

WIENER STUDIEN ZUR TIBETOLOGIE UND BUDDHISMUSKUNDE
HEFT 106

GREGORY FORGUES

RADICAL NONDUALITY

JU MIPHAM NAMGYAL GYATSO'S
DISCOURSE ON REALITY



ARBEITSKREIS FÜR TIBETISCHE UND BUDDHISTISCHE STUDIEN UNIVERSITÄT WIEN

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und MARKUS VIEHBECK

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Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	9
INTRODUCTION	11
How Do We Make Sense of Mipham's Project?	14
Mipham's Nonconceptual Nondualism	21
Organization of the Book	29
Sources and Methods	35
PART ONE	
<i>The View of Mipham's Radical Nondualism</i>	
1. The Two Truths in Perspective	45
The Starting Point: Mipham's <i>Nor bu ke ta ka</i>	47
A Translation of <i>Nor bu ke ta ka</i> 4,1–9,5 and BCA 9.2	48
Mipham's Perspectivist Approach to the Two Truths	59
2. The Concealing Truth as an Epistemic Perspective	63
The Concealing as a Cognitive Experience	63
The Concealing as a Manifestation Resulting from Delusion	66
3. The Ultimate Truth from the Perspectives of the Concealing and Ultimate Truths	69
Distinguishing the Conceptual and Nonconceptual Ultimates	69
Mipham's Perspectivist Discourse on the Inexpressible Ultimate	75
The Two Truths from the Perspective of the Nonconceptual Ultimate	78
4. Mipham's Soteriological Inclusivism	85
Mipham's Set of Ascending Views	85
Does Mipham's Perspective-Based Madhyamaka Make Sense?	92
Is Mipham's Soteriological Understanding of the Svātantrika-Prāsaṅgika Distinction Unfounded?	96
Does the <i>Samdhinirmocanasūtra</i> Support Mipham's Interpretation of the Two Truths?	117
5. The Hermeneutical Originality of Mipham's Perspectivist Approach	120
The Definitive Character of the Last Turning of the Wheel	120
The Compatibility of Asaṅga's and Nāgārjuna's Doctrines	122
The Conventional Existence of <i>svasaṃvedana</i>	127

PART TWO

Practice and Conduct in Mipham’s Radical Nondualism

6. Drawing on the Map the Itinerary toward Awakening	135
Starting to Work with the Only “Thing” We Have: Mere Experiences	135
Defining a Method: From Being to Knowing	138
Stage One: The Mereological Reduction of Imputed Wholes into Their Actual Primary Constituents	143
Stage Two: The Epistemic Reduction of Real Objects into Conditioned Cognitions	144
Stage Three: Seeing That Conditioned Cognitions are Primordially Beyond the Four Extremes	154
Stage Four: Seeing That the Nature of Conditioned Cognitions is Beyond the Four Extremes	156
7. The Itinerary Is Not the Journey: The Two Truths in the Context of Practice	158
A Synthesis of Mipham’s Presentation of the Stages of Practice	158
Nonconceptuality and Practice	160
8. The Gradual Way and the Two Truths in Practice: A Translation	166
Introduction to Mipham’s <i>dPyad sgom ’khor lo</i>	166
Translation: A Complete Purification of Mind’s activity Called “The Wheel of Practice of Analytical Investigation”	169
9. The Direct Way and the Two Truths in Practice: A Translation	195
Introduction to Mipham’s <i>De kho na nyid gsal ba’i sgron me</i>	195
Translation: “The Lamp Illuminating Reality,” a Word Commentary of “Refining Gold from Ore,” the Practice of the Thought of Awakening (byang chub sems/bodhicitta)	199

PART THREE

Ground and Result in Mipham’s Radical Nondualism

10. Ground, Path, and Result from the Highest Perspective.....	233
The Ground As the Unity of the Two Truths.....	238
11. The Two Truths from the Highest Perspective: A Translation	255
Introduction to Mipham’s Commentary on Long chen pa’s <i>Yid bzhin mdzod</i> (Chapter 18).....	255
Translations of Longchenpa’s <i>Yid bzhin mdzod</i> (Chapter 18) and <i>Pad ma dkar po ad cit.</i> , and Mipham’s <i>Le’u bco brgyad ’grel</i>	262

CONCLUSION

Reexamining the Monist Hypothesis 299
Mapping Mipham’s Journeys to Freedom 312
Making Sense of Mipham’s Project 317

APPENDICES

A. Instructions to Accomplish Mental Stillness 327
B. Instructions on the Thirty-Seven Aids to Awakening 331

ABBREVIATIONS 341

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Literature
Works of ’Ju Mi pham ’jam byangs rnam rgyal rgya mtsho
and Klong chen rab ’byams 343
Secondary Literature and Translations 345

INDEX 371

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INTRODUCTION

Ju Mipham (1846–1912) was one of the greatest scholars of the Nyingma tradition of Tibetan Buddhism.¹ He spent his life in Kham and is considered to be part of the Rime (*ris med*) tradition of the late nineteenth century. Mipham was one of Tibet's greatest polymaths, his works covering a wide range of subjects including art, language, and science.²

Mipham's influence on Tibetan Buddhist philosophy somewhat eclipsed his other contributions to Tibetan culture. Two thirds of his works consist in subjects connected with philosophical topics such as epistemology, ontology, and metaphysics.³ His interest in writing numerous commentaries on the most important treatises of Indian Buddhism was, according to his biography, a consequence of a request made by his main guru, Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo.⁴ Although the Rime masters benefited from the royal patronage of the king of Derge, Khyentse Wangpo's request may have been a result of the expansion of the Gelugpa (dGe lugs pa) tradition in Kham, as noted by Karma Phuntsho:

The Rime masters were worried that the growing missionary influence of the dGe lugs school was leading to more religious prejudice and proselytization. In addition, they also had strong reservations against the dGe lugs scholasticism, which as codified in individual college *yig chas* and professed through eristic study of formulaic argumentation, from their viewpoint, consisted largely of a narrow and linear understanding of Buddhism through a scholastic pursuit that is practically inept.⁵

1 His full name is 'Ju Mi pham rnam rgyal rgya mtsho. Among his main other names are 'Jam dpal dgyes pa'i rdo rje and Blo gros dri med. For his biography, see Pettit 1999: 1, and Smith 2001: 230–31. An account of Mipham's life can also be found in Schuh 1973, Goodman 1981, and Duckworth 2011.

2 See Phuntsho 2005a: 13.

3 For an overview of his main works, see Phuntsho 2007, which gives a detailed summary of Mipham's writings.

4 'Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse'i dbang po (1820–1892). See Dudjom 1991: 873.

5 See Phuntsho 2005a: 50–51.

As a response to a purely scholastic interpretation of Madhyamaka, Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo asked him to compose commentaries on the main classic texts in order to protect the Nyingma tradition.⁶ Mipham's mission seems to have consisted in ensuring that the specificities of what he considered the highest teachings of the Dzogchen (rDzogs chen) tradition would not be diluted or harmed by scholasticism.⁷

As shown by Mipham's refutation of the well-known Nyingma scholar Damcho,⁸ there were various conflicting Nyingma interpretations of the scriptures. The Nyingmapas indeed did not have an "official" scholastic presentation of their views, and some Nyingma scholars were probably receptive to the sophistication of the Gelug scholastic interpretations. This might have been acceptable as long as only the causal vehicles were concerned, but this intellectual approach to Buddhaharman started to spread and affect the complete Nyingmapa corpus. It is probably on account of such historical developments that Mipham was entrusted by his guru to defend the Nyingma tradition.

In the same way as Tsongkhapa's⁹ interpretation of the two truths (*satyadvaya*) can be seen as a reaction to extreme forms of relativism with regard to the conventional, Mipham's philosophical project could be understood as a move to protect the soteriological approach¹⁰ of his tradition on the level of a scholastic and intellectual approach to the Buddha's teachings.¹¹ As often is the case in Tibetan debates and polemics, Mipham's expositions of crucial points, such as *Nges shes sgron me*,¹² take place within a framework where soteriology and debate are interwoven. The Tibetan way of presenting the view (*lta ba*), the closest thing to what we call "philosophy," marked as it is by scholasticism, represents a map of reality on which a journey to freedom is indicated through a process of liberation. Mipham's philosophy is no exception in this regard.

6 See Duckworth 2008: xxi regarding the fact that contrarily to mKhan po gzhän dga', Mipham's Madhyamaka is typically Nyingma.

7 With the term "scholasticism" in the Tibetan context, I refer to the "highly rationalized approach to Buddhist doctrine" developed by Buddhist monastic colleges (see Kapstein 2011).

8 rDo grub dam chos bzang po.

9 Tsong kha pa blo bzang grags pa (1357–1419).

10 In the context of Buddhism, I use the term "soteriology" to refer to the system of doctrines and practices structuring the path leading to "the release from the predicament in which we find ourselves in a world marked by the evils of suffering and death." (Kapstein 2005: 61).

11 See Jinpa 2002: 34,175 regarding Tsongkhapa's motivations.

12 See Pettit 1999.

As a consequence, the influence of Nāgārjuna, Candrakīrti, Dharmakīrti, Śāntarakṣita, Rongzompa,¹³ Longchenpa,¹⁴ and Gorampa¹⁵ on Mipham's thought is as much dialectical as it is soteriological. Mipham's technical style should not, therefore, mask the fact that he paradoxically used scholasticism to dismantle scholasticism. His aim in all his major works is to distinguish intellectual pursuits from the sphere of primordial wisdom (*ye shes*), an important point we will further analyze in the first part of the book. In this respect, the influence of the famous Dzogchenpa Longchenpa (1308–1364) on his works cannot be overstated. Likewise, the role played by Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo in shaping Mipham's Madhyamaka, although rarely stressed, was probably significant, particularly with regard to its nonsectarian approach. Across his major works, Mipham repeatedly acknowledges that his guru was his main source of inspiration, so much so that Mipham seems to have considered himself as nothing more than Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo's scribe, putting into writing, albeit in a more scholastic and technical way, his guru's teaching and spiritual instructions.¹⁶ According to Mipham's biography, Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo appears to have considered Mipham's view to be undifferentiated from his own. In addition, it is well known that Mipham studied under Dza Patrul, one of the greatest Nyingma scholars of the time.¹⁷

Although Mipham's main sources of inspiration were diverse, an informed reader cannot help but feel struck by the systematic aspect of his thought. When we examine Mipham's carefully crafted network of doctrines across his major works, it is undeniable that we find ourselves in presence of a deliberate project, or as Foucault would have put it, a "projection" of ideas in which dispersion lines and regular patterns can be identified. The present study is therefore not an historical analysis showing how Mipham's thought came to be, but an exploration of what his overarching project is about. In this book, I understand Mipham's project as a form of nondualism that is not just about the view, but also about the path and the result of

13 Rong zom chos kyi bzang po (1040–1159).

14 Klong chen rab 'byams pa dri med 'od zer (1308–1364).

15 Go rams pa bsod nams seng ge (1429–1489).

16 'Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse'i dbang po (1820–1892). Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo's writings should be examined in order to assess the role played by the most prominent figure of the Ris med tradition on Mipham's philosophy.

17 rDza dPal sprul (1808–1887). Prof. Kapstein stressed to me in a private communication the importance of Kathog Getse Pañchen (Kaḥ thog Ge rtse paṅ chen 'gyur med mchog grub, 1761–1829) in Nyingma scholasticism. This scholar could have also influenced Mipham, a point that would require further investigation.

the path. From this perspective, Mipham's vision of nonduality is radical in that it is ontological, cognitive, soteriological, and inseparable from nonconceptuality. In the following pages, I therefore define Mipham's project in three points to establish my interpretation of his thought:

Argument 1: Mipham's ultimate view is a form of ontological nondualism that is nonconceptual since he understands ultimate realization to be free from conceptualization in terms of categories, divisions, or any other kind of concept whatsoever.

Argument 2: When Mipham's nondualism is expounded through concepts (for example "unity as oneness," *gcig pa'i zung 'jug*), the doctrine he presents is necessarily of provisional meaning for the simple reason that he considers any conceptual representation of reality, be it in terms of the two truths or buddha nature, as propaedeutic and belonging to a viewpoint that cannot represent the highest level of his view. However, he teaches this approach in the context of practice since, in his tradition, the actual and unmediated realization of ontological nondualism is attained through practices based on cognitive nondualism.

Argument 3: Mipham's nonconceptual nondualism is also soteriological since he considers that the relationship between the starting point of the spiritual journey toward liberation (i.e., the ground of being) and the destination itself (i.e., the result) is beyond conceptual distinctions expressing identity or separation.

How Do We Make Sense of Mipham's Project?

Several of Mipham's most important works have been translated into western languages, and central aspects of his philosophical system have been documented by Buddhist Studies researchers. This wealth of material now makes possible the interpretation of his thought according to conceptual frameworks that are not strictly Buddhist or Tibetan. In a word, we are now in a position to ask ourselves a fascinating question, namely, how do we make sense of Mipham's project from a cross-cultural perspective?¹⁸ While I am aware that there might be no definitive answer to this question, I certainly hope that the present study will contribute to the collec-

¹⁸ In the present study, the expression "cross-cultural" simply means "across cultures." It is used in a theory-neutral way.

tive effort of understanding Mipham's thought and relating it to conceptual frameworks we find useful to describe what it is we understand about religious views in general.

The growth of knowledge is cumulative, and in the course of my research I relied on several excellent books without which I would not have engaged with Mipham's philosophy in the way I did. Apart from Mipham's works themselves, I thus extensively consulted the following monographs: Tauscher, *Die Lehre von den zwei Wirklichkeiten in Tson kha pas Madhyamaka-Werken* (1995); Mathes, *Unterscheidung der Gegebenheiten von ihrem wahren Wesen* (1996); Williams, *The Reflexive Nature of Awareness* (1998); Pettit, *Mipham's Beacon of Certainty* (1999); Arguillère, *L'Opalescent Joyau Nor-bu ke-ta-ka* (2004); Phuntsho, *Mipham's Dialectics and the Debates on Emptiness* (2005); Thakchoe, *The Two Truths Debate* (2007); Duckworth, *Mipam on Buddha Nature* (2008);¹⁹ Viehbeck, *Polemics in Indo-Tibetan Scholasticism* (2014).

To briefly explain why I consider these monographs essential with regard to the topic at hand, a few words on their respective subjects will suffice. Tauscher presents extensively the Gelugpa position regarding the two truths on the basis of Tsongkhapa's exposition, which is important to grasp since Mipham was actively involved in debates with Gelug scholars. Mathes gives a translation into German of Mipham's commentary on the *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga* showing the complexity of Tibetan hermeneutics with regard to the Maitreya works. Williams 1998 presents Mipham's acceptance of the conventional existence of reflexive awareness (*svasaṃvedana*) in the context of the polemics in which he was involved following the publication of his *Nor bu ke ta ka*. Pettit's exposition and translation of Mipham's *Nges shes sgron me* is a groundbreaking study that offers some stimulating insights into Mipham's philosophy and its connection to Dzogchen. It was followed by Arguillère's complete translation of the *Nor bu ke ta ka* into French and Phuntsho's thorough study of Mipham's doctrine of emptiness. Thakchoe, on his side, gives a useful general account of the Tibetan hermeneutical debates about the two truths (with an emphasis on the positions of Tsongkhapa and Gorampa). In his thorough survey of the polemics between Mipham and the Gelug scholar Pari Rabsal,²⁰ Viehbeck examines the topics at the heart of these debates. Cabezón and Dargyay offer a translation and a detailed presentation of Gorampa's renowned refutation of Tsongkhapa and Dolpopa,²¹ while Duckworth's research thoroughly documents Mipham's position on the *tathāgatagarbha* issue.

19 Duckworth chose to transliterate Mipham's name as "Mipam."

20 dPa' ris Rab gsal (1840–1912).

21 Dol po pa Shes rab rgyal mtshan (1292–1361).

A few additional important articles and short thematic studies about Mipham's thought have also significantly contributed to shedding light on important aspects of Mipham's works: Kawamura (1981, 1983) and Goodman (1981) analyze the *mKhas pa'i tshul la 'jug pa'i sgo*; Lipman (1981) investigates controversial aspects of the *dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad*; Mimaki (1982a) lists Mipham's main works and presents a summary of his commentary on the *Jñānasamuccaya*; Ehrhard (1988) examines the Nyingma Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka; Kapstein (2001) explores Mipham's hermeneutic approach; Dreyfus (2003a) analyzes Mipham's treatment of the Svātantrika-Prāsaṅgika distinction; Wangchuk (2004) presents the Nyingma interpretation of *tathāgatagarbha*; Duckworth (2005) provides some insights into Mipham's conception of *tathāgatagarbha* in relation to the unity of the two truths; Phuntsho (2007) gives a summary of Mipham's main works and their available translations; Viehbeck (2009) examines Mipham's interpretation of the two truths as found in the *Nor bu ke ta ka*; Duckworth (2008) studies in detail Mipham's interpretation of the *tathāgatagarbha*.²²

Most of the monographs and articles mentioned above focus on a specific aspect of Mipham's philosophy, or dialectical approach,²³ through broad concepts such as emptiness (*śūnyatā*),²⁴ buddha nature (*tathāgatagarbha*),²⁵ the Svātantrika-Prāsaṅgika distinction, or the conventional existence of reflexive awareness (*svasaṃvedana*).²⁶ This initial wave of research documented Mipham's interpretation of Madhyamaka through the philosophical "markers" mentioned above in order to locate his position within the Tibetan hermeneutical debate.

Following this first phase, which prioritized the doctrinal aspects of Mipham's philosophy,²⁷ more recent research attempted to make sense of Mipham's project by providing an interpretation of his doctrine from a cross-cultural perspective. Duckworth (2008) thus presented Mipham's philosophy as a form of "dialectical monism." By using this term, Duckworth initiated for the first time a discussion

22 The following translations of some of Mipham's most important works have also been consulted: Dharmachakra 2006a, 2009, 2013, 2014, 2015; Hopkins 2006b; Kunsang 1997, 2000, 2002; Gentry/Kunsang 2012; Padmakara 2002, 2005, 2007. In the time between the completion of the present study and its publication, several other translations and monographs have been published: Cabezón 2017; Padmakara 2017, 2018; Sherab 2018; Cook 2019.

23 The adjective "dialectical" is used here in its nontechnical sense and refers here to what is related to the logical discussion of ideas. In the context of "dialectical monism," this word carries a more specialized and philosophical meaning, which I have addressed in the conclusion of the book.

24 Tib. *stong pa nyid*.

25 Tib. *de bzhin gshegs pa'i snying po*.

26 Tib. *rang rig*.

27 See for example Williams 1998a, Pettit 1999, Phuntsho 2005a, Thakchoe 2007.

of Mipham's project that does not solely rely on Buddhist categories and concepts. Wangchuk (2012, 2019²⁸), for his part, interpreted Mipham's philosophy as a "doctrine of unity," which he terms Yuganaddhavāda. Duckworth and Wangchuk did not merely elucidate Mipham's doctrinal positions by presenting his views with regard to a set of important topics. Rather, they both attempted to make sense of Mipham's overall project, which, in my view, makes their research quite significant for anyone interested in understanding Mipham's thought from a macroscopic perspective. Wangchuk's position will be examined next, since it is an essential contribution to determining what I consider to be the designing principle structuring Mipham's entire project.²⁹ It is only, however, in the conclusion of this book that I will discuss Duckworth's own interpretation, since it deals with the meaning and nature of Mipham's entire project.

Describing a Tibetan author's doctrine through the lens of Tibetan interpretations of Indian Buddhist philosophical positions can be methodologically problematic, if one uses uncritically concepts that have their own historicity. For instance, if the Svātantrika-Prāsaṅgika distinction is a Tibetan invention, as pointed out by Mipham in his *Nor bu ke ta ka*,³⁰ labeling Śāntarakṣita as a Svātantrika-Mādhyamika could be seen, from an etic perspective, anachronic, and it would not tell us much *in fine* about his work. It would be one thing to say that Śāntarakṣita is a Svātantrika-Mādhyamika according to Tsongkhapa. It is yet another to say that he is a Svātantrika-Mādhyamika *tout court*.³¹ The difference would be that in the first case one reports Tsongkhapa's view, whereas, in the second, one reports one's own. Static presentations of successive strata of ideas that in fact, like shifting tectonic plates, traveled within Indian Buddhist traditions, are often based on an artificial and illusory notion of philosophical synchronicity. This results in a great deal of oversimplifications with respect to the dynamic and evolutionary nature of the various Indian and Tibetan Buddhist traditions. Such oversimplifications tend to ignore the dynamic nature of scholastic doctrines as a consequence of processes of

28 I would like to thank warmly Prof. Dorji Wangchuk for making his article available to me ahead of its publication.

29 By "designing principle," I mean the principle that holds Mipham's entire doctrine together by linking the different doctrinal components of his philosophical approach into a consistent whole. As will be explained, technical terms such as *zung 'jug*, *gnyis med*, *mnyam nyid*, and *dbyer med* play an important role in designing a thread running through Mipham's entire work.

30 See *Nor bu ke ta ka* 6,3.

31 Blumenthal's study of the dGe lugs interpretation of Śāntarakṣita shows the distortions of facts induced by an ahistorical method of investigation mainly based on arguments of authority. See Blumenthal 2004: 210, 214, 220, 227–32.

appropriation, adaptation, or assimilation. From a diachronic perspective, doctrinal tensions could, for example, result from the need to integrate new ideas into an existing body of theories. The complexity of these evolutions is not made apparent in the synchronic, and often uncritical, presentation of doctrinal positions transmitted by the various Tibetan traditions. In the somewhat artificial Tibetan doxographic reconstructions, philosophical views are disconnected from their historically dynamic and intertwined nature.³² Mipham's relative freedom from *tenets*, his interest in absorbing valuable *teachings*, and his willingness to harmonize conflicting approaches show that he was well aware of this issue.

Wangchuk does not fall into this methodological pitfall. Instead of using uncritically a philosophical category taken from the traditional Tibetan doxographical framework of Buddhist views, he suggests the neo-Sanskritism Yuganaddhavāda (i.e., “doctrine of unity”) as an expression encapsulating the essence of Mipham's philosophy.³³ Through this label, Wangchuk aims at characterizing Mipham's project as a discourse centered on the notion of “unity” (*yuganaddha* in Sanskrit, *zung du 'jug pa* or *zung 'jug* in Tibetan).³⁴ We find several translations of *yuganaddha* in

32 See Huntington 2003: 73: “In fact, once we free ourselves from the uncritical habit of reading Indian sources through scholastic categories provided by later doxographers it becomes immediately evident that there were no Mahāyāna schools during the early period, only ‘Mahāyānist thinkers’ who represented various ‘tendencies.’” Tillemans (1990: 54–65) opts for a different strategy and suggests new definitions for Madhyamaka and Yogācāra: “Both Yogācāra and Madhyamaka maintain that objects are reducible to mind, but the Yogācārin, in addition, maintains that the mind is more real than the object. For a Mādhyamika like Candrakīrti, however, the same arguments which he applies to objects are also applied to the mind, and hence both are on the same footing, neither is more real nor more logically consistent than the other and both have the same conventional existence.” It is interesting to note that Tillemans, recognizing the artificial character of these classifications, seeks better definitions than those of the tradition. Dreyfus (2003b: 192) makes the following pragmatic remark about these categories: “The grouping [of authors into schools] is an attempt by late Indian and Tibetan commentators to bring order to the jungle of conflicting ideas in the commentarial literature. As such, the scheme is a reductive simplification and its applicability is limited, particularly, for earlier thinkers.” One could add that this applicability is also limited if one aims at providing a cultural translation of Tibetan Buddhist thought.

33 See Wangchuk 2012, in which the author introduces *yuganaddha* (*zung 'jug*) as a central aspect of Mipham's philosophy. Wangchuk 2019 is a brilliant enquiry of Mipham's Yūganaddhavāda with a focus on the terminology used to develop this approach. It also offers a presentation of Mipham's central ideas and concepts related to the concept of *yuganaddha*. This article is a great piece of scholarship and is one of the best available summaries of Mipham's approach.

34 See Wangchuk 2012 and 2019. “...there is still a need to define and refine our understanding of—as I prefer to call it—Yūganaddhavāda (*zung 'jug tu smra ba*) philosophy, namely, by (a) explicating some of the tacit assumptions underlying his *yuganaddha*-related (*zung 'jug*) thought,

the secondary literature. Broido (1984, 1985a) and Seyfort Ruegg (1989) offer a detailed discussion of its etymology. In the Sanskrit language, *yuganaddha* simply expresses the idea of being yoked together. Possible translations for this term include “unity,” “coupling,” “unity,” “fusion,” “coalescence,” and “integration.”³⁵ Snellgrove (1959, 1987) and Seyfort Ruegg (1989) explain that the relation qualified by the term *yuganaddha* denotes the co-occurrence of two elements in a way implying simultaneity, nondifferentiation, nonduality, inseparability, or coincidence. Just like two oxen that are yoked together, one does not go or is not found without the other. After a careful examination of the primary and secondary literature, I finally chose to translate *zung ’jug* with the English word “unity,” after having considered “coalescence.”

Studying the concept of *yuganaddha* in Buddhist scriptures is clearly beyond the scope of this study.³⁶ It is, however, important to note that this term is widely found across Buddhist texts displaying a variety of doctrinal views. This expression is consequently (a) far from being specific to Mipham, and (b) not particularly informative from a doctrinal perspective.³⁷ In the Derge Kanjur (*sDe dge bKa’ ’gyur*) alone, the term appears in 25 texts, mostly tantras. Among sūtras, it only appears in two texts belonging to the *mDo sde* section of the Kanjur, one of them being the *Samdhinirmocana Sūtra*. Among the nondual tantras (*gnyis med kyi rgyud*) and mother tantras (*rnal ’byor ma’i rgyud*), the term does not seem to play a central role. The situation is different, though, in the father tantras in which it is widely used, as in the case of the *Śrījñānavajrasamuccaya* (D450) and *Śrīsarvatathāgataguhyatantrayogamahārājādvyayasamatāvijaya* (D453). In the Tanjur (*bsTan ’gyur*), *zung ’jug* or *zung du ’jug pa* occurs 1622 times across more than 200 texts covering all genres present in the canonical literature. As is well known, some commentarial textual traditions rely heavily on this term, as demonstrated by the group of texts related to the *Guhyasamāja* and *Pañcakrama*. The term *zung ’jug* is also found across all

(b) tracking down and discussing his definitions and synonyms of *yuganaddha*, (c) presenting his ideas relating to faulty notions of *yuganaddha*, (d) proposing a typology of core *yuganaddha* concepts defined or redefined by him, and (e) systematizing various strategies or arguments employed by him for establishing a *yuganaddha* relationship between any two opposed or juxtaposed poles.” (Wangchuk 2019: 273).

35 For an exhaustive list of translations in the academic literature, see Forgues, *forthcoming*, Appendix A.

36 See Broido 1985bc and Seyfort Ruegg 1989 for a discussion of the usage of *yuganaddha* in Buddhist literature.

37 For a list of the precise location of all the occurrences of the term *zung ’jug* in the Tibetan canon, refer to Forgues, *forthcoming*, Appendix B.

sections of the Nyingma Gyubum (*rNying ma rgyud 'bum*) as it appears altogether more than 200 times in 99 texts.³⁸ If we now turn to the BDRC repository of e-texts mainly comprising large collections of texts in the form of collected works composed by major figures of the four Tibetan traditions, it appears that the term *zung 'jug* is widely used across all schools. It is found in 327 collections of texts out of 514 at the time of consulting BDRC database, where it occurs over 23,000 times.³⁹

In light of this, one might argue—tongue in cheek—that expounding a nonsectarian doctrine grounded in the notion of unity (*zung 'jug*) or inseparability (*dbyer med*) could potentially simplify the Tibetan hermeneutical debate to the lowest common denominator between the positions of the four Tibetan schools, since this term is included in doctrinal discourses shared by all these traditions. However, as a label to designate Mipham's view, this term is rather unsatisfactory considering that it is so widely used in the Tibetan Buddhist literature.⁴⁰ One may ask, in

38 For a list of the precise location of all the occurrences of the term *zung 'jug* in the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum*, refer to Forgues, *forthcoming*, Appendix C. Significant texts in this regard include *rDzogs pa chen po chos nyid byang chub kyi sems bkra shis mi 'gyur bar gsal bar gnas pa'i rgyud* for Atiyoga; *sGyu 'phrul thal ba'i rgyud chen*, *Bla ma'i gsang rgyud bka'i bang mdzod*, *bCom ldan 'das bde bar gshegs pa thams cad kyi sku gsung thugs gsang ba ye shes kyi snying po thams cad yongs su rdzogs shing 'dus pa dpal gsang ba 'dus pa'i rgyud chen po*, *dPal pad+ma gar gyi dbang phyug gis dregs pa can gzan la 'bebs pa'i phrin las kyi rgyud*, *dPal khrag 'thung gyal po*, *rDzogs pa chen po sku gsum ye shes lnga'i don bshad pa nyi zla kha sbyor seng ge sgra yi dgongs pa bshad pa'i rgyud*, *Theg pa chen po'i mngon par rtogs pa byang chub lam gyi rgyud chen nam mkha' dang mnyam pa*, *'Bras bu gsang ba bla na med pa'i rgyud chen po dri ma med pa'i snying po*, and *Pad+ma dbang chen dregs pa gsang byed kyi rgyud* for Mahāyoga.

39 For a list of the precise location of all the occurrences of the term *zung 'jug* in BDRC's digitized collections, refer to Forgues, *forthcoming*, Appendix D. Among these texts, major compilations of teachings (i.e., *bKa' brgyud pa'i phyag chen chos skor*, *rGyud sde spyi'i dgongs 'grel*, *Sa skya'i mkha' spyod be'u bum*, *sGrub thabs kun btus*, *Sa skya bka' 'bum*, *Rin chen gter mdzod*, *gDams ngag mdzod*, and *Shes bya kun khyab mdzod*) stand out, as do the *gsung 'bum* of central figures of Tibetan Buddhism, such as *tā ra nā tha*, *'Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse'i dbang po*, *Ngag dbang kun dga' bsod nams* (Sakya Trichen Amye Zhab Ngawang Kunga Sonam), *gTer chos rtsa gsum gling pa*, *'Jig rten mgon po*, *Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho* (Fifth Dalai Lama), *Kun bzang nyi ma* (Nyingma tertön Dzongter Kunsang Nyima), *Shākya mchog ldan*, *Pad+ma dkar po*, *Chos kyi grags pa* (Drikung Chungtsang Rigzin Chokyi Drakpa), *Grags pa bshad sgrub* (Gelug Chone Lama Drakpa Shedrup), *Rang byung rdo rje* (Third Karmapa Rangjung Dorje), *Dri med 'od zer* (Longchenpa), *Tshe dbang nor bu* (seventeenth-century Nyingma master), *Shes bya kun rig* (Sakya master Rongton Sheja Kunrik), and *bSod nams seng+ge kun mkhyen go rams pa*. These results were produced at the time of writing my dissertation from which this monograph is drawn. Since then, BDRC added a significant number of digital texts to its collection.

40 I refer the reader to Forgues, *forthcoming*, Appendices B, C, and D, in which I document the usage of the term *zung 'jug* in the Kanjur, Tanjur, and Nyingma Gyubum (*rNying ma rgyud 'bum*). Since the term is widely used in a variety of contexts, the doctrinal content of any putative form

which way is the doctrine of unity (*yuganaddha*) characteristic of Mipham’s philosophical project? To paraphrase Matthew Kapstein’s famous statement about Shentongpas (*gzhan stong pa*), one could venture to ask whether we are not all Yuganaddhavādins after all.⁴¹ Since a doxographic notion only makes sense if it is helpful to produce a typology of positions in relation to their proponents, one must conclude that the Sanskrit neologism Yuganaddhavāda somewhat fails to characterize Mipham’s view. In addition, on account of the complex Sanskrit terminology it relies upon, it somewhat shifts the burden of making sense of Mipham’s project from the Tibetan Buddhist specialist to the general reader interested in understanding what Mipham’s view is about.

Mipham’s Nonconceptual Nondualism

A study of frequent collocations throughout Mipham’s Collected Works shows that his highest view on reality (e.g., *gnas lugs*, *chos dbyings*, *de bzhin nyid*, *de kho na nyid*) is formulated through technical terms delineating three specific intertwined semantic spaces:⁴²

- A nonduality (e.g., *gnyis med*),
- B inseparability/nondifferentiation (e.g., *zung ’jug*, *dbyer med*, *mnyam pa*, *mnyam nyid*, *ro mnyam*),
- C nonconceptuality/inexpressibility (e.g., *mtha’ bral*, *brjod bral*, *spros bral*).

From that perspective, Wangchuk’s claim of the central role played by the notion of unity (*zung ’jug*) in Mipham’s philosophy is not without basis. Together with *dbyer med* (“inseparable”) and *gnyis med* (“nondual”), this term is one of the most frequently and widely used by Mipham to describe the nature of reality. In fact, Mipham employs these synonyms in all his major works ranging from dialectical texts to Dzogchen pith instructions.⁴³

of Yuganaddhavāda remains unclear, hence questioning the usefulness of this new doxographical notion.

41 See “We Are All Gzhan stong pas” (Kapstein 2000a).

42 This phase of this research process was performed using text mining algorithms. Word embeddings and semantic similarity have been used to determine these three semantic spaces. See the sub-chapter on Sources and Methods below for a detailed explanation about the corpus-based methodology of my study.

43 A complete mapping of the term *zung ’jug* across Mipham’s Collected Works can be found in Forgues, *forthcoming*, Appendix E. Significant texts with regard to this point include the following works: W2DB16631, Volume 13: *dBu ma la ’jug pa’i ’grel pa zla ba’i zhal lung dri med shel phreng*, *dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad ’jam dbyangs bla ma dgyes pa’i zhal lung*, *rNying btsun dam*

However, what is important to note in the present case is that *zung 'jug* represents only one component of a much wider discourse on reality. A semantic mapping of key terms by means of a word-embedding algorithm reveals that all these expressions are semantic equivalents or semantically interrelated terms sharing the same context words. In this semantic network, the most frequent elements preceding *zung 'jug* and its synonyms are *snang stong* (“appearance and emptiness”) and *bden gnyis* (“the two truths”). Other important pairs include *dbyings ye*, *zhi lhag*, *dbyings rig*, *rig stong*, *bde stong*, *gsal stong*, *stong rten 'byung*, *e waM*, *thabs shes*, *bskyed rdzogs*, *sku thugs*, *sku gnyis*, and *sems*.⁴⁴ From this analysis, one concludes that Mipham’s discourse on reality aims at unveiling a primordial nonconceptual state in which, by way of transitivity, appearance, awareness (i.e., luminosity), and emptiness are in complete unity. I therefore suggest we understand the meaning of Mipham’s highest view as a form of ontological and cognitive nondualism in the way it is defined by Anne Klein.⁴⁵

We could add to these two forms of nondualism the notion of “soteriological nondualism” to denote Mipham’s central idea that reality as the ground of being (*gzhi*), the starting point of the path toward liberation, and the result (*'bras bu*) of the path also stand in a nondual relation that is free from conceptualizations in terms of identity or difference. In Mipham’s philosophy, ontological, cognitive, and soteriological nondualism are inseparable notions used to describe the highest nature of reality. Ontological nondualism means that reality is free from concepts of existence and nonexistence, while cognitive nondualism stresses the

chos bzang po'i dogs sel; Volume 17: *Nges shes rin po che'i sgron me*, *dBu ma sogs gzhung spyi'i dka' gnad skor gyi gsung sgras sna tshogs phyogs gcig tu bsdu pa rin po che'i za ma tog*; Volume 18: *Shes rab kyi le'u'i tshig don go sla bar rnam par bshad pa nor bu ke ta ka*, *gZhan gyis brtsad pa'i lan mdor bsdu pa rigs lam rab gsal de nyid snang byed*; Volume 19: *Rim lnga'i zin bris thor bu*, *gSang 'dus rim lnga'i mchan dkyus su bkod pa'i 'grel chung zung 'jug nor bu'i sgron me*; Volume 21: *dPal dus kyi 'khor lo'i rgyud kyi tshig don rab tu gsal byed rdo rje nyi ma'i snang ba*; Volume 22: *dPal dus kyi 'khor lo'i rgyud kyi tshig don rab tu gsal byed rdo rje nyi ma'i snang ba*; Volume 23: *gSang 'grel phyogs bcu'i mun sel gyi spyi don 'od gsal snying po*, *Zhal gdams lam rim ye shes snying po'i bsdu don*, *rGyud lung man ngag gi tshig don cung zad bshad pa dri med shel gyi me long*; Volume 24: *gNyug sems 'od gsal gyi don rgyal ba rig 'dzin brgyud pa'i lung bzhin brjod pa rdo rje snying po*, *gNyug sems 'od gsal gyi don la dpyad pa rdzogs pa chen po gzhi lam 'bras bu'i shan 'byed blo grol snang ba*; Volume 32: *'Od gsal thod rgal gyi nyams len nyung ngur dril ba shin tu gces pa'i man ngag*. Source: The Buddhist Digital Resource Center (BDRC), Mipham’s digitized Collected Works (*gsung 'bum*).

44 See the complete list of collocations in Forgues, *forthcoming*, Appendix F.

45 See Klein 2008: 21, fn.136: “I refer to this as “cognitive nondualism,” the experienced dissolution of separation between subject and object.” And also: “Middle Way Buddhist philosophy emphasizes what I call ontological nondualism, meaning that emptinesses and dependent arisings are indivisible...”.

fact that reality is free from mental proliferations in terms of subject and object. Mipham thus writes:

The apprehended [object] and the apprehending [subject] are alike in the sphere of the fundamental sameness free from attributes. Free from [all] assertions such as existence or nonexistence, and so forth, the direct experience of the ultimate natural state (*don gyi rang bab*), which cannot be expressed through words, manifests. This is the real nature of all phenomena. Since the actual ultimate must be known for oneself (*so so rang gis rig bya ba*), it is the primordial wisdom of the nonconceptual state of attention (*mnyam bzhag, samāhita*). When you are familiar with this state, the unity of emptiness and dependent arising, the fundamental condition in which the two truths are inseparable,⁴⁶ you have attained the *yoga* of the great Madhyamaka. Being beyond the sphere of mind, it is quickly actualized by means of nondual primordial wisdom.⁴⁷

The cognitive mode of realization of the nature of reality is itself nondual, meaning here nonconceptual.⁴⁸ Mipham thus does not reify nondual primordial wisdom *qua* reality as any kind of entity in terms of oneness or multiplicity as perceived by an external subject:

As for the individual defining characteristic of the flawless practice of the fundamental state or nature of the thought of awakening that is completely purified of mental proliferations and the benefit of directly realizing it, when this sublime perfection of the ultimate thought of awakening is realized in a nondual way by someone who has a mind capable

46 Dependent arising and manifesting as an experience are equated here. Mipham sees all these definitions of the concealing truth as variations of the same idea according to various contexts.

47 *dPyad sgom 'khor lo 18: /gzung dang 'dzin pa rnam bral ba'i/ /mnyam pa nyid kyi dbyings su mnyam/ /yod med la sogs khas len bral/ /brjod med don gyi rang bab la/ /the tshom med pa'i nyams myong 'char/ /de ni chos kun chos nyid de/ /rnam grangs min pa'i don dam pa/ /so so rang gis rig bya bar/ /mnyam bzhag mi rtog ye shes yin/ /de yi ngang la goms pa na/ /stong dang rten 'byung zung 'jug pa/ /bden gnyis dbyer med gnas lugs don/ /dbu ma chen po'i rnal 'byor yin/ /don de sems kyi spyod yul dang / /bral bar gnyis med ye shes kyis/ /myur ba nyid du mngon byed par/* This quotation is drawn from the complete translation of the text in Chapter 8.

48 See Kapstein 1988: 161 on the difference between consciousness (*rnam shes*) and nondual primordial wisdom (*ye shes*) in Mipham's theory of interpretation. In the latter, all processes of objectification through dichotomies are terminated.

of understanding the *dharmadhātu*. At that time, that which is the supreme *kāya*, the basis of primordial wisdom, sublime activities, and the two material *kāyas*, among the three *kāyas* of awakening (i.e., *dharmakāya*, *sambhogakāya*, and *nirmāṇakāya*) is called *dharmakāya* by the victors.⁴⁹ ... This supreme path, which points out the thought of awakening in terms of nonduality (i.e., the absence of dualism) for the sake of beings, this clear path of the victorious ones of the three times, has been summed up and well expounded.⁵⁰

According to Mipham, since there is no distinction between object and subject within the sphere of reality, such dualistic differentiations do not reflect the way things are:

Although the *dharmadhātu* is understood [as being nondual], when, in reliance upon the way things appear, one establishes distinctions through a mere conventional approach, [these distinctions] are included in deceptive appearance. When one analyzes the entire set of phenomena of saṃsāric appearances, which are conceptualized in terms of subject and object (*gzung 'dzin*), nothing is [found to be] true. Being unstable, they are impermanent. Therefore, a phenomenon bearing this deceptive property is a concealing truth.⁵¹

The absence of any possible closure conveyed by words regarding the nature of reality is the meaning of ontological nondualism.⁵² As mentioned above, this explains

49 *De kho na nyid gsal ba'i sgron me* 469: *spros pa rnam par dag pa'i byang chub sems kyi rang bzhin nam ngang tshul ma nor bar bsgom pa dang de mngon du gyur pa'i yon tan gyi khyad par ni/ chos dbyings rtogs nus pa'i blo ldan des nam zhig don dam byang chub sems kyi dam pa de ni gnyis su med pa'i tshul du mngon du gyur pa na/ de la ni chos longs sprul pa ste sku gsum gyi nang na ye shes dang phrin las gzugs sku gnyis po'i rten du gyur pa sogs mchog tu gyur pa chos kyi sku zhes rgyal bas gsung so/* Quotations from this work are drawn from the complete translation of the text in Chapter 9.

50 *De kho na nyid gsal ba'i sgron me* 492: *gnyis med byang chub kyi sems ston pa'i lam mchog dus gsum sangs rgyas rnams kyi gshegs shul nyid gsal ba 'di ni mdor bsdu te rab tu bgyis pa.*

51 *Le'u bco brgyad 'grel* 568: */dbyings de lta bu yin du zin kyang snang tshul la brten nas tha snyad tsam gyi tshul gyis so sor rab tu dbye na/ 'di ltar 'khrul snang gis bsdu pa gzung 'dzin gyi rtog pa'i dbang gis snang ba 'khor ba'i chos su rtogs pa thams cad/ brtag na mi bden zhing g.yo zhing mi rtog pas na bslu ba'i chos can kun rdzob kyi bden pa yin la/*

52 With this statement, I refer to an important point made by Kapstein regarding Mipham's interpretation of the doctrine of buddha nature and extrinsic emptiness: "With this in mind, it will be seen that Mipham in a sense defuses the explosive challenge of Dölpopa's teaching by insisting that, if extrinsic emptiness is to be affirmed at all, it must be as an aspect of the reasoning that in-

why the nondual ultimate is expressed through synonyms implying freedom from mental proliferations, nonconceptuality, unity, inseparability, or sameness, which are all conventional designations standing for that which is inexpressible. In Mi-pham's view, nonduality implies, from the highest perspective, a nonconceptual state free from mental proliferations (*spros bral*), beyond even the notion of dualism and nondualism:⁵³

[Phenomena] comprised of both affliction and purification are not established. Therefore, both awakening, the state of those who are awakened, and the state of non-awakening, the state of [ordinary] beings, are fundamentally the same, being devoid of [any] defining characteristics. [481] Since they are the same, there is [nothing], no awakening, no state of being an ordinary being, to obtain or to reject. If also even that which is called "ultimate" does not exist, how could there be even words stating "The [ultimate] is like that"? When one investigates [this matter] according to the abovementioned explanation, [it appears that] these [designations] are expressions, or names for the ultimate, such as "that which is beyond arising and cessation," "fundamental sameness" (*mnyam nyid*), "nonduality," "that which is beyond thoughts," "emptiness," "that which is called *dharmadhātu*," "freedom from conventional designations," and so forth. All these descriptions [of the ultimate] are conventional designations made in order to instruct [beings].

investigates conventions and *not* the absolute." (Kapstein 2009: 65). It seems that any discourse on what is conceived to be primordially ineffable and nonconceptual by nature must be formulated with a propaedeutic intent. If this holds true, using cataphatic language in an effective propaedeutic way (i.e., without triggering any reification process regarding reality in the participants' minds) hinges on making clear that this discourse actually deals with conventions, and not with "the real thing." Hence the importance of distinguishing the notional and the actual ultimates, a central point for Longchenpa (through the *sems/rig pa* distinction), Gorampa, and Mi-pham.

- 53 See Kapstein 2009: 64: "For this reason, there is an important sense in which the ultimate cannot be in the scope of thought, and even such notions as 'freedom from the proliferation of dichotomous categories' and 'accord between reality and appearance' must be themselves understood as elements of conventional reasoning, which generates conceptual models in order to think an absolute that it can never attain. Indeed, because thinking cannot escape its inherent basis in binary processing, even our modeling of the absolute interprets its realization in terms of an object of insight, namely emptiness, and a subject, primordial wisdom (*jñāna*), whereby emptiness is realized. Mi-pham's technical vocabulary systematically differentiates, therefore, between two quite different types of subject-object distinction: the phenomenal apprehended object and apprehending subject (*gzung-'dzin*) of ordinary mundane consciousness, and the notional object and subject (*yul yul can*) posited as a model in order to speak of what is in fact the nondual realization of emptiness."

From the perspective of the genuine definitive meaning [of the teaching], the ultimate does not exist, and that which is called “the completely obscuring [truth]” (*kun sgrib ba*), or “the thoroughly concealing [truth]” (*kun rdzob*), also does not exist. On account of the way the ultimate is, insofar as it is not merely a conventional designation, if what is meant by the statement “this path is nothing but this” existed as an object, this very [thing] would be completely obscuring, [i.e., conventional,] and not ultimate. In reality, how could there be a division into two truths, the so-called concealing and ultimate? [This division] does not exist.⁵⁴

This absence of cognitive or ontological divisions, differentiations, or categories from the highest perspective on reality is the meaning of nondualism:

From the perspective of ultimate truth, [reality] is beyond the two thoughts of existence and nonexistence, which are opposite phenomena. Things and non-things are exhausted. This is the nondual *vajra yoga*⁵⁵ ...⁵⁶ One should accordingly know that reality, without falling to any position such as the two truths, or appearance and emptiness, is unity, the nondual nature of phenomena that must be intuitively known for oneself.⁵⁷

54 *De kho na nyid gsal ba'i sgron me* 480–81: *kun byang gnyis ka ma grub pa de yi phyir byang chub ste sangs rgyas pa dang ma chub ste sems can gnyis ka mtshan nyid med par mnyam zhing gcig pas sangs rgyas blang ba dang sems can dor ba med do/ /don dam pa zhes bya ba nyid kyang med na de 'di lta bu'o zhes bstan pa'i tshig rnam kyang lta ga la yod de gong du ji skad bstan pa'i don de'i tshul gyis dpyad na don dam pa'i rnam grangs su bya ba skye 'gag med ces bya ba dang mnyam pa nyid ces bya ba dang/ gnyis su med ces bya ba dang bsam pa las 'das pa dang stong pa nyid dang chos kyi dbyings brjod pa dang tha snyad dang bral ba la sogs su/ bstan pa de kun bkri ba'i tha snyad yin te yang dag nges pa'i don la ni don dam med cing kun sgrib bam kun rdzob ces bya ba'ang med do/ /tha snyad tsam min par don dam tshul gyis lam nyid 'di 'dra 'o zhes pa dmigs su yod na de nyid kun sgrib yin gyi don dam min yang dag par na kun rdzob dang don dam zhes bden pa gnyis su dbyer ga la yod de med do/* The source text, Mañjuśrimitra's *rDo la gser zhun*, is embedded.

55 This refers to the six-limb *yoga* (*rdo rje'i rnal 'byor yan lag drug*) that is specific to the *Kālacakra Tantra*.

56 *Dus 'khor tshig don* 287,7–288,1: *don dam pa'i bden pa'i dbang du byas na/ gnyis ka'i sems dag chos mi mthun pa'i yod pa dang med pa las das pa/ dngos po dang dngos po med pa zad pa/ rdo rje'i rnal 'byor gnyis su med pa ste.*

57 *Dus 'khor tshig don* 290,7: *tshul 'dis de kho na nyid ni snang stong dang bden gnyis gang rung gi phyogs su lhung ba ma yin par zung 'jug so so rang gis rig par bya ba'i gnyis su med pa'i chos nyid du shes par bya ste/* For a detailed discussion of the term *so so rang gis rig pa*, see n. 32 in Chapter 2.

This unity of the two truths in Mipham's system is therefore the expression of this absence of dualism on the level of the absolute, which implies that any dualistic distinction regarding reality belongs to the level of conventional truth:

It is said that *saṃsāra* is that which bears the properties of arising and cessation, [while] *nirvāṇa* is the freedom from arising and cessation, the completely nonabiding peace. The concealing is that which bears the properties of arising and cessation. Completely unpeaceful, it is segmented into distinctive parts. When it is said that the ultimate is the opposite of this, this inseparability of the two truths, namely, the inseparability consisting in the inseparability in terms, for instance, of sublime body and mind, is the obtainment of the perfectly pure fruit or the state of awakening. It is accepted as the final ultimate, something that is encompassed within the state in which the two truths are not differentiated. However, it is not that which is encompassed within the sphere of the concealing endowed with dualistic appearances or within the nominal ultimate that pertains to non-things.⁵⁸ This is so because it is said to be the sublime *kāya* of nondual primordial wisdom.⁵⁹

Therefore, the absence of any type of closure established through verbalizations regarding reality is a characteristic point of Mipham's nondual presentation of the two truths:

This being so, [the truth that cannot be separated into two] exceeds the domain of distinctions such as “This is the concealing [truth] and that is the ultimate truth.” Therefore, arising on account of the conceptualization of philosophical systems, [the two truths] are designated as the concealing, which is appearance, and the ultimate, which abides with-

58 The final ultimate is understood as the unity of emptiness, luminosity, and appearance. However, from this perspective, appearance does not correspond to dualistic phenomenal appearances as explained in this quote. Chapter 10 deals in detail with this particular aspect of Mipham's system.

59 *Dus 'khor ye shes le'u'i 'grel pa 704,5–7: 'khor ba ni skyes ba dang 'gag pa'i chos can/ mya ngan las 'das pa ni skye 'gag dang bral ba zhi ba rab tu mi gnas pa zhes gsungs pa dang/ kun rdzob ni skye ba dang 'gag pa'i chos can rab tu zhi ba ris su chad pa dang/ don dam pa ni de las ldog par gsungs na/ bden gnyis dbyer med dang sku thugs dbyer med sogs zung 'jug shin tu rnam par dag gi 'bras bu brnyes pa sangs rgyas kyi sa 'di ni don dam mthar thug bden gnyis dbyer med kyis bsdus pa zhid tu 'dod dgos kyi/ kun rdzob gnyis snang can gyi spyod yul gyis bsdus ba dang/ rnam grangs pa'i don dam dngos med kyis bsdus pa ma yin te/ gnyis su med pa'i ye shes kyi sku yin par gsungs pa'i phyir ro/*

out arising. Since no [thing] is posited as even the two truths, which are conceptual fixations (*zhen pa*), all mental proliferations such as clinging to existence or nonexistence and so forth are completely pacified. The reason for this is the inseparability of the two truths into separate elements from the perspective of the way things are. This key point consists in the inseparability [of the two truths] into separate elements such as: “It is established on the level of the concealing [truth]” or “It is ultimately not established.” To recapitulate, the nature of appearance and emptiness is nondual within the *dharmadhātu*. Since there is nothing to be done dualistically, even these two truths of the concealing and the ultimate are nothing but verbalizations by way of sounds and words.⁶⁰

The great sphere (*thig le chen po*) of reality, the one truth, is therefore none other than this nondual and nonconceptual cognitive state in which there are no ontological and cognitive distinctions in terms of existence and nonexistence, subject and object, and in which the primordially present Buddhahood is not distinct from one’s own nature of mind (i.e., soteriological nondualism). As stated in the *Dus ’khor ye shes le’u’i ’grel pa*, this nonconceptual state is the inseparability of emptiness, luminosity, and appearance:

Since it is free from a substantial entity (*rdzas*) that is established as an essence (*ngo bo nyid*) and free from mentally projected appearances or imputations, the form of the buddhas in the center of the supreme great sphere (*thig le chen po*) comes forth as, for instance, the appearance of the manifold freedom from external subject and object or the sublime hearing of the indestructible (*gzhom med*) sound, namely, all aspects that consist in empty reflections, the natural glow (*rang mdangs*) of the radiant nature of mind.⁶¹

60 *Le’u bco brgyad ’grel* 567–568: /des na ’di ni kun rdzob dang ’di ni don dam zhes rnam par dbye ba’i spyod yul las ’das pas na/ grub mtha’i blos skye bar snang ba kun rdzob/ skye ba med bar gnas pa don dam mo zhes pa lta bur btags shing zhen pa’i bden pa gnyis su’ang bzhag pa med pa’i phyir de las ’das te yod med du ’dzin pa la sogs pa’i spros kun nye bar zhi ba yin te/ de’i rgyu mtshan gnas lugs la bden pa gnyis so sor dbyer med pas na kun rdzob du ni grub ces sam/ don dam par ma grub ces so sor dbyer med pa’i gnad kyi so/ /de’i mjug bsdu ba ni/ de ltar chos kyi dbyings la snang ba dang stong pa’i rang bzhin gnyis su med cing gnyis su byar med pas na/ kun rdzob dang don dam gyi bden pa de yang dbyer med ces su sgra dang tshig gis brjod pa tsam mo/

61 *Dus ’khor ye shes le’u’i ’grel pa* 682,2–5: mthar thig le chen po de yi dbus su sangs rgyas kyi gzugs ni ngo bo nyid du grub pa’i rdzas med pa dang blos ma brtags par snang ba’am brtags pa med pa’i phyir phyi

To conclude on this point, it appears from all the elements presented above that Mipham uses the term *zung 'jug* and its synonyms to refer to the nonconceptual and nondual state across a variety of contexts, such as Madhyamaka or Dzogchen. It is therefore important to note that for Mipham the notion of inseparability or unity is useful to emphasize, by way of transitivity, the inseparability of emptiness, luminosity, and appearance within nonconceptual awareness (*rig pa*) as expressed in the quote from the *Dus 'khor ye shes le'u'i 'grel pa* given above. This inseparability of the empty essence, luminous nature, and unceasing appearance within nondual awareness cannot be subsumed through a dialectics of presence or absence alone since it represents precisely a *dépassement* of both. Buddha (or Sugata) nature, in Mipham's philosophy, is therefore merely a synonym for this nondual awareness inseparable from its empty essence, luminous nature, and unceasing manifestation. I called this form of nondualism "radical" in that it is nonconceptual, a defining feature in the case of Mipham's ultimate view.

Organization of the Book

The aim of the present study is to present Mipham's nonconceptual nondualism by outlining his discourse in terms of ground (*gzhi*), path (*lam*), and result (*'bras bu*)—a common soteriological trope among Tibetan traditions. In this model, the path consists of the view (*lta ba*), how practitioners should see reality; the practice (*sgom pa*), what they should do with regard to meditation; and the conduct (*spyod pa*), how they should behave in the context of post-meditation. This approach is adapted to explore Mipham's project as it does not disconnect doctrinal considerations from their soteriological import, a crucial point from an emic perspective.

In the first part of the book, I examine Mipham's view in the broader context of the path. This part mainly deals with argument 1, namely, with ontological nondualism. In this regard, I show how Mipham relies on a scale of ascending views in his discourse on the two truths.⁶² In his presentation of Madhyamaka, perspectives, or standpoints, play a central role. Even in this specific context, he advocates a perspectivist approach to the relation between the two truths. Thakchoe's follow-

rol gyi yul dang rnam par bral ba du ma snang ba dang/ gzhom med kyi sgra thos pa la sogs pa sems nyid 'od gsal gyi rang mdangs stong pa'i gzugs brnyan rnam pa thams cad par 'char te

62 Chapter 1 is a reproduction with some modifications of my article "Charting the Geographies of 'Ju Mi pham rnam rgyal rgya mtsho's Perspectivist Approach to the Two Truths" that was first published in *Framing Intellectual and Lived Spaces in Early South* (Beyond Boundaries 2, De Gruyter), see Forgues 2020. I would like to express my appreciation for De Gruyter's permission to use this material in the present book.

ing interrogation about this specific point illustrates the complexity of Mipham's philosophy:

Mipham Rinpoche's ... treatment of the two truths is quite inconsistent. Sometimes his view appears strikingly similar to Tsongkhapa's, ... however, Mipham explicitly endorses the perspective-based division of the two truths. In his article "Would the True Prāsaṅgika Please Stand," in *The Svātantrika-Prāsaṅgika Distinction*, p. 321, Dreyfus notes the same problem: "despite this openness, Mipham is in limited agreement with Tsongkhapa, and on many issues he sides with the latter's critics." Furthermore, Mipham is an explicit critic of Tsongkhapa.⁶³

With this comment, I believe that Thakchoe points out a crucial issue. In the first part of the book, I therefore investigate Mipham's exposition of the two truths with regard to the view and his presentation of the same topic in the context of the path. The answer to Thakchoe's critique of Mipham's position finds an answer in Mipham's perspectivist exposition of the two truths from their complete separation up to their complete unity, *even in the context of Madhyamaka*. The soteriological aspects of this propaedeutic approach to the two truths have not been until now the object of any detailed analysis. By capturing the soteriological movement of Mipham's philosophy, I present in the first five chapters of the book the soteriological dynamics of these shifting perspectives as expounded by Mipham across his works. While the direct nondual realization of the nature of reality remains the objective, the need to communicate and transmit this realization according to practitioners' dispositions shapes the way teachings are imparted—a classic trope in all Mahāyāna traditions.

Taking up Thakchoe's challenge, I have therefore tried to examine the coherence of Mipham's interpretation of the two truths in this first part, without failing to apply Davidson's principle of rational accommodation in order to make sense of Mipham's perspectival approach. Instead of looking for inconsistencies, I tried to present Mipham's approach in its full complexity, while considering a few important questions raised by his approach: How does Mipham present the relation between the two truths while teaching Madhyamaka? What can we infer regarding the intentionality of his discourse on reality when he goes against the mainstream Tibetan interpretations of his time? And most importantly, does it make sense historically, philologically, and philosophically?

63 Thakchoe 2007: 176, n.58.

In the second part of the book, I explore how the interplay between knowledge and liberation conditions the conceptual framework within which Mipham's project unfolds, from the perspective of practice and conduct. On account of the reasons mentioned above, it appeared to me that a purely theoretical approach of his interpretation of Madhyamaka—independent of contemplative practice or soteriological concerns—would not be enough to understand why he came to present the two truths as he did. The most interesting question, considering the soteriological nature of any Buddhist discourse on the view, is *in fine*, how did soteriological considerations shape the formulation of his discourse on nonduality?

From this perspective, I examine in this part how practices based on the notion of cognitive nondualism pave the way for the actual realization of ontological nondualism. The texts we are dealing with in the present case were produced within a spiritual tradition structured around a soteriological agenda.⁶⁴ In the case of Mipham, we know that some works he supposedly authored were actually notes taken by some of his main disciples as he was instructing them. If we examine the available Tibetan literature, it seems factual to state that, in the overwhelming majority of Buddhist texts, soteriology and conceptual frameworks regarding the nature of reality are interwoven. What is now referred to as “Buddhist philosophy” cannot be separated from soteriological considerations. In this context, the “view” (*lta ba*), or theory, is indeed supposed to be compatible with practical concerns such as contemplative practice or conduct. Investigating Mipham's view regardless of practice would therefore be methodologically unsatisfactory, since his view is part of a scheme that is by nature soteriological, the so-called “path” (*lam*).⁶⁵ In fact, understanding the internal logic of some positions in the context of Buddhist philosophy can be problematic if one does not take into account the soteriological aspects of the Buddhist path. For instance, without considering Dolpopa's yogic practice and

64 The very availability of most original texts still extant today has been dependent on these spiritual lineages. In fact, one might venture to say that the texts we examine and translate have been “filtered” by a spiritual tradition. Most of these compositions would have remained incomprehensible without the entire corpus that has been protected by Buddhist communities across the ages.

65 The relation between theory and practice is complex. Schmithausen 1973: 185 concludes his seminal article about the origin of Yogācāra by stating, “Es scheint sich somit bei dieser Entwicklung von philosophischen Theorien aus spirituall-praktischen Ursprüngen um einen Vorgang zu handeln, der für die buddhistische Geistesgeschichte geradezu typisch ist.” Regarding Mipham, Pettit 1999: 153–160, 170–186 *passim* shows the intimate relation between Mipham's interpretation of the view and his spiritual practice. Mimaki (1982a: 358) also explains that while commenting on the *Jñānasamuccaya*, Mipham uses a terminology that, being “purement tibétaine,” is influenced by considerations that are not merely philosophical, as illustrated by the Tibetan hermeneutical debate between the various Tibetan traditions.

interpretation of the *Kālacakra Tantra*, or Mipham's Dzogchen background, it is easy to miss the fact that a philosophical position may come into being on account of factors that actually do not *sensu stricto* belong to dialectics, as is obvious in the case of terms such as *dbu ma chen po* or *zung 'jug*.

It goes without saying that, in this exploration of Mipham's journeys to freedom, our concept of philosophy takes a distinctive Hadotian flavor and cannot be distinguished from soteriological concerns.⁶⁶ In recent years, the strong con-

⁶⁶ Interestingly enough, even scholars who question the validity of Hadot's approach for Buddhism (Eltschinger) or understand philosophy in a non-Hadotian way (Siderits) accept that Buddhist doctrines have a fundamentally soteriological orientation. Eltschinger emphasizes the idea that Buddhist philosophy has in this way no soteriological value itself if it is not complemented by cultivation. However, while he accordingly rejects the idea that philosophy itself is a form of cultivation in the sense of *bhāvanā*, he readily admits that the purpose of Buddhist philosophy is to define the view that one must cultivate until awakening, even if its ambition is not limited to this lifetime: "Autrement dit, la philosophie bouddhique n'ambitionne pas de transformer l'existence actuelle, mais, *au mieux*, de créer les conditions intellectuelles d'une entreprise sotériologique qui la dépasse et ultimement l'abroge" (Eltschinger 2008: 538). Siderits concurs with this basic idea: "Buddhism is, then, a religion, if by this we mean that it is a set of teachings that address soteriological concerns" (Siderits 2007: 7). And further: "By now we have grown used to Buddhist philosophical theories serving some soteriological purpose" (*ibid.*: 136).

By referring to Hadot, I must clearly state from the onset that my aim here is not to assert that Mipham is a philosopher in the Hadotian sense, but rather that there is simply no doctrine or theory in his interpretation of Madhyamaka that stands in isolation from soteriological concerns. This point implies that examining the interplay between doctrine and soteriology should be a primary methodological concern when investigating Mipham's presentation of Madhyamaka. To press the point further, let's turn to Eltschinger's excellent analysis of Hadot's understanding of ancient philosophy. In this article, Eltschinger formulates four criteria to assess the validity of Hadot's approach in the case of Buddhist traditions: (a) Doctrinal texts were used to create concrete teaching situations to form and transform an audience of students (see Eltschinger 2008: 526). (b) There was no decoupling of the doctrinal position of the tradition in question from socio-religious realities (see *ibid.*: 529, 532). (c) The authors of the considered doctrines cultivated their own views (see *ibid.*: 533–35). (d) The doctrines of the tradition under consideration only aim at transforming this life (see *ibid.*: 537–38). *Ad* (a) Mipham's texts have been used and practiced to this day. Since his commentaries on classic Indian texts refuting wrong views could not possibly be taught with just an apologetic or defensive purpose in mind in the cultural context of 19th century Tibet, we have to conclude that they were used indeed to form and transform Mipham's disciples and followers by creating a "methodological and doctrinal habitus" (*ibid.*: 526) within a broader soteriological and sociological context. *Ad* (b) In the Nyingma tradition, the integration between doctrinal perspectives and soteriological concerns in the sense of socio-religious realities such as contemplative practice, rituals, etc. is simply a fact. *Ad* (c) In the case of Mipham, it is clear that the author put his own view into practice and did not merely engage in an apologetic enterprise to protect his doctrine. *Ad* (d) In Hadot's view, ancient philosophy was an exercise of death or a preparation for death, which necessarily took place within this very lifetime. Eltschinger sees here a major difference with Buddhist traditions for which this lifetime is only

nection between Buddhist doctrine and practice has been highlighted on multiple occasions by scholars of the field. A strong interpretation of this connection is offered by scholars referring to the work of Pierre Hadot on ancient philosophy. Kapstein (2001, 2013), McClintock (2002), and Apple (2018) have for instance stressed the validity of Hadot's understanding of philosophy as a spiritual exercise with regard to Buddhism.⁶⁷ According to Kapstein, one of Hadot's contributions is to make us "envision philosophy itself in this context as a soteriological enterprise."⁶⁸ From this perspective, philosophy is about contemplation, not "about objects of thought."⁶⁹ The finality of doctrine is therefore "the formation of the person through spiritual exercises."⁷⁰ Apple on his part goes one step further and sees doctrine itself as performative. In reference to the dialectical formulations of Nāgārjuna's view, he states "the text itself is the cultivation. As Hadot would say, this type of ancient philosophical discourse intends 'to form more than to inform.'"⁷¹

In this second part of the book, I therefore show how the Buddhist concept of the two truths is used propaedeutically in order to disclose the nature of what Mipham understands to be nonconceptual and nondual reality. But this disclosure is not achieved through dialectics alone. In addition to reflecting and reasoning, contemplative practices play an important role in actualizing this vision of the real.⁷² The interrelation between theory and practice is thus here of a systemic nature. The variety of soteriological methods, gradual or direct, used by Mipham explains why his approach to the two truths is cognitive and perspectivist, even in the context of Madhyamaka. In his system, the primordial immanence of the ultimate and

one among many due to the Buddhist notion of rebirth. However, if the point is to assess how philosophy could be a way of life in the case of ancient philosophy and Buddhism, it seems to me that the only valid criterion in the present case is whether a certain vision of reality formulated in dialectical terms impacts and transforms one's circumstances during one's lifetime or not. In the case of Mipham, it seems obvious that this is indubitably the case. His doctrinal works were composed to teach the view as a component of a path having a very strong transformative power for his followers in their daily lives. This particularly holds true in the case of tantric practitioners aiming at attaining awakening within one lifetime.

67 The collection of essays edited by Fiordalis (2018) in which Apple's article is found discusses through various standpoints Hadot's notion of spiritual exercises in the context of the Buddhist path.

68 Kapstein 2013: 100.

69 Kapstein 2001: 14–15.

70 Kapstein 2001: 20.

71 Apple 2010: 89. See also Apple 2010: 200–201.

72 See Pettit 1999: 104–107.

the relative (e.g., *zung 'jug, dbyer med*) can indeed be presented as a transcendence (e.g., *gcig pa dkag pa'i tha dad*) or a transcendent immanence (e.g., *ngo bo gcig la ldog pa tha dad*), if this appears to be soteriologically necessary.⁷³ However, contrarily to Dolpopa's doctrinal position, Mipham does not teach what could be perceived, from the perspective of enlightened beings, as a transcendent ultimate, since he does not ultimately see the two truths in terms of two separate realms. In addition, Mipham's perspectival approach allows him to use both cataphatic and apophatic forms of language to connect the gradual approach of lower teachings with the more direct instructions of Vajrayāna. Cataphatic language mainly corresponds to what is referred to as "path language," the function of which is practical rather than dialectical. At this stage, students have usually already been exposed to the doctrine of emptiness, which minimizes the risk of misunderstandings. The second part of the book therefore shows the interplay between Mipham's ultimate view of a non-conceptual ultimate and his concern for providing a path leading to its realization, a point mainly related to argument 2 about cognitive nondualism.

In the third part of the book, I focus on Mipham's soteriological nondualism, this freedom from distinction or identity between the ground of being and the result of the path. From the perspective of the highest Nyingma teachings, the ground is indeed inseparable from the result. Mipham's understanding of Mahāyāna scriptures fully accounts for this central idea, as stated in argument 3 above. Although his elucidation of the unity of the two truths as the unity of appearance and emptiness (*snang stong zung 'jug*) is apophatic,⁷⁴ he is willing to use the more cataphatic accordance/discordance (*mthun mi mthun*) model of the two truths in the context of the ground to stress the idea that the result of the path cannot be generated, as shown in Chapter 10. In this model, the relative corresponds to an erroneous cognitive mode in which the perception of reality does not reflect the actual nature of this reality, whereas the ultimate truth represents the cognitive mode in which the perception and nature of reality are aligned.⁷⁵ According to Mipham, this model is found in the Maitreya tradition. It is used by Mipham to show the importance of dispelling cognitive obscurations to achieve the "gnoseological unveiling" of the ultimate. This soteriological model does not aim *per se* at producing a result. It simply

73 I use here the term "immanence" in its usual philosophical sense: one principle is immanent to the other when it is not exterior or superior to this other entity, but inherent to it. With "transcendence," I refer to the relationship between two entities, in which one is exterior to the other and independent of it, existing beyond the boundaries of that entity.

74 See Chapter 1 for a detailed explanation of this point.

75 See Wangchuk 2019: 275ff. for a detailed exposition of the terminology related to these two models of the two truths.

consists in directly revealing what has always been there (i.e., the result *qua* ground), once defilements preventing this realization have been eliminated. In the context of the path, if the ground has not been recognized, it can be “uncovered” by gradually eliminating the cognitive obscurations obstructing its recognition, or it must merely be revealed through a direct cognitive or epistemic unveiling. Without relying on any ontological commitment in terms of existence or nonexistence regarding the ground of being, Mipham formulates a view of complete immanence, in which the ultimate and the relative are indivisible. In Mipham’s exposition of Madhyamaka, the unity of the two truths perceived from the highest perspective entails the unity of the ground and the result. Mipham’s understanding of nondualism in the context of the ground can be seen to follow closely Longchenpa’s, although Mipham’s own expression presents a more scholastic character than that of his illustrious predecessor.⁷⁶

Sources and Methods

Choice of Texts

In the course of this study, I primarily relied on Mipham’s Collected Works and the Indian and Tibetan treatises that influenced his thought, without any preconception as to their putative compatibility—or lack thereof—from the perspective of the traditional Tibetan doxographical classifications.⁷⁷ I thus consulted Mipham’s main Madhyamaka commentaries to shed some light on key aspects of his presentation of the two truths, but, to avoid mixing up his view with those of his commentators, I chose not to rely on subsequent Nyingma commentaries. Having identified the references made by Mipham himself to some of his works, I translated *in extenso* the corresponding passages in order to let him explain, in his own words, any key

⁷⁶ On Longchenpa’s presentation of *bden gnyis zung ’jug*, see Arguillère 2007: 291–304.

⁷⁷ In complement to this approach, I also produced a translation memory of translations of Mipham’s and Gorampa’s texts by academics in order to validate my translation choices across a broad range of terminological possibilities. The monographs I used to produce this translation memory included Pettit 1999, Dreyfus/McClintock 2003, Phuntsho 2005a, Cabezón/Dargay 2007, Thakchoe 2007, Duckworth 2008, and Viehbeck 2014. The principle of a translation memory is to align bilingual segments of texts in a file that will be accessible during a translation project as a reference. For searches across bilingual corpora of texts (Tibetan/English) in the form of a translation memory (i.e., a TMX file), I use Xbench; see <http://www.xbench.net/> (last accessed on Nov 27, 2015). In addition, to identify quotes in the texts I translated, I used the following online resources: Thesaurus *Litteraturae Buddhicae* of the University of Oslo (<https://www2.hf.uio.no/polyglotta/index.php?page=library&bid=2>); Resources for Kanjur & Tanjur Studies of the University of Vienna (<https://www.istb.univie.ac.at/kanjur/rktsneu/sub/index.php>); the Tibetan and Himalayan Library online resources (<http://www.thlib.org/encyclopedias/literary/>).

point he deemed particularly important. Mipham's interpretation of Madhyamaka has a dual nature: it deals with the contemporary issues of his time in the context of Tibetan Buddhist hermeneutics while simultaneously remaining anchored in the Indian classic texts on which he abundantly commented.

In order to understand Mipham's interpretation of the two truths, Mipham's commentary *Nor bu ke ta ka* 4,1–9,5 ad BCA 9.2 represents our point of departure. The *Nor bu ke ta ka* plays an important role in the history of modern Tibetan Buddhist hermeneutics. It encapsulates a summary of Mipham's thought regarding the two truths. Being characteristic of Mipham's original thought, it triggered a heated debate. Philosophical texts usually arise within a certain continuity of thought. It is unfortunately most of the time quite difficult to trace this "flow of thought" through time and compositions. In the case of Mipham, our task is facilitated by his many references to his own works. He indeed never attempts to conceal the fact that he is overtly reinterpreting central Buddhist texts from one work to the next to give rise to his overarching project. From the *Nor bu ke ta ka* taken as a starting point, the "philological genealogy of texts" running through his philosophical work unfolds, offering some welcome guidance regarding the choice of texts to be translated and analyzed:

1. In his *Nor bu ke ta ka* composed in 1878, Mipham refers to the commentary on Śāntarakṣita's *Madhyamakālaṃkāra* (*dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad*) he wrote in 1876 and explains that this text provides a detailed exposition of some difficult points.
2. In his *dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad*, Mipham quotes Longchenpa's *Yid bzhin mdzod* twice at the end of his introduction to Śāntarakṣita's *Madhyamakālaṃkāra*, stressing the importance he attributed to this text.
3. Chapter 18 of Longchenpa's *Yid bzhin mdzod* expounds the unity of the two truths through the lens of Dzogchen and **sugatagarbha*, when considered from the highest perspective. Mipham wrote several elucidations of the *Yid bzhin mdzod*, but he deemed Chapter 18 to be so important that it deserved its own commentary.

This sequence of texts represents the backbone of my investigation of Mipham's project. In addition, since the aim of the present study is to examine Mipham's non-dualism through his presentation of ground, path, and result, I have translated two

texts composed by Mipham to show how he uses the two truths in the context of practice:

4. *Sems kyi spyod pa rnam par sbyong ba so sor brtag pa'i dpyad sgom 'khor lo ma*, a collection of texts offering a gradual approach to the two truths.
5. *Byang chub sems bsgom pa rdo la gser zhun gyi mchan 'grel de kho na nyid gsal ba'i sgron me*, which represents a more direct approach to practice.

Corpus-Based Discourse Analysis and Text Mining

With regard to methods, I followed a methodological approach based on philological principles complemented by a corpus-based discourse analysis made possible by the recent development of Tibetan digital resources. The field of Digital Humanities has grown immensely over the past decades, and a number of tools are now available for researchers dealing with vast corpora of texts. I am very grateful to Jeff Wallman, former director of the Buddhist Digital Resource Center (BDRC), who kindly made available to me the digital edition W2DB16631, of which four volumes were missing out of thirty-two (i.e., volumes 7, 16, 25, and 30) at the time when I performed my analysis of Mipham's use of the term *zung 'jug*.⁷⁸ For this analysis, I used an approach inspired by corpus-based methods as laid out by Sinclair (2004), Baker (2006, 2010), O'Keeffe and McCarthy (2010), and Cheng (2012). This methodological framework is designed to process very large corpora of texts to identify meaningful formal patterns of intertextuality and word clusters. From this perspective, having an idea of the big picture at the corpus level enables us to improve the selection of significant texts as well as the way we read them.

Mipham's philosophical discourse hinges on a web of lexical choices in which the tenor of discourse in the sense of semantic prosody⁷⁹ and the mode of discourse through language mode, themes, or designing principle play an important role.⁸⁰

78 To process the Unicode files of this digital edition, I used the corpus linguistic software Antconc (<https://www.laurenceanthony.net/software/antconc/> — last accessed on Feb 18, 2020) to map Mipham's usage of *zung 'jug* across the corpus of his works. Considering the content of these four volumes, I do not believe that results were skewed. Volume 7 contains a collection of advice. Volume 25 includes *sādhanas*. Volume 30 holds a collection of liturgical texts and offerings to protective deities. Mipham's commentary on the *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra* is in Volume 16. While it would have been preferable to have this text in the corpus of available digital texts, its absence does not significantly impact the survey findings.

79 On the notion of semantic prosody, see Sinclair 2004: 35ff.

80 See Cheng 2012: 12.

At the core of this approach lies the idea that meaning is not created in isolation but by the co-selection of lexical units through lexico-syntactic relations. The meaning of lexical units is the result of their occurrence in idioms, phrasal verbs, technical expressions, and fixed phrases based on adjacent or nonadjacent words following collocational and structural patterns.⁸¹ In that way, the meaning of a word is dependent on its co-text.⁸² This point is essential because if meaning is phrase based, gaining a sense of regular (or singular) combinations of key words with associated lexical items is crucial for interpreting and translating a discourse unfolding throughout a large corpus of texts. Meaning creation is dependent on co-selection of grammar and lexis, as form and meaning are inseparable.⁸³ The co-occurrence of lexical units taken together is different from their meaning when taken in isolation. As shown by John Sinclair, delexicalized senses can be defined by collocates.⁸⁴ Corpus linguistics offers methods to identify and evaluate in a systematic way these extended units of meaning resulting from lexico-syntactic co-occurring terms. This is achieved by performing queries pertaining to clusters, n-grams, collocational frameworks, colligations, associations, phraseological variations, concordance, keyness, and frequency.⁸⁵ From a macro perspective, this approach allows the researcher to consider a specific discourse from three angles: discourse as connected text, discourse as language in context, and discourse as a social practice.⁸⁶ In the present study, mapping Mipham's use of *zung 'jug* across the various texts in the thirty-two volumes of his Collected Works (W2DB16631, ca. fifteen thousand pages) belongs to the first category, while the analysis of lexico-syntactic patterns in this corpus, independent of a specific text, refers to the second aspect.⁸⁷ This method is methodologically robust as it follows a sequence of basic steps and allows a Popperian hypothetico-deductive approach: (a) observation of linguistic facts, (b) formulation of hypotheses on

81 See Sinclair 2004: 13–30.

82 See Cheng 2012: 45–47.

83 See Cheng 2012: 178.

84 See Sinclair 2004: 20. As an example, I suggest the lexeme *gcig pa*, when it is used by Mipham in collocation with *zung 'jug*.

85 While Sinclair 2004 provides a conceptual framework for designing a research program based on this corpus-based (or driven) approach, Baker 2006 and 2010 offer some guidance for its operationalization in practical terms.

86 See Cheng 2012: 53.

87 There is an obvious benefit in this methodological approach of text corpora as noted by Cheng: "One of the main advantages of a corpus is that it provides better quality evidence because it allows the user to empirically (i.e., scientifically) establish the regularity of patterns based on their repetition throughout a corpus" (Cheng 2012: 174).

the basis of these facts, (c) generalization (or falsification) through evidence, and (d) integration of these observations in a theory.⁸⁸

In a final round of testing, hypotheses originally formulated on the basis of W2DB16631 were evaluated using Adarsha's digital text of Mipham's *gsung 'bum* in twenty-seven volumes (W23468).⁸⁹ In addition, I produced a word representation expressing the semantic similarity of lexical units across the entire *gsung 'bum* by means of FASTTEXT,⁹⁰ a words-to-vectors tool developed by Facebook. Such representations "are referred to as word embeddings, as they embed an entire vocabulary into a low-dimensional space... They are designed to capture semantic similarities between vocabulary items: words that appear in similar contexts will be close to each other."⁹¹ These similarities can be linguistic (e.g., morphological variants) or relational on a semantic level (e.g., synonymy, collocation, etc.). In the related word representation,⁹² the "center" word is the word of focus (for example, *dbyer med*), and the "context" words are the words that surround it in normal use (for example, *snang stong*). In word embeddings, similar words are therefore semantically related through their cotext and not necessarily by synonymy or collocation in the form of appositions.

In the next step, I verified that texts including to a significant degree technical terms identified by the initial corpus-linguistic analysis had not been skipped. This step was performed by running TF-IDF and Dunning G-Test scripts summarizing and thematizing the focus of individual texts across Mipham's entire *gsung 'bum*.⁹³ Finally, I fingerprinted the content of technical terms of individual texts across the complete corpus by means of a script displaying dispersion plots.⁹⁴ These queries are useful for validating hypotheses regarding the centrality of individual texts in light of a specific research question. A quick dispersion plot analysis thus validates the hypothesis that Mipham's commentary on Śāntarakṣita's *Madhyamakālamkāra*

88 See Cheng 2012: 176.

89 See <https://adarsha.dharma-treasure.org/kdbs/mipam?pbId=1507723> (last accessed on Feb 2, 2019).

90 See <https://github.com/facebookresearch/fastText/> (last accessed on Feb 2, 2019). Examples of semantic mapping produced with FASTTEXT word representation of technical terms in the collected works of various authors, including Mipham and Longchenpa, are presented in Forgues, *forthcoming*, Appendix G.

91 Levy/Goldberg 2014: 171.

92 See Forgues, *forthcoming*, Appendix G.

93 See Forgues, *forthcoming*, Appendix H.

94 See Forgues, *forthcoming*, Appendix I.

is a particularly relevant work for us as all main terms we are interested in occur multiple times throughout this work, in contradistinction, for example, to his *bDe gshegs snying po'i stong thun chen mo seng ge'i nga ro*, which focuses on the concept of *bde gshegs snying po* without mentioning other key concepts central to Mipham's view.⁹⁵

One might object that such a corpus-linguistic or text-mining approach is purely synchronic and tends to mask diachronic evolutions of the author's thought. Three points are important to keep in mind with regard to this. First, one should remember that Mipham's scholastic commentaries aim at establishing a global presentation of Buddhist doctrines. This feature is striking when one compares his commentaries to those composed by Khenpo Zhenga.⁹⁶ As a matter of fact, Mipham did not feel bound by a specific philosophical or textual context while commenting treatises from various traditions. Like Longchenpa, his own overarching interpretation of Dharma seems to take precedence over the limited scope of a specific topic.⁹⁷ The second reason justifying this approach is the very stable character of Mipham's views. As noted earlier, his Madhyamaka interpretation was already defined by the time he started composing his most significant commentaries. A cursory examination of Mipham's doctrine of the two truths across his major philosophical works shows a remarkable consistency throughout time. It seems that Mipham's view was in fact more or less already finalized by the time he started to compose his main Mādhyamika works. Finally, even if there were notable evolution in an author's

95 I intend to make all algorithms I used in my corpus-based approach to large corpora of Tibetan Buddhist texts in a forthcoming publication focusing on text analytics and text mining methods. The Python scripts will be made available on Github (<https://github.com/GregoryForgues>).

96 mKhan po gZhan dga' (1871–1927).

97 In his *gZhan stong khas len seng ge'i nga ro*, Mipham declares that seeing any contradiction between Asaṅga and Nāgārjuna is due to one's own delusion (see Pettit 1999: 426). In his *bDe gshegs snying po'i stong thun*, he states that Asaṅga and Nāgārjuna have ultimately the same intent (see Duckworth 2008: 165). In his commentary on DhDhV, the *Ye shes snang ba*, he explains that the three natures are not a feature of Cittamātra and that the DhDhV and the MAV teach the unity of the two truths according to Yogācāra-Madhyamaka (see Scott 2004: 61ff.). In the opening verses of his *'Od zer phreng ba*, he describes both Maitreya and Mañjuśrī as Buddha's spiritual heirs, a clear allusion to the fact that he considers both traditions to be indissociable with regard to their final intention and teachings (see Dharmachakra 2006a: 20). In *Gu ru'i tshig bdun rnam bshad*, he stresses the fact that both traditions complement each other and are by no means contradictory (see Padmakara 2007: 56–57 and Duckworth 2008: 46–56 about Mipham's understanding of the Yogācāra vs. Madhyamaka debate). This commentarial approach to the Indian texts may stem from his inclination for Yogācāra-Madhyamaka.

thought across the fifteen thousand pages of a *gsung 'bum*, it is probable that a thorough corpus-based analysis would detect significant inflection points in an author's thought by capturing phrases deviating from a regular pattern in individual works. To conclude on this point, I believe that any shortcoming is outweighed by the benefits of such methods: (a) Defining an author's space of discourse is based on a hypothetico-deductive method, which is falsifiable; (b) making sense of the semantic modularity and textual diversity of an author's doctrines can be useful for uncovering networks of intertextuality with regard to authorship, sources, and ideas; (c) identifying central sources with regard to a specific research question avoids using texts that would be irrelevant to the analytical work.

With this methodological compass in our possession, let us now turn to the starting point of our journey through Mipham's philosophical project, his *Nor bu ke ta ka*.

PART ONE

The View of Mipham's Radical Nondualism

CHAPTER 1

The Two Truths in Perspective

In his *'Od gsal snying po*, Mipham states that the view defines everything. Without the view, the other two components of the path, practice and conduct, can become flawed.¹ In this first part,² I will focus on his interpretation of the two truths (*bden gnyis, satyadvaya*),³ namely, the “concealing” (*kun rdzob, saṃvṛti*)⁴ and the “ultimate” (*don dam, paramārtha*),⁵ a *locus classicus* in the Tibetan hermeneutical debate.

In his monograph investigating the positions of various prominent Tibetan scholars on the topic, Sonam Thakchoe notes that Mipham’s treatment of the subject appears contradictory. He considers Mipham’s discourse to be ambiguous, since Mipham seems to both endorse and criticize Tsongkhapa’s position.⁶ More importantly, Thakchoe remarks that Mipham propounds contradictory doctrines on the nature of the relationship between the two truths. Mipham usually describes the relationship between the two truths in terms of “unity” (*zung ’jug, yuganaddha*),⁷ yet it is worth noting that Mipham also uses expressions implying such a separation between the two truths (e.g., *gcig pa dkag pa’i tha dad*, “different in the sense that their identity is negated,” and *ngo bo gcig la ldog pa tha dad*, “different conceptual distinguishers with regard to a single entity”) in some of his writings to the extent that one could legitimately question whether Mipham’s position is philosophically consistent.⁸

1 See Dharmachakra 2009: 65.

2 A selection of part one was initially published as an article (“Charting the Geographies of ’Ju Mi pham rnam rgyal rgya mtsho’s Perspectivist Approach to the Two Truths”) in *Framing Intellectual and Lived Spaces in Early South Asia*, edited by Lucas den Boer and Elizabeth Ann Cecil, Sources and Boundaries (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2020).

3 Technical terms are given in Tibetan and Sanskrit (when available).

4 I translate *kun rdzob* as “concealing” in accordance with the Sanskrit etymology of the word *saṃvṛti*.

5 The two truths represent a didactic model commonly found in Buddhist literature. This model distinguishes two levels of truth in order to present the nature of our reality.

6 Thakchoe 2007: 176, n.58. Tsongkhapa is the founder of the Gelug school of Tibetan Buddhism, one of the four schools of Tibetan Buddhism. The numerous theoretical complexities induced by Mipham’s perspectivist interpretation of the two truths were the subject of fierce debate between Mipham and Gelug scholars. On these occasions, Gelug scholars disputed several points, among which is the unity (*zung ’jug*) of the two truths as expounded by Mipham. For an analysis of the polemical literature produced by these debates, see Viehbeck 2014.

7 This view is in agreement with Longchenpa, who ultimately refused the distinction induced by the expression *ldog pa tha dad pa’i ngo bo* (see Butters 2006: 398,411).

8 See Thakchoe 2007: 180.

Thakchoe's reading of Mipham therefore raises an important question: Does Mipham's position entail contradictions? And if not, how are we to make sense of his discourse on the two truths?⁹ The short answer to this problem is that Mipham sees any informed knowledge on the nature of reality as perspectival. As a consequence, any statement on the subject is in his view expressed to address a specific soteriological concern. From this standpoint, discourses on the ineffable relationship between the two truths are necessarily soteriologically situated. Mipham's discourse on Madhyamaka is shaped by this perspectivist notion of veridiction:¹⁰ the truth character of a doctrine on the inexpressible is necessarily dependent on the soteriological context within which these doctrines are expressed. This principle explains why Mipham's inclusivist approach to doctrinal discourse is possible in the first place.¹¹ This perspectivist hermeneutical strategy gives rise to a complex presentation of Madhyamaka, in which several seemingly contradictory positions are ranked according to an ascending scale of views. To make sense of Mipham's overarching project, it is therefore essential to examine in detail the cognitive and epistemic standpoints from which Mipham expounds the two truths in his writings on the topic.¹²

9 Phuntsho was the first academic scholar to question Mipham's doctrinal positions in his treatment of the relationship between the two truths (see Phuntsho 2005a: 123). Duckworth has also noted the presence and importance of various perspectives in Mipham's writings (see for example Duckworth 2008: 138), while Wangchuk has stressed the centrality of the term *zung 'jug* ("unity") in Mipham's discourse on the two truths (see Wangchuk 2012: 15–38). These excellent publications on Mipham's interpretation of Madhyamaka have not, however, systematically addressed the issues raised by Thakchoe in 2007, since Phuntsho's study was published before Thakchoe even identified the issue, while Duckworth's *Mipam on Buddha Nature* was written at roughly the same time.

10 I use the term "veridiction" in the sense defined by Foucault as the mechanism or regime of truth-telling. In Mipham, to tell the truth is dependent on an epistemic and cognitive perspective. As a consequence, one finds in his work various regimes of truth-telling, or veridiction.

11 In terms of Paul Hacker's hierarchical inclusivism or the more accommodating inclusivism. On this issue, see Wangchuk 2004.

12 Mipham's view on the two truths, as found in his *Collected Works*, did not evolve through time. His doctrinal positions are remarkably stable from the moment he started composing commentaries and original works. In addition to primary sources, I also consulted the monographs and articles mentioned in the bibliography below. Key statements drawn from Mipham's works found in some of these publications were retranslated from the Tibetan for the present book.

The Starting Point: Mipham's *Nor bu ke ta ka*

Mipham wrote his commentary on the ninth chapter of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* (BCA), *Sher le'u 'grel pa nor bu ke ta ka*, in 1878. This elucidation of the BCA was an occasion for Mipham to expound his interpretation of Madhyamaka in accordance with the Nyingma tradition and doctrinal positions. He had written his commentary on Śāntarakṣita's *Madhyamakālamkāra* two years earlier in 1876 in the form of an extensive and systematic presentation of Madhyamaka taking as its basis Śāntarakṣita's synthesis of Madhyamaka and Yogācāra, a work that, in Tibet, had not received much attention on the part of Tibetan scholars. Mipham's *Nor bu ke ta ka* (NK) had a significant impact on the Tibetan hermeneutical debates of his time. At the very beginning of this text (NK 4,1–9,5),¹³ Mipham, glossing verse 9.2 of the BCA, defines the two truths and explains their relation, stressing their eminently propaedeutic function. Although Mipham's tone is *prima facie* not particularly polemical, he clearly seizes this occasion to present his own interpretation of the two truths. This work triggered a fierce debate with the Gelugpa School,¹⁴ and the Gelugpas responded by writing several refutations of Mipham's commentary.¹⁵ The *Nor bu ke ta ka* is thus a very important text as it gives us a precise and condensed summary of Mipham's view on the subject.¹⁶

13 See below for a translation of this passage.

14 See Smith 2001: 231–33 and particularly Viehbeck 2014, a comprehensive study of these disputes.

15 See Phuntsho 2005a: 15.

16 Two major texts that delineate the specificity of Mipham's view of the two truths are *dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad*, in which five points are mentioned, and *Nges shes sgron me*, in which six out of the seven difficult points explained in this work are directly related to our subject—Topic 1 of the introduction of *dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad*: causally efficient things as the only authentic objects of valid cognition, cf. Padmakara 2005: 122ff.; Topic 2: the conventional existence of *svaṃvedana* as expounded by Śāntarakṣita, cf. Padmakara 2005: 123; Topic 3: phenomena as the manifestation of mind on the concealing level of reality, cf. Padmakara 2005: 123ff.; Topic 4: the distinction between the nominal and the actual ultimates, cf. Padmakara 2005: 125ff.; Topic 5: the absence of contradiction between conventional reasoning ascertaining arising and the ultimate reasoning ascertaining the absence of arising, cf. Padmakara 2005: 135ff.; Topic 1 of *Nges shes sgron me*: “Is the view an absolute or an affirming negation?” cf. Pettit 1999: 196ff.; Topic 3: “What is the meaning of nonapprehension?” cf. Pettit 1999: 203ff.; Topic 4: “Should meditation be transic or analytical?” cf. Pettit 1999: 208ff.; Topic 5: “Which of the two truths is the more important?” cf. Pettit 1999: 214ff.; Topic 6: “What is the basis of disparate perceptions of a common object?” cf. Pettit 1999: 219ff.; Topic 7: “Does Madhyamaka have a position or not?” cf. Pettit 1999: 227ff.

A Translation of *Nor bu ke ta ka* 4,1–9,5 and BCA 9.2

[4] Thus, [we] accept that all these phenomena (*chos*, *dharma*) comprised of affliction and purification exist as **two truths**, namely, **the concealing truth**, which is the mere appearance¹⁷ of the multiplicity of [phenomena] possessing attributes (*chos can*), **and the ultimate [truth]**, the nature of phenomena as it is, emptiness.¹⁸ As stated in the *Pitāputrasamāgamasūtra*:

You have not heard from others these two truths of the Knower of the World [but] known [them] by yourself.¹⁹

These are the concealing truth and the [truth] of the ultimate meaning; there is no third truth whatsoever.²⁰

With regard to those [two truths], although the concealing truth is devoid of arising and so on in its nature, it is that which appears as that (*der snang ba*),²¹ a mode of appearance similar to an illusion, a dream, or a hair [appearing to someone suffering from myodesopsia]. When [we] examine the nature of “that which merely appears as that,” [its] mode of existence in which there is no arising and so forth is the ultimate [truth]. It is said in the *Madhyamakāvatāra* [MAV VI.23]:

17 Mipham explains the use of the qualifier “mere” in the following way: “As far as this relative truth is concerned, phenomena, which lack true existence, appear in the manner of mere illusions. Here the word ‘mere’ [(*tsam*)] excludes them from being established as real. On the level of mere appearance, things have the ability to fulfill their respective functions, and it would be wrong to deny them, saying that they do not exist” (Padmakara 2015: 48–49). See also Mipham’s commentary on the *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra* (see Dharmachakra 2014: 320ff.), in which mere appearance is explained in relation to dualistic experience in the way of an illusion. Although appearances do not exist, there is the perception of an apprehending subject and an apprehended object. From this perspective, they exist “merely” in experience.

18 The *pratīka* of BCA 2ab is written in bold. The Sanskrit reads *saṃvṛtiḥ paramārthāś ca satya-dvayam idaṃ matam* | (see Vaidya 1960: 170,27). Viehbeck (2011) discussed Mipham’s commentary of this verse and translated parts of it. The entire *Nor bu ke ta ka* has been translated into French (see Arguillère 2004) and into English by Padmakara Translation Group (2017). Lipman translated into English a part of Mipham’s commentary *ad* BCA 9.2 (see Lipman 1981).

19 Arguillère understands here an imperative: “Connais-les par toi-même sans les entendre d’autrui,” which does not make sense since the subject of the sentence is the Buddha.

20 See D60, f.61b: /’jig rten mkhas pa’i bden pa gnyis yin te/ /khyod kyis gzhan las ma gsan rang gis gzigs/ /de ni kun rdzob bden dang don dam ste/ /bden pa gsum pa gang yang ma mchis so/ / Mipham’s quote is slightly different: /’jig rten mkhyen pa’i bden pa’i gnyis te/ /khyed kyis gzhan las ma gsan rang gis rig /de ni kun rdzob bden dang don dam ste/ /bden pa gsum pa gang yang ma mchis so/

21 For a detailed presentation of this technical term, see Chapter 3.

All things possess a twofold nature
 Whose mode of being hinges on seeing correctly or incorrectly:
 For those who see correctly, the sense object is reality.
 For those who see incorrectly, it is said to be concealing truth.²²

This being so, if these two truths such as [they are defined] are [considered to be] ultimately different or identical on the [level of the] concealing [truth], one should understand [this] as a contradiction on account of two sets of four faults, as explained in the *Samḍhinirmocanasūtra* [Samḍh III.3–5].²³

Furthermore, with regard to the ultimate, since emptiness, which is the nonaffirming negation (*med dgag, prasajyapratiṣedha*) of nonarising, nonabiding, [and nonceasing], which are [themselves] the [nonaffirming] negation of arising, abiding, [and ceasing], is merely the entrance gate to the great emptiness free from the four extremes, it is termed the nominal ultimate (*rnam grangs pa'i don dam*) or the concordant ultimate (*mthun pa'i don dam*). It is said in the *Madhyamakālaṃkāra* [MA 70ab]:

Since it is in concordance with the ultimate, it is called the ultimate.²⁴

[5] Because there has been since beginningless time no opportunity for primordial wisdom free from the four extremes to arise in those who are inclined to cling to [appearances] as real things, one must first produce by means of the mere ulti-

22 D3861, f.295a reads /*dnegos kun yang dag brdzun pa mthong ba yis/ /dnegos 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/* For the Sanskrit, see Li 2012: *samyagmrṣādarśanalabdhabhāvaṃ rūpadvayaṃ bi-bhrati sarvabhāvāḥ | samyagdrṣāṃ yo viśayaḥ sa tattvaṃ mrṣādṛṣāṃ saṃvṛtisatyam uktam | |*

23 Nor bu ke ta ka 4,1–4,5: 'di ltar kun byang gis bsdus pa'i chos 'di dag thams cad la chos can ji snyed pa snang tsam kun rdzob kyi bden pa dang/ chos nyid ji lta ba stong nyid don dam gyi bden pa gnyis su gnas par 'dod de/ yab sras mjal ba'i mdo las/ 'jig rten mkhyen pa'i bden pa 'di gnyis te/ /khyed kyis gzhan las ma gsan rang gis rig /de ni kun rdzob bden dang don dam ste/ /bden pa gsum pa gang yang ma mchis so/ / zhes gsungs pa bzhin no/ de la kun rdzob ni skye sogs kyi rang bzhin du med bzhin der snang sgyu ma dang rmi lam skra shad lta bu'i snang tshul 'di yin la/ snang ba de'i rang bzhin brtags na skye sogs kyis rnam par dben pa'i gnas tshul don dam pa yin te/ 'jug pa las/ dnegos kun yang dag rdzun pa mthong ba yis/ /dnegos rnyed ngo bo gnyis ni 'dzin par 'gyur/ /yang dag mthong yul gang de de nyid de/ /mthong ba rdzun pa kun rdzob bden par gsungs/ /zhes so/ des na de lta bu'i bden pa gnyis po de'ang don dam par tha dad pa dang/ kun rdzob tu gcig yin na skyon bzhi bzhi dag gis gnod par 'gyur ba dgongs pa nges par 'grel ba'i mdo las gsungs pa bzhin du shes par bya zhing/

24 D3884, f.555b: *dam pa'i don dang mthun pa'i phyir/ 'di ni dam pa'i don zhes bya/*

mate nonexistence of all things the mental factor that distinguishes [phenomena from] wisdom (*prajñā, shes rab*).²⁵ Therefore, all notions [found] in sūtras and treatises negating form and so forth on account of being nonexistent are explained in Svātantrika texts as [pointing at] the mere nonexistence that is exclusively the negation of real existence—the nominal ultimate.²⁶

As a consequence of this, nonexistence itself is not asserted in these [texts] as the ultimate, which is the absolute nature of things. As said in the *Madhyamakālamkāra* [MA 71ab]:

Since arising and so forth do not exist, nonarising is impossible.²⁷

and [as said] in the *Satyadvayavibhaṅgakārikā* [SD 9d]:

It is clear that in reality there is no negation.²⁸

Moreover, when the provisional path is established, although there is ultimately no arising, it is not possible to negate appearances such as arising on [the level of] the concealing. Therefore, although phenomena are not ultimately established in the way they appear, they are established by the valid modalities of cognition analyzing conventional designations with their individual defining characteristics (*svalakṣaṇa, rang gi mtshan nyid*) on the level of the concealing. As a consequence, it is explained that the qualifier “ultimately” should apply to the object of refutation [i.e., existence]:²⁹ [phenomena] do not ultimately exist, while they do exist without error on

25 For the soteriological importance of *dharmapracaya*-, see *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* I,3 in La Vallée Poussin 1971, Vol. I: 5: *dharmānām pravacayam antareṇa nāsti | kleśānām yata upaśāntaye 'bhyupāyah || kleśaiś ca bhramati bhavārṇave 'tra lokah | [taddhetor ata uditah kilaiṣa śāstrā] ||*

26 *Nor bu ke ta ka* 4,5–5,2: *don dam pa de la'ang skye ba dang gnas pa sogs bkag pa'i skye med dang gnas med sogs med dgag tsam gyi stong ba ni stong nyid chen mo mtha' bzhi dang bral ba la 'jug pa'i sgo tsam yin pas rnam grangs pa'i don dam mam/mthun pa'i don dam zhes brda mdzad de/ rgyan las/ dam pa'i don dam mthun pa'i phyir/ /'di ni dam pa'i don zhes bya/ /zhes gsungs ste/ re zhig thog ma med pa nas dngos por zhen pa goms pa rnam la mthar bzhi dang bral ba'i ye shes skye ba'i skabs med pas thog mar dngos kun don dam par med pa tsam gyis rab tu phye ba'i sems byung shes rab bskyed dgos pas na/ rang rgyud pa'i gzhung thams cad du ni/ mdo dang bstan bcos su gzugs sogs med par bkag pa'i rnam pa thams cad/ bden yod tsam 'gog pa'i med rkyang rnam grangs pa'i don du bshad pa mdzad nas/*

27 D3884, f.555b: */skye la sogs pa med pa'i phyir/ /skye ba med la sogs mi srid/*

28 D3881, f.37b: */yang dag tu na bkag med gsal/*

29 Arguillère's translation is somewhat inaccurate here: “Leur caractère réfutable ne relève donc que des particularités de l'absolu.”

[the level of] the concealing. This way of positing the two truths according to their own respective nature is certainly easier from the perspective of a beginner's mind. As stated by Ācārya Bhāviveka [MH III.12]:

For a wise person, it is absurd to reach for the pinnacle of the palace of reality without the ladder of correct concealing truths.³⁰

However, in the context of the fundamental condition of things, this division into dualistic defining characteristics (*mtshan nyid*, *lakṣaṇa*) of existence and nonexistence, namely the existence on [the level of] the concealing and the nonexistence on the [level of the] ultimate, does not occur. [6] The very form and so forth of whatever appears is empty while, likewise, whatever is empty appears itself as form and so forth. Therefore, as long as one has not actualized the *dharmadhātu* free of the thirty-two superimpositions, which is the unity of appearance and emptiness, [one's] perfection of wisdom is not authentic.³¹

That is why the glorious Candrakīrti and Śāntideva and others emphasize from the beginning the primordial wisdom free from the four extremes, that which must be directly experienced by oneself (*pratyātmavedanītavya*, *so so rang rig pa*).³² By so

30 *tattvaprāsādaśikharārohaṇaṃ na hi yujyate | tathyaśaṃvrtisopānam antareṇa yatas tataḥ ||* See Lindtner 2001: 8. D3855, f.4a: /yang dag kun rdzob rnam kyis skas/ /med par yang dag khang pa yi/ /steng du 'gro bar bya ba ni/ /mkhas la rung ba ma yin no/

31 This is how Mīpham defines the thirty-two superimpositions: “Ultimately, they rest in equanimity in the nature of phenomena by means of nonconceptual primordial wisdom, free of the thirty-two superimpositions (*sgro 'dogs so gnyis*) such as permanent or impermanent, unsatisfactory or satisfactory, self or selfless, empty or nonempty, etc.” (*mKhas pa'i tshul la 'jug pa'i sgo*, Vol. 3: 205,1–3). It is clear from this that the thirty-two superimpositions refer to the affirmation and negation of the sixteen aspects of the four truths. See Wayman 1980b.

32 *so so rang rig pa*, translated here by “that is directly experienced” has been translated in various ways. Kapstein 2000a, contrarily to Williams 1998a, who wrongly understands it as *svasamvedana*, renders it as “individual intuitive knowing” and gives the Sanskrit equivalent *pratyātmavedanītavya* (a gerundive meaning literally “that must be known for oneself”) or any other derivation from *pratyātma-vid-*, corresponding to the Pāli *paccattaṃ veditaḥ*. I agree with him, although it must be noted that other alternatives exist in Sanskrit, such as *pratyātmagati*, *inter alia*. In the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*, *pratyātmagati* is also associated with *jñāna*, *ye shes*; in Pāli, we also have *paccattaṃveva ñāṇa-* (see for example SN 12.68). Dreyfus, however, explains *so so rang rig* in the following way: “Self-cognition is an important term in this tradition, where it is used as an epithet for the ground. Such a self-cognition, which is also identified with pristine wisdom (*ye shes*, *jñāna*), is not identical to the self-cognition posited by Dharmakīrti and Śāntarakṣita as a way to explain mind's reflexivity” (see Dreyfus 2003a: 333). It must be remarked that in the later nineteenth century rime tradition, *so so rang rig* seems to be understood as a polysemic term, the semantic field of which covers a wide scope of mean-

doing, they negate that [phenomena] are established by means of [their] individual defining characteristics on the [level of] the concealing, rejecting thereby the separate apprehension of the two truths. Since appearance and emptiness are in unity (*zung 'jug*), they refute with *reductio ad absurdum* (*prasaṅgas*) all positions of existence and nonexistence through the philosophical view that is in harmony with the fundamental condition of things, the key point leading to the freedom from all assertions. They are thus called *Prāsaṅgikas*.³³

Yet, supreme scholars, such as Bu ston and so forth, declared that this Svātantrika-Prāsaṅgika distinction is nothing more than a Tibetan invention and did not exist in India.³⁴ Although there is no [such] distinction whatsoever in the ultimate sense, there is [indeed] a distinction from the perspective of their [respective]

ings: nondual knowledge, intuitive awareness, one's own direct knowing, direct experience or knowledge. Forsten (2006: 38–42) translates *pratyātmagati* as “a strictly personal experience.” The problem we have to deal with here is clearly one of perspective. From the standpoint of the practitioner, it is one's own (nondual) awareness as opposed to dualistic forms of cognitions. However, from the perspective of *ye shes* itself, it seems that *pratyātma*, *so so rang* might be understood as referring to primordial wisdom and not to the person that as such belongs to the dualistic level of mental proliferations. Interesting examples of these different shades of meanings can be found in Dudjom 1991: 115, 198, 326, 413.

33 *Nor bu ke ta ka* 5,2–6,3: *de las slar med pa nyid kyang gnas lugs mthar thug gi don du mi bzhed de/ rgyan las skye la sogs pa med pa'i phyir/ /skye ba med la sogs mi srid/ /ces dang/ bden gnyis las/ yang dag tun bkag med gsal/ /zhes pa bzhin no/ /de lta na'ang gnas skabs lam gtan la 'bebs pa'i skabs su don dam par skye ba med kyang kun rdzob tu skye ba ltar snang ba 'gog mi nus pas chos rnams ni kun rdzob tu rang gi mtshan nyid 'dzin par tha snyad dpyod pa'i tshad mas grub cing/ de snang ba ltar don dam par ma grub pas dgag bya la don dam gyi khyad par sbyar te don dam par med la kun rdzob par bslud med du yod do zhes 'chad par ched de/ de ltar bden gnyis so so rang sa na mnyams par bzhag pa 'di lta bu ni las dang po'i blo ngor cis kyang bde ba yin te/ slob dpon legs ldan 'byed kyis/ yang dag kun rdzob rnams kyi skas/ /med par yang dag khang chen gyi/ /steng du 'gro bar bya ba ni/ mkhas la rung ba ma yin no/ /zhes gsungs ba bzhin no/ 'on kyang gnas lugs mthar thug pa'i dbang du na kun rdzob tu yod pa dang/ don dam par med pa zhes yod pa dang med pa'i mtshan nyid gnyis so sor phyogs su chad de gnas pa ma yin te/ gang snang ba'i gzugs la sogs pa 'di nyid stong zhing/ gang stong bzhin pa de nyid gzugs sogs su snang ba yin pas na snang stong zung du 'jug pa'i chos kyi dbyings sgro 'dogs so gnyis dang bral ba mngon du ma byas pa de srid sher phyin mtshan nyid pa ma yin pas/ dpal ldan zla ba dang zhi ba lha la sogs pa ni/ dang po nas mtha' bzhi bral ba'i ye shes so so rang rig pa nyid rtsal du 'don par mdzad de/ 'di ltar kun rdzob tu rang mtshan gyis grub pa de'ang bkag pas bden gnyis so sor 'dzin pa khegs te snang stong zung du 'jug par 'gyur bas don dam pa'i gnas tshul la rjes su son pa'i lta ba khas len kun bral du song ba'i gnad kyis yod pa dang med pa'i phyogs thams cad thal 'gyur gyis 'jil bar mdzad pa de'i phyir thal 'gyur ba zhes mtshan du chags so/*

34 *bod kyi rtog bzos* is translated by Arguillère as “une vaine subtilité forgée par les Tibétains.” But here Mipham does not point out doctrinal subtleties made by the Tibetans. He rather insists on the fact that this distinction is a mere Tibetan fabrication, an invention that did not exist in India.

approaches to the commentary of authoritative scriptures. Thus, Bhāviveka critiqued Buddhapālita's commentary [on Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*] for failing to attribute the distinctive qualification "ultimately" to the object of negation [i.e., existence], which was rejected by Candrakīrti.³⁵ Therefore, although there is no distinction whatsoever [to be found] in the essential point of the Svātantrika and Prāsaṅgika great charioteers' outlook concerning the ultimate, there is merely a distinction in [their] way of elucidating [the meaning of] texts, insofar as [Svātantrikas] emphasize the nominal ultimate while [Prāsaṅgikas] emphasize the actual ultimate. One should refer to my detailed commentary on the *Madhyamakālamkāra* [regarding this point].

Since the great Madhyamaka of the unity [of appearance and emptiness] (*zung 'jug*) free from mental proliferations is emphasized in the context of the present Prāsaṅgika [text], it should be known that in this philosophical tradition [the ultimate] is not differentiated into two [categories], the nominal ultimate and the actual ultimate.

[Objection:] Some say that sublime primordial wisdom being the authentic actual ultimate, it [alone] is free from mental proliferations, [7] whereas any [form of] practice of emptiness by ordinary beings is a practice [of emptiness] in the sense of the concordant ultimate, a nonaffirming negation.³⁶

[Reply:] Yet, when emptiness is taught in this tradition, the negation of form and so forth is exclusively a nonaffirming negation. An affirming negation is not correct as the meaning of emptiness because it is in the absolute sense an attachment to substantialism; therefore, [emptiness] is a nonaffirming negation. Nevertheless, since appearance and emptiness are in unity on account of the incontrovertible appearance of that which arises in dependence, one should dismantle all habitual patterns of clinging to affirmation and negation. It is said:

Having understood this emptiness of all phenomena,
Whoever adheres to action and [its] fruit
Is more wonderful than wonders themselves,
More marvelous than marvels themselves!³⁷

35 This refers to the first chapter of the *Prasannapadā* (Pras. I), which has been edited and translated by MacDonald. See MacDonald 2003a (Vol. 1: 85 and Vol. 2: 366) for the Sanskrit regarding the point under discussion).

36 *med dgag, prasajyapratīṣedha*. This objection represents the view of the proponents of extrinsic emptiness (*gzhan stong*).

37 According to Arguillère (2004: 55), the text quoted is the *Prajñāpāramitāsañcayagāthā* (*mDo sdud pa*). A similar quote is, however, found in the *Bodhicittavivaraṇa chos rnam stong pa 'di*

And it is similarly stated in the *Pañcakrama* [V.13]:

Once one has separately understood
Appearance and emptiness,
Their complete co-occurrence (*'dres, saṃmīlana*)
Is in that case explained as [their] unity (*zung 'jug, yuganaddha*).³⁸

[Objection:] Some also pretend that this is the practice of the path of Mantra but not that of the sūtras.

[Reply:] Apart from a mere distinction between the practice of this unity (*zung 'jug*) as the freedom from the four extremes by means of conceptual analysis [in the case of sūtras] and [its] direct manifestation by means of skillful means [in the case of the path of Mantra], there is no difference [between these two] with regard to *dharmadhātu*. On account of this, the four extremes are not simultaneously rejected by means of the analytical meditation of ordinary beings, which investigates the nature of things. However, if, having negated each of these four alternatively, the understanding and experiencing of the sphere of unity, the object without any reference point (*dmigs med kyi don*), could not arise, [it would follow that,] just as a rice sprout does not come forth from a barley seed, the primordial wisdom of sublime beings would also not arise, having no cause. So why should [this unity of appearance and emptiness] not be contemplated in the context of the paths of accumulation and application too?³⁹

[Root text: The ultimate is not the province of the intellect. The intellect is said to be the concealing. (BCA 2cd)]⁴⁰

shes nas / / las dang 'bras bu sten pa gang / / de ni ngo mtshar bas ngo mtshar / / rmad du 'byung bas rmad du 'byung/ cf. BV 88 in Lindtner 1982: 210.

38 *Pañcakrama* (sDe dge bsTan 'gyur W1PD95844, Vol.18, f.189): *snang ba dang ni stong pa dag /so so'i char ni shes gyur nas/ /gang du yang dag 'dres gyur pa/ /zung du 'jug par de bshad do.* See the Sanskrit edition of the text in which the terminology differs slightly from the Tibetan translation found in the sDe dge bsTan 'gyur: *saṃvṛtiṃ paramārthaṃ ca pṛthag jñātvā vibhāgataḥ | saṃmīlanam bhaved yatra yuganaddham tad ucyate ||* See *Pañcakrama, Sanskrit and Tibetan Texts Critically Edited with Verse Index and Facsimile Edition of the Sanskrit Manuscripts*, edited by Katsumi Mimaki and Toru Tomabechi (Tokyo: Centre for East Asian Cultural Studies, 1994). On the basis of the Tibetan, one should probably read here *saṃmīlanam* (“coming together,” “associating,” “being present together”) instead of *saṃmīlanam* (“cessation,” “closing”).

39 Pettit (1999: 159–163) gives an interesting account of Tsongkhapa’s and Mipham’s diverging positions on this subject.

40 *Nor bu ke ta ka 6,3–7,6: mkhas mchog bu ston la sogs pas ni thal rang gi khyad par 'di bod kyi rtog*

Therefore, since **the ultimate**, the fundamental condition of things, is free from all extremes of existence, nonexistence, both, and neither, it is **not the province of the intellect**, because **the intellect**, as well as language, is **the concealing** and not the ultimate.⁴¹ [8] The intellect forms mental patterns (*'du byed pa, saṃskāra*) such as “this” or “that” through fixation (*dmigs pa, ālambana*). Language designates [things] as “this” or “that.” Upon examination, these phenomena that are the province of mind and verbalization (*ngag, vāk*) are [seen to be] empty, just like an illusion, since they are devoid [of any own-being]. In that way, they can never withstand analysis. Therefore, the Blessed One said in a *sūtra*:⁴²

bzor zad de/ rgya gar du ma byung bar mdzad mod/ mthar thug gi don la khyad par ci yang med kyang gzhung 'chad tshul gyi dbang du byas par yod de/ sangs rgyas bskyangs kyi gzhung la legs ldan gyis dgag bya la don dam pa'i khyad par ma sbyar ba'i skyon brjod pa zla bas sun phyung ba lta bu'o/ des na thal rang gi shing rta chen po de dag mthar thug gi dgongs pa'i gnad la khyad par ci yang med kyang rnam grangs dang rnam grangs min pa'i don dam rtсал du bton te 'chad tshul tsam yin te/ rgyas par dbu ma rgyan gyi rnam shad du blta bar bya'o/ des na thal 'gyur ba'i skabs 'dir zung 'jug spros pa dang bral ba'i dbu ma chen po nyid rtсал du 'don pas 'di lugs la rnam grangs dang rnam grangs min pa'i don dam gnyis su dbye ba med par shes bya mthar gtugs na'o/ kha cig gis 'phags pa'i ye shes ni rnam grangs min pa'i don dam mtshan nyid pa yin la de ni spros pa dang bral ba yin zhing/ so skye'i stong nyid bsgom pa thams cad thun pa mthar gtugs na mthar gtugs na mthar gtugs na'i don dam med dag tsam du bsgom par sungс kyang/ 'dir stong pa nyid ston pa'i skabs su gzugs la sogs pa dag pa ni med dgag kho na yin te/ ma yin par bkag kyang mthar gtugs na dngos por zhen pas stong nyid kyi don du mi rung bas med par dgag pa yin bzhin du/ rten 'byung bslu med du snang bas snang stong zung du 'jug pas dgag sgrub kyi 'dzin stangs zhig pa zhig dgos te/ ji skad du/ chos rnamс stong pa 'di shes nas/ las dang bras bu rten pa gang/ngo mtshar bas kyang 'di ngo mtshar/ rmad byung bas kyang 'di rmad byung/ zhes dang/ rim lnga las/ snang ba dang ni stong pa dag /so so'i char ni shes gyur nas/ /gang du yang dag 'dres gyur pa/ /zung du 'jug par de bshad do/ zhes pa bzhin no/ /kha cig 'di sngags lam gyi sgom yin gyi/ mdo'i min no zer yang/ mtha' bzhi dang bral ba'i zung 'jug de yid dpyod kyis bsgom pa dang/ thabs kyis btsan thabs su shar ba'i khyad par tsam las chos kyi dbyings la mi 'dra yod pa min no/ /des na gnas lugs la dpyod pa'i so so skye bo'i dbyad sgom gyis mtha' bzhi cig bsgom/ char gegs pa min kyang/ res 'jog gi tshul du bzhi char bkag nas dmigs med kyi don zung 'jug gi dbyings la go myong skye bar ma byas nas/ nas kyi sa bon las 'bras kyi myug gu bzhin du 'phags pa'i ye shes kyang chu med du skye bar mi 'gyur tshogs sbyor du yang ci ste mi bsgom/

41 *Pratīka* of BCA 2cd in bold. The Sanskrit reads: *buddher agocaras tattvaṃ buddhiḥ saṃvṛtir ucyate* || See Vaidya 1960: 170, line 28.

42 According to Arguillère, this quote is from the *Satyadvayāvatārasūtra* (*bDen gnyis bstan pa'i mdo*). See Arguillère 2004: 56. The same passage is quoted in *Bodhicaryāvatārapañjikā* (*Byang chub kyi spyod pa la 'jug pa'i dka' 'grel*, sDe dge bsTan 'gyur Vol.1a, f.41b–288a) which attributes it to the *Satyadvayāvatārasūtra*. In fact, this quote is drawn from *Samvṛtiparamārthasatyanirdeśa* (D179, f.247a): *lha'i bu gal te don dam par na don dam pa'i bden pa lus dang / ngag dang / yid kyi yul gyi rang bzhin du 'gyur na ni don dam pa'i bden pa zhes bya ba'i grangs su mi 'gro ste/ kun rdzob kyi bden pa nyid du 'gyur ro/ /*

Devaputra, if the ultimate truth were the province of body, speech, and mind, then it would not be considered to be the ultimate but the concealing truth. Devaputra, the ultimate truth is nonetheless beyond all conventional designations. In reality, [it is] unborn and unceasing. It is devoid of something to be expressed or someone expressing [anything], something to be known or someone knowing [anything]. Therefore, that which is beyond the province of the all-knowing primordial wisdom, endowed with the excellence of all aspects, is the ultimate.

And it is also stated in the *Madhyamakālaṃkāra*:

In the real sense, [the ultimate] is free from all accumulations of mental proliferations. [MA 70cd]⁴³
 [Nonexistence], being also based on conceptuality, is concealing [and] not genuine. [MA 72cd]⁴⁴

Hence it is stated here that the nature of phenomena is not an object of cognition: inasmuch as the nature of phenomena is beyond all mental proliferations, it does not exist as an objective support for the intellect.⁴⁵ As a consequence, how could we correctly call “cognitive object” that which is neither subject-object nor established as any phenomenal appearance (*mtshan ma, nimitta*) at all?⁴⁶

[It is] similarly [said in the *Prajñāpāramitāsañcayagāthā* 42a]:⁴⁷

43 D3884, f.55b: *yang dag tu na spros pa yi/ /tshogs rnam kun las de grol yin/* The beginning of the stanza (MA 70ab) is the famous statement quoted above: “Because it is in concordance with the ultimate, it is termed the ultimate” (*dam pa’i don mthun pa’i phyir/ ’di ni dam pa’i don zhes bya/*).

44 Mipham quote the source text in the following way: */rnam par rtog la brten na yang/ /kun rdzob tu ’gyur yang dag min/* but D3884, f.55b reads: */rnam par rtog la rten la yang/ /kun rdzob par ’gyur yang dag min/* The two first *pādas* (MA 72ab) read, “The application of a negation to a nonexistent object is not correct” (*yul med pa la dgag pa yi sbyor ba legs pa yod ma yin*).

45 *dmigs pa, ālambana*, which Arguillère translates by “envisagé.” This fails, however, to render the technical aspect of *dmigs pa* in the context of a subject-object relation. See Arguillère 2004: 57.

46 Arguillère translates *mtshan ma (nimitta)* in my edition of the text by “moyen de connaissance droite,” which in fact would correspond to *tshad ma*. See Arguillère 2004: 57.

47 D13, f.8b: *nam mkha’ mthong zhes sems can tshig tu rab brjod pa/ /nam mkha’ ji ltar mthong ste don ’di brtag par gyis/ / de ltar chos mthong ba yang de bzhin gshegs pas bstan/ /mthong ba dpe gzhan gyis ni bsnyad par nus ma yin/* For the Sanskrit, see *Prajñāpāramitāratnagaṇa-sañcayagāthā: Sanskrit and Tibetan Text*, edited by E. Obermiller (1937; repr., Osnabruck: Biblio Verlag, 1970): *ākāśa dṛṣṭu iti sattva pravayāharanti nabhadarśanaṃ kutu vimṛṣyatha etam arthaṃ | tatha dharmadarśanu niḍiṣṭa tathāgatena na hi darśanaṃ bhaṣitu śakya nidarśanena ||*

Ordinary beings make statements speaking of “seeing space.”
 How [is it possible to] see space?⁴⁸ Examine this matter!
 So is also the vision of phenomena taught by the Blessed One:
 It cannot be explained by another example related to perception.

[Objection:] Well, if the ultimate were not even the province of the sublime beings’ intellect, the arising of the qualities of renunciation and realization would be impossible. [9] If the meditative absorption of sublime beings could not know [the ultimate], this [sublime being] would not be the subject [having the realization of] *dharmadhātu*. *Dharmadhātu* would be asserted as something similar to the inconceivable creator. Moreover, the [conceptual] basis of the distinction between the two truths would not be a cognitive object, and so on and so forth.

[Reply:] Therefore, although the statement that [the ultimate] is beyond the province of the dualistic perception of the intellect is invalidated [by the reasons given above], these [objections] are merely verbal. It has been said [by Candrakīrti in MAV 9.4]:⁴⁹

[With regard to the absorption of sublime beings,] when reality as well as the intellect are nonarisen,
 If one relies on the aspects [of subject and object], it is as if this [intellect] knew reality.
 Insofar as this mind [is considered to] have the aspect of some [subject] and to know its object,
 This is a reasoning relying on conventions.

As explained [by Candrakīrti], it is correct to state that the [ultimate] is a cognitive object, inasmuch as the meditative absorption of sublime beings is taken as the subject and *dharmadhātu* as the object, in the way of [mere] conventional designations. But when one pretends that [*dharmadhātu*] is, on the level of the ultimate, the ob-

48 Space is defined as a mere absence of obstruction.

49 La Vallée Poussin’s edition (1912: 358) varies slightly from Mipham. La Vallée Poussin reads: *gang tshe skye med de nyid yin zhing blo yang skye ba dang ’bral ba / / de tshe de rnam rten las de yis de nyid rtogs pa lta bu ste / / ji ltar sems ni gang gi rnam pa can du ’gyur ba de yis yul / / de yongs shes pa de bzhin tha snyad nye bar rten nas rig pa yin/* instead of *gang tshe skye med de nyid yin zhing blo yang skye ba dang ’bral ba / / de tshe de rnam rten las de yis de nyid rtogs pa lta bu ste / / ji ltar sems ni gang gi rnam pa can du gyur ba de yi yul / / de yongs shes pa de bzhin tha snyad nye bar rten nas rig pa yin/* (Nor bu ke ta ka 9.2–3). Arguillère’s translation (2004: 58) of these verses is somewhat inaccurate. I used La Vallée Poussin’s edition of Candrakīrti’s *Bhāṣya* for my translation.

ject of apprehension or the cognitive object of the meditative absorption that is beyond the dualism of an apprehending subject or an apprehended object, are these words not both explicitly and implicitly contradictory? Moreover, since the basis of distinction of the two truths is a cognitive object, the assertion that the ultimate is a cognitive object is made from the perspective of a conceptual exclusion [of that which is conceptually other than the ultimate] (*rnam gcod, vyavaccheda*), while [the assertion] that the ultimate is not a cognitive object is from the perspective of a positive determination (*yongs gcod, pariccheda*).⁵⁰ Therefore, [these two statements] are not contradictory. If one were to assert the ultimate from the perspective of a positive determination, emptiness would be accepted as an actual thing. As a consequence, since both proponents of these [seemingly opposite] positions exhaust themselves with [problems] of terminology, what's the point [of all this]? They should rely on the meaning⁵¹ [, not on the letter]!⁵²

50 The distinction between *vyavaccheda* and *pariccheda* was made by Dharmakīrti (see for instance the NB in Stcherbatsky 1970: 101, 193, 217). For a detailed study of the use of these terms in early Tibetan Madhyamaka and in Tsongkhapa, see Seyfort Ruegg 2000; Phuntsho 2005a: 92, 122; and Williams 1998b: 203, n. 49 and 211, n. 90. Phuntsho (2005a: 170) presents a succinct explanation of these terms as they are used in this passage of the *Nor bu ke ta ka*. Objects can be determined in two ways. One consists in positively determining them through direct perception (*pratyakṣa*), and the other is to determine them negatively by eliminating what they are not through “language and conceptual thought” (see Cabezón/Dargyay 2007: 329, n. 358). Mipham’s extensive commentary *ad MA 64* (Padmakara 2005: 275ff.) explains that the first mode is an affirming negation (*ma yin dgag, paryudāsa*) while the second is a nonaffirming negation (*med dgag, prasajyapratīṣedha*). About this point, Mipham clarifies in the *Nges shes sgron me*: “The ultimate meaning is seen by not seeing” (see Pettit 1999: 208).

51 This refers to one of the four reliances (*rton pa bzhi*), namely, *tshig la mi rton don la rton*.

52 *Nor bu ke ta ka* 7,6–9,5: *de phyr dngos po’i gnas tshul don dam pa ni yod pa dang/ med pa dang/ gnyis ka dang/ gnyis min gyi mtha’ kun dang bral bas na blo yi spyod yul min te/ blo dang sgra ni kun rdzob yin gyi don dam pa ma yin pa’i phyr ro/ /blos ’di dang ’di’o zhes dmigs shing ’du byed pa dang/ sgas ’di dang ’di’o zhes gang brjod pa sems dang ngag gi spyod yul du gyur pa’i chos de ni rtags na rnam dpen pas sgru ma bzhin du stong pa yin gyi dpyad bzod pa nam yang mi srid do/ des na bcom ldan ’das kiyis mdo las/ lha’i bu gal te don dam pa’i bden pa lus dang ngag dang yid kyi spyod yul du gyur na de don dam pa’i grangs su mi ’gro zhig/ kun rdzob kyi bden pa nyid du ’gyur ro/ / lha bu ’on kyang don dam pa’i bden pa ni tha snyad thams cad las ’das pa dang/ yang dag par ma skes pa dang/ ma ’gags pa dang/ brjod par bya ba dang/ rjod par byed pa dang/ shes bya dang/ shes pa dang bral ba yin te/ ji srid du rnam pa thams cad kyi mchog dang ldan pa’i thams cad mkhyen pa’i ye shes kyi yul las ’das pa ni don dam pa’i bden pa yin no/ rgyan las kyang/ yang dag tu spros pa yi/ tshogs rnam kun las de grol yin/ /rnam par rtog la brten na yang/ /kun rdzob tu ’gyur yang dag min/ /zhes so/ /de la ’dir chos nyid shes bya min par brjod pa ni/ chos nyid spros pa thams cad las ’das pas na/ de ni blos dmigs par byar med pas yin te/ gang yul dang yul can du ma gyur cing mtshan ma gang du’ang ma grub pa de la yang dag par na ji ltar shes bya zhes brjod de/ nam*

Mipham's Perspectivist Approach to the Two Truths

The *Nor bu ke ta ka* was written after the *dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad* and, as acknowledged by Mipham himself, is quite terse regarding some specific points of contention that are dealt with in detail in his commentary on Śāntarakṣita's *Madhyamakālaṃkāra*. As can be seen in the translation above, Mipham's *Nor bu ke ta ka* alludes to complex issues that must be further analyzed and contextualized.⁵³

mkha' mthong zhes sems can tshig tu rab brjod pa/ nam mkha' ji ltar mthong ste don 'di brtag par gyis/ /de ltar chos mthong ba yang de bzhin gshegs pas bstan/ mthong ba dpe gzhan gyis ni bsnyad par nus ma yin/ /zhes pa bzhin no/ /'o na don da pa de 'phags pa'i blos kyang spyod yul min na/ de la dmigs pas spangs rtogs kyi yon tan 'byung ba yang mi 'thad la/ 'phags pa'i nyam bzhag gis de mi shes na de chos kyi dbyings kyi yul can min par 'gyur zhing/ chos kyi dbyings ni bsam min gyi byed po dang 'dra bar khas blangs shing/ gzhan yang bden pa gnyis kyi dbye gzhi shes bya min par 'gyur ba sogs kyis gdon pas blo gnyis snang gi spyod yul min zhes khyad par mdzad na'ang/ 'di ni ming tsam gyis ngal ba ste/ ji skad du/ gang tshe skye med de nyid yin zhing blo yang skye ba dang bral ba/ de tshde de rnam rten las de yis de nyid rtogs pa lta bu ste/ ji ltar sems ni gang gi rnam pa can du gyur pa de yul/ /de yengs shes pa de bzhin tha snyad nye bar brten nas rig pa yin/ /zhes gsungs pa ltar tha snyad du ni 'phags pa'i mnyam bzhag yul can dang/ chos kyi dbyings yul du byas pa la brten nas shes bya yin no zhes brjod rung gi/ don dam par gzung 'dzin med pa'i mnyam bzhag gis 'di gzung bya'am shes bya yin zer na tshig de dngos shugs mi 'gal lam/ yang bden gnyis kyi dbye gzhi shes bya yin pas don dam shes byar khas blangs pa de yang rnam gcad du yan la/ 'dir ses bya min pa ni yongs gcod du yin pas mi 'gal te/ yongs gcod du'ang shes byar khas len na stong nyid dngos por zhal gyis bzhag par 'gyur bas/ phyogs smra gnyis so so nas kyang ming la ngal bas ci bya ste don la rton par bya'o/

- 53 Important research questions are raised by this text. Among them: On what conceptual basis are the two truths defined? As different perceptions or objects? Why are there apparently different ways to approach the concealing truth in Mipham's system? Why does Mipham use the collocation *der snang ba* in the context of the concealing truth? Why is the concept of *pramāṇa* important for Mipham's presentation of the two truths? Why does Mipham use the theory of a twofold ultimate? Is the actual ultimate an object of knowledge? Does it withstand analysis? How should one differentiate statements made about it from the perspective of the concealing from those made from the perspective of the ultimate? What does Mipham mean in this context by positive (*yongs gcod, pariccheda*) and negative determination (*rnam gcod, vyavaccheda*)? What is the relation between the two truths? What are the two quartets of faults mentioned in the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra*? What is Mipham's perspective-based model of the relation between the two truths? How does Mipham interpret the Svātantrika/Prāsaṅgika distinction? What is Śāntarakṣita's influence on Mipham's interpretation of the two truths? Apart from Śāntarakṣita, who were Mipham's main sources of inspiration? What is meant by the "unity" (*zung 'jug*) of experience and emptiness or the inseparability (*dbyer med*) of the two truths? In what way is it compatible with the notion of *tathāgatagarbha* in a context where Dzogchen plays a central role? What is the soteriological purpose of the theory of the two truths? Is it sufficient from a practical perspective to understand intellectually that everything is empty? How should the theory of the two truths be interpreted to remain soteriologically efficient? What does Mipham mean by expressions such as "the great Madhyamaka of the unity of appearance and emptiness" (*snang stong zung 'jug dbu ma chen po*)?

As noted by Tibetan and Western scholars alike, Mipham uses two distinct definitions of the two truths to ascertain the view (*lta ba, dr̥ṣṭi*).⁵⁴ The first definition is based on the distinction between appearance (*snang ba*) and emptiness (*stong pa*), whereas the second hinges on the concordance, or lack thereof, between the way things are (*gnas lugs*) and the way they appear (*snang lugs*). In the *dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad*, his commentary on Śāntarakṣita's *Madhyamakālaṃkāra*, one of his most personal philosophical works, Mipham declares:⁵⁵

Moreover, in [all the Buddha's] words (*bka'*) and treatises (*bstan bcos, śāstra*), there are two ways to posit the two truths: (1) From the perspective of a valid cognition investigating the ultimate, namely, the way [things] are (*gnas lugs*), the "ultimate" refers to emptiness (*stong pa*) and the "concealing" to appearances (*snang ba*); (2) From the perspective of a conventional (*kun tu tha snyad*) valid cognition investigating the mode of appearance [of things] (*snang tshul*), the "ultimate" refers to the subject and object for which nature and appearance (*gnas snang*) are in irrefutable accordance. The "concealing" refers to the opposite.⁵⁶

According to Mipham, the first definition—termed *snang stong*—is usually encountered in Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka or in the sūtras of the second turning of the wheel that explicate the absence of "own-nature" (*ngo bo nyid, svabhāva*) of phenomena. The second definition is prevalent in the Maitreya tradition and the sūtras of the third (last) turning of the wheel. The latter is also referred to as the *mthun mi mthun* ("accordance/discordance") model, since the distinction between the two truths depends upon whether the way things appear is concordant with the way things are. As a consequence, the first definition (*snang stong*) could be considered to be apophatic, being based on the ultimate analysis of appearances showing their absence of "own-nature." The second definition (*mthun mi mthun*) implies a more

54 On this point, see Duckworth 2008: 6ff.; Duckworth 2011: 13; Phuntsho 2005a: 114ff.; Viehbeck 2011: 291–320; Wangchuk 2012: 24; and Viehbeck 2014: 151, n. 207.

55 For a summary of this point, see *gZhan stong khas len seng ge'i nga ro* in Pettit 1999: 416, and Duckworth 2008: 6–20, about the use of the second definition of the two truths in the context of Mipham's interpretation of the *tathāgatagarbha* theory; cf. Phuntsho 2005a: 114–16.

56 *dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad* 30,3: *de'ang bka' dang bstan bcos rnam na bden gnyis 'jog tshul gnyis su gnas te/ gnas lugs don dam la dpyod pa'i tshad ma'i dbang du byas te/ stong pa la don dam dang/ snang ba la kun rdzob ces bzhag pa dang/ snang tshul la dpyod pa kun tu tha snyad pa'i tshad ma'i dbang du byas te/ gnas snang mthun pa mi bslu ba'i yul dang yul can la don dam dang/ ldog phyogs la kun rdzob tu 'jog pa'i tshul gnyis las/*

cataphatic approach to the ultimate through the distinction it establishes between the sphere of mind (*sems*), which constitutes the concealing truth, and primordial wisdom (*ye shes*), the ultimate. In Mipham's system, this second definition is used to explain that the nature of a buddha (*tathāgatagarbha*) is empty of adventitious afflictions (*nyon mongs, kleśa*), but not empty of buddha qualities; in other words, to teach the difference between the conditioned mind and primordial wisdom, which cannot be reduced to a blank nothingness. One should add that these two definitions of the truths are not mutually exclusive, since primordial wisdom is considered to be without an "own-nature," although it does possess qualities.

From the viewpoint of Dzogchen, the highest teaching in Mipham's tradition, the first definition of the two truths appears to be formulated from an ontological perspective, stressing the primordially pure (*ka dag*) aspect of reality, whereas the second definition seems to be expressed from a cognitive perspective conducive to the realization of the spontaneously present (*lhun grub*) aspect of reality. The propaedeutic function of this perspectival approach plays a central role in the way Mipham teaches Madhyamaka as a doctrine that facilitates the realization of Dzogchen. In his introduction to the *dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad*, he thus clearly differentiates the contexts in which statements about the ultimate are made and explains at length that there are no contradictions between different views insofar as one understands that the multiplicity of apparently divergent opinions on a given topic reflects the various contexts in which these views are formulated.

This hermeneutic strategy based on the notion of standpoint and perspective is often used by Mipham to avoid contradictions, but it is also profoundly reflective of his understanding that doctrines, as expressions of a truth, are related to specific epistemic contexts. To illustrate this point, I would like to turn to Mipham's first definition of the two truths, in which the standard opposition between appearance and emptiness is resolved in a way that is similar to Gorampa's approach:⁵⁷

With regard to those [two truths], the concealing truth represents all phenomena in whatever way they appear: the ground comprised of the conditioned and the unconditioned, [such as] the aggregates (*phung po, skandha*), the basic constituents (*khams, dhātu*), and the sources of cognition (*skye mched, āyatana*); the path, [for example,] the perfections, the factors conducive to awakening (*byang chub kyi phyogs, bodhipakṣa*), and so forth; and the fruit, [such as] the ten powers and so forth. In brief,

57 See Cabezón/Dargyay 2007: 207–11.

[the concealing truth includes] the innumerable phenomena, as many as they are (*ji snyed pa*), all that is posited from the perspective of the incontrovertible (*bslus med*) mode of appearance of cognitive objects.

With regard to the ultimate truth, the phenomena of the ground, path, and fruit abide within the emptiness that is not established as anything at all. This [mode of abiding], being posited from the perspective of the way things are (*gnas lugs*), is the profound phenomenon as it is.

Realizing that these two [truths] are in the real sense in a state of unity or fundamental sameness is the supreme object of realization, the ultimate purpose.⁵⁸

In this apparently basic definition of the two truths, a central point is made. Each truth corresponds to an object that is dependent on an epistemic perspective. The dividing line between those truths is, by way of consequence, not so much the concealing and ultimate objects in themselves, but the way things are perceived. In his *Nor bu ke ta ka*, while commenting on Śāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra* (BCA 9.2), Mipham thus quotes Candrakīrti's *Madhyamakāvatāra* (MAV VI.23):

All things possess a twofold nature
Whose mode of being hinges on seeing correctly or incorrectly.⁵⁹

As explained by Mipham in the quote above, the concealing truth is “what is posited from the perspective of the incontrovertible mode of appearance of all cognitive objects.” Objects are mere experiences, appearances, manifestations (*snang ba*). The concept of “truth” is clearly conceived here in epistemic terms rather than as a purely ontological issue.

58 *mKhas pa'i tshul la 'jug pa'i sgo* Vol.2: 174: *de la kun rdzob kyi bden pa ni ji ltar snang ba'i chos gzhi 'dus byas dang 'dus ma byas kyi bsdu pa phung khams skye mched dang / lam phar phyin dang byang phyogs sogs dang / 'bras bu stobs bcu la sogs pa mdor na shes bya rnams kyi snang tshul bslus med kyi ngos nas bzhag pa ji snyed pa rgya che ba'i chos so / don dam bden pa ni gzhi lam 'bras bu'i chos de dag rang bzhin cir yang ma grub pa'i stong pa nyid du gnas pa ni gnas lugs kyi ngos nas bzhag pa ste ji lta ba zab mo'i chos so / de gnyis yang dag pa'i don du zung 'jug mnyam pa nyid du rtogs pa ni rtogs bya rnams kyi nang na mchog tu gyur pa mthar thug gi don no /*

59 For the Sanskrit, see Li 2012: 5: *samyagrṣādarśanalabdhabhāvaṃ rūpadvayaṃ bibhrati sarvabhāvāḥ*.

CHAPTER 2

The Concealing Truth as an Epistemic Perspective

The Concealing as a Cognitive Experience

In Mipham's explanation, the concealing truth consists merely of mistaken experience. Mipham thus declares in his *Nor bu ke ta ka*:

...although the concealing truth is in its nature devoid of arising and so on, it is that which appears as that (*der snang*), a mode of appearance similar to an illusion, a dream, or a hair [appearing to someone suffering from myodesopsia].⁶⁰

A correct understanding of the compound lexeme *der snang ba* is required to grasp Mipham's understanding of concealing truth. As is characteristic of Buddhist polysemic technical terms, *snang ba* is translated in various ways: it is generally assumed to mean "appearance," "perception," "manifestation," or "experience." I have chosen to translate it as "appearance" in the sense of the manifestation as an experience. The notion of experience here conveys the idea of subjectivity, while the idea of manifestation expresses the dynamic aspect of *snang ba*. Unfortunately, these two aspects are somewhat missing when one translates *snang ba* with "appearance." An appearance is usually understood as belonging to an external object and a perception as something purely subjective. The notion of appearance in the sense of a cognitive event supports a gradual shift from the perspective of the concealing truth experienced by ordinary beings up to the perspective of sublime beings (*'phags pa rnams*), a method that is the whole point of Mipham's propaedeutic approach to the two truths. The term does not aim here at reinforcing any dualistic ontological identification of the concealing in terms of subject-object, which is the mark of lower substantialist systems. We can therefore safely understand *der snang ba* as meaning "an appearance as this or that in [one's] mind." With this expression, Mipham refers to a cognitive process without implying that appearances exist ultimately as mind itself, that is to say, without substantially (*rdzas su, dravyatas*) positing any existence on the side of the subject or the object. In his commentary to the *dBu ma rgyan*, he explains:⁶¹

60 *Nor bu ke ta ka* 4: *de la kun rdzob ni skye sogs kyi rang bzhin du med bzhin der snang sgyu ma dang rmi lam skra shad lta bu'i snang tshul 'di yin la/*

61 My preference would be to translate *snang ba* with "manifestation of an experience," which has the advantage of not committing one to either of the two alternatives of the subject-object

One fully knows how things are conventionally by accepting that the various appearances are magical manifestations (*rnam par 'phrul pa, vikurvāṇa*), and [one thus] acquires confidence in the way [one] enters into or turns away from saṃsāra. Further, from the perspective of the way things are, which is free from all objective supports, marks, and mental proliferations, it is not even observed that “appearance is mind.” However, this is the ultimate that is beyond conventional designations. [53] Within the context of the appearance of conventional designations, the existence of external objects is refuted by reasoning, while it is established through reasoning that this [appearance] is nothing but mind.⁶² As a consequence, insofar as a conventional designation is accepted without contradicting confined perception (*tshur mthong*), there is no better [account of the concealing] than this. If one examines the phenomena that are merely posited through the power of conceptuality, [one finds that] they are not established as anything at all. However, these unceasing and incontrovertible appearances, which are experienced from one’s point of view, are established by the power of the things themselves as mental appearances or one’s own appearances.⁶³

dichotomy, while maintaining the dynamic notion *snang ba* carries. However, I have settled for “appearance,” which, being much shorter, leads to a more concise translation of this term. In the context of Dzogchen, this term facilitates the right understanding of the expressive power (*rtsal*) of awareness (*rig pa*) or even of *nyams*, the temporary shifting experiences during practice that belong to mind and not to *rig pa*. As Mipham has based his exposition of Madhyamaka on a gradual progression toward the view of Dzogchen, I believe that it is important to remain in the spirit of this tradition when translating these technical terms in order to allow for a smooth transition between the different levels of Mipham’s ascending scale of philosophical views.

62 Mipham does not mean hereby that things are mind, but only that they appear “there” (i.e., in the mind). They are information in the form of ideas, notions, and various types of cognitions. Their substance, however, is neither matter nor mind. His remark is purely epistemic. This way of positing the concealing truth is reminiscent of the Maitreya chapter of the *Samdhinirmocana* (Saṃdh VI). Longchenpa also understands *snang ba* in the same way: “Notons de plus que Klong chen pa feint aussi souvent de tenir l’esprit pour le spectateur des apparences, celui qui en juge, tandis qu’en même temps il est clair que les apparences ne sont rien de plus que ce fait pour lui de les percevoir. On demandera pourquoi il prétend ainsi distinguer l’esprit des apparences; c’est qu’il décrit une structure ‘apparaître-à-l’esprit’, dont les moments sont indissociables, mais en même temps ne sont possibles que pour autant qu’ils paraissent autonomes. Qu’est-ce-à dire? Le mot ‘*snang ba*’ doit, comme on l’a dit, s’interpréter comme le ‘paraître’ (comme processus) et en même temps comme le contenu qualifié de cette apparition” (see Arguillère 1991: 40). As rightly remarked by Arguillère, *snang ba* denotes both the process and its content.

63 *dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad* 52, 5ff.: *gsum pa snang ba sna tshogs pa sems kyi rnam 'phrul du khas blangs pas tha snyad kyi yin lugs mthar thug pa shes shing 'khor bar 'jug ldog gi tshul la yid ches*

For Mipham, the concealing truth is thus nothing but this multiplicity of experiences manifesting in the mind. He justifies this view by stressing that since such a presentation is in accord with empirical perceptions, there is no better way to define the concealing truth. However, these experiences are not mind, a significant point made by Longchenpa that Mipham undeniably accepts:⁶⁴

Regarding this point, accepting conventional designations in this way does not consist in analyzing whether these appearances are ultimately established as mind or not. It is [rather] a method to analyze these phenomena, which are nothing but incontrovertible (*bslu med*) appearances through valid modalities of cognition applying to conventional designations.⁶⁵

As a consequence, these appearances are not declared to be mind in any ontological sense. In a word, when Mipham defines the concealing truth as experiences man-

thob ste/ de la dmigs mtshan spros pa thams cad dang bral ba'i gnas lugs kyi dbang du na/ snang ba sems yin no zhes kyang mi dmigs mod/ de ni tha snyad las 'das pa'i don dam pa yin la/ [53] tha snyad snang ba'i ngang tshul 'di la gnas ni/ phyi don yod pa la rigs pas gnod cing/ sems tsam yin pa la rigs pa'i sgrub byed yod pas tshur mthong gis las ma brgal bar tha snyad zhig khas len na 'di las gong du gyur pa med de/ rtog pa'i dbang gis bzhag pa tsam gyi chos rnam dpyad na gang du'ang ma grub kyang/ rang ngor myong tshul gyis bslu med du snang ba 'gog tu med pa 'di sems kyi snang ba'am rang snang tsam du dngos po'i stobs kyis grub pa yin no/

64 In his presentation of Mañjuśrimitra's *rDo la gser zhun*, Lipman shows that, in the *Yid bzhin mdzod*, Longchenpa insists that *snang ba* has no substratum: "Nowadays, ignoramuses say that Dzogchen claims that how things appear is merely our own mind. This is totally unacceptable, for it leads to the absurd conclusion that mind can be divided into parts, colours, and qualities you can get a hold on, since the way things appear seems to be so. [...] However, we maintain that how things appear is without root or basis, occasioned by the intoxicant of the deluding habituating tendencies making themselves felt in experience. Therefore, we are those who say that there is no actuality to how things appear" (Lipman/Norbu 1986: 21); further, "Since all the configurations of events/meanings that present themselves to us as the five sense objects of visible form, and so forth, as well as the whole outer world and the beings it contains, are present in mind, they are not something apart from mind. Although they seem to be something other than mind, since they are actually nonexistent, like a dream or conjurer's illusion, they can't be found as something apart from mind. Also, for this reason, they can't be identified with mind itself, as illustrated by the eight similes of conjurer's illusion, and so forth. Examining the ultimate components, whether individual or composite, of material objects that, although they are nothing at all, are clearly experienced, shows that either way they are just the same in that there is nothing that makes them what they are" (*ibid.*, 22–23; I use "mind" instead of Lipman's "experience" for *sems*).

65 *dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad 26,3: de la 'di lta bu'i tha snyad kyi 'dod tshul la yang don dam par snang ba sems su grub ma sgrub kyi dpyad pa ma yin la/ bslu med snang tsam gyi chos 'di rnam la tha snyad kyi tshad mas gzhal tshul yin te/*

ifesting in the mind, he does not imply that the essence of appearances is nothing but mind (*cittamātra*) in the way of an idealist reductionism. His view is not that mind has a higher ontological status than other phenomena on the level of the concealing truth. In fact, Mipham's presentation of the concealing simply describes an epistemic process that does not entail any assertion of existence as such. Ascribing an ultimate substance to illusion is not the point. Rather, the point is that delusion as a cognitive event takes place from a purely epistemic perspective. These manifestations of various experiences, these appearances, are seen as "the play of mind," even at the level of the *sūtras*, which, from the perspective of higher teachings such as Dzogchen, can subsequently facilitate a gradual transition from a lower (i.e., provisional) understanding of the concealing to a more profound one, as found in the context of the unity (*zung 'jug*) of the two truths:

Thus, when one knows that appearances are the play of mind, [one has] a way to find certainty as to how one engages in or turns away from *samsāra*.⁶⁶

The Concealing as a Manifestation Resulting from Delusion

Conditioned (*'dus byas, saṃskṛta*) phenomena are seen by Mipham as nothing but experiences manifesting in the mind, and represent a dualistic cognitive process. Mind is identified as delusion, not as the ultimate, from the perspective of ordinary beings, which echoes Dzogchen's distinction between dualistic mind (*sems*) and nondual awareness (*rig pa*). Mipham's approach allows him to refer to this distinction through his second definition of the two truths, corresponding to the concordance/discordance (*mthun mi mthun*) model.

Putative objects are consequently reduced merely to the vast field of experiences and appearances occurring in the mind as being real, although they are not. As stated in Mipham's *Ye shes snang ba*, his commentary on the *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga*:

That which is designated as "phenomenon" in the immediately preceding explanation, the defining characteristic (*mtshan nyid, lakṣaṇa*) of *samsāra* itself, appears dualistically as an apprehending subject or an apprehended object. Then, inasmuch as this appearance is grasped as this or that and designated by various expressions, this dualistic appearance

66 *dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad 53,4: de ltar snang ba sems nyid kyi rol par shes na 'khor bar 'jug ldog gi tshul la nges pa rnyed tshul yang/*

of an apprehended object and an apprehending subject, being an appearance, is not truly established, just as spatial depth seems to exist in a [two-dimensional] drawing. Therefore, like the appearance of strands of hair and so forth [for someone suffering of myodesopsia], it is nothing but one's own incorrect projection (*kun tu rtog pa, parikalpa*), since it appears in [one's] mind in the manner of a nonexistent object.⁶⁷

So according to Mipham, the concealing truth is a perspective that takes as an existing object that which does not exist. If this object is analyzed, nothing is found. But since ordinary beings experience something, this level of ordinary reality is etymologically termed “concealing” (*kun rdzob, samvṛti*). Mipham's explanations in the *Nor bu ke ta ka* follow here those of Prajñākaramati's *ad* BCA 2ab:⁶⁸

With regard to those [two truths], although the concealing truth is devoid of arising and so on in its nature, it is that which appears as that (*der snang ba*), a mode of appearance similar to an illusion, a dream, or a hair [appearing to someone suffering from myodesopsia]. When [we] examine the nature of “that which merely appears as that,” [its] mode of existence in which there is no arising and so forth is the ultimate [truth].⁶⁹

In the *dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad*, Mipham explains:

Because the so-called “concealing [truth]” appears as arising and so forth, emptiness is hidden from the perspective of spiritually immature persons and must be exclusively understood as that which has become veiled (*bsgribs pa*).⁷⁰

67 *Ye shes snang ba* 5a: *bshad ma thag pa de la chos zhes brjod pa 'khor ba de nyid kyi mtshan nyid ni/ gzung 'dzin gnyis su snang ba dang/ ji ltar snang ba de 'di dang de ltar zhen cing ming sna tshogs kyi mngon par brjod par snang ba can 'di nyid de/ 'di ltar tshul bzhin bris ba'i ri mo la mthod man med kyang yod par snang ba ltar gzung 'dzin gnyis su snang ba de ni/ snang ba ltar don la ma grub pas na dper na skra shad la sogs par snang ba bzhin du yang dag pa ma yin pa'i rang gi kun tu rtog pa tsam ste/*

68 See Vaidya 1960: 176, lines 4–11. The example of the *taimirika* is also given by Prajñākaramati in his commentary.

69 See Chapter 1, A Translation of *Nor bu ke ta ka* 4,1–9,5 and BCA 9.2.

70 *dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad* 30,6: *kun rdzob ces skye ba sogs su snang ba'i tshul gyis byis pa rnam kyi ngor stong pa nyid spas shing bsgribs par gyur pa lta bu zhid kho na la go dgos kyi/*

In this statement, Mipham does not present the concealing truth as intrinsically different from the ultimate, but as that which has become concealed, obstructed, covered, veiled (*saṃvṛti*) “from the perspective of spiritually immature beings.” This latter remark may seem innocuous, but it is an essential point in Mipham’s discernment of various perspectives in accordance with Śāntarakṣita’s approach, particularly in the context of a discourse on the ultimate.

CHAPTER 3

The Ultimate Truth from the Perspectives of the Concealing and Ultimate Truths

Distinguishing the Conceptual and Nonconceptual Ultimates

In his commentary on BCA 2ab, Mipham mentions two ultimates: the nominal (or conceptual)⁷¹ ultimate and the actual (or nonconceptual) ultimate.⁷² The nominal ultimate is defined as “the mere ultimate nonexistence of all things.” The actual ultimate is on its part defined as “freedom from the four extremes.” According to Mipham (cf. *Nor bu ke ta ka ad* BCA 2ab), pretending that things exist conventionally but are ultimately nonexistent is acceptable from the perspective of beginners, but is definitely limited from the perspective of sublime beings. As explained by Kapstein, this division prevents one from conflating the discourse about the absolute with its realization.⁷³ According to Mipham, the nominal ultimate is therefore nothing more than a pedagogical verbalization that is simply in accordance with the actual ultimate:⁷⁴

Likewise, at the beginning, conventional arising and ultimate nonarising [of phenomena], as objects of language and conceptuality at the time of hearing and reflecting, are established together within a twofold system [i.e., the two truths]. As one member of this pair, the nominal ultimate is [called] nominal because it is a conceptualization of the ultimate, and it is derived from the opposite pair with which it is associated (i.e., the concealing [truth]). The nominal, the opposite of the concealing within the so-called two truths, is the cause [of the understanding of the actual ultimate]. It is merely an entrance gate leading to the consummate ultimate (*don dam mthar thug*).⁷⁵

71 *rnam grangs pa'i don dam*, **paryāyaparamārtha*. Also referred to as the “concordant ultimate” (*mthun pa'i don dam*).

72 *rnam grangs min pa'i don dam*, **aparyāyaparamārtha*. Literally, “the ultimate that is not amenable to categories (i.e., concepts).”

73 See Kapstein 2001: 329.

74 See Viehbeck 2011.

75 *dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad* 34,5: *de ltar dang por thos bsam gyi sgra rtog gi yul du gyur pa'i tha snyad du skye ba dang/ don dam par mi skye ba lta bu tshul gnyis zung du bzhag pa'i ya gyal rnam grangs pa'i don dam ni/ kun rdzob yod pa'i zlas drangs pa'i phyir ram/ don dam pa'i grangs su gtogs pas na rnam grangs te/ bden pa gnyis zhes pa'i kun rdzob kyi zlar bgrang rgyud de yin la/ de ni don dam mthar thug dang mthun pa'i sgo tsam mam/*

If the ultimate beyond all mental proliferations is stated in the form of a nonaffirming negation, then some unfortunate consequences ensue. Mipham uses a typical *reductio ad absurdum* here:

Without the two investigations of the ultimate,
The unity (*zung 'jug*) of the two truths would not be known.⁷⁶
As the ultimate would fall into the extreme of mental proliferations,
It would namely, itself, destroy its own nature.⁷⁷

At this stage, it becomes necessary to define what Mipham understands by conceptuality (*rtog pa*). Phuntsho explains this central point meticulously in his study of the debate on emptiness.⁷⁸ According to him, Mipham refers to three different sets of conceptual activity: (1) “conceptual thoughts grasping mixed words and object” (*sgra don 'dres 'dzin gyi rtog pa*), which is the thought taking the image of an object as the object itself, conflating the universal (or generalization) with the particular; (2) “the notional thought of own being” (*ngo bo nyid kyi rtog pa*), which represents all cognitive processes, including direct perceptions, which are nonconceptual from the perspective of the first point; and (3) “the thought [grasping gross features] of the gross and the subtle” (*rtsing zhib kyi rtog pa*), which refers to the cognition apprehending general features (*rtog pa, vitarka*) as opposed to the cognition apprehending specific features (*dpyod pa, vicāra*).⁷⁹ Conceptuality as understood by Mipham in the context of primordial wisdom (*ye shes*) can be subsumed into the eight groups of dualistic consciousnesses (*rnam shes, vijñāna*). In his *rDo rje snying po*, Mipham explains that all mentations included in these eight sets must be distinguished from primordial wisdom.⁸⁰ In fact, the whole purpose of his *rDo rje snying po* is to expose the difference between dualistic mind (*sems*) and awareness (*rig pa*). As explained by Phuntsho,⁸¹ apprehending any phenomenal appearance (*mtshan ma, nimitta*), and for that matter even an absence of phenomenal appearance, is an apprehension in terms of phenomenal appearance (*mtshan mar 'dzin pa*).

76 The first line refers to the nominal and the actual ultimates.

77 *Shes rab ral gri* 804,3: /don dam dpyod byed gnyis med na/ /bden gnyis zung 'jug mi shes shing/ /don dam spros pa'i mthar lhung la/ /de yang rang gis rang nyid 'jig/

78 See Phuntsho 2005a: 190.

79 This definition is based on Mipham's epistemological works such as *Tshad ma kun btus 'grel*. See Phuntsho 2005a: 279, n. 110.

80 See Hopkins 2006b: 64–69, 83–84.

81 Phuntsho 2005a: 192.

This crucial point shows the difference between Mipham's understanding of primordial wisdom and the view traditionally ascribed to Hwa shang. Indeed, for Mipham any kind of nonconceptual abiding in or fixation on a state in which there are no thoughts on account of focusing on an absence of thought or voluntarily blocking the mind's activity *eo ipso* involves conceptuality. In his *dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad*, Mipham seems to be honestly concerned that such a way of stating the ultimate might lead to the wrong understanding:

If this alone, [namely that the ultimate truth means nonexistence], is taught as the ultimate, some people of weak understanding would think, “Nonexistence only, which is the negation of the *negandum*, is the [ultimate] nature [of phenomena].” Clinging to emptiness, they would become incurably attached to this view [of emptiness]. This clinging is of two kinds: the clinging to emptiness as an actual thing and the clinging [to emptiness] as a non-thing.⁸²

In order to avoid such a problem, Mipham uses the Svātantrika distinction between the nominal and the actual ultimate, which enables him to distinguish between the ultimate as conceptualized for the sake of communication with ordinary beings and the ultimate of the sublime beings that is beyond all affirmations and negations. In the following statement, Mipham shows that sheer nonexistence alone is indeed nothing but conceptuality in disguise.⁸³ It is not to be confused with the freedom from extremes that corresponds to what could prosaically be termed a mystical experience beyond the range of our ordinary cognitive processes:

Thus, owing to the clinging to things as being existent, which has been a habit since beginningless time, [phenomena] are established as non-existent and one is made familiar with [this]. If one does not understand that the nature of [any seemingly] real thing is nonexistent, the certainty regarding the nature of phenomena, which is beyond extremes, cannot arise. However, this pure nonexistence alone is not the consummate nature of phenomena. At the time when this thing that is investigated and about which it is said “No thing such as form and so forth exists” is

82 *dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad* 55,5: *de tsam zhid don dam du bstan na ni blo chung ba gcig dgag bya bkag pa'i med pa tsam gnas lugs so snyam du stong pa nyid la zhen nas gsor mi rung ba'i lta bar 'gyur la/ zhen tshul la'ang stong nyid la dngos por zhen pa dang dngos med du zhen pa gnyis yod/*

83 On the three types of conceptuality (*sgra don 'dzes 'dzin gyi rtog pa, ngo bo nyid kyi rtog pa, rtsing zhib kyi rtog pa*), see Phuntsho 2005a: 190ff.

conventionally not perceived as arising and so forth on the basis of its own essence, how could [this nonexistence of a thing] then be the intellect's object of reference, since the very nonexistence of [any] thing that depends on this [thing] has no actual thing it can relate to? It is impossible, just as the death of the unborn son of a barren woman is not perceived. Thus, nonexistence does not exist, as it is only posited in dependence upon existence, namely, that which is established by its own essence as independent.

Some say, "Well, by negating existence, nonexistence is established. If in turn you negate nonexistence as well, since it will go on and on with these two, then what will you do?"⁸⁴ It is certainly true that such conceptualizations (*kun rtog*), [made] in the way an elephant bathes [in the mud], arise in those who, in reliance upon consciousness, take a point of view [based on] the confined perception of dogmatic logicians (*tshur mthong rtog ge'i dbang du byas pa*).⁸⁵ As the inconceivable nature of phenomena is supreme among [all kinds of] greatness that frighten the unfortunates, they do not understand its nature. When something is taught as the insubstantiality [of phenomena], they apprehend [it] as a nihilistic emptiness. When something is taught as that which is endowed with appearance, they apprehend it as really established. When something is termed "the unity [of appearance and emptiness]," they apprehend it as an object such as a rope [made of] of black and white braided strands. When something is termed "inconceivable," nothing dawns on them, aside from something like the Hwa shang's view of [mental] blankness. If everyone could easily understand this supreme and profound nature of phenomena, why is it said,⁸⁶ "Completely beyond the world, the sphere of the sublime ones is difficult to perceive and difficult to understand, being inconceivable"?⁸⁷

84 This represents the position of those for whom the principle of the excluded middle is valid (namely the Gelugpas) also on the level of the ultimate. The very negation of nonexistence establishes existence and vice versa, hence the vicious circle mentioned here by the opponent's objection.

85 Cf. Arguillère 2004: 88, n. 2: "L'éléphant en se vautrant dans la boue se souille tout en se lavant. De même la notion de vacuité, en tant que telle, n'est-elle pas une idée fictive au même titre que les conceptions implicites du substantialisme naïf ou les constructions savantes du substantialisme philosophique?"

86 I could not identify the source of this quote: *de dag 'jig rten mtha' dag las 'das shing 'phags pa'i spyod yul blta dka' zhing shes par dka' bsam gyis mi khyab*.

87 *Nor bu ke ta ka 27,1ff.: re zhig thog med nas goms pa'i dngos po yod pa nyid du zhen pa de'i ngor*

Equipped with this approach of the twofold ultimate corresponding to two different perspectives, Mipham aims at conciliating views ranging from those of the Dzogchen to the Gelugpa traditions, as well as the classical Indian Svātantrika and Mādhyamika interpretations. With this uniquely inclusivist attitude within Tibetan Buddhism, Mipham attempts to make thirteen centuries of Indian and Tibetan Buddhist developments compatible with the highest teaching of his tradition, Dzogchen. By stressing that the actual ultimate beyond all views is truly the nonconceptual ultimate, he echoes the Dzogchen essential teaching distinguishing *sems* and *rig pa* in a move confirming Dzogchen as the epitome of Buddhist views to protect it from sectarian attacks. Yet, as far as the nominal ultimate is concerned, Mipham accepts a position similar to that of the Svātantrikas and the Gelugpas for the sake of teaching beings on the path. In this respect, he goes so far as to provisionally accept Phya pa chos kyi seng ge's (1109–1169) position: The two truths can be said to be a single entity with different conceptual aspects (*ldog pa tha dad pa'i ngo bo gcig*), a position also held by Tsongkhapa and that Longchenpa had expressly rejected in his *Grub mtha' mdzod*.⁸⁸ In spite of this concession, Mipham unquestionably follows Gorampa in his exposition of the two ultimates:⁸⁹ on the level of the actual ultimate, the two truths are accepted to be in unity (*zung 'jug*), as they

byas nas med pa nyid du sgrub cing goms par byed de/ dngos po rang bzhin med par ma shes na gnas lugs mtha' bral la nges pa skye ba'i skabs gtan med pas so/ /'on kyang med pa nyid de tsam kho na gnas lugs mthar thug ni ma yin te/ gang tshe gzugs sogs dngos po gang zhig med do zhes brtag bya'i dngos po de tha snyad du rang gi ngo bos skye ba sogs su mi dmigs na/ de tshe de la rten pa'i dngos med kyang rten dngos po dang bral bas na/ blo yi mdun na dmigs gtad kyi yul du ji ltar gnas te gnas mi srid de mog sham gyi bu skye ba med na de shi ba'ang mi dmigs pa bzhin no/ des na med pa ni yod pa la brten nas bzhag pa tsam ltos med du ngo bos grub pa ni med do/'on yod pa bkag nas med pa sgrub/ slar yang med pa'ang bkag nas yod pa sgrub/ de gnyis res mos spel bas ci zhig bya zer na/ rnam shes la rton cing tshur mthong rtog ge'i dbang du byas pa dag la glang chen gyi khros dang 'dra ba'i kun rtog 'di lta bu 'byung ba ni shin tu bden te bsam gyis mi khyab pa'i chos nyid ni skal dman rnams skrag pa'i gnas che ba'i rab yin pas de'i tshul ni mi shes shing/ dngos med du bstan na chad stong du bzung/ snang bcas su bstan na bden grub tu bzung/ zung 'jug ces brjod na tha gu dkar nag bsgrel ba lta bu'i don du bzung/ bsam gyis mi khyab ces brjod na cang med ci med hwa shang gi lta ba lta bu zhig las mi 'char yin te/ zab mo'i mthar thug pa'i chos 'di kun gyis bde blag tu shes nus na/ de dag 'jig rten mtha' dag las 'das shing 'phags pa'i spyod yul blta dka' zhing shes par dka' bsam gyis mi khyab zhes ji ste gsung/

88 See Tauscher 2003: 235: “Phya pa lays great emphasis on determining the two realities as ‘identical in nature and different with regard to the characteristic distinction’ (*ngo bo gcig la ldog pa tha dad pa*). Equally, in Tsong kha pa’s Madhyamaka exegesis the same determination is of utmost importance, as it provides a basis for his interpretation of ‘neither existent nor nonexistent’ as meaning ‘neither existent in an absolute sense nor nonexistent conventionally,’ which is understood as referring to both realities and thus represents the essence of his ontology.” On Longchenpa’s view, see Butters 2006: 398, 411.

89 See Cabezón/Dargay 2007: 211–17.

cannot be separated (*dbyer med*). In Mipham's systematic integration of ascending perspectives on reality into a coherent vision, the propaedeutic function of the view is therefore a soteriological necessity, as his approach clearly aims at providing beginners on the spiritual path with a ladder linking both the view and the practice of emptiness of lower approaches with that of higher ones:⁹⁰

The single entity corresponding to the single entity possessing different conceptual distinguishers (*ldog pa tha dad pa'i ngo bo*) of the two truths is the single entity of the inseparability of appearance and emptiness (*snang stong dbyer med*). This is established through the valid modality of cognition that analyzes the two truths. Whatever appears is empty. If this emptiness existed as something different from appearance, since the essence of this phenomenon would become nonempty, these two would not be different. This entity, established as an entity that cannot be separated [into two], is the actual ultimate. This cannot be described as anything at all and is the sphere of direct knowledge or experience (*so sor rang rig*). This is *dharmadhātu*, the lineage (*rigs, gotra*) [of the buddhas], and so forth. Although it is the highest mode of being of all phenomena, it is not conceptualized. If it were not so, it would be a phenomenal appearance. From the perspective of the emptiness of the nominal ultimate, when the four extremes are refuted, the extreme of existence must be refuted by the nonexistence of [something] real, while the extreme of nonexistence [must be refuted] by conventional existence. Thus, from the perspective of the nature of things itself, the four extremes cannot be eliminated. The mode of being that is a non-affirming negation has the potency to eliminate the extreme of affirming real existence.⁹¹ However, since the elimination of nonexistence depends on the concealing [truth], the mode of being itself, from its own perspective, would fall into the extreme [of nonexistence]. Therefore, this emptiness that represents a fall into the extreme [of nonexistence] is not the nature of phenomena.⁹²

90 This is also confirmed by Mipham in his *'Od gsal snying po*; see Dharmachakra 2009: 65.

91 I would like to thank Professor Matthew Kapstein for his suggestions regarding the translation of this sentence.

92 *'Jug 'grel 576, 5ff.: bden gnyis ngo bo gcig la ldog pa tha dad pa'i ngo bo gcig pa de/ snang stong dbyer med ngo bo gcig yin la/ de ni bden gnyis dpyod pa'i tshad mas grub ste/ gang snang 'di stong/ stong pa de snang ba las tha dad du yod na/ chos de'i ngo bo mi stong bar 'gyur bas de gnyis tha dad du*

Mipham's Perspectivist Discourse on the Inexpressible Ultimate

Perspectives play a central role in Mipham's discourse on the ineffable. On the one hand, some of his statements seem to indicate that the actual ultimate is a cognitive object for sublime beings:

Realizing that these two [truths] are in the real sense in unity (*zung 'jug*) or in a state of fundamental sameness (*mnyam pa nyid*) is the supreme object of realization, the ultimate purpose.⁹³

These statements, made *from the perspective of ordinary beings*, present the ultimate as an object that is to be realized by sublime beings and, in this respect, is compatible with the Gelugpa position:

With regard to this, insofar as all cognitive objects are distinguished on account of being correct or incorrect, they are completely included within the two truths.⁹⁴

However, according to Mipham the ultimate, *from the perspective of sublime beings*, abides clearly beyond all designations:

In the absolute sense, the ground of emptiness
And that which is empty do not exist as being different.
The inseparability of appearance and emptiness is inexpressible—
You must realize it directly for yourself!⁹⁵

med do/ ngo bo dbyer med med par grub pa'i ngo bo de ni rnam grangs min pa'i don dam ste/ de la gang du'ang brjod mi shes te so sor rang gi yul lo/ de ni dbyings dang rigs sogs yin te/ chos kun gyi gnas lugs mthar thug yin gyi/ rnam grangs pa ni min no/ de min rtags/ rnam grangs pa'i stong pa'i dbang du byas na/ mtha' bzhi 'gog tshe/ bden med kyi yod mtha' sel/ tha snyad du yod pas chad mtha' sel dgos la/ de ltar na gnas lugs rang gi ngos nas mtha' bzhi sel mi nus te/ gnas lugs med dgag la yod mtha' sel ba'i nus pa yod kyi/ med mtha' sel ba kun rdzob la ltos pa'i phyr/ gnas lugs kho rang gi ngos nas mthar lhung ba can du 'gyur bas/ de 'dra'i mthar lhung gi stong nyid de chos nyid ma yin no/

93 mKhas pa'i tshul la 'jug pa'i sgo Vol.2: 174: *de gnyis yang dag pa'i don du zung 'jug mnyam pa nyid du rtogs pa ni rtogs bya rnam kyis nang na mchog tu gyur pa mthar thug gi don no/*

94 dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad 18,2: *de la shes bya 'di dag yang dag pa yin min gnyis kyis phye bas na bden pa gnyis su zad par 'du zhing/*

95 *Shes rab ral gri 799,2: /gnas lugs don la stong gzhi dang/ /stong pa tha dad du med pas/ /snang stong dbyer med brjod dang bral/ /so so rang gis rig bya'o/*

In his *Nor bu ke ta ka*, Mipham comments on Śāntideva's famous *pādas* (BCA 2cd) on the impossibility of conceiving the ultimate.⁹⁶ Various conflicting interpretations of these verses have triggered fierce debates and polemics in Tibet.⁹⁷ About this fine point, Mipham declares in his *Nor bu ke ta ka*:

Moreover, it is also stated in the *Madhyamakālamkāra*:

In the real sense, [the ultimate] is free of all accumulations of mental proliferations. [MA 70cd]
[Nonexistence,] being also based on conceptuality, is concealing [and] not genuine. [MA 72cd]

Hence it is explained here that the nature of phenomena is not an object of cognition: inasmuch as the nature of phenomena is beyond all mental proliferations, it does not exist as an objective support for the intellect. As a consequence, how could we correctly call “cognitive object” that which is neither subject-object nor established as any phenomenal appearance at all?⁹⁸

In his commentary on Candrakīrti's *Madhyamakāvatāra* XI,12–13, Mipham explains, in agreement with the root text, that distinctions between objects and subjects are simply made for the sake of communication, namely, from the perspective of ordinary beings. Ultimately, subject and object are of a single essence. The core of the problem here is that since the ultimate is beyond the dichotomy of subject-object, it cannot be an object, or else it amounts to nothing but a thought:

The entity possessing an objective support
Is a thought, which is the nature of the grasped object and the grasping subject.⁹⁹
Whatever is taken by this [thought] as a pseudo-objective support is falsehood

96 See Vaidya 1960: 170, line 27: *buddher agocaras tattvaṃ buddhiḥ samvṛtir ucyate* ||

97 See Viehbeck 2014.

98 *Nor bu ke ta ka* 8,3ff.: *rgyan las kyang/ yang dag tu spros pa yi/ tshogs rnam kun las de grol yin/ / rnam par rtog la brten na yang/ /kun rdzob tu 'gyur yang dag min/ /zhes so/ /de la 'dir chos nyid shes bya min par brjod pa ni/ chos nyid spros pa thams cad las 'das pas na/ de ni blos dmigs par byar med pas yin te/ gang yul dang yul can du ma gyur cing mtshan gang du'ang ma grub pa de la yang dag par na ji ltar shes bya zhes brjod de/*

99 The subject-object division refers to duality.

[Because this thought] does not actually come into contact with the nature of phenomena.

It is said in the sūtras that

Taking the objective support to be a thing or a non-thing,

Taking the objective support to be dual or nondual,

No matter how one takes [something] as an objective support,

Whatever is grasped through this approach belongs to the domain of the demon.¹⁰⁰

No refutation or proof whatsoever

Can destroy what is taken as an objective support.

When one understands without eliminating or adding [anything], [this is] freedom.¹⁰¹

Mipham therefore clearly separates mind and mental processes from the ultimate beyond all views, which is similar to the distinction made in Dzogchen between mind (*sems*) and awareness (*rig pa*):¹⁰²

100 Cf. Nāgārjuna, Yṣ 36ab in Scherrer-Schaub 1991: 264: “Aussi grande est l’agitation de l’esprit, aussi étendu est le domaine de Māra.”

101 *Shes rab ral gri* 811,3ff.: /dmigs pa can gyi bdag nyid ni/ /bzung dang ’dzin pa’i rang bzhin sems/ /de des gang dmigs de ltar rdzun/ /chos nyid don la dngos mi reg/ /dngos por dmigs dang dngos med dmigs/ /gnyis su dmigs dang gnyis min dmigs/ /ji ltar dmigs dang kyang dmigs pa ste/ /dmigs pas gang bzung bdud kyi ni/ /spyod yul yin zhes mdo las gsungs/ /dgag dang sgrub pa gang gis kyang/ /dmigs pa ’jig par mi nus la/ /bsal bzhag med par mthong na grol/

102 Cf. Thakchoe 2007: 118. Thakchoe quotes here Sogyal Rinpoche about the distinction between *sems* and *rig pa*. However, I must express some rather strong reservations with respect to Thakchoe’s comments. Thakchoe identifies the *ālayavijñāna* with *rig pa*, which shows either that his point of view is somewhat biased or that he is not familiar with Dzogchen. Longchenpa makes it clear that mind and *rig pa* cannot be confused: “Those who are not graced by high learning and speak of the ‘method of spontaneity,’ claim that the way things appear in their objective variety is the state of pure and total presence, which is one’s own mind. But here (in the *Sems sde*), the teaching that (the variety of how things appear) is actually one in the expanse of the state of pure and total presence, is very different, abysmally so. These stupid people take the state of pure and total presence to be their own (ordinary) mind, but here we hold that (our ordinary mind) presents itself through the creativity [*rtsal*] of the ongoing state of pure and total presence that has been apprehended as a ‘subject.’ The way things appear has always been a radiance not existing internally or externally apart from being a mere play of the creativity (of pure and total presence). It is not found as something mental or other than mental, but it is merely how things present themselves interdependently when secondary conditions are present” (Lipman/Norbu 1986: 27). Mipham’s *rDo rje snying po* aims exactly at refuting such views (see, for instance, Hopkins 2006b: 68).

From the perspective of the way things really are, the consummate ultimate (*mthar thug*), the so-called “nonarising” that is induced by [relying on] “arising,” amounts to nothing but a conceptual image that is the elimination through the intellect of the opposite [of nonarising, namely, arising]. Therefore, [the consummate ultimate] is beyond all extremes such as arising, existence, nonexistence, and so forth. The reality of the completely spotless exalted experience (*gzigs*), the primordial wisdom of the meditative absorption of the sublime ones who have completely left behind the sphere of words and conceptuality, is the unsurpassable ultimate beyond names.¹⁰³

The Two Truths from the Perspective of the Nonconceptual Ultimate

Although Dreyfus seems to think that according to Mipham the actual ultimate is accessible to thought, there is a rather long explanation in his *mKhas pa'i tshul la 'jug pa'i sgo* presenting the ultimate as being beyond all extremes as the inseparability of the two truths—that is, as the unique truth.¹⁰⁴ This passage shows Mipham's willingness to facilitate the understanding of the ultimate based on conceptuality, but it also shows his reluctance to conflate the nominal ultimate with the actual, which remains beyond the sphere of thought:

103 *dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad 35,2: /yang dag pa'i gnas lugs mthar thug pa'i dbang du na/ skye bas drangs pa'i skye med ced pa'ang blos gzhan bsal ba'i rnam rtog gi gzugs brnyan tsam yin pas/ skye ba yod med sogs mtha' thams cad las 'das shing sgra dang rtog pa'i spyod yul thams cad spangs pas 'phags pa'i mnyam gzhag ye shas zhin tu dri ma med pa'i gzigs don ni rnam grangs ma yin pa'i don dam bla na med pa yin la/*

104 See Dreyfus 2003a: 335: “Go rams pa holds that this is the case, that the actual ultimate is not accessible to thought and is thus utterly ineffable. Mi pham disagrees, arguing that if this were so, ordinary beings would never understand such an ultimate since they could never develop the causes that lead to the generation of primordial wisdom. Thus, for Mi pham, the actual ultimate is accessible to thought, even though its access is different from that of wisdom. Whereas the latter realizes the ultimate by refuting all four extremes simultaneously, thought proceeds in succession.” It seems to me that Dreyfus does not consider the fact that, according to Mipham as well, as long as extremes and dualistic thoughts are involved, the actual ultimate is not attained. Mipham's quotes above make it clear that the actual ultimate is beyond all extremes. Therefore, a mere intellectual gradual process of negation of the four extremes cannot, according to Mipham, involve the actual ultimate. Arguillère 2004: 57, n. 1 concurs: “Dans la doctrine de Mi pham, quand on dit que l'absolu n'est pas perçu par la connaissance principielle elle-même, ce n'est pas au sens où elle l'ignorerait, mais au sens où il ne saurait être un objet dont elle serait le sujet cognitif. Il s'agit d'une connaissance immédiate, tellement étrangère aux formes de connaissance qui nous sont familières que l'on peut aussi bien parler d'inconnaissance.”

Depending on the individual's intellectual capacity or acumen, emptiness exists as these two kinds of ultimate or emptiness: the nominal and the actual. The first, being the nonaffirming negation that all phenomena are established as truly [existent], is the object of a mode of perception (*dzin stangs*), which has partially eliminated mental proliferations. It is not the realization of that which is completely free from mental proliferations. Inasmuch as this is merely an imputation with regard to the ultimate and emptiness, since it depends also on the non-existence of things, one must [still] understand the authentic ultimate, emptiness. Therefore, this [nominal ultimate] is called the concordant ultimate (*mthun pa'i don dam*). Further, the knowable phenomena that are the objects of an intellect endowed with conceptuality are only posited as existent by means of dependent arising and dependent imputation. [265] The conditioned [phenomena] produced from causes and conditions exist on account of dependent arising. Although unconditioned [phenomena] do not arise out of causes, they exist by means of dependent imputation. They and their conventional designations (*tha snyad*) are established insofar as each of them eliminates its own antithesis (*dgag bya*), like space with regard to obstructive physical contact (*thogs re*), like the cessation [acquired by] discernment (*brtags 'gog*, *pratisamkhyānirodha*) in the case of the exhaustion of what is to be abandoned, like the cessation [acquired by] nondiscernment (*brtags min 'gog*, *apratīsamkhyānirodha*) in the case of what is nonarisen anywhere, or like the definition of nonexistence [that is established] in relation to the elimination of real existence.

On account of this, since unconditioned [phenomena] also are not beyond the dependent arising of dependent imputation, it is said [MMK 24.19ab]:¹⁰⁵

No phenomenon is found
That does not arise in dependence.

Since such unconditioned [phenomena] are unconditioned and without any substantiality, being only imputations projected by the intellect

105 *apratītyasamutpanno dharmah kaścīn na vidyate* | See La Vallée Poussin 1913. D3824, f.15a: / *de phyir stong pa ma yin pa'i/ /chos 'ga' yod pa ma yin no/*

(*blos phar brtags*) and objects knowable only by conceptuality, they are not the inconceivable nature of phenomena. For this reason, when they are examined by the intellect, as not a single one of them is not empty of an own-nature, they are ultimately nonexistent as [anything] observable. It is said [MMK 24.19cd]:¹⁰⁶

Therefore, no phenomenon is found
That is not emptiness.

Likewise, there is not a single phenomenon, thing or non-thing, that is not empty of own-nature. However, the incontrovertible appearances of conventional designations manifest although they have been empty from the beginning. As a consequence, the realization that appearance and emptiness free from contradiction are equivalent is thus expressed by the following statement [*Vigrahavyāvartanī* on *Vigrahavyāvartanī* 70]:¹⁰⁷

To the incomparable Buddha who taught emptiness, dependent arising, and the Middle Way,
I bow down.

In their real condition, all imputations in terms of things and non-things are bereft of [any] fixation grasping [them] as being distinctly different. That which abides in the nature free from all mental proliferations, the nature of phenomena, which is the nondifferentiation of dependent arising and emptiness or appearance and emptiness, must be realized through primordial wisdom, intuitive knowing, without conceptualizing what is free from subject and object. This realization is the actual ultimate.

This [actual ultimate] is designated by means of various synonyms, such as “the ultimate truth,” “the limit of reality” (*yang dag pa'i mtha'*),

106 *yasmāt tasmād aśūnyo hi dharmah kaścīn na vidyate* || See La Vallée Poussin 1913. D3824, f.15a: /de phyir stong pa ma yin pa'i/ /chos 'ga' yod pa ma yin no/

107 *yaḥ śūnyatām pratīyasamutpādaṃ madhyamāṃ pratipadaṃ ca | ekārtham nijagāda praṇamāmi tam apratimabuddham* || See Johnston and Kunst 1986. D3828, f.29a: /gang zhig stong dang rten 'byung dag /dbu ma' i lam du don gcig par/ /gsung mchog mtshungs pa med pa yi/ /sang rgyas de la phyag 'tshal lo/

or “true reality.” It is not merely mentally imputed. The utterly natural (*rang bzhin bab*) mode of being of all phenomena is primordially present, unchanging throughout the three times, and beyond the sphere of conceptuality (*rnam par rtog pa*) or mental imputations. Since all phenomena are fundamental sameness in their [original] condition, there is no other phenomenon at all apart from *dharmadhātu*. This emptiness endowed with the supreme excellence of all aspects (*rnam pa kun gyi mchog*) is the unexcelled ultimate among all kinds of realization of the Great Vehicle.

This unconditioned unity [of appearance and emptiness] is unlike an unconditioned non-thing. It is the great unconditioned that does not abide in the extremes of things and non-things. Not only is this [unconditioned unity] not merely arisen owing to causes, but it is [in fact] the real unconditioned since it is moreover beyond the conventions corresponding to the perceptions of what is merely established by imputations made in dependence (*ltoś nas btags pa*). Considering this [real unconditioned], the learned (*ācārya*) Nāgārjuna thus declared [in MMK 25.13cd]:¹⁰⁸

Things and non-things are conditioned,
Nirvāṇa is unconditioned. [267]

and [in MMK 18.7]:¹⁰⁹

Objects of designation have ceased (*ldog pa*),
The sphere of mind’s objects has ceased.
Unborn and unceasing,
The nature of phenomena is equal to nirvāṇa.

The Dharmarāja Kulika Mañjuśrīkīrti said:¹¹⁰

108 *asaṃskṛtaṃ hi nirvāṇaṃ bhāvābhāvau ca saṃskṛtau* || D3824, f.16b: /mya ngan ’das pa ’dus ma byas/ / dngos dang dngos med ’dus byas yin/ Pādas c and d are inverted in Mipham’s quotation.

109 *nivṛttam abhidhātavyaṃ nivṛtāś cittagocaraḥ | anutpannāniruddhā hi nirvāṇam iva dharmatā* || D3824, f.11a: /brjod par bya ba ldog pa ste/ /sems kyi spyod yul ldog pas so/ /ma skyes pa dang ma ’gags pa/ /chos nyid mya ngan ’das dang mtshungs/

110 *Pradarśanānumatoddeśaparīkṣā* (T2609); Scheuermann 2010: 43,78.

The aggregates, [when] examined, are merely empty,
 Devoid of an essence like the plantain tree.
 This is not like the emptiness
 That is endowed with the supreme excellence of all aspects.

Thus, there is no differentiation into two distinct truths from the perspective of those who have realized [this]. It is realized that all phenomena are equivalent to *dharmadhātu*, fundamental sameness, the single sphere (*thig le nyag gcig*), or the center of the *vajra* space. Therefore, it is said [in RGV I.154, AA V.21, and elsewhere]:¹¹¹

There is nothing to eliminate from this,
 Not even the slightest thing to add.
 The truth should be perceived as it is.
 The one who perceives the truth is liberated.¹¹²

As stated here, you will have reached the heart of the subject of all that is explained in Mahāyāna as fundamental sameness free from mental proliferations. Now, one may think, “[In this case,] the distinction in terms of the two truths makes no sense! There is only one truth.” The distinction into two truths makes sense because it is the method introducing this single truth, the ultimate truth, the final limit (*mthar thug pa*), *dharmadhātu*, or fundamental sameness. [268] The Conqueror declared that the single absolute truth is the unborn nirvāṇa, all phenomena being primordially pacified, namely fundamentally the same (*mnyam pa*). The great charioteers have established [this] accordingly in [their] treatises.¹¹³

111 See Takasaki 1966: 300.

112 *nāpaneyam atah kimcid upaneyam na kimcana | draṣṭavyam bhūtato bhūtam bhūtadarśi vimucyate*. See Johnston 1950. D4024, f.61b: // *di la bsal bya ci yang med/ /gzhag par bya ba cung zad med/ /yang dag nyid la yang dag lta/ /yang dag mthong na rnam par grol/*

113 *mKhas pa'i tshul la 'jug pa'i sgo* Vol.3: 264ff.: *stong nyid de la gang zag gi blo 'jug pa'i rim pa'am/ rtogs tshul gyi dbang du byas na/ rnam grangs dang/ rnam grangs min pa'i don dam mam stong nyid gnyis su yod de/ dang po chos kun la bden grub tsam khegs pa'i med dgag ste/ spros pa phyogs re bcad pa'i 'dzin stangs kyi yul spros bral mtha' dag ma rtogs pa'o/ / 'di ni don dam pa dang stong pa nyid btags pa tsam las/ dngos min yang 'di la bten nas don dam stong pa nyid mtshan nyid pa rtogs dgos pas mthun pa'i don dam zhes bya'o/ / de la rnam par rtog pa dang bcas pa'i blo'i yul du gyur pa'i shes bya'i chos 'di rnam brten nas skye ba dang/ brten nas btags pa gnyis kyi sgo nas yod par bzhag pa kho na yin te/ rgyu rkyen las skyes pa 'dus byas rnam ni/ brten nas skye ba'i sgo nas yod pa'o/ 'du ma byas rnam rgyu las skyes pa min yang/ brten nas btags pa tsam gyi sgo*

Mipham concludes this paragraph by mentioning the single truth *from the perspective of sublime beings*. In his *dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad*, he also shows that Candrakīrti makes exactly the same point:¹¹⁴

nas yod pa ste/ de dag rang rang gis dgag bya rnam par bcad pa las de dang de'i tha snyad 'grub pa/ thogs reg med pa la nam mkha' dang/ spang bya zad pa la brtags 'gog dang/ gang na gang ma skyes pa la brtags min 'gog pa dang/ bden grub bsal ba'i cha nas bden med du 'jog pa bzhin no/ / de'i phyir 'dus ma byas rnam kyang brten nas btags pa'i rten 'byung las ma 'das pas na/ rten cing 'brel 'byung ma yin pa'i/ /chos 'ga' yod pa ma yin no/ / zhes gzungs la/ 'di 'dra'i 'dus ma byas 'di dag ni dngos med 'dus ma byas yin pas rnam rtog kho nas shes par bya ba'i yul dang/ blos phar btags pa tsam ste chos nyid bsam gyis mi khyab pa ma yin no/ / de'i phyir 'di dag la blos gzhih na rang gi ngo bos mi stong pa gang yang med pas don dam par dmigs su med pa yin pas/ de phyir stong nyid ma yin pa'i/ chos 'ga' yod pa ma yin no/ zhes gsungs so/ / de ltar dngos dngos med kyi chos mtha' dag rang gi ngo bos mi stong pa med kyang/ tha snyad kyi snang ba bslu ba med pa rnam ye nas stong bzhin du snang ba yin pas snang stong 'gal med don gcig tu rtogs pa ni/ gang gis stong dang rten 'byung dag/ / dbu ma'i lam du don gcig par/ /gsung mchog zhes gzungs pa ltar/ gang dngos dngos med du btags pa rnam kyang yang dag pa'i don du so sor rang sa na ma 'dres par tha dad pa'i tshul du 'dzin pa'i zhen pa dang bral te/ snang dang stong pa'am stong dang rten 'byung tha mi dad pa'i chos nyid spros pa mtha' dag dang bral ba'i rang bzhin du gnas pa gang zhih gzung 'dzin med pa rnam par mi rtog pa'i ye shes so rang rig pas rtogs par bya ba ni rnam grangs min pa'i don dam yin te/ 'di la ni chos kyi dbyings dang/ don dam pa'i bden pa dang/ yang dag pa'i mtha' dang/ de bzhin nyid la sogs pa'i rnam grangs sna tshogs su gdags par mdzad do/ / 'di ni blos btags pa tsam ma yin te/ chos thams cad kyi rang bzhin bab kyi gnas lugs ye nas gnas shing dus gsum gyi 'gyur ba med pa/ blos btags dang rnam par rtog pa'i yul las 'das pa/ de'i ngang du chos thams cad mnyam pa nyid du gyur pas chos kyi dbyings las ma gtogs pa'i chos gzhan ci yang med pa rnam pa kun gyi mchog dang ldan pa'i stong pa nyid 'di ni theg pa chen po'i rtogs rigs thams cad kyi nang na bla med pa'i mthar thug pa'o/ / zung 'jug 'dus ma byas pa 'di ni dngos med 'dus ma byas dang mi 'dra zhih dngos dngos med gang gi mtha' la'ang mi gnas pa'i 'dus ma byas chen po yin te/ 'di rgyas ma bskyed pa tsam du ma zad/ ltos nas btags pas grub pa tsam kyis dmigs pa'i tha snyad las kyang 'das pa'i phyir 'dus ma byas yang dag yin pa de la dgongs nas mgon po klu sgrub kyi zhal snga nas/ dngos dang dngos med 'dus byas yin/ mya ngan 'das pa 'dus ma byas/ /zhes dang/ brjod par bya ba ldog pa ste/ sems kyi spyod yul ldog pas so/ ma skyes pa dang ma 'gags pa/ /chos nyid mya ngan 'das dang mtshungs/ /zhes sogs gsungs shing/ chos kyi rgyal po rigs ldan 'jam dpal grags pa'i zhal snga nas/ phung po rnam dpyad stong pa nyid/ chu shing bzhin du snying po med/ rnam pa kun gyi mchog ldan pa'i/ stong nyid de dang 'dra ma yin/ zhes gsungs pa'i don no/ / de ltar rtogs pa'i ngor bden pa gnyis su tha dad du phye ba med de chos thams cad chos kyi dbyings mnam pa nyid thig le nyag gcig rdo rje nam mkha'i dkyil lta bur rtogs pas na/ 'di la bsal bya ci yang med/ bzhag par bya ba cung zad med/ yang dag nyid la yang dag lta/ yang dag mthong nas rnam par grol/ zhes gsungs pa ltar/ theg pa chen po na spros bral mnyam pa nyid du gsungs pa thams cad kyi don gting sleb par 'gyur ro / / 'o na bden pa gnyis su phye ba don med cing bden pa gcig tu 'gyur ro snyam na/ bden pa gnyis su phye ba ni bden pa gcig pu don dam bden pa mthar thug pa chos dbyings mnyam pa nyid 'di la 'jug pa'i thabs yin pas don yod la/ mthar thug pa bden pa gcig pu chos thams cad gdod nas zhi zhih ma skyes la mya ngan las 'das pa mnyam pa nyid yin par rgyal ba nyid kyis gsungs shing/ shing rta chen po rnam kyis bstan bcos dag las kyang de ltar bsgrubs zin to/ /

114 Nāgārjuna also mentions the single truth in Yṣ 35; see Scherrer-Schaub 1991: 263.

As quoted from a scripture in the *Madhyamakāvatārabhāṣya*:

Bhikṣus, because [there] are not ultimately two truths,
The ultimate truth is one.¹¹⁵

This is in complete agreement with his commentary *ad* MAv 9.45, in which Candrakīrti explains that knowing reality, the mind is undivided, therefore the Buddha taught a single vehicle. Commenting on this, Mipham explains that primordial wisdom, which is supposedly the subject knowing the ultimate, cannot in fact be distinguished from the ultimate truth itself. This is what *so so rang rig pa* as an apposition or attribute to *ye shes* refers to. This “direct knowing or experiencing” does not imply that primordial wisdom is realized as an object at the ultimate level, for there is no duality of subject-object in this “direct knowing.”¹¹⁶ Dialectics is here again, as it often is in Buddhadharma, self-dismantling. The two truths themselves have no absolute existence as such; they only make sense from a perspective that is rooted in the concealing.

115 *dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad* 40,1: 'jug 'grel las/ don dam par na bden gnyis su med par/ dge slong dag /bden pa don dam 'di ni gcig ste/ zhes sogs lung 'drangs nas gzungs pa bzhin no/ The text in the *Madhyamakāvatārabhāṣya* differs slightly from Mipham's quote: /'di la bshad par bya ste/ 'di bden mod kyi don dam par na bden pa gnyis yod pa ma yin te/ dge slong dag bden pa dam pa 'di ni gcig ste/ (D3862, f.258b).

116 It must be noted that *so so rang rig* of the expression *so so rang rig pa'i ye shes* cannot be fully equated with the Pāli expressions *paccattam nāṇa-* or *paccattam veditabba-*.

CHAPTER 4

Mipham's Soteriological Inclusivism

Mipham's Set of Ascending Views

Mipham's inclusivist exposition of the relationship between the two truths is thus clearly based on a set of ascending perspectives, as explained in the following passage of the *Nges shes sgron me*:

Whatever appears is pervaded by emptiness,
 And whatever is empty is pervaded by appearance,
 Since if something appears, it cannot be nonempty
 And this emptiness is not established as something that does not appear.
 Moreover, since both things and non-things,
 Taken as the bases of emptiness, must be empty,
 All appearances are nothing but imputed things,
 And even emptiness is merely imputed by the intellect.
 With respect to the knowledge that is ascertained through rational
 analysis,
 These two are the method and the result of the method.
 Inasmuch as, if there is one, not having the other
 Is impossible, they abide inseparably.
 Therefore, also when appearance and emptiness
 Are known individually,
 In fact, they are never divisible.
 Therefore, since the certainty that perceives the nature of things
 Does not fall into any extreme,
 They are said to be in unity (*zung 'jug*).
 From the perspective of the wisdom that correctly analyzes, [97]
 These two, appearance and emptiness,
 Are considered to be a single entity with different conceptual aspects
 (*ngo bo gcig ldog pa tha dad*),
 As they exist or do not exist jointly.
 Moreover, for beginners,
 They appear as *negandum* and negation.
 At that time, they are not mingled as a single [entity].

One day, one attains the certainty
 That the nature of emptiness arises as appearance.
 Inasmuch as that which is primordially empty and appearances are both
 empty,
 This is the birth of the certainty that perceives
 Appearances, although they are empty,
 And emptiness, although it manifests as appearances.
 This is the root of all profound paths
 Of sūtra, tantra, and pith instructions.
 This point, which cuts off superimpositions
 With regard to study and reflection,
 Is the correct, undeluded view.¹¹⁷
 By realizing this key point even more profoundly,
 The clinging to the defining characteristics
 Of the appearances of the concealing truth
 Will also be abandoned.
 Therefore, according to the progression of the tantric vehicles,
 The appearances that are nothing but intellectual wishful thinking
 And the appearances of the world and its beings as deities
 That are the confidence in the view [arising] from certainty
 Cannot possibly be the same.¹¹⁸

117 Pettit understands this sentence differently:

“This is the meaning of cutting off misconceptions
 Through study and reflection;
 It is the unmistakable, authentic view” (Pettit 1999: 216).

Since a direct criticism of a merely intellectual understanding of emptiness follows, I understand *sgro 'dog chod pa'i don* as the elimination of superimpositions related to study and reflection; this is based on the different contexts in which this term is used, such as *Shes rab ral gri* 800,3ff.:

“[The other one,] the vast cognition
 Arising from the contemplation of the nature of phenomena, as it is,
 Eliminating the superimpositions (*sgro 'dogs*) with regard to the inconceivable object,
 Is endowed with the fruit of the knowledge of all there is.”

Nor bu ke ta ka 6,2: “Therefore, as long as this *dharmadhātu* that is the union of experience and emptiness, free from the thirty-two superimpositions, is not made manifest, the perfection of wisdom is not authentic.”

118 Pettit understands this in a slightly different way:

“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” (ibid.: 217).

Determining through Madhyamaka

That phenomena are devoid of truth is a view.

When a Brahmin recites mantras for a sick person,

His wishful thinking that there is [in fact] no disease is not the view.

By realizing the fundamental condition of things,

The certainty that the concealing truth is the deity [will be attained].

Otherwise, grounded in the level of deceptive appearances,

How can one accomplish the deity?

Apart from the deceptive appearance of an apprehending subject and an apprehended object,

That which is called saṃsāra does not exist.

The divisions of the path that bring an end to it

Are not [made] from the perspective of the ultimate truth,

Since the ultimate, as it is, is oneness.¹¹⁹

In the abovementioned quote from the *Nges shes sgron me*, as well as in Mipham's other Madhyamaka works, we frequently find the interesting formulaic phrase *ngos nas* or *ngor*. To illustrate this point, the last sentence in the preceding quote reads: "*don dam kho na'i ngos nas min*," with the view to making explicit the standpoint from which a statement is made. This expression *ngos nas/ngor* is of considerable

119 *Nges shes sgron me* 96,3: *gang snang stong pas khyab pa dang/ /gang stong snang bas khyab pa ste/ /snang na mi stong mi srid cing/ /stong de'ang ma snang mi grub phyr/ /dngos dang dngos med gnyis po yang/ /stong gzhir byas nas stong dgos phyr/ /snang kun btags pa tsam zhig la/ /stong pa'ang blo yis btags pa tsam/ /rig pas dpyad pas nges shes la/ /'di gnyis thabs dang thabs byung ste/ /gcig yod na ni gcig med pa/ /mi srid pa du 'bral med par gnas/ /de phyr snang dang stong pa dag/ /so so'i char ni shes na yang/ /don du nam yang dbye ba med/ /de phyr zung 'jug ces brjod do/ /gnas lugs mthong ba'i nges shes ni/ /gang mthar lhung ba med phyr ro/ /yang dag dpyod pa'i shes [97] rab ngor/ /snang dang stong pa 'di gnyis po/ /yod mnyam med mnyam ngo bo gcig/ /ldog pa tha dad dbye bar 'dod/ /de yang dang po'i las can la/ /dgag bya 'gog byed lta bur snang/ /de tshe gcig tu 'dres pa med/ /nam zhig stong pa'i rang bzhin/ /snang bar 'char la yid ches thob/ /de yang gdod nas stong pa dang/ /snang ba 'di dag stong pa yis/ /stong bzhin snang la snang bzhin du/ /stong mthong nges shes skye ba nyid/ /'di ni mdo rgyud man ngag gi/ /lam zab kun gyi rtsa ba ste/ /thos bsam sgro 'dogs chod pa'i don/ /yang dag lta ba 'khrul med yin/ /gnad de je bas je zab tu/ /rtogs pas kun rdzob snang ba yang/ /rang mtshan zhen pa rim spong bas/ /rgyud sde'i theg rim de ltar snang/ /yid kyis mos bskom tsam zhig dang/ /snod bcud ltar snang nges shes kyis/ /lta ba gdengs su gyur pa gnyis/ /mtshungs pa'i go skabs mi srid da/ /dbu mas chos rnam bden stong du/ /nges ba gang de lta yin la/ /bram ze'i nad la sngags 'debs cho/ /nad med mos pa lta min bzhin/ /don dam gnas lugs rtogs pa yis/ /kun rdzob lha ru yid ches kyi/ /gzhan du 'khrul pa'i snang tshul la/ /gnas nas lha ru ji ltar 'grub/ /gzung 'dzin 'khrul snang 'di min pa'i/ /'khor ba zhes bya gzhan du med/ /de spong lam gyi dbye ba rnam/ /don dam kho na'i ngos nas min/ /don dam [98] tshul gcig nyid yin phyr/*

significance to understanding Mipham's presentation of the two truths. Mipham redefines the framework of valid cognitions based on the perspective of ordinary beings on the one hand, and sublime beings on the other. The expressions *ngos nas* and *ngor* are consistently used to determine from which perspective Mipham speaks. According to Mipham, some statements that are final from a deluded point of view are merely provisional from the perspective of sublime beings. For instance, views pertaining to the ultimate that are expressed in dualistic terms on the basis of affirmations and negations still miss the mark from a higher point of view. Mipham's presentation of the two truths thus hinges on the notion of perspectives, outlooks, and cognitive modes of apprehension of our so-called reality since, according to him, any discourse on this reality is necessarily formulated from a specific epistemic viewpoint. From this perspective (pun intended!), charges of inconsistency become meaningless if Mipham's statements are adequately contextualized. With his perspectivist interpretation of Buddhist doctrines, Mipham teaches Madhyamaka through a series of ascending views, the aim of which is to provide beings with a gradual path in their spiritual journey toward the realization of the actual ultimate.

In Mipham's view, any discourse on the two truths necessarily takes place within the concealing truth and therefore only makes sense on account of its propaedeutic function in a given context. Mipham accordingly uses various models of the relationship between the two truths. These models correspond to various stages of the path or circumstances: (1) *from the perspective of a beginner*, the two truths can be seen as "different in the sense that their identity is negated" (*gcig pa dkag pa'i tha dad* or *ngo bo gnyis*);¹²⁰ (2) *from the perspective of post-meditation*, they are "different conceptual distinguishers with regard to a single entity" (*ngo bo gcig la ldog pa tha dad*);¹²¹ (3) *from the perspective of meditative absorption*, they are beyond extremes in an ineffable state of "unity" (*zung 'jug*), as explained by Mipham in his *dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad*.¹²²

120 In the aforementioned quote from *Nges shes sgron me*, all of the various interpretations of the relationship between the two truths are listed. For an example of Mipham's use of *gcig pa dkag pa'i tha dad*, see his *gZhan stong khas len seng ge'i nga ro* in Pettit 1999: 417, in which Mipham notes that the two truths are mutually exclusive in the *gZhan stong* approach. On *ngo bo gnyis*, see Phuntsho 2005a: 151.

121 It is interesting to note that according to Longchenpa the two truths cannot be ultimately distinguished, although some of his statements might lead one to think the opposite (see Butters 2006: 174ff.). In the *Grub mtha' rin po che'i mdzod*, Longchenpa declares that accepting that the two truths are two aspects of a single essence results in a view that is inferior to Cittamātra (see Barron 2007: 101).

122 See Viehbeck 2011 for the contextualization of these perspectives in the polemics between Mipham and Gelugpa scholars.

In short, the ultimate condition as the referential object of the meditative absorption that is beyond the sphere of conceptuality and language cannot be separated into [two] truths. From this perspective, one need not distinguish the two truths. Therefore, as there is no assertion at all establishing or refuting that all phenomena appearing in this way exist or not, are this or not, and so forth, this [ultimate condition] is like answering by not saying anything.¹²³ Since it is verily beyond conventional designations and since it is the inexpressible fundamental sameness free from mental proliferations, it is established as being without [any] assertion. However, from the perspective of postmeditation that is the sphere of words and conceptuality, namely, the mode of appearance [of phenomena], one reflects by oneself on the presentation of the ground, path, fruit, and so forth, and when one then needs to speak for the benefit of others, as one distinguishes the two valid modalities of cognition, it is impossible not to engage in the procedure of refuting and establishing [phenomena].¹²⁴

In Mipham's approach, these three types of perspectives would respectively correspond to the view of (1) beginners following any approach dichotomizing nirvāṇa, the unconditioned, and saṃsāra, the conditioned, (2) Svātantrika Madhyamaka, and (3) Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka.¹²⁵ On account of their propaedeutic value, these three different approaches are used in different contexts: (1) to introduce beginners to the two truths, (2) to explain the nominal ultimate, and (3) to point at the actual ultimate.

To conclude on this point, what appears contradictory on the level of a purely synchronic exposition of the two truths corresponds, in fact, to a diachronic unveiling of the nature of reality. This is why, for Mipham, an ascending scale of views aiming at providing guidance to beings who are practicing this path has some mer-

123 This statement refers to the Buddha's silence and to the fact that one has no view from this specific standpoint.

124 *dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad* 29,2ff.: *mdor na mnyam gzhag sgra dang rtog pa'i yul las 'das pa'i gzhal don ltar mthar thug gi gnas tshul bden pa dbyer med kyi dbang du byas na ni bden gnyis phye mi dgos pas 'di ltar snang ba'i chos thams cad ye nas yod med yin min sogs dgag sgrub kyi khas len gang yang med pas ci'ang mi gsung ba'i tshul gyis lan btab pa dang 'dra bar yang dag par na tha snyad thams cad las 'das shing brjod du med pa dang spros pa dang bral ba dang mnyam pa nyid kyi phyir khas len med par grub kyang/ rjes thob sgra rtog gi yul du gyur pa snang tshul gyi dbang du byas te gzhi lam 'bras bu sogs kyi rnam gzhag zhig rang gis bsam zhing gzhan la'ang smra dgos na ni tshad ma gnyis phye ste dgag sgrub kyi tshul la 'jug pa las 'da' ba mi srid do/*

125 See Duckworth 2008: 85.

it, if this process of disclosure has to take place in a gradual way, even while teaching Madhyamaka. From such a soteriological perspective, any presentation of these philosophical views by way of an exclusivist approach would therefore be absurd. On account of its pragmatic concern, Mipham's integrative approach could therefore be seen as a form of hierarchical soteriological inclusivism in which the validity of any discourse on the inexpressible reality is measured through its propaedeutic value in a given situation. In other words, views on the relationship between the two truths that are antidotes to delusion should not be evaluated independently of their soteriological efficacy with regard to their specific underlying cognitive or epistemic contexts. Paradoxical as it may sound, this does not, however, imply that these views should be seen as being necessarily equal. Since they are formulated from the perspective of an ascending scale of cognitive or epistemic contexts, they constitute a *de facto* hierarchy of possible discourses on reality.

Having identified the three main perspectives Mipham uses to expose the two truths, let us now investigate the ways they differ. The topic 7 of his *Nges shes sgron me* is probably the most interesting text pertaining to this issue. Together with related statements from his *Shes rab ral gri, dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad*, and *Nor bu ke ta ka ad BCA 9.2*, we can delineate these three conceptual frameworks in the following way:

Table 1: Mipham's Various Perspectives

Standpoint	Beginner	Post-meditation	Primordial wisdom of sublime meditative absorption
Perspective	Ontological perspective: things are seen as beings and putative wholes that are merely designations (<i>prajñāp-ti</i>) as they are ontologically reducible to physically or mentally inseparable basic entities (<i>dravya</i>)	Ontology is indissociable from epistemology: being is inseparable from knowing (Dharmakīrtian gradual epistemological reduction of any <i>dravya</i> to a cognitive event)	Gnoseological: nondual mere knowing where all discursive considerations, epistemological and ontological, are exhausted
Corresponding tenet	Hīnayāna	Svātantrika Madhyamaka	Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka
Usage	As an introductory teaching	At the time of teaching	On the occasion of debate and during meditation

Sphere	Objects, conceptuality, and language	Conceptuality and language: mind	Beyond conceptuality and language: primordial wisdom
Position	The two truths are mutually exclusive	Things exist conventionally but are ultimately nonexistent (nonaffirming negation)	No position owing to a lack of conceptual elaborations since things are beyond the four extremes both conventionally and ultimately (the ultimate is beyond affirming or nonaffirming negation)
Relation between the two truths	<i>gcig pa dkag pa'i tha dad</i>	<i>ngo bo gcig la ldog pa tha dad</i>	<i>zung 'jug</i>
Objective of the two truths	To introduce beginners to the two truths	To explain the nominal ultimate	To point at the actual ultimate
Logic		Proofs and refutations on the basis of valid cognitions	Impossible from one's own perspective since things cannot be established as anything even conventionally
Logical principles		Logical bivalence and the principles of excluded middle and noncontradiction are accepted by the Mādhyamika and by the <i>pūrvapakṣa</i>	Logical bivalence and the principles of excluded middle and noncontradiction are only accepted by the <i>pūrvapakṣa</i> and therefore only apply to his or her position since the Mādhyamika has no position ¹²⁶
Practice		The two truths are considered alternatively by analytical wisdom, and the four extremes are abandoned gradually, one after another	No alternation between the two truths within primordial wisdom, and the four extremes are relinquished simultaneously
Names		Causal or path Madhyamaka, lesser Madhyamaka	Great Madhyamaka, Madhyamaka of inseparability (<i>dbyer med</i>), fruit Madhyamaka

126 See Phuntsho 2005a: 94.

Does Mipham's Perspective-Based Madhyamaka Make Sense?

The reason Mipham relies on such a hermeneutical device is a complex matter. Is it purely because of its versatility regarding a non-conflictual interpretation of apparently contradictory teachings? In fact, it seems clear that soteriological factors also play a decisive role in his approach. From a broader perspective, it is important to consider that the soteriological use of a set of ascending perspectives, as championed by Longchenpa and Mipham, is also a method applied by major figures of Indian Mahāyāna in their dialectical works.

Nāgārjuna and Candrakīrti both admit various perspectives as shown, *inter alia*, by Yṣ 30 and by Candrakīrti's commentaries.¹²⁷ For example, Nāgārjuna's use of various perspectives has thus been noted, among others, by Lindtner regarding the term *svabhāva*;¹²⁸ by Seyfort Ruegg regarding the expression *pratijñā*;¹²⁹ and by Siderits, who explains that the two-truth model itself entails different semantic interpretations of a term such as *paramārtha* in order to avoid contradictions.¹³⁰ On this basis, it seems indeed obvious that Nāgārjuna does use these terms from different standpoints. In MMK 18.6, Nāgārjuna explicitly recognizes that Buddha has taught self, nonself, and neither self nor nonself. This roughly corresponds to Mipham's use of perspectives. If we now turn to Candrakīrti and Śāntideva, things do not look much different here either. Śāntideva openly mentions the existence of different perspectives in BCA 9.3. In the MAV, Candrakīrti makes some statements endorsing the perspective of the world, without any further "philosophical" analysis (cf. MAV VI.22, 31–32, 35, 75, 81, 83, 92–93, 110, 113, 158–60, 164–67, 170). And yet, he also makes statements from the perspective of post-meditation when phenomena are analyzed by means of dependent arising (cf. MAV VI.1, 114–15, 166–74, 183–204, Pras. I in MacDonald 2003a: 430) or when they are stated to be mere thoughts or formations of mind (cf. MAV VI.84–90, 119). Finally, he declares that, from the perspective of meditative absorption, all phenomena are unborn when all assertions

127 *sarvam astīti vaktavyam ādau tattvagaveśiṇaḥ paścād avagatārthasya niḥsaṅgasya viviktatā* (Yṣ 30; see Harris 1991: 22).

128 See Lindtner 1983: 157.

129 See Seyfort Ruegg 1983: 235.

130 See Siderits 2007: 202. Siderits explains that the phrase "The ultimate truth is that there is no ultimate truth" refers to two different understandings of the same term "ultimate truth." This is worth noting because it shows that some apparently contradictory statements are in fact due to a subtle switch from a lower to a higher perspective on the part of the author. Siderits' interpretation is in this case completely compatible with the approach of Mipham, who also does not favor a literal reading of such statements.

and negations regarding the conventional and the ultimate are pacified (cf. MAV VI.8, 21, 36, 82, 91–93, 109–12, 114, 158, 160, 185, 200–201, 222–24, Pras. I in MacDonald 2003a: 437ff.). Phenomena are therefore clearly considered by Candrakīrti from three distinctive angles: (1) according to the world, (2) as dependently arisen, (3) as unoriginated. Although these three angles are connected by means of the concept *pratītyasamutpāda*, it is obvious that we are dealing in the MAV with three distinct perspectives. For instance, the notion of arising that is in accordance with the world is presented by Candrakīrti as nonarising from the perspective of meditative absorption (in Mipham’s terminology), even on the level of the concealing truth. Likewise, although there is ultimately nothing to realize, the eleventh chapter of the MAV states clearly that there is something to realize, *from the perspective of ordinary beings*. Indeed, Candrakīrti does not imply that beings should not train in contemplative practices and should abstain from progressing toward awakening. In fact, the whole MAV is structured on a sequence of various *bhūmis* corresponding to ascending stages of realization. Candrakīrti’s system is therefore also obviously based on a set of perspectives. This is not the place to analyze all the terms used by Candrakīrti on various semantic levels, however, if we analyze Candrakīrti’s use of the central notion *svabhāva*, we reach a similar conclusion.¹³¹ Throughout the MAV, Candrakīrti shows that there is no *svabhāva* for those who are not deluded, and yet in the MAV VI.198–99 he declares that emptiness is the *svabhāva* of phenomena. Obviously, these statements are made from different perspectives.¹³² Tanji gives the following translation of a key statement made by Candrakīrti:

Is there such a real nature in fire? That (real nature) is neither existent nor inexistent as a substance (*svarūpataḥ*). Even if it is so, nonetheless with the purpose of dispelling the fears of the audience, we say “[real nature] exists” by means of *samāropa* as a convention (*saṃvṛtti*). (Pras. 263.5–264.4)¹³³

131 Cf. Ames 1982: 2; Huntington 1983: 93 and 2003: 78; Tanji 2000: 362.

132 Ames 1982: 12–13 distinguishes as many as five levels of *svabhāva* according to Candrakīrti.

133 Tanji 2000: 362. Ames (1982: 6–8) translated the whole passage. This statement clearly shows why the standard Gelugpa’s threefold definition of *svabhāva* is problematic in the absence of a perspective-based approach. First, let’s quote the Gelugpa scholar dKon mchog ’jigs med dbang po: “*Svabhāva* has three usages: (1) the conventionally existent nature of a phenomenon, such as the heat of fire; (2) the real or final nature of a phenomenon, that is, its emptiness or non-true existence; and (3) true or independent existence. All Mādhyamikas assert the existence of the first and second and refute the third” (Hopkins/Sopa 1976: 122).

In the Pramāṇa tradition, Dharmakīrti's use of various perspectives has been well documented in Dreyfus 1997, Dunne 2004, Kellner 2005, and Phuntsho 2005a. Śāntarakṣita's perspective-based system, one of Mipham's major sources of inspiration, has been thoroughly investigated in Ichigo 1985, McClintock 2003, and Nagashima 2004, while those of other followers of Dharmakīrti have also been analyzed in detail, for instance in Akamatsu 1983, Kyuma 2005, and Patil 2007 regarding Jñānaśrīmitra, and by Kajiyama 1998 regarding Mokṣākaragupta.¹³⁴ These two authors' heuristic presentations of ascending standpoints undeniably present features in common with Mipham's. Interestingly enough, both classify Dharmakīrti as a Mādhyamika, which would correspond to Mipham's highest perspective.¹³⁵ From the standpoint

According to Mipham, the question would be from which perspective? Indeed, as it is indubitably formulated in the quote above, Candrakīrti does not accept the usage of *svabhāva* as formulated in the first definition, namely, as the existence of the specific characteristic of fire, heat, *from the highest perspective*. If someone asserts the usage of *svabhāva* in the sense of the first definition *from the perspective of the ultimate*, then, the distinction between definition (1) and (3) collapses. Indeed, if a specific characteristic of a given phenomenon exists conventionally *from the perspective of meditative absorption*, it follows that there is a *svabhāva* (or an essence; see Westerhoff 2009: 19–46), which makes it what it is from its own side. This is why Candrakīrti is very clear when he limits the use of *svabhāva* in the sense of the first definition to the perspective of the world. In his study of Nāgārjuna's Madhyamaka, Westerhoff endorses this threefold definition of *svabhāva* and consequently somewhat misses the point. The crucial problem here is not so much one of definition *per se* but one of perspectives. Definitions differ from one another in that they have to refer to different standpoints when the term *svabhāva* is used. This fact is ignored by Arnold (2005: 139): "The fact that our ordinary practices cannot be thought to require explanation, then, is proposed by the Mādhyamika as expressing something that is importantly *true*." Well, from which perspective? Indeed, from the point of view of accomplished beings, this something is importantly *wrong*. This is confirmed by Candrakīrti when he declares that if ordinary experience were valid, ordinary beings would perceive reality (see MAV VI.30–31ab). Modern interpretations of Madhyamaka that do not identify this central issue of perspectives are bound to result in numerous contradictions.

134 For instance, according to Mipham's system, (1) MA 64–65, 76, 78, 84 would correspond to the perspective of beginners; (2) MA 91–92 would correspond to the perspective of post-meditation; and (3) MA 69–72 would represent the perspective of meditative absorption.

135 A few important authors maintain or indicate that Dharmakīrti's final viewpoint was Mādhyamika: Śāntarakṣita, Kamalaśīla (I read Kamalaśīla's quotation cited in Steinkellner 1983: 80–81 in the way Jackson 1987: 174–76 interprets Sakya Paṇḍita's position), Prajñākaragupta (see van der Kuijp 1983: 36ff.), Ravigupta, Jitāri (see Steinkellner 1990: 72), Jñānaśrīmitra (see Kyuma 2005 and Patil 2007), Mokṣākaragupta (see Steinkellner 1990: 72), rNgog lo tsā ba, gSer mdog paṅ chen, Phya pa chos kyi seng ge (see van der Kuijp 1983: 36ff.), Sakya Paṇḍita (in his *mKhas 'jug*), Shākya mchog ldan, Kong sprul blo gros mtha' yas (see Jackson 1987: 36ff.), and Chos grags rgya mtsho (see Dreyfus 1997: 432–33).

of such an interpretation, Nāgārjuna and Candrakīrti, as well as Dharmakīrti, indeed refer to an awakened state that is beyond words, linguistic verbalization, and that is none other than the Buddha's silence.¹³⁶

Mipham's interpretation of the two-truth model along the lines of the aforementioned three perspectives is therefore not really an innovation. In fact, Mipham seems to have been aware of the historical process through which these Buddhist doctrines arose. The diachronic character of philosophical debates in India among Buddhists and between Buddhist and non-Buddhist traditions makes it obvious that "more fitting" theories were formulated in the course of time to fix philosophical *aporia*, as it became clear that some lines of thinking, in spite of their merit, had failed to explain some aspects of reality.¹³⁷ The crucial point of Mipham's inclusivist presentation of the two truths consists therefore in integrating into his interpretation of Madhyamaka various interpretations of the two truths as a propaedeutic approach to the view. On the path, this set of perspectives can also be used as a toolbox to suit the needs or dispositions of a specific audience¹³⁸ while teaching a particular form of meditation. Such a complete set of perspectives on reality can therefore accommodate either a maieutical process of discovery or a more direct approach depending on the practitioner's capacity. In the context of scholastic

Several factors lead me to think that Mipham was certainly favorable to such an evaluation of Dharmakīrti's intention: (1) most Yogācāra-Mādhyamika authors consider Dharmakīrti's final position to be Mādhyamika; (2) among these authors, considering Dharmakīrti as a Mādhyamika generally goes together with the importance granted to the *tathāgatagarbha* theory as being part and parcel of Madhyamaka, and it is worth noting in this respect that Kong sprul blo gros mtha' yas was one of Mipham's teachers; (3) Mipham was moreover deeply influenced by Sakya Paṇḍita: (a) he commented Sakya Paṇḍita's *Rigs gter*, (b) he used for one of his main works the same title as one of Sakya Paṇḍita's works (*mKhas 'jug*), in which Sakya Paṇḍita declares that Dharmakīrti was a Mādhyamika, (c) his epistemology seems to be even more faithful than that of Gorampa's to Sakya Paṇḍita's interpretations of Dharmakīrti regarding important and controversial aspects of Dharmakīrti's thought such as *svasaṃvedana* (see Dreyfus 1997: 402–6) in that, just like Sakya Paṇḍita, he does not accept that *svasaṃvedana* takes itself as its own object. For Mipham, *svasaṃvedana* is the luminosity of awareness itself, a fact which, in his view, is not mutually exclusive with being a Mādhyamika. Further research about Mipham's *tshad ma* commentaries would be, however, necessary regarding this particular topic. For some interesting remarks about Dharmakīrti's Mādhyamika leanings in PV III, see Tani 1991: 374, 377, 382–94.

136 See MMK 25.24 in Tanji 2000: 367–68 and SAS, sūtra 94 in Eltschinger 2005: 174.

137 Cf. Siderits 2007.

138 See for example Mipham's commentary on Padmasambhava's perspectivist presentation of various tenets in ascending order, the *Man ngag lta ba'i phreng ba*, in which views are related to the capacity of individuals (Padmakara 2015: 32, 90). For example, when facing realists, a *prima facie* Sautrāntika approach can facilitate communication.

debate, Mipham recommends the highest view (Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka), since it presents the advantage of being ontologically noncommittal. This point shows that his perspective-based Madhyamaka is unquestionably rooted in soteriological concerns. In the traditional form of scholastic dispute, participants debate positions that are expounded in a synchronic way, independently of a spiritual journey or an historical doctrinal development. In those circumstances, diachronic factors are therefore rarely taken into consideration, which explains why there is little incentive to proceed according to an ascending scale of analysis with regard to Madhyamaka.

Is Mipham's Soteriological Understanding of the Svātantrika-Prāsaṅgika Distinction Unfounded?

Nāgārjuna's positive formulation of the tetralemma (*catuṣkoṭi*) states that "All is real, not real, both real and not real, neither real nor not real. This is the teaching of the Buddha."¹³⁹ The Gelugpa interpretation of the positive *catuṣkoṭi* differs from Mipham's and Candrakīrti's in that it does not deal with various perspectives but with what is to be understood as ultimate or conventional from a single correct perspective. As explained by Westerhoff:

The passage is thus interpreted [by Gelugpas] as saying that:
 1) everything is *conventionally* real; 2) nothing is *ultimately* real;
 3) everything is both *conventionally* real and *ultimately* unreal; and
 4) nothing is either *conventionally* unreal or *ultimately* real.¹⁴⁰

This leads us directly to the Svātantrika-Prāsaṅgika debate, since this Gelugpa interpretation corresponds to Mipham's perspective of post-meditation, the objective of which is to point out the nominal ultimate. In this case, the two truths are accepted as different conceptual distinguishers with regard to a single entity (*ngo bo gcig la ldog pa tha dad*). Mipham makes clear in his *dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad* that separating the two truths is a feature of the Svātantrika approach. He thereby redefines the very doxographic notion of Madhyamaka-Svātantrika as explained by Dreyfus:

Mi pham defines the Svātantrika as the Madhyamaka who explains

139 MMK 18.8 translated by Westerhoff (2006: 391), who gives an extensive presentation of Nāgārjuna and Candrakīrti's gradual presentation of the path based on ascending views of "increasing sophistication." Cf. Harris 1991: 77.

140 Westerhoff 2009: 89ff.

emptiness by emphasizing (*rtsal du bton*) the figurative ultimate, the uses of theses, and formal reasonings.¹⁴¹

Yet Mipham does not think that the views of the so-called Svāntrikas and Prāsaṅgikas fundamentally disagree.

According to Tsongkhapa, the Svāntrikas are substantialists positing *rang gi ngo bo* on the conventional level.¹⁴² Tsongkhapa interprets Candrakīrti's refutation of Bhāviveka as targeting this issue, while Mipham seems rather to understand that Candrakīrti's Madhyamaka is expressed from the highest standpoint, namely, that of meditative absorption. Tsongkhapa's *doxa* appears to be synchronic and ahistorical, whereas Mipham seems to favor an approach that, being philosophically and soteriologically diachronic, is based on a set of perspectives. According to Mipham, divergent viewpoints can be the expression of distinct heuristic methods leading to the same result, an opinion shared by several Tibetan scholars such as, among others, the Eighth Karmapa, Mi bskyod rdo rje.¹⁴³ As apparent in his commentary *ad* BCA 9.2, Mipham appears to have been deeply aware that Buddhist thought is in constant evolution when he stated that the Svāntrika-Prāsaṅgika distinction was a Tibetan invention.¹⁴⁴ As interesting and unconventional as this position may be, does it make sense at all from a historical and philological point of view?

Beside the early developments of Tibetan interpretations of Madhyamaka that appear to validate Mipham's opinion, some philological and philosophical arguments confirm the somewhat artificial and ahistorical character of the Svāntrika-Prāsaṅgika distinction:

- (1) From a philological perspective, if one examines the original sources that may have influenced Mipham's stance in this debate, one observes that Jñānagarbha, Śāntarakṣita, and Kamalaśīla accept conventional nonarising as compatible with the ultimate that is beyond

141 Dreyfus 2003a: 335.

142 See Chu 1997, Yotsuya 1999, and Seyfort Ruegg 2002.

143 See Brunnhölzl 2004: 389–90.

144 This position has been confirmed by modern scholarship. See Seyfort Ruegg 2000: 1–55, 159–63, Seyfort Ruegg 2002: 6, Tauscher 2003: 207–56, Cabezón 2003, Brunnhölzl 2004: 333–41, and Vose 2005, 2009: 44–60 regarding the early Tibetan Madhyamaka(s) of rNgog lo tsā ba, sPa tshab nyi ma grags, Phya pa chos kyi seng ge, rMa bya byang chub ye shes, and Grags pa rgyal mtshan, some of whom were mentioned by Mipham in his *dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad* (see Doctor 2004: 17).

concepts.¹⁴⁵ In Mipham's terminology this would correspond to Candrakīrti's Madhyamaka, the perspective based on meditative absorption. Likewise, Śāntideva does not seem to criticize the Svātantrikas in this way.¹⁴⁶ In the Nyingma tradition, Rongzompa, a contemporary of sPa tshab Nyi ma grags (an eleventh-century scholar who introduced Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka in Tibet), makes no mention of Candrakīrti, let alone of the Svātantrika-Prāsaṅgika distinction, a fact that probably influenced Mipham's treatment of this topic. In fact, Rongzompa's Madhyamaka would correspond to Mipham's perspective of post-meditation since according to Rongzompa the two truths are not presented as indivisible.¹⁴⁷ Longchenpa, on his part, does identify various Svātantrika positions in his *Grub mtha' rin po che'i mdzod*, but they are presented in such a way that the Gelugpa Madhyamaka would end up being included in this category.¹⁴⁸

(2) From a philosophical point of view, the validity of the attributions of authors such as Śāntaraṅgita to the so-called Svātantrika school would make more sense if Candrakīrti's refutations of Bhāviveka's (or similar lines of thinking) went unnoticed or were rejected.¹⁴⁹ In order to assess if this was the case, let us examine whether the two fundamental points raised by Candrakīrti in the first chapter of the *Prasannapadā* were integrated in the approach of later Buddhist philosophers.

(2.1) The crucial point of Candrakīrti's refutations of Bhāviveka's use of *svatantrānumāna* is that a Mādhyamika cannot apply Dignāga's eristics

145 See Nagashima 2004: 75–76 and Moriyama 1991: 200.

146 See Nagashima 2004: 78. Besides, it is worth noting that even Atiśa does not consider Bhāviveka and Candrakīrti as belonging to different traditions (see *ibid.*: 83–88). He even accepts a text written by Kambala, who is supposedly Yogācāra-Mādhyamika, as a presentation of the foundation of Madhyamaka together with those written by four other *ācāryas*, Candrakīrti among them.

147 On Rongzompa's life, works, and doctrinal positions, see *inter alia* Köppl 2008, Almogi 2009, and Wangchuk 2017.

148 See Barron 2007: 111–12.

149 Candrakīrti also uses three- and five-member inferences that are accepted by the opponent to show that a *prasaṅga* is not logically incorrect (see McClintock 2003: 137). Besides, Śāntaraṅgita uses *prasaṅgas* as well. If the use of three- or five-member inferences is only provisionally integrated within a dialectical approach that is perspective-based merely for the sake of convincing an opponent, then it appears intellectually dubious to present these provisional views and methods as the ultimate view of the authors in question.

and theory of inference insofar as, being founded on a realist approach of logic, these are incompatible with the fact that Mādhyamikas have no *pratijñā* of their own.¹⁵⁰ Since Bhāviveka formulates his proof in the form of a *svatantrānumāna*, it follows, according to Candrakīrti, that as a Mādhyamika, he necessarily violates the principles posited by Dignāga (e.g., *pakṣadoṣa*) in a self-stultifying move. The reason for this is simply the fact that the *dharmin* of a *svatantrānumāna* cannot be established even conventionally according to the Mādhyamika.¹⁵¹ In other words, the elements of the inference (*pakṣa* and *hetu*) cannot be commonly recognized (*ubhayaprasiddha*) as required by Dignāga without the Mādhyamika accepting precisely that which is to be established by the opponent.¹⁵² Indeed, the *dharmin* is taken to be *vastusat* by the opponent while it is merely *prajñaptisat* for the Mādhyamika, even if the Mādhyamika understands the *dharmin* as a universal (*sāmānya*) and not a particular (*viśeṣa*). On account of this, according to Candrakīrti, a *prasaṅga* on the basis of that which is acceptable by the opponent (*para-prasiddha*) is sufficient as a refutation.¹⁵³ But is Candrakīrti thereby merely showing the tensions existing in the position of a Mādhyamika using a logical framework based on a realistic ontology? In fact, he goes much further than that. If there are no *dravyas* but exclusively *prajñaptis*, there is no given, and no object about which one could have a view.¹⁵⁴ As *prasaṅgas* are based on unreal *dharmins*, there can be no implication of the reversal of a *prasaṅga* (*prasaṅgaviparīta*)—Mādhyamikas have no *pratijñā* of their own. In other words, the refutation of arising from

150 See MacDonald 2003a: 349–57.

151 See Chu 1997: 159 and MacDonald 2003a: 381–90 for various examples of similar confutations based on Dignāga’s eristic rules.

152 See Chu 1997: 160–62, Yotsuya 1999: 77–106, Seyfort Ruegg 2002: 4, and MacDonald 2003a: 382. As explained by Hugon 2002: 116, n. 168, “Dignāga donne une définition légèrement différente dans NM 1b–d: *svayam | sādhyatvenepsitaḥ pakṣo viruddhārthānirākṛtaḥ* || ‘La thèse est ce que [le locuteur] lui-même accepte comme étant ce qui est à prouver, qui n’est pas éliminé par des objets contradictoires.’”

153 See MacDonald 2003a: 355–57.

154 In Candrakīrti’s interpretation of Madhyamaka, extensions, phenomena, or denotations are respectively taken to be intensions, signified, and connotations. They are nothing but mere designations and are deprived of any substrate. The distinction between fictional generalizations and real specific objects of perception is not accepted as valid. It follows that both generalizations and particular events are fictions or designations and can therefore both be the objects of direct perception or inference.

self does not imply the affirmation of arising from other. This negation takes the form of a *prasajyapratishedha*. But in Dignāga's method of inference, if the *dharmin* is accepted by both sides, a refutation of a substantialist position would mechanically lead to an affirming negation (*paryudāsa*) on the part of the Mādhyamika as far as the *pakṣa* is concerned, since the *pakṣa* would not be refuted, having been accepted by both parties. It would indeed follow that only the properties assigned to this *pakṣa* by the inference would be refuted.¹⁵⁵ But, in such an inferential process, the notion of logical validity and truth does not have to be dependent on what is taken to be real. A hypothetical or unreal subject is equally acceptable as the property bearer (*dharmin*). In fact, it is the only possible *dharmin* for a Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamika. It goes without saying that this is a radical departure from Dignāga's (and possibly Indian) epistemology, which does not accept as a valid proof a *prasaṅga* based on an unreal *dharmin*.¹⁵⁶ According to Candrakīrti, since all so-

155 Bhāviveka was well aware of these eristic issues since he evokes them in the PP (see Lindtner 1984: 168–69).

156 See Kajiyama 1999: 15, Tani 1991: 347, and Tillemans 1999: 172 regarding the invalidity of a *prasaṅga* based on an unreal *dharmin* in the context of Dignāga's logic. Oetke (1996b), in an article about the non-monotonic character of Indian logic, puts forward the thesis that Dharmakīrti's improvements on Dignāga's theory of inference represent an evolutionary break in the context of Indian logic. Taber (2004) disagrees with this claim and prefers to insist on the continuity between them. As a matter of fact, although it is undeniable that Dharmakīrti's inference can be presented in terms of both continuity and discontinuity vis-à-vis that of Dignāga, the Mādhyamika approach to inference of Nāgārjuna, Buddhapālita, and Candrakīrti is without contest an epistemic evolutionary leap. I therefore disagree with Oetke: "If the claims which have been offered in the preceding paragraphs should be (mainly) correct it would ensue that, in contradistinction to Western traditions of logic, in the area which is often designated by the term 'Indian Logic' no relevant role can be discerned regarding notions like 'necessity of thought,' 'being true in consideration of all conceivable states of affairs' or even 'truth in all possible worlds' and no concept of consequence related to those ideas is relevant" (Oetke 2005: 38). What about the Mādhyamika use of *prasaṅgas*? The entailment of an absurd consequence on the basis of premises consisting in a particular view based on some well-established definitions is a necessity of thought, independent of a variation of states of affairs, and remains true in all possible worlds to the same extent that "2+2=4" insofar as "2+2=4" is also nothing but a matter of convention posited in the way it is according to defined sets of rules. The truth-preserving relation of a syllogism is a necessity of thought *provided that* one accepts a certain set of conventions. From the perspective of Madhyamaka, there is nothing that can possibly make "2+2=4" an absolute truth independently from the conventions establishing it. There is as a consequence always an epistemic inbuilt caveat, proviso, or even *ceteris paribus* clause in deductive reasoning since it does not pertain to actual things but to conventions, concepts, definitions, and designations. The

called things are nothing but designations or concepts, logical validity is disconnected from logical soundness, the latter becoming somewhat irrelevant from the point of view of the ultimate. The point of his *prasaṅga* (or for that matter of any *anumāna*) cannot be to acquire knowledge about the world or give an account of the “real” but to dismantle all views about the world and “what is real.” Veridiction in this case is not dependent on inductive and empirical processes of validation because it has taken a hypothetico-deductive nature that can deal with pure abstractions in whatever way they are conceived and defined. Such a way to consider the notion of veridiction was bound to be perceived as not grounded in any reality by realists accepting the mirror theory of language, which probably explains why Mādhyamikas came to be called “wranglers” (*vaitaṅḍika*), namely, disputers having no constructive approach to the debate.¹⁵⁷ Candrakīrti’s theory of inference is therefore by nature monotonic, deductive, analytic, and intensional in contrast with former notions of inference.¹⁵⁸ In his view, the “given” is the very set of

fulfilment of normality conditions is therefore by no means restricted to facts but, in the Mādhyamika view, includes the conventions on the basis of which a deductive argument is constructed. Although it is correct that the general orientation of Indian logic is based on realism, one should be careful here not to dismiss the “Mādhyamika evolutionary break.”

- 157 For instance, in order to derive a *reductio ad absurdum* the Mādhyamika can apply the law of the excluded middle (*tertium non datur*) to the opponent provided that the opponent accepts it but the resulting negation is a *prasajyapratishedha* and consequently does not entail the reverse of what is negated for the Mādhyamika since the Mādhyamika has no view.
- 158 The question as to whether Indian theories of inference are non-monotonic or not has been explored in depth by Oetke 1996b, 2005 and Taber 2004. Siderits 2003: 304 makes, in this context, an important point. The *anumāna* is “a hybrid enterprise, involving both logical and epistemological considerations.” The *anumāna* is, according to Siderits, both inductive and deductive. The inductive epistemic process applied to modelize the factual relations upon which the *anumāna* is built is non-monotonic, but as pointed out by Siderits “The test of a logically good argument remains deductive validity” (ibid.: 314). “What, then, is the *anumāna*?” enquires Siderits. “An epistemically virtuous inference. Its epistemic virtue consists in part in the fact that it instantiates a deductively valid argument pattern, *modus ponens*. But it is not a deductively valid argument” (ibid.: 317). This dyadic aspect of the *anumāna* has led Oetke to conclude that the Indian theory of inference is non-monotonic and that Dharmakīrti’s inference represents a break from the past, whereas Taber finds such a presentation somewhat misleading since monotonic reasoning was, according to him, “the ideal or norm” from the inception of Indian logic. It is interesting to note, in light of this debate, that, although Candrakīrti’s *prasaṅgas* can be considered to be monotonic, the Mādhyamika epistemic process of determining that all views about reality are flawed appears to be inductive and possibly non-monotonic.

concepts, designations, definitions, rules, and conventions supplied by the opponents, and it has nothing to do with real entities.¹⁵⁹

(2.2.) In the first chapter of the *Prasannapadā*, Candrakīrti refutes at length Dignāga's theories of two distinct *pramāṇas* corresponding to both *svalakṣaṇa* and *sāmānyalakṣaṇa*, as well as the nonconceptual (*kalpanāpodha*) nature of direct perception (*pratyakṣa*), as well as reflexive awareness (*svasaṃvitti*).¹⁶⁰ The common factor between these topics is in fact the use or acceptance of the Ābhidharmika *paramārtha/saṃvṛti* distinction, a recurrent theme in Candrakīrti's critique. Candrakīrti accuses Dignāga of positing this distinction on the surface level (the *saṃvṛtisatya* as conceived by the Mādhyamika), which uselessly complicates the matter by introducing a third level of truth/reality resulting in contradictions.¹⁶¹ According to Candrakīrti, both "real" particulars and imaginary universals are mere imputations and equally belong to the *saṃvṛti* level of reality. Hence, Candrakīrti seems to prefer the four *pramāṇa* system of Nyāya in which all objects can be perceived by both direct perception and inference. The only reason for this somewhat puzzling move is of course Candrakīrti's rejection of any ontic distinction between what is real and what is illusion within the *saṃvṛti* level of reality since, according to him, Dignāga's theory of two distinct *pramāṇas* based on *svalakṣaṇa* and *sāmānyalakṣaṇa* has no *raison d'être*.¹⁶²

159 Indeed, "The Yogācāra favors perception, the Madhyamaka favors inference" (Eckel 2008: 77). In the context of practice, the practitioner's objective is to attain a nondual direct experience beyond fabrications or projections. In the context of debate, one has, however, to deal with these very fabrications and projections, which represent ordinary vision. It seems that Mipham's Madhyamaka is an attempt to integrate these two soteriologically complementary approaches instead of opposing them.

160 For a detailed account of Candrakīrti's refutations, see Siderits 1981 and Arnold 2005: 152–204, as well as MacDonald (2003a, b), who edited and translated the entirety of the first chapter of the *Pras*.

161 See MacDonald 2003a: 452 n. 613, 463–64 n. 672, Siderits 1981: 323–25.

162 Some post-Dharmakīrtian Buddhist thinkers such as Mokṣākaragupta accept that particulars are not the only objects of indeterminate knowledge on account of the theory of *ayogavyavaccheda* (see Kajiyama 1998: 56–58, Ganeri 1999, and Gillon 1999). This shows that the complexity of Indian Buddhist philosophy is often oversimplified by doxographies, which, being essentially synchronic presentations, somewhat overlook the history and evolution of philosophical ideas throughout time.

Does, however, Candrakīrti's critique apply to the epistemology of Dharmakīrti and his followers? As we have just seen, Candrakīrti's theory of inference is characterized by three central features: (1) It is not based on a realist account of the external world but on concepts supplied by the opponent. As a consequence, the members of the syllogism do not have to be accepted as real by the Mādhyamika. (2) The law of the excluded middle can be used against the opponent's position since, being a realist, he has to accept this principle. Positing the existence of a property bearer (*dharmin*) entails that if a property A is negated in the locus that is this property bearer, the possession of a property B that is excluded by the definition of the property A must necessarily be present in this property bearer. However, this does not apply to the Mādhyamikas since they have no view of their own. A *prasaṅga* does not result in the implication of the opposite of what is negated since it is a nonaffirming negation (*prasajyapratishedha*). (3) A *pramāṇa* system based on the Ābhidharmika *paramārtha/saṃvṛti* distinction on the conventional level is not acceptable insofar as this definition of the *paramārtha/saṃvṛti* has been refuted by Nāgārjuna and substituted by the Mādhyamika doctrine of the two truths.

We now have all the necessary elements to assess whether Candrakīrti's refutations of Bhāviveka—or similar Mādhyamika views—have been ignored or not by authors such as Dharmakīrti and his epigones.

Ad (1)

Dreyfus 1997 explains at length how Dharmakīrti's epistemology goes beyond realism. Kajiyama 1999—as well as Tani 1991 and 1992, Iwata 1993, 1997, and 1999—shows that Dharmakīrti was perfectly aware of the limits of Dignāga's eristics in the case of an unreal *dharmin*. A relevant illustration of this is Dharmakīrti's demonstration in the Pvin II by means of a valid proof sublating the *probans* in the opposite of the *probandum* (*bādhakapramāṇa* or, as called in the HB I,4,36–37, *sādhyaviparyaye hetor bādhakapramāṇam*) that what is not momentary does not exist since it has no capacity to produce effects. Thinkers influenced by Dignāga's system could indeed point out the four following problematic aspects of such *bādhakapramāṇas*:¹⁶³ (1) The subject of the inference (“what is not momentary”) could mean something utterly unreal for one of the involved parties, for instance an eternal god (*īśvara*). The subject is not unequivocally recognized (*prasiddha*) or recognizable by both parties. (2) On account of the *probans* (*hetu*) being a property of the *sādhyadharmin* alone, the presence of the *hetu* cannot be found in similar things (*sapakṣa*) sharing

163 See Katsura 2004: 143–45.

a similar *probandum* (*sādhyadharmā*), nor can it be found in dissimilar things (*vipakṣa*) not sharing a similar *probandum*. The uncommon *probans* would be inconclusive (*asādhāraṇānaikāntikahetu*), as “the incapability of having effects in succession or simultaneously” is a property only found in the *sādhyadharmin*, namely, a non-momentary *dharmin*. (3) The nature of the *sapakṣa* is difficult to determine apart from the *pakṣa* in the present case, since showing the co-presence of the two properties in an example that is different from the *pakṣa* is not possible. There is no real locus to confirm the negative pervasion.¹⁶⁴ (4) There is no guarantee that the *vyatireka* alone entails in reality an inseparable connection (*avinābhāva*) between the proving property and the property to be proven in the *pakṣa* on account of the tripartition in *pakṣa-sapakṣa-asapakṣa*.¹⁶⁵ In fact, it is obvious that a *bādhakapramāṇa* is built on the same *vyāpti* as an equivalent hypothetical inference (*prasaṅga*) or *prasaṅgaviparyaya*, a point made by Mokṣākaragupta.¹⁶⁶ It can therefore be understood as a *prasaṅga*, which Kamalaśīla confirmed in his commentary to Śāntarakṣita’s *Tattvasaṃgraha*.¹⁶⁷ It is clear that Mipham was fully aware of this issue since he explained precisely this equivalence in his *dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad* by quoting Kamalaśīla’s *Madhyamakāloka*.¹⁶⁸ His familiarity with Śāntarakṣita’s and Kamalaśīla’s works as well as with the main Buddhist texts about epistemology was such that it seems implausible that he would have missed this important point while reading Candrakīrti’s *Pras. I*. Kajiyama 1999 explains how Dharmakīrti and his followers (Dharmottara, Jñānaśrīmitra, Ratnakīrti, and Mokṣākaragupta) reformed Dignāga’s logic, which was based on realistic and inductive tendencies, in order to allow the use of hypothetical inferences (*prasaṅga*) and their conversions (*prasaṅgaviparyaya*) into what can essentially be seen as a *svatantrānumāna* by means of logical concepts such as *vyāpti* instead of Dignāga’s *trairūpya*.¹⁶⁹ A complete arsenal of new concepts and terms facilitated this enterprise: *anupalabdhi*,¹⁷⁰ *svabhāvaprati-*

164 See Oetke 1993: 15–19.

165 See Oetke 1994 and Tillemans 2004b regarding the tripartition *pakṣa-sapakṣa-asapakṣa* implied by the *trairūpya* theory.

166 See Kajiyama 1998: 114–18.

167 See TSP *ad* TS 392–94.

168 See Padmakara 2005: 154–55.

169 About realism in Dignāga’s logic, see Tillemans 2004a, Iwata 2004: 91. Besides, it should be noted that Dignāga considers *prasaṅgas* as *dūṣaṇa* but not as *sādhana*, in contradistinction to Dharmakīrti (see Tanji 1991: 342).

170 See Hugon 2008: 698–99.

bandha,¹⁷¹ *kevala*[*dharmin*],¹⁷² or *antarvyāpti*¹⁷³ insofar as the *bādhakapramāṇa* demonstrating the nonexistence of nonmomentary things is stated according to *an-yathānupapannatva*, namely, “without depending on examples external to the subject of inference.”¹⁷⁴ Dignāga’s definitions of the *sapakṣa* and *vipakṣa* were accordingly reformulated in a way that was compatible with Dharmakīrti’s new theory of pervasion: the *pakṣa* was merged with the *sapakṣa*, which resulted in a bipartite universe replacing Dignāga’s tripartition (*pakṣa*, *sapakṣa*, *apakṣa*).¹⁷⁵ This dichotomization enables the implication of *anvaya* in the case of a *vyatireka* on account of *svabhāvapratibandha*.¹⁷⁶ Hence, an inference with an unreal *dharmin* could be accepted as valid on the basis of a mere *vyatireka*;¹⁷⁷ besides, as pointed out in Hugon 2004: 81, according to Dignāga, uncertainty results on account of the nonestablishment of *anvaya* in the case of an inconclusive reason (*asādhāraṇānaikāntikahetu*), whereas, according to Dharmakīrti, it is the nonestablishment of *vyatireka* that is the basis for uncertainty.¹⁷⁸ The *vyāpti* being dependent on a *svabhāvapratibandha* between a property and a subject, real or not, can be formulated in different ways (e.g., *prasaṅga*, *prasaṅgaviparyaya*, *anumāna*, *bādhakapramāṇam*).¹⁷⁹ As a consequence, what matters is the *vyāpti* on account of *svabhāvapratibandha* together with the bipartition of the universe. It is the engine of the deductive argument on which the logical character of the inference hinges as “a truth-preserving relationship between the relevant facts.”¹⁸⁰ As a consequence, the form this inference takes becomes somewhat secondary as long as it remains based on the notion of *vyāpti*. The Dharmakīrtian change of paradigm, as far as inference is concerned, shows the historical move of Indian Buddhist logic. Whereas logic hitherto relied upon essentially empirical processes derived from the perception of actual things, there is from Candrakīrti and Dharmakīrti onward a marked tendency to assess the logical validity of inferences on a purely conceptual basis. Contrarily to the realist logical frame-

171 See Tani 1991: 348, Tillemans 2004a: 271–72.

172 In the sense of a subject that is *vyavacchedamātra* and therefore *prasajyapratīṣedha* (see Tillemans 1999: 173, 182 n. 4).

173 See Tillemans 2004a: 253ff.

174 See Kajiyama 1999: 35.

175 See Tani 1991: 363–64.

176 See Iwata 2004: 114–18.

177 See Oetke 1993: 15–16.

178 See Iwata 2004: 101–2, 110.

179 See Mokṣākaragupta’s quote of PV IV.12cd in Kajiyama 1998: 118.

180 See Siderits 2003: 309.

work shaped by Dignāga, Dharmakīrti's inference can deal with the logical consistency and coherence (or the lack thereof) of inferences on a purely conceptual level on the basis of the definition of concepts alone. The very notion of *svabhāvahetu* can indeed be used as a means of testing the conceptual coherence of a thesis.¹⁸¹

181 See Oetke 2004: 188–89. On the contrary, Taber (2004: 161) thinks that an inference based on the identity (*tādātmya*) mode of the *svabhāvapratibandha* between *hetu* and *sādhya* cannot be certain. He concludes that “Dharmakīrti and his predecessors were concerned with inference insofar as it pertains to the empirical world; they were not discussing the logic of formal proofs in geometry or mathematics.” However, following a suggestion made by Steinkellner, Taber concedes in a footnote that if the *tādātmya* is conceived as a matter of convention, then “it would, rather, hold strictly and infallibly so long as the convention is accepted, and an inference based on it would be absolutely certain” (ibid.: 170, n. 51). In this case, the inference is not about empirical facts and the knowledge of the world but about our conceptualization of such a knowledge. This possibility is accepted by Dunne (2004: 221–22), although it results in the sphere of concepts being cut off from that of actual things, a problem seen by Dreyfus (1997: 269–72, 319–20, 326–27) as “the greatest difficulty in Dharmakīrti’s system” (ibid.: 320). Dreyfus states, “As a problematic form of knowledge, thought (i.e., inference) must be grounded on an unproblematic form of knowledge, which in Dharmakīrti’s system is perception, our only undistorted epistemic access to reality” (ibid.: 327). Nonetheless, the problem somehow dissolves if we accept that an inference is by nature dealing with a problematic object, a generalization. Indeed, although it is related to the perception of particular events, it cannot be itself grounded in real facts since it is by definition a form of knowledge pertaining to fictions in the form of concepts. Thus, the epistemic purpose of inference may not be to establish an unmediated knowledge of the “real world” as much as “carving out” a conceptually and logically acceptable representation of this world. From this perspective, it seems logical that inferences probing generalizations about particular events can never give a direct access to the real since knowledge in the form of a generalization is by nature bound to remain purely conceptual (see PVSV *ad* PV 1.68–75 in Dunne 2004: 339–52). As mentioned above, in the case where there is no empirical grounding in the form of a *sapakṣa*, the validity of an inference can still be assessed on the basis of mere conventions. This is obvious in the case of the *tādātmya* mode of an essential relation. What about the production (*utpatti*) mode of the *svabhāvapratibandha*? It can likewise amount to conventions (ibid.: 174–92): “The fact of being a product of fire is a property-*svabhāva* of smoke. Hence, if some individual can be called “smoke,” it must have been produced by a fire” (ibid.: 174; cf. PVSV *ad* PV 1.34–37, 335–38; see also Oetke 1996b: 494–95). The fact that the logical validity is evaluated on a purely conceptual basis is undeniable: “we have seen that Dharmakīrti implicitly relies upon some notion of necessity. [...] In this case, the necessity is *de dicto* in that it concerns the relation among properties, and not the relation of properties to an individual. Now, my contention is that, at least in the context of the *svabhāvapratibandha*, Dharmakīrti’s system does not allow for *de re* necessity” (ibid.: 182–83). This is clearly reminiscent of Candrakīrti’s *prasaṅga*, whose necessity is *de dicto* and not *de re* as it equally pertains to generalizations that have been established by convention. In this way, epistemic uncertainty resulting from additional information cannot play any significant role as long as the premises of the syllogism remain stable: “Obviously Dharmakīrti is not ready to concede that the acceptability of inferences and proofs might rely on the condition that certain facts are *not* known” (Oetke 1996b: 465). In such a case, the validity of the inference can remain

Dharmakīrti's inference, just like Candrakīrti's *prasaṅga*, can therefore perfectly show the logical inconsistencies of doctrines based on an unreal *dharmin* without accepting or implying this unreal *dharmin*, while simultaneously maintaining the intersubjective space that is necessary for communication to take place. This was, in a nutshell, the essence of Candrakīrti's critique of Bhāviveka. The logical validity of inferences is independent of examples of substantial things used to ground logical truth in reality, although they may help to clarify the logical relation they embody.¹⁸² The purely abstract logical validity and coherence of a set of propositions can from now on be assessed on the basis of their own premises in conformity with Candrakīrti's recommendation, namely, independently of a commonly accepted subject. Communication, debate, and logical proofs based on reason are possible even when the subject of the inference is not real for one of the debaters. One does not have to accept what must be established, even provisionally, to make communication possible or to establish with reasoning the relevance of dependent arising. Leading us to Mīpham's position, Jñānagarbha's approach is historically fascinating and clearly shows that Candrakīrti's point was subsequently integrated into Yogācāra-Mādhyamaka. Jñānagarbha clearly accepts that the *dharmin* can be unreal. However, his version of *anumāna* is still very much influenced by Dignāga's system, as can be seen in SD 18–22.¹⁸³ The subject must be established by both parties (*ubhayaprasiddha*) to make communication possible. How can this be acceptable for a Mādhyamika? Simply by merging the Pramāṇa and Mādhyamika approaches. According to Jñānagarbha, the subject is nothing but what appears to the minds of both parties. Since there could be no agreement about a subject that is construed as what it is supposed to be on the basis of the very doctrine that is to be proven by the *anumāna*, Jñānagarbha explains that the starting point of the discussion, the *dharmin*, must be what common people think without any further analysis.

a purely abstract concern based on conventions: "A standard example given at various places by Dharmakīrti in order to illustrate the concept of *svabhāvahetu* is the derivation of something's being a tree from its being a *śimśapā* (-tree). [...] The crucial point is that regarding examples of this kind it appears entirely plausible to look at the matter in the way that a logical reason either is probative irrespective of how much and what further information is added or it is not probative at all" (ibid.: 493). In a word, Dharmakīrti and Candrakīrti's approaches to inference offer the theoretical possibility, if necessary, to rule out any potential exceptions to normal conditions in the form of events with a low probability (i.e., the black swan example used to illustrate the problems induced by the epistemically inevitable generalization on which inductive reasoning rests). Even if the premises of a monotonic inference can theoretically change, it is obvious that the lack of stability of the premises has in this case nothing to do with non-monotonicity.

182 See Steinkellner 2004: 229–34, Iwata 2004: 122.

183 See Eckel 1992.

This clearly shows that Candrakīrti's refutations of Bhāviveka's approach—or similar rejoinders formulated by other Buddhist thinkers—were taken seriously and certainly not ignored. Śāntarakṣita also clearly identifies the account of the conventional made by Dharmakīrti and Candrakīrti by associating the capacity to produce effects with the concept of existence as it is accepted by common people, with the additional remark that such phenomena are nothing but an appearance in our minds in the way of a mere cognitive event. Śāntarakṣita accepts that *dharma*s are unreal, although the *dharmin* is not unestablished (*āśrayāsiddha*), since just like Jñānagarbha, he admits common appearances without any further analysis as the subject of syllogisms (see MA 76–78). Kamalaśīla accepts that the *dharmin's svabhāva* is indeed posited on account of *samāropa*, which is compatible with Candrakīrti's use of *svabhāva* in Pras. 263.5–264.4.¹⁸⁴ According to Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla, an unreal *dharmin* can therefore be dealt with by means of *bādhakapramāṇas* and *prasaṅgas* on account of the underlying *vyāpti*. In his *dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad*, Mipham fully endorses this two-pronged Yogācāra-Mādhyamaka approach that he considers to be in fact of a single nature.¹⁸⁵ From the perspective of the historical and doctrinal developments presented above, Mipham's doubts regarding the Svātantrika-Prāsaṅgika distinction seem fairly logical.

Ad (2.1) and (2.2)

Dharmakīrti distinguishes valid cognitions that are conventional (*saṃvyavahārika*) from those that are ultimate (*pāramārthika*). This is actually nothing but the Mādhyamika concept of the two truths (*satyadvaya*) reappearing through the back door. Dharmakīrti therefore accepts that all conventional valid cognitions (*pratyakṣa* and *anumāna*) belong to the sphere of nescience.¹⁸⁶ The conditionally accepted conventional distinctions in terms of what is real or not from the point of view of a realist are in fact clearly, from this ultimate perspective, completely provisional, all phenomena, universal or particular, being recognized to be de-

184 See Tanji 2000: 362.

185 See Doctor 2004: 43ff., 59ff., 157ff., 551, 555ff.

186 See Dunne 2004: 315–16, Krasser 2004: 143–44, Eltschinger 2005: 156, 161–62, 174. From the Yogācāra perspective, direct perception and inference are equally distorted. There is, however, the possibility of understanding *yogipratyakṣa* as a nondeluded direct perception. In this case, the question arises, is *yogipratyakṣa* to be equated with the ultimate (*pāramārthika*) valid cognition mentioned by Dharmakīrti? This is a difficult topic. It seems indeed that various *yogipratyakṣas* are possible and that not all of them can be subsumed by the direct perception of a completely awakened and omniscient being. Although further research is necessary to assess this point, it is obvious that Dharmakīrti accepts two levels, a conventional and an ultimate, which mirrors the Mādhyamika theory of the two truths.

clusion. From this perspective, the Dharmakīrtian theory of inference makes *prasāṅgas* resulting in a nonaffirming negation (*prasajyapraṭiṣedha*) of the unreal *dharmīn* a distinct possibility, while at the same time it accommodates inferences made on a lower level. Just like Candrakīrti, Dharmakīrti seems to accept ultimately that the logical validity of a syllogism and its epistemic reality or soundness do not necessarily have to intersect. Seen from the perspective of the ultimate, a *prasāṅga* is therefore a nonaffirming negation (*prasajyapraṭiṣedha*). As for Candrakīrti's rejection of any privileged level of reality on the level of conventional truth as far as *pramāṇas* are concerned, one should acknowledge the fact that Dharmakīrti ultimately concurs with this view on account of his theory of conventional (*saṃvya-vahārika*) and ultimate (*pāramārthika*) valid cognitions. This point was crystal clear for Kamalaśīla. Keira explains:

Kamalaśīla, in effect, invokes the schema of the two truths in order to enable him to reply to his adversary that although valid cognition implies that there are entities, it does not thereby imply *ultimate* (*pāramārthika*) entities—only conventional (*sāṃvṛta*) entities. In other words, the Mādhyamika would be vulnerable to a charge of self-refutation if his use of Dharmakīrtian epistemology necessitated the very thing that he himself was negating. But it does not: valid cognition is possible without ultimately existing entities.¹⁸⁷

As a conclusion, Dharmakīrti's perspective-based system is certainly not ultimately incompatible with Candrakīrti's views. In fact, his approach paves the way for a full-fledged integration of two radically different perspectives, namely, those of Dignāga and Candrakīrti. This integration took place over centuries within the Yogācāra-Madhyamaka tradition in India and finally culminated in Tibet with Mi-pham along the lines delineated by Dharmakīrti and his perspective-based approach. From the point of view of the historical evolution of Indian Buddhist thought, the Svātantrika-Prāsaṅgika doxographic distinction makes therefore little sense since it gives the impression that the evolution of Indian Buddhist thought stopped with Candrakīrti's criticism of Bhāviveka's refutation of Buddhapālita. Candrakīrti's refutation indeed represents a turning point in Buddhist thought in the form of a fundamental discontinuity, but most Tibetan doxographic models in terms of tenets seem to remain blind to the fact that it did not go unnoticed. The fallacious notion

¹⁸⁷ Keira 2004: 26. For a translation and a presentation of Kamalaśīla's use of the two truths in the context of valid cognition in the MĀ, see *ibid.*: 24–29.

that Candrakīrti's ideas—or similar lines of thinking—were overlooked and that subsequent developments are as a consequence irrelevant makes no sense in the light of the historical development of Buddhist philosophy in India. In fact, the contemporary Tibetan traditions do not really know how to classify most later Indian Buddhist thinkers in their doxographies and show little interest in doing so, these works being usually ignored by most Tibetan scholiasts. To conclude, the Svātantrika-Prāsaṅgika doxographic distinction might be adapted to characterize the methodology of Dignāga's Mādhyamika followers insofar as Candrakīrti's criticisms apply to Dignāga's epistemology and eristics.¹⁸⁸ It is, however, clearly anachronistic in the context of post-Dharmakīrtian Indian Buddhist philosophy.

Mipham's understanding of the Svātantrika-Prāsaṅgika distinction is therefore not unfounded. However, an important question remains. Was Mipham aware of Dharmakīrti's pivotal role in Indian Buddhist thought? First of all, Mipham agrees that Candrakīrti's view is a turning point, but he simultaneously acknowledges the fact that there was a post-Candrakīrti Indian Buddhist Madhyamaka thought worthy of interest.¹⁸⁹ In his *dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad*, he candidly recognizes Śāntarakṣita's influence on his philosophy and seems to be fully aware that there are two ways to give an account of conventional reality. The first is based on a form of realism, while the second is purely epistemic. Mipham obviously refused to lump Bhāviveka, who used a Dignāgan eristic and epistemological template, together with Śāntarakṣita, who followed a Dharmakīrtian approach. In his view, they followed radically different epistemic and eristic approaches as far as unreal subjects were concerned,¹⁹⁰ which is the crucial point at the origin of the Svātantrika-Prāsaṅgika distinction.¹⁹¹ However, Mipham concedes that these different methodologies do not entail a difference of view. As a follower of Sakya Paṇḍita (Sa skya Pan di ta Kun dga' rgyal mtshan, 1182–1251), it seems highly improbable that Mipham would have been unaware of the differences between Dignāga's and Dharmakīrti's systems, having, on the top of that, commented on both the PS and the PV in an extremely detailed way.¹⁹² On the ground of Mipham's assertion that Dharmakīrti and his

188 See Seyfort Rugg 2002: 5–7, MacDonald 2003a: 394–95.

189 Cf. Mipham's praise of Śāntarakṣita's syncretic and innovative approach throughout his *dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad*. Phuntsho (2005a: 52) declares about this aspect of Mipham's philosophy: "Mipham is unequalled among the Nyingmapas in his logico-epistemological fervour and like Tsongkhapa, he took great pride in synthesizing the epistemology of Dharmakīrti with the ontology of Candrakīrti."

190 See McClintock 2003: 139ff., 150.

191 Mipham clearly deals with the issue of the *dharmin* in his *dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad*.

192 Further research about his commentaries of the PS, the PV, and Sakya Paṇḍita's *Rigs gter* would be necessary to assess how these eristic and epistemological issues influenced his

epigones' theory of reflexive awareness is accepted by all Mahāyāna authors, we can conclude that Mipham probably thought of this tradition as synthesizing the works and views of previous authors. An additional fact supports this hypothesis. Mipham elucidated in the way of a detailed commentary Mañjuśrimitra's *rDo la gser zhun*,¹⁹³ in which Mañjuśrimitra, an eighth-century Yogācāra-Mādhyamika paṇḍita who had been exposed to Dzogchen, tries to convince his fellow scholars that the path beyond cause and effect is valid.¹⁹⁴ One of the arguments used by Mañjuśrimitra corresponds almost *verbatim* to Candrakīrti's MAv VI.30–31ab, a fact that could not have possibly escaped Mipham's attention. In these verses, Candrakīrti explains that if ordinary beings' cognitions were valid, they would perceive reality. Mañjuśrimitra's *rDo la gser zhun* shows beyond doubt that Candrakīrti's refutation of Dignāga (or similar lines of thinking) did not go unnoticed but were thought of as having been fully integrated in a perspectivist approach of reality.¹⁹⁵

From a practical point of view, Mipham follows a Svātantrika method to explain the nominal ultimate but prefers the Prāsaṅgikas' approach in order to teach the actual ultimate. This can obviously confuse those who make no difference regarding the perspective from which statements about the ultimates are made. However, throughout his writings about Madhyamaka, Mipham constantly explains from which perspective his statements are formulated.¹⁹⁶ Nowhere is this point clearer

interpretation of the Svātantrika-Prāsaṅgika distinction. However, we do know that Sakya Paṇḍita touches on the issues of universe bipartition/tripartition in his debate against earlier interpretations of the *pramāṇa* tradition in the tenth chapter of the *Rigs gter* (see Hugon 2002, 2004, 2008, and Tillemans 2004b). Any careful reader well versed in epistemology would probably notice that the discrepancies existing between Dignāga's and Dharmakīrti's theories of inference play a significant role in the debate between Sa paṅ and Phya pa.

193 *Bodhicittabhāvanā* (*rDo la gser zhun*, D2591).

194 See below the translation of *De kho na nyid gsal ba'i sgron me*.

195 Atiśa is on a similar line when he states that Buddhists accept direct perception and inference as *pramāṇas* but that emptiness is not realized by these *pramāṇas* (*Satyadvayāvatārā* v.10; see Sherburne 2000: 355).

196 Pettit explains: "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" (Pettit 1999: 145). In the same way, Phuntsho goes on to say: "Mipham observed that the Gelugpa understanding of Emptiness and Mādhyamika dialectics are close to that of the Svātantrika Mādhyamika against their strong claim that they are Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamikas. In the eyes of Mipham, the Gelugpas resembled the Svātantrika Mādhyamika in many philosophical and dialectical issues" (Phuntsho 2007: 110–11). Tauscher 2003: 235 concurs: "With regard to ontological position in general, striking similarities on important basic topics are to be perceived between Phya pa and Tsong kha pa." The whole issue at stake between Mipham and the Gelugpa is well summed up by Sweet (1977: 33) in the context of dGe 'dun chos 'phel's Madhyamaka: "DGe.'dun Chos.phel feels that the Gelugpas only ob-

than in his well-known critique of the Gelugpa interpretation of the two truths. Mipham equates the Gelugpa position with their own understanding of the Svātantrikas' view, exposing an internal contradiction that seems indeed incontrovertible on the basis of their own premises.¹⁹⁷ Although he indeed ultimately disagrees with this school's presentation of the two truths, he still accepts this view as a teaching imparted from the perspective of post-meditation. However, Mipham shows that any doctrine distinguishing the two truths will ultimately lead to philosophical aporias.

The Gelugpa's presentation of the basis of negation (*dgag gzhi*) and the object of negation (*dgag bya*) has been targeted by several non-Gelugpa Tibetan scholars such as Gorampa.¹⁹⁸ While Mipham's tone is less polemical than that of Gorampa, he discusses the matter in his *'Jug 'grel* (533ff.), criticizing at length the Gelugpa understanding of the basis of negation (*dgag gzhi*). Tsongkhapa differentiates clearly the basis of negation (e.g., the pot) from that which is to be negated (i.e., its true existence). However, according to Mipham, if the object of negation is identified in this way and an unbridgeable distinction between the basis and the object of negation is made, it follows that the two truths are considered to be strictly separated. Such a view would be similar to that of extrinsic emptiness (*gzhan stong*), as shown below.¹⁹⁹ Mipham's refutation of the Gelugpa's approach therefore goes as follows:

sure the issue when they assert that there is a lack of actual existence (bden.par.yod.pa.min) and a lack of conventional non-existence (kun.rdzob.tu.med.pa.min), since the middle way of the Mādhyamika is actually a lack of either existence or non-existence without any qualification. He believes that Candrakīrti's refusal to allow the predicate 'ultimately' to be affixed to Mādhyamika syllogisms, as was done by Bhāvaviveka, is a confirmation of his position."

197 The dichotomy "relatively existent/ultimately nonexistent" is here the crucial point raised by Mipham. Mipham seemed to have sensed a profound contradiction in the Gelugpa's criticism of the Svātantrikas. The Gelugpas' Madhyamaka exegesis, in spite of its denigration of the Svātantrika Madhyamaka system, indeed resembles this tradition to the point that one might wonder whether it is not after all simply plain Svātantrika but in name. See Tauscher 2003: 235 on Tsongkhapa's affirmation of conventional existence: "For Tsong kha pa's understanding of conventional existence (*tha snyad du yod pa*), which relates to both realities, it is crucial that only absolute existence (*don dam par yod pa*) is to be negated, but not conventional reality (*saṃvṛtisatya*) in the sense of conventionally real things or existence as such (*yod pa tsam*), for this would imply either substantialism or nihilism. The same is stressed also by Phya pa."

198 For a presentation of the Gelugpa position, see Tauscher 1995: 73–173.

199 See Phuntsho 2007: 79ff., in which the author lists a few of these consequences: emptiness will become an affirming negation; emptiness will become an emptiness of other; emptiness will become segregated from appearance; the absence of hypostatic existence will not be established; conventional things will become hypostatically existent; conventional things will have their own defining characteristic; the varieties of emptiness will become

In this way, the pot as a shared appearance (*mithun snang*) is left without being negated. But it is like the negation of true existence (*bden grub*) [of sound] mentioned above: the object conceived through the superimposition of true existence (*bden par grub par sgro 'dogs pa'i zhen yul*) is negated. With respect to this, if the object conceived by superimposition is negated, the pot itself that is qualified of true existence is negated. The pot itself is recognized to be a pot that has been established as true on account of being apprehended by a subject apprehending it as truly established, [although this pot] has never existed. A truly existing pot, being completely imputed, is not the pot that is a shared appearance. The [pot that is imputed to be truly existent] is a nonexistent pot. This is the way in which true existence is refuted, while the pot as a shared appearance is not negated. This type of pot, which is a shared appearance, is a pot that is existent on the level of the concealing truth.

Some make assertions inferior to this [explanation]. They pretend that the pot is not negated by an ultimate analysis (*don dam dpyod*) but that [only] true existence is negated. However, provided that [such] an argumentation negating true existence applies, even if [the pot] is established as true, since the pot is ultimately not found, as long as it is not established, nor is its nonexistence established! If we analyze by means of an ultimate analysis the pot that is a shared appearance on the level of the concealing truth, we cannot find or observe anything that can withstand analysis (*dpyad bzod*). This is called “nonobservation through the valid cognition of ultimate analysis,” “ultimate nonexistence,” “emptiness of own nature,” and “lack of real existence proved to withstand [ultimate] analysis.” Apart from this, there is no alternative for positing true existence or nonexistence.²⁰⁰ (...)

unnecessary; lack of hypostatic existence cannot be emptiness; things will not be inherently pure; emptiness will lose its soteriological efficacy.

200 'Jug 'grel 535, 1ff.: /de bzhin du/ *mithun snang gi bum pa mi 'gog par bzhag nas/ de'i steng du bden grub bkag pa yang snga ma dang 'dra ste/ bden par grub par sgro 'dogs pa'i zhen yul bkag pa yin no/ de la sgro 'dogs pa'i zhen yul khegs pa na bden grub kyi khyad par du byas pa'i bum pa khengs te/ bum pa nyid bden par 'dzin pa can gyi bzung ba'i bden grub kyi bum pa ye nas med par shes so/ bden grub kyi bum pa kun brtogs te/ mithun snang gi bum pa 'di ma yin/ 'di bden med kyi bum pa yin no/ de ltar na mithun snang gi bum pa mi bkag par bden grub 'gog tshul de yin no/ de lta bu'i mithun snang gi bum pa de ni kun rdzob tu yod pa'i bum pa de yin/ de la bas mas 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 yan gar ba 'gog tshul gyi rigs pa yod na de ltar grub mod kyang/ don dam par bum pa ma dmigs par ma grub kyi bar du/ de'i bden med kyang mi 'grub ste/ don dam dpyod byed kyis mithun snang kun rdzob kyi [536] bum pa de la dbyad na/*

Reflecting in this way to establish the absence of true existence without negating shared appearances, [some say:] “A pot is empty of true existence, [but] not of [being] a pot!” Therefore, they think that all phenomena are not empty of themselves; they are namely not empty of their own nature. If they were, their conventional existence would be impossible. Therefore, they are empty of something other [than themselves], they are namely empty of true existence as something other [than themselves]. By so saying, when a phenomenon is analyzed through an ultimate analysis, if its essential nature (*ngo bo*) is negated, its existence on the level of the concealing truth is impossible. Holding in their hearts as supreme the view of the substantialists who apprehend the two truths as being mutually exclusive, they accept something conventionally nonexistent as that which is to be negated through reasoning. With regard to this, although they pretend to be proponents of the Madhyamaka tradition, they are the new expounders of substantialist views! Therefore, rejecting statements from the sūtras such as “All phenomena are without self” or “the eye is empty of [being] an eye,” [they reject] emptiness, the teaching that all phenomena, as many as there are, are devoid of an essential nature. They say, “All phenomena are not emptiness [of themselves] but are emptiness of true existence.”²⁰¹ (...)

As it is said in the *Madhyamakāvātāra* [MAv VI.181]:

Because its essential nature [is nonexistent], the eye is empty of eye.

dbyad bzod gang yang ma rnyed pa'am/ ma dmigs pa de la/ don dam dpyod byed kyi tshad mas ma dmigs pa dang/ don dam par med pa dang/ ngo bo nyid 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/

- 201 'Jug 'grel 636,6ff.: *mithun 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 khegs 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 gzhung smra ba'i gang zag tu khas 'ches kyang/ dngos smra ba'i grub mtha' gсар du bslang ba yin cing de'i phyir na mdo las chos thams cad stong zhing bdag med pa'o/ /zhes dang/ mig ni mig gis stong ngo/ /zhes sogs ji tsam du snang ba'i chos thams cad rang gi ngo bo med par gsungs ba'i stong nyid spangs nas/ chos thams cad stong pa nyid min gyi bden grub kyis stong pa nyid yin no/ /mig ni mig gis mi stong de yi bden bas stong zhes smra ba ni/*

If the eye is not empty of an essential nature, it is impossible that it is empty of true [existence]. Therefore, the nature of the eye will not be emptiness. Inasmuch as what is empty of other [than itself] is not empty of its own essential nature, [emptiness of other] is not the nature of this phenomenon. It is like a nonexistent space lotus that is not of the nature of a lotus that grows in water. If a phenomenon that is empty of other is not a phenomenon that is empty of its own essential nature, no one, wise or foolish, will postulate that this is its nature. Therefore, they must admit that the nature of all phenomena is the emptiness of essential nature. Since they must accept that all phenomena are empty of their own essential nature, since [these phenomena] are not empty of their essential nature, even if [their] essential nature is empty of other phenomena, how can [this emptiness of other] be their real nature?²⁰² (...)

Therefore, although one must establish conventions in this way when debating with substantialists (*dnegos smra ba*), what is the purpose of the ultimate nonexistence and the lack of true existence? Through reasonings such as neither one [nor many], the pot that is a shared appearance is not found or observed. There is certainly no other purpose apart from this one. Therefore, if the pot that is established as a shared appearance is not negated through an ultimate analysis, it can by no means be ultimately nonexistent or established as untrue; consequently, the very pot that is a shared appearance would be ultimately existent and established as truly existent. Thus, the assertion that true existence is the object of negation [means] that the pot that is a shared appearance is not established as being immune to an ultimate analysis. Apart from this, nothing [is meant]. Therefore, true existence does not exist conventionally, while the pot conventionally does exist. As a consequence, the two are

202 'Jug 'grel 551,4ff.: 'jug pa las/ gang phyir de yi rang bzhin de/ yi na phyir mig ni mig gis stong/ / zhes gsungs so/ mig rang gi ngo bos ma stong na/ bden pas stong pa mi srid pas/ mig ni rang bzhin stong pa nyid ma yin par 'gyur ro/ /gzhan gyis stong pa ni/ rang gi ngo bo mi stong pas chos de'i rang bzhin ma yin te/ nam 'kha'i me tog med pa/ tshul skyes ba'i me tog gi rang bzhin ma yin pa bzhin te/ chos gzhan stong pa [552] zhig chos rang gi ngo bos mi stong na de'i rang bzhin yin par sgro 'dgos pa'i mkhas blun su'ang med do/ /des na chos thams cad kyi rang bzhin stong pa nyid du khas len dgos so/ chos thams cad rang gi ngo bos stong pas 'dod dgos kyis/ rang gi ngo bo ma stong phan chod/ chos gzhan gyis ngo bo stong yang/ de'i rang bzhin du ga la 'gyur te/

not the same. Thus, although we must say that the object of negation is true existence, the conventionally existent pot is a shared appearance.²⁰³

Mipham paradoxically accuses his opponent in this passage of his 'Jug 'grel of being, like the proponents of the lower tenets, a substantialist. By only refuting true existence and not the conventional object, the latter is in fact not empty of itself and as a consequence is established as "truly existing" (*bden par grub*).²⁰⁴ Mipham then asks ironically what the purpose of such a distinction between the basis and the object of negation might be. In his 'Jug 'grel, Mipham declares that this method is clearly not in the interest of common people or yogis. It serves, according to him, no purpose. Common people do not apprehend something called "true existence" apart from the pot they believe to be truly existent, and the yogis, who have no apprehension of a truly existent pot, do not need this method either.²⁰⁵ This remark shows that Mipham's assessment of philosophical views is related to soteriological aspects. Although Mipham's statements are certainly made tongue in cheek, they pertain to a very serious issue. What then is the sense of the Svātantrika-Prāsaṅgika distinction? If the intention of an author is not taken into account but his statements are read literally for the sake of finding a fault, baseless claims of substantialism are all one needs to make anyone into a substantialist. For Mipham, when a doxography has lost its soteriological and propaedeutic function, it has turned into a dogma deprived of any practical purpose.

203 'Jug 'grel 556,6ff.: *dnogs smra ba dang rtsod tshe tha snyad de ltar sbyar dgos kyang/ don dam par med pa dang bden grub med pa ci'i phyir zer na/ gcig du bral sogs kyi rigs pas mthun par snang ba'i bum pa mi dmigs pa'am ma rnyed pa 'dis grub pa las rgyu mtshan gzhan mi srid pas mthun snang du grub pa'i bum pa don spyod kyis ma bkag na don dam par med pa dang/ bden med 'grub pa'i thabs gtan med de/ mthun snang gi bum pa nyid don dam par yod pa dang/ bden par grub par 'gyur ro/ des na bden grub dgag bya yin zer ba de/ mthun snang gi bum pa don dpyod kyis dpyad bzod du grub pa med pa de las gzhang du med pas/ bden grub tha snyad du med la/ bum pa tha snyad du yod pas de gnyis gcig min pas dgag bya bden grub yin zer dgos kyang/ bum pa tha snyad du yod pa ni mthun snang du grub pa 'di yin la.*

204 See Phuntsho 2004: 241: "In singling out a hypostatic intrinsic nature as the only philosophical villain to be annihilated and in leaving the empirical world unscathed and indeed validated, and our ordinary sense of self and the world veritably confirmed, Tsongkhapa's description of things as nominal and fiction-like still eludes us and sounds like mere rhetoric." Indeed, the difference between the Svātantrikas' understanding of *rang gi ngo bo* and Tsongkhapa's innovative term *yod tsam* (see Chu 1997: 171) is quite abstruse. For a display of "Tsongkhapa's dialectical skills" regarding this subtle point of Tibetan hermeneutics, see Chu 1997: 168–75.

205 In his *gZhan stong khas len seng ge'i nga ro*, Mipham gives a detailed explanation of this point (see Pettit 1999: 420–26).

Does the *Samḍhinirmocanasūtra* Support Mipham's Interpretation of the Two Truths?

In the *Nor bu ke ta ka*, his commentary to BCA 9.2ab, which represents the starting point of our enquiry, Mipham quotes a few śāstras to support his position, the *Samḍhinirmocanasūtra* (*Samḍh*) being, however, the only *sūtra* he cites in this passage:²⁰⁶

This being so, if these two truths such as [they are defined] are [considered to be] ultimately different or identical on the [level of the] concealing [truth], one should understand [this] as a contradiction on account of two sets of four faults, as explained in the *Samḍhinirmocanasūtra* [*Samḍh* III.3–5].²⁰⁷

The third chapter of the *Samḍhinirmocanasūtra* is the *locus classicus* regarding the relation between the two truths. It is also repeatedly quoted by Gelugpa scholars, as pointed out by Thakchoe.²⁰⁸ It is obvious that the *sūtra*'s presentation of these faults

206 In a very similar context, Longchenpa mentions the *Samḍhinirmocanasūtra* in his *Grub mtha' mdzod*. See Butters 2006: 397.

207 *Nor bu ke ta ka* 4. The structural outline of *Samḍh* III.3–5 on the four faults is as follows: §3. First fault (*prasaṅga*): if the concealing and the ultimate were *conventionally* the same, then ordinary beings would be accomplished; Second fault (*prasaṅga*): if the concealing and the ultimate were *ultimately* different, then those who see reality would not be liberated; First fault (*prasaṅgaviparyaya*): the concealing and the ultimate are *conventionally* not the same since ordinary beings are not accomplished; Second fault (*prasaṅgaviparyaya*): the concealing and the ultimate are not *ultimately* different, since those who see reality do not have to be liberated; §4. Third fault part 1 (*prasaṅga*): if the concealing and the ultimate were *conventionally* the same, the defining characteristic of the ultimate would be included in the defining characteristic of the afflicted; Third fault part 2 (*prasaṅga*): if the concealing and the ultimate were *ultimately* different, then the defining characteristic of the ultimate would not be the defining characteristic of all phenomena (*chos, dharma*); Third fault (*prasaṅgaviparyaya*): the concealing and the ultimate are *conventionally* neither the same nor *ultimately* different, since their defining characteristics are conventionally different and ultimately the same; §5. Fourth fault part 1 (*prasaṅga*): if the concealing and the ultimate were *conventionally* the same, yogis would not search to attain the ultimate; Fourth fault part 2 (*prasaṅga*): if the concealing and the ultimate were *ultimately* different, the concealing and the ultimate would be simultaneously established; Fourth fault (*prasaṅgaviparyaya*): the concealing and the ultimate are *conventionally* neither the same nor *ultimately* different, since the ultimate is conventionally distinguished from the concealing on account of the mere nonexistence of the self and since the defining characteristics of the ultimate and the concealing are ultimately the same. See D106, Lamotte's edition (1935), and my translation of the *sūtra* (Forgues 2020).

208 As an aside, it is worth noting that the relation between the two truths in the context of the Gelugpa exegesis of Madhyamaka is, surprisingly, explained by means of a text considered to be of provisional meaning.

is made in terms of the two truths being *ultimately* different or *relatively* the same, which accommodates the possibility of understanding the *sūtra* as stating that phenomena *conventionally* exist although they are *ultimately* nonexistent. This could support the position that the two truths are different conceptual distinguishers (*ldog pa*) of a unique entity (*ldog pa tha dad pa'i ngo bo*).²⁰⁹ However, the *sūtra* also states in the last paragraph (Saṃdh III.6) and the closing *gātha* (Saṃdh III.7) of the same chapter that there are no distinctions in the ultimate, including distinctions based on concepts such as the two truths, *from the perspective of primordial wisdom*. This position corresponds in fact to Mipham's interpretation of the two truths as being in unity. The *sūtra* gives the example of the conch to illustrate that it is difficult to conceptualize whether or not the whiteness of the conch is different from its defining characteristic. Other illustrations found in the text include gold and yellowness, the sound produced by a *vīṇa* and sound, aloes and its fragrance, pepper and its heat, *myrobalan arjuna* and its astringency, cotton and its softness, and clarified butter and butter. The *sūtra* concludes that it is not appropriate to conceptualize whether the defining characteristics of conditioned phenomena and the ultimate are different or not. Although such distinctions in terms of defining characteristics are made in the context of post-meditation (see Saṃdh III.6), the concept of *zung 'jug* used by Mipham refers precisely to this inseparability of emptiness and appearance and their ineffable relation from the highest perspective. One can see from this textual reference made by Mipham in his *Nor bu ke ta ka* that *zung 'jug* does not imply a form of monism positing the presence of a single entity in a numerical sense in which the two truths are identical, since this would constitute a fault according to the Saṃdh. Rather, Mipham seems to interpret the *sūtra* as pointing out this non-dual unity of emptiness and phenomenal appearance, namely, the inseparability

209 For example: A quick look at the structure of this passage of the *Saṃdhinirmocana* shows that there must have been a mistake in the way the *sūtra* was originally edited. Faults 1 and 2 do not reflect the parallelistic construction of the rest of this passage. Faults 3 and 4 are both constituted of two sub-mistakes, one pertaining to the conflation of the two truths on the level of the concealing and one regarding their being different on the level of the ultimate. Faults 1 and 2 should therefore be grouped together to reflect this construction. In fact, we only have three sets of two faults: (1+2), 3, and 4. From a structural point of view, even if it seems anachronistic to use these terms, it is interesting to note that the *prasaṅgaviparyaya* corresponding to each *prasaṅga* comes in the subsequent recapitulation of the fault in question. These recapitulations use the particle *phyir* with reference to what was mentioned in the *prasaṅga* of each fault. The last chapter of the Saṃdh also includes elements belonging to Buddhist epistemology. This is interesting in the present context since it shows that Śāntarakṣita's syncretic Madhyamaka-Yogācāra-Pramāṇa approach at the level of the *śāstras* had already been formulated a few centuries earlier in the later *sūtras*.

of the ultimate and the relative, the conditioned and the unconditioned, which is compared to the ineffability of the relation between the conch and whiteness, as these two are neither the same nor different within their nondual unity free from conceptualization. As explained in the *sūtra*, this nondual unity transcends indeed any notion formulated in terms of identity or separation.

CHAPTER 5

The Hermeneutical Originality of Mipham's Perspectivist Approach

In his *dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad*, Mipham describes Asaṅga's tradition as being "flawless," and he clearly accepts both the middle and last turnings of the wheel as definitive.²¹⁰ However, Mipham also endorses Candrakīrti and Śāntideva's refutations of the Vijñānavādins. In this chapter, I would like to investigate the hermeneutical principles upon which Mipham appears to establish his integration of views that are philosophically or historically in conflict with one another. It goes without saying that Mipham's Indian predecessors may have disagreed with his overarching project, and my objective, in this chapter, is certainly not to minimize this point. Rather, I am interested in showing the hermeneutical keystones upon which Mipham's entire endeavor is built. This investigation is conducted on the basis of Mipham's own indications, and when those are missing, on a reconstruction effort that follows the dispersion lines of Mipham's project.

The Definitive Character of the Last Turning of the Wheel

According to the Gelugpa doxography, the tradition of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu is guilty of substantialism, since it posits mind as existent, at least in the Gelugpa presentation of this "tenet," Vijñānavāda.²¹¹ Gorampa appears to agree with the Gelugpa in this case. Mipham's position, however, is surprisingly at odds with them. Mipham considers the Gelugpa position, if taken literally, to be self-contradicting, since it accuses the early Yogācāra of substantialism although it is equally in the wrong as explained above. There is indeed a contradiction in rejecting Yogācāra's putative substantialist view while simultaneously accepting that a vase is not empty of being a vase on the conventional level. Likewise, one could argue that there is, in the case of some Sakyapas (*sa skya pa*), a similar apparent contradiction in proclaiming the ultimate as permanent, independent, and unchanging while condemning Yogācāra on the basis of similar statements. Some of Gorampa and Mipham's

210 See also Mipham's commentary on the *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra*, in which he explains that nondual consciousness is considered to be a truly established entity, which is the reason why Cittamātra and Madhyamaka are in agreement (see Dharmachakra 2014: 129ff.).

211 See Cabezón/Dargyay 2007: 302, n. 139.

descriptions of this nondual ultimate could thus be taken as virtually identical to those of early Yogācāra. If Gorampa accepts that Asaṅga and Vasubandhu are refuted by Prāsaṅgikas, doesn't he have to accept arguments and refutations that could equally be used against him to refute his own view of the ultimate?²¹² To illustrate this point, let us turn to one of Gorampa's statements quoted by Thakchoe in his study on the two truths:²¹³

[Question]: But what is the nature of the reality of phenomena?
 [Reply]: It is not possible to reveal its exact nature. However, to facilitate its understanding by disciples, the real nature of phenomena is disclosed as the apprehended domain of the uncontaminated wisdom. Its nature has three characters: namely, it is not created by causes and conditions; it exists independently of conventions and of other phenomena; and it does not change. The reality of the transcendence of conceptual elaboration is its example.

Having accepted the arguments refuting the followers of Cittamātra, including Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, it seems difficult to see how Gorampa could consistently reject them when applied to him. As a consequence, Thakchoe lumps him together with followers of Yogācāra and seems to believe that, since Gorampa contradicts himself, his position makes no sense.²¹⁴

212 See Cabezón/Dargyay 2007: 101–7. Gorampa apparently considers the *Samḍhinirmocana-sūtra* as a Cittamātra scripture. According to Longchenpa, the scriptures of the third turning of the wheel are definitive (see Butters 2006: 161). Longchenpa therefore makes a difference between interpretations and scriptures. Gorampa does not seem to. This certainly explains the important differences between Mipham and Gorampa in this respect. It would be interesting in future research to examine in which way the *Samḍhinirmocanasūtra* posits substantial existence any more than Gorampa does.

213 See Thakchoe 2007: 73.

214 See Thakchoe 2007: 118: “Central to Gorampa's doctrine of nonduality are several key idealistic conceptions. He does not hesitate to reconcile conceptions derived from the Yogācāra or Vijñānavāda School—such as that of *vijñaptimātra* (*rnam rig tsam*, representation) or of *cittamātra* (*sems tsam*, mind only)—with Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka. He contends that the external world is a system of purely mental constructs and that the five sensory consciousnesses perceiving the phenomenal world arise from the foundational consciousness, or *ālayavijñāna* (*kun gzhi rnam shes*). This latter idea is one of the fundamental elements of Yogācāra idealism. *Ālayavijñāna* is characterized as devoid of intentional activity, self-luminous and self-knowing, and is seen as the primary cause of all sensory experience. For the *ālayavijñāna* is the storehouse of all past karmic seeds—both afflictions and virtues, which ripen as unpleasant or pleasant experiences upon meeting with the appropriate conditions.

Did Mipham consider that Gorampa's rejection of the last turning of the wheel as being of definitive meaning was indeed contradictory and not particularly auspicious from the perspective of the path?²¹⁵ Mipham, who usually follows Gorampa, adopts here a different approach.²¹⁶ By rejecting the idea that Asaṅga and Vasubandhu's views are refuted in any possible way, Mipham opens the way to a full-fledged integration of the Yogācāra method of contemplative practices into his own system. Mipham's position implies that the rather unforgiving Gelugpa and Sakyapa interpretation of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu's views is inaccurate.²¹⁷ Apart from applying the principle of charity to the great idealist tradition of Madhyamaka, is there in Mipham's position any merit from a dialectical or soteriological point of view?

The Compatibility of Asaṅga's and Nāgārjuna's Doctrines

In his works, Mipham systematically tries to defuse the distinctions between the traditions of Maitreya/Asaṅga and Nāgārjuna. Mipham, just like Longchenpa, accepts both the middle and the last turnings of the wheel as definitive.²¹⁸ One cycle of teachings expounds emptiness, while the other focuses on the primordially lu-

[...] According to both Gorampa and the proponents of Yogācāra idealism, it [*ālayavijñāna*] is transcendent of the dualism of subject and object, existence and nonexistence, death and birth, purity and defilements, arising and cessation, and is described as *dharmadhātu*, *nirvāṇa*, or *tathāgatagarbha* (buddha nature).” Thakchoe seems to somewhat misrepresent non-Gelugpa systems in his monograph about the two truths: he identifies the *ālayavijñāna* with *rig pa* and seems to think that according to Gorampa the *ālayavijñāna* is *nirvāṇa*.

215 The Lam 'bras tradition, or better said the Virūpa lineage, is indeed heavily influenced by Yogācāra or at least by Yogācāra-Madhyamaka. Cyrus Stearns presents a text written by 'Jam byangs mkhyen brtse'i dbang phyug in the following way: “Next is an extensive explication by means of three key points of practice: establishing that appearances are the mind, establishing that the mind is illusory, and establishing that the illusory mind has no self-nature” (Stearns 2006: 5). This exact procedure is also found in Asaṅga's MS. The consequence of Gorampa rejection of Asaṅga's views therefore certainly does not help the practitioner to reconcile the view of the sūtras with that of the tantras. What is the point of criticizing at the level of the sūtras that which is applied at the level of the tantras? This is exactly the kind of problem Mipham manages to avoid with his propaedeutic and perspectivist approach to Madhyamaka.

216 See Mipham's general introduction to *dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad*, where he states that Asaṅga has perfectly revealed the Buddha's exposition of the Mahāyāna.

217 For an interesting critical assessment of the Tibetan “mainstream” doxography in a general context, see Dreyfus 1997.

218 Longchenpa uses extensively some Yogācāra theories in his *Ngal gso skor gsum*. See Arguillère 1991: 5–21. In the *Gu ru'i tshig bdun rnam bshad*, Mipham explains that the middle turning expounds the emptiness of the ultimate, while the last turning emphasizes the presence of primordial wisdom together with the *kāyas* (see Padmakara 2007: 56–57).

minous aspect of the ultimate. Contrarily to Gorampa, Mipham, following Śāntarakṣita, unifies the traditions of Asaṅga and Nāgārjuna, insisting that the Cittamātra approach is also used by Nāgārjuna.²¹⁹ This move has nothing to do with similarities between Dzogchen and Cittamātra. Indeed, Dzogchen clearly distinguishes *sems* from *rig pa*. Mipham has therefore no interest from a Dzogchen perspective in bringing some Cittamātra elements into his doctrinal interpretation. It is quite the opposite, which makes his hermeneutical strategy even more puzzling. In fact, Mipham's interest in unifying the traditions of Asaṅga and Nāgārjuna, as made clear in the first three chapters of this book, results from his intention to provide a gradual meditative approach to the freedom from all extremes.

When one reads Mipham's statements on this topic, one is left with the impression that he simply does not take the accusations of substantialism formulated against Asaṅga and Vasubandhu very seriously. Mipham seems to read the Yogācāra foundational texts as describing epistemic processes and not as laying the foundations of a new ontology related to any kind of philosophical realism.²²⁰ As

219 See *dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad* on MA 47, where Mipham quotes the *kārika* 34 of Nāgārjuna's *Yuktiśaṣṭikā*: "Les éléments universels [et autres entités], que l'on enseigne [à certains], sont contenus dans le vijñāna. S'ils cessent [d'exister] lorsqu'on connaît cela, comment ne [seraient-ils] imagination fausse (*log par rnam brtags = mithyā vikalpitam*)" (Scherrer-Schaub 1991: 252). Nāgārjuna also says in the Yṣ 37, "Le monde est conditionné par la nescience: ainsi l'a dit le Parfaitement Éveillé. Comment donc ne serait-il pas juste que les mondes, eux aussi, soient imagination fausse?" (ibid.: 267). Candrakīrti also accepts such an interpretation: commenting the same *kārika* he says, "[Le monde n'] est rien qu'imagination fausse [...]. Parce qu'il n'est pas établi par nature propre, le monde lui aussi est défini en tant que pure imagination fausse (*rnam pa rtog pa tsam = vikalpa-mātra*), comme une imagination (*yongs su rtog pa = parikalpa*) en forme de feu qui se produit dans l'obscurité" (ibid.: 269); and also, "Le sens est que, puisque l'adhésion aux entités (*bhāvābhiniveśa*) est imagination de leur propre pensée et que la forme propre des entités n'est pas établie par nature propre, 'ils sont pris au piège de leur propre pensée', abusés (*brid*) par elle, par occultation de la vision de l'ainsité (*de bzhin nyid*) des entités et par surimpositions des méprises" (ibid.: 212). For an alternative interpretation of Yṣ 34, see Mathes 2015: 23, n. 49: "This hermeneutic stance is demonstrated in Ratnākaraśānti's commentary on Hevajra-tantra I.1.10–12 (HP 10–16), where he quotes Nāgārjuna's *Yuktiśaṣṭikā*, verse 34, in support of his idealist position: 'Such things spoken of as the great elements are contained in consciousness and disappear in wisdom. They are falsely imagined indeed.' (*mahābhūtādi vijñāne proktaṃ samavarudhyate | taj jñāne vigamaṃ yāti nanu mithyā vikalpitam* ||). See Lindtner 1990: 110–11. The reading *taj jñāne* over *tajjñāne* represents Ratnākaraśānti's idealist interpretation of Nāgārjuna, as *taj* then takes up *mahābhūtādi* (see Isaacson 2013: 1042)."

220 In agreement with this interpretation, it is worth remembering that the Yogācāra discourse on reality emerged in a religious environment influenced by the doctrines developed by the Ābhidharmika traditions.

a consequence, he does not consider that the two truths and the three natures are incompatible.²²¹ To measure how peculiar Mipham's hermeneutics may have appeared to most Tibetan scholars, we only have to consider the insuperable gap between Yogācāra and Madhyamaka in the Gelugpa and Sakyapa doxographies. In a way, Mipham's position is even more puzzling since he does not speak from a place of ignorance, having produced detailed commentaries on the most important Yogācāra śāstras.²²² It is therefore with a thorough knowledge of Asaṅga's tradition that Mipham declares the Yogācāra tradition to be faultless.²²³

In the Tibetan hermeneutical debate, the acceptance of some doctrines (e.g., *vijñaptimātra*, *trisvabhāva*, etc.) acts as doxographical markers defining a view on reality, an approach Mipham clearly questions. Be it as it may, Mipham's position would be untenable if he could not explain in which way apparently conflicting views are in reality in harmony, a task he accomplishes through a perspectivist philosophical approach supported by hermeneutical strategies he resorts to throughout his works:

221 The *Samḍhinirmocanasūtra* (Chapters IV–VIII) is of course the canonical text in which this compatibility is stated in the clearest possible terms. See also MSA 11.16 (in D'Amato 2005: 191), which shows how the two models are not incompatible: "Here the text brings the categories of ultimate truth and conventional truth into play. It states that in ultimate truth, no unreal objects actually exist in the illusion; there is only the appearance of unreal objects. And the perception of those objects of unreal imagination is to be understood as conventional truth. The commentary also states that the duality of the imagined nature does not exist in the dependent nature: although conventionally the dependent nature does appear to have the characteristic of duality, in ultimate truth, the dependent nature is devoid of the duality of the imagined nature."

222 Mipham composed commentaries on the main early Yogācāra śāstras: Asaṅga's *Abhidharma-samuccaya* and *Mahāyānasaṅgraha*, Vasubandhu's *Triṃśikā* and *Viṃśatikā*, and Maitreya's *Sūtrālaṃkāra*, *Madhyāntavibhāga*, and *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga*. Of the same tradition he also commented on Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośa* and Maitreya's *Ratnagoṭravibhāga* and *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*.

223 According to Kapstein, Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo and Kongtrul Lodro Thaye ('Jam mgon Kong sprul blo gros mtha' yas, 1813–1899), Mipham's teachers followed Tāranātha, who accepted Dolpopa's refutation of the erroneous attribution of a mind-only view to Asaṅga and Vasubandhu (see Kapstein 2000b: 116–18; Callahan 2007: 364, n. 593; Brunnhölzl 2004: 491–95). According to Tāranātha and Kongtrul Lodro Thaye, the Vijñānavādins were five hundred Yogācāra masters such as Avitarka, Vigatāradvaja, and others, together with some later Indian Yogācāra masters. Kapstein mentions that Dolpopa's *dbu ma chen po*, an expression often used by Mipham and his Nyingma followers albeit with a slightly different meaning, may have promoted Tibetan Buddhist historiography in the works of his successors. On Dolpopa's views, see Stearns 1999, Hopkins 2002: 273–391 and 2006.

- Mipham uses his twofold definition of the two truths to defuse claims of substantialism with regard to the Yogācāra definition of the ultimate. This approach allows him to interpret the cataphatic *mthun mi mthun* model of the two truths belonging to the Maitreya tradition as denoting an epistemic shift and not an ontological model of reality, a point we will consider in detail in the third part of this book.²²⁴
- Mipham accepts the use of the *yongs gcod* (*pariccheda*) and *rnam gcod* (*vyavaccheda*) distinction to interpret potentially self-contradicting statements.²²⁵ To illustrate this point, when a Mādhyamika like Candrakīrti declares that the ultimate is the object of the practice of sublime beings from the perspective of ordinary beings, although, from the perspective of sublime beings, there is no subject-object duality, Mipham explains that this statement is expressed from the perspective of a conceptual exclusion (*vyavaccheda*) and not from that of a positive determination (*pariccheda*). Mipham appears to be reluctant to take any doctrinal reading literally, particularly if such a literal reading entails the refutation of a teaching that might have its use on the path. His use of hermeneutical devices such as the *yongs gcod* (*pariccheda*) and *rnam gcod* (*vyavaccheda*) distinction shows that he therefore has made his choice between the letter and the spirit of the treatises.
- His dialectical application of ascending perspectives provides the ideal tool to recontextualize statements found in Yogācāra texts that appears to contradict Madhyamaka, since it is possible to take literal statements as being just expressed from the perspective of ordinary beings for the sake of communication.²²⁶

224 I would like to thank Professor Klaus-Dieter Mathes who informed me in a private communication that such a hermeneutical approach is already found in the *Madhyāntavibhāga* and *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra*, two texts for which Mipham wrote commentaries.

225 See *Nor bu ke ta ka* 9 translated in Chapter 1: “Since both proponents of these [seemingly opposite] positions exhaust themselves with [problems] of terminology, what’s the point [of all this]? They should rely on the meaning [, not on the letter]!” (*phyogs smra gnyis so so nas kyang ming la ngal bas ci bya ste don la rton par bya’o/*)

226 Some academics have thus pointed out that the *trisvabhāva* can be understood as the soteriological expression of three progressive perspectives on phenomena and not as an ontological model *per se*. See D’Amato 2005: 185 and also Siderits 2007: 178: “We may think of the *trisvabhāva* as three different ways in which reality can be experienced.” Keenan (1993: 148), on his part, explains: “If Yogācāra represents an attempt to develop a critical philosophy of consciousness, then the three patterns refer to the modes whereby that consciousness functions.” Keenan refuses Harris 1991’s interpretation of the *trisvabhāva* as the expression of various levels of spiritual development.

To show how Mipham deploys these hermeneutical strategies, I would like to look at one of the fundamental points of the Mādhyamikas' charge against Yogācāra, the refutation of the three natures (*trisvabhāva*). In his *'Od zer phreng ba* on MAvi 1.3–4, Mipham clearly follows Candrakīrti and considers both the *parikalpita* and *paratantra* to be *saṃvṛti* according to the Mādhyamika definition of *paramārtha/saṃvṛti*. Mipham nonetheless maintains the distinction between what is projected (*parikalpita*) and the projection (*parikalpa = paratantra*), as well as the ensuing epistemic reduction of things to cognitions, which he describes as a substance or the basis of concepts. This is, according to him, faultless. From this point of view, the *parikalpita* corresponds to the absence of *svabhāva* of that which is imagined to exist as an object independent of a subject. In Mipham's understanding, it is the basic imagination of any putative real existent thing by ordinary people, which like an image on a screen is taken to be real, independently of any "projector." The *paratantra* is the absence of *svabhāva* of that which is dependent on an other for its existence, namely, the "projector" that is the source of the object/subject dichotomization of what is primordially beyond distinctions. This dependent nature of mental processes arising in dependence in fact refers to mind and all mental dualistic events projecting the existence of illusory things. The *parikalpitasvabhāva* therefore corresponds to the dualistic reifying, tagging, or labeling made by ordinary beings regarding imaginary things, both subjective and objective. The *paratantrasvabhāva* refers to the sphere of dependent arising of these putative things, which are nothing but mere mental events. As Mipham puts it, the *parikalpita* is relative designation whereas the *paratantra* is relative cognition.²²⁷ We think we deal with objects or subjects, but all we have at any given moment is a mere self-knowing cognition of some things that do not exist as imagined apart from our own experiencing. This dependent defining characteristic that is taught in the context of post-meditation is the key to entering into the nature of things, as is made clear by the MS. The *pariniṣpannasvabhāva* is finally the absence of *svabhāva* of that which is naturally pure in the sense of being beyond this duality. In Mipham's vision, this would correspond to the nature of the projecting mind, which, while not being deprived of qualities such as luminosity, is itself empty of any imagined determinate nature and spontaneously void of any labels and fictional patterns. The *pariniṣpannasvabhāva* represents pure awareness that is primordially luminous and empty of any adventitious imaginary characteristic but is the very nature of what is imagined and therefore not separate from it.²²⁸ This nature of phenomena is seen from the perspective of meditative absorp-

227 See *'Od zer phreng ba* in Dharmachakra 2006a: 78.

228 See Mipham's explanations of the three natures in his *'Od zer phreng ba* (Dharmachakra 2006a: 76–84).

tion in Mipham's perspectivist approach of Madhyamaka. Whereas Mipham favors the two-reality model in the context of the view, he tends to rehabilitate the role of the three natures in the context of practice. From a soteriological standpoint, it is obvious that the three-nature model makes continuities and discontinuities possible between *sems* and *ye shes*, namely, between mind and its primordial nature. It can account for a transformation, although there is ultimately nothing to add and nothing to eliminate. This model can also be used to bridge the sūtras and the tantras by means of the three modes of experience (impure, impure/pure, pure), as is done in the Lamdre (*lam 'bras*) tradition (cf. *sNang ba gsum gyi khrid*).

To conclude on this point, although Mipham chooses to keep Yogācāra terminology, he *de facto* rejects the idea that the *paratantrasvabhāva* is more real than the *parikalpitasvabhāva* as he accepts the Mādhyamika definition of *paramārtha/saṃvṛti*. Namely, the *parikalpitasvabhāva* does not exist; it is nothing but a concept, while the *paratantrasvabhāva* exists as a cognition precisely because it is conditioned, which simultaneously means from the Mādhyamika point of view that it is non-arisen.²²⁹ If it were not so from the perspective of post-meditation, nothing would exist at all, and Mahāyāna would be pure nihilism.²³⁰ It is therefore probably because Mipham embraces the approach of the Yogācāra-Madhyamaka tradition in the context of post-meditation that he insists on the compatibility of Asaṅga's and Nāgārjuna's doctrines. In his perspective-based system, this move, *from the standpoint of post-meditation*, paves the way for the deployment of *pramāṇas*, in a manner that probably parallels the way these notions historically arose. Any difference here between *prajñaptisat* and *dravyasat* is provisional, both being, *from the perspective of the ultimate*, mere designations.

The Conventional Existence of *svasaṃvedana*

Mipham understands that Candrakīrti negates the ultimate but not the conventional existence of *svasaṃvedana*. According to Blumenthal, who thinks that Candrakīrti also rejects it on the conventional level,²³¹ Mipham does not understand Candrakīrti correctly. Blumenthal refers to MAVBh VI.72 and points out that memory and *svasaṃvedana* are not established conventionally for Candrakīrti since memory is dependent on *svasaṃvedana* and vice-versa. Candrakīrti's rejoinder is indeed that this proof of *svasaṃvedana* is based on a circular argument.²³² However,

229 See Dharmachakra 2006a: 78.

230 See Dharmachakra 2006a: 28–29.

231 See Blumenthal 2004: 225.

232 See Candrakīrti's *Bhāṣya* in La Vallée Poussin 1912: 170.

one should be careful here, for this complex topic cannot be dealt with without examining Mipham's position in detail. Mipham, in his commentary on the MAV VI.72, accepts the validity of Candrakīrti's argument just as he accepts that of Śāntideva on the same topic.²³³ Is Mipham contradicting himself? Mipham's perspective-based system provides us with an answer. First, it is important to understand that although Candrakīrti refutes the fact that *svasaṃvedana* and memory are established, even conventionally, he would certainly not reject memory as a mere convention commonly used by the world without analyzing it any further, precisely because memory would not be immune to such an analysis. There is indeed no reason to think that Candrakīrti would debate with the world about memory, namely, against the fact that we can remember events that happened in the past or, for that matter, our knowing that we know when we know something.²³⁴ So in Mipham's perspective-based system, Candrakīrti's argument is only stated *from the perspective of meditative absorption*. Accepting as merely conventional the very things that are accepted by the world does not imply that these things are conventionally established from the perspective of meditative absorption. Secondly, Mipham explains in his introduction to the *dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad* and in his commentary on MA 17–18a that *svasaṃvedana* is not to be construed on the basis of an object-subject relation (*karmakartṛbhāva*). Mipham does not assert that self-awareness is self-reflective but that it is reflexive. He accepts that a second-order consciousness taking as its object a first-order consciousness leads to an infinite regress. According to him, self-awareness is reflexive. "Conscious states simultaneously disclose both the object of consciousness and (aspects of) the conscious state itself."²³⁵ As noted as well by Williams,²³⁶ the issue is therefore, as we have seen repeatedly in previous chapters regarding the Svātantrika-Prāsaṅgika distinction and the Yogācāra's notion of the concealing (*saṃvṛti*), the rejection by the Mādhyamika of the distinction *dravyasat/prajñaptisat* on the conventional level. From this standpoint, the case is made that Candrakīrti and Śāntideva negate the fact that *svasaṃvedana* is conventionally more real than any other *dharma*²³⁷ in order to preserve the Mādhyamika distinction of the two truths. It is important to keep in mind in these

233 See *Nor bu ke ta ka* on BCA 9.23.

234 See MAV VI.74 as interpreted by Mipham in relation to Pras. I in MacDonald 2003a: 451–52, where Candrakīrti's refutation is from the point of view of the ultimate.

235 On the distinction between reflective and reflexive awareness, see MacKenzie 2007: 40. For a detailed discussion of this point, see Chapter 6, *Stage Two: The Epistemic Reduction of Real Objects into Conditioned Cognitions*.

236 See Williams 1998a: 11ff.

237 See Arnold 2005: 173.

discussions that, according to Yogācāra, *dravyasat* means *pratītyasamutpanna*. This point is significant. It makes alternative hermeneutical strategies based on a set of ascending perspectives viable and is historically and philologically a key point in the Mādhyamika-Yogācāra debate. Garfield (2006), criticizing Williams' (1998a) approval of Mipham's position in an article on the reflexive awareness debate, examines Tsongkhapa's and Mipham's respective positions. He concludes that Tsongkhapa has correctly understood Candrakīrti, namely, "that not only are all the arguments for even the conventional existence of reflexive awareness unsound but that their conclusion is false: reflexive awareness has no place in conventional reality and is indeed incoherent."²³⁸ On the basis of what we have shown in the previous chapters, I contend that Mipham has good reasons to think that Candrakīrti would actually merely refute the fact that *svasaṃvedana* is conventionally more real than any other *dharma*. The point here is the Mādhyamika rejection of any *dravyasat* entity on the *saṃvṛti* level of the two truths as defined by the Mādhyamika. This seems to be indeed the crucial point of Candrakīrti's refutations of any higher order of reality within conventional truth.

Garfield (2006: 202) makes three statements about what reflexive awareness involves and why it is rejected by Tsongkhapa:

- (1) "Reflexive awareness, according to this view, involves a commitment to a view that intentionality is an intrinsic rather than a relational aspect of cognition;"

This presentation of the relation between reflexive awareness and intentionality is not necessarily representative of what Mipham understands as reflexive awareness. If his interpretation is indeed self-reflexivity as opposed to self-reflectivity. Moreover, as we have seen above it is not easy to understand what Mahāyāna contemplative practice could be in the absence of any form of reflexive awareness. Reflexive awareness plays a major role in the context of practice (cf. the *Bhāvanākramas* among others). Rejecting reflexive awareness conventionally entails all sorts of practical contradictions and destroys an essential component of the Mahāyāna path. For instance, in order to teach *bhāvanāmayī prajñā*, Tsongkhapa refers mainly to Kamalaśīla's method throughout the *Lam rim chen mo*. Now, Kamalaśīla accepts reflexive awareness as an integral component of his own system. It appears therefore that, in the context of practice, Tsongkhapa relies almost exclusively on a

238 See Garfield 2006: 202.

conception of the conventional truth he rejects in the context of *cintāmayī prajñā*.²³⁹ This is puzzling. As a consequence, it would be important to consider such issues while discussing doctrinal debates that cannot be restricted to a philosophical discussion, considering their soteriological import. Indeed, if reflexive awareness does not exist conventionally, what kind of Mahāyāna meditative practice is Tsongkhapa teaching? Based on which system? A quick look at Tsongkhapa's sources in the LRC regarding this point is edifying and confirms beyond doubt that there is simply no Mahāyāna practice apart from the approach explained in the *Bhāvanākramas*. From a purely practical perspective, it appears that Mipham may have been reluctant to create an artificial and unbridgeable gap between two systems one may need to rely upon in order to reach liberation.

(2) “[Reflexive awareness, according to this view, involves a commitment] to a view that we have a special kind of immediate, nondeceptive access to our minds and to their states;”

Mipham knows that Dharmakīrti distinguishes between conventional and ultimate valid cognitions in his system. Since reflexive awareness is clearly conventional, it is tainted by nescience. There is simply no way Mipham would not be deeply aware of this fact.²⁴⁰ Does the very fallibility of “introspective consciousness” entail an absence of a “ground for positing reflexivity”?²⁴¹ If that were so, how would a Mādhyamika conventionally accept what an ordinary being says about the conventional? This argument implies that as a Mādhyamika, one should not even accept a groundless ground for the sake of communication. But Mādhyamikas do not need a ground to use the notion of reflexive awareness, aggregates, or any other relative concept. Or else, any form of communication would be problematic for them. Mipham accepts that reflexive awareness is groundless, *precisely because* it is conventional and part of the concealing truth.²⁴² This argument is therefore somewhat off the mark since it does not consider a fundamental aspect of the theory of reflexive awareness: it is part of a perspective-based system of ascending views.

239 See Cutler 2002.

240 See for example the translation of his *De kho na nyid gsal ba'i sgron me* below, in which this point is accepted.

241 See Garfield 2006: 221.

242 Cf. *Nor bu ke ta ka* 21,6: *mdor na rang rig pa 'gog pa ni don dam par 'gog pa yin gyi bem po las log tsam la tha snyad du rang rig par 'dogs pa'i tshul de 'gog pa ma yin te/* For a detailed presentation of Mipham's position, see Chapter 6 (Stage Two: The Epistemic Reduction of Real Objects into Conditioned Cognitions).

- (3) “[Reflexive awareness, according to this view, involves a commitment] to the view that we specify an essence of the mental.”

According to Garfield, this justifies the Svātantrika-Prāsaṅgika distinction.²⁴³ But, as shown above, Mipham has good historical and philosophical reasons to consider that this distinction does not rely on a profound divergence of views. In his opinion, the so-called Svātantrika position does not involve any substantialist claims but merely a different methodology. Mipham enquires, however, why for the Gelugpas a vase is not empty of being a vase conventionally, pointing out the irrationality of having double standards when it comes to evaluating whether a view posits substantialism or not. Mipham’s strategy is thus to turn the tables as he tries to show that by accepting some *dharmas* as more real than others on the level of the concealing, the standard Gelugpa position is at odds with Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka. Why should reflexive awareness be rejected but not *skandhas* or *dhātus*? To conclude, a key point in investigating this aspect of Mipham’s thought is to discern the self-reflectivity of mind that is rejected by Mipham from the reflexivity of awareness that Mipham accepts conventionally and that he uses to stress the Mādhyamika crucial point (see Pras. I) that the knower and the knowable do not exist from their own sides but are neither the same nor different.

To conclude this chapter, it is worth noting that, by rejecting a distinction between Maitreya’s and Nāgārjuna’s views, Mipham puts himself in a position to equally integrate the luminous and the empty aspects characterizing the ultimate into his philosophical approach according to the teachings of his tradition. This move also enables him to eliminate any potential conflict between the view and the corresponding practice, both being essential components of the path. There is indeed simply no Mahāyāna method of practice apart from the so-called Yogācāra system, a point Mipham seemed to have been aware of.²⁴⁴ Mipham’s integrative approach of ascending views in the context of the two truths is founded on soteriological aspects and on the fact that any model of the two truths is rooted in conceptuality, and therefore necessarily propaedeutic. Throughout his works, Mipham

243 See *Ibid.*: 216–17.

244 See Mipham’s commentary on *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra*: “In his *Precious Lamp of the Middle Way*, a treatise that gathers all the key points of the Middle Way, the master Bhavya, who was widely renowned as a great scholar in India, distinguishes between the Middle Way of Yogic Practice, which is the subtle, inner Middle Way, and the coarse, outer Middle Way, which asserts external objects. He also clearly states that, in the context of practice, the Middle Way of Yogic Practice is more profound and that even Candrakīrti practiced that way” (Dharmachakra 2014: 130–31). See also Lindtner 2003: 116ff.

thus stresses the importance of the salvific aspects of the path over pointless polemics. His philosophical project did not aim at accomplishing goals limited to eristic, a typical feature of doxographies influenced by Dzogchen.²⁴⁵ Early Tibetan classifications of views and practices establish distinctions between the traditional nine vehicles without denying their soteriological efficacy in accordance with the various capacities of practitioners. This point leads us to the practical aspects of Mi-pham's application of the two truths in the context of practice. Envisaging ontology as indissociable from epistemology provides distinct advantages if the ultimate is not a "blank" emptiness. In this case, Yogācāra's methods of practice can be used without any contradiction. By so doing, the fundamental nature of the ultimate can be uncovered as one realizes the natural luminosity of mind, which is in itself the freedom from the four extremes. Mi-pham's approach to the experiential recognition of the unity of emptiness and luminosity is the topic of the following chapters.

245 Among early Nyingma doxographical presentations, gNub chen Sangs rgyas ye shes's *bSam gtan mig sgron* presents extensively the nine vehicles, as does the *Man ngag lta phreng gi 'grel pa*, a text ascribed to Padmasambhava (see Mestanza: 2005).

PART TWO

Practice and Conduct in Mipham's Radical Nondualism

CHAPTER 6

Drawing on the Map the Itinerary toward Awakening

In the context of practice, Mipham's perspectivist approach provides a gradual descent into the very nature of things through various stages. This gradual journey structured in four main stages, which are typical of the Mahāyāna method of practice as found in the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* and developed by Kamalaśīla in the *Bhāvanākramas*, provides a smooth transition to tantric practice, a notion already found in Indian Buddhism.¹

Starting to Work with the Only “Thing” We Have: Mere Experiences

In the topic 1 of the introduction of his *dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad* and in his commentary *ad MA 64–65*, Mipham presents Śāntaraṅgita's understanding of the concealing as that which is impermanent, causally efficient, and satisfactory as long as it is not analyzed.² This does not contradict Candrakīrti, since Mipham accepts conventionally whatever the world perceives as real. In fact, Mipham, as a Mādhyamika, does not have any own conception related to the nature of these “things,” which are not found when analyzed. He considers that any doctrine expounding that phenomena have an essence is defective from the highest perspective of reality. On account of this, accepting whatever may manifest in the mind of ordinary beings is equivalent to accepting what the world considers real, as long as this does not entail any claim of substantial existence of mind but simply describes an epistemic state of affairs. This point is developed in topic 6 of *Nges shes sgron me*, in which Mipham explains that valid cognitions are dependent on a specific epistemic context and not on an ontological analysis based on an object existing from its own side.³ Here

1 For example, Ratnākaraśānti links the practice of the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* with that of the *Guhyasamājatantra* in his *Prajñāpāramitopadeśa* (see Bentor 2002).

2 See Padmakara 2005: 122ff.

3 See Pettit 1999: 131–32, 219ff. dGe 'dun chos 'phel shares this position with Mipham: “The Prāsaṅgika position is similar to the Cittamātra position, in that both would say that the object perceived by each type of being is valid for that being. The Cittamātra (or Yogācāra—GC uses the terms as synonyms) does not claim that “the something” that each of the beings perceives differently is a cup of water. Instead, they hold that these various appearances arise through the activation of certain potencies (*vāsanā*, *bag chags*) that abide in the foundational consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*, *kun gzhi rnam shes*) of each being. GC seems to approve of this position because it accounts for the wide variation of experience without positing a common object of experience. He concludes with a poem in which he says that it is not only the case

again, intersubjectivity does not imply objectivity, and yet this has to be the starting point of any enquiry or practice, since this is all we have at the beginning of the path.

Mipham's definition of the concealing truth is therefore founded on epistemic rather than ontological terms. Or more precisely, the origin of the suffering of our condition is the apprehension of reality in ontological terms, which is nothing but the result of a flawed epistemic and cognitive process called by Buddhists "ignorance" or "nescience" (*ma rig pa, avidyā*). The fact that Śāntarakṣita's approach of Madhyamaka integrates within a single epistemic framework various perspectives on reality seems to be the reason Mipham sees it as superior to other expositions. As we have seen above, Mipham probably considered that the point made by Candrakīrti regarding Bhāviveka's use of logic had been integrated and accepted by the main proponents of the Pramāṇa tradition as exemplified by Śāntarakṣita. To demonstrate the validity of Śāntarakṣita's definition of the concealing, Mipham quotes in his *Nor bu ke ta ka* a famous stanza from the *Madhyamakāvātāra* (MAv VI.23) showing that the mode of perception is the dividing line between the two truths.⁴ In accordance with Candrakīrti's presentation of the concealing truth, Mipham thus equates that which is accepted by the world with experiences manifesting in mind. This hermeneutical move enables him to merge Śāntarakṣita's and Candrakīrti's descriptions of the concealing into a single definition:⁵

Further, in Madhyamaka, from the perspective of a cognition that does not analyze or investigate the things belonging to the concealing [truth] of whatever appears, mere appearance is accepted as that which is acknowledged by the world.⁶

However, Mipham explains that even if there is no incompatibility between Śāntarakṣita and Candrakīrti, the crucial point is to determine from which perspective things are examined. There is indeed no fault in establishing things *from the perspective of post-meditation*, as it is in agreement with the world, although there is in fact nothing to establish *from the perspective of meditative absorption*.

that the six types of beings see six different things; even among humans, who have six sense organs (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind), things can appear in six different ways without there being a common object" (Lopez 2006: 166).

4 See translation of NK in Chapter One.

5 The hyponym "convention according to the world" is indeed included in the more general term "appearance."

6 *dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad 25,6: dbu ma de la'ang snang tshod kun rdzob kyi dngos po 'di ma rtags ma dpyad pa'i blo ngor snang tsam 'jig rten la grags pa ltar khas len pa dang/*

Things are [thus] dependently arisen, while non-things are dependently imputed. So long as you do not examine these things or non-things, you apprehend them as this or that. But if you conceptually take them apart and analyze them, they are devoid of any basis or foundation. Although they are nonexistent, they manifest, like an illusion, a dream, a reflection of the moon in water, an echo, or a *gandharva* city. Although they are empty, they appear. Although they appear, they are empty. Contemplate empty appearances in the manner of illusions. This is the nominal ultimate. The confidence of having a mind that conceptually discerns [phenomena], is the stainless [18] wisdom that perceives post-meditative experience as an illusion. However, as [this wisdom] is not free from an apprehended object, it has not dismantled the manifestation of [cognitive] apprehension. Because [this wisdom] does not transcend projections, it is not the wisdom into the freedom from all mental proliferations, the nature of phenomena.⁷

Hence, these valid cognitions are formulated exclusively *for the sake of communication with ordinary beings*. From the perspective of primordial wisdom, as we have seen above, there is no subject-object dichotomy, and there is simply no object perceived by a subject at the level of sublime beings. This in accord with Candrakīrti's MAv 9.12–13, where it is stated that speaking of ultimate truth in the sense of a knowledge object is acceptable *from the perspective of ordinary beings*. Therefore, the system of *pramāṇas* is restricted to the domain of conceptuality or post-meditation and is only for the sake of communication.⁸ Needless to say, Mipham holds that experiences or objects cannot be reified in any possible way. In harmony with the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra* (cf. Chapter 4), he is satisfied with a mere description of an epistemic state of affairs. An object is consequently an experience of mind, a

7 dPyad sgom 'khor lo 17–18: *dnegos po brten nas skyes pa ste/ /dnegos med brten nas btags pa yin/ /dnegos dang dngos med gang la'ang/ /ma brtag de dang der 'dzin gyi/ /brtags shing dpyad par gyur pa'i tshe/ /gzhi med rtsa ba bral bzhin du/ /med snang sgyu ma rmi lam dang/ /chu zla brag cha dri za'i grongs/ /mig yor smig rgyu la sogs bzhin/ /stong bzhin snang la snang bzhin stong/ /snang stong sgyu ma'i tshul du bsgoms/ /'di ni rnam grangs pa'i don dam/ /rtog pa'i blo yi nges shes can/ /rjes thob sgyu ma'i tshul mthong ba'i/ /shes rab dri med yin mod kyi/ /gzung ba'i dmigs pa ma bral zhing/ /'dzin pa'i rnam pa ma zhig la/ /kun tu rtog las ma brgal phyir/ /spros bral chos nyid mthong ba min/ See full translation below.*

8 Candrakīrti himself uses *svabhāva* positively, which implies that he also distinguishes these two perspectives when he makes statements about the conventional. This, as an aside, also shows that Mipham's reinterpretation of the Svātantrika-Prāsaṅgika distinction is not without basis.

mental event that is designated by a linguistic convention (*tha snyad, vyavahāra*).⁹ The concealing truth is therefore defined as an experience or appearance manifesting in mind. We merely process information that we erroneously take for real. When the truth of this information is analyzed, the appearance of a phenomenon is not found to actually be what it seems. This point is made clear in topic 3 of the introduction to the *dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad*,¹⁰ in which Mipham insists that practitioners of sūtras and tantras should not reject the idea that the concealing is the manifestation of a cognitive event, as this would amount to deprecating practice itself and, more generally, the entire Buddhist path.

Defining a Method: From Being to Knowing

This is where Mipham's system of valid cognitions plays a decisive role, first, to reduce all ontological entities to mere epistemic processes, and second, to delineate the sphere of mind and that of primordial wisdom. In his *Shes rab ral gri*, Mipham insists without ambiguity on the fact that the concept of *pramāṇa* is necessary for understanding the two truths:¹¹

The Dharma taught by the buddhas
Depends completely on the two truths:
The concealing truth of the world
And the truth of the ultimate meaning.
When an unmistakable intellect that knows with certainty
Applies itself to the nature of the two truths,
The vision of the two types of faultless valid cognitions
Must be established as the supreme excellence.¹²

9 In his *'Od zer phreng ba*, Mipham states that the conventional is established solely from the perspective of the conventional (see Dharmachakra 2006a: 80).

10 See Padmakara 2005: 123ff.

11 See also Mipham's introductory statement to the chapter on the four reliances (*rton pa rnam pa bzhi*) in his *mKhas pa'i tshul la 'jug pa'i sgo* (see Gentry/Kunsang 2012: 123): "Based on properly analyzing the genuine condition of the two truths through the two types of valid cognition or the four principles of reason, as outlined above, there will arise authentic certainty free from the defilements of lack of understanding, misunderstanding or doubt."

12 *Shes rab ral gri* 789,1: /sangs rgyas rnams kyi chos bstan pa/ /bden pa gnyis la yang dag brten/ /'jig rten kun rdzob bden pa dang/ /dam pa'i don gyi bden pa'o/ /bden pa gnyis kyi rang bzhin la/ /ma nor nges pa'i blos 'jug na/ /dri med tshad ma rnam gnyis kyi/ /mig bzang mchog tu bsgrub par bya/ /

Since the two truths are based on cognitions of different orders (direct perceptions and inferences respectively ascertaining things and non-things *from the perspective of ordinary beings*), they cannot be realized without an “unmistaken intellect.” In Mipham’s view, these *pramāṇas* are *nolens volens* part and parcel of our mental experiencing.

If direct perception did not exist,
 Since there would be no logical proof (*rtags, liṅga*), there would be
 no inference.
 The arising from causes, the cessation of this and so forth,
 All these conventional appearances would be impossible.
 In that case, on which basis
 Could we know their emptiness and so forth?
 Without relying on conventional designations,
 The ultimate meaning would not be realized.¹³

Valid cognitions, *from the perspective of ordinary beings*, are therefore a means to an end, namely, instruments that are useful for realizing the ultimate. In this passage they are simply equated with conventional designations. But can one accomplish the ultimate without investigating valid cognitions in such a formal way? Mipham’s answer is clear. Whether we are aware of it or not, we actually constantly use valid cognitions in daily life:

If you ask whether entering the ultimate
 Without analyzing the modalities of valid cognitions or invalid
 cognitions,
 Only by means of worldly perception, [is possible]
 Although it is not refuted that it is so,
 Seeing that this arises from that
 Is the worldly direct perception;
 Based on this, there are inferences that infer a [particular] fact.
 Although this is not designated by the name “modality of valid
 cognition,”

13 *Shes rab ral gri* 793,3: /gal te mngon sum med pa na/ /rtags med de phyir rjes dpag med/ /rgyu las
 skye dang de 'gag sogs/ /snang tshod 'di kun mi srid la/ /de lta na ni de nyid kyi/ /stong sogs gang
 la brten nas shes/ /tha snyad la ni ma brten par/ /dam pa'i don ni rtogs mi 'gyur/

This is [precisely what modalities of valid cognition] mean.¹⁴
 Without the modalities of valid cognitions of conventional
 designations,
 Correct vision would become a falsity.
 Also, with regard to the conch that is incorrectly seen,
 It would be impossible to say that [seeing it] white corresponds [to
 what is] true and [seeing it] yellow [corresponds to what] is false.¹⁵

Mipham associates the Pramāṇa tradition with the two-truth model because he seems to suggest that emptiness cannot be understood without *pramāṇa*. From Mipham's point of view, the use of *pramāṇas* is unavoidable and intellectually completely justified in defining what valid cognitions are, since without them it would be utterly impossible to analyze the concealing, *from the perspective of ordinary beings*. Without *pramāṇas*, the path could not plausibly be taught or expounded. *Pramāṇas* have therefore an indisputable propaedeutic function on the level of the concealing truth:

Conventional designations also appear
 Without concordance between [the way they] appear and [the way
 they] are.
 Therefore, depending on confined perception
 And pure perception,
 In everything there are two valid cognitions of conventional
 designations,
 Like the perception of human beings and gods.
 Moreover, the differences between these two
 Are distinguished through [their] individual defining characteristics,
 causes, and results.
 [The first one,] the intellect's cognition (*blo*), is undeceived with
 regard to a limited factuality (*nyi tshe'i don*).

14 Literally: "its meaning is not discarded!" This means that although it is not called "valid cognition," this is it.

15 *Shes rab ral gri* 803,4: /tshad ma tsha min ma dpyad par/ /'jig rten mthong ba tsam zhig gis/ /don dam nyid la 'jug ce na/ /de ltar bkag pa med mod kyi/ /'di las 'di 'byung mthong ba ni/ /'jig rten pa yi mngon sum la/ /de brten don dpog rjes dpag phyir/ /ming ma btags kyang don mi spong/ /tha snyad tshad ma gnyis med na/ /dag pa'i gzigs pa rdzun 'gyur zhing/ /ma dag mthong ba'i dung la yang/ /dkar ser bden rdzun mi 'thad do/

It arises from its own correctly apprehended object
 And eliminates superimpositions (*sgro 'dogs*) with regard to the object
 of confined perception,
 Thoroughly apprehending the current object.
 [The other one,] the vast cognition,
 Arising from the contemplation of the nature of phenomena as it is,
 Which is the elimination of the superimpositions with regard to the
 inconceivable object,
 Is endowed with the fruit of the knowledge of everything there is.
 The ultimate also is twofold:
 The nominal and the actual.
 Measuring them, the valid cognition
 That investigates the ultimate is also twofold.
 Relying upon the former, [the nominal ultimate], the latter, [the actual
 ultimate,] is engaged,
 In the way the impaired eye is [healed and] purified.
 Once the eye of valid cognition has been purified,
 The reality of purity and fundamental sameness will be seen!¹⁶

Mipham's insistence on the propaedeutic function of *pramāṇas*, which is clearly apparent in the aforementioned quotes, shows that, in his view, such a method does not entail *per se* any assertion of substantialism or realism.¹⁷ Mind is, in the process, never hypostatized. Manifestations of whatever appears in mind, left untouched, are the basis of conventional reality, yet when analyzed they are not found. But, in which way is this approach propaedeutic as explained by Mipham in topic 5 of the

16 *Shes rab ral gri* 800,3: /*tha snyad yang gnas snang dag/ /mi mthun snang ba'i phyir/ /ma dag tshu rol mthong ba dang/ /dag pa'i gzigs pa la brten/ /kun tu tha snyad tshad ma gnyis/ /mi dang lha mi mig bzhin no/ /de gnyis kyi ni khyad par yang/ /ngo bo rgyu 'bras las kyiis dbye/ /nyi tshé'i don la mi bslu'i blo/ /rang yul tshul bzhin bzung las skye/ /tshur mthong yul la sgro 'dogs sel/ /skabs don yongs su 'dzin pa'o/ /rgya che ba yi shes ni/ /ji lta'i chos nyid dmigs las skye/ /bsam mi khyab yul sgro 'dogs sel/ /ji snyed mkhyen pa'i 'bras can no/ /don dam la yang rnam grangs dang/ /rnam grangs min pa'i tshul gnyis/ /de 'jal don dam dpyod byed kyi/ /tshad ma de yang gnyis su 'gyur/ /snga ma la rten phyi mar 'jug/ /mig skyon dag pa'i tshul bzhin du/ /tshad ma'i mig ni rnam sbyangs te/ /dag dang mnyam pa'i don mthong bya/ /*

17 To illustrate this point, even if one needs to rely on *svalakṣaṇas* for *pratyakṣas* in the context of conventional reality, this doctrine of perception does not necessarily entail realism on the level of ultimate reality. For a detailed examination of this, see Chapter 4 above (Is Mipham's Soteriological Understanding of the Svāntarika-Prāsaṅika Distinction Unfounded?).

introduction of the *dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad*?¹⁸ In fact, he considers *pramāṇa* as a dialectical device designed to help realists understand that their ontological claims to substantiality in the form of putative real objects are dependent on percepts or concepts, and therefore dependent on the mind. This is achieved through a set of “conditionally adopted positions” designed to introduce the opponent or the practitioner to positions of a higher order.¹⁹ If the opponent is a realist, there is then a good chance that Candrakīrti’s approach of the concealing will not be accepted but immediately rejected.²⁰ The problem is obvious. Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka’s treatment of the concealing as being not established as anything cannot be accepted by a realist, and for a good reason: it is expressed *from the perspective of meditative absorption* and not on the basis of everyday experience. *From the perspective of ordinary beings*, this vision of reality makes little sense and appears to be wrong, hence Tsongkhapa’s convoluted hermeneutical approach resulting in the use of expressions, such as “conventionally existent, ultimately nonexistent,” that are reminiscent of Bhāviveka. Mipham opts for a different strategy. He neutralizes the differences between Śāntarakṣita and Candrakīrti by showing that Śāntarakṣita accepts one approach based on the perspective of post-meditation and another based on the perspective of meditative absorption to deal with the concealing. On the first level, one can therefore make full use of the *pramāṇa* tradition in order to demonstrate that something provisionally accepted as an actual thing has to be situated in time and space as something specific. It cannot be a generality distributed over several spatiotemporal *loci*; otherwise, it would be nothing but a generalization. This specific “thing,” which has the capacity to produce effects, can thus be considered to be existent only insofar as it is conditioned and momentary.²¹ This thing is validly cognized by a percept. On the other hand, a generalization is in fact nonexistent and merely corresponds to a concept. As we have already seen, this distinction is based on the older abhidharmic distinction between *dravyasat* and *prajñaptisat*. But the context in which it is now used is clearly epistemic. Let us now see how Mipham’s practice instructions employ these valid cognitions on a soteriological level.

18 See Padmakara 2005: 135ff.

19 See Patil 2007 for a similar use of *vyavasthā* by Jñānaśrīmitra.

20 The *Vigrahavyāvartanī* illustrates the numerous “communication problems” that a Prāsaṅgika approach generates on the occasion of debates with non-Mādhyamikas. See for instance VV 1–19 and Pind 1983 on this topic.

21 See Oetke 1993: 152ff.

Stage One: The Mereological Reduction of Imputed Wholes into Their Actual Primary Constituents

The two first texts of the *dPyad sgom 'khor lo* translated below make extensive use of the well-known Ābhidharmika method of mereological reduction of wholes into their constituents. The existence of things that are taken to be singular, permanent, and satisfactory is in fact conditioned by the mere gathering of their parts. Things are not singular but manifold. They are likewise not permanent but momentary, just like the apparent continuity of a movie, which is nothing but the rapid succession of individual pictures composing it. On account of this, extended things have no self (or own-nature) that independently (or inherently) exists as what they seem to be. Mipham's method is based on the Ābhidharmika notion of *dharma*, *skandha*, and *dhātu*, the basic building blocks of wholes, the ultimately irreducible elements revealed by mental or physical deconstruction:²² "Anything that can be reduced either physically or analytically into constituent elements is conventionally real. Thus, on this theory the ultimately real must be an irreducible, partless, unitary entity" (Dunne 2004: 79). In the context of practice, bundles or clusters of basic constituents are dismantled as one perceives by means of *prajñā* the continuous flows of phenomena constituting these assemblages. These spatially and temporally extended wholes are nothing but designations (*prajñapti*) or generalizations (*sāmānya*). Therefore, the only real "things" are these basic building blocks, which are momentary. At this level, what arises, exists, and ceases as a phenomenon is what is conditioned according to the theory of dependent arising (*pratītyasamutpāda*). The designations are on their side merely imputed. Substantial things are taken to arise, albeit for an instant. They are momentary.²³ The two truths are on this level mutually exclusive. What really exists (*dravyasat*) is mutually exclusive with what is a mere designation (*prajñaptisat*). With respect to practice, Mipham advises the practitioner to watch and notice these phenomena by distinguishing the particular aspects of generalities, breaking them down by discerning their basic constituents. In the context of practice, reflection is not emphasized. The method is based on awareness, namely, on noticing basic constituents of putative existing wholes. What matters is that the practitioner experiences as a stream of discrete entities what seems to inherently exist as a single thing as a result of a lack of careful examination and awareness. Two meditative methods are used to achieve this: (1) Mental stillness (*zhi gnas*, *śamatha*) consists in concentrating the mind on its

22 See Frauwallner 1995, Cox 1995 and 2004, and Siderits 2007: 105–37.

23 For a detailed presentation of the Buddhist doctrine of momentariness, see von Rospatt 1995.

object in order to avoid distractions. Mind's lack of focus is accepted here as one of the main reasons why bundles of phenomena are taken to be singular. (2) Insight (*lhag mthong, vipaśyanā*) is, on this level, a method consisting in merely discerning, watching, and noting the particular and individual aspects of the object appearing as a continuum on account of a generalization.²⁴

Stage Two: The Epistemic Reduction of Real Objects into Conditioned Cognitions

This *dravya/prajñapti* distinction leads us to the next level of practice based on a higher “conditionally adopted position.” A *dravya* implies a *svabhāva* in order to be more “real” than pure designations.²⁵ A *svabhāva* is nothing but a particular experiential point in time and space as a corollary of dependent origination. However, this *svabhāva* may paradoxically imply nondependence, as exposed by the Mādhyamika critique of this very notion. Although mereological reduction is an efficient way to show the illusory character of wholes, it has a big defect: primary constituents of phenomena themselves actually do not withstand an analysis examining their supposedly “ultimate” or “real” nature. The notion of ultimate basic building blocks existing independently from the mind apprehending them can easily be refuted from a purely ontological perspective, as demonstrated by Nāgārjuna, Āryadeva, and Vasubandhu. On a more epistemic level linked to the Buddhist theories of perception, spatially or temporally extended objects pose a problem. For instance, the reality of causal relations between momentary phenomena, when analyzed, falls apart to the extent that theories of perception founded on the existence of a real external object become problematic.²⁶ In the same way, the perception of extended objects as being solid wholes despite the fact that they are also perceived as aggregations of particles remains unexplained.²⁷ How can we, moreover, know that we know and therefore conceive perception processes in terms of the subject-object dichotomy? How can a sentient immaterial subject have an actual point of contact with an insentient material object? When facing these issues, which remain insuperable for a proponent of external realism, Mipham's main reference in this matter, Dharmakīrti,

24 The translation below goes through all these points in detail.

25 The term *svabhāva/sabhāva* arose in the context of the late Abhidharmas and Pāli postcanonical commentaries. It is simply not mentioned in the *suttas*, and there is only a single occurrence of this term in the Pāli Canon (see Ronkin 2005: 86–131). As shown by Ronkin 2005: 132ff., the emergence of the *sabhāva* is rooted in the problem of individuation resulting from the mereological strategy pursued by the Abhidhamma. Each *dhamma* has to be determined through a character that is particular to itself.

26 See for instance Nāgārjuna's *MMK passim*, in particular chapters 14 and 21, or Dharmakīrti's PV III.425ff and SP.

27 See Dreyfus 1997: 83–105.

solves this aporia by giving up his provisionally adopted realist approach in favor of a Yogācāra theory of perception:

Consciousness does not need any external support to perceive objects, not even that of infinitesimal atoms. The impression of extended external objects is not produced from external conditions but arises from innate propensities (*vāsanā*, *bag chags*) we have had since beginningless time.²⁸

In a word, cognition experiences cognition and is self-revelatory (*svaprakāśa*). The external object is the objective mode or aspect of a cognition (*grāhyākāra*), while the subjective aspect of the cognition (*grāhakākāra*) is the perceiver that makes it possible to know that we know. Śāntarakṣita, following Dharmakīrti, does not hesitate to develop a notion of the conventional inspired by the Yogācāra tradition. Hence, he declares in Ma 91 that all causes and effects are indeed nothing but ideation (*vijñaptimātra*), which *de facto* integrates all causal relationships pertaining to “substantial things” within the Buddhist context of dependent arising (*pratītyasamutpāda*) into the Yogācāra presentation of the concealing. In his commentary to this stanza, Mipham refers to sūtras of the last turning, among which is, again, the Saṃdh. He explains that, in the post-meditation state, Mādhyamikas have to assert the existence of external objects or reject it, since there is no third alternative. Mipham thus praises Śāntarakṣita’s approach of the concealing: external objects are nothing but information or cognition (*vijñaptimātra*). This statement refers to an epistemic process and does not imply that phenomena have a real nature or an essence. On this level, Mipham endorses Śāntarakṣita’s understanding of *svasaṃvedana* as representing the reflexive capacity of knowing, which, being naturally luminous and self-aware, makes the experience of things possible.²⁹ The main argument here is that if cognition were not aware of itself, the whole concept of experience of external objects would make no sense, since one could never know that one knows. As soon as one were to try to know that one knows, one would engage in an infinite regress of thoughts, which, obviously, never happens when one knows that one knows.³⁰ According to Mipham, awareness without reflexivity does not exist

28 Dreyfus 1997: 103.

29 See Chapter 5, The Conventional Existence of *svasaṃvedana*.

30 The epistemological Dharmakīrtian project is not cut off from the practice of the world but in fact is based on the very logic and perception of the world, a point repeatedly made by Mipham. This line of argument is also developed by Mokṣākaragupta (see Kajiyama 1998: 47ff.) who, just like Mipham, accepts Śāntarakṣita’s exposition of *svasaṃvedana* as reflexive and not reflective awareness. Mokṣākaragupta says that “the relation of the feeler and the felt in con-

since reflexivity is the defining characteristic of awareness in contradistinction to matter. He thus explains in his *dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad* that without accepting *svasaṃvedana* conventionally, our capacity to know cognitive objects cannot be explained. How could we then access the content of our thoughts, if we were not aware of our own mental states? In Mipham's perspective-based system, this position corresponds to *the perspective of post-meditation*. Both in *dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad ad* MA 17–18a and in *Nor bu ke ta ka ad* BCA 9.25, Mipham enjoins the reader to refer to Dharmakīrti for a detailed explanation of *svasaṃvedana*. It is worth mentioning that, according to Dharmakīrti, *svasaṃvedana* is clearly a conventional (*saṃvyavahārika*) valid cognition and is therefore not asserted to be truly existent since it is associated with nescience.³¹ Contrarily to Tsongkhapa, Mipham therefore sees no reason to reject Yogācāra notions of the concealing such as *ālayavijñāna* and *svasaṃvedana*:

In brief, with regard to the negation of reflexive awareness (*rang rig pa, svasaṃvedana*), although it is negated on the ultimate level, this method of naming on the concealing level the opposite of materiality “reflexive awareness” is not negated.³² ... All reasonings that negate reflexive awareness, as many as they might be, negate [it] on the ultimate level, just like the reasonings that negate the aggregates and so forth. But it should be known that it is not a complete nothingness that is negated conventionally. In this system, although some pretend that the subliminal consciousness (*kun gzhi, ālayavijñāna*) and the reflexive awareness are rejected (*khas mi len*) even conventionally, in our tradition (*'dir*) they are neither negated nor established conventionally, but they are [indeed] exclusively negated on the ultimate level. With regard to this, some pretend that if you are a Mādhyamika, you should not accept the subliminal consciousness since it is the system of the Vijñaptivādins, but [they] do not analyze [this] correctly. If one has not accepted the

consciousness is not considered as object-agent relation, but as the relation of the determinant and the determinable (*vyavasthāpya-vyavasthāpaka-bhāva*)” (ibid.: 48). It is interesting to note *en passant* that, emulating Śāntarakṣita, Mokṣākaragupta also adopts Madhyamaka as the highest Buddhist view. The distinction between self-reflexivity and reflexivity used in the present study is based on MacKenzie 2007. It corresponds to Mokṣākaragupta's definition above.

31 See Dunne 2004: 315–16.

32 *Nor bu ke ta ka* 21,6: *mdor na rang rig pa 'gog pa ni don dam par 'gog pa yin gyi bem po las log tsam la tha snyad du rang rig par 'dogs pa'i tshul de 'gog pa ma yin te/*

subliminal consciousness as really established, how could the [mere] conventional assertion of the subliminal consciousness corrupt the approach of Madhyamaka? What is inappropriate to assert conventionally is that which is invalidated by a valid cognition that investigates conventions, for instance permanent universals.³³ However, if one does not assert anything that is negated by a reasoning pertaining to the ultimate, [then] one must not even assert the aggregates, basic constituents, and sources of cognitions at all [(i.e., even conventionally)]!³⁴

I will not elaborate on Mipham's rather straightforward argument. This reasoning line, in essence, reproaches the Gelugpas for, on the conventional level, negating the *ālayavijñāna* and the *svasaṃvedana* while accepting universals as permanent and using widely other concepts, such as *dhātus*. Mipham's position is, by way of contrast, in agreement with pre-Gelugpa Indian and Tibetan exegesis regarding Śāntideva's negation of the *svasaṃvedana* on only the ultimate level.³⁵ Mipham's Yogācāra approach of the conventional in the sense of things merely appearing as cognitions therefore leads to *svasaṃvedana*, the most fundamental conventional *pramāṇa* available to ordinary beings. In his *Shes rab ral gri*, Mipham states that inference (*anumāna*) is dependent on direct perception (*pratyakṣa*) and direct perception is dependent on *svasaṃvedana*. Since all objects are experiences of mind, no object can be established as being what it is supposed to be *from the perspective of mind*, independently from mind itself, either through direct perception or through

33 Regarding permanent universals (*spyi rtag pa*), see Dreyfus 1997: 171–202 and Arguillère 2004: 267. “Kay-drup argues that nothing in the meaning of *universal* prevents universals from being real. To be a universal is to exist as something that at least two phenomena share in common. [...] For Kay-drup and other Ge-luk thinkers, a universal is not necessarily a superimposed factor, although universals qua universals are unreal. Red color is real since its identity as a color (*kha dog gi cha*) derives from the causes that produce it” (Dreyfus 2007: 181). Dunne 2004: 127, however, mentions that Dharmakīrti does not consider universals as permanent according to PVI.169ab and PVSV *ad cit*.

34 *Nor bu ke ta ka 22,2: rang rig 'gog pa'i rigs pa ji snyed pa thams cad phung sogs 'gog pa'i rigs pa bzhin du don dam par 'gog gi tha snyad du bkag pa'i gtan med ma yin par shes dgos shing/ lugs 'dir tha snyad du'ang rang rig kun gzhi khas mi len zer yang 'dir tha snyad du ni dgag pa'ang med la sgrub pa'ang med kyi don dam par bkag pa kho na yin no/ /de la kha cig gis dbu ma pa yin na kun gzhi khas len par mi bya ste/ kun gzhi ni rnam rig pa'i lugs yin zer yang legs par ma brtags pa ste/ kun gzhi bden grub tu khas ma blangs na tha snyad du khas blangs pas dbu ma'i tshul ci zhig nyams/ tha snyad du khas len mi rung ba ni tha snyad dpyod byed kyi tshad mas gnod pa spyi rtag pa la sogs pa lta bu yin gyi/ don dam pa'i rigs pas bkag tshad khas mi len na phung po khams skye mched kyang gtan med du khas blang dgos so/*

35 See Williams 1998a: 61–72.

inference insofar as these two are nothing but mental events. There is no way to prove through logic or direct perception that things are absolutely or unconditionally what they are supposed to be without using mind as an instrument. All conventional knowledge is therefore purely relative as it has to be dependent on mind.³⁶

By way of consequence, nothing can be independent of reflexive awareness *from a conventional point of view*, for this mind is dependent on reflexive awareness (*svasamvedana*) to be conceived as such in contradistinction to materiality. On account of this, it follows that a *vastu* or *dravya* is in fact also *prajñaptisat* on this level of analysis. Phenomena cannot be posited as existing independently from a cognition apprehending them as what they seem to be. In fact, Mipham takes Dharmakīrti's epistemological framework as a perspective-based dialectic funneling realist theories, on the basis of their own positions, through a series of ascending perspectives leading them eventually to Candrakīrti's Madhyamaka.³⁷

This process functions in fact like a *prasāṅga* or a conditionally/provisionally adopted position: Assuming that some things are real and others are not, there are only two ways to establish anything, real or not, namely, direct perception and inference, according to their natures. Non-things are merely fictions, or generalizations, while actual things cannot be spatially or temporally extended, although they must have the capacity to produce effects in contradistinction to mere fictions. But if that is so, putative existents cannot be established as what they are supposed to be independently from the very mind ascertaining them as momentary cognitive events and conceptualizing them subsequently through verbalizations as generalities. Things cannot be established as existent independently of a cognition ascertaining them as what they are supposed to be in a purely tautological way.

36 This is what Frege means when he writes, “So verstehe ich unter Objectivität eine Unabhängigkeit von unserm Empfinden, Anschauen und Vorstellen, von dem Entwerfen innerer Bilder aus den Erinnerungen früherer Empfindungen, aber nicht eine Unabhängigkeit von der Vernunft; denn die Frage beantworten, was die Dinge unabhängig von der Vernunft sind, hiesse urtheilen, ohne zu urtheilen, den Pelz waschen, ohne ihn nass zu machen.” Gottlob Frege, *Die Grundlagen der Arithmetik* (1884; repr., Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1986). Arnold's English translation reads (2005: 52), “It is in this way that I understand objective to mean what is independent of our sensation, intuition and imagination, and of all construction of mental pictures out of memories of earlier sensations, but not what is independent of reason; for to undertake to say what things are like independent of reason, would be as much as to judge without judging, or to wash fur without wetting it.”

37 Mipham gives the essence of this process in his commentary on Padmasambhava's *Man ngag lta ba'i phreng ba*: “As it is said in the *Guhyasamāja-tantra*, ‘All phenomena abide within the mind.’ Everything that appears is nothing other than the appearance of one's own mind. And, ‘The mind itself abides in space.’ The nature of mind is unborn, like space. ‘And as for space,’ it is devoid of all characteristics, so ‘it does not abide anywhere’” (Padmakara 2015: 69).

The pervasion (*vyāpti*) between things and cognitions is therefore complete, and the theory of *svasaṃvedana* has logically, as a consequence, the mutual dependence of valid cognitions (*pramāṇa*) and their results (*pramāṇaphala*), which are merely the illusory manifestation of dualistic aspects of reflexive awareness.³⁸ Perceiving subjects and perceived objects are in fact only aspects of cognition.

Mipham uses on purpose the Gelug expression “different conceptual distinguishers of a single entity” (*ngo bo gcig ldog pa tha dad*) to explain the relation between these two aspects. This is not an innocent move, since the Gelugpa interpretation of the two truths relies on precisely this exegetical device.³⁹ But this subject-object dichotomy is merely a question of imputation, just like when one says that noble beings perceive emptiness, a state where there is supposedly no duality. Reflexive awareness in its relation to a subject-object dichotomy is a matter of worldly conventions, just like when one speaks of “short” and “long.” Commenting on PV III.427, in which Dharmakīrti explains that without reflexive awareness the experience of perception is impossible, Mipham therefore declares in his *Tshad ma rnam 'grel bshad pa*:⁴⁰

One should know that all the refutations of *svasaṃvedana* made by followers of Mahāyāna are negations on the level of the ultimate.⁴¹

This remark is of primary importance to understanding Mipham’s interpretation of the two truths. It shows very clearly that he does not take Tsongkhapa’s Svātantrika-Prāsaṅgika distinction very seriously. It seems that, according to Mipham, Dharmakīrti’s perspective-based system takes into account Candrakīrti’s refutations as

38 This explanation is compatible with Candrakīrti’s discussion of *prameya* and *pramāṇa* as mutually dependent (see Pras. I), as long as one is not accepted as *dravya* and the other as *prajñapti*. In a perspective-based system, this issue is easily avoided.

39 See Williams 1998a: 8–9 and 178–82.

40 *Tshad ma rnam 'grel bshad pa* is Mipham’s commentary of PV. The verses in question (PV III.426–27) read, *dvairūpyasadhanenāpi prāyaḥ siddhaṃ svavedanam | svarūpabhūtasābhāsasya tadā saṃvedekṣanāt || dhiyā 'tadrūpayā jñāne niruddhe 'nubhavaḥ kutaḥ | svañ ca rūpaṃ na sā vettīty utsanno 'nubhavo 'rthinaḥ ||* Reflexive awareness is also indirectly established by the proof that [cognitions have a] twofold nature, since at the time [of such a cognition] we notice that we are aware of a manifestation [namely the object], which is of the very nature [of this cognition]. Once this cognition has ceased, how could a [subsequent] cognition that does have the nature of this [first cognition] directly experience [it]? [If] this [first cognition] does not cognize its own form, then the complete experience [of cognitions and their objects] is impossible.

41 *Tshad ma rnam 'grel bshad pa* 405: *shing rta chen po rnam kyis rang rig 'gog pa' i rigs pa ji snyed pa don dam par bkag pa kho nar 'gyur ba shes par bya'o/*

stated in the Pras. I. Dharmakīrti and Śāntarakṣita's epistemological approach is therefore not just an exposition of Indian Buddhist logic parallel to Madhyamaka but, particularly in the case of Śāntarakṣita's MA, the pinnacle of Madhyamaka from a historical and philosophical perspective. PV III.427 thus explains that causality and momentariness are in fact impossible for real things, even on the conventional level, which is also accepted by Mādhyamikas.⁴²

In fact, Mādhyamikas contend that causality is only possible for entities that have no own-being (*svabhāva*) and are therefore mere designations (*prajñapti*). Here again the Ābhidharmika distinction *dravya/prajñapti* plays a central role. *Dravyas* are dependently produced, while *prajñaptis* are mere concepts and have only a nominal existence. The Mādhyamikas show that dependent arising (*pratītyasamutpāda*) entails that *dravyas* are in fact just *prajñaptis*, since they cannot exist as what they seem to be from their own side. Indeed, if a phenomenon exists as *something* that depends on a set of conditions, on what particular subject can the expression "exists" be predicated apart from a network of ever changing ontological relationships? Since this subject is by nature relative, changeable, and empty of any essence, it is in fact deprived of any identity apart from the mere conventions providing a minimum amount of semantic stability necessary to communicate. Any predication of existence or arising onto this *something* as *what it is supposed to be in reality* becomes utterly impossible owing to the lack of any subject presenting itself in a nondependent mode, as being absolutely what it is. It mechanically follows that dependent arising must in fact be understood as non-arising, a feature of the sūtras of the middle turning.⁴³ Needless to say, causality apart from being a convention makes little sense in this context.

There is, however, a problem inherent to this position. If phenomena are nothing but designations, how could they be differentiated or individuated since they have no own-being characterizing them? The Mādhyamika answer is straightforward: designations (*prajñapti*) have to be conceived as *upādāya prajñapti* (see MMK 24.18). They occur in relation to one another on account of being mutually dependent (*parasparāpekṣa* or *anyonyāpekṣa*) on a purely conceptual basis, as is the case with concepts such as long/short, cause/effect, etc.⁴⁴ Just as in the *apoha* theory, concepts can be determined on the basis of a dichotomization process relying on the distinction between what they are and what they are not, these two

42 See Siderits 2004 for a general account of the Mādhyamika position, Candrakīrti's Pras. VII for a detailed refutation, and Kyuma 2005: LXXXI for Jñānaśrīmitra's explanations.

43 See Walser 2005: 175ff.

44 See Pras. I in MacDonald 2003a: 430, Fenner 1990: 107, Walser 2005: 229ff.

sets being mutually exclusive and thereby mutually dependent for their very definition as to what they are supposed to be according to usage and convention. Bronkhorst suggested the idea that Nāgārjuna's refutation of the notion that words denote actual things eventually found its way into Dignāga's *apoha* through Bhartṛhari.⁴⁵ The theory of reflexive awareness therefore could have provided a theoretical framework with which to integrate the Mādhyamika understanding of dependent arising (*pratītyasamutpāda*) in terms of mutual dependence (*parasparāpekṣa*): all constituents of human experience can be envisaged in terms of fundamental dichotomies (object/subject, cause/effect, qualifier/qualified). A direct consequence of this would be that any theory of perception applicable to this line of thought would eventually have to be compatible with the fact that perceived objects are in fact only mere designations, at least when considered from a higher perspective.⁴⁶

When Mīpham states that all followers of Mahāyāna conventionally accept reflexive awareness, he is therefore completely aware of what he is saying. On this level and in the context of post-meditation, perceived objects are either external or internal. If they are external, they must be *de facto* independent of a perceiving subject. Such an object would not depend on its subject and in this case would exist from its own side. From a Mādhyamika point of view, the *jñeya* would exist independently of the *jñātṛ*, a point criticized at great length by Candrakīrti. Hence, the fact that all phenomena are *prajñaptis* hinges on their being *parasparāpekṣa* according to the Mādhyamikas. Reflexive awareness is therefore, in Mīpham's view, not only compatible with Madhyamaka but a prerequisite for any Mādhyamika account of perception. Things seem to arise in a momentary and causal way, but in fact there is "a nondual flow of self-aware consciousness (the *paratantrasvabhāva*) experienced as if divided into subject and object."⁴⁷ The dualistic experience of a subject perceiving an object only represents the imaginary defining characteristic (*parikalpitasvabhāva*) of experience.

45 See Bronkhorst 1999.

46 As already mentioned above, it is interesting to note that the historical developments of such an idea may have led some post-Dharmakīrtian Buddhist thinkers such as Mokṣākaragupta to accept that particulars are not the only objects of indeterminate knowledge (see Kajiyama 1998: 56–58, Ganeri 1999, and Gillon 1999).

47 Williams 1998a: 11. As explained in detail in Chapter 5, I have not found any passage in the works of Asāṅga and Vasubandhu where the *paratantra* is declared to be *dravyasat* in contradistinction to Sthiramati. In the *Samdhinirmocana* also, dependent arising is not equated with the notion of *dravyasat*. The *ālayavijñāna* and the *paratantra* are considered to be part of the *saṃvṛti* in agreement with the Mādhyamika definition of *satyadvaya*, as opposed to the Ābhidharmika definition of the same concept (see Samdh V.5, V.7).

To conclude on this point, while Mipham agrees with Candrakīrti and Śāntideva's refutations of a self-reflective awareness in the sense of an entity being both its own subject and object, he understands Dharmakīrti's theory as describing the reflexivity of awareness and not its self-reflectivity. If we are happy, mind is not the subject and happiness its object. Mind in fact knows itself as having the aspect, mode, or manifestation of happiness. There is no extra thing here being "happiness."⁴⁸ In this case, the dividing line between subject and object becomes pointless and erroneous. They are both mere appearances, or aspects, of a cognition. This epistemic reduction constitutes the essence of the second stage of the analysis of the conventional. Strictly speaking, on this level only the reflexive awareness is conditioned as the dependent nature (*paratantrasvabhāva*) of phenomena. The collapse of this very notion is the goal of the third stage.

The perception of things is actually not free from conceptual constructions, as remarked by Jñānaśrīmitra, but the very expression of conceptualizations.⁴⁹ From a Dzogchen perspective, the epistemic reduction achieved by the concept of reflexive awareness helps in defining the sphere of mind. All refutations and affirmations take place in this sphere.⁵⁰ Mind does not operate beyond its own scope, which merely consists in percepts and concepts, reflexive awareness at work. What can be refuted or established consists therefore only in fictions. The dualistic mind cannot reach outside of itself. Mipham's approach integrates the Madhyamaka, Yogācāra, and Pramāṇa traditions on the basis that statements about what is ineffable have to be regarded as teachings expressed for the sake of pointing out the inexpressible. As soon as something is posited with regard to the nonconceptual ultimate, there is a fault. It is obvious, from that standpoint, that refutations and assertions only oper-

48 See Williams 1998a: 135ff. The theory propounding that things appear as the manifestations of nondual primordial wisdom in the way gold can take the shape of anything, good or bad—the traditional examples of a Buddha statue or a pisspot come to mind (see for instance Mipham's *De kho na nyid gsal ba'i sgron me* translated below)—definitely presents similarities with the relation between *svasaṃvedana* and *ākāra*. However, there are marked differences between them as to what reflexive awareness (*svasaṃvedana, rang rig*) and nondual primordial wisdom (*jñāna, ye shes*) refer to. *Svasaṃvedana* pertains to a conditioned cognition that is defiled since it is still conventional valid cognition contrarily to nondual primordial wisdom. The conceptual framework within which the concept *svasaṃvedana* operates as understood by Mipham cannot therefore be conflated with that of *rig pa*.

49 See Patil 2007: 606ff.

50 According to Mipham, Mādhyamikas would have nothing to object to in this. As Siderits 1988: 316 puts it, "Now Nāgārjuna would, I claim, hold that if such a procedure is carried out properly, then one would be justified in holding any belief that was induced through some causal route that was identified by the theory as a pramāṇa. Such beliefs would constitute knowledge. What Nāgārjuna denies is that such beliefs in any way 'mirror' or 'correspond to' a mind-independent existent. (See the commentary on VV 51.)"

ate within the sphere of mind, as made clear in teachings such as the four reliances (*rton pa bzhi, catuḥpratisaraṇa*): the intention of statements is what matters, not their literal meaning.⁵¹ Positing any reality can therefore only be achieved on the basis and by means of what is deceptive, unreal: the misapprehending intellect, a fact accepted by both Dharmakīrti and Candrakīrti. Mipham therefore seems to think that all Mahāyānists understand that what is established by relative or dependent—and ultimately mistaken—valid cognitions cannot be taken as the absolute itself. In other words, how is it possible to assert that something *absolutely* measures one thousand meters when the dimension of the supposedly one-meter-long measuring stick varies depending on circumstances? The nonconceptual absolute simply cannot be established by the relative mind. In fact, there are no other means of establishing the ultimate since, without inferencing it, assertions about it would be tautological.⁵²

From the perspective of practice, this key point pertaining to the centrality of mind in establishing or refuting anything makes it possible to bypass all individual refutations of phenomena.⁵³ Having thus reduced real objects to mental events (percepts or concepts), the transition from theory to practice is easy.⁵⁴ In the course of practice, one takes one's own perceptual and conceptual activities as mere cognitive events appearing and vanishing within the sphere of one's own mind.

51 See Kapstein 1988 on Mipham's theory of interpretation.

52 See Siderits 1980: 287, 1981: 305. The only way out of this is to use a set of "ordinarily unquestioned judgments." But then Gödel's Incompleteness Theorems comes into full force. In the present context, valid cognitions are either tautological or infinite regressions.

53 This is a central point in the *Samdhinirmocana* (Chapters V–VIII). Individual focal objects of practice are all included in the contemplation of mind. See also, on this reductionist strategy, the translation of *De kho na nyid gsal ba'i sgron me* below. The epistemic reduction makes all individual ontological refutations redundant. Traditionally, Mādhyamikas use five reasoning lines to dismantle wrong views: (1) The reason of the *vajra* slivers (*rdo rje gzegs ma'i gtan tshigs*) shows that phenomena are unborn since they cannot be produced from themselves, from others, from both, or from neither in the sense of a causeless origination. (2) The reason refuting the arising in terms of the four possibilities (*mu bzhi skye 'gog gi gtan tshigs*) shows that a single cause cannot produce a single result, a plurality of causes cannot produce a plurality of results, a single cause cannot produce a plurality of results, and a plurality of causes cannot produce a single result. (3) The reason refuting the arising of what is existent or inexistent (*yod med skye 'gog gi gtan tshigs*) shows that what exists has no origination and what does not exist also has no origination. (4) The reason that [phenomena] are neither one [nor many] (*gcig du bral gyi gtan tshigs*) shows that things are without existence since what is neither an existent single thing or an existent plurality of existent things is devoid of existence. (5) The reason of dependent arising (*rten 'brel gyi gtan tshigs*) shows that phenomena are not existent since they are dependently originated. While these five reasonings are valid, the epistemic reduction works as a shortcut, particularly in the context of practice.

54 See my translation of Mipham's *De kho na nyid gsal ba'i sgron me* in Chapter 9.

Stage Three: Seeing That Conditioned Cognitions are Primordially Beyond the Four Extremes

Then, as one experientially realizes that all thoughts of existence and nonexistence are perceptual and conceptualizing cognitions (i.e., direct perceptions and inferences) that are dependent on reflexive awareness and latent mental predispositions, “One should easily recognize the great freedom from objectifying mental proliferations, the profound point that must be known for oneself.”⁵⁵ Reflexive awareness itself, even as defined by Śāntarākṣita, cannot be posited as existent independent from mental constructions. Seen in this light, the great differences of views assumed by the Tibetan mainstream doxography between the so-called *pramāṇa* tradition and Madhyamaka seem less significant, and Mipham operates a junction between these two approaches. *From the perspective of meditative absorption*, the concealing is beyond ontological assertions. Mipham also accepts that Mādhyamika arguments such as those of Candrakīrti or Śāntideva are effective in dismantling wrong views positing the ultimate existence of *svasaṃvedana*. More generally, Nāgārjuna’s argument in the *Vigrahavyāvartanī* regarding the impossibility of establishing anything through *pramāṇas* on the level of the concealing can be applied without any contradiction to all knowables that are posited as truly existent, since Mipham’s approach is based on ascending perspectives of the concealing.⁵⁶ As explained in Mipham’s commentary on Mañjuśrīmitra’s *rDo la gser zhun*, so-called valid cognitions (*pramāṇa*) are actually invalid *from the perspective of meditative absorption*.⁵⁷ Dreyfus remarks that some Indian Buddhist authors established a connection between direct knowledge or experience (*so so rang rig* used as an epithet for *ye shes*) and reflexive awareness (*svasaṃvedana*).⁵⁸ However, for Mipham, this

55 *dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad* 56,5: . . . *de dag gi dmigs gtad zhig pa’i spros bral chen po so so rang gis rig par bya ba’i don zab mo bde blag tu ngos zin pa’i dgos pa yod do/* See topic 2 of the introduction of the MA in Padmakara 2005: 123.

56 See VV 30–52, in which Nāgārjuna shows that *pramāṇas* cannot be established since they would have to be proved by other *pramāṇas*. Nāgārjuna’s criticism of the tautological nature of logic is based on the fact that the Nyāya system of *pramāṇa* leads to circular arguments such as the mutual establishment of *prameya* and *pramāṇa* in order to avoid infinite regressions resulting from the use of inferential logic (*anumāna*); in the case of the Buddhist *pramāṇa* tradition, the tautological nature of logic is even more strongly affirmed since there is no distinction between *pramāṇa* and *pramāṇaphala* (see NB 18–19 in Stcherbatsky 1970: 39 and Arnold 2005: 34–35). For a summary of the VV, cf. Lindtner 1982: 74.

57 See *De kho na nyid gsal ba’i sgron me* 471. For a detailed exposition of this argument, I refer the reader to my translation of Mipham’s commentary on Mañjuśrīmitra’s *rDo la gser zhun* in Chapter 9.

58 See Dreyfus 1997: 414.

connection is not to be conceived in terms of identity. It is rather that the latter can be used to facilitate the recognition of the former because it enables a process of deconstruction and disengagement from coarse experience. This experience, which is taken to be real, is reduced to the subtlest expressible aspect of experience in the way one peels off an onion's skins. When this final skin is peeled off, the inexpressible ultimate can be genuinely and directly reached beyond concepts and labels. Mipham is very clear about this point:

The object of a valid cognition (*gzhal bya*), the concealing, is not established.

Even the cognition probing the validity (*'jal byed*) or the reflexive awareness, when analyzed,

Is not established, just like the moon [reflected] in water.

This is nirvāṇa, the summit of what is (*yang dag mtha', bhūtakoti*),⁵⁹

The single truth, the supreme truth that cannot be separated [into two].

Because it is the consummate ultimate (*mthar thug*) with regard to all phenomena,

It is the *kāya* of the inseparability of cognition and cognitive object,

The manifestation of primordial wisdom free from limits and center.⁶⁰

This manifestation of primordial wisdom is therefore not the result of effort. It is not produced but results from a mere process of disengagement (*bral 'bras*). In his *dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad*, Mipham indeed makes clear, regarding yogic perception, that afflictions are not the nature of the mind. Afflictions consist in adventitious thoughts, while the nature of mind is luminous. Mipham's use of *pramāṇa* is therefore extremely important for his exposition of the two truths, as it enables the analysis of reality *based on the perspective of ordinary beings* in epistemic terms *according to the perspective of post-meditation* through whatever logic the world deems appropriate. In Mipham's view, there can be no being apart from knowing. Putative substantial existence is dependent on percepts and concepts that appear in mind. The whole spectrum of our experiencing is grounded in the knowing capaci-

59 This last line belongs to the first line of the next verse, but on account of the enjambment and the syntax, I translated it in this order.

60 *Shes rab ral gri* 804,5: /gzhal bya kun rdzob ma grub cing/ /'jal byed blo dang rang rig kyang/ / dpyad na ma grub chu zla 'dra/ /mthar thug bden pa dbyer med pa'i/ /bden gcig myang 'das yang dag mtha'/ /chos kun de la mthar thug phyr/ /shes dang shes bya dbyer med sku/ /ye shes snang ba mtha' dbus bral/ /

ty of a mind dependent on conditions, which, as such, cannot be established as being anything at all. And yet, this experiencing as the radiance of this mind free from any identity cannot be negated.

Stage Four: Seeing That the Nature of Conditioned Cognitions is Beyond the Four Extremes

This mind is dependent on reflexive awareness, and since this awareness is empty of own-being, its nature is luminosity. At this stage, by recognizing this knowing aspect indissociable from a complete lack of reference point, one enters the sphere of “the great freedom from mental proliferations.” In the context of practice, this last stage aims at dismantling conceptualizations pertaining to the nature of things, at unveiling the nonconceptual ultimate as it is. While the third stage still conceives of nonduality on the basis of an illusory duality, the fourth stage does not rely on any kind of dualistic grasping. Nonduality is an intuitive and direct experience and does not depend on the mediation of duality. Mipham explains the difference between stages 3 and 4 in his *dPyad sgom 'khor lo*:

When such a confidence arises, even the apprehension [that everything is] merely an illusion is imputed on the basis of projections. As there is indeed nothing to apprehend, the essential nature [of the thing] apprehended as an object cannot be established. Even the mind that apprehends [this] is not found [if examined]. Therefore, without apprehending [anything], rest in your fundamental nature, which is effortless presence. When you remain in that way, all external and internal manifestations of an experience remain uninterrupted. However, in the fundamental state that is free from any apprehension as this or that, all imputed phenomena are primordially non-arisen and unceasing. In the sphere of the fundamental sameness free from [dualistic] aspects such as the apprehended [object] and the apprehending [subject], [everything] is the same. This is the inexpressible natural state of being free from [all] assertions such as existence or nonexistence. Within this authentic state, a direct experience dawns beyond all doubts. This is the real nature of all phenomena. This is the actual ultimate must be known for oneself, the primordial wisdom of the nonconceptual state of absorption. Once you are familiar with this state, the unity of emptiness and dependent arising, the fundamental condition in which the

two truths are inseparable,⁶¹ is the *yoga* of the great Madhyamaka. Being beyond the sphere of mind, it is quickly actualized through nondual primordial wisdom. Therefore, if you want [to realize this], practice the pith instructions of the *mantra* [vehicle].⁶²

61 Dependent arising and manifesting as an experience are equated here. Mipham sees all these definitions of the concealing truth as variations of the same idea according to various contexts.

62 *dPyad sgom 'khor lo 18,1-5: /de 'dra'i nges shes skyes pa'i tshe/ /sgyu ma tsam du 'dzin pa yang/ /rtog pas btags te bzung med kyi/ /gzung bya'i ngo bor ma grub la/ /'dzin pa'i sems kyang ma rnyed pas/ /'dzin med lhug pa'i gshis su bzhag/ /de ltar bzhag tshe phyi nang gi/ /snang ba thams cad ma 'gag kyang/ /der 'dzin med pa'i gshis lugs su/ /chos su btags pa ji snyed pa/ /ye nas ma skyes ma 'gag la/ /gzung dang 'dzin pa rnam bral ba'i/ /mnyam pa nyid dbyings su mnyam/ yod med la sogs khas len bral/ /brjod med don gyi rang bab la/ /the tshom med pa'i nyams myong 'char/ /de ni chos kun chos nyid de/ /rnam grangs min pa'i don dam pa/ /so so rang gis rig bya bar/ /mnyam bzhag mi rtog ye shes yin/ /de yang ngang la goms pa na/ /stong dang rten 'byung zung 'jug pa/ /bden gnyis dbyer med gnas lugs don/ /dbu ma chen po'i rnal 'byor yin/ /don de sems kyi spyod yul dang/ /bral bar gnyis med ye shes kyis/ /myur ba nyid du mngon byed par/ /'dod na sngags kyi man ngags bsgom/*

CHAPTER 7

The Itinerary Is Not the Journey: The Two Truths in the Context of Practice

A Synthesis of Mipham's Presentation of the Stages of Practice

Just like Longchenpa, Mipham extensively uses Yogācāra terminology to explain the view on the level of the sūtras.⁶³ In this approach, mind plays a central role. In fact, all Mahāyāna schools, namely, Madhyamaka and Yogācāra, follow this model of successive stages of practice:⁶⁴ (1) Ontological positions involving the apprehension of duality in terms of existence and nonexistence are epistemologically reduced to mere information, mental events, or thoughts. Remaining aware of the flow of experiences continuously occurring, one perceives them as mental events. This merges the abovementioned stages 1 and 2 into one. (2) Mind is then increasingly directed at mind itself; primordial wisdom is unveiled by directly seeing that mind's nature does not exist as anything expressible and is luminous. At this stage, "discovering" or "uncovering" the empty luminosity of mind is still a process dependent on mind. (3) One remains in nondual knowing without fixating on any reference point. This is the method taught in the Saṃdh, which is central for Mahāyāna meditative traditions such as that of Kamalaśīla's *Bhāvanākramas* or Atiśa's *Madhyamakopadeśa*.⁶⁵

This approach is radically different from the śrāvaka path, which, at least in the case of the various *Abhidharmas*, operates within an ontological framework of discrete entities used to dismantle the belief that wholes (such as the self of the person) absolutely exist. This mereological reduction can be used in the context of practice to eliminate superimpositions, but in contrast to this practice, the Mahāyānist approach is purely epistemic. This difference probably explains Mipham's disa-

63 See my translation of *Le'u bco brgyad 'grel*, together with Longchenpa's commentary on his own *Yid bzhin mdzod*, in Chapter 11.

64 See Lindtner 2003: 116ff.

65 Atiśa explains, "By rubbing two sticks together (investigating both kinds of substance), both sticks by which the fire (insight) is caused, ignite and afterwards do not exist, and even the fire itself (finally) ceases. So it is when all phenomena with their particular and universal characteristics are established as non-existent. Then even the insight itself is not established as any luminous entity as it disappears. Hence, during this meditation period, remove any defects that come up, like drowsiness or distraction, and let your understanding not be discursive at all, for there is to apprehend. Avoiding memory and mind activity altogether, stay in that kind of knowing as long as possible—that is, without the enemy and thief of reasoning and (conceptual) characteristics arising" (Sherburne 2000: 362). The removal of discursive reasoning is part and parcel of the process of realization (see Sherburne 2000: 245, 261, 355).

greement with Tsongkhapa regarding the śrāvaka's realization of the selflessness of phenomena.⁶⁶ From the point of view of practice, it is clear that the methods expounded in the first turning of the wheel primarily address the issue of the wrong belief in the self of the person.

In the collection of texts translated below, the *Sems kyi spyod pa rnam par sbyong ba so sor brtag pa'i dpyad sgom 'khor lo ma*, Mipham stresses the centrality of mind in the context of practice. He presents the purification of mind's activity through an analytical approach (*so sor rtog pa, pratyavekṣā*) that is applied in a gradual manner. The harmony between Mipham's presentation of the view in more scholastic texts and his practice instructions as found in his *dPyad sgom 'khor lo* is striking. All the main themes of his interpretation of Madhyamaka are found in this text albeit in the context of practice (i.e., the distinction between the conceptual and the non-conceptual ultimates).

In his *De kho na nyid gsal ba'i sgron me*, Mipham, commenting on Mañjuśrimitra's root text, also follows the approach presented above, although the journey is much more radical and sudden. The stage involving a mereological reduction of putative things is entirely skipped. Through valid cognitions, one immediately recognizes that putative things are in fact nothing but the conventionally valid knowledge of some thing. These valid cognitions themselves are nothing but mental events. The introduction to the nature of mind immediately follows this insight. By understanding that all things are reducible to a mere thought, the practitioner is allowed to dive directly in the nature of reality instead of going through the śrāvaka process of ontological reduction. First, the two truths are presented as mutually exclusive, then as two facets of the same entity, and finally as being beyond differentiation. The process is dynamic and accompanies the practitioner from the bottom of the stairway, the stage based on concealing truths according to what ordinary beings perceive, up to the primordial wisdom of the great unity beyond mental proliferations. In the course of this journey, the relation between the two truths morphs and shifts along an ascending scale of perspectives. It should be noted that this gradual ascension is not mandatory. The aspect taken by this journey to freedom is contingent upon the capacity of the practitioner. Seeing tensions between gradual (*rim gyis pa*) and sudden (*gcig char ba*) methods of liberation therefore misses the crucial point: their soteriological efficacy is their only *raison d'être*.⁶⁷

66 See topic 2 of *Nges shes sgron me* in Pettit 1999: 199ff., where Mipham explains that śrāvakas are mainly interested in the selflessness of persons.

67 The *bSam gtan mig sgron* (ca. tenth century), an early Nyingma text about the view, practice, and conduct of the nine vehicles, accepts two Mahāyāna approaches: a gradual one expounded by Śāntarakṣita and a direct one taught by Chan masters. In the *bsTan 'gyur*, two texts composed by Vimalamitra about these two different methods of practice are found. This shows

Nonconceptuality and Practice

Through his perspectivist approach, Mipham attempts to connect various systems while avoiding contradictions. His position regarding the role of conceptuality in the context of practice illustrates this point.⁶⁸ Mipham does not necessarily reject conceptual analysis in the context of practice, as clearly stated in the translated passage of his *Nor bu ke ta ka*,⁶⁹ for the very reason that most beginners cannot attain primordial wisdom immediately. This approach is also made clear in works such as the *Nges shes sgron me* (topics 3 and 4),⁷⁰ *Ye shes snang ba*, *'Od zer phreng ba*, *dPyad sgom 'khor lo*, and *De kho na nyid gsal ba'i sgron me*.⁷¹ In his *dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad*, Mipham mentions briefly four stages through which one gradually accomplishes the Madhyamaka (*dbu ma'i 'char rim bzhi*) in the sense of a nonconceptual state of realization.⁷² These four stages are emptiness (*stong pa*), unity (*zung 'jug*),

that from the seventh–eighth centuries onward these two methods may have coexisted without any tension within the same tradition in India. Contrarily to Sam van Schaik, I therefore do not see any internal “tensions” between these two methods (see van Schaik 2004: 14ff.). Saying that various ways to meditate correspond to various individuals of various capacities does not seem to me to be a hermeneutical strategy to reconcile these tensions but merely a soteriological necessity. As apparent in the present study, hermeneutics is usually influenced by soteriological aspects in the Tibetan context—and, exceptionally, by political factors (e.g., the so-called bSam yas debate; see Demiéville 1952). Positions held or rejected on the conventional level are at the end of the day a matter of soteriological necessity. To use the famous Buddhist medical metaphor, the state of realization of the subjects under treatment defines the position held by the therapist, hence the soteriological importance of ascending perspectives on reality.

68 See Chapter 3, Distinguishing the Conceptual and Nonconceptual Ultimates, for Mipham's definition of conceptuality.

69 NK 4,1–9,5. See translation of this passage in Chapter 1.

70 See Pettit 1999: 206–14.

71 *Nor bu ke ta ka* is a commentary on Śāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra*; *Ye shes snang ba*, a commentary on Maitreya's *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga*; *'Od zer phreng ba*, a commentary on Maitreya's *Madhyāntavibhāga*; *De kho na nyid gsal ba'i sgron me*, a commentary on Mañjuśrimitra's *Bodhicittabhāvanā*. *dPyad sgom 'khor lo* and *De kho na nyid gsal ba'i sgron me* are respectively translated in Chapters 8 and 9.

72 See *dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad* 291–93: /de'ang rnam par mi rtog pa'i don la rim gyis 'jug pa dag gis dbu ma'i gnad nges pa'i tshul ni/ las dang po pas gcig du bral sogs kyi brtags tshe bum sogs mi rnyed pa'i don la bsams na/ ma dpyad pa'i ngor yod pa 'di yi/ dpyad na med pa nyid gnas lugs so snyam pa'i snang stong res 'jog du 'grub bo/ /'di'i ldog phyogs kyi phyogs snga ni shugs kyi gsal bas smos mi dgos te/ rang bzhin med ces pas snang ba 'di'ang 'gog pa'i don du go nas de ltar na sgrub dang bsgrub bya'i rnam gzhas thams cad mi 'thad snyam du sems pa gang yin pa'o/ /de ltar na 'di'i skabs dang spyir dbu ma thams cad mtshungs par snang ba mi 'gog ces pa'i dus su rang bzhin stong pas ma khyab pa'i snang ba logs su yod pa lta bur go bar mi bya ste/ dper na chu zla nyid snang bzhin pa de stong gi/ snang ba de bzhag nas logs su stong rgyu zhig med pa bzhin du/ stong yang des snang tsam yang med mi dgos te/ gal te snang ba'ang med na de'i stong pa'ang med pas/ stong pa

nonconceptuality (*spros bral*), and equality (*mnyam pa nyid*):⁷³

(1) Practice based on analysis is necessary if one cannot go beyond the four extremes at once. In Mipham's view, realization obtained by examining one's own mind is possible on account of the guru's blessing, but it is difficult for most meditators. Beginners must rely on analysis since the concealing and the ultimate truths are mutually exclusive for them. Extremes are then eliminated in stages, one by one, by means of analysis based on modal apprehension. As explained by Pettit, "modal apprehension [*'dzin stang*] is the way one focuses on a concept as the object of meditation."⁷⁴ This is achieved through reasonings such as neither one nor many, or any type of deconstructionist meditative approach. On this level, things are considered to exist on the level of the concealing, if unanalyzed, but are seen to be nonexistent on the level of the ultimate. Emptiness and appearance are here separated, as practitioners consider them in a sequential manner.

(2) As one eventually directly understands that nothing is established, not even nonexistence on the ultimate level, the four extremes are eliminated and modal apprehension (*'dzin stang*) becomes impossible. Although analysis is conducive to the realization of certainty (*nges shes*), this certainty cannot be produced by discursive examination alone because mere intellectual reasoning relies on modal apprehen-

dang snang ba gnyis po phan tshun gcig med na gcig mi srid la/gcig yod na gcig yod pas khyab cing / yod tshul yang srad bu dkar nag bsgrims pa lta bu so sor yod pa'am/ gcig bsal rjes gcig 'ong ba lta bu'i res 'jog min par stong pa la snang bas khyab/ snang ba la stong pas khyab/ de gnyis nam yang 'du 'bral mi shes pa'i yin lugs la yid ches pa sangs rgyas stong gis bkag kyang yid phyir mi ldog pa zhig byung na dbu ma'i gzhung la thos bsam gyi dpyad pa gting slebs pa yin te/ de nas mdo sngags gang gi lam la nan tan byas kyang srog rtsa tshugs pa yin no/ /de ltar skabs 'dir snang ba mi 'gog ces pa mthun snang chos can khas len pa tsam zhig gi don du bstan kyang gnad bslangs te ci phyir snang ba mi 'gog snyam na rtsod pa tsam gyi ched du khas blangs pa ni min gyi/ rang gi grub pa'i mtha' dang mi gi tshul du stong pa'i rnam pa zhig 'char zhing / de'i tshe de'i med pa nyid kyang ma grub pa'am/ ye nas stong bzhin du snang ba yin pa'i tshul la bsams pas chu zla ltar snang bzhin stong la stong bzhin snang ba'i nges pa khyad par can skye ste/ de'i tshe rang bzhin med pa dang rten 'byung 'gal med du shar ba'am/ zung 'jug tu go ba zhes bya zhing / de dus de gnyis tshig gis brjod tshul la tha dad yod kyang / ngo bo la tha dang cung zad med par dbyer med pa'i tshul la nges shes bskyed pas/ dgag gzhi snang ba dang / dgag bya bcad pa sbyar nas 'dzin pa'i rnam rtog rang sar zhig ste/ dgag sgrub bsal gzhag med par sor gzhag tu nus pa lta bu'i spros bral gyi rnam par 'char zhing / de 'dra'i spros bral la goms pas chos can la ltos pa'i chos nyid so so ba lta bu'i blo ris chad kyi dmigs pa'i spyod yul dag nas/ chos thams cad rang bzhin mnyam pa nyid la nges shes khyad par can skye bas mthar phyin to/ /de ltar stong pa dang / zung 'jug dang / spros bral dang / mnyam pa nyid de/ dbu ma'i 'char rim bzhi po de dag snga ma snga ma rim bzhin goms pa la brten nas/ phyi ma phyi ma'i tshul la nges pa skye ba nyid de/ 'di dag ni shin tu gal che ba'i man ngag gi gnad dam pa'o/

73 See Phuntsho 2005a: 150.

74 Pettit 1999: 157.

sion.⁷⁵ From this standpoint, certainty and the projecting mind are mutually exclusive, and analysis is only used as a tool to eradicate projections. At this stage, Mipham recommends practicing analysis in alternation with the practice of focusing the mind until certainty arises. It is important to note that practice (*bhāvanā*) here is different from reflecting (*cintā*) or intellectual reasoning insofar as contemplative practice is not necessarily discursive.⁷⁶ In Mipham's approach, a distinction is there-

75 In this context, Pettit understands *nges pa* in the Gelug tradition and *nges shes* in Mipham's instructions as being equivalent: "The analytical meditation techniques prescribed in the *Beacon* and the *LRC* are both gradual approaches of insight (*vipaśyanā*, *lhag mthong*) and are structured in more or less the same way. Study (*śruti*, *thos pa*) is followed by analysis (*vicāra*, *dpvod pa*) and thoughtful review (*cintā*, *bsam pa*), which leads to certainty (*viniścaya*, *nges pa* or *nges shes*), which constitutes insight (*vipaśyanā*, *lhag mthong*) or wisdom (*prajñā*, *shes rab*), which develops into realization (*adhigama*, *rtogs pa*) through meditative cultivation (*bsgom pa*, *bhāvanā*). In this progression, these terms are structurally—if not in all respects semantically—equivalent" (Pettit 1999: 169). This sequence oversimplifies the matter because if *nges shes* is equated with *vipaśyanā*, there is a risk to conflate the effect with its cause. Moreover, *bhāvanā* does not necessarily have to take place at the end of this sequence, if one considers *bhāvanāmayī prajñā*. These points are important to keep in mind because *nges pa* usually refers to a discursive process of determination, whereas, according to Mipham, *nges shes* is not necessarily understood as the mere result of ascertainment through reasoning (*rigs*, *yukti*), when it refers to the definite knowledge attained through practice. In the context of meditative practice, *nges shes* implies a nonconceptual and experiential understanding. Pettit states that they "are nearly, but not entirely, equivalent" (*ibid.*). The nature of their difference is, however, quite important to distinguish how Mipham and Tsongkhapa differ in the way their soteriological approach makes use of the two truths.

76 The terms *bhāvanā* and *cintā* are not equivalent. They refer to different aspects of the practice (cause, result, method, etc.). If *vicāra* or *vipaśyanā* were reducible to "analysis and thoughtful review" in the sense of reasoning (*rigs pa*, *yukti*) or inference (*rjes dpag*, *anumāna*), one wonders how *śamatha* and *vipaśyanā* could ever be united, at least on the level of the sūtras. Besides, if mere reasoning in the form of analysis and thoughtful review constitutes practice (*bhāvanā*), there is no need for sitting meditation anymore. Dhammajoti 2007b: 576 explains, "It is to be noted that for the Sarvāstivādins, *śamatha* and *vipaśyanā* are not mutually exclusive practices, nor are they to be too sharply differentiated." These points are also well explained by Adam 2006 and 2008, and Cousins 1992: "For the canonical *abhidhamma*, *vitakka* at its weakest results in a tendency to speculate and fix upon ideas. More strongly developed it is the ability to apply the mind to something and to fix it upon a (meditative) object. *Vicāra* at its weakest is simply the tendency of the mind to wander. More highly developed it is the ability to explore and examine an object" (Cousins 1992: 153; cf. Dhammajoti 2007a: 105–8). According to this explanation, *vicāra* refers to the ability of mind to grasp specific characteristics of objects. On its own, this can be the cause for distraction, but associated with one-pointedness of mind (*cittakāgratā*) it becomes mind's faculty to discern particular aspects, which is helpful during the meditative practice to dismantle unreal generalizations appearing to be real. According to Adam 2006: 74, "Kamalaśīla did recognize the concentrative nature of the resulting state of nonconceptual knowledge; he therefore accepted the necessity of initially combining the one-pointed quality of concentration with the noetic quality of concep-

fore implied between the wisdom born from reflection (*cintāmayī prajñā*) and the wisdom born from meditative practice (*bhāvanāmayī prajñā*).⁷⁷ In the course of this practice, things are seen to arise, although there are inherently empty. The dependently arisen appearances and emptiness are in unity and cannot be separated.

(3) Once one has attained this state of decisive understanding (*nges shes*), the main practice consists in “mind taking mind as a support,” and there is no need for conceptual analysis anymore. As explained by Mipham in the *dPyad sgom 'khor lo*:

tual knowledge.” Therefore, discernment is different from conceptual analysis and dialectical enquiry: “The wisdom of *bhāvanā* [*bhāvanāmayī prajñā*] is conceived as having a ‘direct’ character, it is ‘experiential’—this is what distinguishes it from the mere wisdom of thinking (*cintāmayī prajñā*). It is an experiential process of discerning reality, one that occurs in a concentrated state (*samādhi*)” (ibid.: 84–85). Adam masterfully sums it up: “As described in the *Bhāvanākramas*, the discernment of reality involves cultivating an accurate perception of the true nature of the constituents of conventional reality. In other words, it involves the ‘discrimination of *dharma*s’ (*dharma-pravicaya*). This discrimination involves mindfulness practices (*smṛtyupasthāna*) and specific acts of what might be called ‘perceptual judgement’ as to the ultimate emptiness of *dharma*s. [...] It seems clear that Kamalaśīla is not describing a case of ordinary logical reasoning, but rather a subtle form of *meditative* analysis” (ibid. 89–90). This point is central to explaining the main differences between intellectual and meditative traditions. A good case illustrating this lack of understanding of meditative traditions is apparent in Lindtner’s comparison of *samādhi* with “sheer hallucinations” (Lindtner 2003: 158).

77 There are across Buddhist traditions different interpretations of meditative practice or cultivation (*bhāvanā*). Following Hopkins’ (1983) monograph *Meditation on Emptiness*, which, in fact, mainly deals with *cintāmayī prajñā*, Lopez (2001: 63) illustrates this point: “Since the time of his 1973 doctoral dissertation, Jeffrey Hopkins has gone to great lengths to demonstrate that even for the ‘scholastic’ dGe lugs sect of Tibetan Buddhism, emptiness is not only a topic for philosophical exegesis, but is also the object of sustained and systematic meditation.” According to Lopez, this approach consists in a procedure called the “four essentials” (*gnad bzhi*), which in fact appear to be forms of discursive reasoning. However, even in Indian most scholastic traditions such as that of Dharmakīrti, the ultimate valid cognition (*pāramārthikapramāṇa*) is only accessible by means of *bhāvanāmayī prajñā*, whereas the *cintāmayī prajñā* is associated with conventional valid cognition (*sāṃvṛtyavahārikapramāṇa*), as shown by Krasser (2004: 143–44). If it were not so, the distinction between *bhāvanāmayī prajñā* and *cintāmayī prajñā* would be impossible and would make no sense. *Vipaśyanā* is a method and is part of *bhāvanā*, which is essential to further develop *prajñā*. Analyzing in the sense of reflecting and reviewing discursively is not *vipaśyanā*. Discernment (*so sor rtog pa, pratyavekṣā*), along with equivalent expressions such as *pravicya*, is not amenable in all contexts to reflecting, reasoning, or analyzing. Originally, it refers to a method for realizing the selflessness of wholes by taking note of the *dharma*s that constitute these wholes. This is the meaning of *dharma-pravicaya*, the discrimination of *dharma*s, which gives rise to *prajñā* (see AbhK I.3). The point is that one does not reason and make arguments during *vipaśyanā*. One merely notes and watches *dharma*s as they arise, based on various classifications identifying them as *dhātus*, *skandhas*, and so forth. This point is made clear by Mipham in his *dPyad sgom 'khor lo*, which in its first part follows Kamalaśīla’s stages of practice.

Thus, since the root of all phenomena depends on the mind, search for the essence of your mind. As you become skilled in all phenomena and realize the meaning of selflessness, you will understand the secret of mind. As a consequence, you should relinquish all kinds of analysis based on logical reasoning and rely on the pith instructions of accomplished beings. . . . When you take your mind as a referential object, you accomplish mental stillness and you gradually give rise to the insight into the fundamental state.⁷⁸ With regard to this, remain in the state of your natural empty essence that is luminous and clear by directing your awareness within. This is referred to as mind taking mind as a referential object.⁷⁹

At that point, there is no need to conceptually discriminate any further, because analysis does not make sense in the absence of a divergence between the basis of negation, the appearance, and their emptiness as a nonaffirming negation. Since the actual ultimate is inexpressible and unthinkable, one should then remain in the state of primordial wisdom where conceptuality and analysis are absent (*spros bral*):⁸⁰

According to the sūtras, understanding and directly experiencing [this fundamental sameness] is like quenching your thirst by [actually] drinking [some water]. Therefore, you need not alternate [this gradual practice] with dry intellectualism that exhausts you with endless logical argumentation.⁸¹

78 This sentence refers to the practices of *gzhi gnas* and *lhag mthong*.

79 *dPyad sgom 'khor lo* 22 & 24: 'di ltar chos thams cad kyi rtsa ba sems la thug pas rang sems kyi gnad btsal na sems kyi gsang shes nas chos thams cad la mkhas shing bdag med pa'i don rtogs par 'gyur bas/ 'dir rigs dpyad mang po dor te rtogs ldan gyi man ngag ltar bsten na/ . . . /sams la dmigs na zhi gnas 'grub/ /rim gyis gnas lugs lhag mthong skye/ /de la rang snying stong pa'i ngang/ /gsal le sang nge ba la ni/ /shes pa nang du bkug nas bzhag /sams kyis sems la dmigs zhes bya/ See the full translation of *dPyad sgom 'khor lo* below.

80 In his *'Od gsal snying po*, Mipham explains that one gradually understands emptiness (*stong*), unity (*zung 'jug*), freedom from mental proliferations (*spros bral*), and fundamental sameness (*mnyam pa nyid*), one after another (see Dharmachakra 2009: 58 and Duckworth 2009: 40–42).

81 *dPyad sgom 'khor lo* 18–19: /skoms pas gdung bas phyogs gang na/ /chu yod go yang skom mi sel/ /de phyr btung na sel ba ltar/ /go myong de 'drar mdo las gsungs/ /de phyr rigs pa mang po yis/ /rang nyid ngal ba'i go skam la/ See the full translation of *dPyad sgom 'khor lo* below.

Mipham considers that all vehicles converge toward this state in which form and emptiness, being indivisible, are beyond conceptuality, and therefore beyond affirmation and negation.⁸²

(4) The stage of equanimity, according to Mipham, ensues once all dualistic notions of phenomena as being distinct, or separated in their nature, become exhausted.

It can be seen from this gradual method of realizing Madhyamaka that Mipham's approach is pragmatic. When conceptuality is involved, his objective is to provide beginners for whom the two truths are mutually exclusive with a path toward the realization of primordial wisdom, the unity of the two truths. In this sense, all means (*thabs*, *upāya*) can be used, analysis included. However, it is very clear from these texts that the goal of a conceptual practice is the recognition of what is primordially nonconceptual, empty, and luminous, which brings us to Mipham's elucidation of the ultimate truth. In Mipham's understanding, the primordial wisdom that one must know intuitively or directly (*so so rang rig pa'i ye shes*) corresponds to *pratyātmagati* as described in the LAS. Regarding the meaning of this term in the LAS, Forsten explains:

The strictly personal experience (*[sva-]pratyātma-gati*) is a transcendent event in the sense that all theoretical classifications, views, daily life-entities, ontological (*sat-asat*) and epistemological (*grāhya-grāhaka*) categories, and so forth lose their relevance and legitimacy. [...] Taking the segments as the point of departure, three salient aspects become visible. These are interconnected and seem to form the nature of *pratyātma-gati* and of its close synonym: Noble Insight (*ārya-jñāna*). The transcendent experience *pratyātma-gati* (and/or *ārya-jñāna*), then, is characterized as (1) pure and immediate; (2) it can only be attained and experienced by oneself, and (3) it is incommunicable.⁸³

Mipham, in his *bShes spring gi mchan 'grel*, a commentary of Nāgārjuna's *Ratnāvalī*, insists that "having the right view" indeed corresponds to such a direct experience in opposition to what is merely imagined or conceptualized by way of language.⁸⁴

82 This is a central notion of Nyingma literature presenting an ascending scope of paths (i.e., *bSam gtan mig sgron*). Lower vehicles are merely means of approaching Atiyoga.

83 Forsten 2006: 38–39.

84 See Kawamura 1975: 86.

CHAPTER 8

The Gradual Way and the Two Truths in Practice: A Translation

Introduction to Mipham's *dPyad sgom 'khor lo*

The *dPyad sgom 'khor lo* is a collection of short instructions about the way to practice the two truths.⁸⁵ It was written over a period of time stretching from 1881 to 1906. In *Mi pham gsung 'bum* (BDRC W23468), the *dPyad sgom 'khor lo* is presented according to an ascending scale of perspectives corresponding to increasingly higher teachings. Although some of these texts are not dated, it appears that the *dPyad sgom 'khor lo* was arranged in a non-chronological manner. Providing a gradual method of practice seems to have been the main intention of the person who collated these texts for this particular edition. However, in the edition of Mipham's *gsung 'bum* in thirty-two volumes (BDRC W2DB16631) published by Gangs can rig gzhung dpe rnying myur skyobs lhan tshogs, the title *dPyad sgom 'khor lo* refers only to one text about conceptual meditation. The various texts presented in W23468 as a single collection are published individually with their own titles in W2DB16631. Interestingly enough, they are still ordered in the same way. One could argue that W2DB16631 presents these texts in a more accurate way since the highest instructions have little to do with the notion of *dpyad sgom*. However, what matters from the perspective of our enquiry is that the editors in both cases presented these texts in a way that would provide instructions through a set of gradually ascending perspectives on reality.

The instructions given in *dPyad sgom 'khor lo* (taken as a whole) follow, as noted above, Kamalaśīla's gradual approach of the *Bhāvanākramas*. The other short texts composed by Mipham in this collection of pith instructions aim at connecting Mahāyāna practice with Vajrayāna and Dzogchen approaches to meditative practice. This series of short instructions shows in a very detailed way how Mipham uses various theoretical devices, such as the two truths, to connect the view (*lta ba*) with practice (*sgom*). It is clear in this respect that the lower instructions are conceived as steps toward the higher ones:

85 Three four among the seven have been translated into English. For Text A, see Tarthang Tulku 1973, Pearcey 2004, Duckworth 2011. For Text B, see Pearcey 2021. For Text C, see Pearcey 2006. For Text E, see Brunnhözl 2007a, Duckworth 2011.

- The two first texts (see texts A and B below: *The Exposition of the Practice Based on the Fourfold Summary of the Teaching of the Great Vehicle I and II*) are instructions on the contemplation of manifoldness, impermanence, suffering, and selflessness in relation to phenomena. As presented above in Chapter 4, the aim of these two texts is to teach how to operate the mereological reduction of putative wholes into their primary constituents through the method of the five aggregates in order to perceive their impermanence, their selflessness, and the suffering they induce by virtue of being illusory. This approach is an essential preliminary practice (*sngon 'gro*) and the foundation of the Mahāyāna path that is common to the sūtras and tantras. Its main function is to dent the ongoing chain reaction process perpetuated by conditioned phenomena.
- Texts C and D (respectively *The Profound Instruction on the View of Madhyamaka* and *The way to Reach Certainty with Regard to the Two [Kinds of] Selflessness*) point out the cognitive nature of the problem faced by the meditator and the necessity for going beyond dualistic notions through the realization of the unity of appearance and emptiness. Once the cognitive apprehension of illusory phenomena in the form of mental projections (*kun tu rtog pa, parikalpa*) is clearly perceived as erroneous by the meditator, it is shown that even the mind apprehending this cannot be found when analyzed. A mere intellectual understanding of the selflessness of phenomena is here of little help since this itself falls within the sphere of this apprehending mind. As a consequence, both texts recommend the use of Vajrayāna methods.
- To go beyond what we referred to above as stages 2 and 3, the epistemic reduction of real objects into conditioned cognitions and the realization that the nature of these cognitions is beyond the four extremes, “although many perfect stages of investigation by means of hearing and reflecting have been explained regarding the view, this *dharmadhātu*, the object you must know for yourself, is the crucial point that cannot be discovered by a mere external investigation carried out through verbalization (*sgra dang tshig*). As a consequence, because they experience [it] in a way that is completely beyond the intellect of other ordinary beings, [only] those who are skilled in the way of placing their minds on account of having [received] the guru’s pith instructions can easily attain certainty.”⁸⁶

86 See *dPyad sgom 'khor lo 22*.

- In texts E and F (*Pith Instruction on the Three Aspects of Mahāmudrā* and *Looking at One’s Mind by Means of Mind*), the focus of meditation is on the unity of emptiness and luminosity and on the direct introduction to awareness (*rig pa*). With mind as a starting point, the meditator proceeds through stages 3 and 4 to distinguish awareness and cultivate its constant recognition: “Thus, place [your mind] on the luminous state of your own empty essence (*rang snying stong pa’i ngang gsal le*), the state of sheer clarity (*sang nge ba*), by focusing on the inner aspect of its knowing quality (*shes pa nag du bkug nas bzhag*). . . . The unity of emptiness and luminosity, the secret of mind, manifests within the essential nature of phenomena. Then, on account of the empowering blessing of this lineage, you will experience the sublime original [state of] cognition and emptiness (*rig stong gnyug ma*), the naturally occurring and innate primordial wisdom (*lhan skyes ye shes rang byung ba*), [27] the meaning of the luminous great perfection.”⁸⁷
- Text G (*Summary of the Meditative Practice of Severance*⁸⁸) shows how Vajrayāna practice, in the present case *gcod*, is used as a method for the cultivation of awareness: “As you proceed, you should ideally remain in the state in which there is nothing to be done (*byar med du*). As the next best, exert yourself without conceptualizing. [Or else,] at least unify [appearances] with the expanse of awareness (*rig pa*). Although [all kinds of] possible appearances (*snang srid*) flourish in the nature of mind, know that there is nothing to be done.”⁸⁹

Important information supplied by Mipham in his *mKhas pa’i tshul la ’jug pa’i sgo* regarding various aspects of the practice alluded to in the *dPyad sgom ’khor lo*, as well as emendations to the text, figure in Appendices G and H. Regarding issues pertaining to the translation process itself, when a verbal substantive is used to connect two clauses (see *dPyad sgom ’khor lo* 8,3–4 for an example of this), I sometimes had to break up a long sentence in Tibetan into two shorter sentences in English. In this case, the verb used in the first sentence in English corresponds to the verbal aspect of the Tibetan verbal substantive, while the subject of the following sentence is the English substantive corresponding to the nominal aspect of the Tibetan verbal substantive. This mirrors the dual nature of the Tibetan verbal substantive,

87 See *dPyad sgom ’khor lo* 24 and 26.

88 *gcod*.

89 See *dPyad sgom ’khor lo* 32.

which can be simultaneously a verb and a noun from the perspective of the English language, just as in the following example of a nominalized gerund: “Doing something like this is extremely beneficial.” Unfortunately, it is not always possible to render a Tibetan verbal substantive through an English gerund. As a direct consequence of this, I have not put the subject of the second sentence in brackets, as it is obvious that the term is found in the original text although it occurs only once. I resorted to this translation method when (1) the Tibetan sentence was too long to be translated into English by means of a single sentence, and (2) the resulting English translation would not distort the original text by inducing exogenous change such as a modification of topicalization or an alteration of the causal presentation of arguments and ideas as expressed by the Tibetan syntax. Although I have tried to remain faithful to the Tibetan syntax in order to avoid such shortcomings, there have been some cases where some adaptations were required, especially when Tibetan sentences were too long owing to endless adjuncts such as verbal adjectives. In such cases, these two criteria of readability and precision have been systematically used to assess the pertinence of the proposed translation.

Translation: A Complete Purification of the Mind’s Activity Called “The Wheel of Analytical Investigation”

A. [The Exposition of the Practice Based on the Fourfold Summary of the Teaching of the Great Vehicle (I)]⁹⁰

[2] Homage to Mañjuśrī!⁹¹

[All] negativities that exist in the world

Are created by the power of afflictions [affecting] our own mind.

90 *dPyad sgom ’khor lo* is a compilation of several short texts mainly regarding the form of practice practiced in the common (i.e., non-Dzogchen) vehicles before the direct introduction to one’s own nature. The first text has no title. I gave it this title as it is clearly the topic of this text as explained in the conclusion (see *dPyad sgom ’khor lo* 9,1–4).

91 *Namo Mañjuśrīye*. The text is composed of septisyllabic verses. However, the initial presentation of the outline does not follow this pattern since it is written in prose. There are only a few *alamkāras* in this pith instruction pertaining to the technicalities of practice based on conceptual discernment (*so sor brtag pa*). The versification appears in this case to be merely a mnemonic device. The stanzas do not seem to be based on a fixed number of verses. For all these reasons and because of the need for a precise translation of this text on account of its rather technical character, I opted for prose. Indeed, the result of such a translation would be a poem without any meter or stanzas but with many enjambments. Although it would have certainly been better to translate this text in verse, I must humbly confess that I could not do it in any meaningful way.

[Since] engaging the mind (*yid byed, manasikāra*) in a wrong way is the cause of [all] afflictions,

Instead of this, we should correctly engage the mind.

[With regard to this,] there are three main points:

- 1 how to practice,
- 2 [how to] measure progress in [the practitioner's] mind stream,
- 3 [what is] the purpose of this [practice].

1. *How to Practice*

[Contemplate the manifoldness of the person and phenomena]

Visualize that someone you are very attached to is present before you. Distinguishing the five aggregates with regard to this person, start by examining the body: the flesh, blood, bones, marrow, fat, heart, lungs, liver, spleen, kidneys, gall bladder, stomach, small and large intestines, urinary bladder, reproductive organs,⁹² members, sense faculties, excrements, microbes, hair, fingernails, and so on. [This] is the correct method for differentiating all these impure substances, as well as all the collections of basic constituents—earth, [air, water, fire, and space]. [3] Whatever there is, gradually differentiate [constituents of that], down to irreducible atoms. Examine whether attachment arises or not for each of these [objects of investigation]. Since there is no such thing as what is called “body” apart from these impure and fragmentary substances, this body is like a machinery, a wall [made of] straw, a heap of manure, a mass of foam. Once you realize [it], remain aware of this fact. When the continuity of this thought dwindles, analyze the very nature of sensations, conceptions, conditioning mental states, and consciousnesses by breaking them down into their many components. When you see them as water bubbles, mirages, plantain trees, and illusions, you will understand that there is nothing to be attached to. [4] Sustain this [thought] until it fades away. At that point, without deliberately prolonging it, move on to another investigation.

[Contemplate the impermanence of conditioned phenomena]

Then, [considering] that these impure [substances] and essenceless aggregates do not remain after they have arisen, methodically contemplate them as they fall apart from one instant to the next. All the vanished worlds of the past have met their end, and so will present and future worlds too. The nature of conditioned phe-

⁹² I expanded the list of inner organs for *don snod*.

nomena is a cause for revulsion. All living beings are certain to die. They die all of a sudden, without any certainty as to when. You should [therefore] consider all these appearances of conditioned existence as being subject to change according to circumstances.

In brief, contemplate with a clear mind, all the aspects of the impermanence of conditioned phenomena, one by one, as well as you can. Once you perceive the aggregates of the object of your attachment to be fleeting like a flash of lightning, a water bubble, or a [passing] cloud, just contemplate this as long as this thought does not fade away.

[Contemplate the impermanence inherent to conditioned phenomena]

Then, [consider that] each instant of an aggregate consisting in a manifoldness [of basic constituents] is the essence of suffering itself or will come to be the cause of subsequent suffering or change, even if it appears to be pleasurable. Aggregates are therefore the basis of suffering. Contemplate to the best of your capacity all the suffering there is in the world. Since all this is due to the flaws of the aggregates, [5] there is not the slightest thing in these unstable (*zag bcas*, *sāsrava*) aggregates that is free from the defect of suffering.⁹³ Because these aggregates are the source of [all] suffering, they are like a filthy swamp, a pit of fire, an island of cannibals. Abide as long as possible in this thought.

[Contemplate the selflessness of conditioned phenomena]

Finally, by investigating whatever is called the self in reference to these aggregates that are manifold, impermanent, and rooted in suffering, you will see that [these aggregates] are like a rainfall or an empty house deprived of any self. At that point, remain within this certainty as long as it lasts. Once it has stopped, investigate again according to the stages that have been just explained. At times, contemplate anything through its manifoldness without even following a sequence. Analyze this point again and again. At times, investigate this with regard to others' aggregates.⁹⁴ At other times, examine this with regard to your own. Then, look into this with regard to all conditioned phenomena. Abandon any attachment to anything.

93 I did not translate *zag dang bcas* as "contaminated" or "defiled," since *zag bcas* is used here in its primary meaning, namely, as denominating the character of something fleeting, dissipating. The Sanskrit is *sāsrava* from the root *sru*, "to flow." In the present context, the semantic field of *zag bcas* has little to do with morals. Even so, it is clear that *zag bcas* means "contaminated" only insofar as that which is unstable is unreliable.

94 Xyl.: *gzhan gyis* instead of *gzhan gyi* (5,4).

In brief, renounce all conceptual thoughts that are out of the scope of this investigation in four points, namely, manifoldness, impermanence, suffering, and selflessness, and constantly turn the wheel of this analytical practice. Certainty will arise to the degree you practice this. In the way a wildfire spreads in dry grass, keep directing without interruption your awareness on all kinds of referential objects.

[6] [Consider how] in previous lives you have time and again engaged in a stream of thoughts about all sorts of things as a result of incorrectly engaging your mind. Instead of this, establish [yourself in this practice]. When you are getting tired, do not engage in the investigation as an antidote, since afflictions also subside, [simply] rest in this equanimity. After having spent a short while relaxing, analyze again as [explained] above. Remain at all times deliberately mindful and vigilant regarding the thoughts produced by this investigation. If you become forgetful and afflictions increase, apply this investigation just like [one uses] a sword when the enemy appears. Just like a lamp dispels darkness, what need is there to say that such an investigation will cause great harm to afflictions, even if it is only [practiced] a little. To the extent you consider the defects of all conditioned phenomena, saṃsāra, to that extent you will know the unconditioned, nirvāṇa, the supreme soothing state of peace.

2. Assessment of the Practitioner's Progress

Having trained [in this] for some time, you will spontaneously understand that one's own and others' five aggregates, as well as all conditioned phenomena, are a manifoldness [of basic constituents], impermanence, and suffering and devoid of a self. When, due to this, all appearances manifest as hallucinations, even without any deliberate effort [on your part], you will have overcome afflictions. [7] When the limpid ocean of your mind is free from the waves of afflictions, as this is conducive to having control over yourself, the state of absorption resulting from mental stillness will be within your reach. When you have seen the very nature of things with a one-pointed mind,⁹⁵ you have gained insight into them. This is the introductory path [shared] by the three common vehicles.⁹⁶

95 Xyl.: *rtse gcig sem kyi* instead of *rtse gcig sems kyi* (7,1).

96 Mipham gives the following explanation in his *mKhas pa'i tshul la 'jug pa'i sgo*: "Furthermore, mental stillness (*zhi gnas, śamatha*) and insight (*lhag mthong, vipaśyanā*) are referred to as the path that establishes all positive qualities. Unwavering mental stillness is the attainment of a mind that abides in a state of stillness endowed with perfect mental flexibility (*shin tu sbyang ba, praśrabdhi*) by means of the nine methods for stabilizing the mind. In order to overcome the deceptive phenomenal appearances [of phenomena] and the negative mental rigidities (*gnas ngan len, dauṣṭhulya*), the correct [practice of] distinguishing things as they are

3. *The Purpose [of This Practice]*

All dependently arisen phenomena arising are at all times always primordially non-arisen, like an illusion. Therefore, with regard to emptiness, which is the selflessness of phenomena, they are beyond dualistic views [presenting them] as being different or identical. This sphere of fundamental sameness that cannot be separated [into two] is the object of realization of the Great Vehicle. It is the extraordinarily luminous *dharmadhātu*, sugata nature. Once you have realized this very nature, you have accomplished the nirvāṇa that is not established as the extremes of conditioned existence or peace. Utterly pure and blissful, it is the great unconditioned that is completely permanent. This unsurpassable transcendence of qualities of the great being is nothing but the unsurpassable definitive meaning of the secret essence, the ultimate innate sphere of great bliss, naturally occurring primordial wisdom itself. All phenomena are perfect in this state. Being directly introduced to it by means of the pith instructions of the guru is the Dzogchen approach. Therefore, as a preliminary training for the Mahāyāna path common to the sūtras and [secret] mantra, you should destroy the matrix of delusion of conditioned phenomena.⁹⁷ [8]

This path of investigation is excellent. First of all, the power of analysis disrupts the phenomenal appearances of arising afflictions. Through the certainty that aggregates are empty, the three worlds are freed from attachment or longing throughout. Then, eventually, this is emptiness itself, the complete pacification of all references and marks. As you do not yearn for the antidote of renunciation, you become free from all attachments and fixations in terms of dualistic positions. As you long for the compassion free from attachment, you fearlessly come and go within conditioned existence, like a bird in the sky of *dharmadhātu*, and you reach the supreme state of the bodhisattva.

Thus, in accordance with the noble scriptures, I have explained the purification of mind's activity as a preliminary practice to the practices of mental stillness and

[means] distinguishing ('byed) the phenomena (*chos, dharmā*) of the two truths on account of [their] general characteristics (*spyi mtshan, sāmānyalakṣaṇa*), fully distinguishing [them] on account of [their] specific characteristic (*rang mtshan, svalakṣaṇa*), and seeing the true reality [of all phenomena] exactly as it is by means of the wisdom that discerns their unique qualities and conceptually discriminates their [respective] identities" (*mKhas pa'i tshul la 'jug pa'i sgo* Vol.2: 155,17–156,2).

97 Apart from the direct introduction to one's nature, all paths operate within the sphere of mind, on the level of causality, in contradistinction to Dzogchen, which is beyond causes and conditions. Conceptual discernment (*so sor brtag pa*) therefore has a ripening function that is used to its fullest extent during the *sngon 'gro*. As long as one remains at the level of mind, *so sor brtag pa* is an excellent thing and is therefore not rejected by Mipham.

insight, a central point regarding the paths of the three vehicles. The more familiar you become with this investigation method to purify the mind's activity, the weaker afflictions will be. If you bridle afflictions as much [as possible], accomplishing mental stillness will be easy.⁹⁸ Just like gold, which, purified and [molten] by fire, becomes malleable, mind also, freed from attachment, becomes [pliant]. It is said in the noble sutras that the merit accumulated by someone who understands for a split moment that everything conditioned [9] is suffering, impermanence, emptiness, and selflessness, is immeasurable compared to the merit of someone worshipping the three jewels with all sorts of offerings for [the duration of] one thousand years of a god. It is said [by the Buddha] that reciting these four Dharma seals of the Great Vehicle is similar to reciting the eighty-four thousand sections of the teaching. Therefore, since cultivating⁹⁹ the meaning of this exposition is [like] cultivating the quintessential meaning of myriad sūtras, you will easily obtain the treasury of profound and vast wisdom, you will be quickly liberated! Through the virtue of this explanation and the power of this nectar-like teaching on non-attachment, may those tormented by the misfortune of this degeneration age attain the [supreme] state of peace!

This was written by Mipham, the one who pleases Mañjuśrī, on the eighteenth day of the tenth month of the Iron Hare year [19/11/1891]. *Maṅgalam*.

B. [The Exposition of the Practice Based on the Fourfold Summary of the Teaching of the Great Vehicle (II)]¹⁰⁰

1. [Paying Homage, Taking Refuge, and Producing the Thought of Awakening (*byang chub sems, bodhicitta*)]

Homage to the guru! When you apply the instruction about the purification of the [mind's] activity, apply [the method] based on the practice of concentration (*bsam gtan, dhyāna*) in seclusion. Consider that it is difficult to obtain the [eight] freedoms and the [ten] favorable conditions (*dal 'byor*) and so forth, and rejoice in [your being able to] practice. Visualize at the crown of your head the teacher,

98 For a detailed presentation of Mipham's instructions on this point, see translation in Appendix A (Instructions to Accomplish Mental Stillness).

99 *bsgom nas*. This is an interesting use of a future stem (*bsgom*) in conjunction with the particle *nas*, which is interpreted as expressing the anteriority of an action compared to another in the future. See *dPyad sgom 'khor lo* 9,2.

100 The second text, just like the first, has no title. I gave it this title in continuity with my suggestion regarding the first.

the Buddha, the king of the Śākya, surrounded by his retinue, the saṅghas of the greater and the smaller vehicles. Offer the sevenfold ritual¹⁰¹ [beginning with the words] “To all [the buddhas]. . .”¹⁰² [10] At this [initial] stage in the practice purifying the [mind’s] activity, right [at the beginning of] this session of sitting, supplicate [the Buddha] with intense yearning and devotion. From the bottom of your heart, the depth of your bones, supplicate [him] to let [his] blessing arise in your own continuum as well as those of all beings. Thinking that you will attain the precious state of perfect awakening for the sake of all beings and that you will practice the stages of the purification of [the mind’s] activity in order to [achieve] this, produce the thought of awakening.

[2. *Manifoldness*]

First of all, consider the attachment to anyone in your presence as it arises, or if no one is there, consider anyone suitable in your mind. Then, just as a corpse is dismembered in a charnel ground, dismantle [mentally] (*so sor phye ba*) [the various] impure [parts] of this [body], beginning with the right eye, and then the skin, flesh, bones, and inner organs.¹⁰³ As you proceed, [thinking] that such is the body, consider its various aspects. Mentally breaking down (*rnam par phye*) [the various constituents of the body] from the thirty-six impure substances down to the irreducible atoms, you will thoroughly understand the nature of the body. In the same way, distinguish the earth element [in the body], for example the solidity of flesh and bones, distinguish the fire element through the warmth of the body, the element of air [as evidenced by] respiration,¹⁰⁴ the water element [present as] blood and urine, and the space element on account of the [body’s] cavities. These [elements] also do not have the character of being singular. [Therefore,] with the eye of wisdom, look at the body which, resembling a heap of poisonous snakes set in one place, is nothing but a collection [of multiple constituents], and consider [its] defining characteristic to be without substance.

101 The sevenfold service consists in prostrating, confessing one’s negative actions, making offering, rejoicing in the virtue, requesting the teaching, and beseeching the guru not to pass into nirvāṇa.

102 See Samantabhadra’s “Aspiration to Good Actions” in the *Avataṃsakasūtra* (D44, f.358b–359b).

103 The inner organs refer to the five solid (*don*) organs (i.e., heart, lungs, liver, spleen, and kidneys) and the six hollow (*snod*) organs (i.e., gall bladder, stomach, small and large intestines, urinary bladder, and reproductive organs).

104 Xyl.: *dbug* (for “respiration”) instead of *dbugs* (10,5).

Because the duration of the sitting and relaxation sessions can vary, [11] practice as long as your mind is clear. About this [method], it is said in the sūtras:¹⁰⁵

With regard to a heap of rice, barley, lentils, and so on, thoroughly mixed together in a single place, wise beings make distinctions and think, “this is rice, this is barley.”

Likewise, as you distinguish the heaps of basic constituents constituting the aggregates, through such an investigation, you will understand the manifoldness of the aggregates exactly as it is. Thus, consider first materiality. Then, once you have clearly contemplated such thoughts [as mentioned above] for some time, investigate [the aggregate of] sensation by distinguishing the three [types of sensations]: pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral. Distinguish also the multiplicity of pleasant [sensations], such as pleasure when you see a pleasant form or when you hear a pleasant sound. For each of those, see distinctly that the numerous sensations present within your mind are manifold.¹⁰⁶ Next, when this has been completed, [analyze the aggregate of] conceptions. There are many different kinds of conceptions: various conceptions such as [thinking that] something [is] good, bad, or neutral, and conceptions consisting in the diverse specific aspects of these [good, bad, or neutral things], such as a pillar or a vase, an ox, a horse, male and female, and so forth. On account of this, certainty will arise [in your mindstream] that the aggregate of conceptions also consists in a multiplicity of various phenomena. Next is what is known as the aggregate of conditioning mental states. The conditioning mental states that are associated with mind, namely, the various arising mental states such as intentionality, contact, and so on, in addition to both sensations and conceptions, are manifold. [12] For example, within the [general category of] virtuous mental states, there are many [subcategories of mental states] such as faith, awareness of what is

105 This citation could be inspired by the *Arthaviniścayanāmadharmaparyāya*. See D317, f.177a:
/dge slong dag 'di lta ste/ dper na 'bru rnam pa sna tshogs 'di lta ste/ 'bras sā lu dang / 'bru dang / nas dang / gro dang / mon sran gre'u dang / mon sran sde'u dang / rgya sran dang / 'bras ni sba ba dang / sran chung dang / mon sran gu dang / til dang / 'bras drus pa dang / yungs kar gyis gang ba'i sbyang zhig kha gnyis phye ba de la mig dang ldan pa'i mi zhig gis blug ste so sor brtags na 'di dag ni 'bras sā lu'o/ 'di dag ni 'bras so/ 'di dag ni nas so/ 'di da ni gro'o/ 'di dag ni mon sran gre'u'o/ 'di dag ni mon sran sde'u'o/ 'di dag ni rgya sran no/ 'di dag ni 'bras ni spa ba'o/ 'di dag ni sran chung ngo / 'di dag ni mon sran na gu'o/ 'di dag ni til lo/ 'di dag ni 'bras drus pa'o/ 'di dag ni yungs kar ro zhes bya bar shes so/

106 For example, if we feel happy, this general sensation, which appears to be a whole, may in fact be the aggregation of subsensations resulting from various causes such as hearing pleasant music, eating something tasty, or looking at breathtaking scenery.

embarrassing, and so forth. Nonvirtuous mental states are exemplified by lack of faith or awareness of what is embarrassing, attachment, aggression, and so forth. There are numerous different kinds [of mental states]. Among these, also, when we distinguish a single mental state such as attachment or nonattachment, on the basis of its object, occurrence in time, and aspects, [what appeared to be a single mental state] becomes infinite. Therefore, analyze [them], thinking that these conditioning mental states also are various and manifold. Regarding [the aggregate of] consciousness, consider its six kinds, from the visual up to the mental consciousness, together with their respective internal subdivisions. Examine the fact that such a visual consciousness also appears as a multiplicity of many different kinds of consciousnesses, such as the [visual] perception of blue or yellow.¹⁰⁷ Therefore, as it is said in the [*Buddhasaṅgīti*] *sūtra*:¹⁰⁸

Materiality is like a water bubble; sensations are like froth; conceptions are like a mirage; conditioning mental states are like a plantain tree; consciousnesses are like an illusion. Such are the sacred words spoken by the friend of the sun (*nyi ma'i gnyen*).¹⁰⁹

When you have acquired this extraordinary conviction, remain seated as long as it does not slip away. Without deliberately prolonging the continuity [of this moment], proceed to the contemplation on impermanence.

[3. Impermanence]

The time during which a thing is established lasts one moment, not two. It changes immediately. [13] From the very moment [this thing] first arises up to the final

107 According to Abhidharma there are two mental factors (*sems byung*) that are used to analyze something. The first (*rtog pa, vitarka*) results in a coarse comprehension of the object, while the second (*rnam par dpyod pa, vicāra*) corresponds to a very fine understanding of the object.

108 D228, f.75b: *gzugs ni dbu ba rdo ba lta bu/ tshor ba ni chu'i chu bur lta bu/ 'du shes ni smig rgyu lta bu/ 'du byed ni shing chu skyes lta bu/ rnam par shes pa ni sgyu ma lta bu'o zhes nyi ma'i gnyen gyis gsungs so/* Mipham's quote slightly differs from D228. Various quotes of the same passage are found in the bsTan 'gyur (see D3842, D3854, D3859, D3860, D3862, D3865, D3866). When we compare the various renditions of the text across the commentarial works in which it is contained, it appears that Mipham must have drawn his quote from the *Madhyamakāvatārabhāṣya* (D3862): *gzugs ni dbu brdos pa 'dra/ /tshor ba chu yi chu bur bzhin/ 'du shes smig rgyu lta bu ste/ 'du byed rnams ni chu shing bzhin/ /rnam par shes pa sgyu ma lta/ /nyi ma'i gnyen gyis bka' stsal to/*

109 This epithet refers to Buddha.

instant of its complete cessation, it arises and ceases each moment. Thus, whether [this thing] ceases in a single instant like a flash of lightning or remains for an eon like the physical world, which includes [everything], as long as it is conditioned, it is nothing but an arrangement [of parts] in a continuum or sequence of momentary arisings and cessations. Once you have understood that [all conditioned things] are similar to a waterfall or the flame of a butter lamp, keep [this] in mind. Practice until a clear certainty arises regarding the mode of appearance of all conditioned phenomena, which are subject to change and resemble a lightning flash, a water bubble, a cloud, and so on. Practice this through various means, [by examining] the mode of being of the entire vessel-like world, together with everything it contains, which, having arisen, is subject to destruction; [by investigating] outer change in the form of the four seasons; [by considering] inner change in the form of the stages of life (youth, old age, and so forth), highs and lows, rise and fall, happiness and suffering, and so forth, as well as that which is experienced by oneself and others. When the continuity of these thoughts fades away, examine in the same way the unstable aggregates, which, being a collection of many different properties, dissipate without abiding for a single instant.

[4. Suffering]

At that point, in addition to [being] a continuum and an extended phenomenon, from the perspective of each moment, that which is immediate suffering is the suffering of suffering. Although the nature of this moment might appear to be pleasure, it ceases every moment and exists as a changing continuum. [14] [This is] the suffering of change. Whatever this very moment is—pleasure, suffering, or equanimity—an instant that would not eventually come to be the cause for suffering does not exist. It is like poisonous food, for each subsequent [moment] arises in dependence upon each former [moment]. Therefore, if there was not a single previous moment at all, the arising of an effect would be blocked. As a consequence, since all these [previous] moments are the cause of suffering, this is the suffering of that which is conditioned. Thus, with regard to the three [kinds of] suffering and their various combinations, until this firm conviction arises [in your continuum], consider that the unstable aggregates comprising the three worlds are the very basis of [this] suffering, being similar to a pit of fire or a foul swamp. Moreover, contemplate in any way you can, without fixed order or determined amount of time, the suffering of the six types of existence, such as [suffering] from heat or cold in the hells; whatever form of suffering is the object of your experience, such as worrying about something; or the countless forms of suffering of conditioned existence. The innu-

merable diversity of such forms of suffering is difficult to bear. As long as the noble path has not been obtained, the scope [of suffering] that is continuously manifesting is immeasurable. [15] Thus, thinking, “this [suffering] arose from the continuum of the aggregates perpetuating instability,” devote yourself to contemplation and investigation as long as you do not thoroughly know the nature of this [suffering]. You will attain certainty [in this]. As this certainty effortlessly arises, keep on contemplating [it] as long as it spontaneously remains present in your mind.

[5. *Selflessness*]

When this thought begins to fade, with the certainty generated by the three former examinations, [consider that] assumptions in terms of a person, a self, or an “I” will have to come to an end with regard to conditioned phenomena and the five aggregates whose nature is impermanence, manifoldness, and suffering. Thinking that there is nothing inherently established such as a self, a person, or an ego, in the way [someone with] clear vision understands that there is no snake in the multicolored rope, you will come to see through the eye of wisdom that there is no self apart from the mere conceptual imputations of a self that occur when one does not analyze or investigate just the aggregates, these streams and collections of particles and moments. Though it is indeed¹¹⁰ usually true that selflessness is the main object of realization, you do not have to bring forth reality by force. Through the contemplation that emphasizes the first three investigations [regarding manifoldness, impermanence, and suffering], understanding the last one, [selflessness], will be very easy because of the power of this [analysis]. [16] Therefore, as long as this certainty regarding [the selflessness of the person] does not fade away, practice this.

Then, as soon as¹¹¹ other conceptual thoughts begin to stir, do not fall under their sway. Instead, proceed with the examination of the manifold aggregates as you did before. Practice [this] by bringing it to mind again and again, and for each referential objects you meditate on, eliminate all doubts from your mind. Sometimes, examine the aggregates of your own continuum; sometimes, examine the aggregates of others. Sometimes, [apply] the three [kinds of] analysis to conditioned phenomena, or to universals (*spyi*). Do as you please.

At the end of the practice session, dedicate the merit and rest in a relaxed state. Then, once the practice session is finished, there should be no space for any meaningless conceptual thoughts. Maintain as much as you can the continuity [of this

110 Xyl.: *mod kyis* instead of *mod kyi* (15,5).

111 *dang*: “as soon as,” “after.” Here again *dang* follows a future verbal substantive *brtsam pa* and express the anteriority of the action compared to another in the future. See *dPyad sgom ’khor lo* 16,1.

practice] by constantly turning the wheel of the practice of analysis in the way a fire spreads in dry grass. If your mind gets tired and you become weary doing this, without thinking of anything, cut off this blank mental state (*had de*) and relax (*klod*).¹¹² When conceptual thoughts are stirring, what should you do with [this] meaningless mental wandering? Regarding the correct way to engage the mind, considering that you should place your mind on the movement [of these thoughts], deliberately focus on [this] reference point for some time as you engage the mind [in this way] again and again. At that time, a very strong certainty will effortlessly manifest. Then, even during practice breaks when the mind is let loose, the wheel [of practice] will start [turning], as the topic at the root of the practice mentioned above will spontaneously become the object of mind. What really matters is thereby accomplished. Therefore, anyone who is learned in the stages of the practice of the sūtras will easily attain realization, even if this person is stupid.¹¹³ [17] Since you are familiar with what really matters (*don che ba*), you need not rely on the exhausting complications (*ngal ba*) of logical reasoning. If you train [in this practice], you will be able to understand a little about the essence of all phenomena, as [explained] above. Therefore, [know that] the main thing is not [reached] through explanations but through practice. If you practice, you will from within without any explanation. If you don't practice, even if you [can] give an explanation, you are like a parrot. Therefore, engage in this practice of analytical investigation!

Padma Gyaltsen requested [this teaching] and provided paper, the support for writing, so Mipham wrote [this instruction] in a condensed form within a single tea break without any obstacle. *Maṅgalam*.

C. The Profound Instruction on the View of Madhyamaka

Homage to Mañjuśrī!¹¹⁴ Once you have gone through the purification of the [mind's] activity, you arrived at the crucial stage of developing confidence in the selflessness of the person. At that point, consider how, just as the so-called self is imputed through projections that no one investigates, the five aggregates and all conditioned things, namely, all phenomena are similarly conceptually imputed. Although all kinds of [things] referred to as this or that are apprehended as phenom-

112 This expression refers to a specific method of practice related to “letting be” whatever happens while remaining mindful.

113 For a detailed explanation of this point, see Appendix B: Instructions on the Thirty-Seven Aids to Awakening).

114 This instruction is also composed of septisyllabic verses, like the first text. For the same reasons as those previously stated, I translated it as prose.

ena, when the object behind the imputation is sought, one does not find anything. Even the most subtle particles, [considered to be] ultimate on account of being without parts,¹¹⁵ are not established. Yet, they appear, arising in dependence [upon causes and conditions]. Things are [thus] dependently arisen, while non-things are dependently imputed. So long as you do not examine these things or non-things, you apprehend them as this or that. But if you conceptually take them apart and analyze them, they are devoid of any basis or foundation. Although they are nonexistent, they manifest, like an illusion, a dream, a reflection of the moon in water, an echo, or a *gandharva* city. Although they are empty, they appear. Although they appear, they are empty. Contemplate empty appearances in the manner of illusions. This is the nominal ultimate. The confidence of having a mind that conceptually discerns [phenomena], is the stainless [18] wisdom that perceives post-meditative experience as an illusion. However, as [this wisdom] is not free from an apprehended object, it has not dismantled the manifestation of [cognitive] apprehension. Because [this wisdom] does not transcend projections, it is not the wisdom into the freedom from all mental proliferations, the nature of phenomena. When such a confidence arises, even the apprehension [that everything is] merely an illusion is imputed on the basis of projections. As there is indeed nothing to apprehend, the essential nature [of the thing] apprehended as an object cannot be established. Even the mind that apprehends [this] is not found [if examined]. Therefore, without apprehending [anything], rest in your fundamental nature, which is effortless presence. When you remain in that way, all external and internal manifestations of an experience remain uninterrupted. However, in the fundamental state that is free from any apprehension as this or that, all imputed phenomena are primordial non-arisen and unceasing. In the sphere of the fundamental sameness free from [dualistic] aspects such as the apprehended [object] and the apprehending [subject], [everything] is the same. This is the inexpressible natural state of being free from [all] assertions such as existence or nonexistence. Within this authentic state, a direct experience dawns beyond all doubts. This is the real nature of all phenomena. This is the actual ultimate must be known for oneself, the primordial wisdom of the nonconceptual state of absorption. Once you are familiar with this state, the unity of emptiness and dependent arising, the fundamental condition in which the two truths are inseparable,¹¹⁶ is the *yoga* of the great Madhyamaka. Being beyond the sphere of mind, it

115 There is a note written in small letters: *'di kho nar rigs pa ston*, "I shall explain the reasoning regarding this [point]."

116 Dependent arising and manifesting as an experience are equated here. Mipham sees all these definitions of the concealing truth as variations of the same idea according to various contexts.

is quickly actualized through nondual primordial wisdom. Therefore, if you want [to realize this], practice the pith instructions of the *mantra* [vehicle]. This is the ultimate and essential point of the stages of practice of Madhyamaka. First, having purified the [mind's] activity, progressively come to this experience. By genuinely understanding the illusion of empty experiences, you are liberated in the ultimate, which is without [anything] to remove or add, the sphere of the transcendence of wisdom, fundamental sameness. [19] If you are thirsty, merely knowing that there is some water somewhere will not quench your thirst. According to the sūtras, understanding and directly experiencing [this fundamental sameness] is like quenching your thirst by [actually] drinking [some water]. Therefore, you need not alternate [this gradual practice] with dry intellectualism that exhausts you with endless logical argumentation. Having trained in the stages [of practice], you will quickly attain a state of deep acceptance (*bzod pa, kṣānti*).

This was effortlessly written by *Vajra* who pleases Mañjuśrī¹¹⁷ on the twenty-ninth day of the eleventh month of the Water Dragon year [17/01/1893]. May all beings realize the meaning of the profound Madhyamaka! *Maṅgalam*.

D. The Way to Reach Certainty with Regard to the Two [Kinds of] Selflessness

I bow to Mañjuśrī! Having taken the five aggregates of your own continuum as a referential object, [you should know that] the thought conceiving “I am” is self-grasping. The object of this cognitive fixation is called the self or the “I” of the person. It is considered to exist, as long as it is not investigated or analyzed, but it is not experienced as being established on the basis of this mere cognitive fixation, just like a snake [that is superimposed] upon a multicolored rope. Thinking that a unitary self exists, [some believe that] the basis of imputation of the self, the five aggregates, is manifold and impermanent while the self that comes from the previous life to this one and that goes from this [life] to the next is permanent. But in reality, this [self] is not established apart from imputations [made] on the [basis of] the [five] aggregates taken as a whole. Therefore, the subject, namely, the notion of an “I,” is self-grasping. The object of this attachment is what should be called the self. The self is not established by virtue of its own inherent nature, because it is a mere imputation with regard to the five aggregates, just as there is no snake in the multicolored rope [erroneously perceived as a snake]. When you understand this, that is the view of the selflessness [of the person].

117 One of Mipham's secret names: *'Jam dpal dgyes pa'i rdo rje*.

All phenomena, conditioned and unconditioned, other than what is called “I” or “self,” are referred to as “phenomena.” These phenomena are only satisfactory when not examined.¹¹⁸ Even if you cling to them as being truly, really existent, [20] when you examine them by means of logical reasoning, such as neither one nor many, and so forth, you understand that discrete or extended things are not established in any way, being devoid of a basis or foundation. This understanding is what is called the realization of the selflessness of phenomena.

Then, the object to negate, namely, the inherently or truly established person or phenomenon such as a pot, is referred to as the self of persons and phenomena. Apart from the apprehension of this twofold self by a deluded cognition, [persons and phenomena] are not established in the slightest when analyzed. That is what is referred to as the selflessness of persons and phenomena. The cognition that realizes this [twofold] selflessness is referred to as the realization of selflessness. But there is both the apprehended object, the twofold self [of persons and phenomena], and its apprehending self-clinging subject. Therefore, once you have determined by means of logical reasoning that the object, the twofold self, is not established in order to uproot the twofold conception of a self, you must give rise in your mind-stream to the realization that the subject [apprehending] this twofold selflessness is without a self.

In brief, the apprehension of an “I” is the root of *saṃsāra*, the source of all afflictions, while its antidote, the realization of the selflessness of persons, is like the root of the path toward liberation.¹¹⁹ But that is not all—all cognitive obscurations must be abandoned by means of the perfect view of emptiness, the understanding that no phenomenon is inherently established. Thus, [the realization of the selflessness of phenomena] is the root of the path of the Great Vehicle. [21] As long as you cannot know with certainty the inexpressible *dharmadhātu*, which is the inseparability of emptiness and dependent arising, namely, the great fundamental sameness, you should purify your view.

The mere theoretical understanding consisting in a nonaffirming negation only negating the object to be negated [without implying anything] (*dgag bya bkag pa tsam gyi med dgag*) is only the so-called nominal ultimate, the entrance gate to the genuine ultimate, but it is not the way things are ultimately. The unity [of emptiness

118 *ma brtag nyams dga'* instead of the more frequent *ma brtags nyams dga'*.

119 This statement and the next clearly show that, according to Mipham, the Śrāvakayāna primarily deals with the selflessness of persons in connection with the purification of afflictions, whereas the Mahāyāna is more about the selflessness of *dharmas* and the related purification of cognitive processes.

and dependent arising], the non-abiding Madhyamaka (*rab tu mi gnas pa'i dbu ma*) or actual ultimate, is the mode of being in which the two truths cannot be separated, the state that must be known for oneself, the quintessence of the complete pacification of the net of mental proliferations.

To sum up, all phenomena of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa appear within the rational scope of analysis through logical reasoning. While they appear, if you examine and analyze them, even their most elementary particles are not established. Having conviction in this, develop the definitive and authentic certainty that all things for which there is no contradiction between their appearance and their unestablished nature are like the [reflection of] the moon in water, a dream, the manifestation of an illusion. When you reach this point, as this is equivalent to the confidence that everything is an illusion during post-meditation, you have developed an excellent intellectual understanding of Madhyamaka.

However, this alone is not the realization of the great Madhyamaka free from mental proliferations, the ultimate *dharmadhātu* that you must know for yourself. Therefore, having recognized your own nature,¹²⁰ which is the inexpressible unity [of emptiness and appearance], [22] you acquire an extraordinary conviction in the meditative absorption that, like space, is free from [all] mental proliferations, and in which there is no conceptual mode of perception (*rtog pa'i 'dzin stangs*) in terms of negations and affirmations. At that point, although many perfect stages of investigation by means of hearing and reflecting have been explained regarding the view, this *dharmadhātu*, the object you must know for yourself, is the crucial point that cannot be discovered by a mere external investigation relying on designations and words. As a consequence, because they experience [it] in a way that is completely beyond the intellect of other ordinary beings, [only] those who are skilled in the way of placing their minds on account of having [received] the guru's pith instructions can easily attain certainty. Having pondered this point, you should understand that this is the very heart of the path. [This was composed] by Mipham.

E. [Pith Instruction on the Three Aspects of Mahāmudrā]¹²¹

When you are able to simply practice the three [aspects] of Mahāmudrā, namely, the stillness [of thoughts],¹²² the movement [of thoughts],¹²³ and [the state of]

120 *rang zhal mjal nas*, lit. “having met your own face.”

121 A translation of this section is also found in Brunnhölzl 2007a.

122 The state in which there are no thoughts.

123 The state in which thoughts constantly arise and evaporate.

awareness (*gnas 'gyu rig gsum*), the key point to gradually see the truth and experience the nature of phenomena, is the nature of your mind, the sugata nature you [already] have, together with focusing on the pith instructions about it. Thus, since the root of all phenomena depends on the mind, search for the essence of your mind. As you become skilled in all phenomena and realize the meaning of selflessness, you will understand the secret of mind. As a consequence, you should relinquish all kinds of analysis based on logical reasoning and rely on the pith instructions of accomplished beings. At that time, when you look within at your own mind, you abide in [the state in which there is] no proliferation [of thoughts] about anything; this is called “stillness.” When all kinds of thoughts, this is called “the movement of thoughts.” [23] Whether there is stillness or movement, when your own mind is aware of itself,¹²⁴ this is called “awareness” (*rig pa*). If you continuously practice in this way, you will understand a crucial point: all experiences of happiness or sadness arise from your own mind and dissolve into it. Once you understand this, you will recognize all manifestations as the mind’s own appearance (*sems kyi rang snang*). Then, by directly looking into the nature of this mind, which is still or moving, no matter what appears, you will realize that it is empty of essence, being unestablished as anything at all. You will also realize that this so-called emptiness is not a sheer nihilistic nothingness like space, but the emptiness endowed with all the supreme qualities which, while being [endowed with] the unceasing luminous aspect that knows and cognizes everything, is unestablished as any intrinsic reality at all. When you understand mind’s innermost secret, then, although the watched and the watcher do not exist as distinct [entities], you experience the naturally luminous and genuine nature of the mind (*rang bzhin gyi 'od gsal ba'i sems nyid gnyug ma*). This is called recognizing awareness (*rig pa ngo 'phrod*), and this is what is pointed out in Mahāmudrā and Dzogchen. If you can practice [in this way], this [recognition] will manifest. This is the meaning of Saraha’s statement [in the Dohākoṣagīti]:¹²⁵

Once you have looked again and again at the primordially pure nature of space, seeing will cease.

124 I translated *rang gi rig bzhin pa* with a present progressive, together with “at that very moment,” to insist on the immediate nowness of this “awareness.”

125 D2224, f.72a: */gdod nas dag pa nam mkha'i rang bzhin la/ /bltas shing bltas shing mthong pa 'gag par 'gyur/*

And this is the meaning of what is stated in the *Yum*:¹²⁶

The mind is not the mind. The nature of the mind is luminosity.

There is nothing easier than that, [but] practicing is important.
[This was written] by Mipham. *Maṅgalam*.

F. [Looking at One's Mind by Means of Mind]¹²⁷

[24] Homage to Mañjuśrī! When you take your mind as a referential object, you accomplish mental stillness and you gradually give rise to the insight into the fundamental state.¹²⁸ With regard to this, remain in the state of your natural empty essence that is luminous and clear by directing your awareness within. This is referred to as mind taking mind as a referential object. When you take your mind as a referential object, you do not take as a referential object a reference point [conceptualizing mind] as this [or that]. Nonetheless, if there was such a thing as mind, it would be internal to the body, [but] it is not at the center of the heart, and it does not exist anywhere.

Watching the movement of wild thoughts, the source of conceptual activity, is mental stillness. Do not look for mind, but remain quietly attentive (*lhan ner bzhaḡ*). You need not have, or not have, a spot where [mind] is to be placed. This present mind that is to be placed can [rest] anywhere. Let this inner mind be in its [own] resting place without wavering from it. Doing just this is the way to place [your mind], but [in fact] there is no need to *place* [it]. Just like the vacillations of blazing light rays shining on the [surface] of water, the movement of mind and thoughts is very fast. [But even if these light rays] are not blocked by something obstructing them directly [to prevent them from moving], when the water is not put in motion and remains in its natural state, they also remain still. Likewise, let the source [of conceptual activity] that is beyond any movement [of thoughts], awareness, remain in the state of stillness. This is the state of a mind that does not become for-

126 See D8, Ka 326a; D9, Ka 124a; D10, Ka 73a: 'di ltar sems de sems ma yin te/ sems kyi rang bzhin 'od gsal ba'i phyir ro/ compared to sems la sems ma mchis te sems kyi rang bzhin 'od gsal ba'o (dPyad sgom 'khor lo 23,6). See Kapstein's translation of the Sanskrit phrase in the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* as "Mind is not mind. The nature of mind is clear light (*tac cittam acittam. prakṛtiś cittasya prabhāsvarā*)" (2004: 124).

127 This instruction also is composed of septisyllabic verses, like the first text. For the same reasons as those previously stated, I translated it as prose.

128 This sentence refers to the practices of *gzhi gnas* and *lhag mthong*.

getful, the continuum of deliberate mindfulness. As you continuously and without interruption remain [within this state], whether [your mind] seems to be limpid and empty, completely luminous, or wandering everywhere, just let it be [25] To be unwavering [from the natural resting place of awareness] (*tsen ne*) is to be in one's original state.¹²⁹ No matter what happens, just let it be. Even if you are aware that [your mind] is empty, luminous, or wandering, give up chasing after this. Let [this] awareness rest in its natural place, let it remain in its natural condition (*rang mal rang sar*). You should familiarize yourself with this for a long period of time. Cast all analytical investigations and thoughts [back] to their natural place. At times, there will be no movement [of thoughts], but sluggishness. In order to clear up dullness, just let it be. Sometimes, thoughts are all over the place. At that time, since these wandering thoughts are the mind, just watch the mind and let it be. Do not follow the movement [of thoughts], [but] embrace their natural condition. These wandering thoughts will then stop by themselves. As you remain aware of the movement [of thoughts] or lack thereof, [just watch] the mind. [This] mind is called the natural state of abiding. This mind is the resting state (*mal bzhag*) within the center of your heart, and this mind of yours naturally rests in its natural condition (*rang bab lhod*). This is the meditative absorption in which the knots and entanglements of discursive thoughts come unbound (*rang khrol*) by themselves. The movement of thoughts never ceases, [but] they always spontaneously evaporate (*rang gar yar ba*). No matter how much they wander, they bear no fruit.

[And yet,] the suffering of unwholesome thoughts is unailing. Therefore, know their deceiving nature. Because you have been under their sway since beginningless time, you have not obtained any positive quality. From now on, they should be revolting to you. Having by all means established mental stillness, you will obtain innumerable accomplishments such as the states of absorption and the higher perceptions (*mngon shes, abhijñā*), [26] and you will find freedom and supreme bliss within the original condition. As you understand what are shortcomings and qualities, you will surely bring your mind under control.

Until you have acquired mental stillness, do not let your diligence slack. Thus, by familiarizing yourself again and again [with this practice], you gather the subtle winds at the center of your heart, and you trap them in the central channel. The main conceptual thought, agitation (*rgod*), is pacified more and more, and your mind's pliancy (*las rung*) becomes greater. Even if this will not occur without the guru's direct introduction, this method of letting [the mind] be, which is the es-

129 *rjen ne ba* conveys a range of meanings such as naked, fresh, bare, raw, unprocessed, original.

sence of pith instructions, [leads] easily [to] the calm state of the mind. Without blocking the subtle winds, [mind] is set inwardly by taking it as a referential object. You will easily and without any difficulty obtain the mental pliancy of the state of absorption. You do not need [to dissolve the winds] in the subtle vital essence at the heart center. Without fixating on colors, syllables, and subtle winds, as you look at this present mind of yours, the continuum of mindfulness is maintained. There is no easier or more precious advice about mental stillness than this. First, the state of mental stillness occurs, then, having looked at [your] mind by means of mind, you are free from all wrong views. It is like when you do not perceive any visible thing after having looked again and again at the sky. The unity of emptiness and luminosity, the secret of mind, manifests within the essential nature of phenomena. Then, on account of the empowering blessing of this lineage, you will experience the sublime original [state of] cognition and emptiness (*rig stong gnyug ma*), the naturally occurring and innate primordial wisdom (*lhan skyes ye shes rang byung ba*), [27] the meaning of the luminous great perfection.

This was written by Mipham during a morning session on the sixth day of the first month of the Fire Horse year [01/03/1906].

G. Summary of the Meditative Practice of Severance (*gcod*)

Homage to Ma cig-Vajrayoginī. I will explain in this [instruction] the general key points of the practice of severance (*gcod*), the profound meaning that integrates the intentions of [all] sūtras and mantras. There are four [key points]: the place of severance, the object to be severed, the instrument of severance, and the right way to sever.

- First, regarding the place of severance, when you cut wood, the place where wood is chopped and falls down is the ground. Likewise, when you have cut [all] fetters, the place free of fixation is the expanse of the *dharmadhātu*, awareness (*rig pa*), the thought of awakening. This is the place imbued with the nature of the three gates to liberation, the abode of the noble ones. Since the four demons do not roam in this state, the fundamental sameness that is like space is said to be the place of severance where the four demons are chopped into basic space.¹³⁰

130 The four demons (*bdud bzhi*) represent obstacles to realization. They comprise the demon of passions (*nyon mongs pa'i bdud*), the demon of the aggregates (*phung po'i bdud*), the demon of the lord of death (*'chi bdag gi bdud*), and the demon of the son of the deities (*lha'i*

- The object to be severed is the fetters. They are like snares [trapping you and] leading you to the four demons, just as fish are caught by a fishhook.
- The instrument of severance is the wisdom that realizes selflessness. It is like a sword. Regarding this, you must obtain an extraordinary conviction in the view of selflessness. For some, [this is obtained] by means of intellectual analysis relying on logical reasoning, or, in the case of spiritually mature individuals of [superior] capacity belonging to the instantaneous type (*cig char ba*), [this is obtained] [28] through the direct and correct experience of the absence of an “I” and a self, which is brought about by the ripening empowerments or by the guru’s direct introduction.
- As for the right way to sever, by understanding that these objects, namely, the four [demons], are unreal, by severing the apprehension in terms of a subject [doing this], you will sever the [cognitive] fetters upholding the dividing line between object and subject.

With regard to the application of the profound meaning of this kind of cutting practice, there are three enhancing methods:¹³¹ the ascertainment of the view by means of the *vajra*-like state of absorption (*rdo rje lta bu’i ting nge ’dzin*), the ascertainment of the practice by means of the illusion-like state of absorption (*sgyu ma lta bu’i ting nge ’dzin*), and the ascertainment of the conduct by means of the state of absorption of those who have become heroes (*dpa’ bar ’gro’i ting nge ’dzin*, *śūraṅgama samādhi*).

[1. The View]

Regarding the first point, come to the definitive conclusion through the ripening and liberating primordially present [awareness] that the freedom from any adulteration, such as being entangled [in the fetters] of thoughts, is nonconceptual primordial wisdom, the nature of mind occurring by itself, the sublime *dharmakāya*.¹³²

bu’i bdud). In the *gcod* practice, there is, however, an alternative classification: the material demon (*thogs bcad kyi bdud*), the immaterial demon (*thogs med kyi bdud*), the demon of exaltation (*dga’ spro yi bdud*), and the demon of self-infatuation (*snyems byed kyi bdud*). These four are explained as fetters in the following passage.

131 Xyl.: *bog dbyung* instead of *bogs dbyung*.

132 Makransky’s translation of *chos sku*, *dharmakāya* with “the embodiment of *dharmatā*” is interesting (see Makransky 1997: 5–6, 29–38). Mipham does not differentiate primordial wisdom and emptiness when he refers to the *dharmakāya*. From the ultimate perspective, the knowledge of a Buddha is inconceivable and not amenable to concepts. In this, Mipham

This is like the root [of the practice].

[2. *The Practice*]

As for the second point, when you gather all kinds [of demons] that can produce obstacles and misfortunes for all beings, sever them by uniting them with the fundamental ground. As you are completely victorious in the war against obstacles, this is the severance of the four demons. As was said by Ma cig, the space farer ('*kha'* *'gro*, *ḍākini*) of primordial wisdom:

The fetters of obstructive objects have been severed. The fetters of non-obstructive objects have been severed. The fetters of fixation through joy and happiness have been severed. The fetters of the self that is prone to self-infatuation have been severed.

Because the mighty fetters of conceptual thoughts are so solid, you fell into the pit of these demons and have been trapped in their nets.¹³³ [29] This is why you must sever these [ties]. If you become bound by any of them, you are attached to thoughts that are [merely] conceptions within the nature of mind. But, in the nature of the mind, you are ultimately free from being attached and bound. However, owing to the power of these conceptions, [at the moment,] it appears you are. This appearance [of entanglement] obstructing your own nonconceptual nature, like clouds in the sky [covering the sun], is said to be a hindrance to seeing things as they are—it is a fetter. And anything that binds you belongs to the cluster of the four demons:

- The class [of demons] of tangible objects binds you by tying your mind to an object. There is this [class of demons] to represent the arising of all sorts of [emotions, such as] attachment and aversion or the fear of being hurt, that result from objectifying [something as an actual thing].
- The [demon of the] intangible objects binds you on account of your conceptual mind. All the various secondary afflictions (*kun nyon, saṃkleśa*) flourish because you excessively cling to that which is merely a fleeting experience of your mind, when you do not let [these mere experiences] dissipate.

seems to follow Ārya Vimuktisena's interpretation of the three *kāyas*, like Gorampa. However, in his *Puṇḍarika'i do shal*, his commentary on the *Abhisamayālaṅkāra*, he sometimes seems to accept Haribhadra's theory of four *kāyas*.

133 *bdud kyi rgyar sar 'ching*.

- The demon of exaltation binds you as you become fixated [on these emotions]. Those who get attached to fixations are like pigs [taking delight] in filth.
- The demon of self-infatuation that imagines a so-called “I” or conceptualizes a self binds you through the seemingly perfectly established object of your grasping at the self as “the self.”

That is why, as long as the [duality of the] apprehended¹³⁴ [object] and apprehending [subject] does not completely subside, the mere appearance of these objects—as obstructive and so on—is not blocked. However, although they appear, they are unreal. But if you have apprehended them as being real, be aware that this amounts to falling into these demons’ trap and being caught in their nets.¹³⁵ [30]

When the practitioner who severs the fixations pertaining to these [objects], the fetters, has perfected severance as a path, as well as the complete progression [of this practice], all fixations related to appearances are liberated. At that point, the single taste [of all experiences]¹³⁶ within the supreme *dharmakāya* is the resultant [practice of] severance. Thus, if you think, “How should I sever these fetters?” [you should know that] fetters occur when you eagerly cling to these four objects, without letting them dissipate, due to the power of apprehending them as “this” [or “that”]. This is the cause for being attached to anything. Therefore, genuinely understanding that these objects have no inherent nature, without following them, you should entirely let go of them as you shout “*Phat!*” Remaining in the supreme state of the single taste [of all experiences] is [the practice of] severing fetters. There is no way negativities consisting in the four objects can affect a practitioner who severs these fetters in this way. As it is said [in the *Āryaprajñāpāramitāsamcayagāthā*]:¹³⁷

The wise and powerful bodhisattvas are not easily defeated
Or disturbed by the four demons on account of these four causes:
They abide in emptiness, they do not abandon beings,
They do exactly as they are told, and they receive the blessing of the
Sugata.

134 *gzungs* instead of *gzung*.

135 *bdud kyi rgyar sar 'ching*.

136 Lit. “same taste.”

137 D13, f.15b: */rgyu rnam bzhi yis byang chub sems dpa' mkhas stobs ldan/ /bdud bzhis thub par dka' zhing bskyod par mi nus te/ /stong par gnas dang sems can yongs su mi gtong dang / /ji skad smras bzhin byed dang bde gshegs byin brlabs can/* This citation is also found in Atiśa’s *Ratnakaraṇḍodghāṭanāma-madhyamakopadeśa* (see D3930, f.108b).

This being so, since beginningless time, we have been defeated by the self in the battle with the [four] demons and have thereby continuously experienced the overwhelming suffering [of saṃsāra]. This has been happening because we did not sever our fetters. We have accepted not severing these fetters because we do not understand the way things are. Once we understand how things are, there is no way to sever fetters apart from this method. No matter what virtuous practices we accomplish, [31] acknowledge¹³⁸ the fact that there is no way to be really victorious over the armies of the [four] demons apart from this method of severing fetters. So, although objects are not established, since we create all negativities by cherishing our self, we should continuously give up our self. Have confidence in the fact that cherishing others [more than oneself] is the root of all positive qualities. From now on, completely give up [self-]cherishing thoughts such as “I am so afraid!”¹³⁹ “I am dying!” or “I am terrified!” [All beings] have been your mothers again and again [in your previous existences]. With great compassion toward all beings and particularly toward those who became malevolent demons through the power of their karma and afflictions, feed them with your own flesh and blood, or whatever suits their present conditions. With a strong aspiration to establish them in the ultimate awakening, make the decision from the bottom of your heart to abandon your [own] aggregates so that you can feed them. Whatever appears, take it as the path. In particular, bring onto the path as much as possible bad circumstances such as sickness, suffering, terror, and so forth. Regarding this point, a person who genuinely understands the view takes as the path whatever manifests. Comparable to the excellent [wish-fulfilling] tree, this is the main part of the path.

[3. The Conduct]

As for the third [enhancing practice], once you have hit the key point of practice, in order to unite it in this very moment to your own mindstream, do not let circumstances scare you¹⁴⁰ and go to scary places, such as haunted grounds, and so forth, with the purpose of enhancing your practice with the state of absorption of those who have become heroes.¹⁴¹ [32] Although you will be at first overcome [by your emotions], proceed to visualize according to your practice text. Then, if you go to a place with malicious spirits, you will overcome them. Yet, visualize according to your text. If there are no provocations [from malicious spirits during your prac-

138 *thag bcad*, pun intended.

139 *sdar na* instead of *sdar ma*.

140 Xyl.: *mi brji bar* instead of *mi brdzi bar*.

141 According to what Mipham has explained, the definition of demons is not limited to beings but also includes hindrances: any place where obstacles abound, whatever they may be, is meant here.

tice], visualize that there are, and through this all sorts of outer, inner, and secret provocations will manifest. At that time, you should ideally remain in the state in which there is nothing to be done (*byar med du*). As the next best, exert yourself without conceptualizing. [Or else,] at least unify [appearances] with the expanse of awareness. Although [all kinds of] possible appearances flourish in the nature of mind, know that there is nothing to be done. Since this material body is present in the form of a burden, it is nothing but the source of all suffering. So [let demons] eat a little bit of this nonexistent flesh, body, and blood! If they were not eaten [by demons], thinking that you cannot give what is not you and that they are not [in truth] within [you], suppress your fear of the magical transformations of mind. Stop driving away or exorcizing whatever occurs. Since there is nothing at all to be attached to, remain carefree like a corpse that has been given as food [for birds] in the middle of a funeral. If [your body, flesh, and blood] are eaten, think “How wonderful!” and come to a truly decisive experience. Since you can [practice] forbearance [while remaining] in this state, the benefits [of this] are immense. The complete termination of the domination of conceptual thoughts as well as gods and demons manifests. Once you develop confidence in this, the perfect and complete termination of the state in which [everything is of] a single taste free from self-infatuation dawns.

Such [an instruction] merges the experience of practice with your own mind-stream through forceful means. This is why these three [enhancing] methods are so successful in letting the key point of practice sink into your mind. [33] The path of the precious pith instruction of Ma cig’s awakened mind is the extraordinary spiritual advice that actualizes in a single day the result [achieved] by others in a hundred eons.

Sever the concepts on which you fixate (*zhen rtog*)
 Within the empty basic expanse, and generate compassion
 Toward those who do not realize this [state].
 The union (*zung ’brel*) of emptiness and compassion is the path.
 Flawless is the spiritual tradition of the mother [Ma cig].
 [This instruction] is merely an entrance gate to her approach.
 Since I have cleaved open¹⁴² by the force of virtue what [Ma cig]
 explained,
 May all beings be established
 In the supreme state of the Victorious One, the great mother.

142 *gas pa*.

Although the god among realized yogis (*rtogs ldan*) of the country of those who spontaneously arise was already liberated, he entreated [Mipham to write this instruction]. As he went to a place plagued by malicious spirits on the twenty-ninth of the tenth month of the iron dragon in the fifteenth Rabjung [21/12/1881], Mipham wrote whatever came to his mind on that day. May virtue increase!

CHAPTER 9

The Direct Way and the Two Truths in Practice: A Translation

Introduction to Mipham's *De kho na nyid gsal ba'i sgron me*

The following text is a commentary on Mañjuśrīmitra's *rDo la gser zhun* (Refining gold from ore), a Dzogchen *sems sde* instruction.¹⁴³ In this tradition, Mañjuśrīmitra is seen as a scholar who received Dzogchen teachings from Garab Dorje¹⁴⁴ and became one of the most important figures in the Dzogchen lineage. In the *rDo la gser zhun*, the audience of Mañjuśrīmitra seems to consist of Yogācāra-Mādhyamika paṇḍitas, which would correspond to the Tibetan accounts of his life.¹⁴⁵ In fact, the philosophical background of the text seems to come straight from Śāntarakṣita's and Kamalaśīla's works. Even the gold metaphor that gave its name to this work could have been familiar to these scholars, since it is found throughout Chapter 26 of the TS,¹⁴⁶ in the *vṛtti* and the *pañjikā* on MA 97,¹⁴⁷ and in the BK II and III.¹⁴⁸ And yet, as we have seen above, some arguments about the limited validity of *pramāṇas* are taken almost directly from Candrakīrti's MAV. This shows that, in spite of the inflexibility of the later Tibetan doxographic projects, the philosophical Buddhist context of the eighth century was probably much more fluid than is

143 Mipham's *mchan 'grel* is a text that could at first glance appear to be an original composition. However, the heaviness induced by the multiple appositions and repetitions betrays the nature of this "fill-in" commentary. Compared to Mipham's style as it appears in works that are not *mchan 'grel*, the syntax of this commentary is more complicated and contrived, since the syntactic framework is supplied by the root text, Mañjuśrīmitra's *rDo la gser zhun*. Each term of the root text is glossed by Mipham in the order of its appearance by means of appositions, synonyms, or attributes in the form of verbal adjectives, sometimes nominalized in order to introduce an explanatory clause. In the following pages, the root text is written in bold.

144 dGa' rab rdo rje.

145 See Lipman 1986: 3ff., who translated Mañjuśrīmitra's text together with a commentary provided in large part but not exclusively by Mipham's *De kho na nyid gsal ba'i sgron me*. On account of Lipman's choice of terminology and methodology, a new translation of *De kho na nyid gsal ba'i sgron me* was necessary. See also Liljenberg 2018 for a comparison of the *rDo la gser zhun* with the *Byang chub sems bsgom pa'i rgyud*.

146 See Jha 1986: 1391ff.

147 See Ichigo 1985: 332–33.

148 A very extensive explanation of the metaphor of gold and the corresponding refining process can also be found in Mipham's *'Od gsal snying po*, his commentary on the *Guhyagarbha Tantra* (see Dharmachakra 2009: 51–52).

usually acknowledged. The *rDo la gser zhun* is a very important text insofar as it represents an attempt to communicate the great perfection (i.e., Dzogchen) to a group of people who were intellectually oriented. It consequently teaches a very direct way to practice for practitioners who were familiar with the Yogācāra-Mādhyamika method of practice. As expressed by Mipham in his opening homage:

To the unity in which cognition and cognitive objects (*shes dang shes bya*) are of a single nature, the unconditioned [*dharma*] *dhātu*, the *vajra* of the luminous mind, I bow down with a prostration that relinquishes union and separation.¹⁴⁹

The *rDo la gser zhun* can therefore be seen as building on instructions found in texts such as *dPyad sgom 'khor lo* and its Mahāyāna method of practice. However, in terms of discontinuities, the mereological strategy of the lower vehicles is in *rDo la gser zhun* completely skipped. Worldly valid cognitions, or dualistic mind, represent the starting point of the text:

When one thoroughly analyzes dualistic positions (*mtha', anta*) established in terms of existence and nonexistence, this very analysis proceeds from [one's own mental] continuum, that is to say, from distorted conceptuality, since one dismantles all [putative] things appearing as wholes by means of proofs consisting in direct perception and inference¹⁵⁰ as well as through logical argumentation.¹⁵¹

However, once the epistemic reduction of putative wholes (stage 2 in the process described in Chapter 6 above) has been effectuated, it is immediately dismantled:

Even this dualistic position consisting in analyzing by way of conceptualizations does not exist. This being so, if that which is called a valid cognition establishing [something] and which is endowed with an es-

149 *De kho na nyid gsal ba'i sgron me* 466: *shes dang shes bya ro mnyam pa'i / zung 'jug 'dus ma byas pa'i dbyings / 'od gsal sems kyi rdo rje la / 'du 'bral spong pa'i phyag gis 'dud /*

150 Literally: "by means of proofs consisting in direct perception and so forth, namely, inference."

151 *De kho na nyid gsal ba'i sgron me* 471 (root text embedded in commentary): *yod med ji lta bur grub pa'i mtha' rnam par dpyod pa na / dpyod pa de nyid phyin ci log gi rnam par rtog pa'i rgyun gyi rjes su 'brangs te nor ba'i blos log par mthong ba'i spyod yul tshad mar bzhag nas log pa'i blo yis 'jig cing dpyod par byed de /*

sence withstanding analysis does not exist in the slightest, what could be a valid cognition that establishes an object? It cannot be truly established!¹⁵²

Mind itself as the basis of phenomenal appearances is not ultimately established as anything (stage 3):

These thoughts and these mental states also are beyond dualistic positions [conceived in terms] of existence and nonexistence. They are neither one nor many, meaning they do not abide as anything. ... As long as these movements (*g.yo ba*) of the worldly intellect (*yid, manas*) manifest in terms of existence/nonexistence, truth/falsity, appearance/non-appearance, and so forth, the realm of the demon [appears].¹⁵³

From there, the text proceeds in a direct and quite brutal way by showing how to distinguish mind (*sems*) from awareness (*rig pa* or, as it is referred to in this text, *byang chub sems*), the crucial point of any Dzogchen direct introduction. As awareness is introduced in distinction to mind, one realizes that even this is free from all mental proliferations conceived in terms of the four extremes since it does not abide as anything:

The realm of all sublime beings' pure vision and the place of their accomplishment also are not distinct from saṃsāra or apart from it in a transcendence that rejects it. Even the path that obtains the attributes of positive qualities, such as nirvāṇa, is not established as something other than that, since everything is without any inherent nature. ... "One neither deliberately suppresses nor provides a support for mind with regard to the emergence or nonemergence [of thoughts]." That is to say, without deliberately suppressing the emerging phenomenal appearances or conceptualizations, and without providing any basis for mind in order to [obtain] the nonemergence [of thoughts], one does not real-

152 *De kho na nyid gsal ba'i sgron me* 471–472 (root text embedded in commentary): *rtog pa des dpyod pa'i mtha' yang med de de ltar na 'jog byed kyi tshad ma zhes dpyad bzod kyi snying po can ci yang med na yul 'jog byed kyi tshad ma ni gang yin te yang dag par grub mi srid do/*

153 *De kho na nyid gsal ba'i sgron me* 479 and 483 (root text embedded in commentary): *sems dang sems byung 'di rnam ni yod pa dang med pa'i mtha' las 'das shing gcig dang du ma bral te ci lta bur yang mi gnas so/ ... ji srid 'jig rten yod med bden rdzun snang mi snang la sogs pa'i yid kyid g.yo ba de srid bdud kyi spyod yul te*

ize [anything] by taking a[ny] real object or goal as an objective support [for practice].¹⁵⁴

Through this *yoga*, one attains the nondual state of unity in which there is no separation between emptiness, luminosity, and appearance:

Therefore, those who realize that real things do not exist at all know through their realization that all arising thoughts and appearances, whatever they may be, are the natural state, the *dharmadhātu*. This knowing completely accomplishes the state of one who has subdued the enemy, the absence of awareness (*ma rig pa*), the attainment of positive qualities. The reality (*don*) of what has [just] been pointed out, [knowing], is like space. By analogy, the phenomenon corresponding to the [word] “space” [cannot be] reified in terms of any defining characteristic at all. [“Space”] is merely a name. So both virtue and nonvirtue, and so forth, cannot be separated insofar as they [both] have the nature of a phenomenon and do not arise. [Likewise,] as one does not engage the mind (*yid la byed*, *manasikāra*) in any effort to eliminate or establish [anything], one does not intentionally direct one’s mind toward any object of fixation whatsoever. Since even the nature of mind is not established, by not making concepts in terms of knowing or not knowing one is free from knowing and not knowing.¹⁵⁵

Mipham composed only a few texts directly pertaining to Dzogchen literature, so he must have considered this work to be quite important, since his commentary is

154 *De kho na nyid gsal ba’i sgron me* 484 (root text embedded in commentary): // *phags pa kun gyi gzigs pa’i spyod yul dang grub pa’i gnas kyang ’khor ba spang ba’i pha rol zhid na gud du ma’ dres par med la myang’ das sogs yon tan gyi khyad par thob pa’i lam yang’ di las gzhan du na grub pa med de thams cad rang bzhin med pas so/ . . . ldang dang mi ldang ched du mi spong sems rten mi ’cha’ zhes mtshan ma dang rtog pa ldang ba ched du mi spang zhing mi ldang ba la sems kyi rten mi ’cha’ bar ’bras bu’am bden don la dmigs pa’i sgo nas mngon du byed pa min te/*

155 *De kho na nyid gsal ba’i sgron me* 485–486 (root text embedded in commentary): *bden pa’i dngos po cung zad med par rtogs pa de tshes rtog snang ji snyed skye ba kun kyang chos kyi dbyings kyi rang bzhin du rtogs pa’i shes pa de ni mi shes pa’i dgra bcom pa yon tan rab tu ’byor ba yin no/ /ji skad bstan pa’i don ni nam mkha’ bzhin te dper na nam mkha’ don ci lta bu’i mtshan nyid du yang mi dmigs pas ming tsam zhid ste de ni dge ba dang ni mi dge sogs gnyis chos kyi rang bzhin can du ’byed pa med de skye med pa’i phyir ro/ /spong ba’am ma grub par bya ba’i rtsol ba yid la mi byed cing dmigs pa’i yul gang la’ang sems pa med de sems nyid kyang ma grub pas shes mi shes su mi rtogs pas shes dang mi shes bral ba’o/*

quite detailed. In addition, he makes clear that he consulted earlier commentaries in order to compose his own. Mipham's interest in this text may be related to his main guru, Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo, who was an emanation of Mañjuśrī and Vimalamitra, Mañjuśrīmitra's main disciple. At the age of sixteen, Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo thus had an important vision of Mañjuśrīmitra.¹⁵⁶ In his eulogy of Mañjuśrīmitra's instructions, Mipham invokes the power of these instructions for "whoever has a connection," the role of the lineage being, as is well known, fundamental in Dzogchen. In addition, one should note that Mañjuśrī, to whom this text is dedicated, was Mipham's principal deity.

Translation: "The Lamp Illuminating Reality," a Word Commentary of "Refining Gold from Ore," the Practice of the Thought of Awakening¹⁵⁷

[466] Homage to the guru, Mañjuśrī!

To the unity in which cognition and cognitive objects are of a single nature, the unconditioned [*dharma*] *dhātu*, the *vajra* of the luminous mind, I bow down with a prostration that relinquishes union and separation. Here is the very exposition of "Refining Gold from Ore," the Practice of the Thought of Awakening, a treatise composed by the great lord of the accomplished ones, the learned (*ācārya*) Mañjuśrīmitra. This [text] is the heart of the entire mind section of Dzogchen. It comprises three sections: the introduction, the exposition itself, and the conclusion.

A. [Introduction]

The introduction has two parts: the meaning of the title and the translator's homage.

1. Meaning of the Title

[The title] in Sanskrit [is] *Bodhicittabhāvanopālasuvarṇadruta*, in Tibetan *Byang chub sems bsgom pa rdo la gser zhun* ["Refining Gold from Ore," the Practice of the Thought of Awakening]. Since it genuinely determines the meaning of the absolute nature of phenomena, the nature of **the thought of awakening**,¹⁵⁸ the spontaneously undifferentiated great perfection (*rdzogs chen*), this pith instruction regarding **the way to practice** is like the good smelter who **refines** the substance of gold abid-

156 See Cousins 2002: 134–35.

157 *Byang chub sems bsgom pa rdo la gser zhun gyi mchan 'grel de kho na nyid gsal ba' i sgron me zhes bya ba zhugs so.*

158 In the context of early Dzogchen, *byang chub sems*, *bodhicitta* is a synonym for *rig pa*.

ing in **the gold ore** by skillfully purifying it.¹⁵⁹ This treatise actualizes [the thought of awakening] in a way similar to this example.

2. [*The Translator's Homage*]¹⁶⁰

I **prostrate to the one who is sublime** because he has transcended the level of spiritually immature persons, who is **gentle** because he has pacified the afflictions of mental proliferations, who is **youthful** because he is free from the decay of aging as he is imbued with the **glory** of the two benefits. Such is the translator's homage. In some copies [of the text], one also finds [the following sentence]: "I pay homage to the Bhagavān who is pure with regard to the three realms."

B. The Exposition

There are twelve topics in the root text:

1. the introduction to this work through the preliminary homage to the three jewels;
2. the reason why realization should be obtained; [467]
3. what should be realized;
4. by what means it is realized;
5. what is to be investigated before the realization [of the thought of awakening];
6. the definitive meaning subsequent to investigation;
7. the practice of the definitive meaning;
8. the method for the realization of the definitive meaning through this lineage's skillful means;
9. the flaw of not being conjoined with the thought of awakening;
10. the good quality arising on account of the mere aspiration to [realize] this [thought of awakening];

159 Dil mgo mkhyen brtse, who was one of the most remarkable twentieth-century masters in Mipham's lineage, commenting on Zur chung shes rab grags pa's *Zhal gdams pa brgyad bcu pa*, declares, "If the mind were not primordially pure, it would be quite impossible to make it pure, just as it is impossible to extract gold from ordinary rock, however much one breaks it up and tries to melt and refine it. But just as refining gold ore by washing, melting, and beating it will eventually produce gold, striving on the path will unveil the nature of enlightenment, which has been with us from the very beginning." See Padmakara 2006: 91.

160 The root text reads, "I prostrate to the sublime youthful Mañjuśrī (*'jam dpal*, "Gentle Glory")!" Because of the very nature of the English syntax, it is difficult to render the word order of the Tibetan text into English. However, in his commentary, Mipham strictly comments on each word in the order of its appearance in the root text.

11. the instruction that those having a wrong perspective are objects of compassion;
12. the dedication of merit for the awakening [of all beings].

1. [Introduction: The Homage to the Three Jewels]

The flawless understanding of **the two** [kinds of] **selflessness** of persons and phenomena is the **Sugata's** sublime mind, **nonconceptual primordial wisdom**. [I bow down] to the jewel of the Buddha, the one who, by obtaining this [flawless understanding], has attained **the body of primordial wisdom** that cannot be separated from **the dharmadhātu**, its knowledge object.¹⁶¹

There is no quality to obtain and no fault to eliminate in the nature of all phenomena comprised of affliction and purification, namely, in the *dharmadhātu*, **the pacification** of all phenomenal appearances that are mental proliferations. Since the play (*rol pa*) of such a realization, within which eliminating [faults] and obtaining [qualities] are the same, is **the supreme path** among paths, [I bow down] to the truth of the path leading to cessation, the jewel of the Dharma.

To those who will definitely not return to saṃsāra because they directly realized selflessness, to those on the first stage [called] “Difficult to Conquer” or those **on the eighth stage, and so on**, who will not return to the [sphere of] phenomenal appearances, to the devoted sons of the victors residing on the ten stages **who have obtained the ten powers**,¹⁶² **to all the victorious ones and those who have reached the unique** sphere of experience through the realization of the *dharmadhātu*, [I bow down] to the sublime [jewel of the] saṅgha of the bodhisattvas.

[468] Thus, the **three worthy objects** [of refuge] are the teacher, the teaching, and the students: that which must be known (i.e., Dharma), the one who makes it known (i.e., the Buddha), and the saṅgha. From the perspective of the concealing, these three are similar as a refuge, whereas they are nothing but **fundamental sameness itself**, that which is not distinguished as anything different, on the level of the ultimate. So, **with a mind that does not ascribe a phenomenal appearance to that** [sameness], **with a completely pure devotion, with a conviction** that has firmly apprehended things as they are, I bow down to [the three jewels].

161 For the sake of clarity “[I bow down]” was added at the end of each of the first three paragraphs. In Tibetan, there is only one long sentence. The predicate of the three paragraphs about the three jewels is simply stated at the end of the sentence after three modal clauses (with a mind ..., with a confidence ..., with a conviction ...). In the present case, this complex grammatical structure is due to this particular commentarial style (*mchan 'grel*).

162 [mkhyen pa'i] stobs bcu, daśabalāni.

2. Why Should Realization be Obtained?

This chapter has two sections:

1. the benefit [of realization];
2. the greatness [of this realization].

2.1. The Benefit of Realization

This subchapter has three sections:

1. the benefit of [the thought of awakening], which is the cause [of the accumulations of merit and wisdom];
2. the resulting benefit of direct realization;
3. the teaching on [the thought of awakening] as the supreme [basis] of all results consisting in complete liberation.

2.1.1. [The Benefit of the Thought of Awakening, which is the Cause of the Accumulations of Merit and Wisdom]

With a single intention and a single voice, **all those who are the light** of primordial wisdom dispelling the inner and outer darkness of all worlds, **the teachers** of humans and gods, **praised in the same way** the thought of awakening as supreme. **The ultimate quintessence of Dharma** primordially abiding in all knowable phenomena is [Mañjuśrī], this [very] **gentleness**, which is [none other than] the thought of awakening free from the suffering of mental proliferations. When this is realized, that which is **the glory** of beings, **the youth** free from imperfections and impurities, **is the very quintessence** [of Dharma], which is supreme among [all] knowable phenomena.¹⁶³ Thus, the flawless realization of the thought of awakening, the definitive meaning, namely, the [real] nature of Mañjuśrī, is the transcendence of wisdom,¹⁶⁴ the mother **from whom all sugatas are born**. This being so, one does not

163 Here Mīpham glosses 'jam pa, mañju, which is translated here as “gentleness”; dpal, śrī is translated as “glory,” and gzhon nu, kumāra as “youth,” “freshness” in the sense of that which is not altered, corrupted, or liable to decay. This refers to the thought of awakening (byang chub sems, bodhicitta), which is beyond the three times. Mīpham, in accordance with Mañjuśrīmitra’s root text, explains thereby the real meaning of Mañjuśrī, which is none other than the thought of awakening (byang chub sems, bodhicitta) itself. A theistic interpretation of the chosen deity (iṣṭadevatā) is therefore completely impossible in the present context.

164 shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa, prajñāpāramitā. I chose not to translate this term by the usual “perfection of wisdom.” This expression could indeed mean a “perfect” wisdom, in the sense of being flawless. Although it certainly also means this, etymologically, pāramitā clearly implies something ‘beyond’ prajñā. In the context of Mahāyāna, a dépassement of the Hinayānist concept of prajñā is certainly implied and should therefore be expressed into the English translation of this term. “Transcendence” clearly refers to this, whereas “perfection” allows for a certain ambiguity.

attain awakening by a method other than this one. This is therefore **the perfect and unique path of all the victors**. [469] [The thought of awakening] **constitutes the basis of the causal accumulation by the buddhas such as the discipline, the practice of the virtuous path of the ten transcendences**, and the accumulation of merit that is [like] an ocean. If [these accumulations] have not yet been completed because this thought of awakening [is lacking], one is not accomplished as a buddha. This is why [this thought of awakening] is the [very] basis of these accumulations.

2.1.2. [*The Resulting Benefit of Direct Realization*]

As for the **individual defining characteristic of the flawless practice of the fundamental state or nature of the thought of awakening that is completely purified of mental proliferations and the benefit of directly realizing it, when this sublime perfection of the ultimate thought of awakening is realized** in a nondual way by someone who has a mind capable of understanding the *dharmadhātu*. **At that time, that which is the supreme kāya**, the basis of primordial wisdom, sublime activities, and the two material kāyas among the three kāyas of awakening (i.e., *dharmakāya*, *sambhogakāya*, and *nirmāṇakāya*), **is called “dharmakāya” by the victors. Being the supreme knowing agent** among the knowers of all knowable objects, it is unique. Since its object is the most sublime knowable [object], **this subject is also called “the sublime eye of wisdom.”** Being particularly noble compared to the eye of flesh and so forth, it is unexcelled. Since being indestructible it can cut [any] other [thing], **it is a vajra**. Since this *dharmakāya* is unexcelled by anything, it is also **the highest possible state of being, the pinnacle**¹⁶⁵ [of all that is]. It is the basis of all primordial wisdoms. And **this nonconceptual primordial wisdom itself is this very thought of awakening.**

2.1.3. [*The Teaching on the Thought of Awakening as the Supreme Basis of All Results Consisting in Complete Liberation*]

Everything that is described and shown as the defining characteristic [or] noble quality of the result of the complete liberation from saṃsāra [attained by] the most noble ones among the four saṅghas of the buddhas, the bodhisattvas, the solitary realizers, and the hearers, as many as they are across time and space, **arises from the perfection and thorough realization of this very thought of awakening**. [470] Even if it is realized in a medium or lesser way, **these noble qualities of individual liberation completely arise from this thought of awakening**. On account of this, it is the basis of the result of liberation.

165 Mipham reads *mo* in the root text as meaning *rtse mo*.

2.2 Pointing Out the Greatness [of This Realization]

Among all the lineages of the hearers and so forth, the Mahāyāna lineage is the greatest in terms of the quality of its result. This lineage focuses on the great **awakening**, the state of permanent **deathlessness** of those imbued with **the sublime great lineage** (*rigs, gotra*) [of the buddhas]. So [since] **even all the bodhisattvas** who are intent on applying this, as many as they may be, **could not arise if this** thought of awakening **did not exist, this** [thought of awakening] **is therefore the excellent unsurpassed path of liberation itself.**

3. What Should Be Realized?

All defiled phenomena appear because of the tricks of ignorance, which is the defining characteristic of mind. Even as this ordinary mentation [occurs] within the unaltered *vajra* of the nature of mind, the thought of awakening is of major significance and remains beyond thoughts and words **on account of the** resulting complete liberation, the appearance of supreme accomplishments. Thus, it is not destroyed by anything **under any circumstance.**¹⁶⁶ It is the flawless nature of phenomena, the *vajra* mind since it cuts the net of obscurations.¹⁶⁷

How should one become acquainted with this [Vajra]sattva, or thought of awakening, which contemplates this [nature of phenomena]? Inasmuch as it is not realized by a coarse intellect since **it is** profound and **extremely subtle**, in addition to being **difficult to understand** through a worldly path, one [should] remain on a nondeceptive path and set others on it. Therefore, **this path** leading to the awakening **of the great sage transcends** fixation on objects [consisting in positing] either that [this path] is the object of **non-conceptualization** because it is different **or** that this [path] is the object of **conceptualization**. [471] As a consequence, any mind considering [it] as an [ordinary] object will find it **difficult to examine** in the way [one analyzes] the mental aspect of an object. Because of this, showing to others this so-called “it,” just as it is, is difficult. As it is something devoid of mental proliferations, it cannot be expressed by words. This being so, **it is free from conventional designations describing [it]**. Therefore, **it is not properly [expressed]**, just as it is, **by way of words. Although it is not the province of the others**, such as the hearers, and so forth, who are apart from the Great Vehicle, as well as **all ordinary people and spiritually immature people**, it is not impossible to realize [it].

¹⁶⁶ Literally: “at all times [and] in all places.”

¹⁶⁷ *Vajra* refers to the mythical Indian weapon which, while being itself indestructible, can cut or destroy anything. Here Mipham glosses *rdo rje sems dpa'*, *vajrasattva* just as he glossed Mañjuśrī. The deities are nothing but this state of realization, *bodhicitta* taken in a Dzogchen sense, namely, as awareness (*rig pa*).

4. How Is It Realized?

Well then, by what [means] is it realized? [It is achieved] by the flawless object and [skillful] means leading to realization, in that one reaches a complete understanding of the thought of awakening with regard to **the scriptures of definitive**, namely, ultimate, **meaning**, the speech of the Teacher that is not of provisional sense, **as well as the pith instructions** [based on] the experience of the flawless realization of skilled **gurus**. One should **consider**, or know, that such is **the meaning** of this teaching **in this** context. Thus, a deceptive cognition is not a valid cognition. This being so, when **one thoroughly analyzes dualistic positions established** in terms of existence and nonexistence, **this very analysis proceeds from** [one's own mental] continuum, that is to say, from distorted **conceptuality**, **since one dismantles** all [putative] **things** appearing as wholes **by means of proofs consisting in direct perception and inference**,¹⁶⁸ as well as through logical argumentation. Once **the object of [mental] activity**, which is incorrectly perceived by a misapprehending intellect, **has been established as a valid cognition**, **this misapprehending intellect performs** the analysis **by dismantling** [putative wholes]. For example, as one perceives a rope as a snake, one directly perceives [the snake] on account of its defining characteristic. Therefore, [you may ask,] why is the perception of this so-called "nonexistent snake," which is a valid cognition, logically unsuitable as a valid cognition?¹⁶⁹ Why? **Because there is not** the slightest **dualistic position about** [existence or nonexistence] or [anything] established as "this" [to be found] when one performs an analysis in order to find whether there is any ultimacy in mind's **conceptualization** of this [snake]. [472] **Even this dualistic position consisting in analyzing** by way of conceptualizations **does not exist**. This being so, **if that which is called a valid cognition establishing [something] and which is endowed with an essence withstanding analysis does not exist** in the slightest, **what could be a valid cognition** that establishes an object? It cannot be truly established! **Since** the [opinion of the] people is not a suitable valid cognition for an analysis [investigating] reality, although positing **conventional designations imputed by worldly beings** as valid cognitions may indeed happen, perceiving the fictional conventional designations of the world as valid cognitions **is not necessary in** the context of **the path** that accomplishes **the union** with genuine reality.

168 Literally: "by means of proofs consisting in direct perception and so forth, namely, inference."

169 This argument is reminiscent of the Mādhyamika critique of *pramāṇa* as being valid.

5. *What Is to Be Examined Before the Realization [of the Thought of Awakening]?*

This chapter has two sections:

1. analyzing actual things consisting in that which is defiled;
2. analyzing actual things consisting in that which is completely purified.

5.1. *Analyzing the Actual Things Consisting in That Which Is Defiled*

This subchapter has two subsections:

1. the fundamental nature of misapprehension;
2. how this misapprehension appears.

5.1.1. *[The Fundamental Nature of Misapprehension]*

In the context of that which is flawless, namely, the path of investigation, unsurpassed by all the stories about actual things [or] by unmistakable¹⁷⁰ imputations about the reality of things, one should analyze the cause of the [se] limited doctrinal positions, imputations, which posit any defiled actual thing, the object of [our] investigation. Completely manifesting as an object in the mind of all beings, this phenomenon is known, cognized, as the six externally existing objects and the six internally existing sense faculties. When one correctly analyzes this imputation [that something] exists as an object on account of being seen, heard, and so forth, that is to say, as being such by way of^{f171} the six functional consciousnesses (*'jug shes, pravṛttivijñāna*), which apprehend [it as an object], [one finds that this imputation] does not exist in the way it appears and is [therefore] imputed since it consists [merely] in misapprehension. If this apprehended object, as it is experienced through our own ignorance, [our own] conceptualization, were true as being such, namely, as the basis of an actual thing, all these ordinary beings would see things as they are since they would see the inherent nature of actual things.¹⁷² Being similar to the arhats who conceive the nonexistence of actual things, being not different from them, [473] it could be argued that they would be completely liberated from saṃsāra. Even if [one says] they are, all these ordinary beings are de-

170 Is this an ironic remark directed at logicians who reason correctly on wrong premises? It seems so to me.

171 Lipman reads *gi*, but an instrumental here is necessary. See Lipman 1986: 116.

172 This echoes the Saṃdh. See the translation of the passage in question in Chapter 3.3: “§3. Suviśuddhamati, if the character of conditioned phenomena and the character of the ultimate were not different, spiritually immature people—all ordinary beings—would as a consequence realize the truth. As mere ordinary beings, not only would they attain nirvāṇa, the unsurpassable good, but they would also fully and completely awaken to the unsurpassable, complete, and perfect awakening.”

feated by the enemies of time, death, [aging, and sickness] and are afflicted by the three and eight kinds of suffering. Because of such a *karma*, it is manifest, clear, that [all this] is [nothing but] misapprehension. Otherwise, if the cognitions [arising] through the twelve sources of cognitions, such as the eyes and so forth, were valid cognitions, if this were not misapprehension, since everything beings perceive would be valid cognitions, as beings would naturally possess the sublime path, no one at all would need this sublime path anew. Moreover, if it were so, this path of ordinary perception would be taught as the path of complete liberation, but no one is liberated from saṃsāra's suffering by means of what is cognized by the sense faculties, namely, by that which arises in dependence upon the physical sense faculties. Why is this so? [Simply because] these cognitions perceived by beings as all kinds of valid cognitions do not remove any suffering, and not only that, these cognitions that consist in this kind of ideation (*rnam rig, vijñapti*) are the basis for the arising of afflictions. Therefore, all that is perceived by ordinary beings manifests as misapprehension because [their] logic [depends on] the power of things themselves (*dnegos stobs, vastubala*). The Victor also explained in the scriptures that this is misapprehension.

5.1.2. How This Misapprehension Appears

Although the older outlines mention nine divisions, here, from the perspective of this explanation, there are [only] two:

1. pointing out how this misapprehension appears on the level of the conventional;
2. pointing out that no inherent nature is established on the level of the ultimate.¹⁷³

5.1.2.1. Pointing Out How This Misapprehension Appears on the Level of the Conventional

[This subchapter has] three [sections]:

1. identifying the subliminal [consciousness] from which [this misapprehension] appears;
2. pointing out the confusion of doctrinal positions other than this one;
3. reaching a definitive conclusion about the nature of misapprehension, exactly as it is and not how it appears.

¹⁷³ See Lipman 1986: 81. Mipham apparently consulted the older commentaries but did not follow them, as he clearly indicates here his preference for an outline conforming to the principle of the two truths.

5.1.2.1.1. [Identifying the Subliminal Consciousness from which This Misapprehension Appears]

[474] The perception of ordinary beings appears as misapprehension, **therefore these appearances consisting in misapprehension appear on account of the power of confusion** in [the mind of] beings. **How so?** The mind of beings is by nature **endowed with projections**, and since **it is wrong, in that it erroneously conceives [things dualistically]** in terms of an apprehending subject and an apprehended object, it has been since beginningless time **without any effort**, naturally, **debased (nyams)** and thereby confused. Thus, not seeing reality, **this intellect is mistaken**. Deprived of the power to see reality since **it has been taken over by the cause of ignorance**, straying from the fundamental condition of things, **this very mind**, meaning the eight consciousnesses **together with the fifty-one mental states**, **appears as an object**, namely, as a material form, a self, and a cognition, **the subject matter of the three points** mentioned below:

- **Various conditioning mental states** [arising] from positive or negative actions **accumulate latent mental predispositions**. The power of **being habituated to something** generated by this [process] **increases the force** of the latent mental predispositions so that **at some point in time** they have the power to emit their fruit as one's own **mind appears itself in the form of an object**, externally, **and of a body**, internally.¹⁷⁴ One's own mind **manifests as** in the case of [someone] habituated to the [practice of] ugliness who thereby sees the ground in all directions appearing to be **full of bones**.
- The **apprehension** of the thought of "I" **does arise in [one's] mind-stream**, the subliminal consciousness bearing all kinds of **accumulated latent mental predispositions**. However, **apart from mere imagination** consisting in the thought of "I," **the closely investigated object, the self, does not exist**. Likewise, in the case of the misapprehension of a rope as a snake, the snake does not exist apart from the mere apprehension of a snake.¹⁷⁵

174 This is the first point where the process of mind's appearance as materiality (external and internal) is explained. This process works as follows: (1) positive and negative actions generate *saṃskāra*; (2) *saṃskāra* accumulates *vāsanās*; (3) the power of habituation arising from this increases the force of *vāsanās*; (4) at some point in time, the *vāsanās* bear their fruit.

175 The question of knowing why the self is experienced if the self does not exist is not taken as a good argument here. It would be like saying that water must exist in the mirage since water is perceived in the mirage, or that what is seen on the screen of a movie theatre must be real since it is perceived.

- This subtle subliminal consciousness is **veiled by the power of the phenomena** consisting in **conditioning mental states** appearing as something solid. As it is [veiled,] hard to understand, that which is subtle is not seen. [475] Since every **ideation arises from this** subliminal consciousness, ideation is superimposition, just like water with regard to a mirage.¹⁷⁶

5.1.2.1.2. *Pointing Out the Confusion of Doctrinal Positions Other Than This One*

Why does [this misapprehension] appear? Similarly to the misapprehension of a snake resulting from not perceiving that the nature of the [snake] is a rope, it appears in all kinds of forms **on account of the power of mind**, namely, the subliminal consciousness, the entity containing the latent mental predispositions **together with the [mental] continuum**. **Not realizing [this], adhering to erroneous conceptualizations** apprehending everything that appears as existent on account of its intrinsic nature, **the self, whose nature is the fall** into saṃsāra and which is imputed **on account of conceptualizations**, acts as the primary cause of saṃsāra, although it does not exist. [The self] **and all** internal and external **phenomena** indisputably **proliferate** as if they were concrete **because of this** adherence to erroneous conceptualizations. **This source**, the subliminal consciousness, **endowed with** the latent mental predispositions, **moving very subtly** [like] a necklace of evanescent moments, **is not seen**. **On account of this, the various doctrinal positions of the fordors** (*mu steg pa, tīrthika*), such as the view of the self, arise. Then, on the basis of a path and such [a view], **liberation is conceptualized**.

Why is [the movement of the source of all thoughts, the subliminal consciousness, not seen]? Since this **mind**, the subliminal consciousness, **is the basis of boundless** latent mental predispositions [resulting from] any positive or negative actions, **the latent mental predispositions abiding** in the subliminal consciousness are **boundless**. Thus, **there is no definite certainty** that these latent mental predispositions do not exist. **Manifold are the conditions too that**, acting as a cause and **activating [them] out of their latency** in the form of a resultant entity, **produce these latent mental predispositions**. **Indeed**, the activated latent mental predispositions are numerous: on account of virtuous [actions] they manifest as the higher rebirths, while they manifest as the lower ones as a consequence of de-

¹⁷⁶ The presence of water “arises” from the mirage (namely the causes and conditions leading to the wrong perception of water) so that water is superimposed on this set of causes and conditions called “mirage.” The subliminal consciousness (*kun gzhi, ālayavijñāna*) is compared to a mirage, and not to something truly existent. It is the mirage that projects notions under the force of habituation, which takes the form of accumulated latent mental patterns conditioned, shaped, by actions and conditioning mental states or emotions.

filed or nonvirtuous [actions]. Once **the latent mental predispositions** for a birth as a human that have been placed in the subliminal consciousness at a previous time **have ripened due to some conditions** corresponding to a human birth, **the body corresponding to the [mental] continuum of a human being is obtained.** [476] **Through other** conditions such as those [necessary] for the birth as a god, one obtains the birth of a god. However, **when some other latent mental predispositions are activated, one sees the power** [of the ripening of the latent mental predispositions] **to change** one existence into another on account of prior conditions. At that time, wrong thinking arises, and one **accepts a creator** of the world, **such as Īśvara.** Now, since **this path** posited in such terms **does not pacify** the subtlest suffering, it [simply] **does not liberate** [beings] from the three worlds. As one goes astray from the yogic path leading to the true nature [of things], **the cause for the corruption of this [yogic] path and** the arising of **doubts** regarding it **arise** on account of erroneous conceptualizations **because one does not understand** that this movement [of thoughts] is the fundamental nature of **that which is extremely subtle, namely, this continuum** of the subliminal consciousness.¹⁷⁷ For example, one apprehends [it] as a snake, or one remains in doubt as one does not recognize the rope. **Those who impute** the fault of not realizing [this] as the self **completely obscure** their own [mental] continuum. They **are cut off from the lineage of sublime beings** who do not conceptualize a self, because they do not go beyond the sphere of ordinary beings. As they engage themselves in different actions consisting in **imputing various phenomena, various forms of suffering arise.** Thus, because of nonvirtuous actions, **the three lower rebirths come to be.**

5.1.2.1.3. *Reaching a Definitive Conclusion About the Nature of Misapprehension, Exactly As It Is and Not How It Appears*

This section consists of two parts:

1. the proposition;
2. its proof.

5.1.2.1.3.1. *The Proposition [That There Are No Phenomena Apart from the Mental Continuum of Momentary Thoughts]*

In the continuum of conditioning mental states, these consciousnesses (visual, auditive, and so forth) **are apprehended as different** phenomenal appearances

¹⁷⁷ In fact, Mañjuśrīmitra points out ignorance first. The first step is to introduce ignorance as so-called valid cognition or on a more yogic level as the movement of all thoughts.

or defining characteristics. Therefore, since there are eight knowable objects, [mind] appears as the eight consciousnesses in accordance with [their] specific function, such as making one see, and so forth. However, since these [consciousnesses] are identical in their capacity to know and cognize, they are not manifold as far as this [cognitive] capacity is concerned.¹⁷⁸ Mind is without manifoldness. [477] Therefore, in the first moment of mind, namely, in just a single instant of the subliminal consciousness, which is the basis for the production of everything, the body endowed with its faculties, as well as all noncorporeal phenomena, are present. Because of being caught up by and attached to any thought whatsoever during these previous moments, this [thought of the] previous moment comes forth as something corresponding [to it] during the subsequent cognition inasmuch as the latent mental impregnation for this [thought] ripens.¹⁷⁹ As a result, [mind] appears as being manifold. Hence, there are no phenomena for sublime and ordinary beings apart from the continuum of their own momentary thoughts, because all phenomena abide in mind. There are six types of [mental] continua, six families [of beings], such as the gods and so forth. There is also among them a variety of disagreements.¹⁸⁰ These [disagreements] appear due to the power of their state of absorption (*ting nge 'dzin, samādhi*) in the practice of ignorance since beginningless time.

5.1.2.1.3.2. *The Proof [That There Are No Phenomena Apart from the Mental Continuum of Momentary Thoughts]*

The section has two subchapters:

1. presenting the proof;
2. explaining [this proof] by disputing that which is illogical.

178 See Saṃdh V.4, D106, f.12b–13a: “[Likewise,] Viśālamati, an auditive, olfactory, gustatory, or tactile consciousness arises on the basis of [a sense faculty] connected to consciousness, [such as] the ear, nose, tongue, or body, and a [sound, smell, flavor, or] tangible object. Simultaneously and in conformity with this [auditive, olfactory, gustatory, or] tactile consciousness, a mental consciousness that mentally constructs [the object] arises at the same time, having the same object. If [only] one visual consciousness arises at one time, [13a] then only one mental consciousness that mentally constructs [the object] arises simultaneously, having the same object. If two, three, four, or five consciousnesses arise simultaneously, then also in that case, having the same object as the group of five consciousnesses, only one mental consciousness that mentally constructs [this object] arises simultaneously.”

179 See Saṃdh, Chapter 5.

180 This refers to the way in which various beings perceive the same phenomenon in various ways.

5.1.2.1.3.2.1. *Presenting the Proof*

All phenomena comprised of affliction and purification are thoughts. **So, no partial position at all** about anything whatsoever, such as doctrinal partial positions about existence and nonexistence, or spatial partial positions (the east and so forth), **exists in the slightest in this mindstream. Therefore**, as there is nothing to demonstrate in terms of being a oneness, **even oneness is indemonstrable. Because partial positions do not exist at all in these** [momentary] thoughts, they cannot be differentiated as being distinct [from one another]. On account of this, [even] if a partial position about purity and impurity were to exist, it would not be suitable to demonstrate the defining characteristic of oneness. Forget actual things—even if one says that [oneness] is a non-thing such as space, since the emptiness of space has distinct divisions of center and borders such as east and west, it is not a suitable [instantiation of] oneness. However, since even these partial positions [about things being multiple or not] do not exist in the [momentary] thoughts, they are indivisible into different [entities]. Therefore, **all the limitless fields of the buddhas are one’s own body.** As [everything] is identical in not existing as an objective support, so everything is oneself and [478] one is everything as well. Since **one’s own body appears as the limitless fields of the buddhas and the bodies of ordinary beings**, there is no phenomenon to obtain that has not been primordially obtained. **However, since a thought and a latent mental impregnation are neither the same nor different**, like appearance and color, **it is impossible to speculate** [about them].¹⁸¹

5.1.2.1.3.2.2. *Explaining [This Proof] by Disputing That Which Is Illogical*

If everything is a thought, how do [things] appear to arise from external causes and conditions? It is said that **all these phenomena, occurring in dependence**, arise when the gathering of their causes is complete in mind while they come to cessation when the causes [of their emergence] are reversed. If one considers this statement from the perspective of the ultimate, **a nonexistent result ultimately does not occur from a nonexistent real cause. By way of analogy, this is similar to the non-arising of a fruit**¹⁸² **from a burnt seed.** Therefore, with regard to this [unreal]

181 “Not the same, not different” is a typical Madhyamaka’s argument. Here it is associated with neither one nor many. A similar argument is found in the *Samdhinirmocana* (Chapter III), where it is asked if the conch is distinct from its whiteness, or gold from its characteristic color. This means that the nature of phenomena (i.e., the ultimate) and all the phenomena consisting of affliction and purification (i.e., the concealing) are neither the same nor different. There is therefore no point in speculating about them in terms of existence or nonexistence, sameness or difference.

182 ‘*bras bu* means both “result” and “fruit” in Tibetan.

cause, a so-called **result does not exist** as anything established [as such].¹⁸³ Why [then] does a result [seem to] arise from a cause? Since beginningless time, [beings] **have had the habit of grasping** causes and results as **real entities** or actual [things]. **The internal thoughts themselves that make one conceptually discern [things] in terms of causes and results appear** as if they were external **causes and results**. In a dream too, one sees forms and so forth as if they arose and ceased due to the power of conceptuality, although **both** causes and results **do not** [actually] **exist** in the way of these [dream] appearances. **Therefore**, if **arising**, together with what arises from causes together, does not exist, **annihilation**, its opposite, also **does not exist**. **Since arising and annihilation do not exist**, being established as **self or other does not exist**. If these do not exist, who dies? Who transmigrates? These two [, death and change,] do not exist. **Since these two[, death and change,] do not exist, eternity and annihilation do not exist**, as change and death do not exist. Arising [and death, eternity and annihilation] being nonexistent, [**ordinary beings**] **therefore misapprehend** them, one after another. **Saṃsāra does not exist**, and **consequently even nirvāṇa**, which is free of saṃsāra, **is revealed as this mere absence** [479] in the way the cessation of water, [namely, its nonexistence in the mirage,] is not established, since water has [never] been established [in the mirage in the first place].

5.1.2.2. *Pointing Out That No Inherent Nature Is Established on the Level of the Ultimate*

It is pointed out that mind itself, the basis of appearances, is ultimately not established. These two, the latent mental predispositions and **the momentary** subliminal consciousness, **which is the source** of the latent mental predispositions, **are never separated**. If one does not exist, the other must be nonexistent, and as none [of them] exists, they cannot exist at all. **In this case** these two **become the same** in being without existence. Whenever latent mental predispositions **do not exist**, this subliminal consciousness also **does not exist**, like the protuberance of a nonexistent saiga antelope. Although indeed it is so, why don't the latent mental predispositions exist? **The latent mental predispositions do not exist because they arise on the basis of fictional conceptualizations, which**, on account of not being in agreement with the nature of things, **are not real**. So, if the latent mental predispositions do not exist [and] the sphere of operation of the subliminal consciousness is the latent mental predispositions, **the subliminal consciousness does not exist because [its] sphere of operation**,¹⁸⁴ [the latent mental predispositions,] **does not exist**. The conceptually apprehended object (*zhen yul*) [consequently]

183 Existence means being established as something from its own side.

184 See Samdh V.6–7, in which it is stated that the *ālayavijñāna* is also without a self.

does not exist. In this case, since a cognition does not arise, **all these consciousnesses also certainly do not exist**. As mentioned above, **since partial positions do not exist**, if both **the object**, namely, the latent mental predispositions, **and the place** where they abide, namely, the subliminal consciousness, **do not exist**, **how could consciousnesses and knowledge that are based on them arise?** **Therefore, these thoughts and these mental states also are beyond dualistic positions [conceived in terms] of existence and nonexistence. They are neither one nor many,** meaning they do not abide as anything.

5.2. *Analyzing Actual Things Consisting in That Which Is Completely Purified*

[This chapter] has two parts:

1. the presentation;
2. the explanation [of the subject matter].

5.2.1. *The Presentation of the Subject Matter*

Since the awakening of the Sugata does not exist, the magical illusion of such [an awakening] appears but is not real; just like an illusion, it appears to those who misapprehend [it].

5.2.2. *The Explanation of the Subject Matter*

[This section has] two [subsections]:

1. pointing out that nonconceptual primordial wisdom is not established [as a mere thought] [480];
2. pointing out that primordial wisdom that is pure but mundane is not established.

5.2.2.1. *Pointing Out that Nonconceptual Primordial Wisdom is Not Established*

[as a Mere Thought]

Likewise, even if **these nonconceptual authentic primordial wisdoms**, namely, **this immeasurable continuum itself**, which is without any basis to pur(e)ify,¹⁸⁵ **and this very flawless dharmadhātu**, are taken as the objects [of dualistic thoughts]

185 Mipham has added *bya* to *dag*, so his commentary reads *dag bya*, while the root text reads *dag*. This is important since according to the root text the continuum has always been pure, and according to the commentary the continuum is without any basis that is an object of purification. The meaning is the same. The wording of this sentence is therefore presented in such a way that one can read both the root text in bold and the commentary. In the present case, the rendering of the gerundive is not an easy task inasmuch as the root text in bold has ideally to remain understandable independently from the commentary.

and are imagined to arise, they are not established when analyzed. Thus, the basis or cause of the *vajra* state, this nonconceptual primordial wisdom, is a thought; [this] thought does not exist, therefore neither does its result, primordial wisdom. On account of this, these two are identical in being not established. [The nature of primordial wisdom] is similar to the nature of the nonestablished thought in every respect. They have similar features. Therefore, the assertion through ideation (*rnam rig, vijñapti*) that a momentary primordial wisdom is ultimate is not established.¹⁸⁶ The pinnacle of primordial wisdom, such as the *vajra* primordial wisdom that realizes the *dharmadhātu*, does not exist at all as an object [conceived] in terms of any partial position whatsoever. Because of this, this primordial wisdom is not momentary.

5.2.2.2. Pointing Out That Primordial Wisdom That Is Pure but Mundane Is Not Established

The basis of virtuous qualities, which purifies the three spheres (subject, object, and action), does not truly exist because it is like a reflection. Therefore, primordial wisdom that is pure but mundane will also not come to be since it depends on this [basis].

6. The Definitive Meaning Subsequent to Investigation

Having conceptually distinguished [these points], pointing out the definitive meaning comprises three parts:

1. the [fundamental] sameness of thoughts;
2. the [fundamental] sameness of actions;
3. pointing out the thought of awakening in a concise way.

6.1. The [Fundamental] Sameness of Thoughts

This section has three subsections:

1. pointing out that there is nothing to obtain and nothing to reject since from the point of view of the ground the two truths are fundamentally the same (*mnyam pa*);
2. pointing out that attachment and aversion do not exist since truth and falsity are the same from the perspective of the path;
3. pointing out that [everything] is fundamentally the same since [things] are free from dualistic positions [conceived in terms of] existence and nonexistence.

¹⁸⁶ Mañjuśrimitra makes the distinction between the actual and the nominal ultimates.

6.1.1. [Pointing Out That There Is Nothing to Obtain and Nothing to Reject Since from the Point of View of the Ground the Two Truths Are Fundamentally the Same]

[Phenomena] comprised of both affliction and purification are not established. **Therefore, both awakening, the state of those who are awakened, and the state of non-awakening, the state of [ordinary] beings, are fundamentally the same, being without [any] defining characteristics.** [481] **Since they are the same, there is [nothing], no awakening, no state of being an ordinary being, to obtain or to reject.**

If also even that which is called “ultimate” does not exist, how could there be even words stating “The [ultimate] is like that”? When one investigates [this matter] according to the abovementioned explanation, [it appears that] **these [designations] are expressions or names for the ultimate,**¹⁸⁷ **such as “that which is beyond arising and cessation,” “fundamental sameness” (*mnyam nyid*), “nonduality,” “that which is beyond thoughts,” “emptiness,” “that which is called *dharmadhātu*,” “freedom from conventional designations,” and so forth. All these descriptions [of the ultimate] are conventional designations [made] in order to instruct [beings]. From the perspective of the genuine definitive meaning [of the teaching], the ultimate does not exist, and that which is called “the completely obscuring [truth]” or “the thoroughly concealing [truth]” (*kun rdzob*) also does not exist. On account of the way the ultimate is, insofar as it is not merely a conventional designation, if what is meant by the statement “this path is nothing but this” were to exist as an object, this very [thing] would be completely obscuring, [i.e., conventional,] and not ultimate. In reality, how could there be a division into two truths, the so-called concealing and ultimate? [This division] does not exist.**

6.1.2. [Pointing Out That Attachment and Aversion Do Not Exist since Truth and Falsity Are the Same from the Perspective of the Path]

With regard to the mental state of being in doubt, which is when one does not experience the ultimate truth, or being without doubts, which is when one experiences it, since in fact both truth and falsity do not exist as anything at all, one neither rejects falsity nor abides in truth. Why is this so? In reality, inasmuch as the inherent nature of the meditator and that of the *dharmadhātu*, the object of realization, are not established, [truth and falsity] do not exist. As a consequence, who has doubts about what? On account of this, experiencing [something] as the ultimate

187 *don dam pa'i rnam grangs su bya ba*, which, of course, is reminiscent of the distinction between *rnam grangs pa'i don dam*, the nominal ultimate, and *rnam grangs ma yin pa'i don dam*, the actual ultimate.

also does not exist in the case of the state without doubts, since it is said in the scriptures, “Craving after the [thirty-seven] aids to awakening] and [feeling] aversion toward the factors that are not conducive [to awakening] should be abandoned.”

6.1.3. [Pointing Out That Everything is Fundamentally the Same Since Things Are Free from Dualistic Positions Conceived in Terms of Existence and Nonexistence]

Thus, as explained above, if **one analyzes dualistic positions** [about] “**actual things**,” [it appears that] **no inherent nature is established, not even as a mere illusion**; therefore [actual things] do not exist. But one may have doubts about nonexistence: well, if existence is not established, whose nonexistence is this nonexistence? **This nonexistence, which depends on the existence** of these [things], also **does not exist!** [482] Thus, one may think that [nonexistence] is not the nonexistence that is the cessation of existence but that [this nonexistence] is a sheer nothingness. [But] **there is no conventional designation “sheer nothingness” for a sheer nothingness**, that which by nature does not arise because, being neither seen nor heard, that which does not abide as an entity on the basis of anything is inconceivable and inexpressible as being such [as this or that] by anyone.

As explained above, since there is no dualistic position, of what could there be a middle? There is also no middle. As there is no middle, one does not even abide in the middle.

6.2. The [Fundamental] Sameness of Actions

Having power **over all** phenomena, all **worldly** desirable sense **objects**, it has been called the excellent almighty **Lord**. Yet, because like a **lotus** it is unstained by imperfections, it acts **without rejecting** [anything], **not even desirable sense objects**. In reality all causal negative and positive qualities are **identical**, and therefore not separated, because [things] **are fundamentally the same**. If even beings themselves do not exist, who is misapprehending [the nature of things]? As a consequence, **one realizes that this very perception of phenomena** as being free from misapprehension is **misapprehension**. Therefore, since **even the six teachings** of the forders, the defilements such as killing and so forth, **and the deeds of the demon** are not taken as an objective support [for thoughts], they are not to be rejected. Once one has understood [this], **one does not reject or conceptualize** [anything] as bad. **Since even the practice of wisdom** (*she rabs, prajñā*) and **skillful means** (*thabs, upāya*) is not established and **does not abide** as the defining characteristic of anything, **the behavior of the demon is experienced to be similar to**

both [wisdom and skillful means]. Indeed, as none of these two arises, they are fundamentally the same.

Regarding the freedom from all views, after one has engaged in grasping, thinking “This is the view of ultimate meaning,” **one considers one’s own understanding** as the realization of the truth. Thus, [this view] is made the ultimate. [483] **It prevails over everything**, and as a consequence of this view, **arrogance** arises. **With attachment** to one’s own view **and aversion** toward others’ views, **ignorance consisting in refuting** one another **manifests**. Since what is called “truth” does not exist, both the perception of one’s own view as true and the perception, on the basis of what is not false, of the others’ views as false are opinions that are not in agreement with the fundamental condition of things. As a consequence, **the unadulterated natural condition**, in which both truth and falsity are not perceived, **is not seen**.

6.3. *Pointing Out the Thought of Awakening in a Concise Way*

As long as these movements of the worldly intellect manifest in terms of existence/nonexistence, truth/falsity, appearance/nonappearance, and so forth, **the realm of the demon** [appears].

[**The practice of the thought of awakening**] is a subtle path that is hard to understand. One might think, “Well then, one [has to] abide in a state in which there is no movement [of thoughts].” **One does not even abide in this abiding consisting in not abiding in mere conventional designations** such as the expressions “**movement**” or “**absence of movement**” on the basis of concepts and phenomenal appearances. Hence, there is no need to mention the nonabiding in what is called “the absence of movement.” Likewise, the **nonexistence of appearances** that are apprehended through the experience or the cessation of sensations or through conceptions¹⁸⁸ such as “This is, this is not” is the **path of the nonabiding middle**: since the unsurpassable awakening is accomplished by directing one’s mind toward **this** [ultimate] truth, [this] **was spoken of by the Sugata as the thought of awakening**.

7. *The Practice of the Definitive Meaning*

After the definitive meaning has been ascertained, the [section about its] practice has two [parts]:

1. pointing out the factors that are not conducive to this practice;
2. pointing out the antidote to these, the unmistakable meaning of this practice.

188 See Skilling’s extensive footnote about *samjñā* (Skilling 1997: 477–80, n. 31).

7.1. [*Pointing Out the Factors That Are Not Conducive to the Practice of the Definitive Meaning*]
 Nonconceptual practice is without rejection or acceptance. [In other paths,] **one completely abandons** the factors that are not conducive [to practice], namely, **the three attachments** to form and so forth, **phenomenal appearances, and wishfulness**. [484] As an antidote to this, the practice of **the three [gates of] liberation** such as emptiness, absence of phenomenal appearance, and absence of wishfulness **also** falls into the dualistic positions of rejection and acceptance, thus it is **the activity of the demon**. This very form is emptiness; this phenomenal appearance is without phenomenal appearance; and wishfulness itself is devoid of wishes. However, [all these] do not exist as distinct [entities]. **Since the path that establishes saṃsāra rejects these three**—attachment, aversion, and ignorance—[then] **cultivating the path to nirvāṇa is also** the very activity of **the demon**. Thus, **this very practice is not** the realization of a peaceful or **non-peaceful state**, because from the perspective of **the nature** or fundamental condition of all phenomena, **there is no abiding**, or grounding, **in anything at all by rejecting** the path of saṃsāra or **striving** [to remain] in nirvāṇa. **The realm of all sublime beings’ pure vision and the place** of their accomplishment are **also** not distinct from saṃsāra or apart from it in a transcendence that rejects it. Even the path that obtains the attributes of positive qualities, **such as nirvāṇa, is not established as something other than that**, since everything is without any inherent nature.

7.2. [*Pointing Out the Antidote to These Factors As the Unmistaken Meaning of This Nonconceptual Practice*]

There are three subchapters:

1. [the presentation of] the subject matter;
2. the explanation;
3. the accomplishment of this practice.

7.2.1. [*The Presentation of the Subject Matter*]

“**One neither deliberately suppresses nor provides a support for mind with regard to the emergence or nonemergence [of thoughts].**” That is to say, without deliberately suppressing the emerging phenomenal appearances or conceptualizations, and without providing any basis for mind in order to [obtain] the nonemergence [of thoughts], one does not realize [anything] by taking a[ny] real object or goal as an objective support [for practice].

Why [should] not one suppress [the emerging thoughts]? Since there is no discomfort in the nature of phenomena, it is **gentle**;¹⁸⁹ since when one understands this, one becomes radiant, it is called “**glory**”; [485] even if one were to have the wisdom that **the slightest** defect of phenomenal appearances or conceptualizations **other than this** nature of phenomena were occurring or present, given that **this, itself, is this** Mañjuśrī [(i.e., gentle glory)], the primordial wisdom that is the fundamental nature of phenomena, there is nothing to suppress. That is why [one should not suppress emerging thoughts].

[Objection:] Well then, [should] one abide in the nature of phenomena, this Mañjuśrī? [Answer:] As the defining characteristic of [the nature of phenomena, Mañjuśrī] is not established as anything at all; it is without any basis that could be called a support [for abiding]. Hence, **one does not even abide in that**.

[Objection:] Well then, even if this [nature of phenomena, Mañjuśrī,] is not something to be realized, one might think it is.

[Answer:] Both the nature of phenomena, the object of practice, and the primordial wisdom that meditates [on it] are not established. Therefore, **since a ground or basis for practice is not found**, who cultivates what? What result is [to be] obtained **on account of such a [practice]**? **There is no [result] to obtain**.

For the one who merely knows¹⁹⁰ the object of experience of mind, these conceptualizations of mind arising as whatever appears as a mental aspect (*rnam pa*) **are the nature of all phenomena**. Thus, all possible objects of experience are none other than the nature of phenomena. So whatever appears is free from [any] defect. If [whatever appears] is free from [any] defect, why do beings remain unaware of it? Because they apprehend the various phenomenal appearances as real. It is explained that there is no *samsāra* in the freedom from aspects that consist in the mistaken apprehension of the existence (*bden 'dzin*) of phenomenal appearance. Therefore, since every phenomenon is free from all aspects of phenomenal appearance, one does not identify, conceive, apprehend, seize, hold, or manipulate¹⁹¹ any phenomenon whatsoever. Thus, since this practice, **free from any mental aspect to**

189 In this paragraph, Mipham glosses again the literal meaning of Mañjuśrī: ‘*jam pa, mañju* translated as “gentle”; *dpal, śrī* translated as “glory.”

190 It seems that *shes pa* must be understood as a synonym for *rig pa* in the root text. Within the sphere of operation of mind, *rnam rig* and *rnam shes* are used by Mipham as synonyms. At this early stage of Dzogchen *sems sde*, the terms *rig pa, rdzogs chen*, etc. are not found.

191 The multidimensionality of ‘*dzin* in the context of this method of practice has been rendered here by means of these six verbs. In the present case, phenomena (*chos, dharma*) are not supposed to be suppressed, taken as an objective basis, or conceived as anything.

be rejected or accepted **such as** “This is **good**” or “This is **bad**,” is the most excellent of [all] paths, **one should** continuously **practice this [pinnacle of all] path[s]**.

7.2.2. [*The Detailed Explanation*]

Why is there no defect in the arising of any conceptualization? Since **no conditioning mental state arises** on account of its own inherent nature and **no phenomenon arises** through causes and conditions other [than its own], **phenomena are** by nature **nirvāṇa**.¹⁹² [486] Therefore, **those** who realize that real **things do not exist** at all **know** through their realization that **all** arising thoughts and appearances, whatever they may be, **are** the natural state, **the dharmadhātu**. **This** knowing completely **accomplishes the state of one who has subdued the enemy** that is the absence of awareness (*ma rig pa*), the attainment of positive qualities.

The reality of what has [just] been pointed out, [knowing], is like space. By analogy, the phenomenon corresponding to the [word] “**space**” [**cannot be**] **reified** in terms of any defining characteristic at all. [“**Space**”] **is merely a name**. So, both **virtue and nonvirtue**, and so forth, **cannot be separated** insofar as they [both] have the nature of a phenomenon and **do not arise**. [Likewise,] **as one does not engage the mind in any effort** to eliminate or establish [anything], **one does not intentionally direct one’s mind toward any object of fixation whatsoever**. Since even the nature of mind is not established, by not making concepts in terms of knowing or not knowing **one is free from knowing and not knowing**.

Since there is no difference between suppressing [obstacles] and applying [antidotes], **there is no** antidote [such as] **deliberate recollection (*dran pa, smṛti*) and differentiation**. **There is no** mind that is placed on **anything equivalent** to suppression and antidote, **or on the delight [resulting from] suppressing, stopping, or accepting any phenomenon**. One does not take anything at all as an objective support. As there is no desire or absence of desire, **when one abides in the state of fundamental sameness** without differentiating [anything] as distinct, **there are no dualistic imputations**. There are no apprehensions such as thinking “This is like that” about anything at all. Thus, **released from verbal designations**, one is carefree (*gnyer pa med pa*) about any purpose to be accomplished. Therefore, since there is nothing to do and the actions of the three doors (body, speech, and mind) are not considered as faults, **there is also nothing that is not to be done**. Because the nature of phenomena is free from decrease and increase, **there is nothing** [in

192 The technical expression *'du byed, saṃskāra* is usually translated here as “a conditioning mental state,” but in this particular case it should be understood as “a conditioned mental state,” which corresponds to the other meaning of *saṃskāra*.

this nature of phenomena] **such** as the [two] accumulations of merit and positive qualities [to be obtained] anew, and there is no **decrease** on account of faults.

7.2.3. *The Accomplishment of This Practice*

How do the signs of correct practice manifest? **One does not** meditate or deliberately **engage the mind in any effort**. **One is not disturbed by anything**. One recognizes everything as [fundamental] **sameness**. [487] **There is no intoxication, infatuation, or obsession**¹⁹³ **due to any object** or desire resulting from the **attachment to anything**. There is no delusion due to the mistaken [apprehension] of objects. **There is no fear** on account of [any] object. There is also no absence of desire. Therefore, **one does not reject any phenomenon** by suppressing and getting rid of it, **nor does one abide** by establishing anything or causing anything to abide. **There is no decrease** on account of factors not conducive to awakening. **The four primordial wisdoms knowing** the reality of [fundamental] **sameness**, the nature of phenomena, **the thirty-seven aids to awakening**, **the ten transcendences**, and so forth, all virtuous factors conducive to awakening and resultant positive qualities, as many as they may be, **are included in that which** has been pointed out, the [ultimate] meaning of practice. Being [already] perfected, **one knows** through one's own awareness (*rig pa*). Since all phenomena fall under the scope of thoughts, they remain without doubt **within the sphere of thoughts**.¹⁹⁴ **Practicing** [this] is the only [way] **to be** in the consummate ultimate, **where the path ends**. Therefore, **by practicing in any other way** than this one, the genuine *dharmadhātu*, **luminosity, reality itself, will not shine forth, and one will not be aware** (*rig pa*).

[8.] *Pointing Out the Method for the Realization of the Definitive Meaning through This Lineage's Skillful Means*

What is the method for the realization of the definitive meaning through skillful means? Since the state in which there is nothing to be done [can be] pointed out by actions entailing exertion and contriving, just like when someone points at the

193 *myos pa* is translated here by means of three terms to render its different shades of meanings.

194 Likewise, the design (i.e., the phenomenon (*chos*, *dharmā*) that corresponds to a thought) of a golden jewel remains within the sphere of its elementary constituent, gold (*dharmatā*). The design is merely an adornment (*rgyan*). The reflection remains within the sphere of its elementary constituent, namely, the capacity of the mirror to be completely open to whatever presents itself (*ka dag*) and its spontaneous luminosity (*lhun grub*). The reflection is an adornment of the mirror. See the *bSam gtan mig sgron* (1974: 193–97a,4) for a similar example about gold.

moon with their finger, **the correct obtention** of the thought of awakening by way of skillful means and **symbolic [teachings] is also** [a method] to accomplish the **thought of awakening**. Thus, the Buddha, the venerable one, **the teacher** of the gods, **said** that this is the great thought of awakening. **On account of this**, those who do not have the good fortune to directly realize anything [can] apply themselves to the method of indirect realization. [488] **What** will be explained **regarding this [method] is the basis**, or cause, **for the manifestation** (*bskyed, utpatti*)¹⁹⁵ **and practice of this very thought** of awakening, the ultimate.

[So] what are the states of absorption and the symbolic expressions (*phyag rgya, mudrā*)? As a result of being familiar with **the three states of absorption**, (of reality, of all-pervasive light, and of the cause[-syllable]), one **develops a stability** that is not threatened by factors not conducive [to awakening].¹⁹⁶ Resembling the king's symbol [impressed by his seal], **these are the three seals [stamping] the symbol** of the Buddha:¹⁹⁷ the great seal (*phyag chen, mahāmudrā*) [impressing the

195 It should be noted that “creation,” “generation,” etc. are here inadequate translations for *bskyed*, which is usually used to translate the notion corresponding to the Sanskrit *utpatti* insofar as the thought of awakening (*byang chub sems, bodhicitta*) in the sense of *rig pa* is not fabricated or does not causally arise.

196 *de bzhin nyid dang kun snang dang rgyu yi ting nge 'dzin gsum po*. These three states of absorption refer to the initial stages of Mahāyoga *sādhana*s. From a historical point of view, it is interesting to note that Mipham connects Mañjuśrīmitra's root text with Mahāyoga on account of his interpretation of the three *samādhis*.

197 *rgyal po'i bka' rtags dang dra bar*. It seems difficult on the basis of this passage to translate *mudrā* as “seal.” *Mudrā* corresponds rather to the mark or symbol left by a seal. In this text, it corresponds to the form taken by gold when it is shaped as this or that. In the present context, it also refers to this naturally occurring process that is done here in an artificial and deliberate manner in order to make it obvious. The real thing, however, is the seal (the naturally occurring process), whereas the practice is a mere symbol for this. Although it is artificial at the beginning of the practice, it is itself made possible by the fact that it corresponds to and is based on the nature of things. In that sense the symbol is stamped by the seal. The following explanation is given by Dil mgo mkhyen brtse in his commentary of Zur chung shes rab grags pa's *Zhal gdams pa brgyad bcu pa* (the root text is written hereafter in bold): “**Decide that nothing is extraneous to the absolute nature, taking the example of gold jewelry**. Once we know how to remain in the absolute nature, the manifold thoughts that arise in the mind are no different from gold jewelry. One can make all sorts of things out of gold, such as earrings, bracelets, and necklaces, but although they have a variety of different shapes, they are all made of gold. Likewise, if we are able to not move from the absolute nature, however many thoughts we might have, they never depart from the recognition of the absolute nature. A yogi for whom this is the case never departs from that realization, whatever he does with his body, speech, and mind. All his actions arise as the outer display or ornament of wisdom” (Padmakara 2006: 164–65). So, *mudrā* refers here to the practice consisting in impressing

symbol of] the sublime body (*sku, kāya*), the seal of the sacred pledge (*thugs dam rgya, samayamudrā*) [leaving the mark of] the sublime mind, the seal of action (*las rgya, karmamudrā*) [stamping the symbol of] the sublime activity. **After one has bound [one's continuum to these three] and cultivated [them], the nature of the mind is caused to manifest as the seal [stamping the] symbol of sublime speech, the great symbol of Dharma. Reciting the essence mantra** of this [deity symbolizing the thought of awakening], **one should practice** [in this way]. The states of absorption and the symbols are the nature of phenomena. When one practices, one generates the thought that these are not different [from the nature of phenomena], since they are [the nature of phenomena]. On account of this, the ultimate thought of awakening becomes manifest. Once the practice has become concrete, as one comes to intuitively realize by oneself that all phenomena are none other than one's own thoughts, one accomplishes the accumulations [of merit and wisdom] and purifies all obscurations through the practice of these [skillful means]. Through the direct contemplation of primordial wisdom, one will intuitively realize [the thought of awakening] due to the lineage's blessing.

9. [The Flaw of Not Being Conjoined with the Thought of Awakening]

If one is not conjoined with the thought of awakening, it is pointed out that one does not obtain the complete liberation, and virtue will go to waste. **All paths leading to complete liberation are flawlessly practiced by cultivating** the thought of awakening, the **sacred being** (*sems dpa', sattva*) of the flawless practice of the nature of mind, the *vajra* of the nature of phenomena.¹⁹⁸ When one has the realization described above, [this is] **Samantabhadrī** (“**Universally Good**”), the goddess representing [the unity of] emptiness and wisdom, the mother from whom all positive qualities represented by the god Samantabhadra (“**Universally Good**”) and all objects of experience manifest. [489] **Whatever the virtuous phenome-**

the symbol of the awareness (*rig pa*), the seal, into one's own continuum, by means of the deity, which is none other than awareness, and the three *kāyas*. In order to overcome the cognitive obstacles preventing a practitioner from directly realizing the thought of awakening in the sense of *rig pa*, the golden pisspot (namely, all conventional *dharma*s) is melted through the three states of absorption symbolizing death, bardo, and birth. The “gold” is thereby recast in a symbolic form embodying the awakened state. Dualistic impure vision is dismantled and transformed into pure vision by the power of symbols embodying the thought of awakening (*byang chub sems, bodhicitta*) through the impression of the king's seal. At the end of the process, both impure and pure visions are integrated in the thought of awakening in a nondual manner described in the previous sections of this text. The terminology used here is typical of Mahāyoga.

198 Mipham glosses here the meaning of Vajrasattva.

na not conjoined with this practice of the ultimate thought of awakening realizing emptiness might be, **they represent the activity of the demon**, since practicing the skillful means of the Great Vehicle, such as being kind and so forth, or even Samantabhadra, would not be in harmony with the nature of phenomena. As [this activity of the demon] comes to an end, one has reached the ultimate. Even if the actions based upon this ultimate thought of awakening are in appearance similar to the activity of the demon, they are declared to be the conduct [inspired by] the thought of awakening. There is no assurance regarding [whether] external and internal matters or the practice of the three doors [are virtuous], because affliction and purification arise depending on whether one has awareness or not.

10. Pointing Out That Numerous Good Qualities Are Obtained Even on Account of the Mere Aspiration to [Realize] This [Thought of Awakening]

It was expounded by the Victorious One that even the intense interest and trust in the meaning of what has been pointed out is the thought of awakening. The Victorious One also said that by merely developing [the recognition of] this thought of awakening, the source of all positive qualities, one will completely outshine the hearers who have become the object of veneration of the three worlds and their highest lords such as Brahma, as well as [overpower] the armies of the powerful demons. Since those great skillful means that establish the unsurpassable awakening are the province of the bodhisattvas, the conduct [inspired by] the secret [fundamental] nature,¹⁹⁹ which is not realized by the hearers and so forth, is also this [thought of awakening] itself. If this thought of awakening did not exist, the teaching by the Victorious One of the three vehicles that reveal the path aspired to by the three lineages, as well as all knowable things, as many as they are, would be impossible. [490] If one does not realize the thought of awakening, awakening is impossible. Within just a single instant during which it is present, even an ordinary person quickly and easily becomes this fresh gentle glory (Mañjuśrikumāra) through the power of [their] confidence. One becomes of a single essence with this gentle glory [(i.e., Mañjuśrī)] that is of definitive meaning. Since there is not a single positive quality that is not included in the thought of awakening, the maṇḍala of the [fundamental] nature [of things], the dharmadhātu, manifests as the secret that is not realized by hearers, solitary realizers, and so forth.

199 *gsang ba* can also be understood as “mysterious” or “mystery” in the sense of the Greek mysteries, which also required initiation and transmission of a particular knowledge. Indeed, the fundamental nature of things is not secret because some people hide it from others. It is self-secret. It is a mystery in that it defies mind.

Moreover, while the supreme sacred pledges of the extraordinary Great Vehicle are kept, the awareness holders, **having also guarded the discipline and all the precepts of the bodhisattvas, are declared to be a sublime object of worship peerless in the three worlds.** On account of this, **the Victorious One explained that if all the merit [produced by] this ultimate thought of awakening had a form, even the infinite manifestation of space would be [too] small to contain it.**

11. Pointing Out That Those Having a Wrong Perspective Are Objects of Compassion

Those who come into being as individuals do so according to their actions; since they **have been born** before, within a stream of successive and **various births** corresponding to the six mental continua, they **are being born now and will be born** in the future. **Thus**, since this stream of birth is uninterrupted, **they have come under its power.** Because **they do not know** the natural condition of the **dualistic positions** consisting in their own **conceptualizations, their own erroneous conceptualizations** deceive them. [491] **Carried away by streams of conceptualizations,** which are [like] shackles, those who do not practice the correct path **will never spontaneously turn away from their confused conceptualizations.** Likewise, **resembling the magical apparition of an illusory elephant created by those who know how to [produce] magical illusions [with] spells and so forth, these beings, deluded by unreal magical illusions are [themselves] like magical illusions.** As [one's] mind is completely **duped by dreams, one experiences the happiness** of conditioned existence **the way dreamers** experience dreams. [One feels] what is called compassion for **dreamers,** namely, ordinary beings, whose [pleasant] dreams **have passed due to** the manifestation of the delusion consisting in unpleasant **dreams.** Since their minds are not able to handle this supreme **path** free from dualistic positions, **they have abandoned it, accepting [instead] as the correct path other paths entailing extreme positions,** such as the tradition of the ford, and **they proclaim, "This is the flawless path."** Those speaking in this way are **suitable objects of sublime compassion** because it is as if they were pretending that **ore is gold.**²⁰⁰ The sublime mind of **compassionate** great beings is uncontrollably **filled with compassion** as they see how sad this is. It is just like in the following expression stating, "Uncontrollably engaging in delightful objects, mind is overwhelmed." Likewise, the mind of those who are compassionate is overwhelmed by compassion. Those who **have not completely purified** their minds through wisdom, namely, **[all] beings tormented by time** who will be reborn **in the last five**

²⁰⁰ This expression, which inspired the title of this text, shows the vital importance of the difference between mind (*sems*) and awareness (*rig pa*) in this tradition.

hundred years of the teaching, will corrupt the flawless speech of the Bhagavān. [492] Therefore, if they examine what is immaculate and hard to understand, they will practice the teaching to the letter and will not examine it properly, namely, with regard to the meaning. They do not understand that the meaning [of the teaching] is like some gold in a dark place while the sequence of words is like a lamp [to find this gold], and therefore they fixate on the words only. Since they [can]not fathom the subtle basic constituent [of phenomena], they proceed according to their capacity to judge, merely on the basis their own minds. They are contaminated by various views [about reality], which are [nothing but] their own wishful thinking. Tossed about and carried away by the river of the lack of awareness, they are cut off from the *yoga* consisting in turning in the correct way one's own mind toward the quintessence of the Bhagavān's speech, the texts of definitive meaning, which are like ambrosia.

12. *The Dedication of Merit for the Awakening [of All Beings]*

This section begins with the virtuous dedication of merit for the awakening [of all beings]. For this reason,²⁰¹ the supreme path expounded by the Victorious One, this most excellent secret of the victorious ones' sublime mind, is the realization, just as it is, everywhere and at all times, that is the extraordinary province of the victorious ones' sublime mind. Therefore, even if he, Mañjuśrīmitra, had no understanding [of this], the correct meaning of this secret has been established through valid cognitions, reasonings, which are not in contradiction with scriptures and pith instructions, as a result of the teacher's long practice.²⁰²

This supreme path, which points out the thought of awakening in terms of nonduality (i.e., the absence of dualism) for the sake of beings, this clear path of the victorious ones of the three times, has been summed up and well expounded.

201 This refers to the argument that beings are experiencing suffering because of their wrong views and are unlikely to follow a correct path.

202 This passage is very interesting for several reasons. First, Mipham repeats that Mañjuśrīmitra was an *ācārya*. In connection with the large use and mention made of *pramāṇa*, this seems to be a recognition that this text is quite an intellectual presentation of Dzogchen, or to remain in the spirit of this particular text, of the thought of awakening (*byang chub sems, bodhicitta*). The text indeed introduces the thought of awakening from the side of mind, in contradistinction to the *man ngag sde*. Secondly, scriptures and pith instructions are put on equal footing as valid measuring sticks of the authenticity of a text. This is quite typical of the Nyingma tradition. Thirdly, epistemology and Dzogchen were not deemed to be incompatible by the most important figures of this tradition insofar as epistemology is used as a kind of *sems 'dzin* in order to differentiate the thought of awakening from mind (*sems*).

May this supreme path arise in the conditioned existence of all **beings!** [493] May [their] pure intention **never degenerate** on account of negative factors, **not even for a single instant, whatever the circumstances of their rebirths may be!** May all beings realize **this** quintessence of the meaning contained **in the sublime mind of all the victorious ones**, and may it **flourish** in their [mental] continuum! Such is the aspiration made [by Mañjuśrimitra].

C. Explanation of the Concluding Colophon

The Practice of the Thought of Awakening, “Refining Gold from Ore,” a compilation from the tantras of the great perfection [composed] by Mañjuśrimitra, is finished. This is easy to understand [and does not require any commentary].

The innermost quintessence of the victorious ones’ extensive and profound
 Dharma treasury,
 The path of the effortless vehicle,
 The great perfection that liberates those of sharp faculties in a single life,
 This way [shown] by millions of awareness holders is marvelous!
 As they flawlessly elucidate
 The supreme nature of the Buddha’s thought of awakening,
 Which creates everything²⁰³ within the [fundamental] sameness of all phenomena,
 These scriptures of definitive meaning are nothing but the secret treasury of the
 sublime mind of all the victorious ones.
 Thus, this quintessential pith instruction of the lineage of the awareness holders
 Reinstates into the primordial kingdom whoever has a connection.
 As the teaching of superior intention spreads,
 The continuum of indestructible sublime activities at the end of time
 Competes with the glory of the moon.
 Thus, because the self is the defilement of an ignorant intellect,
 The expositions of the noble and learned ones are beneficial.
 When one acknowledges whatever [fault] there is together with the negativities
 of former lifetimes,
 This confers the accomplishment of Brahmanic rituals of purification.
 In this context, by the virtue of perseverance
 [May] the immaculate old tradition of the great perfection spread more and more
 until [it reaches] the confines of conditioned existence.

203 *kun byed*: this typical Dzogchen *sems sde* term should not be understood as implying that the thought of awakening creates everything the way *Ívara* does.

May I and others, as well as all beings, cross the threshold of this supreme path.
 May [beings] be protected by the authentic nature of phenomena, the path of the
 noble ones!²⁰⁴

[494] The venerable 'Jam dbyangs blo gros rgya mtsho, who touched with the crown of his head the noble feet of [our] venerable master, edited “The Lamp Illuminating Reality,” a word commentary on “Refining Gold from Ore,” the Practice of the Thought of Awakening, from annotations to the text²⁰⁵ written by [our] omniscient precious guru, Mipham, the one who pleases Mañjuśrī, in the year of the Earth Sheep [called] Siddhārtha²⁰⁶ [1919] at the retreat center bDe chen padma 'od gling of Zhe chen [monastery]. The lord of the expounders of scriptures and logic, mKhan chen kun bzang dpal ldan, reviewed and finalized the text. May this too, the teaching of the supreme vehicle of the great perfection, endure for a long time!

204 The text reads *'bags* instead of *'phags*.

205 Schuh 1973: 108 correctly reads *phyag mchan* instead of *phyags chan* in my edition.

206 Usually *don grub*, but we find *don sgrub* in this text.

PART THREE

Ground and Result in Mipham's Radical Nondualism

CHAPTER 10

Ground, Path, and Result from the Highest Perspective

This section of the book could have been placed before Part 1 and Part 2, which are about the path, since in Mipham's approach ground and result are indivisible. The starting point of the spiritual journey is not different from its final destination. The result of the path, awakening, is unproduced. It is the ground of reality itself, which must be uncovered by those seeking awakening. In a way that intends to subsume the meaning of all sūtras and tantras, Mipham's propaedeutic approach to the two truths is based on a vast array of seemingly contradictory sources in order to teach this ultimate corresponding to the Āryas' meditative absorption. Like Longchenpa, he accepts the two last turnings as definitive and considers that both Nāgārjuna and Maitreya elucidate the real condition of things as they are.¹ However, when it comes to giving a direct introduction to the ultimate nature of reality, Mipham favors the pith instructions of Vajrayāna.² As a consequence, Mipham, similarly to Longchenpa, uses an abundance of references and concepts when he evokes this actual ultimate. In order to illustrate his explanations, his quotations can be drawn from the Mādhyamika, *tathāgatagarbha*, tantric, or Dzogchen traditions, independently from the text he is commenting on.

With regard to the notion of **sugatagarbha* and the *gzhan stong/rang stong* debate, three central texts elucidating his own approach have been the focus of recent academic research: *gZhan stong khas len seng ge'i nga ro*, *Nges shes sgron me* (both trs. in Pettit 1999), and *bDe gshegs snying po'i stong thun* (trs. in Duckworth 2008). However, it seems to me that Mipham's commentary on Longchenpa's *Yid bzhin mdzod* (Chapter 18) is a key text to understanding Mipham's view on these topics.

In his commentary, Mipham's follows very closely Longchenpa's interpretation of **sugatagarbha* in a way that remains faithful to what could be interpreted as a typical Nyingma interpretation of buddha nature. I therefore chose to translate Mipham's *Le'u bco brgyad 'grel*, an elucidation of Chapter 18 of Longchenpa's *Yid bzhin mdzod*, *in extenso* together with Longchenpa's root text and auto-commentary of

1 Mathes 2008: 98ff. sketches Longchenpa's position about *tathāgatagarbha*. Arguillère 2007 studies in a very detailed way the philological and historical elements related to this issue in Longchenpa's works and life.

2 Mipham's *Gu ru'i tshig bdun rnam bshad* (trs. by Padmakara 2007: 56–57) shows that he was fully aware of this deliberate propaedeutic approach. See also on this topic Duckworth 2008: xx–xxi.

this chapter. In addition, I consulted Mipham's commentaries on the *Kālacakra Tantra* and on Longchenpa's explanation of the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*, as they provide valuable information regarding the notion of **sugatagarbha* as understood by Mipham.

Le'u bco brgyad 'grel is a text presenting the Nyingmapa position regarding **sugatagarbha* independently from any reference to *gzhan stong* or *rang stong*. With regard to this particular issue, Kapstein draws our attention to the fact that, in the present case, "the recourse to overly broad characterizations seems only to muddy the waters."³ In fact, Duckworth showed that depending on the definition of these terms, Mipham could be classified as a proponent of both *gzhan stong* and *rang stong*, or neither.⁴ In his *bDe gshegs snying po'i stong thun*, Mipham actually criticizes both positions as defended by the Jonangpas and the Gelugpas. In his *gZhan stong khas len seng ge'i nga ro*, he manages to show that both are in fact proponents of extrinsic emptiness, meaning that if one position is wrong (the Jonangpa *gzhan stong* doctrine), so is the other (the Gelugpa *rang stong* doctrine). As noted by Pettit, this is a rather peculiar way to defend the *gzhan stong* theory, which was supposedly the purpose of writing the *gZhan stong khas len seng ge'i nga ro* in the first place. Wangchuk delineates the Nyingmapa position on this topic and shows that Mipham's view does not correspond to any of these two positions.⁵ In his *Shes rab ral gri*, Mipham explains that he does not ultimately accept any form of extrinsic emptiness resulting from a separation between the two truths. In his view, this concerns both the Gelugpas and Dolpopa's followers, as made clear in his *gZhan stong khas len seng ge'i nga ro*.⁶

According to Mipham, the two truths are ultimately not separate, nor are they even two things in union. They are simply in primordial unity, being fundamentally inseparable (*dbyer med*) in the first place. Stearns notices in his monograph on Dolpopa that many modern proponents of *gzhan stong* within the bKa' brgyud or Nyingma traditions accept thoughts as the pure lands of the buddhas, or more precisely as *rtsal*, which would be rejected by Dolpopa insofar as he considers the two truths as two separate domains.⁷ Since Mipham considers that some Gelugpas and Jonangpas may be understood to differentiate between the two truths, it is difficult to take occasional statements similar to those of Dolpopa regarding some aspects

3 See Kapstein 2000a: 121.

4 See Duckworth 2008: 73–91, 116 n.116.

5 See Wangchuk 2004.

6 Gelugpas establish the conventional as existence and the ultimate as nonexistence, while the Jonangpas do the opposite. As for Mipham, see Phuntsho 2005a: 17.

7 See Stearns 1999: 266, n.120.

of the *tathāgatagarbha* as an endorsement of Dolpopa's view about the strict separation between the two truths, between saṃsāra and nirvāṇa. Mipham states his view in very clear terms regarding this point:⁸

This being so, since appearance and emptiness
Inseparably abide in all phenomena,
They are the means and what arises from the means,
Therefore, you cannot negate one and establish the other.⁹

It is important to note that Mipham in the passage above sees this in a pragmatic fashion: the concealing is the method and the ultimate is the result of method, *from the perspective of ordinary beings*, since there is nothing to realize *from the perspective of sublime beings*. This seems to imply that, in Mipham's tradition, the concealing may also be revealing. On the level of the view, Mipham does insist on the use of correct reasoning and, on the level of practice, he does not speak of the concealing in an absolute negative in the way Dolpopa would.¹⁰ Mipham, contrarily to

8 See Longchenpa, *Yid bzhin mdzod*, Chapter 18. According to Arguillère 2004, this is the most important work for understanding Longchenpa's philosophical reflection, as it is posterior to the *Grub mtha' mdzod*. Butters 2006: 163 quotes Longchenpa's following statement: "In reply to those with inferior intellect who need a summary, this essence is empty because it is empty of flaws and being compounded and so forth. It is not empty in the sense that the property of natural enlightened qualities are abandoned. As [the *Uttaratantra*] also stated previously, 'The *dhātu* is devoid of adventitious factors, which are characterized by being different. It is not devoid of unexcelled properties, which are characterized by not being different.'" Wangchuk 2004 makes an excellent summary of the Nyingma position compared to that of the Jonangpas. For Dolpopa's position on this point, see Stearns 1999: 162. On the various interpretations of *gzhan stong* in Tibetan hermeneutical debate, see Mathes 2008.

9 *Shes rab ral gri* 803,2: /des na snang dang stong pa ni/ /'bral med chos kun la gnas pas/ /thabs dang thabs byung nyid yin slad/ /gcig bkag cig shos sgrub mi nus/

10 Dolpopa's statements about the two truths could actually be problematic for Nyingmapas when taken *from the perspective of sublime beings* while being simultaneously completely acceptable *from the perspective of ordinary beings*: "Without dividing the two truths into two kingdoms, they claim that whatever is manifest is relative truth and whatever is empty is absolute truth. They say that the manifest and the empty are in essence indivisible, so there is a single essence, but with different facets. [...] If that is claimed, the consequence would be that all sufferings and their sources would also be absolute nirvāṇa. If even that is claimed, they would be taintless, and also pure, self, great bliss, and permanent" (Stearns 1999: 130–31). Cf. Butters 2006: 171. From Longchenpa's point of view, dualistic appearances are not *rig pa*. However, they are related to *rtsal*. Lipman takes the classical example of the mirror and its reflections. Reflections are not the mirror's surface. As Longchenpa explains, they are linked to the capacity of the mirror to reflect and cannot be separated from it, although not being it (see Lipman/Norbu 1986: 23–27). This is a very important point according to Longchenpa.

Dolpopa, clearly entertains no animosity vis-à-vis the concealing truth, as ultimately it cannot be differentiated from the ultimate. Therefore, although Mipham does believe that it is important for beginners to distinguish the two, he also refuses to establish any marked separation between them. This is logical in the context of his perspectivist approach, for nothing should impede the practitioner's path on the journey through the various ascending stages of view and practice. And certainly nothing on the side of theory, which he sees as nothing but an expedient, should create unnecessary obstacles. All conceptual distinctions, including doctrinal ones, are thus merely provisional, however useful they may be in the course of the path.¹¹ As any seemingly true or real conceptual apprehension *from the perspective of delusion* is dualistic, Mipham does not wish to overstate any distinction between the two truths in the context of the view. His ultimate statement on the topic is that the two truths are primordially inseparable *from the perspective of the nature of things*. Ultimately, he seems to consider that a path that does not facilitate the transition from ordinary vision to sublime vision on account of conceptual distinctions is suboptimal.

In Mipham's propaedeutic use of Madhyamaka, *tathāgatagarbha* as a teaching to be applied in the context of practice is more relevant than if it is taken as a theory of the real formulated in terms of presence or absence. As we have seen previously, two methods used in the Nyingma higher teachings are fundamental in order to enable the switch between the conceptual and the actual ultimate. First, from the perspective of ordinary beings, mind (*sems*) must be distinguished from primordial wisdom (*ye shes*) or awareness (*rig pa*).¹² This is usually achieved by the Dzogchen

In a very interesting way, it echoes the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra*, which states that the two truths are neither the same nor different. This explains why, although it is necessary to distinguish *sems* from *rig pa*, it is meaningless to develop any animosity toward the mirror's reflections. That is probably why Mipham sees the concealing truth not as purely deceptive, but also as somehow revealing. This may seem curious at first glance, taking into account the Sanskrit etymology of *saṃvṛti*, but it makes sense from a Dzogchen point of view.

11 This is also Longchenpa's view. See Butters 2006: 160. Longchenpa clearly states that *grub mtha'* are merely reifications made within a worldly context. Therefore, according to him, "whether the truths are the same or different belongs to the tenets of the realists" (ibid.: 424). In the same way, in Longchenpa's view any identification of the concealing truth in terms of substance or in terms of mental events through reductionism entails realism. His favorite stance is that the concealing truth is the appearances in mind, without reifying them, or their nature, as anything at all.

12 Besides Longchenpa, the influence of some great Nyingma thinkers on Mipham's Madhyamaka is obvious in this respect. Rongzompa is undeniably one of them (see *Nges shes sgron me*, topic 1 in Pettit 1999: 196). According to Pettit 1999: 89, "One of the strategies Rong zom uses

direct introduction (i.e., *ngo sprod*) or practices such as *sems 'dzin* or *ru shan*. Secondly, from the perspective of primordial wisdom, the impure relative is “reintegrated” as the empty qualities of the ultimate, the radiance, play, or display of this primordially pure state. These two approaches taken together correspond to the *ka dag* and *lhun grub* aspects of Dzogchen, or to the nondifferentiation of the two truths, the nonconceptual ultimate. Longchenpa’s works revolve around these principles as he proceeds to introduce his readers to the nondual recognition of the ultimate, as shown by Arguillère.¹³ This nondual and inexpressible nature of things is inseparable from emptiness and luminosity (or appearance). In the context of Dzogchen, this buddha nature with its awakened qualities is a synonym for awareness (*rig pa*) and its compassion (*thugs rje* as *rtsal, rol pa, mdangs, rgyan*, etc.). In his *Le’u bco brgyad ’grel*, Mipham explains the relation between the two truths when seen from the perspective of this disjunction/reintegration model along the lines of the three traditional aspects of the ground, the path, and the fruit, a schema that is often used in Dzogchen. From this standpoint, the soteriological purpose behind the theoretical devices used by Mipham becomes apparent.¹⁴

is to distinguish between the kinds of mind (*blo*) that can determine logic, appearances, and the absolute. Rong zom asserts that it is ‘immaculate wisdom’ (*shes rab dri ma med pa*) only that can ascertain the latter, 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 primordial wisdom.’ 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. 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*.)” Köppl 2008 gives an interesting account of Rong zom’s influence on Mipham and shows that “Mipham defines Madhyamaka in a way that avoids the very faults that Rong zom objects to” (ibid.: 53).

- 13 “Ainsi le mouvement intellectuel de Klong-chen rab-'byams est-il analogue au mouvement spirituel du *rdzogs-chen-pa*: lui aussi commence par la stricte dissociation (*ru-shan 'byed-pa*, etc.) de la conscience (*rnam-shes, vijñāna*) et de la connaissance principielle (*ye-shes, jñāna*), ou de l’esprit (*sems*) et de l’Intelligence (*rig-pa*); puis il procède à la réintégration de l’un dans l’autre, jusqu’au point où la notion même d’une altérité disparaît” (Arguillère 2007: 207). Viewed in this light, Mipham’s Madhyamaka seems to be the formalization of Longchenpa’s mystic insights into more formal scholastic equations based on the same soteriological model.
- 14 The two ultimates, the twofold definition of the two truths, the ultimate valid cognition of the conventional, the acceptance of the last two wheels as definitive, the emptiness of the nonconceptual ultimate together with the presence of its qualities, etc.

The Ground As the Unity of the Two Truths

In his *Le'u bco brgyad 'grel*, Mipham declares that the nature of the fundamental condition is the inseparability or unity of the two truths, the sugata nature (*bde bar gshegs pa'i snying po*/**sugatagarbha*), the *dharmadhātu*, primordial wisdom, luminous emptiness, awareness (*rig pa*).¹⁵ This ground is presented as being primordially pure, abiding beyond mental proliferations and language. It represents the primordial nondual state of being in which the two truths are immanent to one another. From this point of view, the two truths merely represent a gradual method enabling beginners to reach the state beyond mental proliferations through conceptuality itself. It is an expedient that is contingent on a view of reality deeply rooted in the concealing:

As long as any of the [four] extremes of existence, nonexistence, both, and neither is asserted, one is not beyond the mental proliferations of intellectual reasoning. Thus, because it is impractical to refer to that which is not included within the four extremes without distinguishing the two truths [from one another] and mentioning them, one has a view. However, when one is without a view of any of the four extremes such as existence or nonexistence, one has passed into the freedom from mental proliferations. The two truths are the absolute that cannot be separated [into two]. As a consequence, they do not have to be distinguished.¹⁶

In his commentary *ad* BCA 9.2ab, Mipham cites Bhāviveka's famous statement.¹⁷ The correct concealing truth and the nominal ultimate are merely instruments to reach the "freedom from mental proliferations." Another illustration of this process is given by Mipham in his *dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad* 35,6ff., where he compares the two truths to two sticks. The metaphor implies that although two sticks are necessary to start a fire, the fire will consume the sticks. Mipham hereby insists, just as Bhāviveka does, that these distinctions are necessary circumstantial causes for the

15 Primordial wisdom is not a mere emptiness. It is unconditioned and luminous. See Mipham's *rDo rje snying po* (in Hopkins 2006b: 71–73) or *Rong zom gsung 'bum dkar cag*, where this is also clearly stated.

16 'Jug 'grel 560,6: *ji srid yod pa dang med pa gnyis yin gnyis min gyi mtha' gang rung du khas len pa de lta na/ rig pa spros pa las ma 'das pas/ bden gnyis phyese te ma smras par mtha' bzhi gang yang min par khas len mi btub pas khas len dang bcas pa yin la/ nam zhig yod med la sogs pa' i mtha' bzhi gang gi khas len med pa spros bral du son tshe/ bden gnyis dbyer med kyi don yin pas bden gnyis phye mi dgos la/*

17 See NK 4,1–9,5 translated in Chapter 1.

realization of primordial wisdom. He definitely does not mean that primordial wisdom is conditioned but that its realization is dependent on the right understanding of the two truths. When these two are united, all dualistic cognitions are burned up like wood.¹⁸ But then when the fire of primordial wisdom is kindled, the sticks themselves, the two truths, are also burned up. In the same way, Mipham declares in his *Shes rab ral gri*:

When they perceive the absolute, the unity of the two truths,
Those who have become wise in the method of the two truths
Know to engage in all these methods
In the way one eliminates the husk in order to [get] the grain.¹⁹

Mipham explains in his *mKhas pa'i tshul la 'jug pa'i sgo* that the single truth is the actual ultimate in the sense of a complete inseparability into two truths.²⁰ In his commentary on the *Kālacakra Tantra*, Mipham gives a detailed explanation of this by means of the “distortion-based definition” of the two truths (*gnas snang mthun mi mthun gyi bden gnyis*). In the definition of the two truths based on appearances and emptiness (*snang stong bden gnyis*), whatever appears in mind is empty. But Mipham makes a distinction between the conceptual ultimate and the actual ultimate, the latter belonging to the sphere of primordial wisdom:

The emptiness that merely dissolves (*bcad*) the object of negation (*dgag bya*) is not perceived as the supreme mode of being.²¹

Now, in the distortion-based model of the two truths, the sphere of mind is the concealing and the sphere of primordial wisdom, the ultimate:²²

18 This metaphor is common in canonical texts and commentarial texts. See Seyfort Ruegg 1989: 94–95, n.179: “This image of the fire-sticks burnt up by the fire that issues from them is taken from the *Kāśyapaparivarta* § 69; see *Bhāvanakrama* III.”

19 *Shes rab ral gri* 814,2: /*bten gnyis tshul la mkhas byas pas/ /bden gnyis zung 'jug don mthong tshe/ /snying po'i phyir du spun sel ltar/ /thabs kun de la gzhol bar shes/*

20 See Chapter 3, *The Two Truths from the Perspective of the Nonconceptual Ultimate*.

21 *Dus 'khor tshig don* 291,1: *dgag bya bcad tsam gyi stong ba la gnas lugs mthar thug tu 'dzin par mi bya'o/*

22 For a similar definition of the *gnas snang mthun mi mthun gyi bden gnyis*, see Mipham's *dBu ma sogs gzhung spyi'i dka' gnad* (in Duckworth 2008: 11). Duckworth 2008: 80,141–42 also explains the difference between the two definitions of the two truths. In the *snang stong* model the two truths are not mutually exclusive, whereas they appear to be mutually exclusive from the perspective of the *gnas snang mthun mi mthun* approach. The *snang stong* model corre-

From the perspective of the authentic mode of being [of things], all that appears and exists abides without wavering from the reality of awakening in the basic space of the great primordially pure fundamental sameness. However, from the perspective of having abandoned or not abandoned the dualistic experiences consisting in incidental delusion (*glo bur 'khrul ba*), there are without the slightest doubt (*snyon med bslu med du*) two modes of appearance [of things]: [(1) the mode of] pure appearance in the case of the buddhas, in which the way things are and the way they appear are concordant; [(2) the mode of] impure appearance in the case of beings, in which the way things are and the way they appear are discordant.²³

As explained in the *rDo rje snying po*, if the ground is recognized as it is, there is liberation, if not, there is delusion.²⁴ This means that, from this perspective, both the relative and the nominal ultimate of the appearance-emptiness model belong to the concealing, and only the actual ultimate is considered to be truly “ultimate.”²⁵ This

sponds to Candrakīrti’s approach, and the *gnas snang mthun mi mthun* to Maitreya’s. According to Duckworth, the *snang stong* model reveals an absence, and the *gnas snang* a presence. In fact, they both aim at presenting some aspects as absent and some others as present. In the MAv 9.17, Candrakīrti states, for instance, that the cessation of mind entails the apparition of the *kāyas*. Candrakīrti’s method is apophatic, while that of Maitreya appears to be cataphatic. The apophatic method entails an elimination of superimposed views leading to the emergence of the experience of things as they are, whereas the cataphatic approach tends to point out the ultimate in terms that are used only for the sake of communication. The *via negativa* consists in peeling off conventions in order to let the ineffable manifest, while the *via positiva*, having clearly identified their deceiving aspect, uses them to hint at the ineffable.

- 23 *Dus 'khor ye shes le'u'i 'grel pa* 732,4–5: *yang dag pa'i gnas lugs kyi dbang du byas na snang srid thams cad ye nas dag mnyam chen po'i dbyings su sangs rgyas pa'i don las nam yang mi 'da' bar gnas kyang glo bur pa'i 'khrul gnyis snang spangs pa dang ma spangs pa'i dbang gis/ gnas snang mthun pa dag pa sangs rgyas kyi snang dang gnas snang mi mthun pa ma dag sems can gyi snang ba gnyis kyi snang tshul bsnyon med bslu med du yod pa.*
- 24 See Hopkins 2006b: 120–21. In his *'Od gsal snying po*, Mipham compares the state of distortion to water that has completely frozen into ice (see Dharmachakra 2009: 14). Although the nature of ice is water, it is wrongly perceived as being truly solid.
- 25 The conceptual ultimate is part of the concealing truth. Since it is a nonaffirming negation in relation to an object of negation, it must be included within the sphere of mind. For a detailed explanation of this point in the context of *tathāgatagarbha*, see Mipham’s *bDe gshegs snying po'i stong thun* (in Duckworth 2008: 152). Mipham accepts two definitions of emptiness: the emptiness of the concealing and the emptiness of the ultimate. The first is stated in reference to phenomena (*chos, dharma*), such as a pot, and corresponds to the conceptual ultimate, whereas the second is the very inseparability of the two truths, the nonconceptual ultimate (see Mipham’s *brGal lan nyin byed snang ba* about this point in Duckworth 2008: 90).

actual ultimate is nondual, which means that it is not merely one of the two truths of the appearance-emptiness model. It cannot be “measured” by mind since it is beyond the scope of dualistic experiences:

It is said that *saṃsāra* is that which bears the properties of arising and cessation, [while] *nirvāṇa* is the freedom from arising and cessation, the completely nonabiding peace. The concealing is that which bears the properties of arising and cessation. Completely unpeaceful, it is segmented into distinctive parts. When it is said that the ultimate is the opposite of this, this inseparability of the two truths, namely, the inseparability consisting in the inseparability in terms, for instance, of sublime body and mind, is the obtainment of the perfectly pure fruit or the state of awakening. It is accepted as the final ultimate, something that is encompassed within the state in which the two truths are not differentiated. However, it is not that which is encompassed within the sphere of the concealing endowed with dualistic manifestations of experiences or within the nominal ultimate, which pertains to non-things. This is so because it is said to be the sublime *kāya* of nondual primordial wisdom (*gnyis su med pa'i ye shes kyi sku*)... . Therefore, the state of awakening is included in the ultimate, where the fundamental condition consisting in the inseparability of the two truths is directly experienced. However, it is not so on account of [being] only one [of the two truths] as distinguished in the two truth [model]. [The state of awakening] is neither [exclusively] wisdom nor exclusively skillful means. Such statements are taught in various ways, again and again, in this tantra... . On account of the nonconceptual aspect of this state of the spontaneously arisen (*lhan skyes*) and original (*gnyug ma*) great bliss (*bde ba chen po*), the supreme sublime *kāya* of primordial wisdom (*ye shes kyi sku*), each philosophical position [about it] is [made] in the way of positing and negating the manifoldness (*sna tshogs*), since these views depend on the perception of ephemeral aspects. This is like measuring [the vastness of] space with the eye of a needle! ... Likewise, with regard to the other [wheel of time (*kālacakra*)],²⁶ the unchangeable inner awareness, the transcendence of wisdom (*pha rol tu phyin ma*), the Mahāmudrā endowed with the supreme excellence of all aspects, that which is endowed with the form of innate bliss (*lhan cig skyes pa'i dga' ba'i gzugs can*

26 There are three *kālacakra*: outer, inner, and other.

ma), is not the sphere of the sense organs, which arises in dependence upon a subject and an object.²⁷

According to Mipham, distinguishing mind (*sems*) from primordial wisdom (*ye shes*) therefore represents the “ultimate leap” into the freedom from mental proliferations. As this does not imply a mere mental blankness or the mere concept of nonproliferation, intellectual analysis is not sufficient to open the gates of the “great freedom from mental proliferations.” Upon reaching this point, Mipham therefore switches to a more typical Dzogchen approach, where direct recognition, for oneself, is the easiest way to reach this state of “great freedom.” However, he stresses the pedagogical importance of an intellectual preparatory approach:

Consequently, having first destroyed the clinging to existence through this ultimate that is merely conceptualized, one next puts to an end the point of view of clinging to nonexistence by the teaching of the ultimate that is not conceptualized. In short, without attributing any characteristic of true existence and so forth to the four extremes of existence, nonexistence, both and neither, one should easily recognize the great freedom from mental proliferations that objectify those [characteristics of existence or nonexistence], the profound point that must be known for oneself.²⁸

27 *Dus 'khor ye shes le'u'i 'grel pa* 704,5–7: 'khor ba ni skyes ba dang 'gag pa'i chos can/ mya ngan las 'das pa ni skye 'gag dang bral ba zhi ba rab tu mi gnas pa zhes gsungs pa dang/ kun rdzob ni skye ba dang 'gag pa'i chos can rab tu zhi ba ris su chad pa dang/ don dam pa ni de las ldog par gsungs na/ bden gnyis dbyer med dang sku thugs dbyer med sogs zung 'jug shin tu rnam par dag gi 'bras bu brnyes pa sangs rgyas kyi sa 'di ni don dam mthar thug bden gnyis dbyer med kyis bsdus pa zhig tu 'dod dgos kyi/ kun rdzob gnyis snang can gyi spyod yul gyis bsdus ba dang/ rnam grangs pa'i don dam dngos med kyis bsdus pa ma yin te/ gnyis su med pa'i ye shes kyi sku yin par gsungs pa'i phyir ro/ ... 705,7–706,3: de'i phyir sangs rgyas kyi sa ni bden gnyis dbyer med kyi gnas lugs mthar thug gzigs pa'i don dam nyid kyi sa bsdus pa yin gyi bden pa gnyis su phye ba'i ya rgyal la re res ni ma yin te/ shes rab ma yin thabs kyang min pa zhes sogs rgyud 'dir yang yang rnam grangs du mar gsungs ba ... 706,6–7: de lta bu'i lhan skyes gnyug ma bde ba chen po'i bdag nyid ye shes kyi sku mthar thug bde yi tshul ma rtogs pas phyogs nyi tse ba'i mthong ba la brten nas nam mkha' khab mig gis gzhal ba'i dpe ltar so so'i 'dod pa sna tshogs bzhag pa bkag pa'i tshul ... 707,4–5: de bzhin du gzhan nang gi rig pa 'gyur med ni/ shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin ma rnam kun mchog ldan gyi phyag chen mo dang lhan cig skyes pa'i gzugs can ma yul yul can rten cing 'brel bar 'byung ba'i dbang po rnam kyi spyod yul ma yin pa/

28 *dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad* 56,3: des na dang por rnam grangs tsam gyi don dam pa 'dis dngos zhen bshig nas/ de'i rjes su rnam grangs min pa'i don dam bstan pas dngos med la der zhen gyi cha'ang bkag ste/ mdor na yod pa dang/ med pa dang/ gnyis yin dang/ gnyis min gyi mtha' bzhi

At this stage, distinguishing mind (*sems*) from awareness (*rig pa*) or primordial wisdom (*ye shes*) is crucial. Mind is aware of objects, whereas primordial wisdom is nondual, beyond subject and object, as made clear by Mipham in his 'Od gsal snying po.²⁹ In this respect the two last turnings of the wheel are considered to be of definitive meaning by Mipham. As noted by many scholars, Mipham's presentation of Madhyamaka has been deeply influenced by Gorampa, as evidenced by their similar understanding of the unity of the two truths. However, there are also some important differences between them.³⁰ In terms of the spiritual influences on his view, the fact that Dzogchen as presented by Longchenpa is all-pervasive in Mipham's exegesis of Madhyamaka is even more significant. A good example of this Dzogchen approach consisting in differentiating *sems* from *rig pa* can be found in *Nor bu ke ta ka* 74,5ff.:

It is said in the *Madhyamakāvātāra* [MAv 9.17]:

Since the dry firewood of the knowables is completely burned up,
This peace is the *dharmakāya* of the victorious ones,
Now it is without arising and without cessation,
Mind is stopped, the *kāyas* [of awakening] manifest.³¹

As [stated here], just as the fire of peace exhausts the firewood, namely the complete net of mental proliferations such as arising and so forth, the residues of the movement of mind and mental states are completely disposed of. In the inexpressible state of the nature of phenomena, the unity of appearance and emptiness, like water poured into water, the spontaneously occurring primordial wisdom (*rang byung ye shes*) that is free from all extremes perceives all knowables, but the nature of

ka la bden grub sogs kyi khyad par gang yang ma sbyar bar de dag gi dmigs gtad zhig pa'i spros bral chen po so so rang gis rig par bya ba'i don zab mo bde blag tu ngos zin pa'i dgos pa yod do/

29 See Dharmachakra 2009: 13.

30 See Cabezón/Dargyay 2007: 56,264 n.148. It is worth noting that contrarily to Gorampa, Mipham accepts the two last turnings of the wheel as being of definitive meaning. The teaching of *sugatagarbha* is not provisional according to him.

31 In a very interesting article, MacDonald (2009: 164) shows that Nāgārjuna, just like Candrakīrti, “describes gnosis, namely, ‘as transcending all manifoldness’ (*prapañcātīta*)”—see MMK 22.15. Likewise, MacDonald points out that, according to Candrakīrti (Pras. 443.11), one cannot present the tathāgatas as nonexistent since they are “completely outside [the domain of] manifoldness” (*ibid.*). This is not unlike the Dzogchen distinction made between *sems* and *rig pa*.

mental proliferations is simply completely pacified. In this context, it should be understood that, since the mental proliferations of mind and mental states have been completely disposed of, the ultimate primordial wisdom is realized.³² Since the spontaneously occurring primordial wisdom itself is attained, mind has stopped. One might think that, polluted by the conceptualizations (*kun rtog*) of the ordinary beings, thoughts that are mental proliferations do not stop [in one who has attained primordial wisdom] or that primordial wisdom, subsequent to the cessation [of mind] and [attainment of the fundamental] sameness [of phenomena], does not exist, just like the extinction of a butter lamp. Since this is a great deprecation of the buddhas, in order to give it up, one should generate a definitive knowledge of this profound point.³³

Once the distinction between *sems* and *rig pa* has been made, there is paradoxically a simultaneous reintegration of mind in its primordially pure radiant aspect. This aspect is inseparable from the actual ultimate, from the perspective of realization. In his *dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad*, Mipham openly compares this to the inseparability into the two truths, the inseparability of primordial purity (*ka dag*) and spontaneous presence (*lhun grub*). This nevertheless remains beyond the sphere of mind, as it must be directly experienced in a nondual manner, as explained by Mipham in the context of the *Kālacakra*:

Since it is free from a substantial entity (*rdzas*) that is established as an essence (*ngo bo nyid*) and free from mentally projected appearances or imputations, the form of the buddhas in the center of the supreme great

32 Cf. MSA 19.53–54: *tattvaṃ saṃcchādyā bālānām atattvaṃ khyāti sarvataḥ | tattvaṃ tu bodhisattvānām sarvataḥ khyāty apāśya tat ||* “Chez les sots, l’Irréel, cachant le Réel, apparaît de toutes parts ; Chez les Bodhisattva, le Réel, écartant l’Irréel, apparaît de toutes parts” (Lamotte 1973: 264).

33 *Nor bu ke ta ka 74,5: 'jug pa las/ shes bya'i bud shing skam po ma lus pa/ /bsregs pas zhi de rgyal rnam chos sku ste/ /de tshé skyé ba med cing 'gags pa med/ sems 'gags pa de sku yis mngon sum mdzad/ /ces gsungs pa bzhin du skyé sogs pa'i drwa ba ma lus pa zhi ba'i bud shing zad pa'i me bzhin sems sems byung gi rgyu ba lhag ma ma lus par log ste chos kyi dbyings snang stong zung 'jug brjod du med pa'i ngang du chu la chu bzhag pa bzhin du gyur ba'i rang byung gi ye shes mtha' thams cad dang bral ba shes bya kun tu gzigz kyang spros pa'i rang bzhin nye bar zhi ba kho na'o/ 'di'i skabs su sems sems byung gi spros pa lhag med du log pas na ye shes mtha' thug pa mngon du gyur ba dang/ rang byung gi ye shes nyid brnyes pas sems 'gags pa go bar bya ste/ so skyé'i rtog gis sbags nas spros pa'i sems sam snyam pa dang/ 'gags pa'i rjes su ye shes med par mar me shi ba ltar bsams na ni sangs rgyas la skur 'debs chen po yin pas de spang ba'i phyir zab mo don la nges pa'i shes pa bskyed par bya'o/*

sphere (*thig le chen po*) comes forth as, for instance, the appearance of the manifold freedom from external subject and object or the sublime hearing of the indestructible sound, namely, all aspects that consist in empty reflections, the natural glow (*rang mdangs*) of the radiant nature of mind. As it is the avenue for the manifestation of that which is spontaneously present (*lhun grub*), the natural and ceaseless expression (*rang rtsal*) of awareness (*rig pa*) in basic space (*dbyings*), it is called the perfect *sambhogakāya*. Although this indestructible form is said to be the cause of that which is similar to the ultimate *sambhogakāya* with respect to the way things appear, it is called the *sambhogakāya* in the way things are, inasmuch as it is the natural manifestation of luminosity that is unstained by impurities. Moreover, the appearance of the empty form (*stong pa'i gzugs*)³⁴ is called the *nirmāṇakāya*. On account of appearing itself as the indestructible sound, it is the *sambhogakāya*. It is the great bliss without any objective support, the *dharmakāya*. This should be known as the *yoga* of the unity of the three *kāyas*.³⁵

This unity of the three *kāyas* represents the nondual character of the result of the path. At the time of discussing the concealing, Mipham's view therefore avoids developing any animosity toward the manifestations of experiences:

[The concealing] should not be understood in this way: "This is falsity, being deceiving in every aspect." It should moreover not be understood as something that constantly veils the emptiness because, for the sublime ones, emptiness and dependent arising reveal each other. Therefore, although mere appearance does not veil emptiness, the intrinsic nature (*rang bzhin, svabhāva*) of objects is perceived on account of the

34 Skt. *sūnyatābimba*. This body resulting from the practice of the completion phase is specific to the *Kālacakra Tantra* and corresponds to the illusory body (*mayadeha*) of the higher tantras.

35 *Dus 'khor ye shes le'u'i 'grel pa* 682,2–5: *mthar thig le chen po de yi dbus su sangs rgyas kyi gzugs ni ngo bo nyid du grub pa'i rdzas med pa dang blos ma brtags par snang ba'am brtags pa med pa'i phyir phyi rol gyi yul dang rnam par bral ba du ma snang ba dang/ gzhom med kyi sgra thos pa la sogs pa sems nyid 'od gsal gyi rang mdangs stong pa'i gzugs brnyan rnam pa thams cad par 'char te rig pa'i dbyings su 'gags pa med pa'i rang rtsal lhun grub kyi 'char sgo yin pas longs spyod rdzogs pa'i sku zhes bya ste gzhom med kyi gzugs 'di snang tshul la mthar thug gi longs sku'i rigs 'dra'i rgyu zer yang 'gal ba med pa la/ gnas tshul la dri mas gos pa'i 'od gsal gyi rang snang yin pa'i cha nas longs sku zhes bya'o/ de yang stong pa'i gzugs snang ba sprul sku/ gzhom med kyi sgrar snang ba las longs sku/ bde ba chen po dmigs pa med pa chos sku ste sku gsum zung du 'jug pa'i rnal 'byor yin pa shes par bya'o/*

force of the delusion that engaged in the apprehension of a reality with regard to [mere] appearances.³⁶

Although not a single Dzogchen term is used here, this way to understand the concealing makes possible a completely different approach of the conventional truth, compared to that of the *sūtrayānas*, and clearly represents one of the most important features of the Dzogchen's view and practice, in which mind, having been distinguished from primordial wisdom, is reintegrated into the *maṇḍala* of the three *kāyas* on account of its luminous nature. The interplay between these dynamics of disjunction and reintegration is, in Mipham's project, at the root of the path leading to the unveiling of the ground *qua* result.

The Path As the Unity of Saṃsāra and Nirvāṇa

In his *Le'u bco brgyad 'grel*, Mipham, following Longchenpa's explanations, declares that emptiness corresponds to the luminous ultimate, in which there are no dualistic differentiations. On account of this, there is nothing to be done with respect to the path. The path itself is dismantled by the immanence of the two truths. In his commentary on the *Kālacakra*, Mipham considers this crucial point from the perspective of Madhyamaka, Tantra, and Dzogchen. As we have seen, Mipham's view of the nondual *yoga* hinges on the notion of unity in the sense of inseparability. The sphere of mind comprises all phenomena, which exist in mutual dependence upon their opposite, such as things and non-things. With the attainment of primordial wisdom, this sphere is consumed:

From the perspective of ultimate truth, it is beyond the two thoughts of existence and nonexistence, which are opposite phenomena. Things and non-things are exhausted. This is the nondual *vajra yoga*.³⁷

The central point here is that primordial wisdom is beyond all assertions and cannot be described by dualistic means. Speaking of the unity of the two truths does not mean that one takes a little bit of both and mixes these two parts together, but

36 *dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad* 31,1: *rnam pa thams cad du bslu zhing brdzun pa'o zhes go bar mi bya zhing/ des stong pa nyid la rtag tu bsgribs par yang go bar mi bya 'phags pa rnams la stong dang rten 'byung gcig gis gcig gsal ba'i phyr ro/ des na snang tsam gyis stong nyid la bsgribs pa ma yin yang snang ba la bden 'dzin zhugs pa'i gti mug gi dbang gis yul rnams kyi rang bzhin phyin ci log tu dmigs pa'o/*

37 *Dus 'khor tshig don* 287,7–288,1: *don dam pa'i bden pa'i dbang du byas na/ gnyis ka'i sems dag chos mi mthun pa'i yod pa dang med pa las das pa/ dngos po dang dngos po med pazad pa/ rdo rje'i rnal 'byor gnyis su med pa ste.*

that the single ultimate truth being nondual through and through, it cannot be differentiated into two:³⁸

All aspects,
 [All things] that manifest out of the [basic] space,
 Are Utterly Good (*kun tu bzang po, samantabhadra*),
 The universal lord.

[Utterly Good] is the innate (*lhan cig skyes pa*) bliss (*dga' ba*), which is the nature of all beings. Being beyond worldly examples, it is the abandonment of [all] proofs and examples. Why? Because, when [worldly] examples of this, namely, things and non-things, are [said to be] in unity they remain opposite phenomena.³⁹ The fact that [things and non-things] are in unity is impossible in the world. For example, since [it is accepted that] a pot is existent in the world but that a sky flower is non-existent in every respect, [the sky flower] is a phenomenon that is the opposite of a pot, and a pot is a phenomenon which is the opposite of a sky flower, as it exists in every respect. Therefore, these two instances are each other's opposite. Likewise, the defining characteristics of the worldly thing [saṃsāra] and the worldly non-thing nirvāṇa, the cessation [of saṃsāra], are similar. Therefore, what exists is not what does not exist, and what does not exist is not what exists, since [these two] are mutually exclusive. Thus, since this mind perceiving [something] as being existent or nonexistent does not grasp its opposite, [Utterly Good] is beyond all worldly comparisons.⁴⁰

38 Mipham stresses in the same way the inseparability of appearance and emptiness in his *rDo rje phreng ba* (see Duckworth 2008: 91).

39 Mipham uses epistemology (*pramāṇa*) in order to negate potential refutations.

40 *Dus 'khor tshig don 286,7ff.*: *rnam pa thams cad pa/ nam mkha' las byung ba/ kun tu bzang po/ dbang po thams cad pa/ sems can thams cad kyi bdag nyid du gnas pa'i lhan cig skyes pa'i dga' ba/ 'jig rten pa'i dpe las 'das pas/ gtan tshigs dang dpe spangs pa ste/ ci'i phyir na 'di'i dper dngos po dang/ dngos po med pa gcig pa nyid gyur na'ang/ de dag chos mi mthun pa'i phyir gcig tu gyur pa 'jig rten na mi srid do/ dper na 'jig rten na bum pa yod la nam mkha'i me tog ni rnam pa thams cad du med pa'i phyir bum pa dang chos mi mthun pa'am/ /nam mkha'i me tog dang chos mi mthun pa bum pa ni rnam pa thams cad kyi yod pa'o/ /de'i phyir de gnyis phan tshun chos mi mthun pa'i dper 'gyur ro/ /de bzhin du srid pa dngos po dang/ srid pa chad pa myang 'das dngos po med pa'i mtshan nyid la'ang de ltar 'gyur te/ de'i phyir gang yod pa de med par mi 'gyur la/ med pa de yod par mi 'gyur te phan tshun 'gal ba'i phyir/ de ltar yod pa dand med par 'dzin pa'i sems des cig shos su mi 'dzin pa de'i phyir 'jig rten pa'i dper bya kun las 'das pa'o/*

Therefore, the unity of the two truths that is beyond dualistic distinctions cannot be understood as emptiness in the sense of a nonaffirming negation.⁴¹ It is the luminous ultimate, primordial wisdom, the nondual nature of phenomena, the nonabiding nirvāṇa as opposed to the conceptual nirvāṇa:

As long as there are worldly thoughts, phenomena are distinguished as being one or many because the nature of momentary thoughts is [to manifest as] an appearance. It is said that when mind is released from this property of momentariness, at that time it is devoid of any substantial defining characteristic consisting in arising, ceasing, and so on. Therefore, the Bhagavān taught that the position [holding that mind is] devoid of any substantial defining characteristic consists [in fact] in not having a position in terms of dualistic extremes. Why is [this position] without dualistic distinctions? [It is without dualistic distinctions] because, with respect to what is called a position, namely, opinions in terms of things/non-things, existence/nonexistence, being this/not being this, being one/not being one, eternalism/nihilism, worldly existence/nirvāṇa, form/formlessness, sound/non-sound, momentary/nonmomentary, and likewise attached/nonattached, angry/not angry, confused/not confused, and so on, each position entails mutual dependence. The freedom from such positions and distinctions of dualistic phenomena is the buddhas' inand nonabiding nirvāṇa. The primordial wisdom that is without instantaneity or sequentiality is declared to be reality by the victorious ones. One should accordingly know that reality, without falling in any position such as the two truths, or appearance and emptiness, is unity, the nondual nature of phenomena that must be intuitively known for oneself.⁴²

41 In his *rDo rje snying po*, Mipham explains that presenting reality as a non-thing, a nonaffirming negation, is mistaken (see Hopkins 2006b: 72,114).

42 *Dus 'khor tshig don* 290,2–7: *ji srid du 'jig rten gyi sems yod pa de srid du chos rnam gcig dang du ma'i rnam par dpyod de skad cig ma'i sems kyi rang bzhin snang ba'i phyir ro/ /gang tshe sems skad cig gi chos dang bral ba de'i tshe skyes 'gags la sogs pa'i rang bzhin med pa zhes brjod do/ /de'i phyir rang bzhin med pa'i phyogs ni mtha' gnyis gang gi yang phyogs med par bcom ldan 'das kyiis gsungs so/ /ji ltar de la gnyis su 'byed pa med ce na/ phyogs zhes bya ba ni/ dngos po dang dngos po med pa/ yod pa med pa/ yin pa dang ma yin pa/ gcig dang gcig min pa/ rtag pa dang chad pa/ srid pa dang myang 'das/ gzugs dang gzugs min pa/ sgra dang sgra min pa/ skad cig dang skad cig min pa/ de bzhin du chags dang chags min pa/ sdang dang sdang min pa/ rmongs dang rmongs min zhes pa de lta bu la sogs pa rnam ni phyogs re phan tshun ltos pa dang bcas pa nyid kyi phyir ro/ /de lta bu'i phyogs sam gnyis chos kyi dbye ba 'di dang bral ba ni sangs rgyas rnam kyi mi gnas pa'i mya ngan las 'das par rang bzhin med pa ste/ skad cig gcig dang skad cig du ma dang bral ba'i ye shes ni*

The path consists in remaining “there,” in this recognition free from dualistic mind, as the luminosity of mind itself is made into the path, without conceptualizing anything:

With regard to the path obtaining the two *kāyas* of awakening, the vehicle of mantras is more sublime than that of sūtras. Thus, as one makes the utterly lucid mind manifest in the path of *mantras*, reality is experienced in the way of a direct perception by one’s own awareness, but this is definitely not dependent on intellectually deriving the meaning of reality by means of inferences.⁴³

Mipham uses the two-truth model to stress the difference between these two cognitive states in the context of the path of *mantras*, in relation to the various aspects of the paths of development and completion. From this perspective, the ultimate is the nondifferentiation of wisdom and skillful means:

The two truths are taught in the way of the profound vehicle of *mantras*: (1) With regard to the concealing truth, whatever is worldly, those phenomena that are imputed by one’s own mind as being one’s own nature in terms of form and phenomenal appearance, such as the color, face, and arms [of the deity], are the means of actualizing the outer and inner worldly accomplishments. (2) With regard to the ultimate truth, free from all phenomenal appearances, forms, such as color and so on, free from phenomena that are imputed by one’s own mind, the *yogins’* mind is the mind consisting in primordial wisdom, the appearance as a direct perception of the natural luminous display (*rang mdangs*) of the [basic] space, just like the images of young women that appear [to someone practicing mirror divination]. This mind that, beyond anything mundane, is endowed with the supreme excellence of all aspects, is the means of actualizing the accomplishment of Mahāmudrā. Thus, both minds [namely, those belonging to the concealing and the ultimate] or

rgyal ba rnams kyis de kho na nyaid ces gsungs so/ /tshul 'dis de kho na nyid ni snang stong dang bden gnyis gang rung gi phyogs su lhung ba ma yin par zung 'jug so so rang gis rig par bya ba'i gnyis su med pa'i chos nyid du shes par bya ste/

43 *Dus 'khor nang gi le'u'i 'grel pa* 631,5–6: *sangs rgyas kyi sku gnyis ka thob byed kyi lam la mdo las sngags 'phags pas/ sngags kyi lam na 'od gsal ba'i sems mngon du byas pa des de kho na nyid rang rig pas mngon sum du myong ba yin gyi rjes dpag gis stong nyid kyi go don blo la drangs la nges par ltos pa ma yin te/*

both truths have the nature of wisdom and skillful means. Being indivisible, they have [always] been in unity. This unity is the fundamental sameness of wisdom and skillful means. This itself, the highest of all *yogas*, is called the great purpose, the utterly unchangeable, the *vajra yoga*, which is requested in [the *Kālacakra Tantra*].⁴⁴

In Mipham's view, this path depends on the instructions imparted by the guru. Since it requires a certain capacity on the part of the practitioner in order to recognize the nature of things in association with the natural luminosity of the mind, Mipham also describes the pitfalls one encounters in the practice of this path:

- The conceptual examination of the deities' aspects in, say, the development stage is not to be mistaken for reality. A mere intellectual approach to practice, rooted in the sphere of mind, is sufficient for beginners and those who are spiritually immature, but it is based on discursive thoughts and mental fabrications. It is not the direct perception of the deities as the inseparability of wisdom and skillful means (see *Dus 'khor sgrub thabs le'u'i 'grel ba* 511,5ff.).
- Repeating that the impure three gates are the pure body, speech, and mind of the buddhas without having experienced the nondual state amounts, according to Mipham, to a wrong understanding of the scriptures. If this is asserted on account of the fact that both pure vision and impure vision are empty, Mipham declares that this is nothing but nihilism since this represents a nonaffirming negation regarding that which is beyond the sphere of mind. Likewise, conflating a conceptual state of non-thought with the nonconceptual *dharmatā* is nothing but a wrong understanding of this path. Primordial wisdom is not mere stupidity or a temporary "freeze" of the mind's activity (see *Dus 'khor ye shes le'u'i 'grel pa* 731,2ff.).

44 *Dus 'khor tshig don* 284,4–285,1: *zab mo sngags kyi tshul 'di las bden pa gnyis bstan te gang 'jig rten kun rdzob kyi bden pa ni/ kha dog zhal phyag sogs mtshan ma dang dbyibs kyi bdag nyid du rang gis sems kyi yongs su brtags pa'i chos gang zhig phyi dang nang du 'jig rten pa'i dngos grub pa'i thabs so/ /don dam pa'i bden pa ni/ kha dog la sogs pa'i dbyings dang mtshan ma thams cad bral ba rang gi sems kyi yongs su brtags pa'i chos dang ba gzhon nu ma rnams la pra phab pa'i snang ba bzhin du/ rnal 'byor pa rnams kyi rang gis sems nyid 'od gsal gyi rang mdangs mngon sum du nam mkha' la snang ba 'gyur med bde ba'i ye shes sems gang zhig/ 'jig rten las 'das pa rnam pa thams cad kyi mchog dang ldan pa phyag rgya chen po'i dngos grub bsgrub pa'i thabs so/ /de ltar sems gnyis po'am bden pa gnyis po dbyer med cing gcig pa nyid du gyur pa ni shes rab dang thabs kyi bdag nyid ro mnyam pa/ don chen po mchog tu mi 'gyur ba rdo rje'i rnal 'byor zhes bya ba rnal 'byor kun gyi bla mar gyur pa de nyid zhu'o/*

- Grasping empty forms arising in the context of the completion stage as real is similar to eternalism (see *Dus 'khor ye shes le'u'i 'grel pa* 684,4).

All these deviations in the practice of the path occur because awareness (*rig pa*), the pure and luminous nature of mind, has not been made manifest.⁴⁵

The Fruit As the Unity of the Kāyas

In the last part of his *Le'u bco brgyad 'grel*, Mipham explains that the ground is in fact inseparable from the result. Not depending on causes and conditions, the sugata nature cannot be separated into two truths and has always been present from the perspective of the awakening. It is the spontaneously present *maṇḍala* that cannot be reduced to a nonaffirming negation since it is luminous, although it is empty of an essence. Mipham agrees with Rongzompa that impure appearances as commonly perceived by ordinary beings are in fact primordially pure, as they are the divine *maṇḍala*.⁴⁶ In his great commentary on the *Kālacakra*, Mipham declares:

In the way of the tantras, the fruit is taught as innate bliss (*lhan cig skyes pa'i dga' ba*) and innate *kāya* (*lhan cig skyes pa'i sku*): it is beyond the nature of the phenomena of dualistic consciousness. It is the abandonment of the apprehended object and the apprehending subject. It does not abide at all in saṃsāra and nirvāṇa. It is also the assembly of [all] the buddhas and the binding of [all] goddesses. It is the natural equal essence that goes together with the *kāya* of primordial wisdom. Such is the definitive meaning. The surrounding deities of the *maṇḍala* as well constitute the fundamental sameness and the *kāya* of primordial wisdom, primordial wisdom being the [all-]pervading central deity. All grasping on the part of *yogins* is a corruption. In order to dismantle [grasping], the *vajra yoga* is the abandonment of the eternalism and nihilism of those who are without lineage (*rigs med pa*). It is the abandonment of the thoughts of existence and nonexistence. Like the divination [consisting in the apparition of an image of] a young woman in a mirror,

45 In his *rDo rje snying po*, Mipham explains that, on account of the purity of all dualistic conceptions, eternalism is avoided, whereas nihilism is cleared owing to the original luminosity (see Hopkins 2006b: 135). For a description of how the unity of the two truths is directly experienced in the vehicle of *mantras* in contradistinction to the *sūtras*, see *'Od gsal snying po*, Mipham's commentary on Longchenpa's elucidation of the *Guhya garbha Tantra* (in Dharmachakra 2009: 20–21, 42ff.)

46 See Köppl 2008 and Almogi 2009.

[nondual] forms that are not analyzed by one's [dualistic] mind are directly experienced.⁴⁷

In order to integrate this aspect into his epistemology, Mipham develops a system including the valid cognitions of pure perception (*rnam dag dag gzigs tshad ma*) beside the impure valid cognitions of confined perception (*ma dag tshur mthong tshad ma*) for both the conventional and the ultimate.⁴⁸ In his *'Od gsal snying po*, his commentary on the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*, Mipham declares that the confined vision of beings about the conventional cannot be the ultimate state of the conventional.⁴⁹ As we have seen earlier, Dharmakīrti also accepts that, ultimately, conventional valid cognitions belong to the sphere of delusion. Since the pure vision of those who are buddhas is not deluded with regard to how things are, their perception of the conventional represents a valid cognition that cannot be superseded.⁵⁰ This hermeneutical move enables him to use inference and reasoning in the context of tantras and primordial wisdom. Although some important aspects that are beyond the sphere of mind can thereby be evoked for the sake of communication, Mipham insists that this is not in itself a proxy for pith instructions and the direct realization of the unity of the two truths. So, what might be this pure display manifesting as “deities”? In his *'Od gsal snying po*, Mipham argues that the actual deity is the *kāya*

47 *Dus 'khor tshig don* 286,4–7: 'bras bu sngags kyi tshul las lhan cig skyes pa'i dga' ba dang/ lhan cig skyes pa'i sku zhes gsungs te/ gzung ba dang 'dzin pa spangs pa rnam par shes pa'i chos nyid las 'das pa/ srid pa dang mya ngan 'das pa la rab tu mi gnas pa/ sangs rgyas rnam kyi 'dus pa dang/ lha mo rnam kyi sdom pa yang ye shes kyi sku 'di dang lhan cig ro mnyam pa nyid do/ zhes pa nges pa'i don te dkyil 'khor gyi 'khor lo rnam kyang khyab bdag gtso bo'i ye shes kyi sku dang mnyam pa nyid du gyur pa'o/ 'dir rnal 'byor pa rnam kyi phyogs su 'dzin pa thams cad nyams pa ste gzhi g pa'i slad du/ rdo rje'i rnal 'byor rigs med pa rtag pa dang chad pa spangs pa/ yod pa dang med pa'i blo spangs pa/ gzhon nu ma'i me long la pra bhab pa bzhin/ rang gi sems kyis ma brtag pa'i rnam pa mngon sum mthong ba/

48 See Wangchuk 2009: 222–24.

49 See Dharmachakra 2009: 48–50 for a translation of Mipham's *'Od gsal snying po*. Wangchuk (2009: 222–24) gives a detailed account of Mipham's taxonomy of conventional valid cognitions, pure and impure. This system is made to explain how realized beings can have a perception of the conventional that differs from that of ordinary beings when they perceive phenomena as divine appearances. However, this distinction is made from the perspective of post-meditation, since, from the perspective of meditative absorption, things are different. As highlighted by Wangchuk (2009: 221), “However, Mi-pham also belongs to a tradition that postulates the inseparability of the two truths. Accordingly, he posits that ultimately there is only one single *prameya*, and hence only one single *pramāṇa*, which he equates with self-occurring gnosis or with the gnosis of the Self-occurring One (i.e. the Buddha) (*svayambhūjñāna: rang byung gi ye shes*).”

50 See Duckworth 2008: 124–26.

of the spontaneously occurring primordial wisdom, the very unity of appearance and emptiness.⁵¹ This primordial wisdom being naturally radiant, ordinary beings wrongly reify its play and display, on account of their lack of “knowing.” Inasmuch as this nonconceptual ultimate is not dependent on a path, not being produced in any single way, it is permanent in the sense of not being obscured by change and transformation. However, it is also not a mere non-thing:⁵²

All phenomena appearing in one’s own mind are empty, without any established nature. In this primordial state, the nature of one’s own mind, which is this realization, is called the inseparability of bliss and primordial wisdom, natural luminosity and immutability. The fundamental sameness of subject-object, appearance-emptiness, whatever the great bliss of the immutable nature of phenomena is, implies that it is permanent like space... . In the sūtras and tantras, that which is called the mind, in the sense of the nature of phenomena or the luminous mind, is the *vajra* of the original mind (*gnyug ma sems*) or precisely that which, pervading space, is endowed with the indestructibility of space. [Objection:] What? Are you affirming that mind is something permanent? [Reply:] We are not. Not even an atom of the own-being of mind is established. As it was taught, mind is not mind.⁵³ How could [therefore] a permanent mind exist as anything? Permanence and impermanence exist as properties that are dualistically differentiated, but in the ultimate truth, the absence of dualism, distinctions such as the apprehended object and the apprehending subject, permanence and impermanence, things and non-things, are not to be made. All phenomena are of a single essence. This [point] is not the object of sophistry... . The meaning of the word “permanent” is “that which is devoid of the obscuration consisting in change” (*'pho ba'i sgrib pa dang bral ba*). If [primordial wisdom] is devoid of the obscuration consisting in change, it never wavers from the state without change, permanence.⁵⁴

51 Ibid.: 52–53.

52 This issue is also discussed in *Blo gros snang ba* (see Duckworth 2008: 79) and *bDe gshegs snying po'i stong thun* (ibid.: 155,171,174). Duckworth also analyzes this point in detail (see ibid.: 109–11).

53 See *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*: “Mind is not mind. The nature of mind is clear light” (*tac cittam acittam. prakṛtiś cittasya prabhāsvārā*) (Kapstein 2004: 124).

54 *Dus 'khor nang gi le'u'i 'grel pa* 606,6–607,1: *rang sems snang ba'i chos thams cad rang bzhin grub pa med pa'i stong pa la ni ye nas gnas pa de la de rtogs pa yi rang gi sems nyid rang bzhin gyi 'od gsal*

The spontaneously present *maṇḍala* is therefore made manifest, or unveiled, by the guru's pith instructions, and yet it cannot be considered to be the result of the path. In Mipham's view, it is primordially beyond the four extremes:

The nature of phenomena of mind, the luminous nature, is not newly established by means of the path, however, it is made manifest by the path. Therefore, although all beings are pervaded by primordial wisdom, the luminous nature of the Wheel of Time (*dus kyi 'khor lo, kālacakra*), the ground, they do not see [it] since it is veiled by obscurations.⁵⁵

This topic, often presented along the lines drawn by the *tathāgatagarbha* theory, is presented in detail in the translation of *Le'u bco brgyad 'grel* below and in the *bDe gshegs snying po'i stong thun*.⁵⁶ In his *Yid bzhin mdzod*, Longchenpa gives examples from the *Ratnagotravibhāga* to illustrate the fact that this primordial purity, the sugata nature, is not produced by causes but merely liberated from the adventitious obscurations veiling it. Likewise, Mipham accepts that the sugata nature is primordially empty of these obscurations but certainly not of qualities.⁵⁷

ba'am mi 'gyur ba'i bde ba ye shes rnam par bsres zhes bya ste/ yul yul can snang stong ro mnyam pa chos nyid /'gyur pa med pa'i bde chen po gang zhig nam mkha' bzhin du rtag par yang ni 'gyur ba ste/ (...) 607,3–5: *mdo rgyud kun las chos nyid kyi sems sam 'od gsal ba'i sems zhes gsungs pa gnyug ma sems kyi rdo rje'am/ mkha' khyab mkha' yi rdo rje ce na de nyid do/ ci sems rtag pa zhig khas len nam zhe na ma yin te/ sems ni sems ma mchis te zhes gsungs pa ltar sems kyi ngo bo nyid rdul phra rab tsam yang ma grub pa la sems rtag par gyur pa ci zhig yod/ rtag pa dang mi rtag pa ni gnyis su 'byed pa'i chos la yod kyi/ gnyis su med pa de kho na nyid kyi don la gzung dang 'dzin pa/ rtag pa dang mi rtag pa dngos po dang dngos po med pa'i khyad par byar med de chos thams cad ro mnyam pa'o/ de lta bu ni rtog ge'i yul ma yin te/ (...)* 609,5–6: *rtag pa'i sgra ni 'pho ba'i sgrib pa dang bral ba'i don te 'pho sgrib dang bral na 'pho med rtag pa'i go 'phang de las nam yang g.yo ba med do/*

55 *Dus 'khor nang gi le'u'i 'grel pa* 610,3–4: *sems kyi chos nyid rang bzhin 'od gsal ba lam gyi stobs las gsar du bsgrub pa ma yin yang/ lam gyi stobs las mngon du 'gyur pa yin pa'i phyir na/ sems can thams cad la gzhi dus kyi 'khor lo rang bzhin 'od gsal ba'i ye shes kyi khyab kyang sgrib pas bsgrub nas ma mthong.*

56 See for instance Duckworth 2008: 153.

57 For another example of this important point, see Mipham's detailed explanations in his *bDe gshegs snying po'i stong thun* (in Duckworth 2008: 164).

CHAPTER 11

The Two Truths from the Highest Perspective: A Translation

Introduction to Mipham's Commentary on Long chen pa's *Yid bzhin mdzod* (Chapter 18)

Mipham is known to have found in Longchenpa's works a major source of inspiration when it comes to expounding the ultimate view of the highest path as understood in the Nyingma tradition.⁵⁸ In one of his most personal and central works on Madhyamaka, the *dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad*, a commentary on Śāntarakṣita's *Madhyamakālaṃkāra*, Mipham's introductory discussion of the root text refers twice to Longchenpa's *Treasury of Wish-Fulfilling Jewels* (*Yid bzhin mdzod*). Mipham is also one of the very few Tibetan authors who attempted to comment on this text, which he did in a series of short commentaries.⁵⁹ Mipham's commentary

58 Although Mipham synthesizes the thoughts of Longchenpa and Gorampa, his ultimate intention is to be found in the works of the former (see Arguillère 2004: 36,270–71; Kapstein 2000a: 118; and Wangchuk 2012: 21, n.10). As mentioned above, Mipham, just like Longchenpa, but unlike Gorampa, accepts the last turning of the wheel as definitive. According to Butters (2006: 156), Mipham also follows Longchenpa regarding the Svātantrika-Prāsaṅgika distinction. It actually does seem, on the basis of Arguillère's research, that Mipham is merely following Longchenpa's exposition of the two truths as presented in the *rDzog pa chen po sgyu ma ngal so*. Regarding Longchenpa's exegesis of Madhyamaka, one must note that this text presents striking similarities to the philosophy expressed by the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra* and that of the early Yogācāras, with the notable addition of the specific Dzogchen teachings, which cannot be conflated with Yogācāra (see Arguillère 1991). Arguillère (2007) produced a remarkable study of Longchenpa, his life, and his work. I built on his research for difficult choices of terminology in the translation that follows. Arguillère also gives a short summary of Chapter 18 of *Yid bzhin mdzod* (ibid.: 292–95). He stresses the eclectic character of Longchenpa's quotations in this particular chapter, a large part of them being drawn from non-tantric texts, and concludes: "Cela fait évidemment une planche commode pour le concordisme de 'Ju Mi-pham, la conception exclusive et hiérarchique professée par klong-chen-pa étant contredite par son usage des autorités" (ibid.: 295).

59 Mipham composed the following commentaries on Longchenpa's works: *Yid bzhin mdzod kyi grub mtha' sdus pa*, *Yid bzhin rigs gsal*, *Yid bzhin phreng ba*, *Le'u bco brgyad pa'i tshig 'grel ba*. See Arguillère 2007, 11. Other commentators of Longchenpa include Khenpo Ngag ga (mKhan po Ngag dga', 1879 – 1940/41) who wrote a detailed elucidation of the *Bla ma'i yang tig las gnyis ka'i yang yig*, Khangsar Tenpa'i Wangchuk (Khang sar bstan pa'i dbang phyug, 1938–2014) who composed two commentaries on the *Chos dbyings rin po che'i mdzod* and one on the *gNas lugs rin po che'i mdzod* (all contained in W1KG15471), and Khenpo Jamyang Grupa'i Lodrö (mKhen po 'Jam dbyangs grub pa'i blo gros, b. 1932) who wrote an extensive commentary on

on Chapter 18 of the *Yid bzhin mdzod* (*Treasury of Wish-Fulfilling Jewels*) presents the nonconceptual and nondual unity of the two truths from a perspective clearly influenced by Dzogchen,⁶⁰ along with a detailed elucidation of the notion of *tathāgatagarbha* as understood in his tradition—presentations that are independent of disputations related to the *gzhan stong*–*rang stong* distinction. The root text of the eighteenth chapter of the *Yid bzhin mdzod*, together with the commentaries thereon by Longchenpa and Mipham, are therefore essential documents for understanding Mipham’s ultimate position on what came to be termed *buddha nature*.⁶¹ Accordingly, I will here focus on the following texts:

- Longchenpa’s root text: *Treasury of Wish-Fulfilling Jewels (Yid bzhin mdzod)*⁶²
- Longchenpa’s autocommentary: *White Lotus (Theg pa chen po’i man ngag gi bstan bcos yid bzhin rin po che’i mdzod kyi ’grel ba pad ma dkar po)*
- Mipham’s commentary: *Commentary on Chapter 18 (Le’u bco brgyad ’grel)*

These texts are important since they point out the ultimate according to Vajrayāna in a way that combines the approaches of both the result and causal vehicles. In so doing, the two truths are presented by Longchenpa and Mipham from the perspective of awakening. In these texts, the expedient nature of dialectical arguments related to the two truths is made clear, as their propaedeutic function of unveiling the view of Dzogchen is emphasized. The focus of these texts is set on introducing “the inconceivable nature of luminosity” through the lens of “the teaching on the

the *Man ngag mdzod*. I am grateful to Wulstan Fletcher for drawing my attention to the works of Khangsar Tenpa’i Wangchuk and Khenpo Jamyang Grupa’i Lodrö.

60 As a side note, these texts show that Mipham formalized in a more scholastic language Longchenpa’s esoteric poetic instructions, a fact supported by the translations below, in which one can read Longchenpa’s commentary on Chapter 18 of his own *Yid bzhin mdzod*.

61 On Mipham’s position with regard to the *gzhan stong*–*rang stong* distinction in relation to his interpretation of *de bzhin gshegs pa’i snying po*, see Williams 1998a, Pettit 1999a, Pettit 1999b, Williams 1999, Kapstein 2000a, Duckworth 2008, Kapstein 2009, and Wangchuk 2012. Mipham’s works focusing on this topic are *Gzhan stong khas len seng ge’i nga ro* (English translation in Pettit 1999a) and *Bde gshegs snying po’i stong thun chen mo seng ge’i nga ro* (English translation in Duckworth 2008).

62 This text was translated by Thurman 1997, 172ff. and Butters 2006, 757ff., in both cases without references to Longchenpa’s *Pad ma dkar po* or Mipham’s *Le’u bco brgyad ’grel*.

sugata nature.”⁶³ In this context, emptiness in the sense of a mere nothingness is presented as an inferior view.⁶⁴ The path here consists in applying the essence of the perfection stage, the nonconceptual primordial wisdom of luminosity that must be known for oneself, the inexpressible truth that cannot be separated into the two truths.⁶⁵ According to Mipham, this is the state in which emptiness, luminosity, and appearance are in nondual unity. This awareness, which is referred to as sugata nature by Longchenpa, is accomplished by mere recognition, for it is deemed to be naturally and primordially occurring:

Since the concealing truth of the three inner [tantras] is the very appearance of the nature of the deity, truth is posited as indivisible. Therefore, having abandoned any clinging to the truth as being differentiated, all phenomena are determined as the [Buddha] nature ([*sangs rgyas snying po*]), which is nothing but the definitive meaning [of the teachings]. Therefore, apart from the mere elimination of obscurations (*sgrib pa*) from the spontaneously present nature (*lhun grub*) [of the Sugata] or the basic constituent [of awakening], a cause-and-effect relationship affecting the essential nature [of things] (*ngo bo*)⁶⁶ is not accepted. As a consequence, the unconditioned is disclosed as the naturally appearing (*rang snang*) *maṇḍala*.⁶⁷

Mipham summarizes the entire chapter in the following way:

First, the ground (*gzhi*) is ascertained as the truth that cannot be separated [into two]; [second], the path is the practice of the inseparability of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa; [third], that which is to be attained is resolved as the inseparability of the ground and the result.⁶⁸

63 See Longchenpa, *Pad ma dkar po* 640,3–6.

64 See Longchenpa, *Pad ma dkar po* 641,2–642,7.

65 See Longchenpa, *Pad ma dkar po* 641,2–642,7 and Mipham, *Le'u bco brgyad 'grel* 566,1–3.

66 This expression is used in a Dzogchen context here.

67 *Pad ma dkar po* 641,3: /*nang pa gsum gyi kun rdzob lha'i rang bzhin du snang ba nyid nas bden pa dbyer med du 'dzog pas/ bden pa tha dad du 'dzin pa dor nas/ chos thams cad nges pa'i don 'ba' zhi gi snying por gtan la 'bebs pas/ lhun grub snying po'am khams kyi sgrib pa sel ba tsam las/ ngo bo'i rgyud 'bras tha dad du mi 'dod pas/ 'dus ma byas rang snang ba'i dkyil 'khor du shes par byed do/*

68 *Le'u bco brgyad 'grel* 566: *dang po gzhi bden pa dbyer med du gtan la dbab/ lam 'khor 'das dbyer med du nyams su blang/ thob bya gzhi 'bras dbyer med du la bzla ba*

From this perspective, all dualistic notions are discarded since the ineffable unity of emptiness and appearance refers to primordially pure appearances, as explained by Mipham:

As for the first of these three decisive experiences,⁶⁹ what is the nature of reality designated as the “truth that cannot be separated [into two]”? It is that which is called “primordially luminous primordial wisdom” or “sugata nature.” In relation to the word “luminosity” [Longchenpa gives] the example of what is both free from obscurity and endowed with light, [the sun].⁷⁰ Likewise, this is a name for that which is endowed with the sublime cognizing aspect (*mkhyen cha*) of primordial wisdom, being uncovered (*ma gos pa*) by obscurations. Therefore, it is called the primordial wisdom free from obscurations. This is explained from the perspective of awareness (*rig pa*), the sublime cognizing aspect [of primordial wisdom]. Moreover, it has not remained as any extreme whatsoever since a beginningless time, meaning from the very beginning. Being complete peace, it is thus the [genuine] self or natural abiding. With this, the aspect of emptiness has been explained. The example for both awareness (*rig pa*) and emptiness is the luminous orb of the sun and the unobscured sky’s expanse, corresponding respectively to the spontaneously present sublime cognizing aspect and the unconditioned natural state. This basic space that is the unity of awareness and emptiness is naturally completely pure, regardless of any effort to make [it pure]. Further, since it is not even attained by means of the two imperfections consisting in the conditioned saṃsāra and the partly peaceful unconditioned, it is total and complete purity. As it primordially abides as that which is possessed of the fundamental state, appearance and emptiness cannot be separated within the essential nature. Nirvāṇa is not to be established as a truth, while the truth of saṃsāra must also not be refuted. Therefore, there is no coming and going with regard to faults and virtues.⁷¹ In the present case, the application of conventional words and concepts as well as mental proliferations belonging to the [level of the] concealing truth is completely cut off in the absence of

69 *la bzla ba*. Literally “to cross a mountain pass.”

70 This refers to the example of the sun given by Longchenpa in the verses above.

71 Mipham uses words found in the root text, such as going or coming. However, his commentary does not gloss Longchenpa’s verses word by word.

coming and going.⁷² No consideration whatsoever based on words and concepts, such as *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*, appearance and emptiness, fault and virtue, is established as withstanding analysis. Such considerations are therefore concealing. All the coming and going of these [mental proliferations] is complete peace.⁷³

According to Longchenpa, the philosophical device of the two truths is baseless from the highest perspective. The ineffability of that which is referred to as concealing truth cannot be encapsulated by the concept of appearance found in the approach of the two truths *qua* emptiness and appearance. As a consequence, Longchenpa refers to the nonconceptual and nondual truth in which primordial presence (*lhun grub*) and great purity are in union.⁷⁴ Mipham concurs and explains:

Therefore, arising on account of the conceptualization of philosophical systems, [the two truths] are designated as the concealing, which is appearance, and the ultimate, which abides without arising. Since no [thing] is posited as even the two truths, which are conceptual fixations, all mental proliferations such as clinging to existence or nonexistence and so forth are completely pacified... To recapitulate, the nature of appearance and emptiness is nondual within the *dharmadhātu*. Since there is nothing to be done dualistically, even these two truths of the

72 This sentence refers to the last verse of the stanza above.

73 *Le'u bco brgyad 'grel* 566–567: *bzla ba gsum gyi dang po/ bden pa dbyer med ces ming du btags pa'i gnas lugs de yi rang bzhin ji lta bu zhe na/ gdod nas 'od gsal ba'i ye shes sam bde bar gshegs pa'i snying po zhes bya ste/ 'od gsal zhes pa'i ming gis ni/ mun pa dang bral ba/ snang ba dang ldan pa gnyis mtshon pa ltar/ sgrib pas ma gos pa dang / ye shes kyi mkhyen cha dang ldan pa'i ming ste/ des na sgrib bral gyi ye shes zhes bya'o/ // di ni mkhyen cha rig pai ngos nas bstan/ de yang thog ma med pa'i dus sam ye nas/ mtha' gang du'ang mi gnas pas na rab tu zhi ba ste spros pa med pa'i bdag nyid dam/ rang bzhin can du bzhugs pa'o/ // dis ni stong cha bstan/ rig pa dang stong pa de gnyis po'i dpe ni nyi ma'i snying po 'od gsal ba dang nam mkha' sgrib pa med pa lta bu de/ mkhyen cha lhun gyis grub pa dang rang bzhin 'dus ma byas pas so/ /de lta bu'i rig stong zung du 'jug pa'i dbyings de ni lam gyi byed rtsol lta bu la mi ltos par rang bzhin gyis rnam par dag pa ste/ de yang 'dus byas 'khor ba dang 'dus ma byas phyogs gcig pa zhi ba'i skyon gnyis kas kyang ma reg pas na rnam par dag pa chen po'o/ /de lta bu'i ngang tshul can du ye nas gnas pas na/ ngo bo la snang stong so sor dbyer med cing myang 'das bden par bsgrub pa dang / 'khor ba bden pa bsal bya'ang med cing / de'i dbang gis skyon phar 'gro ba dang yon tan tshur 'ong ba'ang med do/ /de lta na kun rdzob sgra dang rtog pa'i 'jug pa der mi rgyu bas na kun rdzob kyi spros pa rnam par chad pa ste/ 'khor 'das snang stong skyon yon sogs su sgra rtog gis gang gzhal ba thams cad dpyad bzod du mi 'grub pa'i phyir kun rdzob pa yin cing de'i rgyu ba thams cad nye bar zhi ba'o/*

74 See Longchenpa, *Pad ma dkar po* 643,7–644,5.

concealing and the ultimate are nothing but verbalizations by way of sounds and words.⁷⁵

In this context, Longchenpa proceeds to posit the two truths as cognitive categories corresponding to the *mithun mi mithun* model presented above.⁷⁶ Commenting on this, Mipham explains the differences between the two definitions of the two truths.⁷⁷ The first is posited according to the way things are and the way they appear: emptiness and appearance. The second definition introduced by Longchenpa determines the epistemic concordance, or lack thereof, between the way things are and the way they appear. The concordance between these two modes defines the ultimate, while its absence defines the concealing. From this standpoint, the concealing is utterly illusory, like hallucinations created by datura. With these distinctions in mind, Longchenpa and Mipham elucidate the inseparability of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, a topic that shows the originality of their interpretation of the teaching on **sugatagarbha*. Although the two realms of mind and awareness are distinguished in terms of concealing and ultimate truths through the *mithun mi mithun* method of defining the two truths, the latter being empty of the former, Longchenpa and Mipham do not consider mind to be something fundamentally different from awareness.⁷⁸ The best comparison here could be that of ice and water. Mind is nothing but solidified awareness. It does not refer to something else. Since differentiating the two truths is based on the correct or incorrect cognitive mode of perceiving the ground of reality, mind merely consists in the “unrecognized” primordially present awareness. As such, mind merely represents the cognitive state in which the nondual unity of emptiness, luminosity, and appearance of the ground of reality, the primordially pure awareness, has been lost.⁷⁹ One could here also consid-

75 *Le'u bco brgyad 'grel* 567–568: /des na 'di ni kun rdzob dang 'di ni don dam zhes rnam par dbye ba'i spyod yul las 'das pas na/ grub mtha'i blos skye bar snang ba kun rdzob/ skye ba med bar gnas pa don dam mo zhes pa lta bur btags shing zhen pa'i bden pa gnyis su'ang bzhag pa med pa'i phyir de las 'das te yod med du 'dzin pa la sogs pa'i spros kun nye bar zhi ba yin te/ ... de'i mjug bsdu ba ni/ de ltar chos kyi dbyings la snang ba dang stong pa'i rang bzhin gnyis su med cing gnyis su byar med pas na/ kun rdzob dang don dam gyi bden pa de yang dbyer med ces su sgra dang tshig gis brjod pa tsam mo/

76 Longchenpa, *Pad ma dkar po* 644,7–645,3.

77 Mipham, *Le'u bco brgyad 'grel* 568,1–569,1.

78 See Longchenpa, *Pad ma dkar po* 646–47 and Mipham, *Le'u bco brgyad 'grel* 570,1–6.

79 Longchenpa, *Pad ma dkar po* 652,1–653,2: “If one intuitively understands (*rtogs*) the definitive meaning [expressed by] the synonyms [standing] for one’s own awareness (*rig pa*), namely, the spontaneously present basic space (*dbyings lhun gis grub pa*), this naturally occurring

er the two truths of the *mithun mi mithun* model as being paradoxically in a state of unity (*zung 'jug*) in the sense that the ultimate and the relative do not refer to two different actual things, just like in the case of conditioned phenomena and emptiness. As expressed in the *Ratnagotravibhāga* through the analogy of the baby who is a future king in the womb of a destitute woman, the seemingly poor child and the future sovereign do not actually refer to two separate entities. In addition, Mipham explains that even if the ultimate (awareness) is in this context empty of the concealing (mind), both are equally unestablished as anything at all. Emptiness of other, from this perspective, does not imply that the ultimate is not empty of itself:

But this very saṃsāra, when analyzed by means of reasoning, is not established. Therefore, defiled [phenomena], the nature of saṃsāra, do not exist in the slightest. Primordial purity, the ultimate of the *dharmadhātu*, the ground that one differentiates, and the phenomena that are divisions of aspects are not established in the real sense. As a consequence, inasmuch as saṃsāra and nirvāṇa are indivisible, peace is taught as fundamental sameness.⁸⁰

Mipham's last significant comment on Chapter 18 of Longchenpa's *Yid bzhin mdzod* takes the form of a concluding statement on sugata nature in agreement with the interpretation laid out by Longchenpa: the essence of this sugata nature is emptiness, and its nature is luminosity. Mipham presents the single truth, the nonconceptual inseparability of the ground and the result of the path, as the nondual unity of luminosity, emptiness, and awareness, that is, beings' primordially present nature.⁸¹

primordial wisdom, then this is nirvāṇa. If one does not intuitively understand the ground, this is saṃsāra. From the perspective of the arising of [saṃsāra and nirvāṇa], [awareness] is called "basic space." It is [also] called the genuine purity of mind (*sems kyi dam pa*)."

80 *Le'u bco brgyad 'grel* 570: 'khor ba nyid rigs pas brtags na ma grub pas na dri mar ldan pa 'khor ba'i rang bzhin cung zad kyang med de gdod nas dag pa dbyings kyi don dam pa dang / gzhi tha dad pa dang rnam pa so sor dbye ba'i chos yang dag pa'i don la ma grub pas don dam par 'khor 'das dbyer med de srid zhi mnyam pa nyid du bstan pa yin no/ See also Longchenpa, *Pad ma dkar po* 647,2–648,1.

81 See Mipham, *Le'u bco brgyad 'grel* 571,3–5.

Translations of Longchenpa's *Yid bzhin mdzod* (Chapter 18) and *Pad ma dkar po ad cit.*, and Mipham's *Le'u bco brgyad 'grel*

[Longchenpa, *Pad ma dkar po* 640,3–6:]⁸² Having thus actually perfected the training in correct reflection, one must generate in [one's] mindstream the wisdom that arises from the third point, practice, and realize that which must be accomplished, the ultimate fundamental nature, in order to actualize the ultimate of reality. [There are] five sections. First, the meaning, which is the entrance in the teaching of practice; second, the main instruction, resting in the state of luminosity; third, the subsequent path; fourth, the perception of progress; and fifth, the ultimate result.

1. The Object to Be Established: The Ultimate Fundamental Nature⁸³

The common [teaching] is determined through a knowledge object, a [philosophical] position established from the perspective of the wisdom arising from hearing. In the present case, the uncommon [teaching] is the inconceivable nature of luminosity, the fundamental nature of the path of the *vajra* vehicle of secret *mantra*, the spontaneously present *maṇḍala*, the teaching on the sugata nature.

[Longchenpa, *Yid bzhin mdzod* 49,5–6 and *Pad ma dkar po* 640,6–7:]

**Having thus completely perfected the object of reflection,
One should generate in [one's] mindstream the wisdom arising from practice.
In this tradition, one engages in the unsurpassable essential meaning
Rather than in the three paths of renunciation from worldly life belonging to
the three vehicles.**

[Longchenpa, *Pad ma dkar po* 640,7–641,2:] On account of the classification into three vehicles, there are the three paths for an individual who has perfected the wisdom arising from reflection: the path of the hearers, of the solitary realizers, and of the supreme buddhas. However, in the present context, one enters the path of the unsurpassable Great Vehicle. There is also an elucidation [of this point] in terms of the dichotomy between causal and resultant [vehicles]: one enters [here] the resultant *vajra* vehicle.

82 See *Yid bzhin mdzod* 49,5–52,5 and *Pad ma dkar po* 640,3–654,6 for the Tibetan text (Gangtok edition) used in the following translation. Longchenpa's root text (*Yid bzhin mdzod*) is in bold, while Longchenpa's auto-commentary (*Pad ma dkar po*) is in normal font, like Mipham's commentary (*Le'u bco brgyad 'grel*).

83 I am following Mipham's way of dividing the text into sections. Although Longchenpa mentions five parts, Mipham's commentary has only three.

[Mipham, *Le'u bco brgyad 'grel* 566,1:] Homage to the gurus! In this chapter, which is the root [text] [of this commentary], what is to be practiced according to this tradition is the supreme *mantra* [vehicle] rather than the three available paths of renunciation from worldly life leading to the respective results of the three vehicles.

[Longchenpa, *Pad ma dkar po* 640,7–641,2:] [It is said] about this [resultant] vehicle:

[Longchenpa, *Yid bzhin mdzod* 49,6 and *Pad ma dkar po* 641,2:]

With regard to [this approach], knowing first the way things are (*gnas lugs*) is crucial.

Although there are many distinct categories on account of [the various] vehicles, The ultimate quintessence [of all phenomena],

The truth that cannot be separated [into two], is the treasure house of the buddhas' secret.

[Longchenpa, *Pad ma dkar po* 641,2–642,7:] In the *vajra* vehicle, the three outer tantras (*phyi'i rgyud*) are similar to the Great Vehicle of characteristics with regard to the view. They determine [the view] as the nature that is ultimately not established as anything at all. Nowadays, most *mantrikas* follow this [approach]. Since the concealing truth of the three inner [tantras] is the very appearance of the nature of the deity, truth is posited as indivisible. Therefore, having abandoned any clinging to the truth as being differentiated, all phenomena are determined as the [Buddha] nature ([*sangs rgyas*] *snying po*), which is nothing but the definitive meaning [of the teachings]. Therefore, apart from the mere elimination of obscurations from the spontaneously present nature [of the Sugata] or the basic constituent [of awakening], a cause and effect relationship affecting the essential nature [of things] is not accepted. As a consequence, the unconditioned is disclosed as the naturally appearing *maṇḍala*. Further, although the method of practicing the path [here] is different from the stages of the nondual father and mother [tantras], it [also] actualizes the essential nature. Yet, it is not asserted as being identical with [those two]. Today, such an [authentic] understanding of the way things are seems to be extremely rare.

So regarding the negation of the perception of a pot, once one has explained temporal sequences, and so forth, in relation to the infinitesimal particles (*rdul phran*, *paramāṇu*) composing the pot, the pot is determined as being unestablished. This ascertainment is of provisional meaning. [In fact,] the perception of a pot is posited as a pot through its opposite. [For example], when one examines a woolen

blanket, one must understand a water jug, and so forth, as being in the real sense such an [opposite] locus, [this locus excluding the perception of a woolen blanket].⁸⁴ Without understanding this, it is apprehended as nothing whatsoever as a consequence of the permanent negation of the apprehension of a pot. This apprehension is called the scope and path of the Great Vehicle of blank emptiness. It is [also] called the lack of potential for the practice of the *vajra* vehicle in particular.

[Objection:] Suppose that one understands and establishes the infinitesimal particles to be nonexistent. If one understands and establishes them as being thoroughly extended phenomena by means of the intellect, what harm is there [in that]?

[Answer:] Because the natural condition (*rnal don*) [would] be congruent with duality, this [realization would] look like the mere imprint of the [authentic] understanding and practice. Since from the perspective of the natural condition, describing [anything] in terms of particles, gross extended objects (*rags pa*), and temporality is the method of intellectual speculation, it is not the definitive meaning, the intention of the buddhas, the profound peace, the freedom from mental proliferations, the unique teaching. Thus, if one [wishes] to classify [this *vajra* vehicle], [one should remember that] the sphere of tantras is apprehended as the ascertainment of that which is just as it is since it is not ascertained by means of scriptures and reasoning that are intellectual digressions.

The approach of the *vajra* pinnacle is the domain of those who have pleased the glorious protector, the noble *guru*, and have been empowered, those who are endowed with the eye of intelligence and a great mind. But those spiritually immature persons with limited vision who engage in intellectual speculation about the conventional close their eyes when they see the [natural] state, just as owls become blind when the sun rises.

At this stage, we should unify in a single [key point] the quintessential meaning of the characteristics of the unsurpassable *vajra* vehicle, and then proceed with the way to practice. The quintessential perfection stage (*rdzogs rim, sampannakrama*) of the father tantras is called the primordial wisdom of the nonduality of the profound and the manifest, the *yoga* of the *rlung* and skillful means. The quintessential perfection stage of the mother tantras is called the inconceivable wisdom of the [nonduality] of bliss and luminosity (*bde gsal*), the *yoga* of the edgeless expanse. From the perspective of the third category, the nondual tantras, the essence of the perfection stage is called the nonconceptual primordial wisdom of the luminosity (*'od gsal*), the *yoga* of the subtle skillful means. In this pith instruction, this is taught

84 The point of this argument seems to be that the unestablished pot is dependent on its conceptual distinguishers (or opposites), which implies that asserting its nonexistence can only be of provisional meaning.

as [the state of] sameness (*cha mnyam*). As it does not arise if one does not know the basis of these [yogas], [one should understand it as] the primordial wisdom that one should know for oneself, the truth that cannot be separated [into two].

[Mipham, *Le'u bco brgyad 'grel* 566,1–3:] Further, of the two [stages] of generation (*bskyed rim*, *utpattikrama*) and completion, [Longchenpa] explains the completion stage, the quintessence of the profound key points of all tantras. One must know the way things are prior to the practice. Moreover, even if there are many doctrinal categories established by the intellect, in this tradition, the ultimate quintessence that corresponds to the key points of all sūtras and tantras is the inseparability of the two truths alone. Since this is the extraordinary sphere of the buddhas, it is secret. Since this is the source of all phenomena, it is a treasure house.

[Longchenpa, *Yid bzhin mdzod* 49,6–7 and *Pad ma dkar po* 642,7–643,1:]

The nature of this [truth that cannot be separated into two] is luminosity, primordial wisdom.

Supreme peace⁸⁵ since beginningless time, naturally free from mental proliferations,

Spontaneously present like the sun and unconditioned like the sky's expanse,

It is the primordially abiding pure and vast nature,

And, thus, the inseparability of appearance and emptiness, without affirmation or negation, coming or going.

[Longchenpa, *Pad ma dkar po* 643,1–643,6:] The essential nature of the spontaneously occurring innate awareness is luminous natural purity. The genuine self, free from mental proliferations since beginningless time, adorned with the complete *maṇḍala* of [awakened] qualities that is like the unobscured sun, is the state that does not waver from the basic space (*dbyings*), the nature of phenomena, the fundamental nature that is like the sky. Since the unconditioned primordially abides as great spontaneous presence, the completely pure natural state abides as the inseparability of appearance and emptiness. It is said in the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti* [VI,5]:

[He is] the one without a beginning, the one whose self is free from mental proliferations.⁸⁶

85 The root text reads *rab zhi* instead of *rang bzhin*.

86 Wayman's edition is slightly different from Longchenpa's quote: */thog ma med spros med bdag/ /de bzhin nyid bdag dag pa'i bdag/—anādhiraṃ niṣprapañcātmā śuddhātmā tathatātmakaḥ ||* See Wayman 1985: 75. Cf. Longchenpa's *Pad ma dkar po* 643,2: *rang bzhin gyis ni dag pa'i*

and

Since he is stainless, he is pure.
 Since he is all-pervasive, he is the genuine self.
 Since he is unchanging, he is permanent.⁸⁷

From the perspective of the fortunate ones whose minds are not [limited by] confined perception (*tshur rol mthong ba'i blo*), it is said in the *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra*:⁸⁸

Purity, self, bliss, and permanence,
 It is the perfection of [awakened] qualities, the fruit.

There is moreover nothing to establish upon or introduce to the natural qualities [of the fundamental state] that was not already there. Apart from adventitious [impurities], there are no faults to purify on account of [the fundamental condition] being stained. Therefore, the fact that faults do not go away⁸⁹ and the qualities do not come⁹⁰ is the authentic meaning of the way things are. As one can be liberated through realization or understanding, it is said in the *Uttaratantra* [RGV I.154 and AA V.21]:⁹¹

There is nothing to eliminate from this,
 Not even the slightest thing to add.
 The truth should be perceived as it is.
 The one who perceives the truth is liberated.

bdag /thog ma med nas spros med bdag. The Sanskrit compounds in this verse can be read as *bahuvrihis*.

87 I could not identify this quotation.

88 I have not been able to locate this quote in the *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra*, but it is quoted in the RGV: *śubhātma sukha nityatva guṇapāramitā phalam/* (RGV I.35ab). Chenique 2001 gives the Tibetan equivalent: *gtsang bdag bde dang rtag nyid kyi/ /yon tan pha rol phyin pa 'bras/* instead of *gtsang bdag bde dang rtag nyid kyi/ /yon tan pha rol phyin pa 'bras/* as quoted by Longchenpa.

89 *skyon spangs pa phyir 'gro ba*. This refers to “going” in the expression of the root texts “without coming or going.”

90 *yon tan nang du 'ong ba*. This refers to “coming” in the expression of the root texts “without coming or going.”

91 *nāpaneyam atah kiṃcid upaneyam na kiṃcana | draṣṭavyam bhūta bhūta bhūta darśi vimucyate*. D4024, f.61b: *'di la bsal bya ci yang med/ /gzhag par bya ba cung zad med/ /yang dag nyid la yang dag lta/ /yang dag mthong na rnam par grol/* I read 'di la in the sense of 'di las (ablative) in the first *pāda* on the basis of the Sanskrit. Also quoted by Mipham in *mKhas pa'i tshul la 'jug pa'i sgo* Vol.3: 267.

[Mipham, *Le'u bco brgyad 'grel* 566,3–567,4:] Regarding the ascertainment (*gtan la bab pa*) of this, first, the ground is ascertained as the truth that cannot be separated [into two]; [second], the path is the practice of the inseparability of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa; [third], that which is to be attained is resolved as the inseparability of the ground and the result.

As for the first of these three decisive experiences,⁹² what is the nature of reality designated as the “truth that cannot be separated [into two]”? It is that which is called “primordially luminous primordial wisdom” or “sugata nature.” In relation to the word “luminosity” [Longchenpa gives] the example of what is both free from obscurity and endowed with light, [the sun].⁹³ Likewise, this is a name for that which is endowed with the sublime cognizing aspect of primordial wisdom, being uncovered by obscurations. Therefore, it is called the primordial wisdom free from obscurations. This is explained from the perspective of awareness, the sublime cognizing aspect [of primordial wisdom]. Moreover, it has not remained as any extreme whatsoever since a beginningless time, meaning from the very beginning. Being complete peace, it is thus the [genuine] self or natural abiding. With this, the aspect of emptiness has been explained. The example for both awareness and emptiness is the luminous orb of the sun and the unobscured sky’s expanse, corresponding respectively to the spontaneously present sublime cognizing aspect and the unconditioned natural state. This basic space that is the unity of awareness and emptiness is naturally completely pure, regardless of any effort to make [it pure]. Further, since it is not even attained by means of the two imperfections consisting in the conditioned saṃsāra and the partly peaceful unconditioned, it is total and complete purity. As it primordially abides as that which is possessed of the fundamental state, appearance and emptiness are inseparable within the essential nature. Nirvāṇa is not to be established as a truth, while the truth of saṃsāra must also not be refuted. Therefore, there is no coming and going with regard to faults and virtues.⁹⁴ In the present case, the application of conventional words and concepts as well as mental proliferations belonging to the [level of the] concealing truth is completely cut off in the absence of coming and going.⁹⁵ No consideration whatsoever based on words and concepts, such as saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, appearance and emptiness, fault and virtue, is established as withstanding analysis. Such considerations are therefore concealing. All the coming and going of these [mental proliferations] is complete peace.

92 *la bzla ba*. Literally “to cross a mountain pass.”

93 This refers to the example of the sun given by Longchenpa in the verses above.

94 Mipham uses words found in the root text, such as going or coming. However, his commentary does not gloss Longchenpa’s verses word by word.

95 This sentence refers to the last verse of the stanza above.

[Longchenpa, *Pad ma dkar po* 643,6:] With regard to this nature, [the root text reads:]

[Longchenpa, *Yid bzhin mdzod* 49,7–50,1 and *Pad ma dkar po* 643,6–7:]

**Because it exceeds the concealing, the sphere of divisions and partitions,
It is the pacification of all mental proliferations.**

**As it surpasses the two truths that are fabrications,
The truth that cannot be separated [into two] is neither established nor
unestablished.**

**Within basic space, inseparable is the nature of appearance and emptiness.
Therefore, it is proclaimed that this truth cannot be separated [into two].**

[Longchenpa, *Pad ma dkar po* 643,7–644,5:] Compared to primordial wisdom, which is luminosity, the concealing truth, saṃsāra, resembles clouds. Thus, because the concealing truth cannot be cognized, it cannot be established even as a mere illusory appearance. If this [concealing truth] is not established, the ultimate [itself] in the sense of a consideration about the emptiness of the manifoldness is [also] not established. Since these two are not established, the distinction between the two truths taken as a philosophical system is not established as anything at all. Since the [two truths] do not exist, passing beyond the two truths that are superimposed (*sgro btags pa*) by the intellect in terms of truth and falsity, the appeasement of all mental proliferations, is proclaimed to be the truth that cannot be separated [into two] as no conceptual truth is established. That which is established as concealing [truth], being ultimately not established, is ineffable. Thus, the primordial wisdom of the luminous basic space is called the spontaneously present great purity. However, it does not exist at all as these two truths of appearance and emptiness according to which philosophical systems are conceptualized.⁹⁶ As a consequence, it is described as “what is called the truth that cannot be separated [into two].” As it is said in the *sGyu ’phrul bla ma*:⁹⁷

The ultimate and the concealing are inseparable
As the great *maṇḍala* of that which is fundamental sameness.

96 This is an interesting definition of primordial wisdom, which shows the inseparability of the two aspects under discussion, namely, emptiness and luminosity.

97 The *sGyu ’phrul bla ma* is a Mahāyoga scripture. See Pt. 186, Vol. 12, f. 598 (*dPal brtsegs* edition of the *rNying ma rgyud ’bum*): *don dam kun rdzob dbyer med pa/ /mnyam pa’i dkyil ’khor chen po ru/* See also Pt. 957, Vol. 54, f. 568 and Pt. 616, Vol. 39, f. 721.

If the truth cannot be separated [into two] on the level of this manifoldness of the two truths, which are conventionally imputed, how much more so from the perspective of the fundamentally unconditioned luminosity (*gshis 'od gsal*)! Moreover, with regard to this, although there is a lot of dust in the air or heavy rain [masking] the sunlight, the sun is [merely] veiled or [temporarily] undistinguishable. Therefore, it is shining even if one actually experiences that it does not. So, because the sun [itself] has no such divisions of aspects, this [absence of sunlight] is merely imputed by one's intellect. If this [absence of sunlight] were to exist, even the world would see it. When we see the sun, it is possible to see its two truths [namely, the unveiled and the veiled sun]. Seeing its light at the time of seeing the sun corresponds to luminosity.

[Mipham, *Le'u bco brgyad 'grel* 567,4–568,1:] This being so, [the truth that cannot be separated into two] exceeds the domain of distinctions such as “This is the concealing [truth] and that is the ultimate truth.” Therefore, arising on account of the conceptualization of philosophical systems, [the two truths] are designated as the concealing that is appearance, and the ultimate that abides without arising. Since no[thing] is posited as even the two truths that are conceptual fixations, all mental proliferations such as clinging to existence or nonexistence and so forth are completely pacified. The reason for this is the inseparability of the two truths into distinct elements from the perspective of the way things are. This key point consists in the inseparability [of the two truths] into separate elements such as “This is established on the level of the concealing [truth]” or “This is ultimately not established.” To recapitulate, the nature of appearance and emptiness is nondual within the *dharmadhātu*. Since there is nothing to be done dualistically, even these two truths of the concealing and the ultimate are nothing but verbalizations by way of sounds and words.

[Longchenpa, *Pad ma dkar po* 644,5–6:] Well then, if the two truths, which are known conventionally, are joined with this reality, how do you posit the two truths? In reply to [this objection], when [the two truths] are posited in terms of cognitive categories in accordance with mere designations, [it is said]:

[Longchenpa, *Yid bzhin mdzod* 50,1–2 and *Pad ma dkar po* 644,6:]

**If we analyze conventions in detail through the approach of the two truths,
Since in this case all saṃsāric phenomena of deluded appearances are untrue
and deceptive,**

**They represent the concealing truth,
Whereas the phenomena related to nirvāṇa, [such as] profound peace or
luminosity,
Are accepted as the immutable nature, ultimate truth.**

[Longchenpa, *Pad ma dkar po* 644,7–645,3:] Thus, the subliminal consciousness consisting in the various mental predispositions obscuring the luminous ultimate heart essence, the appearances that are the mental predispositions of the eight consciousnesses, the various appearing objects such as external forms, and all aspects of internal mind are saṃsāric. Therefore, since what is deceptive is essenceless, this is posited as the concealing truth, while the luminous ground is determined as the spontaneously present ultimate truth. It is like the example of the sun and the clouds. The luminous object that is obscured is the ultimate truth. The phenomena of saṃsāra obscuring [this luminous object]—the aggregates, the basic constituents, and the sources of cognitions—are the concealing truth. The appearance of this [concealing] truth is not established. As a consequence, since luminosity does not exist as a thing, one does not merge [appearance and luminosity] out of the necessity to differentiate or merge [the two truths] as if they were one or separate. Therefore, truth is understood as indivisible.

[Mipham, *Le'u bco brgyad 'grel* 568,1–569,1:] Although the *dharmadhātu* is understood as being [nondual],⁹⁸ when, in reliance upon the way things appear, one establishes distinctions through a mere conventional approach, [these distinctions] are included in deceptive appearance. When one analyzes the entire set of phenomena of saṃsāric appearances, which are conceptualized in terms of subject and object, nothing is [found to be] true. Being unstable, they are impermanent. Therefore, a phenomenon bearing this deceptive property is a concealing truth. Profound because it is difficult to understand, the complete pacification of all mental proliferations is the luminous primordial wisdom of sublime knowing. All phenomena are included within the great nirvāṇa because all suffering has been left behind. Since it surpasses infinitesimal particles and momentary phenomena, the freedom from the uneasiness of change that is imbued with an immutable nature is asserted as the ultimate truth. This way of positing the concealing and the ultimate is set forth on account of how things appear and how things are. They are determined from the perspective of appearance and emptiness. Therefore, [these two truths] correspond to saṃsāra and nirvāṇa. However, in the present case, the method consists in positing the concordance between the way things are and the way things appear

98 See the end of the previous section of Mipham's commentary above.

as the ultimate [truth], and the non-concordance between the way things are and the way things appear as the concealing [truth]. This great approach in which [the two truths] remain as two [separate realms] is found in a great number of sūtras. Therefore, one should not mix [them] with one another. Regarding the latter way of defining the two truths, the method of defining them relies on establishing distinctions between that which is correct and that which is incorrect by means of valid cognitions analyzing conventions. Thus, it should be understood in the way it is mentioned in the [root] text: **“If we analyze it in detail through the conventional approach of the two truths ...”** By means of a valid cognition that performs an analysis of the ultimate, it is crucial to differentiate the nirvāṇa that withstands this ultimate analysis and the [nirvāṇa] that is not established as truly existent.

[Longchenpa, *Pad ma dkar po* 645,3:] With regard to the [truth that cannot be separated into two, the root text says]:

[Longchenpa, *Yid bzhin mdzod* 50,2–4 and *Pad ma dkar po* 645,3–4:]

**The concealing is therefore this appearance of manifoldness,
Which is like an illusion, the moon [reflected] in water, a magical apparition, or
a reflected image.**

Although it has no inherent nature, it appears as anything.⁹⁹

**When it is thoroughly analyzed, since the underlying ground is without inherent
nature,**

It is [found to be] empty like the sky’s expanse and free from defining characteristic.

Satisfactory [when] unanalyzed, this manifoldness, like an illusion,

Arises in dependence upon the delusion of the latent mental predispositions.

Similar to appearances [caused] by datura,¹⁰⁰

[Longchenpa, *Pad ma dkar po* 645,4–5:] The manifold appearance of the concealing is not established as an actual thing. Lacking an individual defining characteristic, it is like the moon [reflected] in water. When analyzed, it does not exist [as anything], whereas when left unanalyzed, it does seem to exist. Therefore, it is called illusory appearance, like the manifoldness of appearances resulting from the hallucinations caused by datura. Illusory appearances are phenomena belonging to the concealing [truth].

99 The root text has *rang bzhin med la snang ba gang yin 'di* instead of *rang bzhin med la snang ba gang yin pa*.

100 The clause introduced by *ji ltar* (*Pad ma dkar po* 645) is in syntactic correlation with *'di ltar snang yang 'khor ba ma grub pas* (*Pad ma dkar po* 646,6). Longchenpa’s commentary, however, divides the root text in the way I have been following so far.

[Mipham, *Le'u bco brgyad 'grel* 569,1–5:] In the sphere of dualistic appearances, this concealing [truth] endowed with a transitory and unstable condition, appearing in this way as a variety of appearances, is like an illusion, the moon [reflected] in water, or a reflected image. When analyzed, it is not in the slightest established as [any] inherently existing nature. Although it is nonexistent, it appears. When appearance is thoroughly analyzed by a reasoning investigating the ultimate, even the slightest, finest particles of things that could provide a foundation or basis for extended phenomena are not established. Therefore, resembling the sky's expanse, it is empty. Although phenomena cannot withstand analysis, since their being established on account of their respective inherent defining characteristics is [thereby] nullified, they appear as having the nature of multifarious aspects. These phenomena belong to the sphere of that which, left unanalyzed [and] unexamined, is only satisfactory when it is [accepted] in an open-minded way without being debased [by analysis], just like [magic tricks in which] something nonexistent appears as an illusory horse, cow, and so forth. If you ask why [phenomena] appear although they do not even exist, [the answer] is that they arise in dependence upon hallucinations (*'khrul pa, bhrānti*) [caused by] some latent mental predispositions [resulting] from habits having no beginning. It is similar to the example of the cow appearing in the field of vision of someone who has ingested some datura, [although there has never been a cow there in the first place].

[Longchenpa, *Yid bzhin mdzod* 50,4–5 and *Pad ma dkar po* 645,5–6:]

The empty nature of those [phenomena] is without a self.

Because reality is the nature of these [things],

The designation “ultimate,” having the quality of appearance, is a concealing [truth].

From the very moment it appears, whatever arises does not truly exist.

Therefore, this very [empty] nature is the truth that cannot be separated [into two].

[Longchenpa, *Pad ma dkar po* 645,6–646,3:] The empty nature of this concealing truth, which is like the [reflected] moon in water, is also known with regard to the two conventional truths as the concealing aspect of appearance in relation to the ultimate.¹⁰¹ Moreover, these two [truths] are not separately established as different distinctions regarding a [single] entity (*ngo bo la dbye ba tha dad*), because both are without [any] basis. It is said in the *Bodhicittavivaraṇa*:¹⁰²

101 This refers to the nominal ultimate in contradistinction to the actual ultimate.

102 This quotation does not seem to be drawn from the BV. I could not identify its source.

Therefore, phenomena are the subliminal consciousness.
 They are similar to groundless illusions.
 Peace and conditioned existence being nondual,
 This emptiness is considered permanent.

and it is also said in the *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* [AA III.15]:¹⁰³

This is a groundless approach, without a basis, without going, unborn.

Once these two truths have been defined on the concealing [level] by summarizing them in this way, they are determined in this tradition as being indeed not established. It is said in the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra*:¹⁰⁴

Who is considered as a mother by someone is in fact a wife for someone else.
 What is the ultimate truth for someone is the concealing truth for someone else.

As a consequence, although [a truth] is conventionally accepted as ultimate, it does not exist apart from the perception of a thing analyzed by the intellect or an unreal object-universal (*don spyi*, **arthasāmānya*).¹⁰⁵ It is so because this [conventionally accepted ultimate] is just a concealing [truth]. In the present context, the conventional truth [about the ultimate], being like a dream, is not established as a basis. However, in the context of the distinction [between the two truths], the opposite [of the conventional truth] is the non-established nature of phenomena.

[Mipham, *Le'u bco brgyad 'grel* 569,5–570,1:] Thus illusory appearances are empty of the self of phenomena on account of themselves and other [phenomena]. Because

103 D3786, f.8a: /mi mthun thogs pa med dang de/ / gzhi med 'gro med skye med dang/ The first part differs from Longchenpa's quote: *de gzhi med pa'i tshul dang ni*

104 I could not locate this quotation in the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra*. There are, however, similar verses in the *bDen gnyis rnam par 'byed pa'i 'grel pa* (D3882, f.10a): /'di ltar/ gzhan gyi don dam byas gang yin/ /de ni gzhan gyi kun rdzob ste/ /gzhan gyi mar 'dod gang yin de/ /gzhan gyi chung mar 'dod pa bzhin/ This commentary quotes this stanza from an unidentified *sūtra*. It is worth noting that the order of *pādas* ab and cd is inverted compared to Longchenpa's quote.

105 The term *don spyi* is used for universals designating an object, which is the meaning or the reference of this category of universals. Other types of universals include *rigs spyi* ("universals referring to types or classes") and *tshogs spyi* ("universals referring to collections" in the sense of an object being superimposed on a collection of phenomena).

this very selflessness of any [putative] personal self is the way things are or the real condition of these appearances, they are termed the ultimate from the perspective of emptiness, and they are defined, from the perspective of appearance, as what is termed “concealing [truth].” Therefore, from the very moment they appear, they are not established as something that arises, abides, and so forth. As a consequence, since, with regard to these phenomena and their nature or fundamental state, appearance and emptiness are that which abides beyond union or separation, [these phenomena and their nature] are the epitome of the truth that cannot be separated [into two].

[2. The Main Instruction]

[Longchenpa, *Pad ma dkar po* 646,3:] The fundamental condition resembles the expanse of the sky:

[Longchenpa, *Yid bzhin mdzod* 50,5 and *Pad ma dkar po* 646,3–4:]

The primordially pure nature [of phenomena]

And the luminous ultimate should not be split into two.

Therefore, the inseparability of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa is beyond the two truths.

[Longchenpa, *Pad ma dkar po* 646,4–5:] The two truths, which are conventions on the level of the saṃsāric concealing [truth], namely, the spontaneously present luminosity and the aspect of not being established of the primordially non-established nature, are not differentiated as being separate. It is so because the elements of [such] a differentiation are not established as anything at all in the sphere of unestablished [phenomena] belonging to the unestablished saṃsāra. Therefore, both the luminous ultimate, which is the nature of nirvāṇa, and the primordially pure saṃsāra should be known as being inseparable in the sense of being without divisions induced by mutually exclusive properties [such as] being “established, unestablished.”

[Mipham, *Le’u bco brgyad ’grel* 570,1–3:] Secondly, the path is the inseparability of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa. With regard to this, there is the teaching from the point of view of emptiness, the completely pure character of the primordially unborn nature of saṃsāra, namely, the ultimate truth of the *dharmadhātu*, and there is the teaching from the perspective of sublime cognition, the so-called luminous ultimate, the ultimate of the result and primordial wisdom. Further, the five divisions of the aspects of primordial wisdom itself, the spontaneously occurring awareness,

and the corresponding five *kāyas* of awakening are included within the ultimate [truth] of result and primordial wisdom, luminosity itself.

[Longchenpa, *Pad ma dkar po* 646,5–6:] One might object, “But it is indeed the case that nirvāṇa is proclaimed to be unestablished!” The intention [of this statement] is the negation of the clinging to designations as being non-things, but it is not that the negated defining characteristic [of nirvāṇa] is not established.¹⁰⁶

To summarize the meaning of this:

[Longchenpa, *Yid bzhin mdzod* 50,5–6 and *Pad ma dkar po* 646,6–7:]

Although saṃsāra manifests, it is not established.

Therefore, it is without inherent nature.

Because the ultimate of *dharmadhātu* and individually distinguished phenomena do not exist,

The inseparability of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa is taught as this very fundamental sameness.

[Longchenpa, *Pad ma dkar po* 646,7–647,2:] The aspect of being unestablished both of unestablished saṃsāric appearances and the *dharmadhātu*, the real nature of phenomena, is incompatible with the fact that they are one within the immaculate ultimate. However, [saṃsāric appearances and the *dharmadhātu*] are not blended together. Because it is not stained by saṃsāra, reality cannot be separated [into two] because it is said to be the complete purity of the real nature itself. It is like the impossible expression of the “inseparability consisting in the blending of light and darkness.” Because there is no element of differentiation since saṃsāra is not established, [reality] is termed luminous and indivisible. The inseparability of day and night [or nirvāṇa and saṃsāra] is like that of an actual thing and the hare’s horns.¹⁰⁷ Therefore, truth is indivisible. This is the meaning of the inseparability of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa.

106 According to Longchenpa, the actual ultimate is not a nonaffirming negation.

107 Both do not exist. The argument of this passage is that two mutually exclusive entities cannot be united or undifferentiated. Therefore, as acknowledged by Longchenpa, it does not make sense to say that these two are “blended,” “merged,” or even “united.” However, two entities that are not established cannot be said to be different. Therefore, the reality of both saṃsāra and nirvāṇa is in both cases complete purity beyond unity or division. See Mipham’s explanations about this point in Chapter 3 of this book.

[Mipham, *Le'u bco brgyad 'grel* 570,3–6:] Thus, the dyad of the emptiness [aspect], the *dharmadhātu*, and the luminosity [aspect], primordial wisdom, does not exist dualistically. It is not divisible into two [separate elements]. Therefore, the mode of appearance [of things] (*snang tshul*) is appearance itself in the sense of saṃsāra. The mode of being [of things] (*gnas tshul*) is that which naturally abides in nirvāṇa. However, in the fundamentally unconditioned nature, saṃsāra and nirvāṇa do not exist dualistically. Truth cannot be separated into two.

[Objection:] You may think, “One should practice¹⁰⁸ the ultimate of the *dharmadhātu* and the ultimate of luminosity without dividing them, but how then could the defiled saṃsāra itself be suitable as the stainless nirvāṇa?” Thus, from the perspective of those who have impure minds, if defiled [phenomena] included within all [forms of] suffering appear as saṃsāric phenomena, and if saṃsāra itself is established as a [mere] appearance, saṃsāra cannot be nirvāṇa.

[Reply:] But this very saṃsāra, when analyzed by means of reasoning, is not established. Therefore, that which is defiled, the nature of saṃsāra, does not exist in the slightest. Primordial purity, the ultimate of the *dharmadhātu*, the ground that one differentiates, and phenomena that are divisions of aspects are not established in the real sense. As a consequence, inasmuch as saṃsāra and nirvāṇa are indivisible, peace is taught as fundamental sameness.

[Longchenpa, *Yid bzhin mdzod* 50,6 and *Pad ma dkar po* 647,2:]

**An erroneous knowledge conceptualizing this in any other way
Is actually complete ignorance of the way things are.**

[Longchenpa, *Pad ma dkar po* 647,2–648,1:] Further, although both saṃsāra and nirvāṇa are established as mere appearances, they are devoid of essential nature or existence. Therefore, within the ultimate state that cannot be separated [into two], the basis of these two is not established. As a consequence, there are no objects of differentiation. With regard to this reasoning, confusion about the meaning of the unsurpassable vehicle is known as ignorance, for at the time when something appears, the differentiation corresponding to the appearance of what cannot be [by nature] separated [into two] is incorrect.

Moreover, the two aspects of the nonexistence of an essential nature do not exist apart from these saṃsāra and nirvāṇa. When the inseparable saṃsāra and nirvāṇa appear, the nonexistence of an essential nature is merely the existence as something

108 *chug*. This imperative form of *'jug* is used as an optative here.

differentiated, like a pillar or a pot. Although saṃsāra does not ultimately exist, if there is no deliverance then [the notions of] meaningless efforts as well as saṃsāra are certainly flawed. Saṃsāra is not established in the fundamental condition, yet it appears, while it does not anymore once the ultimate has been accomplished. The temporal sequence of awakening is posited as an appearance. At present, whatever is apprehended as nonexistent by means of intellectual analysis is considered as sheer nothingness. As a consequence, those who seek liberation should not rely on this [wrong understanding].

Although no imputations of being established or not are established in the fundamental condition, it is said in the profound section of tantras that, in accordance with the way things are, the established [fundamental] state exists. The logician's reasoning, which is like vomit, should not refute it, because that which is sublime compared to other systems is inconceivable by means of the intellect belonging to saṃsāric vision. As said in the *'Grel chung*:¹⁰⁹

This is nothing but another system. [You] should never proclaim that it is refuted on the basis of some other doctrine.

Saṃsāra is not established. Because these experiences are experienced due to the power of adventitious illusory causes and conditions, [distinguishing] the actions to be adopted from those to be rejected together with their [corresponding] effects is crucial at the time of correct deluded appearance.

[Mipham, *Le'u bco brgyad 'grel* 570,6–571,1:] On account of the way things are, conceptualizing saṃsāra and nirvāṇa as distinct in systems different from this one is incorrect intellectual understanding. This position reflects complete ignorance regarding the ultimate of reality. It should be referred to as a misinterpretation of the profound intention of the sūtras of definitive meaning.

[Longchenpa, *Yid bzhin mdzod* 50,6–7 and *Pad ma dkar po* 648,1:]

From the perspective of delusion, cause and effect exist in accordance with appearance.

Therefore, knowing to adopt positive actions and to reject negative actions is crucial.

109 The *Abhisamayālaṃkāranāmaprajñāpāramitopadeśaśāstravṛtti* actually reads: *gang gi phyir 'di ni rnam par gzhaḡ pa gzhan kho na yin te/ de'i phyir theḡ pa gzhan la brten nas ni gang du yang sun 'byin pa brjod par mi bya'o/* (see D3793, f.86b).

[Longchenpa, *Pad ma dkar po* 648,1–3:] For [things] to be experienced as [magical] illusions, one has to resort to magical formulae, pieces of wood, and pebbles.¹¹⁰ When impure appearances occur in the way of established illusions [arising] from these [magical formulae, pieces of wood, and pebbles], adopting positive actions and rejecting negative actions are both crucial. It is said in the *Ratnāvalī* [L.35–36]:¹¹¹

As long as there is an apprehension in terms of a self, there is the apprehension in terms of the ego. Further, when there is an apprehension in terms of the ego, [there is] karma. Then, from this, there is arising. The three paths [of afflictions, action, and arising] without beginning, middle, or end,¹¹² these causes and conditions, which are [like] the circling of a torch, are considered to be *saṃsāra*.¹¹³

[Mipham, *Le'u bco brgyad 'grel* 571,1–3:] Thus, in the mere mode of deceptive conventional appearance corresponding to ignorance, perceiving what is positive or negative, faulty or virtuous, as being comparable on account of a view [based on] platitudes such as “*Saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* are indivisible,” is not correct. From the perspective of those who are deluded, since cause and effect incontrovertibly exist in accordance with appearances as they are, knowing to adopt positive actions and to reject negative actions, however subtle they may be, is crucial.

[Longchenpa, *Pad ma dkar po* 648,3–4:] Now, the defining characteristic of the concealing truth transcends everything. The essential nature of the pure natural state, the basic constituent, is explained in detail [in the following verses]. Because whatever the causes and conditions are:

110 See *Samdh* Chapter 1, where a similar analogy is used to refer to magic tricks performed with objects such as pebbles, pieces of wood, etc.

111 See D4158, f.108a which differs slightly from Longchenpa's quote: */ji srid phung por 'dzin yod par/ /de srid de la ngar 'dzin yod/ /ngar 'dzin yod na yang las te/ /de las yang ni skye ba yin/ /lam gsum thog mtha' dbus med pa/ /'khor ba'i dkyil 'khor mgal me yi/ /dkyil 'khor lta bur phan tshun gyi/ /rgyu can 'di ni 'khor bar 'gyur/* The Sanskrit reads *skandhagrāho yāvad asti tāvad evāham ity api | ahaṃkāre sati punaḥ karma janma tataḥ punaḥ [35] trivartmaitad anādyantamadhyam saṃsāramaṇḍalam | alātamaṇḍalaprakhyam bhramaty anyonyahetukam [36]*. See Hahn 1982.

112 This refers to *'khor ba'i lam gsum: nyon mongs pa'i lam dang las kyi lam dang skye ba'i lam*.

113 There is wordplay here about the etymology of *saṃsāra* (*'khor ba*) with regard to the image of the circle of a whirling torch (*'khor ba'i dkyil 'khor*).

[Longchenpa, *Yid bzhin mdzod* 50,7 and *Pad ma dkar po* 648,4:]

The nature of the immutable ultimate truth

Is the spontaneously present sugata, luminosity,

The nature of phenomena that is the inseparability of emptiness, luminosity, and awareness.

[3. The Ground and the Result of the Path]

[Longchenpa, *Pad ma dkar po* 648,4–5:] This primordially unconditioned primordial wisdom that must be known for oneself, is [the inseparability of] emptiness and luminosity, the freedom from mental proliferations, the sugata nature. It is said in the *Uttaratantra* [RGV I.51cd]:¹¹⁴

It has immutability as its nature, being afterwards as it was before.¹¹⁵

[Mipham, *Le'u bco brgyad 'grel* 571,3–5:] Thirdly, that which is to be attained is the inseparability of the ground and the result [of the path]. Whatever is immutable throughout the three times and in every respect on account of its fundamental condition, the nature of phenomena, is considered as true from the perspective of the noble ones. Luminosity, the nature of the ultimate truth, the sugata nature, primordially abides [as it is] and is spontaneously present since it does not depend on causes and conditions.

If you ask what the attributes of the [nature of the ultimate truth] are, [the answer is that] it is empty of essence and luminous by nature. Awareness, or primordial wisdom, being the opposite of not knowing, is imbued with a spontaneously luminous nature because the inseparability of luminosity and emptiness is free from any objective factor. This is the nature of phenomena, the inseparability of luminosity, emptiness, and awareness.

[Longchenpa, *Pad ma dkar po* 648,5–6:] Since the continuum of the ground is accepted as naturally pure in the secret Mantra [*yāna*], the meaning [of the *Uttaratantra* [RGV I.51] quoted above] is:

114 D4024, f.57a: */ji ltar sngar bzhin phyis de bzhin/ 'gyur ba med pa'i chos nyid do/ (yathā pūrvam tathā paścād avikāritvadharmatā)*, which slightly differs from the quoted text. Longchenpa probably quoted the RGV by heart or referred to a translation that was not integrated into the bsTan 'gyur.

115 The logical subject of the sentence is *tathāgatadhātu*; see RGV I.49.

[Longchenpa, *Yid bzhin mdzod* 50,7–51,1 and *Pad ma dkar po* 648,6:]

This very [nature of the Sugata] is the *maṇḍala* of the spontaneously present nature.

Imbued with the primordially and spontaneously perfect quintessence of awakening,

It is pure, free from mental proliferations, free from falling into any [limited] position.

Profound and peaceful, it is beyond the union or separation of the *kāyas* and primordial wisdom.

[Longchenpa, *Pad ma dkar po* 648,6–649,4:] The qualities of the *kāyas* and primordial wisdom are primordially perfect in the inexpressible essential nature, which, abiding in all beings, is naturally cognizant luminosity, spontaneously present, and free from mental proliferations. Thus, the quintessence of awakening present in oneself is the *maṇḍala* of the spontaneously present ground. It is said in the *sGyu 'phrul*:¹¹⁶

The thought of awakening, the naturally occurring primordial wisdom, the unconditioned quintessence of awakening, is adorned with the radiance of the qualities of complete perfection.

It is also said in the *Hevajra Tantra* [1.1.12]:¹¹⁷

The great primordial wisdom abides in the body.

Completely free from all conceptuality,

It pervades everything.

[And although] it abides in the body, it does not arise from the body.

It is [moreover] said in the *Uttaratantra* [RGV I.28]:¹¹⁸

Because the *kāya* of the perfect Buddha is pervading,

Because reality is indivisible,

116 I could not find the quoted text in the *Guhyagarbhatantra*.

117 *dehasthaṃ ca mahājñānaṃ sarvasaṃkalpavarjitaṃ | vyāpakaḥ sarvastūnāṃ dehastho 'pi na dejahaḥ || /lus la ye shes chen po gnas/ /rtog pa thams cad yang dag spangs/ /dngos po kun la khyab pa bo/ /lus gnas ma skyes pa'o / / (D417, f.2a).*

118 *sambuddhakāyaspharaṇāt tathatāvyatibhedataḥ | gotrataś ca sadā sarve buddhagarbāḥ śārīriṇaḥ || D4024, f.56a: /rdzogs sangs sku ni 'phro phyir dang / / de bzhin nyid dbyer med phyir dang / /rigs yod phyir na lus can kun/ /rtag tu sangs rgyas snying po can/*

Because there is the lineage (*rigs, gotra*) [of the buddhas in beings],
All those who have a body always possess the buddha nature.

This point represents the final pronouncement of the sūtras. It is set forth as the most important one, as the Dharma section that determines the ultimate meaning. It is the basis of the topics [explained in] tantras. Therefore, meaning of this point is explained in this tradition in exact conformity with the topic of the *Uttaratantra*, the [*Mahāpari*]nirvāṇa[*śūtrā*], the *sGyu 'phrul*, and so forth.¹¹⁹ On this basis, the presentation of the summary is first briefly indicated. The *maṇḍala* of the spontaneously present ground is the basic constituent, sugata nature.

[Mipham, *Le'u bco brgyad 'grel* 571,5–572,5:] Since this very [nature of phenomena] pervades all of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa without relying on the factors of the path, it is the *maṇḍala* of the spontaneously present nature. If you ask why it is a *maṇḍala*, it is because it is endowed with the vital essence, possessing the supreme quintessence of awakening, namely, the primordial spontaneous perfection, since it is not produced by the action of causes and conditions.

When this answer is explained in detail, [the quintessence of awakening is considered to be a *maṇḍala*], because it is endowed with the supreme renunciation: it is pure in the primordial absence of any stain of defiling obscurations, and being free from all falling into extremes or biased positions, it is free of the proliferation of conceptualizations, the cause of these stains. [It is a *maṇḍala*] because it possesses this very *dharmadhātu*, the awakened *kāya* of that which is difficult to understand: the primordial wisdom that is the pacification of all conceptualities—namely, the great realization primordially beyond union and separation. Although [this *maṇḍala*] is beyond union and separation with regard to the five awakened *kāyas*, it does not appear from the perspective of ordinary beings, just like the natural radiance of a gem (*man shel gyi rang mdangs*) [is imperceptible] in the absence of [suitable] conditions. Since it cannot be realized just as it is by way of an intellectual and analytical investigation, it is profound. The natural radiance of luminosity, the cognitive aspect that is primordial wisdom, is [always] present, unceasing. However, it is extremely difficult for those who [naturally] abide in the state in which all mental proliferations are pacified to realize this as long as they remain ensnared by conceptualizations in terms of the four extremes. This is why it is said in the sūtras regarding the condition of this sugata nature that [the bodhisattvas], the great beings of the ten stages of the path, know it is present in the way one sees a form in the night, as they cannot realize it exactly as it is.

119 *sGyu 'phrul gsang ba snying po/Guhyagarbhatantra* of the Māyā cycle of tantras.

Having taken the *guru*'s pith instructions as the heart of the matter and having confidence [in this] while also being on the level of an ordinary being, one practices the *yoga*. Regarding this point, the special feature of [secret] *mantra* [is as follows]: since the path of *mantra* is profound, it is swiftly established.

[Longchenpa, *Yid bzhin mdzod* 51,1 and *Pad ma dkar po* 649,4:]

This very [sugata nature] is an allegory for that which is [naturally] present in all beings.

**It should be known by wise persons to be similar to a treasure underground,
A lamp in a pot, or a sublime body in a lotus.¹²⁰**

[Mipham, *Le'u bco brgyad 'grel* 572,5–6:] Although this very [sugata nature] naturally abides as the basic constituent of beings, it should be taught through these three clarifying examples (i.e., the treasure, [the lamp, and the sublime body]).

[Longchenpa, *Pad ma dkar po* 649,4–5:] Among these [three examples], first comes the metaphor of the treasure:

[Longchenpa, *Yid bzhin mdzod* 51,2 and *Pad ma dkar po* 649,5:]

It is just like a precious treasure that has been buried.

Although one owns it, [since] one does not know [about it], it is as if one were destitute.

**[Likewise,] although one does possess the spontaneous present awakening,
One [seems] continually deprived [of it] on account of [one's state of] poverty,
Namely, the shortcomings of conditioned existence arising through the body,
speech, and mind, the cognitive obscurations¹²¹ of the eight collections [of consciousness].**

[Longchenpa, *Pad ma dkar po* 649,6–650,1:] It is like the treasure of a destitute person buried in the ground in his or her [own] house. Although one possesses the

120 Two of these three examples are found in the RGV. The nine examples drawn from the *Tathāgathagarbhasūtra*, which are found in the RGV to illustrate this *sugatagarbha* or *tathāgathagarbha*: (1) the Buddha in the lotus; (2) the honey in a swarm of bees; (3) the grain in the husk; (4) the gold in the filth; (5) the treasure in the earth; (6) the seed inside the fruit; (7) the Buddha statue in the rag; (8) the king in the womb of a destitute woman; (9) the precious statue in the clay mold.

121 Instead of *shes sgrib pas*, the root text has *sas bsgribs pas*.

quintessence [of awakening], as it is hidden by that which belongs to the ground, namely, the latent mental predispositions of the subliminal consciousness, it remains unseen, and as a consequence, one becomes destitute, afflicted by the poverty of *saṃsāra*. It is said in the *Uttaratantra* [RGV I.112–13]:¹²²

Suppose there is an inexhaustible treasure in the ground inside the house of a poor person, and this poor person does not know it since this treasure does not tell him of her “I am here.” Likewise, although there is a treasure contained inside mind, [namely], the immaculate and luminous nature of phenomena, the ground beyond destruction, since beings have not realized this, they continuously experience the suffering of poverty in various ways.

Regarding this simile about the accomplishment of awakening by realizing what is [already] there, [it is said:]

[Longchenpa, *Yid bzhin mdzod* 51,2–4 and *Pad ma dkar po* 650,1–2:]

Instead of this, there is wealth and prosperity for oneself and others

Once the treasure has been recovered

By a person endowed with divine sight who, having seen it, shows how to take it out.

Likewise, through the accomplishment of this natural condition,

Which is shown¹²³ by the noble ones, awakening is naturally found.

The excellence of the two benefits [for oneself and for others] is like¹²⁴ a wish-fulfilling jewel.

[Longchenpa, *Pad ma dkar po* 650,2–3:] In the way supreme wealth is revealed once someone possessing divine sight has seen the treasure and explained the way to

122 *yathā daridrasya narasya veśmany antaḥ pṛthivyāṃ nidhir akṣayaḥ syāt | vidyān na cainam sa naro na cāsminn eṣo 'ham asmīti vaden nidhis tam* [112cd] *tadvan mano 'ntargatam apy acintyam akṣayadharmāmalaratnakośam | abudhyamānā anubhavaty ajasraṃ dāridrya-duḥkhaṃ bahudhā prajeyam* [113]; D4024, f.59b: /ji ltar mi dbul khyim nang sa 'og na/ /mi zad pa yi gter ni yod gyur la/ /mi des de ma shes te gter de yang / /de la nga 'dir yod ces mi smra ltar/ /de bzhin yid kyi nang chud rin chen gter/ /dri med gzahag dang bsal med chos nyid kyang / /ma rtogs pas na dbul ba'i sdrug bsngal ni/

123 *bstan pa* instead of *bstan pas* in the root text.

124 'dra instead of gyur in the root text.

take it out, in the same way, awakening is actualized through practice in accordance with the *guru*'s direct introduction¹²⁵ to this nature.

As for the second analogy:

[Longchenpa, *Yid bzhin mdzod* 51,4–5 and *Pad ma dkar po* 650,3–4:]

In the way a bright light inside a pot is not visible because¹²⁶ it is hidden by this pot,

In that way, even if the *dharmakāya*, the [Sugata] nature, abides in oneself, it does not illuminate¹²⁷

Since it is hidden by the pot of obscurations.¹²⁸

On the contrary, if the pot is broken, [light] shines.

Likewise, if the stages [of the path] are¹²⁹ free from all obscurations, the beacon of the world is caused to shine forth as the *kāyas*.¹³⁰

[Longchenpa, *Pad ma dkar po* 650,4–7:] Because a light inside a pot is hidden by this pot, it does not illuminate the outside [of the pot]. [However], if the pot is broken, it does. Similarly, one has the bright light [in oneself], but, veiled by the obscurations of the stages [of the path] and by the afflictions, it does not presently shine forth. Even then, when the stains of the stages of the path are purified, the darkness [of ignorance] of beings is eliminated by displaying the light to the world. As said by the learned (*ācārya*) Nāgārjuna in the *Dharmadhātustava*:¹³¹

Similarly, in the way a light does not illuminate outside, everywhere, because it is inside a pot, in that way the *dharmadhātu* also, which is [like] a light inside *samsāra*, does not illuminate. In the way it illuminates

125 *ngo sprad*, whose meaning can be rendered by “pointing-out instruction” or “direct introduction to one’s own nature.” This term is widely used in Dzogchen to refer to the direct recognition of one’s natural state.

126 *bsgribs phyir blta bar mi mngon ltar* instead of *phyi rol mi mngon ltar* in the root text.

127 *bsgribs phyir yang mi snang* instead of *bsgribs phyir yongs mi snang* in the root text.

128 *sgrib* can also mean “to obscure,” “to obstruct,” “to veil.”

129 *yod* instead of *yin* in the root text.

130 *sku ru* instead of *kun tu* in the root text.

131 D1118, f.64a: /ji ltar mar me bum nang gnas/ /cung zhig snang bar mi 'gyur ba/ /de bzhin nyon mongs bum nang gnas/ /chos kyi dbyings kyang mi mthong ngo/ /phyogs ni gang dang gang dag nas/ /bum pa bu ga btod gyur pa/ /de dang de yi phyogs nyid nas/ /'od kyi rang bzhin 'byung bar 'gyur/ /gang tshe ting nge 'dzin rdo rje yis/ /bum pa de ni bcag gyur pa/ /de tshe de ni nam mkha' yi/ /mthar thug bar du snang bar byed/ This does not fully correspond to the text quoted by Longchenpa.

everything everywhere [if] this very pot is broken, in that way, when the obscurations are completely eliminated by the *vajra* state of absorption, at that time, the ultimate empty space shines forth.

As for the third analogy:

[Longchenpa, *Yid bzhin mdzod* 51,5–6 and *Pad ma dkar po* 650,7–651,1:]

Although there is the body of a Sugata inside a lotus,

Since it is wrapped up, it is not visible from the outside.

Likewise, because it is hidden in a thousand-petaled lotus of subjects and objects, natural luminosity,

The lord of the conquerors, cannot be seen.

[But] when the petals open up,¹³² it shines forth.

Likewise, when one is liberated from the petals of the delusive appearances of subjects and objects, the three *kāyas* of awakening manifest in oneself.

[Longchenpa, *Pad ma dkar po* 651,1–3:] The physical form [hidden] inside a lotus is seen when the petals open. Likewise, when all the veils of the self-occurring sugata nature are cleared, [sugata nature] is visible. It is said in the *Uttaratantra* [RGV I.99]:¹³³

Likewise, once someone with divine sight has seen inside a lotus the [one who has the] sugata nature, removing [the Sugata] from within the water-born lotus is like eliminating the obscuration [concealing the sugata nature of beings].

Now, summarizing the meaning [of these examples:]

[Longchenpa, *Yid bzhin mdzod* 51,6–7 and *Pad ma dkar po* 651,3:]

Therefore, regarding the *dharmadhātu*, the luminous ultimate,

One should know¹³⁴ the natural condition present within oneself.

132 *kha byegs* instead of *kha phyegs* in the root text.

133 *yathā vivarṇāmbuja garbha veṣṭitaṃ tathāgataṃ dīpta sahasra lakṣaṇam | naraḥ samīkṣyāmala divya locano vimocayed ambuja pattra kośataḥ ||* D4024, f.59a: /*ji ltar mdog ngan pad ma'i khong gnas pa/ /mtshan stong gis 'bar de bzhin gshegs pa ni/ /dri med lha yi mig ldan mis mthong nas/ /chu skyes 'dab ma'i sbubs nas 'byin byed pa/* This differs from Longchenpa's quote: *ji ltar pad nang bde gshegs snying po ni/ /lha mig dag pa mi yis de mthong nas/ /chu skyes pad ma'i sbubs nas 'byin pa ltar/ /de yis sgrib pa rab tu sel ba yin/*

134 *mkhyen par mdzod* instead of *shes bar mdzod*.

[Longchenpa, *Pad ma dkar po* 651,3–6:] As there is no difference between beings and those who are awake, the quintessence of awakening pervades [all beings] without [ever] being diminished or increased. Therefore, you should know that the basis of elimination,¹³⁵ the spontaneously occurring nature of phenomena, is present [in beings]. By taking this [definitive] intention [of the Buddha] as [a teaching] of provisional meaning, those who accept [sheer] emptiness as the ultimate freedom from mental proliferations fall into the extreme of nihilism. If there is no basis of elimination, conventional designations such as “being purified,” “being developed,” “being freed,” and “being beyond,” in relation with this, are [in fact] counterproductive. If there is no basis of elimination, nothing will be suitable as the basis of anything. Therefore, the aspect of the ultimate freedom from mental proliferations [in the sense of sheer emptiness] does not exist as the basis of freedom. As a consequence, since this meaning, [namely that the basis of elimination, the spontaneously present nature of phenomena exists,] is definitive, apprehend [this] as the pinnacle of the ground and the view that must be realized by those who seek liberation.

At this point, an analysis of some expressions [used for this basis of elimination] is presented in order to dispel [any possible] confusion regarding [the meaning of] conventional designations:

[Longchenpa, *Yid bzhin mdzod* 51,7–52,2 and *Pad ma dkar po* 651,6–652,1:]

This [fundamental state] has many synonyms.

Because saṃsāra and nirvāṇa occur, it is called “basic space.”

Because it is primordially present,¹³⁶ it is called “spontaneously present nature.”

Because it is obscured by stains, [it is called] “basic constituent of the [Sugata] nature” (*snying po'i khams*).

Because it is the fundamental state, [it is called] “ultimate truth.”

Because it is primordially pure, [it is called] “immaculate luminosity itself.”

Because it abides [beyond] the two extremes [of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa], [it is called] “luminous¹³⁷ nature of the middle path.”

Because it is beyond mental proliferations, [it is called] “transcendence of wisdom.”

Because it is the total purity of emptiness and luminosity, [it is called] “the truth that cannot be separated [into two].”

135 *grel gzhi* instead of *bral gzhi*.

136 *ye nas yod par* instead of *ye nas yod pas* in the root text.

137 *gsal* instead of *bsal* in the root text.

Because it is without alteration or change, [it is called] “nature of phenomena,” “reality” (*de bzhin nyid, tathatā*), and so forth,
As accepted by scholars graced with [divine] vision.¹³⁸

[Longchenpa, *Pad ma dkar po* 652,1–653,2:] If one intuitively understands the definitive meaning [expressed by] the synonyms [standing] for one’s own awareness, namely, the spontaneously present basic space, this naturally occurring primordial wisdom, then this is nirvāṇa. If one does not intuitively understand the ground, this is saṃsāra. From the perspective of the arising of [saṃsāra and nirvāṇa], [awareness] is called “basic space.” It is [also] called the genuine purity of mind. It is said in [Saraḥa’s] *Dohā[kośagīti]*:¹³⁹

Since the nature of mind alone is the seed of everything, the possibility for anything [to come into being], as well as nirvāṇa, emanates from it. I bow down to this [true nature of] mind, which is like a wish-fulfilling jewel bestowing the desired result.

From the perspective of one’s innate quality, which is present in oneself as that which is primordially unconditioned, [this awareness] is called “awakening,” namely, [one’s] spontaneously present nature. Since all phenomena of awakening are completely present, it is called “sugata nature.” From the perspective of being obscured by [adventitious] stains, it is called “true ground of all”¹⁴⁰ and “basic constituent [of awakening].” Since it is the fundamental state, it is called “ultimate truth.” Since it is primordially pure, it is called “luminous primordial wisdom.” Since it is beyond [the superimpositions of] existence and nonexistence or exaggeration and denigration, it is called “subtle emptiness,” namely, the nature of the middle path. As stated in the *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* [AA IV,52]:¹⁴¹

This profound one is the very freedom from the extremes of exaggeration and denigration.

138 In the commentary *la sogs mkhas pa mig ldan rnam bzhed do* instead of *la sogs mig ldan mkhas pa rnam bzhed do* in the root text.

139 D2224, f.72b: / *sems nyid gcig pu kun gyi sa bon te/ /gang la srid dang mya ngan ’das ’phro ba/ /’dod pa’i ’bras bu ster bar byed pa yi/ /yid bzhin nor ’dra’i sems la phyag ’tshal lo/ cittam ekaṃ sakalabijam bhavanirvāṇai api yasya visphuritaḥ | tat cintāmaṇirūpaṃ praṇamata icchaphalam dadāti || v.21.*

140 *don gyi kun gzhi*, which in a Dzogchen context has nothing to do with Cittamātra’s *ālaya-vijñāna*.

141 D3786, f.8b: /*zab pa de ni sgro ’dogs dang / /skur pa’i mtha’ las grol ba nyid/*

Since it is free from the extremes of all mental proliferations, it is called “transcendence of wisdom.” It is also said in the [*Abhisamayālaṅkāra* III.1]:¹⁴²

It is neither beyond the extremes of this shore [namely, saṃsāra,] or of
the further shore [namely, nirvāṇa],
Nor does it abide in these two.
Since it is the equality of the [three] times,
It is called “the transcendence of wisdom.”

It is moreover said in the *Prajñāpāramitāsūtra*:¹⁴³

This transcendence of wisdom of the Bhagavān is free from all mental proliferations.

Since emptiness and luminosity are not present as two [separate things], it is called “the truth that cannot be separated [into two].” Since it is without alteration or change, it is called “defining characteristic of reality.” Moreover, although in the sphere of space alteration or change regarding the four elements manifest, space does not change. Likewise, although in the sphere of that which naturally occurs, the aggregates, basic constituents, and sources of cognition appear as dissolving, reality does not change. Since it is known that, being pure, it is free from faults, it is empty. However, since it is free from divisions, it is not empty of [awakened] qualities. It is said in the *Uttaratantra* [RGV I.155]:¹⁴⁴

The basic constituent [of the sugata nature] is empty of adventitious (*blo bur, āgantuka*) [phenomena] that have the defining characteristic of being separable [from it]. However, it is not empty of the unsurpassable phenomena that have the defining characteristic of not being separable [from it].

142 D3786, f.6a: // *tshu rol pha rol mtha' la min/ /de dag bar na mi gnas pa/ /dus rnams mnyam pa nyid shes phyir/ /shes rab pha rol phyin par 'dod/*

143 I could not find the source text for this quote. Many phrases containing the collocation *bcom ldan 'das shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa 'di ni* are found across various *Prajñāpāramitāsūtras*, but none of them are followed by *spros pa thams cad dang bral ba lags so*. The word string *spros pa thams cad dang bral ba* is found in D25 and D30 of the *Prajñāpāramitā* section.

144 *śūnya āgantukair dhātuḥ savinirbhāgalakṣaṇaiḥ | aśūnyo anuttarair dharmair avinirbhāgalakṣaṇaiḥ* || The Tibetan (D4024, f.61B) reads */rnam dbye bcas pa'i mtshan nyid can/ /glo bur dag gis khams stong gi/ /rnam dbye med pa'i mtshan nyid can/ /bla med chos kyi stong ma yin/*, which differs slightly from Longchenpa's quote: *rnam dbyer bcas pa'i mtshan nyid can/ /glo bur dag gis khams stong gis/ /rnam dbyer med pa'i mtshan nyid can/ /bla med chos kyi stong pa min/*

[Mipham, *Le'u bco brgyad 'grel* 572,6–573,1:] Reality is revealed in all sūtras and tantras by means of numerous synonyms.¹⁴⁵ As this quintessence of all phenomena is the profound and supreme absolute, there is little recognition [of it] just as it is. Therefore, once one has eliminated the potential for errors consisting in wrong understanding, one attains a firm conviction as to how [this quintessence of phenomena] really is, and one obtains [complete] confidence in the meaning of the profound sūtras and tantras. The path has been accomplished.

[Longchenpa, *Pad ma dkar po* 653,2:] This approach is approved by those wise persons who are well-versed in the quintessential meaning of the sūtras and tantras. As for the refutation of erroneous misconceptions, [it is said:]

[Longchenpa, *Yid bzhin mdzod* 52,2–52,3 and *Pad ma dkar po* 653,2–3:]

Without understanding this approach, emptiness is sheer nihilism.

Although one speaks of the so-called freedom from the extremes of existence and nonexistence in words only,

If one does not know the basis of elimination, one's view is [nothing but] the apex of worldly existence.

Having deviated from [the Buddha's] teaching,¹⁴⁶ those who have a mind like space are fit to smear¹⁴⁷ [their bodies] with ashes.

[Longchenpa, *Pad ma dkar po* 653,3–6:] Repudiating this entrance door to the elixir of peace, the profound ultimate truth, the nature of phenomena, one speaks of the so-called freedom from all mental proliferations in words only, because it is [in fact] beyond all extremes of existence and nonexistence. However, in relation to stains that are the cause for the elimination of whatever must be eliminated, a basis of elimination is required. In this case, instead of this [view], you have abandoned Śākyamuni's teachings, having a mind like space and [adhering to] sheer nihilism in the sense of the nonexistence of both [existence and nonexistence]. So this very view [of yours], which is at best the apex of worldliness, plants the seeds of saṃsāra. Since most of you will wander into bad destinies, this attachment to erroneous views is to be subsumed under that of the Cārvākas.¹⁴⁸ This attitude does not mere-

145 Mipham gives a long list of such synonyms in his *rDo rje snying po* (see Hopkins 2006b: 54).

146 *phyi rol gyur pas na* instead of *phyi rol gyur pa'i phyir* in the root text. Literally: "Having stepped out of the scope of [the Buddha's] teaching."

147 *byug rung ngo* instead of *byugs pa rung* in the root text.

148 The Cārvākas were proponents of nihilist views according to Indian Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike who rejected their system.

ly amount to a mistake: since you have abandoned the saffron robe and smeared your body with a paste made of ashes, [your view] is definitely established as identical to the doctrine of the Cārvākas, being comparable in every respect.

Summarizing the meaning of the sugata nature ([*sugata*] *garbha*), it is said:

[Longchenpa, *Yid bzhin mdzod* 52,3 and *Pad ma dkar po* 653,6–7:]

The treasury of Dharma is expounded by what has been taught here.

The luminous sugata nature of all [beings] is the apex of the path;

It is called the fundamental state of the spontaneously present ground.

[Longchenpa, *Pad ma dkar po* 653,7:] This fundamental condition of the spontaneously present ground has been praised as supreme in the final set of teachings of the Buddha and in secret *mantra*. Therefore, one should know this. As for the necessity and the benefit of what was just mentioned, it is said:

[Longchenpa, *Yid bzhin mdzod* 52,3–4 and *Pad ma dkar po* 653,7–654,1:]

Further, by understanding this supreme profound view,

One is free from deviations and obscurations, eternalism and nihilism.

[This] practice being meaningful, awakening is swiftly attained,

And one possesses the eye perceiving [the meaning of] all sūtras and tantras.

Therefore, one should know this luminous fundamental state!

[Longchenpa, *Pad ma dkar po* 654,1–6:] When one correctly understands the awakened vision (*dgongs pa*) of this profound basic space, sugata nature, or luminous fundamental state, one does not deviate into the inferior paths of the hearers and solitary realizers, or into the state of absorption (*samādhi*) that is the apex of worldly existence. One is free from all extremes of eternalism and nihilism, and as practice is meaningful with regard to liberation, awakening is swiftly attained. One possesses the eye that perceives [the sense of] all tantras and sūtras of definitive meaning. Thus, one becomes skilled in all these points.

Here, [in Tibet, some] pretend that this [way of understanding the teachings] is a Tibetan fabrication regarding teaching and practice. “This secret mantra is the same as the Cittamātra view; the highest [view] is Madhyamaka,” so they speak. Why? Because [according to them] secret *mantra* and Cittamātra accept a permanent absolute universal ground and a transmutation of the basis (*gnas gyur*).¹⁴⁹

149 The opponents are confounding Dzogchen’s universal ground (*kun gzhi*) with the subliminal consciousness (*kun gzhi rnam par shes pa*, *ālayavijñāna*) of Cittamātra followers. Longchen-

Regarding this statement, it seems that the positions [of Cittamātra view and secret *mantra*] are incompatible since, in Cittamātra, the eternal permanence is accepted as a mere cognition, or self-luminosity, whereas in our tradition, the unconditioned spontaneous presence transcends eternalism and nihilism. In addition, we accept the basic constituent [of the sugata nature], namely, the spontaneously present qualities.¹⁵⁰ Therefore, [these two positions] are not similar. The followers of Cittamātra accept the eightfold collection of ordinary consciousness, namely, the subliminal consciousness, as primordial wisdom because it is transmutable, whereas in our tradition, this [subliminal consciousness] is understood as changeable within the mere display of the naturally occurring primordial wisdom. The difference [between these] two [views] is very important. Therefore, listen to those who are known to be well versed [in this matter], and have [them] explain [to you] the genuine sublime teaching. Such is my spiritual advice.

[Longchenpa, *Yid bzhin mdzod* 52,4–5 and *Pad ma dkar po* 654,6:] This was the extended commentary on the eighteenth [chapter], namely, the chapter that establishes the fundamental state in the Wish-Fulfilling Precious Treasury, the treatise of the pith instructions of the Great Vehicle.

[Mipham, *Le'u bco brgyad 'grel* 573,1–577,6:] In this chapter, this tradition is perfectly systematized. This is the Dharma, well explained by the second dGa' rab [rdo rje].¹⁵¹ This essential exposition is the epitome of the Precious Treasury. It gathers the profound crucial points [of this tradition]. May we obtain in this [very] life the

pa explains that these two are completely different, since Dzogchen's universal ground is not conditioned and does not undergo any change.

150 Longchenpa seems to oppose in this passage the Cittamātra model of the transmutation of the basis (*āśrayaparāvṛtti*), which implies a transmutation of the *ālayavijñāna* into primordial wisdom with the [*sugata*] *garbha* theory, in which the basis is primordially pure, luminous, and beyond changes. The question is highly technical and refers to the basis of purification of the spiritual path. In the first case, the *ālayavijñāna* is the basis of purification (*sbyang gzhi*), while it is the [*sugata*] *garbha* in the second case. In the first model, there is a change of the *ālayavijñāna* into a permanent primordial wisdom, whereas in the second model only adventitious stains covering the universal ground, the basic constituent of awakening (*kham*s), are realized to be nonexistent. The basis of purification is therefore different in the case of Cittamātra and Dzogchen. At first glance, it seems that Longchenpa's approach is similar to Dolpopa's *gzhan stong*. But there is an important difference. Dolpopa separates the two truths as two different realms (see Stearns 1999 and Hopkins 2006a), whereas according to Longchenpa, from the highest perspective, what is changing is part of the display, play, or manifestation of primordial wisdom. The two truths are undifferentiated as explained throughout this text.

151 This refers to Longchenpa.

spiritual realization of this Dharma Lord! This chapter about the view of the fundamental state of the treasury fulfilling such wishes is an extremely profound discourse. Therefore, having understood that it is hard to understand, the victorious Mipham composed this [commentary] for the benefit of those who sincerely aspire to [realize this]. May it be virtuous!

Eulogy for this instruction, which is a speech endowed with the four reliances¹⁵²

In the sky's pure expanse of whatever is sublimely cognized,
The tender protector (*'jam mgon*), [Mañjuśrī,] the orb of the moon, is brilliant;
In [his] throat's vast ocean of milk,
A melodious flamingo[, Sarasvatī,] is the shimmering play (*rnam rol pa*) [of his radiance].¹⁵³ (1)

Glorified by countless scholars and adepts is the ocean treasure,
The wish-fulfilling jewel of the excellent speech
Of the one who, taking delight in the great cloud of Dharma, the tenth stage,
Blazes with a thousand immaculate light rays.¹⁵⁴ (2)

We, [having] a lesser understanding, do not possess real knowledge.
We have been engaged in attachment for a long time,
But a definitive conviction in the meaning of the four reliances (*rda bzhin*),¹⁵⁵
The *vajra* speech, has come through our tutelary deity. (3)
As fantasy holds the mind tight, the common scriptural system was developed.
Skillful in the way of words, these collections of formulas are well formulated.¹⁵⁶
But when one analyzes [them] by reasoning,
They are flawed by many inconsistencies with regard to the ultimate state. (4)

[In contrast,] since a treatise made of [mere] words is not the main thing,
The speech, which is a *vajra* formula,
In the uncontrived effortlessness (*ma bcos lhug pa*) of the destruction of the ego,
the knot of fame, pride, and hope,

152 This short eulogy concludes Mipham's commentary.

153 See Lipman/Norbu 1986: 25–26.

154 *dri med 'od zer*, one of Longchenpa's names.

155 This refers to the four reliances (*rton pa bzhi*).

156 *bgrig* probably for *bsgrig* (“to arrange,” “compilation”) or *'grig* (“to be comparable,” “to conform”).

Is in accordance with the king of tantras condensing [everything] sublime [beings] understand well. (5)

Although one strives to analyze in detail the meaning pointed out by [this speech],
[In so doing, one carries] the burden of a subtle fault.
Since it cannot be an opportunity for dispute, being in accordance with Dharma,
It is definitely endowed with the formula of the reliance upon the meaning. (6)¹⁵⁷

Praised by others and followed while he is praised,
Never striking with words those who slander [him],
He composed authoritative texts like the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* and so forth
From the perspective of what is accepted by ordinary beings alone. (7)

Whatever elucidates in a flawless and correct manner
The intended meaning of the supreme Victor and his great sons
By means of a thorough analysis that does not rely on others
Is in harmony with the scriptural tradition of the two [great] charioteers of India.¹⁵⁸
(8)

Having dispelled the storm that churns the others' minds within that which abides naturally,
[As well as] the dust of words agitated by the wind of obsessive philosophical views,
The natural state of peace perfectly symbolizes
The reliance upon the teaching. (9)
At the top of the tree of the inferior method of practice for one's own benefit,
Where myriad leaves of concepts and intellectual investigations vacillate [in the wind of obsessive philosophical views],
The assembly of intellectual monkeys are proud of their deceitful gesticulations
And show off theatrical performances as they analyze the manifoldness [of phenomena]. (10)

[However,] the movement of the wings of the garudas' king of sublime wisdom
Delineates his flight, which is the view of the supreme vehicle.
All his sublime words [represent] the viewpoint of the sky's spaciousness in the

157 Mipham writes three stanzas of four verses each to explain each reliance.

158 This refers to the traditions of Nāgārjuna and Asaṅga.

all-pervasive, wide-open state,
Like the *vajra* mystical songs of the supreme accomplished beings. (11)

Whatever is the ultimate profound meaning of the sūtras and [secret] Mantra[*yāna*]
Is well explained as the heart of the matter.
Therefore, the disciples' good fortune
Causes [them] to rely on the definitive meaning. (12)

In the inextricable jungle of intellectual disputations that negate or affirm
On the basis of the occurrence and dissolution of conceptual thoughts and mental
states,
Those who are habituated to rejecting and accepting, to fear and hope, as a result of
[this mental] activity
Continuously wander and greatly exhaust themselves. (13)

Having encompassed [this] with a single benevolent glance
And eliminated in a single instant
Hundreds of superimpositions of increasingly binding doubts,
A wise person who has opened the inner eye of wisdom is like the Victor, the sun of
Dharma. (14)¹⁵⁹

[If] positive mental proliferations are positive, they increase, and the meaning is
obscured.
Therefore, the crucial point, the definitive secret of the meditative absorption free
of mental proliferations,
Is shown as that which is permanently fresh, bare, raw, unprocessed, and original.¹⁶⁰
Taking this as the most important point is the expression of the reliance on primor-
dial wisdom itself. (15)

Therefore, the exalted speech of the supreme omniscient one
Is different from treatises composed by ordinary beings who are not sublime beings.
When one carefully examines the most excellent method of sublime beings accord-
ing to these four aspects,
One understands with certainty [why this is so]. (16)

159 This stanza is not numbered in my edition of the text—there is apparently a mistake in the numbering of the stanzas.

160 *rjen pa* conveys a range of meanings such as fresh, bare, raw, unprocessed, and original.

Thus, since the excellent mind fully trusting these elegant aphorisms
 Spontaneously flourishes,
 Fortunate beings possessing the four reliances
 Are like flamingos on an ocean of lotuses. (17)

Free from any motivation to cling to one's own benefit,
 Inseparable from the moisture of compassion and care for others,
 The powerful flow of the river of blessing manifesting as the end of saṃsāra,
 The *vajra* speech, runs through the approach of these four formulas. (18)

In this way, the definitive ascertainment of the ultimate sense
 By the second dGa' rab [rdo rje],¹⁶¹ the lord of Dharma, is the approach of the *va-
 jra* speech,
 Which, definitely connected with the formula of the fourfold reliance,
 Softly arises from the secret of uncontrived awareness. (19)

At that time, even if this was established in this way through valid cognitions
 Or produced by the power of the confidence of those having the highest capacity,
 This would still correspond to unfurling waves of uncontrived words
 In the abode of their [own] throat.¹⁶² (20)

By the power of the *vajra* wind of your spiritual merit,
 Even a logician like me passes beyond the web of conceptions
 And overcomes¹⁶³ the delusion of dualistic appearances,
 Just like you, spiritual heroes free from conceptions. (21)

This was written in the Fire Ox year, on the twentieth day of the sixth month
 [31/07/1877] by Mipham. May it be auspicious!

Having seen that the Wish-Fulfilling Jewel, the elegant explanation of the great om-
 niscient one,
 The lord of Dharma, the very embodiment of the omniscient Victor,
 This manifestation of incomparable radiance of power blazing with splendor,
 Was obscured by textual mistaken faults (of addition and omission,

161 Namely, Longchenpa.

162 This identifies Longchenpa with Mañjuśrī (see the similar *alamkāra* of verses 1–3).

163 *zil gyis non* instead of *zil gyis gnön*.

The Lord-guru of the supreme sublime knowledge and compassion,¹⁶⁴
 And the title holder of the *vajra* lineage of Padma[sambhāva],
 The supreme most excellent [teacher], together with spiritually perfect friends, was
 concerned.

As the manifestation of the Youthful Sun again and again poured out compassion,
 It became a calyx of explanations similar to an ocean.

As for me, having gathered authentic texts of this tradition,
 Once I had eliminated corruptions from the stream of incorrect texts,
 The great water treasure of merit was properly retrieved.

The gentle moon with its white [soft] light benefiting others
 Is Lord Jambhala's quintessential ambrosia of good fortune and blessing.
 As the Dharma protectors abiding in the radiance of his halo rejoice,
 Their melodious song of praise clearly resonates:

“Even in the darkness of degeneration, this full moon of compassionate care,
 The Buddha's teaching, is the friend of the jasmine that blossoms by moonlight.”¹⁶⁵
 So, with a mind [dedicated to] the welfare of beings and having confidence in this
 teaching,

I worshiped as the ornament of the human world

The inexhaustible gift of Dharma, the original manuscript of the [root] text of the
 great Wish-Fulfilling Treasury, together with its auxiliary texts.

May all beings subject to transmigration who are connected

With the contemplation and practice of this tradition

Be completely purified and ripened in the pure realms such as Sukhāvātī,

And may their hopes, which [are dependent on] circumstances, be established as
 they wish!

As the holders of this teaching have agreed to look after [beings] for a hundred eons,
 And the power of the benefactors of the teaching is vigorous,

The manifestation of this teaching does not degenerate but always increases,

May all transmigrating beings attain the level of supreme awakening!

Once the eight great treasures of brilliance have been spontaneously released,¹⁶⁶

May all beings who have seen, heard, remembered, or touched this method

Accomplish in this life the state of the primordial protector Mañjuśrī!

164 *mkhyen rtse* refers to Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo.

165 *kun da* is a flower of the jasmine family that blossoms by moonlight. The *kun da'i gnyen* is therefore the moon.

166 *spobs pa'i gter chen brgyad po*. See Dudjom 1991: 666,705 [main text], 381 [notes]; and Kapstein 2001: 331ff. Regarding Mipham's own liberation of the eight great treasures of brilliance, see Dudjom 1991: 871.

By practicing in this way,
 May the sunlight of scriptures and realization shine
 Everywhere in the worldly realms,
 And having completely destroyed the darkness of the [deepest] forests,
 May the thousand-petaled lotus of virtue and goodness of the teaching, as well as
 all beings, bloom!

Thus, even in such times of spiritual degeneration, as the great benefactors of the teaching [still] completely and sincerely keep hold of Anāthapiṇḍada's good conduct, the great elegant explanation that gathers the intention of the absolutely perfect teaching, namely, the main text and supplements of the precious Wish-Fulfilling Treasury (*yid bzhin mdzod*), together with the Treasury of Tenets (*grub mtha' mdzod*), are worshiped more and more. With regard to the great collections of teachings concerning the view and practice of early secret *mantra*, at the time when the supreme Dzogchen was established for the preservation of the teaching in O rgyan bsam gtan chos gling, the editor of the text and verses of aspiration, the victorious Mipham, wrote [this]. May it be virtuous! Virtue! Virtue! *Maṅgalam!*

CONCLUSION

Reexamining the Monist Hypothesis

Following this presentation of Mipham's views, we are in a better position to reassess the monist hypothesis formulated by Duckworth in his monograph on Mipham's interpretation of buddha nature.¹ Duckworth's contribution is important because he offers a concrete interpretation of Mipham's project in terms we can relate to. His reading of Mipham is summarized in the following statement:

In the course of the chapters, we will see that the monistic resolution of duality is central to Mipam's exegetical system. A common theme in his exegesis is a twofold schema, with an ultimately false dichotomy of two opposed factors and a unified ground that emerges from their dissolution. Two provisionally opposed factors, such as the two truths, *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*, self and other, appearance and emptiness, and so on, are resolved in a synthesis in which each of the two distinctions is ultimately untrue, because they are actually indivisible from the beginning. His manner of representing the indivisible ground, however, goes through a virtual "detour" of dichotomization. Thus, such a system is not a simple monism but is better understood as a *dialectical monism*. The detour through ultimately unreal dichotomies is a process that involves everything that falls under the rubric of conventional reality—all that can be physically acted upon, verbally spoken of, and mentally thought about. In Mipam's depictions of the indivisible ground, these provisional divisions are part of a process toward the complete realization of the single ultimate truth of a unified ground—Buddha-nature.²

1 See Duckworth 2008. Wangchuk seems to reluctantly consider Duckworth's "dialectical monism" as a fitting description of Mipham's view: "Douglas S. Duckworth's *Mipam on Buddha-Nature* characterises Mi-pham's (1846–1912) philosophy (or philosophical approach) as 'dialectical monism.' We should instead characterise it with a neo-Sanskritism, namely, 'Yuganaddhavāda' (*zung 'jug tu smra ba*), lest we get bogged down by the usage of the term 'dialectical monism.' While Duckworth is absolutely right in identifying Mi-pham as a proponent of 'dialectical monism,' there is still a need to define and refine our understanding of Mi-pham's position, offer plausible explanations for it, and present various argumentative strategies employed for it by Mi-pham, all based on critically assessed textual sources that engage the idea of 'unity' (*zung 'jug: yuganaddha*)" (Wangchuk 2012: 15).

2 Duckworth 2008: xxxii.

Duckworth does not explicitly define what he means by “dialectical monism,” but, in an endnote, he mentions Sartre’s *Critique of Dialectical Reasoning* in reference to this expression. On the basis of Sartre’s writing on this topic, I therefore believe it is fair to assume that Duckworth uses this term to communicate two key ideas with regard to Mipham’s exegetical system:³

- (1) Buddha nature in the sense of the indivisible ground (*gzhi*) is the one “thing” (as a substance or a principle of a higher order) to which a plurality or duality of phenomena is reduced, hence the notion of “monism.”⁴
- (2) The unification of these opposites takes place through a dialectical process of dichotomization before finding its resolution in the realization of a single “thing” (i.e., buddha nature), hence the notion of “dialectical monism.”

In my view, this interpretation suffers from three problematic issues:

- A Monism does not characterize Mipham’s highest view.
- B Dialectical monism does not characterize Mipham’s perspectivist approach.
- C To investigate Mipham’s corpus, view, and project, methodological choices of key technical terms, central texts, and hypotheses cannot be made *a priori*.

3 Duckworth refers to Sartre as his source of inspiration for using this term: “This term is used in a different context by Jean Paul Sartre in *Critique de la Raison Dialectique* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1960); English edition translated by Alan Sheridan-Smith in *Critique of Dialectical Reasoning* (London: NLB, 1976), 1” (*ibid.*: 200, n. 92). In fact, Sartre never uses the phrase “dialectical monism” in the French edition. It seems that this term was added by the translator of the English as the header of Chapter 1, which bears no title in the original. In the French edition, the *Critique* is preceded by *Questions de méthode*. In this short essay, Sartre explains his dialectical approach, which he calls “progressive-regressive.” The aim of this method is to proceed to a “totalization” of apparent multiplicities into a synthetic truth. The concluding sentence of Sartre’s entire *Critique* is without ambiguity: “If the truth is one in its increasing internal diversification, then, by answering the last question posed by the regressive investigation, we shall discover the basic signification of History and of dialectical rationality” (Sartre 1976: 818).

4 If the unifying ground is not here considered to be of a higher order of being or truth, then one might wonder what is the foundation of Duckworth’s notion of monism, namely, the singular entity to which pluralism (i.e., the multiplicity of phenomena) is reduced.

A. Monism Does Not Characterize Mipham's Highest View

(A.1) It seems quite difficult to interpret Mipham's highest view as expressing any form of monism, taking into account the fact that his discourse on reality is founded on the notions of nondualism and nonconceptuality. As already mentioned above, Mipham explains in his *Le'u bco brgyad 'grel*:

But this very saṃsāra, when analyzed by means of reasoning, is not established. Therefore, defiled [phenomena], the nature of saṃsāra, do not exist in the slightest. Primordial purity, the ultimate of the *dharmadhātu*, the ground that one differentiates (*gzhi tha dad pa*), and the phenomena that are divisions of aspects (*rnam pa so sor dbye ba'i chos*) are not established in the real sense (*yang dag pa'i don*). As a consequence, inasmuch as saṃsāra and nirvāṇa are indivisible, peace is taught as fundamental sameness (*mnyam pa*).⁵

Presenting a view in which even the ground is unestablished as implying any kind of monism is problematic. In fact, by the time Mipham reaches the point where the two truths are explained to be in unity, visions of reality formulated in terms of monism or pluralism have been refuted through well-known arguments such as “Neither one nor many.” In Western philosophical traditions, monism usually implies substantialism and is rarely associated with antirealism. With substance monism, a single entity is posited through the reduction of the multiplicity of phenomena to a unique substance. Unfortunately, in his monograph on Mipham, Duckworth does not define in detail which kind of monism he has in mind apart from the short reference to Sartre mentioned above.⁶ However, he does refer to the ground *qua* buddha nature as representing the affirmation of a single reality or truth. But the ground as the unity of the two truths in Mipham's philosophy is beyond being one or many (i.e., monism or pluralism!), existence or nonexistence, affirmation or negation. If any reduction in numerical terms establishing distinctions between the many and the one is impossible, what sense is there in speaking of monism, be it

5 *Le'u bco brgyad 'grel* 570: 'khor ba nyid rigs pas brtags na ma grub pas na dri mar ldan pa 'khor ba'i rang bzhin cung zad kyang med de gdod nas dag pa dbyings kyi don dam pa dang / gzhi tha dad pa dang rnam pa so sor dbye ba'i chos yang dag pa'i don la ma grub pas don dam par 'khor 'das dbyer med de srid zhi mnyam pa nyid du bstan pa yin no/

6 Some may think that questioning a view that remains undefined might be problematic. However, since the semantic scope of the term “monism” is confined to a few possibilities in the philosophical context it is used, I believe that such a critique still makes sense as long as the most frequent and most plausible senses of this term are considered.

substance, existence, or priority monism? Since the ultimate and the relative are in unity according to Mipham and thus immanent to each other, it seems impossible for one of the two truths to fall under another truth, as this other truth would have to be of a higher type in order to allow the reduction of the many (e.g., appearances) to the one (e.g., emptiness). Therefore, if the ground itself is posited as the unity of appearance and emptiness, how could there logically be a reduction of the manifoldness of appearances to a single principle, substance, or concretum that would be the ground itself *qua* the unity of appearance and emptiness?

With regard to nonduality in the context of the ground, Mipham's position is in fact virtually identical with that of Gorampa:⁷

While one is still an ordinary being, one eliminates each of the proliferations of the four extremes one at a time, and then meditates [on each of these individually]. This leads to the emergence of the Mahāyāna path of seeing. At that time, the proliferations of all four extremes are eliminated simultaneously (*cig char du*) in such a way that the reality that is to be realized and the mind that realizes it do not appear as two distinct things. The object that manifests itself without proliferations and indivisibly from that mind is given the name “the ultimate truth”; but at that time, there is no apprehension whatsoever of the fact, “This is the ultimate truth.”

From a purely dialectical perspective, the relative and ultimate truths are said to be in unity (*bden gnyis zung 'jug*) from an ontological but also cognitive perspective as stated in Gorampa's quote above. If Mipham and Gorampa were monists, they would give a higher ontological status to some “thing,” just as realists and idealists would.⁸ As a consequence, evoking the ground from the highest perspective (i.e., the Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka apophatic approach) as the nature of reality would

7 *lTa ba'i san 'byed theg mchog gnad kyi zla zer* 127–28 (translation in Cabezón/Dargyay 2007: 217). See Gorampa's presentation of ground *yuganaddha* in *ibid.*: 207–17. For Gorampa's influence on Mipham, refer to Cabezón/Dargyay 2007: 56, Pettit 1999: 136–41, Arguillère 2007: 232–34, and Arguillère 2008.

8 In his commentary on Śāntaraṅgita's *Madhyamakālamkāra*, the *dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad*, Mipham states, “A consciousness that is truly existent at the level of pure perception cannot be without a cause, for in that case it would follow that the consciousness is always either existent or nonexistent. It is impossible to establish nondual consciousness as a truly existent, single entity, for in that case all the unwanted consequences of the earlier and subsequent arguments, which refute, for example, the existence of truly permanent entities such as Ishvara, would apply here as well” (Padmakara 2005: 258–59).

make little sense for a monist. In the case of *zung 'jug*, the case is clear. This “unity” does not refer to oneness as a numerical statement related to something existing as one in opposition to many but to the inseparability of two elements, which explains why the most frequent synonyms for *zung 'jug* are *dbyer med*, *gnyis med*, and *mnyam pa*, as any corpus-based analysis will show. Monism implies a transcendence on some level, as the many is transcended by the one. In the present case, the two elements in a *yuganaddha* relationship are immanent to each other, and this as reality *qua* ground is considered to be free from mental proliferations, such as one or many, existence or nonexistence.

(A.2) Duckworth chose to discard nondualism as the best way to describe Mipham’s philosophy, and we should carefully consider his argument:

I use the term “monism” to describe an important aspect of Mipam’s view; however, we should bear in mind a distinction between monism and nondualism. See for instance, Sallie King, *Buddha Nature* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1991), 99–115. Monism is an affirmation of a single reality (closure) and nondualism is a negation of the entire framework of single/plural (open-ended) without affirming either/or/both/neither. We can thus say that the “non” in nondualism is a nonaffirming negation, or an illocutionary negation. Although Mipam’s view certainly has such a nondual character, I use the term “monism” to evoke the important aspect of his emphasis on unity (*zung 'jug*). Mipam states: “The meaning of unity is the single sphere of equal taste of all dualistic phenomena.” Mipam, *Precious Vajra Garland* (*gnyug sems zur dpyad skor gyi gsung sgras thor bu rnams phyogs gcig tu bsdus rdo rje rin po che'i phreng ba*), Mipam’s *Collected Works*, vol. 24, 743.4: *gnyis chos thams cad ro gcig ni zung 'jug gi don*.⁹

If, as Duckworth puts it, “monism is an affirmation of a single reality (closure)” and “nondualism is a negation of the entire framework of single/plural (open-ended) without affirming either/or/both/neither,” it seems rather appropriate to describe Mipham’s system as nondualism since, from a philosophical perspective, Mipham accepts Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka as the highest view. Even in his commentary on the *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga*, Mipham understands the inseparability and one taste of the two truths to refer to the ineffable nature of phenomena in which there

9 Duckworth 2008: 200, n.91.

is no duality.¹⁰ One does not see how a nonconceptual cognitive state free from duality in terms of existence and nonexistence, one and many, etc. could actually be compatible with a closure in the sense of “an affirmation of a single reality” or, as defined by Duckworth, a monism, the kind of notion that precisely involves differentiations in terms of existence and nonexistence, one and many, subject and object.

(A.3) The status of language has always been complex for spiritual traditions in which the nature of reality or god is deemed to be ineffable. In his work on what he calls “mystical language,” Jones defines four ways in which language is used: silence, negation, paradox, and positive descriptions.¹¹ In a context where the mirror theory of language applies, silence is the preferred mode of communication, as with the Buddha’s initial rejection of verbalization right after his awakening. An ontologically noncommittal alternative is negation, which is typical of the apophatic use of language in Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka. In the case when the mirror theory of language is not so strong among the participants in the communication induced by the discourse in question, paradox and figurative language are also possibilities for pointing at the ineffable nature of reality.

These types of discourse on reality delineate two different contexts in which language is used by Mipham to expound the unity of the two truths. When the view is explained to an audience who might think that language mirrors reality, silence and negation are the preferred modes of communication, whereas when those receiving this discourse (e.g., followers of this particular tradition) have intellectually already accepted that language is merely the finger pointing at the moon and not the moon itself, it is clear that the purpose of cataphatic language in the way of paradoxes, metonymies, metaphors, and analogies is merely to point at the ineffable. From that perspective, participants are aware that words are nothing but symbols or signs standing for a thing they could never actually represent. In this

10 See German translation of *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga*, together with Mipham’s commentary, in Mathes 1996: 217 (root text in bold, emphasis is mine): “[188–190 Da [die Weisheit] im wahren Wesen der Gegebenheiten fest gegründet ist, [d.h.] da sie im wahren Wesen der Gegebenheiten, das durch Nicht-Zweiheit und Unausdrückbarkeit [gekennzeichnet ist], fest gegründet ist.] Erstens, da [die Weisheit] nur im wahren Wesen (*chos nyid*) aller Gegebenheiten, der Soheit, fest gegründet ist, [d.h.] da sie im wahren Wesen der Gegebenheiten fest gegründet ist, das der Verstand nicht in zwei, [nämlich] zu erfassendes [Objekt] und erfassendes [Subjekt], oder auch in zwei Wahrheiten trennen kann, und das sprachlich nicht als auf ein Extrem oder eine andere Form [gegründet] zu fassen ist. Der Buddha, der erkannt hat, daß die zwei Wahrheiten untrennbar, [von] einem Geschmack, sind, sieht mit seiner Weisheit das Endgültige so, wie es ist. Dies [befindet sich] in annähernder Übereinstimmung mit dem Pfad des Lernens.” For a complete English translation of this passage, see Padmakara 2015: 46.

11 See Jones 1979 and 1993.

case, cataphatic language becomes harmless and is commonly used in the context of the path. This is particularly true in the case of Mipham since according to him the soteriological nature of the view is more important than its purely eristic aspect. The importance of distinguishing the type of language used by Mipham in terms of view and path language is therefore crucial when attempting to make sense of his project. For example, statements in the source text that are purely propaedeutic or provisional for Mipham can be misrepresented as expressing the ultimate view of the author, if we take them at face value. In other words, statements produced by Mipham in the source text with the understanding that language does not mirror reality do not have the same truth-value for those who do not question for an instant the capacity of language to mirror reality as it is. From this, it follows that context is of the essence.

This seems to be precisely the problem when one takes at face value Mipham's statements affirming the single truth, independently of their propaedeutic function. For the sake of the argument, if Mipham's statements about the single truth or reality implied monism, could we at least consider this view as a form of alethic monism? For example, could the two truths (all truths?) be reducible to a single unique truth as in the following quote: "The meaning of unity is the single defining characteristic of all dualistic phenomena" (*gnyis chos thams cad ro gcig ni zung 'jug gi don*)? Even in this case, I believe that monism is misleading because all terms used by Mipham expressing the idea of oneness are merely meant to negate the dualism of the two elements standing in a *yuganaddha* relation, as a corpus-based analysis clearly shows. The "single defining characteristic" of phenomena is here a synonym for *mnyam pa*. Oneness is therefore used to express "inseparability" (*dbyer med*), "unity" (*zung 'jug*), or "sameness, identity" (*mnyam pa, mnyan nyid*),¹² expressions that, in Mipham's view, semantically involve nonconceptuality (*spros bral*), which is the opposite of any kind of closure.¹³ Referring to the one truth or the single sphere in order to negate dualism does not imply affirming the existence of a single entity to which everything is reducible, be it a truth if not a substance.¹⁴ In the case of

12 See *Zab don nyams len gnad gsang bde lam yangs pa* (Vol.32: 484): / *snang sems sgyu 'od gsal stong rlung rig dang/ 'khor 'das dbyer med zung 'jug mnyam pa'i dbyings/ 'thig le nyag gcig gnyug ma'i don mthong bas/ 'mthar thug 'bras bu rtsol med rim gyis bgrod/ /*

13 See Forgues, *forthcoming*, Appendix G for a detailed semantic mapping of these terms across Mipham's works.

14 This is why I would disagree with Wangchuk's following statement: "He may philosophically be designated as a monist, inasmuch as he consistently held that any given (mostly) binary poles of entity versus reality are only apparently and relatively dual or diverse but are actually and ultimately one or unitary" (Wangchuk 2019: 274). Wangchuk correctly identifies the problem *yuganaddha* tries to reject: duality. But nowhere in Mipham's highest philosophical

the two truths, the concept of “single truth” merely negates the notion of two truths that would be distinct from each other. The point is clearly made by Mipham in his commentary on BCA: in Mipham’s terminology such statements are understood to be made from the perspective of a conceptual exclusion (*rnam gcod, vyavaccheda*) and not from the standpoint of a positive determination (*yongs gcod, pariccheda*).¹⁵ In the context of the highest view, the numerical attribute of oneness therefore must have an apophatic meaning since it is used to negate dualism. Translating literally such technical terminology in the sense of cataphatic statements about a positive and unique entity is bound to create misunderstandings if one is unaware that, in Mipham’s original statement, language is not taken to mirror reality. Mipham’s single truth or reality is therefore merely a negation of any putative dualism of the two truths for those who precisely take language to mirror reality. It is clear that this negation of a nonexistent dualism is, by way of consequence, neither a negation nor an affirmation of any entity or lack thereof, since there was nothing to negate or affirm in the first place. Therefore, “nonduality” indicates here an absence of duality in terms of affirmation and negation, one and many, or existence and nonexistence, and thus paradoxically belongs to a discourse on a reality that defies discursivity. It would therefore be ironic to establish one’s interpretation of Mipham’s position on the kind of philosophical positions Mipham explicitly rejects throughout his works.

B. Dialectical Monism Does Not Characterize Mipham’s Perspectivist Approach

(B.1) There is a definite willingness in the Nyingma tradition to integrate various vehicles in a coherent soteriological approach to liberation. In the same vein, Mipham accepts a scale of ascending perspectives regarding the relation between the two truths in order to provide a gradual approach to practitioners in which “unveiling”

view does this negation of duality entail monism in the sense of a reduction of the many to the one. Monism understood as closure, as defined by Duckworth, is rejected by Mipham in the context of the highest view of the dialectical vehicles: “In the first place, the realization that there is a single cause (that is, a single nature or basis) is that ‘all phenomena, on the ultimate level, are unborn’ and that they are therefore not different in terms of their unborn nature. Neither are appearances on the relative level distinct from each other, in that they have the character of magical illusions, which are devoid of true existence. This is the accepted viewpoint common to the whole of the Great Vehicle... And illusion-like appearance, even though it appears, is devoid of essential nature—unborn. Therefore, there is no separation between the relative and the ultimate. They are united” (Padmakara 2015: 72–73). If the basis of *yuganaddha* of the relative and the ultimate is the unborn nature of phenomena, it seems difficult to understand this concept in the sense of a closure through a dialectical reduction of the many to the one, both being unborn in the first place.

15 See Mipham’s quote of the *Pitāputrasamāgamasūtra* in NK 9 *ad* BCA 9.2. For a translation of the entire passage, refer to Chapter 2.3.

the nature of reality takes precedence over generating awakening as the result of the spiritual path. Mipham's multifaceted formulation of the relation between the two truths, even in the context of Madhyamaka, is undeniably perspectivist. This specificity of Mipham's approach somewhat makes a comparative and systematic study of his philosophical project a complex task. Indeed, there is a great risk of choosing an inferior standpoint as representative of Mipham's philosophy, particularly if one reads "path language" as "dialectics." As we have seen in at length in parts 1 and 2 of this book, a dialectical process takes place only as long as dualistic mind is involved. As soon as the realization of nonconceptuality (*spros bral*) is attained, one no longer relies on an intellectual or dialectical approach consisting in a reductionist analysis of reality. In fact, the attainment of the nonconceptual state of realization presupposes the rejection of any totalizing reasoning about reality, which explains why seeing in Mipham's system a form of "dialectical monism" could be misleading. Rather, Mipham's ascending scale of instructions regarding the practice of the two truths merely fulfills a soteriological purpose, and therefore it is evident that his perspectivist project does not necessarily entail a process of dialectical totalization *per se*, in the sense of a purely intellectual and logical operation.

(B.2) In "dialectical monism," the term "dialectical" could also refer to the synthesis of two opposites as a way to resolve tensions or contradictions.¹⁶ While this process is certainly a topic Mipham addresses in the context of the path, this dialectical representation of the unity of the two truths within a Sartrean conceptual framework precisely contradicts Mipham's exposition of the highest view as being the primordial inseparability of the two truths.¹⁷ While one could argue that Mipham follows a dialectical process until nonconceptuality is reached (see Chapter 6), Mipham's highest view is expounded in his teaching on Madhyamaka as the unity of the ground (*gzhi'i zung 'jug*), in which the unity of the two truths (*bden gnyis zung 'jug*) is generally presented according to the *snang stong* (appearance and emptiness) definition of the two truths. In this context, appearance and emptiness are said to be primordially in unity (*snang stong zung 'jug*), as reflected in collocations in which *gdod ma*, *gnyug ma*, *ye nas*, or *rang bzhin yin pas* form stock phrases in conjunction with *zung 'jug* or *dbyer med*. From this standpoint, the view that Mipham's idea of *yuganaddha* fundamentally presupposes an opposition between the two poles standing in a state of unity is therefore highly problematic. In the quote above, Duckworth

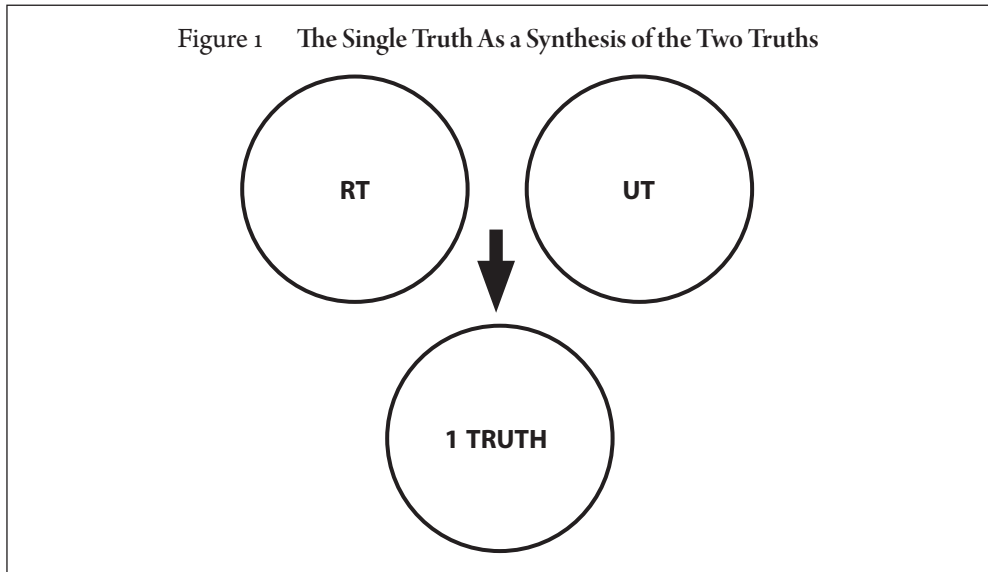
16 See Duckworth 2008: 53, 54, 81, 144, 199 n. 87.

17 Mipham thus declares: "To the extent that one realizes the view that things are perfectly pure from the very beginning, one's spiritual training and yogic discipline will also be practiced in a manner that is perfectly pure" (Padmakara 2015: 97).

considers the fact that this opposition is provisional. From the highest perspective in Mipham's system, there is indeed no dialectical tension or opposition that finds its resolution in a totalizing entity belonging to a higher ontological order.¹⁸ Here again, to describe Mipham's philosophy, Duckworth seems to be referring to the very type of view Mipham rejects with the term *zung 'jug* as clearly shown by Wangchuk in his discussion of the faulty notions of *yuganaddha* rejected by Mipham. The following Euler diagrams represent the relation between the two truths and the

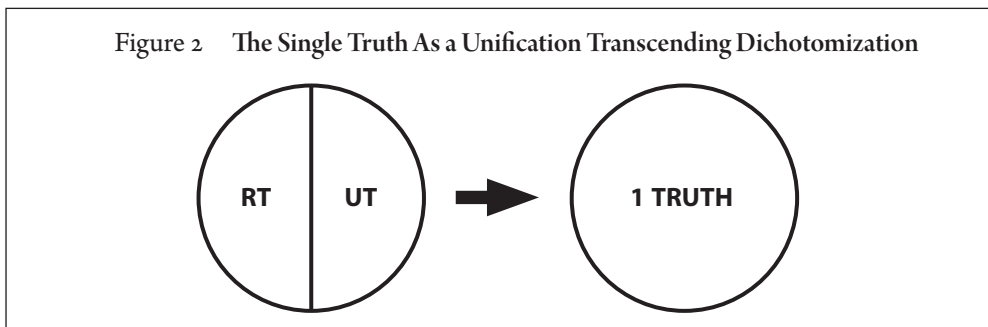
18 Wangchuk's position on the notion of tensions seems to also consider various perspectives. On the presence of tensions, he first makes the following statement: "Mipam's Yuganaddhavāda philosophy is obviously based on some tacit assumptions, which may require some explication. First, it presupposes bipolar tensions, which he attempts to revolve or dissolve between two entities, two qualities of one and the same entity, two modes of reality, two philosophical systems, two positions, two schemes or models, and so on. Second, the poles *x* and *y* must necessarily command equal weight inasmuch as both, each in its given context, are equally tenable or authoritative and hence cannot be dismissed as wrong. A Yuganaddhavādin thus tentatively accepts both poles as correct but ultimately transcends both in finding some kind of unity between the two. He would not dismiss one of the poles as untenable. Third, the tension between the two opposed or juxtaposed poles *x* and *y* presupposes a mutual contradiction or exclusion, or else there would be no tension between them and hence no need for resolving it" (Wangchuk 2019: 280; emphasis is mine). From this quote, one is left under the impression that Wangchuk accepts Duckworth's notion of tensions in the form of contradictions or mutual exclusion between the two poles that are supposed to be coalescent. However, further in his article, Wangchuk presents faulty notions of *yuganaddha* that are rejected by Mipham. One of them is precisely the relation of contradiction between *x* and *y*: "Mipam seems to have had difficulties with any proposition or presupposition that suggests a relationship of anti-theticality between *x* and *y*, that is, a relationship defined by mutual exclusion or contradiction" (Wangchuk 2019: 281; emphasis is mine). The question here is to determine for whom there is a presupposition of a contradiction between *x* and *y*. Obviously it is not on the part of a Yuganaddhavādin according to Mipham. As a consequence, there is no one "thing" transcending the apparent opposition between *x* and *y* according to Mipham, because there is precisely no contradiction between *x* and *y* for the very reason that both are immanent to each other. Duckworth's dialectical monism is therefore not what Mipham has in mind with the concept of the immanent buddha nature possessed by all beings. In his monograph on buddha nature, Duckworth wrote a chapter on precisely this point, entitled "Establishing Buddha-Nature: The Immanent Buddha" (see Duckworth 2008: 118ff.). In his summary of Mipham's system, he included a chapter called "Immanent Wisdom" (see Duckworth 2011: 119ff.). If awareness *qua* buddha nature is immanent to beings according to Mipham, it cannot be the result of a dialectical process. The unity of appearance and emptiness for Mipham is therefore not a dialectical transcendence in the form of a synthesis between two contradictory elements (i.e., thesis and antithesis) but the expression of a state of pure immanence or nondualism between two poles *x* and *y*. This clearly shows that the idea of a transcendent entity is clearly not what is meant by the concept of unity in Mipham's philosophy. It is merely a device used to express the mutual immanence of *x* to *y* and vice versa. The meaning of *yuganaddha* has thus little to do with dialectical monism, and everything to do with nondualism.

single truth and show why, from the highest perspective, Mipham's understanding of unity cannot imply a dialectical synthesis in the sense of a resolution of tensions between two antagonistic elements. Figure 1 represents the dialectical process in which the two distinct truths (thesis and antithesis) dissolve and are synthesized in the one truth (synthesis).



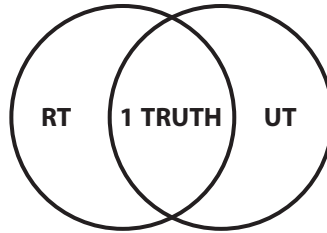
Likewise, the idea of unity in Mipham's philosophy does not imply a henological discourse in which the composite manifoldness is transcended by being reduced to a noncomposite state of unity, in a way that would establish a distinction between the two great realms of the manifold and the one.

Figure 2 illustrates such a dialectical process in which the dissolution of the distinction between two mutually exclusive truths (i.e., the manifold) sharing a common essence or principle would lead to a single truth (i.e., the one).



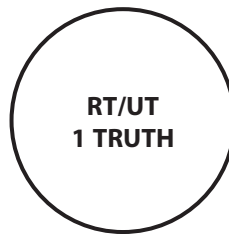
The idea of a single truth in the sense of a common ground between the two truths is another conception rejected by Mipham (see Figure 3).

Figure 3 Single Truth As a Common Ground At the Intersection Between the Two Truths



Needless to say, none of these dialectical processes implying a dichotomization, synthesis, dissolution, or unification applies to Mipham's understanding of the unity of the two truths for the simple reason that, from the highest perspective according to Mipham, nonduality as expressed by the notion of *yuganaddha* is not the result of any process. It simply describes a natural state of affairs. If we attempt to represent the relation between the two truths and the single truth with an Euler diagram, we obtain, interestingly enough, the single sphere (*thig le*) negating any division or process between the two truths, which are by nature indivisible (see Figure 4).

Figure 4 The Single Truth As the Unique Sphere in which Any Separation Between the Two Truths Is Negated



Indeed, as explained by Mipham quoting the scriptures, there is no third truth.¹⁹ The single truth is not yet another truth, a synthesis of the two truths. It is the two truths fully pervading one another, being mutually inclusive in a perfect *vyāpti*. From this standpoint, it is inappropriate to speak of tensions or contradictions

¹⁹ See Mipham's quote of the *Pitāputrasamāgamasūtra* in NK 4 ad BCA 9.2. For a translation of the entire passage, refer to Chapter 1.

between the two elements that are said to be in unity, because, from the highest Madhyamaka perspective in Mipham's system, there can be no tension between the fact of being conditioned and the fact of being empty of own nature. One must necessarily be the other and vice versa. Form is emptiness, emptiness is form.

C. To Investigate Mipham's Corpus, View, and Project, Methodological Choices Cannot Be Made *a Priori*

(C.1) As discussed above in the chapter on sources and methods, a corpus-based and text-analytical approach is essential in order to have an idea of the semantic web of ideas, concepts, and doctrines at the basis of an author's discourse on a given topic. Through this analysis, performed across an entire digitized *gsung 'bum*, it is possible to identify works or key passages embodying a central theme in the author's thought. As Wangchuk aptly argued, some technical terms, such as *zung 'jug* (*yuganaddha*), play a central role in Mipham's works. Duckworth did not follow a corpus-based method in his study to define lexical patterns representative of Mipham's discourse on reality. He studied Mipham's understanding of buddha nature. This approach is absolutely fine, if one intends to document a specific aspect of an author's views on a given topic such as buddha nature. However, this may be quite problematic methodologically if one uses the findings of such an analysis to draw general conclusions at the level of an author's entire corpus of texts. Specific text and term analysis can certainly provide answers to specific questions. But without implementing a corpus-driven or corpus-based approach, looking for general conclusions through the narrow lens of research findings about a specific topic is methodologically unsound. By looking at Mipham's entire work through the lens of his understanding of *bde gshegs snying po*, Duckworth ends up tilting toward a dialectics of presence with his characterization of Mipham's view as "dialectical monism." However, as a matter of fact, apart from *dbyer med* and *gnyis med*, *zung 'jug* is far more common and widespread than any other specialized concepts in Mipham's discourse on reality, including *bde (bzhin) gshegs (pa'i) snying po* (i.e., sugata nature).²⁰

20 In contradistinction to Duckworth (see Duckworth 2008: ix, xi, xvii, xxxiv, 137, 141), I do not think that the concept of buddha nature *per se* plays a central role in Mipham's writings. In this respect, I will side with Wangchuk and favor *zung 'jug* or *dbyer med* as the central thread running through Mipham's works. See Wangchuk 2012 and 2019. Yet, it is important to note that the concept of buddha nature is crucial for Mipham in introducing the distinction between mind (*sems*) and awareness (*rig pa*). See Forgues, *forthcoming*, Appendix I on how dispersion plots allow one to identify key texts or compare them across a range of specialized terminology.

(C.2) As I showed in a recent article published in Prof. Matthew Kapstein's *Festschrift*,²¹ the concept of **sugatagarbha* is not a central idea in Mipham's discourse on reality, and his position on the issue of *gzhan stong* does not structure his hermeneutical approach to Indian Madhyamaka sources. In his commentary on the *Yid bzhin mdzod* (Chapter 18), Mipham refers to the nondual unity of the two truths as expressed in the *snang stong* model, in which there is no closure in the sense of establishing anything as being the single truth. Thus, even in the context of buddha nature, Mipham presents reality as nondual and nonconceptual using the technical terms analyzed in the present study. For Mipham, the cataphatic notion of buddha nature implies the absence of mental proliferations. There is therefore also in this context a unity of presence and absence, a central point emphasized by Mipham in this commentary.²²

To conclude on this point, I consider the use of the term "dialectical" in the present circumstances to be somewhat problematic. In conjunction with monism, it is bound to create misunderstandings by giving the false impression that for Mipham (a) there is a closure (i.e., monism) through language regarding the nature of reality in a context where the mirror theory of language applies, when it clearly does not; and (b) the unity he refers to is the result of a dialectical process, when it is obviously not the case. Instead of monism, I suggest the notion of "radical nondualism" in the sense of an absolute freedom from all dualistic conceptions as a more accurate interpretation of Mipham's highest view regarding the nature of the ground, the path, and the result.

Mapping Mipham's Journeys to Freedom

Although Mipham cannot be credited with the authorship of all the spiritual and philosophical materials he has used in his works, his presentation of various Indian and Tibetan Buddhist teachings (i.e., *sūtras* and *tantras*) as a complete coherent perspectivist system is, on account of the aforementioned reasons, quite unique.²³ As we have seen throughout this study, Mipham uses a few original

21 See Forgues 2019.

22 For an alternative view on this issue, see Duckworth 2008, in which the interplay of presence and absence in Mipham's work is seen to imply tensions between these two poles.

23 Longchenpa is certainly in this respect Mipham's main source of inspiration. However, as explained by Arguillère 2007: 195–214, Longchenpa's philosophy did not create in Tibet a "hermeneutical shock" similar to that provoked by Dolpopa. Not a single opponent of Dzogchen took the pain to analyze in detail Longchenpa's works. It is as if the sheer mystical and esoteric content of his presentation of Dzogchen set him apart from the rest of the scholastic crowd. Longchenpa's poetry represents indeed an unveiling act by itself, almost independently of its discursive content.

theoretical devices in order to present his philosophical approach: a twofold definition of the two truths; the nondualism, inseparability, or unity of these two truths; buddha nature *qua* this nonconceptual inseparability; a conventional valid cognition (*pramāṇa*) corresponding to the pure perception of the concealing; the two last turnings of the wheel as teachings of definitive meaning; and the conventional existence of *svasaṃvedana*. In spite of these original doctrinal positions, Mipham does not aim, however, to establish a new doxographical system, as he essentially proceeds on the basis of an existing scholastic framework.²⁴

While it is possible to present all the components of Mipham's overarching project one by one, as distinct doctrinal points, I tried to show in which way these elements are in fact connected by Mipham across his works. Mipham's integration of various (and sometimes seemingly contradictory) views does not represent a loose patchwork of disseminated ideas but constitutes the backbone of a philosophical project corresponding to a soteriological movement, a journey to freedom in the way of a Foucauldian projection of the subject. By means of reason—but not exclusively—Mipham presents various orders of reality in an attempt to unveil what is not the domain of logical positivism or rationalism. His understanding of the role of discursiveness is compatible with a Kantian approach with regard to the acquisition and definition of knowledge. However, he does not accept that all cognitive modes are limited to the dualistic mind, and the aim of his dialectical approach is to collapse the framework of all dualistic distinctions.

Mipham's interpretation of the two truths is therefore indissociable from his intention to provide a path for those seeking liberation. As a component of this journey toward the ineffable, a philosophical view expressed in dualistic terms must necessarily have a propaedeutic value. As shown in the first part of this book, the nondual unity of emptiness, luminosity, and appearance is in fact the starting point, the destination, and the vehicle of this journey to primordial freedom. This inexpressible unity thus represents the designing principle at the core of Mipham's philosophical project. As such, the essence of *yuganaddha* is, according to Mipham, the state in which emptiness, luminosity, and appearance are in a nondual relation, beyond being identical or separate. In this first part, we defined methodological modalities to investigate the usage of this term in Mipham's vast corpus of texts in

24 Contrarily to Dolpopa, Mipham does not want to destroy the scholastic doxography for the sake of replacing it with a new one. He merely uses the Gelugpa classification of tenets to establish some theoretical distinctions that are important for his soteriological project. Interestingly enough, his method consists in using Gelugpa arguments and turning the tables in a typical Mādhyamika fashion. This is clear in the debate about extrinsic emptiness as well as in the discussion about the conventional existence of the *ālayavijñāna*.

order to map the deployment of various key philosophical concepts in relation to the spiritual path. We also investigated the interplay between philosophy and soteriology, knowledge and liberation, across Mipham's entire project by following the central thread of his approach, the concept of "unity." Through the theory of the two truths, Mipham defines three main perspectives: (1) on the level of beginners, the two truths are different (*tha dad*); (2) in the context of post-meditation, the two truths are one entity with two conceptual aspects (*ldog pa tha dad pa'i ngo bo gcig*); (3) from the standpoint of the meditative absorption of noble beings, the two truths are in an ineffable relation of nondual unity in which emptiness and appearance are indivisible. This realization of the single truth is pointed out by Mipham mainly through the *snang stong* model of the two truths, which is associated with Nāgārjuna's tradition. In this approach, the emptiness of appearances is emphasized.

As explained in the second part of the book, the view is used to teach the mereological reduction of putative wholes into primary constituents. This step is followed by an epistemic reduction of real objects into conditioned cognitions through the Yogācāra-Madhyamaka approach to meditation. Both stages lead to the realization of the conceptual ultimate, the selflessness of self and phenomena from a primarily intellectual perspective. At this point, the practitioner is led to understand that the nature of these conditioned cognitions is beyond the four extremes. The shift from an ontological model of reality toward an epistemic approach in Mipham's system is achieved in reliance upon Maitreya's tradition. In this tradition, the emphasis is on luminosity, a central aspect with regard to meditative practice. Following the reduction of reality into mental events in accordance with Yogācāra methods, the two truths are redefined according to the *mithun mi mithun* model of Maitreya's tradition. The erroneous cognitive mode (i.e., dualistic mind, *sems*) of reality is equated with the concealing truth and the nonerroneous cognitive mode (i.e., nondual awareness, *rig pa*) with the ultimate truth. This theoretical move is applied to stress the need to distinguish *sems* from *rig pa*, a crucial point in Dzogchen. From an ontological perspective, Mipham's highest view of reality is therefore not shaped by any form of transcendence but by the principle of immanence of the absolute in relation to the relative. In his system, it is only from an epistemic perspective that transcendence makes sense.

In the third part of the book, we have seen that, although Mipham distinguishes adventitious defilements from sugata nature, namely, the concealing from the ultimate in this way, he also stresses their unity from the highest perspective, as he does not consider them fundamentally different since in both cases their essence is empty and their nature is luminous. The concealing merely corresponds to the absence

of recognition of the primordially present ground of reality, nondual awareness, while the ultimate corresponds to its recognition. Although the ultimate cognitive mode is primordially free from erroneous perception, it is not the case, according to Mipham, that dualistic mind and nondual awareness denote two different entities. The illusion of a difference between the two simply hinges on whether awareness is recognized or not. To maintain this unity of emptiness, luminosity, and appearance on the level of the nondual ultimate, Mipham therefore needs to introduce a new type of valid cognition corresponding to the pure perception of the concealing truth. What manifests as impure appearance is in fact awakened manifestation of nondual awareness. At this stage, the concept of “unity” stresses the nondual relation between awareness and the *kāyas*, awareness and the deity, and primordial purity and spontaneous presence in accordance with each vehicle (i.e., respectively the vehicle of characteristics, the nondual tantras, and Dzogchen). This important point is made clear by Mipham in various texts, such as his commentary on Longchenpa’s *Yid bzhin mdzod* (Chapter 18) translated above.

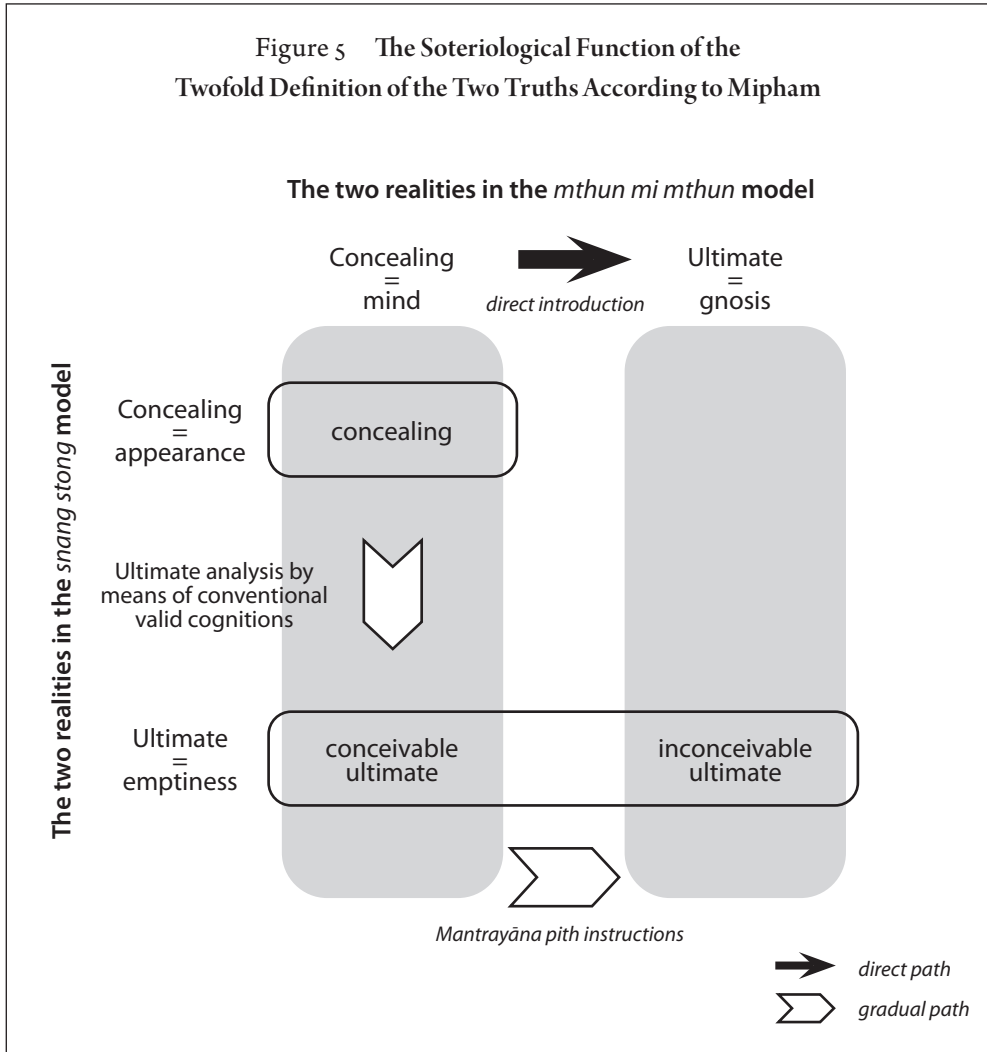
Mipham’s determination to give an account of the transformation process *from an ordinary perspective* stands out since he simultaneously maintains that there has never been any transformation *from the perspective of sublime beings*—a point also stressed in the Chapter 10 of the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra*.²⁵ Hence his extended use of apparently conflicting models in the course of what he regards as an epistemic dismantling or disengagement process leading to the mystical direct experience of the nature of things, beyond any fabrication.²⁶

From this, it appears that Mipham consciously uses the two truths to build a bridge between the *sūtras* and the *tantras* in a way that accommodates the Tibetan scholasticism of his time (see Figure 5) while preserving a soteriological perspectivist approach to awakening. His hermeneutical project is based on ascending perspectives whereby the development of additional valid cognitions together with the twofold definition of the two truths allows him to account for the necessary continuities and discontinuities implied by the underlying soteriological function

25 See also Kapstein 2001: 318. Most of Mipham’s theories can be found in the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra*. It seems that this particular *sūtra* may have played an important role in his scholastic exegesis of Madhyamaka.

26 See Newland 1992: 214: “In chapter six, we saw the problems that a Buddha’s mode of cognition brings to the definitions of the two truths. Why is it that Ge-luk-bas encounter so many problems talking about the Buddha ground? It has been said the Ge-luk system is set up in terms of the basis (*gzhi*), the Sa-gya system in terms of the path (*lam*), the Nying-ma system in terms of the result (*bras*).” It seems to me that through his approach of shifting perspectives, Mipham attempts a general synthesis of these three systems.

Figure 5 The Soteriological Function of the Twofold Definition of the Two Truths According to Mipham



of his philosophy, which has to be compatible with both the disjunctive and reintegrative approaches found in the Dzogchen tradition.²⁷

In Mipham’s view, Madhyamaka is an epistemic instrument designed to solve an ontological quandary through a cognitive unveiling of the nature of reality. As commonly stated by the various Buddhist traditions, the unsatisfactory character of conditioned existence is the result of not seeing things as they are, owing to the belief in the ontological reality of fictions conceived in dualistic terms. Dysfunctional

²⁷ A disjunctive approach is, for example, the distinction between mind (*sems*) and awareness (*rig pa*), whereas an integrative approach consists in the presence of the compassion (*thugs rje*) of awareness (*rig pa*) through the presence of its expressive power (*rtsal*), ornament (*rgyan*), or play (*rol pa*).

epistemic processes representing a defective mode of cognition are the cause of this predicament. The resulting soteriological schema follows a pattern of cognitive continuities and discontinuities, representing gradual or sudden shifts of perspectives in function of the capacity of those who have embarked upon this journey to freedom. The only way out of the *aporia* of conditioned existence is a radical breakaway from the sphere of the dualistically objectifying consciousness toward the nondual awareness consisting in a state of cognitive awakeness without any actuality or reference point. In Mipham's tradition, this awareness (*rig pa*), or primordial wisdom (*ye shes*), is directly recognized by means of the pith instructions of Vajrayāna. According to Mipham, the purpose of the two truths is merely to support this process of recognition. They provide a conceptual framework for dismantling conceptualizations of what is supposedly real as they lead to the pointing out of the luminous nonconceptual nature of this conceptualizing mind. Mipham uses various sophisticated theoretical devices belonging to the scholastic intellectual apparatus of his time in order to introduce the mystical and esoteric realization of a lineage that undeniably represents one of the least conventional and intellectual spiritual traditions of Tibetan Buddhism.²⁸

Making Sense of Mipham's Project

Mipham's works display all the technical sophistication and precision that one expects from a Tibetan scholiast, to the point that describing his approach as essentially dialectical may be tempting. The very rationale of his literary production was to provide his lineage with a theoretical framework that could rival that of other traditions. In the Tibetan context of the nineteenth century, his interpretation had to pass the acid test of scholastic debate for his project to endure. And so Mipham came to be seen as the Nyingma scholar par excellence. However, a case could be made that he is in fact one of Tibet's first post-scholastic thinkers. His defiance with regard to the dominant Tibetan doxography of his time as well as the traditional commentarial style distinguishing the sūtras from the tantras shows that preserving the soteriological efficiency of seemingly contradictory Buddhist views was more important than following any established scholastic *doxa*.²⁹

Centuries of intellectual jousts with Indian non-Buddhist philosophers who rejected Buddhist arguments of authority left a deep mark on Tibetan Buddhism. In this struggle for intellectual supremacy, the question pertaining to the notion of

28 The Dzogchen lineages count innumerable "crazy" masters—from our perspective—who are revered as awakened beings, such as for instance mDo mkhyen brtse ye shes rdo rje.

29 I use this term here as understood by Pierre Bourdieu.

valid knowledge and the conditions for its arising have for centuries been an ongoing concern within Indian and Tibetan Buddhist traditions. Mipham inherited this rich tradition of rational investigation and debate. He made a full use of its sometimes austere inferential approach in order to accomplish the task he had been assigned to perform.³⁰ In a way which can be seen as compatible with at least the spirit, if not the methods, of modern scientific methodology, direct perception and inference are accepted by most Indian and Tibetan Mādhyamikas as the only two ways to obtain, under some specific epistemic and logical conditions, reliable knowledge. Reductionist strategies are in this way acceptable as long as they operate on the basis of conventions and usages rooted within an epistemic framework resulting from conditioned cognitive patterns. However, as soon as they posit an absolute ontological foundation of reality, they are considered as mistaken and become therefore misleading from a soteriological perspective. In the present case, being cannot be disconnected from knowing, and knowing is always conditioned on the level of the concealing.

Considering experiences as real or unreal, in ontological terms delineated by the four extremes (*catuṣkoṭi*), is therefore the result of an epistemic erroneous process. If this is “corrected,” the ontological framework on which views of existence or non-existence are based collapses, for all we know “to happen” are in fact percepts and concepts, not real things. In a way that is similar to Kant’s questioning of the rationality of metaphysical knowledge, there is for Mipham no unmediated access to objects. A strict distinction is also made here between conditioned appearances and things existing from their own side, in and of themselves. Mipham shows that conceptualizing and perceiving appearances in ontological terms, which represent all that we experience, are indissociable from epistemological and cognitive perspectives. In his view, Madhyamaka is all about the fact that any kind of ontology, whatever it might be, cannot be the antidote to the disease that is precisely this very ontological perspective. More alcohol (i.e., conceptualizing in ontological terms) is certainly not the remedy for a hangover (i.e., the suffering resulting from ontological wrong views). Kapstein thus cogently states that “being and knowing are here no different.”³¹ This applies, however, only to the perspective of post-meditation.

In Mipham’s terminology, being is *the ontological perspective of ordinary beings*, while showing that being is indissociable from knowing is, *from the perspective of post-meditation*, the method employed by Mipham (and before him by most Indi-

30 See Kapstein 2001: 318ff. for a detailed presentation of Mipham’s theory of scriptural interpretation.

31 See Kapstein 2001: 334.

an Buddhist epistemologists) to go beyond any ontological claims. This approach, sophisticated as it may be, is nonetheless still based on dualistic mind and discursiveness. *From the perspective of meditative absorption*, a nondual and nonconceptual form of awareness induced by skillful means is all that is required to attain awakening. In Nyingma terminology, this awareness (*rig pa*) is beyond mental proliferations such as existence and nonexistence, knowing or not knowing, one or many. Only at this stage can one be freed from the four extremes as well as all types of dualistic conceptualizations. It is interesting to note that Mipham was very much aware that this final shift from a dualistic consciousness toward a nondual awareness could be yet another occasion for more refined metaphysical claims implying some ontology of being. If all we have are thoughts, or cognitive events, in the form of concepts and percepts, looking in a mere intellectual fashion into the nature of these thoughts could easily induce the discursive understanding that these thoughts are without essence and are pure nondual awareness. However, in his view, this intellectual act of “tagging” the ground of being would amount to nothing but yet another ontology, one more label, which is why the notion of “monism” to describe Mipham’s project is problematic from a cross-cultural perspective.

To free oneself from the limitations of conditioned mind, Mipham, in accordance with the highest teachings of his tradition, recommends a soteriological shift consisting in substituting reason and discursiveness by Vajrayāna skillful means in order to reach this nondual primordial wisdom in a direct unmediated way. Falling into the trap of a “second-order” sophisticated metaphysics represents the core of Mipham’s critique of those who take the nominal ultimate for the actual. And this is a critique we could extend to those who wish to read Mipham’s doctrinal project as a form of monism implying any kind of closure, *from the dualistic perspective of conventional truth*, regarding the ineffable nondual ultimate. Reaching the point where things are seen as being indissociable from our experiencing can certainly be achieved intellectually. But reaching beyond the grasp of dualistic mind cannot be accomplished by this very means. One cannot wash away mud with mud or, in Frege’s words, wash something with water (i.e., mind) without making it wet. The philosophical conclusions drawn by Mipham on the basis of reason seem therefore valid, and he was certainly not the first one to get there.

At this stage, I would like to suggest a more familiar frame of reference, or interpretive template, to help us make sense of Mipham’s project. In his early work, *Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik*, Nietzsche defines three distinct impulses toward “existence,” characterized by the figures of Dionysus, Apollo, and Socrates, to express three different modalities of our relationship with “reality”:

- Socrates represents the “theoretical man,” the dialectician for whom the highest goal in life is truth as determined by science and philosophy. He is the rationalist for whom reason is the only source of knowledge, the ascetic who controls his passions and fights against life, which he sees as a disease. For this theoretical person, emotions as a vital constituent of our experience have no value, and it is essential that reason prevails over them. For the rationalist, reality is the world as it appears to us, an independent object of knowledge that has to be controlled because of its imperfection. The theoretical man is therefore an optimist who has the “unshakeable faith” that reason is capable of intellectually determining existence as it is and, if necessary, correcting it. Separating appearance from truth by means of the mechanical nature of reason and logic is, for that person, the highest human activity. As far as knowledge is concerned, science must replace art, the embodiment of artifice, in a word, deception. Only discursive knowledge can access the essence of things. Nietzsche describes modern culture as being trapped in the net of this approach to reality, a world where an educated person has to be a scholar. Nietzsche sees this as a “sublime metaphysical delusion,” which invariably leads science to its very limit. In his view, Kant and Schopenhauer have conclusively shown that, within this conceptual framework, appearances are taken for the highest reality, the innermost essence of things. Because discursive thinking gives access merely to the world of appearances, not the world of the things in themselves, the dreamer’s sleep thereby becomes deeper and deeper. There is from this point of view no second metaphysical true world apart from appearance and certainly no objective reality that would be unmediated by concepts, language, and interpretations. In this way, the Socratic impulse is bound to lead us to the very boundaries of its own drive for eternal truths or universal principles. The issue here is the epistemological impossibility of objectivity as representing our unmediated access to a being-in-itself that has to be observed as it is, independently from any observing subject. As a consequence, intersubjectivity poses as objectivity, although nothing can be proved to exist from its own side. At that point, logic turns around to itself, biting its own tail, and “tragic insight” as a new form of knowledge can emerge. From the perspective of the present study, one could consider

that all Buddhist approaches that are both reductionist and mereological fall into this category, since they are based on a similar notion of “objectivity.” From an epistemic point of view, these notions are based on the valid cognitions of direct perception and inference.

- Apollo, on his part, represents one of the two elements constitutive of the Nietzschean “tragic insight.” He represents the creative and illuminating principle of individuation (*principium individuationis*), which projects boundaries onto the original unity of being, in the form of illusions possessed of their own identity. These illusions are dreamlike, nonexistent, in that they are conditioned by time, space, and causality. They symbolize the Apollonian dream state, in which all appearances have no real substance. Apollo is therefore the personification of this instinctive indomitable artistic urge, the conscious creation of illusions and symbols, or vision and perception of appearances, which, when expressed in plastic arts and epics, becomes a frame of reference for our own experience. Our own condition is, by the mediation of the dream (or artifice), thereby revealed to ourselves. Apollo, the Greek god *par excellence*, the principle of individuation, is the impulse making civilization possible as the very manifestation of self-consciousness, whereas the lack of any consciously defined identity is in this context considered to be the characteristic of barbarians. This subjective, but self-reflective, projecting and individuating force remains, however, itself a deception, as there is certainly no dream without a dreamer, and not even a dreamer without a dream. Just like Apollonian art, any harmonious and ideal structuring of the world in the form of individuation remains a deception, for illusions, appearances, are not things in themselves. In Buddhist terms, views positing the projecting power of subjectivity as the foundation of reality and considering objectivity as the mere expression of intersubjectivity represent this perspective of the real. The valid cognition corresponding to this principle is *svasamvedana* understood as self-reflectivity. When this illusory order, or structuring of the real, is shattered, the gates to the Dionysian abyss of an unfathomable nonduality at the core of reality are finally opened.
- Nietzsche presents Dionysus as the barbarian god embodying the unmediated, and certainly untamed, primal state of nonduality beyond any individuation, the orgiastic suspension of the rationally function-

ing mind so brilliantly described by Antonin Artaud in his *Héliogabale ou l'anarchiste couronné*.³² The Dionysian state of intoxication manifesting as ecstasy, delirium, frenzy, or rapture, at the paroxysm of the excitement of our passions, expresses the collapse of the principle of individuation, the moment when subjectivity fades into a formless, fluid, and spontaneous form of cognition. In this oblivion of the self that is not the result of a suspension of one's consciousness but an apex of nondual awareness, any sense of subjectivity is left behind as one is fully unified with this primordial state of nondifferentiation. This condition appearing as chaos and excess is barbarous when compared to the theoretical man's measure or the Apollonian ideal. The Dionysian state thus represents this rupture in the flow of appearances, the terrifying formless ground of being in which one cannot but stare in awe and astonishment. Music is seen by Nietzsche as the supreme Dionysian art form.³³ It is neither verbalized nor the image of an appearance in the sense of a self-conscious representation of "something." From this perspective, life in all its rawest and wildest aspects, including the most violent or socially unacceptable emotions, is accepted and does not need to be fixed or corrected in any way. In Mipham's system, one could see this Dionysian state as corresponding to the ground, the state of awareness, or primordial wisdom, the unity of appearance and emptiness, of emptiness and luminosity, and so on. From a Vajrayāna standpoint, inasmuch as untamed emotions shatter the fabric of subjectivity, one should accept their potential to become precious entrance gates into the realm of the primordial nonduality. The valid cognitions corresponding to this principle are those of the yogi (*yogipratyakṣa*) up to those of awakened beings.

With all necessary caveats and without conflating distinct cultural and historical moments, Mipham's project can be seen as an attempt to point out these three per-

32 It is interesting that this god, although he was in fact no recent addition to the Greek pantheon, always remained a foreign deity. Gods representing the same archetypal principle, such as Śiva or Elegebalus, present the same characteristic respectively in the Indian and Roman contexts. All of them were associated with music and dance, just like the Mahāsiddhas with *vajra* songs and *dohās*.

33 There would be much to say about this Nietzschean insight into the symbolism of art forms in the context of Tantrism. Those who are familiar with Vajrayāna will recognize a fascinating parallel with the sound-lights-appearances scheme found in Mahāyoga and Atiyoga.

spectives to those of us who may be “theoretical persons,” by means of our own language and logic. Can these self-dismantling truths reenchant our world with the pure perception of the deity that is none other than the primordial nondual awareness? Mipham’s collapse of epistemic boundaries between subject and object is indeed not an invitation to nihilism, which he sees as yet another form of realism. And also, how could we, theoretical persons of the age of (post)modernity, children of the Popperian hypothetico-deductive foundation of modern science, make sense of a project that is bound to clash with the intellectual paradigm of our time? And yet, having read Mipham, we know that if a substantial thing—be it a constant, an elementary particle, or any other entity conceived as existing objectively, independently from a mind ascertaining it—is not empty of intrinsic existence, in the sense of being dependent on conditions for its existence as what it is conceived to be, then, considering it as falsifiable makes no sense. In other words, how could we possibly falsify a thing-in-itself? And if we can’t, then how would we falsify that which is a falsity, a mere appearance? Would we therefore accept that any form of realism implies an act of faith? In a delightful paradox, our own critical rationalism seems to make no sense, should we reject conceptual framework such as Mipham’s. But can we then consider the possibility of such a framework, knowing that it will eventually lead us to a vision of reality we might find difficult to accept, a world where phenomena, entities, and all things are the play and display of nondual awareness? Beyond the confine of Tibetan Buddhist traditions or academic studies of Buddhism, Mipham’s *Madhyamaka*, on account of its comprehensive perspectivist scope, resonates as a friendly challenge to all those who, in the “(post)modern world,” have a view.

Appendices

A. Instructions to Accomplish Mental Stillness

Mipham gives a lengthy explanation of this point in his *mKhas pa'i tshul la 'jug pa'i sgo*:

“When you practice the purification of the mind’s activity, be mindful of what is repulsive when desire predominates, mindful of loving-kindness when anger predominates, mindful of the signification of dependent arising when delusion predominates, mindful of the distinction of the basic constituents when pride predominates, and mindful of the exhalations and inhalations of breath when conceptual thoughts predominate. These [practices of] mindfulness are the antidotes against the excessive activity of afflictions.

[1. The meditation on what is repulsive as an antidote to desire]

Among these, you [should] meditate on what is repulsive in the following way. There are three [kinds of] meditation: on the mental image of something impure, on the mental image of something repulsive, and on the mental image of skeletons.

[1.1. [The meditation on the mental image of something impure]

Know and become accustomed to the fact that the nature of the body to which one is attached is impure. [The body] is of the nature of thirty-six impure [substances]. The thirty-six impure substances present in the body are head hairs, facial hairs, teeth, nails, excrement, urine, sweat, nasal mucus, tears, saliva, filth, skin, flesh, blood, bones, fat, marrow, veins, tendons, lungs, heart, liver, spleen, kidneys, stomach, small intestines, large intestines, colon, urinary bladder, grease, lymph, pus, bile, gall bladder, brain, and cerebral membrane. Thus, there are thirty-six. In this context, what is referred to as filth means tears, earwax, and dental plaque. It is easy to understand the meaning of the other [terms mentioned above].

[1.2. The meditation on the mental image of something repulsive]

Furthermore, in order to pacify desire regarding colors, forms, tangible objects, and lust (*bsnyen bkur*), having contemplated an inert corpse that has been abandoned in a charnel ground, [you should] think, ‘Indeed all bodies are just like this [corpse].’

With regard to this [practice], there are nine conceptions of the repulsiveness [of the body]: [the recognition of the repulsiveness of the body by contemplating a] rotting [corpse], [by contemplating a] worm-eaten [corpse], [by contemplating a] bleeding [corpse], [by contemplating a] bluish [corpse as it begins to rot],

[by contemplating a] blackish [corpse that has been already rotting for some time], [by contemplating a corpse that has been] gnawed [by wild animals], [by contemplating a corpse that is] falling to pieces, [by contemplating a corpse] destroyed by fire, and [by contemplating a] putrid [corpse]. Such are the nine recognitions of the repulsiveness [of the body].

[1.3. The meditation on the mental image of skeletons]

Recollecting [the mental image] of a skeleton is the best antidote against the four above-mentioned desires. That is to say, all bodies born from a womb consist of a skeleton, without exception. As for the way to cultivate [this contemplation of the] skeleton, first, [visualize that] your own body is decomposing from your big toe or your forehead. Then focus your attention (*sems gtad*) on a finger-sized bone. Thereafter, contemplate step by step your complete body in the form of a skeleton. Contemplate that this skeleton expands, pervading the place where you are until, gradually expanding, it pervades the ocean. Then it is gathered back into the skeleton of your own body. In addition [to this contemplation], when you expand and gather [the skeleton] as [explained] above, gather back [into the skeleton of your own body] all the bones except the bones of your legs. Then when you expand [the skeleton], gather back only half the body, half the skull, and [finally] only a finger-sized bone between your two eyebrows. Such is the explanation [regarding how you] expand and gather [the skeleton]. In any case, having focused on a skeleton [for some time], being familiar [with this meditation] will overcome desire." (*mKhas pa'i tshul la 'jug pa'i sgo* Vol.2: 168,4–169,17) (...)

“[2. The practice of loving-kindness as an antidote to anger]

Understand and contemplate the fact that, just like you, all beings want happiness and do not wish to suffer. How worthy of compassion are those who give up happiness and take on suffering on account of [their own] delusion! “They have been my own mother many times in my former existences.” Based on this, they have been in this way my mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, sons and daughters, paternal and maternal relatives, companions and friends. Loving-kindness, which consists in wishing that all beings are happy, arises by cultivating an affection for all of them as one considers them in the ten ways [mentioned above]. Having trained again and again in this state of mind, loving-kindness, you should cultivate [it] by encompassing all beings [in your meditation]. Relying on any of the four states of concentration, once you have made the state of mind of loving-kindness, which is without enmity or rivalry, encompass [all beings] by taking all the worlds in the ten direc-

tions as the object of your concentration, this state of abiding stillness is the state of absorption of loving-kindness (*byams pa'i ting nge 'dzin*). Even if this the state of absorption of loving-kindness does not occur, it is said that cultivating for a mere instant this state of mind of loving-kindness alone [generates] countless benefits.” (*mKhas pa'i tshul la 'jug pa'i sgo* Vol.2: 170,10–171,1) (...)

“[3.] The meditation on dependent arising as an antidote to delusion

As explained above, all inner and outer phenomena arise in dependence. Having established that arising does not refer to anything permanent or anything utterly nonexistent, by training again and again in this way, you will become free from all delusion.

[4. The meditation based on the distinction of basic constituents]

When pride predominates, you should cultivate the distinction of basic constituents. In fact, there are seven kinds of pride:

[(1)] Contemplating those who have fewer qualities than oneself and thinking, ‘I am greater than these persons!’ or [contemplating those who have] similar [qualities] and thinking, ‘I am like these people!’ is referred to as ‘plain pride’ or ‘lesser pride.’

[(2)] Perceiving oneself as greater than one’s equals or equal to those greater than oneself is referred to as ‘greater pride.’

[(3)] Thinking, ‘I am greater than these people!’ with regard to those who are greater than oneself is referred to as ‘supreme pride.’

[(4)] Thinking, ‘I am,’ the view [based on the concepts of] ‘I’ or ‘mine’ with reference to the five aggregates that have been [hereby] taken up is referred to as ‘pride caused by the thought conceptualizing the existence of a self.’

[(5)] Thinking, ‘I have attained the superior qualities!’ [although] one has not is referred to as ‘higher pride.’

[(6)] Thinking, ‘I am inferior to those who are really great, but I am still quite good!’ is referred to as ‘pride resulting from [false] self-abasement.’

[(7)] Being proud as one pretends that a fault is a quality, although it is not, is referred to as ‘deluded pride.’

In order to pacify these [different kinds of] pride, you should distinguish in your own aggregates which are the basis of the thought conceptualizing the existence of a self: the six basic constituents, namely, earth, water, fire, air, space, and consciousness. You should [further] distinguish [the constituents of these basic constituents], down to the most elementary particles in the case of the elements, down to the var-

ious [specific consciousnesses] such as pleasure, displeasure, virtue, nonvirtue, and so forth in the case of [general] consciousnesses, and down to the smallest conceivable moment [in the case of time]. You should become familiar with the meaning of this [practice]. Moreover, this body is composed of various constituents such as the thirty-six impure substances, and these [various constituents] are also composed of elementary particles. As you mentally distinguish [the constituents of your own aggregates] in the way you [separate] a heap of mixed grains of rice and barley, distinguish the five aggregates into their components and subcomponents. Then, being familiar with conceptually discriminating their nature that causes them to arise and cease instant by instant, eliminate the pride caused by the thought conceptualizing the existence of a self by undermining the object whose nature consists in the deluded notion of something not composite, entirely singular and permanent. All [kinds of] pride, having this [self] as basis, will be pacified, and you will also realize the meaning of selflessness.

[5. The mindfulness of exhalations and inhalations as an antidote to conceptual thoughts]

When conceptual thoughts predominate, you will attain mental stillness by training in being deliberately mindful of exhalations and inhalations. [Proceed] in the following way:

[(1)] Direct your attention to merely counting the exhalations and inhalations to a number such as ten, without making any mistake.

[(2)] Let your attention follow the coming and going of breath in your body.

[(3)] Place your attention on this breath that continuously remains like a string of jewels between the tip of your nose and the soles of your feet.

[(4)] While exhaling and inhaling, at that moment discern and conceptually discriminate that this [coming and going, this momentariness] is the nature of the five aggregates together with the eight material particles and the mind supported by these [eight particles].

[(5)] Direct your attention on alternating your object of concentration, combining [the mindfulness of] exhalations and inhalations with [the mindfulness of feelings or thoughts such as] warmth or virtuous [mental states].

[(6)] Engage the mind while combining [the mindfulness of] exhalations and inhalations with the paths of seeing, practice, and no-learning, which is what is referred to as ‘complete purification.’

By directing your attention to your breath in this way on the basis of these six different [practices], you will pacify conceptual thoughts.” (*mKhas pa'i tshul la 'jug pa'i sgo* Vol.2: 171,12–173,11)

B. Instructions on the Thirty-Seven Aids to Awakening

In his *mKhas pa'i tshul la 'jug pa'i sgo* Vol.3: 198,12–209,8, Mipham gives a detailed account of this approach to practice based on the thirty-seven aids to awakening:

[The thirty-seven aids to awakening]

[1. The four foundations of mindfulness (*dran pa nye bar bzhag pa, smrtyupasthāna*)]
 Among the thirty-seven aids to awakening, there are the [various types of] establishing mindfulness: establishing the mindfulness of the body, sensations, mind, and phenomena. The [four ways to establish mindfulness] take the body and so forth as their referential object. They are taught as [these] four in order to avoid any delusion regarding the main cause of mental rigidities (*gnas ngan len, dauṣṭhulya*), the body; regarding the basis for craving, sensations; regarding the basis for conceiving a self, mind; and regarding the basis for apprehending affliction and perfection, phenomena. Correctly directing one's attention on these will cause one to perceive the four truths. The nature of these four [ways to] establish mindfulness is wisdom concurrent with deliberate mindfulness. Their auxiliaries are the mind and mental states concurrent with them. Auxiliaries should also be understood in that way with regard to the following points.

How does one cultivate [these four ways to establish mindfulness]? The inner body corresponds to the material sources of cognitions comprised within one's own continuum. The outer body is included in the outer material sources of cognitions. Both the inner and outer bodies are the objects of the sense faculties, the material outer sources of cognitions in connection with the inner sources of cognitions. In short, all that is included in the aggregate of materiality in the present context is the object observed through establishing the mindfulness of the body.

How does one consider the body with respect to the body? The hearers look [at it] in terms of the four aspects of the truth of suffering. The bodhisattvas look [at it] as conventionally similar to an illusion and ultimately free from mental proliferations, free from all dualistic positions. They train themselves in not deviating from this.

One should understand in the same way the observation of sensations, thoughts, and phenomena. Having rejected the deceptive results of practice, one will realize the meaning of the truth.

[2. The four right exertions (*yang dag par spong ba, samyagprahāna*)]

The four right exertions are [(1)] not to develop unvirtuous qualities that have not arisen, [(2)] to abandon those which have arisen, [(3)] to develop the virtuous qualities that have not arisen, and [(4)] not to let degenerate those which have arisen. These four [right exertions] take as their object the nonarising of unfavorable unvirtuous qualities and the arising of their antidotes, virtuous qualities. Their nature is diligence. Their auxiliaries are as explained above.

How are they cultivated? Having generated a strong determination, they are developed further and further by means of diligence. Their result is the abandonment of what is unfavorable and the increase of antidotes to these.

[3.] The four bases for spiritual powers (*rdzu 'phrul gyi rkang pa, rddhipāda*)

The bases for spiritual powers are determination (*'dun pa, chanda*), diligence (*brtson 'grus, vīrya*), intentionality (*sems pa, citta*; see SN 51.15.5), and discernment (*dpyod pa, mīmāṃsā*). Their object is to establish the state of absorption. Their nature is the state of absorption. In this way, the state of absorption by means of determination is the devoted application of determination while one places one's mind on the observed object. Relying on this, one obtains the one-pointedness of mind. [The state of absorption by means of] diligence is the constant application of this [diligence]. Relying on this, one obtains the one-pointedness of mind. [The state of absorption by means of] intentionality is the actual mind that is directed one-pointedly at its object of observation by means of the former practices. [The state of absorption by means of] discernment is the aspect of wisdom that has accomplished the state of absorption. It is the obtainment of a one-pointed mind through distinguishing phenomena in conformity with the instructions taught in order to establish the state of absorption by means of the other [bases for spiritual powers]. Also, within the state of absorption, as the wisdom concurrent with this [discernment] abandons the fault of the state of absorption, it is the knowing [quality] that correctly accomplishes the positive qualities. The mind that has become one-pointed through the accomplishments of these [bases for spiritual powers] is the state of absorption. They are trained in further and further by means of the eight conditioning mental states of exertion[, namely, determination (*chanda*), effort (*vyāyāma*), trust (*śraddhā*), mental flexibility (*praśrabdhi*), attention (*smṛti*), presence of mind (*samprajanya*), intentionality (*cetanā*), and equanimity (*upekṣā*)].¹ Their result

1 See Rahula 1972: 121.

being accomplished by the power of the state of absorption, one will attain the objects consisting in the desired qualities.

[4.] The five ruling faculties (*dbang po, indriya*)

These are the faculties of faith (*dad pa, śraddhā*), diligence, mindfulness (*dran pa, smṛti*), the state of absorption, and wisdom. Their objects are the four noble truths. Their respective nature consists in the five [faculties mentioned above], such as trust and so forth. Their auxiliaries are the mind and mental states concurrent with them. One cultivates them in the following sequence: [one cultivates] the confidence in the truths, the diligence or enthusiasm in [practicing] them, the abiding in non-forgetfulness, the one-pointedness of mind, and the complete discernment. Their result is the accomplishment of heat (*dro ba, uṣmagata*) and so forth, the swift realization of the truths.

[5.] The five powers (*ltobs, bala*)

These are similar to [the five ruling faculties, such as] trust and so on. Their particular quality is that they cannot be subdued by their respective opposing aspects. Their object and [nature] are the same as above.

[6.] The seven factors of the path to awakening (*byang chub kyi yan lag, bodhyaṅga*)

The factors conducive to awakening consist in mindfulness, complete discernment of phenomena (*chos rab tu rnam par 'byed, dharmavicaya*), diligence, joy (*dga' ba, prīti*), flexibility, the state of absorption, and equanimity (*btang snyoms, upekṣā*). Their object is the correct noble truths themselves. Their nature consists in these seven [properties]. Their auxiliaries are as explained above.

Among these seven, mindfulness is the fundamental factor. On account of having previously repeatedly trained in mindfulness, the direct realization of the meaning of the truths arises. It is like the precious wheel since it conquers what was not conquered, [making one understand] what was not yet understood.

The full discernment of phenomena, being a factor [conducive to awakening] on account of its very nature, is the essence of the wisdom that realizes the meaning of the truths. It subdues all phenomenal appearances and is similar to the precious elephant, which crushes all opposition.

Diligence is the factor [conducive to] expertise. It makes one practice or master the higher perceptions (*mngon par shes pa, abhijñā*), which must be realized by oneself. It is like the precious steed allowing one to go wherever desired.

Joy is the factor [related to] beneficial qualities. This joy of the increasing light of *Dharma* resulting from the perception of the meaning of the truths extensively pervades one's mind and body, just like the radiant light of a jewel.

Flexibility, concentration, and equanimity are factors free from afflictions. Moreover, flexibility is the state without afflictions. By means of the bliss resulting from physical and mental flexibility the body has been made functional and has become the basis for a mind free from afflictions. It is like the metaphor of the precious queen who bestows bliss through contact.

The state of absorption is the factor consisting in the basis for the freedom from afflictions. It prevents the afflictions from arising and consists in a mind remaining one-pointedly. Because all desired qualities are obtained on account of this [state], it is like the precious householder on account of whom [all] desired possessions are obtained.

Equanimity is the nature free from afflictions. Since, by means of this nature free from desire, anger, and so on, [equanimity] makes one abide on the level of the noble ones as long as one desires, it is like the precious minister who makes the hosts of armies go, remain, or return.

In this way, the bodhisattva possessing the wealth of the seven factors conducive to awakening is like a universal monarch who owns the seven precious royal possessions. The practice of the seven factors conducive to awakening is moreover empty of any [kind of] suffering. It is detached from misery, abides in cessation, and ripens the path of renunciation. By means of abiding in the realization of the very nature of the four truths, which is what is meant by "practice," [the seven factors conducive to awakening] are further and further cultivated. Their result consists in abandoning that which is to be abandoned through the path of seeing.

[7.] The eight factors of the noble path (*'phags pa'i lam yan lag, āryamārgāṅga*) These are the noble path of right view (*yang dag pa'i lta ba, samyagdr̥ṣṭi*), right thought (*yang dag pa'i rtog pa, samyaksamkalpa*), right speech (*yan dag pa'i ngag,*

samyagvāc), right action (*yang dag pa'i mtha'*, *samyakkarmānta*), right livelihood (*yang dag pa'i 'tsho ba*, *samyagājīva*), right effort (*yang dag pa'i rtsol ba*, *samyagvyāyāma*), right mindfulness (*yang dag pa'i dran pa*, *samyaksmṛti*), and right state of absorption (*yang dag pa'i ting nge 'dzin*, *samyaksamādhi*). Their object is the real nature (*yang dag pa ji lta ba*, *yathābhūtātā*) of the four noble truths. Their natures are [these] eight: right view is the factor that causes knowledge by determining the truth of the real nature of phenomena (*chos nyid kyi bden*), just as it is. Right thought is the factor that causes understanding. It produces understanding by means of the thought that inspires the speech pointing out to others what one has realized. Right speech, action, and livelihood are the factors that cause others to trust. Right speech causes trust in the pure view of the noble ones by means of teaching the Dharma to others. Right action causes others to have trust in the pure discipline of the person who has completely purified all his or her actions on account of having abandoned all non-virtues such as killing and so forth. Right livelihood causes trust in the pure livelihood on account of having abandoned all perverted means of living. The remaining three are the factors purifying obscurations. Right effort is the factor that purifies the obscurations consisting in. Mindfulness is the factor purifying the obscurations consisting in secondary afflictions. The state of absorption is the factor purifying the obscurations that are obstacles to obtaining the special qualities, such as the [five] ruling faculties and so on.

When these eight factors are summarized, they can be included within the nature of the three trainings. Right view and thought are [included within the training in] wisdom. Right speech, action, and livelihood are [included within the training in] discipline. Mindfulness, the state of absorption, and effort are [included within the training in] the state of absorption. Their auxiliaries are as explained above, and their practice is like that of the factors conducive to awakening. Their result is, as above, to perform the function of complete resolution and so on. Moreover, the way these [thirty-seven] aids to awakening are connected to the five paths is as explained in the chapter of the four truths.

[8.] Differences in the way these [thirty-seven aids to awakening] are cultivated in the greater and the lesser vehicles

In the context of the practice establishing mindfulness, those following the lesser vehicles observe the body, [sensations, mind, and phenomena] belonging to their own continuum as their main object of observation. Because bodhisattvas observe the body, [sensations, mind, and phenomena] both outwardly and inwardly, they

are superior. As for the way to engage the mind, followers of the lesser vehicles engage their minds [in an object] by conceptualizing only impermanence, suffering, selflessness, and so on. The bodhisattvas are aware that this is so merely on the conventional level, during the post-meditation period. They engage [in post-meditation] in a manner free from clinging, as if it were an illusion. Ultimately, they rest in equanimity in the nature of phenomena by means of nonconceptual primordial wisdom, free from the thirty-two superimpositions (*sgro 'dogs so gnyis*) such as permanent or impermanent, unsatisfactory or satisfactory, self or selfless, empty or nonempty, etc. Therefore, their modes of realizations are far superior to those of the lower vehicles, and on account of this they eliminate all conceptualities consisting in an apprehending subject and an apprehended object. For instance, with regard to an apprehending subject, [followers of the lower vehicles] distinguish substantial existence from imputed existence. With regard to an apprehended object, they distinguish engagement from disengagement. They [also] distinguish affliction from purification. They make distinctions according to the individual defining characteristics of these [phenomena]. As it is said in the *Prajñāpāramitā* and in the *Abhisamayālaṅkāra*, conceptual thoughts must be abandoned through the paths of seeing and practice. The noble bodhisattvas do not apprehend [anything] as substantial, even in the period of post-meditation, when they have only conceptual thoughts pertaining to their engagement in or disengagement from the mere apprehension of imputations. However, in the time of meditative absorption, they also get rid of conceptual thoughts pertaining to the engagement in or disengagement from the mere apprehension of imputations. On the pure stages (*sa, bhūmi*) [of the path], there are no conceptual thoughts because primordial wisdom that does not conceptualize post-meditation and practice have fully matured. When they have attained the nonconceptual primordial wisdom that does not conceptualize engagement and disengagement, they become skilled in the crucial point, namely, the effortless spontaneous accomplishment that does not let the slightest benefit of perfecting, ripening, and purifying go to waste. As for the attainment, since hearers and solitary realizers wish to attain the liberation consisting in being free from the inferior unstable things such as the body and so on, they accordingly attain this result. For the bodhisattvas, [liberation] does not consist in being either separated or not separated from the body and so forth. They practice in accordance with the fundamental sameness, the nature of phenomena, and their result is [therefore] far superior since they attain the nirvāṇa that is not established, either in existence or in peace. Thus, inasmuch as their [manner] of cultivating the establishments of mindfulness by means of the[se] three points is far superior, one understands by impli-

cation that they are [indeed] superior [to the followers of the lesser vehicles], the lesser vehicles being lower than the greater. This is so because the realizations of these paths are taught in the way of an ascending scale by means of successive aids to awakening. The thirty-seven aids to awakening being like a highway [leading to awakening], all noble beings must apply them. Therefore, generating the thought of awakening, which is concomitant with them, is said to be like a highway.

[9.] Mental stillness and insight

[9.1. Mental stillness]

Mental stillness arises from the cause it is dependent on, namely, the eight conditioning mental states that eliminate the five defects (*nyes pa lnga spong pa'i 'du byed brgyad*).

The five defects are:

- Both the laziness and forgetfulness of the instructions regarding the establishment of the state of absorption, which are hindrances (*sgrib, āvaraṇa*) to the practice of the state of absorption;
- The inner dullness and the agitation that pull [the meditator] out [of his or her state of absorption], on account of which there are hindrances to the state of absorption itself;
- The nonapplication of antidotes to dullness and agitation when they happen, and the overapplication of antidotes to them when they have already been pacified by an antidote, on account of which there is a hindrance to the development of the [ordinary] states of absorption into the superior ones.

The eight conditioning mental states that eliminate these [five defects] are:

- Intention, which is the basis for exertion;
- Trust, which is the cause of intention;
- Exertion, which consists in abiding by this intention;
- Flexibility, which is the result of exertion, by means of these four (intention, trust, exertion, and flexibility), one abandons laziness;
- The mindfulness consisting in not forgetting to focus on one's observed object, on account of which the forgetfulness of the instructions is eliminated;
- Vigilance (*shes bzhin*), which knows when dullness and agitation arise;

- Intentionality (*sems pa*), which consists in applying the antidote against those two and which therefore eliminates the defect of not applying the antidotes against [dullness and agitation];
- Equanimity (*btang snyoms*), which eliminates the overapplication of antidotes when dullness and agitation have been pacified and which causes one to enter the natural state (*rnal*).

In terms of methods, there are nine means of [accomplishing] mental stillness:

- **Settling the mind** (*'jog pa*) consists in placing the attention (*gtod pa*) on mind's object (*sems dmigs pa*);
- **Continuously settling the mind** (*rgyun du 'jog pa*) consists in maintaining the continuity of this;
- **Repeatedly settling the mind** consists in focusing again and again on mind's object when one, forgetting it, has become distracted;
- **Thoroughly settling the mind** consists in increasingly developing the inner concentration (*nang du sdud*) on mind's object on account of having settled the mind as [explained above];
- Next is **taming the mind**, as one takes delight in the state of absorption, having previously contemplated its qualities;
- Then there is pacifying one's aversion for the state of absorption as one sees distraction as a defect;
- After that, there is **fully pacifying the arising of secondary afflictions**, which are the causes of distraction, namely, craving (*brnab sems*), sluggishness (*rmug*), torpor (*gnyid*), and mental discomfort (*yid mi bde*);
- **The one-pointedness of mind** endowed with the full application [of concentration] consists in the attainment of [mental] stillness;
- **Settling in equanimity** is the attainment consisting in naturally remaining focused on mind's object, without the need for engaging the mind.

These [nine means of accomplishing mental stillness] are established through six powers (*stobs*):

- Settling the mind is established through the power of having heard the instructions [about mental stillness];
- Continuously settling the mind is established through the power of intention (*bsam pa*);
- Repeatedly settling the mind and thoroughly settling the mind are established through the power of mindfulness. When one is distracted, by concentrating and becoming skilled in this, nondistraction arises;

- Taming the mind, pacifying the mind, and fully pacifying the mind are established through the power of vigilance. On account of this, one delights in vigilance and understands the defect consisting in being pulled out [of one's state of absorption];
- Fully pacifying the mind and the one-pointedness of mind are both established by the power of diligence because it causes one to eliminate and reject the conceptualizations as well as even subtle secondary afflictions;
- The ultimate mental stillness, the continual arising of the state of absorption that cannot be impeded by dullness and agitation, is attained through the power of complete familiarization.

All these are included within the four stages of engaging the mind:

- In the context of the first two means of accomplishing mental stillness, engaging the mind is to apply (*'jug pa'i yid la byed*) [the mind] by tightly holding it on its object (*bsgrim*).
- Then, in the context of the next five [means of accomplishing mental stillness], engaging the mind consists in applying [the mind] and being interrupted since one is not capable of maintaining the continuity [of this] for a long time on account of the hindrances caused by dullness and agitation.
- In [the context of] the eighth [means of accomplishing mental stillness], engaging the mind consists in an uninterrupted engagement [of mind] as one succeeds in maintaining for a long time the continuity of the practice, since, even if one does not apply any effort [to maintain the continuity of concentration], dullness and agitation cannot cause any hindrance.
- In [the context of] the ninth [means of accomplishing mental stillness], because [mind] is continuously and effortlessly engaged, this is referred to as engaging the mind, the effortless application of mind.

The attainment of the ninth mental stillness is called the one-pointedness of mind of the desire realm. By becoming skilled in [maintaining] this state, as body and mind are put to work under one's control, a complete flexibility endowed with blissful aspects comes to pass. At first, this flexibility is coarse. Then gradually its vigor wears out. Then an unshakable flexibility, conducive to the state of absorption itself, resembling the extreme resilience of a shadow [one cannot get rid of, no matter what], arises. This is referred to as mental stillness.

Then one establishes the mundane absorptions related to form and thoughts such as the actual the state of absorption of the first concentration by means of engaging the mind, which is imbued with a coarse kind of stillness. One establishes the transcendent path endowed with the aspects of the truths, [such as impermanence, suffering, and so forth,] by means of mental stillness and the states of absorption related to form and thoughts.

The adverse factor to mental stillness is distraction:

- **Intrinsic distraction** consists in the five sense doors facing outward. Since conceptual mental cognitions concurrent with [intrinsic distraction] arise, it causes one to emerge out of the state of absorption.
- **Outward distraction** consists in the proliferation of mental cognitions regarding outer objects.
- **Inward distraction** consists in dullness, agitation, and taking delight in the state of absorption.
- **Distraction on account of phenomenal appearances** consists in apprehending the state of absorption in terms of phenomenal appearances on account of being dependent on them. Establishing the state of absorption in which mental cognitions remain one-pointed eliminates these [phenomenal appearances].
- **Distraction due to rigidities** consists in thinking that one is superior to others on account of perceiving an “I”.
- **Distraction due to an inferior mind** consists in blending the attention [of the greater vehicle] with that of the lesser vehicles.

One should accomplish the unwavering mental stillness of the Great Vehicle, which eliminates these six [distractions].

[9.2. Insight]

Insight consists, on the basis of mental stillness, in flawlessly seeing objects by distinguishing their universal and individual defining characteristics (*spyi dang rang gi mtshan nyid*), nature, and specific features with regard to everything there is, as it is, by means of the wisdom that fully distinguishes phenomena.

The practice of the thought of awakening endowed with mental stillness and insight is like a steed. Based on this, one goes wherever one wants to.

Abbreviations

AA	Maitreya, <i>Abhisamayālaṅkāra</i>
AbhK	Vasubandhu, <i>Abhidharmakośa</i>
AP	Asian Philosophy
BCA	Śāntideva, <i>Bodhicaryāvatāra</i>
BK	Kamalaśīla, <i>Bhāvanākrama</i>
BSR	Buddhist Studies Review
BV	<i>Bodhicittavivarāṇa</i>
CS	Āryadeva, <i>Catuhśataka</i>
CS	Nāgārjuna, <i>Catuhstava</i>
DhDhV	Maitreya, <i>Dharmadharmatāvibhāga</i>
ed.	editor
f.	folio
HB	Dharmakīrti, <i>Hetubindu</i>
IATS	International Association for Tibetan Studies
IIBS	International Institute for Buddhist Studies
IJ	Indo-Iranian Journal
IJBS	Indian International Journal of Buddhist Studies
IT	Indologica Taurinensia
JA	Journal Asiatique
JAOS	Journal of the American Oriental Society
JBE	Journal of Buddhist Ethics
JIABS	Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies
JIP	Journal of Indian Philosophy
LAS	<i>Laṅkāvatārasūtra</i>
LRC	Tsongkhapa, <i>Lam rim chen mo</i>
MĀ	Kamalaśīla, <i>Madhyamakāloka</i>
MA	Śāntarakṣita, <i>Madhyamakālaṅkāra</i>
MAv	Candrakīrti, <i>Madhyamakāvatāra</i>
MAvBh	Candrakīrti, <i>Madhyamakāvatārabhāṣya</i>
MAvi	Maitreya, <i>Madhyāntavibhaṅga</i>
MB	Mahabodhi
MH	Bhāviveka, <i>Madhyamakahr̥daya</i>
MMK	Nāgārjuna, <i>Mūlamadhyamakakārikā</i>
MS	Asaṅga, <i>Mahāyānasamgraha</i>
MSA	Asaṅga, <i>Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra</i>
MSABh	Vasubandhu, <i>Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkārabhāṣya</i>

NB	Dharmakīrti, <i>Nyāyabindu</i>
NK	Mipham, <i>Nor bu ke ta ka</i>
NM	Dignāga, <i>Nyāyamukha</i>
NSICB	Nagoya Studies in Indian Culture and Buddhism
PEW	Philosophy East and West
PP	Bhāviveka, <i>Prajñāpradīpa</i>
Pras.	Candrakīrti, <i>Prasannapadā</i>
PS	Dignāga, <i>Pramāṇasamuccaya</i>
PV	Dharmakīrti, <i>Pramāṇavārttikakārikā</i>
Pvin	Dharmakīrti, <i>Pramāṇaviniścaya</i>
PVSV	Dharmakīrti, <i>Pramāṇavārttikasvavṛtti</i>
RĀ	Nāgārjuna, <i>Ratnāvalī</i>
repr.	reprint
RET	Revue d'Études Tibétaines
RGV	Maitreya, <i>Ratnagoṭravibhāga</i>
SAS	Dharmakīrti, <i>Santānāntarasiddhi</i>
SD	Jñānagarbha, <i>Satyadvayavibhaṅgakārikā</i>
SLp	Snow Lion Publications
SN	Śaṃyutta Nikāya
Samdh	<i>Samdhinirmocanasūtra</i>
SP	Dharmakīrti, <i>Sambandhapariṅśā</i>
ŚŚ	Śāntideva, <i>Śikṣāsamuccaya</i>
Triṃś	Vasubandhu, <i>Triṃśikā</i>
TriṃśBh	Sthiramati, <i>Triṃśikābhāṣya</i>
trs.	translated
TS	Śāntarakṣita, <i>Tattvasaṃgraha</i>
TSP	Kamalaśīla, <i>Tattvasaṃgrahapañjika</i>
Viṃś.	Vasubandhu, <i>Viṃśatikākārikā</i>
VÖAW	Verlag der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften
VV	Nāgārjuna, <i>Vigrahavyāvartanī</i> .
WSTB	Wiener Studien zur Tibetologie und Buddhismuskunde (Arbeitskreis für tibetische und buddhistische Studien Universität Wien)/Vienna Studies in Tibetology and Buddhism (Association for Tibetan and Buddhist Studies Vienna University)
WZKS	Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens
Xyl.	Xylograph
Yṣ	Nāgārjuna, <i>Yuktiṣaṣṭikā</i>
YṣV	Candrakīrti, <i>Yuktiṣaṣṭikāvṛtti</i>

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Index

'dzin stangs, 55, 79, 82, 184

'od gsal, 22, 29, 45, 74, 164, 185–86, 195–
96, 240, 243, 249, 251–53, 259, 264,
269, 305

'od gsal ba, 185–86, 249, 259

Abhisamayālaṅkāra, 273, 287

absolute, 25, 47, 50, 53, 73, 75, 82, 84, 100,
112, 153, 199, 223, 235, 237–39, 289–90,
312, 314, 318

absolute nature, 50, 223

accordance/discordance model, 34, 60

actual things, 100, 105–06, 148, 151, 206,
212, 214, 217, 261

actual ultimate, 23, 53, 59, 69, 71, 73–75,
78, 80, 88, 111, 156, 164, 184, 216, 233,
236, 239–41, 244, 272, 275

adventitious, 61, 126, 235, 254, 266, 277,
287–88, 291, 314

āgantuka, 288

ālayavijñāna, 77, 121–22, 135, 146–47, 151,
209, 213, 237, 290–91, 313

anumāna, 101, 105, 107, 147, 154, 162

appearance, 22, 24–29, 34, 48, 51–54, 56,
60–64, 66–67, 70, 72, 74–76, 80–81,
85–87, 89, 108, 112–13, 115–6, 118, 124,
136, 138, 148, 161, 164, 167, 178, 184–85,
191, 195, 197–98, 200–01, 204, 208,
212, 218–20, 225, 235, 237, 240–41,
243, 245, 247–49, 253, 257–60, 263,
265, 267–72, 274, 276–78, 299, 302,
306–08, 313, 315–16, 320, 322–23

appearance and emptiness, 22, 26, 51–
53, 72, 74–75, 80–81, 85, 167, 235, 243,
247–48, 259, 265, 267–70, 274, 299,
302, 307–08

appearances, 24, 27–28, 48–50, 60, 62–
66, 80, 85–87, 108, 114, 122, 135, 137,
139, 152, 163, 168, 171–73, 181, 191, 193,
197, 201, 208, 210, 213, 218–21, 235–37,
244, 246, 249, 251–52, 258, 269–76,
278, 285, 295, 302, 306, 314, 318, 320–
22, 333, 340

Arguillère, Stéphane, 15, 35, 48, 50, 52–
53, 55–57, 64, 72, 78, 122, 147, 233, 235,
237, 255, 302, 312

arthasāmānya, 273

Āryadeva, 144

asādhāraṇānaikāntikahetu, 104–05

Asaṅga, 5, 120, 122–24, 127, 151, 293

āśrayaparāvṛtti, 291

Atiśa, 98, 111, 158, 191

avinābhāva, 104

awareness, 15–16, 22, 29, 52, 64, 66, 70,
77, 95, 102, 111, 128–31, 143, 145–46,
148–49, 151–52, 154–56, 164, 168, 172,
176–77, 185–89, 193, 197–98, 204,
221–22, 224–28, 236–38, 241, 243,
245, 249, 251, 257–58, 260–61, 265,
267, 274, 279, 287, 295, 311, 314–17,
319, 322–23

bādhakapramāṇam, 104–05

bag chags, 135, 145

- basis of purification, 291
bdag nyid, 242, 247, 250, 259
bde ba, 52, 245, 250, 254
bde ba chen po, 245
bde bar gshegs pa'i snying po, 16, 238
bde gsal, 264
bde gshegs snying po, 40, 234, 256, 285,
 311
bden, *bden pa*, 22–24, 26–28, 35, 45, 48–
 50, 52, 55, 58–60, 62, 69–70, 73–75,
 83–84, 87, 89, 112–6, 138, 140, 147,
 155, 157, 197–98, 220, 238–39, 242–43,
 246, 249–50, 257, 259–60, 273, 302,
 307, 335
bden 'dzin, 220, 246
bden gnyis, 23, 27, 35, 52, 55, 59–60, 70,
 74, 84, 89, 114, 238–39, 242, 249, 273,
 302, 307
bden gnyis dbyer med, 23, 27, 238, 242
bden gnyis zung 'jug, 35, 70, 239, 302
bden grub, 73, 83, 113–4, 116, 147, 243
bden pa gnyis, 26, 28, 48–49, 59, 69, 75,
 83–84, 138, 242, 250, 260
bden par grub, 113, 116
bhāvanā, 32, 162–63
Bhāvanākrama, 129–30, 135, 158, 163, 167,
 239
bodhicitta, 6, 174, 199, 202, 204, 223–24,
 227
bral 'bras, 155
bsam gtan, 159, 165, 174, 222, 297
bsTan 'gyur, 54–55, 159, 177, 279
 buddha nature, 14–16, 122, 233, 237, 256,
 281, 300–01, 303, 308, 311, 313
byang chub sems, 6, 24, 37, 191, 195, 197,
 199, 202, 223–24, 227
byar med du, 168, 193
 Cabezón, José, 15–16, 35, 58, 61, 73, 97,
 120–21, 243, 302
 Candrakīrti, 13, 18, 53, 57, 62, 76, 83, 93–
 107, 109–12, 123, 126–29, 131, 135–37,
 142, 148–53, 195, 240, 243
catuṣkoṭi, 318
chos nyid, 20, 23, 26, 49, 58, 73, 75–77,
 81, 83, 137, 141, 157, 161, 249, 252, 254,
 279, 283, 304, 335
cittamātra, 40, 66, 88, 120–21, 123, 135,
 287, 290–91
 cognitive object, 56–58, 76, 155
 concealing truth, 27–28, 69, 74, 136, 269,
 271
 concepts, 14, 16–19, 22, 40, 69, 98, 100–
 04, 106, 118, 126, 142, 147, 150, 152–53,
 155, 189, 193, 198, 218, 221, 233, 258–59,
 267, 293, 311, 314, 318–20, 329
 conceptual distinguishers, 74, 88, 96,
 118
 conceptual thoughts, 70, 172, 179–80,
 190, 193, 294, 330, 336
 conceptual ultimate, 34, 239–40, 314
 conceptuality, 56, 69–71, 76, 78–81, 89,
 91, 137, 160, 164–65, 196, 205, 213, 280
 conceptualization, 14, 69, 119, 152, 156,
 197, 204–06, 209–10, 213, 220–21,
 226, 244, 259, 269, 281, 319, 339
 conventional designations, 25, 50, 56–
 57, 64–65, 79–80, 139–40, 205, 216,
 218, 286
 conventional existence, 5, 15–16, 18, 112,
 114, 127, 129, 145, 313
 conventional truth, 27, 109, 124, 129–30,
 246, 273, 319
 crucial point, 29, 71, 95, 98, 107, 110, 112,
 129, 136, 159, 167, 184–85, 197, 246,
 294, 314, 336

- dbu ma chen po*, 23, 32, 55, 59, 124, 157
- dBu ma rgyan*, 21, 36, 47, 55, 59–61, 64–67, 69, 71, 75, 78, 83–84, 90, 96–97, 104, 108, 110, 120, 122–23, 128, 135–36, 138, 142, 146, 154–55, 160, 238, 242, 244, 246, 255, 302
- dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad*, 21, 36, 47, 59–61, 64–67, 69, 71, 75, 78, 84, 90, 96, 104, 110, 120, 122–23, 128, 135–36, 138, 142, 146, 154–55, 160, 238, 242, 244, 246, 302
- dbyer med*, 17, 21, 23, 27–28, 34, 39, 59, 74–75, 89, 91, 155, 161, 234, 238, 242, 250, 257, 259–61, 268, 280, 288, 303, 305, 307, 311
- definitive meaning, 26, 122, 173, 200, 215–16, 218–19, 222, 227–28, 243, 251, 257, 263, 277, 290, 294
- dependent nature, 124, 126, 152
- der snang ba*, 48, 59
- dgag bya*, 52, 55, 79, 83, 112, 116, 161, 183, 239
- dgag gzhi*, 112, 161
- Dharmadharmatāvibhāga*, 15, 66, 124, 160, 303–04
- dharmadhātu*, 24–25, 28, 51, 54, 57, 74, 81–82, 86, 122, 167, 173, 183–84, 188, 198, 203, 216, 222, 225, 238, 259, 269–70, 274–76, 281, 284–85
- dharmakāya*, 24, 189, 191, 237, 243, 245, 284
- Dharmakīrti*, 13, 58, 94–95, 100–01, 103–11, 130, 145–47, 152–53, 163, 252
- dharmīn*, 99–00, 103–05, 107–10
- Dharmottara*, 104
- dhyāna*, 174
- dialectical monism, 16, 299–300, 306–08
- Dignāga, , 98–100, 102–07, 109–11, 151
- direct experience, 52, 156, 165, 181, 315
- direct introduction, 169, 173, 187, 189, 197, 233, 237, 284, 316
- direct perception, 58, 99, 102, 108, 111, 139, 147–48, 196, 205, 249–50, 318, 321
- discourse, 5, 18, 22, 25, 29–31, 33, 37–38, 41, 45–46, 68–69, 75, 88, 90, 123, 301, 304, 306, 309, 311–12
- Dolpopa*, 15, 31, 34, 124, 234–36, 291, 312–13
- don dam (pa)*, 23–24, 26–28, 45, 48–50, 52, 55, 58–60, 62, 65, 69–71, 75, 78–79, 82–84, 87, 112–14, 116, 130, 137, 141, 146–47, 149, 157, 216, 242, 246, 250, 260–61, 268, 301
- don dam dpyod*, 70, 113–14, 141
- don dam par yod pa*, 112, 116
- don spyi*, 273
- dpyad bzod*, 58, 113–14, 116, 197, 259
- dpyad sgom*, 6, 23, 37, 137, 143, 156–57, 159–60, 163–64, 166–69, 174, 179, 186, 196
- dpyod pa*, 52, 55, 60, 70, 74, 87, 162, 177, 196–97
- dran pa*, 221, 331, 333, 335
- dravyasat*, 127–29, 142–43, 151
- dualism, 24, 27, 29, 31, 36, 58, 122, 227, 253, 305–06, 312
- dualistic mind, 66, 70, 152, 196, 249, 307, 313–15, 319
- dualistic positions, 173, 196, 205, 214–15, 217, 219, 226, 331
- duality, 76, 84, 124–26, 156, 158, 191, 264, 299–300, 304–06

- Duckworth, Douglas, 11–12, 15–17, 35,
40, 46, 60, 89, 164, 166, 233–34, 239–
40, 247, 252–54, 256, 299–301, 303,
306–08, 311–12
- dus kyi 'khor lo*, 22, 254
- dzogchen, 12–13, 15, 21, 29, 32, 59, 61,
64–66, 73, 77, 111, 123, 132, 152, 166,
169, 173, 185, 195–99, 204, 227–28,
233, 236–37, 242–43, 246, 255–57,
284, 287, 291, 297, 312, 314–17
- essential nature, 114–15, 156, 168, 188,
257–58, 263, 265, 267, 276, 278, 280,
306
- experience, 5, 23, 48, 52, 59, 63, 65, 67,
78, 86, 94, 121, 127, 135, 137–38, 142,
145, 149, 151, 154–57, 165, 167–68, 178,
181–82, 184–85, 188–90, 193, 201, 205,
216, 218, 220, 224, 226, 240, 283, 315,
318, 320–21
- extrinsic emptiness, 24, 112, 234, 313
- four extremes, 6, 49, 51, 54, 69, 74, 78,
91, 132, 154, 156, 161, 167, 197, 238, 242,
254, 281, 302, 314, 318–19
- fundamental condition, 51–52, 55, 87,
156, 181, 208, 218–19, 266, 274, 277,
290
- fundamental nature, 132, 156, 181, 206,
210, 225, 262
- fundamental sameness, 23, 25, 62, 75,
81–82, 89, 141, 156, 164, 173, 181–83,
188, 216, 221, 251, 261, 268, 276
- fundamental state, 23, 156, 164, 181, 258,
266, 274, 286–87, 290–91
- gcig pa dkag pa'i tha dad*, 34, 45, 88
- gelugpa, 11–12, 15, 20, 45, 47, 73, 75, 88,
93, 96, 98, 111–12, 117, 120, 122, 124,
131, 147, 149, 162, 234, 313
- glo bur* (or *blo bur*), 240, 288
- gnas lugs*, 21, 23, 28, 52, 60, 62, 65, 71, 73,
75, 78, 83, 87, 160, 239–40, 242, 259,
263
- gnas snang*, 60, 141, 239–40
- gnas snang mthun mi mthun gyi bden*
gnyis, 34, 60, 66, 125, 239–40, 260–61,
314, 316
- gnas tshul*, 49, 52, 89, 245, 276
- gnyis med*, 17, 19, 21, 23–24, 70, 157, 303,
311
- gnyug ma*, 168, 185, 188, 241–42, 253, 305,
307
- Gorampa, 13, 15, 35, 61, 73, 95, 112, 120–
23, 190, 243, 255, 302
- gotra*, 74, 204, 281
- grāhyākāra*, 145
- great madhyamaka, 23, 53, 59, 91, 157,
181, 184
- great perfection, 168, 188, 196, 199, 228–
29, 237
- ground, 6, 14, 22, 29, 34–36, 51, 61–62,
75, 89, 107, 110, 130, 175, 188, 190,
208, 215–16, 220, 231, 233, 237–38,
240, 246, 251, 254, 257, 260–61, 267,
270–71, 276, 279–83, 286–87, 290–91,
299–303, 307, 310, 312, 315, 319, 322,
327
- Guhyagarbha Tantra*, 234, 251–52
- gzhan stong*, 21, 40, 53, 60, 88, 112, 114–
16, 233–35, 256, 291, 312
- gzhi*, 22, 29, 59, 62, 75, 89, 112, 121, 135,

- 137, 146–47, 161, 164, 209, 237, 254,
257, 261, 273, 286–87, 290–91, 300–
01, 307, 315
- gzhi'i zung 'jug*, 307
- gzung 'dzin*, 24, 59, 67, 83, 87
- Hadot, Pierre, 32–33
- highest perspective, 6, 26, 35–36, 94, 118,
135, 233, 255, 259, 291, 302, 308–10, 314
- highest view, 21, 96, 300–01, 303, 306–
07, 312, 314
- illusion, 48, 55, 65–67, 102, 124, 137, 156,
173, 177, 181–82, 184, 189, 214, 271–72,
306, 315, 331, 336
- imagination, 123–24, 148
- immanence, 33–35, 246, 308, 314
- imputation, 79, 149, 181–82, 206
- inference, 98, 99–109, 111, 139, 148, 162,
196, 205, 249, 252, 321
- inherent nature, 182, 191, 197, 206–07,
213, 216–17, 219, 221, 271, 275
- innate, 168, 173, 188, 241, 247, 251, 265,
287
- inseparability, 19–21, 27–29, 59, 74–75,
78, 118, 155, 183, 238–41, 244, 246–47,
250, 252–53, 257, 260–61, 265, 267–
69, 274–75, 279, 303, 305, 307, 313
- Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo, 11–13, 124,
199, 296
- Jñānagarbha, 97, 108
- Jñānaśrīmitra, 94, 142, 150, 152
- ka dag*, 61, 222, 237, 244
- Kālacakra, 26, 32, 234, 239, 241, 244–46,
250–51, 254
- kalpanāpoḍha*, 102
- Kamalaśīla, 94, 97, 104, 108, 129, 135,
162–63, 166, 195
- Kapstein, Matthew, 9, 12–13, 21, 23–25,
33, 51, 69, 124, 153, 186, 234, 253, 255–
56, 296, 312, 315, 318
- karmamudrā*, 224
- kāya*, 24, 27, 155, 203, 224, 241, 251–52,
280–81
- key point, 28, 52, 86, 129, 131, 153, 185,
192–93, 264, 269
- knowledge, 15, 31, 46, 52, 74, 85–86, 102,
106, 124, 137, 141, 148, 151–52, 154, 159,
162–63, 189, 201, 214, 225, 244, 262,
276, 292, 296, 313–14, 318, 320, 335
- kun gzhi rnam par shes pa*, 121, 135, 146–
47, 209, 237
- kun gzhi* (in a Dzogchen context), 287,
290
- kun rdzob*, 24, 26–28, 45, 48–49, 51–52,
56, 58, 60, 62–63, 67, 69, 75–76, 87,
113–14, 136, 138, 155, 216, 242, 250, 257,
259–60, 268, 273
- kun rdzob bden*, *kun rdzob kyi bden pa*,
24, 48–49, 55, 58, 62, 138, 250
- kun tu rtog pa*, 67, 167
- lam*, 20, 22, 24, 26, 29, 31, 49, 52, 59, 62–
63, 80, 83, 87, 89, 122, 127, 129, 137, 161,
198, 249, 254, 257, 259, 278, 305, 315,
334
- Laṅkāvatārasūtra*, 51, 135
- Le'u bco brgyad 'grel*, 6, 24, 28, 158, 233–
34, 237–38, 246, 251, 254, 256–57,
259–63, 265, 267, 269–70, 273–74,
276–79, 281–82, 289, 291, 301
- lhag mthong*, 144, 162, 164, 172, 186

- lhan cig skyes pa*, 241–42, 247, 251–52
lhan skyes, 168, 188, 241–42
lhun grub, 61, 222, 237, 244–45, 257, 259
 liberation, 12, 14, 22, 31, 130, 183, 188,
 202–03, 207, 209, 219, 224, 277, 286,
 290, 296, 306, 313–14, 336
 Longchenpa, 13, 20, 25, 35–36, 39–40,
 45, 64–65, 73, 88, 92, 98, 117, 121–22,
 158, 233–37, 243, 246, 251, 254–63,
 265–80, 282–91, 295, 312
lta ba, 29, 49, 52, 60, 62, 87, 148, 166, 302,
 334–35
 luminosity, 22, 27–28, 95, 132, 156, 158,
 168, 186, 198, 222, 237, 249–51, 253,
 256–58, 261, 264–65, 267–70, 274–
 76, 279–80, 285–86, 288, 291, 313–15,
 322
 luminous nature, 29, 246, 251, 254
 luminous ultimate, 246, 270, 274, 285
ma dag tshur mthong tshad ma, 252
 Madhyamaka, 5, 12–13, 15–16, 18, 23, 29–
 33, 35–36, 40, 46–47, 53, 58–61, 64,
 73, 87–92, 94–98, 100, 102, 107–12,
 114, 118, 120–22, 124–25, 127, 131, 136,
 142, 146–48, 150–52, 154, 157–60, 165,
 167, 180–82, 184, 236–37, 243, 246,
 255, 290, 302–04, 307, 311–12, 314,
 316, 318, 323
 Madhyamakālaṃkāra, 36, 49, 59, 255
Madhyamakāvatāra, 76, 114, 136, 243
Madhyamakāvatārabhāṣya, 84, 177
 Mādhyamika(s), 17–18, 40, 73, 91, 94–
 95, 98–103, 107–12, 125–31, 142, 145–
 46, 150–53, 196, 205, 233, 313, 318
 Mahāmudrā, 168, 184–85, 241, 249
Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra, 37, 48, 120, 125,
 131, 266, 273
 Maitreya, 15, 34, 40, 60, 64, 122, 124–25,
 131, 160, 233, 240, 314
manasikāra, 170, 198
 manifestation, 5, 29, 47, 54, 63, 66, 137–
 38, 149, 152, 155, 181, 184, 223, 226, 245,
 291, 295–96, 315, 321
 Mañjuśrī, 40, 81, 111, 159, 169, 174, 180,
 182, 186, 199–200, 202, 204, 220, 225,
 228–29, 292, 295–96
 Mañjuśrīmitra, 26, 111, 160, 210
 Mathes, Klaus-Dieter, 9, 15, 123, 125, 233,
 235, 304
mdangs, 28–29, 237, 245, 249, 281
med dgag, 49, 53, 55, 58, 75, 183
 meditation, 29, 47, 54, 88, 90, 92, 94–96,
 112, 118, 126–27, 136, 142, 145–46, 151,
 155, 158, 162–63, 166, 168, 184, 252,
 314, 318, 327–29, 336
 meditative absorption, 57–58, 78, 88, 92,
 94, 97, 128, 136, 142, 154, 184, 187, 233,
 252, 294, 314, 319, 336
 meditative practice, 130, 162–63, 168,
 188, 314
 mental image, 327–28
 mental proliferations, 23, 25, 28, 52–53,
 56, 70, 79–80, 89, 156, 159, 164, 181,
 184, 197, 200–03, 238, 242–44, 258–
 59, 265, 267–68, 279–81, 286, 288–89,
 294, 303, 312, 331
 mental stillness, 7, 143, 164, 172–74,
 186–88, 327, 330, 337–40
 mere appearance, 48, 136, 191, 245, 323
 mereological reduction, 6, 143–44, 158–
 59, 167

- mindfulness, 163, 187–88, 327, 330–31, 333, 335, 337–38
- mnyam bzhaḡ*, 23, 59, 157
- mnyam nyid*, *mnyam pa nyid*, 17, 21, 23, 25–26, 75, 83, 157, 161, 164, 216, 252, 261, 301
- mnyam pa*, 20–21, 23, 26, 75, 82–83, 157, 161, 164, 196, 215, 250, 252, 254, 261, 268, 288, 301, 303, 305
- Mokṣākaragupta, 94, 102, 104, 146, 151
- monism, 16, 118, 299–308, 312, 319
- mtha' bral*, 21, 73
- mthar thug*, 27, 52, 55, 62, 64, 69, 73, 75, 78, 82–83, 89, 155, 239, 242, 244–45, 284, 305
- mthun pa'i don dam*, 49–50, 69, 79
- mthun snang*, 113–14, 116, 141, 161
- mtshan ma*, 56, 58, 198, 250
- Nāgārjuna, 5, 13, 40, 53, 77, 81, 83, 92, 95–96, 103, 122–23, 127, 131, 144, 151–52, 154, 233, 243, 284, 314
- natural condition, 187, 218, 226, 264, 283, 285
- natural state, 23, 156, 181, 186–87, 198, 221, 258, 265, 267, 278, 284, 293, 310, 338
- nges shes*, 137, 157, 161–63
- Nges shes sgron me*, 12, 47, 58, 85, 87–88, 135, 159–60, 233, 236
- ngo bo gcig la dlog pa tha dad*, 45, 73–74, 85, 87–88, 96, 118, 149, 314
- ngo bo gnyis*, 88
- ngor*, *ngos nas*, 52, 62, 65, 67, 72, 75, 83, 87–88, 136, 160, 259
- nimitta*, 56, 70
- nirmāṇakāya*, 245
- nominal ultimate, 49–50, 53, 69, 73–74, 78–79, 89, 96, 111, 141, 181, 183, 216, 238, 240–41, 272, 319
- nonaffirming negation, 53, 58, 79, 103, 109, 164, 183, 240, 248, 250–51, 275, 303
- nonconceptual primordial, 51, 201, 203, 214–15, 237, 257, 264, 336
- nonconceptual state, 22, 28, 156, 307
- nonconceptual ultimate, 5, 78, 152, 156, 237, 239–40, 253
- nonconceptuality, 6, 14, 160–61, 301, 305, 307
- nondual awareness, 29, 66, 315, 322
- nondual primordial, 23, 27, 152, 182, 319
- nondual unity, 119, 256–57, 260–61, 312–14
- nondualism, 5–6, 13–14, 21–22, 24–26, 28–29, 31, 34–35, 43, 133, 231, 301, 303, 308, 313
- nonexistent, 50, 56, 65, 67, 69, 71, 73, 80, 112–15, 118, 137, 142, 161, 181, 193, 205, 212–13, 243, 247, 264, 272, 277, 291, 302, 306, 329
- Nor bu ke ta ka*, 5, 15, 17, 22, 36, 47–50, 52, 54, 57–59, 62–63, 67, 69, 72, 76, 86, 117–18, 125, 128, 130, 136, 146–47, 160, 244
- Nyingma, 11–13, 16, 20, 32, 34–35, 47, 98, 124, 132, 159, 165, 227, 233–36, 255, 306, 317, 319
- Pad ma dkar po*, 6, 256–57, 259–63, 265, 268–72, 274–80, 282–87, 289–91
- Padmasambhava, 95, 132, 148

- pakṣa*, 99–100, 104–05
paramārtha, 45, 92, 103, 126–27
pāramārthika, 108–09
paratantrasvabhāva, 126–27, 151–52
pariccheda, 58–59, 125, 306
parikalpa, 67, 123, 126, 167
parikalpitasvabhāva, 126–27, 151
pariṇiṣpannasvabhāva, 126
paryudāsa, 58, 100
 perspectivist (approach), 5, 29–30, 45–
 46, 59, 75, 88, 95, 111, 120, 122, 124, 127,
 135, 160, 236, 300, 306–07, 312
 Pettit, John, 11–12, 15–16, 31, 33, 35, 40,
 47, 54, 58, 60, 86, 88, 111, 116, 135, 159–
 62, 233–34, 236, 256, 302
 Phuntsho, Karma, 11, 15–16, 35, 46–47,
 58, 60, 70–71, 88, 91, 94, 110–12, 116,
 161, 234
 Phya pa chos kyi seng ge, 73, 94, 97
phyag chen, 20, 223
 practice, , 6, 14, 23, 29, 31–33, 37–38, 45,
 53–54, 64, 74, 91, 102, 122, 125, 127,
 129–33, 135–36, 142–45, 153, 156–70,
 172–76, 178–80, 182, 184–85, 187–93,
 195–96, 198–200, 203, 208, 211, 217–
 28, 235–36, 245–46, 250–51, 257, 262,
 264–65, 267, 276, 284, 290, 293, 296–
 97, 307, 314, 327–28, 330–31, 334–37,
 339–40
prajñā, 162–63
prajñāpti, 143–44, 150
prajñāptisat, 99, 127–28, 142
pramāṇa, 102–03, 139, 149, 155, 313
prasajyapratiṣedha, 49, 53, 101, 103, 105
prasaṅga, 98–100, 103–05, 106–07, 117–
 18, 148
prāsaṅgika, 5, 16–17, 30, 52–53, 59–60,
 89–90, 96–97, 100, 108–11, 121, 128,
 131, 135, 137, 142, 149, 302–04
 Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka, 96, 98
Prasannapadā, 53, 98
pratyakṣa, 58, 102, 108, 147
pratyātmagati, *pratyātmavedanītavya*,
 51–52, 165
 primordial purity, 244, 254, 261, 276,
 301
 primordial wisdom, 13, 23–25, 27, 51–54,
 61, 70, 78, 80, 84, 90, 118, 122, 137–38,
 152, 155–60, 164–65, 168, 181–82, 188,
 190, 201, 203, 214–15, 220, 224, 237–
 39, 241–44, 246, 248–54, 257–58, 261,
 264–65, 267–68, 270, 274, 276, 280–
 81, 287, 291, 319, 322, 336
 primordially present, 28, 189, 261, 286,
 315
 primordially pure, 61, 185, 200, 237, 240,
 244, 251, 258, 260, 274, 286–87, 291
 pure perception, 140, 252, 302, 313, 315,
 323
 purity, 122, 141, 212, 244, 251, 254, 258–
 59, 261, 265–68, 275–76, 286–87, 301,
 315
 radical nondualism, 5–6, 43, 133, 231
rang byung, 168, 188, 243–44, 252
rang bzhin, 24, 49, 55, 63, 77, 81, 83, 87,
 115, 138, 160–61, 185–86, 198, 244–46,
 248, 253–54, 257, 259–61, 265, 271,
 284, 307
rang mdangs, 28–29, 245, 249, 281
rang rig, 16, 51–52, 74, 83–84, 130, 146–
 47, 149, 152, 154–55, 165

- rang rig pa*, 51–52, 84, 130, 146, 165
rang snang, 65, 185, 245, 257
rang stong, 233–34, 256
Ratnagotravibhāga, 124, 254, 261
Ratnākaraśānti, 123, 135
Ratnakīrti, 104
rDzogs chen, 12, 199, 220
 real nature, 23, 93, 115, 121, 145, 156, 181, 275, 335
 reflexive awareness, 15–16, 111, 128–31, 146, 148–49, 151–52, 154, 156
 reflexivity, 51, 129–31, 145–46
rgyan, 16, 21, 36, 47, 50, 52, 55, 58–61, 63–67, 69, 71, 75–76, 78, 83–84, 88, 90, 96–97, 104, 108, 110, 120, 122–23, 128, 135–36, 138, 142, 146, 154–55, 160, 222, 237–38, 242, 244, 246, 255, 302, 316
rig pa, 25–26, 29, 51–52, 57, 59, 64, 66, 70, 73, 77, 84, 122–23, 130, 136, 146–47, 152, 165, 168, 185, 188, 197–99, 204, 220–24, 226, 235–38, 242–45, 251, 258–60, 311, 314, 316–17, 319
rigs, 22, 65, 74–75, 83, 95, 110–11, 113–14, 116, 147, 149, 162, 164, 181, 204, 245, 251–52, 255, 261, 273, 280–81, 301
rime, *ris med*, 11, 51
rnam dag dag gzigs tshad ma, 252
rnam gcod, 58–59, 306
rnam grangs min pa'i don dam, 55, 69, 75, 82–83, 141, 157, 242
rnam grangs pa'i don dam, 27, 49, 69
rnam par rtog, 56, 58, 76, 81–82
rnam shes, 23, 70, 73, 121, 135, 220
rol pa, 201, 237, 292, 316
Rongzompa, 13, 98, 236–38, 251
rtog pa'i 'dzin stangs, 184
rtogs, 20, 24, 57, 59, 62, 75, 82–83, 87, 139, 162, 164, 194, 198, 242, 253, 260, 283
rton pa bzhi, 58, 153, 292
rtsal, 52, 55, 64, 77, 97, 234–35, 237, 245, 316
sādhyadharmā, *sādhyadharmin*, 103–04
Sakya Paṇḍita, 94–95, 110–11
samādhi, 163, 189, 290
Samantabhadra, 175, 224–25, 247
sāmānya, 99
śamatha, 143, 162, 172
samayamudrā, 224
sambhogakāya, 24, 203, 245
Samdhinirmocanasūtra, 5, 49, 59, 117, 121, 137, 151, 212, 236, 255, 315
 sameness, 23, 25, 62, 75, 81–82, 89, 141, 156, 164, 173, 181–83, 188, 201, 212, 215–17, 221–22, 228, 244, 250–51, 253, 261, 265, 268, 275–76, 301, 305, 336
saṃvṛti, 103
Śāntaraksita, 17, 36, 39, 47, 51, 59–60, 68, 94, 97–98, 104, 108, 135–36, 142, 145–46, 150, 154, 302
Śāntideva, 51, 62, 76, 92, 98, 120, 128, 147, 152, 154, 160
sapakṣa, 104–05
satyadvaya, 12, 45, 108, 151
sbyang gzhi, 291
 secret mantra, 262, 279, 290, 297
 selflessness, 159, 163–64, 167, 171, 174, 179–80, 182–83, 189, 201, 274, 314, 330, 336
sgom pa, 29
shes rab, 15, 50, 70, 77, 137–38, 147, 200, 223, 234–35, 239, 250, 288

- single entity, 45, 73–74, 85, 88, 96, 118, 149, 301
- single instant, 178, 211, 225, 228, 294
- single truth, 82–83, 155, 239, 261, 305–06, 309–10, 312, 314
- smrti*, 221, 332–33
- snang (ba)*, 22, 24, 27–29, 34, 39–40, 48–49, 52, 54–55, 59–60, 62–67, 73–75, 83, 87, 89, 113–14, 116, 127, 136–37, 139, 141, 155, 157, 160–61, 168, 185, 197–98, 223, 239–40, 242, 244–46, 248–50, 253–54, 257, 259–60, 271, 276, 284, 305, 307, 312, 314
- snang dang stong*, 83
- snang lugs*, 60
- snang stong*, 22, 34, 39, 52, 55, 59–60, 74, 83, 87, 160, 239–40, 244, 249, 254, 259, 307, 312, 314
- snang stong bden gnyis*, 239
- snang stong dbyer med*, 74
- snang stong model*, 239–40, 312, 314
- snang stong zung 'jug*, 34, 52, 55, 59, 244, 307
- snang tsam*, 49, 65, 136, 160, 246
- snang tshul*, 24, 49, 60, 62–63, 87, 89, 240, 245, 276
- so rang rig pa*, *so so rang gis rig bya ba*, 23, 51–52, 84, 165
- so sor brtag pa*, *so sor rtog pa*, 37, 159, 169, 173, 237
- soteriological nondualism, 22, 28, 34
- spontaneously present, 61, 245, 251, 254, 257–58, 260, 262–63, 265, 267–68, 270, 274, 279–81, 286–87, 290
- spontaneously present nature, 257, 263, 281, 286–87
- spros bral*, 21, 25, 82–83, 137, 154, 161, 164, 238, 305, 307
- stong nyid*, 49, 55, 59, 71, 75, 83, 114, 246, 249
- stong pa*, 16, 21, 26, 28–29, 53–55, 58, 60, 67, 71, 75, 79, 82–83, 87, 114–15, 160–61, 168, 245, 253, 259–60
- stong pa'i gzugs*, 29, 245
- sublime beings, 57, 63, 69, 71, 75, 83, 88, 125, 137, 197, 210, 219, 235, 294, 315
- subliminal consciousness, 146–47, 208–11, 213–14, 270, 273, 283, 291
- sugata nature, 173, 185, 238, 254, 257–58, 261–62, 267, 279, 281–82, 285, 287–88, 290–91, 314
- sugatagarbha*, 36, 233–34, 238, 243, 260, 282, 312
- śūnyatā*, 16
- svabhāva*, 60, 93–94, 106, 126, 137, 144
- svabhāvapratibandha*, 105–06
- svaprakāśa*, 15, 145
- svasaṃvedana*, 5, 16, 47, 51, 95, 128–29, 145, 147–49, 152, 154, 313, 321
- svātantrika(-prāsaṅgika)*, 5, 17, 50, 59, 71, 89–90, 96–98, 108–12, 116, 128, 131, 137, 141, 255
- tathāgatagarbha*, 15–16, 59–61, 122, 233, 235–36, 240, 254, 256
- tha snyad*, 24, 26, 52, 57–60, 64–65, 73, 75, 83, 89, 112, 114, 116, 130, 138–39, 141, 146–47
- tha snyad du yod pa*, 112, 114
- thabs*, 20, 22, 55, 83, 87, 116, 165, 217, 235, 239, 250

- thig le chen po*, 28, 245
thig le nyag gcig, 82–83, 305
 three *kāyas*, 24, 190, 203, 224, 245, 285
 three natures, 40, 124, 126–27
thugs rje, 237, 316
trairūpya, 104
 Treasury of Wish-Fulfilling Jewels,
 255–56
trisvabhāva, 125–26
 true existence, 48, 93, 113–16, 242, 306
 truly existent, 113, 115–16, 146, 154, 209,
 271, 302
tshad ma, 56, 60, 70, 95, 138, 141, 149,
 197, 252
tshur mthong, 64–65, 73, 141, 252, 266
 Tsongkhapa, 12, 15, 17, 30, 45, 58, 73, 97,
 110, 112, 116, 129–30, 142, 146, 149, 159,
 162

ubhayaprasiddha, 99, 107
 ultimate analysis, 60, 113, 115, 316
 ultimate level, 84, 146–47, 161
 ultimate perspective, 108, 189
 ultimate state, 252, 276, 292
 ultimate thought, 23, 203, 224–26
 ultimate truth, 5, 26–27, 34, 56, 62, 69,
 71, 80, 82, 84, 87, 92, 124, 137, 165, 216,
 246–47, 249, 253, 269–70, 273–74,
 279, 286–87, 289, 299, 302, 314
 ultimate view, 14, 29, 34, 98, 255, 305
 ultimately nonexistent, 69, 80, 112, 118,
 142
 unity, 6, 14, 16–23, 26–27, 29–30, 34–36,
 40, 45–46, 51–54, 59, 66, 70, 72–73,
 75, 81, 85, 88, 118–19, 132, 156, 159–
 60, 163–65, 167–68, 181, 183, 188, 196,
 198–99, 224, 234, 238–39, 243, 245–
 48, 250–53, 256–58, 260–61, 267, 275,
 299, 301–05, 307–09, 311–15, 321–22
 Universally Good, 224
 universals, 102, 147, 179, 273
Uttaratantra, 235, 266, 279–81, 283, 285,
 288

 Vajrayāna, vajra vehicle, 166, 168, 256,
 262–64, 319, 322
 valid cognitions, 88, 108–09, 111, 130,
 135, 137–40, 142, 149, 153–54, 159, 196,
 205, 207, 227, 252, 295, 315–16, 321–22
vāsanā, 135, 145
 Vasubandhu, 120–24, 144, 151
Vigrahavyāvartanī, 80, 142, 154
vijñāna, 70, 237, 287
vijñaptimātra, 145
vipakṣa, 104–05
vipaśyanā, 144, 162–63, 172
vyāpti, 104–05, 149, 310
vyavaccheda, 58–59, 125, 306

 Wangchuk, Dorji, 16–19, 21, 34, 46, 60,
 98, 234–35, 252, 255–56, 299, 305, 308,
 311

ye shes, 13, 20, 22–24, 27–29, 40, 50–52,
 55, 58, 61, 66–67, 70, 83–84, 97, 132,
 152, 154–55, 157, 160, 165, 168, 188,
 236–37, 240–45, 248, 250–52, 254,
 259, 280, 317
ye shes kyi sku, 27, 241–42, 252
yid byed, 170
Yid bzhin mdzod, 6, 36, 158, 233, 235,
 254–56, 261–63, 265, 268–69, 271,
 274–77, 279–80, 282–86, 289–91, 297,
 315

Yogācāra, 18, 31, 40, 47, 95, 98, 102, 107–
 09, 111, 118, 120–29, 131–32, 135, 145–
 47, 152, 158, 195–96, 255, 314
yogipratyakṣa, 108, 322
yongs gcod, 59
yuganaddha, 18–9, 21, 45, 54, 299, 302–
 03, 305, 308, 310–11, 313
 Yūganaddhavāda, 17–18, 21, 299

zhi gnas, 143, 172
zung 'jug, 14, 17–23, 26–27, 29, 32, 34–35,
 37–38, 45–46, 52, 55, 59, 66, 70, 73,
 75, 83, 85, 87–88, 118, 157, 160–61, 164,
 239, 244, 249, 261, 299, 302–03, 305,
 307–08, 311

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