetan tradition the dGe lugs pas sought to synthesize.

Cabezon by and large succeeds in this primary aim. He demonstrates ways in which various scholastic themes—reconciling reason with experience and with scripture, upholding the basic intelligibility of the universe, engaging in methodological self-reflection, as well as meta-linguistic reflection—may be discerned in the dGe lugs pa corpus and the uses to which dGe lugs pa puts the Indian Buddhist tradition. Occasionally, however, Cabezon's focus on scholasticism causes him to overlook some important points about dGe lugs pa. For instance, the tendency to fit rival doctrines into a graded series of ever-closer approximations to the truth he attributes to the Buddhist doctrine of skillful means (95), failing to mention that this tendency is a quite general feature of Indian culture. But in other places, as in his summary of the dGe lugs pa hermeneutical style (70), his employment of the category of scholasticism as a focusing lens results in interesting insights.

In his secondary aim—to convey something of the nature and concerns of the Indo-Tibetan Buddhist scholastic tradition—Cabezon has less success. The dGe lugs pa authors he discusses sought, among other things, to reconcile the epistemology—the theory of *pramāṇas*—of the school of Dignāga with the Madhyamaka doctrine of emptiness. In so doing they exhibited many of the methods and concerns Cabezon classifies as scholastic, so it is important that he explain to the reader how they arrived at certain key positions in epistemology, metaphysics, and the philosophy of language. Here he is not always as clear as he might be. I shall discuss some important questions about his treatment of the theory of *pramāṇas* and its associated semantic theory, as well as a smaller point in connection with his discussion of emptiness.

Cabezon begins his discussion of the *pramāṇas* by defining a *pramāṇa* as a fresh and unmistakable cognition (97), neglecting to mention that the term *pramāṇa* is more often taken to refer to a means of knowledge, i.e., a

reliable causal route to valid cognition. Indeed, Cabezon himself systematically uses *pramāṇa* in the latter sense of reliable means of producing valid cognition, and not for the cognition that is the product of its exercise. But his discussion of whether scripture is to be counted as a *pramāṇa* is rather confused, in part due to his neglect of the process-product ambiguity in *pramāṇa*. His ultimate characterization of the Buddhist scholastic position on this question—officially it is not counted as an independent source of proof, though in practice the *sūtras* are often treated as a source of knowledge about matters not amenable to empirical verification—seems accurate enough. But he vacillates between saying there are only two *pramāṇas*, perception and inference (104), and calling scripture a third *pramāṇa* (107). This seems to stem from his failure to distinguish the question of whether or not scripture is inerrant from the question of whether or not scripture is a *pramāṇa*. And this in turn seems to result from his failure to consider how Buddhist epistemology was shaped by its rejection of Nyāya's theory of *pramāṇa* overflow (*pramāṇa samplava*). Nyāya claims that a given real may be known through the exercise of any of the (for Nyāya, four) *pramāṇas*. Buddhists following Dignāga deny this, claiming instead that each *pramāṇa* has its own ontologically discrete province. To ask whether scriptural statements, or more broadly whether the written and spoken statements of authoritative individuals (*śabda*), count as a *pramāṇa*, is, thus, in part to ask whether there is some category of object that may be known only through its means. The answer of the tradition is that since *śabda*'s object, conceptually constructed universals, may be known in general by means of inference, *śabda* is best thought of as a species of inference. Thus to fail to classify scripture as a *pramāṇa* is not, per se, to make any claim concerning the reliability of scripture. This simply means that to determine whether a given passage of scripture counts as a source of valid cognition, we must subject it to the same tests that all inferential processes must pass to qualify as instances of the *pramāṇa* of inference.

Cabezon is nonetheless correct that in the proof of doctrine, Buddhism tends to place less reliance on scripture than do many other religious traditions. His discussion (108-9) of some of the factors responsible for this state of affairs seems accurate enough. But his focus on scholasticism may have led him to overlook one factor that seems to belong here: surely the reluctance to put great weight on scripture as a means of proving doctrine is connected with the Buddhist project of ending suffering through the cessation of attachment. It seems plausible that Buddhist theorists should have seen a link between dogmatic reliance on authoritative texts and belief in a self whose interests are to be promoted above all else.

Cabezon's discussion of inference suffers, like his discussion of scrip-

ture, from neglect of the ontological background to Buddhist epistemology. He sets out to show how Buddhist scholasticism preserves a sphere of validity for conceptual thinking, an activity central to the scholastic enterprise. This is important, given the tendency of meditation practitioners to champion direct yogic intuition as the sole legitimate path to liberation. But it is only at the end of his discussion of inference (130) that Cabezon brings in the ontological presuppositions underlying the Buddhist distinction between perception and inference, something absolutely necessary to the preceding discussion of linguistically mediated cognition. And even this is inadequate. Buddhist epistemology holds that the object of perception is the *svalakṣana*, the absolutely unique particular, while the object of inference is the conceptually constructed universal. Since only *svalakṣanas* are real, while universals are mere mental constructs (so that all inferential cognitions are literally false), a question arises as to how such cognitions can have utility. This question becomes all the more pressing when we realize that *inference* here covers such cognitions as perceiving that the patch is blue; in this system, *perception* covers only so-called preconceptual awareness (*nirvikalpaka pratyakṣa*) and excludes all conceptually mediated apperception. It is the semantics of *apoha* that is meant to answer this question.

While Cabezon appreciates the centrality of *apoha* semantics to the discussion of inference, his treatment of the theory is confusing. When he asserts (102, 104) that in perception the pot and its qualities are all apprehended simultaneously, he misses the key problem for *apoha* semantics—that the pure particularity of the *svalakṣana* means that in it, no distinction may be drawn between property and property-possessor. The *svalakṣana*'s unique *thisness* or pure particularity *is* its nature, so it is misleading to speak of apprehending both the pot and its qualities through perception. It is because the *svalakṣana is* its own-nature that it is puzzling both that *svalakṣanas* fall into classes, and that a given *svalakṣana* may be in the extensions of what are, intuitively, distinct predicates. Cabezon discusses at length Dharmakīrti's resolution of the latter problem, but the reader who is not already familiar with *apoha* semantics will, I think, have great difficulty following the exposition. The treatment would have been markedly improved by beginning with the ontological presuppositions of the system, and then utilizing some of the formal machinery for modeling *apoha* semantics that has been developed by other scholars. While the principal audience for this book is unlikely to want to know all the logical niceties of Buddhist nominalist semantics, the system, even so, is remarkable, and a little effort could have made its basic workings comprehensible.

In his treatment of Madhyamaka on language, ontology and ineffabil-

ity, Cabezon is generally on safer ground. He seems sensitive to the fact that the dGe lugs pa account of the *Svātantrika-Prāsaṅgika* dispute may be problematic. (In fact, the views he has them attributing to Candrakīrti seem in many instances more like those of Bhāvaviveka.) He provides a clear explanation (184-6) of how the Buddha's rejection of the fourth possible answer to each of the undeclared questions (*avyākṛta*) is not the assertion of ineffability, but just a rhetorical device for rejecting the question's pre-suppositions. And he conveys well the manner in which Madhyamaka seeks to preserve logic and language as useful tools while avoiding the ontological commitments of realist epistemologies. One criticism concerns his use of the term *nominalism* for this non-committal stance toward ontology. This term is now too thoroughly wedded to the dispute over universals to be serviceable here. Better would be Dummett's global anti-realism, particularly since it allows us to capture an important dialectic within the history of Buddhist philosophy, proceeding from a *local* anti-realism that denies the existence of partite entities like chariots and persons, to the nominalist variety of local anti-realism that denies the existence of universals, to the full-fledged global anti-realism of Madhyamaka's doctrine of emptiness.

In sum, the book largely succeeds in its primary aim of demonstrating that scholasticism has useful application outside European religious history. But the explication of Buddhist philosophy that it uses to accomplish this aim is sometimes not completely clear or accurate, and this occasionally interferes with its success in achieving its principal goal.