INTRODUCTION: BUDDHISM AND CONTRADICTION

Koji Tanaka
Department of Philosophy, University of Auckland
k.tanaka@auckland.ac.nz

Dialetheism is the view that *some* contradictions are true. This view needs to be distinguished from *trivialism,* which is the view that everything, including *every* contradiction, is true. According to dialetheists, there are *some* contradictions that cannot be defused and, thus, should be accepted.[1] Armed with the modern development of paraconsistent logic, dialetheism is slowly being recognized as a view to be taken seriously in contemporary Western philosophy.[2]

In "The Way of the Dialetheist: Contradictions in Buddhism," published in *Philosophy East and West* in 2008, Yasuo Deguchi, Jay L. Garfield, and Graham Priest (hereafter DGP) apply dialetheism to the interpretation of Buddhist texts. In opening the pages of Buddhist texts, it is not unusual to find sentences that appear to be contradictory. These contradictory sentences are not necessarily the expressions of inconsistency between one part of the text and another part of the text. They appear in one paragraph or sometimes even in one sentence. For example,

> What the realised one has described as the possession of distinctive features is itself the non-possession of distinctive features. (*Vajracchedika* 5)

> Everything is real and is not real,
> Both real and not real,
> Neither real nor not real.
> This is Lord Buddha's teaching. (*Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* XVIII:8)[3]

DGP argue that at least some of the contradictions found in Buddhist texts are "meant literally and to be accepted as true" (p. 396). Moreover, they argue that accepting these contradictions is a consequence of being rational. For DGP, some contradictions that arise in Buddhist discourses "are the result of following a certain view of the world through to its logical conclusions" (p. 401). They argue that these contradictions are not exemplifications of irrational mysticism but manifestations of 'ultra-rationality.'

The articles in this volume are, in one form or other, responses to DGP 2008. Most of them were presented at a workshop held at Kyoto University (exceptions are the articles by Kassor and Tillemans). Each presentation was followed by a reply from DGP and spirited debate. All of the articles and replies were revised after the workshop. Since DGP 2008 provides important context for these articles, and because not all of DGP's claims are addressed in this issue, I begin with a brief summary of the contents of DGP 2008.

DGP argue for their interpretation in part by rejecting attempts to always 'defuse' contradictory statements of Buddhist discourses. They consider four main suggestions of this kind and argue against each of them.

1. The contradictions in Buddhist texts are metaphors and, thus, should not be taken literally. DGP concede that there are some contradictory statements in the Buddhist tradition that are meant to be poetic expressions. However, they argue that not all contradictions are mere poetic tropes. They point out that some contradictions appear in highly theoretical contexts such as the texts of Nāgārjuna.

2. The contradictions always occur in *reductio ad absurdum* arguments. The suggestion is that, given that contradictions appear in a *reductio* argument, they are intended to be rejected. DGP again concede that there are some contexts where contradictions appear and, thus, are rejected as part of *reductio* arguments. Moreover, they acknowledge that contradictions are sometimes used to the psychological effect of breaking out of 'conceptual thinking' as in the Chan/Zen tradition. Nonetheless, DGP argue, the contradictions that appear in the texts of Nāgārjuna and Dōgen, for example, do not appear in the context of *reductio,* nor are they used for a soteriological context as non-discursive devices for freeing oneself from conceptualization.

3. The contradictions are part of *upāya* (skillful means). The doctrine of *upāya* has been used to explain the historical developments of different Buddhist schools. But it has also been used as a way to account for the differences in the stages of our Buddhist education. The suggestion is, then, that contradictions may be appropriate at different stages of the Buddhist path, yet they should not be endorsed or accepted as true. Against the wholesale treatment of Buddhist contradictions in terms of *upāya,* DGP argue that some contradictions are addressed to a single audience at a single time and, thus, cannot simply be part of one's development on the way to awakening. Indeed, the Madhyamaka doctrine of the emptiness of emptiness involves the collapse of two truths, ultimate and conventional truths, which entails a contradiction.[4] DGP understand Zen tradition as having taken the collapse of two truths to its logical conclusion by maintaining that an ordinary day-to-day existence is an awakened life.

4. Contradictions are meant to be taken literally, to be accepted, and they are unambiguous; nonetheless, they are the exemplifications of an ineffable reality. DGP's rational reconstruction of the Madhyamaka doctrine of the emptiness of emptiness, which entails a contradiction, is meant to be an antidote to this irrational mystical position of Buddhist contradictions. Nonetheless, in the logics of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, which have been the dominant Buddhist logical paradigm since the seventh century, all contradictions are to be rejected. In such logics, when there are contradictory statements, especially when they are unambiguously asserted, we are to take them as prescriptions for silence in the face of the ineffable reality.

Against this suggestion, DGP note that there is an older tradition in which contradictory statements are explicitly taken into account as part of *catuṣkoṭi.* In the logic of *catuṣkoṭi,* DGP argue, contradictions are not to be automatically taken to be absurd. Thus, "[s]ome contradictions may not be absurd, and not all absurdities are contradictions" (p. 401). For DGP, some of the contradictions that are contained in Buddhist texts are examples of non-absurd contradictions.

After rejecting these four approaches to 'defusing' contradictions, DGP conclude that "Buddhisms of certain kinds are committed to dialetheism" (p. 401). More-over, for DGP, some Buddhists provide theoretically robust reasons for accepting dialetheism.

Now to the discussions contained this collection. Each article and DGP's re-sponse are much richer in content than I can describe in this introduction. Thus, in-stead of summarizing each article, I will present what I take to be the main point of contention or disagreement between the authors of the articles and DGP. I do not mean to suggest that this is how the authors and DGP themselves see matters. I some-times bring out a disagreement that I think is important even though it is implicit in the exchange. By presenting what I take to be the main issues, however, I hope to provide a focus to each exchange but also an avenue for future discussion.

Tanaka and DGP

DGP's discussion implicates the Japanese Zen philosopher Dōgen as a dialetheist. Koji Tanaka argues against this. His reason is both philological and philosophical. DGP object to Tanaka's translations of Dōgen's texts, which remove many of the alleged contradictions. However, the more important aspect of their exchange is philosophical. There are two principal disagreements between them.

The first disagreement is that, whereas Tanaka takes Dōgen to be mainly con-cerned with phenomenology, DGP take him to be mainly concerned with ontology. For thinkers such as Heidegger and Husserl, there may not be any significant differ-ence between the two, given that phenomenology may entail ontology and ontology may be provided only in a phenomenological context. The same may be the case for Dōgen. Tanaka, however, emphasizes the cognitive *mode* (and the subjective [or inter-subjective] aspect) of our experiences, and DGP emphasize what our experi-ences are about (the objective aspect). This difference of emphasis seems to permeate their dispute about translation as well.

The second disagreement concerns the structure of the three stages of enlighten-ment. Tanaka argues that the mechanism that supports the first two stages is to be dismantled in the third stage. Thinking, which makes assignments of truth-values pos-sible, keeps asserting itself when we are faced with a mountain, for example. For Tanaka, however, the third stage is the stage where this thinking ceases. DGP, on the other hand, argue that the stage where this dismantling takes place is the second stage. For DGP, everything returns in the third stage as in the first stage, except that it is seen differently because of the first two stages that have to be traversed. Given that the three stages of enlightenment are crucial in understanding Dōgen and Chan/Zen tradition, this may be an important point of contention that needs further discussion.

Ziporyn and DGP

Brook Ziporyn provides a Tiantai view on the issue of contradictions. He argues that, from a Tiantai perspective, DGP understate the role of contradictions because, from

that perspective, *all* statements are contradictory and *all* contradictions are true. He argues for this radical position based on Tiantai's pragmatic approach to truth: what is true is what is conducive to ending suffering. That is, all there is to truth is *upāya* (skillful means). But this pragmatic approach to truth is in tension with DGP's claim that some contradictions appear outside of the context of *upāya*.

Ziporyn argues for his position by claiming that, from a Tiantai perspective, conventional truth and ultimate truth are *identical*. DGP argue that this reading of Tiantai is indefensible. According to them, Zhiyi, the founder of the Tiantai tradition, explains the relationship between the two truths in terms of the relationship among three truths, a relationship characterized as *round fusion* (圓融). DGP argue that, while it is difficult to determine what this relation is, it is not identity since not all characteristics are shared by all three truths.[5] Moreover, Zhiyi's discussions of the relationship between three truths are not metaphorical, not *upāya*, and not *reductio*. Thus, so DGP argue, the contradictions arising from these discussions are genuine dialetheia (sentences or propositions that are both true and false).

Yagisawa and DGP

DGP claim that *reductio* arguments are acceptable for Buddhists in some contexts but not others. Takashi Yagisawa tries to make sense of this claim in order to make DGP's dialetheism more palatable to non-dialetheists. Yagisawa suggests that we distinguish actuality from reality. There are real worlds where the laws of nature are different from the actual world. Similarly, there are worlds where the laws of logic are different and, at some of these worlds, contradictions are true. However, at the actual world, contradictions are not true. Yagisawa's suggestion is, then, that we should understand DGP's Buddhist dialetheism in terms of non-actual logically alternative worlds and not of the actual world.

DGP respond by arguing against Yagisawa's claim that no contradictions are true at the actual world. More importantly, they argue against an appeal to non-actual worlds in order to make sense of Buddhist discourses. DGP point out that Buddhist theoreticians are trying to understand what the actual world is like, and it is important for Mādhyamikas to understand that it is the actual world, and not any other world, that is empty. They conclude that Yagisawa's suggestion to make sense of Buddhist dialetheism fails.

Siderits and DGP

One Buddhist philosopher who appears prominently in DGP's discussion of Buddhist dialetheism is Nāgārjuna. Mark Siderits argues that Nāgārjuna's and his fellow Mādhyamikas' notions of emptiness do not endorse contradictions but, in fact, reject them. Siderits argues for his conclusion based on an exegesis of the relevant texts. The reply from DGP consists, in part, in a contrary exegesis. The principal disagreement between Siderits and DGP concerns what Nāgārjuna (and his Mādhyamika

followers) rejects. Siderits argues that when Nāgārjuna employs the *catuṣkoṭi* he rejects all four *koṭi*s by identifying the claim that things have intrinsic nature as the presupposition common to all the *koṭi*s. For Siderits, this has the effect of refuting the very idea of ultimate truth since there being an ultimate nature of things depends on there being things with intrinsic nature. DGP deny this. They argue that when Nāgārjuna rejects all four *koṭi*s he does so because none of them are ultimately true without refuting the idea of ultimate truth.

This disagreement has an important consequence for evaluating DGP's argument showing that Nāgārjuna was a dialetheist. DGP 2008 argues for the paradoxical conclusion that emptiness is a nature that is no nature from the claim that emptiness is not ultimately real. For Siderits, this inference involves the ultimate truth that emptiness is a description of the nature of reality; however, it is exactly the idea of ultimate truth that is undermined by emptiness.

DGP respond by arguing that Siderits' diagnosis does not remove paradox. One might utter "All things are empty" as a way of defusing the idea of ultimate truth, but this is because that is how things are. Hence, so DGP argue, we should interpret emptiness not in terms of a commitmentless illocutionary negation but as the antidote to mistaking conventional reality for ultimate reality.

Kassor and DGP

Constance Kassor considers not only DGP's interpretation of Madhyamaka but also Tillemans' (2009), according to which the Mādhyamika advocates a weak form of dialetheism: *A* (in one place) and not-*A* (in another place), but never both.[6] It is important to note that this weak form of dialetheism is different from Tsongkhapa's parameterization strategy. The debate between Kassor, Tillemans, and DGP calls attention to Tibetan Mādhyamikas, especially Tsongkhapa and Gorampa. Tillemans argues for his position by referring to Gorampa. Kassor argues, however, that Gorampa's position undermines Tillemans' analysis. According to Kassor, Gorampa distinguishes between twofold contradictions (dilemma) and fourfold contradictions (tetralemma) and argues that parameterization is required for twofold contradictions but not for fourfold contradictions. A consideration of the conjunction p & $\neg p$, however, requires the framework of dilemma and, thus, parameterization. Thus, Tillemans' recourse to Gorampa undermines his analysis.

This consideration of Gorampa has a consequence for DGP's strong dialetheic interpretation of Madhyamaka. Kassor argues that DGP's position is closer to Gorampa's position than to Tsongkhapa's. Gorampa uses *catuṣkoṭi* to refer to the limits of thought without parameterization in the same way that DGP's dialetheic interpretation does. It is not clear how DGP would resist (assuming that they would) Kassor's suggestion that they are Gorampa's followers. What they do disagree about, however, is Kassor's attempt to defuse contradictions at the limits of thought based on Gorampa's fourfold analysis, by suggesting that, since concepts cease to proliferate when we follow the analysis to its conclusion, no contradictions appear at the limit of thought. DGP

show that concepts permeate the realm at the limit of thought in order to conceive of it as being free from conceptual proliferation and, thus, contradictory. Hence, according to DGP, even Gorampa should subscribe to dialetheism.

Tillemans and DGP

Tom Tillemans revisits an earlier article of his, "How do Mādhyamikas Think," which is a response to Garfield and Priest's article "Nāgārjuna and the Limits of Thought." In their article, Garfield and Priest provide a systematic interpretation of Nāgārjuna's Madhyamaka, according to which it is dialetheic. In his article in the present issue, Tillemans asks whether or not there are any systematic advantages for Mādhymikas by interpreting them as dialetheists. Tillemans answers negatively and DGP disagree.

Their exchange raises a number of important issues. The important disagreement concerns whether or not Mādhymikas are quietists. Tillemans understands Mādhymikas to be quietists who (should) remain quiet by suspending all beliefs and assertions. Tillemans argues that an endorsement of a contradiction violates the rejection of the third *koṭi (p & ¬p)*. Hence, so he argues, Mādhyamikas reject the third *koṭi* as well as the contradiction that is entailed by also affirming it.

DGP do not categorically subscribe to this quietist reading of Madhyamaka. They take Mādhyamikas as providing an explanation of emptiness and, as a result, as endorsing some (positive) expressions of emptiness. This endorsement then leads to a commitment to contradictions. According to DGP, Mādhyamikas do express and think about how things are in terms of emptiness. It is just that when they do, they are caught in a contradiction at the limit of expression and thought.

Notes

1 – For a brief introduction to dialetheism, see Graham Priest and Francesco Berto, "Dialetheism," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* Summer 2013 edition, ed. Edward N. Zalta, http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2013/entries/dialetheism/.

2 – For a brief introduction to paraconsistent logic, see Graham Priest, Koji Tanaka, and Zach Weber, "Paraconsistent Logic," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* 2013 edition, http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2013/entries/logic-paraconsistent/.

3 – These are quoted in Yasuo Deguchi, Jay L. Garfield, and Graham Priest, "The Way of the Dialetheist: Contradictions in Buddhism," *Philosophy East and West* 58, no. 3 (2008): 395–402.

4 – This point has been argued for by Garfield and Priest in Jay L. Garfield and Graham Priest, "Nāgārjuna and the Limits of Thought," *Philosophy East and West* 53, no. 1 (2003): 1–21, reprinted in Jay L. Garfield, *Empty Words: Buddhist Philosophy and Cross-Cultural Interpretation* (New York: Oxford University Press,

2002), pp. 86–108, and in Graham Priest, *Beyond the Limits of Thought,* 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), chap. 16.

5 – This point is rigorously argued for by Graham Priest, in Graham Priest, "All is One," in *The Moon Points Back,* ed. Yasuo Deguchi, Jay L. Garfield, Graham Priest, and Koji Tanaka (forthcoming).

6 – Tom J. F. Tillemans, "How do Mādhyamikas Think? Notes on Jay Garfield, Graham Priest and Paraconsistency," in *Pointing at the Moon: Buddhism, Logic, Analytic Philosophy,* ed. Mario D'Amato, Jay L. Garfield, and Tom J. F. Tillemans (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 83–100.

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