

# Beyond Conventional Existence and Fundamental Emptiness: Kuiji's Logical Analysis of Bhāviveka's Two Inferences for the Emptiness of All Dharmas<sup>1</sup>

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**ABSTRACT**—During the sixth century CE, Bhāviveka (c. 500–560 CE), the South Asian Buddhist philosopher, enlisted the ‘three-part inference’ (Sanskrit, hereafter, Skt.: *trairūpya*; Chinese, hereafter, Chi.: *sanzhi zuofa* 三支作法), a form of logical reasoning based in the ‘science of reasons’ (Skt.: *hetuvidyā*; Chi.: *yinming* 因明) to expound the Madhyamaka doctrine of the ‘emptiness’ (Skt.: *śūnyatā*; Chi.: *kongxing* 空性) of all dharmas, the fundamental constituents making up the entirety of reality. In the *Jewel in the Palm of the Hand* (Skt.: *\*Hastaratna*; Chi.: *Zhangzhen lun* 掌珍論), a seminal Madhyamaka treatise preserved only in the seventh-century CE Chinese translation by Xuanzang (602?–664), Bhāviveka formulated two inferences intending to prove that all ‘conditioned dharmas’ (Skt.: *saṃskṛtadharmāḥ*; Chi.: *youwei fa* 有爲法) and ‘unconditioned dharmas’ (Skt.: *asaṃskṛtadharmāḥ*; Chi.: *wuwei fa* 無爲法) are universally empty, in terms of ‘ultimate truth’ (Skt.:

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*paramārthasatya*; Chi.: *shengyi di* 勝義諦). This paper examines how Kuiji 窺基 (632–682), an eminent Sinitic scholar-monk, puts pressure on Bhāviveka’s inferences by contending that they erroneously attribute the property of omnipresent emptiness to all conditioned and all unconditioned dharmas. In his rejoinder to Bhāviveka’s two inferences, Kuiji hews closely to the doctrinal sources of Yogācāra Buddhism in which ‘reality as it really is’ (Skt.: *\*tattva*; Chi.: *zhenshi* 真實) is characterised by an ‘ultimately real nature’ (Skt.: *\*dravyatva*; Chi.: *zhenshi* 實性) that is unconditioned, neither arising, nor ceasing, and neither conventionally existent, nor fundamentally empty.

**KEYWORDS:** Bhāviveka, Kuiji, inference, *trairūpya*, Indian Logic, Madhyamaka

## Introduction

The *Jewel in the Palm of the Hand* (Sanskrit, hereafter, Skt.: *\*Hastaratna*; Chinese, hereafter, Chi.: *Zhangzhen lun* 掌珍論), a śāstra composed in the sixth century by Bhāviveka (c. 500–560 CE), a Buddhist philosopher of likely South Indian descent, illustrates how early Mādhyamika philosophers applied Indic systems of logic and reasoning to formulate doctrinal arguments. In this seminal Madhyamaka treatise, preserved only in the seventh-century CE Chinese translation by the scholar-monk Xuanzang 玄奘 (602?–667), Bhāviveka uses two ‘three-part inferences’ (Skt.: *trairūpya*; Chi.: *sanzhi zuofa* 三支作法) to defend the doctrine of the ‘emptiness’ (Skt.: *śūnyatā*; Chi.: *kongxing* 空性) of all dharmas, the fundamental constituents comprising the entirety of reality. Bhāviveka’s use of the three-part inference demonstrates his deep understanding of the ‘science of reasons’ (Skt.: *hetuvidyā*; Chi.: *yinming* 因明), a system of logic refined by the logician Dignāga (c. 400–480).<sup>2</sup> In his attempt to prove that all ‘conditioned dharmas’ (Skt.: *saṃskṛtadharmāḥ*; Chi.: *youwei fa* 有爲法) and all ‘unconditioned dharmas’ (Skt.: *asaṃskṛtadharmāḥ*; Chi.: *wuwei fa* 無爲法) are universally empty, Bhāviveka employs two *trairūpya* inferences. The first inference intends to prove that all conditioned dharmas

<sup>2</sup> While the five-part model of formal inference, originated within the Brahmanical Nyāya tradition, preexisted him, Dignāga was responsible for streamlining the basic form of the inferential method (*anumāna*), using three, instead of five, parts.

are empty of ‘intrinsic nature’ (Skt.: *svabhāvāḥ*; Chi.: *zixing* 自性) in terms of ‘ultimate truth’ (Skt.: *paramārthasatya*; Chi.: *shengyi di* 勝義諦); the second inference aims to prove that all unconditioned dharmas are empty of ‘causal efficacy’ (Skt.: *kāritra*; Chi.: *zuoyong* 作用) and, therefore, ‘fundamentally unreal’ (Chi.: *wuyou shi* 無有實). The argumentation advanced by Bhāviveka stands as an articulation of the Madhyamaka doctrine of the omnipresent emptiness of the dharmas and offers a clear and vibrant illustration of how the specific rules of the science of reasons, standardised by Dignāga, were used by Mādhyamika authors.

The Abhidharma teachings he argues against draw a basic distinction between conditioned dharmas and unconditioned dharmas. For them, conditioned dharmas are defined as ‘impermanent’ (Skt.: *anitya*; Chi.: *wuchang* 無常), in that they are generated by ‘causes and conditions’ (Skt.: *hetupratyaya*; Chi.: *yinyuan* 因緣), the activities and spatiotemporal contexts of other conditioned dharmas. Conditioned dharmas are understood to possess causal efficacy, the energy required to function as a cause and condition—that is, to activate another dharma. Upon arising, conditioned dharmas abide only long enough so as to discharge a momentary burst of causal efficacy before immediately decaying and ceasing to be.<sup>3</sup> Unconditioned dharmas are defined as ‘perpetually abiding’ (Skt.: *nitya*; Chi.: *changzhu* 常住), in that they are not generated by the causes and conditions of other dharmas and, therefore, do not arise, change, or cease to be; they continually abide and do not serve as either a cause or a condition for any other dharmas. While conditioned dharmas are understood to be modifiable and ‘mutable’ (Chi.: *bianyi* 變異), unconditioned dharmas are regarded as unmodifiable and ‘immutable’ (Chi.: *wu bianyi* 無變異).

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<sup>3</sup> Different Abhidharma theorists diverge over the issue of whether these four stages of alteration—arising, abiding, changing, and ceasing—are incurred by an individual conditioned dharma over one moment (i.e., the present moment), or over two moments (the future and present moments); see Brewster (2021, 28–30). Ronkin (2018) comments on the traditional objection to the view that an individual conditioned dharma withstands four stages of alteration in a single present moment in time: ‘That a single event undergoes four phases within a given moment, inevitably infringes upon its momentariness.’ However, it is important to point out that for Sarvāstivāda theorists such as Saṅghabhadra (fl. c. fifth–sixth century), conditioned dharmas arise in the future (T°), before abiding, changing, and ceasing in the present moment (T<sup>1</sup>). Sarvāstivāda theorists envision a moment as consisting in a finite, though meagre, temporal duration equivalent to 0.013333 of second; see Sanderson (1994, 42).

In his argumentation for the omnipresent emptiness of all dharmas, Bhāviveka hews to Madhyamaka teachings regarding the characterisation of the conditioned dharmas as ultimately lacking in intrinsic nature, the fundamental core of a dharma that makes it ‘ultimately real’ (Skt.: *paramārthasat*; Chi.: *shengyi you* 勝義有) according to Abhidharma doctrine. For Bhāviveka, while conditioned dharmas possess a causal efficacy that validates their existence in conventional reality, unconditioned dharmas are not causally productive in that they are defined as lacking causal efficacy and are therefore ultimately non-existent. In the *Jewel in the Palm of the Hand*, Bhāviveka uses two three-part inferences to argue: firstly, that all conditioned dharmas are empty of intrinsic nature in terms of ‘ultimate truth’ (Skt.: *paramārthasatya*; Chi.: *zhendi* 真諦, *shengyi di* 勝義諦); and secondly, that all unconditioned dharmas, because they lack causal efficacy, are fundamentally unreal. Using two inferences, Bhāviveka concludes that all dharmas are empty of intrinsic nature. Following the rules of the science of reasons, Bhāviveka determines that emptiness is a universal property exemplified equally by all dharmas and thus ‘omnipresent’ (Chi.: *zhoubian* 周遍) throughout the universe.

In advancing his two inferences for omnipresent emptiness, Bhāviveka follows Nāgārjuna’s doctrine of two truths that denies the Abhidharma doctrine of the fundamental existence of dharmas as the ultimately real constituents making up the entirety of reality.<sup>4</sup> For Nāgārjuna, conventional truth designates the provisional existence of composites made up of individual dharmas with intrinsic natures; ultimate truth designates the emptiness of composites and individual dharmas of inherent existence, making them separate from the myriad causes and conditions that produce them. Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma thinkers envision dharmas—conditioned and unconditioned—as the ultimately real and indivisible constituents of reality as it really is by virtue of possessing intrinsic natures that are not borrowed

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<sup>4</sup> Siderits (2007, 182) characterises the Abhidharma teachings on two truths as based upon a ‘metaphysical’ reading of the two truths, wherein conventional truth provides an account for conventional reality populated by composite wholes and other conceptual fictions, and ultimate truth provides an account of the ‘ultimate nature of reality’. By contrast, Siderits describes the Madhyamaka doctrine of two truths as based upon ‘the rejection of the idea of ultimate truth’ and characterises this doctrine—as it rejects the notion that ultimate truth designates any mind-independent ultimate reality that is the way it is no matter what—as fundamentally anti-realist. He also describes it as ‘semantic non-dualism’ in that, ultimately, there is only one kind of truth—conventional truth.

from other entities. In upholding the Madhyamaka doctrine of the two truths, Bhāviveka proposes that the dharmas that comprise the phenomenal world ‘exist’ (Skt.: *sat*; Chi.: *you* 有) as discrete entities with intrinsic natures and distinct causal efficacies according to a conventional truth based on the force of mental construction, while they ‘do not exist’ (Skt.: *asat*; Chi.: *wu* 無) as discrete entities according to an ultimate truth that designates dharmas as ‘empty’ (Skt.: *śūnya*; Chi.: *kong* 空) of any intrinsic nature not borrowed from the myriad of causes and conditions that produce them.

Roughly a century after Bhāviveka flourished, Kuiji 窺基 (632–682)—an eminent disciple of Xuanzang—examined the Madhyamaka doctrine of the omnipresent emptiness of dharmas. Immersed in the analyses and translations of several Indic treatises, including the *Jewel in the Palm of the Hand*, Kuiji took issue with Bhāviveka’s understanding that all dharmas—conditioned and unconditioned—are ultimately empty. Enlisting the same rules of *hetuvidyā* as used by Bhāviveka, Kuiji argued that the two three-part inferences employed by Bhāviveka to prove the omnipresent emptiness of dharmas in fact lead to the conclusion that the ineffable reality comprised by all dharmas cannot be determined as either ‘empty’ or ‘non-empty’ (Skt.: *aśūnya*; Chi.: *bukong* 不空). In his attempted refutation of Bhāviveka’s proof of the emptiness of all dharmas, Kuiji upholds the Yogācāra teaching that ultimate reality cannot be characterised in terms of a polarity between emptiness and existence.

### **Bhāviveka’s Two Inferences for the Emptiness of All Dharmas**

The Chinese translation of the *Jewel in the Palm of the Hand* opens with a single stanza, rendered by Xuanzang into five-characters-per-line Chinese verse (Chi.: *wuyan shi* 五言詩) that encapsulates the two inferences for the emptiness of all dharmas. The treatise is organised into two fascicles: the first devoted to an analysis of the inference for the emptiness of all conditioned dharmas and the second dedicated to that of the inference for emptiness of all unconditioned dharmas. Because the original Sanskrit version of the *Jewel in the Palm of the Hand* has not survived, the Chinese translation put together by Xuanzang with his disciples stands as an important record of Bhāviveka’s use of the science of reasons to advance the Madhyamaka doctrine of omnipresent emptiness.

As presented in the Chinese translation, Bhāviveka structures his opening argument to prove the emptiness of all dharmas into two three-part inferences, which strictly adhere to the rules of *hetuvidyā*, standardised by Dignāga,

wherein deductive and inductive forms of reasoning are employed to validate a thesis. A formal inference is comprised of at least three parts:<sup>5</sup> a ‘thesis’ (Skt.: *pratijñā*; Chi.: *zong* 宗), a ‘reason’ (Skt.: *hetu*; Chi.: *yin* 因), and a ‘concordant example’ (Skt.: *sapakṣa*; Chi.: *tongpin* 同品). For example, to prove the thesis that there is a fire on a mountain, both a reason for inferring the presence of fire on the mountain (such as the appearance of smoke on the mountain) and a concordant example of something that has both the properties of fire and smoke (such a cooking fire in a kitchen) must be provided.

As mentioned above, a valid *trairūpya* inference is comprised of at least three parts:

1. The thesis: A statement in which the ‘target property’ (Skt.: *sādhya*dharma; Chi.: *suoli fa* 所立法), which is the property to be inferred (the presence of fire), is ascribed to the ‘property-possessor’ (Skt.: *dharmī*; Chi.: *youfa* 有法), which is the bearer of the target property (the mountain).
2. The reason: A statement in which the ‘inferring property’ (Skt.: *sādhana*dharma; Chi.: *nengli fa* 能立法), which is the basis upon which the target property is inferred (the presence of smoke), is ascribed to the property-possessor (the mountain).
3. The concordant example: An ‘example’ (Skt.: *drṣṭānta*; Chi.: *yu* 喻), such as a cooking fire in the kitchen, exemplifies the coincidence of both the inferring property (the presence of smoke) and the target property to be inferred (the presence of fire).

According to the rules of *hetuvidyā*, if a reason ascribing a particular inferring property to a property-possessor (the mountain) within a thesis is to be considered valid, three conditions must be met:

1. The inferring property (the presence of smoke) of the reason is exemplified by the property-possessor (the mountain) of the thesis.

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<sup>5</sup> For a concise summary of secondary scholarship analyzing the debates in classical Indic Buddhism regarding whether a ‘negative example’ (*vipakṣa*) is also required in all cases, see Westerhoff (2018, 229-230, n. 47) in which he points out that very early Indic discussions of formal inference do not mention the negative example.

2. The concordant example (the cooking fire in the kitchen) exemplifies both the target property to be inferred (the presence of fire) and the inferring property (the presence of smoke).
3. The inferring property of the reason (the presence of smoke) is not exemplified in any other examples lacking the target property to be proven (the presence of smoke does not occur in the absence of fire).<sup>6</sup>

Bhāviveka's two inferences to disprove the fundamentally real existence of conditioned and unconditioned dharmas as the impartite entities that make up the entirety of the universe are formulated as follows:<sup>7</sup>

**Inference one:**

真性有爲空  
緣生故  
如幻

Thesis: Ultimately, conditioned dharmas are empty.

Reason: Because they are dependently arisen.

Concordant example: Like an illusion (Skt.: \**māyāvat*).

**Inference two:**

無爲無真實  
不起故  
如空華

Thesis: Ultimately,<sup>8</sup> unconditioned dharmas are not intrinsically

<sup>6</sup> These are the three characteristics of an inferential sign (*liṅga*) or of a reason as stipulated by Dignāga: 1) *pakṣadharmatva*, 2) *tattulye sadbhāva*, and 3) *asati nāstitā*; see Hayes (1988, 239–242).

<sup>7</sup> See *Jewel in the Palm of the Hand* (T30, no. 1578, 268b21–b22). La Vallée Poussin (1933, 70, n. 1) has reconstructed the Sanskrit of the two inferences as follows: *tattvataḥ saṃskṛtāḥ śūnyā māyāvat pratyayodbhavāḥ | asaṃskṛtās tv asadbhūtā anutpādāt khapuṣpavat ||*.

<sup>8</sup> In the second inference, the qualifier 'ultimately' (Skt.: \**tattvatas*; \**paramārthatas*; Chi.: \**zhenxing* 真性) is understood to be implied, *metri causa*, and therefore not explicitly stated in the opening verse of Bhāviveka's *Jewel in the Hand*. He (2015) and La Vallée Poussin (1933, 70) reconstruct the corresponding Sanskrit as *tattvatas*, while Moro (2020, 295) reconstructs it as *paramārthatas*.

real entities.

Reason: Because they do not (causally) arise or produce.

Concordant example: Like a sky-flower (Skt.: \**khapuṣpavat*).<sup>9</sup>

In the first inference, Bhāviveka reasons that, if the target property—being empty—is to be proven to inhere in all conditioned dharmas, then being ‘dependently arisen’ (Chi.: *yuansheng* 緣生) must be positively concomitant with, or ‘pervade’ (Skt.: *vyāp*; Chi.: *bian* 遍),<sup>10</sup> all entities that are empty. Furthermore, the concordant example—‘like an illusion’—must exemplify both the target property of being empty and the inferring property of being dependently arisen. Because illusory entities exemplify both the properties of being empty and dependently arisen, the first inference is considered valid.

In the second inference, Bhāviveka further contends that if the target property of being fundamentally unreal is to be proven to inhere in all unconditioned dharmas then ‘not arising’ (Chi.: *buqi* 不起)<sup>11</sup> must pervade the class of all entities that are fundamentally unreal. Since the concordant example of ‘like a sky-flower’ exemplifies the target property of being fundamentally unreal and the inferring property of not arising, the second inference is considered valid.

Taken together, the two inferences attempt to prove that conditioned and unconditioned dharmas are empty (in that they are, in the first example, like illusions that arise dependently) and, in the second example, fundamentally unreal (in that they do not arise in the first place). Because conditioned dharmas possess causal efficacy, yet do not possess intrinsic natures that ultimately exist, they can be regarded as empty, just like illusions. Because unconditioned

<sup>9</sup> Insofar as a flower does not spontaneously arise in the sky, a sky-flower is likened to an unconditioned dharma which neither arises nor possesses the power to produce anything else, even conventionally.

<sup>10</sup> Bhāviveka follows the rules of *hetuvidyā*, systematised by Dignāga, in which ‘pervasion’ (*vyāpti*) is taken to mean that the inferring property of the reason applies to a broader class of entities than the property-possessor does. Thus, the property-possessor should be pervaded by the inferring property, but not vice versa. For this definition of *vyāpti*, see Fong (2015, 23) and Katsura (1986, 62).

<sup>11</sup> See *Jewel in the Palm of the Hand*: ‘What is not causally productive is commonly known in ordinary cognition. Its nature is fundamentally unreal. It can be likened to a sky-flower.’ 諸不起者，愚智同知。其性無實，猶如空花。 (T30, no. 1578, p. 273, c15–c16); ‘spatiality (*ākāśa*) is established as not even really existent in terms of conventional truth, as it does not arise, just like a sky-flower.’ 若就世俗，所立虛空亦非實有，以不起故，猶如空花 (T30, no. 1578, p. 273, c28).



dharma neither arise nor possess causal efficacy to produce effects, they are also regarded as empty. Thus, by way of two inferences, Bhāviveka has given the outline of his proof of the Madhyamaka thesis that all conditioned and unconditioned dharmas are universally empty.

### **Bhāviveka on the Inference for the Emptiness of All Conditioned Dharmas**

In the prose commentary to the first inference, located within the first fascicle of the *Jewel in the Palm of the Hand*, Bhāviveka defines the property-possessor—all conditioned dharmas—to be comprised of ‘twelve sense-loci’ (Skt.: *āyatana*; Chi.: *chu* 處), that is, the ‘six sense faculties’ (Skt.: *ṣaḍāyatana*; Chi.: *liugen* 六根) and the six types of corresponding sensory objects. Bhāviveka stipulates, however, that the four types of mental objects that correspond to the cognitive field of the sixth sense, the ‘mental faculty’ (Skt.: *manas*; Chi.: *yigen* 意根), fall outside the scope of the property-possessor of all conditioned dharmas. The four types of mental objects include: ‘spatiality’ (Skt.: *ākāśa*; Chi.: *xukong* 虛空), ‘cessation realised through analytical meditation’ (Skt.: *pratisaṃkhyānirodha*; Chi.: *zemie* 擇滅), ‘cessation realised without analytical meditation’ (Skt.: *apratisaṃkhyānirodha*; Chi.: *fei zemie* 非擇滅), and ‘thusness’ (reality as it really is; Skt.: *tathatā*; Chi.: *zhenru* 真如).<sup>12</sup> Bhāviveka determines that these four types of mental objects are within the scope of the property-possessor of the unconditioned dharmas and addresses them in the second inference.

Bhāviveka states that in the thesis of the first inference, he deliberately chooses the qualifier ‘ultimately’ (Skt.: *\*paramārthatas*, *\*tattvatas*; Chi.: *zhenxing* 真性) to indicate that the emptiness of the conditioned dharmas can be validated in terms of an ultimate truth, and not merely a conventional truth that conforms to the ordinary sense perception of things composed of conditioned dharmas. In terms of the conventional truth of conditioned dharmas, Bhāviveka understands that both individual conditioned dharmas, and composite entities

<sup>12</sup> In his *Jewel in the Palm of the Hand*, Bhāviveka stipulates that the reference of the property-possessor in his first inference excludes only these four types of mental objects: ‘Conditioned’ means produced and formed by a myriad of conditions. It refers to the twelve sense-loci. It only excludes one part of the locus of the dharmas (i.e., mental objects of the mental faculty)—i.e., spatiality, cessation realised through analysis, cessation realised without analysis, and thusness. 眾緣合成有所造作故名有為, 即十二處, 唯除法處一分虛空、擇非擇滅及真如性 (T1578.30.268c14–15).

that are comprised of multiple conditioned dharmas, have functions that are perceived through the senses, and therefore can be verified as conventionally existent. By using ‘ultimately’ in the thesis, Bhāviveka, eliminates the possibility that the emptiness of the conditioned dharmas could be invalidated by the commonplace perceptions of the conditioned dharmas as conventionally real.

His prose auto-commentary on the first inference is encapsulated in the opening stanza and reads:

此中世間同許有者，自亦許為世俗有，故世俗現量生起因緣亦許有。故眼等有為世俗諦攝，牧牛人等皆共了知，眼等有為是實有故。勿違如是自宗所許、現量共知，故以真性簡別立宗。真義自體說名真性，即勝義諦。就勝義諦立有為空，非就世俗。<sup>13</sup>

Here [in the first inference] what is granted to exist among ordinary folk in the world is also granted by the disputant to exist conventionally. Therefore, the causes and conditions that produce direct perception at the conventional level are also believed to exist. Hence, the existence of the visual faculty, etc., is subsumed under the conventional truth. This is because of the fact that cowherders, etc., all know that existents such as the visual faculty, etc., really exist. So as not to violate what is thus granted in the disputant’s own tradition, and commonly known via direct perception, we thus use the qualifier ‘ultimately’ to restrict the thesis that is established [in the first inference]. Reality as it really is, is designated by the qualifier ‘ultimately’, and is identical to the ultimate truth. It is in terms of ultimate truth that existence is proven to be ‘empty’, *not* in terms of conventional truth.

In this passage, Bhāviveka defends his using ‘ultimately’ as a ‘specifying phrase’ (Chi.: *jianbie ci* 簡別詞) to restrict the scope of the entire thesis of the first inference. He states that the temporary existence of conditioned dharmas can be perceived by the senses and is therefore subsumed under conventional truth. Therefore, to eliminate the possibility of invalidating ordinary sense perception based upon the conventional existence of impartite dharmas and the composite entities made up of conditioned dharmas, Bhāviveka restricts the thesis to the ultimate truth of the emptiness of conditioned dharmas.

<sup>13</sup> T1578.30.268c8–13.

According to the rules of *hetuvidyā* systematised by Dignāga, non-existent entities cannot serve as property-possessors as they, by definition, cannot possess properties. By using ‘ultimately’ as a qualifier, Bhāviveka avoids the error of ascribing a property to a conventionally non-existent property-possessor (Fong 2019, 797). Bhāviveka thus meets the requirement that the existence of the property-possessor of all conditioned dharmas is *not* negated in terms of conventional truth. While Bhāviveka grants that all conditioned dharmas exist conventionally, he denies that they possess an intrinsic reality in terms of ultimate truth. He is thus in a position to argue that ultimately empty entities can serve as property-possessors that bear tangible properties in terms of conventional truth.

In his commentary on the first inference, Bhāviveka makes two overarching points: First, that both conditioned dharmas and the composites made of dharmas that comprise conditioned reality can be perceived; secondly, that conditioned dharmas and the composites made of dharmas are not ultimately real. He argues in the *Jewel in the Palm of the Hand* that both conditioned dharmas and composites of dharmas are ultimately ‘like an illusion’ (Skt.: \**māyāvat*; Chi.: *ru huan* 如幻), in that they ultimately lack intrinsic natures that differentiate them as entities that exist separately from the myriad of causes and conditions that produce them:

眾緣所起男、女、羊、鹿諸幻事等，自性實無，顯現似有。所立、能立法皆通有，為同法喻，故說如幻。隨其所應，假說所立、能立法同，假說同故，不可一切同喻上法，皆難令有。如說女面端嚴如月，不可難令一切月法皆面上有。<sup>14</sup>

Illusory entities produced by the myriad of conditions such as ‘deer’, ‘lamb’, ‘man’, ‘woman’, etc., are devoid of intrinsic natures. They are [mere] appearance and [only] seeming existence. The target property to be inferred (i.e., ‘being empty’) and the inferring property of the reason (‘being dependently arisen’) are both present and share the same target property [dharma] (i.e., lacking an intrinsic nature) as the concordant example [*drṣṭānta*] (i.e., ‘like an illusion’), therefore [conditioned dharmas] are said to be ‘like an illusion’. According to the requirements [of this logical system of

<sup>14</sup> T1578.30.268c20–25.

*hetuvidyā*], the concordant example, shares the same property as the inferring property and the property to be inferred. In that they share precisely this property [of lacking intrinsic nature] with the concordant example, you can't fault us that [the inferring property and the property to be inferred] must share all of the properties of the concordant example. If someone says that a woman has a face that is beautiful like the moon, you can't fault them in that not all the properties of the moon are present in her face.

Throughout his analysis of the first inference, Bhāviveka takes a consistently anti-realist stance regarding the fundamentally illusory nature of composite entities such as 'deer', 'lamb', 'men', or 'women'. He also rejects the fundamentally real existence of impartite dharmas that possess unique intrinsic natures of their own. Because Bhāviveka denies the intrinsic reality of both composite entities and the individual dharmas that comprise them, Fong notes that '... the claim that some conditioned things are more real than others is untenable.'<sup>15</sup> Precisely because they lack intrinsic natures that are uniquely their own or render them as distinct from the myriad of causes and conditions of all other conditioned dharmas, for Bhāviveka, all conditioned entities are no different from illusions.

### **Bhāviveka on the Inference for the Emptiness of All Unconditioned Dharmas**

In his second inference, Bhāviveka aims to prove the unreality of unconditioned dharmas in terms of ultimate truth. In the commentary—although he contends that unconditioned dharmas are ultimately 'non-existent entities' (Chi.: *wuyou shi* 無有事)—Bhāviveka posits unconditioned dharmas as existent entities in terms of conventional truth. He reclaims the four mental objects that he eliminated from the property-possessor of all conditioned dharmas and ascribes them as part of the property-possessor of all unconditioned dharmas. In the second inference 'all unconditioned dharmas' are established as a conventionally existing property-possessor based upon the 'power of mutual designation' (Chi.: *gongxu li* 共許力):

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<sup>15</sup> Fong (2015, 181) elaborates: 'This is not because these things all have an inherent existence. It is rather because they all lack an inherent existence. In the opponents' words, they all lack the nature of a real thing, which is real because of its possession of an inherent nature or an ultimate existence.'

想施設力許有假立虛空等故，不顯差別，由共許力總立有法，差別遮遣非所共知立為宗法，彼不起等共所了知立為因法，是故無有立宗、因過。所說空花雖無有事，是不起等法之有法，無性性故，由是能成所成立義，故無有法不成過失。<sup>16</sup>

Because the power of designation of the mind is granted to provisionally establish [dharma]s such as] spatiality, etc., without specifying their particular properties (\**viśeṣa*). Through the power of mutual designation, the property-possessor (i.e., all unconditioned dharma]s) is established as a general concept. It specifies and negates that which is not cognised as established in the target property of the subject-locus (\**pakṣadharmā*). That which is generally known not to causally arise [or produce] is established as the target property to be inferred (\**sādhya*dharmā). For this reason, there is no logical error in the subject-locus (\**pakṣābhāsa*) or in the reason (\**hetvabhāsa*). Although sky-flowers are non-existent entities, the target property (dharma) [to be proven], ‘being [causally] unproductive’ inheres in the property-possessor because the intrinsic nature [of the property-possessor] is the absence of intrinsic nature. Thus, the inferring (*sādhana*) and inferred properties (*sādhya*) are both established and therefore there is no error of the property-possessor being unestablished (\**asiddha*).

Unlike his Ābhidharmika and Yogācāra opponents, who envision unconditioned dharma]s as ultimately real,<sup>17</sup> Bhāviveka views the unconditioned

<sup>16</sup> T30n1578\_p0274b11–15.

<sup>17</sup> The position that unconditioned dharma]s are ultimately real is attested in Yogācāra sources that survive in Chinese. For example, Xuanzang’s translation of \**Asvabhāva*’s \**Mahāyāna-saṃgrahabhāṣya* (Chi.: *She Dasheng lun shi* 攝大乘論釋) cites a passage, ascribed to the \**Mahāprajñāparāmitāsūtra* (Chi.: *Da bore boluomiduo jing* 大般若波羅蜜多經), which contains Śākyamuni Buddha’s teaching to Maitreya (Chi.: *Cishi* 慈氏) that the ‘thoroughly-real nature’ (Chi.: *yuancheng shixing* 圓成實性; Skt.: *pariṇiṣpannasvabhāva*)—the nature of the dharma]s as they really are, free from distorting mental superimpositions—consists in ‘ultimately real existence’ (Chi.: *zhenshi you* 真實有): ‘The imputational nature is absolutely non-existent. The other-dependent nature is merely names, concepts, designations, and verbalisations. The thoroughly-real nature consisting in emptiness and the absence of selves, is ultimately real existence.’ 諸遍計所執性決定非有。諸依他起性，唯有名想施設言說。諸圓成實空無我性，是真實有 (T1598.31.382c7–9). This particular passage does not appear to be paralleled in the

dharma as causally unproductive and, ultimately, unreal. Because the sky-flower neither arises nor engenders anything else, it is taken by Bhāviveka in his second inference to be a positive example that exemplifies both the target property of emptiness and the inferring property of being neither causally produced nor productive.

For Bhāviveka, the unconditioned dharmas included in the taxonomies of his Buddhist interlocutors are merely erroneously cognised conditioned dharmas and lack intrinsic reality. As Fong (2019, 800) describes: ‘Bhāviveka shows that, in some circumstances, unconditioned things are in fact conditioned things which are erroneously conceptualised as unconditioned. To him, they are actually conventional realities.’ Bhāviveka regards unconditioned dharmas as misconstrued conditioned dharmas that exist with intrinsic natures in terms of conventional truth. For example, he regards spatiality as lacking intrinsic nature as it simply consists in the absence of a physically resistant entity in a particular spatio-temporal locus. In other words, the occurrence of space is merely a particular occurrence of non-resistance. As non-resistance merely consists in the absence of physical resistance, it is not a real entity possessing a distinct causal efficacy. Spatiality cannot be a real cause because nothing can be a cause that does not have a real effect. The absence of physical resistance does not produce any tangible sensation in the observer. Nor can spatiality be an effect, as nothing could be the cause of the absence of physical resistance in the environment, as absences are not created. For example, the hammer blow does not create the cessation or absence of the existence of the pot. Bhāviveka reasons that because spatiality itself is neither cause nor effect, it is a pseudo-entity that does not ‘arise’ in the first place.

Yogācāra doctrine maintains that both thusness and the non-conceptual cognition that directly discerns thusness correspond to the inexpressible ultimate truth. For Kuiji, who upholds the Yogācāra position, ultimate reality exists and is ultimately real. By contrast, Bhāviveka denies the existence of any ultimate reality beyond the constant flux of conditioned dharmas. Ultimately, emptiness itself—the ‘cognitive object’ (Skt.: *ālambana*; Chi.: *suoyuan* 所緣) of putative non-conceptual cognition—is ‘empty’ of intrinsic reality; it is a

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Tibetan rendering of \*Asvabhāva’s commentary, made by Jinamitra, Śilendrabodhi and Ye-shes-sde (D 4051). I have been unable to locate the source of this particular passage in the body of Prajñāparāmitā literature extant in Chinese.

mere concept and is not ultimately real.<sup>18</sup> By identifying the cognitive object of non-conceptual cognition as conditioned in nature, Bhāviveka refutes the Yogācāra doctrine that non-conceptual cognition has thusness—defined as an unconditioned dharma—as its cognitive object.<sup>19</sup> He writes in his *Jewel in the Palm of the Hand* that thusness as an ultimately existent ‘unconditioned dharma’ is a misnomer:

於唯無有一切, 所執立為真如.<sup>20</sup>

Thusness is simply posited on the basis of nothing but the absence of all [dharmas].

Thus, the postulate of thusness—defined as neither arising nor ceasing—is predicated upon the negation of the existence of all dharmas that arise and cease. Bhāviveka further argues that the putative non-conceptual cognition of thusness, believed to correspond to ultimate truth in Yogācāra doctrine, is in actuality conceptual cognition of emptiness:

緣真如智非真出世無分別智, 有所緣故, 及有為故, 如世緣智.<sup>21</sup>

The discernment which has thusness as its cognitive object (*ālambana*) is not authentic supramundane cognition, since it has a cognitive object, and because it is conditioned. Just like cognition of worldly conditions.

Bhāviveka reasons that if the non-conceptual discernment taught in Yogācāra doctrine could cognise or directly realise thusness, it would cease to be non-conceptual, as it would bear a cognitive object which always involves conceptualisation; it would therefore be conditioned, like other cognitions based on mundane conditions. For Bhāviveka, the realisation of emptiness neither

<sup>18</sup> In his *Jewel in the Palm of the Hand*, Bhāviveka formulates this argument in the form of a three-part inference: ‘The thusness of the other tradition (i.e., Yogācāra) is not ultimately real, since it is a cognitive object, just like physical stuff (*rūpa*), etc.’ 又彼真如非真勝義, 是所緣故, 猶如色等 (T1578.30.274c13–14).

<sup>19</sup> Fong (2015, 51) writes: ‘For Madhyamaka holds that ultimate existence is not possible; the former being a discriminative knowledge of emptiness, both itself and its object are also refuted as real ultimately.’

<sup>20</sup> *Jewel in the Palm of the Hand*, T1578.30.274b10.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, T1578.30.274c5–c7.

arises nor ceases and is therefore without an image. It is not seen in terms of ordinary perception involving the duality of ‘grasper’ and ‘grasped’, ‘inside’ and ‘outside’. Bhāviveka thus upholds the Madhyamaka doctrine wherein emptiness is itself ‘empty’ of intrinsic reality. As Westerhoff (2018, 204) describes: ‘Because emptiness itself is empty, there is no bottom level we could postulate that is not conceptually imputed on something else and that could therefore act as an objective foundation of all that exists in the world.’ Bhāviveka is adamant that both thusness, and the non-conceptual cognition which is believed by his Yogācāra opponents to access it, are part of conditioned reality.

### **Bhāviveka on the Omission of the Discordant Example (Vipakṣa)**

Typically, the logical form of the three-part ‘inference for others’ (Skt.: *parārthānumāna*; Chi.: *ta biliang* 他比量)<sup>22</sup> includes a ‘discordant example’ (Skt.: *vipakṣa*; Chi.: *yipin* 異品) that exemplifies neither the target property to be inferred nor the inferring property. The discordant example is included in order to demonstrate that the property to be inferred and the inferring property are absent in all entities that do not possess the target property to be inferred.<sup>23</sup> In the example of the smoke on the mountain, the discordant example provided by the disputant would be ‘like a lake’, because a lake fails to exemplify the possibility of the presence of either smoke or fire. Quite notably, the two three-part inferences constructed by Bhāviveka do not, according to the rules of the ‘inference for others’ laid down by Dignāga, include the standard discordant example.

Matilal (1970, 83)<sup>24</sup> and Westerhoff (2018, 144–145), make the trenchant

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<sup>22</sup> Dignāna argued that there are two kinds of formal inferences: Inferences ‘for oneself’ (*svārthānumāna*) and inferences ‘for others’ (*parārthānumāna*). In essence, the former are inferences enacted in one’s own mind to obtain inferential knowledge of some matter, and do not require adducing both a positive and a negative example to be considered valid. The latter are inferences set forth in a public context so that another individual can use them to acquire their own inferential knowledge based on them and require adducing both a positive and a negative example to be considered valid. For this twofold analytical distinction in Dignāga’s theory of inference, see Westerhoff (2018, 227–229).

<sup>23</sup> According to Dignāga, the basic purpose of discordant examples is to indicate the dissimilar instances, which neither exemplify the target property to be inferred as inhering in the property-possessor nor the inferring property. This is in order to exclude these dissimilar instances from the domain of positive instances, which instead may exemplify the inferring property. See Katsura (1986, 63–65).

<sup>24</sup> Matilal (1970, 83) argues that for Madhyamaka Buddhist doctrine, the usage of conceptual fictions—or ultimately ‘empty’ terms in the thesis (*pakṣa*) of inferences—is valid: ‘... it is possible



point that a discordant example cannot—based upon the reason that it is dependently arisen based on a myriad of impermanent causes and conditions—be provided in a three-part inference intended to prove the emptiness of all conditioned dharmas. They reason that, if all conditioned entities are understood to be empty of intrinsic natures (according to Madhyamaka doctrine), and there are no conditioned entities that possess intrinsic natures but are not empty, then a discordant example of a conditioned dharma that is not empty cannot be provided.

Bhāviveka anticipates the counterargument of a lacking discordant example. He reasons that, because all discordant examples necessary to prove the emptiness of the dharmas have already been proven to be empty—via individual inferences that are intended to prove the emptiness of each and every individual dharma—then the requirement of a discordant example is moot. Therefore, Bhāviveka’s omission of discordant examples in his two inferences is intentional and legitimate.<sup>25</sup>

In his *Jewel in the Palm of the Hand*, Bhāviveka argues that the purpose of discordant examples is to eliminate via the process of ‘negation’ (Chi.: *zhe 遮*)<sup>26</sup> any potential counterexamples of entities that would exemplify the inferring property—but not the property to be inferred—thus invalidating his inferences by revealing the lack of ‘positive concomitance’ (Skt.: *anvaya*; Chi.: *he 合*) between the inferring property and the property to be inferred:

為遮異品, 立異法喻, 異品無故, 遮義已成, 是故不說。

An example with discordant properties (Skt.: *\*vaidharmyadrṣṭānta*; Chi.: *yifayu* 異法喻) is established in order to negate discordant

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to talk about fictitious objects or empty properties because, otherwise, one cannot even deny successfully their existence.’

<sup>25</sup> Fong (2015, 43) argues: ‘As there is no locus for the properties “not empty” and “real” to occur in, the second characteristic is secured while the third characteristic has become impossible.’

<sup>26</sup> Fong (2015, 43) notes: ‘This elimination is achieved by non-implicative negation, which negates without implying the affirmation of the opposite of what is negated.’ That is, the existence of each and every conditioned and unconditioned dharma as an ultimately real constituent of reality is negated without implying ‘the existence of its absence’ (Skt.: *abhāvabhāva*). See Keira (2004, 30), who points out that the usage of implicative negation in the context of Madhyamaka thought would ‘... lead to the nihilist extreme, where the negation becomes an absolute reality—the subtle point of Mādhyamika philosophy is always that neither the affirmation nor negation of things is ultimate.’

examples. Since there are no discordant examples with the process of the negation [of the intrinsic reality of all dharmas] being completed, discordant examples are not mentioned.

According to Bhāviveka, there are no legitimate discordant examples sufficient to disprove either of his inferences; namely, entities which are produced by impermanent causes and conditions but are not empty, or which are not causally productive but are real.

### **Bhāviveka on the Conventional and Ultimate Truths of All Dharmas**

Bhāviveka's two inferences aim to prove that the dharmas are, without exception, empty of any 'fundamentally real nature' (Skt.: *\*dravyatva*; Chi.: *shixing* 實性) and produced by the mental force of conceptual construction. Bhāviveka adheres to the inherited Abhidharma definition of the real nature of dharmas in terms of causal efficacy, the energy required to achieve their characteristic functions. However, by way of two inferences, he dispels with the Abhidharma tenet that the individual dharmas are ultimately real entities owing to their fundamentally real intrinsic natures that are not borrowed from other dharmas. In combating the Abhidharma ontological tenet ascribing ultimate reality to impartite dharmas with intrinsically real cores, Bhāviveka stresses that all reality that the individual dharmas possess flows from their status as mere conventions—conceptual fictions that nonetheless possess functional efficacy.<sup>27</sup> For Bhāviveka, individual dharmas are no more real than the composite entities they serve as the basis of—such as 'jars', 'chariots', 'armies', or 'forests'. While composite wholes derive the entirety of their causal efficacy from their constituent parts, individual dharmas derive the entirety of their causal efficacy from the myriad of causes and conditions that generate them. For Bhāviveka, in the final analysis, both individual dharmas and composites are essentially conceptual constructions,

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<sup>27</sup> As Westerhoff (2018, 117) describes, Nāgārjuna's Madhyamaka doctrine of the universal emptiness of all dharmas of intrinsic natures does not deny that dharmas possess causal efficacy: 'Nāgārjuna stresses the fact that even though things like chariots and pots are neither fundamentally real nor based on something fundamentally real, they can still perform various functions such as carrying wood or water.' Westerhoff points to the example of fiat currency, which has no intrinsic value nor is based upon anything with intrinsic value, but nonetheless can serve as a valid medium of exchange by relying on the beliefs and expectations of the participants in economic exchanges.

and are as fundamentally unreal as the illusory hairs superimposed on the moon by an eye stricken with cataracts.<sup>28</sup> However, for Bhāviveka, although the existence of discrete dharmas with intrinsic natures is ultimately illusory, that does not mean that the dharmas are ‘absolutely non-existent’ or pseudo-entities like the ‘son of a barren woman’.<sup>29</sup> Conditioned dharmas produced by impermanent causes and conditions nonetheless exist conventionally and are able to produce effects and to causally interact with other dharmas; otherwise, they are absolutely non-existent (i.e., even conventionally).

### Kuiji’s Yogācāra Counterargument to Bhāviveka’s Two Inferences for the Emptiness of All Dharmas

A century later in his *Study Notes on the Treatise Demonstrating Nothing but Consciousness* (Chi.: *Cheng weishi lun shuji* 成唯識論述記), Kuiji contends that the two inferences of Bhāviveka are founded on a ‘mistaken interpretation of the doctrine of emptiness’ (Skt.: *\*durgrhītā śūnyatā*; Chi.: *equ kong* 惡取空). In his attempted refutation of Bhāviveka’s two inferences, Kuiji defends the Yogācāra position that there is an ultimate reality, designated by the term ‘thusness’ (the ultimate nature of the dharmas as they really are), that

<sup>28</sup> Bhāviveka adduces the example of illusory hairs superimposed upon the perception of the moon by someone stricken with cataracts in his *Jewel in the Palm of the Hand* at T1578.30.269a26–27.

<sup>29</sup> Bhāviveka envisions the target property of ‘being empty’—that is to be proven as inhering in the property-possessor of ‘all conditioned dharmas’—as like an illusion or a false appearance, which is existent conventionally and thus able to produce an effect, unlike the ‘voice of the son of a barren woman’, which is a complete pseudo-entity and causally impotent; see Fong (2015, 154–155). Bhāviveka’s *Jewel in the Palm of the Hand* records the objection that: ‘If [all conditioned dharmas] are empty of intrinsic natures, then the target property to be inferred and the inferring property (i.e., being dependently arisen) are both unestablished (Skt.: *\*asiddha*), like the voice projected by the son of a barren woman. The inferring property pervades conditioned dharmas, therefore it is the same as the target property to be proven (i.e., ‘being empty’) inasmuch as its nature is empty. Owing to the fact that both are empty, neither the inferring property nor the property to be inferred are established. Both negate the intrinsic reality of the target property to be inferred and the inferring property. This amounts to negating the specific attributes of the property-possessor, and reveals itself to be a logical error in establishing the thesis’ (Skt.: *\*pakṣābhāsa*). 若自性空所立能立皆不成就, 如石女兒所發音聲, 能立攝在有為中故, 同彼所立其性亦空, 以俱空故, 所立能立並不成就。彼遣所立能立法體, 即是遣於有法自相, 顯立宗過。 (T1578.30.270a14–17). For Bhāviveka, conditioned dharmas that are ultimately empty nonetheless exist conventionally. As such, the establishment of the property that infers and the property to be inferred does not undermine the establishment of the property possessor of ‘all conditioned dharmas’.

can be accessed by the mind and physical sense faculties of Buddhas and awakened sages. Relying on a variety of Yogācāra doctrinal sources, most notably the *Treatise Demonstrating Nothing but Consciousness* (Chi.: *Cheng weishi lun* 成唯識論)—the compilation of which Kuiji participated in—Kuiji holds that the nature of this ultimate reality cannot be circumscribed in terms of a dichotomy between fundamental emptiness and conventional existence. Based upon these Yogācāra treatises, Kuiji defends the Yogācāra stance that unconditioned reality is ineffable and ultimately real.

### Kuiji on the Property-Possessors of Bhāviveka's Two Inferences

In his logical analysis of the two inferences for the emptiness of all dharmas, Kuiji contests Bhāviveka's deployment of the word 'ultimately' when used to qualify the property-possessors of all conditioned dharmas and all unconditioned dharmas. While the underlying Sanskrit correlate is difficult to corroborate, given that Bhāviveka's original Sanskrit is not extant, Xuanzang's translation of 'ultimately' as *zhenxing* 真性 in Bhāviveka's two inferences remains elusive and is disputed by commentators.<sup>30</sup> Kuiji understands *zhenxing* as a partial descriptor of the property-possessors of all conditioned and unconditioned dharmas<sup>31</sup> rather than as an adverb

<sup>30</sup> In his *Lamp of the Definitive Meaning of the Treatise Demonstrating Nothing but Consciousness* (Chi.: *Cheng weishi lun liaoyi deng* 成唯識論了義燈), Huizhao 慧沼 (648–714) diverges from his teacher Kuiji in regarding the terminology 'ultimately' (Chi.: *zhenxing* 真性) to take broad scope over the entire thesis, including both the target property to be inferred of 'being empty' and the property-possessor of 'all conditioned dharmas'. In asserting that this terminology does not specifically comprise a component of the property-possessor, he rejects Kuiji's reading, which takes the term to comprise a component of the property-possessor as an indication of the unconditioned nature of ultimate reality: 'There is no error of the property-possessor being unacceptable [to one party] in the thesis [of Bhāviveka's first inference], since [the terminology] 'ultimately' isn't [part of] the property-possessor. Because the purpose of including this 'ultimately' is to take [all] conditioned dharmas as the property-possessor, we now say that [Kuiji's interpretation] is erroneous. The opponent's (i.e., Bhāviveka's) inclusion of [the qualifier] 'ultimately' indicates the omnipresent emptiness [of all dharmas]; it is not a conditioned dharma. The original purpose [behind Bhāviveka's inclusion of this qualifier] is not to take 'ultimately' to be [part of] the property-possessor. In their ultimate nature [conditioned dharmas] are ineffable.' 宗中無有法不極成過。以其真性不是有法。舉此真性意，取有為為有法故，今謂是過。彼舉真性，真性皆空無有為法。本意不取真性為有法。於真性中復不可言說。 (T1832.43.733b16–19).

<sup>31</sup> He (2015) observes that such a reading misconstrues Bhāviveka's inclusion of the qualifier

modifying both the target property to be inferred and the property-possessor.

In his reading, Kuiji understands ‘in their ultimate nature’ (Chi.: *zhenxing* 真性) as a partial component of the property-possessor. He then views the complete property-possessor of the first inference as ‘all conditioned and unconditioned dharmas in their ultimate nature’. To Kuiji, the phrase ‘in their ultimate nature’ is understood to include both conditioned and unconditioned dharmas within the property-possessor. In this reading, the underlying referent of the property-possessor ‘all conditioned dharmas in their ultimate nature’ is unconditioned reality.<sup>32</sup> Thus, Kuiji understands Xuanzang’s Chinese rendering (*zhenxing*) to designate the unconditioned nature of ultimate reality, rather than indicating the perspective or register of ultimate truth from which all conditioned dharmas are seen as empty of intrinsic natures.

In his *Study Notes on the Treatise Demonstrating Nothing but Consciousness*,

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‘ultimately’ in order to modify the entire thesis (\**pratijñā*), including the property-possessor and the target property ascribed to it, ‘being empty’, such that it exemplifies this property in terms of ultimate truth. To assert that the property of ‘being empty’ is exemplified by conditioned dharmas in terms of conventional truth is to deny their real causal efficacy within conventional reality. He (2015) notes: ‘... one cannot take ‘ultimate nature’ to be just one part of the property-possessor, or a restriction only on the property-possessor.’ 而不能把‘真性’看作是‘有法’的一部分或者僅是對‘有法’的限定。

<sup>32</sup> In his investigation of Nara-period exegesis on the *Treatise Demonstrating Nothing but Consciousness*, Green (2020) poses the provocative question: ‘... in Yogācāra, are [conditioned] dharmas strictly *saṃskṛta* or could it be that there is a true nature of *saṃskṛta*?’ (Brackets added.) This study contends that the position maintaining that the true nature of conditioned dharmas is unconditioned thusness is represented in a variety of Yogācāra doctrinal sources, such as the *Pañcaskandhakaprakaraṇa* (Chi.: *Wuyun lun* 五蘊論), which defines thusness in terms of the omnipresent nature of all dharmas (Chi.: *faxing* 法性). Xuanzang’s translation of this treatise reads: ‘What is thusness? It refers to the intrinsic nature of each and every dharma, which [all] are devoid of the nature of selfhood.’ 云何真如?謂諸法法性、法無我性 (T1612.31.850a23). Xuanzang’s rendering of \**Abhidharmasamuccayavyākhyā* (Chi.: *Dasheng Apitadamo zaji lun* 大乘阿毘達磨雜集論), a Yogācāra-inflected work of exegesis on Asaṅga’s \**Abhidharmasamuccaya*, attributed to Sthiramati within East Asian tradition, through to Jinaputra by the Tibetan tradition, expresses a similar doctrinal stance in ascribing ultimate existence to the nature of all conditioned and unconditioned dharmas as characterised by the lack of individual essences or ‘selves’ (*ātmānaḥ*): ‘The nature of dharmas as being devoid of selfhood is designated by ‘thusness’. Its nature of being devoid of selfhood is ultimately real existence.’ 諸法無我性, 是名真如。彼無我性真實有故。 This statement is paralleled in the Tibetan counterpart of the \**Abhidharmasamuccaya* at D4054.135.143b.3.

Kuiji argues that Bhāviveka's first inference incurs the logical error when 'the property-possessor (i.e., conditioned dharmas in their ultimate nature) is well known [to exist] (Skt.: *aprasiddha*) by one party',<sup>33</sup> namely, the Yogācāra opponent. The conclusion is based on a false premise, and therefore unsound:

彼依《掌珍》真性有為空等似比量。撥無此識及一切法，皆言無體。言似比量者，謂約我宗，真性有為無為非空不空，有法一分非極成過。

Bhāviveka's [argumentation] in his *Jewel in the Palm of the Hand* that 'conditioned dharmas in their ultimate nature are empty', etc., amounts to a pseudo-inference. It negates as non-existent all dharmas, including our own consciousness, describing them as all lacking intrinsic reality (Chi.: *ti* 體). It is said to be a pseudo-inference because in our tradition (of Yogācāra), conditioned and unconditioned dharmas in their ultimate nature are neither empty nor non-empty. The inference incurs the logical error of the property-possessor (i.e., 'all conditioned and unconditioned dharmas in their ultimate nature') being unacceptable to one party (i.e., the Yogācāras).

Kuiji states that Bhāviveka deploys an illegitimate property-possessor in his first inference. By referring to 'the ultimate nature [of conditioned dharmas]', Bhāviveka improperly expands the scope of the property-possessor of his first inference beyond conditioned dharmas to include unconditioned dharmas such as thusness. In his rejoinder to Bhāviveka, Kuiji's construes 'ultimate nature' as referring to the entirety of unconditioned reality. Therefore, Bhāviveka's

<sup>33</sup> Also referred to as 'the error of the qualificand being well known [to exist]' (Skt.: *aprasiddhaviśeṣya*; Chi.: *suobie bu jicheng guo* 所別不極成過). As the paradigmatic case of this type of logical error, Dignāga's *Nyāyapraveśa* gives the example of when an adherent of the Sāṃkhya tradition (Chi.: *Shulun* 數論) asserts the thesis that '*ātman* is sentient' (Chi.: *wo shi si* 我是思) in a debate with a Buddhist opponent. To Buddhist opponent, it is well established that there exists the property of sentience, but not that there exists an *ātman* to which this property can be properly ascribed. In other words, the predicate or qualifier (Skt.: *viśeṣaṇa*; Chi.: *nengbie* 能別) is well known to exist by the opponent, but not the subject or qualificand (Skt.: *viśeṣya*; Chi.: *suobie* 所別). See Xuanzang, trans., *Nyāyapraveśa* (T1630.32.11b26) for the full three-part inference; for the corresponding original Sanskrit, see Dhruva (1987, 3); for English translation, see Tachikawa (1971, 122).

attempt to restrict the property of being empty to all conditioned dharmas in terms of ultimate truth—without ascribing this property to them in terms of conventional truth—is denied. Kuiji thus rejects Bhāviveka’s contention that unconditioned dharmas are ultimately empty, hewing to the Yogācāra tenet of ‘nothing but consciousness’, wherein all conditioned dharmas are produced by the real force of mental construction.

### Ultimate Reality Is Neither Empty, Nor Non-Empty

In his analysis of Bhāviveka’s two inferences, Kuiji adheres to the Yogācāra doctrine formulated in the *Treatise Demonstrating Nothing but Consciousness*, which envisions the nature of thusness as ‘departing from both existence and non-existence’ (真如離有離無性):<sup>34</sup>

我法非有，空識非無。離有離無，故契中道。<sup>35</sup>

Self and [illusory] dharmas are [ultimately] non-existent; emptiness and consciousness are not [ultimately] non-existent: in departing from existence and non-existence one thereby tallies with Middle Way.

Based upon the characterisation of the nature of thusness in the *Treatise Demonstrating Nothing but Consciousness* as ‘neither existence nor non-existence’, Kuiji maintains that Bhāviveka’s two inferences negate the ‘intrinsic reality’ (Chi.: *ti* 體) of thusness. For Bhāviveka, the term ‘thusness’ is merely a ‘designatory label’ (Skt.: *prajñapti*; Chi.: *jiaming* 假名) that ultimately refers to nothing beyond the reality of conditioned dharmas. All designatory labels are conditioned and therefore do not designate any ultimate reality. In his *Study Notes on the Treatise Demonstrating Nothing but Consciousness*, he avers that thusness is characterised in the treatise as existent in order to combat the view that it is an ‘absolutely non-existent’ (Chi.: *quanwu* 全無) entity without any intrinsic reality of its own:

遮惡取空、及邪見者撥體全無，故說為有。體實非有非不有。<sup>36</sup>

<sup>34</sup> *Cheng weishi lun*, T1585.31.46b16–17.

<sup>35</sup> T1585.31.39b2. Reference has been made to translations of Mayer (2017, 2372) and Wei Tat (1976, 510).

<sup>36</sup> Kuiji, *Study Notes on the Treatise Demonstrating Nothing but Consciousness*, T1830.43.291c4–5.

It [thusness] is spoken of as ‘existent’ in order to dispel with the mistaken interpretation of the doctrine of emptiness and the pernicious views which negate its intrinsic reality as absolutely non-existent. Its intrinsic reality is, in actuality, neither existence nor the absence of existence.

Kuiji alleges that, within Bhāviveka’s first inference, the target property of being empty is improperly ascribed to both conditioned and unconditioned dharmas, whereas the Yogācāra opponent’s doctrinal sources maintain that the ultimate nature of unconditioned dharmas—such as thusness—cannot be determined as either ‘empty’ or as ‘non-empty’. For Kuiji, the logical error of the property-possessor being unacceptable to one party is incurred because thusness, in the ultimate analysis, is not regarded as ‘empty’ by the Yogācāra opponent and thus cannot serve as a valid locus in which the target property of ‘being empty’ could inhere.

## Conclusion

By applying the inferential method both to conditioned and unconditioned dharmas, Bhāviveka aims to prove that all dharmas, without exception, lack ultimately existent intrinsic natures.<sup>37</sup> He argues that unconditioned dharmas, like conditioned dharmas, ultimately lack intrinsic natures, and that they are merely misperceived conditioned dharmas existing as conventionalisms produced through the sheer force of mental construction. By denying that unconditioned dharmas ultimately exist, Bhāviveka upholds a doctrinal understanding that takes Nāgārjuna to contend that nothing exists beyond the conditioned reality. While Bhāviveka deploys the Madhyamaka doctrine of two truths to expose that conditioned dharmas are ultimately empty of intrinsic natures, he does not deny that conditioned dharmas are without intrinsic natures conventionally. To deny that conditioned dharmas lack distinguishing natures even conventionally would invalidate the accurate perceptions of conventionally existent entities.

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<sup>37</sup> Keira (2004, 30–31) articulates two distinct readings of the scope of the qualifier, ‘ultimately’, attached to the theses of Bhāviveka’s two inferences in terms of Madhyamaka thought. On the first reading, Mādhyamika thinkers indicate that—from an ultimate point of view (i.e., in terms of ultimate truth)—all dharmas are without intrinsic natures. On the second reading, all dharmas are understood as without an ultimately existing intrinsic nature. Keira (2004, 30) elaborates that: ‘In the second case, the qualifier pertains to what is negated, i.e., intrinsic nature, and thus ensures that it is not all intrinsic natures which are being negated but rather ultimately existing intrinsic natures.’



In his logical analysis of Bhāviveka's two inferences, Kuiji faithfully follows Yogācāra doctrinal sources, according to which the ultimate nature of unconditioned dharmas is not reducible to the conventional existence of conditioned dharmas in constant flux. Rather, there is an ultimately real nature of unconditioned dharmas that does not consist in a conceptual superimposition on conditioned dharmas. This ultimately real nature cannot be determined as 'empty' as it includes all dharmas in their quiescent and undifferentiated state. However, it cannot be determined as 'non-empty,' in that such a positive description poses the risk of leading to the reification of the dharmas as substantially existent entities.

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