

**DVPR 41700:**  
**Readings in Madhyamaka**

Spring term, 2016  
Swift Hall 403  
Fridays, 1:00-3:50

Instructor: Dan Arnold

Office hours: Swift 401A, **Wednesdays, 9:30-11:30** (or by arrangement); for appointments during regular office hours, sign up on the sheet kept by Julia Ivory-Woods (773-702-7049) in the Martin Marty Center

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**Objectives and requirements of the course:** This seminar will consist in a close reading of the sixth chapter of Candrakīrti's *Madhyamakāvatāra* ("Introduction to Madhyamaka"), an early 7th-century text that many if not most Tibetan monastic curricula still take as the keystone text for the study of the Madhyamaka tradition of philosophy as that developed in India. Though written in Sanskrit, Candrakīrti's text – which consists in verses together with an auto-commentary (*bhāṣya*) – has long been extant only in the Tibetan translation by sPa-tshab Nyi-ma-grags, the 12th-century Tibetan scholar largely responsible for the revival of Candrakīrti's reputation in Tibet. (The Tibetan translation of Candrakīrti's text, which will represent one of our primary sources, was edited by Louis de La Vallée Poussin, who also translated the text into French; for these and other materials noted here, see the bibliography, below.) However, a Sanskrit text of the *Madhyamakāvatāra* has been known to be available in China for some time now, and a complete edition of that is said to be forthcoming in very important series "Sanskrit Texts from the Tibetan Autonomous Region," established by Lhagpa Phuntshogs and Ernst Steinkellner and published as a joint venture by the China Tibetology Research Center, the Austrian Academy of Sciences, and the University of Hamburg's Asia-Africa Institute. (On this series, see Franco 2006.) While it is likely to be quite some time before an edition of the complete text (i.e., including Candrakīrti's auto-commentary) is available, an edition of just the verse portion of chapter 6 has now been published (see Li Xuezhong 2014); this will be our principal primary text.

Candrakīrti's *Madhyamakāvatāra* consists in ten chapters, corresponding to the ten "stages of a bodhisattva" (*bodhisattvabhūmi*) paradigmatically enumerated and characterized in the *Daśabhūmika Sūtra* (for a translation of which, see Honda 1968). Though the ten stages oblige Candrakīrti to present a work in ten chapters, these in fact vary enormously in length; indeed, the immediately preceding, fifth chapter (named for the fifth *bodhisattvabhūmi*, called *sudurjayā*, "unconquerable") consists only in a single verse, whereas the chapter we will read consists in 226 verses. It stands to reason that this chapter would be by far the most extensive and important in Candrakīrti's text; for the sixth *bodhisattvabhūmi* is that on which the aspirant is "directly facing" (*abhimūkhī*) – that is, directly facing the definitive truth realized by a Buddha, which is characterized in the *Daśabhūmika Sūtra* in terms of "dependent origination" (*pratītyasamutpāda*). It is this one among the stages of a bodhisattva's achievements, then, that effectively elicits all the really philosophical work of Candrakīrti's text; for to elaborate the definitive truth "directly faced" by a bodhisattva just is, on Candrakīrti's view, to elaborate the distinctive philosophical project (the one styled *Madhyamaka*) that Candrakīrti carries on from the second-century thinker Nāgārjuna, the famous progenitor of this school of thought. Thus, it is particularly insofar as the *Madhyamakāvatāra* includes just such an

elaboration that this text continues to this day to figure in Tibetan monastic curricula; for here we have a systematic presentation of the considered views of the Mādhyamika thinker (i.e., Candrakīrti) who, despite his having been largely neglected by the Indian tradition that followed him, came to be almost unanimously thought by Tibetan Buddhists to represent the pinnacle of Buddhist philosophy.

In addition to using La Vallée Poussin's edition of the complete Tibetan text of Candrakīrti's text (as well as his French translation therefrom) and Li Xuezhū's critical edition of the Sanskrit verses of chapter 6, we will also make use of C. W. Huntington's translation (done in collaboration with Geshe Namgyal Wangchen) in *The Emptiness of Emptiness*, which gives (after a lengthy introduction presenting Huntington's distinctive interpretation of Madhyamaka) a complete translation of Candrakīrti's verses together with significant extracts from the auto-commentary (given in endnotes). We will also make use of a recent translation of chapter six that takes its bearings particularly from a commentary thereon by the eighth Karmapa, Mikyō Dorje: Ari Goldfield, et al, *The Moon of Wisdom: Chapter Six of Chandrakīrti's Entering the Middle Way*. A comparable translation, based chiefly on the late 19th-century Tibetan scholar Mipham's commentary, was done by the Padmakara Translation Group: *Introduction to the Middle Way*.

The Bibliography below gives details on all of the foregoing references, as well as a few other things relevant to the study of Candrakīrti (and of Indian Madhyamaka more generally). Two of the aforementioned works – the translation by Huntington, and the one by Goldfield, et al – are (or will soon be) available for purchase at the Seminary Coop; most of the other items are (or will soon be) on reserve at Regenstein Library (see the course's Chalk website for details). With these tools at our disposal, our *modus operandi* will be simply to read the text closely from the beginning (and getting as far as we can), attending particularly to the philosophical sense of the arguments (but also, as far as possible, to philological considerations, translation judgments, etc.). In addition to exhibiting regular attendance and spirited participation in discussion, students will be required to write a final paper of moderate length (15-20 pages), engaging some aspect of the text and/or its arguments, and/or issues or thinkers overlapping with the world of concerns evinced in our text(s); the paper will be **due Friday, June 10**. N.b.: *Late papers will not be accepted without prior notice*.

### Calendar of class sessions:

- Week 1 (Friday, April 1)
- Week 2 (Friday, April 8)
- Week 3 (Friday, April 15)
- Week 4 (Friday, April 22)
- Week 5 (Friday, April 29)
- Week 6 (Friday, May 6)
- Week 7 (Friday, May 13)
- Week 8 (Friday, May 20)
- Week 9 (Friday, May 27)
- Week 10 (Friday, June 3)

*Papers due Friday, June 10!*

**Bibliography** (additional items to be found on the course's Chalk website):

- Dreyfus, Georges, and Sara McClintock, eds. 2003. *The Svātantrika-Prāsaṅgika Distinction: What Difference Does a Difference Make?* Boston: Wisdom Publications.
- Franco, Eli, 2006. "A New Era in the Study of Buddhist Philosophy," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 34: 221-227.
- Ganeri, Jonardon, 2007. *The Concealed Art of the Soul: Theories of Self and Practices of Truth in Indian Ethics and Epistemology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Goldfield, Ari, et al, trans., (under the guidance of Khenpo Tsültrim Gyamtso Rinpoche), 2005. *The Moon of Wisdom: Chapter Six of Chandrakīrti's Entering the Middle Way, with Commentary from the Eighth Karmapa Mikyö Dorje's Chariot of the Dagpo Kagyü Siddhas*. Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications.
- Honda Megumu, trans., 1968. "Annotated Translation of the Daśabhūmika-Sūtra," in Denis Sinor, ed., *Studies in South, East, and Central Asia*, pp.115-276. New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture.
- Huntington, C. W. (with Geshe Namgyal Wangchen), 1989. *The Emptiness of Emptiness: An Introduction to Early Indian Mādhyamika*.
- Lang, Karen, 1992. "sPa tshab nyi ma grags and the Introduction of Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka into Tibet," in G. Kuppuram and K. Kumudamani, eds., *Buddhist Heritage in India and Abroad*, pp.267-281. Delhi: Sundeep Prakashan.
- Li Xuezhong, 2014. "Madhyamakāvatāra-kārikā Chapter 6," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 43: 1-30.
- La Vallée Poussin, Louis de, trans., 1907-1911. "Madhyamakāvatāra: Introduction au Traité du milieu de l'Ācārya Candrakīrti, avec le commentaire de l'auteur, traduit d'après la version tibétaine," *Le Muséon* ns.8 (1907): 249-317 [*Madhyamakāvatāra* 1.1-5.1]; ns.11 (1910):271-358 [*Madhyamakāvatāra* 6.1-6.80]; ns. 12 (1911): 235-328 [*Madhyamakāvatāra* 6.81-6.165].
- La Vallée Poussin, Louis de, ed., 1907-1912. *Madhyamakāvatāra par Candrakīrti: Traduction tibétaine*. Osnabrück: Biblio Verlag, 1970 (reprint).
- Ruegg, David Seyfort. 1981. *The Literature of the Madhyamaka School of Philosophy in India*. [A History of Indian Literature (ed. Jan Gonda), Vol. VII, Fasc. 1.] Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz.
- Siderits, Mark, 2003. *Personal Identity and Buddhist Philosophy: Empty Persons*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate.
- Vose, Kevin A. 2009. *Resurrecting Candrakīrti: Disputes in the Tibetan Creation of Prāsaṅgika*. Boston: Wisdom Publications.