

Reinterpreting *Catuṣkoṭi* in Contemporary Philosophy: Tensions between Non-Classical Logic and East Asian Buddhist Soteriology

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to evaluate the reinterpretation of the concept of *catuṣkoṭi* (tetralemma) in contemporary philosophy, particularly within the discourse of non-classical logic, and to compare it with traditional interpretations found in East Asian Buddhism. The research addresses the tension between modern logical approaches—such as those proposing the addition of a fifth truth value (ineffability)—and soteriological frameworks within traditions like *Mādhyamaka*, which emphasise the function of liberating individuals from conceptual entanglements. This study employs qualitative methods, incorporating hermeneutic and comparative approaches, along with close textual analysis of classical primary sources, including the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, and the works of East Asian Buddhist philosophers such as Jizang, Zhiyi, Kuiji, and Gomyō. In addition, the research engages with relevant contemporary philosophical texts by figures such as Graham Priest, Jay Garfield, and Adrian Kreutz. The main findings suggest that contemporary logical reconstructions of the *catuṣkoṭi* risk reducing its soteriological function to a merely paradoxical or conceptual exercise, thus detaching it from its original liberatory context. In contrast, East Asian Buddhist traditions tend to resist the insertion of new logical dimensions, instead preserving the spiritual integrity of the doctrine of *śūnyatā* (emptiness).

ARTICLE INFO¹

Keywords:

Catuṣkoṭi, *Mādhyamaka* philosophy, East Asian Buddhism, Non-classical logic.

Article History:

Received 16th Jan, 2025
Revised 25th Feb 2025
Accepted 22th Apr, 2025
Published 25th Apr, 2025

How to Cite in APA Style:

Green, R. S. (2025). Reinterpreting *Catuṣkoṭi* in Contemporary Philosophy: Tensions between Non-Classical Logic and East Asian Buddhist Soteriology. *Smaratungga: Journal of Education and Buddhist Studies*, 5(1), 67-86. doi: 10.53417/sjebse.v5i1.146

Introduction

The phenomenon of using *catuṣkoṭi* (tetralemma) in Buddhist philosophy has become central to discussions of Buddhist logic and thought. Introduced by Nāgārjuna in the *Mādhyamaka* tradition, *catuṣkoṭi* serves as a dialectical tool to disentangle attachments to concepts and lead practitioners to an understanding of

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Published by Center of Research and Publication of Smaratungga Buddhist Collage

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<https://doi.org/10.53417/sjebse.v5i1.146>

emptiness (*śūnyatā*) (Ilieva, 2023). In contemporary society, increasing attention is being paid to how *catuṣkoṭi* is translated and applied within the framework of non-classical logic. This reflects the tension between traditional Buddhist thought and modern logic, raising questions about how this concept should be understood in today's philosophical landscape, particularly in relation to paradox and negation.

A key issue is how *catuṣkoṭi*, originally used to dismantle fixed concepts in Buddhist thought (Mason, 2012), is being translated in discussions of non-classical logic. The concept proposes four possibilities (affirmation, negation, both, and neither) as a method to deconstruct rigid views and highlight the limitations of conceptual thinking. This discussion has become more complex with the emergence of contemporary interpretations of logic, such as dialetheism and paraconsistent logic, which attempt to incorporate *catuṣkoṭi* into formal systems of logic. This phenomenon reflects significant differences in the understanding of *catuṣkoṭi* between the classical Buddhist tradition and modern logical thought, warranting further analysis of how these two approaches intersect or diverge.

On the other hand, the debate surrounding *catuṣkoṭi* also includes studies on its application within the context of East Asian Buddhism. Thinkers such as Jizang, Zhiyi, Kuiji, and Gomyō defend the dialectical function of *catuṣkoṭi*, but with a particular emphasis on its soteriological dimension. For them, *catuṣkoṭi* is not intended to establish a system of paradoxical logic, but rather to facilitate the practice of understanding emptiness and to guide practitioners in letting go of attachment to any view. In this framework, *catuṣkoṭi* should be 'broken' (*jué sī jù* 絕四句), not expanded or sharpened (Jizang, n.d.; Kuiji, n.d.). This perspective is significant as it highlights how the East Asian Buddhist tradition offers a distinct view in the ongoing debates within contemporary logic (Rahlwes, 2022).

The connection between Buddhist logic and modern formal logic has become increasingly relevant in academic discussions, particularly in the fields of philosophy and logic. Many studies have examined *catuṣkoṭi* in the context of *Mādhyamaka*, and some have linked it to non-classical logic (Hu, 2024; Hung, 2020a; Priest, 2015; J Westerhoff, 2017; Jan Westerhoff, 2020). However, many of these studies overlook the perspective of East Asian Buddhism. Some key categories in previous research include studies on *catuṣkoṭi* in classical *Mādhyamaka*, focusing on the writings of Nāgārjuna and commentators such as *Candrakīrti* and *Bhāviveka* (H. R. Kantor, 2021; Rahlwes, 2022; Vose, 2021; Vy, 2015). There has also been research linking *catuṣkoṭi* to dialetheism and paraconsistent logic (Mohanta, 2023; Priest, 2018a; Schang, 2013), as well as studies on soteriological approaches to *catuṣkoṭi* by East Asian thinkers such as Jizang and Zhiyi, who emphasize the role of meditation and the understanding of emptiness through the dialectic of *catuṣkoṭi* (Jones, 2020; H.-R. Kantor, 2019; Kreutz, 2019). Despite this extensive body of literature, there remains a gap in the attention given to the contribution of East Asian thought in offering a perspective on the application of *catuṣkoṭi* in the modern context.

A notable gap in previous research is the lack of focus on how East Asian Buddhist traditions adapt and interpret *catuṣkoṭi* within a broader doctrinal context, and how this differs from more recent interpretations of formal logic. While previous studies have primarily focused on theories of logic or understanding within *Mādhyamaka* and contemporary logic, few have integrated the views of East

Asian thinkers, who approach the application and soteriological purpose of *catuṣkoṭi* differently. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by offering a broader perspective on how *catuṣkoṭi* is understood and applied across various Buddhist traditions.

This research aims to address the gap in the existing literature by examining how the reinterpretation of *catuṣkoṭi* in contemporary philosophy, particularly within the discourses of logic and soteriology, can contribute to a deeper understanding of emptiness (*śūnyatā*) in Mādhyamaka philosophy. This study will investigate the role of *catuṣkoṭi* in bridging the traditions of Buddhist logic and non-classical logic, and will critically discuss the debates surrounding the addition of a ‘fifth corner’ in the structure, a subject of debate among contemporary philosophers. The research will focus on the tension between logic and soteriology, and evaluate modern reinterpretations of the principles of *śūnyatā*. Hermeneutic and comparative approaches will be employed to assess the continuities and deviations between classical and contemporary understandings of this concept.

Based on the problems outlined, the initial hypothesis of this study is that the reinterpretation of *catuṣkoṭi* in modern non-classical logic tends to obscure the soteriological dimension that lies at the core of the Buddhist tradition, particularly in Mādhyamaka thought and East Asian Buddhism. Rather than understanding *catuṣkoṭi* as a tool for dismantling conceptual entanglements and guiding practitioners toward an understanding of emptiness (*śūnyatā*), modern logical approaches—such as dialetheism and paraconsistent logic—emphasize the structural and systematic aspects of paradox, potentially distancing the concept from its original spiritual purpose. This hypothesis asserts that there is a fundamental difference between the formal-logical approach, which seeks to fit *catuṣkoṭi* into a systematic framework, and the soteriological approach, which emphasizes detachment from any system of thought. Therefore, through a hermeneutic and comparative approach, this study will examine whether the integration of *catuṣkoṭi* into modern logical systems expands our understanding of *śūnyatā*, or whether it creates a gap between its intended meaning of liberation in classical and East Asian Buddhist traditions.

Method

This research investigates the philosophical and doctrinal interpretations of *catuṣkoṭi* in various Buddhist traditions, both historical and contemporary. The unit of analysis in this study is the concept of *catuṣkoṭi* itself, which appears in major Buddhist texts and is interpreted within the framework of Buddhist thought and non-classical logic. The focus of this research is on how *catuṣkoṭi*, as a dialectical tool in Buddhist philosophy, has been understood, adapted, and debated across various Buddhist traditions, ranging from classical Indian Mādhyamaka texts and Buddhist commentaries from East Asia to contemporary scholarly interpretations. The primary objective of this study is to explore how the concept of *catuṣkoṭi* has evolved over time and how contemporary discussions align with or differ from traditional Buddhist views.

A qualitative research design was chosen for this study due to its ability to provide in-depth analyses of philosophical texts and their interpretations (Bhattacharya, 2017; Tisdell, Merriam, & Stuckey-Peyrot, 2025). A qualitative

approach is well suited to examine the historical and doctrinal nuances of *catuṣkoṭi* and how the concept functions in various philosophical traditions. The focus on textual and philosophical analyses, rather than quantitative measurements, allows for a rich exploration of shifting concepts and doctrines in Buddhist thought related to *catuṣkoṭi*. The comparative method allows for a more detailed understanding of historical and modern perspectives (Lange, 2012) on *catuṣkoṭi*, facilitating a deeper comparison of how this concept operates in Buddhist discourse and its interrelationship with non-classical logic.

The data sources used in this study consist of primary and secondary materials related to Buddhist philosophy and logic. Primary data include original Buddhist texts, such as Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā, Commentary on the Treatise on the Middle View* (Zhōngguān Lùn Shū) by Jizang, Tiantai doctrinal writings by Zhiyi, Kuiji's *Cheng Weishi Lun Shuji*, and Gomyō's commentaries. These texts are foundational sources that provide direct insight into how *catuṣkoṭi* is used and interpreted in various Buddhist traditions. Secondary data includes modern scholarly works that analyse *catuṣkoṭi* from both Buddhist and logical perspectives. Some of the works in question are studies by Graham Priest, Jay Garfield, Mark Siderits, Matthew Kapstein, and Adrian Kreutz. These sources provide critical engagements with *catuṣkoṭi* in the context of contemporary logic, especially in discussions of paradox, negation, and unspeakability.

Data collection for this study involved a systematic review and analysis of these primary and secondary texts. The process began with the identification of key texts and scholarly discussions relevant to the concept of *catuṣkoṭi*. Classical Buddhist sources were selected based on their contribution to understanding *catuṣkoṭi*, while contemporary sources were chosen for their involvement in the analysis of Buddhist logic and its relationship with modern logical theories. The texts were then qualitatively analyzed with a focus on the doctrinal and philosophical contexts in which *catuṣkoṭi* emerged. The collection of these texts involved consulting both translated versions and original language materials to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the subject under study.

Data analysis was conducted using hermeneutic (Byrne, 2001; Ramsok, 2018) and comparative approaches (Pagel, 1992). Hermeneutic analysis was employed to interpret the meaning and function of *catuṣkoṭi* in various Buddhist traditions, taking into account its doctrinal and soteriological dimensions. This approach facilitates a deep understanding of how *catuṣkoṭi* functions as a dialectical tool for conceptual deconstruction in Buddhist philosophy. Comparative analysis was used to evaluate the extent to which these interpretations align with or diverge from contemporary philosophical discussions, particularly in the context of non-classical logic. The findings from these two approaches are synthesized to assess whether contemporary interpretations of *catuṣkoṭi* align with the traditional Buddhist framework or whether modern logical approaches introduce significant deviations from its historical context. This multi-stage approach ensures a comprehensive understanding of the role of *catuṣkoṭi* in Buddhist thought and logic.

Findings

Reinterpreting Catuṣkoṭi from Classical Mādhyamaka to Contemporary Philosophy

The concept of *catuṣkoṭi*, or tetralemma, introduced by Nāgārjuna, has long been a central element in the study of Buddhist philosophy, particularly within the Mādhyamaka tradition. The structure of the *catuṣkoṭi*, consisting of four possibilities (affirmation, negation, both, and neither), has historically served as a tool to reveal the limits of conceptual thought and to guide practitioners toward a direct understanding of *śūnyatā* (emptiness). Beyond its function as a logical device, *catuṣkoṭi* has also served as a method to transcend rigid conceptualizations and remain attuned to the realization that all phenomena are empty of inherent existence.

In recent years, the relevance of *catuṣkoṭi* has been extended through the work of contemporary philosopher Graham Priest. In his influential book *The Fifth Corner of Four*, Priest reintroduces Nāgārjuna's tetralemma into the discourse of non-classical logic, proposing a provocative addition: a 'fifth corner.' This supplementary element represents the notion of ineffability—the idea that certain truths about reality cannot be articulated within the confines of human language or conceptual frameworks. To support this, Priest developed a logical system known as FDEe (First-Degree Entailment with ineffability), which extends the application of *catuṣkoṭi* by incorporating the unspeakable. His aim is to construct a more nuanced framework for addressing paradoxes that lie at the heart of metaphysical structures. This addition has sparked significant interest among scholars, as it attempts to forge a bridge between Buddhist metaphysics and Western logical traditions.

Priest's reinterpretation has, however, elicited both enthusiasm and criticism. On the one hand, the innovative inclusion of ineffability within the *catuṣkoṭi* framework has opened new avenues for interdisciplinary dialogue, uniting traditional Buddhist metaphysics with contemporary inquiries in logic and the philosophy of language. On the other hand, this interpretation is not universally accepted. Scholars such as Matthew Kapstein, Mark Siderits, and others—including myself—have expressed concerns regarding the accuracy and implications of Priest's portrayal of ineffability in Nāgārjuna's philosophy (Green, 2020). The core of this critique lies in the delicate challenge of engaging with traditional Buddhist logic—namely, how to balance innovative reinterpretations with a faithful understanding of the historical and doctrinal context of *Mādhyamaka* thought.

A primary critique is advanced by Mark Siderits, who contends that the concept of ineffability is not central to Mādhyamaka philosophy and that Priest's interpretation risks distorting Nāgārjuna's original intent. According to Siderits, Mādhyamaka thinkers such as *Candrakīrti* (c. 600–c. 650 CE) deliberately sought to avoid the kinds of paradoxes associated with ineffability. For these thinkers, the purpose of *catuṣkoṭi* is to refute all views—including the assertion of an ineffable reality that lies beyond the fourfold negation. Siderits argues that Nāgārjuna and his commentators employed *catuṣkoṭi* as a method to dismantle conceptual systems rather than to introduce new paradoxes centered on the unspeakable. From this perspective, Priest's interpretation is viewed as both anachronistic and philosophically unjustified. *Candrakīrti*, in particular, explicitly rejects the claim that something ineffable exists beyond the *catuṣkoṭi* framework—a view that Priest's reading appears to overlook (Siderits, 2019).

In contrast, scholars such as Yasuo Deguchi, Jay Garfield, and Graham Priest defend the view that Nāgārjuna's *catuṣkoṭi* is inherently paradoxical. They argue that paradox is not merely an incidental feature but a necessary aspect of the tetralemma, essential for articulating profound insights into the nature of reality. While acknowledging that Mādhyamaka philosophy rejects intrinsic existence and absolute truths in conventional terms, they contend that Siderits' dismissal of the paradoxical character of *catuṣkoṭi* overlooks a crucial dimension of Nāgārjuna's thought (Deguchi, Garfield, & Priest, 2013a). These scholars maintain that rather than resolving such paradoxes, one should embrace them as integral to the Mādhyamaka project (Deguchi, Garfield, & Priest, 2013).

For Deguchi, Garfield, and Priest, the paradoxes embedded in *catuṣkoṭi*—such as the assertion that there is no ultimate truth, which paradoxically is expressed as a truth—exemplify the non-dual nature of reality. The paradox of expressibility, in particular, challenges the notion that reality can be conveyed through language and conceptual distinctions. To state that ultimate reality is ineffable is itself paradoxical, as it uses language to articulate what cannot be spoken. Yet this, they argue, is precisely the point: such paradoxes are not flaws but are vital to demonstrating the limits of conceptual thought and illuminating the nature of *śūnyatā* (Deguchi et al., 2013).

Furthermore, they assert that rejecting such paradoxes would diminish the transformative potential of Mādhyamaka philosophy. Attempts to impose strict logical consistency, they argue, would risk reducing the tradition's radical insights to mere conventional realism. In this light, embracing the paradoxical dimension of *catuṣkoṭi* is not only consistent with Nāgārjuna's teachings but also serves as a means to a deeper understanding of the boundaries of human cognition and the ultimate nature of reality.

This ongoing debate regarding the interpretation of ineffability in Mādhyamaka philosophy reflects a broader challenge in contemporary engagements with Buddhist thought: how to reconcile innovative reinterpretations of traditional concepts with careful attention to their historical and doctrinal foundations. While Priest's introduction of a 'fifth corner' presents a compelling expansion of the *catuṣkoṭi*'s applicability, it remains an open question whether this reinterpretation faithfully reflects Nāgārjuna's original intentions or risks altering the philosophical framework in the process. This dialogue is likely to continue shaping scholarly understanding of *Mādhyamaka*, its engagement with logic, and its relevance to contemporary philosophical and metaphysical inquiry.

Contemporary Debates on Catuṣkoṭi in the Perspective of Logic and Soteriology

Contemporary interpretations of Nāgārjuna's *catuṣkoṭi* have become a vibrant field of discourse among philosophers seeking to understand its function as both a logical tool and a soteriological strategy. Central to this conversation are thinkers such as Jay Garfield and Graham Priest, who propose a dual reading of *catuṣkoṭi*, integrating both its affirmative and negative functions. In its affirmative mode, *catuṣkoṭi* affirms four logical possibilities—true, false, both, and neither—as a means of exposing the limits of conventional truth (*saṃvṛti-satya*). Conversely, in its negative usage, *catuṣkoṭi* rejects all four positions, thereby directing the mind toward ultimate truth (*paramārtha-satya*), which transcends conceptualization (Tillemans, 2009).

To illustrate this philosophical progression, Garfield and Priest introduce a lattice model of truth values that represents the movement from conventional to ultimate understanding. Within this model, they propose a fifth truth value, denoted as 'e' (ineffability), which symbolizes a reality that surpasses conventional logical frameworks. Through this innovation, they aim to dissolve even the binary distinction between conventional and ultimate truth, unveiling what they describe as the "void of the void." This interpretation underscores *catuṣkoṭi* not merely as an epistemological or logical construct but as a vehicle for existential liberation (Deguchi et al., 2013).

Expanding on this, Garfield and Priest, alongside Y. Deguchi, apply *catuṣkoṭi* within the domain of paraconsistent logic—an approach that allows contradictions to coexist without undermining logical consistency. This model, grounded in First Degree Entailment (FDE), reflects *Nāgārjuna's* dialectic more aptly than classical logic, which cannot accommodate the subtleties of *prasanga* arguments that aim to dismantle all positions. However, this innovative approach has drawn criticism.

Aaron J. Cotnoir (2015) argues that the FDE model compromises fundamental principles of classical logic, such as *modus ponens* and *reductio ad absurdum*, which he claims are implicitly employed in *Nāgārjuna's Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* (MMK). In response, Cotnoir proposes an alternative framework that more clearly demarcates the domains of conventional and ultimate truth. By employing a Boolean lattice model, he retains classical inferential structures within the realm of conventional truth while still accounting for the transformative purpose of *catuṣkoṭi*. In his view, this approach aligns more closely with *Nāgārjuna's* rhetorical and philosophical objectives.

Adrian Kreutz (Kreutz, 2019) contributes to this debate by acknowledging the value of Garfield and Priest's efforts to reconcile *catuṣkoṭi* with Western logic, while critiquing their addition of a fifth truth value. He contends that this move undermines the traditional structure of the tetralemma, which is characterized by the exclusivity and exhaustiveness of its fourfold formulation. Kreutz also critiques Cotnoir's Boolean framework for neglecting the rhetorical and performative power of *catuṣkoṭi*. As an alternative, he advocates for an illocutionary interpretation, viewing *catuṣkoṭi* as a speech act that negates positions not only logically but also existentially, thereby fostering detachment and paving the way to liberation.

Further enriching the debate, Jan Westerhoff (2009) emphasizes the necessity of understanding *catuṣkoṭi* within its historical and doctrinal Buddhist context. He interprets the logic not only as rejecting all views, but also the very idea of conceptual determinacy. For Westerhoff, *catuṣkoṭi* serves to dissolve the entire edifice of conceptualization, thereby enabling the realisation of emptiness (*śūnyatā*)—a state beyond all constructs.

In a related yet distinct approach, R. D. Gunaratne (1986) introduces what he calls a dual-strand approach to *catuṣkoṭi*. While appreciating *Nāgārjuna's* deconstruction of conceptual extremes, he argues against the idea that *Nāgārjuna* abandoned classical logical principles. Rather, *Nāgārjuna* utilises logical reasoning to its very limits to show the inadequacy of all conceptual fabrications. Unlike Priest, Gunaratne does not accept the need for a fifth truth value, and unlike Cotnoir, he emphasizes that *catuṣkoṭi* operates pedagogically as well as dialectically—guiding practitioners to directly perceive the void.

Gunaratne's interpretation addresses Cotnoir's concern that many Western models overlook the soteriological function of *catuṣkoṭi*. He highlights its meditative and pragmatic value, underscoring how it leads not to doctrinal conclusions, but to an experiential realization of the non-dual. This reinforces the Madhyamaka ethos: that logic, while necessary, must ultimately be transcended in the path toward liberation.

The tension between formal logic and spiritual liberation also features prominently in the works of Lloyd Humberstone (2013). He evaluates Priest's paraconsistent logic critically, especially its claim to accommodate contradictions while rejecting truth gaps. Humberstone interrogates the ontological commitments behind such logic and reviews alternative approaches like the Dunn-Belnap semantics, which attempts to systematize *catuṣkoṭi* within a broader framework. Yet he remains cautious about the capacity of any formal system to fully accommodate the transcendental aims of Nāgārjuna's philosophy.

A Critique of the Use of Catuṣkoṭi in Bhāviveka's Thought and its Implications in Contemporary Philosophical Discourse

Bhāviveka's Logical Innovations and Their Relevance in the Contemporary Context

Bhāviveka (c. 500-578 CE), an important figure in *Mādhyamaka* philosophy, is known for his contribution in integrating Dignāga's syllogistic reasoning (*hetuvidyā*) into the *Mādhyamaka* framework. This innovation marks a significant difference compared to the methods employed by earlier commentators such as Buddhapālita, who relied solely on the *reductio ad absurdum* approach to expose inconsistencies in the opponent's views. In contrast, *Bhāviveka* introduced a more systematic and structured method of argumentation, utilising elements such as thesis (*pratijñā*), reason (*hetu*), and example (*dr̥ṣṭānta*). This approach made it possible to present Nāgārjuna's teachings in a clearer and more precise manner, increasing the accessibility and depth of the *Mādhyamaka* doctrine.

A distinctive aspect of *Bhāviveka's* methodology is the positive application of *catuṣkoṭi*. Although *catuṣkoṭi* is traditionally used to dismantle extreme views including affirmation, negation, both, and neither, *Bhāviveka* extends its use to constructively demonstrate the emptiness (*śūnyatā*) of all phenomena. This use of logical reasoning as an *upāya* (expedient means) bridges the gap between doctrinal analysis and the soteriological goal of realising the ultimate truth. By using structured logical arguments, *Bhāviveka* not only dismantles erroneous views but also facilitates progress towards a non-conceptual understanding of ultimate reality.

Bhāviveka's philosophical approach is strongly associated with the two-truth framework, which distinguishes between conventional truth (*saṃvṛti-satya*) and ultimate truth (*paramārtha-satya*). He acknowledged that ultimate reality transcends the conceptual framework, yet he also emphasised that reason in the conventional realm has an important role in guiding practitioners towards a direct understanding of emptiness. For *Bhāviveka*, logical argumentation is not an end in itself, but an essential tool to help clear misunderstandings and reveal the emptiness underlying all phenomena, in line with *Mādhyamaka's* aim to transcend attachment to all conceptual views.

Through this structured approach, *Bhāviveka* uses vivid analogies, such as ‘magic illusions,’ to illustrate the insubstantial and temporary nature of conditioned phenomena. His analogies effectively convey the idea that what we consider solid and permanent is actually empty and transient. By bridging the gap between conventional distinctions and the realisation of ultimate truth, *Bhāviveka*’s methodology provides a clear path for practitioners, moving from intellectual understanding to direct insight into emptiness.

Bhāviveka’s influence on *Mādhyamaka* thought extended beyond his immediate followers and had a profound impact on the development of Buddhist philosophy, particularly in East Asia. His integration of logical analyses into the *Mādhyamaka* teachings was highly resonant with later scholars, who adapted his approach to develop more sophisticated doctrinal classifications. However, *Bhāviveka*’s reliance on positive inference and syllogistic reasoning also drew criticism from other *Mādhyamaka* scholars, especially *Candrakīrti*, who embraced the *prāsaṅgika* method. *Candrakīrti*’s approach, which avoids making positive assertions about ultimate reality, emphasises that all conceptual formulations, even those intended to negate inherent existence, can lead to entanglement. For *Candrakīrti*, any attempt to formulate the *Mādhyamaka* doctrine using syllogistic reasoning risks reifying emptiness, which would undermine the goal of not being attached to any view.

This methodological difference between *Bhāviveka* and *Candrakīrti* reflects the fundamental tension in *Mādhyamaka* philosophy whether it is better to favour systematic logical reasoning, as *Bhāviveka* does, or stick to the principle of non-assertion, as *Candrakīrti* maintains. *Bhāviveka*’s method of using syllogistic reasoning to defend the *Mādhyamaka* doctrine provided a more structured and clear approach to *Nāgārjuna*’s teachings, which was favoured by subsequent generations of scholars in East Asia. However, *Candrakīrti* and his followers argued that such formalisation could misinterpret *Nāgārjuna*’s teachings, which emphasised the emptiness of all views, including the view of emptiness itself.

The contemporary relevance of *Bhāviveka*’s logical innovations can be seen in the current debate on the application of *catuṣkoṭi* in philosophical discussions. *Bhāviveka*’s careful approach to non-implicative negation (*prasajyapratishedha*) offers valuable insights for reconciling conventional and ultimate truths without compromising their coherence. By avoiding affirmation of alternative positions while refuting propositions, *Bhāviveka*’s method maintains *Mādhyamaka*’s commitment to avoiding attachment to fixed views. This is particularly relevant in contemporary philosophical discussions, such as the critique of the introduction by Garfield and Priest of a fifth truth value to describe inerrancy, which risks complicating the simplicity of the *catuṣkoṭi* framework.

For scholars like Cotnoir, who address the ‘classical capture problem,’ *Bhāviveka*’s approach offers a way to reconcile conventional and ultimate truths in a way that preserves the integrity of both. His use of logical analysis in conjunction with soteriological goals demonstrates how structured reasoning can facilitate the path from conceptual understanding to direct insight. By revisiting *Bhāviveka*’s innovations, contemporary philosophers can find a balanced approach in interpreting *catuṣkoṭi*, which integrates logical rigour with the transformative aims of Buddhist practice. This synthesis between logic and spirituality enriches the

ongoing dialogue in *Mādhyamaka* philosophy and offers a correction to the potential misinterpretation of *Nāgārjuna's* teaching on emptiness.

Jizang's Rejection of the Fifth Angle in *Catuṣkoṭi*

Jizang (吉藏, 549-623 CE), a Persian-Chinese Buddhist monk and central figure in the *Mādhyamaka* tradition in East Asia, played a key role in shaping the contemporary understanding of *catuṣkoṭi* (four-corner logic) and introduced a firm rejection of the addition of a 'fifth corner.' In his thought, Jizang emphasised the importance of cutting across the four phrases present in *catuṣkoṭi* (jué sì jù 絕四句), illustrating how this same principle can build and destroy concepts simultaneously. With this dialectical method, Jizang transforms *catuṣkoṭi* into a dynamic tool that not only unravels conceptual entanglements but also reveals the fundamental non-duality in doctrine and liberation. According to him, clinging to any one angle in the *catuṣkoṭi* would only prolong delusion.

In Jizang's teachings, an understanding of emptiness (*sūnyatā*) is crucial to understanding the Middle path, which is free from conceptual duality. Jizang asserts that views on existence and non-existence are the main obstacles in achieving a correct understanding of emptiness. This view is closely related to the teaching in the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* that describes living beings as insects that bend while walking, instinctively relying on existence to form a view of non-existence and vice versa. Jizang uses this analogy to show how views of existence and non-existence are obstacles that block the middle path and are the root of all false views.

Jizang responds very critically to the idea of adding a 'fifth angle' in *catuṣkoṭi*, proposed by some modern thinkers such as Garfield and Priest, who introduce a fifth truth value to represent ineffability. For Jizang, holding to 'neither existence nor existence' is a form of misrepresentation. He argued that adding a fifth angle would only reinforce attachment to the conceptual view and prevent a correct understanding of emptiness. In his view, 'neither existence nor existence' is not enlightenment, but a misguided view, which places itself in the realm of delusional discourse. Jizang quotes the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-śāstra*, which states that 'If one claims "neither existence nor existence", then it becomes something that can be discussed and disputed somewhere where thoughts arise and disputes occur.'

According to Jizang, the correct understanding of emptiness does not lie in the rejection of existence or non-existence externally, but rather in the understanding that they are two sides of the same coin and that both should be avoided in the attainment of higher understanding. In this way, the understanding of emptiness must be free from dualistic notions such as existence and non-existence, which are wrong views that hinder the understanding of the middle way. For Jizang, the Middle way taught by *Nāgārjuna* is one that is not caught up in affirming or denying existence or non-existence, but rather one that transcends all conceptual constructs.

The Jizang Method, with its rejection of the addition of a fifth angle in the *catuṣkoṭi*, asserts that the idea of adding an angle will only reinforce attachment to conceptual views, which will ultimately lead to further delusion. In his view, the aim of Buddhism is to free the mind from all fixed views and conceptual dualities, paving the way for a direct understanding of emptiness free from all forms of affirmation or denial. Thus, Jizang underscored the importance of an understanding that is not

bound to any view, be it one that affirms existence, non-existence, or any that seeks to add a new dimension to *catuṣkoṭi*. This approach reflects Jizang's loyalty to *Nāgārjuna's* teachings on the avoidance of fixed views and insistence on the principle of non-assertion, which remain relevant in contemporary discussions on *catuṣkoṭi* and emptiness.

Zhiyi's Integration and Critique of *Catuṣkoṭi* in Tiantai Buddhism

Zhiyi (智顓, 538-597), the founder of Tiantai Buddhism (Hung, 2020b), played an important role in integrating *catuṣkoṭi*, the Buddhist logical framework consisting of four possibilities (true, false, both, and neither) into Tiantai's doctrinal and meditation system. In his mind, *catuṣkoṭi* is not only a tool for logical analysis but also a means of navigating the path to genuine truth. While this framework became an important tool in dissecting Buddhism, Zhiyi was also well aware of the potential of *catuṣkoṭi* to mislead if misused. As Jizang, a key figure in the Tiantai tradition, explains, when used by the unenlightened, *catuṣkoṭi* can entangle the mind in conceptual proliferation (*prapañca*), further reinforcing attachment to dualism and preventing a deeper understanding of reality. However, for those who have attained higher levels of consciousness, *catuṣkoṭi* becomes a transformative tool, allowing them to transcend conceptual distinctions and realise the inseparability of all phenomena.

Zhiyi's view of *catuṣkoṭi* is in line with Tiantai's core teachings that emphasise the importance of integrating doctrinal analysis with the soteriological goal of achieving liberation. In Tiantai, conceptual frameworks, including *catuṣkoṭi*, are not regarded as fixed absolute truths, but as temporary tools that lead to a deeper, unspeakable reality. This dynamic use of *catuṣkoṭi* is seen in Zhiyi's development of a doctrinal classification system consisting of four levels corresponding to an increasingly profound understanding of reality. The first level, the Tripitaka teachings (*sanzang jiao*, 三藏教), corresponds to *Hīnayāna* thought, in which the world is seen as 'all real.' The second level, the General teaching (*tongjiao*, 通教), reflects elements shared by *Hīnayāna* and *Mahāyāna*, and understands that 'everything is not real.' The third level, the Distinctive teaching (*biejiao*, 別教), highlights *Mahāyāna's* view that 'both the real and the unreal.' Finally, the Spherical/Perfect teaching (*yuanjiao*, 圓教), which is the highest level, reflects the Middle Way that states 'neither real nor unreal,' unifying all previous levels.

The Spherical/True Teaching is directly related to Tiantai's concept of the three truths (*sandi*, 三諦) (conventional truth, true truth, and the Middle Way) that present a unifying vision of truth without distinction. The integration of *catuṣkoṭi* with the Round/Top teaching allows for an understanding of the indivisibility of Buddha nature. For Zhiyi, *catuṣkoṭi* is not only a logical tool but also a means to lead practitioners to the direct experience of inseparability, removing the boundaries between concepts and leading to the realisation of the Middle Way.

In his critique of the previous logical framework, Zhiyi specifically addresses the ideas of *Bhāviveka*, an important figure in the *Mādhyamaka* school. *Bhāviveka's* reliance on syllogistic reasoning and the use of qualifying words such as 'finally' (*paramārtha*) is seen by some as problematic because it risks making the concept of emptiness (*śūnyatā*) a bounded one, instead of realising the true *Mādhyamaka* understanding of non-attachment to views. Zhiyi's response is to emphasise the

fluid and dynamic function of *catuṣkoṭi*, asserting that no single logical framework can fully capture the true truth. He warned not to get stuck on the alternatives available in *catuṣkoṭi* as fixed positions, as this would hinder the ability to transcend dualistic thinking.

Zhiyi also identifies four types of *catuṣkoṭi* misuse, each of which reflects a deepening of conceptual confusion. The first type, simple *catuṣkoṭi* (單四句, and *siju*), refers to the four basic alternatives. When applied by unenlightened minds, these alternatives are often mistaken for absolute truths about reality, whereas they are only temporary concepts, leading to conceptual proliferation. The second type, double *catuṣkoṭi* (複四句, *fu siju*), arises when alternatives to simple *catuṣkoṭi* are rejected without understanding the fundamental uncertainty of reality. This type adds its layer of confusion by proposing a connection between each alternative and its denial, doubling the metaphysical complexity without bringing clarity. The third type, compound *catuṣkoṭi* (具足四句, *juzu siju*), arises when one tries to escape from dual *catuṣkoṭi* yet fails to recognise the interdependence between conceptual distinctions. Here, each alternative to the simple *catuṣkoṭi* is expanded into a set of four sub-alternatives, resulting in a sixteen-fold conceptual involvement and further confusing the path to enlightenment. Finally, the dissolution of speech (絕言, *jueyan*; 無言, *wuyan*) represents the mind's attempt to transcend all conceptualisation by retreating into stillness. Zhiyi criticises this approach, arguing that it is a deceptive form of stillness because it still relies on dualistic thinking, distinguishing between speech and its cessation, and thus does not lead to true non-dual realisation.

These four abuses reflect the dangers of attachment to concepts and the tendency to get caught up in dualistic thinking. However, when *catuṣkoṭi* is properly understood, it serves as a tool of liberation. By recognising the voidness of all conceptual distinctions and understanding the interdependence of all phenomena, practitioners can transcend dualism and approach the non-dual reality that lies beyond both speech and silence. Therefore, for Zhiyi, the *catuṣkoṭi* serves as a symbol of confusion as well as a guide to enlightenment, reflecting the Tiantai school's ability to integrate doctrinal analysis with its primary soteriological goal.

Kuiji and Catuṣkoṭi in the Context of Yogācāra and Critique of Bhāviveka

Kuiji (632-682) was an important figure in the *Yogācāra* tradition (Keng, 2018; Li, 2023) who contributed greatly to understanding the concepts of emptiness (*śūnyatā*) and existence through deep logical thinking. In his works, he often refers to the 'four phrases' (四句), which are the main talking points regarding the relationship between objects and mind. These four phrases are essential elements in *catuṣkoṭi*, which are used as tools to examine and criticise various views in the Buddhist tradition, especially in terms of the understanding of emptiness and existence. Kuiji takes a more complex approach compared to *Bhāviveka*, who emphasises emptiness as an absolute principle. Although in some of his writings Kuiji does not directly mention *catuṣkoṭi*, its influence is evident in the way he discusses and introduces criticisms of *Bhāviveka's* views, as well as in the way he uses *catuṣkoṭi* to discuss deeper logical and metaphysical issues.

Kuiji criticised *Bhāviveka*, who, according to him, tended to ignore the connection between emptiness and the *Yogācāra* teaching of the 'three universes' (*trilakṣaṇa*), which include the conventional world, emptiness, and the true world.

In *Bhāviveka's* view, emptiness is regarded as the highest principle that affirms that all phenomena are empty, yet it is inadequate in systematically explaining the relationship between these three realms. In contrast, Kuiji considered that the understanding of emptiness should include all three aspects, and he emphasised that although worldly phenomena appear to exist in conventional truth, they are empty in ultimate truth. This view shows that Kuiji had a deeper understanding of the early teachings of Buddhism, and he used *catuṣkoṭi* to clarify the *Mahāyāna's* more complex and holistic position on reality.

Kuiji used *catuṣkoṭi* not only as a tool to refute erroneous views, but also as a way to classify the various positions in Buddhist discourse regarding the relationship between objects and mind. He divides these views into categories, showing how thoughts in the Buddhist tradition and even heretical views can be examined using a clear logical framework. According to Kuiji, there are views that hold that only objects exist without minds, others that hold that only minds exist without objects, and others that assert that both objects and minds exist. More interesting, however, is the more radical view, which asserts that there are no objects and no minds at all. In relation to these views, Kuiji states that they can all be analysed through *catuṣkoṭi* as a logical framework to explain the various positions.

In his discussion of perception and mental images, Kuiji identified four possibilities related to perception and mental images in the understanding of reality. He considers that some Buddhist traditions, such as *Vaibhāṣika*, hold that external perception is direct without the mediation of mental images, while *Bhāviveka* tends to see mental images as more fundamental than direct perception of external objects. Kuiji himself argues that both perception and mental images work together in shaping our experience of the world, and this is more in line with the *Mahāyāna* view that reality is formed through the interaction between mind and object.

In his work *Essays on the Forest of Meanings*, Kuiji discusses the importance of distinguishing between peripheral and core teachings in *Mahāyāna*. *Bhāviveka's* teachings, although appreciated in some aspects, were considered peripheral teachings as they only focused on emptiness as the highest principle without paying attention to the broader dimensions present in the *Yogācāra* teachings. Kuiji considered that the more comprehensive and thorough *Mahāyāna* teaching, which combined the principle of emptiness with the doctrine of 'Consciousness-Only' (*Vijñaptimātratā*), was better able to explain reality in a deeper and broader sense. Therefore, although *Bhāviveka* makes an important contribution to the understanding of emptiness, deeper views of consciousness and reality, such as those taught in the *Mahāyāna*, provide a more thorough and more accurate interpretation of the true nature of the world and human consciousness.

Kuiji not only used *catuṣkoṭi* as a tool to respond to *Bhāviveka's* views, but also as a very useful hermeneutic tool to clarify and categorise various views in Buddhism. This use of *catuṣkoṭi* becomes a way to introduce the deeper teachings of *Mahāyāna*, emphasise the importance of consciousness in understanding reality, and show how the teaching of emptiness should be understood in a more holistic framework. In this context, *catuṣkoṭi* functions not only as a logical tool to refute erroneous views, but also as a means to deepen the understanding of reality and

existence in the Buddhist tradition, which is closely related to the attainment of enlightenment in the *Mahāyāna* teachings.

Gomyō's Critique of Bhāviveka and Its Implications for Theology

Gomyō, a prominent *Hossō* master, provides a profound critique of *Bhāviveka's* views in the context of *Mahāyāna* Buddhist philosophy. His critique, drawn from the teachings of *Kuiji*, the founder of the *Hossō* school, reflects a deep understanding of the *Samdhinirmocana-sūtra* and its implications for the interpretation of emptiness and the three natures in *Yogācāra* thought. *Gomyō's* position is based on the belief that *Bhāviveka's* interpretation of dependent origination and the nature of dharma deviates greatly from the original teachings of the Buddha, resulting in a misunderstanding of key doctrinal concepts.

The crux of *Gomyō's* critique lies in a quote from the *Samdhinirmocana-sūtra*, which states that Buddhism is centred on the understanding that 'all phenomena have no intrinsic nature,' a concept that is crucial to understanding the doctrine of emptiness in Buddhism. This *sūtra* further explains that in the highest sense, there is no birth or destruction, everything is essentially serene, and its nature is *nirvāṇa*, which is characterised by the absence of intrinsic nature. This teaching, according to *Gomyō*, is the most profound teaching and leaves no room for anything more than that. It is the highest teaching in Buddhist Dharma teaching. *Gomyō* emphasises that this absence of intrinsic nature is not rooted in dependent nature (*paratantra*) or fully achieved nature (*pariniṣpanna*), but in imagined nature (*parikalpita*). Therefore, the non-existence of this intrinsic nature is related to the conceptual projection we make on phenomena, but it does not mean that the other two properties of dependent origination and fully attained nature are also devoid of intrinsic nature.

On the contrary, *Bhāviveka* holds that both dependent origination and the intrinsic nature of dharma are completely absent. This view, according to *Gomyō*, directly contradicts the Buddha's teachings found in the *Samdhinirmocana-sūtra*. For *Gomyō*, this view is erroneous because it deviates from the core teachings of the Buddha. He states that if one denies that the *Samdhinirmocana-sūtra* is Buddhist, arguments can still be made in defence of *Bhāviveka's* view. However, if it is recognised that this *sūtra* is Buddhist, then *Bhāviveka's* position becomes untenable, as it fundamentally misrepresents important aspects of the Dharma.

Gomyō's critique, along with *Kuiji's*, is part of a wider acceptance of *Nāgārjuna's catuṣkoṭi* in East Asia, especially in relation to the inadequacy of conceptual language to capture ultimate truth. Both thinkers see *catuṣkoṭi* as an important tool, not only to refute erroneous views, but also to emphasise the limitations of conceptual language in grasping ultimate truth. The role of *catuṣkoṭi*, therefore, is not only to criticise erroneous teachings, but to affirm the inexpressible nature of ultimate reality that transcends all conceptual limitations. For *Kuiji*, this is seen in his use of *catuṣkoṭi* to criticise the way *Bhāviveka* treats emptiness, specifically his failure to reconcile the three natures in *Yogācāra* thought. By doing this, *Kuiji* not only criticises *Bhāviveka's* position but also reinforces the view that ultimate truth lies beyond the dichotomy of existence and non-existence.

Similarly, *Gomyō* uses the same conceptual framework to criticise *Bhāviveka*, by pointing out the implications of his rejection of dependent nature and fully achieved nature. For *Gomyō*, *Bhāviveka's* position undermines Buddhism, and leads to a

misunderstanding that rejects the essential components of the Buddhist teaching on emptiness. His critique draws attention to the more nuanced relationship between the three types of intrinsic non-being, as explained in the *Samdhinirmocana-sūtra*. Gomyō's careful distinction between imagined nature and the other two (dependent and fully achieved) emphasises the complexity of the Buddha's teaching on emptiness and the limitations of the conceptual framework in capturing the ultimate truth

Discussion

This study examines the reinterpretation of *catuṣkoṭi* (the fourfold negation) in contemporary philosophical discourse and compares it with classical Buddhist traditions, particularly in the context of *Mādhyamaka* and East Asian traditions. The main findings suggest that the integration of *catuṣkoṭi* into non-classical logic by philosophers such as Graham Priest and Jay Garfield—particularly through the introduction of a fifth value (or *ineffability*)—presents a significant tension with East Asian approaches such as those of Jizang and Zhiyi, who emphasise a complete severance from all four positions (*jué sì jù 絕四句*, “the rejection of the four propositions”). This difference underscores the divergent epistemological directions between modern logic and classical Buddhism.

The fundamental difference in approaches to *catuṣkoṭi* arises from the epistemological orientation and philosophical aims that distinguish contemporary logical philosophy from classical Buddhist traditions. As hypothesised earlier, non-classical approaches in modern logic—such as dialetheism and paraconsistent logic—tend to emphasise the structural and systematic aspects of paradox. In doing so, they risk obscuring the *soteriological* (liberation-oriented) dimension that lies at the heart of *catuṣkoṭi* in both *Mādhyamaka* and East Asian Buddhism.

Rather than being used as a strategy to dismantle attachment to conceptual elaboration (*prapañca*, conceptual proliferation) and to guide understanding towards *śūnyatā* (emptiness), *catuṣkoṭi* in contemporary approaches is formalised into logical systems, such as the FDEe model (First-Degree Entailment with explosion). The addition of a fifth value to represent *ineffability*—despite being inspired by Buddhist intuitions—ironically results in a kind of “positivisation” of what is, in *Mādhyamaka*, purposefully left undefined and unconceptualised.

In other words, the reinterpretation of *catuṣkoṭi* as a component of an inferential system in modern logic contradicts its original role as a tool for liberation from all systems of thought. This strengthens the hypothesis that there is a fundamental difference between formal-logical approaches that attempt to systematically articulate *catuṣkoṭi*, and *soteriological* approaches that stress disengagement from all conceptual frameworks. Therefore, rather than expanding our understanding of *śūnyatā*, formal logical approaches may actually create a distance from the original meaning of *catuṣkoṭi* as a path to liberation.

This research thus acts as both a complement and a critique of formal and logical approaches to *catuṣkoṭi* developed by figures such as Graham Priest, Jay Garfield, and Mark Siderits. They interpret *catuṣkoṭi* within the framework of non-classical logics such as paraconsistent logic and First-Degree Entailment (FDE) to accommodate paradoxes and contradictions in Buddhist arguments, especially in *Nāgārjuna's Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* (Priest, 2011, 2015, 2018b, 2022). In their

approach, *catuṣkoṭi* functions as a formal instrument structuring an alternative logical system to classical Western principles such as the law of non-contradiction and the law of the excluded middle. In some recent analyses (Priest, 2018b; Roy & Posina, 2024), *catuṣkoṭi* is even employed to dissect ontological issues such as the identity of *samsāra* (cyclic existence) and *nirvāṇa* (liberation), as well as the concept of *śūnyatā* within semantic and categorical frameworks.

However, this study maintains a critical distance from such approaches by emphasising that these logical frameworks risk obscuring the soteriological dimension of *catuṣkoṭi*—especially within the Mādhyamaka tradition and East Asian Buddhism. In this context, *catuṣkoṭi* is not merely a logical tool, but a deconstructive strategy designed to liberate the subject from attachment to concepts (*prapañca*) and guide them towards the realisation of *śūnyatā*. This concern echoes a broader challenge in contemporary applications of Buddhist teachings, where spiritual and ethical dimensions are often neglected in favour of cognitive or structural benefits. As Medhacitto, Mahatthanadull, and Busro (2024) observe in their study of *Appamāda*, modern adaptations of classical Buddhist concepts often experience ethical dilution, with mindfulness reduced to a psychological technique, thereby losing its foundational purpose of spiritual development and liberation.

“*Appamāda*, when removed from its ethical and soteriological foundations, becomes merely a tool for stress management, missing its deeper role in cultivating moral awareness and spiritual insight” (Medhacitto et al., 2024, p. 94).

The study also differentiates itself from the approaches of Gunaratne and *Bhāviveka*, who attempt to integrate *catuṣkoṭi* within conventional logic by affirming specific positions. This method is critiqued through readings of *Candrakīrti* and Jizang, who explicitly reject all forms of affirmation as a path to enlightenment, as examined by Wang and Wen-fang (Wang & Wen-fang, 2024).

By comparing Western thought (Priest, Garfield, Siderits) and Eastern perspectives (*Candrakīrti*, Jizang, Zhiyi), this study highlights the importance of hermeneutic and contextual approaches in understanding philosophical doctrines across traditions. The novelty of this research lies in its explicit attempt to compare the principle of “breaking the four positions” (*po sì jù 破四句*) in Chinese Buddhism—especially in the Tiantai and Sanlun schools—with the FDEe model in contemporary logic, an area that remains underexplored academically.

The findings of this research clarify that within the *Mahāyāna* framework, logic is not the ultimate goal but a means towards the realisation of *śūnyatā*. Consequently, the use of *catuṣkoṭi* within a formalistic context, without consideration of its transformative and existential significance, risks reducing the spiritual substance of Buddhist teachings. This research contributes to cross-cultural understanding between Eastern and Western philosophies, particularly in recognising the limitations of logical formalism in comprehending transcendent reality.

The positive function of contemporary interpretations such as the FDEe model lies in opening interdisciplinary spaces that enrich the discourse of logic and philosophy of religion. However, the dysfunctional aspect is the potential loss of the soteriological essence of *catuṣkoṭi*, which may lead to a secularisation of its meaning.

This serves as a warning against the dangers of reductionism when intellectual legacies from spiritual traditions are interpreted within epistemological frameworks alien to their origins.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that philosophical, theological, and logical studies in academic institutions pay closer attention to the doctrinal and *soteriological* dimensions in cross-traditional inquiries. Curricula in philosophy and religious studies should encourage hermeneutic and contextual approaches to classical texts, while fostering critical awareness of the limitations of logical formalism in grasping transcendent realities. Furthermore, collaborative research between East Asian thinkers and Western logicians should be encouraged to avoid unilateral epistemological assumptions in interpreting complex spiritual doctrines such as *catuṣkoṭi*.

Conclusion

This research reveals that the reinterpretation of *catuṣkoṭi* in contemporary philosophy, particularly through non-classical logical models such as FDEe and the fifth truth value (ineffability), creates epistemological and soteriological tensions with traditional East Asian Buddhist understandings. The main findings show that *catuṣkoṭi*, which was originally a dialectical device to dismantle conceptual entanglements and lead to *śūnyatā*, has been reconstructed in modern Western logic into a tool of exploration of paradoxes and formal contradictions. This has the potential to reduce the transformative and liberatory essence of *catuṣkoṭi*, as demonstrated in the teachings of Jizang, Zhiyi, Kuiji, and *Gomyō* which expressly reject such logical expansion in favour of maintaining its soteriological function.

The main scholarly contribution of this study is the provision of a comparative synthesis between contemporary Western logic and East Asian hermeneutic approaches to *catuṣkoṭi*. The research enriches the discourse of philosophy of religion and logic by showing that formal approaches to spiritual texts must be complemented by historical-doctrinal and soteriological understanding in order not to deviate from their original intent. It also offers a model of cross-traditional thinking that emphasises the integration between logical analysis and the goal of liberation, and proposes the need to reread philosophical legacies such as *catuṣkoṭi* contextually and cross-culturally.

However, this study has limitations in the scope of texts and figures analysed, which is still focused on key figures from *Mādhyamaka* and certain East Asian traditions. This study has not fully explored the understanding of *catuṣkoṭi* in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, Southeast Asian Buddhism, or in contemporary practice among the global Buddhist community. For this reason, future research is recommended to expand the study across traditions and include a praxis perspective so that the understanding of *catuṣkoṭi* is not only theoretical, but also contextual in today's spiritual and social religious dynamics.

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