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The Tibetan Buddhist Syllogistic Form

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Abstract

The Tibetans were converted to Buddhism beginning in about the seventh century of the Common Era. After their conversion to Buddhism, the kings sent young trainees to Buddhist India to learn Sanskrit, develop a written language for Tibetan, and translate the Buddhist literature of India into Tibetan. One of the approaches the Tibetans adopted from the Indian Buddhists is a tradition called “the path of reasoning” which employs philosophical debate. In India, the importance of debate was highly valued. Among Tibetan Buddhists, debate has the reputation of being the most effective way of learning the Buddhist doctrine, preparing one to understand clearly the assertions and be able to apply them in meditation to achieve the liberating wisdom.

For more than a millennium, the Tibetans preserved and practiced the Indian style of philosophical debate. The Tibetan argument forms were brought over with minor adaptations from the Indian logical forms. In this system of reasoning syllogisms, consisting of a thesis and a reason stated together in a single sentence, and consequences, an argument structurally similar to a syllogism but is merely a logical outflow of an opponent’s own assertions. This paper describes the structure of the Tibetan Buddhist syllogistic form and suggests that, from the point of view of Buddhist religious practice, the central point of Buddhist reasoning and debate is to guide the student to become capable of understanding the profound view leading to liberation.

Keywords:

Tibet, Debate, Inference, Logic, Syllogism.

藏傳佛教之因明論式

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提要

大約在七世紀時，藏人開始信仰佛教，在他們信仰佛教後，藏王派遣年輕的學習者至信仰佛教的印度學習梵文，發展藏文的書寫語言，並翻譯印度的佛教經論至西藏。而藏人從印度的佛教中採納的其中一個方法是運用哲學思辯的「理路」。在印度對於辯論的重要性給予相當高的評價，而在西藏佛教徒中，辯經成爲學習佛教教理最有效的方法，並使學習者能清楚地了解教示，且運用於禪修中成就解脫智慧。藏人保留並練習印度風格的哲學辯論超過千年，藏人的辯論風格只有將印度的邏輯形式稍加改變，在此推理論式的系統下，包含以一句所呈現的「宗」與「因」，以及辯論架構與三段論式相近，但事實上只是在邏輯上順應論敵的主張(應成)的「推論」。此篇描述藏傳佛教因明論式之架構，並從佛教修行的觀點指出佛教推理及辯論的重點是爲了引領學習者有能力了解引領至解脫的深奧教法。

關鍵字：西藏、辯經、比量、邏輯、三段論式

Introduction

The Tibetans were converted to Buddhism beginning in about the seventh century of the Common Era. By their own word, they were “barbarians” prior to their conversion into Buddhism. Though this may not be strictly true, they lived mostly as nomads and had no written language. After their conversion to Buddhism, the kings sent young trainees to Buddhist India to learn Sanskrit, develop a written language for Tibetan, and translate the Buddhist literature of India into Tibetan. They did a remarkable job of this. In fact, in later centuries, after much of the Buddhist literature of India was destroyed during hundreds of years of oppression by the ruling Mughal Emperors, Muslims from Persia, scholars were able to reconstruct the original Sanskrit texts from the Tibetan translations.

During more than a dozen centuries of free Buddhist practice in Tibet before the Chinese Communist invasion of the late 1940’s, the Tibetans did not merely preserve the Buddhist literature but also added greatly to every area of Buddhist practice. Since the time of the early Buddhist kings, Tibet has enjoyed a rich history of philosophical enquiry and carries this heritage forth today in exile communities. Buddhism is a “wisdom tradition,” meaning that it is based on the realizations or insights of the historical Buddha and that it holds that all suffering and even the suffering of death is related to a failure of wisdom. They hold that one is freed by wisdom, by seeing the nature of things. In this effort, one of the approaches the Tibetans adopted from the Indian Buddhists is a tradition of philosophical debate. In India, the importance of debate was so valued that, if one lost a debate with an opponent, one would have to convert to the view of that opponent. If a guru debated with another guru and lost, not only the guru but also all of his disciples too would have to become disciples of the winning guru. If one could not defeat a view, then one was compelled to accept it.

For more than a millennium, the Tibetans preserved and practiced the Indian style of philosophical debate. Philosophical debate is so highly valued in Tibetan society that during the Great Prayer Festival held annually in at the beginning of the Tibetan New Year the government of Tibet would assign a numerical order of merit in the disputation—first, second, and so on—for the top sixteen examinees finishing their programs of philosophical studies. Altogether, from the beginning study of logic through to the final examination, the program of studies may take as long as thirty years. However, one should not think that every Tibetan Buddhist is a master of philosophical debate any more than one should think that everyone with a Ph.D. is an expert in philosophy. The number of debaters at the advanced level in the Tibetan monasteries was always relatively small, and the numbers actually earning the degree of *Ge-shay* (meaning “virtuous friend”), a sort of Ph.D. in Buddhist philosophy, was always small.

The tradition of debate was emphasized in two of the four main orders of Tibetan Buddhism and philosophical training was not extended to nuns until after the fall of Tibet in 1959.

All Buddhist practices are based on the trilogy of hearing the teaching of the doctrine, thinking about its meaning, and meditating on it. Philosophical debate fits into all three of these levels of practice, but is mainly included in the level of thinking. A student hears teaching on the topics of debate, this teaching often being given in the debating form. Then the student reads the texts, memorizes the definitions and divisions, and thinks independently about the meaning of the topics. After this preparation, the student is able to debate the topic with others. Each debater puts forth their own view of a point of doctrine, and others raise objections to that view. Similarly, one raises objections to others' interpretations. This debating of the points of doctrine with others is included in the level of thinking. Further, the debating process may be utilized in the level of meditation as when one is pursuing analytical meditation and raising qualms as if one were debating with oneself. Analytical meditation is the main type of meditation, and debate is able to help this process by sharpening the reasoning capacities and providing one with a procedure for orderly investigation and analysis. Thus, debate may be included in all three practices of hearing, thinking, and meditating.

Among Tibetan Buddhists, debate has the reputation of being the most effective way of learning the Buddhist doctrine, preparing one to understand clearly the assertions and be able to apply them in meditation to achieve the liberating wisdom. The central purposes of Tibetan monastic debate are to defeat misconceptions, to establish a defensible view, and to clear away objections to that view. Debate for the monks of Tibet is not mere academics but a way of using direct implications from the obvious in order to generate an inference of the non-obvious state of phenomena. The debaters are seeking to understand the nature of reality through careful analysis of the state of existence of ordinary phenomena, the bases of reality. This is the essential purpose for religious debate.

The Tibetan argument forms were brought over with minor adaptations from the Indian logical forms. In this system of reasoning, two forms of argument are used to defeat wrong conceptions and to support a clear understanding. These are syllogisms, consisting of a thesis and a reason stated together in a single sentence, and consequences, an argument structurally similar to a syllogism but is merely a logical outflow of an opponent's own assertions.¹ A valid argument may take the form of either a syllogism or a consequence. Today I will focus on the syllogism.

The Argument Form

In the tradition of Buddhist epistemology, syllogisms are not valid arguments in the sense of being valid by all interpretations. Rather, here an argument is determined to be valid only in

1 The source for the Sanskrit terms provided in this chapter is from Rogers (1980).

relation to certain persons at certain times. This is because the only value for any argument is in its efficacy in bringing forth new knowledge. This implies that they assert that an argument is not determined to be valid merely by its form, for validity is inextricably linked with the possibility of epistemological verification of that argument. Thus, a “logical” argument is determined to be valid only in a certain restricted sense. Let me mention the four main characteristics for validity.

The form of a syllogism generally used in the Tibetan philosophical literature and in debate consists of a thesis and a reason, both what is to be proven and the proof, in one sentence. Here I call this argument form a “syllogism,” not in the sense of a series of sentences consisting of the premises and a conclusion, but in the sense of a deductive argument form. For example, a syllogism is stated:

The subject, sound, is an impermanent phenomenon because of being a product.

The thesis or what is to be proven is that sound is an impermanent phenomenon. In the argument form, this is framed: the subject, sound, is an impermanent phenomenon. The reason or proof, product, is framed: because of being a product. According to Prof. James Cargile at the University of Virginia, this argument form would be an enthymeme. This argument is contained in a single sentence, and is this a condensation of a multi-sentence form in the works of the Indian Buddhist logicians (Hopkins 1983, 729-733). Consequently, this terse argument form implies a series of premises and a conclusion which form a more recognizable syllogistic form, as will be shown.

Elements of a Syllogism

The series of sentences implied by this terse form of syllogism is predicated by cross-relating the three basic units of a syllogism. These three are the subject (*chos can, dharmin*), the predicate to be proven (*bsgrub bya'i chos, sādhya-dharma*), and the sign (*rtags, liṅga*) or reason. In the sample syllogism:

The subject, sound, is an impermanent phenomenon because of being a product

the subject is *sound*, the predicate to be proven (or predicate of the probandum) is *impermanent phenomenon*, and the sign (mutually inclusive with reason) is *product*. Anything, be it existent or non-existent, is suitable to be stated as a subject, predicate to be proven, or sign.

The subject is the basis with respect to which one is seeking to learn something. According to the tradition, a proper subject of a syllogism, also known as a basis of debate or a basis of inference, must meet two requirements, one formal and one epistemological (Mi-nyak 1979, 32-33). First, the subject must be held as a basis of debate in a syllogism as sound is held as the subject in the proof of sound as an impermanent phenomenon. In other words, a subject must occupy the first position in a syllogism. Second, as in the sample syllogism, there must

be a person who has ascertained that sound is a product and is engaged in wanting to know whether or not it is an impermanent phenomenon. That a person has understood that sound is a product indicates that he or she is already involved in the reasoning process. That the person is now seeking to determine whether or not sound is an impermanent phenomenon indicates that the reasoning process is not complete, for the person is still seeking to learn something about the basis of inference, sound.

From this epistemological requirement one can understand that the form of syllogism used in this system is not valid in the sense of being valid for all persons. There must be a person who, within having certain knowledge, is seeking to know something that was not formerly known. Thus, although formally solid, the sample syllogism is not asserted to be valid in all contexts. For instance, it is not valid for a person who is unable to understand. Nor is it valid for a Buddha or anyone else who has already completed the understanding and has not forgotten it. Neither the unprepared person nor one who has already realized this is seeking to know whether or not sound is an impermanent phenomenon.

In the sample syllogism sound is the subject about which something is sought to be known; what one is seeking to know is whether or not sound is an impermanent phenomenon. In this syllogism, *impermanent phenomenon* is the predicate to be proven (*bsgrub bya'i chos, sādhyā-dharma*) with respect to the basis of inference, sound. Thus, the thesis of the sample syllogism, that which is to be proven (*bsgrub bya, sādhyā*), is *that sound is an impermanent phenomenon*. Anything may be stated as a predicate to be proven. For instance, one might state a proof of sound as a permanent phenomenon. This does not imply that one can prove sound as being anything, but that one can *state* anything as a predicate to be proven of sound.

In the proof of sound as an impermanent phenomenon, that which is to be negated (*dgag bya, pratiṣhedhyā*) is *that sound is a permanent phenomenon*. This is the opposite of the thesis, that sound is an impermanent phenomenon. More precisely, that which is negated is *that sound is a non-impermanent phenomenon*. Although the Tibetan literature on logic and epistemology consistently reports that that which is to be negated is that sound is a permanent phenomenon, there is a slight verbal fault with this, for it is not the full negation of the predicate to be proven. The predicate to be negated (*dgag bya'i chos, *pratiṣhedhyā-dharma*) is *non-impermanent phenomenon*, the opposite of the predicate to be proven, not *permanent phenomenon*. This is because “permanent phenomenon” is a quality found only among permanent phenomena, things that exist and do not disintegrate moment by moment. However, “non-impermanent phenomenon” may be ascribed to both permanent phenomena and to non-existents as well, for a non-existent too is a “non-impermanent phenomenon.” In taking the predicate to be negated as *non-impermanent phenomenon*, one is able to explicitly exclude the possibility that the quality of being an impermanent phenomenon, the predicate to be proven, might be found among non-existents. Understand that the grammar here has it that the “non-“ applies to “impermanent phenomenon,” not just to “impermanent.” So, for clarity it might be written as “non-(impermanent phenomenon).” In either case, being a permanent phenomenon or a non-impermanent phenomenon is to be negated with respect to the basis of inference, sound.

In explicitly proving that sound is an impermanent phenomenon, one implicitly proves that it is not a permanent phenomenon.

In the sample syllogism, the sign (*rtags, liṅga*) or reason is *product*. The thesis, sound is an impermanent phenomenon, is justified by the reason, product. Sign is mutually inclusive with reason and proof. Anything may be put as a sign, although it may or may not be a valid reason. In the proof of sound as an impermanent phenomenon by the sign, product, it is product alone which is put as the sign rather than “because of being a product.”

Although one may state anything as the sign in the proof of sound as an impermanent phenomenon, only some reasons will justify the thesis. Moreover, certain epistemological requirements must be satisfied in order for a reason to be correct.

Correct Signs

As in every system of reasoning, there are valid and invalid reasons. The definition of a correct sign is:

that which is the three modes. (Ibid., 36)

The three modes are three criteria that a correct sign must satisfy. These are that the sign must be:

1. the property of the subject
2. the forward pervasion, and
3. the counter-pervasion. (Ibid.)

An example of a correct sign is *product* in the syllogism:

The subject, sound, is an impermanent phenomenon because of being a product.

Here product is the three modes, for it is the property of the subject, the forward pervasion, and the counter-pervasion. A correct sign is not something which has the three modes, but it *is* the three modes. The definition of the correct sign in the proof of sound as an impermanent phenomenon by the sign, product, is:

that which is the three modes in the proof of sound as an impermanent phenomenon by the sign, product. (Ibid.)

This is not a definition of product but a definition of the correct sign in the proof of sound as an impermanent phenomenon by the sign, product. Product alone is the correct sign in this

proof, but product as such is not what is being defined. There are definitions of each of the three modes in the proof of sound as an impermanent phenomenon.

The Property of the Subject

The property of the subject (*phyogs chos, pakṣha-dharma*), or the presence of the sign in the subject, requires that the subject must have the quality of the reason. In a proof such as this, the subject and the sign must be such that it is accurate to state them together in a copulative sentence, a sentence of the form, “That subject is that sign.” For instance, sound and product are like this, for it is accurate to say that sound is a product. Sound is a product in that it is produced from causes and conditions. It does not arise adventitiously.

The definition of something’s being the property of the subject in the proof of sound as an impermanent phenomenon is:

that which is ascertained (by a person for whom it has become the property of the subject in the proof of sound as an impermanent phenomenon) as just existing, in accordance with the mode of statement, with sound. (Ibid.)

Product is the property of the subject in the proof of sound as an impermanent phenomenon by the sign, product, because product is ascertained (by a person for whom product has become the property of the subject in the proof of sound as an impermanent phenomenon by the sign, product) as just existing, in accordance with the mode of statement, with sound. The property of the subject is reckoned between the sign and its basis of relation, the subject. Thus, although technically only the sign, product, is the property of the subject in the sample syllogism, the first mode of the correct sign in this syllogism is *formulated*: sound is a product.

Reflecting this formulation, the definition specifies the association between the sign and the subject saying that the property of the subject must be “ascertained as just existing, *in accordance with the mode of statement*, with sound”. The mode of statement in the proof of sound as an impermanent phenomenon by the sign, product, is an “is” or copulative statement. The reason is framed, “because of *being* a product”. Thus, the reason is saying something about the manner of being of sound. Sound *is* a product. This type of statement is to be distinguished from “exists” statements, reasons that justify the existence of something by the sign. For example, in the syllogism:

The subject, on that mountain pass, there is fire because there is smoke,

the mode of statement is existential. The reason is stated in a manner to prove the existence or presence of one thing, fire, by the existence of another, smoke. This is not the same as saying, as implied by the definition, that the sign must *exist with* the subject. For example, in the proof of sound as an impermanent phenomenon by the sign, product, product exists with sound in

accordance with the mode of statement, for sound has the quality of *being* a product (Rogers, 43ff).

Also, the definition specifies that in order for something to be the property of the subject in the proof of sound as an impermanent phenomenon it must be ascertained by a person for whom it has become the property of the subject in the proof of sound as an impermanent phenomenon. A reason is not correct, it does not meet even the first requirement of a correct sign, unless it is ascertained by a certifying consciousness. In this system a syllogism cannot be valid merely by its form.

The heart of this definition is that the property of the subject is *ascertained as just existing* with sound (Mi-nyak, 36-38). The specification that the sign must be *ascertained* with sound serves to eliminate an indefinite understanding. Product is not the property of the subject in the proof of sound as an impermanent phenomenon either for a person who is wondering whether or not sound is a product or a person who firmly holds that sound is not a product. The person must ascertain definitely that sound is a product. Again, it is emphasized that the validity of an argument is bound with the epistemological verification of that sign. A sign is the property of the subject only in relation to individual persons. The requirement that the sign must *exist* with the subject insures that the sign is a property of the subject, as productness is a property of sound. In saying that the property of the subject is ascertained as *just existing* with the subject, the definition insures that the sign must exist with the subject, though not exclusively with the subject. That is, the sign must actually be a property of the subject, as sound has the property of being a product. Yet, in order to be the property of the subject, the sign need not exist exclusively with the subject but may apply to other things as well. Not only sound is a product, for other phenomena such as chairs, tables, and so forth are products as well.

In summary, product is the property of the subject in the proof of sound as an impermanent phenomenon by the sign, product, because of being ascertained (by a person for whom it has become the property of the subject in the proof of sound as an impermanent phenomenon by the sign, product) as just existing, in accordance with the mode of statement, with sound. The property of the subject in this syllogism is formulated: sound is a product. However, whatever is a property of sound is not necessarily suitable as a correct sign in the proof of sound as an impermanent phenomenon because of the epistemological reasons given above concerning the person for whom the syllogism is stated and because of the requirements of the other two modes of a correct sign, the forward and counter-pervasions.

Forward Pervasion

Whereas the property of the subject is predicated between the sign and the subject, the pervasions are predicated between the sign and the predicate to be proven, the predicate of the thesis. More technically, in the case of the forward pervasion (*rjes khyab, anvaya-vyāpti*),

it is a relationship between the sign and the similar class. The similar class (*mithun phyogs, sapakṣha*) is the basis of relation of the forward pervasion just as the subject is the basis of relation of the property of the subject.

In the proof of sound as an impermanent phenomenon, the class of impermanent phenomena is the similar class. The definition of the similar class in the proof of sound as an impermanent phenomenon is:

that which is not empty of impermanence, in accordance with the mode of proof, in the proof of sound as an impermanent phenomenon. (Mi-nyak, 33)

Anything which is an impermanent phenomenon is a member of the similar class in the proof of sound as an impermanent phenomenon. The mode of proof referred to here is the copulative mode, for the sample syllogism seeks to show that sound *is* an impermanent phenomenon, as opposed to the “exists” or existential mode of proof. Thus, in accordance with the mode of proof, all things which *are* “not empty of impermanence” (i.e., *are* impermanent phenomenon) are members of the similar class—matter, consciousness, and so forth (Rogers, 43ff).

The sign’s being the forward pervasion in the proof of something refers to its relating to the similar class in a certain way. For instance, the definition of something’s being the forward pervasion in the proof of sound as an impermanent phenomenon is:

that which is ascertained (by a person for whom it has become the second mode of the sign in the proof of sound as an impermanent phenomenon) as existing in only the similar class in the proof of sound as an impermanent phenomenon. (Mi-nyak 1979, 38)

In order for a sign to be the forward pervasion it must exist in only the similar class. In the sample syllogism, this means that product must exist only among impermanent phenomena. According to the tenets of the Buddhist tenet system known as the Proponents of Sūtra Following Reasoning, this is so, for “productness” exists only in impermanent phenomena. There are no products which are not impermanent phenomena.

The heart of the definition of forward pervasion is that the sign is *ascertained as existing in only* the similar class (Ibid., 38-40). The requirement of ascertainment serves to eliminate a dubious cognition. The sign is the forward pervasion only for a person who realizes definitely that the sign exists only among members of the similar class. Again epistemological verification is required as a component of validity.

That the sign must *exist* in the similar class serves to eliminate contradictory reasons as in the syllogism:

The subject, sound, is a permanent phenomenon because of being a product.

Here the sign, product, does not exist in the similar class of permanent phenomena, for it exists only in the dissimilar class (*mi mithun phyogs, vipakṣha*) of impermanent phenomena. If being the property of the subject were the only requirement of a correct sign, then the foregoing

syllogism would be a correct proof of sound as a permanent phenomenon. However, since a correct sign must be the forward pervasion and the forward pervasion requires that the sign must *exist* in the similar class, this syllogism is not valid.

Moreover, a correct sign must exist in *only* the similar class and cannot be present in the dissimilar class. The dissimilar class in the proof of sound as an impermanent phenomenon includes the class of permanent phenomena. The requirement in the definition of forward pervasion that the sign must exist in *only* the similar class serves to eliminate indefinite reasons as in the syllogism:

The subject, sound, is an impermanent phenomenon because of being an existent.

Here the reason, existent, exists not only in the similar class of impermanent phenomena but also in the dissimilar class of permanent phenomena, for both permanent and impermanent phenomena equally exist. Thus, in the definition of forward pervasion, the word “only” functions in the sense of “exclusively”, for it entails that the sign must exist *exclusively* in the similar class.

However, although the sign must exist exclusively in the similar class, the definition does not specify that the similar class must exist exclusively in the sign. Rather, there are two types of correct signs in this regard: (1) those such that the sign and the similar class are equal in extent and (2) those such that the similar class is greater in extent than the sign (Rogers, 142-143). In the sample syllogism:

The subject, sound, is an impermanent phenomenon because of being a product,
the sign and the similar class are equal in extent. All products are impermanent phenomena and all impermanent phenomena are products. There is nothing which is the one but not the other. However, in the syllogism:

The subject, sound, is an impermanent phenomenon because of being an object of hearing,

the similar class is greater in extent than the sign. There are impermanent phenomena such as consciousnesses which are not objects of hearing. The definition requires that the sign exist *exclusively but not necessarily universally* in the similar class. The extent of the sign may be equal to or lesser than the similar class, but it cannot be greater. Consequently, the extent of the similar class may be equal to or greater than that of the sign, but it cannot be less.

“Pervasion” means that the reason is *pervaded* by the predicate to be proven. The extent of the reason is either less than or equivalent to the extent of the predicate to be proven. In general, if the subject has the quality of being that sign and whatever is that sign is that predicate to be proven, then the subject must have the predicate to be proven. Applied to the sample syllogism, sound is a product and whatever is a product is an impermanent phenomenon; thus, sound is an impermanent phenomenon. In a valid syllogism, the *sign* is the *pervaded*, for its extent is less than or equal to the extent of the predicate to be proven which pervades it, and it is the *proof*, for the sign proves the thesis. Conversely, in such a syllogism, the *predicate to be proven* is the

pervader, for its extent is greater than or equal to the extent of the sign which is pervaded by it, and it is the *proven*, for the reason proves it as a predicate of the subject.

In this system of translation pervasion statements are generally formulated: whatever is that reason is necessarily that predicate to be proven. For example, the forward pervasion of the sample syllogism is formulated: whatever is a product is necessarily an impermanent phenomenon. Translated more literally, the general formula would be rendered: if something is that sign, then it is *pervaded* by being that predicate to be proven. If this is applied to the sample syllogism, the pervasion is formulated literally: if something is a product, then it is pervaded by being an impermanent phenomenon. For all statements in which the mode of statement is copulative—an “is” statement—it is suitable to translate a statement of pervasion into the form of an English conditional sentence, a sentence of the form: if something is a *p*, then it is necessarily a *q*. This conditional form is often relied upon in the translation, though usually pervasions are translated in the form: whatever is a *p* is necessarily a *q*. For syllogisms in which the mode of statement is existential—an “exists” statement—the translation is always of the form: if a *p* exists, then a *q* necessarily exists.

It is important to understand the nature of pervasion as associative and not copulative.² Although the sign *exists* in only the similar class in the sense that whatever is the sign *is* such and such, this does not mean that the sign itself is that predicate (although it may be). More correctly, pervasion indicates that the sign is *associated* with that predicate. For instance, products exist exclusively among impermanent phenomena. Products and impermanent phenomena are inextricably, necessarily associated. If something is a product, it is necessarily impermanent. In this case, it is also true that since product itself is a product, it is also an impermanent phenomenon. That is, here it may be said that the sign, product, is an example of the predicate to be proven, impermanent phenomenon, in the sense that product *is* an impermanent phenomenon. However, as will be seen, there are many cases for which, although there is pervasion, it cannot be said that the particular sign *is* that predicate in the sense that the sign has the quality of, demonstrates the being of, and exemplifies that predicate. Pervasion does not mean that the sign *is* the predicate to be proven. Rather, the meaning of pervasion is that the predicate to be proven encompasses the sign and is invariably associated with it.

The procedure of translating statements of pervasion in sentences of the form, “Whatever is a *p* is necessarily a *q*,” serves to express this nature of pervasion. In saying that whatever is a product is necessarily an impermanent phenomenon, the point of emphasis is not so much on product itself but on *those things which are* products. This statement of pervasion says that product is an impermanent phenomenon, since product is itself a product, in that it says that *everything which has the quality of being* a product is also an impermanent phenomenon. Thus, those things—such as pots, persons, consciousnesses, and so forth as well as product itself—which are products are also impermanent phenomena. Being a product is invariably associated with being an impermanent phenomenon. In the statement of pervasion, “Whatever is a product is necessarily an impermanent phenomenon,” the word “whatever” stands in place

2 The term “associative” is suggested by Vada (1911, 2:168-170).

of the points of emphasis, these things which are products—pots, persons, consciousnesses, and so on. Ascertaining this is essential for understanding the system of reasoning used in the Tibetan philosophical texts.

Counter-Pervasion

The third mode of a correct sign is the counter-pervasion (*ldog khyab, vyatireka-vyāpti*). This type of pervasion is a necessary outflow of the forward pervasion, for in all cases in which the sign is the forward pervasion it is also the counter-pervasion.

The basis of relation of the counter-pervasion is the dissimilar class which in the proof of sound as an impermanent phenomenon is the class of non-impermanent phenomena. The definition of the dissimilar class in the proof of sound as an impermanent phenomenon is:

that which is empty of impermanence, in accordance with the mode of proof, in the proof of sound as an impermanent phenomenon. (Mi-nyak, 33-34)

Anything which is not an impermanent phenomenon is a member of the dissimilar class in the proof of sound as an impermanent phenomenon. Thus, any permanent phenomenon or any non-existent is a member of this dissimilar class.

The dissimilar class is the basis of relation of the counter-pervasion, the third mode of a correct sign. The sign's being the counter-pervasion refers to its being distinct from the dissimilar class in a particular way. For instance, the definition of something's being the counter-pervasion in the proof of sound as an impermanent phenomenon is:

that which is ascertained (by a person for whom it has become the third mode of the sign in the proof of sound as an impermanent phenomenon) as just non-existent in the dissimilar class in the proof of sound as an impermanent phenomenon. (Ibid., 40)

If a sign is the counter-pervasion in the proof of something, it is ascertained as just non-existent in the dissimilar class. For the sample syllogism, this means that product is ascertained as just non-existent among non-impermanent phenomena. This is established, for products exist only among impermanent phenomena. There are no products which are non-impermanent phenomena.

In the definition of counter-pervasion, as in the definitions of the other two modes of the sign, there is an epistemological requirement—of how and by whom a sign must be ascertained—and an ontological requirement—of how the sign must exist in relation to its basis of relation. The sign must be ascertained as the counter-pervasion by a person who is actively involved in the reasoning process. In this case, the ontological requirement is that the sign must be *universally absent* in the dissimilar class and, although (according to the requirements of the forward pervasion) it must exist in the similar class, it may or may not be universally present

in the similar class (Mi-nyak, 40-41). This is to say that the extent of the sign may be lesser than the extent of the predicate to be proven.

As in the cases of the property of the subject and the forward pervasion, only the sign is the counter-pervasion. Still, counter-pervasion is *formulated* between the sign and its basis of relation, the dissimilar class. In general, this is: whatever is not that predicate to be proven is necessarily not that sign. Applied to the sample syllogism, the counter-pervasion is formulated: whatever is not an impermanent phenomenon is necessarily not a product. Since all products are impermanent phenomena, anything which is not an impermanent phenomenon cannot be a product.

The nature of counter-pervasion is reflective of and resultant from the nature of forward pervasion. For any syllogism in which the sign is established as the forward pervasion, that sign will also be the counter-pervasion. Still, the values of these two types of pervasion are somewhat different. The main requirement of the forward pervasion is that the sign must exist exclusively in the similar class whereas the main requirement of the counter-pervasion is that the sign must be universally absent in the dissimilar class. Also, the ascertainment of the forward pervasion and the ascertainment of the counter-pervasion are different sorts of realizations. If one explicitly realizes the forward pervasion, one implicitly realizes the counter-pervasion. And if one explicitly realizes the counter-pervasion, one implicitly realizes the forward pervasion. From this point of view, the two types of pervasions are different requirements. Although they are ontologically concomitant—for if the sign is the one then it is also the other as well—*explicitly* they are ascertained separately.

Summary

Given the above information, one can understand that the single-sentence syllogism used in the Tibetan philosophical literature implies the more familiar syllogistic form consisting of a series of sentences leading to a conclusion. For instance, the sample syllogism:

The subject, sound, is an impermanent phenomenon because of being a product
implies a series of three sentences and a conclusion:

Sound is a product.

Whatever is a product is necessarily an impermanent phenomenon.

Whatever is not an impermanent phenomenon is necessarily not a product.

Therefore, sound is an impermanent phenomenon.

The first three sentences in this implied syllogism are premises only in the sense that once they are true, then the conclusion too must be true. For any *valid* syllogism, the implied premises are not just assumptions that may or may not be true. Rather, according to the way the three

modes of the sign are defined in this system of reasoning, the three sentences implied by any *valid* argument must be true and they must be ascertained as true by a person for whom the argument is valid.

However, in general the premises implied by a syllogism may or may not be true. For instance, there is the argument:

The subject, sound, is a permanent phenomenon because of being a product
which implies the series of premises and a conclusion:

Sound is a product.

Whatever is a product is necessarily a permanent phenomenon.

Whatever is not a permanent phenomenon is necessarily not a product.

Therefore, sound is a permanent phenomenon.

This syllogism is determined to be invalid by the Tibetan Buddhist logicians simply because the second and third premises are not *true*. That is, productness is not ascertained as existing only in the class of permanent phenomena. Thus, one can say that in general the premises implied by a single-sentence argument are assumptions that may or may not be true, but for a valid argument the premises must be true.

The fact that this second argument, the proof of sound as a permanent phenomenon by the sign, product, is determined to be invalid emphasizes a major aspect of this system of reasoning. One criterion of validity is that the premises must be verifiably true, certified as concordant with fact by an ascertaining valid cognizer. This argument is sound in the sense that *if* the premises were true then the conclusion would be true. However, it is not factually true according to the assertions of this system of philosophy; thus, it is not valid. In this system of reasoning, soundness of argument does not entail validity. A valid argument must be sound, but a sound argument is not necessarily valid (Mates 1972, 5ff).

Furthermore, even arguments which are formally sound and factually true may or may not be valid, for a valid argument must meet the epistemological requirements concerning the person faced with the argument. The person must be one who is actively seeking to understand the thesis/conclusion of the syllogism. An argument is not valid for all persons at all times. For one who has already ascertained the conclusion or for one who is unable to ascertain the conclusion, the argument is not valid even though it may be sound and the premises and conclusion factually true.

By way of review, Table I shows the components of a syllogism:

Table I: Components of a Syllogism

Sample Syllogism: The subject, *sound*, is an *impermanent phenomenon* because of being a *product*.

1	subject (<i>chos can, dharmin</i>):	sound
2	predicate to be proven (<i>bsgrub bya 'i chos, sādhya-dharma</i>):	impermanent phenomenon
3	sign (<i>rtags, liṅga</i>):	product
4	that which is to be proven (<i>bsgrub bya, sādhya</i>):	sound is an impermanent phenomenon
Formulated in general: that subject is that predicate to be proven		
5	predicate to be negated (<i>dgag bya 'i chos, *pratiṣhedhya-dharma</i>):	permanent phenomenon
6	that which is to be negated (<i>dgag bya, pratiṣhedhya</i>):	sound is a permanent phenomenon
Formulated in general: that subject is non-that predicate to be proven		
7	similar class (<i>methun phyogs, sapakṣha</i>):	impermanent phenomenon
8	dissimilar class (<i>mi methun phyogs, vipakṣha</i>):	non-impermanent phenomenon
9	property of the subject (<i>phyogs chos, pakṣha-dharma</i>):	product
Formulated in general: that subject is that sign		
Formulated for the sample syllogism: sound is a product		
10	forward pervasion (<i>rjes khyab, anvaya-vyāpti</i>):	product
Formulated in general: whatever is that sign is necessarily that predicate to be proven		

Formulated for the sample syllogism: whatever is a product is necessarily an impermanent phenomenon

- 11 counter-pervasion product
(*ldog khyab, vyatireka-vyāpti*):

Formulated in general: whatever is not that predicate to be proven is necessarily not that sign

Formulated for the sample syllogism: whatever is not an impermanent phenomenon is necessarily not a product

Conclusion

Within Tibetan Buddhism, one very important avenue of approach is the practice of reasoning and debate. It is a broad avenue for many. Whether or not the student is bright and rational, the study of reasoning and debate will help. In fact, whether or not one is even a Buddhist, the study of reasoning and debate will help. All of us want to be able to understand better, to assess better the words of others, and to express ourselves more clearly. These skills develop with the practice of debate. The Tibetan practice of debate develops from the Indian practice of debate. Thus, from its origins Buddhism has had an appreciation for reasoning and debate skills.

The Buddhists think that ultimately what frees us from this round of rebirth is to replace ignorance with wisdom. They believe that when we overcome our mistaken ideas about ourselves, we will at the same time overcome those same mistaken ideas about all other phenomena. Buddhists say there is something we need to understand to get free of our misery and even ultimately to get free of death itself.

Thus, the profound purpose of Buddhist debate and reasoning is to clear away a wrong conception of our own natures and thereby to become free of suffering and even death. However, the vast majority of us cannot go directly to the point. Thus, Buddhist debate begins with the simplest topics, builds up one's competence with reliable tools and procedures, and moves on to the more profound topics. The whole point of Buddhist reasoning and debate is to guide the student to become capable of understanding the profound view that is liberating. Now, if there is no round of rebirth from which one would wish to be free and if there is no view which will liberate one, then in the course of study one should be able to figure out these things. Reliable tools and procedures are called reliable because they help one to understand what is factual and accurate, what is real and what is unreal.

Buddhism is a wisdom tradition. It is based in the wisdom of the Buddha, and it holds that we will be freed—freed even from death and suffering—through developing our wisdom.

Moreover, the Buddhists believe that the possibility of achieving this liberating wisdom is within the capacity of each and every one of us. The stains that inhibit us may be removed by the power of wisdom. Thus, because the purpose of debate is so compelling for the practitioners, they have worked hard to develop tools and procedures which are reliable. It seems that the actual tools and procedures are simple and elegant, so they are useful to many. Also, though their tools and procedures were developed to look into topics that may lead to a profound, liberating wisdom, those same tools and procedures are useful to many for looking into whatever is of interest. They provide a useful way of organizing one's own thought and words and for assessing the flood of information that is coming our way.

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