# Philosophical argumentation in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition
## – Between theory and practice –

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## Remarks and acknowledgements

## Foreword

Research on the early developments of the Tibetan tradition of epistemology (*tshad ma*) in the first centuries of the Later diffusion (*phyi dar*) of Buddhism in Tibet has been able to take a fresh start in recent years thanks to the surfacing of a number of works, some of which were written by the most influential figures of this era. In particular, three works of epistemology by the Tibetan Buddhist thinker Phya pa (/Phywa pa) Chos kyi seng ge (1109-1169) (hereafter: Phya pa) have become available.[1] This author, linked with the monastery of gSang phu Ne'u thog in central Tibet, is especially famous in the Tibetan tradition for his original (even if controversial) contribution to epistemological theory as well as Madhyamaka interpretation. He is also mentioned as a leading figure concerning debating practices. Thanks to the rediscovery of his works, we are now in a position to ascertain his contribution on the basis of his own words and to replace the speculations and myths that have been built around this figure by first-hand knowledge.

In this presentation I will introduce Phya pa's views on argumentation, which I would like to consider on the one hand from the angle of the Buddhist historical and philosophical context, and on the other in view of broader issues in argumentation theory. I will in particular consider in what way Phya

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[1] See *Mun sel*, *'Od zer* and *rNam nges bsdus don* in the bibliographical references.

pa's theory of argumentation concords with or diverges from his own argumentative practice. The "theoretical" angle will be examined on the basis of the section of *Mun sel* dealing with argumentative statements (*rtsod pa'i ngag*). For the "practical" angle, we do not have access to direct evidence of oral argumentation, i.e., the practice of live debating in this period, but Phya pa's own works offer abundant evidence of textual argumentation.

Before turning to the texts, I will start by drawing an overall picture of argumentation in the context of the Indian Buddhist tradition, and then examine what became of it in the Tibetan tradition at the time of the spread of Buddhism in Tibet. In the second part of this introduction, we will consider more closely what comes under the concept of "argumentation," and more specifically of "philosophical argumentation," and attempt to isolate a number of features relevant to an understanding of what is going on in the Buddhist texts under consideration.

## Introduction

### 1.  Historical background

Argumentation has been present in Buddhism since the early days. As Buddhism evolved in the pluri-religious context of India, Buddhists confronted their ideas with those of rival non-Buddhist systems in debate. In spite of a tendency to vilify debate — it is condemned in some sūtras as an unsuitable practice — Buddhist adherents engaged in debate to establish and defend their views, maybe also in order to gain secular advantage from local rulers. Disputes among co-religionists also took place. Beside public debate, Buddhist thinkers used argumentation in their treatises: authors seldom presented their views in isolation, but rather in confrontation with the views of others and with possible or actual objections.

Concerning the theoretical aspects of argumentation, Buddhists were also competing with other systems. Treatises on debate (*vāda*) and rules of reasoning and proof were composed by authors belonging to what modern scholarship refers to as "the school of the logicians" or "epistemological school," whose leading figure is Dharmakīrti (7th c. or earlier). An important change brought about in Dharmakīrti's *Vādanyāya* is in particular the redefinition of the purpose of debate as an "investigation of the truth" (*tattvacintā*) following logical rules and excluding the "way of the wicked," namely, the use of verbal tricks and other dishonest means of obtaining victory. Also the way in which points of defeat (*nigrahasthāna*) were identified was changed by his establishment of a general rule to replace the case-by-case enumeration of situations involving the defeat of one of the participants in a debate.

When Buddhism spread to Tibet in the 7th and 10th centuries, as the Indian Buddhist corpus was translated into Tibetan, Tibetan scholars inherited models of written argumentation as well as theoretical works on logic and debate composed in India. The role of direct and oral transmission should not be downplayed. For instance, the Indian master Śāntarakṣita, who traveled to Tibet twice at the time of king Khri srong lde btsan (8th c.), and his disciple Kamalaśīla were living examples of Indian Buddhist scholarly practices. The first is depicted in Tibetan historiographies as an active debater, and the second played a decisive role in the so-called Great Debate of bSam yas. The account of their activities in Tibet testifies to the importance of philosophical debate since the early times of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition.

Occasions of debate with non-Buddhists were rather rare in Tibet, but Buddhists debated extensively among themselves. Visiting other monasteries on "debating tours" (*rtsod pa'i grwa skor*) appears to have been a popular practice for scholars.[2] The use of debate for didactic purposes in monastic education — a practice that has remained alive to this day, especially in the dGe lugs pa school[3] — probably started before the end of the 12th century, as it is criticized by Sa skya Paṇḍita Kun dGa' rgyal mtshan (1182-1251) who deems that it does not qualify as proper debate.[4]

Tibetan scholars did discuss issues related to argumentation in philosophical debate within their epistemological works, especially in relation to the discussion of "inference-for-others," but there is only rare evidence of early autochthonous works on debate.[5]

## 2. Some issues linked to argumentation

After drawing this general picture of the Buddhist context of argumentation, let us turn to the notion of argumentation itself. "Argumentation" is a term that can be used very broadly and applied to a great variety of situations. For instance, Śāntarakṣita's proof of the voidness of all dharmas by the "neither one nor many" argument is a type of argumentation. But a child crying in order to get his mother to buy him an ice-cream also can be considered as an instance of argumentation!

These two examples illustrate quite well the variability that can take place with regard to two major features of argumentation: its purpose and its form. Argumentation may be aiming at the truth, at

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[2]  See the *Deb sngon* (p. 1110) about sMra ba'i seng ge (12th-13th c.).
[3]  See Dreyfus 2003 on the role of debate in monastic training.
[4]  For the relevant passage of Sa skya Paṇḍita's *mKhas pa 'jug pa'i sgo*, see Jackson 1987: 330-331.
[5]  The only instance I am aware of is the *rTsod pa'i de nyid* described in van der Kuijp 1994. This three-folio work composed by gTsang nag pa brtson 'grus seng ge (?-after 1195) is preserved at the China Nationalities Library in Beijing.

testing one's position, at convincing an opponent, at destroying his reputation, at winning, etc. Whether one considers discussions between scientific experts, political debates, or any discussion or dispute in a family, a classroom or on the street, one realizes quickly that arguments following logical patterns are more often then not left aside in favor of various other verbal (sometimes physical or emotional) strategies.

Do the latter situations really qualify as proper argumentation? It is important here to distinguish prescriptive and descriptive perspectives on argumentation. While descriptive theories take as object actual cases of controversies and analyze their constituting features, prescriptive theories give rules to be followed, thereby disqualifying a certain category of practices or statements. One can for instance decide to ban insults and other types of ad hominem arguments from the discussion, thereby giving them the status of argumentative fallacies. The explicit or implicit adoption of specific rules of discussion is often conditioned by a specific context — consider for instance argumentation by lawyers in a court of justice.

How does philosophical argumentation fare in this regard? When one speaks of "philosophical argumentation," one is evidently restricting the scope of argumentation to specific themes of disputation — philosophical argumentation is not about getting an ice-cream, but would rather be about establishing whether the ice-cream really exists or not! But what about its form and purpose? In spite of the connotation the expression "philosophical argumentation" may carry, there is no a priori restriction. The Indian context testifies to a range of acceptable possibilities in this regard, both in treatises on argumentation and debate narratives.

The question that we will be considering is to what extent attested instances of actual argumentation by an author (or followers of his system) match the theoretical rules of argumentation given in this author's own treatises. With regard to actual instances of argumentation, it is important here to point out an essential difference between argumentation as found in texts or oral monologue and argumentation in the context of debate. Indeed, a central feature of the latter is that it involves a dialogue between two debaters. Once a proponent has presented a proof to the respondent, it is the respondent's turn to present a refutation or a counterargument. The respondent thus actively participates, whereas in textual argumentation, the addressee of an argument cannot answer directly, that is, he has no opportunity to answer in the treatise itself. Even if the author of a treatise deals with actual or potential refutations the addressee may raise, the scope of refutations he is willing to consider is really up to him.

## I.    Phya pa's theory of argumentation

I have mentioned earlier the prominent place that Phya pa Chos kyi seng ge holds in the Tibetan tradition. In particular, he is noted for his contribution to debate and as the initiator of a specific method of argumentation.[6] No work on debate by Phya pa has surfaced so far. First hand information about his views on argumentation can, however, be gathered from 1) the fifth chapter of his *Mun sel* entitled "determination of the way to voice a disputation" (*rtsod pa'i ngag gi tshul rnam par nges pa*), and 2) the third chapter of *'Od zer*, his commentary on the chapter on inference-for-others in Dharmakīrti's *Pramāṇaviniścaya*. In addition to commenting on the root-text of this chapter, this text also includes extensive excursus that, for the most part, run parallel to the presentation of the *Mun sel*. Let me give here an overview of Phya pa's presentation.[7]

### 1.  The scope of Phya pa's presentation

The discussion that we find in these two texts addresses only a restricted aspect of what one would call "debate." Indeed, Phya pa does not discuss contextual questions such as the spatial setting or the timing of the discussion. He does not describe the steps of the disputation in details, but just distinguishes a proof statement coming from the proponent and a potential refutation by the respondent, namely, pointing out faults in that proof. He is notably silent about the issue of the outcome of a dispute; he accordingly does not enumerate "points of defeat" (*tshar gcad, nigrahasthāna*) nor does he mention the criteria that decide defeat or victory. Also, his determination of the actors involved is limited to the proponent (*rgol ba*) and the respondent (*phyir rgol*) but makes no mention of a referee (*dpang po*).

Phya pa's focus is on the "argumentative statement" (*rtsod pa'i ngag*), on establishing "what should be stated under which conditions" in a dispute. He thus concentrates on discerning what the "conditions" that may arise are (we will see that these conditions are of a cognitive nature) and on identifying what proof statement is adapted to each particular case.

### 2.  The purpose of argumentation

The identification of the purpose of argumentation is conditioned by the restricted aspect taken into account by Phya pa, namely, the expected effect of the argumentative statement. The function of a proof statement is to lead the opponent to the understanding of a true state of affairs — this "understanding"

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[6] See Stcherbatsky 1930: 55 and 58. The introduction to Phya pa's life and works by the editors of the *bKa' gdams gsung 'bum* is especially representative of the range of traditional attributions to this author.

[7] For a more detailed discussion of Phya pa's views on argumentation, see Hugon 2011.

is to be taken in the strong sense of "valid cognition" (*tshad ma*, *pramāṇa*). Proponent and respondent are defined in relation to this functional aspect as the person who intends to lead his interlocutor to such a cognition, and the addressee of this endeavor.

A philosophical debate in this sense can hardly be described as a "quest for the truth," for one of the initial requirements is that the proponent must himself have ascertained the state of affairs he intends to prove to his opponent. It does not either constitute a process of "transmission of knowledge," for according to the Buddhist epistemological system, valid cognition cannot be acquired via a mere statement; for example you cannot acquire the valid cognition that I have a million yens in my wallet just from my telling you "I have a million yens in my wallet." Regardless of whether or not I really have a million yens, of whether or not I am telling the truth, your cognition "She has a million yens in her wallet" does not qualify as *valid* because it was not acquired by a proper means of valid cognition — according to the Buddhists, either direct perception or inference.

Rather, what the proponent must do is hint at the evidence on which his own ascertainment is based, prompting his opponent to rely on the same to ascertain the given state of affairs, i.e., the thesis, on his own account. Briefly stated, a proof statement does not provide knowledge of the thesis, but sets forth the conditions for the opponent to generate a valid cognition of this state of affairs.

## 3.  The form of the argument

The definition of a correct proof statement includes two aspects that condition the form it has to take. Indeed, the proponent must present evidence that 1) it is correct in view of the thesis, and 2) it is adapted to the circumstances at hand. These formal conditions alone are pertinent to the *correctness* of the proof statement, even though they might not be sufficient for its efficiency in view of the functional aspect.

## 3.1  Logical requirement

The basic idea behind proof statements is that knowledge pertaining to the thesis is to be acquired via an inferential process. Phya pa follows here the Dharmakīrtian model of inference: valid inferential knowledge comes from a so-called logical reason (*gtan tshigs*/*rtags*, *hetu/liṅga*) that must 1) qualify the subject of inference, and 2) be related to the property to be proven via a relation of identity or causality. A stock-example is that of the logical reason "smoke" that allows for the inferential knowledge that there is fire on the hill when this fire cannot be directly perceived. "Smoke" is a correct logical reason insofar as the cognizer ascertains that 1) there is now smoke on this hill, and 2) where there is smoke there always is fire; in other words, there cannot be smoke without fire.

The understanding of a thesis based on such a logical reason is a private process termed "inference-for-oneself" (*rang don rjes dpag*, *svārthānumāna*). In contrast, a proof statement in a debate is termed an "inference-for-others" (*gzhan don rjes dpag*, *parārthānumāna*); although a statement is not properly speaking an "inference" (an inference is a mental event), it is called so in view of its leading to the generation of an inference-for-oneself by the opponent.

The form of the inference-for-others reflects the criteria pertaining to the correct logical reason of the inference-for-oneself. A standard proof-statement thus consists in the enunciation of 1) the fact that the logical reason qualifies the subject (*phyogs chos*, *pakṣadharmatā*), and 2) the pervasion of the logical reason by the property to be proven (*khyab pa*, *vyāpti*).

One finds in Indian Buddhist texts two versions of inference-for-others:

1)  Statements of the type "A is B because C, like D, unlike E" Hence, for our example: "The hill has fire, because of smoke, like the kitchen, unlike the ocean."

2)  Two-member statements of the type "All that is C is B, like D; A is C," or alternatively "All that is not B is not C, like E; A is C." For our example: "Where there is smoke there is fire, like [in] the kitchen; the hill has smoke."[8]

While both versions are used in Phya pa's texts, in the section on proof statements, Phya pa has in view the second one.[9] Let us note in addition that apart from such a "positive proof statement," another form is possible, that of a consequence (*thal 'gyur*). This aspect of Phya pa's theory, although it occupies the largest part of the section on argumentation, falls outside the scope of the current presentation.

## 3.2 Pertinence requirement

The kind of two-member statement just presented is, for Phya pa, only one among eight possible positive proof statements. These are differentiated on the basis of the "circumstances" or "conditions" (*skabs*) at hand, based on a twofold requirement of pertinence that can be summarized as: what is not necessary should not be stated, and what is necessary should not be omitted. "Necessary" should here be understood in view of the function of the proof statement, namely, a necessary condition for the opponent to generate an inference.

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[8] Tillemans 1984: 74-75. The first type of statement derives from Dignāga's *Nyāyamukha* and Śaṅkarasvāmin's *Nyāyapraveśa*. The second is found in Dignāga's *Pramāṇasamuccayavṛtti* and in Dharmakīrti's *Pramāṇavārttika*, *Nyāyabindu*, as well as *Pramāṇaviniścaya*.

[9] One must note a particularity in its formulation, namely, the statement "A is C" ends with an instrumental particle. For instance "All that is produced is impermanent; sound (also) is produced, hence...." (*gang byas pa mi rtag ste bum pa bzhin sgra yang byas pas zhes*). This "*pas*" suggests a connection with a subsequent, but unformulated, proposition – the thesis.

The circumstances to be considered are exclusively of a cognitive nature, namely, they concern the knowledge state of the respondent. It is necessary, first, that the respondent has not yet ascertained the thesis, else a proof is completely useless. Then, when the proponent intends to present the respondent with a proof statement, he needs to take into account the respondent's knowledge regarding the relation of the logical reason with the subject and property to be proven.

Phya pa distinguishes three kinds of knowledge states — 1) knowledge (*shes pa*), which must be understood here in the sense of "ascertainment by a means of valid cognition"; 2) knowledge followed by oblivion (*shes la ma dran*), or temporary lapse of attention (*blo kha ma phyogs*); 3) absence of knowledge (*ma shes* or *ma nges*) — that provide seven possible situations.[10]

Each knowledge state of the respondent calls for a specific action on the side of the proponent: 1) if the respondent knows and remembers, any statement is superfluous; 2) if he once knew something but has forgotten it, he needs to be reminded of it by verbal indication (*ston pa*); 3) if he does not know something at all, this needs to be proven to him.

Phya pa thus spells out eight possibilities of proof statements as follows:

| P (=qualification of the subject by the logical reason) | V (=pervasion of the logical reason by the property to be proven) | | Proof statement |
|---|---|---|---|
| once known but forgotten | once known but forgotten | 1 | Statement of P and homogeneous statement for V (*chos mthun pa, sādharmyavat*; i.e., V in positive form with homogeneous example) |
| | | 2 | Statement of P and heterogeneous statement for V (*chos mi mthun pa, vaidharmyavat*; i.e., V in counterpositive form with heterogeneous example) |
| once known but forgotten | known and remembered | 3 | Statement of P alone |
| known and remembered | once known but forgotten | 4 | Statement of V alone in positive form (*rjes 'gro, anvaya*) |
| | | 5 | Statement of V alone in counterpositive form (*ldog pa, vyatireka*) |
| not known | not known | 6 | Proof of both |
| once known but forgotten | not known | 7 | Proof of V, statement of P |
| not known | once known but forgotten | 8 | Proof of P, statement of V |
| known and remembered | known and remembered | - | No need for a proof statement |

Cases 1 and 2, which represent the standard formulation of a proof, are statements that remind a forgetful respondent of the two characteristics of the logical reason that have been ascertained before.

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[10] Two cases among the nine possible combinations do not appear in Phya pa's list: (1) P is not known and V is known and remembered; (2) P is known and remembered and V is not known. The corresponding proof statements would be indistinguishable from, for (1), the proof of P and, for (2), the proof of V.

When one of the two characteristics is known and remembered, the corresponding statement is simply dropped from the formulation of the proof. This results in one-member proof statements such as "sound is produced" for case no. 3, or "what is produced is impermanent, like a pot" for no. 4.

The complete absence of knowledge requires more than the mere statement of the corresponding member of the proof. Phya pa prescribes the use of a secondary proof, the statement of which is embedded within the main proof statement. For instance, if one wants to prove that sound is impermanent to a respondent who does not know at all that sound is produced but has once ascertained, but now forgotten, that what is produced is impermanent (no. 7), one should state:

> "What is occasional is produced by a cause, like a pot; sound also is occasional, hence.... What is produced is impermanent, like a pot."

The first part of the statement constitutes a proof statement of the first characteristic of the logical reason — i.e., that "produced" qualifies "sound" — while the second part reminds the respondent of the pervasion of "produced" by "impermanence."

In the case of a very ignorant respondent (no. 6), one ends up with a rather complicated proof-statement, termed "[inference-]for-others that proves both," where each of the two members themselves consists of two members, such as, for proving sound's impermanence:

> "$_{(1.1)}$What is void of gradual or simultaneous causal efficacy is void of production, like a sky-flower; $_{(1.2)}$what is void of momentariness is void of gradual or simultaneous causal efficiency, hence.... $_{(2.1)}$What is occasional is produced by a cause, like a pot; $_{(2.1)}$sound also is occasional, hence...."

A statement that satisfies the two criteria — the logical one and the criteria of pertinence — qualifies as a "correct proof" (*sgrub pa yang dag*), but, let us note, only the logical criterion is stated in Phya pa's formal definition of a correct proof. This, of course, does not mean that proponents actually state only correct proofs in the course of a debate. Many deviations from the prescribed statements are likely to occur in practice. But deviant statements (either from the point of view of logic or pertinence), do not qualify as "correct proof" and are likely to be the object of a refutation by the respondent. A pertinent question that is raised is whether the statement of a correct proof is even conceivable. Indeed, the evaluation of the knowledge state of the opponent necessary to avoid redundancy or incompleteness in the proof statement would require supernatural powers from the proponent. Phya pa rejects the extreme consequence that a proponent devoid of the ability to "read the mind" of his opponent should simply not engage in the discussion, but maintains that if he has misjudged the knowledge state of his opponent,

his proof statement does not qualify as "correct." The consequences this might have on the course of the debate (in particular, if this would constitute a point of defeat) are, as mentioned before, not elaborated upon by Phya pa.

## II.   Argumentation in practice

Phya pa's discussion in *Mun sel* constitutes a prescriptive theory of argumentation. It tells us what conditions a statement should satisfy to qualify as a correct proof. Ascertaining whether actual debates in Phya pa's time followed such rules constitutes a difficult question. We learn for instance from Śākya mchog ldan that Phya pa was involved in a debate against the Kaśmīrian paṇḍit Jayānanda about Madhyamaka interpretation, but we have no information about the arguments that were put forward.

While we lack data concerning oral instances of actual argumentation regarding Phya pa, his own texts provide abundant evidence of textual argumentation. Although such a kind of argumentative practice involves essential differences from live debate — as pointed out in the introduction, they notably lack a real and active respondent — they often take the appearance of a debate, as they introduce the tenets and objections of hypothetical or genuine opponents. Leaving aside for now the questions as to whether and to which extent instances of textual argumentations reflect debating practices, let us look here at the form argumentation takes in Phya pa's treatises. Surprisingly, Phya pa does not resort very often to proof statements of the form we described above. Rather, he favors a type of argumentation that I call "arguments by parallels."[11]

Arguments by parallels (in Tibetan "*mgo sgre*") take the form of a dialogue between 1) a debater initiating an argument to refute a thesis P of his opponent or to establish a thesis of his own, either nonP or a thesis whose establishment derives from the refutation of P, the "instigator," and 2) a "respondent." The main characteristic of arguments by parallels is that the instigator does not address the thesis P directly, but proceeds to introduce a parallel thesis from a different, but usually familiar and easily understandable context, a thesis that is "parallel" in the sense that it preserves the formal structure of P, that is, the relations between its constitutive elements.

For instance, against the opponent's claim that:

"Inference cannot be the comprehension of something true (i.e., it cannot be a valid cognition) because it is a wrong cognition insofar as, depending on a concept, it is erroneous with regard to what is apprehended,"

Phya pa offers the following retort:

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[11]   See my 2008 for a detailed analysis of this argumentative practice.

"A sprout could not be the cause of a visual cognition, because it emerges subsequently with regard to the seed."

Although logic and botanic are two quite distinct domains, both the initial statement and the retort instantiate the structure "A is not B because it is X with regard to Y."

Let us consider how the argument develops on the basis of a made-up example. Its structure is taken from a case found in *Mun sel*, but I have adapted the statements in order to avoid having to go into detailed explanations of Buddhist philosophical concepts. In this example, I will play the role of an instigator in a discussion against the view of an (atypical) biologist who holds that "all aquatic animals are fishes." Instead of opposing the biologist's thesis directly, I introduce a parallel thesis which prompts the opponent to react (let us suppose that this biologist is a friend of mine who knows what kind of occupation I have): "All scholars studying Buddhist texts are Japanese" (2). The dispute goes on as follows:

| *Biologist* / Me | | | | *Me* / Biologist |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **P= All aquatic animals are fishes** <br> (all As are **X**) | 1 | → | 2 <br> ↓ | **P'= All scholars studying Buddhist texts are Japanese** <br> (all **A'**-s are **X'**) |
| **S'₁: the whale, which is an aquatic animal, would be a fish** <br> (**e**, which is **A**, would be **X**) | 4 <br> ↓ | ← | 3 | **S₁: P. Hugon would be Japanese** <br> (**e'**, which is **A'**, would be **X'**) |
| **S₂: the whale is not an aquatic animal** <br> (**e** is not **A**) | 5 | → | 6 <br> ↓ | **S'₂: P. Hugon is not a scholar studying Buddhist texts** <br> (**e'** is not **A'**) |
| **S'₃: if the whale is not an aquatic animal, we would see it walking around on the earth** <br> (if **e** is not **A**, it would be **B** or **C** and this has absurd consequences ) | 8 <br> ↓ | ← | 7 | **S₃: if P. Hugon is not a scholar studying Buddhist texts, then it would be contrary to her having written this paper** <br> (if **e'** is not **A'**, it would be contradictory to **e'** being **G'**) |
| **S₄: then [given that it is an aquatic animal] the whale is a fish** <br> (then **e** is **X**) | 9 | → | 10 <br> ↓ | **S'₄: then [given that she is a scholar studying Buddhist texts] P. Hugon is Japanese** <br> (then **e'** is **X'**) |
| **S'₅: the wale is not a fish, because it does not reproduce by laying eggs, breath through gills, etc.** <br> (**e** is not **X**, because it does not have **L**=def(**X**)) | 12 | ← | 11 | **S₅: P. Hugon is not Japanese because she was not born in Japan, her parents are not Japanese, she does not have a Japanese passport, etc.** <br> (**e'** is not **X'**, because it does not have **L'**= def (**X'**)) |

The reason I organized the sequence of statements 1 to 12 in this way in the above schema is that it allows one to clearly discern two discussions within this dialectical exchange: in the left column a

discussion pertaining to marine biology, in the right column a discussion pertaining to people doing Buddhist studies. Both discussions develop in a parallel way and are based on an identical argument: to counter the claim of a relation between two properties, one must find a counter-example, and a counter-example is a case which satisfies the first property, but not the second. In the domain of Buddhist studies, by establishing that P. Hugon is a scholar studying Buddhist texts but is not a Japanese, one establishes a counter-example invalidating the claim that "all scholars studying Buddhist texts are Japanese" and in the domain of biology, by establishing that the whale is an aquatic animal but is not a fish one establishes a counter-example invalidating the claim that "all aquatic animals are fishes."

Now if one looks at the statements of the respective debaters, one sees that each of my statements (see 4, 6, 8, 10, 12) consists in an adaptation of the respondent's previous statement (see 3, 5, 7, 9, 11). The biologist is doing all the work of coming up with criticism or defense, and experiences what I call a "boomerang effect": due to my using parallels, every argument he gives against the parallel thesis turns into an argument against his own thesis, and every argument in defense of his own thesis turns into an argument in defense of the parallel thesis.

The discussion ends at the point where the respondent cannot object further. When dealing with a written argument, this will be at the point where no further objection by the respondent is dealt with by the author of the text.

Note that the instigator does not always have the last word: arguments by parallels can also turn to the advantage of the respondent if the latter can show that the two cases are actually not parallel. Not surprisingly, in Phya pa's texts, arguments by parallels always end up successfully for the instigator when the instigator is Phya pa himself and always fail when Phya pa plays the role of the respondent. Looking at the above schema, one can wonder why the initiator does not just start by pointing out that the whale is a proper counter-example to the claim that all aquatic animals are fishes. Why introduce the parallel thesis?

We have noted above the fact that the respondent is "doing all the work." In brief, he is refuting himself insofar as he develops an argumentative structure that applies to his own claim by parity of reasoning. He is thus more likely to be bound — if not logically, at least psychologically — to accept the outcome of the discussion. From this angle, arguments by parallels can be seen as a useful rhetorical device, but also as a pedagogical device. The introduction of the parallel domain can, furthermore, be seen as analogue to the mention of the example in an inference-for-others, with the advantage that it allows for the exemplifications of relational structures that are more complex than pervasion of a property by another.

Comparing *Mun sel* and *'Od zer*, one can notice several cases where one of the two texts uses a

regular proof statement in the form of an inference-for-others and the other an argument by parallel when dealing with the same issue; this indicates that for Phya pa argumentation by parallels does not have a different function and has the same probative value as a proof statement. However, arguments by parallels allow for the possibility that the instigator succeeds to refute the thesis thanks to a logically faulty argument developed by the respondent.

Does argumentation by parallels reflect an actual practice used in live debates in Phya pa's time? One can wonder indeed if a debate could ever take this form. In our example, what are the chances that a biologist would actually bother to answer the claim that "all scholars studying Buddhist texts are Japanese" and not just refuse to discuss further, objecting that this claim is absolutely irrelevant?

There is one reason that the respondent might be willing to go that way: I have mentioned that carefully chosen replies of the respondent may allow him to turn the discussion to his advantage. Indeed, provided that both debaters agree on the form that an argument by parallels must follow, the instigator's statements are limited to parallels. The respondent may thus, for instance, create for himself the opportunity to expound his views. The biologist could say in (3): "why do you state that all scholars studying Buddhist texts are Japanese?" The instigator's answer would have to be "why do you state that all aquatic animals are fishes?" giving the biologist the chance to explain his idiosyncratic theory of classification of animals. Thus, both debaters are likely to agree on implicit or explicit rules of parallel argumentations because each may be convinced that the argument will turn to his advantage.

## Conclusion: Theory and practice

Even though Phya pa certainly witnessed and took part in debates, the *Mun sel* cannot be taken as a description of these argumentative practices, even though it probably reflects at least some aspects of it. Phya pa's project in the *Mun sel* is a prescriptive one. This kind of material does not allow us to ascertain whether these prescriptions were followed in his life time, or if they could have been taken as underlying rules for deciding about victory or defeat in a dispute. The study of debate narratives in the Tibetan tradition, taken with the caution that such literature deserves, may shed some light on the general question: "What were debates like in this period?"

Considering Phya pa's writings, we have met with the following situation: Phya pa prescribes the use of proof statements in the form of an inference-for-others, but does not himself resort extensively to this form. On the other hand, Phya pa makes abundant use of arguments by parallels, of which no theoretical presentation is included in his chapter entitled "the way to voice a disputation" (*rtsod pa'i ngag gi tshul*), nor anywhere else in his available epistemological works.

We have discussed some features of argumentation by parallels that are quite advantageous for a debater. However, the use of arguments by parallels — whether in a live debate or simulating a debate in writing — conflicts with the method of debate involving proof and refutation prescribed in the works of Dharmakīrti and adopted by his Indian and Tibetan epigones, Phya pa included. The notions of "proof" and "refutation" indeed do not allow for the kind of statements that arise in parallel argumentation.

Phya pa's writings thereby testify to the use of a broader range of argumentative techniques than the ideal rules that they prescribe, involving rhetorical but also pedagogical functions, and it would not be surprising if live debate in his days also overstepped the strict boundaries of theory in the same way.

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