

# **THE KEYS TO THE TREASURY OF THE DHARMA**

**FRAMEWORKS FOR CONTEMPLATING  
THE ESSENTIAL MEANING**

**SOURCEBOOK**



# RIME SHEDRA CHANTS

## ASPIRATION

In order that all sentient beings may attain Buddhahood,  
From my heart I take refuge in the three jewels.

*This was composed by Mipham. Translated by the Nalanda Translation Committee*

## MANJUSHRI SUPPLICATION

Whatever the virtues of the many fields of knowledge  
All are steps on the path of omniscience.  
May these arise in the clear mirror of intellect.  
O Manjushri, please accomplish this.

*This was specially composed by Mangala (Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche). Translated by the Nalanda Translation Committee*

## DEDICATION OF MERIT

By this merit may all obtain omniscience  
May it defeat the enemy, wrong doing.  
From the stormy waves of birth, old age, sickness and death,  
From the ocean of samsara, may I free all beings

By the confidence of the golden sun of the great east  
May the lotus garden of the Rigden's wisdom bloom,  
May the dark ignorance of sentient beings be dispelled.  
May all beings enjoy profound, brilliant glory.

*Translated by the Nalanda Translation Committee*

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Exclusively for the use of the  
Rime Shedra NYC  
Advanced Buddhist Studies Program  
Shambhala Meditation Center of New York  
First Edition - 2016*

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- 16) Nitartha, Neyartha, and Tathagathagarbha in Tibet, Kennard Lipman, *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 8 (1980), pp. 87-91, SB pages 127-135
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**The Keys to the Treasury of the Dharma**  
**Frameworks for Contemplating the Essential Meaning**  
**An Advanced Buddhist Studies/Rime Shedra NYC Course**  
**Eleven of the Tuesdays from September 13<sup>th</sup> to December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2016, 7-9:15 pm**

**Sources**

- ❖ **TOK:** *Foundations of Buddhist Study and Practice, The Treasury of Knowledge, Book Seven and Book Eight-Part One and Two*, by Jamgon Kongtrul, translated by Richard Barron.
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iii) A Brief Introduction to Tibetan Logic, *Establishing Validity*, David Karma Choephel, pp. xlvii-liii, SB pages 78-81

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***The Treasury of Knowledge***  
***Book Seven and Book Eight-Part One and Two***

**By Jamgon Kongtrul**  
**Translated by Richard Barron**

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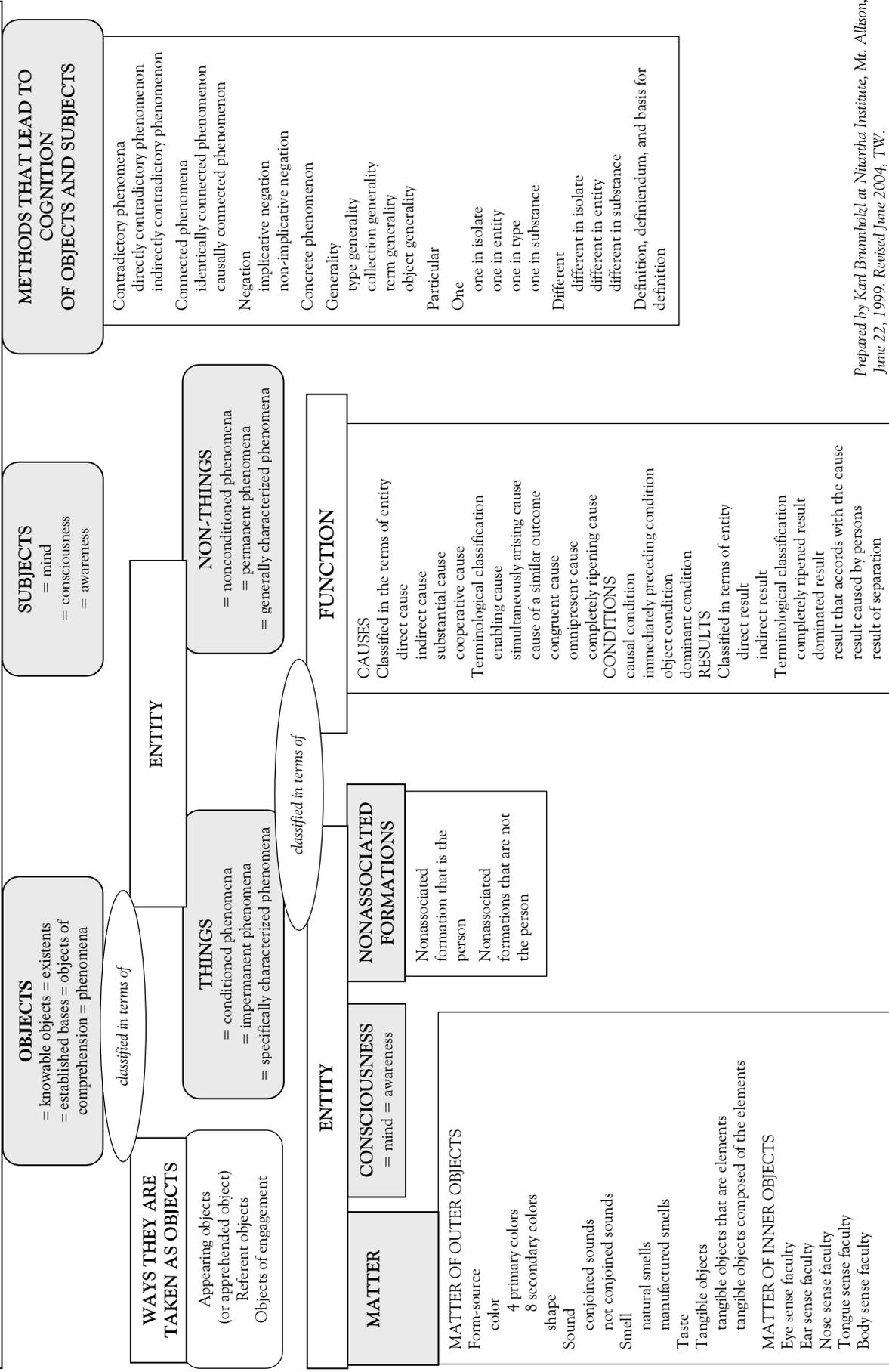
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# CLASSIFICATION OF PHENOMENA



Prepared by Karl Brunnhörl at Niartha Institute, Mt. Allison, June 22, 1999. Revised June 2004, TW.

# The Precious Treasury of Philosophical Systems

*A Treatise Elucidating the Meaning of the  
Entire Range of Spiritual Approaches*

*Longchen Rabjam*

Translated by Richard Barron  
(Lama Chökvi Nyima)



PADMA PUBLISHING

2007

1

## The Buddha

### I. THE TEACHER

#### A. The Hinayana Interpretation

According to the Hinayana interpretation, our Teacher gave rise to bodhicitta, or “the awakening mind,” in the presence of the buddha Mahashakyamuni three immensely long eons ago, with the following words recorded in *The Scriptural Transmission of Vinaya*:

O Sugata, whatever your form is like,  
whatever your retinue, life span, and realm,  
and whatever your noble and sublime marks of perfection,  
may I swiftly accomplish the same!

Thereafter, during those three immensely long eons, the Bodhisattva pursued spiritual development, serving fifty-five thousand buddhas during the first eon, sixty-six thousand during the second, and seventy-seven thousand during the third.<sup>1</sup> *The Foundation of Scriptural Transmission* states:

From the enlightened guide Rashtrapala  
to the buddha Vipashyin,  
I venerated a total  
of fifty-five thousand buddhas.  
During that time, I was not discouraged. [5a]  
From the buddha Sadhu  
to the sage Indradhvaja,  
I venerated a total  
of sixty-six thousand buddhas.  
During that time, I was not discouraged.

From the buddha Dipamkara  
to Ratnashikini,  
I venerated a total  
of seventy-seven thousand buddhas.  
During that time, I was not discouraged.

According to *The Treasury of Abhidharma*:

Vipashyin, Dipamkara, and Ratnashikini  
came at the close of the three immensely long eons.  
Preceding that succession,<sup>2</sup>  
the first was Shakyamuni.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, it is maintained that he awakened to buddhahood through a process entailing twelve deeds and, having passed into nirvana with no trace of his mind-body aggregates remaining, abides in the basic space of peace.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, the Buddha developed the positive qualities associated with the path of accumulation for three immensely long eons. Then, at Vajrasana, with attainment of the highest level of this path of accumulation as the basis, he traversed the rest of the five paths—those of linkage, seeing, meditation, and no more learning—in a single sitting.<sup>5</sup> This interpretation is consistent with the process undergone by a pratyekabuddha of keen acumen. The same source states:

The enlightenment of the Teacher and those who are like  
rhinoceroses  
is fully attained in a single, final state of meditative stability.<sup>6</sup>

Moreover, the following verse attests to the fact that in his final lifetime in conditioned existence, the Bodhisattva was an ordinary being:

Service to one's parents, sick people, those who give spiritual  
teachings,  
and bodhisattvas in their final rebirth—  
even though none of these are spiritually advanced—  
is said to be of inestimable value.<sup>7</sup> [5b]

## B. The Ordinary Mahayana and Vajrayana Interpretations

In the Mahayana tradition as well, some maintain—in keeping with the Hinayana interpretation—that the Bodhisattva first gave rise to bodhi-

chitta, then pursued spiritual development for three immensely long eons, and finally became a buddha in this human world through a process entailing twelve deeds. But they further hold that the Buddha simultaneously manifested enlightened embodiments elsewhere in the universe Difficult to Renounce, benefiting beings. The sutra *The Complete Array of Qualities* states:

From the point that I first gave rise to the intention to attain unsurpassable enlightenment, I pursued spiritual development with great diligence for three immensely long eons. When the average span of human life was one hundred years, I saw that ordinary beings were blind and without a guide; I awakened to buddhahood in this human world and completely turned the inconceivable wheel of dharma.

Certain authors in the secret mantra approach agree for the most part with this interpretation, but more specifically maintain that while the Bodhisattva was practicing asceticism, although his body was seated by the banks of a river, his mind was in Akanishtha, being empowered with great rays of light.<sup>8</sup> By cultivating a profound state of nondual meditative absorption, he thus awakened to buddhahood. Immediately after this, he manifested at Vajrasana in the manner of one awakening to buddhahood. In *The Sphere of Freedom*, the venerable Buddhajinana writes:

Although Shakyamuni  
pursued spiritual development for three immensely  
long eons,  
he had not realized the goal, so at Nairanjana  
he dwelled in the meditative absorption of “nothingness.”<sup>9</sup>  
At that time, the sugatas of the ten directions<sup>10</sup>  
brought an end to his mental patterns [6a]  
and thoroughly revealed to him the nondual state of  
profound lucidity,<sup>11</sup>  
totally pure like the expanse of the sky.  
At midnight, just like other victorious ones,  
he meditated on thameess, and at dawn  
in a single instant he realized truth.  
To guide ordinary beings,<sup>12</sup>  
he remained at Bodhimanda  
and conquered the great hordes of Mara.<sup>13</sup>  
To care for beings,  
he turned the wheel of dharma.<sup>14</sup>

Similarly, *Magical Display as the Guiding Principle* states:

For Siddhartha, the person practicing austerities, victorious ones of the ten directions gathered like clouds, and for his spiritual enrichment, in the evening and at dawn they bestowed the empowerment of the eclipse of sun and moon.<sup>15</sup>

With the source of this display having been shown to him, the Tathagata arrived at suchness.

The preceding are the ordinary interpretations of these approaches.

### C. The Extraordinary Mahayana and Vajrayana Interpretations

According to the extraordinary Mahayana interpretation, having first aroused bodhichitta and pursued spiritual development, the Bodhisattva awakened to buddhahood in the realm of Akanishtha Ghanavyuha.<sup>16</sup> Subsequently, he manifested in the manner of one awakening to buddhahood in an immaculate abode, and shortly thereafter he manifested in the manner of one awakening to buddhahood at Vajrasana.<sup>17</sup> In *The Journey to Sri Lanka*, we read the following:

The Buddha did not actually awaken to buddhahood in the realm of desire or in the realm of formlessness; you, who were free of desire and attachment, became a buddha in Akanishtha in the realm of form.<sup>18</sup>

.....

In the delightful realm of Akanishtha Ghanavyuha, [6b] beyond the immaculate abodes, the completely awakened Buddha awakened to buddhahood.<sup>19</sup>

It was an emanation who awakened to buddhahood in this world.

Some authors in the secret mantra approach hold a similar view and maintain that, immediately after attaining buddhahood in Akanishtha,<sup>20</sup> the Buddha descended from the peak of Sumeru to Bodhimanda and there awakened to buddhahood at the foot of the bodhi tree. *The Summary of Suchness* states:

The transcendent and accomplished conqueror, having awakened to buddhahood, knew that he had become the embodiment of the

enlightened form, speech, and mind of all tathagatas. Soon after, he descended from the peak of Sumeru to Bodhimanda. To conform to the perceptions of ordinary people, having taken a seat of grass at the foot of the bodhi tree, ...

Others, however, explain that it was after being empowered in Akanishtha by all buddhas that the Buddha awakened to buddhahood as Vajradhara in the Akanishtha realm of our world system.<sup>21</sup> He then immediately awakened to buddhahood as Shakyamuni at Vajrasana and so benefited beings. According to the tantra *The Empowerment of the Vajra Holder*:

The Bodhisattva, the great spiritual hero, the all-noble one, the holder of the vajra, was naturally empowered in the greater universe known as Basis Whose Center Is Adorned with a Flower. After that, within our universe, Difficult to Renounce, in the human worlds throughout the intermediate-sized universe of world systems that comprise four worlds each, the transcendent and accomplished conqueror, with the name Shakyamuni, having defeated Mara, awakened to a manifestly perfect state of enlightenment.<sup>22</sup> [7a]

### D. The Interpretation of the Unsurpassable Approach

The foregoing ordinary and extraordinary interpretations were given in response to certain kinds of beings to be guided. However, the quintessential and definitive meaning, which is found in the unsurpassable approach, is as follows: Our Teacher awakened to buddhahood an inconceivable number of immensely long eons ago. Through the Tathagata's immeasurable and manifold display, ordinary beings were benefited in whatever way was necessary to guide them. The Teacher guided beings solely through emanations, such as those who manifested as though first giving rise to bodhichitta (so that beginners would not feel inadequate), those who attained higher and higher spiritual levels (so that bodhisattvas could attain those levels), and those who performed the twelve deeds. This is discussed in the following passage from the sutra *The Reunion of Father and Son*:

In the past, countless eons ago, in a realm composed of as many universes as there are grains of sand in the bed of the river Ganges, a tathagata known as Indraketu awakened to buddhahood,

benefited beings, and passed into nirvana. From that point until the present eon, this buddha manifested an inconceivable number of times in the manner of one awakening to buddhahood. This buddha continues to manifest as ordinary beings who first give rise to bodhichitta and then eventually awaken to buddhahood, and will continue to do so until samsara is emptied. . . .

O great spiritual hero of skillful means,  
in order to bring ordinary beings to complete spiritual  
maturity,  
you revealed yourself as a buddha,  
a true victorious one, to billions. [7b]  
Even now you, O guide,  
will reveal yourself as many buddhas.

Moreover, the sutra *The White Lotus* states:

O children of spiritual heritage, many hundreds of thousands of millions of billions of eons ago, I awakened to the state of a manifestly perfect buddha.

There are teachings of the unsurpassable approach of the supreme secret that accord with this interpretation. They say that, with enlightenment taking place in the context of primordial being, there is a state of evenness in immutable basic space that eludes measurement in terms of eons. Without straying from that state of dharmakaya, countless sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya manifestations have appeared to all beings in whatever ways are necessary to guide them, and they will continue to manifest everywhere for as long as the universe exists. According to the tantra *The Array of the Precious Wish-Fulfilling Secret*:

The buddha who awakened prior to all,  
the supremely secret, victorious holder of the vajra,  
revealed a manifold display in an inconceivable number of realms.  
Throughout a succession of immensely long eons,  
benefit was ensured in myriad ways—  
through countless peaceful and wrathful modes,  
even in such forms as hunters and prostitutes.  
Moreover, now in this fortunate eon,  
a thousand enlightened guides will manifest  
who similarly adopt myriad modes,  
benefiting countless beings.

While not wavering from the basic space of dharmakaya, within the context of the lucid manifestation of sambhogakaya, an inconceivable myriad display spontaneously shines forth in the environments of the six classes of beings to benefit them. [8a] The glorious tantra *The Heart Essence of Secrets: The Ascertainment of Suchness* (a synopsis of the teachings found in the cycle *The Supreme Web of Magical Display*) states:

The phrase “through supreme compassion, blessings are granted” is a reference to the six sages, spiritual beings who are emanations of awareness. They emanate from the vajras of the enlightened form, speech, and mind of the Tathagata. As they emanate, owing to the influence of beings’ karma, a great sage—a transcendent and accomplished conqueror—appears in every world system in the six directions—zenith and nadir—as well as other dimensions, in every one of the vast three-thousand-fold universes throughout the boundlessness of the ten directions.<sup>23</sup> These sages benefit the five kinds of ordinary beings by guiding them in four ways.<sup>24</sup>

The four ways of guiding are as follows: guiding through the enormous merit of enlightened form, whereby the twelve deeds are carried out; guiding through the collections of teachings—enlightened speech—which provide a variety of spiritual approaches; guiding through sublime states of perception, whereby enlightened mind entails knowledge of beings’ levels of acumen; and guiding through inconceivable qualities and activities of enlightenment, manifesting various miraculous displays, emanating light rays, and so forth.

*The Highest Continuum* describes how the twelve deeds are carried out:

It is the nature of the nirmanakaya that, in various ways,  
it comes into being through manifest forms of rebirth,  
while not straying from dharmakaya.  
Descending from Tushita,  
entering a womb, taking birth,  
being trained in all the arts and martial skills,  
enjoying the company of a retinue of queens,  
resolving to gain release from samsara, practicing austerities,  
going to Bodhimanda, [8b]  
defeating the legions of Mara, awakening to perfect  
enlightenment,

turning the wheel of dharma, and passing into nirvana: all those who demonstrate these deeds<sup>25</sup> do so within the total range of impure realms for as long as there is conditioned existence.<sup>26</sup>

## II. THE TEACHINGS

After having thus awakened to buddhahood, the Buddha turned the wheel of dharma in the following ways.

### A. The Hinayana Interpretation

According to the shravaka schools, the Buddha did not teach for a period of seven weeks after his enlightenment. Then, in response to supplications by Brahma and Indra, he journeyed to Varanasi, where he taught the four truths. His audience, made up of “the five noble ones” as well as eighty thousand gods, perceived the truth.<sup>27</sup> From that point until his eightieth year, the Buddha presented his teachings in three stages. These schools maintain that he taught in response to specific situations, giving a distinct teaching in each place according to the capacities of those to be guided. *The Scriptural Transmission of Vinaya* states:

On the banks of the Varata River, he gave to the nagas a great outpouring of teachings concerning the ten kinds of positive actions. . . . The descendants of Vasishtha, together with their five hundred attendants, simultaneously gained unclouded vision free of distortions through the teachings on unsurpassable enlightenment.<sup>28</sup>

Regarding the Buddha’s passing into nirvana at the age of eighty, *The Great Treasury of Detailed Explanations* explains:

In each of the following locations, the Sage, the sublime person, spent one year: the sacred site where he turned the wheel of dharma,<sup>29</sup> Vaishali, Makkola, the abode of the gods, Shishumara, Kaushambhi, Atavaka, Chaityargira, the bamboo grove of Venuvana, Vairata, and the city of Kapilavastu. [9a] He spent two years at the sacred site of Blazing Cave,

four in the medicinal groves of Bhaishajiyavana, and five in the city of Rajagriha. He spent six years practicing austerities, twenty-three in Shravasti, and twenty-nine at the palace. Thus, the Victorious One was eighty when he, the holy and sublime sage, passed into nirvana.<sup>30</sup>

Some shravaka authors maintain that he prolonged his life for two months, as we read in *The Commentary on “The Hundred Thousand Stanzas”*:

Having vanquished Mara, the lord of death, he prolonged his life for two months.<sup>31</sup>

### B. The Ordinary Mahayana Interpretation

According to the well-known interpretation of the ordinary Mahayana, in the excellent place of Varanasi, on excellent occasions, the excellent teacher Shakyamuni spoke to an excellent retinue made up of the five noble ones and eighty thousand gods, teaching the excellent dharma—the first cycle of the Buddha’s words, the various teachings pertaining to the four truths; this he did between the ages of thirty-six and forty-two. He began by teaching principally the training in discipline, what came to be known as the compilation of Vinaya. The ethical codes of Vinaya contain extensive overviews that classify actions according to their nature or their relation to formal precepts. The discourses of Vinaya concern the stages of meditative absorption and the celibate way of life undertaken in yogic practice. The further teachings of Vinaya give extensive, detailed explanations and analyses of these topics.

Then, at the excellent place of Vulture Peak, [9b] the excellent teacher Shakyamuni spoke to several excellent retinues. Among the four relatively ordinary retinues were about five thousand arhats, including Shariputra and Maudgalyayana;<sup>32</sup> about five hundred nuns, including Shakyamuni’s stepmother, Prajapati; and groups of laypeople, including the householder Anathapindaka and the laywoman Sagama. As well, there were enormous numbers of gods, nagas, demigods, and gandharvas. The extraordinary retinue was made up of an enormous number of bodhisattvas—including Bhadrakopa, Ramasambhava, and Jaladatta—who had truly attained great levels of realization. On excellent occasions, he taught these reti-

ness the excellent dharma—the intermediate cycle of the Buddha's words, the various teachings pertaining to the characterization of phenomena as nonexistent; this he did between the ages of forty-three and seventy-two. He taught principally the training in mind, what came to be known as the compilation of Sutra. The ethical codes of Sutra classify the precepts of the bodhisattva vow. The discourses of Sutra discuss meditative absorption in profound and extensive ways. The further teachings of Sutra analyze related topics—spiritual levels and paths, powers of recall, and meditative absorption—in great detail.

Then, in excellent places—not any one place—such as the human world and the abodes of gods and nagas, on excellent occasions, the excellent teacher Shakyamuni spoke to an excellent retinue of innumerable monks, nuns, gods, nagas, bodhisattvas, and others, [10a] teaching the excellent dharma—the final cycle of the Buddha's words, the various teachings pertaining to definitive truth; this he did between the ages of seventy-three and eighty-two. He taught principally the training in sublime knowing, what came to be known as the compilation of Abhidharma. The ethical codes of Abhidharma have to do with taming the afflictive states in ways that are easy to implement and involve little hardship.<sup>33</sup> The discourses of Abhidharma discuss the vast range of techniques for engaging in the experience of suchness. The further teachings of Abhidharma analyze in great detail the mind-body aggregates, the fields of experience, the components of perception, the controlling factors, consciousness, and tathagatagarbha (the innately, totally pure “buddha nature”) and discuss related topics.<sup>34</sup> As the sutra *The Seven Hundred Stanzas* states:

The Sage taught the collections of the dharma thoroughly to benefit beings.

In stages, at various places and times, the Buddha imparted his teachings in melodious tones.

### C. The Extraordinary Mahayana Interpretation

According to the extraordinary interpretation, in terms of the intelligence of those to be guided, for those whose karma allowed them to comprehend the teachings gradually, it seemed that the Buddha taught in three successive cycles. For those whose intelligence enabled them to comprehend everything all at once, he seemed to teach, in its entirety and on a

single occasion, everything that needed to be taught. According to the sutra *The Majestic Array of Qualities*:

Without saying anything at all, [10b]  
I manifest to beings in infinite and pervasive ways.<sup>35</sup>  
When there are those who sincerely wish to comprehend in a gradual way,  
that is what occurs for all of them.  
For those who comprehend all at once,  
the varieties of spiritual teachings manifest in their entirety.  
Such is the great quality of enlightened speech—  
to fulfill beings' hopes just as they wish.

Some masters hold exclusively that the three cycles were taught all at once, while others maintain that they were taught in stages. Both points of view amount to nothing more than ignorance of the significance underlying the distinction between the ordinary and extraordinary interpretations, which is based on the acumen of individual beings.

Like a precious wish-fulfilling gem, then, the Teacher ensured benefit for beings exactly according to their interests. This benefit came about because, by his blessings, individual beings heard him, his speech marked by sixty melodious qualities, as if he were speaking in their respective languages. Nevertheless, these words and sounds actually had no autonomous existence. Their manifestation was similar to that of an echo and arose because of the coming together of three things: the interests of those to be guided, the Buddha's blessings, and the occasions on which these two factors coincided. *The Highest Continuum* explains:

The sound of an echo  
occurs within someone's consciousness;  
it is nonconceptual and unfabricated.  
Similarly, the enlightened speech of the Tathagata  
occurs within someone's consciousness,  
but it is not located externally or internally.<sup>36</sup>

Referring to the same theme, *The Amassing of the Rare and Sublime* states:

O Shantimati, from the night that I awakened to manifestly perfect buddhahood to the night that I pass into nirvana, [11a] I will not have spoken even a single syllable of spiritual teachings.

Some ignorant people say that this means he did not teach in the ultimate sense, only in the relative sense. But they seem to be confused about what is actually so—that enlightened speech, which is beyond words and letters, seems to be expressed in words and letters that conform to the perceptions of beings.

Therefore, regarding these cycles of the Buddha's words, which manifested in the perceptions of those to be guided, let us put aside the question of whether he taught in a single or in numerous locations. When those to be guided differ in three ways—in terms of bias, character, and interest—what each of them hears the Tathagata speak will be a different teaching, and all of these teachings will occur simultaneously. In *The Majestic State of Meditative Absorption*, we read the following:

Benefactor of the world, a single instance of your enlightened speech  
arises as sounds that accord with different interests.  
Each one thinks, "This is what the Victorious One taught me."  
That is why you smile.

Moreover, the sutra *Prophetic Enlightened Intent* states:

In a single instance of vajra speech—  
nonconceptual, unchanging, and delightful—  
there are many different interpretations  
based on the mentalities of those to be guided.

Because it seemed to some that the Buddha spoke these three cycles of teachings in succession at different times, there exists such a classification. As *The Intermediate-Length "Mother"* indicates:

How marvelous that in the human world there occurred the second turning of the wheel of dharma!

According to *The Perfection of Sublime Knowing in Seven Hundred Stanzas*:

Restating his teaching three times, [11b] he turned the wheel of dharma in twelve ways.<sup>37</sup>

There are also cases in which what the single Teacher spoke on a single occasion in a single place was perceived as different teachings by the individuals to be guided. The sutra *The Array of Treasure Urns* states:

On that occasion, some bodhisattvas heard a variety of teachings about supreme compassion, while others heard a variety of teachings about the characterization of phenomena as nonexistent.

As we find in *The Definitive Commentary on Enlightened Intent*:

... for while different teachings were spoken, they were not explained in separate places on separate occasions.

You may wonder, "Doesn't the preceding citation disprove the claim that the Buddha ever spoke in stages?" However, the intended meaning of the foregoing passages is that a single theme of the teachings is subject to different analyses and that no other location or occasion is involved; but this does not imply that he did not speak on other topics in other places and at other times.

### III. THE BUDDHA'S NIRVANA

Then, at age eighty-two, the Buddha saw that he could no longer ensure benefit by continuing to manifest physically, so it became his intention to demonstrate his passing into nirvana. The sutra *The Exalted Passing into Complete Nirvana* states:

At this time, when the life span is one hundred years,  
it is only fitting that I pass into nirvana at eighty.  
But for your sake, O brahmin,  
I will endeavor to prolong my life for an additional two.<sup>38</sup>

The ordinary scriptural sources state that he lived for eighty years, whereas the extraordinary sources state that he lived to be eighty-two.<sup>39</sup> [12a] Although different methods of calculation are involved, these sources are considered to be in fundamental agreement. An excellent explanation is given by the master Bhavadeva, who states that if one counts the actual years, there were eighty, whereas if one counts from the Buddha's birth (disregarding the ten months he spent in the womb) and adds up the intercalary months, one arrives at a total of eighty-two. That is, by separately counting the intercalary month that was traditionally added every three years, at the end of eighty years one obtains a total of twenty-four months (or two years) extra, thus giving the total of eighty-two; there are also the two months by which the Buddha deliberately extended his life. Alternatively, there are twenty days that can be counted as the

equivalent of two extra years; both the “year” of his birth and “year” of his passing into nirvana are counted as full years, though each is only ten days long.<sup>40</sup>

In any event, he passed into nirvana while lying between two shala trees in the town of Kushinagara, the region in which the Malla, a clan of powerful athletes, arose. His funeral pyre spontaneously burst into flames, and his sacred remains were divided into eight portions. One of these was given to the Malla clan of Kushinagara, one to the Malla clan of the region of Papa, one to the Mahabuluga clan of the warrior class in the region of Avakalpana, one to the brahmins of Vishnuvipa, one to the Shakya clan of Kapilavastu, and one to the Licchavi clan of Vaishali. One was worshiped by the Bheda clan of the brahmin class of Magadha. The vase that held the Buddha’s remains was given to the brahmins Drona and Sama.<sup>41</sup> The ashes from his funeral pyre were taken by the Pippala clan of the brahmin class. The clans all went their separate ways with their portions, which they enshrined in great stupas.

Of his canine teeth, [r2b] the fourth was taken to the naga domain by the nagas of the city of Ravana.<sup>42</sup> The third was worshiped by the king of the rakshasa demons of Kalinga. The second was given to Ajatashatru, the king of Magadha, as his share; this, together with the relics that multiplied from it, was enshrined in a stupa ornamented with designs of lotus garlands. These relics were later brought with honor to Tibet and are said to reside at present in the White Stupa at Samyé. The first tooth was brought with honor by Indra to the Trayastrimsha abode.<sup>43</sup>

All of this is referred to in *The Scriptural Transmission of Vinaya*:

Of the eight portions of the Seer’s remains, including the canine teeth,

seven were worshiped by people in the human world.<sup>44</sup>

Of that sublime being’s four canine teeth,

one was worshiped in the Trayastrimsha abode,

a second in the lovely city of Rajagriha,

a third in the country of the king of Kalinga,

while the fourth canine tooth of this sublime being

was worshiped by the naga king in the city of Ravana.

King Ashoka, dwelling in Pataliputra,

spread the contents of the seven stupas far and wide.

By the power of this act, the earth, the foundation of our prosperity,

was clearly adorned with the tangible signs of the king’s aspirations.

In this way, the Seer’s remains were highly honored by gods, nagas, human sovereigns, kinnaras, and yaksha lords as they worshiped and venerated them.

Thus, the portions of the remains, including the four teeth, were kept as objects of worship in the different domains. [r3a] In particular, in keeping with his aspirations in previous lives and his miraculous abilities, the Buddhist king Ashoka, the son of King Patala, took the seven portions left in our human world and, on the Indian subcontinent and in surrounding regions, erected as many stupas as there are grains in two handfuls of sand. There were said to be ten million such stupas, or chaitiyas. This is what *The Fortunate Eon* means by “the Buddha’s remains will continue to increase.”



From *The Precious Treasury of Philosophical Systems: A Treatise Elucidating the Meaning of the Entire Range of Spiritual Approaches*, this is the first chapter, a classification of the histories concerning the Teacher.

There now follows an exposition of wisdom, the third of the three trainings, covering both its nature and its various categories. Essentially, wisdom is a pure intelligence that accurately knows phenomena and their ultimate nature.

THE CATEGORIES OF WISDOM

The wisdom that is the fruit of meditation arises naturally in three ways. To begin with, it is the result of the preliminary training of samadhi. Later, it derives from the main practice of samadhi, which is limpид and free from all obscuration and opacity, occurring when the mind has become pliable and positive. This at length gives rise to the wisdom of perceiving (even in post-meditation) that phenomena are without true existence.

In all, there are three kinds of wisdom: the wisdom of hearing, the wisdom of reflection, and the wisdom of meditation. Gradual training in these will result in the perfect accomplishment of vipashyana, primordial and nonconceptual wisdom. This wisdom destroys the defilements that prevent the attainment of liberation and removes the cognitive obscurations that prevent omniscience. It is the unmistakable knowledge, first, of ultimate reality, the profound nature of things, and second, of all phenomena that arise within the sphere of deluded perception. Equipped with such knowledge, one is able to pass swiftly through the city of existence, which karma and defilements have made so difficult to cross. Thus, one goes beyond suffering and reaches nirvana with ease.

The six transcendent perfections, generosity and so forth, are causally interrelated and are arranged progressively in terms of subtlety and elevation. They are called transcendent because they are all combined with transcendent wisdom.

THE WISDOM RESULTING FROM HEARING THE TEACHINGS  
Ordinary people who have entered the path and who are not well grounded in the wisdom of hearing the teachings are in danger of becoming pretentious and conceited about their qualities of reflection and meditation. Because of this, they run the risk of wandering into error. The *Samadhiraja-sutra* says:

# TREASURY of PRECIOUS QUALITIES *The Rain of Joy*

by JIGME LINGPA

WITH *The Quintessence of the Three Paths*

*A Commentary by Longchen Yeshe Dorje, Kangyur Rinpoche*

BOOK ONE

*Translated by the Padmakara Translation Group*

*Forewords by H. H. the Dalai Lama*

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SHAMBHALA

BOSTON & LONDON

2010

A man who binds himself with pure discipline  
But proudly fails to listen to much teaching—  
The fruits of his good life will go to waste,  
And dreadful suffering will be his lot.

Indeed, the wisdom arising from hearing the teachings is said to be the cause of the wisdom of reflection and meditation. As master Ashvaghosha has said:

The man of little learning is as if born blind.  
How can he meditate, on what can he reflect?  
Study then with diligence, reflect and meditate;  
Through this, vast wisdom will arise.

**The keys that open the treasure chest of Dharma**

115 The twelve branches of scripture, which set forth the doctrine of the two truths, are evaluated by the wisdom that arises from hearing the teaching. This evaluation involves the making of two distinctions: (1) the distinction between the teachings of definitive meaning and the teachings of expedient meaning; and (2) the distinction between the four kinds of implied teaching\* and the four kinds of indirect teaching.† This assessment can only be made by applying the principle of the four reliances.<sup>224</sup>

*The definitive and expedient teachings*

The fundamental state of all phenomena, of samsara, nirvana, and the path, is the naturally pure expanse of absolute reality, the luminous nature of the mind itself. Transcending origination, abiding, and cessation, this state is expressed as the three doors of perfect liberation: it is empty, devoid of attributes, and beyond all expectancy. This is the definitive meaning.

116 Taking as his frame of reference phenomena as they appear to deluded minds—in other words, everything occurring on the level of the relative truth—and in order to lead beings on the path, the Buddha

\* *dgongs pa can.*  
† *ldem dgongs.*

referred to things that in truth have no existence. Thus, with regard to the ground, he spoke about the aggregates, the *dhatus* and *ayatanas*. With regard to the path, he gave teachings on the three vehicles. And in reference to the fruit, he expatiated upon the three kinds of nirvana. All these doctrines comprise the teachings of the expedient meaning. The scriptures that set them forth are the “pitaka of expedient meaning,” and their commentaries are the “shastras of expedient meaning.”<sup>225</sup> Those who understand the distinction between the teachings of the sutras of expedient meaning and those of the sutras of definitive meaning will know in which they should place their trust. The previous mention of the four reliances has made this clear. All this is the first key that opens up the treasury of the teachings, enabling us to imbibe its rich and varied contents.

*The implied teachings and indirect teachings*

117 Once we have understood the difference between the definitive and expedient teachings, we can go on to explore the latter, namely, those the real meaning of which is not explicitly stated. In order to assess both the Buddha’s didactic purpose and the content of his thought,\* as these underlie the sutras of expedient meaning, and in order to establish a meaning that is ultimately valid, it is helpful to distinguish four kinds of “implied” teaching and four kinds of “indirect” teaching.

We will begin with the four kinds of implied teaching. Here, the Buddha merely expressed himself in words that were, and are, open to interpretation. The case is different with the indirect teachings, in which the Buddha taught his hearers by means of expressions employed on an ad hoc basis, suited to the situation. This was to lead them to an understanding of what he actually meant. It should be noted that in the case of implied teachings, although the underlying meaning is uppermost in importance, it may in fact elude the grasp of the hearers, even though the immediate purpose of the utterance is achieved.

**Implied teachings · 1. Teachings implying the equality of all phenomena.** In the most general terms, phenomena are, according to their fundamental nature, beyond the categories of good or bad. They are beyond any such

\* *dgongs gzhi.*

differentiation. In this sense, the Tathagatas are all essentially equal—identical in the expanse of the Dharmakaya. Having this in mind, the Buddha said: "At that time, I was the perfect Buddha Vipashyin." He was thus teaching that phenomena appearing as separate in time, or as opposites—samsara and nirvana, good and bad, to be accepted or rejected accordingly—are all one. In addition, it was with these words that he confounded those who disparaged him for his short life span and the size of his body.

2. *Teachings implying the absence of inherent identity in phenomena.*\* Having another sense in mind (in other words, the absence of inherent identity with regard to the *imputed*, *dependent*, and *actual* natures),<sup>226</sup> the Buddha said that when phenomena are analyzed—from form right up to omniscience—nothing is found. Thus, by appealing to analysis and so on, he counteracted the tendency to grasp at phenomena as real.<sup>227</sup>

3. *Teachings implying fulfillment at a future time.* Having in mind the fact that, once the seed is planted, enlightenment eventually occurs at some future moment, the Buddha said that by the single recitation of certain dharanis or mantras, or by simply pronouncing the name of the Buddha Nirmala Chandraprabha, enlightenment "would be effortlessly achieved." He said things like this in order to entice people who are otherwise slow and lazy in the practice of virtue.<sup>228</sup>

4. *Teachings for the humbling of pride and conceit.* Seeing that people are barred from liberation by the pride they take in their practice of generosity, the Buddha belittled it, saying it was demon's work (though of course it was not) and praised discipline. And thinking that people become self-satisfied on account of their discipline, the Buddha deprecated it and extolled charity. In this way he destroyed conceit and undetermined pretentiousness.

119 **Indirect teachings** · In the so-called indirect teachings, the Buddha expressed himself in terms that are not to be taken at their face value. He acted in this way because if he had set forth subjects like the indivisibility of the two truths or the extraordinary qualities of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in straight and unvarnished terms to people of limited capacity, their minds would have been unable to accept them, and they

\* *ngo bo nyid med.*

would have fallen into doubt. To people of this kind, who could not otherwise be introduced to such doctrines, the Buddha expressed himself artfully and with tact, using words and arguments that were engaging and liable to make an impression on his hearers. In order to direct them to an understanding of his wisdom intention, he taught in words that were on a level with his hearers, even though his own true meaning was not.

The *Sutralankara* distinguishes four categories of indirect teachings: (1) indirect teachings aimed at introducing people to the path; (2) indirect teachings on the nature of phenomena; (3) indirect teachings connected with remedial methods; and (4) indirect teachings that are couched in metaphors.

120 1. *Indirect teachings aimed at introducing people to the path.*\* If from the first the Buddha had taught people of lesser capacity and aspiration the teachings of, for example, the *Prajnaparamita-sutras*, in which the no-self (or the absence of inherent existence) of phenomena is openly expounded, his hearers would have missed the point, namely, that phenomena arise in interdependence. They would have taken the teaching as a nihilistic view of nothingness. And dismayed by both the words and the meaning, they would have rejected both the path and the teachings of the Mahayana. In one of the sutras, the Buddha therefore said, "Form, O Subhuti, has attributes. Sound has attributes." He thus made an assertion implying the existence of form and the rest. The people listening to him were consequently not shocked, and in the belief that phenomena truly exist, they entered the path. This was the purpose of the Buddha's saying what he said. Yet what the Buddha himself knew was that everything that appears to the deluded mind does so in the manner of a dream.<sup>229</sup>

2. *Indirect teaching on the threefold nature of phenomena.*† To say that phenomena in their fundamental nature<sup>230</sup> have no inherent identity does not mean that they are completely lacking in existence, but that they are characterized by the three doors of liberation—for the understanding of which the three kinds of nature or reality were set forth. First, there

\* *zhugs pa ldem dgongs.*

† *mtshan nyid ldem dgongs.*

is *imputed reality*, or reality as understood by ordinary beings. Second, there is *dependent reality*, the condition of phenomena as they arise through interdependence. Thirdly, there is *actual reality*, in other words, the truly Real, emptiness, beyond all conceptual constructs.

On the level of the imputed or assumed reality of things, absence of inherent identity means that phenomena have no inherent existence at all. Phenomena that are merely mistaken perceptions have no reality whatever. This is exemplified by someone seeing a rope and thinking that it is a snake.

On the level of dependent reality, absence of inherent identity means that phenomena are unborn. For, although phenomena seem to have origins, if they are analyzed it will be found that none of the four possible kinds of origination applies to them.<sup>231</sup> In this sense, they are like illusions.

On the level of actual reality, absence of inherent identity means that even the absolute truth cannot be said to exist inherently. This is so because the absolute is outside the range of concepts and predicates (of impunity, puny, or whatever). It is like the unclouded sky. With these three realities in view, the Buddha gave profound teachings, difficult to fathom. He said, for instance, "All phenomena, from form to omniscience, lack true existence. They have no origin."

The above is presented from the Madhyamika point of view, which regards the Buddha's teaching on the threefold nature of phenomena as expedient. The Chittamatrins, for their part, take the opposite view and affirm that it is rather Buddha's teaching on the absence of inherent identity that is expedient. In their view, when the Buddha said that the imputed reality lacks existence, he meant that there are no substances outside and separate from the mind. When he said that dependent reality lacks true existence, he meant that the causes of phenomena are not found in themselves. When he said that the actual reality does not exist, he meant that it is not something separate from the dependent reality. This is the reason why he affirmed their lack of inherent existence. But this view is specific to the Chittamatrins and is not the same as the one just given.

12.2 3. *Indirect teachings connected with remedial methods.*\* Certain coarse and nar-

\* *gnyen po ldem dgeongs.*

row-minded persons thought that, of the thousand Buddhas who would manifest, the Buddha Shakyamuni was inferior due to the fact that, as it was reported in the *Bhadralipita-sutra*, his body was slight, his light radiated only to the distance of an arm's length, his following was meager, and his life span short. In order to correct such disparagement, the Buddha taught that the life span, lineage, and physical stature of the Teachers are beyond measurement. He was thinking of the fact that the Rupakayas of all the Buddhas are equal in appearing only for the benefit of beings, that they are equal in the unborn Dharmakaya, that they are equal in having perfected the twofold accumulation, and that they are equal in their enlightened activity, which is effortlessly deployed for the sake of others.

Likewise, in order to remedy contemptuous attitudes toward his Dharma of transmission,<sup>232</sup> the Buddha said, "The ability to understand the Mahayana is the fruit of worshipping Buddhas equal in number to the grains of sand in the Ganges." He was thinking, so it is taught, of the mahayana Dharma of realization.

4. *Indirect teachings expressed in metaphors.*\* In order to prevent people from saying things like, "Gautama the ascetic teaches unsolicited," the Buddha said, "Profound and peaceful, beyond all concepts, and so on," and he remained silent. And in order to prevent people from saying, "If he attained such excellence after a mere six years of ascetic practice, his Dharma must be easy indeed!" the Buddha said, intending to introduce his hearers to profound teachings, that one should kill one's father and mother (whom one should not kill under any circumstances). He said that liberation would be attained by those who bring down the king and the two classes of pure conduct (Brahmins and virtuous ascetics) and by those who destroy both country and royal court—all of which are not to be destroyed. Actually, with these words, the Buddha was referring to Craving, Grasping,<sup>233</sup> and the alaya. Thus, in the *Udamavarga*, he said:

Father, mother—slay them both,  
Your king, the two of pure life,

\* *bsgyur ba ldem dgeongs.*

The country and the royal court<sup>234</sup> destroy!  
Liberation is for those who do so.

124 It would obviously be a calamitous mistake to take such words literally. **The difference between implied and indirect teachings** · In whichever way the implied and indirect teachings are presented, their meaning comes essentially to the same thing; they are separated only by a difference of emphasis. When a discourse of the Buddha is being explained in which the meaning is not literally expressed in the words used, and when the commentator emphasizes this underlying meaning, saying, "The Buddha said this, but in fact he meant that," as distinct from what the commentator understands to be the specific pedagogical purpose behind the Buddha's speech (namely, to lead people on the path), we have what are called the implied teachings. By contrast, when the commentator interprets the Buddha's words in a manner that particularly highlights their pedagogical purpose, saying, "The reason the Buddha did not speak directly but in a roundabout way was to guide certain people onto the path," we have what are called indirect teachings. Of course, the interpretation of the Buddha's words, meaning, and purposes is a vast and complex subject. But in short, the wisdom that correctly identifies the implied and indirect teachings constitutes the second key that opens the scriptures of sutra and tantra.

#### **An explanation of the treasury of Dharma**

*A general exposition of the two truths*

125 As an antidote to the eighty-four thousand types of defilement, the Buddha, expert in methods and rich in great compassion, set forth eighty-four thousand sections of teaching, classified as the four pitakas, or "baskets." Each of the first three pitakas counteracts one of the three principal defilements, while the fourth pitaka is an antidote to all three together. The range of these teachings is inconceivably vast, but they are all summarized in the doctrine of the two truths.

The relative truth embraces all the phenomena of samsara or the world, in other words, the mind and the phenomena that manifest from the mind. The absolute truth refers to supramundane primordial wisdom, self-knowing awareness, which has the same nature as the dharmas-

126 dhatu. It follows from this that all possible knowledge-objects are accounted for in the two truths; there is no third truth.

The relative truth is subdivided into two aspects: unmistakable and mistaken, following the distinction made between accurate and defective cognition. All phenomena that appear to the deluded mind and are efficient (in the sense of the moon shedding light, fire giving heat, water being wet, and so on)—together with the consciousnesses that cognize them—are regarded as the "unmistaken relative truth."<sup>235</sup> They arise from their respective causes, although, when examined, they are found to be empty of inherent existence. By contrast, things like a mirage of water, a rope that is mistaken for a snake, or the vision of two moons instead of one (all of which might appear in hallucinations but are incapable of producing normal effects, in the sense of moistening, giving a poisonous bite, or shedding light)—together with the consciousnesses that cognize them—are referred to as "mistaken relative truth."<sup>236</sup> Thus the difference between mistaken and unmistakable truth depends upon the ability to function on the conventional level.<sup>235</sup>

127 The term "absolute truth" refers to the fundamental state of all things. It is primal wisdom, wherein samsara and nirvana are seen to have the same nature.<sup>237</sup> From the very first, neither the phenomena of samsara nor the phenomena of nirvana possess inherent existence, and they are not two separate classes of things. Phenomena have always been beyond the range of conceptual construction. And since the absolute truth is beyond all thought and verbal expression, it cannot be said to exist for those who have realized it and not to exist for those who have not done so. Whether it is realized or not, the absolute truth is the unchanging nature of all things. The regent Maitreya has said: "It is the unchanging ultimate nature, the same in the past and in the future."

128 The two truths are not separate like the two horns of a buffalo. From the beginning, they are blended together inextricably: appearance and emptiness inseparably united. Therefore, phenomena arising through interdependence are not totally nonexistent like a horned rabbit. They are rather like the reflection of the moon in a clear pool.

<sup>235</sup> yang dag pa'i kun rdzob.

<sup>236</sup> log pa'i kun rdzob.

<sup>237</sup> I.e., as seen at the level of buddhahood when mind and object are "of the same taste."

Phenomena appear, and this aspect of appearance corresponds to the relative truth. Nevertheless, in the very moment of their arising, they are lacking in true existence. This aspect corresponds to the absolute truth. Thus, while a distinction can be made between the two truths, these same truths have no intrinsic existence separate from each other.

129 For the moment, while we are on the path of aspirational practice, phenomena, the objects to which the senses are attracted (forms, sounds, and so forth), all appear clearly to our five sense consciousnesses, like the brilliant colors of a painting. But the mere appearance of the five sense objects is not what entangles us. It is rather that, when the duality of subject and object arises, the perceiver identifies a perceived object as something to be enjoyed and so on. Endless delusory perceptions of mind and mental factors occur, resulting in the rejection of the undesirable and indulgence in the desirable. Nevertheless, all these appearances are lacking in real existence. They are beyond the eight ontological extremes. One should reflect on them and analyze them according to the eight examples of illusion. Like appearances in a dream, phenomena have no origin; like an illusion, they are not subject to destruction; like a mirage they have no permanence; like a reflection of the moon in water, they are not completely nonexistent; like an optical illusion, they come from nowhere; like an echo, they go nowhere; like a castle in the clouds, there is no distinction in them; like magical displays, they are not identical. We must generate conviction in the inseparability of appearance and emptiness and, having done so, rest one-pointedly in it.

130 Merely to understand the indivisibility of the two truths and the absence of inherent existence according to the eight ontological extremes (using the eight similes quoted above), and to familiarize oneself with this, does not in itself mean that one attains to the ultimate nature of things. Why so? Because whatever withstands analysis and is an object of mental affirmation *cannot* be the absolute truth. The intellect pertains only to the relative truth and is itself the factor that veils the state of nonduality. The absolute truth can be realized only by thought-free primordial wisdom, wherein there is no duality of subject and object. The state beyond all conceptual constructs is incompatible with concepts of one and many, existence and nonexistence. Primordial wisdom, the ultimate nature,

can never be the object of the intellect. As Shantideva says, "The absolute is not within the reach of intellect." (*Bodhicaryavatara*, IX, 2)

#### The four tenet systems

131 This, then, is an exposition of the two truths in the most general terms. However, each Buddhist school of tenets interprets the Buddha's teaching on the two truths in its own particular way, and thus sets forth its own particular teaching on the ground, path, and fruit.

The Vaibhashikas · The Vaibhashika school considers that, with regard to the six ordinary sense consciousnesses, the absolute truth, or ultimate reality, is the indivisible moment of consciousness, which, so they say, intellectual analysis is unable to divide into past, present, and future. Likewise, the indivisible particle of matter, which cannot be further divided, also has the status of an ultimate reality or absolute truth. By contrast, all gross, nonmental phenomena, which are composed of these tiny particles, are considered to lack true existence, being subject to destruction by opposing forces.<sup>236</sup>

The Sautrantikas · The way in which the Sautrantikas<sup>237</sup> account for phenomena in terms of the two truths is as follows. Efficient objects, like vases able to hold water and pillars able to support beams, have no absolute existence in that they are no more than collections of material atomic particles (which, however, are ultimately real). Consequently, the position of the Sautrantikas is the same as that of the Vaibhashikas in that they accept the reality of two partless particles—of matter and consciousness. The Sautrantikas differ from the Vaibhashikas, however, in saying that time (the past, present, and future) has no substantial existence and in denying that space is a permanent and real entity. They say, moreover, that a mental image of, for example, a vase or a pillar, insofar as it is unable to perform a concrete function such as holding water, belongs to the relative truth. It effectively obscures the specific character of the object as it is in itself. For it is the mental image alone that appears to the deluded mind and has no inherent existence. The absolute and relative truths are explained as relating respectively to specifically characterized things\* (absolute) and generally characterized

\* rang mtshan.

things\* (relative). The tradition of the Sautrantrikas is a system established through reason and elaborated through the application of logic.<sup>238</sup>

133 **The Chittamatrins, the Mind Only school** · The Chittamatrins<sup>239</sup> say that through the power of habit, we assign a distinct existence both to the perceiving mind and to its perceived object, whereas in reality the two do not exist as separate entities. The object-apprehending mind and the percepts of this mind, which are falsely reified as truly and separately existing entities, are referred to here as imputed reality. This imputed reality is the relative truth, and everything other than it is absolute. The absolute truth refers, in the first place, to the ultimate essence of the dependent reality, namely, the underlying substratum of mental appearances or percepts. This substratum itself is the self-knowing mind, void of duality of subject and object. In the second place, the absolute truth also includes the actual reality, namely, the fact that the dependent reality is empty of the imputed reality.<sup>240</sup> Of these two aspects of the absolute truth, the first is called the absolute truth as property possessor,† and the second is the absolute truth as ultimate reality in itself.‡

134 **The Svatantrika Madhyamikas** · The Svatantrika Madhyamikas say that phenomena (form and the other objects of the six senses) have a natural existence of their own on the relative level, and this is established by conventional reasoning. Although phenomena have no *true* existence, yet on their own level, so to speak, they do exist. In this context, “existing from their own side,” “existing on their own level,” “existing according to their characteristics,” and “substantially existing” are regarded as synonymous, and what these expressions refer to is not considered the proper object of refutation by reasoning that establishes the absolute truth. Thus, for the Svatantrikas, it seems that when the Madhyamika texts say that phenomena are without inherent existence, it is necessary to add that this is to be understood on the level of the absolute truth alone.<sup>241</sup> Phenomena appear like illusions, according to the interdependence of causes and conditions; they are “really there,” existing according to characteristics. It is thus possible to discourse

\* *spyi mtsheh.*  
† *chos can don dam.*  
‡ *chos nyid don dam.*

about distinct phenomena, actions and their effects, and so forth. On the other hand, if the ontological status of these phenomena is examined using analysis and reasoning on the absolute level, they are found to be devoid of any kind of existence. They are utterly pure, empty like space. In this context, the expressions “true existence,” “absolute existence,” “actual reality,” and “ultimate existence” are all synonyms and are equally the object of refutation by analysis at the absolute level. The Svatantrikas state that the objects of refutation are specifically the self of phenomena and the personal self. These are the general tenets of the Svatantrika Madhyamikas.

135 **The Prasangika Madhyamikas** · The Prasangika Madhyamikas accept that everything in phenomenal existence arises in interdependence; phenomena manifest like an illusion or dream. However, they refrain from investigating such appearances, to see whether they have some sort of existence or not, and group them all under the heading of relative truth, using this as a stepping-stone to the absolute truth. That phenomena are, ultimately speaking, without inherent existence and are void from the very beginning—this is their absolute truth. However, all such statements are mere labels, formulated from the conventional standpoint alone. In reality, the two truths, relative and absolute, are not correlated with appearance and emptiness, respectively. Phenomena are by their very nature ungrounded and rootless, beyond the four ontological extremes. All phenomena, forms and so forth, that are the objects of the six consciousnesses and appear to come into and pass out of existence—all arise and perish, come and go just like a reflection or a mirage. They have no ultimate existence. For the processes of origination and so forth are themselves mere appearances. They themselves have no real existence.

136 The Chittamatrins affirm that the self-knowing mind (i.e., the dependent reality) is really existent. The Svatantrikas assert that the phenomena dependent on causes and conditions, forms, and so forth, have an existence on the conventional level. By contrast, the Prasangikas, in their tenets, refrain from positing even the relative existence of things, let alone their absolute existence.

The great founder of the Prasangika tradition, the supreme Nagarjuna, whose birth was foretold in scripture, elucidated the sutras of definitive meaning through the sheer strength of his own genius, with-

out recourse to other commentaries. It was thus that he established the Madhyamika dialectic, which prevails to this day.<sup>242</sup> It is written in the *Lankavatara-sutra*:

In the land of Bheta to the south,  
A glorious monk of wide renown,  
By name of Naga will be called.  
"Is" and "is not" both he will refute  
And propagate my teaching in the world,  
Explaining Mahayana unsurpassed.  
Accomplishing the ground of Perfect Joy,  
He will depart for Sukhavati.

And in the tantra *'jam dpal rtsa rgyud* it is said:

Four hundred years after I  
The Tathagata shall have passed away,  
A virtuous monk called Naga will arise  
To propagate and benefit my doctrine.  
Accomplishing the ground of Perfect Joy  
And living then six hundred years,  
This great being will attain  
To *Knowledge of the Mighty Peacock*,<sup>243</sup>  
To understanding of the different shastras,  
The meaning of the absence of existence.  
Relinquishing his mortal frame,  
He will take birth in Sukhavati  
Thence to gain the perfect fruit  
Of final buddhahood.

Nagarjuna's six (main) treatises<sup>244</sup> were commented on by the masters Aryadeva, Buddhapalita, Bhavaviveka, Chandrakirti, and others. Of these especially, the glorious Chandrakirti, possessed as he was of incomparable knowledge and ability, penetrated the teaching of the master Nagarjuna and unerringly elucidated the *Karikas* in his commentaries *Madhyamakavatara* and *Prasannapada*.<sup>245</sup> He perfectly set forth the ultimate

meaning of the Buddha's teaching, and it was through his writings that the tenets of the Prasangikas rose like the sun over the world, scattering the darkness of false views.

#### Conclusion

The proponents of the three lower tenet systems impute existence to phenomena. They do indeed manage to overcome certain conceptual constructions by reflecting on the absence of self, the unborn nature, emptiness, and the absence of ontological extremes, which are the very object of wisdom inquiry. But they still retain a certain clinging to the reality of things. The Svatantrikas, for their part, accept existence on the conventional level. It is only the Prasangikas who contest such assertions, uprooting all extremes of conceptuality. Being immune to counterattack, the Prasangika tenets are supreme; they are the summit of all systems and utterly free from error.

In India there were many philosophical systems, both Buddhist and non-Buddhist. Likewise in Tibet, numerous distinctions were made according to respective beliefs, and there are several ways of comprehending the teachings of the proponents of the Madhyamika and the Secret Mantra. From their own standpoint, and according to their own understanding, the proponents of each of these systems claim finality for their own tenets. But if one analyzes them all in detail and gains a proper understanding of them through the wisdom arising from hearing the teachings, it is possible to differentiate clearly the character of the four main systems of Buddhist thought and achieve certainty that the ultimate path of practice is that of the Prasangikas. While the Svatantrikas are in harmony with the Prasangika position, the Vaibhashikas, Sautrantikas, and Chittamatrins diverge from it. Conviction in this matter goes far beyond the manipulation of mere words and expressions.\* It is the wisdom resulting from reflection, which itself derives from the wisdom arising from perfectly hearing the teachings. Through meditation on the meaning thus understood, the perfect wisdom that accurately ascertains phenomena will subdue all negative emotions and the thought patterns that fixate upon the (supposed) reality of things. It will banish them

\* It has nothing to do with a merely academic understanding.

from the mind, and an immense courage will arise in the face of evil and adversity, which in turn will be rendered powerless.

As the great upholders of Prasangika doctrine have shown, the ultimate aim of practice is the fundamental condition of phenomena. This is the dharmadhatu, which is by nature beyond all conceptual constructs. It is unspeakable, unthinkable, and impossible to convey. It is a peaceful serenity, the absence of all conceptual construction: the ultimate, absolute truth. Its unobstructed creative power is displayed as the dependent arising of phenomena, and it is this that the mind and its mental factors interpret, or rather misinterpret, as something that can be verbally expressed, mentally conceived, and demonstrated. Phenomena that arise unobstructedly and according to imputation are described as the relative truth. If in meditation one settles in the spacious state of wisdom free from thoughts, and if in the post-meditation period one unremittingly accumulates merit on the understanding that all is like an illusion, one will avoid falling one-sidedly into one or other of the two truths. Even in post-meditation, when appearances arise, it will be impossible to stir from the fundamental mode of phenomena, and, conversely, even when one rests in meditation in a state free from conceptual constructs, such an emptiness will not be a state of mere nothingness. At all times, the two truths are united and inseparable. This is the nature of the dharmadhatu, beyond all duality imputed by the ordinary intellect, beyond the division of an object realized and a mind that realizes. It is impossible for anyone to experience it in the manner of a knowledge-object. The dharmadhatu is, of course, invisible to the referential, dualistic view. It is not at all as though something is newly attained that had not been present before, or perfected through the laborious following of the path. Even those who fail to accomplish the path and who remain in ordinariness do not, for that reason, lose it. For in the natural condition of the ultimate nature, attainment is not good, and nonattainment is not bad; they are perfectly equal.

Dwelling in emptiness, the ultimate nature, means that the mind is attuned to emptiness and all clinging to ontological extremes is exhausted. Subject and object blend into one taste. Like salt dissolving in water, the mind and the ultimate nature are not distinct. This is what

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is correctly designated as the "realization of emptiness" and "the gaining of the result."<sup>246</sup>

#### THE WISDOM RESULTING FROM REFLECTION

The meaning of the treasury of the scriptures is that all the phenomena of the ground, path, and fruit arise interdependently. If, from listening to the teachings, we gain a clear understanding of this interdependence, and if we are then able to bring together the key points and penetrate them with the wisdom that results from reflection—a wisdom that is uncontaminated by adhering to extreme views—we will have in our possession, so to speak, a key with which to open the door to the scriptures' profound meaning.

#### Dependent arising with regard to the ground nature

All phenomena, all false and deceptive appearances, the fluctuating compoundedness of life, samsara with its karma and defilements, and indeed the liberation from suffering that we call nirvana are names superimposed on the ultimate nature. As to their origin, they arise from nowhere; as to their cessation, they go nowhere; and in the meantime they have no place of abiding. From the outset, phenomena dwell in the same essential equality of the three times. They arise in interdependence, an interdependence that is rendered possible by their ultimate nature. As it is written in the *Pitaputrasamagama-sutra*, "Phenomena are equal in the equality of the three times."<sup>247</sup>

This could be expressed in another way by saying that all phenomena seem to arise from origins and end in extinction. But in the very moment of their manifestation, they are without inherent existence. These appearances, which are empty by nature, arise unobstructedly. They are untouched by the ontological extremes of existence, nonexistence, and so forth. If through wisdom one gains a profound conviction that this is so, one will realize that all that appears within the sphere of the common consensus is without inherent existence; it is a mere imputation of the mind and is based on emptiness. This is the teaching of the Madhyamika path, in which there is no place for extreme ontological assertions.

True and fundamental reality is beyond the categories of pure and impure. Nevertheless, though devoid of true existence, external and in-

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ternal phenomena appear—according to the habitual patterns set up by the adventitious\* cognitive activity of the mind. But in reality there is nothing. These appearances are organized dualistically and are considered to exist inherently, some apprehended as subject and some as object. They are seized upon as things to accept or to reject, to accomplish or to avoid. Thus we wander endlessly, caught in the uninterrupted sequences of false appearances and false cognitions.

Proponents of philosophical tenets, whether Buddhist or non-Buddhist, have reflected upon the nature of reality and repeatedly investigated it. But failing to comprehend the absence of ontological extremes, they take one of four possible positions which either overshoot the mark or fall short of it. Here we are referring, on the one hand, to those Buddhist schools which attribute true existence to either the outer object or the inner mind or which, by negating entities on the coarse level and refuting the duality of subject and object, express the ultimate reality as the mere emptiness of a nonaffirming negative. On the other hand, there are the proponents of non-Buddhist tenets. Some propound a theory of the eternal and unchanging *purusha* and *prakriti*; others hold the nihilistic view that phenomena existing here and now are purely random and that there is no causality and no past and future lives.

145 In addition to all this, if one intellectually elaborates a position that is free from extremes and calls it the Middle Way, proudly upholding it as supreme, this is a sign that one has failed to master the ultimate meaning.<sup>248</sup> Those caught in the toils of their own views and tenets are like silkworms imprisoned in cocoons devised from their own saliva.

146 But phenomena that are mere appearances and to which we impute real existence through the sheer power of our habits are by their fundamental nature unoriginate. (1) They are without origin. (2) They have no extinction. (3) They have no dwelling. (4) They arise from nowhere and go nowhere. And it is for this reason that (5) “self” and “other,” consciousness and its objects, are neither the same (6) nor are they different. (7) They are not eternal unchanging entities, nor do they (8) have existence at the outset and fall to extinction at the end. The first

\* *glo bur ba.*

six items of this list express nonaffirming negatives, while the last two are affirming negatives. Phenomena, in conclusion, are by their very nature devoid of the eight conceptual extremes.

As Master Nagarjuna has said:

All things then dependently arise;

They have no ending and they have no origin;

They are not nothing, nor are everlasting;

They do not come, they do not go;

They are not different and they are not one.

Thus the absence of conceptions is set forth.

The mind that truly understands this fundamental reality, the natural state of things as it is, has in its possession the unmistakable wisdom that arises from reflection.

The dependent arising of samsara

147 All that appears on the conventional level to the deluded mind—the four elements of earth, air, fire, and water appearing within the bosom of open space; and all particular objects such as mountains, woods, villages, pitchers, woolen cloth, yak-hair fabric, soil, bamboo, and so forth—all such compounded things arise from their respective causes.

In the outer world, phenomena occur due to the interdependence of twelve factors. Consider, for example, a plant, which manifests in dependence on six main causal factors (root, stem, branches, leaves, flowers, and fruit) coupled with six circumstantial factors, namely, the five elements in conjunction with time as expressed in the changing of the seasons. When all these twelve factors are present and complete, and as long as one still retains the propensity to perceive external appearances, the phenomenon “plant” will continue to manifest. Thus the outer world is the result of twelve interdependent links.<sup>249</sup>

148 In the same way, from Ignorance derive Conditioning Factors, which in turn give rise to Consciousness, and so forth. The twelve interdependent links gradually unfold, each link based on the one preceding it. They are seamlessly connected without interruption until Aging-and-Death. This is how “life” goes on, from beginningless time, until the

moment when the propensities of the mind and body are exhausted. This describes the twelve-linked dependent arising on the inner level.

#### The dependent arising of nirvana

149 The dependent arising of nirvana<sup>250</sup> consists in the four successive paths of learning, together with the resultant stage, the path of no more learning. The root of the twelve-linked chain, which proceeds from Ignorance to Aging-and-Death and is concomitant with the dependent arising of samsara, is Ignorance—ignorance of the ultimate meaning of the two truths. By listening to the teachings and reflecting on them, while on the path of accumulation, practitioners come to a full understanding of the antidote to ignorance—the wisdom of awareness that realizes the no-self of persons and phenomena. While on the path of joining, and by means of the five factors of faith, diligence, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom, the practitioner meditates on emptiness by way of a mental image. The result of this is that Ignorance is attenuated. On the path of seeing, the practitioner beholds the wisdom of awareness directly and in its true nature. As a result, no further karma is ignorantly accumulated, and therefore no further existence is set in motion. While on the nine grounds of the path of meditation, the practitioner trains continually in this wisdom and intensifies its power, with the result that the habitual tendencies of ignorance are gradually brought to a halt. By virtue of this, the habitual tendencies of Conditioning Factors, together with the other links (of the twelvefold chain) are halted in reverse order. Finally, when the last stage of the tenth ground is reached, by means of the diamondlike concentration, all extremely subtle tendencies to Ignorance, the very root of samsara, together with the perception of mere appearances<sup>251</sup> will be discarded and their continuity severed. When this happens, the wisdom of the Dharmakaya will be actualized and unbounded compassion will manifest, able to assume any form. All this amounts to the interdependence of the fruit.

151 From this it follows that the ground, path, and fruit are interdependent; in themselves, they have no real, inherent existence. Those who correctly realize this know also that true sufferings (namely, the universe and its inhabitants) manifest simply by virtue of dependent arising and are without true existence. They know that by abandoning the cause of

suffering (ignorance, the root of defilement—the truth of origin), the truth of cessation, or supreme nirvana, is actualized. Thus they meditate upon the supreme wisdom of no-self (the truth of path) and behold it directly.

#### THE WISDOM RESULTING FROM MEDITATION

152 As we have already explained, perfect wisdom arising from reflection creates the conviction that the three types of phenomena associated with samsara, nirvana, and the path are unoriginated (i.e., empty), and gives rise to an unmistakable knowledge of the fundamental nature of things. Settling the mind, unspoiled by dualistic cogitation,<sup>252</sup> in this ultimate reality calls forth the wisdom that results from meditation. This is the message of the extraordinary sutras and their commentaries as set forth by valid authorities.

#### WISDOM ITSELF

153 Just like space, ungraspable, impossible to indicate, formless, and without center or circumference—even so is the nature of the mind. When one rests in the primordially pure dharmadhatu, the object of meditation (ultimate reality) and the subject (wisdom) are of one taste. Within the fundamental nature of the mind, which cannot be characterized as “this” or “that,” there is no such thing as five aggregates. And given that the mind’s nature is uncompounded,\* even the eight consciousnesses are absent. The Prasangka Madhyamikas teach that there is no origination of the kind described by any of the four possible theories. But one should not conclude from this that, once the extreme of existence has been refuted, there is a “nonexistence” to be meditated upon as something newly established. For “nonexistence” is not the fundamental nature of things; indeed, it is incompatible with the wisdom that knows this nature. The nature of the mind abides within the three doors of liberation. It is not a bare nonentity. It is the source of all the kayas and wisdoms of the Tathagatas and is indeed like a treasure house.

To be sure, only Superior Beings or Aryas see ultimate reality directly as it is. But even on the level of ordinary beings, the mind, when left unaltered by mental fabrications, is able to watch the perfectly pure and

\* Uncompounded in the sense of having no origin, duration, or cessation.

ultimate nature of phenomena. Such a state of mind is the wisdom of vipashyana. It is quite different from the absorption of the insensate gods. Neither is it a kind of somnolence, nor a deprivation of the faculty of vision as in the case of somebody born blind. Of course, the expression "to watch" is just a metaphor. If one does not stir from the state of uncontrived nature (in the sense of being distracted elsewhere or of purposefully meditating), one is in fact meditating on the natural condition of things, as it is. This is why this kind of meditation is superior to any other. The primordial wisdom present in such meditation is without the split between subject and object. It is free from discursive thinking with its "main mind," "mental factors," and their objects. This wisdom is indeed the all-discerning wisdom. When the mind attains to such a wisdom and phenomena are known to be neither existent nor nonexistent, liberation will come by virtue of bodhichitta and the skillful methods of generosity and the rest. On the other hand, endeavoring in skillful means while lacking this wisdom, and continuing to apprehend phenomena as truly existent, is to be no different from non-Buddhist practitioners, who are unable to free the mind from the fetters of samsara.

#### PROGRESS ON THE PATHS AND THE ATTAINMENT OF THE RESULT

Those who gather the two accumulations through meditation on emptiness in formal sessions and through the practice of great compassion in post-meditation (first through conscious application and then through gradual habituation) are on the small, medium, or great path of accumulation. The path of joining is what links practitioners swiftly to the path of seeing and has four stages (warmth, peak, acceptance, and supreme mundane level). In each of these four stages, both in meditation and post-meditation, emptiness and compassion manifest naturally.

When the path of seeing is attained, the wisdom of emptiness is united with compassion. "Emptiness experienced in meditation" and "compassion felt during the post-meditation" are not different experiences. Emptiness and compassion manifest coemergently and inseparably. While resting in the meditation on emptiness, the mind is saturated with great compassion. In post-meditation, while training in the bodhi-

sattva activities of generosity and so forth, everything is conditioned by the wisdom of the emptiness of the three spheres. On the first ground, named Perfect Joy, the practitioner gains the perfect, pure, unclouded eyes of Dharma and beholds directly the true, ultimate nature of phenomena.

Later, on the noble path of meditation, that is, on the seven impure grounds, skillful means and wisdom are combined, even though there is still a distinction between the practices of meditation and post-meditation. When, however, the pure grounds are reached, and due to a concentration on emptiness endowed with supreme aspects, the yogi gradually attains the perfectly pure expanse and all the inconceivable qualities of the Tathagatas. By this means, and following the nonconceptual path that is free from effort and activity, the yogi spontaneously accomplishes the two aims of self and other. Here meditation and post-meditation are indistinguishable.

When, at the end of the tenth ground, the path of meditation is perfected, the diamondlike concentration overwhelms even the subtlest cognitive obscurations, annihilating them without a trace, while on the path of no more learning, total and perfect enlightenment is attained. At this point, there is no moment when the mind is not resting in meditation. The twenty-one sections\* of the stainless qualities of omniscient wisdom are actualized: the eighteen distinct qualities of the Conquerors, the ten strengths, the four fearlessnesses, and so forth. This is buddhahood.

#### A concluding summary of the six paramitas

All the Buddhas of the three times—those who have come in the past, those who appear at the present time, and those who will come in the future—when on the path of learning, listen to scriptures that set forth the six paramitas. They reflect upon their meaning and train in them on the path. As their view exceeds all conceptual extremes (in the final stages of their training), their practice of the path is unlimited and their exercise of the six paramitas is utterly pure (devoid of all self-regard).

\* See appendix 9, p. 431.

# Buddhist Hermeneutics

*Edited by*  
Donald S. Lopez, Jr

MOTILAL BANARSIDASS PUBLISHERS  
PRIVATE LIMITED • DELHI

# The Assessment of Textual Interpretation in Buddhism

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In *India Antiqua*, a volume of articles published in honor of the eminent archaeologist J. P. Vogel, there is a contribution of mine entitled "La critique d'authenticité dans le bouddhisme"<sup>1</sup> It was concerned with the *Mahāpadésā* (Discourse on the Great Authorities), in which the rules for the assessment of textual authenticity according to the minds of Buddhist scholars were recorded for a text to be considered as the "word of the Buddha," it must be based on the authority of the Buddha himself, of a formally constituted community, of one of several particularly learned "elders", it should further be in harmony with the doctrinal texts (*sūtra*), the disciplinary collections (*vināya*), and the spirit of Buddhist philosophy

Once the authenticity of a text has been duly established it remains to supply a correct interpretation of it, to understand what the author is saying and, especially, what he is trying to say, it is to this assessment of interpretation that we wish to devote the present article and offer it in homage and respect to Professor Henri Grégoire, whose splendid discoveries in the fields of Byzantine studies, epic literature and comparative mythology are sealed with the stamp of the most sure assessment and the most penetrating exegesis. While not attaining his incomparable virtuosity, the early Buddhist thinkers attempted to define and apply the rules of sound textual interpretation. Such rules are formulated in the *Catuhpratisaranasūtra* (Sūtra of the Four Refuges), of which we possess several versions in Sanskrit and Chinese. However, while the *Mahāpadésāsūtra*, which deals with the assessment of textual authenticity, appears in the earliest collections of the sūtras and vināyas, the *Catuhpratisaranasūtra*, which is devoted to the assessment of interpretation, is unknown to the canonical literature in its strict sense and seems to have been compiled at a later date. It first appears in compositions

pertaining to the Sarvāstivādin-Vaibhāsika school, such as the *Abhidharma-makośa* (trans L de la Vallée Poussin, IX 246), the *Abhidharmakośa-vyākhyā* (ed U Wogihara, 704), and the *Mahāvīyūtpatti* (ed R Sakaki, nos 1546-1549), it is again found in the sūtras and śāstras of the Mādhyanika school, such as the *Aksayamatirāsésūtra* quoted in the *Madhyamakāvṛtti* (ed L de la Vallée Poussin, 43), the *Mahāprajñāpāramitāsāstra* (translated as *Traité de la Grande Vertu de Sagesse*, I 536-540), and the *Dharmasamgraha* (ed Max Muller, chap 53), finally, it is repeated in several treatises of the Yogācāra school, such as the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* (ed U Wogihara, 256) and the *Sūtrālamkāra* (ed S Lévi, 138) Nevertheless, even if the sūtra in question was not given its definitive form until a period after the establishment of the Buddhist sects and schools, the ideas which it contains had already been evolving since the earliest texts of the Buddhist canon

The *Catuhpratsaranasūtra* posits, under the name of refuges (*pratisarana*), four rules of textual interpretation (1) the dharma is the refuge and not the person, (2) the spirit is the refuge and not the letter, (3) the sūtra of precise meaning is the refuge and not the sūtra of provisional meaning, (4) (direct) knowledge is the refuge and not (discursive) consciousness.<sup>2</sup> As will be seen, the aim of this sūtra is not to condemn in the name of sound assessment certain methods of interpretation of the texts, but merely to ensure the subordination of human authority to the spirit of the dharma, the letter to the spirit, the sūtra of provisional meaning to the sūtra of precise meaning, and discursive consciousness to direct knowledge

I *The doctrine (dharma) is the refuge and not the person (puruṣa)* This first principle merely consists of summarizing the rules of the assessment of textual authenticity which were already formulated in the *Mahāpadésasūtra* in order that a text be accepted as the "word of the Buddha" it is not sufficient to call upon the authority of the Buddha himself, upon a religious community (*sangha*) which has been formally established, or upon one of several particularly learned elders, the text in question must also be found in the sūtra (*sūtra vatarati*), appear in the vinaya (*vinaye samdṛśyate*), and not contradict the nature of things (*dharmaṭām ca na vilomayati*) In other words, adherence to the doctrine cannot be dependent on human authority, however respectable, since experience shows that human evidence is contradictory and changeable, adherence should be based on personal reasoning (*yukti*), on what one has oneself known (*jñāta*), seen (*dṛṣta*) and grasped (*vidita*)<sup>3</sup> "By relying on reasoning and not on a person's authority, one does not deviate from the meaning of reality, because one is autonomous, independent of others when confronted with rationally examined truths"<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, in the case of a

beginner who is unable to understand by himself the teaching which has been given to him, faith in the master's word is a provisional necessity "The [beginner] merely adheres to the profound texts which his intelligence cannot fathom, he tells himself those are truths within reach of the Buddha and not within reach of our intelligence, and he refrains from rejecting them In this way, he is protected from any fault"<sup>5</sup> To the mind of Buddhists, the judicious application of the *mahāpadésas* is directed less at supplying the historian with rules for assessment than at making the devotee become indissolubly wedded to the *saddharma*. If he is incapable of grasping it himself, he should at least adhere to it with faith, since "by adhering to the holy dharma, one does not perish"<sup>6</sup>

II *The spirit (artha) is the refuge and not the letter (vyañjana)* The meaning is single and invariable, while the letter is multiple and infinitely variable Buddhist exegetes often wondered anxiously whether one and the same entity or one and the same truth was not concealed under different terms The monks of the Maichikāsanda debated among themselves in order to know whether the expressions "letter" (*saññajana*) or "fettering things" (*saññajanyā dhamma*) designated one and the same thing (*ekattiha*) or different things (*nānattiha*)<sup>7</sup> The venerable Godatta thought he knew, from a certain point of view, that the four mental liberations (*cetovimutti*) are identical in meaning but different in expression (*ime dhammā ekattiha vyañjanam eva nānan ti*)<sup>8</sup> The four noble truths which were expounded in Vārāṇasī have only one acceptable meaning, but they can be explained in an infinity of ways Hence, with regard to the first truth, "the fact of [universal] suffering is true, not false or changeable, but many are the subtleties and terms, many are the means of explaining that first noble truth of suffering"<sup>9</sup>

Although the spirit takes precedence, the good doctrine is perfect in its spirit and in its letter This twofold perfection characterizes the dharma which the Buddha expounded, it is also found in a good monk, a good instructor and a student A formula which is repeated incessantly throughout the canonical writings states that the Buddha expounds a dharma which is "good in the beginning, in the middle and at the end the meaning is good (*sāttīha*) and the letter is good (*saṃvayāna*)" The *Sūtrālamkāra* explains that the meaning is good because it applies to conventional truth and absolute truth, and that its letter is good because the phrases and syllables are intelligible<sup>10</sup> The early texts laud the perfect monk "who correctly grasps the meaning and correctly applies its terms",<sup>11</sup> his colleagues consider it a gain and an advantage to have a fellow-member who is so expert in the meaning and the formula<sup>12</sup> Conversely, if a monk has discovered the right formula but misunderstands the meaning, his colleagues should chide him patiently and say to him

“That formula [which we accept as you do], does it not have this meaning rather than that meaning?”<sup>13</sup> if a monk correctly grasps the meaning but uses a faulty expression, he should be taxed “In order to render that meaning [over which we are in agreement], is not this formula more suitable than that formula?”<sup>14</sup> A good speaker is he who is not mistaken over the spirit or the letter,<sup>15</sup> and it is all for the best if he speaks at length and well and if those listening to him are capable of judging whether he is right or wrong.<sup>16</sup> The talented instructor “teaches the phrases and syllables according to the requisite order, then, once those phrases and syllables have been taught, he explains them from the point of view of their meaning according to the requisite order.”<sup>17</sup> It is advantageous for the student to hear the dharma at the appropriate time and to examine its spirit at the appropriate time.<sup>18</sup> Nāgasena, who was a model disciple of Dhammarakkhita, learned in three months, with the help of a single recitation, the word of the Buddha which is contained in the three baskets and, in a further three months, he mastered its meaning.<sup>19</sup>

It ensues from what has just been described that the monk who limits himself to memorizing the texts without attempting to understand them is failing in his duty. “There are some foolish men who learn the *dhamma*, *suttas*, *geyas*, and so on by heart but once they have learned it by heart they do not examine the meaning in order to understand the texts. Those texts, the meaning of which they have not examined in order to understand them, do not please them and the only advantage they gain from their memorization is to be able to contradict [their adversaries] and to give quotations, all the same, they do not reach the goal for the sake of which they memorized the *dhamma*, those texts which they do not understand will, for a long time, earn them much sorrow and suffering. Why? Because those texts have not been understood.”<sup>20</sup>

Whoever memorizes the *dhamma* like a parrot at least has the merit of being able to transmit it materially in an impeccable form. However, such a monk is one of those who “memorize texts which have not been understood and the phrases and syllables of which are wrongly arranged.”<sup>21</sup> such monks conduce to the confusion and destruction of the *saddhamma*.<sup>22</sup> In fact, when the form is faulty, all hope of discovering the correct meaning is lost. “If the phrases and syllables are wrongly arranged, the meaning in turn is impossible to discover.”<sup>23</sup>

It is clear that it is far from the intention of the *Catubpratisaransūtra* to deny the importance of the letter, but only to subordinate it to the spirit. According to Buddhist concepts, there are cases in which the letter must be sacrificed for the sake of the spirit, its function is to indicate the meaning, but it is never able to express it in an adequate way.

That the letter is not absolutely indispensable is confirmed by the

famous meeting between Śāriputra and Āśvajit, one of the Buddha’s first five disciples.<sup>24</sup> The latter had just embraced the new religion when he was questioned by Śāriputra about Śākyamuni’s teaching. Āśvajit at first attempted to evade Śāriputra by saying “Friend, I am only a novice and it is not long since I left the world, I only recently embraced this doctrine and discipline. I cannot propound the doctrine to its full extent (*vithhārena dhammam desetem*), but I can briefly indicate its spirit (*āpi ca samkhuttena attham vakkhāmi*).” Then the wandering mendicant Śāriputra said to the venerable Āśvajit “Let it be so, my friend. Tell me a little or a great deal of it, but speak to me of its spirit, I need only the spirit, so why be so preoccupied with the letter?”<sup>25</sup>

The letter indicates the spirit just as a fingertip indicates an object, but since the spirit is alien to syllables (*akṣaravaryīta*), the letter is unable to express it in full. Purely literal exegesis is therefore bound to fail. The theme of the letter which kills and the spirit which enlivens is elaborated several times in the *Lankāvātarasūtra*, of which we will merely quote a page here.

O Mahāmati, the son and daughter of good family should not interpret the spirit according to the letter (*yathārutārthābhinnēsa*) since reality is not connected with syllables (*nirakṣaratāvāt tattvaya*). One should not act like those who look at the finger (*anguliprēksaka*) it is as if someone pointed out something with his finger to someone else and the latter persisted in staring at the fingertip [instead of looking at the object indicated], similarly, just like children, foolish worldlings end their lives as attached to that fingertip which consists of the literal translation and, by neglecting the meaning indicated by the fingertip of literal interpretation, they never reach the higher meaning. It is as if someone were to give some rice to children, for whom it is the customary food, to eat but without cooking it, whoever were to act in such a way should be considered foolish, since he has not understood that the rice must first be cooked, equally, the nonarising and nondestruction [of all things] is not revealed if it has not been prepared, it is therefore necessary to train and not to act like someone who thinks he has seen an object merely by looking at a fingertip. For this reason, one should try and reach the spirit. The spirit, which is in isolation (*vivikta*), is a cause of nirvāna, while the letter, which is bound up with discrimination (*vikalpa-sambādha*) favors samsāra. The spirit is acquired in the company of educated people, and through learning (*bhāṣarūpa*), one should be conversant with the spirit (*arīhakaśālyā*) and not conversant with the letter (*rutakaśālyā*). To be conversant with the spirit is a view which is alien to the discussions of all the sectaries. It is not lapsing into it oneself and not making others lapse into it. In such conditions, there is a learning of the spirit. Such are those who should be approached by someone who seeks the spirit, the others, those who are attached to the literal interpretation, should be avoided by those who seek the truth.<sup>26</sup>

If scholars counseled the search for the spirit with so much insistence, it is because the meaning of the texts often lacks clarity and needs to be interpreted. This led to the imposition of the third rule

III *The sūtra of precise meaning (nīlārtha) is the refuge, not (the sūtra) the meaning of which requires interpretation (neyārtha)*. This distinction is not accepted by the Mahāsamghika school, which is of the opinion that “in all that the Blessed One expounded, there is nothing which does not conform to the meaning (*ayathārtha*), and that all the sūtras propounded by the Buddha are precise in meaning (*nīlārtha*)”<sup>27</sup> However, that position is not easy to defend, since many sūtras contradict each other. Thus, to take just one example, the text of the *Bambisārasūtra* states “Foolish worldlings (*bālaprthagana*) who have not learned anything (*asrūtvat*) take the self for their self and are attached to the self. But there is no self (*ātman*) or anything pertaining to the self (*ātmīya*), the self is empty and anything pertaining to the self is empty”<sup>28</sup> This text, which denies the existence of a soul, is contradicted by another canonical passage, in the words of which “An individual (*ekapudgala*) born in the world is born for the welfare of many”<sup>29</sup> If those two texts are taken literally, one is forced to conclude that the Buddha contradicted himself. For fear of maligning the omniscient one, the Sarvāstivādins, followed by the scholars of the Mahāyāna, preferred to accept that certain sūtras should be taken literally while others should be interpreted. According to Vasumitra and Bhavya, theses 49 and 50 of the Sarvāstivādins state that the Blessed One uttered words which were not in accordance with the meaning (*ayārtha*), that sūtras spoken by the Buddha were not all precise in meaning (*nīlārtha*) and that the Buddha himself said that certain sūtras were indeterminate in meaning (*anīlārtha*)<sup>30</sup>

The need for a fluid exegesis is admirably emphasized in the *Treatise* by Nāgārjuna. “The dharma of the Buddhas is immense, like the ocean. Depending on the aptitude of beings, it is expounded in various ways: sometimes it speaks of existence and sometimes of nonexistence, eternity or permanence, suffering or happiness, the self or the not-self, sometimes it teaches the diligent practice of the threefold activity [of body, speech and mind] which includes all good dharmas, and sometimes it teaches that all dharmas are intrinsically inactive. Such are the manifold and diverse teachings, an ignorant person who hears them considers them to be perversions, but the wise man who penetrates the threefold teaching of the dharma knows that all the words of the Buddha are the true dharma and do not contradict each other. The threefold teaching is the teaching of the [Sūtra]-pitaka, the Abhidharma and Emptiness”<sup>31</sup> Having defined it, the *Treatise* continues: “The man who penetrates the threefold teaching knows that the Buddha’s teachings do

not contradict each other. To understand that is the power of the perfection of wisdom (*prajñāpāramitā*) which, when confronted with all the Buddha’s teachings, does not encounter any impediment. Whoever has not grasped the rule of the *prajñāpāramitā* [will encounter numerous contradictions in the interpretation of the dharma] if he takes up the teaching of the Abhidharma, he will lapse into nihilism, if he takes up the teaching of the Pitaka, he will lapse [sometimes] into realism and [sometimes] into nihilism”<sup>32</sup>

It was in order to answer the requirements of exegesis that the distinction between sūtras of precise meaning and sūtras of indeterminate meaning was conceived. The *nīlārtha* sūtra (Tib. *nges pa’i don*, Ch. *liao i*) is a sūtra the meaning of which is clear (*vibhaktīārtha*, cf. *Kośa* III 75) and explicit (*kathattha*, cf. *Manorathapūranī* II 118), when taught without any ulterior motive (*nihparyāyadeśita*), it can and should be taken literally. In contrast, the *neyārtha* sūtra (Tib. *drang ba’i don*, Ch. *pu liao i*) is one the meaning of which needs to be deduced (*yassa attho netabbo*, cf. *Manorathapūranī* II 118), because it is intentional (*ābhuprēyika*) and derives from a motivation (*paryāyadeśita*). The *neyārtha* sūtras constitute the *samdhāvācana*, the intentional teaching of the Buddha.

Three questions arise in connection with the *neyārtha* sūtras. Should they be accepted? How can they be distinguished from *nīlārtha* sūtras? How should they be correctly interpreted?

1. The *neyārtha* sūtras are just as much the word of the Buddha as the *nīlārtha* sūtras. They should therefore be accepted, and those who reject them by saying, “That is not the word of the Buddha but the word of Māra” commit a serious fault in repudiating the good doctrine (*saddharmaprakṣepakarmāzārana*). The *Sarvadharmavaipulyasamgrahasūtra* says: “Subtle, O Mañjuśrī, is the impediment which consists of repudiating the good doctrine. Whoever at times approves a text expounded by the Tathāgata and at others disapproves another one is repudiating the good doctrine. Whoever repudiates the good doctrine in that way maligns the Tathāgata, repudiates the doctrine and denies the community”<sup>33</sup>

2. With regard to the means of distinguishing between *nīlārtha* and *neyārtha* sūtras, the authors turn out to be reticent, and we can only examine their method of procedure in each particular case. There is a very clear impression that the distinction is based on purely subjective criteria, which explains why, quite frequently, the scholars are not in agreement.

The *Treatise* by Nāgārjuna (I 539–540) considers sūtras to be of precise meaning when the allegations are obvious and easily understood, and sūtras the meaning of which needs to be determined are those which through skilful means (*upāya*) say things which at first sight seem

to be incorrect and which demand an explanation. For example, the *sūtra* in the *Anguttara* (III 41) on the five advantages of giving is a *nīlārtha* *sūtra* because it is obvious that giving is meritorious, in contrast, another *sūtra*, which attributes the same advantages of giving to teaching, is *neyārtha* because it is less clear that teaching, which cannot be translated by material giving, is as meritorious as almsgiving. However, after due reflection, the teacher has the same merit as the donor since, by praising almsgiving in all manner of ways, he is combatting his own avarice and that of others.

In general, it is considerations of a doctrinal type which enable a decision to be reached as to whether a *sūtra* is precise in meaning or with a meaning to be determined. The Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna are in agreement in rejecting the belief in the self (*ātmagraha*) and proclaim the non-existence of the individual (*puḍgalanaisitīmya*). However, we find texts in both vehicles in which the Buddha, in order to place himself within his listeners' range, speaks of a soul, a living being, a man, an individual, and so on. Scholars consider such texts to be *neyārtha* and requiring explanation, if not correction. Conversely, they regard as *nīlārtha* and literal the Hīnayāna texts in which there is a question of impermanence (*anitya*), suffering (*duḥkha*), and impersonality (*anātman*) as well as Mahāyāna passages which deal with universal emptiness (*śūnyatā*). Here are some quotations which illustrate this statement.

For Buddhaghosa (in *Manorathapūraṇī* II 118), *sūtras* in which it is a matter of one or several individuals (cf. *Anguttara* I 22) are *neyārtha*, because "from the absolute point of view (*paramatthato*) no individual exists". In contrast, *sūtras* which deal with impermanence, suffering and the not-self (cf. *Anguttara* I 286) are *nīlārtha*, since "whether or not the Tathāgatas appear in the world, that natural causality, that basic suchness of things remains".

The *Aksayamatinnirdésasūtra* says "Which are the doctrinal texts with a meaning to be determined (*neyārtha*) and which are the doctrinal texts of precise meaning (*nīlārtha*)? The texts which have been expounded in order to teach the path of penetration (*mārgāvatāraya nirdésita*) are called *neyārtha*, those which have been expounded in order to teach the fruit of penetration (*phalāvatāraya nirdésita*) are called *nīlārtha*. All texts which teach emptiness (*śūnyatā*), signlessness (*ānimitta*), wishlessness (*apramāhita*), effortlessness (*anabhisaṃskāra*), nonbirth (*ajāta*), nonarising (*anutpāda*), nonexistence (*abhāva*), the not-self (*anātman*), the absence of a living being (*jīva*), of an individual (*puḍgala*) and of a master (*svāmin*), such texts are called *nīlārtha*."<sup>34</sup>

Finally, the *Samādhirūpasūtra* in turn declares "Whoever knows the value of texts with a precise meaning knows the [precise] way in which emptiness has been taught by the Sugata, however, wherever there is a

matter of an individual, being or man, he knows that all those texts are to be taken as having a provisional meaning."<sup>35</sup>

The subjective nature of this criterion is immediately apparent and explains the frequent disagreement between scholars each school tends to take literally the doctrinal texts which conform to its theses and to consider those which cause dilemmas as being of provisional meaning. These are some of the texts which have been disputed over.

The Vaibhāsikas considered *āvidyā* (ignorance) and the other links of dependent origination as so many specific entities, the Sautrāntikas were of the opinion that *āvidyā* is not a thing apart, but a modality of *prajñā* (wisdom). In order to support their thesis, the Sautrāntikas cited as their authority a *sūtra* in which it is said "What is *āvidyā*? Non-knowledge in relation to the past (*pūrvānte ajñānam*)", that *sūtra*, they said, is clear and precise in meaning (*nīlārtha*), you cannot therefore claim it is a *sūtra* with a meaning to be determined (*neyārtha*). The Vaibhāsikas responded "Nothing substantiates that that *sūtra* is clear in meaning, the fact that it is expressed in terms of definition proves nothing."<sup>36</sup>

The Vātsīputrīyas, who believed in the existence of an ineffable *puḍgala*, based their authority on the *Bhārahārasūtra*, in which it is said "The bearer of the burden [of existence] is such-and-such a venerable one, with such-and-such a name, from such-and-such a family, such-and-such a clan, etc."<sup>37</sup> and other similar *sūtras* which they took literally. The other Buddhist schools, while not rejecting such texts, only accepted that they have a provisional meaning and are not authoritative, they resorted to *sūtras* which are explicit in meaning and formally taught that, within that supposed *puḍgala*, "there are merely things which are impermanent, conditioned, arisen from causes and conditions, and are created by action."<sup>38</sup>

In order to refute the existence of an external object, the Vijnānavādins took their authority from a passage in the *Dasabhūmika* (p. 49) which states that the triple world is mind only (*cittamātram idam yad idam traidhātukam*). However, the Mādhyamikas took them severely to task "You are making yourselves ridiculous," they said, "the intention of the *sūtra* is nothing like it appears in your minds, that text only teaches the unimportance of visible things, but not the denial of their existence." However, the Vijnānavādins persisted and produced a passage from the *Lankāvatārasūtra* (p. 47) in which it says "The external thing, however it may appear, does not exist, it is the mind which appears in various guises, such as a body (*dēha*), objects of pleasure (*bhoga*) and a place (*sthāna*)." Nonetheless, the Mādhyamikas were determined to prove, in writing and by reasoning, that this quotation was provisional and not definitive.<sup>39</sup>

3 The Mahāyāna attached the greatest importance to sūtras of indefinite and provisional meaning and which constitute the intentional teaching of the Buddha. The expression "intentional teaching" is rendered in Pali and Sanskrit by *sandhāya bhāsita* (*Majjhima* I 503, *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, 174), *sandhāya bhanita* (*Dīpavamsa*, 5, 34), *sandhāya vāg bhāsita* (*Vajracchedikā*, 23), *sandhābhāsita* (*Saddharmapundarikā*, 125, 199, 233), *sandhābhāṣya* (ibid., 29, 34, 60, 70, 273), *sandhāvācana* (ibid., 59), *sandhāya vacana* (*Bodhisattvabhūmi*, 56, 108). In Tibetan, we find *dgongs te bshad pa*, and in Chinese *mi i yu yen* 'the word of hidden thought'. The *sandhābhāṣya* has already been the subject of many studies,<sup>40</sup> so we will merely point out here the procedures which enable us to interpret and "discover the profound intentions of the Buddha" (*gambhīrārthasamādhinirmocanā*, cf. *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, 303).

Sūtras of provisional meaning, which constitute the intentional teaching, should be understood in the light of sūtras the meaning of which is precise, the interpreter will then become determined to discover the point of view which the Buddha was taking as well as the motivation with which he was inspired.

Following the Council of Vaiśālī, certain dissident monks held separate meetings which were known as Mahāsaṅgīti. Among the reproaches with which the Sinhalese chronicle of the *Dīpavamsa* addressed those monks, the following complaint can be found: "Not knowing what should not be taken literally (*pariyāyadesita*) or what should be taken literally (*nippariyāyadesita*), not distinguishing the precise meaning (*nīlāṭṭha*) from the meaning to be determined (*neyyāṭṭha*), those monks attribute to what is said with a particular intention (*sandhāya bhanita*) another meaning [than the true one] and hence, by respecting the letter (*byarīyanacchāyāya*), they destroy a large part of the meaning (*bahu attham vināsayum*)"<sup>41</sup>

The third refuge prescribes taking as one's guide the meaning and not the letter, *nīlāṭṭha* and not *neyyāṭṭha* sūtras. "The bodhisattva who resorts to the meaning and not to the letter penetrates all the enigmatic words of the Bhagavat Buddhas"<sup>42</sup> "The bodhisattva who has put his faith and confidence in the Tathāgata, trusting his word exclusively, resorts to the sūtra the meaning of which is precise, he cannot deviate from the Buddhist doctrine and discipline. Indeed, in the sūtra the meaning of which has to be determined, the interpretation of the meaning which is diffused in several directions is uncertain and causes hesitation and, if the bodhisattva does not adhere exclusively to the sūtra which is precise in meaning, he might deviate from the Buddhist doctrine and discipline."<sup>43</sup>

However, when the interpreter is certain of having grasped the meaning thanks to the *nīlāṭṭha* sūtras, it will profit him greatly to ponder over

the enigmatic words of the Buddha which are also an integral part of the *saddharma* and constitute a method of teaching (*desanānaya*) controlled by skillful means, but the end and aim (*svasiddhānta*) of which consist of a personal comprehension (*adhigama*) of the undefiled element (*anāsravadhātu*) which is superior to phrases and syllables.<sup>44</sup> In order to make use of this method of teaching and to understand the enigmatic words, it is important to discover the point of view which inspired the Buddha.

The *Treatise* by Nāgārjuna (I 26-46) lists four points of view (*siddhānta*), only the last of which is absolute (*paramārthika*), the other three pertain to relative or conventional (*samvrti*) truth. The Buddha did not restrict himself to exactness of wording when expressing himself (1). From the worldly point of view (*laukikasiddhānta*), he often adopted the current idiom and did not hesitate to speak in terms of beings (*sattva*) who die and go to be reborn in the five destinies (e.g. *Digha* I 82), he extolled the role of the single person (*ekapudgala*) who is born into the world for the joy, happiness and benefit of the many (*Anguttara* I 22) (2). From the personal point of view (*prātipaṇṣikasiddhānta*), the Buddha often tried to adapt his teaching to the intellectual and moral dispositions (*āśaya*) of his listeners. To those who did not believe in the afterlife but believed everything disappears at death, he discoursed on immortality and predicted a fruition in different universes (*Anguttara* I 134), to Phalguna, who believed in the eternity of the self, he taught the non-existence of a person as a thinking and fruition-incurring being (*Samyutta* II 13). This might be said to be a contradiction, it is, however, not the least so but merely skillful means (*ūpaya*) (3). From the remedial point of view (*prātipāṅkikasiddhānta*), the Buddha who is the healer of universal suffering varied the remedies according to the diseases to be cured, to the sensuous (*vāgacariya*), he taught the contemplation of a decomposing corpse (*asūbhahāvanā*), to vindictive and hate-filled men (*āvesacariya*), he recommended thoughts of goodwill (*maitrīcitta*) regarding those close to one, to the deluded (*mohacariya*), he advised study on the subject of dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*). We should never forget that the omniscient Buddha is less a teacher of philosophy and more a healer of universal suffering: he imparts to every person the teaching which suits them best.

Scholars have attempted to classify the intentions and motivations which guided the Buddha in his teaching.<sup>45</sup> They counted ~~eight~~ motivations (*abhiprāya*, Tib *dgongs pa*, Ch *i ch'u*) and four ~~more~~ *saṃdhi*, Tib *ldem por dgongs pa*, Ch *pi mi*). However, ~~the two lists overlap, it is preferable, for ease of explanation,~~ ~~the two lists~~ ~~overlap,~~ it is preferable, for ease of explanation, to review them together.

A person who might be tempted to feel some scorn ~~for~~ the Buddha (*buddhe 'vayā*) is informed by the latter that, long ago, ~~he~~ ~~was~~ the Bud-

dha Vipāśvin and fully enlightened (*aḥam eva sa tena kālena Vipāśvi samyaksambuddho bhūvam*). Obviously, the present Buddha Śākyamuni is not the Buddha Vipāśvin of the past, but he resembles him in all points because both Buddhas participate in the same body of the doctrine (*dharmakāya*). By expressing himself in that way, the Buddha meant to point out the similarity (*samatābhūprayā*).

The literal interpretation of the texts (*yathārutārthagrāha*) does not lead to a comprehension of the dharma but, in fact, is equal to scorning the doctrine (*dharme 'vayñā*). The Buddha therefore teaches that one should have served Buddhas as numerous as the grains of sand in the Ganges in order to arrive at an understanding of the Mahāyāna (*yaṭo Gaṅganad-īvalukāsamanābuddhān paryupāśya mahāyāne 'vabodha vipadyate*). This is hyperbole since, in order to understand the Mahāyāna, it is not necessary to have served an infinite number of Buddhas, nevertheless, prolonged effort is required. Here, the intention of the Buddha is to speak of another thing (*arīhāntarābhīprāya*).

The lazy (*kusīda*) who do not resolutely practice the means of deliverance are told by the Buddha that those who make an aspiration with a view to the blissful abode will go to be reborn there (*ye sukhāvātyāṃ prañidhānam karisyanti te latropapāpasyante*). In reality, matters are more complicated but every effort, however minimal, will have its recompense "later." Here, the Buddha is referring to another time (*kālāntarābhīprāya*).

A virtuous action which is praiseworthy in a beginner appears insufficient on the part of an adherent who is more advanced in perfection. In order to combat satisfaction in mediocrity (*alpasamtusti*), it happens that the Buddha scorns a virtue in one person which he has just praised in another (*yaṭ tad eva kuśalamūlam kasyacid praśamsate kasyacid vigarhate*) here he is taking into account the dispositions of each individual (*pudgalāśāyābhīprāya*).

In order to cure the sensuous (*rāgacarita*), the Buddha depicts the splendors of the Buddha-fields to them, so as to discomfit the proud (*mānacarita*), he describes the supreme perfection of the Buddhas, he encourages those who are tortured by remorse (*kaukrīya*) by telling them that those who have committed offenses against the Buddhas and bodhisattvas will indeed end by going to the heavens (*ye buddhabodhisattve svapākāram karisyanti te sarve svargopagā bhaviṣyanti*). Such declarations should obviously not be taken seriously, but interpreted as is appropriate in the light of sūtras of precise meaning.

Furthermore, and not necessarily intentionally, the Buddha sometimes cultivated paradox and plays on words this is innocent amusement and not reason for complaint. Some extracts taken from the *Mahāyānasamgraha* (II 224-231) are sufficient to illustrate these stylistic methods

"The bodhisattva," it says, "practices almsgiving extensively when he does not give anything." It should be understood that the bodhisattva does not give anything, because he identifies himself mentally with all those who give, because he has already given away everything he possessed and, finally, because he practices the triply pure giving, in which no distinction is made between the donor, beneficiary and thing given. "The bodhisattva," it says further, "is the supreme slayer of living beings (*prāṇātipātīn*). " A fanciful etymology informs us that the bodhisattva is a *prāṇātipātīn* insofar as *prāṇ*[*snah samsārato*] *'ipātayati*, that is, he "cuts beings off from the round of rebirths" by ensuring their nirvāna. Another śāstra dares to claim that the profound attributes of the Buddha correlate with craving (*rāga*), hatred (*dveṣa*) and delusion (*moha*). This is not blasphemy but a profound truth, since all beings, involved as they are with passion, are basically identical to the Buddha and destined to win supreme and perfect enlightenment.

IV *Direct knowledge (jñāna) is the refuge and not discursive consciousness (vijñāna)* This last exegetical principle, which summarizes the previous three, shows that sound hermeneutics are based not on a literal though theoretical understanding of the noble truths, but on direct knowledge. Here again, the best commentary is supplied by the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*. "The bodhisattva attaches great importance to the knowledge of the direct comprehension [of the truths], and not to mere discursive consciousness of the letter of the meaning, which [consciousness] arises from listening and reflecting. Understanding that what should be known through knowledge arising from meditation cannot be recognized only through discursive consciousness arising from listening and reflecting, he abstains from rejecting or denying the teachings given by the Tathāgata, profound as they are."<sup>46</sup>

The Buddhist truths which the exegeticist seeks to penetrate can be the object of a threefold wisdom, or *prajñā* arising from listening (*śrūti-mayī*), reflecting (*cintāmayī*) or meditation (*bhāvanāmāyī*).

The first two are worldly (*laukika*) and defiled (*sāsvra*) discursive consciousnesses (*vijñāna*), since, in their empiricism, they remain defiled by craving, hatred and delusion. *Śrūtamayī* *prajñā* which is incurred by oral teaching accepts the truths on faith and is founded on confidence in the words of the Buddha, it is this which caused Siha (in *Anguttara* IV 82) to say "That almsgiving bears fruit here below I do not believe, I know, but that the giver is reborn in heaven, I believe from the Buddha." The object of that wisdom is the word (*nāman*) or the letter, such as it was expounded by the Buddha. *Cintāmayī* *prajñā*, which follows the preceding, is a personal and reasoned understanding of the truths the meaning (*arīha*) of which it grasps and not just the letter. Basing themselves on these, the monks which the *Maṅghma* (I 265) presents can declare "If

we say this or that, it is not through respect for the master, but because we ourselves have recognized, seen and understood it”

These first two types of praññā, which are dialectical in nature, remain blemished by delusion, they are practiced as a preparatory exercise (*prayoga*) by worldlings (*prthagana*) who are not yet committed to the path of nirvāna. They are of only provisional value and are meant to be rejected after use. The *Mahāvibhāṣā* (T no 1545, 42 217c-81 420a) and the *Abhidharmakośa* (VI 143) compare the first to a swimming aid which is constantly gripped by a man who does not know how to swim, the second, to the same aid which is sometimes used and at other times disregarded by a poor swimmer. Whoever possesses the third praññā, wisdom arising from meditation (*bhāvanāmāyī*), is like a strong swimmer who crosses the river without any point of support.

*Bhāvanāmāyī* praññā is no longer discursive consciousness (*viññāna*) but authentic knowledge (*ñāna*), a direct comprehension of the truths (*satyābhisamaya*), being free from any hint of delusion, it is transcendental (*lokottara*) and undefiled (*anāsrava*). Its sudden acquisition marks the entry into the path of nirvāna and confers on the ascetic the quality of holy one (*ārya*). That holy one, during the stage of training (*śauksa*) which continues throughout the path of meditation (*bhāvanamārga*), successively eliminates all the categories of passions which can still coexist with undefiled praññā, however, it will finally lead him to arhatship where the holy one, having nothing more in which to train (*āśauksa*), enjoys nirvāna on earth because he knows that his impurities have been destroyed (*āstravakṣayajñāna*) and that they will not arise again (*anupāday-ñāna*).

We can, as did L. de la Vallée Poussin,<sup>47</sup> take it as certain that Buddhist praññā is not a gnosis, a vague apprehension of a transcendental reality, as is, for the monists and pantheists of the Vedānta and Brāhminism, the knowledge of the absolute brahman and the consciousness of the identity of the “I” with the brahman. Praññā has as its object the eternal laws of the dependent origination of phenomena (*pratītyasamutpāda*), and their general marks: impermanence, suffering, impersonality and emptiness, finally, the affirmation of nirvāna. Having been prepared through faith and reflection, undefiled praññā transcends them with its sharpness (*patutva*) and attains its object directly. It constitutes the single and indispensable instrument of true exegesis.

From this brief survey, we derive the impression that the Buddhist scholars spared themselves no trouble in order to maintain intact and correctly interpret the extremely varied teachings of Śākyamuni. They were not content with memorizing their letter (*vyavāyana*), and they were intent on grasping the meaning (*artha*) through a rational approach. The distinction which they established between texts with a precise

meaning (*nīrārtha*) and texts with a meaning to be determined (*neyārtha*) is, more often than not, perfectly justified. Even while allowing faith and reflection their due place, they accepted the priority of undefiled praññā, that direct knowledge which attains its object in all lucidity. We cannot, therefore, accept, as does a certain critic, that as from the first Buddhist Council “a continual process of divergence from the original doctrine of the Teacher is evident”,<sup>48</sup> on the contrary, we are of the opinion that the Buddhist doctrine evolved along the lines which its discoverer had unconsciously traced for it.

TRANSLATED BY SARA BOIN-WEBB

### Notes

This article was first published as “La critique d’interprétation dans le bouddhisme” in *Annuaire de l’Institut de Philologie et d’Histoire Orientales et Slaves*, vol 9 (Brussels, 1949), 341-361. Grateful acknowledgement is made to the editors of that journal for permission to publish this English translation by Sara Boin-Webb, which first appeared in *Buddhist Studies Review* 2, no 1-2 (1985) 4-24.

1 *India Antiqua* (Leiden, 1947), 213-222, English translation in *Buddhist Studies Review* 1 (1) 4-15

2 Cf *Abhidharmakosavyākhyā*, 704 *catvāriṃśā bhikkavaḥ pratisaranaṃ katamāni catvāri dharmah pratisaranaṃ na puḍgalah, arthah pratisaranaṃ na vyañjanam, nīrārtham sūtram pratisaranaṃ na neyārtham jñānam pratisaranaṃ na vijnānam, in other recensions, the order often differs*

3 Cf *Majjhima* I 265 *nanu bhikkhave yad eva tumhākam sāmam ñālam sāmam dūtīham sāmam viditām tad eva tumhe vadethā ti*

4 *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, 257 *sa evam yuktipratisarano na puḍgalapratisaranaḥ tatvārthān na vicālaty aparaprabhavyeś ca bhavati dharmesu* Ibid , 108 *na paraprabhavye bhavati tesu yuktiparikṛitesu dharmesu.*

5 Ibid , 108 *kimcit punar adhimucyamāno yesu asya dharmesu gambhīresu buddhir na gāhate, tathāgatagocārā ete dharmā nāsmadbuddhigocārā ity evam apratikṣhams tān dharmān, ātmānam aksatam cānu-pahatam ca pariharaty anavadhyam*

6 *Sūtrālamkāra*, 138 *ārsadharmādāhimuktito na pranaśyati*

7 *Samyutta* IV 281

8 Ibid , 297

9 *Samyutta* V 430 *idam dukkham ti bhikkave tatham etam avatītham etam anaññālo-tham etam tatha aparimāṇā vanna vyañjanā āperimāṇā samkāsānā ittipidam duk-kham ariyasaccam*

10 *Sūtrālamkāra*, 82 *svārthah samvrtiparamārthasatyayogāt, suvyañjanah pratītopa-davyañjanavāṭ*

11 *Dīgha* III 129 *eyam kho āyasmā alīham ñeva sammā gahāti, vyañjanāni sammā ropeti*

12 Ibid *lābhā no āvuso, suladdham no āvuso, ye mayam āyasmanītam tāḍisaṃ sabrahmacāriṃ paṣāma evam aittūpetaṃ vyañjanūpetaṃ ti*

13 Ibid *imesam nu kho āvuso vyañjanānam ayaṃ vā alīho eso vā alīho, katama opāy-ikāro ti*

14 Ibid *imassa nu kho āvuso atthassa imāni vā vyañjanāni etāni vā vyañjanāni, kata-māni opāyikatānāni ti*

- 15 *Anguttara* II 139 n'ev' *atthato no vyañjanato paryādānam gacchati*
- 16 *Ibid*, 138 *dhammakathuko bahū ca bhāsati sahitañ ca, parisā ca kusalā hoti sahītasahitassa*
- 17 *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, 106 *yathākramam padavyañjanam uddisati, yathākramoddhāsam ca padavyañjanam yathākramam evārthato vibhajati*
- 18 *Anguttara* II 381-383, IV 221-223 *animsasā kālena dhammasavane kālena atthupaparikkhūya*
- 19 Cf *Mūlindapañha*, 18
- 20 *Majjhima* I 133 *idha bhikkhave ekacce moghapurusa dhammam paryāpunanā, suttam, geyyam, te tam dhammam paryāpunitvā tesam dhammānam paññāya attham na upaparikkhanti, tesam te dhammā paññāya attham anupaparikkhatam na nyājanam khānanti, te upārambhānisamsā c'eva dhammam paryāpunanāti ittvādāppamokkhiānisamsā ca, yassa c'atthāya dhammam paryāpunanāti tañ c'assa attham nānubhonti, tesam te dhammā duggahitā digharattam ahitāya dukkhāya samvattanti tam kassa hetu duggahītīti bhikkhave dhammānam*
- 21 *Anguttara* II 147, III 178 *duggahītam suttantam paryāpunanāti dunnakkhitteti padavyañjanēhi*
- 22 *Ibid*, III 178 *saddhammassa sammosayo antardhānāya samvattanti*
- 23 *Nettipakarana*, 21 *dunnakkhittassa padavyañjanassa attho pi dunnayo bhavati*
- 24 Cf *Vinaya* I 40
- 25 *Ibid* *hotu āvuso, appam vā bahum vā bhāsassu, attham yeva me brūhi, atthen' eva me attho, kam kāhasi vyañjanam bahun ti*
- 26 *Lankavatāra*, 196
- 27 Vasumitra in J Masuda, "Origin and Doctrines of Indian Buddhist Schools," *Asia Major* 2 (1925) 19 and 28 See also M Walleiser, *Die Sekten des alten Buddhismus* (Heidelberg, 1927), 27
- 28 Chung a han, *T* no 26, 11 498b10
- 29 *Anguttara* I 22
- 30 Cf Masuda, "Origin and Doctrines," 52, Walleiser, *Die Sekten des alten Buddhismus*, 43
- 31 *Le Traité de la Grande Vertu de Sage*, vol 2 (Louvain, 1949), 1074
- 32 *Ibid*, 1095
- 33 Quoted in *Sikṣāsamuccaya*, 95 *sūksmam hi Mañjuśrīti saddharmapratikṣepakar-mavāranam yo hi kascim Mañjuśrīti tathāgatabhāsute dharme kasmimsic chobanasamyānam karoti kvacid asobhanasamyānām sa saddharmam pratikṣpati tena saddharmam pratikṣpata tathāgato 'bhyākkhyāto bhavati dharmah pratikṣipto bhavati saṅgho 'pa vadito bhavati*
- 34 Quoted in *Madhyamakavṛtti*, 43
- 35 *Samādhirīyasūtra*, ed N Dutt, *Gilgit Manuscripts*, II 78, also quoted in *Madhyamakavṛtti*, 44, 276 *nūlārthasūtrānāvasesa jānāti yathopadistā sugatena sūnyatā, yasmin punah pudgālasattvapurusa neyārthato jānāti sarvadharmān*
- 36 Cf *Kosa* III 75
- 37 On the *Bhārahārasūtra*, see *Samyutta* III 25-26, *Kośavyākhyā*, 706, *Sūtrālam-kāra*, 159
- 38 Cf *Kośa* IX 256
- 39 Cf *Madhyamakāvatāra*, 181-194
- 40 V Bhattacharya, "Sandhābhāsā," *Indian Historical Quarterly* 4 (1928) 287-296, P C Bagchi, "The Sandhābhāsā and Sandhāvacana," *Indian Historical Quarterly* 6 (1930) 389-396, P Pelhot, in *Toung Pao* (1932) 147, P C Bagchi, "Some Aspects of Buddhist Mysticism in the Caryāpadas," *Calcutta Oriental Series* 1, no 5 (1934), J R Ware, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 57 123, F Edgerton, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 57 185-188, L de la Vallée Poussin, "Buddhica," *Harvard Journal of Asian Studies* 3 137-139

- 41 *Dīpavamsa* V 30-35
- 42 *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, 108 *arham prahsaran bodhisattvo na vyañjanam buddhānām bhāgavatām sarvasamdhāyavacanāny anupravāsati*
- 43 *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, 257 *bodhisattvas tathāgate nivastāradhho nivastāprasāda ekāntiko vacasy abhīprasannas tathāgatanūlārtham sūtram pratsarati na neyārtham nūlārtham sūtram pratsarann asamhāryo bhavati asmād dharmavinayāt tathā hi neyārthasya sūtrasya nānāmūkhapratkrāntārvbhāgo 'nīcītiāh samdehakāro bhavati sacet punar bodhisattvoh nūlārthe 'pi sūtre 'nāikāntakāh syād evam asau samhāryah syād asmād dharmavinayāt*
- 44 On the contrast between *desanānaya* and *siddhāntanaya*, see *Lankavatāra*, 148, 172, etc
- 45 Cf *Mahāvīyupatti*, nos 1666-1675, *Sūtrālamkāra*, 82-84, *La Somme du Grand Véhicule*, 2 129-132
- 46 *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, 257 *Punar bodhisattvoh adhigamajñāne sāradaṛsī bhavati na srutacintādharmārthavyūñānamātrake sa yad bhāvanānāyena jñānena jñūlavayam na tac chākyaam srutacintājnānamātrakena vjñātum ite vuditvā paramagambhīrān aṣṭi tathāgata-bhāsītān dharmān srutō na pratikṣipati nāpavodati*
- 47 L de la Vallée Poussin, *La Morale bouddhique* (Paris, 1927), 302
- 48 J C Jennings, *The Vedantic Buddhism of the Buddha* (Oxford, 1947)

# Gateway to Knowledge

*The treatise entitled  
The Gate for Entering the Way of  
a Pandita*

by  
Jamgön Mipham Rinpoche

## VOLUME IV

*Translated from the Tibetan by*  
JAMES GENTRY & ERIK PEMA KUNSANG

RANGJUNG YESHE PUBLICATIONS  
Kathmandu, Nepal

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## THE FOUR REASONINGS

In accordance with the stages of having gained mastery over the triad of Dharma, meanings and definitive phrases taught above, by attaining the ready speech of fearlessness in expounding, debating and commenting on the meaning of the Exalted Word, one becomes endowed with the power to accept the fortunate and to refute proponents of wrong views. That is to say, bodhisattvas attain the ready speech that is inexhaustible even if they were to explain each and every word and meaning for an ocean of eons.

In this context I shall explain correct reasoning, the means for attaining the supreme ready speech of flawless doctrinal intelligence by which one does not have to depend on others for the content of the Exalted Word.

If one were to summarize all the contents of the Dharma taught by all buddhas there would be nothing which is not included within these two: the mundane relative truth and the ultimate truth. One should therefore correctly develop a definitive understanding that ascertains these two by means of the twofold valid cognitions that scrutinize them.

How should one proceed? One should understand them in accordance with the four principles of reason that have been taught in the sūtras: 1) the principle of efficacy, 2) the principle of dependence, 3) the principle of reality, and 4) the principle of valid proof.

These are as follows. All phenomena of samsāra and nirvāna arise and appear in the manner of dependent origination. Independent of causes and conditions, it is not feasible for them to appear by themselves, like

a flower doesn't appear in the sky. Therefore in brief, just as a complete collection of causes such as a seed, water, warmth and the rest has the ability to produce a sprout, all functions performed in which a certain cause produces a certain effect are called the "principle of efficacy." The fact that everything that is an effect, such as a sprout and so forth, is definitely dependent upon its own causes is called the "principle of dependence."

In that way, everything that has the ability to produce a certain cause creating a certain effect and everything that is an effect dependent upon its causes are feasible as mutual causes and effects, and therefore facts. It is like how virtuous actions produce pleasurable effects and non-virtuous actions produce suffering, or how a rice sprout grows from a rice seed. It is not a fact that they produce the opposite, such as suffering due to virtue and pleasure due to non-virtue, or a rice sprout growing from a barley seed.

These first two principles of reason enable rejection and acceptance, and engagement and withdrawal with respect to all phenomena, by means of understanding what is and what is not factual about them. Therefore, all the sciences such as technology and the others, as well as all the mundane and supramundane schools of philosophy have a thoroughly analytic grounding in these two modalities. Consequently, science and philosophical schools become more refined and sublime in direct proportion to one's mastery in understanding what is and what is not factual.

The principle of reality is as follows: conventionally all phenomena subsist according to their own respective natures, as earth is solid, water is wet, space is non-obstructive and the like. That is to say, even a single phenomenon like a pot has the character of multiple categories—those established, like being impermanent, being material, and so forth; and those posited in terms of elimination or negation, such as not being consciousness, not being permanent, and so forth. However, in brief, a specifically characterized phenomenon, which is an object of direct perception, like a substantially existent pot, is joined to the conceptual mind through various categories of different conceptual properties, like its production, impermanence, and the like, which are imputed to the pot by means of other-exclusion. Thus, phenomena fall

into the two modalities of substantiality and imputability. From these are fashioned the various categories of conventions in conformity with objects, such as specifically characterized phenomena and generally characterized phenomena, universal and particular, contradiction and relationship, definition and definiendum and so forth. Based on these one becomes non-deluded with regard to all objects.

What is thus posited in terms of the triad of cause, effect and nature are the three principles belonging to the context of analyzing the conventional. Ultimately when analyzed by means of the reasoning of the vajra-splinter, one does not observe any cause producing any effect. When analyzed by means of the refutation of arising from an existent or non-existent thing, there is also no arising of effects based on causes. When analyzed by means of the reasoning of the absence of singularity and plurality, there is no nature of solidity and so forth established whatsoever. Therefore, that phenomena abide as the nature of the three gates of emancipation—cause devoid of phenomenal characteristics, effect un-wished-for, and essence, emptiness—is the ultimate reality.

The principle of efficacy and the principle of dependence are also included within the conventional reality of things, in the sense that it is a reality that fire is hot, that fire is efficacious in burning and that fire is dependent upon kindling.

For this reason, all the parameters of reasoning come down to the principle of reality, after which there are no further reasons to seek. It is like how the heat of fire, which is the reality of things, cannot be denied by anyone at all.

When subsuming the meaning of the three previous principles in such a way, the meaning of exactly how the cause, effect and nature of all phenomena conventionally subsist is their conventional condition or reality. And that the triad of cause, effect and nature are devoid of self-nature is their ultimate condition or reality.

In brief, the three former principles have been taught in terms of bringing about a definitive resolution to the meaning of the two truths.

These are called principles because it is quite suitable and reasonable that the nature of all phenomena would subsist in such a way; or these are called "reasoning" for their evaluation in conformity with such.

In this way, "the principle of valid proof" is so called because assessing properly and unerringly the meaning of the two truths (i.e. that which is to be assessed) is established by the power of fact. This is because of being proof, which is endowed with proper validity.

By means of what is such validity proven? It is by means of two types of valid cognition: the valid cognition that directly perceives as manifest phenomena both conventional objects, how things appear, and ultimate objects, how things are; and the valid cognition that infers another incontrovertible thing from the manifest appearance of evidence that enables one to assess an obscure phenomenon.

That is to say, the direct perception of a conventional nature, is for instance directly seeing a blue *utpala* flower with an unmistakable visual cognition.

Direct observance of an ultimate nature is like the wisdom of composure of the noble ones.

Inference of a conventional object is like inferring fire from smoke or impermanence from being produced.

Inference of the ultimate is like inferring emptiness by means of syllogisms such as the absence of singularity and plurality, and so forth.

How many kinds of valid direct perception are there? There are four kinds:

1) Valid sense direct perception is a non-conceptual, unmistakable cognition that has arisen based on the ruling condition of a sense faculty with physical form. Unmistaken visual cognition and so forth make it five-fold. The appearance of one moon as two, effectuated by the cause of an erroneous sense faculty, is a spurious direct perception, and not a valid cognition.

2) Valid mental direct perception is a non-conceptual, unmistakable cognition that has arisen based on the ruling condition of the mental faculty. Things like a non-conceptual mind following an erroneous sense faculty, or a dream perception are not valid cognitions.

3) Valid yogic direct perception is a non-conceptual, unmistakable cognition that has arisen based on the ruling condition of the yoga practice of shamatha and vipashyana. Things like the vivid appearance of skeletons from having become habituated to repulsiveness are not unmistakable and therefore not maintained to be valid cognition.

"Yogic direct perception" is maintained to be with appearance, like the yogic direct perception that is aware of conventional things that are covered or obscured objects; and without appearance, like the yogic direct perception that perceives selflessness.

4) Direct self-cognizing perception is all primary and subsidiary mental states, by their own cognizant nature, being non-conceptually and unerringly cognizant of themselves. It is such that any cognition taking place, be it mistaken or unmistakable, is unmistakable and non-conceptual in terms of it simply experiencing itself in its own cognizant presence.

Since the objects of these four types of direct perception appear as specifically characterized phenomena distinct in terms of space, time, and attribute, they are free from concepts that apprehend sound and object combined.

In general, if there were no such thing as these "mundane direct perceptions," then because evidence too has its basis in being observed with an unmistakable cognition it would also be nonexistent. Then, because all the categories of the full gamut of appearance, like the origination of something from a cause, its cessation and so forth would be nonexistent, one would not understand their nature as emptiness either. For it is said:

Without relying on names,

The ultimate meaning will not be realized.

In particular, if there was no sense direct perception, one would not perceive objects like visible forms and the rest. If there were no mental direct perception, there would be no awareness that collectively cognizes all external and internal objects. If there were no direct yogic perception, a cognition that realizes things beyond the scope of ordinary beings would be impossible. These three are therefore presented as such. All of them are cognitions directly experiencing their respective objects.

The basis of all experience is rooted in self-cognition. An object experienced directly does not require further proof. Based on an unmistakable mental cognition experiencing its own presence, doubt is

resolved. Thus, the self-cognizing awareness is the final basis of all valid cognition.

Moreover, inference is ultimately based on direct perception. And the basis of direct perception is ascertained through self-cognizance, in that it is rooted in an experience of an unmistaken mind, after which there is no need to seek additional proof, like the experience of pleasure and so forth.

Second is inference. What kind of cognition performs the act of inferring? It is the conceptual mind, and nothing else. What is meant by "conceptual" here? It means that which apprehends only the universal form of any given object that appears to the mind, while combining it with its name. For example, that which conceptualizes or mentally expresses "pot" and "pillar" is called "conceptual mind."

Human beings like small infants and animals like horses that do not know how to apply names also have the mere universal image of food, drink and so forth appear to their minds. Although these images are not combined with names, such beings engage in and withdraw from objects by means of the concepts of universal images that are suitable to be combined with names. Such can be illustrated through an example. Even without actually seeing water, an animal tormented by thirst will, upon hearing the splashing sound of running water, have the image of water appear to its mind, make noise with an expression of wanting it, and know to pursue the water for a long distance.

The conceptual mind apprehends the mere universal image of objects by way of combining their location, time and form. And by means of formulating the various conventions of rejecting or accepting in relation to them, all names are established. Otherwise, no inferences or topics of learning could be taught at all. For what appears to direct perception is only the fragmentary, specifically characterized phenomena of the spatial segments and moments connected to something's specific location in its specific time, subsisting distinctly from one another. Since such is not suitable to be combined with names, there is no application of the meaning of names to this alone.

Such conceptualization does not simply produce the understanding of objects seen in the present, applying to them names, types, and so forth, which is simply called "relative conceptualization" or

"conceptualization based in evidence." It also assesses obscure objects that are not immediately apparent by means of concepts about the past by way of recollection, concepts about the future by way of wanting something to manifest, concepts that apprehend evidence, the basis of inference, and concepts about signified objects to be inferred from evidence. Thus, if there were no conceptual inference, then like a newborn infant that does not understand to be frightened of fire, one would not be able to engage in or refrain from what should be adopted and abandoned, whatsoever.

Conceptual mind is also two-fold: unmistaken, like conceptualizing a rope as a rope and conceptualizing a mirage as a mirage; and mistaken, like conceptualizing a rope as a snake, and a mirage as water. From among them, it is based on unmistaken conceptuality that one can unerringly discern all the conventions of knowable objects throughout the three times.

How is it that the conceptual mind should infer some other obscure phenomenon? Phenomenon based on which some other phenomenon can be comprehended is called "evidence."

To elaborate, the establishment of some evidence as a property belonging to the position of a thesis is the first criterion, which is called the "property of the position." If evidence has not been established with respect to some issue under dispute there is no point in analyzing logical concomitance. Thus, one should initially analyze whether or not a piece of evidence, like being produced, pertains to some subject, like pot.

Once the evidence has been established, one analyzes the relationship between that evidence and the property of the thesis to be proven. That the thesis to be proven is entailed by the evidence is the second criterion, called "positive concomitance." For example, it is like how "impermanence" is entailed by the evidence of "being produced," because one ascertains through valid cognition that if something is produced it is necessarily impermanent.

Alternatively, when the property of the thesis to be proven is reversed or non-existent the evidence too is reversed such that its existence is impossible. It is like how if something is not impermanent its

being produced also does not occur. This is the third criterion, called “negative concomitance.”

These two final criteria are described as the ascertainment of positive and negative concomitance by means of valid cognition. And in the context of illustrating those through examples, they are explained as “what pertains to all concordant factors and is the opposite of all discordant factors.”

The three criteria being complete in that way makes for correct evidence, which is capable of establishing the thesis to be proven. Without these being complete, it is a spurious syllogism, in that the evidence is not established, and so forth—its manner includes multiple internal divisions.

How many illustrations are there for evidence that is correct? There are three: resultant evidence, natural evidence, and evidence of non-observation. There are two kinds of positive evidence. These are resultant evidence, in which a cause is inferred via an effect based on the relationship of causality; and natural evidence, in which the evidence establishes another property through the relationship of identity.

There is also the non-observation of something that could feasibly appear, or the negation of something through the observation of its opposite. Since both of these actually negate the essence of something to be negated, they are called “evidence of non-observation.”

As for their internal divisions, in terms of how syllogisms are put forth, resultant evidence is fivefold. There are syllogisms of resultant evidence that directly prove causes, as in “The subject, on a smoky pass, there is fire, because there is smoke.” Likewise, there are those that prove a preceding cause, as in “The subject, billowing blue smoke in space, is preceded by a previous fire as its cause, because of being smoke.” There are those that generally prove a cause, as in “The subject, the appropriated aggregates, are associated with their causes, because of being temporary objects.” There are those that prove causes in their particularity, as in “The subject, a sense cognition to which blue appears, is associated with its observed-object condition, because of being a sense consciousness.” There is also resultant evidence, which infers properties of causes, as in “The subject, a lump of molasses in the mouth, has form, because of having flavor.” This is resultant evidence

because it actually infers the previous molasses flavor from the present one, and, because it infers that the combined presence of both the previous and present flavor and form was produced by a previous cause. Through this fine differentiation between such multiple ways that exist for proving causes by way of effects one should understand all similar types in which causes are inferred through effects, such as the stability of a receptacle based on the water inside it not shifting and the like, as included within resultant evidence.

Among natural evidence, there are syllogisms with natural evidence based on qualification, as in “The subject, sound, is impermanent because of being produced, or because of being created.” And there are syllogisms with natural evidence free of qualification, like adding to the same subject and thesis to be proven the evidence “because of being something that exists as an entity.” In terms of the style of expressing the evidence, the former demonstrates the subject as the result of something else, and thus it is as though it relies on something else. The latter evidence is the mere essence of the subject expressed in an independent manner, thus it is called “independently free.” Yet, beyond mere verbal presentation there is no difference in meaning between these.

Syllogisms with evidence of non-observation are two-fold: non-observation of something that does not appear and non-observation of something that can appear. The first of these is as follows: “The subject, here on the floor in front, a person to whom a flesh-eating demon is far removed from is uncertain whether or not there is a flesh-eating demon, because, since it does not appear to him, he does not observe it.”

Such a statement, which in this context is for proving that something is absent because of not having observed it, is two-fold: things that cannot appear and things that can appear.

The first is as follows: objects that are remote in terms of location, time and nature cannot be observed by a person for whom they are remote objects, despite their presence. For despite the presence in this location of things like flesh-eating demons and bardo beings, since they are not things that appear to such a person, it is taught that, “He does not observe them.” Thus, the fact that it is things that do not appear, which are not observed, demonstrates that there is no genuine

engagement with them in accordance with reality, meaning that one analyzes whether one can be certain about their presence or absence. This has the further goal of differentiating it from its contrary. If these were things that could appear then they would be negated by not being observed.

The way in which this goes into syllogistic evidence involves only the negation of the convention of being certain about something's presence or absence. As for the way in which its evidence is presented in syllogism, presenting its evidence as, "because there is no valid cognition that perceives flesh-eating demons in the mind stream of one for whom they are remote objects" would not correspond with the meaning of not observing what does not appear.

In brief, the non-observation of something that does not appear in actuality teaches not to exaggerate or denigrate things that cannot be inferred, as people do not rightly know what is fitting for each other, and so forth.

The non-observation of something that can appear is two-fold: the non-observation of something that can be observed and observation of something's opposite.

The first of these includes non-observation of nature (*rang bzhin ma dmigs pa*) as in "The subject, in this house, there is no pot, because of not observed with a valid cognition to which it could appear."

The first category also includes the non-observation of a related item. This further includes the non-observation of the cause, as in, "The subject, on the lake at night, there is no smoke because there is no fire." It also includes the non-observation of the entailing factor (*khnyab byed*) as in "The subject, on the stony crag over there, there is no *aśoka* tree because there are no trees." And it includes also the non-observation of the direct effect (*dhngos 'bras*) as in "The subject, in the circular wall devoid of smoke, there is no direct result of smoke because there is no smoke."

Within the category of the observation of the opposite, there are two types of syllogism: those based on a non-coexistent opposition and those based on mutually exclusive opposition.

The first of these is twelve-fold. Taking the issue under dispute to be "The subject, in the direction over there," and taking the evidence

to be "because it is engulfed by fire," the property to be proven is construed as "there is no cold sensation," "there is no unobstructed capacity of a direct cause of a cold sensation," "there are no goose bumps as the result of cold," and "there is no sensation of snow." These respectively constitute syllogisms involving the observation of the nature of an opposite in terms of nature, cause, result and encompassed factor.

Moreover, negating the above four of "cold sensation" and the rest by putting forth as evidence "covered completely by billowing smoke" for the same issue under dispute as above is the observation of a result that is opposite in terms of nature and the other three.

Negating the four of "cold sensation" and the rest by putting forth as evidence "covered completely by a sandalwood fire" for the same issue under dispute is the observation of an encompassed factor that is opposite in terms of nature and the other three, thus making four more. Moreover, some Tibetan scholars maintain that there are sixteen syllogisms involving the observation of an opposite. They add to the previous ones the negation of all four by putting forth as evidence "covered by the unobstructed capacity of a direct cause of fire."

Other scholars have emphatically rejected that, saying: "The direct cause of fire is not fire. The moment just before the production of the direct result is. Thus, it cannot function as evidence." Despite such, because there is generally no direct cause of a cold sensation where there is the potent capacity of the direct cause of fire, the other three would also not be present. Consequently, in such syllogisms there is only the absence of opposites in actuality. Nonetheless, since the previous opinion of twelve syllogisms is easier to apply, we should maintain such in this context.

With opposites of mutual exclusion, direct opposites have no evidence and no thesis to prove involving the observation of opposites because they end up being the same object. For example, in "The subject, sound, is impermanent because it is produced, or because it emerges with effort," the opposite of the encompassing factor is negated based on presenting an encompassed factor that indirectly opposes it. This is also called "an opposite problematized by valid cognition." Here, from the perspective of the exclusion of the opposite, the mere monitor of non-observation is indeed suitable. However, when considered

from the perspective of the inclusion of impermanence through negating the excluded permanence, non-observation ought to be included among natural evidence.

Moreover, as indicated by such, contradictory mental states are also to be included among natural evidence and therefore have not actually been construed as a category of syllogistic evidence. This is because, like the unobstructed capacity of a direct cause, it is difficult for ordinary beings to ascertain them.

A reasoning in which a collection of causes is complete in number is also included among natural syllogisms. In this way, all other syllogisms possessing the character of the three types of evidence should likewise be included among them. This is like how the reasoning of absence of singularity and plurality involves the non-observation of the encompassing factor of truth.

Properly understanding in such a way, by oneself, a certain fact by means of a correct reasoning is called "inference for one's own benefit." Whereas, expressing to another person as well, based on the former, the proof of a certain fact, in conformity with reason, while refuting those who speak inconsistently with fact is called "inference for another's benefit."

When refuting the position of an opponent, the factor of the issue under dispute is held as an issue of interrogation, not something that has already been established or rejected through valid cognition. This means that proof is not garnered for something that has already been established by valid cognition in the perception of both parties, like fire being hot, or something that has already been rejected by valid cognition, like fire being cold. Rather, a reason of proof is put forth in the case when something like sound is held as an issue of interrogation because there are different positions that maintain it to be permanent or impermanent, respectively.

To elaborate, when proving something, an autonomous syllogism with the three criteria complete must be enlisted. This is because the evidence must be established according to valid necessity and not by mere acceptance.

Refutation also includes both autonomous and consequential language. In order to refute an opponent who claims that sound is

permanent one can independently put forth something like, "Sound is impermanent because it is produced."

It is also suitable to project an unwanted consequence for the opponent by putting forth evidence that is established by his admission, as in, "It follows that the subject, sound, is not made because it is permanent." Thus, a consequence is projected based on how the evidence was already established, by his admission, even as a valid necessity. These two have multiple categories.

One who debates with another should do so through having gained complete certainty in diverse topics. This means that he should be familiar with the terminology and content of the topics taught in his own and others' scriptural traditions. He should be learned in interrogating and responding, and in communicating the proper understanding of extensive and abbreviated topics.

As someone who has stabilized his training of fearlessness, he should communicate clearly. He should thus speak by rejecting what is irrelevant, like improper words, and enlisting that is relevant. Through possessing such verbal "adornments" he should express the issue under discussion clearly, eloquently enlisting complete syllogisms, along with examples, endowed with the three valid cognitions—direct perception, inference, and authoritative testimony that has been authenticated by the three-fold analysis. He should speak thus at a location where there is a king and a master, or a crowd, capable of serving as a judge or a witness to the speech. It should be someone who understands what is correct and incorrect and can thus properly determine who wins or loses. The speech of the proponent who has fully established the truth of his thesis through speaking in this way will be carried far and wide and become renowned.

Nevertheless, the Blessed One said that a bodhisattva who sees the rarity of the following twelve occurrences in actuality "should exert himself in virtuous activity and not debate with others." The following are scarce:

1. To understand the profound meaning of the sacred Dharma,
2. To engage in discussion with the motivation of wishing to understand,

3. A learned assembly capable of properly adjudicating the meaning,
4. To abandon the faults of disparaging others, deceit, harsh words and the like with a mentality that is disturbed by the fault of attachment to a negative position,
5. To speak without being disturbed,
6. To speak while safeguarding others' minds,
7. To speak while maintaining meditative composure,
8. To speak without any concern about victory or defeat,
9. To be without disturbing emotions in victory or defeat,
10. To meditate on virtuous factors, since one cannot remain at ease once the disturbing emotions have arisen,
11. To settle the mind in equipoise without meditating on virtuous factors,
12. To be liberated even while resting evenly.

Accordingly, most debates stem from only the faults of attachment or aversion. Thus, few can discern the meaning as it is. But if one can enlist various topics and debate these without such faults, properly analyzing the meaning of the Victorious One's Exalted Word by means of authentic reasoning, this will serve to refute false Dharma and spread the tradition of real Dharma.

Among the four principles of reason taught above, the latter, the principle of valid proof, can be divided in terms of support into the two aspects of direct perception and inference. It can also be divided in terms of the thesis to be proven into the two aspects of the relative analysis of appearance and the absolute analysis of emptiness, or, into three aspects when including the valid cognition of the ultimate analysis of the two truths inseparable.

When dividing it in terms of the style of argumentation, there are four aspects of proving and negating, in which things are proven or negated either existentially or copulatively. There is also provisionally the dyad of proof and negation, and ultimately its culmination in the object of one's own individual self-awareness, the freedom from mental constructs beyond negating and proving.

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### THE FOUR RELIANCES

Based on properly analyzing the genuine condition of the two truths through the two types of valid cognition or the four principles of reason, as outlined above, there will arise authentic certainty free from the defilements of lack of understanding, misunderstanding or doubt. At that point, the four reliances will automatically take place.

No matter what kind of person a teacher is, he cannot purify or liberate you. If the teaching he gives is truly meaningful, it is proper to adhere to it. But if it is not meaningful, it is improper to adhere to it. Thus, one should not rely on the person but on the teaching.

As for the teaching, moreover, the expressing words are merely utilized for the purpose of communicating meaning, just like a finger pointing to the moon. If one understands a certain meaning based on the words that present what is intended, then the purpose of the words is exhausted and therefore should not be pursued further. If one embraces the elaboration of words, they increase endlessly and will impair one's understanding of meaning. Thus, one should not rely on the words but on the meaning.

The content taught by the Exalted Word, moreover, has the two aspects of a provisional expedient meaning taught out of necessity and the definitive meaning that does not have a merely expedient meaning. One should therefore fully settle upon and retain, by means of reasoning, the content of all the different levels of Dharma-gates, which were spoken as methods for taming disciples based on the Buddha knowing their respective dispositions, faculties and inclinations. There are, for example, the following kinds.

The implication of another intent due to necessity is like when the Teacher himself, implying equality, said: "At that time I was Buddha Vīpaśyin."

The implication of another meaning is like the statement, "All phenomena are devoid of identity," or "There is no form, no sensation." These are not merely conventions, but imply the absolute.

The implication of another time is like the statement "By merely retaining the name of a certain buddha one will be reborn in his realm." This implies that one will at some time certainly be reborn there, although there is no certainty that one will take rebirth there as soon as the present life is over.

The implication of a person's inclination is like describing that generosity is inferior and praising discipline to a person who is inclined to hold only generosity as sufficient. In fact, discipline is indeed superior to generosity. The necessity involves individual purposes.

Indirect implication primarily involves not the literal sense, but refers obliquely to something else. There are four types.

Indirect teachings aimed at introducing people to the path are given to śhravakas in order to introduce them to the teachings in a gradual way. They are taught in view of what exists on a relative level only, such as the statement that there is no self of person, but that the phenomena of form and so on do exist.

Indirect teachings on the nature of phenomena are taught in view of the three natures, or from the ultimate perspective. They include such teachings as those on the absence of inherent identity and teachings on primordial nirvāna.

Indirect teachings connected with antidotes are expressed in order to eliminate what should be relinquished from the mind streams of disciples. These are like the statement "I was Buddha Vīpaśyin," which was said, as explained above, in order to relinquish a disparaging view based on perceiving a qualitative difference between the buddhas.

As an antidote to the disparaging view that the Dharma is easy to obtain, the Buddha said, "Understanding the teachings of the Mahayana dawns once one has worshipped buddhas equal in number to the grains of sand in the river Ganges."

For the sake of the lazy, who think, "I cannot train in the path!" the Buddha said that by praying for Sukhāvātī one will be reborn there. This was said, as before, with a view to another time.

Then for the benefit of those who are satisfied with only a trifling root of virtue, the Buddha belittled that virtue and praised another. This was said with a view to people's inclinations, as stated earlier. These four are expressions made based on a certain intention.

Then in consideration of individuals' attitudes, but not based on any other intention, in front of people who were proud of their caste, beauty and wealth and so on, the Buddha praised others, so that they might develop humility.

As an antidote to the attachment to defiled objects, he praised the superiority of supermundane riches.

To those overcome with grief and remorse at having committed misdeeds like harming a sublime being he taught how even harming buddhas and bodhisattvas establishes a positive connection. This was taught in view of the pleasure that is produced once a confession is made or a fault is exhausted.

For those indeterminate bodhisattvas wishing to turn away from the Mahayana, it was taught that there is only a single vehicle. This was said in view of the ultimate, and does not imply that on a provisional level there are no results for each of the three vehicles.

Through the Dharma of the supreme vehicle taught in that way all such obstructing faults will be overcome. Such was said in the *Two Verse Dhāraṇī*, applying to someone who memorizes the following phrase, or brings its meaning to mind:

[Disparaging buddhas and the Dharma,  
Laziness and satisfaction with a trifling,  
Attachment and behaving arrogantly,  
Regret and the turning away of the indeterminate—

These have become obstructions for sentient beings.  
Through the sublime vehicle taught as their antidotes  
The faults of these obstacles  
Will be fully relinquished.]

It is said that were one to commit to memory these two verses teaching the eight faults, such a supremely intelligent person would obtain ten qualities. What are they?

1. The potential of buddha nature will fully develop.
2. At the time of death, one will obtain a supreme state of rapture

These two are qualities that emerge as tangible phenomena in the same lifetime.

There are also eight intangible phenomena that emerge in future lives. These are:

3. An excellent body born according to one's wish,
4. The excellent recollection of all one's past lives, and
5. An excellent teacher, encountering the buddhas.

These are the three supports for the path.

As for the path:

6. One will receive the teachings of the supreme vehicle from a Buddha.
7. One will become interested in that vehicle, and in conjunction with that interest, acquire a profound intelligence capable of fully ascertaining its meaning.
8. One will obtain limitless doors to meditative samadhi on the pure bhumis.
9. One will obtain limitless doors of retention.
10. Ultimately, one will swiftly attain great enlightenment.

If even the qualities of memorizing two verses of the sublime Dharma are as extensive as this, then there is no need to mention the rest of the Dharma. Therefore, one should develop the wisdom of retaining the whole of the Dharma and being learned in finely discerning its intent.

Indirect teachings expressed in metaphors are indirect teachings expressed metaphorically in order to counter the disparaging perception of certain non-Buddhists and others who maintain that the Exalted

Word of the Buddha is easy to understand. The meaning to be understood is other than that expressed literally. For example, it is said:

- One should know the essence in the essenceless.
- One should be thoroughly afflicted by the afflictions.
- If one can perfectly abide in the perverse,
- One will attain sublime enlightenment.

To explain what the intended meaning behind this is, it was said with the following indirect intention in mind: the Sanskrit terms "*sāra/sātra*" are applicable to both "essence" and "movement." Therefore, one should exert oneself diligently in mental training, understanding the essence to be an absence of wavering. One should also be "afflicted" by the afflictions of hardship while training in discipline. One should also perfectly adhere to training in wisdom, which is "perversely" opposite of clinging to purity, pleasure, permanence and self. With this as the cause "one will attain sublime enlightenment."

Similarly, in the *Udānavarga* it is said:

Father and mother should be slain.

The intention behind this is that craving and ignorance are to be relinquished. All such similar statements are known as "indirect teachings expressed in metaphors."

As illustrated by these implied and indirect styles of teaching, any content among the Exalted Word behind which there is an ulterior intention, purpose, or that problematizes actual fact, is of expedient meaning. On the contrary, all statements established by the reasoning that scrutinizes the ultimate should be understood as definitive in meaning.

Moreover, statements made exclusively with the purpose of taming disciples are not literal. Such include all the statements similar to the teachings demonstrating the ten continua of karmic action, such as when the Buddha said "My back hurts," and the rest. Buddha was indeed utterly without the faults of karma and suffering. Yet, out of the intention to tame disciples he had the intention of pretending as

though he did have these faults. Such should be understood according to what he said in the *Sūtra of Inconceivable Secrets*. In addition, understanding the difference between the content taught by the higher and lower vehicles, one should engage in the ultimate meaning. This is why it is said, “Do not rely on the expedient meaning, but on the definitive meaning.”

Even in terms of the definitive meaning, it can either be the apprehension of a mere universal belonging to the conceptual sphere, or it can be the individual self-awareness of an inexpressible, specifically characterized phenomenon belonging to the sphere of non-conceptual wisdom. From among them, as long as one adheres to the extreme reference points of negation and affirmation, existence and non-existence and so on, one does not transcend the realm of conceptual cognition. But when one has obtained the sublime appearance of wisdom, when there has clearly manifested the goal of the total pacification of dualistic conceptual constructs, in accordance with the nature of reality, free of negation and affirmation, rejection and acceptance, then one has plumbed the depths of the Dharma. Therefore it is said, “Do not rely on conceptual cognition, but on wisdom.”

When one possesses these four reliances just as they were explained, then just as butter is extracted from milk and butter-cream is in turn extracted from butter, one will comprehend the ultimate intent of the Thus-gone-one’s Exalted Word, and then gain mastery over self-arisen wisdom appearances as vast as space. Through this, the eight treasures of eloquence will unfold. What are they? It is said in the *Lalitavistara*:

- Through not forgetting, the treasure of recollection,
- Through mentally discerning, the treasure of doctrinal intelligence,
- Through comprehending the form of all sūtra collections, the treasure of understanding,
- Through fully recollecting all that was learned, the treasure of retention,
- Through satisfying all sentient beings with eloquent exposition, the treasure of ready speech,

- Through fully protecting the sublime Dharma, the treasure of Dharma,
- Through not severing the family line of the Three Jewels, the treasure of awakened mind,
- And through attaining forbearance in the Dharma of non-origination, the treasure of accomplishment—
- One will attain these eight great treasures.

Accordingly, a being who has attained the right discrimination of ready speech endowed with the eight treasures will uphold the Buddha’s teachings, illuminate for sentient beings what should be adopted and abandoned, and ultimately establish them in unexcelled buddhahood. One should understand this point in greater detail from the *Sword of Insight for Fully Ascertaining Reality*.

This concludes the section on right discrimination.

PART ONE  
THE FOUR SEALS OF  
THE DHARMA



23

ALL CONDITIONED THINGS  
ARE IMPERMANENT

Having thoroughly explained in the above manner the meaning of the ten topics to be learned in, I shall now by means of reasoning resolve the meaning of the four seals of the Dharma, which is their essence to be realized.

The sūtras state:

All conditioned things are impermanent.

The defiled is suffering.

Nirvana is peace.

All phenomena are empty and absent of self.

In accordance with this statement, first, a “conditioned thing” is any phenomenon whose formation is through causes and conditions or belongs to the category of composite things. Understand that all of them—no matter which—are impermanent because they arise and cease moment by moment. Anything that has not emerged from causes has not arisen. Things that have arisen were absent before their causes and conditions came together, and formed the first moment of arising, immediately after their causes came together in full. In the next instant—after their moment of formation—they do not remain but cease. As long as the collection of their causes has not relented, one encounters a continuity that successively resembles the previous.

Immature beings may think that a thing is permanent from when it emerges until it collapses. They are simply mistaken. In reality, just like a waterfall, the flame of a butter lamp, and the like, everything—the

universe of physical matter outside, the body within it, and the primary and subsidiary mental states included within consciousness—are arising and ceasing moment by moment.

In this way, understand that all things—from lightning, bubbles, clouds and the like, all the way up to mountains—are alike in their momentary nature no matter how long they seem to remain.

Why is this? We know from observation that all these things perish in the end and have different occasions during their subsistence. If they did not change from the first instant, it would be unreasonable for them to perish in the end or to have separate, different features in between. This is because even if it were reasonable for things to permanently remain exactly according to the first moment following their initial emergence, the fact that such is not the case has been verified by direct perception.

Let us take the example of a pot that comes into being from the causes of clay, the forming action of a person's hands, a wheel, stick, and the rest. One may think "that very same pot continually remains, from when it came into existence until it encounters a cause of destruction, such as a hammer or the like." Now, the first moment of the pot, precisely that which arose from causes, has the nature of not remaining, but ceasing, the second moment right after it was formed. If it were to remain without ceasing it would be impossible for it to have any differences during successive moments. Yet a pot has various occasions of different spatial and temporal aspects—it ages, receives designs and color patterns, sometimes contains or does not contain water inside it, performs or does not perform the function of being held in the hand of a person, and the like. Therefore, a pot should be understood as a something formed from the confluence of the material cause of a pot's substance and the cooperating conditions of such things as fire, water and pot maker—possessing a string of moments in which its situation repeatedly changes.

When a pot is not moved such that its appearance changes, and when it does not encounter another circumstance, we do not directly observe any other feature different from before. Nevertheless, since it is impossible for it to lack differences during former and later moments of time, it should be understood to arise and cease as many

times as the number of instants have passed from its emergence to its collapse.

Immature beings might think that the hindrance to a pot remaining permanently is its cause of destruction, like a hammer, which makes a pot impermanent, and as long as such is not encountered it is permanent. That is not the case. Since whatever is born from the causes that produce it perishes of its own accord moment by moment its collapse does not require a separate cause.

That a hammer causes the continuity of a pot not to remain does not mean that a hammer newly destroys a permanent pot because if it were permanent it could not be destroyed.

However, regarding a pot having the character, in and of itself, of disintegrating instant by instant, the condition of shards occurs from the material cause of the final instant of a pot and the cooperating condition of a hammer. For instance, the first instant of a pot does indeed emerge from the cause of clay and the condition of being formed with hands. Yet, saying that a hammer, which interrupts the continuity of the uninterrupted emergence of a pot's similar types of appearances, has destroyed a pot is merely designating it as the cause of destruction.

Based on the apparent modality of the impermanence of a continuum on the gross level, the designation of saying "the hammer destroyed the pot" is indeed not inconsistent with fact.

However, it is mistaken to think, not understanding the impermanence of reality on the subtle level, that a pot, though permanent for the time being, is rendered impermanent only by the power of some another cause of destruction.

Therefore, all the occasions of objects encountered as similar and dissimilar in type are only the sequential arrangement of a string of moments possessing the nature of dependent arising based on the confluence of different causes and conditions.

In this way all things appear as possessing birth, subsistence and cessation. They have emerged anew from causes; they remain as an uninterrupted succession of similar types for as long as there is the impelling force of causes; and they cease as a continuity of similar types in the end when their causes relent.

Yet, all things are also perceived by noble beings as possessing the character of impermanence such that by their very own nature, regardless of other causes, they do not remain for a second instant. Such has also been proven by the reasoning of the power of fact in accordance with what was taught in scripture.

This is because when examined in this way even everything that appears as solid and stable things, like the world of the external environment consisting of wind, water, earth, Mount Sumeru, diamonds, and the rest, due to the force of sentient beings' karma forms anew like a cloud in the sky, remains for a while, and finally is destroyed by fire and so forth, such that it becomes empty as the nature of space.

In this way, even while still subsiding, it is observed that the four external elements and the five sense objects of form and so forth completely change, having increases and decreases due to force of circumstance. The appearance of objects changes due to the force of previous karma. Likewise, the environment is damaged by people's actions of digging, burning and so forth, and by other elements such as fire and so forth. Objects also completely change with age, and external objects also change according to changes in internal mental states, as in the purview of one who has attained meditative absorption.

Consequently, objects are established as impermanent moment by moment. It is simply that consecutive instances, moments of ongoing separate likenesses that have similar features of color, shape, texture and so forth, are mistaken as identical and wrongly considered to be permanent.

The various types of bodies and faculties of the individual, inner contents (sentient beings) are produced and arise anew due to karma and disturbing emotions. At the conclusion of having dwelled in a certain realm, life transmigrates and the bodies and faculties cease. Even now while subsiding, from the time when one dwells in the womb, is born, and becomes a child until aging, becoming decrepit and the finality of dying, one changes with the vicissitudes of age and there successively occurs different occasions of pleasure, pain and so forth.

In this way, beings become imbued with sensations in connection with a continuity of mental states, such that in each and every moment they arise in relation to a succession of causes and effects.

In conformity with the impelling force of former karma, they correspondingly follow pure and impure mental states, have different occasions of increase and decrease, high and low, pleasure and pain, as well as several different occasions of location and activity. Since these many differences are observed, sentient beings should be understood in terms of numerous different instances.

As for all the primary and subsidiary mental states in the three realms subsumed within consciousness, whether a continuity of similar type occurs, like the state of mind of the absorptions, or there are different types, like the state of mind in the desire realm with a variety of distractions. The various different occasions that rapidly occur and change involve complete transformation based on the many dissimilar sets of the four conditions—the immediately preceding condition, the observed object condition and the rest. It should be understood that the time of taking birth in the different domains included within the three realms, and having been born in a particular place, the duration until one's individual lifespan is exhausted is a string of instants of finite duration that occur as successive arising and ceasing.

Since in this way all conditioned things are a fusion of causes and conditions they all gradually change in the manner of a sprout growing from a seed and so forth. Thus, even the things that remain for an eon unceasingly only participate in arising and ceasing, from the duration of years, months and days, up to that of an instant, like the fluctuations of scale's balance.

When thus understanding that they are impermanent, one becomes unattached to the whole range of conditioned things, one gains interest in liberation, and such becomes a basis for entering into the meaning of emptiness.

Endowed with these and other eminent reasons, a sutra says, "Just as the footprint of the elephant is the supreme among all footprints, likewise the notion of impermanence is the supreme among all notions."

Is it not taught in the *Abhidharma-samucchaya* that the separation from what is dear and so forth are included under the 'suffering of change?' Such is indeed the case, but that was intended to mean that one will be separated from it at some point. Here it is mentioned in terms of the suffering of separation while it is being experienced.

The suffering of change means that no matter what kind of pleasant defiled dwelling place, body or enjoyment appears in any of the worldly domains, such as the higher realms and so forth, it will never be able to last in that same way but is sure to eventually change. This is because these are not beyond inclusion within the four outcomes of impermanence.

When changing, the previous pleasure itself becomes a cause of torment, just like the sorrow at the death of one's child. If one had not had a child, there would also be no sorrow from his death.

Regarding this a sutra says, "The suffering of change is that which is pleasant when arising, pleasant when remaining, but painful when ceasing."

Consequently, no matter what the intensity of pleasure experienced, its previous moments gradually cease while its subsequent moments gradually arise such that its continuity eventually ceases. Nothing is beyond that. Therefore it is unreliable like a beautiful white autumn cloud.

By being attracted to sense pleasures the numerous unbearable miseries of the lower realms and so forth are created and entry into the path of emancipation is thwarted.

Defiled pleasure mixed with the strains of these and other faults has little advantage and great shortcomings.

The suffering of conditioned being is that once implicated in the aggregates that perpetuate defilements, no matter whether there is temporary pleasure, pain, or neutrality, all aspects of their instants form the material cause for perpetuating future aggregates. Consequently, it is the source of all future suffering. Considering its presence as the cause of suffering, like a poisoned meal, a tumor that grows with time, or getting closer and closer to the pain of death with each footstep toward the scaffold, the Blessed One said: "The suffering of conditioned being is not evident when it arises, remains or ceases. Yet, it is the cause

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### EVERYTHING DEFILED IS SUFFERING

That which is included within conditioned things, or composite phenomena, is two-fold: the defiled and the undefiled.

The undefiled are not included within the causes for, the nature of, or the effect of suffering and are therefore not suffering.

However, all that is endowed with defilement remains as suffering itself. Why are such things called suffering? It is because they are undesirable for body and mind and are not satisfying.

The defiled are the nature of, connected to or mixed with suffering because they serve as the medium by which it is produced.

It is as follows: The suffering upon suffering is the sufferings of the lower realms; birth, old age, sickness and death even within the higher realms; separation from what is dear; having to encounter what is undesirable; and not achieving what is desired even when pursuing it. All the suffering that comes from these, no matter how severe or minor, is from the moment it appears undesirable and understood to be suffering even by animals.

More than the two other types of suffering, this one was taught, combining the two nouns of suffering as a basis of attribution and its attribute, for the purpose of understanding that it is suffering itself, in terms of its nature.

A sutra states, "What is the suffering of suffering? It is that which is painful when arising, painful when remaining, and pleasant when changing."

The enumerations of suffering, as indicated by the heat and cold in the hells, and so forth, are limitless.

of suffering.” Accordingly, since there is nothing among all aspects of the continuity of defiled conditionality that is untouched by this [128B], it is the all-pervasive suffering of conditioned being.

When considering this, all noble beings with their eye of wisdom see the whole of cyclic existence as something to be renounced, like a pit of fire or an island of cannibals, as in the statement: “On the needle point of cyclic existence there is never any pleasure.”

However, immature beings do not understand the suffering of conditioned being as suffering. They wallow in only their desires for births, meetings, enjoyments, and the like, engaging in them without consideration or discernment for the death and so forth that will surely come at their conclusion. Thus, they do not properly bring to mind even the nature of the suffering of change.

Because of being completely fettered by the nature of the three types of suffering, all defiled aggregates are the nature of suffering, connected to suffering, or the causes of suffering. From this perspective, the noble truth of suffering will be understood. For it is with respect to such a meaning that it was taught that everything defiled is suffering.

When understood in this way, the wish for deliverance from the nature of cyclic existence arises and one enters the authentic path to emancipation.

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### NIRVANA IS PEACE

Thirdly, having understood as just explained that the defiled aggregates are suffering, nirvana or emancipation, which is to have permanently repealed defiled causes and effects through relinquishing the causes of suffering, the origins, by means of the correct antidotes, is peace. This is because it is the sublime state that is the nature of being permanently free from all aspects of samsaric suffering.

This has also been established through reasoning. Since these samsaric aggregates, which possess the occasion of suffering, are not permanent and immutable, but emerge occasionally and in various kinds of forms, it can be inferred that they have causes.

Likewise it can be seen that for such causes to be created by the likes of a God is problematized by reasoning, while for such causes to have emerged based on karma and disturbing emotions is proven correct by reasoning.

Thus, if one were to analyze this with discriminating knowledge consistent with what was taught by the Thus Gone One—the authoritative being who is the exalted teacher endowed with the love who teaches methods that benefit all those to be tamed, and the wisdom, which unerringly perceives the nature of knowable things—one would then understand that all the disturbing emotions by which karmic actions are accumulated are rooted in the view of self. When examining the object that one clings to as self, that very thing called ‘I’ or ‘self,’ one discovers the certainty that just as a mottled rope is only assumed out of confusion to be a snake, it is likewise imputed and only assumed out of confusion that a self exists based

on the continuity and confluence of the five aggregates, the basis of imputation.

It is thus proven by correct reasoning that based on having completely relinquished this belief in the transitory collection by means of the knowledge that realizes selflessness; there is a cessation that is a permanent negation of defiled causes and effects.

It is also seen through the path of reasoning that emancipation is twofold. There is the nirvana of the lesser vehicle, the incomplete fruition of the shravakas and pratyekabuddhas who temporarily dwell in the extreme of temporary quiescence.

There is also the state of buddhahood, the complete unexcelled fruition attained by means of the path of the Mahayana path, the nirvana of those who dwell in neither existence nor quiescence, the culmination of the knowledge that realizes the twofold selflessness.

Among these two types of emancipation, the nirvana of shravakas and pratyekabuddhas is inferior because abandonment and realization have not been perfected. However, due to having relinquished the obscuration of disturbing emotions, just as a burnt seed grows no further, cyclic existence is permanently repealed. Thus, this too is an authentic emancipation.

One might wonder if, just as the path can arise in the mind stream of ordinary beings, the defects might also arise in the mind stream of one who has reached the culmination of training in the path. Such is not the case.

In this way, it has not been established as an impossibility for the nature of mind to be free of the faults of belief in self and the rest. However, like mistaking a mottled rope for a snake, the mind only temporarily errs due to circumstances.

Even when one has obtained the conditions for seeing the meaning of selflessness and the like, the remedy that averts faults, just as light removes darkness, one will no longer be impaired by faults like the belief in self. Thus, there is no need to mention when one has reached perfection through training in the remedy. For it is impossibility for there to be a reason for one to be averted from a mentality endowed with the nature of the remedy.

Why is that? Since the remedies such as selflessness and so forth are free of faults or harm from the causes and effects of the suffering of cyclic existence, the mind cannot be averted from them with effort.

However, even without being harmed, if the remedies can be problematized by reasoning, it will be possible to discard them. Yet, since the remedies have been established by reasoning as correct objects, it will always be impossible to discard them, seeing them as problematic, and they will not be averted with effort. Neither is it possible, even without being problematized by reasoning, that the remedy will be impaired upon having become separated from the mind due to forgetfulness and the like. This is because when one's training has reached perfection, the mind will in and of itself have exclusively become the very essence or nature of the remedy. This cannot be averted by all the modes of fixation that impute adverse factors to it, even were one to try. Thus, the mind's unalienable embodiment of the correct remedy is just like how a mentality that understands that there is no snake in a mottled rope no longer has the occasion to cling to it as a snake. Such is like what has also been stated in the *Commentary on Valid Cognition*

(*Tshad ma nam 'grel*):

It is unharmed and the correct object.

The very essence, by error,

Will not be averted, even with effort,

Because such a mind embodies that dimension.

Even more than that, by having discarded all the passing stains from the cognizant nature of mind, it becomes the identity of great natural purity, the ultimate transformation of fully perfected abandonment and realization, the dhatmakaya, [the body of buddha qualities] This has countless qualities, but to summarize, these are transcendent purity, bliss, permanence and identity.

What are these like? Transcendent purity, the body of complete liberation, or the body of extreme purity is the possession of the twofold purity through destroying, so that they will not arise again, the two passing obscurations along with their habitual tendencies by means of

the great wisdom that realizes the twofold selflessness exactly as it is, the expanse of reality, whose essence is naturally pristine.

Transcendent sublime bliss, the body of great bliss, is the freedom from all the pains of change through having totally discarded not only the coarse defects of suffering and its origin, but also the aggregates of a mental nature and their cause, ignorance, even at the level of its habitual tendency, which not even shravakas and pratyekabuddhas can discard.

Transcendent permanence, the vajra-like body, is the indestructible great unconditioned, in which one does not remain in the extremes of either substantiality or insubstantiality, through having realized sam-sara and nirvana as an equality, without clinging to them as different.

That is to say, since not even so much as a fraction remains of the four defects—'birth' as something new after a previous existence has ceased, 'old age' from decomposing after the formations have aged, 'sickness' due to changes in the constituents, and 'death and transmigration', which is inconceivable change—one becomes the nature of permanence, stability, quiescence, and unchanging continuity, respectively.

Transcendent sublime identity is the attainment of the transformation into the very wisdom that encompasses all of existence and peace, the nature of all phenomena. This transcends the extreme of provisional insubstantiality—differentiated from the substantial existence of self in terms of the mere non-existence of self—and in so doing, utterly quells all such conceptual complexities.

This great identity is the wisdom body of space-like equality, which exercises mastery over all phenomena. It is the transformed locus of the entire unfathomable and matchless ocean of undefiled qualities such as the ten powers and the ten masteries. It is the sublime basis for spontaneously accomplishing the two benefits.

In this way, having perceived the nirvana of emancipation as the unexcelled, supreme and ultimate emergence of cessation, quiescence, coolness, and eminence, one should have enthusiasm for the result of emancipation and, in particular, one should arouse the mind set upon supreme and unexcelled enlightenment, aiming for the nirvana of the greater vehicle.

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### ALL PHENOMENA ARE EMPTY AND DEVOID OF A SELF-ENTITY

Fourthly, since in this way everything included within conditioned and unconditioned phenomena is devoid of a personal self and empty of a phenomenal self, all phenomena are therefore established as being essenceless, [lack of inherent existence].

How is that? That which is wrongly believed to be the self, or the person, and the doer and so forth, which has been imputed as the performer of actions and the experiencer of joy and sorrow is nothing but the false belief in self based on the five aggregates.

When examined by means of discriminating knowledge the essence of a personal self is not perceived because it is not established as being identical with the aggregates, nor is it established as being different from them.

If a self were identical with the aggregates it would follow that just as the aggregates are different, so too must the self be plural. And if a particular one of the aggregates, form, were the self, it would follow that the self would be plural according to the number of particles of its form. Similarly, since the aggregates of sensation, conception, formation, and consciousness are also plural, it would follow that a self too would be such. Since the five aggregates have arisen from causes and are impermanent from one moment to the next, it follows that a self too would be impermanent.

In short, the aggregates, as an amalgam of multiple things with the attribute of subtle particles and finite time, are not a self.

If there were an independent self, different from the five aggregates, it should be possible to observe it. But since it has not been perceived,

it is therefore negated. If there were a self beyond the conditioned aggregates, it would not be suitable for it to have such attributes as being the doer of actions and the experiencer of joy and sorrow. Rather, it would be an unconditioned thing, devoid of causing benefit or harm, like space.

The self accepted by the Vātsīputriya school as an essence utterly indescribable as either identical or different from the aggregates, or as either permanent or impermanent, is also untenable. When examined with valid cognition, that which has not been established as either of those two alternatives is not capable of existing as an entity. This is because for something to exist as an entity it necessarily exists as either of those two alternatives. Those two are contravened in this case and it is impossible for there to be a third alternative for the way something exists as an entity other than one of those two alternatives.

In that way, forms are not self, and neither do forms and self mutually possess one another. A self does not abide in form, and neither do forms abide in a self. The twenty combinations from connecting this in the same way with sensations and the rest are the twenty mountain peaks of belief in the transitory collection. Since these have been imputed based on their root, innate self-clinging, when belief in the transitory collection has been destroyed by vajra-wisdom, all of the rest will dissolve simultaneously.

Moreover, as it is taught in the *Brahma Net Sūtra* there are sixty-two types of beliefs based on the extremes of past, present and future, which are in turn based on the root belief in the transitory collection. There is a whole range of superimpositions of a self as permanent, singular, governing, pervasive, and so forth, in its aspects. It is inferred that the self exists because of seeing the bedding, food, clothes, and so forth that fulfill the needs of the self, just as one understands that there is a potter because of seeing the wheel, potter's stick, and so forth, which are the implements for making a pot. There is also the rejection of the position of selflessness based on questioning whose sake the pointless striving on the path would be for were there to be no self. These and whatever else is mentioned by non-Buddhist proponents of the existence of a self are all exclusively meaningless. This is because it is not suitable to posit

attributes and proofs for a self that does not exist as something with attributes.

If a self were permanent it would be impossible for there to be different occasions of performing actions and experiencing results, occasions of pleasure and pain, high and low, pure and impure, and the like. If it were singular, it would be impossible for there to be various types of attributes and so forth. If it possessed the independence of governing everything it would be impossible for even the slightest impermanence or undesirable thing to occur. If it were pervasive it would simultaneously include everything and it would be untenable for it to have provisional distinctions such as being separated from friends, self and other, virtuous or evil deeds, and the like.

For a self whose nature has never been observed through valid cognition, no eyewitness proof has been established for an article of evidence that benefits it. It is like the "clothes" of the son of a barren woman.

But doesn't one take possession of bedding and so forth? These things are taken up, despite the nonexistence of a self, in order to be of benefit to the collection and continuance of the aggregates.

If a self existed the path of emancipation would be impossible. It is impossible in the tradition of those who propound an existent self to have a path by which attachment to self is abandoned. If attachment to self is not discarded, by means of attachment to what belongs to self one will never be free from craving the totality of the three realms, and the means for emancipation from cyclic existence will therefore be impossible.

Those who propound the nonexistence of self do have emancipation. Contrary to the above, by means of not rejecting or accepting anything whatsoever, they attain the nirvana that is free from attachment to the three realms. Practicing what is beneficial and discarding what is harmful is not for the sake of an existent self, because a doer, experienter, and so forth are posited based on the continuity of the collection of selfless aggregates.

For example, the term "chariot" is assigned based on the collection of all its component parts. It is not that the component parts of the wheels and so forth are the same as the chariot. While it is

also not that there is something separate from its component parts. Therefore, the component parts and the composed whole do not mutually include one another. Neither does the composed whole exist in the component parts. Not do the component parts, such as wheels and the rest, exist in the composed whole, the chariot. This is because both the collection of component parts and the shape of this collection do not have even the slightest substantial existence separate from the component parts themselves. When examining such in this seven-fold manner, even though the composed whole, the chariot, cannot be observed, it exists through mere imputation based on its component parts. Likewise, it should be understood that the self too is impured based on the aggregates, but is not established when examined in this seven-fold manner.

Such is also said in a *sūtra*:

So-called "self," demonic attitude,

You are a belief.

This aggregate of formation is empty.

In it there is no sentient being.

Just as a chariot is named based upon

The collection of all its component parts,

Similarly the relative "sentient being"

Is so-called based on the aggregates.

One might object that even though a personal self is refuted through reasoning, since its basis of imputation, phenomena like forms and so forth, are directly observed, an essential nature of phenomena does exist. In response, the undecieving appearances of forms and so forth only appear due to the power of dependent origination. But when examining with discriminating knowledge just how these appearances are, these and their essential nature cannot be established in anyway whatsoever, like a reflection, a dream, an illusion and the like.

How is this so? It is resolved by way of the four-fold reasoning:

- 1) The analysis of the cause, the vajra splinter;

- 2) The analysis of the result, the refutation of the origination of an existent or nonexistent thing;
- 3) The analysis of the nature, absence of singularity and plurality; and
- 4) The analysis of everything, the great dependent origination.

These are as follows: Since it is irrefutable that a result appears from a collection of causes and conditions it is accepted in all Buddhist traditions that appearance is due to the power of dependent origination. However, our own Buddhist group's proponents of true entities construe as truly existent the basis of dependent origination, like the two subtlest parts, or the other-dependent consciousness, and put forth an emptiness, which is an implicative negation, like the basis of emptiness's emptiness of a personal self, or its emptiness of the imputed aspect.

The Middle Way proponents of essencelessness claim that all phenomena, such as the aggregates and the rest, appear while not possessing any existent self-essence. Thus, they are empty, in that even the slightest existence capable of withstanding scrutiny by means of the reasoning that examines the ultimate is negated without any existential implications. Yet, such emptiness and dependently originating appearances dawn, due to the nature of things, as a non-contradictory unity. This is the Great Middle Way of the coalescence of appearance and emptiness, the viewpoint of Nāgārjuna, which is the final realization of the victorious ones.

There are different positions within this, such as gradual or instantaneous ways of partaking in such a meaning, ways of accepting conventionality, and so forth. Here, however, I shall simply explain the crucial points of the Middle Way as a whole.

To elaborate, as mere convention a result does indeed arise from a cause. However, when examined in the ultimate sense arising is not observed. This is because if there were arising that could withstand scrutiny through reasoning then it should arise in the manner of one of the four limits—either from itself, something else, both, or neither, that is, without a cause. And these are untenable.

How is this the case? It is unreasonable for something to arise from itself, since it is pointless for something that has already formed as its own nature to arise once again, just as a child once born cannot be born again. If something could be born again, then a seed for instance should be able to grow again and again endlessly and there would be no gradual changes into different occasions such as a sprout, a shoot, and the rest.

The Samkhya proponents of self-production say: "Just as various permutations, like a pot and so forth, are made from the single nature of clay, likewise a single nature, such as a seed, transfers into the permutation of a sprout, having relinquished the permutation of a seed." However, if one were to claim that the occasions of seed, sprout, and the rest are one, even while observing their different temporal existences, colors, shapes, and the like, then fire and water, virtue and evil, and the rest, would likewise be one. Hence, such a position is invalidated by an extremely absurd conclusion.

One might object that since seed, sprout, and the rest share the same continuum, they are not like fire and water. In response, a "continuum" is a mere imputation on an uninterrupted resemblance of attributes arising moment by moment. In reality it does not exist.

It is not only in the treatises. Worldly people too directly see a result as following the conclusion of a cause, and do not claim about this that cause and effect are one. Self-production therefore does not exist at all according to either of the two truths.

One might counter that even though self-production is indeed illogical, just as a child is born from a mother and a sprout comes from a seed, all things are only ever separate things born from separate things. In response, cause and effect have indeed been imputed as separate. However, this is not an other-production that has been established through reasoning. If cause and effect were established as utterly separate in essence, then an effect would not need to depend on a cause, since both would exist at the same time. And while existing there is no need for one to be born from the other, just as two people who have already been born are not mutually dependent.

If one thing were to arise from another, it would follow that everything would arise from everything else, like darkness coming from a

butter lamp and so forth, because there is no difference in terms of them being other.

One might object that everything separate is not fixed as cause and effect. Since cause and effect are related as benefactor and beneficiary, and subsequent things come from previous things, the problem related above does not pertain. In response, just as barley, a flower, a stone, and so forth do not belong among the causes of rice and its continuum, both a seed and a sprout of barley itself are also in reality similar in terms of being separate. Thus, it follows that they could not be producers and share an identical continuum. However, the fact that a presentation of these as producers and sharing an identical continuum is feasible is due to the crucial point of the nature of dependent origination established without withstanding scrutiny, in which those do not exist as separate in essence.

Moreover, since between both seed and sprout one does not exist while the other is present, how would it be tenable for them to be beneficiary and benefactor? It is mere imputation.

One might object that even though both of them are not present at the same time, since they are arising and ceasing like the fluctuation of a scale's balance, such a problem does not pertain.

In response, since an encounter while arising or while ceasing is not established, what is demonstrated by the example of a scale's balance is meaningless.

Things like the four elements that emerge at the same time as primary and subsidiary mental factors are likewise only imputed in terms of cause and effect. If they were other-produced in essence, the previous fault would likewise pertain.

Thus, things like a sprout growing from a seed are dependently arisen appearances, which do not withstand analysis. When analyzed, "arising" is not observed in the least. It only appears that a sprout grows from a seed according to mere uncritical consensus and then such terminology is applied. Likewise, things are imputed to remain and cease. But in reality, appearance is devoid of the triad of arising, remaining and ceasing. On this, the two truths are not at odds. Appearance is just like an illusion, a dream, a city of *gandharvas*, and the like. When examined in this way through reasoning, due to the crucial point of all

phenomena being devoid of inherent existence, things like seeds and sprouts are not established at all as essentially existent.

Others may object that even though the three other types of production have been rejected, if other-production is not accepted, will it not contradict the presentation of worldly convention? In response, there will be no such contradiction. When analyzing the final condition, no "origination" whatsoever is observed conventionally. If such were observed, it would follow that the conventional truth would withstand scrutiny through reasoning; it would follow that origination on the ultimate level would not be negated; and it would follow that the meditative equipoise of noble ones would entail the disintegration of objects, in that it would possess a nature which denigrates objects. Yet, such is impossible.

Middle way adherents maintain that the utter non-observation of any phenomenon whatsoever ultimately and their observation according to mere convention are a single reality. Proponents of entities object to this, holding that emptiness and dependently arisen appearance are contradictory. What is negated through ultimate level scrutiny never existed even conventionally and everything that does exist conventionally is not negated through ultimate level scrutiny. This position on emptiness and appearance as a coalescence, like the non-existence of a rabbit horn and the existence of a cattle horn, where emptiness is the negation of an isolated object of negation with names such as the thoroughly imagined, true existence, and the like, on top of conventional phenomena, the basis of negation, which is appearance, is the position of emptiness as an implicative negation. Previous logicians have already proven well that when such a position is thoroughly scrutinized, it does not transcend that of proponents of entities.

Production from both self and other incurs the faults described with respect to both sides, so cannot be claimed for either of the two truths. Non-production from either self or other, the position that all things arise without cause, is like what was refuted previously in the section on philosophical systems.

When scrutinized in such way through the reasoning that negates origination from the four limits, phenomena are utterly devoid of origination. Therefore, the other features of remaining, ceasing, and

so forth are also not observed. Such should be understood as the utter quelling of conceptual constructs, even while mere appearance is unceasing, like what was taught in *Entrance to the Middle Way* in detail.

Moreover, any of the four possibilities—the production of one effect by many causes, likewise, the production of many by many, the production of many by one, and the production of one by one—are not established when scrutinized. One might object that an eye consciousness as an effect is produced by many causes, like an object, sense faculty, attention, light, and so forth.

In response, it follows that since different causes produce one single effect, singularity would be without cause. Likewise, since a singular thing does not produce a singular result, difference and singularity, or one and many would be without cause. And because there does not exist an entity that is not included within one or many, everything included therein would either always exist or never exist.

One might object that many causes produce many results. An immediately preceding act of attention produces the eye cognition, which is itself in the nature of consciousness. Yet, the sense faculty produces something possessing a cognition apprehending the object and objects produce cognitions endowed with their own respective images. In response, because the particular things that are produced by individual causes would be no different from them, consciousness would become multiple. If such were accepted, in response, those causes are not what produce the effect of the eye cognition. They produce individual features, but an eye cognition endowed with features would be causeless.

One might object that those features are no different from a single consciousness. In response, the designation that many causes produce many effects would then be meaningless, since the effect would be construed as singular. Thus the same fault explained above pertains.

One might object that there is no problem with this: although of singular essence, the effect is designated as different by means of its conceptual isolates. In response, since the causes, which function as designated qualities, do not produce a substantially existent consciousness, consciousness would be causeless. If the identity of the result were singular and the features were many, then the qualities and the object possessing them would be separate.

On might object that a single cause like a blue flower makes several results—it produces something resembling itself in type, it produces a separate eye cognition, and so forth. In response, would it be exclusively the cause alone that acts, or would it act in the company of others? If the former were the case, difference would be causeless. And since a single cause also does not make a single thing, like before, it would follow that singularity and multiplicity would be causeless.

One might object that an object, such as blue [flower], produces an eye cognition in dependence upon light, a sense faculty, an act of attention, and so forth. Thus, other things also produce it. In response, the result produced would not be singular, since it would be endowed with multiple features produced by its individual causal features.

One might object that a singular cause produces its own singular result. In response, something like an eye sense faculty would only produce a type similar to its own. But since it would not perform the function of producing an eye cognition and the like, it would follow that all sentient beings would be deaf and blind. Such would be greatly problematic in this and other ways. This is the reasoning taught in the *Two-truths of the Middle Way*.

Moreover, if multiple causes produced a single result, it would be reasonable that the result would be without multiple phenomena. However, a true singular phenomenon without multiplicity is impossible. If multiple things produced multiple things, since it would be impossible for multiple causes to perform the function of producing a singular result, a collection of multiple causes would be pointless. The same goes for the production of many by one, because a singular, partless cause is impossible and a single cause would not produce a result without depending upon something else. One thing does not produce one thing, because this would contradict the production of various results by way of a collection of causes and conditions. Consequently, there is indeed no true singularity among any of the entities within cause and result. And since that does not exist, neither does any multiplicity formed by it. Yet, due to the reason of concordant type and so forth, multiple phenomena are designated as one, and due to the distinction of attributes, a single thing is designated as separate things.

The convention of cause and result is only posited with respect to that. However, when analyzed, none of the four possibilities whatsoever are established. Thus, all things should be understood to not withstand scrutiny, like a dream.

It is maintained that this analysis, “the analysis of both cause and result, the refutation of the four possibilities of origination,” is included in an enumeration of five reasonings. Despite having explained such, there is indeed no contradiction. However it also seen as tenable to include this within the analysis of the cause, thus making four reasonings.

There are also many other avenues of reasoning for analyses of the triad of cause, result, and essence, [*ngo bo nyid*]. These are like, for example, the fact that when divided according to the three times, since a past result has ceased, it does not arise; since its future has not arisen, it does not arise, and since its present has already been formed, it does not arise.

Alternatively, we can ask what kind of result is produced: an existent one, a non-existent one, both, or neither. One might imagine that an existent thing arises. But since for an existent thing, its nature has already been formed, it would not need to be produced by a cause anew, like a wound that has already come to term. If it needed to be produced despite already existing, there would be no end to it.

A non-existent thing cannot be produced. It is like the horn of a rabbit. One might imagine that something that did not exist previously is made to exist anew through a cause. But the two, non-existent and existent, are mutually exclusive because they are contradictory. In actual fact, “something non-existent before which becomes existent later” does not exist at all. “Something that did not exist before is arising” is simply imputed to a result arising in dependence upon a cause based on mentally connecting the pair of something that did not appear previously and something that appears now. Likewise, that something existent previously would not exist later is also imputed based on combining together before and after. All things only appear through the force of dependent origination. Aside from that, there does not exist in the least something existent transformed into something non-existent and something non-existent transformed into something existent. Origination,

cessation, subsistence, non-subsistence, existent self, non-existent self, and the rest, are also the same, in that everything is mere appearance, empty of essential nature. Therefore, according to actual fact, the transformations of any phenomena whatsoever, going and coming, arising and ceasing, increasing and decreasing, and the rest—no such features are observed anywhere at all.

One might speculate that if neither an existent nor a non-existent result arises, since another manner for a result to arise other than those two is impossible, how is it accepted that results arise? In response, the arising of a result is only the ineluctable appearance of dependent origination. When scrutinizing its existence or non-existence, it is accepted to be non-existent, like an illusion and so forth.

For it to be both existent and non-existent is impossible because those are mutually contradictory. And for it to be neither existent nor non-existent is also impossible because a third possibility between things that are directly contradictory is impossible.

Beginners of meager intellect might think the following: in that case, just as being neither is impossible in this context, you claim without qualifications in the context of freedom from mental constructs of the four extremes that “neither is it not the identity of either” and “neither existent nor non-existent.” In such a case, because a third possibility between things that are directly contradictory is impossible, the genuine meaning is understood through a double negation, and there is nothing to be understood in saying that what is nothing at all is its meaning. Thus, not claiming anything at all is like the view of sophists. “This tradition of ours” does not inspire confidence.

In response, such is not the case. As long as one remains on a foundation replete with objective reference points, a manner of clinging that vanquishes the four extremes simultaneously will be impossible. Therefore, once one has claimed anything based on applying distinctions, one objectively observes it through clinging to it. But that does not transcend the nature of conceptuality. The freedom from conceptual constructs, in which all reference points have been utterly quelled, is indeed without any objective reference or claim related to any of the four extremes. But it is not like the darkness of not having realized suchness or an occasion of unconsciousness. This is because for one’s

self-reflective awareness to fully discern the ineffable, inconceivable, indescribable freedom from conceptual constructs, which is hard to exemplify through examples and words, non-conceptual wisdom, in which the cords of doubt have been severed, is without apprehended object and apprehending subject, yet nonetheless possesses natural luminosity, like the sun.

The analysis of the nature, absence of singularity and plurality, is as follows: the nature of all compounded and un-compounded phenomena should initially be analyzed for whether or not it truly exists as a singularity. Among the five compounded aggregates, things that possess form can be divided into upper, lower, cardinal directional, intermediate directional and central parts. Thus, like a pot, several phenomena serving as a basis of imputation are only imputed as a singularity. Beyond that no singularity truly exists. Their parts are likewise the same. The body and its limbs too are fragmented into parts in such a way. In summation, when something with form is broken down to the level of the subtlest particle, the basis of all things materially formed, and that subtle particle is surrounded by particles in all directions, if it has different sides, there would be an infinite regress of further parts. If it does not, then it would not grow larger no matter how many subtle particles were amassed. Such is like the reasoning explained earlier. The entire spectrum of phenomena with form is devoid of true singularity.

Neither is there a truly existent singularity amidst the eight or six collections of cognition, since they arise and cease as a multiplicity based on multiple primary and subsidiary mental states and multiple forms of observed objects. All that has a causally based birth and cessation is thus analyzed by way of not having even an exceedingly subtle part-less moment. Thus, all phenomena included within matter and consciousness is devoid of true singularity. Non-associated composite phenomena, aside from being merely imputed to the context of matter and mind, are devoid of essence. Un-compounded phenomena, beyond being imputed to the factor of a negated object’s vacuity, are without existence in and of their own nature. Consequently, in summary, all compounded and un-compounded phenomena are devoid of a truly existent singularity. Without such having been established, any

plurality formed from a singularity is likewise not established. Since there is necessarily no other mode of truly existing aside from being a true singularity or a true plurality, personhood and phenomena are established as devoid of intrinsic nature, just as it was extensively taught in *Ornament of the Middle Way*.

The general analysis of everything, the reasoning of great dependent origination, is as follows: all phenomena do not emerge by way of their own inherent nature. This is because they arise based on a collection of causes and conditions and do not emerge without a cause. And it is because even when appearing they appear while being devoid of intrinsic nature, like a reflection, which is a fabrication of causes and conditions. Freedom from the mental constructs of permanence and nihilism, going and coming, arising and ceasing and singularity and multiplicity is that things appear while being devoid of nature.

When assessed in such a way through the reasoning that scrutinizes the ultimate meaning in accordance with the nature of things, if there were anything at all, aside from only ineluctable dependent origination, that were truly established as origination from the four extremes, the four possibilities, and the like, or as existent, non-existent, permanent, impermanent, and so forth, then a conventional presentation would not be feasible, and all conventions would therefore be denigrated. Yet, in the Middle way tradition, where untrue, illusion-like dependently arisen appearance and emptiness arise as a single reality, all the conventions of mere appearance are highly tenable. Therefore, all mundane conventions, as well as all the supra-mundane philosophical conventions of the Four Truths, the Three Jewels and the rest are well established in it.

Within the king of reasonings, the great dependent origination, is included all other reasonings which scrutinize the ultimate meaning, such as the vajra-splinter and the rest. Since dependently arisen appearance is only uncritical consensus, when it is analyzed and examined the triad of cause, effect, and nature is not established at all. A more elaborate set of reasonings that scrutinizes dependently arisen objects is taught in the *Fundamentals of the Middle Way* and elsewhere.

In that way, things appear in their relative dimension in terms of the triad of cause, result, and nature, and such conventions are designated.

Yet, in their ultimate dimension, they are emptiness, the identity of the three gates of liberation, lacking the nature of the triad of cause, result, and nature. Such is the emptiness endowed with the supreme of all characteristics, in which the true truths are an indivisible coalescence, the object to be realized through the path of the Middle way called "the expanse of reality," the supreme among objects to be realized, the very mother of the buddhas of the three times and their offspring. Since the dimension of the truth of the indivisible equality of appearance and emptiness, like the center of space, transcends the domain of conceptuality, it is inconceivable and ineffable. However, through non-conceptual wisdom one rests in equipoise in the manner of individual self-reflective awareness. Then in post-meditation one is enabled to unerringly understand and to teach all the presentations of ground, path and fruition through the knowledge which differentiates between the two truths and is endowed with the conviction that all phenomena, like the examples of an illusion, a dream, a reflection, an emanation, and the rest, are devoid of nature even while appearing. In this way, all the good qualities of the path and fruition of the Mahayana come from comprehending the meaning of emptiness. This concludes the section on resolving the four seals according to the Mahayana.

any "golden silence" beyond the silvery speech of philosophers, have kept alive over two and one half millennia an illustrious line known as the "Golden Speech" (*Ch. jin ko*) tradition, whose members include among the sage-scholars of India, Tibet, China, and Japan, Śākyamuni himself (himself the first hermeneutician of his own Holy Doctrine!), Nāgārjuna, Āryadeva, Asaṅga, Chih I, Candrakīrti, Fa Tsang, Śāntarakṣita, and Tsong Khapa. This latter, working in the 14th and 15th centuries, was one of the greatest scholars of any of the Buddhist cultures, and his masterpiece, *Essence of the Eloquent*, composed in 1407, provides a golden key with which the door to this tradition can be opened.

## Buddhist Hermeneutics

Robert A. F. Thurman

### ABSTRACT

"Hermeneutics" as a philosophical discipline of rational interpretation of a traditional canon of Sacred Scriptures authoritative for a religious community has usually been considered peculiar to the West. This notion is anchored only in the misconception that "Eastern" thought is somehow "non-rational," or "mystical," hence excused from the burden of reconciling the tensions between some forms of authority and philosophical reason. Buddhism in particular has been misconceived in this way, due to its emphasis on meditational experience and non-dualistic wisdom. These misconceptions are quickly cleared away when we examine the role of authority in Buddhist teaching, appreciating the predominantly pedagogic concerns of Śākyamuni during his long tenure as a teacher who sought to encourage the individual disciple's ability to think for himself; the role of analytic reasoning in Buddhist practice, wherein a practitioner's first task is to sift through the complexities of Doctrine to discover its inner meaning as relevant to his own experience and its systematic transformation; the role of hermeneutical strategies in guiding the practitioner's analytical meditations, wherein the first two stages of wisdom (*prajñā*) are cultivated through a refined discipline of philosophical criticism of all false views (*dṛṣṭi*), such as naive realism, nihilism, etc., as to the nature of ultimate reality and of the self; and finally the role of transcendent experience, wherein the transcendence of verbalization is approached not as a non-rational escape into mysticism, but as an affirmation of empiricism, a rational acknowledgement of the fact that reality, even ordinary reality, is never, in the final analysis, reducible to what we may say about it. These four functions in Buddhism are traditionally expressed in an ancient rule of thumb known as the "Four Reliances": "Rely on the Teaching, not the Teacher; rely on the meaning, not the letter; rely on the definitive meaning, not the interpretable meaning; rely on wisdom, not on consciousness." To examine the traditional usage of these Reliances, we must trace the work of the Buddhist hermeneuticians, who, far from maintaining

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### I. Overview

In all the Buddhist traditions, faith is but a way to wisdom, doctrines but prescriptions for practices, and thus Scripture has less authority than reason. It should not be surprising therefore that hermeneutics, the science of interpretation of sacred doctrine (*saddharma*), should be central in the methodology of enlightenment, the unvarying goal, though variously defined, of all the Buddhist traditions.

In the early schools of the Hīnayāna, /1/ Theravāda, Mahāśāṅghika, and so on, the hermeneutical discourses of Śākyamuni's direct disciples such as Sāriputra and Mahākātyāyana were collected into a group of texts that were accorded canonical status, namely, the *Abhidharma Canon*. The idea underlying the intensive hermeneutical activity of this period was that *Abhidharma* was itself pure wisdom (*prajñāmalā*) presented in analytical form as text that systematically described ultimate reality, just as the *Sūtra Canon*, the collection of Buddha's sermons, was the direct outpouring of the Teacher's own meditative experience. The main hermeneutical problems that developed during this period concerned the nature of the ultimate reality conveyed in the *Abhidharma*, the two main trends being a school of critical realism (Vaibhāṣika) and a school of critical nominalism (Sautrāntika). At least there was no problem of disagreement about the general definition of enlightenment as being an escape from the suffering of life.

With the emergence of the Mahāyāna into public prominence, starting about 100 B.C., the hermeneutical question became much more complex. Hīnayāna exclusive monasticism was challenged, the dualistic definition of enlightenment as escape into *nirvāṇa* was refuted, the bodhisattva ideal of love and compassion for all living beings was stressed, and nothing less than the full enlightenment of Buddhahood was deemed acceptable as a goal, an enlightenment that affirmed the ultimate nonduality of *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa*. The interpretation of this apparent contradiction was indeed a formidable task, but the great thinkers later known as the "Six Ornaments of India" managed to elaborate the two extraordinary systematic hermeneutical disciplines later known as Mādhyamika and Vijñānavāda, or the "Middle Way" and "Mind-Only" schools. These thinkers were namely Nāgārjuna (c. 100 B.C.-200 A.D.), Āryadeva his disciple, Asaṅga (c. 250-450 A.D.), Vasubandhu his brother and disciple, Dignāga (5th century) and Dharmakīrti

(6th century). The traditions founded by these great "heroes" (*mahāratha*) of philosophy were further refined and reformulated in different modes by numerous later Indian thinkers, noteworthy for our discussion being Śāntarakṣita (8th century) and Candrakīrti (7th century).

With the transmission of the Buddhist traditions to China, over the five centuries from c. 200 A.D. to c. 700 A.D., the hermeneutical problems were of great moment for the Chinese scholars who were concerned with the establishment of authentic practice on a solid Scriptural and philosophical basis. Chih I (538-597), founder of the T'ien T'ai school (itself based on the *Lotus Sūtra*), records no fewer than ten different hermeneutical systems prior to his own scheme of the "Five Periods." Fa Tsang (643-720), the third patriarch of the Hua Yen school (based on the *Avatamsaka Sūtra*), refined Chih I's hermeneutic to its highest degree in China, except perhaps for the rather unconventional hermeneutic of the Ch'an (Zen) school.

During the second millennium, Buddhist civilization was badly ravaged by the waves of invasions that swept down from the Central Asian steppes across the wide open wealthy areas of India and China. Fortunately, during the last flowering at the end of the first millennium, Chinese Buddhist traditions were transmitted to Japan, and the Indian Buddhist traditions were transmitted to Tibet. Thus, the great scholars of Japan and Tibet were left to preserve, organize, and clarify the various traditions. There are many striking parallels between the developments in Tibet and Japan, but they fit less with our concern than one striking difference. Since Japan was further, culturally as well as geographically, from India, a smaller number of texts actually reached there, and thus the Japanese scholars had less material to deal with. This may have been to their advantage in some respects, since they were able to stay firmly concentrated on practice. However, for our purposes in this paper, the Tibetan scholars are more important, since they inherited the full Scriptural and hermeneutical textual traditions from India; thus it is they who have been burdened with that problem in the last millennium.

Although there were many great scholars in the Tibetan schools, the colossal figure of Tsong Khapa (1357-1420) dominates the landscape, partly because of his particular genius, and partly because of his perfect timing, coming as he did just at the moment when the various textual collections had been fully edited, organized, printed, and systematized. He studied with over forty-five teachers from all the previous schools and spent many hours in intensive religious discipline as well. In his voluminous writings, he ranges widely over the 4673 works in the Tibetan Canons, while his critical and comparative method is strikingly modern. It is his masterwork on the subject of Buddhist hermeneutics composed in 1407, called *The Essence of the Eloquent: The Elucidation of the Analysis of the Interpretable Meaning and the Definitive Meaning of the Scriptures of the Jina*, that opens up this question with the greatest thoroughness, subtlety, and precision /2/. Hence, this paper will follow his presentation, briefly attempting to impart some sense of the rare texture of his thought, as it represents the razor's edge of the Buddhist hermeneutical tradition.

## II. The Problem

What need do the Buddhists have of a hermeneutical tradition?

Imagine for a moment that Jesus taught for about fifty years, to close disciples numbered in the thousands; that his pedagogical aim and skill were such that he formulated his doctrines to resonate precisely with the abilities and inclinations of each disciple; that, while recommending devotionism to many, he taught others to rely on the intellect, and still others to rely on works motivated by love and compassion; that he constantly demanded critical reflection on the deeper meaning of his teachings; that he sometimes even provided conceptual schemes with which to interpret his own doctrines, which schemes sometimes included dismissal of the ultimate validity of a teaching he had previously set forth unequivocally; that it sometimes happened that two such schemes referred each to the other as merely conditional, valid only in that other context; and that in spite of these apparent contradictions he had to be accepted as a supreme authority, incapable of self-contradiction; and finally that different groups of his disciples preserved traditional records of his promulgations in different places, some not even knowing of the existence of the others during certain periods during and after the Teacher's lifetime. It is easy to see that all this would result in the situation for later generations in which a bewildering profusion of doctrines, all embedded in hallowed scriptural traditions, is presented as uniformly authentic. If you can imagine such a situation at the outset of the Christian tradition, you will have gained a sense of the complexities involved right from the beginning of the two-and-one-half millennia long religio-philosophical tradition we may, I believe, quite properly call "Buddhist Hermeneutics" /3/.

According to the tradition, Gautama, the Śākyamuni Buddha, attained unexcelled perfect enlightenment during his thirty-fifth year, in c. 529 B.C., and spent the next half-century teaching the thousands of persons who sought his wisdom, coming from all over India as well as from foreign lands. The single aim of all his teaching was stated to be the evocation of enlightenment in living beings themselves, as it would not have served his purpose to preach a single message dogmatically. Rather, he exercised what is known as his "skill in liberative technique" (*upāya-kauśalya*), which is defined in the tradition as including all sorts of supernormal powers and knowledges such as clairvoyance about the past experience, present inclinations, and future destiny of disciples, but most importantly including an unimpeded eloquence in "turning the wheel of the Dharma," or instructing disciples in the nature of the supreme reality.

A Buddha's pedagogic versatility is well illustrated in a famous parable in the *Lotus Sūtra* about a man with many children who are playing in a burning house. They will not listen to his warnings at first, too absorbed in their play, so he changes his tack and instead tells them he has some marvelous toys for them outside and they should come and see. Knowing what each one likes, he tells some he has deer-carts for them, some he has horse-carts, and some bullock-carts. Out they rush pell-mell, only to discover that after all the man

has only bullock-carts for them to ride in. At the cost of a slight disappointment, they all escape the burning house in this way (Kern, 1963:72ff.).

In the Hinayāna discourses, the Buddha speaks of real suffering and its real cessation, and urges his hearers to abandon the one by attaining the other (Goddard, 1970:22). He rejects any form of speculation that does not directly contribute to this goal. In the *Prajñāpāramitā* (or Transcendent Wisdom) discourses, he rejects the previous teaching, saying it was intended for those persons too narrow-minded to conceive of the magnificent aims of the Mahāyāna, to focus them on personal development to broaden themselves to undertake eventually the more universal path of the bodhisattva. He teaches that suffering and its cessation are ultimately empty or unreal, although empirically real, and that their ultimate unreality must be understood to transcend empirical suffering (Conze, 1974:96ff.). In the *Sarvādharmīrmojana* discourses, he disclaims the ultimate validity of both of the former teachings, giving a new instruction that purports to steer a middle course between the naive realism of the first type of instruction and the apparently nihilistic skepticism of the second type (Lamotte, 1962:193ff.). Finally, in the *Laṅkāvatāra*, he disclaims the *Sarvādharmīrmojana* type of discourse, saying he only resorted to it to render the picture of the ultimate reality less terrifying to the neophyte, to avoid either frightening him or letting him misconstrue it as nihilism (Suzuki, 1960:150ff.). And there are yet other hermeneutical schemes put forth by the Teacher himself in his various discourses /4/.

Now, all of these have scriptural status, all of them are spoken by the Buddha, the "Teacher of Men and Gods," as he is called. And yet they appear to contradict one another. How is one to decide these questions? To completely reject as false any teaching of the Buddha is traditionally a grave sin, known as "abandonment of the doctrine" (*dharmaprahāṇa*). And yet, a practitioner must settle on one method, technique, or discipline. One can hardly set out to win liberation and enlightenment, or even to live properly in an ethical sense until one has decided which of these teachings is right, and what ways lead to their realization. Thus, it is clear that the hermeneutical enterprise in this tradition is an essential part of *praxis* on whatever level, an essential vehicle on the way of enlightenment. We should note that since the various scriptural passages are contradictory on the surface, scriptural authority alone will not fully settle the hermeneutical questions, since the scriptures are in a sense the basis of discussion. In the final analysis, rationality (*yukti*), inference (*anumāna*), or philosophical logic (*nyāya*) become the highest authority (*pramāṇa*) for deciding which scriptural passage is ultimately valid.

The main body of this discussion will be framed by the four traditional hermeneutical strategies called the "Four Reliances," which are as follows:

1. Rely on the teaching, not the teacher('s authority).
2. Rely on the meaning, not the letter.
3. Rely on the definitive meaning, not the interpretable meaning.
4. Rely on (non-conceptual) wisdom, not on (dualistic) cognition. /4/

### III. Rely on the Teaching, Not the Teacher

Tradition has it that the first words of the Buddha upon his enlightenment bespoke an outlook of pedagogical pessimism, to say the least: "Deep, peaceful, undefiled, luminous, and uncreated—I have found a Truth, like nectar of immortality! Though I teach it to them, no one will understand it—better I should stay alone in the forest in silence!" /5/. If we took him literally here, we should be most surprised to see how much he actually talked to how many people. So how are we to interpret his words? How are we to understand the fact that his culminatory experience of supreme enlightenment appears not to have filled him with zeal to lead others thereunto? Contemplation of this question leads us to a sharp insight into the nature of revelation and authority in the Buddhist tradition. That is, the revelation is not accorded him by any external agency or supreme being, but rather is the spontaneous outflow of his own attainment of unexcelled perfect enlightenment as to the ultimate actuality of all things. Hence, his authority derives not from his investiture with a mission to save living beings, but rather from his own personification of full knowledge of reality. And his very first instruction to his fellows comes in his abstaining from proclaiming any dogmatic truth, but indicating by indirection that the truth must be realized by each alone, that one cannot install another in enlightenment, that mere authority is not a vehicle on the way to enlightenment.

Of course, he was not allowed to take his ease in the forest for very long, stirred, tradition has it, by his own great compassion (*mañākaruṇā*), as in the *Rāṣṭrapālāparipṛcchastūtra*: "Living beings wander (from life to life) by their not knowing the way of voidness, peace, and uncreatedness—impelled by his great compassion for them, (a Buddha) turns them (toward it) with the methods of his liberative techniques and with hundreds of philosophical reasons" /6/. This verse makes several points. First, it is compassion that motivates a Buddha's teaching activity; he feels sympathetic about the trouble of living beings, he wishes they could feel at ease as he appears to do. Second, he does not see himself as installing them in liberation, but sees himself as turning them in the right direction. The progress is up to them. Third, he does not try only one way, but tirelessly invents different reasons and methods to help different beings.

Of all his liberative techniques, however, his teachings are most effective. As Tsong Khapa says, "Of all the Buddha-deeds, that of speech is supreme; therefore, wise men commemorate a Buddha from this point of view" /7/. Now the verbal teachings of the Buddha, called the Holy Dharma (*Saddharma*), were collected after his final liberation in three collections (called three "baskets," *tripitaka*), the "Ethics" (*Vinaya*), "Discourse" (*Sūtra*), and "Pure Science" (*Abhidharma*) collections. The most interesting point to note here is that the third collection, the *Abhidharma*, consists of scientific texts that do not claim direct authorship of the Buddha. They are rather the systematic analyses of the major topics and categories employed by the Buddha in his Discourses, composed by the major disciples, with the Buddha's authorization. It is highly noteworthy that these texts enjoy the

same scriptural status as do those that record the actual sayings of the Buddha. Furthermore, if we note their correspondence with categories of practice, the “Three Disciplines” (*trīśikṣā*) of Morality, Mind, and Wisdom, it can be seen that in some respects the Abhidharma collection is superior to the Sutra collection. The latter merely records sermons given in the context of personal interviews, whereas the former represents the abstract quintessence of all those sermons. Hence, the prefix “*abhi-*” which means “super-,” is attached to Dharma as “doctrine,” giving “Super-Dharma.” Certainly the early monastic schools devoted most of their energy to study of the Abhidharma, considering it the elite teaching of greatest practical value. And it is the Abhidharma that contains the earliest forms of the hermeneutical concepts such as we will encounter below /8/.

In sum, the first Reliance alerts us to the fact that Buddha’s Dharma claims to stand on its own philosophical cogency, not requiring a personal authoritarianism for its legitimation. We are reminded of the famous goldsmith verse: “O monks—Sages accept my teachings after a thorough examination and not from (mere) devotion; just like a goldsmith accepts gold only after burning, cutting, and polishing” /9/.

#### IV. Rely on the Meaning, Not the Letter

The three disciplines exactly correspond to the three collections, constituting the “realizational” or “practical Dharma” (*adhigamadharmā*), while the latter constitute the “verbal Dharma” (*āgamadharmā*). The point is that the essence of the teachings lies in the practice of them. This is a point that is generally understood about Buddhism, at least conceptually, and we need not elaborate here. Important to note in this regard, however, is that again in the threefold classification, it is wisdom (*prajñā*), here in its Abhidharmic meaning of analytic discernment of realities (*dharmapracicaya*), that is preeminent, not either meditation or ethical behavior, although all are of course needed in combination. And, in our special context, it is wisdom that is reached via the practice of hermeneutics. Finally, note that wisdom, presented as the culmination of the intellectual enterprise, as the perfection of analytic reason, the ultimate refinement of discriminative awareness, is considered a practice, considered to be experiential and realizational (*adhigamadharmā*). Thus, there is no dichotomy between intellect and experience, the rational and the mystical, and so forth. Enlightenment as wisdom is perfected as the culmination of the most refined rational inquiry, not at the cost of reason.

#### V. Rely on Definitive Meaning, Not Interpretable Meaning

This brings us to the main subject: for, granted the meaning is more important than the mere letter, how is the meaning to be decided? What kind of meaning is to be accepted? Here we are in the realm of hermeneutical strategies.

The obvious and most simplistic approach to this question of interpretability and definitiveness is found in the Hīnayāna Abhidharma

tradition, where “definitive meaning” (*nīṭārtha*) is defined as “meaning acceptable as literally expressed” (*yathāruṭavāsena jñātavyārīham*), and “interpretable meaning” (*neyārtha*) as “meaning acceptable after interpretation” (*niddhareva grahitavyārīham*) (Poussin, V, 246, n.2). Thus the two can be aligned merely with explicit and implicit teaching, i.e., teachings wherein a teacher directly states his point, and those in which a teacher hints at his point, perhaps because this disciple is not ready for the explicit statement, or perhaps because the impact will be greater when indirectly approached. This interpretation of the two categories has been prevalent in Western scholarship to date, and most Buddhologists translate the terms simply as “implicit” and “explicit” meanings. Indeed, in the Abhidharma context these terms will do, but we shall see how they will fare in the Mahāyāna context. A final point about this type of scheme is that it has no historical dimension. That is to say, a Buddha might switch from interpretable meaning statement to definitive meaning statement in the same discourse, depending upon the context, and thus one would not necessarily consider the entire discourse to be interpretable in meaning or *vice versa*. This is a general characteristic of hermeneutical strategies that depend upon content rather than context.

The next strategy we will consider is set forth in the *Samādhirimocana Sūtra*, a Mahāyāna Scripture, believed by Mahāyānists to record the actual words of the Buddha. This Scripture was highly regarded by Asanga, one of the greatest Buddhist philosophers, known as the “hero” (*mahārāṭha*) of the expansive stage of the path (that emphasizing love and compassion [*maitrīkaruṇā*]), and he founded the hermeneutical strategy of the Vijñānavāda school upon it. The strategy is that known as the Three Wheels of the Dharma (a Buddha’s teaching is metaphorically called a “turning of the wheel of Dharma”) and, in the Scripture’s words, runs as follows:

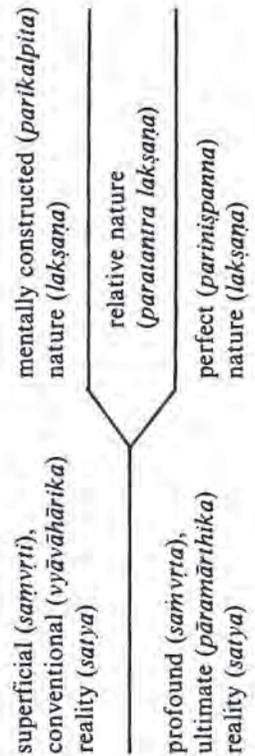
First of all, in the Deer Park at Rṣhipatana in Varanasi for the sake of those involved in the disciple vehicle, the Lord turned a wonderful, amazing wheel of Dharma, such as had never before been turned in the world by men or gods, and he showed the (sixteen) aspects of the Four Holy Truths. Yet even that wheel of Dharma turned by the Lord was surpassable, provisory, interpretable in meaning, and subject to dispute. Then the Lord, for the sake of those involved in the Mahāyāna turned a second wheel of Dharma even more wonderful and amazing, by proclaiming voidness, starting from the fact of the unreality, uncreatedness, ceaselessness, primordial peace, and natural liberation of all things. Nevertheless, even this wheel of Dharma was surpassable, provisory, interpretable, and subject to dispute. Finally, the Lord, for the sake of those involved in all vehicles turned the third wheel of Dharma, by showing the fine discrimination (of things), addressing the fact of the unreality, uncreatedness, ceaselessness, primordial peace, and natural liberation of all things. And this turning of the wheel of Dharma by the Lord was unsurpassed, not provisory, definitive in meaning, and left no room for dispute. (Lamotte: 85, 206)

Of course, the “first wheel” here is the Hīnayāna teaching, teaching the truth of suffering of *saṃsāra* and the truth of its cessation in *nirvāṇa* and so on. It presupposes the truth-status of things, both mundane and transcendental, and hence is suitable for the realistically minded. The “second wheel” is the *Prajñāpāramitā* or “Transcendent Wisdom” type of Mahāyāna teaching, teaching the fundamental truthlessness of persons and things, which is called their absolute emptiness. It aims to free its disciples from attachments and ignorance, but can be dangerous if taken too literally and interpreted nihilistically. Therefore, the “third wheel” is the supreme one, being the teaching of the *Samādhiṅmoccana* itself, known as the “subtly discriminative” type of Mahāyāna teaching.

What are the “fine distinctions” drawn in the third wheel that make it “subtly discriminative”?

At stake primarily is the interpretation of the frequent statements of the Buddha in the Mahāyāna scriptures to the effect that all things are empty, often phrased as straight negations, i.e., “there is no form, no feeling, no Buddha, no enlightenment, no non-enlightenment . . .” and so forth. The Mādhyamikas supply the qualifier “ultimately” in all contexts other than the *100,000-Line Prajñāpāramitā*, where the qualifier is in the text. But for the Vijñānavādins, Buddha considered this insufficient, and hence devised a scheme known as the “three natures” (*trilakṣaṇa*). Things have three natures, a mentally constructed (*parikalpita*) nature, a relative (*paratantra*) nature, and a perfect, or absolute (*pariṇiṣpanna*) nature. When all things are said to be empty of intrinsic substance, this only applies to them in their mentally constructed nature—they continue to exist as relative things, and their ineffable relativity devoid of conceptual differentiation is their absolute nature. Thus, the insertion of the relative category between the conceptual (*parikalpita*) and the absolute (*pariṇiṣpanna*) insulates the practitioner against nihilism.

The following diagram illustrates the relation of the three natures with the Mādhyamika two reality theory. Using this hermeneutical scheme, the disciple of the third wheel can follow exactly what is said and attain the highest goal, without any hermeneutical dilemma, free of the dangers of naive realism or nihilism, and thus this teaching is definitive in meaning.



It is noteworthy that this scheme of the *Samādhiṅmoccana*, fundamental in the Vijñānavāda school, is both historical (as relating to Buddha's biography) and philosophical, as relating to the content of the teaching. It seems to present a rather logical progression from the elementary to the advanced. Tsong Khapa (Thurman, 1978: 102ff.) points out that it treats the interpretability of the first two wheels differently, since the first wheel is plainly misleading as it stands, as things are not intrinsically real as they appear, and hence the mode of interpretation involved must justify its teachings as purely pedagogic techniques. Thus, in teaching that wheel, the Buddha expounds the analysis of the elements of internal and external reality in order to convey the message of personal selflessness, leaving intact for the time the hearer's false notions concerning the truth-status of such objects. On the other hand, the second wheel is much closer to the definitive teaching, since it does not actually presume upon any naive realism about external objects, but only falls short of definitiveness by failing to demonstrate explicitly precisely how things are empty. However, once the distinctions brought out in the third wheel are understood, the second wheel can be understood in the light of its intention, and it has great value in practice once one is safe from the danger of a nihilistic extremism. As Tsong Khapa says: “Thus (this Vijñānavāda system) states the *Mother Scripture* (i.e., *Prajñāpāramitā*) to be interpretable not because its meaning is the indiscriminate ultimate unreality of all things, but rather because it requires further explanation, as it is not fit to be literally accepted, hence is not definitive as it is” (Thurman, 1978: 104).

While this system is far more elaborate than the Hīnayāna hermeneutic given above, the literal acceptability or unacceptability of a Scripture still seems to be the basic criterion for its interpretability or definitiveness. Indeed, the Vijñānavāda thinkers did still invoke scriptural authority for the establishment of literally definitive Scriptures. They give three types of literally definitive Scriptures, those that so establish themselves, those that are so established by another Scripture, and those established both by themselves and by others, exemplified by the *Lankāvatāra* and the *Samādhiṅmoccana*, by the *8000-Line Prajñāpāramitā*, and by the *18,000-Line Prajñāpāramitā*, respectively (Thurman, 1978: 109).

There are two main criticisms of this Vijñānavāda hermeneutic. First, mere literal acceptability is an inadequate criterion of definitiveness, since there are varieties of interpretability, some involving symbolism, some involving intention, some involving context, some merely involving restoring abbreviated expressions, and so forth. Hence the criterion is too rigid and simplistic to cope with the intricacies of the teachings. Second, for all its claims to fine analytic discrimination, three nature theory and all, this hermeneutical strategy is still itself scripturally justified—it is after all the scheme set forth in the *Samādhiṅmoccana* Scripture. No abstract rational rule or criterion to distinguish between scriptural claims is disclosed, and hence the obvious circularity of invoking a Scripture's own claim of definitiveness as proof of its own definitiveness. The great Mādhyamikas, especially

Candrakīrti and Tsong Khapa, level these criticisms at the Vijñānavāda hermeneutic, before setting forth their own strategies. But before we take these up, we should consider briefly the Chinese tradition.

Although Leon Hurvitz makes no mention of the fact in his important study of Chih I, our first Chinese hermeneutician, the *Sāmdhinirmocana* was well known in China before his time, having been translated during the fifth century both by Guṇabhadra and by Bodhiruci (Nanjio: 49, 68). It is almost certain that the ten schools mentioned by Chih I as preceding him in elaborating hermeneutical strategies were influenced by this Scripture, as their main categories, "sign-doctrine" and "signless doctrine" correspond precisely to the *Sāmdhinirmocana* characterization of the first two wheels respectively. However, according to Hurvitz the *Laṅkāvatāra* and the *Mahāparinirvāṇa* were the most important scriptural sources for the Chinese hermeneuticians, which discipline they called "doctrinal analysis" (Hurvitz: 214ff.). Most important for Chih I was the parable of the five stages of milk in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa*:

It is just as from a cow one extracts milk, from milk one extracts cream, from cream butter, from butter clarified butter, and from clarified butter the essence of clarified butter. The essence is the best of these. If anyone take it, his ailments shall all be cleared away, and all medicines that are shall enter his system. Good Sir! The Buddha is also like this. From the Buddha are extracted the twelve kinds of scriptures, from them are extracted the (Mahāyāna) sutras, from the (Mahāyāna) sutras are extracted the Expansive (Vaipulya) Scriptures, from the Expansive Scriptures is extracted the *Prajñāpāramitā*, and from the *Prajñāpāramitā* is extracted the *Mahāparinirvāṇa*. (Hurvitz: 217)

We note immediately that Chih I's doctrine of the five periods follows this scriptural theme almost exactly, with the differences that Chih I reverses the order of numbers one and two, taking the general "sutras" as the *Garland (Avatamsaka) Scripture*, and that he includes the *Lotus Scripture* in the final category, which he takes to be supreme, as teaching the eternity of Buddhahood, the universality of Buddha-nature, and the happiness and bliss of *nirvāṇa*. Of course, the *Garland Scripture*, according to Chih I, has already conveyed this message from the moment of the Buddha's enlightenment, but only a very few were able to realize its meaning at that time.

Now, although this scheme, like the three wheels of Dharma theory of the *Sāmdhinirmocana*, is historical in using the Buddha's biography as framework, Chih I's analysis of it is somewhat more sophisticated. First, while each period is dominated by the teaching it is associated with, the other teachings may be given to some disciples during any of the periods, as the Buddha's capacities are ever adaptable to the pedagogical necessities. Second, Chih I coordinates the context-classification to a methodological classification, known as the "Four Methods of Conversion," which consist of 1) the sudden teaching, which corresponds to the first period of the *Garland Scripture*, which conveys instantaneous enlightenment to those with the

necessary ability, 2) the gradual teaching, corresponding to the second through fourth periods, giving the stages of progress of Hinayāna and Mahāyāna disciples, 3) the secret indeterminate teaching, which is Buddha's method of teaching a number of different disciples different teachings simultaneously without knowing each other, and 4) the express indeterminate teaching, which is Buddha's method of doing the same to different disciples in the same assembly. The two latter methods are practiced in the first four periods. Finally, Chih I also coordinates the historical context and the methodological scheme with a content-scheme, known as the "Four Principles of Conversion," namely, 1) the storehouse teaching, or the Hinayāna, 2) the Pervasive (Transitional) teaching, including the Mādhyamika and general analytic counteractive to Hinayāna notions, 3) the Separate (Discriminate) teaching, which consists of the Vijñānavāda, and 4) the Round teaching, which consists of the teaching of the ultimate nonduality of the world of common experience with the ultimate reality, the Dharma-body, the containment of infinity in an atom, of eternity in an instant, and so on. We may again note here that the first three Principles correspond quite precisely to the three wheels of Dharma of the *Sāmdhinirmocana*.

This latter classification of Chih I is further refined by Fa Tsang, who pays less heed to the historical approach, although he does not contest it. He puts the last four of Chih I's categories into his first three, adds a new one which is a scriptureless, meditational school, later identified with Ch'an or Zen, and places his own beloved *Garland Scripture* with its miraculous view of reality at the very top. Fa Tsang was one of the greatest philosophers of all of Chinese philosophy, and his elaboration of a hermeneutic is extremely refined and detailed, dealing as it does with most of the major problems of the tradition. These schemes can perhaps best be conveyed in the following diagram (Fig. A).

In general, the Chinese tradition was essentially extremely Scripture-oriented, as relatively few of the myriad Indian scientific treatises (*śāstra*) were translated into Chinese. Thus, while the hermeneutical strategies were extremely refined in some respects, they still based themselves finally on a particular Scripture, Chih I on the *Lotus*, Fa Tsang on the *Garland*, others on the *Pure Land*. Their hermeneutics' main thrust was to place their favorite Scripture at the apex of a doctrinal pyramid. In contrast, of course, was the Ch'an school, which eschewed the whole enterprise, purporting to cast aside all Scriptures ultimately, although this is perhaps one of the most important of all hermeneutical strategies, certainly eminently rational. But I will return to this in a final section.

Now for the final hermeneutical strategies we proceed to those of the Mādhyamikas of India and Tibet, which are the most content-oriented perhaps, although they too depart from a scriptural basis, though one with a difference.

In the *Akṣyamatinirdēśa Scripture* there is the following famous passage:

Which scriptures are definitive in meaning? And which interpretable? Those teaching superficial realities are interpretable, and those

teaching ultimate realities are definitive in meaning. Those teaching various words and letters are interpretable, while those teaching the profound, the hard to see, and the hard to understand are definitive. Those introducing the path are interpretable. Those introducing the fruit are definitive. Those scriptures that teach as if there were a lord in the lordless, using such expressions as "ego," "living being," "life," "soul," "creature," "person," "human," "man," "agent," "experiencer," etc., are interpretable. And those scriptures that teach the doors of liberation, the emptiness of things, their signlessness, wishlessness, inactivity, birthlessness, creationlessness, beginninglessness, lifelessness, personlessness, and lordlessness, and so on, are definitive in meaning. You should rely on the latter, not the former. (Thurman, 1978: 111) / 10/

SCRIPTURE-BASED HERMENEUTICAL SCHEMES

(Figure A)

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <p style="text-align: right;">Fa Tsang's Hua Yen</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Chih I's T'ien Tai</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">Philosophical</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Hinayana</li> <li>2. Preliminary Mahayana (including Chih I's historical Nos. 3 and 4).</li> <li>3. Final Mahayana (including Chih I's No. 5 i.e., <i>Lotus Sutra</i> and <i>Mahaparinirvana</i>).</li> <li>4. Instantaneous Enlightenment; Scriptureless school, later identified with Chan.</li> <li>5. Round Doctrine of the <i>Garland (Avatamsaka) Scripture</i>; one in one, all in one, etc.</li> </ol> | <p style="text-align: center;">Historical</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Garland Sutra</i>, at Bodhi tree for three weeks; sudden teaching.</li> <li>2. Hinayana, twelve years; gradual teaching.</li> <li>3. General Mahayana to correct Hinayana narrowness, eight years; gradual teaching.</li> <li>4. <i>Prajnaparamita</i>, twenty-two years, on emptiness; gradual teaching; secret and express indeterminate teachings in 1 through 4.</li> <li>5. <i>Lotus Sutra</i>, for eight years; <i>Mahaparinirvana</i> for twenty-four hours, supreme teaching of universal enlightenment; sudden teaching again.</li> </ol> |
|---|---|---|

Here we note a new hermeneutical strategy whose essence is the alignment of the categories of interpretable and definitive with the epistemological and ontological categories relative/absolute, superficial/ultimate, i.e., the two realities (*sarya dvaya*) of Buddhist philosophy / 11/. This is a departure from the equation of the *Vijnānavāda*, namely, interpretable/definitive = implicit/explicit, since now a non-explicit teaching that concerns itself with the ultimate reality is definitive in meaning, whether or not it requires some verbal interpretation due to its indirectness, figurativeness, or laconicness. On the other hand, a completely explicit statement that concerns itself with some superficial, mundane state of affairs is interpretable in meaning, even if it can be understood literally as it is, since it fails to communicate the ultimate condition of said state of affairs. For example, a statement such as "there is no Buddha," which often occurs in the *Transcendent Wisdom Scriptures*, is definitive in meaning, since its meaning, i.e., that in terms of ultimate reality there is no such relative thing as even a Buddha, concerns the ultimate condition of a Buddha, even though it requires the verbal interpretation of supplying the phrase "in the ultimate," since it does not mean that there is no such thing as a Buddha in the relative, superficial, conventional and mundane realm. Indeed such statements are often made by the Buddha himself, and obviously on the relative level he is making the statement, and thus is there, as it were. Further, as an example of the second type, the statement "the sprout is born from the seed" is interpretable in meaning, even though it is true on the relative, conventional level, since it fails to communicate the ultimate condition of the sprout and the seed, neither of which exist ultimately, while the sentence seems to assume that they do indeed have objective existence.

The philosophically minded will here object that there appears to be a lack of parity at work in the analysis of the statements. After all, the latter statement can be interpreted by supplying the qualification "conventionally" (just as we have supplied the qualification "ultimately" in the first case), which would then make the statement definitive in meaning, while the former statement could be said to be assuming the "reality" of a Buddha in the course of denying it. The mistake that gives rise to this objection is the idea that there is indeed parity between the two realities, i.e., the relative, and the ultimate.

However, the ultimate takes precedence over the relative, not intrinsically or ontologically, as it were, since the “two” realities are in fact merely presented as a conceptual dichotomy, but epistemologically, since the mind’s orientation toward the absolute is more beneficial and liberating than is its orientation toward the relative, which after all includes suffering and ignorance, and so on. Thus, the statement “there is no Buddha” contains the negation of the truth-status of a Buddha, among all other relative things, and points to his ultimate status which is truthlessness, or realitylessness, or emptiness. The directionality of our cognition here is correct, does not need further correction, even though a word might be supplied here and there, since it aims at the absolute, as it were, aimed by an absolute negation. On the other hand, the statement “the sprout is born from the seed” confirms our habitual unconscious assumption of the intrinsic reality of sprout, seed, birth, etc., and brings us no closer to the ultimate, and hence the directionality of our cognition is wrong, we are confirmed in our “naive realism” about persons and things, i.e., our habitual clinging to their objective substantiality, and although the interpretive correction with the supplied qualification “conventionally” may give us pause by having us think “ah, that means not ultimately,” this is secondary and the statement remains interpretable according to this strategy.

Thus, in this system, “interpretation” involved in “interpretable meaning” does not mean any sort of trivial verbal interpretation or qualification, but only that type of interpretation that brings out the ultimate relevance, meaning, reality of things. And the only type of verbal statement that does not require such interpretation is that which is absolutely negative, an absolute negation in the logical sense of only negating its negandum without establishing or implying anything else. Therefore, to apply this scheme to the three wheels of Dharma, the middle wheel of Dharma, that of the *Prajñāpāramitā*, is seen to be the most definitive, although the third and even the first contain some statements that can be accepted as definitive. Such flexibility is there because on this interpretation, the subject matter, the concern, superficial or ultimate, is all-important.

Of course, not all Mādhyamikas were agreed among themselves on the precise ramifications of this principle. Of the two main sub-schools, the Svātantrika and the Prāsāngika /12/, the former drew back from the rigorously critical position of the latter and attempted to syncretize the Mādhyamika system with the Vijñānavāda system. Thus Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla took the interesting position that in a strong sense both the second and third wheels of Dharma were definitive in meaning (Thurman, 1978: 150ff.). Indeed, according to the latter, it is the *Saṃdhirimocana* interpretation of the *Prajñāpāramitā* message of pure negation that renders the *Prajñāpāramitā* definitive in meaning. For, he reasons, the *Prajñāpāramitā* negations are often laconic, failing to mention the qualification “ultimately,” and the *Saṃdhirimocana* type of interpretation through the three nature theory enables us to remember the constant need to assume the qualifier “ultimately” as understood. Thus, a nihilistic skepticism,

or “repudiation” (*apavāda*), is avoided by negating the literalness of negations, and a naive realism, or “presumption” (*samāropa*), is avoided by negating the truth-status of the relative. On this latter point, he differs from the Vijñānavādins, who believe the relative nature to be ultimately real, as distinct from the constructed nature, which is unreal. The type of reality involved here is called by the Vijñānavādins “intrinsic identifiability” (*svataḥsaṃsiddhatvam*), and is distinguished from “objective reality” (*svarūpasiddhatvam*). Kamalaśīla reorganizes somewhat these different types of reality-status, by denying the ultimacy of the relative and perfect natures, i.e., seeing the relative/absolute formula as a conceptual, mentally constructed dichotomy, while affirming the intrinsic identifiability of both of them on the conventional level, as he thinks this necessary to avoid the extremism of repudiation (*apavāda*), or nihilistic skepticism. Thus, not only does he use the *Saṃdhirimocana* to interpret the *Prajñāpāramitā* in order to discover the latter’s definitiveness (i.e., not to prove its interpretability as did the Vijñānavāda), but he also uses subtle logical reasoning to interpret the *Saṃdhirimocana* itself, taking the emptiness of mentally constructed things (*parikalpitalakṣaṇa*), defined as “nature-unreality” (*lakṣaṇaniḥsvabhāva*), to mean that the relative and the perfect lack ultimacy, instead of to mean that the relative and the perfect gain their ultimacy when distinguished from the ultimately unreal mentally constructed, which is how the Vijñānavāda takes it, and is what is explicitly said in the *Saṃdhirimocana* itself. In essence, the Svātantrika tactic is to reconcile the Vijñānavāda with the Mādhyamika by accepting the three nature theory as conventionally, not ultimately, valid.

Candrakīrti, the greatest of the Prāsāngika philosophers, was dissatisfied with any such attempt of the Svātantrikas. He considered the *Akṣayamatīrdeśa* statement to mean just what it said, that only statements concerning the ultimate are definitive, and that all statements concerning any aspect of the superficial, conventional, social, relative reality are interpretable. Thus, the whole interpretive scheme of the three natures is unacceptable to him and is itself interpretable, and he will not allow any intrinsic identifiability in the relative at all. But the full impact of his hermeneutic will be explained under the final heading below.

#### VI. Rely on (Non-conceptual) Wisdom, Not on (Dualistic) Consciousness

The fourth step of the Buddhist hermeneutical movement serves as a reminder of the unswerving dedication to practice of the Buddhist teaching. Thus, even after having discerned the definitive meaning of the Scriptures as consisting of an absolute negation of the truth-status, intrinsic reality, selfhood, etc., of all things, relative and absolute, having discerned it with a critical consciousness that is properly called “intellectual wisdom” (*cintāmayiprajñā*), one still has not concluded the hermeneutical enterprise. In fact, it cannot be concluded until enlightenment is attained, until intellectual wisdom concerning the ultimate has been combined with one-pointed concentration, which combination leads to the holy knowledge of the space-like equipoise (*ākāśavatsamāhitāñāna*), the meditative wisdom

(*bhāvanāmayiprajñā*), the nondual knowledge, etc. Thus, even though one has reached a profound intellectual knowledge of the definitive meaning of the Scriptures, one must go on cultivating this knowledge until it permeates one's deeper layers of consciousness. Of the utmost significance is the fact that at no point is the intellectual study merely cast aside. On the contrary, reason is pushed to its utmost and held there by the cultivated power of concentration (*samādhi*). To rephrase this in hermeneutical terms, we must remember that the hermeneutical rule that the definitive teaching is that which concerns the ultimate, is itself a teaching concerning the superficial. It is a teaching concerning teachings, it is not itself a pure negation pointing to the ultimate reality. Thus, although Candara aligns himself with it, he does not dogmatically base his position on it as authority. Authority for him is reason, and reason is consummated only in enlightenment.

To make this point in another way, while conceptual, analytic wisdom is absolutely indispensable to attain a correct cognition of ultimate reality through an accurate understanding of the absolute negations that are definitive in meaning, it will not produce the experiential transformation called enlightenment unexcelled and perfect, unless it is combined with a systematically cultivated one-pointedness of mind. Ultimate reality eludes encompassment in any concept, no matter how hallowed, and hence the hermeneutician would betray his craft and avocation if he were to rest forever on the intellectual plane, no matter how refined his understanding. Thus, the Buddhist hermeneutical tradition is a tradition of realization, devoid of any intellect/intuition dichotomy. Authority here gives way to intellect, yet never lets intellect rest in itself, as it were, but pushes it beyond toward a culminating nondual experience.

It is remarkable how this hermeneutic of the Prāsāngika-Mādhyamika tradition (i.e., the alignment of interpretable and definitive with the conventional and ultimate realities, respectively), coming as it does as the culmination of a philosophical development of many centuries, as the supreme refinement of the critical analysis that leaves no dogmatic attitude unscathed, uses such rigorous reasoning to affirm the unswerving practicality at the heart of the tradition. It is further worth noting, *contra* notions of "mysticism," that this hermeneutic is identical in an exact manner with the principal strategy of the Ch'an/Zen tradition, even though that school is rightly called by Fa Tsang, as mentioned above, the "Scriptureless School." For while the Mādhyamikas may seem at first glance to be based on the *Prajñāpāramitā*, the "Mother of All Buddhas," what finally does it mean to be based on a Scripture that constantly repeats the litany, "There is no Buddha, no Dharma, no attainment, no attainer, no ground, no grounded. . . ." and so on? As Vimalakīrti says to Mañjuśrī (Thurman, 1976: 58): "Mañjuśrī, when something is baseless, how can it have any root? Therefore, all things stand on the root which is baseless." Thus, to stand on the *Prajñāpāramitā* is to stand ultimately on groundlessness, i.e., to belong to the "Scriptureless School." In relation to the important citation given above from the *Akṣayamatirdeśa*, this is of course a scriptural passage and is taken by the Mādhyamikas as

authoritative, yet if we follow the sense of it, it self-destructs as dogma, stating that teachings about teachings, which include its own hermeneutical statements, are *all* interpretable in meaning, and that only teachings about absolute, ultimate reality, i.e., pure negations such as "all things are empty of intrinsic reality," etc., are definitive in meaning. Finally, it is eminently thought provoking here that these two traditions, when we examine them in the light of the above taxonomy of hermeneutical strategies, emerge as not at all "mystical," as scholars have so commonly misinterpreted them, but as rationalistic, non-authoritarian, and empirically pragmatic, while the various types of Scripture-based traditions emerge as "mystical" insofar as dogmatically attached to sacred authority in the final analysis.

Nāgārjuna, in the climactic chapter of his "*Wisdom*": *Basic Verses of the Middle Way* in which he analyzes the concept of "*nirvāṇa*" and finally equates *nirvāṇa* and *saṃsāra*, anticipates the objections of those who will consider him to have made some authoritarian statement about *nirvāṇa* by listing a version of the "Fourteen Unpronounced Verdicts" /13/ of the Buddha and concluding with the following extraordinary verse: "The Dharma is that bliss which is the quiescence of all perceptions and elaborations—not a bit of it was ever taught by any Buddha for anyone anywhere (Vaidya, 1960: 236) /14/. Instead of settling for the usual platitude about Nāgārjuna's alleged "mysticism" here, we can clearly see this hermeneutically as his steadfast refusal to allow any verbal formula to be misconstrued as authoritarian dogma. Precisely the same point is made most forcefully by the great Ch'an Master Pai Chang (720–814) to his disciple Nan Ch'uan (747–834), as recorded in the *Blue Cliff Record* (Cleary: 181):

Nan Ch'uan went to see Master . . . Pai Chang.

Chang asked, "Have all the sages since antiquity had a truth that they haven't spoken for people?"

Ch'uan said, "They have."

Chang said, "What is the truth that hasn't been spoken for people?"

Ch'uan said, "It's not mind, it's not Buddha, it's not anything."

Chang said, "You said it."

Pai Chang here tested his advanced friend with the fundamental hermeneutical question, probing to see if Nan Ch'uan still felt there was any dogmatic doctrine, even an esoteric one. Ch'uan bravely sallied forth by standing up for what he took to be the tradition, thinking to get off easily since it was a "traditionless tradition" wherein the truth was nothing at all, yet somehow still there, and still possessed by the sages. Chang powerfully refutes him with the humorous reference to the fact that this was indeed not "unspoken truth" at all, since Ch'uan himself had just easily said it. Ch'uan realizes he has missed it, and becomes insecure and attempts to defer to Chang's authority.

Ch'un said, "I am just thus. What about you, teacher?"  
 Chang said, "I am not a great man of knowledge either; how would I know whether it has been spoken or not?"  
 Ch'un said, "I don't understand."  
 Chang said, "I've already spoken too much for you."

Whatever other depths or surfaces of meaning may be here, for our purpose one thing is abundantly clear: Pai Chang completely refuses to set himself up as authority for his disciple, leaving him entirely on his own at the conclusion of the encounter. The commentator on the case interestingly relates it to the above idea of Nāgārjuna's, saying, "Old Śākyamuni appeared in the world and in forty-nine years never said a single word" (Cleary: 184).

In conclusion, let me offer a striking image for this Mādhyamika/Ch'an hermeneutical tradition, the gift of one of its eminent members, Master Pa Ling (10th century) (Cleary: 88):

A monk asked Pa Ling, "What is the school of Kaṇadeva (Āryadeva)?"

Pa Ling said, "Piling up snow in a silver bowl."

## NOTES

/1/ I use "Hīnayāna" here to designate the teachings aiming at self-liberation from suffering by separate individuals, philosophically subdivided into eighteen schools during the centuries after Śākyamuni's death. "Theravāda" is not serviceable for this purpose, as it represents only one of these eighteen schools, being the Pali form of Sanskrit *Sthāviravāda*. Lest any reader be offended by any presumed derogatory tone implied in the term, let me make clear that I mean "individual" (not "inferior") by "Hīna-," and "universal" (not "superior") by "Mahā-" of Mahāyāna. The former aims at *individual* liberation, not stressing the cultivation of love and compassion (*maitrīkaruṇā*). The latter aims at *universal* liberation, heavily stressing those virtues, but also including the necessity for individual liberation at the same time.

- /2/ This text is translated by the author in a forthcoming work (Thurman, 1978).
- /3/ This striking contrast in the lengths of teaching tenure of Jesus and Śākyamuni complements a no less striking similarity in the spreads of the traditions, the Christian westward through the Hellenic/Roman/European world, completing its cultural conquest in about 1000 years, and the Buddhist eastward throughout Asia as far as Mongolia, Japan, and Indonesia over roughly the same time span.
- /4/ A typical formulation of these rules, though differently ordered, is (Sakaki, 19: — 124): Skt. *arthapratīśaraṇena bhāvītyaṃ na vyāñjanapratīśaraṇena / dharmapratīśaraṇena bhāvītyaṃ na pudgalapratīśaraṇena / jñānapratīśaraṇena bhāvītyaṃ na vijñānapratīśaraṇena / nīārthasūtrapratīśaraṇena bhāvītyaṃ na neyārthasūtrapratīśaraṇena /*
- /5/ Skt. *gambhīra śānto vīrajāḥ prabhāsvaraḥ prāptomi dharmo hyamrto 'samskrītaḥ / dēśeya cāham na parasyajane yannuna tuṣṇī pavane vāseyaṃ /* (My translation follows the Tibetan version's slight variance.) (Vaidya, 1958: 286).
- /6/ Skt. *sūnyasā śānta anuṣṭānaya avījanād eva jogad udbhramati / teṣāṃ upāyanayayuktīśatāir avatārayasi api kṛpātūyā /* (Vaidya, 1961: 154).
- /7/ Tibetan: */ mdzad pa kun las gsuṅ gi ni // mdzad pa mchog yin de yan ni // de nīd yin phyir mkhas pa yis // de las sans rgyas rjes dran byos /* (Tsong Khapa, 1399).
- /8/ Vasubandhu's famous definition of "ultimate (*paramārtha*) Abhidharma" is pertinent here: *prajñāmalā sāmucārā*, i.e., "pure wisdom, with its correlates."
- /9/ Skt. *tāpēcchedācca nikaṣāi suvarṇam iva pañḍitāiḥ / parīkṣaya bhīkṣavo grāhyaṃ madvaco na tu gauravā /* (Śāntarakṣita, v. 3587).
- /10/ Partial Sanskrit (Vaidya, 1960: 14): *ye sūtrāntā mārgāvatāryā nirdiṣṭā imā ucyante neyārthāḥ / yeṣu sūtrānteṣu ātmasattvajīvapoṣapurūṣa-pudgalamānūjyamanyākārakavedakanānāśabdāir akhyāyante yeṣu cāsāmīkaṃ sasvāmīkatvena nirdiṣṭam te neyārthāḥ / ye sūtrāntāḥ phalavāitāryā nirdiṣṭā imā ucyante nīārthāḥ / yāvad ye sūtrāntāḥ sūnyatānimitāprāñihitānabhi-samskāṛjātānupādābhāvanīrāmāñṣattvanirjīvanīpudgalāsvāmīkavimokṣa-mukhanirdiṣṭāḥ te ucyante nīārthāḥ /*
- /11/ In this context, *sārya* is often translated as "truth." I prefer "reality," to stress the ontological nature of the categories, as they are defined traditionally as "objects of knowledge" (*jñeya*) rather than merely propositions.
- /12/ The Svāntantrika branch is named after the school of interpretation stemming from the c. 6th century Master, Bhāvaviveka, and the Prāsāngika branch after the school stemming from Candrakīrti. The names themselves were applied by Tibetan scholars, on the basis of Candrakīrti's discussion of his differences with Bhāvaviveka in Chapter I of the *Prasamnapada*.
- /13/ The famous *avyākṛtavastuṃ*, namely, 1) Buddha exists after death, 2) does not, 3) both does and does not, 4) neither, 5) the world is limited, 6) is not, 7) is both limited and infinite, 8) is neither, 9) the world has a beginning, 10) has not, 11) both, 12) neither, 13) the self is the same as the body, 14) the self is different from the body.
- /14/ Skt. *sarvopalambhōpāsamaḥ prapañcopāsamaḥ śivāḥ / na kimcikasya-citkāścid dharmo buddhena deśitāḥ /*

# ESTABLISHING VALIDITY

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The First Chapter of Karmapa Chödrak Gyatso's  
*Ocean of Literature on Logic* and the  
Corresponding Chapter from Dharmakīrti's  
*Commentary on Validity*

WITH FOREWORDS BY

The 17th Gyalwang Karmapa Ogyen Trinley Dorje  
& Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche

ness, and thus the truths of the path and cessation are unified. The wisdom of the path that realizes emptiness is itself emptiness (cessation), but that cessation is also wisdom by its nature. This position is characteristic of the Middle Way—the lower schools deny that wisdom is empty and assert that it exists in the ultimate truth.

The point of all of this is not so much whether Dharmakīrti's own personal view was actually Middle Way or not; we as ordinary people separated from him by the distance of fourteen centuries have no way to definitively know. What is important is that when viewed as part of the tradition of the Great Middle Way, Dharmakīrti's texts can help us understand the philosophical basis for meditational practices such as mahamudra, as Kagyu masters from the time of Chödrak Gyatso and Karma Trinleypa onward have often said. Regarded in this way, Dignāga and Dharmakīrti's works then cease being merely intellectual but instead become part of the path by which we can, to paraphrase Dharmakīrti's verse of homage, clear away the net of thought and gain the vast and profound bodies of a buddha ourselves.

## THE MEANING OF VALIDITY

Over the course of this chapter, Dharmakīrti addresses various issues of interest—whether there is a creator god, the nature of omniscience, how compassion can develop exponentially, the nature of the four noble truths, and so forth—and Chödrak Gyatso adds a few topics in his general discussions as well. For the most part, the text presents these clearly and they do not need further explanation here. However, a couple—the meaning of validity and the topic of rebirth—that could benefit from some additional explanation will be discussed in the next few pages.

Even in the opening verses, it is clear that Dharmakīrti uses the term *validity* on different levels. Often he uses it in an epistemological sense as to how to determine whether a cognition is valid or not, but he also uses it to refer to the authoritativeness of the Bhagavan Buddha. As Chödrak Gyatso highlights (following a distinction found in Dharmakīrti's *Ascertainment* as well as in Prajñākaragupta's *Ornament* and other commentaries), from the very outset there is the tension between the usage referring to the ultimate validity of a Buddha and the usage

referring to the conventional validity that is the means to achieve that ultimate validity. Because Dharmakīrti uses the term *validity* in this manner with different but related meanings, there has been a great deal of discussion in the commentarial literature as well as in contemporary academic sources about what he actually intends by the word.

In trying to understand what the word *pramāṇa* means (or its Tibetan translation *ṣṭad mā* in the context of the Tibetan canon), it is helpful to look at how the word is used in the wider context of Buddhist literature, particularly in the *vinaya* where technical terms are often used in a historical narrative context that illuminates not just their technical meaning but their general usage and diction. The word *ṣṭad mā* appears three times in historical passages in *The Topics of the Vinaya*,<sup>35</sup> where it has the sense of a statement being authoritative or reliable. For example, a passage describing the reaction of the early Śākyā princes to the sage Kapila's advice to marry their half-sisters reads, "The sage's words are valid (*ṣṭad mā*)," they thought. . ."<sup>36</sup> In such narrative contexts, the word *valid* means authoritative and worth heeding, and applies primarily to words. This is similar to one usage of the word *pramāṇa* by non-Buddhist sects that assert the Vedic scriptures are verbal validity because they are "not of human origin," a notion that Dharmakīrti refutes briefly here and at greater length in other chapters of his *Commentary*. Yet though he denies verbal validity, Dharmakīrti does seem to accept this sense of the word as meaning authoritative, in particular in reference to the Bhagavān as ultimate validity. Because he has perfected the qualities of abandonment and realization through cultivating compassion and training in the path, the Buddha is said to be valid—that is, an authoritative, reliable guide.

Yet much of the time, Dignāga and Dharmakīrti use the word *pramāṇa* on the level of epistemology and conventional validity. This usage of the term seems to come from their participation in the pan-Indian *pramāṇa* tradition and shared systems of logic that started around the second century with the founding of the Nyāya school. From this time onward, there were lively inter-sectarian debates, and each school posited its own criteria for and classification of validity, though there was enough common ground among the schools that they could use it as the basis for their debates.<sup>37</sup> For most of the non-Buddhist schools, it refers to the means of knowledge—the perception, inference, scriptures, and so

forth that lead to knowledge, which is considered result of the valid.<sup>38</sup> But Dignāga, Dharmakīrti, and their followers take a more restrictive view of validity. For them validity (at least on the conventional level) must be cognition itself, not the means to knowledge: the means of knowing—the *pramāṇa*—and its resulting knowing are essentially two simultaneous aspects of the same cognition, as Dharmakīrti describes in his chapter on perception. As Dharmakīrti says here, "The valid is an undecieving mind."<sup>39</sup> Thus on this epistemological level, Dharmakīrti rules out anything other than cognition (such as scriptures, the sensory faculties, and so forth) being considered valid.

Additionally, for Dharmakīrti the valid must "dwell in the ability to function,"<sup>40</sup> or to dwell in *arhīnakriyā*, a Sanskrit term he uses with different meanings in different contexts. In the chapter on perception, he uses it in the sense of causal efficacy, but here it has the sense of attaining a goal or aim: the valid enables an individual to encounter an entity as it is apprehended. Chōdrak Gyatso explains:

The meaning of *undecieving* is that the individual is able to encounter the entity as the valid cognition itself indicates. This is called by the term *undecieving*. It means nothing other than that it makes an individual comprehend the object without error by way of producing recognition that realizes the way the object is.

Additionally, Dharmakīrti only considers undecieving cognitions that engage real things (here called specific characteristics,<sup>41</sup> which on the level of external realism refers to atoms and instants of cognition) to be valid, not those that engage conceptual projections such as universals (that is, some sort of "juggness" or "cowness" that would inhabit specific vessels and bovines and make them into jugs and cows). This is because only specific characteristics can fulfill aims—actual water can slake thirst while a concept of water cannot. As Dharmakīrti says:

Cognition that knows the unknown-specific Characteristics is intended, since One analyzes specific characteristics.<sup>42</sup>

In this way, Dharmakīrti's approach is typically concrete and pragmatic: any description of real or unreal must be based on specific experience, not conceptual projections.

And yet such a characterization of validity can only operate on a lower level of analysis, for a cognition that engages without deception an external object such as fire can only be considered valid on levels where the independent existence of such external objects is not directly challenged. Thus at the end of the first chapter of his *Ascertainment*, Dharmakīrti makes a distinction between such valid cognitions—which he calls conventional validity—and ultimate validity, which is the eventual result of contemplation and meditation:

. . . in relation to being undecieving about the conventional, it [conventional validity] is valid here. This here is in all respects a description of the nature of conventional validity, because others are deluded about it and the world is thus deceived. By becoming familiarized with the intelligence produced by contemplation, one is separated from confusion of misunderstanding and manifests ultimate validity, which cannot be turned back from the stainless.<sup>43</sup>

That is to say, ordinary beings misunderstand what validity is and thus treat things that are not valid or authoritative even conventionally—the faculties, Vedas, and so forth—as if they were and then perform actions such as animal sacrifice that will only create more suffering for themselves and others. When taught conventional validity, however, they can contemplate it and develop a view that accords with the true nature, the four noble truths. By meditating on this, they will free themselves from confusion and achieve nirvana, the stainless ultimate validity. In this manner, distinguishing between conventional and ultimate validity can be seen as one aspect of the different phases and levels of analysis described above, and conventional validity becomes a part of Dharmakīrti's method for gradually guiding beings to progressively more profound insights.

Though Dharmakīrti does not explain this distinction in this chapter, Chödrek Gyatso does bring it into his analysis of Dharmakīrti's text, explaining several of these verses in terms of both ultimate and con-

ventional validity. In doing so, he brings out yet another meaning of the Sanskrit *arīṭhākriyā*: the function or *arīṭha* that the Buddha fulfills is the twofold benefit (*arīṭha*) for self and other. As Chödrek Gyatso says:

Due to his perfect intent, he performs all temporary and ultimate benefit for wanderers. Because of the cause of the perfect training of the path, he dwells in the ability to achieve that function of benefiting and is proven to be the protector who never deceives.

Thus for Chödrek Gyatso, the Bhagavan himself is the ultimate validity: he has achieved the perfect abandonment and realization of the *sugata* and thus fulfilled the ultimate benefit for himself. At the same time, as the protector who teaches the path without deception, he has achieved the ultimate benefit for others.

#### DHARMAKĪRTI'S ARGUMENT FOR REBIRTH

Of all the various issues that Dharmakīrti covers in this chapter, the one for which it is most famous is his proof of rebirth and reincarnation. This is not merely among contemporary academics. For centuries, Dharmakīrti's defense of rebirth has been celebrated and studied in India and Tibet within a social context where belief in rebirth is the cultural norm. Dharmakīrti's discussion of the logic and supporting arguments occur in two long passages that together account for well over a third of the chapter—113 of 287 stanzas.<sup>44</sup> From the length and depth of his arguments, it is clear that this is just as important an issue for Dharmakīrti as it has been for later scholars.

The reasons become clear upon looking at the context for the proof. Dharmakīrti first addresses the issue in support of his assertion that the cause of achieving buddhahood is cultivating compassion over many lifetimes—a standard Buddhist position dating back to the many occasions when the Buddha spoke of past and future lives recorded in the sutras and the *vāyaya*. Dharmakīrti returns to the topic of rebirth a second time to defend his position that "Suffering is the *samsāra* aggregates"<sup>45</sup> against the opponents' assertion that there is no *samsāra* where beings come from one lifetime and go on to the miseries of the

### THE THREE MODES

In order to evaluate whether the evidence proves the proposition or not, the relationships of the evidence to the subject and predicate must be examined. This is done through what are called the three modes (*trirūpani, tshul gsum*): the propositional property (*paḥṣadhārna, phiyogs chos*),<sup>1</sup> entailing pervasion (*anvayaavyapti, rjes khyab*), and reverse pervasion (*vyatirekavyapti, ldog khyab*). The propositional property describes the relationship between the evidence and the subject (despite its name, which might suggest it is the relationship to the entire proposition), and the two pervasions describe the relationship between the evidence and the predicate, as shown in Figure 3. In order for evidence to be considered correct, all three modes must be fulfilled. Indeed, this is the characteristic<sup>2</sup> traditionally given for correct evidence: evidence that fulfills the three modes.

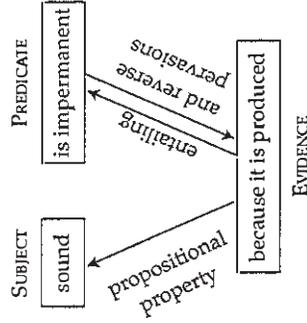


Figure 3: The three modes in a correct reason

For the propositional property to be fulfilled, the evidence must be recognized as present in the subject. For example, being produced is a property of all sound, so the propositional property in this sample syllogism is fulfilled. If on the other hand the evidence is not necessarily present in subject or if the debaters do not both recognize it, the propositional property is not fulfilled. For example, in the syllogism “sound, the subject, is permanent because it is produced by effort,” the propositional property is not fulfilled because being produced by effort is not present in all instances of sound, as in Figure 4. (The sound

## A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO INDO-TIBETAN LOGIC

DHARMAKĪRTI IS RENOWNED as a master logician, and so it should be no surprise that this chapter is built around logical arguments and reasoning. However, the Indo-Tibetan way of reasoning and structuring arguments differs from the Western way, and without a brief introduction to its basics, people who have never read texts such as this might become confused by the terminology and reasoning. Thus this brief introduction is intended to provide newcomers enough of a basic understanding of logic so as to be able to understand Dharmakīrti’s and Chödrak Gyatso’s arguments. It is not intended to be a thorough study of logic, as that is neither necessary for a basic understanding of this chapter nor within the scope of such a short introduction.

The logic is described here as it is taught in the Tibetan tradition, which developed out of the Indian style of logic and debate established by Dignāga, Dharmakīrti, and their followers. As in Western logic, propositions are proven through syllogisms (*prayoga, sbyor ba*), though the form and presentation differ. Generally, a syllogism consists of four parts: the subject (*dharmaṇi, chos can*), predicate (*dharma, chos*), evidence (*tiṅga, rtags*), and analogy (*mithun dpe*). For example, in the classic syllogism “Sound, the subject, is impermanent, because it is produced, like a jug,” the subject is sound, the predicate is being impermanent, the evidence is it being produced, and the analogy is a jug. The combination of the subject and predicate is called the proposition (*paḥṣa, phiyogs*). The evidence is also sometimes called the reason (*hetu, gtan tshig*), and these terms are often used interchangeably.

merely a question of whether it is determined in a positive direction or a negative direction. Thus the reason why there are the two pervasions is because there are cases where it is difficult to ascertain the entailing pervasion but easier to evaluate the reverse pervasion and vice versa. When the two pervasions are fulfilled, the evidence is said to *pervade*, or alternately the evidence is said to be *determinate*.

For example, in Figure 5, the area inside the circle represents the similar class, the area outside the circle represents the dissimilar class, and *e* represents instances of the evidence. Here the entailing pervasion is ascertained (fulfilled) because all of the instances of *e* are inside the similar class. The reverse pervasion is also ascertained because there are no instances of *e* in the dissimilar class—that is, outside the similar class. Thus this is an example of the evidence pervading or alternately of the evidence being determinate.

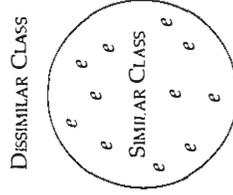


Figure 5: All evidence in the similar class

In Figure 6, however, the entailing pervasion is not ascertained because not all instances of *e* are within the similar class. The reverse pervasion is also not ascertained because there are instances of *e* in the dissimilar class. Thus this is an example of the evidence not being determinate.

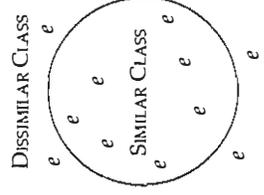


Figure 6: Not all evidence in the similar class

of thunder requires no effort, for example.) In such cases, the evidence is said to be *not proven* or *not established* (*nia grub pa*). Thus when it says in the chapter that the reason (or evidence) is not proven or not established, it means that the propositional property has not been fulfilled.

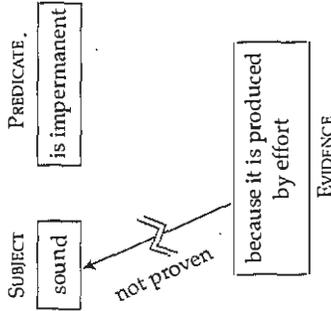


Figure 4: Unproven evidence

The two pervasions ascertain whether the evidence is necessarily present within all instances of the predicate. The entailing pervasion means that the predicate is entailed (*anvaya, rjes su 'gro ba*)<sup>3</sup> by the evidence—that is, in our example that being produced necessarily means being impermanent. This is evaluated by ascertaining that all instances of the evidence (being produced) are included in the similar class (*nyidun phiyogs*) of the predicate (the set of everything impermanent). If there is any instance of the evidence that is outside the similar class, then the entailing pervasion is not fulfilled. That is to say, anything that is produced—jugs, cars, anxiety, and so forth—must be impermanent for the entailing pervasion to be fulfilled.

The reverse pervasion is evaluated in the opposite manner: it means that everything that is not the predicate (being impermanent) is necessarily also not the evidence (being produced). In other words, everything that is permanent (that is, not impermanent) must also not be produced. In the text, this is called *reverse entailing* (*vyaitreka, ldog pa*). It is evaluated by ascertaining that there are no instances of the evidence in the dissimilar class (in our example, the set of everything permanent). Logically, this is the same as the entailing pervasion—it is

For example, in the syllogism “sound, the subject, is blue because it is produced,” the propositional property is proven because being produced is ascertained as always being present in the subject. However, the pervasions are not determinate because not everything that is produced (red jugs, for example) is blue, and there are things (red jugs) that are not blue but are produced. Thus the evidence in such a syllogism is not determinate, as shown in Figure 7, and the proposition is not proven.

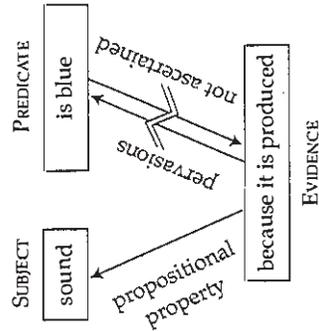


Figure 7: Evidence not determinate

## ANALOGIES

Even if all three modes are logically fulfilled, a syllogism is still not considered proven unless both debaters validly recognize that they have been fulfilled. Thus a method to help bring about that recognition is necessary, so it is normal in Indian logic for a syllogism to include an analogy—an opponent who is at first unable to recognize the logic with regard to the subject in question might recognize it when given an easily understandable analogy. For example, an opponent who is unable to recognize the impermanence of sound may well recognize that jugs are produced and thus impermanent. By making the analogy of sound to jugs, the opponent can then be brought to understand that sound is also produced and therefore impermanent.

Because analogies are considered crucial for bringing recognition of the three modes, they are integral to the syllogism, and if the analogy is fallacious then the entire syllogism is considered unproven. Thus there are several instances throughout this chapter where Dharmakīrti

refutes an opponent’s argument by attacking the analogy, notably in his refutation of the existence of a creator god. In addition, the analogies he provides for his own propositions give him an opportunity to display his own wit.

## TYPES OF EVIDENCE

When the evidence fulfills the three modes and there is a valid analogy, the evidence is said to be correct. There are said to be three types of correct evidence: evidence of nature, evidence of a result, and evidence of nonobservation. The first two prove that a phenomenon exists or that it has a certain predicated property, and the last is used to prove the nonexistence of a phenomenon or predicate.

1. Evidence of nature is a reason where the evidence and the predicate of the proposition share the same character. For example, in the syllogism “Sound, the subject, is impermanent because it is produced, like a jug,” the predicate being impermanent has the same character as the evidence, being produced. Since the evidence and predicate are thus related by having the same character, the evidence thus entails the predicate. The logic of the first half of Dharmakīrti’s chapter, presenting the reasons in order, is based on a series of such reasons of nature in that the presence of a cause proves the capacity to produce a result, as such a capacity is the nature of a cause. Thus the cultivation of loving-kindness proves that there is the capacity to achieve its result—the training in the path. The training in the path in turn proves there is the capacity to gain its result—the sugata—and the sugata proves that there is the capacity to attain the state of the protector. That protector—unerringly teaching the natures of the four noble truths—is the meaning of validity, and thus validity is established from the protector.
2. Evidence of a result is a reason that proves the prior existence of a cause by reason of the existence of the result, just as the presence of a flower proves the prior existence of its cause—a seed. The logic of the second half of this chapter is based on a sequence of such reasons: the ability of the Bhagavan Buddha to protect beings from samsara by teaching the nature of the four noble truths unerringly proves the prior existence of the sugata—his qualities of abandonment and realization. That in turn proves the prior presence of its cause—the training on the

path—which then proves the prior existence of its cause, the cultivation of loving-kindness.

3. Evidence of nonobservation is used to prove the nonexistence of a phenomenon by reason of it not being validly observed. An example of such evidence is the syllogism, “Rabbit horns, the subject, do not exist, because they have never been validly observed, like pink elephants.”<sup>4</sup> Dharmakīrti discusses such reasons at length in the chapter on perception, but he does use this type of evidence in this chapter as well.

This short introduction should give readers enough to grasp the basic logic of this chapter. Of course, a thorough study of types of evidence (*ritgs rigs*) would require far more study and debate; it is an integral part of a traditional Tibetan monastic education that cannot be given its full due in so few pages. However, there are several books on this topic available, as well as classes in it at various institutes, universities, and Dharma organizations, so readers who wish to study it more should look for such resources.

# The Sword of Wisdom

## For Thoroughly Ascertaining Reality

by *Mipham Rinpoche*

1. You have not the slightest confusion about philosophy,  
And have completely abandoned every fault,  
Your mind has no doubts about the three points—<sup>1</sup>  
Before Mañjuśrī, the treasure of wisdom, I bow.
2. Profound, vast and difficult to realize  
Is the nectar-like teaching of the sugatas—  
To those who long to taste it,  
I here grant the light of intelligence.
3. The Dharma taught by the Buddha  
Depends entirely upon the two levels of truth,  
The relative truth of the mundane  
And the truth of the ultimate meaning.<sup>2</sup>
4. If one is to apply an unerring and certain mind  
To the nature of these two truths,  
One must cultivate the excellent vision  
Of the two flawless valid cognitions.<sup>3</sup>
5. These appearances in all their rich variety  
Arise through dependent origination.  
Something that is truly independent,  
Like a lotus in the sky, will not appear.
6. It is a complete gathering of causes  
That functions to bring about an effect.  
All effects, whatsoever they may be,  
Depend upon their own particular causes.
7. It is by knowing what is or is not the case  
In terms of causes and their effects  
That we pursue one thing and avoid another,  
Whether in crafts or in philosophy—

8. They all have this as their starting point.  
This includes not only worldly disciplines,  
But also the training that transcends the world.  
All phenomena, arisen in mutual dependence,
9. Naturally possess their own particular  
Characteristics, which are uniquely theirs.  
The plain and simple facts of the conventional—  
Solidity, fluidity, warmth and so on—are incontestable.
10. Even just a single thing has countless properties,  
And can be classified in infinite ways,  
Based on affirmation and negation.  
These are natural features of the thing itself.
11. An object that is perceived clearly and directly,  
Has properties that seem separate and distinct,  
But these distinctions are mental designations,  
Distinguished and engaged with by conceptual mind.
12. Actual substance and what is imputed conceptually—  
These are two ways in which one can understand  
All that can be known, and many are the categories  
That come from further elaborating on these two.
13. Just so, they have their own causes, effects and natures,  
But when phenomena are investigated authentically,  
That which brings about arising cannot be observed,  
Nor is there anything that arises in dependence.
14. Each thing appears with its own identity,  
Yet is empty by its very nature,  
Absolute space with threefold liberation,  
The very nature of the ultimate.
15. How something functions and how it depends  
Are both aspects of its particular nature,  
So it is with a thing's nature that reasoning ends,  
And it would be futile to enquire any further.<sup>4</sup>
16. This kind of evaluation of things in their nature,  
According to each of the two levels of reality,  
Is proven by the basic facts of how things are,  
So it is reasoning that establishes what is tenable.

17. How things appear or how they ultimately abide,  
Can be known through perceiving their nature directly,  
Or it can be inferred unerringly based on  
Something else which is clearly apparent.
18. Direct perception itself is of four kinds:  
Unmistaken sensory, mental, self-awareness  
And yogic; all of which are non-conceptual,  
Since their objects appear with specific characteristics.
19. Without these direct perceptions  
There would be no evidence and hence no inference,  
And any perception of things arising from causes  
And then ceasing would become impossible.
20. If that were the case, how could we ever  
Understand them to be empty and so on?  
Without relying upon the conventional,  
There can be no realization of the ultimate.<sup>5</sup>
21. Cognitions brought about by the five senses  
Clearly experience their own objects.  
Without this direct sensory perception,  
Like blind folk, we would fail to see.
22. Mental direct perception arises from the faculty of mind,  
And clearly determines both outer and inner objects.  
Without it, there would be no aspect of consciousness  
Capable of perceiving all types of phenomena.
23. Yogic direct perception is the culmination of meditation  
Practised properly and according to the instructions.  
It clearly experiences its own objects, and without it  
There would be no vision of objects beyond the ordinary.
24. Just as this direct experience can eliminate  
Misperceptions about outer forms and the like,  
This is also how it is within the mind itself,  
If there were some other knower, there would be no end to them.
25. A mind that is cognizant and aware  
Naturally knows its objects, but at the same time  
Is also aware of itself, without relying upon something else,  
And this is what is termed 'self-awareness'.
26. Any experience of the other direct perceptions  
Is only determined to be actual direct perception  
By means of self-awareness; without this  
There would be no way of establishing it.
27. The root of inference lies in direct perception,  
And direct perception is determined by self-awareness.  
It all comes down to the experience of an undeluded mind;  
There are no other means of establishment beyond this.
28. Therefore, it is based on direct perceptions,  
Which are non-conceptual and undeluded,  
That misperceptions of apparent phenomena  
Can be decisively eliminated.
29. The conceptual mind is that which  
Conceives of objects by way of general images,  
Associating them with names to form concepts,  
From which stem all manner of words and thoughts.
30. Even for someone unaware of the proper expression,<sup>6</sup>  
Generic images will appear in the mind,  
Ready to be named, and through such concepts,  
Objects can still be pursued or avoided.<sup>7</sup>
31. Without this conceptual mind,  
There could be no conventions of affirmation or denial,  
And it would be impossible to infer anything  
Or communicate the points of training.
32. Conceptual thought enquires into and establishes  
That which is not evident directly, such as future pursuits.  
Without this ability to infer things conceptually,  
We would all become like newborn babies.
33. A reason is information that allows us to know something else.<sup>8</sup>  
The reason must be a feature of the subject,<sup>9</sup>  
And there must be positive and negative logical pervasion—<sup>10</sup>  
When these three modes are present, there can be no delusion.
34. From a reason that is arrived at through  
Valid direct perception and valid inference,  
What is hidden can be logically inferred,  
And things can be proven by means of relationship.

35. There are reasons that are results and natural reasons.<sup>11</sup>  
When a thing is not observed or its opposite is seen,  
Something is negated for the reason that it cannot be observed—  
Like this, there are three types of evidence in all.
36. From a genuine perspective, all appearances  
Are now, and always have been, the same;  
And since a pure mind sees only purity,  
Their nature remains entirely pure.
37. Real functioning things dependently arise,  
And what is unreal is dependently imputed;  
Therefore both the real and the unreal  
Are empty by their very nature.
38. In the way things are, one cannot separate  
A thing which is empty from its own emptiness.  
So appearance and emptiness are indivisibly united,  
This is inexpressible—one must know it for oneself!
39. Any affirmation, whatsoever it may be,  
Must affirm either existence or identity;  
And any negation, whatsoever it may be,  
Must negate either existence or identity.
40. Negations and affirmations based on what is valid  
May be set out definitively in the proper way,  
And then, while remaining logically consistent,  
One can prove a point to others or make a refutation.
41. When it comes to refutation, you can compose  
Your own syllogisms including all three modes,  
Or you can state the consequences that follow  
From the opponent's very own assertions.
42. Within the conventional, there is that which  
We call 'impure and narrow vision' because  
Reality and appearances do not coincide,  
And a vision in which things are purely seen.
43. This makes two types of conventional validity,  
Like seeing with eyes that are human and divine.  
The difference between the two lies in their  
Essential natures, causes, results and functions.
44. One is an undeceived cognition of limited scope,  
That arises from a correct perception of its object,  
Clearing misperceptions of things in a narrow field of vision,  
To bring a thorough apprehension of a given object.
45. One is a pristine cognition of what is vast in nature,  
That arises from an observation of precisely how things are,  
Clearing misperceptions of objects beyond the imagination,  
To bring the result of wisdom that knows all there is.
46. The absolute as well has its two aspects:  
Categorized and uncategorized conceptually,  
And then to evaluate them, two types of validity  
For looking into what is ultimately true.
47. It is by relying on the former that one reaches the latter.  
Like impaired vision that is healed and made pure,  
When the eye of valid cognition is fully developed,  
The truth of purity and equalness can be seen.
48. It is because the mind, both with concepts and without,  
Is sometimes deluded—as when perceiving two moons,  
Dreaming or believing a rope is a snake—<sup>12</sup> and sometimes not,  
That we have the categories of valid and invalid cognition.
49. Without these categories of valid and invalid cognition,  
A clear separation between the deluded and false  
And the undeluded and true would be impossible,  
And the tenets of philosophy could not be put forward.
50. When we investigate on the level of reality,  
In spite of all these conceptual elaborations,  
Based on classifications such as direct perception,  
Inference, valid and invalid cognition and so on,
51. All is empty by its very nature.  
And this natural simplicity itself  
Is a feature of all conventional constructs,  
Just as heat is a property of fire.
52. So it is that appearance and emptiness  
Are inseparable in all phenomena  
As the method and its outcome,<sup>13</sup> which is why  
You cannot negate one and affirm the other.

53. "Without investigating what is and is not valid,  
But through mundane perception alone,  
Can one enter into the ultimate?" you may ask.  
It is true that this is not ruled out.
54. Seeing how this thing is produced from that thing  
Is the direct perception of ordinary people,  
Based on which they infer and make predictions—  
In fact, this is '*pramāṇa*' in all but name.
55. Without the two kinds of conventional valid cognition,  
Pure visions would seem false, and, even for the impure,  
It would be unfeasible to say of a conch shell,  
"White is its true colour, and yellow it is not."
56. Without the two approaches to ultimate analysis,  
We would not know the unity of the two truths,  
The ultimate would fall into conceptual extremes,  
And be a cause for its very own destruction.
57. The relative, that which is examined, is not real.  
So too the probing mind and self-awareness.  
When we look, they are not there, like the moon in water—  
This is the ultimate indivisibility of the two truths.
58. This is the one truth, nirvāṇa, the limit of reality,  
It is the ultimate state of all phenomena,  
Enlightened being where in knowing and known are inseparable,  
Pure wisdom experience, without limit or centre.
59. Once the excellent eye of discriminating wisdom  
Has opened to the profound and vast like this,  
One sees the noble path travelled by  
The bliss-gone buddhas and their heirs,
60. Those enlightened beings of mighty intelligence.  
This is the way of the sūtra and mantra vehicles,  
So difficult to find. When we have the opportunity,  
Let us not fail to gain the result!
61. Possessing in this way the four reasonings,  
And endowed with the light of intelligence,  
Let us not be deceived by others, but investigate  
And be sure to follow the four reliances.
62. If we do not have this understanding,  
Then, like a blind man leaning on his staff,  
We can rely on fame, mere words or what is easy to understand,  
And go against the logic of the four reliances.
63. Therefore do not rely on individuals,  
But rely upon the Dharma.  
Freedom comes from the genuine path that is taught,  
Not from the one who teaches it.
64. When the teachings are well presented,  
It does not matter what the speaker is like.  
Even the bliss-gone buddhas themselves  
Appear as butchers and such like to train disciples.
65. If he contradicts the Mahāyāna and so on,  
Then however eloquent a speaker may seem,  
He will bring you no real benefit,  
Like a demon assuming Buddha's form.
66. Whenever you study or contemplate the Dharma,  
Rely not on the words, but on their meaning.  
If the point is understood, it matters little  
How eloquently or not the words were spoken.
67. Once you have understood what the speaker  
Intended to communicate, if you then continue  
To think about each word and expression,  
It is as if your elephant is found, yet still you search.
68. If you misinterpret the words they will only increase,  
And you'll never stop till you run out of thoughts,  
All the while straying further and further from the point.  
Like a child at play, you'll only end up exhausted.
69. Even for a single phrase like "Fetch the wood!"  
Out of context, there's no end to what it might mean.  
Yet if you understand what is meant,  
The need for the words ends just there.
70. When a finger points to the moon,  
The ignorant look at the finger itself.  
Fools, who are attached to language alone,  
May think they understand, but it will not be easy.

71. When it comes to the meaning of what is taught,  
You should know the provisional and definitive,  
And rely not on any provisional meaning,  
But only on the meaning that has certain truth.
72. The All-Knowing One himself, in all his wisdom,  
Taught in accord with students' capacities and intentions,  
Presenting vehicles of various levels,  
Just like the rungs of a ladder.
73. Wisely, he spoke with certain intentions in mind,  
As with the eight kinds of implied or indirect instructions.  
If taken literally, these might be invalidated,  
But they were spoken for specific reasons.
74. From the four schools of buddhist philosophy  
Through to the ultimate vajra vehicle,  
Aspects not fully realized by the lower approaches,  
Are made clear by those which are more advanced.
75. Seeing it to be superior according to the texts and logic,  
The intelligent seize the definitive meaning  
Like a swan drawing milk from water,  
And revel in the ocean of buddhist teachings.
76. The teachings of the profound vajra vehicle are also sealed  
By means of the six limits and four modes.<sup>14</sup>  
But can be definitively established by stainless reasoning,  
Accompanied by the pith instructions of the lineage.
77. The inseparable union of the primordial purity  
And great equalness of all phenomena  
Is the point that is definitively established  
By the two authentic valid cognitions.
78. By applying the key points of the literal, general,  
Hidden and ultimate meaning, without any conflict  
In the approaches of the pāramitās, development phase,  
Completion phase and the Great Perfection,
79. One gains the confidence of certainty about reality.  
Then the supremely intelligent heirs of the buddhas  
Come to master an inexhaustible treasury of Dharma,  
As a sign of victory for the teachings of scripture and realization.
80. When taking the definitive meaning into experience,  
Do not rely upon the ordinary dualistic mind  
That chases after words and concepts,  
But upon non-dual wisdom itself.
81. That which operates with conceptual ideas is the ordinary mind,  
Whose nature is dualistic, involving 'perceiver' and 'perceived'.  
All that it conceptualizes in this way is false,  
And can never reach the actual nature of reality.
82. Any idea of something real or unreal, both or neither—  
Any such concept, however it's conceived—is still only a concept,  
And whatever ideas we hold in mind,  
They are still within the domain of Māra.
83. This has been stated in the sūtras.  
It is not by any assertion or denial  
That we will put an end to concepts.  
But once we see without rejecting or affirming, there is freedom.
84. Although it is without any perceiving subject or object perceived,  
There is naturally occurring wisdom that is aware of itself,  
And all ideas of existence, non-existence, both and neither have ceased completely  
This is said to be supreme primordial wisdom.
85. Just like the orb of the sun to someone blind since birth,  
This has never been seen by the spiritually immature.  
However much they think about it, they fail to understand,  
And so it is only a cause of fear in the minds of the foolish.
86. Yet through scriptures of authentic origin,  
Reasoning that refutes all four conceptual extremes,  
And the force of the master's practical instructions,  
It arises in our experience, like sight that is restored.
87. At that time, with a faith that comes from savouring  
The nectar-like taste of the Buddhadharmā,  
Our eyes open widely in purest joy  
And we glimpse the buddhas' wisdom kāya.
88. In this, all things without exception  
Are seen in their ultimate state of equality,  
And with this certainty about what is itself beyond expression,  
Skillfully, one expresses the unending treasury of Dharma.

89. Having become learned in the ways of the two truths,  
When seeing the reality of their inseparable unity,  
One knows that, just as a husk is removed to reveal the grain,  
All the various methods are simply to lead one to this point.
90. With the thought, “Skilled in means are the buddhas,  
And all these methods make a genuine path,”  
An irreversible sense of confidence will arise  
In the teachers and their teachings.
91. By gaining the supreme non-abiding wisdom,  
Naturally one is freed from the extremes of existence and quiescence,  
And the ornament of great and effortless compassion  
Arises to pervade throughout the furthest reaches of space and time.
92. When the correct approach to the two truths  
Is realized through contemplating the four reasonings  
In this way, it brings the four genuine reliances.  
From such a supreme and flawless cause as this
93. Comes the result of profound primordial wisdom.  
When this experience is developed to its fullest  
It releases the eight great treasures of confidence<sup>15</sup>  
That were sealed within the absolute space of awareness.
94. Scriptures heard and contemplated in the past  
Are never forgotten—this is the treasure of recollection.  
Knowing precisely their profound and vast points—  
This is the treasure of intelligence.
95. Understanding all the themes of the sūtra and tantra collections—  
This is the treasure of realization.  
Never forgetting any detail from one’s studies—  
This is the treasure of retention.
96. Satisfying all beings with excellent explanations—  
This is the treasure of confidence.  
Safeguarding the precious treasury of sacred teachings—  
This is the treasure of Dharma.
97. Not severing the continuous line of the Three Jewels—  
This is the treasure of bodhicitta.  
Gaining acceptance of the nature of equality beyond arising—  
This is the treasure of accomplishment.
98. Someone who has mastered these eight great inexhaustible treasures  
Will never separate from them, and  
Will be praised by the buddhas and their heirs  
And become a sovereign of the three worlds.
99. The valid teachings of the victorious buddhas  
Are established by the valid cognitions,  
So by developing confidence through the valid path,  
The true result of the valid teachings will be seen.
100. With noble vision, completely and utterly pure,  
And great compassion that has reached perfection,  
The bliss-gone buddha revealed the path  
And said, “The taste of this nectar I have discovered
101. Should be experienced by means of  
The four reasonings and the four reliances.”  
Although a portion of this elixir has now been shared,  
In this modern age rife with degeneration,
102. Through all the methods that run counter to this approach,  
It is difficult to savour the supreme taste of the teachings.  
With this in mind, and with an altruistic intention  
And a mind of supreme devotion for the teachings,
103. I have here briefly explained how to generate  
The immaculate wisdom that is born of reflection.  
Through the merit of this may all beings  
Become the very equal of Mañjuśrī!
104. Turned towards the sun of Mañjuśrī’s speech,  
The water-born lotus of my heart opens in devotion,  
May these golden honey drops of excellent explanation  
Become a plentiful feast for the bees of good fortune!
- I had had the intention to write this for a while, but in accord with the recent request made by the learned scholar Lhaksam Gyaltsen, this was written in a single day by Jampal Gyepa on the twenty-ninth day of the third month of the Sakyong year (i.e. Wood Bird, 1885). Mangalam. There are one hundred and four verses. Virtue!*

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| Translated by Adam Pearcey, [Rigpa Translations](#). 2004.

1. Mipham Rinpoche in his own commentary, རྟོག་རྒྱུ་ལའང་རྒྱུ་ལེགས་པར་བརྟེན་གྱི་མཚན་པུངས། (hereafter MR) says that this refers to the three modes of a valid inference. ←
2. This verse appears in Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyaṃakakārikā*, XXIV, 8. ←
3. MR: conventional and ultimate valid cognition. ←
4. MR. For example, heat is the nature of fire. We don't need to look into why it is hot; that is simply how it is. ←
5. These last two lines are a quotation from Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyaṃakakārikā*, XXIV, 10. ←
6. MR gives the example of a small child or even an animal. ←
7. MR says for example fire is avoided and water sought after. ←
8. MR says for example, through the presence of smoke we can know that there is fire behind the mountain. ←
9. In the well-known syllogism, "Given the subject of sound, it is impermanent because it is created" this refers to the fact that sound is created. ←
10. In the above example, positive logical pervasion would be the fact that whatever is created is impermanent. Negative logical pervasion refers to the fact that whatever is not impermanent it is not created. ←
11. The three types of evidence are: resultant evidence, natural, and non-observation. ←
12. MR. Seeing two moons is a deluded sensory perception, dreaming is deluded mental perception, both of which are non-conceptual, and mistaking a rope for a snake is deluded and conceptual. ←
13. MR. Appearance is the method, emptiness is the outcome. ←
14. Six limits: 1) provisional meaning, 2) definitive meaning, 3) indirect, 4) not indirect, 5) literally true and 6) not literally true. Four modes: 1) literal, 2) general, 3) hidden and 4) ultimate. ←
15. These eight are mentioned in the *Lalitavistara Sūtra* (ལྷོ་བོ་རྩེ་ལུ་པུ་). This is all based on a quotation from that text. ←

tual cognition is that if the given consciousness has its own apparent object, then that must be without any specifically characterized phenomenon or any established basis whatsoever.<sup>196</sup>

The defining characteristic of mistaken consciousness is that it apprehends *x* although *x* does not exist, while the defining characteristic of unmitaken consciousness is that it cognizes the real nature of its object.

The defining characteristic of intrinsic or reflexive awareness is that it is the apprehending consciousness (*dzin pa'i rnam shes*), while the defining characteristic of extraneous awareness is that it is consciousness of the apprehended (*gzung bu'i rnam shes*).<sup>197</sup>

The defining characteristic of mind is that, with regard to the object and the attributes of an object, it cognizes only the object. When analyzed, the mind comprises the six or eight modes of consciousness (*rnam shes tibogs drug gam bgyad*).<sup>198</sup> The defining characteristic of mental states is that they cognize the particular attributes of an object. When analyzed, they comprise the fifty-one mental states (*sems byung lnga bcu rtsa gcig*).<sup>199</sup>

Although these aforementioned [aspects of the cognizing subject] have a great many subcategories, I will not digress further at this point.

**VALID COGNITION [viii']**

- With regard to direct perception,
- There are four modes of direct perception:
- Sense organs, mind, intrinsic awareness, and yoga.
- Inference is made through the power of facts,
- Popular acclaim, and conviction.
- There are many such categories and approaches,
- And the conclusions of valid cognition
- Should also be incidentally understood.

When valid cognition is quantifiably analyzed, it comprises both the valid cognition of direct perception (*pratyakṣapramāṇa*, *mngon sum tshad ma*) and the valid cognition of inference (*anumānapramāṇa*, *rjes dpag tshad ma*).

**THE VALID COGNITION OF DIRECT PERCEPTION [aa']**

The defining characteristic of the valid cognition of direct perception is [cognition] which, without conceptuality and without bewilderment, under-

# The Treasury of Knowledge

*Book Six, Parts One and Two*

## Indo-Tibetan Classical Learning and Buddhist Phenomenology

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SNOW LION  
BOSTON & LONDON

2012

stands its own objects as they newly arise. It comprises the four designated modes of direct perception. The defining characteristic of direct perception is consciousness without conceptuality and without bewilderment.<sup>200</sup>

When analyzed, [direct perception] comprises four modes, namely, direct perception of the sense organs (*indriyapratyakṣa*, *dbangpo'i mngon sum*), direct perception of mental consciousness (*mana pratyakṣa*, *yi ki mngon sum*), direct perception of intrinsic or reflexive awareness (*svasamuedanapratyakṣa*, *rang rig gi mngon sum*), and direct perception of yoga (*yogapratyakṣa*, *rnal 'byor gyi mngon sum*).

#### DIRECT PERCEPTION OF THE SENSE ORGANS [1"]

The defining characteristic of the first of these is [bare] consciousness consisting of extraneous awareness, which arises without conceptuality and without bewilderment, directly from the physical sense organs that constitute an individual's own predominant condition. It has five aspects, corresponding to the direct perception of the [five] sense organs [the eye and so forth] which apprehend their respective sense objects.<sup>201</sup>

#### DIRECT PERCEPTION OF MENTAL CONSCIOUSNESS [2"]

The defining characteristic of the second is [bare] consciousness consisting of extraneous awareness, which arises without conceptuality and without bewilderment, directly from the sense faculty of the mind that constitutes an individual's own predominant condition. It too has five aspects, corresponding to the direct perception of the [five aspects of] mind, which apprehend their respective sense objects.<sup>202</sup>

#### DIRECT PERCEPTION OF INTRINSIC AWARENESS [3"]

The defining characteristic of the third is [bare] consciousness transcending all the other aspects of consciousness, which is exclusively introverted (*khā nang kho nar 'phyogs pa'i shes pa*).<sup>203</sup>

#### DIRECT PERCEPTION OF YOGA [4"]

The defining characteristic of the fourth is the [bare] consciousness of a sublime being (*ārya*, *'phags pa*), free from conceptuality and without bewil-

derment, which derives from the power of genuine meditation (*bhāvanā*, *sgom*). When the last of these is analyzed, there are in fact three modes of the direct perception of yoga, corresponding to [the meditations of] the pious attendants, the hermit buddhas (*pratyekabuddha*, *rang rgyal*), and the [bodhisattva] followers of the Greater Vehicle—these are exemplified respectively by the path of insight (*darśanamārga*, *mtshong lam*) attained by the pious attendants, the path of insight attained by the hermit buddhas, [and so forth].<sup>204</sup>

#### VALID COGNITION OF INFERENCE [bb']

The defining characteristic of the valid cognition of inference is that the intellect [correctly] understands its own indirectly evident objects as they newly arise, dependent on logical reasoning or evidence (*linga*, *rtags*) in which the threefold criteria (*trairūpya*, *ishul gsum*) are fully present.<sup>205</sup>

#### INFERENCE PROCEEDING FROM THE COGENT POWER OF FACTS [1"]

It has three subdivisions. Among them, inference proceeding from the cogent power of facts (*vastubalapravṛttānumāna*, *dnags po stobs zhugs kyi rjes dpag*) is exemplified by the intellect that understands that sound is impermanent, dependent on factual evidence.

#### INFERENCE BASED ON POPULAR ACCLAIM [2"]

Inference based on popular acclaim (*yaśo 'numāna*, *grags pa'i rjes dpag*) is exemplified by the understanding that the name Śāśin (*yi bong can*) may be given to the moon, based on the evidence of its [widespread] acceptance as a conceptual object.

#### INFERENCE ON THE BASIS OF CONVICTION [3"]

Inference on the basis of conviction (*āptānumāna*, *yi'd ches rjes dpag*) is exemplified by the intellect that understands that the meaning presented in authoritative scriptures, such as the [previously cited] verse, "resources come through generosity...", is infallible, based on scriptural authority of which the purity is established by the three types of scrutiny.<sup>206</sup>

### INTERNALLY AND EXTERNALLY ASCERTAINED VALID COGNITION [cc, dd']

There are many [other] illustrative categories and approaches that issue from this [analysis], such as the distinction between internally ascertained valid cognition (*yang las nges kyī tshad ma*) and externally ascertained valid cognition (*gzhan las nges kyī tshad ma*), which belong here.<sup>207</sup>

### [THE CONCLUSIONS OF VALID COGNITION]

It is explained that the conclusions of valid cognition (*pramāṇaphala, tshad 'bras*) should also be understood on the basis of the following incidental comments that relate to these [categories of direct perception and inference].

Although there are many systematic presentations [that could be made], briefly stated, the successful conclusion (*grub 'bras*) of a given presentation is achieved with reference to its causal basis. [Therefore, in the case of direct perception,] let us take, for example, the unmistakable apprehension of the color "blue" as an illustration (*mtshan gzhi*). The defining characteristic is that consciousness arises in conformity with its object. The conclusion of the valid cognition is that the term [blue] on the basis of which the material object in question is understood can then be applied.

Similarly, in the case of inference, let us take the statement that "sound is impermanent" as the object of appraisal. An image of sound being impermanent arises from the understanding of the proof that sound is impermanent, in which all the three criteria are fully present. Valid cognition then refers to the consciousness which is infallible with regard to the statement "sound is impermanent" whenever it newly arises. The conclusion of this inference is that sound is directly understood to be impermanent.

### PROCESSES OF LOGICAL UNDERSTANDING [c]

As for the third part of the extensive exegesis, concerning [processes of] logical understanding [it is said in the root verses]:

- With regard to [the logical processes of genuine] understanding,
- There are contradictions [that may be determined],
- Along with relations, negations, proofs, universals and particulars,
- Identity and difference, eliminative and affirmative engagement,

As well as extraneous [elimination], definition, definiendum, Substance and counterpart [phenomena], and the two modes of inference.

The processes of understanding objects or knowable [phenomena] are established to include the following determinations: contradiction (*virudha, gal ba*), relation (*sambandha, 'brel ba*), negation (*pratisedha, dgag pa*), proof (*vidhi, sgrub pa*), universals (*sāmānya, spyi*), particulars (*viśeṣa, bye brag*), identity and difference (*abhinnabhinna, gcig dang tha dad*), eliminative engagement (*apohapravrtti, sel 'jug*), affirmative engagement (*vidhipravrtti, sgrub 'jug*), extraneous elimination (*anyāpoha, gzhan sel*), definition (*lakṣaṇa, mtshan nyid*), definiendum (*lakṣya, mtshon bya*), substance phenomena (*dravyadharmā, rdzas chos*), distinguishing counterpart phenomena (*vyāvrttidharmā, ldog chos*), and the two modes of inference (*anumāna, rjes dpag nam gnyis*).

### CONTRADICTION [i']

Among them, the defining characteristic of contradiction is that it indicates mutually exclusive or disharmonious factors, such as "light and darkness."<sup>208</sup>

### RELATION [ii']

The defining characteristic of relation is that [the attribute] *y* is different from the given phenomenon *x*, but if it is negated the phenomenon will explicitly be negated as well, as in the example, "golden vase."<sup>209</sup>

### NEGATION [iii']

The defining characteristic of negation is that in the case of a given phenomenon, for every object-universal (*don spyi*) *x* that arises, a corresponding object-universal of its negandum (*dgag bya*) *y* also arises.<sup>210</sup>

### PROOF [iv']

The defining characteristic of proof is that in the case of a given phenomenon, for every object-universal *x* that arises, a corresponding object-universal of its negandum *y* does not arise, as in the example "vase" [where the negandum is absent].<sup>211</sup>

### UNIVERSALS [v']

The defining characteristic of a universal is that it has a positive concomitance (*anvaya, rjes gro*) with a multiplicity [of attributes].<sup>212</sup>

### PARTICULARS [vi']

The defining characteristic of a particular is that (1) a particular [attribute] *x* must be phenomenon *y*; (2) *x* and *y* have a relation of essential identity (*sādāmyasambandha, bodagcig bréd*); and (3) there are established to be many other instances of *y* which are not *x*.<sup>213</sup>

For example, taking “gold” and “vase” respectively as the particular and the phenomenon, there is a relation of essential identity between “vase” and “gold,” but there are also established to be many other particulars, such as “copper vase,” “clay vase,” and so forth, which are identified with the phenomenon “vase” and are not the [particular] “golden vase.”

### IDENTITY AND DIFFERENCE [vii']

The defining characteristic of identity is that in the case of a given phenomenon, different conceptual thoughts will not arise with respect to it, as in the case of the “color white.” The defining characteristic of difference is that the established basis (*gzhi grub*), phenomenon *x*, is to be comprehended in terms of different explicit names (*angos ming*), such as “pillar” and “vase” which refer to different substances (*rdzas tha dad*), or [in terms of different predicates] such as “created” and “impermanent” which refer to different distinguishing counterparts (*ldog tha dad*).<sup>214</sup>

### ELIMINATIVE ENGAGEMENT [viii']

The defining characteristic of eliminative engagement is that in the case of the given subject of a [conceptual] predicate *x*, even though there are all sorts of phenomena that are coextensive or congruent in their logical entailment (*yin khyab myyam*) with the given predicate *x*, it does not engage with object *y*. This is exemplified by the certainty that comes from [correctly] understanding that a vase [is not permanent].

### AFFIRMATIVE ENGAGEMENT [ix']

The defining characteristic of affirmative engagement is that in the case of the given subject of a [perceptual] predicate *x*, even though there are all sorts of phenomena that are coextensive or congruent with the given predicate *x*, it does engage with object *y*. This is exemplified by the focusing on object-universals.<sup>215</sup> Alternatively, the defining characteristic of these two is that [in the case of eliminative engagement,] [the subject] does not engage with its object, having differentiated its parts, and [in the case of affirmative engagement, the subject] does engage with its object, having differentiated its parts.

### EXTRANEOUS ELIMINATION [x']

The defining characteristic of extraneous elimination is that the predicate is to be understood, once its own [counterpart] that is to be eliminated has been verbally negated, as when the statement “this is a man” eliminates [the counterpart] “this is a woman,” or just as the statement “there is no mountain” eliminates [the counterpart] “there is a mountain.”<sup>216</sup>

### DEFINITION [xi']

The defining characteristic of a definition is that all the three real properties (*don chos gsum*) are fully present, whereas the defining characteristic of the absence of defining characteristics is that the three real properties are not fully present.<sup>217</sup> In this context, the term “three real properties” refers to the three substantially existent properties [of defining characteristics] (*rdzas yod chos gsum*).<sup>218</sup> That is to say, they exist materially (*rdul rdzas su grub pa*), they exist as entities (*angos por yod pa*), and they are phenomenally existent (*chos su yod*) because the terms “phenomenon” (*chos*) and “knowable object” (*shes bya*) are equivalent.

### DEFINIENDUM [xii']

The defining characteristic of a defined object or definiendum is that the three properties of conventional terminology (*sha snyad chos gsum*) are fully present, whereas the defining characteristic of the absence of a defined object is that the three properties of conventional terminology are not fully present. The three properties of conventional terminology are cognition, signification, and application or engagement (*shes brjod jug gsum*).<sup>219</sup> Incidentally,

the defining characteristic of the term “illustration” (*mishan gzhi*) is that it is the basis upon which a defined object is defined to be in accordance with its defining characteristic.<sup>210</sup>

When the defects of a definition are analyzed, there are said to be three such defects, namely, the defect of a definition that has no logical entailment (*vyāpti, khyab pa*), the defect of a definition that has excessive logical entailment, and the defect of a definition that is not present in its [proposed] illustration. These [defects] are exemplified respectively as follows:

- (1) When “stripes, including the hump” are presented as the definition of an ox, the expression “stripes including the hump” has no logical entailment in respect of an ox.
- (2) When “cephalic” is presented as the definition of an ox, the expression “cephalic” has excessive logical entailment in respect of an ox.
- (3) When “humped and so forth” is presented as the definition of a horse and an ox, the [proposed] illustration “humped and so forth” is not present in respect of the [definiendum] horse.

Alternatively, the term “definition” can be analyzed in terms of the so-called eight ostensible factors (*tar snang bgyad*).<sup>211</sup>

#### SUBSTANCE PHENOMENON [xiii']

The defining characteristic of substance (*dravya, rdzas*) is exemplified by physical form, which is the necessary efficient condition of a human being. The defining characteristic of the term “substance-phenomenon” (*dravyadharmā, rdzas chos*) is exemplified by an attribute of physical form, such as the impermanence of form, which is the basis underlying the identity of a substance-phenomenon.

#### DISTINGUISHING COUNTERPART PHENOMENON [xiv']

The defining characteristic of the term “distinguishing counterpart” (*vyāvṛtti, ldog pa*) is a given phenomenon that conceptually appears to be the opposite of [phenomena] of a dissimilar class but is not actually existent, such as the appearance of form in conceptual thought. The defining characteristic of a “counterpart phenomenon” (*ldog chos*) is a given phenomenon which conceptually appears as a substantial attribute but is not actually existent, such as the appearance of form as impermanent in [the mind of] a logician.<sup>222</sup>

#### THE TWO MODES OF INFERENCE [xv']

##### INFERENCE FOR ONE'S OWN SAKE [aa']

[Concerning the first of the two modes of inference, it is said in the root verses:]

[The first of these] is inference for one's own sake —

This requires genuine evidence endowed with the three criteria.

One should reject ostensible and contradictory evidence

In which [these criteria] are incomplete.

The [given] examples should also be determined accordingly.

When inference (*anumāna, rjes dpag*) which is to be undertaken for one's own sake is analyzed in particular, the defining characteristic of genuine reasoning or genuine evidence is that the three criteria—property of the thesis (*paksadharmā, phyogs chos*), forward logical entailment (*anvayavyāpti, rjes khyab*), and counter logical entailment (*vyatirekavyāpti, ldog khyab*)—are fully present.<sup>223</sup>

##### PROPERTY OF THE THESIS [1'']

The defining characteristic of the property of the thesis is that the reason or evidence *x* is ascertained by valid cognition to be in conformity with the statement proposed on the basis of the subject of interest (*shes 'dod can*) that is to be proven.

##### FORWARD LOGICAL ENTAILMENT [2'']

The defining characteristic of forward logical entailment is that the reason or evidence *x* is ascertained [by valid cognition] to be present exclusively in the analogous term or compatible factor (*sapaksa, mthun phyogs*), in accordance with the logical proof that is presented.

##### COUNTER LOGICAL ENTAILMENT [3'']

The defining characteristic of counter logical entailment is that the reason or evidence *x* is ascertained [by valid cognition] to be absent exclusively in the

non-analogous term or incompatible factor (*vipakṣa, mi mthun phyogs*), in accordance with the logical proof that is presented.<sup>224</sup>

These three criteria may be exemplified as follows: “When sound is presented or stated to be impermanent, sound, the subject for discussion, is impermanent because it has been created. Just like a vase, for example, so has sound also been created.” Here, sound is the subject for discussion, the basis for the debate (*adhiکارنا, rtsod gzhi*). “Impermanent” is the property of the probandum (*sādhya*, *bsgrub bya*). “Created” is the evidence (*linga, rtags*) or reason (*betu, gtan tshigs*); and “vase” is the analogous example (*sādharmyadr̥ṣṭānta, mthun dpe*). Now, the criterion of “sound” (*x*), presented [here] as the subject for discussion, the basis for the debate, being “created” (*y*), which is presented as the evidence, requires an acceptance (*mthung snang*) in the mind of both the [antagonist] who presents the statement of proof and [the respondent or protagonist] who is the focus of this presentation. The correct formulation of this [criterion] is the property of the thesis that is to be established through valid cognition. [The second criterion,] forward logical entailment, is represented [in this example] by the words “is created,” and [the third criterion,] inverse or negative logical entailment, is represented by the [implied] statement, “permanent things are uncreated.”<sup>225</sup>

#### GENUINE EVIDENCE [4"]

When genuine reason or evidence is quantifiably analyzed, there are said to be three kinds of [genuine] evidence, namely, the [genuine] evidence associated with the axiom of the result (*kāryahetu, 'bras bu'i gtan tshigs*), the axiom of identity (*svabhāvahetu, rang bebin gyi gtan tshigs*), and the axiom of the absence of the objective referent (*anupalabdihetu, ma dmigs pa'i gtan tshigs*).<sup>226</sup>

When analyzed in terms of its objectives, [genuine reason] may be applied both for one's own sake (*rang don gyi rtags*) and for the sake of others (*gzhan don gyi rtags*). Then, when analyzed in terms of its modes of establishing proof, there are many subcategories, such as the distinction between proof of a meaning (*don sgrub*) and proof of a conventional term (*pha snyad sgrub*).<sup>227</sup>

#### OSTENSIBLE EVIDENCE [5"]

When the three criteria [of genuine evidence] are incomplete, the evidence is said to be ostensible (*ābhāsalinga, rtags liar snang*). There are many types of

ostensible evidence that have to be rejected, such as contradictory evidence (*viruddhalinga, gal ba'i rtags*), unascertained evidence (*anaikāntikalinga, manges pa'i rtags*) and unestablished evidence (*asiddhalinga, ma grub pa'i rtags*).<sup>228</sup>

#### EXAMPLES [6"]

##### CORRECT ANALOGOUS EXAMPLES [a"]

In such contexts, even the examples that are given are to be determined accordingly, as correct or ostensible. The defining characteristic of a correct example is that it is the basis of a definitive logical entailment, preceding a definitive probandum. When analyzed, there are two sorts of [correct example], among which the defining characteristic of the first, correct analogous examples (*sādharmyadr̥ṣṭānta, mthun dpe yang dag*), is that they are the definitive basis preceding a logical entailment that precedes a definitive probandum, as in the [aforementioned] proposition where the analogous example proving that sound is impermanent is stated to be a vase.

##### NONANALOGOUS EXAMPLES [b"]

The defining characteristic of correct non-analogous examples (*vaidharmyadr̥ṣṭānta, mi mthun dpe yang dag*) is that they are the definitive basis of an authentic inverse logical entailment, made in respect of a definitive probandum, as when space is given as a non-analogous example, while proving that sound is impermanent because it is created.<sup>229</sup>

##### OSTENSIBLE EXAMPLES [c"]

The defining characteristic of ostensible examples is that they start out as the definitive basis for logical entailment with regard to a definitive probandum, but they are incapable of being definitive. Moreover, although there are many other defective types of evidence and examples, they may be illustrated by the aforementioned.<sup>230</sup> These should all be determined and then rejected.

#### INFERENCE FOR THE SAKE OF OTHERS [bb']

[The second of these] is inference for the sake of others—  
This requires a statement of proof endowed with the three criteria,  
Acceptable to both the antagonist and the respondent,

And endowed with the two aspects.  
 In the case of evidence, elimination, refutation,  
 Consequential reasoning, and so forth,  
 The ostensible [types] should be rejected,  
 And the correct [types] should be established.  
 While these [processes of logical understanding] are prestigious in  
 modern circles...

The defining characteristic of inference for the sake of others, or correct statement of proof (*sgrub ngag*), is that the statement of proof should be presented, endowed with the three criteria, without addition or omission, that are definitively acceptable to both the antagonist (*vādin, rgol mkhan*) and the protagonist or respondent (*prativādin, phyir rgol*).<sup>231</sup>

#### CORRECT STATEMENT OF PROOF [1"]

Statements of proof are said to have two aspects: The [first of these] is a statement of proof applying a qualitative similarity (*chos mthun sbyor gyi sgrub ngag*), as in the statement, "That which is created is logically entailed to be impermanent, just, for example, like a vase. Sound too is created." The [second] is a statement of proof applying a qualitative dissimilarity (*chos mi mthun sbyor gyi sgrub ngag*), as in the statement, "That which is permanent is logically entailed to be uncreated, just, for example, like space. Sound by contrast is created."

#### OSTENSIBLE STATEMENT OF PROOF [2"]

The defining characteristic of an ostensible statement of proof is that, in the case of a given statement of proof, either the cognizing intellect, or the object, or the words [that are employed] are defective and in contradiction of the three criteria of logical reasoning.

#### PROBANDUM BASED ON CORRECT EVIDENCE [3"]

The defining characteristic of a probandum endowed with correct evidence is that it should be comprehended from its inception on the basis of correct evidence, as exemplified in the statement, "Created things, the subject for discussion, are impermanent, like a vase, for example."

For these reasons it is said that both [aspects of inference], for one's own sake and for the sake of others, may be correct or ostensible.<sup>232</sup>

#### ELIMINATION [4"]

The defining characteristic of elimination (*bsal ba*) is that, in the case of a given ostensible thesis (*pratijñā, dam bcas*) *x*, the object of the opposite standpoint (*ldog phyogs*) *y* is established by valid cognition, as in the statement, "It would follow that sound, the subject for discussion, is not an audible object."

#### REFUTATION [5"]

The defining characteristic of correct refutation (*duṣṭāna, sun 'byin*) is that a statement can be comprehended as defective by expressing or signifying its defect as a defect. The defining characteristic of ostensible [refutation] is the opposite of that.<sup>233</sup>

#### CONSEQUENTIAL REASONING [6"]

The defining characteristic of a correct consequence (*prasaṅga, thal 'gyur*) is that the following or consequential statement (*thal ngag*) cannot be countered by a rejoinder. The defining characteristic of an ostensible consequence is the opposite of that.<sup>234</sup>

#### DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS OF AN ANTAGONIST [7"]

The defining characteristic of the antagonist who employs such [logical techniques] is an individual person who holds his position in order to sustain the original premise (*phyogs snga ma*).

#### DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS OF A RESPONDENT / PROTAGONIST [8"]

The defining characteristic of the respondent or protagonist is an individual person who holds his position in order to refute the original premise.

Also, the defining characteristic of the witness (*dpang po*) [or mediator] is an individual person who holds his position in order to differentiate between which of the two contestants is the victor in the debate and which is the vanquished.

In all such cases, the ostensible and defective [types of argument] should be rejected and, instead, knowable objects should be appraised and standpoints established in accordance with the correct [types of argument].

#### [PURPOSE OF THE COLLECTED TOPICS]

The [reasoning of the] *Collected Topics*, [summarized above,] is valuable because it facilitates the education of newcomers (lit. those of fresh intelligence) with regard to objects of knowledge. By presenting an uncommon subject for discussion, the basis for the debate should be recognized as directly evident. Once this recognition has dawned, the essential points of negation and proof should be applied. These will arise in the mind and it is through them that one's own thesis can be presented. If a respondent engages, one can then ensure that his evidence is not proven, that his argument is without logical entailment, and that he will categorically accept your position three times.<sup>235</sup> Thereby, the intellectual brilliance of the other party will be eclipsed, and the other party will conclusively accept your logical concomitance, entailments, and observations with regard to scriptural authority and logical reasoning.

This merely partial exegesis [of the *Collected Topics*] leaves unchanged the special technical terms that are employed in the tradition of logical reasoning that is prestigious nowadays in modern circles.<sup>236</sup>

The particle *ste* at the end of this verse is a connecting particle (*lhag bcas kyi sgra*).

#### INCIDENTAL COMMENTS REGARDING OTHER LOGICAL TRADITIONS [d']

The fourth part of the extensive exegesis comprises incidental comments regarding other [logical] traditions. On this [it is said in the root verses]:

... There are also different [logical presentations],  
Exemplified by the *Treasure of Logical Reasoning*,  
The *Oceanic Textbook of Uncommon Logical Reasoning*,  
And the traditions of the ancient [Kadampas].

The *Treasure of Valid Logical Reasoning* (*Tshad ma rigs gter*), along with its *Auto-commentary* (*rang grel*), which were composed in eleven chapters by Sakya Panchen, is known as the first pathway of the chariot [of logic], in which

the combined twofold approach called “knowable objects to be ascertained through universal distinguishing counterparts” (*shes bya spyi ldog nas nges par bya ba*) and “cognitive process establishing the nature of valid cognition” (*shes byed tshad ma'i rang bshin gan la dbab pa*) are perfected, along with the processes of logical reasoning [based upon them].<sup>237</sup>

The *Oceanic Textbook of Uncommon Logical Reasoning* composed by the omniscient Gyalwang [Karmapa] VII Chodrak Gyatso, which perfects the enlightened intention of [Dharmakīrti's] *Seven Sections [of Valid Cognition]*, summarizing and elucidating them through his own ability, without reference to the exegetical traditions of India and Tibet or to the Indian and Tibetan commentaries (*grel tik*), is known as the second pathway of the chariot [of logic], containing, [as it does], modes of logical reasoning that were not previously existing.<sup>238</sup>

There are also different traditions, including the one known as the ancients' tradition of valid cognition (*tshad ma snga rabs pa'i lugs*), which was widely propagated by [Kadampa masters] such as the great Ngok Lotsāwa and Chapa Choseng, which are similar in their treatment of universal distinguishing counterparts of the signified object (*brjod bya'i spyi ldog*) but slightly dissimilar in their defense of standpoints concerning the signifier (*brjod byed khas len skyong tshul*).<sup>239</sup>

[This last mentioned system] includes, for example, the following summarization [of the terminology of logical reasoning] in eighteen collected topics (*bidus tshan bco brgyad*):<sup>240</sup>

O monks of Kyetshal! [The topics] are (1) the colors white and red (*kha dog dkar dmar*); (2) substance phenomena and distinguishing counterpart phenomena (*rdzas chos ldog chos gnyis*); (3) contradictions and non-contradictions (*gal dang mi gal*); (4) universals and particulars (*spyi dang bye brag gnyis*); (5) relation and non-relation (*'brel dang mi 'brel*); (6) difference and non-difference (*tha dad dang tha min gnyis*); (7) positive and negative concomitance (*rjes su 'gro ldog*); (8) cause and result (*rgyu dang 'bras bu gnyis*); (9) cogency of the antagonist, mediator, and respondent (*snga bisan bar bisan pbyi bisan*);<sup>241</sup> (10) definition and definiendum (*mishan mishon gnyis*); (11) multi-faceted evidence and multi-faceted elimination (*rtags mang bsal mang*); (12) the two procedures for adding negation (*dag pa 'phar tshul gnyis*); (13) direct contradiction and indirect contradiction (*dhgos gal brgyud gal*); (14) the two aspects of logical congruence (*khyab mnyam rnam pa gnyis*); (15) presence

and absence (*yin gyur min gyur*), and (16) their opposites (*yin log min log gnyis*); (17) understanding of existence and understanding of non-existence (*vod rtogs med rtogs*); and (18) explicit understanding and evidential understanding (*dnagos rtogs rtogs gnyis*).

Although there are many such [categorizations of the terminologies of logical reasoning], they can be principally subsumed under these [eighteen topics].<sup>242</sup>

### SYNOPSIS OF THE EIGHT ASPECTS AND THREE SCOPES OF DIALECTICS [2']

The second [part of the actual exegesis] is a synopsis [of logical reasoning] in terms of the eight aspects of dialectics and the three scopes [of dialectical application].

### EIGHT ASPECTS OF DIALECTICS [a']

All points signified in the texts on valid cognition may be personally understood

Through direct perception, inference, and their ostensible forms, Whereas proof, refutation, and their ostensible forms engender understanding in others:

These are the eight aspects of dialectics.

### CORRECT AND OSTENSIBLE FORMS OF DIRECT PERCEPTION AND INFERENCE [i']

When all the points that are signified in the textbooks of valid cognition are abbreviated, the four categories of direct perception and inference, comprising their correct and ostensible forms, are the means whereby [the conclusions of logical reasoning] are personally known or comprehended.

### CORRECT AND OSTENSIBLE FORMS OF PROOF AND REFUTATION [ii']

Similarly, the four categories of proof and refutation, comprising their correct and ostensible forms, cause others to comprehend [the conclusions of logical reasoning]. Altogether, these are known as the eight aspects of dialectics

(*tarka, rtog ge*). [When condensed] they may be gathered under two headings: [logical reasoning undertaken] for one's own sake and [logical reasoning undertaken] for the sake of others.

### THREE SCOPES OF DIALECTICAL APPLICATION [b']

[Then, with regard to the three scopes of dialectical application, it is said in the root verses:]

In brief, there are three kinds of objects to be appraised:

The directly evident, the indirectly evident,

And the indirectly evident to an extreme degree.

As for their means of appraisal, they comprise [respectively]

Direct perception, logical inference, and scriptural authority,

Of which the purity is established by the three types of scrutiny.

There are four kinds of direct perception,

Three logical axioms of inference,

And various technical terms that derive from these.

When all the topics of valid cognition are abbreviated, they are gathered under the three headings of appraisable objects (*gzhal bya*) that are directly evident (*abhimukhi, mngon gyur*), indirectly evident (*parokṣa, lkog gyur*), and indirectly evident to an extreme degree (*atyantaparokṣa, shin tu lkog gyur*). As for the means of appraisal (*gzhal byed*), they may all be subsumed under the three [respective] headings of appraisal by direct perception (*pratyakṣa, mngon sum*), logical inference (*anumāna, rjes dpag*), and scriptural authority (*āgama, lung*), of which the purity is established by three kinds of scrutiny (*dpypad gsum*).

### DIRECTLY EVIDENT OBJECTS OF APPRAISAL [i']

Directly evident objects of appraisal include

- (1) the five sensory activity fields (*pañcāyatana, skye mched lnga*) comprising visible, audible, olfactory, gustatory, and tangible forms, which can eliminate superimposition through the experiential power of direct perception, an extraneous or non-apperceptive awareness of external objects that refers to the immediately visible [world].<sup>243</sup>
- (2) the sensory activity fields of the six modes of consciousness (*sadvijñāna,*

*riam shes tshogs drug*),<sup>244</sup> which are experienced through the valid cognition of intrinsic or reflexive awareness<sup>245</sup> and only with reference to objects of experience (*myong bya*) based on the consciousness that can eliminate superimpositions through logical reasoning;

- (3) the aspects of experiential awareness associated with mental states that relate collectively to the sensory activity field of phenomena (*dharmāyatana, chos kyi skye mched*).<sup>246</sup>

Although there are realists (*dingos por smra ba riams*) who [additionally] hold that, in the case of a sublime being, the abiding nature of selflessness including the sixteen aspects of the four truths (*sodasiākāraṅvīsāritacaturārya satya, bden chung bcu drug*), beginning with impermanence (*anitya, mi riag pa*),<sup>247</sup> and in the case of a buddha, all quantifiable objects of knowledge<sup>248</sup> are directly evident, Dharmakīrti has said that the processes of cognition that a buddha experiences are inconceivable.<sup>249</sup> Therefore, direct perception, as a means of appraising the [range of] objects that are to be appraised, is said to comprise the four following categories: direct perception of the sense organs, direct perception of mental consciousness, direct perception of intrinsic awareness, and direct perception of yoga.

#### INDIRECTLY EVIDENT OBJECTS OF APPRAISAL [ii]

Indirectly evident objects of appraisal include the physical sense faculties (*dbang po gaugs can*); the sixteen aspects of the four truths, such as impermanence, the suffering of change (*viparināmadubkhatā, gyur ba'i sdug bngal*), the emptiness of self (*atmāśūnyatā, bdag gi bas stong pa*), and selflessness (*anātmaka, bdag med*);<sup>250</sup> the selflessness of the individual person (*puḍgalanairātmya, gang zag gi bdag med*), exemplified by these [aspects of the four truths], and the selflessness of phenomena (*dharmānairātmya, chos kyi bdag med*);<sup>251</sup> as well as [the concepts of] identical nature (*ekātman, bdag gzig*) and relation of identical nature (*tadātmayasabbandha, de byung gi 'brel ba*),<sup>252</sup> primary causes (*hetu, rgyu*) or potentialities (*sakti, nus pa*), the seeds of dissonant and purified mental states (*sems kyi steng gi kun byang*),<sup>253</sup> the activities associated with renunciation and antidotes (*spang gnyen*),<sup>254</sup> and so forth. These are all indirectly evident—the second category of objects of appraisal—because they have to be established exclusively through logical axioms proceeding from the cogent power of facts (*vastubalapravṛttibetu, dngos po stobs zhuvs kyi gtan tshigs*).

There are also objects of appraisal that cannot be established through

the direct perception of an individual person and requires reference to pure [authoritative] sources [see below].<sup>255</sup>

There are three kinds of logical axiom dependent on inference, which appraise and establish these [indirectly evident] objects of appraisal through the cogent power of facts. These are termed the axiom of the result, the axiom of identity, and the axiom of the absence of the objective referent.<sup>256</sup>

#### OBJECTS OF APPRAISAL INDIRECTLY EVIDENT TO AN EXTREME DEGREE [iii]

Objects that are indirectly evident to an extreme degree include those such as virtuous and non-virtuous actions which cannot be established by either direct perception or the axioms of the cogent power of facts, and therefore have to be understood on the basis of scriptural authority alone. For this reason, scriptures of which the purity is not established by three kinds of scrutiny only obstruct or impede certainty because they demonstrate or represent heretical [views]. On the other hand, [scriptures] of which purity can be established by the three kinds of scrutiny contain words of definitive meaning (*nītārtha, nges don*), without resorting to terms that express a flawed conviction, the need for a [concealed] intention, and so forth.<sup>257</sup>

The diverse technical language employed in logical reasoning exclusively derives from these basic categories.

As far as the three kinds of scrutiny are concerned, [reasoning based on scriptural authority] is not contradicted by direct perception with regard to directly evident objects, nor by inference through the cogent power of facts with regard to indirectly evident objects, nor by contradictions inherent in the sequence of [authoritative] utterances with regard to objects that are indirectly evident to an extreme degree.

#### SYNOPSIS OF FIVE ESSENTIAL MODES OF LOGICAL REASONING [3]

The third [part of the actual exegesis] is a synopsis of these [categories of logical reasoning] in terms of their five essential modalities. On this [it says in the root-verses]:

The analytical basis or topics [for discussion],

The analysis of phenomena,

The systematic framework to be determined,

Consequential reasoning which is the process of determination, and [correct] view—  
These are the five modalities offering an introduction to the Middle Way,  
Subsumed in [the teachings] of the mighty lords of knowledge.  
Through conventional terms, ultimate objects of appraisal  
Are established as valid cognition.

#### ANALYTICAL BASIS OF KNOWABLE PHENOMENA [a]

[In Garwang Chokyi Wangchuk's commentary, concerning the first modality, the topics of logical reasoning (*abharmin*, *chos can*), it is said:<sup>358</sup>

Objects of knowledge and objects of appraisal have an established basis.  
This means that phenomena, foundational [factors],  
Dependent origination, objective referents, subjects and objects  
Are all [valid] topics for discussion,  
Forming an analytical basis for logical congruence.

Those verses refer to the analytical basis (*dbye gzhi*) of knowable phenomena, which includes such terminology.

#### ACTUAL ANALYSIS OF PHENOMENA [b]

[Concerning the second modality, the actual analysis of phenomena, the same text] then says:

When analyzed, [phenomena] may suggest dichotomies  
Between substance and permanence, negation and proof,  
Or defining characteristics, defined objects, and their demonstrations,  
As well as [a plethora of specific dichotomies]  
Such as between the created and uncreated,  
The produced and non-produced,  
The compounded and non-compounded,  
Entity and non-entity, or the perishable and imperishable.

Those verses refer to the analysis of phenomena (*chos kyi dbye ba*), which includes an analysis of universals (*spyi: dbye ba*) and also an analysis of the extensive particulars derived from that [analysis of universals].

#### SYSTEMATIC PRESENTATION OF LOGICAL REASONING [c']

[Concerning the third modality,] the systematic presentation [of logical reasoning] that is to be determined, the text then goes on to say:

There are thirteen [logical topics to be examined]:  
Substance and counterpart, contradiction and relation,  
Universal and particular, definition and definiendum,  
Cause and result, and understanding of existence and non-existence,  
Along with presence, absence, and their opposites,  
Positive and negative concomitance,  
Assessment of the basis of negation,  
Cogency of the antagonist, cogency of the respondent,<sup>359</sup>  
And iterations [employed in the course of formal debate].<sup>360</sup>

Those [understandings] and their subdivisions form the systematic presentation [of the dialectic] that is to be determined (*nges bya'i mam gzhag*).

#### CONSEQUENTIAL REASONING [d']

[Concerning the fourth modality, the consequential reasoning that forms the actual process of determination, the text] says:

The subject of interest (*shes 'dod chos can*),  
The property of the probandum that is to be apprehended,  
And the three axioms of the cognitive process  
Together form a causal basis for making consequential statements.

Those verses therefore refer to consequential reasoning (*thal gyur*), which, along with logical entailment (*khyab*) and rejoinders (*lan*), form the process of determination (*nges byed*).

#### GENUINE CONCLUSION OF VALID COGNITION [e']

[Concerning the fifth modality, the correct view, the text] continues:

Moreover, according to the logical reasoning of the *Collected Topics*,  
Upon scrutiny, neither beginning nor end will be found,  
Nor will there be any abiding in a middle position.  
All standpoints will be destroyed.

When one is without beginning or end,  
 Without referring to a middle [position],  
 Without standpoints, and without philosophical systems,  
 That is the Great Madhyamaka.<sup>261</sup>

Those verses therefore refer to the conclusion of valid cognition, the direct determination that all things are without self (*anātmaka*, *bdag med*) and free from conceptual elaboration (*nihprapañca*, *spros bral*).<sup>262</sup> This is the view that offers an introduction to the Middle Way, as summarized systematically by mighty lords of logical reasoning, great beings endowed with the precious [teachings of] *sādhana* and *tantra* (*sgrub rgyud*), such as [Zhamar VI] Garwang Chokyi Wangchuk.<sup>263</sup>

This text should be examined in detail, though I am unable to summarize it here. In any case, all of these [citations from it] are in conformity with the ultimate reality, appraised through the logical reasoning of conventional terms and reliably established.

#### THE IMPLEMENTATION OF LOGICAL REASONING [4']

Since [at this juncture,] it would be inappropriate not to establish the points of the textual traditions through the scrutiny of logical reasoning, if I may incidentally make some ad-hoc comments concerning preliminary engagement in the logical techniques, according to the *Collected Topics*, this will have two parts: The first concerns the modes of recognizing evidence and specific predicates (*rtags gsal gyi ngos dāzin*) and the second concerns the rejoinders made by the respondent to the antagonist (*snga rgal la phyi rgoi gyis lan brjod tsbul*).

#### RECOGNIZING EVIDENCE AND SPECIFIC PREDICATES [a']

The former is exemplified by the statement, “It follows that the vase, the subject for discussion, is impermanent, because it has been created.” Here, it should be recognized that “vase” is the given subject for discussion (*chos can*) (*x*) or basis of the debate (*rtsoḍ gzhi*), “impermanent” is the probandum (*bsgrub bya*) or the specific predicate (*gsal ba*), and “created” is the proof (*sādhana*, *sgrub byed*), evidence (*linga*, *rtags*), or reason (*hetu*, *gtan tshigs*).

# Buddhist Hermeneutics

*Edited by*  
Donald S. Lopez, Jr

MOTILAL BANARSIDASS PUBLISHERS  
PRIVATE LIMITED • DELHI

# Mi-pham's Theory of Interpretation

MATTHEW KAPSTEIN

## Introduction

This chapter takes for its subject matter the theory of interpretation explicitly advanced by the late Tibetan scholastic philosopher 'Jam-mgon 'Ju Mi-pham rgya-mtsho (1846-1912).<sup>1</sup> We will not be concerned with Mi-pham's actual application of this theory in his commentarial writing; his tremendous output (traditionally said to amount to thirty-two large Tibetan volumes) precludes our undertaking here a critical study, or even a perfunctory sketch, of his practice of interpretation.

The scriptural corpus representing the transmitted doctrine (Skt *āgama*, Tib *lung*) of the Buddha, the enlightening teaching of the enlightened sage, is, by virtue of its extent and heterogeneous composition, a source of bewilderment no less than of illumination for those who have not fully realized the founder's intention. In the face of apparent contradiction and obscurity systematic interpretation is required, and, so that this does not become merely the arbitrary reformulation of the doctrine according to erroneous preconception or pure fancy, interpretive guidelines have been elaborated within the Buddhist tradition. We must thus distinguish carefully at the outset between Buddhist *interpretations* and *rule for interpretation*, the latter being those directives whereby the former, representing the actual content of the teaching, may be established. Rules of thumb, however, if not grounded in reasonable extrasystemic foundations, may support the construction of fantastic theories (if unreasonable) or conduce to circularity (if purely intrasystemic).<sup>2</sup> A complete *theory of interpretation* should, therefore, be more than a miscellany of such rules, it must ground its rules and indicate their proper application. Read with this in mind, the sāstraic lists of rules for interpretation, so familiar to students of Buddhism, seem not to resolve satisfactorily the problem for whose solution they were drawn up.

We must distinguish, too, between *implicit* and *explicit* rules for or

theories of interpretation. In our study of a given interpretation of the doctrine we may arrive at the conclusion that the interpreter is guided in his thinking by certain principles which, however, he never actually sets forth. For strictly formal reasons such a conclusion can never be more than probabilistic, though the particulars in any given case may strongly suggest our determination of the interpretive principles in question to be appropriate.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, it is only when an explicit statement of such principles is available to us that we can speak authoritatively of an actual theory of interpretation. This does not mean, of course, that explicit theoretical statements allow us to assume without further evidence that their author ever actually employed his theory in practice. Indeed, the examination of his actual interpretive work may lead us to discover that his explicit theory could not have supported his own avowed conclusions. We may infer that our author misapplied his own theory, or that there are further implicit principles he assumed but did not set forth—in other words, that his theory was deficient even with respect to his own interpretive work. This problem need concern us no longer, for only the fundamental distinction made here is relevant to the present investigation.

These remarks may help to clarify the manner in which the central concerns of this chapter are to be related to the multifarious body of thought we in the West call hermeneutics. As a point of departure, at least, our problematic lies within the domain of scriptural interpretation. Specifically, it centers on the theory of the interpretation of Buddhist scriptures. As we proceed, however, it will become apparent that Mi-pham's theory addresses basic philosophical concerns, and that our understanding of just what, in Mi-pham's case, it is that can be termed "Buddhist hermeneutics" will have to be broadened accordingly.

### The Scholastic Background

Mi-pham did not create his theory *ex nihilo*. Its ingredients, one and all, were derived from traditions of scholastic exegesis that can be traced back to India, to sūtras such as the *Samdhinirmocana*, and to such towering interpreters of the Buddha's doctrine as Asanga and Vasubandhu, Dharmakīrti and Candrakīrti. The historical evolution of all the many relevant themes cannot be surveyed here. What is most useful for our present purposes is some knowledge of the tradition on which Mi-pham immediately drew. We are fortunate that this tradition is represented to some extent in the work of Mi-pham's senior contemporary, Jam-mgon Kōng-sprul Blo-gros mtha'-yas (1813–1899/1900).<sup>4</sup>

Kōng-sprul's *The All-Embracing Treasury of Knowledge* (*Shes bya kun khyab mdzod*) was the last great Tibetan encyclopedia.<sup>5</sup> Its three volumes sur-

vey all branches of Tibetan scholastic learning with erudition and clarity, if not often with great originality. Of its ten books, the seventh is devoted to "the progressive disclosure of the lesson of superior discernment" (*lhag pa shes rab kyī bslab pa rim par phyē ba*). The methods and objects of Buddhist scriptural interpretation are the subject matter of the first two chapters of this book. (1) the ascertainment of the interpretive keys (*'jal byed kyī lde'u mig rnam par nges pa*, viz. that open up the treasure-house of the genuine doctrine, which is the object of interpretation, *gzhal bya'i dam chos rim chen mdzod khang*), and (2) the ascertainment of provisional and definitive meaning in connection with the three wheels, and of the two truths and dependent origination (*'khor lo gsum gyi drang nges dang bden gnyis rten 'brel rnam par nges pa*). As the second of these treats the Buddha's teaching *qua* object of interpretation in particular, its contents would have to be surveyed in any thorough treatment of Tibetan hermeneutics.<sup>6</sup> It is the first, however, that encompasses the relevant background for Mi-pham's work, and so only its contents will be described here.

In his general introduction to "the ascertainment of the interpretive keys," Kōng-sprul proposes that study (*thos pa*) alone is productive only of rough understanding (*rags par go ba*) of its objects and leaves us still subject to doubts. The demand for certainty (*nges shes*) requires that we exercise discernment born of critical reasoning (*bsam byung gi shes rab*), the medium of which is discursive thought (*'yid kyī brjod pa*). The precise manner in which this is to be exercised with respect to the objects of study may be summarized with reference to the interpretive keys.

The keys themselves are considered throughout the remainder of the chapter. They fall into the two broad categories of those which are common (*thun mong*, viz. to the interpretation of both sūtras and tantras) and those which are uncommon (*thun mong ma yin pa*, viz. which uniquely pertain to the interpretation of tantras). To the first of these categories belong four sets of rules of thumb, which distinguish (1) provisional meaning (*drang don*) and definitive meaning (*nges don*), (2) four special intentions (*dgongs pa bzhi*) and four hidden intentions (*ldem dgongs bzhi*), (3) four orientations (*rton pa bzhi*), and (4) four principles of reason (*rigs pa bzhi*). The first three of these groups have been discussed at length elsewhere<sup>7</sup> and will be considered briefly in connection with Mi-pham's work below. The fourth has not, to the best of my knowledge, received extended scholarly attention outside traditional Buddhist circles and our efforts here will for the most part concern it.

Kōng-sprul's discussion of the interpretive keys which apply uniquely to the tantras outlines the two sets of rules known as the six parameters (*mtha' drug*) and four modes (*ishul bzhi*). These have also been considered elsewhere and so need not detain us here.<sup>8</sup>

It should be noted that Kong-sprul nowhere seeks to explain the manner in which all these rules are to be applied, or the manner in which they complement, or relate to, one another. Presumably we are to master their use inductively, by discovering in the commentarial literature their actual utilization. This leaves Tibetan hermeneutics in roughly the condition of its premodern western counterpart.<sup>9</sup> This state of affairs is Mi-pham's point of departure.

### Kong-sprul's Definitions of the Four Principles of Reason

The four principles of reason are in Sanskrit called the *yukti-catustayam*.<sup>10</sup> The term *yukti*, which may mean "law, reason, proof, argument, what is correct, right, fit, appropriate,"<sup>11</sup> had been used in connection with the earliest efforts of Indian Buddhists to formulate canons of interpretation.<sup>12</sup> The precise enumeration of four *yukti* appears for the first time, it would seem, in the quintessentially hermeneutical scripture of the Mahāyāna, the *Samdharmamocana-sūtra* (The Sūtra Which Sets Free the [Buddha's] Intention). "The principles of reason," declares the sage, "should be known to be four: the principle of dependence (*apeksāyukti*, *lhos pa'i rigs pa*), the principle of efficacy (*kāryakāranayukti*, *bya ba byed pa'i rigs pa*), the principle of valid proof (*upapattisādhanayukti*, *'thad pa sgrub pa'i rigs pa*), and the principle of reality (*dharmatāyukti*, *chos nyid ky'i rigs pa*)."<sup>13</sup> Henceforth, this enumeration of the four principles of reason would remain a stable feature of the Indo-Tibetan scholastic tradition. The precise manner in which the four were individually defined and the manner of their interrelation were, however, subject to considerable variation. Kong-sprul's definitions relate rather closely to those given in the *Abhidharma-samuccaya* of Asanga and its commentaries.<sup>14</sup> They are as follows:

1 The first is dependent production. It is a principle of reason that in dependence upon the seed the shoot emerges. It is a principle of reason that in dependence upon unknowing (*ma rig pa*) existence-factors (*'du byed*) and the other [links in the chain of] dependent origination (*rien 'brel*) emerge. It is a principle of reason that visual consciousness does not emerge by itself (*'rang bzhin mi 'byung gt*), but that in dependence upon both the ocular faculty and form as an object it emerges. Such are [examples of] the principle of dependence.

2 The sense faculty, object and consciousness, and so forth act to effect the apprehension of the proper object [of the sense consciousness in question], but do not so effect [apprehension of] other meaningful forms (*don*). It is a principle of reason that when visual consciousness occurs it effects vision directed upon form, but it is not fit (*mi 'os pa*) to hear sound. And the ocular faculty can effect the production of visual consciousness but

cannot produce auditory or other consciousness. Further, it is a principle of reason that a barleycorn produces barley, but it is not a principle of reason for buckwheat, peas, and so forth to be born [from it]. Such is the principle of efficacy.

3 The logic of inference is exemplified by knowing from smoke that there is fire and by recognizing the presence of water from moisture. The logic of direct perception is [exemplified by] the six consciousnesses and the yogin's spiritual vision (*nal 'byor pa'i sems kyi mihong ba*). The infallible utterances enunciated by the Buddha constitute scriptural authority (*lung*). These form the principle of logic (*tshad ma'i rigs pa*), or the principle of valid proof.

4 It is a principle of reason that water falls downward and not a principle of reason that it falls upward. [The principle here considered] also includes generic properties (*chos spyi*) and individuating characteristics (*'rang gi mtshan nyid*), such as the sun's rising in the east, the solidity of earth, the wetness of water, the heat of fire and the motility of air, as well as emptiness and absence of self. These, which are well known as thus abiding by their own natures from all eternity (*'thog ma med pa'i dus nas*), are the principle of reality.<sup>15</sup>

The Tibetan *rigs pa*, like its Sanskrit counterpart *yukti*, is a term whose reference may be either extramental or psychological—note the analogy to the English *reason*, when taken to include, for example, "the reason it happened" as well as "his reason for doing it." In passages such as the one given here, it thus appears possible to propose two main approaches to the interpretation of the doctrine: either it may be taken to be a doctrine of natural fitness, that is, one which holds that the world is such that it is in some sense fitting and correct that, for instance, shoots come from seeds and inferences allow us to know certain things, or, to adopt a Kantian tack, it may be a way of describing the a priori conditions for knowledge, such that, for example, it is reasonable to maintain that *x* causes *y* just because we can know the event at hand under no other description than a causal one. I do not believe that Kong-sprul's discussion of the four principles is formulated with sufficient precision to permit an exact determination here. Some clarification will be forthcoming below, especially when we consider Mi-pham's treatment of the principle of reality. But I must confess that this is one of several questions that may be raised in connection with the four principles of reason, for which I have no fully satisfactory answers at the present time.

It should be noted, too, that the four principles of reason differ from the other three groups of rules of thumb listed above in that they are not ostensibly rules for the interpretation of scripture. Kong-sprul tells us nothing regarding their actual role in scriptural interpretation. We must wonder can their occurrence here be merely a classificatory accident?<sup>16</sup>

### Mi-pham's Theory Sources

Mi-pham sketched out his theory of interpretation in two works (1) a short verse tract entitled *The Sword of Discernment: An Ascertainment of Meaning* (*Don rnam par nges pa shes rab ral gr*), written in 1885, his fortieth year,<sup>17</sup> and (2) in the final section of his *Introduction to Scholarship* (*Mkhas pa'i tshul la 'jug pa'i sgo*), a lengthy scholastic manual intended for more or less elementary instruction, composed in 1900.<sup>18</sup> The four principles of reason, the foundation of his approach, he also treated at some length in his mammoth commentary on the *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra* (The Ornament of the Mahāyāna Sūtras), his last great exegetical work, written in 1911, the year preceding his decease.<sup>19</sup> This last mentioned, being to a great extent dependent on the commentary of Sthiramati<sup>20</sup> and composed primarily to facilitate our understanding of the root-text, does not contribute much to our knowledge of Mi-pham's own theory. It is clear that his conception of the four principles of reason attained much of its final form with his composition of *The Sword of Discernment*, for the exposition in the *Introduction to Scholarship* is little more than a prose restatement of the contents of the former work. Hence, in what follows, my primary aim will be to offer an account of the theory developed in *The Sword of Discernment*, drawing on the *Introduction to Scholarship* and, where relevant, others among Mi-pham's writings, only in order to clarify and fill out the argument I have also made free use of Mi-pham's own annotations on *The Sword of Discernment*,<sup>21</sup> and of Mkhan-po Nus-ldan's on the *Introduction to Scholarship*.<sup>22</sup> The outline to be followed here is based on the one formulated by Mi-pham himself for the *Introduction to Scholarship*,<sup>23</sup> which is followed, too, by Mkhan-po Nus-ldan. While adhering as closely as possible to the actual words of these texts, I do not offer here a translation, but rather a paraphrase, with occasional digressions and insertions for which I alone am responsible (but which, I believe, are in no case inappropriate or misleading). Of course, it will not be possible in this summary to present and analyze each and every important concept and argument presupposed. My presentation must thus be somewhat elliptical, as is Mi-pham's own.

### Mi-pham's Theory Exposition

1 0 The teaching of the Buddha is profound and vast (*zab cing rgya che*), and therefore hard to understand (*rtogs dka' ba*). Those who wish to savor its meaning require intellectual illumination, which *The Sword of Discernment* is intended to provide.

The Buddha's entire teaching, in all its many dimensions, can be subsumed under two fundamental categories that teaching, which is

consistent with the mundane truth which conceals reality (*'jig rten kun rdzob kyī bden pa*), and that which reveals the absolutely valuable truth which is reality (*dam pa'i don gyi bden pa*). These two categories are the domains of two fundamental "logics of investigation" (*dpyod pa'i tshad ma*), which are directed upon the two truths respectively. These in turn are wholly subsumed by the four principles of reason.

#### 1 1 *The Principles of Efficacy and Dependence*

Whatever appears in the world comes into being through some cause, this being expressed in the fundamental Buddhist doctrine of dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*, *sten cing 'brel bar 'byung ba*). Nothing appears independent of its proper causal nexus (*rgyu yi tshogs pa*). Nothing do not merely blossom in space. When a causal nexus is complete it effects the production of its proper result—this is the principle of efficacy. Conversely, whatever is by nature an effect depends upon its proper causal nexus—this is the principle of dependence. The two, of course, are not equivalent: they do not entail that all causes are themselves effects, nor that all effects be causes. We can restate these two principles in the simplest of terms:

- 1 Principle of efficacy every cause has an effect  
(x) (x is a cause  $\supset$  ( $\exists y$ ) (x causes y))
- 2 Principle of dependence every effect has a cause  
(x) (x is an effect  $\supset$  ( $\exists y$ ) (y causes x))

We will simply assume for the moment that we understand what it means to be a cause, to be an effect, and to cause. Indeed, we function quite adequately in our daily lives without questioning these assumptions. It is the functional utility of these concepts, in fact, that characterizes them as belonging to the logic of the truth which conceals reality.<sup>24</sup> It is on this basis that we undertake or desist from actions in the world, and here we find the root of our technologies, arts, and other branches of learning. That is to say, all practical endeavor is grounded only in our knowledge of the positive and negative contingencies of things (*stkhānā-stkhāna*, *gnas dang gnas ma yin pa*).<sup>25</sup>

#### 1 2 *The Principle of Reality*

1 2 0 Mi-pham, it will be remarked, has altered the canonical sequence of the four principles of reason. The principle of valid proof, originally and throughout much of the later scholastic tradition third in the list, has traded places with the principle of reality. In this Mi-pham is following the eleventh-century Rnying-ma-pa master Rong-zom Chos-kyi bzang-po,<sup>26</sup> though the arrangements found in both the

*Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra* and Candragomin's *Nyāyālokaśūdhī* offer precedents as well.<sup>27</sup> The motive underlying the change of order will become clear below. Mi-pham's discussion divides the principle of reality into two subsections, corresponding to the two truths, viz conventional reality (*tha snyad kyi chos nyid*) and absolutely valuable reality (*don dam pa'i chos nyid*).

1 2 1 Conventionally all things, according to their particular essences (*rang rang gi ngo bo nyid kyi*), possess specific individuating characteristics (*rang mshan*) and possess, too, the generic characteristics (*sphyi mshan*) of the classes to which they belong. Inclusion (*sgrub*) and exclusion (*sel*) determine for any given entity limitlessly many attributes. One way of categorizing these with respect to meaningful forms that are directly apprehended (*mngon sum gyis yongs gzung don*) is to speak of the opposition of substance (*rdzas*) and attribute (*ldog*). The former, as the unique locus of its specific individuating characteristics is a concretum (*rdzas yod*), whose apprehension is nonconceptual (*rtog med*). The latter, attributed to the object in question by a conceptualizing agent (*rtog bcas yid*) which "divides and combines" (*phye zhing sbyor*),<sup>28</sup> is both a generic characteristic and abstractum (*btags yod*). The categories thus elaborated may be multiplied manifold. Inasmuch as they are conventionally adequate (*tha snyad don mthun*) they unquestionably correspond to reality.

In addition to the categories of substance and attribute, individuating and generic characteristic, concretum and abstractum, which Mi-pham explicitly assigns to conventional reality, his tradition maintains that, for example, what we would term necessary truths are to be classed here as well.<sup>29</sup> The conventional aspect of the principle of reality further plays a foundational role with respect to the concept of causality, as will be indicated below (in paragraph 1 2 3).

1 2 2 The principles of efficacy, dependence, and reality, as introduced thus far, are all principles belonging to the conventional logic of investigation. The absolute logic of investigation is presented as a second aspect of the principle of reality, but all three of the principles introduced up until now are brought into play again at this juncture.

So far we have taken the concepts of cause, effect, and individual essence as primitives upon which we actually rely in our daily lives, even if we are at a loss to explain them. The "great arguments" (*gtan tshigs chen mo*) of the Madhyamaka<sup>30</sup> are now called upon to demonstrate that there is no causal agent which acts to generate the result,<sup>31</sup> that results do not come to be depending upon such causal agents,<sup>32</sup> and that individual essences are merely convenient fictions.<sup>33</sup> The three gates to liberation (*rnam thar sgo gsum*) are thus thrown open: causes stripped of efficacy are unmarked (*mshan ma med pa*), results that are not dependent entities can no longer be objects of expectation (*smon pa med pa*), and

reality itself cannot be hypostatized through such fancies as individual essence (*ngo bo nyid med pa*).<sup>34</sup>

1 2 3 Returning now to the domain of convention, efficacy and dependence are actual features of the conventional reality of beings (*tha snyad kyi dngos po'i chos nyid*). So, for instance, fire is essentially warm—it is the very nature of the thing to be so. But it is equally the nature of fire to effect the state of being burnt and to depend upon fuel for its own being. Hence, the principles of reason find their limit (*mtha'*) in the principle of reality. We cannot ask *why* fire is hot, burns, or depends upon fuel. Such is the way of reality. To seek for further reasons is futile.<sup>35</sup>

It should now be clear that the principle of reality will not permit the sort of very simple formulation advanced above for the principles of efficacy and dependence. It does seem possible, though, to suggest a tentative statement outlining an approach to its precise formulation. Let us assume that for all  $x$ , where  $x$  is an individual, fact, or state of affairs, there is some (possibly infinite) set of individuating and generic properties  $\{P_1, P_2, P_n\}$ , such that being  $x$  entails instantiating all and only  $\{P_1, P_2, P_n\}$ . Let us call  $\{P_1, P_2, P_n\}$  "the complete concept of  $x$ ," and further assume that the complete concept of  $x$  will include as a subset the causal properties of  $x$ , viz those which are subsumed in the principles of efficacy and dependence. We may assert, then, that a complete definition (or analysis or explanation) of  $x$  is one in which the properties entailed by those mentioned in the *definiens* (or *analytans* or *explanans*) are all and only those that are constitutive of the complete concept of  $x$ . The conventional aspect of the principle of reality, taken metaphysically, would amount to the principle that the reality of a thing is exhausted in its complete concept, and, taken epistemologically, it would amount to the assertion that a thing is known when one attributes to it some set of properties that constitute a complete definition of that very thing. The absolute aspect of the principle of reality would then be a negative thesis to the effect that the complete concept of a thing neither involves, nor entails, the intrinsic being of that thing. (This formulation can apply only to the absolute *qua* denotation, on which see paragraph 1 3 3 below.)

1 2 4 Thus, we see that Mi-pham subsumes the two logics of investigation within the three principles of reason considered so far, and these he subsumes within the single principle of reality. The metaphysical character of these principles and also their role in the guidance of thought he affirms in these words:

Because it is appropriate ('*os*) and reasonable (*rigs pa nyid*) that the nature of things which are objects of knowledge should so abide, one speaks of

"principles of reason" Or, one speaks of "principles of reason" with reference to judgment that accords with that (*de dang mathun par gzhal ba*).<sup>36</sup>

### 1 3 The Principle of Valid Proof

1 3 0 Having grouped together the principles of efficacy, dependence, and reality as fundamentally metaphysical principles, which pertain by extension to the adequate judgment, Mi-pham turns to treat the remaining principle of reason. From the *Samdhunmocana* onward this principle had always been taken to subsume the topics dealt with in Buddhist logic and epistemology (*pramāṇa, tshad ma*),<sup>37</sup> and so Mi-pham accordingly elaborates here a terse, but remarkably complete, treatise on this subject. As we shall see below, there is a clear sense in which Buddhist logic is essentially hermeneutical. As a result it is impossible to cut material from Mi-pham's presentation without losing much that is important for his theory as a whole. At the same time, limitations of space require that rather severe abridgments be made at this point. So I will have to assume that readers presuppose here the inclusion of the Dignāga-Dharmakīrti theory of direct perception (*pratyakṣa, mngon sum*), inference (*svārthānumāna, rang don rjes dpag*), and argument (*parārthānumāna, gzhan don rjes dpag*).<sup>38</sup> The remarks which follow (in paragraphs 1 3 1-4) are intended only to indicate some interesting points of emphasis in Mi-pham's discussion.

1 3 1 If the determinations (*sgro 'dogs gcod pa*) made with respect to one's own mental states (*rang sems*) were similar to those made with respect to physical forms experienced through direct perception, there would be another awareness of that, *ad indefinitum*. Therefore, self-reference must be distinguished from awareness cognizing an object. This self-clarification (*rang gsal*) is self-presenting awareness (*rang rig*). All that is experienced through other modes of direct perception is ascertained as direct perception through self-presentation. If that were not the case, direct perception would in effect be epistemically unfounded (*'grub mi 'gyur te*). Inference is rooted in direct perception. Direct perception is made certain by self-presentation. After arriving at this, the experience of one's own mind, with respect to which there can be no error (*ma 'khrul blo yi nyams nyong*), there can be no further proof (*sgrub byed*).<sup>39</sup>

1 3 2 Having grasped objects as general objectives (*don sbyi*), one associates them with words and they become conceptualized (*ming dang bses te rlog byed*), conceptual thought then multiplies various conventions. Even among persons who do not know the signs (e.g. preverbal infants), it is the general objective that appears to the mind. Through concepts which are possibly such as to be associated with words (*ming dang 'dres rung rlog pa*), they enter into or desist from actions with respect

to objects. Without the conceptualizing intellect, there could be no conventions of refutation and proof, and so none of the topics of inference and learning could be communicated. Concepts permit us to ponder and to undertake future objectives, and so forth, even though these are not directly evident.<sup>40</sup> If there were no inferences, which involve concepts, everything would be as if one were just born. (That Mi-pham, as a representative of a spiritual tradition that places much emphasis on the transcendence of conceptual states of mind, insists here on the value of conceptual processes is illuminating. His exposition reveals that the nonconceptual intuition to which the Buddhist practitioner aspires cannot be correctly regarded as a regression into preconceptual chaos.)

1 3 3 In *The Sword of Discernment*, but not the *Introduction to Scholarship*, Mi-pham introduces a way of subdividing the two logics of investigation, conventional and absolute, that is worth noting owing to the emphasis he placed upon it in other works,<sup>41</sup> and the emphasis placed upon it by his successors.<sup>42</sup> The conventional is divided into an impure realm of what is perceived as being on hand in the ordinary world (*ma dag tshu rol mthong ba*) and a pure realm of supramundane visionary experience (*dag pa'i gzigs snang*). The absolute is divided into the absolute *qua* denotation (*mam grangs kyi don dam*) and the absolute *quatenus* undenotable (*mam grangs ma yin pa'i don dam*).<sup>43</sup> The former division is required in order that our logic and epistemology be rich enough to embrace both mundane and visionary experience, and their objects, without reducing one to the other (as our behaviorists do when they attempt to describe, e.g., the believer's sense of divine presence). The latter division prevents us from confusing discourse about the absolute with its ineffable realization, in which the dichotomy of the two truths is transcended in their coalescence. This realization may be spoken of as the sole truth of nirvāna. The pristine cognition (*ye shes*) of enlightenment and its embodiment (*sku bya*) here converge: the noetic agent (*shes byed*) and its object (*shes bya*) are undivided.

1 3 4 It may be objected that, because the first three principles of reason already subsume the categories which apply to our understanding of the world and the arguments which conduce to receptivity to absolute value, the elaboration of this last principle of reason is quite unnecessary, being largely redundant. In replying to this Mi-pham asks that we consider two ways in which the objection might be construed. First, it may be taken as asserting that we do not need to be epistemologists in order to know, that we need not have studied formal logic in order to reason correctly. This, of course, is perfectly true, but it does not establish any redundancy here. The objection thus taken involves a confusion between the act of knowing and the inquiry into what it is to know, the act of inferring and the study of the principles of sound argu-

ment <sup>44</sup> Alternatively, the objector may be suggesting that our foregoing consideration of the absolute should have already led us to conclude that the distinctions made here are not ultimately valid, and so should be dispensed with even conventionally. But this leads to great absurdity even in our daily affairs we would then be incapable of distinguishing between a thing and its opposite. For one who has been in this manner misled by the notion of absolute realization—a realization in which all affirmation and denial have been utterly transcended—so that he now affirms utter nonsense, the principle of valid reason should be hardly considered unnecessary.

#### 1 4 The Four Orientations

1 4 0 When one has achieved certainty with respect to the two truths by means of the four modes of reasoning, that is, has freed one's intellect from ignorance (*ma rtogs*), misunderstanding (*log rtogs*), and doubt (*the ishom*), four changes of orientation are automatically realized (*shugs kays 'byung*) with respect to the intention of the Buddha's doctrine. That is to say, the philosophical insight previously cultivated has now contributed to the formation of a preunderstanding that is appropriate to the task of correctly interpreting the Tathāgata's liberating message.

1 4 1 One orients oneself to the dharma, and not to persons (*gang zag la mi rton, chos la rton*). For it is the path which liberates, not its proponent. The latter may appear in any guise it is taught that the Sugata himself, for example, according to the requirements of those to be trained, once emanated as a butcher. And even if he who propounds the doctrine appears to be otherwise excellent, it is of no benefit if the content of his teaching contradicts the Mahāyāna. Māra, for instance, emanated in the guise of the Buddha.

1 4 2 Having oriented oneself to the dharma, one orients oneself to its content, and not to its verbal conventions (*tshig la mi rton, don la rton*). Because the motivation for utterance (*byod 'dod*) is to convey some content, then, so long as a given concatenation of signs gives rise to such understanding, further verbal elaboration is unnecessary. It is like seeking an ox that has been already found. There is no limit to the possible analysis of objects, and so forth, associated with even a single phrase like "Fetch the wood!" But if the utterance of that phrase alone permits of understanding, then the purpose of the verbalization is exhausted.

1 4 3 In penetrating the content, having come to know provisional meaning and definitive meaning, one orients oneself to definitive meaning, and not to provisional meaning (*drang don la mi rton, nges don la rton*). The omniscient one taught the sequence of vehicles as the rungs of a ladder in accord with the predispositions, faculties, and attitudes of his disciples. There are statements which he has purposefully made with an

intention (*dgongs pa*) directed to a given intended stratum of meaning (*dgongs gzhi*), but which a critical analysis calls into question if taken literally (*sgra yi bzhun pa*). These are exemplified by the four special intentions and four hidden intentions. Thus, regarding the four philosophical systems and the culminating Vajrayāna, that part of the teaching not clearly disclosed in a lower system is elucidated by a higher one. It is by seeing what both accords with scripture and is proven by reason that one grasps definitive meaning. In the case of the Vajrayāna, whose teachings are "sealed" by the six parameters and four modes, reason can establish the intended content only in association with the precepts transmitted by the appropriate lineage <sup>45</sup>

1 4 4 If one is to assimilate the definitive meaning of the doctrine, then one must orient oneself to nondual pristine cognition, and not to (mundane) consciousness (*nam shes la mi rton, ye shes la rton*). The latter is that mind which apprehends objects (*gzung 'dzin sems*), and is entangled in word and concept (*sgra rtog rjes 'brangs*). That mind's very being is objectification (*dmigs pa can gyi bdag nyid*), which is embodied in the dichotomy of apprehended objects and the apprehensions of them, acts which are all non-veridical (*rdzum*)<sup>46</sup> and so cannot touch reality. Attributes which objectify may grasp their objects as beings (*dingos por dmigs*), nonbeings (*dingos med dmigs*), the conjunction of being and nonbeing (*dingos dmogs med gnyis su dmigs*), or the negation of both being and nonbeing (*gnyis med dmigs*).<sup>47</sup> But these objectifications are all equally said to be "Māra's range of activity" (*badud gyi spyod yul*).<sup>48</sup> The process of objectification is not terminated by refutation or proof, for only when one sees what is as it is, without refutation or proof, is one freed.<sup>49</sup> Released from all apprehended objects and apprehensions, self-emergent and self-luminous, pristine cognition unfolds.

#### 1 5 The Eight Treasures of Brilliance

The realization of immediate insight into the nature of reality brings with it the emergence of spiritual faculties that contribute to a profound ability to convey to others the significance of the Buddha's message. These faculties are spoken of in the *Lalitavistaraśūtra*<sup>50</sup> as "treasures of brilliance" (*spobs pa 'i gter*), and are said to be eight in number. (1) the treasure of mindfulness, so that forgetfulness is overcome, (2) the treasure of intellect, whereby one remains critical, (3) the treasure of realization, which is here specifically the comprehension of the entire corpus of Buddhist scripture, (4) the treasure of retention, which is distinguished from mindfulness in that retention has as its specific objects the topics of formal study, (5) the treasure of brilliance, here the ability to satisfy the needs of others by means of eloquent speech, (6) the treasure of dharma, whereby one acts to preserve the doctrine, (7) the treasure of

an enlightened spirit, so that one maintains a constant affinity with the three jewels of the Buddhist religion, and (8) the treasure of actual attainment, for one is now fully receptive to unborn reality. Endowed with these treasures one upholds the doctrine, reveals to others what is to be undertaken and what is to be abandoned, and in the end one comes to realize for oneself the enlightenment of a Buddha.

### Some Contemporary Reflections

We began this inquiry considering Buddhist hermeneutics to be the explicit theory guiding Buddhist scriptural interpretation, and we have followed its course as it has merged with Buddhist philosophy as a general theory of exegesis and practice. Turning now to our western traditions of hermeneutical thought, what might be derived from their juxtaposition with Mi-pham's contribution? A comprehensive answer to this question cannot be hastily formulated. I will content myself to consider briefly two related problems that have come to my attention in the course of this research. These concern the dichotomy of explanation and understanding, and the conflict of fundamentally ontological with fundamentally epistemological orientations. Mi-pham, of course, knew nothing of western philosophy. I therefore make no claim to represent here the manner in which he might have treated these issues in their contemporary context.

Hermeneutical philosophy since Dilthey has generally affirmed there to be two distinct scientific methodologies: a methodology of *explanation* which is appropriate to the natural sciences, and a methodology of *understanding* (*Verstehen*) which is appropriate to the human sciences. This was advocated against the view of the positivist tradition, which maintained that the methods of the human sciences could be reduced to those of the natural sciences. In recent philosophy this monomethodological view has been powerfully asserted in Hempel's covering law theory,<sup>51</sup> which has occasioned a debate within the analytic tradition through the challenges framed by disciples of Wittgenstein such as Anscombe and von Wright.<sup>52</sup> The last mentioned, in particular, has explicitly related his own insistence upon an irreducible distinction of "two great process categories"—causation and intentional agency, which are respectively the objects of the operations known as explanation and understanding—to the work of thinkers associated with the continental hermeneutical tradition. At the same time, philosophers within the hermeneutical tradition, especially Ricoeur, and within the analytic tradition, such as Davidson and Searle, have in various ways questioned the validity of the distinction, though without wishing to resurrect Hempel's program in its particulars.<sup>53</sup> The controversy thus bridges the gulf between two

major philosophical traditions which until very recently seemed to be incapable of constructive interaction. Let us now inquire into the manner in which the dispute reflects upon certain features of Mi-pham's thought.

We are concerned here, of course, with the principles of efficacy and dependence, especially in the light of Mi-pham's assertion that these are the basis for our undertaking or desisting from actions in the world. This suggests that Mi-pham would have denied that there is any absolute gulf separating the realm of intentional undertaking from that of causation. It thus appears *prima facie* that his thought is in conflict with the views of those who insist on a thoroughgoing dualism here. Does this point up a fundamental defect in Mi-pham's system?

Before we can answer this question, we should note that many of the contemporary causalists have conceded a major point to philosophers such as von Wright: they have abandoned the program of the logical positivists to rely on causality to explain away the intentional features of human action. But they insist that intentional attitudes may themselves function causally. This von Wright, for instance, would deny I believe. Buddhist thought in general, and Mi-pham in particular, would support some version of the causalist approach to the problem. In his treatment elsewhere of the fundamental doctrine of dependent origination (*pratītya-samutpāda*, *rtten cing 'brel bar 'byung ba*), Mi-pham recalls the distinction between an *inner causality* (*nang gi rten 'brel*) and an *outer causality* (*phyi yi rten 'brel*).<sup>54</sup> The former is embodied in the traditional Buddhist scheme of the twelve links of dependent origination, beginning with ignorance and ending in old age and death, and the latter describes natural processes such as the growth of a plant from the seed. I take this distinction to be at least analogous to von Wright's distinction between two great process categories. But, Mi-pham, like Davidson, parts company from von Wright by maintaining both processes to be causal, though it is important to note that this is established without seeking to reduce one category to the other. A detailed analysis of the relevant Buddhist doctrines in Mi-pham's formulation of them cannot be undertaken here. Suffice it to say, however, that in the absence of such an undertaking it is by no means obvious that Buddhist thought is lacking in the conceptual richness required to deal adequately with the conflicting claims of causation and agency. If Mi-pham's theory is defective at this point (as it may yet prove to be), more than a general objection to causalism will be necessary to show wherein a supposed fault may lie.

With regard to the problem of the conflict between ontological and epistemological orientations, it may be said that western philosophy since Kant has moved between two poles, which assert respectively the primacy of being and, in line with Kant's "Copernican revolution," the

primacy of knowing. The distinction complements, in some respects, that which obtains with respect to the two process categories. When we emphasize an epistemological and agent-centered orientation to the exclusion of the ontological and causalist, we tend toward idealism, and when we adopt an opposite orientation, we swing in the direction of positivism. And other orientations have also been realized with respect to these fundamental divisions. But this problem of conflicting orientations does not seem to exist for Mi-pham. In the following brief remarks I will offer one explanation for this, without committing myself to any opinion on its implications for contemporary western philosophical investigations.

Mi-pham's most novel contribution to the discussion of the four principles of reason was his reduction of the principles of efficacy and dependence to that of reality. As we have seen, this is where why-questions must reach their end. At the same time, in elaborating the principle of valid proof, he sought the ultimate foundations for his epistemology in the phenomenon of self-presentation. We thus have two fundamental grounds, the first of which is ontological and the second epistemological. What I wish to suggest here is that no tension arises between them because Mi-pham never seeks to reduce one to the other, but rather holds that without such reduction the two foundations nonetheless converge. That they do so ultimately is, of course, entailed by Mi-pham's conception of the absolute as involving the coalescence of noetic agent and object. But it is significant, too, that even within the domain of convention they are not to be thought of as being wholly disparate.<sup>55</sup> For self-presentation confronts us in all our conscious moments with the unity of being and knowing. How does being in pain allow me to know that I am in pain? It just does. No further answer is required. Being and knowing are here no different. And it is characteristic of Rnying-ma-pa thought to find in our ordinary states of awareness (*rig pa*) a subtle but abiding link with the ineffable truth of enlightenment.

### Buddhism as a Hermeneutical Endeavor

Mi-pham's theory of interpretation clearly ramifies beyond the apparent limits of scriptural interpretation plain and simple. In concluding this presentation of it, I wish to consider a few of the implications of Mi-pham's work for our general conception of Buddhist hermeneutics.

It will be observed that Mi-pham's discussion is divided into three main phases. First, the four principles of reason are taught so that we might comprehend the fundamental doctrine of Mahāyāna metaphysics, namely that of the two truths. Armed with this insight we set out to transform certain basic orientations in the second phase. And finally,

realizing the fruit of this transformation, we gain the endowment of the eight treasures of brilliance. This seems to bear more than accidental resemblance to the systematic teaching of the doctrine according to the categories of ground (*gzhi*), path (*lam*), and result (*'bras-bu*). Let us note however, that with the sole exception of the eight treasures all the major categories employed by Mi-pham are those expounded in the earlier scholastic tradition in particular association with the problems of textual interpretation. It thus would seem to be the case that for Mi-pham the principles of interpretation are really no different from the principles of Buddhist philosophy overall. I believe that this is as it should be.<sup>56</sup>

Vasubandhu, in a frequently cited verse, divided the teaching into the two great domains of transmitted doctrine (*āgama*) and realization (*adhigama*). No English translation can convey the resonance of these technical terms, which are both derived from the same Sanskrit root. (In Tibetan, too, this is lost.) Perhaps we can suggest it by saying that the transmitted doctrine is that which *comes down* to us, while realization is that which *comes through* when the transmission is rightly understood. Vasubandhu associated these two domains with two sorts of spiritually meaningful activity: exegesis and practice. Jointly, they guarantee the continuing integrity of the Buddha's teaching in the world. Now, what I wish to propose here is that we regard both of these activities to be fundamentally interpretive. In the first, receptivity and acumen must open us to the descent of the teaching, for that only occurs when we are capable of understanding the Buddha's intention. In the second, we similarly open ourselves to the realization of reality *qua* absolute value, for that cannot come through to us until we comprehend the real order of things. Clearly a Buddhist theory of interpretation must in the final analysis embrace both domains, for it is through the interpretive act that scripture on the one hand and reality on the other are in fact comprehended.

In developing Buddhist theory of interpretation in this manner Mi-pham was not, of course, undertaking a radical program, he was no revolutionary breaking with tradition in order to explore previously undiscovered pathways in Buddhist thought. Like most Buddhist philosophers, he was engaged in the ongoing process of unpacking the contents of the received tradition. The very inclusion of the four principles of reason among the rules of thumb for interpretation was already indicative of the inseparability of Buddhist hermeneutics from Buddhist logic and metaphysics.<sup>57</sup> The hermeneutical character of the Dignāga-Dharmakīrti system, too, had been clearly enunciated long before Mi-pham's time, for example by Karma-pa VII Chos-grags rgya-mtsho (1454–1506), who introduced his monumental exposition of that system with these words:

The Buddha, that transcendent lord, who embodies logic set in motion the wheel of the doctrine which is infallible with respect to both provisional and ultimate meaning, so that the genuinely significant, which had been previously unknown, might be clearly known without error. And that [doctrine], according to the faculties of individual disciples, abides in various forms, to wit, provisional meaning, definitive meaning, literal, metaphorical, having special intention, and having a hidden intention. Seeing that its meaning is thus hard for disciples to understand, that great soul Dignāga well established all the scriptures of the Sugata by means of three logics, so that they could be easily understood through the science of logical argument, and so that ignorance, misunderstanding, doubt, and so forth might be removed.<sup>38</sup>

It will not be possible to explore this theme in greater detail here. It will be enough to affirm that there is a fundamental sense in which Buddha-dharma is a hermeneutical endeavor and that this is revealed certainly in our consideration of Mi-pham. Buddhism is hermeneutical in that it demands that we confront and come to understand the message of the Sugata, it is hermeneutical in that it requires a reinterpretation of the world within which we find ourselves and equally a redefinition of ourselves within that world, and it is hermeneutical in that it will not allow us to remain silent, but demands that we enunciate, that is, interpret for others, the message and the reality with which we have struggled.

### Notes

I am grateful to several individuals for advice and criticism in connection with this research. The topic for this paper was suggested, and the relevant writings of Mi-pham brought to my attention, by Mkhan-po Sangs-rgyas bstan-'dzin Rin-po-che of Ser-lo dgon-pa, Nepal. Mkhan-po Dpal-ldan shes-rab, currently residing in New York City, indicated to me the important contributions of Candragomin and Rong-zom-pa, and their influence on Mi-pham and the later adherents of his school. The participants in the Buddhist Hermeneutics conference all must be acknowledged for the stimulus they provided. Among them, I wish to thank Michael Broido, Luis Gómez, Jeffrey Hopkins, and Tom Kasulis in particular for their generous comments on specific issues raised here. I am indebted, too, to Professor Philip Quinn, Department of Philosophy, Notre Dame University, for his indications regarding the philosophical content of several passages.

1 For a useful introduction to the life and contributions of this master, see Steven D. Goodman, "Mi-pham rgya-mtsho an account of his life, the printing of his works, and the structure of his treatise entitled *Mkhas-pa'i ishul la jug pa'i sgo*," in Ronald M. Davidson, ed., *Wind Horse*, vol. 1 (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1981), 58-78.

2 The circularity that seems to me to be problematic here is not a feature of the so-called hermeneutic circle in general. According to Dilthey's conception of the latter, the interpreter is not expected to (and indeed cannot) exclude as

irrelevant all elements of his preunderstanding which have their origins outside the particular text under consideration. The concept of the hermeneutic circle tells us that we cannot understand the text without already understanding the text *in part*. But the circularity to which I here object arises when we insist that to understand the text we must refer only to the text, and nothing more.

3 My reservations with respect to implicit hermeneutics stem from the following considerations. Let us suppose that an individual *a* has interpreted a text *b* and that his interpretation is represented by some body of conclusions *C*. Let us further suppose that there is some theory *T* such that if *b* is read in the light of *T* one would conclude *C*. These suppositions do not jointly entail *a*'s having interpreted *b* in the light of *T*. Given these bare bones there is in fact *nothing whatsoever* that can be said of *a*'s implicit hermeneutic. These considerations notwithstanding, I do not disagree with Robert Gimello and David Tracy in their insistence that Buddhist hermeneutics will often require our extending our inquiry to implicit principles of interpretation if we are to investigate Buddhist hermeneutics at all. In such instances we will, of course, have more than bare bones upon which to base our hypotheses. Let there be some misunderstanding about this, my point here is simply to indicate something of the theoretical limits of this process, and to define my own investigations in terms of those limits.

4 Kong-sprul and Mi-pham were among the closest disciple-colleagues of nineteenth-century Tibet's greatest visionary, 'Jam-dbyangs Mkhven-brtse 'i dbang-po (1820-1892). The best survey to date of these masters and their intellectual and spiritual milieu remains E. Gene Smith's introduction to Lokesh Chandra, ed., *Kongtrul's Encyclopedia of Indo-Tibetan Culture* (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1970). Kong-sprul was, in fact, one of Mi-pham's teachers, but available information on his instruction to him leaves unclear whether he influenced Mi-pham with respect to the present subject matter. On their relationship see Bduud'-joms Rin-po-che 'Jigs-bral-ye-shes-rdo-rje, *Gangs byongs rgyal bstan yongs kyi phyi mo naga 'gyur do rje theg pa'i bstan pa rin po che'i ltar byung ba'i ishul dag cing gsal bar brjod pa lha dbang gYul las rgyal ba'i rnga bo che'i sgra dbyangs*, in *Collected Writings and Revelations of Bduud'-joms Rin-po-che*, vol. 1 (Delhi, 1979), 697. Translated in G. Dorje and M. Kapstein, *Fundamentals and History of the Nyungmapa Tradition of Tibetan Buddhism* (London: Wisdom Publications, forthcoming).

5 The original Dpal-spungs edition of this work is reproduced in Lokesh Chandra, *Kongtrul's Encyclopedia*. Citations in the present paper, however, refer to Kong-sprul 'Yon-tan rgya-mtsho (Blo-gros mtha'-yas), *Shes bya kun khyab*, 3 vols. (Beijing: Minorities Press, 1982).

6 It is this aspect of Tibetan hermeneutics that has perhaps received the most attention from Tibetan thinkers themselves, e.g., in Tsong-kha-pa's *four de force*, the *Drang nges legs bshad snyung po*, a complete translation of which is now available in Robert Thurman, *Tsong Khapa's Speech of Gold in the Essence of True Eloquence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

7 Among recent contributions see, for example, Kennard Lipman, "Nīār-tha, Neyārtha, ar-dī Jāhāgatarābha in Tibet," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 8 (1980) 87-95; Robert A. F. Thurman, "Buddhist Hermeneutics," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 46 (1) 19-39; and Michael M. Broido, "Abhiprāya and Implication in Tibetan Linguistics," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 12 (1984) 1-33.

8 See especially the contributions of Broido and Thurman to the present volume and the references therein.

- 9 Cf. Josef Bleicher, *Contemporary Hermeneutics* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), 14. "The limitation of the pre-Schleiermacher effort consisted in the lack of reflection that transcended merely methodological considerations—which themselves did not reach any systematic formulation and remained on the level of ad hoc insights that were forthcoming from interpretative practice."
- 10 S. Bagchi, ed., *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra*, Buddhist Sanskrit Texts 13 (Darbhanga: Mithila Institute, 1970), xix 45d. Elsewhere in the Sanskrit phrase is *catasro yuktayah*, e.g., Nathmal Tāta, ed., *Abhidharmasamuccayabhāṣyam* (Patna: K. P. Jayaswal Research Institute, 1976), p. 99, no. 125.
- 11 Cf. Monier Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1899), 853.
- 12 The Pali equivalent *yūtti* represents a basic category of scriptural analysis in both the *Nettipakaraṇam* and the *Petaḥopadesa*. See Bhikkhu Nanamoli, trans., *The Guide* (London: Luzac and Company, 1962), 36ff., and idem, *The Piṭaka-Disclosure* (London: Luzac and Company, 1965), 116ff. *Yūtti* is here translated as "a construing." I am grateful to George Bond for calling these sources to my attention through his presentation to the conference on Buddhist hermeneutics. Cf., also, the concept of *yūkti* as it occurs in the *Tāttvārtha* chapter of the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, edited by Nalinaksha Dutt (Patna: K. P. Jayaswal Research Institute, 1978), 25ff., and the translation by Janice Dean Willis, *On Knowing Reality* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 150.
- 13 Étienne Lamotte, *Samādhirnārocana Sūtra L'Explication des Mystères* (Louvain: Université de Louvain, 1935), chap. 10, 7 4<sup>o</sup> (text and translation). Lamotte mistook *rigs pa* in this context to be a translation of the Sanskrit term *nyūya* rather than *yūkti*. His attempt to translate the lengthy and difficult passage which adumbrates the four principles of reason he qualifies with these words: "Cet exposé de logique bouddhique était très spécial, nous avons cru bien faire de conserver les termes sanscrits dans notre traduction." The present writer has made a new translation of the entire passage, and intends to include it with other materials he has gathered in a forthcoming historical study of the development of the four principles.
- 14 Pralhad Pradhan, *Abhidharma Samuccaya of Asanga* (Santunuketan: Visva-Bharati, 1950), 81, Nathmal Tāta, *Abhidharmasamuccayabhāṣyam*. For a translation of the former see Walpola Rahula, *Le Compendium de la Super-Doctrine d'Asanga* (Paris: École française d'Extrême-Orient, 1971), 136. This, however, is seriously flawed in the passage here cited. Rahula has without explanation read *sāksātkrtyāsādhanyūkti* for Pradhan's entirely correct reading of *upapattisādhanyūkti*.
- 15 Kong-sprul, *Shes bya kun khyab*, 3 11–12.
- 16 Neither do the doxographers of the other Tibetan traditions offer us much assistance at this point. For example, the Dge-lugs-pa scholar Lcang-skya Rol-pa'i rdo-rje (1717–1786), in his *Grub pa'i mtha'i rnam par bshag pa gsal bar bshad pa thub bstan lhun po'i mdzes rgyan* (Sarnath, U.P.: The Pleasure of Elegant Sayings Press, 1970), 151, says that "relying on these four principles of reason, too, one penetrates the significance of the Jina's scriptures." But this is rather uninformative.
- 17 *Don rnam par nges pa shes rab ral grā*, modern xylograph from Ser-lo mgon-pa, Nepal, based on the Rdzong-sar edition, 10 folios.
- 18 *Mkhas pa'i tshul la 'jug pa'i sgo* (Tashijong, H.P.: Sungrab Nyamso Gyun-phe! Parkhang, 1964), fols. 148b–161b. For a general introduction to this work

- see Goodman, "Mi-pham rgya-mtsho", and Leslie S. Kawamura, "An Analysis of Mi-pham's *mKhas-'jug*," in Davidson, *Wind Horse*, 112–126.
- 19 *Collected Writings of Jam-mgon 'Ju Mi-pham rgya-mtsho*, vol. A (Gangtok: Sonam Topgay Kazi, 1976), 667–668.
- 20 Sthiramani, *Sūtrālamkāravṛttibhāṣya*, vol. 2 (Rumtek, 1976), 403–410.
- 21 *Don rnam par nges pa shes rab ral grā mchan bcas*, in *Collected Writings of 'Jam-mgon 'Ju Mi-pham rgya-mtsho*, vol. PA (Gangtok: Sonam Topgay Kazi, 1976), 787–820.
- 22 *Mkhas pa'i tshul la 'jug pa'i sgo'i mchan 'grel legs bshad smang ba'i 'od zer* (Delhi: Lama Jume Drakpa, 1974), 653–694.
- 23 *Mkhas 'jug gi sa bcad mdor bodus pa pad dkar phreng ba* (Tashijong, H.P.: Sungrab Nyamso Gyunphe! Parkhang, 1965), 20b–22b.
- 24 Dharmakīrti's definition of absolute reality, i.e. efficacy, is here taken as the mark of veridical being in the domain of the concealment of the absolute. See Swami Dwarikadas Shastri, ed., *Pramānavārtikam* (Vārānasi: Bauddha Bharati, 1968), 100. "What is capable of effecting a result is here [defined as] absolute being." Cf., also, Esho Mikogami, "Some Remarks on the Concept Arthakriyā," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 7 (1979): 79–94.
- 25 Goodman, "Mi-pham rgya-mtsho," 71, translates this term as "what is possible and what is impossible", and Kawamura, "An Analysis of Mi-pham's *mKhas-'jug*," 114, gives "what is inevitable and what is impossible." The latter is certainly incorrect and the former somewhat inaccurately suggests that both logical and empirical possibility are to be included here. But Mi-pham himself, *Mkhas pa'i tshul la 'jug pa'i sgo*, 23a1 ff., makes it quite clear that this topic concerns only empirical possibility. Accordingly, "positive contingencies" (*gnas*) refers here to natural processes—e.g., a rice-stalk growing from a rice-seed—and "negative contingencies" (*gnas ma yin pa*) to empirically impossible processes—e.g., a cat growing from a rice-seed.
- 26 See his *Gsang sngags rdo rje theg pa'i tshul las smang ba lhar bgrub pa Rong zom chos bzang gis mdzad pa*, in *Selected Writings of Ron-zor Chos-kyi-bzan-po*, Smanrtsis Shesng Spenzod, vol. 73 (Leh: S. W. Tashigangpa, 1973), 125–151.
- 27 The Sanskrit title of the text last mentioned is also given as *Nyāyasiddhāloka*, P. 5740, translated by Śrīsimhaprabha and Vairocana, although it is not listed in the early ninth century *Ldan dkar dkar chag* as given by Marcelle Lalou, "Les Textes Bouddhiques au Temps du Roi Khri-sron-lde-bcan," *Journal Asiatique* 241, no. 3 (1953): 313–353. The text is noted, but not analyzed, by Sats Chandra Vidyabhusana, *A History of Indian Logic* (Delhi: Motilal Barnarsidass, 1971), 336. Vidyabhusana assigns the author to "about 925 A.D.," but if the attribution of translators is correct he would have been active over a century earlier.
- 28 Cf. the distinctions made by St. Thomas Aquinas, *Aristotle On Interpretation*, translated by Jean T. Oesterle (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1962), 17. "There is a twofold operation of the intellect. One is the understanding of simple objects, that is, the operation by which the intellect apprehends just the essence of the thing alone, the other is the operation of composing and dividing. There is also a third operation, that of reasoning, by which reason proceeds from what is known to the investigation of things that are unknown. The first of these operations is ordered to the second, for there cannot be composition and division unless things have already been apprehended simply. The second, in turn, is ordered to the third, for clearly we must proceed from some known truth to which the intellect assents in order to have certitude

about something not yet known" Cf., also, Aristotle, *De Anima*, bk 3, chap 6 For Mi-pham's indications concerning the passage from the operation of division and combination to that of reasoning, see below, paragraphs 1 3 1-2

29 I am indebted to Mkhan-po Dpal-ldan shes-rab for having clarified this point By now it will be obvious to readers familiar with recent western philosophy that "conventional" is not used here with the same meaning it has in the philosophy of science since Poincaré For even the necessary truths of logic and mathematics, which may be known a priori, are here termed "conventional" (*sāṅketika, tha snyad pa*) But "conventional" in its Buddhist uses should not be taken to imply "freely chosen from a given set of alternatives," and much less "arbitrary" It refers, rather, to all language and propositional knowledge, and to the principles to which they conform and to their objects, for none of these is or directly points to that absolute reality whose realization is spiritual liberation That absolute, of which not even the categories of the one and the many or of being and nonbeing can be affirmed, wholly transcends the familiar conventions of logic, experience, language, and thought

30 For the four major arguments traditionally enumerated in the scholastic treatises of the Madhyamaka school see David Seyfort Ruegg, *The Literature of the Madhyamaka School of Philosophy in India* (Wiesbaden Otto Harrassowitz, 1981), 112 A detailed account of their exposition according to the Dge-lugs-pa tradition is found in Jeffrey Hopkins, *Meditation on Emptiness* (London Wisdom Publications, 1983), pt 2, "Reasoning into Reality" Here I follow Mi-pham's own discussion, as given in *Mkhas pa'i tshul la 'jug pa'i sgo*, 133b-140a The enumeration of three arguments in the passage which follows, rather than the traditional four, is explained by the fact that the fourth, the "Great Interdependence Argument" (*ten 'brel chen po*), is held to apply equally to the analysis of cause, result, and essence

31 The argument applied to causes, called "Diamond Fragments" (*gyu la dpyod pa rdo rje gzeags ma*), proceeds from the assumption that if an individual thing comes into being as the result of some cause, then that cause must either be the thing itself or something other The supposition that it is the thing itself leads to an infinite regress, whereas the assumption that the cause is other cannot be sustained owing to the absence of any intrinsic relationship between the supposed cause and its result Having denied these two alternatives nothing is gained by supposing that their conjunction might explain causation, and their joint negation leads to the absurdity of things coming into being causelessly The argument is intended to demonstrate that the concept of cause is radically defective, i e empty

32 The reality of the result is challenged by the "negation of the coming into being of an existent or of a nonexistent" (*'bras bu la dpyod pa yod med skye 'gog*) Whatever comes into being, it is supposed, must be something that exists, does not exist, conjoins existence and nonexistence, or neither exists nor does not exist Following an argumentative strategy similar to that of the critique of cause, one is led to conclude that the concept of result (i e of something that is brought into being) is also defective

33 The argument employed here intends to reduce to absurdity the notions of the one and the many (*ngo bo la dpyod pa grig du bral*), with the result that the concept of individual essence is overturned As applied to material bodies the argument is similar to Kant's second autonomy But in the case of spiritual substance it depends on the denial of the unity of consciousness, both through appeal to an assumption of temporal parts and in the light of Humean consider-

ations with respect to the variegation of consciousness Mi-pham analyzed this argument *in extenso* in his commentary on Śāntarakṣita's *Madhyamakālamkāra*, the *Dbu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad 'jam dbyangs bla ma dgyes pa'i zhal lung*, in *Collected Writings of 'Jam-mgon 'ju Mi-pham rgya-mtsho*, vol 12 (Gangtok Sonam Topgay Kazi, 1976), 1-359

34 Cf Étienne Lamotte, *L'Enseignement de Vimalakīrti* (Louvain Publications Universitaires, 1962), 148 n 16

35 Despite the peculiarities of diction, Mi-pham's point here seems to be similar to that made by Aristotle in *Metaphysics*, bk 7, chap 17, 1041<sup>a</sup> (trans W D Ross)

Now "why a thing is itself" is a meaningless inquiry (for [to give meaning to the question "why"] the fact or the existence of the thing must already be evident—e g that the moon is eclipsed—but the fact that a thing is itself is the single reason and the single cause to be given in answer to all such questions as "why the man is man, or the musician musical," unless one were to answer "because each thing is inseparable from itself, and its being one just meant this" )

Cf., also, *Posterior Analytics*, bk 2, chaps 4-7 For a recent discussion of related issues, see Harry V Stopes-Roe's observations on "terminal quests," in his "The Intelligibility of the Universe," in Stuart C Brown, *Reason and Religion* (Ithaca Cornell University Press, 1977), 53-67

36 *Mkhas pa'i tshul la 'jug pa'i sgo*, 150a6-b2

37 The presentation found in the *Samdhinirmocana* thus has the distinction of being one of the earliest Buddhist presentations of these topics They are listed there as falling under three categories direct perception, inference, and scriptural authority Later Buddhist logicians tended to refrain from enumerating the last of these as a separate epistemic authority, but recall Kong-sprul's remarks above

38 The most complete account of this system remains Theodore Stcherbatsky's dated opus, *Buddhist Logic* (reprint ed., New York Dover, 1962), 2 vols While there is no comprehensive bibliography for the many contributions made in recent years to the primary and secondary literature on this subject, useful lists of sources are found in Geshe Lobsang Tharchun, *The Logic and Debate Tradition of India, Tibet, and Mongolia* (Freewood Acres, N J First Kalmuk Buddhist Temple, 1979), 237-270, and Ernst Steinkellner, *Dharmakīrti's Pramānavivśāyāh, Teil II—Übersetzung und Anmerkungen* (Vienna Verlag der Osterreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1979), 10-19

39 The issues raised in this passage are of central importance to contemporary epistemology, and require much further study in their Buddhist formulations The epistemic primacy of self-presentation (*svasamvittih*) was sharply contested by those within the Buddhist tradition who maintained this concept to be fundamentally incoherent, like the notion of the sword being used to cut itself Cf Śāntideva, *Bodhicāryāvātāra*, chap 9, v 18 Also problematic was the precise nature of the chain leading from discrete self-presentations through sensory perceptions to inferential knowledge of the world For contemporary philosophical discussions of these and related questions see Roderick M Chisholm, *Theory of Knowledge* (Englewood Cliffs, N J Prentice-Hall, 1966) The connection between the Buddhist notion of *svasamvittih* and recent investigations of self-presentation appears to have been first explicitly noted by Paul M Williams, "On *rang ng*," in Ernst Steinkellner and Helmut Tauscher, eds, *Contri-*

*tutions on Tibetan and Buddhist Religion and Philosophy*, Proceedings of the Csoma de Koros Symposium Held at Velm-Vienna (Vienna, 1983), 2 321-332 I thank Michael Broido for calling this interesting article to my attention (Wilhams, it should be noted, uses "self-consciousness" where I prefer "self-presentation")

40 One interesting question that can be raised here is whether Buddhist philosophers regarded future states of affairs as having determinate truth-value

41 See especially his *Nges shes rim po che'i sgron me*, published in a lithographic edition with the commentary of Mkhan-chen Kun-bzang dpal-ldan (Clement Town, U P Nyingma Lama's College, n d)

42 Particularly noteworthy here is Bod-pa sprul-sku Mdo-sngags bstan-pa'i nyi-ma's *Lta grub shan 'byed* and its autocomentary, on which see Kennard Lipman, "What Is Buddhist Logic?" in S D Goodman and R Davidson, eds, *Tibetan Buddhism Reason and Revelation* (Albany SUNY Press, forthcoming)

43 On this distinction see Ruegg, *Literature of the Madhyamaka School*, 64 and 88

44 In point of fact this very confusion has been an obstacle to the study of the development of Indian logic See, e g, Vidyabhusana, *A History of Indian Logic*, 500 n 1

45 Note that it is here that Mi-pham situates most of the interpretive rules of thumb enumerated in the standard scholastic manuals Cf the section on "The Scholastic Background" above and the articles referred to in nn 7 and 8

46 Nonveridical, that is, in the absolute sense, which does not preclude their being conventionally veridical

47 From a philosophical perspective it is of supreme interest that while Mi-pham considers, e g, the conjunction of being and nonbeing to be a metaphysical absurdity, he nonetheless maintains that it can be in some sense *objectified* This merits comparison with certain of the proposals of Alexius Meinong as detailed in his "The Theory of Objects," translated in Roderick M Chisholm, ed, *Realism and the Background of Phenomenology* (Glencoe, Ill Free Press, 1960) A lucid introduction to Meinong's theory may be found in Leonard Linsky, *Referring* (London Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967), chap 2

48 This is so because the conventional dichotomy of subject and object is a fundamental aspect of the unknowing which is the root of samsāric entanglement For the precise formulation of this in accord with the cosmology of the Rnying-ma-pa school, see B'dud-'joms Rin-po-che 'Jigs-bral-ye-shes-rdo-rje, *Gsang sngags snga gyur mying ma ba'i bstan pa'i nam gzhag mdo tsam brjod pa legs bshad snang ba'i dga'i ston* (Kaluimpong Dudzom Rinpochee [sic], 1967), 4b6 ff Translated in G Dorje and M Kapstein, *Fundamentals and History of the Nyingmapa Tradition of Tibetan Buddhism*

49 Cf E H Johnston, ed, *Ratnagotravaiḥāga* (Patna Bihar Research Institute, 1950), 1 154, p 76, and *Abhisamayālaṅkāra*, 5 21, in P L Vaidya, ed, *Astāsāhasnikā*, Buddhist Sanskrit Texts 4 (Darbhanga Mithila Institute, 1960), 523

50 P L Vaidya, ed, *Lalitavastara*, Buddhist Texts Series 1 (Darbhanga Mithila Institute, 1958), 317 The sūtra refers to them merely as the "eight great treasures" (*astau mahānīhānāni*)

51 Carl G Hempel, "The Function of General Laws in History," in Herbert Feigl and Wilfred Sellars, eds, *Readings in Philosophical Analysis* (New York Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1949), 459-471

52 G E M Anscombe, *Intention* (Ithaca Cornell University Press, 1957), Georg Henrik von Wright, *Explanation and Understanding* (Ithaca Cornell University Press, 1971) An introduction to the domain in which analytic philosophy and hermeneutics intersect is provided by Roy J Howard, *Three Facts of Hermeneutics* (Berkeley University of California Press, 1982)

53 For a concise presentation of Paul Ricoeur's view here see his *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, ed and trans John B Thompson (Cambridge University Press, 1981), chap 5 ("What Is a Text? Explanation and Understanding") Ricoeur does not seek to deny that explanation and bifurcation are distinct operations, but refuses to accept Dilthey's absolute the same terrain, within the same sphere of language [*langage*], that explanation and interpretation will enter into debate" By contrast, analytic critics have tended to focus upon the supposed dichotomy between the two process categories of natural causation and intentional agency See Donald Davidson, *Essays on Actions and Events* (Oxford Clarendon Press, 1980), and John R Searle *Intentionality* (Cambridge University Press, 1983), chap 4 ("Intentional Causation") One philosopher who has systematically examined both the causation-agency and the explanation-understanding dichotomies is R M Chisholm In the *Person and Object* (La Salle, Ill Open Court, 1979), 69-72 ("The Agent as Cause"), he denies that there is any "unbridgeable gap" between the members of the former pair, whereas in *The Foundations of Knowing* (Minneapolis University of Minnesota Press, 1982), chap 7 ("Verstehen The Epistemological Question"), he concludes that the latter distinction is indeed a significant one Implicit in Chisholm's work, therefore, is the important observation that strict parallelism between these two distinctions need not be presupposed At the time of this writing I have no clear sense of how Buddhist epistemologists would have treated the notion of *Verstehen*

54 *Mkhas pa'i tshul la jug pa'i sgo*, sec 4

55 Cf Edmund Husserl, *Recherches Logiques*, trans Hubert Élie et al (Paris Presses Universitaires de France, 1962), vol 2, pt 2, sec 5, p 174 "There are not two things which are present in the experience, we do not experience the object and, beside it, the intentional experience which relates to it"

56 When we survey the history of western hermeneutics since Schleiermacher we find also theory of interpretation becoming fused with more general aspects of epistemology, metaphysics, and the philosophy of language What I wish to suggest at this juncture is that any theory of interpretation which generalizes its concerns beyond the elaboration of rules of thumb required in connection with the study of a given corpus must inevitably undergo some such transformation, for the reason that interpretive acts and their objects, when considered in general and not specified, are none other than rational and linguistic acts and their objects If this is so, then hermeneutics as scriptural interpretation will be in essence the conjunction of the appropriate domains of general philosophical inquiry with those rules which are elaborated specifically to link such inquiry with the scriptural corpus under consideration And this seems to be just what is accomplished by the Buddhist enumerations of interpretive keys If, in the light of these observations, we turn to western scholastic traditions, I think we will find that logic, theology, rational psychology, etc, are within those traditions hermeneutical in just the same sense that Buddhist philosophy is here claimed to be hermeneutical

57 It is of interest in this connection that the first western work explicitly

consecrated to interpretation theory was a treatise on logic, Aristotle's *De Interpretatione*

<sup>58</sup> Karma-pa VII Chos-grags rgya-mtsho, *Tshad ma rigs gzhung rgya msho* (Thimphu Topga Tulku, 1973), vol 1, p. 5, ll 1-5 *tshad mar gyur pa'i sangs rgyas bcom ldan 'das de nyid kyi chos kyi 'khor lo gnas skabs dang mihar thug gi don pa'i bstu ba med cing sngar ma shes pa'i yang dag pa'i don phyin ci ma log pa gsal bar shes pa'i slad du bkor bar mdzad la/ de'ang gdul bya so so'i dbang gis drang ba'i don dang/ nges pa'i don dang/ sgra ji bzhin pa dang/ ji bzhin ma yin pa dang dgongs pa can dang/ ldem por dgongs pa ci rigs pa'i tshul gyis gnas pa las/ de'i don gdul bya mams kyis rtogs dka' bar gzigs nas glan tshugs rigs pa'i sgo nas bde blags tu rtogs par bya ba dang/ ma rtogs pa dang/ log par rtogs pa dang/ the tshom la sogs pa bsal ba'i slad du bdag nyid chem po phyogs kyi glang pos bde bar gshegs pa'i gsung rab ma lus pa tshad ma gsum gyis legs par gtan la phab ste/*

# Buddhist Hermeneutics

*Edited by*

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# On the Interpretation of the Mahāyāna Sūtras

DONALD S LOPEZ, JR

We are of the opinion that the Buddhist doctrine evolved along the lines which its discoverer had unconsciously traced for it

É LAMOTTE

In his story "Tlon, Uqbar, and Orbus Tertius" Borges tells of the fantastic planet of Tlon, where the metaphysicians seek not truth but rather a kind of amazement and where, in literary matters, "the dominant notion is that everything is the work of one single author. Books are rarely signed. The concept of plagiarism does not exist, it has been established that all books are the work of a single writer, who is timeless and anonymous."<sup>1</sup> Such are the sūtras of the Mahāyāna, composed over the course of centuries in a wide array of languages but attributed to a single author, all considered *buddhapacana*. It is a vast canon.<sup>2</sup> The Peking edition of the Tibetan tripitaka contains 326 sūtras (some of which, like the *Ratnakūta*, include scores of autonomous works) in 34 volumes. Approximately 150 volumes would be required to translate these works into English. The longest of the sūtras is the *Satasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā*, the *Perfection of Wisdom in 100,000 Stanzas*, which fills 6 of the 34 volumes of sūtras. The shortest is the *Ekāksarībrajñāpāramitā*, the *Perfection of Wisdom in One Letter*, translated here in its entirety.

Thus did I hear at one time. The Bhagavan was sitting on Vulture Peak with a great assembly of 1,250 monks and many billions of bodhisattvas. At that time, the Bhagavan said this to the venerable Ānanda, "Ānanda, keep this perfection of wisdom in one letter for the benefit and happiness of sentient beings. It is thus, a." So said the Bhagavan and everyone—Ānanda, the monks, and the bodhisattva mahāsattvas—having understood and admired the perfection of wisdom, praised what the Bhagavan had said.<sup>3</sup>

Here the perfection of wisdom is radically contracted to a single letter, the letter *a*, the first letter of the Sanskrit alphabet, inherent in each consonant, the symbol of emptiness (*śūnyatā*). This is, clearly, an attempt to

synthesize and condense the vaster scriptures, to proclaim their essence most succinctly. It can also be seen as an attempt at interpretation, simultaneously eliminating all that is not essential, while implying that that which has been eliminated is entailed by and derived from an essence, both infinite and indeterminate.<sup>4</sup>

There is, of course, something even more succinct than a single letter. Nāgārjuna states at *Mūlamādhyamakakārikā* XXV 24

The cessation of all objects,  
The cessation of all elaborations is auspicious  
The Buddha did not teach any doctrine  
Anywhere to anyone.<sup>5</sup>

And in commentary, Candrakīrti cites several sūtras that tell of the Buddha's supreme economy of expression. Playing on the famous statement, called the "Sūtra of the Two Nights" (*dharmaśāstrīdvayasūtra*), that the Buddha constantly taught the doctrine from the night he achieved enlightenment to the night he passed into nirvāna,<sup>6</sup> Vajrapāmi proclaims in the *Sūtra Setting Forth the Inconceivable Secrets of the Tathāgata* (*Tathāgataśrībhagavyākhyānurdésāsūtra*)

Sāntamati, from the night when the Tathāgata fully awakened into unsurpassed, perfect, complete enlightenment, until the night when he passed without remainder into final nirvāna, the Tathāgata did not declare or speak even a single syllable, nor will he speak. Then how does the Bhagavan teach the doctrine to the various beings who are to be instructed—the gods, demigods, humans, *kinnaras* [half-human, half-horse], adepts (*śiddha*), *vidyādharas*, and serpents? Through giving voice for one instant, there is a great light of autumn gold that removes the darkness from beings' minds, opens the many varieties of awareness like a cluster of lotuses, evaporates the rivers and oceans of birth and death, and shames the multitude of rays of the seven suns that shine at the end of an age.<sup>7</sup>

The same sūtra compares the word of the Buddha to the sound of a wind chime, which, without being played by anyone, produces music when stirred by the wind. So does the word of the Buddha arise when stirred by the minds of sentient beings, although he has no thought, it is due to his fulfillment of the bodhisattva deeds in the past that his speech conforms to the diverse needs of all sentient beings.<sup>8</sup> Candrakīrti also cites the *Samādhirājasūtra*

When the Buddha, the king of doctrine, the proclaimer of all doctrines, a subduer, appears  
The refrain that phenomena do not exist arises from the grass, bushes, trees, plants, stones, and mountains.<sup>9</sup>

The passage from the *Tāhāgatācintyaguḥya* is quoted by Candrakīrti as a Mādhyamika proclamation of the final nature of the word of the Buddha, all of the speech of the Buddha is no speech because his words, like all other phenomena, are empty of any substantial nature (*svabhāva*). But Candrakīrti cites the passage out of context. Vajrapāṇi makes his declaration in explaining to Śāntamati the secret of the Buddha's speech, indicating not so much an ontology of the Buddha's words but rather a wondrous Buddhology in which the Buddha as speaker and author disappears. It is not merely that words spoken by the Buddha did not ultimately exist, Vajrapāṇi explains that the Buddha was actually silent throughout his life, remaining constantly absorbed in samādhi, without speech, without thought, without breath. The Tathāgata is thus like a speaking prism, perfect, impassive, with no color of its own, it is touched by the faith, the development, the questions, the intentions of sentient beings and refracts the teaching that is appropriate to each.

But our concern is not so much the magical mechanism by which the Buddha spoke or his miraculous pedagogical powers, but his words. The question here is not whether the Buddha expatiated the perfection of wisdom in one hundred stanzas, or spoke one syllable, or made no sound at all, the question rather is how to account for the apparent inconsistencies in what was "heard." It is the question of the conflict of interpretation in the Mahāyāna sūtras. Hence, it is Candrakīrti's reading of the passage out of context to which we must return.

### Upāya and Intention

As noted above, Candrakīrti cites the passage from the *Tāhāgatācintyaguḥya* that the Buddha never spoke to support Nāgārjuna's statement that because all objects and elaborations cease in the understanding of the emptiness of self, there is nothing for the Buddha to teach. Ultimately, the Buddha never taught anything to anyone, hence his silence from the night of his enlightenment to the night of his passage into nirvāna. But having fulfilled his commentator's role of providing sūtra support for Nāgārjuna's statement, Candrakīrti seems compelled to go farther. The statement from the *Tāhāgatācintyaguḥya* evokes other passages that proclaim rather different, and contradictory, characteristics of the word of the Buddha. Thus, he was not silent but spoke for a single instant and thereby cleared away the darkness that obscures the minds of beings. Or, he did not speak for a single instant but spoke repeatedly when moved by the thoughts of sentient beings, like music from a wind chime moved by the wind. Or, Indra and the storm gods, the *maruṭis*, beat drums that declare that all things are like illusions and mirages and moons reflected in water. Or, the teaching that phenomena do not exist

was heard from the grass, trees, and mountains. Or, the Buddha, with one sound, teaches what is beneficial in accordance with the diverse aspirations of his audience.<sup>10</sup>

The variety of characterizations of the word of the Buddha, a variety that Candrakīrti makes no attempt to account for, citing the diverse sūtra passages without comment, points up a tension that moves through the exegesis of the Mahāyāna sūtras, a tension between what the Buddha taught and what he intended, between upāya and doctrine, between method and truth. Simply stated, the problem is this: the Buddha taught many things to many people, in accordance with their aspirations, capacities, and needs. How is one to choose among these myriad teachings, each "true" for its listener, to determine the final view of the teacher?

Because many of his disciples were emotionally and intellectually unable to comprehend his true teaching, it is said that the Buddha often taught what was ultimately false but provisionally true in order compassionately to lead all, eventually, to the final truth of enlightenment. The theory of the Buddha's expediency or skillful methods (*upāya*) is delineated most fully in the *Lotus Sūtra* (*Saddharmapundarīka*), where through a series of parables the Buddha explains how his teaching of three vehicles effectively leads to his disciples' mounting of the one vehicle (*ekayāna*), the Buddhayāna.<sup>11</sup>

The case of the *Lotus Sūtra* is a fairly straightforward one in that the Buddha repeatedly explains what he meant by a certain teaching. But what of cases of contradictory statements where no such gloss is provided by the speaker? Here it is the task of the exegete to determine the intention of the Buddha. Yet, while the question of the possibility of determining the author's intention and the usefulness of having identified that intention in the interpretation of a text has been very much an issue in literary theory, beginning with "The Intentional Fallacy" and subsequent verbal icons of the New Criticism,<sup>12</sup> the task of the Buddhist exegete is not simply "the modest, and in the old-fashioned sense, philological effort to find out what the author meant."<sup>13</sup> This is because the Buddha apparently meant what he said, for example, when he told the *śrāvakas* that theirs was a path to enlightenment, that is, that is what he meant for them to understand because they were incapable of understanding that they must eventually enter the Mahāyāna. Rather, the task of the Buddhist hermeneutician appears more akin to Schleiermacher's divinatory method in which the interpreter seeks "to transform himself, so to speak, into the author" in order to understand the meaning of the text.<sup>14</sup> But again, the Buddhist exegetes are not dealing with the mental processes of an ordinary author. The author is the Buddha, the Awakened One, endowed with the knowledge of all aspects (*sarvākā-*

raṅgāna), fully aware in each instant of the modes and varieties of all phenomena in the universe, and possessed of superknowledges (*abhijñā*) such as clairvoyance, clairaudience, telepathy, and knowledge of the past lives of himself and all other beings. Nor is the Buddhist exegete to discern the unconscious intentions of the Buddha, for he has none. It is impossible, then, for the Buddhist interpreter to follow Schleiermacher's dictum, "to understand the text at first as well as and then even better than its author"<sup>15</sup>. How is the unenlightened exegete to know the enlightened mind of the Buddha? One option is to rely on instructions provided by the Buddha on the problem of interpretation: two such instructions will be considered in detail below. However, before moving further, some observations concerning the relationship of the Buddhist exegete to the text will be instructive.

First, in dealing with the hermeneutical strategies devised by the Mahāyāna exegetes, there seems to be little value in questioning the sincerity of their belief that the Mahāyāna sūtras are the word of the Buddha. Modern studies have concluded that these sūtras were composed over a period of a millennium, from the second century B C E to the seventh or eighth centuries of the common era. That such figures as Nāgārjuna, Asanga, Bhāvaviveka, and Candrakīrti should have been unaware of the composition of these texts during their lifetimes seems far-fetched, yet we find them arguing for the authenticity of the Mahāyāna sūtras as the word of the Buddha.<sup>16</sup> These savants of the Mahāyāna were aware of the charges of fabrication and went to some lengths to rebut them. The authors of the sūtras were also aware of such charges, as is evident from devices such as that employed in the thirteenth chapter of the *Pratyutpanna-Buddha-Sammukhāvasthita-Samādhi*, where the Buddha predicts that the sūtra will be preserved in a cave<sup>17</sup> and the retrospective predictions that occur in works like the *Lankāvatāra* and the *Mañjuśrīmūlatantra*, where the Buddha is endowed with the presbyopia to forecast the appearance of Nāgārjuna and Asanga, four hundred years and nine hundred years after his passage into nirvāna respectively.<sup>18</sup>

However, it is not possible to bracket entirely the questions of authorship of the Mahāyāna sūtras and the intentions of the authors of the sūtras to speak as the Buddha, the relationship between the authors of the texts and the Yogācāra and Mādhyamika interpreters of those texts is highly ambiguous. Even with the assumption that the Mahāyāna interpreters believed the sūtras to be the word of the Buddha, it remains a complex dialectic between the sūtras and the schools that interpret them, in that the sūtras themselves provide the scriptural bases for the formulations of the doctrinal schools, such as the Yogācāra and Mādhyamika, the ideas set forth in the sūtras were subsequently systematized by thinkers such as Asanga and Candrakīrti. What, then, way

the nature of the preunderstanding that the exegetes brought to their interpretation of the sūtras? We cannot assume that the texts, or at least the positions delineated in the texts, were wholly unknown to the interpreter prior to his encounter with the text. The exegete was faced with a twin commitment, one to the presuppositions of his own philosophical school and the other to the teachings of the Buddha contained in the sūtras, commitments that potentially entail conflict. The situation is further complicated by the fact that sūtras continued to be composed during the period of the exegetes, sūtras that presumably were not immune from the influence of śāstras.

There is, thus, a compounding of the traditional problem of the hermeneutical circle as described by Heidegger in *Being and Time*.

Any interpretation which is to contribute understanding, must already have understood what it is to be interpreted. But if interpretation must in any case already operate in that which is understood, and if it must draw its nurture from this, how is it to bring any scientific results to maturity without moving in a circle, especially if, moreover, the understanding which is presupposed still operates within our common information about man and the world?<sup>19</sup>

Stated in other terms, if preunderstanding operates in every act of understanding, how can there be new understanding? For the Buddhist exegete, original understanding is not the issue, the goal is the communication and eventual replication of the content of the Buddha's enlightenment. Nonetheless, the question remains as to the nature of the "conversation" that takes place between the interpreter and the sūtra. Rather than a circle, it is perhaps more useful to visualize a symbiotic process along a Moebius strip, where the sūtra provides the discourse that is interpreted into philosophical doctrine, that doctrine turning back upon the sūtra as the standard of interpretation of the sūtra and, in some cases, stimulating the generation of new sūtras. Consequently, the interpretation of a sūtra is significantly determined by the affiliations of the interpreter, as is evident from considering a Mādhyamika exegesis of passages often cited in support of the Yogācāra view of mind-only.

Although it is always suspect to allow one opponent to present the position of another, Candrakīrti's summary of Yogācāra epistemology in his *Mādhyamakāvātāra* (VI 45-46) provides a useful starting point

Because no object exists, no apprehension is seen  
Therefore, understanding that the three realms are mere  
consciousness,

The bodhisattva who abides in wisdom  
Comes to understand that reality is mere consciousness

Just as waves arise on a great ocean  
 Stirred by the wind,  
 So does consciousness arise through its potency  
 From the basis of all seeds, called the foundation  
 consciousness <sup>20</sup>

The Yōgācāra position as summarized by Candrakīrti is that there are no objects of a substance other than mind. Because no external objects exist, none are apprehended by consciousness. Rather, everything in the universe is of the nature of consciousness, and this realization constitutes the bodhisattva's vision of reality. The Yōgācāra accounts for the appearance of objects by positing the existence of seeds which exist in a foundation consciousness, the *ālayavijñāna*. These seeds, or karmic potencies, fructify as the experience of subject and object but are in fact consciousness alone.

Candrakīrti goes on to cite two well-known sūtra passages that seem to support the Yōgācāra position that no external objects exist apart from consciousness. The first is from the *Daśabhūmika*: "The three realms are mind only."<sup>21</sup> The other, from the *Lankāvatāra*, is the Buddha's statement "I teach mind only."<sup>22</sup> Both Bhāvaviveka and Candrakīrti argue that it is evident from the context of the passage that it is not the intention of the statement "the three realms are mind only" to indicate that there are no external objects. The sūtra itself says

A bodhisattva on the sixth bodhisattva level (*bhūmi*) views dependent arising in forward and reverse order and thinks, "These aggregates of suffering, devoid of agent or subject, arise from the twelve branches of ignorance, etc., and the tree of suffering is established." O children of the Conqueror, because this is certain, it is thus the three realms are mind only, they are completely composed and inscribed by mind, there is no agent or subject whatsoever other than mind <sup>22</sup>

Thus, according to Candrakīrti, the point of the Buddha's instruction is that the world is created by the mind, there is no permanent self (*ātman*) that acts as creator. The statement in the sūtra that the three realms are mind only is an abbreviated way of saying that only mind is primary—nothing else, including form, is as important as mind. This does not entail, however, that form does not exist.<sup>23</sup> He goes on to argue that if the Buddha had intended to deny external objects and uphold the pristine status of mind in the *Daśabhūmikasūtra*, he would not have declared that the mind arises from obscuration (*moha*) and karma. He says at *Madhyamakāvāyāra* VI 88-90

If he meant to refute form  
 With the knowledge that "these [three realms] are mind only,"

Why did the Mahātman go on to state  
 That mind is produced from obscuration and karma?  
 Mind alone establishes the world of sentient beings  
 And the myriad worlds that they inhabit  
 It is taught that all the realms [of rebirth] are produced from  
 karma  
 But without mind, there is no karma  
 Although form exists,  
 It is not an agent, as is mind  
 Thus, an agent other than mind is denied,  
 But form is not refuted <sup>24</sup>

Candrakīrti also denies that the statement from the *Lankāvatāra* means that external objects do not exist. The passage from the sūtra is

The person, the continuum, the aggregates,  
 Likewise causes, atoms,  
 The *pradhāna*, *Īśvara*, and agents,  
 I explain to be mind only <sup>25</sup>

Candrakīrti argues that this passage is intended to refute the various kinds of permanent agents propounded by the various heretical (*tīrthika*) schools, such as the *pradhāna* of the Sāmkhyas and a creator deity. All of these are false, only mind creates the world <sup>26</sup>

Candrakīrti concedes later, however, that there are statements in the sūtras that do indeed teach that externally appearing objects do not exist. For example, he cites the *Lankāvatāra*

External objects do not exist, although they so appear,  
 It is the mind that appears as various [objects],  
 In the image of bodies, resources, and abodes  
 I explain [everything] as mind only <sup>27</sup>

In the case of the earlier passages that ostensibly taught mind-only, Candrakīrti relied on the context of the passage to argue that this was not the Buddha's intention. In this case, however, Candrakīrti says that the Buddha's statement was intentional (*abhiprāyika*, Tib *dgongs pa can*)—that is, it does not represent the Buddha's final position but is directed to those beings who are greatly attached to form and who, consequently, are powerlessly drawn into sins such as anger and pride. With the purpose of putting an end to the afflictions (*klesā*) that are related to form, the Buddha denied the existence of form, although this is an interpretable (*neyārtha*) teaching because, in fact, form exists <sup>28</sup>

And to crown his argument that, although the Buddha intended to teach mind-only here, his purpose was expedient, Candrakīrti is able to cite a passage from the same sūtra that suggests this

Just as a physician provides  
Medicine for the sick,  
So the Buddha teaches  
Mind-only to sentient beings.<sup>29</sup>

Later, Candrakīrti explains the Buddha's method

The Bhagavat Buddhas cause disciples to enter into [the knowledge] of no inherent existence (*nihsvabhāva*) gradually. Initially, they instruct them in such things as giving because it is a method for entering reality, the meritorious enter reality easily. In the same way, because the refutation of objects of knowledge is a method for penetrating selflessness, the Bhagavan at first sets forth only the refutation of objects of consciousness, those who understand the selflessness of objects of consciousness easily enter the selflessness of consciousness.<sup>30</sup>

Thus, the Yogācāra doctrine of mind-only is identified as one of the many skilful methods of the Buddha, a propaedeutic whereby he gradually leads those who are initially unable to comprehend the truth exactly as it is. Other Mādhyamika thinkers saw the Yogācāra in the same way.<sup>31</sup> Upāya does not, then, simply provide the basis for a hermeneutics of accommodation, but also establishes one of appropriation and control, for to declare a teaching to be expedient is to declare knowledge of the Buddha's intention and, hence, his final view.

Tibetan exegetes refined the process of determining whether a statement was of interpretable meaning through the delineation of four criteria

- 1 The intended meaning (*dgongs pa*)
- 2 The foundation of the intention (*dgongs gzhi*)
- 3 The motive (*dgeos pa*)
- 4 The contradiction if taken literally (*dgeos la gnod byed*)<sup>32</sup>

Each of these requires discussion. The intended meaning (*dgongs pa*, *abhi-prāya*) is what the Buddha says—that is, what he intends his audience to understand. This intended meaning is multiple and hence difficult to determine, especially when “with one sound your voice, beneficial to the world, comes forth in accordance with diverse aspirations.”<sup>33</sup> In any case, the intended meaning must differ from the Buddha's own knowledge of reality in order for the statement to be interpretable (*neyārtha*). This knowledge of reality is the foundation of the intention (*dgongs gzhi*), the truth or fact that the Buddha has in mind when he says what is

not ultimately true. The motivation (*dgeos pa*, *prayana*) is the Buddha's purpose, based on his knowledge of the capacities and needs of his disciples, in teaching what is not actually the case. The last criterion, the contradiction if taken literally (*dgeos la gnod byed*, *mukhyārthabādhā*), refers to the contradiction by reasoning and by definitive scriptures if the statement were accepted without interpretation.

Although Candrakīrti does not discuss the passage from the *Lankāvatāra* cited below in terms of this fourfold system, his position can be inferred from his arguments discussed above.

External objects do not exist, although they so appear,

It is the mind that appears as various [objects],

In the image of bodies, resources, and abodes

I explain [everything] as mind only.<sup>34</sup>

The intended meaning is what the sūtra says: external objects do not exist, only mind exists. The foundation of the intention, that is, the deep meaning or fact, which the Buddha will eventually lead the auditors of this statement to understand, is that all phenomena, both form and consciousness, are empty of any intrinsic nature (*svabhāva*). However, both objects and the mind exist conventionally. Neither holds ontological precedence over the other. The Buddha's motivation in denying the existence of form is to cause his disciples who are excessively attached to form to overcome that attachment. Once that attachment has been destroyed, they will be able to understand that consciousness also does not exist in and of itself, and will, thereby, come to enter into the knowledge of reality, the emptiness of all phenomena in the universe. The contradiction if the statement is accepted as being literally true would include Candrakīrti's arguments against the mind-only position and statements from sūtras to the effect that external objects exist.

This theory of interpretation again raises the question of how the interpreter is to discern the intention of the Buddha—in these terms, the intended meaning, the foundation of the intention, and the motivation. Since the interpreter is not enlightened, what are the standards by which the boundaries of the interpretable and the definitive are traced? It should not be surprising at this juncture to discover that the sūtras, the supposed objects of interpretation, take up this question themselves.

### The *Samdhirmocana* and the Supplement

At the beginning of the seventh chapter of the *Samdhirmocana-sūtra*, the bodhisattva Paramārthasamudgata is puzzled by the apparent contradiction in the Buddha's teaching. He points out that on numerous occasions

sions the Buddha has taught that the aggregates (*skandha*), the truths (*satya*), and the constituents (*dhātu*) exist by their own character (*svākāśana*), yet on other occasions he has said that all phenomena lack entitiveness (*svabhāva*), that all phenomena are unproduced, unceased, originally quiescent, and naturally passed beyond sorrow.<sup>35</sup> The Buddha responds

Listen, Paramārthasamudgata, and I will explain to you what I intended when I said that all phenomena are without entitiveness, all phenomena are unproduced, unceased, originally quiescent, and naturally passed beyond sorrow. Paramārthasamudgata, I was thinking of these three aspects of the nonentitiveness (*nīkṣvabhāva*) of phenomena when I taught that all phenomena are without entitiveness: the nonentitiveness of character, the nonentitiveness of production, and the ultimate nonentitiveness.<sup>36</sup>

The Buddha's answer, briefly stated, is that his teaching that all phenomena lack entitiveness should be taken as a qualified apophasis. He had in mind three different types of nonentitiveness which qualify the three natures (*trilakṣana*), the imaginary (*parikalpita*), the dependent (*paratantra*), and the consummate (*parniṣpanna*). The meaning and implications of the doctrine of the three natures are topics of considerable controversy among the Yogācāra, Svātantrika, and Prāsangika philosophers. According to the sūtra, imaginary natures are the entities and qualities that thought imputes to conditioned phenomena. These imputations are merely mental designations and thus do not exist by their own character. Dependent natures are the conditioned phenomena which are the objects of thought's operation and which serve as the bases of imputation by thought and terminology. These impermanent phenomena arise in dependence on causes and cannot produce themselves, and thus are said to lack entitiveness of production. The consummate nature is the fact that the imaginary nature is not established in conditioned phenomena. It is the selflessness of phenomena (*dharmānairātmya*), according to the sūtra.<sup>37</sup>

The Buddha concedes Paramārthasamudgata's observation that in some sūtras he taught that all phenomena are established by their own character and that in other sūtras he taught that no phenomenon is established by way of its own character. But here, in the *Samdhinirmocana*, he explains that, in fact, some phenomena are established by their own character, namely dependent and consummate natures, and some are not so established, namely imaginary natures.

Having understood this, Paramārthasamudgata offers a chronology of the Buddha's teaching. The Buddha's first sermon is renowned as the turning of the wheel of doctrine. In the *Astasāhasrikāprañāpāramitā*, the gods declare that teaching of the four truths at Sarnath to be the first turning of the wheel, which has been superseded by the new dispensa-

tion, the second turning of the wheel of doctrine of the perfection of wisdom. Here, in the seventh chapter of the *Samdhinirmocana*, a third wheel is proclaimed

First, in the Deer Park at Rśvādāna in Vāranāśi, the Bhagavan turned a wheel of doctrine, wondrous and amazing, the likes of which had never been turned in the world by gods or humans, teaching the aspects of the four truths of Superiors (*ārya*) to those who had correctly entered the vehicles of *śrāvakas*. Yet even this wheel of doctrine turned by the Bhagavan is surpassable, provisional, of interpretable meaning (*neyārtha*), and subject to disputation.

The Bhagavan turned a second wheel of doctrine, wondrous and amazing, through proclaiming emptiness to those who had correctly entered the Mahāyāna, dealing with the lack of entitiveness of phenomena, that they are unproduced, unceased, originally quiescent, and naturally passed beyond sorrow. Yet even this wheel of doctrine turned by the Bhagavan is surpassable, provisional, of interpretable meaning, and subject to disputation. The Bhagavan turned the third wheel of doctrine, very wondrous and amazing, possessing good differentiations for those who have correctly entered all vehicles, dealing with the lack of entitiveness of phenomena, that they are unproduced, unceased, originally quiescent, and naturally passed beyond sorrow. This wheel of doctrine turned by the Bhagavan is unsurpassed, not provisional, of definitive meaning (*nīlārtha*), it is indisputable.<sup>38</sup>

The first wheel comprises the teaching of the four truths for disciples of the Hīnayāna. This is the wheel, presumably, in which Paramārthasamudgata recalls that the Buddha does not deny but upholds the reality or own-character (*svākāśana*) of the various constituents of the person, such as the five aggregates. The second wheel includes the Perfection of Wisdom sūtras, where the emptiness, the lack of entitiveness, of all phenomena is indiscriminately proclaimed. Both of these wheels are declared here to be provisional and subject to interpretation, that is, neither is literally acceptable because neither is wholly accurate in its characterization of the nature of phenomena. It is the third, and final, wheel which is "unsurpassed, not provisional, and of definitive meaning" because it is here that the Buddha interprets what he means by "no entitiveness" with his delineation of the three natures. It is this teaching of the third wheel, contained in the *Samdhinirmocana* itself, that is proclaimed as the Buddha's final view.

Thus, in the *Samdhinirmocana*, as its very title indicates, the Buddha explains what "I was thinking of." Here the Buddha provides a retrospective reading of his teachings, complete with chronology, he provides his own hermeneutic. The term *sandhi* in this context means "intention" with the sense of a deep or underlying meaning—hence

Lamotte's rendering as "mystère" *Nirmocana*, often translated as "explanation" or "interpretation," is derived from *nimuc* 'loosen, untie, unravel, cast off, free'. This, then, is the sūtra in which the Buddha's intention, his underlying meaning, is freed from the illusory knots of contradiction that appear when all his statements are read literally. The key that unlocks this meaning is the knowledge of the Buddha's intention, the importance of which is indicated by Asvābhava in his *Mahāyānasamgrahopaniṣadśāstra*.

Up until now, explanations of the meaning [of the sūtras] have not taken into account the intention of the author. But it is in taking into account that intention that one should explain the meaning of what has been declared [in the sūtras].<sup>39</sup>

With the knowledge of the Buddha's intention, the interpreter's task is a fairly simple one. If the statement is what the Buddha meant, it is definitive (*nīṅārtha*). If it is not, it is interpretable (*neyārtha*). In other words, that which is literal is definitive, that which is not literal requires interpretation. However, a simple hermeneutic may also be problematical, for, according to the *Samdhimucocana*, it itself is the sūtra which is unsurpassed, not provisional, and of definitive meaning. This self-proclamation of authority immediately draws the exegetical system of the sūtra into questions of self-verification and subjectivism.

Perhaps of greater interest, however, are the implications entailed by the repeated addition of wheels of doctrine, each of which is claimed to outdistance those that have gone before. These implications can be considered in light of Jacques Derrida's notion of the supplement.<sup>40</sup> He writes that what is supplementary is "the operation of differing which at one and the same time both fissures and retards presence, submitting it simultaneously to primordial division and delay."<sup>41</sup> The supplement is both an addition and a compensation for a deficiency, compensating for nonself-presence. The dilemma of the interpreter of the sūtra is that he is dealing with a text that pretends to be a record of speech, an account of the discourse of the enlightened teacher. Even if we bracket the question of the authorship of the Mahāyāna sūtras, the Mahāyāna exegete is still faced with a double absence, the absence of the Buddha and the absence of the audience to whom and for whom he speaks. So long as intention and upāya remain the keys to interpretation, these twin deficiencies lure the supplement. The commentator, who claims to be able to see beyond the exigencies of the always already absent audience, is compelled to attempt to provide presence, to provide the text that is present elsewhere, that is, in the mind of the always already absent Buddha. The "present" which the sūtra attempts to capture must then be continually reconstituted. Derrida writes

Everything begins with reproduction. Always already repositories of a meaning which was never present, whose signified presence is always reconstituted as deferral, *nachträglich*, belatedly, *supplementarily* for the *nachträglich* also means *supplementary*. The call of the supplement is primary, here, and it hollows out that which will be reconstituted by deferral as the present. The supplement, which seems to be added as a plenitude, is equally that which compensates for a lack (*qui supplée*).<sup>42</sup>

With the addition of each new wheel, the previous one is not simply augmented but is also displaced, the supplement takes and keeps the place of the other. The supplement does not simply enrich presence, it "adds only to replace. It intervenes or insinuates itself *in-the-place-of*, it fills, it is as if one fills a void."<sup>43</sup> And because the presence sought by the interpreter can never be reclaimed, the supplements are multiplied one upon the other, thereby creating "the mirage of the thing itself, of immediate presence."<sup>44</sup>

One need only turn again to Candrakīrti to see the multiplication of the supplement. After explaining how the passage from the *Lankāvatāra* which sets forth the nonexistence of external objects is a statement requiring interpretation, he remarks that that passage makes it clear that other such sūtras also require interpretation. "What are 'other such sūtras'? The *Samdhimucocanasūtra*, in setting forth the three natures—the imaginary, dependent, and consummate—[teaches] that the imaginary does not exist and the dependent exists."<sup>45</sup> Thus, the third wheel of the *Samdhimucocana*, which was declared to be "unsurpassed, not provisional, of definitive meaning, indisputable" is here surpassed, disputed, declared provisional and interpretable, the third wheel is supplemented. Candrakīrti both adds to and displaces the third wheel with his implication that it indeed was not the Buddha's final view, but rather is yet another example of the skillful methods whereby he taught those disposed toward the Yogācāra position that some phenomena have their own character while others do not. This position, however, is ultimately false, for the Mādhyamika view of Candrakīrti is that all phenomena equally lack their own character.

### From Intention to Emptiness

In the *Samdhimucocana*, the Buddha explains to Paramārthasamudgata that he was compelled to turn the third wheel because the second wheel had been misunderstood by some. These disciples took the Buddha at his word when he said that all phenomena lack entityness. As a consequence, they fall to the nihilistic view that phenomena do not exist. The third wheel was provided, then, as a corrective.<sup>46</sup> Once the *Samdhimucocana* establishes such a progression, complete with the chronology of the

three wheels, the possibility of endless correctives arises. A very different, perhaps ahistorical hermeneutic, is provided by the *Aksayamatīrdeśasūtra*, which says

If it is asked, "What is a sūtra of definitive meaning? What is a sūtra whose meaning requires interpretation?" Sūtras that teach the establishment of the conventional are called [sūtras] whose meaning requires interpretation. Those sūtras that teach the establishment of the ultimate are called [sūtras] of definitive meaning. Sūtras which teach with various words and letters are called [sūtras] whose meaning requires interpretation. Those sūtras that teach the profound—difficult to see and difficult to understand—are called [sūtras] of definitive meaning. Sūtras that teach, for instance, an owner where there is no owner, with [the owner] being described with a variety of terms [such as] self, sentient being, life, nourisher, being, person, born of Manu, child of Manu, agent, and expriencer, are called [sūtras] whose meaning requires interpretation. Those sūtras that teach the doors of liberation (*vimokṣamukha*)—the emptiness of things, no signs, no wishes, no composition, no production, no birth, no sentient beings, no living beings, no persons, no owner—are called [sūtras] of definitive meaning. This is called relying on sūtras of definitive meaning and not relying on sūtras whose meaning requires interpretation.<sup>47</sup>

This passage addresses a specific problem that arises in the interpretation of the pronouncements of the Buddha, but also has implications for the problem of supplementation that appears to be systemic to Buddhist hermeneutics. Let us consider the specific context of the passage first.

Perhaps the most commonly cited examples of an apparent contradiction in the Buddha's teachings are his statements in which he makes reference to the self (*ātman*) or the person (*puṅgala*). Although the doctrine of selflessness (*anāman*) is renowned as the very heart of Buddhist philosophy, there are numerous statements that ostensibly uphold the existence of the self. For example, the *Dharmapada* (XII 4/160) says

The self is protector of the self  
What other protector could there be?  
Through subduing the self,  
One gains protection difficult to gain.<sup>48</sup>

In order to avoid the inconvenience of expunging all nouns such as "I," "myself," "oneself," and "person" from common parlance, Buddhist commentators have traditionally accommodated the provisional use of such terms by the Buddha by classifying them as teachings that require interpretation, while assigning the statements that there is no self to the more exalted category of the definitive. As Lamotte has noted,<sup>49</sup> the

Therāvadin exegete Buddhaghosa consigns references to the person to the *neyārtha* class while preserving the class of the *nītartha* for the temporal truths of impermanence, suffering, and selflessness. Candrakīrti makes a similar point at *Madhyamakāvātāra* VI 44

Even though the Buddha is free from the view of self (*satkāyadrsti*),  
He teaches [using the terms] "I" and "mine."  
In the same way, although things lack intrinsic nature,  
He teaches that they exist as an interpretable meaning.<sup>50</sup>

The statement cited above from the *Aksayamatīrdeśa* appears to be addressing the same problem, while defining the definitive in even more exclusive terms than does Buddhaghosa. It provides a long list of synonyms for the person and says that sūtras which teach in such terms require interpretation. Those sūtras that teach that there are no persons (*puṅgala*), no sentient beings (*sattva*), no living beings (*purusa*) are definitive. The categories of the interpretable and the definitive are hence similar to those outlined by Buddhaghosa, as is the resolution of the contradictions between those statements in which the Buddha speaks of the person and those in which he speaks of the nonexistence of the person. The latter statements are afforded prepotency. However, the *Aksayamatīrdeśa* goes further.

First, it equates the interpretable with the conventional (*samvṛti*), sūtras that set forth conventional truths require interpretation. Consequently, the *Aksayamatīrdeśa* does not equate the interpretable with that which is not literally acceptable. Although it is the case that suffering and impermanence are facts of mundane existence, the expostions of suffering and impermanence that occur in the Buddha's first sermon, for example, would, according to the *Aksayamatīrdeśa*, be classed as teachings requiring interpretation because suffering and impermanence are conventionalities, suffering and impermanence, which according to Buddhaghosa are definitive, here require interpretation. For the *Aksayamatīrdeśa*, "sūtras that teach the profound—difficult to see and difficult to understand—are called [sūtras] of definitive meaning." That is, sūtras teaching emptiness, the ultimate truth (*paramārthasatya*), are definitive. This same distinction occurs in the *Samādhirvājasūtra*.

Instances of definitive sūtras are known

To accord with the Sugata's teaching of emptiness

All doctrines teaching sentient being, person, or being

Are to be known to require interpretation.<sup>51</sup>

As emptiness is the definitive, final nature of phenomena, sūtras that set forth this final nature are definitive, all others require interpretation.

This method of categorizing scripture radically centers the hermeneutic endeavor on the ontological question, excluding from consideration questions of authorial intention, contextual circumstance, expediency, and literal acceptability. Sūtras whose referent is emptiness are definitive, those whose referent is not emptiness require interpretation. One can thus provide examples of literal statements that are interpretable, such as the common ethical axiom that the practice of giving brings about the karmic effect of wealth in the future. Although it is indeed the case that giving causes wealth for the donor such that it can be said that the creation of wealth is a quality of giving, the creation of wealth is not the final quality or mode of being of giving. This final mode of being is the emptiness of giving, which is not to be inferred from the statement that giving causes wealth. Thus, the statement requires interpretation.<sup>52</sup>

The *Aksayamatnirdeśa* defines the definitive and the interpretable strictly in terms of the subject matter, the signified of the passage, without consideration of the time, place, audience, or mode of expression of the text in question. This provides an element of distanciation which the *Samdhimudrocana*, identifying itself as the final and only definitive wheel, lacks. The *Aksayamatnirdeśa* provides a universal and disinterested approach by which texts can be distinguished as definitive and interpretable, without making dogmatic claims about its own priority. Indeed, the statement in the *Aksayamatnirdeśa* that sūtras which teach emptiness are definitive is itself interpretable, because it does not set forth the final mode of being, the emptiness, of those sūtras. By aligning the interpretable with conventional truths and the definitive with ultimate truths, however, the *Aksayamatnirdeśa* in no way relegates the interpretable to a class of provisional teachings to be superseded. As Nāgārjuna says at *Madhyamakakārikās* XXIV 10

Without relying on conventions

The ultimate cannot be taught

Without understanding the ultimate

Nirvāna cannot be attained.<sup>53</sup>

Thus, the *Aksayamatnirdeśa*'s hermeneutical program seeks to point beyond the literal meaning of the text, it is not concerned with establishing what the author intended. The text is allowed to speak, as it is restricted from doing under the constraints of establishing intention and upāya. At the same time, the hermeneutic of the sūtra provides a constant reminder of the need to seek the ultimate in all cases where the ultimate is not explicitly set forth, the attention of the reader of sūtras requiring interpretation is constantly displaced from both the signifier and signified of the text to emptiness, although emptiness is not mani-

festly present. Indeed, the *Aksayamatnirdeśa* seems to transcend strictly textual concerns by classifying not merely sūtras but all phenomena as either interpretable or definitive. Emptiness is definitive, everything else requires interpretation, it is only by extension that texts which discuss the ultimate are definitive and those which discuss the conventional are interpretable.

The appeal of the *Aksayamatnirdeśa* to Candrakīrti is not difficult to appreciate, he echoes its formula at *Madhyamakāvātāra* VI 97

Interpretation is undertaken upon knowing the application of scripture

And understanding that sūtras which teach what is not reality

Are said to require interpretation

Know [that sūtras] having the meaning of emptiness are definitive.<sup>54</sup>

Here the question of interpretation is, at least for the moment, freed from questions of intention and upāya, of fathoming the Buddha's profound techniques for leading diverse disciples in diverse situations. The hermeneutic of the *Aksayamatnirdeśa* prefers not to engage such questions, but to point always to the emptiness, the lack of any own-being or intrinsic nature of the words of the sūtras, the emptiness that is the object of Nāgārjuna's reasoning, accessible to those still on the path, yet also the constant content of the Buddha's mind. Hence, Candrakīrti can claim that the purpose of Nāgārjuna's composition of the *Madhyamakakārikās* was to prove with reasoning what the *Aksayamatnirdeśa* proclaims in scripture: that emptiness is the definitive nature of reality, all else requires interpretation.

Some have the doubt "What is the teaching that has the meaning of reality? Which [teachings] are intentional?" Some, because of their feeble minds, think that teachings of interpretable meaning are of definitive meaning. In order to clear away the doubt and mistaken ideas of both [of these] through reasoning and scripture, the master composed this [text].<sup>55</sup>

But is the hermeneutic of the *Aksayamatnirdeśa* free from the dangerous supplement? It is a hermeneutic that seeks closure with a single supplement, allowing texts dealing with the conventional to stand as literal while undermining them by pointing beyond to their final nature, their self-absence, their emptiness, their un-supplemented nature. And texts that take the definitive as their subject require no supplement, no addition, no compensation, their subject is the absence which need not be promoted by the supplement.

### Conclusions

In her work entitled *Intention*, G. E. M. Anscombe notes that “to explain one’s actions by an account indicating a motive is to put them in a certain light.”<sup>56</sup> This observation pertains in the case of the problem of intention in the interpretation of the Mahāyāna sūtras, where it is not the actor, but another who explains the motives of the actor. So long as intention remains central to the process of interpretation, it is the exegete’s present description of a past intention that constitutes the goal of that process. The commentator must be able to reproduce the circumstances of the discourse in order to know its meaning. It is such an agenda that Gadamer terms *romantic*, arguing at length in *Truth and Method* that it is inadequate, in part because it does not take into account the significance of temporal distance for understanding.

Before taking up this question in the Buddhist context, let us examine briefly Gadamer’s notion of understanding—and, by extension, commentary—as projection. He writes

A person who is trying to understand a text is always performing an act of projecting. He projects before himself a meaning for the text as a whole as soon as some initial meaning emerges in the text. Again, the latter emerges only because he is reading the text with particular expectations in regard to a certain meaning. The working out of this fore-project, which is constantly revised in terms of what emerges as he penetrates into the meaning, is understanding what is there.<sup>57</sup>

What appears to be the case with the Buddhist exegete, however, is that the foreknowledge or prejudice remains determinative, understanding is not modified through a conversation with the text, but rather “meaning” is imposed upon it. The concept of *upāya* suggests the fluid nature of meaning, adapted by the Buddha for each of his listeners. The goal of the interpreter, however, is to freeze that nature for all time, declaring what the Buddha really meant. The interpreter, ironically, participates in a hermeneutics of suspicion, in the case of interpretable scriptures, allowing the Buddha’s statement its illocutionary function but denying its perlocutionary effect, acknowledging his words but being unpersuaded by them.

“Every encounter with tradition that takes place within historical consciousness involves the experience of the tension between the text and the present,”<sup>58</sup> writes Gadamer. The question, however, is whether the interpretation of the Mahāyāna sūtras takes place within such historical consciousness. For the Buddhist interpreter, the discovery of the true meaning of the text is not the infinite process that Gadamer envisions, the horizons of the Buddha and the interpreter are not even

imagined to exist separately. There is no need for their fusion. It is essential for the Buddhist interpreter to believe that the genius of the creator of the discourse can ultimately be matched by the genius of the interpreter, for it is the intention of the Buddha, the duplication of his enlightenment, that is the interpreter’s goal. Meaning must be determined.

But what is that meaning? How is the intention of the Buddha in a specific instance to be determined except by what the Buddha retrospectively declares it to have been? If the categories of the interpretable and the definitive are based on what a particular sūtra says they are, how can the vicious circle of textual claims to authority be broken? This problem was not one of which Buddhist thinkers were unaware. For example, Tsong-kha-pa writes at the beginning of his *Legs bshad stying po*

Seeing that the reality of phenomena is most difficult to understand and that, if it is not understood, there can be no liberation from samsāra, the Compassionate Teacher is said to have guided [beings] to penetrate that [reality] through many methods (*upāya*) and doors of reasoning. Therefore, the discriminating must strive for a method to understand what reality is like, which, in turn, depends on distinguishing the interpretable meaning and the definitive meaning in the pronouncements of the Conqueror.

It is not possible to differentiate those two merely through [citing] scriptures that say, “This is the interpretable meaning. This is the definitive meaning.” Otherwise, it would have been purposeless for the great chanothers [such as Nāgārjuna and Asanga] to compose commentaries that differentiate the interpretable and the definitive. There are also many conflicting modes of positing the interpretable and the definitive set forth in the scriptures.

Therefore, one must seek the intention [of the Buddha] by following the great chanothers, prophesied [by the Buddha] to differentiate [his] interpretable and definitive pronouncements. They commented on the [Buddha’s] intention concerning the interpretable and definitive and employed reasoning to delineate well the faults of interpreting the meaning of definitive pronouncements in some other way and [gave] proofs that [those scriptures] are definitive, it being unsuitable to interpret them otherwise. Thus, in the end, one must distinguish [the interpretable and the definitive] using stainless reasoning.<sup>59</sup>

An analysis of the autonomy of reasoning in Buddhism must for the moment be deferred. However, it seems clear that there is no escape from the text, for the great formulators of the reasonings employed in the interpretation of scripture appear to gain authority for Tsong-kha-pa, at least in part, from the fact that they are prophesied by the Buddha himself in the scriptures.

Hence, interpretation is projection of prejudice, of preunderstand-

ing, "an allegorical act, which consists in rewriting a given text in terms of a particular master code"<sup>60</sup> Commentary becomes the endless search for a meaning that can be discerned once and for all, free from sectarian concerns, such as those of Yogācāra and Mādhyamika. And what text better receives these projections than the letter *a*, or perhaps, that from the night of his enlightenment until the night of his passage into nirvāna the Tathāgata uttered not a sound. Here the interpreter becomes the arbiter of meaning, the interpreter becomes the author as the author sits in silence. A unity of thought is thus imposed upon diverse texts, as the commentators "reconstitute another discourse, rediscover the silent murmuring, the inexhaustible speech that animates from within the voice that one hears, re-establish the tiny, invisible text that runs between and sometimes collides with them"<sup>61</sup>. The silence of the Buddha or the letter *a* stands for the original unsupplemented nature which does not exist without commentary, supplemented nature seeking endlessly to constitute that mythic, unsupplemented entity.

In undertaking this task, the commentator must recall Borges' cautionary "Parable of the Palace," in which the Yellow Emperor showed the poet through his palace

It was at the foot of the penultimate tower that the poet (who seemed remote from the wonders that were a marvel to all) recited the brief composition that today we link indissolubly to his name and that, as the most elegant historians repeat, presented him with immortality and death. The text has been lost, there are those who believe that it consisted of a line of verse, others, of a single word. What is certain, and incredible, is that all the enormous palace was, in its most minute details, there in the poem, with each illustrious porcelain and each design on each porcelain and the penumbrae and light of each dawn and twilight, and each unfortunate and happy instant in the glorious dynasties of the mortals, of gods and dragons that had inhabited it from the unfathomable past. Everyone was silent, but the Emperor exclaimed: *You have robbed me of my palace!* And the executioner's iron sword cut the poet down.<sup>62</sup>

### Notes

- 1 Jorge Luis Borges, *Ficciones* (New York: Grove Press, 1962), 28.
- 2 Because of the lack of any definitive list of texts in India and because of the lack of consistency among Tibetan and Chinese sources as to which sūtras are to be considered authentic, one cannot speak of a single Mahāyāna canon.
- 3 P 741, vol 21, 257 4 3-8
- 4 Compare the view of Rabbi Mendel of Rymadov that the revelation of the law on Mount Sinai consisted only of the *aleph*, the consonant in the Hebrew alphabet which represents the position of the larynx when a word begins with a vowel. See Gershom G. Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 30.
- 5 For the Sanskrit, see Louis de La Vallée Poussin, ed., *Mūlamādhyamakakārikā-*

*kāś* de Nāgārjuna avec la *Commentaire Prasannapadā de Candrakīrti* (Osnabruck: Biblio Verlag, 1970), 364.

6 For references to this statement in the Pali canon, see É. Lamotte, trans., *L'Enseignement de Vimalakīrti (Vimalakīrtinirdesa)* (Louvain: Université de Louvain Institut Orientaliste, 1962), 109 n 52.

7 See La Vallée Poussin, *Mūlamādhyamakakārikās*, 366. For the Tibetan translation of the passage in the *Tāhāgatacatyaguhya*, see P 760 3, vol 50, 62 5 4-5, where the first part of the passage appears but the second is absent. See also Lamotte, *L'Enseignement de Vimalakīrti*, 110 n 52.

8 See La Vallée Poussin, *Mūlamādhyamakakārikās*, 366-367. See also P 760 3, vol 50, 63 5 6-64 1 2 and 66 2 2-3.

9 See La Vallée Poussin, *Mūlamādhyamakakārikās*, 367.

10 See *ibid.*, 366-368.

11 For a useful analysis of the theory of upāya in the *Lotus* and other Mahāyāna sūtras, see Michael Pye, *Skillful Means* (London: Duckworth, 1978). Pye argues, primarily on the basis of East Asian sources, that all of the Buddha's teachings are upāya. This does not appear to be the view of Candrakīrti, who suggests that only teachings of interpretable meaning (*neyārtha*) are upāya, that is, methods by which the Buddha leads beings to the final truth.

12 See David Newton-De Molina, ed., *On Literary Intention* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1976). Especially useful is the essay by Quentin Skinner, "Motives, Intentions, and the Interpretation of Texts," 210-221.

13 E. D. Hirsch, Jr., *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), 57.

14 Schleiermacher's various writings on hermeneutics, collected by Heinz Kimmerle, have been translated by James Duke and Jack Forstman in F. D. E. Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics: The Hermeneutical Manuscripts* (Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1977). The phrase cited here appears on p. 150.

15 *Ibid.*, 112.

16 See, for example, Nāgārjuna's argument in *Ratnāvalī* IV 67-100 and Bhāvaviveka's long defense in the fourth chapter of the *Tarkagvāla*.

17 See Paul Harrison, "The *Pratyutpanna-Buddha-Sammukhāvasthita-Samādhi-Sūtra*" (Ph D. diss., Australian National University, 1979), 86-90.

18 For these and other prophecies, see E. Obermiller, trans., *History of Buddhism by Burton Stein*, Part II (Heidelberg: Heft, 1932), 108-122.

19 Marun Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 194.

20 See Louis de La Vallée Poussin, ed., *Madhyamakāvāitāra par Candrakīrti* (Osnabruck: Biblio Verlag, 1970), 135-137.

21 Cited by Candrakīrti in *ibid.*, 181 and 183, respectively.

22 Cited by ICang-skya-rol-pa 'i-rdo-rje, *Grub pa'i mtha'i rnam par bzhag pa gsal bar bshad pa thub bstan lhun po'i mdzes rgyan* (Sarnath: Pleasure of Elegant Sayings Press, 1970), 340-341. See also La Vallée Poussin, *Madhyamakāvāitāra*, 182.

23 See *Madhyamakāvāitāra*, VI 84, 87, in La Vallée Poussin, *Madhyamakāvāitāra*, 182, 185.

24 *Ibid.*, 186-191.

25 Cited by Candrakīrti in commentary on VI 85, see *ibid.*, 183.

26 *Madhyamakāvāitāra* VI 86, see *ibid.*, 183-185.

27 Cited by Candrakīrti in commentary on *Madhyamakāvāitāra* VI 23, see *ibid.*, 194.

28 These points are made at *Madhyamakāvāitāra* VI 94-95 and their autocommentary, see *ibid.*, 194-196.

<sup>29</sup> Cited by Candrakīrti in commentary on *Madhyamakāvātāra* VI 95, see *ibid.*, 196

<sup>30</sup> Autocommentary to *Madhyamakāvātāra* VI 96, see *ibid.*, 199

<sup>31</sup> For example, Jñānagarbha writes in his *Satyadvayavibhāṅgavṛtti*: (Toh 3882, folio 13a3-4.)

The Bhagavan himself, the knower of actions and their effects, whose body is the nature of compassion, sees transmigrators bound by the chains of misconception in the prison of saṃsāra and completely destroys the conception of true existence by setting forth in stages the aggregates, constituents (*dhātu*), sources (*āyatana*), mind-only, and the selflessness of phenomena

Sāntarakṣita in his *Madhyamakālamkāra* (P 5284, vol 101, 2 3 4 )

The nonexistence of external objects should be known  
Through relying on mind-only

[Then] relying on this [Mādhyamika] mode, it should be known  
That this [mind] as well is completely without self

Kamalaśīla says in his *Madhyamakāloka*

Some sections [of sūtras] such as the *Samdhinirmocana*, the *Lankāvātāra*, and the *Ghanavyūha* establish the Cūtamātra system [through] refuting external objects and not refuting the inherent existence of the mind. This teaching accords with the thoughts of those who are unable to realize that all phenomena are simultaneously without intrinsic nature [and thus] must be led in stages

This passage is cited by Tsong-kha-pa in his *Drang nges legs bshad snying po* (Sarnath Pleasure of Elegant Sayings Press, 1973), 129-130

<sup>32</sup> This list is derived from Pan-chen bSod-nam-grags-pa (1478-1554) who employs it in *Drang nges wpa'la'i, phreng pa*, his commentary on Tsong-kha-pa's *Legs bshad snying po*. Earlier Tibetan scholars, such as bSod nam rise mo, Sa skya Pandita, and Bu-ston speak only of the last three criteria. See the excellent study by D. Seyfort Ruegg, "Purport, Implication, and Presupposition Sanskrit *abhiprāya* and Tibetan *dgons pa/dgons gzhi* as Hermeneutical Concepts," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 13 (1985) 311. Pan-chen bSod-nam-grags-pa probably derives the first criteria, *dgons pa*, from Tsong-kha-pa's uses of the terms *gsung ba po'i dgons pa* (intention of the speaker) and *gsung rab ky'i dgons pa* (intention of the scripture). On *abhiprāya*, see also Michael Broido, "Abhiprāya and Intention in Tibetan Linguistics," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 12 (1984) 1-33

<sup>33</sup> See La Vallée Poussin, *Mūlamadhyamakārikās*, 368

<sup>34</sup> Cited by Candrakīrti in commentary on *Madhyamakāvātāra*, VI 23, see La Vallée Poussin, *Madhyamakāvātāra*, 194

<sup>35</sup> For an edition of the Tibetan translation of the sūtra, see Etienne Lamotte, ed., *Samdhinirmocana Sūtra L'Explication des Mystères* (Paris: Adrien Maisonneuve, 1935). The passage translated here occurs on pp 65-66

<sup>36</sup> See *ibid.*, 67

<sup>37</sup> See *ibid.* 67-69

<sup>38</sup> See *ibid.*, 85

<sup>39</sup> Cited by Lamotte, *La Somme du Grand Véhicule d'Asanga*, Tome II (Louvain: Institut Orientaliste, 1973), 134 n 3. Thanks to John Keenan for pointing out this passage

<sup>40</sup> Derrida deals with the supplement in the seventh chapter of *Speech and*

*Phenomena*, trans David B. Allison (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 1973). It also figures in his essay "Freud and the Scene of Writing," in *Writing and Difference*, trans Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 196-231. The most extensive treatment is in the second half of *Of Grammatology*, trans Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976)

<sup>41</sup> *Speech and Phenomena*, 88

<sup>42</sup> "Freud and the Scene of Writing," *Writing and Difference*, 211-212

<sup>43</sup> *Of Grammatology*, 145

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 157

<sup>45</sup> La Vallée Poussin, *Madhyamakāvātāra*, 195-196

<sup>46</sup> See Lamotte, *Samdhinirmocana Sūtra*, 77

<sup>47</sup> Cited by Candrakīrti in the *Prasannapadā*, see La Vallée Poussin, *Mūlamadhyamakārikās*, 43. For the Tibetan, see Tsong-kha-pa, *Drang nges legs bshad snying po*, 89-90

<sup>48</sup> Translated from the Pali edition of S. Radhakrishnan in *The Dhammapadam* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), 112. A series of similar statements occurs in the *Uddānavarga A Collection of Verse from the Buddhist Canon* (Calcutta: Tribner's Oriental Series, 1892), and Gareth Sparham, *The Tibetan Dhammapadam* (New Delhi: Mahayana Publications, 1983)

<sup>49</sup> See p 18

<sup>50</sup> La Vallée Poussin, *Madhyamakāvātāra*, 133

<sup>51</sup> This passage is cited by Candrakīrti in both the *Madhyamakāvātāra* and the *Prasannapadā*, the former is in La Vallée Poussin, *Madhyamakāvātāra*, 200, the latter in La Vallée Poussin, *Mūlamadhyamakārikās*, 44

<sup>52</sup> This example is drawn from ICang-skya-rol-pa 'i-rdo-rje's exegesis of the passage from the *Akṣayamatirāsa*. See his *Grub mtha'i rnam par bzhag pa* (Sarnath Pleasure of Elegant Sayings Press, 1970), 317. For an English translation, see Donald S. Lopez, Jr., *A Study of Svātantrika* (Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, 1987), 285

<sup>53</sup> La Vallée Poussin, *Mūlamadhyamakārikās*, 494

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 199

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 42

<sup>56</sup> G. E. M. Anscombe, *Intention* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1957), 21

<sup>57</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1975), 236

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 273

<sup>59</sup> Tsong-kha-pa, *Drang nges legs bshad snying po*, 2-3. This work has been translated by Robert A. F. Thurman as *Tsong Khapa's Speech of Gold in the Essence of True Eloquence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984). The passage cited above is translated by Thurman on p 189

<sup>60</sup> Frederic Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), 10

<sup>61</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 27

<sup>62</sup> Jorge Luis Borges, *A Personal Anthology* (New York: Grove Press, 1967),

KENNARD LIPMAN

*NĪTĀRTHA, NEYĀRTHA, AND TATHĀGATAGARBHA*  
IN TIBET\*

D. S. Ruegg, in his *La Théorie du Tathāgatagarbha et du Gotra* and other works,<sup>1</sup> has mentioned the need for further study of the various Tibetan exegetical traditions involved in the controversies surrounding the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine. He has relied extensively on the exegesis developed by *dGe-lugs-pa* scholars. This paper is an initial attempt to address this need voiced by Ruegg, by presenting the views of a *bKa'-brgyud-pa* and two *rNying-ma-pa* scholars. In particular, the focus will be on elucidating how they applied the interpretive devices of *nītartha* (*nges-don*, certain, definitive meaning) and *neyārtha* (*drang-don*, indirect meaning which is to be established) to texts dealing with the *tathāgatagarbha*.<sup>2</sup> One of the basic philosophical problems the Tibetans faced in this regard was the relationship between the concepts of *śūnyatā* and *tathāgatagarbha* emphasized in the second and third "turnings of the wheel of Dharma" (*dharmacakra-pravartana*) respectively.

Padma dkar-po (1527–1592), the great '*Brug-pa bka'-brgyud* scholar, in his *Chos-'khor rim-pa gsum-gi dogs-gcod*, criticized the majority of previous scholars who, ". . . took the *Prajñāpāramitāsūtras* as the basis for the second 'turning' spoken of in the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra*, while taking the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra* and others as the [basis for the] third 'turning'."<sup>3</sup> On the basis of this erroneous notion, according to Padma-dkar-po, those who thought of themselves as *rang-stong-pas* (those who took *śūnya* as a reflexive concept)<sup>4</sup> held the second 'turning' to be *nītartha* and the third *neyārtha*, while those calling themselves *gzhan-stong-pas* (those who took *śūnya* as primarily non-reflexive, denoting an ontological region devoid of relativity)<sup>5</sup> put forward the reverse interpretation, i.e., the second 'turning' was *neyārtha* and the third *nītartha*. This error, said Padma dkar-po, was based on a more fundamental presupposition: that each 'turning' must be based on a unique set of texts. For him both the second and third 'turnings' were based "primarily" (*gtso-bo*) on the *Prajñāpāramitāsūtras*: the second 'turning', which is *neyārtha*, was in accord with the *Cittamātra* doctrine, which can be summed up in the theory of the *triniḥsvābhava*. The third, which is *nītartha*, was in accord with the *Madhyamaka* teaching, as set forth in such *śāstras* as the *Mūlamādhyamikakārik*

*Journal of Indian Philosophy* 8 (1980) 87–95. 0022–1791/80/0081–0087 \$00.90  
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and the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, and as embodied in the *sūtras* which teach the *tathāgatagarbha* (*snying-po'i mdo*).

In support of his position, Padma dkar-po shows, for example, that the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra* teaches both *Cittamātra* and *Mādhyamaka* doctrines, and thus cannot be made the basis for claiming that the third 'turning' is strictly a *Cittamātra* teaching of certain, definitive meaning. Furthermore, he held that the *Cittamātra* teaching on the subject is in contradiction with the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine of the *snying-po'i mdo*, which teach that there is but one *gotra* (*rigs*, spiritual lineage or affinity).<sup>6</sup> Thus, despite his reversal of the usual order of the 'turnings', and his cautions on equating 'turnings' unequivocally with basic texts (which enable him, however, to account for *Cittamātra* interpretations of the *Prajñāpāramitāsūtras*, as well as to bring *Samdhinirmocanasūtra* VII, 30<sup>7</sup> into accord with a *Madhyamaka* interpretation), Padma dkar-po's presentation remains quite orthodox by Tibetan standards.

Two *rNying-ma-pa* leaders of the nineteenth-century non-sectarian (*ris-med*) movement of Eastern Tibet, Kong-sprul blos-gros mtha'-yas (1813–1899), in his so-called 'Indo-Tibetan Encyclopedia' (*Shes-bya kun-khyab*) and his commentary on the *Ratnagotravibhāga*; and Mi-pham rgya-mtsho (1846–1912), in his commentary on the same work and in his *bDe-gshegs snying-po'i stong-thun chen-mo senge nga-ro*, presented similar views. Basically, they both held that the second and third 'turnings' were *nītartha*, although the third was nonetheless "higher" (*lhag-pa*) or "ultimate" (*mthar-thug*). Kong-sprul's presentation, however, had been strongly influenced by the *gzhan-stong-pa* approach,<sup>8</sup> while the influence of the *rDzogs-chen* philosophy of Klong-chen rab-'byams-pa (1308–1364) was clearly evident in Mi-pham.

Kong-sprul states, in his *Shes-bya kun-khyab*, that the second 'turning', as explicated by the *Madhyamaka*, is of "definitive meaning which is contextually dependent or conditional" (*gnas-skabs kyi nges-don*), in that it focuses on opinionatedness (*lta-ba, dṛṣṭi*) so as to cut off ingrained "semantic structurning" (*spros-pa, prapañca*) whose sense-relations always operate in extremes (*mtha', anta*).<sup>9</sup> The third 'turning', as explicated by what he calls the *Yogācāra* (*rnal-'byor spyod-pa*) or *Yogācāra-Madhyamaka* (*rnal-'byor spyod-pa'i dbu-ma*), is of "ultimately definitive meaning" (*mthar-thug-gi nges-don*), in that it clearly sets forth "pristine cognitiveness itself as a unique experience, the presence of Being which is absolutely real" (*don-dam-pa'i gnas-lugs so-so rang-rig-pa'i ye-shes nyid*).<sup>10</sup> This *Yogācāra* trend of thought,

in Kong-sprul's usage, which began with Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, is to be distinguished from the *Cittamātra* (*Vijñaptimātra*) trend initiated by these two Indian masters, as well as from the later *Svātantrika-Yogācāra-Mādhyamika*. For example, in the introduction to his commentary on the *Uttaratantrasāstra*, Kong-sprul states that Vasubandhu's commentary on the *Prajñāpāramitā*, the *gnod-'joms*, as well as his commentary on the *Dharmadharmatā-vibhāga*, belonged to the "siddhānta of the *Madhyamaka* which is of definitive meaning" (*nges-don dbu-ma'i grub-mtha*), but that this exegetical lineage did not survive.<sup>11</sup>

Mi-pham rgya-mtsho's major concern was to show the harmony, or more precisely, the unity (*zung-'jug, yuganaddha*), of the *sūnyatā* teaching of the second 'turning' and the *tathāgatagarbha* teaching of the third. This he accomplished through the *rDzogs-chen* conceptions of the facticity and actuality of Being (*ngo-bo, rang-bzhin*).<sup>12</sup> The facticity of the *tathāgatagarbha* is 'open' (*stong-pa, sūnya*), while its actuality is the intrinsic possession (*ye-ltan*) of Buddha-capabilities (*yon-tan, guṇa*) of the *Buddhakāya* and its corresponding cognitiveness (*sku dang ye-shes*).<sup>13</sup> Mi-pham's approach will become clear by considering his commentary on *Uttaratantra* I, 155,<sup>14</sup> which states that the *dhātu* (*khams*, spiritual make-up), which is a synonym for *tathāgatagarbha*, is "devoid of" (*sūnya, stong-pa*) incidental obscurations, but not "devoid of" (*asūnya, mi-stong-pa*) Buddha-capabilities. The first two *padās* refer to facticity and the second two to actuality, according to Mi-pham, and in view of this interpretation one can put concisely Mi-pham's objection to both the usual *rang-stong-pa* and *gzhan-stong-pa* approaches. The *gzhan-stong-pas* err in regarding the facticity of the *tathāgatagarbha* as being something ontically ultimate (*bden-grub*) and not devoid of Buddha-capabilities (*mi-stong*); while the *rang-stong-pas* err when they regard the actuality, as well as facticity, of the *tathāgatagarbha*, as "void" (*stong*). For Mi-pham, however, the actuality of the *tathāgatagarbha* is the luminous presence (*gsal-ba*) in utter spontaneity (*lhun-grub*) of intrinsic Buddha-capabilities; this spontaneous presence, however, should not be confused with something eternally present-at-hand (*rtag-pa, nitya*). For example, Mi-pham criticizes the position (that of the *dGe-lugs-pa*?) that *sūnyatā* as the mere "non-existence in truth of the *citta*" (*sems bden-grub med*) can serve as the basic cause-factor (*rgyu, hetu*) of Buddhahood.<sup>15</sup> This position leads, for Mi-pham, to a contradiction of the principle of the unity of facticity, as open, and actuality, as luminous, mentioned above, in that it entails *sūnyatā*

without its inseparable, spontaneously present, luminous actuality: the intrinsic Buddha-capabilities. In their anxiousness to avoid having the *tathāgatarbha* construed as the *dharmakāya* existing in-truth (*bden-grub*) at the level of ground, the *dGe-lugs-pa* may have risked throwing the baby out with the bath-water.<sup>16</sup> Several generations before rGyal-tshab and mKhas-grub-rje, the two chief disciples of Tsong-kha-pa who gave the *dGe-lugs-pa* interpretation its definitive form, Klong-chen rab 'byams-pa had already pointed out some of the pitfalls in such an interpretation, while also retaining some similarities with it, thus not incurring the faults of the *Jo-nang-pa* and Bu-ston interpretations which the *dGe-lugs-pa* would criticize.<sup>17</sup>

Klong-chen-pa's approach is nicely summed up in the following quotation from his autocommentary on the *Sems-nyid ngal-gso*:<sup>18</sup>

'At the time of the status of a sentient being, although the non-thematicness of experience (*sems-kyi chos-nyid*) possesses the complete capabilities of the *dharmakāya* through its modality of openness and the capabilities of the *rūpakāya* through its modality of presence, since it has been obscured by impurities on account of which it does not shine forth directly, it is called 'spiritual affinity' or 'existential make-up' (*rigs, khams*). Although, at the time of status of a Buddha, it is free from all impurities, it is called 'Enlightenment' (*byang-chub*), merely from the presence or absence in its completeness of the potency (*nus-pa*) of experience-as-such (*sems-nyid*) in its facticity, one cannot claim that the capabilities which are at first non-existent at the time of the status of a sentient being, are afterwards newly produced, since (experience-as-such) does not change into some other status.'

Although the *rNying-ma-pas* and the *dGe-lugs-pas* agree that the *tathāgatarbha* doctrine is a *Madhyamaka* teaching of the third 'turning' which is of certain meaning, there is a source of contention here in the proper interpretation of the *Madhyamaka* understanding of *sūnyatā*. In this regard, Mi-pham, Kong-sprul, and Klong-chen-pa often warned against a negativistic (*phyang-chad*) interpretation of *sūnyatā* taught in the second 'turning' as a mere 'absolute negation' (*med-dgag, prasajya-pratiṣedha*). Such a negativistic interpretation creates problems in dealing with the *tathāgatarbha* doctrine of the third 'turning'. According to Mi-pham,<sup>19</sup> the second 'turning' has merely emphasized facticity as 'open', and the third has emphasized actuality as intrinsic possession of Buddha-capabilities. Problems only arise due to a one-sided emphasis on either facet, resulting in either negativism or substantialistic ontologizing. For Mi-pham the third 'turning' is only "higher" (*lhag-pa*) in regard to its pointing out the inseparability of facticity and actuality in regard to the *tathāgatarbha* doctrine. It is difficult at this time

to properly assess the *rNying-ma-pa* critique, as they do not mention their opponents by name, as, for instance, Go-ram-pa bsod-nams senge (1429–148) did on this matter of 'negativism'.<sup>20</sup>

Another problem in assessing the *rNying-ma-pa* contribution is that, while the *dGe-lugs-pa*, for example, base their interpretation of *sūnyatā* on the texts primarily by Nāgārjuna and Candrakīrti which explicate the sūtras of the second 'turning', the *rNying-ma-pa* range farther afield, to include what they call the *Yogācāra-Madhyamaka* trend, as indicated above, on up to the *Mantrayāna* doctrine of the *rDzogs-chen*.<sup>21</sup> The *dGe-lugs-pa*, on the other hand, did not mix *tantra* into their *sūtra* discourse. This issue is particularly relevant here, in that a major source of contention on the issue of *tathāgatagarbha* interpretation, the *Jo-nang-pas*, were generally regarded by their opponents as being unreproachable as Tantric yogins, who nevertheless erred in the way in which they brought their realization (*sgrub*) into the realm of philosophical explication (*bshad*). While this may have been true of the *Jo-nang-pas*, further research is needed to determine whether the *rNying-ma-pas*, some of whom have been *gzhan-stong-pas* (like Kong-sprul) and some of whom have not (like Mi-pham), were liable to similar criticisms.

In conclusion, I would venture that philosophical problems concerning the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine will continue for contemporary scholars, as they did for the Buddhist tradition itself, as long as an undue emphasis is placed on the 'negative' aspect of *sūnyatā*, which is *both* a 'being-devoid-of' and an 'openness'.<sup>22</sup> Several scholars have remarked (May and Conze, for example) that the main thrust of the *Madhyamaka* is ontological and not epistemological, but they did not bring out the nature of this ontology.<sup>23</sup> The *Madhyamaka* is certainly a critique of ontologies which tend to absolutize particular existents or beings. But this critique does not leave us with a collection of emptied-out phenomena (internal and external) – but rather fulfilled, in the open and luminous clearing of Being (-as-such) and its working "in" and "through" us as *tathāgatagarbha*.

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#### NOTES

\* This is an amended and annotated version of a paper delivered at the 188th annual meeting of the American Oriental Society, Toronto, April, 1978.

<sup>1</sup> See Ruegg, D. S., *La Théorie du Tathāgatarbha et du Gotra* (Paris, 1969), pp. 55–66; *Le Traité sur le Tathāgathagarbha de Bu-ston* (Paris, 1973), Introduction; 'On the dGe lugs pa Theory of the Tathāgatarbha', in *Pratidanām* (La Haye, 1968), pp. 500–509.

<sup>2</sup> On *nītartha* and *neyārtha*, see Lamotte, É., 'La critique d'interprétation dans le bouddhisme', *Annuaire de l'Institut de philologie et d'histoire orientales et slaves* (Bruxelles), IX (1949), 341–361; Ruegg, *La Théorie*, p. 55ff. Kajiyama puts it nicely in discussing *nītartha* and *neyārtha* as the third of the four "reliances" (*rton-pa, prati-sarana*), i.e., rely, ". . . on a sūtra teaching explicitly what it aims at (*nītartha*), but not on a sūtra the teaching of which implies a hidden intention (*neyārtha*) . . ." (Kajiyama, Y., 'Later Mādhyamikas on Epistemology and Meditation', in Kiyota, M., ed., *Mahāyāna Buddhist Meditation* [Honolulu, 1978], pp. 116–17.) Still, this represents only the formal aspect of the distinction, which is also a doctrinal one: *neyārtha* relates to the *samvṛti*, *nītartha* to the *paramārtha*.

<sup>3</sup> *PK*, p. 336.

<sup>4</sup> By 'reflexive' here we mean that *śūnya* does not indicate that one entity is 'devoid of' another, that something is absent in a given locus. *Śūnyatā* indeed means *niḥsvabhāvatā*, although it is just this negative which is a source of contention, as we shall see, even though all *rang-stong-pas* in Tibet agreed it was a case of *med-dgag* (*prasajya-pratiśedha*), non-implicative negation. To take *svabhāva* as the nature, or essence, of an entity, and then to negate this 'nature' and call this the understanding of *śūnyatā*, is to remain within the limits of a purely conceptual analysis, however valuable this may be.

<sup>5</sup> The *gzhān-stong-pa*, making use of the Yogācāra theory of the *trisvabhāva*, held the *pariṇiṣpanna* to be devoid of both the *parikalpita* and the *paratantra*. This was attacked by the *rang-stong-pa* as being in contradiction with the Indian doctrine; however, on this point see Ruegg, D. S.; 'The Uses of the Four Positions of the *Catuskoṭi* and the Problem of the Description of Reality in Mahāyāna Buddhism', *JIP*, 5 (1977), p. 67, n. 126. Cf. also notes 16 and 22 below.

<sup>6</sup> *PK*, p. 338.

<sup>7</sup> See Lamotte, É., trans., *Samdhinirmocanasūtra* (Paris, 1935), pp. 85, 206–7. This is the definitive statement of that *sūtra* on the three 'turnings'.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. his presentation of the development of the Madhyamaka in Tibet in *Encyc.*, I, 451, 7–459, 1. Kong-sprul's major works on *gzhān-stong*, however, are to be found in his *Thun-mong ma-yin-pa'i mdzod*, which has yet to be republished. See Gene Smith's Introduction to *Encyc.*, p. 69.

<sup>9</sup> *Encyc.*, Part III, f. 24, 3.

<sup>10</sup> *Encyc.*, Part III, f. 24, 3–4. On *prapañca*, see May, Jacques, *Candrakīrti Prasannapadā Madhyamakavṛtti* (Paris, 1959), p. 175, n. 562; and Bhikkhu Nānananda's *Concept and Reality in Early Buddhist Thought* (Kandy, 1971). *Madhyamaka-kārikā* XVIII, 5 is central to an understanding of *prapañca*, where it is said to found *vikalpa*, dichotomous conceptualization; as well as Candrakīrti's commentary on XVIII, 9, which glosses *prapañca* as *vāk* (Vaidya ed., p. 159). There, he tells us that the reason for this is that *prapañca* conjures up, proliferates (*prapañcayati, spro-bar byed-pa*) meanings (*artha, don*). Such hints have suggested 'semantic structuring' to us, but a contemporary poet, George Quasha, seem to have captured it best as "the linguistic unconscious of easy conceptualization." On sense-relations in modern semantics, see John Lyons' excellent survey, *Semantics I* (Cambridge, 1977), chapter 9.

<sup>11</sup> *RG*, f. 7b, 4–6.

<sup>12</sup> On *ngo-bo* and *rang-bzhin*, see Guenther, H. V., *Kindly Bent to Ease Us, Part One: Mind* (Emeryville, Calif., 1975), pp. 223–4; *Kindly Bent to Ease Us, Part Three: Wonderment* (Emeryville, Calif., 1976), pp. 5ff.; and *Tibetan Buddhism in Western Perspective* (Emeryville, Calif., 1977), pp. 119, 124–5, 156, 176, 212.

<sup>13</sup> This idea appears throughout the *DS*, first occurring on ff. 564, 4–565, 1.

<sup>14</sup> *RGM*, f. 433, 6ff.; *DS*, f. 576, 6ff. The difference between the usage of *śūnya* here and in the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature (and the works of Nāgārjuna, Candrakīrti, etc., which are said to explicate it), lies in what Tibetan scholasticism called the *stong-gzhi*, “the basis for (the understanding) of *śūnya*.” In the *Uttaratantraśāstra*, the *stong-gzhi* is the *khams* (*dhātu*), while in the *Prajñāpāramitā* it is any *dharma*, or entity, in its ontical givenness or ‘nature’.

<sup>15</sup> *DS*, f. 568, 1ff.

<sup>16</sup> See Ruegg’s article mentioned in note 1 for a concise statement of their approach.

<sup>17</sup> See the treatment of *tathāgatagarbha* in his *Theg-pa mtha’-dag gi don gsal-bar byed-pa grub-pa’i mtha’ rin-po-che’i mdzod* (Gangtok, Sikkim, n.d.), p. 161, 4ff. and the following note.

<sup>18</sup> *rDzogs-pa chen-po sems-nyid ngal-gso’i ’grel-pa shing-rta chen-po* (Gangtok, Sikkim, n.d.), p. 312, 4–6. Klong chen-pa’s most extensive treatment of the *tathāgatagarbha* is to be found in this work, p. 310 ff., by way of commentary on the verse numbered “BIIc” in Guenther’s translation, p. 65 (*Kindly Bent, Part One*). Klong-chen-pa makes the same distinction which the dGe-lugs-pa were later to emphasize in criticizing the theories of Bu-ston and the Jo-nang-pa, i.e., we speak of *tathāgatagarbha* or *gotra* as long as one is bound up with the adventitious *kleśa*, but when these have been removed, we can speak of *tathāgata*. Cf. also *Kindly Bent, Part One*, pp. 52–3.

<sup>19</sup> *RGM*, f. 381, 4ff.

<sup>20</sup> *TS*, p. 2ff. Here Tsong-kha-pa is placed under the *chad-mtha’ la dbu-ma smra-ba* (“Nihilistic Mādhyamika”).

<sup>21</sup> In his controversial commentary on the *Madhyamakālamkāra* of Śāntarakṣita, for example, Mi-pham explicitly links the philosophical perspective (*lta-ba, drṣṭi*) of Candrakīrti with the *rDzogs-chen*:

The intent of Candrakīrti (is) the profound perspective in which the deceptiveness of conventionality subsides in the continuum of Being (*dbyings-su yal-ba*), because all presence is pure in exactly its own place (*rang-sar*). (This) is similar to the setting forth of the initially pure (*ka-dag*) in the works of the *rDzogs-chen*.

(*Collected Writings of ’Jam-mgon ’Ju Mi-pham rgya-mtsho*, Vol. 12 [Gangtok, 1976], f. 46, 3–4.)

<sup>22</sup> It is interesting to note that the *gzhan-stong-pa* seized on the *difference* between these two aspects, relegating the *rang-stong* (*śūnya* as ‘being-devoid-of’) to the *samvṛti* and the *gzhan-stong* (*śūnya* as an ontological region) to the *paramārtha*. See *TS*, pp. 1–2.

<sup>23</sup> This is closely related to the understanding of *prapañca* discussed in note 10, for *prapañca* clearly has an ontological function. Not only do we ‘have’ and ‘use’ language, but we have been “habituated to *samsāra* since beginningless time” because of *prapañca*, as Candrakīrti tells us in his commentary to *Madhyamakakārikā* XVIII, 5 (Vaidya ed., p. 150).

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ABBREVIATIONS

- DS *bDe-gshegs snying-po'i stong-thun chen-mo senge nga-ro* of Mi-pham rgya-mtsho, in *Collected Writings of Jam-mgon 'Ju Mi-pham rgya-mtsho*, Vol. 3, Gangtok, 1973.
- Encyc. *Kongtrul's Encyclopedia of Indo-Tibetan Culture*, Parts I–III, ed. by Lokesh Chandra, New Delhi, 1970.
- PK *Chos-khor rim-pa gsum gi dogs-gcod* of Padma dkar-po, in *Collected Works of Kun-mKhyen Padma dkar-po*, Vol. 7, Darjeeling, 1973.
- RG *Theg-pa chen-po rgyud bla-ma'i bstan-bcos snying po'i don mngon-sum lam gyi bshad srol dang sbyar ba'i rnam-par 'grel-pa phyir mi-ldog-pa senge nga-ro* of Kong-sprul blo-gros mtha'-yas, Gangtok, n.d.
- RMG *Theg-pa chen-po rgyud bla-ma'i bstan-bcos kyi mchan-'grel* of Mi-pham rgya-mtsho, in *Collected Writings of Jam-mgon 'Ju Mi-pham rgya-mtsho*, Vol. 3, Gangtok, 1973.
- TS *lTa-ba'i shan-'byed theg-mchog gnad kyi zla-zer* of Go-ram-pa bsod-nams senge, in *The Complete Works of the Great Masters of the Sa Skya Sect of Tibetan Buddhism*, Vol. 13, comp. by Bsod-nams rgya-mtsho, Tokyo, 1969.

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# Ascertaining the Two Kinds of Selflessness

by Mipham Rinpoche

*Homage to Mañjuśrī!*

The mind that thinks “I am” in reference to the five aggregates (*skandha*) of its own psycho-physical continuum is clinging to that “I”. In other words, the referent object (*zhen yul*) of such clinging is the self of the individual (*pudgalātman*) or the “I”. As long as we don't investigate or analyse it, we have a sense that this self exists, whereas, in fact, it has never existed, just as there has never been a snake in a length of coloured rope. The five aggregates, which are the basis upon which the self is projected, are themselves multiple and impermanent. We might think that there is a self which endures, in the sense that it came out of the past and will pass into the next phase, and that this self is somehow unitary. Yet such ideas are simply projections, made on the basis of the gathering of the aggregates; and they have no foundation in reality.

The subject, which is the mind that thinks “I am”, is therefore self-clinging. And its referent object is what we call the “self”. Rather like mistaking a length of coloured rope for a snake, we simply project the idea of a self onto the aggregates, while the self in fact has no real existence. Understanding this is the view of selflessness.

All conditioned and unconditioned things other than the “I” or the self are “phenomena” (*dharma*). As long as we don't subject our naive assumptions to investigation, we believe that these phenomena exist. Yet if we do examine them using logical reasoning, such as the argument of “neither one nor many”, we come to understand that no entity, whether coarse or subtle, can be said to be real. And that understanding of how things lack any basis or origin is what we call the realization of the 'selflessness' (or 'identitylessness') of phenomena (*dharmanairātmya*).

The self of the individual and the 'self' (or identity) of phenomena are therefore objects of negation: naturally, truly existent individuals and phenomena such as vases. Although we perceive these two kinds of self as a result of our mental delusion, when we analyse them we find that they lack even the slightest hint of reality—and this absence is the selflessness of the individual and of phenomena. The mind that understands the absence of self in this way is said to *realize* selflessness.

There are thus two forms of perceived self, and correspondingly two types of subject, or self-clinging. In order to eradicate both forms of self-clinging, it is necessary to arrive at certainty through logical reasoning, by considering how these two types of object, or types of self, lack true existence, and thereby generating realization of selflessness within the mind, as the 'subject' perceiving twofold selflessness.

In short, clinging to an “I” is the source of all mental afflictions (*kleśa*), which are the root of saṃsāra. Its antidote is the realization of individual selflessness, which is like the root of the path to liberation. And the full view of emptiness, through which we understand how all phenomena lack true existence, overcomes cognitive obscurations in their entirety—and is thus the root of the Mahāyāna path. Until we arrive at a deep, stable certainty concerning the great equality that is the inexpressible *dharmadhātu*, in which emptiness and dependent origination are indivisible, we must continue to refine our view.

Mere conceptual understanding based on an unqualified negation (*med dgag*)—i.e., refuting an object of negation—is the 'categorizable ultimate' (*rnam grangs pa'i don dam*), which is merely a gateway to true, ultimate reality, not the ultimate nature itself.

The Middle Way of unlimited unity, or the 'uncategorizable ultimate' (*rnam grangs ma yin pa'i don dam*), is the natural state of the indivisibility of the two truths, which is understood through self-knowing awareness, and is characterised by pacification of web-like conceptual elaboration.

In short, conceptual understanding born of analysis brings genuine certainty and the decisive understanding that all the phenomena of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa appear while lacking even so much as an atom's worth of true existence—as is made clear when we subject them to investigation and analysis. Moreover, there is no conflict between the appearance of all these entities and their lack of true existence, just as in the examples of the reflection of the moon in water, a dream, or an illusion. Conviction at this stage is equivalent to the certainty regarding illusoriness that is experienced during post-meditation. Although it represents a positive intellectual grasp of Madhyamaka, by itself it does not qualify as seeing the true *dharmadhātu*, the great Middle Way beyond conceptual elaboration, which must be understood through self-knowing awareness. We must therefore engender a special form of certainty within the space-like freedom from conceptual elaboration that results from directly seeing the actual state of inexpressible unity. Then we must practise the meditative equipoise in which all philosophical standpoints based on thoughts of refutation or proof have faded away entirely. This is said to mark the point at which an analytical view developed through study and reflection is perfected. Still, the *dharmadhātu*, which is an object of self-knowing awareness, can only be seen through the complete transcendence of ordinary mental processes, and not through any outwardly directed, language-based analysis which fails to strike the crucial point. Moreover, those who are adept at settling the mind as a result of their guru's pith instructions, find it easy to develop certainty. We must therefore understand the key points of the path without error.

*By Mipham.*

Translated by Adam Pearcey, 2016

# TREASURY of PRECIOUS QUALITIES

*The Rain of Joy*  
by JIGME LINGPA

WITH *The Quintessence of the Three Paths*  
*A Commentary by Longchen Yeshe Dorje, Kangyur Rinpoche*

BOOK ONE  
*Translated by the Padmakara Translation Group*  
*Forewords by H. H. the Dalai Lama*  
*and Jigme Khyentse Rinpoche*



SHAMBHALA  
BOSTON & LONDON  
2010

## APPENDIX 8 @ *The Madhyamika School*

Those who uphold the Madhyamika tenets of the Mahayana understand that both subject and object are devoid of absolute reality. They therefore refrain from attributing true existence either to external phenomena or to the self-knowing mind.\* The Madhyamika school is divided into two subschools: the Svatantrika Madhyamikas and the Prasangika Madhyamikas. The former refute the true existence of phenomena and do this on the basis of correct signs and premises according to the three modes of reasoning.<sup>278</sup> By contrast, the Prasangikas induce an inferential understanding of the absence of true existence in the minds of their adversaries simply by exposing the consequences of their assertions.

### THE SVATANTRIKA MADHYAMIKAS

The Svatantrika Madhyamikas say that all things, forms and so on, appearing to the six undamaged consciousnesses, exist on the level of the relative truth “according to their characteristics,” and their reality is demonstrated by the kind of reasoning that confines itself to the level of conventional existence. Although they are devoid of true existence, such phenomena are real “from their own side,” “on their own level,” “according to their characteristics,” and “as substantial entities.”<sup>†</sup> All these expressions are synonyms for the Svatantrikas. Existence of this kind is not denied by the sort of arguments that seek to establish the absolute truth. It is clear that when the Madhyamika texts declare phenomena to be without inherent existence, the Svatantrikas say that one should add that this refers exclusively to the level of absolute truth. They say that phenomena existing according to their characteristics are

\* The lower tenet systems all do this in one way or another.

† Real from their own side: *rang ngo nas grab pa*; on their own level: *rang bzhi gyis grab pa*; according to their characteristics: *rang gi mtshan nyid kyī grab pa*; substantial entities: *rdzas su grab pa*.

like illusions, for they arise merely through interdependence. But granting this, it is nevertheless possible to discourse (meaningfully) about specific phenomena such as causation, despite the fact that when such phenomena are investigated with arguments aiming at absolute truth, they are found to be devoid of existence and to be utterly pure and empty like space. In the latter context, expressions like “true existence,” “existence on the absolute level,” “perfect existence,” and “existence on the ultimate level”<sup>\*</sup> all have the same meaning and refer to the ultimate object of refutation at which absolutist arguments are aiming.

As regards the twofold *apprehension* of, or clinging to, the self (by which is meant the self of the person and the self of phenomena), the Svatantrikas distinguish these, not from the standpoint of the referent but from that of the mode of apprehension. When in a moment of personal introspection one detects a self-sufficient and autonomous entity, this is the apprehension of the personal self. When one apprehends (other) people and things as truly existing, this is the apprehension of the self of phenomena. This is the general position of the Svatantrikas; they are, however, divided into two subschools, higher and lower. The so-called lower school is in turn divided into two subgroups, the first of which emphasizes the illusoriness of all phenomena of *samsara* and *nirvana* (for which reason Tibetan scholarship refers to them as *pan-illusionists*).<sup>†</sup> Thus, masters like Acharya Sagaramegha hold that phenomena have no existence in themselves. They exemplify the two truths in being like illusions. Conventional appearance is unreal, for it is like a mirage. But though empty on the absolute level, this appearance nonetheless occurs unobstructedly through dependent arising. Accordingly, by completing the two miragelike accumulations, practitioners attain the miragelike result of enlightenment. Abiding constantly and evenly in the nature of illusion, Buddhas work for miragelike beings by implementing miragelike activities. Due to the interdependence of causes and conditions, all appearances are like illusions. Delusory appearances are illusions, and even the display of unobstructed luminosity—that is, un-

<sup>\*</sup> True existence: *bdan par grub pa*; existence on the absolute level: *don dam par grub pa*; perfect existence: *yang dag par grub pa*; existence on the ultimate level: *de kbo na nyid da grub pa*.

<sup>†</sup> *sgyu ma rigs khyis grub pa*.

deluded wisdom wherein all conceptual constructs have subsided—is illusionlike. In short, Sagaramegha and others affirm that the ground, path, and fruit are all like illusions.

The second branch of the lower school are “those who distinguish between Appearance and Voidness.”<sup>\*</sup> Thus, the master Shrigupta and others say that, on the absolute level, objects like vases have no existence and are like mirages. Ultimately there is nothing there. On the conventional level, however, vases and so forth are not empty (of existence), for they appear to function and are therefore real. If one investigates them on the absolute level, they are empty, for nothing is discovered. Consequently, they say that relative truth, which cannot withstand analysis, and absolute truth, which does withstand analysis (in other words phenomena and their ultimate nature), do not coincide on the same ground, that is, in the same phenomenon or thing. Otherwise it would follow (absurdly) that the absolute is impermanent like the relative truth, or that the relative truth is as unoriginated and unceasing as the absolute truth. They therefore say that the phenomenal appearances of the relative truth and the emptiness nature of the absolute truth exist merely in relation to each other. Both branches of the lower schools are like the higher Svatantrikas in accepting the distinction between mistaken and unmistakable relative truth.

The higher Svatantrika school is represented by such masters as Jnanagarbha, Shantarakshita, and Kamalashila. For them, the absolute truth, taken either as illusion or emptiness (as stated in the previous two points of view), is itself incapable of withstanding analysis.<sup>279</sup> For the absolute truth in itself is the ultimate nature of all phenomena and transcends all conceptual construction. Nevertheless, relative phenomena, at their own level, retain their characteristics and are incontrovertible. It is only when they are analyzed by (absolutist) reasoning that they are found to lack even the slightest degree of existence. What is found is an emptiness that is an approximation of the absolute truth. The Svatantrikas consider these two (the actual absolute truth and the approximate absolute truth) to be on an equal footing and affirm, sub-

<sup>\*</sup> *snang stong tha dad pa*.

stantiate, and defend their position by using “autonomous” or “positive” reasoning. For example, in order to refute the belief in permanence, they say, “The subject, an existent thing, is impermanent because it is fabricated, like a vase.” And they follow this with the “autonomous” proposition, in other words, the independent statement: “The subject, an existent thing, is impermanent because it is fabricated, arising from causes and conditions.”<sup>280</sup>

In this school, as in all the lesser tenet systems, production from an extraneous cause is accepted. The relative truth is subdivided into unmistakable and mistaken relative truth in the manner already explained in the section on the two truths. This relative truth, deceptive as it is, manifests irresistibly until the pure grounds are attained, for in their post-meditation experience, Aryas still perceive what are known as “pure” worldly appearances. The proponents of the higher Svatantrika school affirm that they gather the two accumulations and attain the two bodies through the understanding that the two truths are not mutually exclusive.

Depending on whether external objects, separate from the mind, are asserted or denied, the higher Svatantrikas are divided into two camps. First there are the “Svatantrika Madhyamikas who act like Sautrantikas.”\* These are exemplified by Bhavaviveka in his commentary on the *Mulamadhyamaka-karika* entitled the *Prajnapradipa*, and his follower Jnanagarbha in his treatise *Satyadvayavibhanga* and its autocommentary. These masters assert the existence of external objects on the relative level, but deny the existence of the self-knowing mind. Second, there are the *Svatantrika Madhyamikas who act like Yogacharas*,† as represented by Shantarakhita in his *Madhyamakalanakara* and his disciple Kamalashila in his *Madhyamakaloka*. On the level of relative truth, Shantarakhita and Kamalashila affirm the existence of the self-knowing mind and deny the existence of objects separate from it.<sup>281</sup> Arya Vimuktasena, who predated Shantarakhita, was also a Yogachara Svatantrika Madhyamika, although he is not credited as being the founder of this school. This kind of situation occurs also in other contexts.<sup>282</sup>

\* *indo sde spyod pa'i dhu ma rang rgyud pa.*

† *rnal 'byor spyod pa'i dhu ma rang rgyud pa.* Yogachara is another name for Chittamatra (the Mind-Only school).

By adopting the Svatantrika method for establishing the two truths, one can gain conviction that phenomena are without true existence on the absolute level, even though, through dependent arising, they manifest unobstructedly. Such certainty is the point of entry to the Great Madhyamika, which is utterly beyond ontological extremes. On the other hand, if, while failing to undermine the powerful conceptual propensity to apprehend true existence, ingrained from beginningless time, one contemptuously dismisses other views and simply snatches at the highest (i.e., Prasangka), the only result will be the fault of disparaging the lower schools and abandoning the Dharma. And the realization of the higher teachings will be rendered even more difficult. By contrast, if the pith instructions of our teachers, sharp and penetrating, strike upon the hard terrain of *our own minds*, it is said that the entire textual tradition (of both Svatantrika and Prasangka) will have the effect of teachings that directly elicit experience.<sup>283</sup>

The Svatantrikas refute the extreme views of permanent existence and nothingness by using the same great logical arguments as propounded in the Madhyamika texts. And as these are not dissimilar from those of the Prasangikas, they will be set forth in due course. . . .

## THE PRASANGIKA MADHYAMIKAS Establishing the ground Madhyamika

The Prasangikas consider that all phenomena, arising through interdependence and appearing in the manner of mirages or dream visions, are relative truth. They do not analyze phenomena as to their existential status but regard them as being of relative validity, seeing them as a means of getting at something else, namely, the absolute. In his autocommentary on the *Madhyamakavatara*, Chandrakirti says, “The relative truth is an avenue of approach to the absolute truth. No analysis is made of relative phenomena to see whether they are self-generated or produced from extraneous causes. On the contrary, phenomena are simply accepted on an empirical basis and as they appear to the common man.” Moreover, Lord Buddha himself is quoted in one of the sutras as saying, “People argue with me, but I do not argue with them. What

they believe to exist in the world, I also affirm. What they disbelieve, I also disallow.”

This appeal to “empirical reality” is not just a sop to general opinion. It means that the Prasangikas accept all interdependently produced phenomena, which appear as undeniably to them as to anyone else. They accept them just as they arise, *without investigating their existential status*. The true reality of these phenomena, however—in other words, their ultimate nature inseparable from them—has from the very beginning been emptiness, *shunyata*, beyond the four extremes of existence, nonexistence, and so on. This is what is referred to as the absolute truth of phenomena, and it is of course no more than a mere label on the relative level. Indeed, the two values (of relative and absolute) are not two separate categories, with phenomena on the one side and emptiness on the other. No, the very nature of phenomena is emptiness. The very nature of phenomena is to be groundless and rootless. Phenomena in fact elude every position that the intellect can take in their regard.

By contrast, some people refute only what they call the “true existence” of things, regarded as somehow separate from their conventional existence (which is not itself negated). They may refer to this as the absence of conceptual construction (*spros bral*), but it resembles it only in name and is something quite different. The inseparable union of appearance and emptiness in the authentic *spros bral* disallows both extremes of existence and nonexistence. To deny the true existence of an object and at the same time affirm its conventional existence is to dissociate existence from nonexistence. And in any case, even if someone were to succeed in recognizing this “absence of true existence,” such a recognition would be useless as a means of removing attachment. However much one were to meditate on such an emptiness (i.e., an emptiness of “true existence”), it would do nothing to dissipate the perception of conventional phenomena as existing in their own right. And if such an apprehension is not dissipated, how can aversion and attachment to it be overcome?<sup>284</sup> In *The Treasure of Wish-Fulfilling Jewels*, in the section dealing with the refutation of the system of the lower Svatantrika school, according to which the appearance of a thing is different from its emptiness, the omniscient Longchen Rabjam says, “Emptiness that is other than appearance is an impossibility, whether on the relative or absolute

level. Such an emptiness is unrealizable, and since it is other than phenomena it would be powerless as an antidote to them. When anger against an attacker arises, merely knowing that it is empty is of no help. In the same way, the simple assurance that desired objects are lacking in some ‘true existence’ separate from them will likewise be of no avail.” As the *Samadhiraja-sutra* says:

As long as man a “woman” apprehends,  
Desire for her will powerfully arise,  
But let such apprehension be destroyed  
And lust’s defilements will depart as well.

The objection might be raised that without perception it would be impossible to meditate on love and so forth, because the true existence of the referent must be apprehended as a basis of such a meditation—given that one must have both a referent and the perception of it. To this we answer that that which apprehends objects as desirable or hateful is dualistic thought. It is this that brings forth the defilement, and it is this that must therefore be removed. Aside from dualistic thought, there is no such thing as the so-called true existence of phenomena—somehow standing apart from them as a possible object of refutation. In his *Songs of Realization*, Jangya Rolpa'i Dorje himself says:

Our great intellects these days,  
Leave things appearing clearly on one side  
And look for hares with horns as something to refute.  
Old grandmother\* will run away from them!

Therefore, even though, as a help for beginners, it is possible to speak of “relative phenomena” as being devoid of true existence, on the ultimate level, nothing of the kind can be found. As far as meditation on love is concerned, this can be explained as follows. Suppose a man is having a nightmare. He is suffering because he is dreaming that he is being chased by a frightful enemy or a wild beast, and he looks every-

\* A humorous reference to the Prajnaparamita, sometimes referred to as the Great Mother.

where for somewhere to hide. A clairvoyant person (able to see what the man is dreaming about) knows perfectly well that the dreamer has no such enemy and that he is not being chased. Such a person will conclude that in order to comfort the sleeper and remove his fear it would be best to wake him.<sup>285</sup> In the same way, it is said that one must understand that whereas on the absolute level no phenomena are to be found, on the conventional level such phenomena are indeed present. These two modes, relative and absolute, are not mutually exclusive. Thus, phenomena, the objects of the six consciousnesses, *sem* to arise and subside, come and go, and so on. They do so in the manner of reflected images or mirages. In themselves, however, they do not in fact pass through these four processes—for the simple reason that, in themselves, they lack all existence. From this point of view, in accordance with which, phenomena, dependently produced, are primordially “unborn,” it is said that appearance and emptiness are essentially one and the same thing. It is as when the four modes of emptiness are proclaimed in the text of the *Hridaya-sūtra*: “Form is emptiness; emptiness is form. Emptiness is none other than form; form is none other than emptiness.”

The Chittamatrins claim that in absolute terms, the nature of the “dependent reality,” namely, the self-knowing mind, is not empty. The Svatantrika Madhyamikas say that phenomena dependent on causes and conditions have a conventional existence on the relative level. By contrast, the Prasāngikas refrain from making assertions about the existence of phenomena even on the relative level, let alone on the absolute level. As Nagarjuna has said, “If I assert anything, then I am at fault. But since I assert nothing, I alone am faultless!” And Aryadeva said, “One who refrains from asserting inherent existence or nonexistence, or the two combined, is beyond dispute.” And finally, Chandrakīrti said in the *Madhyamakavatāra*:

Unlike you, who think dependent nature is a true existent,  
 Even for the all-concealing relative we make no claims.  
 And yet, to gain the fruit, we speak in harmony with worldly folk,  
 And grant that things exist (though they do not).

(VI, 81)

## Identifying the object of refutation: the two selves

### *The difference between the “self” and “apprehension of (or clinging to) self.”*

Although the object of refutation, namely, a concretely existent self, has no reality, unless the conceived object (*zhen yul*) of ego-clinging (or ego-apprehension) is dissipated, this clinging itself cannot be neutralized. We can see this in the example of the rope and the snake.<sup>286</sup> When a distinction is made between persons and phenomena, a person is the subjective individual, such as “Devadatta,” imputed upon his own collection of aggregates, which are the basis of such a labeling.<sup>287</sup> By contrast, phenomena are Devadatta’s aggregates, his eyes, for example, which act as the ground on which the person “Devadatta” is imputed. The term “phenomena” refers to all other things, in addition to the personal aggregates.

The “personal self,” or ego, is the name given to what is assumed to be our inherently existing person; the “phenomenal self” is what is assumed to be the inherently existing phenomenon. These are the conceived objects apprehended in the two kinds of self-clinging. In the example of the rope mistakenly apprehended as a snake, they correspond to the snake. They are as nonexistent as a rabbit’s horns, even on the relative level.<sup>288</sup>

In addition to this, there is self-apprehension, or self-clinging. To cling to the personal self means to believe that one’s self is truly existent. To cling to the phenomenal self means to believe that phenomena are truly existent. The person and phenomena<sup>289</sup> are thus the referents of these two self-clings. In the example given, they are like the colored rope that acts as the basis for the mistaken perception of the snake.

The “personal no-self” is the absence of inherent existence in the person. The “phenomenal no-self” is the absence of inherent existence in phenomena. This is understood by the “wisdom of realizing no-self.” Persons and phenomena are, of course, said to exist on the conventional level. The roots of the two veils, which are to be dispelled, are thus the two kinds of self-clinging,<sup>290</sup> the conceived objects of which are the two kinds of self. These are thus the objects of refutation. The conceived

object assumed by deluded thought, which takes for real what is utterly without existence, may be dissipated by the analysis that demonstrates its nonexistence. Thus a firm understanding of the two kinds of no-self may be cultivated. One should again and again strive to maintain the continuity of this illuminating conviction that counteracts the two kinds of self-clinging, and one should exert oneself in the techniques that remedy the mental darkness created by mistaken discursive thoughts. If this conviction weakens, it should be reinforced by repeated analysis. On the other hand, it is said that, when it is stable, one should lay aside analytical investigation and simply rest in that state of insight. In the early stages, beginners should meditate by concentrating on the nonexistence of self. But when, thanks to the meditation just mentioned, conviction is gained, there is no need to focus on the “nonexistence of the self” as such. And at length, when one is free from all false assertions, it will be possible to meditate on the great emptiness that is conceptually ungraspable. . . .

### Analysis through the application of reason

This method consists of four or five great arguments that establish the fact that phenomena are without inherent existence. The specific explanation of these arguments is preceded by a general exposition of how such assessments are made.

To begin with, the prasangka approach is unlike that of the Svatantrikas. The Svatantrikas disprove true existence on the relative level but then assert an illusory existence. Likewise they disprove conceptual construction on the absolute level, but then go on to assert (positively) that this absolute is beyond conceptual construction. The prasangka method is simply to demolish the defective propositions of their opponents by directly refuting every assertion to which the mind might cling. But they do not accompany this with any kind of independent pronouncement. In order to eliminate clinging to real existence,<sup>291</sup> it is essential to eradicate the conceived object of such clinging. Therefore, as we have said before, it is necessary to analyze and achieve certainty about the true nature of the two selves which are the object of refuta-

tion. Otherwise it is like shooting arrows without seeing the target, and it is impossible to eliminate the assumption of the real existence of a self.

When one uses the madhyamika arguments to search for the meaning of suchness, the idea that “the opponent is wrong” is enough to cause one to stray off the point. Therefore, from the outset, do not refute only the assertion of an opponent, but work to eradicate completely all the innate discursive thoughts in *your own mind*, which have been left unexamined from beginningless time and which deviate from the Truth or Suchness. Likewise, eradicate all clinging to positions or theories, which are imputations arising from philosophical inquiry and which are found in all tenet systems whether Buddhist or non-Buddhist. Subsequently, when you meditate, simply rest without clinging to anything, in the sense of having an object of meditation. This, however, is not to say that you should remain in a state of blankness, a “foolish meditation,” so to speak. On the contrary, through the certain knowledge deriving from the realization of the absence of inherent existence, your vipashyana will be rendered extraordinary and you will be able to rest in the union of shamatha and vipashyana. And you will have no doubts. All this is the sign that your analysis has hit the mark.

Generally speaking, at the present time, all the great beings who uphold the Madhyamika declare that the way the phenomena of samsara or nirvana appear is as the mere imputation of thought; they are without real existence. Emptiness consists in dependent arising; emptiness and dependent arising are indissociably united. Everyone is in agreement about this. In our tradition, however, we do not consider that the expression “imputed existence” implies the presence of a “something” that lacks true existence and to which true existence could be ascribed. We say that the object referred to is a kind of empty form, an originless display of the mind’s creative power.\* Consequently, when emptiness is said to be inseparable from dependent arising, this is not meant to imply that there is a validly established appearance from which emptiness is inseparable. On the contrary, we understand that phenomena are

\* *rtal snang*.

themselves ungrounded and rootless. There is no way in which they could exist. And yet they arise freely, produced in interdependence.

Therefore, once the object of refutation, which is to be identified as the two really existing selves, has been eliminated, its place is not still occupied by some (residual) basis of refutation—a so-called person or phenomenon. There is simply nothing left at all. Persons and phenomena are empty of *themselves*. For one cannot say that they are empty of true existence while holding that phenomena themselves (the basis of emptiness) are not empty of themselves on the relative level.<sup>292</sup> It is rather that form, for example, is empty of form and so forth. Therefore, because all phenomena are devoid of real existence, there is no “concrete” object of refutation. All that is refuted is the false imputation that ascribes existence to what does not exist. Nagarjuna says in his *Vigrahavyavartani*:

Since no object of negation can be found,  
I myself have nothing to negate.  
And so, by saying “I refute,”  
You’re the ones who falsely testify.

It might be objected that there is a contradiction in saying, as we have just done, that the two selves are devoid of true existence, while at the same time affirming that persons and phenomena exist on the relative level. All we mean is that as long as there is the tendency to delusion, relative appearances arise constantly and unhindered. But this does not mean that they exist inherently.

#### *The four arguments*

Four separate arguments are employed. The first is the so-called Diamond Splinters argument and addresses the question of causes. This is followed by an argument dealing with effects, which shows that no effects, whether existent or nonexistent, can be said to be produced. Then comes the refutation of the idea of production from any of the four alternatives (as will be explained), which is an examination of both

cause and effect together. Finally, there is the great argument that investigates the nature of phenomena. This is subdivided into two separate arguments: (1) the argument of dependent arising and (2) the argument of “neither one nor many.”

#### AN INVESTIGATION OF CAUSES: THE DIAMOND SPLINTERS ARGUMENT

Phenomenal appearances are unborn. This is so because it is impossible for appearances to arise either (a) produced from themselves; (b) produced from something else; (c) produced from both self and other; or (d) produced causelessly through sheer randomness.<sup>293</sup>

*Self-production.* The thesis that phenomena are self-produced is untenable. This is so because in the process of production from self, the product must arise from what is either present (at the time of production) or not present. In the first case, arising cannot be explained because (a) there is no difference between the producer and the produced; (b) since the product is already present, there is no time when it is not actually produced; and (c) there is no end to the process of production. If the product arises subsequently, then given that the cause is itself not present, it cannot properly be so labeled, and this amounts to saying that the product has arisen causelessly.<sup>294</sup>

*Production from other.* So-called production from other is also impossible. It is unacceptable to say that phenomena are produced from something other than themselves because (a) if the product has not yet been produced, no extraneous object can be qualified as being its producer and (b) if that were the case, anything could arise from anything.<sup>295</sup>

*Production from self and production from other combined.* This too is impossible since production from self and production from other are mutually exclusive and because both kinds of production have already been refuted.

*Causeless origination.* It is impossible to say that things are produced causelessly, since (a) this contradicts the evident experience of causality; (b) it would necessarily follow that lotuses could grow from thin air; and (c) all action would be rendered pointless.<sup>296</sup>

The *Mulamadhyamakakarika* says:

Neither from themselves, nor from another cause,  
Not from both, nor yet without a cause—  
Phenomena indeed of any kind  
Are never born.

(I, 1)

AN INVESTIGATION OF RESULTS: NO EFFECTS, WHETHER  
EXISTENT OR NONEXISTENT, CAN BE SAID TO BE PRODUCED  
Objects that appear to be different kinds of product are in fact unproduced. The reason for this is that a product, whether regarded as truly existent or truly nonexistent, is empty of origination. No origin can be ascribed to a truly existent product for the simple reason that it is already possessed of existence. Likewise, no origin can be ascribed to a truly nonexistent effect since, in this case, there is nothing that might receive the ascription of origin (like the rabbit's horns). The *Mulamadhyamaka-karika* says:

Contributive causes cannot be ascribed  
To things existing or without existence.

If things do not exist, what contribution can such causes make?  
And if things "are," what is the cause accomplishing?

(I, 6)

AN INVESTIGATION OF THE CAUSAL PROCESS ITSELF: A  
REFUTATION OF ORIGINATION RELATED TO FOUR POSSIBLE  
ALTERNATIVES

The apparent production of effects from causes cannot be accounted for in rational terms. (1) A single cause cannot be shown to give rise to a single result; (2) a plurality of causes cannot be shown to give rise to a plurality of results; (3) a single cause cannot be shown to give rise to a plurality of results; and (4) a plurality of causes cannot be shown to give rise to a single result. Since neither the cause nor the result is an indivisible discrete entity, they are devoid of both singularity and plurality. To speak of production is therefore as far-fetched as saying that space is solid. The *Introduction to the Two Truths* says:

By many things a single thing is not produced,  
And many things do not bring forth plurality;

A single thing does not give rise to many things,  
And from a single thing, a single thing is not produced.

AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE NATURE OF PHENOMENA

1. The Great Interdependence argument, which constitutes an affirming negative: mere appearances are not discrete, existent entities, because—being interdependently produced—they are beyond the eight extremes of arising, cessation, and so forth, and are thus empty of inherent reality, like the reflection of the moon in water. As it is said in the sutra:

Whatever has arisen from conditions is indeed unborn.  
No true origin can be ascribed to it.

And it is said in the *Mulamadhyamaka-karika*:

But for what originates dependently,  
There are no phenomena;  
Therefore without voidness,  
There are no phenomena.\*

2. The argument of "Neither One nor Many," which constitutes a nonaffirming negative: all external and internal phenomena are devoid of real existence, because that which is neither a single truly existent thing nor a plurality of existent things must of necessity be empty of true existence. Aryadeva has said:

See how an instant has an end,  
And likewise a beginning and a middle.  
Because an instant is in turn three instants,  
Momentariness is not the nature of the world.

The above techniques of rational analysis are used when debating philosophical tenets and also when, while practicing on the path, one tries to free oneself (from defilement) through the application of intelligence. Because the proponents of Madhyamika make no assertions, they

\* In other words, emptiness is not different from phenomena.

have no need to prove a position nor to extricate themselves from difficulties. They merely point out the flaws in the propositions of substantialist thinkers and thereby uproot the assumption of true existence. While on the path, when one is engaged in the process of freeing oneself through the application of wisdom, it is important to investigate any assertion or position taken with regard to objects of perception whether in the outer world or in the inner forum. It is necessary to investigate thoughts, the thought-free mind, the absorptions and meditative experiences, and so forth. Similarly, one should examine one's practice of Dharma, oneself and others in all manner of activities, and such matters as samsara and nirvana, existence and nonexistence, happiness and suffering, rejection and acceptance; one should ask oneself what is virtuous and what is not virtuous. One should subject all these matters to analysis, scrutinizing their most elementary constituents. And one should settle in a state devoid of any fixation and clinging, in a spaciousness that is free from conceptual construction. It is said that the Sevenfold Reasoning<sup>297</sup> (based on the image of a chariot) proves that there is no such thing as a personal self. In fact, these same arguments disprove the existence of both types of self (personal and phenomenal).

### Why the Madhyamika dialectic is superior to all other tenet systems

Because the Prasangika Madhyamikas make no assertions that presuppose the reality of phenomena, they are without fault and utterly pure. According to their own understanding, the three lower tenet systems take up a position with regard to the nature of phenomena and proceed to investigate that to which wisdom is applied: no-self, non-origination, emptiness, and the absence of ontological extremes. They go some way to dispelling false notions, but each of them assumes true existence in one way or other. In addition, the Svatantrika Madhyamikas assert existence on the relative level. The Prasangikas contend with all of these schools and demolish their extreme positions. They themselves, however, are invulnerable to attack, and thus the Prasangika approach is regarded as faultless, the culmination of all tenet systems.

Consequently, the view of Madhyamika is nothing other than the mind's certainty with regard to the ground nature, a certainty gained through the application of the four arguments. The view itself, however, cannot be regarded as the *object* of this certainty, in the sense of being "emptiness beyond all ontological extremes." This is because if you take this *emptiness* for your view, you have failed to distinguish between the four extremes and the apprehension of these same extremes. If you entertain such a view, you have in fact become embroiled in these four extremes. Therefore, it is important to refrain even from asserting, "The view is beyond all ontological extremes."

In the words of Aryadeva:

Not existence and not nonexistence,

Not these two conjoined nor the opposite of this:

Freed from four extremes, the truly wise

Are those who keep within the middle way.

[Taken from the commentary of Khenpo Yönten Gyamtsö, *YG II*, 479–526]

## Parting from the Four Attachments

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*Jetsun Drakpa Gyaltsen's Song of Experience  
on Mind Training and the View*

By Chogye Trichen Rinpoche

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Commentary translated by Thubten Choedak

Root Text and Lineage Prayer translated by  
H. H. Sakya Trizin and Jay Goldberg

Compiled and edited  
by John Dewese



Snow Lion Publications  
Ithaca, New York ♦ Boulder, Colorado

## The Pith Instruction on the Mind Training Teaching of Parting from the Four Attachments

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by *Jetsun Drakpa Gyaltsen*

May the kind teachers and compassionate tantric deities  
In whom I take refuge from my heart  
Please bestow blessings upon me.

It is unnecessary to act without [regard for] Dharma.  
As for the manner of accomplishing Dharma,  
I request you to listen to this instruction on  
Parting from the Four Attachments.

*Thus, the invocation and promise to explain the teaching  
have been made by the author.\**

If you are attached to this life,  
you are not a person of Dharma.  
If you are attached to cyclic existence,  
you do not have renunciation.  
If you are attached to your own purpose,  
you do not have bodhichitta.  
If grasping arises,  
you do not have the view.

First, for non-attachment to this life,  
You must put aside the non-Dharma person's [manner of]  
Practicing moral conduct, hearing, contemplation, and meditation,

\* The annotations indicated in italics are by Sakya Pandita.

Which are performed for the sake of this life.

To begin with, moral conduct is explained as endowing [one] with  
The root for accomplishing the higher realms,  
The ladder for attaining liberation,  
And the antidote by which one abandons suffering.

Though there is no method [for gaining liberation]

Without moral conduct,

The moral conduct of one attached to this life is endowed with

The root for accomplishing the eight worldly concerns,

Denigration of [those possessing] inferior moral conduct,

Jealousy toward the righteous,

Hypocrisy in one's own moral conduct,

And the seed for attaining the lower realms.

Put aside this false moral conduct.

The person who undertakes hearing and contemplation

Is endowed with the wealth for accomplishing knowledge,

The lamp that dispels ignorance,

The knowledge of the path by which to guide living beings,

And the seed of the *dharma*kaya.

Though there is no method [for gaining liberation]

Without hearing and contemplation,

One who hears and contemplates while attached to this life

Is endowed with the wealth that accomplishes pride,

Contempt for [those] inferior in hearing and contemplation,

Jealousy toward those who possess hearing and contemplation,

The pursuit of followers and wealth,

And the root [causes] for attaining the lower realms.

Put aside this hearing and contemplation [based on]

The eight worldly concerns.

All persons who practice meditation

Are endowed with the antidote

For abandoning the afflictive emotions,

The root for accomplishing the path to liberation,  
And the seed for attaining buddhahood.

Though there is no method [for gaining liberation]

Without meditation,

The meditator who practices for the sake of this life

Is busy though living in seclusion:

Reciting prayers by blindly chanting words,

Ridiculing those who hear and contemplate,

Jealous of others who meditate,

And distracted in his own meditation;

Cast aside this meditation of the eight worldly concerns.

*What has been written up to this point is in accordance with the  
Abhidharmakosha, where it states, "Through possessing hearing and  
contemplation based upon moral conduct, one should thoroughly apply  
oneself to meditation." Thus, this shows directly the distinction between  
ultimate and relative aims, whereas it indicates indirectly the manner  
of meditating upon the difficulty of obtaining the [eighteen]  
prerequisites [of human rebirth] and upon the impermanence of life.*

In order to attain nirvana,

Abandon attachment to the three realms.

In order to abandon attachment to the three realms,

Keep in mind the faults of worldly existence.

First, the suffering of suffering

Is the suffering of the three lower realms.

If this is contemplated well, one's flesh will tremble.

If it befalls one, there is no way one could bear it.

Those who do not accomplish the virtue of abandoning it

Are cultivators of the lower realms.

Wherever they reside, they are pitiful.

When contemplating the suffering of change, one sees:

The movement [of beings] from heavenly realms

To the lower realms;  
 Shakra reborn as an ordinary being;  
 The sun and moon going dark;  
 And the universal emperor reborn as a slave.

Belief in this depends upon the word [of the Buddha],  
 As ordinary people do not have the ability to realize it,  
 So observe for yourself the changes of men:  
 The wealthy become poor, the mighty become weak,  
 Where there were many people there is [only] one, and so on,  
 Exceeding the imagination.

When contemplating the suffering  
 Of the nature of all conditional phenomena, one sees:  
 No end to activities,  
 That suffering exists among many and among few,  
 And that suffering exists among the rich and the poor.

All of human life is exhausted in preparations,  
 And everyone dies while making preparations.  
 Those preparations do not end even at the time of death,  
 [When we] begin preparations for the next life.

Those who are attached to this world of existence,  
 Which is a heap of suffering, are pitiful.

*Up to this point, the faults of the world of existence have been directly shown, whereas what actions should be taken up and [what should be] rejected have been indirectly indicated in accordance with the law of cause and result.*

When free from attachment, nirvana is won.  
 When nirvana is attained, bliss is obtained.  
 This song of experience is the  
 Parting from the Four Attachments.

Liberating myself alone is without benefit,  
 Since all the sentient beings of the three realms are my parents.  
 To leave my parents in the midst of suffering  
 While desiring my own bliss is pitiful.

Let the sufferings of the three realms of existence ripen upon me,  
 And let my merits be taken by sentient beings.  
 By the blessings of this merit  
 May all sentient beings attain buddhahood.

*Up to this point, the meditations on loving kindness and compassion, which are the causes [for the production of the enlightenment thought], have been indirectly indicated, whereas exchanging self and others, which is the result [of the enlightenment thought], has been shown directly.*

In whatever manner I continue, there is no liberation  
 Through grasping at the true nature of things.  
 To explain this precisely:

There is no liberation through grasping at existence,  
 There are no heavenly realms through grasping at non-existence,  
 [And] grasping at both [extremes] is [only] done in ignorance.  
 Be joyful in the state of non-duality.

*Up to this point, having rejected the views of eternalism and nihilism, the general method for placing the mind in the non-dual state [of the inseparable merging of subject and object, existence and non-existence, and so on] has been shown.*

All phenomena are mind's sphere of experience.  
 Do not seek a creator in the four elements,  
 In chance, in God, or the like,  
 But be joyful in the nature of mind itself.

*Up to this point, having shown the stages of the path common to the Bodhisattva Vijñānavada (Mind Only) school, now the uncommon path of the Mahayana Madhyamaka school will be explained.*

Appearances are of the nature of magical illusions,  
 Arising through interdependence.

Not knowing how to describe their natural state,  
 Be joyful in the ineffable.

*Up to this point, the manner of meditating upon calm abiding meditation [shamatha] has been indirectly indicated, whereas the manner of meditating on clear insight [vipasyana] has been directly shown in the following way: Having systematically established that all objective outer appearances are mind made; that [the mind] is illusory; that [the illusion] is without an inherent nature of its own; and that [the natureless illusion] is interdependent in origin and inexpressible, one meditates on the merging [of the mind and its true nature of emptiness], the Absolute devoid of all conceptual extremes.*

By the merit of this virtue

Of explaining the Parting From the Four Attachments,

May all the seven races of living beings

Be established upon the stage of buddhahood.

*The author concludes with the dedication of merit and indicates the result.*

*Colophon:*

This instruction on Parting from the Four Attachments was written by the yogi Drakpa Gyaltzen at the auspicious Sakya monastery.