

**Postmodernity – The East and the West: Gilles
Deleuze and Nagarjuna as Paradigms of Becoming**

Final Report

Submitted to the UGC

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31-5-2016

Ref. No:

MRP(H)/13-14/KLMGO27/UGC-SWRO,

dtd, 15th February 2014

Introduction

Gilles Deleuze and Nagarjuna, temporally and geographically wide apart, converge by virtue of their radical approaches to philosophy, truth and self. To say that both are pure metaphysicians engaged in critiquing the then conventional view of life as well as inaugurating a fundamentally new approach would be an understatement. In order to achieve their aim, both choose, rather refreshingly and methodically, much the same strategy that lends the requisite cogency to their argument. Whereas for Deleuze, the entire history and the major signposts of the Western metaphysics turn out to be a monument of errors and a scaffolding for oppressive structures that urgently need revision, Nagarjuna brought about a veritable revolution by dislodging the deeply entrenched and Brahminically inspired thought systems of the Sautrantikas and the Sarvastivadins, around 3rd century CE.

While Deleuze turns searchlight towards the key figures of Western thought such as Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Kant, Bergson, Nietzsche, Leibniz and Freud precisely to stress the necessity and the area in need of revisioning, Nagarjuna primarily overturns the orthodoxy of the Sautrantikas and Sarvastivadins, both of whom, he believed, brought to nought, the good work done by the Buddha. If Nagarjuna could not find acceptance in his own time, Deleuze's ideas, even as he found acceptance, did not get the circulation they deserved. The profundity of their thought as well as the density of the linguistic expression must also account for the lukewarm reception.

The fundamental focal point in their approach may be identified as a rejection of representation and judgment and their attendant oppressive structures. They try to effect a turnaround from the rather oppressively rigid model of "knowledge of the world" to that of the "process of learning" which stresses, so to speak, the "thinging of the thing" or "the worlding of the world". Deleuze's critique is directed against the uncritical assumptions

underpinning the traditional metaphysics and common sense beliefs. Hence, first and foremost, he rejects the rather general and simplistic assumption that identity precedes difference. Such an assumption, Deleuze argues, supports the pseudo conviction that a philosophical search has its basis on incontrovertible “judgments”. Such facile beliefs easily lead one to make extravagant claims concerning the shape of the world and reality. In general, Deleuze, by bringing to bear the thought of a host of major philosophers, demonstrates how the entire edifice of the Western thought rests on unsure foundation, as it assumes identity as producing difference. All of these would add up, for Deleuze, to representation. Indeed, representation is identified as the bane of human life against which the whole of *Difference and Repetition* argues. Hence, one aspect of his enquiry is to locate the fault line in the Western thought and suggest revision. *Difference and Repetition* may be viewed as the way in which Deleuze collocates and tries to introduce his own ‘liberative’ version with special reference to some thinkers who, themselves rather unsuccessfully, struggled against representation.

Nagarjuna’s analysis of the world, similarly focuses on its nonsubstantial character. Cutting across all the aspects, taken up for analysis in the *Mulamadhyamaka-karika*, (herein after to be referred to as MMK) Nagarjuna stresses the antiessentialist nature of reality. Even a cursory analysis would give one the sense that Nagarjuna’s attempt is to restore the actual teaching of the Buddha, which has been misinterpreted by his immediate followers. However, at a time when religion and morality seem to function as handmaidens to philosophy in Nagarjuna, that the independence of philosophy is never compromised is his singular achievement. Perhaps, it is a tall order expecting Nagarjuna to assume the postmodern secular world view that Deleuze assumes. Yet, significantly, the moral and religious concerns in Nagarjuna do not produce a jarring note

in a postmodern world. Thus, it is interesting to note how these two thinkers, different as they are, form a confluence.

Considering the centrality that *Difference and Repetition* has in the Deleuzian oeuvre, and the opacity of its language and thought, an overview of the structure of the book is in order. The introductory chapter of the book calls attention to the relation of difference and repetition to establish why they cannot be viewed in terms of genus and species. The section refers to the way repetition falls outside the realm of law and how it is related to the question of taxonomy and categories.

Chapter 1 entitled “Difference in Itself” addresses the central issue in the sense that Deleuze demonstrates how the conventional starting point of judgement and representation is inherently flawed. Deleuze argues that one’s sense of the world is directly based on one’s judgment, which is a much less sure affair than one would like to believe, as such a sense is traceable to sensations and intensities. Chapter 2 entitled “Repetition for itself” puts forth the view that the world of an individual is a matter of synthesis. Deleuze’s special focus is on Kant’s notion of synthesis by the subject precisely to demonstrate the chinks in Kantian synthesis. For, as Deleuze argues, even the Kantian project assumes a self and categories of judgment. Deleuze makes one aware of the bottomless space between, and prior to object and subject, of pure intensities and virtualities. Hence, significantly, rather than a synthesis by the self or subject, the constituted quality of the very self and categories is what Deleuze focuses on. So much so, the very self and categories for Deleuze, are explainable in terms of sensations and intensities.

Chapter 3 “The Image of Thought” dwells on the way the notion of thought has eclipsed and stood in the way of intensity. Deleuze identifies eight ‘dogmatic’ image of thought which together collude towards a world based on judgment and hence representation. He, therefore, stresses the necessity

of doing away with the dogmatic image of thought in order to rivet on sensations and intensity.

Chapter 4, “Ideas and Synthesis of Difference” is yet again about making sense of a world underpinned by difference and repetition. In order to understand a world devoid of representation and judgment, the methodology of differential calculus is pressed into service. Calculus opens out into the unknown and the unlimited sphere. It is a method of ranging beyond the determinate structure from which it takes off.

Chapter 5 “The Symmetrical Synthesis of the Sensible” discusses how ‘ideas’ relate to intensity and how they together define the world for an individual. ‘Idea’ presented as something other than representation and judgment, in conjunction with the relations of intensity constitutes the human world.

Difference and Repetition

The opening sentence of the book: “Repetition is not generality” (1) can be taken as the central concern of the book as it is resonant in the entire Deleuzian oeuvre. The statement deflates one’s confidence and the tendency to make sense of the phenomena in terms of general laws which are believed to be in operation. Such an uncritical assumption operates in all realms of knowledges such as sciences (natural law), ethics (moral law), psychology (habit) etc. The law in all such cases is based on repetition, which is nonexistent and which can at best be explained in terms of analogy. Deleuze argues that there actually is no pure repetition and hence a law or generality based on repetition is untenable. As this may be clear only if the dynamics of difference is explained, Deleuze dwells on the notion of difference in itself.

Deleuze observes that denial of difference is a facile way of validating representation. Then, it is all too easy as difference would “leave its cave

and cease to be a monster” (38). Difference cannot be done away with, says Deleuze. It can take two perspectives; namely, difference or distinction that is brought to bear and the difference or variation inhering in themselves. The former obviously results in representation and judgment, and the latter, more liberatingly, manifests as immanence and univocity. Deleuze says that one’s attempt to impose a structure on a formless “undifferentiated abyss, . . . the indeterminate animal in which everything is dissolved” (36) is doomed. The shape of the world is a matter of analogy, contrast, parallelism, emerging from an unknown realm, a process that is untenable. For, beneath or beyond the world represented is a world that is other than what one is prepared to take.

Deleuze on Aristotle

Deleuze critiques the supposedly unproblematic issue of representation emerging out of Aristotle’s division of genus and species. For example, when some things are said to be the same, one only means that they look similar, and that too from a certain perspective. And Deleuze says, “for generality only represents and presupposes a hypothetical repetition, “given the same circumstances then . . .” (10). Hence, the whole basis of a truth based on genus and species looks flawed.

Significantly, while Aristotle supplies a classification of phenomena, the genesis, or constitutive character is not given as well, e.g. when a question such as ‘what is a pen’ and its answer “A pen is . . .” is a matter of addition of a predicate to a subject. This, evidently, is begging the question. Hence Deleuze would introduce the notion of “unconnected determinations” to account for the emergence of entities.

Deleuze on Platonic Ideas

Deleuze, after referring to a host of philosophers like Duns Scotus, Spinoza, Nietzsche, Hegel and Leibniz among others, comes heavily on Plato, who is

specifically singled out as the foundation for a history of representation. Deleuze identifies four figures of the Platonic dialectic: “the selection of a difference, the installation of a mythic circle, the establishment of a foundation and the position of a question-problem complex” (79). In other words, Plato with his theory of ideas, founds the reality of becoming, a world that is in process, a life in motion, on the world of being. Notably, both Plato and Deleuze are fellow questers, though their conclusions differ. While Plato identifies an ultimate and original entity (Ideas or Forms), Deleuze explains the origin of the world and phenomena in terms of difference.

It may also be observed that the chapter “Difference in itself” is as much about the phenomenon of repetition as it is about difference. For, repetition happens when there are things absolutely identical, (because, in the absence of identity, there is no repetition), which also must be different because in the absence of difference i.e., with only one thing, one cannot have repetition.

Deleuze on Kantian Synthesis

In the chapter, “Repetition for Itself”, Deleuze stresses the way repetition is related to synthesis. He specifically refers to Kantian synthesis that presupposes a subject that synthesizes and an object that is synthesized. It is this notion of synthesis that assigns centrality to subject and object which is revised in Deleuze. After critiquing the Kantian synthesis, Deleuze comes up with another synthesis that he calls as passive synthesis. Deleuzean model is far more radical in the sense that Kantian subject itself is a result of synthesis. Therefore, Deleuze’s project is to show how passive synthesis gives rise to the three active syntheses of Kant.

In order to establish the notion of passive synthesis, Deleuze takes support from David Hume according to whom habit is the constitutive root of the

subject and “that subject, at its root, is the synthesis of time – that is a synthesis of the present and the past in the light of the future” (Qtd. in Somers Hall63). Then, the subject itself becomes constitutive of impressions passively synthesized than an active synthesizer itself. Accordingly, the denial of essence to self, and synthesis as a complex process precipitating a sense of coherence with regard to the self that is constitutive of habits, memory, contemplation and expectation are basic notions in Deleuze. He goes on: “The self, therefore, is by no means simple; it is not enough to relativize or pluralize the self, all the while retaining for it a simple attenuated form. Selves are larval subjects; the world of passive synthesis constitutes the system of the self, under conditions yet to be determined, but it is a system of a dissolved self.” (100).

The Three Syntheses of Time

Deleuze refers to three types of syntheses of time to explain how one has a coherent world, even as there is a question about what the actual given is. “Or is there never such a given, merely an endless and ungraspable trail of differences, perhaps something like the concept of *difference* developed by Jacques Derrida’s early work? (Williams 86).

According to Deleuze, the lived present (meaning) is dependent on or is a matter of passive synthesis of time in which past is processed as a guideline for the future and hence made relevant for the present. Such a synthesis or process of contraction provides one with the illusion of stability and order. As Deleuze puts it: “Passive synthesis or contraction is essentially symmetrical: it goes from the past to the future in the present, thus from the particular to the general, thereby imparting direction to the arrow of time (107).

The three syntheses of time may be summarized thus. The first synthesis is a matter of habit and memory. The second is a matter of connecting isolated

events into a series, with the illusion of causality, even as there is none. The third synthesis is about assembling and ordering. There is a disconnect and assemblage which appear paradoxical. But in the third synthesis of time, there is forgetting and revival, forgetting to connect, as well as connecting to forget.

Thought and Representation

The chapter “The Image of Thought” is an extension of the two previous chapters. Deleuze shows how thinking is generally understood as judgment and representation. Thought, instead of being a series of processes, has become frozen conclusions, so much so, that thinking has assumed the status of a ‘dogma’.

The basic argument is that the ‘image of thought’ is mistaken for thinking, and that image of thought assumes too much that becomes judgment. Deleuze here tries to argue that thought should not be in terms of identity but rather in terms of difference and repetition, as detailed in the first two chapters. The image of thought, therefore, should be sidelined to give way to ideas (not to be confused with representation and judgment), in the form of flow of cognitive train which is the transcendental condition (not cause) for thought, and which is traceable to intensities. Deleuze uses capital ‘I’ for Ideas to distinguish it from fixity and identity. Ideas are not to be discovered in the mind, instead, they arise in the context of the relation between events in the virtual which in turn becomes the platform for the emergence of actual events.

One might say that Deleuze at his radical best emerges here, because the chapter addresses the issue of doing away with all presuppositions, which is essentially a questioning of common sense assumptions. The argument is that thought is not thought but suppositions on the basis of recognition

which happens in terms of analogy that takes the shape of imagination, opposition and similarities.

If the whole of *Difference and Repetition* can be viewed as an attack on representation, how is it possible for anyone to steer clear of representation? Deleuze refers to two types of the use of faculty, namely, the “common sense” use and the “transcendent use”. The latter he describes as “superior empiricism” or “transcendental empiricism”. This use happens when one uses one’s faculty “beyond proper limits”, that is, as the faculty realizes its own evolution through its interconnection with other faculties. Hence, rather than identifying the nature and role of a faculty, the very faculty is transformed by going beyond the assumed boundaries and limits to stress the way the faculty itself is in a process of emerging constantly. This is a transcendental work which is experimental with regard to the evolution of the faculty. Equally significant is that thinking is not a shared universal faculty, instead it is individual and condition specific.

Therefore, the thought that takes the shape of sense is more a problem than a proposition. Such a sense as a problem is nonconceptual, pluralistic and devoid of unity, and shorn of a pre-given essence. As Deleuze puts it: “Sense is located in the problem itself. Sense is constituted in the complex theme, but the complex theme is that set of problems and questions in relation to which the propositions serve as elements of response and cases of solution” (Williams 130). Hence any learning may be far from a solution but a response to a problem that leads to another and so on ad infinitum. Learning, then, is merely, an experimentation to learn without ever reaching knowledge.

The chapter on “Ideas and the Synthesis of Difference” employs the methodology of differential calculus both to demonstrate nature and function of Ideas as well as not to mistake Ideas as representation. He says that “Ideas are multiplicities: every idea is a multiplicity or a variety.”(230).

Multiplicity refers to events in continuous change resisting identification. However, in an ideal synthesis of difference, ideas should lend determinacy and fixity to the chaos of pure differences yet without a final fixity. Deleuze is basically interested in the emergence of cognitive entities, that is, the conditions of genesis of actual objects and events. He explains this process in terms of calculus, embryology, and dramatization. “We are forced to conceive of existence as a brute eruption, a pure act or leap which always occurs behind our backs and is subject to a law of all or nothing” (263).

Deleuze takes up the process of dramatization in “The Asymmetrical synthesis of the sensible” which addresses the philosophy of ‘phenomena’. His approach, though in harmony with science, tries to move beyond science, assuming the presence of aspects of reality which are not amenable to scientific approaches.

The Invented World of Becoming

The complexity and the gigantic process involved in one’s meaning generation in the asymmetrical synthesis of the sensible is summarized by James Williams: “the sensations that allow us to order actual things imply syntheses of virtual intensities that cannot be fully rendered as actual and these syntheses are the reason sensations and orders are significant. Significance is the result of the asymmetrical synthesis of the sensible, where asymmetrical means that the causal relations between actual things and sensations is not the same, is not mirrored, in the arrangement of relations between intensities” (177).

With regard to the notion of the individual, Deleuze stresses the significance of sensation, intensities and their dramatization. Intensities are neither comparable nor shareable. One’s own sense of reality is a provisional combination of virtual ideas, virtual intensities and actual things. The process of the emergence of individual is explained with the

twin orientation of different/citation. “The relation of idea to actual identity involves a pair of related processes, from idea to actual thing (differentiation) and from actual thing to the idea (differentiation). The necessity of reciprocal determination of idea and actual thing means that an actual thing acquires determinacy in terms of genesis and evolution by expressing an idea. Conversely, an idea only acquires the determinacy of clarity and obscurity by being actually expressed. So, we must think of the two processes as irrevocably connected.” (Williams 186).

Deleuze’s contention is that individuals, rather than members of a species, are condition for the species to emerge through the relation of ideas, intensities and actual things. The complex process of individuation is summarized by Williams: “Sensation moves identity and reconfigures intensity. Intensity creates sensation and lights up ideas. Ideas give sense to sensation and sensations express ideas.” (187).

This takes one to the notion of ‘univocity’ of being, which implies that all things are individuals that are incomplete and open-ended but exposed to unique and reciprocal relations between ideas, intensities, sensations and actual identifies. Deleuze adds that “the principle of individuals would indeed have the formula given to it by Lucretius: no two eggs or grains of wheat are identical.” (314).

In sum, one might say that the Deleuzean model of reality views the world as invention rather than discovery. “For him creative expression must also be destruction, in the sense of going beyond what we are and what we can identify through understanding” (Williams 197). Deleuze views the world as the interconnection of the virtual world and the actual world. ‘Self’, according to Deleuze, is a process and not a foundation, for thought presupposes other processes as conditions for them. In this sense, Deleuzean thought is an attack on Cartesian cogito in all senses. Besides, thinking is just one aspect of being and hence, there is an attempt to move

beyond self and subject in thinking. Deleuze asserts: “Individuation is mobile, strangely supple, fortuitous and endowed with fringes and margins; all because the intensities that contribute to it communicate with each other, envelop other intensities and are in turn enveloped” (320).

The Other and Ethics

Given the notion of the individual, Deleuze passes on to an individual’s relationship with the other and the ethics governing it. What applies to the self is applicable to the other as well, but the relation between the two is what the sensation the other can produce in me, the intensities the other can engender in me in the context of the world. Deleuze says, “In every psychic system, there is a swarm of possibilities around reality, but our possible are always others. The other cannot be separated from the expressivity which constitutes it” (323).

The encounter with the other does not lead up to a shared world or empathy, but it is a coming together of two different dynamic processes which none of the two is able to fully grasp. Like the encounter with the other in Emmanuel Levinas, the Deleuzian “encounter with the other makes my world more strange and hence, more intense, not more comfortable or communal or better known” (Williams 209). Therefore, Deleuze’s ethics would be underpinned by difference which views “the Other as the expression of a possible world”. It is owing to this reason that Deleuze suggests, “not to explicate oneself too much with the other, not to explicate the other too much” (324). Hence, the other as the possible world should trigger sentiments of love, as Deleuze concludes: “There is no love which does not begin with the revelation of a possible world as such, enwound in the other which expresses it” (324).

Nagarjuna

Gouthama Buddha's basic teaching is contained in two treatises, namely, *Kaccayanagotta-Sutta* and *Dhammacakkappavattana-Sutta*, the former being philosophical in orientation and the latter more practical. Both the Theravada and the Mahayana as well as the sundry schools in general accept the authority of both the above texts. The *KaccayanagottaSutta* that dwells on the philosophy of the middle path that takes, by and large, the form of 'dependent arising', *paticcasamuppada*, is primarily a discourse on one's take on the ontology of the world. It concerns itself with the organization of human experience of the world and hence comes up with a formula consisting of twelve factors (*dvadasanga*). *Dhammacakkappavattana-Sutta*, dealing with the practical aspect of the middle path, is accepted by most of the later schools of Buddhism. The text calls for the avoidance of the extremes of self-indulgence (*Kamasukhanuyoga*) and self-mortification (*attakilamathanyoga*) as well as the importance of observing the eight fold path, all of which would take one to liberation (*nibbana*).

Notably, as many schools deviated from the fundamental philosophical tenets of the Buddha, it is primarily due to the work of seers like Moggaliputta-tissa and Nagarjuna, that the theory of the middle path has survived in its original sense propounded by the Buddha. Of the two, Nagarjuna has received far more attention than the other philosopher.

Basically, Nagarjuna is credited with restoring Buddhism to its original purity. Nagarjuna's own *Mulamadyamakakarika* considered as his main text, is an explication of Buddha's *Kaccayanagotta-Sutta*. Nagarjuna does not set aside any verse of the Buddha text, but takes exception only to the misleading interpretations of the intervening philosophers. As Nagarjuna is faithful to the *KaccayanagottaSutta*, a few remarks on that text is also in place.

The *Kaccayanagotta-Sutta* answers the philosophical question “what is a right view (*sammaditti*)? One needs to remember that this is in the context of the sixty two kinds of views in circulation, and debated during the Buddha’s own times. These views have two broad orientations, viz. permanent existence (*astitva*) and nihilism (*nastitva*). The Buddha rejects both the views then in existence to zero in on the middle path that eschews either extremes. Philosophically, the Buddha expatiates on human nature and the way it makes sense of the world based on the principle of dependent origination.

Fundamental to the Buddhist explanation is “dependence”. Hence, an occurrence (*samuppanna*) is traced to a set of conditions on which it depends (*paticca*). This becomes then the process of becoming (*bhava*). Therefore, everything is “dependently arisen” (*paticca-samuppanna*) phenomena and “dependent arising” (*paticca-samuppada*). The terminology is regarded as original and unique contribution from the Buddha. As Kalupahana puts it: “Dependent arising is the middle path presented by the Buddha between the extremes of eternalism and annihilationism, of strict determinism and chaotic indeterminism, of absolute reality and nihilistic unreality, of permanent identity and absolute difference” (16). One also finds a strong empirical flavor informing the Buddha discourse, with a tendency to play down abstract metaphysics.

The Buddha approached conventions (*sammuttor samvrti*) whether social, religious, linguistic, political or moral for what it does. They were neither absolutely real nor irrelevant, but all of which as capable of leading one to freedom (*nibbana*). This logic of middle path is applicable to every sphere of life including language and human personality.

The Buddha’s pragmatic teaching from the beginning had to fight against the deeply entrenched absolutist and substantialist Brahminical tradition of the *Bhagavat Gita*. The Buddhist counter movement came in the form of

Dhammapada, a powerful philosophical argument against a permanent and eternal self. The age of *Dhammapada* is known as the *Abhidharma* period which is a high water mark in the history of Buddhist thought. Fourteen books, divided into two sets of *Abhidharma* texts, are concerned about human nature that is analyzed in terms of aggregates, elements and faculties to demonstrate the absence of a substantial self. As a whole, this era also stresses the Buddha's own teaching related to "dependently arisen phenomena" (*paticcasamuppanna-dhamma*) and dependently arising (*paticcasamuppada*), the recognition of which leads to liberation.

As the two schools, namely the *Sarvastivadins* and the *Sautrantikas*, that veered towards substantialism, stood against the fundamental tenets of the Buddha, there was a dire need to set things right. While the *Sarvastivadins* argued for a "self-nature" (*svabhava*) preexisting in the phenomena including the human person, the *Sautrantikas* though rejected "self-nature" (*svabhava*) gave credence to "other-nature" (*parabhava*) with a cause-effect differentiation. Then, the first return to the non-substantialism of the Buddha happened with the reformist thinker Moggaliputta-tissa, who came up 250 years after the Buddha and approximately 300 years before Nagarjuna. This was followed by the Mahayanist reforms.

Nagarjuna enters the Buddhist historical stage when the Theravada-Mahayanist divide was not very wide. Nagarjuna who had before him the discourse of the Buddha and the *Abhidharma* texts, set about the task of showing the fallacious character of certain schools, especially the *Sarvastivadins* and the *Sautrantikas*. Structurally, therefore, *MMK* may be viewed as primarily an attempt to return to the notion of insubstantiality of all phenomena and the non-substantiality of *pudgala* as well as the positive doctrines emerging from *Kaccayanagotta-Sutta*. Structurally *MMK*, with 27 chapters, may be divided into four sections. Chapters 1 and 2 that deal with causation and change address causation or "dependent arising". This section

stresses conditions without self-nature (*svabhava*). Chapters 3-15 deal with the non-substantiality of phenomena (*dharmanairatmya*), and it rejects both permanence as well as annihilation. The third section, chapter 16-26, argues for the nonsubstantiality of the individual (*pudgalanairatmya*). The section, also dwells on the four noble truths and the doctrine of dependent arising. The last chapter and section four addresses the question of “right view”, that was the central concern of *Kaccayanagotta-Sutta*. It calls for freedom from ideological constraints (*prapancopasama*), which is what the Buddha and his true disciples attained.

A deeper analysis of MMK can identify Nagarjuna’s convergence and departures with Deleuzean approach. Interestingly, Nagarjuna, like Deleuze is guided by empirical validity. Kalupahana says, “Nagarjuna appears more as an empiricist than as a dialectician who merely utilizes reason” (33). Nagarjuna begins the text with a denial of the four causes – self-causation, external causation, both self and external causation and non-causation. Instead, he upholds four types of conditions (*pratyaya*), though he is careful not to allow any substantialist notion to the conditions too. “The self-nature of existents is not found in the condition” (1.3). This position is elaborated in verse 1.14 where conditions are neither affirmed or denied in terms of an effect that is preexistent and essential or nonexistent and absent: “In the absence of the effect, where can there be a condition or a non-condition” (1.14). Significantly, the conceptual framework of conditions is to stress the dependently arising (*pratityasamudpada*) phenomena, and deny any permanent existent. Besides, dependently arisen phenomena (*pratitya-samutpanna*) implies impermanence that is predicated only on change and movement (*gatagata*), which again conceived in a non-substantialist manner: “Therefore neither motion, nor the mover, nor the space moved is evident” (2:24-25).

Nonsubstantialism may be the focal concern of the treatise. For instance, referring to the faculties, Nagarjuna criticizes a particular version of seeing ('*darsana*'). Kalupahana considers it "the Indian version of the Cartesian cogito which led to the belief in a permanent and eternal self during the period of *Upanisads*" (37). Nagarjuna rejects it obviously because it implies the notion of a preexisting self as a 'seer'. The same position is maintained in his discussion of the five aggregates (*skanda*) which constitutes human person according to Buddhist thought.

In addition to the five aggregates, Buddhist thought recognizes six elements (*dhatu*), as informing the psychophysical personality. They are earth (*prithvi*), water (*apas*), fire (*tejas*), air (*vayu*), space (*akasa*) and consciousness (*vijnana*). While "unique cause" (*karana*) is applied to the aggregates (*skanda*), the idea of characteristics (*laksana*), is the focus in the analysis of elements (*dhatu*). This takes Nagarjuna to the notion of the appeasement of the 'object' (*drastavyopasama*) through which one reaches the nonsubstantiality of phenomena (*dharma-nairatmya*). Likewise, Nagarjuna's reference to lust is also in terms of not assuming a concealed substance (*svabhava*). This is followed by the notion of the conditioned (*samskrta*), which when viewed in terms of essence is rejected.

The term (*samskrta*) meaning "dispositionally conditioned" is different from *pratityasamutpanna*(dependent) and has special significance vis-à-vis Deleuzean thought. The analysis in terms of 'action and agent' (*karmakaraka*) appears to be relevant in terms of the asymmetrical synthesis in Deleuze. "While dependently arisen (*pratityasamutpanna*) phenomena imply a process of natural occurrence "unconditioned by dispositional tendencies" (*asamskrta*) on the part of the human beings, "dispositionally conditioned" (*samskrta*) phenomena are the results of human deliberation (*samskara*) or actions (*karma*)".

Closely related to the above is the antecedent state of the self (*purva*). Nagarjuna argues that the self (*sum, aham, asmi*) is dependent, and that there is a demarcation between the experiences and the personality (10:1). Nagarjuna also holds that there is neither a beginning nor an end. These questions arise only because phenomena are viewed substantially: “the prior end of all existents is also not evident” (11.8).

Nagarjuna accords great importance to dispositions (*samskara*) to all human beings. Dispositions do not disappear even at the stage of the Buddhahood. Even in the state of deliverance (*nirvana*) dispositions cling on like the sensations and intensities in Deleuze. What happens at the time of release (*nirvana*) is appeasement of dispositions (*samskaropasama*).

Nagarjuna recognizes the necessity of conceptualization, without which no truth can be communicated provisionally. Indeed conceptualization should enable an individual to have freedom from views and insistence on absolute or ultimate truth. Nagarjuna’s denial of self-nature (*svabhava*) and other nature (*parabhava*) apply to his view of self. He says, “The Buddhas have made known the conception of self and taught the doctrine of non-self” (18:6). Nagarjuna would accept a self that is not a permanent entity.

His concept of the fruit or effect (*phala*) is in a similar manner. Effect or fruit emerges as a result of harmony (*samagri*) which seems to run close to Deleuzean synthesis. Yet, neither fruit nor harmony, for Nagarjuna, is substantial: “The effect is not made by the harmony, nor is it made by the non-harmony. Where can there be harmony without an effect” (20:24).

The notion of truth (*satya*) discussed at length is in conformity with his view on the absence of self nature (*svabhava*), other nature (*parabhava*), emptiness (*sunyata*) to stress the aspect of non substantiality (*anatman*). He says, “Without relying upon convention, the ultimate fruit is not taught. Without understanding the ultimate fruit, freedom is not attained (34:10).

Also, the realization that “*artha* as well as *paramartha* are truths (*satya*) (69) is a democratization in one’s approach. This realization would take one to the middle path, and which is formulated in the following manner: “We state that whatever is dependent arising, that is emptiness. That is dependent on convention. That itself is the middle path” (24:18). Another to be read along with the above is about the conjunction between dependent arising and emptiness: “A thing that is not dependently arisen is not evident. For that reason, a thing that is non empty is, indeed, not evident” (24:19). Nagarjuna’s text concludes with the most open ended and nonsubstantial vision as possible:

“I reverently bow to Gouthama, who out of compassion, has taught the true doctrine for the relinquishing of all views” (27:30).

Conclusion

Even as the exact points of convergence and departures of the two thinkers wide apart on many aspects, are a matter of long and insightful debate, one cannot help recognizing the shared perspective on fundamental issues that inform the contemporary Western thought. While Deleuze’s approach has a secularist feel, Nagarjuna’s thought is couched in the spiritual, religious and moral concerns which were on the center stage in his day. Conspicuously, both thinkers have a more or less, shared world-view on fundamentals. It may be noted that Nagarjuna demolishes all the common assumptions he was surrounded with, whereas Deleuze could afford to begin with a widely shared set of assumptions of a secular democratic framework and build on them. Hence, between the two most radical thinkers. Nagarjuna had to do greater maneuvering than for Deleuze.

If the East has anticipated the philosophical insights of poststructuralism long ago, it is less significant for its jingoist value than for further dialogue and mutual appreciation between the two cultural hemispheres. Finally and

most importantly, Nagarjuna and Deleuze together, with their empirically validated and antiessentialist thought inaugurate a liberatory framework for the world. Their thought is a clarion call to demolish oppressive structures based on representation and build a just and democratic world predicated on fluidity and openness.

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