

MIPHAM'S



BEACON of
CERTAINTY

ILLUMINATING

THE VIEW OF

DZOGCHEN

The Great Perfection

JOHN WHITNEY PETTIT

Mipham's *Beacon of Certainty*

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*Illuminating the View of Dzogchen,
the Great Perfection*

By John W. Pettit



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Foreword

His Holiness Penor Rinpoche

LAMA MIPHAM was a great Nyingma scholar of the nineteenth century who wrote a prodigious number of works on all subjects, including numerous brilliant commentaries on both sūtra and tantra. His work translated here by John Whitney Pettit as the *Beacon of Certainty* is particularly famous and is one of the most beneficial for clearing away confusion and doubt regarding views, paths, and meditation.

It is my earnest hope that John Pettit's translation will bring great benefit to foreign students and scholars in the study of both philosophy and meditation practice.

This work is valuable indeed. I pray that all sentient beings may benefit from this text and ultimately attain enlightenment.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be in Tibetan script, with a stylized, flowing design.

Drubwang Pema Norbu

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I MUST FIRST DEDICATE the merit of this work to my parents, Jack and Anne Pettit, whose unfailing support, both emotional and financial, has made it all possible; and to my wife, Victoria, for keeping faith in my ability to finish this seemingly interminable project.

For empowering blessings textual transmissions, elegant explanations, and personal guidance, there is no way to repay the kindness of my root teacher, the late Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche. He was a peerless master of the scriptures and realizations of sūtra and tantra, and a nonsectarian holder of all the lineages of Tibetan Buddhism. Khyentse Rinpoche dedicated his life to preserving Buddhist traditions, saving many of them from oblivion. He collected, edited, and published many volumes of rare texts, and restored dozens of Tibetan temples and monasteries destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. Khyentse Rinpoche's own teachers, and the many great scholars and yogis among his colleagues and disciples, knew him as the manifestation of the wisdom mind of Mañjuśrī, as the unobstructed voice of countless Indian and Tibetan siddhas, and as the bodily rebirth of the nineteenth-century master 'Jam dbyangs mKhyen brtse dbang po. There is no doubt that he was a brilliant moon (*rab bsal zla ba*) in the starry sky of the paṇḍitas and siddhas of India and Tibet; that in accomplishing the benefit of self and others, he was endowed with a brilliant wealth of auspiciousness (*bkra shis dpal 'byor*); and that, by realizing and transmitting the Great Perfection teachings, he raised the victory banner of the teaching of the changeless supreme vehicle (*'gyur med theg mchog bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan*) in many countries around the world.¹

As an infant, Khyentse Rinpoche received blessings and prophecies of future greatness from Mipham Rinpoche, who conferred upon him the name bkra shis dpal 'byor (*Mangalaśrībhūti*). As the heart disciple of Mipham's main student Zhe chen rgyal tshab Pad ma rnam rgyal, Khyentse Rinpoche was a principle heir to Mipham's teachings. I was extremely fortunate to receive teachings from Khyentse Rinpoche in the years 1985–1990, including a precious few teachings of Mipham's tradition. In one of my first meetings with him, Rinpoche encouraged me to combine study and practice. I believe it is only due to Khyentse Rinpoche's constant inspiration that I have been able to digest a small portion of Mipham's writings—not merely as an intellectual challenge, but as a key for opening a door to the living teachings of the Buddha.

In this very preliminary exploration I can hardly hope to have done justice to the profound and vast wisdom of masters such as Mipham and Khyentse Rinpoche, so for the distortions and omissions that my efforts will undoubtedly evince, I beg the pardon of the enlightened beings. It is my fervent wish that the efforts of other scholars will improve upon my own, and that the Nyingma and other traditions of Buddhadharma will spread and develop, benefitting countless beings.

I must also express boundless gratitude for the guidance and support of these excellent spiritual teachers and friends, whose wisdom and compassion have never failed to inspire: H.H. the Dalai Lama, H.H. Penor Rinpoche, Kyabje Trulshik Rinpoche, Tulku Pema Wangyal, Nyoshul Khen Rinpoche, Tulku Thondup, H.H. Sakya Trizin, Kyabje Thinley Norbu Rinpoche, Lama Tharchin Rinpoche, Khenpo Palden Sherab, Khenpo Tsewang Dongyal, Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche, Tulku Jigme Khyentse, Shechen Rabjam Rinpoche, Bhakha Tulku, Urgyen Thinley Rinpoche, Tulku Thupten, Lama Pema Wangdak, and Mathieu Ricard. In particular, I must acknowledge Khensur Lobsang Tharchin, who introduced me to the teachings of Je Tsong kha pa,

and Gyalse Tulku, who conferred the reading transmission (*lung*) of the *Beacon of Certainty*, answered my preliminary questions about the text, and gave me a copy of Khro shul 'jam rdor's *Beacon* commentary.

Were it not for my academic mentors, those pioneers on the frontiers of Western culture, I would never have been inspired to approach Buddhism through scholarship. In 1981 Prof. Ashok Gangadean of Haverford College introduced me to the Madhyamaka philosophy of Nāgārjuna, and has been unstintingly supportive of my efforts ever since. It is thanks also to Ashok that, as a Haverford undergraduate, I was able to study closely with three eminent Buddhist scholars: Prof. Lal Mani Joshi, Prof. Gunpala Dharmasiri, and Prof. Lobsang Lhalungpa. My thanks go especially to Prof. Lal Mani Joshi, the author of *Studies in the Buddhistic Culture of India*, for introducing me to the intellectual and historical context of Buddhist philosophy in India, and to Kungö Lhalungpa, for introducing me to the spirit of impartial (*ris med*) study and practice in Tibetan Buddhism.

The late Prof. Paul Desjardins convened a Madhyamaka conference at Haverford in 1982, where I witnessed a brilliant lecture on Candrakīrti by my future dissertation advisor, Prof. Robert A. F. Thurman. This was a pivotal event that inspired my choice of career in Buddhist Studies. While I was a graduate student Prof. Thurman was uncompromising—even wrathful—in his insistence that I do my best. Without his tutelage and inspiration, this work would never have reached fruition. My deepest thanks go also to Prof. Matthew Kapstein, whose insightful editorial comments and vast bibliographical knowledge were essential to the development of the central themes of my dissertation.

My thanks go also to Lopen Karma Phuntsho, for his generous encouragement and erudite comments on the translations, to Carl Yamamoto for countless stylistic and grammatical improvements, to David Strom for his patient and tireless editing, and to Tim McNeill, for undertaking this unwieldy publication project.

Last, and certainly not least, I must express my deepest gratitude to Gene Smith. Were it not for Gene's many years of tireless effort to preserve Tibetan literature, many of the texts I have consulted might never have been published, much less been available in the Columbia University library collection. In addition, Gene's essays on Tibetan religion and culture were the first to introduce the *Ris med* tradition and the writings of Mipham to a Western scholarly audience and were essential in laying the groundwork of my research. As fate would have it, Gene has acted as an editor for this book. For his encouragement and generous help here, and in other ways, I am most thankful.

Source Abbreviations²

ACIP	Asian Classics Input Project ³
BA	<i>Blue Annals</i> (Roerich, 1988)
BCA	<i>Bodhicaryāvatāra</i>
BSG	<i>Byang chub sems bsgoms pa rdo la gser zhun</i> (Mañjuśrīmitra, in Norbu and Lipman)
CD	<i>Chos dbyings rin po che'i mdzod</i> (in Klong chen rab 'byams, 1983) DR <i>The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism</i> , vol. 1 (Dudjom Rinpoche, 1991)
DRG	<i>Don nam par nges pa'i shes rab ral gri</i> (Mipham Rinpoche, in lHag bsam bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan, 1984)
GD	<i>Grub mtha' rin po che'i mdzod</i> (in Klong chen rab 'byams, 1983)
KJ	<i>Nges shes rin po che'i sgron me'i rnam bshad 'od zer dri med</i> (Khro shul 'Jam rdor)
KNG	<i>d'Ka' ba'i gnad chen po brgyad</i> (Tsongkhapa)
LRC	<i>Byang chub kyi lam rim che ba</i> (Tsongkhapa)
LT	<i>Lung gi gter mdzod</i> (commentary on CD by Klong chen rab 'byams)
MA	<i>Madhyamakāvatāra</i>
MAL	<i>dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad 'jam dbyangs bla ma dgyes pa'i zhal lung</i> (in Mipham Rinpoche, 1990)
MAZL	<i>dBu ma la 'jug pa'i 'grel pa zla ba'i zhal lung dri med shel phreng</i> (in Mipham Rinpoche, 1990)
MK	personal communication of Matthew Kapstein
MMK	<i>Mūlamadhyamakārikā</i> by Nāgārjuna (Sanskrit in Kalupahana (1986), Tibetan in ACIP:\TEXTS\BYAUTHOR\TSASHE)
MTPH	<i>Man ngag lta ba'i phreng ba</i> (Rong zom Paṇḍita, 1974)
NK	<i>Shes rab kyi le'u 'grel pa nor bu ke ta ka</i> (Mipham Rinpoche, n.p., n.d.)
NLG	<i>gSang sngags rdo rje theg pa'i tshul las snang ba lhar grub pa</i> (in Rong zom Paṇḍita, 1974)
NRC	<i>sNgags rim chen mo</i> (Tsongkhapa, Sherig Parkhang, n.d.) NyS <i>Nyugs sems skor gsum</i> (Mipham Rinpoche, 1972)
NyZ	<i>Yon tan rin po che'i mdzod kyi 'grel pa zab don snang byed nyi ma'i 'od zer</i> (Yon tan rgya mtsho)
SM	<i>sGom gyi gnad gsal bar phye ba bsam gtan mig sgron</i> (gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes)
SNy	<i>Guhyagarbhatantra</i> (gSang snying rgyud)
TDC	<i>Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo</i>
TGSB	<i>lTa grub shan 'byed gnad kyi sgron me</i> (mDo sngags bsTan pa'i nyi ma)
ThCh	<i>Theg pa chen po'i tshul la 'jug pa</i> (in Rong zom Paṇḍita, 1976)
ThD	<i>Theg mchog rin po che'i mdzod</i> (in Klong chen rab 'byams, 1983)
TJB	<i>lTa ba'i brjed byang</i> (in Rong zom Paṇḍita, 1974)
TSB	<i>lTa ba'i shan 'byed theg mchog gnad kyi zla zer</i> (Go ram pa bSod nams seng ge)
TTC	<i>bDe gshegs snying po stong thun chen mo seng ge'i nga ro</i> (in Mipham Rinpoche, 1990)
VBD	<i>Victorious Battle Drum</i> ('Jigs med phun tshogs)
WTL	Edition of <i>Nges shes rin po che'i sgron me</i> published by Waṇa mTho slob (Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies in Vārāṇasī); with commentary of mKhan po Kun bzang dpal ldan
YD	<i>Yid bzhin rin po che'i mdzod</i> (in Klong chen rab 'byams, 1983)
ZT	<i>gZhan stong khas len seng ge'i nga ro</i> (Mipham Rinpoche, 1975)

THE BOOK'S CHAPTERS and subsections are accompanied by section numbers; cross-references for these are given in the text and footnotes as "§6.1.1," etc. The translated verses of the *Beacon of Certainty* are accompanied by the outline heading numbers of Khro shul 'jam rdor's commentary and will be indicated by *Beacon* (for example, *Beacon* §8.1.1). Where a specific passage of Khro shul 'jam rdor's commentary is intended, the heading number will be preceded by the letters "KJ" (for example, KJ 0.1.1.0).

All Sanskrit words are given with diacritics. Sanskrit words that are well known outside the fields of Buddhist and Indian Studies (for example, Prajñāpāramitā), those that are used frequently in lieu of English equivalents (for example, Mādhyamika), and proper names (for example, Śāntarakṣita) are given without italics. Sanskrit equivalents for Tibetan terms that are reconstructed, unattested, or conjectural are marked with an asterisk (for example, *lākṣaṇya).

All Tibetan words are in Wylie transliteration, with the exception of some commonly used words such as Mipham (*mi pham*), Tsongkhapa (*tsong kha pa*), Nyingma (*rnying ma*), Gelug (*dge lugs*), Rinpoche (pronounced "rin bo chay"), Lama (*bla ma*), Tulku (*sprul sku*), Khenpo (*mkhan po*), etc. To refer to followers of Tibetan religious traditions, or as an adjective referring to their views and practices, I have followed the conventions of Tibetan grammar and used the *pa* suffix, for example, Nyingmapa, Sakyapa. Tibetan head letters (*mgo yig*) are capitalized for the names of persons and places, which are sometimes combined, (for example, Khro shul 'Jam rdor = 'Jam rdor of Khro shul, 'Ju bla mDo sde = mDo sde Lama of 'Ju). Individual names within the composite names of famous lamas are capitalized, for example, bDud 'jom 'Jig bral Ye shes rdo rje. The names of Tibetan acquaintances are given, wherever possible, in their preferred phonetic spellings. Head letters of the first word of Tibetan book titles are likewise capitalized.

To locate some of the quotations and references found in my research materials, I have used Release Two of the CD-ROM issued by the Asian Classics Input Project (ACIP), which contains numerous texts from the Derge edition of the bKa' 'gyur and bsTan 'gyur and from the collected works (*gsungs 'bum*) of Tsongkhapa and other Gelug masters. Using various search programs, I have been able to locate several quotations on the CD that would have been difficult or impossible to locate otherwise. All quotations researched with the ACIP CD-ROM are given in the following format: ACIP:\CD\TEXTS\...\[TEXT NAME]\[DOCUMENT NAME]@[PAGE NUMBER], where "CD\TEXTS\...\\" is the directory path, "TEXT NAME" is the name of the directory containing the text in question (for example, the YENYING subdirectory contains Āryadeva's text, the *Ye shes snying po kun las btus pa*), "document name" is the text document on the disk, and page number is the page of the edition volume where the text is found (for example "@42b,") as it appears in the online text. On the CD-ROM, page numbers are always given with the "@" symbol, so readers wishing to consult the CD-ROM for quotations given may search the directory path quoted for the page number in the @[PAGENUMBER] format. This will quickly locate the quotation and its surrounding text.

1. Introduction

1.1. Mipham Rinpoche and the *Beacon of Certainty*

ALL MAJOR RELIGIONS have witnessed philosophical and theological transformations in their belief systems.⁴ This is an exploration of the critical philosophical approach of Tibetan scholasticism,⁵ especially its traditions of interpretation of Madhyamaka (Middle Way) philosophy, and the relationship of Madhyamaka to Dzogchen (*rdzogs chen*) or the Great Perfection, one of the most important and controversial Tibetan traditions of mystical philosophy and meditation practice. In particular, this study examines Mipham Rinpoche's polemical defense of the Nyingma school's Great Perfection teaching, his resolution of philosophical controversies that are historically associated with the Great Perfection, and the epistemological and gnoseological⁶ distinctions he uses to that end. Mipham's brilliance in this undertaking, and his (historically speaking) privileged perspective on the similar efforts of those previous scholars renowned as emanations of the Buddha of Wisdom Mañjuśrī—Rong zom Paṇḍita (11th–12th century), Sakya (Sa skya) Paṇḍita (1182–1231), Klong chen rab 'byams (1308–1362), and Tsongkhapa (1357–1419)—certainly merits his inclusion alongside the doctrinal systembuilders (*shing rta*, literally, "charioteers") of India and Tibet.⁷

Comparison, contrast, and reconciliation of different philosophical positions have always figured in Buddhist literature, especially in philosophical commentaries (*śāstra*, *bstan bcos*) written by Indian and Tibetan scholars. Comparative philosophical analysis is also important in Great Perfection literature, where it serves both pedagogical and polemical purposes. The main source for this study is a short verse text of recent origin, the *Precious Beacon of Certainty* (*Nges shes rin po che'i sgron me*), which utilizes both critical comparison and hermeneutical rapprochement in the service of teaching and defending the Great Perfection system of the Nyingma school.

The *Beacon's* author, Mipham Rinpoche ('Jam mgon 'Ju Mi pham rnam rgyal, (1846–1912), was one of the greatest scholars of the Nyingma (*rnying ma*) or "old school" of Tibetan Buddhism. Mipham's "root" teacher (*mūlaguru*, *rtsa ba'i bla ma*), the incomparable scholar and visionary 'Jam dbyangs mKhyen brtse dbang po (1820–1892), entrusted him with the preservation of the Great Perfection teaching. Mipham was an indefatigable scholar, debater, and meditator. He mastered the major scholastic traditions of Tibetan Buddhism and composed commentaries and treatises (*śāstras*, *bstan bcos*) based upon them, and during numerous meditative retreats, he cultivated a profound experience of the Vajrayāna practices taught in both the older and newer traditions of Tibetan Buddhism. He also debated extensively with adherents of Tibet's quintessential scholastic tradition, the Gelug (*dge lugs*). In the course of his writings, and due in no small part to these debates, Mipham developed the philosophical traditions of the Nyingma school to an unprecedented level of sophistication. The *Beacon* is a relatively short text, but it is a very complete expression of Mipham's integrated approach to philosophy and meditative practice.⁸

1.2. Outline

The four chapters following the introduction provide biographical, historical, cultural, and

philosophical contexts for the translations of the *Beacon* and its commentary. Chapter 2 introduces Mipham's life, his most important writings, and the extraordinary teachers of the Eclectic Movement (*ris med*) of the nineteenth century who taught and inspired him. Chapter 3 identifies the philosophical and religious aspects of Indian Buddhism that were most significant in the development of Tibetan Buddhism and introduces the philosophical perspective (*darśana, lta ba*) of the Buddhist tantras. Chapter 4 discusses the historical, cultural, and literary background of the Nyingma and Great Perfection traditions and places the *Beacon* and its author in their intellectual-historical context. Chapter 5 examines hermeneutical, epistemological, and gnoseological issues that are points of contention for Mipham, Gelug scholars, and exponents of the extrinsic emptiness (*gzhan stong*) theory. Chapter 6 concerns the philosophical issues addressed in the *Beacon*. The first, third, and fourth topics, which exemplify Mipham's interpretations of philosophical theory (*darśana, lta ba*), meditative practice (*bhāvanā, bsgom pa*), and ultimate reality (*paramārthasatya, don dam pa'i bden pa*) in the Nyingma and Great Perfection traditions, are the focus of discussion here. Chapter 7 considers the significance of Mipham's thought—its unique contributions, historical significance, and relevance for understanding the roles and relationships of texts, reason, and personal experience in religious traditions.

Chapters 8 and 9 contain complete translations of the *Beacon* and its commentary by Khro shul 'Jam rdor (KJ). Chapter 10 is a translation of Mipham's short text on extrinsic emptiness, *The Lion's Roar Proclaiming Extrinsic Emptiness*, followed by explanatory diagrams and tables and a glossary.

1.3. The *Beacon of Certainty*: Context and Significance

1.3.1. Dialectical Philosophy and the Great Perfection

The Madhyamaka⁹ or Middle Way school of Indian Buddhist thought was first expounded by the philosopher Nāgārjuna (c. 1st–2nd centuries C.E.), who systematized the Buddhist philosophy of emptiness (*śūnyatā, stong pa nyid*) of the Prajñāpāramitā (Perfection of Wisdom) scriptures and applied it as a rigorous critique of the metaphysical categories of Buddhist and non-Buddhist schools. Essentially, the Mādhyamika teaching of emptiness is that all phenomena (*dharmāḥ*) ultimately (*paramārtheṇa, don dam par*) have no intrinsic reality, no status as things-in-themselves. Conventionally (*vyavahāreṇa, tha snyad du*) they are dependently originated (*pratītyasamutpanna, rten cing 'brel bar 'byung ba*) and conceptually designated (*prajñapta, rten nas gdags pa*). Because Mādhyamika logic negates any philosophical position that assumes an independent, self-existent entity through rigorous exhaustion of logical alternatives, Madhyamaka may be said to be the Buddhist dialectical philosophy *par excellence*. Madhyamaka employs exhaustive critical analysis to induce rational certainty (*[vi]niścaya, nges pa* or *nges shes*), which, combined with meditation, leads to enlightenment.

While Madhyamaka is concerned primarily with establishing the nature of reality, the tradition of Buddhist logic, *pramāṇa*, is concerned with how we know reality, in both its ultimate and relative senses. To that end the Buddhist logicians Dignāga (5th–6th centuries) and Dharmakīrti (6th–7th centuries) elaborated what would become the most elegant and influential system of valid cognitions (*pramāṇāḥ*) to appear in India. Unlike their Buddhist and non-Buddhist predecessors, they taught that sources of knowledge (*pramāṇā*) could be assimilated to two types: direct perception (*pratyakṣa*) and inference (*anumāna*). In addition they established the various subtypes of these valid cognitions, as well as the complex relationships between them, in the contexts of ordinary life, the Buddhist path, and forensic debate. Later Indian and Tibetan

philosophers incorporated the Pramāṇa system of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti into their Madhyamaka exegeses. The Madhyamaka and Pramāṇa systems of Indian Buddhist philosophy are the most important sources for Mipham Rinpoche's discussion of critical philosophy in the *Beacon*, and are discussed in chapter 3.

The Great Perfection teaching belongs to the tantric traditions of Buddhism. The revealed scriptures of esoteric Buddhism, or *tantras*, are understood to comprise a soteriological approach or conveyance (*yāna*), the Vajrayāna or "Indestructible Vehicle." Though Vajrayāna is firmly rooted in the philosophical conventions of critical Buddhist philosophy, its texts epitomize mystical or speculative philosophy. Vajrayāna meditation is based on the principle of the immanence of ultimate reality, which is a coalescent continuum (*tantra, rgyud*) of gnosis (*jñāna, ye shes*) and aesthetic form (*rūpa, gzugs, snang ba*). Exoteric Buddhist scriptures (*sūtras*) know this immanence as buddha nature or *tathāgatagarbha*, while tantric scriptures describe it as the pervasive, unfabricated presence of divine form, divine sound, and gnosis-awareness. For this reason, tantric meditation does not invoke the logical syllogisms of dialectical philosophy. Instead, it uses special methods that force normal conceptuality to subside and cause gnosis to manifest spontaneously.

In the Nyingma tradition, the Great Perfection is regarded as the most direct and powerful way to access the continuum (*tantra, rgyud*) of reality, and as the highest form of Vajrayāna practice. Though the personal instructions of a qualified teacher of the Great Perfection may on very rare occasions suffice to induce "sudden enlightenment" in a disciple, it has generally been practiced alongside more conventional forms of Buddhism. "Great Perfection" variously indicates the texts (*āgama, lung*) and oral instructions (*upadeśa, man ngag*) that indicate the nature of enlightened wisdom (*rdzogs chen gyi gzhung dang man ngag*), the verbal conventions of those texts (*rdzogs chen gyi chos skad*), the yogis who meditate according to those texts and instructions (*rdzogs chen gyi rnal 'byor pa*), a famous monastery where the Great Perfection was practiced by monks and yogis (*rdzogs chen dgon sde*), and the philosophical system (*siddhānta, grub mtha'*) or vision (*darśana, lta ba*) of the Great Perfection.

The Great Perfection teaches that reality (*dharmatā, chos nyid*) is not an object of verbal expression or conceptual analysis. Reality and enlightenment are identical; in the final analysis "being" and "knowing" are the same. If one truly knows, there is no need to discuss or analyze philosophically how one knows, or what one knows. Great Perfection meditation is described as effortless, free of concepts (*vikalpa, rnam par rtog pa*) and subtle distortions (*prapañca, spros pa*); in this way it conforms to the radical immanence of ultimate reality taught in Vajrayāna. In the *Beacon* and elsewhere Mipham argues that all philosophical views, including the Great Perfection, are resolved in the principle of coalescence (*yuganaddha, zung 'jug*). Though coalescence is defined in different ways in different philosophical contexts, in essence it is the nonduality of conventional (*saṃvṛtisatya, kun rdzob bden pa*) and ultimate realities (*paramārthasatya, don dam pa'i bden pa*). Coalescence is the immanence of ultimate reality, which in Madhyamaka philosophy is known as the inseparability of *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*.

In advocating nonconceptual meditation the Great Perfection might seem to contradict the Mādhyamika method of discerning reality through critical analysis and the contemplative enhancement of rational certainty (*nges pa* or *nges shes*) that analysis makes possible. The Great Perfection (and certain other traditions which have been practiced in Tibet, including Ch'an) has often been criticized by Tibetan scholars who thought it utterly incompatible with the critical philosophical approach of Madhyamaka. This perceived incompatibility is based on the

assumption that the very different philosophical views (*darśana, lta ba*) and practical methods (*upāya, thabs*) that typify the subitist approach of the Great Perfection and the gradualist approach of the Madhyamaka cannot both access ultimate meaning (*paramārtha, don dam*). Mipham's writings suggest that this perceived contradiction reflects a one-sided (*phyog lhung*) or impoverished (*nyi tshe ba*) understanding of the Mādhyamika philosophical view. In the *Beacon*, certainty (*nges shes*) mediates the causal connection between theory (*lta ba* in the critical philosophical context) and gnostic vision (*lta ba* as experience that is the result of successful practice), and between soteric methods (*upāya, thabs*) and the ultimate reality that those methods reveal (*upeya, thabs byung*). Thus, the *Beacon* teaches that certainty belongs to both reason and experience, to ordinary consciousness and sublime gnosis, and to Madhyamaka as well as the Great Perfection.

1.3.2. The *Beacon's* Purpose

According to Nyingma scholars, the main purpose of the *Beacon* is to elucidate the teaching of the Great Perfection. The Great Perfection method of meditation assumes the possibility of sudden enlightenment, based on the principle of coalescence. In the Great Perfection teaching, enlightenment is the recognition or unveiling of one's original nature, not, as Buddhist dialectical philosophy understands it, a gradual development or result. Likewise the Great Perfection cannot be established through logical proof, because its proof is found in personal experience. The Great Perfection is nonconceptual (*nirvikalpa, rnam par mi rtog pa*) gnosis, which must be realized for oneself (*pratisaṃvid-jñāna, so sor rang rig ye shes*). Thus, the *Beacon* should not be read simply as an attempt at rational demonstration of the viability of the Great Perfection against the objections of its critics. It is also an affirmation of the necessity to leave rational affirmations and negations aside once critical philosophical certitude has been attained.

Scholarly treatises (*śāstra, bstan bcos*) of Buddhist philosophy often begin by identifying their purpose (*prayojana, dgos pa*) and intended audience. The narrative format of the *Beacon* suggests that Mipham wrote it to inspire his personal intuition of the Great Perfection; it is presented as an exercise in self-edification. Why would the *Beacon*, with its thorough dialectical critiques of mistaken philosophical positions, begin on such a personal note? And what role, if any, does the critical philosophical analysis found throughout the *Beacon* play in elucidating the meaning of the Great Perfection? The teaching of the Great Perfection is not a critical philosophy; if it is a philosophy at all, it is of the most speculative or mystical variety. If the Great Perfection is not amenable to rational proof, how can it be meaningfully established as a meditation method or as a spiritual path? Does practicing the Great Perfection require the suppression of rationality, or a flight toward escapist quietism?

These questions do not admit of simple or formulaic answers, and will be gradually addressed in the chapters to follow. For the moment, it should suffice to indicate some conclusions that seem reasonable in light of careful study of the *Beacon* and other materials related to the Great Perfection. First of all, if considered as a handbook for scholars who wish to meditate, the *Beacon* does not seem to have been conceived as a rational justification of the Great Perfection. Instead, the *Beacon* effectively charts the applicability of reason in the practice of the Great Perfection and other systems. Like Kant in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, Mipham affirms the utility of reason while setting limits to its role in creating religious meaning. Unlike Kant, he does not consider ultimate religious meaning to be an object of faith, but rather as that which is only known in the cessation of all conceptual elaborations—hence also of philosophical speculation—in the state of

experiential certainty about the nonreifiable (*anupalabधि, mi dmigs pa*) nature of things. Secondly, the polemical arguments of the *Beacon* should not be taken as one-sided rejections of other philosophical interpretations or religious traditions. Rather, the *Beacon's* polemics are meant primarily to refute the misinterpretations of the Great Perfection's critics and resolve the doubts that these might raise for Nyingma scholars and, perhaps more importantly, to alert Nyingma practitioners to their own potential misunderstandings of the Great Perfection. Finally, the *Beacon* is meant to show that reason, as employed in critical philosophical study, and personal intuition of gnosis, as the principle of the Great Perfection, are complementary paradigms that converge in the same soteriological goal.

1.3.3. The *Beacon's* Comparative Method

The philosophical view of the Great Perfection tradition is said to be enlightened awareness (*bodhicitta, byang chub kyi sems*), which is none other than the state of enlightenment. Thus, the Great Perfection is not only compatible with all paths, but implicitly contains the practices and qualities of all paths. The Great Perfection does not render other approaches obsolete, because to understand the Great Perfection is to master all methods.

The Great Perfection inculcates a spirit of inclusivity, which is reflected in the ecumenical approach to study and practice of its great exponents, such as Mipham. However, the *Beacon's* pragmatism and inclusivity are not indiscriminate. The important points of the text are made with reference to the traditional Nyingma doxography of higher and lower philosophical systems, and with a clear and consistent focus upon the Great Perfection as the highest system. The *Beacon's* polemical refutations do not imply a wholesale rejection of other philosophical systems; rather, they serve to establish a philosophical perspective—that of the Great Perfection—that tends to accept the validity other systems in spite of their philosophical differences, while also maintaining the unique view of the Great Perfection.

The comparative philosophical component of the *Beacon* has an important pedagogical function. The *apoha* theory of the logician Dignāga maintains that correct understanding of the unique character of something is predicated on the knowledge of what it is not. In other words, by knowing how something is distinct from all things that resemble it, one truly knows its uniqueness. Although in principle the Great Perfection is a unique and self-sufficient way to reach enlightenment, it is generally understood in the context of the other philosophies and methods it claims to transcend. Thus it could be said that, through a thorough knowledge of what the Great Perfection is *not*, one can begin to appreciate its essential intuition of enlightenment.

1.4. Methods and Sources

The pivotal moments of my research were consultations with Tibetan scholars on the subtleties of Mipham's *Beacon of Certainty* and other texts. That process began auspiciously in New York in the fall of 1992 when I met Gyalse Tulku, an incarnate lama of sMin sgrol ling Monastery near Dehra Dun, India, who gave me the reading transmission (*āgama, lung*) for the *Beacon* and explained the fundamentals of Mipham's position in the *Beacon's* seven topics. Later Gyalse Tulku kindly sent me a copy of Khro shul 'Jam rdor's commentary from Bhutan. I did not realize how fortunate I was to come across this text until I determined that it is not to be found in the Library of Congress PL 480 collection or any other collection in the U.S. and is little known outside of the community of Nyingma scholars at the Ngagyur Nyingma Institute in Bylakuppe, where it was

published.

During my stay in Himachal Pradesh in the summer of 1993 I began to study the *Beacon* with Khro shul 'Jam rdor's commentary (*KJ*) and translated most of another commentary on the *Beacon* by Mipham's close disciple mKhan po Kun bzang dpal ldan (1872–1943)¹⁰ (*KP*). *KP* is favored by many scholars as a commentary on the *Beacon*, and its author was supposedly commended by Mipham himself for his expertise in the *Beacon*. However, the format of Kun bzang dpal ldan's commentary is largely that of a *mchan 'grel*, or compilation of short glosses on selected words and phrases, leaving many of the original verses intact as parts of much longer sentences in the commentary. This made translating Kun bzang dpal ldan's text difficult in places; he often leaves unexplained passages in the *Beacon* that, prior to reading *KJ*, seemed obscure. *KJ* is rather detailed; it comments on most verses word for word and occasionally digresses into long discussions of important issues. I was delighted to find that Kun bzang dpal ldan's and Khro shul 'Jam rdor's commentaries together clarified virtually all of the obscure points in the three sections of the *Beacon* discussed in detail here. This and other considerations, such as "Delhi belly," led me to pursue the bulk of my research in the U.S. I first translated Khro shul 'Jam rdor's commentary, having decided upon it as a superior source for understanding the *Beacon* because of its generous inclusion of quotations from Indian and Tibetan sources and its extensive topical organization (*sa bcad*), which I have used to index the translation of Mipham's verses.

While translating the mere words of the Tibetan texts was a relatively straightforward task, it has been much more difficult to research and organize the background materials for the earlier chapters. In a monastic curriculum the *Beacon* is studied only after many years of study and debate of Mahāyāna philosophical texts. Needless to say, I have not been able to study all those primary sources, which would have made it much easier to analyze the philosophical concerns of the *Beacon*. In lieu of pursuing the exhaustive studies of a Tibetan *mkhan po* or *bge gshes*, I have relied heavily on the research of other scholars of Tibetan Buddhism, and on a limited number of Tibetan texts that seemed to be most relevant to understanding the *Beacon*. My research focus shifted many times between the primary and secondary sources. As I accumulated the information and ideas required for a reasonably balanced and thorough discussion of the *Beacon*'s historical and philosophical context, chapters 1 through 6 gradually took shape. The material here thus evolved in a way quite opposite to that of the writings of Mipham Rinpoche himself, who is said to have written spontaneously, with little or no editing, and quoting all original sources from memory. Though I can hardly hope to have sounded a lion's roar of Buddhist philosophical exegesis, it is hoped that this tentative meow will nonetheless beckon the reader to fathom the writings of Mipham Rinpoche more deeply.

1.4.1. Tibetan Language Sources

1.4.1.1. Editions of the *Beacon*

The basic primary sources for this work are the several editions of the root text of the *Beacon* and the two commentaries by Mipham's disciples, Kun bzang dpal ldan (*KP*) and Khro shul 'Jam rdor (*KJ*). The Vārāṇasī edition of *KP* includes a helpful anonymous index and introduction. *KJ* is more extensive and has an excellent topical outline (*sa bcad*), so it has been translated here. There is said to be another commentary by Mipham's disciple mKhan po Nus ldan, but it has remained unavailable outside of Tibet. More recently, a very detailed commentary on the *Beacon* has been published by sLob dpon Theg mchog of Dodrup Chen Rinpoche's monastery in Gangtok, Sikkim,

India.¹¹ Though I have not been able to study it at length, it is even more detailed than *KJ* and should definitely be consulted by serious students of the *Beacon*.

In translating the root text I have consulted four editions of the *Beacon*. The first two versions are found in the *Nges shes rin po che'i sgron me'i tshig gi don gsal ba'i 'grel chung blo gros snang ba'i sgo 'byed*¹² published by the Institute for Higher Tibetan Studies in Vārāṇasī (Tib. *Wa ṅa mtho slob*; hereafter *WTL*), which contains the commentary on the *Beacon* referred to as *KP* and the root text embedded in *KJ*.

KP's commentary in *WTL* contains lengthy quotations of the root text with annotations of textual variants from an unknown edition of the collected works (*gsung 'bum*) of Mipham; these are followed by a succinct word-for-word commentary. The root text embedded in the commentary is much at variance with the annotated root text that precedes it. It is possible that the quoted portions preceding the commentary were not part of Kun bzang dpal ldan's original edition and were added by the editors of the *WTL* edition to facilitate study. In any case, since the verses and commentary in effect provide two different versions of the root text, I have referred to them separately as *WTL* and *KP*, respectively.

The *WTL* version is nearly the same as the Tashi Jong edition (*PL*, see below). The *gsung 'bum* referred to in the critical annotations of the *WTL* is nearly the same as the sDe dge edition (hereafter *DG*), though the first annotation (page 3) reads *phyi lo 1975 gar dbang bskrun zhus pa'i mi pham rin po che'i gsung 'bum (gsung) nang bzang zhes gsal* ("In the *Collected Works* commissioned in 1975 by Gar dbang, this read 'bzang"). I am not sure to whom this refers; 1975 is certainly too early to be Dilgo Khyentse's edition. This might refer to Sonam T. Kazi's edition (see below). Many of the variant readings seem to be spelling errors.¹³ The *DG* edition also seems to be full of spelling variations and/or errors, but the *WTL* correction of these seems to be arbitrary in places, and in many places contradicts both *KP* and *KJ* versions. When it contradicts both *KP* and *KJ*, and these latter two are identical, I have generally used the *KP-KJ* version. Since *WTL* and *PL* are nearly identical, I assume that they are either copied one from the other or rely on a third, as yet unknown edition. This edition would in any case be a revised and relatively recent one, since *WTL* and *PL* often are at odds with the other three—*DG*, *KP*, and *KJ*. That *KP* and *KJ*, like *DG*, represent a fairly early edition is suggested by the fact that their authors were both direct disciples of Mipham. On the other hand, both of these texts are recent publications and may well have been edited prior to publication, so under these circumstances it is practically impossible to determine how the original text actually read. This is of little consequence, since, with only one or two exceptions, the variants do not require different readings of the text.

The second version I have consulted, *DG*, is found in the sDe dge mGon chen edition¹⁴ of Mipham's writings, which was originally published in sDe dge, of the Kham region of Tibet. It is twenty-seven folios in length, and the folios are handnumbered with Tibetan numerals 36–63. Arabic numeral pagination in the opposite right margin runs 71–124. The *Beacon* folios contain an additional pagination, spelled out in the traditional fashion: *gcig* (1), *gnyis* (2), and so on, to *nyer bdun* (27). This is apparently the original pagination of the wood blocks. Each spelled numeral is preceded by the word *nges* and followed by the word *sgron*, so the left margin of the first side of each page reads something like this: *śrīḥ nges gcig sgron* 36, etc. This indicates that it originally belonged to volume *śrīḥ* of the sDe dge edition and was numbered separately from other texts in the volume. A copy of this volume along with most of Mipham's other writings was recently published in Nepal by the late Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche and then acquired by the Library of Congress PL480 program, which provided for the acquisition of foreign language texts with

government surpluses of foreign currency. This edition of the text was recommended to me by Gyalse Tulku as the most reliable edition available. However, many of the spellings in *DG* as well as its use of the particles *gi*, *gis*, *su*, *-r*, and their equivalents are highly irregular, so in many such cases I have followed readings found in the other editions, especially *PL*. Again, these variants generally do nothing to change the meaning of the text.

In addition to the *sDe dge mGon chen* edition, there is the incomplete edition of Mipham's writings entitled *The Collected Works of 'Jam-mgon 'Ju Mipham rgyamtsho* (part of the *Ngagyur Nyingmay Sungrab* series), edited by Sonam T. Kazi. It is also available in the Library of Congress *PL* 480 collection. As mentioned above, the version of the *Beacon* there was found by Gyalse Tulku and me to be riddled with scribal errors, so it has not been included here for comparison.

The third version I have used is a woodblock print from Phun tshogs gLing (*PL*), a monastery in the Tibetan refugee community of Tashi Jong in Himachal Pradesh, India. The colophon of the text reads simply *phun gling gsung rab nyams gso rgyun spel las byed nas dpar du bskrun pa dge*. This edition is thirty-five Tibetan folios in length. The ink is somewhat messy in places, but it seems to be nearly free of obvious spelling errors. As mentioned above, it is nearly identical with *WTL* and appears to be well edited.

The fourth version is that found in the commentary by Khro shul 'Jam rdor, the *Nges shes rin po che'i sgron me'i rnam bshad 'od zer dri med*. The root text is not printed separately but is somewhat irregularly marked with *bindus* (◦) in the text of the commentary. This makes identification of the root text difficult in places, so variations have only been noted where the root text is clearly marked or otherwise evident.

In addition to the *Beacon* and its commentaries, I have also consulted Mipham's commentaries on Padmasambhava's *Man ngag lta ba'i phreng ba* and Mañjuśrīmitra's *Byang chub sems bsgom pa rdo la gser zhun*; his commentaries on Candrakīrti's *Madhyamakāvatāra*, Śāntarakṣita's *Madhyamakālaṃkāra*, and the *Nor bu ke ta ka* commentary (*NK*) on the Wisdom Chapter (*prajñāpariccheda*) of Śāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra*; his original text, the *Don rnam par nges pa'i shes rab ral gri* (*DRG*), with his interlinear commentary (*mchan*), and also with a commentary by Lhag bsam bsTan pa'i rgyal mtshan; his study of tathāgatagarbha, the *bDe gshegs snying po stong thun chen mo seng ge'i nga ro* (*TTC*); the various materials, including Mipham's Great Perfection lecture notes compiled by his student Zhe chen rGyal tshab Padma rnam rgyal as the *gNyug sems skor gsum*; his reply to Brag dkar sprul sku's criticism of the *Nor bu ke ta ka*, entitled *brGal lan nyin byed snang ba*; his defense of extrinsic emptiness in the *gZhan stong khas len seng ge'i nga ro*; and the collection of Mipham's short instructions (*gdams ngag*) on the Great Perfection, which occupy about two-thirds of the volume labeled *dhiṅ* in the *sDe dge* edition of Mipham's writings (*Thun min rdzogs chen skor gyi gdams pa phyogs bsdus zab don snying po sangs rgyas lag ster*). There are a number of other titles that I would have consulted but, for lack of time, could not, such as the *dBu ma'i gsungs gros*, a collection of essays on Madhyamaka, Mipham's commentaries on the Five Dharma Texts of Maitreya (*'byams chos sde lnga*), and so forth.¹⁵

mDo sngags bsTan pa'i nyi ma (died 1959), a student of Kun bzang dpal ldan, is the author of a systematic exposition of Mipham's thought, the *lTa grub shan 'byed* (*TGSB*). It includes numerous comparisons of Mipham's philosophical interpretations with their Gelug counterparts. To my knowledge it is the only textbook exposition (*yig cha*) of Mipham's thought available. It demonstrates that, in terms of originality and systematic completeness, Mipham's work ranks on a par with the work of Tibetan luminaries Sakya Paṇḍita and Tsongkhapa.¹⁶

Among the available works of Rong zom Paṇḍita, I first consulted his *Theg pa chen po'i tshul la*

'jug pa,¹⁷ which is a polemical defense of the Great Perfection. For the present study, of special interest among the *Selected Writings* (Rong zom Chos kyī bzang po, 1974) is the *sNang ba lhar grub pa*,¹⁸ where Rong zom attempts to prove the Vajrayāna doctrine of universal divinity by means of four types of reasoning,¹⁹ and his *lTa ba'i brjed byang*,²⁰ where he compares the philosophical views of Madhyamaka, Vajrayāna, and the Great Perfection.

Among the writings of Klong chen rab 'byams, I have consulted his *Seven Treasures* (*mdzod bdun*), especially the *Yid bzhiṅ mdzod*, *Grub mtha' mdzod*, *Chos dbyings mdzod*, and *gNas lugs mdzod*. The first two are of interest here because in them Klong chen rab 'byams sets forth his interpretation of Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka and differentiates the approaches of sūtra and tantra. The latter two titles are treatises on the view, meditation, and conduct according to the Great Perfection. The influence of Madhyamaka is apparent throughout.

Chapter 6 includes translations of several lengthy passages from the works of three scholars representing Mipham's *anupakṣas* (philosophical allies) and *pūrvapakṣas* (philosophical opponents). Sakya scholar Go ram pa bSod nams seng ge (1429–1489), whose *lTa ba'i shan 'byed* (TSB) is largely devoted to refuting Tsongkhapa's Mādhyamika interpretation, is an important source for understanding Mipham's approach to the problems of negation (*dgag pa*, *Beacon* topic 1) as well as modal apprehension (*'dzin stang*, *Beacon* topic 2). Yon tan rgya mtsho, belonging to the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, wrote a commentary on 'Jigs med gling pa's *Yon tan mdzod*, the Mādhyamika portion of which contains one long passage that is representative of the Nyingma tradition's response to Gelug critiques of meditation practices similar to the Great Perfection.

For understanding Mipham's *pūrvapakṣa*, I have used mainly Tsongkhapa's *Lam rim chen mo* (LRC)(*Great Stages of the Path*),²¹ especially its *lhag mthong* chapter, his disciple rGyal tshab Dar ma rin chen's (1364–1432) commentary on the Prajñāpariccheda of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* in his *rGyal sras 'jug ngog*, and the *dKa' ba'i gnad chen po brgyad*. The final chapter of the LRC concerns insight (*vipaśyanā*, *lhag mthong*), which Tsongkhapa understands as the cultivation of the philosophical view of Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka by means of analytical meditation. It also contains the basic arguments Tsongkhapa uses to refute the erroneous views and practices of his Tibetan predecessors.

In addition to English language sources for Mipham's life and works, I have used Kun bzang dPal ldan's *Essential Hagiography of the Lion of Tibetan Philosophers*²² and the *Victorious Battle Drum* (VSB),²³ a biography of Mipham written in 1965 by mKhan po 'Jigs med phun tshogs, a contemporary Nyingma master of the Golok region.

1.4.2. English Language Sources

The most useful English language sources for understanding the intellectual and historical aspects of the Nyingmapa and the Great Perfection traditions are Thondup (1986), Karmay (1991), Dudjom Rinpoche (1991), and the companion volume to Dudjom Rinpoche's work by Kapstein and Dorje. These have provided an excellent historical and philosophical framework for understanding Mipham's Mādhyamika interpretation and the importance of his *Beacon*. Special mention should be made of a recent landmark publication, *The Life of Shabkar*, translated by Matthieu Ricard and others under the inspiration of Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, which presents in great detail the life and times of an illustrious eighteenth-century Tibetan saint belonging equally to the Gelug and Nyingma traditions. Shabkar's autobiography, which integrates the teachings of the two schools

without controversy, provides an interesting foil to the scholarly debates between Mipham and his Gelug opponents. Shabkar's life demonstrates that the philosophical differences between the Gelug and Nyingma, which might at times seem insurmountable to scholars engaged in passionate study and debate, were of no practical concern for Shabkar or for his Gelug and Nyingma teachers, who, following Tsongkhapa's example, took all teachings as "practical advice" (*gdams ngag*), studying, teaching, and practicing them without a trace of cognitive dissonance.

For providing basic autobiographical and bibliographical information, the lion's share of credit goes to E. Gene Smith (especially 1969(a),(c), and 1970) and to Steven Goodman (1981). Smith was the first to introduce the debates between Mipham and Gelugpa scholars that arose in reaction to Mipham's *Nor bu ke ta ka* commentary on the ninth chapter of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* (NK). He also suggests that the NK, in spite of being a Madhyamaka commentary, was in effect an exposition of the philosophical view of the Great Perfection. It was this hypothesis that originally stimulated my interest in Mipham and has informed my reading of his writings ever since.

Summaries of Mipham's life have appeared in several different places. Dudjom Rinpoche's is the most detailed,²⁴ while Smith's²⁵ offers valuable detail about his debates with Gelugpa opponents. Both of these accounts appear to be largely based upon the work of Mipham's disciple mKhan po Kun bzang dPal ldan, the *Essential Hagiography of the Lion of Tibetan Philosophers*, which I have also consulted. Dudjom Rinpoche's account seems to have drawn almost entirely upon this material. Dieter Schuh²⁶ has outlined a chronology of Mipham's travels based on the colophons of his collected works; it has been incorporated into the biographical sketch in the second chapter. The VBD by mKhan po 'Jigs med phun tshogs has been translated by Ann Helm, who kindly sent me a copy of her work, which is annotated with comments by two prominent Nyingma scholars, Ringu Tulku and Khenpo Palden Sherab.

My dissertation topic was inspired by a paper by Franz-Karl Ehrhard (1988), which brought the uniqueness of Mipham's Mādhyamika interpretation to my attention. Ehrhard's paper summarizes the findings of his M.A. thesis,²⁷ which includes a German translation of the *Beacon*, and examines the sources for Mipham's Mādhyamika interpretation in the writings of Klong chen rab 'byams. Ehrhard corroborates Smith's hypothesis about the NK, with reference to the *Beacon*, and discusses the *Beacon's* seventh topic, concerning whether the Madhyamaka has a philosophical position (*khas len, pratijñā*). He also draws attention to the fact that this problem is resolved in what seems to be a distinctly Nyingma fashion with reference to meditative practice, particularly the gnosis (*ye shes*) of meditative equipoise. I am much indebted to Ehrhard's work for pointing out one of the most important features of Mipham's thought and its historical precedent in the works of Klong chen rab 'byams.

Kapstein (1988) has observed that the conception of the absolute as involving the coalescence of noetic agent and object in Mipham's thought establishes a link between the Buddhist epistemological paradigm (Knowing) and the inseparable reality of the two truths (Being).²⁸ This paper also introduces the unique features of Mipham's system of pramāṇas. Elsewhere Lipman (1992) provides a very helpful introduction to Mipham's system of Buddhist logic and his concept of "conventional valid perception of pure phenomena" (*dag pa'i gzigs pa'i tha snyad dpyod pa'i tshad ma*). Lipman (1980) makes note of Mipham's resolution of a classic interpretive problem in Tibetan tathāgatagarbha theory through the application of Great Perfection terminology. Lipman (1981) also quotes a passage from Mipham's commentary on the *Madhyamakālaṃkāra*, which compares the thought of Candrakīrti with the Great Perfection concept of *ka dag*, or original purity, and clarifies Mipham's position on the Svātantrika/Prāsaṅgika distinction. Sweet (1979)

refers to Mipham's interpretation of a controversial line in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* concerning the coalescence of object and subject in meditation upon ultimate reality.²⁹

Thapkhay (1992) is the only English language source where Mipham's and Tsongkhapa's views are explicitly compared. Most of Thapkhay's paper is dedicated to points of contention between Tsongkhapa and other philosophers that do not concern us here,³⁰ but it does provide a helpful synopsis of the Gelug position on the two different kinds of ultimate (*paryāya* and *aparyāyaparamārtha*).

The work of several other scholars has been very useful in coming to an understanding of the complex relationships among philosophical systems, hermeneutical paradigms, and methods of practice in Tibetan Buddhism. Paul Williams (1989) has pointed out the importance of intellectual-historical context in assessing Tibetan Mādhyamika interpretations. He has also explored some of the basic features of Tsongkhapa's Mādhyamika interpretations (1982) and the controversies surrounding them (1983, 1992). More recently he has discussed Mipham's commentary on the ninth chapter of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*.³¹ Broido (1985) has discussed the influence of tantra in the Mādhyamika works of Padma dKar po (1526–1592) and Mi bskyod rdo rje (1507–1544). Ruegg (1963) was the first to draw attention to the extrinsic emptiness tradition of Tibetan philosophy and the syncretization of Vajrayāna concepts with dialectical philosophy; Ruegg (1989) highlights the importance of the tathāgatagarbha concept for gradualist and subitist soteriological paradigms. Thurman (1991), Lamotte (1936, 1988), Lopez (1988b), and N. Katz (1984) have been valuable sources for understanding the definitive/provisional (*nītārtha/neyārtha*) distinction of Buddhist hermeneutics.

The books and articles of H.V. Guenther have been helpful in gaining access to some of the more obscure aspects of the Great Perfection texts and terminology. Whether or not one accepts the thesis of *From Reductionism to Creativity* (1988) that the Great Perfection is the culmination of the history of Buddhist thought, Guenther has clarified how the Great Perfection system is a product of intellectual-historical evolution. Mipham's *Beacon* may be seen as the product of a related process, in this case, the trend of harmonizing dialectical-philosophical and Vajrayāna paradigms (especially the Great Perfection) in Tibetan Buddhism and its Nyingma school. Guenther (1984, 1988) has also noted the "process orientation" of the philosophical aspects of the Great Perfection. In process-oriented thinking, there is no radical break between what we misperceive as existent and what actually exists; truth and falsehood, delusion and enlightenment are part of a continuum that is irreducible to any dichotomy. In this respect, Guenther's understanding of the Buddhist philosophical view is practically the same as Mipham's.

The comparative aspect of my introduction to the three topics of the *Beacon* below (§6.3ff.) would not have been possible without the excellent studies of the Gelug Madhyamaka tradition by Hopkins (1984), Lopez (1987), Napper (1989), and Thurman (1991). An especially useful source has been Newland's *The Two Truths* (1992), a discussion of several Gelugpa scholars' interpretations of that important topic, which like Napper's study includes a detailed discussion of Gelug pūrvapakṣas.

1.5. The Contributions of this Work

While the aforementioned studies all clarify issues prominent in Mipham's thought, there is still much work to be done. The literature of the Nyingma tradition is vast, and very few of its important texts have been subject to thorough study. In the present book I have tried to

incorporate the most important contributions of other Western scholars in the area of Nyingma scholarship, and to further explore some of the important issues they have raised.

The *Stainless Light* commentary on the *Beacon* by Mipham's student Khro shul 'Jam rdor (§9) has never before been translated from Tibetan. Though it does not seem to be as well known among Nyingma scholars as that of Kun bzang dpal ldan, it is a valuable resource for understanding Mipham's philosophy and its sources. It contains a number of long excurses and abounds in quotations that link Mipham's thought to the writings of his Nyingma predecessors, Klong chen rab 'byams and Rong zom Paṇḍita, to important Indian sūtras and tantras, and to Pramāṇa and Mādhyamika treatises. Mipham's *Lion's Roar Proclaiming Extrinsic Emptiness* (ZT), which is included as an appendix (§10), appears to be a unique interpretation of the Tibetan extrinsic emptiness (*gzhan stong*) interpretation of Madhyamaka, and to my knowledge has not been studied in previous research.

In these translations, Mipham emerges as a syncretist and hermeneutician of the highest order; I think it is fair to say that he was the last great philosopher of pre-Communist Tibet. Tsongkhapa has been widely regarded among Tibetans and in the community of Western scholars of Tibetan Buddhism as having the final word on many points of philosophical interpretation. Though Mipham is by no means Tsongkhapa's equal in historical and cultural significance, this study suggests that he was the most coherent philosophical opponent ever faced by exponents of Gelug philosophy. It is my hope that this work, together with the valuable contributions on which it is built and others that it might inspire, will lead to a wider recognition of Mipham's contributions.

Whether Mipham's thought constitutes a landmark development in the history of Tibetan philosophy remains to be determined. Among the horrible tragedies suffered by Tibet in the last fifty years is the nearly total destruction of the monastic culture, where its greatest intellects were forged in a cauldron of diverse viewpoints sustained by prodigious study, debate, and literary composition. Without such conditions favoring the creative development of philosophy, it is not certain that Mipham's thought will be fully tested in the fire of critical evaluation, which was instrumental in establishing Tsongkhapa's work as the standard against which all subsequent philosophers were measured. In any case Mipham never posed as an innovator, but considered himself to be a caretaker of existing traditions. In this respect his intention has been realized in the numerous Nyingma monasteries, colleges, and retreat hermitages where both his philosophical and liturgical writings are widely used today.

In order to elucidate the interpretations of theory, practice, and ultimate reality set forth by Mipham and his Nyingma predecessors, this work explores various aspects of Buddhist epistemology, hermeneutics, and meditation practice brought to my attention by English-language sources mentioned earlier. Though some relevant features of Mipham's philosophy have been explored by other scholars, the present study attempts to be more comprehensive and inclusive. The only previous published study of Mipham's *Beacon of Certainty* (Ehrhard, op. cit.) deals primarily with the sources of Mipham's Mādhyamika interpretation in the writings of Klong chen rab 'byams, specifically in the context of the seventh topic of the *Beacon*. I have incorporated the most important findings of Ehrhard's research here (§6.2.2), and have also considered the Sakya scholar Go ram pa bSod nams seng ge's *TSB*, which represents, to a large extent, the source of Mipham's Mādhyamika interpretation.³²

Scholarly studies of Nyingma philosophy are few, and those of Mipham Rinpoche even fewer. With the exception of the essays of E. Gene Smith and Yeshe Thabkay, none have made more than passing reference to the relationship between Mipham's philosophy and that of the Gelug school.

No previous study has examined the differences between Gelug Madhyamaka and Mipham's thought in detail, and in this respect the present research has broken important ground.

To understand Mipham's thought, it is essential to understand Tsongkhapa, founder of the Gelug tradition and the most influential philosopher in Tibetan history. In order to present Tsongkhapa's views accurately, I have tried to consult all the relevant Western language contributions on Gelug philosophy available. It would have been helpful to discuss the opinions of Tsongkhapa's commentators, as their divergent interpretations were apparently the focus of many of Mipham's critiques;³³ however, sorting out the subtle differences of opinion among Tsongkhapa's commentators would be a daunting task even for seasoned Gelug scholars and is happily left to them. I have used phrases like "Gelug philosophers" and "Gelug philosophy" only where, to the best of my knowledge, the positions ascribed are universally accepted in the Gelug school. However, without being an expert in Gelug philosophy, I do not expect always to have represented its positions adequately. In the detailed discussion of Mipham's and Tsongkhapa's positions in the sixth chapter, I have mainly used the *LRC*, which is one of the most accessible sources for Tsongkhapa's Madhyamaka thought, and the most important source for his approach to Mādhyamika analytical meditation. The *LRC* is widely studied outside the Gelug tradition and is not unknown to Nyingma scholars, as Yon tan rgya mtsho's discussion (§6.3.3.1.1) demonstrates.

This study also touches upon one of the most popular subjects in recent Buddhist studies, the dichotomy of "sudden" vs. "gradual" enlightenment. In Tibetan Buddhism, the Mahāmudrā and Great Perfection traditions both allow the possibility of sudden awakening, but two of the most important Indian masters to teach in Tibet, Kamalaśīla (eighth century) and Atīśa (eleventh century), disallowed or ignored this possibility, emphasizing instead a gradual approach. Later scholars such as Sakya Paṇḍita³⁴ and Tsongkhapa³⁵ were likewise wary of subitist approaches, which they considered to be philosophically incoherent.

I would suggest that this dichotomy is false. At the very least, it should not be understood to imply parallel but mutually exclusive universes of philosophical discourse and religious practice. One of Mipham's interesting points about Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka, normally considered the quintessential philosophy of the gradualist vehicle of philosophical dialectics, is that it has a relatively "sudden" approach to eliminating all four extremes of elaboration (**catuṣkoṭiprapañca, spros pa*), and is in this respect similar to the Great Perfection, which establishes *ka dag*, or primordial purity. The *Beacon* demonstrates that, as far as Mipham was concerned, a sudden or intuitive approach (the Great Perfection) can be understood in the context of a gradual and rational approach (typified by Madhyamaka), and vice versa. The *Beacon* is, in part, a philosophical justification of the theoretical possibility of sudden enlightenment in the Great Perfection. At the same time, it is an exploration of how gradualist theory and practice can make that possibility a reality.

A related problem that the *Beacon* elucidates is the relationship between reason and enlightenment. The stereotype of Gelug scholars that Nyingmapas sometimes present is one of speedy intellectuals averse to meditation. On the other hand, Gelug scholars have sometimes accused the Great Perfection and its Nyingma practitioners of holding nihilistic philosophical views and engaging in quietist meditation and antinomian behavior. The *Beacon* clearly demonstrates that Mipham considered philosophical analysis to be an essential tool for the paths of both sūtra and tantra, including the Great Perfection; without it, one risks falling into one or another of these stereotypical extremes.

Mipham's affirmation of reason undoubtedly reflects the influence of Gelug thought. Though

no Tibetan scholar has ever denied the necessity of reason, few if any Nyingma scholars have ever affirmed its utility in the same way or to the same degree as Mipham does in the *Beacon*. Mipham defends the Nyingma philosophical system on the basis of the logical and epistemological system of Dharmakīrti and the *reductio ad absurdum* (*prāsaṅgika*) methods of Candrakīrti, the same sources claimed by Tsongkhapa as the foundations of his philosophy. Throughout the *Beacon* and other works, Mipham attempts to show that the Great Perfection is the quintessence of philosophical systems, but with extensive reference to the logical and epistemological concepts of Madhyamaka and Pramāṇa. The *Beacon* indicates that even though reason alone is insufficient to realize the full meaning of the Great Perfection in personal experience, the philosophical view of the Great Perfection can and should be approached through the concepts and methods of critical philosophical analysis.

In spite of their numerous philosophical differences, Mipham and his Gelug opponents shared the following assumptions: (i) Madhyamaka philosophy is essential to understanding the philosophical views of both sūtra and tantra, (ii) a correct philosophical view is essential for correct practice, and thus (iii) logical reasoning plays a crucial role in the Buddhist path. In particular, Mipham and Tsongkhapa have a very similar understanding of the function of rational determination (*ngeś pa*) and rational-experiential certainty (*ngeś shes*) in philosophical analysis and meditation practice. Based on these and other reasons, the concluding section of chapter 7 considers the feasibility of asserting the “gospel truth” of Tibetan ecumenism (*ris med*): that Mipham and Tsongkhapa, like all the great saints of Tibetan Buddhism, had a common philosophical understanding (*dgongs pa gcig*).

2. The Life and Works of Mipham Rinpoche

ONE WONDERS why such an important figure as Mipham Rinpoche has not been subject to a detailed Tibetan biography and why, in spite of being an otherwise prolific author and unlike many lamas of his stature, he never composed an autobiography. Tibetan scholars of lesser importance have often been remembered in reminiscences much more extensive than the small but inspiring biographical sketches of Mipham available at present.

Unlike most important teachers of recent memory, and notwithstanding the fact that many of his contemporaries considered him to be an incarnation of Mañjuśrī, Mipham was not an officially recognized tulku, or reincarnate teacher. Nor was he attached to a position of historical or political significance. Although he was a great master of the Nyingma and new tantras and wrote extensively about them, Mipham was not known as a discoverer of Dharma treasures (terma (*gter ma*)),³⁶ or terton (*gter ston*), at least not publicly. The sheer volume and topical diversity of his work make it seem that Mipham spent most of his time studying, meditating, and writing about both dialectical philosophy as well as tantra.

Available biographical materials, however, indicate that there was much more to Mipham's life than textual study and composition. Though he was not renowned as a terton during his lifetime, the holders of Mipham's lineages consider him a terton in most if not all senses of the word.³⁷ Furthermore, the successful propagation of Mipham's tradition attests to the fact that he and his disciples were great teachers. It is often said of Mipham Rinpoche, as of other great *Ris med* figures, that if one examines the depth of his meditation practice, it seems he did nothing but meditate, and likewise for his teaching and textual composition. The stories translated below indicate that Mipham spent many years in strict meditation retreat and, at least as far as his close students and associates were concerned, displayed numerous intellectual prodigies and magical feats through his realization of enlightened wisdom.

The most prominent figures other than Mipham in Kun bzang dpal ldan's *Essential Hagiography*³⁸ are his own teachers. dPal sprul O rgyan 'jigs med Chos kyi dbang po (1808–1887), known as the "speech emanation" (*gsungs gi sprul sku*) of 'Jigs med gling pa (1730–1798),³⁹ was highly accomplished as a scholar, yogi, and teacher, and as a writer was nearly as prolific as his famous disciple. Mipham's other root teacher (*rtsa ba'i bla ma*) was 'Jam dbyang mKhyen brtse dbang po, known as the "mind incarnation" (*thugs sprul*) of 'Jigs med gling pa. As a writer mKhyen brtse was as prolific as his student, but far less so in sūtric subjects, devoting much attention to the discovery and redaction of terma materials. Perhaps Mipham, as the most brilliant scholar in a tradition renowned for tertons and yogis, would have been less liable to attract the attention of potential biographers—and the supplications of students requesting the composition of an autobiography—than were his own teachers, who were subject to relatively lengthy biographies.⁴⁰ It seems that toward the end of his life Mipham did not have great expectations about the value of his work,⁴¹ and thus might have been disinclined to honor his work with an autobiography. Whether this shows exceptional modesty on Mipham's part or just a weariness with the cares of this life is difficult to say. One thing is certain: according to his wishes, Mipham's opus has proven to be of great importance for Tibetan Buddhism in general, and for the

Nyingmapa in particular.

The most promising sources for Mipham's life yet to be explored are the scattered and quickly disappearing oral traditions of Nyingma masters concerning Mipham which, so far as I can determine, have never been gathered systematically. Due to Mipham's widespread activity and his habit of not remaining in one place over a long period of time, stories about him appear to have been spread widely among his numerous intimate teachers, colleagues, and disciples. Tibet's rugged terrain meant that until fairly recently people and information traveled slowly, so maybe it is not unusual that in the eighty-five years since his death only two substantial biographical essays on Mipham have come to light.⁴²

One of the lamas most knowledgeable about Mipham's life and works, Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, is unfortunately no longer with us. For now it seems the greatest exponent of Mipham's traditions of teaching and practice is mKhan po 'Jigs med phun tshogs, heir to numerous oral traditions concerning Mipham and recipient of numerous visionary teachings from Mipham himself. His biography of Mipham, the VBD,⁴³ is based on rather stringent standards for authenticating oral tradition⁴⁴ and is referred to throughout this chapter.

Unfortunately, there are few Western language sources for the nineteenth-century historical context of Mipham's life. Though there are a number of Tibetan language sources for this period, they are mostly in the form of hagiographies, which do not always provide much information about the political and social circumstances that might have influenced the formation of Mipham's thought.⁴⁵

It is well known that the vast wealth of some Tibetan monasteries has often drawn their prominent lamas and abbots into the political intrigues of their patrons. However, it does not seem likely that a detailed investigation of the social and historical factors influencing Mipham's life would reveal any significant influences on the philosophical content of his work, which is the main subject of investigation in this book. Mipham apparently benefited from a modest family fortune and/or patronage, which provided for his basic needs, allowing him to do as he pleased. He did not found monasteries, maintain a large retinue, or engage in other activities that would have required the heavy solicitation of funds from wealthy landowners, with all the political complications that can entail. Mipham spent a good deal of time traveling to receive teachings in his younger years, and later in life dedicated his time exclusively to study, teaching, writing, and meditating, much of the time at his hermitage at 'Ju nyung. He did not have time to be a politician,⁴⁶ though he did write a manual on statecraft (*nītiśāstra*, *rgyal po'i bstan bcos*) for the benefit of his aristocratic disciples. Ann Helm's collaborator Ringu Tulku, like other contemporary lamas of the Nyingma tradition, discounts the idea⁴⁷ that Mipham was one of the real temporal powers in sDe dge. To the extent that powerful persons became his devoted disciples, it seems that Mipham's spiritual influence over them was much greater than any political influence they might have wielded over him.⁴⁸

Even though his excellence as a teacher evidently made his counsel much valued by the rich and powerful in sDe dge, Mipham does not seem to have been exceptionally indebted to those persons for material support. Like Mipham himself, the sDe dge aristocracy were supporters of the ecumenical (*ris med*) trend fostered by Mipham's teachers. This also suggests that Mipham's controversial philosophical positions were probably not influenced by the political agendas⁴⁹ of aristocratic factions who favored one or another of the Tibetan Buddhist traditions.

If anything, it was the long-standing tensions between the Gelug-dominated government in

Central Tibet and the aristocratic powers of Kham that prompted ecumenical scholars of the Sakya (sa skya), Kagyu (bka' brgyud), and Nyingma schools to forge a sort of cultural—if not quite political—solidarity. The Nyag rong war (c. 1861–1863) displaced numerous persons, apparently including Mipham himself,⁵⁰ and precipitated the invasion of an army from Lhasa, the presence of which seems to have been instrumental in the settling of old scores between Gelug and rival monasteries in Kham.⁵¹ These events resulted in the destruction of several monasteries and the death of certain religious figures and must have impressed upon Mipham—as they certainly did for his teachers mKhyen brtse and Kong sprul—the importance of preserving endangered spiritual traditions.

Because of their close relations with officials in the Lhasa government, the Gelugpas were naturally less inclined to participate in this solidarity, at least on the institutional level. This seems to have been especially true of Gelug scholars from central Tibet,⁵² while others from Mipham's homeland, such as 'Bum gsar dGe bshes,⁵³ numbered among his admirers. Some Gelug scholars attacked viciously,⁵⁴ while others respectfully disagreed. At least one, dPal ris rab gsal, became a close friend and achieved a philosophical reconciliation with Mipham in the course of a prolonged exchange of polemical writings (*rtsod yig*).⁵⁵ Kun bzang dPal ldan says that in the monasteries of eastern Tibet Mipham was universally respected.⁵⁶

2.1. Accounts of Mipham's life

Summaries of Mipham's life have appeared in several different places. As already mentioned, Dudjom Rinpoche's is the most detailed,⁵⁷ while Gene Smith's⁵⁸ offers valuable detail about his debates with Gelug opponents. Both of these accounts appear to be based largely upon mKhan po Kun bzang dPal ldan's *Essential Hagiography*.⁵⁹ Dieter Schuh was the first Western scholar to survey Mipham's works in detail; using the colophons of the most important texts of Mipham's *oeuvre* he has constructed a partial chronology, which is wanting in the *Essential Hagiography* and Dudjom Rinpoche's account.⁶⁰ Goodman (1981) has used the works of dPal ldan, Dudjom Rinpoche, Smith, and Schuh to outline Mipham's life and also discusses the publication of Mipham's collected works.

The VBD, written by one of Mipham's principal lineage holders, mKhan po 'Jigs med phun tshogs, recently came into my hands thanks to Ann Helm, who also supplied me with her unpublished annotated translation of this text.⁶¹ The VBD is a lively mixture of miracle stories, scholastic triumphs, and intellectual prodigies, culminating in descriptions of Mipham's enlightenment. Though a number of the anecdotes in VBD are similar or identical to those in the *Essential Hagiography*, several that appear to be unique to the VBD are referred to above and below in footnotes.

Large portions of Kun bzang dPal ldan's *Essential Hagiography* are found nearly verbatim in Dudjom Rinpoche's *History*. Here I have translated most of the *Essential Hagiography*, including similar or identical passages already found in DR, and a number of passages that have not appeared elsewhere in translation. For the most part, the laconic colloquialisms of the Tibetan text have yielded sense, but several obscure portions have been omitted from the translation and are marked by an ellipsis (...).

Like the VBD, the *Essential Hagiography* is a depiction of a person of unusual sanctity and learning, without a shred of what Tibetans would call "impure perception" (*ma dag pa'i snang ba*),

which in a secular biography might include elaborations of psychological turmoil, analysis of interpersonal conflicts, the fulfillment of personal and professional vendettas, etc. It is also notably lacking in narrative progression, so it cannot serve to inform us much about the order of events in Mipham's life, nor of the political reconciliations in which he and his teacher 'Jam mgon Kong sprul were supposedly involved.⁶² It does, however, give an accurate picture of how Mipham was seen by his students, teachers, and colleagues, and continues to be seen today: as an incomparable fountain of wisdom, compassion, and prodigious learning who greatly revitalized the Nyingma teaching. Thus, Kun bzang dpal ldan's biography provides an incomplete but fascinating glimpse of Mipham's approach to scholarship, debate, and yogic practice, as well as of the cultural climate in which he lived.

2.2. *The Essential Hagiography by mKhan chen Kun bzang dpal ldan*

525.2] The Primordial Lord Samantabhadra is the atemporal splendor of enlightenment of all saṃsāra and nirvāṇa. His unobstructed intrinsic radiance of gnosis is the eternal pervasiveness of the arrangements of the five spheres of inexhaustible adornment as the self-appearing pure land of the saṃbhogakāya, from which the artistic and supreme nirmāṇakāyas, both peaceful and wrathful, appear in accordance with the destinies of pure and impure disciples. This limitless display, which disciplines each and every sentient being according to need, manifests infinitely throughout the expanse of reality and the dimension of space. As a causal principle, it is the [coalescence of] the profound, luminous, nondual gnosis and the expanse of reality, or the tathāgatagarbha that is unfabricated by nature, originally pure, and possesses the nature of natural luminosity free of all characteristics of elaboration. With respect to emptiness it is the dharmakāya, and with respect to appearance it is atemporally integrated with the positive qualities of the formal kāyas, like the sun and its rays.

526] By becoming free from baseless adventitious appearances—the deluded obscurations of subject and object that are like thick clouds—the ultimate purity is revealed. Because [in previous lifetimes Mipham] perfectly cultivated great loving compassion and made prayers for the benefit of sentient beings while on the path of training (*śaikṣamārga*, *slob lam*), and because of the timely maturation of the positive karmic propensities of disciples, there was a powerful collection of causes and conditions. It is like the full harvest moon, which does not move from the sky, while all the distinct reflections on the earth and its oceans appear simultaneously in its light. The display of inconceivable manifestations, the limitless illusory displays by which great sublime beings tame sentient beings, cannot be fathomed in one specific way or another.

In particular,⁶³ our holy supreme guide was not someone to praise himself or engage in cunning and deceit; he was the appearance of the unobstructed glow of gnosis of all buddhas who, in the manner of a bodhisattva, always holds the complete treasury of the victors' teaching until saṃsāra is emptied. As the exalted Mañjughoṣa himself, no other great sublime being could possibly vie with him in terms of his amazing career or his personal kindness. Thinking to uphold, protect, and propagate the precious teaching of the Jīna in this degenerate age, he manifested as a spiritual guide. Except for buddhas, it is difficult even for intelligent bodhisattvas of the tenth bhūmi to fathom the succession of his lifetimes and his extraordinary liberation. So, needless to say, it is impossible for an extremely limited

individual like myself. So here I will say just a little bit about his renown in the experience of his ordinary disciples, just as I have heard it, without exaggeration or omission.

527.4] His paternal lineage was of the 'Ju clan, so renowned because [his ancestors] were clear light deities who held onto ('ju) a rope and descended from heaven. His maternal lineage was the A lcags 'bru clan, which numbers among the so-called "six aboriginal Tibetan tribes" (*bod mi'u gdung drug*) (...) His father was the ayurvedist mGon po dar rgyas, who was the son of the famous doctor 'Ju bla mDo sde, known as an emanation of the Medicine Buddha (*bhaiṣajyaguru, sman bla*), and who came from a lineage of wealthy and powerful men who were ministers of the sDe dge kings, and wise and accomplished spiritual guides. His mother was the daughter of a minor minister of the king of sDe dge. Thus, his family was of very high status.

528.5] The lotus of his emanation opened in the fire male horse year (1846) under an auspicious astrological configuration.⁶⁴ His paternal uncle, the minister-lama sGrub mchog Pad ma dar rgyas, gave him the name Mi pham rgya mtsho ("Unconquered Ocean"). From the time he was small he was endowed with the potential of the Mahāyāna lineage, [which manifested] as faith, renunciation, wisdom, and compassion, and he was able to remember everything from the time he was an infant. According to provincial custom, at the age of twelve he became a novice monk at 'Ju mo hor gSang sngags chos gling, a branch monastery of Ze chen bsTan gnyis dar rgyas Gling.⁶⁵ There he was praised by everyone as "the little monk scholar" (*btsun chung mkhas pa*).⁶⁶ At the age of fifteen or sixteen, at the 'Ju nyung hermitage,⁶⁷ he meditated upon Mañjuśrī-Vādasiṃha for eighteen months, performing the activity rites of ritual pills, etc., and obtained extraordinary signs of accomplishment. He said that from then on he was able to understand all subjects—secular and sacred, sūtric and tantric—without trying. As he was able to understand whatever text he looked at, he did not have to study, aside from receiving an explanatory reading transmission (*bshad lung*).⁶⁸

530.2] When he was seventeen, all of the nomad tribes left for Golog due to the Nyag [rong] disturbances, and the Lord also went there himself.⁶⁹ It is said that from that point onward he was knowledgeable about geography. At ages eighteen and nineteen he went on a pilgrimage to Lhasa with his uncle 'Gyur med bzang po,⁷⁰ where he stayed at a philosophical college of dGa' ldan Monastery⁷¹ for about a month. Later he traveled extensively in the south. When he went to Lho brag mkhar chu, the appearance of the place transformed and everything arose as bliss-emptiness. He told his entourage that the experience of blazing blissful heat was due to the blessing of that place. (...)

531.2] From the emanation of the supreme sublime one (Avalokiteśvara), dPal sprul O rgyan Chos kyi dbang po,⁷² in five days' time he received the ninth chapter on wisdom (*shes rab kyi le'u*) of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, and completely mastered both the words and the meaning. Later, he wrote the *ṭika* commentary, etc.⁷³ 'Jams dbyangs mKhyen brtse dbang po⁷⁴ accepted him as his heart-son and bestowed upon him empowerments, commentaries, and explanations for many texts, both sūtric and tantric, of the old and later traditions. 'Jam mgon Kong sprul bLo gros mtha' yas as well gave him countless empowerments and teachings on secular subjects, such as Sanskrit and alchemy, and empowerments of tantric deities such as Mañjuśrī, Lord of Life.

...⁷⁵

532.5] As a cause, for countless lifetimes Mipham had studied well and cultivated [himself in practice], thus gaining a powerful spiritual genotype imbued with with positive instincts. As a

condition, these instincts were thoroughly awakened by the compassion and blessed intentionality of his spiritual master, and thus he was able to master all the profound and vast subjects of the buddhas' teaching without contradicting the four reliances,⁷⁶ and by means of the four kinds of reasoning.⁷⁷ Because he gained mastery of the appearance of self-arisen gnosis that pervades space, the eight great treasures of brilliance (*spobs pa'i gter chen po brgyad*) were released. According to the *Lalitavistara*, these are (i) the treasure of memory, which does not forget, (ii) the treasure of analytical intellect, (iii) the treasure of realization, which understands the meaning of all the sūtras, (iv) the treasure of incantation (*dhāranī*), which retains all that has been learned, (v) the treasure of brilliance, which explains the teaching to the satisfaction of all sentient beings, (vi) the treasure of Dharma, which means completely protecting the sacred Dharma, (vii) the treasure of enlightened awareness, which means not interrupting the lineage of the Three Jewels, and (viii) the treasure of accomplishment, which means acquiring tolerance for the nonarisen nature of things.⁷⁸

533.6] When he received the *Madhyamakāvatāra* from 'Bum gсар dGe bshes Ngag dbang 'byung gnas,⁷⁹ [Mipham] asked him not to go to any trouble, saying that an explanatory reading transmission would be enough. As soon as the explanation was completed, the dGe bshes examined Mipham, who proceeded to explain the *Avatāra* from start to finish.⁸⁰ The dGe bshes praised him in front of the monastic assembly: "Though I have obtained the name "Geshe," I don't have even a fragment of his intellect!"⁸¹

From the Acārya Blo gter dbang po⁸² he received the *Tshad ma rig gter*,⁸³ and from gSol dpon Padma he received the explanatory transmission of the Five Dharma Texts of Maitreya⁸⁴ and texts on the bodhisattva levels (*bhūmi, sa*), such as the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, etc., one after the other. As soon as he received them, he explained them to others. Such was also the case when he received explanatory transmission for the *Abhidharmakośa* from Ser shul dGe gshes Lha ram pa. Generally speaking, from many spiritual guides of the old and new traditions he received commentaries of sūtra and tantra, whose uninterrupted transmissions have survived until today. In particular he received the transmitted (*bka' ma*) and discovered (*gter ma*) teachings of the Nyingma tradition, the *Madhyamakālamkāra*⁸⁵ and the two *Vibhaṅgas*,⁸⁶ Vimalamitra's commentary on the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti*,⁸⁷ the *Man ngag lta ba'i phreng ba*,⁸⁸ and the general and specific cycles of the Eight Transmitted Precepts [*bka' brgyad*].⁸⁹ Having just heard these teachings, which descend in an uncommon short lineage from omniscient lamas, their meaning poured forth from his mind of its own accord. He wandered confidently through many assemblies of greatly learned scholars like a fearless lion, in the course of which he was able to explain, discuss, and compose commentaries without any trouble. The Lord himself said:

i.1] When I was young, there were many spiritual guides of the old and new traditions. It was a time not unlike the actual turning of the Dharma wheel; but personally, aside from the wisdom chapter⁹⁰ from dPal sprul Rin po che, I did not study much. Later, by the kindness of the lama and my meditational deity, I was able to unlock the difficult points without much trouble, just by reading a text. At the beginning of my studies, the texts of the new traditions were easy to understand, but the Early Translation texts were difficult. Thinking that, in spite my own lack of understanding, these profound texts of the Vidyādhara

lineage must have great meaning, I never had a moment's doubt, and for that reason my wisdom ripened fully. Later, when I looked [at these texts] again, I saw that all the profound points of the teaching are contained only in the Dharma systems that descend from the precious lineages of the Early Translations. Thus I conceived an extraordinary certainty.

i.6] At that time the Lord Protector, the Vajra-holder mKhyen brtse Rinpoche, commissioned me to write some textbooks for our tradition.⁹¹ In order to fulfill the command of the lama and cultivate my own intellect, and with the Buddha's teaching uppermost in mind, I wrote some textbooks on the cycles of sūtra teachings, etc. In those texts my explanations rather emphasized our own tradition. The scholars of other schools heard that there was a refutation [of their own system], so of course letters of refutation arrived here from all directions.

As for my own motivation, I have been impelled only by the command of my lama and by the fact that nowadays the Early Translation teaching is not much more than a painting of a butter lamp. Aside from imitating other systems, there are very few who even wonder what the philosophical system of our own school is, much less ask about it. Thus, I have hoped it would be of some benefit to write. Otherwise, I haven't even dreamed of reviling other systems or praising myself. If those who possess the eye of gnosis gaze upon me, I have nothing of which to be ashamed.

i.5] Since I have not attained sublime qualities, how could I realize all profound subjects? It is like the saying, "Since intellectual knowledge is not certain, saṃsāra [which it] cannot encompass is full of suffering." But if I rely on the guiding lights of the scriptures of the Buddha and the commentaries of the great champions of India and Tibet, and if I analyze a bit for myself what is reasonable and unreasonable, then even though I have no idea of someone benefiting someone else, it might turn out somewhat beneficial for others. If I were to pollute the scriptures and commentaries through ignorance and misunderstanding, I would only obstruct my own liberation and lead others to do the same, which is the worst of evils. So, if someone who possesses the Dharmaeye refutes me in accordance with scripture and reasoning, I should rely upon him as a doctor, and should never refute him out of anger. Thus, with a noble and honest intention, I have debated upon occasion.

537.5] I myself was privy to this, and others also heard him speak to this effect. When great sublime beings counter the misunderstanding of others, and so forth, in order to protect the treasure of the holy Dharma, it is very meaningful. Thus, when the supreme scholar Blo bzang rab gsal and the Lord himself had finished exchanging a series of elegant compositions, their minds became as if one, and they showered one another with praise. The venerable Blo bzang rab gsal offered him a silk scarf with these words:

In the golden maṇḍala renowned as Kham,
An open sky replete with a cloudlike mass of Dharma
Resounds with the rhythm of divine drums:
I delight in the Dharma king of definitive meaning!
In order to gently cleanse the faults of the heart
With a spark consuming the haystack of false projections,

Like a stainless, divine white cloud this silk is arrayed
Before the one whose body, vast as space, encompasses the earth.

Also, when he was teaching the *Wish-fulfilling Treasury* (YD)⁹² at sTong bzab Siddhi, he said, "Previous lamas such as the omniscient 'jigs med gling pa were accepted by the supreme buddha Klong chen rab 'byams. As his representative I have also received a little blessing from the Omniscient Dharma King, by virtue of which I was able to realize easily all the profound aspects of the Early Translations. Now, even if I debate before a hundred geshe, it's like the saying "Don't go scowling, have confidence!"⁹³

538.6] dGe bshes Khang dmar ba said this again and again in the company of many other scholars:

I actually witnessed a debate with this holy being. When the reason, probandum, and concomitance were set forth, he immediately demonstrated their nonestablishment, causing the opponent to accept undesirable consequences (*'dod lan 'debs pa*), etc., in four successive replies. He shut the opponent's mouth with a vajra seal, rendered him speechless, ruined his reputation, and embarrassed him. Again and again he caused the Jīna's victory drum to resound in all directions. Thus, this lord of scholars is worthy of being asked to sit on a lion throne along with the glorious father and son, Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, and so forth.

539.3] In particular, if one sees the response that Mipham wrote to the great scholar dPal ri ba Blo bzang rab bsal,⁹⁴ what need is there to differentiate [or rely upon] the learned and nonlearned ones who are mixed up with the demons of extreme views? Intellectually honest⁹⁵ scholars, through the force of extremely pure perception, could not help but place their palms together at their hearts and proclaim, "The great scholar of these degenerate times, Mipham Namgyal! He is the crown jewel of the Buddha's teaching in general, and of the Ancient Translation school in particular." This is how he is considered today in all the great monasteries of Eastern Tibet.

539.6] His cultivation of the science of logic in previous [lives] manifested without impediment. When he was looking at the *Pramāṇavārttika*, he dreamt of someone who seemed to be essentially Sakya Paṇḍita, in the dress of a learned and accomplished Indian, who said, "What don't you understand about the *Pramāṇavārttika*? It has both refutation and proof." Saying this, he took a copy of the *Pramāṇavārttika* and divided it in two. Taking these in his hands he said, "You put them back together." As soon as Mipham had done this, the book became a sword, and all objects of knowledge seemed to appear before him. Waving the sword once, he clearly saw that everything was cut through instantly. He told gSol dpon Padma that from that point forward there was not a single word in the *Pramāṇavārttika* he did not understand.

540.4] The first time he looked at the *Vinayasūtra*, some passages seemed difficult. When he was reading through the bKa' 'gyur⁹⁶ he read all thirteen volumes of the vinaya at one sitting, and thereafter said that because of this there was nothing in all of the *Vinayasūtra* he did not understand. Another time he manifested illness⁹⁷ and made circumambulations in the temple of mDzid rnam rgyal Monastery. When his health was restored, he borrowed some volumes of the bsTan 'gyur from dPal mdzod Monastery and had a look at them. His secretary at the time, Lama Rig mchog, said that he definitely had twelve volumes, but each time there appeared to be twenty-four.⁹⁸ In any case, Mipham looked over those volumes in three days and returned

them. His attendant asked him if he had memorized them all, to which he replied, "I haven't memorized all the words, but I have understood their meaning entirely."

541.2] Later, in rDza mgon, he was reciting the commentaries on the Muni's teaching,⁹⁹ where the great mkhan po Lama Kun bzang dpal ldan was acting as his secretary.¹⁰⁰ At that time, during the time it took him to finish one clay pot of tea, he went over each volume of the bKa' 'gyur, and without confusing the words or meaning, he began to recite spontaneously.¹⁰¹ Such stories are quite numerous.

He perused the entire bKa' 'gyur about seven times. The various profound meanings as well as the order of the different titles arose in his mind spontaneously, not just because he had read them, but due to the blossoming of his intellect through lengthy practice of the service and accomplishment (*sevasādhana*, *bsnyen sgrub*) of his chosen deity, as well as the deity and lama's blessing. Thus he said "I had no other choice but to write."

541.6] In brief his treatises, with their amazing transforming and protecting (*'chos skyob*) qualities, are untainted by the slightest contradiction, repetition, irrelevance, or incompleteness. Their use of Sanskrit (*sgra*), poetry, and composition are superb. Their scriptural citation, logic, and instructions about profound points are consummate. Even if they are examined with trivial intellectual analysis¹⁰² for a long time, their subjects are profound and vast, and are difficult to penetrate. When these great interpretive commentaries—which are no different than the great texts of the six ornaments and two supreme ones of India and those of the Tibetan philosopher-lions, the omniscient Rong zom Paṇḍita and Klong chen rab 'byams—were written, he did not have to peruse other texts or make notes. Like a magician's legerdemain, they were written extremely rapidly, just as they appear. From this one can infer that this sort of profound, acute, and vast wisdom and brilliance has never before appeared in the Land of Snows, much less among the ordinary spiritual guides of today.

542.5] Moreover, there are witnesses to this. One auspicious day his root guru, the peerless Vajradhara mKhyen brtse Rinpoche, placed all sorts of rare and profound volumes of sūtric and tantric texts on an altar and made extensive offerings. He put Mipham on a high throne in front of them and said, "I entrust these scriptures to you. From now on, preserve them through teaching, debating, and composition. Cause the Victor's teaching to remain in this world for a long time," and empowered him as a master of the Dharma. On the back of an extremely fine painting of White Tara he wrote this verse:

Om svastijayantu

You directly realized the intentionality of the Invincible Lord,¹⁰³

Like Mañjughoṣa, you have total mastery of knowledge,

And like Dharmakīrti, you are victorious everywhere:

May your oceanic fame pervade the entire world!¹⁰⁴

Thus, he completely mastered the profound view, extensive activities, and the final significance of all modes of perfect reasoning, and his fame pervaded the world. With four great essential reasons,¹⁰⁵ he was endowed with the name Mi pham 'jam dbyangs rNam rgyal rgya mtsho. [mKhyen brtse dbang po] bestowed upon him important supports of enlightened body, speech, and mind, and as a symbol of his empowerment as Dharma regent, he was given [mKhyen brtse's] own paṇḍita's hat with a long tip, along with lofty praises.

544.1] Later, in conversation [mKhyen brtse] was heard to say, “In this time, there is no one else on earth more learned than Lama Mipham. If I wrote down a bit of his previous lifetimes and qualities, it would not fit in a text the size of the *Prajñāpāramitā*. Even if I wrote about it, he would be displeased.” This story I heard from a reliable source. The lord of the maṇḍala ‘Jam mgon Kong sprul called him “Mahāpaṇḍita Mipham Gyatso,” and listened to his explanation of his *Pramāṇavārttika* and *Eight Transmitted Precepts* commentaries. In conversation Kong sprul praised Mipham as a second Vajrapāṇi, the Lord of Secrets, a master of the profound secret tantras and endowed with inconceivable brilliance. In his long-life prayer for Mipham, Kong sprul wrote:

The wisdom being Mañjuśrī, who encompasses the sphere of reality
Manifests in all worlds as the dance of salvific activity.
May the supreme Lord of Speech with the two forms of omniscience,
The glorious lama, live for a hundred aeons!

544.5] When ‘Ja pa mDo sngags, a scholar learned in the traditions of the New Translation schools, expressed some misgivings about Mipham’s commentary on the wisdom chapter of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, the supreme head of learned, noble, and accomplished ones in the Land of Snows, dPal sprul Rinpoche, was called as a witness during several days of debate.¹⁰⁶ When nobody could decide upon a winner, except insofar as they were personally inclined to the position of one or the other of the disputants, Lama Rig mchog asked dPal sprul Rinpoche which of the two should be declared the winner. He replied,

I cannot decide one way or the other. As goes the proverb, “A son is not praised by his father, but by the enemy; a daughter is not praised by her mother, but by the community,” some of Ja pa mdo sngags’ monks told me that at the beginning of the debate they clearly saw a ray of light coming from the heart of Mipham’s statue of Mañjuśrī, his meditational deity, which dissolved into his heart. That says it all.

On the same occasion ‘Ja’ pa mdo sngags was writing a commentary on the statement, “The Great Perfection is the essence of gnosis.”¹⁰⁷ Some thought he had refuted the statement, while others thought it proved, so [dPal sprul] told them to have a debate, in which Mipham emerged victorious. dPal sprul then authorized him to compose commentaries on the tantras, transmissions, and practical instructions. This I heard from a reliable source.

545.6] gSol dpon Padma asked dPal sprul Rinpoche, “Who is more learned, you or Lama Mipham?” dPal sprul replied, “In sūtra, we are about the same. In tantra, there is a slight difference; Lama Mipham is more knowledgeable than I.” The master of the profound secret tantras, mKhan po Padmavajra of rDzogs chen Monastery, considered Mipham to be inseparable from the omniscient Dharma lord [Klong chen rab ‘byams] in his power of wisdom, his qualities of realization, and his scriptural and philosophical acumen. Although previously [the mKhan po] had considered many learned and accomplished luminaries for the job, none had been up to the task of editing the commentary of the *Wish-fulfilling Treasury* (YD);¹⁰⁸ he asked [Lama Mipham] to do it.¹⁰⁹ In conversation, [the mKhan po] said, “One’s mind is liberated through learning’—that is Lama Mipham! Although [my] mind was a bit unrefined¹¹⁰ [in its perception

of him] when I was young, now, like butter melting in soup, it is gentle and full of devotion.”
Saying this, tears fell from his eyes.

546.4] In particular, the lineage holder of the second Buddha bLo bzang [grags pa, Tsongkhapa], unrivaled in analysis, dPal ris Blo bzang rab gsal, wrote in his rejoinder:

In particular, he has the powerful discipline of analytical wisdom.

A most learned practicing *kusali*¹¹¹

Who has long travailed in search of the profound meaning:

This is my great friend, the spiritual guide Mipham.

And:

5.6] A treasure house of the great wealth of profound and vast secrets
I, a pauper, do not possess;
But in response to a letter of the spiritual friend Mipham
Requesting an answer, I will now proclaim it.
By arranging a garland of stainless white lotuses
May I be a friend to Mipham Jamyang,
Who is learned in the nature of profound and vast instructions
Of the infinite mandalas of the buddhas.

The great Geshe Khang dmar ba of 'Bras phung Monastery said,

To speak a concise and meaningful praise of the supreme scholar Mipham Namgyal, it is said:

As fire is known from smoke
And water from ducks,
An intelligent bodhisattva
Knows spiritual faculties from signs.

This lord of scholars Mipham Namgyal relied upon many qualified spiritual masters from childhood, crossed the ocean of extensive learning, and acquired the glorious vast treasure of the good qualities of inner realization. He received the blessing of countless learned and accomplished masters of eastern, central, and western Tibet and became a great spiritual master of all teachings. This one known as Mipham Namgyal is, in a definitive sense, the wisdom emanation of Mañjuśrī, emanated like the rays of the sun, appearing as a spiritual guide in this time of the five degenerations in accordance with the needs of sentient beings. If one thinks of his tremendous benefit for the Buddha's teaching, then it is just as Sakya Paṇḍita said,

48.2] First one should become learned in all subjects,
Then one should expound elegantly in the company of scholars.
Finally one should meditate diligently on what one has learned.
This is the way of all buddhas of the three times.

This holy being [Mipham] has done just that.

In such ways Mipham was praised again and again. In brief, in our time, like a banner of fame the name “Jamyang Mipham Gyatso” pervades all the way to the eastern and northern oceans. The intelligent and honest have filled their basket of faith with *udumbara* flowers and have scattered flowery showers of praise from all directions.

548.5] Thus, having eliminated doubts through learning and reflection, and in accordance with the biographies of previous holy ones, at the king among places of attainment—the “tiger den” of Karmo—Mipham Rinpoche planted the banner of attainment for a period of thirteen years. Above all, when he performed the ritual service of Mañjuśrī-Yamāntaka, lord of life, the deity on whom, in accord with his fortune, his flower had alighted [in the empowerment ceremony], it is said that there arose all the signs of accomplishment that are described in the texts.

For the most part, he took tea twice a day,¹¹² and focused on the one-pointed practice of approach and accomplishment.¹¹³ He remained sedentary, without interruption, in total solitude, casting away all elaborations of worldly activities, distractions, and the eight worldly dharmas, and thus kept hold of the banner of devoting his entire life to meditation practice. He practiced the creation phase of skillful means, wherein all appearances and activities arose as the natural expression of the dharmakāya, which is the great pure equality of original buddhahood encompassing all phenomena of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, and the completion phase of wisdom, whence he never wavered from the profound yoga of the three vajras¹¹⁴ of coalescence.

As an example of the clarity of his creation phase visualization, when he was young¹¹⁵ (...) he received the permission blessing instructions and activity rituals for the White Mañjuśrī of [Sa bzang] Mati [Paṇ chen’s] tradition. When he practiced in retreat, he focused on the heart-wheel and the intense spinning of the mantra garland, discovering an extraordinary vividness of perception in which all ordinary appearances and mental states were suspended. Of his ability to spend time in the samādhis described in texts, he said, “it must be the lama’s blessing.” During his many years in retreat, he said, he was never distracted by verbal or visual objects from the one-pointed yogas of creation and completion that are explained in texts for the length of a single rosary.

550.1] Once Mipham Rinpoche went into the presence of his teacher, mKhyen brtse Rinpoche. The teacher asked, “What sort of practice did you do in retreat?” Mipham replied, “While studying I reasoned conclusively, and thinking that I should finish the creation phase during approach recitation, I have been very disciplined in the practice of the creation phase.” mKhyen brtse Rinpoche replied, “That’s hard. The omniscient Klong chen pa said, ‘Not doing anything, come to rest right where you are.’ By resting in that way I haven’t seen any so-called “face of mind” with white skin and a rosy complexion, but nonetheless, if I were to die right now it would be all right. I haven’t the slightest hesitation!” Saying this, mKhyen brtse Rinpoche laughed out loud. Mipham later said he understood this to be the teacher’s practical advice.

Mipham said, “Until now, by focusing on the creation phase, I have reached the point where, among the five types of experiences, the experience of familiarity flows like a river. I wonder if I should cultivate a one-pointed mind with this calm abiding? If I accomplish calm abiding, penetrating insight should increase.”¹¹⁶ Accordingly, the master said that when he did the approximation for his karmically destined deity upon which his flower fell [in the empowerment divination], all of the signs explained in texts arose.

551.1] When he was staying in the ‘Ju hermitage, the supreme refuge¹¹⁷ [Zhe chen] Rab ‘byams rin

po che went to visit him. He said,¹¹⁸

When [Mipham] was doing the long-life practice of Ratna gLing pa, for an entire year the life-water¹¹⁹ did not go bad in the summer, nor did it freeze in the winter. From the moment he put it out it did not diminish even slightly. "I think it's a sign of accomplishing the deity," he said. We did the ceremony of receiving the *siddhis* together. In receiving the life sacrament and so forth, it was certain that each and every one of the signs described in texts were present. He said to meditate on it and be glad to keep it secret, saying nothing about it.

Even in a public context [Mipham's magical powers were apparent]. In sTag tshang he did a four-day retreat on the Black Horse [Mahākāla]. When he threw the *gtor ma*,¹²⁰ a mountain of stone was reduced to dust. When the princess of sDe dge was ill, he performed soul-retrieval (*bla 'gug*). Just by focusing on it [in visualization], she turned around quite naturally; everyone there saw it. When he was staying in the Dis mgo hermitage¹²¹ in lDan khog, one day he went to the 'Bri River's edge. As a way of praying for the happiness of Tibet and as a circumstance for healing the essence of the earth, he buried some medicinal pills as a treasure of nāgas. Thereafter, he took a streamer-arrow¹²² in his hand and cast it into the 'Bri River. The base of the arrow sank into the water, while the tip stayed upright and in place, its silk streamers flapping in the wind. Then Mipham faced away from the river and began to chant prayers and auspicious verses, taking eight or nine slow steps. The arrow also began to move back from the center of the river to the shore. This was seen by everyone present.

552.3] When he was in Chamdo there was much talk of a Chinese invasion, and Mipham's attendant, the venerable Lama 'Od gsal, was worried. Mipham said, "If I am to be the highest general of the destroyer of the barbarians, the Rigden King Wrathful One with Iron Wheel,¹²³ I should be up to this. We'll see."¹²⁴ Thus, when Mipham was staying near sGa stod, the foreign army went there, but even though the lama's place of residence was on the way, they were not able to go that way, and were forced to take a detour.

In the meantime the general fortune¹²⁵ of 'Ju nyung ma was on the wane; it was overrun with mercilessly violent bandits.¹²⁶ The Lord entrusted buddha activity [to the Dharma protectors]. He dreamt that Ber nag [a form of Mahākāla] came to him riding on a black horse, holding a lance in his hand, and tied a banner of black yak-hair cloth¹²⁷ to the peak of 'Ju nyung and left suddenly. From that time forward, the prosperity and peace of 'Ju nyung increased. I heard some stories to the effect that nobody knew that the departure of most of the killers was [Mipham's] doing. With me, he once jokingly said, "If you're a Nyingmapa, you have to show the sign of having perfected your approach and accomplishment recitations. What power do you have? Were it not for [wishing] to avoid the consequences,¹²⁸ if one day I had to kill many people, I would do it."

553.3] With respect to completion phase practice, it is possible to determine that he was someone who achieved sudden realization based on previous [lives'] practice. Not only that, in this very life he practiced all the formal yogas of piercing the vital points of the vajra body, such as the six-branched yoga [of Kālacakra]. Thus the flows of the winds were mostly purified in the expanse of the central channel, and Mipham realized the true inner radiance, the natural, innate gnosis of great bliss. Especially, by relying on the yogas of the Great Perfection, namely,

cutting through (*khregs chod*) and all-surpassing realization (*thod rgal*), he fathomed the limits of reality without merely engaging in intellectual investigation. He enjoyed the infinite spectacle of limitless purity, the dominion of the self-appearing sambhogakāya pure lands, the display of buddha bodies and buddha gnosis.

By purifying completely the wheels of cloud-like letters in the inner energy channels, the analytical wisdom born of meditation burst forth. He only composed treatises that were mind treasures (*dgongs gter*) born from the expanse of realizing all profound meanings, which in their purpose and benefit are unlike most others. One should understand them to be no different from the *Trilogy of Comfort and Ease* (*ngal gso skor gsum*) and the *Seven Treasures* (*mdzod bdun*), mind treasures composed in the form of treatises by the Omniscient Dharma King [Klong chen rab 'byams].

554.4] When I was young, at dKar mo stag tshang I went into his presence and received the sNyan sgron commentary on the Eight Transmitted Precepts. He said,

Anyone can find something to write about if they are inclined to do so, but there's no point to that. Sometimes, in dependence upon the lama's and the meditational deity's compassion, [something to write] naturally arises in the mind. If, without needing much alteration, it seems fitting to write without effort, it is easy and there is a great purpose in it, so now I'll wait a while until that happens. You can pray to the lama and the meditational deity and request the activity of the Dharma protectors.

This story is an important one. To some close friends [of mine] he declared, "None of the prayers and so forth that I have written were done without a specific purpose. Whoever recites them will receive great benefit and blessings." One can also determine this from the colophons of each treatise, where it is all clearly stated.

555.3] In essence, if one considers the power of his wisdom and realization, the experience of his intention, the activities of his accomplishment, and the qualities of his learning and reasoning, no one can challenge the fact that the nature of Mipham's inconceivable liberation was universally renowned and apparent to all. The great treatises of this holy being, of which those concerning the three inner yogas are foremost, are excellent in meaning, excellent in composition, not mixed-up, totally complete, perfectly pure, and perfectly lucid. They were spoken by the teacher, the great sage, bestowed by him, and are blessed, authentic speech. His interpretive commentaries are not in the slightest way different, in words or in meaning, from those of the supreme ornaments of India (Nāgārjuna and Asaṅga) and the eight great knowledge holders. This should be clear to those with the Dharma eye if they investigate.

556.2] In particular, as this is the time when the five degenerations are increasing, the Buddha's teaching in general and the traditions of the Early Translations in particular are extremely feeble, as if gasping for breath at the point of death, but in their wonderfulness and kindness they are better than ever. It goes without saying that those who are concerned for the precious teachings of our own and other schools should treasure these teachings in the depths of their hearts and honor them with the crowns of their heads.

This great being's students, who enjoyed a Dharma feast of the Supreme Vehicle, were innumerable. The most important students were rDo grub Rinpoche, gTer ston bSod rgyal, the Fifth rDzogs chen Tulku, dGe dmang skyab mgon, mKhan po Padmavajra, Kaḥ thog Si tu Rin po che, Ze chen rab 'byams, rGyal tshab sprul sku,¹²⁹ dPal yul rGyal sprul, Kar ma yang

sprul,¹³⁰ dPal spungs Si tu Rin po che, Gling rje drung, minister of dGe mang bsTan 'dzin nor bu, Mu ra sprul sku, mKhan po Yon tan rgya mtsho, Bla ma Lung rtog, A 'dzom 'brug sprul, rTogs ldan Shā kya Śrī, Ngor slob dpon, dGu rub Tulku, and so forth. Thus the great incarnations of Zhe chen, rDzogs chen, Kaḥ thog, dPal yul, dPal spungs, sDe dge mgon chen, Re skong, and others of the Sakya, Gelug, Kagyu, and Nyingma traditions, all became his disciples.

557.2] There were also scholars learned in all textual traditions, mKhan pos with the three trainings,¹³¹ mantra practitioners with the yoga of the two stages, those who had abandoned all cares of this life,¹³² nine great kings and ministers (especially the king (*sa skyong*) of sDe dge and the king of gLing tshang), and wealthy patrons of the Dharma among the innumerable persons whom he accepted with compassion.

In his sixty-seventh year, the water-mouse, on the thirteenth day of the first month,¹³³ Mipham left his retreat. Around the eighteenth,¹³⁴ there were some annoying visitors, and in the morning he wrote the following:

Namo Mañjuśrīsattvāya.

Having mastered the ocean of bodhisattva practices,
In Great Joy and other pure lands,
I vow to protect living beings throughout space
With a mind of great compassion.
As a Dharma teacher in this dark age, afflicted with karma,
For seventeen human years I have suffered
A severe illness of the energy channels.
Although the suffering was uninterrupted and intense,
I have relied upon this illusory frame
To remain in this world.
Now, with a mind happy to die,
I will put my final advice down in words.

Then he wrote his last testament and concealed it.

558.2] During the second month he gave some advice to his attendant, Lama 'Od gsal, and recited the dhāraṇī of Akṣobhya about one hundred thousand times.... On the morning of the tenth day of the third month, he said, "Let us dedicate the merit acquired through my recitation and composition of treatises from the time you came to dKar mo stag tshang;" so we dedicated the merit together, three times, to full enlightenment for the benefit of others. "Now that all the signs of having accomplished the aspirational prayer are apparent, in the future you will become inseparable from Mañjuśrī, so you should not just be pleased, but joyful! If you have any questions to settle about practice, then settle them today, because I don't know how much longer I'll be staying." He offered consolation by saying, "From now on this ācārya student of mine and I will be inseparable in enlightenment."¹³⁵

Thereafter, many requests were made for him to live longer as a sublime protector of sentient beings. He said,

2.] At this point, because of the times and my ailment, I do not wish to stay. Even if I did, it

would be hard to make it worthwhile, so you stay in retreats and other places and try to keep up your practice as best you can. As you have quite a bit of experience, from now on do not look to other teachers. In life, death, and the intermediate state we will meet again. Later, we will be inseparable in pure realms.

On the eighteenth day of the fourth month mKhan po Kun dpal arrived with a volume on Kālacakra printed at Kaḥ thog. To Lama 'Od gsal [Mipham] said:

If you speak the truth nowadays, there's nobody to listen; if you speak falsely, everyone thinks it's true. I have never said this before: I am not an ordinary person. I am a bodhisattva who has taken rebirth by aspiration. The suffering experienced here in this body is the residue of karma, but from now on I will never again have to experience karmic obscuration. Now, as there is an extremely important circumstance to attend to, starting today I will be giving the explanatory transmission of Kālacakra to mKhan po Kun dpal. Although it says clearly in the text that one needs ten days to finish it, this time we are going to do it in eight, because the twenty-fifth day of the month is auspicious. (...)

560.2] At one time he said,

I am a great bodhisattva who wears the great armor of [commitment] to the liberation of sentient beings until space is emptied. In this body I ought to have greatly benefited the Buddha's teaching and the Early Translation school in particular. But since the Nyingmapas generally have little merit, they are disturbed by great obstacles, and due to certain crucial circumstances I have been very sick, so I don't know who is benefiting whom. However, I have finished some commentaries. I wanted to do a general study on Madhyamaka, but haven't done it. Either way it doesn't matter. If the *Trilogy on Fundamental Mind* (*gNyugs sems skor gsum*) had been finished, it would have sustained the life of all traditions impartially. Though I thought I would finish it, it too has remained incomplete. Now is a critical moment in these final times; the barbarians and so forth are close to destroying the teaching, so there is no point whatsoever in my taking rebirth. If this were the time of the brothers of sMin grol gling,¹³⁶ it might have been possible to benefit sentient beings in all sorts of ways. Now, because of temporal contingencies, it is difficult. From now on, I will not be taking rebirth in impure realms. It is said that, staying only in pure realms and benefiting beings with magical emanations by the power of prayer, it is the nature of sublime beings to appear incessantly until the end of time.

561.4] [Later he said],

From around the twenty-second or twenty-third of the month¹³⁷ until now, the physical ailment from which I suffered is completely healed. Now I have no suffering at all. Day and night I see only the visions of all-surpassing realization—rainbow lights, spheres of light, buddha bodies, and pure lands.

On the morning of the twenty-fifth he said, "Now tell the Dilgo (dis mgo) family and other patrons, as well as other people I know in the area, to come at once." They came before him and made prayers. rDi sprul¹³⁸ and others asked him to please remain. He said, "Now I

will definitely not stay, nor will I take rebirth. I have to go to Śambhala in the north.” In response to the prayers of Lama ‘Od gsal and Khenpos Yon dga’ [Yon tan rgya mtsho] and Kun dpal [Kun bzang dpal ldan], although he had given up extending his life, he resolved to live on until Friday the twenty-ninth.¹³⁹ During that time he said various things, especially “All of space is filled with letters,” including handwriting, symbolic script, and so forth. Although there were many such letters, it was not possible to take them down.

562.3] Around the twenty-fifth day, in response to a note he gave to his lama attendant, rDzogs chen Rinpoche and I came quickly and arrived at the hermitage that morning. Again, on the third day we viewed the precious remains. The legs were crossed,¹⁴⁰ with one hand in the gesture of equipoise and the other in the gesture of expounding Dharma.¹⁴¹ Thus, we saw him as he went for a while to the expanse of the original ground. Then we performed offerings, supplications, and offerings for accomplishment; the two mKhan pos,¹⁴² Lama ‘Od gsal, Sangs rgyas gnyan sprul,¹⁴³ and I together received the transmission of [Mipham’s] entire collected works, along with their empowerments.

Then, when we made offerings to the precious remains, there appeared tents of rainbows in the sky, and many spheres of light, large and small, the likes of which had never been seen before. These were even visible to people living in the mountains on the other side of the ‘Bri River. Everyone was inspired to faith.

563.2] The attendant Lama ‘Od gsal took good care of the large and small funerary duties, such as overseeing the building of a cremation house, made of copper and gold, at Ze chen Monastery, and [the creation of] symbols of enlightened body, speech, and mind, which became fields of merit for sentient beings. One hundred days after his passing, on the morning of the tenth day of the eighth month, before the remains of the siddha Nam mkha’ legs pa, Lama ‘Od gsal actually met Mipham in physical form; he wrote down twenty-six or twenty-seven pages and said, “I give these to you.” In the writing itself were the words “rainbow body vajra,”¹⁴⁴ and Mipham actually said “rainbow body vajra” in a loud voice three times before he dissolved into space like a rainbow at the same time as the sun rose. There were many other signs of extraordinary blessings; those with faith saw, in dreams and the waking state, constant signs of Mipham’s unchanging spiritual protection.¹⁴⁵

564.2] This is just a rough sketch of Mipham’s outer biography.¹⁴⁶ His inner and secret biographies have not even been touched upon here. In brief, Mipham was everywhere known as someone who indisputably achieved perfect greatness as a scholar and meditator, having crossed the ocean of learning, reflection, and experiential cultivation in the common perception of others. In truth, in his realization and activity, this master was no different from Mañjuśrī, Vajrapāṇi and so forth. For such a great being as this, seeing deities and showing a few magical powers is nothing out of the ordinary. However, from the perspective of his disciples, it is not enough simply to recount where he was born, how long he lived, and what things he did, so here I have recounted what I have heard myself, without exaggerating or toning anything down.

3. Indo-Tibetan Buddhism: An Overview

3.1 Historical and Philosophical Dimensions of Buddhism

GENERALLY SPEAKING, in Buddhism the possibility of freedom is predicated on the possibility of enlightenment, and enlightenment is predicated on the possibility of knowing ultimate reality—so to know what is ultimately true or real is to be enlightened and free. In this respect all traditions of Buddhism are essentially in agreement. However, Buddhist philosophical schools have different conceptions of what constitutes ultimate reality, and thus have developed diverse philosophical interpretations of ultimate reality and practical approaches to freedom, which are understood to be the most appropriate means for knowing reality.

Buddhist scriptures (*sūtras*) do not necessarily appear to convey a consistent, unified philosophical vision. The Buddha appears to have taught in different ways on different occasions. Thus the *sūtras*, with their diverse content, form the basis of a long and complex history of Buddhist philosophy in India and Tibet. The *sūtras* are reckoned by later tradition as belonging to different *yānas*, or soteriological conveyances—the *Hīnayāna* (“Small Vehicle”) or the *Mahāyāna* (“Great Vehicle”). The adherents of the *Mahāyāna* *sūtras* distinguished themselves from the *Hīnayāna* by espousing different ideals of enlightenment, different emphases in ethical orientation, and a more radical formulation of the nature of ultimate truth. The *Mahāyāna* scriptures teach several distinct ways of understanding the nature of ultimate reality. This led to the development of the different trends of Buddhist critical philosophy, which were eventually translated and propagated in Tibet.

The doctrines of Buddhist esotericism, or tantra, developed more or less simultaneously with the *Mahāyāna*. Tantric texts and traditions are based upon special methodological approaches to cultivating Buddhist philosophy as a lived experience; to some extent they also elaborate the theories developed by critical philosophy. The teachings of tantra were understood to be a distinct vehicle, the *Vajrayāna*, distinct from the Vehicle of Philosophical Dialectics (**lakṣaṇayāna*, *mtshan nyid kyi theg pa*, lit. “vehicle of [philosophical] definitions”), which emphasizes rational analysis instead of the direct approaches to gnosis taught in the tantras. Though Tibet’s most influential philosopher, Tsongkhapa, developed an interpretation that assumes that the philosophical views of *sūtra* and tantra are the same, other scholars such as Mipham differentiate the *sūtras* and tantras with respect to view as well as method (*upāya*).

These viewpoints are explored in greater detail in the following sections. Having introduced the basic elements of Indian Buddhist tradition, my discussion will consider the *sūtras*, commentators, and treatises (*śāstras*) that are most important for understanding Mipham and the philosophers who influenced him. In particular, section 3.5.2 concerns the Nyingma tradition’s understanding of the tantric philosophical view (*darśana*), and how the Nyingma differs from the Gelug in this respect. For present purposes, the details of tantric method are of less concern and will be considered briefly; the tantric methods unique to the Nyingma school will be discussed in the following chapter in sections 4.2.2.2–4.2.2.4.

3.2 *Hīnayāna* and *Mahāyāna*

The historical Buddha Śākyamuni lived for eighty-one years sometime in the fourth or fifth centuries B.C.E., according to modern chronologies devised on the basis of textual, epigraphical, and archeological evidence. He was a prince named Siddhārtha in the Śākya kingdom in what is now northeastern Nepal. The future Buddha renounced kingship, studied a number of religious doctrines and yogic techniques under the famous teachers of his time, and then wandered alone to discover the truth for himself. He practiced various austerities and meditated until he reached the state of supreme freedom, or nirvāṇa. According to a passage in the *Lalitavistara* that Tibetans often quote from memory, when the Buddha reached enlightenment he thought to himself:

Profound, peaceful, immaculate, luminous, and unfabricated:
Such an ambrosial Dharma have I found!
If I try to teach it, nobody will understand,
So not speaking, I shall stay in the forest.¹⁴⁷

Not long thereafter the Buddha was entreated by the god Brahmā to reveal his Dharma. To some ascetic companions he first taught the four sublime truths (*āryasatya*): the fact of suffering (*duḥkha*), its origin (*samudaya*), its cessation (*nirodha*), and the way to cessation (*mārga*). During the Buddha's life, a large following of monks (*bhikṣu*) and lay devotees (*upāsaka*) developed. The Buddha and his disciples traveled widely, teaching and meditating, thus planting the seeds for the flowering of the Buddhist religion under the patronage of King Aśoka (died c. 230 B.C.E.). The Buddha is noteworthy among founders of world religions in his insistence that he was not the first to discover his truth, or Dharma, nor the last.

This much of the history of early Buddhism is agreed upon by the various traditions of Buddhism throughout Asia. Also agreed is that the interpretation of the monastic rules (*vinaya*) laid down by the Buddha, as well as the philosophical implications of his various teachings, especially that of selflessness (*anātman*), led to the development of diverse philosophical schools before the common era. Paul Williams (1989b) has pointed out that Buddhism was, and continues to be, a religion bound by a moral unity in spite of its ethical and philosophical evolution. Buddhists all accept that the world of cyclic rebirth (*saṃsāra*) is marked by impermanence (*anitya*), selflessness (*anātman*), and suffering (*duḥkha*), and that the cause of suffering can be identified and terminated through the practice of the Buddhist path. Nonetheless, as new philosophical interpretations and practical innovations developed, the classificatory schema of different *yānas* appeared in the attempt to better understand the connections among the different philosophical views, ethical concepts, and spiritual ideals of Indian Buddhism.

The spiritual ideal of early traditions of Buddhism was the arhat, a saint who has extinguished all emotions of attachment, aversion, and misknowledge and thus ended the round of rebirth. Arhatship is reached through the renunciation of negative actions, the cultivation of wholesome attitudes, and by understanding the nature of things—as impermanent (*anitya*), selfless (*anātman*), and unsatisfactory (*duḥkha*). The arhat continues to be the spiritual ideal in Buddhist countries, such as Sri Lanka and Thailand, that follow the Theravāda, or Tradition of Elders. Theravāda tradition maintains—and not without reason—that it is the form of Buddhism that most closely resembles that of early Buddhism. Among the elders (Skt. *sthāvara*, Pali *thera*) of early Buddhist tradition were many revered arhats, on whose authority the teachings of the Buddha were maintained and codified, forming the basis for what is preserved today as the Pali language canon of Theravādan Buddhism.

An arhat is distinct from a buddha, who throughout innumerable lifetimes strove, as a bodhisattva or “enlightening being,” to achieve perfect, omniscient buddhahood for the sake of liberating all beings. For Theravāda Buddhists the ideal of buddhahood is something to be pursued only by a small number of persons, as it is most difficult to reach. By contrast, anyone with diligence can reach the arhat’s state of nirvāṇa within several lifetimes.

Around the first century C.E. a new development began to take place in Indian Buddhism, later known as the Mahāyāna or Great Vehicle. Followers of this school no longer accepted the arhat as the principal ideal of Buddhist practice. Instead they exalted the bodhisattva, who like the historical Buddha strives to attain enlightenment over many lifetimes for the sake of others. *Hīna* means small, inferior, deficient, or defective. *Hīnayāna* is the term used by Mahāyānists, sometimes disparagingly, to differentiate their tradition from those Buddhists who do not explicitly seek enlightenment for the sake of liberating all beings.¹⁴⁸

In spite of the smug sense of superiority over the Hīnayāna that some Mahāyāna scriptures express, historical evidence suggests that monks who adhered to one or the other of these ideals lived peacefully together, and for the most part maintained the same, or at least compatible, forms of moral discipline. Mahāyāna Buddhism does not have a strong historical claim for representing the explicit teaching of the historical Buddha; its scriptures evince a gradual development of doctrines over several hundred years. However, the basic concepts of Mahāyāna, such as the bodhisattva ethic, emptiness (*śūnyatā*), and the recognition of a distinction between buddhahood and arhatship as spiritual ideals, are known from the earliest sources available in the Pali canon. This suggests that Mahāyāna was not simply an accretion of fabricated doctrines, as it is sometimes accused of being, but has a strong connection with the teachings of Buddha himself.

According to Tibetan commentators, Hīnayāna practitioners cultivate the wisdom of selflessness mainly with respect to persons (*pudgalanairātmya*, *gang zag gi bdag med*), and the ethical precepts they follow are primarily negative, that is, the avoidance of the ten nonvirtuous actions. These are: three of body—murder, theft, and sexual misconduct; four of speech—falsehood, slander, irresponsible chatter, and verbal abuse; and three of mind—covetousness, vindictiveness, and wrong views.¹⁴⁹ According to Mahāyāna, the Hīnayāna is a vehicle for the enlightenment of two kinds of persons: those who listen to and follow the Buddha’s teaching (*śrāvaka*) and become arhats, and individualist seekers (*pratyekabuddha*) who discover nirvāṇa without encountering the institutional Dharma teaching. Thus many Mahāyāna scriptures mention two lower vehicles, the Śrāvakayāna and the Pratyekabuddhayāna. In Mahāyāna the wisdom of phenomenal selflessness (*dharmanairātmya*) is emphasized. The bodhisattva seeks explicitly to realize the emptiness of all phenomena, not just of the illusion of personal self, which is one phenomenon among many. According to most commentators, this emphasis on realizing the nature of all phenomena is essential to the attainment of omniscience in buddhahood.

The ethical foundation of a bodhisattva’s path to enlightenment is great compassion (*mahākaruṇā*) for all sentient beings. Arhats possess compassion but not great compassion and thus effect only their own liberation. The bodhisattva’s ethics includes avoidance of the ten nonvirtues, but mainly emphasizes the six consummate virtues or perfections (*pāramitā*)—generosity (*dāna*), ethics (*śīla*), patience (*kṣānti*), effort (*vīrya*), meditative concentration (*dhyāna*), and wisdom (*prajñā*). It is said that a bodhisattva must practice these virtues for three incalculable aeons (*asaṃkhyeyakalpa*).

The bodhisattva’s intention to achieve full enlightenment and its practical application as the

six perfections are the motivational and applied aspects, respectively, of the *bodhicitta* or “mind of enlightenment.” Based on the attitude of *bodhicitta*, ordinary virtues become extraordinary because of the motive to benefit of all beings, and because of the philosophical outlook of perfect wisdom, which does not adhere to the dichotomy of self and other. Though the ethical principles emphasized by Mahāyāna Buddhism are not unknown in Hīnayāna, they are not taught as “perfections.” In this respect, the Mahāyāna is sometimes distinguished as the *Pāramitāyāna*, or Vehicle of Transcendental Perfections. Mahāyāna philosophical view and ethics are thus considered inclusive of those of the Hīnayāna, but greater in scope.

By applying him- or herself to the first five perfections, a bodhisattva accumulates merit (*kuśala*), and by the last, wisdom (*jñāna*). These are said to be the causes, respectively, for the attainment of a buddha’s form bodies (*rūpakāya*) and wisdom body (*dharmakāya*). The form bodies of a buddha are the *nirmāṇakāya*, the emanation body, which appears in the perceptions of ordinary beings, and the *sambhogakāya*, or body of beatific vision, which appears in the sublime vision of arhats and bodhisattvas. Generally speaking, the *sambhogakāya* is the type of buddha manifestation referred to in the visionary passages of Mahāyāna sūtras. The *dharmakāya* is the actual wisdom mind of a buddha, which knows all phenomena in their true nature as well as their diversity (*yathāyavān*). It is also described as the wisdom comprising the cessation of emotional afflictions (*kleśa*) and misknowledge (*avidyā*).

An important feature of Mahāyāna scriptures is the prominence of semihistorical or mythical buddhas and bodhisattvas. Among the more famous bodhisattvas are Avalokiteśvara and Mañjuśrī, who appear as disciples of the Buddha in various Mahāyāna scriptures. Mahāyāna scriptures also refer to buddhas in other universes, such as Buddha Amitābha, whose paradise is described in the *Sukhāvatīvyūhasūtras*. Mythical buddhas and bodhisattvas became popular objects of devotional worship, and confident faith (*śraddhā*) was thus an essential factor in Mahāyāna Buddhist practice. The special practices taught in Mahāyāna scriptures include elaborate visualized meditations of mythical buddhas and their paradises, repetition of prayers and mystic formulae (*mantra* and *dhāraṇī*), the worship of *stūpas* or reliquaries, and the ritual worship of certain sūtras such as the *Lotus* (*Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra*).

Such typically Mahāyānist practices find numerous precedents in the traditions of early Buddhism as preserved in the Pali canon. They also prefigure the developments of the Buddhist tantras. The various innovations of philosophy and practice in Indian Buddhism were, in all likelihood, not perceived as heretical in their incipient phases. The fact that different Buddhist traditions possess strong “family resemblances” (if not perfect compatibility in all respects) suggests a process of gradual development. Vehement disagreement between different religious and philosophical traditions in Buddhism has generally emerged only after a basis of difference—scriptures, practices, treatises, etc.—has become the focus of interpretations that differ from received tradition. Such variant interpretations in turn provide the basis for the evolution of new traditions.

3.3 Important Teachings of Mahāyāna Scriptures

3.3.1 Prajñāpāramitā

The earliest discernible type of Mahāyāna sūtra, and in many ways the most characteristic, is the *Prajñāpāramitā*, or Perfection of Wisdom, which began to emerge about 100 B.C.E. The emphasis of the *Prajñāpāramitā* genre is the emptiness (*śūnyatā*) of all things (*dharmāḥ*)—their lack of

intrinsic, substantial reality—and the implication of the realization of that emptiness, which is the extraordinary wisdom (*prajñā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), and ability (*bāla*) acquired by the bodhisattva on the path to full enlightenment.

The Prajñāpāramitā scriptures collapse the dichotomies and assumptions of conventional expression in the nature of the ultimate, including the very notion of enlightenment itself:

Subhuti: Even Nirvana, I say, is like a magical illusion, is like a dream. How much more so anything else!

Gods: Even Nirvana, Holy Subhuti, you say is like an illusion, is like a dream?

Subhuti: Even if perchance there could be anything more distinguished, of that too I would say it is like an illusion, like a dream.¹⁵⁰

The quintessential formula of the Prajñāpāramitā is found in the *Heart Sūtra* (*Prajñāpāramitāhṛdayasūtra*): “Form is empty, emptiness is form; form is not other than emptiness, emptiness not other than form.” Various ways of interpreting this statement are found in the commentarial literature of India, Tibet, China, and Japan. All would seem to agree that the statement expresses the highest wisdom of the Buddha, who realizes emptiness as identical with the causally originated (*pratītyasamutpāda*) and illusory (*mayopama*) nature of things. Emptiness also means that all phenomena (*dharmaḥ*) are nonarisen (*anutpāda*), not destroyed (*anuccheda*), unfabricated (*asaṃskṛta*), wishless (*anabhisamskara*), signless (*alakṣya*), and so on.

Though the Prajñāpāramitā sūtras represent a significant innovation in style as well as content over earlier materials, it may be impossible to judge whether or not the philosophical and ethical emphases of the Prajñāpāramitā represent actual teachings of the Buddha. There is, in any case, no reason to exclude the possibility that, like the sūtras of the Pali canon, the Prajñāpāramitā sūtras were compiled at least in part from oral traditions. Moreover, the Prajñāpāramitā’s most important concept, *śūnyatā*, is not unknown in the Pali literature (as *suññatā*).

Early followers of Mahāyāna considered their scriptures to be authentic teachings of the Buddha, a claim that was not acceptable to large segments of the Buddhist community. In the Prajñāpāramitā sūtras, the Buddha’s audience is portrayed as consisting primarily of bodhisattvas, and, not infrequently, the bodhisattvas themselves deliver the teaching. In the scriptures of early Buddhist traditions, as preserved in the Pali canon, the Buddha himself usually addresses monks, and the arhat ideal is emphasized. According to Mahāyāna scriptures, bodhisattvas are supposed to have spiritual faculties superior to those of śrāvakas, so the Buddha taught a special doctrine suited to them, the Prajñāpāramitā. Perhaps to account for the absence of its teachings in scriptural collections already in existence, Prajñāpāramitā scriptures introduced the distinction of different “revolutions” of the “Dharma wheel” (*dharma cakraparivartana*), according to which the Prajñāpāramitā is the subject of a second and more profound phase of teachings than those given by the Buddha earlier in his teaching career. In this way the Prajñāpāramitā literature provided a built-in defense against critics who objected to its brand of teaching, which was unfamiliar to them.

The sūtras discussed in the following section show that the distinction of two revolutions is not merely a polemical device. It reflects the distinction between relative and ultimate truth, which is essential to Mahāyāna philosophy and has played an important role in the development of Buddhist hermeneutics.

3.3.2. The *Samḍhinirmocana* and the “Essence Sūtras”

The Prajñāpāramitā literature and its philosophical approach were supplemented by later developments that introduced more positive expressions of the nature of the ultimate reality. These include sūtras that teach Mentalism (*cittamātra*)—that everything is mind—and those that some Tibetans call “Essence Sūtras” (*snying po’i mdo*), which teach the innate buddha essence (*tathāgatagarbha*).¹⁵¹ Mentalism and the concept of *tathāgatagarbha* are the most important developments in Mahāyāna sūtras after the Prajñāpāramitā.

The most important of the Mentalist scriptures for Tibetan commentators is the *Samḍhinirmocanasūtra* or *Sūtra Elucidating the [Buddha’s] Intention*. It is an essential source for understanding the developments of the Mentalist philosophy of the Buddhist commentators Asaṅga and Vasubandhu and the distinction between provisional (*neyārtha*, *drang don*) and definitive (*nītārtha*, *nges don*) teachings in Buddhist hermeneutics.

Early Buddhist tradition had used the “Dharma wheel” metaphor to refer to the Buddha’s act of teaching. For example, the image of a wheel was used before anthropomorphic representations of the Buddha became common. In the Prajñāpāramitā this metaphor was used to distinguish two different levels of teaching and the Prajñāpāramitā’s superior profundity. The *Samḍhinirmocanasūtra* is a *locus classicus* of the idea of three successive “turnings” of the wheel of Dharma, each one of increasing profundity, as a classificatory scheme for Buddhist scriptures. The Prajñāpāramitā literature had distinguished itself from earlier scriptures as a second and more profound phase of turning. In addition to introducing the three-turning model, the *Samḍhinirmocanasūtra* claims to epitomize the last phase as the most profound expression of the Buddha’s doctrine.¹⁵² The teachings of the second turning, the *Samḍhinirmocanasūtra* advises, were not definitive (*nītārtha*) but required interpretation (*neyārtha*).

According to the *Samḍhinirmocanasūtra*, the most explicit and definitive understanding of reality is conveyed not only by the dichotomy of “form” and “emptiness,” but also with reference to the “three natures” (*trisvabhāva*). The threenature theory is held to be the quintessential teaching of the third turning. The first of the three natures is projection (*parikalpita*). Projection is the process of imagination that labels and constructs the multifarious deceptions of *saṃsāra*. What exists in truth is confused with deluded perceptions, as in mistaking a coil of rope for a snake. The second nature is relativity (*paratantra*). Relativity is what does exist—that is, a rope, in spite of our misperception of a snake. The third nature is perfection (*pariniṣpanna*), the fact that projection does not exist in relativity. Perfection is realized through meditation that eliminates all forms of projection, resulting in the realization of the fundamental coalescence of subjective perceiver and objective fact. Thus the three natures provide the philosophical basis for Buddhist Mentalism (*cittamātra*), which holds that relativity exists as mind (*citta*), while dualistic appearances of subjective mind and objective phenomena are unreal. It is significant that the theory of three natures is also found in a Prajñāpāramitā text, the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitāsūtra*, in the “Chapter Requested by Maitreya.” This indicates that the philosophical views later considered paradigmatic for the “third turning” were known early in the development of Mahāyāna scriptures,¹⁵³ and that Bodhisattva Maitreya was associated with Mentalist trends some time prior to the appearance of Mentalist texts attributed to him and commented on by Asaṅga.

The Essence Sūtras, of which the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, the *Śrīmālādevīsīṃhanādasūtra*, and the *Samḍhinirmocanasūtra* are probably the most famous, teach that all beings possess the essence of

buddhahood (*tathāgatagarbha*). One of the earliest scriptures of this type is aptly named the *Tathāgatagarbhasūtra*. It teaches that the wisdom (*jñāna*) and bodies (*kāya*) of enlightenment are present in sentient beings, but are obscured by emotional afflictions (*kleśa*).¹⁵⁴ Thus, the Buddha's teaching serves not just to remove defilements, but to render manifest the innate qualities of buddhahood. Buddhahood is thus not understood as a special achievement, distinct from arhatship, which results from the extraordinary practices of bodhisattvas. It is, rather, none other than the original nature of the mind. Other Essence Sūtras elaborate on this theme. The *tathāgatagarbha* is referred to as "self" (*ātman*) in the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*. It is said to be what the Buddha intended when he taught selflessness (*anātman*). In other words, enlightenment is our true nature. It is pure (*śuddha*), blissful (*sukha*), permanent (*nitya*), and self (*ātman*), while the misperception of self in the evanescent flow of ordinary experience is impure (*aśuddha*), miserable (*duḥkha*), impermanent (*anitya*), and not really a self (*anātman*).

The *tathāgatagarbha* is also identified with the dharmakāya, the wisdom body of the Buddha. It is a radiant (*prabhāsvara*) and pure (*viśuddha*) awareness (*jñāna*). In some places the *tathāgatagarbha* is linked with the *ālayavijñāna*,¹⁵⁵ which has led some commentators to classify the scriptures teaching one or another form of proto-Mentalism and the Essence Sūtras together as Mentalist scriptures. The most important feature that they share is the understanding of luminous mind (*prabhāsvavaracitta*) or wisdom (*jñāna*) as the ultimate truth. This is arguably equivalent to the Mentalist conception of ultimate reality as perfection (*pariniṣpanna*). Thus, if the essential import of the scriptures of the third turning is considered to be of definitive meaning, the nature of mind—understood as identical to buddha mind—is an ultimate reality.

One implication of *tathāgatagarbha* theory is that arhatship is not really enlightenment, because, in addition to not being omniscient or fully competent in enlightening others, the arhat has not understood the nature of reality completely. Arhatship is thus understood as a pleasant detour on the way to buddhahood. Likewise, if the existence of *tathāgatagarbha* means that all beings are destined to buddhahood—as is it usually understood—then the teaching that there are three yānas is a provisional (*neyārtha*) teaching only, because there is only one yāna in the final analysis that leads to unsurpassable enlightenment as a buddha. This idea is most famously expressed in the *Lotus Sūtra*, where yānas are exemplified by several types of lovely carts (*ratha*) promised by a father to lure his children from a burning house. When the children emerge, they find only one type of cart awaits them.

3.3.3. Sources for Buddhist Hermeneutics

In addition to the *Samdhinirmocana* and the Essence Sūtras there are several important sources for understanding the development of Buddhist hermeneutics in Tibet. One important aspect of Indian Buddhist hermeneutics is its use in determining textual authenticity. This will not concern us here because the sources for the rival philosophical interpretations of Tibetan commentators were accepted as valid by all parties involved. For Tibetan philosophers the most crucial issue was how to interpret the various positions of Indian texts as being either definitive in meaning or provisional.

The *Catuhpratisaraṇasūtra* is a *locus classicus* for the definitive-provisional distinction, which appears there as one of four "reliances" or "refuges" (*pratisaraṇa*): (i) rely not on the person (*pudgala*), but on the teaching (*dharma*); (ii) rely on the spirit (*artha*), not on the letter (*śabdha*); (iii) rely on scriptures of definite meaning (*nītārtha*), not on those of provisional meaning (*neyārtha*);

and (iv) rely on ultimate wisdom (*jñāna*), not on dualistic consciousness (*vijñāna*).¹⁵⁶

These four reliances are guidelines for understanding the proper view, meditation, and moral conduct inculcated by Buddhist scriptures. The first is familiar, as it is well known that the Buddha did not encourage his disciples to adhere to his teaching on the basis of personal authority, but by determining the reasonableness and efficacy of the teaching for themselves. The second reliance could be seen as an admonition for those conceited about their learning, or for those confused by the Buddha's use of different modes of expression to communicate the same point. The third reliance invites any number of different applications, depending on which scriptures one accepts as definitive and provisional, so it is obviously a point requiring clarification. The fourth reliance implies that one should not rest content only with the wisdom arisen from study (*Śrutamayīprajñā*) and thoughtful reflection (*cintāmayīprajñā*), but use them as a basis for cultivating the unmediated direct insight achieved by meditating (*bhāvanāmayīprajñā*).

We are left with the question of which teachings are provisional and which are definitive. Definitive teachings are sometimes considered to be those that may be taken literally without philosophical interpretation; provisional teachings, if taken literally (*yathāruta*), lead to contradiction. Provisional teachings should be understood to have a special purpose (*prayojana*) that their literal content does not indicate, and to be motivated by an implicit intention (*abhiprāya*) on the part of the speaker.

For example, when the Buddha teaches that a person who creates positive karma will enjoy celestial pleasures in a future life, his intention is to encourage renunciation of negative actions and ultimately to convey his realization of enlightenment to the listener. His purpose in speaking as though a particular person exists for whom karma will ripen is to counteract the nihilistic misconception that karma and future lives do not exist at all. It is not that the Buddha is contradicting his teaching of selflessness, which is that no independent person exists. Elsewhere, in addressing someone attached to the prospect of enjoying the fruit of positive merit in future lives, the Buddha might categorically deny a connection between the agent and recipient of karmic effects. Again, his ultimate intention is to liberate the listener; his purpose here would be to counteract the listener's attachment to pleasures and false belief in a "self." If the statement is taken literally, the Buddha would be contradicting his own teaching of the inexorability of cause and effect. Thus, a provisional teaching is motivated by the need to address the particular faults or prejudices of listeners and to skillfully guide them toward correct understanding and liberation.

The *Samdhinirmocana* classifies scriptures as belonging to three "turnings" and declares those sūtras belonging to the last—which in Tibet was held to include those sūtras teaching the Mentalist doctrine, the tathāgata-garbha, and the luminous nature of ultimate mind—to be definitive in meaning. The *Samdhinirmocana* also teaches that the scriptures of the second turning should not be taken literally and are in need of interpretation. However, this way of differentiating provisional and definitive meanings seems incomplete. If a provisional teaching is motivated by an implicit intention, and cannot be taken literally, one may infer that a definitive teaching makes the Buddha's intention explicit and may be understood literally. If the Buddha's teachings are ultimately intended only for the perfect benefit (*nirśreyas*) of beings, which is enlightenment, and if enlightenment is to be understood as the ultimate nature of reality, then definitive teachings are those that indicate the ultimate nature of reality—that would require the inclusion of sūtras belonging to the second turning. It seems then that the *Samdhinirmocana*'s three-turning classification does not completely explain the criteria for establishing the provisional/definitive distinction. If this distinction is understood with reference to the Buddha's

intention, it is the subject of the teaching—conventional or ultimate reality—that provides the key. So what defines ultimate reality must be precisely explicated in order to establish provisional and definitive meanings.

Some sūtras, most notably the *Akṣayamatinirdeśa* and the *Samādhirāja*, make the provisional/definitive distinction in this way. The *Akṣayamatinirdeśa* says that sūtras that introduce the path (*mārgāvatārāya*) are provisional in meaning; those that portray the result of the path (*phalāvatārāya*) and those that teach emptiness (*śūnyatā*), signlessness (*animitta*), wishlessness (*apraṇihita*), effortlessness (*anabhisaṃskāra*), selflessness (*anātman*), etc.—which are attributes and synonyms for ultimate reality—are definitive in meaning. The *Samādhirāja* also indicates that texts teaching *śūnyatā* are definitive, while those referring to individuals, persons, and so forth are provisional.¹⁵⁷ Thus the teaching of ultimate truth is definitive, and the teaching of conventional truth is provisional. And in the case of the *Akṣayamatinirdeśa* and *Samādhirāja* sūtras, the teaching of emptiness (*śūnyatā*) and equivalent concepts is clearly indicated as the ultimate teaching.

Tibetan responses to the dilemma posed by these different standards for the determination of the *nītārtha/neyārtha* distinction ran a gamut of possibilities. Tsongkhapa, as Tibet's foremost Mādhyamika commentator, adhered strictly to the guidelines of the *Akṣayamatinirdeśa* and *Samādhirāja* sūtras and maintained the teaching of *śūnyatā* as the ultimate reality and definitive teaching. Mipham, as the foremost philosopher inspired by the spirit of hermeneutical reconciliation of the Ecumenical Movement (*ris med*), incorporated the standards of all three sūtras in his hermeneutics, and maintained that *śūnyatā*, as well as the teaching of the innate luminosity of mind and the immanent perfection of tathāgatagarbha, were complementary and equally definitive teachings about ultimate reality. The implications of the respective hermeneutics of Tsongkhapa and Mipham are seen throughout their many works on sūtra and tantra, and will be explored in greater detail below in the fifth and sixth chapters.¹⁵⁸

3.4. Traditions of Indian Madhyamaka

The Buddha often referred to his teaching as a “middle path” (*madhyamapratipad*) that avoids the ethical extremes of asceticism and self-indulgence and the philosophical extremes of existence and nonexistence (*bhāvābhava*). The Madhyamaka or “Middle Way school” of the Indian Mahāyāna was a philosophical development of the teachings of the Prajñāpāramitā. The cardinal concept of Madhyamaka is *śūnyatā* or emptiness, meaning the absence of inherent existence (*nīḥsvabhāvatā*). According to Madhyamaka, emptiness is identical in principle with causal relativity (*pratītyasamutpāda*), because a thing that exists inherently cannot be subject to change or have any causal relationship with other things. Conversely, whatever exists dependently is empty, and vice versa. The identity of emptiness and relativity is the correct view that avoids the extremes of eternalist (*śāśvatavāda*) belief in self and nihilistic (*ucchedavāda*) denial of karma and the possibility of enlightenment.

3.4.1. Origins of Prāsaṅgika and Svātantrika Madhyamaka

Nāgārjuna (early first millennium C.E.) is considered the founder of the Madhyamaka school. He is also associated with the Prajñāpāramitā literature. Candrakīrti and Asaṅga both mention that Nāgārjuna's most important text, the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* (MMK) was based upon the

Prajñāpāramitā.¹⁵⁹ Legend has it that Nāgārjuna himself brought the Prajñāpāramitā sūtras from the land of the dragons (*nāga*), where they had been entrusted for a time to those mythical beings. Nāgārjuna's Madhyamaka is generally understood as a systematic logical exposition of the philosophy of the Prajñāpāramitā.

The terminology employed in the MMK suggests that Nāgārjuna was writing for Buddhists and non-Buddhist opponents who did not accept the Prajñāpāramitā conception of śūnyatā.¹⁶⁰ He systematically critiques the Buddhist theories of causes and conditions (*hetupratyaya*), nirvāṇa, and the four noble truths (*caturāryasatya*), as well as other concepts not particularly Buddhist, such as inherent existence (*svabhāva*), and identity and difference. The gist of Nāgārjuna's critique is that neither the ordinary conceptions that are taken for granted in secular discourse nor the hallowed conventions of sacred discourse are tenable if not understood as dependently originated, and thus as empty of inherent existence.

Nāgārjuna's writings became the focus of a distinct Madhyamaka school. Two of his most important commentators, Buddhapālita and Bhāvaviveka lived around 500 C.E. From the eleventh century onward, Tibetan scholars would consider them the originators of the Consequentialist (**prāsaṅgika*, *thal 'gyur ba*) and Dogmaticist (**svātantrika*, *rang rgyud pa*) interpretations of Madhyamaka, respectively. Tibetan commentators differentiate the Prāsaṅgika and Svātantrika approaches in several respects, all of which are related to the methods of argumentation they employ. Ruegg observes that Buddhapālita

...did not make use of independent inferences to establish the Mādhyamika's statements; and he employed the well-established *prasaṅga* method, which points out the necessary but undesired consequence resulting from a thesis or proposition intended to prove something concerning an entity.¹⁶¹

The essence of the Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka method, then, is to demonstrate the inherent contradictions of an opponent's position, and in so doing implicitly demonstrate that the Madhyamaka position—which is emptiness *cum* relativity—is correct. On the other hand, Ruegg says, Bhāvaviveka

...[t]ook up a position radically opposed to Buddhapālita's on the matter of the logical establishment of the Mādhyamika's philosophical position in general and of the negative statements in particular. In his view the necessary co-ordination with scripture (*āgama*) of an adequate logical method of reasoning (*yukti*) requires more than *prasaṅga* arguments because, to establish the Mādhyamika's position, there is needed in addition an independent (*svatantra*) inference (*anumāna*), which can also be embodied in a proper "syllogism" (*prayogavākya*). And it is from this characteristic use of a *svatantrānumāna* that Bhāvaviveka's school has received its name of Svātantrika.¹⁶²

According to Bhāvaviveka's method, it is not sufficient merely to disprove the opponent's position on the basis of its internal contradictions. The Mādhyamika philosopher should prove his own position on the basis of a phenomenon (*dharmin*, *chos can*) that is commonly established for both the opponent and the Mādhyamika. This means that the Mādhyamika should posit a subject (*dharmin*) accepted also by the opponent, and establish the probandum (*sādhya* *adharma*)—in this case, emptiness—on the basis of a valid logical reason (*hetu*) acceptable for both parties. It is not

enough simply to demonstrate the incoherence of the opponent's position. Such an inference is "independent," then, to the extent that the Mādhyamika intends to prove his point directly with his own reasons, and not merely by indirectly disproving the opponent's position. Bhāvaviveka's approach was evidently influenced by the Buddhist logicians Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, whose work is devoted to disproving the mistaken views of opponents as well as to proving the correct views of Buddhists on the basis of a commonly appearing subject.¹⁶³

Among the most important contributions of Bhāvaviveka were his distinction of a conceptual ultimate (*paryāyaparamārtha*, *rnam grangs pa'i don dam*) and a nonconceptual ultimate (*aparyāyaparamārtha*, *rnam grangs ma yin pa'i don dam*), and his definition of emptiness as an absolute negation (*prasajyapratiṣedha*, *med dgag*). These two ultimates correspond to the way emptiness is known by ordinary and sublime beings, respectively. Emptiness as an absolute negation means that when the object of negation, the false appearance of true existence, is negated, there is nothing implied in its place.

The most important Prāsaṅgika commentator for Tibetan tradition was Candrakīrti (c. 600–650). His verse work, the *Madhyamakāvatāra* together with its own commentary (*bhāṣya*), were written as an introduction to Nāgārjuna's MMK on which Candrakīrti also wrote a commentary, the *Prasannapadā*. In the latter text he critiqued Bhāvaviveka's approach and defended Buddhapālita's, arguing that it is not possible for the Mādhyamika to prove his point on the basis of a commonly accepted phenomenon (*dharmīn*); for the opponent will necessarily understand that phenomenon to be truly existent (*satyasiddha*), while the Mādhyamika should not accept that anything truly existent exists. The Mādhyamika should not assent to a common phenomenon or substratum in order to prove his point to the opponent, because that would be tantamount to accepting that the phenomenon perceived by the opponent conventionally exists as it appears, that is, as inherently existent. In so doing, the Mādhyamika would be contradicting his own position.

Other important Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamikas include Āryadeva, Nāgārjuna's direct disciple, and Śāntideva, the ninth chapter of whose *Bodhicaryāvatāra* is an important source for Tibetan Mādhyamika debates. Mipham's *Nor bu ke ta ka* (NK) commentary on Śāntideva's text generated considerable controversy among both Gelug and Nyingma scholars; some of its important points will be touched upon below.¹⁶⁴

According to the Gelug commentarial tradition, the requirement that autonomous (*svatantra*) syllogisms (*prayogavākya*) be used to edify one's opponent means, in effect, that the Svātantrikas accepted that phenomena are *conventionally*—though not ultimately—established by way of their own characteristics (*svalakṣaṇasiddha*, *rang mtshan gyis grub pa*). Non-Mādhyamikas do not distinguish the merely conventional mode of designation of a thing—which does not in itself involve misperception of inherent existence—from a thing's apparent mode of existence, for example, as inherently existent. To use a commonly apparent object, which is not already understood according to the Mādhyamika system of establishing conventionalities, as a subject (*dharmīn*, *chos can*) or basis on which to establish the Mādhyamika position would, in effect, commit the Mādhyamika to accepting the validity of the mode of appearance of a common object.¹⁶⁵ Though Svātantrikas, like all Mādhyamikas, maintain that *ultimately* nothing exists inherently or with respect to its defining characteristic (*svalakṣaṇa*), if they accept that things exist conventionally according to their mode of appearance—as inherently existent—then things must be established conventionally according to their unique characteristics (*svalakṣaṇa*). Additional evidence for imputing this position to Svātantrika is Bhāvaviveka's definition of

conventional truth as that which appears to a conventional validating cognition. What appears for a conventional validating cognition appears to be inherently existent, so this definition implies that Svātantrikas accept that conventionally things exist the way they appear. The Prāsaṅgikas do not accept that the appearance of true existence, establishment by way of own-characteristic (**svalakṣaṇasiddhatva*, *rang mtshan gyis grub pa*), and so forth, are valid even conventionally, so they do not accept that things conventionally exist according to their mode of appearance.

The distinction between Prāsaṅgika and Svātantrika Madhyamaka became a very important one for Tibetan scholasticism, especially in the Gelug tradition. Gelug scholars consider the hypothetical acceptance by Svātantrikas of phenomena as conventionally established by way of their own characteristics to be one the most subtle forms of philosophical dogmatism, and as indicative of the most subtle form of instinctual clinging to inherent existence. Mipham seems to agree that Svātantrikas accept *svalakṣaṇasiddhatva* of phenomena conventionally. However, he considers the subtlety and ease of understanding of their approaches to emptiness and ultimate reality as the most important distinction between Svātantrika and Prāsaṅgika. Mipham certainly did not think that they were “radically opposed,” as Ruegg has suggested,¹⁶⁶ and as some Gelug commentators maintain. Instead, he sees Svātantrika and Prāsaṅgika as complementary approaches that draw the same conclusions about ultimate concerns,¹⁶⁷ though by different conventional means.

3.4.2. Yogācāra and the Yogācāra Madhyamaka Synthesis

The Yogācāra school is associated with Asaṅga, his teacher Maitreyaṇātha, and his brother Vasubandhu (c. 4th–5th centuries C.E.). Though their writings cover a variety of subjects, they are generally associated with the Mentalist (*cittamātra*) trend of Indian philosophy (also known as *Vijñaptimātra* and *Vijñānavāda*), which is based on the principle that “mind is everything.” The writings of Asaṅga *et al.* are sometimes considered by Western scholars as a historical reaction against the apophatic *via negativa* of the Prajñāpāramitā and the Madhyamaka. Tibetans generally understand them as the vast (*rgyas*) elaboration of skillful methods (*upāya*, *thabs*), complementing the profound (*zab*) insight of the Prajñāpāramitā and Madhyamaka.

Maitreyaṇātha was the author of five important texts, the *Dharmadharmatāvibhaṅga*, the *Madhyāntavibhaṅga*, the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra*, the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*, and the *Ratnagoṭravibhāga*. According to legend this Maitreya was none other than the eponymous teacher of Śākyamuni Buddha and the future buddha of this world, who taught Asaṅga when he took a visionary trip to Maitreya’s abode, the Tuṣita heaven. Maitreya’s texts, and those that Asaṅga and Vasubandhu based upon them, revolutionized the history of Buddhist philosophy. They are widely studied in the scholastic curriculum of Tibetan monasteries and are referred as the “Five Dharma Texts of Maitreya” (*byams chos sde lnga*). In Tibet the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* and *Ratnagoṭravibhāga* have been particularly influential.¹⁶⁸ The *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* is a source for understanding the paths (*mārga*, *lam*), levels (*bhūmi*, *sa*), and realizations (*abhisamaya*, *mngon rtogs*) of the Mahāyāna, and is the focus of the scholastic study of Prajñāpāramitā, while the *Ratnagoṭravibhāga* is an important source for various approaches to Buddhist hermeneutics, to be discussed in detail below.¹⁶⁹

Whether these five seminal texts can be considered to belong to a “Yogācāra school” is more or less problematic, depending on how the tenets of that school are defined. The *Dharmadharmatāvibhaṅga*, *Madhyāntavibhaṅga*, and *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra* elucidate the theory and practice of the path with reference to the basic concepts of Mentalism, such as the three natures

and the ultimate existence of mind, and elaborate a system of eight consciousnesses, including the *ālayavijñāna*. Since they explain the metaphysics of experience according to Mentalism, these texts can be called Mentalist treatises, and because they also teach the psychology of ordinary as well as yogic and meditative experience, they may be called *Yogācāra* treatises. *Yogācāra* texts are based principally on the teachings of the *Samḍhinirmocanasūtra*.

The philosophical views of the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* and the *Ratnagotravibhāga* have been variously interpreted by Tibetan commentators as Mentalist, Svātantrika Madhyamaka, Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka, or some combination.¹⁷⁰ Regardless of which philosophical school Tibetan commentators assign them to, the Five Dharma Texts of Maitreya and the numerous commentaries and original works of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu collectively added a new dimension to the world of Indian Mahāyāna philosophy. In addition to systematizing and clarifying the Mentalist philosophy taught in the sūtras, they provided a rich and detailed map of all levels of experience, from the ordinary to the sublime.

The *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* is said in Tibetan tradition to teach the “hidden meaning of *Prajñāpāramitā*” (*sher phyin sbas don*). It is a systematic exposition of the modes of realization (*abhisamaya*, *mngon rtogs*) achieved on the paths (*mārga*, *lam*) and in full enlightenment. Commentators on the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* have explained that its various categories elucidating the basis, path, and result of enlightenment should be understood in terms of five paths: accumulation (*saṃbhāramārga*, *tshogs lam*), preparation (*prayogamārga*, *sbyor lam*), vision (*darśanamārga*, *mthong lam*), meditation (*bhāvanāmārga*, *bsgom lam*), and nonlearning (*aśaikṣamārga*, *mi slob lam*). The first two paths are those of ordinary persons (*prthagjana*, *so so'i skye bo*), those who have not realized emptiness directly.

Ordinary persons must accumulate merit and prepare the mind through discriminating wisdom in order to reach the path of vision, where emptiness is perceived directly. Someone who has perceived emptiness directly is called a sublime being (*āryajana*, *'phags pa'i skye bo*) and, in the Mahāyāna context, is a sublime bodhisattva (*āryabodhisattva*, *byang 'phags*). Subsequently, the realization of emptiness is deepened, and in the Mahāyāna, an *āryabodhisattva* gradually masters the practice of ethical perfections (*pāramitā*). The culmination of these paths, nonlearning, is not really a path but the full result of the previous paths. In the Hīnayāna the stage of nonlearning is arhatship, and in the Mahāyāna, buddhahood.

Because ordinary and sublime beings have very different ways of perceiving things, the distinction between them is crucial in determining proper methods of meditation, which is the subject of the third and fourth topics of Mipham's *Beacon* and of Tsongkhapa's chapter on insight (*vipaśyanā*, *lhag mthong*) in his *LRC*. The essential difference between them is that ordinary beings experience nearly everything through the mediation of concepts, while sublime beings who have direct realization of emptiness *cum* relativity experience things primarily through direct perception.

Ruegg (1969, 1989) and Hookham (1991) have drawn attention to the crucial importance of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* for understanding Tibetan philosophical traditions. The *Ratnagotravibhāga*'s importance hinges upon its role as a liminal text bridging sūtra and tantra.¹⁷¹ It systematically discusses the most important principle underlying tantra—the *tathāgatagarbha* as a primordial state—while purporting also to represent the final intention of the sūtras. Many Tibetan authors, including Tsongkhapa's disciple rGyal tshab Dar ma rin chen, interpret the *Ratnagotravibhāga* as expressing the Prāsaṅgika view. These authors do not agree, however, on whether the teaching of the immanence of the qualities (*guṇa*, *yon tan*) of buddhahood in the *tathāgatagarbha* should be

taken literally. rGyal tshab understands the immanence of qualities to mean the nature of emptiness, which has the potential to manifest any possibility, while the dialectical-philosophical and tantric interpretations of the Nyingma understand this immanence literally, as the coalescence of enlightened attributes and the wisdom of the realization of emptiness in the original state.

The Yogācāra Madhyamaka is generally considered to have been founded by Śāntarakṣita, who also brought the scholastic tradition of Indian Buddhism to Tibet in the eighth century. The most important extant Mādhyamika text of Śāntarakṣita is his *Madhyamakālamkāra*. Like Bhāvaviveka and other Svātantrikas, Śāntarakṣita incorporates concepts and methods of Buddhist logic and epistemology (*pramāṇa*) into his systematization of Mādhyamika thought; he also incorporated the Mentalism of the Yogācāra school.

Like the Yogācāra philosophers, Śāntarakṣita holds that, conventionally speaking, the mind and its contents are not separable.¹⁷² Like other Mādhyamikas, he maintains that the mind, like all other phenomena, is empty and does not ultimately exist. Thus, in the final analysis, Śāntarakṣita's view of emptiness is the same as that of Nāgārjuna and Candrakīrti. Like Bhāvaviveka, his logical method invokes autonomous syllogisms and emphasizes the logical establishment of conceptually formulated emptiness, the conceptual ultimate (*paryāyaparamārtha*, *rnam grangs pa'i don dam*), which is conventionally "true" or "correct" in the sense that it is the antidote for the misconception of inherent existence. This type of emptiness is also known as a "conformative ultimate" (*mtshun pa'i don dam*), because it conforms to the nature of the nonconceptual emptiness (*aparyāyaparamārtha*, *rnam grangs ma yin pa'i don dam*), the emptiness realized by buddhas. Because of this affinity with Bhāvaviveka, Śāntarakṣita is usually classified by Tibetan scholars as a "Yogācāra-Svātantrika-Mādhyamika."

Śāntarakṣita's other great work is his *Tattvasaṃgraha*, a mammoth survey of Buddhist and non-Buddhist philosophies. In spite of his greatness as a scholar, Śāntarakṣita's works were studied relatively little, due in part to their eclipse by the commentaries of Candrakīrti in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Nonetheless, the *Madhyamakālamkāra* was the subject of one of Mipham's great commentaries. Mipham thought this text was especially important because of its integration of the two major trends of Mahāyāna philosophy, the Yogācāra and the Madhyamaka. He also valued its Svātantrika emphasis on establishing the conceptual ultimate (*paryāyaparamārtha*, *rnam grangs pa'i don dam*), because the conceptual ultimate is easily understood by beginners, and is conducive to understanding the actual or nonconceptual ultimate that, according to Mipham, is the special emphasis of Prāsaṅgika.

3.4.3. Madhyamaka and Pramāṇa

The Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition of *pramāṇa*, or logic and epistemology, began to develop around the time of Vasubandhu (fourth century), an author of proto-Pramāṇika texts and the celebrated author of the *Abhidharmakośa* and, according to some later traditions, a follower of the Sautrāntika¹⁷³ school before his conversion to Mahāyāna by his brother Asaṅga. According to Tibetan doxographies, the Sautrāntika definition of the two realities (*satya*), the relative (*samvṛti*) and the ultimate (*paramārtha*), is the philosophical basis of the *pramāṇa* system of the Buddhist logicians Dignāga and Dharmakīrti. The Sautrāntikas define a relative truth as a permanent phenomenon that is mentally designated—this is a universal, or, as the Tibetans translate it, a "meaning generality" (*sāmānyalakṣaṇa*, *spyi mtshan*)—while an ultimate truth is an impermanent

phenomenon, a unique particular (*svalakṣaṇa*, *rang mtshan*). In Dignāga and Dharmakīrti's thought, *svalakṣaṇa* is understood as a momentary phenomenon that is real because it has the power to produce effects (*arthakriyā*), while general abstractions (*sāmānyalakṣaṇa*) do not and are considered unreal.

In his *Pramāṇasamuccaya* Dignāga subsumed all possible means of valid cognition (*pramāṇa*) in direct perception (*pratyakṣa*), whose object is *svalakṣaṇa*, and inference (*anumāna*), which operates mainly on the level of *sāmānyalakṣaṇa*. Dharmakīrti was Dignāga's preeminent commentator who developed the latter's theories to a new level of subtlety; Dharmakīrti's most important text is the *Pramāṇavārttika*.

What makes a cognition valid in Dharmakīrti's system is the fact that it refers to something that really exists—*svalakṣaṇas*. In direct perception a real object is present to the senses. In making valid inferences (*anumāna*), like deducing the presence of fire from smoke, a valid sign (*liṅga*, *rtags*) or reason (*hetu*, *rgyu mtshan*), such as an instance of smoke, must be ascertained, and the invariable concomitance (*anvaya*, *rjes khyab*) of the probandum (*sādhya*, *sgrub bya*) in the presence of the sign or reason for its inference must also be established. Given that smoke is never present without fire, one must either directly perceive smoke, or correctly infer on the basis of other direct evidence that smoke exists, in order to infer the presence of fire. In either case, direct perception of *svalakṣaṇas* is essential to valid cognition. In philosophical debate the efficacy of this type of reasoning presumes that the sign or reason is perceptible to both parties, and that the concomitance of the sign and probandum are likewise established.

The innovation of Dharmakīrti's contemporary Bhāvaviveka was to use Dharmakīrti's method of formal syllogisms in the service of establishing the Mādhyamika viewpoint, also incorporated by Śāntarakṣita in his synthesis of Svātantrika and Yogācāra conventions. Bhāvaviveka, like Dharmakīrti, held that conventional and ultimate reality are both known by valid cognitions. This idea was generally embraced by Tibetan Mādhyamikas, though as already indicated, Bhāvaviveka's understanding of conventional valid cognition is somewhat problematic in the context of Mādhyamika philosophy. Though Bhāvaviveka did not assert the ultimate true existence of the objects of conventional valid cognition by way of unique characteristics (**svalakṣaṇasiddha*, *rang mtshan gyis grub pa*), as did Dharmakīrti, according to some commentators he effectively committed himself to accepting the *conventional* true existence of things by way of unique characters as a result of his incorporation of *pramāṇa* categories and methods. The position that valid cognition (*pramāṇa*) refers to truly existent characteristics (*svalakṣaṇa*) was unacceptable for Candrakīrti, but he did accept that conventionally there are valid cognitions. In his *Madhyamakāvatāra*, Candrakīrti distinguishes between a cognition being valid because it accords with conventional discourse, and cognition being valid because it correctly realizes the nature of things. The former, a valid cognition of conventional reality, is considered valid to the extent that it does not contradict what is generally known to be true in the world. Nonetheless, it is necessarily mistaken about the way in which its objects exist, because those conventional objects falsely appear to be truly existent. An ultimate valid cognition, on the other hand, realizes emptiness, wherein the mode of appearance and actual nature of the object of valid cognition are the same. In spite of their very different systems of differentiating the two realities, the Mādhyamikas as well as Dharmakīrti seem to agree about the limitations of inferential reasoning in realizing the ultimate. A quote attributed to Dharmakīrti in Bhāvaviveka's *Madhyamakaratnapradīpa* reads,

One who wants to look for reality (*de nyid, tattva*) should not rely on the syllogisms of inferential reasoning; [reality] is experienced through meditating properly, but not through its self-cognition [*rang rig, svasaṃvitti*]. The essential meaning of reality is not experienced through inference; by relying upon a good teacher and meditating, it will be experienced. When your own school and others are seen to have settled on a wrong course, and even resent you [for disagreeing], you should teach inferential reasoning.¹⁷⁴

To rephrase Kant's dictum, one might say that for Dharmakīrti the purpose of reason is to make way for direct perception. Likewise, in his *Madhyamakaratnapradīpa* Bhāvaviveka says,

In fact logicians (*tārkika*) who give priority to inference (*anumāna*) as a *pramāṇa* cannot by analysis (*vitarka*) and deliberation (*vicāra*) come to know the utterly transcendent reality (*atīparokṣatattva*), the buddha body (*buddhakāya*) or gnosis (*jñāna*), since [inference only provides] a knowledge of confined outlook (*arvāgdarśana*).

The sun is not accessible to blind people,
Heaven is not accessible to wicked people,
The real, and ideal to be realized,
Is not accessible to logicians.¹⁷⁵

Samvvyavahārikapramāṇa, or conventional valid cognition, as understood by Dharmakīrti in his *Pramāṇavinīśaya* is primarily motivated by the fact that "with respect to ordinary (means of) cognition stupid non-Buddhists are misleading people"¹⁷⁶ However, this does not mean that inferential valid cognitions serve only to refute other people's misconceptions. The first chapter (according to some redactions) of Dharmakīrti's *Pramāṇavārttika* is dedicated to the role of inference in self-edification (*svārthānumāna*). What seems to be implied here is that, soteriologically speaking, inference should be applied to knowing ultimate reality. A *paramārthikapramāṇa*, according to Dharmakīrti, is beyond "theoretical and emotional disturbances" and is the product of contemplation on the universal features of things.¹⁷⁷ This means that the intrinsic identity (*svalakṣaṇa*) of a thing, or of a fundamental aspect of reality such as impermanence, is realized directly by first contemplating a general image (*sāmānyalakṣaṇa*) of it unwaveringly. The viability of a general image, such as *śūnyatā*, in serving as a meditative support for direct perception of reality would depend upon prior ascertainment of its validity through proper inference. The implication is that it is not inference *per se*, but what we make of it, that is significant in the gnoseological domain.

This explains the emphasis in *Svātantrika* *Madhyamaka* on the distinction between a conceptually formulated ultimate (*paryāyaparamārtha, rnam grangs pa'i don dam*) and a nonconceptual one (*aparyāyaparamārtha, rnam grangs ma yin pa'i don dam*).¹⁷⁸ Bhāvaviveka and other *Svātantrikas* implicitly accepted that, conventionally speaking, phenomena possess unique characteristics (*svalakṣaṇa*). This would include the ultimate nature of phenomena, emptiness (*śūnyatā*), which is established in conventional discourse, and which thus conventionally exists. Accordingly, the contemplation of the abstract concept (*sāmānyalakṣaṇa*) of emptiness, which is the conceptually formulated ultimate defined as the absolute negation of true existence, leads to a direct, nonconceptual perception of emptiness. The importance of this distinction will be

considered further in [section 5.3](#), and in the specific context of Tsongkhapa's and Mipham's systems, in [sections 6.3–7](#).

3.5. Vajrayāna: Buddhist Tantra

3.5.1. Indian Origins

The Vajrayāna is the tradition of liberative techniques (*upāya*) taught in the texts of the Buddhist tantras. Its methods are ethically and philosophically grounded in Mahāyāna principles. Tantric techniques are supposed to reveal the indestructible (*vajra*) nature of reality, which is the same as innate enlightenment (*tathāgatagarbha*). In Tibetan commentarial traditions, Vajrayāna is synonymous with *Tantrayāna* (*rgyud kyi theg pa*) and *Mantrayāna* (*sngags kyi theg pa*). Another synonym used frequently by Tibetan authors is "Fruitional Vehicle" (**phalayāna*, 'bras bu'i theg pa).¹⁷⁹

The historical origins of Tantrism are obscure, though certain themes of tantra—erotic, ritualistic, mythical, and philosophical—are as old as Indic culture itself. Like the Mahāyāna sūtras, the Buddhist tantras for the most part trace their origins to the historical Buddha. While it is not inconceivable that the Buddha secretly taught some practices known in the tantras to a limited audience, the abundance of tantric texts, the diverse doctrines they contain, and the geographical locations where they are supposed to have been taught, are not generally corroborated by early textual sources. On the basis of text-critical analysis by modern scholars, the dates of Buddhist tantras have not been established before the first or second centuries of the common era. Most appear to be relatively late—fifth century and after.

L.M. Joshi writes that "the beginnings of Esoteric Buddhism seem to be inseparable from the beginnings of the Mahāyāna."¹⁸⁰ He notes that some of the typical features of tantras—use of magical spells (*dhāraṇī*), invocation of various divinities, cultivation of an ecstatic, visionary mysticism, and so on—have been found in Mahāyāna sūtras and, to a lesser extent, in the Pali canon. Seeing the human body as the abode of enlightenment, the prominence of the feminine (*Śakti*) in tantric symbolism, the use of sexual energy in yogic practice, and an emphasis on "great bliss" (*mahāsukha*) as the essence of enlightenment more uniquely characterize Tantrism.¹⁸¹

Regardless of the cultural and historical context of their origin, a thematic unity among the tantras is much in evidence, especially if one considers that the tantras, like the Mahāyāna sūtras, probably originated in part in revelatory experience. But this begs the question of what cultural influences predisposed hypothetical Buddhist prophets who received the tantras as visionary revelations. Here one might infer the recipient's familiarity with tantric or proto-tantric practices and beliefs, for major cultural developments do not emerge in a vacuum. As Joshi's study indicates, there is solid evidence that many aspects of tantra spring from an ancient cultural matrix. Thus there does not seem to be any *a priori* reason to deny the claim of tantric tradition that it is as ancient as the Buddhist teaching itself—nor the claim that it was maintained in secret for centuries—if we understand the extant tantras as sophisticated elaborations of germinal ideas and practices developed over a long period of time.

The canonicity of the tantras, like that of the Mahāyāna sūtras, is certainly not groundless if their sense (*artha*) rather than their verbal expression (*śabdha*) is considered. Like the Mahāyāna scriptures of the "third turning," the tantras invoke the luminous quality of wisdom and the immanence of the enlightened state, and, like the Prajñāpāramitā sūtras, they teach emptiness and the inconceivability of enlightenment. In general, the philosophical import or vision (*darśana*)

of the tantras is the same as that of the sūtras; they differ primarily in the liberative techniques (*upāya*) they prescribe. However, as later sections will elaborate, this generalization admits of exceptions, depending on how *darśana* is defined.

Joshi notes that at least one tantric source—the *Advayavajrasaṃgraha*—maintains that the esoteric mysticism of the Buddhist tantras can be understood only through the Madhyamaka and Vijñānavāda systems.¹⁸² Tantric texts frequently use apophatic terms (for example, śūnyatā) as well as kataphatic language referring to mind and awareness (for example, vijñāna and bodhicitta). The *Hevajratantra* says,

In reality there is neither form nor seer, neither sound nor hearer; there is neither smell, nor one who smells, neither taste nor taster; neither touch nor one who touches, neither thought nor thinker.¹⁸³

Master Indrabhūti says that

reality is unsupported like the sky, all-pervasive and devoid of characteristics; it is the highest Reality and the unique vajrajñāna. It is known as Mahāmudrā, Samantabhadra, and Dharmakāya; it is the ideal to be known and knowledge itself.¹⁸⁴

While the *Hevajratantra* here reflects the thought of the Prajñāpāramitā and Madhyamaka, elsewhere it invokes the tathāgatagarbha theory, for example, “sentient beings are buddhas, but are obscured by adventitious obscurations. When the obscurations are removed, they become buddhas.”¹⁸⁵ Tantric commentators followed suit. Āryadeva asserts the primacy of mind in his *Cittavīśuddhiprakaraṇa*,¹⁸⁶ while Saraha uses expressions like “the great tree of nondual mind” and “mind is the universal seed.”¹⁸⁷ Evidently the tantras and their commentators were firmly rooted in the philosophical concepts of Mentalism, Madhyamaka, and tathāgatagarbha. The philosophical emphasis of Indian tāntrika commentators was embraced and further developed by their Tibetan counterparts.

3.5.2. Philosophical Dimensions of Tantra

Mipham and Tsongkhapa both tried to establish a unified philosophical perspective for the Pāramitāyāna and Vajrayāna. As their interpretations of Mahāyāna philosophy differ, so do their basic expositions of tantra and their understanding of the relationship between the philosophical views of the two systems. Here my discussion of the theory and practice of the tantras for the most part follows the Nyingma tradition, but along the way important divergences of interpretation between the Nyingma and Gelug will be noted.¹⁸⁸

In Tibet the tantras were transmitted in two different periods. In the eighth and early ninth centuries, the tantras of the Nyingma, including Great Perfection texts, were brought from India and translated. In the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries, what Nyingma authors often refer to as the “new mantras” (*sngags gsar ma*) or “new tantras” (*rgyud gsar ma*) were brought from India. Though some important tantras such as the *Guhyasamāja* were translated in both periods, there are many tantras unique to the tradition of the earlier translations. There are also different ways of interpreting the meaning of the tantras in relation to the philosophical systems of the

Mahāyāna, especially Madhyamaka.

Tibetan commentators all agree that pure divine perception (*dag pa'i snang ba*) of the self and world is a distinctive teaching of tantra. The essential tantric method is to realize the immanence of enlightenment through the visualization of meditational deities (*istadevatā, yi dam lha*) and their divine abodes (*maṇḍala, dkyil 'khor*), by repeating sacred sounds (*mantra, sngags*), and by making sacred gestures (*mudrā, phyag rgya*). Ultimately, pure appearances are the formal content of enlightenment. It is said that by imaginatively creating the pure perceptions characteristic of enlightenment, one creates the immediate and homologous cause for enlightenment. This special homology of cause and effect is distinguished from the common methods of the six perfections, where the cause of enlightenment does not resemble the effect.

In Tibet, the new traditions (*gsar lugs*) of the Sakya, Kagyu, and Gelug classify their “new tantras” (*rgyud gsar ma*) into four classes: action (*kriyā*), performance (*caryā*), union (*yoga*), and unexcelled union tantra (*anuttarayogatantra*). These classes are progressively more esoteric, with *kriyā* tantras primarily emphasizing ritual worship of external deities, and *anuttarayogatantras* emphasizing internal contemplation of oneself as a deity. The Nyingma tradition classifies its tantras as six: *kriyā*, *ubhāya*, *yoga*, *mahāyoga*, *anuyoga*, and *Atiyoga* tantras. This classification also differentiates the tantras by their more or less immediate approaches in revealing the nature of enlightenment. The first three are called “outer tantras” (*phyi rgyud*) and are more or less the same in emphasis as the three lower tantras of the new traditions’ classification. The last three are called “inner tantras” (*nang rgyud*) and are considered equivalent to the *anuttarayogatantras* of the new traditions. *Atiyoga* or “ultimate yoga” is the Great Perfection, which teaches the most simple and unelaborate modes of practice, based upon the effortless intuition of gnosis (*jñāna, ye shes*) and the spontaneous presence of pure appearances. The unique emphasis of *Atiyoga* will be addressed in detail below.

In the Nyingma tradition, each of the six classes of tantra is considered a distinct *yāna* within the general classification of *Vajrayāna*,¹⁸⁹ but this classification does not feature prominently in the writings of recent scholars such as Mipham or Dudjom Rinpoche. In fact Dudjom Rinpoche discusses the Nyingma tantras according to the four tantric classes according to the new translations and identifies the three inner tantras of *mahāyoga*, *anuyoga*, and *Atiyoga* as belonging to the *anuttarayogatantras*.¹⁹⁰

The *anuttarayogatantras* of the new traditions and the inner tantras of the Nyingma both teach two phases of practice, known as the creation phase (*utpattikrama, bskyed rim*) and the completion phase (*sampannakrama, rdzogs rim*). The creation phase is common to all tantras, while the completion phase is unique to *anuttarayogatantra*. In the creation phase a yogi visualizes deities, recites mantras, and so forth, gradually developing a sacred perception of self and environment. In the completion phase, a yogi gradually induces a direct awareness of the fundamental nature of mind, the innate luminosity (*prakṛtiprabhāsvara, rang bzhin gyi 'od gsal*), through visualization, mantra, and techniques of yoga.

Completion phase practices purify the nerve channels (*nāḍī, rtsa*), energy winds (*prāṇa, rlung*) and seminal essence (*bindu, thig le*), which are the subtle constituents of the human body. Completion phase practices cause the energy winds to dissolve into the central nerve channel of the body (*avadhūti, rtsa dbu ma*), where “wisdom energy” (*ye shes kyi rlung*) resides but does not normally circulate due to emotional disturbance of the energy-winds. The entry of winds into the central channel causes realization of innate luminosity (*prakṛtiprabhāsvara, rang bzhin gyi 'od gsal* or *gnyug ma'i 'od gsal*), which is the essence of the enlightened mind. By experiencing luminosity with

increasing clarity, a yogi ceases to contrive the pure appearances of the creation phase, and experiences all phenomena as the spontaneous manifestation of reality (*dharmatā, chos nyid*), as divine appearance. Luminosity and divine appearance are realized as an inseparable coalescence (*yuganaddha, zung 'jug*), the original nature of all phenomena.

Vajrayāna practice is based on the buddha essence (*tathāgatagarbha*) that all sentient beings possess. Like *tathāgatagarbha* taught in the *sūtras*, in Vajrayāna the buddha essence is already perfect and complete. As it is identical with the ultimate nature, it is unfabricated (*asaṃskṛta, 'dus ma byas*) and unborn (*anutpada, ma skyes pa*). Even though the *Pāramitāyāna* has a similar understanding of the *tathāgatagarbha*, its methods proceed on the assumption that enlightenment is produced through the coordination of vast merit and ultimate wisdom, which require aeons of development. In tantra, the function of merit and wisdom is simply to unveil original enlightenment.

The Vajrayāna is sometimes called the “Result Vehicle” (**phalayāna, 'bras bu'i theg pa*) because the “result” of enlightened awareness (*bodhicitta*) or gnosis (*jñāna, ye shes*)—which is not really a result—is the foundation and active principle of the path. Dudjom Rinpoche explains,

This [vehicle] which makes the result into the path is superior to the vehicle of the transcendental perfections which makes the cause into the path...[F]rom the standpoint of being, the genuine essence [of enlightenment]¹⁹¹ which is to be obtained abides intrinsically, and yet, because it is not understood from the standpoint of realisation, it is merely the means of realising it which is said to be made into the path.¹⁹²

In differentiating the Gelug and Nyingma traditions, what particularly concerns us is the question of the view (*darśana, lta ba*) as understood in the context of the *sūtras* (critical philosophy epitomized by Madhyamaka) and the tantras. Critical analyses of Gelug interpretations are found throughout Mipham's *Beacon*. The fifth topic in particular addresses the tantric view as understood in the Nyingma tantras, emphasizing the nature of subjectivity as crucial to defining the view, while the sixth topic considers the objective or gnosemic aspect of enlightened awareness as constitutive of the tantric view.

To illustrate the distinction between the *Pāramitāyāna* and Vajrayāna, Tibetan authors often quote a passage from the *Nayatrāyapradīpa*:

Though they are identical in purpose (*artha, don*),
The vehicle of the mantras is superior;
For it is unobscured and endowed with many means,
Is without difficulty,
And refers to those of highest acumen.¹⁹³

“Identical in purpose” means that the *Pāramitāyāna* and Vajrayāna have the same purpose, buddhahood. The latter, however, is “unobscured” with respect to the use of the skillful means of visualization of deities, recitation of mantras, and so forth, which directly reveal the nature of things as the display of blissful awareness. “Endowed with many means” refers to the panoply of methods in the various classes of tantra. “Without difficulty” indicates that these skillful means accomplish their purpose in one or a few lifetimes, thus avoiding the aeons of toil required by

bodhisattvas in the Pāramitāyāna. “Highest acumen” means that the tantras are taught for persons of unusual ability, who are able to take full advantage of their special techniques.¹⁹⁴

In the Nyingma tantric tradition, the word “unobscured” in the above quotation is interpreted to mean that innate gnosis (*sahajajñāna*, *lhan cig skyes pa'i ye shes*) is realized directly by the view of the inner tantras, and that divine appearances arise naturally as the radiance or manifestation of gnosis. While the methods of tantra are “easier” to use than those of the *pāramitā* approach, in the sense of being more effective, they are not easy for everyone to understand. The reason is that gnosis is not something that can be grasped through intellect but is realized only through the power of the intuition of innate gnosis, which is awakened through receiving empowerment (*abhiṣeka*, *dbang*) from a guru and perfected with the skillful means of tantric meditation. The view (*darśana*, *lta ba*) of tantra is understood in the Nyingma tradition as superior to the view of the Pāramitāyāna, because blissful awareness is much more powerful than the analysis of the abstract concept of emptiness with discursive thought. Though emptiness as the mere exclusion of inherent existence (*svabhāva*) is the same for both sūtra and tantra, in the inner tantras emptiness is understood to be inseparable from the infinite pure phenomena of enlightenment (*stong nyid rnam pa kun ldan*).¹⁹⁵

Pāramitāyāna (in particular, the teachings of the “third turning”) and Vajrayāna both accept that the result of the path—buddhahood—is revealed by purification of ignorance, not produced anew. But while the former utilizes the analysis of concepts (for example, *śūnyatā*), the latter utilizes intuitive wisdom (*jñāna*, *ye shes*), also known as natural luminosity of mind (**prakṛticittaprabhāsva*, *sems kyi rang bzhin 'od gsal ba*), and great bliss (*mahāśukha*, *bde ba chen po*). Emptiness is realized in the Pāramitāyāna through the gradual development of intellectual certainty. In the Vajrayāna emptiness is not usually taken as a special subject of analysis, because it is inseparable from the innate wisdom of luminosity and is realized implicitly by it.¹⁹⁶ However, tantric visualizations often begin with the imaginative dissolution of all appearances into emptiness and also have a similar dissolution at the end. These dissolutions serve to eliminate the extremes of clinging to the true existence of deluded appearances as well as pure sublime appearances. In the tantras of the Great Perfection, the essence of reality (*ngo bo*) is said to be emptiness, its natural expression (*rang bzhin*) luminosity, and its manifestation unobstructed compassion (*thugs rje*). This is only an analytical distinction, however, for the three aspects are omnipresent, inseparable (*dbyer med*) and coalescent (*yuganaddha*, *zung 'jug*) in the original nature, and are meditated on accordingly in Great Perfection practice.

According to Tsongkhapa, the meaning of emptiness is the same in the two vehicles. He maintains that the Pāramitāyāna and the Vajrayāna are differentiated only with respect to method (*upāya*, *thabs*), and not with respect to philosophical view (*darśana*, *lta ba*). This position is not entirely inimical to Nyingma commentators; Mipham's grand-disciple mDo sngags bstan pa'i nyi ma writes, “all great scholars agree that sūtra and tantra do not differ with respect to the view, except insofar as they differ in being reckoned or not reckoned by the coemergent gnosis of great bliss.”¹⁹⁷

In other words, emptiness is the same, but the type of mind that perceives it is different. The Pāramitāyāna uses concepts and philosophical analysis to induce a conceptual understanding that gradually, over the course of aeons, develops into a direct cognition of emptiness. The Vajrayāna (in particular, the anuttarayogatantras) uses special methods to induce a subjectivity—great bliss—that realizes the nature of reality without recourse to aeons of analysis.

Because realization of emptiness is implicit in the subjectivity of great bliss *cum*-luminosity in

the Nyingma tantras, it is not explicitly differentiated as a “view,” or gnosemic component of experience, because that luminous great bliss is not characterized by the appearance of the subject-object dichotomy. The present Dalai Lama observes,

In the Great Perfection the term “view” most frequently refers not to the object emptiness, but to the subject, the wisdom consciousness realizing it.... The treatment of the object, emptiness, as the view and also of the subject, the wisdom consciousness, as the view is not a unique feature of tantra but is similar to the Middle Way Autonomy school’s [the Svātantrika] presentation of emptiness as the ultimate truth and the mind realizing emptiness as a concordant ultimate [*mthun pa’i don dam*—this being accepted by both the Old and New Translation schools]. In the Great Perfection, however, the subjective view, that is to say, the mind which takes emptiness as its object—is not the ordinary or coarse mind described in the Perfection Vehicle of the Great Vehicle but a subtle mind. It is basic knowledge (*rig pa*), luminosity (*’od gsal*), the fundamental innate mind of luminosity (*gnyug ma lhan cig skyes pa’i ’od gsal*) which is the final status (*gnas lugs*) of things.¹⁹⁸

To this one should add that the Nyingma tradition does not emphasize śūnyatā as a principle unifying the views of sūtra and tantra, because śūnyatā is implicit in the realization of luminosity. Moreover, śūnyatā in the context of luminosity is not merely an absolute negation (*prasajyapratiṣedha*, *med dgag*), as the Gelug system maintains, but the coalescence of form and emptiness, referred to as “the emptiness endowed with all characteristics” (*stong nyid nam pa kun ldan*). For Mipham, to say that the emptiness of absolute negation is the meditational “object” of fundamental luminosity is contradictory at worst, and redundant at best.¹⁹⁹ An absolute negation is a conceptual image exclusive of appearance and is not free of the elaboration of nonexistence. Luminosity is nonconceptual wisdom that understands emptiness as the coalescence of relative and absolute truths, which means “emptiness endowed with all characteristics.”

The Nyingma tantric system differentiates the view of the tantras in terms of both subjectivity (for example, innate luminosity vs. conceptual mind), and objectivity—for example, the way conventional appearances arise for the mind that maintains the view. In the dialectical vehicle, intellectual ascertainment of emptiness does not automatically give rise to the spontaneous presence of pure divine phenomena. Within the understanding of the illusion-like character of phenomena, in the dialectical vehicle one still perceives conventional phenomena as pure and impure, and maintains ethical discipline by accepting and rejecting things accordingly. According to the inner tantras of the Nyingma, only pure phenomena appear when innate luminosity is realized. Since all phenomena arise as the great equality of enlightened body (*kāya*), speech (*vāk*), and mind (*citta*), there is nothing to accept or reject. Because pure conventional phenomena are the natural expression (*rang bzhin*) or radiance (*mdangs*) of subjective luminosity, and because the views of the Nyingma tantras are differentiated by the degrees of directness with which they reveal luminosity, the manner of conventional appearance is considered an essential aspect of the philosophical view of the tantras.

In the fifth topic of the *Beacon*, Mipham notes that in kṛīya tantra divine appearance is not realized as the perfect equality of purity and impurity as it is in the inner tantras. In kṛīya tantra, a deity is visualized as different from oneself and as superior, while various behavioral prohibitions and obligations are inculcated with respect to ritual purity and impurity. In the

inner tantras, the dichotomy of pure and impure is transcended in the great pure equality of all phenomena. In this respect, the inner tantras have a higher view because they eliminate all dualistic concepts, including purity and impurity, from the root. Though the Pāramitāyāna, epitomized by the Mādhyamika concept of śūnyatā, is not surpassed with regard to refuting the elaboration (*prapañca*, *spros pa*) of inherent existence (*svabhāva*, *rang bzhin*),²⁰⁰ it has no means of eliminating the deluded appearances of impure conventional phenomena because it uses only an abstract concept as its objective support. Meditating on an abstract concept of emptiness eliminates the apprehension or ascertainment (*nges pa*) of true existence and replaces it with the ascertainment of nontrue existence—but the appearance of true existence of impure phenomena still remains. By applying the skillful methods of the creation and completion phases on the different levels of tantric practice, a progressively more profound understanding of the purity of phenomena is cultivated as a function of more and more profound understanding of innate luminosity, and thus the appearance of true existence is automatically—and swiftly—eliminated. Thus, in the Nyingma tradition, the view of the tantras is considered more profound than Pāramitāyāna with respect to both subjectivity and objectivity.

3.5.3. Styles of Tantric Practice

We have seen that Buddhist tantra should be understood in a Mahāyāna philosophical context, while being distinguished from conventional Mahāyāna practice by special methods and special experiential modes of accessing the correct philosophical view. So far, the theory (*darśana*, *lta ba*) and experiential cultivation (*bhāvanā*, *bsgom pa*) of Buddhist tantra have been considered. But how does tantric theory manifest in social and cultural dimensions?

Some of the most famous tantric adepts of India are remembered in the legends of the “eighty-four siddhas,” who are known to both the Buddhist and Hindu traditions. These siddhas, or accomplished ones, came from all walks of life. Many were illiterate, some were outcasts or low-caste, some were princes or kings, and some were Buddhist monks and scholars. Many of them pursued their *sādhana* or practice in secret without significantly altering outward appearance or behavior. Some siddhas, however, were famous for the performance of miracles and unconventional behavior.²⁰¹ These displays are understood as skillful means (*upāya*) that inspire people to practice the path.

What unites them first and foremost is the discovery of enlightenment through the radical methods of tantra received from a guru. Before practicing it is necessary to receive the guru’s empowerment (*abhiṣeka*, *dbang*). There are various types of empowerments for the different levels of tantra. In anuttarayogatantra, when a disciple receives the empowerment of a particular deity there are four separate phases. First is the vase empowerment (*bum dbang*), which confers the blessing of buddha body (*kāya*, *sku*). The second is the secret empowerment (*gsang ba’i dbang*), which confers the blessing of buddha speech (*vāc*, *gsungs*). Third is the wisdom empowerment (*shes rab ye shes kyi dbang*), which confers the blessing of buddha mind (*citta*, *thugs*). Last is the word empowerment (*tshig gi dbang*), which points directly to the nature of fundamental luminosity or gnosis. The word empowerment is sometimes distinguished from the others as being “extremely unelaborated” (*shin tu mi spros pa*), because it can potentially confer enlightenment on the spot. In Nyingma tradition the meaning of the Great Perfection is said to be conveyed by the word empowerment.²⁰²

Though Indian *tāntrikas* came from all walks of life, they can be roughly classified in two

categories of individuals, “shamanic” and “clerical” t̃āntrikas.²⁰³ Practitioners of the shamanic type were often socially marginal figures. Many were wandering yogis who meditated in charnel grounds and associated with ritually unclean persons (for example, prostitutes, bartenders, and outcastes). Some shamanic t̃āntrikas are known for the ecstatic songs (*doha*) that were expressions of their realization.

Historically the most important t̃āntrikas were monk-scholars who outwardly maintained the conventional ethics and activities of monastic life and secretly practiced tantra. Such individuals were largely responsible for teaching and transmitting tantra in India, both inside and outside of the monastic context. Nāgārjuna, Āryadeva, Asaṅga, Vasubandhu, Dignāga, Dharmakīrti, Candrakīrti, and Śāntideva are all remembered to have been tantric adepts, though some of these may have been tantric namesakes after the famous scholars of dialectical philosophy.

There is no doubt that most, if not all, later Indian philosophers such as Śāntarakṣita, Kamalaśīla, and so forth were t̃āntrikas. By the eleventh century tantra was widely practiced by monks in Indian monasteries—for example, by the paṇḍita Nāropa, who became the teacher of the Tibetan translator Marpa. Shamanic and clerical types were not mutually exclusive and often formed guru-disciple relationships. Tilopa was a “shamanic” yogi of the most unconventional type, who survived by eating fish innards discarded on a river bank. Nāropa, an erudite Brahmin monk, left his important position at Nālandā Monastery to follow Tilopa and wound up adopting the same lifestyle.

In Tibetan Buddhism one finds a similar division of practitioner types. Most (but by no means all) important teachers of tantra in Tibet were monk-scholars. Others, such as Milarepa, were solitary yogis who shunned busy monasteries and spent most of their time in mountain retreats. Among nonteaching practitioners there were monarchs and politicians, householders with families, wandering mendicants, nomads, hermits, monks and nuns who lived in monasteries, and monks and nuns who alternated travel (usually as pilgrimage or to listen to Dharma teachings) with meditation in the mountains.

4. Tibetan Buddhist Traditions and the Great Perfection

B UDDHIST HERMENEUTICS is predicated on the assumption that there is one truth and that all Buddhist scriptures point to it, directly or indirectly. How that truth is defined and interpreted is key to understanding Tibetan philosophy. Tibetan philosophical innovations have been largely motivated by the desire to clarify what is assumed to be the unified intention of the Buddha and the great Indian commentators who developed his thought. To understand the subtleties of Tibetan philosophy it is not necessary, though it is certainly helpful, to bring an “etic” perspective—such as historical development—to bear on its texts. For reading Tibetan philosophical texts, however, it is particularly important to understand the hermeneutical contexts—the “emic”—of Tibetan commentators as they themselves understood them. In the course of twelve centuries, the Tibetans assimilated a good deal of Indian Buddhist scholasticism. Having digested their fare, they developed new traditions of interpretation, and a unique set of “memes,” or currency of discourse, that articulated common concerns in the various traditions.

Philosophical traditions, and formulated principles of hermeneutics, are products of history. History does not necessarily clarify what a philosophical position is, but it is necessary for understanding why it developed. Whether earlier philosophies are even available for our evaluation is to some extent an accident of history. Texts and traditions are lost or neglected, and then discovered again; or sometimes, as has occasionally been the case in Tibet, they are proscribed or destroyed. Since the seventh century, Tibetan religion and politics have always been closely linked. The fortunes of different monasteries and different traditions have tended to rise and fall with the temporal powers that supported them. For this reason, Tibetan Buddhists’ standards of orthodoxy and orthopraxis have been influenced to some extent by political realities.

Several themes discussed in the *Beacon* are important in the philosophical and religious history of Tibet. The *Beacon* is in part a product of the ecumenism (*ris med*) of nineteenth-century Kham, which developed partly as a result of, and in reaction to, alliances of religion and politics. This chapter focuses on the historical aspects of Tibetan Buddhism that are most relevant for understanding the *Beacon*. It provides evidence that the teachers and texts most representative of the Nyingma and Great Perfection have long been concerned about the same issues that motivated the scholars of the later traditions, particularly Tsongkhapa. This will set the stage for later chapters, where Mipham’s debates with Gelug philosophers will be examined in detail. [Section 4.1](#) concerns the development of the Nyingma tradition under royal patronage in the eighth and ninth centuries, the Nyingma response to the appearance of new traditions of dialectical philosophy and tantra from the eleventh century onward, and the origins of the various controversies associated with the Great Perfection from the eleventh century onward. [Section 4.2](#) discusses the Great Perfection as a textual tradition, as a philosophy, and as a form of meditation. [Section 4.3](#) concerns the development of scholasticism in the Nyingma and the new traditions (*gsar lugs*), which developed from the eleventh century onward. There I will identify the salient features of Tibetan scholasticism, examine some pre-eleventh-century comparative philosophical texts belonging to the Great Perfection tradition, and refer to the most important authors and cultural developments in the Nyingma school through the nineteenth century.

4.1. The Yarlung Empire and the Introduction of Buddhism

Tibetan leadership seems always to have been defined in some way by religion; at least this is the case with their prehistoric and semi-historical kings. The first king of the Yarlung dynasty, gNya khri btsan po (4th–1st centuries B.C.E.), is said to have descended from the gods, or to have been a descendant of Indian royalty, or to have been a “gnome” (*the rang* or *the’u rang*).²⁰⁴ The supernatural character of the first and last is obvious, while the mythos of Indian familial descent seems to stem from the devotion of later Tibetan scholars to Buddhism and things Indian.²⁰⁵ The common feature of all these traditions is the appearance of the future king on a sacred mountain (*lha ri rol pa* or *yar lha sham po*) and his adoption by the rulerless populace, who carry him in a sedan chair on their necks or shoulders (*gnya*), hence the name gNya khri, “neck-throne.” According to tradition, gNya khri btsan po and his next six successors all ascended to heaven on a cord (*mu thag*), leaving no mortal remains. The eighth Yarlung king, Dri gum btsan po, was the first to leave mortal remains, being killed in battle by one of his ministers.²⁰⁶ Thereafter the Yarlung kings became the focus of a funereal cult.

The twenty-eighth in the line of Yarlung kings, Lha tho tho ri snyan btsan (ca. 173 C.E.),²⁰⁷ was later reckoned as the first of the Buddhist “religious kings” (*chos rgyal*). Legend has it that several Buddhist texts fell on the roof of his palace, but unable to read them, the king used them as objects of veneration. ‘Gos Lo tsa ba accepts an alternate tradition—that an Indian paṇḍita and his translator delivered the texts to the king but were unable to communicate their meaning.²⁰⁸ Later Tibetan tradition remembers Lha tho tho ris snyan btsan as an emanation (*nirmāṇakāya*, *sprul sku*) of the bodhisattva Samantabhadra.

It seems that Buddhism was present in Tibet from a fairly early time, so the claim of Tibet’s indigenous religion, Bön (*bon*), to have already possessed the essentials of the Buddhist religion is plausible.²⁰⁹ Like the Nyingma, Bön possesses an extensive tradition of spiritual treasures (*gter ma*), including the Great Perfection, which they claim to have received in a lineage from their founder, gShen rab.²¹⁰ This conflicts with the common stereotype of early Bön practitioners as being exclusively devoted to animal sacrifices and magical rituals. Thus, it makes sense to posit the existence of two types of indigenous Tibetan religious practitioner at the time of the introduction of Buddhism under Srong btsan sgam po: the priests and ministers who upheld the funereal cult of the kings, centered in the Yarlung valley, and the proto-tantric practitioners of the religious traditions of the kingdom of Zhang-zhung to the west. In Tibetan historical literature both groups are retrospectively designated as “Bön,” but it is clear that later Bön adherents identify themselves more with latter group, the traditions of the former having died out with the Yarlung dynasty itself.

Srong btsan sgam po (died 649) was the first bonafide Buddhist king of Tibet. Among his wives were two foreign princesses, one of China (Wen Ch’eng) and one of Nepal (Khri btsun), each of whom supposedly brought a Buddhist statue with her to Tibet. The king is also said to have established a series of temples in the land of Tibet, envisioned as a supine demoness. Four temples were built to rest on her shoulders and hips, four on her knees and elbows, and four on her hands and feet. These temples were meant to effect the Buddhist conversion of central Tibet, its borders, and hinterlands, respectively.²¹¹ The source for this tradition is the *Maṇi bKa’ ’bum*, a series of texts concerned with the deity of compassion, Avalokiteśvara, which is traditionally ascribed to Srong btsan sgam po himself. According to the Fifth Dalai Lama, the king concealed the texts of

the *Maṇi bKa' 'bum* in the Jokhang temple in Lhasa (then known as *Ra sa* or "goat fold"), where they were discovered beginning in the time of King Khri srong lde btsan.²¹²

Srong btsan sgam po is also said to have sent an emissary, Thon mi Sambhoṭa, to India in order to acquire the science of reading and writing.²¹³ Subsequently, according to 'Gos Lo tsa ba, the king mastered writing, taught various tantric practices to his subjects, and founded various temples.²¹⁴ Foremost among the tantric practices said to have been taught by Srong btsan was the six-syllable mantra of Avalokiteśvara, *Om Maṇi Padme Hūṃ*, which gained some currency in his time. However, there is little evidence of Srong btsan's Buddhist activities except for a few temple foundations and a few small temples.²¹⁵

Several inscriptions as well as Tun Huang documents indicate that the traditional observances of the royal funereal cult as well as "Bön" practices of animal sacrifice continued unabated up through the reign of the last Yarlung king, Lang dar ma, in the middle of the ninth century.²¹⁶ There is evidence that the Yarlung kings after Srong btsan sgam po maintained an interest in Buddhism; Khri 'dus song (died 704) and Khri lde tsug btsan (died c. 754), the grandfather and father of Khri srong lde btsan, are said to have sponsored the building of temples. It is likely that Chinese and Central Asian monks made their presence felt in Central Tibet (*dbus*) during this time, as the Tibetans had occupied Tun Huang and had frequent diplomatic and martial exchanges with the Chinese.²¹⁷

The expansion of the Tibetan empire reached its zenith during or shortly after the life of King Khri srong lde btsan (reigned until 797), who reaffirmed his ancestor Srong btsan sgam po's commitment to Buddhism. Khri srong lde btsan invited to Tibet the famous Bengali paṇḍita Śāntarakṣita and the Vajrayāna master Padmasambhava, who established the monastic/scholastic and tantric traditions, respectively. At first Śāntarakṣita met with opposition from the "local deities" (*yul gyi lha*), or at least from powerful Tibetans who resented the incursion of the foreign religion. (Buddhist monks and temples had already met with persecution after the assassination of Khri srong lde btsan's father, c. 754.)²¹⁸ Śāntarakṣita recommended the intercession of Padmasambhava to King Khri srong lde btsan. When Śāntarakṣita left Tibet, he happened, in Nepal, to meet Padmasambhava, with whom he returned to Tibet. Padmasambhava subdued the hostile deities of the central and outlying regions, and Śāntarakṣita oversaw the ordainment of the first seven Tibetan monks (*sad mi bdun*).

According to tradition, from this point onward the Dharma and its practitioners were free to practice and propagate the teaching. Intense literary and philosophical activity in the latter half of the eighth century and early part of the ninth is much in evidence from Tun Huang documents, early Tibetan historical works, and the *lDan dkar* catalogue.²¹⁹ Khri srong lde btsan's son, Khri lde srong btsan (*alias* Sad na legs, d. 815), was a great supporter of Buddhism, as was his son, Khri gtsug lde btsan (*alias* Ral pa can, died 838). The end of Tibetan Buddhism's glorious early period came with the reign of Lang dar ma (died 847), who was assassinated by the monk Lha lung dPal gyi rDo rje. Lang dar ma closed down temples and monasteries, forcing monks to return to lay life and unmonklike activities such as hunting and beer drinking. Sangs rgyas ye shes (cf. §4.2.3.1) is credited with terrifying King Lang dar ma with magical powers, thus discouraging him from oppressing lay practitioners of mantra (*sngags pa*) during his persecution of monastic Buddhism in central Tibet. Since such practitioners were spared Lang dar ma's persecutions, their tantric lineages survived, but the monastic institution and its political influence, which had grown considerably under Sad na legs and Ral pa can, was effectively destroyed. After Lang dar ma's

demise the Yarlung dynasty fell apart and with it the wealthy Tibetan empire. Tibetan Buddhism was without royal support until the revival of the late tenth and early eleventh century.

4.2. Early Nyingma Teachers and Texts

The exact nature of Padmasambhava's role in the early propagation of Buddhism in Tibet is uncertain.²²⁰ Dudjom Rinpoche is of the opinion that he stayed in Tibet for five and a half years, but allows that he might have stayed as long as fifty-four years, or as little as six months.²²¹ Padmasambhava is renowned as a master of the Great Perfection, but his lineage is not known to have been successfully propagated after the time of his visit to Tibet. Aside from his crucial role in establishing Vajrayāna in Tibet, Padmasambhava is most important for later tradition as a concealer of Dharma "treasures" (*gter ma*),²²² which were discovered by later Tibetan tantric adepts, purported to be his reincarnated disciples, beginning in the late tenth century. He is also credited with transmitting the lineages of the *Vajrakīla*, *Hāyagrīva*, and *Guhyagarbha* tantras,²²³ among others, which have been preserved without interruption to the present day. The central deities of these and several other tantras are known as the "eight great classes of the means for attainment" (*sgrub pa bka' brgyad*), the most important tantric deities of the Nyingma tradition.²²⁴

Several other important Vajrayāna teachers were active in Tibet in the late eighth and early ninth centuries. Dudjom Rinpoche mentions Buddhaguhya, Śāntigarbha, and Vimalamitra as masters who transmitted the mahāyoga tantras,²²⁵ while King Ral pa can invited "Surendrabodhi, Śīlendrabodhi, Dānaśīla, and many others" to translate sūtras and śāstras during his reign.²²⁶ For the Great Perfection tradition the most important figures are Vairocana, a Tibetan translator, and Indian master Vimalamitra. Vimalamitra was a student of the Indian Great Perfection masters Śrī Siṃha and Jñānasūtra. He was invited to Tibet by King Khri srong lde btsan around 790, and transmitted the thirteen "later translations" of the mental class²²⁷ of Atiyoga (the Great Perfection), as well as the *snying thig* or heart-essence teachings, later known as the "seventeen tantras" (*rgyud bcu bdun*). He was also greatly learned in the sūtras, and wrote an important commentary to the *Heart Sūtra*.²²⁸ Like Padmasambhava, he was unable to propagate these teachings widely, so he hid them at mChims phu, near the first Tibetan monastery at bSam yas.²²⁹

Vairocana's life is no less shrouded in legend than Padmasambhava's. An historical reconstruction of his life is rendered more complicated by the fact that Bönpos also claim him as an important religious ancestor, though they recount a different cycle of legends concerning him.²³⁰ Vairocana is said to have visited India, where he studied with the Master Śrī Siṃha and met the original Great Perfection teacher, dGa' rab rDo rje. Later, in Tibet, he transmitted the mental and spatial classes of Atiyoga to his Tibetan disciples. The anuyoga tantras were also transmitted by a Tibetan, gNub chen Sangs rgyas ye shes, who received them from several different Indian and Central Asian teachers.²³¹

The early period of Tibetan Buddhist literary activity was extremely fruitful. The lDan dkar catalog composed by the translators dPal brtsegs and Nam mkha'i snying po, two of Padmasambhava's most important disciples, lists 736 works of translation on diverse subjects.²³² Some of the early translators wrote original texts as well. Ye shes sde, also one of Padmasambhava's disciples, wrote a short *sgrub mtha'* (*siddhānta*) or "comparative philosophy" of Buddhism, which is similar to much later works of the same genre, except in its classification of

the Madhyamaka school.²³³ dPal brtsegs wrote a work entitled the *lTa ba'i rim pa bshad pa*, which treats Buddhist philosophical systems comparatively, and also includes a discussion of tantric systems culminating in Atiyoga.²³⁴ In this latter respect it is similar to works of Padmasambhava and Mañjuśrīmitra, the *MTP* and *BSG*.²³⁵ The lDan dkar catalog does not list any translations of tantric texts, which at that time were subject to strict secrecy.

4.2.1. The Treasure Tradition

In addition to various textual collections preserved from the eighth and ninth centuries as “transmitted precepts” (*bka' ma*),²³⁶ the Nyingma tradition possesses many tantric texts known as “treasures”²³⁷ or *termas* (*gter ma*). Most terma teachings are said to have been transmitted by Padmasambhava to his closest Tibetan disciples with the intention that they discover and propagate them in future lives. Though Padmasambhava transmitted tantric teachings that he received from human teachers, as the manifestation (*nirmāṇakāya*) of the buddhas Amitābha and Avalokiteśvara he is considered the original author (though not in the ordinary sense of the word) of thousands of terma texts. Most *termas* include liturgies (*sādhana*, *sgrub thabs*) in which Padmasambhava appears as a meditational deity (*iṣṭadevatā*, *yi dam*).

Material *termas* (*rdzas gter*) include texts, statues, and other sacred objects said to have been consecrated and hidden for the benefit of future generations by Padmasambhava with the help of his consort Ye shes mtsho rgyal and other important disciples. *Termas* may also be discovered as visionary revelations from Padmasambhava; these are called “mind treasures” (*dgongs gter*).²³⁸ *Termas* found concealed in rock or earth are called “earth treasures” (*sa gter*), and those found in bodies of water are called “water treasures” (*chu gter*). Adepts who discover *termas* are called *tertöns* (*gter ston*) or “revealers of treasure.” *Tertöns* make their discoveries when visions, dreams, and other signs have indicated the appropriate time and place for discovery.

Most Nyingma tantric liturgies in use today, as well as some of the Nyingma's most important historical documents, were revealed as *terma*.²³⁹ *Termas* may contain visionary, mythical, and historical narratives, complete tantras similar in form to those of Indic origin, systematic treatises on any aspect of Buddhist philosophy and practice (but especially tantra), and texts dealing with ancillary subjects, such as medicine and astrology. Many of the most important sources for the Great Perfection are *terma*.

There is no reason to rule out the possibility that *termas* date from Padmasambhava's time—the practice of hiding sacred objects in times of political turmoil or religious persecution is known in other times and places. Because they are attributed to an authentic Indian teacher, Padmasambhava, and because they are usually revealed by adepts who are already accepted as enlightened teachers (*bla ma*), *termas* have a sort of built-in canonicity. Acceptance of *terma* status has resulted in a large and ever-growing canon of revelations belonging primarily to the Nyingma tradition, but also maintained to some extent by adherents of other schools. *Terma* literature has also provided several biographical sources for Padmasambhava. In *terma* biographies Padmasambhava is born miraculously from a lotus, pursues the careers of a prince, a monk, a scholar, a *siddha*, and so forth, and eventually manifests as a second Buddha, who teaches and propagates the Vajrayāna throughout India and Tibet. Because there is little historical data about Padmasambhava's life dating from the time of his visit to Tibet, it is hardly possible to separate the man from the myth.²⁴⁰

4.2.2. The Great Perfection

4.2.2.1. Origins

The ultimate origin of the Great Perfection is said to be Samantabhadra, the primordial dharmakāya buddha. The Great Perfection was revealed in India by the saṃbhogakāya buddha Vajrasattva to its first human teacher, the nirmāṇakāya bGa' rab rdo rje (*Prahevajra). bGa' rab rdo rje transmitted the Great Perfection teachings to the paṇḍita Mañjuśrīmitra, who organized them according to three classes (*sde*). Mañjuśrīmitra's disciple Śrī Siṃha elaborated further on his teacher's classification and transmitted the teachings to Jñānasūtra and Padmasambhava. Jñānasūtra gave the teachings to Vimalamitra, who with Padmasambhava became one of the most important teachers of the Great Perfection in Tibet. The early Indian masters are supposed to have codified the Great Perfection teachings as the Great Perfection tantras and other texts that were translated in the eighth and ninth centuries. These are now preserved in the collections of Nyingma tantras (*rnying ma'irgyud 'bum*) and transmitted precepts (*bka' ma*).

There are numerous legends associated with these early teachers of the Great Perfection. Though there is no reason to discount the historicity of their biographical data out of hand, very little is known about them from Tibetan sources, and Indian tradition preserves little or no memory of them.²⁴¹ Whether the doctrinal classifications of the Great Perfection that are commonly known in Tibet in fact originated with early Indian teachers is not clear. Here what most concerns us is how the philosophical view of the Great Perfection was understood in the Nyingma tradition. For that purpose, the classifications attributed to the early masters are essential.

4.2.2.2. The View of the Great Perfection

The Great Perfection is reckoned supreme in the Nyingma system of nine vehicles (*yānas*). The eight lower vehicles rely exclusively upon fabricated methods of purifying obstacles and accumulating merit, and make distinctions between the basis, path, and result. The methods of the tantras, such as visualization, are based on the principle of the superior efficacy of causes that are formally homologous to the result of enlightenment. Nonetheless, to a greater or lesser extent all the eight yānas below Atiyoga (the Great Perfection) adhere to the formal dichotomy of cause and effect and thus do not dispel duality from the root.

The view and practice of Atiyoga are based exclusively upon the direct intuition of gnosis (*jñāna*, *ye shes*). Having recognized the nature of gnosis, the essential method of Atiyoga is to preserve the state of unmodified awareness (*rig pa*). Because gnosis is beyond affirmation and negation, acceptance and rejection, and so on, Great Perfection meditation is prescribed as natural (*ma bcos pa*), effortless (*rtsol med*), and spontaneously present (*lhun grub*).²⁴² Thus, Atiyoga is the only method that is fully homologous to the result in both form and content, and is the "fruition vehicle" (**phalayāna*, *bras bu'i theg pa*) *par excellence*. Atiyoga is said to be the pinnacle (*rtse mo*) of vehicles, from which all liberative methods can be seen in perspective, and is the final destination (*skyal so*) of all paths.²⁴³

Considered historically, Great Perfection texts should be understood in the context of Indian Mahāyāna philosophy and other forms of Vajrayāna practice. Great Perfection texts abound in concepts common to Indian Mahāyāna. One can especially point to the śāstras of the Madhyamaka and Cittamātra Yogācāra traditions, the Essence Sūtras teaching tathāgatagarbha,

and the anuttarayoga tantras as sources for understanding for the Great Perfection. The common ground of the Great Perfection and other systems is not limited to philosophical theory. For practical intents and purposes, the Great Perfection embraces the ethics and meditative techniques of lower yānas.

If practitioners of the Great Perfection always practice the disciplines of other vehicles, how is the Great Perfection distinguished as a separate vehicle? Moreover, if the Great Perfection is gnosis, which is already perfect and complete in itself, does it make any sense to call it a vehicle? The Sanskrit word yāna is understood by Tibetan scholars to mean "going" or "conveyance," and also as "that which is gone to." The view, path, and result of the Great Perfection are essentially identical with gnosis. Thus the Great Perfection is a yāna at least in the sense that it is "that which is gone to" by other vehicles.

This would still not explain how the Great Perfection can be a path (*mārga, lam*), if it is indeed none other than the result. Here one can invoke the second and eighteenth chapters of the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, where Nāgārjuna says that there is ultimately no difference between the "goer," the "going," and the "gone to," and that there is no difference between saṃsāra and nirvāṇa. Thus there is no difference in the basis, path, and result in any of the vehicles as regards the identical empty nature of those aspects, and in this respect the Great Perfection is the same as other vehicles. As in the Vajrayāna in general, the theory and practice of the Great Perfection is based on the tathāgatagarbha, which has the nature of gnosis. The tathāgatagarbha is the basis (*gzhi*), which is empty in essence (*ngo bo stong pa*), luminous by nature (*rang bzhin gsal ba*), unobstructed (*ma 'gags pa*), universal (*kun khyab*), and spontaneous (*lhun grub*) in its compassionate manifestation (*thugs rje*). As emptiness, the basis is the omnipresent and unchanging nature of all phenomena. Luminosity and compassion, the manifest aspects of the basis, are experienced on the path when a practitioner develops his or her understanding. Though experiences on the path do not reveal the full extent of gnosis, they are nonetheless its manifestation as the partial appearance of luminosity. When full enlightenment is reached, the qualities of gnosis are fully manifest. Thus the basis, the path, and the result are identical with respect to their ultimate nature (*ngo bo*) and identical in principle, if not in degree, with respect to the nature (*rang bzhin*) and manifestation (*thugs rje*) of the basis.

4.2.2.3. The Three Classes of Great Perfection

The Great Perfection is primarily a tradition of meditation practice. But like the tantric systems of lower vehicles, Great Perfection teachings are classified according to different levels of profundity in their philosophical views. All the Great Perfection teachings, regardless of their textual origin, are classified according to three *sde* or classes: mind (*sems*), space (*klong*), and esoteric instruction (*man ngag*). Of these three classes, only the esoteric instruction class is held to convey the essence of gnosis (*ye shes*) in a perfectly unmodified, uncontrived way. The differences among the three classes are anything but obvious; most Great Perfection texts use similar terminology and, to all appearances, teach the same thing. The following distinctions of the three classes are made according to the Nyingma exegetical tradition but do not pretend to be comprehensive.

The teaching of the mental class (*sems sde*) is that all phenomena arise as the creativity (*rtsal*) of mind-as-such (*sems nyid*), or the nature of mind. Mind-as-such here should not be confused with the ultimately existent mind of Mentalism. Tulku Thondup says that the mental class "teaches that all the appearances are mind, that mind is emptiness, emptiness is intrinsic awareness, and emptiness and intrinsic awareness are in union." Though it reveals the innate liberation of the

mind, the limitation of the mental class is that it does not eliminate all conceptual reference to the means of freedom—the awareness or clarity aspect of mind.²⁴⁴

The space class (*klong sde*) emphasizes the emptiness aspect of the awareness and clarity aspect of mind. It is said thus to eliminate the fault of the mental class, which is clinging to the clarity of awareness. The space class understands phenomena simply as the ornament (*rgyan*) of gnosis, while the mental class understands phenomena in terms of the arising of the creative display of awareness. The limitation of the space class is that it has a slight preference for the aspect of emptiness. Both the mind and space classes still depend upon a modicum of rational analysis to introduce gnosis.

The esoteric instruction class (*man ngag sde*) is said to introduce the nature of gnosis directly, without any adherence to subtle reference points of emptiness, clarity, or nonconceptuality. It is divided into outer, inner, secret, and innermost secret precepts. To the division of innermost secret precepts belong the teachings of the *snying thig*, or heart-essence. The heart-essence teachings were introduced in Tibet by both Padmasambhava and Vimalamitra, and have also appeared in many important termas. Heart-essence is the most widely practiced form of the Great Perfection meditation today.

The heart-essence practice has two levels, cutting through (*khregs chod*) and all-surpassing realization (*thod rgal*).²⁴⁵ Cutting through practice reveals the nature of mind, which is gnosis. To introduce gnosis, the esoteric instruction class refers to four precepts of absence (*med pa*), evenness (*phyal ba*), spontaneity (*lhun grub*), and uniqueness (*gcig bu*).²⁴⁶ These indicate the nondual, unfabricated nature of the nature of mind and the mode of appearance of enlightened mind as the bodies (*kāya*, *sku*) and gnosis (*jñāna*, *ye shes*) of enlightenment. In cutting through, one masters the realization of the dharmakāya, the basic nature of mind, but the methods for manifesting the saṃbhogakāya and nirmāṇakāya are not explicitly taught. An advanced cutting through meditator realizes the full extent of the three buddha bodies only at the moment of death.

A meditator who develops a stable realization of the mind's nature in cutting through may then practice all-surpassing realization.²⁴⁷ While cutting through reveals the nature of the dharmakāya, all-surpassing realization reveals the saṃbhogakāya and nirmāṇakāya. All-surpassing realization uses special forms (*gnad*) of bodily posture and visual focus to induce four stages of visionary experience. In the four visions of all-surpassing realization gnosis manifests spontaneously as visions of spheres of light containing mantric syllables and images of buddhas, "vajra chains" (*rdo rje lug gu rgyud*), and buddha paradises (*zhing khams*). After these visions reach the limit of diversity and completeness, all appearances recede in the ground of reality (*dharmatā*, *chos nyid*), and the perfection of the three buddha bodies is attained.

4.2.2.4. Great Perfection in Practice

As mentioned earlier, Great Perfection practitioners also engage in practices that belong to the lower vehicles. Most Tibetan masters of the Great Perfection have completed one or more retreats of three years' duration, during which time they practice all nine yānas in stages.

In the Nyingma tradition, a tantric practitioner must complete the "preliminary practices" (*sngon 'gro*) before focusing on tantric practices. The preliminaries include taking refuge in the Three Jewels, prostration, generating bodhicitta, making offerings, and purification practices; these condense the fundamental practices of the Hīnayāna, Mahāyāna, and Vajrayāna. Most

important is *guruyoga*, or devotional union with the wisdom mind of the teacher. The various preliminary prayers are recited 100,000 times each and take four months or more to complete.

Having completed the preliminary practices, most Nyingma yogis focus on the creation and completion phases of anuttarayogatantra. This requires hundreds of thousands or millions of mantra recitations for various meditational deities, followed by the inner yogas of the completion phase. In a three-year retreat the creation and completion phases are normally practiced during the second year.

In the final year of retreat Nyingma yogis practice the Great Perfection. For the most part only the esoteric instruction class (*man ngag sde*) teachings are practiced today, and most meditators practice according to one or another of the heart-essence cycles. The practices of cutting through and all-surpassing realization are the main practices (*dnegos gzhi*) of the instructional class. Cutting through has its own type of preliminary practice, known as "differentiating saṃsāra and nirvāṇa" (*'khor 'das ru shan*).²⁴⁸

In addition to cutting through and all-surpassing realization, the heart-essence cycles also contain other liturgies. These include the preliminary practices, the yogas of various deities, supplications of the protectors of Dharma (*dharmapāla*), commentaries on creation and completion phase practice, commentaries on cutting through and all-surpassing realization, liturgies for tantric feast offerings (*gaṇapūja*, *tshogs mchod*), and explanations of the kinds of experiences likely to occur while meditating. Great Perfection meditators may do only the practice of a particular heart-essence cycle, or may pursue a course of practices drawn from many different sources.

In general, the practices of cutting through and all-surpassing realization are undertaken only after considerable preparation through study and practice. Great Perfection practitioners must also attend to certain ritual observances, such as feast offerings and prayers to Dharma protectors, which create favorable conditions for practice. The exception is the practice of all-surpassing realization. To master the various visions of all-surpassing realization, a yogi must abandon all worldly distractions and all fabricated Dharma activities, such as mantras and rituals, and meditate in solitude. A successful all-surpassing realization practitioner will achieve the rainbow body (*'ja' lus*), making it possible, if so desired, to dissolve the physical body into rainbow-colored lights at the moment of death, leaving only body hair and nails behind. Though this type of occurrence is rare, unusual lights, sounds, smells, and psychic experiences are commonly associated with the death of an accomplished Great Perfection yogi.

4.2.3. The Great Perfection in Comparative Philosophical Texts

The Great Perfection is rarely if ever practiced outside the context of other types of practice, such as those of the other tantric systems and the common Mahāyāna. Likewise, in the scholastic curricula of Nyingma monasteries, philosophical treatments of the Great Perfection (such as the *Beacon*) are not usually studied until other systems of sūtra and tantra have been covered. As suggested earlier,²⁴⁹ this reflects the fact that the Great Perfection, which claims to convey the radical simplicity of enlightened awareness in the most direct way, needs to be approached by understanding what it is not, that is, in the comparative philosophical context of other systems to which it is supposed to be superior.

In the ninth and tenth centuries, as Tibetan scholars strove to understand all the different philosophies and practices they had encountered, there appeared the first indigenous Tibetan

doxographies, known as *grub mtha'* (*siddhānta*).²⁵⁰ Grub mtha' texts may be more or less sophisticated. Some are simply lists of formulaic definitions of the tenets of philosophical schools, while others include detailed comparative analysis of different systems, Buddhist and non-Buddhist, tantric as well as exoteric.

Mimaki recognizes two kinds of grub mtha': those that enumerate Indian philosophical systems, and those that include Tibetan schools as well.²⁵¹ The earliest Tibetan doxographies, not surprisingly, do not reckon any distinct Tibetan schools. Here, a more instructive classification would distinguish those that discuss Vajrayāna in addition to dialectical philosophy. A critical-philosophical grub mtha' analyzes higher and lower systems primarily in terms of their consistency and the refinement of their understanding of selflessness or emptiness.²⁵² A grub mtha' of the latter type, in differentiating the Vajrayāna systems from the dialectical vehicle, would address practical considerations such as the speed with which enlightenment is gained. A Nyingma grub mtha' of this type would also consider the degree of profundity of the subjectivity that determines the understanding of emptiness or ultimate reality, and designate Atiyoga as the highest philosophical system, as in the BSG.²⁵³

4.2.3.1. Ch'an and the Great Perfection in the *bSam gtan mig sgron*

gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes (9th–10th centuries) was the author of one of the most important philosophical documents of the early period. The *bSam gtan mig sgron* (SM)²⁵⁴ is a comparative philosophical study of the Great Perfection, Ch'an, tantric deity meditation, and exoteric Mahāyāna practice. The SM indicates the extent to which Tibetan understanding of Indian Buddhism had developed in little more than one hundred years, and shows the cardinal place that the Great Perfection was considered to hold among meditation systems.

The SM is a unique source for understanding the role of Ch'an Buddhism in Tibet, because of its early date and because it presents quite a different picture of Ch'an than later Tibetan historians usually do. According to the SM, Ch'an (*bsam gtan gyi lugs*) is to be ranked below the Great Perfection and the tantric teachings, but above the gradualist dialectical vehicle (*mtshan nyid kyi theg pa*) of the conventional Mahāyāna.²⁵⁵ Though Sangs rgyas ye shes thus grants some authenticity to the view of the Ch'an tradition (which he refers to as the "meditation" (*bsam gtan*) or "instantanealist" (*cig car ba*) system), he is nonetheless careful to distinguish its view of "nonimagination" (*rnam par mi rtog pa* or *dmigs su med pa*)²⁵⁶ from the "nonimagination" of the other vehicles, particularly the Great Perfection.²⁵⁷

Sangs rgyas ye shes's treatment of Ch'an suggests that it continued to be an important influence in Tibet even after its supposed proscription during the time of King Khri srong lde btsan. To determine which form of Buddhism was appropriate, the king is said to have convoked the "Council of Tibet."²⁵⁸ There one or more Chinese monks, later identified with the Abbot (*ha shang*) Mahāyāna (*mo ho yen*), are said to have encountered Śāntarakṣita's disciple Kamalaśīla and debated the merits of the subitist method of Ch'an against the gradualist method of the Indian Mādhyamikas.²⁵⁹

The encounter between the Indian scholastic Mahāyāna and representatives of the Ch'an tradition was a pivotal moment in the development of Tibetan Buddhism. The Hashang is said to have advocated nonmentation (*yiḍ la mi byed pa*) as the way to sudden enlightenment, and that all activities—including the ethical perfections (*pāramitāḥ*) of the Mahāyāna—were obstacles to be

abandoned. This was unacceptable to the Mādhyamika Kamalaśīla, who affirmed the necessity of rationality and ethical conduct. The Chinese abbot supposedly lost the debate and left in disgrace.

Consequently, at least as far as the traditions of the sūtras and scholastic tradition were concerned, early Tibetan Buddhists adopted the system of Kamalaśīla, who taught a gradual approach to understanding the ultimate truth according to the Yogācāra-Svātantrika Madhyamaka of his teacher Śāntarakṣita. Most scholars of the new traditions have followed Kamalaśīla's *Stages of Meditation (Bhāvanākrama)* in arguing that enlightenment must be understood gradually through correct analysis of the nature of ultimate reality. Tsongkhapa, for example, often refers to the *Bhāvanākrama* in his discussion of the gradual method of insight meditation (*vipaśyanā*, *lhag mthong*) in the *LRC*.

Certain aspects of Great Perfection teaching, such as the (at least rhetorical) rejection of analysis and the possibility of sudden enlightenment, suggest a similarity to quietist Ch'an attributed to the Hashang. This was noted by later critics of the subitist trends in Tibetan Buddhism and by critics of the Great Perfection.²⁶⁰ Indeed, one early master of the Great Perfection, A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas, received part of his lineage from Chinese teachers.²⁶¹ Tsongkhapa thought that most Tibetan Mādhyamikas in his day held views identical with those of the Hashang, and he refutes them in his *LRC*. Noting the resemblances of "Hashang" meditation and the Great Perfection, some of Tsongkhapa's followers assumed that the refutations in the *LRC* applied to the Great Perfection. Over time "Hashang" has become, especially for Gelug polemicists, a stereotypical label for any text, author, or practice that seems to adhere to the extremes of quietism or nihilism.

A number of Nyingma scholars have attempted to refute the conflation of Ch'an and the Great Perfection. They sometimes resort to caricature to distinguish an ersatz Great Perfection (the "Hashang" system) from the real article. Some, however, are ambivalent as to whether Hashang's view was completely amiss.²⁶² In the first topic of the *Beacon*, Mipham uses a caricature of the "Hashang system" (*ha shang lugs*) to differentiate the Great Perfection from the mistaken perceptions of its critics.²⁶³

Hashang Mahāyāna may also have been a tantrist.²⁶⁴ Karmay cites the description of Hashang Mahāyāna as a tantrist in O rgyan Gling pa's *Blon po bka' thang* as a garbled misinterpretation of a similar passage in *SM*,²⁶⁵ but Demieville's analysis²⁶⁶ suggests that there may be some truth to O rgyan Gling pa's characterization. If so, the early association and possible influence of Ch'an with respect to the Great Perfection would be rendered more plausible, since Great Perfection adepts would have shared with at least one Ch'an master the common denominator of tantric practices during the eclectic ferment of the early Tibetan Buddhist community (8th–10th century). Dudjom Rinpoche argues that the meaning of "non-elaboration" (*nisprapañca*, *spros bral*) and "nonconceptuality" (*nirvikalpa*, *rnam par mi rtog pa*) are the same for the sūtras and tantras of India, so the similarity of Great Perfection (representing the tantras) and the Hashang teachings (claiming to represent the sūtras) in this respect proves nothing.²⁶⁷

4.2.3.2. Other Early Doxographies

Two other early works discussing the Great Perfection view in comparative perspective may be found in various editions of the bsTan 'gyur: the *Byang chub sems bsgom pa rdo la gser zhun*²⁶⁸ (*BSG*), attributed to Mañjuśrīmitra (c. sixth century), and the *Man ngag lta ba'i phreng ba*²⁶⁹ (*MTPH*),

attributed to Padmasambhava (eighth century).

Mañjuśrīmitra is believed to have been the disciple of the first Great Perfection teacher, dGa' rab rDo rje. According to Lipman and Norbu (1987), the text of the *BSG* indicates that he was a learned paṇḍita, perhaps at one of the monastic universities of northern India. As with other early Great Perfection texts, however, its precise age and origin, as well as those of the author, are difficult to determine. In any case, the *BSG* is rightly considered to be one of the oldest Great Perfection texts, and to belong to the "mental class" of Great Perfection literature.

The *BSG* is a useful source for understanding the Great Perfection in the context of Mahāyāna philosophy. Its critical and comparative approach to the intuitive practice of meditation on bodhicitta (termed awareness (*rig pa*) or gnosis (*ye shes*) in later Great Perfection texts) anticipates the approach of Tibetan scholars like Sangs rgyas ye shes and Rong zom Paṇḍita. The text carefully distinguishes between the analytical approach to understanding reality, which proceeds through logical analysis, and the intuitive understanding of bodhicitta, which is gained through faith or by tantric methods.

As an appendix Lipman and Norbu include the index from the *Theg pa gcod pa'i 'khor lo*,²⁷⁰ which is an analysis of the *BSG* as a doxography (*grub mtha'*). Though structurally the *BSG* is not obviously a *grub mtha'*, the existence of the *Theg pa gcod pa'i 'khor lo*, perhaps written by the Tibetan adept Vairocana (eighth century), indicates the importance early Tibetan scholars placed upon the comparative philosophical perspective of *grub mtha'* texts. The amenability of the *BSG* to a *grub mtha'* analysis also suggests the sophistication of the philosophical milieu from which the early Great Perfection emerged. The comparative philosophical emphasis of the *BSG* might explain why Mipham would wish to comment upon it, in a day and age when *sems sde* texts had been nearly eclipsed by the heart-essence (*snying thig*) literature.²⁷¹

The *Garland of Esoteric Views* (*Man ngag lta ba'i 'phreng ba*, *MTPH*) is one of the oldest sources for the Great Perfection;²⁷² it is perhaps the only such text that is plausibly attributed to Padmasambhava.²⁷³ The *MTPH* presents the Great Perfection as one among several Buddhist and non-Buddhist philosophical systems (*grub mtha'*) and interprets it in terms of the mahāyoga doctrines of the *Guhyagarbhatantra*. According to Karmay (1988), the later (that is, eleventh century onward) fusion of the mahāyogatantra methods of deity, mantra, etc. with the Great Perfection is in large part a legacy of the *MTPH*.

As a *grub mtha'* or presentation of philosophical systems, the *MTPH* represents primarily the view of the tantras, and among these, primarily the Atiyoga (Great Perfection) doctrines of the *Guhyagarbhatantra*. The *Guhyagarbhatantra*, which is generally considered a mahāyogatantra, deals extensively with the symbols and schema of anuttarayogatantra—the five buddhas, five dākinīs, and so forth.²⁷⁴ It also treats the Great Perfection as a second stage of the completion phase (*sampannakrama*, *rdzogs rim*); this has made the text acceptable to certain later non-Nyingma scholars who were critical of the interpretation of the Great Perfection or Atiyoga as constituting a vehicle by itself, that is, something above and beyond the completion phase of their own systems.²⁷⁵

Following the Prajñāpāramitā and the Madhyamaka, on the dialectic (*mtshan nyid kyi theg pa*) path of the bodhisattvas, the *MTPH* says that

all elements of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa in reality have no true existence. It is only in terms of conventional truth that each entity exists, its own identity being so much an illusion.

Through practicing the ten *pāramitās*, a bodhisattva traverses the ten spiritual stages one by one and then finally attains enlightenment.²⁷⁶

On the subject of the Great Perfection, the *MTP* says there are four ways of understanding it (*rtogs pa nam pa bzhi*).²⁷⁷ The first is “the understanding that all existence has only one cause” (*rgyu gcig pa*), which means that

all existence in terms of the absolute has neither origination nor has any separate entities, but conventionally its apparitional character—which has no origination and therefore involves no individual entities—is like the moon reflected in different waters, hence it has capacity for causality. This apparition itself is devoid of true nature and has no origination (yet it has appearance). So in terms of both absolute and conventional truth one entity cannot be separated from another, whence derives understanding of the one cause.²⁷⁸

This could be characterized as a *Prāsaṅgika* *Madhyamaka* explanation, as it specifies the ultimate nonexistence and conventional causal efficacy of apparent phenomena.²⁷⁹ The fourth understanding, “direct experience” (*mngon sum pa*), is explained as follows:

[The statement that] “...all elements of existence have always been present as the realm of Enlightenment” from the beginning is neither contrary to the intention of the scriptures nor contradictory to the precepts, though one does not rely on either of these. One comprehends it directly with one’s own intellect through the means of total faith.²⁸⁰

This line of reasoning is elaborated by Rong zom Paṇḍita in his *Establishing the Divinity of Appearance* (*sNang ba lhar grub pa*), where he equates the empty nature of all phenomena (*dharmata*, *chos nyid*) with total purity (*viśuddha*, *rnam dag*), and total purity with buddhahood.²⁸¹ According to Mipham, in this regard Rong zom and Candrakīrti were of “one voice and one intention” in establishing the identity of original purity (*ka dag*) and emptiness.²⁸² It comes as no surprise that the *MTP* was commented upon by both Rong zom and Mipham, as it served well their intention to harmonize the Great Perfection with the highest view of the dialectical vehicle, epitomized by *Madhyamaka*.

4.3. The New Translation Period and the Nyingma Tradition

By the end of the ninth century, the early phase of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition had produced formidable intellectual and spiritual monuments. Monasteries had been built, texts translated, and their terminology canonized in the *Mahāvīryūtpatti*, and numerous scholars and adepts had flourished. But the rapid decline of the Yarlung dynasty subsequent to the destruction of the monastic establishment by King Lang dar ma left Tibetan Buddhists without royal patrons. The lineages of tantric teaching and practice were preserved, but on a reduced scale, by lay practitioners. What little is known about them is preserved in early religious histories, such as that of Nyang ral Nyi ma ’od zer (1136–1204).²⁸³

The sons and grandsons of Lang dar ma divided the Yarlung kingdom. One of them, sKyi sde Nyi ma mgon, ruled in Pu hrang in western Tibet in what had at one time been the ancient Zhang zhung kingdom. He is supposed to have built a monastery.²⁸⁴ His grandson Ye shes 'od (late tenth century) was interested in Buddhism and became a monk. He sent a number of young Tibetans to India to study Sanskrit and translate Buddhist texts. Two of these, Rin chen bzang po (958–1055) and Ngog Legs pa'i shes rab, returned with some Indian paṇḍitas in 978, the year traditionally marked as the start of the Buddhist revival.²⁸⁵ The texts of these and other translators—including Mar pa Lo tsa ba (1012–1096),²⁸⁶ the teacher of Mi la ras pa and founder of the Kagyu tradition, 'Brog mi lo tsa ba (992–1072), a founder of the Tibetan Sakya tradition, and Khyung po rNal 'byor, founder of the Shang pa Kagyu²⁸⁷—were later known as the “new translations” (*gsar 'gyur*), as distinct from the “early translations” (*snga 'gyur*), whose adherents came to be known as the “Ancient Ones,” or Nyingmapa.

There is an edict (*bka' shog*) ascribed to Ye shes 'od that censures the degenerate practices of “village tāntrikas” (*grong sngags*). He mentions the Great Perfection by name:

Now as the good karma of living beings is exhausted and the law of the kings is impaired,
False doctrines called rDzogs-chen are flourishing in Tibet.

Heretical tantras, pretending to be Buddhist, are spread in Tibet.²⁸⁸

Ye shes 'od was particularly critical of the practices of sexual yoga (*'byor ba*) and ritual slaughter (*grol ba*, lit. “liberation”). These practices are discussed in a chapter of the *Guhyagarbhatantra*, one of the most important canonical texts of the Nyingma, and one of the most controversial tantras from the eleventh century onward. Ye shes 'od recommended following the standard Mahāyāna practices of renunciation, compassion, and so forth.

To put his subjects back on the right path, in 1042 Ye shes 'od and his grandson Byang chub 'od invited the Bengali paṇḍita Atīśa (987–1054) to Tibet.²⁸⁹ Atīśa's followers founded the Kadampa (*bKa' gdams pa*) order, which emphasized the harmonious practice of monastic and tantric Buddhism. Atīśa's treatise on the gradual path to enlightenment, the *Bodhipathapradīpa*,²⁹⁰ was to become one of the most influential texts in Tibetan literature, providing the basic material for Tsongkhapa's monumental *LRC*. All schools of Tibetan Buddhism eventually assimilated Atīśa's methods for grounding potential tāntrikas in the ethical and philosophical teachings of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

Ye shes 'od's other grandson, Pho brang Zhi ba 'od, played a role equal to if not greater than his grandfather's in reestablishing Buddhism. He was a monk, a patron of Buddhist endeavors, including translation, and an accomplished translator himself. Like his grandfather, he issued a *bka' shog*, this time denouncing many Nyingma texts by name, including numerous Great Perfection texts.²⁹¹ A good Kadampa, he said, should not practice the Great Perfection. In his estimation, the Great Perfection and other Nyingma texts were nothing but spurious compositions by Tibetans.

Thus the religious practitioners who would later be known as the “Ancient Ones” (*rnying ma pa*) were in a difficult position. They were forced to come to terms with a new religious environment that was more hospitable to Buddhism in general but more hostile to Nyingma texts and practices. In determining textual authenticity, Indian origin was the most important standard for proponents of the new translations. The Nyingmapas were hard pressed to provide evidence of

Sanskrit originals for most of their tantras, though eventually they were somewhat exonerated by the discovery of Sanskrit manuscripts for two of their most important tantras, the *Vajrakīla* and *Guhyagarbha*.²⁹² The irony of the Sanskrit standard for canonicity was that many new tantras (such as the *Candamahāroṣaṇatantra* and *Hevajratantra*), which taught the same kind of theories and practices condemned by Ye shes 'od and Pho brang Zhi ba 'od, wound up being accepted in the new translation traditions on the basis of their Sanskrit originals.

It is not surprising that the transgressive practices taught in some Nyingma anuttarayogatantras became widespread during the interim period of the late ninth and tenth centuries. The hermeneutical traditions of tantra exclude the literal interpretation of language prescribing sexual intercourse and the taking of life, except under narrowly circumscribed conditions. But given the absence of clerical authority and the strictures such authority inevitably imposes on the interpretation of sacred texts, literalist readings of the tantras were perhaps more likely to occur.

It is not clear to what extent proto-Nyingmapas were aware of the need to interpret their tantric texts on several different levels, but they had, at least potentially, some access to the *locus classicus* for the tantric hermeneutics of the tradition of later translations, the *Guhyasamājatantra*, which was first translated in the ninth century.²⁹³ Some of the old and new tantras prescribe practices that would be considered conventionally immoral, such as the use of black magic against enemies, necromancy, etc. The early followers of the new tantras (*gsar rgyud*) were not above interpreting their tantras literally. Rwa lo tsa wa, famed as a great translator and wealthy patron of Buddhist monasteries, is supposed to have been a fearsome sorcerer.²⁹⁴ The life stories of Nyingma adepts of the interim period of the late ninth and tenth centuries indicates that sorcery was not unknown, but it appears most lived the uncontroversial lives of ascetic hermits.²⁹⁵

4.3.1. Rong zom Paṇḍita

The religious kings of Gu ge were perhaps among the critics who prompted Rong zom Chos kyi bzang po to defend the doctrines of the Great Perfection. Rong zom was a layman who was vastly learned in all topics of Buddhism, exoteric and esoteric, including the new translations. In this respect he upheld the standard of early Nyingma scholars and translators, such as Vairocana and Vimalamitra, and augured the great Nyingma scholars of the future like Klong chen pa, Lo chen Dharmaśrī (1654–1717), 'Jam mgon Kong sprul, and Mipham.²⁹⁶

The *Guhyagarbhatantra* was one of the main targets for criticism by followers of the new translations. In his commentary on that text, Rong zom claims the superiority of the Nyingma tradition in six respects: (1) the benefactors of earlier translations were the three ancestral religious kings, the "Lords of the Three Families" in kingly guise (Srong btsan sgam po as Avalokiteśvara, Khri srong lde btsan as Mañjuśrī, and Ral pa can as Vajrapāṇi); (2) the texts were translated in "emanated temples" such as bSam yas; (3) the translators, such as Vairocana, were emanations (*nirmāṇkāya*, *sprul sku*); (4) the Indian scholars supervising the translations were also emanations of buddhas and bodhisattvas; (5) as a sign of sincerity, much more gold was offered to Indian masters by earlier seekers of Buddhist teachings than was offered in the later period; and (6) the translations were completed when Buddhism was at its zenith in India, and the doctrines translated were in some cases revealed directly to the Indian masters who brought them to Tibet or taught them to Tibetans, having, like the Prajñāpāramitā sūtras of yore, only recently been

brought from magical lands other than India.²⁹⁷ Rong zom also wrote an important polemical defense of the Great Perfection tradition²⁹⁸ and several other texts addressing the philosophical coherence of the Nyingma tantras, which will be discussed below.

There is no evidence that Rong zom's invocation of the Nyingma's ideal origins, nor his philosophical proofs, sufficed to quiet his opponents' objections. It seems to have been Rong zom's Sanskrit scholarship that won over his critics in the long run,²⁹⁹ as the bigotry of some adherents of the new translations stemmed in large part from their belief in the canonical purity of the new tantras on the basis of their Indian and Sanskrit origin.³⁰⁰ The texts of many new tantras are said to have been concealed in nonhuman realms of *nāgas*, etc., after the Buddha taught them and then revealed much later to human beings. However, since the translators of the new tantras had received their texts and transmissions directly from Indian *paṇḍitas*, the Nyingmapas' invocation of an idealized historical matrix for the appearance of their canonical texts might have been less than compelling. All the same, one wonders how adherents of the new translations managed to accept the ultimately mythical origins of their own tantras.

Rong zom *Paṇḍita*'s most important original work on the Great Perfection is his *Theg pa chen po'i tshul la 'jug pa (ThCh)*.³⁰¹ According to Karmay, this text was written mainly as a defense against some early critics of the Great Perfection,³⁰² though it is not clear who exactly those critics were. The elaborate arguments of the *ThCh* suggest it was the scholars of dialectical philosophy to whom Rong zom addressed his work. One of the strategies Rong zom uses is to distinguish between the kinds of mind (*blo*) that can determine logic, appearances, and the absolute.³⁰³ Rong zom asserts that it is "immaculate wisdom" (*shes rab dri ma med pa*) only that can ascertain the latter,³⁰⁴ and that the Great Perfection is not refuted by logic (*rig pas mi gnod pa*) for that reason. He also differentiates this wisdom as *so sor rtog pa'i shes rab*, or the wisdom of individual analysis, from *rnam par mi rtog pa'i shes rab*, or "nonconceptual wisdom." Rong zom also refers to *rnam par mi rtog pa'i ye shes*, "nonconceptual gnosis." While *rnam par mi rtog pa'i shes rab* is a gradual method of eliminating obscurations, *rnam par mi rtog pa'i ye shes*, he seems to say, is direct.³⁰⁵ The relation between these two forms of wisdom is explored extensively in the *Beacon* and is a common theme in the analytical discussions of the esoteric instruction class of the Great Perfection (*man ngag sde*), where various pairs such as *kun gzhi (ālayavijñāna)* and *chos sku (dharmakāya)*, *sems* (ordinary mind) and *rig pa* (enlightened awareness), etc., are distinguished (*shan 'byed*).³⁰⁶ In Mipham's usage, *shes rab* generally refers to a wisdom cultivated through analysis, while *ye shes* refers to the original nature of mind.³⁰⁷

Rong zom's *lTa ba'i brjed byang (TJB)* discusses the views of non-Buddhist and Buddhist systems, including *anuttarayogatantra* and the Great Perfection. He compares *Mantrayāna* with *Madhyamaka*; the former, he says, asserts the equality of all dharmas (which the latter, implicitly, does not), but does not assert a higher nonelaboration (*spros bral*) than the *Madhyamaka*. Likewise the *Vajrayāna* does not maintain that the ultimate is not free of elaboration, nor that the buddha bodies (*kāya, sku*) and wisdoms (*jñāna, ye shes*) exist ultimately. Here Rong zom seems to anticipate the extrinsic emptiness (*gzhan stong*) "heresy."³⁰⁸ The *Mantrayāna* does eliminate the elaboration that asserts that the nature of relative phenomena is to have a substantive causal efficacy³⁰⁹—a view characteristic of the Buddhist logicians and the *Sautrāntika* school—but does not denigrate causal efficacy as relativity (*pratītyasamutpāda, rten 'brel*).³¹⁰ Though *Mantrayāna* asserts that the psychophysical aggregates (*skandha, phung po*), experiential constituents (*dhātu, kham*s), and sense

fields (*āyatana*, *skye mched*) are the maṇḍala of buddha bodies and wisdoms, it does not denigrate their conventional existence. Nor does it assert that the buddha bodies and wisdoms are somehow beyond them. The appearance of the skandhas, dhātus, and āyatanas on the one hand and the buddha bodies and wisdoms on the other are due respectively to impure and pure perception (*dag dang ma dag pa'i snang ba*). The latter is designated contextually as “true,” because it is a less erroneous mode of perception (*'khrul pa chung ba*).³¹¹ Elsewhere Rong zom states that the Mantrayāna and Madhyamaka are in agreement (*mthun*) with respect to the ultimate absence of production and cessation (*skye dgag med pa*) and the fact of the skandhas, etc., being mere illusions conventionally.³¹² However, the Mantrayāna is, according to Rong zom, unique in seeing those illusions as pure deities and in viewing the two truths as inseparable. In this regard, mantra is for those of sharp faculties who possess skillful methods.

As for the Great Perfection, the *TJB* says it teaches that “all phenomena (*dharmāḥ*, *chos*) are neither accepted nor rejected in great equalness”³¹³ and that all dharmas are inseparable (*dbyer med*). It doesn't claim to have a different or higher mode of eliminating elaborations than lower vehicles, but it is unique in eliminating the elaborations of acceptance and rejection (*blang 'dor*). Thus, all the Dharmas of the Buddha have a single savor and single character (*ro gcig pa tshul gcig pa*). There is nothing that is not included in the great equality of the Great Perfection, just as drops of water are combined in a single stream, and taste equally of salt in the ocean.³¹⁴

Rong zom's writings do not recognize the Svātantrika-Prāsaṅgika distinction, which was developed in Tibet during his lifetime. His writings employ the earlier distinction of *mdo sde spyod pa'i dbu ma* (Sautrāntika Madhyamaka) and *rnal 'byor spyod pa'i dbu ma* (Yogācāra Madhyamaka), exemplified by the writings of Bhāvaviveka and Śāntarakṣita. In his *TJB*, he suggests that the Yogācāra Madhyamaka is “more important” (*don che ba*):

The two Madhyamakas are dissimilar in their presentations of relative truth. With respect to [adequately representing] the general systems of sūtra and tantra, the general method of logical argument, and the writings of the ūr-Mādhyamikas Nāgārjuna and Āryadeva, the Yogācāra Madhyamaka system seems to be more important.³¹⁵

4.3.2. The Rise of Scholasticism

In Tibet the dialectical criticism of the Madhyamaka, the logic and epistemology of the Pramāṇa, and the esoteric mysticism of the tantras were all embraced and formed the basic material for new Buddhist traditions. Though this process had begun in the eighth century, scholasticism did not blossom until the eleventh century, when the earlier Nyingma traditions were joined by new streams of Indo-Tibetan tradition—later known as the Sakya, Kagyu, and Kadam.³¹⁶ Each of these had its great exponents, usually combining the lifestyles of the monk-scholar and yogi, who clarified the philosophical views of their respective schools through teaching, debating and writing, and meditation practice. All of these authors sought, in one way or another, to situate the theory and practice of Vajrayāna within dialectical-philosophical discourse and vice versa. Such persons were Rong zom Paṇḍita and Klong chen rab 'byams among the Nyingmapas, Sakya Paṇḍita among the Sakyapas (*sa skya pa*), Atiśa³¹⁷ and 'Brom ston pa (1003–1064) among the Kadampas, sGam po pa (1079–1153),³¹⁸ Mi bskyod rdor rje,³¹⁹ and Padma dkar po³²⁰ among the Kagyupas, and Tsongkhapa (1357–1419),³²¹ reviver of the Kadampa lineage, whose tradition would

later be known as the “Virtuous Tradition,” or Gelug (dge lugs).

The work of all these scholars as well as Mipham’s should be understood in the context of Mahāyāna philosophical systems as studied in Tibetan philosophical colleges (*bshad grwa*). The main subjects studied there are logic and epistemology (*pramāṇa*, *tshad ma*), the Perfection of Wisdom (*prajñāpāramitā*, *phar phyin*), the Middle Way (*madhyamaka*, *dbu ma*), monastic discipline (*vinaya*, *’dul ba*), and Buddhist psychology and cosmology (*abhidharma*, *chos mngon pa*) according to the celebrated treatise of Vasubandhu, the *Abhidharmakośa* (*Chos mngon pa mdzod*), and its commentaries. There is a Tibetan commentarial genre, the monastic college textbook (*yig cha*), of which the Gelug school has the most extensive collection. These texts serve to introduce students to the important topics of their courses of study. Some Gelug *yig cha* are summaries of Tsongkhapa’s teachings. The divergent interpretations of these *yig cha* are hotly debated by Gelugpa monks from different monasteries, or between different colleges of the same monastery. With the exception of *pramāṇa*, for which students generally prepare by studying “collected topics” (*bsdu grwa*), “types of mind” (*blo rigs*), and “types of evidence” (*rtags rigs*)³²² in their various compilations by Tibetan authors, the study of these subjects proceeds for the most part on the basis of original Indian texts, together with their Indian and Tibetan commentaries.³²³

The order in which these scholastic subjects are studied in different monasteries and traditions varies. *Madhyamaka* or *Prajñāpāramitā* usually follows *Pramāṇa*, since logic is considered essential for mastering the various lines of reasoning that establish emptiness. Forensic debate is an essential part of Tibetan monastic education, and it is especially emphasized in Gelug monasteries. After a number of years, usually not less than ten, philosophical studies may culminate in a degree. In the major Gelug monasteries of central Tibet, this is the *geshe* (*dge bshes*).³²⁴ In other traditions, a scholar may achieve the grade of *khenpo* (*mkhan po*) or monastic preceptor. Technically a *khenpo* (*upadhyāya*) is an abbot and professor of a monastery, but in the Nyingma and Kagyu traditions (as with “*geshe*”) the title functionally means “master philosopher and teacher.” A student of dialectical philosophy may, upon completion of his studies, engage in a second course of study of tantric ritual and meditation, embark on a teaching career, or enter the administration of a monastery. Most of the important figures of the Tibetan Buddhist traditions held either a *geshe* or *khenpo* degree and were accomplished in both scholarship and tantric meditation.

4.3.3. Klong chen rab ’byams

In the life and works of Klong chen rab ’byams (1308–1363) the Nyingma traditions of the Great Perfection achieved their finest literary expression. Klong chen pa is best known for his Great Perfection writings, but he was also a great scholar of dialectical philosophy. No Nyingma author has ever surpassed his contribution of outstanding scholarship and superb poetic style. In Klong chen pa, the dialectical philosophical tradition of the Nyingma reached, if not exactly its apogee, then certainly the second of its three greatest pinnacles, flanked by Rong zom Paṇḍita and Mipham. The writings of Klong chen pa are in any case exemplary of the Nyingma scholastic tradition in their comprehensive treatment of both exoteric Buddhism (including dialectics) and Vajrayāna theory and practice, preserving a clear emphasis upon the latter (especially the Great Perfection).

Klong chen pa was born in central Tibet to a family of tantric adepts. From the time he was five his father began teaching him the esoteric practices of the Nyingma tradition. At sixteen he began

studying the tantras of the New Translation schools, and by the time he was twenty-one he had received most of the major transmissions of the later translations. At the age of nineteen he began to study the exoteric texts of the sūtra tradition at Sang phu Monastery. Later he would receive important Kagyu teachings from the Third Karmapa, Rang byung rDo rje.

When Klong chen pa was twenty-nine he met Kumāradza, a principal holder of the heart-essence (*snying thig*), the highest teaching of the Great Perfection. He was immediately accepted as his chief disciple and spent about two years with him. Then he left to practice on his own and began to give teachings. Throughout the rest of his life he traveled, taught, and wrote extensively.

Klong chen pa's works include numerous commentaries on various subjects of sūtra and tantra and some of the most exquisite Tibetan poetry ever written. Though he wrote extensively on the tantras of the Nyingmapa and of the schools of the later translations, as well as on the practices of "exorcism" (*gcod yul*) and "pacification" (*zhi byed*), his greatest volume of work is dedicated to the Great Perfection, especially the heart-essence.³²⁵

Klong chen pa's writings exhibit a conscientious effort to present the entire Buddhist teaching as a consistent whole. He pays particular attention to the Great Perfection tradition, not only in its practical aspects (which he explores at length), but also in its relation to the other yānas and philosophical systems. Like Rong zom Paṇḍita, Klong chen pa tries to demonstrate the Great Perfection's superiority in philosophical terms. His discussion of Madhyamaka in the *Yid bzhin mdzod*, for example, seems to support the view of the Great Perfection.³²⁶

In a personal bibliography Klong chen pa lists about 200 titles of works he composed, many of which are now lost. On his works dealing with philosophical dialectics, he says:

On occasion I have written treatises belonging to the vehicle of philosophical dialectics. As a general commentary on the five treatises of Maitreya, there is the *Jewel Staircase Exposition of the Stages and Paths*, root text and commentary; the *Beautiful Light, An Illuminating Exposition of the Main Text of the Abhisamayālaṃkāra*; the *Sprouting Field of Light, Illuminating the Vinayakārikā*; the *Summary of the Three Eastern Svātantrikas*,³²⁷ *The Entrance to Suchness*; the *Summary of Non-Abiding, Clarifying the Essence of Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka*; *Introduction to the Differentiation of the Two Realities* and its practical instruction, the *Illumination of the Gradual Path*.³²⁸

He goes on to mention ten more titles, dealing with bodhicitta in its relative (ethical-motivational) and ultimate (gnostic) dimensions. Though Klong chen rab 'byams's works on the vehicle of philosophical dialectics seem to form the smallest component of his *oeuvre*—he mentions many more titles just on the subjects of song, dance, and poetry—this passage indicates the importance he placed on the study of Madhyamaka. Unfortunately, most if not all of these titles relating to Madhyamaka appear to be lost.

Klong chen rab 'byams' *Yid bzhin mdzod* (*Wish-fulfilling Treasury, YD*) "provides a summary of the whole range of Buddhist doctrine, and teaches the way of Hearing, Pondering and Meditation upon the doctrine."³²⁹ It is one of the most important texts for understanding Mipham's Mādhyamika interpretation, especially for the resolution of the seventh topic—whether Madhyamaka has a position or not (*dbu ma khas len yod dam med*).³³⁰ In the YD is Klong chen rab 'byams' most lengthy discussion of the Prāsaṅgika system available; he considers it the highest system of dialectical philosophy.³³¹ In his comparative philosophical work, the *Grub mtha'*

mdzod,³³² and his Great Perfection treatise, the *Theg mchog mdzod*,³³³ Klong chen pa also affirms the Prāsaṅgika as the highest system of dialectical philosophy.

Nowhere does Klong chen pa espouse the Yogācāra Madhyamaka system of Śāntarakṣita. He also distinguishes between the Mentalist system (*cittamatra*, *sems tsam*) and the mental class (*sems sde*) of the Great Perfection.³³⁴ He does not explore the extrinsic emptiness (*gzhan stong*) concept at all. Klong chen pa must have been aware of the distinction of intrinsic (*rang stong*) and extrinsic emptiness, as the teaching of Dol po pa Shes rab rgyal mtshan (1292–1361) became very famous during his lifetime. It is also significant that Klong chen pa did not write a commentary on the *Ratnagotravibhāga* or on the subject of tathāgatagarbha, even though the synonymous term *bde gzhegs snying po* (*sugatagarbha*) appears frequently in his writings on the Great Perfection. The subject of buddha nature was just starting to become a central polemical issue in Tibetan scholasticism, as attested by the numerous commentaries and interpretations brought to bear on the *Ratnagotravibhāga* by Klong chen pa's contemporaries (especially Bu ston Rin chen 'grub and Dol po pa) and later scholars.³³⁵

In his masterful verse work on the Great Perfection, the *Chos dbyings mdzod*, and in its lengthy *LT* commentary, Klong chen pa compares the Great Perfection and Madhyamaka and notes their similarity on the issue of nonelaboration (*niṣprapañca*, *spros bral*).³³⁶ However, he does not emphasize the unity of purpose or intent (*dgongs don*) of the Great Perfection and other systems, such as Madhyamaka. Mipham's concern with this question seems to have stemmed, as did Rong zom's polemic of the *ThCh*, from the challenge posed later by politically ascendant schools and the critiques of their partisan adherents. In Klong chen rab 'byams' time, in spite of the political turmoil in which he was accidentally involved,³³⁷ *odium theologicum* seems to have been kept at a happy minimum. Apparently he did not have any reason to defend the Great Perfection against philosophical criticism.

Klong chen rab 'byams' polemical asides in the *Seven Treasures* (*mdzod bdun*) are in large part directed to those within the Great Perfection tradition who misinterpret it. In the *CD* he says,

Nowadays, elephant-like meditators who claim to practice Atiyoga
Say that scattered thoughts are the enlightened mind (*bodhicitta*, *byang chub kyi sems*).
These deluded ones are utterly benighted
And are far from the meaning of the natural Great Perfection.³³⁸

He also criticizes the "Hashang" or quietist misinterpretation of the Great Perfection:

If, not realizing equalness within self-arising,
One becomes attached to the word "nonduality" and
Feigns confidence in the total absence of imagination,
That is false realization, the dark expanse of ignorance³³⁹ (...)
If [one's meditation] abides without distraction in the expanse of nonfabrication
Even if memories and thoughts are engaged, it is still the state of *dharmatā*.
But if one gets entangled in fabrication, even *dharmatā*,
Though nonconceptual and vast like space, is a canopy of characteristics.
Even if one meditates day and night, there is still attachment and clinging.
It is the same as the meditation gods, said the Victor.³⁴⁰

In at least one place in the CD, Klong chen pa seems to address persons of the dialectical-philosophical (*mtshan nyid pa*) persuasion who do not accept the subitist position of the Great Perfection. The root text reads,

As for “liberation without realization or nonrealization,”
To assert liberation through realization is a major hindrance.
The teaching of Atiyoga that everything is one and equal
Is irrational [according to lower vehicles], but here is quite reasonable.³⁴¹

In his commentary, the *Treasury of Quotations* (*Lung gi gter mdzod*, LT), Klong chen pa explains:

Because all dharmas are liberated from the beginning, there is nothing to liberate through realization now. For, if they are *not* primordially liberated, they cannot be liberated through realization, and if they are [already] liberated [temporally], liberation is not necessary....To think that one is liberated through introduction [to the nature of the mind] is an erroneous concept. What could bind the essence, which you would then try to liberate? In the state of profound and penetrating awareness that is not established anywhere, realization and what is realized are nondual, so there is nothing to enlighten or liberate. Because it is not made better through realization, nor worse through nonrealization, and is equality, there is no need for adventitious realization, [precisely] because the ultimate dharmatā is beyond intellect and is not established as an object of realization. To say “it is realized conventionally” is just the expression of deluded thoughts.³⁴²

Bearing in mind the importance that Buddhist logicians, and those Tibetan philosophers influenced most by them—the Gelugpas—place upon the valid establishment of gradualist conventionalities, it is not hard to imagine their discomfort with the kind of view expressed here. Arguably, however, Klong chen pa was just expressing the experiential implications of emptiness. It might be said that this and other passages in Great Perfection texts that seem to cast aspersions upon conventional distinctions are echoes of the state of sublime equipoise (*āryasamādhi*, *‘phags pa’i mnyam bzhas*), where the inconceivability of the ultimate is uninterrupted by the “yes, but...” voice of conventional understanding.

Like Rong zom Paṇḍita, Klong chen pa qualifies the Great Perfection view with reference to the emptiness (*śūnyatā*, *stong pa nyid*) of Madhyamaka. The *gNas lugs mdzod* (ND) is a treatise on the meditative practice of cutting through (*khregs chod*), the basic practice of the esoteric instruction class of the Great Perfection. It discusses the Great Perfection view under four topics: *med pa* or nonexistence, *phyal ba* or equalness, *lhun grub* or spontaneity, and *gcig bu* or holism (literally, “oneness”). The first of these refers to the nonexistence of inherent existence (*niḥsvabhāva*, *rang bzhin med pa*) according to Madhyamaka. The root text reads,

The nature of nonexistence is emptiness of self-existence.
In the great expanse of enlightened awareness equal to space,
However things appear, they are without true existence.
In the womb of the vast realm of space,
Animate and inanimate beings and the four elements transmute,

But however they appear, their empty forms are not self-existent;
 Likewise are the dharmas that appear in enlightened awareness.
 Just as magical, illusory reflections appear but
 Are insubstantial and have the nature of emptiness,
 From the very moment of appearance everything that can possibly appear
 Does not move from the state of enlightened awareness and is insubstantial.
 Just as dreams do not move from the state of sleep
 And from the moment of appearing have no self-existence,
 Phenomenal existence, *saṃsāra*, and *nirvāṇa* do not move
 From the sphere of enlightened awareness, having no substantiality or characteristics.³⁴³

Great Perfection texts do not emphasize the reasonings that establish emptiness. For example, the point of this passage is essentially that from the perspective of bodhicitta or awareness (*byang chub kyi sems, rig pa*), all phenomena are empty, and appear to be insubstantial and illusory. This does not prove that they are empty but merely indicates that in Great Perfection meditation, realization of emptiness is inseparable from the state of awareness. This is essentially the same point Klong chen pa makes in noting the similarity of the Great Perfection and Madhyamaka with respect to the absence of elaboration.

Thus, Klong chen pa's writings touch upon many of the same points that concerned his predecessor Rong zom and the critics of Nyingma whom Rong zom addressed in his writings. It is also evident that Klong chen pa was a serious student of Madhyamaka and that his Mādhyamika studies contributed significantly to his understanding of the Great Perfection. However, the Mādhyamika philosophical aspects of his Great Perfection texts are just one facet of Klong chen pa's approach to Buddhist study and practice, which was eclectic with a Great Perfection core component. In the centuries following his death, Klong chen rab 'byams' comparative philosophical outlook and religious eclecticism continued to be a salient feature of Nyingma tradition, never more so than in the nineteenth-century Ecumenical Movement (*ris med*).

4.3.4. Nyingma Monasticism and the Ecumenical Movement (*ris med*)

Tsongkhapa revived the Kadam tradition of Atīśa, the eleventh-century Indian master who restored monastic discipline in Tibet, and founded several important monasteries. His tradition, later known as the Gelug, became the dominant school in Central Tibet, and eventually in Tibet at large. The Fifth Dalai Lama (1617–1682) consolidated temporal power under his office and, with it, the power of the Gelug school.³⁴⁴ He was also an important tertön and patron of Nyingma monasteries, which consequently flourished. During the Fifth Dalai Lama's time four important Nyingma monasteries were founded: Kaḥ thog rDo rje gdan (1656), dPal yul (1665), sMin grol gling (1676), and rDzogs chen (1685).³⁴⁵

Though it never flourished to the same degree as that of the Gelug tradition, the development of Nyingma monasticism is one of the most important developments in that school after Klong chen rab 'byams. Scholasticism and monasticism are generally found together in Tibetan culture, and the intellectual traditions of the Nyingmapa developed significantly in these monasteries. Here certain figures stand out, such as mNga' ris Paṇ chen Padma dBang rgyal (1487–1542), who wrote an exposition of the "three vows"³⁴⁶ (*sdom gsum rnam par nges pa'i bstan bcos*) of the Hīnayāna, Mahāyāna, and Vajrayāna, with special attention to defending the Great Perfection

system against its critics.³⁴⁷ This text was not as controversial as a similar work by Sakya Paṇḍita (the *sDom gsum rab tu dbye ba*),³⁴⁸ but it remains an important text in the curricula of Nyingma monasteries. Sog zlog pa Blo gros rgyal mtshan (1552–1624) was a prolific author who wrote an important defense of the Nyingmapa and the Great Perfection, the *Nges don 'brug sgra*.³⁴⁹ Lo chen Dharmaśrī (1654–1717) was a great scholar who mastered all the “inner” (Buddhist) and “outer” (worldly) sciences, and fostered the growing monastic trend by ordaining monks and writing about the vinaya.³⁵⁰ Kaḥ thog rig 'dzin Tshe dbang nor bu (1698–1755) was one of the great Nyingma luminaries of the eighteenth century and a forefather of the Ecumenical Movement,³⁵¹ eclipsed only by 'Jigs med gling pa,³⁵² the most important Great Perfection author since Klong chen rab 'byams.³⁵³

The ecumenical “movement” (*ris med*) of the nineteenth century was centered in the royal capital of Derge (*sDe dge*) in the eastern Tibetan region of Kham.³⁵⁴ According to E. Gene Smith, the sectarian conflicts stemming from political and economic ties of different monasteries during the youth of the Derge prince Sa dbang bzang po (b. 1768), ending in his mother's imprisonment, led to his nonsectarian orientation. The royal family history he later wrote is, according to Smith, perhaps the first explicitly nonsectarian Tibetan document, advocating tolerance among different sects.³⁵⁵ In any case ecumenism had long been the rule rather than the exception among eminent Tibetan scholars; references to seeking out Dharma teachings without discriminating (*ris su ma chad par*) among different schools abound in the biographies of Tibetan lamas.

According to Smith, partly as a result of the nonsectarian ethos adopted by the prince, intellectual and spiritual culture flourished at Derge in the nineteenth century. Some of the more noteworthy individuals involved include the extraordinary Nyingma scholars 'Jam mgon Kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas (1813–1899),³⁵⁶ who was the author of a prodigious encyclopedia of Buddhist culture, the *Shes bya kun khyab*, 'Jam dbyangs mKhyen rtse dbang po,³⁵⁷ a prolific tertön and author, their student-colleague Mi pham 'Jam dbyangs rnam rgyal, the tertön mChog 'gyur gling pa (1829–1870), and the famous scholar and Great Perfection master dPal sprul 'Jig med Chos kyī dbang po.

These scholars and their literary *oeuvre* were nothing short of prodigious. Kong sprul's collected works number over ninety volumes; his expertise encompassed every type of artistry and knowledge known in Tibet. Like Kong sprul, mKhyen brtse was a meditation master and redactor of tantric traditions, old and new, and a great tertön as well. mChog 'gyur gling pa was particularly renowned as a tertön and in that capacity collaborated to some extent with Kong sprul and mKhyen brtse. The vast survey of the three yānas of Buddhism, including the Great Perfection, called the *Graded Path: The Essence of Gnosis (lam rim ye shes snying po)*³⁵⁸ was a collaborative effort of the three.

One of the most important contributions of these masters was the compilation of texts from disparate traditions in large collections: such as Kong sprul's *Encyclopedia (Shes bya mdzod)* and *Treasury of Collected Precepts (gDams sngags mdzod)*, mKhyen brtse's *Collection of Tantras (rGyud sde kun btus)*, and mKhyen brtse's student Blo gter dbang po's *Collection of Sādhana (sGrub thabs kun btus)*. These collections facilitated the preservation of rare lineages and underlined the unity of the diverse traditions from which they were drawn.

4.3.5. A Nyingma Philosophy?

What, if anything, unifies the philosophical views of these diverse Nyingma authors? Klong chen pa seems to have followed the Madhyamaka exegetical tradition of the Kadam/Sakya monastery at Sang phu Ne'u thog, where he undertook the bulk of his training in dialectics, though he declares that his solution to the question of "whether Mādhyamikas have a position" is unique.³⁵⁹ Like the vast majority of Sakya scholars, Klong chen pa upheld the Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka as the highest system of the dialectical vehicle. Rong zom also held the Madhyamaka as supreme, though as mentioned above he seems to have had a predilection for the Yogācāra Madhyamaka.³⁶⁰ In his *TJB* he explicitly rejects two faulty positions later ascribed to the gZhan stong pas (exponents of extrinsic emptiness)—namely, asserting the ultimate existence of the buddha bodies and wisdoms, and denigrating conventional phenomena.³⁶¹ By the nineteenth century, in eastern Tibet, many Nyingma monasteries used Gelug scholastic textbooks in their curricula, but many Nyingma scholars of Kham, such as Kaḥ thog Rig 'dzin Tshe dbang nor bu and 'Jam mgon Kong sprul, were gZhan stong pas. Khro shul 'jam rdor mentions that according to some accounts, 'Jig med gling pa accepted the Gelug mode of establishing conventionalities, while Lo chen Dharmaśrī maintained extrinsic emptiness.³⁶² Thus, it is evident that by Mipham's time the Nyingmapas, though unified in their adherence to a core of received Vajrayāna texts and to the ultimate view of the Great Perfection, maintained diverse lineages of interpretation of the dialectical vehicle, especially along the lines of the intrinsic vs. extrinsic emptiness (*rang stong gzhān stong*) distinction.

The flourishing of Nyingma monasticism and *Ris med* in the nineteenth century created the conditions for new commentaries and original works to be written and received by a community. The literary activities of the scholars mentioned here suggest an unparalleled exchange of information among individuals of rare genius. The ostensible reason underlying much of Mipham's writing on both sūtra and tantra was the command of his teacher 'Jam dbyang mkhyen brtse'i dbang po to write "textbooks for our tradition" (*rang lugs kyi yig cha*)—the distinctive feature of which is the Great Perfection system.³⁶³ This can only mean that the texts written as a result of that request, which include his major philosophical commentaries on Indian Madhyamaka, were written to elucidate the unique feature of the Nyingma tantras, namely the Great Perfection. Thus, to the extent that they were intended to prepare students for the Great Perfection, Mipham's dialectical philosophical writings should be read as texts of the Great Perfection tradition.

Traditionally, it is said that the Great Perfection is the pinnacle of vehicles, providing a unified vista of all philosophical systems and spiritual attainments of the various paths.³⁶⁴ It would seem to be in this spirit that the *Ris med* tendency developed. Certainly most if not all the prominent lamas associated with Kong sprul *et al.* in Eastern Tibet were practitioners of the Great Perfection. It may also be that the relatively fluid and decentralized political structures of eastern Tibet inclined the region to religious diversity, and its adepts to eclecticism.³⁶⁵ Cultural and political heterogeneity may be expected to spawn creative innovations.

Mipham's *Beacon* thus exhibits two influences. On the one hand there is the long-standing orientation of Nyingma exegesis toward defining the Great Perfection in terms of, and yet distinct from, other systems—which was, at least in part, a response to polemical critiques issuing from the adherents of those systems. On the other hand, the *Beacon* reflects the cultural and social diversity of Mipham's life experience, especially in its hermeneutical reconciliation of all systems of sūtra and tantra, culminating in the Great Perfection, in accordance with the ecumenical (*ris*

med) approach. It should be emphasized that the comparative and critical dimension of Mipham's philosophical work did not stem from a need to go on the offensive, but, as Mipham himself observed, from the fact that the Nyingma tradition had dwindled in strength and needed to be fortified.³⁶⁶ Like creative philosophers before him such as Atīśa, Sakya Paṇḍita, Tsongkhapa, and Mi bskyod rdo rje, Mipham sought to strengthen the tradition by grounding its mystical Vajrayāna insights in the rational common currency of critical philosophy. As will be seen in the next chapter, Mipham was very much a conciliator of diverse philosophical viewpoints.

5. Philosophical Distinctions of Mipham's Thought

PREVIOUS CHAPTERS have introduced the cultural, historical, and philosophical features of Indo-Tibetan Buddhism in general, and in, particular, those of the Nyingma and Great Perfection traditions. We have seen that the Great Perfection, while claiming to be the quintessence of all paths and of enlightenment itself, is for most intents and purposes best understood within the rich philosophical and religious context of those very paths it claims to transcend. It has been suggested that in its use of doxographical analysis the *Beacon* is fairly typical among philosophical treatments of the Great Perfection, and that the *Beacon* employs philosophical comparison and contrast for both polemical and pedagogical purposes. Previous sections have also indicated the controversial history of Tibetan traditions of the Great Perfection.

The Gelug school has already been mentioned as a source of various critiques, more often implicit than explicit, directed at the Nyingma school and the Great Perfection. Likewise, the philosophical critiques in the *Beacon* are for the most part directed at positions held by the founder of the Gelug tradition, Tsongkhapa, or the interpretations of Tsongkhapa's followers. The specifics of the *Beacon* are discussed in the following chapter. The present chapter will consider the distinctions of epistemology, gnoseology, and hermeneutics that are most important for understanding the *Beacon*, particularly those that account for the philosophical debates between Mipham and Gelug scholars.

5.1. The Gelug Philosophical Tradition

The founder of the Gelug school was Tsongkhapa Blo bzang grags pa. As a young monk he studied widely with scholars and yogis of the Sakya, Kagyu, and Nyingma traditions and soon distinguished himself through his outstanding intellect. He also dedicated many years to Vajrayāna practice in retreat and developed many profound realizations. By his early thirties he had become a famous teacher. The last thirty years of his life were dedicated to teaching, writing, founding monasteries, and other activities that greatly revitalized the religious and philosophical activity of Buddhism in Tibet.

Tsongkhapa's tradition, eventually known as the Gelug (*dge lugs*), produced many great teachers and scholars. It was not long before the Gelug eclipsed the Sakya as the Tibetan scholastic tradition *par excellence*. Gelug monasteries specialized in the study of logic and the practice of debate. Their victories over scholars of other schools, real as well legendary, fostered a powerful *esprit de corps* among Gelug philosophers.

Tsongkhapa's immediate disciples rGyal tshab Dar ma rin chen and mKhas sgrub dGe legs dpal bzang (1385–1438) reiterated and drew out the implications of their master's original interpretation of Mādhyamika thought. rGyal tshab, in his commentary on the ninth chapter of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*³⁶⁷ and in lecture notes from Tsongkhapa's teaching entitled the *dKa' ba'i gnad chen po brgyad*,³⁶⁸ elucidated crucial points of his teacher's position. One of rGyal tshab's most significant contributions to the Gelug school's unique philosophical tradition was his commentary on the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, known as the *Darṭik*.³⁶⁹ mKhas grub, in his *sTong thun chen mo*,³⁷⁰ refuted Tsongkhapa's detractors and was thus the first great Gelug polemicist. Other

writers, such as rJe btsun Chos kyi rgyal mtshan (1469–1546), Paṇ chen bSod nams grags pa (1478–1554), 'Jam dbyang bzhad pa (1648–1721), and lCang skya Rol pa'i rdo rje (1717–1786), continued to examine inconsistencies and points of confusion that were imputed to Tsongkhapa by his opponents,³⁷¹ and sometimes by Tsongkhapa's followers themselves.³⁷²

Tsongkhapa wrote several Mādhyamika commentaries, among the most important of which are the *lhag mthong* (*vipaśyanā*) chapter of his *LRC*,³⁷³ his commentary on the *Madhyamakāvatāra* entitled *dBu ma dgongs pa rab gsal*, and his treatise on Buddhist hermeneutics, the *Drang nges legs bshad snying po*.³⁷⁴ The *LRC* contains Tsongkhapa's most detailed analysis of the proper methods for generating the Mādhyamika view in meditation practice, and will be discussed further in sections 6.3.2–6.3.3.1.1.

The philosophical project of Tsongkhapa and the Gelug tradition is perhaps best characterized as a consistent and comprehensive interpretation of sūtra and tantra in accordance with the Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka of Candrakīrti and the Pramāṇa system of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti. This, at any rate, is how Gelugpas interpret the overall significance of their philosophical tradition. In his Mādhyamika writings Tsongkhapa sets forth what he considers to be distinctive about the theory and practice of the Prāsaṅgika system and discusses how some of his Indian and Tibetan predecessors went wrong in their interpretations of Nāgārjuna and Candrakīrti. Tsongkhapa claimed to have mastered the subtleties of their writings with greater depth and sophistication than his Tibetan predecessors.³⁷⁵ He also suggested that most Tibetan Mādhyamika philosophers and meditators had views that were not much different than, if not identical to, the infamous "Hashang" of yore. They adhere to emptiness as something exclusive of causal relativity, he says, and consider a mindless catatonia to be proper meditation on emptiness. It is hardly surprising that many of Tsongkhapa's colleagues were inclined to object.

The Gelug was the largest religious school from the time of the Fifth Dalai Lama onward. Thus Tsongkhapa's work is widely considered to be the most authoritative Tibetan interpretation of original Indian texts, especially Candrakīrti's *Madhyamakāvatāra*. In particular Tsongkhapa's *Legs bshad snying po* is considered by Gelugpas to be a conclusive expression of Buddhist hermeneutical principles, establishing the distinction of definitive and provisional teachings (*nītārtha/neyārtha*) incontrovertibly. If, as Tsongkhapa maintains, the teaching of emptiness is the only definitive teaching, then maintaining that gnosis (*jñāna, ye shes*) is part and parcel of the ultimate reality, as Klong chen pa, Mipham, and the gZhan stong pas do, is incorrect. Thus, the philosophical debates between the Gelugpas and Mipham stem in large part from the different definitions of ultimate reality they accept. What Tsongkhapa considered the definitive (or "highest") teaching, was considered by many other scholars as provisional (or "lower") in relation to their own traditions of exegesis, or at least not exclusively definitive, and vice versa. Bearing in mind that Tsongkhapa's writings are very comprehensive in their treatment of the Prāsaṅgika system—and also that scholastic traditions invariably consider themselves to be the "highest" or "most refined"—one can imagine the invigorating effect his philosophy had on the intellectual climate of Tibet.

One of the hallmarks of Tsongkhapa's interpretation of Prāsaṅgika is his emphasis on the valid cognition of conventionalities (*tha snyad tshad grub*). Some of Tsongkhapa's predecessors had, in his opinion, wrongfully denigrated the validity of conventional knowledge. Some of Tsongkhapa's detractors, on the other hand, felt that his emphasis on conventionality was excessive and that he failed to explain properly the quintessential meaning of Prāsaṅgika, which they understood as absence of elaboration (*niṣprapañca, spros bral*) or as the gnosis of realization (*jñāna, ye shes*).

Another point of fierce contention between the Gelug and other schools concerns the logical character of emptiness as the ultimate truth. Is emptiness, defined as a logical negation of *svabhāva*, adequate to the nature of ultimate truth? Or is ultimate reality best defined in terms of knowledge, for example, as the object of enlightened wisdom, or perhaps simply as enlightened wisdom itself?

While Tsongkhapa was most concerned with recovering Candrakīrti's interpretation of Nāgārjuna, his main predecessor in Tibetan philosophical innovation, Dol po pa, was concerned to clarify the significance of the sūtras teaching the buddha essence (*snying po'i mdo*) and the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, which was based upon them. Dol po pa's interpretation of Madhyamaka emphasized the "emptiness of other," or extrinsic emptiness (**paraśūnyatā*, *gzhan gyis stong pa*), which, he claimed, was a higher philosophical view than that of Prāsaṅgika, which he designated the system of "own-emptiness" (*rang stong*).³⁷⁶

Klong chen rab 'byams' style of interpretation of Prāsaṅgika (apparently derived from his Sakya philosophical studies) and Dol po pa's system of extrinsic emptiness were both subject to Tsongkhapa's critiques. Thus, Tsongkhapa's interpretations and polemics cannot be understood only in terms of Indian Buddhist sources but must be seen in relation to Tibetan developments. This also holds true for all major Tibetan philosophers after Tsongkhapa, who were compelled to respond to his critiques of philosophical and meditative approaches that were perfectly acceptable to them.

Mipham's *Beacon* is representative of the centuries-old philosophical backlash against the positions of Tsongkhapa's Madhyamaka. However, as already suggested, it is unusually conciliatory in some respects. In chapter 6 the *Beacon* will be examined further, as both a polemical defense against, and also as a conciliatory response to, the Gelug philosophical tradition.

5.2. Theory, Practice, and Ultimate Reality

Previous sections have introduced various aspects of Indo-Tibetan philosophical traditions and referred to differences in their views. The present section explores the gnoseological, epistemological, and hermeneutical issues informing the views of the Nyingma school, especially those of Mipham and of Gelug philosophy.

The terms "view" and "theory" can be used interchangeably as rough equivalents of the Sanskrit *darśana* (*lta ba*), which literally means "seeing." Here I have used "theory" because it is often paired with the words "practice," "praxis," and "method." In the present study, as synonyms for theory, I have used "view," "vision," "seeing," and *darśana*. These terms are more suggestive of the practical implications of philosophical theory in a Buddhist context than the word "theory" normally is.

Darśana is commonly used to mean "philosophical system" or "philosophical text." Indian Brahmanical philosophy recognizes six orthodox *darśanas*, while Buddhist philosophy (*bauddhadarśana*) is numbered among heterodox systems. Indian philosophers generally did not acknowledge a difference between the fundamental concerns of philosophy—which includes diverse systems of logic, metaphysics, and ontology—and those of religion. Philosophy as "seeing" is a method of orienting the spirit, by means of intellect, toward *mokṣa* or salvation. Philosophical knowledge, like *aletheia* of the ancient Greeks, is understood not so much as an addition to one's current stock of knowledge, but as a method for removing ignorant misconceptions about the

nature of things. As “seeing,” Buddhism and most other Indian philosophical systems have for the most part a similar orientation. Indian philosophy is conducive to gnostic vision of ultimate concerns. There is a goal toward which the various traditions of Indian philosophy provide ethical, practical, and gnoseological orientation, a goal that in some systems such as the Great Perfection is considered identical with a primordial ground (*’dod ma’igzhi*).

If philosophy is understood as a process of historical development without a specifiable goal, or as a deconstructing metadiscourse that parasitizes the naive speculations of earlier ages, the classical Indian understanding of philosophy’s purpose might seem impoverished. As the handmaiden of religion, philosophy might not function as a transforming process but as the rigid armor of dogma. However, the neglect of critical philosophy in a soteriological context tends to result in the degeneration of religious and philosophical traditions into partisan insularities. This was a major concern for Buddhist philosophers.³⁷⁷ Philosophy imbued with the spirit of mokṣa is more likely to draw people together than drive them apart.

For its Indian and Tibetan exponents, Buddhist critical philosophy has an exalted purpose. It is an effective tool for gaining confidence (*niścaya*, *nges pa* or *nges shes*) in realities that transcend the contingencies of culture and history. Unless the experience of freedom in personal realization is integrated with philosophical discourse, however, it is difficult if not impossible to share that realization with others. It is by revealing the possibility of freedom from the culture of compulsive adherence to ordinary identities and differences, that philosophy has secured its vital role in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism.

A philosophical theory constitutes a claim, or position, about truth and reality. The word “theory” is more connotative of what speech expresses than of what a mind perceives, thinks, or understands. In other words, a theory is generally something that can be verbally communicated to others. In the Buddhist philosophical context, darśana as “seeing” involves both the gnosemic and epistemic formulas that are the currency of philosophical discourse, as well as the subjective (gnoseological and epistemological) orientations of experience.³⁷⁸ In this respect, darśana might be better differentiated as “looking” as well as “seeing.” Epistemically speaking, darśana is the content of philosophical discourse and is subject to abstract formulation. When one is attempting to fathom the nature of things through the medium of abstractions, it is as though one were looking for something. When it is found in this way, however, it is not as a matter of direct perception, but as a crystalline idea (*sāmānya*, *don spyi*). When darśana is the property of a knowing subject, it functions dynamically in experience and is less amenable to theoretical formulation. In this context, darśana is “seeing” rather than “looking”; it is a process of self-transformation rather than a series of propositions. When one sees something, as opposed to looking for or at it, one participates profoundly in the seen. The view of the Great Perfection is said to be gnosis (*jñāna*, *ye shes*) and not a critical-philosophical theory. Distinctions of subject and object, and the definition of philosophical views by logical propositions, do not characterize the Great Perfection *per se*, so it should be considered a darśana in the latter sense.

Establishing the rational coherence of a theory requires interpretation, and interpretation requires principles of interpretation. If a theory is demonstrably coherent according to those principles, it is said to be correct. In the Buddhist context a “correct view” (*samyagdṛṣṭi*, *yang dag pa’i lta ba*) should be both rationally coherent and experientially relevant. The Buddha is said to have defined Dharma as that which is both true and useful. To the extent that a Buddhist theory is rational, it is true; to the extent that it is experientially verifiable, it is useful. Practice, when based on a correct view, conduces to liberation (*mokṣa*), because a correct view is adequate, or

homologous, to reality. When a theory gains relevance through its liberating function, its truth as correctness is known in the fullest sense. For this reason, gnosis (*jñāna*) is often termed “individually cognized” (*pratisamvid, so sor rtogs pa*).

On the one hand, theory is a philosophical perspective on truth or reality that, in order to be correct, must be rationally coherent according to accepted principles—when someone has a thorough understanding of that coherence, (s)he is said to understand the view correctly. On the other hand, the view is known correctly when it provides practice—especially meditation—with an effective soteriological orientation. When the correct view is cultivated to perfection—when seer and seen coalesce—one reaches enlightenment. Enlightenment is perfect freedom from suffering and perfect knowledge of all that exists. Perfect knowledge entails fully realizing the unique and encompassing nature of ultimate reality. Thus, ultimate reality may be defined as what is known in the state of perfect freedom. Ultimate reality may also be defined as the nature of all things, which is not known in particular things or through particular concepts. The Buddha used the words “profound, peaceful, unelaborated, luminous, not produced” to describe this nature.

How are theory, practice, and ultimate reality related? A “theory,” when it is oriented toward the Buddhist *summum bonum*, is a view of what is ultimately true. Theory as “correct view” points one in the right direction, while practice conveys one to a destination. The destination, ultimate reality, is pointed out or pictured in the view. The ultimate, however, is what has always been the case, regardless of how it is variously conceived in evanescent thoughts. Ultimate reality is not the finger that points at the moon, but the moon itself. The ultimate is not known through imagination, but through the cessation of imagination in direct perception. For these reasons, in the Great Perfection teaching the basis or *gzhi* (what is already ultimately the case) is inseparable from the result (realization or perfect knowledge).³⁷⁹

Understood in this way, the ultimate is a hermeneutical principle that guides the rational and experiential modes of determining the correct view.³⁸⁰ Buddhist philosophers generally agree that, in the final analysis, words and concepts are not adequate to ultimate truth. Therefore, rational determination of the correct view should establish that concepts and formulas are, by their very nature, inadequate to what is ultimate. If its reasons effectively demonstrate this inadequacy, a theory is coherent and true in the Buddhist context.

Rational determination of the correct view cannot mean, however, utter repudiation of all concepts as false; after all, the view that ultimate reality is free of conceptual elaboration is itself a concept. The correct view must also imply an understanding of how conventional realities—including the analytical distinction of “ultimate” and “relative”—are established through experience and reason. If the moon is ultimate truth and one’s finger is conventional expression, the sensory faculties of the person who points at the moon is the correct view subsuming both conventional and ultimate realities.³⁸¹ When subjective understanding and conventional expression are properly coordinated, the ultimate view can be properly indicated. Having a correct view, then, entails a coherent rational understanding of a philosophical theory, experiential cultivation of the view, and effective coordination of one’s understanding with conventional transactions.

Thus, correct view is necessary for personal development as well as for meaningful communication. Rational determination of the view entails having a correct concept of the ultimate as beyond disclosure by concepts (correctness here implying rational conviction gained through exhaustive analysis). Experientially, the view is established by the actual pacification of

limiting concepts. When the rationally determined view becomes the subject of meditation, it eliminates conceptual elaborations and is known to be correct.

Generally speaking, “view” has a philosophical meaning as well as a practical significance. It is not just a formula or an abstract concept—the view is the reasoned conclusion of philosophical analysis that transforms one’s experience and informs one’s actions. When experience is transformed, understanding of the view deepens. In this sense, the view is part of an ongoing process. To understand completely is to know the ultimate, while practice is a method that exercises the view and deepens understanding. In the context of practice, ultimate reality is the goal or destination toward which the view provides orientation, and practice provides momentum. In the context of the view, ultimate reality is a hermeneutical principle that provides orientation for reason. The linchpin of the hermeneutical circle of theory, practice, and ultimate reality is ultimate reality itself. How it is defined is essential to how theories are evaluated and how practice is cultivated.

5.3. Valid Cognition and Philosophical Analysis

The dialectical-philosophical approach assumes that philosophical views (*darśana*) and meditative practice (*bhāvanā*) are intimately linked—without a proper philosophical determination of the nature of reality, direct meditative access to it is impossible. Philosophical views, to the extent that they are more or less profound, require different forms of valid cognition (*pramāṇa*, *tshad ma*). Meditation is the process whereby one makes the transition from intellectual certainty to direct realization. In Buddhist epistemology (*pramāṇa*) there are two forms of valid cognition—*inference* (*anumāna*) and *direct perception* (*pratyakṣa*). One or both of these may be involved in ascertaining the view and in meditating upon it. For the most part, inference is dominant in critical philosophical investigation (*vicāra*, *dpyod pa*), while direct perception occurs momentarily in all experience, and with increasing consistency as meditative absorption (*samāpatti*, *mnyam bzhaḡ*) deepens.

Tibetan Mādhyamikas have largely followed the ninth-century Indian scholar Kamalaśīla in advocating a combination of analytical (*dpyad bsgom*) and transic meditation (*’jug bsgom*). Analysis is the method of inferential reasoning leading to intellectual certainty (*nges shes*), which is the vivid ascertainment (*nges pa*) of a general concept or mental image (*sāmānya*, *don spyi*) of emptiness. Transic meditation is tranquil abiding (*śamatha*, *zhi gnas*), which is the method for clearly holding that image in the mind. Ultimately these two kinds of meditation should, as the coalescence of calm abiding and analytical insight (*śamatha-vipaśyanā-yuganaddha*, *zhi lhag zung ’jug*), reinforce one another and lead to direct nondual perception of the nature of things.³⁸²

Mipham, like the Indian Mādhyamikas, divides valid cognitions by way of their objects—conventional and ultimate.³⁸³ According to Madhyamaka, whatever exists conventionally is said to be devoid of inherent existence (*svabhāva*, *rang bzhin*). Conventional phenomena are known by conventional valid cognitions (*tha snyad dpyod pa’i tshad ma*). Conventional valid cognition is necessary for understanding the mundane aspects of causality, and for differentiating out-and-out falsehoods (for example, the appearance of a snake) from what actually is the case (for example, a coiled rope). Conventional valid cognition does not know how things exist (*gnas*), but how they appear (*snang*). The nature (*svabhāva*) of all things is emptiness, the ultimate truth (*paramārtha*, *don dam*), which is known by ultimate valid cognition (*don dam dpyod pa’i tshad ma*). Ultimate valid cognition concerns the way things actually exist, regardless of how they appear to exist.

Extremely obscure (*atīparokṣa*, *shin tu lkog gyur*) phenomena such as emptiness and cyclic rebirth cannot be known directly by ordinary individuals (*prthagjana*, *so so skye bo*), who must rely upon inferential reasoning and scripture, respectively, in order to determine correctly the object under consideration.³⁸⁴ In the Madhyamaka, rational certainty (*niścaya*, *nges shes*) about the view is gained in the process of applying inferential reasoning to phenomena with a view to establishing their emptiness. Such emptiness is admittedly a mental image, hence not authentic (**lakṣaṇya*, *mtshan nyid pa*) emptiness. But, if thoroughly cultivated, it leads to the direct perception of emptiness—the first *bhūmi* or stage of Buddhist enlightenment, which also reveals the nature of extremely obscure objects.³⁸⁵

Mipham divides conventional valid cognition into “the conventional valid cognition of impure limited perception” (*ma dag tshur mthong tha snyad dpyod pa’i tshad ma*) and “the conventional valid cognition of pure perception” (*dag gzigs tha snyad dpyod pa’i tshad ma*).³⁸⁶ The conventional valid cognition of impure limited perception includes whatever unenlightened beings can validly know with the modes of perception available to them, and comprises Dignāga and Dharmakīrti’s categories of conventional valid cognition.³⁸⁷ The Buddhist logicians accept that the object of direct perception is a unique particular (*svalakṣaṇa*) that ultimately exists. The way a unique particular appears to direct perception and the way it actually exists conform to one another. Madhyamaka, however, accepts that conventional things appear to be truly existent but does not accept that appearance as indicative of the abiding nature of things, which is emptiness.

According to Mipham’s commentator mDo sngags bstan pa’i nyi ma, conventional valid cognition of pure perception is necessary to account for divine appearance as taught in the tantras as well as for understanding the immanence of enlightened qualities in the *tathāgatagarbha*.³⁸⁸ These are not, strictly speaking, conventionalities that ordinary individuals (*prthagjana*, *so so skye bo*) can experience. Only a sublime being (*ārya*, *’phags pa*) can perceive the pure conventionality of divinity or the *tathāgatagarbha*’s inherent perfection. However, to the extent that authentic scriptural reference (*āgama*, *lung*) is a valid source for inferential valid cognition, an ordinary person can use the valid cognition of pure perception as a guide for practice. For example, when a meditator practices the visualizations of the tantric creation stage, (s)he is not simply projecting a false image of purity, because things actually appear as pure for sublime perception.³⁸⁹

Following Bhāvaviveka, Mipham distinguishes two types of ultimate reality in Madhyamaka.³⁹⁰ The conceptual ultimate (*paryāyaparamārtha*, *rnam grangs pa’i don dam*)³⁹¹ is considered an absolute negation (*prasajyapratiśedha*, *med dgag*)³⁹² and is accessed by a “valid cognition investigating the conceptual ultimate” (*don dam rnam grangs pa’i tha snyad dpyod pa’i tshad ma*).³⁹³ An absolute negation simply excludes something, without implying anything else.³⁹⁴ For example, when the Mādhyamika philosopher says “All things are empty of inherent existence,” he does not imply that they are not devoid of something else.³⁹⁵ In the statement “that man is not a Brahmin,” the negation is an implicative one (*paryudāsapratiśedha*, *ma yin dgag*), because it expresses the absence of one predicate while implying some other (for example, Kṣatriya, etc.).

Mipham takes the ultimate *cum* absolute negation to be a special emphasis of the Svātantrika system,³⁹⁶ while the Gelugpas consider it to be a distinguishing feature of Prāsaṅgika.³⁹⁷ According to Mipham, absolute negation is a suitable way to conceptualize the ultimate for beginners, but because it is still a conceptual formula, it does not represent the final significance of nonelaboration (*niṣprapañca*, *spros bral*). It is a mere nonsubstantiality (*dnegos med*), as opposed to

substantial existence (*dnagos po*). It corresponds to the analytical wisdom (*prajñā, shes rab*) of the post-meditative state (*prṣṭhalabdha, rjes thob*) and is adequate to emptiness as an object of discursive thought but not to the nonconceptual gnosis of sublime equipoise (*āryajñāna, 'phags pa'i ye shes*).

The Svātantrika-Prāsaṅgika distinction among the Gelugpas is drawn primarily with reference to the Svātantrika practice of debate, which assumes a commonly and validly established conventional phenomenon, implicitly acknowledging that phenomenon's existence by way of its own character (*svalakṣaṇa*). Mipham's interest in Svātantrika has more to do with the Svātantrikas' understanding of the ultimate, which Mipham considers the constitutive feature of Svātantrika that complements the Prāsaṅgika understanding.³⁹⁸ This concern is stated most explicitly in his commentary on Śāntarakṣita's *Madhyamakālamkāra*.³⁹⁹ For Mipham, the definitive ultimate (*don dam mtshan nyid pa*) must be understood as the nonconceptual ultimate that is the object of sublime beings in meditative equipoise. The coalescence (*yuganaddha, zung 'jug*) of appearance and emptiness is the nonconceptual, final ultimate (*aparyāyaparamārtha, rnam grangs ma yin pa'i don dam*), and is the object of nondual gnosis of sublime beings. This is the ultimate according to Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka of Candrakīrti, which is accessed by a valid cognition investigating the nonconceptual ultimate. As it is free of elaborations (*niṣprapañca, spros bral*), it is beyond affirmation and negation.

According to mDo sngags bstan pa'i nyi ma, a misunderstanding of these different types of negation and the two kinds of ultimate underlies the view of Mipham's pūrvapakṣa:

The great scholars of the later traditions all seem to agree that the valid cognitions analyzing the two realities are ultimate valid cognition and the conventional valid cognition. Obviously, this has been explained many times. However, according to some points of view, in accordance with the Svātantrika, a valid cognition analyzing the conceptual ultimate and the valid cognition of limited conventionality taught in the logic texts [is are all there is]. [Such scholars] do not explain the unique reasonings of the Prāsaṅgika texts, which are the valid cognition of nonconceptual ultimacy, according to the words [properly used to express them, *sgra ji bzhin du*]. Especially, no one explains the conventional valid cognition that relies upon pure sublime perception. These scholars understand the ultimate validating cognition by harmonizing it with the system (*tshul*) of the valid cognition of limited perception, as if arguing: "the subject, sound, is not permanent, because it is a causally efficacious entity." Here the subject is not negated, but a permanence based upon it is negated. In the context of analyzing ultimate reality as well, they say "the vase is not empty of vase, but of true existence. The subject, vase, is not negated, but a true existence based upon it must be negated." That system also understands the ultimate, as it is explained in the Svātantrika context, as a nonsubstantial conceptual ultimate only. They do not know how to properly establish the great equanimity of appearance and emptiness, the nonconceptual ultimate, which is said to be "profound, peaceful, unelaborated, unfabricated."⁴⁰⁰

This is essentially the same argument with which Mipham rebuffs his Gelug pūrvapakṣa in the first topic of the *Beacon*. Mipham concedes that, with respect to the logical manner in which emptiness is established, the view of Prāsaṅgika is an absolute negation (*prasajyapratīṣedha, med*

dgag).⁴⁰¹ However, his opponents understand this negation in a manner similar to the proponents of true existence (*dnegos smra ba*, for example, the Sautrāntikas and Buddhist logicians). According to them, Mipham says, the Mādhyamika negation of *svabhāva* is like the Buddhist's negation of the Mīmāṃsākas' idea of the permanence of sound; it is the misconception of permanence that must be negated, but sound itself is not negated. Thus, *svabhāva* is negated, but not the thing *per se*. This model of Mādhyamika negation is problematic, because the only things that appear to exist for ordinary beings are things that falsely appear to be truly existent, and because it is not possible to imagine a thing *per se* without objectifying and reifying it as having some kind of *svabhāva*.⁴⁰²

According to Mipham, if the Buddhist logicians' model of negation is applied too rigidly to the Mādhyamika conception of the ultimate, it is difficult to reconcile emptiness as absolute negation and as ultimate reality, with ultimate reality as identity of form and emptiness. Absolute negation is not adequate to understanding the view of Madhyamaka or the Great Perfection for this reason. The definitive meaning of these systems should be determined according to sublime meditative equipoise (*'phags pa'i mnyam bzhaq*) not according to the affirmations and negations of the unenlightened mind. Thus, Mipham relies heavily upon the hermeneutical principle (*pratiśaraṇa, rton pa*) of gnosis in defining ultimate reality. According to the dialectical vehicle, even sublime beings (*ārya*)—those who are capable of perceiving emptiness directly in meditation—must alternate between focusing on form and focusing on emptiness; only buddhas can perceive relative and ultimate truth simultaneously. If the highest wisdom sees the two truths as coalescent, and if the ultimate truth is known in highest wisdom, then the ultimate should be defined according to that coalescence.

5.4. The Philosophy of Extrinsic Emptiness

Extrinsic emptiness was the most controversial of philosophical innovations to appear in Tibet. Its first systematizer was Dol po pa Shes rab rgyal mtshan (1292– 1361), a famous scholar and holder of the *Kālacakra* teachings.⁴⁰³ Like Tsongkhapa, Mipham in the *Beacon* faults the gZhan stong pas, exponents of extrinsic emptiness, for failing to properly understand the nature of emptiness.

According to the extrinsic emptiness view, all conventional phenomena are empty of intrinsic reality (*svabhāva*). The ultimate reality (*paramārtha*), however, is not empty of its own essence; it is the supreme emptiness endowed with all characteristics (*stong nyid rnam pa kun ldan*), such as the three bodies (*kāya, sku*) of buddhahood, the ten buddha powers (*daśabala, stobs bcu*), and so forth. Thus, enlightenment is what is real in the ultimate sense and is empty of the relative, impure, conventional phenomena of *saṃsāra*, which are other than it. The emptiness of conventional phenomena in Svātantrika and Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka is a different sort of emptiness, called "intrinsic emptiness" (*rang stong*); ordinary appearances are simply deluded fabrications and are devoid of any essence. If their type of emptiness applied to the ultimate, then its manner of appearance as buddha bodies (*kāya, sku*) and gnoses (*jñāna, ye shes*) would also be deceptive (*saṃvṛti, kun rdzob*), that is to say conventional. But that is impossible, because the ultimate reality is what is known by enlightened wisdom, for which deceptive appearances do not exist. For this reason Dol po pa and other gZhan stong pas maintain that the teachings of the "third turning"—especially the tathāgatagarbha—are definitive, while those of the "second turning" are provisional. Generally speaking, the extrinsic emptiness view accepts the orthodox Prāsaṅgika

view on the lack of intrinsic reality (*niḥsvabhāvatā*) as it relates to the phenomena of deceptive reality, but relegates it to nondefinitive status as a philosophical view. If emptiness as absolute negation (*prasajyapratishedha*, *med dgag*) were to apply equally to the enlightened state, the gZhan stong pas say, that state would have to be a blank, “dead” emptiness (*bem stong*) devoid of qualities.

In essence, the extrinsic emptiness view is that ultimate reality and its inseparable qualities (enlightened phenomena) exist ultimately, while the deluded appearances of *samsāra* do not exist. Tsongkhapa and subsequent Gelug scholars, as well as the vast majority of Sakyapas, have criticized this position. Whereas the *Prāsaṅgika* Madhyamaka holds the two truths to be ultimately the same, the gZhan stong pas’ critics say they reify the ultimate reality and deprecate conventional reality, holding them to be mutually exclusive in a manner reminiscent of the dualistic metaphysics of the *Sāṃkhya* system.⁴⁰⁴

Many prominent Nyingma and Kagyu scholars maintained one degree or another of extrinsic emptiness. A number of the figures associated with *Ris med*—especially Kong sprul and mKhyen brtse—were proponents of extrinsic emptiness. Kong sprul seems to have considered it as the glue that held the various Tibetan Buddhist traditions together.⁴⁰⁵ Others, such as Mipham’s teacher dPal sprul Rinpoche and the Sakya lama Blo gter dbang po, were decidedly not gZhan stong pas. Mipham’s position is rendered potentially ambiguous by the fact that he criticizes extrinsic emptiness in some places (for example, in the *Beacon*), upholds it in one short text (the *gZhan stong khas len seng ge’i nga ro*),⁴⁰⁶ and incorporates some aspects of it while rejecting others in his short study of *tathāgatagarbha*, the *TTC*.⁴⁰⁷

It seems that extrinsic emptiness is both a product of and a catalyst for ecumenism. One of the appealing features of the extrinsic emptiness theory is that it provides an easy hermeneutical link between *sūtra* and *tantra*. The *tantras*, like the *Essence Sūtras* and the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, teach the idea of original enlightenment replete with qualities and symbolically imagine that view in meditation practice. Extrinsic emptiness takes the teaching that the ten powers, etc., are inherent in the *tathāgatagarbha* literally, much as the *Vajrayāna* does when invoking the immanence of enlightenment in the form of deities, *maṇḍalas*, and miraculous activities. According to Dudjom Rinpoche, the authenticity of extrinsic emptiness is to be ascertained in part by reference to the *tantras*.⁴⁰⁸ If so, then it is somewhat problematic to claim that extrinsic emptiness is the highest system of the vehicle of philosophical dialectics, as does Dudjom Rinpoche.⁴⁰⁹

Contemporary Nyingma and Kagyu teachers tend to say that *Prāsaṅgika* is good for study, while extrinsic emptiness is good for practice. This seems to suggest that the validation of extrinsic emptiness is discovered in the pudding of personal experience, and not in the conceptual kitchen utensils used to make it. If this is so, then it is hard to assign extrinsic emptiness purely to the vehicle of philosophical dialectics (*mtshan nyid kyi theg pa*), where conclusions are drawn on the basis of principles accepted by both parties. To extend the gastronomic metaphor, dialectical philosophy is more like a course in culinary technique, while extrinsic emptiness attempts to be a degree program in home economics, covering all phases of materials, techniques, and finished products. The controversial nature of extrinsic emptiness thus stems in large part from its ambiguous relationship to the mainstream of Indo-Tibetan philosophy, typified by *Prāsaṅgika* Madhyamaka. One could even argue that extrinsic emptiness is a “revealed” teaching masquerading as a critical-philosophical system. There is no doubt that Dol po pa based his views in no small part upon the evidence of his own experience.⁴¹⁰

Although the philosophical distinction of extrinsic emptiness versus intrinsic emptiness is a

purely Tibetan convention, antecedents for extrinsic emptiness are found in the Pali canon⁴¹¹ as well as Mahāyāna śāstras.⁴¹² The undefiled and ontologically primary status of the tathāgatagarbha is made explicit in śāstras such as the *Ratnagotravibhāga* and in what Dol po pa refers to as the *snying po'i mdo*, or sūtras that teach the buddha essence.⁴¹³ In the opinion of some Tibetans, extrinsic emptiness is identical with the “Yogācāra Madhyamaka,” or the Madhyamaka of Maitreya-Asaṅga as found in such texts as the *Madhyāntavibhāṅga*.⁴¹⁴ It should not, however, be confused with Cittamātra or “Mind-only.” According to the extrinsic emptiness interpretation, the position that “everything is mind” is not the intention of Asaṅga and Maitreya, even though such a school of philosophy arose on the basis of their works.⁴¹⁵ Nor should it be confused with the Yogācāra-Svātantrika Madhyamaka of Śāntarakṣita. Extrinsic emptiness is also referred to as “Great Madhyamaka” (*dbu ma chen po*), a term that appears frequently in Mipham’s works. This term can also be misleading, because *dbu ma chen po* does not refer exclusively to extrinsic emptiness. Klong chen pa and Mipham use it to refer to Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka, because it emphasizes the nonconceptual ultimate, which they understand as the principle of coalescence. Tsongkhapa also uses this term in passing, for example, in the colophon of his *dBu ma dgongs pa rab gsal*.⁴¹⁶

Neither of Mipham’s chief predecessors Klong chen pa and Rong zom Paṇḍita were proponents of extrinsic emptiness. Though Rong zom lived before the intrinsic vs. extrinsic emptiness controversy, he seemed to anticipate its views and reject them.⁴¹⁷ Klong chen pa was a contemporary of Dol po pa, and was certainly familiar with his views, but he maintained the Prāsaṅgika as the highest dialectical system.⁴¹⁸ Mipham, as the student of noteworthy proponents of extrinsic emptiness and as a representative of the philosophical tradition of Klong chen pa and Rong zom, was in a difficult position. On the one hand, he wanted to preserve the crucial position of the gZhan stong pas—and the Great Perfection—that the tathāgatagarbha was intrinsically possessed of the qualities of enlightenment. On the other hand, if these qualities are asserted to exist ultimately, as the gZhan stong pas supposedly maintain, then they would have to be immune to an ultimate analysis (*don dam dpyad bzod*). This would contradict the reasoning of Nāgārjuna and Candrakīrti. Therefore, Mipham used the concept of conventional valid cognition of pure perception in order to validate a type of perceptual content—the spontaneous presence of enlightened qualities in all their diversity for enlightened meditative perception (*phags pa'i mnyam bzhaq*)—that the more austere pramāṇa system of Dharmakīrti, as applied in the Gelug Madhyamaka system, could not accommodate. This interpretation exemplifies how Mipham’s thought engages diverse Tibetan scholastic traditions, including that of Tsongkhapa and the Gelugpas, who emphasized the valid cognition of conventionalities. The immanence of buddhahood, though inconceivable in the ultimate sense, should nonetheless (relatively speaking) be validly cognized.

5.5. Mipham’s Interpretation of Extrinsic Emptiness and Tathāgatagarbha

Mipham’s own interpretation of extrinsic emptiness, and his response to its Gelug critics, are found in his *Lion’s Roar Proclaiming Extrinsic Emptiness* (*gZhan stong khas len seng ge'i nga ro*, ZT). This text is somewhat of an anomaly. Nowhere else does Mipham defend extrinsic emptiness, while he rejects it in several places, including the *Beacon* and his short treatise similarly entitled *The Lion’s Roar: Extensive Notes on Buddha Nature* (*bDe gshegs snying po stong thun chen mo seng ge'i nga ro*,

TTC).⁴¹⁹ Some Nyingma scholars take the *ZT* as evidence that Mipham did in fact accept the philosophical position of extrinsic emptiness, while others such as mDo sngags bstan pa'i nyi ma in the *TGSB* understand him to be a Prāsaṅgika, based on the *Beacon* and Mipham's commentaries on dialectical-philosophical subjects. It has also been suggested that Mipham wrote the *ZT* to fulfill the request of his teacher mKhyen brtse dBang po, who definitely accepted the validity of extrinsic emptiness.⁴²⁰

Though there is no clear consensus in the Nyingma tradition about whether Mipham was a gZhan stong pa or not, there is no doubt that the *ZT* is a brilliant defense of extrinsic emptiness and that it employs a number of concepts and strategies found elsewhere in Mipham's original writings, especially in the *TTC*. Mipham's interpretation of the tathāgatagarbha in the *TTC* and elsewhere certainly has an affinity with some aspects of the extrinsic emptiness view. Nonetheless, I am inclined to say that Mipham was not a gZhan stong pa, at least not in the way that philosophical view is generally understood by its critics. There are a number of reasons for this conclusion.

For one, the *Beacon* and Mipham's Mādhyamika commentaries clearly indicate Mipham's preference for the Yogācāra Svātantrika and Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka interpretations of Sāntarakṣita and Candrakīrti, respectively. If Mipham had been a proponent of extrinsic emptiness, one would expect him to have written more than this short text in its defense. Furthermore, in the *ZT* Mipham nowhere states that extrinsic emptiness is superior to *rang stong* (a.k.a. Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka), a point for which apologists of extrinsic emptiness usually argue strenuously.

The most interesting (though rather indirect) evidence that Mipham did not stand for a dogmatic extrinsic emptiness position is the fact that the arguments with which he defends it in the *ZT* are for the most part, if not entirely, noncommittal.⁴²¹ Many of the arguments in the *ZT* attempt to show that the faults found by Gelugpa critics in the extrinsic emptiness position apply equally to their own Madhyamaka system. While the Gelugpas maintain a verbal distinction between the negandum (true existence) and the basis of negation (*dgag gzhi*), that is, conventional reality—which, Mipham argues, would commit them to the ultimate existence of the basis of negation—the proponents of extrinsic emptiness maintain the absence of the negandum (conventional phenomena) in the basis of negation (ultimate reality), while asserting the presence of enlightened qualities in that ultimate reality. The Gelugpas say that ultimate analysis negates true existence but does not negate the basis of negation and thus assert that "a vase is not empty of being a vase, but is empty of true existence." The gZhan stong pas likewise say that "the ultimate reality is not empty of being the ultimate reality, but is empty of deceptive reality." In both cases a reality is established as the absence of a negandum, which does not exist at all, while requiring the true existence of the basis of negation.

The fact that Mipham argues this way does not mean he was a gZhan stong pa, and in fact might imply the opposite. To defend extrinsic emptiness by showing that the accusations of its critics apply equally to the critics themselves hardly constitutes an impassioned argument in favor of extrinsic emptiness. All he has said, in effect, is "if we're wrong, then you're also wrong." That this strategy is noncommittal for Mipham is corroborated by the first topic of the *Beacon*, where Mipham rejects both Gelug Prāsaṅgika and extrinsic emptiness as instances of "verbal" (*tshig*) and "ontological" (*don*) extrinsic emptiness, respectively, and faults them both for failing to establish the coalescence of relative and ultimate truths.⁴²² For the *ZT* to be an unequivocal polemical statement in favor of extrinsic emptiness, it would have to show that the opponent's

position is irrevocably self-contradictory, while his own position, that is, extrinsic emptiness, is not. This is in fact what Mipham tries to do in other texts, such as the *Beacon* and the *MAZL*, when he argues in favor of the Nyingma interpretation of Prāsaṅgika over that of his opponents.

In the *ZT* Mipham interprets the tathāgatagarbha in a way that does not, at first, seem essentially different from the position he posits as the faulty extrinsic emptiness interpretation of tathāgatagarbha in other texts, especially the *TTC*. Whereas the *ZT* pursues the traditional extrinsic emptiness thesis that the ultimate truly exists and is not empty, the *TTC* rejects the statement that buddha qualities ultimately exist and argues that enlightened qualities are inseparable from buddha gnosis, that buddha gnosis is inseparable from the tathāgatagarbha, and that enlightened qualities are therefore inseparable from the tathāgatagarbha. Whether or not this amounts to precisely the same position as that expressed in the *ZT* is not certain, though it is clear that in both the *ZT* and the *TTC* Mipham invokes similar arguments to reject the statements of critics of extrinsic emptiness, notwithstanding the fact that he rejects a stereotyped extrinsic emptiness in the latter text. Thus, the *ZT* and (to a lesser extent) the *TTC* might also be understood as attempts at philosophical reconciliation of extrinsic emptiness with mainstream interpretations of Madhyamaka, including his own. In this respect one could say that Mipham was in part, if not exclusively, a gZhan stong pa. Whether Mipham's extrinsic emptiness interpretation is representative of other extrinsic emptiness philosophers is an important question that I will not attempt to answer here.

In the *ZT* Mipham invokes another line of reasoning also found in his *TTC*. He says that if extrinsic emptiness asserted the conventionalities of pure perception (which are more or less commensurate with the qualities of buddhahood) to be immune to an ultimate analysis, then they would be liable to the Prāsaṅgika critiques of the Gelugpas, for whom immunity to ultimate analysis, true establishment, and inherent existence are the same. But, according to Mipham, that is not what the quintessential extrinsic emptiness position—that the ultimate is not empty of itself (*rang stong*) but is empty of deceptive reality (*gzhan stong*)—actually means. The ultimate reality is true and existent to the extent that, as the concordance of the mode of appearance of things and the manner of existence of things (*gnas snang mthun pa*) for enlightened awareness, the way things appear is nondeceptive, hence true. It is empty insofar as false deceptive appearances are absent. Therefore, the true existence of the ultimate with its inseparable enlightened qualities is not understood in the context of ultimate valid cognition, but in the context of the conventional valid cognition of pure perception (*dag pa'i gzigs pa tha snyad dpyod pa'i tshad ma*). Here it should be noted that in this position the ultimate is implicitly defined with respect to enlightened awareness (*jñāna*, *ye shes*) and is understood to be the definitive (*mtshan nyid pa*) or nonconceptual ultimate (*aparyāyaparamārtha*, *rnam grangs ma yin pa'i don dam*).

Thus, according to the *ZT*, the statement that the ultimate exists and is non-empty is not an assertion of ontological status based on the rational verification (*rigs shes*) of ultimate or true existence—that is, an ultimate validating cognition—but a statement about the phenomenology of pure perception from the perspective of sublime gnosis (*āryajñāna*). Pure conventionality is the objective aspect of sublime gnosis for which the mode of appearance (*snang tshul*) of conventional phenomena and the way those phenomena actually exist (*gnas tshul*) are concordant. This means simply that sublime gnosis perceives things as they are—as the coalescence of formal appearance and emptiness, or as the coalescence of the two truths—but does not perceive impure phenomena, which appear to be truly existent. Thus, the ultimate, *qua* ultimate wisdom, is empty of impure conventionalities.

When sublime gnosis is manifest, the qualities of the ultimate gnosis, or pure conventional phenomena, are invariably present as the coalescence of form and emptiness, while impure appearances of inherent existence are absent. Thus, extrinsic emptiness takes ultimate wisdom, which is devoid of false appearances but not devoid of pure perceptions and enlightened qualities, as its basis for designating emptiness (*stong gzhi*) and asserts that the ultimate (as gnosis) is empty of something else (*gzhan stong*) but not empty of its own essence (*rang stong*, *rang bzhin gyis stong pa*).

Prāsaṅgika, on the other hand, takes the appearances of conventional phenomena, which falsely appear to be real, as its basis for designating emptiness (*stong gzhi*) and uses logical reasoning to establish the nonexistence of that false mode of appearance in the ultimate nature of emptiness. In Gelug Prāsaṅgika, emptiness as the mere exclusion (*rnam par gcod pa*, *vyavaccheda*, that is, *med dgag*, *prasajyapratīṣedha*) of that false appearance is understood to be the definitive ultimate (*don dam mtshan nyid pa*), while a wisdom consciousness that perceives it is held to be a conformative or concordant ultimate (*mtshun pa'i don dam*). By proving that the ultimate reality is itself empty of inherent existence, Prāsaṅgika establishes the inseparability of form and emptiness; but it does not elaborate the distinction between pure and impure conventionalities, which is made with reference to sublime and ordinary modes of perception. The ZT argues, in effect, that there is no reason why one cannot make this distinction in the Mādhyamika context. Prāsaṅgikas would have no reason to reject the assertion that enlightened awareness is empty of deceptive reality, to the extent that deceptive reality is identical with the false appearance of inherent existence and enlightened awareness is free of false perception. In this respect the Prāsaṅgika or *rang stong* view does not contradict the position of extrinsic emptiness, and it is not difficult to understand why most if not all extrinsic emptiness authors have insisted that their positions do not conflict with Prāsaṅgika.

5.6. Mipham's Position on the Tathāgatagarbha

The tathāgatagarbha concept is a central conundrum for Buddhist hermeneutics. Is it literally true (*nītārtha*)—are all beings actually buddhas?—or is it to be interpreted in some way (*neyārtha*)? Is the teaching of sūtras such as the *Śrīmālādevīśiṃhanādasūtra* and the treatise *Ratnagotravibhāga*—that sentient beings already possess the nature of buddhahood—to be accepted without qualification, or is it perhaps a provisional teaching meant to encourage those easily discouraged from the hardships of seeking enlightenment? In the context of the Great Perfection, which emphasizes the original purity of all phenomena in the state of enlightenment, the first interpretation is preferable for Nyingma philosophers.

In his *TTC*, Mipham understands the tathāgatagarbha in a way similar to what the fifteenth-century scholar gSer mdog Paṇ chen Śākya mchog ldan (1427– 1508) calls the “tradition of meditative interpretation” (*sgom lugs*) of the *Ratnagotravibhāga*.⁴²³ According to this interpretation, the tathāgatagarbha is none other than natural stainless wisdom (*prakṛtiśuddhajñāna*, *rang bzhin rnam dag gi ye shes*), or the natural luminosity (*prakṛtiprabhāśvara*, *rang bzhin gyi 'od gsal*) of the mind. Śākya mchog ldan calls the other tradition of interpretation of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* the “tradition of study and reflection” (*thos bsam gyi lugs*), which takes the tathāgatagarbha to be the natural purity (*prakṛtiśuddhi*, *rang bzhin rnam dag*) of all phenomena, which is the absolute negation (*prasajyapratīṣedha*, *med dgag*) of inherent existence, or śūnyatā.⁴²⁴ This latter interpretation is essentially the same as that of rGyal tshab's *Dar ṭik*.

According to Śākya mChog ldan these two approaches, based on the principles of “luminosity” and “emptiness,” respectively, are complementary. The Gelug, however, accepts only the latter interpretation of tathāgatagarbha as definitive, and considers the former to be a provisional teaching. This is one of the most crucial points of contention between the Gelug and other schools. For Mipham, though emptiness and luminosity are both definitive and complementary paradigms for the ultimate, luminosity is technically *more* definitive—if indeed the definitive meaning (*nītārtha*, *nges don*) admits of degrees—because it is the experiential domain (*gocara*, *dpyod yul*) of enlightened beings (*ārya*, *’phags pa*). Emptiness, on the other hand, can be understood by ordinary beings (*prthagjana*, *so so skye bo*) as a conceptual formula.

In the *TTC* Mipham presents an interpretation of the buddha nature that attempts to go beyond the extremes of eternalism (in the Tibetan context, the extrinsic emptiness interpretation of a permanent substantive entity as the ultimate) and nihilism (the Gelug, specifically rGyal tshab Dar ma rin chen’s, interpretation of tathāgatagarbha as mere emptiness of absolute negation, not possessed of intrinsic qualities). In accordance with the Great Perfection teaching of the immanence of enlightened awareness (*rig pa’i ye shes*), Mipham considers the tathāgatagarbha as already complete and perfect (*yon tan ye ldan*), without asserting the ultimate existence of enlightenment in the manner of the proponents of extrinsic emptiness.

According to the Gelugpas, specifically rGyal tshab in his *Darṭik*, the tathāgatagarbha or buddha essence inherent in every sentient being should be understood as the absolute negation of emptiness (*prasajyapratishedha-śūnyatā*, *med dgag gi stong pa nyid*). It should not be understood as the dharmakāya of the buddhas (which is a resultant state, not an original one) but as the “defiled suchness” (*samalatathatā*) that, if purified, leads to enlightenment.⁴²⁵ Statements to the effect that the qualities of buddhahood are inherent in the tathāgatagarbha are given for those afraid of profound emptiness. This teaching should be understood to mean, in fact, that the nature of sentient beings, insofar as it is emptiness, is capable of manifesting the qualities of enlightenment, provided the purification of defilements and the collection of merits are consummated. Interpreting the meaning of tathāgatagarbha as emptiness in this way accords perfectly with the strict gradualism of Tsongkhapa’s approach to philosophical theory (specifically, *Prāsaṅgika* interpretation) and meditative practice (as exemplified by the *LRC* and the *Ngag rim chen mo*, his treatise on Vajrayana practice).⁴²⁶

Mipham’s interpretation in the *TTC* affirms one important aspect of the extrinsic emptiness view, namely, the naturally present qualities of the buddha nature. However, he qualifies that acceptance with the understanding that these qualities are the spontaneous presence (*anābhoga*, *lhun grub*) or natural display (*rang bzhin gyir tsal*) of enlightened awareness. In other words, sublime phenomena are the appearance or conventional aspect of gnosis, just as impure conventional phenomena are the inseparable appearance aspect of deluded perception. The inseparability of form (or appearance) and emptiness applies equally to sublime beings and ordinary beings, but the purity of conventional appearance (*snang tshul*) is determined with respect to the concordance (*mthun pa*) of the way things appear (*snang tshul*) with their ultimate nature (*gnas tshul*), which is fully possible only for sublime beings.

Thus, saying that sublime qualities manifest spontaneously and without fabrication in the state of sublime gnosis is not the same as saying that pure phenomena or sublime qualities exist inherently or statically in the ultimate sense. The difference between pure and impure phenomena is that pure phenomena are inseparable from the state of gnosis and are thus never apprehended as inherently existent, while impure phenomena always appear to ordinary

consciousness as if inherently existent, even if one is aware that their mode of appearance is false. To assert the spontaneous presence of sublime qualities in the state of enlightened wisdom does not commit one to accepting their inherent existence any more than asserting that the natural manifestation of paranormal perceptions (*abhijñā*, *mngon shes*) on the basis of calm abiding meditation (*śamatha*, *zhi gnas*) requires one to accept the truth of their false mode of appearance as inherently existent. If ordinary states of consciousness automatically entail the presence of qualities and abilities that one has not explicitly sought to cultivate, there does not seem to be any *a priori* reason to deny the same relationship between sublime gnosis and the qualities of enlightenment.

While this interpretation deflects one of the main objections of Gelug philosophers—that extrinsic emptiness contradicts the Mādhyamika teaching when it asserts the ultimate existence of enlightened qualities—the essential concomitance of enlightened qualities with the ultimate reality is still incompatible with the Gelug tradition's strictly gradualist paradigm for enlightenment. To begin with, Tsongkhapa accepts only *śūnyatā* as the definitive teaching and ultimate reality. In the context of *sūtra* as well as *tantra*, Gelug philosophers understand the formal or conventional aspects of enlightenment, such as the buddha bodies, the ten powers, and so forth, as the result of the collected merits of a bodhisattva, while the *dharmakāya*, which is the full realization of emptiness, is the result of the bodhisattva's collection of wisdom. For them it does not make sense to define the ultimate in terms of gnosis (*jñāna*), because gnosis is ultimate only in the sense that it fully realizes the ultimate as emptiness. Gelug philosophers consider gnosis to be a conformative ultimate (*mtshun pa'i don dam*); they do not accept gnosis as a definitive ultimate, which is the position of Mipham and the gZhan stong pas.

The Gelug interpretation of *tantra* conforms to this model as well. It is not so much a way to uncover an original enlightenment already replete with qualities, but is rather a powerful method for completing the accumulations of merit and wisdom that cause those qualities to arise. The teaching of *tathāgatagarbha* and its inherent qualities is accordingly understood to refer to our spiritual potentiality and not as a literal statement or ontological position. The *tathāgatagarbha* is emptiness, and emptiness means that ordinary mind has no inherent existence and thus can develop the qualities of enlightenment.

Mipham's interpretation of extrinsic emptiness might also be understood to imply a theory of *tathāgatagarbha* as potentiality, since he understands enlightened qualities as the conventional aspect or spontaneous presence of enlightened wisdom, and not as qualities that exist ultimately. However, Mipham does not accept that the formal aspects of enlightenment or the *dharmakāya* are the results of causes and does maintain a concept of *tathāgatagarbha* replete with qualities in the *TTC*. This follows from his understanding that ultimate reality—as the coalescence of form and emptiness, which, in the final analysis, is identically understood by *Prāsaṅgika*, extrinsic emptiness, and the *Nyingma* *tantras*—implies the inseparability of the pure conventionalities of enlightenment and sublime gnosis just as much as it implies the infallibility of causal relativity in deceptive reality for ordinary consciousness.

What differentiates the Gelug understanding of extrinsic emptiness from that of Mipham should be understood in terms of what kind of subjectivity (ordinary consciousness or gnosis) is implied in their respective definitions of what is ultimate, and in terms of what kind of validating cognition is understood in defining the relation of ultimate and conventional realities. Gelug *Prāsaṅgika* defines the ultimate as emptiness with respect to consciousness—that is, emptiness as an absolute negation that is a conceptual ultimate (*pariāyaparamārtha*, *don dam rnam grangs pa*)—

while Mipham understands emptiness as the complete absence of conceptual elaboration (*niṣprapañca*, *spros bral*) with respect to sublime gnosis (*aparyāyaparamārtha*, *don dam rnam grangs ma yin pa'i don dam*). Likewise, Gelug *Prāsaṅgika* makes no distinction between the conventional valid cognitions of sublime and ordinary beings, while Mipham does.

Thus Mipham's position in the *TTC*, as in the *ZT*, is that one can understand the *tathāgatagarbha* as having inseparable qualities of enlightenment, such as the ten powers of a buddha, without being committed to the eternalistic position that is imputed to extrinsic emptiness by its opponents. This follows from his understanding that the essential teaching of the second and third turnings of the wheel should be understood together, as complementary and definitive presentations of the Buddha's teaching. In the *TTC* he explains:

To posit the beginningless presence of [enlightened qualities] even when one is a sentient being is an inconceivable subject. So even though the Buddha taught his disciples that this is an infallible teaching worthy of confidence, he also told them that it is difficult to understand on one's own. Because it is a limitlessly profound teaching, small-minded intellectuals have always objected to it with all sorts of rash statements like "then buddhas and sentient beings would have basically the same mind." The *Samdhinirmocanasūtra* says,

The fabricated realm and the definitive ultimate
Are defined by the lack of sameness or difference.
Whoever imagines them to be the same or different
Is possessed of mistaken imagination.⁴²⁷

The essential faculty [of enlightenment], which is the nature of the mind, and the mind that possesses it, do not have to be posited as either the same or different. Although it is not beyond the pale of the abiding nature of reality, it is not contradictory for there to be delusion in [the *tathāgatagarbha*'s] mode of appearance; for otherwise, there would be the faults of no liberation, or the impossibility of anyone being deluded, and so forth. Because its abiding nature and mode of appearance are dissimilar, deluded sentient beings are possible, and their attainment of buddhahood after abandoning delusions on the path is also proven to exist. Although reasoning that investigates the ultimate establishes all dharmas as empty, it doesn't negate the qualities of the buddha nature. Although [the *tathāgatagarbha*] has the most excellent qualities, this [sūtra] maintains that it is empty. Thus, the teaching of the middle [or second] turning of the wheel that all dharmas of *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* are empty is likewise taught by this [sūtra], for the buddha nature also has the nature of emptiness.

However, as this teaching of a buddha nature qualified by the inseparable presence of *kāyas* and gnoses possessed of the nature of emptiness is the intention of the definitive sūtras of the final turning, in just that respect [the final turning] is superior to the middle turning. Praise for the superior meaning of the final turning found in the interpretive commentaries on the sūtras was not stated for all teachings found there [such as the *ālayavijñāna* and other Mentalist doctrines], but just with respect to the definitive meaning of this teaching of the buddha nature. One can determine this clearly from other sūtras, from the demonstration of the buddha lineage (*gotra*, *rigs*) as

the polishing of a gem, etc.

Therefore, since emptiness as taught in the middle turning of the wheel as well as the *kāyas* and gnosis taught in the final turning should coalesce as appearance and emptiness, one should just understand [the two turnings] according to the position of the omniscient Klong chen rab 'byams, who considered the definitive texts of the middle and final turnings together, without distinction, as definitive. However, it is not contradictory to take one of these as definitive, the other as provisional. Having combined them and interpreting that sort of buddha nature as a causal continuum, the crucial point of the Vajrayāna is obtained, and one will know that all those teachings of the Buddha converge on a single point. This is because this final significance is the single intention of Nāgārjuna and Asaṅga, etc., which can be realized in the *Dharmadhātustāva* and the *Bodhicittavivāraṇa*, etc., as well as in the *Uttaratantra* [*Ratnagotravibhāga*]. Moreover, the master Nāgārjuna said,

The sūtras taught by the Buddha
On the subject of emptiness
All counteract negative emotions.
They do not harm that faculty [the potential for enlightenment].

According to this statement, by analyzing with an ultimate analysis, the adamantine significance of the ultimate fruition, the inseparability of the two truths, is the expanse that cannot be divided by intellectual knowledge. So it is not a subject for disputes that refer to the ultimate.⁴²⁸

Mipham's commentator mDo sngags bsTan pa'i nyi ma elucidates Mipham's tathāgatagarbha interpretation in the *TGSB*. Following the *Samdhinirmocana*, the basic criterion for differentiating definitive and provisional scriptures is that provisional scriptures are those that involve some kind of contradiction if they are taken verbatim, and definitive teachings are those that do not.⁴²⁹ He further differentiates scriptures teaching the two truths as those that teach the dichotomy of form and emptiness (*snang stong*), and those that teach the dichotomy of reality and appearance in harmony or disharmony (*gnas snang mthun mi mthun*).⁴³⁰ This latter distinction, he admits, is unusual.⁴³¹ However, it is the proper distinction for understanding how the teaching of buddha nature, endowed with all the characteristics of enlightenment, is to be accepted *verbatim* and as definitive. According to the *Ratnagotravibhāga* and other Mahāyāna texts, emptiness is the object found by investigating the pure conventional nature of things, wherein abiding nature and appearance are harmonious and gnosis is the subject that perceives it. Together, these two are accepted as the ultimate.⁴³² Because the tathāgatagarbha is not devoid of form but comprises all buddha qualities, it cannot be properly established as such by ultimate analysis (*don dam dpyod pa'i tshad ma*), which invariably establishes only emptiness. Thus, the tathāgatagarbha with its many qualities of enlightenment is the object of valid cognition that investigates pure perception (*dag pa'i gzigs pa tha snyad dpyod pa'i tshad ma*). This kind of pure perception is necessary in order to validate the tathāgatagarbha theory as well as the premise of tantra, namely, that all things are divine by nature, without entailing the extrinsic emptiness position. Otherwise these teachings would be nothing but *neyārtha*, hence intentional and not directly indicative of the qualities of the

enlightened state.

It might be objected that if nondual gnosis (*ye shes*) pervades the ultimate wherein the apparent and abiding natures are harmonized, a contradiction is entailed, because a nonduality of subject and object would render meaningless the distinction of “appearance” and “emptiness,” as well as the concept of sublime pure perception (*‘phags pa’i gzigs snang*). To this I think Mipham could reply to the effect that nondual gnosis is none other than the realization of the emptiness of any dichotomy, such as form and emptiness or apparent and abiding natures, so in this sense appearance (*snang tshul*) and reality (*gnas tshul*) are designated as “harmonious” (*mthun pa*). In the Gelug system, a buddha’s perception has dualistic appearances wherein the apparent aspect of phenomena is seen to be indistinguishable from emptiness, like milk poured into water, without alternating between the two truths. For Mipham such a realization of the coalescence of form and emptiness requires also the coalescence of subject and object, since the dichotomy of subject and object has no more intrinsic reality than the dichotomy of form and emptiness. Therefore, though one speaks of “a buddha’s realization” or the “appearance of infinite divinity,” these are only conventional designations.

This illustrates how Mipham attempts to reconcile the dialectical and critical approach of scholasticism, with its emphasis on valid cognition and the differentiation of the two truths, with the tathāgatagarbha theory and the Great Perfection, where nonduality and ineffability are often invoked. According to Mipham, the tathāgatagarbha is an object of valid cognition (though not of ordinary dualistic perception) but not ultimate analysis (*rigs shes kyi tshad ma*). Instead, it must be understood in the context of gnosis, where the way things “really” are (devoid of intrinsic reality) and the way they appear (empty-but-apparent) are the same—hence as the conventional valid cognition of sublime beings’ perception (*dag pa’i gzigs snang tha snyad dpyod pa’i tshad ma*). Mipham’s analysis might not satisfy a demand to prove that enlightenment is *in fact* that way, but it does set clear limits to what ordinary perception can know of enlightenment, without placing enlightenment entirely outside the range of conventional valid cognition.

Both Gelug and Nyingma philosophers agree that relative phenomena and ultimate reality *qua* emptiness are perceived simultaneously in full enlightenment. So the fact that the way things are and the way they appear are in the final analysis identical is also accepted by Gelug philosophers, though in their case it is understood that dualistic perception must also obtain at the level of buddhahood, if we are to speak of buddhas knowing conventional phenomena. If enlightenment is understood as knowing things as they are—wherein the mode of appearance and mode of existence (*gnas tshul* and *snang tshul*) are identical—then, to the extent that the dharmakāya is “what knows,” it is at least homologous (*mthun pa*), if not identical, with what is known. Just as there is no moment at which an ordinary thing misperceived as inherently existent suddenly becomes empty by virtue of being perceived as empty—because it has never been non-empty—likewise, there is no moment at which an ordinary mind becomes the dharmakāya by virtue of perceiving emptiness, because the ordinary mind has always had the nature of dharmakāya. Dharmakāya is designated with respect to the nature of reality, because it is what knows the nature of reality, just as ordinary mind is designated in relation to ordinary objects. In this sense dharmakāya must be understood as the “nature of mind,” and as the buddha nature replete with qualities, which is not the product of causes and conditions.

6. The Beacon of Certainty

6.1. Recapitulation of Earlier Discussions

IN PREVIOUS CHAPTERS it has been suggested that the various ways in which theory, practice, and ultimate reality are understood in different Tibetan philosophical traditions is basically a function of the definitions of ultimate reality that form the bedrock of their hermeneutical systems. Those systems, in turn, refer to Indian Buddhist sources, discussed in chapter 3, which specify the parameters for Buddhist hermeneutics. The overall purpose of Mipham's writings—like those of Tsongkhapa—was the elaboration of a coherent and comprehensive system of interpretation for both sūtra (the vehicle of philosophical dialectics) and tantra. Given this proviso, Mipham's refutations of Gelug positions in the *Beacon* were not motivated by a desire to undermine or destroy another system, but simply to clarify the philosophical principles essential to an integrated understanding of sūtra and tantra, in the specific context of the Madhyamaka and Great Perfection traditions of the Nyingma school.

Previous discussions have also indicated that the formulation of correct philosophical awareness (*darśana, lta ba*) is determined by which aspect of experience—subject or object—is held to be most constitutive of philosophical understanding. If the objective aspect of experience, which is the philosophical idea as theoretical formula (*don spyi*), especially emptiness, is assumed to be more important, then naturally reason, analysis, and philosophical discourse will be upheld as the most important factors in developing wisdom. If the subjective aspect is emphasized, then personal experience or innate spiritual potential will be designated as the fundamental condition for the development of wisdom, and gnosis (*jñāna, ye shes*) will be essential to the definition of philosophical view.

The Gelug school, which possessed the most vital traditions of scholasticism in Tibet, considers the Prāsaṅgika to be the definitive expression of the philosophical view for both sūtra and tantra. The Prāsaṅgika view is established through reasoning and is considered, at least by the Gelug, to be properly understood as the absolute negation (*prasajyapratishedha, med dgag*) of inherent existence (*svabhāva, rang bzhin*). According to the *Beacon*, this definition of śūnyatā as an absolute negation is generally understood by Gelug philosophers as definitive of the ultimate view. By formulating the definitive ultimate as a logical negation, Tsongkhapa secured the Buddhist path, and ultimate wisdom itself, as an objective for which reason is both necessary and, with proper methodological underpinnings, perhaps also sufficient.

Like the gZhan stong pas, Nyingma philosophers understood the subjective aspect of experience to be constitutive of the definitive view. For them the definitive ultimate is gnosis (*jñāna, ye shes*), inseparable from the expanse of reality (*dharmadhātu, chos dbyings*), while the view is understood in terms of the inseparability or coalescence of gnosis and its gnosemic content. Thus Mipham often refers to the distinction between the ultimate as a conceptual formula (*paryāyaparamārtha, rnam grangs pa'i don dam*) and the ultimate as the absence of elaboration (*niṣprapañca, spros bral*), which is the nonconceptual definitive ultimate (*aparyāyaparamārtha, rnam grangs ma yin pa'i don dam*). The former is the object of mundane consciousness and is determined by reasoning, while the latter belongs to supramundane, nonconceptual wisdom.

Mipham's emphasis on this distinction might seem to suggest that reason plays a nonessential role in the philosophy of the Nyingma school. If gnosis *cum* coalescence is the definitive ultimate, then the definitive ultimate is automatically inaccessible by reason, because reason operates through concepts. What then is the role of reason in the Nyingma school? More specifically, does reason play a meaningful role in understanding the view of the Great Perfection, which is defined as gnosis pure and simple? These are important questions to bring to one's reading of the *Beacon of Certainty*. In the following sections I hope to show that, in addition to being a rational defense of the Nyingma tradition and the Great Perfection system against its critics, the *Beacon* is a spirited affirmation of the utility of reason in the philosophy and practice of the Nyingma school.

6.2. The Topics of the *Beacon*

The rest of this chapter provides an overview of the *Beacon* and its seven topics (§6.2), and discusses the first, third, and fourth topics in detail (§6.3). The first topic concerns the definition of the Nyingma philosophical view (*lta ba*). The third topic examines how conceptual focus (*'dzin stang*) imbues meditation practice with correct philosophical awareness or *darśana*. The fourth topic determines how rational analysis (*dpyad pa*) and meditative trance (*'jog pa*) must be coordinated in meditation in order to give rise to nonconceptual wisdom. These three topics establish the essentials of Mipham's interpretation of the view and its application in meditation practice, while the first in particular deals with the nature of ultimate reality. Each of these topics will be illustrated with reference to other works where Mipham discusses these and related issues. Mipham's *pūrvapakṣas* or the philosophical opponents whom he addresses, as well as his *anupakṣas*, the philosophical allies who prefigure or confirm Mipham's views, will also be discussed. The final chapter (chapter 7) will summarize and elaborate the most important points of previous chapters and explore some of the ramifications of Mipham's thought.

As previous discussions (especially §5.2) have noted, in Buddhist philosophy a concept of the ultimate functions as the content of a philosophical view, as the desired goal of practice, and as a hermeneutical principle or standard against which views and practices are evaluated. In its hermeneutical dimension, ultimate reality may be understood ontologically, which is to say, as the basis (*gzhi*) for the possibility of whatever exists, and as the ultimate nature of whatever exists. In this sense the ultimate—regardless of how it is defined—is an *a priori* principle for philosophical interpretations of theory and practice. An even more fundamental assumption of course is that there is an ultimate reality, something upon which all Buddhist philosophers agree. Ultimate reality is not the explicit focus of any topic in the *Beacon*, but all the topics of the *Beacon* are resolved with reference to Mipham's conception of the ultimate as the coalescence of relative and ultimate truths.

In previous chapters I have suggested that the *Beacon* illuminates a broad spectrum of theoretical and soteriological issues in Buddhist philosophy that encompass the views and practices of the vehicle of philosophical dialectics (**lakṣaṇayāna*, *mtshan nyid kyi theg pa*) as well as the Vajrayāna. The *Beacon* focuses on the Nyingma interpretation of the highest system of the dialectical vehicle—Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka—and the highest Vajrayāna system of the Nyingma, the Great Perfection. Though it is not immediately obvious in the enumeration of its topics, one of the most important themes of the *Beacon* is the complementarity of Prāsaṅgika and the Great Perfection as theoretical and practical approaches to enlightenment.

In Nyingma philosophical colleges (*bshad grwa*) the *Beacon* is studied by advanced students as a

comprehensive treatment of the philosophical views and meditative practices of the Nyingma and other schools.⁴³³ Again, the *Beacon's* comprehensive scope is not apparent in the seven topics. The ancillary issues that are made explicit in the index (*sa bcad*) of Khro shul 'jam rdor's commentary constitute the *Beacon's* philosophical breadth and depth. The anonymous introduction to the WTL edition of Kun bzang dpal ldan's commentary on the *Beacon* begins:

Among the three Dharma wheels teaching the complete and unerring path, which were turned by our most skillful teacher in order to train his disciples, the most excellent and sublime is the Prajñāpāramitā. Its hidden meaning—the various degrees of spiritual realization—was subject to the excellent analysis of the Lord Regent Maitreya in his Prajñāpāramitā commentary, the *Abhisamayālamkāra*. The main teaching [of the Prajñāpāramitā], the stages of emptiness, was explained in the five logical treatises of the lord, the sublime Nāgārjuna, while the commentaries [upon it]—Buddhapālita's, Āryadeva's *Catuhśataka*, Candrakīrti's *Madhyamakāvatāra*, etc.—established the view of Prāsaṅgika.

In the snowy land of Tibet, the *Grub mtha' mdzod* and *Yid bzhin mdzod* of the great omniscient [Klong chen pa], the *lTa ba ngan sal* of Go ram pa, the *Dwags brgyud grub pa'i shing rta* of [Karmapa VIII] Mi bskyod rdo rje, and the *dBu ma dgongs pa rab gsal* of the Lord Mahāatma [Tsongkhapa], all elucidate the Prāsaṅgika view. This *Precious Beacon of Certainty* is like an eye that brings all the difficult points of sūtra and tantra into focus. Externally, it accords with the Prāsaṅgika; internally, it accords with the *Sūtra that Gathers all Intentions*⁴³⁴ and the *Tantra of the Magical Net*;⁴³⁵ secretly, it accords with the Great Perfection.⁴³⁶

This passage indicates something of the historical background of the *Beacon*. It suggests that the *Beacon* serves to elucidate the logical corpus (*rigs zhung*) of Nāgārjuna's and Candrakīrti's Madhyamaka as well as the experiential map of enlightenment according to the Prajñāpāramitā summarized in the *Abhisamayālamkāra*. It also refers to Mipham's chief philosophical predecessor, Klong chen pa, to the chief sources of the Sakya and Kagyu traditions' critique of Tsongkhapa's Madhyamaka, Go ram pa and Mi bskyod rdo rje, and to the paradigmatic texts of the three classes of anuttarayogatantra according to the Nyingma school.

The *Beacon* begins with reflection by a "sage" (*r̥ṣi, drang srong*), who we may assume is the text's author, upon the necessity of developing certainty (*nges shes*) by means of the two forms of valid cognition, conventional and ultimate, according to the texts of Dharmakīrti and Candrakīrti. Then, as KJ's commentary explains, a conceptual thought (*vikalpa, nam rtog*) in the form of a mendicant (*ldom bu pa*) appears and challenges the contemplating sage with seven questions: (1) according to which type of negation the view is to be explained,⁴³⁷ or "the basis that is the coalescence of appearance and emptiness";⁴³⁸ (2) whether arhats realize both types of selflessness, or "how Śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas do not understand [phenomenal selflessness fully]";⁴³⁹ (3) whether the view involves modal apprehension, or "how to meditate on coalescence";⁴⁴⁰ (4) how one engages in analysis and transic meditation, or "how to generate that meditation in one's mind";⁴⁴¹ (5) the relative importance of the two truths, or "how the two truths arise when realization is born";⁴⁴² (6) the common object of disparate perceptions, or "how all things arise in equanimity from the perspective of that (realization)";⁴⁴³ and (7) whether Madhyamaka has a position or not,

or “how to edify others according to one’s realization.”⁴⁴⁴ The *Beacon* concludes with the questioner’s concession of the profound points and the sage’s summary of those points as embodied in six syllables of the mantra of Mañjuśrī, who embodies wisdom: A Ra Pa Tsa Na Dhīḥ.

6.2.1. The *Beacon* and Tsongkhapa’s *Eight Great Difficult Points*

Ehrhard has suggested that the topics of the *Beacon* might be understood in connection with Tsongkhapa’s *Eight Great Difficult Points* (*dKa’ ba’i gnad chen po brgyad*, KNG).⁴⁴⁵ The KNG consists of lecture notes of Tsongkhapa that his disciple rGyal tshab Dar ma rin chen organized into a short treatise on his teacher’s unique approach to some important points of Prāsaṅgika interpretation.⁴⁴⁶ These difficult points are, in brief: (1) the refutation of the conventional existence of the ālayavijñāna; (2) negation that things exist by way of their own characteristic (*svalakṣaṇasiddha*, *rang mtshan gyis grub pa*); (3) acceptance of external objects; (4) negation of dogmatic proof (*svatantra*, *rang rgyud*); (5) refutation of apperceptive awareness (*svasaṃvitti*, *rang rig*); (6) affirmation of Śrāvakas’ and pratyekabuddhas’ full realization of both forms of selflessness (*pudgalanairātmya/dharmanairātmya*, *gang zag gi bdag med/chos kyi bdag med*); (7) definition of the apprehension of true existence and its tendencies (*bden ’dzin sa bon dang bcas pa*) as emotional obscurations (*kleśāvaraṇa*, *nyon mongs kyi sgrib pa*), and the tendencies of deluded dualistic perception (*gnyis snang ’khrul pa’i bag chags*) as cognitive obscurations (*jñeyāvaraṇa*, *shes bya’i sgrib pa*); and (8) explanation of how buddhas are aware of the mistaken perceptions of sentient beings without being subject to them themselves.⁴⁴⁷

On the face of it, point (6) is the only topic that the *Beacon* (topic 2) has in common with Tsongkhapa’s KNG. While Tsongkhapa maintains that Śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas realize both types of selflessness fully, Mipham asserts that their realization of phenomenal selflessness (*dharmanairātmya*, *chos kyi bdag med*) is partial. Following Go ram pa⁴⁴⁸ and Klong chen pa,⁴⁴⁹ Mipham affirms the conventional existence of the ālayavijñāna (point 1) in his MAZL and NK commentaries. On difficult points (2) and (4) Tsongkhapa and Mipham seem to be in agreement, at least as far as Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka is concerned. As for point (3), though Mipham expresses high esteem for the Yogācāra Madhyamaka system of Śāntarakṣita—which accepts the conventional nonexistence of external objects—in his commentary on the *Madhyamakālamkāra*, he does not explicitly assimilate the Yogācāra Madhyamaka position on external objects in his discussions of the Prāsaṅgika view. Apperception or *rang rig* (point 5) is essential to Mipham’s system of epistemology and hermeneutics discussed in the DRG;⁴⁵⁰ he also affirms it in his commentary to the ninth chapter of the BCA.⁴⁵¹

On point (7), Mipham’s discussion in the MAZL suggests that he does not agree with Tsongkhapa on this point.⁴⁵² As for point (8), judging from his discussion of topic 6 in the *Beacon*, Mipham did not think buddhas have any “impure appearances” (*ma dag pa’i snang ba*). However, he never says that buddhas are *not* aware of sentient beings’ mistaken perceptions of true existence (*bden snang* or *ma dag pa’i snang ba*), which would be tantamount to saying that buddhas are not omniscient. Mipham also maintains that buddhas have no dualistic perceptions, while Gelug commentators found this position to be incompatible with buddhas’ omniscience, specifically, with their awareness of the experiences of sentient beings.⁴⁵³

The KNG mainly concerns Tsongkhapa’s interpretation of the Prāsaṅgika position on conventional or deceptive reality (*saṃvṛtisatya*, *kun rdzob kyi bden pa*).⁴⁵⁴ This focus is rather

atypical of Prāsaṅgika commentators, who have tended to emphasize the distinction of the two truths, and specifically how and why things are empty, as opposed to understanding why conventional objects are the way they are. This is not to say that Candrakīrti *et al.* don't devote considerable attention to conventional reality, for example, cause and effect, the progression of the path, etc., but Tsongkhapa took special note of the arguments used to establish conventionalities, and in at least one case developed what was, for Prāsaṅgikas at least, a novel interpretation.⁴⁵⁵ This emphasis on conventionalities seems to have resulted from his conviction that most Tibetan commentators took their Prāsaṅgika interpretation of conventionalities to agnostic or nihilistic extremes.

Though the KNG's topics are mostly distinct from those of the *Beacon*, they are certainly useful points of departure for understanding the differing views of Mipham and the Gelug school, especially on the subject of how conventionality is established. Further investigation of Mipham's position on points (6), (7), and (8) in his commentary on the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* should eventually resolve these questions.

The *Beacon* shares the KNG's emphasis on conventionality to some degree. The first topic concerns mainly the Mādhyamika negandum (*dgag bya*)—which for Mipham, though not for Tsongkhapa, is a conventionally apparent phenomenon. The second through fourth topics concern the path and its methods, the sixth concerns the common object of perception, and the seventh addresses the Madhyamaka's theoretical position (*khas len*) on conventional and ultimate truths. Khro shul 'jam rdor observes that the middle three topics (for example, 3, 4, and 5) are to be resolved with reference to the pramāṇas used by Dharmakīrti.⁴⁵⁶

In all seven topics Mipham resolves conventional distinctions with reference to the coalescence of the two truths (*yuganaddha*, *zung 'jug*), which for Mipham is a synonym for the nonconceptual ultimate (*aparyāyaparamārtha*, *rnam grangs ma yin pa'i don dam*), which is the ultimate realized in the gnostic equipoise of sublime beings (**āryasamāpatti*, *'phags pa'i mnyam bzhas*). It thus seems that Mipham inherited the major concern of Tsongkhapa's Madhyamaka, namely, the importance of conventions and the conventional valid cognitions that ascertain them, but attempted to resolve those questions from the point of view of enlightened gnosis and coalescence. Mipham's philosophical method appears to confirm a Tibetan maxim to the effect that Gelugpas approach their discussion from the point of view of the basis (*gzhi*) and Nyingmapas from the point of view of the result (*'bras bu*).⁴⁵⁷

6.2.2. Some Observations on Topics 5, 6, and 7

Before examining topics 1, 3, and 4 of the *Beacon* in detail, it will be helpful to outline the main points addressed in topics 5, 6, and 7. Further discussion of topic 2 is omitted here because it does not explicitly address the most important theme of the *Beacon*, namely, the relationship between the views and practices of the dialectical-philosophical vehicle and Vajrayāna.

Throughout the *Beacon* it will be seen that the differences between Mipham and Tsongkhapa on the *nītārtha/neyārtha* distinction, the view, and the correct way to cultivate the view in practice are based on their definitions of ultimate truth. Tsongkhapa considers emptiness *per se*, as an absolute negation (*prasajyapratiṣedha*, *med dgag*), to be the definitive teaching, the ultimate reality, and definitive view. Mipham refers to coalescence—of gnosis and emptiness, form and emptiness, the two realities, and so forth—as the ultimate hermeneutical cornerstone of his interpretations.

Topic 5 concerns the relative importance of the two truths. Not surprisingly, given the way he

resolves topics 1, 3, and 4, Mipham emphasizes the equal importance of the two truths *qua* coalescence. Tsongkhapa, on the other hand, was advised by his tutelary deity Mañjuśrī to emphasize the proper understanding of relative truth, which is readily apparent in the KNG.⁴⁵⁸ Topic 5 also addresses an important ancillary issue relating to the two truths, namely, how the views of different levels of Vajrayāna practice are distinguished from one another and from the view of the dialectical vehicle typified by Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka. Tsongkhapa maintains that with respect to the view sūtra and tantra are the same, being rooted in transcendent wisdom (*prajñāpāramitā*, *sher phyin*). They are differentiated with respect to their use of skillful means (*upāya*, *thabs*), the distinction of tantra being its use of the subjectivity of great bliss (*mahāsukha*, *bde ba chen po*).⁴⁵⁹ In topic 5 Mipham refutes those Nyingmapas who differentiate the views of different levels of tantra by skillful means alone⁴⁶⁰ and maintains that the degree of subtlety of the subjective mind that perceives emptiness is crucial for differentiating the views of different systems.⁴⁶¹ Thus, it is not incorrect in this sense to say that the views of the different vehicles (Hīnayāna, Mahāyāna, and Vajrayāna) are different.

Topic 6 concerns the common object of disparate perceptions. The example used is water: humans, animals, hungry ghosts (*preta*), etc., variously perceive it as water, as a home, as pus, and blood, etc. Like topic 2, this might seem to be a rather academic topic, since āryaśrāvakas, hungry ghosts, and so forth are not readily available to testify about realizations of emptiness or perceptions of water. In the final analysis, a “mere appearance” (*snang tsam*)⁴⁶² is all that can be said to be perceived in common by different beings.⁴⁶³ According to Mipham, what makes a cognition valid is its context, so the human perception of water is posited as a valid cognition in relation to the *preta*’s perception of pus and blood, and the sublime being’s perception of the divine nature of the elements (for example, water as the female buddha Māmākī) is posited as pure in relation to the perceptions of sentient beings.⁴⁶⁴ However, there is no truly existing object that can be said to be the basis of each of these perceptions, so it is simply “appearance” (coalescent with form) that is the “basis,” so to speak, of each and every perception of anything. Topic 6 also serves as the occasion for differentiating the various levels of view in the Vajrayāna—in particular those of mahāyoga and the Great Perfection—and for demonstrating the necessity of Mipham’s fourfold classification of valid cognition.⁴⁶⁵

Topic 7 addresses whether or not Mādhyamikas have a thesis or philosophical position (*pratijñā*, *khas len*).⁴⁶⁶ Topic 7 is closely related to the first topic, which concerns the view. In the Nyingma tradition, philosophical views are determined by logical reasoning as well as experience—that is, with respect to both the objectivity of logic and conventional expression, and the subjectivity of personal experience—inclusive of the perceptions of ordinary and sublime beings. A *pratijñā* or philosophical thesis is generally understood as an opinion or statement that is publicly communicated and defended in debate. Therefore, one might conclude that a Prāsaṅgika’s philosophical thesis is simply the position (s)he upholds in public discourse and is more or less identical to the objective aspect of the philosophical view.

It has been noted that Prāsaṅgikas are not supposed to pursue debate on the basis of subjects (*pakṣa*, *phyogs*, or *dharmin*, *chos can*) that are accepted by their opponents, as Svātantrikas do, because that would imply assent to the validity of the opponent’s mistaken perception of the common subject as truly existent. Instead Prāsaṅgikas should establish their own position—emptiness of inherent existence (*svabhāvasūnyatā*)—by demonstrating the inherent contradictions of all theoretical positions that are based on the erroneous philosophical

assumption of inherent existence. This means that a Prāsaṅgika effectively maintains the position of the absence of inherent existence in the context of ultimate reality. However, since the Prāsaṅgika establishes his position on ultimate truth through prasaṅga methods, it is said that at the time of debate the Prāsaṅgika has no position. But does a Prāsaṅgika put forward any position on conventionality in debate, or in writing at least? Or does (s)he simply acknowledge the general views of the world without dispute?

As in earlier topics, Mipham strikes a balance between an unqualified “yes” and an unqualified “no” in his analysis of the Mādhyamika philosophical position. His interpretation is the same as that of Klong chen pa in his *Yid bzhin bzod*, which elaborates the Prāsaṅgika position contextually.⁴⁶⁷ In forensic debate, Mipham says, a Prāsaṅgika does not have a position but focuses on the internal contradictions of the opponent’s system. In the context of being liberated by analytical wisdom on the path (*lam shes rab kyi srol ba’i tshes*), the Prāsaṅgika does not accept distinctions such as “Dharma” and “non-Dharma,” “happiness” and unhappiness, “saṃsāra” and “nirvāṇa,” etc. In Prāsaṅgika, wisdom is understood primarily as the meditative equipoise of sublime beings, which is an unelaborated (*niṣprapañca, spros bral*) meditation on emptiness. In the context of meditative aftermath (*prṣṭhalabdha, rjes thob*), the Prāsaṅgika accepts the usual conventions of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa.⁴⁶⁸ This means that a Prāsaṅgika accepts Buddhist conventions in a religious context and worldly conventions in a secular one.

Following up on earlier topics, in topic 7 the *Beacon* differentiates Mipham’s position from those of his opponents and elaborates the Nyingma interpretations of sūtra and tantra.⁴⁶⁹ In particular it establishes the complementary character of the Svātantrika and Prāsaṅgika approaches. Mipham argues that the logically distinct character of the two truths (for example, the ultimate truth of emptiness as the conceptual negation of true existence and conventional reality as something validly cognized) is the emphasis of Svātantrika, while the experiential and ontological coalescence or single savor (*ekarasa, ro gcig*) of the two truths is the emphasis of Prāsaṅgika.

6.3. View, Meditative Practice, and Ultimate Reality in the *Beacon*

6.3.1. Anupakṣas and Pūrvapakṣas: An Overview

The *Beacon* addresses a number of pūrvapakṣas or “prior antagonists.” The *Beacon*’s main pūrvapakṣa is Tsongkhapa and his Gelug followers. Aside from the Gelugpas, who are referred to as *dge ldan pa* at the beginning of topic one,⁴⁷⁰ the only pūrvapakṣa mentioned by name is “Hashang” (topic 3, §3.2.1.2.1.2), in reference to the infamous eighth-century Ch’an teacher Mo-ho-yen (Mahāyāna). Besides the Gelug, the *Beacon* mentions only one other pūrvapakṣa that is identifiable as a tradition, extrinsic emptiness (*gzhan stong*), in topic 1.

Gyalse Tulku, the Nyingma scholar who introduced me to the *Beacon*, mentioned that Kagyupas were among the *Beacon*’s pūrvapakṣas but did not provide details. The *Beacon*’s refutation of extrinsic emptiness, which has been the Mādhyamika interpretation preferred by Kagyu scholars since the eighteenth century, means that some Kagyu scholars’ positions are implicated as a pūrvapakṣa⁴⁷¹—but the same could be said for many Nyingma scholars who were gZhan stong pas. It is conceivable that Mipham’s discussion of nihilist and quietist deviations in the view and meditative practice was meant to refer to certain Kagyu Mahāmudrā teaching lineages, whose most famous critic was Sakya Paṇḍita.⁴⁷² However, in his mainstream treatise on Mahāmudrā, the Kagyu master Dwags po bKra bshis rnam rgyal echoes Mipham and Tsongkhapa in his

criticisms of quietist and anti-intellectual interpretations of the philosophical view and meditation of Mahāmadrā. This, along with Mipham's affirmation of the unified significance of Madhyamaka, Mahāmadrā, and the Great Perfection, rules out the possibility that Kagyu Mahāmadrā is a pūrvapakṣa in the *Beacon*.

On the other hand, it seems fairly obvious that certain teachers, texts, and practice lineages of the Nyingma and Great Perfection are intended objects of Mipham's critiques. Contemporary Nyingma teachers make no secret of the fact that the view and practice of the Great Perfection can be misinterpreted, leading to nihilistic denial, quietistic withdrawal, and antinomianism (which were, not coincidentally, basically the same faults found in the Madhyamaka of Nāgārjuna by some of his critics). Such errors are addressed in the third, fourth, and fifth topics of the *Beacon*. In the fifth topic of the *Beacon* Mipham refutes those who differentiate the various levels of tantra in the same way as the Gelugpas, that is, in terms of method and not according to different philosophical views. Khro shul 'jam rdor refers to these persons as "some Nyingmapas,"⁴⁷³ whose identity remains obscure. *KJ* is probably referring to some Nyingma scholars and monasteries whose scholastic curricula were based on Gelug materials, a common practice in nineteenth-century Kham and Amdo.⁴⁷⁴

The Sakya is the only Tibetan tradition that does not seem to function as a pūrvapakṣa in the *Beacon*. This should come as no surprise. Earlier it was noted that Klong chen pa, to whom Mipham refers as a major source for his philosophical interpretations in the *Beacon*, was trained in dialectical philosophy at a Sakya college. Klong chen pa's most extensive analysis of Svātantrika and Prāsaṅgika, which is found in his *Yid bzhin mdzod*, does not appear to differ in any significant way from Go ram pa's formulation of the Sakya system in his *TSB*. Mipham's root teacher, 'Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse dbang po, was one of the most important teachers of the Sakya school in the nineteenth century. The Sakya scholar Blo gter dbang po was one of Mipham's most important tutors in his study of dialectical philosophy, particularly pramāṇa. Though Mipham considered Klong chen pa and Rong zom to be the quintessential Nyingma philosophers, both lived and wrote before Tsongkhapa's writings became influential, so their Mādhyamika works would not have sufficed as primary sources for the argumentative techniques Mipham applies to Gelug Prāsaṅgika. It is for this reason primarily that I have not undertaken to discuss the works of Rong zom and Klong chen pa in greater detail here. Aside from Klong chen pa and Rong zom Paṇḍita, the Sakya tradition would be the most likely source of philosophical precedent (*anupakṣa*) for the *Beacon*. It was Matthew Kapstein who first suggested that the *Beacon*'s critiques of Gelug Prāsaṅgika are for the most part the same as those used by Go rams pa in the *TSB*; my research has confirmed this beyond a doubt. For this reason, Go ram pa's *TSB* is discussed below as the *Beacon*'s most exemplary *anupakṣa* (§6.3.1.2).

6.3.1.1. Essential Issues and Arguments in Topics 1, 3, and 4

Topics 1, 3, and 4 in the *Beacon* expound the view (*darśana, lta ba*), and the methods of analytical reflection (*śruti, bsam pa*) and meditation practice (*bhāvanā, bsgom pa*) of the Nyingma school in the context of Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka and the Great Perfection. They also reply to criticisms formulated by earlier scholars, such as Kamalaśīla, Sakya Paṇḍita, and Tsongkhapa, which implicitly or explicitly indict the theory and practice of the Nyingma. Cabezón notes that

Tsongkhapa and his followers identify three major doctrinally misguided currents

prevalent in their day. All three are regarded as forms of skepticism or nihilism....[T]he three are [often] conflated and portrayed as the view of a single opponent....⁴⁷⁵

The first of these positions is a stereotype of the view of the infamous Hashang who debated with Kamalaśīla. According to Tsongkhapa, regardless of whether analysis of the nature of reality is undertaken or not, to maintain that the actual practice of equipoise (*mnyam bzhaq*) should be nonconceptual and free of all clinging (*'dzin pa, 'dzin stang*) is nothing more than a species of "Hashang" meditation. This mistaken meditation is discussed in the third topic of the *Beacon*.

The second false view identified by Tsongkhapa is a radical skepticism that interprets the Mādhyamika critique of valid knowledge (*pramāṇa, tshad ma*)⁴⁷⁶ as an utter repudiation of the possibility of knowledge of ultimate reality. The *Beacon* and Mipham's other writings suggest that the controversy concerning the knowability of the ultimate arises when the conceptual and nonconceptual ultimates, as well as the different *pramāṇas* that access them, are not distinguished properly.

The third mistaken view according to Tsongkhapa is that of "neither existence nor nonexistence" (*yod min med min gyi lta ba*); this is an erroneous interpretation of emptiness as a logical negation. Tsongkhapa is supposed to have had this view in mind when, via his teacher Lama dBu ma pa, he asked Mañjuśrī whether his view was Prāsaṅgika or Svātantrika. He received the reply, "Neither."⁴⁷⁷ According to Tsongkhapa, *yod min* means "not [truly] existent [ultimately]," while *med min* means "not nonexistent [conventionally]."

Go ram pa and Mipham consider the *yod min med min* formula, if properly understood, to be an adequate expression of the meaning of nonelaboration (*niṣprapañca, spros bral*).⁴⁷⁸ However, Mipham acknowledges that "neither existent nor nonexistent" is an extreme of elaboration—the fourth member of the famed *catuṣkoṭi*—if this formula is contemplated without adequate prior analysis. Mipham seems to agree with Tsongkhapa's position that a proper ascertainment (*nges pa*) of the nature of reality, which is emptiness, must inform one's meditation, lest one mistake the erroneous mental image or "target" (*'ban*) of "neither existent nor nonexistent" for the correct image of emptiness.⁴⁷⁹ Nonetheless, he rejects Tsongkhapa's view that emptiness meditation, if it does not focus on the absolute negation (*prasajyapratiṣedha, med dgag*) of emptiness, is *ipso facto* an agnostic quietism or "Hashang" meditation.

Mipham accuses his extrinsic emptiness and Gelug pūrvapakṣas of making a mistake in differentiating the negandum (*dgag bya*) of Mādhyamika reasoning from its substratum (*dgag gzhi*). Mipham understands this difference to entail the undesirable consequence that Mādhyamika reasoning, in negating only the negandum but not its substratum, effectively establishes the substratum as ultimately existent; but the Mādhyamika of course denies that anything is ultimately or truly existent. The Gelug opponent is portrayed as making a merely verbal distinction between the negandum of "true existence" (*bden grub*) and the substratum of negation—the conventional phenomenon in relation to which true existence is misconceived—thus incurring the fault of "verbal extrinsic emptiness" (*tshig gi gzhan stong*). The extrinsic emptiness philosopher's error is to posit an ontological extrinsic emptiness (*don gyi gzhan stong*) obtaining with respect to conventional phenomena—which are empty of essence and hence ultimately nonexistent—and the ultimate reality, which is empty of conventional phenomena but not of its own qualities,⁴⁸⁰ and is therefore what exists ultimately.

6.3.1.2. Go ram pa's Analysis of View and Meditation in the TSB

Mipham's critiques of Gelug Prāsaṅgika in topics 1, 3, and 4 in the *Beacon* follow closely those of the Sakya scholar Go ram pa bSod nams seng ge (1429–1489) in his *lTa ba'i shan 'byed theg mchog gnad kyi zla zer* (TSB). Go ram pa's writings undoubtedly influenced Mipham's thought in the *Beacon* and elsewhere, although Mipham does not explicitly refer to Go ram pa so far as I can determine. It seems reasonable, however, to assume that Mipham encountered Go ram pa's writings in his studies under the Sakya scholars Blo gter dbang po and 'Jam dbyangs mKhyen brtse.

Go ram pa was a student of the famous Sakya teacher, Rong ston Śākya rgyal mtshan (1367–1449). Gelug biographical materials concerning Tsongkhapa's disciple mKhas grub dGe legs dpal bzang indicate that Rong ston was supposed to have pursued a debate with mKhas grub rje but mysteriously backed out at the last minute. Other accounts suggest that they did in fact debate, but that Rong ston made a poor showing. It also seems that mKhas grub was not well liked in some Sakya colleges for the fierce critiques he launched against the views of certain revered Sakya teachers.⁴⁸¹ Whether or not mKhas grub was the ever-invincible polemicist that Gelug tradition remembers, his writings leave no doubt that he was a scholar and debater of the first order.

The legacy of mKhas grub's zealous attacks on Sakya philosophical positions and his eloquent defense of Tsongkhapa in his *sTong thun chen mo*⁴⁸² set the stage for Go ram pa's fierce critiques of the Gelug system in the TSB.⁴⁸³ The fortunes of the Gelug school experienced a meteoric rise during Go ram pa's lifetime, so the Gelugpas were probably perceived to pose both a philosophical challenge and serious competition for aristocratic patronage, which was the economic lifeblood of Tibetan religious traditions.

Although the substance of Mipham's and Go ram pa's critiques of Tsongkhapa and their formulations of Mādhyamika systems are for the most part the same, there is a notable difference in tenor. Go ram pa speaks with the stern voice of a confirmed polemicist and does not shy from accusing his opponents of nihilism and other philosophical sins (for example, *dbu ma chad lta ba* "nihilistic Madhyamaka"). At one point he says that the position that apprehension of the absolute negation of emptiness is not something to be abandoned in vipaśyanā meditation is the "talk of demons" (*bdud kyi tshig*),⁴⁸⁴ and elsewhere says that his enemies have been "seized by demons" (*bdud kyi zin pa*).⁴⁸⁵ In the *Beacon* and Mipham's other works, one finds no such invective. The only position he literally demonizes is the stereotypical "Hashang view."⁴⁸⁶

6.3.1.2.1 Go ram pa on the Ultimate View

Go ram pa's TSB discusses the views of extrinsic emptiness, Tsongkhapa, and the Sakya school at length. The first two he glosses as "*dbu ma rtag lta ba*" and "*dbu ma chad lta ba*," or "eternalist Madhyamaka" and "nihilist Madhyamaka," respectively. The bulk of his discussion is devoted to analyzing and refuting Tsongkhapa's interpretation of Prāsaṅgika, especially the points covered in the KNG.

Toward the end of the TSB Go ram pa provides a verse summary of the Gelug interpretation of the ultimate view and his critical response:

...Some others say that the great beings who expounded Svātantrika
And the greatest of learned and accomplished ones in Tibet

“Did not understand the important points of Madhyamaka”—
 They try to denigrate them in all respects.
 They apprehend ultimate reality as the extreme of annihilation,
 And denigrate the freedom from the four extremes of elaboration—
 The essence of the teaching found in the good texts of Nāgārjuna—
 As “the view of the Chinese Hashang.”
 The conformative ultimate arrived at through logical analysis⁴⁸⁷
 They hold to be the definitive ultimate reality.
 “To eliminate all clinging to dualistic perception
 Is an erroneous concept—abandon this approach,” they say....⁴⁸⁸

Thus far, Go ram pa caricatures his Gelug opponents. Next he explains the correct way to understand view and meditate upon it:

The “truth” that is the object of clinging to true existence—
 Which is the cause of the suffering of the three worlds of saṃsāra—
 When sought with reasoning explained in texts
 Is not found, and one develops certainty in the meaning of emptiness.
 By realizing truthlessness, clinging to “I” is eliminated.
 By combining this view with the engagement and abandonment of virtue and vice,
 And practicing them integrally,
 One will achieve the enlightenment of the Small Vehicle.
 But if in the view of accomplishing supreme enlightenment,
 One clings to emptiness, one falls into the extreme of nihilism,
 So one should eliminate all elaborations of dualistic perception,
 Such as empty, non-empty, truth, existence, and nonexistence.
 The intellect of an ordinary individual analyzing the nature of reality
 Cannot eliminate the elaboration of the four extremes all at once,
 But having eliminated all four in succession,
 And by meditating correctly, the path of vision is reached.
 At that time, the nature of reality free of the four extremes
 And the mind (*blo*) that realizes it become nondual.
 The mind itself dissolved into nonelaboration
 Is conventionally designated as the “view that sees the expanse of reality.”⁴⁸⁹

In the earlier prose portion of the TSB Go ram pa discusses these points in detail. The debate about the “four extremes of elaboration” (**catuṣkoṭi-prapañca*, *mtha’ bzhi’i spros pa*) stems from Tsongkhapa’s interpretation of the famous statement, */yod min med min yod med min/ /gnyis ga’i bdag nyid min pa’ang min/*—“not existent, not nonexistent, not both existent and nonexistent, and not having the nature of being neither [existent nor nonexistent].”⁴⁹⁰ Tsongkhapa notes that *yod min* (lit. “existing-not”) means nonexistent (*med pa*) while *med min* (lit. “not-not-existing”) effectively means existent, and accordingly he interprets the first alternative to mean “not existent ultimately” and the second to mean “not nonexistent conventionally.”⁴⁹¹ Otherwise, Tsongkhapa claims, this view would be none other than that of the “Chinese Hashang.” To empty the mind of all concepts of existence, nonexistence, etc., does not constitute discriminating

wisdom (*prajñā*, *shes rab*), which should be acutely aware of what exists and what does not exist. This kind of emptiness is simply a state of unawareness.

In the *LRC* Tsongkhapa expresses the opinion that most traditions in Tibet had deviated to this extreme. What needs to be negated, he asserts, is not all conceptuality whatsoever, but the false apprehension of true existence (*bden 'dzin*). By refuting the object of that mistaken concept and focusing upon its emptiness of true existence, one realizes the nature of reality. Having properly identified the apprehension of true existence, it is readily apparent that there are many concepts (*rtog pa*) that do not involve apprehension of the true existence of self or phenomena. This refutes the position that all concepts are to be refuted.⁴⁹²

Tsongkhapa and Go ram pa evidently understand the relationship between conceptuality and the apprehension of true existence differently. Go ram pa understands conceptuality *ipso facto* as involving apprehension of true existence, whereas Tsongkhapa does not accept that conceptuality is always associated with the apprehension of true existence.⁴⁹³ Go ram pa agrees that the object of the apprehension of true existence must be refuted. But to maintain that the mere absolute negation that is the nonfinding of that object through rational analysis is the definitive ultimate (*don dam mtshan nyid pa*),⁴⁹⁴ and to maintain that clinging to or apprehension of that emptiness is not an object of refutation,⁴⁹⁵ is “alien to the Mādhyamika textual tradition” (*dbu ma'i gzhung lugs las 'das*). Go ram pa quotes several Indian sources that support his contention that a definitive view is beyond verbal-conceptual formulation. The definitive ultimate is realized non-dualistically by sublime beings' meditation (**āryasamāpatti*, '*phags pa'i mnyam bzhaq*). He also quotes Candrakīrti to the effect that deceptive reality (*saṃvṛti*, *kun rdzob*) is the object of false seeing.⁴⁹⁶ Therefore, unlike the emptiness seen directly (*pratyakṣena*, *mngon sum du*) by sublime beings, the emptiness of absolute negation that is ascertained by inferential reasoning (*anumāna*, *rjes dpag*) is just deceptively true.⁴⁹⁷

One might object that in some contexts the ultimate reality is said to be the mere absolute negation of emptiness, and that both realities are posited only by a worldly mind (*'jig rten pa'i blo*)⁴⁹⁸—which seems to imply that it is incorrect to define the ultimate as the object of sublime equipoise. In reply, Go ram pa explains that truthlessness is realized in relation to a mind that apprehends true existence, and the designation of “ultimate reality” there refers to a conceptually formulated ultimate. The reason that designation is made is because its referent, the conceptually formulated ultimate, is the object of a mind that understands (*rtogs*) the nature of reality instead of (lit., “in relation to”—*la ltos par*) apprehending true existence. It is necessary to call the conceptual ultimate “ultimate” because it must be realized prior to realizing the nonconceptual ultimate (*aparyāyaparamārtha*, *nam grangs ma yin pa'i don dam*). To claim that a conceptual object, which is apprehended as the absence of true existence by negating true existence, is the definitive ultimate (*don dam mtshan nyid pa*), is to confuse the concept (*sāmānyalakṣaṇa*, *spyi mtshan*) of the ultimate (a pointing finger) with the ultimate *per se* (the moon).⁴⁹⁹ The implication is that if the conceptual ultimate is designated and accepted with reference to a worldly mind (*'jig rten pa'i blo*), then there is no reason why the nonconceptual, definitive ultimate should not be defined in relation to a nonconceptual mind, which is sublime gnosis.

Thus, Go ram pa does not deny that reasoning and concepts are necessary in realizing the nature of the ultimate. He grants a propaedeutic function to the conceptual formulation of emptiness but does not accept that the Gelug formulation of emptiness as absolute negation qualifies as a definitive ultimate. This follows logically from his assumption that conventional

reality is pervaded by conceptuality and that conceptuality is pervaded by ignorance.⁵⁰⁰ Thus, any concept—even a concept of the mere absence of inherent existence—is not a definitive ultimate.

6.3.1.2.2. Go ram pa on Meditative Practice

Go ram pa's critique of Tsongkhapa's approach to meditation is based on the implication that clinging to (*zhen pa*) or apprehending (*'dzin pa*) emptiness is not something to be abandoned. According to Go ram pa, Tsongkhapa reasons that if the apprehension of emptiness is only something to be abandoned, then there is no point in ascertaining it in the first place, as the antidote for apprehending true existence (*bden par 'dzin pa*). Go ram pa counters with several quotations from sūtras and śāstras, such as the famous statement of Nāgārjuna,

The victors have taught emptiness
To definitely eliminate all views.
Those who have a view of emptiness
Are said to be incurable.⁵⁰¹

Go ram pa's imaginary opponent replies, "The meaning of those scriptures is that apprehending emptiness as something true is to be negated, but not that the emptiness that negates truth is something to be negated."⁵⁰² Go ram pa says that if such were the case, then the scriptural references to eliminating "all views" (*dr̥ṣṭi, lta ba*) and "all concepts" (*vikalpa, rnam rtog*) would be pointless.⁵⁰³ The apprehension of something as truly existent and the apprehension of its emptiness as something truly existent are both only the first of the four possible extremes (*catuṣkoṭi, mtha' bzhi*), namely, the extreme of existence. This is why the scriptures refer to all views and also mention the four extremes by name—*yod min med min yod med min/ /gnyis ka'i bdag nyid min pa'ang min*, etc.⁵⁰⁴ Thus, the statement of the *catuṣkoṭi* would be pointless; to insist that the "view of neither existent nor nonexistent" (*yod min med min kyi lta ba*) is nothing but the view of the Chinese Hashang is, according to Go ram pa, the "blessing of Māra, intended to harm the essential teaching of nonelaboration."⁵⁰⁵ Go ram pa also mentions that clinging to emptiness is criticized in many tantric scriptures, and is the eleventh root downfall according to mahāyoga (*rnal 'byor chen po*).⁵⁰⁶

In effect, Go ram pa accuses Tsongkhapa of "underpervasion" (*khyab chung ba*)—that is, a too-limited definition of the negandum of emptiness—while Tsongkhapa would have accused Go ram pa of "overpervasion" (*khyab che ba*).⁵⁰⁷ The differences in the scope of the negandum that each maintains is related once again to how the ultimate reality is defined. Go ram pa understands the definitive ultimate as nonelaboration (*niṣprapañca, spros bral*) that is realized in nonconceptual sublime equipoise, and thus beyond formulation as a mere logical negation, while Tsongkhapa understands the ultimate view as the absolute negation of inherent existence. Accordingly, for Tsongkhapa it is not useful to cultivate the total absence of apprehension in meditation, because that would amount to losing one's awareness of the ultimate view.

Thus, according to the TSB, Tsongkhapa's interpretation of "not existent, not nonexistent" as "not existent ultimately" and "not nonexistent conventionally" is "extremely mistaken" (*shin tu mi 'thad*). The definitive nonelaboration (*spros bral mtshan nyid pa*) is known from the perspective of sublime equipoise. Again, someone might object that the intended meaning is "not truly existent,

not truly nonexistent,” but this misses the point of nonelaboration, as explained above. Fabricated and unfabricated phenomena (*saṃskṛtāsaṃskṛta*, ‘*dus byed ‘dus ma byed*), as well as substantial and nonsubstantial entities (*dnegos dnegos med*), are together the subject of negation (*dgag gzhi*) in various authoritative passages, so what is the point of negating only a “true existence” of them?⁵⁰⁸

One additional similarity between Go ram pa and Mipham is their use of the term *zung ‘jug* (*yuganaddha*), or coalescence. In the section setting forth the Mādhyamika system of his own school, Go ram pa like Mipham defines the basis (*gzhi*), path (*lam*), and result (*‘bras bu*) with reference to *zung ‘jug*.⁵⁰⁹ The basis is the coalescence of the two truths (*gzhi dbu ma bden gnyis zung ‘jug*), the path is the coalescence of the two accumulations of merit and wisdom (*lam dbu ma tshogs gnyis zung ‘jug*), and the result is the coalescence of the two buddha bodies (*‘bras bu dbu ma sku gnyis zung ‘jug*).⁵¹⁰

6.3.2. Topic 1: Philosophical View and Rational Negation

6.3.2.1. Tsongkhapa on the Negandum and Its Substratum

The first topic of the *Beacon* is stated in the question: “which of the two negations is explained as the view?”⁵¹¹ The table of contents of the Vārāṇasī edition glosses this as “Question 1: The basis as the coalescence of appearance and emptiness.”⁵¹² According to the *Beacon*, the Gelug view is said to be an absolute negation (*prasajyapratiṣedha*, *med dgag*). In a polemical context, the advantage of understanding the view of emptiness as an absolute negation is that the Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamika is not required to supply a counter-thesis against his opponent.⁵¹³ The ultimate Prāsaṅgika view is that no things inherently exist (*niḥsvabhāvatā*, *rang bzhin med pa*), so in confronting other views the Prāsaṅgika simply establishes the contradictions inherent in views based on the assumption of inherent existence. This does not mean, at least in the Gelug tradition, that Prāsaṅgikas have no position at all. They simply have no position about inherently existing things, which Prāsaṅgikas consider utterly false and nonexistent.⁵¹⁴

One of the hallmarks of Gelug Prāsaṅgika is its emphasis on proper identification of the negandum (*dgag bya*). Otherwise, in undertaking Mādhyamika analysis, one will just be throwing stones in the dark. If the negandum is over-defined (*khyab che ba*), one will become mired in nihilism (*ucchedavāda*, *chad ltar smra ba*), and if underdefined (*khyab chung ba*), one will become attached to eternalist views (*śāśvatavāda*, *rtag ltar smra ba*). mKhas grub says,

It is first necessary to ascertain what the object to be refuted is like. This object to be refuted is that [entity] whose exclusion (*vyavaccheda*, *rnam par bcad pa*) is what the ascertainment of reality must be based on, the reason being that without the appearance of the universal (*spyi*), [that is, the mental image,] of what is to be refuted, the universal of the refutation of that [object, namely, emptiness of inherent existence], will not appear. As the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* explains,

Without a feeling for the designated substance
One cannot apprehend that it is substanceless.⁵¹⁵

In his *LRC*, Tsongkhapa emphasizes that one must not confuse what is being negated with what is conventionally existent. In other words, what is negated by Mādhyamika analysis—inherent

existence (*svabhāva*, *rang bzhin*) or true existence (**satyasiddha*, *bden par grub pa*)—does not exist even conventionally, much less ultimately. If it is true existence that must be negated, then conventionally existent things such as *mere* production, *mere* cessation, and so on, are not negated. Thus, when analyzed with respect to their false appearance of true existence, conventional things are not “immune to analysis” (*rig pas dpyad bzod med pa*), but they are nonetheless not “harmed by analysis” (*rig pas gnod pa*). To assert otherwise would be tantamount to saying that to prove the emptiness of things is to disprove or “harm” their conventional status as dependently arisen. In the LRC Tsongkhapa says:

One might think, “If those [conventional phenomena] are not immune to reasoning [*dpyad mi bzod pa*], wouldn’t they be objects of refutation?” This is a case of confusing the meaning of “not immune to reasoning” with “harmed by reasoning” [*rig pas gnod pa*]. Many such people will say, “Of course, [phenomena] should be negated by an ultimate reality reasoning; but then to say ‘birth, etc., are existent’ would be uncalled for, so we don’t explain [it this way].”...

The meaning of immunity or nonimmunity to reasoning is to be found or not found by a reasoning that analyzes suchness.... Thus, one searches for an *inherent establishment* of production and cessation of form and so forth. That reasoning is not simply a search for *mere* production and cessation. Thus, that reasoning is known as “analysis of suchness,” because it is an analysis of whether production and cessation, etc., are established in reality or not. If one analyzes or searches with that kind of reasoning, production, etc., are not found in the slightest measure. This [our opponents] call “nonimmunity to reason.”

However, it is not the case that merely not finding something with such reasoning is [the same as] negating [that something]. For if something exists, then reasoning would have to prove its existence, and if something does not exist, [reasoning] would have to disprove it [which is not the case, because this reasoning searches for *inherent* existence, not *mere* conventional existence]. The production and cessation of form, etc., are established by conventional minds. Even though such things exist, they are not found by a rational cognition (*rigs shes*);⁵¹⁶ but even though they are not found by it, how could they be thus negated? For example, an eye consciousness does not find sound, but that would not mean sound has been negated. Thus, if production, cessation, etc., were established intrinsically or in reality, that reasoning would have to find them—because it correctly (*tshul bzhin du*) analyzes whether or not production and cessation exist intrinsically.⁵¹⁷

Thus, for Tsongkhapa, ultimate analyses and conventional analyses are different “search vectors.” One searches for ultimate existence, the other for conventional existence; each is a valid cognition with respect for to its own object, but not with respect to the other’s object. To say that a conventional reality is not immune to reason is not the same as saying that it is refuted by reasoning, because nonimmunity to reason is the invariable consequence of ultimate reasoning. Being refuted or “harmed” by reasoning is the consequence of conventional reasoning in some contexts—such as the refutation of the permanence of sound—and of ultimate reasoning with respect to anything, which concludes with the nonexistence of inherent existence of each and every thing.

Napper (1989) also notes that Tsongkhapa distinguishes between lack of immunity to analysis and being refuted by a consciousness, on the one hand, and not being found by a consciousness and being found to be nonexistent on the other.⁵¹⁸ Different types of consciousness have different spheres of authority. So an ear consciousness is not authoritative for visual objects, etc. Likewise, a consciousness that investigates conventional phenomena (*tha snyad dpyod pa'i tshad ma*) is not authoritative for determining the ultimate status of phenomena, nor is an analysis of the ultimate status of phenomena (*don dam dpyod pa'i tshad ma*) authoritative for their conventional status. In other words, to perceive the emptiness of a sprout is not to perceive its greenness, its being wheat and so forth, and to perceive these qualities is not to perceive the sprout's emptiness. If an ultimate analysis finds no sprout, that does not mean the sprout does not exist at all, but only that it is empty of inherent existence. If a conventional analysis finds a sprout, that is not the same as finding an inherent existence (*svabhāva, rang bzhin*) of a sprout, which could only be found by an analysis of the ultimate status of a sprout—and of course never is.

In short, ultimate analysis does not refute a conventional phenomenon *per se*, but only the misconception of its inherent existence. If to perceive a sprout's emptiness is not to perceive its conventional aspects and vice versa, it also follows that a proper meditation on emptiness requires the absolute negation of emptiness to alternate with contemplation of the illusion-like nature of phenomena, which are the bases of negation (*dgag gzhi*) in relation to which emptiness is established. Elsewhere in the *LRC* Tsongkhapa says:

Something that is [conceived as being] established on top of (*steng*) the object by way of its own essence, without being designated by the mind, is known as "self" or "inherent existence." Its nonexistence on top of its particular basis of person is the selflessness of person, and its nonexistence on top of the phenomena of eye, nose, etc., is said to be the selflessness of phenomena.⁵¹⁹

It is not the conventionally existent phenomenon *per se* that is negated, but the misconception of its true existence (*bden grub*) or of its intrinsic establishment (*rang gi ngo bos grub pa*) that is negated by a rational analysis of the ultimate status of a thing (*don dam dpyod byed kyi rigs pas dpyad pa*). Thus, it is said that a conventional phenomenon is neither found by an ultimate analysis, nor is it "harmed" (*gnod pa*) or refuted utterly by such analysis.

6.3.2.2 Mipham's Theory of Negation

6.3.2.2.1 Negation and the Definition of the Ultimate

We have seen that Tsongkhapa makes a very explicit distinction between the Mādhyamika negandum (*dgag bya*) and the basis of negation (*dgag gzhi*). The former is the object of ultimate rational analysis and is refuted by ultimate valid cognition, while the latter is the object of conventional analysis and is established by conventional validating cognition. The negandum and the basis of negation are thus differentiated by the rational modalities that determine them. They are also differentiated in terms of their status as conventionally nonexistent (for example, inherent existence) and conventionally existent (conventional phenomena). Of course, neither the negandum nor its basis is supposed to be truly or ultimately existent.

According to Mipham and mDo sngags bsTan pa'i nyi ma, Gelug Prāsaṅgika understands the two truths and emptiness in a way similar to that of the "proponents of true existence" (*dnegos*

smra ba), which would include the Sautrāntikas and Cittamātrins. The Sautrāntika “school”—as reconstructed from fragmentary sources by Tibetan scholars—and to a lesser extent the Cittamātra, are generally understood as the philosophical basis of the Pramāṇa systems of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti.

In Sautrāntika unique particulars (*svalakṣaṇa*) are ultimate truths, inherently exist, and are objects of direct perception (*pratyakṣa*). Abstract concepts or universals (*sāmānyalakṣaṇa*) are conventional truths, do not truly exist, and are objects of inferential reasoning (*anumāna*).⁵²⁰ The Cittamātra or Mentalist school, as formulated by Tibetan commentators, maintains that the ultimate (*pariniṣpanna*) truly exists as relativity (*paratantra*), and is known as such when the unreal projections of subject and object (*parikalpita*) cease.

In both Sautrāntika and Cittamātra, as in Madhyamaka, conventional reality—specifically concepts and reasoning—is the means (*upāya*) for realizing the ultimate. But in the final analysis, the conventional and ultimate realities of the proponents of true existence do not have an identical ontological status in emptiness as they do in Madhyamaka. More important is the meaning of “emptiness” that obtains in these systems. For Cittamātrins and proponents of extrinsic emptiness, emptiness and ultimate reality are established as the absence of what does not exist (*parikalpita*) in that which does exist (*paratantra*). In other words, pure relativity (*paratantra*) truly exists, and is the ultimate, with respect to the absence of the false appearances of projection. It is not devoid of its own nature, but of something extrinsic to it. A similar relation of relative and ultimate truths obtains in the context of Sautrāntika: the ultimate as the momentary succession of things-in-themselves or particulars (*svalakṣaṇa*) truly exists, while the relative as conceptual abstractions or universals (*sāmānyalakṣaṇa*) does not.

According to the Gelug scholar ‘Jam dbyangs bzhad pa, in Madhyamaka “the two truths are objects, not vague concepts...[t]hey are phenomena (*dharma, chos*), objects (*viśaya, yul*), existents (*sat, yod pa*), and objects of knowledge (*jñeya, shes bya*).”⁵²¹ They are logically distinct—complementary, but mutually exclusive.⁵²² Though the two truths are known by different kinds of consciousness—conventional and ultimate—they are not simply different perspectives on the same thing. Instead they are understood as “different isolates in one entity” (*ngo bo gciḡ la ldog pa tha dad*), referring to the ultimate emptiness of the conventional distinction of “conventional” and “ultimate.”

Gelug Prāsaṅgika here seems close to Svātantrika, which according to Mipham emphasizes the valid cognitions that cognize the truths and the logical distinction of the two truths. If ultimate truth is validly cognized by means of rational analysis that investigates the ultimate status of a thing, the object known through such an analysis is obviously distinct from that known by a conventional analysis. However, if the definitive ultimate (*don dam mtshan nyid pa*) is an emptiness of absolute negation exclusive of appearance, then the coalescence of the two realities—for example, form and emptiness or appearance and emptiness—cannot be established because the two realities are, on the basis of this definition of the ultimate, mutually exclusive. Thus, according to Mipham, the definition of the negandum as utterly nonexistent, and its basis as conventionally existent, is not adequate to the nature of coalescence, which is realized as the absence of conceptual elaborations (*niṣprapañca, spros bral*) of existence, nonexistence, and so forth.

Mipham, Go ram pa, *et al.*, were not the only ones to notice the problematic nature of Tsongkhapa’s Prāsaṅgika system on this account. Napper notes that there is a “danger that, because Dzong-ka-ba chose to emphasize a verbal distinction between existence and inherent

existence which cannot be realized in ordinary experience, people will miss the Mādhyamika message altogether. They will not understand that Mādhyamika is attacking and refuting our very sense of existence and, misled by the verbal emphasis on inherent existence, will see Mādhyamika as refuting something merely intellectual, 'out there,' not immediate.... Dzong-ka-ba has been criticized on this point even from within the Ge-luk-ba tradition."⁵²³ Newland likewise observes,

[I]t is clear that "Tsong-ka-pa's system," as institutionalized in the monastic textbooks (*yig cha*), supplies pat answers to many Ge-luk-bas and closes down their reading of Nāgārjuna, Candrakīrti, and even Tsongka-pa himself. At worst, the result is a defanged Mādhyamika whose insistence upon the valid establishment (*tshad grub*) of conventional reality serves only to confirm the samsaric (and socio-political) status quo. Cutting against this tendency, Jang-gya, Den-dar-hla-ram-ba (b. 1759) and other Ge-luk-ba writers warn their fellows against taking "these concrete appearances as givens." Inherent existence, they say, is not some horn-like or hat-like protuberance ready to be lopped off, leaving our world unscathed.⁵²⁴

These comments are both reminiscent of Mipham's critique in the first topic of the *Beacon* and the MAZL. Because he names his opponents as *dGe ldan pa* (*Beacon* §1.1), Mipham's critiques in the *Beacon* are implicitly directed toward Tsongkhapa. However, the fact that Mipham quotes Tsongkhapa to support his own position in the MAZL⁵²⁵ and praises him elsewhere (in his *Madhyamakālamkāra* commentary) suggests that Mipham was more concerned with the way his Gelug contemporaries understood Tsongkhapa. This is perhaps corroborated by the fact that Mipham and his Gelug opponents exchanged many refutations and counter-refutations (*rtsod yig*).⁵²⁶ Go ram pa and his Sakya colleagues—faced with aggressive polemics of Tsongkhapa's disciple mKhas grub dge legs dpal bzang⁵²⁷—must have perceived Gelugpas as a threat to their previously unchallenged status as Tibet's greatest scholars. Mipham, however, as a student of ecumenical *Ris med* teachers, was committed to including all the luminaries of Tibetan tradition among the ranks of great commentators on Mahāyāna philosophy. One would therefore expect his critiques of Gelug Prāsaṅgika to focus on particular errors of interpretation rather than wholesale refutations of an exegetical tradition.

6.3.2.2 Mipham's Analysis of Negation in the MAZL

Tsongkhapa's formulation of the Mādhyamika negandum (*dgag bya'i mtshams 'dzin* or *dgag bya'i ngos bzung ba*) is the main focus of Mipham's critique in his commentary on Candrakīrti's *Madhyamakāvatāra* (MAZL).⁵²⁸ At the beginning of his commentary on the sixth chapter of the *Madhyamakāvatāra* Mipham undertakes a lengthy refutation of the "not empty of itself, but empty of true existence" interpretation of the Mādhyamika negandum (*pratiśedhya, dgag bya*). He says:

[In forensic debate] both disputants refute or establish some *dharma* on a commonly apparent basis of disputation.... Having posited sound as the commonly appearing subject, sound is proven to be impermanent, so it appears that a permanence extrinsic to the commonly appearing sound is negated, but sound [*per se*] is not negated. This way of positing the three [members of the syllogism, namely, the commonly] understood subject (*dharmin, chos can*), probandum (*sādhya, sgrub bya*), and reason (*hetu, gtan tshig*),

has given rise to the position "A vase is not empty of being a vase, but is empty of true [existence]."⁵²⁹

As in the *Beacon*, Mipham's discussion in the *MAZL* centers on the implication that if pillars, vases, and so forth, were not ultimately empty of being pillars, vases, and so forth, but only empty of being truly established as such, then true existence, in order to be thus negated, would have to be extrinsic to the basis of negation—the vase, pillar, etc. To then say that vases, pillars, and so forth are "empty" is only a species of extrinsic emptiness, since "emptiness" means the absence of something other than what exists in fact. Furthermore, since pillars, vases, and so forth, would not be negated ultimately—only their true existence being thus amenable to negation—they would be immune to ultimate analysis (*don dam dpyad bzod du 'gyur*), and hence would be truly existent. Thus, true existence would not, in fact, be eliminated from the basis of negation (*dgag gzhi*). Mipham observes,

Such a commonly appearing vase is the deceptively existing (*kun rdzob tu yod pa*) vase. With that in mind, the position that "the vase is not negated by an ultimate analysis, but true existence is" has arisen. If an ultimate analysis did not negate the vase, but there were some way of negating an independent (*yan gar ba*) true existence, then that [position] would of course be proven. But as long as the vase is not established as not reified (*mi dmigs par*) ultimately, its lack of true existence will not be established.⁵³⁰

Mipham here seems to assume that an ultimate analysis should lead to an understanding of emptiness wherein the subject of negation (*dgag bya*)—a conventional phenomenon falsely appearing as real—no longer appears. This is generally the position of Gelug Madhyamaka. Mipham continues:

If one uses an ultimate analysis to analyze that commonly apparent vase, one will not find anything immune to analysis, or will not reify anything. With respect to a valid cognition of ultimate analysis, "nonimagination," "ultimate nonexistence," "emptiness of essence," "the absence of true existence immune to analysis," etc., are designated. Aside from this, there is no other way to posit true existence and the absence of true existence. Thus, if one eliminates the erroneous object of clinging to true existence with the reason of "lacking sameness or difference," and so forth, one eliminates the true existence of the commonly appearing vase, and it is reasonable to say that it is established as not truly existent, as in the above case of eliminating the permanence of sound. Although this way of establishment is taught in all the great texts of the Madhyamaka, and should be apprehended in that way, [my opponents] do not expound any other negandum aside from the negandum of "true existence."

Here Mipham refers to the basic premise of the Gelug analysis of negation: there is a basis of negation (*dgag gzhi*)—a conventional phenomenon—and there is a negandum, which is the misconception of true existence (*bden grub*) confused with that basis by a deluded mind. He continues:

Of course there is no Mādhyamika text that teaches that a true existence on the basis of

a commonly apparent vase is not negated, while the commonly apparent vase is negated. So bearing in mind this establishment of the absence of true existence without negating the commonly apparent object, there is the statement “the vase is not empty of vase, but of true existence.” Thus, all dharmas are not self-empty (*rang stong*) of their own essence, because if they were, their conventional existence would not obtain. Therefore, they are extrinsically empty (*gzhan stong*) of another thing—true existence.

Here Mipham begins to turn the tables on his opponents. He refers to statements found in Tsongkhapa’s own writings having the basic form of “x is not empty of x, but of true existence.”⁵³¹ Mipham considers this a species of extrinsic emptiness, since the negandum and basis of negation are held to be different. Mipham continues:

Thinking that by analyzing ultimate reality, no matter what dharma is analyzed, if its essence is negated, then it cannot exist deceptively, [such persons] who hold dear to their hearts the outlook of the proponents of true existence (*dnegos smra ba’i zhed ’dod*)—who maintain that the two truths are contradictory—claim that something that is conventionally nonexistent [like the permanence of sound or true existence] is that which is negated through reasoning. Although they loudly claim to be expounders of the Mādhyamika tradition, they have revived the philosophical system of the proponents of true existence.⁵³²

In the first part of this passage Mipham first suggests that an ultimate analysis (*don dam dpyod pa*) should lead to the nonreification (*mi dmigs pa* or *dmigs pa med pa*) of the basis of negation (*dgag gzhi*), which for him is a conventional phenomenon. In other words, when ultimate reality or emptiness is logically established by ultimate analysis, it must also be established experientially by non-perception of the negandum, since that is the outcome of correct analysis. Gelug commentators would seem to agree that emptiness meditation *per se* should be just that—only meditation on emptiness to the exclusion of all else. If the appearance of a truly existent thing is present, then the analysis that induces certitude about emptiness has not been adequate.

Mipham’s opponents insist that what is negated is not a conventional phenomenon, but a phenomenon that is not even conventionally existent—namely, true existence (*bden grub*). If it is not a conventional phenomenon that is negated by an ultimate analysis, but instead a mistaken “true existence” of that phenomenon, then, Mipham says, that is the same as asserting “An eye is not empty of being an eye, but of true existence.” This would seem to imply that an eye is still present to the mind when its true existence is eliminated by analysis. That, Mipham asserts, would be the same as “immunity to analysis.” The reason is that an eye that appears to the consciousness of anyone except a buddha still *appears* to be inherently existent, even if it is not ascertained (*nges pa*) as such. In other words, an ascertainment of emptiness thus understood would not suffice to eliminate the false appearance of true existence.

The presence of the basis of negation to the mind in the context of ultimate analysis would be tantamount to its truly existing, because only a truly existing thing can withstand such an analysis. Here it should be borne in mind that in adducing this consequence Mipham assumes that the only conventional phenomena that appear to the mind of an ordinary person are appearances confused with true existence, an assumption Tsongkhapa does not seem to share.⁵³³ Though one can make a verbal distinction of a conventional thing and its true existence, this is not a

distinction that has any experiential relevance for an ordinary person. Thus, to maintain that it is not a conventionally existing phenomenon that is negated by ultimate negation, but only true existence—which is conventionally nonexistent—would entail that true existence of the phenomenon (*dgag gzhi*) is thereby established. Moreover, if negation applies only to true existence, and the appearance of the basis of negation is not eliminated, then emptiness of true existence would require the existence of something else—the basis of negation. Thus, emptiness would not be an absolute negation, as Gelugpas hold it to be, but an implicative negation (*ma yin dgag*).⁵³⁴

Mipham also says that using the qualification (*khyad par*) of “true existence,” when negating existents vis à vis ultimate reality, is not necessary, because the context clearly requires that it is not the conventional existence of a dependently arisen thing that is being negated, but rather the misperception of a thing as having ultimate, truly established status. He concedes that “true existence” is in fact what is negated in Madhyamaka. But this “true existence” should not be misunderstood as a superimposed misconception such as the Mīmāṃsaka conception of permanence, which is negated by the Buddhist in relation to sound, while not negating sound itself. For example, if a falsely projected, extrinsic permanence of sound is disproven, and “impermanence” proven as a mere *property* of sound, and not as its essence, then impermanence as the *nature* of sound is not in fact proven.⁵³⁵

In the MAZL Mipham also poses the question, “If in fact it is not the thing *per se* that is negated, then who is this teaching to benefit?” Worldly people do not apprehend a true existence extrinsic to the thing itself, such as a vase; they apprehend a truly existent vase. Since they have no concept of a true existence other than the vase itself, there is no point in negating a true existence extrinsic to the vase. As for yogis, as they have already apprehended the vase as lacking true existence (*bden med*), it goes without saying that yogis do not need to be admonished that “a vase is not empty of being a vase, but of true existence.”⁵³⁶ It would thus appear that the negandum of true existence, if understood as something distinct from its basis of imputation, is only a philosophical misconception (*grub mtha'i sgro btags pa*), not the innate misperception of true existence that must be eliminated by practicing the path (*lam gyi dgag bya*).

If the Mādhyamika negandum is a conventionally nonexistent phenomenon (for example, *bden grub*) like a rabbit's horns, and emptiness is the absence of such, then an ultimate analysis is not necessary to negate it; that a rabbit has no horns is established by conventional valid cognition. If the negandum (*dgag bya*) of true existence is not the same as the basis of negation (*dgag gzhi*), then Mādhyamika analyses such as the analysis of the lack of sameness and difference (*gcig du bral*) are unnecessary. For example, what good would it do to analyze the absence of sameness or difference of a rabbit and its horn? If something does not even exist conventionally, what is the point of analyzing its dependent origination to establish its emptiness?⁵³⁷

In conclusion, Mipham states that one should never say that a conventionally existing dharma-possessor (*dharmin, chos can*) is not negated by an ultimate analysis, or is not empty. Otherwise, though the mere word “truthless” may be established, a correct understanding of emptiness is not.⁵³⁸ He quotes Tsongkhapa to illustrate his point:

Je Tsongkhapa said, “Though the special reasoning (*rigs pa'i phul 'tshams*) of the Svātantrikas and the proponents of true existence is expressed differently than this, their meaning does not go beyond this. The Svātantrikas do not refute natural existence (*rang bzhin gyis grub pa*), but claim that true existence (*bden grub*) is negated. That natural

existence is the same as in my system where conventional vases are not empty of being vases, etc., but are empty of true [existence], and it is shown that when conventional essences and birth, etc., are refuted, the qualification of 'true existence' is applied. If one analyzes with reasoning, and if there is a conventional essence that is not negated and is not eliminated (*mi bkag mi khegs*) with an ultimate analysis, that would be truly existent. So that would be to claim that a conventional dharmapossessor is itself empty of true existence, but is not empty of being existent by way of its own characteristic (*rang mtshan gyis grub pa*). If it is not eliminated with an ultimate analysis, even if true existence is not accepted, that acceptance of its own characteristic not being negated by an ultimate analysis implicitly establishes it as truly existent (*mi 'dod bzhin bden par grub par 'gyur ro*)."⁵³⁹

Here Tsongkhapa warns against just the kind of misconception Mipham devotes so much time to refuting. Though Mipham's *Madhyamaka* does not employ the term *bden grub* to the same degree as Tsongkhapa's, he acknowledges again and again that "true existence" is a correct negandum, as long as it is not held to be something different than the conventional phenomenon that is misperceived as truly existent. He says,

Generally speaking, to apply the distinction of "true existence" (*bden grub*) is not incorrect, and facilitates understanding. This is so if, in the context of analyzing dharmas' emptiness of self-nature, the convention of "absence of true existence" is applied. However, if it is understood as the negation of an independent true existence, without apprehending the meaning of "absence of true existence" as the emptiness of dharmas' self-nature, that kind of emptiness will not eliminate any apprehension of the substantiality (*dnegos 'dzin*) of dharmas, but will eliminate the necessity of determining the nature of emptiness.⁵⁴⁰

6.3.2.2.3 Mipham's Theory of the Ultimate: Gnosis and Coalescence

Mipham's definitive statement about the view in topic 1, and also about what is negated by that view, is similar to his position in topic 7, "whether *Mādhyamikas* have a position or not" (*dbu ma khas len yod dam med*), where he invokes Klong chen pa's solution of this problem in the *YD*. There he says that, in the actual practice of meditation (*dnegos gzhi*) and at the time of debate, a *Prāsaṅgika* takes no position, while in meditative aftermath (*rjes thob*) the everyday conventions of existence and nonexistence are accepted. Likewise, in keeping with the Nyingma emphasis on gnosis as a hermeneutical principle, Mipham states succinctly at the outset of topic 1:

What is our own Early Translation tradition?
 In the state of great gnosis of coalescence,⁵⁴¹
 After making a negative judgment of "nonexistence,"
 What other thing such as a blank emptiness,
 Or something that is not [that which is negated],
 Could be implied in its place?
 Both are just intellectual designations.
 In the ultimate sense, neither is accepted.

This is the original dharmatā beyond intellect,
Which is free of both negation and proof.⁵⁴²

Mipham maintains that ultimate reality is beyond the dichotomy of form and emptiness, since these two are themselves only conventionally established. The function of the view, he implies, is not merely to cultivate the absence of a misconception, but to pacify all elaborations (*prapañca*). This is agreed upon by all Mādhyamikas. What distinguishes Mipham from Tsongkhapa and his interpreters here is his emphasis on the coalescence (*yuganaddha*, *zung 'jug*) of form and emptiness, as well as the “great gnosis of coalescence” (*zung 'jug ye shes chen po*). Mipham’s reference to *zung 'jug ye shes* also seems to reflect his concern in this text to integrate the Mādhyamika approach with Vajrayāna.

Throughout the *Beacon* Mipham refers to the hermeneutical reliance on gnosis (*jñāna*, *ye shes*) again and again. Though *jñāna* is the objective or fruition (*phala*, *'bras bu*) of all Mahāyāna Buddhist practice, as a hermeneutical principle it is emphasized more in Mipham’s work than in Tsongkhapa’s. Newland observes that

[I]t has been said that the Ge-luk system is set up in terms of the basis (*gzhi*), the Sa-gya system in terms of the path (*lam*) and the Nying-ma system in terms of the result (*'bras-bu*). Of course, this is a rough and sweeping generalization. All three systems tell us what there is to work with, how to work with it, and what the end results will be, However, in doing so they each speak from a different perspective, and the predominant Ge-luk-ba approach is to speak in terms that make sense in relation to where we are now.... Jam-yang-shay-ba points out, if one attempted to make all conventional presentations in terms of what can be fathomed of the inconceivable subjectivity of the Buddha mind, the resulting system would be chaotic.⁵⁴³

Gelugpas acknowledge that emptiness is known directly only by sublime beings (*āryas*), but rGyal tshab Dar ma rin chen, for instance, rejects the assertion that an inferential cognition of emptiness (which is, in the Prāsaṅgika system, a *med dgag*, or absolute negation) is not a definitive ultimate (*don dam mtshan nyid pa*).⁵⁴⁴ This certainly reflects an emphasis on the “here and now”—emptiness as a conceptual image is the only emptiness perceivable by non-āryas. Mipham agrees that as an object of inferential cognition, emptiness is correctly understood as an absolute negation.⁵⁴⁵ In keeping with the aforementioned Nyingma emphasis on the result (gnosis), however, he understands the definitive meaning of emptiness as the object of sublime equipoise free of discursive elaboration, which is not amenable to conceptual reduction as an absolute negation.⁵⁴⁶ In essence, Mipham and rGyal tshab assume different definitions for what can be definitive in the ultimate sense. The latter assumes a philosophical formula (*stong nyid med dgag*, the emptiness of absolute negation), while the former assumes gnosis that realizes the ultimate nature of emptiness and form coalescent. Mipham’s reliance upon the hermeneutical principle of gnosis is based upon the distinction of the two truths as the discordance and concordance of the nature of things and their mode of appearance. For gnosis, of course, there is concordance, hence gnosis is part and parcel of the ultimate.

The fact that Gelug scholars (or at least those agreeing with rGyal tshab on this issue) accept the conceptually formulated ultimate as definitive (*mtshan nyid pa*) is in conformance with their

emphasis on valid cognition of conventional phenomena. Emptiness is a convention like any other. If it is the true nature of things, then its conceptual formulation must also be correct (*mtshan nyid pa*), in the same way that “the sky is blue” is correct, even though ultimately there is no “sky” and “blue.” It is for this reason, apparently, that Gelug scholars do not differentiate between conceptual and nonconceptual definitions of emptiness, at least as far as the definition of emptiness as absolute negation is concerned.

Mipham’s use of *ye shes* (gnosis) in interpreting the meaning of emptiness reflects a fundamentally different conception of the basis of the spiritual path. In accordance with the emphasis of the Great Perfection system on the original purity of things (*ka dag*), Mipham accepts that the basis is none other than the result. In the Madhyamaka, the basis is defined as the coalescence of the two truths and, in the Vajrayāna, as the coalescence of gnosis and emptiness. Thus, it makes sense, especially in the context of Vajrayāna, to base the definition of emptiness on how it is known by enlightened beings, not as it appears to be for ordinary persons—an absolute negation that is something other than the conventional object on which it is based.

Mipham’s reference to the gnosis of coalescence (*zung ’jug ye shes*) in the *Beacon* thus seems to reflect his concern to integrate the dialectical philosophy of the Madhyamaka with the Vajrayāna. In his NK commentary to the wisdom chapter (*prajñāpariccheda*, *shes rab kyi le’u*) of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, Mipham says:

In the context of determining the path, [it is said that things] are not produced ultimately, but the fact that they appear to be produced deceptively cannot be denied. Thus, all dharmas are established by a conventional valid cognition that apprehends their own characteristics (*svalakṣaṇa*, *rang gi mtshan nyid*) deceptively. Because they are not ultimately established as they appear, the qualification of “ultimately” is applied to the negandum, so they say that things are “ultimately nonexistent and infallibly present in deceptive reality.” This kind [of explanation], where each of the two truths is posited in its own right without conflict, is quite easy for beginners. Master Bhāvaviveka said,

Without the stairway of authentic deceptive reality,
To ascend to the house of authentic reality
Is not possible for the wise.

However, with respect to the final nature of things, it is not appropriate to explain characteristics of existence in deceptive reality and nonexistence in ultimate reality separately in this way. Whatever form, etc., appears, that is empty; whatever is empty, that appears as form, etc. Therefore, as long as the dharmadhātu—which is the coalescence of appearance and emptiness—is not free of the projection of dualistic doubt, there is no authentic perfection of wisdom. Glorious Candrakīrti and Śāntideva, and so forth, emphasized from the very outset the individually cognized gnosis free of elaboration. Thus, if the establishment of relative phenomena by way of their own characteristics is negated, separate apprehension of the two truths will also be negated. Because form and emptiness are [seen to be] coalescent, by arriving at the quintessential view free of all positions that is entailed by the ultimate nature of things, all extremes of existence and nonexistence are dispelled by consequential reasoning,

hence the name “Prāsaṅgika.”

Here Mipham confirms one aspect of Tsongkhapa’s Mādhyamika interpretation by noting that negation of establishment by way of own-characteristic (*rang mtshan gyis grub pa*) is the crucial point of Prāsaṅgika. He continues:

Because the Great Mādhyamika of unelaborate coalescence is emphasized here in the context of Prāsaṅgika, there is no differentiation between conceptual and nonconceptual ultimates. But some say: “The gnosis of sublime beings is a nonconceptual ultimate, and that is free of elaboration. But all meditations on emptiness of ordinary beings are meditations on the conformative ultimate, which is an absolute negation.” Here, when emptiness is taught, all negations of form and so forth are only absolute negations. If they were implicative negations, in the end there would have to be substantial entities, and thus that negation would not be adequate as emptiness. By applying absolute negation, relativity appears infallibly, so appearance and emptiness coalesce. Thus, all modal apprehension of form and negation should be destroyed....The *Pañcakrama*⁵⁴⁷ says:

If one knows the separate aspects of form and emptiness,
And then mixes them perfectly,
That is said to be coalescence.

Some say, “This is the meditation of the mantra path but not of the sūtras.” Well, aside from the fact that this coalescence free of the four extremes is a meditation by means of intellectual analysis, and the other arises from powerful methods, there is no difference in the dharmadhātu itself. An ordinary person’s meditation that analyzes the nature of things cannot eliminate the four extremes all at once. But if one does not eliminate the four extremes successively and gain experience of the nonobjectified coalescent expanse, [to achieve the nonobjectified direct realization of the first bhūmi would be] just like a grain of wheat producing a sprout of rice. Therefore, why shouldn’t one meditate in this manner (of coalescence) on the paths of accumulation and preparation?⁵⁴⁸

Mipham’s reference to the gradual elimination of elaborations implies that the meditations of the paths of accumulation and preparation are similar to actual realization of the first bhūmi and beyond, differing only in degree of intensity or nonelaboration. Such an interpretation is required in the Nyingma context, where it is maintained that the nonelaborated meditations of the Great Perfection give rise to some circulation of the wisdom energy (*ye shes kyi rlung*) in the central channel of the subtle body, even while the practitioner is still on the mundane paths (*sambhāramārga* and *prayogamārga*) prior to the first bhūmi. Gnosis (*jñāna*, *ye shes*) is the same in essence for ordinary beings and buddhas; practitioners and buddhas differ simply in their degree of realization.

In discussing Madhyamaka Mipham practices what might be termed “trickle-down logonomics.” The *logos*, or principle of ultimate reality insofar as it tends to be manifest, is definitively known as the coalescences of gnosis and buddha bodies (*sku dang ye shes*), luminosity

(*'od gsal*) and the illusory body (*sgyu lus*), the primordial ground (*gzhi*) and its manifestation (*gzhi snang*), etc., in the various tantric systems of the Nyingma and other schools. When Mipham uses the term *zung 'jug* as logos he is referring implicitly to anuttarayogatantra, as his opponent avers in the NK. In *zung 'jug* Mipham uses a term for the ultimate state that is prevalent in anuttarayogatantra to indicate the final significance of all Mādhyamika reasoning and practice. In this way the logos of what the Nyingmapas consider to be a higher vehicle with a higher philosophical view seeps into his systematic interpretation (*nomos*) of Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka.

The conception of the ultimate as the coalescence of form and emptiness is not considered by Gelug commentators to belong to the Prāsaṅgika system, though it does seem to have been considered essential to the Madhyamaka by Śāntarakṣita.⁵⁴⁹ The Gelug objection to Mipham's use of the term "coalescence" in the Mādhyamika context might reflect a concern that the simultaneous awareness of relative and ultimate as a single entity (*ngo bo gciq*) is something possible only for buddhas, so for everyone else it is absolutely necessary for one to meditate on the emptiness of absolute negation and the illusion-like nature of phenomena alternately. But what if it is possible for an ordinary person to be cognizant of appearance and emptiness simultaneously? Napper notes:

[I]n the [Gelug interpretation of the] tantric system, it is posited that the subject—the appearance as a deity—appears to the appearance factor of the consciousness while the ascertainment factor of that same consciousness ascertains its emptiness. The consciousness is still considered to have a mode of apprehension of a non-affirming negative since it is *ascertaining* only emptiness even if a divine form, etc., is *appearing* to it. Such is said to occur in tantra due to the force of special training. However, some scholars, such as Nga-wang-bel-den, have posited that even in the sūtra system the subject such as a sprout appears to an inferential consciousness realizing emptiness, even though the consciousness ascertains only emptiness. Dzong-ka-ba's position on this is not totally clear; it is generally held to be his view that the subject does not appear in the Prāsaṅgika system, but there are a few passages in his *Great Exposition* which seem to suggest that the subject does appear.⁵⁵⁰

Mipham's position is that, even if emptiness is logically determined as an absolute negation, it should not be meditated upon to the exclusion of appearance. Though elsewhere he argues that ultimate analysis should lead to the absence of imagination of the basis of negation, in the MAZL, in order to prove his point about the nature of the Mādhyamika negandum,⁵⁵¹ he insists, in the context of meditation (*Beacon* topics 3 and 4) that certainty in the nature of reality as coalescence leads to realization of coalescence. Coalescence means, among other things, the inseparability of form and emptiness. Any negation is still a conceptual creation, and can only go so far toward the complete nonelaboration of coalescence. That emptiness and form should coalesce in reality is known from the fact that emptiness is itself empty, that is, not exclusive of form.⁵⁵² The requirement that an ultimate analysis lead to nonreification (*mi/ma dmigs pa, dmigs pa med pa*)—which excludes appearance—only applies for beginners, who must meditate upon emptiness as an absolute negation until some understanding of the coalescence of form and emptiness is realized. And, as the sūtras teach the identity of form-relativity and emptiness, it goes without saying that one's meditation on emptiness, to the extent that it is correct, will enhance one's understanding of relativity. Thus, to meditate on the coalescence of the two is of paramount

importance.

Mipham seems to think that even Tsongkhapa would agree upon the possibility of appearance and the absolute negation of emptiness appearing simultaneously. Later on in the *Beacon*, he notes of his pūrvapakṣa:

Some say deceptive reality is more important;
They say you must integrate the two truths,
But then they heap praise on deceptive reality.
At the time of maintaining the view of coalescence,
They desert coalescence and grasp a blank emptiness.
Thus, the toddler of practice is unable to keep up
With the mother of good explanations.⁵⁵³

If this is not explicitly a criticism of Tsongkhapa (the *Beacon* uses the word *kha cig*, “some”), then Mipham may be saying that Tsongkhapa’s view of coalescence is correct, but the practice or analysis of some of his followers goes astray. It should be remembered that Mipham’s construction of his pūrvapakṣa probably derived from his studies and debates with Gelug scholars at least as much, if not more than, from his readings of Tsongkhapa and his commentators. For Mipham emptiness as one aspect of a dichotomy is still a conventional designation; a qualified meditation on the ultimate view must not adhere one-sidedly to it, lest it focus too much on words over meanings, consciousness over gnosis, etc.

Thus, the coalescence of form and emptiness is just another way of expressing the inseparability of form and emptiness; if the absolute negation of emptiness is an authentic emptiness, it must not be exclusive of appearance.⁵⁵⁴ The distinguishing feature of the Prāsaṅgika approach according to Mipham is the non-separation of the two truths.⁵⁵⁵

6.3.3 Topics 3 and 4: Tsongkhapa and Mipham on Modal Apprehension and Analytical Reasoning

6.3.3.1 Tsongkhapa on the Role of Conceptuality in Meditation

The proper way to realize the coalescence of form in emptiness is the concern of the third and fourth topics of the *Beacon*, “whether the view involves modal apprehension (*dzin stang*)” and “whether one meditates with analysis or placement.” Modal apprehension is the way one focuses on a concept as the object of meditation. Analysis (*dpyod pa*, *vicāra*) and trance (*jog sgom*, *samāpatti*) refer to the cultivation of meditative insight through reasoning (*vipaśyanā*, *lhag mthong*) and the cultivation of tranquility (*śamatha*, *zhi gnas*).

In the *Beacon*, “modal apprehension” refers to a particular way of perceiving things that is purposeful as opposed to instinctual (*rang dga’ ba*).⁵⁵⁶ Topic 3 is concerned with what Tsongkhapa terms “habit pattern [modal apprehension] of rational cognition” (*rigs shes kyi’ dzin stang*),⁵⁵⁷ which is an awareness of the lack of intrinsic reality of things maintained in meditation as ascertainment (*nges pa*).

According to Go ram pa’s and Mipham’s interpretations of Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka, any type of conceptual apprehension will have to involve some kind of reification or formulation of its object.⁵⁵⁸ Such a mental “posturing” (*stang*) is incompatible with the nonconceptual,

unelaborated (*niṣprapañca*) direct realization of emptiness on the first bhūmi. Therefore, Nyingma authors, like Go ram pa, generally advise that one cultivate a homologous (*mthun pa*) nonapprehension (*'dzin pa med pa*) on the paths of accumulation and preparation. Tsongkhapa criticizes this approach, or one very similar to it, in his *LRC*. Of the four mistaken *vipāśyana* meditations he mentions, the first is a familiar “Hashang” quietism:

Some say that without discovering any sort of view that realizes selflessness, [simply] to hold the mind without thinking anything is to meditate on the way things are. Because emptiness, the way things are, is without any discernment of “this is” and “this is not,” and that way of dwelling accords with the nature of things, one doesn’t apprehend anything with the mind, because nothing whatsoever is established.⁵⁵⁹

This view is wrong, according to Tsongkhapa, because it is impossible to have confidence in the view without having analyzed it and gained certainty. If one does not already know what the view is intellectually, it is impossible to meditate on it. It is not sufficient to meditate on emptiness simply having heard someone else say, “everything is empty.” Tsongkhapa also mentions a variation on this view that, except for the last sentence of the stated *pūrvapakṣa*, sounds similar to the approach of some Nyingma authors:

Having done many analyses of the objects apprehended as having the two types of self [and thus ascertained their emptiness], one stops the apprehension that is the perceiver [of that analysis]. To eliminate elaborations after they arise [*spros pa phyi chod*] is like a dog chasing after stones; to control the mind from the very start without straying is like [a dog] biting the hand that throws the stone. By doing just that, one doesn’t stray to those objects that apprehend characteristics, and all elaborations are cut off from within. Thus, to study scripture and reasoning is just to get lost in conventional expressions.⁵⁶⁰

This way of meditating is reminiscent of the method of “self-liberation” (*rang grol*) taught in the Great Perfection, where thoughts and negative emotions are said to subside through the force of awareness alone, without applying explicit analysis or antidotes. In response to this position, Tsongkhapa says:

This is the worst kind of wrong view. It forsakes the Buddha’s own scriptures and the texts of the great scholars, such as the six ornaments, because those [scholars] only devoted themselves to determining scripture and reasoning.... Without finding any certainty, merely holding the mind may not involve straying to the objects of the two kinds of self, but that is not the same as realizing the meaning of the two kinds of selflessness. Otherwise, falling deeply asleep or fainting would entail the absurd consequence of realizing selflessness, because in those states the mind does not stray. This approach is like, for example, entering an unfamiliar cave; fearing that there might be a monster, you hold up a candle and investigate well to see if there is one or not, but failing to assuage your fear, you say “don’t think about the monster—just control your mind.”⁵⁶¹

If wisdom is a function of knowing selflessness, then there is no wisdom in this method, Tsongkhapa says, because selflessness is only known through *understanding* selflessness, that is, through analysis and interpretation. It is not sufficient, he suggests, to merely avoid the conceptualization of the two kinds of self.

The other mistaken positions that Tsongkhapa mentions all maintain, to one degree or another, that one should not engage in analysis at the time of actually meditating on emptiness, but just take emptiness as the focus of transic meditation (*'jog sgom*). Tsongkhapa maintains that, without cultivating certainty through repeated analysis, simply meditating on something is ineffective:

Even if one has ascertained [the view] through study and reflection, one must still cultivate that ascertainment. To the extent that one cultivates that ascertainment, that certainty is seen to become stronger, more prolonged, clearer, and more stable. The *Vārttika* says,

Certainty and the mind that projects

Have the nature of being the opponent and that which is opposed.⁵⁶²

Thus, according to this statement...certainty in the lack of inherent existence should become more and more stable.⁵⁶³

Tsongkhapa also answers the objection that analytical meditation cannot serve as the cause of nonconceptual wisdom, because conceptual analysis of emptiness and the nonconceptual gnosis of sublime beings (*'phags pa'i rnam par mi rtog pa'i ye shes*) are opposite with respect to conceptuality. The cause and effect must be homologous (*rjes su mthun pa*), so meditation on emptiness must be nonconceptual. In response, Tsongkhapa says:

[If that were the case], then it would be impossible for a pure path [i.e., *darśanamārga*] to arise from a impure one [i.e., *prayogamārga*], and ordinary beings would not become sublime beings, because the cause and effect are dissimilar. There are many examples of dissimilar causes and effects, such as a brown seed producing a green sprout, smoke coming from fire, a child of a woman, and so forth. The nonconceptual gnosis of sublime beings is the direct realization of the meaning of selflessness, which is the emptiness of the object of the two kinds of self-clinging. At the present time, [when one is an ordinary being], one must meditate by realizing the nonexistence [of the two kinds of self] by analyzing the objects of self-clinging individually. Although that is conceptual, it is quite a homologous (*mthun pa*) cause for nonconceptual wisdom.⁵⁶⁴

This argument agrees in principle with Tsongkhapa's strict adherence in the *LRC* to the gradualist model of spiritual progress, which understands gnosis as a result of causes. If gnosis is understood as the nature of ordinary mind, and not as a transformed or purified ordinary mind, then it would be reasonable simply to empty the mind of concepts. This would be a homologous cause for realization in the Great Perfection system, since the method (nonconceptuality) is similar to the effect (nonconceptual gnosis). This kind of homology may be termed formal or literal, because the form or characteristic of method and result are similar. Tsongkhapa uses the word "homologous" (*mthun pa*) in a different way, in the sense of "conducive," which implies a

figurative or temporal understanding of the term. For Tsongkhapa, “homologous cause” in the Mādhyamika context simply means a cause conducive to the desired result, and not necessarily a cause that resembles the result.⁵⁶⁵

6.3.3.1.1 Yon tan rgya mtsho on Modal Apprehension and Analysis

Yon tan rgya mtsho (19th to early 20th century) was an important teacher of the Klong chen snying thig lineage. He was a student of dBon po bsTan dzin nor bu⁵⁶⁶ of Gemang, some fifteen or twenty kilometers northwest of Mipham’s retreat at ‘Ju nyung in northeast Kham. He is evidently the same mKhan po Yon tan rgya mtsho who was with Mipham in the last few weeks of his life⁵⁶⁷ and is listed among his students.⁵⁶⁸ His major work is a commentary in three volumes on ‘Jigs med gling pa’s *Precious Treasury of Good Qualities* (*Yon tan rin po che’i mdzod*), a comprehensive manual for spiritual practice in the Nyingma tradition, entitled *Sun Rays Illuminating the Profound*.⁵⁶⁹

For Nyingma philosophers, Tsongkhapa’s analysis would have to be compelling to the extent that it applies to the practice of meditation according to the dialectical philosophy of the Madhyamaka. Mipham would certainly not deny that there is a proper and necessary role to be played by concepts and dialectical reasoning in the development of wisdom according to Madhyamaka. It might not be so compelling, however, in the context of Vajrayāna, where a formal homology of cause and effect is considered by all Tibetan schools as an essential feature of method in the creation and completion phases of anuttarayogatantra. This might explain why Nyingma philosophers accept one degree or another of formal homology of cause and effect in the Mādhyamika context—they were more concerned, as “trickle-down logonomists,” to harmonize Mādhyamika meditational methods with Vajrayāna practice, rather than vice versa, which is Tsongkhapa’s approach.

Like his teacher and contemporary Mipham, Yon tan rgya mtsho was concerned to establish the philosophical coherence of the Great Perfection meditation in the context of Madhyamaka, and particularly in response to Tsongkhapa’s LRC.⁵⁷⁰ His discussion suggests that in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Nyingma colleges there was some discussion about how to respond to Gelug critiques that explicitly or—as in the case of the LRC—implicitly or plausibly applied to Great Perfection meditation. The following passages are excerpts from the Madhyamaka section of Yon tan rgya mtsho’s commentary on the *Precious Treasury of Good Qualities*. He says:

All the Mādhyamika traditions of the old and new schools are alike in maintaining that, after completion of all analyses through study and contemplation, when meditating one must be free of modal apprehension. In this system, however, one must not merely be without any modal apprehension of “truth” or “existence”; one must be free of all discursive clinging to extremes of conceptual elaboration.⁵⁷¹

Here Yon tan rgya mtsho implies that what is commonly understood as the path negandum (*lam gyi dgag bya*) in Gelug Prāsaṅgika is somewhat narrower in scope (*khyab chung ba*) than what Nyingmapas understand it to be. Yon tan rgya mtsho continues:

With respect to this method, some holy ones have said that one must generate the wisdom of individual analysis by means of many methods of ascertaining the meaning

of penetrating insight—which derive from the analytical methods of discerning objects of “how many” and “in what way”⁵⁷² according to the statements of the interpretive commentaries, or according to the *Śrāvaka*bhūmi (*nyan sa*), the *Abhidharmasamuccaya* (*kun btus*), the *Prajñāpāramitā* pith instructions, and so forth. This definitely seems to be important for beginners or ordinary persons until they have mastered the analysis of the view. When meditating as well, in order to further clarify [one’s sense of] certainty about and derive benefit from the significance of selflessness, by occasional analysis one should achieve certainty.⁵⁷³

Here Yon tan rgya mtsho affirms the propaedeutic value of analytical meditation, as does Mipham.⁵⁷⁴ He continues:

Nonetheless, someone might say, “If, in the context of actually practicing meditation, one does not always have that kind of acute analytical awareness and modal apprehension endowed with certainty about the significance of selflessness, then there is no gnosis of individual analysis, which is the essence of penetrating insight.”⁵⁷⁵

This sounds like the response of a Gelug interlocutor. The crucial points of the opponent’s position as Yon tan rgya mtsho represents it are that both analysis and modal apprehension (*dzin stang*) should *always* be present. This may have been the position of some Gelug polemicists, but it should be noted that Tsongkhapa himself maintained that analytical meditation (*dpyad bsgom*) should alternate with transic meditation involving certainty about the meaning of emptiness, which in his case would mean that modal apprehension is always present, even if analysis is not.⁵⁷⁶ Yon tan rgya mtsho replies,

Thus, in the meditative stabilization of sublime beings, and even at the level of buddhas, you would be claiming that such an analytical awareness is present, because if it were not, you would be claiming that they had no gnosis of penetrating insight.⁵⁷⁷

What he is saying, in effect, is that if emptiness is constitutive and definitive of ultimate reality, and if analytic awareness is constitutive of insight and sublime gnosis, then analytic engagement of emptiness would be constitutive of buddhahood, which is the consummation of sublime gnosis. In brief, enlightened beings would not have nonconceptual gnosis, because they would still have analytical awareness. Yon tan rgya mtsho continues with the reasons why one must have a homologous cause and effect (*rgyu ’bras bu dang rjes su mthun pa*).

[Objection:] “That [conclusion] is not entailed, because sublime beings actually see the nature of reality and thus have penetrating insight; and ordinary persons are not like that.” [Reply:] Granted they are not necessarily alike in every respect—but since there is no homologue of the gnosis of meditative equipoise in the manifest vision of reality, it is not reasonable that discursive elaboration [acting as a] cause should bring about gnosis, which is free of elaboration. About this some say: “So it is not reasonable for a blue-green sprout to come from a white seed, because cause and effect must only be similar.” However, by this very example [our own position] is reasoned to be extremely

appropriate. A white seed, for example, [represents] an ordinary person's mind; if it is rice, a rice sprout similar to it is produced. Likewise, if one meditates now without apprehension, it makes sense for a sublime being's gnosis (which is similar) to be produced. Likewise, if that [seed] is buckwheat, it does not make sense for it to ripen as a rice sprout. So, I think that it does not make sense for a sublime beings' nonconceptual gnosis to be produced from that meditation that has conceptual apprehension.⁵⁷⁸

Tsongkhapa in his *LRC* rejects the idea that the lack of a homology of cause and effect is meaningful in this case. For if cause and effect must be similar, then how could an ordinary person become a sublime being (*ārya*), or a child be produced from a woman?⁵⁷⁹ In response, Yon tan rgya mtsho elaborates further:

Accordingly, ordinary persons do not have anything equivalent to the great wave of altruistic activities—such as generosity endowed with the four extraordinary dharmas, etc.—that sublime bodhisattvas undertake with great compassion. Yet wherever a system maintains that one must henceforth practice generosity, etc., replete with the mindgeneration (*bodhicittotpāda*, *sems bskyed*) on [the path of] preparation and with subsequent dedication homologous to that [sublime bodhisattva's practice], that is a special homology of cause and effect.

Moreover, by practicing the equipoise of nonelaborated gnosis, sublime bodhisattvas attain the dharmakāya homologous to it, and by practicing the subsequently attained activities of final enlightenment, they attain the form bodies and the enlightened activities. This is similar to the [foregoing] reasoning.

It is also said, "By confidence that the two types of apprehended self are not as [they seem], one should collapse the cave of false bewilderment. But to focus the mind unwaveringly on absence the two types of self without having acquired any certainty whatsoever [that they do not exist] is like going into an unfamiliar cave at night, being afraid that there might or might not be an monster there, and holding up a candle and investigating, without [consciously] dispelling one's fear, such that the mind no longer strays into conceptualizing a monster; this is similar to just controlling the mind."⁵⁸⁰

On that, I grant that merely taking the mind as an object [of contemplation] without [first] acquiring confidence [about its nature] is like that [example just mentioned]. However, to cast aspersions upon such an unwavering mind in every case is like saying that having already held up the candle and determined that there is no monster, if one does not repeatedly think "There's no monster, there's no monster," then fear will not be eliminated.⁵⁸¹

Mipham also makes a similar point.⁵⁸² He emphasizes the need to go beyond modal apprehension and meditate in a nonelaborated (*niṣprapañca*, *spros bral*) fashion once certainty is gained. It is significant that Yon tan rgya mtsho and Mipham do not pursue their discussion in terms of "nonconceptuality" (*nirvikalpa*, *rnam par mi rtog pa*) but rather "nonelaboration" (*niṣprapañca*, *spros bral*). Tsongkhapa's refutations of any meditation that does not use analysis, or maintain ascertainment of the view gained through analysis, is framed as a response to

opponents' assertions that meditation be nonconceptual. Mipham seems to answer Tsongkhapa's concern when he refutes nonconceptual meditation as one of the four extremes, namely that of meditation on "neither existence nor nonexistence."⁵⁸³ It will be recalled that Tsongkhapa was rebuked when he questioned his tutelary deity Mañjuśrī with this view in mind.⁵⁸⁴ It seems, then, that what these Nyingma authors understand by nonelaboration is more subtle than what Tsongkhapa understands by nonconceptuality. Yon tan rgya mtsho says of nonelaboration:

I do not think it is appropriate not to give up the apprehension of "emptiness" once certainty has been achieved. Why is that? Although I am not saying that the meaning "truthlessness," "emptiness," "selflessness," and so forth, are not the nature of reality, the "truthlessness," "emptiness," and so forth, that do not eliminate all conceptual elaborations are not the final emptiness explained in the *Prajñāpāramitā*. For the *Fundamental Wisdom* says,

All the buddhas have said that emptiness
Definitely eliminates all viewpoints.
Those who have the view of emptiness
Are said to be incurable.⁵⁸⁵

Therefore, those who have a conception of "nonsubstantiality" (*dnogs med*) are said not even to have a merely homologous tolerance⁵⁸⁶ [of the nature of reality]. The *Eighty Thousand* says, "Those with a conception of nonsubstantiality do not even have a homologous tolerance." The last *Bhāvanākrama* says, "For if you say, 'don't think anything,' you will reject the consummate wisdom of individually analyzed characters. The root of consummate wisdom is the consummate analysis of individuals; if you reject it, you sever the root, and thus reject the world-transcending wisdom," and so forth. Though this was said in consideration of those lost in the thick darkness of doubt⁵⁸⁷ who have not acquired confidence in the lack of intrinsic nature of things through study and contemplation, how could it have been intended for those who have settled in the nonapprehensive state of nonelaboration that is characteristic of the gnosis of penetrating insight?⁵⁸⁸

Here Yon tan rgya mtsho seems to make the same point as Tsongkhapa, that certainty (*nges pa* or *nges shes*) is essential. For Tsongkhapa, however, certainty necessarily involves conscious apprehension (*'dzin pa* or *'dzin stang*), while for Yon tan rgya mtsho it evidently does not. Mipham likewise indicates that upon the attainment of certainty one should begin to let go of modal apprehension.⁵⁸⁹ Next, Yon tan rgya mtsho paraphrases Tsongkhapa's response in the *LRC*:

"Now, is the emptiness meditated on by an ordinary person an obscure phenomenon (*lkog gyur*) or a manifest phenomenon (*mngon gyur*)? If the first were the case, they would be sublime beings. If the second were the case, to apprehend an obscure phenomenon nonconceptually would be ridiculous [because only a manifest phenomenon can be perceived nonconceptually, i.e., directly]. In short, this contradicts the statement that an ordinary person meditating on emptiness meditates on his object,

selflessness, without even looking toward it. And if he does look toward it, whether it be hidden or manifest, for an ordinary person it is nothing but an obscure phenomenon. Therefore, from the "supreme phenomenon" phase of the path of preparation on down, [emptiness] is held to be cognized as a universal (*samānyārtha*, *don spyi*). This utterly contradicts the [idea of] 'meditation without concepts.'⁵⁹⁰

This objection is based on how the Gelugpas understand the relationship between conceptuality and the apprehension of true existence.⁵⁹¹ If conceptuality automatically involves the erroneous apprehension of true existence, then meditating on a concept of emptiness as the antidote for that misapprehension would be utterly self-defeating. If, as Tsongkhapa appears to assume, conceptuality is not invariably imbued with such misapprehension, then it is essential to maintain a concept of emptiness until the path of vision (*darśanamārga*, *mthong lam*) is reached. Yon tan rgya mtsho continues:

Even though this is said, when in the context of study and contemplation, the meaning of selflessness is taken as a conceptual object, it goes without saying that it is not contradictory for [selflessness] to be cognized in the form of a universal (*don spyi*). At the time of equipoise in the state of selflessness, however, I do not think it is necessarily correct to adduce such a contradiction. If emptiness or selflessness were possessed of an established characteristic, it would be reasonable to speak in the manner of [this objection]. But as the essence of reality is not established to have the characteristics of substantiality, nonsubstantiality, and so forth, not to apprehend it with the intellect in any way is homologous to its abiding nature, and [such meditation] is placed upon [that nature] nonconceptually. Nonetheless, when one meditates at the present time, that essence that is free of concepts does not become the unfabricated wisdom free of mental obscurations, and is thus admittedly meditated on in the form of a conceptual object (*don spyi*, *sāmanyārtha*). But there is no contradiction in not asserting that one takes a characteristic called "emptiness" as a mental object and meditates upon it conceptually.⁵⁹²

Yon tan rgya mtsho here assumes that there is a difference between selflessness as a concept that is consciously and intentionally brought to mind, and selflessness as a concept that is not consciously or intentionally brought to mind but that nonetheless informs the process of meditation. He concedes Tsongkhapa's point that an ordinary person cannot meditate on selflessness without some kind of generic image (*don spyi*). But he suggests that, for the very reason that the experiential fact of selflessness is realized in the absence of apprehending characteristics, there is no reason that the apprehension of selflessness must always be explicitly cultivated for the meaning of selflessness to inform meditative practice. Yon tan rgya mtsho is not saying that apprehension of selflessness should never be present in meditation, but only that there is a context where it is appropriate to let go of that apprehension. Mipham likewise indicates that when the understanding of selflessness is understood with total confidence (*ngeś shes*), there is no reason to consciously apprehend the meaning of selflessness.⁵⁹³

For Tsongkhapa this would be a dangerous conclusion, since it seems to open the door to quietism, antirationalism, and so on. Yon tan rgya mtsho tries to address this concern:

Let us also examine this statement: "The claim 'all virtuous and nonvirtuous concepts are the fetters of saṃsāra, so one only need maintain the essence of nonconceptuality' is actually the view of Hashang, and this severs the root of the Mahāyāna."

Generally speaking, any good or bad concepts that involve apprehension of "something there" are limiting; they are not any different [in this respect], just as golden chains and ropes are equally fettering devices. Nevertheless, it is not maintained that on the Mahāyāna path one must eliminate all concepts because they involve the apprehension of characteristics (*mtshan 'dzin*). One must not reject virtuous concepts. Indeed, one must also analytically terminate, without clinging, mental afflictions, which are included among "nonvirtuous concepts." Thus, through the method of purifying [concepts] into the nature of reality, they become the essence or the accompaniment of the path. So it is maintained that one must accomplish in that way [which involves concepts] the meditations upon the formal absorptions (*mnyam bzhaq*) of love, and so forth, and the various ways of performing actions such as generosity in the aftermath [of meditation].

Likewise, if on the seven impure [bodhisattva] stages prior to the pure stages [eight through ten] the practices of meditative absorption and aftermath are explained separately, it goes without saying that the same holds for ordinary persons. When meditating primarily upon emptiness, one settles without any modal apprehension. When meditating upon the formal [absorptions] of love and so forth, or when dispensing generosity and so forth, one does it in the manner of illusion, without clinging to any memory or expectation. This is said to be established as "conceptual" practice.

Therefore, [this discussion is] intended for these persons who refute with reasoning and scripture even the nonelaborated meditative absorption of holy beings who behold the profound significance [of the Dharma] and are meditating with undue emphasis upon absolute negations and the grasping of emptiness to the exclusion of everything else. Their deluded meditations are like throwing stones in the dark, and they do not comprehend any of the scriptures, interpretive commentaries, or profound pith instructions. How could this [sort of teaching] be the final spiritual intent of the holy ones? How can one deny the many faithful and humble disciples who never went through the analyses of study and contemplation, who were manifestly liberated by the paths of general Mantrayāna, Mahāmudrā, and the Great Perfection?

Therefore, I thought there might be some small benefit even for those who uphold our own tradition on the path of noneffort [that is, the Great Perfection] who have some doubts, thinking "Should there be thoughts now or not?" and also for those others who have spoken in the ways [just mentioned], who appear to have a perverse view, thinking, "This is an erroneous teaching."⁵⁹⁴

Though Yon tan rgya mtsho here maintains essentially the same position as Mipham in the *Beacon*—that one must cease analysis and objectification of one's object of meditation within the state of certainty in the view of emptiness while on the mundane paths (*sambhāramārga* and *prayogamārga*)—he nonetheless concedes Tsongkhapa's point that a mental image (*don spyi*) of emptiness is necessarily present as long as emptiness remains an obscure phenomenon (*lkog gyur*), that is, perceived inferentially.⁵⁹⁵ At the same time, he maintains that a non-grasping and

nonconceptual meditation is appropriate for ordinary persons—an approach that Tsongkhapa considers to be for practical purposes dangerous, and in any case theoretically impossible.

From Tsongkhapa's perspective, as long as there is a mental image, there is a concept, and as long as there is a mental image or concept, there is an apprehender of the concept, so there is apprehension (*'dzin pa* or *'dzin stang*), however salutary it may be. According to Tsongkhapa, if one abandons such apprehension, one abandons the conceptual determination (*nges pa*) of emptiness, and thus it is impossible to realize signlessness (*mtshan med*) or nonconceptuality (*rtog med*).⁵⁹⁶

7. Ascertainment (*nges pa*) and Certainty (*nges shes*): Some Conclusions

AS DISCUSSED in the previous chapters, the key terms certainty (*nges shes*) and analysis (*dpyod pa*) as used by Mipham and Yon tan rgya mtsho are very similar in meaning to the terms ascertainment (*nges pa*) and analytical meditation (*dpyad bsgom*) used by Tsongkhapa in the *LRC*. Moreover, modal apprehension (*'dzin stang*) is understood more or less identically in Mipham's and Tsongkhapa's systems.

The analytical meditation techniques prescribed in the *Beacon* and the *LRC* are both gradual approaches to the cultivation of insight (*vipaśyanā*, *lhag mthong*) and are structured in more or less the same way. Study (*śruti*, *thos pa*) is followed by analysis (*vicara*, *dpyod pa*) and thoughtful review (*cintā*, *bsam pa*), which leads to certainty (*vinīścaya*, *nges pa* or *nges shes*), which constitutes insight (*vipaśyanā*, *lhag mthong*) or wisdom (*prajñā*, *shes rab*), which develops into realization (*adhiḡama*, *rtogs pa*) through meditative cultivation (*bsgom pa*, *bhāvanā*). In this progression, these terms are structurally—if not in all respects semantically—equivalent.

Tsongkhapa's ascertainment (*nges pa*) and the central concept of the *Beacon*, certainty (*nges shes*) are nearly, but not entirely, equivalent. Ascertainment and certainty are both constituted by a philosophical orientation (*darśana*, *lta ba*) toward ultimate reality, which is developed through analysis and contemplation. Ascertainment means to apprehend something in a certain, and generally speaking, correct way. For example, one may apprehend the appearance of a horse conjured by a magician, but simultaneously ascertain that the appearance is an illusion. In *Mādhyamika* meditation, what is ascertained is emptiness or selflessness, and the basis for its ascertainment as such is an apprehended appearance, such as a person.⁵⁹⁷ According to the *Beacon*, certainty is first developed through ascertainment in the analytical phase of meditation, where the view is established analytically as the exclusion (*rnam dpyod*, *vyavaccheda*) or nonexistence (*med pa*, *abhava*) of the false conception of inherent or true existence; certainty is consummated in the gradual elimination of all elaborations (*spros bral*, *niṣprapañca*), including the elaboration of nonexistence. Thus, for practical purposes, both ascertainment and certainty are constitutive of meditative insight (*vipaśyanā*, *lhag mthong*), because they exercise the philosophical view through which insight becomes possible.

According to both Mipham and Tsongkhapa, in the transic phase of meditation (*'jog bsgom*) analysis is suspended and insight is preserved through the intentional preservation of modal apprehension (*'dzin stang*) of a mental focus (*don spyi*). Until a certain level of proficiency in insight meditation has been developed, bare maintenance of intentional apprehension must alternate with analytical meditation (*dpyad bsgom*) lest proper ascertainment be lost. Insight into the nature of reality—which is what certainty is certain about—is a function of the force of one's analysis and the subsequent clarity with which the reasoned conclusion of analysis—a mental image (*don spyi*)—can be kept in mind.

Notwithstanding the etymological and functional similarities that are in evidence, the distinct philosophical presuppositions of these authors preclude any simple equation of the terms *nges pa* and *nges shes* as used by Tsongkhapa and Mipham, respectively. Tsongkhapa defines the two truths in terms of the dichotomy of form and emptiness, which is how ordinary mind accesses the two-truth distinction. Mipham usually, though not exclusively, interprets ultimate reality as

the concordance of the way things are and the way they appear (*gnas snang mthun pa'i don dam*), which is the coalescence of gnosis and gnoseme—the way sublime beings experience things.

Likewise, Mipham and Tsongkhapa assume different degrees (or types) of relatedness obtaining between analysis and wisdom (*prajñā, shes rab*), and between wisdom and realization (*adhiḡama, rtogs pa*). The strengths of these relationships correlate with the differing degrees of emphasis that their respective traditions, the Nyingma and Gelug, place upon the study of dialectical philosophy and Vajrayāna meditation practice. Tsongkhapa and the commentators who follow him emphasize a strong relationship between analysis and wisdom based upon philosophical study and reflection (*thos pa, śruti*, and *bsam pa, cintā*), according to the highest system of the dialectical vehicle, Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka. Mipham and his co-religionists emphasize an organic connection between wisdom, as the direct awareness of one's true nature, and enlightenment, in accordance with the systems of meditation (*bsgom pa, bhāvanā*) taught in the anuttarayogatantras in general and the Great Perfection in particular. Though Tsongkhapa and Mipham are renowned in their respective traditions equally for their scholarship and Vajrayāna meditative expertise, Tsongkhapa grounds his interpretation of both sūtra and tantra as much as possible in his normative interpretation of Prāsaṅgika, while Mipham—the "trickle-down logonomist"—grounds his discussion of Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka in the *Beacon* as much as possible in the conventions of anuttarayogatantra in general, and the Great Perfection in particular.

Ascertainment or conceptual determination (*nges pa*) plays a crucial role in Tsongkhapa's treatment of insight meditation in the *LRC*; it is the fulcrum by which the force of transic meditation (*'jog bsgom*) and the lever of analysis (*dpyad bsgom*) pry off the stifling lid of the apprehension of true existence (*bden 'dzin*). *Nges pa* and philosophical analysis are perfectly complementary; *nges pa* without prior analysis would not lead to certainty, but would be only false imagination,⁵⁹⁸ and philosophical analysis that did not lead to ascertainment would be pointless sophistry. Because Tsongkhapa holds an analytical determination of emptiness as the absolute negation of inherent existence to be constitutive of philosophical insight, his *nges pa* involves a gnoseological orientation of type (i),⁵⁹⁹ because ultimate reality and the ultimate view (*darśana, lta ba*) are defined in terms of the object of an awareness, that is, objectively.

Certainty (*nges shes*), the unifying concept of the *Beacon*, is the same as *nges pa* in one important respect: Mipham indicates that it is the certitude that inherent existence does not exist, and that it is initially generated by analytically determining that the emptiness of absolute negation is the nature of things.⁶⁰⁰ However, to the extent that certainty enables one to go beyond the four extremes of elaboration, including the apprehension of the absence of inherent existence, Mipham's *nges shes* is arguably less determinate in its philosophical orientation (*darśana, lta ba*) than Tsongkhapa's *nges pa*—so much so, a Gelug polemicist might argue, as to imply quietism, nihilism, or agnosticism. If certainty is not defined with respect to some objective reference point, and is not exclusively a subjective state of mind either, then, one might object, what could really be certain, and for whom?

Mipham specifies that certainty should allow one to let go of all apprehension, hence also the explicit conceptual determination that there is no inherent existence—*nges pa* with respect to the absolute negation of emptiness—and implies that this nonapprehension should be developed prior to the attainment of direct realization of emptiness (the path of vision or *darśanamārga*) on the mundane paths (*saṃbhāramārga* and *prayogamārga*). This nonapprehension is required, as Yon tan rgya mtsho argues, because the type of meditation that leads to the result of direct perception should be similar in its nonelaborate "structure" to the totally nonelaborate direct perception of

sublime beings, just as a grain of rice produces a rice sprout, while buckwheat does not. Thus, in Mipham's understanding, certainty that inherent existence is false (gnoseological orientation (i)) must develop into experiential certainty that the two truths are coalescent (gnoseological orientation (iii)).⁶⁰¹ What is realized by the latter approach is similar (if not identical) in its relative nonelaboration to nonelaborated sublime gnosis, and is a natural result of previous analysis that initially determines emptiness in relation to particular things (*dnegos po*), but that also determines emptiness itself (as a nonthing, *dnegos med*) to be empty.

As the apprehension or determination of a mental image that is sustained by transic meditation, *nges pa* in Tsongkhapa's usage is closely linked to '*dzin stang* as Mipham uses it in the *Beacon*.⁶⁰² *Nges pa*, as Tsongkhapa understands it, assumes an experiential distinction between the gnosemic focus (*don spyi, yul*), which is emptiness, and a mind (*yul can*) that consciously apprehends it. *Nges shes*, as Mipham understands it, does not in every case assume an explicit experiential distinction between an object of meditation and a subject that experiences it. There is at least one context however, that of direct perception (*pratyakṣa*), where I think Gelug scholars would acknowledge that such an absence of distinction is meaningful and valid, and might thus have to acknowledge Mipham's and Yon tan rgya mtsho's point, that there is a nonconceptual component (or at least, a moment) of meditation that is possible and salutary, prior to direct realization of emptiness on the path of vision. This has ramifications for understanding Tsongkhapa's approach to insight meditation as a method that is not incompatible with—though by no means identical to—that of Mipham.

According to Dharmakīrti's *pramāṇa* system, concepts are one of the six sense objects that are directly perceived in the first moment of sense perception by their respective sense consciousnesses. This means that for a single moment there is no heterogeneity of formal aspect (**ākāra, rnam pa*) that differentiates the mind (as sense faculty, *manovijñāna*) and its object. Immediately following this moment, a mental image of the object of direct perception arises as an object of mental direct perception (*manasājpratyakṣa, yid kyi mngon sum*).⁶⁰³ I would suggest that *nges pa*, in its gnoseological dimension sense (i) as it applies in Tsongkhapa's system, is best defined in relation to the first moment a generic image is ascertained in mental direct perception. Given that *nges pa* is the direct result of proper analysis, when analysis has been successfully concluded, the result of that analysis is a generic image (*sāmānyārtha, don spyi*) of emptiness subject to ascertainment (*niścaya, nges pa*), which will structure experience more or less seamlessly (as *vipaśyanā, lhag mthong*) when that image becomes the focus (*ālambana, dmigs pa*) of transic meditation (*śamatha, zhi gnas*). The reason the *initial moment* of ascertainment or *nges pa* is of primary importance is that it *ipso facto* constitutes an undistorted—or, according to one's level of philosophical insight, the least conceptualized—perception of the mental image (*don spyi*) of emptiness induced by analysis. Thus, assuming one's preliminary analysis is adequate, the first moment of ascertaining emptiness would, at least potentially, be the most crucial and authentic determinant of the philosophical view one is attempting to realize. It would, in effect, be a *relatively* (if not absolutely) nonconceptual moment of insight, which would lead to a *relatively*, if not entirely, nonconceptual meditation imbued with insight.

Thus, the effectiveness of ascertainment (*nges pa*) in meditation would depend upon transic stability as well as the strength and accuracy of the analysis that gave rise to *nges pa* in the first place. Though ascertainment is the result of analysis, it does not necessarily begin where analysis leaves off. Insofar as Tsongkhapa emphasizes the thorough coordination of transic and analytical meditation, the relationship between analysis, a particular moment of ascertainment, and a

transic meditation that is structured by that particular ascertainment would not generally be a linear one. Instead it would tend to be a dynamic process where ascertainment (*nges pa*) induced by analysis and preserved by transic stability is enhanced by periodic rehearsals of Mādhyamika analysis (*dpyad bsgom*). Trance gives stability and focus to the conclusions of analysis—that is, moments of ascertainment—while repeated analysis brings clarity and vividness to that focus.

Three points should be kept in mind here: first, the assumption that the first moment of a concept—specifically a momentary mental image (*don spyi*) that is the first of a series comprised by an ongoing determination of the nature of reality—is the aspect of a direct perception by a mental consciousness (*manovijñāna*, *yid kyi rnam par shes pa*); second, Tsongkhapa’s definition of emptiness as the absolute negation of inherent existence, and as the ultimate truth; and last, the orthodox (though perhaps not universally accepted) Gelug position that the emptiness of absolute negation is a definitive ultimate (*don dam mtshan nyid pa*) and not merely a conformative (*mtshun pa*) or conceptual (*rnam grangs*) one as Tsongkhapa’s critics claim.⁶⁰⁴ There is a felicitous connection between these three, as we shall see.

The crucial significance of having a proper generic image of emptiness is reflected in the very strong emphasis upon dialectical-philosophical study and debate in the Gelug tradition. Emptiness as absolute negation may only be a concept, but through study and reflection it becomes a more and more vividly understood and appreciated concept, which is why it can then provide a powerful focus in meditation. It is no accident that Tsongkhapa reached enlightenment while he was reading Buddhapālita’s commentary on the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*.⁶⁰⁵ If a perfect rational cognition (*rigs shes*)—meaning a flawless understanding or ascertainment (*nges pa*) of emptiness arising from analysis—were conjoined from the first moment of determination (that is, as direct mental perception) with a transic meditation of perfect tranquility (*śamatha*, *gzhi gnas*), that would mean that direct perception of the mental image would remain with perfect clarity before the mind as long as the perfect tranquility of meditation remained undisturbed. If perfect tranquility is understood to involve the ability to suppress all thoughts and disturbing emotions and to focus on a single object (such as the *brahmavihāras*), then there is no reason why emptiness as absolute negation should not remain with perfect, unwavering clarity as the aspect of direct mental perception. Assuming one has achieved perfect tranquility, to the degree to which one possessed a perfect ascertainment of emptiness, enlightenment—or at least the first *bhūmi*—would be inevitable, though not necessarily immediate; for the ostensible object of meditation—emptiness—and the experience of the mind that apprehends it would become, and remain, entirely homogeneous. This would be, then, a direct perception of emptiness, and the attainment of the path of vision (*darśanamārga*).

Thus, in the Gelug system, the analysis leading to that moment of determination must be flawless and is highly constitutive of enlightened realization—even if realization *per se* is not mediated by any conceptual focus (*don spyi*) or determination (*nges pa*). When perfect tranquility is secured, it only remains for the meditator to maintain the most pristine and clear determination of the nature of emptiness in each and every moment. Otherwise, without this contemplative insight, which is constitutive of wisdom, the subtle aspects of disturbing emotions—which Tsongkhapa considers to be constituted by the apprehension of true existence—cannot be eradicated.

Generally speaking, Gelug scholars do not understand nonelaboration (*niṣprapañca*, *spros bral*) as a defining characteristic of the ultimate, or at least, not as the most important one.⁶⁰⁶ They would certainly grant that emptiness is directly realized in the absence of elaboration. However,

elaboration and its absence are features of a subjective mind, which in Gelug Prāsaṅgika is not a definitive ultimate (*don dam mtshan nyid pa*), but a conformative one (*mtshun pa'i don dam*). There appears to be good reason for this distinction. If there is an ultimate reality, it must be the same for everyone and everything, regardless of how it is thought, expressed, or experienced by individuals. In the Gelug tradition emptiness is taught in relation to individual things. Everything is empty, yet emptiness is never known except in relation to a conventional thing that possesses emptiness as its ultimate nature. A mind is just one phenomenon among many. If one perceives the nature of the mind as emptiness, one realizes the ultimate nature of mind, but that does not make the individual mind an ultimate reality. When the ultimate is known by an individual mind, that mind is “ultimate” only to the extent that it correctly ascertains or, in the case of sublime beings, directly perceives emptiness.

For Tsongkhapa, as for all Mādhyamikas, to realize emptiness as the absence of inherent existence is also to realize the causal relativity of things. What obscures the nature of relativity is the misperception of inherent existence, and what constitutes wisdom is the realization of the opposite of inherent existence, namely emptiness as the negation of inherent existence. On this basis one could argue that Tsongkhapa’s definition of ultimate truth as the emptiness of absolute negation is pragmatic; the ultimate truth is that which, if understood rationally, leads to enlightenment.

Emptiness thus understood is also ideal for establishing the coherence of Tsongkhapa’s philosophical system. For one, defining ultimate reality as emptiness *cum* absolute negation effectively negates (or, perhaps, unfortunately blurs) the distinction between emptiness as the content of rational cognitions (*rigs shes*) of the absence of inherent existence by ordinary individuals, and emptiness as an object of sublime gnosis, and thus fortifies (or possibly confutes) the connection between reason as a cause of analytical wisdom (*prajñā, shes rab*) and sublime gnosis (*jñāna, ye shes*) as the result of rational analysis. It also allows for an unambiguous (or, perhaps, oversimplified) alignment of what constitutes the definitive meaning of the Buddha’s teachings—the gnoseological dimension of the Buddhist path (*tathāgatagarbha*)—with the rational cognandum (*gzhal bya*) of logical and epistemological analysis as understood in the textual traditions of both Pramāṇa and Madhyamaka. This in turn allows for a hermeneutical reconciliation of the teachings of the tantras, the theoretical basis of tantra according to texts belonging to the vehicle of philosophical dialectics (the teaching of *tathāgatagarbha* in the *Ratnagotravibhāga*), and the definitive teaching of the vehicle of philosophical dialectics, which is the Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka. If the institutions and adherents of the Gelug tradition exhibit a hearty *esprit de corps*, one could point to this convergence of hermeneutics, gnoseology, and epistemology in a single system as their philosophical rallying point.

Thus, Tsongkhapa’s understanding of ascertainment (*nges pa*) is linked to the concept of emptiness as a definitive representation of its referent (ultimate reality), and that connection is crucial in determining the effectiveness of meditation on the nature of reality. In turning to Mipham’s understanding of the crucial points of the theory and practice of the vehicle of philosophical dialectics and the Vajrayāna in terms of the *nges shes* concept, we must consider how concepts of ultimate reality may be useful and effective in meditation practice even if they are not, by their very nature, definitive representations of that reality nor, beyond a certain point, crucial in determining the effectiveness of meditation on the nature of reality.

Valid cognition, as understood by the Buddhist logicians, functions primarily in single moments of direct perception of individual characteristics (*svalakṣaṇa, rang mtshan*). Valid

cognition functions derivatively, and more commonly, as the correct inference of things that are at least potentially present to direct perception. “Things” in this sense are generalities or universals (*sāmānyalakṣaṇa*, *spyi mtshan*), which are properly understood as the exclusion (*apoha*, *gzhan sel*) of what is extrinsic or nonessential to each thing. For Dharmakīrti whatever truly exists (*svalakṣaṇa*) must also have the capacity to produce effects (*arthakriyā*, *don byed nus pa*). Accordingly, the most common form of reasoning involves deducing the presence of a cause (such as fire) from its effect (such as smoke).

Generally, for Buddhist philosophers to accept the truth of a proposition it must not be contradicted by either reason or direct perception. This means something is validly cognized if it is perceived directly or is inferred through proper reasoning. For example, I know the sky is clear because I see it, and that the sun will rise tomorrow because there is no reason to infer that it will not. What is conventionally true is perceived by valid cognition, but the mere fact of being validly cognized in an explicit or formal manner is not constitutive of conventional reality. Everyday experiences are rooted in the implicit assumption that what we and others know as conventionally real is somehow independent of our own perceptions. This consideration requires that a conventionally existing object not be understood *only* as the object of a valid cognition, but also, at least nominally, as an object independent of our perceptions. For example, an available taxi passes us on the street, whether we notice it in time or not.

Prāsaṅgikas hold that things exist as dependently arisen and as dependently designated. This means that a Prāsaṅgika accepts the existence of conventional things in accordance with worldly convention, even though not all conventions are known to every individual. Thus, the Prāsaṅgika could be said to have a pragmatic conception of conventional truth. What is conventionally true is what makes it possible for individuals to get along with the business of being sentient. Conventional truths are known primarily through direct perception, but for practical intents and purposes, mainly through inference. This means that conceptual affirmation and negation is the key to all conventional knowledge, as it is for Buddhist logic.⁶⁰⁷ Rational thinking determines whether something exists or not.

Ultimate reality, on the other hand, is not fully realized in thought and reason, notwithstanding the fact that reason plays an indispensable role in making realization possible. Knowing the ultimate, in the most definitive sense, is not comparable to knowing that the sun will rise tomorrow, or to perceiving that the sky is presently free of clouds, because it is what is already always the case. Conventional knowledge, on the other hand, is an either-or proposition: the sun will rise or it will not, given the appropriate causal conditions.

Even if one accepts that ultimate reality is adequately defined as absolute negation, according to Mipham, to understand emptiness as the negation of inherent existence does not suffice to realize the nature of emptiness. Wisdom means to understand, with increasing profundity, the falsity of what emptiness is supposed to negate, namely, inherent existence, and also to understand the emptiness of emptiness itself—which follows from the fact that emptiness is designated relationally with respect to phenomena. Reality as a concept does not admit of degrees, but our understanding of what we think of as reality does. Reality could be defined pragmatically as that which becomes infinitesimally more apparent if one applies the right methods (*thabs*, *upāya*) for understanding it. As a result, when understanding leaves the domain of doubt and misconception behind, direct perception and realization will occur.

Mipham acknowledges that emptiness is an absolute negation to the extent that it involves something that is not conventionally true, namely, the misconception of inherent existence.⁶⁰⁸

By analytically determining emptiness-cum-absolute negation as the ultimate nature of things, one gains confidence in the absence of inherent existence, which the concept of emptiness excludes. The logical correctness and efficacy of emptiness-as-negation do not suffice to make it a definitive ultimate, however. Absolute negation adequately defines the logical character of emptiness as the inexorable conclusion of inferential reasoning,⁶⁰⁹ but ultimate reality *per se* (*aparāyaparamārtha*, *rnam grangs ma yin pa'i don dam*) is not an object of inference,⁶¹⁰ because it is not an object of dualistic consciousness, as pointed out in Śāntideva's famous statement.⁶¹¹

For Mipham, the emptiness of absolute negation is not definitive because ultimate reality in the definitive nonconceptual sense (*aparyāyaparamārtha*, *rnam grangs ma yin pa'i don dam*), as coalescence, is not conceptualizable and is not realized without the gradual pacification of all elaborations, which occurs through the application of emptiness to the dichotomy of the two truths, form and emptiness. This means, in effect, to qualify the dichotomy of the two truths of form and emptiness, or appearance and emptiness, in terms of the other two-truth paradigm that Mipham often invokes, namely, the two truths as the concordance or discordance of reality and appearance. Determining emptiness as absolute negation prepares the way for the realization of coalescence, in the concordance of appearance and reality.⁶¹² It is definitive only to the extent that it represents the logical conclusion of Mādhyamika analysis.

Analysis functions first to induce certainty in the falsity of inherent existence, and then to gradually eliminate all apprehensions of truth and untruth, existence and nonexistence, form as well as emptiness. When the apprehension of true or inherent existence has been eliminated, say Go ram pa, Mipham, and Yon tan rgya mtsho, one must not rest content with the apprehension of the mere negation of inherent existence. If the definition of the ultimate is restricted to emptiness as an absolute negation, they say, one might eliminate the misapprehension of true existence but fail to eliminate the conceptual elaboration of absence or nonexistence. If intentionally meditating on emptiness as absolute negation requires modal apprehension and is for the purpose of eliminating all extremes of elaboration—including views of nonexistence—then it is fitting that meditation on emptiness as absolute negation should lead to the cessation of apprehending even absolute negation, because it is a negation, an intentional act. At that point one would begin to fathom the definitive ultimate as the coalescence of form and emptiness—though of course, an individual's awareness of a distinction between "knower" and "known" would be greatly reduced, if not absent altogether.

Thus, in defining the view (topic 1) and philosophical position (topic 7) of Madhyamaka, Mipham refers to the "great gnosis of coalescence"⁶¹³ and the "great Madhyamaka of nonelaboration,"⁶¹⁴ which is the "object" (but *only* analytically speaking) of the nonelaborated gnosis for which relative and ultimate realities no longer appear as a dichotomy, that is, as the concordance of appearance (*snang ba*, which is both perceiver and perceived) and reality (*gnas lugs*, the nature of things). In the final analysis what is known (ultimate reality) and what knows (gnosis) are inseparable. Accordingly, in the practice of meditation one should gradually develop certainty through analysis, and further stabilize certainty through meditation with modal apprehension. When certainty has progressed sufficiently, modal apprehension ceases and the absence of elaboration dawns with increasing clarity. To the extent that this process is an experiential fact (*qua* result of method) it verifies Tsongkhapa's position (that analysis and modal apprehension should be intentionally developed) as well as Mipham's (that analysis and modal apprehension must, in a certain context, be intentionally suspended).

For Mipham analysis is not exactly constitutive of sublime gnosis (*ye shes*), as it is for

Tsongkhapa, but facilitative. Analysis does not cause one to realize the nature of reality in quite the same way that force applied to a lever causes a weight to be lifted off the ground. When a weight is lifted from the ground and moved, weight, lever, and ground remain. But when analysis removes the pall of apprehending existence, nonexistence, both, and neither, analysis and that which it removes vanish altogether.⁶¹⁵ In this way Mādhyamika analysis has a built-in obsolescence because it tends to undermine the modal apprehension of generic images determined through analysis. When analysis subsides in flawless certainty, one remains in that state as long as possible, invoking analysis as necessary to maintain certainty. When analysis is not necessary, one remains in the state of certainty until direct realization occurs. The state of nonapprehending certainty attained subsequent to analysis is the immediately precedent homologous cause (*upādāna*hetu, *nyer len gyi rgyu*) of the nonelaborated direct perception of reality by sublime beings who attain the path of vision (*darśanamārga*). When ultimate reality is realized as the absence of elaboration, one is fully cognizant of the fact that there is nothing to realize nor anyone to realize it, for sublime gnosis and the expanse of reality (*dharmadhātu*, *chos kyi dbyings*) are coalescent. And so, one adopts a similar, less refined, and only partially nonelaborated approach to cultivating meditative equipoise prior to direct realization.

Granted that emptiness as the logical negation of inherent existence gives rise to an understanding of causal relativity—the total interdependence of all things—to the extent that the logical negation of inherent existence is a function of inferential reasoning, the understanding of relativity it implies is also a function of inference. For Mipham, relativity in the definitive sense is the inseparability of relative and ultimate truths, where subjective perceiver and object of perception are not related by a process of inference but coexist in each moment as coalescence. In Mipham's thought, theory, practice, and ultimate reality are all understood according to this principle.

In Tsongkhapa's interpretation of Madhyamaka the function of reason is to eliminate the misconception of inherent existence or true existence. In the universe of Buddhist conventionality, inherent existence excludes the possibility of causal efficacy in a thing; the logical exclusion of inherent existence is emptiness, which goes hand in hand with understanding the status of a thing in causal relativity, as well as understanding its conventional identity. To fully understand how something functions conventionally and to misunderstand its status of not existing inherently are mutually exclusive. For if one does not fully comprehend the absence of inherent existence of something, one cannot fully understand its status as a dependently arisen thing, nor its causal relation to other things.

One might object here, "But then ordinary people would be unable to function in the world, and ordinary discourse would be useless, because ordinary people apprehend everything as inherently existent." Granted that ordinary people understand the superficial aspects of causal relationships, that alone is not to understand relativity. One can make a finer distinction here between the obvious causal connections that obtain in everyday experience, and the subtle connections that are observable through special methods, such as scientific investigation or deep meditation. The dependently originated nature of any thing is more subtle than ordinary thought (which is constituted by inferential valid cognition) can comprehend; it is, in fact, infinitely complex. But if we accept that any thing is infinitely complex insofar as it is causally originated, then we must also accept that a thing's conventional nature is beyond simple formulation, and that so-called conventional knowledge of ordinary sentient beings is inherently bound up with delusion.

One of the distinctive positions of Tsongkhapa's Madhyamaka is a model of negation wherein the ultimate nature of things is known in the absence of a misconception of inherent existence that is falsely projected upon conventional phenomena. To whatever extent this projection informs experience, the understanding of the relativity of things is misunderstood, because whatever is conceived to be inherently existent is to that extent not understood as relativity. In Tsongkhapa's system, the status of conventionalities is the starting point and ending point of practice; one knows emptiness in relation to conventional phenomena, which are without true existence, and in knowing emptiness one understands conventional phenomena as they are, dependently originated, without the misconception of true existence. While ultimate reality is known in theory as an absolute negation of inherent existence in relation to a particular conventional thing, in practice it becomes relevant when conventionalities are mastered as relativity, free of the misconception of true existence.

Mipham acknowledges that the logical character of emptiness is the negation of inherent existence. However, he does not accept that ultimate reality is adequately defined as negation or as the exclusion of a misconception. The Gelug definition, he would say, tends to confuse what is only a method (*upāya, thabs*) with the reality that method is supposed to reveal. At more advanced stages of practice, when the apprehension of inherent existence has been significantly pacified, what is most distinctive about the view (*darśana, lta ba*), says Mipham, is the disappearance of the dichotomous appearance of relative and ultimate truths. Relativity means not only that conventional things are causally dependent (*pratītyasamutpāda, rten cing 'brel bar 'byung ba*), but also that conventional reality and ultimate reality are dependently designated (*prajñāpta, rten nas btags pa*). The definition of relative and ultimate truths is not exhausted in their logical or practical relation—where the former is a subject or aspect of method, and the latter an object, or rational conclusion constituting wisdom—because the Mādhyamika must finally conclude that relative and ultimate truths are nondifferent. In the final analysis, what fundamentally characterizes the relation of the two truths is how they are realized through practice and realization, as perfectly coalescent. Thus, Mipham says,

[I]n the context of extraordinary certainty
 Free of elaborations of the four extremes
 There is no occasion for analyzing or focusing on
 Thoughts of "this" and "that."
 When the analytical apprehension of characteristics
 Binds the thinker like a silkworm in its silk,
 The authentic nature will not be seen as it is.
 When this extraordinary certainty
 Dispels the darkness that obscures reality,
 One realizes the actual fundamental luminosity
 And the flawless vision of thatness
 Which is the individually cognized gnosis (*ye shes*).
 How could this be analytical wisdom (*shes rab*), a form of mentation?⁶¹⁶

Though absence of elaboration (*niṣprapañca, spros bral*) is fully realized only on the path of vision (*darśanamārga*) and above, according to Nyingma authors such as Yon tan rgya mtsho and Mipham it is not an irrelevant consideration in discussing the meditation of ordinary persons. In

the LRC Tsongkhapa maintains that meditation is either conceptual (*saprapañca*, *spros bcas*) or nonconceptual (*niṣprapañca*, *spros bral*), and thus is saying, in effect, that ordinary persons cannot meditate in a nonelaborated fashion. When they attempt such meditation, he says, they fall into an abyss of semiconscious quietude devoid of analytical wisdom. Klong chen pa, Go ram pa, Mipham, and Yon tan rgya mtsho all acknowledge this pitfall as a possibility. However, for practical purposes they would say that the role played by conceptuality (or elaboration) in the development of wisdom through meditation is not adequately addressed simply by asserting its presence or absence. Again, reality does not admit of degrees, while our knowledge and experience of it does.

To have a correct understanding of a thing's identity, or of a logical or causal relationship, does not necessarily require one to be conscious of every aspect of that identity or relationship to other things. For example, when I see a beautiful oak tree, I first think "There is a beautiful oak!" not "There is a beautiful oak belonging the class of things called 'trees,'" or "There is a tree that is the exclusion of all trees that are not oaks," etc. Even if for some reason I believe that oaks belong in the same family of plants as tomato vines, I would still be able to know the difference between an oak and a hickory.

Likewise, I know that Park Avenue is west of Lexington Avenue, so upon emerging from the stairwell of the downtown 6 train, I instinctively know that, in order to reach Park Avenue, I should not cross Lexington but should simply keep going in the same direction. To whatever extent one has experience of public transportation on the East Side, it is less likely that one will need *consciously* to recall the fact that Lexington is east of Park and that it is therefore not necessary, upon debarking the southbound train, to cross it. One might describe this situation as "knowing that one knows." However, it is quite different from simply affirming to oneself that one knows something. Instead, the knowledge in question is so much a part of one's habitual mode of perceiving that one is hardly conscious of the fact of knowing. For most New Yorkers, knowing where to go each morning to catch the subway is similar to knowing that the sky is blue, that the sun will rise, or that water falls down, not up.

Mipham's and Yon tan rgya mtsho's discussions indicate that meditation on emptiness is not rendered meaningful only by the conscious apprehension of emptiness as the exclusion of inherent existence, even though such apprehension is important for beginners. This means that one is free to dispense with the doubts and disciplines that were appropriate when one's understanding was incomplete, just as a well-assimilated New Yorker will throw away her subway map. In meditation, if one has certainty, one effortlessly understands the ultimate nature of things, while becoming ever more cognizant of their relative aspects. In other words, one *knows*, without needing to intentionally conceptualize the object of knowledge or the *fact of knowing* itself. When one achieves certainty in the view, modal apprehension fades, without compromising the practical efficacy (*arthakrīyatva*) of one's knowledge.

The definitive nature of emptiness, as Mipham and Go ram pa understand it, is known in the absence of elaboration. Elaboration admits of degrees, as does its pacification. Though an ordinary person who is advanced in meditation still has an elaborated realization of emptiness, it is reasonable to assume that his or her meditation is *relatively* nonelaborated, and becomes more so as he or she progresses. Thus, it is appropriate to prescribe the relinquishment of conceptuality at a certain point of practice, even if the meditator is still an ordinary person and cannot perceive emptiness directly, that is, in a nonconceptual way.

Even if emptiness as negation is not a conscious or explicit focus of meditation, emptiness as

nonelaboration is implicitly established as the content of meditative awareness when understanding of relativity is enhanced through meditation. In meditating upon emptiness I might not *know* or even *recall* that emptiness is the thematic content of my experience, but if my practice coincides with an efflorescence of insight into conventional aspects of the Buddhist paths, I am justified in being confident that my meditation is correct. I might not make a conscious choice to keep walking when I leave the Lexington Avenue subway, but if I always find myself on Park Avenue, and if Park Avenue was where I intended to go, it is fair to say I knew where I was going.

Mipham, were he here today, could invoke an explanation employed by Steven Katz⁶¹⁷ and Wayne Proudfoot⁶¹⁸ to account for the content of mystical experience: the factors that determine the meaning of a mystical experience include, but are not limited to, the conceptual apparatus that is active during the experience itself. This means that prior expectations, beliefs, and rational convictions (such as conceiving emptiness as an absolute negation, or of ultimate reality as coalescence), as well as subsequent interpretations of one's experience, may determine the meaning of an experience even if they are not explicitly invoked or adhered to during the experience itself. This kind of assumption appears to underlie Yon tan rgya mtsho's acknowledgment that the nature of reality is meditated upon as a universal (*don spyi*), even though nonapprehension is considered a quality of deepening understanding.⁶¹⁹

In the *Beacon*, "certainty" is a term that applies to two distinct phases: (i) the development of rational conviction through mastering the proofs and implications of philosophical propositions by study, and through the application of those implications in analytical meditation, and (ii) the development of experiential certainty, which defies the affirmations and negations of philosophical propositions. Rational conviction results from the logical determination of philosophical meaning through affirmation and negation, and is stabilized through meditation on the general meaning (*don spyi*) of previous analytical conclusions. Certainty develops as the realization that the nature of reality is beyond generic images, affirmation, and negation, as the coalescence of the two truths in the context of Madhyamaka, and as the coalescence of gnosis of original purity and the expanse of reality (*dharmadhātu, chos dbyings*) in the context of the Great Perfection. One who holds the precious beacon of certainty in this way illuminates the path to understanding all realities.

7.1 Mipham's Place in Tibetan Philosophy

The Nyingma tradition reveres many scholar-adepts for their outstanding accomplishments as teachers, writers, and Vajrayāna masters. With a few exceptions,⁶²⁰ however, they have not achieved distinction as philosophers and debaters in the intersectorian community of scholars of dialectical philosophy. In the Tibetan popular imagination, the Nyingmapa are famous for Vajrayāna teachings, especially the Great Perfection, just as the Gelugpa are famous for dialectical scholarship and the preservation of monastic virtue. Mipham, of course, is the exception—a Nyingma monk who was and is renowned as a scholar in other traditions as well as in his own. From the eleventh century onward, the Nyingmapa have generally identified the philosophical distinction of their school in terms of their tantric traditions. Mipham is the only Nyingma scholar who ever attempted to define a Nyingma tradition of dialectical philosophy with such breadth and depth. His commentaries on dialectical philosophy are studied in the Sakya and Kagyu schools and, to a lesser extent, by Gelug scholars.⁶²¹

As a writer of commentaries, Mipham is revered by Nyingmapas as a transmitter and preserver of traditions. His role as a Nyingma polemicist is well known, but that aspect of Mipham's career is not as important for contemporary Nyingma scholars. Present-day Nyingmapas seem to agree that Mipham's uniqueness lay in his unsurpassed brilliance in teaching and writing about every important aspect of the theories and practices of Tibetan Buddhism. What earlier chapters have identified as innovative aspects of Mipham's thought are rarely if ever singled out as such by Nyingma scholars. Though the *Beacon* uses logical refutation and proof to differentiate crucial points of the Nyingma tradition from those of other schools, the importance of Mipham's writings is understood to consist in their clarification, and thus preservation, of received traditions. Thus, the *Beacon's* significance for Nyingma tradition is not that it demonstrates that traditional differences exist *per se*, but that its philosophical and doctrinal distinctions serve to establish a unity of purpose underlying the diverse methods of dialectical philosophy and the Vajrayāna in the Nyingma tradition.

There are several historical and cultural factors that might explain why the Nyingma has played a marginal role at best in the development of Tibetan philosophical traditions other than its own. Under royal patronage, the early phase of the tantric, monastic, and scholastic traditions that would later be known as Nyingma was a great success, but the monastic community was suppressed in the ninth century and never began to thrive again until the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. In the meantime the monasteries and scholarship of the new traditions flourished. The philosophical identity of the new schools emerged primarily in relation to their developing traditions of Madhyamaka exegesis, particularly on Candrakīrti's *Madhyamakāvatāra*, which was unknown in Tibet prior to the eleventh century, when it was greatly popularized by Atīśa and adherents of the new translations. Beginning then, Nyingmapas who studied dialectical philosophy often did so as students of Indian paṇḍitas or scholars of the new traditions.

Rong zom Paṇḍita was the only Nyingma scholar before Klong chen rab 'byams whose writings on dialectical philosophy have had enduring significance, apparently because his defense of the Great Perfection against its critics was based on his study of the Sanskrit language scriptures and commentaries in the canons of the new translations. In any case, Rong zom was a lay person. Though his lineal descendants excelled in tantric practice, unlike many of his ordained colleagues he did not leave behind a monastic foundation where his scholastic tradition might have been preserved and further developed. Under such circumstances it is not hard to understand why his works fell into disuse and in most cases, it seems, simply disappeared through neglect.

Nyingma monasticism and scholasticism was bolstered by governmental support in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and a number of great scholars appeared. Nevertheless, the Nyingma archetypal imagination has continued to focus on the siddha, or tantric adept, rather than on the virtuous and scholarly monk, as is more generally the case in the Gelug tradition.⁶²² It is not uncommon for the most important teacher of a Nyingma monastery to be a married layman whose role is primarily that of a vajra master who transmits tantric teachings inside and outside the monastic community. There are also many instances of Nyingma "crazy yogis" (*smyon pa*)—whose behavior has sometimes been scandalous by Tibetan folk standards, much less monastic ones—becoming the teachers of monks.⁶²³ In the person of Padmasambhava, the siddha archetype plays an important role in both the Nyingma monastic communities and popular imagination. In many monasteries elaborate dances are held every year commemorating Padmasambhava's various guises of scholar, monk, vajra master, siddha, and meditational deity (*yi dam*). These dances draw large audiences from the community of monks, nonordained yogis, and

lay persons alike.⁶²⁴ If a religious tradition can be understood as a development of a central archetype—often identified with its founder—in the institutions and values of its members, it is not hard to see why the Nyingmapa, who claim the legendary Padmasambhava as their founder, never developed a tradition of monasticism or scholasticism on the same order as the Sakya or Gelug traditions. In striving to emulate Padmasambhava, Nyingma masters have generally had to wear too many hats, as it were, to be able to focus on the pursuit of dialectical philosophy and its attendant controversies.

An earlier section has noted that the most famous Nyingma scholars of the last five hundred years are anything but unified in their approach to dialectical philosophy.⁶²⁵ The *Ris med* or Ecumenical Movement of the last century was a momentous development in the Nyingma school. The writing, teaching, and publishing activities of its proponents has focused on the preservation of diverse teaching and practice traditions of the Vajrayāna. By emphasizing the use of texts as sources for practice rather than for critical philosophical study, *Ris med* has inspired many scholars and practitioners of Tibetan Buddhism, especially in the Nyingma school, to place less importance upon the philosophical distinctions of different traditions—which in Tibet have often been a source of division—and to be more appreciative of the practical methods for enlightenment each has to offer. For this reason, among others, the Nyingma tradition has been far more influential in the history of Tibetan religious practice than in religious philosophy.

To the casual observer, there does not seem to be much difference in the subjects of study in the monastic colleges of Tibetan traditions. The core curricula of the Gelug and Nyingma scholastic traditions, for example, are both based on the major treatises of Indian Buddhist philosophers. The textbook commentaries used in Nyingma monasteries include original works of Nyingma scholars and other Tibetan commentaries on Indian classics, and to a lesser extent, much earlier commentaries by Indian scholars; debate is practiced, but kept to a minimum. In Gelug colleges, on the other hand, concise textbook (*yig cha*) formulations are the core curriculum, and provide topics for daily debates, which may often last through the night. The *yig cha* are the basis for (mostly) friendly philosophical rivalry among Gelug monks of different monasteries, and even among different colleges within the same monastery.

For Gelug scholars, *yig cha* are a source of social identities and differences. For Nyingma scholars, it is their tantric traditions more than anything else—especially the Great Perfection—that constitute a traditional identity. No textbook commentary by a Nyingma scholar has ever become the subject of controversy among Nyingma scholars like the Gelug *yig cha*—that is, until Mipham.⁶²⁶ Though his work is clearly much indebted to the ecumenical (*ris med*) scholarship of his own teachers and includes a number of commentaries on tantric traditions of the later translations, the writings for which he is most well known in the Tibetan scholastic community are those that take a resolute, and sometimes polemical, stance according to Nyingma philosophical traditions. During the present century, Mipham Rinpoche's philosophical commentaries have come to possess nearly universal acceptance among Nyingma scholars, and the Nyingma tradition has come to enjoy a greater and greater unity of purpose, in spite of all adversities.

7.2. Philosophical Texts and Human Relatedness

Humans sometimes communicate in ways that are mutually experienced as profoundly meaningful, and yet seem to surpass our ability to fully grasp them. Conversations, like

relationships, command our attention most effectively when they allow—or not infrequently, force—us to go beyond the limits of our previous understanding and to explore new avenues, and new destinations, in communication. Texts are raw material for conversation, with oneself and with others. Studying a text can compel us to reassess unquestioned assumptions, and in so doing, come to a better understanding of others and ourselves. Self-understanding means also understanding our relation to others; understanding relatedness, in the Buddhist sense of relativity, also means self-transcendence. The possibility of self-transcendence is what humans unconsciously seek in communicating, and is what makes any relationship meaningful in the final analysis.

To communicate meaningfully is to be transformed in realizing for oneself, in oneself, or as oneself, what was previously alien or unknown. To know something is to be transformed, to become different, and to acquire common ground with others of similar—or different—understanding. What enlivens a conversation is a perceived affinity between oneself and another, or at least the expectation of affinity. Even violent arguments are thus motivated, because expectations of agreement have been frustrated. Communication is an exchange of meaning, and the most satisfying form of communication occurs when meanings are experienced as shared. This is even true of communications between persons who disagree with one another, and is especially the case in the context of Tibetan scholasticism, where Mahāyāna Buddhist teachings are a broad and solid common ground for meaningful differences. What makes Buddhist philosophical texts meaningful is the fact that they bring people together in the pursuit of ultimate concerns, in disagreement as well as in agreement.

Texts mirror the dominant concerns of particular communities and historical periods. However, to study a text as an artifact embedded in a matrix of historical, cultural, and philosophical significance is only to look *at* it but not *through* it. In communicating it is not words alone—hence also not texts or their interpretations—that are the fundamental source of meaning. Rather, it is the process of communicating shared meanings—and personal differences—that makes philosophy come alive. In other words, viewed historically or psychologically, philosophical significance is a process in which persons (and personal experiences) are most essential, while texts play a subordinate role. It is people who give meaning to texts, not vice versa.

Analyzing what a text means in its cultural or historical context does not necessarily reveal what it means for its readers in that context, although we can determine that such-and-such a text was appropriated effectively by a community as a means to certain ends. To look, or rather, to *see through* a text is only plausible when it—like we ourselves—functions as a medium of shared meaningfulness in a community. To say that a text such as the *Beacon* is philosophically significant is to point to it as an integral part of a region of communication where self-transcendence is realized. Such transcendence is not constituted as meaningful only because it is structured by the content of texts like the *Beacon*, but because philosophical texts like the *Beacon* fulfill the fundamental desire to experience relatedness, which according to Buddhist philosophy is perfectly realized in relativity. Thus, the *Beacon* is significant not only because it addresses personal or communal needs, but, more importantly, because it has been effectively appropriated to that end by persons and communities.

Fundamental meaning (*gnas lugs kyi don*) could be realized in relation to a philosophical text to the extent that the explicit orientation of that text is ultimate reality—or relativity in the Buddhist context—which is the general context of what human beings experience in relatedness.

In the *Beacon*, ultimate reality is approached through the theoretical and practical convergence of the rational and analytical methods of dialectical philosophy and the meditative practices of the Vajrayāna. The path to this convergence is summed up by a single word, “certainty,” which characterizes definitive understanding gained through dialectical philosophical analysis, and definitive experience cultivated in meditation. The content of certainty is expressed in coalescence, which means philosophical insight beyond the distinction of “knower” and “known,” or where knowing and being are realized as an identity. The *Beacon*, then, is a text that explicitly concerns the nature of ultimate reality, which is beyond concepts, while also specifying the ways in which rational analysis and experiential cultivation are used to facilitate realization of the ultimate.

One could argue that Mipham’s *nges shes* is philosophically underdetermined—that is, not sufficiently informed by clear mental images, as Tsongkhapa attempts to be in his use of the concept of determination (*nges pa*). But this is irrelevant, not because it is an implausible or senseless criticism from a Gelug point of view—it is not—but because Nyingma scholasticism brings to the study of the *Beacon* certain presuppositions that render such an objection impotent—the most important being a fundamental assumption of ultimate reality as transcending thinking and expression. There are various ways of arguing for or against the Nyingma position, but there does not seem to be any *a priori* reason to accept or reject this position or any other. The “truth” of presuppositions about ultimate reality does not appear to be fundamentally a question of rational certitude, although Tibetan scholastic traditions tend to understand them that way. Instead it is the process of generating meaning through relativity as relatedness that makes a philosophical point of view meaningful, valuable, and true for one person or another.

In this sense there is nothing more or less “true” or significant about Mipham’s *Beacon* or Tsongkhapa’s *LRC*, for example, to the extent that both serve the same function in their respective traditional contexts, namely, to show how reason is employed to realize the ultimate that is known by sublime gnosis. This is not simply a rehashing of the relativist vogue, but is, in my opinion, very much in line with how the Great Perfection (and the *Ratnagotravibhāga*) understand the nature of Dharma (gnosemic) language. Salvific language is said to resonate in accordance with the needs of individuals best suited to understand them, as a spontaneous manifestation of enlightened wisdom and compassionate method. In this sense all philosophies that bring relief to weary minds are equally true, and

8. The Translation of the Beacon of Certainty

8.1. Terminology and Syntax

TRANSLATIONS OF BUDDHIST TEXTS occupy a methodological and stylistic spectrum that is polarized by the “canonical” (*sgra 'gyur*) extreme on one side and the “interpretive” (*don 'gyur*) extreme on the other. The former was generally the method of Tibetan scholars, who used fairly rigid standards in determining how a word should be translated in a given context of usage. The latter, also known as “semantic” translation, is more typical of Western scholars.

Provided the context of usage in the original is more or less the same, the canonical style tends to use the same term to translate the same word in the original text. Tibetan canonical translations also preserve the word order and syntax of the original to a great extent, often through artificially applied particles and pronominal neologisms simulating Sanskrit declensions and relative pronominal constructions, respectively. The resultant style often seems awkward, if not downright confusing, if compared to classical Tibetan composition. The assumption of Tibetan translators seems to have been that syntax is important, because written words represent the thoughts of the original author. If subjects and predicates, verbs and adverbs, dominant and subordinate clauses, and so forth, were arranged in a certain fashion, one assumes this was because the original author (who was generally a master of Sanskrit syntax) actually thought in such and such a way. Thus, the canonical style of translation reflects a concern to preserve the meaning, as well as the words, of the original authors’ mode of expression.

If a similar method is applied to the translation of Tibetan verse and prose into English, one will frequently have to resort to equally artificial conventions, resulting in unwieldy sentences littered with commas, parentheses, and em-dashes, as well as “Buddhist hybrid English” terminology. In the translations below, my preference has been to read between the lines, wherever necessary, in order to avoid cumbersome “translationese,” and to use plain English wherever possible. In translating prose passages I have tried to break down complex Tibetan sentences (which in size and complexity are often akin to our paragraphs) into separate clauses, punctuated by periods and semicolons. For the most part I have tried to preserve the line order of the Tibetan verses of the *Beacon* except where the sense would otherwise be lost in translation. Where necessary, I have broken a single line of Tibetan into two lines in the translation, or translated two lines as one, and so on. However, because original syntax is significant—if not necessarily for semantics, then for rhetorical or aesthetic considerations—I have sometimes resorted to artificial use of terminology, syntax, and punctuation, especially in translating the prose.

The practice of using brackets for translator’s glosses does not, in my opinion, make it any easier to read the original text alongside the translation, even for someone proficient in literary Tibetan. For someone who does not read Tibetan, it seems to be a needless encumbrance. In the materials translated here I have often used glosses for the sake of clarity, but for the most part they are not marked with brackets except where the gloss is either somewhat speculative, or is not, in my estimation, entirely necessary for the sake of clarity.

In places where a word appears twice in close succession I have often translated it differently,

for stylistic reasons and/or to reflect different shades of meaning (for example, the word *ngan pa*, “bad,” in §4.2.2.2.2.1.1.2). In the introductory verses of the *Beacon*, where the term *nam dpyod* (*vicāra*), “analysis,” appears twice in two lines, I have translated it as both “understanding” and “acumen.” To translate a term differently in this case is not absolutely required for the sake of clarity, but it makes for easier reading, and it certainly does no injustice to the sense of the original.⁶²⁷ It also helps prevent the translation of an already technical original from sounding more technical in English than is necessary. In translating from a sophisticated and relatively alien philosophical milieu into English, I think it is helpful to use a variety of translations for a single technical term in order to provoke the reader’s awareness of the many nuances of the original, which rarely if ever can be communicated by a single English word. For this reason, throughout the book, many Tibetan and Sanskrit terms are quoted and re-quoted alongside different translation terms so that neither writer nor reader should lose sight of the original concept. An example here is the term *’dzin stang*, which is usually translated as “modal apprehension,” but is also referred to as “intentional” or “conscious apprehension.” “Modal apprehension” is perhaps the most literal translation of the three, but “conscious” and “intentional” are also implied in the usage of the Tibetan.

8.2. Technical Terms

The central concept of the *Beacon*, *nges shes*, has been translated throughout as “certainty.” In previous chapters I have also used certainty for *nges pa* (in Tsongkhapa’s usage) in places, while in most contexts I have used “determination” and “ascertainment” for *nges pa*. In so doing I have hoped to preserve a sense of the subjective or experiential tone of *nges shes* as Mipham uses that term, and of the logical and objective nuance of *nges pa* as Tsongkhapa uses it, without ignoring the fact that the two terms are closely related, and in some contexts of usage, identical in meaning.

Among the most important terms of the *Beacon* are *snang ba* and *stong pa*, or “appearance” and “emptiness,” respectively. These two are very often paired as *snang stong*. “Emptiness” should pose no problem, as it is a standard translation for *stong pa* or *śūnyatā*. “Appearance,” on the other hand, is much more problematic. In Tibetan the word *snang ba* means both “appearance” as well as “perception” or “experience.” “Appearance” means the showing-up of something, whereas “perception” means our own receptivity—with respect to sensory experience—or the engagement of thought with an external object. Thus “appearance” refers primarily to the object and “perception” primarily to the subject. *sNang ba* refers exclusively to neither of these.⁶²⁸ Thus, it seemed to make sense to translate *snang ba* at turns by “perception,” “experience,” and “appearance.” The point of topic 6 is to show that “experiencing” is ultimately not reducible to subject or object, and that reality as coalescence is beyond all dichotomies. As with *’dzin stang*, I have hoped to preserve some of the nuances of the original texts by using several terms to translate *snang ba*.

That the term *snang ba* cannot be translated adequately simply as “appearance” is underscored by its usage with the term *gzhi*, as in *snang gzhi*. This term means “the thing in itself,” or literally, the “basis of appearance/perception,” and is the subject of discussion in the sixth topic of the *Beacon*. At KJ 255.4, as elsewhere, Khro shul ’Jam rdor glosses *snang gzhi* as *lta gzhi*. I have usually translated *lta gzhi* as “basis of perception,” because although *lta ba* could mean “view,” “viewing,” or “seeing” (it is equivalent to both Skt. *dr̥ṣṭi* and *darśana*), it is used here in a more general sense,

referring to the object of any kind of sensory perception. In topic 6, water is the exemplary object of perception, but since the discussion is clearly relevant for any kind of sense perception, I have translated *lta gzhi* accordingly as “basis of perception.” *lta ba* and *snang ba* are only partially synonymous, however, as *lta ba* clearly refers to the subjective component of perception, while *snang ba* connotes both individual perception as well as that which is common to all beings’ perceptions, namely the appearance of an object.

The troublesome term “experience” inevitably crops up in the translations. I have used it in two basic ways: to refer to dualistic perceptions of ordinary individuals (so *so’i skye bo’i snang ngor*), and to the pure perceptions of sublime beings (*’phags pa’i gziḡs snang*). Louis Nordstrom has objected to Kennard Lipman and Namkha’i Norbu’s title of their study of Mañjuśrīmitra’s Great Perfection writings, *Primordial Experience*, because “experience” in the usual sense of the word (which implies subject-object duality) is incompatible with the nondual nature of primordial enlightenment.⁶²⁹ In my opinion, the use of this term in some contexts to refer to the minds of enlightened beings is justified by the fact that enlightenment is not utterly devoid of content, but is in some sense “full” (for example, as *sarvākārājñāna*, *rnam pa thams cad mkhyen pa’i ye shes*). This is a basic principle underlying all Mahāyāna sūtras, tantras, and śāstra treatises, though it may be somewhat less obvious when reading Mādhyamika texts.⁶³⁰ The distinction between the experiences of ordinary individuals and enlightened beings is reflected in the contextual use of terms for subject and object. For example, “mind” in the context of sentient beings is variously termed *blo*, *sems*, *yid*, *yul can*, and so forth, and object by *yul*, *snang ba*, *dngos po*, and so on. On the other hand, the subjective aspect of enlightenment is variously named *ye shes*, *rig pa*, *bde ba chen po*, *’phags pa’i gziḡs pa*, and so forth, while the objective aspect is referred to as *chos dbyings*, *stong pa nyid*, *rtsal*, *rol pa*, *stong pa*, *dag pa’i gziḡs snang*, *rang bzhin rnam dag gi lha*, etc.

The authors translated here evidently have been careful to differentiate ordinary and enlightened forms of “experiencing.” I have tried to follow the authors in translating the special terms they accord to each context, but sometimes it seems more gracious just to acquiesce in the ambiguity of the word “experience.” For example, the term *gzhal ba* is used in the context of *tshad ma* or valid cognition, by itself, and in the compound *gzhal bya*. *gzhal ba* is the future form of *’jal ba*, which variously means to measure, analyze, investigate, think about, return, meet, or accompany. The primary meanings are clearly subsumed by the word “experience,” and in the context of valid cognition, we are not concerned exclusively with any particular form of experience, such as inference or sensory perception, but with any possible form. For this reason I have translated the term *’jal byed tshad ma* as “valid cognition that causes experience.”

Tshad ma or *pramāṇa* is used in the text to refer to valid cognition *per se*, and to the subject of its study. In the latter usage, I use the term “Pramāṇa,” for example, *dbu tshad* “Madhyamaka and Pramāṇa.” Otherwise, for *tshad ma* I have used two basic forms, “valid cognition” and “validating cognition.” In some contexts *tshad ma* connotes a volitional process or investigation, so there I have used the latter term. For *kun tu tha snyad pa’i tshad ma* I have used both “conventional valid cognition” and “conventionalizing valid cognition,” again with concern for whether the context implies that *tshad ma* involves a volitional process. Though here I have distinguished shades of meaning that were not explicit in the original terms, I think it is clear that conventional valid cognition can be both automatic and volitional. This nuance seems to be conveyed by the *pa* of *kun tu tha snyad pa’i tshad ma*.

Don spyod tshad ma means *don dam par spyod pa’i tshad ma*, or “valid cognition that analyzes with respect to ultimate reality.” *Don spyod* is also used as an abbreviation for this term and is

equivalent to the term *rigs shes* as used by Tsongkhapa in *rigs shes kyi tshad ma*. This is the kind of *tshad ma* taught in Mādhyamika texts, while the valid cognitions through analysis of conventions mentioned above are taught in Pramāṇa texts.

For '*phags pa* (*ārya*) I have followed Thinley Norbu Rinpoche in using the word "sublime." This term is crucial in differentiating the experiences of the nonenlightened from the enlightened. It is often used in the context of meditative equipoise, for example, '*phags pa'i mnyam bzhaq*. *mNyam bzhaq* often means the meditative state of enlightened beings, so in the interest of clarity, I have occasionally supplied the word "sublime" in translation where '*phags pa* was lacking in the text.

I have generally translated *bden stong* as "emptiness of true existence," as though it were the same term as *bden sgrub kyi stong*. Although Mipham objects to the way some Gelug interpreters understand this term, he certainly never suggests that things are not empty of true existence. "Empty of truth" does not seem felicitous as a translation of *bden stong*, because "truth" in the context of translated Mādhyamika texts must be specified as either conventional or ultimate in order to be clearly understood. Things are not "empty of truth" in the sense of denying conventional truth altogether. "Empty of reality" is also unacceptable, because "reality," as the ontological unity of the two truths, is what is meant by the terms *gnas lugs*, *gshis*, and so forth. For the sake of simplicity I have translated *bden med* ("truthless") and *bden stong* ("empty of truth") identically, as either "truthless" or "truthlessness."

The familiar triad of *thos bsam bsgom gsum* (*Śruticintābhāvanā*) is translated here as "study, reflection, and meditation." "Hearing" or "listening" is not really appropriate as a semantic translation for *thos pa* (*Śruti*) because that term implies study of all types, and obviously "hearing" does not imply the textual studies that are of central importance in Tibetan Buddhism. "Reflection" is used for *bsam pa*, the second and crucial stage in the process of inducing *nges shes*, or "certainty." *bSam pa* must be very intense if it can induce a certainty or experiential realization of the nature of emptiness. In the context of the Great Perfection, adequate study and reflection may be sufficient to prepare the student for introduction to the nature of awareness (*sems ngo 'phrod*). "Reflection" seems a rather lukewarm translation, because *bsam pa* should be more like what is popularly imagined to be meditation, but I think it necessary in order to provide the proper context for the use of the term *bsgom pa* (*bhāvanā*), which is usually translated as "meditation," but which would be more accurately translated as "experiential cultivation." Meditation seems nowadays to be popularly considered as a process that induces some kind of higher knowledge or certitude about ultimate reality, but in the context of the gradualist (*rim gyis pa*) path, which is the main context of discussion in the *Beacon*, discursive contemplation or "reflection" is what primarily induces certainty, while meditative equipoise (*mnyam bzhaq*, *samāpatti*) combined with certainty is what induces realization (*abhisamaya*, *mngon rtogs*) and enlightenment. Judging from the way study-reflection-meditation triad is understood in this text, and in other traditions of Tibetan Buddhism as well, the common perception of meditation as a panacea that induces enlightenment is overly simplistic. In Mipham's thought, certainty alone suffices to realize the nature of things as they are, but unless one is a "subitist" (*cig car ba*), meditation is necessary to prolong and deepen certainty to the point of consummate enlightenment.

The words "intellect" (*blo*, *blo gros*, *matī*) and "intellectual" (*rtog ge ba*, *tārkika*) appear throughout the translations. Used adjectivally, *blo* is also translated as "intellectual." *Blo gros* as well as *blo* often refer to the faculty of making fine distinctions between things, using conceptual affirmation and negation, but *blo* may also mean "mind" in a general sense. *rTog ge* sometimes has

a pejorative connotation for Tibetan authors. A *rtog ge ba* may be a sophist or dogmatist who is attached to making subtle distinctions, but has no real knowledge (or rather, gnosis). Nyingma scholars tried to distance themselves from what they saw as contentious sophistry and mental wheel-spinning by speculative dialectical philosophers, which by Mipham's time had become common in the textbook-dominated curriculum of some monasteries. Thus, Mipham and his contemporaries are fond of invoking the hermeneutical maxim, "Rely not on the words but on the meaning" (*tshig la mi rton don la rton*). This does not mean that they did not prize intellectual brilliance (*blo gros spob pa*),⁶³¹ as the wording of Mipham's introduction demonstrates.

The Sanskrit words *jñāna* and *prajñā* are translated in Tibetan as *ye shes* and *shes rab*, respectively. The former is clearly a case of semantic translation, as *ye* means original or primordial, which sense is not necessarily found in the Sanskrit *jñāna*. In Nyingma thought, and especially in the *Beacon*, *shes rab* tends to be analytical or rational in character, whereas *ye shes* is gnostic and nonconceptual and is the cognitive component of enlightenment. *Shes rab* is the initial cause of *nges shes*, or certainty, as understood in the *Beacon*, and is generally understood as the cause of *ye shes*. I have hoped to convey the sense of the Tibetan *ye* ("original") in translating *ye shes* as "gnosis." *Shes rab* I have translated as "wisdom" or "analytical wisdom," depending on the context. It should be noted that what is conventionally understood by the word "wisdom" is quite similar to one sense of *shes rab*, namely, knowledge of conventional phenomena.

8.3. Proper Names

There are several recurrent epithets in the text that I have translated literally. The most common is *kun mkhyen chen po*, "Great Omniscient One," which always refers to Klong chen rab 'byams. 'Jam mgon bla ma, "Gentle Lord Lama," refers to Mipham as Mañjunātha, as does 'jam dpal smra ba'i seng ge, "Mañjuśrīvādasimha, Philosopher-Lion." This was the name of the form of Mañjuśrī that Mipham practiced intensely for eighteen months, at the end of which time he was rewarded with an auspicious dream and the "dhāraṇī of total recall" (*mi brjed gzungs*).

8.4. On the Use and Disuse of Sanskrit Terms

In some cases I have used Sanskrit terms for Tibetan terms, especially where the terms are already in common usage in Buddhist studies literature, for example, *dharmatā*, *dharmadhātu*, and *bhūmi*. In other places I have used Sanskrit because I do not think English equivalents are adequate, for example, for *pūrvapakṣa* and *tathāgatagarbha*. Some Buddhist terms are well enough known to be found in English language lexicons, and these are given without italicization or diacritical marks for that reason. Such terms include *saṃsāra*, *nirvāṇa*, *arhat*, *sangha*, etc. Otherwise, there are many important terms in the text for which Sanskrit is given in footnotes. I have tried to avoid parenthetical insertions of Sanskrit terms in the translation, except where it might be especially helpful for a reader with knowledge of Sanskrit.

In most cases, except where I am unfamiliar with the original Sanskrit, I have translated the Tibetan titles of quoted Indian texts back into Sanskrit. This seems preferable to using titles like "[Auto]commentary [on the] 'Supplement [to (Nāgārjuna's) *Treatise on the Middle Way*']" when the Tibetan text has only 'Jug 'grēl, which means *Avatārabhāṣya*, in reference to Candrakīrti's *Madhyamakāvatārabhāṣya*. In a few places, for Tibetan words I have given plausible Sanskrit equivalents that I cannot attest to. These are marked with an asterisk (for example, *mtshan nyid kyi theg pa*, **lakṣaṇayāna*).

8.5. Outline of the *Beacon* and Khro shul 'jam rdor's Commentary

The text of Khro shul 'Jam rdor's commentary is divided into nine sections: the introduction, seven questions and answers, and the conclusion. In the translation I have numbered all the sections of the introduction and conclusion beginning with "0.," and each of the sections dealing with questions one through seven beginning with the number of the question. If I had extended the topical index (*sa bcad*) from the introduction into the individual sections, it would have

needlessly encumbered the outline, so instead I have eliminated the index headings of the introduction in the context of each of the seven question-and-answer chapters. Otherwise, the numerical outline of each of the three main sections is complete and reflects the original; no heading or subheading of the index has been omitted.

Abbreviations and Bibliography

- DG* Edition of the *Beacon* in *Mi pham rin po che'i gSung 'bum*, sDe dge mGon chen edition of Dilgo mKhyen brtse Rinpoche. Root text only.
- KP* Root text of the *Beacon* as embedded in Kun bzang dpal ldan's commentary in *WTL*.
- KJ* *Nges shes rin po che'i sgron me'i rnam bshad 'od zer dri med*, by Khro shul 'jam rdor. Ngagyur Nyingma Institute, Karnataka, India, n.d.
- PL* Edition of *Beacon* from Phun tshogs gLing (Tashi Jong), Himachal Pradesh. Woodblock print, root text only.
- WTL* Edition of the *Beacon* published by Waṇa mTho slob (Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies in Vārāṇasī), with commentary of mKhan po Kun bzang dpal ldan.

Translation of the *Beacon of Certainty*

Introduction

- 0.1.1.2.1.1.1 "Trapped in doubt's net, one's mind
Is released by the lamp of Mañjuvajra,
Which enters one's heart as profound certainty.
Indeed, I have faith in the eyes that see the excellent path!
- 0.1.1.2.1.1.2. Alas! Precious certainty,
You connect us with the profound nature of things;
Without you, we are tangled and confused
In this web of samsaric illusion.
- 0.1.1.2.1.1.3 The development of confidence through certainty
In the phenomena⁶³² of the basis, path, and result,
And being roused to faith by studying them⁶³³
Are like the authentic path and its reflection.
- 0.1.1.2.1.2.1 The fame of the Moon of the Amazing Dharma⁶³⁴
Arises along with the light of elegant speech
In the vast sky of the Buddha's teaching,
Vanquishing the heavy darkness of doubt.
- 0.1.1.2.1.2.2. The valid cognition that examines conventionalities
Is unerring with respect to engaging and avoiding.
Specifically, the textual corpus on valid cognition
Is the only way to acquire confidence
In the teacher and the teaching, and
The Madhyamaka of the Supreme Vehicle
Elucidates the stainless valid cognition
Of ultimate reasoning, which determines the nature of things.
[The two valid cognitions emphasized in] these two [systems]⁶³⁵
- 0.1.1.2.1.2.3 Are the wisdom eyes of a well-trained intellect.
Praise to such enlightened beings who
Abide on the path taught by the teacher
Without taking detours!"
- 0.1.1.2.2.1.1 As the sage reflected thus,
A mendicant⁶³⁶ who happened along
Asked these seven questions
In order to critically examine his intellect:
- 0.1.1.2.2.1.2 "What's the point of being a scholar
If you only repeat the words of others?
Give us a quick answer to these questions
According to your own understanding.⁶³⁷
Then your philosophical acumen will be obvious.
- 0.1.1.2.2.1.3 Though they stretch out the elephant's trunk of their learning,
Like well water, the deep water of Dharma is not tasted;
Yet they hope still to become famous scholars
Like low-caste men lusting for a queen.
- 0.1.1.2.2.1.4 According to which of the two negations do you explain the view?
Do arhats realize both types of selflessness?
Does meditation involve modal apprehension?
Does one meditate analytically or transically?
Which of the two realities is most important?

- What is the common object of disparate perceptions?
Does Madhyamaka have a position or not?
- 0.1.1.2.2.1.5.1 Thus, starting with the topic of emptiness,
Give an answer established by reasoning,
Without contradicting scripture,
For these seven profound questions!
- 0.1.1.2.2.1.5.2 Even though pressed with the barbed lances
Of a hundred thousand sophisticated arguments,
These issues have not been penetrated before.
Like lightning, let your long philosopher's tongue strike
These difficult points, which have confounded the great!"
- 0.1.1.2.2.2.1 Thus incited by intellect,
The speech-wind wavered somewhat,
And that shook the sage's heart
Like a mountain in the winds at the end of time.
- 0.1.1.2.2.2.2. After maintaining a moment of disciplined engagement,⁶³⁸ he said:
"Alas! If by undergoing hundreds of difficult tests,
And analyzing again and again,
The fires of great intellects blazed ever greater
Yet were still not refined to a flawless state,
How can a low person like myself possibly explain this,
- 0.1.1.2.2.2.3 Whose innate brilliance is weak
And who has not undertaken lengthy study?"
- 0.1.1.2.2.2.4 Then, as he cried these words of lament to Mañjughoṣa,
By what seemed to be His mystic power
A light dawned in the mind of the sage.
At that moment, as he acquired a little self-confidence,
He reasoned analytically according to eloquent scriptures, and spoke.

Topic 1

- 1.1 The dGe ldan pas⁶³⁹ say the view is an absolute negation;⁶⁴⁰
Others say it is an implicative negation.⁶⁴¹
- 1.2.1 What is our own Early Translation⁶⁴² tradition?
- 1.2.2.1 In the state of great gnosis of coalescence,
After making a negative judgement of "nonexistence,"
What other thing such as an exclusive emptiness,⁶⁴³
Or something that is not [that which is negated],⁶⁴⁴
Could be implied in its place?
Both are just intellectually designated, and,
In the ultimate sense, neither is accepted.
This is the original reality beyond intellect,
Which is free of both negation and proof.
- 1.2.2.2.1 But if you should ask about the way in which emptiness is established,
Then it is just an absolute negation.
In India the glorious Candrakīrti
And in Tibet Rong zom Chos bzang both
With one voice and one intention
Established the great emptiness of primordial purity.⁶⁴⁵

- 1.2.2.2.2 Because these dharmas are primordially pure,
Or because they are originally without intrinsic reality,
They are not born in either of the two realities;
So why fret about the expression “nonexistent”?
- 1.3.1.1.1 In the place of a pillar, primordially pure,
There is nothing non-empty whatsoever.
If you don’t negate it by saying, “There is no pillar,”⁶⁴⁶
What does it mean to say, “The pillar does not exist?”⁶⁴⁷
- 1.3.1.1.2.1 The emptiness that is the negation of the pillar
And a left-over appearance
Are not fit, as “empty” and “non-empty,” to coalesce;
It is like twisting black and white threads together.
- 1.3.1.1.2.2 To say, “a pillar is not empty of being a pillar”
Or “dharmatā is empty of being a pillar”
Is to posit the basis of emptiness and something of which it’s empty.
These are verbal and ontological extrinsic emptinesses.
- 1.3.1.1.2.3 Woe! If this is not empty of this itself,
The empty basis is not empty and is left over.
This contradicts both scripture and reasoning—
“Form is empty of form!”
- 1.3.1.2.1.1 Consider a pillar and the true existence of a pillar:
If they are one, then refuting one the other is refuted;
If they are different, by refuting a true existence
That is not the pillar, the pillar
That is not empty of itself would be immune to analysis.
- 1.3.1.2.1.2.1. “Because true existence is not found to exist,
There is no need to debate sameness and difference”—
- 1.3.1.2.1.2.2 Even though true existence does not exist,
Individuals still apprehend vases as truly existent.
So aside from a non-empty vase
What is there to establish as truly existent?
And you think you’ve determined the appearance of the negandum!⁶⁴⁸
- 1.3.1.2.1.3 To teach emptiness by applying some qualifier
Such as “true existence” to the negandum
Is of course well known in Svātantrika texts.
But in the context of analyzing ultimate reality,
What is the point of applying it?
- 1.3.1.2.2.1 Thinking that if it’s empty, then even deceptively
A pillar will be nonexistent,
You try to avoid misinterpretation of the word [nonexistent];
But this is itself a great contradiction!⁶⁴⁹
- 1.3.1.2.2.2.1 You are not satisfied to say simply,
“A pillar is deceptively existent.”⁶⁵⁰
Why must you say, “It is not empty of itself”?
- 1.3.1.2.2.2.2.1 You may say, “They⁶⁵¹ are the same in meaning,”
But it is not so; “A pillar exists” and
“There is a pillar in a pillar”⁶⁵² are different statements.
The latter means “Something depends on something”—
This in fact is what you end up claiming.

- 1.3.1.2.2.2.2.2 If ultimately a pillar is not perceived,
Then how can a pillar not be empty of pillar?
In saying "Deceptively a pillar [is not empty of being a] pillar,"
You are confused, using the same word twice.⁶⁵³
- 1.3.1.2.2.2.2.3 If something is not empty of itself,
Then while it exists itself, it must be empty of something else.
If the negandum is not something else,
This contradicts the claim that it is not empty of itself.
- 1.3.2.1 Generally speaking, extrinsic emptiness
Does not necessarily qualify as emptiness.
Although a cow does not exist in a horse,
How could one thereby establish the horse's emptiness?
By seeing that horse, what harm or good
Will it do to the cow?
- 1.3.2.2 Therefore a non-empty nirvāṇa and
An apparent saṃsāra are unfit to be dharma and dharmatā.
Here there is no coalescence of appearance and emptiness
Or equality of cyclic existence and peace.
- 1.3.2.3. "The moon in the water is not the moon in the sky"—
If you think the emptiness of being the moon in the sky
And the appearance of the moon in water
Are the coalescence of form and emptiness,
Then the realization of coalescence would be easy for anyone.
- 1.3.2.4 Everyone knows a cow is not a horse;
They directly see the appearance of a cow.
How could the Mahātmā have said,
"To realize this is amazing"?
- 1.4.1 Therefore, in our own system,
If one examines a moon in the water, that moon
Is not found at all, and does not exist as such;
When the moon in the water manifestly appears,
It is negated, but appears nonetheless.⁶⁵⁴
- 1.4.2.1 Emptiness and existence are contradictory
In the mind of an ordinary person. But here, this manifest
Coalescence is said to be wonderful;
The learned praise it with words of amazement.
- 1.4.2.2 If one examines from the side of emptiness,
Because nothing at all is non-empty,
One can say simply that everything is "nonexistent."
- 1.4.2.3.1 But that nonexistence is not self-sufficient,
For it arises unobstructedly as appearance.
That appearance is not self-sufficient,
For it abides in baseless great emptiness.
- 1.4.2.3.2 There, distinctions such as "This is empty of that,"
Or "That is empty of this,"
Or "This is emptiness and that is appearance,"
Are never to be found;
- 1.4.2.3.3 When one develops inner confidence in this,
The one who searches won't be frustrated
By pointless analysis,

But will attain peace of mind—amazing!

Topic 2

- 2.1.1.1 Some say that Śrāvaka and pratyekabuddha arhats
Do not realize phenomenal selflessness.
- 2.1.1.2.1 As long as the self that is the apprehension
Of the aggregates as the mere “I” is not eliminated,
By the power of that, emotional disturbances are not abandoned.
- 2.1.1.2.2 That self is a designation made
With respect to the aggregates; it is the object
Of innate I-apprehension. That, and vases, etc.
Aside from being different, bases of emptiness
Are no different in their modes of emptiness;
For phenomena and persons are both
Empty of intrinsic establishment.
- 2.1.1.2.3 Thus, this is proven by scripture and reasoning.
To go beyond this and state that
“Śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas do not realize emptiness”
Is just a claim.
- 2.1.2.1 At this point, some draw unwarranted conclusions and claim that
The paths of vision of the three vehicles are the same
And that there are no distinctions of levels of realization.
They interpret the Prajñāpāramitā and mantra, all of sūtra and tantra,
As texts of provisional meaning.
- 2.1.2.2.1 There, when those who have already traveled lower paths
Achieve the the Mahāyāna path of vision and so forth
There would be such faults as not having anything to abandon;
By reasoning, harm would befall them irrevocably.
- 2.1.2.2.2 Moreover, though having realized what must be realized,
They say that in abandoning what must be abandoned,
[One must] ally [one’s practice with the accumulations]—
[But this means] nonrealization, which contradicts the claim of realization.
To claim that the rising sun must rely on something else
In order to vanquish the darkness—quite strange!
- 2.1.1.2.3.1 Some say that Śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas realize the emptiness
Of the five aggregates of their own continua of experience,
But do not realize selflessness of other phenomena.
- 2.1.1.2.3.2 If one realizes the five aggregates to be empty,
Then, aside from noncomposite phenomena [like space and cessation],
What other dharma would be left unrealized?
- 2.2.1.1 So what is our own tradition?
Glorious Candrakīrti’s Autocommentary
Says that, in order to abandon obscurations, the buddhas
Teach Śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas personal selflessness,
And in order to abandon cognitive obscurations, they teach
Bodhisattvas how to realize phenomenal selflessness.
- 2.2.1.2 “Well then, what does it mean to say
That both Śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas
Have realization of emptiness?”

- 2.2.1.3 In order to abandon just the emotional afflictions
 Śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas meditate on personal selflessness;
 But “They do not meditate on the entirety
 Of phenomenal selflessness”—thus teaches [our tradition].
- 2.2.2 Klong chen rab ’byams said of yore
 That although earlier masters all disputed
 Whether they did or did not [realize both forms of selflessness],
 Our own position is that whatever types of Śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas
 Appeared of yore and reached arhatship
 Did not become liberated without
 Realizing the emptiness of the self
 That is the apprehension of the aggregates;
 But just having that realization does not mean
 That they realized selflessness entirely.
 Just like the space inside a sesame seed
 That is eaten out by a worm,
 [Their realization] is said to be a lesser selflessness.
 Thus, with words that refute the lesser [of possible realizations],
 It is said that “They do not realize emptiness.”
 This is a most excellent eloquent explanation;
 There is nothing else like it.
- 2.2.3.1 For example, if one drinks a single gulp
 Of the water of the great ocean,
 One cannot say that one has not drunk the ocean.
 Because they see the selflessness of the mere “I,”
 Which is one phenomenon among others, it is held that
 [Śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas] see emptiness.
 Just as by drinking a single gulp one cannot say
 That one has drunk the entire ocean’s water;
 Because they do not realize the nature of all knowables
 To be emptiness, it is held that they do not see selflessness perfectly.
- 2.2.3.2.1 If one sees the emptiness of a single thing,
 Why wouldn’t one see the emptiness of everything?
- 2.2.3.2.2.1.1 If, with scripture, reasoning, and pith instructions,
 They were to examine things, of course they would see it.
 But, for the most part, those who are destined
 To be Śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas
 Are attached to the selflessness of persons,
 So it is hard for them to realize the latter extremes [of the *catuṣkoṭi*],
 Just as those who analyze a vase
 Might assert its particles to exist substantially.
- 2.2.3.2.2.1.2 If the mind that realizes [selflessness]
 After analyzing a vase also were to
 Analyze particles, it would be reasonable to realize [their emptiness];
 But usually, they do not realize [their emptiness].
- 2.2.3.2.2.1.3 Though coarse bases and partless atoms appear contradictory,
 Since [Śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas] are mostly bereft
 Of those scriptures, modes of reasoning, and pith instructions,
 They practice systems that do not contradict [the possibility of personal liberation].
- 2.2.3.2.2.1.4 Likewise, followers of the Cittamātra system

Do not accept the existence of external objects,
So why wouldn't they also accept the nonexistence of the subject?

Why wouldn't Svātantrikas use the reasoning that establishes
Ultimate truthlessness to understand the conventional
Nonestablishment of intrinsic characteristics (*rang mtshan*)?
So, for you everyone would become a Prāsaṅgika!
How would it be possible for Śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas
To denigrate the Mahāyāna [if they were Prāsaṅgikas]?

2.2.3.2.2.2 Thus, although the nature of one thing
Is also the nature of everything,
As long as the collection of external and internal causes and conditions
Is not complete, realization will come slowly.

2.2.3.2.2.3.1 Generally speaking, those with sharp minds become realized
Under their own power, while dullards
Do not necessarily reach realization immediately.

2.2.3.2.2.3.2 At some point, realization is inevitable;
At the end of ten thousand aeons, it is said,
The arhat wakes up from the state of cessation,
And enters the Mahāyāna path.

2.2.3.2.2.4.1.1 To properly abide on the Mahāyāna path,
One must cultivate oneself for a countless aeon.
So why shouldn't it be impossible for
Śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas, who strive for their own happiness,
Not to realize all forms of selflessness
During those [ten] thousand aeons [they spend in cessation]?

2.2.3.2.2.4.1.2 Don't those who have attained the bhūmis
Gradually clarify and perfect their realization?

2.2.3.2.2.4.2 With the help of the accumulations,
Infinite modes of reasoning, bodhicitta,
The conduct [that follows from it], and perfect dedication—
When these conditions are complete, it is certain
That one will achieve realization,
Just as complete knowledge of skillful means is a condition
For swift realization on the mantra path.

2.3.1.1 Even if one has abandoned notions of permanent self,
Instinctive apprehension of "I" occurs in relation to the aggregates.
Therefore [it is said], "[As long as] there is apprehension of the aggregates,
There is apprehension of 'I'"—this statement [from the *Ratnāvalī*]

2.3.1.2 Means that, as long as there is a basis of designation in the aggregates
And a mind that apprehends them,
The causes for designating a self are complete,
And as a result, apprehension of self will not cease.

2.3.2 Thus, even if the permanent self were abandoned,
Since the object, in relation to which the designated self
Is instinctively designated, would not be eliminated,
There would be nothing to oppose the occurrence of self-apprehension.

2.3.2 Thus, in abandoning emotional disturbances,
The assertion "One must realize the aggregates and so forth to be empty"
Is not the meaning of the passage [in the *Ratnāvalī*].
That meaning was explained in this way by Candrakīrti:

- 2.3.3.1 If one recognizes the designated mere "I,"
That is enough to stop the apprehension of "I."
Though one does not know a rope to be nonexistent,
By seeing the lack of snake, the apprehension of snake is stopped.
- 2.3.3.2 Finally, one will definitely realize both kinds of selflessness.
The suchness of all phenomena is unique,
And the way of seeing suchness is the same,
So Nāgārjuna and his son [Candrakīrti] have expounded
A line of reasoning that establishes the finality of a single vehicle.
- 2.3.3.3 If, as in your system, Śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas
Had already seen reality, what would that line of reasoning
Do to establish a single vehicle?
It is just an assertion.
- 2.3.3.4.1 Here, the primordial wisdom of coalescence
That sees the ultimate
Is precisely identical with suchness;
All sublime beings head toward it, and enter it.
- 2.3.3.4.2 Therefore, if one understands this system well,
The systems of Nāgārjuna and Asaṅga are like
Molasses and honey combined;
A hungry person will easily digest them.
- 2.3.3.4.3 Otherwise, as with inappropriate food,
One feels the discomfort of cancer within.
Poked and jabbed with a hundred sharp lances
Of scripture and reasoning, one is afraid.

Topic 3

- 3.1 When pursuing the main practice of the view,
Some say one should not apprehend anything.
The meaning of "not apprehending anything"
- 3.2.1.1 Can be understood well or wrongly.
- 3.2.1.2.1.1 The first [way of understanding]
Is free of the elaborations of the four extremes.
For the gnosis of sublime beings,
Nothing is seen to remain,
So modal apprehension automatically subsides;
It is like looking at the empty, luminous sky.
- 3.2.1.2.1.2 The second is the mindless⁶⁵⁵ system of Hashang:
Letting the mind rest blankly⁶⁵⁶ without analysis and
Without the clarity aspect of penetrating insight,
One remains ordinary, like a rock in the ocean depths.
- 3.2.1.2.1.3.1 For example, though both say "There is nothing at all,"
The Mādhyamika sees there really is nothing,
And the other one just imagines the absence of form;
Likewise here, though the words are the same,
The meaning is different like earth and sky.
- 3.2.1.2.1.3.2.1 Therefore, if in the absence of elaboration of the four extremes,
One does not apprehend the four extremes anywhere,
One is beyond the four extremes, and modal apprehension subsides;

- 3.2.1.2.1.3.2.2 Because it no longer exists, we say there is no modal apprehension.
If some idiots think "Since there is no modal apprehension,
From the very beginning one should relax and not grasp anything"—
Then because all beings are quite relaxed in their ordinary state,
Always wandering in the three worlds of saṃsāra,
There is no reason to encourage or remind them!⁶⁵⁷
- 3.2.1.2.2.1 Some might say, "We have recognized the nature of mind,"
Without really understanding it; in recognizing the ultimate,
One must definitely realize the absence of true existence.
That "Deluded appearances are one thing, and I am another"
Is obvious and requires no meditation.
- 3.2.1.2.2.2.1.1.1 You might say, "When examining the color, form, origin, cessation,
And so forth, of the mind nothing is seen;
That is realization of emptiness."
- 3.2.1.2.2.2.1.1.2.1 This system of teaching is extremely profound,
And there are also great mistakes one can make;
Because mind does not have a form,
It is impossible for anyone to see its color, etc.
- 3.2.1.2.2.2.1.1.2.2 However, it is a very great mistake to think that merely not seeing them
Is the same as being introduced to emptiness.
Though you examine your head a hundred times,
A ruminant's horns cannot be found.
- 3.2.1.2.2.2.1.1.2.3 To say that not seeing something is to realize its emptiness—
Wouldn't that be easy for anybody?
- 3.2.1.2.2.2.1.2 Therefore, if by this rational analysis
One sees the nature of things precisely,
One will profoundly realize the essential unreality
Of the illusion mind, which is like an illusion.
Then, just like looking directly into space,
One will derive profound certainty in the nature of one's mind,
Which though moving is empty.
- 3.2.1.2.2.2.2.1.1 You ask, "Well then, this mind of yours—
Is it nonexistent, like space,
Or does it have disparate awarenesses?"
- 3.2.1.2.2.2.2.1.2 Because the vibrant mind that we all possess
Doesn't rest for a moment, surely everyone would say
There is some sort of awareness.
Thus, you say that mind,
Which is neither existent nor nonexistent,
Is the luminous dharmakāya.
Although he hasn't done much study,
Such a person who claims to introduce the nature of mind
Thinks this is a teaching such that
"Knowing one liberates all."⁶⁵⁸
- 3.2.1.2.2.2.2.2.1 The teaching of "neither existent nor nonexistent" in the Great Perfection
Is the freedom from the four extremes of elaboration.
If you examine this mind carefully,
You cannot say it exists,
Nor can you say it does not exist.
- 3.2.1.2.2.2.2.2.2.1 But in fact, your mind does not go beyond either

- 3.2.2.2.1 In the main practice of absorption,
Actual and potential phenomena, saṃsāra and nirvāṇa,
Are beyond existence and non existence. If in the nature of things
Existence and nonexistence are nowhere established,
Biased apprehension is [nothing but] conceptual elaboration.
Therefore, when analyzing rationally,
One does not see anything established anywhere;
So how can apprehension come about?
- 3.2.2.2.2 However, if you analyze the nature of
Freedom from the four extremes of elaboration, certainty is gained.
By this the penetrating insight of self-arisen
Luminous wisdom becomes clear like a lamp.
- 3.2.2.2.2 Its opposite—the dark night of the
Four extremes of inferior intellects—
- 3.2.2.2.3 Is uprooted by this very antidote;
So when you meditate upon it, certainty should arise.
- 3.2.3.1.1 The fundamental space beyond intellect where
The elaborations of the four extremes are eliminated instantly
Is difficult to see all at once
At the level of an ordinary person.
- 3.2.3.1.2 The system of study and reflection
Is for eliminating the elaborations of the four extremes in stages.
To the extent that one grows accustomed to it,
Certainty grows ever greater;
One's intellect, which causes mistaken reification to subside,
Improves like the waxing moon.
- 3.2.3.2 The unsound view that doesn't apprehend anything
Cannot produce the confidence that
No real entities are established anywhere;
Therefore, it cannot remove obscurations.
- 3.2.3.3.1 Therefore, just like inferring fire by smoke,
The difference between these meditations
Is known from the dividend of abandoned defilement and acquired realization.
- 3.2.3.3.2.1 The ordinary idiot's meditation
Is not a cause for abandoning defilements or realization.
Because it is an obstacle to producing good qualities,
It is like pouring tea through a strainer—
Scriptural learning and realization slip away,
While emotional disturbances accumulate.
In particular, one has little confidence in cause and effect.
- 3.2.3.3.2.2.1 If one has the eyes of the authentic view,
Scriptural learning, experience, and realization blaze up.
By virtue of seeing emptiness,
Confidence in the infallible relativity of cause and effect
Will increase, and emotional disturbance will lessen.
- 3.2.3.3.2.2.2 With the samādhi that abides one-pointedly
In the state of certainty induced by analysis,
The ultimate meaning is seen by nonseeing.
- 3.2.3.3.2.2.3 One does not succumb to any particular object of seeing
And of course does not apprehend anything.

Like a mute's taste of molasses,
Confidence grows in a yogi who cultivates it,
But it cannot be produced by analysis alone.

Topic 4

- 4.1 In meditating the view of the supreme vehicle,
Which is right—to analyze or focus the mind?
- 4.2.1.1 Some say, "Don't analyze, but meditate transically.
Analysis obscures the nature of things,
So without analyzing, sit like a bump on a log."⁶⁵⁹
- 4.2.1.2 Some say, "Only do analysis.
Meditation without analysis
Is like going to sleep and doesn't help,
So one should always analyze."
- 4.2.1.3 To adhere exclusively to analysis or transic
Meditation is not appropriate.
- 4.2.2.1.1 Most transic meditations without analysis
Can become a mere calm abiding,
But meditating thus will not produce certainty.
If certainty, the unique eye of the path of liberation,
Is abandoned, obscurations cannot be dispelled.
- 4.2.2.1.2.1 If you do not know the nature of dharmas,
However much you meditate, you are still
Meditating on ordinary concepts. What's the use?
It's like travelling on a path with your eyes closed.
- 4.2.2.1.2.2 The habits of beginningless delusion
Produce clinging to mistaken notions about the nature of things.
Without endeavoring to investigate
With a hundred methods of reasoning, it is difficult
To achieve realization.
- 4.2.2.1.2.3 Insofar as clinging to mistaken appearances
And seeing the authentic meaning are mutually exclusive,
Here, in the darkness of existence to which
Sentient beings are well habituated,
It is difficult to obtain a glimpse of reality.
- 4.2.2.2.1 Through the ripening of the karma of previous practice
And the master's blessing,
By just examining the origin, abiding, and cessation of the mind,
It is possible to determine truthlessness.
But this is extremely rare;
Not everyone can achieve realization this way.
- 4.2.2.2.2.1.1 In cutting through to primordial purity,
One needs to perfect the Prāsaṅgika view.⁶⁶⁰
As for the aspect of nonelaboration,
Those two⁶⁶¹ are said to be no different.
In order to prevent clinging to blank emptiness,
The Mantrayāna teaches great bliss.
This causes an experience of
The expanse of nondual bliss and emptiness,

Free of subject and object.
Appearance, clarity, and awareness
Are synonyms of that bliss.⁶⁶²

4.2.2.2.2.1.1.2 Here the appearance aspect is the formal buddha bodies,
Which protect all beings and bring them to happiness
As long as saṃsāra exists;
It has the nature of ultimate compassion.
Therefore great gnosis by its very nature
Does not abide in either existence or peace.⁶⁶³

4.2.2.2.2.1.2 Because it abides in the basis,
By practicing the path *Evam* of bliss and emptiness
In this very life, one will manifest
The fruitional coalescence.

4.2.2.2.2.1.3 In fact the basis, path, and result
Are not divided; the path of the fourth empowerment,
Which is the culmination of the Vajrayāna,
Is the self-arisen gnosis of awareness and emptiness.
This is exclusively emphasized

In the path of the vajra pinnacle of luminosity,⁶⁶⁴
Which is the final point where all vehicles converge.

4.2.2.2.2.1.1.1 As long as certainty has not been born,
One should induce it with skillful means and analysis.
If certainty is born, one should meditate
In that state without separating from that certainty.
The lamp-like continuity of certainty
Causes false conceptuality to subside.
One should always cultivate it.
If it is lost, then induce it again through analysis.

4.2.2.2.2.1.1.2 At first, analysis is important;
If you don't start out with analysis,
How can you induce an excellent certainty?
If an excellent certainty is not born,
How can miserable projections cease?
If miserable projections do not cease,
How can the foul wind of karma be stopped?
If the foul wind of karma is not stopped,
How can this awful saṃsāra be abandoned?
If this awful saṃsāra is not abandoned,
What can be done about this dismal suffering?

4.2.2.2.2.1.1.3 In reality, there is no good or evil
In saṃsāra and nirvāṇa;
To realize the equanimity of neither good nor evil
Is the nature of excellent certainty.
With excellent certainty, nirvāṇa is not attained
By abandoning saṃsāra.
The mere words may seem contradictory,
But in fact they are not.
This is the most important point of the path,
A crucial secret instruction on the view and activity—
You should examine and savor its meaning!

- 4.2.2.2.2.1.2.1 Next, you should alternate analysis and trance.
If you analyze, certainty will be born;
When you don't analyze, and cling to the ordinary,
Analyze again and again, inducing certainty.
When certainty is born, rest in that state
Without distraction and meditate one-pointedly.
- 4.2.2.2.2.1.2.2 Certainty and the projecting mind
Are mutually exclusive;⁶⁶⁵
So by the analysis that roots out projection,
You should increase certainty more and more.
- 4.2.2.2.2.1.3.1 Finally, if even without analysis
Certainty arises naturally, rest in that very state;
Since it has already been established through analysis,
There is no need to accomplish it again.
- 4.2.2.2.2.1.3.2 If you understand that a rope is not a snake,
That very certainty blocks the perception of a snake.
To say "Still you must go on analyzing
The absence of a snake" is silly, isn't it?⁶⁶⁶
- 4.2.2.2.2.2.1 When realization of the sublime paths occurs,
You will not meditate with analysis;
What need is there to apply
Inferential analysis to direct realization?
- 4.2.2.2.2.2.2.1 If you think that "When you leave off analysis
There is no realization of the ultimate,"
- 4.2.2.2.2.2.2.2.1 Then for you the gnosis of buddhas and sublime beings,
And the undistorted perceptions of worldly beings,
Would all be mistaken.
- 4.2.2.2.2.2.2.2.2.1 Because they have already been perceived,
They are not subject to analysis.
Therefore, in the context of extraordinary certainty
Free of elaborations of the four extremes,
There is no occasion for analyzing or focusing on
Thoughts of "this" and "that."
- 4.2.2.2.2.2.2.2.2.2 When the analytical apprehension of characteristics
Binds the thinker like a silkworm in its silk,
The authentic nature will not be seen as it is.
- 4.2.2.2.3.1 When this extraordinary certainty
Dispels the darkness that obscures reality,
One realizes the actual fundamental luminosity
And the flawless vision of thatness,
Which is the individually cognized gnosis.
How could this be analytical wisdom, a form of mentation?⁶⁶⁷
- 4.2.2.2.3.2 The object of analytical wisdom is "this" or "that,"
Which is differentiated and conceptualized,
Whereas this gnosis of equanimity
Does not reify subject, object,
Appearance, or emptiness in any way;
It does not abide in the characteristics
Of mind or mentation.
- 4.2.2.2.3.3.1 Therefore, the stainless analytical wisdom

Of equipoise in supreme certainty

Induced by analysis is the cause by which
One attains the resultant gnosis of coalescence.

4.2.2.2.3.3.2.1

The ascertainment of the view
And the establishment of philosophical systems
Determined [by that view]
Is the stainless valid cognition of analytical wisdom
That differentiates and cognizes individually.

4.2.2.2.3.3.2.2.1

The gnosis of sublime equipoise
That has reached the nature of things
By the certainty induced by that valid cognition
Is the main practice of the Great Vehicle.

4.2.2.2.3.3.2.2.2

If you have it, in this very life
The result of coalescence is bestowed;
So it is both a "vehicle" and "great."

4.2.2.2.4.1.1

According to the system of four tantric classes,
This path of the word empowerment in anuttarayogatantra
Is of course the ultimate gnosis,
But it is not designated as a separate vehicle.

4.2.2.2.4.1.2

However, in the explanation of
The glorious *Kālacakratāntra*,
The body of the gnosis of equanimity
Is emphasized, so it is held as the ultimate tantra.

4.2.2.2.4.1.3

Among the classes of anuttarayogatantra,
The gnosis of the path of the fourth empowerment
That is emphasized and explained here [in the Great Perfection]
Is the basic intent of all tantric classes.

4.2.2.2.4.1.4

Just as gold smelted sixteen times
Is extremely pure, so too here
The analysis of other vehicles' philosophical systems
Reveals their progressive purity, which culminates here.

4.2.2.2.4.1.5

Thus the way this is established
Through the valid cognition of stainless wisdom
Is found in all the interpretive commentaries and tantras
And in the analysis of Dharmabhadra.⁶⁶⁸
If you think about it, it is beyond the realm of Māra,
And causes inalienable wisdom to mature.

4.2.2.2.4.2.1.1

However, to teach the main practice of the view
As an object of mind and mentation, such as
Adhering one-sidedly to appearance or emptiness,
Is to make the inexpressible into an object of expression;
So it contradicts the intention of the learned.⁶⁶⁹

4.2.2.2.4.2.1.2

Since atiyoga is the inconceivable gnosis
Of form and emptiness inseparable,
It is simply beyond impure mind.

4.2.2.2.4.2.2.1.1

Here the view of cutting through—which ascertains
The emptiness aspect of primal purity—and

4.2.2.2.4.2.2.1.2

The view of the luminous all-surpassing realization—
Which determines the nature

- Of spontaneously present buddha bodies and gnosis
In the inner luminosity of the youthful vase body—
4.2.2.2.2.4.2.2.1.3 Are inseparable;
They are just the coalescence of
Primal purity and spontaneous presence.
- 4.2.2.2.2.4.2.2.2 Here in the Great Perfection the so-called “indestructible
Tilaka of gnosis” of other tantric systems
Is very clearly taught as a synonym for this.
- 4.2.2.2.2.4.3.1 Each of the pith instructions of the mental class of the Great Perfection
Is found in the practice of learned and accomplished masters.
The *Mahāmudrā*, Path and Result, Pacification,
Great Madhyamaka of Coalescence, and so on,
Are known as its synonyms;
- 4.2.2.2.2.4.3.2.1 Because in fact they are all the gnosis,
Beyond mind, they are all the same.
The buddhas’ and siddhas’ intention is the same—
The learned affirm this univocally.
- 4.2.2.2.2.4.3.2.2 Some people say, “Our system of the Great Perfection
Is better than other systems like *Mahāmudrā*.”
They have no realization and
No understanding of the conventions of the path.
If they understood, they would see that this unique intention
Cannot be divided through reasoning.
- 4.2.2.2.2.4.3.3 Likewise, all the gnoses of the fourth empowerment
In the *anuttarayogatantras*
Are indivisible in the Great Perfection.
- 4.2.2.2.2.4.4.1 However, the source of all of those
Is the gnosis of the Great Perfection, whose tantric classes
Are divided into “mental,” “space,” and “instructional,”
According to their profound, extensive, extraordinary meanings.
There are many instructions here that are not known
In other systems, which use just a fragment of them,
So it goes without saying that this is an “extraordinary teaching.”
- 4.2.2.2.2.4.4.2 There, the ultimate Great Perfection
Is profound, peaceful, luminous, and unfabricated—
The gnosis of the buddhas.
But here in the context of the paths,⁶⁷⁰
One practices the exemplary and actual coalescences,
Which are like a drawing of the moon,
The moon in water and the moon in the sky,
Homologous to that gnosis.⁶⁷¹
- 4.2.2.2.2.4.4.3 Each one gradually leads to the next,
As one cultivates the self-arisen stainless gnosis
According to one’s own capacity.
Therefore it is like meditating homologously
In order to reach sublime gnosis.
- 4.3.1 If one directly ascertains
The great gnosis of the coalescence of *dharmatā*,
All views that are apprehensions of mental analysis
Will definitely subside, and one will see nonelaboration.

4.3.2 Therefore, without citing the context,
Saying one-sidedly that modal apprehension
Should be used or not has both faults and good points,

Like the waxing and waning of the moon.
This is established through reasoning,
According to scriptures of definitive meaning.

Topic 5

5.1 Which of the two truths is more important?
5.2.1.1.1 Some claim the ultimate is most important.
 "Deceptive reality is a deluded perception," they say,
 Understanding it as something to be abandoned.
 "Ultimate reality is not deluded, so that ultimate
 Is the perfectly pure view," they say.
5.2.1.1.2.1.1 If deceptive reality were not erroneous, were indeed true,
 Ultimate reality could not be emptiness, so
 They are expressed differently in this way.
5.2.1.1.2.1.2 However, no ultimate can be established
 Over and against the deceptive;
 The two of them are method and methodical result.
 Without depending on an entity for examination,
 Its nonsubstantiality cannot be established—
 Therefore both substance and nonsubstance
 Are the same in being mere relativity.⁶⁷²
5.2.1.1.2.2.1 If that clinging to emptiness
 Were to fully exclude appearance,
 It would mess up Nāgārjuna's fine system.
5.2.1.1.2.2.2 If by cultivating the path by that seeing of emptiness,
 One were only to realize the expanse of emptiness,
 Then one would have to accept that the
 Sublime equipoise on emptiness
 Would be a cause for the destruction of substantial entities.
5.2.1.1.2.2.3 Therefore, though things are empty from the beginning,
 Appearance and emptiness are not separate things;
 Adhering to the statement "Only emptiness is important"
 Is an unskilled approach to the final meaning.
5.2.1.2.1.1 Some people put aside the ultimate
 And from the perspective of mere conventionality,
 Differentiate the levels of the view in the tantric classes.
5.2.1.2.1.2.1 Viewing oneself as a deity conventionally
 Without complementing the view with the ultimate reality of emptiness
 And thus differentiating "higher" and "lower" teachings, is incorrect.⁶⁷³
5.2.1.2.1.2.2 Without having confidence in ultimate reality,
 Just meditating on deceptive reality as divinity
 Is mere wishful thinking, not a view;
 Just as some heretical awareness mantras
 Involve visualizing oneself differently during recitation.
5.2.1.2.2.1 Some say deceptive reality is more important;
 They say you must integrate the two truths,

- But then they heap praise on deceptive reality.
- 5.2.1.2.2.2 At the time of maintaining the view of coalescence,
They desert coalescence and grasp a blank emptiness.
Thus the toddler of practice cannot keep up
With the mother of good explanations.
- 5.2.2.1.1 Therefore, here in our early translation tradition,
Our Dharma terminology for the basis, path, and result
Does not fall into extremes or bias with respect to
Permanence, impermanence, the two truths, and so forth;
We maintain only the philosophical position of coalescence.
- 5.2.2.1.2.1.1.1 If deceptive and ultimate reality are separated,
One cannot posit the basis, path, or result on the basis of either.
- 5.2.2.1.2.1.1.2 Basis, path, and result are all
Without the distinction of abandoning one thing or accepting another.
For if one abandons deceptive reality,
There is no ultimate; there is no deceptive
Reality apart from the ultimate.
- 5.2.2.1.2.1.1.3 Whatever appears is pervaded by emptiness,
And whatever is empty is pervaded by appearance.
If something appears, it cannot be non-empty,
And that emptiness cannot be established as not appearing.
- 5.2.2.1.2.1.2.1 Since both entities and nonentities should both
Be taken as bases for establishing emptiness,
All appearances are just designations,
And emptiness too is just a mental designation.
- 5.2.2.1.2.1.2.2 For the certainty of rational analysis,
These two are method and methodical result;
If there is one, it is impossible not to have the other,
As they are inseparable.
- 5.2.2.1.2.1.2.3 Therefore appearance and emptiness
Can each be conceived separately,
But in fact they are never different.
Therefore, they are called "coalescent,"
Since the confidence of seeing the nature of things
Does not fall to any extreme.
- 5.2.2.1.2.1.2.4 In the perspective of the wisdom of authentic analysis
Appearance and emptiness are considered to be
A single essence with different aspects, for
If one exists, the other exists, and if
One does not exist, the other does not exist.
- 5.2.2.1.2.2 Nonetheless, for beginners
They appear as negation and negandum;
At that time they are not combined as one.
When the nature of emptiness
Arises as appearance, one attains confidence.
Thus, everything is primordially empty,
And these appearances are empty;
Though empty, they appear; though apparent,
They are seen as empty—this is the birth of certainty.
- 5.2.2.1.3 This is the root of the profound paths

Of sūtra, tantra, and pith instructions.
This is the meaning of cutting off misconceptions
Through study and reflection;
It is the unmistakable, authentic view.

5.2.2.2.1.1 By realizing that crucial point more and more profoundly,
Clinging to the characteristics of appearances of
Deceptive reality will gradually be abandoned.
The stages of the vehicles of the various tantric classes
Appear in that way.

5.2.2.2.1.2.1.1. Intellectual wishful thinking and
The view of certainty that finds confidence in the
Divine appearance of animate and inanimate phenomena
Cannot possibly be the same.

5.2.2.2.1.2.1.2. The determination that phenomena are truthless
By Mādhyamika reasoning is a view.
But when a Brahmin recites a mantra over a sick person,
His imagining a lack of illness is not the view.

5.2.2.2.1.2.2.1. By realizing the abiding nature of ultimate reality,
One grows confident in the divine appearance of deceptive reality.
Otherwise, if one dwells on the manner of deceptive appearance,
How can divinity be established?

5.2.2.2.1.2.2.2. Aside from this deluded appearance of subject and object,
There is no such thing as saṃsāra;
The divisions of the path that abandons it
Are not only made from the perspective of ultimate reality,
Because ultimate reality has a unitary character.

5.2.2.2.1.2.2.3. With respect to the mental ability gained
Through seeing and cultivating all phenomena
Of apparent deceptive reality, the subject (of qualities),⁶⁷⁴
With respect to ultimate reality, the action tantra,
Performance tantra, yoga tantra, and unexcelled yoga tantra are taught.

5.2.2.2.1.3. Therefore, the tantric classes are not differentiated as higher
Or lower with respect to either of the two truths individually.
According to one's attainment of confidence
In the coalescence of the two truths,
The practice of [each of the tantric classes naturally] follows.

5.2.2.2.2.1.1. Therefore, if one properly practices without mistakes
The peerless Vajra Vehicle,
The path that bestows liberation in a single life,
Then, just like the example of water seen
By several different types of sentient beings,
With respect to pure vision
It will be impossible for anyone not to see
Actual and potential phenomena as a manifested maṇḍala.

5.2.2.2.2.1.2. If you don't know things that way,
Meditating on deities while holding
The nature of saṃsāra to be impure
Is like spraying a vomit-filled vase with perfume.
Alas! That sort of meditation on the Vajra Vehicle of equanimity
Is just like a drawing of a butter lamp.

- 5.2.2.2.2.1. The way things appear is impure,
But that is the system of delusion.
We say that authentically seeing the nature of things
Is the meaning of the undivided Vajrayāna system.
- 5.2.2.2.2.2.1 Seeing the animate and inanimate universe
As lacking the nature of pure support and supported,
But meditating while imagining that they do—
This path evinces an obvious contradiction,
And is just a reflection of the Vajrayāna path.
Coal cannot be whitened by washing;
- 5.2.2.2.2.2.2 Likewise, a fabricated meditation that thinks “It is not, but it is”
Attaining some kind of result
Would be like the heretical sun worshippers (*nyi ma pa*)—
Who have no confidence in the emptiness of true existence—
Abandoning emotional afflictions through meditating
On an emptiness devoid of appearance, etc.
- 5.2.2.2.3.1. What if the action, performance, and unexcelled tantric classes
Did not have different levels of view?
- 5.2.2.2.3.2.1. If you have confidence in the view that realizes
The pure equality of actual and potential phenomena,
But fail to take advantage of the correct view,
Seeing yourself and the deity as superior and inferior
And discriminating things as pure and impure,
You will only harm yourself.
- 5.2.2.2.3.2.2. And, if you are still attached to what is accepted and abandoned in the lower tantras
But practice the equality of what is accepted and abandoned in the unexcelled tantras,
Such as “union and liberation,” eating meat, drinking alcohol, etc.,
This is known as the “reckless behavior of misunderstanding”—
Isn’t that despicable?
- 5.2.2.2.4.1. The view is defined according to one’s certainty
In the vision of the nature of things;
According to one’s confidence acquired by the view,
One maintains the practice of meditation and conduct.
- 5.2.2.2.4.2.1. “Because the vehicles are differentiated
By different levels of view, they are not necessarily nine in number”—
- 5.2.2.2.4.2.2. From the lowest of the Buddhist philosophical systems
Up to the ultimate vajra pinnacle of atiyoga,
There is a specific reason for positing
The enumeration of nine classes.
Of course there are many levels of vehicle,
But they are posited by necessity, as is the three-vehicle system.⁶⁷⁵
- 5.2.2.3.1 Thus, according to the relative strength
Of inner gnosis, the animate and inanimate
Worlds are seen as pure or impure.
- 5.2.2.3.2 Therefore, the basis of inseparable appearance and emptiness
Is realized as the inseparability of the two realities;
As you cultivate the path in that way,
You will see the gnosis,
The coalescence of the two buddha bodies.

Topic 6

- 6.1. When a single instance of water appears
As different substances to various sentient beings,
- 6.2.1.1.1. Some say there is a single object of perception⁶⁷⁶
And that all perceptions of it are valid.
- 6.2.1.1.2.1 If water had some kind of essence,⁶⁷⁷
Valid and invalid cognitions would be impossible [here].
- 6.2.1.1.2.2. If the various objects that appear were distinct,
It would not be possible for [different minds]
To perceive the same pillars, vases [etc.].
- 6.2.1.2.1. Some say [that in the case of water] there is just wetness,⁶⁷⁸
- 6.2.1.2.2.1.1 But if [different appearances] are not different aspects [of the same substance,
But merely perceptions belonging to different perceivers],
Different perceptions [of the same thing] would be impossible.
- 6.2.1.2.2.1.2 If what one [being sees as] water, pus, and so forth,
Is not present to other [beings],
What would be the basis of [those perceptions of] water, pus, etc.?
- 6.2.1.2.2.1.3 Moreover, what would happen to the wetness basis
In the case of beings of the realm of infinite space?
- 6.2.1.2.2.2 If wetness were the same as water,
It could not appear as pus and so on;
If it were different from water and so on,
Liquidity would not be perceived anywhere.
- 6.2.1.3.1.1 It is not possible for there to be a common object
Of each distinct perception,
Because it is not possible for a suitable common substance
To appear in different ways.
If one accepts an analytically [determined] basis
Other than a dependently designated one,
One must establish its existence in reality—
However you look at it, it's unreasonable.
- 6.2.1.3.1.2.1 If the common object were nonexistent,
There would be no object as in Cittamātra,
And one would have to accept that consciousness itself is the object;
That is unreasonable.
- 6.2.1.3.1.2.2 The subjective apprehension of a nonexistent object
Would also be nonexistent in fact.
- 6.2.1.3.1.2.3 Both subject and object are equally apparent
In relative truth, so considering whatever appears⁶⁷⁹
It is not reasonable to differentiate
Subject and object as existent and nonexistent.
Although an object appears, it is false.
Likewise apprehension of an object appears but is not established.
- 6.2.1.3.2.1 The common perceptual object is a mere appearance
That is established as the basis of similar and dissimilar perceptions,
Because otherwise it would be unreasonable, as in seeing a dance.⁶⁸⁰
- 6.2.1.3.2.2 Aside from this mere existence [of an appearance],
It is not possible for it to come from some other existent;
Without this, all appearances

- Would be nonapparent, like space.
- 6.2.1.3.2.3 On the basis of outer and inner conditions,
One does not see the thing itself as it is,
But in the manner of seeing horses and cattle
In the place of wood blessed by illusion mantras.
- 6.2.2.1.1 Therefore the common object of perception
Cannot be specified as "this" or "that."
So in our system appearance and emptiness
Are not differentiated in the basis itself,
Which is not established anywhere.
Because it is the same in everything that appears,
A single substance appears as various things.
- 6.2.2.1.2 For whomever appearance and emptiness are possible,
Everything is possible;
For whomever appearance and emptiness are impossible,
Nothing is possible.⁶⁸¹
- 6.2.2.2.1 "Well then, the distinction of valid and invalid cognitions Would be invalid."
- 6.2.2.2.2.1.1.1 Whatever appears does not appear otherwise,
So it is not the case that the perception of its being thus
Does not establish it as a cognandum.
- 6.2.2.2.2.1.1.2 For all things naturally abide in their own essences,
Because they are established by valid cognitions
That determine their sameness and difference.
- 6.2.2.2.2.1.2.1 Thus, things by their very nature are
That in dependence upon which valid cognitions are established,
But they are not themselves established by valid cognition;
If they were, they would be reality itself.
- 6.2.2.2.2.1.2.2 An instance of water that is established
By the valid cognition of one's own apprehension
Is not independently established under its own power.
It is not established by ultimate reasoning,
Nor is it [established] for a hungry ghost.
- 6.2.2.2.2.1.3 If one determines the objects of one's own perception
By means of direct perception and inference,
One is not deceived with regard to engaging and avoiding
The objects of those [valid cognitions];
So valid cognition is not pointless.
- 6.2.2.2.2.2 Thus, when we say "a single instance of water,"
We refer to the visual perception of human beings.
In the divine context,
A single instance of nectar is understood as the basis of perception.
When water is seen as pus, water, and nectar,
The three are not mixed together.
If one of those three were not valid,
Then it could not be established as validly cognized
By being cognized as a different substance, and
All three objects of visual perception would be nonexistent.
If this instance of water perceived by a human being
Were not water, it would not be viable as water for another,
And "water" would be completely nonexistent.

- In such a system, a system of valid cognition
Would also be untenable.
- 6.2.2.2.2.3.1.1 Thus, the object of a sense faculty
That is undistorted by accidental conditions
Should be established as validly cognized,
As in the appearance of water and mirages.
- 6.2.2.2.2.3.1.2 Thus, in the context of hungry ghosts
Karmic obscurations cause clean water
To appear as pus, but if the fault [of such obscuration]
Is dispelled, it then appears as water.
For this reason, what is seen by human beings
Is posited contextually as validly cognized,
Because the other is distorted by perceptual fault.
- 6.2.2.2.2.3.1.3 For now water is established by a valid cognition.
But if one analyzes with ultimate reasoning,
Everything is the appearance of karmic propensity.
Since [for sublime beings] water appears
As the pure realms and kāyas,
The human perception cannot itself
Be established one-sidedly as the [only] valid cognition.
- 6.2.2.2.2.3.1.4 Thus, by progressively purifying the causes of obscuration,
It is reasonable to posit higher forms of seeing
In relation to lower forms of seeing.
Since the final nature of things is unique,
- 6.2.2.2.2.3.2.1 The valid cognition that sees only it
Is likewise unique; a second type is impossible.
- 6.2.2.2.2.3.2.2 Reality is a unique truth, coalescence,
And valid cognition is self-arisen gnosis.
Since there is nothing to abandon except unawareness,
It is simply a case of awareness and unawareness.
- 6.2.2.2.2.3.2.3 Thus, this system of valid cognition
Establishes the nature of all appearances as deities.
This is the unique tradition of the early translations,
The lion's roar of the elegant works
Of the omniscient Rong zom Paṇḍita.
- 6.2.2.2.2.3.2.4 Other [systems] do not explain [this] point correctly;
In this respect whatever other systems say is contradictory.
- 6.2.3.1 The claim that the common object of perception
Is either appearance or emptiness is untenable.
- 6.2.3.2.1.1.1 If it were only emptiness,
It would be possible for any sentient being
To perceive space as vases,
And vases would disappear like space.
If emptiness without appearance
Were viable as an object of perception,
What would not appear?
- 6.2.3.2.1.1.2 Things would either be permanently existent,
Or become entirely nonexistent, being causeless;
Either way, it is the same.
- 6.2.3.2.1.1.3 In the context of emptiness there is no appearance,

- Because they are contradictory;
 If there were something non-empty,
 It would contradict the position
 That mere emptiness is the basis of appearance.
- 6.2.3.2.1.2.1 "Well, didn't you say earlier
 That appearance and emptiness are not contradictory?"
- 6.2.3.2.1.2.2.1 Here, the object of visual perception is understood
 In the context of conventional valid cognition,
 For which existence and nonexistence are contradictory;
- 6.2.3.2.1.2.2.2 On the basis of a single thing the two truths
 Are noncontradictory only for gnosis.
- 6.2.3.2.2.1 If a mere appearance bereft of emptiness
 Were not viable as the basis of appearance,
 That appearance could appear any which way;
- 6.2.3.2.2.2.1 For there is no appearance that is not
 Distinguished in one way or another.
 [A non-empty appearance] is not established as the basis of appearance,
 It is not perceived by a valid cognition that causes one to know it;
 To say that it exists is only a claim.
- 6.2.3.2.2.2.2 If whatever appeared were entirely separate,
 Nothing other than it could appear;
 Because it would be a non-empty appearance,
 It would be immune to an ultimate analysis.
- 6.2.3.2.2.2.3 Whether one understands the basis as water, pus,
 Nectar, or whatever, there is contradiction.
 If that water were pus,
 How could it appear as water?
 If it were water and not pus,
 How would it appear otherwise as pus, etc.?
 If you say that the object that appears to hungry ghosts
 Is water, then you would have to accept that the pus
 That appears is nonexistent.
- 6.2.3.3 For aside from whatever appears to oneself,
 There is no separate basis of appearance,
 Because if there were it would be something different,
 Like pillars and vases, having a single basis but being different.
- 6.2.4.1 Therefore the coalescence of appearance and emptiness,
 Or the absence of true existence and mere appearance,
 [Is equivalent to] the original pure equality of all phenomena
 In the great equal taste of the coalescence
 That is free of partiality and extremes.
- 6.2.4.2.1.1 In that way, when one determines the essence of accomplishment
 In the Great Perfection of equality,
 In the context of the path where one cultivates [that essence],
 In dependence upon the vision of purity,
 Impure appearances self-liberate.
 Hence one attains confidence in the meaning
 Of the statement from the vajra scriptures,
 "Dharmakāya, which is the purity of all appearances."
- 6.2.4.2.1.2. So, in the *Magical Net Tantra*, it is taught that

- The continuous appearance of the five aggregates
Is the “pure divine body of thatness”;
This is confidence in the intended meaning [of that scripture].
- 6.2.4.2.2.1.1 Similarly, when the apprehension of pus is removed,
It is realized to be delusion, and by cultivating that
Water appears in its place.
A great bodhisattva [on the] pure [stages]⁶⁸²
Sees countless buddha fields in each drop of water,
And water itself manifests as Māmakī.
- 6.2.4.2.2.1.2.1 On the bhūmi where the two obscurations are finally abandoned,
One sees the great equal taste of coalescence.
As for pure vision,
If in order to abandon all obscurations
The unerring reality of things is seen
By it and it alone,
It is taken to be the final valid cognition⁶⁸³
- 6.2.4.2.2.1.2.2 And is established for those with the eyes of reason
Who abide on the pinnacle of the establishment of the statement⁶⁸⁴
“Everything abides originally in the purity of dharmakāya.”
- 6.2.4.2.2.1.3 Moreover, this vehicle has thousands
Of wonderful rays of light.
The low-minded, like spirit birds,⁶⁸⁵
Are as if blind to it.
- 6.2.3.2.2.2.1 Although it cannot be incontrovertibly proven
That the final space of equality
Only appears as divinity,⁶⁸⁶
- 6.2.4.2.2.2.2 To the extent that the expanse of original natural purity
And its apparent aspect, the wisdom body,
Are inseparable, the apparent aspect is
Originally pure divinity,
And cannot be harmed by ultimate reasoning,⁶⁸⁷
- 6.2.4.2.2.2.3 For the expanse of coalescent form and emptiness,
Which is free of the two obscurations,
Is the final suchness of things.
- 6.2.4.2.3.1 Aside from this, whatever else one analyzes
Is not the final meaning;
For if the two obscurations are not completely abandoned,
Abiding and apparent natures are always discordant.
- 6.2.4.2.3.2.1.1 Contextual appearances in the practice of the path
Are like healing a cataract;
By purifying defilements of the subject,
The object is likewise seen in its purity,
Because for a pure subject
There are no impure objects.
- 6.2.4.2.3.2.1.2 Thus, when an ordinary person becomes a buddha,
[There is no impurity], but impurity still appears to others,
Because they obscure themselves with their own obscurations.
- 6.2.4.2.3.2.2.1 Thus, although object and subject
Are originally pure,

- They are obscured by adventitious defilements,
So one should strive to purify them.
- 6.2.4.2.3.2.2.2 Because there is nothing impure with respect to
- The purity of one's own nature,
There is the equality of natural luminosity.
Not realizing it, one apprehends
Various appearances individually.⁶⁸⁸
- 6.2.4.2.3.2.2.3.1 A childish person whose mind is attached
Is an ignorant child whose ignorance enslaves him;
- 6.2.4.2.3.2.2.3.2 But everyone who realizes this will seize
The citadel of fruition in the state of equality,
And become victorious in self-arisen gnosis
In the fundamental expanse of the three times and of timelessness.
- 6.2.4.2.4.1.1.1 This system, which accepts the principle
Of great pure equality, is well established.
Because appearance and emptiness are not established,
Whatever can appear appears anywhere and everywhere.
- 6.2.4.2.4.1.1.2 However else you look at it,
Nothing can appear anywhere.
- 6.2.4.2.4.1.2.1 The way to gain confidence in this system
Is the path of emptiness and dependent origination.
If one gains certainty in appearance and emptiness,
In the self-arisen changeless maṇḍala,
Profound tolerance will be born within oneself
For the inconceivable dharmatā
And for the emptying and non-emptying [of the limits of existence].
- 6.2.4.2.4.1.2.2 In the width of an atom
One sees as many buddha fields as are atoms,
And in a single instant an aeon appears.
With certainty in the absence of true existence
Which is like an illusion,
One can enter the range of buddhahood.
- 6.2.4.2.4.2.1 One may have disciplined oneself and thought for a hundred years
About the meaning of the words of different philosophical systems, such as
The undifferentiability of one's own appearances [and their basis],
The absence of partiality and extremes,
The inconceivability of the fundamental expanse,
The dharmatā that is not established anywhere,
The coalescence of form and emptiness, etc.,
Yet if one lacks the cause of prior familiarity,
Then, even if one's intellect and training are not inconsiderable,
One will not get it.
- 6.2.4.3.1 Thus the hundred rivers of elegant explanations
In which flow the quintessences
Of all philosophical systems
Pour into this great ocean, which is amazing.
- 6.2.4.3.2. Other modes of appearance
That appear in the process of transformation are indefinite;
The consummate gnosis of coalescence

Sees the infallible meaning and is changeless.

Topic 7

- 7.1 When analyzing whether or not there is a position
In the Great Madhyamaka of nonelaboration,
- 7.2.1.1 Earlier scholars univocally stated
That our own Mādhyamika system has no position,
Because existence, nonexistence, being, and nonbeing
Do not exist anywhere.
- 7.2.1.2 In our texts, all the philosophical explanations
Of path and result and relativity
Are accepted as our own position, so
To say that all conventions are only set forth
From other people's perspective
Is to contradict both the words and the meaning.⁶⁸⁹
- 7.2.2.1 According to Klong chen rab 'byams,
Earlier scholars veered to the extremes of
Asserting that Madhyamaka has or does not have a position;
Each of those positions has defects and qualities.
- 7.2.2.2.1 Thus, when approaching the nature of reality,
Nothing is established in the original state;⁶⁹⁰
What then is there to accept as a position?
- 7.2.2.2.2 Therefore, because a philosophical system
Is a position about the nature of things, at the time of debate, etc.,
No position is taken, in accordance with the original state.
In meditative aftermath, the systems of path and result—
Whatever and however they are posited—
Are expounded according to their respective positions,
Without confusing them.
Klong chen pa said, "From now on, if someone knows how to
Expound this, it is because of my elegant explanation."
- 7.2.3.1 In that respect, some Tibetan scholars
Established and overestablished the fact that
Their own systems had a position.
- 7.2.3.2.1.1.1 But if one does not differentiate the context,
Because the meaning of the original state
Is not established anywhere, it is difficult
To assert one-sidedly that one has a position.
- 7.2.3.2.1.1.2.1 If you say "Madhyamaka is our system,"
It should refer to the way that the Mādhyamika system
Approaches the ultimate meaning.
- 7.2.3.2.1.1.2.2 Anything else is not our own system,
Because when other systems are approached
By a Mādhyamika, they cannot be established.
- 7.2.3.2.1.2.1 Thus, if the Mādhyamika accepts [deceptive reality],
Then he accepts it as established by its own power,
Because it is established by the force of reasoning.
That position would be established ultimately
And thus be immune to analysis.

- 7.2.3.2.1.2.2 If our own system had no position,
This would contradict the statement,
"We do have a position
[That accords with worldly renown]."
- 7.2.3.2.2.1 We would have two positions according to
Whether or not there is analysis.
If both of them were definitely true,
Would "our system" be each of them separately,
Or would it be both of them together?
- 7.2.3.2.2.2.1 If it were each of them separately, then
Each would contradict the other.
If we do not accept "existence"
But do accept "nonexistence,"
The position of "existence" would not
Even be conventionally acceptable,
Because of only accepting nonexistence.
- 7.2.3.2.2.2.2.1 If we accepted both of them together,
Having removed that which is susceptible to analysis,
We would posit something not harmed by reasoning.
Thus, both existence and nonexistence
Would be immune to analysis.
- 7.2.3.2.2.2.2.2.1 Accordingly, both existence and nonexistence
Cannot be mixed together;
- 7.2.3.2.2.2.2.2.2.1 For if they were, then even though one
Could realize [coalescence] through analysis,
When not analyzing, existence would be engaged.
So what good would analysis do
For eliminating clinging to deceptive realities?
For deceptive reality to be established
Through analysis is irrational.
- 7.2.3.2.2.2.2.2.2.2 If there were no reality beyond the mere
Exclusion of a negandum, an absolute negation,
That modal apprehension could not have
An apparent aspect; so why would this be any different
Than the position of someone who thinks
That view, meditation, and action are simply nonexistent?
For there would never be any need to meditate
In accordance with the nature of things.
- 7.2.4.1.1.1 Therefore, according to the statement of the Omniscient One,
Our system should be understood as follows:
If ours is to be a definitive Mādhyamika system,
It must be the Great Madhyamaka of coalescence,
Or the nonelaborated Madhyamaka.
Because, by defining it according to
The gnosis of sublime equipoise,
All extremes of existence, nonexistence, and so forth,
Are completely pacified.
- 7.2.4.1.1.2.1 That path that objectifies emptiness alone
Succumbs to each of the two realities one-sidedly;
That trifling point of view

- Is neither coalescent nor unelaborated.
Coalescence means the equality of
Existence and nonexistence, or of form and emptiness;
Whereas that view is just the subjective aspect
Of the expanse of ultimate emptiness.
Among all types of reification, such as
The elaborations of existence and nonexistence,
This is nothing but an elaboration of nonexistence,
Because it reifies [emptiness].
- Therefore, from the perspective of Great Madhyamaka
There is no position whatsoever.
In order to realize the equality of appearance and emptiness,
It is free of all proof and negation such as
Reality, unreality, existence, and nonexistence.
According to the sense of [ultimate] reality, all things
Cannot be asserted through rational proof;
Therefore, there is nothing to have a position about.
- Thus, although the ultimate meaning of reality
Has no position, in the way things appear
There is a position on the conventions of each of the two realities;
With respect to how the two realities abide inseparably,
They are both simply ways of appearing.
- With respect to the gnosis that
Sees that they are inseparable, both valid cognitions
Are fragmentary, because with only one of them
Both realities cannot be apprehended.
- Therefore, if the wisdom of ultimate and
Conventional valid cognition
Both engage a vase, etc.,
Two essences are found.
- But when one is engaged, the other is not, for
In the mind of an ordinary person the two realities
Can only appear in succession.
Thus, the positions based on each type of engagement
Are established in fact.
- "Well, don't the faults of having or not having a position,
And the internal contradiction of the two realities
That you have ascribed to others above
Apply just as well to you?"
- By making subtle distinctions,
I have differentiated the path Madhyamaka and
The equipoise Madhyamaka that is the main practice.
Since my explanation distinguishes great and little Madhyamakas
With respect to coarseness and subtlety,
Cause and effect, consciousness and gnosis,
How can that defect apply to me?
- Thus, the Great Madhyamaka
With no position is our ultimate system.
- In the context of meditative aftermath,
When the two realities appear separately,

- All the proofs and negations engaged by
The validating cognitions of each of the two realities
Are for negating various misconceptions;
7.2.4.1.3.1.1.2.2.1 But in the original state, there is
No position of refutation or proof.
Therefore, in the original state
The two realities are not divided,
Because neither of their positions
Is established in truth.
- 7.2.4.1.3.1.1.2.2.2 If [a position] is posited [conventionally about either] of the two [truths],
It is only with respect to the way things appear.
For the time being, each is established as true
In its own context, so there is no contradiction,
And the fault of immunity to analysis, etc. does not apply.
- 7.2.4.1.3.1.2.1.1 Real entities are not immune to analysis;
Nor are unreal entities immune to analysis.
In the final analysis, they are the same;
They are just designated contextually.
- 7.2.4.1.3.1.2.1.2.1 Something that exists by consent, without investigation,
Is a mode of appearance, not the way things are;
- 7.2.4.1.3.1.2.1.2.2 Whatever is seen by the rational knowledge
That analyzes truthlessness is considered
As the way things really are.
This is an ultimate reality in relation to
Deceptive reality, but in the final analysis
It is just a conceptual ultimate.
- 7.2.4.1.3.1.2.2.1 If the way things appear and the way things are
Are mutually exclusive,
The four faults of the two realities being different are incurred.
If the two realities are mutually inclusive,
The four faults of the two realities being identical are incurred.
- 7.2.4.1.3.1.2.2.2.1 In this way, buddhas and sentient beings
Are just the way things are and the way things appear;
The claim that they are cause and effect
Should be known as the Hīnayāna system.
- 7.2.4.1.3.1.2.2.2.2 Because the way things are and the way they appear
Are not posited as either the same or different,
There is absolutely no logical fault, such as
Sentient beings appearing as buddhas,
The path and practice being pointless,
The cause residing in the effect.
- 7.2.4.1.3.1.2.2.2.3 However things may be in reality,
They are obscured by obscurations,
And do not appear as such.
- 7.2.4.2.1.1 Everyone accepts the need to practice the path.
Because the two truths are not contradictory,
Though the two views of "existence" and "nonexistence"
Are posited, how could they be contradictory?
Because they are not mutually inclusive,
The two positions are formulated.

- 7.2.4.2.1.2 For this reason, as long as the two realities
Are engaged by minds for which
They appear separately,
- Both realities are quite equivalent in force,
And there is no one-sided position about either of them.
- 7.2.4.2.1.3 The determination of the emptiness of truth as "nonexistence"
And the determination of appearance as "existence"
Are the objects found or seen alternately by each
Of the two valid cognitions at the time of their engagement,
And are said to be the two truths.
- 7.2.4.2.1.4 Because those two are neither the same nor different,
It is not possible to one-sidedly discard one
And accept the other.
The wisdom that analyzes these two
Differentiates their respective positions.
- 7.2.4.2.2.1.1 For example, when the dharmakāya is finally attained,
All minds and mental events without exception
Cease, conventionally speaking;
But ultimately there is no cessation.
- 7.2.4.2.2.1.2 In all the texts of all sūtras and treatises,
Among the various kinds of proof and negation
Some posit ultimate reality,
And some are stated with respect to deceptive reality.
- 7.2.4.2.2.2.1.1 With respect to ultimate reality alone,
The path, buddhas, sentient beings, and so forth,
Are rightly said to be "nonexistent."
It is not the case, however, that
Without relying on conventions, they are simply nonexistent.
- 7.2.4.2.2.2.1.2 Though they do not exist, all appearances of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa
Appear, and are established through direct perception.
Therefore, with respect to conventional valid cognition,
The path, buddhas, sentient beings, and so forth,
Are rightly said to be "existent."
But this doesn't mean that they are really existent
Without reference to ultimate reality.
They exist, but are not established as such,
- 7.2.4.2.2.2.2 Because they can be determined by
An analytical cognition of ultimate reality.
Thus, those two can never exist
One without the other.
- 7.2.4.2.3.1 "When both are true with equal force,
Will existent things be non-empty?"
- 7.2.4.2.3.2.1 Both are not established by their intrinsic nature,
7.2.4.2.3.2.2.1 Nor are they, as objects, really different;
Whatever appears is empty, so what can be non-empty?
- 7.2.4.2.3.2.2.2 Both are equally apparent,
So they are established as empty;
If they were not apparent, how would emptiness be known?
- 7.2.4.2.3.2.2.3 Thus, both appear together as cause and effect,
Without contradiction.

- If one is certain that one exists, the other does too:
They are always inseparable.
- 7.2.4.2.3.2.2.4 There is no case where one does not
Encompass the other; therefore,
Whichever one investigates, it is correct.
By knowing appearance as emptiness,
One realizes appearance as realitylessness;
And by knowing emptiness as appearance,
One will not conceive emptiness as real.
Therefore, when they are seen as inseparable,
One will not revert to seeing them as real.
- 7.2.4.2.3.2.2.5 The abiding character of whatever appears
Is emptiness, so they are inseparable.
If one rejects appearance,
Emptiness cannot be established independently.
- 7.2.4.3.1.1.1 Therefore, one cultivates the wisdom
Of meditating on the two realities alternately.
In the context of this saṃsāra of dualistic perception,
Gnosis does not appear,
So the two stainless analytical wisdoms
Should be upheld without ambivalence.
- 7.2.4.3.1.1.2 When one of these is incomplete,
The coalescence of gnosis
That arises from them will definitely not arise,
Just as fire will not occur without
Two pieces of wood rubbed together.
- 7.2.4.3.1.1.3 Therefore, a path where method and emptiness
Are separated is inauthentic
According to all the buddhas and vidyādhara.
- 7.2.4.3.1.2 Therefore, if one abandons these two causes,
There is no other way for the great gnosis to arise.
The essence of gnosis
Is beyond thought and expression.
Therefore, aside from symbolic means and mere words,
It cannot actually be indicated.
Thus, the teaching of the word empowerment in the Mantrayāna,
In the tantras of the vajra essence, and so forth,
It is taught by words and methods.
- 7.2.4.3.1.3.1 The supramundane gnosis
Cannot be understood without relying on
Some kind of verbal expression,
So the path of the Madhyamaka of the two realities is taught.
- 7.2.4.3.1.3.2 The result of analyzing in the manner of two realities
Can be established as coalescence itself.
Therefore, when the two realities are ascertained,
Appearance and emptiness are taught alternately
As negation and negandum.
Their result, the gnosis of coalescence,
Is taught by many synonyms in tantra.
- 7.2.4.3.2 Thus, all Mādhyamika systems

- Are established by way of the two realities;
Without relying on the two realities,
Coalescence will not be understood.
Whatever the buddhas have taught
Has relied entirely on the two realities;
- 7.2.4.3.3.1.1.1 Therefore, the Madhyamaka that contains
The positions of each of the two truths
Is the little Madhyamaka of alternation,
Which gives the result's name to the cause.
- 7.2.4.3.3.1.1.2 The emptiness of the analyzed five aggregates
Is the mere absolute negation exclusive of the negandum;
In that respect there is the position of "nonexistence."
- 7.2.4.3.3.1.1.3 Whatever the causal or path Madhyamaka
Posits as the two truths,
Both are our own system.
It makes no sense to posit the ultimate as our system,
And say that conventional reality
Is only from other people's perspective.
- 7.2.4.3.3.1.2.1 If that were so, then our own system of the ultimate
Would be a blank nothingness,
And we would wind up totally denigrating
All appearances of the basis, path, and result
As "delusions to be abandoned."
Then a mere expanse of emptiness without obscuration
Would be left over, while the two types of omniscience
Would be negated. This would be similar to the śrāvaka path,
Which asserts a remainderless nirvāṇa,
Just like the blowing out of a candle.
- 7.2.4.3.3.1.2.2 Thus, the Buddha said that these
Spaced-out people who denigrate
The expanse of coalescence as mere nothingness
Are thieves who destroy the Śākyā Dharma.
With reasoning, one can see how
That system denigrates the existent as nonexistent,
And one is able to destroy the mountain of bad views
With the vajra-fire of certainty.
- 7.2.4.3.3.2.1.1 Thus, in all Mādhyamika texts,
Without establishing the causal Madhyamaka
Of analytical wisdom through rational analysis,
The fruitional coalescence is not established.
Therefore, even if one has rationally determined
The character of the two realities,
The fruition is the establishment of the inseparability
Of the two realities. This is the quintessence of all vehicles.
- 7.2.4.3.3.2.1.2 Therefore, gnosis
Does not abide alternately in the two extremes,
And is beyond intellect;
Thus it is Madhyamaka, and also great.
- 7.2.4.3.3.2.1.3 As long as one has not reached gnosis
By means of alternation, this is not

- 7.2.4.3.3.2.2.1 The ultimate Madhyamaka that is
The heart of all buddhas' realization (*dgongs pa*).
Like fire stirred up by a fire-stick,
The fire of coalescent gnosis induced
By the stainless analytical wisdom of the two realities
Pacifies all elaborations of the four extremes
Such as existence, nonexistence, both, and neither.
This is the gnosis of sublime equipoise,
And is considered the fruitional Madhyamaka of coalescence.
- 7.2.4.3.3.2.2.2 Not falling into the extremes of the two realities—
For the analytical wisdom of meditative aftermath
This may be considered the "coalescence of
Appearance and emptiness,"
- 7.2.4.3.3.2.2.3 But for the great gnosis of equipoise,
Appearance, emptiness, and coalescence
Are not reified as having some essence.
Appearance is the object of conventional valid cognition,
Emptiness is the object of ultimate analysis,
And coalescence combines these two components.
Since these are objects of words and concepts,
- 7.2.4.3.3.2.2.4 The equipoise that transcends them
Is merely designated as "gnosis known for oneself."
[In the context of sublime equipoise,]
"Apparent," "nonapparent," and so forth,
Are not established by authentic reasoning.
- 7.2.4.4.1.1.1 Thus, as long as one meditates on the two realities
Alternately, this is analytical wisdom,
And when there is no such alternation,
One attains the coalescent gnosis.
Then one transcends the bare emptiness
That is the absolute negation that
Is the analytical exclusion of the aggregates.
Negation and negandum no longer appear separately.
The great nonelaborated emptiness that
Is consummately endowed with the aspect
Of appearance as method,
Mahāamudrā of coemergence, and so forth,
Have many synonyms.
Because these are all the gnosis that transcends mind,
They are inconceivable by any other concepts.
- 7.2.4.4.1.1.2 Because this gnosis is not the object of words and concepts,
It is not differentiated by
Implicative and absolute negations,
Nor as different, nondifferent, apparent, or empty, etc.
Because it does not fall into any extreme or partiality,
It is beyond having and not having a position,
And appears as the nonabiding self-arisen gnosis of
The coalescent *Evaṃ*.
- 7.2.4.4.1.1.3 Thus, the ultimate meaning, free of reification and negation,
That is beyond all positions,

The state of awareness and the expanse inseparable,
Is held to be without any expression or indication of “this” or “that.”
However, unlike the “thoughtless agent,”
It is not something that cannot be known by anyone,
Because the Dharma lamp of certainty
Is the consummate gnosis attained subsequent

To the individually cognized gnosis induced
By the analysis of stainless reasoning,
What appears directly to those [yogis] who
Are free of the darkness of doubt.

7.2.4.4.1.2

In the sūtra path, both method and wisdom

Are considered in light of each other,⁶⁹¹

But here both method and wisdom

Are realized and cultivated inseparably.

7.2.4.4.2.1

Both the Great Madhyamaka of coalescence and

The Great Perfection of luminosity

Have the same meaning, and their names are synonymous.

There is no view higher than that,

7.2.4.4.2.2

For anything other than the absence of the elaborations

Of the four extremes—which is the nonapprehension

Of appearance and emptiness alternately—

Is nothing but some sort of elaboration.

7.2.4.4.2.3

However, the meaning of coalescence in the sūtra system

Is ascertained through analysis;

In mantra, it is established through directly experiencing

The expanse of intrinsic awareness.

7.2.4.4.3.1.1

Therefore, “Madhyamaka” refers to the

Path Madhyamaka of analytical wisdom that

Investigates each of the two realities,

And the single savor of the two realities induced by it,

Which is the Result Madhyamaka of coalescence.

7.2.4.4.3.1.2

With respect to the causal and resultant views of sūtra and mantra,

The former is the aspect of analytical wisdom,

And the latter is just gnosis.

Therefore, this latter is praised

With the word “great.”

7.2.4.4.3.2

As for the “the way things are”:

There is the way things are as the emptiness of entities,

And the way things are as the inseparability of the two truths.

The term is the same in both cases, but in fact

The difference is like the earth and sky.

Accordingly, the terms “nature of things,” “expanse of reality,”

“Emptiness,” “nonelaboration,” “limit of cessation,”

“Ultimate,” and so forth, function similarly in different contexts,

But their difference—in terms of final or partial significance—

Is great, so one must explain them in context,

Like the word *sendhapa*.

Conclusion

- 0.3.1.1 Thus, when the seven profound questions
Were explained with profound, vast, meaningful words,
The questioner said, with great respect:
- 0.3.1.2 "Alas! Like a frog at the bottom of a well,
Having not seen the depths
Of the Dharma ocean of other textual traditions,
And having tasted only the flavor of the well
Of our own arrogant view, our pride is crushed
By these words of yours!
In the great ocean of sublime spirituality,
- 0.3.2.1.1 The ecstatic dance of Mañjuśrī,
Known as "Rong zom" and "Klong chen pa,"
Is an ocean of the sublime enlightened mind,
Which possesses many and sundry bejeweled Dharma treasures.
Those who abandon them and hanker after
The trinkets of other systems are surely deceived!
- 0.3.2.1.2 Those who have the discerning intellect
Born of the analysis of the excellent Dharma (*chos bzang*)
Are never obstructed by demons.
As this great lion's roar of the path of reasoning
Is proclaimed, will they not find confidence in
This outstanding tradition of the Lake-born's⁶⁹² teaching?
- 0.3.2.1.3 Please grant us the opportunity to firmly grasp
The handle of wisdom's sword, which cannot be stolen away
By the refutations of arrogant extremism!
- 0.3.2.1.4 The profound meaning that is found in the
Nectar ocean of Dharma learning
Is like a jewel that should be taken, wherever it happens to be;
One should not just follow the external behavior of another person.
- 0.3.2.2.1 It's not enough to receive a lot of teachings and talk about them,
For though one seems talented and well trained, one's analysis
cannot get this profound point, like a buried treasure.
But whoever does get it should be known as a spiritual genius.⁶⁹³
- 0.3.2.2.2 As if it were a jewel-encrusted vessel
For a hundred thousand spiritual treasures,⁶⁹⁴
My mind realized that it was time
To accept the beneficence of instructions
Accomplished in the great ocean of profundity and vastness,
And I joyfully drank the ocean of the glorious King of Nāgas.
- 0.3.2.2.3 Having definitely realized the vast extent of the analytical mind
By the river of eloquent explanations that descend from him,
One should realize that the source of these explanations
Is the oral tradition of the vidyādhara lineage,
Which is like the Lord of Nāgas himself.
- 0.3.3.1 Please brighten the lamp of the amazing Dharma,
Which causes the mind to acquire great strength
By receiving the springtime nectar that benefits the heart,
The quintessence that is imbibed
All at once from the limits of space!"
- 0.3.3.2.1 When he had shown his respect with these words,

The sage advised him again,
Condensing the meaning of what he said before,
Which converts a shallow mind to a deep one:
"The lion's milk of the supreme Dharma
Is only contained by the vessel of a sound mind.
Though others may try, it won't stay in place.
A vessel that can hold it is like this:

0.3.3.2.2.1

A is the door of unborn dharmas;
Ra is the door free of particles;
Pa is the door of the appearance of the ultimate;
Tsa is the absence of death, transmigration, and birth;
Na is the absence of names;
Dhiḥ is the door to profound intelligence.

0.3.3.2.2.2.1

If one focuses on all of these six doors
In the manner of the two truths
And accomplishes the samādhi of illusion,
With one gulp, one will be able to stomach
The water of the great infinite ocean of phenomena,
And in the stainless gem of one's heart,
The dhāraṇī of spiritual brilliance will blaze with glory.

0.3.3.2.2.2.2

By the path of certainty that eliminates
The elaborations of four extremes,
May we abide in the expanse of fundamental luminosity
Beyond mind that reaches the original state,
The state of the Great Perfection Mañjuśrī.

0.3.3.2.2.2.3

Having seen the real meaning of remaining in the equanimity of
The vast expanse of the regal view without extremes,
All the darkness of the crude mind of the four extremes
Will naturally disappear as the sun of luminosity rises."

0.3.4.1

Thus, the questions asked by that wanderer
Were explained in the number corresponding to
The [seven] accoutrements of royalty.

0.3.4.2

Thus, a feeble-minded intellectual like myself
Has received this extremely profound and abstruse meaning
From the heart of sublime great-minded beings
And presented it here.

0.3.4.3

This elegant explanation like a shower of Dharma
Is the path trodden by millions of bodhisattvas;
By listening joyfully, hoping to attain the great goal,
And by inquiring, the joyous opportunity for blessing has appeared.

0.3.4.4

Therefore, I have considered these profound
And vast subjects again and again,
And just as they arose in the face of the mind's mirror,
The Dhiḥ-named one arranged them playfully.

0.3.4.5

The profound way of the Buddhadharma, like the limit of space,
Cannot be put into words entirely,
But if you rely on this *Beacon of Certainty*,
You can discover the amazing path of the supreme vehicle.

Mangalam

9. *Stainless Light:* *A Commentary on the Beacon of Certainty*

Introduction

*Namo Buddhadharmasanghāya*⁶⁹⁵

From the churning ocean of many aeons' dual accumulation [of merit and wisdom]
Springs the moon⁶⁹⁶ of the fortunate aeon, teacher of gods and men,
Replete with the multifarious maṇḍalas of the three kāyas—
I bow to the Lord of Sages, the moon of philosophers!
The essence of the great treasure of wisdom of all buddhas and their scions,
Blazing gloriously with marks and signs like brilliant clouds at sunrise,
Sun of my heart, Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī,
Ripen the bud of my lotus heart!
Your appearance is a festive dance of Lord Ajita, Mañjuśrī, and others;
Your laughing lion's roar of scripture and reasoning is victorious over opponents in all
directions;
You open the door to the jewel treasury of important points and profound meanings of an
ocean of sūtras and tantras,
I bow to the Gentle Lord Lama,⁶⁹⁷ whose name has four definitive meanings!⁶⁹⁸
Your fiery halo of wisdom, which is vast and luminous in the sky of profound intention,
With beautiful radiance embraces and causes my mind's bud to open
With a brilliant luster of authentic learning, contemplation, and meditation.
As it overflows with the nectar of exposition, debate, and composition, may all beings
benefit!
Inspired by the stainless unconquered mind, which is the intention
Of the stainless light rays of good Dharma reasoning,
I write to discover stainless understanding of the expositions
Of stainless Dharma eloquence.⁶⁹⁹

The Buddha of great compassion appeared in the world, and all the causal and fruitional vehicles taught by him were gradually introduced from the sublime land of India and propagated in Tibet. The early and later periods of translation are known as "new" and "old," respectively. Here, regarding the profound and vast subjects of sūtra and tantra, the profound and crucial aspects of the interpretation and practice of the view, meditation, and so forth, of the exegetical and practice traditions of the great secret Nyingmapa are explained in this treatise of practical instructions (*man ngag gi bstan bcos*), taught by way of question and answer.

0.1 The introduction to the composition of the treatise, which is virtuous at the beginning; 0.2 the consummate main body of the treatise that has the enumeration of royal accouterments,⁷⁰⁰

which is virtuous in the middle; 0.3 an excellent auspice of fulfillment, the conclusion that is virtuous in the end.

0.1.1 The name of the treatise, which is meaningful; 0.1.2 how the treatise with that name introduces the discussion.

0.1.1 “*The Beacon of Certainty*”: Here, if one develops certain knowledge that is free of doubt about the profound and vast subjects of sūtra and tantra—which are extremely hard to understand—through the wisdoms of study, reflection, and meditation, the darkness of ignorance will be dispelled. For example, a beacon that has a jewel fire-crystal or water-crystal, etc., dispels darkness. Thus, the name is given metaphorically, and the purpose is as generally [understood].⁷⁰¹

0.1.1.2.1 How to enter the profound and vast subjects of the Buddha’s teaching; 0.1.1.2.2 the posing of questions that identify those subjects.

0.1.1.2.1.1 The benefits of certainty, which is induced by two types of valid cognition; 0.1.1.2.1.2 explaining the necessity of valid cognition, which leads to that certainty.

0.1.1.2.1.1.1 Since this certainty illuminates the authentic path, developing faith that desires certainty; 0.1.1.2.1.1.2 showing the faults of being without this certainty; 0.1.1.2.1.1.3 explaining the reasons for these by example.

0.1.1.2.1.1.1 *Trapped in...* When someone accepts a philosophical system, practices its path to liberation, and analyzes the profound and vast sublime meanings—which are extremely subtle and difficult to realize—his mind wavers. With respect to higher and lower vehicles, the way in which the subject of two truths is explained is progressively more profound. To the extent that one lacks the mental ability to investigate them accordingly, one might think, “some parts are all right, others are not all right” and so on. This leads to ambivalence, which is thinking “maybe yes, maybe not.” This is doubt, produced by the power of ignorance. The *Abhidharmakośa* says: “From ignorance, doubt, and from that...” Accordingly, for those who are enveloped by the heavy net of extremely thick obscurations, the unalloyed gnosis that reveals [reality] without any disturbance or error is a beacon that blazes with the light of four types of authentic individual cognition,⁷⁰² which is the stainless wisdom of Mañjuśrīvajra.

In this context, that [wisdom] is not only present in the author of the text as the wisdom that illuminates the excellent path. By means of this text, [that wisdom] will enter the heart-minds of certain fortunate disciples as the analysis of dharmas (*chos rnam par ’byed pa*), which is the inalienable wisdom that is certainty born of studying, etc., a text such as this. The *Uttaratantra* says:

Just as the sun without concepts
Instantly emanates its own light,
Causing some lotuses to open and
Others to ripen,
In the same way the light rays of the
Tathāgatas’ sun of holy Dharma

Enter nonconceptually
The lotus of the disciples.

This kind of wisdom is like an eye that leads those desirous of liberation to see the excellent path. Therefore, that very certainty that does not stray into the views of others is the authentic view that is aware of the way things are, and is also the wisdom of Mañjughoṣa. So the author of the treatise salutes it, saying, “I have faith.”

0.1.1.2.1.1.2 *Alas!...* Because of not finding the authentic path due to the power of worldly ignorance, he says, “Alas!” Without you—the beacon of certainty, who is induced by valid cognition, which is entered by applying one’s mind to the proper view and meditation on the authentic nature of things, which is the true nature of things, the inseparability of the two truths, the profound subject of the sūtras and tantras that is to be discussed here—it is difficult even for the “intelligent” (*blo dang ldan pa*) and so forth to flawlessly understand this particular path without error. For those who have not been blessed by the tutelary deity, and whose ability to investigate all things in their mode of existence and diversity of appearance (*ji lta dang ji snyad*) is weak, it goes without saying that it is difficult to realize. Therefore, in this realm of existence, even if one has an idea to follow the path, one is still bound up in delusions cultivated from beginningless time, like a fish in a net. There is no external, truly existent “catcher” by which one is caught; one is enveloped and deluded in the illusory net of one’s own doubts. Therefore, by depending upon a text such as this one, one can rend asunder the net of doubts about the profound nature of things and generate certainty through the path of authentic valid cognition.

0.1.1.2.1.1.3 *The development...* In general, followers of lower vehicles maintain the basis, path, and result in terms of the five basic knowables,⁷⁰³ etc., the four truths of the path and relativity, etc., and the four pairs and eight aspects of the result, etc.⁷⁰⁴ Mahāyānists generally maintain a basis of the coalescent two truths, a path of dual accumulation and integrated method and wisdom, and a result of two coalescent bodies. That kind of basis, path, and result are practiced by meditating with certainty induced through dispelling misconceptions about them with valid cognition. Although the path is authentic, one might [otherwise] generate faith through learning about it, without actually determining its [entire] significance with that valid cognition and then becoming habituated in it. The former of these two possibilities is to reside upon the authentic path, and the latter is just a reflection of that path; the difference between them is that one involves the elimination of doubts and superimpositions, and the other does not. For example, a real butter lamp actually dispels darkness, and its reflection does not.

0.1.1.2.1.2.1 How the two great system-builders (*shing rta*) came to this world and clarified profound and vast subjects; 0.1.1.2.1.2.2 the two valid cognitions, with which those two [system-builders] opened the way of the path, cause one to understand the topics of dharma-possessor (*dharmīn, chos can*) and dharmatā; 0.1.1.2.1.2.3 explaining the praise of right-minded persons who abide in that way.

0.1.1.2.1.2.1 *The fame...*⁷⁰⁵ Thus, this master of yore sought the siddhi of victory in all directions through Śrī Heruka, and was endowed with the fantastic, amazing, and unrivaled liberation of a

learned, ethical, and noble person.⁷⁰⁶ The sound of his name, “Śrī Dharmakīrti,” completely pervades saṃsāra and nirvāṇa. Also, the glorious Candrakīrti was victorious in many disputes with heretics, established many Brahmins and householders in the doctrine, founded many great Dharma institutions, drew milk from a drawing of a cow, etc., and passed unimpeded through walls, pillars, and so on. He possessed incredible and inconceivable qualities of learning and realization. These two masters, together with the light of the elegant compositions of such as the cycles of Pramāṇa and Madhyamaka—enlightened speech that dispels the darkness of the world’s ignorance—arose in the vast sky of the profound and vast teaching of the Buddha, which includes the middle and final turnings of the Dharma wheel. By [rising thus] they vanquished the thick darkness of doubt about all the subjects of the profound and vast scriptures and intentional commentaries⁷⁰⁷ of the Mahāyāna, and cleared up the eyes of the valid cognitions that see the meaning of the two truths.

0.1.1.2.1.2.2 *The valid cognition...* Moreover, according to the meaning intended by Dharmakīrti, by the valid cognition that analyzes the conventions of deceptive reality, one should unerringly resolve each and every of the entrances and abandonments of virtue and vice, etc., and the proofs and refutations of Buddhist and non-Buddhist philosophical systems. The *Pramāṇavārttika* says:

Taking the unique identifying characteristic [of something] as a subject of investigation
And investigating whether it exists or not
Has the result of accepting or abandoning [that something].
Thus, everyone engages [such characteristics].

In particular, the ascertainment of the entrance to the authentic teaching through valid inferential reasoning based on direct experience,⁷⁰⁸ and the establishment of the valid person [teacher] who is superior to other teachers—the unique point of access to extraordinary confidence free of doubt—is the Pramāṇa corpus consisting of seven treatises with their sūtric [sources]. Again, the *Pramāṇavārttika* says:

By superimposing the sixteen forms of wrong view,
Such as “permanence,” “happiness,” “I,” and “mine,”
Upon the [phenomena] of the four [noble] truths,
One is totally attached.
These (sixteen) contradict reality.
By meditating well with the authentic view
That understands the nature of reality,
One conquers clinging and all that it entails.⁷⁰⁹

And, the *Pramāṇasūtra* says:

The person who embodies valid knowledge, who vows the benefit of beings,
I bow to the Protector, the Teacher, the Sugata!

According to the meaning expressed here, there are explanations of “intention” and so forth,

using inductive reasoning according to the path, and explanations of “protection,”⁷¹⁰ etc., that cause one to know the [the validity of the teacher] through deductive reasoning.⁷¹¹ Thus the teaching and teacher are established as valid. Thus, the existence of good qualities in the object itself is taught by the path of reasoning. The *Khyad par 'phags bstod* says:

I abandoned other teachers,
And took refuge in you, Venerable One.
Why is that?
You have no faults and have good qualities.

Likewise, according to the meaning experienced by the gnosis of sublime beings in meditative equipoise, the abiding nature of things is ascertained to be free of elaboration. This is the utterly nonabiding great Madhyamaka, which emphasizes the stainless valid cognition that rationally cognizes the final ultimate nature. In this world, this system, elucidated according to the profound intention of Candrakīrti, is known as the Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka, and is supreme in the vehicle of philosophical dialectics. Candrapāda said:

The explanation that negates production from something else is not simply a view of worldly [perception]. And why? Because it is posited according to the experience of sublime beings.

Thus, these two textual traditions [Pramāṇa and Madhyamaka] cause one to understand the aspect of vast skillful means, and teach the wisdom that opens up the profound, respectively.

In this context, the basis for differentiating the two truths is the totality of phenomena, both afflicted and purified; and in differentiating those, there is the differentiation of two truths with respect to valid cognition that analyzes the ultimate reality of the way things are, as well as the differentiation of two truths with respect to the conventional valid cognition that analyzes the way things appear. These two [differentiations] are similar in maintaining ultimate reality as the expanse of great purity and the coalescence of appearance and emptiness—without accepting any elaborated defining characteristic of identity or difference whatsoever. However, with respect to positing the two truths as conventions, the former posits the aspect of appearance and the aspect of emptiness as different isolates of the same essence, while the latter posits the difference that negates their oneness.⁷¹²

Whichever valid cognition is used to engage the two truths, [according to the] former [definition], it is infallible. So in the objective cognandum's way of existing, there is no differentiation of truth and falsity, and that emptiness arises as the nature of relativity. All relative appearances are equal in being empty phenomena, [and hence] pure; from form up to omniscience, these two [form and emptiness] should be understood equally, without holding them to be higher and lower, or good and bad. Thus, the apparent aspects of both saṃsāra and nirvāṇa are equal in being empty and hence are not different. Because the emptiness of each is similar in that it arises both as saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, both appearance and emptiness are the abiding character of an object, and thus both of them are without the difference of “deceptive” and “nondeceptive.”

Since the ascertainment of the basis in the higher vehicles of our tradition is for the most part done only by means of this [latter] way of positing the two truths, the middle three questions are

mostly engaged through valid cognition [as explained by] Dharmakīrti. Also, in the context of the latter way of positing the two truths, the ultimate is both object and object-possessor for which reality and appearance are concordant, and deceptive reality is posited as object and object-possessor for which reality and appearance are discordant. This distinction is made with respect to whether, conventionally speaking, they are nondeceptive or deceptive, respectively.⁷¹³ Moreover, insofar as the mere designations [of deceptiveness and nondeceptiveness are concerned], the lower philosophical systems as well as worldly [persons distinguish] deceptive reality as authentic or false in precisely that way. Consider, for example, a worldly person's [interpretation of] the appearance of two moons, or only one; or consider how the Vaibhāṣikas and Sautrāntikas determine whether something is the actual referent of a conventional expression as regards its being liable to destruction or not, or as regards its being a specifically characterized phenomenon (*rang mtshan*, *svalakṣaṇa*) or a generally characterized phenomenon (*spyi mtshan*, *sāmānyalakṣaṇa*).⁷¹⁴

Here, in fact, the subject for which reality and appearance are concordant is gnosis, and because that gnosis views all phenomena of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa with respect to the concordance of their reality and their modes of appearance, if all phenomena of saṃsāra are posited with respect to ultimate reality, the appearances of nirvāṇa obviously are as well, because they are all are seen to be pure and equal. Deceptive reality is the arising of any and all appearances of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa as the object of a subject for which appearance and reality are discordant. Even if this [subjective] mind engages the kāyas, gnoses, and so forth, it is still just an appearance of deceptive reality, so of course the same would be said for saṃsāric phenomena. Thus, those two truths are said to be taken as deceptive and nondeceptive in relation to one another, and the first two and last two questions should mainly be addressed with this way of positing the two valid cognitions according to Candrakīrti.

0.1.1.2.1.2.3 *Are the wisdom...* When one's mind is well versed in the three kinds of wisdom⁷¹⁵ regarding the profound and vast textual traditions of Madhyamaka, Pramāṇa, and so forth, the two eyes of valid cognition will be opened to the nature of things in all their diversity. Then, one will abide firmly on the authentic path with the light of wisdom that is not influenced by other people's opinions—the twofold path of the profound and vast traditions of the system-builders Nāgārjuna and Asaṅga, which clearly sets forth the meaning of the causal and fruitional vehicles that are the excellent paths to liberation and omniscience taught by the Buddha to his disciples. Those who, like Rong zom Paṇḍita, understand [these two systems] together, without contradiction, are worthy of praise.

0.1.1.2.2.1 The questions and 0.1.1.2.2.2 the way they are answered. 0.1.1.2.2.1.1 The layout of the way the questions are posed; 0.1.1.2.2.1.2 the qualities of answering perfectly; 0.1.1.2.2.1.3 the defects of pretentious prattling;⁷¹⁶ 0.1.1.2.2.1.4 enumerating the topics to be asked about; and 0.1.1.2.2.1.5 exhortation to give answers based on scripture and reasoning.

0.1.1.2.2.1.1 *A sage...* Thus, that sage was thinking, "Having illuminated the excellent path with potent reasoning, this might draw a straight line that would eliminate devious caviling in Tibet." Then, a wandering mendicant happened along who, in order to dispute with and test him in the manner of intellectuals, asked him these seven questions to be explained below—which are the crux of the view and meditation to be explained—in the following manner.

0.1.1.2.2.1.2 *What's the point...* If in answering these questions you just imitate and repeat what other philosophical systems and other persons have to say, then what is the point of being called a scholar? It would be like giving the monastic precept renewal (so sbyong) to worldly people.⁷¹⁷ One might think, "How to answer, then?" Suppose you depend upon the Buddha's speech and the elegant explanations of the sublime beings of India in general, and in particular, upon the stainless, elegant texts that explain the intention of both Rong zom and Klong chen pa. Then you analytically determine in a relaxed way, without uptightness, the meaning of those [sources] without simply repeating those scriptures. Then, having differentiated the various objects of investigation—such as Dharma-possessor and dharmatā, reality and appearance, deceptive reality and ultimate reality. Now, please reply quickly to these questions in terms of how the two types of valid cognitions engage [those objects of investigation]! From your words, which indicate the result [of your knowledge], I will be able to determine clearly, as if with fleshly eyes, your personal mastery of analysis.

0.1.1.2.2.1.3 *Though they stretch...* Thus, not only is it pointless to repeat what other [traditions and persons] say, even in our own tradition very erudite scholars, like elephants, hyperextend the trunk of prolixity, adorned with many scriptures, and talk. That well water, as in the popular saying "the well has gone dry,"⁷¹⁸ is not to be tasted just by having a long trunk. Likewise, without having experienced the Dharma water of the profound, definitive, and final meaning, those who yearn for worldly renown as scholars are like low-caste persons, such as śūdras or caṇḍalas, lusting after the wife of a king. It is impossible for them to attain the object of their desires, and it is likewise difficult to attain fame as a scholar.

0.1.1.2.2.1.4 *According to which...* What are the seven questions? (1) The profound view of emptiness must be ascertained by a valid cognition that analyzes ultimate reality, and there is nothing whatsoever established as its object. Therefore, if all clinging to substantiality must be eliminated by the Mādhyamika analyses, what sort of negation is involved? (2) In the context of Madhyamaka, do śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas realize the two types of selflessness to the same degree as in Mahāyāna? What sort of difference in realization of emptiness differentiates the Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna? (3) When one engages in equipoise on that Mahāyāna view, must there be intentional apprehension or not? (4) In meditating upon that view, does one analyze and then meditate, or settle in meditation without analyzing? (5) In the divisions of that view, which of the two truths is more important, or is there no difference in importance? (6) What is the common object that appears differently to sentient beings? (7) Does the Madhyamaka free of extremes have a position or not? If in other systems there are many ways of establishing and refuting these topics, how do you of the early translation school interpret them?

0.1.1.2.2.1.5.1 The subject that is the extraordinary profound point established through both scripture and reasoning; and 0.1.1.2.2.1.5.2 the exhortation to quickly compose the treatise that shows the way to explain it.

0.1.1.2.2.1.5.1 *Thus, starting...* Having said that, since when one ascertains the profound meaning of Madhyamaka there are many different streams of philosophical systems with [a concept of] emptiness as their point of departure, please give an answer for these seven questions about profound and crucial points, using stainless valid inferential reasoning, without contradicting any

of the scriptures or interpretive commentaries, in accordance with your own tradition; and in this way, your personal [philosophical] inclinations will be established.

0.1.1.2.2.1.5.2 *Even though pressed...* If one has pure scriptural sources and reasoning techniques, which are like an excellent armor of extraordinary realization of profound subjects, even if one is attacked with a hundred thousand spurious scriptural references and reasoning techniques—such as the acrimonious *reductio ad absurdum* statements of mean-spirited sophists, which are like the horrible barbs of thorns—one will not be pierced; and of course this goes without saying if such attacks are few. The *Prasannapadā* says:

By applying well-crafted words, one will not be
Shaken by the wind of intellectuals.⁷¹⁹

Therefore, even though other philosophical systems may be better known to worldly people, in response to these profound questions about difficult points that have mostly confounded those greatly renowned in the world, as soon as the question is asked, he says, “please extend your long philosopher’s tongue immediately like a lightning bolt”! This means, please compose quickly, without going off on tangents, using many and lengthy scriptural references and reasonings that definitely resolve the questions at hand.

0.1.1.2.2.2 The specifics of how the questions are answered; 0.1.1.2.2.2.1 having generated enthusiasm for answering, how he refrained for a moment; 0.1.1.2.2.2.2 how other people of outstanding talent and training cannot establish these topics flawlessly; 0.1.1.2.2.2.3 therefore, having cast away arrogance, how he propitiated the deity; 0.1.1.2.2.2.4 how he acquired the eloquence that expounds the answer, induced by reasoning in accordance with scripture.

0.1.1.2.2.2.1 *Thus incited...* Thus, that question—the slight wavering of the speech wind that exhorted the swift composition of profound points—was incited by the intellect of that mendicant who suddenly appeared. By it, the heart of the scrupulous great sage was shaken, disproportionately to the mendicant’s request, like a mountain by the wind at the end of time. [Thus, he had a] very joyful mind to answer, and the power of his wisdom, like the wind at the end of time, was moved to give a perfect answer, without hesitation, that would clear up all doubts and nescience about these important points. For example, like a mountain shaken and agitated, he quietly disciplined negative actions of speech and abided inseparably from the sun of philosophers, Mañjuśrī. After a moment, he again propitiated his special deity. The meaning of “maintaining a moment of disciplined engagement”⁷²⁰ is explained as follows:

To the individually cognized [gnosis] induced...

And:

May we abide in the expanse of fundamental luminosity
Beyond mind, which dwells in the original state,
The state of the Great Perfection—Mañjuśrī.

It seems that one should explain it as being the same [as the meaning of these two quotations]. It is said that the empty container for the meaning of this text is accomplished in this way through the six entrances of mantric eloquence.⁷²¹

0.1.1.2.2.2.2 *Alas!...* Alas! Even if, after having undertaken austerities for many years, perhaps a hundred, such as depriving oneself of food and clothing, suffering heat and cold, relying again and again upon many spiritual teachers, and continuously blazing more and more with the oppressive fire of intellect, like purifying and testing gold, one still cannot [settle these issues] rationally without faults of contradiction, then needless to say others cannot either.

0.1.1.2.2.2.3 *Whose innate...* Likewise, "the innate intellectual brilliance of a low person like me, which is the ripening of previous seeds, is weak. So how can a low person like me, who has not undertaken the task of lengthy training in a hundred austerities as explained before, explain this without any scriptural or logical contradictions?" Thus, he called with intense devotional longing upon the lord of his spiritual lineage, Mañjughoṣa.

0.1.1.2.2.2.4 *Then...* Then, a sign arose that he thought to be from the force of the cause and condition, respectively, of the equanimity of ultimate reality, and of praying with intense devotion on the level of deceptive reality. That is, a brilliant wisdom unlike any before arose in his mind, like light at the time of dawn, dispelling the darkness of ignorance, and he achieved an opportune eloquence that could exhaustively expound upon the difficult questions. As soon as that happened, he vowed to compose the text, by analyzing all the ways of establishing arguments by means of the rational principles of dependence (*ltos*), efficacy (*bya*), and reality (*chos nyid*),⁷²² which should be relied upon, according to the meaning of well-spoken scriptures and interpretive commentaries that have the four qualities of *brahmacārya*.⁷²³

Topic 1

0.2 The composition that is virtuous in the middle, the consummate main body of the treatise that has the [sevenfold] enumeration of royal accouterments: 0.2.1 a general explanation of the view of emptiness; and 0.2.2 a specific discussion of the three views.

0.2.1.1 The actual explanation and 0.2.1.2 an incidental analysis of whether śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas have realization of the view of emptiness.⁷²⁴

1.1 How the two systems of negation are generally known in the world; 1.2 the specific way that emptiness is ascertained in our own system; 1.3 refutation of modes of extrinsic emptiness; and 1.4 explaining how those [faults that we refute] do not apply to us.

1.1 *The dGe ldan pas...* The Mādhyamika view that is free of elaboration is ascertained by taking all elaborations that involve clinging and adherence to extremes, such as existence and nonexistence, as the Mādhyamika negandum. However, the views of the lower philosophical systems logically require the two types of partlessness in place of a person whose self has been refuted by means of [establishing] the absence of self-nature of continua and coarse [aggregates].⁷²⁵ The Cittamātrins

require the consciousness of relativity (*gzhan dbang, paratantra*) in place of the two kinds of falsely superimposed (*kun btag, parikalpita*) self that are negated. Thus, it is difficult for them to reverse the intentional apprehension that clings to substantiality. For an implicative negation requires the existence of some other dharma in the empty space left by the negandum, and if in the space of the negation there is some other dharma present as the view of ultimate reality, one cannot stop the intentional apprehension that clings to its substantiality, because it is not required.

Among Mādhyamikas also, although it is held that neither Prāsaṅgikas nor Svātantrikas have higher or lower final intentions with respect to the ultimate meaning, the adherence of Svātantrikas to each of the two truths individually is a negandum of Prāsaṅgika. Accordingly, in the Land of Snows, those who maintain the philosophical systems of the new and old schools each claim that their final view is that of Prāsaṅgika. So which of the two negations is their Prāsaṅgika view? In this world, those who are reputed to be exalted with respect to the brilliance of virtue, the Ri bo dGe ldan pas,⁷²⁶ take the view to be an absolute negation. How is that? For example, if the form of the son of a barren woman does not appear, then the form of his death likewise does not appear. In that way, if the aspect of true existence of a thing does not arise, the absence of [that thing's] being established in truth cannot be determined adequately. Thus, they say that the negation of that aspect that is the negandum—that is, true existence—requires skill in apprehending the range of the negandum,⁷²⁷ and maintain that in the place of the negandum, there is no implication of the existence of another phenomenon.

Other holders of Tibetan philosophical systems say that the emptiness of Madhyamaka is an implicative negation, thus, they must assert that, in the place of the negandum, the existence of either deceptive or ultimate reality is implied. The venerable (*rje btsun*) Jonangpas, who are the most famous among them, claim that in the place of the negation of adventitious obscurations of deceptive reality, the existence of the buddha nature—which is permanent, stable, changeless, thoroughly established, and not empty of its own essence—is implied.

In general, the reasons that the Mādhyamikas use to negate true existence include the three marks of fruition, essence, and nonperception. From those [reasons of nonperception], the reasons of nonperception of cause, pervasion, essence, and result, as well as the perception of incompatibility, and so forth, are variously used in different texts as reasons for negation.⁷²⁸

The negandum is also differentiated as the rational negandum and the path negandum, and those are further differentiated as superimposed and innate and so on. Therefore, in the Mādhyamika context, some scholars expound both—an absolute negation in refuting the conceptual reifications of lower philosophical systems [of Buddhism] and heretics, and an absolute negation in refuting the Vijñāptivādin, and so forth.

1.2 In our own system: 1.2.1 the question about the two negations; 1.2.2 plotting the answer, and explaining it.

1.2.1 *What is...* “Well, if Tibetans have various ways of ascertaining the view as an absolute negation and as an implicative negation, which of those two do the followers of the Early Translation school of secret mantra take as the Mādhyamika negandum?

1.2.2.1 From the perspective of the meditative equipoise of the coalescence of appearance and emptiness, [the view] is beyond establishment and negation, and there is no conventional distinction of two negations; 1.2.2.2 from the perspective of the ultimate reality analysis that

ascertains that, [the view] is an absolute negation.

1.2.2.1 *In the state...* There are two contexts here with respect to the Early Translation school, namely the conventions that relate to the state of gnosis that is manifest in the great equanimity of dharmatā, and the ascertainment of how that [gnosis] is empty of essence through a valid cognition that analyzes ultimate reality. If one asks about the first context: with respect to the great self-arisen gnosis of the coalescence of the expanse and awareness—where one meets the face of naked freedom of elaboration, where the nature [of things] “abides in the womb”⁷²⁹—there is no position of “nonexistence.” The bare emptiness of absolute negation in the place of negating the negandum of true existence is a mental imputation, but is not the actual nature of things. Having implicatively negated the adventitious obscurations, what other “thoroughly established reality” (*yongs grub*) could be implied in the place of negation? If in ultimate reality, even as an inclusive judgment (*yongs gcod, pariccheda*), some existent object of cognition existed or were required, emptiness would become a substantial entity. Such notions of “substantial” and “insubstantial” are the mind’s conceptual projection and denial, respectively, upon the nature of things. Therefore, in fact, in the state of [sublime] equipoise, neither is maintained. Both of these are concepts of projection and denial, or negation and proof, while dharmatā, which is free of all dualistic phenomena and beyond the mind that conceptualizes subject and object, is the primordial basis beyond negation and proof, and beyond eliminating and positing (*bsal bzhaq*).

Therefore, in texts of the profound and vast [lineages of explanation, namely, those stemming from Nāgārjuna and Maitreya-Asanga], reality is taught to be without negation and proof or eliminating and positing, and in this tradition of the great secret Nyingmapa, [those authors] can be quoted directly and interpreted according [to their actual mode of explanation].⁷³⁰ The reason is that, in reality, all dharmas are not naturally established and are empty of essence. Thus, modes of appearance that are not realized in that way, which are false appearances of adventitious defilement, are found, by practicing the path, to be divisible [from reality] or, [otherwise put], to have the characteristic of emptiness.⁷³¹ The natural purity of the expanse is not a bare emptiness, because it has the characteristic of all undifferentiable qualities of the unsurpassable three bodies. The Great Omniscient One said:

Having the nature of emptiness, luminosity, and awareness,
Having great masses of indivisible qualities,
Spontaneously present and naturally pure like the sun,
Primordially empty of stains that are differentiable [from it]:
Such is the primordially pure, luminous dharmatā.

The great glorious Rong zom said:

In the system of the Great Perfection, all dharmas are completely realized to be quite similar to illusions. Having fathomed this completely, one’s mind is no longer deluded by the power of appearances, and cannot produce manifest mental constructions.⁷³² One does not accept, abandon, hesitate, or make effort. Thus, this final realization of the illusion-like nature of things is established by consummating the realization of the inseparability of the two truths.

Otherwise, for those who explain the basis as bare emptiness, reality will empty of the qualities of the formal *kāyas*, and for those who explain the basis as nonempty, reality will be empty of the qualities of the unsurpassable *dharmakāya*. Furthermore, if one divides the two truths and explains that the ultimate is an exclusive emptiness (*stong rkyang*) that is without any removal or placement of something non-empty, because that something else cannot be removed or placed [in relation to an exclusive emptiness], it will not be of benefit to someone else whose mind [functions in terms of] eliminating and positing.

1.2.2.2.1 The emptiness of self-nature is the intention of the great beings of India and Tibet;
1.2.2.2.2 having determined the negandum of the ultimate truth analysis, explaining how [phenomena] are intrinsically empty.

1.2.2.2.1 According to the second alternative [elucidated in the first paragraph of 1.2.2.1.], if one only considers the way of analyzing into productionless emptiness that negates production from the four extremes, and asks which of the two negations it is: since one must negate even the slightest intentional apprehension, it is just an absolute negation. For glorious Candara of sublime India and Rong zom chos bzang of snowy Tibet both, with the same enlightened intention and the same melodious speech, established everything, however it appears—fabricated and unfabricated things, *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*, good and bad, and so forth—as the great emptiness of primordial purity, without applying any qualification whatsoever. Therefore, on that the *Prasannapadā* says:

If you ask, "If one determines that something is not produced from itself, doesn't that mean that one also does not assert that it is produced from something else?" [the answer is yes], because we wish to say that it is an absolute negation.

And:

The Victor explained dharmas as being nonsubstantial.

And so on. Having referred to this *sūtra*, the *Prasannapadā* says:

...and because [we] wish to say that it is an absolute negation, the meaning of *substantial entities* [my emphasis] lacking self-nature is the meaning of "absence of self-nature."⁷³³

And, the great glorious Rong zom said:

Unlike the *Mādhyamika* tradition, the *Yogācārin*s view ultimate reality as being [the] existent [subject of attributes], and they do not apply an absolute negation to imagination (*parikalpita*, *kun brtags*), saying, "it is totally nonexistent"; they say that "an ultimate reality that is established as a negation does not establish the middle way." Thus, since objects of cognition (*shes bya*) are empty of imagination (*kun brtags*), we absolutely negate the [status of] being [the subject of attributes] and the existence of an intrinsic identifying characteristic, so there is nothing whatsoever left over as a basis indicated [as the referent of imaginative construction].⁷³⁴

And so on. Thus, in the Mādhyamika expositions of Mipham Rinpoche only an absolute negation is stated. Since some have mixed together the philosophical systems of the new and old schools,⁷³⁵ and some have thought that they have discovered new interpretations, this is a response to those who have not seen the sources for our tradition, or have seen them but have not understood them.

1.2.2.2.2 *Because these dharmas...* Because the ultimate negandum of the Madhyamaka is like that, all these afflicted and purified dharmas are primordially pure, or are without self-nature from the beginning. Therefore, it is not as though something previously arisen is later nonexistent or negated, because it is primordially pure; and it is not as though aspects of the object that are present in the context of conventionality are absent in the context of ultimate reality, because they are without self-nature from the beginning. The *Avatāra* commentary says:

If something had a self-nature or essence, and that were something arisen, that self-nature would not be existent [beforehand], so what would arise? This shows that it never arises at any time; from what does arise before, nothing arises later, and something that arises does not arise again. What is it then, you might ask: by its very nature, it is beyond the nature of suffering (*rang bzhin nyid kyis yongs su mya ngan las 'das pa*). "From the beginning" (*'dod nas*) does not mean that it does not arise only in the context of the gnosis of a yogi. What does it mean, then? It is taught that even before that, in the context of worldly conventionality, those dharmas are not born from their own self. The word "beginning" (*gdod*) is a synonym of "at first" (*dang po*). One should know that this is stated in the context of worldly conventionality.

Therefore, because things are not born ultimately, nor are they born conventionally either—and are thus not born in either of the two truths—why should one have any doubt about the statement that a subject, such as a pillar, "does not exist"? For this is the excellent path established by reason, and therefore, since a pillar is primordially pure and is equanimity, by searching for another ultimate negandum and negating it, there is no residual fragment⁷³⁶ whatsoever of either ultimate or deceptive reality left over. Thus, the *mDo sdud pa* says:

As here one understands that the five aggregates are like illusions,
One does not take illusions and aggregates to be different.
Free of various concepts, one experiences peace.
This is the way of the supreme perfection of wisdom.

Here, the fact that all cognizable dharmas are empty of self-nature or are empty of essence is stated in the scriptures and treatises. Accordingly, since this is established by authentic reasoning, although this tradition of the Nyingmapa school of secret mantra expounds intrinsic emptiness (*rang stong*), it is not the "intrinsic emptiness" of the "intrinsic emptiness vs. extrinsic emptiness" dichotomy. These two are differentiated by the philosophical systems of the new schools of Mantrayāna, so that assertion of [intrinsic emptiness in the context of the new schools] is somewhat incompatible with the reality of the integrated two truths. In that respect there are some differences [between the proponents of intrinsic emptiness in the new schools and ourselves] regarding how the middle and final turnings of the wheel are posited as definitive or

provisional, whether the intentions of both the great system-builders are combined together or not, whether the two validating cognitions are emphasized equally or not, etc.

[Objection:] This statement of yours, “only thinking of the manner of emptiness,” which you take to mean the instantaneous cutting of the four extremes, is not reasonable. It is not possible to eliminate all the four extremes at once. Therefore, both the Prāsaṅgikas and Svātantrikas first ascertain that all dharmas are empty in that they are not produced, and having thus eliminated the extreme of existence of entities, the latter extremes are then eliminated in a similar manner.

[Answer:] The Svātantrikas differentiate the two truths; and it is true, as you have said, that once having ascertained a pillar as emptiness and eliminated the extreme of substantial existence, they gradually eliminate the latter extremes. However, in this Prāsaṅgika context, where it is said that “this dharma is primordially pure,” and so forth, by the very fact that the two truths are not differentiated, the pillar as it appears is the equanimity of integrated appearance and emptiness, which qualifies it as birthless emptiness. Since that actually cuts off both extremes of existence and nonexistence, it automatically eliminates the extremes of “both” and “neither.” For the nonfinding of an experiential object of “both” or “neither” in the integrated appearance-emptiness of dharmatā is ascertained according to the object of sublime beings’ meditative equipoise. Therefore, if one looks honestly, although Prāsaṅgika and Svātantrika are similar in ascertaining substantial entities as emptiness, in fact they are dissimilar insofar as they eliminate the four extremes all at once and gradually, respectively, due to the fact that each system posits the presence or absence of a position differently.

Therefore, further on, in the context of explaining the disposal of faults in our system, that freedom from extremes is explained extensively, in the manner of coalescence of appearance and emptiness, and in the manner of coalescence being free from extremes and so forth, by means of examples like the moon’s reflection in water. But aside from that, one should understand that the analysis of the two truths is not engaged merely by means of using the verbal expression of the complementary aspects of appearance and emptiness.

1.3 Refuting other systems: 1.3.1 their determination of the negandum of intrinsic emptiness brings the consequence of extrinsic emptiness; and 1.3.2 refutation of the extrinsic emptiness of both ultimate and relative truth.

1.3.1.1 Contradiction of the intention of Candrakīrti; and 1.3.1.2 the inappropriateness of applying one’s own qualifications.

1.3.1.1.1 The question about the pūrvapakṣa’s Prāsaṅgika negandum; and 1.3.1.1.2 refuting their answer to it.

1.3.1.1.1 *In the place...* [They say] that with an ultimate validating cognition (*don dpyod tshad ma*) the dharma-possessor, such as a pillar, is not negated, but must be posited as what is left over as a conventional residue. They say, “Well, but the negandum is not that pillar, and if it were, one would denigrate conventionality”; this is how they explain it. [We ask], “If it is not the pillar, then what exactly is it?” to which they answer, “The pillar is not empty of being a pillar, but is empty of being truly existent.”

1.3.1.1.2.1 Even if one says it is an absolute negation, it becomes an implicative negation; 1.3.1.1.2.2

it becomes a species of extrinsic emptiness; 1.3.1.1.2.3 it contradicts both scripture and reasoning.

1.3.1.1.2.1 *The emptiness...* On the basis of that subject, such as a pillar, the emptiness that is the negation of true existence and a left-over appearance in the place where the negandum has been eliminated that is not empty cannot become the coalescence of appearance and emptiness, because one is a bare emptiness, and the other is implicated as a non-empty appearance. For example, there is no sense of coalescence in black and white threads wound together. Therefore, even if one proves an absolute negation over and over [in this way], reasoning establishes that in the final analysis it is an implicative negation.

1.3.1.1.2.2 *To say...* Thus, both of these two kinds of Mādhyamika interpretation—viz., (1) deceptive reality, where a pillar is not empty of being a pillar, but is empty of being truly existent, and (2) where the thoroughly established (*yongs grub*) dharmatā that is a non-empty ultimate is the emptiness of deceptive reality, [such as] a pillar—posit the basis that is empty of something extrinsic as one or the other of the two truths. Therefore, they both propound an emptiness with respect to an extrinsic true existence and an adventitious deceptive reality, respectively. Therefore, whether or not the [exponents of these systems] apply the name [extrinsic emptiness] or not, they maintain a verbal and ontological forms of extrinsic emptiness,⁷³⁷ respectively. True existence is not established with respect to either of the two truths and is only an object of verbal designation, hence the term “verbal extrinsic emptiness” (*tshig gi gzhan stong*); and saṃsāra exists conventionally in deceptive reality, hence the term “ontological intrinsic emptiness” (*don gyi gzhan stong*).

You might wonder, “We don’t maintain extrinsic emptiness, so how can that be?” In your system, whatever exists conventionally is not negated ultimately and is not empty from its own side; and you claim that whatever is negated ultimately and whatever is empty does not appear conventionally. Because what is empty and what is not empty are different, they are [empty of each another, hence] extrinsically empty. If they are not now extrinsically empty, then even the proponents of extrinsic emptiness would not be proponents of extrinsic emptiness.⁷³⁸

1.3.1.1.2.3 *Woe! If this...* As they do not have a view worthy of such arrogance, he begins with a word of amazement: Woe! If that pillar is not empty of being that pillar, [and one only applies the] negation of emptiness with respect to an extrinsic true existence that does not exist conventionally, then that negandum [of pillar, etc.,] is not empty and is left over. Thus, scripture and reasoning are contradicted. [For example], consider the meaning of scriptural passages [dealing with] the sixteenfold differentiation of emptiness—“the eye is empty of eye, form is empty of form,” etc., and from a sūtra, “Kāśyapa! Emptiness does not make dharmas empty; dharmas are by their very nature empty,” and so forth. As for reasoning, if one analyzes a pillar from the perspective of cause, effect, and essence, it is not established. “Pillar” is the subject, which is nonsubstantial, because it is not produced from itself, another, both, or without cause, like a dream. Likewise, the subject and probandum⁷³⁹ are similarly bereft of being the result of an existent or nonexistent. And since in essence it is bereft of singleness and plurality, cause, effect, and essence are all dependently arisen. Thus, if there were something nonempty aside from the three doors of liberation,⁷⁴⁰ it would contradict the sense of reason. Also, a truly existent thing does not have the distinctions of cause, effect, essence, etc.

Also, there would be the consequence of an emptiness without appearance not existing,

because it would not be possible in either of the two truths. If it were possible, it would consequently not be realizable by anyone, because it would not be connected with an appearance that would serve as means to realize it. Even if it were realized, it would consequently not be able to serve as an antidote to that which must be abandoned, because it would be a separate emptiness. For example, when one is angry with an enemy, it does no good to recognize the emptiness of space.

1.3.1.2.1 The unreasonableness of applying qualifications of latter words; and 1.3.1.2.2 the unreasonableness of applying prior words.

1.3.1.2.1.1 Refutation through examination of sameness and difference; 1.3.1.2.1.2 refuting the answer that disposes of its faults; 1.3.1.2.1.3 even though that kind of qualification is known in Svātantrika, it is not necessary for the final meaning.

1.3.1.2.1.1 *Consider a pillar...* You might think, "It is reasonable to apply the qualification of 'empty of true existence.'" But are the pillar and the negandum based upon pillar, namely, true existence, the same or different? In the first case, if the negandum and the basis of negation are the same, when true existence is eliminated from one [of them], it is also reasonable to eliminate from the pillar what is essentially the same as it, because it also is the same as the true existence [of pillar]. For example, if you burn a pillar, its color also changes.

Also, according to the second alternative, even if one eliminates a true existence that is other than the pillar, then the pillar would consequently have a non-empty essence immune to analysis, no matter how many Mādhyamika reasonings one used to examine it. If you accept that consequence, then a non-empty pillar is contradictory to a valid cognition of ultimate analysis, because it [that is, true existence] would be empty of an extrinsic pillar that is truly existent. This would contradict the position that the pillar is empty of its own essence (*rang stong*). Finally, true existence would not be negated, because something that is immune to analysis [that is, the pillar] is said to be "truly existent."

1.3.1.2.1.2.1 The answer [to our criticism]; and 1.3.1.2.1.2.1 its refutation.

1.3.1.2.1.2.1 *Because true existence...* "If true existence does not exist because it is not established with respect to either of the two truths, then this examination as to whether it is the same as or different than the pillar is unnecessary."

1.3.1.2.1.2.2 *Even though...* Granted, "true existence" does not exist if you analyze it. However, with respect to ordinary individuals who apprehend self and phenomena as truly existent, Mādhyamika reasoning ascertains all dharmas as emptiness, because those ordinary individuals apprehend vases, etc., as truly existent. Since vases, etc., are apprehended as true, and the non-empty vase conforms to the mental object of an ordinary individual, the apprehension of true existence is not stopped. Then, if [as you say] there is some form of "true existence" above and beyond [the vase] that must be mastered as the scope of the negandum, whose object would that be? That mode of appearance of the two forms of self that are the negandum of Madhyamaka—of which self-apprehending person will it be the object? What need would there be to ascertain the selflessness through Mādhyamika reasoning of that extraneous object? And yet you flatter

yourselves with the idea that this is a Mādhyamika interpretation never set forth by earlier generations!⁷⁴¹ For example, it is like asserting the horns of a rabbit as the negandum.

Also, all subjects such as vases, pillars, etc., are not immune to analysis. If that [lack of immunity] is not [the same as] absence of true existence, then for whom is that dharma-possessor to be truly existent as the object of the apprehension of true existence? How can one realize that as not truly existent? For even though it is ascertained as not immune to analysis, you claim that it is not nontruly existent. Thus, you think this is how the negandum is explained, or how it appears.

1.3.1.2.1.3 *To teach emptiness...* To teach with the application of any kind of verbal qualification to the two truths, such as “true existence” or “utterly established” (*yang dag par grub pa*), etc., is admittedly well known in the Svātantrika corpus of the master Bhāvaviveka, and so forth. But in the context of the final analysis of ultimate reality, what need is there to apply those qualifications such as “truly existent”? That [analysis] should ascertain the absence of all elaborations of the four extremes, but a bare emptiness of true existence is not sufficient. Thus, the Avatāra commentary says:

For that very reason, the Master did not make qualifications, and saying “not produced from self,” he negated production generally. “There are no substantive entities that are ultimately produced from themselves, because they exist, like sentient beings”—one should I think it pointless to add the qualification of “ultimate” to [a negation already] qualified in this way.

1.3.1.2.2 The unreasonableness of applying the prior verbal qualification: 1.3.1.2.2.1 the fact that there is contradiction in positing the expectation that requires the application of qualification; and 1.3.1.2.2.2 having asked about it, making a refutation.

1.3.1.2.2.1 *Thinking that...* If one thinks that one needs to add the qualification “the pillar is not empty of being a pillar”: Your expectation is that if the pillar is empty of its own essence, then not only ultimately but deceptively as well there will be no pillar. Thinking this, you fail to distinguish the two truths and doubt the words without investigating their meaning, like a crow struck with hesitant curiosity,⁷⁴² and although you apply words in this way, it does not remove your doubt, and again you incur the contradictions arising from merely literal understanding.⁷⁴³ From the *gSung sgras*:⁷⁴⁴

The reason is that these words are not reasonable even with respect to deceptive reality, because they are not timely, they are unnecessary, and they contradict your own words. Because of these three faults, the logical mark is established gradually: (1) when explaining the way that eye is ultimately empty of being an eye, it is not the time to discuss the fact that conventionally an eye is not empty of being an eye; (2) the fact that conventionally an eye is not empty of itself, but is empty of being a nose and so forth, is the same for everything and is already established for the world, so it is not necessary to establish it again; and (3) if a vase were truly existent conventionally and were not empty of being a vase, this would contradict the position

that "true existence is conventionally nonexistent." There the first two cases,⁷⁴⁵ which refer to conventionality, and the second two, which refer to ultimate reality, are unreasonable, because they entail the three faults of (1) internal contradiction in the opponent's position, (2) harming the position that emptiness is an absolute negation, and (3) harming the meaning of emptiness arising as relativity. The reasons (*rtags*) are established gradually: (1) if ultimately the vase is not empty of being a vase, it is truly existent, so there is contradiction of the position of its being empty of true existence; (2) likewise, if the vase is analyzed into parts and part-possessors, etc., down to elementary particles, and is not found, the vase would be empty of vase, and because there is no other way of positing the absence of true existence than this conventional expression of nonexistence in truth, this contradicts the statement "a vase is not empty of being a vase."

Moreover, (3) because your ultimate truth analysis implicates a vase in the space left by the negation of true existence, emptiness becomes an implicative negation. But if the vase is not implicated, when negating true existence, the vase will be empty [which is our position anyway]. Also, those dharmas that are not empty of their own essence do not arise from the emptiness that is empty of other dharmas, because empty and not-empty are mutually exclusive. For example, from the absence of a rabbit's horn, a ruminant horn does not arise.

1.3.1.2.2.2.1 The question; and 1.3.1.2.2.2.2 its refutation.

1.3.1.2.2.2.1 *You are not satisfied...* [The opponent] says, "This statement of ours does not refer to either of the two truths. [What we say] is that a pillar is not empty of being a pillar in terms of deceptive reality, and is empty of being truly existent with respect to ultimate reality. So there is no fault whatsoever." This shows that you are not content to accept the position of previous scholars, who simply said that things are "deceptively existent." For some reason you come up with the new expression "The pillar is not empty of being a pillar." You might say, "Those two expressions are not the same in words, but the meaning comes out the same. We say 'pillar not empty of being a pillar' because it is easier to understand."

1.3.1.2.2.2.2.1 The contradiction of the meaning not being the same; 1.3.1.2.2.2.2.2 that statement is not reasonable in terms of either of the two truths; 1.3.1.2.2.2.2.3 intrinsic emptiness and not being empty are both unreasonable.

1.3.1.2.2.2.2.2.1 *You may say...* You say the meaning is the same. But if the different modes of expression are different, then these are statements made according people's [differing] intentions, which indicate different meanings, hence they do not mean the same thing. For the statement "a pillar exists" is accepted as what merely appears and is generally known, without damaging the way things are known in the world. That statement, and the statement that "a pillar possesses a pillar," are not the same. The former is a mere conventionality, unanalyzed and uninvestigated; the latter is a case of [epistemological] investigation and analysis, where the former [pillar] is the support and the latter [pillar] is supported by it. This is in fact what you end up claiming. It is like saying, for example, "A pillar exists impermanently." Therefore, insofar as a pillar that exists deceptively is a mere appearance of something empty that is naturally apparent as relativity, it is

reasonable to accept that the pillar is empty. If [the pillar] were not empty, then not only are the two statements different in meaning, this would contradict the position that [pillars, etc.,] are mere verbal designations that are conceptually imputed. To say "empty of true existence" with respect to ultimate reality contradicts Candrakīrti's assertion that it is not necessary to apply qualifications, and it is the same as the application of the qualification of true existence to the negandum by the Svātantrikas, who expound [a conception] of substantial existence [conventionally].

1.3.1.2.2.2.2.2 *If ultimately...* Another fault follows. Does the statement "a pillar is not empty of being a pillar" refer to ultimate reality or deceptive reality? If one analyzes with respect to ultimate reality, analyzing parts and part-possessors, partless components, directional parts, and so forth, as well as establishment as one or many, and so forth, then one cannot imagine even the slightest essence proper to a pillar. This being the case, how can one possibly be intended by the statement that the dharma-possessor "pillar" is not empty of the dharma "pillar"? In the second alternative, with reference to deceptive reality, if in saying "pillar [is not empty] of being a pillar" the two [pillars] are not identical but are different, it makes sense to say "pillar" twice. And if they are not different, in saying this one is just deluded about words. This is an utterly pointless and cumbersome mode of expression that is difficult to read and write.

1.3.1.2.2.2.2.3 *If something is not empty...* Thus, if a pillar is not empty of being a pillar, then is the pillar itself not empty, or empty? In the first case, even though one claims that something is intrinsically empty, if, when ascertaining the thing itself, for example, a pillar, it is not empty of itself, the only alternative is to accept that it is empty of some extrinsic negandum, because the pillar exists without being empty of itself. For example, it is like the claim that "thorough establishment" [*yongs grub, parinīṣpanna*] is extrinsically empty of adventitious defilements. In the second case, if the negandum that is negated ultimately is none other than the pillar, and thus the pillar is empty of its own essence, then this contradicts the claim that the pillar is not empty of itself, because it would be empty of its own essence. The *sDud pa* says:

If through ignorance one conceptualizes form,
Experiences feelings, and consciously interacts with the aggregates,
Even if such a bodhisattva thinks, "This aggregate is empty,"
[S]he interacts with marks, and has no faith in the birthless.

Thus, if you postulate appearances that are empty of something else, you state that there is an appearance that is not empty, and if you say that there is emptiness that is empty of an appearance of something else, then you should analyze how your statement that "something that is not apparent is empty" accords with Nāgārjuna's [thought].

1.3.2 Whether it is deceptive or ultimate reality that is extrinsically empty, they both are negated: 1.3.2.1 if one focuses on that system, one will not give rise to the qualities of abandonment and realization; 1.3.2.2 the coalescence of appearance and emptiness, etc., that transcends narrow-minded perception would be impossible; 1.3.2.3 if that point of view were the meaning of coalescence, it would be easy for anyone to realize it; 1.3.2.4 it would not be fitting for great beings to praise that [point of view].

1.3.2.1 *Generally speaking...* In general, in each philosophical system there seem to be many different ways of explaining what qualifies as, or is disqualified⁷⁴⁶ as, existence, nonexistence, emptiness, and non-emptiness, etc. In the teachings of the lord father, Lama Mañjuśrī, it says that according to most earlier scholars, if something exists conventionally, it does not [generally] qualify as something existent, and if something is ultimately nonexistent, it [generally] qualifies as something nonexistent. Likewise, the earlier scholars who upheld extrinsic emptiness maintain that something that is deceptively existent does not qualify as existent, and that something that is ultimately existent qualifies as existent. Most later scholars say that something that is deceptively existent [generally] qualifies as existent, while something that is ultimately nonexistent does not qualify as nonexistent [in general]. In the system of intrinsic emptiness, there is only nonexistence ultimately, because an ultimately existing thing is impossible. In the system of extrinsic emptiness, if something is nonexistent ultimately, it must be deceptive, because what exists ultimately is ultimate reality itself.

These are both distinctions of the later philosophical systems. We Nyingmapas do not explain things according to either of these [systems of conventions regarding existence and nonexistence in the two truths]. [We say that] because things do exist conventionally, they qualify as conventionally existent, but do not qualify as ultimately existent. Because things are ultimately nonexistent, they qualify as ultimately nonexistent, but do not thereby qualify as conventionally nonexistent. It is taught [in the Nyingma tradition] that this is a way to understand ultimate nonexistence and conventional existence as a single meaning that obtains without contradiction on the basis of existing things. In general, even though in philosophical models of the conventionality of appearances there are various conventions of existence, nonexistence, deceptiveness, and nondeceptiveness, and so forth, at the time of ascertaining the dharmadhātu emptiness as the object of [sublime] equipoise, the emptiness of one thing with respect to another does not qualify as emptiness. The *Uttaratantra* says:

Originally without center or periphery, indivisible,
Not dual, not three, stainless, nonconceptual,
The realization of this nature of the dharmadhātu
Is seen by a yogi in equipoise.

Since it has to be this way, as there is no dichotomy of dharma-possession where one is empty and the other not empty, there are no elaborations that adhere to extremes of existence and nonexistence; and since there is no eliminating and positing, such as eliminating one thing and positing another, one realizes the equality of all dharmas in birthlessness. Therefore, the extrinsic emptiness of adventitious deceptive reality with respect to the dharmatā that is thoroughly established definitely does not qualify as the realization of the emptiness of nonelaboration, which is the support for consummation of the qualities of abandonment and realization, because there is apprehension of the absence of one thing on the basis of something that is other than it existing. For example, even though one realizes that a cow is not established in a horse, that absence of a cow does not suffice to determine that the horse is empty. The *Avatāra* commentary says:

It is not reasonable for the emptiness of one thing in another to be nonsubstantiality, for in scripture we see “Mahāmati! That emptiness that is the absence of one thing in

another is the most trivial of emptinesses." To say "because a cow is not a horse, it does not exist" is not reasonable, because [a cow] exists [as a cow] by its very nature.

And so on. The opponent says, "By seeing a horse, one automatically knows that there is no cow there. Likewise, by realizing the very essence of the thoroughly established dharmatā, one knows the emptiness that is empty of conceptuality, so that that qualifies as realization of emptiness." Well, even if one has realization of thorough establishment that is not empty of its own essence, what good does that do for realizing the emptiness of adventitious deceptive reality? The consequence is that it would not help, because their essences are different. For example, what good will seeing a horse do for seeing the emptiness of a cow? It won't help. Moreover, even if one knows that [dharmatā] is empty of adventitious deceptive phenomena, how will this help one to understand the emptiness of thoroughly established dharmatā? That won't help either because their essences are different. The example is as above [the cow and the horse]. Therefore, there is no reason why this should qualify as emptiness.

One might say, "The supreme realization is the realization of the non-empty thorough establishment of reality, so by realizing that, one does not need to realize emptiness." Well then, that kind of realization of reality is the subject. The consequence is that it could do nothing to harm the two obscurations that are to be abandoned, and the reason is that one cannot establish the intentional apprehension and antidotes that oppose the two kinds of self-apprehension that are the root of the two obscurations. For example, by knowing that a cow is not present in a horse, how does that help to stop grasping at the horse itself? It doesn't help. On that account, the *Pramāṇavārttika* says:

Without refuting this object [of desire],
That desire cannot be abandoned.
The abandonment of desire, hatred, and so forth,
Which is related to [developing] good qualities and [eliminating] faults,
Is [brought about] by not seeing the objects [of the afflictions]
But not [by abandoning the] external [objects themselves].

And, from the *Sher phyin rgyan*:

Others teach that dharmas exist
And maintain that obscurations to the knowable
Are exhausted,
But I find this incredible.

If it is not different, then like deceptive reality, ultimate reality will also be intrinsically empty.

1.3.2.2 *Therefore...* In the scriptures and treatises, saṃsāra and nirvāṇa are said to be dharma-possessor and dharmatā. The *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga* says:

There, the division of dharmas
Is saṃsāra, and with respect to dharmatā,
The divisions of the three vehicles

Have their respective nirvāṇas.⁷⁴⁷

Because they are different, that non-empty nirvāṇa is not the dharmatā of saṃsāra, because as something that is not empty of itself, it is different than saṃsāra. Saṃsāra also cannot be its dharma-possessor, because nirvāṇa is something different. They cannot each [be both dharma and dharma-possessor]. Nirvāṇa cannot be both dharmatā and dharma-possessor, because non-empty appearance would become permanent; saṃsāra cannot be both dharmatā and dharma-possessor, because of being an exclusive emptiness of absolute negation. There is a pervasion—the dharma-possessor is the appearance of dharmatā, and dharmatā is the nature of the dharma-possessor, and saṃsāra cannot be both of them. Thus, the hollow [claim that extrinsic emptiness is] the intention of Maitreya's teaching collapses.

Also, in this type of system, the coalescence of appearance and emptiness is impossible, because the bodies and wisdoms are exclusive appearance devoid of the aspect of emptiness, and saṃsāra is the nihilistic emptiness of adventitious defilements, and those two [saṃsāra and nirvāṇa] are different. If one claims that they are empty of intrinsic nature (*ngo bo stong pa*), then one will contradict the previous thesis that [ultimate reality] is not empty of its own essence, but is empty of something extrinsic and adventitious.

Moreover, there is no sense of the equality of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa here. If there were, then all sentient beings would already have become that equanimity, because one asserts the permanence of a buddha nature that is not empty of its own essence. If not, then even if sentient beings practiced the path, they would not manifest equanimity, because a permanent reality of equanimity is asserted to be other than saṃsāra. Therefore, "By this syllogism of otherness, differences are vanquished,"⁷⁴⁸ and "For whomever emptiness doesn't work, nothing works."⁷⁴⁹

Thus, because of being non-empty and different, all faults arise. Not only that, the *Acintyastava* says:

"Existence" is the view of eternalism;
"Nonexistence" is the view of nihilism.
Thus, Lord, you have taught the Dharma
That avoids these two extremes.⁷⁵⁰

In this system, the middle turning is held to explain the extreme of nihilistic, absolute negation, and the final turning is held to explain the extreme of eternalistic non-emptiness. So if one does fool oneself into believing that this interpretation is terribly profound, that would be better. The *[Samādhirāja]*sūtra says:

Both "existence" and "nonexistence" are extremes.
Permanence and impermanence are also extremes.
Thus, having completely abandoned both extremes,
A wise person does not abide in the middle either.

Likewise, the glorious Rong zom Chos bzang said:

It is taught that neither production nor destruction is established; the actual nature of things is the absence of production and destruction. One should not try to prove that

things are characterized by emptiness of something else, as if saying, "Here, the temple is empty of monks," and so forth.

Also, the *gSang 'grel* says:

All dharmas are empty of intrinsic essence. [But if one] sees them as extrinsically empty, one will not realize that they are empty of their own essence, so their essence would be quite obscure.⁷⁵¹

1.3.2.3 *The moon in the water...* According to this [opponent's] system [under consideration], the "coalescence of appearance and emptiness" means something like, for example, saying, "A reflection of the moon in water is other than the actual moon in the sky," where the moon in the sky is the emptiness that is empty of deceptive reality, and deceptive reality is the self-appearing apparent aspect of the moon in water. Taken together, these two would be the coalescence of appearance and emptiness.⁷⁵² That kind of abiding reality of coalescence would be easy for anyone to realize, from foolish herdsmen on up. Just by seeing, one would definitely realize it, and expounding, debating, and composition would be completely unnecessary.

According to that example, the combination of emptiness that is the emptiness of adventitious deceptive reality, and the non-empty abiding ultimate reality that is thoroughly established, might be called "coalescence"; but in fact they cannot be combined, because they are different. Therefore, one might be confused because the mere words "coalescence" and "nonelaborated" are the same [in various systems], but one would be very mistaken in holding all systems to be the same. Whichever meaning one considers here, one must discriminate with respect to the actual meaning, because all of these philosophical systems have the mere words "coalescence" and "nonelaborated." Likewise, the Great Omniscient One says in the *Comfort and Ease of Illusion*:⁷⁵³

Some people say that this dharma is not present in that, making an excluding judgment of emptiness, and claim that [the latter dharma] is not empty of its own essence. This is a fair-weather emptiness, like the fact that the sun is empty of darkness, but not empty of light rays.⁷⁵⁴ If one is attached to "truth," one can never be liberated; since the essence of the sun is empty of being one or many, its rays are also empty. This appearance-in-emptiness is said to be suchness. The *Bodhicittavivaraṇa* says:

The nature of fire is heat,
And the nature of treacle is sweet.
Likewise, the nature of all things
Is taught to be emptiness.

And, from the *Prajñāpāramitā*:

Form is intrinsically empty of form.

And, from the *Sher rgyan 'grel chung*:

Because everything is empty of its own essence,
Twenty types of emptiness are asserted.

This does not mean that because something is empty, it is nonexistent; because the nature of emptiness is inseparable from appearance, all dharmas are reasonable in emptiness....

And so on.

1.3.2.4 *Everyone knows that a cow is not a horse...* Because it is easy for the wise and foolish alike to recognize that a cow is not a horse, to [maintain that] actually seeing that a cow is not a horse is realization was [sarcastically] said to be “a great wonder” by the Great One. If that is a great wonder, then what more ridiculous thing could there be that is not wondrous? For everyone knows that things are, by their individual [conventional] natures, exclusive of other things, and only exist in that way.

1.4 How those faults do not apply to us: 1.4.1 a summary, using a common example, which teaches how our own tradition of absolute negation [implies] coalescence; 1.4.2 an extensive explanation of its meaning.

1.4.1 *Therefore...* For appearance and emptiness to be different is totally unreasonable. Therefore, how is it that, in our own early translation tradition, an absolute negation is asserted but doesn’t imply that there is an emptiness exclusive [of appearance] and an appearance [exclusive of emptiness]? For example, if one analyzes a reflection of the moon in water with respect to the inside, outside, and middle of the water, and also with respect to its own essence, the reflected moon is not found to exist in even the slightest measure according to its manner of appearance, so it abides in emptiness. Though it does not exist—or, is empty—when it is actually perceived as a sensory object, as the form of the moon reflected in water, that kind of mere appearance and the emptiness of absolute negation are established by valid cognition as being inseparable, and hence there is an absolute negation. For to be that way [that is, an absolute negation], and yet be able to appear, is the dharmatā of things. A sūtra says:

Just as the water-reflected moon at night
Appears in the clear and undisturbed ocean,
The reflected moon is empty, and aggregations are without essence.
All dharmas should be understood in that way.

And, from the *Hevajratantra* (*brtag gnyis*):

Naturally pure from the beginning,
Neither true nor false, the claim “like a moon
In the water”
Is understood by the yoginī.

1.4.2 The extensive explanation: 1.4.2.1 it is reasonable because it is directly seen by the wise;

1.4.2.2 it is reasonable because it is inferred by reasoning; 1.4.2.3 perfectly explaining the meaning established with these reasons.

1.4.2.1 *Emptiness and...* The noncontradictory arising of the natural emptiness of all dharmas and the unobstructed apparent aspect of relativity as one object appear to immature, ordinary beings, from a single basis, as if contradictory. But here, it is established by the direct vision of yogis. This nature of things, the coalescence of appearance and emptiness, is praised by the wise with words of wonderment, as “amazing.” The *Pañcakrama* says:

If one understands this emptiness of dharmas,
As the relativity of cause and effect,
There is no greater wonder than this!
Nothing is more amazing than this!

And, from the Great Omniscient One:

When the yogi free of subject and object perceives
This appearance-in-nonexistence, he laughs in amazement.⁷⁵⁵

1.4.2.2 *If one examines...* For that reason, the previous thesis of absolute negation is reasonable. If one thus investigates from the perspective of emptiness, because there is not the slightest pure or afflicted dharma that is not empty, one can say apodictically, without the slightest doubt, that from the perspective of that valid cognition that investigates ultimate reality, it is an “absolute negation.” The *Uttaratantra* says:

The nature of mind is like space,
Without cause or condition;
It is not an aggregate and has no
Production, destruction, or abiding.

1.4.2.3.1 The manner of abiding of things is emptiness and relativity abiding inseparably; 1.4.2.3.2 in explaining that the way it is, it is not necessary to apply qualifications; 1.4.2.3.3 even if one does not apply them, one will develop experience.

1.4.2.3.1 *But that nonexistence...* However, “nonexistence” is not something other, because it appears to others. That nonexistence or emptiness of essence does not remain on its own as nonexistence, but arises unimpededly as the appearance of relativity, which is the basic reality of luminosity. It is not the case that something that existed before later becomes nonexistent; whatever appears in *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa* does not remain on its own as appearance. It is not like “reversal to the basis” of emptiness in philosophical systems that propound existence; because self-liberation in baseless emptiness is taught according to the abiding nature of reality, which is coalescence free of elaboration, the meaning [of this teaching] abides in the Great Middle (*dbu ma chen po*). Therefore, the Great Omniscient One said:

Existence is not established in appearance; emptiness does not veer into nonexistence.

This should be understood as the nature of nondual great spontaneous presence.

1.4.2.3.2 *There distinctions...* When ascertaining that kind of Madhyamaka, although an extrinsic true existence or adventitious deceptive reality is the empty aspect that is absolutely negated, this negandum is not used to qualify the emptiness of pillars or buddha nature, nor do we ever find any distinctions of dualistic dharmas, such as the twofold partlessness of [the Sautrāntikas and Vaibhāṣikas], or the conventional establishment by way of identifying characteristics in Svātantrika. All such divisions of dualistic dharmas are never to be found, because they are the inseparable equanimity. The *Shing rta chen po* says:

Those people who propound a nihilistic emptiness of nonexistence do not understand the nature of emptiness, and are similar to the heretical Lokāyatās (phyi rol pa rgyang 'phen pa). The emptiness of "this is empty, this is not empty" is a trivial emptiness similar to views of eternalism and the views of Śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas. Because these views fall into the extremes of nihilism and eternalism, one should simply not rely upon them.

Also, the great Rong zom Chos bzang said:

There all dharmas are without the establishment of the modes of dharma-possession and dharmatā, and are thus empty of intrinsic essence. There no is postulation of "this being empty of that."

1.4.2.3.3 *When one develops...* In the equanimity of inseparability one does not have to rely upon the opinions of others, and thus, free from the fetters of one's doubt, one acquires certainty within oneself. Other scholars, through the power of not understanding in this way, have investigated the nature of reality again and again, and as much as they have tried to find it, they have just worn out and frustrated themselves, without realizing the meaning of dharmatā. Without such frustration or regret, one becomes extraordinarily happy, even if others are dissatisfied. Though others do not see it, one conceives irreversible confidence and thinks, "Amazing!"

I say:

*If one analyzes the meaning of things with an honest mind,
One sees with a mind that conforms to the meaning of emptiness.
If this statement about the nature that is sought on the path of liberation
Seems wearisome to anyone, I beg your pardon.*⁷⁵⁶

Topic 2

0.2.1.1 An incidental analysis of whether Śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas have realization of the view of emptiness: 2.1 refuting other systems; 2.2 establishing our own system; and 2.3 dispelling doubts about it.

2.1.1 Refuting the assertion of not realizing emptiness; 2.1.2 refuting assertions of realization; and 2.1.3 refuting assertions of realizing emptiness of each and every member of the *catuṣkoṭi*.

2.1.1.1 Setting up the pūrvapakṣa; and 2.1.1.2 refuting it.

2.1.1.1 *Some say...* Now, the meaning of the second question is as follows. Some earlier scholars (*snga rab pa*) have said that Śrāvaka and pratyekabuddha arhats realize only the selflessness of persons, but do not realize the selflessness of phenomena. The *Abhidharmakośa* says:

If the conception of something such as a vase or water
Does not arise when it is destroyed or analytically divested [of properties],
That is deceptively existent;
Otherwise, it is ultimately existent.⁷⁵⁷

Quoting this, the self of persons is said to be nonexistent, and to know it as such is the authentic view of selflessness. Because the dharmas of the coarse skandhas, *dhātus*, and *āyatanas* have the nature of the two kinds of subtle partlessness, they are not understood as the emptiness of selflessness; but the attainment of the twice-four and eightfold liberation⁷⁵⁸ is nonetheless asserted.

2.1.1.2.1 If selflessness is not realized, negative emotions are not abandoned; 2.1.1.2.2 how that kind of self is a mere designation, or a type of conditioned phenomenon;⁷⁵⁹ 2.1.1.2.3 it is proven by scripture and reasoning that (arhats) realize that, and the claim that they do not realize it is not proven.

2.1.1.2.1 *That self...* Let us examine that system: if the selflessness of phenomena is not realized, then to that extent there is apprehension of the five appropriating (*nyer len*, *upādāna*) skandhas as a single substantial entity, and then there is the apprehension of "I." As long as the self that is the apprehension of a mere "I" is not eliminated, there is the root of the suffering of saṃsāra, which is the apprehension of self. By the power of that, negative emotions are not abandoned. The *Ratnāvalī* says:

As long there is apprehension of the skandhas,
There is the apprehension of them as "I."
If there is apprehension of "I," there is karma,
And from that comes rebirth.

As it is said here, there are karma and negative emotions, and by their power one is unable to abandon saṃsāra, or attain the result [of liberation]. The *Pramāṇvārttika* says:

Everything that is harmful
Arises from the view [of the self] of the perishable assemblage.
That is ignorance, and attachment [arises] there,
And from that arise anger and so forth.
For that very reason, the cause
Of harm is said to be ignorance.
In other [treatises] it is [called] the view of the perishable assemblage,

Because when it is abandoned, [ignorance, etc.,] are abandoned....⁷⁶⁰

2.1.1.2.2 *And that self...* For that reason, generally speaking the cause of saṃsāra is said to be ignorance, and the special result (*nyer len*) of that is the view of the perishable assemblage (*jig tshogs lta ba, satkāyadr̥ṣṭi*). The self that is the object [of that view] is nothing but a designation made in dependence upon the five skandhas, and has not one iota of true existence. Nevertheless, from beginningless time there is the object that is apprehended as a self by the innate apprehension of “I,” and the objects that are clung to by the apprehension of a self of phenomena; these exist from the perspective of delusion. If they are investigated as having a nature of unity or multiplicity, the self of persons and the self of phenomena are both found to be empty. Those two are differentiated as bases upon which emptiness is established, but are not at all different with respect to how emptiness is established. If the dharmas that are the bases of designation of vases and so forth are analyzed into their component parts, their inherent existence is not established; if the five aggregates that are the basis of the designation of “person” are analyzed into their component parts, the self is found to be empty of intrinsic establishment. [Thus, both the self of persons and the self of phenomena are] empty, but the way in which they are empty is identical. If this Mādhyamika analysis of parts, which shows that all dharmas are not established, means that [all dharmas] are empty, then the nonestablishment of the continuum and coarse [aggregates according to the systems of] śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas is also emptiness. If the way in which the self of persons is nonestablished is not emptiness, then the way in which the self of phenomena is nonestablished would not be emptiness either. Thus, the *Abhidharmakośa* says:

If the conception of something, such as a vase or water,
Does not arise when it is destroyed or analytically divested
[of properties]....

And the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* says:

The body is not the feet or the calves,
The body is not the waist or the thighs....

Since the manner of reasoning is identical, there is no difference in [the manner of] emptiness. Thus, it is pointless for śrāvakas to find anything unreasonable with the Mahāyāna explanation of emptiness.

2.1.1.2.3 *Thus, this is proven...* Thus, as explained above, the fact that arhats realize the emptiness of selflessness is proven in the *Madhyamakāvatārabhāṣya* with seven scriptural quotations and three rational arguments, and is thus directly proven. To go beyond this and state, “Śrāvaka and pratyekabuddha arhats do not realize emptiness” is just to make an unprovable claim.

2.1.2.1 The pūrvapakṣa; and 2.1.2.2 its refutation.

2.1.2.1 *There, some...* Thus, some later scholars⁷⁶¹ draw unwarranted conclusions from Candrakīrti’s proof based on scripture and reasoning, and conclude that the path of vision of śrāvakas, pratyekabuddhas, and bodhisattvas is the same, and make the assertion that their

realizations of the meaning of the all-pervasive dharmatā is without any distinction of profundity. However, in the Prajñāpāramitā it is said that the basic awareness (*gzhi shes*) has distinctions of near and far with respect to the resultant mother (*'bras yum*);⁷⁶² and that śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas realize the object of [wisdom, namely] the absence of inherent existence, but do not realize the absence of inherent existence of the subject that realizes it, and do not abandon [that misapprehension of the inherent existence of the subject]. In addition, most texts of Maitreya explain that cognitive obstructions are to be abandoned from the first bhūmi onward; and, in the tantras of the Mantrayāna, various distinctions of the vehicles are explained.

[Thus, since] the texts of sūtra and mantra expound differences among the types of realization attained in the three vehicles, how should they be interpreted? "In the far-reaching [stage], the intellect becomes distinguished...." Thus, basing themselves on a single verse of the root text and commentary, the [pūrvapakṣa] interprets all śāstras as being of provisional meaning, even though there is no threefold evidence of purpose, intent, and contradiction-if-taken-literally.⁷⁶³

2.1.2.2.1 The criticisms of others cannot be deflected; 2.1.2.2.2 their position is self-contradictory.

2.1.2.2.1 *There...* In this kind of system, other scholars [have said], in accordance with your system, that those who have previously traversed the paths of the lower vehicles, such as śrāvaka and pratyekabuddha arhats, must once again attain the path of vision and the second bhūmi, and so forth. [Here] there is the fault that they would not have anything at all to abandon, for one would have to assert that a śrāvaka or pratyekabuddha arhat, who has already abandoned emotional obscurations, would not have to abandon cognitive obscurations on the seven impure [bodhisattva] bhūmis. Moreover, [the particle] "and so forth" [implies that, in addition to there being] nothing to abandon, there would not be any primordial awareness of realization to be attained anew. Even if there were, there would be no use or ability [for one to abandon anything]—the dual accumulation of countless aeons' duration would be pointless; the distinctions of higher and lower and faster and slower vehicles [would be senseless]; there would be no distinction of sharp and dull faculties among the three lineages (*rigs can*) of practitioner; and so on. Thus, many faults of logical contradiction would descend like spring water, and the refutations that are cast by perfect reasoning would descend irrevocably.

2.1.2.2.2 *Moreover...* There is still another fault. If śrāvaka and pratyekabuddha arhats have realization of both forms of selflessness, then they have abandoned the obscurations to liberation through realizing the selflessness of persons. So likewise, why wouldn't they [also] have abandoned the obscurations to omniscience by realizing the selflessness of phenomena—as those two are equivalent? Then they say, "[The reason] the [obscurations to omniscience] are not abandoned is because, although both forms of selflessness have been realized, in order to abandon cognitive obscurations, [one's practice] must be allied with the ornament of boundless accumulations [of merit and wisdom]." However, the accumulations are not the actual antidote to the abandonment [of cognitive obscurations]. The *Pramāṇavārttika* says:

Since love and so forth do not oppose ignorance,
They do not eliminate the worst of evils.

Well, then, what does? In order to attain realization, one needs [both] accumulations. If one

attains realization through accumulations, one will eliminate what is to be abandoned, since the actual opponent is the attainment of realization, just as the rising sun eliminates darkness.

Then they say, "If one meditates extensively in terms of time and forms (*dus dang rnam pa*), that is the antidote for cognitive obscurations." Well then, is that extensive meditation the antidote for emotional obscurations or not? If it is, then Śrāvaka and pratyekabuddha arhats would not eliminate emotional obscurations, because they do not have such extensive meditation [as is taught in the Mahāyāna]. If not, then during the seven impure bhūmis bodhisattvas would not have to undertake such meditation, because if during that time they only abandon emotional obscurations, that would not be the antidote for those [emotional obscurations]. Moreover, if obscurations are not abandoned by the primordial wisdom of realization, then Śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas also would not abandon emotional obscurations, because they are not adorned with boundless accumulations. If they did abandon them, Śrāvaka and pratyekabuddha arhats would abandon both obscurations, because they have the antidote—the realization of both forms of selflessness.

If it is the case that they do not abandon the cognitive obscurations, because they have not realized the selflessness of phenomena, this contradicts the position that they do realize [both forms of selflessness]; if they do realize them both, this contradicts the position that they have not abandoned cognitive obscurations. This would be like the sun rising, but not dispelling darkness. The *Uttaratantra* says:

Without wisdom, the other [virtues]
Are not able to remove [obscurations]....⁷⁶⁴

And, from the *Pramāṇavārttika*:

Because the view of emptiness contradicts that,
It is proven to oppose
All evils that have the nature of that [ignorance]....⁷⁶⁵

If, without being adorned with boundless accumulations, one does not abandon them, then from the first bhūmi onward cognitive obscurations would be abandoned, because one would be adorned with the accumulations. If one does not at that point abandon them, because one does not have the boundless accumulations of the eighth bhūmi, then one would not abandon them on the eighth bhūmi either, because there one does not have the accumulations one does on the tenth bhūmi. For example, it would be like the rising sun requiring assistance in vanquishing the darkness—quite strange! There, if "obscurations" that is obscuration of the nature of things—which is emptiness—were not obscurations, then even if the object of obscuration that is emptiness were apparent, it would not be abandoned, and the adornments of accumulation would be hard [to achieve].

2.1.1.2.3.1 The pūrvapakṣa; and 2.1.1.2.3.2 refutation based on its internal contradictions.

2.1.1.2.3.1 *Some say...* Some later [scholars] say that Śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas realize the emptiness that is the absence of true existence of the five aggregates that are the cause of the apprehension of self in their own continua of experience (*rang rgyud*), because they have the

realization of selflessness of persons that is the result of that. However, [they also assert] that they do not realize the selflessness of other phenomena, such as the latter alternatives,⁷⁶⁶ and so forth.

2.1.1.2.3.2 *If one realizes...* In your system, if śrāvakas and pratyekabuddha arhats realize the emptiness that is the lack of inherent existence of the five aggregates, then since, except for noncomposite (*'dus ma byas, asaṃskṛta*) [phenomena], there are no phenomena not included [in the five aggregates], and moreover, since in the Sautrāntika system noncomposites are also held to be nonsubstantial designations (*dn̄gos med btags yod*), there would be no phenomenon that śrāvakas and pratyekabuddha arhats would not realize to be without true existence. So, would the emptiness realized by that arhat be the selflessness of continua and coarse [aggregates], or would it be the emptiness taught in Madhyamaka? The first case would contradict the realization of the baseless emptiness of the five aggregates, because in the [abhidharma] two kinds of partlessness are asserted to exist ultimately. The second case would contradict the assertion that the selflessness of other phenomena are not realized, for in the [Madhyamaka] it is said that all dharmas, composite and noncomposite, are empty.

"That fault does not apply to us. In the path of the Hīnyāna, continuity and coarse [aggregates] are realized to be without inherent existence. For example, if one knows the interior of a reed to be empty, one can gradually come to know others to be so also. Likewise, having eliminated the first extreme of existence as explained in the Madhyamaka, which is the true existence of all phenomena, one gradually realizes selflessness. As the explanation of the latter three extremes is unique to the Mahāyāna, those other dharmas are not realized [by śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas] to be empty."

Well then, they would also realize [the emptiness] of the latter three extremes, for if they realize gradually, they should realize the [latter three extremes gradually], as in your example of the empty interior of a reed; and whatever you say in response, for example, "they don't specifically try to," could also be applied to the first extreme. Also, lacking the middle two extremes could only apply to the systems of the pratyekabuddha and Cittamātra, for if there are differences in the views of the three vehicles, then the śrāvakas are the ones who eliminate the first extreme, and the Mādhyamika view eliminates all four extremes. Thus, these assertions that śrāvakas realize emptiness would have to posit a new classification of paths and results that do not belong to either the Mahāyāna or the Hīnyāna, for the view is identical, while the meditation and conduct are dissimilar.

2.2. An explanation of our own system: 2.2.1 Explanation of the intention of glorious Candrakīrti; 2.2.2 laying out the position of omniscient Klong chen pa;

2.2.3 explaining our own system by examples, in accordance with their [explanations].

2.2.1.1 Candrakīrti's explanation in the *Autocommentary* [of the *Madhyamakāvatāra*] of the purpose of teaching the two kinds of selflessness individually; 2.2.1.2 anticipating doubts about the above explanation that śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas have realization of emptiness; and 2.2.1.3 explaining the intention behind it.

2.2.1.1 So... The explanations that śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas realize both types of emptiness completely, or not at all, are both unreasonable. Thus, in our early translation tradition, how do

we take the intention of glorious Candrakīrti? On the statement of the *Madhyamakāvatāra* that

This selflessness, in order to liberate beings,
Was taught as the selflessness of phenomena and persons...,

the *Autocommentary* says that in order to abandon emotional obscurations that involve the three realms, to śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas the victors teach the selflessness of persons and liberate them from saṃsāra; in order to abandon cognitive obscurations that obstruct omniscience, to the victors' heirs—the bodhisattvas—the victors teach the selflessnesses of phenomena in their entirety, [and thus] both [types of selflessness] are realized. The *Autocommentary* says:

There, the selflessness of persons is taught in order to liberate śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas; and in order to liberate bodhisattvas in the attainment of omniscience, both are taught. Śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas see the conditioned nature⁷⁶⁷ of dependent origination, but in that [context] they do not meditate upon the entirety of phenomenal selflessness. This is just a method for abandoning the negative emotions that involve the three realms of existence.

2.2.1.2 *Well then...* "Well then, why is it that in the *Daśabhūmikasūtra* it is said that, in the context of the far advanced [bhūmi], 'both śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas realize emptiness'? Thus goes the *Autocommentary*...."

2.2.1.3 *In order to abandon...* The meaning of that statement is as follows. The doubt concerning the "realization of emptiness by śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas" was already anticipated in the context of teaching the distinctions of emptiness [for example, as the selflessness of persons and phenomena]. As for the statement that "śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas have realization of emptiness": in order to abandon the saṃsāric emotional afflictions, by realizing the emptiness that is the lack of inherent existence of continuity and coarse [aggregates] of all outer and inner phenomena, there is realization and meditation upon the selflessness of persons. Although śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas do have realization of the lack of inherent existence of continuity and coarse [aggregation], that kind of "selflessness of phenomena is not meditated in its entirety." According to this statement [in the *Autocommentary*], one should be able combine the meanings of the earlier and later [statements] without any contradiction.

2.2.2 The position of our own early translation tradition, according to the omniscient Klong chen pa: *Klong chen rab 'byams*... In accordance with the intention of Candrakīrti, Klong chen rab 'byams has said that all the earlier scholars of India and Tibet have disputed whether [śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas] realize both forms of selflessness, with some saying that they do, and some saying that they do not. Our own position is as follows. We do not accept either of these onesided approaches. The earlier holders of the eighteen philosophical systems of the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas had various views concerning whether or not there was a personal self (*gang zag gi bdag, pudgalātman*). But regardless, in the final analysis, [they all agree that] in order to realize arhatship one must abandon the obscuration of emotional defilements, and in order to abandon it, one must realize the emptiness of the object that is clung to by innate self-apprehension, which is the apprehension of the five skandhas as a self-sufficient entity (*phung po lnga ril por 'dzin pa*), for

otherwise, there is no liberation. That [śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas] have realization of precisely that is established by scripture and reasoning in the sūtras and śāstras. If one must realize the selflessness of persons in order to realize the result of arhatship, its necessary and sufficient cause is to realize the absence of the inherent existence of continuity and coarse [aggregation] of all phenomena.

Nevertheless, they do not realize the selflessness of phenomena in its entirety. In some sūtras, the example used is a droplet of water carried by a *spra rtsi*,⁷⁶⁸ and in some it is the space inside a sesame seed that has been eaten by a worm. In that way, śrāvakas' and pratyekabuddhas' realization of emptiness is said to be extremely limited. Thus, with "words that negate the small," it is said that they do not realize emptiness. On this, the commentary of the *Wish-fulfilling Treasury* (*Yid bzhin rin po che'i mdzod*) says:

If one wonders whether śrāvaka and pratyekabuddha arhats realize emptiness, some earlier masters said that, aside from the selflessness of persons, they do not realize it, and that pratyekabuddhas realize only half of phenomena to be without inherent existence, and thus do not realize both. Some assert that they do realize emptiness, so there are disputes. This is how I understand it: in earlier times when the various śrāvaka schools were spreading, some asserted a self, some did not, some asserted it to be like a reflection, and so forth. [In this way], [basing themselves on distinct conceptions about the self], they established their paths. In the context of fruition, based on the paths followed, one can surmise that some did realize emptiness and some did not. Also, the arhats who followed the path of the Vaibhāsikas, who previously had strong clinging to existence, are said to have realized only the selflessness of persons, but not of phenomena, because of their apprehension of characteristics. The Sautrāntikas [on the other hand] understood it better, saying that [the self] is like a reflection, so I think they realized [both]. Now, those of sharp faculties would infer that everything is equivalent to the dharmas of the form [aggregate], while the dull would not understand anything other than what was actually taught to them. Since both are in agreement as far as realizing the nature of selflessness, both must realize the emptiness of apprehending the aggregates [as a self], and so forth.

Thus, this interpretation is an extraordinary eloquent explanation. In the Land of Snows, there is no other system like it.

2.2.3.1 Explaining that system through examples; 2.2.3.2. disposing of faults [imputed] to it.

2.2.3.1 *For example...* "Well then, if this is an eloquent explanation unlike any other, what exactly does it mean?" The realization by śrāvakas and pratyekabuddha arhats that all dharmas are emptiness is like taking a gulp of the water of the vast ocean; if one drinks it, it is not correct to say that "I have not drunk the water of the ocean." The śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas exemplified here realize the mere "I"—which is one of all the phenomena realized by bodhisattvas to be empty—to be empty or selfless; thus, they are asserted to see and realize emptiness. The *Madhyamakāvatāra* says:

Thus, seeing the emptiness of "I" and "mine,"

The yogi is fully liberated.

Thus, it actually says that to see selflessness is to realize emptiness. For that reason, all the results of the three vehicles depend on the realization of emptiness, which is the nondual doorway to peace. Thus, for those who think that śrāvakas' and pratyekabuddhas' vision of [the noble] truths is not the same as the meaning of emptiness, it is proven by the great system-builders [of the Mahāyāna, such as Candrakīrti] that the "vision of the truths" and the realization of emptiness mean the same thing, insofar as they are just a general case and specific instance.

However, just as drinking a single gulp one does not suffice to ingest all the water of the great ocean, since they do not entirely realize the empty nature of all knowable things, such as the two kinds of partlessness, it is asserted that they do not see the selflessness of phenomena in its entirety. The *Sūtra Teaching the Two Truths* says:

Bodhisattva mahāsattva! It is better to abide on the stage of faith that aspires to nonreification, even though one has emotional disturbances; for śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas who have reifications, have attained liberation, and are without emotional disturbances do not have such [an aspiration].⁷⁶⁹

And further:

Consider this. For example, just like a droplet of butter that clings to a fragment of a hair split a hundredfold, the objectified uncompounded wisdom of śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas is small, and is reified. Consider this, Kāśyapa! Just as though the four oceans were filled with butter, a bodhisattva mahāsattva is endowed with all sublime ways of acting, in the manner of nonaction, on the stage of action through faith that does not reify anything; (s)he sees in the manner of nonseeing that all the accumulations of merit and wisdom are all collected, yet are not compounded. Moreover, the blazing fire of ultimate reality fully matures (the bodhisattva). (S)he comes to realize, in a nonreifying way, the omniscient wisdom endowed with all sublime qualities. Likewise, Kāśyapa, the bodhisattva mahāsattva overwhelms, in a nonreifying manner, all the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas who have attained the noncompounded and who reify things.

2.2.3.2. Responses that dispose of faults: 2.2.3.2.1 setting forth a fault and 2.2.3.2.2 responding to it.

2.2.3.2.1 *If one sees...* If one sees one dharma as being truthless and empty, one should see all dharmas in the same way. For example, as in the case of the empty interior of a reed, when one sees the selflessness of persons, why wouldn't one see the selflessness of other things as well?

2.2.3.2.2 The response: 2.2.3.2.2.1 those of inferior lineage do not realize it; 2.2.3.2.2.2 when conditions are incomplete, it is not realized; 2.2.3.2.2.3 the dull witted do not realize it; 2.2.3.2.2.4 proving that it is not realized with respect to a short period of time.

2.2.3.2.2.1.1 The actual [response]; 2.2.3.2.2.1.2 the reason, which adduces the example of not realizing partlessness; 2.2.3.2.2.1.3 to some extent, lower systems are without fault as mere paths

to liberation; 2.2.3.2.2.1.4 otherwise, all higher and lower systems would be untenable.

2.2.3.2.2.1.1 *If, with scripture...* Generally speaking, among the śrāvakas there are those whose spiritual destiny is determinate (*rigs nges pa*) and must go to peace, and those whose destiny is indeterminate, whose minds are changeable.⁷⁷⁰ If those whose destiny is indeterminate and who have sharp intelligence analyze according to the Buddha's scriptures, their own reasoning, and a teacher's instructions, and try to see in this way, it is possible for them to see [both forms of selflessness]. Not only that, in the long run, all will realize [both forms of selflessness]. However, in the short run, because they have a determinate spiritual destiny, those who have the destiny of being śrāvakas—who are progressing toward peace—are afraid of saṃsāra, and in order to abandon it, they cling to its antidote, the selflessness of persons. For that reason, it is obviously difficult for them to realize [the emptiness] of the latter extremes. They do not cut off the subtle extremes of inanimate things and mind.⁷⁷¹ With the reasoning of "blowing and scattering coarse aggregations" (*rags pa'i bsil rtor*), they assert that a vase [for example] is a nonsubstantially existent designation, but that partless atoms are the substantially existent basis for the composition [of things such as vases].

2.2.3.2.2.1.2 *If the mind...* If one were to analyze not only [composites like vases], but also the partless particles [that compose them], it would be reasonable to realize them to be nonexistent. If one were to transfer the mode of reasoning from one case to another similar case and investigate [the latter] in this way, the mind that analyzes a vase and realizes it to be a designation would also realize that atoms are merely nonexistent. However, with respect to individual dispositions, mental abilities and aspirations, usually (*re zhig*) the two [types of] partless [atoms] are not realized to be truthless, and the [emptiness] of the extreme of existence is not completely realized. Accordingly, the other extremes would be difficult to realize.

2.2.3.2.2.1.3 *Though coarse bases...* Well, if they don't realize emptiness perfectly, do Hīnayānists reach liberation? If one investigates, although it seems contradictory for something to be both the basis for the composition of a macroscopic phenomenon (*rags pa'i gzhi*) and to be a truly existent partless atom, while those who have the spiritual destiny of aspiring to personal peace (nirvāṇa) are reaching the temporary result [of personal nirvāṇa], they are bereft of the scriptures, reasoning, and personal instructions of the Mahāyāna, and they accomplish the systems that do not contradict the paths of liberation from saṃsāra—for just those can vanquish deluded concepts (*tshul min yid byed kyi rtog pa*). [These systems] are not like the mistaken systems that teach the existence of a self of persons.

2.2.3.2.2.1.4 *Likewise...* "If Hīnayānists realized the lack of inherent existence of coarse [aggregations], they should also realize [the lack of inherent existence of] the subtle partless particles that compose them—for if one applies the reasoning of one context to another, this would be established." Well then, since Cittamātrins realize the nonexistence of external objects, by applying that reasoning to the subject, why would they not also realize its truthlessness? For they are of similar types. And why wouldn't Svātantrikas also be able to reapply the reasoning that establishes that ultimately things are not established in truth, and thus realize that even conventionally, the intrinsic characteristics of things are not established? In your opinion, these realizations would be entailed. Therefore, for you, all philosophical systems would become the

Prāsaṅgika system.

Accordingly, if those Śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas understood the intent of the Mahāyāna, then how could they possibly denigrate the Mahāyāna, saying that it is not the teaching of the Buddha, and so forth? Moreover, just think what would happen with the [Saṃkhya teaching],

Whatever is visible

Is insubstantial like magic....⁷⁷²

How could that be possible? Think about it.

2.2.3.2.2.2 When conditions are incomplete, it is not realized: *Thus, although...* For that reason, between the nature of objects and the way in which the object-possessing mind engages them, as far as the object is concerned, the nature of one thing (*chos can*) is equally the nature of all other things. If the internal and external causes and conditions for realizing how it is are complete, the object-possessor mind can engage things accordingly. As the *Pramāṇavārttika* says:

When causes are complete,

What can prevent a result from occurring?⁷⁷³

Similarly, as long as one has not assembled the outer condition of the support [of a teacher] (*yongs 'dzin*) and the internal condition of skillful methods, to that extent, one's realization will come slowly; it will take long to become realized. Thus, the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* says:

Because there is reification,

There is no method, and it is far....⁷⁷⁴

2.2.3.2.2.3 Distinctions of mental ability: 2.2.3.2.2.3.1 how realization and nonrealization arise according to distinctions of mental ability; 2.2.3.2.2.3.2 how even the dull-witted should eventually become realized.

2.2.3.2.2.3.1 *Generally speaking...* Generally speaking, the nature of an object is engaged by the object-possessor mind; the speed with which this occurs is determined by the completion or noncompletion of external and internal conditions. Specifically, the mental ability of the object-possessor is distinguished as "sharp" or "dull." Those of sharp abilities who follow the Dharma achieve realization quickly by their own power, while those of dull faculties do not necessarily reach realization immediately under their own power, because someone who does not have a complete set of mental abilities as a condition must rely upon [other] conditions.

2.2.3.2.2.3.2 *At some point...* When a Śrāvaka who has gone to peace is aroused by buddhas from the obscuration of his destiny,⁷⁷⁵ at that point, it is certain that one will realize emptiness, the nature of things. For the Śrāvakas and pratyekabuddha arhats have dried up the ocean of blood and tears, and cast away the heap of flesh and bones, and reached nirvāṇa, where they are absorbed in the state of cessation for ten thousand aeons. Finally, when those arhats arise or spring up from that state, it is said that they must enter the Mahāyāna. It is said:

Although in what is called "nirvāṇa"
You are free from the suffering of saṃsāra,
Now you are stuck in nirvāṇa,
And should look for this vehicle of the buddhas.

2.2.3.2.2.4 Distinctions of time: 2.2.3.2.2.4.1 because conditions are not complete, one must realize in gradations of time; 2.2.3.2.2.4.2 when they are complete, one is realized.

2.2.3.2.2.4.1.1 Because the bodhisattvas take a long time, it is impossible for śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas to realize in a short time; 2.2.3.2.2.4.1.2 because the bodhisattvas' realization increases gradually, the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas do not become realized instantaneously.

2.2.3.2.2.4.1.1 *To properly...* Otherwise, when the disciple who has the Mahāyāna spiritual destiny and who has sharp faculties, but who does not have the complete assemblage of outer and inner conditions, dwells properly on the path of the coordinated dual accumulation of the Mahāyāna, (s)he must make efforts to cultivate direct realization of the meaning of equality, which is the realization of the two forms of selflessness, for one countless aeon. If that is so, then how could it be impossible for śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas—persons of inferior spiritual destiny whose acumen is dull, and who strive for personal peace on their respective paths—not to perfectly realize the two forms selflessness in just the same amount of time as bodhisattvas must practice, that is, in one thousand aeons, or one countless aeon? It would not make sense for it to be possible. How could it happen that those who have the spiritual destiny of śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas—who have entered the paths of accumulation and preparation on the paths of śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas, and who have only cultivated the selflessness of persons without incorporating skillful means into their practice—suddenly enter the path of vision of the Mahāyāna, without having to make efforts for one countless aeon, that is, without possessing the causes for such realization? If it couldn't happen, then we can dispense with the idea of the path of vision of the great and lesser vehicles being identical. If it could, then one must specify a reason why it is impossible for śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas not to realize selflessness during a countless aeon, and why it is possible for bodhisattvas.

2.2.3.2.2.4.1.2 *Those who have attained the bhūmis...* Not only that, those who have realized the path of vision of the Mahāyāna and who have thus attained the bhūmis realize the all-pervasive nature of the dharmadhātu. In traversing one bhūmi to the next, they gradually increase and then perfect their understanding just like waxing moon, don't they? That being the case, it goes without saying that, on the accumulation and perfection paths of the Mahāyāna, realization increases gradually. The *Dharmadhātustava* says:

Just as the waning moon
Is barely visible on the fourteenth day,
To those who aspire to the Mahāyāna,
The dharmakāya is barely visible.
Just as the waxing moon
Is seen to grow bit by bit,
So does the vision of those who dwell

On the bhūmis gradually increase.
Just as the orb of the waxing moon
Is perfectly brilliant on the fifteenth day,
So too the dharmakāya that
Is perfectly luminous on the ultimate bhūmi.

Thus, how could it be the case that śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas, by following their respective paths, could suddenly develop the extraordinary realization of the Mahāyāna? If that were the case, then the dull-witted would have the destiny of subitists, and the sharp-witted would have the destiny of gradualists!

2.2.3.2.2.4.2 When conditions are complete,⁷⁷⁶ there is realization: *With the help of the accumulations...* Thus, in order to realize the two forms of selflessness perfectly, one must have all the causes and conditions complete. That means one must have the help of the vast accumulation of merit, the infinite means of analyzing the triad of cause, effect, and essence—which are the reasonings that ascertain emptiness, the bodhicitta that has two dimensions⁷⁷⁷—the six perfections that are encompassed by that bodhicitta, and the affirmation of perfect dedication. If those causes and conditions are flawless and complete, there is no doubt that the complete assemblage of causes will give rise to the result, and one will come to realize perfectly the two forms of selflessness. For example, if there is a Vajrayāna disciple, a spiritual guide to teach it, and the creation and completion phases of the practice, and so on—if the conditions of skillful means are complete—that mantra practitioner will quickly become realized.

2.3 Dispelling doubts: 2.3.1 explaining the scriptural passage of the *Ratnāvalī* according to our system; 2.3.2 explaining the meaning of this [passage], not according to others' opinions, but according to Candrakīrti's interpretive commentary; 2.3.3 establishing that meaning through reasoning.

2.3.1.1 Setting up the meaning of the scriptural passage; and 2.3.1.2 explaining its intention.

2.3.1.1 *Even if...* "Well then, since in your system śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas do not realize the emptiness of all phenomena, including the two kinds of partless atoms, then how do you interpret the statement of Lord Nāgārjuna, 'As long as there is apprehension of the aggregates, [there is apprehension of "I"]?' The meaning of that [passage] is as follows. There are two things to be abandoned: conceptualized [apprehension of "I"] and innate [apprehension of "I"]. The object of the first is the permanent self. But even if that is abandoned, as long as the object that is clung to by the second—which is designated in relation to the five skandhas—is not eliminated, there will be conceptions of "I." Therefore, as long as the five skandhas are apprehended as a single self-sufficient entity, there will be apprehension of "I." From that comes karma and emotional disturbances, and birth in cyclic existence—so says the *Ratnāvalī*.

2.3.1.2 *Means that...* The statement means that, as long as one does not realize the emptiness of the object that is clung to by the innate misapprehension of "I," one cannot abandon cyclic existence [simply] by cognizing the absence of a permanent self. With the five skandhas as the basis of designation, as long as there are subtle and extended thoughts that apprehend them, all the causes

for designating a self are complete, and if they are not eliminated, the result of misapprehension of self will not be stopped. This is said [in the passage at hand] to go along with the complete assemblage of causes. The *Abhidharmakośa* says:

The subtle and extended are not abandoned,
One dwells upon objects,
And from deluded mental activity
Emotional disturbances are born.

2.3.2 *Thus...* Thus, even though the conceptualized permanent self taught by heretics is abandoned, in dependence upon the five aggregates that are the basis for its designation, the designated self, which is the object clung to by innate misapprehension of "I," is not eliminated. Thus, even if the manifestation of emotional disturbances is repressed through meditative absorption, their tendencies are not abandoned, and thus the causes for the reappearance of the misapprehension of self are complete. This is what obstructs the realization of selflessness. That is the meaning of the scriptural passage at hand.

Some say, "In order to abandon emotional disturbance, one must realize all dharmas as empty," but this does not explain what the *Ratnāvalī* passage actually means. The reason for this is that the meaning of this passage, which has been explained above, has been explained in the same way by Candrakīrti.

"Well, if the meaning of this passage from the *Ratnāvalī* is not that one must realize the emptiness of all dharmas, including the skandhas, why then did Candrakīrti quote the *Daśabhūmikasūtra* in the *Madhyamakāvatāra* in the context of the [seventh bhūmi, the] 'far advanced,' to the effect that a first bhūmi bodhisattva cannot overwhelm śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas with his intellect? That was said in order to inform [the reader] that śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas have realization of the emptiness of all dharmas, such as the skandhas, even though this passage and others were not quoted as a proof thereof."

The meaning of that [scriptural quotation] is not as you claim. Because those āryas—śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas—are similar to the bodhisattvas of the sixth bhūmi and below (as explained in the *Madhyamakāvatāra*), insofar as they have a mental construction of objectification in the state [of samādhi] wherein the movement of mind and mental factors has ceased, it is said that those Hīnayānists are not overwhelmed by [the bodhisattva's] samādhi. At the "far advanced" bhūmi, meditative absorption reaches the reality limit (*yang dag pa'i mtha', bhūtakoti*) of cessation, and thus the intellect becomes distinct from earlier absorptions. The *Madhyamakāvatārabhāṣya* says, "because the absorption in cessation is absorption in the reality limit."

If that were not the case, and if one did not know entities that are continua and aggregations to be without inherent existence, one would have no way of knowing selflessness. For example, a worldly person who is free of desire enters into absorption, but cannot [know the lack of inherent existence]. Thus, the absorption of a first bhūmi bodhisattva would be able to overwhelm [an arhat]. Moreover, to the extent that one is without such realization, even if one knows there is no permanent self, that will not suffice to abandon the subtle and extended [forms of emotional obscuration], because one would have a mistaken reification of the essence of form, etc., as being truly existent. Accordingly, it says below [in the *Madhyamakāvatāra*]:

If then the permanent self is abandoned, for that reason your mind, or aggregates,

would not be the self. [But that would not mean] that by seeing selflessness in meditation you would realize the nature of form and so forth [to be empty]. Because [you would still] reify and engage forms, desire and so forth would [still arise] because you have not realized their nature [to be emptiness].⁷⁷⁸

Thus, the apprehension of self would not be abandoned, because there is the cause of imputing a self, the reification of the aggregates:

“When selflessness is realized, the eternal self is abandoned”—
But that [eternal self] is not said to be the basis for the apprehension of “I”;
Thus, one would have to assert that once having realized selflessness,
One would again have to dispel the view of self—amazing!⁷⁷⁹

Both the earlier and later examples are made with reference to heretical [systems].

Thus, both the earlier and later examples are identical in words and meaning, and should be understood to be proven by the passage from the *Ratnāvalī*, and so forth. Otherwise, if the statement “without cognizance of the absence of inherent existence” meant being without realization of emptiness as explained in the *Mahāyāna*, and if one were to adduce the consequence of it being reasonable for [arhats] to be overwhelmed, then even though from the *Śrāvaka* perspective there is no *Mahāyāna* emptiness, that does not necessarily entail the consequence of being overwhelmed. On this, the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* says:

By seeing truth one will be freed;
By seeing emptiness, what is accomplished?

Accordingly, just because one is without the emptiness of the *Mahāyāna* does not necessarily entail the consequence of being a worldly person free of desire, because there are *Hīnayānists* who are without desire. Therefore, that example is pointless.

Also, as for the latter two lines of reasoning: one might adduce the consequence that, as long as there is no realization of emptiness according to the *Mahāyāna*, there is still mistaken reification of the entities of form, etc., and of the aggregates; that the subtle and extended [forms of mentation] are not abandoned; and that apprehension of self is not abandoned. However, the reason is not established, because the *pūrvapakṣa* does not accept that form and so forth are substantial entities, that the five aggregates are a single self-sufficient entity, nor that, as a single thing, they are reified as the self. Even if apprehension of the two types of partless atoms is not given up, there is no way to prove, either by valid cognition or logical proposition, that this would necessarily entail that neither subtle and extended forms of mentation, nor apprehension of self, are not abandoned. The reason is that someone who has realization of the selflessness of persons, through cognizing continua and coarse [aggregations] as not inherently existent, has accomplished the antidote that opposes modal apprehension [of a personal self]. Using the example of a heretic cannot necessarily entail the consequence, as explained above.

2.3.3 Establishing that meaning through reasoning: 2.3.3.1 provisionally (*gnas skabs*), how recognizing multiplicity reverses the apprehension of “I”; 2.3.3.2 conclusively (*mthar thug*), how one final vehicle is established; 2.3.3.3 how this is not established in other systems; 2.3.3.4 why our

own system is reasonable.

2.3.3.1 *If one recognizes...* If one investigates the multiplicity of the five aggregates that are the basis of designation for the self that is the object of innate "I"-apprehension, and thus cognizes the mere "I" that is dependently originated and dependently designated, then one will dispel both conceptualized "I"-apprehension and innate "I"-apprehension, and that is sufficient. For example, when one mistakes a rope for a snake, one does not have to know that the rope is not existent in order to dispel the apprehension of "snake." Even if one does not know [it to be nonexistent], by directly seeing a rope-entity, one stops the apprehension of a snake. A sūtra says, "form is like foam" and so forth. [The meaning of this] way of knowing the multiplicity [of things] is explained in the *Bodhicittavivaraṇa* as "Śrāvakas see the five skandhas as bubbles..." and so forth. This is similar to the statements that bodhisattvas see form, etc., as bubbles, etc.:

Form, feeling, perception,
Conceptualization, and consciousness
Are the five aggregates; these were taught by those
Who wished to benefit Śrāvakas.
Form is like foam.
Feeling is like a water bubble,
Perception is like a mirage,
Conceptualization is like the plantain,
Consciousness is like an illusion.
To teach the aggregates in this way
Is how the best of men
Always teaches bodhisattvas.

2.3.3.2 *Finally...* Though incidental liberation from cyclic existence is sufficient, finally, in order to attain omniscience, one must realize the nature of dharmadhātu, [which means] both kinds of selflessness. The reason is that all knowable phenomena are identical in suchness, and are not dissimilar; the gnosis that sees it is likewise unitary in character. Thus, although the three vehicles are distinct, in the final analysis there is only one vehicle, and this was explained through scripture and reasoning by Nāgārjuna and his disciples. Nāgārjuna said:

Because dharmadhātu is indivisible,
The chief of vehicles is not divisible.
The teaching of three vehicles
Is designed to place sentient beings [in it].

Candrakīrti said:

Other than by realizing reality, to remove all stains
There is nothing else to do. Reality does not admit of divisions,
And likewise, what perceives reality is not differentiable.
Therefore, you have taught sentient beings a single, indivisible vehicle.⁷⁸⁰

2.3.3.3 *If, as in...* Thus, if in establishing a single vehicle it were the case, as it is in your system, that the paths of vision of the Śrāvakayāna and the Mahāyāna were the same, then because Śrāvakas would have already seen reality, if they were to achieve a resultant arhatship different from the result of the Mahāyāna, then what would that reasoning, [which establishes] that reality is unique, do to establish a single vehicle? Aside from being a mere assertion, it would accomplish nothing, because when what is realized is one, both lower and supreme results would already be accomplished.

2.3.3.4.1 On a single path to be traversed, sublime beings progress at many rates of speed; 2.3.3.4.2 in that respect, Nāgārjuna's and Maitreya's intentions are not contradictory; 2.3.3.4.3 otherwise, if one holds them to be contradictory, there is great embarrassment in the face of scripture and reasoning.

2.3.3.4.1 *Here...* Here in this exegetical tradition of the early translations, the coalescence of the expanse and awareness is the primordial wisdom of awareness, in which totally pure primordial wisdom—which sees the ultimate meaning of the abiding nature—is the unique suchness of dharmatā, the primordial wisdom of awareness. This unique abiding nature is what all sublime beings of the three vehicles are headed toward and will enter into—by longer and shorter paths, more quickly and more slowly—in the manner of livestock wagons [as taught in the *Lotus Sūtra*]. On this, the Great Omniscient One said:

Therefore, the “three countless aeons” and so forth that are taught And that [lead to] quick perfection, long [awaited] perfection, and Liberation in this life, depend upon the power of one's mind. One who practices with supreme method, diligence, and wisdom—Such a person has the greatest power.

2.3.3.4.2 *Therefore...* For the reasons explained above, if one understands all the points made in this system [of explanation], such as the context of the “far advanced” [bhūmi], one will not [falsely discern] faults of mutual contradiction in the the profound system of Nāgārjuna and the texts of Maitreya, or see one to be logically established at the expense of the other. Instead, [persons] hungry [for knowledge] will take the texts of the great system-builders together, like the sweet taste of molasses and honey mixed together, and having easily digested them, their wisdom bodies will greatly increase in strength.

2.3.3.4.3 *Otherwise...* Otherwise, if one holds them to be contradictory, one will not have an appetite, and as if one had eaten the wrong kind of food, one will suffer various internal contradictions of study and reflection upon the texts of the profound and extensive [lineages], like unpleasant cancers within oneself. In order to free [such a person] from his illness, other scholars with profound and vast minds will poke and jab him with a hundred sharp scalpels of

scripture and reasoning, and like a person with cancer who has internal blockages,⁷⁸¹ that person will be profoundly terrified. When he sees the antidote of scripture and reasoning, which contradict his own point of view, he will be embarrassed.

I say:

*When inferior disciples realize
The meaning of equality, they go on the quick path.
Because there are doubts about the renowned Mahāyāna,
They have been discussed here.*⁷⁸²

Topic 3

[0.2.2.] Explaining the particulars of the three different views: 0.2.2.1 explanation of the view of intrinsic awareness, which realizes the equal taste of the coalescence of the two truths; [0.2.2.2.] explanation of the view of the dharma-possessor through the stages of the manner of pure divine self-appearance; [0.2.2.3.] explanation of the view of dharmatā, which recognizes its nature as equality.

[0.2.2.1.1] The actual explanation [topics 3 and 4]; [0.2.2.1.2] analyzing which of the two truths is most important by positing the differences of the views of the various vehicles [topic 5].

[0.2.2.1.1.1] 3. Whether the maintenance of the actual practice of the view involves apprehension or not; [0.2.2.1.1.2] 4. whether analysis or equipoise is correct; [0.2.2.1.1.3] 4.3 combining those two into a common meaning.

3.1 Taking up the subject of analysis through question and answer; 3.2 explaining its meaning extensively.

3.1 *When pursuing...* When meditating and maintaining the actual practice of the view of the meaning of reality, if one asks whether there is an intentional apprehension, such as apprehending emptiness: Some people say that one should have an intentional apprehension that sees the abiding character of emptiness, and they claim that having no intentional apprehension whatsoever is a fault for meditation on the object of the view. Some people say that one should meditate on the nature of things without apprehension, “apprehending nothing whatsoever,” and that if anything is apprehended, it is a fault.

3.2 Explaining that meaning extensively: 3.2.1 if, by being introduced to the nature of complete awareness⁷⁸³ and settling in it, one gains realization of the esoteric instruction class [of rDzogs chen], and elaborations are cut off instantaneously, that is authentic nonapprehension; 3.2.2 if one does not realize in that way, then one gradually eliminates elaborations with intentional apprehension according to the traditions of study and reflection, and in the main practice (*dnngos gzhi*) one meditates without grasping; 3.2.3 summarizing those two together with their reasons.

3.2.1.1 A brief demonstration that mere nonapprehension is something to accept as well as reject;

3.2.1.2 explaining that extensively.

3.2.1.1 *Can be understood...* Here we must discriminate the various contexts in which one should or should not have an intentional apprehension when maintaining the actual practice of the view. But if one makes the one-sided statement “Do not apprehend anything,” both a proper and an erroneous understanding are possible.

3.2.1.2.1 Determining both contexts (*mtshan gzhi*) of nonapprehension; 3.2.1.2.2 an extensive explanation of how those require or do not require an intentional apprehension.

3.2.1.2.1.1 If one realizes the total coalescence of calm abiding and insight into reality, which can stop the river of saṃsāra, then intentional apprehension is destroyed; 3.2.1.2.1.2 not understanding that, the mere nonapprehension of calm abiding will become the cause of rebirth; 3.2.1.2.1.3 demonstrating the reasonableness of those two [positions].

3.2.1.2.1.1 *The first...* “If meditation without apprehension is the system of most learned and accomplished beings, how could that have both aspects of abandonment and acceptance?” In the following way: if one understands the first [alternative] well, that is [to realize] the coalescence of appearance and emptiness—which is the nature of reality, the gnosis of sublime beings, free of all elaborations of the four extremes such as existence and nonexistence, which abides in the state of dharmadhātu like salt dissolving in water. From the perspective of that gnosis, it is seen that no elaboration is present as the object of an intentional apprehension; there is no need to destroy intentional apprehension on purpose, because it is destroyed automatically. The innate radiance of the essence of emptiness is the purity of inseparable emptiness and clarity, which is without obstruction. For example, it is like gazing at the autumn sky free of clouds—although there is no intentional apprehension, there is no fault, because it is unnecessary.

3.2.1.2.1.2 *The second...* In the second context, that of misunderstanding, one abides in a dark mindless state of nonconceptuality, without apprehending anything. This is how the view is maintained according to the Chinese Hashang system. Without analyzing anything as “empty” or “not empty,” and leaving the mind as it is, one might generate a bit of stability, bliss, clarity, nonconceptuality, and so forth. But without the clarity aspect of penetrating insight, no matter how long one cultivates the state of apprehending nothing whatsoever, one will not be able to abandon any concepts or emotional afflictions. For example, like a stone at the bottom of the wet ocean that doesn’t soak through,⁷⁸⁴ one will still be an ordinary person. As it is said, “When well fed and the sun is shining, a Dharma practitioner; when things get tough, an ordinary person.” Because that meditation is faulty, one should once again meditate with intentional apprehension.

3.2.1.2.1.3.1 Their reasonableness according to examples; 3.2.1.2.1.3.2 their reasonableness in fact.

3.2.1.2.1.3.1 *For example...* You might think that those two are equally faultless, because they are both without apprehension; but even though they have the same name, in fact they are different. For example, even though the term “[apprehending] nothing whatsoever” is the same, their meaning is different. One is to see the abiding nature of things by realizing the absence of elaboration through Mādhyamika reasoning, and the other is just wishing for nothingness,

thinking "There is no form, so there is nothing whatsoever." They are similar, both using the term "absence" [or "nothing," *med pa*], but in fact they are completely dissimilar, like the earth and the sky. Thus, in mere nonapprehension it is possible to have both a perfect and a mistaken path.

3.2.1.2.1.3.2.1 The reason why there is no intentional apprehension in the absence of the four extremes; 3.2.1.2.1.3.2.2 the reason why, if one does not realize that, nonapprehension that depends only on seeing and studying mere words is erroneous.

3.2.1.2.1.3.2.1 *Therefore...* You might wonder why, if one understands well, one doesn't need an intentional apprehension. As said above, dharmadhātu is free of all elaborations of the four extremes; if there were something to apprehend in it, it would have to fall into one of those four extremes. If the object is not established in one of the four extremes, the subject cannot apprehend any of the four extremes. Because there is no intentional apprehension beyond the four extremes, we maintain for that reason that there is no intentional apprehension. The *Bodhicaryāvatāra* says:

When neither entities nor nonentities
Abide before the mind,
Then because there is no other aspect,
Without reification, it is utterly pacified.⁷⁸⁵

3.2.1.2.1.3.2.2 *If some idiots...* Thus, if one has thoroughly understood the reason, it is reasonable for there to be no intentional apprehension. Some idiots analyze this meaning but gain no experience at all, just following the words "no intentional apprehension." From the very start they think "free of extremes, inexpressible..." and stare into space. Unfortunately, they think "without any apprehension whatsoever, I'll just relax," and practice without relying on the actual meaning of those words. However much they relax, they will not be able to cut the root of saṃsāra. From beginningless time, all beings have been extremely relaxed, just letting things happen in an ordinary state of mind, experiencing three kinds of suffering in one life after another in the three realms of existence. Since they have always been wandering, someone who thinks this is practice need not read this, or be encouraged to practice! The *Wish-fulfilling Treasury* says:

If one is lost in the pointless [mere] words of "nonelaboration,"
These are conceptual fabrications, with the [verbal qualification] of "nonelaboration."

3.2.1.2.2 The extensive explanation: 3.2.1.2.2.1 it is not beneficial to simply recognize the merely delusive mind that has not gone to the depths of truthlessness; 3.2.1.2.2.2 explanation of the distinction between knowing and not knowing the proper sense of the emptiness of true existence.

3.2.1.2.2.1 *Some might say...* Of course, if one relaxes without apprehending anything, one should realize the view. But those people who do not apprehend anything do not recognize the face of fundamental mind, and putting on great airs of being yogis they say "we know the nature of the mind." There is the fundamental mind of dharmatā, which is beyond the eightfold mind that includes the ālayavijñāna; and the dharma-possessor, which comprises the eightfold

consciousness, which is the deluded mind. In recognizing the first one, which is the ultimate reality of dharmatā, one must either have definite confidence in the crucial points of vast scriptures and reasonings, or realize the meaning of profound pith instructions received from a master who has reached the stage of “heat” in his own practice, thus determining the emptiness of true existence of one’s own mind, which is pure from the beginning, and thus, tear out the deluded mind from its root and basis. If one does not do it that way and says, “This clear knowing mind that apprehends the deluded appearances of the eightfold aggregation is me, and what is not this, is something different”—then that mind whose essence is to experience happiness, suffering, and so forth, is easy for anyone, stupid or wise, to realize. What need is there to meditate on it? As it is said:

Having introduced the clear and cognizant nature of mind
And settled on that nonconceptually,
Thinking this to be the intention of Mahāmudrā and the Great Perfection,
One contradicts the holders of philosophical traditions and their texts.
Both are nothing but lunatic ravings.⁷⁸⁶

3.2.1.2.2.2.1 Whether or not modal apprehension is necessary in “not seeing” depends upon whether or not one has been introduced to the nature of mind; 3.2.1.2.2.2.2 whether or not modal apprehension is necessary depends upon whether or not one has eliminated elaborations with respect to the object of “neither existent nor nonexistent”; 3.2.1.2.2.2.3 explaining whether or not modal apprehension with a conceptual focus⁷⁸⁷ of existence or nonexistence is necessary in meditating on the meaning of the nonelaboration of the four extremes.

3.2.1.2.2.2.1.1 Not being introduced [to the nature of mind]; 3.2.1.2.2.2.1.2 generating perfect understanding.

3.2.1.2.2.2.1.1.1 The opponent’s expression of his understanding; 3.2.1.2.2.2.1.1.2 investigating its meaning.

3.2.1.2.2.2.1.1.1 *You might say...* Obviously, it is not enough to know that there is only mind; one must thoroughly fathom the emptiness of true existence. When analyzing the mind—whether it has a color such as blue or yellow, whether it has a shape such as round or square, where it arises, where it stays, and where it goes—one does not see any shape, color, etc., and that you say “is to realize the emptiness of mind.”

3.2.1.2.2.2.1.1.2.1 The mere nonseeing form, color, etc., has great potential for error; 3.2.1.2.2.2.1.1.2.2 in general, mere nonseeing does not qualify as emptiness; 3.2.1.2.2.2.1.1.2.3 if merely that were the realization of the nature of reality, it would be easy for anyone.

3.2.1.2.2.2.1.1.2.1 *This system...* In general, it is difficult to realize the actual teaching of Dharma in the sūtras and tantras. The *Lalitavistara* says:

Profound, peaceful, unelaborated, unfabricated—
I have found a Dharma like nectar.

If I teach it, nobody will understand.
Without speaking, I will remain in the forest.

This path of the supreme vehicle is extremely profound. Because with respect to different disciples there can be both good and harm [from this teaching], the possibility for error in this is extremely great. The reason is that the mind has no form, so it is impossible for anybody to recognize color, form, and so forth, whether they recognize [the nature of mind] or not, because that distinction of each dharma-possessor does not belong to anything else.⁷⁸⁸ As it is said:

The mind is subtle, profound, and difficult to examine;
It cannot be differentiated by various and sundry methods.
Unstable and deceptive, it causes confusion.
Even though it's yours, the mind is hard to fathom.

3.2.1.2.2.2.1.1.2.2 *However...* Therefore, you might think that merely by not seeing inanimate dharmas in the mind, you have been introduced to the nature of mind, the dharmatā, which is empty of being truly existent. But this is a great mistake. For example, if you investigate one hundred times, it is impossible to find an animal's horns on a human head. Simply not to see it does not mean that you have understood the human mind and body's emptiness of true existence.

3.2.1.2.2.2.1.1.2.3 *To say that...* Therefore, your meditation on the view is a mere nonseeing of shape, etc., in the mind. Though you might think that [meditation] can realize the suchness of dharmatā or emptiness of the mind, because that kind of dharmatā of not seeing anything is easy for anybody to realize, what would be the point, then, of the statements in the sūtras and tantras to the effect that the nature of dharmas is extremely difficult to realize? As it is said, "The fact that you don't see something doesn't mean it is nonexistent." There are many things that, with respect to location, time, and aspect, are remote and hence invisible. But the mere fact of not seeing them doesn't qualify as a realization of the nature of the dharmatā of those things, which is difficult to realize. This is similar to what has already been explained above [in topic 1]—that realizing that one thing is empty of another does not qualify as realization of emptiness.

3.2.1.2.2.2.1.2 *Gaining understanding of the nature of things: Therefore, if...* For that reason, if one properly investigates with the reasoning of pith instructions that destroy the hovel of the mind, and generally with the power of analyzing the three natures of cause and effect, one will see intrinsic awareness directly, without mixing the ambivalence of concepts with the nature of mind, which one has clearly, precisely, and unmistakably settled upon. The nature of the mind arises in any form whatsoever, similar to various forms of illusion. At the time of arising, it is liberated in the primordial purity of the lack of truly existent essence. If one realizes this in the depths of one's mind without any doubt, then, just like looking at the sky in front of oneself, which is clear, empty, and without center or limits, one will become certain that the effulgence of this mind that moves without obstruction is the self-radiance of the emptiness of dharmatā, which does not exist anywhere in particular, and does not reduce to any particular appearance. If one understands in this way, then one has seen the reason for not needing to modify [one's mind] or [cultivate] intentional apprehension. Nowadays, practitioners pretend that lack of understanding is understanding, and that uncertainty is certainty. But even those practitioners

can know that they are still ordinary persons, like rocks at the bottom of the ocean, through inferential valid cognition.

3.2.1.2.2.2.2 The difference between eliminating and not eliminating elaborations: 3.2.1.2.2.2.2.1 that practitioner investigates our point of view; 3.2.1.2.2.2.2.2 explaining the difference between eliminating and not eliminating elaborations.

3.2.1.2.2.2.2.1.1 The question about our point of view; 3.2.1.2.2.2.2.1.2 analyzing it.

3.2.1.2.2.2.2.1.1 *You ask...* "Well then, you who pretend to be a yogi (*rtogs ldan*): is this mind of yours insubstantial like empty space? Or does it have the nature of various movements and changes, and is it able to know all phenomena? What is it?"

3.2.1.2.2.2.2.1.2 *Because the vibrant...* How to express it? [In the context of investigating the mind], there is a mere nonseeing of shape, color, and so forth. But the mind that doesn't even rest for a moment but jumps around after various objects is present in all embodied beings. Therefore, even though everyone knows for certain that such a consciousness is in each of our bodies, this charlatan says that this is the nature of mind! If you analyze this idea, it cannot exist by the reasons that he gives, viz., because one cannot see its shape or color; and it cannot not exist, because it is a mind that doesn't stay still for a moment and changes constantly. Saying that this kind of mind is "the realization of the dharmakāya of luminosity explained in the rDzogs chen tantras," they deceive others. They bombastically claim "this is the introduction to the nature of the basic dharmadhātu." In their grand pretense, they show little regard for karmic cause and effect. Without a general knowledge of the sūtras and tantras in general, nor great learning in the dialectical vehicle, etc., in particular, and without making much effort on the path of the three trainings, they say, "I have realized the luminosity that by knowing one, liberates all." If one analyzes this, it is just like the saying, "Not having seen one's true nature, but beating the dead horse of introduction."⁷⁸⁹ Even if they have understood one thing (*gcig shes*), there is no good evidence that they have liberated everything (*kun grol*), so I think this unfortunate idea is wrong.

3.2.1.2.2.2.2.2.1 The view of rDzogs chen is nonelaboration; 3.2.1.2.2.2.2.2.2 the [false yogi's] meditation is one or another of the extremes of elaboration.

3.2.1.2.2.2.2.2.1 *The teaching...* That "not existing, not nonexistent" may indeed be your system's dharmakāya of luminosity. The nature of rDzogs chen as intended by the knowledge-holders dGa' rab rDo rje and so forth is not existent, abiding in the primordial basis, and not seen even by the buddhas; and not nonexistent, as it is the basis for the appearance of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa. That is the expanse of the equality of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, the coalescence of awareness and emptiness free of all elaborations of the four extremes. Therefore, these two are not the same. The *Thal 'gyur* says:

Dharmakāya is without elaboration,
Without unconscious apprehension of characteristics.
Its essence is inseparable clarity and emptiness....

And the *Klong drug pa* says:

The nature of the primordially pure dharmakāya,
Free of elaboration, the perfectly pure basis....

How can this possibly be the same as what you are saying? It cannot.

3.2.1.2.2.2.2.2.1 The actual way that this is an extreme; 3.2.1.2.2.2.2.2.2 explaining why this is no different than non-Buddhist systems that adhere to the same extreme.

3.2.1.2.2.2.2.2.2.1 *But in fact...* If the nature of mind that you see is analyzed well in accordance with scripture and reasoning, it cannot be said to have the identity of shape, and so forth. Because it wanders and wavers all over the place, internally and externally, it cannot be said to be nonexistent. Therefore, your "nature of mind" does not go beyond either the extreme of "neither existent nor nonexistent," nor the extreme of "both existent and nonexistent." Thus, you are just mulling something over in your head, on the basis of one of these two extremes; [we know this] because a person's idea can be deduced from what they say.

3.2.1.2.2.2.2.2.2.2 *Aside from...* Once again, because this is a way of cultivating an intentional apprehension of analysis, it is nothing other than the way the "inconceivable self" is propounded by non-Buddhists, even though the names given to them are different. Both of them maintain a reified object on an inexpressible basis.

3.2.1.2.2.2.3 The difference between having and not having a reifying focus: 3.2.1.2.2.2.3.1 the absence of reifying focus when there is nonelaborated cognition that does not focus on mind or appearances; 3.2.1.2.2.2.3.2 an elaborated meditation, which does not realize this, is not free of reification.

3.2.1.2.2.2.3.1 *The mind and dharmas...* Thus, the important points of establishing the view cannot be determined by words alone; they must be known through reliance on the actual meaning. Therefore "nonelaboration" is not simply a statement about how extremes are eliminated in relation to the existence of some dharmas and the nonexistence of others. Whatever appears as the internal mind or as external phenomena is determined as the emptiness of primordial purity, which is the negation of true existence. On the basis of that confidence in the absence of the extreme of "existence," all these internal and external appearances appear as the relativity of the nature of unobstructed self-radiance, and are free of the extreme of nonexistence. Likewise, the nature of things is not both [existent and nonexistent], because a dharma that can be differentiated as both existent and nonexistent on a single basis does not abide in reality, since reality is nondual. Also, there is no *tertium quid* (*phung gsum pa*) that is neither existent nor nonexistent. If there were, it would have to be something expressible as "being like this," and if it were thus expressible, it would be none other than an existent object of cognition or a nonexistent object of cognition. So there is no way of knowing the *tertium quid* that is neither existent nor nonexistent.

Generally speaking, ultimate reality is not an object of cognition. The Prajñāpāramitā says:

Ultimate reality is not an object of cognition.
It cannot be cognized.

Moreover, just as in the case of positing something in terms of existence or nonexistence, here “both” and “neither” also do not go beyond the extremes of the two [former extremes, for example, existence and nonexistence, because the latter two extremes are likewise posited in those terms].⁷⁹⁰ Therefore, [reality] is beyond the thought and expression of all four extremes of elaboration. As it is said, “Mañjuśrī asked perfectly, and the bodhisattva remained without answering.”

By experiencing that crucial point—freedom from the darkness of the elaborations of the four extremes—and not just following after the mere words of scripture, reasoning, and pith instructions, that bare naked state that is pure and brilliant, homogenous, without contamination, naturally radiant, and free of all focal points, is known to be “unobstructedly arisen.” The *Rig pa rang shar* says, “The self-purification of the stains of the four extremes....” Therefore, the maintenance of the main practice of the view is said to be an authentic nonapprehension.

3.2.1.2.2.3.2 [But] just saying... If you don’t understand it in that way, and your mind is distracted with the mere statement “Look at the nature of mind,” you might focus on a kind of blank state where there is nothing in particular. But here you don’t recognize whether or not there is a subtle intentional apprehension or reifying focus, and you fool yourself into thinking that the intentional apprehension wherein one ceases to perceive superficial forms, shapes, and so forth, is the absence of reifying focus and nonapprehension. This meditation has as its object the extreme of “neither-nor,” which you think is “free of extremes.” This object abides like a target in front of a mind that has a subtle intentional apprehension, and you are simply unconscious.⁷⁹¹ By cultivating that state, you are not freed from *saṃsāra*, and in dependence upon this kind of apprehension of substantially existing “I” and “other” that has been present from beginningless time, you pass from one life to the next in this great river of suffering, like a bee passing from one bottle to the next. It is said that such a person must meditate again upon selflessness with intentional apprehension.

3.2.2 Because one doesn’t understand, one gradually eliminates elaborations and meditates with intentional apprehension: 3.2.2.1 the beginner eliminates elaborations gradually with intentional apprehension; 3.2.2.2 when free of elaboration, in the main practice one meditates on the meaning of “nonapprehension.”

3.2.2.1.1 The way of meditating on selflessness as the antidote to clinging to substantiality; 3.2.2.1.2 the way of meditating on the absence of extremes as the antidote to clinging to nonexistence.

3.2.2.1.1.1 Exemplifying the manner of selflessness; 3.2.2.1.1.2 having analyzed rationally according to the example, meditating with intentional apprehension.

3.2.2.1.1.1 *The antidote...* Thus, the antidote that stops all the reifying focusing discussed above is an intentional apprehension that considers selflessness. On that, Āryadeva said:

Seeing selflessness in the object,

The seeds of existence are blocked.

And, the *Avatāra* says:

If [reifying] thoughts had substantial entities [as their objects], they would [always] happen.

[But, since] the substantial entities have been established not to exist [inherently],

Without substantial entities, these [thoughts] do not arise.

For example, without firewood there is no fire.⁷⁹²

If one does not understand the sense of nonexistence in that selflessness perfectly by means of the pure path of scripture and reasoning, like the seventh *dhyāna* in the scriptural tradition, one will be obsessed with nonexistence, and it will do no good for cutting the root of *saṃsāra*. For example, if one mistakes a coiled rope for a snake, to think, "It is not a snake" does not help to eliminate one's fear. If through conditions such as "the fact of appearance" one correctly sees that the rope is not a snake, fear will go away.

3.2.2.1.1.2.1 Having analyzed with respect to the absence of one and many, etc., the actual meditation with intentional apprehension; 3.2.2.1.1.2.2 explaining why it is necessary; 3.2.2.1.1.2.3 showing why not doing it is problematic.

3.2.2.1.1.2.1 *Thus...* Therefore, by analyzing through the many types of reasoning explained in the gradual view and gradual meditation of *Madhyamaka*, one will come to understand selflessness and the emptiness of all dharmas. When first determining selflessness and emptiness, one should not simply rest content with having analyzed, but rather one should cultivate it. The reason is that one has been extremely addicted to clinging to substantial entities from beginningless time, so as the antidote to that propensity one should meditate again and again with analysis and an intentional apprehension that accords with its object, the object of analysis.

3.2.2.1.1.2.2 *By meditating...* Why does one need to meditate in that way? By accustoming oneself to the meaning of selflessness, one will not just abandon the manifestation of egotism, but will tear its seed out from the root. Therefore, many learned and accomplished beings who have seen the meaning of reality have forcefully established the need to meditate analytically in this way. The *Alaṃkāra* says:

Why is that? The buddhas

Have realized it, and because they do not see dharmas....⁷⁹³

3.2.2.1.1.2.3 *If this is...* Generally speaking, the first entry to the gradual path is selflessness. Moreover, in realizing the inseparable equal purity on the path of the *Vajrayāna*, one must first realize equality. Thus, cultivating this entryway for beginners is the infallible method for [entering] transic meditation. Some people who are confused about the important points of the path say that meditation with intentional apprehension is, from the very beginning of the path, a fault, and that it should be abandoned. Because these are rumors spread by *Māra* in order to obstruct progress on the path, one should not confuse what is to be accepted and what is to be

abandoned.

3.2.2.1.2.1 How the nonapprehending absence of elaboration is the antidote for apprehension of nonexistence; 3.2.2.1.2.2 why it is appropriate to have confidence in that crucial point, by virtue of the fact that emptiness and relativity are inseparable; 3.2.2.1.2.3 the reason why foolish meditators who pretend to have realization will be subject to doubts.

3.2.2.1.2.1 *When you acquire...* When, through the force of that modal apprehension, one has perfectly induced a confidence free of doubt in the secret pith of all dharmas—the emptiness of true existence of the unborn nature of mind—that modal apprehension, which is a mere apprehension of “nonexistence,” is just an aspect of the subjective mind. It is not the final reality of all objective knowables, so then one must meditate upon the great coalescence of appearance and emptiness, the nonconceptual ultimate, free of elaborations of projected doubts, as the antidote to that intentional apprehension.

3.2.2.1.2.2 *When you're really...* You might think, “I doubt that not apprehending anything can end saṃsāra,” but that is not so. If one realizes from within the emptiness of true existence, which is the absolute negation of all afflicted and purified dharmas, that emptiness of absolute negation is not an exclusive emptiness, but is understood to arise as the illusory display of unobstructed relativity. At that time, one does not fall into either extreme of appearance or emptiness, and does not at all apprehend appearance and emptiness separately. Although it is not [specifically] apprehended, not only does one *not* fail to cut the root of saṃsāra, one is confident in transcending the extremes of both existence and peace, just as one is confident in gold that has been purified in fire, so of course one cannot be dissuaded from it. This is the excellent teaching of the nonapprehension that gradually eliminates elaborations.

3.2.2.1.2.3 *Though this...* On the other hand, if having only seen and heard the words of the introduction to the nature of mind, one pretends to realize the nature of reality from the very beginning without eliminating elaborations gradually, or having to rely upon distinctions of “good” and “bad,” or “sharp” and “dull” faculties, then it is in fact difficult to dispense with intentional apprehension. The reason is that the object of sublime persons, which is the extraordinarily profound, crucial aspect to be realized, has been striven for with great effort for long periods of time by the great, extraordinarily learned, and accomplished beings of India and Tibet. About that profound aspect they have said, “Alas! Nowadays, pretentious beings of the degenerate age say that they have realized that profound reality in a single moment, without having to make any effort,” and they doubt those statements of clever speakers. They say, “I wonder how the result can arise when causes and conditions are not complete?”

3.2.2.2 Meditating upon the meaning of the main practice of nonapprehension: 3.2.2.2.1 by reason of seeing the object as nonelaborated, the mind does not apprehend any aspect; 3.2.2.2.2 although there is no apprehension, it arises as penetrating insight, which is the self-radiance of luminosity; 3.2.2.2.3 that certainty is the antidote to both reification and denigration.

3.2.2.2.1 *In the main practice...* Thus, that gradual path eliminates elaborations alternately. Then, in the way that one practices the main practice of transic meditation, saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, actual

and potential phenomena, are beyond all extremes, such as the eternalist extreme of existence and the nihilist extreme of nonexistence. This is not something that has been fashioned or fabricated anew by someone, but is the way things are primordially. Likewise, if the proper mode of being of knowable things is not at all established as existing or nonexisting, then the apprehension of non-empty appearances, or emptinesses that are not combined with appearances, does not exist in the object, but is rather the adventitious fabrication of elaboration wrought by the mind. Therefore, when one analyzes with authentic scriptural references and conclusive reasoning, whatever objects are apprehended cannot be conceptualized and do not possess even the slightest atom. Because [the conclusion of] dharmatā reasoning does not admit of degrees,⁷⁹⁴ how could one adhere to any possible extreme, through not seeing the utter lack of [true] establishment in things? For the production of consciousness has to arise in the form of an existing object, and here there is no object whatsoever. The *Bodhicaryāvatāra* says:

Having analyzed the object of analysis,
The analysis itself has no basis.
Because it has no basis, it is not produced.
That is called "nirvāṇa."

3.2.2.2.2 *Its opposite...* However, this not like the śrāvaka in his nirvāṇa, who does not cognize anything at all. When one meditates within the view of irrevocable certainty induced by analysis of the way in which reality is free of the four extremes, one is not completely without knowledge of "this" or "that." The lamp of Mañjuśrīvajra, the penetrating insight that is the unobstructed effulgence of the wisdom of luminosity, is radiant like an ordinary lamp. As it is said:

Desire, your root
Is known to arise from concepts.⁷⁹⁵

Thus, conceptuality is stopped, and the effulgence of penetrating insight blazes.

3.2.2.2.3 *Is uprooted...* Wherever any elaboration of the four extremes—which is contradictory to that penetrating insight in terms of its forms and intentional apprehension—apprehends something, the antidote, which pulls up the seed of the obscurity of the darkness of that mistaken view that stupid minds have about the ultimate meaning, is this penetrating insight. When one meditates on the antidote for what is to be abandoned, certainty should arise, because in this context one abandons what needs to be abandoned, and the [appropriate] antidote should arise.

3.2.3 A summary: 3.2.3.1 explanation of the qualities of realization and abandonment of gradual and sudden [enlightenment]; 3.2.3.2 explaining the degraded mistaken view that arises because of not analyzing or understanding those two modes; 3.2.3.3 the way of inferring those two through the signs of their difference.

3.2.3.1.1 Showing that the fundamental expanse beyond intellect that is the domain of subitists is difficult to realize; 3.2.3.1.2 therefore, by properly cultivating the view through study and contemplation, the qualities of abandonment and realization will arise.

3.2.3.1.1 *The fundamental...* As far as disciples' abilities and talents are concerned, there are subitists and gradualists, and of course that distinction also applies to how they eliminate the objects of elaboration. However, only a few persons with that karmic potential and sharp intelligence, and sublime beings, are able to enter the fundamental expanse beyond intellect by eliminating the four extremes all at once without having to eliminate them one by one. For most persons at the ordinary level, it is difficult to dispense with gradual cultivation and see dharmatā all at once.

3.2.3.1.2 *The system...* Therefore, because [most people] cannot realize enlightenment in that way, they cultivate this successive cessation of the elaborations of the four extremes according to the graded view of the Madhyamaka; that is the tradition of study and reflection. Even if elaborations are not eliminated all at once, to the extent that one cultivates that view, the opponent of certainty will become clearer and clearer, and finally one will cause the object of abandonment—the erroneous darkness of reifications—to gradually subside. One's intellect, or wisdom of realization, will increase like the waxing moon, and having realized ultimate reality, the object of abandonment will be eliminated.

3.2.3.2 *The unsound view...* Like a frog who tries to follow a lion's leap,⁷⁹⁶ if one has the base view of not apprehending anything, existence or nonexistence, without having understood anything from the start, how can one generate certainty that the self of persons and phenomena is not established anywhere? Without that certainty, that degraded meditation that doesn't apprehend anything cannot function as an antidote for objects of abandonment. Therefore, such a view cannot abandon any emotional afflictions or cognitive obscurations, because it does not realize emptiness. On that, the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* says:

The antidote for emotional and cognitive
Obscurations is emptiness.
Those who wish to attain omniscience quickly
Should not meditate on it in such a way.⁷⁹⁷

3.2.3.3 Inferring from signs: 3.2.3.3.1 generally and 3.2.3.3.2 specifically.

3.2.3.3.1 *Therefore...* For that reason, the difference between the correctly cultivated nonapprehension meditated on by both gradualists and subitists, and the ersatz nonapprehension that is meditated on by neither of those, can be known from the way that qualities of abandonment and realization are gained or not gained as the reward [of practice], like inferring fire from the sign of smoke.

3.2.3.3.2.1 The idiot meditator's nonapprehension is not the cause of abandonment and realization;
3.2.3.3.2.2 the authentic view is the cause of abandonment and realization.

3.2.3.3.2.1 *The ordinary...* For the reason that qualities do not arise from this [mistaken view], remaining ordinary in the idiot's meditation that does not recognize anything is not the cause of any gnosis of abandonment and realization. As it is said:

If one gains confidence in the real meaning,

A hundred thousand Dharma treasures spring from the heart.

[The idiot's meditation] produces obstacles to this kind of discriminating wisdom, love, compassion, and so forth—indeed, for all the good qualities of the path and result. Without having the slightest purity of moral discipline, [practicing this meditation] is like straining the dregs of tea and calling that “tea.” One's previous qualities will decrease further and further and will not be reproduced; faults and emotional afflictions that one did not have before will be produced and will increase further and further. In particular, this mindless “view of emptiness” will cause one's confidence in causality to decrease. Finally, one will be obsessed with senseless nihilistic ravings.⁷⁹⁸

3.2.3.3.2.2.1 The actual way [the authentic view] is the cause of abandonment and realization;
3.2.3.3.2.2.2 that kind of realization is the dharmatā of the coalescence of calm abiding and penetrating insight; 3.2.3.3.2.2.3 therefore, even if there is no apprehension, confidence is produced.

3.2.3.3.2.2.1 *If one has...* If one has the eyes of the authentic view that realizes the inseparable reality of dependent origination, it goes without saying that the good qualities one already possesses will increase, and that the qualities of scriptural [learning] and experiential realization will blaze like dry wood heaped on a fire. From the quality of one's realization and vision of all dharmas as emptiness, one will be extremely confident in the arising of the nature of emptiness as the infallible relativity of cause and effect. To the extent that one develops its power as an antidote, objects of abandonment—emotional afflictions and concepts—will decrease. Even if one does not meditate on it specifically, great compassion will arise effortlessly, and with discriminating wisdom one will be able to master the ocean of sūtric and tantric subjects on one's own. Such are the qualities that will arise.

3.2.3.3.2.2.2 *With the samādhi...* Thus, with respect the fundamental expanse of coalescence that is beyond all elaborations of extremes, one does not just bask in the glow of excellent certainty induced by rational analysis. In that state, one-pointed formless samādhi sees dharmatā, which is the object wherein nothing in particular is seen. That authentic object of seeing, which is the way ultimate reality abides, does not fall into any extreme of emptiness or non-emptiness. On that way of not falling into extremes, the *mDo sdud pa* says:

“I see space”—this is an expression of sentient beings.
But analyze this—how could one see space?
Seeing phenomena is also like this, taught the Tathāgata;
Seeing cannot be explained by any other example.

3.2.3.3.2.2.3 *One does not...* Therefore, when one sees the authentic reality of things, obviously no essence is apprehended at all, but this doesn't mean that, since nothing at all is certain, nothing is apprehended. For example, if a completely mute person tastes molasses, he has no doubt that it is sweet. Likewise, in the explanation that one does not need an intentional apprehension of ultimate reality, the extraordinary confidence of being freed from the fetters of doubt is produced in the yogi who cultivates the coalescence of calm abiding and special insight. But other positions

—such as the idea that one should cultivate analysis exclusively, and the idea that one should cultivate the calm abiding of equipoise exclusively—cannot eliminate doubts, and it is difficult to gain confidence in them. Moreover, since nowadays there are people who suppose that to meditate is to drift away in the dreamy expanse of mindless obscurity, without having to eliminate any doubts at all, it is obvious that they need to think about what needs to be accepted and abandoned.

I say:

*Because the light of the lamp of biased modal apprehension
Cannot penetrate the gloom of biased obscuration,
By seeing this orb of the sun that dispels darkness,
Good and bad are like the disk of the quarter moon.*⁷⁹⁹

Topic 4

[0.2.2.1.1.2.] 4. The exposition of which is correct—analysis or trance? 4.1 the question; 4.2 an extensive explanation of it.

4.1 *In meditating...* In meditating upon the meaning of the view of reality, the profound definitive meaning of the supreme vehicle, which is the infallible method taught by the Buddha. Which is correct—to exclusively meditate with analysis, or to exclusively meditate transically, without analysis?

4.2 The extensive explanation: 4.2.1 a brief demonstration that in our own and in other systems as well, it is not appropriate to be prejudiced toward either analysis or trance in meditating upon the view; 4.2.2 having differentiated the context and meaning of analysis and trance, an extensive explanation of the systems of interpretation of the previous two.⁸⁰⁰

4.2.1.1 One-sided trance; 4.2.1.2 [one-sided] analysis; and 4.2.1.3 demonstrating that it is not appropriate to be prejudiced toward either of them.

4.2.1.1 *Some say...* In general, regardless of who practices what is renowned as “the wandering yogi’s transic meditation”⁸⁰¹ or “the paṇḍit’s analytical meditation,” if there is a one-sided prejudice toward either one, it is obviously a fault. In particular, nowadays it is said that people who cannot persevere in study and reflection should meditate by resting quietly without analyzing anything, and without analyzing according to the meaning of scripture, reasoning, and pith instructions, the reason being that to analyze the meaning of what is studied is just so much conceptualization, which obscures ultimate reality. Therefore, without analyzing what should be accepted or abandoned, such as the topics of abiding nature vs. apparent nature, consciousness vs. gnosis, and so forth, all those things being equal, one should be like a bump on a log. Because this is the crucial point of pith instructions, it is enough, so they say.

4.2.1.2 *Some say...* Some scholars say that one should only analyze the absence of true existence, which is the root of penetrating insight. If one does transic meditation without analysis, it is like

going to sleep, and will not eliminate the apprehension of true existence. Because it does not help generate the qualities of abandonment and realization, they say that one should always analyze, both in meditation and in its aftermath.

4.2.1.3 *To adhere...* You might think, “Well then, what is your position on these two?” We do not accept either of these, since they are both prejudiced positions. In meditating upon the meaning of the view, to focus exclusively on either analysis or trance is inappropriate, because one must integrate calm abiding and penetrating insight.

4.2.2.1 A general discussion, [held in] common [with other systems]; 4.2.2.2 a differentiation and an explanation of our own uncommon system.

4.2.2.1.1 Most transic meditations only produce calm abiding, and cannot dispense with obscurations; 4.2.2.1.2 why one must have penetrating insight that knows the nature of things as the antidote for dispensing with obscurations.

4.2.2.1.1 *Most transic...* It is pointless to practice only transic meditation. Why is that? If at first one does not analyze what is to be accepted and abandoned, it is probable that most forms of transic meditation will accomplish a mere calm abiding or one of the worldly realms of formal meditation that are common [to Buddhist and non-Buddhist traditions]. To whatever extent one meditates in that way, one will bring about the cessation of mind and mental events, but one will not generate even the slightest certainty, which is induced by the power of analyzing the nature of things. The unique eye for traveling the path of liberation is precisely this confidence free of doubt. If one is bereft of the authentic view, one cannot eliminate obscurations just by meditating. Therefore, one must have the coalescence of calm abiding and penetrating insight, which is cause for consummating qualities of abandonment and realization. The *Bodhicaryāvatāra* says:

By penetrating insight thoroughly suffused with calm abiding,
One will know complete victory over emotional afflictions

4.2.2.1.2.1 The view must precede the meditation of the path; 4.2.2.1.2.2 the necessity of its ally, intense effort; 4.2.2.1.2.3 the reason its opposite is very powerful.

4.2.2.1.2.1 *If you do not know...* The cause for eliminating obscurations and giving birth to realization is knowing the nature of dharmas by means of study and so forth; this is the authentic view. If one does not know it, no matter how much one meditates on the authentic object, insofar as one does not know the abiding nature of the object of meditation, one is only subject to ordinary, instinctual thought. Meditating on that is of no use for producing good qualities and traveling the path of liberation. Therefore, like a blind person, one will get lost and will not progress on the path that leads to the attainment of omniscience.

4.2.2.1.2.2 *The habits...* Therefore, although it is difficult to enter the difficult subjects of the profound and vast scriptures, treatises, etc., through study, reflection, and meditation, if one does not undergo many hardships, it is not possible to attain a result. Pha dam pa Sangs rgyas (*rgya gar dam pa*) said:

Buddhahood is rare for a person who is not steadfast;
Undergo hardships, people of Ding-ri!

Through clinging from beginningless time to true existence and solidity in things, again and again, because of not having abandoned the propensity for delusion, and contrary to the nature of emptiness, one has erroneously clung to the intrinsic reality of purity, happiness, permanence, and self. The *Avatāra* says:

Because it is obscured by the nature of ignorance, it is called “deceptive.”
That which is fabricated appears as though real....⁸⁰²

Accordingly, in order to stop those erroneous delusions, there are a hundred methods, such as love, compassion, generosity, morality, and meditation; the four great *Mādhyamika* reasonings, which analyze the nature of equality, etc.; the four reasonings of realization, which realize the nature of purity,⁸⁰³ and so forth. As long as one does not investigate with a hundred reasonings, it is difficult to gain realization. A *sūtra* says:

Empty, peaceful, without birth—
Not knowing this Dharma, beings wander.
Through the power of compassion, with method
And a hundred reasonings, they will be made to enter it.

4.2.2.1.2.3 *Insofar as...* For the very reason that one needs that kind of intense effort, clinging to the true existence of the two forms of self—which is deluded appearance contrary to the authentic path—and having the vision of the two forms of selflessness through the authentic view, are mutually exclusive and cannot abide together. Therefore, in this heavy darkness of the nescience of clinging to true existence and circling in existence through the power of karma and emotional afflictions deeply cultivated from beginningless time, it is difficult to obtain the authentic vision of wisdom that clarifies the nature of suchness, so one should strive to master both innate and acquired wisdom. The *Bodhicaryāvatāra* says:

In existence there are many precipices,
And in it [knowledge] of reality is absent.
Also, [emptiness] and [misknowledge] contradict each other,
But in existence there is no such thing.⁸⁰⁴

4.2.2.2 Our own uncommon system: 4.2.2.2.1 if those with sharp faculties or awakened karmic connections realize the view correctly, they do not need to analyze; 4.2.2.2.2 if one cannot gain realization that way, one should gradually practice analysis and trance.

4.2.2.2.1 *Through the ripening...* You might wonder, “Is that explanation of the necessity of effort definitely for everyone?” It is possible, in this corporeal frame, to gain realization without having to practice. With the ripening of the karma of practicing the path in previous lives, or through the conjunction of the conditions of a sharp-minded disciple and the blessing of a realized master, it

is perhaps possible that by analyzing just the origin, abiding, and cessation of mind one can acquire authentic certainty in the emptiness of true existence without extensive practice of the path. However, there are very few persons like that. It is not possible for everyone to gain realization in that way, regardless of intelligence, previous practice of the path, and so forth. Therefore, all gradualists should practice according to the above quote: "If this is the fail-safe entryway for beginners...."⁸⁰⁵

4.2.2.2.2 If one cannot gain realization in that way: 4.2.2.2.2.1 determining the basis of what is to be analyzed and placed upon; 4.2.2.2.2.2 demonstrating the individual contexts in which that object is analyzed or placed upon; 4.2.2.2.2.3 the consciousness of both analysis and trance depends upon the reason of gnosis; 4.2.2.2.2.4 establishing the Great Perfection, which demonstrates the gnosis beyond consciousness nakedly, as the pinnacle of vehicles.

4.2.2.2.2.1.1 How the three inner tantric vehicles have the mahāyoga view and meditation, which realizes the inseparability of the two truths in pure equanimity as their common basis; 4.2.2.2.2.1.2 on that basis anuyoga manifests the path of inseparable bliss and emptiness; 4.2.2.2.2.1.3 the effortless arising of the selfarisen result of the three kāyas in Atiyoga.

4.2.2.2.2.1.1.1 The actual [explanation] and 4.2.2.2.2.1.1.2 how that basis by its very nature does not abide in the extremes of existence and peace.

4.2.2.2.2.1.1.1 *In cutting through...* According to this reality of all dharmas that is the uncommon teaching of the great secret Nyingma tradition, by the logical reasonings of the four understandings in the context of the three classes of inner tantras, the basis is determined as the pure equality of the inseparability of the [two] truths. This means that one should determine the nature (*rang bzhin*) as unborn, its display (*rol pa*) as unobstructed, its essence (*ngo bo*) as indivisible, and its defining characteristic (*mtshan nyid*) as beyond intellect. "Unborn nature"⁸⁰⁶ means that when one breaks through to the equanimity that is from the beginning unborn with respect to the four extremes—the primordially pure nature of the basic essence—by getting to the heart of the matter by means of analysis, one needs the final view of the Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka. With respect to illuminating the dharmadhātu that is the epistemic object free of all elaborations of the four extremes, its nature is unborn. That is not different from "unborn from the four extremes" in Madhyamaka. From the *Penetration of Sound Root Tantra*:

The limit of the perfection of wisdom
Is included in directly cutting through appearance (trekchö).

Likewise, from the Great Omniscient One's commentary to the *Jewel Treasury of Dharmadhātu*:

The ways in which this tradition of the natural Great Perfection investigates "freedom from extremes" are for the most part the same as Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka. But while Madhyamaka mainly considers an emptiness like space, here it is primordially pure, naked awareness, not established, a mere absolute negation that is taken as a basis.⁸⁰⁷

In order to stop clinging to the emptiness taught by Madhyamaka, the Mantrayāna teaches the great bliss of unobstructed display. That changeless great bliss and the emptiness supremely endowed with all forms are identical in the essence of bliss and emptiness. The defining characteristic of that unique indivisible expanse that is primordially pure is that it is experienced in a manner beyond intellect, free of subject and object, and without dualistic appearance. The *rNgam klog* says:

Understanding (rtogs pa) has four aspects
That are accepted by Buddhist yogis.
One cause, the manner of words,
Blessing, and direct experience—
These induce entry to the meaning of the Great Perfection.
“Cause” means that the two truths simultaneously
Are one, and thus have the defining characteristic of oneness.
In the maṇḍala of enlightened body, speech, and mind
The nature of all dharmas is realized;
And from the blessing of the unborn expanse,
All dharmas are known as appearance.
If that sort of nature,
Which does not depend on something else and is without contradiction,
Is determined and known directly,
The yogi reaches the bhūmis.

And, from the *Instructional Garland of Views*: “The way of the Great Perfection is to gain confidence through the path of the four understandings....” and so on. Having determined [the view] through these and other statements, one meditates on the cycles of the dharmatā of deity and mantra by the stages of methodically generating body, speech, and mind as the display of that basis. The three meditations of the body-vajra of appearance-emptiness, the speech-vajra of clarity-emptiness, and the mind-vajra of awareness-emptiness are not considered separately. By knowing them to be mere synonyms for the vajra of gnosis of nondual bliss and emptiness and practicing accordingly, the primordial purity of the causality of saṃsāra and the causality of nirvāṇa are demonstrated to be spontaneously present.

4.2.2.2.1.1.2 *Here the appearance...* The causal vehicle of the perfections achieves the final result of buddhahood. Because it puts an end to both extremes of cyclic existence and peace, by striving for three countless aeons, etc., to collect the dual accumulation that integrates emptiness and compassion, the result of the two kāyas is attained. Having manifested the emptiness aspect of the dharmakāya from the accumulation of gnosis of cultivated emptiness, the apparent aspect of the two formal kāyas appears. These [formal kāyas] protect sentient beings from all the fears of saṃsāra by establishing disciples in temporary and ultimate bliss. Thus, the ultimate result of the accumulation of merit is the formal kāyas, which have the nature of compassion. The fruitional Mantrayāna contains all of the important points of the path and result of the causal vehicles, as the direct experiential meaning that is individually cognized by yogis, as the inseparable equality of the nature of emptiness endowed with all forms, and as supreme bliss having the nature of nonreifying compassion.⁸⁰⁸ Therefore, the path that causes the attainment of buddhahood in

mantra is more exalted than that of sūtra. In the path of mantra, suchness—the abiding reality of the luminosity of mind, which is the coalescence of awareness and emptiness, or the inseparability of bliss and emptiness—is directly experienced for oneself. It is not absolutely necessary to have recourse to inducing intellectual understanding of the meaning of emptiness through inference. For example, those who have attained divine vision do not need to rely upon human vision in order to perceive forms. Likewise, the nonelaboration that is ascertained unerringly as the view through inferential valid cognition is more easily perceived directly on the path of skillful means.

Therefore, the meaning of emptiness, which is coalescence free of elaboration as explained in the Prajñāpāramitā sūtras, is seen just as it is on our Vajrayāna path. It is entirely impossible that [this] is a path without the meaning of that kind of emptiness. Therefore, because the dharmakāya abides as the primordially pure essence and the formal bodies abide as the spontaneous presence of the aspect of the nature of clarity, the dual accumulation is by nature primordially complete and spontaneously present. It is the great self-arisen gnosis that by nature does not abide in either cyclic existence or peace. Once this is manifest, there is no need to purposefully negate the extremes of existence or peace.

4.2.2.2.2.1.2 *By practicing...* While the mode of appearance of the kāyas and wisdoms, and the extraordinary great dharmakāya that is the inseparable two truths of appearance and emptiness—which is the expanse of coalescence—is ascertained to abide as the basis according to the mahāyoga system, anuyoga is understood with the view that determines that the expanse of emptiness is the maṇḍala of Samantabhadrī and the method of bliss is the maṇḍala of Samantabhadra, and that these together are the all-pervading lord of the lineages and maṇḍalas, the maṇḍala of bodhicitta that is essentially inseparable emptiness and bliss. Because the path of bliss and emptiness is accomplished through the completion phase of the wisdom of coalescence of the *Evaṃ* of the yogas of one's own and another person's body, there is no recourse to extensive external practices, and one penetrates the vital points of the channels, bindus, and winds of the internal vajra body. The result is that in this very life one manifests the resultant coalescence where there is nothing more to learn.

4.2.2.2.2.1.3 *In fact...* The triad of basis, path, and result are, with respect to the meaning of the abiding nature of things, inseparable. This is the Atiyoga of the Vajrayāna. But in the apparent nature of things, they are different. Therefore, the *Tantra of the Mirror of Vajrasattva* says:

The generation of mahāyoga is like the basis of all Dharmas.

The completion of anuyoga is like the path of all Dharmas.

The Atiyoga or Great Perfection is like the result of all Dharmas.

According to this, Atiyoga is like the result of the two lower yogas. Since it is the fourth empowerment that is the entrance to the paths of generation and completion, which are manifested as the gnoses of the four vajras by those [lower yogas],⁸⁰⁹ among those this is the gnosis of the completion phase, which is without characteristics and is free of effort. This is the meaning of the three bodies, which are complete in themselves, and which are introduced by the path of the fourth empowerment. Without relying upon external elaborations and effort, or internal yogic discipline of the body, the inseparability of generation and completion—the self-

arisen gnosis that is the coalescence of awareness and emptiness—is exclusively emphasized in the practice of the equipoise of primordial liberation. This vehicle, which is the method where the self-radiance of luminosity appears manifestly, is the tradition of the supreme secret Great Perfection, the pinnacle of vehicles, the final swift path that is the destination of the results accomplished by all lower vehicles.

4.2.2.2.2.2 Differentiating the contexts in which one employs analysis or trance: 4.2.2.2.2.2.1 in order to attain realization, one engages in analysis and trance progressively; 4.2.2.2.2.2.2 when realization is manifest, analysis is not necessary.

4.2.2.2.2.2.1.1 The beginning practitioner generates understanding through study and reflection; 4.2.2.2.2.2.1.2 the intermediate practitioner combines reflection and meditation; 4.2.2.2.2.2.1.3 finally, one attains an excellent certainty that realizes the nature of things.

4.2.2.2.2.2.1.1.1 In order to attain qualities of abandonment and realization, one induces certainty through various methods and analysis; 4.2.2.2.2.2.1.1.2 if one cannot induce certainty, abandonment and realization will not occur; 4.2.2.2.2.2.1.1.3 therefore, one must induce certainty that realizes the abiding nature of things.

4.2.2.2.2.2.1.1.1.1 *As long as...* As long as one has not generated authentic certainty about the meaning intended by the Vajrayāna that teaches the final abiding nature of things, by making effort in the practice of many methods and by referring to authentic scriptures for the meaning of the great pure equality of actual and potential phenomena for potent⁸¹⁰ and analytical reasonings about the two truths, one will induce certainty. If certainty is produced, one must meditate without separation from the heat of that certainty.

Why is that? If one has that continuity of certainty that, like a lamp, causes the appearance of the authentic meaning, it will become a cause for the gnosis of realization, which causes the base conceptuality of inauthentic improper mentation to disappear like darkness. This should be done diligently, and if one is ever without certainty, one should induce [certainty] again through analysis.

4.2.2.2.2.2.1.1.2 *At first...* When one first practices the path, this analysis is important. The reason is that if one doesn't begin with an excellent analysis, there is no way to generate an excellent certainty thereafter. If excellent certainty is not generated, one will not have authentic experience, so how will one be able to make the darkness of miserable projections disappear? If one does not make miserable projections disappear, how will one stop the foul winds of karma? If those are not stopped, how will one abandon this awful saṃsāra? If one does not abandon saṃsāra, what will one do about dismal suffering? If one doesn't do anything about it, these will have the characteristic of conditions and things conditioned, and like the wheel of a chariot, one will cycle in endless suffering. Therefore, if one induces certainty with excellent analysis and stops miserable projections, by the power of that, one will be able to stop the winds of karma. If bound-up winds are stopped, then one can stop degraded concepts. Thus, one should strive in the methods for abandoning saṃsāra with whatever strength one can muster.

4.2.2.2.2.2.1.1.3 *In reality...* If one induces certainty by analyzing some object, in the final analysis of

saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, there is no good thing called “nirvāṇa” and no bad thing called “saṃsāra,” because if one analyzes them, neither is established. The *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* says:

The intrinsic nature of the Tathāgata
Is the intrinsic nature of these sentient beings.
The Tathāgata has no intrinsic nature;
These sentient beings also have no intrinsic nature.

According to this passage, saṃsāra and nirvāṇa have no good and bad, nor anything to accept or abandon. Their nature is the equality of dharmatā, which does not abide in any extreme of cyclic existence and peace and is the basis of the perfection of wisdom. The excellent certainty that realizes that as it is, is the path of the perfection of wisdom. Because such a certainty does not establish a true “nirvāṇa” by rejecting a true “saṃsāra,” the apparent contradiction that this poses for the explanation above—that one must have certainty as the antidote for abandoning saṃsāra—depends upon the words alone. If one relies upon the actual meaning, there is no contradiction so far as the distinction of “manner of abiding” and “manner of appearance” is concerned. The making of this kind of distinction is the most important feature of the paths of sūtra and tantra. On that, the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* says:

Without abandonment, without accomplishment,
Without annihilation, without permanence,
Without cessation, without production—
This is said to be nirvāṇa.

And Lord Maitreya said:

In this, there is nothing whatsoever to remove;
There isn’t the slightest thing to add.
Look at authenticity authentically.
If you see authentically, you will be liberated.

When one practices all the causal vehicles of “profound views” and “vast activities,” the secret advice that rolls all important points of pith instructions into one, is this. As explained above, when one realizes the basis of the inseparable two truths and analyzes this way of practicing without eliminating or positing saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, one should not simply rest content with words, but experience the flavor of the meaning—this is Mipham’s exhortation.

4.2.2.2.2.1.2.1 By occasionally analyzing again and again, certainty is produced; 4.2.2.2.2.1.2.2 explanation of the reason why, once one has produced it, one should meditate in that state.

4.2.2.2.2.1.2.1 Next... In the intermediate phase of practice, one should combine analysis and trance and cultivate one’s practice in that way. If one analyzes, one will give rise to certainty in equanimity. If, when one does not analyze, one clings to ordinary [appearances], in order to reverse that one should analyze again and again, and in that way certainty is induced. If certainty is produced, then one should meditate one-pointedly in that state, without wavering.

4.2.2.2.2.1.2.2 *Certainty...* What is the reason for meditating in that way? Because the antidote of certainty and the object of abandonment—the ambivalence of reification—are mutually exclusive and cannot exist at the same time, reification can be dispelled by the power of analysis, and certainty should thus be increased further and further.

4.2.2.2.2.1.3.1 One induces trance after the views of study and reflection; 4.2.2.2.2.1.3.2 explaining the reason why one doesn't need to analyze.

4.2.2.2.2.1.3.1 *Finally...* Finally, having cultivated the view in that way, even if one doesn't induce it through analysis, certainty automatically arises by the power of previous cultivation. While practicing transic meditation in that very state of clear appearance, because one has already accomplished [certainty] previously, one does not have to do it over again.

4.2.2.2.2.1.3.2 *If you understand...* To illustrate the reason for that: when one mistakes a rope for a snake, and then realizes through conditions that it is not a snake, that very certainty eliminates the apprehension of "snake." If one then said that one should still analyze, saying, "There is no snake" over and over again, that would be silly, wouldn't it?⁸¹¹

4.2.2.2.2.2 When realization is manifest, analysis is not necessary: 4.2.2.2.2.2.1 expounding our own system along with the reason for not needing analysis;

4.2.2.2.2.2.2 refuting the other system, which maintains that if one is without analysis, one will not see the meaning. 4.2.2.2.2.2.2.1 *When realization...* When the result of that cultivation is manifest as the realization of the dharmadhātu on the paths of seeing and meditation by sublime beings, one no longer meditates with analysis, as one has directly realized the dharmatā, which is without any dualistic appearance of analysis and the object of analysis. There is no need for any application of mental analysis that ascertains a cognandum through inferential valid cognition in dependence upon the application of a logical reason.

4.2.2.2.2.2.2.2.1 Setting up other systems; 4.2.2.2.2.2.2.2.2 flinging consequences at them.

4.2.2.2.2.2.2.2.1 *If you think...* In some systems, in order to see the meaning of selflessness through penetrating insight, one needs only analysis. They maintain that one does not attain the realization that sees the ultimate reality of dharmatā when one is without analysis, because one does not know whether the object is this or that, that merely positioning or keeping the mind stationary is a mistake, and that even non-Buddhists have this kind of meditation.

4.2.2.2.2.2.2.2.2.1 The actual set-up of the consequence; 4.2.2.2.2.2.2.2.2.2 explaining how the logical reason is established.

4.2.2.2.2.2.2.2.2.1 *Then for you...* If that were the case, then the equipoise of sublime beings, the omniscient gnosis of the buddhas, and even the cognition of the unimpaired sensory faculties of worldly beings—all apprehension of ultimate and deceptively real objects—would consequently be mistaken for you, for those objects are already understood [hence not in need of analysis], and because those subjective minds that directly perceive their objects are without analysis at that

time.

4.2.2.2.2.2.2.2.2.1 Establishing the logical reason through valid cognition; 4.2.2.2.2.2.2.2.2.2 the thesis is descended upon by clarification through valid cognition.

4.2.2.2.2.2.2.2.2.1 *Because...* In general, a logical mark (*rtaḡs*) that is set up for an absurd consequence (*thal gyur*) requires a thesis and establishment through valid cognition. Here, the disputant accepts the logical reason of unimpaired sensory faculties, but because he claims that there is analysis in the realization of the sublime paths, the reason must be established by valid cognition. The way to do that is from the perspective of the extraordinary certainty that is free of all elaborations of the four extremes. If its object is free of "existing," "nonexisting," "both," and "neither," then there is no object different from it that is objectively focused upon as "this" or "that." If that object does not exist, then what occasion will the subjective mind have for analysis? There is no such occasion.

4.2.2.2.2.2.2.2.2.2 *When...* If at the time of equipoise there is an analytical modal apprehension, then just like apprehension of true existence, that apprehension of a characteristic will obscure and bind up that person with analytical conceptualization, just like a silk worm who ties himself up with his own saliva. For if the correct vision of the meaning of the authentic abiding nature of things were harmed by valid cognition, one would not see it.⁸¹²

4.2.2.2.2.3 The difference between consciousness and gnosis: 4.2.2.2.2.3.1 by eliminating what is incompatible with certainty, one attains gnosis; 4.2.2.2.2.3.2 explaining the defining characteristics of those two; 4.2.2.2.2.3.3 therefore, how gnosis arises in dependence upon consciousness.

4.2.2.2.2.3.1 *When this...* For that reason, with this extraordinary certainty in the nature of all dharmas, one dispels the darkness of ignorance and imagination that obscures the way things are. Then, just as one can see things at dawn, the actual fundamental luminosity is manifest. The self-arisen effulgence of luminosity that sees suchness unerringly, which is the radiance of that state, is the gnosis that is individually cognized. Mental events that have dualistic apprehension have no such wisdom as this.

4.2.2.2.2.3.2 *The object...* The causal analytical wisdom that is a subjective modal apprehension differentiates "this" and "that" in its object, such as dharma and dharmatā, deceptive and ultimate, saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, without mixing them up. It determines individual objects by conceptualizing them in terms of acceptance and abandonment, etc. The result of cultivating this is without analysis or modal apprehension, because it does not apprehend object and subject individually, or focus on any bias of appearance or emptiness whatsoever. This is the gnosis of the equality of appearance and emptiness, which does not exist with any identifying characteristic of differentiating the objects of mind or mental events.

4.2.2.2.2.3.3.1 Analytical wisdom and gnosis have a relation of cause and effect; 4.2.2.2.2.3.3.2 positing the contextual meaning of each of those.

4.2.2.2.2.3.3.1 *Therefore...* In dependence upon dichotomizing analytical wisdom, nondichotomizing

gnosis should be achieved. Therefore, by the causal analytical wisdom of meditative equipoise in the supreme certainty induced through analysis that is free of doubt, the fruitional gnosis of the coalescence of the expanse and awareness is attained. Thus, it is reasonable to persevere in the certainty that is induced by analysis.

4.2.2.2.2.3.3.2.1 All analyses in the context of differentiation in the aftermath of meditation are analytical wisdom; 4.2.2.2.2.3.3.2.2 the equipoise of seeing the abiding nature of things as they are is gnosis.

4.2.2.2.2.3.3.2.1 *The ascertainment...* When first entering the path, with analyses of scriptural passages and reasoning the view is ascertained; and with the subsequent cognition, the philosophical systems that one has already determined the meaning of are established by way of refutation, positioning, and abandonment. The discrimination in objects of cognition of general and particular characteristics, abiding and apparent natures, provisional and definitive meanings, and so forth, is the stainless valid cognition of analytical wisdom that cognizes phenomena individually.

4.2.2.2.2.3.3.2.2.1 The main discussion; 4.2.2.2.2.3.3.2.2.2 establishing this as the Mahāyāna.

4.2.2.2.2.3.3.2.2.1 *The gnosis...* The gnosis for which saṃsāra and nirvāṇa remain in equality, which is the final destination of the way all afflicted and purified dharmas exist, and which is induced by the path of certainty in that analytical wisdom explained above, is the authentic main practice of the stainless path of the Mahāyāna, and is the result of persevering in the analytical wisdom of specific cognition.

4.2.2.2.2.3.3.2.2.2 *If you have it...* If one has this gnosis, which is the main practice of that sort of path, one can be bestowed with the coalescences of practice and nonpractice in this short life of the degenerate age. This is a vehicle, because it can cause one to travel to the level of fruition, and it is great, because it is a swift path that can bestow the goal of the supreme Mahāmūdrā in this life. The *sDud pa* says:

This vehicle is a great measureless mansion like space.

It is the supreme vehicle, because one actually attains pleasure, happiness, and bliss.

Moreover, if one is conveyed (*degs*) "by this," it is a causal vehicle (*theg pa*); and if one is conveyed "in this," it is a fruitional vehicle. For example, whenever one mounts a sedan chair, whether one goes anywhere or not, one is still held up (*btegs*) by it. So, there are vehicles in which there is nowhere to go, and vehicles by which there is some destination. The great glorious Rong zom said:

If one wishes to travel the gradual path, one will stray from the path that is not traveled.⁸¹³ The path of greater and greater purity does not harmonize with the Dharma of nonaction. For, if one should travel a path that is limit[-less] like space, one will never reach [the end of it].⁸¹⁴

The Dharma, just as it is, is the essence of all dharmas; it is not something to be reached by the paths and bhūmis. If, as in the stages of the bhūmis, there were established stages of purity, of purification, and of liberation, the dharmatā of dharmas would be totally nonexistent; if one attained another, and then another, there would be no end to it. The quotation from the *sDus pa* should not be understood to imply that from here one should go somewhere else; one should understand it to mean that one just abides in its essence. As it is said:

One who rides without a destination in mind
Is said to go to nirvāṇa, without reifying going.

4.2.2.2.2.4 The Great Perfection is the pinnacle of vehicles: 4.2.2.2.2.4.1 establishing that this is the pinnacle of vehicles by the reasoning of its essential sameness with other tantric classes; 4.2.2.2.2.4.2 how this vehicle's view and meditation are more exalted than those of other systems; 4.2.2.2.2.4.3 how the individual pith instructions of other philosophical systems have the distinction of the mental class; 4.2.2.2.2.4.4 it has an extraordinary teaching not known to others.

4.2.2.2.2.4.1.1 Although other systems do not posit it separately as a vehicle, it is the gnosis of the fourth empowerment of the final path; 4.2.2.2.2.4.1.2 we maintain that the tantric class that emphasizes the gnosis of equanimity is the ultimate tantra; 4.2.2.2.2.4.1.3 this vehicle is similar in being the gnosis of the fourth initiation of the corpus of anuttarayogatantra; 4.2.2.2.2.4.1.4 thus, analyzing the vehicles progressively, there is perfect purity here; 4.2.2.2.2.4.1.5 eliminating doubts with the reasoning of the three valid cognitions.

4.2.2.2.2.4.1.1 *According to...* There are many different classifications of the vehicles according to the old and new schools of secret mantra. The Early Translation school posits the vehicles in nine stages: three vehicles that lead one away from the process of cyclic existence, three intellectual vehicles that employ austerities, and three methodical vehicles of transformation.⁸¹⁵ The systems of the later translations are for the most part identical in positing three vehicles and four tantric classes. According to the system of maintaining four tantric classes, there are four initiations in the unexcelled yoga tantras, and the paths of each of those [tantras] have practices from the creation phase up to the completion phase without characteristics. Among those, this path of the fourth "word empowerment" is the ultimate gnosis of the completion phase, the actual luminosity. Although that gnosis is not discussed separately as a vehicle and is not designated as a vehicle, that does not mean that it is not in fact so.

4.2.2.2.2.4.1.2 *However...* How is that? For example, because it is a tradition of explanation that emphasizes the pure and untrammelled nature beyond the dharmatā of consciousness—the vajra body of gnosis equal to space, the equanimity of bliss and emptiness—the glorious Kālacakra should be considered the ultimate tantra, because its subject is more sublime than the lower tantric classes. As it is said:

All things are the state of equality,
And abide without becoming one thing.
They arise from changeless gnosis,
They are not annihilated or permanent.

4.2.2.2.4.1.3 *Among...* According to that example, among the mother, father, and nondual tantras of the highest yoga tantras of the old and new traditions, the Great Perfection without characteristics, which is the path gnosis in the fourth precious word initiation, is emphasized and explained in this Nyingma tradition, and hence does not fail to be established. It is the quintessence of the intention of all the tantric classes of the old and new schools. Therefore, that extraordinary swift path is expounded as a vehicle, and in so doing there is no contradiction whatsoever.

4.2.2.2.4.1.4 *Just as gold...* "Well, how is it established?" It is like gold, which, having been purified by melting, merits confidence in its perfect purity. By stainless analysis and reasoning, starting with non-Buddhists and going up through the lower Buddhist philosophical systems, the great glorious Rong zom established the progressively higher vehicles in terms of the lower ones that were already established, by means of the three "witnesses of reasoning": the witness of prophecy, the witness of persons, and the commentary of scripture. In establishing the ultimate result above and beyond the lower vehicles, from the perspective of its relative purity, through reasoning he established the path of the natural Great Perfection as the ultimate and supreme of all swift paths. The lama Mañjuśrī wrote and taught about those teachings of Rong zom by clearly differentiating them with respect to scripture and reasoning in the essence of luminosity.

Although it is difficult to fathom the idea that all dharmas are primordially Buddha, here I will explain a little bit about how this is established in the lineage for those who think it is unreasonable. First, for non-Buddhists who have doubts about the Buddha as an authoritative person: as rare as the *udumbara* flower mentioned in their Vedic scriptures, the omniscient teacher appears in the world as a prince or a Brahmin. When entering the womb, his mother dreams that he enters in the form of an elephant. When he is born, he is endowed with the marks and signs of [a buddha]. It is prophesied that if he does not renounce the world, he will be a chakravartin monarch, and if he does, he will become a buddha. This is the scriptural establishment of the Buddha.

As for reasoning: The path taught by that Buddha establishes the selflessness of persons, etc., with potent reasoning. Since that is established as the path of liberation, the Buddha is the authoritative teacher for those who desire liberation, and the path that he teaches is established as authentic. It is established according to the teaching by the proof of valid cognition, etc.

Although they accept the Buddha, for the Śrāvakas who do not accept the Mahāyāna teaching of emptiness, the scriptural reference is found in the sūtras of the Hīnayāna: "Form is like the prominence of a bubble," and so on. As for reasoning: If the five skandhas are not seen as unreal in terms of not being [one or] many and in terms of momentariness, then not even the selflessness of persons can be established. The way of attaining liberation by relying upon emptiness is established according to the teaching of the *Ratnāvalī*.

For those on the sūtric path who do not accept the profound view and activity of secret mantra: The scriptural reference is the statement in the *gDams ngag 'bog pa'i rgyal po* sūtra that mantra would appear later. The *sDong po bkod pa'i mdo* says:

For those for whom the buddhas
And sentient beings are naturally equal,
Without abiding or accepting,
They will become tathāgatas.

Form, feeling, perception,
And consciousness—these thoughts
Are countless tathāgatas.
Those will become the great Muni.⁸¹⁶

Thus, here the five aggregates are taught to have the nature of the tathāgatas. The *Vimalakīrtiśūtra* says:

Mental afflictions are the bloodline of the tathāgatas.

And:

The teaching of liberation through desirelessness and so forth is taught for the excessively proud. Those without “I” are naturally liberated from desire, and so forth...

Also, the ‘*Jam dpa’ rnam par rol pa sūtra* and so forth teach that “emotional afflictions are the four vajras of enlightenment,” and so forth, teaching that emotional afflictions are gnoses. The ‘*Jam dpal rnam par ’phrul pa* and so forth teach that one does not meditate on nirvāṇa by eliminating saṃsāra, but teach that saṃsāra is enlightenment by saying, “The reifications of saṃsāra are nirvāṇa.” The *Avataṃsakasūtra* says:

The many realms of the world
Are inconceivable, but to put them into words,
The sky is indestructible,
And self-arisen gnosis is like that.

This is the teaching of self-arisen gnosis. In the sūtras one also finds the teaching that all sentient beings have the nature of self-arisen gnosis, and there are countless statements of Buddha Śākyamuni to the effect that “this world is extremely pure, but you do not see it.” As for the body of a woman giving pleasure to the Buddha, a sūtra says:

A bodhisattva, in order to please the tathāgatas, should emanate his body as a woman’s body, and should always remain in the presence of the tathāgatas.

And, there are statements that one should compassionately destroy those who harm the Dharma. These are statements from scripture.

As for reasoning: Since, according to the perception of those on the pure spiritual levels, all dharmas are naturally pure and all dharmas are equality, saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, good and bad, are not established as things to accept and abandon. According to this kind of teaching, secret mantra is supremely established. Beginning with the acceptance of emptiness, purity is also definitely established in stages.

Some people who have just glanced at the explanations of most mantra [systems] think that [what is explained in mantra] is not reasonable for the actionless Great Perfection. To them we say: The teaching in the tantric corpus of anuttarayogatantra that sentient beings have the nature of buddhas, that the aggregates and elements are practiced as divine purity, and how in the

ultimate meaning one does not need to rely upon *maṇḍalas* and *gtor mas*, are established by the scriptural passages that introduce gnosis in the context of the fourth initiation. The fact that awareness is established as primordial pure equality does not need to be established anew by the path; for those who have the confidence of understanding this, the fetters of activity and effort are well established as obstacles on the path. Therefore, relying upon the yoga of the natural flow of meditative equipoise, the ways of mastering the appearances of gnosis that are the effulgence of [awareness] are accomplished quickly and easily.

Thus, one should not take this to mean that as the lower [views] are not established, the higher ones are not established either; for the buddhas teach the different vehicles gradually, like stairs on a staircase, to purify the lineage and faculties of sentient beings as though they were gems. The *Nirvāṇasūtra* says:

Just like the stages of a staircase,
My profound teaching also
Should be gradually learnt and practiced diligently,
Not all at once, but gradually.

The great glorious Rong zom also taught how gradual progress is established, according to the example of earlier steps being gradually left behind by later ones. Thus, if one explains profound subjects to persons of meager intelligence who have not gained certainty in the earlier practices, they will be afraid and either abandon their practice, or the teachings will become the occasion for misconceptions, so it is advised that they be kept extremely secret. If one teaches the profound intention of the view of unsurpassable mantra to those who have gained certainty in the great equality of the sūtric system, they will accomplish it completely. That kind of person will be skilled in all the levels of the vehicles, and should be known as capable of accomplishing the philosophical system of the ultimate vajra pinnacle. This is established by the statement, "If those [persons] analyze only from the perspective of reasoning, they are limitless."⁸¹⁷

4.2.2.2.4.1.5 *Thus...* For those reasons, this wisdom that analyzes the nature of dharmas is without stains of partiality. As for establishing this supreme secret of the Great Perfection, which is to be established by way of the three genuine valid cognitions, it is said:

By the roar of the three genuine valid cognitions,
The deer of degraded views are terrified.
The lion's roar of the supreme vehicle pervades the three worlds.

Accordingly, we have the authoritative speech of the Victor in the great tantric corpuses, the authoritative instructions of masters in all the intentional treatises, and especially the authoritative instructions of the omniscient Rong zom Chos bzang. As it is said:

Scripture, meaning, reasoning, and logical reasons.
Appearance, conformity, reasonableness, and sealing.⁸¹⁸

Here, we have "appearing in the scriptures [of the Buddha]"; conforming to the meaning [of scripture]; reasonableness discovered through reasoning; and sealing by syllogisms. In these ways,

doubts about the authentic meaning of the probandum are eliminated.

Therefore, according to the meaning of those statements, one does not rely upon consciousness, but upon gnosis. To prove that the vision of the nature of that unique gnosis—which is the Buddha’s gnosis of the self-arisen and unfabricated, the great equal taste of the inseparable purity and equality that is the nature of all dharmas, whatever and however they exist—is a perfectly pure vision, the *Vārttika* says:

Valid cognition is nondeceptive cognition...

The one who has it is the Buddha, the embodiment of valid cognition.

[Valid cognition] realizes its own essence by itself.

Valid cognition is [known] from conventions.

Treatises reverse delusion.⁸¹⁹

According to this statement, if one properly considers analysis with authentic reasoning according to perfectly pure vision, it is beyond all disputes and demons of discordant wrong views, and hence it cannot be revoked by others. Because the object of the profound abiding nature of things is ripened by wisdom, one has no doubt about accomplishing the view; one does not need to concern oneself with others’ opinions,⁸²¹ and one is happy.

4.2.2.2.2.4.2 How this vehicle’s view and meditation are more exalted than those of other systems:
4.2.2.2.2.4.2.1 dispelling the erroneous concepts that arise from not understanding the meaning of this; 4.2.2.2.2.4.2.2 explaining the harmonious aspect, which is the authentic view.

4.2.2.2.2.4.2.1.1 Were the meaning of this an object of mind, it would contradict the skillful intention of the teacher; 4.2.2.2.2.4.2.1.2 explaining that the reason for this is that this meaning is beyond mind.

4.2.2.2.2.4.2.1.1 *However...* This may well be the pinnacle of all the tantric classes. But some people who are not able to investigate this properly claim that the main practice of the view of the Great Perfection conforms to a biased, exclusive appearance that is not empty; or they apprehend it as conforming to a biased, exclusive emptiness; or they claim that the “awareness” of the Great Perfection is a subtle aspect of mind. Thus, they teach [that the nature of awareness] is the object of mind and mental events. They say that what is beyond mind is mind, what is beyond mental analysis is a subtle aspect of mind, and try to express what is in fact beyond expression. This system contradicts the intention of the lord of scholars dGa’ rab rDo rje and others. The *Samdhinirmocanasūtra* says:

The immeasurable object of individual awareness

Is inexpressible and bereft of conventionality;

Free of debate, it is the ultimate dharma.

Its defining characteristic is that it is beyond all intellectualization.

4.2.2.2.2.4.2.1.2 *Since...* You might wonder why this intention contradicts those who are biased in favor of [either appearance or emptiness]. The Atiyoga that is the pinnacle of vehicles and the buddhas’ intent, insofar as it is the intention of the vast expanse free of extremes, the

inconceivable self-arisen gnosis of the great equality of appearance and emptiness, is simply beyond impure mind and mental events. The *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* says:

Expressibility is eliminated
Because the mind's object is eliminated;
Not born and not ceased,
Reality (*chos nyid*, *dharmatā*) is like nirvāṇa.⁸²⁵

4.2.2.2.2.4.2.2.1 The actual exposition of the manner of practicing the view and meditation;
4.2.2.2.2.4.2.2.2 how this Dharma terminology is just a synonym for the "indestructible drop" of other tantric systems.

4.2.2.2.2.4.2.2.1.1 The formless view of trekchö ; 4.2.2.2.2.4.2.2.1.2 the formal view of tögal,⁸²²
4.2.2.2.2.4.2.2.1.3 the inseparability of those two in self-arisen gnosis.

4.2.2.2.2.4.2.2.1.1 *Here...* Here in the Great Perfection we have both trekchö and tögal. A tantra says:

With the samādhi of the breakthrough of equipoise,
The delusions of subject and object are exhausted.
By cultivating the effulgence of spontaneously present awareness,
The kāyas and wisdoms are expanded in tögal.

First, one ascertains that all subjective and objective dharmas are the aspect of the nonelaborated emptiness of primordial purity. Having been introduced to the naked awareness that is the unfabricated self-awareness of emptiness and clarity, the elaborations and modal apprehension of all inner and outer appearances are cut off immediately. To maintain equipoise in that state is the view of breakthrough. The Great Omniscient one said, "Because of pacifying all elaborations, it is called trekchö."

4.2.2.2.2.4.2.2.1.2 *The view...* In determining that the aspect of natural clarity [of awareness] has the nature of the kāyas and wisdoms, which are the self-radiance that abides primordially as spontaneous presence, one induces certainty in the unfabricated inner expanse free of the vicissitudes of birth and death as being the youthful vase body. From within the state of primordial purity, with the crucial points of posture and gaze, and from the crucial point of wind and awareness with respect to external objects, in order to directly meet with the autoluminance of luminosity, there is the formal meditation of tögal.

4.2.2.2.2.4.2.2.1.3 *Are inseparable...* Both of these, formal and formless, involve the inseparability of awareness and emptiness. They are just the great self-arisen gnosis that is the coalescence of primordial purity and spontaneous presence. With respect to greater and lesser importance, one might posit the aspect of emptiness and the aspect of appearance [in relation to these two], respectively; but in fact there is no bias toward either one. The Great Omniscient One said:

The cessation aspect of mind is trekchö,

And the inner clarity of gnosis is tōgal.
As the integrated gnosis,
They are explained on the secret path of the innermost essence.

4.2.2.2.2.4.2.2.2 *Here...* In this tantra of the Great Perfection, it is not unreasonable to posit the “vase body of inner clarity”; indeed, the meaning of other tantric systems is clearly taught by this. The reason is that in the other tantric systems, the so-called “indestructible life-drop” or “*tīlaka* that is the essence of gnosis” are just synonyms along with “youthful vase body.” There is no reason why they should be dissimilar because one is a “drop” and the other a “body”; one cannot negate the other. If formally apprehended as a mental object, neither makes sense. Neither is actually the object of narrow-minded perception (*tshur mthong*, *arvāgdarśana*). The buddhas, who are authoritative persons capable of perceiving extremely esoteric objects, have spoken of both of them. Thus, since the indestructible drop that is naturally unfabricated is established as the *kāyas* and gnoses, in this tantric system of the Great Perfection the way in which the basis of the ultimate result—the buddha nature of indestructible luminosity—appears without impediment as the autoluminance that arises naturally as the *kāyas* and gnoses, is very clearly taught.

4.2.2.2.2.4.3 [How the individual pith instructions of other philosophical systems have the distinction of the mental class:] 4.2.2.2.2.4.3.1 How Mahāmudrā and so forth actually have the distinction of the mental class; 4.2.2.2.2.4.3.2 how the intention of all of those is identical; 4.2.2.2.2.4.3.3 moreover, how the gnosis of the fourth initiation of unexcelled yoga tantra is included in this.

4.2.2.2.2.4.3.1 *Each of...* In the tantric system of the Great Perfection, there are the mental, space, and esoteric instruction class divisions. Some portions of the instructions of the mental class were practiced by learned and accomplished masters of India, and in Tibet as well they have been practiced by holders of the philosophical systems of the new schools. The Mahāmudrā of the Kagyu, etc., the Path-Result of the Sakyapa, as well as the Pacification of Pha dam pa Sangs rgyas, and the Great Madhyamaka of Coalescence, and so forth, are known by different names, but in fact they do not go beyond the mental class. In the *bSam gtan ngal gso* it says:

The Prajñāparamitā, the Madhyamaka,
The Pacification of Elaborations and Suffering, Mahāmudrā,
The Great Perfection of the Essential Dharmatā,
Are the primordial place of cessation, the abiding reality of things,
Luminosity, mind-as-such (*sems nyid*), self-arisen gnosis.

4.2.2.2.2.4.3.2.1 The actual explanation; 4.2.2.2.2.4.3.2.2 eliminating doubts.

4.2.2.2.2.4.3.2.1 *For in fact...* Even though the names are different, because the meaning taught by all of these systems is the gnosis beyond mind, Madhyamaka, Mahāmudrā, and the Great Perfection, etc., are equal without any good or bad, higher or lower. For example, all scholars have said that the intention of the Buddha and the siddhas is the same.

4.2.2.2.2.4.3.2.2 *Some...* Some say that the Great Perfection tradition of our own Early Translation

school is superior to Mahāmudrā, and so forth. If one does not realize self-arisen gnosis, there is no convention of the path; if that is realized correctly, then everyone has the same understanding of the abiding nature that is free of elaboration. There is no reasonable distinction that can be made through reasoning that establishes superiority. The Great Omniscient One said:

If understood, everything [that] exists, everything is the display of dharmatā.
Primordially the case, the natural flow, it is self-arisen gnosis.
If this is not understood, even if there is space-like emptiness without elaboration,
It is a conceptual determination, and a fabrication of one's mind.⁸²³

4.2.2.2.4.3.3 *Likewise...* Not only are Madhyamaka, Mahāmudrā, Path-Result, etc., included in the mental class, the gnosis of the fourth initiation in the tantric classes of the old and new schools, which is actual luminosity, is entirely included without distinction in the natural Great Perfection. As it is said:

In the great king of self-awareness who realizes the meaning of equality,
Just as all rivers flow into the great ocean,
In these great methods whose meaning is taught by the master
All the inconceivable vehicles of liberation are included.

4.2.2.2.4.4 The extraordinary teaching: 4.2.2.2.4.4.1 there are many instructions, not known to other systems, that take direct [perception] as the path; 4.2.2.2.4.4.2 although that is the ultimate gnosis, on the path it is done gradually; 4.2.2.2.4.4.3 explaining its reasonableness through examples.

4.2.2.2.4.4.1 *However...* However, that gnosis of the Great Perfection that is the source of all those other tantras and vehicles is the general form (*spyi gzugs*) of all gnoses. The 'Jam dpal zhal lung says:

The Great Perfection is the general form of gnosis.
The perfectly pure kāya is the great Vajradhāra.

To differentiate these tantric systems of the teacher: the external is the mental class, the inner is the space class, and the secret is the instructional class. The profound and vast meaning differentiated by these classes is an excellent, amazing, wonderful, and superior secret meaning, which is not known to other philosophical systems that only practice a fragment of the instructions that are passed from mouth to ear. Since there are many extremely secret teachings not known to those other systems, it hardly needs to be said that this is an extraordinary Dharma. In the old days, there were many people who were able to pass unobstructed through the ground with the rainbow body achieved in the body of this life, because the guide on the path—the authentic view—was this extraordinary Dharma.

4.2.2.2.4.4.2 *There, the ultimate...* The Dharma that is to be practiced by those who have that kind of extraordinary Dharma is the ultimate gnosis of self-arisen awareness, the Great Perfection. It is not touched by conventions and objects of cognition, it is not taken up by intellect and cogitation, and it is pacified of elaborations of existence, nonexistence, etc. Because its natural radiance is

unobstructed, it is luminous; because it does not change in the three times, it is, of course, the unfabricated gnosis of the buddhas. Likewise, in the context of practicing the path, on the paths of accumulation and preparation it is homologous to that gnosis.

As for the stages of exemplary luminosity, actual luminosity, and the luminosity of coalescence on the paths of learning and nonlearning: the first two stages of the path of preparation are like a drawing of the moon, and the latter two stages are like the moon reflected in water. On the path of vision, the actual luminosity is like the moon in the sky. Also, on the path of accumulation, there is the understood generality of luminosity; on the path of preparation, there is the experienced exemplary luminosity; and on the path of vision, there is the actual luminosity of realization, and so forth. By practicing in this way, one is liberated.

4.2.2.2.4.4.3 *Each one...* If those earlier and later [levels of realization] are induced continuously, one after another, the self-arisen, undefiled gnosis that is [induced] in that way accords with the power of one's own mind, because it has been practiced. For example, in order to achieve the gnosis of the sublime paths, one meditates in a way that conforms to that [pristine cognition]. This is also found on the sūtric paths, and so forth.

[0.2.2.1.1.3.] 4.3 A summary:⁸²⁴ 4.3.1 differentiating and summarizing the contexts in which one needs and doesn't need analysis and modal apprehension; 4.3.2 demonstrating that biased apprehension has both advantages and faults.

[0.2.2.1.1.3.1] 4.3.1 *If one...* Thus, to summarize the meaning of whether or not one needs modal apprehension, analysis, and trance: As long as the great gnosis of self-awareness of the coalescence of appearance and emptiness that is the equanimity of dharmatā has not become manifest, it is mostly said that one needs both subtle and coarse analysis and modal apprehension.⁸²⁵ If one ascertains the individually cognized gnosis directly, intellectual analyses and views that have modal apprehension definitely subside, and one comes to see the meaning of nonelaborated coalescence directly.

[0.2.2.1.1.3.2] 4.3.2 *Therefore...* Therefore, for that reason, if one does not differentiate the various contexts in which one needs or does not need modal apprehension, or in which it is appropriate to engage in analytical or transic meditation, maintaining one-sidedly that there is or is not a modal apprehension, or likewise maintaining analysis and trance separately, has both advantages and faults. For example, it is like the moon, which grows larger as it waxes and smaller as it wanes. Our way of practicing here, which does not fall into any of those extremes, is established through reasoning in accordance with the scriptural sources of sūtra and tantra that express the definitive meaning. Therefore, having abandoned partiality, it is appropriate to engage whatever scripture and reasoning we have at our disposal, because we are not just looking for bones to put in our bowl, but are striving for liberation.

I say:

The vagaries of analysis are like juice without a container;

The stability of trance is like a container without juice.

The balance of insight and calm abiding free of bias

*Is like a pure land replete with animate and inanimate luxury.*⁸²⁶

Topic 5

[0.2.2.1.2.] 5. An explanation of which of the two truths is more important: 5.1 the question; 5.2 an extensive discussion of its meaning.

5.1 *Which...* Thus, the claim that there is no difference between the views of sūtra and tantra, and the claim that there is a difference, are stated in response to the question, "Which of the two truths is more important?"

5.2.1 Refuting other systems that maintain that either of two truths is more or less important; 5.2.2 expounding our own system, which maintains that there is no degree of importance in the inseparability of the two truths.

5.2.1.1 Refuting the claim that ultimate reality is more important; 5.2.1.2 refuting claim that deceptive reality is more important.

5.2.1.1.1 Setting up the pūrvapakṣa's claim; 5.2.1.1.2 refuting it.

5.2.1.1.1 *Some...* Some holders of philosophical systems in the new schools claim that ultimate reality is more important. Their reason is that the dharma-possessor, deceptive reality, is only "deluded appearance," and realized to be an adventitious object of abandonment. Ultimate reality is nondeluded and is the basic reality of things, so only the view of that ultimate reality is a perfectly pure view, they say.

5.2.1.1.2.1 The two truths are essentially nondifferent; 5.2.1.1.2.2 explaining why it is a mistake to cling to their difference.

5.2.1.1.2.1.1 Explaining the meaning of the statement that deceptive reality is delusive; 5.2.1.1.2.1.2 explaining that the two truths are of equal force whether they both exist or both do not exist.⁸²⁷

5.2.1.1.2.1.1 *If deceptive reality...* Of course, deceptive reality and ultimate reality are explained as being "delusive" and "nondelusive," respectively, but that doesn't mean that they are more and less important. If the deceptive appearances of dependent origination—the apprehension of self and dharmas as being truly existent—were not delusive, but true, then it would be impossible for the other aspect [of the two], ultimate reality, to be posited as emptiness; for besides the non-empty deceptive reality, there is nothing else to posit as empty. Therefore, although the statement "Deceptive reality is delusive" is used metonymically to indicate the ultimate reality of emptiness, aside from stating in effect that "a mind that apprehends a non-empty appearance is deluded," it does not mean that the mere appearance of deceptive reality should be abandoned. If that were the case, then the ultimate reality of emptiness would not be found, since ultimate reality is posited as the essential emptiness of deceptive reality.

5.2.1.1.2.1.2 *However...* Thus it is not reasonable to posit greater and lesser importance. If one abandons the dependently arisen appearance of deceptive reality, there is no empty or non-empty ultimate reality left over; appearance and emptiness are related as method and methodical result.

In dependence upon the appearance of this method of deceptive reality, one realizes the ultimate reality that is the methodical result of knowing its lack of intrinsic reality. And from the method of knowing ultimate reality as emptiness, one realizes the infallible occurrence of the appearance of deceptive reality as illusion-like relativity, as the methodical result of profound dependent origination. Without relying upon the entity that is investigated, or without relating to it, the non-entity of that entity cannot be, because each is posited in relation to the other. The *Avatāra* commentary says:

If this exist, this arises; for example,
If there is "long," there is "short."
If this is born, this arises; for example,
If a lamp arises, there is light.

For that reason, in relation to entities, there is production, and in relation to nonentities, there is designation; both are entirely equivalent, whether they exist or not, insofar as they are both mere appearances of dependent origination. The *Bodhicaryāvatāra* says:

When you say that something is "nonexistent,"
Unless you refer to the entity under investigation,
Its nonentity cannot be apprehended.⁸²⁸

5.2.1.1.2.2.1 How your position contradicts the tradition of the great system-builder Nāgārjuna;
5.2.1.1.2.2.2 how Candrakīrti's statement of fault applies equally to you; 5.2.1.1.2.2.3 therefore, how your position is mistaken with respect to the final meaning.

5.2.1.1.2.2.1 *If that...* If one only maintains ultimate emptiness, and if clinging to that excludes the deceptive reality of appearance, this makes a mess of the good system of the profound view of Nāgārjuna, according to which emptiness only arises as dependent origination. If appearance is excluded, there will be no distinction of greater or lesser importance. Also, if one clings to a non-empty appearance as being ultimate reality, even if that excludes other appearances of deceptive reality, it will also make a mess of the system of Nāgārjuna, because [his system] does not fall into a biased interpretation of appearance or emptiness as being the nature of things, which both of these positions do in their biased claims about appearance and emptiness.

5.2.1.1.2.2.2 *If by...* If one sees the ultimate reality of emptiness and cultivates that as the path, and if through that cultivation there is some kind of exclusive expanse of emptiness to be realized that excludes appearance, then that kind of emptiness seen by the equipoise of sublime beings would be a cause for destroying entities. This would not only apply to the Svātantrikas, but to you as well, because your equipoise would render nonexistent one half of the coalescence of emptiness and dependent origination. If the object to be realized is not exclusively emptiness, this would damage the claim that emptiness is most important.⁸²⁹

5.2.1.1.2.2.3 *Therefore...* For those reasons, even though all afflicted and purified dharmas abide primordially in emptiness, that emptiness does not exclude appearance. Because emptiness and appearance are not separate and distinct, the views that apprehend that only the ultimate truth of

emptiness is important, or that only some non-empty ultimate reality is important, are not adequate to the final meaning of the nature of things, because they are not established through reasoning.

5.2.1.2 The claim that deceptive reality is more important: 5.2.1.2.1 refuting the system of some Nyingmapas; 5.2.1.2.2 refuting other philosophical systems.

5.2.1.2.1.1 Staking the claim; 5.2.1.2.1.2 refuting it.

5.2.1.2.1.1 *Some people...* Some Nyingmapas exclude the ultimate reality of emptiness and posit the views of the tantric systems as higher and lower merely from the perspective of the deceptive reality of knowing the aspect of appearance as deities and maṇḍalas.

5.2.1.2.1.2.1 Deceptive reality alone cannot be an extraordinary Dharma; 5.2.1.2.1.2.2 explaining the reason for that through examples.

5.2.1.2.1.2.1 *Viewing oneself...* If that positing of higher and lower systems only from the perspective of deceptive reality is not completed by ultimate reality, or is not related to ultimate reality, then that kind of deceptive reality of divine appearance is not suitable as a teaching for ranking the views of the tantric systems of our own tradition. If the essence is not empty, then it is not right to establish anything as a deity, because that kind of deity is not possible as an object of cognition.

5.2.1.2.1.2.2 *Without having...* Therefore, if one does not have confidence in the realization of the great equality of apparent and possible phenomena—which is the abiding character of ultimate reality—to divide the two truths and meditate only the aspect of deceptive reality as a deity is only wishful thinking that is not completed by the view. It is not a meditation that possesses the meaning of the view that realizes the nature of things. For example, when one recites certain awareness mantras of heretical systems, one imagines that one's own body is different.

5.2.1.2.2.1 Expounding the way of ascertaining the philosophical system of the pūrvapakṣa; 5.2.1.2.2.2 refuting it by showing that its theory and praxis have gone their separate ways.

5.2.1.2.2.1 *Some say...* Some scholars of the new schools of the Land of Snows say that between the two truths, the appearance of dependent origination in deceptive reality is most important. The reason, they say, is that "the two truths of appearance and emptiness must be integrated." But then, again and again, they praise the position of deceptive reality and its establishment through conventional validating cognition. They say that deceptive reality is not empty of its own essence, because if it were empty, that would denigrate conventionality, and that, since it would be a nihilistic view, would be inappropriate.

5.2.1.2.2.2 *At that time...* Having made this explanation, when meditating on its meaning, that is, when maintaining the view of coalescence that has been ascertained in that way, they [in fact] abandon the coalescence that has been ascertained and do not meditate upon it. Instead, they explain that one meditates with modal apprehension on an exclusive emptiness that is the absence of true existence. This is like a thoughtless, wandering boy of meditative practice who

does not follow his mother—the view [ascertained] through study and reflection, according to good explanations. The meditation does not follow suit after the explanation. It is like, for example, throwing a *gtor ma* to the north for a ghost staying in the east.

5.2.2 Expounding our own system: 5.2.2.1 ascertaining the basis, the coalescence of the two truths; 5.2.2.2 according to their lineages and faculties, there are different paths for those who can or cannot correctly experience the meaning of the abiding reality of things; 5.2.2.3 summarizing by way of explanation that, by realizing and cultivating the coalescence of the two truths, one attains the result of the integrated two *kāyas*.

5.2.2.1.1 A brief demonstration, with respect to the inseparability of appearance and emptiness, that our own tradition, the Early Translation school, does not fall into any bias of intrinsic emptiness, non-emptiness, permanence, nonpermanence, and so forth; 5.2.2.1.2 an extensive explanation of that meaning; 5.2.2.1.3 summarizing with the idea that this is the cornerstone of the authentic view of all of *sūtra* and *tantra*.

5.2.2.1.1 *Therefore...* Thus, in explaining the basic meaning, some positions of the new schools, as explained before, maintain that the basic buddha nature is impermanent and empty. In that respect, the *sūtras* of the intermediate turning that teach emptiness and their interpretive commentaries are said to be of definitive meaning, and the *sūtras* of the final turning and their interpretive commentaries are said to be of provisional meaning. Also, some claim that the buddha nature is not empty of essence, and is stable and permanent; they say that the *sūtras* and interpretive commentaries of the final turning are of definitive meaning, and the scriptures and interpretive commentaries of the middle turning are of provisional meaning. Thus, with a few exceptions, most of them interpret the scriptures and commentaries through dividing them in this way.

Some *sūtras*, such as the *Akṣayamatipariṣcchā* and the *Samādhirāja*, say that the middle turning is definitive; some, such as the *Dharaṇīśvarapariṣcchā*, praise the final turning as supreme, and the *Samdhinirmocana*, and so forth, say that the final turning is of definitive meaning. Some sources agree with others, and some do not.

Therefore, here in our own tradition of the Early Translation school, in our terminology of the basic nature of objects of cognition, the dharmas of the path that is traveled, and the essence of the result that is to be attained, we do not favor either side of the two truths by asserting either permanence or impermanence, or an empty or a non-empty appearance, and so forth. Not falling into any extreme, we maintain only the philosophical system of the equanimity of the coalescence of appearance and emptiness that is free of the ambivalence of false imagination. As it is said:

If a fortunate disciple practices *sūtra* and mantra
Properly, without being influenced by others' ways....

Accordingly, whether it is the *sūtric* or *tantric* path under consideration, we do not have any interpretive bias. With respect to *sūtra*, the *sūtras* and interpretive commentaries of the middle turning emphasize and explain the way of engaging the ultimate reality of the buddha nature, the abiding reality of coalescence of the two truths; therefore, they teach the abiding character of

primordial purity. Also, the sūtras and interpretive commentaries that teach the essence of the final turning emphasize the systems of the conventionality of the appearance of the buddha nature, which is the abiding nature of the coalescence of the two truths; thus, they are held to teach the system of the spontaneous presence of the qualities of natural clarity. Therefore, it was said, “All the scriptures and interpretive commentaries are perfect.”

Likewise, as far as Mantrayāna is concerned, not only do we maintain that all of the branches of the tantric systems and practice systems of the old and new schools, as well as the distant lineage of the transmitted precepts of the Nyingmapa, are authentic paths, the close lineage of treasures and its branches are complete and perfect. It says:

In the scriptural great ocean of true speech,
The jewels of the profound Dharma treasure are beautifully manifest.

According to the previous explanation, in the teaching of the final nature of reality that integrates all those [scriptures and commentaries], when one has determined the coalescence of primordial purity and spontaneous presence, one practices the coalescent self-arisen gnosis on either the path of trekchö or tögal. The result, the purity of the inner expanse, is held to be the attainment of the goal of the inseparable coalescence of the three kāyas. The commentary to the *Sems nyid ngal gso* says:

In the apparent aspect of the natural luminosity of the mind—which abides primordially, is the holy gnosis of the buddhas, the nature of mind, whose essence is stainless and which is naturally pure—the qualities of the formal kāyas of the buddhas are spontaneously present. This is taught with nine examples. For the emptiness aspect, the quality of dharmakāya is explained in all the sūtras and tantras as being like space. The inseparability of those two [the dharmakāya and the formal kāyas] is the virtue of the beginningless dharma realm. Because it is changeless, it is the naturally abiding lineage, and because it is purified of stains and has extensively manifested qualities, it is called the “expanded lineage” (*rgyas gyur gyi rigs*). But at its root, it is just the luminous gnosis of self-awareness.

Also, along the same lines, the great Rong zom said:

By realizing the two truths inseparably, one can engage dharmas and dharmatā nondualistically. This is called “abiding in the view of the Great Perfection.”

5.2.2.1.2 The extensive explanation: 5.2.2.1.2.1 a general explanation of the inseparability of the two truths; 5.2.2.1.2.2 explaining the need for beginners to realize this gradually.

5.2.2.1.2.1.1 Setting up the proof of the inseparability of the two truths; 5.2.2.1.2.1.2 establishing the pervasion for that.

5.2.2.1.2.1.1.1 Establishing the subject (*phyogs chos*) [of the syllogism] [by demonstrating that] one cannot posit the basis, path, and result if either of the two truths is taken individually as a basis; 5.2.2.1.2.1.1.2 in the context of any of those three, taking the position that there is no accepting or

abandoning of the two truths; 5.2.2.1.2.1.1.3 establishing that with the logical reason that the inseparable essence is equanimity.

5.2.2.1.2.1.1.1 *If deceptive...* The reason for not dividing the two truths is that the basis, path, and result cannot be posited on the basis of either deceptive reality or ultimate reality, if either of those two is taken separately. For exclusive emptiness and exclusive appearance cannot possibly be objects of cognition. The object of cognition and the object of attainment are impossible; if they are impossible, the path that connects the two of them as agent and agenda cannot be posited.

5.2.2.1.2.1.1.2 *Basis, path...* Therefore, our position is that, with respect to the aspect of appearance and the aspect of emptiness, the triad of the basis, path, and result does not involve any acceptance of “this” aspect, on the one hand, and abandonment of “that” aspect on the other. For once one has abandoned deceptive reality, there is no ultimate reality of exclusive emptiness, and once one has abandoned the ultimate reality of emptiness, there is no other exclusive appearance of deceptive reality either.

5.2.2.1.2.1.1.3 *Whatever appears...* By virtue of that absence, whatever appears is pervaded by emptiness, because if that appearance is analyzed, it is not established. Whatever is empty is pervaded by appearance, because if the emptiness is analyzed, it is the nature of that appearance; and sublime beings see emptiness arising as dependent origination. Moreover, it is impossible for whatever appears not to be empty, because if a sublime being sees it as empty and if one analyzes it, it cannot possibly be established as immune to analysis. Also, emptiness is not established as not appearing, because the nature of appearance is analyzed into emptiness, and it is impossible to have an independent emptiness as an object of cognition. Therefore, if something appears, it is impossible for it not to be empty; and if something is empty, it cannot be nothing whatsoever—the two cannot be separated. This is the nature of things.

5.2.2.1.2.1.2 Establishing the pervasion: 5.2.2.1.2.1.2.1 although appearance and emptiness are different isolates, in relation to their inseparable essence, both are mere designations; 5.2.2.1.2.1.2.2 even from the perspective of ascertaining the isolates by two valid cognitions, they are inseparable as method and methodical result; 5.2.2.1.2.1.2.3 with respect to the way of inducing certainty through valid cognition in the inseparable essence [of the two truths], the convention of “the coalescence of appearance and emptiness” conforms to things as they are; 5.2.2.1.2.1.2.4 these two truths, in the context of the valid cognition that analyzes the way ultimate reality abides, are different isolates of one essence.

5.2.2.1.2.1.2.1 *Since both...* From the perspective of an analysis of the final ultimate reality, produced substantial entities and nonsubstantial entities that are dependently designated are both by nature dependently originated. Therefore, aside from being [separately] posited as the dharma-possessors that are bases of emptiness, they are no different in being necessarily empty. Thus, having divided the two truths, all aspects of the posited appearance of deceptive reality are just designations that depend upon emptiness. Because it depends upon appearance, conceptual emptiness (*stong pa nam grangs pa*) is also just a designation of the intellect. Therefore, in the final meaning, both are the same in not being established.

5.2.2.1.2.1.2.2 *For the certainty...* With certainty about that manner [of inseparability] of the two truths—which is induced through authentic analysis by reason or through the two validating cognitions—[it is seen that] they are mutually dependent as method and methodical result; without one, the other is impossible. It is not the case that they were previously combined; nor is it the case that what was previously combined has been rent asunder.

5.2.2.1.2.1.2.3 *Therefore...* For those reasons, appearance and emptiness are both capable of being expressed and known verbally and conceptually in all systems of the two truths, as different isolates. But since they have the same essence, they can never in fact be separated. Thus the expression “coalescence of the two truths,” since, from the perspective of the confidence that sees the abiding nature of things, appearance and emptiness do not fall into any extreme whatsoever.

5.2.2.1.2.1.2.4 *In the perspective...* From the perspective of the two validating cognitions that analyze the nature of things authentically, both appearance and emptiness are different isolates of the same essence, such that if one of them exists, the other equally exists; and if one of them does not exist, the other equally does not exist. We maintain the division of the two truths in this way. In the *Shing rta chen po* it says:

The two truths are not different like two horns. When seeing the abiding reality of deception as being like the reflection of the moon in water, the aspect of the appearance of the form of the moon is deceptive reality, and from the perspective of the moon not being real, there is ultimate reality. Those two have one essence, apparent though nonexistent in the pond; [thus one should understand] the inseparability or coalescence of the two truths. Therefore, as a mere conventionality, water and the reflection of the moon in water are of one essence and are different isolates, etc.

And so on. The *Theg mchog mdzod* says:

With respect to the apparent aspect of deceptive reality, there is spontaneous presence, and with respect to the emptiness aspect of ultimate reality, there is primordial purity. Aside from being mere verbal expressions, those two are not different substances and are not independent, just as there is no contradiction in saying, “If he is a Brahmin, he is a man,” or “a vow-holder is a renunciate.”

The great Rong zom said:

As mere deceptive realities, dharmas and dharmatā have the same nature. Because ultimately all elaborations are pacified, they are nondual. That is the meaning of enlightened awareness.

5.2.2.1.2.2 How, by practicing that, the four stages of Madhyamaka appear gradually: *Nonetheless...* Moreover, beginners who are practicing that meaning of the two truths (1) ascertain emptiness through Mādhyamika reasoning and cultivate it; then appearance appears like a negandum, and emptiness appears like a negation. (2) At that time, even though emptiness and appearance are not mixed together, one meditates again and again on the nature of that appearance as emptiness,

and (3) when the nature of that emptiness appears, in spite of being empty, one attains confidence in coalescence. (4) Once again, appearance and emptiness are not mixed together, but rather, primordial emptiness as well as appearance are coalescent. Being empty of elaborations, they appear even though empty,⁸³⁰ and although apparent, they are seen as empty. Thus, one generates certainty in the equality of appearance and emptiness.

5.2.2.1.3 Summarizing: *This....* This equality of the coalescence of appearance and emptiness is the root of all profound points of the paths of sūtra and commonly held tantric systems, as well as of the pith instructions that are not held in common with [lower systems]. This meaning, which eliminates all false conceptions through the study of and reflection upon the scriptures and interpretive commentaries, is the unmistakable authentic view that is the foundation of all practices of sūtra and tantra. Thus, one must analyze [and determine] its unmistakableness. Mañjuśrī Sakya Paṇḍita said:

Some other Dharmas that lack the crucial points
Are not complete, go too far,
Or are somewhat in error, so
One cannot take great pleasure in them.
If one distorts the crucial points of Dharma,
Even though it looks good, one will not reach buddhahood.
Therefore, in some [systems] it is easy to make mistakes.
One needs to analyze crucial points without mistakes.

5.2.2.2 The different paths: 5.2.2.2.1 with the view of the subject who realizes the crucial point of the inseparability of the two truths progressively, the [four and]six tantric systems are posited; 5.2.2.2.2 according to philosophical systems that are, or are not, complemented by that view, there are various ways of practicing the tantric systems; 5.2.2.2.3 if there are not different levels of views in the tantric systems, their different modes of activity would be mistaken; 5.2.2.2.4 the especially exalted meditations and activities of [the higher tantras] exist because of that.

5.2.2.2.1.1 Brief demonstration; 5.2.2.2.1.2 extensive explanation; 5.2.2.2.1.3 summary.

5.2.2.2.1.1 *By realizing...* That crucial point of the inseparability of the two truths is taught and realized more and more profoundly with respect to the differences among the various vehicles. Thus, if that naturally pure emptiness and the dharma-possessor of appearance that is inseparable from it are capable of abandoning clinging to impure, ordinary characteristics without depending on anything else, then the various higher and lower levels of the view of the “vehicle of tantric systems” appear to be the same with respect to the crucial point of integrating the two truths. The *Wish-fulfilling Treasury* says:

There, at first it is important to know the nature of things.
Though there are many types of vehicle,
The determinate essence is the inseparability of the [two] truths.
This is the treasure house of all the buddhas.

5.2.2.2.1.2 The extensive explanation: 5.2.2.2.1.2.1 a general discussion of the difference between wishful-thinking meditation (*mos bsgom*) and complete certainty; 5.2.2.2.1.2.2 because we do not teach that the two truths that qualify the view are separate, that fault mentioned earlier does not also apply to us.

5.2.2.2.1.2.1.1 Explanation that the views of wishful thinking meditation and complete certainty are not the same; 5.2.2.2.1.2.1.2 demonstrating the specifics of that through examples.

5.2.2.2.1.2.1.1 *Intellectual...* If you think that the meditation on one's own body and so forth as divine are meditations, but not a view—this is obviously true, but it is also possible that they are meditations that are not complemented by a view. With that kind of intellectual wishful thinking, aside from meditating on [the mere form of] divinity, one has no understanding of the way things are. To determine that the animate and inanimate universes are deities and mansions through scripture and reasoning, and then to meditate on the meaning of the view in which one has become confident through the certainty of knowing the abiding nature of things, is something else. Although both are called "meditation," there is no way they could be the same.

5.2.2.2.1.2.1.2 *The determination...* For example, in Madhyamaka the ascertainment of all dharmas as being empty of true existence is a view. It is not the same as when a Brahmin recites a mantra over a sick person and has the view of wishing that the person were not sick. Therefore, these two are different in being or not being [informed by the] view of dharmatā. Here, the difference between having previously integrated the dharma-possessing view with dharmatā, and not having previously done it, is like the earth and sky.

5.2.2.2.1.2.2.1 How the divine appearance of deceptive reality arises from the attainment of a clear perception of ultimate reality; 5.2.2.2.1.2.2.2 thus, how the ranking of the paths is not just with respect to ultimate reality; 5.2.2.2.1.2.2.3 therefore, the ranking of the six tantric systems is taught with respect to differences in their capacity to cultivate vision of the inseparability of the two truths.

5.2.2.2.1.2.2.1 *By realizing...* Thus, by realizing the conformity of the abiding and apparent natures in the state of the ultimate abiding nature of the coalescence of the two truths, one has confidence that all aspects of the dharma-possessor—deceptive reality—are the unobstructed divine appearance of the expanse. Besides this view, some assert that the vision of sublime beings is only emptiness, and by the power of that, in some other place or another, there is a buddha adorned with the marks and signs. If one persists in apprehending that deluded appearances—which comprise suffering and emotional afflictions—are established just as they appear by way of their own characteristics, one will not know the abiding nature of the dharma-possessor at all. How can these appearances be established as divine? For this is to maintain that worldly vision is valid cognition.

5.2.2.2.1.2.2.2 *Aside from...* Aside from the mistaken appearances comprised by both subject and object, the animate and inanimate universe, there is no such thing as "saṃsāra," because the nature of suffering that is to be abandoned is precisely this. The divisions of the path that cause the abandonment of impure saṃsāra—the nine vehicles—do not exist from the exclusive

perspective of ultimate reality, because the mode of ultimate reality is unitary. The *Sher rgyan* says:

Because the dharmadhātu is indivisible,
Lineages cannot be different.⁸³¹

5.2.2.2.1.2.2.3 *With respect to...* Thus, these factors of dualistic appearance of the dharma-possessor—deceptive reality—are gradually cultivated and seen as nondual with reference to the basic reality of the ultimate dharmatā, like ice gradually melting into water. By the power of that cultivation, to the whatever extent that one develops the ability to understand the coalescence of the two truths, one will attain certainty in the great pure equality of actual and potential phenomena. The various tantras—the kriyātantra, its functional equivalent caryātantra, yogatantra, and anuttarayogatantra—are taught with those views in mind.⁸³²

5.2.2.2.1.3 *Summary: Therefore...* Thus, for that reason, the ranking of the tantric systems is not done with respect to either of the two truths individually. If an abiding nature that is an exclusive appearance or emptiness is not possible, and if its realization is also not possible, then a Dharma that ranks the tantric systems as higher and lower [according to such a nature] will be nonexistent. Thus, to whatever degree one has cultivated the abiding nature of the coalescence of the two truths and attained confidence through it, all of one's practice of meditation and activity will follow suit, because the view and meditation are necessarily practiced in connection with each other.

5.2.2.2.2 The difference between how our own and other tantric systems are practiced: 5.2.2.2.2.1 the difference between ascertaining and not ascertaining the authentic abiding reality through the view; 5.2.2.2.2.2 the difference of a result arising or not arising from meditation.

5.2.2.2.2.1.1 How meditation on the meaning of the view that correctly realizes the abiding nature is free of doubt; 5.2.2.2.2.1.2 demonstrating that by not understanding that, meditating with doubts has no result.

5.2.2.2.2.1.1 *Therefore...* Therefore, as explained above, if one correctly practices without error the three paths of the extraordinary quick unexcelled Vajrayāna path—the creation phase, completion phase, and coalescence—which bestow liberation in a single lifetime, it goes without saying that one should [follow the practices of] accepting and abandoning [modes of conduct] according to the example of the different perceptions of beings who see water in different ways that are impure, and buddhas, who see it as pure. For, among those various visual perceptions, in dependence upon the vision that is purified of sullyng obscurations, who would not become confident about the utterly pure sublime vision of the self-arisen maṇḍala of actual and potential phenomena abiding in the basis? It would be unreasonable not to be confident. For example, it is appropriate for sublime beings to have confidence in the emptiness of all dharmas.

5.2.2.2.2.1.2 *If you...* If one doesn't know how to experience the animate and inanimate universe abiding as divinities and mansions through authentic valid cognition, and asserts that there is nothing else besides this truth of suffering, which is the nature of saṃsāra—the impure

appearances of karma, emotional afflictions, and the resultant origination of suffering—then it will be difficult to accomplish the goal of inseparability from divinity by meditating upon Cakrasaṃvara, Hevajra, Vajrabhairava, Guhyasamāja, etc. For example, like a vase filled with vomit, if one has no view of realizing the pure abiding nature, and sees things as impure, then meditating upon the generation and completion phases and thinking that the calm abiding and mere methods are the special teachings of the Vajrayāna is like spraying the outside of the vase with perfume. This is not to see the special teaching of Vajrayāna, and Mipham thinks, “Alas! All the meditations on the meaning of the Vajrayāna, [which teaches] the equality of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, would be just like a drawing of a butter lamp; with only an image, it would be difficult to dispel the darkness of ignorance and illuminate the realization of the pure equality of the abiding nature.”

5.2.2.2.2.1 Showing how, having distinguished modes of reality and appearance, one connects the view and meditation by meditating according to the mode of reality; 5.2.2.2.2.2 the opposite of that.

5.2.2.2.2.1 *The way things appear...* Those claims do not distinguish the modes of reality and appearance. In that mode of appearance, the five appropriated aggregates of sentient beings of the impure animate and inanimate worlds appear as impure. Who would assert this as the result of accomplishment or a philosophical system? That sort of appearance is the “philosophical system” that is posited by a mistaken mind that clings to impure appearances that are the result accomplished by delusion—karma and emotional afflictions.

With respect to what actually exists, it is not appearance, but the abiding nature, that is great pure equality. Whose philosophical system is this? Having consummated the result of accomplishment on the authentic path, the inseparability of the two truths, which is the pure equality that is the object seen by pure vision, is maintained as the inseparability of the basis and result, and is expounded as the philosophical system of the Vajrayāna. Thus, having discriminated individual philosophical systems, it is appropriate to practice all views and meditations according to the philosophical system of the Vajrayāna, since it is the Vajrayāna that directly sets up the vision of gnosis, and because one should not rely upon consciousness, but upon gnosis.

If a philosophical system that establishes things according their appearance for deluded perception actually corresponded to the way things are,⁸³³ the emptiness that is the emptiness of true existence would not be established and that [system] would be in error, because it would apprehend self and dharmas as truly existent. For if one analyzes things, they are not established, they abide in emptiness. And since the appearances of the impure animate and inanimate universe are also not established if analyzed, according to pure vision, the animate and inanimate universes are the same in abiding both as a pure basis and as that which is based upon it.

5.2.2.2.2.2.1 The view and meditation are not connected; 5.2.2.2.2.2.2 demonstrating through examples that that cannot achieve the result.

5.2.2.2.2.2.1 *Seeing...* Conversely, if one thinks, “the external animate realm and internal animate realm do not have the nature of a pure basis and that which is based upon it, deities and mansions,” and while seeing them as impure, one meditates on the generation and completion

phases, thinking, “they are deities and mansions”—that is just a separation of the view and the meditation, and is a sign that clearly indicates that the philosophical system has the fault of internal contradiction. Though it satisfies others, that path is a hollow reflection of the Vajrayāna. For example, if one washes coal, it does not become white, and there is no way to make it white.

5.2.2.2.2.2.2 *Likewise...* Though it doesn’t have anything to do with the real meaning, if with a fabricated meditation that thinks, “I am a deity” it were possible to attain the goal of a resultant deity, then consequently, without any certainty in the emptiness of true existence, the heretical Sun-worshippers (*nyi ma pa*), and so forth, would be able to realize selflessness by meditating on an emptiness bereft of appearance and abandon the emotional afflictions. The reasoning is the same [as in the previous example of a vase].

5.2.2.2.3.1 Setting up the claim that there are no differences in the views [of the different tantric systems]; 5.2.2.2.3.2 refuting it.

5.2.2.2.3.1 *What if...* Certain philosophical systems in Tibet maintain that *kriyā*, *caryā*, yoga, and anuttarayoga tantras have different methods of meditation and activity, but do not have any differences in their respective views.

5.2.2.2.3.2.1 If the lower tantric systems had the same view as the higher tantric systems, activity would contradict the view; 5.2.2.2.3.2.2 if the higher systems had no view other than the lower systems’ view, then the profound activity [of the higher tantras] would be pointless.

5.2.2.2.3.2.1 *If you have confidence...* If, in the lower tantric systems, in spite of having confidence in the view that realizes the great equal purity according to the higher tantras, one viewed oneself, the pledge being (*dam tshig pa*), and the deity as wisdom being (*ye shes pa*), as “good” and “bad,” or as “master” and “slave,” and, while maintaining pure behavior, apprehended impure things as something to abandon, then that would be to discriminate good and bad, acceptance and abandonment, without respect to the view. Not meditating according to the meaning of the view, one would go astray from the authentic path, and this would only be an obstacle to quickly achieving the result.

5.2.2.2.3.2.2 *And...* If, in accord with the lower tantric systems, one maintained the view that clings to good and bad, acceptance and abandonment, and if one undertook the profound secret activities of the higher systems, such as union and liberation, and acted within the equality of acceptance and abandonment, without considering what is clean and unclean, without abandoning meat and alcohol, etc., then wouldn’t this be the “reckless behavior of not understanding the view” in which the view and behavior are contradictory, which is condemned by the wise?

5.2.2.2.4.1 With respect to how the nine vehicles integrate the two truths, how one maintains meditation and activity in the state of ascertaining the view; 5.2.2.2.4.2 disposing of doubts about that.

5.2.2.2.4.1 *The view...* Whether one considers *sūtra* or *tantra*, the different types of meditation and

action follow after their respective views. Their views are said to be precisely how they have the confidence of seeing the profound meaning of the abiding nature of things. Thus, with respect to sharp and dull faculties, there are higher and lower views; but in accordance with how the view of each vehicle ascertains the meaning of the abiding nature without any doubt, so do they abandon and accept things in their activity. The *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti* says, "Having awareness and legs."⁸³⁴

5.2.2.2.4.2 Disposing of faults: 5.2.2.2.4.2.1 setting up the dispute about the indefiniteness of nine vehicles; 5.2.2.2.4.2.2 demonstrating the response that disposes of it—the response that the fault applies equally.

5.2.2.2.4.2.1 *Because...* "If in your tradition you posit nine levels of vehicle, then because you differentiate those nine with respect to their views, there are not definitely nine, because the view is certainty, and it is not certain that certainty has many different forms."

5.2.2.2.4.2.2 *From the lowest...* That is not a fault. Among Buddhist philosophical systems, from the lowest system of the *śrāvakas* up to the peak of the ultimate *Vajrayāna*, the *Atiyoga*, there is a reason for positing each of the nine. What is that? Even though there are many higher and lower vehicles, if one condenses their type, they can be summarized as the three vehicles of *śrāvakas* and *bodhisattvas*, etc.; those are established by necessity. If, with respect to the differences of disposition, intelligence, and aspiration among superior, mediocre, and inferior disciples, etc., it is appropriate to posit three vehicles, then it is also appropriate to posit nine. If they are not definitely nine in number, then they are not definitely three either.

5.2.2.3 A summary of the meaning of attaining the result of the coalescence of the two *kāyas*:
5.2.2.3.1 there are different ways of seeing with respect to great and small powers of gnosis,
5.2.2.3.2 by practicing according to the way of seeing the conformity of actual and apparent modes, one attains the result.

5.2.2.3.1 *Thus...* Therefore, although there is no difference in the *dharmadhātu*, which is the coalescence of appearance and emptiness, the condition for increasing the subjective internal gnosis is the distinction of sharp intelligence, practice of the path, etc. To whatever extent the power of gnosis has been previously increased, to that extent one sees that animate and inanimate realms naturally abide in primordial purity. For example, if one is cured of an eye problem, one sees the whiteness of a conch shell more clearly; thus, when the subject-mind has an impediment, the conch is seen to be yellow, so it is seen impurely. Therefore, those various ways of seeing, where actual and apparent modes are or are not concordant, refer to the subjective mind, but not to any difference in the object.

5.2.2.3.2 *Therefore...* For that reason, without mistaking the basic abiding nature of the inseparable truths of appearance and emptiness, a mind that is authentically concordant with its object realizes the two truths as being inseparable. By cultivating the path of the inseparability of the generation and completion phases in that way, one attains the gnosis of [knowing everything] that is just as it is, which is the fruition of the integrated two *kāyas*, and one will be able to liberate disciples of the high and low vehicles.

I say:

*Wishing to imbibe sweet juice from the fruit of an excellent view,
Even though one collects the milk of ultimate reality,
Without this fine brass vessel of deceptive reality,
Bare emptiness gets burnt in the Mādhyamika oven.*⁸³⁵

Topic 6

[0.2.2.2.] Secondly, the explanation of the view of the subjective viewer: 6.1 the question about what the commonly perceived object is, and 6.2 an extensive explanation of its meaning.

6.1 *When a single...* The perfect Buddha, who taught the ways of acceptance and abandonment, appeared in the world of human beings, and the exponents of his teaching are human beings; so in this context “water” is taken as a topic of discussion. In that respect, various beings perceive it variously as the viable (*don byed nus*, *arthakriyā*) substances of pus, blood, nectar, and so forth. Among those, which is the commonly perceived object? This is the question.

6.2 The extensive explanation: 6.2.1 refuting other systems that claim that different subjects perceive the same object; 6.2.2 our own system, which teaches the indivisible basis of appearance and emptiness as the object of perception; 6.2.3 neither emptiness nor appearance, if divisible [from one another], can possibly be an object of perception; 6.2.4 explaining the necessity of ascertaining the common object of perception in our own system.

6.2.1.1 refuting the claim that water is the common object; 6.2.1.2 refuting the claim that liquidity is the common object; 6.2.1.3 the summary of both of those into one meaning.

6.2.1.1.1 Setting up the pūrvapakṣa’s claim and 6.2.1.1.2 refuting it.

6.2.1.1.1 *Some say...* Some scholars say that the common object of beings’ perceptions is water. By dint of the fact that it is water, they say minds that perceive it as such are valid cognizers, and those for whom it appears otherwise are mistaken.

6.2.1.1.2 Refuting that: 6.2.1.1.2.1 if only water were established as the common object, both valid cognizers and nonvalid cognizers would be impossible; 6.2.1.1.2.2 if there were no common object, an object of perception would be impossible.

6.2.1.1.2.1 *If water...* If, from the perspective of a mind [that analyzes] ultimate reality, there were a water that was established by way of its own non-empty nature, and [thus] beings unanimously perceived water, all of them would be valid cognizers. But if on that same basis there were no other nonvalid cognition and its corresponding perception, such as pus, blood, nectar, and so forth, it would be impossible for valid and invalid cognitions to be distinguished, because if one is not present, the other, which depends upon it, is not possible.

6.2.1.1.2.2 *If the various...* On the other hand, if various beings’ individual visual perceptions, such as water, pus, nectar, and so forth, were not based on a commonly appearing object, they would not be based upon the same thing. This would be similar to, for example, the minds of a single

person that variously perceive pillars, vases, etc. If a common object were not possible for [different] sentient beings, it would be like the system of the Vijñaptimātrins.

6.2.1.2.1 The pūrvapakṣa; and 6.2.1.2.2 refuting it.

6.2.1.2.1 *Some say...* Also, some scholars say that since water, pus, blood, and so forth, all without a doubt possess liquidity, that must be the common object.

6.2.1.2.2 Its refutation: 6.2.1.2.2.1 it is not reasonable for liquidity to be a basis of perception; and 6.2.1.2.2.2 refutation by analysis of whether it is the same as or different than the water.

6.2.1.2.2.1.1 If liquidity is the basis of perception, visual perceptions of it would have to be nondifferent; 6.2.1.2.2.1.2 the different visual perceptions would have nothing to perceive; 6.2.1.2.2.1.3 demonstrating indetermination for the infinite space realm.

6.2.1.2.2.1.1 *But if...* Thus, if the dissimilar visual perceptions of the beings of the six realms unmistakably possessed the individual characteristic of liquidity as the common object of their various perceptions, then those beings would not be able to have different visual perceptions, because [liquidity] would have an individual characteristic and would be able to stand on its own. If there were no such individual characteristic, and water, pus, and nectar were simply known as mutually exclusive aspects of liquidity,⁸³⁶ to claim a basis of perception would be pointless, because it would be nonsubstantial. It would be like the saying:

Whether a eunuch is beautiful or not—

What good does it do for a desirous person to consider this?

In some texts it says, “many arise,” which is a bit awkward, so one should investigate whether this is a typographical error.⁸⁴¹

6.2.1.2.2.1.2 *If what one...* Thus, if the water and so forth that are seen by each of the six realms’ beings is not there for the gods, for example, because they see nectar, then one cannot posit what the common object of perception for the water, pus, and so forth, of those dissimilar [perceptions] would be. For liquidity cannot have several different visual perceptions, and water, pus, etc., are different visual perceptions, and having and not having distinct perceptions are mutually exclusive. Thus, a single basis of perception would become many, as in the case of individual visual perceptions of pillars, vases, etc.

6.2.1.2.2.1.3 *Moreover...* Also, if there is a basis of perception such as liquidity, it becomes indefinite for the beings of the infinite space realm. When they perceive nothing but space, what kind of basis will liquidity be? It won’t be.

6.2.1.2.2.2 *Liquidity...* If “liquidity” were identical to the water that is the visual perception relative to human beings, it would not be appropriate for liquidity to appear in pus and so forth, for that very reason.⁸³⁸ Also, if it were different from the water perceived by humans, it would likewise

also be distinct from pus, nectar, and so forth; so as the identifying characteristic of liquidity is not perceived anywhere, this would be mere fancy.⁸³⁹

6.2.1.3 Combining the meanings together: 6.2.1.3.1 positing in relation to a contextual object of perception; and 6.2.1.3.2 showing the final object of perception to be a mere appearance.

6.2.1.3.1.1 The actual [argument]; and 6.2.1.3.1.2 at the time of positing the object of perception, it is unreasonable for it to appear to the mind.

6.2.1.3.1.1 *It is not possible...* For those reasons, for the various individual visual perceptions, such as water, pus, and blood, a common perceptual object is not possible, because it is impossible for those beings to perceive a commonly appearing substance, such as water, pus, and so forth. Therefore, that basis of appearance, from the perspective of humans, is water, and in reference to gods, is nectar. Aside from a mere appearance, which is not immune to analysis, and which dependently arises from positing a variety of perceptions on a single objective basis, if one maintained the existence of a basis that was immune to analysis by the two kinds of valid cognition, it would have to be established as the abiding character of reality, because no matter how one analyzes [the basis] in relation to the two truths, it is simply not reasonable.

6.2.1.3.1.2 The unreasonableness of appearing to the mind: 6.2.1.3.1.2.1 the unreasonableness of maintaining cognition as the object, like the Cittamātrins; 6.2.1.3.1.2.2 the reason that mind and appearance are equal in deceptively existing and 6.2.1.3.2.3 are equal in not existing ultimately.

6.2.1.3.1.2.1 *If the common...* Thus, if those various visual perceptions of the beings of the six realms had no common perceptual object, like the proponents of the Cittamātra philosophical system, one would have to maintain that there was no object of cognition, and that the apprehending cognition was the object itself. To claim that is not reasonable. The *Wish-fulfilling Treasury* says:

The ignorant think everything is mind.

They are extremely confused about the meaning of the three kinds of appearance.

There are many faults of internal contradiction and absurd consequence,

So please abandon the tradition that they maintain.

6.2.1.3.1.2.2 *The subjective...* How is it unreasonable? Subject and object are posited in dependence upon one another. While there is no object, it would seem that the apprehending possessor of the object is likewise in fact nonexistent. Among those two, if one claims the existence of an apprehending mind, an apprehended object must likewise exist in dependence upon it; so both subject and object are equal in being deceptively existent as mere appearances. For example, if there is "the mountain thither," there must be "the mountain hither" also.

6.2.1.3.1.2.3 *Both subject...* If one examines the appearance of an object, and, finding it unreasonable, thinks it is nonexistent, unreasonableness under examination also applies to the subject, so if one examines any subject and object that appear, it is unreasonable to differentiate them and find one existent and the other nonexistent. Although there is the appearance of an object, it appears in a deceptive manner. Likewise, though apprehension appears, it is not

established as the same as or as different from mere appearance. The *Avatāra* says:

If there is formlessness, do not apprehend it as the existence of the mind.

If there is an existing mind, do not apprehend it as formless.

Those were abandoned by the Buddha

In sūtras dealing with wisdom, and spoken about in the

abhidharma.⁸⁴⁰

6.2.1.3.2.1 The reasonableness of all common and uncommon [perceptions] having mere appearance as their common object of perception, which all beings have in common; 6.2.1.3.2.2 if not, it would be unreasonable for different individual perceptions to arise; 6.2.1.3.2.3 the unreasonableness of various conditions for appearance being the object of perception.

6.2.1.3.2.1 *The common...* Thus, without being partial to either the external thing or the internal cognition, the mere appearance that can appear anywhere, which is the very nature of emptiness, is posited as the commonly perceived object. That mere appearance is established as the basis of the appearance of all common and uncommon perceptions of sentient beings; for it goes along with all things pure and impure, and there is no scripture or reasoning whatsoever that can refute that mere appearance. Therefore, without that, any other position is unreasonable. For example, if there is a dancer, there are many who will see or not see the dance; if there is not an appropriate actor [that is, one visible] for the various gods and *rākṣasas*, those appearances [of gods' and *rākṣasas*' dances] will not exist [for them].⁸⁴¹

6.2.1.3.2.2 *Aside from...* For that reason, aside from this merely existent or merely apparent dependent origination that is the basic nature of things, a particular existent thing is not possible either internally or externally; however much one searches, it becomes a cause for pointless fatigue. If that kind of merely existent basis of perception did not exist, all phenomena pure and impure would not appear anywhere and would become like the empty expanse of space. Because it is unreasonable, it is reasonable to posit [a mere appearance] here.

6.2.1.3.2.3 *On the basis...* "If the basis of perception is not seen, how can things appear in different ways?" That is due to various external circumstances of appearance and internal propensities, etc. Not seeing the object of the basis of perception just as it is, is due to fabrication [of perception] through the admixture of circumstance and conceptual dividing. For example, when the eyes are impaired by a magical spell, a piece of wood appears like a horse or an ox; therefore, one does not see the actual thing. One cannot say that a piece of wood, which is the appearance of the special condition for the appearance of such things as horses and cattle, is the common object of perception, because that fragmentary appearance [of a piece of wood] does not go everywhere.⁸⁴²

6.2.2 Secondly, according to our own system: 6.2.2.1 showing what common perceptual object is posited; 6.2.2.2 disposing of objections about it.

6.2.2.1.1 Positing inseparable appearance and emptiness as the actual basis of perception; 6.2.2.1.2 explaining how it can appear as anything.

6.2.2.1.1 *Therefore...* As explained above, the indivisibility of appearance and emptiness is reasonable as the basis of perception. Therefore, in our own system, in the earlier context of the two truths “we only maintain the philosophical system of coalescence free of divisions and partiality.”⁸⁴³ Accordingly, on the basis of the impartial and indivisible equanimity of appearance and emptiness, saṃsāra and nirvāṇa are not in any way established, and because that [indivisibility of appearance and emptiness] equally accompanies whatever appears in saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, a single substance can appear in various pure and impure ways, and we accept just that as the basis of perception. The Great Omniscient One said:

The primordial state of inseparable appearance and emptiness
Cannot be conceived as one or many, is without elaboration,
Without partiality or divisions, it is all-embracing equanimity,
Equal in appearance, equal in emptiness, equal in truth, equal in falsity,
Equal in existence, equal in nonexistence, equal beyond all limits—
It is the primordially pure state of the unique expanse.

6.2.2.1.2 *For whomever...* For whichever philosophical system, yogi, and so forth, this basis of the equanimous coalescence of appearance and emptiness is possible and reasonable, it is also possible, from their perspective, for saṃsāra, nirvāṇa, the path, and all the various pure and impure appearances to appear on that single basis, and they will see the reasonableness of this, as they have minds that are in tune with the power of the way things are. Moreover, for whomever the inseparability of appearance and emptiness is not possible and appearance and emptiness are cut off from each other, it is difficult to rationalize a common basis of perception. So for them it goes without saying that the reasoning of all appearances of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa arising on a single basis, etc., would not be possible. The *Dharmadharmatāvibhāṅga* says:

If aside from unreal appearance nothing
Whatsoever were possible, delusion and nondelusion,
And likewise mental afflictions and
Liberation, would be impossible.

Accordingly, if one thinks that the delusion and liberation of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa are somehow possible apart from emptiness and appearance, this kind of position, which does not accord with the meaning of the way things actually are,⁸⁴⁴ cannot be justified by scripture and reasoning.

6.2.2.2.1 The disagreement; and 6.2.2.2.2 its disposal.

6.2.2.2.1 *Well then...* “Well then, this means that the distinction of valid and invalid cognition would be unreasonable for you! For a single substance can appear in any which way. Therefore, the appearances of the beings of the six realms, cause, effect, saṃsāra, and nirvāṇa would all be confused together, because they can appear anywhere. Thus, all systems would be contradictory.”

6.2.2.2.2.1 A general discussion of our own system’s disposal of faults; 6.2.2.2.2.2 other systems cannot dispose of faults; 6.2.2.2.2.3 specifying and discussing the rationale of our own system’s

disposal of faults.

6.2.2.2.2.1.1 The reasoning that posits a valid cognition dependently is established as an inclusive judgement (*yongs chod, pariccheda*); 6.2.2.2.2.1.2 the fact that such reasoning is established by its own power is proven automatically by an excluding judgement (*rnam chod, vyavaccheda*); 6.2.2.2.2.1.3 and therefore, valid cognition is meaningful.

6.2.2.2.2.1.1.1 Contextually, the mind that apprehends in dependence upon an objective basis is established as a valid cognition;⁸⁴⁵ 6.2.2.2.2.1.1.2 the positing of one and many by that mind in dependence upon that object of investigation establishes that object as validly cognized.

6.2.2.2.2.1.1.1 *Whatever appears...* It is true that you, the opponent, do not understand the great secret Nyingmapa's uncommon way of engaging valid cognition, but the fault you find here does not exist. Glorious Candrakīrti said:

When a wise person has abided in the sublime vision and made a valid cognition, at that time there is no harm from worldly [forms of perception]. Wise persons should also analyze from this perspective.⁸⁴⁶

And from the *Vārttika*:

To understand the essence of something from itself:

This is to validate something conventionally.⁸⁴⁷

Likewise, the *Don rnam par nges pa'i shes rab ral gri* [DRG] says:

Since conventionally the abiding and actual natures [of a thing]
Have different ways of appearing,
With respect to impure, narrow-minded perception (*tshur mthong, arvāgdarśana*)
And the pure vision of [sublime beings],
There are two conventional valid cognitions,
Like the eyes of humans and gods.⁸⁴⁸

According to those statements, valid cognition that engages a cognandum comprises both the conventionalizing valid cognition that refers to the pure vision [of sublime beings], and the conventionalizing valid cognition of narrow-minded perception. The difference between them is said to be delineated by essence, causality, and function.

If you ask how one experiences with [those validating cognitions]: If one analyzes according to the conventional statements made in treatises about the objects of narrow-minded perception, through the direct and inferential valid cognitions [based on] autonomous syllogisms, one will be able to induce an unmistaken experience of that conventional thing. Likewise, with respect to the inconceivable object that is beyond narrow-minded perception, by analyzing in accordance with the conventions of treatises, one can ascertain that the pure vision that engages that cognandum is unmistaken. Because the meanings taught in this context are not contradictory in their prior

and latter modes of expression, nor in what is actually said and what is implied, one can engage that extremely obscure object, without its being hidden.

Therefore, having realized the coalescence of the two truths, for the vision that comprises the harmony of the reality and the appearance of things, anything can arise from the great expanse of equality without divisions of time and place. Because all those arisings do not waver from that expanse, in relation to it everything abides in equanimity without discriminating truth and falsehood, such as the misperception of a mirage as water. Therefore, aside from the valid cognition that experiences according to pure vision, divisive appearances are all equally eliminated, and in that way, in relation to each subject, there are no harmful consequences whatsoever of one kind of substance becoming another, of the karmic perceptions of sentient beings, etc., belonging to one another [as mentioned above], and of both valid and invalid cognitions being impossible, because the possibility of any such thing happening is not established at all.

Thus, worldly beings do not understand that dharmatā, because they apprehend a self in various dharma-possessors (*chos can*). As a result of that, all appearances that grow out of propensities are apprehended individually and separately, and become objects of attachment. At that time anything that appears, appears in that [apprehension] and does not appear otherwise. Because each [phenomenon] has its own defining characteristic, which is not mixed with others', the various karmic appearances of virtue, vice, and their effects, etc., cannot appear in a confused way. The *Vārttika* says:

As all things naturally
Abide in their own essence,
Similar things are complementary to other things,
From which they differ.⁸⁴⁹

Therefore, that narrow-minded [perceiver] does not fail to establish that object of experience. That mind easily establishes whatever system it tries to experience, as validly or invalidly cognized, etc.

6.2.2.2.2.1.1.2 *For all things...* For the reason that things do not appear indistinctly, all things that appear in that way do not become otherwise or discard their mode of being by force of their individual natures or dharmatās, because their very nature is not to be combined with other things. Thus, the identifying characteristics of water, pus, and so forth, are not muddled together. The ways in which things, such as water, mirages, pus, etc., are the same or different are all valid. The glorious Rong zom said:

What is something identical to that? The defining characteristic of a pillar is to hold up a roof. The defining characteristic of a vase is to contain water. If you say, "Those are both produced," the producedness of a pillar abides in the essence of a pillar. The producedness of a vase abides in the essence of a vase. Although their individual defining characteristics are perceived as different, their producedness is not perceived as different. Although the producedness is not perceived separately, that doesn't make a pillar into a vase, nor a vase into a pillar. The characteristics of roof-holding and water-holding are not lost.

And, from the *Rigs gter*:

The intentional apprehension that discerns the sameness and difference
Of defining characteristics makes possible the four alternatives (*catuṣkoṭi*).⁸⁵⁰

Thus, apprehending a single characteristic as one, different characteristics as different, many aspects (*ldog pa*) for one characteristic, and one characteristic for many aspects, are the four alternatives.

Therefore, although words and thoughts apply various conventions, because of the fact that individual characteristics are not confused, it is a valid cognition for humans to apprehend water as water, because it is infallible; and it is an invalid cognition to apprehend a mirage as water, because that is fallible. Moreover, by the power of the karmic appearances of beings, the apprehension of water as water by humans is a valid cognition in the context of the defiled perception of hungry ghosts. When the perception of pus and blood occurs for hungry ghosts, it is infallible with respect to attainment and loss⁸⁵¹ and is a valid cognition. But in relation to humans, it is an invalid cognition, because it has a fault that must be eliminated. Therefore, because the ways in which cognitions are valid and invalid are by nature differentiable and infallible, they are established as valid or reasonable. But nonetheless, they are not established by their own power, because whatever is posited in dependence upon different beings is not established ultimately. Therefore, Rong zom Chos bzang said:

Thus, in the case of an appearance like this, it does not appear differently everywhere; it appears on a single basis. Not everything appears concordantly; things appear individually as pure or impure. Accordingly, there is the distinction of “completely pure” and “not completely pure” appearances.

In this context, “established as a valid cognition” means that because of being generally renowned, a single subject can generate understanding; this is the same as saying, “Dharmatā reasoning should rely on the object.” The great Rong zom said:

Thus, the particular way in which each thing abides in its own state, and the mind that accords with it, are both engaged with words of reasoning...⁸⁵²

Thus, I think valid cognition is also like that.

6.2.2.2.2.1.2.1 Generally, it is not reasonable for all dharmas to be established under their own power; 6.2.2.2.2.1.2.2 a single, particular instance of water does not exist under its own power, and it is reasonable for it to have a relation of dependence.

6.2.2.2.2.1.2.1 Thus... For that reason, in dependence upon defiled appearances, there is a dependent origination—which is not immune to analysis—that is posited as the establishment of a valid cognition. External objects of knowledge are not established by valid cognition independently, by their own power. If they were thus established, they would just be an ultimate abiding reality, and that is not reasonable.

6.2.2.2.1.2.2 *An instance...* Since all dharmas are generally not established by their own power, although a single instance of water is established by a validating cognition that is quite infallible from the perspective of the humans who apprehend just that water, it is not established in any way under its own independent power. Just how is it not established? It is not immune to an analysis vis-à-vis ultimate truth, because it is not even established conventionally from the perspective of a hungry ghost.

6.2.2.2.1.3 The meaningfulness of valid cognition: *If one determines...* Moreover, an object such as water is perceived directly by a mind or sensory faculty that apprehends it. And if it is ascertained through a valid inferential cognition from a mark that is complete in the three aspects,⁸⁵³ just as it is determined, the object is infallible with respect to both engagement and disengagement.⁸⁵⁴ So, although it is not one-sidedly established under its own power, it is not meaningless to posit "valid cognition," because although it is posited for a contextual object like water, it is infallible in engaging and disengaging both mundane and supramundane objects.

6.2.2.2.2 Other systems cannot dispose of faults: *Thus...* Therefore, as a mere indication, the stated convention of "basis of perception" is made for a single instance of water with respect to human vision, without depending upon [the vision of] other beings, who see that water in different ways. For the gods a single [instance of] nectar is apprehended as the basis of perception. But if and when hungry ghosts, humans, and gods each see the different substances of pus, water, and nectar in the water of a single vessel, not all three [perceptions] are assembled in the mind of each being. Because the human does not have the dominant karmic influence of the other two beings, pus and blood do not appear, and the same goes for the other two beings. If that vessel has the three substances [according to our pūrvapakṣa], and if when the human drinks from it the three become water, when the hungry ghosts drinks from it the three become pus, and when the god drinks from it the three become nectar, then, among those three, which would be the basis of perception, and which a valid cognition? Which would be deluded, and which an invalid cognition? For they would all become each other, like the appearances of a dream.

Thus, if those three were identical but not valid cognitions, there would have to be another substance other than those three that might serve as the basis of perception of those three and that could not be established through valid cognition. Therefore, for that reason, it would not be possible to establish any of those three objects of vision, nor a basis different from them, by valid cognition.

Accordingly, if this water seen by a human were filled with the six types of nonwater substances, such as pus and nectar, it would be unreasonable, because something different from [water] cannot be water. Therefore, a human's seeing [the vessel] filled with a flow of water would have to be completely impossible as a valid cognition. Thus, since there would not be invalid cognitions of seeing that water as another substance, like pus, it would seem that in that tradition the ways of positing "valid" and "invalid" cognitions would be unreasonable, wouldn't it?

6.2.2.2.3 A special reasoning for our own system's disposal of faults: 6.2.2.2.3.1 explaining the contextual establishment of valid cognition without referring to grades of defilement by causes of perceptual error; 6.2.2.2.3.2 establishing final valid cognition through the reasoning of dharmatā.

6.2.2.2.3.1.1 Explaining that an object perceived by an unflawed sense faculty established for

oneself is established as valid; 6.2.2.2.2.3.1.2 for that reason, in relation to defilement, what is sometimes perceived by humans as water is established as valid; 6.2.2.2.2.3.1.3 otherwise, it would not be established according to deceptive or ultimate truth;⁸⁵⁵ 6.2.2.2.2.3.1.4 therefore, in dependence upon the lower, the higher is established as valid.

6.2.2.2.2.3.1.1 *Thus, the object...* For that reason, there are no external things that are established as valid without depending upon each other. However, that object of a sense faculty that is not flawed by adventitious causes of error must be established as valid in relation to flawed perception. For example, the water perceived by a human being's unflawed eyes is established as valid, and the perception of water in a mirage by flawed faculties is posited as invalid.

6.2.2.2.2.3.1.2 *Thus, in the context...* Although water and mirages are alike in appearing as water, they are respectively true and false, flawed and unflawed. Thus, for a particular hungry ghost, when the fault of karmic obscuration that causes pure water to appear as pus is dispelled, the appearance of pus then appears as water. Therefore, those two [appearances]—the water seen by a human, and the faulty perception of hungry ghosts and so forth, which is a cause of suffering for them—are, respectively, valid or mistaken appearances. In this way the water that is free of defilement should be established as valid.

6.2.2.2.2.3.1.3 *For now...* In any case, all of these impure karmic appearances are just erroneous appearances of [karmic] propensities if one analyzes them with a final, ultimate reasoning. There is not one that is established by way of its own nature. Although pure and impure appearances are equivalent in their way of lacking intrinsic nature, if, from the perspective of conventional analysis, a hungry ghost removes the obscuration that causes the appearance of pus, there will be only a perception of water. And likewise, for some pure disciples, pure realms and buddha bodies will appear. Therefore, human experience is not exclusively or one-sidedly viable as valid cognition, because in relation to the higher [form of experience, that is, pure vision] it is flawed.

6.2.2.2.2.3.1.4 *Thus, by progressively...* Therefore, it is reasonable to accept as valid the vision of progressively higher forms of perception over lower forms of perception, because the conditions of karma that obscure the [final] meaning where actual nature and appearance are concordant become progressively worse [the lower one goes]. The *Bodhicaryāvatāra* says:

Yogis, by the difference of their minds
Progressively refute lower [types of minds].

The idea is the same here.

6.2.2.2.2.3.2.1 Because suchness is unitary, self-cognizant pristine awareness is established as a single valid cognition; 6.2.2.2.2.3.2.2 therefore, it is reasonable for saṃsāra and nirvāṇa to have their origin in unawareness and awareness; 6.2.2.2.2.3.2.3 the strength of the great glorious Rong zom is in establishing apparent objects as deities in that manner; 6.2.2.2.2.3.2.4 others do not have reasoning established in this way, so whatever claims they make are contradictory.

6.2.2.2.2.3.2.1 *The valid...* Thus, when the ultimate result of the path is made manifest, there is no

second to the unique suchness of the object, the dharmadhātu, and there is also only one valid cognition that sees in that way, namely, gnosis. A second, dissimilar object or valid cognition is impossible. The Avatāra says:

There is nothing else to do; reality does not admit of divisions,
And likewise, what perceives reality is not differentiable.⁸⁵⁶

6.2.2.2.3.2.2 *Reality is...* Therefore, this abiding reality, ultimate reality, is unique; it is the coalescence of appearance and emptiness, or suchness. The way to cognize it validly is by self-arisen gnosis. The root of all that which must be abandoned for it [to arise] is nothing other than the single fact of unawareness. Thus, the only thing that obscures abiding reality is unawareness, and saṃsāra depends upon it. When the self-radiance of the gnosis of awareness is manifest, without relying on any other support, the unawareness to be abandoned is purified automatically, and the three kāyas are spontaneously present. Therefore, it is reasonable to say that saṃsāra and nirvāṇa have simply awareness and unawareness as their roots. The great glorious Rong zom said:

Therefore, aside from the fact of conventionally designating knowledge and misknowledge as mental afflictions and purified constituents, all dharmas have no entity whatsoever to be removed, nor any entity to be added.

6.2.2.2.3.2.3 *Thus, this system...* Therefore, as explained above, with respect to this type of valid cognition it is reasonable for the perceptions of these sentient beings to be mistaken. This establishment of apparent objects as naturally being maṇḍalas of deities is little known in the New Translation schools, and is the unique tradition of the Early Translation school. This emphasis is the eloquent lion's roar of the great paṇḍita, the omniscient Rong zom. On that, the great glorious Rong zom said:

Hungry ghosts see a river as pus. But one of them might say, "My friends! This river of pus, which hungry ghosts like us see as if filled with pus, is seen by humans to be a river of water! If those who enjoy it as water dedicate it to us, then even we hungry ghosts will see it as water and be able to enjoy it. This the very same water that we have, on occasion, been able to find in the past." Likewise, I have heard that the bodies and enjoyments that appear in accordance with human [perception] are seen by some very pure persons as maṇḍalas of deities, and according to the way of secret mantra, they are taught actually to be maṇḍalas of divinity. Someone might then say, "My friends! These appearances of ordinary enjoyments that humans like us perceive are, according to the vision of pure persons, the maṇḍalas of deities. If those who have the power to enjoy the domain of purity bestow spiritual boons upon us, we human beings also will see this domain [of ordinary objects] as divinity and be able to enjoy it, just as persons like myself, who have occasionally gained spiritual accomplishments [in previous lives], have been able to reach the domain of divine [experience]."

6.2.2.2.3.2.4 *Other...* Elsewhere, in other philosophical systems, no explanation whatsoever is made according to this way of authentic reasoning, which in this tradition establishes the great pure equality of actual and potential phenomena. And it goes without saying that they have

nothing to say [about it on the basis of] realization and meditation. Therefore, whatever positions other philosophical systems uphold in the context of this [particular discussion of] the view and meditation are all seen to be contradictory to reason and scripture, [Mipham] says. This is the same as what the *Avatāra* says:

Elsewhere, this Dharma
Is not present, and likewise
The system presented here is not found in other [systems]—
The wise should be certain of this!

6.2.3 Emptiness and appearance are not something to view separately: 6.2.3.1 a synopsis; 6.2.3.2 an extensive explanation; and 6.2.3.3 a summary.

6.2.3.1 *The claim...* The claim that the common object is exclusively appearance, or exclusively emptiness, is not correct, because of the faults explained below.

6.2.3.2.1 Emptiness cannot be a basis of perception; 6.2.3.2.2 appearance also cannot be a basis of perception.

6.2.3.2.1.1 Refuting that emptiness is something to perceive; 6.2.3.2.1.2 explaining how that problem is not also applicable to us.

6.2.3.2.1.1.1 The consequence that space, vases, and so forth, both entities and nonentities, would be the same; 6.2.3.2.1.1.2 they would be the same in being causeless; 6.2.3.2.1.1.3 if the basis of perception were emptiness, it would contradict appearance.

6.2.3.2.1.1.1 *If it were...* If the object of perception were merely emptiness, for that reason any being would be able to [perceive] it. And if an exclusive emptiness could appear or were the basis of appearance, then the consequence would be that nonapparent space would also appear as a vase. If exclusive emptiness were not capable of appearing, an apparent vase would also not appear like space, because its basis of appearance is that [emptiness]. Therefore, if a mere emptiness without appearance could be an object of perception, why wouldn't it appear? It should appear.

6.2.3.2.1.1.2 *Things...* Also, things like vases and so forth would be either permanently existent or permanently nonexistent. If an exclusive emptiness fit to be a basis for appearance were simultaneous [with the appearance], they would have to be completely identical; and if it were not simultaneous with the object, they both would have to be completely distinct. Therefore, the reasonings adduced for causelessness all apply in this context as well.

6.2.3.2.1.1.3 *In the context...* Also, in this way, as the occasion for [there being a] basis of perception is [the fact of] emptiness, the karmic appearances of individuals would not appear. Like rabbit horns and cattle horns, those two [appearance and emptiness] exclude one another as existence and nonexistence, respectively. If there were something non-empty, it would contradict the position of a mere emptiness as the basis of appearance.

6.2.3.2.1.2 That fault does not apply to us: 6.2.3.2.1.2.1 setting up the fault; and 6.2.3.2.1.2.2 disposing of it.

6.2.3.2.1.2.1 *Well...* "Well then, how is it that you said before that 'non-empty' and 'appearance' are noncontradictory?"

6.2.3.2.1.2.2: 6.2.3.2.1.2.2.1 they are contradictory as the object of a conventionalizing valid cognition; 6.2.3.2.1.2.2.2 how they are not contradictory as the object of gnosis, which sees the abiding nature of things.

6.2.3.2.1.2.2.1 *Here...* Here, in the context of demonstrating that the claim that emptiness is the basis of perception is problematic, since the mutual exclusivity of appearance and emptiness is made with reference to the way visible objects are [objects of] valid cognition, the absence of a basis of appearance and the presence of the appearance of karma are contradictory, insofar as one is existent and the other is nonexistent. Because they cannot combine in a single substratum, there is a problem.

6.2.3.2.1.2.2.2 *On the basis...* The noncontradictory coalescence of both truths, appearance and emptiness, on the basis of one entity is the context for ascertaining the ultimate object of the equipoise of gnosis. Therefore, if one can discern it in that way, there is no fault of contradiction in our way of expressing it.

6.2.3.2.2 A non-empty appearance cannot be a basis for perception: 6.2.3.2.2.1 claiming that it is impossible; 6.2.3.2.2.2 explaining the reason for that.

6.2.3.2.2.1 *If a mere appearance...* If an exclusive appearance without emptiness were not viable as a basis of appearance or perception, [or] if that kind of nonempty basis of appearance were possible, it would have to be established in truth, and from that fact alone all the various objects of knowledge that are karmic appearances could not appear.

6.2.3.2.2.2.1 If there were an indistinguishable appearance, cognizing validating cognition would be impossible; 6.2.3.2.2.2.2 if there were a distinguishable appearance, it could not be a general basis of perception; 6.2.3.2.2.2.3 none of the specific possibilities is suitable to be a common basis of perception.

6.2.3.2.2.2.1 *For there...* If one had to say that this kind of non-empty appearance of a basis of perception is the way an entity's own nature appears, then one could not posit a distinct appearance such as water [as the basis of perception]. An appearance that is indistinguishable from its basis has no way of being made to appear to a mind, and thus cannot be thought, so that kind of appearance is not established as the basis of appearance. It has no basis in scripture, and to say that something "exists" without perceiving it with a valid cognition is nothing more than a claim, like claiming the existence of a thoughtless actor.

6.2.3.2.2.2.2 *If whatever appeared...* Moreover, if the thing that appears is distinguished by its identifying characteristic (*rang mtshan*) [as in the case of liquidity and water, pus, etc.], it could not

appear in any other way but with that [characteristic]. As [the root text said] earlier, “For a common object that appears according to [various perceivers]/ Distinct appearances are not possible.” Therefore, that distinct appearance cannot be a basis of perception, because it is an exclusive appearance that is not empty of its own essence. Therefore, not only is that kind of appearance not conventionally viable as a basis of perception, ultimately an exclusive appearance is also not reasonable. If there were such a thing, it would be immune to rational analysis. Among knowable things, this kind of thing—heavier than the hundred thousand vajra mountains of analytical reasoning and able to withstand them—is not possible, even in the slightest degree.

6.2.3.2.2.3 *Whether one...* Even if one believes it to be a non-empty appearance, whether one takes the basis of perception to be the water, pus, nectar, etc., of humans, ghosts, or gods, etc., it will be contradictory. How is that? If that water were pus, how could it appear as water for humans? It is not reasonable. If it is not pus, but water, it is reasonable for humans, but how would it appear as pus for ghosts and nectar for the gods? You might think, “That which appears as the object for ghosts is essentially water.” Then even if it appears as pus for ghosts, you would have to accept that it [the pus] is nonexistent, because its essence is water.

6.2.3.3 A summary: *For aside...* For all those reasons, the basis of appearance of whatever appears to various perceivers is not a separate exclusive emptiness, because if it were, the appearance and the basis of appearance would be different. For example, a pillar and a vase would exist individually while having a single basis of appearance, and if they were not different [from the basis of perception], the above-mentioned fault would apply to them.

6.2.4 The necessity [of ascertaining the common object of perception in our system]: 6.2.4.1 briefly explaining how, by ascertaining the common object of perception, one goes to the heart of the authentic philosophical system; 6.2.4.2 explaining that meaning extensively; 6.2.4.3 summarizing.

6.2.4.1 *Therefore...* As explained above, since neither appearance nor emptiness taken alone and exclusively is viable as a basis of perception, the coalescence of inseparable appearance and emptiness, or the illusion-like appearance that is inseparable from the expanse of emptiness of true existence—that and that alone does not, as a cause, fall into either of saṃsāra or nirvāṇa; nor does it fall into the partiality of appearance or emptiness.⁸⁵⁷ All dharmas of saṃsāra, nirvāṇa, and the path abide primordially in equanimity, in the great equal taste of the coalescence free of any extreme of existence or nonexistence. Therefore, in the innate spontaneously present equanimity of the Great Perfection, the meaning established by the three valid cognitions, which is the actual basis of perception, is ascertained by refuting, positing, and abandoning. Then one should realize the way the nature [of things] abides in the basis.

6.2.4.2 The extensive explanation: 6.2.4.2.1 by ascertaining the basis of perception, one acquires an excellent certainty in the meaning of *mdo*, *sgyu*, and *sems*,⁸⁵⁸ 6.2.4.2.2 explanation of the reasoning that establishes their final intent on the nature of things; 6.2.4.2.3 advice to purify the stains of the mind for which reality and appearance are discordant; 6.2.4.2.4 explaining the benefits of accepting the great pure equanimity of actual and potential phenomena in that way.

6.2.4.2.1.1 Attaining confidence in the meaning of the vajra words of the Great Perfection of

equanimity; 6.2.4.2.1.2 discovering the intention of the *Magical Net Tantra*.

6.2.4.2.1.1 *In that way...* Thus, in the context of the self-composing, effortless path of cultivating that way of realizing the basic abiding character of reality, one must first cut off one's doubts on the path of both scripture and reasoning. Reasoning [here] means relying upon pure vision, for which the abiding and apparent natures are concordant. When the coalescence of the great equal taste is manifest, one experiences according to that kind of vision, so one does not have to abandon ordinary appearances and cling to antidotes. One has no doubts about the manner of letting everything rest in its own nature of self-liberation. Scripture here means that, when one attains an inviolable, extraordinary confidence through experiencing what is called in the Atiyoga tantras "the pure dharmakāya of actual and potential phenomena," one's mind connects with the meaning of the scriptural corpus that is the vajra pinnacle of luminosity. The *Kun byed rgyal po* says:

However things appear, they are one in suchness.
Here, nobody fabricates anything.
In that sovereign of uncontrived equanimity,
Without abiding, the primordial dharmakāya is spontaneously present.

6.2.4.2.1.2 *So...* Because one abides in the great exalted dharmakāya, which is the inseparability of the truth of the abiding nature of things, then, as it says in the *Magical Net of Vajrasattva*, "Right now, the five aggregates, which as mere appearances are empty of true existence, are illusion-like appearances of the indivisible suchness that is naturally pure, and appear as the divine maṇḍala of the five families and five gnoses." One attains confidence in the sense intended by the magical net of inseparable thought and deity. The *Le lag* says:

In the illusory gnosis of the five aggregates,
The five self-cognizant families of method are emanated.

6.2.4.2.2.1 The actual reasoning that establishes that; and 6.2.4.2.2.2 cutting off doubts about it.

6.2.4.2.2.1.1 Showing what the final valid cognition is through gradually purifying sullied obscurations; 6.2.4.2.2.1.2 the way in which our position, which accords with that way of seeing, is established as the culmination of all vehicles; 6.2.4.2.2.1.3 showing that other [systems] cannot realize it in this way.

6.2.4.2.2.1.1 *Similarly...* Thus, the proof that pure vision is a valid cognition is completed by analyzing in this way: when a person cultivating the path has reversed the tendencies of the lower realms that cause the experience and apprehension of pus, which is a delusive appearance, one realizes that apprehension of pus to be delusion, and that appearance of pus to be sullied (*bslad pa*). When one is free of clinging to appearances, the previous appearance is purified and water appears. And by cultivating the path further, for the yogi that appearance of water is somewhat further purified compared to the previous appearance. In general, because sullied appearances are impure, when they have been gradually purified, the great bodhisattva sees each of the atoms of water as numberless pure buddhafi elds, and water appears as the great mother Māmākī. When

it is touched, it performs the action of moistening, and when it is enjoyed, the bliss of samādhi and nonconceptual gnosis are produced, etc. It is manifestly apparent as a pure appearance of support [entity] and supported [experiences of it].

Then, when one has cultivated the path in its entirety, on the bhūmi where the two obscurations and their propensities have been abandoned, one consummates the character of perfectly pure vision in the great equal taste of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, the basic abiding nature of pure equal coalescence. The *Uttaratantra* says:

Sentient beings and bodhisattvas
And tathāgatas are said to be
Impure, purified of impurity, and
Extremely pure, in stages.

6.2.4.2.2.1.2.1 Other than just that pure vision, there is no other authentic final reality of things;
6.2.4.2.2.1.2.2 explaining conventional valid cognition according to the cognitive [mode] of that [pure vision].

6.2.4.2.2.1.2.1 *On the bhūmi...* For that reason, on the bhūmi of the consummated fruition, all actual and potential phenomena are seen as the great extraordinary dharmakāya, the inseparable [two] truths of pure equality, which has abandoned all obscurations and their tendencies without exception. Since, aside from the pure vision, free of the cataracts [of delusion], which knows the actual nature of things unerringly, there is nothing else, one should accept that alone as a valid cognition and ascertain the view [accordingly]. The *Avatāra* says:

Just as the perception of one with cataracts
Cannot challenge the cognition of one without cataracts,
Likewise the intellect that is bereft of stainless gnosis
Cannot challenge the stainless intellect.⁸⁵⁹

6.2.4.2.2.1.2.2 *And is established...* That very vision that is bereft of the two obscurations and free of defilements is held to be the ultimate valid cognition beyond all contextual valid cognitions. Moreover, since all the various appearances are primordially contained in the profound and vast Dharma essence that has the nature of purity, there is the statement that “they abide in the dharmakāya buddha nature.” This is the meaning established by the ultimate validating cognition. This is precisely the intention of the Great Perfection of the supreme secret bindu, the pinnacle of all vehicles of sūtra and tantra. By relying upon the presence of perfectly pure scripture, it is proven for those honest individuals who have the guiding eyes of reason.

6.2.4.2.2.1.3 *Moreover...* This extremely profound vehicle is supported by that particular crucial point of establishment, and the result that is acquired through hundreds of efforts in other vehicles is here shown spontaneously, without effort. That vehicle, like the orb of the sun, “does indeed have the beautiful rainbow body, the unique teaching of the king of vehicles.”⁸⁶⁰ But, because it possesses a thousand light rays of amazing and wonderful qualities, most people, like spirit birds⁸⁶¹ with inferior lineages⁸⁶² and dull faculties, are as if blind and cannot easily understand it. The Lord Maitreya said:

Their aspirations are low, and their faculties are extremely dim.
They are completely surrounded by unworthy friends, so
How can they accomplish, without aspiration,
This Dharma, which is explained in a profound and vast way?⁸⁶³

6.2.4.2.2.2 Cutting off doubts: 6.2.4.2.2.2.1 this authentic meaning of the abiding nature of things can arise as anything, so one cannot prove that the subject (*chos can*) only appears as a deity; 6.2.4.2.2.2.2 the ultimate deity of dharmatā is the inseparability of the expanse and gnosis, so it is not challenged by an ultimate analysis; 6.2.4.2.2.2.3 therefore, the vision bereft of the two obscurations is the object established by the two valid cognitions.

6.2.3.2.2.2.1 *Although...* There, with regard to how appearance manifests from the basic expanse of the equality of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, the final nature of things, one cannot prove that deities ought to appear to everyone without appearing otherwise, because it is not contradictory for [the basic expanse] to appear as anything whatsoever.⁸⁶⁴ Nāgārjuna said, "Everything works for him/ For whom emptiness works."

6.2.4.2.2.2.2 *To the extent...* Moreover, in general all aspects of discordance between reality and appearance are the neganda of any path or form of reasoning. Both the dharmadhātu, which is by nature primordially pure, and the self-radiance of that dharmadhātu, the apparent aspect that is the body of gnosis, are by nature inseparable. Therefore, not only is the apparent aspect—which is primordially pure as divinity—not negated on the path, it is also not harmed by an ultimate analysis. By virtue of the fact that, however much one analyzes it, one is made to see the empty nature of gnosis, the two obscurations are purified, and one is made to see the aspect of clear appearance as the arising of the self-radiance of emptiness. For example, it is like the purification of gold by fire. On that, Nāgārjuna also said:

The sūtras teaching emptiness
That were spoken by the Buddha
All reverse mental afflictions.
That faculty [the buddha nature] is not harmed.⁸⁶⁵

And, the Lord Maitreya:

The ultimate limit is devoid
Of all kinds of fabrication;
Afflictions, karma, and ripening
Are said to be like clouds.

6.2.4.2.2.2.3 *For the expanse...* For which reason is it not harmed? The perfectly pure vision that has abandoned the two obscurations and their tendencies, which are the things to be abandoned on the path, is the primordial expanse of the coalescence of appearance and emptiness; precisely that is the final object established by the two valid cognitions. Therefore, since it is the result of accomplishment, it is not something to negate. Thus, the *Wish-fulfilling Treasury* says:

Statements to the effect that “In establishing ultimate reality, there is no appearance” are meant to indicate that, conventionally speaking, the object thus established is authentic. But it should not be understood to mean that [ultimate reality] is truly existent over and against that [appearance]. For this would contradict statements above and below, such as “In the expanse, appearance and emptiness are inseparable; thus, that reality is called inseparable.”

Thus, since earlier and later statements are contradictory, they should be understood according to the teaching of inseparability, which is explored exhaustively in the eighteenth chapter [in this text, the *Yid bzhin mdzod*].⁸⁶⁶

6.2.4.2.3 Purifying obscurations: 6.2.4.2.3.1: a *précis*; 6.2.4.2.3.2 an extensive explanation; and 6.2.4.2.3.3 a summary.

6.2.4.2.3.1 *Aside from this...* If, unlike above, one takes this self-centered intellect as a valid cognition, no matter which aspect one exclusively analyzes, be it appearance or emptiness, it is not the final meaning. As one does not completely abandon the two obscurations, the subjective intellect has defilements, because as long as one does not integrate the object of cognition, the two truths, the abiding and apparent natures of things are in all respects discordant. The *Samādhirāja* says:

Eyes, ears, and nose are not valid cognizers.
Likewise the tongue and the body are not valid cognizers.
If these sense faculties were valid cognizers,
What could the sublime path do for anyone?

6.2.4.2.3.2 [The extensive explanation:] 6.2.4.2.3.2.1 because the subject is pure, the way the appearance of the object arises is pure; 6.2.4.2.3.2.2 therefore, advice that the stains of the subject must be purified.

6.2.4.2.3.2.1.1 The actual [explanation]; and 6.2.4.2.3.2.1.2 cutting off doubts.

6.2.4.2.3.2.1.1 *Contextual...* Therefore, contextual appearances of the path appear as a mixture of pure and impure. Practicing the path is like purifying a defect of the eyes—for instance, removing a cataract—in that purifying the subject’s stains likewise purifies the object. Internally, when the subject is purified of stains, externally there is no object that is not purified. For that reason, from the form realm up to omniscience there is no difference in the naturally pure state. The *Sūtrasamuccaya* says:

The purity of form should be considered as the purity of result.
The resultant purity of form becomes the purity of omniscience.
The purity of the result of omniscience and pure form
Are the same as the element of space and are indivisible.

6.2.4.2.3.2.1.2 *Thus...* In that way, if an individual practices the path, in his own perception all

dharmas are manifestly fully enlightened, and at that time there is only pure appearance, but that doesn't mean that impure things—the animate and inanimate universe—will not appear to other individuals, since sentient beings who do not practice the path are themselves obscured by self-appearing obscurations. For example, to purify the eyes of another person does not benefit the person with cataracts.

6.2.4.2.3.2.2: 6.2.4.2.3.2.2.1 Advice to purify the stains that obscure the abiding nature of things; 6.2.4.2.3.2.2.2 in the authentic meaning, stains to be purified are not established.

6.2.4.2.3.2.2.1 *Thus, although object...* Therefore, both subject and object—the object-possessor and clinging to ordinary appearances—abide in the nondual equanimity that is naturally pure from the beginning. Nonetheless, when one misunderstands that and errs due to extrinsic conditions, one is obscured by adventitious stains of the way things appear. Therefore, the advice is given that one should strive diligently with one's three doors in the methods for purifying those kinds of obscurations. The *Vārttika* says:

This is the nature of things; other than this,
By other causes, one will err.
The opposite also depends upon the condition,
Like the unstable mind that perceives a serpent.⁸⁶⁷

6.2.4.2.3.2.2.2 *Because...* Thus, though the "stain to be purified" is conventionally stated—like, for example, a rhinoceros [skin] vessel, which has no hairs—stains are perfectly pure insofar as they are empty of their intrinsic essence; otherwise, there are no impure substances. Though the term "adventitious" is applied conventionally, the fundamental nature of things is the beginningless luminosity of equanimity. The *Uttaratantra* says:

Because sentient beings are realized
To be just the peaceful dharmatā
Because they are naturally completely pure,
They are primordially liberated from affliction.⁸⁶⁸

6.2.4.2.3.2.2.3 The summary: 6.2.4.2.3.2.2.3.1 one is bound in saṃsāra by the nescience of ignorance; 6.2.4.2.3.2.2.3.2 how one achieves liberation through the gnosis of awareness.

6.2.4.2.3.2.2.3.1 *A childish person...* Thus, when the abiding reality of the way the various karmic appearances appear, such as water, pus, nectar, and so forth, is not understood, those children who are fooled by apprehending self and other, and so forth, are foolish children attached and clinging to things such as the appropriating aggregates. As long as they are thus fooled, they will be bound by that ignorance. The *Sūtrasamuccaya* says:

The lowest, middling, and greatest sentient beings
Are all arisen from ignorance, said the Sugata.
From the gathering of conditions, the machine of suffering is produced.
That machine of ignorance neither is exhausted nor increases.

6.2.4.2.3.2.2.3.2 *But everyone...* If one realizes the mode of abiding of those modes of appearance, all dualistic dharmas—oneself and others, saṃsāra and nirvāṇa—are purified in the equal taste of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, the coalescence of the two truths, and one reaches the haven of the ultimate fruition. Because, in the fundamental expanse of the primal purity of the three times and timelessness, there is no fruition arisen from an extrinsic cause; self-arisen gnosis is victorious over all fabricated phenomena. That same text says:

The bodhisattva who knows relativity
As birthless and stainless with this analytical wisdom
Will vanquish the darkness of ignorance and attain the self-arisen
Just as the cloudless sun dispels darkness by radiance.

6.2.4.2.4 The benefits: 6.2.4.2.4.1 by taking such a position, one gives rise to tolerance for the profound meaning; 6.2.4.2.4.2 if one has no karmic connection, it is difficult to realize.

6.2.4.2.4.1.1 From the dharmatā, which does not exist anywhere, things can arise anywhere;
6.2.4.2.4.1.2 explaining from the perspective of gaining confidence in that.

6.2.4.2.4.1.1.1 The actual explanation; and 6.2.4.2.4.1.1.2 the inappropriateness of other reifications for that.

6.2.4.2.4.1.1.1 *This system...* Thus, this way of positing the great indivisible pure equality of apparent and potential phenomena as explained above is already well established by the three types of validating cognition. Because the partial extremes of appearance and emptiness are not established anywhere, it is possible for pure self-effulgence to arise anywhere from the great vast expanse free from extremes. And when distorted by conditions, it is possible for impure appearance to arise anywhere. The *Madhyamakālaṃkāra* says:

As for the nature of things,
By following the path of reason,
One eliminates the claims of others,
So their criticisms are pointless.⁸⁶⁹

6.2.4.2.4.1.1.2 *However else...* Otherwise, for the positions that maintain an exclusive emptiness or an exclusive appearance as the basis of perception, and so forth, aside from whatever is falsely mentally imputed on the actual object, nothing else can arise. That same text says:

Wherever there is no entity,
There is nothing that knows it.⁸⁷⁰

6.2.4.2.4.1.2.1 Generating profound tolerance through realizing emptiness as dependent origination
6.2.4.2.4.1.2.2 that can engage the cognitive domain of the buddhas.

6.2.4.2.4.1.2.1 *The way to gain...* The way to gain confidence in this object or way, which is

extremely esoteric and beyond narrow-minded perception, is this excellent and profound path, where emptiness and dependent origination are inseparable. If through the path of the coalescence of the two valid cognitions one acquires certainty in the way divided fabricated appearances are, like illusions, inseparable from emptiness, then, regardless of how delusion and liberation, etc., appear, in the self-arisen maṇḍala that is the basis of apparent and possible phenomena, which is beyond increase and decrease, one generates from the core of one's being a fearless tolerance in all the profound and inconceivable objects of dharmatā, such as the fact that by attaining nirvāṇa the limits of saṃsāra are empty, and by not attaining it the limits of existence do not fail to be emptied, and so forth. The *mDo sdud pa* says:

The entrances to gnosis, methods, and all roots
All arise from the supreme perfection of wisdom.
From various conditions, the machine of gnosis issues forth.
In the perfection of wisdom, there is no exhaustion or increase.

6.2.4.2.4.1.2.2 *In the width...* Not only that, by that entrance to tolerance of the profound object, in the space of a single atom one sees as many pure lands as there are atoms, without the atom becoming larger or the pure lands becoming smaller. And in a single moment, one can see an entire eon, without the moment becoming longer or the eon shorter. By this very certainty in the absence of true existence, which is like an illusion, one can enter the inconceivable domain of the buddhas. The *Avatāra* says:

Empty things, such as reflections,
That do not depend upon aggregation are not known to exist.
Just as from empty reflections, etc.,
The form of a cognition is produced,
Likewise, though all things are empty,
From emptiness itself they are produced.

6.2.4.2.4.2.1 The specifics of the Dharma terminology of the tradition of the early translations;
6.2.4.2.4.2.2 without a karmic connection, one will have no interest (*mos pa*) in it.

6.2.4.2.4.2.1 *One may have...* Thus, the creative expression of the primordial basis appears of itself, without distinction [of location]; at the time of arising, there is equality without differentiation or extremes; from the inconceivable basic expanse of equality, phenomena appear in every which way; at the time of appearing they are not established in reality in any way whatsoever; and thus, appearance and emptiness are coalescent. The meaning of these statements, which express the philosophical system of the early translations, is indeed difficult to fathom.

6.2.4.2.4.2.2 Though one disciplines the three doors of the bodily support, which lasts about one hundred years, and contemplates [the teaching], if one doesn't have a ripened cause or karmic connection from previous cultivation [of the path], then even if one has a great mind and is not a lowly person, and has both innate and acquired wisdom, that alone will not suffice for understanding. For example, it is like the Hīnayānist who has consummated both innate and cultivated wisdom, but who cannot comprehend the Mahāyāna. Glorious Candra said:

When this is explained, someone who has previously cultivated this frightening, profound meaning will definitely understand it, while another person, even if greatly learned, will not be able to comprehend it.

6.2.4.3 The summary: 6.2.4.3.1 an explanation of the greatness of this establishment of the view of our system; 6.2.4.3.2 summarizing by explaining the difference between abiding and apparent natures.

6.2.4.3.1 *Thus...* Therefore, although the sūtric and tantric philosophical systems have various ways, according to context, of inducing their particular [forms of realization], this great ocean, wherein enter the great rivers of elegant explanations of the one hundred holy Dharmas that deal with the ultimate profundities, is the most wonderful. From the *bShad rgyud rdo rje*:

The continuum of the ocean of individual teachings
Is taught here, is taught by this, is taught on account of this.
Because all meanings are completely perfected here,
It is explained as the “universal scripture.”⁸⁷¹

6.2.4.3.2. *Other modes...* The basic mode of appearance where appearance and abiding natures are not concordant, as well as other appearances at the time of the path, are not certain, are deceptive, and appear with fluctuations, such as happiness and suffering. Therefore, they cannot be relied upon. By directly seeing the true sublime meaning that is not deceptive—the unfabricated gnosis that is the coalescence of the two bodies, the final stage of the path where appearance and reality are concordant—one attains the realm of the changeless, and one can rely upon it.

I say:

By preparing the makṣā⁸⁷² of deluded karmic appearances,
One does not see the excellent pure gold of the apparent basis.
Though one debates⁸⁷³ [the alchemical virtues of] ice, fat, butter, and so forth,
This charcoal of analysis obviously only colors oneself.⁸⁷⁴

Topic 7

[0.2.2.3.] Third, in the analysis of whether the great Madhyamaka, the view that is the view of the nature of things, has a position or not: 7.1 the question; and 7.2 extensive discussion of its meaning.

7.1 *When analyzing...* Having already determined that the great Madhyamaka, which is a facet of the “Middle, Mudrā, and Perfection” triad (*dbu phyag rdzogs gsum*), has no position vis-à-vis ultimate reality existing or not existing, etc., the time has arrived to discuss the question of whether it upholds a position on the conventional level.

7.2.1 Refuting the system of earlier [philosophers], which exclusively asserts that it is without a position; 7.2.2 discussing the origin of our own system, which proceeds by way of differentiating [the meaning of the expressions] “with” and “without a position”; 7.2.3 refuting other systems that one-sidedly maintain that there is a position to maintain; 7.2.4 differentiating according to the quintessential [meaning] of our own tradition, namely, the way one settles in meditative equipoise.

7.2.1.1 Positing other philosophical systems and 7.2.1.2 explaining how they are opposed to our own Prāsaṅgika tradition.

7.2.1.1 *Earlier scholars...* The earlier [philosophers] of Tibet uniformly followed the meditative equipoise upon ultimate reality of the noble ones, which does not uphold either of the two truths, because it is utterly without any particular adherence to being, nonbeing, both, or neither, and existence, nonexistence, and so forth. They said that, in reference to the worldly deceptive [reality] of others, “we have no such position.”

7.2.1.2 *In our texts...* Although it is reasonable to maintain that the ultimate Madhyamaka has no position, if one maintains that exclusively, there is a problem, because it contradicts the textual tradition of the Prāsaṅgikas. The [latter’s] way is explained in our own tradition’s texts, the *Madhyamakāvatāra* and the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. [There] the basis is the two truths, the path is the perfection of the dual accumulation on the five paths and ten stages, and the result is incidental as well as conclusive. Conventionally, or deceptively, all dharmas exist as dependent originations, and for that reason our own system accepts all positions of the Mādhyamika philosophical system. That being the case, to attribute all conventional positions to the perspective of other worldly beings’ manner of perception would be to contradict both the words and the meaning of our Prāsaṅgika textual tradition.

7.2.2.1 Earlier systems are a mixture of good qualities as well as faults; and 7.2.2.2 analysis of the position of our own system, which eliminates those faults.

7.2.2.1 *According to...* As for that system, the victorious Lord Klong chen Rab ’byams bzang po said that, on the subject of whether the Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka has a position or not, earlier philosophers such as Pa tshab and his four sons, and so forth, each adhered one-sidedly to either the position that there is, or that there is not, a position, and that each of those systems of explanation had both its faults and its virtues. If one maintains those positions one-sidedly, one should understand their faults according to what is explained above and below.

7.2.2.2.1 When one determines that nothing is established in reality, one has no position; and 7.2.2.2.2 when one establishes the system of the path and result in apparent reality, one distinguishes the two truths and maintains them [as a position].

7.2.2.2.1 *Thus...* For the reason stated above, in Klong chen pa’s interpretation, emptiness and dependent origination are in a state of equality, and when one determines the nature of things that is free of all extremes of elaboration, none of the four extremes is established in any way whatsoever. So how could one hold any position about that nature of things vis-à-vis the two

truths? It would be unreasonable. Therefore, a “philosophical system” [*grub mtha'*] is a way of determining just how things exist in reality, because it posits or maintains a system [that describes] that [reality]. Moreover, when debating the establishment of the view as a basis, and so forth, on that second occasion there is no position [of nonposition] maintained when it is said that “In the nature of things, there is no position whatsoever.”⁸⁷⁵

7.2.2.2.2 *Therefore...* Also, with respect to the manner of appearance in the aftermath of meditation, according to the texts of the Prāsaṅgikas there is a philosophical system consisting of, for example, the triad of basis, path, and result. The establishment of these, whichever and however they exist, is carried out without confusing them, and they are asserted as a position. “Henceforth, if Tibetan [scholars] are able to analyze and expound according to this system, it shall be by dint of my own elegant treatise, the *White Lotus Commentary to the Wishfulfilling Treasure*,” he [Klong chen rab 'byams] said.

7.2.3.1 Setting up the philosophical systems of others and 7.2.3.2 refuting them.

7.2.3.1 *In that respect...* In Tibet, some scholars, such as gTsang pa, maintained that the Mādhyamika system has a position. In dependence upon that one-sided view, some scholars in the Land of Snow proved over and over again that their [Mādhyamika] system has a position. They distinguish the two truths by saying that ultimate reality is emptiness and deceptive reality is not empty of itself, thus establishing the point of view that there is a position.

7.2.3.2 Secondly, refuting that view: 7.2.3.2.1 in general, it contradicts the view of the Prāsaṅgika school to say that there is a position; and 7.2.3.2.2 in particular, an explanation of how the two truths would thus be contradictory.

7.2.3.2.1.1 Explaining and analyzing the reason for that; 7.2.3.2.1.2 how the point under consideration is harmed by reasoning.

7.2.3.2.1.1.1 Establishing a sign that it is difficult to assert a position; 7.2.3.2.1.1.2 explaining the reason for that.

7.2.3.2.1.1.1 *But if one...* If one maintains that there is a position without specifying a context, there is a problem. Because in the actual state of things, existence and nonexistence are not established, and it is difficult for there to be an unequivocal position,⁸⁷⁶ because if one analyzes, there is nothing to maintain as a position. If the referent of excluding judgment is something merely existent, it is not the nature of things.⁸⁷⁷ The *Prajñāpāramitā* says:

There is an end, there is no end, and so forth, the four positions:
How can there be any peace in these?⁸⁷⁸

7.2.3.2.1.1.2.1 In our Mādhyamika tradition, the object of ascertainment is the ultimate nature of reality and 7.2.3.2.1.1.2.2 whatever else is not established from that perspective is not our own system.

7.2.3.2.1.1.2.1 *If you say...* As for “our Mādhyamika system”: having thoroughly analyzed the view of reality that is free of extremes, what is settled on [subsequent to] that [analysis] is the final meaning that is ascertained in the Mādhyamika philosophical system. For that analysis is what causes one to know just what to contemplate in our [Mādhyamika] tradition.

7.2.3.2.1.1.2.2 *Anything else...* Aside from that, “our system” is not anything like what is known to a worldly old man. Why is that? Because, if we Mādhyamikas investigate with that valid cognition of rational knowledge about ultimate reality, and do not maintain any system of conventionality in that respect, it goes without saying that those “other” things, for example, false theoretical imputations of philosophical systems, are not established.

7.2.3.2.1.2.1 If our system had any position, then it would consequently be ultimately established;
7.2.3.2.1.2.2 if not, it would contradict the statement that we do have a position.

7.2.3.2.1.2.1 *Thus...* For that reason, if a Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamika analyzes and maintains each of the two truths individually as the ultimate reality that is empty of being truly existent from the perspective of a valid cognition of rational knowledge, and as the deceptive reality that is not empty of being established by valid cognition, then the mere conventional appearance that is not investigated or analyzed would not be ascertained relationally, but should, by dint of [valid cognition], be analyzed and accepted as a position, precisely because it would be established by the force of reasoning. An empty non-entity that is maintained as a position [according to such a Mādhyamika interpretation] would not be established in relation to entities, but would be ultimately existent. And deceptive realities would not just be what is renowned in the world, but would be immune to analysis and not empty of themselves, because they would be understood in the context of rational valid cognitions (*rig shes kyi tshad ma*)—for example, like the *paratantra* of the Vijñaptimātrins. Thus, the commentary to the *Avatārabhāṣya* says, “therefore, because it depends upon other things, what I maintain is not established by its own power.”

7.2.3.2.1.2.2 *If our own system...* If such a way of explanation, vis-à-vis our own Mādhyamika system, had no position, then it would contradict the extreme establishment of the aspect of saying “we do have a position.”

7.2.3.2.2 Regarding the internal contradiction of the two truths: 7.2.3.2.2.1 a question about whether or not we have a position on analysis and nonanalysis; and 7.2.3.2.2.2 refuting the answer to that.

7.2.3.2.2.1 *We would...* [Someone objects:] If in our own Mādhyamika system ultimate reality is emptiness—which is the analysis of [existing entities] into nonreality through a valid cognition of

rational knowledge—and deceptive reality is not investigated and not analyzed, then we would have two positions. If both of them are true, then is “our system” one or the other of these, or both of them?

7.2.3.2.2.2.1 If our system were one or the other, then each would contradict the other; 7.2.3.2.2.2.2 if it were both, showing its untenability.

7.2.3.2.2.2.1 *If it were...* If, according to the first alternative, [our system were each of the two truths] separately, each would contradict the statements regarding [the other truth], as well as the received statements of our own Prāsaṅgika corpus. If in our Mādhyamika system there were no existent to posit, and everything were posited as unreal, then the positing of something “existent” would not be possible, even according to deceptive reality. If this were the proper system of Madhyamaka, then it would have to posit only nonexistence.

7.2.3.2.2.2.2.1 If it were both, both would consequently be resistant to analysis and 7.2.3.2.2.2.2.2 and there would be no point.

7.2.3.2.2.2.2.1 *If we accepted...* Moreover, if our Mādhyamika system did not posit them separately, but posited them both at the same time, since all lower systems and any position whatsoever, when analyzed, are the same in not resisting analysis, if we had no position, our way of thus having a position [of no-position] would posit a basis that is not refutable by reason, in the empty space left over once you have refuted all things not resistant to analysis. Thus, both [truths] would become resistant to analysis.

7.2.3.2.2.2.2.2.1 Both of those cannot combine; and 7.2.3.2.2.2.2.2.2 even if they could, it could be proved meaningless from each side.

7.2.3.2.2.2.2.2.1 *Accordingly...* According to that way of positing a claim, those two objects cannot possibly be combined together. A nonexistent that withstands analysis cannot combine with an existent, and likewise an existent that withstands analysis cannot be combine with a nonexistent either.

7.2.3.2.2.2.2.2.2.1 Even if one realizes that exclusive emptiness, it does not cut off attachment to deceptive reality, so analysis becomes futile; and 7.2.3.2.2.2.2.2.2.2 that apprehension of nonexistence lacks the context of view, meditation, action, and fruition, so systems of conventionality become futile.

7.2.3.2.2.2.2.2.2.1 *For if they were...* If a combination were possible, then even if at the time that one realizes that things are unreal by means of reasoning that examines the nature of ultimate reality, does one still possess an understanding (*rtogs pa*) of deceptive existence or not? If one does, then just when one is not analyzing the nature of ultimate reality, one experiences (*rtogs*) something existing, so what good will an analysis of ultimate reality do to reverse the two kinds of self-apprehension? The consequence is that it would not benefit [the reversal], for the reason given earlier. Not only that: if we Prāsaṅgikas wanted to establish that conventional, deceptive reality is not harmed by reasoning, indeed is immune to reasoning, then wouldn't it be similar to the way in

which the Svātantrikas reason, whereby conventional reality is proven to be immune to reasoning? For that would be similar to one's own position.⁸⁷⁹

7.2.3.2.2.2.2.2.2 *If there were...* Moreover, according to the second [alternative]: If, apart from that absolute negation that excludes the negandum, there is no nature of things—that is, appearance, or a combination [of appearance and emptiness]—and an understanding of existence is unnecessary, then it will never be possible for that modal apprehension to have an apparent aspect. Thus, for that Mādhyamika system of ours, why wouldn't the view, meditation, and conduct all share the context of that conception of nonexistence? They would, because one must cultivate oneself according to the nature of things [which would be nonexistence].

7.2.4.1 Explanation of the Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka, which emphasizes the nonconceptual ultimate; 7.2.4.2 explanation of the Svātantrika Madhyamaka, which emphasizes the conceptual ultimate that is easy to understand; 7.2.4.3 combining both of them into one stream, insofar as they both have the aspects of equipoise and aftermath; and 7.2.4.4 explanation of the differences among Madhyamaka, Mahāmudrā, and the Great Perfection.

7.2.4.1.1 Explaining that, when one ascertains [ultimate reality] in accordance with the gnosis of sublime equipoise, the two truths are not established, and there is no position; 7.2.4.1.2 setting up the system of the two valid cognitions conventionally, without confusing them; 7.2.4.1.3 explaining that the faults ascribed to others above do not apply to us.

7.2.4.1.1.1 The pacification of elaborations in accessing the expanse of integrated appearance and emptiness; 7.2.4.1.1.2 aside from this, coalescence and absence of elaborations are pointless; 7.2.4.1.1.3 therefore, from the perspective of the great Madhyamaka, which investigates according to the nature of reality, there is no position.

7.2.4.1.1.1 *Therefore...* One hears that the great awareness-holder 'Jigs-med gLingpa said that in the context of Madhyamaka, one establishes the system of conventionality according to the Gelugpas, who uphold intrinsic emptiness, and that Lo chen Dharmaśrī of sMin-grol gLing established Madhyamaka in the context of extrinsic emptiness. Since they were both great scholars of the Nyingma tradition, I think they must have had their reasons for so doing. However, if one should ask whether the explanatory tradition of the Early Translation school accords with either of those, it does not; for it is said that those systems are just other [traditions'] explanatory systems. Therefore, our own system should be understood in accordance with the explanation of the *White Lotus* commentary to the *Wish-fulfilling Treasure* by the omniscient Dharma king Klong chen pa, [which propounds] the intention of our own unique system, the Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka. In accordance with that commentary, the sun of philosophers who was identical to Mañjuśrī, Mi pham phyogs las rnam rgyal, was able to unpack the meaning clearly and unmistakably. He says that our own Mādhyamika system, which integrates the intentions of the Prāsaṅgika masters and the Great Omniscient One [Klong chen pa], should be understood in this way: "Henceforth, if anyone knows how to explain it this way, it is by dint of my elegant composition [the *White Lotus*]."

Accordingly, if it is a qualified, nonabiding Madhyamaka of coalescence, it must be a great Madhyamaka that is the coalescence of appearance and emptiness according to the interpretive

commentaries and essential sūtras of the Buddha's final turning of the wheel of Dharma, or it must be the great Madhyamaka free from all elaborations of the four extremes, as taught in the sūtras and interpretive commentaries of the middle turning. Having ascertained that way of accessing ultimate reality, which combines those two without contradiction in a manner homologous to the way in which the equipoise of sublime beings engages gnosis, the dharmadhātu of coalescence does not need to be understood in terms each of the two truths alternately [in order to] eliminate extremes, because it has the nature of complete pacification of all the very subtle elaborations of extremes, such as existence and nonexistence. As it is said, "profound, peaceful, free of elaboration, luminous, unfabricated."

7.2.4.1.1.2.1 That mere emptiness is neither [coalescent nor nonelaborated]; 7.2.4.1.1.2.2 explaining each of them.

7.2.4.1.1.2.1 *That path...* For that reason, that path that takes emptiness alone as the path falls into one of the two extremes of appearance and emptiness, so that trivial view does not have the sense of the coalescence of the final turning, or of the nonelaboration of the middle turning.

7.2.4.1.1.2.2.1 That mere emptiness does not have the sense of coalescence and 7.2.4.1.1.2.2.2 does not have the sense of nonelaboration.

7.2.4.1.1.2.2.1 *Whereas...* One might wonder why there is no sense of coalescence here. The coalescence of appearance and emptiness is equal with respect to existence and nonexistence, and has the nature of nondual equality of the coalescence of appearance and emptiness. But here, this is just a subjective intentionally apprehensive consciousness that takes as its exclusive object the expanse of ultimate emptiness.

7.2.4.1.1.2.2.2 Likewise, elaboration is any and all types of reification of existence, nonexistence, both, neither, permanence, impermanence, etc. Among those possibilities, the present case is not free of an elaboration of nonexistence, because it takes that emptiness as its object.

7.2.4.1.1.3 *Therefore...* Since in that [exclusive emptiness] there is no sense of coalescence or nonelaboration, from the perspective of the great Madhyamaka free of extremes that encounters reality just as it is (*gnas lugs ji bzhin 'jal ba*), there is no position. Because the gnosis of sublime equipoise realizes the equality that is the coalescence of appearance and emptiness, it is free of all elaborations of establishment and negation, such as having and not-having, being and nonbeing. Therefore, when in that way one ascertains with a valid cognition of rational knowledge (*rigs shes tshad ma*), in accordance with the sense [of that form of cognition], all dharmas of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa are not established by reasoning no matter how they may be asserted to exist, and are thus not maintained according to any ontological extreme. The *Teaching for Ocean-mind Sūtra* says, "Brahmā, that dharma that is thoroughly nonestablished is not accepted as 'existence' or 'nonexistence.'"

7.2.4.1.2.1 In analyzing the manner of appearance from the perspective of a conventionalizing valid cognition, there is a position on the two truths; 7.2.4.1.2.2 in relation to the ascertainment of those two by means of two types of valid cognition, how [our] system is established.

7.2.4.1.2.1.1 The main point; and 7.2.4.1.2.1.2 explaining the reason for how it appears in that way.

7.2.4.1.2.1.1 *Thus...* Thus, the fact that there is no position vis-à-vis the ultimate meaning of reality is proven by both reasoning and scripture, but from the perspective of the conventional valid cognition that analyzes things' manner of appearance, the two truths are posited. The *Meeting of Father and Son Sūtra* says:

You should not listen to others, but realize them for yourself, these two truths that are known by the world—namely, deceptive truth and ultimate truth. There is no third whatsoever.

Just as there are various modes of perception based upon a single cognandum, according to the way in which the meditative equipoise of sublime beings ascertains things—for which the way things are and the way they appear are concordant—there is an definitive ultimate truth, a reality (*chod nyid*) beyond all establishment and negation, not abiding in any extreme, which is the object of a nonconceptual gnosis. Thus, there is ascertainment of an ultimate truth that is free of extremes by means of a valid cognition that analyzes ultimate reality in accordance with that [gnosis of sublime equipoise], and there is also a deceptive reality, comprising objects and the subjects that perceive them, which are posited by a mind for which appearance and reality are discordant. All systems of things that are known or appear infallibly in the world for oneself and others—all dependently arisen appearances—are not destroyed and are not analyzed or investigated as to whether or not they exist ultimately; these are posited by conventional validating cognitions. The two truths that depend on those two kinds [of valid cognition] are each posited. The *Bodhicaryāvatāra* says:

Deceptive and ultimate reality
Are held to be the two realities.

7.2.4.1.2.1.2.1 The two truths as objects of engagement are only modes of appearance vis-à-vis their inseparability; 7.2.4.1.2.1.2.2 the two valid cognitions that engage them are trivial vis-à-vis gnosis.

7.2.4.1.2.1.2.1 *With respect to...* Thus, the [conventions] of the two truths as modes of appearance are [mere appearances] in relation to the equipoise of sublime beings that engages the reality of the inseparable two truths just as it is. If, in the domain of an ultimate valid cognition, the objective nonelaboration—which is a conceptualized negation that is the exclusion of elaboration—is merely an appearance, it goes without saying that the establishment of deceptive reality vis-à-vis conventional valid cognition is also an appearance. Therefore, each of the two valid cognitions is merely an appearance, and their objects are not the actual ultimate.

7.2.4.1.2.1.2.2 *Are fragmentary...* In relation to the subjective gnosis that sees the meaning of the inseparability of the two truths, both of the two kinds of valid cognition that ascertain the two truths are apprehensive of an exclusive object, and are thus fragmentary. Neither by itself is capable of simultaneously comprehending the two truths.

7.2.4.1.2.2.1 Each of the objects found by the ascertainment of the two ascertaining analytical wisdoms has its respective essence; 7.2.4.1.2.2.2 the position that the two truths to be ascertained are entered alternately.

7.2.4.1.2.2.1 *Therefore...* For that reason, the valid cognition that posits systems of deceptive or conventional reality, and the valid cognition that analyzes the nature of ultimate reality are both forms of discriminating analytical wisdom. If one investigates a subject, such as a vase, with those two valid cognitions, the objects one finds are the two essences of “abiding nature” and “apparent nature.” Likewise, the *Madhyamakāvatāra* says:

By seeing all things with respect to their falsity and their true nature,
One will comprehend the two essences found in things.
Whatever is the object of authentic seeing is reality;
False seeing is said to be deceptive reality.

7.2.4.1.2.2.2 *But when...* When one of those two realities is investigated, the other is not present. At the time of ascertaining ultimate reality by a valid cognition that investigates the nature of things, there is no position whatsoever on conventional, deceptive reality; and at the time of positing systems of deceptive reality, one must make one’s position without investigating or analyzing ultimately. Since, as an ordinary person, one cannot go beyond an alternating investigation of the two truths, be it in considering the view or actually meditating, it is established that there are two positions—namely, the systems of the abiding nature of things and their modes of appearance, which are established from the points of view of the different validating cognitions.

7.2.4.1.3 Eliminating faults: 7.2.4.1.3.1 setting up the argument; 7.2.4.1.3.2 and eliminating its faults.

7.2.4.1.3.1 *Well don’t...* “Well then,” someone might say, “As far as your previous statements are concerned—criticizing later scholars for saying that there is a position, and criticizing earlier scholars for saying that there is no position, and also saying that in having a position, an internal contradiction between the two truths follows—those faults you have ascribed to others also belong to you as well, don’t they?”

7.2.4.1.3.1.1 Actually giving the response, that there is no fault and 7.2.4.1.3.1.2 refuting other systems in that manner.

7.2.4.1.3.1.1.1 Summary of the specifics of the response, that both faults are absent; 7.2.4.1.3.1.1.2 explaining its meaning extensively.

7.2.4.1.3.1.1.1 *By making...* As for not having those faults, [Mipham says], I have made special distinctions—namely, the path Madhyamaka of meditative aftermath, and the principal (*dn̄gos gzhi*) Madhyamaka of meditative equipoise. Those can be distinguished by degree of difficulty, as coarse and subtle; or by invariable concomitance, as cause and effect; or by reference to the subjective mind, as consciousness and gnosis. Thus differentiating by context both great and lesser Madhyamakas, the presence and absence of a position are variously determined. Because I have explained myself in that way, how can those faults of permanence and annihilation possibly

apply to me?

Moreover, in the context of ultimate reality, you apply verbal qualifications, and thus discriminate between the two realities, so you have a position. In our system, at the time of determining the view in meditative equipoise of our own Madhyamaka, which is free of extremes and differentiation of the two truths, we have no position. And by differentiating the two validating cognitions, we differentiate two contexts for ascertaining systems of appearance in the aftermath, which involve positions. Therefore, all important points referring to the nonentailment of the two faults depend upon this kind of specification. I also think this is an important point for understanding the differentiation of Mādhyamika systems in our own and other schools.

7.2.4.1.3.1.1.2.1 The first answer to the fault; and 7.2.4.1.3.1.1.2.2 the second answer.

7.2.4.1.3.1.1.2.1.1 Criticizing others who have a position; and 7.2.4.1.3.1.1.2.1.2 criticizing others who don't have a position, and the fact that their fault is also not applicable to us.

7.2.4.1.3.1.1.2.1.1 *Thus...* As has been said above, because in ascertaining the great Madhyamaka free of elaboration there is no position established, our own final system of Madhyamaka is the explanation that there is no position whatsoever. The *Prasannapadā* says, "If one is a Mādhyamika, one does not make inferences according to an entity existing in common,⁸⁸⁰ because one has not accepted anyone else's position." The *Yuktiśaṣṭika* says, "The great-minded, who do not engage in anything, have no position⁸⁸¹ [to defend]. How can whoever has no position have some other position?"

Therefore, whatever position one maintains, be it the side of appearance or the side of emptiness, fails to eliminate conceptualization of characteristics. As long as there is imagination and modal apprehension, there will be some fault, and whoever has no theses or positions to uphold will have no fault whatsoever. That very text [the *Yuktiśaṣṭika*] says, "If I have some thesis, then I have this fault. Since I have no thesis, I am quite free of fault." The fact that one must elucidate the definition of "position" does not mean that one has a thesis and a position, because one has the thesis of not having the position or elaboration that characterizes the opponents' previously stated position, such as "produced" or "nonproduced," etc. Thus, there is no fault whatsoever.

7.2.4.1.3.1.1.2.1.2 *In the context...* Also, the faults that are shown to harm some others do not apply to us. Even though the Madhyamaka of meditative equipoise has no position, at the time of experiencing the aftermath, in reference to the mode of appearance of the basis, path, result, and so forth, the two truths appear to exist individually, without confusion. Then at that time it is not right to cast the aspersion of "nonexistence." For that reason, from the perspective of the authentic experience wrought by the two distinct validating cognitions that cause the experience of both of the two truths, all conceptual elaborations adhering to philosophical extremes are eliminated. The correct establishment of all the systems of the path and result is for the purpose of eliminating all erroneous concepts in those contexts. Moreover, all biased views that adhere to notions of substantiality in Buddhist and non-Buddhist systems, as well as to existence and nonexistence, are eliminated. On the basis of that ultimate reality, all good qualities of abandonment and realization are established, and assertions of the conventional nonexistence of

the path, result, and so forth, are eliminated. There is a position that maintains that all systems of basis, path, and result exist infallibly in their manner of appearance, and they are not something to be cast away as unnecessary.

Accordingly, the *Prasannapadā* says, "Like a vessel for someone desirous of water, at first deceptive reality should definitely be accepted."

7.2.4.1.3.1.1.2.2.1 The internal contradiction and the fault of withstanding analysis do not apply in the context of ultimate reality; and 7.2.4.1.3.1.1.2.2.2 they do not apply even with respect to deceptive reality.

7.2.4.1.3.1.1.2.2.1 *But in...* So at the time of experiencing the fundamental nature of all dharmas, there is no position whatsoever of establishment or negation. From the *dBu ma She rab la 'jug pa*:

Both establishment and negation are just negated;
In fact there is no establishment or negation at all.⁸⁸²

If you wonder why there is no position: In the fundamental nature of reality, both levels of truth are primordially without divisions or partiality. There is no fault whatsoever, either ontologically or psychologically,⁸⁸³ in saying that there is no position. Therefore, whichever of the two faults one implicates—either the internal contradiction, or immunity to analysis that establishes something in reality—that characterizes the systems of others who have positions about the differentiation of the two truths, in our tradition there is no fault of establishing something in truth, because there is no basis for the internal contradiction that arises from having no position, even though the two truths are dualistically perceived, nor is there a basis for [either of the two truths being] immune to analysis.

7.2.4.1.3.1.1.2.2.2 *If [a position]...* Not only that, [the criticism] does not apply to deceptive reality. Even though we accept both truths on the conventional level—insofar as all dharmas have both a fundamental as well as an apparent nature—because this is accepted in reference to deceptive reality, and even though it is not ultimately established, as long as one is temporarily abiding in this apparent reality level, both levels of reality are true from the perspective of the validating cognitions that apprehend them. The noncontradiction of there being both an abiding nature and an apparent nature on a single basis is the nature (*chos nyid*) of things, so there is no internal contradiction. Thus, the two truths are posited as mere designations, but because they are posited without analysis or investigation [into their ultimate nature], the faults of being immune to analysis and so forth do not descend upon us.

7.2.4.1.3.1.2 Refuting others with that: 7.2.4.1.3.1.2.1 having differentiated the abiding and apparent natures of a thing and differentiated appearance and emptiness, all designations are the deceptive reality of modes of appearance; 7.2.4.1.3.1.2.2 by explaining that abiding and apparent realities are without sameness and difference, one dispels other false conceptualizations.

7.2.4.1.3.1.2.1.1 Explaining that existing things and nonexisting things (*dngos dang dngos med*) are not immune to analysis; 7.2.4.1.3.1.2.1.2 explaining that even though those two are posited as the two truths, they are [actually] modes of appearance.

7.2.4.1.3.1.2.1.1 *Real entities...* So, in relation to the ultimate meaning, the dependently arisen psychosomatic aggregates, realms, and bases, etc., are things that are not immune to analysis, because they are neither one nor many, and because their nonsubstantialities, which are designated dependently, are likewise not immune to analysis, since they are designated in dependence upon entities. Therefore, in the final analysis, both substantiality and nonsubstantiality are equal in not being established, and are contextually dependent upon one another; they are just designated deceptive realities.

7.2.4.1.3.1.2.1.2.1 Explaining that uninvestigated deceptive reality is the way things appear;
7.2.4.1.3.1.2.1.2.2 explaining that unreality (*bden med*) is just conceptual.

7.2.4.1.3.1.2.1.2.1 *Something...* Thus, a thing that exists merely because it is renowned in the world, without being investigated or analyzed, exists as a mode of appearance, but not in relation to its actual abiding nature. So there is no debate or doubt as to the fact of its being a deceptive reality.

7.2.4.1.3.1.2.1.2.2 *Whatever is seen...* By analyzing that mode of appearance into unreality with a rational cognition, one sees an emptiness of absolute negation. That of course is held to be emptiness, the abiding nature of things. That functions as the counterpart of deceptive reality, or as the contextual ultimate reality in relation to it; but in relation to the final, nonconceptual ultimate, it is a mere nonsubstantiality. Moreover, it is just a conceptual ultimate, and an authentic deceptive reality. The master Bhāvaviveka said:

Without the staircase of authentic deceptive reality,
It is not possible for a wise person
To ascend the staircase
Of the great house of the ultimate.⁸⁸⁴

The *Ornament* says:

If it depends upon conceptuality,
It is still deceptive, and not ultimate.⁸⁸⁵

7.2.4.1.3.1.2.2.1 The sameness and difference of appearance and reality; and 7.2.4.1.3.1.2.2.2 excluding misconceptions about that [sameness or difference].

7.2.4.1.3.1.2.2.1 *If the way...* Then, if the above-mentioned ultimate, which is the way things are in reality, and the deceptive, which is the way things appear, are mutually exclusive,⁸⁸⁶ they should be ultimately different. Then, just as the *Samdhinirmocana* says, the four faults of the two truths being different would result: (1) Even if one directly realized the ultimate, the deceptive would not be included in it, and would have to be focused upon separately, so one would not obtain nirvāṇa. (2) That ultimate that is different from deceptive reality would not be the dharmatā of deceptive reality, as a vase is not the dharmatā of a cloth. (3) The mere fact of a deceptive self not being totally established would not be an ultimate truth, just as a vase not being totally established does not make it a cloth. (4) Having realized ultimate reality and achieved nirvāṇa,

because one has imagined it separately from that deceptive reality, one will become afflicted again. It would be possible for both afflicted and purified constituents to exist simultaneously in the mind of a single person. These are the four [faults].

Those who have delved into the *Samḍhinirmocana* should analyze the two truths of their own systems with this in mind. Also, if those two realities—the way things are and the way they appear, which appear as though not mutually mixed—were conventionally nondifferent, there would be the four faults of the two truths being identical, which are stated in that same sūtra. To wit: (1) Ordinary individuals would see ultimate reality, because they see deceptive reality; (2) just as defilement increases in dependence upon deceptive reality, it would likewise increase in dependence upon ultimate reality;⁸⁸⁷ (3) just as there are no divisions in ultimate reality, there would be no divisions in deceptive reality; and (4) just as deceptive reality does not need to be sought apart from what one sees and hears, ultimate reality would be the same.

7.2.4.1.3.1.2.2.2.1 In general, there are different systems according to the great and small vehicles; 7.2.4.1.3.1.2.2.2.2 therefore, as the buddha nature is the definitive meaning [of all vehicles], it is not harmed by reasoning; 7.2.4.1.3.1.2.2.2.3 showing that it is meaningful to purify the stains that obscure it.

7.2.4.1.3.1.2.2.2.1 *In this way...* By explaining that the two truths are the abiding reality and apparent reality in that way, buddhas and sentient beings are the abiding reality and apparent reality [respectively]. But in the Hīnayāna, buddhas and sentient beings are held to be effect and cause, respectively. The [followers of the Hīnayāna] maintain that when a disciple in the lineage of sublime beings whose [spiritual destiny] is uncertain abides for a very long time and undergoes hardships on the path of the lesser vehicle as a cause, the result is the one supreme among two-legged creatures, who achieves the goal of perfect buddhahood.

The Mahāyāna maintains that by practicing the path that is the antidote for the cloud-like mass of things that are to be abandoned, the final result is the buddhas who have become free [of those things]. Having perfected and consummated the equality of primordial buddhahood, which is the abiding nature of all appearances of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, which are the apparent nature of things, apparent and abiding natures come into harmony, and they abide in the selfnature of utterly pure self-appearance. Nonetheless, that primordial buddha nature that is the basic abiding reality of sentient beings is not understood [by those sentient beings]. For the sake of those who are worn out and daunted by searching for buddhahood outside themselves, the Lord Maitreya taught that from the perspective of the three types of dharmatā reasoning that are to be relied upon, it is established that the lineage of the nature of buddhahood is present in the realm of sentient beings.⁸⁸⁸

That kind of lineage undertakes the actions that achieve buddhahood, and buddhahood, in dependence upon the existence of the lineage in the realm of sentient beings, is proven to be manifest. If you wonder whether [sentient beings and buddhas] are related as cause and effect, as taught in the small vehicle, the answer is no. Even if that were proven, because the apparent existence of things appears as cause and effect, nonetheless in the actual nature of things both buddhas and sentient beings abide without distinction in the state of thusness. Likewise, if both dharmatā or thusness that is unfabricated and sentient beings are nondifferent, then sentient beings must be buddhas, because buddhas are nondifferent from that [dharmatā]. The *Uttaratantra* says:

Although it has adventitious ill
It has good qualities by its very nature;
As before, so it is after:
The changeless dharmatā.⁸⁸⁹

And:

Luminous, uncreated, and inseparable,
It is completely endowed with the dharmas of
Past buddhas as numerous as
The sands of the Ganges river.⁸⁹⁰

Thus, this oceanic realm of fundamental Buddhadharmas, which is inseparable from the unfabricated luminosity that is the nature of mind, is an authentic reason [for inferring that sentient beings are buddhas, etc.]. If it is unfabricated and inseparable, then there is no reason for establishing it anew. So the buddha that is apparently the result [of some cause] is spontaneously present in the basis. If it had to be established anew, it would become fabricated, and thus it would not be an immutable refuge, etc.—such would be faults [of such a position]. Moreover, Rong zom Paṇḍita said, in accordance with the meaning of the *Ye shes snang ba rgyan gyi mdo*:

The permanently uncreated dharma is the Tathāgata;
All dharmas are like the Tathāgata.
The infantile apprehend substantial characteristics
And always interact with nonexistent phenomena in the worlds.

According to this statement, all dharmas are the Tathāgata, because those dharmas that are permanently uncreated are the Tathāgata, like the sugatas of the three times. How are they similar? The Sugata is not distinguished by body, speech, and mind; [the Sugata] is distinguished by dharmatā. For, the distinction of dharmatā is said to be [that of] a “sublime being.” Just as the sublime ones have attained sublimity through attaining the unfabricated, likewise all dharmas, by having attained the unfabricated, have attained suchness and are the Tathāgata. The domain of characteristics is not like that. Although they are not as they seem, those who interact with them are just reacting to things that do not exist.

Thus, the crucial point of the first two reasonings depends upon this dharmatā reasoning, so since it depends upon the ultimate dharmatā, there is no need to look for another reason.⁸⁹¹ From the *Praise to the Attainment of Omniscience*:

Among reasonings, with respect to dharmatā,
Among liberations, with respect to nonwavering,
Among wisdoms, with respect to omniscience,
You are supreme among the embodied.

7.2.4.1.3.1.2.2.2.2 *Because the way...* There is no error whatsoever in this kind of exposition. Insofar as both reality and appearance are not claimed to be either wholly identical or wholly different, if sentient beings are buddhas, there is no implication that they should appear as such, for the previous reason. If they are buddhas, there is no implication that they must all appear as such. You might think, “All the buddhas now living in the ten directions either appear to you or, if they don’t, [you] are obscured by obscurations”—all sentient beings abide in the [nature of] buddhahood, and though they don’t appear [as such], they are obscured by that obscuration. If you think, “Even though we haven’t met the buddhas, previously there were many people who met them and bore witness to [the possibility].” There are many people who have experienced the fact that sentient beings are buddhas. For example, the Brahma [god] “Locks of Hair” saw this realm as pure.

Moreover, even if [sentient beings] are buddhas, there is no implication that the five paths, ten bhūmis, and two accumulations, which are the antidotes for abandoning obscurations, are pointless; for they are the method for manifesting the fact that [sentient beings] are buddhas. If you think that since they have been buddhas from the beginning there is no need to manifest that anew: well then, there would be no need to accumulate merit and purify obscurations for realizing emptiness, because from the very beginning [sentient beings] are emptiness, and since the effect resides in the cause, if one ate tainted food, there would be no harm. As explained before, there is a distinction between the systems of the Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna, and you would have to want to make this pretentious philosophical system of yours the same as the system of the Hīnayāna! Thus, in such a position [as we have here] there are no faults as described earlier, because of the speciousness of [your] scriptural quotations and reasonings.

7.2.4.1.3.1.2.2.2.3 *However things...* Thus, the buddha nature and emptiness are both obscured by the obscuration of karma, afflictive emotions, and ripening effect, so [we and the opponent] are in all respects the same in [maintaining that buddhahood] is not apparent. Therefore, in order to abandon obscuration, both we and others assert that one must try to practice the path.

7.2.4.2 Explaining the system of the Svātantrikas: 7.2.4.2.1 a general discussion of their exposition of the two truths; 7.2.4.2.2 a discussion of the manner of applying distinctions when ascertaining [the two truths]; and 7.2.4.2.3 abandoning criticisms about that.

7.2.4.2.1.1 The claim that the two truths have one essence and different isolates; 7.2.4.2.1.2 the position that those two are equally potent, based as they are on [their respective] objects; 7.2.4.2.1.3 determining that the objects found by the two subjective validating cognitions are the two truths; and 7.2.4.2.1.4 explaining that there is no choice but [to conclude that] those two are neither the same nor different.

7.2.4.2.1.1 *Because the two truths...* Thus, in this context of the great Madhyamaka, if you should wonder if, in analyzing whether or not there is a position in the coalescence that is free of extremes of elaboration, the Svātantrika system is discussed, the answer is of course that it must be explained, because both contexts of having and not-having a position must be demonstrated. Why is that? The fruitional Madhyamaka, which is the gnosis of equipoise, and the causal Madhyamaka, which is the analytical wisdom of aftermath, are individually distinguished as the Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka, which from the start emphasizes the nonconceptual ultimate free of

positions, and as the Svātantrika Madhyamaka, which emphasizes the conceptual ultimate that involves a position. [The conceptual ultimate must be discussed first, because then, on the basis of that,] one must explain the experiential confidence, etc., in the final, nonconceptual ultimate free of all positions.

You might think that the difference between the two is determined only with respect to the conceptual and nonconceptual ultimates. Indeed, in positing the differences between the views of [these] philosophical systems, this alone is the fundamental distinction. The claim that valid cognition is or is not established, whether or not the distinction of ultimacy is applied to the negandum, whether logical reasons are *prasaṅgas* or autonomous syllogisms, and so forth, are just auxiliary distinctions. In brief, the Svātantrikas' way of explanation is to distinguish the two truths individually, and the Prāsaṅgikas' is not to differentiate the two truths, but to explain them as the being experienced by the two kinds of validating cognition. All the distinctions explained above converge upon this crucial point. The glorious and great Rong zom Chos bzang said:

All dharmas are ultimately pacified of elaborations. Though one considers that there is no probandum whatsoever to be proven, the [tendency] to apprehend something to be abandoned or accepted as characteristics of authentic deceptive reality is an error in the extreme, and is cause for amazement.

And, from the *Secret Commentary* of the Great Omniscient One:

The Svātantrika Mādhyamikas maintain that all dharmas are deceptively apparent, and that if one investigates them, they are ultimately without intrinsic nature. The *dBu ma bden gnyis* says, "This deceptive reality, which appears in this way; if analyzed with reason, nothing is found. It is the primordially abiding dharmatā."

The Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamikas maintain that whether one analyzes or not, all dharmas are pacified of all elaborations and free of any position. The *Avatāra* says:

While you claim that the *paratantra* is real,
I do not accept that deceptive reality [is real].

And:

If one differentiates that deceptive reality, there are both appearances that are not viable as they appear, like the reflection of the moon in water, and those that are viable, like the moon in the sky. Even if you analyze them, both authentic and mistaken (*yang log gnyis ka*) are equally appearances, and if you examine them, they are equal in not being established in fact. So to that extent, *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*, actual and potential phenomena, abide in equality, without differentiation. Such an ultimate is beyond intellect, so in essence it is without differentiation. But if one were to loosely discern it intellectually, there the "emptiness with respect to the essence of dharmas themselves that is the actual ultimate," and so forth, and the birth of a mind that is free from elaboration in the yogi who meditates on that object, are called the conceptual ultimate. The *bDen gnyis* says:

The cessation of birth, etc.,
Is held to conform to the authentic;
The unborn, the pacification of all elaborations,
Signifies the ultimate.

Because just this is an object of the mind, it is explained as a definitive deceptive reality, and as a designation of ultimate reality. Likewise, in the *sGyu ma ngal so*:

Here, proponents of true existence (*dgnos smra ba*) maintain deceptive establishment, and nonestablishment ultimately, taking the two aspects separately. In that case, since dharmas are not established in their own context,⁸⁹² it is not reasonable. For, from a mere intellectual concept of these two aspects of [nonexistence and existence], there clearly manifests, on the basis of an appearance, a nonexistence. And, by the thought that nothing is established, a thing does not become anything less [than what it is]. The system of the Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka is this: from the moment of appearance, to be free of all positions is the quintessence of the Middle Way. Nāgārjuna said:

Because its essence is just as it appears
Do not start analyzing this.

Whenever Mipham Rinpoche (*'jam mgon bla ma*) spoke of the Prāsaṅgika system or the difference between Prāsaṅgika and Svātantrika, he always based himself on Rong zom Paṇḍita and Klong chen Rab 'byams.

Moreover, since these two truths of appearance and emptiness, which are the object of the validating cognition that analyzes the abiding nature or ultimate reality, are noncontradictory on a single basis—just as substantial entities, on their own ground, are not contradictory—the two validating cognitions that investigate them have search criteria (*dpyod yul*), which are conventionally existent, and ultimately nonexistent, respectively. How could these be contradictory? They are not. Thus, although they only have one essence, the two isolates of appearance and emptiness are not mutually inclusive. Since they are different, they are formulated with two positions—those of deceptive existence, and ultimate nonexistence.

7.2.4.2.1.2 *For this reason...* Therefore, on the basis of the foregoing explanation, as long as these two truths—appearance and emptiness—appear separately without being mixed, and the mind engages them thus, the isolate of appearance and the isolate of emptiness will be in all respects of similar value in being true and false, respectively. Thus one does not adhere one-sidedly to a position of existence or nonexistence. From the realm of form to omniscience, they are equivalent.

7.2.4.2.1.3 *The determination...* For those reasons, if one analyzes ultimately, one determines “nonexistence,” which is the emptiness of [establishment in] truth. And if one analyzes deceptively, one determines “existence,” which is the apparent aspect established by validating cognition. These two are not established at the same time. In proving emptiness by negating true existence by means of an ultimate truth-validating cognition, one does not negate or establish appearances. In proving the infallible relativity of appearances, while negating permanence and

annihilation, etc., one establishes the infallibility of dependent origination, but one does not negate or establish emptiness. Therefore, by alternating the two validating cognitions, whenever the two kinds of validating cognition meet with any object of cognition, the objects that are found or seen by them—the isolates of appearance and emptiness—are named or posited as the two truths.

7.2.4.2.1.4 *Because those two...* Thus, those two truths of appearance and emptiness are different isolates, so they are not the same; and since they have no more than one essence, they are not different either. Therefore, one cannot apprehend one of the two truths in the absence the other. For although the isolate is insubstantial (*dn̄gos med*) in relation to the “thing itself,” the mind that engages it in that way, which accords with the “thing itself,” has a single essence.⁸⁹³

7.2.4.2.2 How qualifiers are applied: 7.2.4.2.2.1 the common way of explaining the reasonableness of applying the qualifier; and 7.2.4.2.2.2 the reasonableness of specific cases of application.

7.2.4.2.2.1.1 Showing through analogy the way Svātantrikas apply the qualifier at the time of ascertaining the two truths; and 7.2.4.2.2.1.2 how it is applied in the sūtras and śāstras.

7.2.4.2.2.1.1 *For example...* Thus, in the context of the two truths, from the perspective of the two kinds of analytical wisdom derived from the ten reasonings,⁸⁹⁴ the different modes and contexts of positions are differentiated. Because a qualification is required, it is shown with examples. [For instance], at the time of attaining the ultimate fruition of dharmakāya, mind and mental factors are, conventionally speaking, “ceased.” But with respect to ultimate reality, they are not [ceased], because they are not produced. Thus, if having specified the context, one explains “cessation” and “non-cessation,” it is appropriate to use qualifiers; and if one does not use qualifiers, it is because the context does not require it.

7.2.4.2.2.1.2 *In all the texts...* That application of qualifiers is also clearly present in all the texts of the great sūtras and śāstras. In relation to the exigencies of various and sundry negations and proofs in those texts, sometimes the exposition is framed as an ultimate-truth position, and sometimes it is framed as a deceptive-truth position. Those positions are stated in those ways for the sake of removing the delusion of disciples.

7.2.4.2.2.2.1 The actual reasoning behind those qualifiers; and 7.2.4.2.2.2.2 its meaning summarized.

7.2.4.2.2.2.1.1 Applying a qualifier at the time of ascertaining ultimate reality; and 7.2.4.2.2.2.1.2 the necessity of likewise applying it to conventional systems.

7.2.4.2.2.2.1.1 *With respect to...* It is appropriate to say, with exclusive reference to ultimate reality, that the path, buddhas, sentient beings, and so forth, are “nonexistent”; but why is that? Saṃsāra, nirvāṇa, and the path are not established as one or many, but they don’t become completely nonexistent without any connection to the apparent aspect of deceptive reality. Although they are ultimately nonexistent, the apparent aspects of saṃsāra, nirvāṇa, and the path are established as manifestly appearing, infallibly and indisputably. Therefore one must teach by applying the qualifier in the context of ultimate reality. If one doesn’t apply it, on the basis of the object

[negated], the very “nonexistence” one intends will not come about, because [the student] will not be able to discern the object of one’s intention.

7.2.4.2.2.1.2 *Though they...* Likewise, in reference to a validating cognition that analyzes conventional systems, it is reasonable to say that the path, buddhas, and sentient beings, etc., are all “existent.” For conventionally the cause and effect of both *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa* are infallibly existent. Nonetheless, that doesn’t mean that they are ultimately existent, without any connection to the nonestablishment of ultimate reality, because although they are conventionally existent, they can be ascertained by a validating cognition as not being established in that way.

7.2.4.2.2.2 *Because...* For that reason, it is completely impossible for the empty aspect of ultimate reality and the apparent aspect of deceptive reality to exist separately, one without the other.

7.2.4.2.3 Disposing of criticisms: 7.2.4.2.3.1 the criticism; and 7.2.4.2.3.2 its disposal.

7.2.4.2.3.1 *When both...* “Well then, if by analyzing ultimate reality one cannot eliminate deceptive reality, at that time of establishing the two truths as equally potent and true without qualification, the undesirable consequence of substances being non-empty would follow, because both of them are true with equal force.”

7.2.4.2.3.2.1 Summary demonstration that from the perspective of a final analysis of ultimate truth, both are without intrinsic reality; 7.2.4.2.3.2.2 an extensive explanation of that.

7.2.4.2.3.2.1 *Both are...* That is not a fault. The two truths are differentiated contextually. To ascertain the path *Madhyamaka*, one meditates again and again, thinking, “inherent existence is not established,” as an antidote to beginningless adhesion to substantial realities, which is so hard to stop. This is quite necessary, but in the final analysis, both truths are not established intrinsically. The *Madhyamakālaṃkāra* says:

Finally, it is free of
The entire mass of elaborations.

The *bDen gnyis* says:

The negandum is not existent;
It is clear that ultimately it is not negated.

7.2.4.2.3.2.2.1 The way in which one is liberated in emptiness, because appearance is not established in truth; 7.2.4.2.3.2.2.2 the way relativity appears, because emptiness is not established in truth; 7.2.4.2.3.2.2.3 the ways of cognizing arise as cause and effect, are of equal force, and are inseparable; 7.2.4.2.3.2.2.4 being known to be thus indivisible, they cannot revert to truly existing; 7.2.4.2.3.2.2.5 the proof that they are that way.

7.2.4.2.3.2.2.1 *Nor are they...* The object of the two validating cognitions has two isolates, which in respect to the thing itself (*don gyi steng na*) are not different. For that reason, if one analyzes just

the essence of that appearance, it is empty. How could it not be empty?

7.2.4.2.3.2.2.2 *Both are...* As for emptiness, both substantiality and nonsubstantiality are equivalent in being the appearance of the mere relativity of depending upon one another. Therefore, emptiness is without nihilistic negation or true existence, and is established as empty. Why is that? If both substantiality and non-substantiality were not the appearance of dependent origination, how could one cognize emptiness? One could not.

7.2.4.2.3.2.2.3 *Thus, both...* For that reason, appearance and emptiness are non-contradictory in a single basis. If one analyzes with the two validating cognitions, the objects of appearance and emptiness appear in a mutual relation of cause and effect; if one has, on the one hand, appearance, one will have, on the other hand, its nature, which is emptiness. If one acquires an extraordinary certainty in this, appearance and emptiness will always be inseparable.

“Well, if they are equally viable, how can they be truths?” They just are. Appearance and emptiness are mutually inclusive,⁸⁹⁵ and for that reason, whichever validating cognition one uses to access [one of them], its object is infallibly existent according [to that validating cognition], so they are both truths.

7.2.4.2.3.2.2.4 *There is no case...* “If it is a truth, then isn’t it non-empty?” That is not the case. When something appears, by knowing it to be empty one is not carried away with the appearance, and one knows that appearance is not true according to [its mode of] appearance. And if one knows that emptiness appears unobstructedly as relativity, one does not get carried away with emptiness, and one will not think that an absolute emptiness is real. For that reason, those two [truths] are inseparable on the basis of a knowable object; and when one sees them that way, neither of them will ever revert to true existence.

7.2.4.2.3.2.2.5 *The abiding...* Because the abiding reality of whatever appears in saṃsāra and nirvāṇa does not go beyond emptiness, on the basis of that mere appearance, they are inseparable. An independent emptiness existing apart from that appearance is never, ever established to exist. Accordingly, in the *Sems nyid ngal gso*, it says:

This appearance is primordially nonproduced, like a reflection.
Without essence, there are various appearances.
Having seen relativity, which is naturally pure,
One quickly realizes the supreme, nonabiding goal.

7.2.4.3 Combining the Prāsaṅgika and Svātantrika into a single stream: 7.2.4.3.1 the reason why one should meditate upon the view in gradual stages, starting with the causal small Madhyamaka; 7.2.4.3.2 the fact that this requirement represents the intention of the scriptures and treatises; 7.2.4.3.3 the consciousness and gnosis that meditate in this way are the context for applying the conventional designations “small,” “great,” and so forth.

7.2.4.3.1.1 On the sūtra path, in dependence upon dichotomizing analytical wisdom, nondual gnosis is generated; 7.2.4.3.1.2 on the mantra path, there are many methods that can indicate the essence of gnosis, by means of empowerment and symbolic means; 7.2.4.3.1.3 summarizing the

two as harmonious.

7.2.4.3.1.1.1 If one does not rely upon the two stainless forms of valid cognition, the forces contrary to gnosis will prevent it from arising; 7.2.4.3.1.1.2 if the causal factors of either of those two forms of analysis are not complete, gnosis is not generated; 7.2.4.3.1.1.3 thus, to separate them is not the authentic path.

7.2.4.3.1.1.1 *Therefore...* Thus, the ascertainment [of reality] in the Prāsaṅgika and Svātantrika schools is practiced gradually. Therefore, as long as the view or realization of equipoise is not fully manifest, one meditates upon the two truths alternately; this is “analytical wisdom.” Why is that? In this context of saṃsāra, where one has the dualistic appearances that are the antithesis of nondual gnosis, the activity of mind and mental factors prevents nondual gnosis from manifesting. Therefore, the two stainless validating cognitions that are analytical wisdom, which is in turn the cause of gnosis, should be maintained without accepting, abandoning, or hesitation, because they are an indispensable cause.

7.2.4.3.1.1.2 *When one...* When one practices in that way, if either of the two validating cognitions that alternately analyze both appearance and emptiness is deficient, the result that arises from those two causes, the gnosis of equipoise coalescence, will definitely not be produced. For example, if one lacks the fireproducing stick or the wood that it rubs, fire will not be produced as a result.

7.2.4.3.1.1.3 *Therefore...* For that reason, emptiness that is separate from the apparent method aspect of compassion, and so forth, and method that is separate from the analytical wisdom of emptiness, are said to be inauthentic paths because of this separation. This has been taught by the Victor, the perfect Buddha, and all the great learned and accomplished lineage-holding masters of India and Tibet. The non-path where the two are separate, and the true path where they are coalescent, are exemplified by various examples, such as one clutching an umbrella with both hands and jumping into an abyss,⁸⁹⁶ etc., and by many similes. The Sūtrasamuccaya says:

If that is completely embraced by method and wisdom,
Without harm, one will come to realize the enlightenment of the tathāgatas.

And, from the Sūtra Insistently Requested by Rab rTsal:⁸⁹⁷

By analytical wisdom that is bereft of method
It has not arisen, nor will it arise.
Method bereft of wisdom will also
Not satisfy the learned.

The glorious Saraha said:

If one views emptiness without compassion,
One will not discover the supreme path.

Moreover, if one only meditates on compassion,
One will remain in saṃsāra—why even mention liberation?⁸⁹⁸

According to these statements, if one abandons the dual cause of gnosis, no other method for generating the fruitional gnosis is possible.

7.2.4.3.1.2 *Therefore...* The result of the sūtric method and wisdom, namely gnosis, is essentially beyond conceptual thinking and verbal expression. Therefore, there is no other method in the sūtra path besides cultivating the coalescence of method and analytical wisdom. However, the tantras only teach by symbolic means, such as empowerment, and by verbal indications, hence the teaching of the “word empowerment” in the Mantrayāna. In the uncommon tantric classes of the vajra essence, and so forth, [gnosis] is demonstrated by verbal introduction and various symbolic methods.

7.2.4.3.1.3 Summary: 7.2.4.3.1.3.1 showing the Mādhyamika path that differentiates the two truths and their purpose; 7.2.4.3.1.3.2 summarizing by explaining that the nonconceptual gnosis of coalescence that is the result [of the two truths] is a crucial point common to both sūtra and tantra.

7.2.4.3.1.3.1 *The supramundane...* As for that gnosis that is beyond the world and free of conceptual thought and expression: the self-arising gnosis cannot, as explained above, be attained without relying upon some extrinsic cause and method, nor can it be comprehended. Therefore, a path Madhyamaka is taught that differentiates the two truths and cultivates them alternately.

7.2.4.3.1.3.2 *The result...* Thus, by teaching the two truths through differentiating them, as the result of their analysis one is able to accomplish the gnosis that is the coalescence of appearance and emptiness. Therefore, when one ascertains both truths of appearance and emptiness, the negandum—appearance—and negation—emptiness of “appearance-emptiness”—are taught as alternating practices. The result [of that practice] is the gnosis that integrates the expanse and awareness without contradiction. [That coalescence] is taught by many synonyms in the tantric classes, as the gnosis that arises from the many practices of generation and completion on the path, as the “actual luminosity,” and so forth.

7.2.4.3.2 The fact that this is the meaning of the scriptures and interpretive commentaries: *Thus...* Therefore, because one must practice without separating method and wisdom, all the Mādhyamikas take as their point of departure the system of the two truths. The reason for that is that if one does not know how to integrate the two truths as a basis, one does not know the basic character of reality. Thus, if one does not rely on that knowledge of the coalescence of the basic character of reality, one will not come to practice the path as the coalescence of method and wisdom. Without that, one will not comprehend the coalescence of the result, the bodies and gnosis of a buddha. Therefore, all the teachings taught by the Victor, in all contexts of the basis, path, and result, are taught entirely with reliance upon the two truths. The *Root Stanzas on Wisdom* says:

The Dharmas taught by the buddhas

Rely entirely upon the two truths—
Worldly deceptive truth
And ultimate truth.

7.2.4.3.3.1 The causal small Madhyamaka of analytical wisdom; and 7.2.4.3.3.2 the fruitional great Madhyamaka of coalescence.

7.2.4.3.3.1.1 The two truths maintained as a position in our own tradition; and 7.2.4.3.3.1.2 the fact that to do otherwise would be unreasonable.

7.2.4.3.3.1.1.1 The reason for being “small”; 7.2.4.3.3.1.1.2 the reason for having a position; and 7.2.4.3.3.1.1.3 the fact that the two truths are our own system.

7.2.4.3.3.1.1.1 *Therefore...* Therefore, according to what has been said above, the designation “Madhyamaka” is given to the Madhyamaka that has the positions of the two truths, vis-à-vis “ultimately nonexistent” and “deceptively existent.” This is giving the name of the fruitional gnosis to the cause, namely, all situations where one ascertains appearance and emptiness alternately and meditates upon them accordingly. This is the “small Madhyamaka.”

7.2.4.3.3.1.1.2 *The emptiness...* The emptiness that is the object of analysis, insofar as all dharmas subsumed by the five aggregates are not immune to analysis as being one or many, is a bare absolute negation that eliminates the negandum, true existence. In dependence upon that [negation], there is the position of “ultimately nonexistent.”

7.2.4.3.3.1.1.3 *Whatever...* Thus, that causal or path “small Madhyamaka,” which causes the attainment of the fruitional gnosis, maintains whatever position is posited by the two truths—nonexistence with respect to ultimate reality and the systems of deceptive reality. Both of these are maintained as the position of our own Mādhyamika tradition, but we do not take that ultimate nonexistence as our own system and then posit deceptive reality in terms of [what is known by] others in the world.

7.2.4.3.3.1.2.1 That denigrating view is not reasonable as a basis, path, or result; and 7.2.4.3.3.1.2.2 it can be refuted by both scripture and reasoning.

7.2.4.3.3.1.2.1 *If that were so...* If [our view] were like that, our own tradition’s view of the absence of true existence would be an ultimate reality of exclusive emptiness or exclusive nonexistence, and we would underestimate what exists as being nonexistent, thinking all of these various infallibly existent appearances of deceptive reality, such as the basis, path, and result, were nothing but illusions and things that should be abandoned. Finally, at the time of establishing the result, we would have nothing left over but an expanse of emptiness, free of obscurations, which would exclude appearances altogether, and we would have to assert that the two types of omniscience—which know everything that is just as it is—as well as the bodies and gnosis, were completely absent. For example, just as the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas are held to pass into a remainderless nirvāṇa on their respective paths, this type of Madhyamaka is also no different than extinguishing a candle.

7.2.4.3.3.1.2.2 *Thus, the Buddha...* Someone who denigrates the dharmadhātu that is the coalescence of appearance and emptiness, which abides as the basic reality of all dharmas, as being absolutely nonexistent like empty space, was said by the Victor to be a thief of Śākyamuni's teaching and a destroyer of the holy Dharma. The *Sūtra of the Samādhi of the Mudrā of Gnosis* says:

Emptiness is not born, nor produced by anyone,
Not seen, neither come nor gone.
Having imagined [it falsely, and saying,] "I have mastered it well"—
Those prattlers are thieves of the Dharma.

Such an inferior way [of understanding], which is not authentic, is a way of denigrating the cause and effect of karma, the path, and the result—which are infallibly existent appearances—as being nonexistent. With rational analysis—the downpour of the indestructible vajrafire of certainty that it is impossible for an absolute emptiness without appearance to become an object of knowledge on the path of validating cognitions that analyze the two truths—one will be able to destroy the mountain of bad nihilistic views without remainder from the foundation. On that, the Great Omniscient One said:

If he doesn't understand this, he will talk about
An absolute emptiness "free of extremes of existence and nonexistence."
But without understanding the basis free [of those extremes], this is the view of the peak
of existence.
As he has gone beyond the pale of this doctrine,
That space cadet should be smeared with ashes.⁸⁹⁹

7.2.4.3.3.2 On the fruitional Madhyamaka: 7.2.4.3.3.2.1 the reason why it is both "Madhyamaka" and "great"; and 7.2.4.3.3.2.2 the reason for positing coalescence and fruition.

7.2.4.3.3.2.1.1 The way of meditating on the essence of the intentions of the causal and fruitional vehicles, the Madhyamaka that is the gnosis of the coalescence of the two truths; 7.2.4.3.3.2.1.2 such a gnosis is the great Madhyamaka; and 7.2.4.3.3.2.1.3 if that is not touched upon, then it is neither Madhyamaka nor great.

7.2.4.3.3.2.1.1 *Thus...* For that reason, Mādhyamika texts that do not teach the view and meditation progressively, do not analyze with potent reasoning the meaning of the causal Madhyamaka of analytical wisdom. And without authentically establishing the meaning of selflessness, they do not establish the fruitional Madhyamaka, which is the gnosis of coalescence. Therefore, although the reasoning that perfectly analyzes all knowable dharmas in the system of the two truths ascertains the crucial meaning, it is not the final nature of things. So the result of that very ascertainment, the inseparability of the two truths, the coalescent equality that is thus established, is the essence of all the causal and fruitional vehicles. Thus, the ultimate thing to be realized is precisely that. The *Avatāra* says:

When conceptions are turned back, that
Is said by the learned to be the result of analysis.⁹⁰⁰

7.2.4.3.3.2.1.2 *Therefore...* Therefore, the final result to be realized, the self-cognizant pristine awareness, is beyond mind and free of elaborations, and does not abide in the two extremes, having cut off those two extremes by alternating [the focus on the two truths]. Thus, it is Madhyamaka, and also great.

7.2.4.3.3.2.1.3 *As long as...* As long as the forms of appearance and emptiness appear to the mind in the manner of alternating [one's focus] on appearance and emptiness, that is not the final essence of the intention of all the victors, and does not touch upon the ultimate gnosis. It is a progressive stage in the context of the Mādhyamika path.

7.2.4.3.3.2.2.1 The gnosis of sublime beings that is free of elaboration is designated as the state of coalescence and fruition; 7.2.4.3.3.2.2.2 from the perspective of that equipoise, deceptive elaborations are eliminated; 7.2.4.3.3.2.2.3 how all conventionalities are engaged in the aftermath state through words and concepts; 7.2.4.3.3.2.2.4 how, from the perspective of that equipoise, neither the presence nor absence of appearance is established.

7.2.4.3.3.2.2.1 *Like fire...* Just as fire arises as the result of rubbing firewood, the fire of self-arisen gnosis, the integrated expanse and awareness, is the result brought about by its cause, stainless analytical wisdom that analyzes the two truths. That fire, in turn, is the fruitional Madhyamaka, which is the sublime gnosis of equipoise, in which all elaborations of the four extremes, such as existence, nonexistence, both, and neither, are pacified. The *Root Stanzas on Wisdom* says:

Not known in dependence upon another, peaceful,
Not elaborated by elaborations,
Without conceptualization, not multifarious:
That is the characteristic of reality.

7.2.4.3.3.2.2.2 *Not falling...* Such an abiding reality of things, which does not fall into partiality with respect to the two truths, is posited with mere conventionalities and terms as "the coalescence of appearance and emptiness" by the analytical wisdom that differentiates it in the context of meditative aftermath. Because such terms and conventions are not established in any way whatsoever from the perspective of the great gnosis of equipoise, the essence of the coalescence of appearance and emptiness is not something that can be imagined. They are deceptive elaborations of the meditative aftermath, and this [equipoise] is the complete pacification of elaborations.

7.2.4.3.3.2.2.3 *But for...* For that reason, cause and effect, and so forth, are all objects of validating cognitions that analyze conventionalities, and emptiness, which is non[establishment]-in-truth, is the object of validating cognitions that analyze ultimate reality. The "coalescence" that depends upon them both is analyzed and thought through a combination of both [types of valid cognition]. Because it is [only] the object of words and thoughts in the meditative aftermath state, it cannot be imagined in equipoise itself.

7.2.4.3.3.2.2.4 *The equipoise...* The equipoise that is beyond words and thoughts is, as a mere conventionality, said to be "gnosis realized individually." [In it] the object and subject called

“expanse and gnosis,” and “existence and nonexistence,” and all such dichotomies, are elaborations that are pacified. The implicative negation that has an apparent aspect, the absolute negation that has no appearance, emptiness, and so forth, are also not imagined in the state of equipoise. If one analyzes accordingly, they are not in the slightest bit established [in that context]. Nāgārjuna said:

Because I have no negandum,
I do not negate anything.
Therefore by saying “I negate,”
It is you who denigrates.

7.2.4.4 The differences among Mādhyamika, Mahāmudrā, and the Great Perfection: 7.2.4.4.1 the differences in practicing the path; 7.2.4.4.2 the differences in ascertaining the basis; and 7.2.4.4.3 summarizing those points.

7.2.4.4.1.1 The differences in the view of analytical wisdom; 7.2.4.4.1.2 the differences in both analytical wisdom and skillful means.

7.2.4.4.1.1.1 In the sūtric path, by gradually practicing the path, one realizes the views of Mahāmudrā and the Great Perfection; 7.2.4.4.1.1.2 such a view is explained as effortless in the path of the Great Perfection; 7.2.4.4.1.1.3 by realizing it, one comprehends the profound doctrine, and is able to help others.

7.2.4.4.1.1.1 *Thus...* In the final analysis, the significance of both sūtra and tantra is compatible. Therefore, as long as one is meditating upon the two truths of appearance and emptiness alternately, that is “analytical wisdom.” And when one realizes the gnosis of integrated appearance-emptiness without alternation, that is the attainment of the supreme realization of the peak of the dialectical vehicle. At that time, one is beyond the absolute negation of bare emptiness, which is the absence of true existence of the negandum—true existence—brought about by analysis of the two truths, and by the elimination of true existence in relation to the aggregates. When the modalities of negation and negandum do not appear individually, and appearances arise as aspects of method, that is the emptiness “fully endowed with characteristics.”⁹⁰¹ *The Summary for Those Who Want the View*⁹⁰² says:

The emptiness that is the analysis of the aggregates
Is like a plantain tree, without essence.
The emptiness fully endowed with all characteristics
Is not like that.

Accordingly the great Madhyamaka that is free of elaborations, the all-pervasive Mahāmudrā of coemergence, and so forth, have many synonyms, but since their actual being is the gnosis beyond mind, they cannot be conceived by other kinds of superimposing concepts that involve a subject-object duality. *The Comfort of Mind* says:

With its antidote, the gnosis of awareness,
One gains confidence that all saṃsāric habits are empty,

And by determining the nature of emptiness to be appearance,
One knows the meaning of the two truths, inseparable appearance and emptiness.
By practicing the Madhyamaka, which dispels the two extremes,
One does not abide in saṃsāra or nirvāṇa, but is liberated in space.
This is the ultimate essence of the definitive meaning.
This is the reality of the natural Great Perfection.

7.2.4.4.1.1.2 *Because...* Because such an abiding reality is not an object of words and concepts, it is indivisible by any concept such as “absolute negation,” “affirming negation,” or “different,” “nondifferent,” “appearance,” “emptiness,” and so forth. Therefore, because it is free of divisions and partiality, it is beyond all positions of philosophical systems, such as “existing” and “nonexisting.” It is the *Evaṃ* of the indivisible purity and equality of the extraordinary dharmakāya. The appearance of nonabidingly abiding in that very state of self-arisen gnosis, the coalescence of awareness and emptiness, is the final mastery and consummation of the kingly method of the innate dharmakāya.⁹⁰³ Likewise, from the *Secret Essence*:

Thusness is free from one and many,
Center and periphery,
Is not seen even by buddhas,
Is the nonabiding appearance of gnosis.

7.2.4.4.1.1.3 *Thus...* As explained above, “beyond all positions” means the claim that the unfabricated ultimate reality of the expanse and awareness inseparable is without the superimposition of existence upon what is nonexistent, and the denigration of nonexistence where something exists, and that there is no indication of “this” through signs, words, or concepts, nor any verbal expression. The *Ornament of the Perfection of Wisdom* says:

The path of meditation is profound,
And profundity is explained as emptiness.
That profundity is liberated from the extremes
Of superimposition and denigration.

Although that is the case, it is not the same as saying that there is nobody who realizes anything, like the non-Buddhist theory of a “thoughtless actor.” The yogi has to make it manifest in equipoise. That means that it is seen directly through the self-cognizant pristine awareness that is produced by the rational analysis of stainless validating cognition that analyzes the two truths. Not only that, a person for whom it becomes manifest in that way has modes of reasoning—such as this treatise, which is a Dharma beacon of the certainty of subsequently attained gnosis—that can dispel the darkness of doubt about extremely profound subjects for those disciples on this excellent path of perfect reason, by means of inferential reasoning and direct perception.

7.2.4.4.1.2 The different ways of entering through skillful means and wisdom on the path: *In the sūtra path...* Although the object seen, the dharmadhātu, has no divisions, there are various ways of entering it. On the sūtric path, the apparent aspect of method such as compassion and the emptiness aspect of the analytical wisdom of selflessness are engaged by a mind that

differentiates them each with respect to the other, though it is not the case that they are newly mixed together or superimposed upon one another. Nāgārjuna says:

Emptiness, which has the nature of compassion,
Is the attainment of enlightenment.⁹⁰⁴

Accordingly, on this Vajrayāna path, the great bliss of method, which has the nature of compassion, and the emptiness of analytical wisdom, which is endowed with all characteristics, are primordially inseparable, and are realized by the view of the basic expanse of reality, the dharmadhātu, and habituated by being cultivated in meditation; they are not newly combined together. The Great Omniscient One said:

The causal vehicles claim that like a seed and sprout,
Method and wisdom produce the two kāyas.
The result vehicles posit types of conditions
That dispel the two bodies' obscurations.
Method relies upon the path of immeasurable compassion.
In fact they are one, for emptiness has the nature of compassion.
Thus, one practices by harmonizing cause and effect.

7.2.4.4.2 differences in the manner of ascertaining the basis: 7.2.4.4.2.1 the dharmadhātu free of elaborations is the unique object; 7.2.4.4.2.2 differences in the analytical wisdom that meditates upon it—whether it has an intentional apprehension or not; 7.2.4.4.2.3 in the view that ascertains that, the difference between the expanse and direct or inferential [valid cognition].

7.2.4.4.2.1 *Both the...* Therefore, the great Madhyamaka that is free of all elaborations of the four extremes and the luminous Great Perfection of the vast expanse free of extremes are both identical with respect to their object, the dharmadhātu that is the coalescence of appearance and emptiness, but with respect to mere names, they are different. Insofar as they realize such an abiding reality, there is no view higher [than them]. Except for the speed with which they realize the primordially pure abiding reality free of elaborations, they are similar.

7.2.4.4.2.2 *For anything...* Why doesn't one need a view higher than that? Because it is free of elaborations of the four extremes, and is without the intentional apprehension that apprehends appearance and emptiness alternately, and because, were it otherwise, it would have elaborations. Sakya Paṇḍita said:

If there were a view higher
Than the nonelaboration of the perfection [of wisdom],
It would be a view with elaboration.
If it were without elaboration, there would be no difference.

7.2.4.4.2.3 Third, the difference in the speed with which the basis is ascertained: *However...* Although the dharmadhātu is the unique object [of all these systems] as mentioned before, nonetheless that very meaning—the coalescence of appearance and emptiness—of the vehicle of

philosophical dialectics is principally based upon the practice of analytical meditation, which ascertains through an inferential valid cognition that analyzes in dependence upon an authentic reason. Thus, analytical meditation is most important [here]. In the pinnacle of the Vajra Vehicle, the tradition of mantras, without wavering from the dharmadhātu, one directly practices with one's own awareness, and establishes [the nature of reality] from within that state. As it is said:

With few hardships, great meaning, and infinite methods,
Its pith instructions are easy to practice but hard to fathom.

Therefore, the stages of the different vehicles are progressively more profound and sublime. For that reason, the abiding character of reality that is equanimity is extremely esoteric, and is only partially understood in dependence upon mere scripture. The ascertainment through valid inferential cognition, or being able to experience the object through direct valid cognition, etc., are characteristic of the differences among disciples and vehicles.

7.2.4.4.3 A summary: 7.2.4.4.3.1 how to show that those stages of the various vehicles have different subjective views;⁹⁰⁵ 7.2.4.4.3.2 likewise, though its name is the same, the object also has a different meaning understood in accordance with different contexts.

7.2.4.4.3.1.1 Understanding the views of sūtra and tantra by explaining the difference between the great and small Madhyamakas to be that of mind and gnosis; 7.2.4.4.3.1.2 praising the state of gnosis with the word "great."

7.2.4.4.3.1.1 *Therefore...* For the reason explained above, "Madhyamaka" means, in the context of an outstanding wisdom that analyzes the two truths individually, without mixing them into one taste, the causal or path Madhyamaka. And the certainty in the expanse of the equality of coalescence where appearance and emptiness and the two truths are of one taste, which the [former] Madhyamaka induces, is the fruitional Madhyamaka. Those two have an invariable relation of cause and effect, and the views of sūtra and tantra are also like that. Therefore, if one comprehends the equality state of the causal vehicle of the sūtras, one will be able to realize the utter purity of all dharmas that is nondifferent from that. On that, the Great Omniscient One said:

Moreover, the way in which beginningless virtue, like a seed,
Is primordially present without being produced, is stated in the sūtras.
That, and the assertion that the adventitious obscurations of the
Three primordially present buddha kāyas is purified, is the same in mantra.
In brief, the identity of the sūtric and tantric paths
Is explained exoterically and esoterically by the learned and accomplished.

7.2.4.4.3.1.2 *With respect to...* Moreover, of the two Madhyamakas, the former is the aspect of analytical wisdom, and for that very reason the former is small and the latter is specially praised with the word "great." The term "Great Perfection" is thus lauded for the same reason. If by inferring that very gnosis and making it the path, it is praised with the word "great," why shouldn't the vehicle that actually uses it as the path also be praised with the word "great"? It should be extremely praiseworthy in that respect.

7.2.4.4.3.2 *As for the...* Moreover, the object that is engaged by the term and convention of “reality” (*gnas lugs*) is above called “great” and “small” in relation to its aspects of analytical wisdom and gnosis. Likewise, the reality of emptiness with respect to substantial entities, and the reality of the inseparable two truths that is emptiness with respect to both substantial and nonsubstantial entities, are both called “abiding reality.” But, in fact, in terms of one-sidedly cutting off true existence, or cutting off all elaborations of the four extremes, and with respect to differences in equipoise and aftermath, etc., they are like the earth and the sky. Likewise, “*dharmatā*,” “*dharmadhātu*,” “*śūnyatā*,” “nonelaboration,” “ultimate cessation,” and “ultimate truth,” etc., are similarly [used in different systems], but since they are very different in being greater [or lesser] in being either final or partial, having discriminated the various contexts [in which they are employed], without confusing them, one should unerringly explain them according to their distinct meanings. It is like the word “*sendhapa*”; in [the context of land] travel, it means “mount,” and in traveling by water, it means “boat,” etc.

I say:

*Propped up on a pillow, truthless but conventionally existent,
Those self-proclaimed “Mādhyamikas” would sleep in peace!
That rather unfortunate misery of extremism—
A bogus “freedom from extremes”—
Is cured by this medicine for obstinate slumber.*⁹⁰⁶

Conclusion

[0.3.] Thirdly, the final virtue, knowing well the complete and perfect conclusion: 0.3.1 the reason why the interlocutor should be humbled and awed at the extensive explanation; 0.3.2 joyfully praising the undertaking and explanation of the profound and extensive meaning; 0.3.3 at that time, the expositor once again summarizes the points and gives advice; 0.3.4 stating the meaning of the treatise, including both questions and answers.

0.3.1.1 The way the interlocutor generates humility; 0.3.1.2 the destruction of his arrogance.

0.3.1.1 *Thus...* Thus, according to the meaning of the text explained above, in response to the seven questions about the profound meaning that is difficult to realize, he has explained in accordance with the path of perfect reasoning, with good words, those good meanings that are extremely vast and profound, without delusion or straying [from the point]. At that time, the interlocutor, with a humble mind, said the following:

0.3.1.2 *Alas!...* *Kye ma* means “with regret” or “alas!”: “Alas! Like the fabled frog who lived in a small well, we wandering intellectuals are surrounded by a vast ocean of other traditions’ textual corpora—the *sūtras*, *tantras*, and their interpretive commentaries—but we have not seen their subtle points by means of valid cognition. Stuck in the well of our own opinions, we have only experienced the taste of our own arrogance, which has been completely eradicated by this eloquent discourse!”

0.3.2.1 The greatness of the teaching and lineage holders of Padmasambhava; and 0.3.2.2 this

treatise's praise for the holders of that [lineage].

0.3.2.1.1 Although the author has not simply repeated the words of others, Rong zom's and Klong chen pa's tradition is like a treasure-house of jewels; 0.3.2.1.2 therefore, by taking up those important points of the good Dharma of the Nyingmapas on the path of reasoning and explaining them properly, confidence is gained; 0.3.2.1.3 moreover, in dependence upon this path of reasoning, one can prove and refute with explanation and debate; 0.3.2.1.4 therefore, it is reasonable to rely upon this kind of Dharma, which is the supreme jewel of the profound meaning that dispels ignorance.

0.3.2.1.1 *The ecstatic dance...* The omniscient ones, Rong zom and Klong chen pa, indisputably reached the goal of learning and accomplishment in maintaining the philosophical system of the authentic tradition of the Early Translation school of the early Indian mahāpaṇḍitas, Padmasambhava, Vimalamitra, Śāntarakṣita, and so forth. The white umbrella of their fame encompasses the triple world. Together with their spiritual sons, who embody the gnosis of the victors and sport the joyous dance of Mañjuśrīvādasīmha,⁹⁰⁷ like a great ocean, their wisdom minds see everything that is, just as it is. These persons, who have the nature of utmost sublimity, have mastered the inconceivable Dharma treasury of jewels, which contains the various profound and extensive Dharmas, and with many elegant explanations, they make them radiate with brilliance. The key for opening this [treasury] of things that can be known is this elegant explanation of the lama Mañjuśrī, and if one should abandon this opportunity to enjoy that wealth [of Dharma], and instead place one's hope only in the trinket tradition that offers the "realization" of vast and extensive words, such a person who just repeats the ideas of others is without realization, and deluded. Thus, the All-Powerful Great Fifth [Dalai Lama] composed a praise:

The explanation of emptiness by pretentious scholars
Who hope to find buddhahood somewhere else,
Is like placing a ransom [glud] in the north
For a ghost in the eastern direction.
The distinctive Dharma of the great secret Nyingmapa
Is that, when one sees [reality], the defiled body dissolves into light.

0.3.2.1.2 *Those who...* Therefore, the consummate abode of words and meanings is the glorious Dharma. As it is said:

The Dharmas of enlightenment, which is naturally endowed with good qualities,
Are all consummated in the Great Perfection.
It is the reliquary of the dharmakāya of all buddhas.
As a field of merit, nothing is better than this.

Accordingly, those whose minds have attained a firm certainty through rational analysis of the provisional and definitive, as well as the apparent and actual aspects [of reality] through that Dharma and the doctrine of the Early Translation school in general, [such as] the sūtras and tantras with their interpretive commentaries, at all times and places are always blessed with

freedom from obstructing demons and philosophical antagonists. For that reason, by proclaiming the lion's roar of an authentic path of reason such as this one, which is victorious in all directions, one will gain irrevocable confidence in the supreme good qualities of the extraordinary Dharma of our own system, the Early Translation school of the second Buddha, Padmasambhava, which is supreme amongst all.⁹⁰⁸

0.3.2.1.3 *Please grant...* Moreover, by simply following the words of others and being motivated by rigid arrogance and extreme views of existence and nonexistence, without investigating reality, some foam at the mouth as they refute others and prove themselves right. But please bestow on those other disciples the fortunate opportunity to grasp the handle of this sword of discriminating analytical wisdom, which cannot be revoked by any demon or disputant!

0.3.2.1.4 *The profound meaning...* Listening to the ways of the holy Dharma that is not deluded with respect to all the vast and profound textual traditions causes the faithless to conceive faith, and is said to be like nectar for the ears. It is like an ocean of nectar that expands the pristine realm that is free of suffering. To see and realize the domain of the gnosis of definitive meaning is like finding a wish-fulfilling jewel that dispels sickness. Since one can attain the good qualities of abandonment and the gnosis of realization, it is like a gem. Whatever philosophical system or person such a profound and vast meaning may abide in should be accepted with the three kinds of wisdom. Since one should rely not on the person but on the Dharma, one should not simply follow after a person who appears to be good.

0.3.2.2.1 Whoever is able to hold an authentic Dharma teaching like this receives the name of "bodhisattva"; 0.3.2.2.2 because the meaning of the Dharma, like a treasury of gems, is attained, how to study and contemplate common and uncommon subjects; 0.3.2.2.3 this elegant explanation is not something made up, but is the oral tradition of the vidyādhara lineage.

0.3.2.2.1 *It is not enough...* Even if one has studied many textual traditions with others and proclaims various and sundry syncretisms and speculations regarding one's own and other traditions, this misses the point. Though one's talent and expertise seem quite profound, one analyzes in dependence upon spurious scriptural references, and does not get the point. This extremely profound meaning is like a treasure buried in the ground; whoever gets it, however they appear—good or bad—should be known as a spiritual genius (*blo ldan*), an actual bodhisattva.

0.3.2.2.2 *As if it were...* The vessel in whom this [teaching] is contained is like a hundred-thousand-gem treasure of intellect and eloquence that realizes the extremely profound meaning of the pith instructions. "In order to accomplish the great ocean of profound and vast [teachings], when I, the author of the text, recognized the appropriate time for undertaking practical instructions of the vidyādhara lineage and the well-written texts of scholars and siddhas, just as the Nāga king Śrī joyfully dove into the ocean, I poured all the textual traditions of scriptures and interpretive commentaries down the throat of hearing, reflection, and meditation." Not only that, he also implores others to drink.

0.3.2.2.3 *Having definitely...* Whence springs this very text, which is like a great river of elegant explanations? The author of this text certainly realized the analytical intellect that is as broad as

the ocean and vast as the sky. The origin of that mind should be understood to be the oral tradition, as vast as the ocean of the Nāga king, of the lineages of the buddhas and bodhisattvas of India and Tibet, the paṇḍitas and siddhas, as well as the vidyādhara, beginning with dGa' rab rDo rje, down to Rong zom and Klong chen pa, and so forth.

0.3.3 Once again to summarize the meaning and give advice: 0.3.3.1 an exhortation to be a vessel containing meaning that condenses the quintessence of vastness; 0.3.3.2 the actual advice.

0.3.3.1 *Please brighten...* Recalling all knowable phenomena that pervade the limits of space in one gulp, one ingests them as juice and they manifest as a pure essence abiding in one's heart. If one wants to inhale that utterly perfect juice of springtime nectar, which bestows happiness and benefit both temporary and final, one should quickly undertake to accomplish that intention by cultivating the great power of the three kinds of analytical wisdom in one's mind; this is the advice given. What fulfills and perfects that intention is the amazing beacon of the Dharma, so please give advice that makes that text most easily apparent.

0.3.3.2.1 The way of giving advice with respect to the establishment of a profound and vast intellect; and 0.3.3.2.2 the actual meaning of that advice.

0.3.3.2.1 *When he...* When the mendicant with the staff who had suddenly appeared [earlier] said those words and bowed humbly, in order to establish the mendicant, who previously lacked a profound understanding, in profound and vast understanding, the sage summarized all the points made earlier, and gave them as advice in this way: This excellent juice of the supreme holy Dharma, like the milk of a lion, can only be held by an excellent container, such as a golden vessel. Otherwise, just as a clay vessel does not hold the milk of a lion even if one tries very hard to make it do so, it will not stay put. Therefore, the golden vessel for these profound meanings is "A," etc.

0.3.3.2.2.1 The six-syllable mantra, which is explained before, etc., is the entrance way for these; 0.3.3.2.2.2 those ways are accomplished in dependence upon the yogas of calm abiding and special insight.

0.3.3.2.2.1 "A..." What are those? The letter "A" is the name for birthlessness. Since, without wavering from that emptiness that is an absolute negation of a thing, it appears as relativity, the entrance to the Dharma of birthlessness in terms of the two truths is shown by the first question as the meaning of the main practice, the coalescence of appearance and emptiness.

Ra means "free of dust," and thus the realization of equanimity, which is the door free of the dust of being afraid of existence, or being attached to thoughts of one's own benefit. It shows the profound, because it is not an object for śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas. This indicates the profound, because in the second question it is shown not to be the domain of śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas, etc.

Pa means that although the equipoise of ultimate reality has no grasping, it is not a thick darkness devoid of mindfulness and the light of special insight. From the perspective of that equipoise of ultimate reality, the entrance to appearance is addressed by the third question, and shows the meaning of how to meditate on coalescence.

Tsa is the extraordinary equipoise that is induced by analysis. It is unstained by

nonunderstanding and misunderstanding and doubt, and is without fabricated mental activities of death, transmigration, and birth, which agitate like waves. How to preserve the natural abiding and flow of the equanimous dharmakāya is the subject of the fourth question, which shows how to generate that meditation in the mind.

Na means that neither of the two truths is more important than the other, because appearance and emptiness are inseparable. Even conventionally, they are of equal status, and both are objects of words and concepts. Ultimately, the abiding reality of their inseparability is beyond the path of words and concepts; that namelessness itself is inconceivable and inexpressible, to be discerned by individual cognition alone. This indicates the subject of the fifth question, which shows how the two truths arise from the perspective of generating realization of the profound in one's mind.

Dhīḥ ascertains such a profound meaning on the basis of a subject such as an atom. To know the equality of all dharmas, one investigates the basis of appearances that are compatible or incompatible. Having adduced examples there, there is a way in which there is no position in the equanimity of ultimate reality free of elaborations, and there is a way in which there is a position conventionally. Having joined them together without contradiction, there are [two ways] of understanding them, [namely] the way of limited intellectual perception, and in the systems of Prajñāpāramitā up through mantra, there is [the way of understanding] just how things are. This [latter] is the way of profound intellect, the sixth question. The seventh question concerns how one is to advise others about the profound view, according to one's own realization of the equality of all dharmas.

Thus all seven questions comprehend the crucial points of all systems, which are like the precious lifeblood of the profound and vast philosophical systems of the sūtras and tantras, so one automatically generates certainty in all Dharmas.

0.3.3.2.2.1 By practicing in that way, the individually realized analytical wisdom blazes;
0.3.3.2.2.2 its result is consummation in the nonconceptual state of the perfectly pure Mañjuśrī;
0.3.3.2.2.3 having abandoned obscuring stains through that, one attains eloquence with respect to the ultimate meaning.

0.3.3.2.2.1 *If one focuses...* Thus, by focusing on each syllable of the six doors of the dhāraṇī according to the two truths, one generates certainty. It is indisputably and infallibly the case that one develops clear understanding of these dharmas, such as birthlessness, by these [syllables] A, etc., which express them. But if one analyzes with respect to ultimate truth, both the expression A, etc., and the expressed, "birthlessness" and so forth, are not produced on the basis of expression. Thus, equanimity does not have anything to express in the state of equanimity, like space drawing a picture in space.

Likewise, if one analyzes the other five syllables, Ra and so forth, the expressions with their expressed [meanings], and any other names that arise from the combination of letters, there is no expression or expressed [meaning] established [in reality]. Accordingly, one generates the certainty that expression *per se* is "amazing." Therefore, since all dharmas are just expressed through names, even if one expresses them for aeons, the dharmadhātu is not exhausted or increased. To dwell in the equanimity of this [dharmadhātu] is to focus in the manner of ultimate reality.

Moreover, as for the way of entering conventionally: as one does not waver from equanimity, one understands the dharmas that have their birthplaces in these five syllables, such as A, and all

other afflicted and purified dharmas that are just infallible relativity. This is an unrivaled, wondrous miracle. Because existence and peace appear, wisdom, like an eye, pervades existence everywhere and manifests all kinds of displays. This understanding depends upon a conventional mode of analysis.

If one thus accomplishes the eyes of analytical wisdom that analyze the two truths, then in dependence upon the skillful means of mantra, one quickly accomplishes all of one's goals. Therefore, if one practices with illusion-like samādhi on the coalescence of the two truths, one will accomplish the eloquence dhāraṇī through the emanation and retrieval of lights from the mantra at the heart of oneself visualized clearly as a deity. The qualities of that are as follows:

One will be able to take into one's stomach in a gulp, with the force of one's analytical mind, all knowable objects, like the water of the great ocean; the jewel of one's heart [that can do that] is the hero Mañjuśrī, the radiance of whose wisdom is stainless. In that state, the dhāraṇī of total recall, the treasures of brilliance, and the noble intellect of discrimination blaze gloriously. As it is said:

The dharmakāya-terton of the effulgence of awareness
Has taken out this treasure from the expanse of wisdom.
It is not like [treasures that are] the essence of earth and stone.⁹⁰⁹

0.3.3.2.2.2 *By the path...* The nature of those syllables is the effulgence of one's own mind, which appears everywhere unobstructedly, because it is the original emptiness that is inseparable awareness and emptiness. In that state, the fundamental expanse, which is free of center and extremes, the luminosity beyond mind, which is the abiding reality reached by means of the path of certainty in the equanimity that is free of the four extremes of elaboration, and which is the coalescence of the two truths, is the Great Perfection—Mañjuśrī. To abide in that state is the supreme dhāraṇī entrance to the inseparability of the two truths.

0.3.3.2.2.3 *Having seen...* Thus, by equipoise in the vast expanse of the king of views, free of extremes, one sees the true meaning. Because of that, one does not need to make efforts to eliminate the darkness of the low-mindedness of intentional apprehension of the four extremes—namely, nescience in general or philosophical superimpositions in particular. Instead, the unobstructed effulgence of the sun of the self-luminous wisdom of luminosity, which knows everything just as it is, eliminates them automatically.

0.3.4.1 Including both questions and answers, the way of composing the crucial points of scripture; 0.3.4.2 having cast away arrogance, the presence of profound and extensive meaning in this treatise; 0.3.4.3 differentiating joyfully the meaningful speech that posed questions in that way; 0.3.4.4 stating the colophon, which is made for the sake of those with profound and extensive minds; 0.3.4.5 in dependence upon this, finding the excellent path of the supreme vehicle.

0.3.4.1 *Thus, the question...* This great sage analyzes in an honest and upstanding way; sudden, adventitious thoughts are the mendicant. By means of the questions posed by the mendicant to that sage, these seven questions, equal in number to the accoutrements of royalty, were explained. The *Uttaratantra* says:

Someone who only refers to the teaching of
Buddha and unwaveringly practices it
Is on the way to attaining liberation.
By the sage's command, I revere that one on crown of my head.⁹¹⁰

0.3.4.2 *Thus, a feeble-minded...* Having cast away arrogance, a feeble-minded (*blo chung*) intellectual like myself has taken from the mind treasury of sublime, great-minded beings these profound and abstruse subjects—the topics that are difficult to understand, namely the profound exposition of ultimate reality and the extensive exposition of deceptive reality—and composed this text accordingly. For example, it is like the wish-fulfilling tree of the gods taking root in the world of humans.

0.3.4.3 *This elegant...* This excellent gentle shower of Dharma, the elegant explanation spoken above, is the only path trodden by millions of previous bodhisattvas. And by listening to the words with pleasure and enthusiasm and thinking about the meaning, all beings who become disciples in the future, by thinking about the attainment of the great temporary and final purposes, will rejoice in these questions, and open the door to this opportunity for receiving the nectar of the holy Dharma.

0.3.4.4 *Therefore...* Therefore, as there is a great meaning involved, for the benefit of many disciples who think about the profound and vast meaning again and again as explained in this way, the *Dhīḥ*-named one has playfully written and arranged all the profound and vast meanings of the scriptures and commentaries, just as they arose in the lucid surface of his mirror-mind, which is free from any stain of confusion.

0.3.4.5 *The profound way...* The profound Dharma of the Sugata cannot in any way be expressed, just as space cannot be measured. But relying upon the light of this *Beacon of Certainty* and abiding in it through study, reflection, and meditation, one will find the excellent supreme path and be able to gradually comprehend all the Dharmas of the Sugata. *Maṅgalaṃ!*

After the syllable *Dhīḥ* the author's colophon reads, "When I was very young and had just begun my studies, this text, the *Beacon of Certainty*, was written just as it came to mind. Looking at them now, some of the words seem a bit awkward, but since they are not contradictory and since there are important points to be understood here, I have not changed them but left them as is. Thus, this was spoken by Mipham at age seven."

I say:

*Wishing to see the palace of Rong zom and Klong chen pa, which is filled with the jewels of
eloquent explanations,
If one upholds this jeweled beacon with one's innate and acquired intellect,
One will have the good fortune to enjoy this profound and extensive treasure;
But others, alas, see only a fragment of it, and intend to possess it without aspiration!⁹¹¹
The royal banner of the teaching of the early translations, possessed of six superiorities,⁹¹²
Is festooned with supreme divine ornaments, the scriptural knowledge and reasoning of the lion of
philosophers.*

*Beautifully adorned, it flies high in the heavens of Tibetan philosophy;
With this beacon of brilliance held aloft, one should be able to see it perfectly.
By searching with the floodlight of this excellent text,
The sharp reasoning of its elegant explanations is unsheathed, like a sword.
Grasping its handle by means of this commentary, one can embark on its study,
And cut off one's doubts about the peerless, secret profundity.
The teachings of Rong zom and Klong chen pa, ornaments of the essence
Of the Buddha's teaching, were clarified by the reasoning of Ajita.
May we uphold the system of these peerless lords of scholarship,
Through study, reflection, and meditation!
Without a second thought you overwhelmed the arrogance
Of a thousand elephants of wicked disputation,
With the roaring laughter of a philosopher-lion.
May you prevail, Mipham Victorious in all Directions!⁹¹³
May intellectuals, with their dry words and willful misinterpretations,
Confess their faults with heartfelt regret.
May the brilliant white moon of fresh merit
Cause the Buddha's teaching to spread and increase,
And may the holders of the teaching remain among us.
May all sentient beings with a connection to me
Be blessed with happiness and follow the teachings,
Find bodies of miraculous rebirth in pure realms,
And finally reach perfect buddhahood.*

Some time ago, since there were others whose interest in this text was similar to my own, I wrote a little bit about it. At that time, [Zhe chen rgyal tshab] 'Gyur med Padma rnam rgyal—the lord of the lineage possessing the three forms of kindness of the all-compassionate protector Zhe chen kong sprul—requested that I write a short commentary, so, to the best of my ability, I wrote an outline. Later, the one whose life epitomizes the liberation of a learned, ethical, and noble person, 'Jam dbyangs mKhyen brtse Chos kyi blo gros, proofread it and asked that I write a commentary based upon it. With a white scarf, a silver coin,⁹¹⁴ and, in particular, the implements of method and wisdom—a vajra and bell—plus paper to write on, his command fell on my head. Someone who should be embarrassed even to take the dust of their feet on the crown of his head—who is known as the nephew of the lord of siddhas, 'Gyur med mtha' yas, and of the lord of scholars, Tshul khrims rgya mtsho—the Buddhist monk 'Jam dpal rdo rje was assisted by the scribe Khri dpon mkhan po Blo gros rab gsal. Virtue!

10. The Lion's Roar Proclaiming Extrinsic Emptiness

NAMO GURU MAÑJUŚRÊYE

Respectfully I bow to the lion among men, the Friend of the Sun,
To the great compassionate Maitreya, Asaṅga, and their lineage,
And to the one who makes the fearless lions roar in Tibet!

The secret treasure of infinite victors and their scions,
The essential nectar of instructions of sūtras and tantras of definitive meaning,
The finest of the experience and realization of
The learned and accomplished ones of India and Tibet:
Here I will explain a little of the profound Mādhyamika view.⁹¹⁵

Here, the philosophers of extrinsic emptiness take the sūtras of the final turning, which teach the irreversible, fearless, permanent path of the Victor's teaching of definitive meaning, the *Mahāyānottaratantraśāstra*, which is the teaching of the regent Maitreya, the lord of the tenth bhūmi, the profound meanings taught by the sublime Asaṅga and his brother, the scriptural commentaries on the definitive meaning such as the Lord Nāgārjuna's hymnic corpus, the tantras, such as the glorious Kālacakra, as well as their interpretive commentaries (*dgongs 'grel*), which elucidate them, such as the three cycles of commentaries on mind (*sems 'grel skor gsum*), as having the same essential significance. Although this [extrinsic emptiness], which causes one to enter the textual system of the great Madhyamaka of profound and definitive meaning, has an extremely profound and vast intention underlying it, nowadays those who undertake to expound philosophy say whatever comes into their mind in this regard, whether they understand it or not. They are extremely deluded.

Now, to say a little bit about this system. In order to understand definitively the philosophical system of extrinsic emptiness, one must first understand the absence of inherent existence according to the texts of Nāgārjuna. If one does not understand this, one will not understand how deceptive reality is empty with respect to itself, and how ultimate reality is empty with respect to the other. So, one must first understand for oneself the absence of conceptual elaborations.

Having realized the ultimate reality that is free of elaboration by means of subjective (*yul can*) nonconceptual gnosis, the subject and object that are concordant with respect to the abiding nature of things and the way things appear are together called "ultimate" (*paramārtha=don dam*), and the subject and object for which abiding nature and appearance are discordant are called "superficial" (*saṃvṛti = kun rdzob*). If one analyzes with a conventional validating cognition, they are, respectively, nonmistaken and mistaken, or nondelusory and delusory. So, whatever is neither mistaken nor delusory is ultimate, and the other is considered deceptive.

Both of these ways of positing the two truths—the well-known distinction of appearance and emptiness, and the harmony and discordance of the abiding and apparent natures as just explained—were originally explained in the sūtras and great treatises. These are not the original creations of the philosophers of extrinsic emptiness. They were explained in the

Dharmadharmatāvibhaṅga and in the *Mahāyānottaratantra*:

It is empty of adventitious elements,
Which have the character of being differentiable;
It is not empty of the unsurpassable dharmas,
Which have the character of being nondifferentiable.

And, in its commentary:

The buddha essence is capable of being differentiated and separated; it is empty of the shell of negative emotions. It is not empty of the buddha qualities, which are not differentiable, not separate, and are more numerous than the sands in the river Ganges.

The great system-builder Nāgārjuna said:

Just as the stains on a fireproof cloth
That is sullied by various stains
Are consumed when the cloth is placed in fire
While the cloth itself is not,
Likewise the stains of the luminous mind
Are consumed in the fire of wisdom;
They are not luminous.
All the sūtras on emptiness
Taught by the Victor
Counteract negative emotions;
They do not harm that element [of luminosity].

The Dharma king, the awareness-holder Mañjuśrīkīrti said:

The emptiness [that results from] analysis of the aggregates
Is without essence, like the plantain tree;
The emptiness supremely endowed with qualities
Is not like that.

Thus, the statement “not empty from its own side” must by all means be understood in terms of the latter way of positing the two truths; this means that it should be understood in terms of the position of the two truths being mutually exclusive, where one is the negation of the other (*gcig la gcig dkag*). It must never be understood according to the manner of positing the two truths as different isolates of the same essence (*ngo bo gcig dang ldog pa tha dad*). Accordingly, the delusory appearances of the discordance of abiding nature and appearance appear from the perspective of delusion; because they are not established that way in reality, they are considered deceptive. The other [namely, the ultimate truth] is established as it appears from a nondeluded perspective; since it is not invalidated by valid cognition, it is said to exist ultimately and to be truly established.

This [ultimate truth] does not have to be a truly established appearance that is separate from

emptiness.⁹¹⁶ Being established from the very beginning as the emptiness supremely endowed with qualities—the coalescence of the expanse of phenomena and emptiness—it has already been accepted as the ultimate reality that is the nature of things. Thus, such an ultimate is not empty from its own side. To take a conventional example, a coiled rope is ultimate reality; a snake should be posited as deceptive reality in relation to it. They should be differentiated as conventionally established and nonestablished, respectively, as it is impossible for them to be either both false or both true.

Thus, the ultimate is not empty of its own essence, because the ultimate has both a nondeluded subject and a nondelusory object, because what exists there cannot be invalidated (*gnod pa*) by a valid cognition that proves otherwise, because it is what is proven after the reasoning establishing emptiness has already been applied, and because in establishing it according to conventional validating cognition, no one in this world, including the gods, can dispute it in accordance with the Dharma.

Since the ultimate is true and nonmistaken from its own side, it is never empty of dharmas that exist in that way; if it were empty, there would have to be some valid cognition that posited it as deluded and untrue, and that is impossible. If it were possible, and the peace of nirvāṇa were unreliable, then this position would, except for devils and tīrthikas bereft of valid cognition, not be something for those with faith in this teaching to expound.

This ultimate reality that is the nature of things exists primordially in this way, but the deluded perceptions that do not realize it are validly established as untrue and deluded and in this context are called “deceptive” (*saṃvṛti* = *kun rdzob*), which accords with the meaning of the word [*saṃvṛti*], which is “having obscurations.” So, the ultimate is empty of that deception; it is empty of the very subject and object that comprise the deluded perceptions that are termed “deceptive.” For example, a rope is empty of being a snake.

Thus, one is very much compelled to accept [this position]. According to other philosophical systems that claim to refute extrinsic emptiness, truthlessness [in Gelug Prāsaṅgika] is the probandum of an ultimate analysis, but one should not take it [i.e., truthlessness] as a negandum. Likewise, [according to other Prāsaṅgikas such as Go ram pa,] nonelaboration is the probandum of ultimate reasoning but is not a negandum. So, [according to these interpretations,] if one does not uphold the position of truthlessness and the absence of elaboration, one will not be able to establish anything as “our own philosophical system.” Moreover, if ultimate reality were empty of its own essence just like deceptive reality, then one would not be able to establish the ultimate as nondelusory and as the abiding nature of things, nor would one be able to establish deceptive reality as delusory and not established by way of its own essence—for emptiness is here understood in terms of what kind of empty basis is empty of what kind of dharma (*chos*).

If ultimate reality were empty from its own side, there would be no way to distinguish between deluded and nondeluded appearances by means of a valid cognition of truth and falsity, and it would be just like the rope and snake being either both existent or both nonexistent. That emptiness of deceptive phenomena definitely qualifies as emptiness, because that true existence [that is negated in relation to conventional phenomena in the Gelug Prāsaṅgika system] is not established, and because the apprehension of true existence is a deluded cognition that is misleading and [causes] wandering in *samsāra*. Thus, since that delusory subject and object [bound up with the misapprehension of true existence] are both considered deceptive reality in this context [of intrinsic emptiness], and since [the ultimate] is empty of them [from the perspective of gnosis], if the fact of [ultimate reality] being empty of that [deluded dichotomy of

subject and object] did not qualify as emptiness, then the emptiness of true existence would also not qualify as emptiness, and the elimination of the apprehension of true existence would not qualify as meditation on emptiness.

So emptiness, which is the absence of subject and object [established] with respect to the elimination of the elaborations of object and object-possessor, is perfectly complete in this system. Since all elaborations of the dualistic perception of subject and object are comprised by the delusory object and object-possessor, in this context they are posited as deceptive reality. If the fact of ultimate reality being empty of that [subject-object dichotomy] did not qualify as emptiness, then the absence of elaboration would not qualify as emptiness, and the mind that meditates on nonelaboration would not qualify as meditation on emptiness, either.

"Well, isn't that ultimate not truly existent and free of elaboration?" How could something that is neither nontruly-existent nor nonelaborated be the ultimate? It is the same as the case of deceptive reality [as considered in our system, for we, like you, accept that true existence does not even conventionally exist].

"Well, if the ultimate is not truly existent and empty, then how can you say that it is truly existent and not empty from its own side?" Here you have utterly failed to understand that, in this context, true existence and non-emptiness exist and are established from the perspective of conventional validating cognition, so this is just ignorant quibbling on your part.

"Well, then aren't you saying that it is both truly existent and not truly existent, and both emptiness and non-emptiness?" How could that be? You consider appearance to be deceptive reality, and emptiness to be ultimate reality. Just as you consider it inappropriate to eliminate truthlessness and nonelaboration when analyzing ultimate reality, in our system, which considers delusion as deceptive reality and nondelusion as ultimate reality, we do not think it appropriate to negate the nondelusory nature of the ultimate, nor to establish nondelusion as true. Thus, the great system-builder Asaṅga [sic] said, "When something does not exist in something else, that something is empty of it; whatever is left over there exists."⁹¹⁷

Thus, when establishing a system (*gzhung*) of proof and refutation, one must by all means refute what is not established by reasoning, and one should accept what is proven by reasoning, without refuting it. If one were to refute everything, one would reverse the valid cognitions that establish the difference between authentic and inauthentic signifying dharmas (*rjod byed chos*) and signified meanings (*brjod bya'i chos*), and it would be impossible to develop any kind of certitude whatsoever.

"Well, don't you have a position about the object of individual cognition, the dharmadhātu that is beyond refutation and proof?" Why do you say that? one should ask. "Because you set forth a system that, on the one hand, negates a negandum and, on the other hand, has a position of establishing a probandum, and thus you abide in a state that reifies something without claiming to negate everything."

Since the dharmadhātu that is realized in an individual's experience is beyond refutation and proof, this we accept as the ultimate reality. In the present context [of extrinsic emptiness], such an ultimate, which is already established [for you, as well as for us], is *conventionally* established to exist as the ultimate, so these two [positions] of refuting one thing and establishing another are not contradictory. If we did not have this position, which proves that ultimate reality is conventionally not empty of its own essence, then the ultimate that is free of refutation and proof would be nonexistent [conventionally]. Therefore, just as reversing the conventional position that things have no inherent existence would be tantamount to establishing that they do have inherent

existence, if it were not proven that ultimate reality is not empty from its own side, then that ultimate would not be ultimate, but deceptive.

Given that it is already established that the ultimate is not truly existent from its own side and is without elaboration, one might think that the verbal expression “the ultimate is not empty from its own side” disqualifies it from being empty⁹¹⁸ and is the untenable view that existence and peace are not equal and that the ultimate is isolated (*rkyang pa*), permanent (*rtag pa*), and unchanging (*ther zug*). This, however, is a case of not having even a partial understanding of this great philosophical system.

According to the position that emptiness is the absence of true existence and is free of elaboration, how could it have true existence or elaboration? The mere statement that the ultimate is established as the ultimate is a conventional distinction about what is empty and not empty by means of showing that [ultimate reality] is not deceptive reality; this [conventional distinction between ultimate and relative] is the probandum here. If to accept this [distinction] conventionally were to hold a view that reified emptiness as a thing, then to accept the absence of true existence would be to hold an untenable view clinging to emptiness as a nonthing, and to accept nonelaboration would also be to hold an untenable view reifying emptiness as an inexpressible thing.

In brief, in this context [of extrinsic emptiness] the bases of the designations of ultimate and deceptive are, respectively, the absence of delusion and the distinct apprehension of objects by subjects that are deluded about them.⁹¹⁹ The nondelusory ultimate is the object of a nondeluded mind, is true, and is accepted as being empty of the delusion of deceptive reality. Conventionally, it is not empty [of truth], because it is held to be the experience of sublime beings.⁹²⁰

If the ultimate were empty from its own side, then it would not be possible to posit it as the basis for the emptiness of deceptive reality. Since it would not be possible to determine the difference between what exists and what does not exist as an object of sublime perception, the ultimate would not be the ultimate, and the deceptive would not be deceptive but would be entirely on the same level as the ultimate.

Therefore, it is completely inappropriate not to accept this position. Whatever faults are found therein would equally apply to the position of those who expound emptiness as truthlessness or nonelaboration. Also, it is not the case—since *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* here have become different [because of being] nonexistent and existent, respectively—that there is no equality of existence and peace (*srid zhi mnyam nyid*). It is utterly impossible even conventionally for [something to be] both a deluded *saṃsāra* and a nondeluded *nirvāṇa*.⁹²¹ Though *samsara* appears, it does not exist as such; the nature of *saṃsāra* is the originally pure ultimate reality that abides in great *nirvāṇa*, and this is the probandum here, which is termed “the equality of existence and peace.” In any system where all phenomena abide primordially in the ultimate expanse, this is called “the equality of existence and peace.” There is no position whereby *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* have a common basis.⁹²² Also, the ultimate is not empty of being the ultimate, because if the ultimate were empty of itself, it would not be ultimate, but would become the deluded appearances of deceptive reality.

Listen, you [Gelugpas] who would vehemently dispute this philosophical position! Don’t you say that a vase is not empty of being a vase, but is empty of true existence? If it is reasonable to accept that all conventionally existent dharmas are not empty of themselves but are empty of something else—true existence—then you must also accept the position that the ultimate is not empty of being the ultimate, together with the reasoning [that establishes that position, because

“ultimate” is no less a conventionality than “vase,” etc.].

“If the ultimate is not empty of being the ultimate, then it would not be empty of true existence”—but the same could be said of vases, etc. Thus, although our ultimate is not empty of being the ultimate, since it is empty of deceptive reality, it goes without saying that it is empty of true existence, [which is a] false, deluded appearance. If the fact that we accept that it is empty of all dualistic appearances of deceptive reality [which are constituted by the misperception of true existence] does not qualify our [conception of ultimate reality] as empty, then how could the elimination of the superimposed, isolated object of true existence—which is not empty of all dualistic phenomena of deceptive reality—possibly qualify as emptiness? Just as you say that true existence is negated, but truthlessness never can nor should be negated, likewise we negate the deluded appearances of deceptive reality, [but maintain that] the nondelusory ultimate never can nor should be negated.

In brief, in your line of reasoning that establishes truthlessness without negating deceptive reality, the basis [for the designation] of emptiness (*stong gzhi*) winds up being deceptive reality, so ultimate reality is not empty of deceptive reality. We say that the basis [for the designation] of emptiness is ultimate reality, and that it is empty of deceptive reality. You maintain an ascertained (*phyang chad*) emptiness, which is the emptiness of true existence, with respect to a basis of emptiness, which is truthlessness as absolute negation; and [you maintain] an ascertained deceptive appearance, which is not empty from its own side, but is empty of an extrinsic (*yan gar ba*) true existence. [Thus, in your system] appearance and emptiness, as bases of emptiness, are never mixed together, and the equality of existence and peace is utterly impossible in either of the two levels of truth. Therefore, please look into the important details of this point.⁹²³

In our system, both objective emptiness and the subject, which is gnosis, are ultimate. In the final analysis, both of these are the nondifference of the two truths of appearance and emptiness, so the ultimate expanse of phenomena is not an ascertained emptiness. It is not empty of the inseparable buddha bodies and gnoses, and abides as the primordial, spontaneously present essence body (*ngo bo nyid sku* = *svabhākāya*). Your ultimate, which is the ascertained emptiness of absolute negation, is a nonentity (*dnegos med*) that is distinct from conventional appearances; it will never, ever be endowed with even a fragment of the buddha bodies and gnoses. The conventional appearances that are different from it exist, but they are of no use [for understanding] that emptiness, because [appearances and emptiness] are utterly incapable of being combined. Thus, since the object of the root of *samsāra*—which is the apprehension of true existence—does not exist, the subject and object both are deceptive delusions, so in your system deceptive reality should be considered as just true existence and the apprehension of true existence.

[In your system] conventional appearances are not ultimate, because they are not emptiness, and they are not deceptive reality, because they are nondeluded appearances or are immune to ultimate analysis—because, although they are not immune to analysis with respect to true existence, they are immune to analysis insofar as they are not conventionally empty from their own side. Thus, truthlessness and all conventions would be ultimate reality, true existence alone would be deceptive reality, and the apprehension of true existence would be a substantial entity, like vases and so forth.⁹²⁴

Though it is reasonable to assert that the object of truly existing appearance and the subject of apprehending true existence together are the deceptive reality wherein the abiding nature of things and appearances are discordant, and that truthlessness and the apprehension of truthlessness are the ultimate wherein abiding nature and appearance are concordant, it is not

reasonable to assert that both subject and object without dualistic appearance are the ultimate, and that the existence [of dualistic appearance] is deceptive reality.⁹²⁵ If vases and so on were not empty from their own side, the dualistic appearance of existents and the mind that apprehends duality would become the subject and object wherein abiding nature and appearance are concordant, and the absence of dualistic appearances and the apprehension of duality would become delusion, wherein abiding nature and appearance are discordant.

In brief, in your system the rational negandum is only true existence; to meditate on emptiness is to abandon only appearances of true existence and the apprehension of true existence, and nothing else.

"In the meditative absorption of those training on the sublime paths (*'phags slob kyi mnyam bzhaḡ*), why shouldn't all deceptive appearances empty of true existence be nonapparent? Though they are not objects of rational negation, they are negated on the path, and cease to appear."

That path, which is like a shade tree, causes existent things not to appear. If the fact of nonexistence appears, why can one not see what exists? Because one sees their nonexistence! As it is said, "What is this form of darkness?" Such a path is amazing!

In our system, when the ultimate is seen directly, the domain (*gocara=spyod yul*) is nonconceptual wisdom without the dualistic appearance of subject and object. How can it have the appearance of true existence or the apprehension of true existence? How can it have the objects of elaboration and elaborations [about them]? This is designated as the ultimate. Taking that nondeluded ultimate as the basis of emptiness, it is said that it is empty of the subject and object that comprise the deluded saṃsāric appearances of deceptive reality.

Though the the ultimate essence is beyond elaborations,
When establishing the ultimate, our position is that
What is ultimate and what is deceptive
Are differentiated as nondelusion and delusion;
What is wrong with that?
Although all dharmas are unelaborated because they have no inherent existence,
Those who refute nonelaboration and focus on absolute negation
Maintain a one-sided position of "absence of inherent existence";
They hold these words alone as their philosophical refuge.
But, by taking the position of "truthlessness,"
Even though they do not wish to accept the position
That the ultimate is not empty from its own side,
They cannot avoid it.
If one explains that ultimate reality is not empty from its own side,
It is good to establish the ultimate as the ultimate;
If one were to explain that a vase is not empty from its own side,
All dharmas would be non-empty, would be seen as permanent,
And emptiness would be a trivial nonsubstantiality—

Thus one would establish the basis of the view as a dichotomy of permanence and annihilation.

If the ultimate is established and known by conventional valid cognition
As permanent, real, and non-empty,
One seizes all qualities of the path and eliminates

All base views that cling to the extremes of permanence and impermanence.
"Whatever is permanent is not necessarily a view of permanence,
And whatever is annihilated is not necessarily the extreme of annihilation;
Whatever is existent is not necessarily the extreme of existence,
And whatever is not existent is not necessarily the extreme of nonexistence"—
This is [universally] accepted by Tibetans renowned as scholars.
Thus, if one analyzes well with conventional valid cognition,
One can realize with a discriminating mind whether
Permanence, impermanence, emptiness, non-emptiness,
Reality, unreality, existence, and nonexistence are extremes.
For the gnosis that analyzes the final ultimate
There are no elaborations of existence, nonexistence, and so forth;
This is accepted by all the learned and accomplished philosophers of extrinsic
emptiness.

Your position is that, even from the perspective of an ultimate analysis,
There is an elaboration of "truthlessness";
If something exists from the perspective of an ultimate analysis,
And is the object of sublime perception,
Why should it be contradictory to say that it is
Not empty, truly existent, and perceived as such?
Therefore, what contradiction is there in explaining this according to how it is imagined?
If the perception of truthlessness were empty of truthlessness,
How would that be any different than not seeing truthlessness at all?
If you think that truthlessness is seen as empty,
Then why not see a vase and so forth as empty?
You think that vases and so on are empty of true existence but not of themselves—
For if they were, vases and so forth would not exist conventionally—
But why would this be any different than saying that
From the perspective of seeing the ultimate, the ultimate is not empty?

In brief, if someone should ask, "What is the meaning of the statement 'The ultimate is not empty from its own side'?" we reply that it means that the ultimate reality is not empty of being the ultimate reality. To this they reply, "Then, the ultimate would be truly existent," [to which we reply,] "But if a vase is not empty of being a vase, it would be truly existent!" Now they ask, "If a vase were empty of being a vase, then that vase would become a non-vase, so why wouldn't the vase become conventionally nonexistent?" Indeed, it would. Thus, if the ultimate reality were empty of being the ultimate reality, the ultimate reality would become nonultimate reality, [for] this would be the same as the ultimate being conventionally nonexistent.

Therefore, if it is reasonable for truthlessness, nonelaboration, emptiness, and the ultimate to be accepted as the probanda of an ultimate rational cognition, but unreasonable for them to be accepted as neganda [of such a cognition], then you must definitely assert that truthlessness and so forth exist. The fact that you do not accept their nonexistence means that you accept that [in the perspective of conventional validating cognition] the ultimate and emptiness are true, existent, and non-empty, and do not accept that they are untrue, nonexistent, and empty.

The pristine cognition of the equipoise that sees the ultimate must see, apprehend, have as objects, and accept as real the aforementioned truthlessness and so forth. Therefore, it would be wrong to claim that pristine cognition does not see, apprehend, have as an object, or witness the nonexistence of that [truthlessness], etc. Everyone accepts that ultimate emptiness is the perspective of sublime vision, exists, is established as true, and so forth.

“If it is accepted as truly existing, clinging to emptiness as true will not be eliminated”—but [you also say] it is not appropriate to negate clinging to it as conventionally true. The thought that what is [in fact] true is established as such is not the clinging to truth (*bden 'dzin*) that should be eliminated by reasoning or the path, just as apprehending truthlessness as truthlessness is not a negandum.

A true existence that is immune to an ultimate analysis is not something that needs to be analyzed here, for it has already been determined [as false] by the reasoning that establishes the ultimate, and because the emptiness of true existence is included in the explanation of the [ultimate] being empty of deceptive reality. Thus, just as you say that although there is no true existence in truthlessness, the apprehension of truthlessness should never be eliminated, in quite the same way [we assert that] although it is empty of dharmas that are immune to ultimate analysis, the apprehension of that ultimate *per se* is truly established and not empty of its own essence, is not something to eliminate.

Just as you assert that by analyzing with an ultimate analysis nothing is found to be immune to analysis, and that no dharma that is not negated by such analysis is ultimately established, you likewise maintain that true existence is the only negandum of rational cognition that analyzes the ultimate, and is abandoned by nonconceptual gnosis. [You also say that] if one were to assert that anything that is reified as a dharma is to be negated and abandoned by those two [viz., by analysis and gnosis], that would be the extremely wrong view of Hashang. According to that position, rational cognition (*rig shes*) and pristine cognition (*ye shes*) negate and abandon, respectively, the dualistic appearances of deceptive reality. But this establishes well the fact that the objective ultimate that is empty of deceptive reality, the subjective (*yul can*) pristine cognition, and the ultimate dharmas that are seen by pristine cognition are not negated or abandoned. If all objects (*dmigs pa*) were always taken as objects of negation and abandonment, all dharmas in their multiplicity and mode of existence (*ji lta ba dang ji snyed pa'i chos thams cad*) would be the neganda of reasoning and the path, and that would result in a space-like nihilistic emptiness of complete nothingness.

Thus, by disavowing our position, all those Tibetans who look down on this theory established by exponents of extrinsic emptiness wind up establishing all the theories of extrinsic emptiness automatically. Thus whatever is existent, whatever is nonexistent, whatever is real, and whatever is non-empty are not necessarily extremes; nor are all minds that apprehend [things in those ways] the apprehension of extremes. As it is said,

The Buddha thoroughly comprehends what exists as existent,
And what does not exist as nonexistent.

Modes of existence, modes of nonexistence, what is truly existent and nonexistent, what is empty and non-empty, and so forth, are differentiated and systematized by the analytical wisdom of meditative aftermath (*rjes thob shan 'byed pa'i shes rab*). As these are established by the valid cognition that investigates the meaning of whatever exists, without confusing any

conventionalities and differentiating each [phenomenon], they are not objects of negation.

The supreme protector, Lion of the Śākyas,
Sounded this lion's roar to his fearless retinue,
Gratifying those who found confidence in it
With prophecies [of irreversibility].

The rivers of the intentions of
The lord of the tenth bhūmi, the regent Ajita,
And those dwellers on sublime ground, Nāgārjuna and Asaṅga,
Are united in the expanse of gnosis;
Any contradictions seen therein
Are just the faults of one's own mind.

Although all dharmas are empty of essence,
The element of luminosity, the bodies, and gnosis
Are spontaneously present, like the sun and its rays.
The meaning of the Great Madhyamaka, the coalescence of appearance and emptiness,
Is not deceptive for sublime perception, and is the ultimate truth.
The dualistic appearances of conventional reality are deceptive delusions;
Opening the eyes of wisdom that discern modes of existence and appearance,
This excellent, supreme explanation is like a bejeweled lamp.

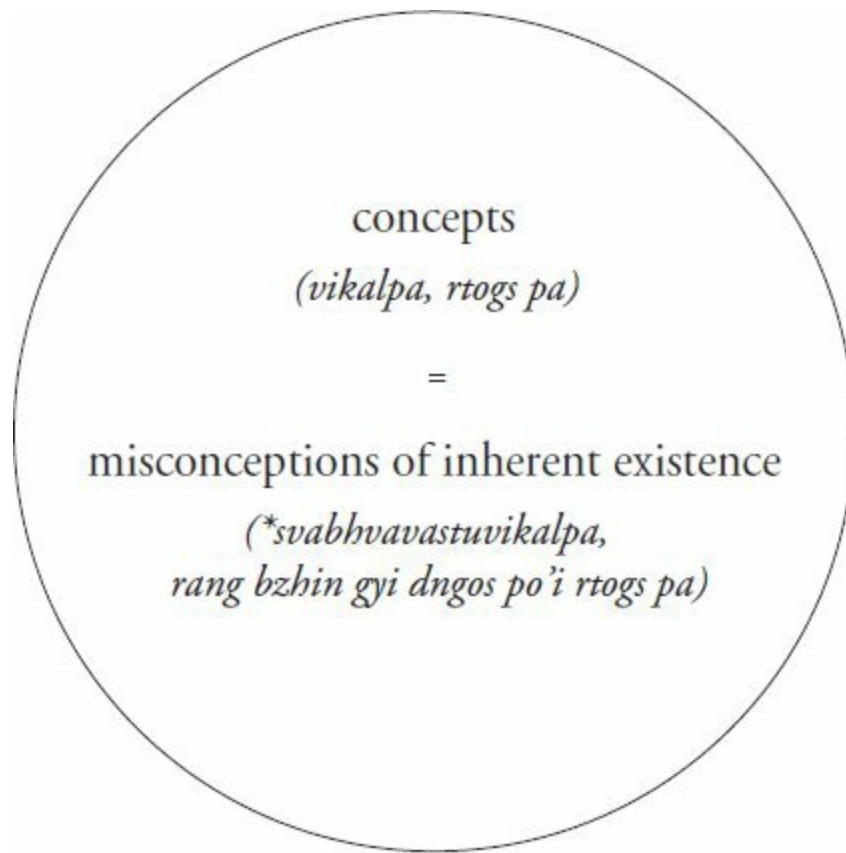
For that reason intelligent, honest, and fortunate ones
Will develop eyes to see this profound meaning;
Dwelling in the mansion of the essence of definitive meaning,
May they be rich with the joys of benefiting themselves and others!

Like the fresh brilliance of the harvest moon, may the virtue of this effort
Permanently banish the burning torment of the five degenerations;
May the lily garden of the scriptures and realizations of the Lord of Sages
Explode into blossom, and may the ocean of liberation swell!

In all my lives may I be protected by the Gentle Lord (*'jam mgon bla ma*)
And perfect my skill in scriptures, reasoning, and personal instructions;
From the heights of the peak of the supreme vehicle,
May I proclaim this fearless lion's roar!

To this, the essential abbreviated kernel of a composition spoken by the unique lion among Tibetan philosophers, the Lord Lama, the omniscient Mipham 'Jam dpal dGyes pa'i rdo rje, I added my own words as the introductory and concluding verses. It was edited (*zhal bshus*) by 'Jam dbyang bLo gros rgya mtsho at his residence, the college of glorious Shechen Tennyi Dargye Ling. May this cause the tradition of the Great Madhyamaka of definitive meaning to spread in all directions, and to persist!

Diagram 1: Conceptuality and True Existence
According to Go ram pa and Mipham



*Diagram 2: Conceptuality and True Existence
According to Tsongkhapa*

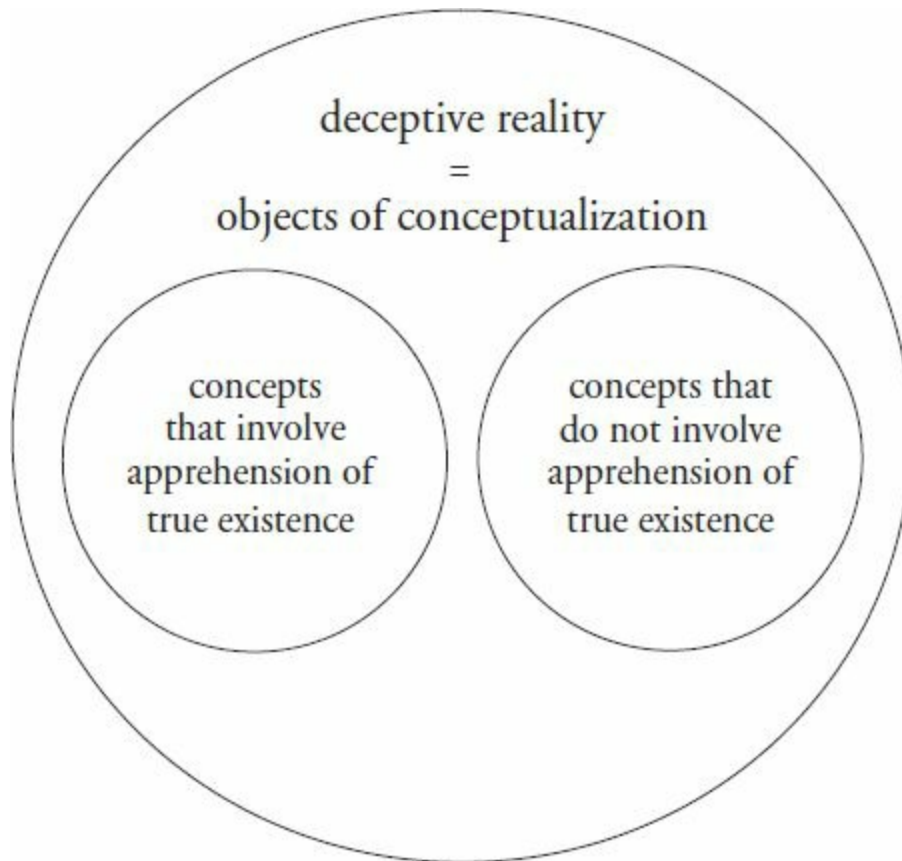


Table 1: Mipham's System of Four Pramāṇas

PERSON	CONVENTIONAL PRAMĀṆA	ULTIMATE PRAMĀṆA
untutored ordinary persons (<i>prthagjana</i> = <i>so so'i skye bo</i>)	(i) conventional valid cognition of limited impure perception (<i>ma dag tshur mthong tha snyad dpyod pa'i tshad ma</i>)	N/A
ordinary persons practicing the path	(i) and (ii) conventional valid cognition of pure sublime vision (<i>dag pa'i-</i> or <i>phags pa'i gzigs snang tha snyad dpyod pa'i tshad ma</i>)	(iii) valid cognition involving the conceptual ultimate (<i>rnam grangs pa'i don dam dpyod pa'i tshad ma</i>) and (iv) ¹
enlightened or sublime beings (<i>āryajana</i> = ' <i>phags pa'i skye bo</i>)	(ii) and (i) ²	(iv) valid cognition involving the nonconceptual ultimate (<i>rnam grangs ma yin pa'i don dam dpyod pa'i tshad ma</i>)

Table 2: Traditions, Two-Truth Paradigms and Their Sources

"tradition" ³	primary two-truth paradigm	main sources for primary paradigm	secondary two-truth paradigm	sources for secondary paradigm
Svātantrika	(i) two isolates/one essence	ūr-Madhyamikas (Nāgārjuna and Āryadeva); Pramāṇa	(ii) concordance/disordance of appearance and reality ⁴	Prajñāpāramitā and ūr-Madhyamaka
Prāsaṅgika	(ii) ⁵	ūr-Madhyamikas; Candrakīrī	(i) ⁶	ūr-Madhyamikas
Nyingma	(ii)	Nyingma tantras; "extensive tradition;" Essence Sūtras; Nāgārjuna's hymnic corpus (<i>brāhṃaśloka</i>); his logical corpus (<i>rigśloka</i>); and his commentators	(i)	Prajñāpāramitā; Madhyamaka (<i>rigśloka</i>)
Extrinsic Emptiness (<i>gZhan stong</i>)	(ii)	Kālacakra Tantra; "extensive tradition;" Essence Sūtras	(i) ⁷	as above
Gelug	(i)	writings of Nāgārjuna (<i>rigśloka</i>) and Candrakīrī; Pramāṇa	(ii)	writings of Nāgārjuna (<i>rigśloka</i>) and Candrakīrī; <i>Ratnagotravibhāga</i> (acc. to Dar ṅik)

Table 3: Pramāṇas and Their Paradigms of Truth and Negation

pramāṇa	object of understanding and/or realization (<i>negs byu'i yul</i>)	two-truth paradigm context for pramāṇa	type of negation required in Gelug system	Mipham's interpretation of Gelug negation	type of negation required according to Mipham	locus <i>classicus</i>
conventional valid cognition of impure limited perception	perceptions of ordinary beings; conventional phenomena	(i) appearance-emptiness (<i>snang stong gyi bden gyis</i>) as two isolates of one essence	implicative negation ⁸ and absolute negation ⁹	implicative negation and absolute negation	implicative negation and absolute negation	instinctual perception (<i>jig rten rang dge</i> , <i>ka'i shes pa</i>); teachings of cause and effect (first turning); pramāṇa treatises.
conventional valid cognition of pure sublime vision	vision of enlightened beings; pure perception	(ii) concordance/disconcordance of appearance and reality	[implicative negation] ¹⁰	not applicable ¹¹	implicative negation ¹¹	Essence Sūtras (<i>snang po'i mdob</i>) and their commentaries (esp. <i>Ratna-gotravibhāga</i>); tantras (esp. <i>Spyi G</i>)
valid cognition of the conceptual ultimate	conceptually formulated emptiness	(i) and (ii)	absolute negation	implicative negation ¹¹	absolute negation ¹²	Svātantrika texts
valid cognition of the nonconceptual ultimate	nonconceptual emptiness	(ii) and (i)	absolute negation	absolute negation	not applicable ¹³	Svātantrika texts ¹⁴ ; Prasangika texts

Table 4: The Role of Ascertainment and Conceptuality According to Mipham and Gelug Philosophers

pramāṇa	object of appearance according to Mipham	object of ascertainment according to Mipham	object of appearance according to Gelug	object of ascertainment according to Gelug	path & level of perceiver according to Mipham	path and level of perceiver according to Gelug
conventional valid cognition of limited impure perception	deceptive phenomena	deceptive phenomenon as if truly existent	deceptive phenomenon as if truly existent	deceptive phenomenon as if truly existent or a phenomenon <i>per se</i> ¹⁵	worldly beings; paths of accumulation and preparation	worldly beings; paths of accumulation and preparation
conventional valid cognition that arises from investigation of pure sublime vision	[conventional phenomenon as pure divine forms]	nonconceptual ultimate, e.g., coalescence of form and emptiness]	[deceptive phenomena] ¹⁶	emptiness cum absolute negation	[paths of accumulation and preparation; sublime path]	[paths of accumulation and preparation; sublime paths]
valid cognition that arises from investigation of the conceptual ultimate	emptiness as absolute negation ¹⁷	emptiness as absolute negation	emptiness as absolute negation	emptiness as absolute negation	paths of accumulation and preparation	paths of accumulation and preparation; [sublime paths?] ¹⁸
valid cognition that arises from investigation of the nonconceptual ultimate	emptiness and form inseparable	emptiness and form inseparable	emptiness as absolute negation	emptiness as absolute negation	paths of accumulation and preparation; sublime paths	[paths of accumulation and preparation?]; sublime paths

Notes to Tables

Strictly speaking, only enlightened beings can directly perceive the nature of emptiness—in a nondualistic manner—by means of the valid cognition which arises from investigation of the nonconceptual ultimate. However, since the radically nonelaborated nature of this ultimate, as well as the reasonings which establish it, are taught in sutras and tantras—especially in *Prāsaṅgika* texts—it would be incorrect to say that ordinary persons cannot ponder and discuss the nonconceptual ultimate, in the mode of a mental image (*don spyi*), through study and reflection. But then, it might be objected, the ultimate under consideration would no longer be the nonconceptual ultimate, but just another conceptual ultimate. That objection would be conceded, but it would also be pointed out that it is not meaningless for an ordinary person to conceptualize the distinction between conceptual and nonconceptual ultimates, in so far as the former implicitly relies upon the definition of the two truths as different isolates of the same essence, while the latter relies—at least implicitly—upon the definition of the two truths as the concordance and discordance of appearance and reality (cf. [table 2](#), column 2). Of these two-truth paradigms, the former requires the logical exclusivity of the two truths and risks being a trivial distinction, whereas the latter, which is based upon the gnosis of sublime beings, requires the experiential coalescence of the two truths, and is thus only knowable nonconceptually.

Whether sublime beings have the conventional valid cognition of limited impure perception is a matter of some dispute. At the very least it must be said that they are not “subject to” such mistaken cognitions—as are sentient beings, who involuntarily misapprehend the nature of appearances as impure (i.e., truly existent). On the other hand, it is problematic to say that sublime beings are unaware of such cognitions (i.e., the way sentient beings habitually perceive things), because, in that case, buddhas would be disqualified from omniscience.

Svātantrika and *Prāsaṅgika* are, of course, the doxographical creations of Tibetan scholars. Nonetheless, for the purpose of understanding Mipham and the Gelug philosophical traditions, they are necessary in so far as those traditions accept the distinction. In any case, “*Svātantrika*” and “*Prāsaṅgika*” are hardly more artificial as doxographical labels, than are the labels “*Nyingma*,” “*gZhan stong*,” or “*Gelug*,” if those are misunderstood as denoting monolithic philosophical traditions.

Cf. note 7.

While two isolates/one essence would have to be considered the most explicit paradigm in the writings of *Nāgārjuna* and *Candrakīrti*, the distinction of the concordance/discordance of appearance and reality should be considered to be more distinctive of the *Prāsaṅgika* approach. This is especially true in so far as (1) the emphasis of *Prāsaṅgika* (as *dbu ma chen po*, or “Great Madhyamaka”) is the nonconceptual ultimate—wherein all elaborations that differentiate subject and object cease—and (2) it is distinguished from the *Svātantrika*, whose proper emphasis is the conceptual ultimate, which is part and parcel of two-truth paradigm (i).

rgyas pa'i lugs; e.g., the writings of Maitreya, his disciple Asaṅga, and their commentators; especially the *Ratnagotravibhāga* and the *Abhisamayālaṅkāra*.

gZhan stong pas maintain that two-truth paradigm (i) applies to deceptive realities, which are inherently empty (*rang stong*), while two-truth paradigm (ii) applies to ultimate reality, which is devoid (*gzhan stong*) of the deluded perceptions that involve the discordance of appearance and reality but is not devoid of the qualities of enlightened wisdom.

For example, when a Buddhist philosopher maintains that “permanent sound does not exist,” he is only negating the permanence of sound, not sound itself.

For example, when someone says “Brahmins are not _____, there is no implication that Brahmins are _____, etc.

In the Gelug tradition, this *pramāṇa* is not explicitly reckoned; but Gelug commentators maintain that, in the context of tantric visualization of deities, *maṇḍalas*, etc., those pure appearances are concomitant with the ascertainment of emptiness. Whether, for Gelug commentators, the ascertainment of emptiness by subjective great bliss (*bde ba chen po*) actually *implies* the presence of the pure perception of divinity is not clear, but if it does, then emptiness would indeed function as an implicative negation in this particular context. If the special subjectivities of Vajrayāna practice (*bde ba chen po*, *rig stong dbyer med*, et al.) did not imply the presence of pure divinity, then the perception of divinity would, according to Mipham, be no better than “spraying a vomit-filled vase with perfume” (*Beacon* §5.2.2.2.1.2.– 5.2.2.2.2.1); it would still be an implicative negation, since the perception of divinity would still imply the perception of impurity (cf. [table 4](#)). I think Mipham would acknowledge that, in the context of practicing the Vajrayāna path, the cessation of ordinary perception automatically implies the presence of pure perception, and thus that the existence of conventional valid cognition that arises from investigation of pure sublime vision does involve, for practical intents and purposes, implicative negation.

Since Gelug *Prāsaṅgika* considers the negandum to be the misapprehension of true existence and not a conventional phenomenon *per se*, this means that negation of true existence implies the existence of a conventional phenomenon in addition to negating true existence. Hence, it is not an absolute negation, as the Gelugpas claim, but an implicative one.

To the extent that Mipham accepts that emptiness as absolute negation is a valid conceptual ultimate, he accepts that the negation paradigm that applies in the valid cognition of a conceptual ultimate is that of absolute negation. He also maintains, however, that the use of absolute negation in defining the ultimate as his Gelug opponents understands it is not, in fact, an absolute negation, but an implicative one.

Since the nonconceptual ultimate is, for Mipham, thoroughly nonelaborated, it is not appropriate to associate it with any paradigm of negation. But since he considers the definitive ultimate to be the coalescence of form and emptiness, Gelug scholars might well consider Mipham’s ultimate an implicative negation, since emptiness would imply form and vice versa. Cf. *Beacon* §1.2.2.1.

Methodologically speaking, Svātantrika texts do not emphasize the logical methods that establish the nonconceptual ultimate as do *Prāsaṅgika* texts, but they (i.e., works of Bhavaviveka) are a *locus classicus* for the distinction between the two types of ultimate. According to Mipham, for this reason (among others), and notwithstanding their differences in philosophical methodology, the Svātantrika view converges with that of the *Prāsaṅgika*.

In the abstract of his paper delivered at the XIIth Conference of the International Association of

Buddhist Studies in Lausanne, "Is Seeing Believing? The Theory of Perception in Dharmakīrti's Epistemology According to Mi-pham," Lopen Karma Phuntsho observes:

According to Sa-paṇ and Mi-pham, two leading interpreters of Dharmakīrti, perception is bare awareness free from conceptual distortion; it knows its objects merely by taking the percept of the object. Sense perception cannot verify or ascertain but only collect the data within its scope. Perhaps one could say in Kantian terms that sense perception according to Dharmakīrti is just empirical intuition and not a faculty of judgement. The issue of whether or not sense perception gains certainty (*niścaya*, *nges-pa*) about what it apprehends has become a highly controversial topic among Tibetan epistemologists. The dGe-lugs-pas argued that perception, as valid knowledge, should have certainty, whereas Mi-pham refuted this. He, like Sa-paṇ, attributed certainty only to conceptual thoughts and reasoned that perception being free of conceptual thoughts cannot have certainty. If perception were to ascertain, it would also follow that perception is eliminative (*apoha-pravṛtti*, *sel-'jug*) in its nature of engagement, which would then contradict Dharmakīrti's theory of eliminativism (*anyāpoha*, *gzhan-sel*) according to which eliminativity is limited to conceptual thought and language. Thus, according to Mi-pham, perception can apprehend appearances but without ascertaining (*snang-la ma-nges-pa*)." (unpublished collection of 1999 IABS Conference abstracts, p. 109).

Bearing in mind the fact that, at least as far as Mipham is concerned, to ascertain a phenomenon as what it is (e.g., through *anyāpoha*) *ipso facto* involves the perception of the phenomenon as if truly existent (cf. diagram 1), I have listed "deceptive phenomenon" as the object of appearance in row 2, column 2, and "deceptive phenomenon as if truly existent" in row 2, column 3; and accordingly, I have also listed the the object of appearance according to Gelug epistemology in row 2, column 4 as "deceptive phenomenon as if truly existent." This classification reflects the crucial distinction that Lopen's paper has brought to my attention. The reason row 2, column 5 gives "phenomenon as if truly existent or a phenomenon *per se*" as the Gelug object of ascertainment is to reflect that, according to Gelug Madhyamaka and epistemology, a phenomenon *per se* is not negated by ultimate analysis, while a falsely conceived true existence is negated. Thus, in knowing a conventional phenomenon by means of conventional valid cognition, one should be able to ascertain it either authentically (divested of conceptions of true existence), or inauthentically (as if truly existent). This begs the question of why a mere appearance of deceptive reality (*snang tsam*), or a deceptive phenomenon *per se*, as in row 2, column 2, can be the object of appearance (though not necessarily the object of ascertainment) in Mipham's system. Wouldn't this mean that Mipham would have to accept the very same distinction of which he is so critical in the first topic of the *Beacon*—namely, that of a deceptive phenomenon and its true existence—exactly as the Gelugpas do (row 2, column 5)? And wouldn't that mean, contrary to diagram 1, that a misperception of true existence would not invariably be connected with the presence of a deceptive reality? If so, there would be a conventional phenomenon, such as a jar or a pillar, perceived without such misperception; and thus a conventional reality (*kun brdzob*) would no longer be known as the discordance of appearance and reality, but as the concordance of appearance and reality—which would mean that conventional reality would become ultimate reality. Furthermore, even if this last consequence were not entailed, wouldn't impure conventional valid cognition become the conventional valid cognition of pure perception, wherein appearance and reality are concordant?

And wouldn't this entail that all ordinary individuals would be sublime beings—or, at least, practitioners of pure perception? In anticipation of further clarification from holders of Mipham's exegetical lineage, these questions must remain unanswered for now.

The Gelug system of tantric exegesis does not distinguish between pure and impure appearances as the objects of different types of valid cognition. Because the Gelug distinguishes tantra by its methods and not by its view, they do not understand divine appearance as an object of a special valid cognition or as an inseparable aspect of the ground (*gzhi*), but rather primarily as a feature of the path

Since an analytically determined emptiness is an absolute negation, a correct mental image (*don spyi*) of emptiness, when ascertained through investigation or meditated upon subsequent to investigation, should be exclusive of appearance. But this begs the question of whether a mental image, as an object of a conceptual mind, is not in fact an appearance. For this reason it is given as an "appearance" here.

There is some ambiguity here since Gelug authors make very little use of the distinction between the conceptual and nonconceptual ultimate. It is not clear whether what Mipham considers to be a conceptual ultimate is in fact excluded by Gelug authors from the meditations of sublime beings.

1. Glossary of Technical Terms in Sanskrit, Tibetan, and English

This glossary contains two tables, one sorted by Tibetan words, and one sorted by Sanskrit. The words are alphabetized according to the English alphabet. I have tried to include every Sanskrit and Tibetan technical term that appears above. The English glosses give my own preferred readings and some of the more common ones used by other scholars. I have included a few Sanskrit words that do not appear in earlier sections but that correspond to Tibetan terms appearing frequently in the *Beacon* and other sources cited. Reconstructed, unattested, and conjectural Sanskrit terms are marked with an asterisk (*).

Sanskrit-Tibetan-English

Sanskrit	Tibetan	English
abhiprāya	dgos pa; dgongs pa	purpose, intention (hermeneutics)
abhiṣeka	dbang	empowerment, initiation
adhigama	rtogs pa	(spiritual) realization
āgama	lung	scriptural reference
alakṣya	mtshan med	singless
ālayavijñāna	kun gzhi rnam par shes pa	store consciousness
āloka	snang ba	appearance, experience
anabhisamskāra	rtsol ba med pa	effortlessness
anābhoga	lhun grub	spontaneous presence
anātman	bdag med	selflessness
anuccheda	ma chad pa, chad pa med pa	not destroyed
anulomikīkṣānti	mthun pa'i bzod pa	homologous tolerance
anumāna	rjes dpag	inference; inferential reasoning
anutpāda	ma skyes pa	unproduced, nonarisen
anvaya	rjes su 'gro ba	positive concomitance
aparyāyaparamārtha	rnam grangs ma yin pa'i don dam	nonconceptual ultimate
aprañihita	smon pa med pa	wishlessness
arthakriyāṭva	don byed nus pa	functionality
arvāgdarśana	tshur mthong	narrow-mindedness, shot-sightedness
ārya	'phags pa	sublime being
āryajñāna	'phags pa'i ye shes	sublime gnosis, wisdom
āryasamāpatti	'phags pa'i mnyam bzhag	sublime equipoise
āryaśrāvakas	nyan [rang gyi] 'phags pa	sublime hearers
aśaikṣyamārga	mi slob pa'i lam	path of nonlearning (buddhahood)
asamkhyeyakalpa	grangs med kyi skal pa	countless aeons

asaṃskṛta	'dus ma byas	unfabricated
aśuddha	ma dag pa	impure
atīparokṣatattva	shin tu lkog gyur de nyid	esoteric nature of reality
atīyoga	shin tu rnal 'byor	Great Perfection
avadhūti	rtsa dbu ma	central never channel of the body
avalokiteśvara	spyān ras gzigs	Bodhisattva of Compassion
avidyā	ma rigs pa	ignorance; nescience
āyatana	skyed mched	constituents
bhāvanā	bsgom pa	meditation
bhāvanāmayīprajñā	bsgom 'byung gi shes rab, bsgom pa las 'byung ba'i shes rab	insight achieved by meditating
bhikṣu	dge slong	monk
bhūmi	sa	bodhisattva level
bodhicitta	byang chub kyi sems	enlightenment mind, enlightened awareness
bodhisattva	byang chub sems dpa'	bodhisattva
buddha	sangs rgyas	buddha
buddhakāya	sangs rgyas kyi sku	buddha body
catuṣkoṭi	mtha' bzhi	tetrallemma; four extremes
*catuṣkoṭīprapañca	mtha' bzhi'i spros pa	elaborations of the four extremes
cintā	bsam pa	reflection
cintāmayīprajñā	bsam 'byung gi shes rab	wisdom aisen from reflection
cintāmayīprajñā	bsam pa las byung ba'i shes rab	thoughtful reflection
citta	sems	mind
cittamātra	sems tsam [pa]	mentalism, [mentalist]
*cittaprakṛtiprabhāsvara	rang bzhin 'od gsal gyi sems	natural luminosity of mind
ḍāka	mkha' gro	ḍāka, male divinity or tāntrika
ḍākinī	mkha' gro ma	ḍākinī, female divinity or tāntrika
darśana	lta ba	theory, view, philosophical view
darśanamārga	mthong lam	path of vision
dhāraṇī	gzungs	spell
dharma	chos	Buddhist doctrine, religious doctrine, phenomenon, thing
dharmacakraparivartana	chos kyi 'khor lo skor ba	"turnings" of the "Dharma wheel"
dharmadhātu	chos dbyings	expanse of reality
dharmakāya	chos sku	wisdom body
dharmakīrti	chos kyi grags pa	Dharmakīrti
dharmānairātmya	chos kyi bdag med	phenomenal selflessness

dharmapāla	chos skyong	Dharma protector
dharmatā	chos nyid	reality
dharmin	chos can	subject (of predicates); see pakṣa
dhyāna	bsam gtan	meditation
dr̥ṣṭi	lta ba	view
duḥkha	sdug bsngal	suffering
ekarasa	ro gcig	single savor
gaṇapūja	tshogs kyi mchod pa	tantric feast offering
gocara	dyod yul	(cognitive domain)
guṇa	yon tan	positive quality
guru	bla ma	teacher, spiritual master
hetu	rgyu	causality
hīnayāna	theg dman	Small Vehicle
iṣṭadevatā	yi dam	meditational deity
jñāna	ye shes	gnosis, wisdom, pristine cognition
jñeya	shes bya	cognandum
jñeyāvaraṇa	shes bya'i sgrib pa	cognitive obscuration
kalyāṇamitra	dge ba'i bshes gnyen	spiritual friend
karuṇā	thugs rje	compassion
kleśa	nyon mongs	emotional affliction
kleśāvaraṇa	nyon mongs kyi sgrib pa	emotional obscurations
kriyātantra	bya rgyud	action tantra
kṣānti	bzod pa	patience, forbearance
kuśala	dge ba	merit
lakṣaṇa	mtshan ma	characteristic, mark, quality
*lakṣaṇayāna	mtshan nyid kyi theg pa	dialectical vehicle, vehicle of philosophical dialectics
*lakṣaṇyaparamāṛtha	don dam mtshan nyid pa	definitive ultimate
liṅga	rtags	logical mark or sign
madhyamaka	dbu ma	Middle Way School
mādhymika	dbu ma, dbu ma pa	pertaining to the Middle Way School; follower of Middle Way School
mahāmudrā	phyag rgya chen po	Great Seal
mahāsukha	bde ba chen po	great bliss
mahāyāna	theg pa chen po	Great Vehicle
mahāyoga	rnal 'byor chen po	great yoga
manasāpratyakṣa	yid kyi mngon sum	mental direct perception

maṇḍala	dkyil 'khor	maṇḍala, divine mansion
mañjuśrī	'jam dpal, 'jam dpal dbyangs, 'jams dbyangs	Buddha or Bodhisattva of Wisdom
mantrayāna	(gsang) sngags kyi theg pa	(Secret) Mantra Vehicle
mūlaguru	rtsa ba'i bla ma	fundamental teacher
neyārtha	drang don	provisional meaning/teaching
niḥsvabhāva	rang bzhin med pa	noninherent existence, lack of inherent existence
niḥsvabhāvatā	rang bzhin med pa (nyid)	absence of inherent existence
niḥśreyasa	nges legs	final beatitude
nirmāṇakāya	sprul pa'i sku	emanation body
nirvāṇa	mya ngan las 'das pa	nirvāṇa
nirvikalpa	rnam par mi rtog pa	nonconceptual, nonconceptuality
niścaya	nges pa	certainty, ascertainment
niścaya	nges shes	certainty, conviction
niṣprapañca	spros bral	nonelaboration, unelaborated
nītārtha	nges don	definitive meaning
nītiśāstra	rgyal po'i bstan bcos	treatise on rulership
pakṣa	phyogs	logical subject
pakṣadharmā	phyogs kyi chos	property of a subject
paramārtha	don dam	ultimate
paramārthasatya	don dam pa'i bden pa	ultimate reality; ultimate truth
paramārthikapramāṇa	don dam dpyod pa'i tshad ma	ultimate validating cognition
pāramitayāna	pha rol tu phyin pa'i theg pa	Perfection Vehicle
parārthānumāna	gzhan don rjes dpag	dialectical or forensic logic
*paraśūnya	gzhan stong	extrinsic emptiness, emptiness of other
paratantra	gzhan dbang	relativity; cf. pratīyasamutpāda
parikalpita	sgro btags	projection
pariniṣpanna	yongs grub	perfection; thoroughly established reality
parokṣa	lkog gyur	obscure phenomenon
paryāyaparamārtha	rnam grangs pa'i don dam	conceptual ultimate
paryudāsapraśedha	ma yin dgag	implicative negation
phalayāna	'bras bu'i theg pa	fruition vehicle; cf. Vajrayāna
prabhāsvara	'od gsal	luminosity
prajñā	shes rab	analytical wisdom, discriminating awareness
prajñāpāramitā	shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa;	perfection of wisdom

	phar phyin	
prajñāpta	rten nas btags pa	dependently designated`
prakṛtiprabhāsvara	rang bzhin gyi 'od gsal	natural luminosity
prakṛtivyāśuddhajñāna	rang bzhin rnam dag gi ye shes	natural stainless wisdom
pramāṇa	tshad ma	logic, valid cognition, validating cognition
*pramāṇasiddhatva	tshad grub	valid establishment
prāṇa	rlung	psychosomatic energy
prapañca	spros pa	elaboration
prasajyapratiṣedha	med dgag	absolute negation
prāsaṅga	thal 'gyur	consequential reasoning; <i>reductio ad absurdum</i>
prāsaṅgika	thal gyur ba	Consequentialist
pratijñā	khas len	thesis, philosophical position
pratiṣedhya	dgag bya	negandum
pratītyasamutpāda	rten 'brel	relativity; dependent origination
pratyakṣa	mngon sum	direct perception
pratyakṣena	mngon sum du, mngon sum gyis	directly perceived
pratyaya	rkyen	condition
pratyekabuddha	rang rgyal	individualist buddha
prayogamārga	sbyor lam	path of preparation
prayogavākya	sbyor ngag	sylogistic argument
prṣṭhalabdha	rjes thob	post-meditative state
prthagjana	so so'i skye bo	ordinary person
pūrvapakṣa	phyogs snga ba	prior antagonist
rṣi	drang srong	sage
rūpa	gzugs	form
rūpakāyāḥ	gzugs sku	form body (of a buddha)
sādhana	sgrub thabs	spiritual practice
sādhya	sgrub bya	probandum
sādhyaadharma	sgrub bya'i chos	probandum
śākyamuni	shā kya thub pa	Śākyamuni Buddha
sāmānya	don spyi	universal; meaning generality
sāmānyalakṣana	spyi mtshan; don spyi	meaning generality; universal
samāpatti	mnyam bzhag	meditative equipoise, absorption
*samāpattibhāvanā	'jog bsgom	transic meditation
śamatha	zhi gnas	calm abiding, tranquil abiding, tranquility, transic meditation

śamathavipaśyanāyuganaddha	zhi lhag zung 'jug	coalescence of calm abiding and analytical insight
sambhāramārga	tshogs lam	path of accumulation
sambhogakāya	longs spyod rdzogs pa'i sku	body of beatific vision
saṃsāra	'khor ba	cyclic existence
saṃskṛtāsaṃskṛta	'dus byas 'dus ma byas	fabricated and unfabricated phenomena
samvṛti	kun rdzob	deception, deceptive reality
samvṛtisatya	kun rdzob bden pa	deceptive reality
saṃvyavahārikapramāṇa	*kun tu tha snyad tshad ma	conventional valid cognition
samyagdrṣṭi	yang dag lta ba	authentic or right view
saprapañca	spros (dang) bcas (pa)	conceptually elaborated
śāstra	bstan bcos	scholarly treatises
śāṣvatavāda	rtag lta ba	eternalism, eternalist views
satya	bden pa	truth; reality
*satyasiddha	bden grub	true existence, truly existent, truly established
sautrāntika	mdo sde pa	Scripturalists
sevasādhana	bsnyen sgrub	service and accomplishment
siddhānta	grub mtha'	doxography, comparative philosophy
skandha	phung po	psychosomatic aggregates
śrāvaka	nyan thos	listeners, disciples
śrāvakayāna	nyan thos kyi theg pa	Vehicle of Disciples
śrutamayīprajñā	thos pa las byung ba'i shes rab	wisdom arisen from study
śruti	thos pa	study
śūnyatā	stong pa nyid	emptiness, voidness
svabhāva	rang bzhin	inherent existence, inherently existent
svabhāvaśūnya	rang bzhin gyis stong pa	empty/emptiness of inherent existence
svabhāvaśūnyatā	rang bzhin gyis stong pa nyid	emptiness of inherent existence
svalakṣaṇa	rang gi mtshan nyid	identifying characteristic; characteristic
svalakṣaṇasiddha	rang mtshan gyi grub pa	establishment by way of identifying characteristics
svārthānumāna	rang don rjes dpag	personal or private inference; lit., "inference for one's own sake."
svasaṃvitti	rang rig	apperception
svaśūnya	rang stong	self-empty
svatantra	rang rgyud	autonomous
svatantrānumāna	rang rgyud rjes dpag	autonomous inference
svātantrika	rang rgyud pa	Dogmaticist; Autonomy School

tantra	rgyud	tantra, tantric scripture
tāntrika	sngags pa	tantric (practitioners)
tār̥kika	rtog ge ba	intellectual; sophist
tathāgatagarbha	de bzhin gshegs pa'i snying po	buddha essence
theravāda	*gnas brtan smra ba	Tradition of Elders
trisvabhāva	rang bzhin gsum	three natures of Yogācāra
ucchedaḍḍṭi	chad lta ba	nihilism, nihilist
ucchedavāda	*chad par smra ba	nihilism, nihilist
upādānaḥetu	nyer len gyi rgyu	immediately precedent cause
upadeśa	man ngag	pith instructions
upādhyāya	mkhan po	abbot, monastic preceptor, professor
upāsaka	dge bsnyen	lay devotee of Buddhism
utpattikrama	bskyed rim	creation phase
upāya	thabs	method
vāc	ngag	speech
vāsanā	bag chags	imprint, karmic propensity
vicāra	dpyod pa; rnam dpyod	analysis
*vicārabhāvanā	dpyad bsgom	analytical meditation
vijñānavāda	rnam rig smra ba	Mentalism
vijñaptimātra	rnam rig tsam	Consciousness only
vikalpa	rnam rtog	concepts
vipāśyanā	lhag mthong	penetrating insight, insight
viśaya	yul	epistemic object
viśeṣa	khyad par	aspect, distinction
vitarka	*rnam dpyod	logical analysis
vyavaccheda	rnam par chad pa	exclusion, excluding judgement
vyavahāra	tha snyed	conventionality; conventional expression
vyavahārasatya	tha snyad kyi bden pa	conventional truth; see saṃvṛtisatya
yāna	theg pa	vehicle
yathāyavān	ji lta ji snyad	whatever and however things exist
yogācāra	rnal 'byor pyod pa	Yogācāra
yogī	rnal 'byor	adept
yuganaddha	zung 'jug	coalescence, integration, complementarity
yukti	rigs pa	reasoning, rationality

Tibetan	Sanskrit	English
bag chags	vāsanā	imprint, karmic propensity
bdag med	anātman	selflessness
bde ba chen po	mahāsukha	great bliss
’bden ’dzin		apprehension of true existence
bden grub	*satyasiddha	truly established, truly existent, true establishment, true existence
bden pa	satya	truth; reality
bden par grub pa	*satyasiddha	truly existent, truly established
bla ma	guru	teacher, spiritual master
’bras bu’i theg pa	phalayāna	fruition vehicle; <i>see</i> Vajrayāna
bsam ’byung gi shes rab	cintāmayīprajñā	wisdom arisen from reflection
bsam gtan	dhyāna	meditation
bsam pa	cintā	reflection
bsam pa las byung ba’i shes rab	cintāmayīprajñā	thoughtful reflection
bsgom ’byung gi shes rab	bhāvanāmayīprajñā	wisdom arisen from meditation
bsgom pa	bhāvanā	meditation
bsgom pa las byung ba’i shes rab	bhāvanāmayīprajñā	insight achieved by meditating
bskyed rim	utpattikrama	creation phase
bsnyen sgrub	sevasādhana	service and accomplishment
bstan bcos	śāstra	scholarly treatises
bum dbang		vase empowerment
bya rgyud	kriyātantra	action tantra
byang chub kyi sems	bodhicitta	enlightenment mind, enlightened awareness
byang chub sems dpa’	bodhisattva	bodhisattva
bzod pa	kṣānti	patience, forbearance
chad lta ba	*ucchedadṛṣṭi	nihilism, nihilist
chad par smra ba	ucchedavāda	nihilism, nihilist
chos	dharma	Buddhist doctrine, religious doctrine, phenomenon, thing
chos can	dharmin	subject (of predicates); <i>see</i> pakṣa
chos dbyings	dharmadhātu	expanse of reality
chos kyi ’khor lo skor ba	dharmacakraparivartana	“turnings” of the “Dharma wheel”
chos kyi bdag med	dharmanairatmya	phenomenal selflessness
chos kyi grags pa	dharmakīrti	Dharmakīrti
chos nyid	dharmatā	reality

chos sku	dharmakāya	Wisdom Body
chos skyong	dharmapāla	Dharma protector
dbang	abhiṣeka	empowerment, initiation
dbu ma	madhyamaka	Middle Way School
dbu ma, dbu ma pa	mādhyamika	pertaining to the Middle Way School; follower of Middle Way School
de bzhin gshegs pa'i snying po	tathāgatagarbha	buddha essence
dgag bya	pratiṣedhya	negandum
dgag bya'i mtshams		limit of the negandum
dge ba	kuśala	merit
dge bshes gnyen	kalyāṇamitra	spiritual friend
dge bsnyen	upāsaka	lay devotee of Buddhism
dge slong	bhikṣu	monk
dgos pa; dgongs pa	abhiprāya	purpose, intention (hermeneutics)
dkyil 'khor	maṇḍala	maṇḍala, divine mansion
dngos gzhi		main practice
dngos smra ba		Proponents of True Existence
dngos stobs kyi rigs pa		potent reasoning; valid inferential reasoning based on direct experience
don byed nus pa	arthakrīyatva	functionality
don dam	paramārtha	ultimate
don dam dpyad bzod		immune to ultimate analysis
don dam mtshan nyid pa	lakṣaṇyaparamārtha	definitive ultimate
don dam pa'i bden pa	paramārthasatya	ultimate reality; ultimate truth
don dam (dpyod) pa'i tshad ma	*paramāρθikapramāṇa	ultimate validating cognition
don dpyod	•paramāρθikapramāṇa	ultimate analysis
don spyi	sāmānya	meaning generality; universal
don spyi; spyi mtshan	sāmānyalakṣana	meaning generality; universal
dpyad bsgom		analytical meditation
dpyad bzod pa		immunity to analysis
dpyad mi bzod pa		nonimmunity to analysis
dpyod pa; rnam dpyod	vicāra	analysis
dpyod yul	gocara	(cognitive) domain
drang don	neyārtha	provisional meaning/teaching
drang srong	ṛṣi	sage
'dus ma byas	asaṃskṛta	unfabricated

'dus byas 'dus ma byas	saṃskṛtāsaṃskṛta	fabricated and unfabricated phenomena
'dzin stangs		modal apprehension
*gnas brtan smra ba	*theravāda	Tradition of Elders
grangs med kyi skal pa	asaṃkhyeyakalpa	countless aeons
grub mtha'	siddhānta	doxography, comparative philosophy
grub mtha'i sgro btags pa		philosophical misconception
gsang ba'i dbang		secret empowerment
(gsang) sngags kyi theg pa	mantrayāna	(Secret) Mantra Vehicle
gzhan dbang	paratantra	relativity; see pratītyasamutpāda
gzhan don rjes dpag	parārthānumāna	dialectical or forensic logic
gzhan stong	*paraśūnya	extrinsic emptiness, emptiness of other
gzugs	rūpa	form
gzugs sku	rūpakāya	form body (of a buddha)
gzungs	dhāraṇī	spell
'jam dpal, 'jam dpal dbyangs, 'jam dbyangs	mañjuśrī[ghoṣa]	Buddha or Bodhisattva of Wisdom
ji lta ji snyed	yathāyavān	whatever and however things exist
'jog bsgom		transic meditation
khas len	pratijñā	thesis, philosophical position
'khor ba	saṃsāra	cyclic existence
khyab che ba	ativyāpti	overpervasion
khyab chung		underpervasion
khyad par	viśeṣa	aspect, distinction
kun gzhi rnam par shes pa	ālayavijñāna	store consciousness
kun rdzob	samvṛti	deception; deceptive reality
kun rdzob bden pa	samvṛtisatya	deceptive reality
kun tu tha snyad tshad ma	*saṃvyavahārikapramāṇa	conventional valid cognition
lam gyi dgag bya		path negandum
lhag mthong	vipāśyanā	penetrating insight, insight
lhun grub	anābhoga	spontaneous or primordial presence
lkog gyur	parokṣa	obscure phenomenon
longs spyod rdzogs pa'i sku	saṃbhogakāya	body of beatific vision
lta ba	darśana	theory, view, philosophical view
lta ba	drṣṭi	view

lung	āgama	scriptural reference
ma dag pa	aśuddha	impure
ma rigs pa	avidyā	ignorance; nescience
ma chad pa	anuccheda	not destroyed
ma skyes pa	anutpāda	unproduced, nonarisen
ma yin dgag	paryudāsapraṭiṣedha	implicative negation
man ngag	upadeśa	pith instructions
mdo sde pa	sautrāntika	Scripturalists
med dgag	prasajyapraṭiṣedha	absolute negation
mi slob pa'i lam	aśaikṣamārga	path of nonlearning (buddhahood)
mkha' gro	ḍāka	ḍāka, male divinity or tāntrika
mkha' gro ma	ḍākinī	ḍākinī, female divinity or tāntrika
mkhan po	upādhyāya	abbot, monastic preceptor, professor
mngon sum	pratyakṣa	direct perception
mngon sum du, mngon sum gyis	pratyakṣena	directly perceived
mtha' bzhi	catuṣkoṭi	tetralemma; four extremes
mtha' bzhi'i spros pa	*catuṣkoṭiprapañca	elaborations of the four extremes
mtha' bzhi skyes 'gog		refutation of production from four extremes
mtshong lam	darśanamārga	path of vision
mtshun pa'i don dam		conformative ultimate
mtshun pa'i bzod pa	anulomikīkṣānti	homologous tolerance
mtshan 'dzin		apprehension of characteristics
mtshan ma	lakṣaṇa	characteristic, mark, quality
mtshan med	alakṣya	signless
mtshan nyid kyi theg pa	*lakṣaṇayāna	dialectical vehicle, vehicle of philosophical dialectics
mnyam bzhang	samāpatti	meditative equipoise, absorption
mya ngan las 'das pa	nirvāṇa	nirvāṇa
ngag	vāc	speech
nges don	nītārtha	definitive meaning
nges legs	niḥśreyasa	final beatitude
nges pa	niścaya	certainty, ascertainment,
nges shes	niścaya	certainty, conviction
ngo bo gcig ldog pa tha dad		different isolates in one entity
nyan (rang gyi) 'phags pa	āryaśrāvaka	sublime hearers
nyan thos	śrāvaka	listener

nyan thos kyi theg pa	śrāvākayāna	Vehicle of Disciples
nyer len gyi rgyu	upādānahetu	immediately proceeding cause
nyon mongs	kleśa	emotional affliction
nyon mongs kyi sgrib pa	kleśāvaraṇa	emotional obscurations
’od gsal	prabhāsvara	luminosity
pha rol tu phyin pa’i theg pa	pāramitāyāna	Perfection Vehicle
’phags pa	ārya	sublime being
’phags pa’i mnyam bzhag	āryasamāpatti	sublime equipoise
’phags pa’i ye shes	āryajñāna	sublime gnosis, wisdom
phung po	skandha	psychosomatic aggregates
phyag rgya chen po	mahāmudrā	Great Seal
phyogs	pakṣa	logical subject
phyogs kyi chos	pakṣadharmā	property of a subject
phyogs snga ba	pūrvapakṣa	prior antagonist
rang bzhin	svabhāva	inherent existence, inherently existent
rang bzhin gsum	trisvabhāva	three natures of Yogācāra
rang bzhin gyi ’od gsal	prakṛtiprabhāsvara	natural luminosity
rang bzhin gyis grub pa	svabhāvasiddha[tva]	natural existence
rang bzhin gyis stong pa	svabhāvaśūnya	empty/emptiness of inherent existence
rang bzhin gyis stong pa nyid	svabhāvaśūnyatā	emptiness of inherent existence
rang bzhin med pa	niḥsvabhāva	noninherent existence, lack of inherent existence
rang bzhin rnam dag gi ye shes	prakṛtviśuddhajñāna	natural stainless wisdom
rang bzhin med pa (nyid)	niḥsvabhāvatā	absence of inherent existence
rang dga’ ba		instinctual
rang don rjes dpag	svārthānumāna	personal or private inference; lit., “inference for one’s own sake.”
rang gi mtshan nyid	svalakṣaṇa	identifying characteristic; characteristic
rang gi ngo bos grub pa		intrinsic establishment
rang grol		self-liberation
rang mtshan gyi grub pa	svalakṣaṇasiddha	establishment by way of identifying characteristics
rang rgyal	pratyekabuddha	individualist buddha
rang rgyud	svatantra	autonomous
rang rgyud pa	*svātantrika	Dogmaticist; Autonomy School
rang rgyud rjes dpag	svatantrānumāna	autonomous inference

rang rig	svasaṃvitti	apperception
rang stong	svabhāvaśūnya	self-empty
rgyal po'i bstan bcos	nītiśāstra	treatise on rulership
rgyu	hetu	causality
rgyu 'bras bu dang rjes su mthun pa		homologous cause and effect
rgyud	tantra	tantra, tantric scripture
rigs pa	yukti	reasoning, rationality
rigs pas gnod pa		harmed by reasoning
rigs shes		rational consciousness
rigs shes kyi 'dzin stangs		habit pattern of rational cognition
rjes dpag	anumāna	inference; inferential reasoning
rjes su 'gro ba	anvaya	positive concomitance
rjes thob	prasthalabdha	post-meditative state
rkyen	pratyaya	condition
rlung	prāṇa	psychosomatic energy
rnal 'byor	yogī	adept
rnal 'byor chen po	mahāyoga	great yoga
rnal 'byor spyod pa	yogācāra	Yogācāra
rnam dpyod	vitarka	logical analysis
rnam grangs ma yin pa'i don dam	aparyāyaparamārtha	nonconceptual ultimate
rnam grangs pa'i don dam	paryāyaparamārtha	conceptual ultimate
rnam par chad pa	vyavaccheda	exclusion, excluding judgement
rnam par mi rtog pa	nirvikalpa	nonconceptual, nonconceptuality
rnam rig smra ba	vijñānavāda	mentalism
rnam rig tsam	vijñaptimātra	consciousness only
rnam rtog	vikalpa	concepts
ro gcig	ekarasa	single savor
rtag lta ba	śāśvatavāda	eternalism, eternalist views
rtags	liṅga	logical mark or sign
rten 'brel	pratīyasamutpāda	relativity; dependent origination
rtog ge ba	tārkaika	intellectual; sophist
rtogs pa	adhigama	(spiritual) realization
rtsa ba'i bla ma	mūlaguru	fundamental teacher
rtsa dbu ma	avadhūti	central nerve channel of the body
rtsol ba med pa	anabhisaṃskāra	effortlessness
sa	bhūmi	bodhisattva level
sangs rgyas	buddha	buddha

sangs rgyas kyi sku	buddhakāya	buddha body
sbyor lam	prayogamārga	path of preparation
sbyor ngag	prayogavākya	sylogistic argument
sdug bsngal	duḥkha	suffering
sems	citta	mind
sems rang bzhin gyi 'od gsal	*cittaprakṛtiprabhāsvara	natural luminosity of mind
sems tsam pa	cittamātra	mentalism
sgro btags	parikalpita	projection
sgrub bya	sādhya	probandum
sgrub bya'i chos	sādhya dharma	probandum
sgrub thabs	sādhana	spiritual practice
shā kya thub pa	śākyamuni	Śākyamuni Buddha
shes bya	jñeya	cognandum, knowable thing
shes bya'i sgrub pa	jñeyāvaraṇa	cognitive obscuration
shes rab	prajñā	wisdom, analytical wisdom, discriminating awareness
shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa; phar phyin	prajñāpāramitā	perfection of wisdom
shes rab ye shes kyi dbang		wisdom empowerment
shin tu lkog gyur de nyid	atiparokṣatattva	esoteric nature of reality
shin tu rnal 'byor	atiyoga	Great Perfection
skye mched	āyatana	constituents
smon pa med pa	anabhisaṃskāra, apraṇihita	wishless
snang ba	āloka	appearance, experience
sngags pa	tāntrika	tantric (practitioners)
snang srid		actual and potential phenomena
so so'i skye bo	pṛthagjana	ordinary person
spros (pa dang) bcas (pa)	saprapañca	conceptually elaborated
spros bral	niṣprapañca	nonelaboration, unelaborated
spros pa	prapañca	elaboration
sprul pa'i sku	nirmāṇakāya	emanation body
dpyad bsgom		analytical meditation
spyang ras gzigs	avalokiteśvara	Bodhisattva of Compassion
stang		mental "posturing"
stong pa nyid	śūnyatā	emptiness, voidness
tha snyad	vyavahāra	conventionality; conventional expression

tha snyad kyi bden pa	vyavahārasatya	conventional truth; <i>see</i> saṃvṛti-satya
thabs	upāya	method
thal 'gyur	prāsaṅga	consequential reasoning; <i>reductio ad absurdum</i>
thal gyur ba	prāsaṅgika	Consequentialist
theg dman	hīnayāna	Small Vehicle
theg pa	yāna	vehicle
theg pa chen po	mahāyāna	Great Vehicle
thod rgal		all-surpassing realization, tōgal
thos pa	śruti	study
thos pa las byung ba'i shes rab	śrutamayīprajñā	wisdom arisen from ba'i study
thugs rje	karuṇā	compassion
tshad grub	pramāṇasiddha pramāṇasiddhatva	validly established, valid establishment
tshad ma	pramāṇa	logic, valid cognition, validating cognition
tshig gi dbang		word empowerment
tshogs kyi mchod pa	gaṇapūja	tantric feast offering
tshogs lam	saṃbhāramārga	path of accumulation
tshur mthong	arvāgdarśana	narrow-mindedness, short-sightedness
yan gar ba		separate, independent
yang dag lta ba	samyag-dṛṣṭi	authentic or right view
ye shes	jñāna	gnosis, wisdom, pristine cognition
yi dam	iṣṭadevatā	meditational deity
yid kyi mngon sum	manasāpratyaśa	mental direct perception
yon tan	guṇa	positive quality
yongs grub	pariniṣpanna	perfection, thoroughly established reality
yul	viśaya	epistemic object
yul can don dam		ultimate subject
zhi gnas	śamatha	calm abiding, tranquil abiding, tranquility, transic meditation
zhi lhag zung jug	śamathavipaśyanayuganaddha	coalescence of calm abiding and analytical insight
zung jug	yuganaddha	coalescence, integration complementary
zung jug ye shes	yuganaddhajñāna	great gnosis of coalescence

For a comprehensive account of Khyentse Rinpoche's life and works, see *Journey to Enlightenment* (Ricard, 1996).

See §1.4.1.1 for source abbreviations and bibliographical information on editions of the *Beacon of Certainty*.

cf. Annotation, Diacritics, and Transcriptions, p. xix.

I understand the words "philosophy" and "philosophical" in two senses: (1) to refer to what John Passmore calls "[the] essentially rational and critical" version of philosophy, with "logical analysis (in a broad sense) at its heart;" and (2) "the other, (represented by Heidegger, for example) [which] is openly hostile to critical analysis and professes to arrive at general conclusions by a direct, essentially personal intuition" ("Philosophy," in Edwards, p. 218). The Great Perfection, as *ye shes* or gnosis, may not be a philosophy in the first sense, but there is a philosophical discussion about it in the works of Klong chen rab 'byams and Mipham, for example, that combines elements of both these types of philosophy. Therefore, I will refer to texts and traditions that conform to one or both of these types as "philosophy" or "philosophical."

Cabezón (1994) has argued that scholasticism, understood as the systematization of religious thought through the application of logic and categorization, is an appropriate *topos* for the comparative study of religion; cf. definition of scholasticism of Masson-Oursel given by Cabezón (1994), p. 14. Cabezón elaborates, "[S]cholastic traditions generally share this common concern: that experience and action be guided and justified by reasoning and that rationally justified doctrine be made experientially relevant" (ibid., p. 19). It is in this sense especially that I refer throughout to Tibetan scholasticism.

I will use "gnoseology" and "gnoseological" if a conception of ultimate reality (*paramārthasatya*=*dam pa'i don*) figures as an object of knowledge or theoretical discussion. For the purposes of this study, gnoseological significance is understood to be three-dimensional: (i) objective, (ii) subjective, and (iii) both subjective and objective. As a rule, dimension (iii) should be understood wherever I use the terms "gnoseological" and "gnoseology," unless otherwise specified. This inclusive dimension of gnoseology is the one that is implied in what Mipham calls "the great gnosis of coalescence," for reasons to be discussed in the section on Vajrayāna (cf. §3.5.2). Where appropriate I have used "gnoseme" and "gnosemic" to refer to the objective aspect, or *logos*, of ultimate wisdom (*jñāna*) op. cit., which is dimension (i). In Tibetan philosophy ultimate reality as gnosemic object (*artha*) is emptiness (*śūnyatā*), while ultimate subjectivity is typically gnosis (*jñāna*) (dimension (ii)). "Epistemology" and "epistemological" are used to refer to the exercise of knowledge in conventional experience, i.e., to determine what is generally true and how it is known to be such. I admit that these distinctions might seem unnecessarily subtle. However, I think they are important in the context of the present study, because Mipham's writings are rather unusual in making a number fine distinctions that, according to my understanding of these terms, are either epistemological or gnoseological in nature. D.S. Ruegg is the only author I have encountered who uses "gnoseology" and "gnoseological" frequently, and I am indebted to him for introducing these helpful—if sometimes obscure—terms. However, his

usage of the term “gnoseology” tends to refer to what I would rather call the “gnosemic” dimension, to the extent that his research has focused on Gelug materials that assume a definition of ultimate reality as emptiness, as opposed to gnosis. Here gnoseology refers primarily to sense (iii), where the coalescence of subject and object is implicit. This does not mean, of course, that Mipham never speaksgnosemically or gnostically; for example, in his use of the term *zung ’jug ye shes chen po*, the coalescence of form and emptiness, or relative and ultimate truth, is the “gnoseme,” while gnosis per se is that which “knows” it. Neither does it mean that there is nognoseological dimension to Tsongkhapa’s understanding of certain dimensions of practice, on which cf. especially §7. On “gnoseme” and “gnosemic,” cf. also n. 377.

“System builders” (*shing rta*, lit. “chariots”) are Nāgārjuna and Asaṅga in India, and for Gelugpas at least, Tsongkhapa in Tibet.

The reader will note that according to Khenpo ’jigs med phun tshogs (cf. below, p. 24, n. 66) and Khro shul ’jam rdor (p. 414) the *Beacon* was composed when Mipham was seven years old. Be that as it may, the *Beacon* contains the most important points elaborated in Mipham’s other treatises and commentaries composed later in his life.

Madhyamaka is the name of the philosophy; *Mādhyaṃika* is used adjectivally or as a personal noun.

This date is from a short biography of Kun bzang dpal ldan by Thondup (1996), pp. 258–59; however, cf. op. cit. n. 286, p. 375.

Nges sgron bshad sbyar lha’i rnga sgra by sLob dpon Theg mchog of rDo grub dgon pa; published by ’Bras ljongs sgang tog mch’od rten dgon (English publisher given as Deorali Chorten Gonpa, Gangtok, Sikkim, India), no date, 383 folios.

Published in *Nges sgron ’grel chen dang mkhan chen yid bzhin nor bu ’jigs med phun tshogs ’byung gnas kyi nam thar dang gsung chos bcas* by Wa ṇa mtho slob snga ’gyur rnying ma pa’i bde don lhan khang, Vārāṇasī, 1991. According to Ehrhard (op. cit.), this text was also published in Clement Town, U.P., by Nyingma Lama’s College (n.d.).

What constitutes “correct” spelling in Tibetan is sometimes difficult to determine, though “incorrect” spellings are somewhat easier to isolate, as, for example, in the case of substituting a homonym (for example, *’phrul* for *’khrul*). I do not know which version of the *Beacon* Kun bzang dpal ldan used for his commentary; it is possible that he, as one of Mipham’s foremost disciples, had learned the text by heart and supplied his own spelling as he went along.

On this and other editions of Mipham’s works, see Goodman, “Mi-Pham rgyamtsho: An Account of His Life, the Printing of His Works, and the Structure of His Treatise Entitled *mKhas-pa’i tshul la ’jug-pa’i sgo*” (1981).

Fortunately, these and other important titles in Mipham’s collected works are currently the subject of a dissertation by Lopen Karma Phuntsho, a scholar of Palyul Monastery who is presently a doctoral candidate at Balliol College, Oxford. It is hoped that the fruits of his research will soon become available.

In this respect, Mipham’s writings are a significant addition to the writings of Klong chen pa, who is considered the greatest author of the Nyingma tradition for his extensive writings on the Great Perfection, but who for the most part refrained from elaborating a distinctively Nyingma interpretation of dialectical philosophy. One prominent lama of the Ris med persuasion, Dzongsar

Jamyang Khyentse, told me that Mipham was a greater scholar than either Sakya Paṇḍita or Tsongkhapa. Coming from the Lama of a Sakya philosophical college (Dzongsar Institute (rdzong gsar bshad grwa) in Bir, Himachal Pradesh), where works of Sakya Paṇḍita and Tsongkhapa figure prominently in the curriculum, I am inclined to think this is an unbiased assessment. In any case, one can place Mipham among the small number of Tibetan philosophers, such as Tsongkhapa, whose philosophical interpretations have been codified in yig cha.

Rong zom Chos kyi bzang po (1976), pp. 41–335; studied by Karmay (1988).

Rong zom Chos kyi bzang po (1974), pp. 125–51.

rigs pa bzhi; cf. Kapstein (1988), pp. 154–60, and below, n. 77.

Rong zom Chos kyi bzang po (1974), pp. 187–246.

I have used two editions of the *LRC*, the Sherig Parkhang edition (Tsong kha pa bLo bzang 'grags pa, n.d.) and the ACIP CD-ROM, release 3. All citations of the *LRC* are from the former, unless otherwise noted.

Gangs ri'i khrod kyi smra ba'i seng ge gcig pu 'jam mgon mi pham rgya mtsho'i rnam thar snying po bsdu pa dang gsung rab kyi dkar chag snga 'gyur bstan pa'i mdzes rgyan; in *Collected Writings*, vol. 7, pp. 621–65.

Kun mkhyen mi pham rgya mtsho la gsol ba 'debs tshul gyul las rnam par rgyal ba'i rnga sgra.

DR, pp. 869–80.

Smith (1969 (a)).

Schuh.

I am unable to provide the exact title of Ehrhard's thesis, which he pursued at the University of Heidelberg. Ehrhard's research focuses on the sources of Mipham's Mādhyamika interpretation in the writings of Klong chen rab 'byams. The most significant features of Ehrhard's Mipham research have been noted below in §§6.2.1–6.2.2.

Kapstein (1988), p. 164.

Several other studies and translations of Mipham that, though not immediately relevant to this study, should be mentioned for the sake of completeness are: Kawamura (1980, 1981, 1982, 1983); Mipham 'Jam-dbyangs rnam-rgyal rgyamtsho (1983), a translation of his *Sems kyi dpyod pa 'khor lo ma*, a short text on Mādhyamika analytical meditation; Mimaki (1982), a study of Mipham's commentary on an Indian comparative philosophical text by Āryadeva, the *Jñānasārasamuccaya*; Guenther (1971) has translated a good portion of Mipham's *Yid bzhin mdzod kyi grub mtha' bsdu pa*, a summary of Klong chen rab 'byams's *Yid bzhin mdzod*; Nāgārjuna and Lama Mipham (1985) includes a translation of Mipham's commentary on the *Suḥrillekha*. Kunzang (1988) includes a translation of an important aspirational prayer for the Great Perfection practice, the *'Jam dpal rdzogs pa chen po gzhi lam 'bras bu dbyer med pa'i don la smon pa rig stong rdo rje'i rang gdangs*.

For example, how external objects are asserted (*phyi don khas len tshul*), how Śrāvakas realize both types of selflessness, why self-apprehension (*bdag 'dzin*) is not an affliction (*kleśa*), and cessation is a functional thing (*zhig pa dngos po*). These are four of the "eight great difficult points" (*dka' ba'i gnad chen po brgyad*) that Tsongkhapa was unique among Tibetan Mādhyamikas in asserting to be the position of the Prasāṅgika school. With the exception of the second, none of these are

discussed in the *Beacon*, though Mipham discusses them elsewhere. Cf. §6.2.1 below.

Williams (1998 (a) and (b)). I have reviewed the second volume, *Altruism and Reality*, in an article for volume 7 of *The Journal of Buddhist Ethics* (<http://jbe.la.psu.edu/current.html>).

Cf. §§6.3.1.2–6.3.1.2.2

Most of the written Gelug critiques of Mipham were in reaction to his NK commentary; cf. Smith (1969 (b)).

Cf. his critiques of the “white panacea” notion in the Mahāmudrā system of sGam po pa discussed in D. Jackson (1994 (c), 1991), R. Jackson (1982), and Broido (1987).

Tsongkhapa’s objections to “subitism” in his *LRC* are discussed in §6ff.

On the various types of terma, cf. p. 76.

In general, Mipham’s works are considered *dag snang*, or pure visionary treasures arisen from the realization of gnosis, because their author was never apart from the visionary state. *DR* considers Mipham a tertön in the sense of *dag snang* (cf. n. 238). According to mKhan po ‘Jigs phun, Mipham was a tertön in the classical sense, but his termas have remained secret. In the *VBD* he mentions a Great Perfection terma of Mipham, the *Yang gsang snying thig*, three hundred pages long, which Mipham discovered and then burned, predicting that his attendant ‘Od gsal would rediscover it in the future (Helm, p. 45; 19a.3). The *VBD* also mentions the discovery of several material termas (*rdzas gter*; cf. below p. 76). mKhan po ‘Jigs phun thinks that Mipham concealed material termas himself (*VBD* 19b) and says, “Though I think there are many other termas [discovered by Mipham], because the Lord was extremely fond of secrecy, I have not come to see or hear of any others” (*VBD* 9a).

Cf. n. 238.

On ‘Jigs med glings pa, see p. 97 and n. 352.

Another of Mipham’s important teachers, ‘Jam mgon kong sprul (1813–1899), wrote his autobiography in 210 folios, about ten times the length of the *Essential Hagiography*.

Cf. pp. 37–38.

The historical account of Zhe chen rgyal tshab padma rnam rgyal (1971) includes a few folios on the life of Mipham, but aside from an obscure reference to one of his previous lives, it does not substantially supplement the sources considered here. It should be noted that the most famous religious biography of Tibetan literature, that of Milarepa (Mi la ras pa) by gTsang myon heruka (1452–1507), was written more than three hundred years after Milarepa lived.

Kun mkhyen mipham rgya mtsho la gsol ba ‘debs tshul g.yul las rnam par rgyal ba’i rnga sgra, n.p. n.d.

mKhan po ‘Jigs phun says in *VBD* 25b.6: “As for myself, I have felt strong devotion for Mipham Rinpoche ever since I was young. Whenever I was with learned or elderly people, I would ask for stories of his life, and I made notes about him. However, Lama Mipham is so famous that each person had his own version, and probably some of them were mixed up with stories of other great masters. Unless I was positive that a story was about Lama Mipham, I did not record it here.... [S]ince I was very young when I heard them, I retained only pieces of [some] stories, and have not written them here. Only definite stories from authentic sources have been included” (translation

from Helm, pp. 60–61). Except where he mentions himself by name as a witness to certain events, Kun bzang dpal ldan's account is mostly anecdotal, though he often adds, "I heard this from a reliable source" (*lo rgyus khung ma las thos*).

However, see §§4.3.4–4.3.5 for further details of Mipham's cultural and historical context. Lauren Ruth Hartley, presently a doctoral student at Indiana University, has written an M.A. thesis entitled "A socio-historical study of the kingdom of sDe-dge (Derge, Kham) in the late nineteenth century: Ris-med views of alliance and authority" (1997). Hartley's thesis draws upon a number of Chinese and Tibetan sources, including some recent scholarship on the region, and examines the dynamic of religion and politics in Mipham's time. In particular, she has translated portions of Mipham's *Treatise on Kingship* (*rGyal po'i lugs kyi bstan bcos*) and related them to the sDe dge princes for whom the text was written.

Unless, perhaps, one accepts a "political shamanism." The VBD recounts that Mipham caused an avalanche to thwart an advancing army during a border dispute (14b.2), and recounts several stories about Mipham's mastery of sorcery. In one instance, mKhan po 'Jigs med phun tshogs says, he overcame an army using magical dice (14b.3). In another, he says:

When the *Norbuketaka* commentary on the Wisdom Chapter of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* had become renowned in Eastern, Central, and Western Tibet, several leaders of many monks who misunderstood Mipham's intent came together with their charges and gathered together all the monks of the Three Seats [Se ra, dGa' ldan, and 'Bras phunq monasteries] to undertake the wrathful rites of the *Sixty Iron Forts* [of Yamāntaka, a wrathful "throw-torma" (*gtor zor*) ritual] and the *Prajñāpāramitā* reversing rite of the sūtra tradition. Though they tried to harm him, it simply increased the benefit of all; Mipham's activities, fame, and vitality (*bla*) increased greatly. Those among the sorcerers who actually held bad intentions found their own protectors turning against them; the point of their own minds' weapon came back to them. Most died of throat blockage, while others were suddenly overcome by violent spirits, went crazy, became mute, or fell comatose. When the Nechung oracle revealed the causes for this, Thubten Gyatso [the Thirteenth Dalai Lama] dispatched many emissaries with his apologies. The Omniscient Lama himself [Mipham] said, "Because I have been openly accepted by the Lord Bhairava, Enemy of Time, I cannot be affected by sorcery; but if those monks had directed their wrathful rites at the King of Mountains, it would have been completely destroyed." (VBD 16a–b; my translation.)

See also the *Essential Hagiography*, 652.3 (translation, p. 34).

Cf. Smith (1970(a)).

Helm, p. 34, n. 88. The VBD says of Mipham's aristocratic disciples, "[t]hese rulers were extremely powerful and wealthy, just one step behind the king of the gods. Their knowledge of the ways of the world and Dharma was as vast as the sky, and their pride was greater than the highest mountain. But Mipham Rinpoche's fame encircled them tightly like a lasso; he overpowered them by displaying miracles, and he captivated their minds through the four ways of gathering followers." Helm, pp. 26–27.

Except perhaps insofar as geopolitical tensions might conduce to cultural diversity; cf. pp. 99–100.

Cf. n. 69.

Smith (1970(a)), p. 33.

The opposite, in fact, seems to have been the case; cf. n. 46. However, one of Mipham's Gelug admirers, Khang dmar dGe bshes, was presumably from Khang dmar, a district of south-central Tibet; cf. *Essential Hagiography*, 638.6 (p. 27 below).

Cf. *Essential Hagiography*, 633.6 (p. 25 below).

For example, Brag dkar sprul sku of 'Bras phung Monastery, who replied to Mipham's *rGal lan nyin byed snang ba* (completed June 11, 1889, according to Goodman p. 63) with the *Mi pham rnam rgyal gyis rtsod pa'i yang lan log lta'i khong khrag skyug man* (*An Emetic for the Expulsion of the Bloody Vomit of Wrong Views: Another Reply to Mi pham rnam rgyal's Objections*). According to the VBD (14b–15a), Tragkar Tulku was an emanation of Avalokiteśvara.

Detailed in Smith (1969(b)). According to Goodman (1981), p. 64, this exchange spanned 1897–1903. *Essential Hagiography* 639.5; translation, p. 28.

DR, pp. 869–80.

Smith (1969(a)).

Gangs ri'i khrod kyi smra ba'i seng ge gcig pu 'jam mgon mi pham rgya mtsho'i rnam thar snying po bsodus pa dang gsung rab kyi dkar chag snga 'gyur bstan pa'i mdzod rgyan; in *Collected Writings*, vol. 7, pp. 621–65. As the title indicates, the biography forms the first part of a two-part work, fifty-five folios (110 pages) in length. The second part is an index (*dkar chag*) of Mipham's works, which includes detailed information about the editing and publishing of Mipham's works, by his students Zhe chen rgyal tshab Pad ma rnam rgyal and Kun bzang dpal ldan; it has been studied in detail by Goodman (1981). As indicated in notes below, there is some doubt as to whether the *Essential Hagiography* is in fact the work of Kun bzang dpal ldan; it has at least been edited to include honorific references to Kun dpal himself.

Schuh. Based on the colophons of the collected works of Mipham published at the monastery of Zhe chen bstan gyis dar rgyas gling, Schuh has identified some of the places where Mipham stayed and composed various works in the last thirteen years of his life (Schuh, pp. xxxii–xxxiii). According to Schuh's chronology, during this time Mipham changed residence at least twice a year, moving from one monastery or retreat hermitage to another. However, none of these correspond to places mentioned in the VBD or the *Essential Hagiography*. Schuh's catalogue accounts for about only half of the titles Mipham is known to have authored; these, and most of the other half, have been collected, edited, and published in twenty-seven volumes by Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche in Bodhanath, Nepal. A thorough study of all the text colophons in Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche's edition, as well as a thorough survey of all the biographical materials for Mipham's teachers, intimates, and close disciples, would be essential for any future biographical study of Mipham.

Lama Mipham's Miracles, The Sound of the Victorious Battle Drum Which Accompanies the Supplication to Omniscient Mipham Gyatso; unpublished; translation attributed to Nalanda Translation Committee.

On these, see Smith (1970).

khyad par du; KP here implies that his own teacher, Mipham Rinpoche, exemplifies the mode of enlightened manifestation just described.

DR (p. 869) gives the location of Mipham's birth as Yachu Tingchung, near the Yalung River, in

Dokham. In vol. 2 this location is indexed as Map 10–F24 but is not marked by name on the map. This would place Mipham's birthplace at least fifty kilometers from his ancestral home, 'Ju nyung, which is a short distance from the Yalung (=Yachu=Dzachu) in northeast Kham. The 'Ju nyung Valley is shown in a photo in Ricard (1996), pp. 4–5.

Ze chen = Zhe chen. Photographs of this monastery are found in Ricard (1996), pp. 20–28.

Khenpo 'Jigs med phun tshogs mentions a story, common in current oral tradition, that the *Beacon* was dictated by Mipham when he was seven years old to one 'Ju bla ma Rin chen mgon po (VBD 9a.6). Kun bzang dpal ldan mentions that the *Beacon* was written when Mipham was "very young" (*shin tu gzhon pa'i dus su*; WTL, p. 2). The 'Ju prefix suggests this was a member of Mipham's family.

A photo by Matthieu Ricard of 'Ju nyung hermitage is shown in *DR*, vol. 1, plate 94.

bshad lung here means a traditional reading transmission (*āgama*= *lung*), with some added explanation of salient and difficult points.

nyag zing gis 'brog sde mgo log tu song bas rje nyid kyang der byon. This must have occurred during the Nyag rong war, which affected sDe dge and its principalities such as 'Ju. In 1862 the fighting spread to Dza chu kha, forcing the nomad inhabitants to flee (Schuh, xxviii). It seems that Mipham, like the nomads themselves, was displaced by the turmoil to Golog in the northeast.

According to Matthew Kapstein, this uncle might have been an important Gelug abbot in Kham, but I am unable to corroborate this.

dGa' ldan ("Ganden," for Tuṣita heaven, where future buddhas reside before incarnating in the human world), founded by Tsongkhapa near Lhasa, was one of the largest and most important Gelug monasteries in Tibet.

dPal sprul (Paltrul) Rinpoche was one of the most important holders of the lineage of the *Klong chen snying thig*, the cycle of visionary revelations discovered by 'Jigs med gling pa. He was a great scholar of both sūtra and tantra. One of his favorite texts was the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, which he is said to have taught in its entirety over one hundred times. In spite of being a monk and a famous teacher, he never accumulated any wealth and traveled incognito disguised as a beggar.

This refers to his *Nor bu ke ta ka* commentary (NK) on the ninth chapter of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, completed August 9, 1878 (Schuh, p. 115), as well as the rejoinders to some of the critics of this commentary; these were the most controversial works of Mipham's career. See Smith (1969 (a)), for a discussion of this text and the refutations and counter-refutations it generated. Portions of the NK are translated below, n. 451, and pp. 153–55.

Cf. §4.3.4.

'jam dpal tshe bdag, a wrathful form of Mañjuśrī.

rton pa bzhi; cf. p. 49 below.

apekṣāyukti = *ltos pa'i rigs pa*, *kāryakāraṇayukti* = *bya ba byed pa'i rigs pa*, *upapattisāadhanayukti* = *'thad pa sgrub pa'i rigs pa*, and *dharmatāyukti* = *chos nyid kyi rigs pa*. Cf. Kapstein (1988), p. 152. These four principles are invoked explicitly by Rong zom Paṇḍita in his *sNang ba lhar grub pa*, which was an important source for the sixth topic of the *Beacon*; cf. KJ §6.2.2.2.2.3.2.3.

The four reliances, four kinds of reasoning, and eight treasures of brilliance are discussed by Mipham in the *DRG* and Kapstein (1988).

'Bum gсар is about ten kilometers from 'Ju nyung, so Mipham probably would not have had to travel far to study with this dGe bshes.

Mipham is the author of a commentary on the *MA*, the *dBu ma la 'jug pa'i 'grel pa zla ba'i zhal lung dri med shel phreng*; cf. §6.3.2.2.2.

The *VBD* recounts other accolades Mipham received from Gelug scholars. Like Smith, *DR*, and Kun bzang dPal ldan, mKhan po 'Jigs med phun tshogs refers to the friendly exchange of polemical tracts between Mipham and Blo bzang rab gsal (12b–11a). Khang dmar dGe bshes considered him identical to Mañjuśrī. Blo bzang phun tshogs at first criticized Mipham, and then became his student (12b–13a); their debate was witnessed by high lamas of the Nyingma, Sakya, and Gelug traditions (15b). All three opponents composed verses in Mipham's honor.

Blo gter dbang po was one of greatest Sakya scholars of the nineteenth century.

A treatise on Buddhist logic (*pramāṇa*) by Sakya Paṇḍita, which is probably the most important of its kind in Tibet except for the major works of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti. Mipham is the author of a commentary on this text entitled *Tshad ma rig pa'i gter mchan gyis 'grel pa*, written at the Sakya monastery of rDzong gсар bkra shis lha rtse (Schuh, p. 93).

'byams chos sde lnga. Mipham was the author of commentaries on all five; cf. pp. 55–56. On the role played by these texts in Gelug and Nyingma scholastic curriculum, see Dreyfus (1997).

On this text Mipham composed a commentary, the 'Jam dbyangs dgyes pa'i zhal lung, which was one of his more controversial works; cf. Lipman (1981). A written critique of this commentary by the scholar rDo grub dam chos prompted Mipham to reply in his *Dam chos 'dog sel*.

The *Madhyāntavibhaṅga* and the *Dharmadharmatāvibhaṅga* are Yogācāra-Madhyamaka works attributed to Maitreya; Mipham's commentaries on these are the *Ye shes snang ba snam 'byed* and the 'Od zer phreng ba, respectively.

Of all the texts mentioned here, the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti* is the only one on which Mipham did not compose a commentary himself. Since Mañjuśrī figures throughout Mipham's works—above all, as an object of devotional salutation (*mchod brjod*) at the beginning of all his major compositions, but also as the subject of many of his tantric commentaries and *sādhana*s—one would expect Mipham to have composed a commentary on the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti*. Much as lines or entire stanzas of the Nyingma tantras appear in writings of Klong chen rab 'byams, bits and pieces of the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti* appear in various verse compositions of Mipham. The beginning of the *DRG*, for example, has *don gsum the tshom med pa'i blo*, and a short prayer to Mañjuśrī has *skyabs kyi dam pa skyabs su 'os/ 'jam dpal dpal dang ldan pa'i mchog*; so Mipham was evidently fond of the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti*. One Nyingma lama told me Mipham declined to write a commentary on it because he felt the early Tibetan translation had been corrupted by the inferior translators of the later period of translation (*phyi 'gyur*). However, this seems questionable, as Mipham had more than a passing knowledge of Sanskrit—he studied Candragomin's grammar with 'Jam mgon Kong sprul (*DR*, p. 871) and wrote a commentary on the *Kāvyādarśa*—and would probably have had access to the original Sanskrit, some versions of which survived in Tibet.

The exposition of philosophical systems attributed to Padmasambhava; see below, §4.2.3.2. Mipham's commentary on this text is the *sLob dpon chen po padma 'byung gnas kyis mdzad pa'i man ngag lta ba'i phreng ba'i mchan 'grel*; cf. also Schuh, pp. 107–8.

Eight important wrathful meditational deities in the Nyingma lineage; discussed by Garje Khamtul Jamyang Dondup (1990). Mipham is the author of several ritual texts on these; cf. Schuh, p. 121ff.

shes rab kyi le'u; the *prajñāpariccheda* of Śāntideva's *BCA*.

Cf. *Essential Hagiography*, f. 642.5, pp. 29–30 below.

The *Yid bzhin rin po che'i mdzod* of Klong chen rab 'byams.

skang rag mi bor ba phob la yid ches zer ba.

The *gZhan gyis brtsad pa'i lan mdor bsdus pa rigs lam rab gsal de nyid snang byed*; discussed by Smith (1969 (b)).

blo gzu bor gnas pa, lit. "upright-minded."

The collected sūtras translated into Tibetan, numbering 108 volumes. The VBD mentions that Mipham "memorized" (*thugs 'dzin*) the entire bsTan 'gyur, the 225 translated volumes of Indian commentarial literature, in the space of twenty-five days. When asked about this prodigious feat, Mipham explained that he had not memorized the exact words, but had understood the meaning completely. Later Mipham was able to demonstrate this knowledge in his discussions with scholars. Mipham is also said to have memorized the 108-volume bKa' 'gyur in three days, attributing this to the blessing of his teacher mKhyen brtse dbang po, by which he was able to recall what he had learned previously, i.e., in previous lifetimes. At Dza rgyal Monastery Mipham recited the bKa' 'gyur by heart while scholars checked his accuracy (VBD 9b–10a). Mipham also wrote more than one hundred pages of commentary on the Kālacakra Tantra in a single session (VBD 10b).

gre thog, perhaps a sore throat or laryngitis.

khong ni pu sti bcu gnyis nges par yin la/ skabs rer nyer bzhi yang yin snang shar. The meaning of this sentence is unclear.

thub mchog rgyab chos, literally, "backup teachings of the Supreme Sage," which should mean the bsTan 'gyur, though the following sentence mentions instead the bKa' 'gyur.

This appears to be interpolated, as it seems unlikely that the author would use the honorifics "great khenpo" and "Lama" to refer to himself, especially in a biography of his own teacher. mKhan po Kun [bzang] dpal [ldan] appears again below; it is not clear whether he occasionally referred to himself in the third person or not. In any case, he signs the end of the biography *cum* bibliographical essay as "Samantabhadra-Dharmakīrti," using the Sanskrit equivalent of his alias Kun bzang chos 'grags. It appears that the mkhan po used this name when he signed his literary works; otherwise he is usually known as mKhan po kun dpal.

hugs thog nas shar gyis rtsam pa gnang tshul gsung pa.

tog ge'i rigs pa nyi tshe ba.

ni pham dgon po, referring to the future buddha Maitreya, especially as the author of texts such as

the RGV.

mi pham dgon po'i dgongs don mngon gsum rtogs/ /'jam dpal dbyangs bzhin shes bya kun la mkhas/ /phyogs las nam rgyal chos kyi grags pa bzhin/ /snyan pa'i rgya mtsho'i gos can khyab gyur cig/ ces 'jam dbyangs bla ma dgyes pa'i 'bangs mkhyen brtse'i dbang pos bris pa siddhir astu//. Mipham's name is interpolated in the verse and shown here in bold typeface. VBD (11a) also records this praise to Mipham by mKhyen brtse dbang po.

lon gyi rgyu mtshan bzhi dan 'brel bar; this refers to the lines of the verse of praise.

rgro gleng.

dzogs pa chen po ye shes spyi yi gzugs.

Klong chen rab 'byam's most important work on Indian Buddhist systems of philosophical dialectics and the tantric systems of the New Translation traditions; cf. p. 113.

sngon chad mkhas pa dang grub pa'i skyes chen du mas thugs la bcangs kyang/ ji bzhin 'chos ma bzod par lus pa'i yid bzhin rin po che'i mdzod kyi 'grel pa zhus dag byed par skul ma mdzad pa/. This could also be translated: "Though previous learned and accomplished luminaries considered it, none could bring himself to modify the *Wish-fulWlling Treasury*, and the job of editing it remained undone; [the mKhan po] asked [Mipham] to do it."

thyog po lta bu, lit. "crooked."

cusali = yogi.

phal cher gsol ja gnyis re bzhes te. My thanks go to Nyichang Khentrul Rinpoche for correcting my original gloss of this phrase.

bsnyen sgrub kho na la thugs rtse gcig tu dril ba. bsNyen, "approach," and *sgrub*, "accomplishment," refer to the prior and latter stages of mantra recitation in the creation phase (*utpattikrama* = *bskyed rim*) of anuttarayogatantra; cf. p. 82.

buddha body, buddha speech, and buddha mind.

Unclear text not translated here is *zung 'jug rdo rje sa mkhan la/ skyabs mgon rin po che las*.

hi gnas zhiig 'grub na lhag mthong ni chung ngu'i dus nas yod dar gsungs. The gist of this sentence might perhaps also be expressed, "If I accomplish calm abiding, then penetrating insight—well, I've had that anyway since I was small."

kyabs rje.

bka' las. The use of the high honorific *kyabs rje* ("lord protector") and *bka'* (high honorific for or equivalent to honorific *gsungs*, "speech") suggests that Zhe chen rab 'byams was the author's own teacher; though Thondup (1996), pp. 258–59, does not mention him in his short biography of Kun bzang dpal ldan, nor is Kun dpal mentioned as a disciple of Zhe chen rab 'byams. This might indicate that the actual author of the *Essential Hagiography* was not Kun bzang dpal ldan, or at least that the hagiography was edited by someone else who was a close student of Zhe chen rab 'byams.

she chu, ritual water for the practice of longevity kept in a vase.

A ritual offering cake.

Evidently a hermitage belonging to the family of Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, which numbered

among Mipham's aristocratic patrons.

mda' dar, an arrow with silken banners attached to it used to "attract life" (*tshe 'gug*) in rituals concerning prosperity and longevity, or to perform soul-retrieval (*bla 'gug*).

Drag po 'khor lo can, referring to a king of the hidden kingdom of Shambhala, who, according to prophecy, will lead forces to destroy the evil powers of the world.

le dag gis 'chog la nus/ a'u tsi

lung rta, lit. "wind-horse," symbolizing prosperity and good luck.

have glossed this sentence, which is somewhat unclear: *bar skabs 'ju nyung ma rlung rta gud ra mda' sogs mi phod par shin tu mkhas dman dgra jag gis 'tshe bas skabs*.

e ba nag po.

nam smin la 'dzem pa ma gtogs.

Probably Ze chen rgyal tshab Padma rnam rgyal.

According to a personal correspondence from Christopher Fynn, this probably "refers to the third Karma Kuchen of Palyul [1854–1906] particularly as the name occurs right after that of Palyul Gyatrul, his teacher."

slab pa gsum, the disciplines of Hīnayāna, Mahāyāna, and Vajrayāna.

Probably referring to mendicant yogins and pilgrims.

Friday, March 1, 1912, according to Kapstein and Dorje's translation of *DR*.

March 6, *ibid*.

This appears to refer to Lama 'Od gsal, who was Mipham's personal attendant.

Ter bdag gLing pa (1646–1714) and Lo chen Dharmaśrī (1654–?). This refers to the time of the Fifth Dalai Lama, under whose auspices the Nyingma school enjoyed a renaissance.

Wednesday, May 9 (*DR*).

f rdi is an alternate spelling for *dis*, this probably refers to Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche's older brother; cf. n. 143.

June 14, 1912 (*DR*).

zhabs sems skyil; the *sems* is here uncertain, but with *skyil* seems to indicate a variation on the "full lotus" (*rdo rje'i skyil krung*) posture. According to Ringu Tulku (Helm, p. 55, n. 112), Mipham passed away in the *sems nyid ngal gso* posture: with the right leg bent inward and left leg extended a little in front of it, upper body resting on the left arm, and the right hand resting palm upwards on the right knee. *Sems skyil* here might refer to the placement of the legs as in *sems nyid ngal gso*, the position of the hands being, according to *KP*, distinct from the description *sems nyid ngal gso* given here.

This would mean that the right hand, palm forward, was placed at the heart, the index finger touching the tip of the thumb, the other fingers extended gradually, and the left hand was resting in the lap, fingers extended to the right. Mipham is often depicted in this way, as in the temple at Zhe chen bsTan gnyis dar rgyas gLing in Bodhanath, Nepal, where he wears a paṇḍit's hat and has

a text resting upon his left hand.

Here referring ostensibly to rDzogs chen mKhan po Padmavajra and mKhan po Yon tan rgya mtsho.

᠋ilgo Khyentse Rinpoche's older brother.

'ja' lus rdo rje. This hints at Mipham's accomplishment of rainbow body ('ja' lus) according to the sNying thig teachings of the Great Perfection. Cf. §4.2.2.4.

mi lam tshun chad du rtag par rjes su bzung ba sogs kyi ltas bzang po.

spyi'i nram thar. A "public" or relatively exoteric biography, as opposed to "inner" (personal, psychologically intimate) and "secret" (mystical and visionary) biographies. *The Autobiographical Reminiscences of Ngag-dbang-dpal-bzang, Late Abbot of Kah-thog Monastery* (Smith, 1969 (d)) exemplifies all three levels of biography.

ACIP (CD: \ACIP\KANGYUR\GYACHER\@305B–306A) has: /zab zhi rdul bral 'od gsal 'dus ma byas/ /bdud rts'i chos ni bdag gis thob par gyur/ /bdag gis bstan kyang gzhan gyis mi shes te/ /mi smra nags 'dabs gnas par bya ba snyam/. "rdul bral" is often quoted by Tibetan authors as spros bral. The terms "unelaborated" (niṣprapañca = spros bral), "luminous" (prabhāśvara = 'od gsal) and "unfabricated" (asaṃskṛta = 'dus ma byas) have technical meanings for Buddhist philosophers and are important subjects of debate. Cf. *Beacon* §4.2.2.2.2.4.4.2 and *KJ* §3.2.1.2.2.2.1.1.2.1 and §7.2.4.1.1.1.

Because it is an important concept in the self-definition of Mahāyāna, the term Hīnayāna is used here, but without implied assent to its pejorative association with the Theravāda. Hīnayāna, as Tibetan scholars generally understand it, is primarily a distinction of personal motivation, and is by no means exclusively a label of sectarian allegiance.

᠋f. Dorje and Kapstein, p. 166.

From Edward Conze, *The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines and Its Verse Summary* (Bollingen: The Four Seasons Foundation, 1973); quoted in Williams (1989 (b)), p. 46.

According to the Jonangpa school, these are the Tathāgatagarbhasūtra, the Āryadhāraṇīśvararājasūtra (= Tathāgatamahākaruṇānirdeśasūtra), the Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra, the Aṅgulimālīyasūtra, the Śrīmālādevīsīmaṇīnādasūtra, the Jñānālokālamkārasūtra, the Anūnatrāpūrṇatvanirdeśaparivarta, the Mahābherīśūtra, the Avikalpapraveśadhāraṇī, and the Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra; Thu'u bkvan Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, in his *Grub mtha' shel gyi me long*, also includes the Ratnakūṭa and Suvarṇaprabhāsa sūtras. Ruegg (1968), pp. 502–3.

᠋f. Lamotte's translation of the Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra (1935), 7.30.

᠋f. Obermiller (1984 (a)), p. 97.

᠋f. Williams, op. cit., p. 97.

The ālayavijñāna or "store consciousness," is the eighth consciousness of the Mentalist system, where the imprints (vāsanā = bag chags) are "stored" until a future time or future life.

᠋f. Lamotte (1988 (b)), pp. 12–24.

bid., pp. 18–19.

Here the reader is referred to [Table 2](#), for a map of the scriptural sources for Tibetan

hermeneutics.

Candrakīrti, cf. Stcherbatsky, p. 83; Asaṅga in his *Madhyamakaśāstranusara*; cf. Robinson and Johnson, p. 62.

Robinson and Johnson, p. 63.

Ruegg (1981 (b)), p. 60.

ibid., p. 61.

The classic example is “Sound, the subject, is impermanent, because it is produced” (*sgra chos can/ mi rtag par thal/ byas pa yin pa’i phyir*), where sound is the commonly appearing subject (*dharmīn*), impermanence is the probandum (*sādhya*), and production is the reason (*hetu*).

Cf. n. 451 and pp. 153–56.

This problem is addressed at length in topic 6 of the *Beacon*.

Cf. quote above, p. 52.

Cf. KJ §1.1.1 and KJ §7.2.4.2.1.1. Mipham’s position here is elaborated in his *MAL* commentary.

The role played by these texts and the other texts of Maitreya-Asaṅga in the Nyingma and Gelug scholastic curriculum are discussed in Dreyfus (1997).

Cf. §§5.5–5.6.

Bernheimer (1984 (a)), p. 98.

Hookham, pp. 45–46. The *RGV*’s function is suggested by the subtitle of the text, *Mahāyānottaratantraśāstra*.

’rgyu dang ’bras bur gyur pa yang/ /shes pa ’ba’ zhiq kho na ste/ /rang gis grub pa gang yin pa/ /de ni shes par gnas pa yin/ /sems tsam la ni brten nas su/ /phyi rol dngos med shes par bya/ /tshul ’di brten nas de la yang/ /shin tu bdag med shes par bya/ (MAL verses 91–92, from Ichigo, “Śāntarakṣita’s Madhyamakālaṃkāra,” in Gomez and Silk (1989), p. 220).

On Sautrāntika, see Klein (1987) and Guenther (1971 (a)), p. 69ff.

/de nyid don ni tshol ’dod pas/ /rjes dpag grtan tshigs sten mi bya/ /legs par bsgoms pas mnyong gyur gyi/ /de yi rang rig rtogs pa min/ /de nyid don gyi snying po ni/ /rjes dpag shes pas nyams mnyong min/ /bla ma bzang po bsten byas nas/ /bsgom pas nyams su mnyong bar ’gyur/ /bdag gzhan sde pa ma lus pa/ /log pa’i lam du zhugs mthong dang/ /de dag bdag la’ang sdang byas na/ /rjes su dpag pa’ang smra bar bya/. Lindtner (1980), p. 29; my translation.

Madhyamakaratnapradīpa, I.2, in Lindtner (1981), p. 169.

Jetter (1989), p. 327.

ibid., p. 328.

Bhāvaviveka makes this distinction, among other places, in his **Madhyamakārthasaṃgraha* (ACIP: CD\TEXTS\BYAUTHOR\BAVAVIVE\UDONDU;@329B): */sangs rgyas rnams kyis chos bstan pa/ /bden pa gnyis su ’dus pa ste/ /don dam dang ni kun rdzob po/ /dam pa’i don ni spros bral te/ /de yang rnam pa gnyis su bya/ /rnam grangs kyi ni don dam dang/ /rnam grangs ma yin don dam mo/ /dang po de yang gnyis yin te/ /rigs pa rnam grangs don dam dang/ /skye ba bkag pa’i don dam mo/.* Cf. n. 390 and Ruegg

(1981 (b)), p. 64.

On this term, cf. p. 64ff.

L.M. Joshi (1977), p. 243.

ibid., p. 236.

ibid., p. 276.

ibid., p. 277; from *Hevajra Tantra*, part I, p. 60 (Snellgrove (1959)).

Joshi, op. cit., gives the location as *Jñānasiddhi* I, 47–48. The last line reads, *dharmakāyam idam jñeyadarśajñānam ityapi*. I think this should translate, “the mirror-like wisdom of the knowable,” though Joshi has just “knowledge itself.”

If memory serves me, the Tibetan for this verse is *sems can rnams ni sangs rgyas nyid/ 'on kyang glo bur dri mas sgrib/ sgrib bsal na ni sangs rgyas so/*.

nanah pūrvaṅgamanā dharmāḥ; v. 10, quoted in Joshi, op. cit., p. 418, n. 27.

Joshi, op. cit., quoted from *Dohakośa*, ed. P. Bagchi, p. 23.

My sources for the discussion in this section are two recent works that epitomize the Nyingma and Gelug tantric traditions, Dudjom Rinpoche (1991) and Tsongkapa (1980). Another useful source for comparative Tibetan tantric theory is Tenzin Gyatso and Alexander Berzin (1997).

For example, *Śrāvakayāna*, *Pratyekabuddhayāna*, *Pāramitāyāna*, plus the six tantric *yānas*. See Karmay (1988), pp. 172–74, for diagrams of different *yāna* schemes.

DR, p. 268ff. See, however, Mipham’s justification of the nine vehicle classification in *KJ* §5.2.2.2.4.2.2.

My insertion.

DR, pp. 243.

Translated in DR, p. 246.

DR, p. 246.

DR, p. 246ff.

Cf. n. 199.

GSB, p. 21a.

Hopkins (1984), p. 208; my insertion in brackets.

The NyS says: “Aside from yogis who realize the nature of mind in their own experience, [the fundamental mind of luminosity] is not accessible by dualistic thoughts such as metaphorical expressions and logical syllogisms; thus it is conventionally designated as ‘unthinkable, unspeakable, beyond mind’ and so forth. Whoever realizes this knows the nature of things. Here some will wonder, ‘Does that fundamental mind realize emptiness or not?’ The convention of realizing or not realizing emptiness does not apply to fundamental mind, which abides as the basis [of everything]. Because its own empty essence has the nature of luminosity, or is the coalescence of awareness and emptiness—the *dharmatā* that is not mixed with any concept—it is

called Just-thatness (*de kho na nyid*) or dharmadhātū; it is not an object to which the conventional distinction of realization or nonrealization applies. The realization or nonrealization of emptiness is not posited as the basis; the basis is the dharmatā that must be realized. When the apparent aspect of the basis arises, the realization or nonrealization of its nature gives rise to freedom or delusion...the basis itself is not designated as freedom, delusion, Buddha, sentient being, realization or nonrealization." Mipham further elaborates (NyS, p. 237): "By the method of holding the mind on the subtle *bindu* [in completion phase practice], a luminosity that is vast like a cloudless sky arises. However, [some] consider the method aspect [of such meditation] to be a mental consciousness (*nyid shes*), while an emptiness aspect is the object of that consciousness, so [that meditation] doesn't destroy dualistic clinging. This cannot induce certainty in the nature of things, Mind-as-such, which is the changeless union of emptiness and luminosity.... Thinking to induce emptiness with the clarity of that consciousness, they label the nondual as dual, and consider a double aggregate, which is like a black and a white thread spun together, to be the meaning of coalescence" (pp. 44–45). Cf. also quote from the *LT*, p. 115.

Cf. discussion of Rong zom Paṇḍita below, p. 88ff.

See Dowman (1985) and Thondup (1996).

Cf. KJ §4.2.2.2.2.1.2, §4.2.2.2.2.4.1.1, §4.2.2.2.2.4.1.3, and §7.2.4.3.1.2.

See Geoffrey Samuel (1993) is the author of this distinction.

These traditions are the *grags pa bon lugs*, the *gsang ba chos lugs*, and the *yang bsang lugs*, respectively; see Karmay (1988 (b)), p. 221ff; and E. Haarh, p. 171ff.

Such at least is the opinion of Namkhai Norbu (1981).

See Snellgrove and Richardson, p. 25.

See Shakabpa, p. 24.

3A, p. 38.

See Snellgrove (1987), p. 390ff; Kvaerne (1972), pp. 38–40. The late Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche was of the opinion that Bön already possessed some aspects of the Great Perfection teaching prior to the introduction of Buddhism, but I do not know on what source he based this opinion. See Jeremy Russell, "Glimpses of the Nyingmapa" in *Chö Yang* 1.2 (1987): 13.

gShen rab is said to have hailed from Ta zig, or Persia, and to have pre-dated the Buddha. On Bön and Bönpos, see Snellgrove, *Nine Ways of Bon*; Kvaerne (1972); and Karmay (1975). According to Bönpo texts, the date of gShen rab is extremely early, antedating the historical Buddha; see Norbu, op. cit. Though Nyingma scholars generally dispute the historical claims of the Bön tradition of the Great Perfection, they also tend to acknowledge its validity as a spiritual practice.

J. Gyatso (1987), passim, and Michael Aris (1979), pp. 8–33. On the *Ma ṇi bKa' 'bum*, cf. Kapstein (1997 and 1992 (a)). Photographs of some of these temples are found in *DR*, plates 44–47.

See Kapstein (1992 (a)), pp. 80–81.

J. Norbu (1980) notes that the *Bairo 'Dra bag chen mo* uses the word *bsgyur*, "transform," instead of a word meaning to "invent" or some such, in support of his argument that the ancient language of Zhang Zhung already possessed a script, which was in part the basis for Thon mi's modifications.

This view seems to have been favored by A mdo dGe 'dun Chos 'phel; see Ngawang Thondup (1982).

3A, p. 40.

2f. n. 206.

The Tibetan and Chinese treaty of 821, under the reign of Ral pa can (d. 838) was commemorated by Buddhist ceremonies as well as animal sacrifices; cf. Snellgrove (1987), p. 408; and Richardson (1952), p. 70ff.

3A, op. cit.; Richardson (1982), p. 66; and Snellgrove, op. cit., pp. 412–13.

Snellgrove, op. cit., pp. 410–11.

On the *lDan dkar* catalog, see Lalou (1953).

For an analysis of the different biographies of Padmasambhava, see A.M. Blondeau (1980).

DR, pp. 516–17.

See DR, pp. 554–55. The discovery (or in some cases, apocryphal creation) of sacred texts is crucial to the vitality of the Nyingma tradition; see Thondup (1986), for a definitive discussion of termas or treasure texts, and J. Gyatso (1993), for a psychological analysis of this phenomenon.

ibid., p. 534ff. On the *Guhyagarbhatantra*, probably the most controversial of all Tibetan tantras, see Guenther (1984), especially the chapter “Fury of Being”; BA, pp. 103–4; and G. Dorje, *The Guhyagarbhatattvaviniśayamahātantra and Its XIVth-Century Tibetan Commentary: Phyogs-bcu mun-sel* (unpublished thesis, University of London, 1987).

DR, pp. 534–35; see also Garje Khamtul (1990).

Mahāyoga tantras emphasize the creation phase (*utpattikrama* = *bskyed rim*) of deity visualization and mantra recitation, while anuyoga emphasizes the completion phase (*sampannakrama*), which involves yogic exercises and formless meditation on emptiness. See DR, pp. 275–89, and Thondup (1989), pp. 36–46.

DR, p. 522.

The three classes of Atiyoga are *sems sde* or “mental class,” *klong sde* or “spatial class,” and *man ngag sde* or “instructional class”; these are discussed below in §4.2.2.3. The *sNying thig* class of Great Perfection teachings belongs to this last class, which predominates in Great Perfection practice today. See Thondup (1989), pp. 47–88; DR, pp. 319–45; and for an intellectual-historical analysis of the three classes, cf. Karmay (1988), pp. 206–15, and Germano (1994). Vairocana is said to have translated five of the eighteen texts on the mental class; for a list, see Norbu and Lipman, p. 7. Of these five, two have been the subject of major studies: the *Rig pa khu byug* in Karmay (1988), and the *Byang chub sems bsgom pa* in Norbu and Lipman. Among the other thirteen texts of the mental class, translated by Vimalamitra, the *sBas pa'i Gum chung*, discovered by Aurel Stein at Tun Huang, has been studied by Namkhai Norbu (1984 (b)).

Translated and analyzed by Lopez (1988 (b)). On Vimalamitra's life, see Sacco (1988).

DR, p. 555. Karmay, op. cit., says that Vimalamitra's disciple Myang Ting 'dzin bzang po concealed the books of the seventeen tantras at the Zhva'i Lha khang. In his short biography of Myang, DR simply says, “he concealed the books” (p. 556). I assume he is speaking of the same collection of

texts.

see Karmay (1988), chapter 1, "The Legend of Vairocana," and DR, p. 538ff.

DR, p. 607ff.

see Lalou (1953), pp. 317–18.

In fact Ye shes sde may have authored the terminological distinction of Sautrāntika Madhyamaka (Bhāvaviveka, Jñānagarbha, et al.) and Yogācāra-Madhyamaka (Śāntarakṣita, Kamalaśīla, et al.); see Ruegg (1981 (a)), pp. 216–19. There is no evidence for this terminology in Indian texts, but the *Jñānasārasamuccayanibandhana*, a commentary by Bodhibhadra on Āryadeva's philosophical survey the *Jñānasārasamuccaya*, makes the same point and mentions Śāntarakṣita and Bhāvaviveka by name; see Mimaki (1982) p. 376, n. 78.

ʼeking *bKa' gyur* 5843; Imaeda, p. 134.

In which, see below, §4.2.3.2.

In *bka' ma*, see Dorje and Kapstein, p. 52, n. 699; and DR, p. 396, and p. 599ff.

The most extensive examination of terma is Thondup (1986); DR, pp. 743–880, gives the biographies of the most important tertön or revealers of treasure. See also Gyatso (1993, 1994), Kapstein (1989), Blondeau (1988, 1980, 1971), Aris (1988), Toussaint (1923, 1933), Eva Dhargyay (1981), Goodman (1994), and Ehrhard (1989).

dGongs gter should not be confused with "pure vision" (*dag snang*) teachings, which arise from the state of a realized adept's awareness, without association with an historical entrustment (*gtad rgya*) of a teaching by Padmasambhava to a particular person, to be discovered in a future life.

The *bKa' thang sde lnga* or "Five Legends" discovered by U rgyan gLing pa (b. 1323) is an important source of ancient historical as well as legendary material, though it is doubtful that the texts themselves comprise only ancient material; cf. Vostrikov, pp. 49–57, and H. Hoffman (1970), p. 173. Hoffman is inclined to accept that the *bKa' thang sde lnga* is based upon genuinely ancient texts discovered by U rgyan gLing pa. One of these, the *lHa 'dre bka' thang*, has been studied by Blondeau (1971). Another text of U rgyan gLing pa, the *Padma bKa' thang*, has been studied and translated by Toussaint (1933), as well as by Blondeau (1980). The *Padma bKa' thang* is a legendary life-history of Padmasambhava, which was immensely popular in Tibet. It should be noted that no less a critic of the Nyingmapa than Sum pa mKhan po accepted the ancient origins of the *bka' thang* texts (Vostrikov, p. 57).

There is anecdotal evidence for the historicity of Padmasambhava and the existence of the Great Perfection tradition in India. Kunu Lama, one of the most widely revered and learned lamas of this century, was a native of an ethnically Tibetan village in what is now the modern Indian state of Kinnaur, and spent many decades traveling in Tibet and India mastering both the Tibetan lineages of scholarship and Vajrayāna meditation and the Sanskrit texts of Indian philosophy. He reported to one of his English disciples of my acquaintance, Christopher Fynn, that scattered lineages of Buddhist Vajrayāna practice have survived in secrecy among wandering Indian *sadhus*, including the teaching of the Great Perfection and legends concerning Padmasambhava.

Though cf. n. 240.

Cf. CD, pp. 47–48: */'di dag rgyu 'bras rtsol bas ma bsgrubs te/ /ye nas lhun grub cog bzhang ngang la*

snang/.

cf. CD, p. 25: */sgo nga'i nang nas 'dab gshog rgyas pa'i bya/ /rgya dang bral bas nam mkha'i klong la gnas/ /klu rnams zil gnon gyangs sa shugs kyis chod/ /theg pa'i yang rtse rdo rje snying po yang/ /ji bzhin rtogs pa'i rnal 'byor skal ba can/ /theg dman zil gnon 'khor ba'i gyang sa chod/*.

Thondup (1996), pp. 30–31.

cf. KJ §4.2.2.2.2.4.2.2.1.1.

cf. discussion of ND, p. 96.

cf. KJ §4.2.2.2.2.4.2.2.1.2.

cf. Germano, (1997 (a)), p. 318.

cf. §1.3.3, p. 6.

Mimaki (1982 (b), p. 2) glosses *grub mtha'*: “extremite. (*mtha'*) de ce qui est établi (*grub pa*), [que] signifie par extension ‘doctrine.’”

bid.

For example, the *lTa ba'i khyad par* by Ye shes sde (Ruegg, 1981 (a)), the *Grub pa'i mtha' rnam par bzhaq pa rin po che'i phreng ba* of dKon mchog 'Jigs med dbang po (translated in Guenther, 1971 (a)), and dBu pa blo gsal's *Blo gsal grub mtha'* (Mimaki, 1982 (b)).

discussed below in §4.2.3.2.

gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes, 1974. Cf. Karmay, op. cit., pp. 107–20 and Thondup (1986), pp. 112–22.

cf. Thondup (1986), pp. 119–22.

Taber (1985) provides a translation of an ancient Tibetan Ch'an text from Tun Huang that discusses this crucial idea, the *dMyigs su myed pa'i tshul gcig pa'i gzhung*.

Karmay (1988), pp. 103–6.

Here I follow Demieville (1970) and Imaeda (1975) in assuming that there was no single “debate,” as later Tibetan tradition would have us believe, nor that there was an unequivocal “winner” in Kamalaśīla. The evidence of Tun Huang texts indicates that there was a series of debates, in different places with mixed results, which may be referred to as the “Council of Tibet” or, as Demieville does, the “Council of Lhasa.”

The definitive work on this subject from the Chinese perspective continues to be Demieville (1954); Ruegg (1989) emphasizes Tibetan and Indian scholastic sources for understanding “sudden” and “gradual” discourses.

Beginning with the tenth- and eleventh-century religious kings of Gu ge, Ye shes 'Od, and Zhi ba 'Od; see Karmay (1980 (a), (b)), and below, §4.3.

cf. BA, p. 167.

According to Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, “There is a perfect and imperfect Great Perfection; that of the so-called Homshang [sic] tradition is opposed to the real and perfect Great Perfection, but this is a matter of some controversy.” (Russell, p. 13) The matter is complicated beyond complete

resolution by the fact that we do not know exactly which branch of the southern Ch'an tradition "Hashang" represented, though he seems to have been a follower of Hui Neng (Tucci (1958), p. 64). Both Klong chen pa and 'Jigs med gling pa have defended "Hashang" in their writings; see Guenther (1977), p. 140, n. 2.

cf. *Beacon* §3.2.1.2.1.2.

Fatz (1978), p. 16, quoting Demieville (1954), p. 23 and p. 32, n. 8.

Karmay (1988), p. 190ff.

Demieville, op. cit.

cf. Faber (1985, *passim*) and *DR*, pp. 899, 905–6.

This text is the subject of a detailed study in Norbu and Lipman.

According to Karmay (op. cit., p. 137), the title of the text is *lTa ba dang theg pa la sogs pa'i khyad par bsdus pa'i bskyud byang*, but *Man ngag gi rgyal po lta ba'i phreng ba* appears in the colophon (Tibetan Tripiṭaka [Tokyo, 1965], vol. 83, no. 4726). No author's name is found in the colophon; the text is not mentioned by Bu ston, nor by gZhon nu dPal in the *Blue Annals*. The edition of the root text found in the *Selected Writings of Rong Zom Chos kyi bZang po* (= *Smanrtsis Shesrig Spendzod*, vol. 73; S.W. Tashigangpa, Leh, Ladakh, n.d.) has a colophon reading *slob dpon chen po padma 'byung gnas kyis mdzad pa'o*, "By the great master Padmasambhava". This would seem to indicate that in the tenth century this text was well enough known to be commented upon by the greatest scholar of the time, Rong zom Paṇḍita, and to be ascribed to Padmasambhava. It was later commented upon by Mipham as well.

source in Norbu and Lipman given as *Vairocana rgyud 'bum*, vol. 5, pp. 1–59.

cf. Karmay (1988), p. 208.

it is quoted in the *SM*; Karmay, op. cit., p. 143.

There is no firm evidence that it is indeed Padmasambhava's work, but this attribution dates at least to the time of Rong zom Paṇḍita, who wrote an extant commentary upon it. Cf. Karmay, pp. 137–38.

On the basic features of Mahāyoga, see Germano (1994), pp. 205–6. Snellgrove (1987), vol. 1, explores the historical evolution of tantric enumerations and homologues; cf. especially p. 189ff. The *SNy* is studied in Dorje (1987) and Guenther (1984).

The generation phase, it will be recalled, is the process of gradually perfecting the visualization and mantra recitation of the meditational deity, in front of oneself or as oneself. In the highest class of tantra, anuttarayogatantra, it is followed by the completion phase, where one actually "becomes" the deity through internal yogic processes that harness the subtle psychophysical constituents of the body, the channels (*rtsa*), energies (*rlung*), and seminal essence (*thig le*). Cf. Karmay, op. cit., pp. 144–46. The Great Perfection is reckoned as a "ninth vehicle" in the Nyingma system, so obviously it is considered to be distinct from Anuyoga (the eighth vehicle), which emphasizes practices that are more or less identical to the completion phase of the later translation schools. On the nine vehicles in the Nyingmapa school, see Karmay, op. cit., pp. 172–74, and Thondup, op. cit., p. 15ff.

Karmay, op. cit., p. 154.

On these terms, see *DR*, pp. 165 and 175, and §4.2.2.2.1.1.1.

Karmay, op. cit., p. 158.

The concept of “one cause” here is essentially the same principle as coalescence (*zung 'jug*), as Mipham uses it in the *Beacon* and elsewhere.

Karmay, op. cit., p. 159.

VLG, p. 130.

Cf. *Beacon* §1.2.2.2.1.

In his *Chos 'byung me tog snying po sbrang rts'i bcud*. This seems to be the earliest Nyingma religious history (*chos 'byung*), though earlier sources for Tibetan religious history are available, such as the *sBa bzhed*; cf. Richardson (1980).

Shakabpa, p. 56.

bid.

Cf. *The Life of Marpa the Translator* (Tsang Nyon Heruka, 1980).

Cf. Kapstein (1980).

Karmay, (1980 (a)), p. 154.

Atiśa's life has been studied by Chattopadhyaya (1967), Thubten Kalsang (1974), Eimer (1982), and Tatz (1988); see Lindtner (1981) for an analysis of his Mādhyamika interpretation.

See Sherburne's translation (1983).

Karmay (1980 (b)), p. 14ff.

Atiśa and Sakya Paṇḍita, among others, are said to have seen Sanskrit manuscripts of these and other Nyingma tantras at bSam yas; cf. *DR*, pp. 890–95.

On the “six parameters” of tantric hermeneutics, see Thurman (1988).

Gos lo tsa ba's biography (*BA*, p. 374ff) does not preserve any such accounts; but cf. *DR*, pp. 713–14.

Biographical materials predating the eleventh-century period of the Nyingmapa are found in *DR*, passim.

To my knowledge no articles or other publications dedicated to Rong zom's life or works have yet appeared. His biography is translated in *BA* (pp. 160–67); the same account is given in *DR* (1991). Guenther (for example, 1984, 1989) has quoted frequently from his extant works, such as his commentary on the *Guhyagarbhatantra*; see Guenther (1984), passim. An outline of his life and his major work, the *Theg pa chen po'i tshul la 'jug pa*, is given in Karmay (1988), pp. 125–33. See also my translation of Rong zom's *sBrul nag stong thun* and bibliographical essay in *The Black Snake Discourse*, with commentary by Khenpo Palden Sherab and Khenpo Tsewang Dongyal (Skydancer Press, forthcoming).

This is a paraphrase of a long quote in *DR*, p. 889.

The *Theg pa chen po'i tshul la 'jug pa*; cf. Karmay (1988), p. 125ff.

cf. BA, pp. 162–63.

This criterion was in effect “canonized” by Bu ston Rin chen grub (1290–1364), who first redacted the Tibetan canon as the *bKa’ ’gyur* (the collection of sūtras and tantras), and *bsTan ’gyur* (the collection of Śāstras); cf. Ruegg (1966), pp. 27–29.

armay, op. cit., p. 125 ff.

bid., p. 124.

bid., p. 128.

bid., p. 129.

so sor rtog pa’i shes rab kyis chos nyid la gzhal na/ dri ma rim pa nas rim par bsal du yod de/...mtha[r] chos nyid kyi dngos gzhi ma log gi bar du dri ma mi zad do//rnam par mi rtog pa’i ye shes kyis rtogs pa na/ chos nyid kyi dngos gzhi ldog go/ThCh, p. 199.

Cf. Yon tan rGya mtsho’s commentary on ‘Jig med gling pa’s enumeration of the “ten differentiations” (*shan ’byed*) in *Yon tan rin po che’i mdzod kyi ’grel pa bden gnyis gsal byed zla ba’i sgron me*, vol. *hūṃ*, pp. 616–51; and ‘Jigs med gling pa, *rDzogs pa chen po’i gnad gsum shan ’byed*, translated in Guenther (1977), pp. 142–47.

cf. Beacon §§4.2.2.2.2.2.2.1–4.2.2.2.2.3.1.

cf. §§5.4–5.5 below.

un rdzob kyi mtshan nyid don byed rdzas su ’dod pa.

TJB, pp. 210–11. This sounds like the Svātantrika-Prāsaṅgika distinction, especially if one takes “substantive causal efficacy”—here ostensibly the same as the *arthakriyā* (= *don byed nus pa*) of the Buddhist logicians—as similar or identical to what is identified by Tsongkhapa as a distinguishing feature of the Svātantrika, namely, that phenomena are conventionally established by way of their unique characteristics (*svalakṣaṇasiddhi*). Evidently Rong zom intended the “Sautrāntika-Madhyamaka,” which corresponds to what is later called Svātantrika, as the object of refutation in the tantras. One could argue here, then, that Rong zom’s final view was Prāsaṅgika, which is what Mipham does, in effect, when he equates Rong zom’s and Candrakīrti’s thought; cf. Beacon §1.2.2.2.1.

TJB, pp. 211–12: sku dang ye shes kyi dkyil ’khor yang phung po dang khams dang skye mched kyi mtshan nyid las ’das te/ mi ldan no zhe’am/ bdag dang bdag gis byas pa’i mtshan nyid can no zhes bya ba la sogs par phyir mi ldog go/ ’o na ji ltar zhe na/ phung po dang khams dang skye mched kyi msthan nyid du snang bar ’dra yang/ yongs su dag par snang ba dang/ ma dag par snang ba gnyis/ sems ’khrul pa’i bag chags che ba dang chung bar snang ba’i dbang las/ dag pa dang ma dag par snang bar zad pas de gnyis ltos te bzhaq na/ ’khrul ba chung ba’i snang ba ltar bden par ’dod par zad de yang dag par grub pa’i sku dang ye shes gcig ’dod na kun rdzob zhes kyang ci’i phyir ’brjod de/ ’khrul pa’i bag chags ’thug srab kyi snang ba tsam du zad do/. Cf. Beacon topic 6, especially §§6.2.2.2.3.1.3–6.2.2.2.3.2.3.

TJB, p. 231.

hos thams cad mnyam pa chen po’i ngang du blang dor med par smra ba. Ibid.

bid., p. 213; cf. Beacon §6.2.4.3.1.

lbu ma rnam pa gnyis kun rdzob kyi tshul mi mthun pa la/ lung dang rigs pa gang che ba ni rgyud dang mdo

sde spyi'i tshul dang/ rigs pa spyi'i tshul dang/ dbu ma'i mkhan po gzhung phyi mo mdzad pa'i slob dpon klu sgrub dang/ ārya de ba'i gzhung ltar na yang rnal 'byor spyod pa'i dbu ma'i gzhung don che bar snang ngo/ (pp. 209–10).

For an introduction to the history and thought of these schools, see Tucci (1980), pp. 6–28 and 47–109.

cf. Atīśa's *Bodhipathapradīpa*, translated in Sherburne (1983).

cf. Jackson (1994 (c)), which discusses sGam po pa's innovations in the Mahāmudrā system.

cf. Ruegg (1988).

On Mi bskyod rDor rje and Padma dKar po, see Broido (1984 (a), 1985); Guenther (1969, 1972) explores Padma dKar po's tantric writings.

On Tsongkhapa's understanding of tantric practice, see Tsongkhapa (1980) and Thurman (1985).

cf. Dreyfus (1997), p. 34, for a discussion of these textbooks in Gelug curricula.

Onoda, p. 23. On *bsdus grwa*, see Onoda, and Perdue (1992). On *blo rig*, see Lati Rinbochay and Napper (1986), and A skya Yongs 'dzin (1986). On the scholastic curriculum of Gelug monasteries, see Sopa (1983), vol. 1, pp. 41–42.

cf. Sopa, op. cit.

For a descriptive bibliography of Klong chen rab 'byams' writings, see Thondup (1984), pp. 71–74, p. 160, n. 471.

cf. p. 132.

rang rgyud shes [read *shar*] *gsum*. According to Matthew Kapstein, this refers to the "three easterners" (*shar pa*) of India who were Svātantrikas (*rang rgyud pa*): Śāntarakṣita, Kamalaśīla, and Jñānagarbha.

re zhig mtshan nyid k yi theg pa'i phyogs su gtogs pa'i bstan bcos sbyar ba la/ byams pa'i chos lnga sphyi'i don 'grel la 'jug pa/ dbu ma than 'gyur gyi gnad gsal ba rab tu mi gnas pa'i don bsdus/ bden pa gnyis kyi rab tu dbye ba la 'jug pa/ de'i man ngag lam rim gsal ba/.... (From the *bsTan bcos kyi dkar chag rin po che'i mdzod khang* in Klong chen rab 'byams, n.d., p. 6).

Thondup (1984), p. 72.

cf. Ehrhard (1988), p. 143.

TD, p. 536: *da ni nang pa sangs rgyas pa dag gi mtshan nyid theg pa chen po'i rtse mo dbu ma thal 'gyur ba'i lugs rnam par bzhag pa ni...thub pa bcom ldan 'das kyi dgongs pa phyin ci ma log par ston pa ni/ dbu ma thal 'gyur yin....*

TD, pp. 201–12.

TD, p. 91.

cf. Norbu and Lipman (1987), "Sems tsam (Cittamātra) and Sems sde," pp. 13–29.

For example, Bu ston Rin chen grub (cf. Ruegg (1966)), and rGyal tshab Dar ma rin chen (cf. Hookham, *passim*). On Dol po pa and his teaching of extrinsic emptiness (*gzhan stong*), see pp. 131–32. Extrinsic emptiness and tathāgatagarbha are discussed at length in §§5.4–5.5.

1D, pp. 149–50. The passage is translated in Thondup (1989), p. 104.

Klong chen pa accidentally ran afoul of the Phag mo gru hierarch, Byang chub rgyal mtshan, and spent some years in exile in Bhutan. Eventually the two were reconciled, and Byang chub rgyal mtshan became Klong chen rab 'byams's disciple; cf. Smith (1969 (c)).

CD, p. 17: /deng sang a tir rlom pa'i glang chen dag/ /'gyu 'phro'i rtog tshogs byang chub sems yin lo/ /rmongs pa 'di kun mun pa'i klong nyid dang/ /rang bzhin rdzogs pa chen po'i don la ring/.

1D, p. 25: /rang byung ngang nas mnyam nyid ma rtogs par/ /gnyis med nyid ces tshig la mngon zhan nas/ /ci yang mi dmigs yid dpyod gdeng 'cha' ba/ /log rtogs nyid de ma rig mun pa'i klong/.

1D, p. 35: /ma bcos klong du ma gyeng ngang ldan na/ /dran rtog yul la 'jug pa'ang chos nyid ngang/ /ched du 'jur bus bcos na chos nyid kyang/ /mi rtog mkha' ltar yangs kyang mtshan med gzeb/ /nyin mtshan bsgom par 'da' yang 'ching zhen nyid/ /bsam gtan lha dang mtshungs par rgyal bas gsungs/.

LT, p. 170: /rtogs dang ma rtogs med par grol ba ni/ /rtogs nas grol bar 'dod pa nyams pa'i dgra/ /a ti mnyam nyid gcig tu bstan pa de/ /'og ma rnams la mi rigs pa'i gnad/.

LT, p. 170: chos thams cad ye nas grol zin pas da gzod rtogs nas grol bar byar med de/ ye nas ma grol na rtogs par byas pas grol mi nus la/ grol na 'grol mi dgos pa'i phyir/ rtogs ma rtogs kyi ngo bo 'ching grol du mi byed do/ ngo sprod pas grol snyam pa yang 'khrul rtog ste/ ngo bo la gang bcings nas kyod 'grol bar brtson/ gang du'ang ma grub pa'i rig pa zang thal te rtogs byed gnyis su med pas byang grol bar byar med la/ rtogs pas bzang du ma song ma rtogs pas ngan du ma song ba'i phyir na yang mnyam pa nyid pas glo bur du rtogs par byed la dgos pa med cing/ chos nyid don dam de blo la [read las] 'das pas kyang rtogs byar ma grub pa'i phyir/ kun rdzob tu'ang rtogs zhes bya ba 'khrul rtog kho nar brjod pa yin no/.

med pa'i rang bzhin ngo bo nyid kyis stong/ /mkha' mnyam byang chub sems kyi klong chen du/ /ji ltar snang yang de ltar rang bzhin med/ /ji ltar nam mkha' yangs pa'i dbyings rum du/ /snod bcud 'byung bzhi 'pho 'gyur cir snang yang/ /stong pa'i gzugs de rang bzhin med pa ltar/ /byang chub sems snang chos kyang de bzhin no/ /ji ltar sgyu ma'i gzugs brnyan cir snang yang/ /stong pa'i rang bzhin dngos po med pa ltar/ /snang srid chos kun snang ba'i dus nyid nas/ /byang chub sems las ma g.yos dngos po med/ /ji ltar rmi lam gnyid las ma gyos shing/ /snang ba'i dus na rang bzhin med pa ltar/ /snang srid 'khor 'das byang chub sems kyi ngang/ /ji bzhin ma gyos dngos po mtshan ma med/. (ND, pp. 2–3.)

1hakabpa, p. 100ff; Samuel, pp. 527–31.

1ee Smith (1969 (c)), pp. 6–8.

1ranslated by Sangye Khandro and Khenpo Gyurme Samdrub in *Mnga'-ris Paṇ-chen Padma-dbang-rgyal* (1996).

1n this teacher, cf. DR, p. 808.

1n which, cf. D. Jackson (1994, 1991), R. Jackson (1982), and Broido (1987).

1mith (1969 (c)), p. 5, and Karmay (1988), pp. 181–82.

1R, pp. 728–32.

1mith (1969 (c)), pp. 8–9.

1n 'Jig med gling pa's life and works, see DR, pp. 835–40; Goodman (1992); and Janet Gyatso (1993). Guenther (1977), pp. 110–61, includes translation and analysis of two of 'Jig med gling pa's Great Perfection revelations.

The most thorough discussion of Nyingma literature can be found throughout *DR*, vols. 1 and 2; cf. especially Dorje's sketch of Nyingma literature, in vol. 1, pp. 39–41.

It is somewhat misleading to term *Ris med* a "movement," but it seems to have been a more organized phenomenon than a mere trend. The prominent Lamas involved often engaged in a mutual teacher-student relationship, for example, mKhyen brtse and Kong sprul, Kong sprul and Mipham, etc.

The *sDe dge rgyal rabs*; cf. Smith (1969 (c)), p. 12, and (1970), pp. 24–25. Sectarian conflict in Tibet has many different layers; the one which has created the most disturbance is the conflict that often developed between monasteries (usually, but not always, of different traditions) when their allegiance to their patrons rendered their participation in politics inevitable. There is an extensive history of sectarian violence related to such allegiances. It seems, however, that even in times of relative peace such rivalries have tended to sediment as general rancor and mistrust, regardless of patronage or political allegiance, especially in the twentieth century. The Nyingmapa, who have tended to steer clear of deep political involvements, have several times been subject to violence born of sectarian hatred, for example, during the Dzongar invasion of 1717–18, and under the Manchu emperor Yung Chên; cf. Petech (1950), pp. 44–45 and 95–98. In both these cases persecution stemmed directly or indirectly from the machinations of foreign powers; but in the twentieth century, the Nyingmapas in Kham were again persecuted, by a representative (Pha bong kha bDe chen snying po, 1878–1943) of the dGa 'ldan pho brang whose head, the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, was ironically a devotee of Nyingma teachers and practices; cf. Samuel (1994), pp. 545–46. It may be, as Samuel suggests, that such religious intolerance stemmed inexorably from the concentration of political power associated with a particular religious sect.

Cf. E. G. Smith (1970) and *DR*. The *Shes bya Kun khyab* was partially translated by students of the Venerable Kalu Rinpoche in Bodhgaya, India.

Cf. *DR*, pp. 847–58.

A partial translation of this text with Kong sprul's commentary by Erik Pema Kunzang has recently been published as *The Light of Wisdom* (Padmasambhava, 1996). Mipham is the author of a summary of this work, the *Zhal gdams lam rim ye shes snying po'i bsdus don*, in *Collected Writings*, pp. 435–62.

Cf. Ehrhardt (1988). According to Matthew Kapstein, the *Yid bzhin mdzod* is possibly just a synopsis of Klong chen rab 'byams's training at Sang phu; this is certainly suggested by the fact that it discusses the Vajrayāna according to the new tantras only.

Cf. pp. 90–91.

The case could be made that Rong zom was basically a Prāsaṅgika; cf. n. 310.

J §7.2.4.1.1.1.

Cf. p. 26.

Cf. n. 243.

Cf. Dawa Norbu (1985).

Cf. above, p. 26. Mipham's works elicited many polemical responses, some of them extremely *ad hominem*, to which he wrote numerous rejoinders; but his remarks near the time of his death seem

to reflect a weariness with the futile task of trying to elicit understanding in those not inclined to constructive dialogue. Cf. *Essential Hagiography* 660.2, pp. 37–38.

Discussed in Sweet (1979).

Cf. L. Dargyay (1987) and Thapkey (1992).

rGyal tshab's commentary, the *Theg pa chen po'i rGyud bla ma'i tika*, was one of the most important sources for Obermiller's (1932) and Ruegg's (1969) discussions of the subject of tathāgatagarbha. Mipham takes on rGyal tshab in his own RGV commentary, the *Theg pa chen po rgyud bla ma'i bstan bcos kyi mchan 'grel mi pham zhal lung*, and in his shorter *bDe gshegs snying po stong thun chen mo seng ge'i nga ro*, which is discussed below (p. 114ff.). Generally speaking, later gZhan stong pas such as 'Jam mgon kong sprul took the *Dar tika* as a pūrvapakṣa; cf. Hookham, p. 295ff.

Translated in Cabezón (1992).

Reference to these later commentators is to be found throughout the works of Hopkins (1983), Napper (1989), Lopez (1987), and Newland (1992).

Cf. quotation from Napper, p. 145.

A portion of this text is translated in Napper (1989).

Translated by Thurman as *The Essence of True Eloquence* (1984).

ibid., p. 188, n. 6.

In gZhan stong, cf. §§5.4–5.5 below.

This concern is evident throughout the *Beacon*, particularly in the introductory verses. In the *DRG*, Mipham identifies philosophical dogmatism as a symptom of “inverted hermeneutics” (*rton pa go log*)—relying on the teacher, rather than the teaching, the words instead of the meaning, and so on. Cf. p. 49ff.

On the terms “gnoseological” and “epistemological,” cf. n. 6. Guenther (1984, pp. 64–73) uses “gnosemic (language)” in reference to mantric syllables (*yi ge*), which, according to the Great Perfection tantras, are the incipient components of verbal expression dwelling in the nerve channels (*naḍī = rtsa*) of the subtle body. In my usage here, “gnosemic” is also understood to apply to various metaphorical expressions for the ultimate reality, such as śūnyatā, tathāgatagarbha, zung 'jug, and so forth, because it is precisely such terms that are used to explain the significance ofgnosemic language. Following statements from Great Perfection tantras, Guenther understands written and spoken language as evolutionary manifestations ofgnosemic language. To the extent that revealed scriptural statements—especially metaphors for the ultimate—are such a manifestation, they are constituted bygnosemic language, even though metaphorical expressions are not necessarily without highly specifiable meaning, which is not the case with mantra syllables or “gnosemes.” What Guenther writes aboutgnosemic language expresses very well how the unusual texts and language of the anuttarayogatantras, the Great Perfection tantras, and more current revelations known as “pure visions” (*dag snang*) and termas, are understood according to the Great Perfection system:

Gnosemic language, even if it inevitably writes its own libretto, thereby transforming itself into grapho-phonemic levels (written and spoken words), never takes a position or maintains a viewpoint—it asserts nothing and demonstrates nothing, yet nevertheless

initiates every meaningful expression. Through the gnosemic language medium Being-*qua*-Existenz announces itself and, in this act, gnosemic performance constitutes itself as a polarized field in which there occurs a special interaction between a subject and object in such a way that the subject becomes the object (of its own concern), this object itself being the subject, auto-presencing and auto-announcing. (Guenther (1984), p. 73)

Thus, gnosemes are not reducible to mere words, philosophical statements, or metaphorical expressions, but are the virtual source of verbal communicative acts and their media. The gnoseme “activates” when its written, spoken, or aural manifestation is linked to a subjective intuition of its profound meaning, which intuition is amenable to spontaneous expression as words, philosophical statements, and metaphors, and yet is irreducible to any set of conventional meanings or symbolic expressions.

ṣzhi 'bras dbyer med. In his commentary on the seven-line prayer of Guru Rinpoche, Mipham says, “In essence, this is the unique sphere of the dharmakāya, the inseparable basis and result. This should be realized as primordial buddhahood. If it is not understood, one will not understand the maṇḍala of spontaneous presence, and one will interpret [the nature of mind] as the cause of buddhahood, as in the Perfection Vehicle; thus, one will fail to understand the view of Secret Mantra. For that reason, the *Gal po* says, ‘In the causal vehicle of dialectics, sentient beings are the cause of buddhahood; according to the Vajrayāna, one cultivates the nature of mind as Buddha.’ As far as appearances go, though the nature of mind is primordially pure, it is rendered impure by adventitious stains—so from the perspective of individual beings that dharmatā, which dwells in the mind of each sentient being, is not the buddhahood endowed with the twofold purity. When obscurations are abandoned, one should apply the conventional expression of ‘reawakening to original buddhahood.’ These two [conventions of unenlightenment and original enlightenment] should be understood without contradiction, according to the distinction of ‘appearance’ and ‘reality’ (*de gnyis gnas snang gi dbang du byas te go dgos*). Therefore, it is taught in the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* that the tathāgatagarbha is primordially endowed with the qualities of spontaneous presence, and that all paths are causes for its revelation.” (*Gu ru'i tshig bdun gsol 'debs kyi rnam bshad pad ma dkar po*, n.p., n.d., pp. 78–79.)

Cf. two of the four reliances: rely on scriptures of definite meaning, not on those of provisional meaning; and rely on ultimate wisdom (*jñāna*), not on dualistic consciousness (*vijñāna*).

cf. *Beacon* §0.1.1.2.1.2.3, where the texts on valid cognition and Madhyamaka are likened to a pair of eyes; cf. also §§3.2.3.3.2.2.1 and 4.2.2.1.2.1.

cf. Kamalaśīla's *Bhāvanākrama*, section 9 (Tucci (1958), pp. 198–89): *tatra prathamam tāvatsrutamayī prajñotpādanīyā/ tayā hi tāvad āgamārtham avadhārayati/ tataśca cintāmayyā prajñayā nītaneyārtham nirvedhayati/ tatas tayā niścītya bhūtam artham bhāvayen nābhūtam/ anyathā hi viparītasāpi bhāvanād vicikitsāyāścāvyaṣṭapagamāt samyagjñānodayo na syāt/ tataśca vyarthaiva bhāvanā syāt/ yathā tīrthikānām/...tasmāc cintāmayyā prajñayā yuktyāgamābhyām pratyavekṣya bhūtam eva vastusvarūpam bhāvanīyam/ vastūnām svarūpam ca paramārthato'nutpāda evāgamato yuktitaśca niścītam/*. “There, first of all, one should develop wisdom consisting of learning; in that way, one will comprehend the meaning of scripture. Then, with wisdom consisting of discursive reflection, one penetrates the provisional and definitive meanings [of scripture]. Having ascertained them with that [wisdom consisting of discursive reflection], one should meditate on the way things are, not on the way things are not; otherwise, by meditating erroneously, one will not resolve one's

doubts, and flawless gnosis will not arise. One's meditation would be pointless, like that of heretics.... Thus, with recourse to scripture and reasoning, having understood [all the crucial points] one meditates on the nature of things. The nature of things is ultimately unproduced; this is also determined by both scripture and reasoning."

The most concise explanation of Mipham's system of *pramāṇas* is found in his *DRG*; cf. Kapstein (1988), p. 159. Mipham's system is derived in large part from the *MA*; cf. the famous quote: */dngos kun yang dag brdzun pa mthong ba yis/ /dngos rnyed ngo bo gnyis ni 'dzin par 'gyur/ /yang dag mthong yul gang de de nyid de/ /mthong ba brdzun pa kun rdzob bden par gsungs/*

(ACIP: CD\TEXTS\BYAUHOR\CANDRKRT\JUKPA,@205A = *Madhyamakāvatāra*, 6.23). *MA*, vol. 23: "For all things two natures are apprehended: one found through seeing their reality and another found through seeing their deceptive character. The object of the mind that sees reality is suchness, i.e., the ultimate truth, and that of the mind that sees deceptive entities is the conventional truth." (translation from Rabten (1983), p. 58).

This distinction was also a concern for Candrakīrti's *pūrvapakṣa*, *Bhāvaviveka*; cf. his discussion in the *Rin chen sgron me (Madhyamakaratnapradīpa)*: */di ltar rjes su dpag pa'i tshad ma gtso bor byed pa'i rtog ge bas ni de kho na nyid dang/ sangs rgyas kyi sku dang ye shes shin tu lkog tu gyur pa dag brtags shing dpyad pas shes par mi 'gyur te/ phyi rol pa'i shes pa yin pa'i phyir ro/ /nyi ma dmus long yul min zhing/ /mtho ris sdig can yul ma yin/ /de nyid dang ni bsgrub bya ste/ /rtog ge pa la yul ma yin/* (ACIP: CD\TEXTS\BYAUTHOR\BAVAVIVE\RINDRON, @259B–260A). "Thus intellectuals who mainly use inferential valid cognition will not come to know suchness and the bodies and gnoses of buddhas—which are extremely obscure [phenomena]—through investigation and analysis; for this is [a type of] knowledge that heretics [also possess]."

cf. Cabezón (1994), pp. 99–100.

cf. discussion of *Yon tan rgya mtsho* below, p. 164ff.

in his *DRG*, among other places; cf. Lipman (1992), pp. 29–30.

On Dharmakīrti's conception of *pāramārthika* and *sāmvyavahārikapramāṇa*, cf. Vetter, pp. 327–28.

Lipman, op. cit., pp. 36–37.

cf. *Beacon* §5.2.1.2.1.2.2.

cf. n. 178. *Bhāvaviveka*'s threefold etymology of *paramārtha* in his *Tarkajvālā* implicitly reflects these definitions (my insertions in bold type; from ACIP: CD\TEXTS\BYAUTHOR\BAVAVIVE\TOGEBAR\Td3856e.inc,@5A–5B), quoted in Lopez (1987), p. 135: [1] */don dam pa zhes bya ba la don zhes bya ba ni shes par bya ba yin pa'i phyir don te/ brtag par bya ba dang go bar bya ba zhes bya ba'i tha tshig go/ /dam pa zhes bya ba ni mchog ces bya ba'i tshig gi sgra yin te/ don dam pa zhes bsdu ba ni de don yang yin la dam pa yang yin pas don dam pa'o/* [2] */yang na dam pa'i don te rnam par mi rtog pa'i ye shes dam pa'i don yin pas dam pa'i don to/* [3] */yang na don dam pa dang mthun pa ste don dam pa rtogs pa dang rjes su mthun pa'i shes rab la don dam pa de yod pas don dam pa dang mthun pa'o/*. Here [1] analyzes *paramārtha* as a *karmadhārya* compound, meaning "ultimate or supreme (*mchog*) object"; ultimate (*parama*) reality (*artha* = object) is, generally speaking, supreme among objects. [2] analyzes *paramārtha* (*dam pa'i don*) as a *tatpuruṣa* compound, meaning "the object of the ultimate nonconceptual gnosis" (*rnam par mi rtog pa'i ye shes dam pa'i don*)—which is the *aparyāyaparamārtha*. [3] analyzes *paramārtha* as a *bahuvrīhi* compound, meaning "having the ultimate as object"; this refers to the analytical wisdom (*shes rab* = *prajñā*) that

"conforms to" or is homologous to (*mtshun pa*) the ultimate (= *paryāyaparamārtha*). Cf. Newland's discussion of this passage (p. 91), and reference to other authors' analysis thereof (p. 91, n. 49).

On this term and its complement, *aparyāyaparamārtha*, cf. Tauscher (1989).

On this term, cf. Ruegg (1981 (b)), pp. 37–38, and Hopkins (1983), p. 726.

Cf. Lipman op. cit., p. 27ff.

Hopkins gives a more precise definition of *med dgag*: "a negative which is such that the term expressing it does not suggest in place of the negation of its own object of negation another, positive phenomenon which is its own object of negation." (Hopkins, op. cit., p. 723).

ibid.

Lipman (1981), p. 46. On the Svātantrika-Prāsaṅgika distinction in Madhyamaka, see also Ruegg (1981 (b)), pp. 58–86; Mimaki (1982); and Lopez (1988), pp. 55–81, who translates lCang skyā Rol pa'i rdo rje's definition of a Svātantrika: "Autonomous (*svatantra*, *rang rgyud*) means that an inferential consciousness (*anumāna*, *bsgrub bya*) is generated without taking the lead merely from the opponent's assertions, but by his having ascertained the establishment of the modes (*rūpa*, *tshul*) of the sign (*liṅga*, *rtags*) with respect to a subject that is established as appearing commonly to nonmistaken valid cognizers (*pramāṇa*, *tshad ma*) of both parties in the debate through the force of an objective mode of subsistence from the side of the basis of designation. Mādhyamikas who assert the correctness of the necessity for such are Svātantrika Mādhyamikas" (pp. 59–60).

Cf. Thapkey, pp. 3–5.

Cf. KJ §7.2.4.2.1.1.

Cf. Lipman (1981).

TGSB, pp. 46–48: *de la phyi rabs kyi mkhas pa rnam* [read *rnams*] *ni...mgrin gcig lta bur bden gnyis rnam par dpyod byed kyi tshad ma la/ don dam dpyod byed kyi tshad ma dang/ tha snyad dpyod byed kyi tshad ma rnam pa gnyis zhes ches cher smra bar mdzad med* [read *mod*] *kyi/ 'on kyang bzhed pa 'gag* [read *'ga*] *zhig gi lugs la rang rgyud pa dang tshul mthun pa'i don dam rnam grangs dpyod byed kyi tshad ma dang/ rtog ge'i gzhang nas bstan pa'i tha snyad tshur mthong tshad ma kho na tsam las/ thal 'gyur ba'i lugs thug* [read *thun*] *min gyi gtan tshig rnam grangs ma yin par dpyod pa'i tshad ma sgra ji bzhi du 'chad du med pa dang/ khyad par dag pa'i gzigs pa la brten pa'i kun tu tha snyad pa'i tshad ma ni su la yang 'chad du med do/ tshul de'i dbang gi don dpyod tshad ma'i rigs pa'i 'gros kyang tshur mthong tshad mas sgra chos can rtag pa min par thal/ don byed nus pa'i dngos po yin pa'i phyir zhes 'god pa'i skabs chos can smra ba'i 'gog par de'i steng gi rtag pa 'gog dgos pa dang tshul bstun te/ don dam dpyod pa'i skabs su yang bum pa bum pas mi stong bum pa bden pas stong zhes/ chos can bum pa mi 'gog par de'i steng gi bden grub 'gog dgos zhes smra bar mdzad kyang/ tshul de yis gzhal bya don dam kyang rang rgyud pa'i skabs na bshad pa ltar gyi don dam dngos med rnam grangs pa tsam las zab zhi spros bral 'od gsal 'du ma byas zhes gsungs pa ltar gyi snang stong mnyam pa chen po rnam grangs ma'i* [read *pa'i*] *don dam ji bzhi 'grub nus pa min no/*

Cf. Beacon §1.2.2.2.1: *stong tshul kho nar bsam nas ni/ /dri na med dgag nyid yin te/*

Yeshe Thabkay, professor of philosophy at the Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies in Sarnath, India, notes: "Most of the ancient Tibetan scholars were of the opinion that the view of nonelaborative nonconceptuality was subtler than the view of nonaffirming negation [*prasajyapratishedha* = *med dgag*] of true [existence]. Je Rinpoche (rje Tsong kha pa blo bzang grags

pa, 1357–1419) also asserted both these views. In his commentaries [*Ocean of Reasoning* and *Illumination of the Thought*, respectively] on the *Root Wisdom* [= *MMK* of Nāgārjuna], he stated that there is no realisation of the mode of existence without prior thought. In order to realize the mode of existence, it is imperative to know the mode of apprehension [*'dzin stang*] of the lack of true [existence]. The view of selflessness as a nonaffirming negation has been stated to be the ultimate view.... However, in his *Epistle to the Lord Rendawa*...concerning the 'view,' he stated that ordinary beings cannot enter into the actual ultimate (*rnam grangs min pa'i don dam*) at first. In the beginning one should have clinging to the nominal ultimate (*rnam grangs pa'i don dam*) of noninherent dependent arising and engage in analytical meditation whereby one will perceive the actual ultimate. In order to establish the actual ultimate, it is not feasible for it to be spoken, listened to or heard." (Thabkay, p. 4).

On Dol po pa and the gzhan stong tradition, cf. Ruegg (1963), Kapstein (1992b), Hookham (especially p. 135ff.), and Stearns (1996).

Cf. Ruegg (1963), p. 84.

The reviver of gzhan stong among the Kagyupas in the eighteenth century was Situ Panchen (Smith (1968 (b))). According to Thurman, the present Dalai Lama has mentioned a "black" gzhan stong, which denigrates the Madhyamaka of Nāgārjuna and Candrakīrti (cf. Tenzin Gyatso (1997), pp. 236–37) as opposed to a "white" gzhan stong, which accepts Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka with respect to samsaric phenomena, as detailed in my discussion here. I have not found evidence for a "black" line of gzhan stong. On the basis of an admittedly limited investigation of the gzhan stong writings of Dol po pa, Kong sprul, and mKhyen brtse, and others, I observe that a sort denigration of Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka occurs in polemical contexts (especially in criticizing the "intellectuals" (*tarkika* = *tog ge ba*) who maintain a Prāsaṅgika position without incorporating the hermeneutics of the *RGV* and *Vajrayāna*), as well as praise and acceptance of the Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka view within a specified context of application (samsaric, as opposed to enlightened, phenomena). If there is a "black" gzhan stong pure and simple, it has probably never been expounded by a major Tibetan scholar—though one might well encounter it among Kagyupa seminarians whose favorite philosophical straw man is Gelug Prāsaṅgika. Dol po pa himself considered the writings of Nāgārjuna to issue from the "Golden Age" (*kr̥tayuga*) of Indian Buddhist philosophy, along with those of Maitreya-Asaṅga, Dignāga, and Dharmakīrti, etc. (Kapstein (1992)), and thus to be an authentic interpretation of the Buddha's intention.

Cf. below, §10.

Discussed below, §5.5.

DR, p. 186: "One should know that the intention of the final promulgation, even though not within the path upheld by the proponents of intrinsic emptiness (*rang stong pa*), is without contradiction by examining, one by one, the commentaries of the great lords of the tenth level [for example, Maitreya] and the teachings belonging to the Tantrapiṭaka of the way of secret mantra."

DR, p. 206ff.

Cf. Stearns (1996), pp. 32–34.

For example, the *Cūḷasuññītasutta*; cf. Nagao (1991), pp. 52–53, and L. Dhargay (1990), p. 54: "It is perceived that when something does not exist there, the latter [the place] is empty with regard to the former. Further it is comprehended that something that remains there does exist as a real

existent.”

For example, the *Abhidharmasamuccaya*: “When you ask what are the characteristics of emptiness [I answer]: ‘One sees properly that if something does not exist in something else, the latter is void of the former; one correctly realizes that whatever remains here, exists here.’” (L. Dhargyay (1990), p. 84.) The *Madhyāntavibhāṅgabhāṣya* has: *evaṃ yad yatra nāsti tat tenaśūnyam iti yathābhūtam samanupāśyati yat punar atrāvasiṣam bhavati tat sad ihāstīti yathābhūtam prajānātī tv aviparītaṃśūnyatalakṣaṇam udbhāvitam bhavatiś* “Thus...the characteristic of emptiness has been shown in an unmistakable way as stated: ‘It is perceived as it really is that, when anything does not exist in something, the latter is empty with regard to the former; and further it is understood as it really is that, when, in this place, something remains, it exists here as a real existent’” (translation from Nagao (1991), p. 53).

For a list of the *snying po*’i *mdo*, cf. n. 151.

Cf. Hookham, p. 26.

OR, pp. 182–83.

lbu ma chen po’i rnal ’byor pa mang du thos pa’i dge slong shar tzung kha pa blo bzang grags pa’i dpal gyis/ ’brog ri bo che dge ldan rnam par rgyal pa’i gling du sbyar ba’o// (ACIP: \CD\SUNGBUM\GONGSEL\S5408e.raw@267A).

Cf. above, p. 120.

Nonetheless, his conception of *tathāgatagarbha* as explained in the *GD* is similar to that of *Dol po pa*. Cf. *GD*, p. 229ff.

Sung ’bum, sDe dge dGon chen, vol. *pa*, ff. 282–304.

In a personal correspondence, Robin Kornman reports that “Dezhung Rinpoche said that he thought [the *ZT*] did not express the system Mipham regarded as the highest. But rather, Mipham felt sorry for the Other Emptiness people [*gzhan stong pas*]—they weren’t defending themselves very well in debates. And so he presented a discourse that made their arguments and responses to supposed refutations in a stronger, clearer way.”

Though cf. *ZT* below, p. 415ff, where Mipham attempts to argue that the Gelug system of the two truths is hopelessly self-contradictory.

Cf. *KJ* §§1.3.1.1.1–1.3.1.1.2.2.

Kuijp (1983), pp. 42–43; see also gSer mdog Pan chen’s own statement translated, *ibid.*, p. 50.

Cf. Kuijp, *op. cit.*, p. 43, quoting Śākya mchog ldan’s *dBu ma’i byin tshul rnam par bshad pa’i gdam yid bzhin lhun po* (*Collected Works*, vol. 4, Thimpu, 1975), and also Ruegg (1989), pp. 105–8.

Cf. Hookham, pp. 97–98 and 319–23.

The *Ngag rim chen mo* is studied in Gyatso (1984).

’du byed khams dang don dam mtshan nyid ni/ /gcig dang tha dad bral ba’i mtshan nyid de/ /gcig dang tha dad du yang gang rtog pa/ /de dag tshul bzhin ma yin zhugs pa yin// (ACIP: \CD\TEXTS\BYTITLE\KANGYUR\GONGDREL@14B). Cf. also Lamotte (1935), p. 175ff.

bDe gzhegs snying po stong thun chen mo seng ge’i nga ro; *Collected Works* (*gsungs ’bum*) of Mipham, sDe

dge mGon chen edition, vol. *pa*, pp. 583–87.

ṚGSB, p. 28.

bid., p. 30

bid., p. 57.

bid., pp. 60–61.

For example, in the largest Nyingma monastery of the Tibetan exile community, dPal Yul dGon pa in Bylakuppe, Karnataka, the *Beacon* is studied in the seventh or eighth year of the scholastic curriculum. As in Gelug colleges, students at dPal yul spend the first six years studying Pramāṇa, Abhidharma, Prajñāpāramitā, and Madhyamaka.

The *Sūtra That Gathers All Intentions* (*mdo dgongs pa 'dus pa*) is the main text of anuyogatantra in the Nyingma tradition; on anuyoga and the particular doctrines of this text, see *DR*, pp. 364–66, part 5, *passim*.

The *Tantra of the Magical Net* (*spyi rgyud/rgyud chen*) *sgyu 'phrul drwa ba* is an important collection of texts of which the *Guhyagarbhatantra* is one of the root texts; cf. *DR*, part 5, and Dorje and Kapstein, p. 275.

VTL, pp. *ka–ga*.

ta ba dgag gnyis gang ltar smra.

zhi snang stong zung 'jug.

yan rang mi rtogs tshul.

zung 'jug ji ltar bsgom tshul.

sgom pa de rgyud la ji ltar skyed tshul.

togs pa skyes tshe bden gnyis ji ltar 'char tshul.

le'i ngor chos thams cad mnyam pa nyid du 'char tshul.

ang gi rtogs pa bzhin gzhan la man ngag 'doms tshul.

Shrhard (1988), p. 140, n. 7.

See L. Dargyay (1987); Tsongkhapa's original text, with rGyal tshab's revisions, is found in *dKa gnad brgyad kyi zin bris rje'i gsung bzhin brjed byang du bkod pa*, in *Collected Works of rJe Rin-po-che*, pp. 567–601.

.. Dargyay, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

Go rams pa maintains the conventional validity of ālayavijñāna in his *TSB*.

Klong chen pa discusses the ālayavijñāna at length in the first chapter of his *YD*, among other places.

cf. Kapstein (1988), pp. 158 and 164

Śāntideva refutes the existence of *rang rig* (*svasaṃvitti* or *svasaṃvedana*) in the ninth chapter of the *BCA*; cf. Śāntideva (1982), pp. 142–44. In one of his lengthy asides in the course of his commentary, Mipham expresses a most un-Gelug point of view:

In brief, the refutation of *rang rig* is refutation with respect to ultimate reality, but is not a refutation of the way *rang rig* is designated conventionally as the opposite of the state of being inanimate. If that were refuted, one would have to accept that one's own mind would be hidden from itself, and there would be no difference in the way one knew the minds of oneself and others [viz., through inference]; the proofs that one's own continuum possesses a mind would be invalid; and finally the convention of knowing things would be eliminated. Thus, there would be harm, just as the Lord of Reason said. One should know that all the reasonings that negate *rang rig*, like the reasoning negating the skandhas and so forth, are negations with respect to the ultimate, but are not categorical denials at the conventional level. Although it is said that in this [Prasāṅgika] system *rang rig* and *ālayavijñāna* are not accepted, here they are neither refuted nor proven [conventionally], but are simply refuted ultimately. On this some say that if one is a Mādhyamika, one should not accept *ālayavijñāna*, because it is the system of the Vijñāptimātrins; but this is ill considered. What harm does it do to the Madhyamaka if the *ālayavijñāna* is accepted, but not as truly existent (*bden grub*)? Things such as permanence that are harmed by conventional valid cognition should not be accepted conventionally; but if everything that is negated ultimately were likewise not accepted conventionally, then the skandhas, āyatanas, and dhātus would also have to be accepted as totally nonexistent. (NK, pp. 37–38.)

Cf. also P. Williams (1997).

MAZL, p. 607: "By realizing personal selflessness one abandons emotional obscurations; by realizing both types of selflessness one abandons both [emotional and cognitive] obscurations and attains the nonabiding nirvāṇa of the bodhisattva vehicle." (*gang zag gi bdag med rtogs pas nyon sgrib spangs te/...bdag med gnyis rtogs kyi mkhyen pas sgrib gnyis spang ba byang chub sems pa'i theg pa'i mi gnas pa'i myang 'das 'thob pa yin....*) Mipham's statement here suggests that the cause of emotional obscuration is the apprehension of personal self, while the most subtle cause of ignorance is the apprehension of the self-existence of things in general. In the TGSB mDo sngags bstan pa'i nyi ma indicates that Tsongkhapa's definition of deluded dualistic perception as cognitive obscuration would contradict statements to the effect that a bodhisattva of the first bhūmi can "overwhelm" (*zil gyis gnon*) or outshine the arhat's wisdom.

Cf. Newland (1992), p. 191ff.

"When he questioned, debated and analyzed further in regard to the view, the holy Mañjughoṣa repeatedly declared, 'You should never allow yourself to cling to preference for either the appearance side or the empty side. But you must take special consideration for the appearance side.'" (Thurman (1991), p. 79; from mKhas grub's *gSang ba'i rnam thar* in *Tsong kha pa gSungs 'bum* (Delhi: Ngawang Gelek Demo, 1980), vol. ka.)

Tsongkhapa uses the concept of a "substantial cessation" (*zhig pa dngos po ba*) to explain the temporal gap between cause and effect; this concept was evidently also used by the Vaiśeṣikas. Cf. Thapkey, pp. 26–30.

Cf. KJ §0.1.1.2.1.2.2. Even though the *pramāṇas* (*pratyakṣa* and *anumāna*) are basically the same for Mādhyamikas and Prāmaṇikas, the conception of what constitutes the object of valid cognition in the context of ultimate truth is distinct. *Svalakṣaṇa*, as the unique particular that truly exists in the Sautrāntika system as the ultimate, is not even conventionally existent for Prāsaṅgika-

Madhyamaka. *Sāmānyalakṣaṇa*, on the other hand, does conventionally exist for Mādhyamikas to the extent that they are the mental factors that combine with words to constitute meaningful conventional transactions.

Newland, p. 214; cf. passage quoted below, p. 151.

cf. n. 454.

Thurman (1985), p. 374; and Tsongkhapa (1980), pp. 544–56.

cf. *Beacon* §5.2.1.2.1.

cf. *Beacon* §5.2.2.2.1.

snang tsam thun mong lta bya ni/ mthun par snang dang mi snang gzhir/ /yod par grub phyir de med par/ /mi rung zlos gar mthong sogs bzhin/.

If Mipham's solution to this problem seems vague to the point of being agnostic, mKhas grub's view—and presumably Tsongkhapa's as well, though I have not located a source to verify that mKhas grub's view is the same as his master's—is speculative in the extreme. mKhas grub says that the substance perceived variously as water, pus, nectar, etc., is equal parts of all of these substances; each being in the various realms perceives only a part of it, just as a hot iron rod contains both hot and cold particles, and a person who has a sense of touch but no sense of heat senses only the cold particles thereof. Cf. Cabezón (1992), pp. 334–37.

Beacon §6.2.4.2.2.1.1.

Cf. Tables 1, 3, and 4.

On the Gelug resolution of this problem, see Ruegg (1986 (b)) and Napper (1989).

CJ §§7.2.2.1–7.2.2.2.2.

Beacon §§7.2.2.2.1–7.2.2.2.2; cf. YD, pp. 541–42 and 546–48.

Beacon §§7.2.4.3.3.2.2.4–7.2.4.4.3.2.

Beacon, l. 72: *dge ldan lta ba med dgag zer*.

It is significant that in the anonymous introduction to the WTL edition of the *Beacon* the *Dwags brgyud grub pa'i shing rta* of Karmapa VIII Mi bskyod rdo rje is mentioned alongside the works of Go ram pa and Tsongkhapa (p. 128). Mi bskyod rdo rje was an adherent of gZhan stong and a critic of Tsongkhapa earlier in his life, but later came to admire Tsongkhapa greatly and developed a predilection for Prāsaṅgika, of which the *Shing rta* commentary on the MA is a result; cf. Ruegg (1988).

Cf. R. Jackson (1982), M. Broido (1987), and D. Jackson (1991).

nying ma pa kha cig; KJ §5.2.1.2.1.1.

This was evidently of some concern to Mipham; in the *Essential Hagiography* (636.3) he is quoted as saying, “aside from imitating other systems, there are very few who even wonder what the philosophical system of our own school is, much less ask about it.”

Cabezón (1994), p. 8.

This is discussed in the first chapter of Nāgārjuna's *MMK*, where he refutes the inherent existence of perceiver, perceived, and perception.

Cf. Cabezón (1992), p. 400, n. 30, and Thurman (1984), p. 78.

Beacon §3.2.1.2.2.2.2.1.

Beacon §3.2.1.2.2.2.3.2.

Beacon §§1.3.1.1.1–1.3.1.1.2.2.

Cabezón (1992), pp. 14–19.

Translated in Cabezón, op. cit.

It is interesting, however, that when introducing the views of Dol po pa (whom he also refutes vigorously), Go ram pa says, "The one of extraordinary wisdom and compassion, the lord of experience and realization, the Omniscient Dol po pa" (*mkhyen rab dang thugs rje phul du byung zhing nyams dang rtogs pa'i dbang phyug kun mkhyen dol bu pa shes rab rgyal mtshan*; TSB, p. 420) while he introduces Tsongkhapa as "the one who commented on the intention of well-reasoned scriptures, the easterner Tsongkhapa bLo bzang grags pa'i dpal, beautified by the ornamental qualities of compassion and bodhicitta, etc." (*legs par dpyod pa'i blo gros kyi gsung rab kyi dgongs pa rang stobs kyi 'grel zhing snying rje dang/ sems bskyed la sogs pa'i yon tan gyi rgyan gyis mdzes pa*). Tsongkhapa likewise expresses admiration for the spiritual realization of Dol po pa in his *Legs bshad snying po*, even though he considers his philosophical views to be seriously mistaken.

TSB, p. 446.6.

TSB, p. 449.4: "If one determines the nature of reality according to the reasoning taught in authoritative texts, the objects of adherence to [the] extremes [of conceptualizing existence and nonexistence] are gradually eliminated; when one no longer finds any extremes of elaboration such as existence, nonexistence, and so on, that is conventionally designated "realizing the view of Madhyamaka." But to say that those two [i.e., Mādhyamika absence of elaboration and the Hashang quietist view] are the same shows that you are just pretending to be learned scholars and haven't done any analysis at all, or that you are seized by demons who have confused you about method (*thabs la bslu ba'i bdud kyis zin par nges so*)."

3eacon §3.2.2.1.1.2.3.

mthun pa'i don dam, i.e., a conceptually formulated ultimate (*rnam grangs pa'i don dam*). Go ram pa, like Mipham, takes the emptiness of absolute negation to be a conceptually formulated ultimate.

TSB, p. 505: *gzhan dag rang rgyud smra ba'i skyes chen dang/ /bod yul mkhas shing grub pa'i gtso rnams kyis/ /dbu ma'i gnad rnams legs par ma rtogs zhes/ /rnam pa kun tu skur ba 'debs la brtson/ /don dam gnas lugs stong pa'i chad mthar bzung/ /klu sgrub gzhung gi lugs bzang las byung ba'i/ /bstan pa'i snying po mtha' bzh'i spros bral la/ /rgya nag ha shang lta ba yin ces smod/ /rigs pas dpyad pa'i don dam rjes mthun la/ /don dam bden pa mtshan nyid par 'dod cing/ /gnyis 'dzin mngon zhen mtha' dag 'gogs pa ni/ /log rtog yin pas lugs 'di spong zhes zer/.*

TSB, pp. 507–8: *srid gsum 'khor ba'i sdug bsngal rgyur gyur pa'i/ /bden par zhen pa'i zhen yul bden pa ni/ /gzhung nas bshad pa'i rigs pas btsal byas nas/ /ma rnyed stong pa'i don la nges shes bskyed/ /bden med rtogs pas ngar 'dzin khegs pa yi/ /lta ba 'di dang dge sdig blang dor la/ /tshul bzhin sgrub pa'i spyod pa zung 'jug na/ /theg pa dman pa'i byang chub thob gyur kyang/ /bla med byang chub sgrub pa'i lta ba la/ /stong par zhen na chad pa'i mthar lhung bas/ /stong dang mi stong bden pa yod med sogs/ /gnyis 'dzin spros pa mtha' dag bkag par gyis/ /gnas lugs dpyod pa'i so skye'i blo gros kyis/ /mtha' bzh'i spros pa gcig char mi kheg kyang/ /res 'jog tshul gyis bzhi char bkag nas ni/ /tshul bzhin bsgoms pas mthong lam skyes pa'i tshe/ /gnas lugs mtha' bzh'i spros pas dben pa dang/ /rtogs byad [read byed] blo gnyis gnyis su dbyer med par/ /blo nyid spros bral ngang du thim pa la/ /lta ba chos dbyings mthong ba'i tha snyad mdzad/.*

[I am unable to find an exact source for the verse quoted in TSB (*yod min med min yod me min/ /gnyis ga'i bdag nyid min pa'ang min/*), but Āryadeva's *Jñānasarasamuccaya* has: */gcig dang du ma'i rang bzhin dang/ /bral phyir nam mkha'i padma bzhin/ /yod min med min yod med min/ /gnyis ka'i bdag nyid kyang min pas/ /mtha' bzhi las grol dbu ma pa/ /mkhas pa rnams kyis de kho na'o/ /chos la 'bad pa dbu ma pa/ /mkhas pa rnams kyis de kho na'o/* (ACIP: CD\ TEXTS\BYAUTHOR\ARYADEV\YENYING\@27B).

TSB, p. 426. This view is also addressed by mKhas grub in his *sTong thun chen mo*; cf. Cabezón (1992), pp. 113–14.

TSB, pp. 425–26.

On the relationship between conceptuality and the apprehension of true existence, see diagrams 1 and 2.

Cf. mKhas grub's *TTC*, in Cabezón, op. cit., p. 366.

I have not found any passage in a Gelug text that says one should cling to emptiness; Gelugpas, like all Mādhyamikas, acknowledge that on the path of vision and above clinging is absent, because emptiness is realized nonconceptually. The "position" referred to here is in any case an easily adduced consequence of other positions, such as those of Tsongkhapa in the *LRC* to the effect that a mental image (*sāmānya* = *don spyi*) of emptiness is not only necessarily present for ordinary persons, but is salutary and should not be abandoned in favor of a quietistic blankness devoid of penetrating insight (*vipaśyanā* = *lhag mthong*). To the extent that there is a mental image apprehended (*grāhya* = *gzung*), there is clinging (*grahaka* = *'dzin pa*) or modal apprehension (*'dzin stang*), so to assert that one should maintain a mental image is in effect to maintain that apprehension should not be abandoned.

The MA: */dngos kun yang dag rdzun pa mthong ba yis/ dngos rnyes ngo bo gnyis ni 'dzin par 'gyur/ /yang dag mthong yul gang de de nyid de/ /mthong ba rdzun pa'ang kun rdzob bden par gsungs/* (ACIP: \CD\TEXTS\TENGYUR\JUGP Td3861f.act@205a).

TSB, pp. 442–43.

Go ram pa here quotes Candrakīrti's commentary on the *Yuktiśaṣṭikā*: *bden pa gnyis su 'jog pa ni 'jig rten pa'i blo la ltos nas 'jog go/*; TSB, p. 444.

ibid., pp. 443–44.

Cf. diagrams 1 and 2.

TSB, p. 445. Cf. MMK 13: *rgyal ba rnams kyis stong pa nyid/ /lta kun nges par 'byung bar gsungs/ /gang dag stong pa nyid lta ba/ /de dag bsgrub tu med par gsungs/* (ACIP: \CD\TEXTS\TENGYUR\TSASHE\@8A).

Cf. *LRC*, p. 790: *gal te shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa las/ gzugs la sogs pa rnams stong pa dang bdag med pa'o snyam du dpyod na mtshan ma la spyod par gsungs pas stong pa nyid la so sor rtog pa mi 'thad do snyam na/ 'di 'dra ba rnams ni stong nyid la bden par bzung ba la byed kyi/ stong pa'o snyam du bzung ba tsam la ma yin pa ni sngar mang du bshad zin to/*.

Cf. n. 501.

ibid., pp. 446–47.

rod min med min kyi lta ba khas blangs pa la/ /rgya nag ha shang gi lta ba yin no zhes brtag dpyad ma byas pa'i tshig rang dga' ba 'jig rten gyi kham su 'phangs pa ni bstan pa'i snying po spros bral nyams pa'i ched du bdud rigs kyis byin gyis rlabs nas bkye bar byed pa ste/ (TSB, p. 449).

Ibid., p. 447. Mahāyoga is a class of anuttarayoga tantra usually counted as part of the Nyingma teaching, but the Sakyapas were holders of one important mahāyoga lineage, that of the deity Vajrakīla.

The meaning of “overpervasion” and “underpervasion” in the Mādhyamika context is discussed by Napper, *passim*, and by Tsongkhapa, *LRC*, pp. 580–651.

TSB, pp. 447–48.

TSB, p. 489ff.

/de phyir snang stong dbyer med gzhi/ /bden gnyis dbyer med tshul gyis rtogs/ /lam de ji bzhin goms pa las/ /sku gnyis zung 'jug ye shes mthong//. Mipham nowhere uses the term *tshogs gnyis zung 'jug* (coalescence of the two accumulations of merit and wisdom) in the *Beacon*; in the above quote, for example, the path is understood as the meditation on the inseparability of the two truths.

ta ba dgag gnyis gang ltar smra.

lri lan dang po gzhi snang stong zung 'jug.

uegg (1981 (b)), p. 37.

lein (1991), pp. 213–14, n. 17.

Cabezón, p. 92. Quotation from *BCA* 9.140: *kalpitam bhāvasprṣṭvā tadabhāvo na grhyate/ tasmādbhāvo mṛṣā hi tasyābhāvaḥ sphuam mṛṣā* / (*BCA*, Vaidya edition, p. 267). There is an alternate interpretation of this passage that supports Mipham and Go ram pa's contention that meditation should be free of all elaborations, including the elaboration of nonexistence, to the effect that the absence of an entity constructed by thought, which is emptiness, cannot be established when the entity it is predicated upon is absent. In other words, when the false appearance of a truly existing conventional object has been eliminated through analysis and meditation, emptiness itself should cease to appear as a conceptual image. This passage is discussed also in Williams (1998 (b)) and in my review of that book in the 1999 volume of the *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* (<http://jbe.la.psu.edu>).

rigs shes or *rigs shes kyi tshad ma* is the term used by Tsongkhapa for a mind realizing the absence of true existence through the force of reasoning that establishes emptiness.

LRC, pp. 606–7: *gal te de dag rigs pas dpyad mi bzod na rigs pas khegs pa'i don yod par ji ltar 'thad snyam na/ 'di ni rigs pas dpyad mi bzod pa dang rigs pas gnod pa gnyis gcig tu 'khrul ba ste de 'dra ba mang po zhig na re/ de nyid dpyod pa'i rigs pas 'gog mod 'on kyang skye ba sogs yod do zhes smra ba ni bab col yin pas kho bo cag mi 'dod do/*. [This last line should perhaps be followed by a *zhes zer ro* to mark it as the statement of an opponent's position. The passage continues:] *rigs pas dpyad bzod mi bzod kyi don ni de kho na nyid la dpyod pa'i rigs pa des rnyed ma rnyed yin la/ de / /yang bzhi brgya pa'i 'grel pa las/ kho bo cag gi rnam par dpyod pa ni rang bzhin tsol ba lhur byed pa nyid kyi phyir ro/ /zhes gsungs pa ltar/ gzugs sogs la skye 'gag la sogs pa'i rang bzhin yod med 'tsol ba yin no/ /de lta na gzugs la sogs pa la rang gi ngo bos grub pa'i skye 'gag yod med btsal ba yin gyi/ rigs pa des skye 'gag tsam tsol ba min no/ /des na rigs pa de la de nyid la dpyod pa zhes bya ste de kho na nyid du skye 'gag sogs grub ma grub dpyod pa yin pa'i phyir ro/ /de lta bu'i rigs pa des dpyad pa'am btsal ba na skye ba la sogs pa cung zad kyang ma rnyed pa la dpyad mi bzod pa zhes zer la rigs pa des ma rnyed pa tsam gyis khegs pa min gyi/ yod na rigs pa des 'grub dgos pa las des ma grub na khegs pa yin no/ /gzugs la sogs pa'i skye 'gag rnam kyang tha snyad pa'i shes pas 'grub pa yin gyi/ de dag yod kyang rigs shes kyi mi 'grub pas des ma rnyed pas de dag ji ltar khegs te/ dper na/ mig gi shes pas sgra ma rnyed kyang des mi khegs pa bzhin no/ /des na skye 'gag la sogs pa rang gi ngo bos grub pa'am de kho nar grub na rigs pa des de rnyed dgos te/ rigs pa des gzugs sogs la rang gi ngo bos grub pa'i skye 'gag yod med tshul bzhin du dpyod pa yin pa'i phyir ro/ /de lta bu des skye ba sogs ma rnyed pas rang gi ngo bos grub pa'am de kho nar grub pa'i skye 'gag sogs 'gog pa yin te/*

Napper (1989), p. 55.

RC, p. 662.

klein (1986), p. 33ff.

Hopkins, op. cit., p. 405.

cf. Newland's comment: "[Gelug scholars] adhere to two important distinctions: (1) The two truths are the objects of two different types of perspective, and not the differing perspectives themselves or some indefinite mixture of object and subject. (2) Although they are one entity, a table and its emptiness are distinct phenomena; there is nothing that is both a table and its emptiness." (Newland, p. 49).

Napper, op. cit., p. 147.

Newland, p. 18.

cf. quote from the MAZL below, p. 150.

cf. Smith (1969 (b)). Mipham occasionally uses the term *deng sang* or "nowadays" in referring to his opponents, for example, *gzhan bden grub kyis stong pa'i gzhan stong yin zhes deng sang gi chos smra ba rnams kyis grub mtha' bzung ba ltar na....* (MAZL, pp. 609–10).

See Cabezón (1992), p. 389, for a translation of mKhas grub's swaggering *ad hominem* denunciation of the Sakya lama Rong ston Shākya rgyal mtshan's cowardice in refusing to debate him. David Jackson reports that stories about a debate (or lack thereof) between these two are legion among both Gelugpas and Sakyapas. Sakya tradition even has it that mKhas grub spat in Rong ston's face during a confrontation. Whether this story is true or not, it certainly indicates that the competition between the emerging Gelug school and the Sakya tradition—of which it largely represents a dialectical-philosophical and Vajrayāna offshoot—was highly charged emotionally. This must have been especially so in Go ram pa's case, as Rong ston was one of his teachers.

dBu ma la 'jug pa'i 'grel pa zla ba'i zhal lung dri me shel phreng (MAZL) p. 532ff. (sDe dge mGon chen edition, published by Dilgo Khyentse; vol. ༨, pp. 487–837.)

Ibid., pp. 532–33: *rgol ba gnyis la mthun par snang ba'i rtsod gzhi'i steng du/ chos 'ga' zhig dgag pa'am sgrub par byed pa ni/...mthun snang sgra chos can du bzhas nas/ sgra mi rtog par bsgrub pas mthun snang gi sgra yi steng du dgag bya gzhan rtog pa bsal ba ltar snang gi/ sgra bkag pa min pa ltar go ba'i chos can dang bsgrub bya rtogs gsum du phye ba'i 'jog tshul 'dis/ bum pa bum pas mi stong/ bden pas stong zer ba'i khas len de byung ngo/.*

For the source of this and the following quotations, cf. n. 532.

Tsongkhapa's MA commentary, the *dBu ma la 'jug pa'i rnam bshad dgongs pa rab gsal*, states what would become Go ram pa's and Mipham's standard objection, as well as Tsongkhapa's own position, in this way:

bum pa bum pas mi stong bar bden pas stong pa ni/ gzhan stong yin pas bum pa bum pas stong pa ni rang stong yin no zhes smra ba ni gtan nas mi rigs te/ bum pa bum pas stong na bum pa la bum pa med dgos na/ rang la rang med na gzhan su la yang med pas bum pa gtan med par 'gyur ro/.

"A vase is not empty of a vase, but of true [existence]' is extrinsic emptiness, while 'a vase is empty of a vase' is intrinsic emptiness (*rang stong*)"—this is totally incorrect. If a vase

were empty of a vase, and there could not be any vase in a vase, for example, if it did not exist in itself, then because it [likewise] would not exist in [what is] other [than it], the vase would be totally nonexistent.

(ACIP: \CD\TEXTS\SUNGBUM\GONGSEL\S5408e.raw@117B).

MAZL, pp. 535–57: *mi 'grub ste/ don dam dpyod byed kyis mthun snang kun rdzob kyis bum ba de la dpyad na/ dpyad bzod gang yang ma rnyed pa'am/ ma dmigs pa de la/ don dam dpyod byed kyis tshad mas ma dmigs pa dang/ don dam par med pa dang/ ngo bo nyid kyis stong pa dang/ dpyad bzod du grub pa'i bden grub med pa zhes btags pa yin gyi/ de las gzhan pa'i bden grub 'jog byed dang/ bden med 'jog byed cung zad kyang med do/ des na gcig du bral sogs kyis gtan tshigs kyis bden grub du 'khrul ba'i zhen yul bsal ba na/ mthun snang gi bum pa bden par grub pa bsal nas/ bden med sgrub pa ltar smra bar rigs ste/ gong du sgra rtag pa bsal tshul dang "dra'o/ des na 'di lta bu'i sgrub tshul dbu ma'i gzhang chen po kun gyis bstan pa yin pas/ 'di ltar 'dzin dgos kyis don dpyod kyis rig [sic] pa'i dgag bya bden grub kheg de lta bu'i mthun snang gi bum pa de ni kun rdzob tu yod pa'i bum pa de yin/ de la bsams nas/ don dam dpyod byed kyis bum pa mi 'gog bden grub 'gog zer ba'i khas len de byung ba yin kyang don dam dpyod byed kyis bum pa ma bkag par/ bden grub yen gar ba 'gog tshul gyi rigs pa yod na de ltar grub mod kyang/ don dam par bum pa mi dmigs par ma grub kyis bar du/ de'i bden med kyang pa las lhag pa'i dgag rgyu gzhan yod ces mi smra/ mthun snang bum pa'i steng gi bden grub 'gog pa min gyi mthun snang bum pa 'gog pa yin zhes dbu ma'i rnam bzhang sus kyang mi smra mod/ mthun snang mi 'gog par bden med sgrub tshul de la bsams nas/ bum pa bum pas mi stong bden grub kyis stong/ des na chos thams cad rang gi ngo bos stong pa'i rang stong min te/ yin na tha snyad du yod pa mi 'thad pa des na don gzhan bden grub kyis stong pa'i gzhan stong yin no/ zhes don dam dpyod pas chos gang la dpyad kyang de'i ngo bo kheg na kun rdzob tu yod mi srid snyam du/ bden gnyis 'gal bar 'dzin pa'i dngos smra ba'i zhe 'dod snying la dam du bzung nas/ tha snyad du med pa zhig rigs pas dgag byar 'dod pa ni/ dbu ma'i gzhang smra ba'i gang zag tu khas ches kyang/ dngos smra ba'i grub mtha' gsar du bsang ba yin cing/.*

cf. diagrams 1 and 2, but cf. also [table 4](#), n. 15.

MAZL, p. 538.

bid., p. 542.

bid., p. 544.

bid., p. 545.

bid., p. 546.

bid., pp. 547–48. I am unable to locate the source of this quote in Tsongkhapa's writings preserved in ACIP release 3, which leads me to think it may be drawn from his *Legs bshad gser phreng*, an early work that is not considered by Gelug scholars to represent the fully developed system of Tsongkhapa.

bid., p. 610.

zung 'jug ye shes chen po'i ngor.

§§1.2.1–1.2.2.1.

Jewland, p. 214.

in the *Presentation of the Two Truths and Jewel Garland Guide to the View* (bden gnyis kyis rnam gzhang dang

lta ba'i khrid yig rin po che'i 'phreng ba, p. 134, quoted in Thabkay, p. 5), rGyal tshab says, "Elaborations of dualistic appearance, [appearing] to unobscured and to obscured minds are the ultimate subject (*yul can don dam*) of the nominal and actual [emptiness]. The actual ultimate truth and the nominal ultimate truth have been explained in relation to the realization of ultimate truth by these two minds. It is not permissible at any cost to say that the object of [apprehension] (*gzhal bya*) of an inferential cognition, such as a nontruly existent sprout, is a nominal ultimate truth, but not a valid (*mtshan nyid pa*) ultimate truth."

cf. Beacon, §1.2.2.2.1.

cf. Beacon §§1.2.2.1–1.2.2.2.1.

The *Pañcakrama*, attributed to Nāgārjuna, is a commentary on the completion phase of anuttarayogatantra.

VK, pp. 8–12.

Tabezón, p. 89.

Napper, p. 422.

cf. quotation from MAZL above, p. 147.

cf. Beacon §§1.4.1–1.4.2.

cf. Beacon §5.2.1.2.2.2.

cf. Beacon §§1.4.1–1.4.2.

cf. Beacon §§1.1 and 1.4.2.3.2, and KJ's quote from Rong zom, p. 256:

With the system of the Great Perfection, by completely fathoming the realization that all dharmas are extremely equal like illusions, thenceforth one's mind is not deluded by the power of appearances, and cannot produce manifest mental constructions. One does not accept, abandon, hesitate, or make effort. Thus, this illusion-like final realization is established by consummating the realization of the inseparability of the two truths.

Cf. Tsongkhapa's differentiation of theoretical and instinctual modal apprehension or "habit patterns," in Thurman, op. cit., p. 297.

bid., p. 372.

cf. diagrams 1 and 2.

RC, p. 773

RC, pp. 776–77.

bid.

nges pa dang ni sgro 'dogs yid/ /gnod bya gnod byed no bo'i phyir; niścayāropamanasor bādhyabādhakabhāvataḥ.

RC (ACIP: CD\TEXTS\BYAUTHOR\TSONGKHAP\LAMCHE\S5392e.inc@502b).

RC, p. 789.

For a detailed discussion of Tsongkhapa's presentation of *vipaśyanā*, see Thurman (1979).

A disciple of dPal sprul Rinpoche; cf. Thondup (1996), pp. 226–27.

cf. p. 38.

cf. p. 36.

The full title reads, *Yon tan rin po che'i mdzod kyi 'grel pa zab don snang byed nyi ma'i 'od zer* (NyZ). The three volumes of the commentary in my possession, serialized *om*, *āḥ*, and *hum*, were published in Nepal by Dudjom Rinpoche as the fortieth section of the collected scriptures of the Ancient Translation tradition (*snga' 'gyur bka' ma*) sometime in the mid- to late 1980s.

The *LRC* appears to have been widely studied in Nyingma monasteries in Eastern Tibet. According to Tulku Thondup, it was part of the curriculum at rDo grub chen Monastery in Amdo.

VyZ, p. 548.4.

ji lta ji snyed = *yathāyavan*. “How many” (*ji snyad*) and “in what way” (*ji lta*) probably refer to the Mādhyamika analyses of “lack of one or many” (*gcig du 'bral*) and the refutation of production from four extremes (*mtha' bzhi skyes 'gog*), for example from self, other, both, or neither.

VyZ, p. 549.1.

cf. Beacon §3.2.2.1.1.1.1–3.2.2.1.1.2.2.

VyZ, p. 549.3.

cf. *LRC*, p. 795.

VyZ, p. 549.4.

VyZ, p. 549.5.

cf. *LRC*, pp. 788–89.

sems bzung ba; cf. *LRC*, p. 777.

VyZ, p. 550.5.

Beacon §3.2.2.1.2.1.

Beacon §3.2.1.2.2.2.3.1.

cf. p. 135.

MMK, 13.8. The Tibetan reads: *rgyal ba kun gyi stong pa nyid/ lta kun nges par 'byin par gsungs/ gang dag stong pa nyid lta ba/ de dag bsgrub tu med par gsungs*. The Sanskrit reads: *śūnyatā sarvadṛṣṭiṇām proktā nīḥsaraṇam jinaiḥ/ yeśāṃ tu śūnyatādrṣṭis tan asādhyan babhāṣire*.

mulomikīkṣānti = *mthun pa'i bzod pa*.

tsom 'jog mun thom du 'dug pa.

NyZ, p. 552.1.

Beacon §3.2.2.1.2.1.

VyZ, p. 553.3. Cf. *LRC*, pp. 779–80.

cf. diagrams 1 and 2.

vyZ, p. 553.6.

Beacon §3.2.2.1.2.1.

vyZ, p. 554.3.

RC, pp. 779–80.

RC, p. 787.

cf. LRC (ACIP: \CD\SUNGBUM\LAMCHE\S5392E.inc@476a–b).

Cf. *Pramāṇavārttika* quote in n. 562. Both ascertainment and false conceptualization (*sgro 'dogs*) involve conceptualization; the difference is that one is a correct concept, and the other is false.

On gnoseological orientations, cf. n. 6 above.

cf. Beacon §§1.2.2.1 and 3.2.1.2.1.1.

cf. n. 6.

What Mipham means by '*dzin stang* in the *Beacon* is basically the same as what Tsongkhapa calls *rigs shes kyis 'dzin stang*.

cf. Nagatomi (1985), p. 256.

It should be noted that for Mipham and Go ram pa, *mtshun pa* means effectively the same thing as *rnam grangs*, but it is not clear whether Gelugpas would accept these two as the same. Following Bhāvaviveka, Gelugpas understand the conformative (*mtshun pa*) ultimate as the mind that meditates conceptually upon emptiness, because it is, as mentioned before, a mind that takes on an aspect homologous to its object; but for Gelugpas, that does not necessarily mean that emptiness thus meditated upon is not definitive. Mipham et al. understand the definitive ultimate to be nonconceptual (*rnam grangs ma yin pa*), so for them a conformative ultimate is functionally equivalent to a conceptual ultimate.

Thurman (1984), pp. 84–85.

It is probably not insignificant that Tsongkhapa uses the term *spros bral* only once in the *dBu ba dgongs pa rab gsal* and does not use it at all in the *lhag mthong* chapter of the *LRC*.

cf. Sakya Paṇḍita's statement to Mipham in a vision; *Essential Hagiography* 639.6, translation p. 33.

cf. Beacon §§1.2.2.1 and 1.2.2.2.1.

Beacon §1.2.2.2.1.

Beacon §1.2.2.1.

CA, 9.2: *buddheragocarastattvam, don dam blo yi dpyod yul min*.

Beacon §§5.2.2.1.2.1.2.1–5.2.2.1.2.1.2.3.

Beacon §1.2.2.1.

Beacon §7.1.

Cf. BCA, 9.35: *yadā na bhāvo nābhāvo mateḥ samtiṣṭhate puraḥ/ tadānyagatayabhāvena nirālabhā praśamyati// gang tshe dngos dang dngos med dag/ /blo yi bdun na mi gnas pa/ /de'i tshe rnam pa gzhan med pas/ /dmigs pa med par rab tu zhi/*.

Cf. KJ §§4.2.2.2.2.2.2.2.1–4.2.2.2.2.3.1.

Steven Katz (1984).

Proudfoot (1985).

Cf. quotation above from the NyZ, p. 165.

For example, Rong zom Paṇḍita and the Fifth Dalai Lama, who was also an important teacher of the Gelug tradition.

His commentary on the *Madhyamakālaṃkāra*, for example, is studied in Sakya College in Dehra Dun, HP, while his *Legs bshad snang ba'i gter* commentary on the *Pramāṇavārttika* has been used as a textbook at the Karma Kagyu monastery of Rumtek in Sikkim.

For biographies of some interesting exceptions, cf. Willis (1985).

One such relationship was that of Mipham's teacher dPal sprul Rinpoche, an unconventional but saintly monk, and his teacher mDo mkhyen brtse Ye shes rdo rje (1800–1866), who sometimes lived as a wandering hunter. dPal sprul achieved a sudden realization when mDo mkhyen brtse, in a drunken rage, physically abused, insulted, and spat upon him. Cf. Thondup (1996), p. 202ff.

This and similar ceremonies are shown in Ricard (1996), p. 22ff.

Cf. §4.3.5 above.

Gene Smith observes that Mipham's "approach to textual exegesis was 'creative.' There were even Ris med proponents who regarded his extensively annotated editions (*mchan 'grel*) as a bit too unusual for pedagogical purposes...." He goes on to mention the writings of Gzhan dga' (1871–1927), who "explicitly formulated the principle that the easiest way to put an end to sectarian differences was to attempt to understand and to expound the basic Indic sources as the pandits of the past would have understood and expounded them." Smith (1969 (b)), p. 10. The TGSB is basically a textbook exposition of Mipham's thought; see p. 10 above.

In this example, *nam dpyod* is used literally in the first case, and metonymically in the second, "acumen" (*nam dpyod*) being the result of "analysis" (*nam dpyod*).

The fact that such a word exists in Tibetan, as it did also in Sanskrit [*āloka*], just goes to show that fifteen hundred years ago Buddhist epistemology was already far ahead of the dualistic *episteme* of Western philosophy, though of course contemporary Western philosophy is to a large extent moving beyond dualistic epistemology. Hermeneutics and the philosophy of science have discovered the importance of the subject in determining the object. *sNang ba* per se does not primarily belong to schematic interpretation, but to direct perception, and is as close to "the thing itself" as any concept can be and still be a Buddhist concept. According to Gadamer, a text, or a work of art, can be allowed to exist "as itself" in the purview of the subject, but that doesn't imply that the subject does not bring necessary and unavoidable prejudices to that experience of "the thing itself." In Buddhist epistemology, "the thing itself" [*svalakṣaṇa* = *rang mtshan*] is held to present itself, and to be effective as such [*don byed nus pa*], in direct experience. However, given that no two subjects perceive the "same" object the same way, Mādhyamika reasoning (according to Mipham) establishes that *svalakṣaṇa* is merely *snang ba* or "appearance," and is not ultimately established in its mode of appearance. If *snang ba* is taken as an "object," one need only mention that the subject thereof is also not established independently; but this implicit problem is never

raised, since as mentioned here *snang ba* is used to mean both “appearance” (of an object) and “perception.”

Jordstrom (1989).

This is an old problem for Mādhyamikas; cf. Lobsang Dargyay (1990); Nagao, “‘What Remains’ in Śūnyatā: A Yogācāra Interpretation of Emptiness,” in Nagao (1991), pp. 51–60; and §5.4 below.

Cf. the eight treasures of brilliance (*spobs pa'i gter rgyad*), *Essential Hagiography* 632.8, p. 25.

thos.

thos pas dad par byed pa; lit. “faith caused by hearing,” but as mentioned in section 8.2 (Technical Terms), the words *thos pa* should be understood in a general sense as “study.”

rnam byung chos kyi zla ba'i grags pa ni/.... This line is a play on the names of the logician Dharmakīrti (*chos kyi grags pa* = “Fame of the Dharma”) and Nāgārjuna’s commentator Candrakīrti (*zla ba grags pa* = “Moon-fame”).

Though the wording of the verse suggests that *rnam pa gnyis* refers to the Pramāṇa and Mādhyamika textual corpuses—which reading appears to be supported by Kun bzang dPal ldan’s commentary—KJ suggests that these also refer to the “profound” (*zab*) and “vast” (*rgya che*) exegetical lineages of Asaṅga and Nāgārjuna, and that the two forms of valid cognition refer to Mipham’s twofold paradigm of the two-truth theory. Cf. KJ 0.1.1.2.1.2.2–3.

dom bu pa.

nam dpyod.

rtul zhugs.

I.e., the Gelugpas. “dGe ldan pa” is perhaps a less sectarian way of designating the school of Tsongkhapa’s followers than “Gelugpa.” See Kuijp (1985), pp. 33–34.

rasājyapratīṣedha = *med dgag*.

śāryudāsapratīṣedha = *ma yin dgag*.

nga 'gyur = Early Translation, synonymous with “Nyingmapa.”

tong rkyang, referring to emptiness as absolute negation.

Referring to emptiness as an implicative negation.

Cf. the dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad 'jam dbyangs bla ma dgyes pa'i zhal lung (Mipham Rinpoche, 1990), p. 76: “The intention of the glorious Candrakīrti is the profound view that all these appearances are directly purified in their own place and that the deceptive outlines of conventionalities dissolve in the expanse of reality; this is similar to the way in which primordial purity is determined in Great Perfection texts.” (*dpal ldan zla ba'i dgongs pa snang ba 'di kun thad ka rang sar dag pas tha snyad kyi rdzun ris dbyings su yal ba'i zab mo' lta ba ni/ rdzogs chen gyi gzhung nas ka dag gtan la 'bebs tshul dang mtshungs pa*.)

ka ba med ces ma bkag na/. “There is no pillar” is an absolute negation.

I.e., assuming the negandum is not the pillar (which does exist conventionally), but the falsely conceived “truly established (*bden grub*) pillar” (which does not even exist conventionally) (*ka ba*

min zhes ci zhig yin/).

lgag bya'i snang tshul nges so lo.

.e., because you have also misinterpreted the meaning of the words.

kun rdzob tsam du ka ba ni/ /yod ces byas pas mi chog par/. Mipham seems to be suggesting that Tsongkhapa's famous interpretation of the Mādhyamika maxim *yod min med min* ("not existent, not nonexistent") as "not [ultimately] existent, not [conventionally] nonexistent" is all right, but to go beyond this and say "not empty of itself" is not. Cf. n. 531.

"They" = the pillar and the true existence of the pillar, or to say "A pillar is conventionally existent" and "A pillar is not empty of being a pillar."

'A pillar is not empty of itself, but empty of a truly established pillar" can be rephrased "A pillar is itself, and there is a notion of true existence imputed upon it."

[i.e., if "pillar" and "[true existence of] pillar" are different, the expression makes sense; if they are the same, what is the point of repeating oneself?

.e., it is negated as being that which it appears to be, a truly existing moon.

ran med, lit. "without memory."

san ner bzhaq pa.

This passage suggests that *'dzin stang*, which is translated here as "modal apprehension," could also be translated as "conscious apprehension"; because sentient beings are without conscious apprehension of the nature of things, if that lack of conscious apprehension were uniquely constitutive of insight into the nature of reality, then sentient beings would already be enlightened.

jcig shes kun grol. This is an epithet used for various Tibetan teachings.

sbom por zhog dang zhes. According to the TDC, *sbom po* means "not subtle, rough" or "unrestrained." The alternate spelling *spom* found in PL could mean "pretentious," "large in girth," "careless," "unrefined," and so on. Evidently the expression *sbom por zhog* is dialectical, so I have rendered it freely.

Cf. n. 649.

The original purity (*ka dag*) of the Great Perfection and the nonelaboration (*spros bral*) of Madhyamaka.

The "bliss-emptiness" (*bde stong*) coalescence is best known in the later traditions of Tibetan Buddhism. "Appearance-emptiness" is usually associated with Madhyamaka, and "awareness-emptiness" with the Great Perfection, while according to at least some oral traditions of the Nyingmapa, *bde stong* is the emphasis of the Mahāmudrā system of the Later Traditions. However, within the Sakya tantric tradition, the four metaphors of coalescence—*snang stong*, *bsal stong*, *bde stong*, and *rig stong*—are considered successive stages in the four *lta ba* or visions of Virūpa, for which, see Ruegg (1966), p. 58ff., n. 2.

This refers to the mahāyoga system.

.e., in Atiyoga or the Great Perfection.

cf. n. 556.

cf. discussion of Yon tan rgya mtsho above, p. 163.

ems byung shes rab = *caittaprajñā; cf. Rong zom's analysis of shes rab and ye shes, p. 89.

Fib. chos bzang, i.e., Rong zom Paṇḍita.

An allusion (and implicitly, a reply) to a famous statement by Sakya Paṇḍita in the sDom gsum rab tu dbye ba: rdzogs pa chen po'i lta ba ni/ /ye shes yin gyi theg pa min/ /brjod med brjod du byed pa ni/ /mkhas pa'i tshul ni ma yi no/.

Here specifies sambhāramārga and prayogamārga.

re shes de dang rjes mthun pa.

'brtag bya'i dngos la ma brten par/ /de yi dngos med 'dzin ma yin/ /des na dngos dang dngos med pa/ /gnyis ka brten 'brel tsam du mtshungs/ Cf. BCA, 9.35, n. 615.

This appears to be a nod toward—but not an unequivocal agreement with—Tsongkhapa's assertion that the views of sūtra and tantra are the same.

chos can kun rdzob snang ba'i cha.

KJ adds, "If it is correct to posit three vehicles with respect to the ability and disposition of superior, middling, and inferior disciples, then it is also correct to posit nine; if nine is not definitely the right number, then neither is three."

ta bya.

ang bzhin.

lan gsher.

nang bar mnyam phyir gang snang ba/ /de la brtags nas gzung 'dzin gnyis/ /yod med phye ba mi 'thad de/.

mKhan po Kun dpal's commentary (WTL) here elaborates: "For example, if an unanalyzed, unexamined dancer conventionally exists, it is possible to see various dances of the gods, etc., and if not, it is not possible, etc."

'gang la snang stong rung ba na/ /de la thams cad rung bar 'gyur/ /gang la snang stong mi rung ba/ /de la thams cad mi rung 'gyur/ Cf. MMK, 24.14: sarvaṃ ca yujyate tasya śūnyatā yasya yujyate/ sarvaṃ na yujyate tasya śūnyaṃ yasya na yujyate// /gang la stong pa nyid rung ba/ /de la thams cad rung bar 'gyur/ /gang la stong nyid mi rung ba/ /de la thams cad mi rung 'gyur/.

lag pa'i rgyal sras chen po yis/ /chu yi rdul rer grangs med zhing/.

mthar thug tshad ma. This is not precisely the same as "ultimate validating cognition" (don dam dpyod pa'i tshad ma), as understood in the Mādhyamika context, which concerns nonapparent emptiness and is distinct from conventional valid cognitions that concern appearances; here simultaneous awareness of form and emptiness is realized by buddha gnosis.

lam bca'.

byung po'i bya.

KJ glosses the root text: de la mthar thug mnyam nyid dbyings/ /lha snang kho nar snang ngo zhes/

/phyogs gcig bsgrub par mi nus kyang/ as de la gnas lugs mthar thug 'khor 'das mnyam pa nyid kyi gzhi dbyings de las snang tshul gyi dbang du byas na gzhan du mi snang bar lha dang dkyil 'khor du snang ba kho nar su la yang snang ngo zhes phyogs gcig du bsgrub par mi nus te/ cir yang 'char ba mi 'gal ba'i phyir ro/.

gnas lugs dpyad pas cis mi gnod. Here the Mādhyamaka version of ultimate reasoning is implied.

Cf. Rong zom Paṇḍita's statement in the NLG, f. 430: "All these apparent phenomena are just delusion. Moreover, when delusion is removed, no 'nondelusion' can be established. Because the nature of delusion is totally pure, it has the nature of enlightenment. Therefore, all phenomena are primordially in the state of enlightenment." (snang ba'i chos 'di dag thams cad 'khrul ba yin zad de/ de yang 'khrul ba bsal nas ma 'khrul ba shig bsgrub tu med te/ 'khrul ba'i ngo bo nyid nam par dag pas sangs rgyas pa yin te/ de bas na chos thams cad ye nas mngon par rdzog par sangs rgyas pa'o/).

Of Prāsaṅgika texts, that is.

shis.

mdo lam thabs dang shes rab gnyis/ gcig la gcig gi rtsis zin par/ byed kyi 'dir ni.... KP and KJ seem to disagree on the interpretation of this line. KP says, "On the path of sūtra both the apparent aspect of method and the empty aspect of wisdom are made inseparable by considering each as if sealed by the other [rgyas 'debs par byed pa lta bu]" (WTL, p. 243).

But KJ says, "On the sūtra path both the apparent aspect of method, which is compassion, etc., and the emptiness/selflessness aspect of wisdom are differentiated by considering them in terms of one another, as objects of intellectual engagement; but it is not as though they are mixed together anew or superimposed [on one another—rgyas 'debs]." Nāgārjuna said, "Emptiness having the nature of compassion/ Accomplishes enlightenment."

ntsho skyes = Padmasambhava.

blo ldan; glossed by KJ as blo gros dang ldan pa'i rgyal sras nyid, "an actual bodhisattva endowed with intellect."

blo gter. KP and KJ interpret this passage differently; KP glosses bdag blo as "this mind of mine which clings to extremes" (phyogs rer zhen pa'i bdag gi blo 'di, WTL, p. 255), while KJ takes it as gzhung rtsom pa po bdag gi blo gros zab cing yangs pa'am rgya che ba rgya mtsho chen por bsgrub pa'i phyir (KJ, p. 357). I am inclined to follow KP, since the passage began as the confession of the questioner, and has not clearly shifted back to the respondent, who presumably would speak for Mipham.

ic.

cu mud gnyen, lit. "friend of the [night-blooming] lotus."

jam mgon bla ma, an epithet for Mipham Rinpoche sometimes used by his close disciples.

Namely, "Unconquered" (mi pham = Maitreya), "Mañjughoṣa" (jam dbyang), "Victorious" (rnam rgyal), and "Ocean" (rgya mtsho).

'chos bzang rigs pa dri med 'od zer gyi/ /dgongs pa blo gros dri med mi pham pas/ /bslangs pa chos spobs dri med 'od zer gyi/ rnam bshad go ba dri med rnyed slad bri/. This stanza is a play on the names of the scholars who inspired and wrote the *Beacon*: chos bzang is Rong zom Chos kyi bzang po, dri med 'od gzer is Klong chen rab 'byams, and Mipham. The word dri med, which also appears in the commentary's title, occurs four times, making the translation rather cumbersome.

rgyal srid kyi grangs dang ldan pa'i bstan bcos kyi lus phun sum tshogs pa. In other words, the chapters are seven in number. The seven accouterments of royalty are the wheel, gem, queen, minister, elephant, general, and horse (Dorje and Kapstein, p. 156).

According to Lopen Karma Phuntsho, "The *dgos pa* or purpose of naming a text is twofold: (1) a general reason for having names and (2) the particular reason for naming texts. The first reason is to avoid confusion, for which a verse from the *Lāṅkāvatārasūtra* is often quoted: *ming du gdags par ma mdzad na / / 'jig rten thams cad rmong par 'gyur / / de bas mgon po thabs mkhas kyis / / chos rams ming du btags par mdzad / /*. The naming of texts is required because (1) a person of sharp intelligence can know the entire contents by looking at the title, (2) a person of mediocre intelligence can know part of the content, and (3) a person of dull intelligence can at least sort out the text by looking at the title. The analogies given are (1) a physician knowing the disease through feeling just the pulse, (2) knowing to which battalion a soldier belongs by looking at his insignia, and (3) finding something, for example a bottle of medicine, by looking at the label."

so so yang dag rig pa bzhi. TDC defines these: *byang chub sems dpas chos sna tshogs tha dad pa'i mtshan nyid ma nor bar shes pa'i phyogs bzhi ste/ chos so so yang dag par rig pa dang/ don so so yang dag par rig pa dang/ nges pa'i tshig so so yang dag par rig pa dang/ spobs pa so so yang dag par rig pa*.

According to Lopen Karma Phuntsho, the five objects of knowing or basic knowables are (1) *snang ba gzugs kyi gzhi*—the form basis, which appears; (2) *gtso bo sems kyi gzhi*—the mind basis, which is the chief (consciousness); (3) *'khor sems byung gyi gzhi*—the mental factors/volitions basis, which is subordinate; (4) *ldan min 'du byed kyi gzhi*—the basis of compounded (factors), which are nonassociated (with the consciousnesses); and (5) *'dus ma byas rtag pa'i gzhi*—the basis of eternal things, which are uncompounded. This is a Sarvāstivādin taxonomic doctrine.

This refers to the attainments of the four types of *āryapudgala*: the streamwinner (*rgyun du gzhuḡs pa*), the once-returner (*phyir 'ong ba'i 'bras bu*), the nonreturner (*phyir mi 'ong ba'i 'bras bu*) and the arhat (*dgra bcom pa'i 'bras bu*). According to Lopen Karma Phuntsho, these are each further distinguished by *gzhuḡs pa* and *'bras gnas*, for example, *rgyun gzhuḡs gzhuḡs pa*, *rgyun gzhuḡs 'bras gnas*, etc., for a total of eight.

rmad byung chos kyi zla ba'i grags pa ni/. Literally, "The fame of the amazing Dharma moon." Here Mipham combines the names of Dharmakīrti (*chos kyi grags pa*) and Candrakīrti (*zla ba grags pa*) in a single image.

nkhas btsun bzang po'i rnam thar. According to TDC, *mkhas* means "not ignorant of the knowledge of knowable things," *btsun* means "having the pure ethics of controlling negative actions of the three doors," and *bzang* means "having a perfectly pure aspiration to benefit others."

lgongs 'grel. This term might also be translated as "interpretive commentary," but this would seem to emphasize the commentators', rather than the original authors', intention. I have chosen to use "intentional" with the understanding that Mahāyāna Buddhist exegesis, however speculative, ostensibly always defers to what is assumed to have been the original authors' intent (*dgongs pa*).

dngos po stob zhugs kyi rigs pa. This refers to reasoning based on knowledge of the invariable concomitance of a directly perceptible reason (for example, smoke or being a product) and probandum (for example, fire or impermanence), where the invariable relation between reason and probandum follows from the very nature of the subject of a property.

/bden pa bzhi la brtan pa dang/ /bde dang nga dang nga'i zhes sogs/ /yang dag min pa rnam bcu drug/

/sgro btags nas ni yongs su sred/ /de nyid la ni de 'gal don/ de nyid rnam pa rjes rtogs can/ /legs bsgom yang dag lta ba yis/ /sred pa rjes brangs bcas 'joms byed/.

skyob here refers to the protection of the Buddha, who teaches what to accept and avoid on the path. See TDC, I.171.

bsam sogs lugs 'byung lam bzhin bshad pa dang/ skyob sogs lugs ldog shes byed du bshad pa. According to Lopen Karma Phuntsho, lugs 'byung and lugs ldog are "the two modes of validating the teacher and his teaching found in the pramāṇasiddhi chapter of the *Pramāṇavārttika*: establishing them through expounding his intention and such in accordance with the sequence of path (lugs 'byung) and establishing them through expounding the Buddha's status as a protector (skyob pa) by reverse verification.

"There are eight reasons altogether. The first four are: (1) The ordinary person who later becomes Śākyamuni will give rise to the preparatory pristine wisdom that discerns selflessness (sbyor ba bdag med rtogs pa'i ye shes) because he has a strong intention (bsam pa) to benefit beings (bsam pa 'gro la phan bzhed). (2) The ārya-in-training ('phag pa slob pa) will become a sugata with three characteristics (bde gshegs khyad par sum ldan) because he is endowed with the preparatory pristine wisdom that discerns selflessness. (3) The person, Śākyamuni, who has just achieved the sugatahood, is a great protector (skyob pa) who teaches what to accept and abandon through the four noble truths because he is a sugata with three characteristics. (4) The teacher Śākyamuni therefore is a valid teacher (ston pa tshad ma) because he is a protector who shows the correct modes of accepting and abandoning through the four noble truths. The four reverse reasonings that prove Śākyamuni is a valid teacher are: (1) Śākyamuni is a valid teacher because he is protector. (2) Śākyamuni is a protector because he is a sugata with three characteristics. (3) Śākyamuni is a sugata because he has perfected the preparatory pristine wisdom that discerns selflessness. (4) Śākyamuni has perfected the preparatory pristine wisdom that discerns selflessness because he has perfected the intention to benefit beings."

In other words, as far as valid cognition goes, Prāsaṅgika emphasizes ultimate valid cognition, which establishes the inseparability of the two truths *qua* form-and-emptiness, while Pramāṇa emphasizes conventional valid cognition, which differentiates the two truths according to the concordance or discordance of the way things are and the way they appear.

cf. *Lion's Roar Proclaiming Extrinsic Emptiness* below, p. 418ff.

lper na 'jig rten la zla ba gnyis snang dang zla ba gcig gi snang ba dang/ bye mdos bcom gzhiḡ rung mi rung dang spyi mtshan dang rang mtshan sogs thams cad kyi tha snyad kyi 'jug yul dnos yin min gyi khyad par la mdzad do/.

The wisdoms of learning, contemplation, and meditation.

tar snang mang nyob spros pa'i skyon.

The analogy is not entirely clear, but one might assume that only an ignorant and incompetent monk-scholar would do such a thing.

jig rten pas dong chu kha rub zer ba ltar. Kha rub can mean either "slander of one person by many" or "closed-mouth." This expression may have some other idiomatic meaning.

debs legs ngag gis sbyar zhiḡ rtog ge yi/ rlung gis ma dkrugs pa dag gsal bar byas/.

rtul zhugs dal cig bzung ba.

ab drangs so sor rang rig pa'i/ [Beacon §7.2.4.4.1.1.3] /ces dang/ blo las 'das pa od gsal gnyug ma'i dbyings/
/'jam dpal rdzogs pa chen po'i ngang du zhog/ [Beacon §0.3.3.2.2.2.2] /ces pa dang gcig tu 'chang dgos 'dra
ste gzhung don 'di shong ba'i snod ni gzungs spobs kyi sgo drug po 'di ltar bsgrub pa yin par gsungs pas so/.

tos bya chos nyid kyi rigs pa gsum; cf. n. 77 above.

tshangs spyod yon tan bzhi. Lopen Karma Phuntsho explains: "The four pure qualities of *bka'* or Buddha's speech are: (1) *ma 'dres pa*, unmixed, distinct; (2) *yongs su dag pa*, completely perfect; (3) *yongs su byang ba*, completely purifying; (4) *yong su rdzogs pa*, complete or full."

§0.2.1.1. subsumes chapter 1, and §0.2.1.2., chapter 2. At this point, please note that the enumerations for each chapter will begin with the number of the chapter, for example, §1.1 is actually §1.1.0.2.1.1, and so on.

rgyun dang rags pa. According to Lopen Karma Phuntsho, "rgyun is the continuum of transient things and *rags pa* the coarse or gross aspect of form, sound, etc."

The Gelugpa.

lgag bya'i tshad 'dzin pa.

de las kyang rgyu khyab rang bzhin 'bras bu ma dmigs pa dang 'gal dmigs sogs. My thanks to Lopen Karma Phuntsho for the interpretation of this passage.

'ang bzhin lhum zhugs.

i bzhin par thad sor 'dren nus.

le ltar ma rtogs pa'i snang tshul la sgrib pa glo bur ba ltar snang ba yang lam bsgrub pas rnam par dbye ba
dang bcas pa'am stong pa'i mtshan nyid can yin la/.

nngon par 'du byed pa.

res sogs tshig gsal du mdo 'di drangs nas/ med par dgag pa brjod par 'dod pas dngos po rang bzhin med pa'i
don ni rang bzhin med pa'i don yin no/. The reference to a sūtra is unclear, but might refer to the previous quote.

lbu ma'i tshul las ji ltar rnal 'byor dpyod pa rnams kyi don dam pa'i mtshan nyid yod pa dang yin par lta ba
de dag ni kun tu brtags pa ste gtan med do zhes med par 'gog par byed pa ma yin par dgag pa bsgrub par
bya ba'i don dam pa nyid dbu ma mi bsgrub bo zhes dang/ de bas na shes bya rnams la kun tu brtags pas
stong pas rang gi mtshan nyid yod pa dang yin par bsgrub tu rung ba med par bstan pa'i gzhir gyur pa 'ga
'ang lhag par mi lus so/.

This is possibly a reference to 'Jigs med gling pa, whose autocommentary to his *Yon tan rin po che'i mdzod* explains Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka largely according to traditions of Gelug exegesis.

igo skal.

shig dan don gyi gzhan stong.

la dung gzhan stong du mi 'gyur na gzhan stong pa 'am [read pa'ang] gzhan stong du mi 'gyur ro/.

hos can dang bsgrub bya 'dra ba la.

The three samādhis of entry to liberation: emptiness (*stong pa nyid* = śūnyatā), absence of identifying characteristics (*mtshan ma med pa* = vilakṣaṇa), and wishlessness (*smon pa med pa* =

apraṇihita).

Granted, the meaning of this passage is somewhat unclear here. mKhan po Kun dpal says, "Even if one recognizes the negandum of the Prāsaṅgika system, other than the nonempty vase, which is immune to analysis with respect to ultimate reality, or the vase that cannot be negated, what other negandum—which is not immune to an analysis of true existence—could there be? Because it does not exist extraneously [*yan gar du*], you are certain that you alone have recognized the mode of appearance of the negandum and that no one else has. This is unfortunate." (WTL, p. 27.)

ya rog khu 'khrigs zhugs pa.

.. *tshig 'di ltar sbyar bar byas kyang dogs pa mi sel ba'i steng du slar tshig 'khr'i 'gal ba 'di la che ste/*. I am not sure what his point is here, unless he is referring to the latter qualification, *bden grub kyi stong*. mKhan po Kun dpal's commentary is not much clearer: *tha snyad la bskur ba 'debs pa la sogs pa'i tshig 'khr'i dogs pas ka ba ka bas mi stong zhes pa la sogs pa 'di sbyar bar byas kyang tshig 'khr'i 'gal ba bzlog tu med pa 'di la lhag par che ste/* (WTL, p. 27).

The following quote does not end with a *zhes gsungs*. The *gSung sgros* is a collection of miscellaneous writings found in the last volume of the sDe dge dgon chen edition of Mipham's collected works.

ur gnyis ka.

jo chod mi chod. The discussion that follows concerns not whether something "qualifies" as existent or nonexistent in a strictly ontological sense (which is another, related question) but rather what conventions of existence and nonexistence are adopted in the Mādhyamika philosophical context.

de la chos kyi phye ba ni/ 'khor ba yin te chos nyid kyi/ /rab tu phye ba theg gsum gyi/ /mya ngan las ni 'das pa'o/.

MA in ACIP@207b.

MMK, 24.14: *gang la stong nyid mi rung ba/ /de la thams cad rung mi 'gyur/*.

Acintyastava, vol. 22. Cf. Lindtner (1992), p. 146.

chos thams cad ngo bo nyid kyi stong pa yin la/ gzhan gyis stong par mthong nas ji ltar snang ba rang gi ngo bo nyid kyi stong par ma rtogs pas ngo bo nyid kyi rab tu gsang ngo/. *gSangs 'grel* here probably refers to a commentary on the *Gūhyagarbhatantra* (*gsang snying rgyud*).

gnam zla kun rdzob kyi stong pa'i stong nyid de dang chu zla rang nyid snang ba'i snang cha lta bus don dam pa de gnyis snang stong zung 'jug yin na ko. KJ here seems to be corrupt; I have read *snang cha lta bus don dam pa as snang cha lta bu kun rdzob*.

gyu ma ngal so.

nyi ma mun pas stong la 'od zer gyis mi stong zhes pa lta bu'i nyi tshe ba'i stong pa ste/. Klong chen pa's example makes a pun of the term *nyi tshe ba*, which literally means "daytime," but in discussions of emptiness is used in the sense of "partial" or "trivial." For *nyi tshe ba*, elsewhere I have used "trivial," but here, to echo the pun, I have used "fair weather," as in "fair-weather friend."

KJ has: *gzung 'dzin med pa'i rnal 'byor ngo kha la/ /med la snang 'di ya mtshan rgod po 'chor*; Klong chen rab 'byams (1983), vol. ka, p. 145.2, reads *dgod* for *rgod*.

lngos po'i don la gzu bo'i blo dpyad na/ /ngo bo stong pa don mthun blos mthong nas/ /thar lam tshol ba'i

de nyid brjod pa 'di/ /gang la gzan por gyur rnams bzod par gsol/. Here, as below, KJ seems to have used an alimentary pun in his concluding verse; *gzan* (alternately, *bzan*) means fodder for animals, and *gzan pa* means, in addition to "waste" or "wear out," "to eat."

'gang la bcom dang blo yis gzhan/ /bsal na de blo mi 'jug pa/ /bum chu bzhin du kun rdzob tu/ /yod de don dam yod gzhan no/. Cf. Vasubandhu's commentary on this verse: *gang la cha shas su bcom na de'i blo mi 'jug pa de ni kun rdzob tu yod pa ste/ dper na bum pa lta bu'o/ /de la ni gyo mor bcom na bum pa'i blo mi 'jug go/ /gang la blos chos gzhan bsal na de'i blo mi 'jug pa de yang kun rdzob tu yod pa yin par khong du chud par bya ste/ dper na chu lta bu'o/ /de la ni blos gzugs la sogs pa'i chos bsal na/ chu'i blo mi 'jug go/ /de dag kho na la kun rdzob tu de'i ming du ba tags pa yin pas kun rdzob kyi dbang gis bum pa dang chu yod do zhes brjod pa ni bden pa kho na smras pa yin gyi/ brdzun pa ni ma yin pas de ni kun rdzob kyi bden pa yin no/ /de las gzhan pa ni don dam pa'i bden pa ste/ gang la bcom yang de'i blo 'jug pa kho na yin la/ blos chos gzhan bsal yang de'i blo 'jug pa de ni don dam par yod pa yin te/ dper na gzugs lta bu'o/ /de la rdul phra bar tu bcom yang rung/ blos rol [read ro la] sogs pa'i chos bsal kyang rung gzugs kyi rang bzhin gyi blo 'jug pa nyid de/ tshor ba la sogs pa yang de bzhin du blta bar bya'o/ /de ni don dam par yod pa'i phyir don dam pa'i bden pa zhes bya'o/*. (Source: ACIP: \TENGYUR\DZURANG\DZURANG2\Td4091e.raw@07A-B.)

zung bzhi ya brgyad kyi 'bras bu.

'kyen nyid 'di pa tsam.

nyes pa mnam pa thams cad dag/ /'jig tshogs lta las skyes pa yin/ /de ma rig de der chags pa/ /de las zhe sdang la sogs byung/ /de nyid kyis na nyes rnams kyi/ /rgyu ni gti mug yin par gsungs/ /gzhan las 'jig tshogs lta ba ste/ /de spangs pa na spong phyir ro/. Interpretation courtesy of Lopen Karma Phuntsho.

pyi rab pa.

Lopen Karma Phuntsho observes, "gZhi shes is a particular kind of gnosis discussed in the Perfection of Wisdom texts and systematized in *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*. It is one of the eight topics and one of the three types of gnosis. It has five kinds, two of which are the *gzhi shes* 'close to the resultant mother' and the *gzhi shes* 'distant from the resultant mother,' the resultant mother being omniscient wisdom. The first is a bodhisattva gnosis, and the latter, a Hinayāna gnosis. *gZhi shes* is realization of selflessness, and therefore if there is no difference between the bodhisattva realization of selflessness and the arhat realization of selflessness, our commentator is questioning how there could be the difference of close and distant *gzhi shes* as the distant *gzhi shes*, which is supposed to belong to arhats, would be equal to that of the bodhisattvas."

lgos pa dgongs pa dngos la gnod byed kyi rigs pa gsum.

shes rab las gzhan de dag ni/ /spong rgyu gzhan med de yi phyir/. Translation after Obermiller (1931), p. 293.

stong nyid lta dang de 'gal phyir/ /de yi rang bzhin nyes kun dang/ /'gal bar rab tu grub pa yin.

KJ 73.2: *mtha' phyi ma*. This refers to the last three alternatives of the *catuṣkoṭi*: nonexistence, both existence and nonexistence, and neither existence nor nonexistence.

'kyen nyid 'di pa tsam.

Obscure reference; perhaps this means a droplet of water clinging to a hair.

byang chub sems dpa' sems dpa' chen po dad pas spyod pa'i sa la spyod pa mi dmigs pa la mos shing nyon

mongs pa dang bcas pa bla'i nyan thos dang rang sangs rgyas dmigs pa can nges par gyur pa thob pa/ nyong mongs med pa ni de lta ma yin no. According to Lopen Karma Phuntsho, *nges par gyur pa* should read *nges par 'byung ba*.

igs nges pa zhi bar bgrod pa dang ma nges pa rgyud yongs 'gyur gnyis.

According to Lopen Karma Phuntsho, this refers to partless atoms (*bem po phra ba*) and partless moments of mind (*shes pa phra ba*).

/mthong ba'i lam du gang gyur pa/ /sgyu ma lta bur shin tu gsog/. Lopen Karma Phuntsho comments, "This is a well-known quotation of *Sāṃkhya* found in Buddhist texts. Perceptible things in *Sāṃkhya* include things like form, sound, etc., but not absolute things like self (*puruṣa*) and primal matter (*prakṛti*). If knowing the vanity of some things can be easily applied to other things, then the *Sāṃkhya* would have to understand the vanity of self and thus become an *anātmavadī*. Many other unacceptable consequences would follow."

na tshang med rgyu de la ni/ /'bras bu gang gis ldog par 'gyur.

le ni mtshan mar dmigs sgo nas/ /thabs ma yin pas ring ba ste.

[J, 88.4: *rigs yi sgrib pa srab cing sangs rgyas kyi bskul ba'i rkyen.* The exact image is rather obscure. *Srab* means "bridle bit," so the idea seems to be that the buddhas yank arhats out of their slumber.

[J, 91.5 has: *gnyis pa rkyen ma tshang na rtogs pa yod pa ni.*

lon gnyis ldan pa'i byang chub kyi sems.

MA, 6.130–31: *rtag bdag spangs na de tse de yi phyir/ /khyod kyi sems sam phung po bdag mi 'gyur/ /khyod kyi rnal 'byor bdag med mthong ba yis/ /gzugs sogs de nyid rtogs par mi 'gyur zhing/ /gzugs la dmigs nas 'jug phyir 'dod chags sogs/ /skye 'gyur de yi ngo bo rtogs med phyir/.*

MA, 6.140: *bdag med rtogs tse rtag pa'i bdag spong zhing/ /'di ni ngar 'dzin rten du'ang mi 'dod la/ /de phyir bdag med shes pas bdag lta ba/ /dpyis kyang 'byin zhes smra ba shin tu mtshar/.*

jang phyir 'di na de nyid shes las dri ma mtha' dag sel ba ni/ /lhur byed gzhan med chos rnam de nyid rnam 'gyur dbye la'ang bsten min zhing/ /de nyid yul can blo gros 'di yang tha dad 'gyur ba ma yin la/ /de yi phyir na khyod kyi 'gro la theg pa mi mnyam dbyer med bstan/.

khong na 'gal 'du'i skran can gyi nad pa. Here a play is made on the word 'gal 'du, which has been translated above as "internal contradiction."

dman pa'i gdul byas mnyam pa'i don/ /rtogs pas myur ba'i lam du 'gro/ /che ba'i theg pa'i grags pa yang/ /nyams pa'i dogs pas skabs 'di bris/.

ig pa sphyi blugs.

'do la nem thig cung zad med pa zhig.

BCA, 9.36: *gang tshe dngos dang dngos med dag/ blo yi mdun na mi gnas pa/ de tshe rnam pa gzhan med pas/ dmigs pa med par rab tu zhi/.* In Vaidya, 9.35: *yadā na bhāvo nābhavo mateḥ samtiṣṭhate puraḥ/ /tadānyagatyabhāvena nīrālambā praśamyati/.*

sems kyi gsal rig ngo sprod nas/ /de steng mi rtog par 'jog pa/ /phyag rdzogs dgongs pa yin snyam nas/ /grub mtha' 'dzin dang de gzhung 'gog/ /gnyis ka smyon pa'i ca cor zad/.

lmigs gtad.

chos can so so'i khyad par de gzhan la med pa'i phyir.

'ang ngo ma 'phrod ngo sprod ro la 'debs.

ler ma zad yod med gnyis ltos nas bzhag pa bzhin/ gnyis yin gnyis min kyang ltos nas bzhag pa'i phyir na de gnyis ka'i mtha' dang bral ba'i phyir/.

lo de yi mdun na gtad so 'bem gzhin du gnas pa ma tshor ba tsam yin la/.

MA, 6.116: rtog rnams dngos po yod na 'gyur ba ste/ /dngos po ji ltar med par sngar dpyad zin/ /dngos po med pas 'di rnams mi 'byung dper/ /bud shing med par me yod min ci ltar/.

i phyir zhe na sangs rgyas kyis/ /mkhen nas chos rnams ma gzig phyir/.

hos nyid kyi rigs pa la nye ring mi mnga' ba'i rgyu mtshan de'i phyir/.

dod pa khyod kyi rtsa ba ni/ shes te kun tu rtog las skyes/.

stag mchongs pa'i rje su lbas bsnyags te. I am taking lbas as a misspelling or dialectical form of sbal pa. Otherwise, this would have to mean "A leaping lion being followed by a goiter."

nyon mongs shes bya'i sgrib pa yi/ mun pa'i gnyen po stong pa nyid/ myur du thams cad mkhyen 'dod pas/ de ni ji ltar bsgom mi byed/.

'di med phyi med rang rgyud nag po kha 'byams su 'gyur ro/. Literally, "one's mind will become Nag po kha 'byams," the demon said to possess practitioners with nihilistic views.

hyogs re 'dzin stangs sgron me'i snang ba yis/ /phyogs re grib mas khebs la ma phyin pa'i/ /sel byed nyi ma'i dkyil 'khor 'di mthong na/ /legs nyes tshes brgyad zla ba'i dkyil 'khor bzhin/.

dpyad 'jog gi skabs don so sor shan phyed te snga ma gnyis po'i go don gyi rnam bzhag rgyas par bshad pa. The snga ma gnyis po ("previous two") appears to refer to pair dpyad 'jog (as opposed to skabs don); cf. §4.2.2.1ff.

cu su li'i 'jog sgom.

gti mug rang bzhin sgrib phyir kun rdzob ste/ /des gang bcos ma bden par snang de ni/.

cf. discussion of the MTP, p. 85.

srid pa na ni gyang sa mang/ der ni de nyid min 'di 'dra/ der yan phan tsun 'gal bas na/ srid na de nyid de 'dra med/. BCA, 9.157.

cf. §3.2.2.1.1.2.3.

rang bzhin skyed med. This is part of the triadic aspect of reality according to the Great Perfection. The other two are ngo bo and thugs rje.

'dir rig pa ka nas dag pa rjen zang nge ba/ ma grub med 'gag tsam de la gzhir gyas nas/ zhes gsungs pa ltar yin pas na/. The present Dalai Lama seems to be of the opinion that rig pa is an implicative negation (paryudāsapratiśedha = ma yin dgag), though he does not consider that a fault, as do some Gelug scholars. Cf. Gyatso (1984), final chapter.

rnam kun mchog ldan gyi stong pa nyid dang/ dmigs pa med pa'i snying rje chen po yi bdag nyid mchog tu [mi] 'gyur ba'i bde ba dang/ de gnyis ngo bo dbyer med mnyam pa nyid du rnal 'byor pa'i so so rang rig pa'i... In the text mi of mchog tu mi gyur ba'i bde ba is an interlinear addition, which does not seem to have been written with the same pen as the rest of the manuscript. Since it doesn't make much

sense here, I assume—for whatever that’s worth—that the *mi* is a corruption of the original text by a later proofreader for the sake of completeness.

le dag gis rdo rje bzhi yi ye shes mngon du byed pa'i bskyed rdzogs kyi lam rnams kyi 'jug sgo dbang bzhi po yin na.

lgnos stob dang bden par dpyad pa'i rigs pas. Cf. n. 708 on the meaning of *ngos po stob zhugs*.

Cf. Yon tan rgya mtsho's discussion above using the example of a "monster" (*srin bu*), p. 163.

rang dag pa'i gnas lugs kyi don ji bzhin pa'i mthong ba la tshad mas gnod pa yod pas na mi mthong ba'i phyir ro/.

ngrod du med pa'i lam, literally, "the path that is not to be traveled," for example, Atiyoga.

si ste lam la bgrod gyur na/ /nam mkha'i mtha' bzhin thob pa med/.

kun 'byung 'dren pa'i theg pa gsum dang/ dka' thub rig byed kyi theg pa gsum dang/ dbang bsgyur thabs kyi theg pa gsum ste dgur 'dod cing/.

...gzugs dang tshor ba 'du shes dang/ /rnam par shes pa sems pa dag/ /grangs med de dbzhing gshegs pa rnams/ /de dag thub pa chen por 'gyur/.

de dag ni rigs pa'i sgo tsam ste zhib par phye na tshad med do. This obscure line seems to be a quote from Rong zom Paṇḍita.

'bka' don rigs pa gtan tshigs kyis/ snang dang mthun dang 'thad rgyas thebs/.

tshad ma bslu med can shes pa/ /de ldan bcom ldan tshad ma nyid/ /rang las rang gi ngo bo rtogs/ /tha snyad las ni tshad ma nyid/ /bstan bcos rmongs pa zlog byed yin/. These lines are all from the "Pramāṇasiddhi" chapter of the *Pramāṇavārttika*. I could not locate the origin of the second line, referring to the Buddha (*de ldan bcom ldan tshad ma nyid*), but the others are gleaned from verses 1 through 5. Cf. R. Jackson (1993), pp. 176–80.

zhan mthong gi yid smon.

brjod par bya ba ldog bya ste/ /sems kyi spyod yul ldog pas so/ /ma skyes pa dang mi 'gag pa/ /chos nyid mya ngan 'das dang mtshungs/.

chregs chod and thod rgal.

togs na kun yin chos nyid rol pa yin/ /yi [read ye] yin bab yin rang byung ye shes yin/ /ma rtogs mkha' ltar stong nyid spros bral yang/ /rtogs pa'i inges yin rang sems 'chang byed yin/.

gsum pa don bsdu ba la/. The *gsum pa* here was forecast in the *sa bcad* in the beginning of topic 3. I have changed it to 4.3 for simplicity's sake.

lpyad pa dang 'dzin stang phra rags re ma gtogs phal cher dgos par gsungs shing/.

lpyad pa'i g.yo ba bcud la snod med bzhin/ /'jog pa'i gnas pa snod la bcud med 'dra/ /phyogs lhung bral ba'i zhi lhag cha myam pa/ /snod bcud phun tshogs dag pa'i zhing khams bzhin/. This translation does not convey the play on the words *snod* (=container, inanimate world, or body) and *bcud* (=essence, juice, sentient being, or mind).

nden pa gnyis yod mnyam med mnyam stobs mtshungs su bshad pa.

jang tshe gang zhig med do zhes/ /brtag bya'i dngos la ma reg par/ /de yi dngos med 'dzin ma yin/.

togs bya de stong pa 'ba' zhig pa min na stong pa gtso che ba nyams so/.

le yang gsar du snang stong 'dres pa lta bu ma yin par gdod nas stong pa dang snang ba 'di dag zung du 'jug pa spros pa yis stong zhing du snang la. In KP the root text reads *de yang 'dod nas stong pa dang/ snang ba 'di dag stong pa yis/ stong bzhin snang la snang bzhin stong/.*

:hos kyi dbyings la dbyer med phyir/ /rigs ni tha dad rung ma yin/.

ta dgongs de dag la brten nas bya ba'i rgyud dang....

al te mtha' gcig tu 'khrul pas grub pa'i mtha' don la gnas na.

ig pa dang ni rkang par ldan.

lta bzang 'bras bcud mngar mo gsol 'dod pas/ /bcud bzang don dam 'o ma 'doms lags kyang/ /snod bzang kun rdzobs zangs dkar 'di med na/ /dbu ma'i thab tu stong rkyang gsur du 'gro/. The word *gsur* is normally used for substances burnt as offerings. It might not be coincidental that in this concluding verse for the fifth topic, which especially emphasizes the ascertainment of the view of the tantras, KJ has used the words *dbu ma* and *rkyang [ma]*, which could refer to the central channel and the (milk) white-colored subsidiary channel, respectively, of the subtle body in completion phase practices of anuttarayoga tantra. *sTong rkyang* literally means the “bare” or “blank” emptiness of absolute negation, which according to the Nyingma view has nothing to do with the view or practice of the inner tantras. According to the Gelug, however, it is another matter (cf. n. 199).

:hu rnag bdud rtsi gsum rlan gsher min pa las log tsam gyis sel ba.

'di dpe 'ga' zhig na mang byung zhes pa cun zad mi bde bas yig skyon e yin dpyod. KP reads *mang*, but his interpretation of the sense of the passage does not differ from KJ's.

rtags snga ma de'i phyir, literally, “for the former reason,” which seems here to mean “because they are identical.”

pro ba dga' tsam du 'gyur ro/.

gzugs med na ni sems yod ma 'dzin cig/ sems yod na ni gzugs med ma 'dzin cig/ de dag shes rab tshul mdor sangs rgyas kyis/ mtshungs par spangs shing mngon pa'i chos las gsungs/.

lper na zlos gar mkhan yod na des bsgyur ba'i zlos gar de mig lam du 'gro mi 'gro du ma yod par mthong ba dang/ lha dang gnod sbyin sogs du mar bsgyur rung gi zlos gar mkhan med na de dag kyang med pa bzhin no/. mKhan po Kun dpal's commentary is a bit easier to sort out here: “For example, if an unanalyzed, unexamined dancer conventionally exists, it is possible to see various dances of the gods, etc., and if not, it is not possible, etc.” (*dper na ma brtags ma dpyad pa'i snang tsam gyi zlos gar mkhan tha snyad du yod na lha la sogs pa'i zlos gar gyi rnam 'gyur mi 'dra ba sna tshogs par mthong bar rung ba dang med na mi rung ba la sogs pa bzhin no.*)

ris su chad pa'i snang ba de kun tu mi 'gro ba'i phyir. This might mean that the piece of wood is not perceived everywhere, so one cannot say that it is the condition for the appearance of horses, cattle, etc., in general, or that a piece of wood does not occupy the exact space occupied by horses and cattle, so it cannot be the basis of the misperception of horses and cattle.

cf. KJ§5.2.2.1.1.

lon dang mi mthun pa'i smra ba.

re zhig yul brten pa nyid la ltos pa'i rang 'dzin gyi blo tshad mar grub pa.

jang gi tshe 'phags pa'i gzigs pa la gnas nas skye bo mkhas pa tshad mar byed pa de'i tshe 'jig rten gyis gnod pa yod pa ma yin no/ /mkhas pas phyogs 'dis gzhan yang dpyad par bya'o/.

rang las rang gi ngo bo rtogs/ /tha snyad kyis ni tshad ma nyid/.

tha snyad la yang gnas snang dag/ /mi mthun snang ba yod pa'i phyir/ /ma dag tshu rol mthong ba dang/ /dag pa'i gzigs pa la brten pa'i/ /kun tu tha snyad tshad ma gnyis/ /mi dang lha yi mig bzhi no/.

gang dag dngos kun rang bzhi gyis/ /rang rang ngo bo la gnas phyir/ /mthun dngos gzhan gyi dngos dag las/ /ldog pa la ni brten pa can/.

rang mtshan gcig dang tha dad la/ sel ba'i 'dzin stangs mu bzhi srid.

thob shor mi bslu ba.

de lta na don rang rang gi ngang tshul ji ltar gnas pa dang/ de dang mthun pa'i blo gnyis ka la rigs pa'i sgra 'jug pas zhes.

phyogs chos = pakṣadharma, or presence of the sign (rtags = liṅga) in the locus (pakṣa) of the probandum (sgrub bya = sādhyadharma, for example, smoke on a mountain where fire is to be inferred); rjes khyab = anvaya, or positive concomitance of the sign and probandum (where there is smoke there is fire); ldog khyab = vyatireka, or negative concomitance of the probandum and sign (where there is no fire, there is no smoke).

rul thob pa sogs la ni 'jug ldog gang byas mi bslu ba'i phyir ro.

le ltar min par kun don gnyis kar mi 'grub pa'i tshul.

lhur byed gzhan med chos rnam de nyid rnam 'gyur dbye la'ang brten min zhing/ de nyid yul can blo gros 'di yang tha dad gyur pa ma yin pa.

gyu 'khor 'das gang du ma chad/ phyogs snang stong gang du ma lhung/.

Referring to the principal scriptures of the anuyoga (mdo dgongs pa 'dus pa), mahāyoga (spyi rgyud sgyu sprul drwa ba, of which the Guhyagarbhatantra is part), and Atiyoga (sems sde).

nig ni rab rib can gyi dmigs pa yi/ /rab rib med shes la gnod min ji ltar/ /de bzhi dri med ye shes spangs pa'i blo/ /dri med blo la gnod pa yod ma yin/.

ndzes pa 'ja' sku lags lags mod theg rgyal gyi khyad chos.

byung po'i bya.

igs dman—lineage in the sense of enlightenment-destiny.

dman par mos shing kham kyang shin tu dman/ /grog po dman pa dag gis yongs bskor bas/ /zab dang rgya che rab tu bshad pa'i chos/ 'di la gal te mos med grub pa yin/.

de la gnas lugs mthar thug 'khor 'das mnyam pa nyid kyi gzhi dbyings de las snang tshul gyi dbang du byas na gzhan du mi snang bar lha dang dkyil 'khor du snang ba kho nar su la yang snang ngo zhes phyogs gcig du bsgrub par mi nus te/ cir yang 'char ba mi 'gal ba'i phyir ro.

stong pa nyid ni bstan pa'i mdo/ /rgyal bas ji snyed gsungs pa kun/ /de dag kun gyis nyon mongs bzlog/ /kham de nyams par byed ma yin/.

des sogs gsungs pa dang snga phyi 'gal bar 'gyur ba'i phyir/ /des na 'di'i gong 'og kun tu le'u bco brgyad pa'i dgongs don dbye ngo zad pa'i dbyer med du bstan par rig go/.

rang bzhin 'di yin 'di las ni/ /rkyen gzhan gyis ni gol gyur zhing/ /ldog pa yang ni rkyen la ltos/ /mi brtan sbrul gyi blo bzhin no/.

'gro ba zhi ba'i chos nyid du/ /rtogs phyir ji lta nyid de yang/ /rang bzhin gyis ni yongs dag phyir/ /nyon mongs gdod nas thar phyir ro/.

rngos po rnam kyi rang bzhin ni/ /rigs pa'i lam gyis rje brangs bas (read bar) / /gzhan dag gnod (read gdod) par sel bar byed/ /de phyir rgol ngan gnas med do/ (corrections made according to Mipham's 'jam dbyangs dgyes pa'i zhal lung commentary).

di ltar gang la rngos gang med/ de la de shes yod ma yin/.

ung gi spyi.

According to Matthew Kapstein, a *makṣa* is a type of bean that is held under the tongue during the recitation of certain mantras of the lower tantras; when the bean sprouts, one's recitation is considered to have borne fruit.

tsod. Perhaps a pun for 'tshos,"cook."

as snang 'khrul pa'i makṣa'i sbyor ba yis/ /gzhi snang dag pa'i gser bzang ma mthong ba'i/ /'kyags rom tshil dang mar sogs rtsod na yang/ /rnam dpyod sol mo 'di yis rang mdog gsal/.

The passage ends *khas len med par gsungs so*, which indicates that §7.2.2.2 is a synopsis of Klong chen pa's view.

mtha' gcig tu khas len pa, i.e., it is difficult to say that Madhyamaka has a position with respect to both conventional and ultimate truth.

nam chad dgag rtog gi spyod yul na yod pa tsam ni rngos po'i gshis ma yin te.

MMK, 22.12: *mtha' yod mtha' med la sogs bzhi/ /zhi ba 'di la ga la 'gyur/.*

¶J, 289.1 reads: *rang rgyud pa la tha snyad bden pa rigs pas dpyad bzod du 'phangs pa de rigs pa'i tshul dang mthun pa ma yin par thal*. I have chosen to read this as ...*tshul dang mi thun pa ma yin par thal*. The idea would seem to be that the opponent's (i.e., the Gelugpas') claim to be *Prāsaṅgikas* is harmed by the consequence of similarity to the *Svātantrikas*.

rang gi rgyud kyis.

shyogs.

dgag sgrub gnyis ka dgag 'ba' zhig/ rngos la dgag sgrub gang yang med/.

chas len med par smras pa la blo skyon dang don skyon med pas.

yang dag kun rdzob rnam kyi skas/ med par yang dag khang chen gyi/ steng du 'gro bar bya ba ni/ khas la rung ba ma yin no/.

nam par rtog la brten na yang/ kun rdzob tu 'gyur yang dag min/.

shan tshun 'gal ba.

The conundrum of "buddhodoxy."

The phrase “three types of dharmatā reasoning” (*chos nyid kyi rigs pa = dharmatāyukti*) appears to refer to the famous passage in the RGV that runs: *rdzogs sangs sku ni 'phro phyr dang/ /de bzhin nyid dbyer med phyr dang/ /rigs yod phyr na lus can kun/ /rtag tu sangs rgyas snying po can.*

/nyed pa blo bur dang ldan kyang/ /yon tan rang bzhin nyid ldan pas/ /ji ltar sngar bzhin phyi de bzhin/ /'gyur ba med pa'i chos nyid do/.

'od gsal byas min dbyer med par/ /'jug can gang ga'i klung gi ni/ /rdul bas 'das pa'i sangs rgyas kyi/ /chos rnams kun dang yang dag ldan/.

de ltar rigs pa gong ma gnyis kyi gnad kyang chos nyid kyi rigs pa 'di la thug pas dngos mtha' chos nyid la thug nas rgyu mtshan gzhan tshol mi dgos te/.

'ang dus ma grub pa.

dog pa ni don gyis steng na dngos med yin kyang de ltar gzhal ba'i blo don dang mthun pa gang zhig ngo bo gcig pa'i phyr/.

thad pa bcu.

'nang stong gang la gang gis ma khyab med.

ag gnyis kyis gdugs bzung na gyang la mchongs kyang lus mi snang ba sogs dpe.

'ab rtsal gyis rnam par gnong pas zhus pa'i mdo.

snying rje dang bral stong pa nyid lta na/ /des ni lam mchog rnye pa ma yin no/ /'on kyang stong nyid [read snying rje] 'ba zhig bsgom na yang/ /'khor ba 'dir gnas thar pa thob bam ci/.

According to one casual informant, “to be smeared with ashes” is a Tibetan insult, rather like saying someone should be tarred and feathered. This expression might also refer to the Indian ascetic practice of anointing the body with charnel ground ashes, and it might be inferred that some such ascetic practitioners hold such views as mentioned in the present quote.

tog rnams log par gyur pa gang yin pa/ rnam par dpyod pa'i 'bras bur mkhas rnams gsung/.

'nam kun mchog ldan gyi stong pa.

ta 'dod mdor bstan.

'ang gnas chos sku'i rgyal thabs la dbyang 'byor zhing mthar phyin par 'gyur ro/.

'stong nyid snying rje'i snying po can/ byang chub sgrub pa kha cig la'o.

'ul can lta ba'i khyad par.

'bden med tha snyad yod pa'i sngas brten par/ dbu mar rlom nas zhi bar nyal 'dod rnams/ /mthar 'dzin zug rngu cung zad ma bde ba/ /mtha' bral gzu lum yur ba'i sman 'dis bsal/.

The commentator has inserted *smra ba'i senge* to refer to Mipham himself, where the root text simply says, *rong klong zhes grags 'jam dpal dgyes pa'i gar.*

The text adds here: *gzhan zer rjes zlos re byas nas de yang mi thon pa'i ba min glang min de 'dra'i ngal ba mi dgos so//.*

From the conclusion of the *Tsig gsum gnad 'deg*s of dPal sprul Rinpoche. This is one of the quintessential Great Perfection texts commonly practiced by modern Nyingmapa.

gang zhiḡ rgyal ba'i bstan pa 'ba' zhiḡ giḡ / /dbang byas rnam gyeng med yid can gyis byas / /thar pa thob pa'i lam dang rjes 'bral ba / /de yang drang srong bka' bzhiḡ spi bos blangs /.

hyogs re 'jal la yid smon mi dgos slong ba'i re ba chad do kye.

ḡf. pp. 88–89.

ni pham phyogs las rnam rgyal.

ḡgul gyi dong tshe zhes pa'i grangs ldan.

ratijñā = khas len.

This is the objection commonly raised by critics of extrinsic emptiness—that appearances of buddha qualities would have to exist ultimately.

yang la gang med pa de ni des stong ngo / /di la lhag mar gyur pa gang yin pa de ni yod de /. This appears to be a paraphrase of Vasubandhu's commentary on *Madhyāntavibhāṅga*, 1.2, which Mipham quotes in his own *Madhyāntavibhāṅga* commentary, the 'Od zer phreng ba (sDe dge dgon chen edition, vol. pa, p. 663.3–4): de yang ji skad du gang na gang med pa de ni des stong pa yang dag pa ji lta ba bzhiḡ du rjes su mthong ngo / /di la lhag ma yod pa gang yin pa de ni 'dir yod par yang dag par ji lta ba bzhiḡ du rab tu shes te / de ltar stong pa nyid kyī mtshan nyid phyin ci ma log par bstan pa yin no /.

stong nyid kyī go ma chod par.

'khrul pa'i yul yul can so so la 'dzin cing. Translated more literally, this would read "apprehension of individual deluded objects and subjects." I have chosen to translate this phrase as "distinct apprehension of objects by subjects that are deluded about them" because technically, "delusion" ('khrul pa) exists as a property of a subjective perceiver, not of an object.

ha snyad du rang ngos ni mi stong ste 'phags pa'i gzigs ngor yod par 'dod do /.

khrul pa'i 'khor ba dang ma 'khrul pa'i myang 'das gnyis ka yin pa than snyad du nam yang mi srid la.

'khor ba myang 'das kyī gzhi mthun khas len pa med do /. Kazi's edition reads: 'khor 'das gzhi mthun pas len pa med do /.

les na de 'dra ba spros la gnad du khel bar gyis shig /.

Gelugpas would not accept this use of "immune to analysis" (dpyad bzod pa). Instead, they would say here that conventional phenomena are "not harmed by ultimate reasoning" (rigs pas mi gnod pa) even though they are "not found by ultimate reasoning" (rigs pas ma brnyed pa). "Immune to [ultimate] reasoning" (rigs pas dpyad bzod pa) would be the same as "being found by an [ultimate] reasoning" (rigs pas brnyed pa) or "immunity to analysis."

gnyis snang med pa'i yul yul can gnyis ka don dam dang / de yod pa kun rdzob tu 'jog pa'i lugs khas len mi rigs te /.

ḡgos pa is used in the sense of heuristic necessity, while dgongs pa is used in the sense of authorial or pedagogical intent.

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Source Abbreviations in Bibliography

AO	<i>Acta Orientalia</i>
ACIP	CDROM distributed by Asian Classics Input Project
BA	<i>Blue Annals</i> (Roerich, 1988)
BH	<i>Buddhist Hermeneutics</i> (Lopez, 1988)
DR	<i>The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism</i> , vol. 1 (Dudjom Rinpoche, 1991)
EB	<i>Eastern Buddhist</i>
HJAS	<i>Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies</i>
HR	<i>History of Religions</i>
JA	<i>Journal Asiatique</i>
JAAR	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i>
JAH	<i>Journal of Asian History</i>
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
JIABS	<i>Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies</i>
JIBS	<i>Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies</i> (Indogakku Bukkyogakku Jisyo)
JIP	<i>Journal of Indian Philosophy</i>
JJRS	<i>Japanese Journal of Religious Studies</i>
JRAS	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society</i>
JTS	<i>The Journal of the Tibet Society</i>
LTWA	Library of Tibetan Works and Archives (Dharamsala, H.P. India).
PEW	<i>Philosophy East and West</i>
RR	<i>Tibetan Buddhism: Reason and Revelation</i> (Goodman and Davidson, 1992)
RTC	<i>Reflections on Tibetan Culture</i> (Epstein and Sherburne, 1990)
SG	<i>Sudden and Gradual</i> (Gregory, 1986)
STC	<i>Soundings in Tibetan Civilization</i> (Kapstein and Aziz, 1985)
TBF	<i>The Buddhist Forum</i> (Skorupski and Pagel, 1994)
TibS	<i>Tibetan Studies</i> (Uebach and Panglung, 1988)
TibS5	<i>Tibetan Studies, Proceedings of the 5th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies</i> (Shoren Ihara and Zuiho Yamaguchi, 1989)
TibS6	<i>Proceedings of the 6th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies</i> (P. Kvaerne, 1994)
TJ	<i>The Tibet Journal</i>
TP	<i>T'oung Pao</i>
TSHR	<i>Tibetan Studies in Honour of Hugh Richardson</i> (International Seminar on Tibetan Studies)
TTS	<i>Tantric and Taoist Studies in Honour of R.A. Stein</i> (Michel Strickmann, 1981)

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es. *See* gnosis

n. *See* meditational deity

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ñas. *See* calm abiding; transic meditation

'jug. *See* coalescence

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