Three Models of Teaching Collected Topics Outside of Tibet

William Magee, Ph.D.

Abstract

This paper will describe my own experiences with three educational models each teaching the same Tibetan monastic subject — the Collected Epistemological Topics. (*tshad ma'i bsdus grva.* Also translated as the Collected Topics of Valid Cognition, but usually just referred to as the Collected Topics.) These three models appear today in three different educational contexts far removed from their original context in Lhasa's major Ge-luk monasteries. They exist in the modern world to serve three very different student populations: (1) the Institute of Buddhist Dialectics in Dharamsala, India, serving primarily young refugee monks; (2) the University of Virginia in the United States of America, serving primarily graduate students of an academic History of Religions program; and (3) the Chenrezig Institute in Queensland, Australia, serving primarily members of the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT), both Australian monastics and lay persons from near-bye towns in Queensland.

I will try to show how these three educational programs, having radically different institutional goals, have each developed their own purposes for the study of Tibetan Buddhist dialectics and, in the process, have determined different educational models for its study. Through examining these different educational models, I hope to come to some conclusions about some changes we can expect to see in the study and practice of Tibetan Buddhism outside of Tibet.

西藏以外地區藏傳佛教之三種教育模式

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中文摘要

本報告將描述我個人對藏傳佛教三種教育模式的體驗。這三種教育模式教導的是相同的西藏修道科目—“集體認識論主題”(*tshad ma'i bsdus grva*)，也有譯為“集體有效認知主題”(Collected Topics of Valid Cognition)，但通常僅簡稱為“集體主題”(Collected Topics)。這三種教育模式今天以三種與拉薩主要格魯派(Ge-luk)寺廟原始環境大異其趣的不同教育環境呈現。它們出現在現代世界中，教育對象包括三類不同的學生群體：(1) 印度達蘭沙拉的佛教辯證學院(Institute of Buddhist Dialectics) —主要教育年輕難民僧侶；(2) 美國維琴尼亞大學—主要教育宗教史研究所的研究生；(3) 澳洲昆士蘭 Chenrezig 研究所—主要教育大乘佛教傳統維護基金會(FPMT)的會員，這些會員都是昆士蘭省附近城鎮的澳洲修道士和俗家人士。

我將在論文中說明這三種制度目標互異的教育計劃如何各自發展出自己的藏傳佛教辯證法研究目的。透過逐一檢視這三種不同教育模式，我希望能夠針對有關西藏以外地區藏傳佛教之研究與實踐的可能變化做出一些結論。

Three Modes of Teaching Collected Topics Outside of Tibet

William Magee, Ph.D.

This paper will describe my own experiences with learning and teaching a traditional Tibetan monastic subject — the Collected Epistemological Topics[1] — in three different educational contexts far removed from Lhasa's major Geluk monasteries: (1) the Institute of Buddhist Dialectics in Dharamsala, India; (2) the University of Virginia in the United States of America; and (3) the Chenrezig Institute in Queensland, Australia. Each school has different educational goals for the teaching of Collected Topics, serves different student populations, and teaches the Collected Topics using a different educational model. Besides these three institutions, there are numerous others that teach the Collected Topics in Tibetan — these being primarily Geluk monasteries, Buddhist institutes, and secular research institutions of higher learning — but this paper will mention mainly three: those with which I have experience, either as a student of the Collected Topics or as instructor.

When discussing different modes of teaching Collected Topics in this paper I will use terminology derived from that employed by the U.S. Department of Education and the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, who espouse a style of education (especially useful in teaching foreign languages) called proficiency-based, or competency-based.[2] My experience with these educational theories came in the early 1990's when I was working on a proficiency-oriented Tibetan language textbook through a grant from the Department of Education. At that time I attended numerous training workshops in designing proficiency-oriented language materials and curricula and also became trained as an oral-proficiency rater.

When considering the different approaches used in these schools for the teaching of Collected Topics, it is important to keep in mind that they each serve a different student demographic. Let us look first at the Institute of Buddhist Dialectics in Dharamsala. The Institute of Buddhist Dialectics serves primarily a student-body composed of Tibetan monks born in exile or recently arrived from Tibet. Although there are some non-Tibetan students, the student-body generally speaks Tibetan as

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[1] *tshad ma'i bsdus grva.* Also called the Collected Topics of Valid Cognition, but most often referred to as the Collected Topics.

[2] There are many sources for those interested in reading about proficiency-based education. Perhaps the most basic is the *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines* (Hastings-on-Hudson, NY: American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, 1988). A good anthology of articles is Charles James, ed., *Foreign Language Proficiency in the Classroom and Beyond* (Lincolnwood, IL: ACTFL Foreign Language Education Series, 1985).

their first language.

Since the program is designed to facilitate the training of Geshe-style scholars, its approach to the Collected Topics is a proficiency-oriented model. [3] Proficiency-oriented educational models train students to perform specific tasks. Within using a proficiency-oriented model, the Institute employs a restrictive subset that educational theorists might call a behavioral-proficiency model.

The University of Virginia teaches Collected Topics primarily to graduate students. It employs what I refer to as an integrated-proficiency model. An integrated-proficiency educational model is not focused solely on training for proficiency in a task — although proficiency is considered important — but rather is aimed at conveying a rich mixture of educational benefits.

The Chenrezig Institute is a training center for the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT). The Chenrezig Institute has facilities for monks and nuns as well as lay-people, and therefore classes are composed of English-speaking Australian monastics as well as lay persons from near-bye towns. Some students are advanced in their scholarship whereas others are just beginning their study of the Tibetan language. The Collected Topics are not taught regularly but, when they are taught, a content-based model is used: there is no attempt to train students to become proficient in debate. Instead, a lecture approach is used, wherein the goal is to acquaint students with the generic attributes of the Collected Topics, and to allow them to consider and savor a complex combination of knowledge, understanding, and attitudes. These three modes of teaching Collected Topics will be discussed individually below.

In this paper, it is not my goal to rank these approaches or individual institutions teaching Collected Topics. They are all excellent educational facilities with professional faculty and the highest educational standards. Rather, I will try to show how these three educational programs, having radically different institutional goals and requirements, have each developed their own purposes for the study of Tibetan Buddhist dialectics and, in the process, have determined different educational models for its study. Through examining these different educational models, I hope to come to some conclusions about the future of the study and practice of Tibetan dialectical debate outside of Tibet.

The Collected Topics

Their are numerous sects of Tibetan Buddhism, but the Geluk sect probably predominates in terms of numbers of monks and nuns. For centuries — initially in Tibet

[3] This model is also called proficiency-based, competency-based, outcome-based, and so forth.

but now primarily in India — the great monastic universities of the Geluk tradition have had the reputation of rigorously training their scholarly monks in logic and reasoning. Geluk monks interested in scholarship strive to attain the degree of Geshe; the highest academic degree awarded by those monasteries. Becoming a Geshe is a long and arduous process, not totally unlike the process of earning a doctor of philosophy degree at a secular research university. Scholar-monks train for years to master the primary five topics of the Geshe curriculum: epistemology (*tshad ma, pramana*), perfection of wisdom (*phar phyin, prajnaparamita*), the Middle Way School (*dbu ma, madhyamaka*), phenomenology (*mngon mdzod, abhidharma*), and monastic discipline (*'dul ba, vinaya*). Like secular academics, the tasks of a scholar-monk (or scholar-nun) are to demonstrate mastery of these topics so as to satisfy their examiners, further the study of the topics and, hopefully, to pass their knowledge to later generations; but unlike secular academics, it is also their task to internalize the religious import of the curriculum through a three-fold process of hearing, thinking, and meditating so as to advance themselves spiritually, developing compassion and wisdom as much as possible.

In general, the methodology of a Geshe training program is to approach the curriculum in an orderly and logical way, avoiding incoherent thought and inconsistent doctrine: and so the study of epistemology has come to be known as the Path of Reasoning. In this it is not unlike the secular academy. However, their approach to the study of the topics differs greatly from that of most universities. Instead of attaining and demonstrating mastery of the topics primarily through reading and scholarly writing, the Geluk monks also develop and demonstrate their mastery through memorization of the debate texts and the practice of dialectical debate. Therefore, their primary task in the beginning of the training program is to learn well the modes of dialectical reasoning and the procedure for debate. This is achieved through the study and debate of the Collected Topics.[4]

Shunzo Onoda gives both an etymology and a concise summary of the importance of this genre:

> Texts of the *bsdus grwa* genre were some of the most influential works of Tibetan philosophical literature, since more than any other genre of text they determined how scholastics in the predominant traditions of Tibetan Buddhism reasoned and

[4] However, as Onoda points out, the Collected Topics "did not originate with the dGe luks pa, but rather had a long and complicated anterior development in the traditions associated with with the influential monastery of gSang phu sNe'u thog." He makes the point that considering the Collected Topics to be only Gelug trivializes their importance in Tibet. Shunzo Onoda, *Monastic Debate in Tibet* (Vienna: Arbeitskreis fur Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien, 1992), 1.

> conceptualized. The term *bsdus grwa* or *bsdus rwa* originally probably meant *bsdus pa slob pa'i sde tshan gyi grwa* or "the schools or classes in which [primary students] learn *bsdus pa* or summarized topics [of logic or dialectics]. Later the term was etymologized as *rig pa'i rnam grang phyogs gcig tu bsdus pa'i grwa* or "the class where many arguments are summarized together." In modern usage, the term has both a general and more restricted meaning. *bsDus grwa* in its broad sense means the introductory course or classes in dialectics, which consist of the following three: *bsdus grwa* (in the narrow sense; ontology), *blo rigs* (epistemology) and *rtags rigs* (logic). Without mastering these basic stages, a student cannot advance any further in the dGe lugs pa tradition of Tibetan Buddhist scholasticism.[5]

Regarding the genre itself, Daniel Perdue says in *Debate in Tibetan Buddhism*:

> The Collected Topics of Valid Cognition is essential introductory material for those seeking to learn Buddhist logic and epistemology. Rather than being a single work The Collected Topics of Valid Cognition refers to any number of debate manuals written in Tibetan for the sake of introducing new students of Buddhist philosophy to a wide range of topics presented within a rigorous framework.[6]

The Collected Topics genre traditionally presents students with three volumes of topics that are to be mastered in stages. It is important for the young student to learn these texts fluently, since they introduce the template for the presentation of debates in Tibetan commentarial literature. The introductory volume of a typical debate manual (for instance, the *Presentation of Collected Topics Revealing the Meaning of the Texts on Valid Cognition* by Pur-bu-jok Jam-ba-gya-tso[7]) presents the student with seven different topics:

1. colors — white, red, and so forth (*kha dog dkar dmar sogs*)
2. established bases (*gzhi grub*)
3. identifying isolates (*ldog pa ngos 'dzin*)
4. opposite from being something and opposite from not being something (*yin log min log*)
5. smaller presentation of causes and effects (*rgyu 'bras chung ngu*)
6. generalities and instances (*spyi bye brag*)
7. substantial phenomena and isolate phenomena (*rdzas chos ldog chos*)

More advanced topics are presented in successive volumes and include presentations of types of minds and modes of logical reasonings, as mentioned above by Onoda. In this paper I will not discuss these topics. However, I will concur with Onoda and Perdue

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[5] Onoda, 59.

[6] Daniel Perdue, *Debate in Tibetan Buddhism* (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 1992), xiv.

[7] *phur bu lcog byams pa rgya mtsho,* 1825-1901.

that, for the Geshe student, mastery of the Collected Topics is a necessary preparatory step for advanced Geshe studies. This is partly because it trains the student in debate procedure and is preparatory to a study of Tibetan commentaries on the works of Dignaga,[8] Dharmakirti,[9] and Vasubandhu.[10] As Onoda states:

> Anyone who wishes to investigate seriously the indigenous Tibetan commentaries on such key Indian texts as the *Pramanavarttika* is confronted immediately by the problem that the terminology and concepts used in such commentaries bear a heavy debt to *bsdus grva.*

However, Onoda also makes the important point that the Collected Topics are not just presentations of Indian logic "watered down for pedagogical purposes." This is because "while it is true that many Indian-inspired notions do figure among the subjects of *bsdus grwa,* their treatment is fundamentally original and has to be understood in a Tibetan philosophical context."[11]

For topics besides epistemology, the Geshe program will rely rather more heavily on original Indian texts. However, even for the study of these, Tibetan commentaries are primarily the texts consulted. Thus, it is accepted in the Geluk system that there is simply no way for a student of Tibetan philosophy to go around the study of the Collected Topics. They must be studied first.

We have seen that in Geluk monastic universities there are several reasons for students to begin their educational training in Tibetan philosophy with the Collected Topics:

1. they introduce the student to the practice and theory of the dialectical debate
2. they introduce the student to the way debates are presented in Tibetan commentarial literature
3. they introduce the student to the terminology and concepts used in Tibetan commentaries on major Indian texts.

Let us now turn our attention to three institutions teaching Tibetan Buddhism outside of Tibet, to try to understand their differing motivations and methods for teaching the Collected Topics.

The Collected Topics at the Institute of Buddhist Dialectics

The Institute of Buddhist Dialectics was founded in 1973 in Dharamsala, not far from the new residence of the Dalai Lama XIV. In Tibetan the name of the Institute of

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[8] *phyogs glang*, 480-540 C.E.

[9] *chos kyigrags pa,* 600-660 C.E.

[10] *dbyig gnyen,* 316-396 C.E.

[11] Onoda, 1-2.

Buddhist Dialectics is *mtshan nyid slob gra*, wherein *slob gra* is a common term for "school." The term *mstan nyid* means definition,[12] and since Tibetan debates often proceed by means of stating definitions, the Geluks call those who are skilled in debate "definers." So the very name of the Institute of Dialectics advertises its traditional methodology: it is a school with the primary aim of preserving and promoting Tibetan Buddhist tradition and literature through the traditional means, the debate. Although the Institute also offers a variety of non-traditional courses (i.e., courses that were not offered in the monasteries of Tibet) its principle class for beginners in the course of philosophy is the Collected Topics.

The mission statement of the Institute of Buddhist Dialectics states these goals:

1. to produce graduates who will become sincere meditators devoting their life to the practice of Buddhism in solitude
2. to produce well qualified teachers in Tibetan Buddhism, language and literature
3. to produce qualified writers, poets, and translators of Tibetan Buddhist philosophy and religion into other languages.

These goals are an interesting mixture of old and new. The first goal — to produce graduates who will become solitary meditators — harks back to an ancient and honored Buddhist lifestyle. It is traceable to the days of the original sangha and is perhaps best exemplified in Tibet by the life of Milarepa. Training solitary meditators was one of the goals of the Geshe program as it was pursued in Tibet.

The second goal is really three goals — to produce teachers of Tibetan Buddhism, Tibetan language, and Tibetan literature. The first of these was one of the goals of the Geshe program as it was pursued in Tibet. However, producing language teachers was not something that was needed in pre-diaspora Tibet, since the Tibetans rarely taught their language to foreigners. The fact that the Institute feels the need to train Tibetan language teachers is a reaction to a perceived — and probably very real — danger that the Tibetan language is in danger of extinction. Communities of exiles naturally fear cultural extinction. One way to avoid extinction is to join the world community, and it seems likely that this wish to join with the larger world is also behind the stated goal of producing qualified writers, poets, and translators of Tibetan Buddhist philosophy and religion into other languages.

My own experience at the Institute of Buddhist Dialectics was brief but fruitful. The year before I began graduate studies at the University of Virginia, I accompanied a Tibetan Lama on a visit to Dharamsala. I knew only a little Tibetan but, since I intended to study Tibetan Buddhist philosophy with Professor Hopkins, I knew it

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[12] For instance, the definition of "existent" is "observed by valid cognition." A thing and its definition are different but mutually inclusive: whatever is the one is necessarily the other.

would be useful to me to be able to debate. Hoping to avail myself of an opportunity, I entered the Institute and approached the principal to ask if I could join his Collected Topics class. Hearing that I was from the University of Virginia, and seeing that I was not young (even then) he assumed that I wanted to be in the madhyamaka class — but my needs were more basic than madhyamaka.

In that Collected Topics class, held in a small temple building, I found to my amusement that I was taller than the next-tallest student by an entire head — and my amusement was nothing compared to the amusement of my classmates. Nowadays, I am told, with increased enrollments from Tibetan refugees, and with increased interest in Tibetan Buddhism in universities, there are older students in the classes, including Tibetan nuns, as well numerous non-Tibetans of both sexes. But in 1985 I was the only American, and there were no women to be seen while I was there; neither Tibetan nuns nor university co-eds. There were stories, however, of "a long-haired debater" from America who had done very well on the courtyard, to the amazement of the monks. Only later did I realize the reference was to my colleague Kathy Rogers.

That first day the Collected Topics class began with a little lecture by way of explanation — but I could not understand most of it due to the Lama's thick accent. Following this brief introduction there was a lengthy session of sing-song repetition of the materials of the "Colors — White, Red, and So Forth" chapter of the text: the definienda, definitions, and divisions. Following that, we lined-up in rows and debated the material. The young monks in my class already knew the text well — they had memorized it. They also knew the debate procedure: they had evidently prepared for this course in advance. Later in the day we returned for another session of debates. In the days to come this same structure was observed: a brief lecture, a lengthy session of sing-song repetition, and two sessions of debate. I did not win even just one.

I have not been able to speak with anyone who has debated Collected Topics in Dharamsala in the past few years, but if this is still the methodology employed there, then it is a proficiency-oriented model. In general, a proficiency-oriented model is designed to develop competencies. According to the "Report of the National Postsecondary Education Cooperative Working Group on Competency-Based Initiatives in Postsecondary Education," [13] a "competency" is defined as "a combination of skills, abilities, and knowledge needed to perform a specific task." In

[13] Elizabeth Jones and Robert Vorhees, "Defining and Assessing Learning: Exploring Competency-Based Initiatives: Report of the National Postsecondary Education Cooperative Working Group on Competency-Based Initiatives in Postsecondary Education" (National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education).

other words, competencies are the result of integrative learning experiences. One of the important points about competencies is that specific competencies can be taught to students that will help them to become proficient in different and more advanced contexts.

In particular, a proficiency-oriented model for the study of the Collected Topics is designed to train the student to perform the actual debate without spending undue time explaining the purpose of the debate, the theory of the syllogistic structure, the theory of the comparison of phenomena, the difference between copulative assertions and pervasion statements, and so forth.[14] Instead, the students memorize the materials; the debate procedures are briefly explained; then they are sent to the debating courtyard to practice. Generally, for a true proficiency-oriented learning experience, far more practice time is required than classroom time.

In fact, students at the Institute of Buddhist Dialectics practice long hours each day, summoning up tremendous energies accompanied by prodigious feats of memory. Anyone who observes this procedure will come away with tremendous respect for the efficacy of the proficiency-based model as a learning tool for debate.[15] It is obvious that the proficiency-based model is the best way to teach the Collected Topics to students who are already fluent in Tibetan and who have few other demands on their time. This is because a proficiency-oriented approach "emphasizes outcomes — what individuals know and can do."[16] For the Geluk scholastic, knowing definitions and being able to use them in debate is the foundation for the entire educational program.

On the debating courtyard, competency is thought of entirely in behavioral terms. That is to say, competence in the debate comes through being able to perform specific behaviors. These behaviors are then the basis for competency assessment. The behavioral competency model is a rather narrow subset of the proficiency-oriented model. It works well in the teaching of Collected Topics because (1) there are very specific behaviors to be modeled and (2) the students are generally at the beginning of their training — it is a type of training that requires the acquisition of proficiency before the acquisition of further theory becomes possible. However, this model — the behavioral-proficiency model — does not serve all institutions equally well.

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[14] Later on in the Geshe program, especially while studying Signs and Reasonings, students are exposed to logical theory. But even in these classes a proficiency-oriented model is employed.

[15] When it came time to write *Fluent Tibetan* along with Hopkins and Napper we sub-titled our text: *A Proficiency-Oriented Learning System* since it included far more practice-based material than discussions of grammar.

[16] Sandra Kerka, "Competency-Based Education and Training" (Eric Clearinghouse: http://ericacve.-org/docs/cbetmr.htm).

The Collected Topics at the University of Virginia

As we have seen, the behavioral subset of the proficiency-oriented model works well in a traditional Tibetan setting such as the Institute for Buddhist Dialectics, and in fact is optimal for that Institute. It would not be optimal for the University of Virginia's Tibetan studies program. At Virginia, a behavioral approach to the study of Collected Topics would be considered bizarrely reductionist by faculty and students alike. In fact, such an approach would be liable to most of the criticisms put to behavioral competency-based learning systems by its critics: in short, it would be critiqued as being overly narrow, unpleasantly rigid, atomized, and pedagogically unsound.[17] To understand the validity of these criticisms one need only imagine a course in a complex philosophical topic at a secular research university where students are given no historical background information, very little theoretical underpinning, no explanation of the methodology in place, or the logical system to be employed, or the goals to be achieved, and instead are told to memorize their textbook and in effect holler the contents at each other for the greater part of each day. What Dean would approve such a course, and what student would register for it?

Although course description describes the Collected Topics class I attended at the Institute of Buddhist Dialectics, such an offering would be highly undesirable at the University of Virginia, whether it was taught in Tibetan or English. The question arises: why is the behavioral-proficiency model right for one school teaching Collected Topics and wrong for another?

One answer is seen in the charter of the University of Virginia setting forth the institution's purpose:

> The central purpose of the University of Virginia is to enrich the mind by stimulating and sustaining a spirit of free inquiry directed to understanding the nature of the universe and the role of mankind in it. Activities designed to quicken, discipline, and enlarge the intellectual and creative capacities, as well as the aesthetic and ethical awareness, of the members of the University and to record, preserve, and disseminate the results of intellectual discovery and creative endeavor serve this purpose.

Some might argue that the practice of debating the Collected Topics fulfills this purpose because from the Institute of Buddhist Dialectic's point of view such practice is "directed to understanding the nature of the universe and the role of mankind in it." But I suspect that Buddhist inquiry into the nature of the self is not quite what Thomas Jefferson had in

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[17] Kerka quoting Chappell, "Quality & Competency Based Education and Training" in *The Literacy Equation* (Red Hill, Australia, 1996), 71.

mind when he spoke of "free inquiry" in the secular academy. For one thing, the methods and expectations of Buddhist inquiry are shaped by Buddhist philosophy and the axioms of insider tenets are not open to discussion by Buddhist monks studying the Collected Topics in the same way that Aristotle's conclusions are open to discussion by sophomores at Harvard. Luis Gomez contextualizes this distinction:

> Buddhist studies [in America] continues to be a Western enterprise about a non-western cultural product, a discourse about Buddhism taking place in a non-Buddhist context ... in isolation from the mainstream of Western literature, art, and philosophy ... The methods and expectations of our scholarship and our audiences have been shaped by a cultural history very different from that of Buddhist traditions.[18]

Practicing the Collected Topics using a behavioral proficiency-oriented model is a Buddhist tradition, and the benefits to be derived from it are primarily (but not solely) Buddhist benefits. From the point of view of the secular academy, teaching Collected Topics as it is taught in Dharamsala would be a training exercise, interesting perhaps, but lacking thoughtful reflection and critical distance. Moreover, it would be suspect because such an approach:

> … ignores the connections between tasks; the attributes that underlie performance; the meaning, intention, or disposition to act; the context of performance; and the effect of interpersonal and ethical aspects.[19]

Even if done strictly in terms of a language-learning methodology, the behavioral-proficiency model would not be acceptable at the University of Virginia. For one thing, in a language-learning situation, the primary achievement of the behavioral-proficiency model for teaching the Collected Topics would be debate proficiency. Certainly there are linguistic benefits to be derived from practicing the debate, but academic language-learning assessors — even in the context of a Tibetan studies program — are not going to be impressed with debate proficiency if the language student cannot function in other areas: conversation, reading, grammatical analysis, and so forth. This is because modern language assessment instruments "allow assessment of what an individual can and cannot do, regardless of where, when, or how the language has been learned or acquired. It would therefore be disastrous and pedagogically unsound to equate proficiency levels with … [language] instruction."[20]

Nevertheless, educators tend to agree that there are many uses for bringing

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[18] Luis Gomez "Unspoken Paradigms," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* (Winter 1995), 190.

[19] A. Gonczi, "Future Directions for Vocational Education in Australian Secondary Schools." *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Vocational Education Research* (May, 1997), 77-108.

[20] John Liontas, "Proficiency-Based German Curricula." *Schatzkammer* (Vol. XVI, 1990), 37.

authentic language materials into the classroom. The professional literature on teaching for proficiency suggests various ways for using authentic materials as cultural resources for enhancing students' receptive or productive skills.[21] This points to the fact that in the language-learning module of a program of Tibetan studies there is still considerable benefit to be derived from using Collected Topics. For instance, there are the benefits of:

1. creating proficiency in speaking the Tibetan language
2. providing access to Tibetan grammar at a basic level (the Collected Topics have simple sentence structure, at least in the first few chapters)
3. helping to generate an understanding of philosophical issues that will facilitate comprehending of the texts of Dharmakirti, Vasubhandu, Nagarjuna, and others
4. introducing the student to the literary format of the dialectic that is used in most Geluk philosophical texts
5. enabling students with an interest in Geshe studies to acquire dialectical background to enable them to pursue their researches at one of the traditional monastic institutions.

Not all the educational benefits on this list would be derived from a behavioral-proficiency model. The behavioral-proficiency model of the Institute in Dharamsala ignores grammar and does not elaborate on philosophical context. Nor would all these benefits be forthcoming if no proficiency in the debate is sought. Without some degree of proficiency there would be no benefit to a student's oral skills, and no dialectical background would be founded. Instead, it seems, a middle way model is required. Just such a middle way has been adopted in Jeffrey Hopkins' Tibetan studies program at the University of Virginia. I call it the integrated-proficiency model.

The integrated-proficiency model is in fact a proficiency-oriented model that has accommodated different conceptions of competence, including numerous generic attributes that, while not directly contributing to proficiency, provide a constellation of skills that are useful in a university setting. For instance, proficiency in Collected Topics aids communication with Tibetan lamas during research projects, and goes along with a theoretical understanding of logic and grammar and knowledge of Buddhist philosophy to increase the student's communication skills and problem-solving ability. I refer to this combination of debate proficiency with a broad approach to competence "integrated" because it views competence in the Collected Topics not only as trained behavior but also as complex and rich mixture of "knowledge, attitudes, skills, and values displayed in the context of task

[21] See Lana Rings, "Authentic Language and Authentic Conversational Texts," *Foreign Language Annals* 19 (1986), 203.

performance."[22] Similarly, it is holistic in that it "acknowledges the cultural context and social practices involved in competent performance."[23]

Thus, the integrated approach recognizes levels of competency that are not entirely tied to proficiency in debate, but also recognizes that some level of proficiency in debate will assist the student in demonstrating competency in a variety of contexts. It is a model suited to the study of Collected Topics in academia because students in academia are exposed to many methodological approaches that can enrich their understanding of Collected Topics. Also, graduate students have serious time constraints and thus cannot afford the time required to develop debate proficiency to the level expected of students at the Institute of Buddhist Dialectics. Moreover, graduate students are not generally fluent in conversational Tibetan at the time of their study of Collected Topics. Therefore, their ability to make full use of a proficiency model for debate is restricted by language limitations.

The integrated model for studying the Collected Topics has been in use at the University of Virginia since the mid-1970s. My own training in Collected Topics took place there between 1985 and 1988 under the tutelage of Georges Dreyfus (Geshe Sangye Sangdrup). Thanks to the presence of this very experienced instructor as well as a number of fellow graduate students with experience in debate (and a keen appreciation for its benefits), we were able to extend our proficiency to encompass the first six chapters of the first volume of Collected Topics (the smaller path of reasoning) and even into some of the topics of the next volume. I do not think this degree of proficiency has been achieved at Virginia since then, which demonstrates that enthusiasm and excellent tutelage are two requirements for proficiency.

It seems to me that the integrated model of studying Collected Topics at the University of Virginia is the best model for academic purposes for a number of reasons: the holistic approach to learning Collected Topics allows students to transfer competencies learned in Collected Topics to other courses in the curriculum and to refer competencies learned in other courses in the curriculum to enhance their understanding of Collected Topics. In this way it allows students to exercise their right to freedom of inquiry that is such a central goal of a secular university while at the same time accruing the benefits of proficiency training in an authentic Tibetan language context. Moreover, there is a benefit for studying Collected Topics in this way for a Tibetan studies program that is based in a department of religious studies

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[22] See Gonczi, 77-108

[23] Kerka paraphrasing Jones and Moore. "Appropriating Competence." *British Journal of Education and Work*. Vol. 8 (1995), 78-92.

(as at the University of Virginia): it enables the students to study Tibetan language in a way that directly contributes to their knowledge of Tibetan religion.

The Collected Topics at the Chenrezig Institute

The Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana was founded by Lama Thubten Yeshe and Lama Thubten Zopa Rinpoche. These world-renowned lamas were trained in the Gelug tradition at Sera-Je monastic university. Quite simply, their organization is dedicated to conserving and conveying this Geluk tradition. The FPMT has over a hundred centers around the world, including a number of monastic institutions for non-Tibetan monks and nuns.

Although the FPMT is dedicated to preserving Sera-Je traditions, there is no tradition of debating at any FPMT center. Nevertheless, the FPMT expends much effort on newly inventing Buddhist educational programs (some of them quite advanced). My sources within the foundation attribute this lack of debate to an organizational culture that showed — at least initially — less regard toward academic accomplishment then toward Buddhist practice. This attitude, of course, is by no means limited to the FPMT. Richard Hayes, a well-known American professor of Buddhism who oversees a busy internet discussion group, reports that the study of Buddhist texts in their original languages is seen by many of his correspondents "as evidence that the scholar has little or no direct experiential familiarity with Buddhist contemplative practices and therefore has probably developed few of the virtues that arise only out of firsthand experience with reality."[24] Academic (or even religious) reliance upon logic and reasoning are especially targeted by this critique. Hayes reports one correspondent writing to him: "Burn your books, Richard ... Forget the logic, it is a trap for the unwary ... When you find the truth you'll know it, I assure you." Hayes finds this sort of suspicion of academic authority to be a species of anti-intellectualism. Not limited only to Buddhist studies, Hayes sees it as widespread in Christian and Jewish studies as well. In fact, he believes it to be a general feature of North American culture. In his opinion it is based upon a feeling that academics are hostile towards religious piety.[25]

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[24] Richard Hayes "The Internet as Window onto American Buddhism," in Duncan Williams and Chris Queen, ed., *American Buddhism* (London: Curzon Press, 1999), 171.

[25] Daniel Perdue reports that, at least in his religion department, certain professors who know that he is a practicing Buddhist doubt the objectivity of his scholarship, while numerous Buddhists who have read his book on logic wonder if he practices. Perdue concludes philosophically that a fellow cannot please everyone and so must please himself.

Anti-intellectualism is not limited to individuals and can be seen in religious sects and institutions as well. Even in Tibet there were those who felt that Geshes engaged in too much study and not enough meditation. The study of Collected Topics is peculiarly open to anti-intellectual critiques, since the dialectical debates are as intellectual as any pursuit undertaken in Buddhism. Although the debates are done in order to sharpen the intellect for analytical meditation, that goal is not obvious to the casual onlooker.

In my experience, this attitude is held more often by lay persons than monastics. Monastics are no doubt aware that the tension between study and practice is an ancient feature of Buddhism, dating back at least as far as to Sri Lanka in the first century B.C.E., at which time monks first began preserving the *tripitaka* in writing. Different groups arose holding different opinions about study and practice. It is claimed (by scholars, of course) that the group espousing scholarship won out.[26]

Whatever the reasons for Buddhist anti-intellectualism, it appears that the FPMT early in its development made a determination not to emphasize the study of texts in Tibetan. Recently, however, this organizational attitude is beginning to change. Perhaps this change is due to the recognition that there are a growing number of non-Tibetan scholars of Buddhism who have made important contributions to the spread of Buddhist doctrine outside of Tibet. Certainly there is no hint of anti-intellectualism at two of the FPMT's most advanced institutes, the Instituti Lama Tsongkhapa in Italy and the Chenrezig Institute in Australia. I visited both of these institutes in the past year and found impressive scholarship at both of them. At the Chenrezig Institute I was asked to teach Collected Topics to a mixed group of Australian monastics as well as lay persons from near-by towns. The course was to last for only five weeks and was to be held just one night each week for two hours. Astonishingly, on the night of the first class, almost fifty students arrived to begin their study of Collected Topics. Some students were advanced in the study of Tibetan and wanted to learn the topics in Tibetan. Others had only just begun their study of Tibetan. Still others had never had a lesson in Tibetan and hoped to learn the topics in English.

Since the published goal of the Chenrezig Institute is "to benefit as many people as possible, helping them to transform their lives so they can benefit others and realize ultimate happiness," I decided to take an approach that would cater to the entire group. Fortunately, the materials I had with me for the study of the Collected Topics were in English and Tibetan. Given the very limited time allotted for the class, it was

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[26] For a discussion of this issue see Walpola Rahula's *History of Buddhism in Ceylon* (Colombo, 1966), 157-63.

impossible to expect students to memorize definitions or practice debates. Instead, my goal was to familiarize them with the generic attributes of the debate and the cultures that had spawned it. I refer to the methodology I adopted as "content-based." This means that I mainly introduced them to the generic attributes of the Collected Topics as well as a number of associated topics without expecting much in the way of proficiency.

I presented them with five modular evenings, so that it would be possible for a student to miss an evening and still enjoy the next week's class. In fact, entertaining this group was a priority for me, since I wanted them to come away from the course with a strong feeling that it would be both pleasant and instructive to learn more about the Collected Topics.

On the first of five evenings I gave a brief introductory talk about the purpose of logic and debate at Sera-Je monastery and showed the video entitled "Debate in Tibetan Buddhism," filmed at Sera-Je. This short but informative film "stars" Geshe Georges Dreyfus and Geshe Thupten Jinpa. It gives students a cultural overview of the Geshe program, demonstrates briefly the functional components of the debate, and allowed this FPMT audience the opportunity to see that: (1) a fellow from Switzerland can become a great debater and (2) logic and reason are highly prized in the FPMT's parent-organization. It also allowed students the opportunity to observe the great enthusiasm with which the monks debate.

On the second evening I demonstrated the comparison of phenomena. Comparison of phenomena involves finding possible permutations between phenomena: that is, are two things synonymous, are they exclusive, does one pervade the other, or is there a common locus within no pervasion of one by the other. Comparison of phenomena is an integral part of Collected Topics, and perhaps the only aspect of the debate that can quickly be understood and practiced in a content-based class. In fact, there is much to be gained by demonstrating comparison of phenomena on a blackboard. There are many nice logical tricks that can be played with comparison of phenomena, involving same and different, multiple negatives, phenomena that are not themselves, and so forth. Students come away from the experience feeling that they have mastered a complex aspect of Tibetan logic. There is an immediate gain in analytical proficiency.

On the third evening I demonstrated syllogistic structure. Here also is an aspect of Collected Topics that lends itself well to a content-based class. Students can be challenged to agree or disagree with increasingly complex syllogistic propositions, and thereby learn the three modes of a correct reason and the responses to correct and incorrect reasonings. It does not hurt to shout and clap, as in a "real" debate. In the context of explaining syllogisms it is also possible to make points about Buddhist epistemology in general and inferential cognitions in particular.

On the fourth evening I demonstrated the divisions of phenomena. The selfless is divided into the existent and the non-existent; the existent is divided into permanent and impermanent, and so forth. This presentation is an important part of Buddhist philosophy, and is presented with clarity in the Collected Topics. Since the class was proficient in comparison of phenomena, we were able to compare divisions of phenomena. Observing the ramifications of the comparison allowed the class to understand the important difference between copulative associations (*A* is *B*) and statements of pervasion (whatever is *A* is necessarily *B*) and to realize that the statement *A* is *B* says nothing about the pervasion between *A* and *B*. The behavioral-proficiency approach teaches this lesson, but experientially, over a lengthy period of time. Efficiency in presentation is a benefit of the content-based approach.

On the final evening I introduced the topic of Identifying Isolates, which is also learned more efficiently in a content-based classroom model than in a behavioral proficiency-oriented model of teaching Collected Topics. Identifying Isolates is a crucial logical aspect for the understanding of the central Geluk ontological proposition that asserts two truths for each phenomenon. This aspect of emptiness theory is technical, but can be demonstrated quite easily if the student has knowledge of comparison of phenomena and the theory of isolates. Within this discussion of emptiness, the student can be given a basic presentation of cyclic existence, path structure, cessation, and nirvana.

In this way, the students came away from their five evenings of Collected Topics with an understanding of the historical background of the debate, its cultural context in Tibetan monasteries, some proficiency in comparison of phenomena, increased understanding of logical theory, epistemology, and phenomenology. They had been given a technical presentation of the two truths, as well as instruction in negatives, path structure, and objects of abandonment. That is a lot of material to be extracted from a short presentation of Collected Topics, and demonstrates the importance of the Collected Topics to an understanding of Tibetan philosophy.

Conclusion

This paper has looked at three models for the teaching of Collected Topics outside of Tibet with an eye towards assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the models as well as the purposes served by each. By looking at three educational models employed in teaching one topic in three different institutions, we observe a close relationship between institutional goals and educational models. We can also see that the teaching of the Collected Topics need not be fixed in its traditional outcome-based mode but can be adapted successfully to fit other educational models than those found in Tibet.

The behavioral proficiency-based model used to teach Collected Topics at the

Institute for Buddhist Dialectics is based on Tibetan traditions dating back to the days of Cha-ba Chos-kyi Sen-ge (1109-1169) and the monks of Sang-Phu Monastery (founded in 1073). It is a model suited to the ultimate purpose of debate in Tibetan monasteries, which is to gain an inferential realization of emptiness. The outcome of debate practice for these monks is the development of a very sharp analytical faculty trained to see the smallest flaw in a statement of proof by another.

The integrated-proficiency model for studying Collected Topics developed by Hopkins for use in a secular university may be one of the most important educational developments to occur in Tibetan philosophical education since the diaspora. As we have seen, the behavioral-proficiency model is somewhat inappropriate for university use since its analytical procedure is restrictive and its outcome is not actual conversational proficiency. But the integrated-proficiency model accommodates many different conceptions of competence and can be accompanied by a theoretical presentation of logic and grammar and a knowledge of Buddhist philosophy in general, leading to an outcome that is a complex and rich mixture of knowledge, attitudes, skills, and values. The integrated approach not only recognizes a rich blend of outcomes but also helps the student acquire a level of proficiency in debate. It is an appropriate model for the study of Collected Topics in academia because it allows students to integrate other fields of knowledge into their understanding of the Collected Topics. However, not all benefits of the proficiency-oriented approach accrue with the integrated approach. For one thing, graduate students do not develop debate proficiency to the level expected of students at the Institute of Buddhist Dialectics. Since one of the primary goals of the integrated model as it is pursued at the University of Virginia is to train beginning and intermediate students in language skills, language limitations themselves prevent students from attaining an advanced level of debating proficiency. Because of this, students generally do not attempt further studies in Collected Topics but instead move on to other topics where content-based abilities are more richly rewarded. As a result, the study of Collected topics in academia has become limited primarily to the first few chapters of the introductory volume.

It is possible that the content-based model that I recently employed at the Chenrezig Institute may be useful in overcoming this limitation. If one were to combine lecturing about the topics with reading the text in Tibetan, the entire Collected Topics paths of reasoning — lesser, middling, and great — could be covered in a year or two of academic study. Still, it is likely that not many students would be interested in such a course, since the higher topics, divested of the excitement of oral debate, make fairly dull, repetitive, and yet difficult reading and would not easily yield the research data needed for a graduate thesis.

Perhaps a real solution to the study of the Collected Topics outside of Tibet has been found by Daniel Perdue. At Virginia Commonwealth University, Perdue regularly teaches a course in Buddhist Logic to undergraduate religion and philosophy majors in which the Collected Topics are studied and debated entirely in English. As I understand his methodology from interviewing him and reading his syllabus, Perdue employs a content-based approach in the beginning to inform students about the topics and the debate procedure; then switches to an integrated-proficiency model in the middle to allow the students time to familiarize themselves with the debate; then at the end changes models again to a behavioral proficiency-based approach to maximize proficiency in the final weeks of class. This sequential-model approach has much to recommend it: it is appropriate in a university setting because it allows space for free expression of ideas and holistic integration of outcomes; it is open-ended because it is taught in the vernacular and therefore avoids language constraints and problems of non-compliance with language proficiency measurements; it is portable to any modern secular university speaking any language and is therefore available to undergraduates and non-specialists. Perhaps most interestingly, it offers an open architecture: that is to say, once the structure and procedure of the Collected Topics are mastered by the student, new debates can be formulated and tested for validity just as they were on the courtyards of Tibet.

In this way, using the vernacular language and employing a graded sequence of educational models that move the student through content toward proficiency, Perdue's undergraduate students work through the early chapters of the Collected Topics. In a graduate-school setting such an approach could be combined with Tibetan language studies to yield both philosophical and linguistic outcomes. If Perdue's approach were adopted at a Buddhist studies institute, it is quite possible that Tibet's great tradition of Geluk debate could finally be translated into a non-Tibetan context: the entire Collected Topics could be memorized and debated in the local language. Students could then pursue more advanced studies on the debating courtyard, just as is done in the Institute for Buddhist Dialectics, enabling students all over the world to develop the same outcomes as those that, for centuries, have transformed enthusiastic young monks into wise old Geshes.