

Elías Capriles

*CLEAR DISCRIMINATION OF VIEWS
POINTING AT THE
DEFINITIVE MEANING*

THE FOUR PHILOSOPHICAL SCHOOLS
OF THE SUTRAYANA TRADITIONALLY TAUGHT IN TIBET
WITH REFERENCE TO THE
DZOGCHEN
TEACHINGS

Version 1.3

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This book is dedicated to Tenzin Gyamtso,
H. H. the Fourteenth Dalai Lama

On the plane of dharma,
truly non-sectarian Master
concerned with the Truth rather than
the vested interests of schools or with
making of partial truths pseudo-absolutes

On the plane of politics,
wise and agile judoka—
may he through nonviolence help
Tibetans return to the Roof of the World
in the framework of his Five Points Plan

NOTICE TO THE ELECTRONIC EDITION OF THIS BOOK

THIS VERSION OF THIS BOOK IS EXTREMELY RAW, AND AS SUCH INVOLVES TOO MANY CONCEPTUAL IMPRECISSIONS OF WHICH THE AUTHOR IS FULLY AWARE BUT WHICH WILL NOT BE CORRECTED UNTIL THE TIME COMES TO PREPARE THE VERSION THAT WILL BE SENT TO PUBLISHERS. AND AS SUCH, IT IS NO MORE THAN THE BLUEPRINT FOR THE DEFINITIVE EDITION.

MOREOVER, THE BOOK WAS ORIGINALLY WRITTEN IN ENGLISH BY THE AUTHOR, WHO IS NOT A NATIVE ENGLISH SPEAKER, AND IN THIS VERSION THE ENGLISH HAS NOT BEEN PROOFREAD BY NATIVE SPEAKERS FOR LANGUAGE ACCURACY, AS IT WAS POSTED IMMEDIATELY AFTER COMPLETION BY THE AUTHOR.

READERS OF THIS VERSION ARE WELCOME TO LOOK BOTH FOR IMPRECISSIONS AND FOR THE REPETITION OF IDEAS: THOUGH IT WAS THE AUTHOR'S INTENTION TO HAVE A CERTAIN DEGREE OF REITERATION, EXCESSIVE REPETITION IS TO BE AVOIDED. IN GENERAL, ALL TYPES OF CRITICISM BY READERS, WHETHER CONCERNING CONTENT OR REGARDING FORM, ARE VERY WELCOME, FOR CRITICISM MAY HELP IMPROVE THE TEXT PRIOR TO ITS PUBLICATION ON PAPER.

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ELÍAS CAPRILES
IN MÉRIDA, VENEZUELA, ON JANUARY 19, 2004

NOTICE TO VERSION 1.1

This new version resulted from including some new quotations from the book by Gendün Chöphel titled *dBu ma'i zab gdad snying por dril ba'i legs bshad kLu sgrub dgongs rgyan*, all of which appear in the section discussing Je Tsongkhapa's interpretation of Prasangika philosophy and practice, of which the longest and most important one may be the refutation of the idea that there is contradiction in what we normally experience as "miracles" (which resulted in the inclusion of a new subsection in the section in question). I also added the reasonings I deemed necessary for understanding the extracts of Chöphel's book or / and for making the discussion of Tsongkhapa's thought clearer.

Likewise, as a result of the doubts raised by Victor Klimov after proofreading Part One of *Buddhism and Dzogchen*, this new version of *Clear Discrimination of Views* features an improved discussion of dang (*gdangs*) energy, and in general of the three forms of manifestation of energy posited by the Dzogchen teachings, stressing the fact that in itself dang energy manifests as a transparent, pure, clear and limpid dimension that cannot be regarded either as internal or external and that is of the nature of dharmakaya.

Furthermore, some key Sanskrit and Tibetan terms that were omitted in the original version were included in this one, so that the book may be of greater use to Buddhologists and Tibetologists, as well as to the students of these disciplines. In particular, this version includes a discussion by Elio Guarisco of the usages of the term khorsum, which I render as "triple projection."

I also changed the translations of the terms rangdröl (*rang-grol*) and lhundrub (*lhun-grub*): now I am rendering the first as *spontaneous liberation* rather than *self-liberation*, and the second as *spontaneous perfection* rather than *self-perfection*. The first change was due to the fact that self-liberation was often understood in an utterly wrong sense as "liberation by one's own action," and sometimes as "liberation by one's own power" (as different from liberation from the power of another), both of which are the very opposite of what the term really means: liberation not *caused* by any *action*, beyond the dichotomy "power of one's own self / power of something different from one's own self." The second change was due to the fact that the prefix *self* does not seem to add any new content to the concepts of perfection and perfect (unless we said "self-perfected," but then the term would suggest that perfection was not inherent to the original condition, but arose at some point later on—which is not the case), whereas the adjective "spontaneous" adds two important ideas: firstly, that the perfection referred to is not the product of anyone's action, and secondly that what the term also refers to spontaneous processes beyond action that lead to full Awakening.

Finally, many other corrections were done to the text of which I kept no track, for at the time I had no intention of posting this notice, which was a late idea of Grisha Mokhin, the administrator of the webpage in which this book is published, and a Santi Maha Sangha and Yantra Yoga instructor certified by Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu.

In Mérida, Venezuela, on Wednesday, February 25, 2004,

Eliás Capriles

INTRODUCTION

The Nyingmapa and Sarmapa Ways of Classifying Theoretical Views

Whereas the Sarmapas^a in general tend to classify the diverse theoretical views of Buddhism in terms of the philosophical schools of the Indian Sutrayana, the Nyingmapas^b classify all theoretical views in terms of vehicles and Paths, and distinguish among schools only within the context of a given vehicle or Path. Among the Sarmapas, the Gelugpas^c, in particular, hold the theoretical view of the Madhyamaka Prasangika School, which pertains to the Mahayana, to be supreme among Buddhist views. Conversely, the Nyingmapas stress the fact that the highest view is that of Dzogchen Atiyoga, rather than any of those held by the different schools belonging to the Mahayana. At first sight, however, there would seem to be no contradiction between the opinions of Nyingmapas and Gelugpas, insofar as the most important Tantra of the Menngagde or Upadeshavarga series of Dzogchen Atiyoga,^d the *Drataljur*,^e asserts that the theoretical view of the supreme vehicle coincides with that of the Madhyamaka Prasangika.^f

Nevertheless, this coincidence is far from being absolute. No doubt, the theoretical explanation of reality found in the Dzogchen teachings agrees with the theoretical view of the Prasangikas in that both stress the fact that the true nature of reality is unthinkable (Skt., *achintya*), nonconceptual (Skt. *nishprapancha*) and ineffable (), and that hence no explanation whatsoever can fully correspond to it, and insist that this nature can only be Seen upon the collapse of conceptual understanding.¹ Likewise, the teachings of Dzogchen coincide with those of the Prasangikas in asserting that no entity exists “inherently,” even on the conventional plane.² However, the Dzogchen teachings resort to concepts and terms which are extraneous to Prasangika thought, and which are featured in the canonical texts of the Third Promulgation (*dharmachakra*) and in the philosophical schools based on them, such as the Yogachara School, the Madhyamaka-Swatantrika-Yogachara subschools of Madhyamika thought, and the subschools that make up the inner, subtle Madhyamaka (which are the Zhentongpa and Mahamadhyamaka subschools). As an example, suffice to mention the concepts and terms *swasamvedana* and *klišhtamanovijñana*, and the term *alaya vijñana* (though not the corresponding concept).³ Furthermore, the Prasangikas upheld many causal and other lower Mahayana views that are in a stark contrast with the teachings of Atiyogatantrayana, whereas the schools of the inner, subtle Madhyamaka, and in particular Mahamadhyamaka, upheld higher views, far more congruent with those featured in the teachings of Ati Dzogpa Chenpo.⁴ Therefore, a

^a *gSar-ma-pa*.

^b *rNying-ma-pa*.

^c *dGe-lugs-pa*.

^d The Tantra in question is the *Drataljur* (*sGra-thal-'gyur chen po'i rgyud*); Skt., *Shabda maha prasamga mula tantra*.

^e *sGra thal 'gyur chen po'i rgyud*; Skt., *Shabda maha prasamga mula tantra*.

^f Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1988, p. 26.

great number of Masters belonging to the Ancient or Nyingmapa tradition, which introduced Dzogchen into Tibet, have stated that Mahamadhyamaka is the “highest” subschool of Madhyamaka and of the Mahayana in general: as we will see in the last chapter of this book, this subschool *encompasses* the view of the Prasangika, which it places in an ampler framework that includes the totality of the Madhyamaka subschools, showing to which aspect of reality or stage of the Mahayana Path each of them responds, and validating it in its own particular context.

Furthermore, as Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche has noted,^a neither the Madhyamaka Prasangika, nor Mahamadhyamaka, nor any other Mahayana school, could fully coincide with Ati Dzogpa Chenpo, for the latter has three aspects, which are the Base, the Path and the Fruit—all of which are expressions of the Path of spontaneous liberation and as such are utterly different from their equivalents in all schools of the Mahayana and other lower vehicles. The fact that Dzogchen coincides with the Prasangikas in acknowledging the impossibility of concepts to correspond to reality and in rejecting the “inherent” existence of entities even on the conventional plane, is far from implying that the complex constituted by the Base, the Path and the Fruit of Dzogchen (each of which has three aspects) coincide with the complex constituted by the Base, Path and Fruit of the Prasangika—and, in fact, taken as a whole they are quite different from each other.^{b5}

The point in the Nyingmapa way of classifying theoretical views is that “higher” Paths and vehicles lead to a more complete and profound realization than lower ones, and that the views of the “higher” Paths and vehicles, insofar as they respond to and try to express a more complete and profound realization than those of the lower ones, are necessarily “higher” than those of the latter. The Mahamadhyamaka and the Prasangika subschools of Madhyamika philosophy pertain to the Mahayana; though this vehicle is “higher” than the Hinayana, insofar as it pertains to the Path of renunciation, it is “lower” than all Tantric Vehicles belonging to the Paths of purification and transformation—which themselves are “lower” than the Path of spontaneous liberation, consisting in Ati Dzogpa Chenpo.⁶ Correspondingly, the realization of the absolute truth of the Mahayana is not the same as the Dzogchen unveiling of what the Atiyoga designates as the Base or zhi^c, which this vehicle views as realization. In fact, according to one of the explanations of the Base in the Atiyogatantrayana, the former has two aspects, which are katak^d or primordial purity, corresponding to voidness, and lhundrub^e or spontaneous perfection, consisting of clarity and appearances. In the state of absolute truth of the Mahayana, the Base does not unveil through and through: its katak aspect is privileged, and so there is a *certain* emphasis on voidness, while its lhundrub aspect is *to some extent* neglected.⁷ Contrariwise, in Ati Dzogpa Chenpo the unveiling of the Base is total, and therefore katak and lhundrub manifest in their indivisibility, none of them being privileged over the other. Thus, the absolute truth of the Mahayana is clearly partial with regard to the complete and perfect realization of Ati Dzogpa Chenpo, and the theoretical explanation of reality provided by the latter is far more correct, and thus “higher” and more profound, than are those of the various schools and subschools within the former.

^a *Ibidem.*

^b *Ibidem.*

^c *gZhi.*

^d *Ka-dag.*

^e *Lhun-grub.*

The above may seem to be quite a radical statement, and therefore it must be substantiated. Namkhai Nyingpo^a, one of the main direct disciples of Padmasambhava, was a realized practitioner of Shantarakshita's tradition of gradual Mahayana, as well as one of the most realized Tibetan practitioners of the Chinese Ch'an School, which transmits the Tönmun or "sudden" tradition of the Mahayana. Thus, he was most qualified for comparing the final result of successively going through the five paths (Skt., *marga*; Tib., *lam*) and eleven levels (Skt., *bhumi*; Tib., *sa*) of the gradual Mahayana,⁸ with the Contemplation (of) the ultimate condition to which the sudden school gives direct access. And in fact, he never contradicted the claim of Ch'an or Zen according to which the Contemplation of this school is the very state of Buddhahood (corresponding to the fifth path and the eleventh level of the gradual Mahayana).

However, Namkhai Nyingpo also was a realized Master of the Dzogchen Path of spontaneous liberation, as well as a Master of the Tantric Path of transformation, and so he was able to realize, and to explain in his *Kathang Dennga*^b, that the Contemplation of Ch'an or Zen implied some degree of attention and therefore of directionality, failing to surpass the duality of center and periphery, and that this manifested as a certain partiality towards voidness. Consequently, this Contemplation and the corresponding realization were not the condition of total plenitude and perfection called Dzogchen—the totally panoramic state beyond the duality center / periphery, beyond attention and beyond directionality. Though, as we have seen, the Contemplation of the sudden Mahayana corresponded to the supreme and final realization of the gradual Mahayana, it was not the self-manifested condition of total Space-Time-Awareness called Dzogchen, wherein the Vajra nature containing the three kayas becomes perfectly evident in its entirety.

Namkhai Nyingpo illustrated the above with two particular examples. The first is that of a hen picking grains: though it may seem that the hen is engrossed in the ground, it is actually looking at the grains. The second is that of a person threading a needle: though it may seem that the person is engrossed in the sky, she or he is actually looking at the needle's eye. The ground and the sky are examples of the condition called Dzogchen, which, unlike the ground and the sky, is *not* an object of knowledge, but Total Space-Time-Awareness utterly beyond the subject-object duality,^c beyond consciousness as such, and therefore beyond directional attention and intentionality. What the examples are meant to illustrate is the fact that, though it may seem that the practitioner of Ch'an or Zen dwells in the condition called Dzogchen, in her or him there is still a certain degree of directionality, a partiality towards voidness that subtly veils the indivisibility of *katak* and *lhundrub*.⁹

Furthermore, in the Tantras, the trikaya is not merely the Fruit of Buddhahood, for it corresponds to the Vajra-nature, which is perfectly actual and complete as the Base (and therefore is actual and complete in all beings of *samsara* just as much as in the fully Awake ones of *nirvana*).¹⁰ Such a view is not found *exactly* in the same way in most Mahayana Sutras; even in the Sutras of the Third Promulgation (*dharmacakra*) that assert that all sentient beings have the Buddha-nature, we often find a conception of this Buddha-nature as mere potency, which in order to become actual has to develop gradually

^a *Nam-mkha'i sNying-po*.

^b *bKa'-thang sDe-lnga*.

^c Skt. *grahaka-grahya* (Tib. 'dzin - gzung), *vishayi-vishaya/artha* (Tib. *chos can - yul/don*) or *dharmin-jñeya* (Tib. *chos can/yul can - shes bya*). (The normal order of the terms is the inverse of the English: *grahya-grahaka, vishaya-vishayi*, etc.)

by means of the practice of the Path as the main cause and of a set of contributory conditions, or we find the idea that a radical change is needed for Awakening to obtain (Buddhahood being generally explained in the Mahayana as the effect of a cause).¹¹ Contrariwise, in the inner Tantras of the Nyingmapa, rather than maturing progressively through the confluence of a cause and a set of contributory conditions, the actual Buddha-nature simply has to unveil. In Dzogchen Atiyoga, in particular, this unveiling has to take place in a spontaneous manner rather than as the effect of an action, for action is by its very nature conditioning and therefore cannot result in the unveiling of the unconditioned; furthermore, the first time this unveiling occurs, it does so in a sudden way.

Since the Mahayana, being always partial toward voidness, cannot make fully patent the indivisibility of *katak* and *lhundrub* that characterizes Dzogchen *qua* Base, *qua* Path and *qua* Fruit, and since the Mahayana conception of the Buddha-nature falls short of the Vajra-nature having the two aspects of *katak* and *lhundrub* that is the *actual* state of Buddhahood *qua* Base, it would be incorrect to assert that the statement “form is no other than emptiness and emptiness is no other than form” in the *Prajñāparamita Hridaya Sutra* (which, besides, is not among those that posit a Buddha-nature), may express the principle of the indivisibility of *katak* and *lhundrub* that is pivotal in Ati Dzogpa Chenpo and in the inner Tantras of the Nyingmapa in general. In particular, in the Dzogchen teachings, the principle of *lhundrub*, consisting in all-accomplishing spontaneity, is responsible for the attainment of a realization that is not the effect of a cause, but that is utterly beyond the cause-effect relation.

Furthermore, several teachers have used the *Prajñāparamita Hridaya Sutra*'s claim that there is no *karma* in order to show that the statement by Garab Dorje^a (who introduced Buddhist Dzogchen into our world) according to which he had found a teaching beyond cause and effect, would not be heterodox even in the context of the Mahayana sutras. However, in general these teachers immediately let their students know that this does not imply that there is any kind of identity between the *Prajñāparamita* and Dzogchen, insofar as Garab Dorje's statement is principally alluding to the fact that in Dzogchen practice it is clear that Awakening is *not* the effect of a cause. In fact, the above-referred principle of *lhundrub*, corresponding to all-accomplishing spontaneity beyond intentionality or effort, which is neither explained nor consistently applied in the Mahayana, is pivotal in the application of the Dzogchen teachings and, in particular, of the “higher” methods of these teachings (it finds its supreme instance in the practices of Thögel^b and the Yangthik^c, which uproot delusion precisely by activating loops inherent in the human system that dissolve the illusory, delusive doer of action every time it manifests). As we will see when comparing Dzogchen to the schools of the Mahayana and to the Anuyoga, even in Direct Introduction, which marks the very onset of the Dzogchen Path, it is evident to the fortunate practitioner that spontaneous Awake Awareness or rangrig^d arises precisely the way the particle “rang” suggests—that is, in a totally spontaneous way—and thus that it is not the effect of a cause.

To conclude, Dzogchen Atiyoga flatly rejects the concept of the two truths that is pivotal in the Sutrāyana. Below, in the discussion of the subschools of the Madhyamaka

^a *dGa'-rab rDo-rje*.

^b *Thod-rgal*.

^c *Yang-thig*.

^d *Rang-rig*.

School of the Mahayana, we will see that both the Prasangikas and the higher Swatantrikas agree that the distinction between the two truths is not ultimate. However, this view is posited on purely logical grounds, for both subschools insist on the need for the superior bodhisattva to alternate between a Contemplation state wherein absolute truth manifests, and a post-Contemplation state of so-called “correct” relative truth in which there is a delusory perception of substantiality, attenuated and balanced by the knowledge of illusoriness deriving from Contemplation. This is very different from the outright rejection of the two truths in the Dzogchen teachings, which logically follows from the imperative to maintain the state of Contemplation during the whole of one’s daily activities, throughout wakefulness and sleep, and from the availability of the powerful methods that make this possible: this imperative, if actualized, makes it pointless to posit a post-Contemplation state wherein (a “correct”) relative truth would manifest.

Treatises discussing the theoretical views of the various Vehicles have existed for millennia. These views are elucidated even in some of the most ancient root texts of the Atiyogatantrayana; it was done in the *Rigpa Rangshar Gyü*^a, a key Tantra of the Dzogchen Menngagde^b (*Upadesha*), and it has continued to be done in the secondary literature of the Nyingmapa until our days. Padmasambhava himself expounded them in his authoritative *Menngag Tawai Threngwa*^{c12} or *Necklace of Theoretical Views*, which has often been taken as a paradigm in classifying such views, and which even in our time continues to be taken as such (for example, the discussion of theoretical views in Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu’s *The Precious Vase*, written towards the end of the 20th century, closely follows the schema laid down in Padmasambhava’s book).^d

In my book *Buddhism and Dzogchen* / Vol. I / *Buddhism: A Dzogchen Outlook* (the revised and enlarged English version of Part One of Capriles, Elías, 2000a), I expounded the theoretical views the Nyingma way—that is, in terms of Paths and vehicles, rather than in terms of the philosophical schools of the Sutrāyana that were traditionally taught in Tibet. However, as remarked in the Introduction to that book, in it vehicles were not classified in terms of the schema of Padmasambhava’s *Necklace of Theoretical Views*, but in terms of the one that is common to the *Kathang Dennga*^e by Namkhai Nyingpo^f and the *Samten Migdrön*^g by Nubchen Sangye Yeshe^h. This schema does not assort the vehicles of the Nyingmapa into Hinayana, Mahayana and Vajrayana, but into: Path of renunciation (Tib., pong lamⁱ), corresponding to the Sutrāyana; Path of transformation (Tib., gyur lam^j), corresponding to the Mantrāyana, Vajrayana or Tantrāyana; and Path of spontaneous

^a The full name of this text, which is one of the seventeen main Tantras of the Dzogchen Menngagde (*rdzogs chen man ngag sde*) and that was originally transmitted in our era by Primordial Master Garab Dorje (*dGarab rDo-rje*), is *Rig pa rang shar chen po’i rgyud*. It is found in the *rNying ma’i rgyud bcu bdun*, vol. 1. One current edition is the one published by Sangye Dorje (*Sangs rgyas rDo rje*) in New Delhi in 1973.

^b *Man-ngag-sde* or *man-ngag-gyi sde*.

^c *Man-ngag lta-ba’i phreng-ba*.

^d Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu, 1999/2001.

^e *bKa’-thang sDe-lnga*.

^f (gNubs) *Nam-mkha’i sNying-po*.

^g *bSam-gtan Mig-sgron*.

^h *gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas Ye-shes*.

ⁱ *sPong lam*.

^j *sGyur lam*.

liberation (Tib., dröl lam^a), corresponding to the Atiyogatantrayana, which in this book I will abridge as Atiyana. It is also worth noting that this schema, unlike the one proper of Padmasambhava's text, includes the sudden Mahayana as a vehicle, which it rates higher than the Bodhisattvayana / gradual Mahayana. Furthermore, since *Buddhism and Dzogchen* was to be published in the West, where the numerous Buddhist Schools existing throughout Asia have been discussed in many works, I decided *not* to circumscribe the discussion of theoretical views to those normally reviewed in Tibetan manuals, and so I briefly dealt with the views of the Theravada School of the Hinayana, of the Chinese Mahayana schools (including the Ch'an School of sudden Mahayana), and of the Chinese Mi-tsung School of outer or lower Vajrayana.

Toward the beginning of 2002, while I was preparing the above book, I took part in the Dzogchen Community's Teachers' Training held in Margarita Island (Venezuela). In it, Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche had me expound the theoretical views of the philosophical schools of the Sutrayana Path of Renunciation traditionally taught in Tibet. However, the limits of time forestalled me from answering in full detail the questions asked by the other participants—which led me to prepare a discussion of the said views, which was originally meant to be published in the English edition of *Buddhism and Dzogchen*. Nonetheless, since the result seemed to be too lengthy and philosophically complex, I decided to turn it into a book—which is the one the reader has in her or his hands.

This book expounds and classifies the theoretical views of the two schools of the Shravakayana and the two schools of the Gradual Mahayana or Bodhisattvayana that are universally expounded in Tibetan texts and included in Tibetan curricula, which I had not explained in *Buddhism and Dzogchen*: the Vaibhashika and Sautrantika schools of the Shravakayana, and the Yogachara and Madhyamaka schools of the gradual Mahayana or Bodhisattvayana (including the various subschools that developed within the Madhyamaka School). It must be borne in mind that the order in which these Buddhist philosophical schools were just listed and in which they are discussed in this book is not chronological: though the Sarvastivada schools from which the Vaibhashika derived were more ancient than the Sautrantika, the Madhyamaka School arose earlier than the Yogachara School. However, the order in question is the one sanctioned by tradition, for these four schools, when studied one after the other in the traditional order, make up a graded course on Buddhist philosophy that works in a way that is reminiscent of the Christian scholastic method, which may be compared to a wooden stairway in which each step is supported by the lower one. And the same applies to the subschools of Madhyamaka, which are reviewed in a sequence that concludes with Mahamadhyamaka, pinnacle of all Sutrayana Buddhist schools of thought.

Validity or Invalidity of this Work:

Writing from Inside or Outside the Buddhist Tradition

Finally, many present-day Buddhologists would deny validity to this book insofar as it was written by a full-time practitioner of the tradition that it discusses; however, it is precisely because of this that there is a *possibility* that the work may have some validity. In Napper, Elizabeth, 2003, pp. 72-3, we are reminded that those who gave rise to the

^a *Grol lam*.

Madhyamika philosophical tradition—Nagarjuna, Aryadeva, Buddhapalita, Bhavaviveka, Chandrakirti and so on—were full-time Buddhist practitioners. She writes (pp. 678-9):

“Paul J. Griffiths... claims that a Buddhologist cannot be a Buddhist, since such apparently hopelessly cripples the powers of critical thought. One wonders whether if he would also say that Christianity can only be studied in a scholarly way by non-Christians, a requirement that would effectively end most scholarly study and negate most that has been done.”

Furthermore, the subtle doctrines of Buddhism can only be understood through *realization* of the practice, which gives access to the Vision of reality that gave rise to these doctrines and that is inaccessible to nonrealized individuals. To claim that in order to interpret the Buddhist doctrines correctly one has to be a nonpractitioner is like asserting that in order to judge the quality of paintings one has to be blind. (In particular, the method applied in producing this book is what I have called a “metaontological hermeneutics,” which only those who have some realization of the condition that is free from the delusive phenomenon of being can employ. For a description of this method, see Capriles, Elías, work in progress.¹³)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND ADMONITION

Most special thanks are due to Elio Guarisco for the research work concerning the usages of the term *khorsum* (*'khor gsum*), and the origin of the term *drodok* (*sgro 'dogs*, equivalent of the Sanskrit *samaropa* or *adhyaropa*); to Adriano Clemente for his help concerning the *Vairo Drabag's* explanation of the origin of the outer Tantras and the etymology of the term *Yogachara*; to Victor Klimov for pointing out an omission in the explanation of *dang*^a energy, and to Donatella Rossi for her advise as to how to find some data that were missing in my manuscript. Likewise, most special thanks are due to Jim Valby and Edgar M. Cooke for their invaluable help with the Bibliography, and to David Meyer for having sent me as a gift his personal copy of Guenther, Herbert V., 1977 (which I needed for completing both the present book and *Buddhism and Dzogchen*).

Finally, a most special recognition is owed to Grisha Mokhin for freely offering me the webpage in which the electronic version of this book was originally published and for the wonderful—and equally free—work in preparing that webpage.¹⁴

I excuse myself for the important errors that most likely crept into this book. I never followed a Khenpo or Geshe course, nor did I study Buddhology or Tibetology at the University; as stated in the Introduction to *Buddhism and Dzogchen*, when given the choice between going into retreat in the higher Himalayas or undertaking University studies on Tibetan Buddhism, I decidedly went for the former. Furthermore, so far no one has read this work for conceptual errors. However, I still think that it is very important to publish it, for I am certain that its contributions far outweigh its likely shortcomings; I hope the feedback I may receive from specialized readers may help me prepare further editions in which whatever errors may have slipped into this first edition will be progressively purged out. (Whoever wishes to help me with technical criticism concerning this book may contact me at eliascapriles@dzogchen.ru)

I must note that here I will not deal with the *practices* sanctioned by the schools reviewed in it; the reader interested in a discussion of these practices may consult other works.^b

The fact that, with very few exceptions, quotations included in the book were taken from works in Western languages, was not the fruit of a didactic decision but of fortuitous circumstances.¹⁵ However, I have often modified the terminology used in those works—

^a *gDangs*.

^b Among such works, I find the following worth mentioning: Khenpo Tsültrim Gyamtso, Spanish, 1983; Khenpo Tsültrim Gyamtso, 2001; Geshe Lhundrub Zopa and Jeffrey Hopkins, Spanish translation 1977.

However, at some point I will prepare a text with instructions for a Madhyamika analytic meditation on the absence of a self-nature both in human beings and in phenomena that are not human beings.

not because I regard it to be faulty, but because it had to be homogenized with that in the rest of the book so that the present work may be fully coherent and at the same time may read smoothly.

There are two types of notes: (1) footnotes, with the calls in letters, are used both for providing book references and for giving the Wylie transliteration of Tibetan terms; (2) endnotes, with the calls in numbers, are used for conceptual clarifications, for enlarging ideas expressed in the regular text, and so on.

Note on the ideal way to read this book

Concerning the way in which this book ideally should be read, I must warn that, since the length of some of the explanations in them made it impossible to include the notes at the bottom of the page, and since the latter's contents are often quite complex, consulting them systematically during the initial reading of the book could make it hard for some readers to maintain the continuity of the regular text. Therefore, I think some readers may find it more convenient, on the initial reading, not to consult the endnotes. Nevertheless, the latter contain information that I deem quite important and essential—to such a degree that they constitute a parallel text, which to some extent may be viewed as a commentary on the regular text. Therefore, if the first reading of the regular text elicits sufficient interest in the readers, I would advise them to do a second reading, this time stopping to read each note with the purpose of interweaving the two parallel texts that coexist in the work.

Words in Foreign Languages

When original terms are given in italics within parentheses with no indication of language, the reader should assume that they are in Sanskrit. Words belonging to other languages, and Sanskrit terms when they are accompanied by terms in other languages, are always preceded by an indication of the language to which they belong. Terms in Pali and in the language of Oddiyana also are given in italics, but Tibetan terms are written in regular script and in a phonetic approximation, with the Wylie transliteration given in italics in accompanying footnotes the first time a term is used.

However, in Sanskrit and Pali terms the diacritical marks were omitted and some letters were modified so as to allow laymen to have at least a loose idea of their pronunciation; in particular, an “h” or an “i” were added to the syllables that needed it for English-speaking laymen to be able to produce an approximate pronunciation. For example, since “vr̥tti,” for example, sounds approximately as “vrit̥ti,” I Romanize it as *vrit̥ti*; in terms such as “Siva” or “risi,” in which the “s” sounds (to a greater or lesser degree, according to the case) like a “sh,” I add an “h” and write *Shiva* and *rishi*. I do the same with terms such as “citta,” which sounds “chitta:” I add an “h” and write it as *chitta*. After “s” and “sh” I chose to write “w” instead of “v,” but the reader should be aware that the letter so transcribed to some extent may sound like a “v.” “Ñ” sounds like in Spanish (i.e., it sounds “ny”), but the combination “jñ” may sound somehow between “gñ” and “gj.” In turn, the combinations “ph” and “th” do not sound close to “f” and “d,” respectively, but as an aspirated “p” and an aspirated “t.” And so on.

Concerning the Tibetan phonetic transcription, in general “ö” sounds like in German (i.e., like a French “e”): molding the lips as though one were to pronounce an “o,” one pronounces an “ai” (i.e., a Spanish or Italian “e”). “Ü” is pronounced like in German (i.e., like a French “u”): placing the lips as though one were to pronounce a “u,” one pronounces an “ee” (corresponding to the sound “i” in Latin languages in general). The sound of “zh” is a bit like that of a “sh,” but is much closer to that of a French “j.” And, like in Sanskrit, the combinations “ph” and “th” do not sound close to “f” and “d,” respectively, but as an aspirated “p” and an aspirated “t.”

In particular, so that the English-speaking layman may approach both the pronunciations of Central Tibet and that of Kham^a, she or he must bear in mind the following: when “y” appears after “g,” “k” or “kh,” a Central Tibetan will pronounce it as a “y,” but a Khampa will pronounce it as “gjy,” “kjy” or “khjy” (placing a greater or lesser emphasis on the “j” according to the varieties of Khampa pronunciation and according to the combination of letters). For example, a Central Tibetan will pronounce the combination “ghye” as “ghye,” but a Khampa may pronounce it as “ghjye,” and a Central Tibetan will pronounce “khy” as “khy,” but a Khampa may pronounce it almost as “jee.” In turn, the letter “ä” may be pronounced as “a,” as “ai” (i.e., like a Spanish “e”), or somewhere between the two sounds, according to the origin of the individual.

Finally, the genitive termination *a’i* was rendered as “ai,” to be pronounced “ai” or “ie” according to the pronunciation of the region of Tibet one may choose to follow.

^a *Khams*.

DIAGRAM OF THE PHILOSOPHICAL SCHOOLS AND SUBSCHOOLS
IN TERMS OF 'HIGHER' AND 'LOWER'

		Mahamadhyamaka
	Subtle, Inner Madhyamaka	Madhyamaka Zhentongpa
MADHYAMAKA		
		Madhyamaka Prasangika
	Coarse, Outer Madhyamaka	Madhyamaka Swatantrika
YOGACHARA		
SAUTRANTIKA		
VAIBHASHIKA		

DIAGRAM OF THE PHILOSOPHICAL SCHOOLS AND SUBSCHOOLS
IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

VAIBHASHIKA (second century CE)	SAUTRANTIKA (<i>circa</i> 150 CE)	MADHYAMAKA (<i>circa</i> second century CE)
YOGACHARA (fourth century CE) ¹⁶		
Madhyamaka Prasangika (<i>circa</i> 510 CE)		
Madhyamaka Swatantrika-Sautrantika (<i>circa</i> 540 CE)		
Higher Madhyamaka Swatantrika-Yogachara (<i>circa</i> sixth / seventh century CE)		
Lower Madhyamaka Swatantrika-Yogachara (early eighth century CE)		
Inner, Subtle Madhyamaka (systematized <i>circa</i> eleventh century CE)		

THE VAIBHASHIKA SCHOOL
OF THE SHRAVAKAYANA

The Vaibhashika is the school of “those who adhere to the *Vibhasha*,” insofar as it is based on the two great Sarvastivada Commentaries to the Abhidharma: the *Vibhasha* or *Detailed Explanation* and the *Mahavibhasha* or *Great Detailed Explanation*. It represents a late phase of the Aryasarvastivada, which was the school of those who upheld a realistic or *sarvastivada* view (in this context, this means that they adhered to a substantialistic, commonsense viewpoint concerning phenomena that are not human beings—i.e., what is referred to by the Sanskrit word *dharma*¹⁷) and which, as shown in the discussion of the Shrivakayana in Part One of my book *Buddhism and Dzogchen*, subsequently subdivided into several schools. The Vaibhashikas seemingly compounded the views of some of the schools that arose from the subdivision of the Aryasarvastivadins; however, they seem to have been closer to the Mulasarvastivadins than to any other of the schools issued from this subdivision.

As stated above, the Vaibhashika School is “realistic” concerning entities other than human beings, which according to it were made of atoms existing materially, and were held together by the *karman* (i.e., the power of *karma*) of sentient beings. Not only does this school hold that such entities exist substantially, but it sustains that any entity that at some point exists substantially does so in the three times (past, present and future). In general, the said entities were divided into five basic sub categories, which were:

(A) Apparent forms (*rupa*). There are eleven types of such forms, which are: (1-5) the five objects of the senses, (6-10) the five senses, and (11) unrevealing forms. So-called “unrevealing forms” are subtle forms exemplified by the absence of a given vow of the *Pratimoksha* (“vows for individual liberation”), the subtle form of the evil action of killing that accompanies butchers even when they are not killing, and so on.

(B) Principal mind (*chitta*). This refers to the consciousnesses of the five senses along with the mental faculty that perceives external objects, and as such, it gives us the knowledge of an object in general. Concerning it, Vasubandhu’s *Abhidharmakosha* states “consciousness is a selecting awareness,” and also “perception is a process of singling out [segments in a sensory *Gestalt*, in order to take them as figure and perceive them as unitary objects].”^a

(C) Concomitant mental events (*chaitasika*). These are the fifty-one mental events that according to this school may accompany minds in the apprehension of objects. The comprehension of objects by consciousness and the apprehension of the specific qualities of objects by the mental events arise simultaneously with the objects that they apprehend: the principal mind and the mental events always have the same reference, have the same scrutiny, occur at the same time with the same sensory basis, and have the same substance. As stated in the *Madhyantavivaga*: “Seeing a thing belongs to mind; seeing its specific characteristics belongs to a mental event.”^b Each of the philosophical schools of the Sutravayana holds a particular group of mental events to be indispensable for perception to occur, insofar as it deems them to be necessary for determining the characteristics of objects, and therefore asserts that they are involved in all cognitions: these are the

^a Guenther, H. V. and L. Kawamura, Trans., 1975.

^b *Ibidem*.

“omnipresent” mental events, which according to the Vaibhashika are ten, including feeling tone (*vedana*), impulse (*chetana*), recognition (*samjñā*), and so on. Both mind and mental events are held to be solely aware of external objects, which means that this school does *not* posit an awareness (of) consciousness (Skt., *swasamvittih*; Tib., rangrig).¹⁸

(D) Repetitive mental formations that are not associated either to minds or to mental events, or *chitta-chaitasika-viprayukta-samskara*.¹⁹ These are neither forms nor knowledge of forms; examples of them are: the four characteristics of all that is conditioned or compounded (production, aging, duration and disintegration); meditative absorptions; nouns, words and syllables (which are held to exist substantially throughout the three times). It is held that any action, even when completed, has inexhaustible substantiality.

(E) Unconditioned and uncompounded (*asamskrita*) phenomena. These are space (*akasha*), nonperception of phenomena due to the absence of *pratyaya* or contributory conditions and resulting from concentration rather than discrimination (*apratismkhyanirodha*), and supreme wisdom of cessation deriving from discrimination (*pratisamkhyanirodha*). It is held that all of these are free from corruption insofar as that which is free from birth also is free from death, and insofar as that which is not compounded will not disaggregate.

They deem the above five types of “object of knowledge” (*jñeya*) to “be” (*sat*) “things” (*bhava*)²⁰ insofar as they are *actual* in the sense of the German adjective *wirlich*: they regard them as being capable of producing an effect or having a function. While the phenomena of the first four categories are all deemed impermanent, those of the last type (the unconditioned or uncompounded) are regarded as permanent. If one asks how can space be a “thing,” they will reply that the essential nonobstructing character of space allows the movement of other objects to occur within it, and that this is most clearly an *effect* of space. To conclude, all of these entities are held to exist substantially (*dravyasiddha*), but in a conventional (Skt., *vyavaharasat*; Tib., thanyaikyī denpa^a) rather than in a necessary (Skt., *dravyasat*; Tib., dzesu yōpa^b) manner.

However, being a Buddhist system of thought, naturally the Vaibhashika school was not “realistic” concerning human individuals, which they viewed as not existing substantially, for the Shrivakayana and in general all Buddhist vehicles and schools of thought explain the apparent unity and subsistence of human beings as an illusion created by the interaction of the five *skandha* or aggregates: *rūpa* or form, *vedana* or sensation, *samjñā* or perception, *samskara* or repetitive mental formations, and *vijñāna* or consciousness.²¹

Concerning the two truths, Vasubandhu’s *Abhidharmakosha* states:^c

A thing that when broken or mentally divided into other things [i.e., into parts] is no longer understood by the mind [to be that thing, such as so for example] a jug or water, is conventionally existent. All other [things] are basically [or absolutely] existent.

Thus the Vaibhashikas held something to be basically or absolutely existent when the idea of it was not lost if someone physically destroyed it or mentally split it into parts, and they held something to be conventionally existent when the knowledge of it as such

^a Tha snyad kyī bden pa

^b rDzas su yod pa

^c Retruncated into English from Geshe Lhundrub Sopa and Jeffrey Hopkins, Spanish translation, 1977.

and such an object was cancelled when physically destroyed or mentally split into parts:^a a jug is a conventionally existing entity because as soon as it falls on the ground and breaks we no longer perceive it as a jar; water is a conventionally existing entity because the very moment we imagine it to be the sum of many atoms we no longer perceive it as water (it is important to bear in mind that this criterion is the condition for the refutations of self-existence developed by the Madhyamikas to work: hence the importance of studying this school before proceeding with the study of Madhyamaka philosophy). In turn, they viewed mind and its experiences as consisting of a sequence of indivisible noetic events and thus as being mentally divisible, which means they viewed them as existing conventionally. Thus the things that Vaibhashikas held to be basically or absolutely existent were: (1) indivisible atoms; (2) indivisible noetic events; and (3) the three unconditioned or uncompounded elements listed above (space and so on).

This school also divided objects into tainted and untainted. The former are defined as those that cause defilements to increase, and the latter are defined as those that do not cause defilements to increase. For example, in general the five skandhas are regarded as tainted objects insofar as they may cause defilements to increase; however, there are exceptions to this rule, for the true paths that constitute the Fourth Noble Truth, though they consist of the five skandhas or include the skandhas, are not tainted objects insofar as they do not cause defilements to increase (but, on the contrary, cause them to decrease). Thus it is said that, except for the true paths, all conditioned or compounded phenomena are tainted, and that, contrariwise, unconditioned or uncompounded elements (*asamskrita dharma*) are all untainted. In the case of the unconditioned or uncompounded elements, there is no exception to this rule, for the three unconditioned or uncompounded elements listed above²² are all held to be untainted. Thus, it is said that the untainted phenomena are the unconditioned or uncompounded elements and the true paths (the latter, with some specific exceptions²³).

The Vaibhashika School, which is not one of the eighteen original schools of Ancient Buddhism, has been considered here because it is one of the two Hinayana schools included in Tibetan curricula. This school has also been widely discussed outside Tibet; for example, the Indian scholar and ex President S. Radhakrishnan, who in his book *Indian Philosophy* did not include the Theravada among the philosophical schools of Buddhism, did include the Vaibhashika among them.^b

^a Guenther, Herbert V., 1957, 2d. ed. 1974.

^b Radhakrishnan, S., 1923; 2d ed., 1929; seventh impression of 2d ed., 1962, vol. 1.

THE SAUTRANTIKA SCHOOL
OF THE SHRAVAKAYANA

The Sautrantikas or followers of the Sutantra School, seem to have split from the Aryasarvastivada School in Kashmir around 150 BC. The name of this school responds to the fact that its followers adhered solely to the Sutrapitaka, rejecting the Abhidharmapitaka of the Sarvastivadin and its doctrine of the “all is.” They were also called Darstantika or Exemplifiers insofar as they taught the whole of their doctrines by means of examples.

According to the Gelug tradition there are two kinds of Sautrantikas: (1) the unreformed, who adhere to the treatises and who assert there is no such thing as an awareness of consciousness (Skt., *swasamvittih*; Tib., rangrig), who are mainly those who follow Vasubandhu’s *Abhidharmakosha* and who are therefore influenced by the Sarvastivada School (of which Vasubandhu’s text is the most important compendium, even though later on its author, under the influence of his elder brother, Asanga, converted to the Yogachara School); and (2) the reformed, who adhere to logic and posit an awareness of consciousness like the one upheld by the Yogachara School,²⁴ who follow Dharmakirti’s *Pramanavinishchaya*—a text that according to the Gelugpa expressed Yogachara views, according to most non-Gelug Tibetan interpreters expressed Sautrantika views, and according to some of the most renowned Indian Madhyamika Masters expressed Madhyamika-Swatantrika views.²⁵ For reasons that will be explained in the next chapter, I believe that Dharmakirti should not be classified either as a Sautrantika or as a Yogachara, but as a Madhyamika.²⁶ According to this Gelug view, the Sautrantikas that adhere to the treatises and that reject the concept of an awareness of consciousness, who, as we have seen, are close to the Vaibhashika School, have a conception of the two truths that corresponds to the one held by this school. In general, all non-Gelug interpreters are unanimous in rejecting this Gelug division of the Sautrantika School. Yet let us stop for a moment on the view attributed to the Sautrantikas who are supposed to adhere to logic and who posit an awareness of consciousness.

An object (*visaya*) is whatever may be known by a mind, and an object of knowledge (*jñeya*) is that which can be an object to a mind. This school divides objects according to whether they: (a) belong to relative or absolute truth; (b) are specifically or generally characterized; (c) are negative or affirmative; (d) are manifest or hidden throughout the three times (past, present and future); and (e) are singular or different. Here we will concentrate on the division of objects according to the two truths and its relation to their division into specifically characterized, nonmental, physical objects, and generally characterized, nonphysical, mental objects. We will begin by discussing these two types of objects, as only once we have a clear understanding of them will we be able to discuss their relation to the two truths.

Those supposedly nonmental, physical objects that the Sautrantika referred to as specifically characterized phenomena were also termed “actual objects” insofar as they functioned and produced effects; “basic truths” insofar as they were considered to be the basis for the arising of the type of objects that this subschool did not deem to be basic; “produced phenomena” insofar as they originated and ceased; “ever-changing things” insofar as they constantly changed during their existence; and “truly existing phenomena” insofar as this school considered that the supposed self-existence of this type of objects withstood logical analysis without being dependent on mental imputations or on

terminology. These objects were supposed to be external to human experience, to be real and to be made of atoms (however, the realism of this school is limited, for it held atoms not to exist *materialiter*, and not to touch each other even though there were supposed to be no intervals between them). They could not be directly apprehended by obscured minds, and could be perceived by valid direct knowers only.

Westerners who are not familiar enough with Buddhist philosophy could think that “obscured minds” are the minds of one category of people, and that “valid knowers” are the individuals of an altogether different category of people. This is not so: the terminology of this school was not based on the assumption that there is a continuous, subsistent mind, and therefore the terms “mind” and “knower” referred to the knowledge that arose in a single act of cognition. Thus, according to this system, in normal human beings obscured minds manifested in some cognitions and valid knowers manifested in other cognitions. (New valid knowers were “direct” when they perceived their object directly, and “illative” when they knew them by means of inference. New direct valid knowers could be of four classes: [1] the ones that perceive directly through the senses, [2] the ones that perceive directly through the mind, [3] the ones that perceive themselves directly by virtue of awareness of consciousness [Skt., *swasamvittih*; Tib., rangrig], and [4] the ones that perceive directly in yoga. In the preceding paragraph and in the present one the term “valid knowers” refers to valid direct knowers of the first type, which consist in the knowledge that apprehends objects in the moments of bare, pure sensation that will be discussed later on.)

We have seen that only valid knowers can perceive specifically characterized phenomena, which cannot be directly perceived by obscured minds: the latter can only discern such phenomena indirectly, by means of inference. In fact, the only objects that can *appear* to obscured minds are the “mental objects lacking physical existence” or “generally characterized phenomena” that this school indistinctly referred to as “nonactual objects,” “nonproduced phenomena,” “phenomena that are not constantly changing” and “falsely existing phenomena.” Though this school characterized the latter as unreal, it held them to be true to an obscured mind (*samvriti-satya*).

These objects could be of four different types: generic images, images of memory, the posterior image of an object that was perceived through the senses, and imaginary constructions. The first three could be loosely said to be “representations” in the sense given this term when used as a loose synonym of what Locke, Berkeley, Hume and some “ideologues” termed “ideas,” which in Hume’s view always reproduced a concrete entity of the corresponding class, and which, insofar as they are images, are particular rather than universal—and therefore it would not be exact to view them as *universalia post rem*—and, as we have seen, in the view of the Buddhist school under consideration in themselves they are not real.²⁷ In fact, the first three types of nonphysical mental objects or generally characterized phenomena, like Hume’s ideas, necessarily have a particular and concrete content rather than a universal and abstract one: this content was derived from the particular perceptions that they reproduced, and often from new experiences that successively modified them. However, the philosophical problem that the Sautrantikas tried to solve by positing generally characterized, mental, nonphysical phenomena, was very different from those that gave rise to Western empiricism and nominalism, and thus it is imperative to acknowledge that this Sautrantika concept, which this school so strikingly contrasted to that of specifically characterized, nonmental physical objects, has no exact equivalent in any of the most widely popularized systems of Western philosophy.²⁸

Objects of this type arise firstly in early life, though, as advanced above, they may continue to be modified during the whole of an individual's lifetime. For example, when a person, upon perceiving the nonmental physical object called "a fire," learns that this phenomenon is a fire, a generic image of "fire" is produced that will intervene in obscured perception each and every time the individual is in the presence of the supposedly nonmental physical object that the Sautrantika regard as a "true fire," or whenever he or she thinks of fire or imagines fire, etc. When the individual first perceives the fire there is a first moment of perception in which an image of the object forms in the eye; however, it does so an instant after the object perceived had the moment of existence reproduced by the image, and so by the time it is perceived the object has already changed—which implies that even in this circumstance the object is not directly apprehended *as it is in the precise moment* when cognition takes place. Nonetheless, the Sautrantika still assert that at the moment there is a bare, pure sensation of the true, impermanent nonmental physical object, insofar as the image in the eye is not modified by the intervention of something false, such as the nonphysical mental object that they call a "subsequent image." Then the next moment this bare, pure sensation is replaced by the perception of the nonphysical mental object that was formed on the basis of the former, which is what they call a "subsequent image." Henceforth, whenever the individual perceives a fire, initially there will be an instant of bare, pure sensation of the nonmental physical object, but immediately thereafter a perception will occur (i.e., a mental knowledge will arise) having as its object the generic, mental, nonphysical image that was formed on the basis of the bare, pure perception of the nonmental physical object—an image which is a false, nonphysical mental object that does not change during its perception, but which the individual will mistake for the real entity, thinking "this is a fire." (As we have seen, later experiences may modify the initial image of the fire, but whatever the image we have of "fire" *at a given stage* may be, that is the image that will intervene in cognition at that stage. However, this does not mean that subsequent images, and in general the mental, nonphysical objects that the Sautrantika call "generic phenomena," are stored some place where they remain without interruption, to be taken out and used for perception whenever necessary; contrariwise, they are said to arise and cease to manifest according to necessity.)

Nonphysical mental entities, despite not changing during cognition, represented what was ever changing; in spite of being ineffectual, they represented what was actual; and so on. Hence, they were deceptive insofar as they led the perceiver to experience the changing as unchanging, the ineffectual as actual, and so on.

As we have seen, this brand of the Sautrantikas claimed that the very nature of obscured minds bars them from directly perceiving the impermanent, ever-changing, nonmental, physical objects that they held to make up the true reality, and asserted that obscured minds could have some knowledge of these objects—albeit indirect and distorted—only by knowing nonphysical, mental objects (this is so because, as we have seen, the mind that arises in the moment of bare, pure sensation of the true, impermanent nonmental physical object is not an obscured mind, but a valid direct knower, which immediately thereafter is replaced by an obscured mind). Moreover, obscured minds perceived nonphysical, mental objects as being true. Therefore, these Sautrantikas held these objects "to be true to obscured minds," and defined what is true to an obscured mind as "a phenomenon that only exists by the imputation of thought or terminology."

Of the four types of mental, nonphysical objects enumerated above, so far we have not touched on imaginary constructions. In the perception of an imaginary construction there is no physical, nonmental entity whatsoever that may be said to exist and be the basis for the formation of the mental, nonphysical object that the obscured mind perceives and takes to be true. Paradigmatic examples of imaginary constructions are the perception of a sound as permanent, and that of a person as being an entity: though an obscured mind may apprehend the corresponding mental, nonphysical images, and so the said images will be no doubt true to that obscured mind, neither of them was derived from the bare, pure sensation of a physical, nonmental entity, for there is simply no corresponding nonmental, physical, true entity. In fact, like the rest of Buddhist schools, the Sautrantikas considered the human self to be but an imaginary construction produced by the interaction of the five aggregates or *skandha*. Likewise, insofar as they held all true, nonmental physical entities to be impermanent, they sustained that permanence was in all cases an imaginary construction. This is the reason why they asserted that phenomena such as the perception of a sound as permanent or of a person as being an entity were *imaginary constructions*, and decreed both of them *not to exist conventionally*. (It must be noted that in the Gelug view, whereas those Sautrantikas who adhered to treatises asserted the person to be the continuity of the five skandhas, those who adhered to valid reasoning, just like the tradition having its source in Dharmakirti [who, as we have seen, the Gelugpa classify as a Yogachara, most Tibetans classify as a Sautrantika, but I have decided to classify as a Madhyamika], insisted that the real person was a subtle and neutral kind of mental knowledge pertaining to consciousness or *vijñana*, which had continuity and subsistence during deep sleep, during meditative absorption and from one life to the next: in fact, it was this subtle and neutral kind of mental knowledge that they deemed to be the vehicle of rebirth.)

The Sautrantika held space to be merely the absence of an obstructing contact, and as such to be something perceivable only by means of inference, through a concept or a mental knowledge. They asserted it to be a phenomenon that is not constantly changing and a nonproduct, and as such, they grouped it with generally characterized phenomena; since they rejected the existence of an ever-changing physical entity that could serve as the basis for the formation of the image of space, it had to be an imaginary construction. However, space is a truth to an obscured mind unable to perceive physical, nonmental, specifically characterized phenomena.

Likewise, though the Madhyamikas held the voidness of entities to be perceivable directly, no Sautrantika ever agreed to this, as they viewed the voidness of entities to be an absence that, just like space, could only be perceivable by means of inference, through a concept or a mental knowledge, and thus to belong to the same category of entities as space.

The point made above concerning voidness may be viewed in the context of the wider view according to which it was possible for an obscure mind to infer, on the basis of mental, nonphysical images and through a concept or a mental knowledge, the true character of physical, nonmental entities. The point is that obscured minds were unable to perceive impermanent, physical, nonmental, specific, true phenomena, for, as we have seen, the mind that arises in the moment of bare, pure sensation of the true, impermanent nonmental physical object is not an obscured mind, but a valid direct knower. In fact, the only way an obscured mind could realize the impermanence of “real” entities was through an inference made on the basis of a perception that was mistaken concerning the object

that appeared to that mind (the nonchanging, nonimpermanent, false, mental, nonphysical, generic phenomenon), even though it was accurate concerning the object of reference (the ever-changing, impermanent, true, physical, nonmental, specific phenomenon). This was so because the nonchanging, nonimpermanent, false, mental, nonphysical, generic phenomenon would be *wrongly* perceived as being ever-changing, and yet this perception would *correctly* give us the ever-changing, impermanent character of the true, physical, nonmental, specific phenomenon.

Contrariwise, this subschool of the Sautrantika held valid knowers not to be ultimately mistaken, either concerning the object that appears to them, or regarding the object of reference: it is when there is a valid direct knower that these Sautrantika speak of a “basic knower,” which is the knowledge of a “basic truth.”

Furthermore, despite the fact that mental, nonphysical objects, which are neither real nor ever-changing, could by no means correspond exactly to physical, nonmental objects, which are real and ever-changing, the Sautrantikas sustained that some of the qualities²⁹ of both objects could either coincide or differ. For example, they claimed that, if the physical, nonmental object that we call a mountain is green, and the mental, nonphysical object in terms of which we experience that mountain is also green, there is coincidence between both objects regarding this quality; however, if we see the mountain as blue, there is no such coincidence, but, on the contrary, there is a divergence between them. This view gave rise to objections from the philosophical schools of the Mahayana; at any rate, it should be clear even to common sense that, if the physical, nonmental, specific phenomena posited by the Sautrantika existed, a mountain of this kind would be blue when seen from afar, green when seen from a closer distance, multicolor when we stand on it, of different colors when we see its different parts with a microscope, and of no particular color when its parts are studied with the equipment used by nuclear physicists. Therefore, by no means could it be correct to say that this type of mountain is blue, green, multicolor or of no particular color, and it would thus be wrong to claim that the color of the mental, nonphysical mountain in terms of which an obscure mind perceives the physical, nonmental mountain can either correspond or not correspond to that of the latter.

According to the whole of the Sautrantikas, and also according to the views of the Vaibhashikas and other Sarvastivadins and in general of the adherents of the Shravakayana, the subsistence of entities in human perception was the result of a succession of moments of consciousness—a view that was adopted by the Yogachara School of the Mahayana.

The Sautrantika School, which is not one of the eighteen original schools of Ancient Buddhism, has been considered here because it is one of the two Hinayana schools included in Tibetan curricula. This school has also been widely discussed outside Tibet; for example, the Indian scholar and ex President S. Radhakrishnan, who was not a Buddhist and did in no way follow Tibetan views (and who, moreover, did not include the Theravada in his discussion of Buddhist philosophical schools), in his book *Indian Philosophy* did discuss the Sautrantika as one of the philosophical schools of Buddhism.^a

^a Radhakrishnan, S., 1923; 2d ed., 1929; seventh impression of 2d ed., 1962, vol. 1.

THE YOGACHARA SCHOOL
OF THE MAHAYANA

The Yogachara School received its name from the fact that it teaches yoga—the name itself means “Behavior of Yoga”³⁰—and in fact it went so far as to assert that the absolute truth of Awakening as it manifests in the Buddhas is only attainable by those who practice yoga. It must be emphasized, however, that in this context the term yoga does neither refer to Patañjali’s Brahmanic, dualistic *darshana* bearing the same name,³¹ nor to any other system involving *hatha yoga* or other types of physical yoga, but to a series of practices of introspection, attention, absorption and inquiry aiming at the rediscovery of our true nature and essence, which is wholly beyond distinctions such as “internal” and “external.” Therefore, though the Sanskrit term yoga literally means “union,” in this school the word does not allude to the idea of achieving union with an external deity or an external absolute reality—and thus the etymology of the Tibetan translation of the term yoga, which is naljor^a, does better justice to the concept that gives its name to this school than does the Sanskrit original.³²

The other names that refer to this school reflect its theoretical conception of reality: Chittamatra means “Mind-Only,” Vijñānavada means “Adhering to Consciousness,” and Vijñaptimatra means “Representation Only.” These names, which will be further discussed below, derive from the fact that this school, which was originally based on the Buddhist sutras of the Third Promulgation (*dharmachakra*), just like these sutras, does not assert the existence of a reality external to and independent from the mind or the experience of sentient beings; furthermore, it reduces the whole of reality to thought-relations, and views entities as mere representations behind or under which there is neither being-in-itself nor substance (*sarvam buddhimayam jagat*).

The views of the Yogacharas are based on canonical texts of the Third Promulgation, which were taught directly by Shakyamuni, who was no doubt aware that the fact that the existence of an external reality cannot be proven, does not entitle us to negate the existence of this reality, and who knew very well that logically speaking it does not make sense to say that “all is mind,” for “mind” is defined by contrast with that which is not mental—so that, if there is nothing that is not mental, then the concepts of “mind” and “mental” have no meaning whatsoever. Therefore, there can be no doubt that the expressions in the sutras of the Third Promulgation that have been interpreted as asserting that the world is constructed by the mind or by the process of experiencing, responded to the fact that in his practice and Awakening Shakyamuni perfectly realized the “self-luminous nature of awareness,” and observed how experience is constructed by mental functions on the basis of this self-luminous nature. Thus we can conclude that the expressions in these sutras that have been interpreted as denying the existence of a reality external to experience and independent from it, had a yogic rather than a logical intent, and that Shakyamuni used those expressions with full awareness of the logical problems involved, on the basis of his own practice and Awakening.

In fact, upon Awakening, which may be compared to awakening from a dream, Shakyamuni realized that the whole of samsaric experiences were delusive, and, upon witnessing the indivisibility of the whole of reality, became fully aware of the fact that all

^a *rNal 'byor*.

divisions and separations are introduced by the mental processes that construct *samsara*; therefore, he no longer held the division into mental experience, on the one hand, and a reality external to and independent from experience, on the other, to be to any degree true. Furthermore, the so-called “capacity of miracles” of realized individuals also proves to them that the different modes of manifestation of energy³³ are not cut from each other, but, as stressed in the Dzogchen teachings, are like segments in a continuum—which, in contexts different from that of the Dzogchen teachings and requiring less precision, may be expressed by claiming that “all is mental.” (It must be noted that the teachings speak of the self-luminous nature of awareness insofar as, according to Buddhism, the most important sense is that of vision—let us remember that the Tibetan term for “experience” is nangwa, meaning “vision”—and insofar as the experiences based on vision are the most striking in realizing the so-called self-luminous nature of awareness. However, in theory we could as well use sound or the characteristic experience of any other sense as a symbol, and speak of the self-sounding nature of awareness and so on.)³⁴

Not only the Yogacharas, but the totality of the schools that were more directly based on the experiences of yoga, to a greater or lesser degree referred to ultimate reality in seemingly idealistic terms; therefore, it is logical to conclude that they did so not only because the sutras of the Third Promulgation, on which they were based, reduced the whole of reality to mind or experience, but because their founders, by practicing the methods taught in those sutras and other related ones transmitted by oral tradition, discovered the “self-luminous nature of awareness,” observed how experience is constructed by mental functions on the basis of this self-luminous nature, and upon Awakening realized that all divisions are the product of the mechanisms that give rise to *samsara*. Therefore, the views of those schools responded to direct experience, rather than being based on mere metaphysical speculation.

In ancient Greece, the Skeptics—and in particular Pyrrho of Elis, Neoacademics Arcesilaus and Carneades, Aenesidemus and Sextus—stressed the impossibility of either demonstrating or negating the existence of a world external to human perception, and insisted on the need to maintain an *epoche* or “suspension of judgment” with regard to the possibility of its existence or nonexistence. Later on, at the beginning of the so-called “Modern Age,” the *nouveaux pyrrhoniens* in France, and other Sceptics in other parts of Europe, propagated the views of the Greek Sceptics, giving rise to a series of philosophies that stressed the need to maintain the *epoche*—even though some of them believed that this imperative should not be an obstacle for the development of the sciences.^{a35} Thus many phenomenistic philosophies progressively developed, until, in the twentieth century, Sceptic phenomenism clearly dominated European, continental philosophy, giving rise to the widely held assumption that both idealism and materialism had been surpassed. Wittgenstein dared to state the truism at the root of such developments when he remarked that since we cannot see into the exterior of our experience, denying that there is something out there is just as illegitimate as asserting that there is. In agreement with this, twentieth century phenomenology maintained the *epoche*, which was said to be “phenomenological” when, in spite of not discussing whether or not there is an unknowable physical basis of our perceptions external to and independent from these, philosophers nonetheless attempted to discern and describe the ontological structures of reality by means of what some deemed to constitute a hermeneutics of human

^a Cf. Popkin, Richard H., 1968.

experience.³⁶ In order to show the reasons why phenomenalism dominated twentieth century European philosophy, let us ponder the words written by Bertrand Russell in *The ABC of Relativity*:^a

Common sense imagines that when it sees a table it sees a table. This is a gross delusion. When common sense sees a table, certain light waves reach its eyes, and these are of a sort that, in its previous experience, has been associated with certain sensations of touch, as well as with other people's testimony that they also saw the table. But none of this ever brought to us the table itself. The light waves caused occurrences in our eyes, and these caused occurrences in the optic nerve, and these in turn caused occurrences in the brain. Any one of these, happening without the usual preliminaries, would have caused us to have the sensation we call 'seeing the table', even if there had been no table. (Of course, if matter in general is to be interpreted as a group of occurrences, this must apply also to the eye, the optic nerve and the brain.) As to the sense of touch when we press the table with our fingers, that is an electric disturbance on the electrons and protons of our finger tips, produced, according to modern physics, by the proximity of the electrons and protons in the table. If the same disturbances in our finger-tips arose in any other way, we should have the sensation, in spite of there being no table. The testimony of others is no doubt a secondhand affair. A witness in a law court, if asked whether he had seen some occurrence, would not be allowed to reply that he believed so because of the testimony of others to that effect. In any case, testimony consists of sound waves and demands psychological as well as physical interpretation; its connection with the object is therefore very indirect. For all these reasons, when we say that a man 'sees a table', we use a highly abbreviated form of expression, concealing complicated and difficult inferences, the validity of which may well be open to question.³⁷

From the above quotation it is easy to acknowledge that, if there were a world existing independently from our experience and externally to it, we would be unable to know it. However, since the fact that such a reality would be totally beyond the range of our capacity of knowledge implies that we are equally unable to verify that it does not at all exist, we would be as wrong in denying its existence as we would be in asserting it. For example, the particle-waves we call photons are supposed to produce modifications in the eye, which are supposed to produce electromagnetic disturbances in the optic nerve, which are supposed to produce certain phenomena in our brains that cause us to see light. However, there is no proof whatsoever that this experience of light is in *any way* similar to the photons that supposedly touched the eye: these photons never entered our experience, and in themselves the particle-waves that we call photons surely resemble other particle-waves, but do not seem likely to resemble in any way our experience of light. Moreover, in dreams and hallucinations we also see light, but this light does not arise in response to any supposedly external particle-waves touching the eyes. Scientists would assume that our experience is a product of the workings of the brain, but since we cannot perceive the "external" light particle waves or anything else external to experience, the very idea that there is a brain that is not a mere experience (which we may have in the dissection of the corpses of others, from which we validly infer that we also have a brain) is clearly open to question. Since experience cannot be legitimately explained as being the function of an organ the non-experiential existence of which cannot be proven, it is easy to be tempted to claim that it is a product of our mind, or of the process of experiencing, etc.

^a Russell, Bertrand, Ed. by Felix Pirani; 4th rev. ed., 1985.

Does the above mean, as Russell seems to suggest, that we do not see the table? Semanticist Alfred Korzybski stated that “the pattern is the thing,” and, in the same vein, some of the British and Continental European phenomenologists, just as, later on, twentieth century European phenomenologists, did not reject the existence of a physical reality external to human experience, but simply put it in parentheses and assumed that the table is but our perception of it. Though the Yogachara School, just like Berkeley and some other Western phenomenologists, *did* reject the existence of a reality external to human experience, the conception that the table (and all other entities, for that matter) is but our perception of it, is precisely the reason why this school called itself “Vijñaptimatra:” the only existing table is the phenomenon in our experience that we call “the table” (in fact, this assertion is the basis for the purported discrepancy between those Yogacharas and Madhyamika-Swatantrika-Yogacharas who “regard the aspect^a as true” and those who “deem the aspect to be false”³⁸). Therefore, the fact that we do not see the table that supposedly exists outside our experience and independently of it does not mean that we fail to see the table (this being so at least according to those who “regard the aspect as true”).

Bishop Berkeley’s *A Treatise concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* intended to demonstrate the nonexistence of an external world. However, its arguments are far more effective as a defense of skeptic phenomenalism (or of phenomenology, for that matter) than as a defense of idealism. Below I reproduce paragraph 8 of the said book, which I have paraphrased in order to make it conform to the vocabulary of this book (and which may be used as a refutation of the views of the Sautrantikas who adhere to valid reasoning):^b

You could reply that... outside the mind... there could be things that are similar to the phenomena or representations of our experience, but existing outside the mind in a nonthinking substance, of which the phenomena or representations of our experience would be copies or likenesses. I reply that a phenomenon of our experience cannot be something other than a phenomenon of our experience; a color or figure cannot resemble anything but another color or figure. If we observe a bit the phenomena or representations of our experience (whether in perception, reminiscence or fantasy), we shall find it impossible to conceive a similitude except between [various] phenomena or representations of our experience. Again, I ask whether the supposedly original or external things, of which [according to the realist] the phenomena or representations of our experience would be images or representations, would themselves be perceivable or not be so. If they were, then they would be phenomena or representations of experience [rather than the originals posited by the realist] and we would be right; if you say they are not, I will ask anyone whether it makes sense to assert that a color resembles something that is invisible; whether the hard and the soft [may resemble] something that is intangible; and so on and on concerning the rest [of the qualities we perceive].

What Berkeley’s arguments and the subsequent discoveries of modern physics really managed to show was that it does not make much sense to posit the existence of an external, independent reality having forms and colors and so on. In fact, it has been claimed that Kant’s acknowledgment that only representations can be known resulted from his readings of Berkeley, even though he energetically denounced the latter’s

^a Skt, *akara*; Tib., *nampa (rnam-pa)*.

^b Berkeley, George, this ed., 1963.

“dogmatic idealism,” to which he replied with his own theories of the *Ding an sich* and so on.³⁹ At any rate, even children would agree that the fact that it is not possible to perceive anything external to our experience does not mean that we are entitled to assert that there is nothing external to it. And yet it is equally true that after Awakening (or even after the initial manifestation of *prajña* wisdom) one could have no doubts whatsoever as to the fact that all divisions and separations are illusions produced by the mechanisms at the root of *samsara*, and thus one has the unshakeable certainty that the supposed duality between human experience and a reality external to it is but a samsaric delusion—which was to a great extent what the sutras of the Third Promulgation and the Buddhist Schools based on them intended to show. (It must be noted that Berkeley contradicted all Buddhist views insofar as he considered human minds to be really existing souls, having been created by the God of Christianity in such a way that they in turn would agree with each other to create the illusion of an objective external world.)

Maitreyanatha, Asanga, and Asanga’s brother, Vasubandhu, are supposed to have been the ones who laid the foundations of the Yogachara School.⁴⁰ Yet, it is not at all certain that Asanga asserted mind-only in the sense of denying external objects.⁴¹ In fact, Maitreyanatha and Asanga also wrote treatises that, just like the Yogachara School, are based on the Third Promulgation, but that, unlike this school, express the highest view of the Mahayana, which according to the Nyingmapa and other Tibetan “Red Hat” Schools is that of the subtle and inner Madhyamaka (Tib., Nang trawai uma^a), which they contrast to the coarse and outer Madhyamaka (Tib., Ch’i ragpai uma^b) of the Prasangikas and Swatantrikas.⁴² By positing an [inherently existing] universal mind, claiming that all was this mind or that all was mental and, as will be shown later on, needlessly positing a series of metaphysical entities the existence of which is not at all granted by experience, the Yogachara School deviated from this highest view, and therefore from the essential, subtle, inner meaning of the both the Third and Second Promulgations. Therefore, Yogachara philosophy cannot be thought to represent the final intent and view of those who laid the foundations of this school, but must be considered to be a coarser theory of reality that they produced in response to the understanding and propensities of beings of lower capacities, and that they intended to be part of a gradual course of intellectual and philosophical development that should progressively refine the theoretical views of practitioners of the teachings of the Mahayana, finally leading them to the direct view of the given, beyond theoretical speculation.

The Yogachara School claimed that when, in a given individual, ultimate mind directed its intention to the base-of-all (Skt., *alaya vijñana*; Tib., kunzhi namshe^c)—which will be described later on and which contains the imprints (*avarana* or *vasana*, according to the case) at the root of karmic propensities—these propensities manifested as *samskaras* or “formations,” dualistic subjective consciousness came into being, ultimate truth was veiled, and *samsara* developed. In turn, when ultimate mind directed its intention to the true condition of all entities (Skt., *parinispanna*; Tib., chönyi yongdrub^d), primordial gnosis (Skt. *jñana*; Tib., yeshe^e) and therefore *nirvana* manifested, unveiling the absolute nature. Therefore, contrarily to the assertions of critics interested in making the views of

^a *Nang phra-ba’i dbu-ma.*

^b *Phyi rags-pa’i dbu-ma.*

^c *Kun-gzhi rnam-shes or kun-gzhi rnam-par she-pa.*

^d *Chos-nyid yongs-grub.*

^e *Ye-shes.*

the Yogachara School appear coarser than they actually were, the “mind” that this school held to be absolutely true was the one that I have just called primordial, ultimate or universal mind, rather than the fragmentary, dualistic consciousness that is concomitant with the spurious, delusory mental subject.

The above is related to the fact that the term Chittamatra or “Mind-only” has often been taken to refer solely to the negation of the external world, among other things because in his commentary to the *Vimshatika* Vasubandhu stated that the Sanskrit prefix *matra* (the Tibetan equivalent of which is *tsam*^a) referred to the well-known fact that this school flatly rejected the independent, external existence of the “object” (Skt., *artha*; Tib. *dön*^b). However, as K. Lipman pointed out in the Introduction to *Primordial Experience*,^c the sub-commentator, Vinitadeva, warned that the prefix referred to *both* the subjective and the objective sides of experiencing.^d Lipman also reminds us that, according to Sthiramati, *both* the self *and* the configurations of events and meanings with which it deals, have *no* “in itself” status and do not exist at all apart from the experiencing process. In fact, the Yogachara School does not posit an absolutely real, substantial, dualistic consciousness existing prior to knowledge of objects; like Jean-Paul Sartre in the 20th Century (who rejected Husserl’s resurrection of the Cartesian *cogito* and stated that that “*Consciousness is not to any extent substantial; it is a mere ‘appearance’, in the sense that it only exists to the extent that it appears*”),^{e43} the Yogachara school asserted dualistic consciousness to be an insubstantial appearance that arose together with dualistic knowledge.

Above we touched on the concepts of absolute and relative natures. It is time to discuss in greater detail the three truths or natures posited by this school:

(1) Absolute truth or ultimately existing nature (Skt., *parinispanna*; Tib., *yongdrub*^f) is simply voidness, conceived as the condition in which the object perceived and the perceiving consciousness, both of which belong to *paratantra* or dependent nature (which is the type of nature or truth discussed below under [2]), are undifferentiated. Ultimately existing nature is classified into the unchanging and the incontrovertible: the former is so called because it is the Buddha-essence or *tathagatagarbha*, which does not change no matter whether *samsara* or *nirvana* manifests, and the latter is so called because it is the incontrovertible actualization of the Buddha-essence as effective Buddhahood once the conflicting emotions have been totally purified.⁴⁴

(2) Dependent nature (Skt., *paratantra*; Tib., *zhenwang*^g) is correct relative truth insofar as it does not involve the activity of the imagination, distortions of the senses or other delusory activities, and therefore it is compared to seeing a rope as a rope. There are two subdivisions to this type of truth: impure dependence, which includes the phenomena of *samsara*, and pure dependence, which includes those of *nirvana*.⁴⁵ The *phenomena* of sound awake experience, as they manifest *before* they are recognized in terms of concepts (intuitive or discursive), are phenomena of impure dependence: before their recognition

^a *Tsam*.

^b *Don*.

^c In Mañjushrimitra, English 1983/1986, trans. Namkhai Norbu and Kennard Lipman, pp. 17-18: Introduction by K. Lipman.

^d *rNam par shes pa las ma gtogs pa gzung dang 'dzin pa'i mtshan nyid kyi don*.

^e Sartre, Jean-Paul, 1942, 31st edition, 1980.

^f *Yongs-grub*.

^g *Zhan-dbang*.

there is a moment of “bare, pure sensation” in which the image that later on will be recognized in terms of concepts appears to human consciousness; though both the image and the perceiving consciousness are mere appearances produced by the mind (and as such are void or empty), they are dependent arisings subject to the functionality of this mode of truth. They relate to the first mode of truth insofar as both the image appearing and the perceiving consciousness are undifferentiated in voidness and devoid of independent existence.

(3) Imaginary nature (Skt., *parikalpita*; Tib., *kuntag^a*) is delusive relative truth, which involves being mistaken concerning the nature of entities, and, as such, is compared to seeing a rope as a snake. Though the experiences of dreams, hallucinations, optical illusions and so on fall under this category, the valid phenomena of dependent nature (Skt., *paratantra*; Tib., *zhenwang*) also serve as the basis for it when they are recognized in terms of delusive concepts put by the imagination (for example, as being this or that type of object, which is taken to be permanent and to exist outside the mind, etc.): this gives rise to a delusive perception of the phenomena of *paratantra* that itself is an experience of imaginary nature or *parikalpita*. This delusive perception of the phenomena of *paratantra* may belong to the “nominal imaginary” or to the “imaginary of delimited characteristics:” the former refers to the overvaluation of the essential features of entities, or of the names and symbols applied to them (all of which are mere fictions lacking true existence); the latter corresponds to the mistaken projection of a self or independent self-nature (Skt., *atma*; Tib., *dagpa^b*), either on human individuals or on phenomena other than human individuals. In short, the mere apparition as object of a phenomenon that common sense regards as true, on the one hand, and of a perceiving consciousness, on the other, is a dependent arising of *paratantra*; however, the recognition of the phenomenon appearing as object in terms of a concept that is taken as its absolute identity, or its perception as having its own independent self-nature or as being a substance, belongs to imaginary nature or *parikalpita*.

Since the concept of emptiness or voidness (Skt., *shunyata*; Tib., *tongpanyi^c*) was used in the above definition of *parinispāna*, it is pertinent to note that in the Yogachara School the concept of emptiness is not as thorough as in the various Madhyamaka subschools, for it means that all phenomena are void of a self-nature *that may be said to be different from mind* (Skt., *chitta*; Tib., *sem^d*): this conception of emptiness simply refers to the fact that the object perceived and the perceiving consciousness, which belong to the second type of truth (*paratantra* or dependent nature), are both of the nature of mind and in truth are undifferentiated. It will be up to the coarse, outer Madhyamaka (Tib., *Ch'i ragpai uma*) constituted by the Swatantrika and the Prasangika schools, based on the Second Promulgation, to establish a more thorough concept of voidness as the absence of self-existence; in turn, it will be the task of the subtle, inner Madhyamaka (Tib., *Nang trawai uma^e*) of the Zhentongpa^f and the Mahamadhyamaka subschools, the most important source of which is the Third Promulgation, to reveal the most profound meaning of the Mahayana.

^a *Kun-brtags*.

^b *bDag-pa*.

^c *Stong-pa-nyid*.

^d *Sems*.

^e *Nang phra-ba'i dbu-ma*.

^f *Zhan-stong-pa*.

The Yogacharas refer to the ultimate nature of awareness, which is nondual, by the name spontaneous awareness or self-awareness (Skt., *swasamvittih*; Tib., rangrig, or shepa rangrig rangsel^a). This spontaneous awareness or self-awareness is *explained* in terms of a duplication of consciousness: when a sensory consciousness, which is oriented toward the “external world,” apprehends a sensory object, there is a second consciousness that is turned to the inside and that experiences its own nature without distinguishing or separating what is experienced from the experiencing consciousness. At least since the time Dignaga wrote the *Pramanasamuchchaya* (1:11d),^b it has been held that this “second consciousness” is the necessary condition of remembrance, as its knowledge is supposed to remain even after the external object has disappeared.⁴⁶ This metaphysical duplication of consciousness, which was redundant and unnecessary, was understood by the Madhyamika Prasangikas to imply a dualistic self-consciousness—which as such they rejected on the basis of the scriptural argument according to which the eye cannot see itself (without a mirror), the fingertip cannot touch itself, the knife’s blade cannot cut itself, and it would thus be equally impossible for consciousness to be aware of itself. However, the examples provided by the Yogacharas were of a different order: one of these was the light of a lamp, which was said to be the same in the lamp and in what it illuminated—which in turn seemed to imply that there was no real duality between consciousness and the perceived object.⁴⁷ Furthermore, though it is true that some sutras compare awareness with the eye, the fingertip and the knife, as Ju Mipham remarked, the *Gandavyuha Sutra* states that all the manifold appearances are actually one’s own mind, and then states that the mind does indeed see itself (although this is not realized)—which may be taken as an assertion of awareness of consciousness.^{c48}

Spontaneous awareness was also said to be at the root of *nirvana*, wherein the objects hitherto experienced as external and the mind hitherto experienced as internal were no longer apprehended as separate entities, for this awareness apprehended itself beyond all dualism, and thus its own nature of clear light was unveiled: this is why this awareness was called “consciousness that apprehends and illumines itself” or shepa rangrig rangsel. Hence all suggests that the Yogacharas, with their clumsy, dualistic description of spontaneous awareness, among other things were trying to explain an experience that is totally beyond dualism, and that the description of spontaneous awareness in terms of a second entity of consciousness that looks toward the inside (that is, toward the first consciousness or, rather, toward the source of all consciousness) was another instance of the typically Yogachara habit of resorting to metaphysical schemas unwarranted by experience in order to explain the most evident facts of experience. (However, it seems likely that the clumsy Yogachara way of explaining *swasamvittih* or rangrig may have resulted from the metaphysical interpretation of one or more actual phenomena or dynamic.⁴⁹)

Another drawback in the Yogachara conception of the above “consciousness that apprehends and illumines itself” lied in the fact that it was explained as a truly existing or self-existent entity, which caused the Madhyamika Prasangikas to criticize it and reject it as an instance of substantialism or eternalism.⁵⁰ This type of defect is as characteristic of the Yogacharas as that of resorting to metaphysical schemas unwarranted by experience.

^a *Shes-pa rang-rig rang-gsal*.

^b Williams, Paul, 1998, p. 9.

^c Williams, Paul, 1998, p. 168.

The attitude involved in both shortcomings of the Yogachara School contrasts to that of the Dzogchen teachings (and to some extent to that of the inner, subtle Madhyamaka), the views of which respond to a faithful hermeneutic reading of the yogi's experience of *samsara* and metaexperience of *nirvana*, of the kind that in a series of works I have called "metaphenomenological" (as contrasted with the interpretations of Continental European phenomenology, which are limited to *samsara* and take *samsara* to be the only and true reality).⁵¹

In the section dealing with the Zhentongpa sub school of Madhyamaka, the *sosoi rangrigpai yeshe*^a of this school will be contrasted with the spontaneous awareness, *swasamvittih* or *rangrig* of the Yogacharas in order to show how a nondual awareness can be posited as the Base of all of the phenomena of *samsara* and the metaphenomena of *nirvana*⁵² without thereby incurring in a duplication of consciousness or a substantialistic deviation. Then a brief experiential explanation of the self-arisen awareness or *rangrig* of Ati Dzogpa Chenpo will be provided, upon which *samsara* and *nirvana* will be explained to be functions of the same inherently all-liberating primordial gnosis, which is veiled in *samsara* (so that its all-liberating quality is impeded) but becomes fully evident in *nirvana* (characterized by the uninterrupted spontaneous liberation of all that arises).

According to the Yogacharas, there are eight types of consciousnesses or *vijñana*. These are: the five modes of sensory consciousness or "consciousnesses of the five senses"⁵³ (Skt., *pañchadwarajñana*; Tib., *gongai namshe*^b); the mode of consciousness that perceives thoughts and "internal" mental experiences or "consciousness of thought" (Skt., *manovijñana*; Tib., *yiki namshe*^c);⁵⁴ the so called "ego-centered consciousness" or "consciousness of passions" (Skt., *klishtamanovijñana*; Tib., *nyongmongpachen yiki namshe*^d);⁵⁵ and finally the eighth consciousness, which is the "consciousness of the base-of-all" (Skt., *alayavijñana*; Tib., *kunzhi namshe*^e), often termed "receptacle consciousness" in Western works.⁵⁶ However, if the consciousness of the base-of-all is to be considered to be a consciousness, it will be better to refer to it as the first consciousness, for it is the root consciousness, all "other" consciousnesses being but specifications or transformations of this basic, root consciousness, which is simultaneously the potentiality for all experience, and the experiencing process that this school unifies under the term "mind" (Skt., *chitta*; Tib., *sem*^f). Furthermore, though all perceptions, including those that take place during sleep, those that take place during wakefulness, and the yogi's meditative absorptions, manifest through the six sensory consciousnesses, according to this school they have as their basis the consciousness of the base-of-all, which is the continuum that links the different states of consciousness.

The consciousness of the base-of-all was not conceived as an immutable absolute, which is how the Atman of Hinduism is described; in agreement with the Hinayana idea of a succession of instants of knowledge, it was explained as a continually changing stream of consciousness (Skt., *santana*; Tib., *gyü*^g), and though it was said to be the vehicle that carries the karmic imprints (*vasanas* or *bijas*) that go from one life to the next,

^a *So-so'i rang-rig pa'i ye-shes.*

^b *sGo-lnga'i rnam-shes.*

^c *Yid-kyi rnam-shes.*

^d *Nyong-mongs-pa-can yid-kyi rnam-shes.*

^e *Kun-gzhi rnam-shes.*

^f *Sems.*

^g *rGyud.*

its concept did not imply the continuity of a substance (each instant of knowledge being comparable to a perfectly elastic billiard ball that, upon being hit by the former ball, were impelled with the whole of the force transmitted to it without losing any by absorption of the shock of by friction with the air or the table—hitting the next, which would equally be impelled with the whole of the force—this conception does not imply the continuity of a substantial entity; however, although each instant is like a different ball, there is a perfect sequence of balls that may be differentiated from all other sequences of balls, and which is responsible for the illusion of continuity of the individual: the energy transmitted through the sequence of balls represents the force of *karman*, and as *karman* is transmitted from one ball to the next so are the *vasanas* or *bijas* associated to it—which form a perfect continuity without there being an entity that continues). In turn, from the standpoint of experience, the consciousness of the base-of-all is an ample condition that yogis may find by absorption. Though the consciousness of the base-of-all is of the nature of thatness (Skt., *tathata*; Tib., *dezhinnyi*^a)—the absolute nature that is the single constituent of all entities—this consciousness is also the root of *samsara*.

In fact, Vasubandhu’s summary of Yogachara thought, the *Trimshika* (Tib., *Sum chupa*^b), explains the process that gives rise to the samsaric world of objects in terms of three “transformations of the experiencing process” (Skt., *parinama*; Tib., *gyur*^c) whereby the consciousness of the base-of-all becomes increasingly conditioned and thus “gradually solidifies into the subject-object dichotomy.” The first transformation, whereby the consciousness of the base-of-all (and therefore the structuring of all experience) is modified by a process of habituation that conditions the experience of the present in the light of the past, gives rise to the awareness of being in an as yet unspecified situation. The second transformation, just as was the case with spontaneous awareness, is explained in terms of a duplication of consciousness: it is said to consist in the formation of the seventh stratum, corresponding to the ego-centered consciousness or consciousness of passions, which is but a specification or transformation of the consciousness of the base-of-all, and which takes this consciousness of the base-of-all, which is but a momentary flow wherein the habituation tendencies are “built up” and “discharged,” to be an enduring, substantial entity, and considers it to be “one’s own self.” As K. Lipman has noted, this shows that the basis of the delusive experience of “me, myself” that results from the second transformation, is the consciousness of the base-of-all, which after the first transformation became the “anonymously functioning,” prepersonal, fundamental structuring of all experience. Finally there comes about the third transformation, which consists in the development of ego-centered perception by means of the next six strata: the mode of consciousness that perceives thoughts and “internal” mental experiences, or “consciousness of thoughts” (Skt., *manovijñana*; Tib., *yiki namshe*), plus the five modes of consciousness that perceive the data of the five so-called “external” senses or “consciousnesses of the five senses” (Skt., *pañchadwarajñana*; Tib., *gongai namshe*). Thus Vasubandhu concludes: “nothing exists for ordinary people and noble ones apart from the continuum of their own experiencing.”

However, two important facts concerning the consciousness of the base-of-all must be underlined: (1) The true nature of this consciousness and therefore of the whole of

^a *De-bzhin-nyid*.

^b *Sum cu pa*.

^c *Gyur*.

reality is the absolute nature that this school calls thatness (Skt., *tathata*; Tib., *dezhinnyi*), which explains why, as stated in the *Vijñānamātra Śāstra*, the *nirvana qua* Base that is possessed by all sentient beings (even though they fail to realize it), is inherent to the consciousness of the base-of-all and corresponds to the “unchanging absolute truth.” This type of *nirvana*, which corresponds to the dharmakaya (in this case conceived *qua* Base), is the first of the four types of *nirvana* posited by the *śāstra*. (2) The consciousness of the base-of-all is not solely the root of *samsara*; it also is the source of the “incontrovertible absolute truth” which, according to this school, results from the purification of this consciousness as it is restored to its original simplicity and radiant transparency, so that the absolute consisting in thatness (*tathata*) becomes fully evident in a nondual manner, and which subdivides into the three remaining types of *nirvana* posited by the *śāstra*, all of which are types of *nirvana qua* Fruit, which correspond to the three types of fruit of the Buddhist Paths of the Sūtrayāna: (a) *upādhisheshā nirvana*, which is a *nirvana* in which some residue is left; (b) *anupādhisheshā nirvana*, or *nirvana* without a residue; and, (c) the *nirvana* of the Mahāyāna, attained only by the Buddhas (and not by the arhats of the Hīnayāna), which is the absolute *nirvana* that has as its aim the benefit of others.

The Yogācāras posited six unconditioned phenomena or *asamskrīta dharmā*: (1) *ākāśa* or space, which was “the unlimited and unchanging;” (2) *pratisamkhyānirodha* or cessation (*nirodha*) of the passions (*kleśa*) by the power of perfect discrimination; (3) *apratisamkhyānirodha* or cessation of the passions or *kleśas* without the intervention of perfect discrimination; (4) *achala* or disinterest concerning power and pleasure; (5) *saṃjñāvedānanirodha*, which is a state wherein *saṃjñā* or recognition in terms of concepts and *vedāna* or mental sensation are inactive; and (6) *tathata* or thatness, which was the true absolute-*qua*-Base of the Yogācāras: the basic constituent of all phenomena, which unveils in *nirvana* and is veiled in *samsara* (actually, according to the Mahāyāna in general, a first, incipient, partial glimpse of thatness first occurs in the first of the four stages of the path of preparation or path of application [Skt., *prayoga-mārga*; Tib., *yor lam* {*sbyor lam*}], which is the stage called “heat” [Skt. *uśmagata*; Tib., *drö* {*drod*}]).

Concerning the subdivisions of this school, one of the most important ones pits the *Sakaravāda*, who are those who hold *sensa* to be veridical, against the *Nirakaravāda*, who claim that *sensa* are false. The former assert that the color blue exists as blue (i.e., as it appears) to the consciousness of the eye that apprehends it, even though it does not exist externally to experience. The latter are considered to be slightly superior insofar as they claim that the appearance of blueness has no substantiality of either object or intellect, that nothing material exists, and in general that nothing exists apart or separately from consciousness, which is the source of the overvaluation that either debases or enhances appearances, but that in any case corrupts them.⁵⁷ The *Sakaravāda* are classified into three subclasses: (a) those who propose an equal number of subjective and objective factors;⁵⁸ (b) the intermediate, who claim there is a diversity of *sensa* but not of consciousness;⁵⁹ and (c) nonpluralists, who claim that *sensa* and consciousness are aspects of the same indivisible reality, like the two parts of an egg.⁶⁰ In turn, the *Nirakaravāda* are divided into “those who follow the defiled false aspect” and “those who follow the undefiled false aspect.” According to some, these two groups are: the one constituted by those who deem the nature of mind to be defiled by the stains or propensities of latent delusion, and the one consisting of those who claim that the nature of mind can not at all be defiled; according to others, these two groups are that constituted by those who think that though

Buddhahood involves no delusion (Skt., *avidya*; Tib., marigpa^a), in it there are false appearances, and that of those who assert that Buddhahood involves no delusion and no false appearances.

Kennard Lipman brings to us a tradition according to which the nonreductionistic followers of this school bear the name Yogacharas, and the reductionistic ones are called Chittamatra.^b However, most scholars use both terms indistinctly as synonyms, asserting that (as remarked at the beginning of this chapter) the term Yogachara emphasizes the practice-related aspects of this school, while terms such as Vijñānavada and Chittamatra place the accent on its speculative features.^c

Finally, according to the Gelugpas, Yogacharas are classified into those who adhere to Asanga's *Yogacharabhumishastra* and "follow the scriptures," and those who adhere mainly to Dharmakirti's *Pramanavinishchaya* and "follow valid reasoning." The basis of this subdivision is the fact that, unlike the other Tibetan traditions, which view Dharmakirti as a Sautrantika, the Gelugpa School considers him a Yogachara. (It is paradoxical that the same author may be considered to belong to two schools occupying two different extremes in the ideological spectrum: as we have seen, the Sautrantikas believed that there were entities external to human experience [which they deemed true and effective but impermanent and ever-changing], whereas the Yogacharas insisted that there were no such entities.)

The Yogachara School and the sutras on which it was originally based, on the one hand, and the Sautrantika School and the sutras on which it was based, on the other, considered all entities impermanent and ever-changing. Dharmakirti conserved this view, but added that the mental images in terms of which most of the time we experience those entities are unchanging during perception, and therefore that perception in terms of thoughts could never correspond precisely to the "real" entities it interpreted. By this token, this Indian Master introduced the understanding, typical of Madhyamika, of the fact that words cannot describe reality precisely and thought cannot know impermanent objects exactly as they are, for the conceptual map is not the territory it interprets, and is qualitatively so different from the latter that there is no way it could correspond to it.⁶¹ In fact, according to Dharmakirti, the unchanging or "permanent" mental images we form of entities are a basis for deception insofar as they cause sentient beings to believe that they convey the existence of unchanging, permanent entities. Because of this, beings perceive the changing as unchanging and view the impermanent as permanent. This idea that words cannot describe reality with precision and thought cannot know impermanent objects exactly as they are, for the conceptual map is not the territory it interprets, and is qualitatively so different from the latter that there is no way it could correspond to it, is proper of Madhyamaka. **Therefore, I tend to agree with those who regarded Dharmakirti as a Madhyamika Swatantrika (ONLY IN THIS REGARD; EXPLAIN IN WHAT REGARD I VIEW HIM AS A SAUTRANTIKA).**⁶² Elizabeth Napper writes:^d

"Ngawang Palden, in the Sautrantika chapter of his *Explanation of the Conventional and the Ultimate in the Four Systems of Tenets (Grub mtha' bzhi'i lugs kyi kun rdzob*

^a *Ma-rig-pa*.

^b Mañjushrimitra, trans. Kennard Lipman, Namkhai Norbu and Barry Simmons, English 1983/1986.

^c Cf., for example, Radhakrishnan, S., 1923; 2d ed., 1929; seventh impression of 2d ed., 1962, vol. I, p. 625.

^d Napper, Elizabeth, 2003, p. 685, note 142.

dang don dam pa'i don rnam par bshad pa legs bshad dpyid kyi dpal mo'i glu dbyangs, New Delhi: Guru Deva, 1972, 39.5-39.6), says that some [of the most highly reputed Indian authors], such as Prajñakaragupta, Suryagupta, Shantarakshita, Kamalashila, and Jetari, interpret Dharmakirti's *Commentary on [Dignaga's] Compendium of Valid Cognition (Tshad ma rnam 'grel, Pramanavarttika)* as a *Madhyamika* treatise.”

At any rate, if we consider the whole of Tibetan Buddhist Schools, we will find they listed a Yogachara school that followed logic, supposed to be based on the views set forth by Dharmakirti; according to the Gelugpa, also there is a Sautrantika school that does so, but which to some extent interpreted in a way opposite to that of the Yogacharas the deception caused by the mental images he posited: while the latter supposedly insisted on the fact that they led us to perceive images existing only in our own experience as though they were entities existing externally to it and independently from it, according to Gelug view the Sautrantikas adhering to logic held that they prevented us from knowing the entities that were supposed to exist externally to our experience.

In the West, some historians of philosophy have held that the idealistic theories developed by Fichte, Schelling, Hegel and so on, according to which the belief in a reality external to and independent from the Mind or from the “I” was baseless, were the logical consequence of Kant's positing a reality external to and independent from experience, but that could not at all be known.⁶³ On the basis of an analogous reasoning, Western and Indian scholars, including S. Radhakrishnan, have claimed that the so-called Mind-only view of the Yogacharas is the logical conclusion of the theses advanced by what the Gelug call Sautrantikas who adhered to valid reasoning, which were wrongly interpreted as asserting that there is a world external to and independent from human experience, and yet we can only know our own mental representations—but not the real, external world. The idea behind both reasonings was that the thesis according to which we can only know our own mental representations and we can by no means know the external world, directly gave rise to the realization that we can have no assurance that there is really an external world that serves as the basis of our perceptions, and thus it was easy to go on from that thesis to a theory that reduced the whole of reality to representations, doing away with the hypothesis of an objective basis for human perception existing outside the mind. However, at least with regard to the Buddhist schools we are concerned with, the reasoning is faulty, for, as we have seen, Dharmakirti's *Pramanavinishchaya*, which the Gelug view as the source of the supposed Sautrantika sub-school adhering to valid reasoning, was written at a time when both the Sautrantika and Yogachara schools had been established for considerable time (and which had been influenced by the epistemology of Acharya Dignaga, who is considered as a Yogachara, but who is universally acknowledged to have been impressed to some extent by Sautrantika views).⁶⁴ The claim concerning the genesis of the Yogachara School that we need to discard is most clearly refuted, however, by the following two facts: (1) The Yogacharas did not invent their views out of nothing, but directly based themselves on the sutras of the Third Promulgation (*dharmachakra*), which according to all adherents of the Mahayana were taught by the Buddha Shakyamuni himself,⁶⁵ and which referred to a universal Mind as the substratum of all phenomena. (2) It is not at all true that the thesis according to which we cannot know an external world that is posited as real, but only our own mental representations, is common to those Sautrantikas being discussed and to Kant: according to the former, valid knowers, which arose for brief moments again and again in what in terms of Yogachara thought we could

call “the same mental continuum,” could perceive what this subschool called “nonmental physical objects;” contrariwise, Kant insisted that no human knower whatsoever could ever perceive the *Ding-an-sich* or thing-in-itself (furthermore, “nonmental physical objects” were phenomenal, but the *Ding-an-sich* was said not to be conditioned by the *a priori* forms of sensitiveness [space and time] and therefore to be absolutely nonphenomenal).⁶⁶

The Yogachara School and Dzogchen Atiyoga

As we have seen, the eight consciousnesses or strata of the *Lankavatarasutra* of the Third Promulgation were adopted by the Yogachara School of the Mahayana (and also by some subschools of Madhyamaka—namely, the two Swatantrika Yogachara subschools, and the two subschools of the subtle, inner Madhyamaka, which are the Madhyamaka Zhentongpa and Mahamadhyamaka). The names of these “consciousnesses” also exist in the teachings of Ati Dzogpa Chenpo, but these do not give the terms the same sense they have in the Mahayana, for in them the names do not refer to metaphysically hypostatized entities of consciousness. Furthermore, these teachings add two further concepts to those of the *Lankavatarasutra*, the Yogachara School and so on, which do not at all exist in any of these and did not originate in the context of any Sutric Buddhist system: (1) that of a “Base” or zhi^a involving three functional possibilities, which are *samsara*, *nirvana* and a nonconceptual condition called the “base-of-all” (Skt., *alaya*; Tib., *kunzhi*^b) in which neither *samsara* nor *nirvana* are active, and (2) that of the just mentioned “base-of-all” in which neither *samsara* nor *nirvana* are active, which is the vehicle of *vasanas* or *bijas* but which, however, is not at all the same as the “consciousness of the base-of-all” (Skt., *alaya vijñana*) posited in the sutras of the Third Promulgation. In their turn, the so-called “eight consciousnesses,” beginning with the “consciousness of the base-of-all,” are subsequent structurings of experience that manifest in the process of the arising and development of *samsara* from the condition called the “base-of-all.”^c

Concerning the Base or zhi, according to the Dzogchen teachings the whole of the phenomena of *samsara* (including subjects and objects, the phenomena that we consider to be mental and the ones that we consider to be physical, etc.) and of the metaphenomena of *nirvana* (are) this very Base—which may also be referred to as *rigpa qua* Base, Dzogchen *qua* Base, *bodhichitta qua* Base, total sphere *qua* Base, spontaneous awareness *qua* Base, the nature of mind or Base awareness, primordial gnosis *qua* Base, etc. Furthermore, in this Base the three kayas of Buddhahood are fully actual, for they constitute its three aspects, which are: (1) essence or *ngowo*^d, corresponding to the *dharmakaya qua* Base; (2) nature or *rangzhin*^e, which corresponds to the *sambhogakaya*

^a *gZhi*.

^b *Kun-gzhi*.

^c See: (1) Guenther, Herbert V., 1977; (2) Longchen Rabjampa (Commented by Dudjom Rinpoche and Beru Khyentse, 1979): in particular, the additions by one of the two main commentators in pp. 41-42. (3) Lipman, Kennard, 1977.

^d *Ngo-bo*.

^e *Rang-bzhin*.

qua Base; and (3) energy or *thukje*^a, corresponding to the *nirmanakaya qua* Base (which in its turn manifests in three different ways, which are *dang*^b energy, *rölpa*^c energy, and *tse*^d energy).⁶⁷

As noted above, according to the Dzogchen teachings, this Base or *zhi* has three functional possibilities:

(1) *Nirvana*, which manifests upon the nondual, nonconceptual reGnition⁶⁸ of the Awake, nonpositional, nonthetic, nonreflexive self-awareness the Dzogchen teachings call *rigpa*. This reGnition makes this nondual awareness' "own face" patent (*rangngo shepa*^e), whereby the true nature of the Base is unconcealed in the manifestation of *rigpa-qua*-Path and, in the long run, of *rigpa-qua*-Fruit, so that the three aspects of the Base listed above are effectively realized as the three kayas of Buddhahood and actualized as such (which, however, takes place sequentially, beginning with the realization of the *ngowo*^f aspect of the Base as the *dharmakaya*), and there manifests an absolutely free, spontaneous activity of primordial awareness that does not involve any temporary beclouding and does not fall into dualism.

(2) The neutral (*lungmaten*^g) condition of the base-of-all (Skt., *alaya*; Tib., *kunzhi*), which according to circumstances may be called: primordial (*yedön kunzhi*^h); dimension of the base-of-all (*kunzhi kham*ⁱ); base-of-all carrying propensities (*bagchagkyi kunzhi*^j) or *rigpa-qua*-Base (*zhi'i rigpa*^k). In general, this condition may be described as a nonconceptual and nondual dimension in which neither *nirvana* nor *samsara* are manifest; in terms of a symbology that represents *nirvana* as pure pristine water, and that exemplifies as mud the potentialities of *samsara* and the drives leading *samsara* to manifest, the teachings compare it with turbid water. The reason why this dimension, which is the source of all appearances of *samsara* and *nirvana*, is different from *nirvana*, is because it involves an "automatically arising beclouding of primordial awareness,"⁶⁹ which is the most basic of the three types of *avidya* or *marigpa*^l in the Dzogchen classification adopted here: the one introduced by the contingent, beclouding element of stupefaction (*mongcha*^m) that has always been flowing with the continuum of beings who have never realized the true condition, and that prevents the nondual Awake self-awareness that the Dzogchen teachings call *rigpa* (as it manifests in *nirvana*) from making patent its own face (*rangngo shepa*) in what is known as *rigpa-qua*-Path and *rigpa-qua*-Fruit.⁷⁰ The reason why it is not within *samsara* either, is because at this stage the functions responsible for the construction of *samsara*, and in particular the delusory valuation-absolutization of thought that will be defined below and that is at the root of the confusion of categories that is the characteristic trait of *samsara*, have not yet become

^a *Thugs-rje*.

^b *Gdangs*.

^c *Rol pa*.

^d *rTsal*.

^e *Rang-ngo shes-pa*.

^f *Ngo-bo*.

^g *Lung-ma-bstan*.

^h *Ye-don kun-gzhi*.

ⁱ *Kun-gzhi kham*.

^j *Bag-chags-kyi kun-gzhi*.

^k *gZhi'i rig-pa*.

^l *Ma-rig-pa*.

^m *rMongs-cha*.

active, and hence *avidya* or marigpa does not manifest as delusion properly speaking (i.e., does not involve the second and third of the meanings the term has in the Dzogchen classification adopted here).⁷¹ In Mahayana terms, it does not involve the defilement of the passions (*kleshavarana* or nyöndrib^a), but it does contain the obscuration of knowledge (*jñeyavarana* or shedrib^b) that is the “obstacle to omniscience” preventing the realization of Buddhahood (but which does not prevent the obtention of the realizations belonging to the Hinayana, nor of those of bodhisattvas up to the seventh level). Though in this condition neither *samsara* nor *nirvana* are active, the fact that in it the limitless dimension of space-like emptiness called *dharmadhatu* may become evident, and that this may be accompanied by bliss, gives rise to *the danger that it may be mistaken for the dharmakaya—which Jigme Lingpa prophesized would be a frequent error in our time.*⁷² Kunzhi kham, the “dimension of the base-of-all,” is a pervasive medium in which the intentionality of mind does not yet operate, and it is thus likened unto an egg (being comparable to the universe before the distinction between the earth and the sky has taken place, as conceived in Bön and other ancient cosmogonies):⁷³ in this sense, the base-of-all is compared to a situation in which the senses have not awakened to their objects, *not* necessarily because the continuum of sensation out of which objects are singled out in developed samsaric experience has not manifested (as would be the case with a person who is about to wake up from sleep, to whom the continuum of sense data of awake experience is not yet present), *but* because there isn’t as yet an illusory mental subject, or a cognitive activity that may either take that continuum as object, or actively function in order to single out segments of the sensory continuum and perceive them as object.⁷⁴ In fact, it is said that because of the presence in rigpa-*qua*-Base of the beclouding element of stupefaction called mongcha, rigpa-*qua*-Base functions as “base-of-all carrying propensities,” corresponding to the clear light that beings in *samsara* perceive only immediately following death but that underlies every moment of grosser levels of cognition during life—which is a particular manifestation of mind (sem^c: the limited awareness which is the condition of possibility of *samsara*, which underlies all samsaric states, and of which the eight “consciousnesses” that will be described below are manifestations)⁷⁵ and which is said that to carry propensities insofar as it is the vehicle of the propensities for grasping for existence, the various karmic propensities, and the propensities for repeatedly remembering whatever we remember repeatedly.

(3) *Samsara*, which arises when *avidya* or marigpa manifests as delusion properly speaking—i.e., in the second and third of the senses of the term in the Dzogchen classification adopted here: (2) as false, baseless dualistic appearances, and (3) as ignoring (mishepad) that the dualistic appearances indicated as (2) are false and baseless.⁷⁶ This delusion is explained as being the result of the interplay of a set of mental functions, among which the most important element is the delusory valuation-absolutization of the thinking process that endows our thoughts with illusory importance and truth, leading us to take their contents to be absolutely true or false, and giving rise to the confusion of categories that is the essence of *samsara*—which consists in taking the relative as absolute, the dependent as independent, the spurious as true, the put as given, the

^a *Nyon-sgrib.*

^b *Shes-sgrib.*

^c *Sems.*

^d *Mi-shes-pa.*

conditioned as unconditioned, the contingent as inherent, etc. In some Dzogchen teachings, this has been explained as the process whereby a vibratory function that seems to emanate from, or be concentrated in, the center of the chest at the level of the heart, *charges* thoughts with the illusion of *value* and *truth*, causing us to either confuse them with the territory they interpret and take them to be entities-in-themselves (as occurs in sensory perception), or to be the absolute truth—or something absolutely false—with regard to that which the thoughts interpret (as occurs in discursive thinking).⁷⁷ (As asserted in Capriles, Elías, 2003, it is when the delusory valuation-absolutization of thought becomes more pronounced—so that the sensation in the center of the chest associated with the vibratory function at the root of delusion becomes more perceptible—that it is said that one is being affected by a *passion*.) The type of *avidya* or *ma-rig-pa* involved in *samsara* features the subject-object duality, which results from the delusory valuation of the supersubtle conceptual structure called the “directional threefold thought structure” (Tib., khorsum^a) that gives rise to the grasped and the grasper (Skr. *grahya-grahaka*; Tib., zungdzin^b),⁷⁸ condition of possibility of grasping at appearances—and in general it involves the delusory valuation-absolutization of the three type of thoughts that are distinguished by the higher Tantras and the teachings of Dzogchen *Ati*, which are: (A) “coarse,” (B) “subtle,” and (C) “super-subtle.” (A) In my version of these concepts, the paradigmatic coarse thoughts are those that the Dzogchen teachings—and in the context of the Mahāyāna, *ācārya* Dignāga—call *word sound patterns [resulting from mental syntheses] that are audio categories*, which is my own translation of the Sanskrit term *śabdāsāmānya*,^d which are the ones used in discursive thinking and which are *models* of our memory of the sounds of words (divested of the characteristics of an individual’s voice, pitch, pronunciation and so on) used by the imagination in such a way as to form inner dialogues serving as the basis for conveying chains of meaning.⁷⁹ (B) The ones called “subtle thoughts” are those that the Dzogchen teachings—and in a Mahāyāna context, *ācāryas* Dignāga and Dharmakīrti—call *universal concepts of entities [resulting from mental syntheses] that are meaning categories* (my translation of the Sanskrit term *arthasāmānyae*), responsible for our *instantaneous, mute comprehension of the essence of sense data or of the latter’s reproduction by the imagination in the form of mental images, coarse thoughts* and so on, thus being responsible for conceptual knowledge and perception, including, (a) what Descartes, Locke and other Western philosophers and epistemologists called “intuitive knowledge” (including the one that, according to both the Dzogchen teachings and some Western, twenty century epistemologists, occur repetitively in discursive thinking, allowing us to grasp the meaning of the reproduction of the sound of words by the imagination⁸⁰) but which, contrarily to the view of Descartes, rather than being a source of indubitable truth, if taken to be true give rise to delusion, and (b) what Locke called “sensitive knowledge,” which H. H. Price and others call “recognition,” and which is responsible for sensory perception (which, when taken to correspond precisely to that which it interprets, or confused with the latter, begets delusion in the sense just considered).⁸¹ (C) Finally, the paradigmatic supersubtle thought is the one conceiving a

^a *Khor-gsum*.

^b *gZung-'dzin*.

^c *Phyin-ci-log-par 'dzin-pa*.

^d Tib. drachi (*sgra spyi*).

^e Tib. dönchi (*don spyi*).

directional, linear threefold structure of experience, which I call “threefold directional thought-structure” and which consists in the notion that there is a perceiver, a perception and something perceived; a doer, an action and something done; a thinker, thinking and thoughts; etc.⁸²

When the vibratory activity at the root of the delusory valuation-absolutization of thought sustains the “discursive thoughts”—which as we have seen are a type of (B) coarse thoughts—that follow each other in reasoning, as well as the subtle thoughts that come into play again and again in the course of the reasoning, we take them to be either the absolute truth, or something absolutely false, with regard to that which the thoughts interpret. When the activity in question sustains (B) the subtle / intuitive thoughts coming into play in sensory perception, we confuse these thoughts with the territory they interpret and take them to be entities-in-themselves. When this activity sustains (C) the *threefold thought-structure*, the result is the manifestation of the *threefold directional apparitional structure*, which comprises the delusive subject-object duality, condition of possibility of knowledge and action—which by the same token appears to be part of an absolutely true, objective reality, so that we feel we are mental subjects or souls at a distance from an objectively existent “physical universe” (as will be shown below, it was this that led Descartes to take no notice of the fact that the mental subject and its objects were simply projections of delusorily valued thought, and posit them as elements of a *given*, objective, self-existent reality). It must be noted that when it is said that we are being affected by a passion, what has actually happened is that the delusory valuation-absolutization of thought has become more intense, and this has intensified the sensation in the center of the chest associated with the vibratory function at the root of delusion and with the tensions it elicits, by the same token increasing the strength of thoughts and hence their power to lead us unreflectingly into action. (The condition of possibility of the delusory valuation-absolutization of the less subtle types of thoughts is the delusory valuation-absolutization of the subtler types. For example, for the delusory valuation-absolutization of subtle / intuitive thoughts to come into play in perception, the delusory valuation-absolutization of the threefold thought structure must have given rise to the illusory subject-object duality, and for delusory valued-absolutized coarse thoughts of the discursive type to come into play in reasoning, both the subject-object duality and perception in terms of intuitive thoughts must manifest. Furthermore, there is delusion in discursive thinking only when thoughts are perceived as object and in terms of delusorily-valued intuitive concepts; otherwise, if discursive thoughts arise, they will be like mental sounds that are not interpreted and that hence are not followed, and so they will immediately dissolve rather than having continuity. Finally, in syllogisms and inferential reasoning in general the conclusion is always reached intuitively. Therefore, it is clear that the delusory valuation-absolutization of coarser thoughts depends on that of subtler ones.) To conclude, it is said that samsara involves an inversion insofar as the three indivisible, continuous aspects of the Base, which are ngowo^a, rangzhin^b and thukje^c, seem to be inherently separate from each other: the phenomena that manifest by virtue of the thukje aspect and which are part of this aspect seem to be substantial rather than void, and thus they seem to have an essence different from the ngowo aspect—voidness, which is completely ignored.

^a *Ngo-bo.*

^b *Rang-bzhin.*

^c *Thugs-rje.*

How do the above three conditions interact? The neutral condition of the base-of-all listed as (2), in which there is a nonconceptual experience of the limitless space where all phenomena appear (Skt., *dharmadhatu*; Tib., *chöjing*^a), cannot manifest uninterruptedly: at some point it will be interrupted by the sudden shining forth of *ngowo shi*^b,⁸³ which should make spontaneous awareness (Skt., *swasamvedana*; Tib., *rang rig*—which is the same as *rangjunggi yeshe*^c or “self-arisen primordial gnosis”) most clearly patent, with the emphasis on its essence or *ngowo* aspect. However, what the Dzogchen teachings call spontaneous awareness is not the same as its namesake in the Yogachara School (Skt., *swasamvittih*; Tib., *rang rig*), for it is not explained in terms of a duplication of consciousness: it does not involve positing a supposedly “second consciousness” which is turned to the inside while a sensory consciousness that is oriented toward the “external world” apprehends a sensory object, and which simultaneously experiences its own nature without distinguishing or separating the experienced from the experiencing consciousness. The concept of spontaneous awareness in the Dzogchen teachings will be discussed in great detail in the next chapter of this book; for the time being, suffice to say that it is a nondual Awake awareness beyond the subject-object duality that becomes patent in *nirvana* (so that we then may speak of spontaneous awareness *qua* Path or *qua* Fruit, according to the case), and which in *samsara* is inherent in the Base, though it is ignored by dualistic consciousness. At any rate, as noted in Capriles, Elías, 2003, and as we will see again in the comparison of Mahamadhyaṃaka and Dzogchen in the chapter on the Madhyamaka School, in the Tibetan term that expresses this concept, which is *rangrig*, the particle *rang* refers to a spontaneous occurrence, and thus it perfectly responds to the way spontaneous awareness manifests in Ati Dzogpa Chenpo, but has little relation to what the term refers to in the Yogachara School (and the same may be said concerning the particle “*swa*” in the Sanskrit term *swasamvedana*).⁸⁴

If, upon the sudden shining forth of *ngowo shi*, we do not react with an attempt to take as object the essence or *ngowo* aspect of this awareness and recognize it in terms of concepts, but instead a nondual, nonconceptual reGnition makes patent *rigpa*’s own face (*rangngo shepa*^d), this is *rigpa-qua*-Path manifesting as the *dharmakaya*: an unveiling of the true nature of spontaneous awareness, with the emphasis on its *ngowo* aspect, which is the first level of realization in Dzogchen Atiyoga,⁸⁵ and which is also the initial manifestation of the renowned *chikshe kundröl*^e or “all-liberating single gnosis” in the condition of (1) *nirvana*, upon which thoughts liberate themselves spontaneously. This gnosis is all-liberating because when it unveils there manifests *no* (illusory) distance between a perceiver and something perceived, and therefore the spurious perceiver’s clinging to the perceived that throughout *samsara* inhibits spontaneous liberation cannot occur, and as a result all that arises liberates upon arising. However, the all-liberating function of this gnosis is inhibited not only in *samsara*, but also in the condition of the base-of-all in which neither *samsara* nor *nirvana* are manifest: though in the condition of the base-of-all *samsara* (and therefore the spurious perceiver’s clinging of the to the perceived) is not manifest, this gnosis has not unveiled; contrariwise, its all-liberating character has been inhibited by the obscuration of this very gnosis by the contingent,

^a *Chos dbyings*.

^b *Ngo bo ’i gshis*.

^c *Rang-byung-gi ye-shes*.

^d *Rang-ngo shes-pa*.

^e *gCik-shes kun-grol*.

beclouding element of stupefaction that was referred to above. (In fact, just before Awakening Shakyamuni was resting in the meditative absorption of the base-of-all; his Awakening is said to have taken place when, upon seeing the morning star, the reGnition of Awake awareness manifested in his continuum, giving rise to *nirvana*.)

How to help the manifestation of the nondual, nonconceptual reGnition that makes patent rigpa's own face, so that rigpa-*qua*-Path may manifest as the dharmakaya? While the neutral condition of the base-of-all is manifest, we are neither asleep nor in a state of total unawareness like that of a stone; contrariwise, there is a most clear awareness. A *precise* application of the secret oral instructions may contribute to the nondual, nonconceptual reGnition of this awareness: *in terms of these instructions*, we must look and check to what or whom is this condition present—or in what awareness, just like a reflection in a mirror, is it manifest.⁸⁶ Since the illusory mental *subject* can perceive *objects* only, and by no means can perceive itself, the precise way of looking explained in the instructions may provide a most precious opportunity for the subject-object duality that is the core of the delusion that is the second of the senses the term *avidya* or marigpa has in the Dzogchen classification adopted here, to short-circuit and collapse. In that very instant the nondual, nonconceptual reGnition that makes Awake nondual self-awareness' face patent manifests, dissolving the beclouding of primordial awareness that is the first sense *avidya* or marigpa has in the Dzogchen classification adopted here, and thus allowing this self-awareness to manifest and function as chikshe kundröl or “all-liberating single gnosis.” When this happens, it becomes self-evident that it occurred *spontaneously* rather than having been *produced* by our action, and we become fully aware that it *cannot* be *produced* by any means whatsoever. (In occasions in which the energetic-volume-determining-the-scope-of-awareness [Skt. *kundalini*; Tib. thigle^a]⁸⁷ is high enough and certain specific conditions are present, this reGnition may take place after a positive feedback loop has led tensions to a threshold, and then, in connection with the application of the instructions but not as an effect of this, those tensions liberate themselves spontaneously [i.e., liberate of their own accord, in a perfectly spontaneous way]: in this case it will be even more clear that this reGnition and the concomitant spontaneous liberation of delusion do not at all depend on our actions or on our will.)

However, at the time of the shining forth of ngowo shi, the beclouding element of stupefaction (Tib. mongcha^b) that has always been flowing with the continuum of those beings who have never realized the true condition may manifest, preventing the reGnition of that which shone forth—which otherwise would have made the dharmakaya patent—and giving rise to the type of *avidya* or marigpa that prevents the reGnition in question, which is the one that, as the Dzogchen teachings note, arises first in the process of origination of *samsara*, and which gives rise to the neutral condition of the base-of-all (in which there is no *nirvana* insofar as this type of *avidya* is manifest, yet there is no *samsara* insofar as the other types of *avidya* are not manifest): the type of *avidya* that arises at this point is the one that in the threefold Dzogchen division adopted in this book is called innate beclouding of primordial, nondual awareness (Tib. lhenkye marigpa^c or lhenchik kyepai marigpa^d), and that in the alternative threefold Dzogchen classification of

^a *Thig le*.

^b *rmongs cha*.

^c *lhan skyes ma rig pa*.

^d *lhan cig skyes pa'i ma rig pa*.

avidya favored by Longchen Rabjampa is referred to by the hardly translatable term *gyu dagnyi chikpai marigpa*^a.⁸⁸ If, immediately after failing to recognize the sudden shining forth in question and thus keeping unaware that it is the expression of the Base, the delusory valuation-absolutization of the supersubtle threefold thought structure gives rise to the subject-object duality, so that we take that shining forth to be an external reality, this is the second type of *avidya* to originate according to the threefold classification favored by Longchenpa—in which it is called spontaneous illusion or *lhenchik kyepai marigpa*^b—and the one that marks the beginning of the development of *samsara*. This gives rise to the illusory distance between the perceiver and the perceived necessary for the perceiver to subsequently cling to the perceived, and hence for the arising of the grasper and the grasped which are the condition of possibility of grasping at appearances. And, in fact, it is after this that there manifests the delusiveness (Skt. *klishtamanas*; Tib. *nyönyi*^c)—the propensity for which is inherent in the base-of-all-carrying-propensities (*bagchagkyi kunzhi*^d)—that, on the basis of the delusory valuation-absolutization of subtle (intuitive) thoughts, instantly conceives the base-of-all-carrying-propensities as an independently existing “I” that rules over the skandhas, thus giving rise to the basic disturbing attitude referred to by the Sanskrit term *ahamkara* and the Tibetan *ngadzin*^e that I am rendering as self-grasping (but that as we have seen involves self-affirmation and self-preoccupation), which conceives an *I* or *me* as the experiencer, would-be controller and somehow owner of what is cognized. This will give rise to the third type of *avidya* in the alternative threefold classification espoused by Longchenpa, which is termed *kuntu tagpai marigpa*^f or imaginative delusion, and which as the term suggests is related to the third truth of Mahamadyama.⁸⁹ This type of *avidya* involves the singling out of objects within the continuum that appeared as object the very moment spontaneous illusion (*lhenchik kyepai marigpa* as understood in the threefold classification favored by Longchen Rabjampa) arose in the immediately preceding stage—thus presupposing the operativeness of a divisive, hermetic focus of awareness—and the perception of these objects in terms of delusorily valued-absolutized subtle (intuitive) thoughts (thus involving the confusion of the digital, fragmentary maps of thought with the analog, holistic territory of the given that such maps are incapable of matching, and the mistaken belief in the exact match of the former with the latter)—which produces the illusion of there being a plethora of entities existing inherently, independently and disconnectedly. Since the idea of an “I” has been superimposed on the illusory subject associated to dualistic consciousness, a compelling drive arises to confirm its existence and gratify its acquisitiveness by means of contacts with the seemingly self-existing, apparently external entities perceived at this stage. With this, the illusion that constitutes the second type of *avidya* in the division adopted in this book becomes complete; insofar as a low energetic-volume-determining-the-scope-of-awareness and the defense mechanisms discussed in

^a *rgyu bdag nyid gcig pa'i ma rig pa* (cf. Longchenpa, 1976, p. 24, and Cornu, 2001, p. 62).

^b *lhan cig skyes pa'i ma rig pa*. Cfr. Longchenpa (1975a, p. 51; 1976, pp. 24 and 122 note 10) and Cornu (2001, p. 62). This is the same term that the other classification uses to refer to the first type of *avidya*.

^c *nyon yid*.

^d *bag chags kyi kun gzhi*.

^e *nga 'dzin*.

^f *kun tu brtags pa'i ma rig pa*. Cfr. Longchenpa (1976, pp. 24 and 123 note 11) and Cornu (2001, p. 62).

this volume allow us to ignore (mishepa^a) this illusion to be no more than an illusion, we are under the power of the third type of *avidya* in the classification adopted in this book—and, as we thus become totally deluded, *samsara* consolidates.

The clinging of the grasper with regard to the grasped reinforces and consolidates the inhibition of spontaneous liberation that, as a result of the arising of *avidya* and marigpa in the first of the senses the terms have both in the Dzogchen classification adopted here and in the one espoused by Longchen Rabjampa, was already manifest in the condition of the base-of-all—and it makes the complete development of *samsara* possible insofar as the whole of *samsara* functions in terms of the subject-object duality. In fact, in terms of the above illustration of the chikshe kundröl^b or *all-liberating single gnosis* by the example of a spring, in *samsara* there is a perceiver that seems to lie at a distance from the water, and the spring flows like a river in which this perceiver can single out relatively lasting forms, conceptualize them, and cling to them, thereby fixating them and thus preventing their spontaneous liberation.

So that the distinction and relationship between the two threefold classifications of *avidya* in the Dzogchen teachings discussed above may become crystal clear, it is essential to keep in mind that the first sense of *avidya* in the Dzogchen division adopted here is the same as in the Dzogchen classification favored by Longchenpa, even though each system refers to it by a different name; the second sense of *avidya* in the division adopted here comprises both the second and third senses of the term in the Dzogchen classification espoused by Longchenpa (even though the name of the second type of *avidya* in the latter classification is the same as that of the first in the former); and the third sense of *avidya* in the division adopted here is the seal that maintains the operativeness of the combination of the other two types of *avidya* in the division adopted here, and of all three types of *avidya* in the classification used by Longchenpa.

However, also in case the shining forth of ngowo shi had been reGnized and hence *nirvana* had manifested, this would not last forever: at some point (and initially most likely after very few seconds) *avidya* or marigpa in the first of the senses it has in the Dzogchen classification adopted here and in the one favored by Longchen Rabjampa would manifest again, reinstating the dimension of the base-of-all, from which *samsara* would rapidly develop. If we wish to explain the origination of *samsara* in more precise terms, we may do so in terms of three stages that successively produce birth in the three spheres of *samsara*; if at any of these stages we let go of the drives that give rise to delusion, the development of *samsara* will be interrupted, but otherwise the corresponding samsaric sphere will become established. These three stages are:⁹⁰

(1) The co-emergent arising of the activity I call “delusory valuation-absolutization” and the supersubtle thought I call threefold thought-structure, which gives rise to *avidya* in the second sense of the term in the classification favored by Longchen Rabjampa, produces a directional, dualistic structuring and functioning of the cognitive complex (which has polarized into subject and object) and by the same token gives rise to the phenomenon of being—thus generating the illusion that there is an *experience-that-is*, an *experiencer-that-is* and *something-experienced-that-is*.⁹¹ The arising of the subject-object duality at a time when there is nothing that may be taken as object except for the continuum of the neutral base-of-all that manifested when the beclouding element of

^a *mi shes pa*.

^b *gcig shes kun grol*.

stupefaction prevented the reGnition of ngowo shi^a that otherwise would have made evident the essence or ngowo aspect of the Base (i.e. the Base's voidness that constitutes the dharmakaya-*qua*-Base), causes the continuum in question to be replaced by a seemingly limitless object that is neither the sudden shining forth of ngowo shi nor the condition of the base-of-all, but which, being beyond a figure / ground distinction, may be easily taken for a totality or an infinitude (which it is not, for the illusory subject-object duality has concealed Totality, and the experience of there being a subject different and separate from whatever appears as object has introduced a limit that makes the object finite). If, in the immediately following moment, the mental subject deeply feels the object in question to be its own being (in Sartrean language, establishing a link-of-being with it⁹²), thereby gaining the illusion of having attained totality or infinity, the result is a formless absorption of the top of *samsara*.⁹³ If we could make stable the figureless and *in this sense* formless condition produced in this way, attaining what Longchenpa calls “the cognition that is in the state of contemplation [and that] involves a stable absorption of tranquility”,^b we could take birth in the formless sphere;⁹⁴ however, if we have not developed the necessary healthy habits through negative feedback and constructive practices such as pacifying meditation (Skt. *shamatha*; Tib. *zhine*^c), and we are not applying either yogic or shamanic methods at the time this happens, the condition in question will last for an extremely brief instant. If we reGnize the true condition of the thought involved, it will liberate itself spontaneously in the unveiling of the dharmakaya or true condition of the dang aspect of the gnosis (or wisdom) of *dharmadhatu*, or all-pervading gnosis (or wisdom). However, what normally happens is that the basic drive to produce, confirm and sustain the illusion that the mental subject possesses self-being and absolute importance—which as we have seen is called self-grasping—gives rise to the next stages in the unfolding of *samsara*, sustaining the unhappy consciousness that results from the contradiction between the yearning to recover the plenitude concealed by the arising of the dualistic consciousness that, insofar as it experiences itself as being at a distance from the rest of the Base, experiences the lack of the latter's plenitude, and the compulsion to affirm and sustain the existence of the illusory mental subject *cum* dualistic consciousness that is the root of the experience of lack of plenitude..

(2) Then there manifests what the Dzogchen teachings call consciousness of the base-of-all (Skt., *alaya vijñana*; Tib., *kunzhi namshe*^d or *kunzhi nampar shepa*^e). Though at this point the concrete objects of the five senses are not yet present as such, a subtle cognitive capacity that tends to grasp its objects has risen and made itself ready in every respect to receive the impressions of the potential objects of deluded mind, like a mirror, and so the eyes see color-forms, the ears hear sounds, the nose smells fragrances, the tongue tastes flavors and the body has kinesthetic sensations. This involves an interest that drives us to single out and take as figure some of those structures that conserve their pattern within the total change of the sensory pseudo-totality appearing as object (i.e., the collections of characteristics referred to by the Sanskrit term *lakshana* and the Tibetan

^a *ngo bo'i gshis*.

^b *dri med 'od zer* (Longchen Rabjam), *rdzogs pa chen po sems nyid ngal gso'i 'grel ba shing rta chen po*, vol. I, 85b/5; quoted in Tulku Thöndup (1996), p. 223. The terminology was adapted to the one used here.

^c *zhi gnas*; Pali, *samatha*; Chinese *chih*.

^d *Kun-gzhi rnam-shes*.

^e *Kun-gzhi rnam-par shes-pa*.

noun tsenpai^a).⁹⁵ This consciousness is compared to ice on water^b because grasping at its would-be objects amounts to singling them out, which is akin to freezing segments of the ocean, insofar as it causes what is as yet unpatterned become configured,⁹⁶ when this happens we enter the realm that, in Mahayana terms, is primarily determined by the defilement of knowledge (Skt., *jñeyavarana*; Tib., shedrib^c): the realm of form. If we manage to make the ensuing condition stable, attaining what Longchenpa calls “the cognition in the state of contemplation of clarity and lack of [coarse] thought [involving] stable [yet] partial insight”,^d we take birth in this realm;⁹⁷ if we recognize the true condition of the stirring involves, the thought involved will liberate itself spontaneously in the unveiling of the dharmakaya that is the true condition of of the dang aspect of the mirror-like wisdom or mirror-like gnosis; if neither of these two occurrences take place, *samsara* will continue to develop through the manifestation of the next stage.

(3) Then the cluster of mental operations called “consciousness of defilements” (Skt. *klishtamanovijñāna*; Tib. nyongmongpachen yikyī namshe^e, or nyongmongpachen yikyī nampar shepa^f), which is the source of *avidya* in the third of the senses the term has in the classification favored by Longchen Rabjampa, on the basis of the delusory valuation-absolutization of subtle (intuitive) thoughts, gives rise to the self-grasping / self-affirmation / self-preoccupation / egocentricity that compels us to establish, confirm, demonstrate and sustain the illusion that we are separate, absolutely important and true individual selves, by reacting passionately with grasping, appropriation or confrontation to the structures or collections of characteristics that we single out in the sensory continuum, in an attempt to achieve plenitude and pleasure (which as we have seen is a self-defeating task, for it is the illusion of a separate self that gives rise to the lack of plenitude at the core of *duhkha*, whereas the quest for pleasure causes pleasure to elude us). This is the sphere of sensuality, in which the cluster of mental operations called “consciousness of defilements” functions through the following consciousnesses posited by the Dzogchen teachings, which it would be more precise to call *fields of presentation of phenomena*: (a) the field of presentation (“consciousness”) of mental phenomena (Skt. *manovijñāna*; Tib. yikyī namshe^g, or yikyī nampar shepa^h), which presents those phenomena of the dangⁱ mode of manifestation of energy that the higher Tantras call “coarse thoughts”—which as we have seen correspond to the *mental images* that Dharmakīrti called *samanyalakshana* (Tib. chitsen^j) or *general collections of characteristics* and that David Hume called *ideas*,⁹⁸ and which reproduce perceptions of phenomena of tsel^k energy achieved through the five universally accepted senses—and, (b) the fields of presentation (“consciousnesses”) of the five universally accepted senses (Skt. *pañchadwarajñāna*; Tib.

^a *mTshan-dpe*.

^b Jigme Lingpa, *rDzogs-pa chen-po'i gnag gsum shan-'byed*, in the *kLong-chen snying-gi thig-le*. Quoted in Guenther, Herbert, 1977, p. 144.

^c *Shes-sgrib*.

^d *Dri-med 'od-zer* (Longchen Rabjam), *rdzogs-pa chen-po sems-nyid ngal-gso'i 'grel-ba shing-rta chen-po*, vol. I, 85b/5; quoted in Tulku Thöndup (1996), p. 223. The terminology was adapted to the one used here.

^e *Nyong-mongs pa-can yid-kyi rnam-shes*.

^f *Nyong-mongs pa-can yid-kyi rnam-par shes-pa*.

^g *yid-kyi rnam-shes*.

^h *Yid-kyi rnam-par shes-pa*.

ⁱ *gDangs*.

^j *sPyi-mtshan*.

^k *rTsal*.

gongai namshe^a, or gongai nampar shepa^b), which present what the Dzogchen teachings call phenomena of tsel energy.⁹⁹ We can single out and take as figure the collections of characteristics of tsel energy manifesting through the five senses insofar as they seem to correspond to one or another of the collections of characteristics that appear in the field of presentation exhibiting the mental phenomena of dang energy that serve as models for perception (i.e., in the *manovijñāna* or yikyī namshe). Then, the cluster of mental operations referred to as “consciousness of defilements” recognizes and understands these collections of characteristics (whether they appear through the fields of presentation of the five senses or in the field of presentation of mental phenomena) in terms of the subtle thought—i.e., of the *comprehension of essence*—with which they were associated in the process of socialization, and as this understanding is taken to be the absolute nature of the collection of characteristics, the supposed self-existence and self-value both of the imaginary self that is the core of self-grasping and of an objective world is confirmed.¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, the associations that the *comprehension* in question acquired in the process of socialization, and/or the specific determinations of the particular collection of characteristics that is recognized in terms of this *comprehension*, lead the cluster of operations called “consciousness of defilements” to ascribe a positive, negative or neutral ethical or aesthetic value to the collection of characteristics in question, and thus to react to it with acceptance / desire, rejection or indifference, thereby confirming the supposed self-existence and self-value of the imaginary self that is the core of self-grasping and of the world. Since in this way we attempt to gratify the acquisitiveness of this imaginary self, the sphere of sensuality—which in Mahayana terms is primarily determined by the defilement of the passions (Skt. *kleshavarana*; Tib. nyöndrib)—is the realm of *I* and *mine*.

The above explanation makes clear the reasons why the Dzogchen teachings do not limit themselves to positing the six so-called consciousnesses the Madhyamaka Prasāngika accepts (those of the five universally accepted senses and that of mental images): in these six “consciousness” different types of images are presented, yet because of the nature of these “consciousness” all of them are necessarily (a) particular and (b) dimensional (i.e., spatiotemporal); therefore, if these were all the “consciousnesses” there were, there could be collections of characteristics but there could be no *comprehension of the essence* of these collections,¹⁰¹ and therefore there could be neither *recognition* of the collections in question (without which deluded sentient beings could not manage reality), nor emotionally charged reactions to them (without which the sphere of sensuality could not manifest). This is the reason why the Dzogchen teachings posit the cluster of mental operations called “consciousness of defilements.” Furthermore, it would not suffice to present the cluster of operations in question as a kind of consciousness that perceives the contents of the fields of presentation of the so-called “six consciousnesses” which, as a result of the structuring of experience in terms of the threefold directional apparitional structure, seem to lie in front of this “consciousness;” it is necessary to acknowledge that, as a result of the structuring of experience in terms of the directional structure in question, the drives activated by karmic imprints (Skt. *avarana* or *vasana*, according to the case; Tib. bagchag^c) that determine the impulses and reactions of this cluster of operations seem to come from a source somehow located behind it, and that this allows the cluster of

^a *sGo-lnga'i rnam-shes*.

^b *sGo-lnga'i rnam-par shes-pa*.

^c *Bag-chags*.

operations in question to conceive the illusion that the illusory mental subject that is one of the poles of the threefold directional apparitional structure is a self-existent, autonomous self or soul—an illusion which, as we have seen, is the core of self-grasping, and which is also the condition of possibility of life in the sphere of sensuality. Furthermore, as shown above, all of the elements posited by the Dzogchen teachings are necessary in order to account for the arising of *samsara* from the neutral condition of the base-of-all (which, as we have seen, carries propensities)—whereas as shown elsewhere in a discussion of the concept of “unconscious” and of self-deceit,^a the base-of-all-carrying-propensities itself (which as we have seen is a neutral condition manifesting in our experience rather than a metaphysical abstraction) is necessary in order to account both for the *continuity* of our deluded experience and activities and for the elusion of ego-dystonic contents. (It must be kept in mind that all of the so-called “consciousnesses” discussed here, their objects, the sequence in which they arise and so on, depend on the karmic dispositions carried by the “base-of-all carrying propensities.”)

With regard to the above three stages, the corresponding spheres of *samsara*, and their relationships with the various “consciousnesses” posited by the Dzogchen teachings, it is convenient to consider the following explanation by Buddhaguhya:^b

In the realm of sensuality the seven consciousnesses, such as that of the eyes [and other senses, that of mental forms, and that of the passions] are principal, whereas all else [including the base-of-all and the consciousness of the base-of-all] are subordinate. In the realm of form the consciousness of the base-of-all and the consciousnesses of the gates [or senses] are principal and all else is subordinate. In the formless realm the base-of-all itself is principal and all else [(namely the eight consciousness)]

The same applies to the following words by Longchen Rabjam:^c

E ma! *By holding on to duality*, living beings,
while dwelling in the dream-like illusory *samsara*,
whatever efforts they make are causes and effects of *samsara*.

By [dualistically] experiencing [what in the immediately preceding moment was] the non-conceptual base-of-all, they stray into the formless realm;

[while] experiencing the clear-empty [yet dualistic and figure-ground] consciousness of the base-of-all, they stray into the realm of form;

[while] experiencing the six consciousness [through the consciousness of defilements] they stray into the realm of desire.

Nonetheless, in the case of Dzogchen practitioners who are familiar enough with the unwavering manifestation of the dharmakaya and the spontaneous liberation of delusory thoughts, even at this point it will be enough for them to look into whatever thought is present, as though to apprehend its true condition (with which they are quite

^a Capriles (2007, vol. II).

^b Buddhaguhya, commentary to the *Kunzhi Dang Yeshe Takpa* (*Kun-gzhi dang ye-shes brtag-pa*), quoted by *dri-med 'od-zer* (Longchen Rabjam) in *rdzogs-pa chen-po sems-nyid ngal-gso'i 'grel-ba shing-rta chen-po*, vol. I, 85b/5; translation in Tulku Thöndup (1996), p. 223. The terminology was adapted to the one used here.

^c Longchen Rabjam, *rDzogs-pa chen-po sems-nyid rang-grol*, translated in Tulku Thöndup (1996, pp. 326-327). The terminology was adapted to the one used here.

familiar due to their previous, repeated experience of spontaneous liberation), for the thought to liberate itself spontaneously in the unveiling of the dharmakaya¹⁰² that is the true condition of the dang aspect of the wisdom or gnosis of equalness—or not to do so, since spontaneous liberation is beyond causality and thus, unless the individual is extremely advanced on the Dzogchen Path, there are no guarantees that it will take place in any particular occasion.¹⁰³ This is why the *Kayatraya[vatara]sutra* reads:^a

The dissolution of the base-of-all into the ultimate sphere is the primordial gnosis or wisdom of the ultimate sphere. The dissolution of the consciousness of the base-of-all into the ultimate sphere is the mirror-like primordial gnosis or wisdom. The dissolution of the mind-consciousness into the ultimate sphere is the primordial gnosis or wisdom of equanimity. The dissolution of the [consciousness of defilements or] defiled mind into the ultimate sphere is the discriminative gnosis or wisdom. The dissolution of the consciousnesses of the five senses into the ultimate sphere is the primordial gnosis or wisdom of accomplishment.

(A process roughly analogous to the one described above develops again and again as short cognitive gaps occur repeatedly in our experience throughout the activities of daily life, but at the time our space-time-awareness is quite narrow and we are distracted by the turmoil of daily activities, duties and worries; furthermore, the process takes place just too rapidly and confusedly, and the limits of its successive stages become extremely murky. At any rate, the recurrence of this process throughout our daily life shows that *samsara*, rather than being continuous, is constantly arising and developing.)

Though the above description, which is exclusive to the Dzogchen teachings, may seem to some extent similar to the one carried out by the Yogacharas in terms of the three “transformations,” the Dzogchen description, beside being far more precise, does not involve unwarranted metaphysical abstractions, hypostatizations or reifications, for it is carried out in the metaphenomenological way typical of Dzogchen.¹⁰⁴ To begin with, an *a priori* consciousness of the base-of-all that then will go through three transformations is not gratuitously posited; an experiential development is described, starting from the condition of ignorance of the true condition of the Base as such (i.e., as ignorance of the true nature of both ourselves and the universe) called the base-of-all—in which, however, there is as yet no consciousness and therefore no dualism. As we have seen, the sudden shining forth of the ngowo aspect of the Base disrupts the dimension of the base-of-all, and only after this has happened there may arise the consciousness of an indeterminate, apparently total object, and thereafter the readiness to perceive that the Dzogchen teachings refer to as the consciousness of the base-of-all, etc.

Note that the particle *she* (*shes*) is part both of the terms rangjunggi yeshe and chikshe kundröl, on the one hand, and of terms such as kunzhi namshe (or kunzhi nampar shepa), yiki namshe (or yiki nampar shepa), and gongai namshe (or gongai nampar shepa), on the other. This is so because all of these terms refer to functions of primordial gnosis or yeshe (*ye-shes*): in the rangjunggi yeshe called chikshe kundröl this nondual gnosis is fully evident, and the nonmanifestation of the first two of the senses the term *avidya* or marigpa in the Dzogchen classification adopted here (the beclouding of

^a Quoted by tshul khriims blo gros (Longchen Rabjam) in the *theg-pa chen-po'i man-ngag-gi bstan-bchos yid-bzhin rin-po-che'i mdzod-kyi 'grel-ba pad-ma dkar-po*, as translated in in Tulku Thöndup (1996, p. 410). The terminology was adapted to the one used here.

primordial awareness and the illusion of duality) translates itself into the instant, spontaneous liberation of whatever arises; in the namshes that characterize *samsara*, the base of experience continues to be primordial gnosis or *yeshe*, but this gnosis is veiled by the beclouding of primordial awareness and by the illusion of duality—which, as we have seen, prevents spontaneous liberation.

The second part in this comparison of Yogachara and Dzogchen concerns the thesis expressed by the Sanskrit term Chittamatra and its Tibetan equivalent, Semtsam^a, meaning “mind only.” No Dzogchen teachings have ever made assertions such as “all is mind” or “all is experiencing.” Among the three series of Dzogchen teachings, the one that employs the terminology that is closest to that of idealist schools of thought such as the Chittamatra, is the Semde series, according to which all is in truth primordial *bodhichitta*, corresponding to what the Dzogchen teachings in general call the Base or zhi.

From a cognitive perspective, primordial *bodhichitta* or, what is the same, the Base, is called Base-awareness or nature-of-mind (Skt. *chittata* or *chitta eva*; Tib., *semnyi*^b); however, insofar as this Base or primordial *bodhichitta* (is) the universal totality that encompasses everything and does not exclude anything, it cannot be properly understood in terms of conceptual extremes such as “mind” or “matter,” “subject” or “object,” “I” or “not-I,” and so on. Furthermore, the Semde stresses the distinction between nature-of-mind or Base-awareness and mind, insofar as the first words refer to the cognitive aspect of the single Base that gives rise to *samsara*, *nirvana* and the base-of-all, whereas the second term refers to the deceptive appearance and delusory functioning that are the core of *samsara*.¹⁰⁵

The same that was said with regard to the term mind applies to the word experiencing: only in *samsara* is there experiencing, for in a series of languages the corresponding term implies the subject-object duality¹⁰⁶ (in English and other European languages the term derives from the Latin *ex-perire*, meaning “going out from inside” or “dying from inside,” and therefore there can be no doubt that it implies both the subject-object duality and the dichotomy of an internal and an external dimension).

Furthermore, the Tibetan term here rendered as “experience” is nangwa^c, meaning vision or sensory presentation; as Kennard Lipman rightly pointed out in the Introduction to *Primordial Experience*,^d the Dzogchen teachings in general and the Semde series of teachings in particular have never claimed that all is nangwa, but, contrariwise, always emphasized the difference between nangwa and nangyül^e—the latter meaning “the seen,” “the presented,” or “that which is experienced.” This may be most clearly illustrated with a quotation from a text on the Tekchö^f of the Dzogchen Upadesha revealed by the great tertön^g Dudjom Lingpa^{h,i}:

^a *Sems-tsam*. Those who adhere to the view of mind-only are called Semtsampa (*sems-tsam-pa*).

^b *Sems-nyid*.

^c *sNang-ba*.

^d Introduction by Kennard Lipman to Mañjuśrimitra, trans. Kennard Lipman, Namkhai Norbu and Barry Simmons, English 1983/1986, pp. 19-23.

^e *sNang-yul*.

^f *Khregs-chod*.

^g *gTer-ston*. This term means “Treasure Revealer” and applies to those highly realized practitioners who reveal the Spiritual Treasures called *terma* (*gter-ma*).

^h *bDud-'joms gLing-pa* (1835-1904).

ⁱ Dudjom Lingpa, English 1994, trans.: Richard Barron, p. 103.

Some people hold apparent phenomena to be mind. They might wonder whether all external apparent phenomena are actually [delusorily valued] thoughts and therefore [whether they are] their own minds, but such is not the case. This is demonstrated by the fact that while apparent phenomena change from the very moment they manifest, ceasing and passing away in a succession of later moments following former ones, ordinary mind does *not* take on the nature of these passing phenomena, [for if it did so it would] become itself nonexistent *qua* mind [the very moment these phenomena have ceased to exist].

Through the usual progression of apparent phenomena manifesting in this manner to the eight aggregates of consciousness, cyclic existence emerges in its entirety. By tracing the process back to consciousness as the ground of all ordinary experience, one is still left stranded at the very pinnacle of conditioned existence.

Thus the world of all possible appearances, the whole of *samsara* and *nirvana*, is none other than the Base itself and is of one taste with that Base. To give an example, although myriad reflections of the planets and stars appear in the ocean, in actuality they are of one taste with the water itself. Understand that things are like this. This demonstration that all apparent phenomena are inherently self-manifesting appearances is the direct transmission instruction of Vajradhara.

According to the above reasoning, it is not permissible to assert that the apparent phenomena perceived by the mind are the mind, for if they were the mind, when the latter perceived a yellow phenomenon it would become itself yellow, and such yellow mind would forever be unable to perceive apparent phenomena of other colors. Furthermore, as noted in the above quote, if apparent phenomena were the mind, when a phenomenon ceased to be, the mind itself would cease to be, and henceforth it could no longer perceive further phenomena. Therefore, nangyül is not nangwa, just as the images projected in the movies are not the process of projecting them. And yet all phenomena are of one taste with the nature-of-mind or Base-awareness in which they manifest: this is the reason why, when we realize this nature-of-mind or Base-awareness in the state of rigpa or Truth, the whole of phenomena have a single taste for us—and, contrariwise, if the whole of phenomena do not have a single taste for us, we are not in the state of rigpa.

All of the above is directly related to the reasons why, unlike the Yogachara School, the Semde series of Dzogchen teachings assert that vision, sensory presentation or apparent phenomena (Tib., nangwa), whether in *samsara* or in *nirvana*, are always the play (Tib., rölp^{a107}) or ornament (Tib., gyen^b) of primordial *bodhichitta* (i.e., of the Base of both *samsara* and *nirvana*). And it is also directly related to the fact that the Semde series of Dzogchen teachings explains the samsaric perception of a seemingly external world as resulting from dividing the given into an apparently internal dimension (what the teachings call the “internal jing^c”) and an apparently external one (the “external jing”),^d and then projecting (Tib., tsel^e) a great deal of the appearances manifesting as the energy (Tib., thukje^f) of *bodhichitta* into the dimension that appears to be external.

^a *Rol-pa*.

^b *rGyan*.

^c *dByings*.

^d Introduction by Kennard Lipman to Mañjushrimitra, trans. Kennard Lipman, Namkhai Norbu and Barry Simmons, English 1983/1986, p. 20.

^e *rTsal*, which is the noun expressing this projection.

^f *Thugs-rje*.

This is illustrated with the simile of a mirror: *bodhichitta* is like a mirror, and the energy or thukje of *bodhichitta*, consisting of the disposition to manifest phenomena, the uninterrupted flow of phenomena, and the spaces between them, is like the uninterrupted flow of reflections: the reflections are not at a distance from the mirror’s reflective capacity and therefore are not external to the mirror. In fact, Longchenpa wrote:^a

“Using one of the eight metaphors for illusoriness, they are understood to be reflections that manifest clearly without existing anywhere, outwardly or inwardly.”

However, when the projection or tsel of the energy of *bodhichitta* takes place, the phenomena of this energy appear to manifest outside the mirror. All of this may be explained in terms of the following quotation from Longchenpa:^b

Although phenomena appear as they do to the mind,
they are not mind nor anything other than mind.
Given their illusory nature as clearly apparent yet unthinkable, void manifestations,
moment by moment they are beyond description, imagination or expression.
For this reason know that all phenomena that appear to the mind
are unthinkable, ineffable and empty even as they manifest.

The apparent phenomena that manifest as the five kinds of sense objects [visual forms and so forth], and the phenomena of the universe that seem to appear in their own right, manifest to the mind and [in fact] are nothing other than [manifestations appearing to the mind]. Even though they appear to be something other [than the mind], like dreams and illusions they are by nature empty, and, [being unthinkable and ineffable, they] have never been anything other [than mind] and have never been mind. In accordance with the eight traditional metaphors for illusoriness, an examination of phenomena as forms of emptiness, clearly apparent yet unthinkable, ineffable and void—whether considered to be composed of reducible or irreducible particles—determines their equalness in having no identity. One knows the basic space of unchanging emptiness through these natural manifestations of the nature of mind...

Then Longchenpa cites the *Kunche Gyälpo*,^c which asserts that what is ultimately meaningful is sublime, timeless, Awake self-arising awareness, and afterwards goes on to explain:^d

“Well,” you might ask, “aren’t you asserting everything to be mind?” Let me clearly outline the distinction [between Mind-only and Dzogchen]. In general, when the world of appearances and possibilities, whether [as] *samsara* or *nirvana*, is explained to be Awake awareness, what is meant is that phenomena are alike [in that they do not waver from the single awareness] and manifest naturally as the display, projective energy and adornment

^a Longchen Rabjam (2001b), p. 156.

^b Longchen Rabjam (Longchen Rabjampa or Longchenpa), English 1998, pp. 84-87. The language was adapted to the terminology used in this book.

^c *Kun-byed rgyal-po*.

^d Longchen Rabjam (Longchen Rabjampa or Longchenpa), English 1998, pp. 84-87. The language was adapted to the terminology used in this book.

of that awareness. [On the basis of this, phenomena have been said] to be mind, just as one uses the name “sun” to refer to the rays of the sun when one says, “Sit in the midday sun.”

There are two ways to refute the assertion [that “phenomena are mind”]. According to logical reasoning, this would require that mind exhibit color and other distinctive features, because apparent phenomena have color and such features...

However, if mind had color and other distinctive features, it could manifest only its own color and its other distinctive features, and hence it could not manifest successively the countless colors and distinctive features of the variegated phenomena. This is obviously not the case, for awareness manifests innumerable phenomena one after the other as its display, projective energy and adornment—all of which manifest successively to the human mind. Longchenpa goes on to say:^a

It would also require that mind be external or that apparent phenomena be internal, and so their actual relationship would be thrown into chaos. And it would require that when one died the universe would collapse at the same time. In these and other ways, the assertion is disproven by its logical absurdity [as corresponds to the method of *prasanga* or *reductio ad absurdum*].

The [confusion of the view of Mind-only with that of Dzogchen] can also be disproven by scriptural authority. [The *Atiyoga Tantra*] *Kuntuzangpo thugkyi melong*^b states:

“To hold that apparent phenomena are mind is to stray from me.”

...And the [Atiyoga Tantra] *Ngedön düpai gyü*^c states:

“Fools who do not perceive the ultimate meaning
claim that apparent phenomena are one’s own mind.
This is like taking brass to be gold.”

In this regard, these days some who arrogantly assume that they understand the Dzogchen approach, or who follow ordinary spiritual approaches, hold apparent phenomena to be one’s own mind. They speak without defining the issues involved and so commit an extremely serious error, for ordinary mind and Awake awareness are *not at all* the same. “Ordinary mind” refers to the eight modes of consciousness and their associated mental events, which together constitute the adventitious distortions affecting beings in the three realms [of *samsara*]. “Awake awareness” refers to the naturally occurring timeless awareness having no substance or characteristics [that is] the basic space of *samsara* and *nirvana*... While that which manifests as *samsara* and *nirvana* is understood to be the projective energy of awareness, one should further understand that awareness itself is an unceasing ground for the arising of things, although it has never existed as anything, whether of *samsara* or *nirvana*.

Apparent objects are understood to be clearly apparent yet unthinkable and ineffable, and never to have been mind or anything other than mind, [for they are] empty and yet clearly apparent, groundless, and timelessly pure. When freedom occurs, the projective energy and display [of awareness], in being [realized to be] groundless, are [realized to be] naturally pure—which is like awakening from a dream. Thus one should understand that

^a *Ibidem*.

^b *Kun tu bzang po thugs kyi me long*. The extensive title of this Tantra is *Kun tu bzang po thugs kyi me long gi rgyud ces bya ba thams cad ston pa’s rgyud*.

^c *Nges don ’dus pai rgyud*.

the [Awake] awareness that is [nondually] aware of itself [as well as of sense-data and so on], without ever having wavered from the unchanging dharmakaya [that is] its original state of natural rest, is uncontaminated by any substance or characteristics, [as these have never existed in truth and thus have been timelessly void, or, what is the same, pure].

These days, no one other than me makes such distinctions. Some hold apparent phenomena to be mind, others hold them to be something else [than mind], but they have no opinions other than these. Even people within my own school are not precise, because they [wrongly] admit that which arises as projective energy (i.e., **as the tsel mode of manifestation of the thukje^a aspect of the Base), display and adornment, to be the essence (i.e., the ngowo^b aspect of the Base).** (Check terminology in Longchenpa's book.)

In this regard, “projective energy” is the creative potential of awareness and accounts for the fact that *samsara* and *nirvana* arise differently, just as the very same ray of sunlight causes a lotus blossom to open and a night lily to close.

In fact, *samsara* arises on the basis of the projection of tsel^c energy that gives rise to an external dimension or jing^d, in relation to which dang^e energy, which is beyond dualism and beyond the division into internal and external, appears to be an internal dimension or jing—so that the duality between an internal and an external dimension is a central feature of *samsara*. Conversely, *nirvana* implies the nonduality of a single, indivisible dimension. However, both *samsara* and *nirvana* arise equally by the power and as the play (rölpa^f) of the energy aspect of the Base, which in terms of the above may be compared to the same ray of sunlight.¹⁰⁸ Longchenpa goes on:

“Display” is used in the sense of the radiance of awareness displaying itself, like a lamp displaying itself as light or the sun displaying itself as sunbeams. “Adornment” refers to the fact that naturally manifest phenomena, appearing in full array, arise of themselves as adornment in light of awareness. This is similar to rainbows, the sun and moon, stars and planets being adornments of the sky.

It is said that Mañjushrimitra, the main disciple of Garab Dorje (the Tönpa^g or Primordial Master who introduced Buddhist Dzogchen into our world), previously to meeting his teacher had been an important scholar of the Yogachara School, and that the philosophy of this School to a great extent molded his Dzogchen writings, and in particular the *rDo la gser zisun*, which was published in English as *Primordial Experience*^h, and in which, according to some accounts,¹⁰⁹ he expounded the argument with which Garab Dorje defeated him in debate. The dates of Mañjushrimitra, on the one hand, and of the founders of the Yogachara School, on the other, contradict the claim according to which the former was originally a Yogachara and then the tenets of the

^a *Thugs-rje*.

^b *Ngo-bo*.

^c *rTsal*.

^d *dByings*.

^e *gDangs*.

^f *Rol-pa*.

^g *sTon-pa*. The term “tönpa” literally means “Revealer;” however, the term does not refer to those who reveal terms (*gter-ma*), but to those who reveal a complete system of Awakening at a time when previous systems have disappeared.

^h Mañjushrimitra, trans. Kennard Lipman, Namkhai Norbu and Barry Simmons, English 1983/1986.

school he had adhered to molded his Dzogchen writings. In fact, according to the most widely accepted, authoritative chronicles, Mañjushrimitra's teacher, Garab Dorje (who, according to tradition, was much younger than Mañjushrimitra¹¹⁰) was born in 55 CE,¹¹¹ while there is universal agreement that Maitreyanatha, Asanga and Vasubandhu, who founded the Yogachara School, lived in the fourth century CE.¹¹²

Due to the above, and to Dzogchen Master Nubchen Sangye Yeshe's^a reference to Dzogchen Atiyoga as the "universal ancestor of all vehicles"^b (which coincides with the etymology of the term Atiyana^c, which is that of "primordial vehicle" and may thus be taken to suggest that the Atiyogatantrayana is the source of all other vehicles), privately some Western scholars have suggested that the doctrines of the Yogacharas may have been conceived by Mañjushrimitra and/or other Dzogchen Masters in order to lead on the Path individuals of Mahayana capacities, and that henceforth these doctrines may have been transmitted orally until the time of the three Masters who are regarded as the founders of the Yogachara school. However, the scholars who have advanced such theories seemingly disregard the fact that the *Sandhinirmochanasutra*, the *Lankavatarasutra* and other sutras of the Third Promulgation taught by Shakyamuni several centuries B.C., already contained many of the concepts and terms that later on were adapted and adopted by the Yogacharas (whose doctrines should be regarded, nonetheless, as being "lower" than those taught in the *Lankavatarasutra*). Furthermore, the teachings of Ati are far more congruent with those of the *Lankavatarasutra*, than they are with the teachings of the Yogachara School. Therefore, it is essential that scholars avoid expressing unwarranted assumptions, rather than allowing themselves to be carried out by wild flights of the imagination.

S. Radhakrishnan acknowledged that the Yogachara School was founded by Asanga and Vasubandhu, who lived in the fourth century CE; however, then he went on to claim that Ashvagoshā, who lived in the first century CE, was a Yogachara.^{d13} Since doctrines cannot be transmitted from the future into the past, the allegedly Yogachara elements that Radhakrishnan observed in Ashvagoshā's thought (and the same would be the case if apparently Yogachara elements had been present in *the first* Mañjushrimitra) must come from the sutras of the Third Promulgation; in fact, one may wonder whether Ashvagoshā may have received an oral tradition associated with the sutras of the Third Promulgation that later on resurfaced in Maitreyanatha and Asanga.¹¹⁴ If so, there would seem to be no doubt that the latter pair developed the Yogachara School in order to adapt that tradition to beings of lower capacities, and simultaneously wrote texts expressing Mahamādhyamika views in order to communicate the said tradition to beings of higher capacities.

^a *gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas Ye-shes*.

^b Nubchen Sangye Yeshe (*gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas Ye-shes*), *sGom-gyi gnad gsal-bar phye-ba bsam-gtan mig-sgron*, 290-145b, 6; published by Tashi Gangpa (*bKra-shis sGang-pa*), Leh (Ladakh, India) 1974. Another edition: *gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas Ye-shes rin-po-che'i mdzad pa'i sgom'gyi gnad gsal-bar phye-ba bsam-gtan mig-sgron*; published by Kordön Tertrül Chime Rigdzin (*'Khor-gdon gTer-sprul 'Chi-med Rig-'dzin*), Shantiniketan, West Bengal, India. This text was hidden in Tunhuang (*Tun-huang; Dunhuang*) until the very beginning of the twentieth century.

^c As we have seen, Atiyana is an abbreviation for Atiyogatantrayana.

^d Radhakrishnan, S., 1923; 2d ed., 1929; seventh impression of 2d ed., 1962, vol. 1, p. 624, note I.

Toward the end of the chapter on the Madhyamaka School, the Yogachara School will be contrasted with the Mahamadhyamaka subschool of Madhyamaka, and then the Mahamadhyamaka subschool will be contrasted with the Dzogchen Atiyoga.

THE MADHYAMAKA SCHOOL
OF THE MAHAYANA
(A MAHAMADHYAMAKA INTERPRETATION)

Nagarjuna (who according to Western scholarship lived in the 2d to 3d century CE, but who according to Tibetan tradition was born much earlier)¹¹⁵ and his direct disciple Aryadeva had become established in the nonconceptual unveiling of the true nature of all phenomena (Skt., *dharmata*; Tib., *chönyi*^a), seemingly by means of the practice of various Buddhist vehicles.¹¹⁶ Their Madhyamaka philosophy, which was a conceptual Mahayana expression of their boundless, nonconceptual Vision (and in particular the trend of this philosophy that Tibetans call Rangtongpa^b [Skt., *swabhava shunyata*]), had as its canonical basis the *Prajñaparamitasutras* of the Second Promulgation.¹¹⁷ These sutras illustrated the nature of all appearances with the eight similes of illusion (Skt., *ashtamayopama*; Tib., *gyumai pe gye*^c), which are: (1) dream^d, (2) illusion^e, (3) optical illusion^f, (4) mirage^g, (5) the reflection of the moon in water^h, (6) echoⁱ, (7) the city of the gandharvas^j (in Western symbology, “a castle in the sky”), and (8) emanation or phantom^k. Concerning these eight similes, Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu cites Andzam Drukpa’s *The Lamp that Illuminates the Path to Liberation*:¹

...at first it is necessary to eliminate doubts by means of study and reflection and then, when engaging in meditation, (it is imperative) to recognize that all outer phenomena tied to the five sense objects:

- albeit nonexistent, appear to our delusory perception, like [the phenomena in] a dream;
- manifest suddenly through the interdependence of primary and secondary causes, like [the apparitions in] a magic show;
- seem to exist even though they are nonexistent, like an optical illusion;
- appear although [they are] unreal, like a mirage;
- despite [having] nothing either inside or outside, are perceived, [as is the case with] an echo;
- neither have an abode nor [contain] someone within, [just as occurs with] the city of the gandharvas;¹¹⁸
- appear without having a self-nature, like a reflected image;
- albeit nonexistent, may manifest in any manner, like a city conjured by magic.

^a *Chos-nyid*.

^b *Rang-stong-pa*.

^c *sGyu-ma'i dpe brgyad*.

^d Skt., *swapna*; Tib., *milam (rmi-lam)*.

^e Skt., *maya*; Tib., *gyuma (sgyu-ma)*.

^f Skt., *pratibhasa*; Tib., *migyor (mig-yor)*.

^g Skt., *marichi*; Tib., *miggyu (smig-rgyu)*.

^h Skt., *udakachandra*; Tib., *chuda (chu-zla)*.

ⁱ Skt., *pratishrukta*; Tib., *dragchha (brag-cha)*.

^j Or “castle of the gandharvas” (the gandharvas being the illusory musicians of the gods): Skt., *gandharvanagara*; Tib., *drizai drongkhyer (dri-za'i grong-khyer)*.

^k Skt., *nirmita*; Tib., *tulpa (sprul-pa)*.

¹ Norbu, Namkhai [Chögyäl], 1999/2001, p. 138. The quotation is from the work by Andzam Drukpa Drodül Pawo Dorje (*A-'dzam 'Brug-pa 'Gro-'dul dpa'-bo rdo-rje*: 1813-1899) titled *Tharlam Seldrön (Thar-lam gsal-sgron: kLong chen snying thig gi sngon 'gro'i khrid yig thar lam gsal byed sgron me zhes bya ba)*, edition published by bsTan 'dzin dbang rgyal, Darjeeling 1974, p. 255, 2. (This book is a text of explanations on the *Longchen Nyingthik [kLong-chen snying-thig]*.)

Recognizing the insubstantial [condition] of [both] emptiness and form on the basis of these eight examples of illusoriness, we can understand that outer phenomena are by their very nature false. Then, upon examining the condition of our mind [in the light of traditional instructions transmitted to this end], even though vision continues to appear, the judging and grasping mind abates. Relaxing in the discovery of the space-like condition of emptiness and clarity of the ultimate nature is *Prajñāparamita*.

The fact that the above eight examples are used to illustrate the nature of the whole of the phenomena perceived by dualistic mind may lead simpletons to believe Shakyamuni was claiming that it was unnecessary to elude the strike of swords, the bite of venomous snakes and so on. In order to make it clear that this was not so, in their *Madhyamika* works the commentators of the *Prajñāparamita* Sutras clearly distinguished the appearances that are effective or actual (in the sense of the German *wirlich*) and that therefore are capable of producing the effects that legitimately may be expected from them, from those appearances that lack effectiveness or actuality. An example of the former is the falling hairs perceived by a man with good vision while the barber is working on his head, which cause his hair to become shorter, and an example of the latter is the falling hairs perceived by a man suffering from cataract who is not at the barbershop, which do not cause his hair to become any shorter. Likewise, an example of the former is the perception of being hit by a car in “real life,” which may cause actual damage to the body, and an example of the latter is the perception of being hit by a car in dream or hallucination, which does not cause any damage to the body.

According to general *Madhyamaka*, appearances of the first type (i.e., those which are actual or effective) share four characteristics, which are thus listed in a short book by Thinle Norbu Rinpoche:^a

“Collectively perceived” (Tib., thunpar nangwa^b). For example, water, fire, sun and moon are perceived similarly by [all human beings];

“Capable of [producing] effects [or capable of] functioning” (Tib., dönje nüpa^c). For example, the earth can support all human beings;

“Produced by root cause and condition (Tib., gyukyen gyi kyepa^d). For example, when a seed, which is the root cause, and [earth,] water, warmth, [light] and air, which are the contributory circumstances, come together, a plant grows; and

“Nonexistent when examined (Tib., tag na denpa^e).

Furthermore, though the mode of existence of phenomena is illustrated with the eight similes of illusion, according to the philosophy of the *Madhyamaka* Prasāṅgika School that will be discussed below, there is not even illusion: all phenomena, together with existence, nonexistence, truth and untruth, are in fact but great emptiness, and since the collections of distinctive marks (Skt., *lakshana*; Tib., tsenpai^f) that illusions should have if they are to be recognized as this or that cannot be found anywhere, the term is but an empty name with no referent that may be found somewhere.¹¹⁹

^a Norbu, Thinle, 1977/1985, p. 40 (1st. ed., p. 25).

^b *mThun-par snang-ba*.

^c *Don-byed nus-pa*.

^d *rGyu-rkyen gyis skyes-pa*.

^e *brTag na dben-pa*.

^f *mTshan-dpe*.

Mahayana Buddhism emphasized the concept of the “two truths,” which are the relative and the absolute. All philosophical schools of the Mahayana deal with these two truths, which the higher subschools of Madhyamaka conceive and explain with greater precision than the lower subschools of Madhyamaka—which in turn conceive them and explain them with greater precision than the Yogachara School.

Relative truth comprises the contents of concepts, judgments and ideas, and in general, all that can be understood in terms of thoughts. The point is that every concept or content of thought is relative to other concepts or contents of thought, and in particular, to the one that is its *genus proximum* and the one that is its *differentia specifica*. In fact, *definitio fit per genus proximum et differentiam specificam*: definition is carried out by naming the immediately wider genus (*genus proximum*) in which the class being defined is included, and the specific difference (*differentia specifica*), which is the characteristic that set the class being defined apart from other classes within the same genus. A classic example used to illustrate this is the definition of the human being as a “rational animal.” “animal” is the *genus proximum*, while “rational” is the *differentia specifica*—and thus the concept of “human” is relative to both that of “animal” and that of “irrational.” This shows quite clearly how all contents of thoughts are *relative* to their *genus proximum* and their *differentia specifica*, and, insofar as these are relative to other contents of thoughts that are relative to other contents of thoughts (and so on *ad infinitum*), are relative to *all other contents of thought* as well. Furthermore, all phenomena—both those that this school calls effective or actual, and those that it calls ineffectual—belong to relative truth because they may be singled out and individualized only insofar as they correspond to a concept, in terms of which they are perceived.

In turn, here I will distinguish between what may be called absolute truth from an ontological perspective (which in this case is a [meta]ontological¹²⁰ one) and what may be so called from an epistemological perspective (which here is [meta]epistemological¹²¹).

In the first case, absolute truth is the true nature of reality, the common essence or condition of all entities and of all thoughts, which, insofar as nothing wider that may include it may be contemplated, has no *genus proximum*, and insofar as it does not exclude anything, has no *differentia specifica*; since concepts (and in general the contents of thought) are defined by *genus proximum et differentiam specificam*, absolute truth understood in this sense cannot correspond to any concept whatsoever. Therefore, absolute truth is said to be *achintya* or unthinkable.

The fact that absolute truth is unthinkable means that, epistemologically (or rather metaepistemologically) speaking, no understanding in terms of thoughts can ever be the realization of absolute truth. In fact, in this sense absolute truth consists in the *direct, nondual, nonconceptual unveiling* of the true nature of reality that is the absolute truth in the ontological (or rather metaontological) sense of the term.

As explained in detail in my book *Buddhism and Dzogchen*, the delusion called *avidya*, in the most widely admitted sense the term has in the Mahayana and in the second of the senses the term has in the Dzogchen classification adopted here, consists in taking the relative (which, as we have seen, comprises the contents, as well as the referents,¹²² of *all* our thoughts) as absolute, the dependent as independent, the insubstantial as substantial, the posited as intrinsic or given, etc. Therefore, understanding absolute truth in terms of concepts would give rise to a more treacherous manifestation of delusion, as it would obliterate the distinction between the two truths that is intended to allow people to recognize the relative as relative and to aspire to the absolute.

The concept of voidness or emptiness (Skt., *shunyata*; Tib., *tongpanyi*^a), which in this context (i.e., as referred to by the Sanskrit *swabhava shunyata* and the Tibetan *rangzhinggyi tongpanyi*^b) may be explained as meaning that entities *do not exist* (or, in Gelugpa terms, that they do not exist *in the way in which they appear to exist*: truly, absolutely and inherently), is central to Buddhist thought, and in particular to Madhyamaka philosophy, which produced the most thorough variety of it. As we have seen, according to the Hinayana, emptiness applied only to human individuals, who did not exist as the selves that they appeared to be, for it was the five skandhas or aggregates that interacted to produce the illusion of a true self. The Mahayana asserted that voidness applied to all phenomena, for phenomena other than human beings also failed to have the independent self-nature (Skt., *atma*; Tib., *dag*^c) they appeared to have. The Yogachara School explained emptiness as meaning that the whole of those phenomena that appeared to exist independently from the mind and externally to it did not exist in this manner. The trend of Madhyamaka that Tibetans call Rangtongpa (Skt., *swabhava shunyata*) explained voidness as consisting in the absence of self-existence (Skt., *swabhava shunyata*; Tib., *rangzhinggyi tongpanyi*^d) of *all* entities—including human individuals and phenomena other than human individuals, phenomena that we regard as mental and phenomena that we deem physical, the entities of *samsara* and the metaphenomena of *nirvana*, etc. Finally, the trend of Madhyamaka that Tibetans call the inner, subtle Madhyamaka (Tib., *Nang trawai uma*^e), admitted that all phenomena were void in the Rangtong sense of the term, but also stressed the fact that the absolute was empty of extraneous substances (Skt. *parashunya*; Tib., *zhentong*^f)—which is what is known as emptiness of substances extraneous [to the single true nature of reality] (Tib. *zhengyi ngöpo tongpanyi*^g). The first three sections of this chapter will deal with the Uma Rangtongpa or Swabhava-Shunyata Madhyamaka, corresponding to what the Nyingmapas call “outer, coarse Madhyamaka” (Tib., *Chi ragpai uma*^h).

The concept of emptiness is equivalent to that of “selflessness” or “absence of an independent self-nature” (Skt., *nairatmya*; Tib., *dagme*ⁱ). The Madhyamaka subschools divided both the selflessness or emptiness of human beings and the absence of an independent self-nature or emptiness of phenomena that are not human beings into a coarse one and a subtle one. In the case of the selflessness or voidness of human beings, the coarse one consists in the baselessness of the belief in a pure ego or in a center that would be different from the events it unites: it consists in the unfounded character of the belief in a truly existing, self-sufficient self conceived as a non-composite phenomenon that would exist independently from the aggregates (Skt., *skandha*; Tib., *phungpo*^j). In turn, the subtle selflessness of human beings is the baselessness of the belief in a pure ego or center as an event of a “self-sufficient substance:” it consists in the unfounded

^a *sTong-pa-nyid*.

^b *rang bzhin gyis stong pa nyid*.

^c *bDag*.

^d *rang bzhin gyis stong pa nyid*.

^e *Nang phra-ba'i dbu-ma*.

^f *gZhan-stong*.

^g *gzhan gyi dngos po stong pa nyid*.

^h *Phyi rags-pa'i dbu-ma*.

ⁱ *bDag-med*.

^j *Phung-po*.

character of the belief in a truly existing, self-sufficient self conceived as a composite phenomenon corresponding to the collection of aggregates. Only the five Sammitiya sub-schools of the Vaibhashika School ever held the subtle belief in an ego; no Buddhist school ever held the belief in a coarse one.¹²³

In the context of the Sutrayana, the division into a “coarse” and a “subtle” belief in the true existence of phenomena that are not human beings, and the proclamation of two types of absence of an independent self-nature or voidness in the same type of phenomena (which corresponded to the baselessness of the “coarse” and the “subtle” belief), is exclusive to the Madhyamikas. Since the Hinayana in general proclaims the selflessness of human beings but not that of phenomena that are not human beings, no Hinayana school ever posited either of the two types of absence of an independent self-nature or voidness of phenomena that are not human beings. Since the Yogacharas belonged to the Mahayana, they posited the absence of an independent self-nature or voidness in those phenomena that are not human beings; however, although this system arose after that of the Madhyamikas, their conception of the absence of an independent self-nature or voidness was limited to what the Madhyamaka called “coarse voidness of phenomena other than human beings” and defined as the baselessness of the belief that things exist apart from their being experienced: as we have seen repeatedly, the Yogachara school understood emptiness merely in the sense of the nonexistence of phenomena *as separate from mind*, and failed to add that, as they are experienced, phenomena lack self-existence or substance. Therefore, only the Madhyamikas posited the subtle voidness of phenomena other than human beings, which corresponds to the baselessness of the subtle exaggerate belief in the existence of things and that consists in the fact that, as they are being experienced, things lack the *existence* (though not the *actuality*) that we experience them as having.

The absence of self-existence of the myriad phenomena that we regard as constituting a physical reality is confirmed by the fact that, when subjected to analysis, they are not found as self-existent entities: we find that whatever we may have taken to be an entity, is in fact but an aggregate of other entities (the ones constituting the parts of the entity under analysis); when we analyze the other entities (i.e., the “parts”), we find that whatever we may have taken to be an entity, is in fact but an aggregate of other entities (the ones constituting the parts of the part under analysis). In order to go on with this analysis into microscopic levels that we cannot reach with our bare senses, we would have to resort to contemporary physics—which, without intending to refute the supposed substantiality of the entities of our experience, by inspecting them on an extremely small dimensional level has shown that there are no self-existing entities at any level of the dimensional spectrum.¹²⁴ (It is necessary to warn, however, that scientific proofs and theories must not be wrongly taken to be incontestable truths, for the history of science shows that at some point all scientific theories are refuted by newer theories, and cutting edge epistemology has shown the sciences and their discoveries to be but ideological constructs and worse.¹²⁵ Therefore, science will not have the last word in proving the insubstantiality of entities. However, insofar as we have been indoctrinated to take such theories as correctly expressing the nature and structure of reality, the fact that they negate the existence of substances has enough convincing power as to allow us to use them as a provisional antidote against the assumptions of common sense. And this antidote will work just the same regardless of whether the entities of our experience and their subatomic structure as studied by physicists through their scientific instruments are

part of a material world existing externally to and independently of our experience, or whether they exist only in our own experience.¹²⁶⁾

According to the lower views among those classified as coarse, outer Madhyamaka (Tib., Ch'i ragpai uma^a) or as Madhyamaka positing the Emptiness of Self-Existence (Skt., Swabhava-Shunyata Madhyamaka; Tib., Uma Rangtongpa^b), emptiness or voidness, which consists in the absence of self-existence of entities, is the absolute truth. However, in agreement with the highest Madhyamika views (the higher ones among those classified as coarse, outer Madhyamaka, and all of those classified as subtle, inner Madhyamaka [Tib., Nang trawai uma^c]), here absolute truth has been defined as (being) that which is not relative, and in terms of this definition we have to concede that, insofar as the absence of [self-]existence is *relative* to [self-]existence, it could not be the absolute truth, which by definition is what is not relative: this is the reason why it was stated above that absolute truth cannot correspond to any concept whatsoever, and that it can be realized solely in terms of a *direct, nondual, nonconceptual unveiling*.

This explains why in a previous paragraph, rather than defining absolute truth as voidness, it was asserted that, (meta)ontologically speaking, it consisted in the true nature of all phenomena (Skt., *dharmata*; Tib., chönyi^d), which cannot be correctly understood or explained in terms of any of the four extremes (which may be either [1] not-being, not-nonbeing, both-being-and-nonbeing and neither-being-nor-nonbeing, the negation of which makes up Nagarjuna's *chatushkoti* (Tib. muzhi^e) **in its common sense**, or [2] not permanent, not impermanent, not existent and not nonexistent),¹²⁷ in terms of any of the eight extremes (unobstructed, unborn, unceasing, not permanent, not coming, not going, having meanings which are not distinct or separate from anything else, and having meanings which are not not distinct or separate from anything else), or in terms of any other concept or series of concepts. (Meta)epistemologically speaking, it was asserted that absolute truth consisted in the direct unveiling of the true nature of all phenomena (Skt., *dharmata*, Tib., chönyi) beyond all conceptual recognition or interpretation, for it is self-evident that it could not consist in the realization of an absence (i.e., of a voidness) insofar as by definition absences are relative to that which is absent (which in the case of voidness is the self-existence that we wrongly project and perceive in entities). (In spite of the reference to the four and eight extremes, however, this explanation is not that of the "absolute truth of enumeration" posited by a Swatantrika subschool that will be considered later on—for, as we have just seen, here absolute truth is not said to correspond to voidness, but to the *dharmata* and its unveiling.)

So far, we have seen that conceptual positions cannot apply to the *dharmata* as such, for the *dharmata* has neither *genus proximum* nor *differentia specifica*. However, the same applies to the whole of the phenomena that manifest in the *dharmata*: the fact that exhaustive analysis will reveal a contradiction whenever they are understood in terms of a conceptual position, proves that no conceptual position can perfectly correspond to any of them. In fact, as shown by the refutation of the supposed oneness of entities as well as of their supposed plurality, the refutation of movement, and the refutation of so many categories carried out by Nagarjuna and Aryadeva, founders of the Madhyamaka School,

^a *Phyi rags-pa'i dbu-ma.*

^b *dbU-ma rang-stong-pa.*

^c *Nang phra-ba'i dbu-ma.*

^d *Chos-nyid.*

^e *mu bzhi.*

and later on by Prasangikas such as Buddhapalita, Chandrakirti and Shantideva, conceptual maps are not the territory and cannot precisely correspond to it.¹²⁸ Furthermore, we have seen that, when delusorily valued, conceptual positions give rise to the basic delusion called *avidya* or marigpa, for then we take what is neither absolutely true nor absolutely false as being absolutely true or false.

In agreement with all that has been stated so far, the Madhyamaka School, rather than presenting an exhaustive conceptual interpretation of reality that would fall into one of the epistemological extremes consisting in realism and idealism, or into one of the ontological extremes which are materialism and idealism, stressed the impossibility of all conceptual maps to match with absolute precision and exactitude the territory of the *given* and to exhaust this territory: according to the Prasangikas, since all was primordially void, there were no true collections of inherent distinctive marks (Skt., *lakshana*; Tib., tsenpai^a) to which human descriptions could either precisely correspond or fail to do so.

Furthermore, mutually contradictory conceptual positions may be equally true and equally false (so far as both can be *soundly* and *validly* adopted when their referents are considered from *different* standpoints, levels of reality or logical types), and therefore none of them could be ultimately true. Buddhapālita's *Mūlamadhyamakavṛtti* tells us:^b

“A position (*paksha*) implies a counter position (*pratipaksha*), and neither of them is true.”

Is it possible that all conceptual positions be just as true and just as false as their opposites? Let's take the classical example of a cart. From one standpoint, a cart is a cart, for we can perceive what seems to be the collection of characteristics that is designated by the term “cart.” However, from another standpoint, it is not a cart: we can also see it as the sum of a platform, axles, wheels and so on—or, in terms of the theories of contemporary physics, as a conglomerate of molecules (or atoms, or subatomic particles), or as a segment of Einstein's single energy field, or even as something that in itself is not dimensional,¹²⁹ and so on and on. (It is not even valid to state that the cart is the form or configuration that we designate by this name, for a form without matter is ineffectual; in fact, the seventh of the possibilities rejected by Madhyamika refutations is that the cart is the form of the cart, and the Prasangika further assert that configurations [Skt., *lakshana*; Tib., tsenpai] cannot be found anywhere.) Nevertheless, it could not be validly asserted that the cart is a dog, and so this assertion would be more false than saying the cart is not a dog.¹³⁰

Therefore, when the above quoted text says that no conceptual position is true, this means that no conceptual position whatsoever can be *absolutely* true; however, conceptual positions applied to objects are *relatively* true if they can be *soundly* and *validly* adopted when these objects are considered from *one* given standpoint, level of reality or logical type (however, even though a position may be relatively true, upon adopting it the deluded individual will automatically take it to be absolutely true: this is why he or she is deluded). In fact, Nagarjuna developed his philosophy as a further conceptual antidote to the basic samsaric delusion that involves taking relatively true

^a *mTshan-dpe*.

^b Tib. *Uma tsawai drelpa Buddhapālita (dbu ma rtsa ba'i 'grel pa Buddhapālita)* Cited in Guenther, Herbert V., 1957, 2d. Ed. 1974.

conceptual positions to be absolutely true—which is the reason why Chandrakirti said concerning the followers of Madhyamaka that they should not have “own mind” (in the sense of having opinions of their own which they take to be absolutely true)^a. However, as will be shown later on, this is only possible in the case of those who have attained the realization that is the aim of the methods of Madhyamaka and of the higher forms of Buddhism in general.

Let us revert to Nagarjuna’s and Chandrakirti’s refutation of the alleged self-existence of a cart: if the cart is the sum of the wheels, the axles, the main platform, the seats, the reins and so on, then the cart is not a unity, but an aggregate of unities. If in turn we consider any of these unities, we will realize that it is not a unity but an aggregate... and the same will apply to the unities making up the latter aggregate... so that ultimately entities can neither be seen as aggregates, for there are no ultimate unities that may aggregate in order to form them. The conclusion is that the cart cannot be said to be a self-existing entity, nor can it be said to be an aggregate of self-existing entities.

Gregory Vlastos has rejected arguments of this kind on the grounds that the oneness and the multiplicity of an entity are not mutually exclusive features, and therefore that the multiplicity of what we consider as being “one” and hence as constituting a unity, does not contradict its oneness and therefore does not imply it is not a unity.^{b131} However, when a deluded being recognizes and apprehends an entity, he or she perceives that entity as being exclusively and absolutely *one* (i.e., as being *a unity*), and there is no comprehension whatsoever in the deluded mind of the fact that the entity also is a multiplicity. If then the same individual mentally decomposes the entity, he or she will perceive it as a multiplicity, and there will be no understanding whatsoever in the deluded mind of the fact that this multiplicity also is a unity. This does not mean that the right thing to do is to say that the entity is both one and multiple, which if left unexplained would violate the law of the excluded middle (or law of the excluded third, or principle of non-contradiction),¹³² would not clarify anything, and would be but another conceptual position, contrary to saying that the entity is neither one nor multiple, and equally true and equally false as the latter (it would clarify things if we said that *relatively* the entity is one when viewed from one standpoint and multiple when seen from another, but that it cannot be said to be either *absolutely* one or *absolutely* multiple; however, this would be but another conceptual position which, if grasped at, would give rise to just another instance of delusion).

The delusion consisting in perceiving entities as being inherently and absolutely *one* and thus as being *unities*, which implies the negation of the fact that they also are multiplicities (or, upon analysis, the delusion that consists in seeing them as being, inherently and absolutely, multiplicities—which implies the negation of the fact that it is equally *valid* to see them as *unities*) is precisely what Madhyamika philosophers intended to destroy with their arguments, and it is what is destroyed by Zeno of Elea’s “proof of Q” of the first argument against plurality (whatever the real intent of this philosopher may have been).¹³³

^a Gendün Chöphel (*dGe-'dun Chos-'phel*, 1905-1951), *dBu ma'i zab gdad snying por dril ba'i legs bshad kLu sgrub dgongs rgyan*. As stated in a previous footnote, a translation of this work by Amdo scholar Pema Wangjie and US scholar Jean Mulligan is in progress as I write this book and probably will be published already by the time the reader has this book in her or his hands.

^b Vlastos, Gregory, 1961, this. ed., 1968.

Both Zeno and the Madhyamikas also produced refutations of movement.¹³⁴ The latter showed that ultimately we cannot say a moving cart goes over a certain place, for when the front of the cart reaches that place, the back of the cart has not reached it yet, and when the front of the cart just passes that place, the back of the cart has not arrived at it yet. The problem cannot be solved by referring to parts of the cart: when the front of any molecule of the cart arrives at some imaginary mathematical line, the back of that molecule will not have arrived at it yet, and when the back of the molecule arrives at it, the front part will be past it already. Furthermore, if by “moment” we refer to a unit of time having duration, then a moving object could not be said to be in some precise place at some precise moment (for it would not be in the same place throughout the moment), nor could it be said not to be in that place at that moment (for at some point of the moment it may be in that place); if by “moment” we refer to a mathematical point or line along the time line—i.e., to an abstract instant having no duration—then we are not referring to a real time unit but to an intellectual abstraction that can neither be perceived or measured, and it would be a violation of logic to relate it with real, physical objects moving in real, physical time, for it is not legitimate to relate the phenomenal (i.e., the physical) with the non-phenomenal (in this case, the mathematical).¹³⁵ **(Furthermore, if moments had no duration, insofar as they would occupy no section whatsoever of the time-line they would be *nothing* at all, and so if we ask where is some object at a given moment we would be asking where is something at no moment at all. This implies that the object spends no time whatsoever at a given point of a stretch of space—which, as shown in the regular text, is exactly what we are forced to conclude is we admit the thesis according to which moments have a duration.) ;?**

Seemingly assuming that moments have duration (i.e., that they are lapses), Hegel concluded that “for something to move, simultaneously it has to be and not to be in the same place;” however, this conclusion derives from Hegel’s belief in the conceptuality of all reality and therefore in the perfect adequation of the conceptual map to the territory it represents.¹³⁶ The truth is that there is no such a perfect *adaequatio intellectus et rei* and thus to say that a moving object is in some precise place at some precise moment, to say that it is not in that place at that moment, to say that it is-and-is-not in that place at that moment, and to say that it neither-is-nor-is-not in that place at that moment, are statements equally incapable to precisely correspond to reality.

One of the reasons why there cannot be a perfectly precise *adaequatio* is that, at the dimensional level of the entities we perceive in our daily experience, reality involves four apparently continuous dimensions (three spatial and one temporal), but our understanding and our descriptions of reality are lineal and discontinuous. How could this understanding and these descriptions correspond precisely to the territory they interpret?

Our concepts are digital (just like the functioning of the cerebral hemisphere that in males is located usually on the left, and that which Freud called “secondary process”); conversely, our sensations are analog (just like the functioning the cerebral hemisphere that in males is located usually on the right, and what Freud called “secondary process”).¹³⁷ The analog being continuous and the digital being discontinuous, there cannot be a perfect correspondence between them.¹³⁸ This is quite evident in the case of digital photographs: the greater the number of pixels per square inch in the photograph, the less the naked eye will notice the lack of correspondence between the photograph and

^a Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, this ed., 1999.

the object it represents; however, if you look at the picture through a magnifying glass, or through a microscope, you will realize that no matter how high the number of pixels per square inch, there is still an insurmountable gap between the digital picture and the analog object it reproduces. Likewise, if you send a spaceship to Mars, in order to predetermine its trajectory you will need many (digital) numbers¹³⁹ after the comma if the engine is to have any chance of reaching its aim (and yet, as the ship advances, its trajectory will have to be constantly modified so that it will not miss its aim). In the case of concepts that are not numbers and their referents, the impossibility of correspondence is far more evident, for as shown by the Madhyamikas the attempt to establish a perfect correspondence between the ones and the others results in sheer contradiction.

It is our mental events that single out objects out of an undivided, unfragmented *Vollgestalt* (totality of pattern or configuration), and these objects can be singled out and understood as this or that only insofar as, despite the uninterrupted process of change that reality undergoes at all levels, at a given dimensional level this change is so slow and gradual that to objects seem to maintain their basic pattern or configuration for a given period—and also insofar as we possess memory, which allows us to recognize the object's pattern or configuration. However, when we single out a segment of the *Vollgestalt* and understand it in terms of a concept, what we are doing is isolating one of the segment's aspects and considering it from one particular perspective or viewpoint. If we considered another of the aspects of the segment, or switched perspective or viewpoint, a different concept—and possibly the opposite one—would apply to it as precisely as the one in terms of which we have understood it. Therefore, we are under delusion when we believe that any of the concepts that we may apply to a segment of the given that has been singled out by our mental events is the single, absolute truth regarding the totality of the segment.¹⁴⁰ Likewise, though the segment was singled out from a totality by our mental functions and in itself it has no separate existence, and so we will be under delusion if we perceive it as being inherently separate and self-existent, we will also be under delusion if we understand the universe as being in itself a single continuum, a nothingness-of-entities, or anything else. In fact, we will be under delusion whenever we confuse the conceptual map with the sensory territory, or whenever we believe the correspondence between the one and the other is perfect.

It is precisely because all conceptual positions are just as true and just as false as their opposites, and because delusion lies in taking a position to be absolutely true, that Hui-neng, the six Patriarch of Ch'an (Zen) Buddhism in China, instructed his disciples to apply a dialogical method which is one of the most sophisticated and powerful applications of what Madhyamikas called other-directed assertions or exterior-directed assertions (which will be explained in detail in a subsequent section of this chapter), and which aims at breaking the interlocutor adherence to a concept that he or she takes as absolutely true in detriment of the truth of its opposite. (It must be noted that this method corresponds to the method of *isosthenia* that Democritus of Abdera allegedly transmitted to Anaxarchus of Abdera, who supposedly transmitted it to Pyrrho of Elis, founder of the Skeptic School of Hellenistic philosophy: a method which reputedly had also been applied by Protagoras, and which Arcesilaus allegedly introduced into the Academy.¹⁴¹) Hui-neng said:^a

^a A shorter version of this appears in Wong-Mou-Lam, 1969, p. 99. For the longer versions see: Suzuki, Daisetz Teitaro, 1934, French 1940/1943, this ed. 1972, 3 vol.; Watts, Alan, 1956.

When you are questioned, if someone asks about being, reply in terms of nonbeing. If someone asks about nonbeing, reply in terms of being. If you are questioned about the ordinary individual, reply by describing the sage. If you are asked about the sage, reply in terms of the ordinary individual. From this method of reciprocal opposition there arises the comprehension of the Middle Way (*Madhyamaka*). Each and every time you are questioned, give an answer implying the opposite [of what you are expected to reply].

The above describes quite precisely the way Ch'an Master Ta-chu Hui-hai behaved when a Tripitaka Master tried to ridicule him by asking him whether changes occurred in the absolute condition of Buddha nature (*bhutatathata*). Instead of replying that they didn't occur (which he knew was the answer that the Tripitaka Master considered correct),¹⁴² Hui-hai stated: "yes, they do." Triumphantly, the Tripitaka Master decreed: "Venerable Master, you are wrong." Hui-hai replied with a question: "Isn't the true nature or condition of the Tripitaka Master the *bhutatathata* (i.e., the Buddha-nature)?" The Tripitaka Master answered: "Indeed, it is the nature of all of us." Hui-hai then added: "Well, if you sustain that it does not change, you must be a very ignorant king of monk. Surely you should have heard that a wise man can transform the three poisons (hatred, desire and ignorance) into the three accumulative precepts, transmute the six sensory perceptions (the ones that take place through the five senses and the one that occurs through the mental consciousness) into the six divine perceptions, passions into Awakening and delusion into wisdom. If nonetheless you suppose the absolute to be incapable of change, then you—a Master of the Tripitaka—are in truth a follower of the heterodox sect that posits a plurality of substances and asserts that things come about on the basis of their own supposedly individual self-natures."¹⁴³ The Master of the Tripitaka had no alternative but to concede: "If you put it that way, then the absolute does undergo changes." However, instead of agreeing, Hui-hai upbraided him, saying: "However, in your case, to sustain that the absolute undergoes changes is equally heretic." In despair, the Tripitaka Master retorted: "Venerable Master, first you said that the absolute undergoes changes, and now you said it doesn't. What is then the correct answer?" Hui-hai concluded: "The one who has realized his own nature, which may be compared unto a Mani pearl that reflects all appearances (without any of them sticking to it), will not fall into delusion no matter whether he states that the absolute does undergo changes, or that the absolute does not undergo changes. But those who have not realized this nature, upon hearing about the changing absolute, cling to the concept of mutability, clinging to it, and upon hearing that the absolute doesn't change, adhere to the concept of immutability, being stuck in it. (And this clinging to concepts is the very root of the basic delusion that Mahayana Buddhism invites us to overcome.)"^a

When I found a Danish Vajra-brother called Jakob standing on the back of the Nyingmapa Buddhist temple in Clement Town (Dehradun, H.P., India) in the late 1970s, I asked him: "What are you doing here?" He replied: "Relatively I am here; ultimately I am not here." At which I retorted: "Actually, it is relatively that you are not here, because the relative does not truly exist, and it is absolutely that you are here, for everything is the absolute."¹⁴⁴

^a Adapted from Blofeld, John, 1962.

Perhaps the most impressive usage of this method by a Buddhist Master may taken place when Milarepa was confronted by a Kadampa Geshe who was jealous of the quantity of disciples that visited the Kagyü hermit. In order to ridicule him before his disciples, and thinking Mila had no knowledge whatsoever of philosophy, the Geshe asked him whether space was obstructing or nonobstructing—to which the great repa replied “obstructing.” When the Geshe triumphally decreed “you are wrong,” Mila took a walking stick and began banging it against empty space—which responded as though it were solid and therefore obstructing. Then the Geshe asked Milarepa whether matter was obstructing or nonobstructing. The hermit replied “nonobstructing.” When the Geshe triumphally decreed “you are wrong,” Mila passed his hand through the wall of the cave in which he was sitting. At this, the Geshe became his disciple.

Nagarjuna’s *Rajaparikatharatnamala* describes in the following words the supreme effect of the skillful means of higher Buddhist vehicles, including dialogues such as the one that took place between Hui-hai and the Master of the Tripitaka and other examples of the *via oppositionis* or “way of the opposition (of mutually contradictory concepts).”^{a145}

As the “is” and the “is not” are destroyed by wisdom
there is a passage beyond merit and sin;
this, the excellent ones say, is liberation
from [both] bad and good migrations.

Thus the point in the *via oppositionis* or method of interrelated opposites is not to lead people to take as equally true the view according to which tides depend on the moon’s attraction and a fantastic theory according to which they depend on cycles of generation and destruction of algae in the oceans, placing on the same stand the views established by worldly convention and/or by scientific convention, on the one hand, and the wildest flights of the imagination, on the other. The method of interrelated opposites, by balancing contradictory views *that may be both taken to be correct from the standpoints of worldly convention and/or of scientific convention*, should free us from wrongly taking one view to be absolutely true and the other to be absolutely false—and, in the best of scenarios, lead us into the state of absolute truth that is utterly beyond views (which would be followed by the state of correct relative truth in which, as will be shown in the Mahamadhyamaka section of this chapter, no matter which views we may be managing, we do not take some of them to be *absolutely* true and their opposites to be *absolutely* false).

To conclude, it seems important to note that the root of *samsara* is a consciousness or mind and its objects. In fact, verse XIV.25 in Aryadeva’s *Chatuhishatakashtakarakarika* reads:

The seed of cyclic existence is a consciousness;
objects are its sphere of activity.

All objects are relative both to the subject and to other objects. Thus all conceptual positions, besides being relative to other conceptual positions, are objects relative to that core of delusory cognition that is called mind. Absolute truth, being that which is not at

^a Nagarjuna and the Seventh Dalai Lama, English, 1975, stanza I-45.

all relative, cannot be an object of knowledge. Thus, Shantideva wrote (*Bodhicharyavatara*, Chapter 9, 2):

The relative and the absolute
are what is known as the two truths;
the absolute is not an object of knowledge to the mind,
for the mind [and all of its objects are what is] considered as “the relative.”

Even though Shantideva, an unorthodox Madhyamika Prasangika, expediently used the concept of the two truths, as acknowledged by his own subschool, as well as by the higher Swatantrikas, in the true nature of all phenomena (Skt., *dharmata*; Tib., *chönyi*) there are not two truths, and as implied by the above verse, the very distinction between a “relative truth” and an “absolute truth” is a conventional difference established by the mind that is the source of delusion.

Development and Views of the Indian Subschoools that Make up the Coarse, Outer Madhyamaka (Tib., Ch’i ragpai uma^a) or *Swabhava-Shunyata Madhyamaka* (Tib., Uma Rangtongpa^b)

Rather than setting to produce an all-comprehensive theory of reality and its functionality, Nagarjuna and Aryadeva set to refute, by means of *reductio ad absurdum* (Skt., *prasanga*), the main views, both of commonsense and of the Indian religions and philosophies that prevailed in their time. Their aim was to give individuals an opportunity to go beyond the delusion that consists in taking the contents of thought to be absolutely true or false, or in confusing them with the territory they interpret, by Awakening to what is not conditioned by thought—a method that could be compared to beating the hand of a child who is clinging to something, so that he or she let go of the object.

It was centuries after the time of Nagarjuna and Aryadeva, and after the arising of the Yogachara School, that a Master, called Buddhapalita, gave continuity to and further developed the Rangtongpa^c (“adhering to *swabhava shunyata*”) interpretation of *Madhyamaka*—which, as we have seen, is based on sutras of the Second Promulgation. Aware, like his predecessors, that no concept or conceptual explanation could precisely correspond to the given, rather than positing realistic, idealistic or other hypotheses about reality, he circumscribed himself to consistently applying the method of *reductio ad absurdum* to the assumptions of common sense, to the philosophical views upheld by non-Buddhist traditions, and even to many views held by Buddhist schools different from his own (and in particular to those of the Yogachara School)—developing the *consequences* of their conceptual positions and showing them be self-contradictory or to contradict one another. Since his philosophical endeavor was almost exclusively based on the application of the method of *prasanga* or refutation by *reductio ad absurdum*, his

^a *Phyi rags-pa’i dbu-ma.*

^b *dBu-ma rang-stong-pa.*

^c *Rang-stong-pa*: “adhering to *swabhava shunyata* Madhyamaka.”

interpretation of the philosophy developed by Nagarjuna and Aryadeva was called the Madhyamaka-Prasangika or “Madhyamaka of refutation by *reductio ad absurdum*.”

The Madhyamaka-Swatantrika subschools arose as Madhyamika Masters who lived after Buddhapalita, contradicting the most basic method of original Madhyamaka, which consisted in not affirming anything that would give rise to a position or thesis, resorted to logical propositions featuring concepts and interpretations from other of the philosophical schools of Buddhism. In fact, the name of this subschool derived from the fact that they used autonomous (*swatantra*) theses and syllogisms, making affirmative claims about the nature of reality, rather than limiting themselves to reducing to absurdity the affirmative claims made by outsiders and members of other Buddhist schools (as Nagarjuna did in his *Collection of Madhyamika Reasonings*, as did his disciple Aryadeva and as did later on the Prasangikas). Therefore, the difference between Prasangika and Swatantrika is most aptly expressed by the following excerpt from the *Ludrub Gonggyen*^a (written by twentieth century scholar Gendün Chöphel, though some Gelugpa scholars have denied his authorship of the text¹⁴⁶):^b

Extremely succinctly, a view which has some belief in the principles set up by one’s own mind is Swatantrika and the destruction of everything that the mind sets up is Prasangika.¹⁴⁷

It is said that the reputed founder of the Swatantrika subschool, Bhavaviveka (also called Bhavya),¹⁴⁸ was influenced by Acharya Dignaga’s interpretation of the Yogachara School, which stressed epistemology and logic (an interpretation that in turn had been profoundly influenced by the “semi-realistic” Sautrantika School of northern Hinayana). Later on Bhavaviveka’s system—which, like that of the Sautrantikas, posited the existence of external, physical entities constituted by atoms, and which rejected the concept of spontaneous awareness (Skt., *swasamvittih*; Tib., rangrig) and in general the concepts that nowadays the Gelugpa associate to the *Yogachara* School—was called the Madhyamaka-Swatantrika-Sautrantika School.

Others of the teachers who were influenced by the Yogachara School gave rise to the two Swatantrika subschools known as Madhyamaka-Swatantrika-Yogachara: (1) that of Shantarakshita, Kamalashila and Arya Vimuktasena, and (2) that of Haribhadra, Jetari and Lavapa. In general, these subschools of Madhyamaka, like the Yogacharas, denied the existence of atoms because, according to their view, there was no external material world, and objects did not exist separately from our perception of them,¹⁴⁹ besides, they were enthusiastic defenders of the spontaneous awareness (*swasamvittih* or rangrig) posited by Dharmakirti. It is said that the subschool constituted by Shantarakshita, Kamalashila and Arya Vimuktasena “regarded the aspects of entities as true,” whereas that of Haribhadra, Jetari and Lavapa “deemed the aspects of entities to be false” and so was “higher” than the former.¹⁵⁰ Furthermore, among those who considered the aspect to be false and who, therefore, were deemed “higher,” Haribhadra produced a system that surpassed other forms of Madhyamaka-Swatantrika-Yogachara in that, just as done by the

^a *kLu sgrub dgongs rgyan*.

^b Gendün Chöphel (*dGe-'dun Chos-'phel*, 1905-1951), *dBu ma'i zab gdad snying por dril ba'i legs bshad kLu sgrub dgongs rgyan*. A translation of this work by Amdo scholar Pema Wangjie and US scholar Jean Mulligan is in progress as I write this book and probably will be published already by the time the reader has this book in her or his hands.

supreme form of Madhyamaka—the Mahamadhyamaka subschool—it stated unequivocally that nondual primordial gnosis (Skt., *jñāna*; Tib., *yeshe*^a), rather than mind, or the *alaya* consciousness, etc., was that which the schools of the inner, subtle Madhyamaka, just like the inner Tantras and the Dzogchen teachings, called the Base (i.e., the objective reality that was correctly apprehended in *nirvana* and delusorily perceived in *samsara*).¹⁵¹

It was after the arising of the Madhyamaka-Swatantrika that the Prasangika school found its continuity, in the work of the two most important, realized Masters to develop Buddhapalita’s philosophy and method in India: Chandrakirti and Shantideva.

The former summed up the essential principle of Prasangika philosophy when he stated that one must not assert anything from one’s own heart, which meant that one must not make self-directed or interior-directed assertions (Tib., *ranggyü du khelenpa*^b), but only other-directed or exterior-directed assertions (Tib., *zhenngo khelen*^c)—which, as we have seen, is the core of the method of interrelated opposites taught by Hui-neng (the point being that realized beings do not perceive anything they say as being either true or false, for they are utterly free from grasping at concepts and other thoughts, and so whatever they say arises beyond grasping as the spontaneous function of Awakening that naturally leads beings beyond *samsara*). Though Chandrakirti is best known for his philosophical Mahayana treatises, he also wrote outstanding Tantric works. In the former—which include original Madhyamika texts (the best-known of which is the *Madhyamakavatara*) and commentaries to the original philosophical treatises by Nagarjuna and Aryadeva—he laid, as clearly and precisely as possible, his understanding of the original meaning of the Madhyamaka, which he set in opposition to some of the main interpretations of the philosophy of Nagarjuna and Aryadeva produced by Madhyamika-Swatantrika teachers after the death of Buddhapalita¹⁵² (However, he did not use the labels *Prasangika* and *Swatantrika*.¹⁵³)

In turn, Shantideva became famous after producing a couple of truly outstanding original works: the one that has been alternatively called *Bodhisattvacharyavatara* and *Bodhicharyavatara*,¹⁵⁴ and the *Shikshamuchchaya*.

The Madhyamika-Prasangikas radically rejected Yogachara theses such as “all is mind” or “all is (the process of) experiencing.” Concerning the “all is mind” thesis, they insisted that “mind” is a concept that, as is the case with all concepts, is defined by *genus proximum* and *differentia specifica*; therefore, its meaning derives from the contrast between mind and what is not mind, and so if we say that all is mind, the concept of mind will lose its *differentia specifica* and therefore will become an empty concept, having no meaning whatsoever. Concerning the thesis according to which “all is (the process of) experiencing,” in his *Bodhicharyavatara* (Ch. 9, verse 24), Shantideva stated:

“A jar seen by applying sight-restoring lotion would still not be the lotion itself.”

Though the example is not totally to the point insofar as the main cause of vision is the power of organs such as the eye, the optic nerve, the brain and so on, and the lotion would be but a secondary cause restoring this power, as shown in the section contrasting

^a *Ye shes*.

^b *Rang-rgyud du khes-len-pa*.

^c *gZhan-ngo khas-len*.

Yogachara and Dzogchen, it is quite evident that the objects we see are not our vision, just as the images appearing on the screen of a movie theater cannot be said to be the light emitted by the movie projector (even though they are constituted by the light): if they were the light, in order to see them it would suffice to look directly into the beam emitted by the projector. If the category of causality is momentarily not called into question, perhaps it may be said that the images appearing on the screen are *an effect* of the light emitted by the projector, depending on whether the projector's focus is graduated correctly and so on, but it would not make sense to simply say that "the images are the light."

The Madhyamaka Prasangika, which with the passing of time gained the favor of many scholars and intellectuals, kept producing realized Mahayana Masters insofar as its adherents, beside applying logic and reasonings, trained in the development of the qualities of the bodhisattva, and, in the framework of this training, intensively practiced the meditational and introspective yogic methods deemed essential for attaining the realization of the Mahayana. Nonetheless, in all schools people may apply the teachings incorrectly; since the Prasangika put so much emphasis on the development of logic and reasoning, in the case of this school those who applied the teachings incorrectly may have run the risk of falling into the deviation represented by mere intellectualism.

Prasangikas and Swatantrikas are both Madhyamikas insofar as they assert that no phenomenon whatsoever exists in an absolutely true (Skt., *satyasiddha*; Tib., denpar drubpa^a) manner. According to the Je Tsongkhapa and his Gelugpa followers these two subschools disagree as to whether or not phenomena are self-existent (Skt., *swabhavasiddha*; Tib., rangzhingyi drubpa^b / ranggi ngowö drubpa^c) on the plane of so-called conventional truth (Skt., *vyavaharasatya*; Tib., thanyekyi denpa^d), claiming that while the Prasangikas (such as Buddhapalita, Chandrakirti and Shantideva) assert that even on the conventional plane no phenomena are self-existent, Bhavaviveka and in general the Madhyamika-Swatantrika-Sautrantikas assert that all phenomena are self-existent on the conventional plane. Though there is no doubt that all Madhyamika-Swatantrika-Yogacharas assert that, when any phenomenon is sought, it is found, and therefore it is self-existent (Skt., *swabhava siddha*), existent by its inherent distinctive marks (Skt., *swalakshanasiddha*; Tib., ranggi tsennyiki drubpa^e), or existent in its own right (Skt., *swarupa siddha*; Tib., ranggi ngowö drubpa^f / rangngönai drubpa^g), both Shakya Chokden (Serdok Panchen) and the eighth Karmapa, Mikyo Dorje, agree that it is untrue that Prasangikas deny this and that this is one of the eight points that distinguish them from the Swatantrikas (in fact, they claim that only one of this points in a real distinction between them [Kongtrul . 2007, p. 247]).¹⁵⁵ Nevertheless, Gendün Chöphel^h notes that an essential difference between Prasangika and Swatantrika is expressed by the following dialogue:

^a *bDen-par grub-pa.*

^b *Rang-bzhin-gyi grub-pa.*

^c *Rang-gi ngo-bos grub-pa.*

^d *Tha-snyad-kyi bden-pa.*

^e *Rang-gi mtshan-nyid-kyis grub-pa.*

^f *Rang-gi ngo-bos grub-pa.*

^g *Rang ngos nas grub pa.*

^h Gendün Chöphel (*dGe-'dun Chos-'phel*, 1905-1951), *dBu ma'i zab gdad snying por dril ba'i legs bshad kLu sgrub dgongs rgyan.*

When Jamyang Shepa^a asked Gyüchen Sang Gyamtso^b what is the difference between the views of the Prasangikas and [those of] the Swatantrikas, he pointed at a pillar in the room and said, “According to the Swatantrikas, this vertical piece of wood is a pillar. According to the Prasangikas, this is nothing more than a basis for the [imputation of the] name^c ‘pillar’.”

When Bälmgang^d pandita paid a visit to Arig Geshe Chenmo^e, the latter asked him, “Which of the five fields of philosophy are you learned in?” “Most of my training is in Madhyamika,” he replied. “Well, then, according to the system of the Prasangikas, what is this?,” asked Arig Geshe Chenmo, as he pointed to the table in front of them. “That is a table.” “That must mean it is not a table, because it is the basis for the [imputation of the] name ‘table.’” To this, Bälmgang pandita could make no reply.

These two sayings express the essence of the [respective] views of Prasangikas and Swatantrikas. Thus, believing the square piece of wood in front of us to be a table is to the Prasangikas an instance of confirmed mind (i.e., of delusion to be transcended), but to the Swatantrikas it is a valid cognition based on convention. Similarly, according to the Prasangikas, [when made by realized ones, and therefore also when found in the Buddhist teachings, the assertion] that the square piece of wood in front of us is a table, is an other-directed assertion (which, as such, is not made from the heart); [conversely,] to the Swatantrikas (who are not concerned as to whether or not it is made from the heart), it is an independent voluntary assertion^f. (Note by the author of the present book: The categories of other-directed assertion and assertion made from the heart will be discussed in a subsequent section of this chapter.)

In fact, according to the Prasangikas what we refer to as “a table” is not a table, but the basis for the imputation of the name “table.” The following question is whether there is at least a “basis for the imputation of the name ‘table’.” If we apply analysis with reference to the absolute, we will not find a basis for any imputation, for what we regard as bases for imputations are singled out by human perception in a undivided continuum, depending on the application of the corresponding concept. Furthermore, the same segment of the continuum can receive different imputations: the basis for the imputation of the name “table” can also be the basis for the imputation of the names “disposable segment of a furnished house,” “sum of the bases for the imputation of the names ‘plank of wood’ and ‘four wooden bars’,” “sum of an extremely large quantity of bases for the imputation of the name ‘molecule’,” and so on. However, no matter what imputations this “basis for the imputation of the name ‘table’” may receive, according to the theories of contemporary physics, nothing separates it from what is not itself: it is *our perception of it as a “table”* that singles it out, and in itself it is just as ineffable and unthinkable as the undivided continuum out of which it is singled out. It is no doubt true that it can be singled out because of the continuity of pattern shown by the corresponding segment of the continuum, but since this segment is not in itself separate from what is not this segment, since it does not conserve the matter-energy that constitutes it,¹⁵⁶ and since it is

^a *Jam dByangs bZhad pa* (1648-1721), the student of the Fifth Dalai Lama who founded Ladrang (*bLa-brang*) Monastery in Amdo.

^b *Gyud-chen Sangs rgya-mTsho*, another student of the Fifth Dalai Lama (1653-1705).

^c *gDags-gzhi*.

^d *dBal mang pandita*, the famous scholar from Ladrang Monastery in Amdo.

^e *A-rig dGe-bshes Chen-mo*, the famous scholar from Ladrang Monastery in Amdo.

^f *Rang-dbang gis khas-len*.

only our perception of it as a table that singles it out, we have that the basis for the imputations of the name “table” is as empty (or, what is the same, as dependently existent) as our perception of it as “a table.” This is why the Prasangikas deny that, when sought, collections of characteristics may be found. However, in daily life all “bases for imputations” are recurrently perceived as being the imputations we make on them (for example, we perceive the “basis for the imputation of the name ‘table’” as being “a table”), and so far as these imputations are legitimately made, the Prasangikas will regard the corresponding perceptions as *valid*—which, however, *does not mean “correct,” for all “valid” perceptions are the mistaken perceptions of deluded mind.*

According to the Swatantrikas, all entities exist in the bewildered, deluded minds that perceive relative, dualistic appearances, but are utterly nonexistent in the utterly unbewildered awareness of Awake Ones. Furthermore, in general it is said that, according to the Swatantrikas, voidness is the fact that none of the “four extremes” (not permanent, not impermanent, not existing and not not existing)¹⁵⁷ applies to entities; that all phenomena arise from interconnection (which here is not principally understood in the sense of the sequential causality of the twelve links or nidanas that make up the *pratitya samutpada*,¹⁵⁸ but as meaning that all phenomena arise co-emergently, and that they exist in mutual, simultaneous dependence); and that all functions are free from the activities of the four or eight extremes.¹⁵⁹ In particular, the higher Swatantrika system (Tib., Ranggyü gongma^a) of Madhyamaka-Swatantrika-Yogacharas asserts that, though there is really no truth to relative truth because absolute truth does not exist anywhere (and therefore the two truths are inseparable in a single inconceivable reality, which cannot be said to be existent, nonexistent, both or neither),¹⁶⁰ absolute truth can be explained in relative terms as the “absolute truth of enumeration” by listing things as being great emptiness: thus arose the four voidnesses,¹⁶¹ the sixteen great voidnesses,¹⁶² the eighteen great voidnesses,¹⁶³ and the twenty great emptinesses. Another Swatantrika view is that the nature of all phenomena is separated from all activity and that the wisdom of the Buddha is free from all enumeration, thus speaking of an “absolute truth without enumeration” (Tib., namdrang mayinpai döndam denpa^b). Khenpo Tsültrim Gyamtso explains the truths “of enumeration” and “without enumeration” within a single framework.^c

Another distinguishing feature of the Swatantrika School is that it refutes [the belief] that things are inherently true and asserts that emptiness is the genuine nature of reality. So it is a view that involves an assertion. Furthermore, it refutes [the belief] that concepts can demonstrate the nature of reality [precisely insofar as it] asserts that the nature of reality is free from conceptual fabrication. So again it makes an assertion. The way these two assertions work, is that the first one, whereby they refute that things are true and assert that they are emptiness, insofar as it states something, is called the enumerated or the approximate absolute truth. They say it is not the genuine ultimate truth, but just an approximation, an [inherently imprecise] description of it. Then when they refute conceptual fabrications and say the nature of reality is beyond conceptual fabrications, this is what they call the unenumerated ultimate truth insofar as they are referring to the genuine nature of reality as it actually is, beyond [its interpretation in terms of] concepts [and the baseless projections and illusory limits imposed by the latter].

^a *Rang rgyud gong-ma.*

^b *rNam-grangs ma-yin-pa'i don-dam bden-pa.*

^c Khenpo Tsültrim Gyamtso, 2001, p. 45.

The lower Swatantrikas (Tib., Ranggyü ogma^a) considered dream images void, and by comparing the images of wakefulness to those of dreams, established the former to be equally void. According to their view, absolute truth was total voidness, and relative truth was different from it—so that on the one hand there were the whole of the phenomena of relative truth, and on the other there was the voidness that corresponded to absolute truth. Thus, they split an indivisible reality into two different truths and relativized absolute truth insofar as they took it to be different from and relative to relative truth. Furthermore, positing voidness as the absolute truth, as done by these Swatantrikas, could lead the followers of this school to adhere to a *conception* of voidness as absolute truth and thus to further obscure the latter by taking what in reality is but a knot in the fabric of mutually relative, delusorily valued conceptions that veils the absolute nature, as being the absolute nature that unveils in *nirvana*. Furthermore, identifying appearances with relative truth and voidness with absolute truth could cause appearances to be deprecated and voidness to be highly appraised, which in turn would foster aversion to appearances and might result in attachment to conditioned, conceptual experiences of emptiness (or to the transformations of these conceptual experiences into nonconceptual states through the application of mental pacification [Skt., *shamatha*; Tib., *zhinai*^b], which is what, as will be shown below, the *Bhavanakramas* by Shantarakshita and Kamalashila instruct practitioners to do), which in turn would reinforce delusion, and, as we have just seen, would prevent the nondual, nonconceptual unveiling of the true (metaontological) absolute that is the true nature of all phenomena (Skt., *dharmata*; Tib., *chönyi*)—a nonconceptual unveiling that is the true (metaepistemological) absolute, and which shows all phenomena to be naturally void.

This explains why Chandrakirti and other later Prasangikas asserted that the above voidness is but a concept, and in general terms rejected the reduction of absolute truth to voidness, affirming that the absolute could not lie in any of the renowned four mutually relative, possible conceptual positions, which are (1) nonexistence (i.e., emptiness, which therefore could not be the absolute truth), (2) not-nonexistence (i.e., not-emptiness), (3) both-existence-and-nonexistence, and (4) neither-existence-nor-nonexistence—and that absolute truth was discovered upon the realization *in one single moment, of the fact that none of these four possibilities applies* to reality: as we will see below, it was this that they referred to as “the ultimate meaning without distinctions,” the “ultimate meaning which is not conventional” or the “[realization of the] inexpressible ultimate.” Thus all Prasangikas rejected the reduction of absolute truth to voidness; however, with the renowned exception of Chandrakirti, they conceded that this “inexpressible ultimate” that could not be reduced to voidness, was indeed void of self-nature.¹⁶⁴ Furthermore, when considering the manifestation of absolute truth in the superior bodhisattva’s state of Contemplation,^c they refused to identify the appearance of phenomena with relative truth and their voidness with absolute truth: the two truths are but mental constructions that do not manifest in this condition—which is why they say that absolute truth is neither “of enumeration” nor “without enumeration”. However, when speaking from the standpoint

^a *Rang rgyud ’og-ma*.

^b *Zhi-gnas*.

^c Tib., *nyamzhak (mnyam-bzhag)*; Skt., *samahita*.

of the manifestation of relative truth in the post-Contemplation state,^a they asserted that the absolute truth was voidness beyond all mental constructions—where voidness implied that both the manifold phenomena that deluded mind categorizes as “external” and the mind that perceives these aspects, rather than being true, are mere apparition-like phenomena lacking substance, subsistence, or an in-itself status (a statement that, nevertheless, until practitioners actually attain the true state of absolute truth, will cause them to give rise to yet another, more subtle mental construction). They further concluded that, in actual Contemplation, absolute truth, which is utterly free from all mental activity, is neither an “absolute truth of enumeration” nor an “absolute truth without enumeration.”

The above allows us to understand some of the reasons for positing the concept of an *emptiness of voidness*, which responds to the fact that our concept of voidness and its referent are also empty of self-existence, and our conceptually-tainted, delusorily valued perception of voidness (as well as its transformation into a nonconceptual state by means of mental pacification), if adhered to, may become a further, more dangerous manifestation of the basic delusion at the root of *samsara*. In order to fully understand this, it may be useful to take as an example the method of *vipashyana* meditation taught in the whole set of *Bhavanakrama* by Shantarakshita and Kamalashila (which adapted to the view of the Madhyamaka-Swatantriya-Yogachara the method for gaining access to emptiness taught in the *Sandhinirmochanasutra*—the sutra of the Third Promulgation that was the canonical source of the Yogachara school—and then further discussed in the Shravakabhumi chapter of Asanga’s *Yogacharabhumi*).¹⁶⁵

This method of *vipashyana* meditation consists in analyzing whether or not an entity exists. At some point in the process of analysis, the entity’s nonexistence becomes present to dualistic mind as an object of knowledge. According to the *Bhavanakramas*, the object’s emptiness (which according to this brand of Madhyamaka-Swatantriya-Yogachara is the absolute truth), is this “presence of the absence of the object’s existence,”¹⁶⁶ which initially is a delusory appearance resulting from the delusory valuation-absolutization of an intuitive (i.e., subtle) concept.¹⁶⁷ Since this “presence of an absence” disappears the very moment the discursive thought stating that “the object is empty” and so on arises, the *Bhavanakramas* teach practitioners to use their experience of pacification (*shamatha* or *zhine*^b) to concentrate for as long as possible on the presence of the absence of the mode of existence that they had wrongly attributed to the object, rather than allowing the discursive thought that establishes the object’s voidness immediately to arise. Furthermore, by these means they intend to turn this voidness into a nonconceptual experience beyond a subject-object duality. However, as will be shown in the next section of this chapter, the ensuing concentration on emptiness may become a way of clinging to a mentally constructed, delusive experience of voidness that, by making the meditator believe he or she has already realized the absolute truth, may as well bar the true realization of this truth.

However, the worst and most dangerous way of clinging to voidness would consist in using it as a justification to freely give way to wayward impulses, on the grounds that they will harm no one insofar as harm, the doer of harm and the recipient of harm are ultimately nonexistent. If the absolute truth really unveiled, in the Contemplation state the subject-object duality would not arise and therefore it would be impossible to wish to

^a Tib., jethob (*rjes-thob*); Skt., *prishthalabdha*.

^b *Zhi-gnas*.

possess, harm or destroy any object whatsoever; in turn, in the post-Contemplation state one would maintain some degree of awareness of the emptiness of the subject, as well as of whichever object that the subject may want to possess, harm or destroy, and furthermore one would have the good qualities of the Mahayana subsumed in the four immeasurables and the six or ten paramitas—and thus any harmful impulse would lose impetus and subside. Only if one has failed to realize absolute truth can one become prey to the harmful impulse, and then decide to use the concept of voidness as a pretext to justify freely giving way to it. In order to warn against this, Nagarjuna wrote in the *Rajaparikatharatnamala*:^{a168}

Followers of nonexistence follow bad migrations,
but happy ones accrue to the followers of existence.
However, those who know what is correct and true
do not fall into dualism and thus are liberated.

The Madhyamaka holds absolute truth to be uncompounded or unconditioned (Pali, *asankhata*; Skt., *asamskrita*; Tib., *dūmaje*^b); the Madhyamika-Swatantrikas who asserted appearances to be relative truth and voidness to be the absolute truth held the former to be compounded or conditioned (Pali, *sankhata*; Skt., *samskrita*; Tib., *dūje*^c), and the latter to be uncompounded and unconditioned. We have seen that this belief in the separation of appearances and voidness, each of which was differently characterized, was rejected by the Madhyamaka Prasangikas, which understood that asserting relative truth to be appearances and absolute truth to be emptiness, and viewing these two as different from each other, would reinforce the dualistic delusion that veils the uncompounded and unconditioned absolute truth, and possibly drive misguided practitioners to cling to conditioned, delusive states of voidness. According to the Prasangika, since all there is, is the unconditioned, absolute nature of all phenomena designated by the Sanskrit word *dharmata* (which, by the way, implies that all phenomena are void of self-nature), both absolute truth and relative truth necessarily arise on the basis of this nature: conditioned, relative truth arises when this nature is concealed by relative, conditioned appearances resulting from conceptually-tainted perception, whereas the unconditioned, absolute truth manifests when the absolute, unconditioned, void nature becomes evident, instantly cutting through conceptually-tainted perception. Insofar as interpreting, dividing, asserting, negating and conceptualizing, by their very nature give rise to something created that as such is compounded or conditioned, if we interpret, divide, assert, negate or conceptualize the absolute truth, we will give rise to compounded and conditioned relative concepts or conceptually-tainted phenomena that will conceal the uncompounded, unconditioned absolute truth—but that we could wrongly take to be the uncompounded and unconditioned absolute truth, thereby blocking our possibilities of realizing this truth.

This is why the Prasangikas emphasize that phenomena themselves are void, and that relative phenomena are in fact the absolute nature; since the latter is uncompounded, phenomena themselves are uncompounded and unconditioned. In fact, the apprehension of the phenomena of sensory experience by a fully Awake One is neither compounded not conditioned, for the compounded and conditioned is introduced by the delusive

^a Nagarjuna and Seventh Dalai Lama, English, 1975.

^b *Dus-ma-byas*.

^c *Dus-byas*.

perspective of sentient beings, who experience everything in terms of their own mental constructions. Though we cannot genuinely apprehend the uncompounded and unconditioned nature of appearances so long as we mistake a subtle concept of voidness for the absolute truth, in the gradual approach we must go deeper and deeper into voidness as it unveils in the practice of meditation, until finally we may see through all subtle concepts of emptiness into the genuine absolute truth, which is uncompounded, unconditioned and beyond the subject-object dichotomy. It will be at this point that we will realize the inseparability of the two truths, ridding ourselves of the artificial separations associated with the distinction into relative and absolute, and discovering that voidness is just as insubstantial and void as appearances themselves. In the sudden approach, absolute truth manifests instantaneously upon nongradual Awakening.

Je Tsongkhapa's Interpretation of Prasangika in his Three Lamrim Works

In the second half of the fourteenth century and the first half of the fifteenth century lived Je Tsongkhapa^a (1357-1419),¹⁶⁹ who studied with Masters of the Kadampa school (the one based on the teachings of Atisha), as well as with Masters of the Kagyüpa and other schools, and who grew dissatisfied with the interpretations of *Madhyamika* philosophy prevailing in his time. After a long quest for the true meaning of *Madhyamaka*, Tsongkhapa came to the conclusion that it lied in Chandrakirti's interpretation, which he regarded as expressing the essence of the *Prasangika* or Consequentialist interpretation of *Madhyamaka*. In particular, his works on the Graded Path or Lamrim compounded the methods of meditation taught in the *Bhavanakramas* by Shantarakshita and Kamalashila (which adapted to the view of the lower Madhyamika-Swatantrika-Yogacharas, the means taught in the *Sandhinirmochanasutra* and reproduced in the Shravakabhumi chapter of Asanga's *Yogacharabhumi*), the philosophy of the Prasangikas, and elements of the epistemology of the *pramana* teachings by Dignaga and Dharmakirti. Like the *Sandhinirmochanasutra* and all texts based on it, these works by Tsongkhapa have provisional meaning (Skt., *neyartha*; Tib., *drangdön*^b); however, unlike the rest of these texts, Tsongkhapa's Lamrim works may to a certain extent seem self-contradictory, insofar as they mix disparate elements from different approaches and schools.

As we have seen, the Prasangikas asserted that in order to realize the absolute truth it was necessary to go beyond the four extremes consisting in "empty," "not empty," "both empty and not empty," and "neither empty nor not empty;" none of them asserted that the absolute truth was voidness, and most of them affirmed that this truth was void of self-nature; and they asserted that from the standpoint of the manifestation of absolute truth in the higher bodhisattva's state of Contemplation there were not two truths, for the contrast between these was but a mental construction that did not manifest in this condition. Therefore, the Lamrim works by Tsongkhapa contradicted the Prasangika view outright by positing as the absolute truth of the Prasangikas, the emptiness (one of the

^a *rJe Tsong-kha-pa*.

^b *Drang-don*.

four extremes beyond which it was necessary to go in order to realize the absolute truth) that appeared at the term of the *vipashyana* meditation taught in the *Bhavanakramas* by Shantarakshita and Kamalashila.

Since in these works Tsongkhapa (1) borrowed a method taught by the Yogacharas and the Madhyamika-Swatantrika-Yogacharas and, like the lower Swatantrikas, identified voidness with absolute truth, and (2) he intended to adhere quite strictly to the approach of the Prasangikas, I am tempted to refer to the approach of these books by the neologism “Madhyamika-Swatantrika-Prasangika.”

Tsongkhapa’s “Prasangika” Adaptation of the Method of *Vipashyana* Taught in the *Bhavanakramas* by Shantarakshita and Kamalashila

We have seen that the method taught in the *Bhavanakramas* consisted in analyzing whether or not an entity existed. In terms of the distinction between “mere existence” and “true existence” that will be examined in a posterior subsection of this section, Tsongkhapa reworded this by saying it consisted in analyzing whether or not an entity existed *in the way in which it appeared to exist*—i.e., whether or not the entity existed inherently and truly.¹⁷⁰ In this regard, it will be useful to introduce a distinction made by Jean-Paul Sartre: if my wallet is stolen but I do not realize it, the wallet will be absent from my pocket, but this absence will not be not present to me. If then at some point I take the bus and try to reach for the wallet in order to pay my ticket, the absence of the wallet will become present to me. Finding out that an object is not present involves what Sartre called the presence of the object’s absence; realizing that the delusive phenomenon consisting in perceiving the object as *existing* is a delusion, would involve the presence of the absence of the self-existence (Skt., *swabhava shunyata*; Tib., rangzhin) samsaric beings wrongly perceive all entities as having (which Tsongkhapa called the illusion of inherent existence). The latter is the way Tsongkhapa understood the voidness that is sought in the practice of *vipashyana* taught in the whole set of *Bhavanakramas* by Shantarakshita and Kamalashila, and in Tsongkhapa’s own Lamrim works. In fact, at some point in the process of analysis, the absence of what in terms of Tsongkhapa’s interpretation may be called *the mode of existence that the individual had wrongly attributed to the entity, and in terms of which she or he had been perceiving it*, was supposed to become *present* to the meditator’s consciousness as an object of knowledge (though, as we will see below, according to Gendün Chöphel, in practice this could hardly happen). Tsongkhapa concluded that the absolute truth of the Prasangikas was this “presence of the absence of the mode of existence that we had wrongly attributed to the object,”¹⁷¹ which, if at all possible, initially would be but a delusory appearance resulting from what Dzogchen and other Vajra teachings call the delusory valuation-absolutization of an intuitive (i.e., subtle) concept.¹⁷²

“Absolute” is defined by *differentia specifica* (i.e., by contrast) with “relative;” in fact, as we have seen, in tautological terms “absolute” may be defined precisely as “that which is not relative.”¹⁷³ The reduction of absolute truth to voidness in the sense explained above, contradicts this definition and therefore is contrary to logic, for the presence of the absence of the mode of existence that we had wrongly projected on an entity and in terms of which we had wrongly perceived it, is relative to the entity and to the mode of existence we had wrongly projected on it (and to all other entities and the

mode of existence we had wrongly projected on them). How could the relative be the absolute truth?

Furthermore, a hermeneutic reading of the higher *Mahayana* Sutras of the Second and Third Promulgations from a metaontological perspective¹⁷⁴ demonstrates that, in full agreement with logic, view absolute truth as not being in any way relative, and therefore that Tsongkhapa's conception of this truth in his Lamrim works is contrary not only to logic, but also to the meaning of those texts. The fact that according to the higher Mahayana Sutras absolute truth is in no way relative, is proven by the fact that they make it clear that the realization of this truth can only take place beyond the subject-object duality and therefore *beyond the mutual relativity* of subject and object, and also beyond concepts and therefore *beyond the mutual relativity* of these (as we have seen repeatedly, insofar as concepts are defined by *genus proximum* and *differentia specifica*, they are relative to those that are their proximate genus and specific difference, and insofar as these in their turn are relative to other concepts that are relative to other concepts, all concepts are relative to the whole galaxy of concepts).

The conceptual pseudo-absolute that is found in this analysis is what Bhavaviveka called a “conceptual ultimate” (Skt. *paryayaparamartha*; Tib. nam drangpai döndam^a), and since concepts are defined by *genus proximum* (inclusion in a wider genus) and *differentia specifica* (contrast with another category within the same genus), as such it cannot be a true absolute. In fact, the conceptual pseudo-absolute in question is no more than the intuitive, pre-discursive apprehension of a nonaffirming, nonimplicative or absolute negation (Skt. *prasajyapratishedha*; Tib. megag^b),¹⁷⁵ which as Ju Miphan noted, is what the Madhyamaka-Swatantrika-Yogachara School of Shantarakshita and Kamalashila view as the ultimate, but is not what Prasangikas view as the ultimate—even though Je Tsongkhapa and his Gelugpa followers assert precisely the opposite to be the case.^c

Contrarily to Tsongkhapa's interpretation of it, the original Prasangika view is in perfect agreement with both logic and scriptural authority; in fact, rather than claiming that the absolute consisted in voidness, it asserted it to (be):

- (1) From a [meta-]ontological standpoint, the true condition of all entities (Skt., *dharmata*; Tib., chönyi^d), which they declared to be impossible to understand in terms of any of the conceptual extremes, including that of voidness. In fact, Nagarjuna and Aryadeva referred to the *dharmata* as the ultimate condition, with regard to which they announced the tetralemma or *chatuskoti*, whereas (as shown below) Chandrakirti went so far as to characterize the *dharmata* as *swabhava*. As Rongzompa said:^e “The essence of the absolute is the ultimate nature of phenomena (*dharmata*) that transcends all conceptual limits.”
- (2) From a [meta-]epistemological standpoint, which is from the one in which the word “truth” is properly used, the absolute truth is the direct realization of the true condition of all entities—i.e., the above mentioned *dharmata*—absolutely

^a *rNam grangs pa'i don dam*.

^b *med dgag*.

^c Lipman, 1981, p. 46; Pettit, 1999, p. 109.

^d *Chos-nyid*.

^e Rong zom Pandita Chos kyi bZang po (1012-1088), *Rong zom lta 'grel (Man ngag lta ba'i phreng ba zhes bya ba'i 'grel pa)*, p. 218, 4; in SNGA 'GYUR BKA' MA'I CHOS SDE, vol. 'a, published by Si khron bod kyi rig gnas zhib 'jug khang. (Commentary to *Man ngag lta ba'i phreng ba* by Padmasambhava.) Cited in Namkhai Norbu, Chögyal, 1999/2001, note by Adriano Clemente.

beyond the experience of the relative or conventional, and hence beyond the subject-object duality and beyond any understanding in terms of thoughts, for as Rongzompa said:^a “The essence of the relative is the deluded consciousness together with its vision.”

The original Prasangikas did not understand this “true condition of all entities” as being a negative phenomenon (which is what the presence of an absence Tsongkhapa identified as voidness is), but as the essence of all reality, beyond the extremes consisting of positive, negative, both and neither. *Dharmata* is deemed to be synonymous with thatness (Skt., *tathata*; Tib., *dezhinnyi*^b) and with Buddha-nature; though the Yogacharas, in spite of deeming thatness to be unconditioned, explain it as being a nonaffirming or nonimplicative negation (Skt. *prasajyapratisheḍha*; Tib. *megag*^c), this is a lower view, for all negations are conceptual and as such conditioned, and hence they cannot be the absolute nature or the true condition of all reality: in conceptualizing the true condition of reality we obtain an implicative or affirmative negation (Skt. *paryudasapratisheḍha*; Tib. *mayingag*^d) insofar as it is empty of anything external to or different from itself (*zhentong*:^e a concept that is discussed in a subsequent section), and in conceptualizing the true condition of any particular entity we obtain a nonimplicative or nonaffirming negation insofar as its supposed self-existence (Skt. *swabhava*; Tib. *rangzhin*^f) is not found. In fact, the original Prasangikas understood the true condition of all entities to (be) that which (is) nonconceptually and nondually apprehended by absolute *prajñā* wisdom; as Tsongkhapa himself acknowledged and as will be explained below, this wisdom “does not negate;” therefore, this condition could by no means correspond to the presence of an absence that the founder of the Yellow Hats posited as the absolute truth. Therefore, Tsongkhapa’s interpretation of the Prasangika view is contrary, not only to logic and to the meaning of the canonical texts of the Mahayana, but also to the original view of the Madhyamaka Prasangika.

However, from the standpoint of Tsongkhapa’s Lamrim works, when Prasangikas asserted that the absolute truth was the true condition of all entities (Skt., *dharmata*; Tib., *chönyi*), they were affirming that the absolute truth was voidness (Skt., *shunyata*; Tib., *tongpanyi*^g) understood as the presence of an absence. In fact, in these works Tsongkhapa wrongly equated voidness, not only with “absolute truth,” but also with “self-nature” (Skt., *swabhava*; Tib., *rangzhin*^h), “true condition of all entities” (Skt., *dharmata*; Tib.,

^a Rong zom Pandita Chos kyi bZang po, op. Cit. p. 220, 1, cited in Namkhai Norbu, Chögyal, 1999/2001, note by Adriano Clemente.

^b *De-bzhin-nyid* (Chinese, *chen-ju*; Japanese *shinnyo*). According to the *Shambhala Dictionary of Buddhism and Zen*, *tathata* is similar in meaning to *tathagatagarbha*, Buddha-nature, *dharmakaya* and *dharmata*. The dictionary does not mention *shunyata* (voidness or emptiness) among the terms that are similar in meaning to *tathata*. (On the basis of the teachings of various vehicles I would say that rather than corresponding to the *dharmakaya*, the *dharmata* is the indivisibility of *dharmakaya* and *dharmadhatu* [Tib., *chos-kyi dbyings*: the “expanse of reality”]; in turn, *tathata* would be said to be the essential constituent of both *dharmakaya* and *dharmadhatu*.)

^c *med dgag*.

^d *ma yin dgag*.

^e *gzhan stong*.

^f *rang bzhin*.

^g *Stong-pa-nyid*.

^h *Rang bzhin*.

chönyi), and thatness (Skt., *tathata*; Tib., *denyi*^a, *dezhinnyi* or *dekhonanyi*^b). One of the finest specialists on the system of Tsongkhapa tells us:^c

Tsongkhapa... [equates] a number of terms—emptiness (*stong pa nyid*, *shunyata*), ultimate [or absolute] truth (*don dam bden pa*, *paramarthatasatya*), [self-]nature (*rang bzhin*, *swabhava*), [true condition of] reality (*chos nyid*, *dharmata*), and [thatness] (*de nyid* or *de kho na nyid*, *tathata*).^d Unlike J. W. de Jong, who sees these as merely metaphors, for Tsongkhapa these are equivalents; whatever is the one is the other, and he finds it legitimate to apply a discussion of such things as existence and so forth carried out in terms of one to another.

In some places, Je Tsongkhapa did distinguish emptiness from absolute truth;^e however, throughout his Lamrim works he recurrently identified the one with the other. Furthermore, since in these works Tsongkhapa understood voidness as the presence of the absence of the “mode of existence” that we wrongly project on each different entity, he had to posit as many absolute truths as there are entities. This not only contradicts the original Prasāngika view and the true sense of the canonical texts of the Mahāyāna (which did neither posit multiple absolutes nor reduce the absolute truth to voidness), but makes even more evident the self-contradictory character of the conception of “absolute” our author developed in these works. In fact, above we saw that it is wrong to posit as *absolute* the voidness of *each* of the entities to be analysed, for each of these voidnesses is *relative* to the corresponding entity and to the “mode of existence” deluded beings erroneously perceive in it. To posit as a *different absolute* each of these voidnesses makes the *non-absolute* character of these pseudo-absolutes far more evident insofar as then each pseudo-absolute will be relative, not only to relative entities and the mode of existence we wrongly project on them, but to an endless series of other pseudo-absolutes.

Furthermore, not content with positing as a separate, distinct absolute or ultimate truth the voidness of each and every potential object of analysis, Tsongkhapa also posited as absolute truths each and every one of the consciousnesses (i.e., cognitions) to which one of these absences was present.¹⁷⁶ However, these consciousnesses were not ultimates *per se*: whereas the former were called *actual* ultimates, the latter were named *concordant* ultimates, deemed to be ultimates only to the extent that they consist in the awareness of an ultimate which as such is in *adaequatio* or concordance with this ultimate. In the *Lamrim Chenmo* we read:^f

“However, it must be emphasized that the only *actual* ultimates are emptinesses, objective ultimates. Subjective ultimates, consciousnesses realizing emptiness, are merely concordant ultimates.”¹⁷⁷

^a *De nyid*.

^b *De kho na nyid*.

^c Napper, Elizabeth, 2003, p. 127.

^d Napper’s text had “[final] nature” instead of “[self] nature,” “reality” instead of “[expanse of] reality,” and “suchness” instead of “[thatness].” I had to replace her translations by the ones I use throughout this book to avoid confusing my readers.

^e *Lamrim Chenmo*, 411b.3-412b-6; Wayman, Alex, 1978, Indian ed. 1979, pp. 247-249.

^f P6OOI: 431a.3-431b.3, quoted in Napper, Elisabeth, 2003, p. 720, note 263.

Thus Tsongkhapa posited as many absolute truths as the total sum of (1) all entities that could be submitted to analysis and (2) all acts of cognition (consciousnesses, minds) realizing voidness. This is most paradoxical, for Madhyamaka arose precisely in order to refute the wrong belief that each and every relative entity was an absolute truth, and now we have an interpretation of Madhyamaka according to which there is still an absolute truth for each and every entity—the only difference with the wrong view of common sense being that in this case the absolute truth of each and every entity is supposed to be its lack of self-existence. Furthermore, though by definition and scriptural authority the realization of absolute or ultimate truth is beyond the subject-object duality, Tsongkhapa posits the two above types of ultimates—the “actual” ones, which correspond to objects, and the “concordant” ones, which correspond to subjects.

Furthermore, we have seen that Tsongkhapa equated absolute truth, voidness, self-nature (*swabhava*), the true condition of all entities (*dharmata*) and thatness (*tathata*), and made these interchangeable. Therefore, by positing as many voidnesses / absolute truths as there are entities, he was by implication positing a separate self-nature (*swabhava*) for each and every relative entity—which is the core of the human error or delusion that the Mahayana, the Madhyamaka of Emptiness of Self-Existence (Skt., Swabhava-Shunyata Madhyamaka; Tib., Uma Rangtongpa^a), and the Prasangika system, set out to refute. Of course, Tsongkhapa was not consciously intending to assert that relative entities were self-existent; on the contrary, what he intended to assert was that they were empty of self-existence, insofar as in this context he was understanding the term *swabhava* in a particular way. Elizabeth Napper tells us:^b

...in the *Lamrim Chenmo*, (Tsongkhapa) uses Nagarjuna’s discussion in chapter fifteen of the *Madhyamakashastra* or *Mulamadhyamakakarikah* of the inherent, or final nature (*rang bzhin*, *swabhava*) and Chandrakirti’s discussion of the same topic in his *Madhyamakavatareshya*^c... (and concludes that) Nagarjuna indicates in chapter fifteen, the *Analysis of Swabhava* (*rang bzhin*), two distinct meanings of the term *swabhava*: one is inherent existence, the object of negation, which does not exist in the least; the other is emptiness, the final nature of each and every phenomenon.

However, a minute twentieth-century examination of the texts in question has shown that:^d

...although Chandrakirti explicitly uses the term *swabhava* in a positive way, there are no comparably clear and explicit uses of such by Nagarjuna in the *Madhyamakashastra* or *Mulamadhyamakakarikah*.

Chandrakirti clearly equated *swabhava* and *dharmata*,^e and though this equation will be challenged in a subsequent section of this chapter, there can be no doubt that the true condition of all entities (*dharmata*) by no means depends on causes and conditions;

^a *dbU-ma rang-stong-pa*.

^b Napper, Elizabeth, 2003, p. 127.

^c This is an autocomentary to the *Madhyamakavatareshya*, which in turn is a supplement to Nagarjuna’s *Madhyamakashastra* or *Mulamadhyamakakarikah* (*Prajñānamulamadhyamakakarikah*).

^d Napper, Elizabeth, 2003, p. 713, note 244. Napper is explaining the results of the analysis carried out by William Ames, as reported in Ames, William, 1982.

^e *Ibidem*.

however, it was Tsongkhapa, in his Lamrim works, who for the first time ever equated *swabhava* with emptiness *qua* the presence of an absence—which is utterly illogical insofar as the presence of an absence depends on the experiencer, on that which is absent, and on the entity on which that which is absent was wrongly imputed. Since both etymologically and philosophically the meaning of the Sanskrit term *swabhava* and the Tibetan term *rangzhin* is self-existence, the fact that the self-existence Tsongkhapa posits for each entity is the entity’s voidness does not save him from being in direct opposition to the Madhyamika view, for in any case he is positing a *separate self-nature* for each and every entity. Furthermore, it was precisely in order to prevent beings from taking voidness to be self-existent, that the Prasangikas placed such a strong emphasis on the concept of a “voidness of voidness” or “emptiness of emptiness:” voidness was lack of self-existence, and voidness of voidness was the lack of self-existence of this lack of self-existence. Thus it seems clear that the system expounded in Tsongkhapa’s Lamrim works is refuted by its absurd consequences (i.e., by *prasanga*: the method of the Prasangikas, which gives its name to this school). Furthermore, Tsongkhapa’s equation of absolute truth, voidness, self-nature, true condition of all entities or *dharmata*, and thatness or *tathata*, which he made interchangeable, also implied that each entity has a different “true condition of all entities” (*dharmata*) of its own, as well as a different “thatness” (*tathata*) of its own—which is equally absurd and contrary to the essence both of the Mahayana and of the Madhyamaka School.)

Furthermore, since in his Lamrim works Tsongkhapa identified absolute truth with the emptinesses that in the method taught in the *Bhavanakramas* and in his own Lamrim works initially present themselves to a subject, he had to concede that *absolute truths are objects of knowledge*—which is absurd insofar as objects of knowledge, being relative to the subject of knowledge and to all other objects of knowledge, could by no means be the absolute truth. The fact that the emptinesses or voidnesses that in this method initially present themselves to a subject are objects of the mind is confirmed by the fact that the practitioner is told to *concentrate on them* by means of pacification (*shamatha* or *zhine*^a) in order to maintain the (“mentally mute”) presence of the absence of an illusory mode of existence, postponing as long as possible the discursive enunciation of voidness (which would consist in the mental pronunciation of a chain of words stating something like “the object is empty”)—and allegedly making the voidness in question become nonconceptual. Since, as we have seen, Aryadeva said, “the seed of cyclic existence is a consciousness [and] objects are its sphere of activity,” and Shantideva stated that “the absolute is not an object of knowledge to the mind, for the mind (and all of its objects) are (what is) considered as the relative,” the presence of an absence that in these works Tsongkhapa identifies as voidness, being an object to the mind, could under no circumstances be the absolute truth of the Madhyamaka Prasangika; contrariwise, it is the sphere of activity of the seed of *samsara*.¹⁷⁸ In fact, the presence of the absence of the mode of existence that we had wrongly attributed to an object is but the recognition of a specific absence (which in this case is not that of the entity, but—in Tsongkhapa’s terms—that of the mode of existence we had attributed to it) in terms of a subtle or intuitive concept, which is delusorily valued and absolutized, and taken as object by deluded, dualistic mind. Therefore, it is an instance of delusion and a manifestation of relative truth, rather than

^a *Zhi-gnas*. As we have seen, this term translates the Sanskrit noun *shamatha* and the Pali word *samatha*; it also corresponds to the Chinese term *chih*.

being the absolute truth that puts an end to the delusion that is both the root and a key mark of *samsara*.

Since, as Gelugpa textbooks for debate show, this system makes of the term “object of knowledge” (Skt., *jñeya*; Tib., *shecha*^a) a synonym of “existent” (Skt., *bhava*; Tib., *yöpa*^b),^c in his Lamrim works Tsongkhapa went on to assert the *existence* of emptiness, despite the fact that voidness as understood in these works is a negative phenomenon of the type called a “non-affirming negative” (Skt., *prasajya-pratishedha*; Tib., *medgag*^d), which consists in the mere absence of the object of negation, which as we have seen is inherent existence (Skt., *swabhava*; Tib., *rangzhin*).^e In fact, on top of positing emptiness as absolute truth, equating emptiness with “self-nature,” “true nature of all entities” and “thatness,” and positing an endless series of absolute truths, in his Lamrim works Tsongkhapa made the blunder of asserting that *emptiness existed*. The same specialist on Tsongkhapa tells us:^f

Tsongkhapa’s case that emptiness exists is based on his equating (the terms listed above)... ..in the *Lamrim Chenmo*^g, he uses Nagarjuna’s discussion in chapter fifteenth of the *Mulamadhyamakakarikah* (i.e., of the *Madhyamakashastra*) of the inherent, or final, nature (*rang bzhin, swabhava*) and Chandrakirti’s discussion of the same topic in his *Madhyamakavatarabhashya* as the locus for his proof that ultimate truth, that is, emptiness, exists.

However, as we have seen, on revising the above chapter of the essential work by Nagarjuna we do not find the assertion that the *dharmata* is self-existent (Skt., *swabhava*; Tib., *rangzhin*), or that emptiness is self-existent—or even that they exist. In fact, the claim that emptiness *exists* is outright disproved by XIII.7 of the *Madhyamakashastra* or *Prajñanamulamadhyamakakarikah* by Nagarjuna:

“If there were something not empty, then something empty would also exist; since there is nothing not empty, how could the empty exist?”

Furthermore, since in his Lamrim works Tsongkhapa explained that the voidnesses that manifest at the term of analysis are “absolute truths,” since he asserted that these emptinesses are objects of knowledge, and since objects of knowledge are to Tsongkhapa by definition “existents,” he has to conclude that *absolute truth(s) (are) existents*—thereby falling into the extreme of eternalism. However, he simultaneously falls into the extreme of nihilism, for by the same token he has explained absolute truth to be a mere nonexistence (in his own terminology, a non-inherent-existence). These two facts may be viewed to amount to an implicit assertion that absolute truth(s) are both-existent-and-nonexistent: he claims they exist insofar as they are existent objects of

^a *Shes-bya*.

^b *Yod-pa*. The fact that Buddhism identifies being with becoming is reflected in this terminology.

^c Cf. the *gZhi grub* chapter of *Phur bu lcog byams pa rgya mtsho*’s *Rigs lam chung ngu’i rnam par bshad pa*, in the *Tshad ma’i gzhung don ’byed pa’i bsdus grwa’i rnam bzhag rigs lam ’phrul gyi sde mig*, Buxa, India, 1965. Perdue, Daniel, 1983, pp. 364 et seq. Napper, Elizabeth, 2003, pp. 57 and 671-672 note 79.

^d *Med dgag*.

^e Napper, Elizabeth, 2003, p. 23.

^f Napper, Elizabeth, 2003, p. 127.

^g *Lam-rim chen-mo*.

knowledge, and claims they are nonexistences insofar as they are voidness(es), which he defines as absences of inherent existence. And yet simultaneously his qualification of existence as “inherent” and of nonexistence as “utter” implies that all can be correctly defined as “neither [inherently] existent nor [utterly] nonexistent.” All this implies that Tsongkhapa is indirectly asserting the four extremes negated by Madhyamaka as being correct views of reality.

According to Madhyamika philosophy, even relative truths, which are defined by their *genus proximum* and *differentia specifica*, may not be said to be either existent, nonexistent, both or neither. How could absolute truth, which has neither *genus proximum* nor *differentia specifica* and thus is by nature and by definition indefinable, ineffable and unthinkable, be said to *exist* (a term that is defined in terms of the contrast with its *differentia specifica*, which is “does not exist”)? In the discussion as to whether *swasamvedana* “exists inherently” presented in a subsequent section of this chapter, we will see that it cannot be said to exist, not-to-exist, both-to-exist-and-not-to-exist, or neither-to-exist-or-not-to-exist. The reasons why this is so concerning *swasamvedana*, are the same why it is so concerning absolute truth.

It must be noted that Tsongkhapa’s claim that absolute truths are existents is the basis for many of the objections Mikyo Dorje, the eighth Karmapa, made to the views he expressed in his Lamrim works.^a In turn, Tsongkhapa’s reduction of absolute truth to voidness is the basis for many of the objections Nyingmapa Masters made to the views he expressed in those works.

To conclude with this subject, Nagarjuna seems to have foreseen that in the future some interpreters of his system would develop the wrong view consisting in understanding voidness as the presence of the absence of each and every entity’s existence, for he wrote:^b

How could things that do not exist
number two or three and the like?
Free from the dogmatic conceptual elaboration
of appearances and mind,
the true condition, transcending the intellect,
is not an object of meditation.

It may have been partly in order not to be an object of Nagarjuna’s objection that in his Lamrim works Tsongkhapa asserted that the emptinesses he regarded as the ultimate truths existed: he thought that then he would not be positing a plurality of things which do not exist. However, there can be no doubt that Nagarjuna is refuting precisely the view developed in these works, for he asserts that the true condition, transcending the intellect, is not an object of meditation (which is how Tsongkhapa posited it to be in these works), and that it would be utterly illegitimate to posit a plurality of nonexistences. Furthermore, Tsongkhapa’s solution did not solve anything, for by positing “voidnesses” and “absolute truths” to be existents, he made of himself the object of the objection Nagarjuna made when he stated, in the stanza quoted above, that “If there were something

^a Cf. Williams, Paul, 1983.

^b Quoted in Dudjom Rinpoche, J. Y. D., English 1991, Trans.: Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein, vol. I, p. 317.

not empty, then something empty would also exist; since there is nothing not empty, how could the empty exist?”

There can be no doubt that the voidness that manifests to dualistic mind as the presence of an absence is what the lower Madhyamika-Swatantrika-Yogacharas posit as absolute truth, for it is what in their *Bhavanakramas* Shantarakshita and Kamalashila posited as such. However, all that has been explained so far, conclusively demonstrates that it is not the absolute truth of the Madhyamika Prasangikas—or even that of the higher Swatantrikas, for that matter.

Prasangika Master Chandrakirti taught analysis, but he did not ever say that what appears at the term of analysis is absolute truth. He writes in *Madhyamakavatara*, VI,120:^a

“There is a way to abandon the view of the transitory [i.e., of the conditioned and therefore samsaric], for yogis do not just leave it at only seeing that [all the afflictions arise in dependence on the view of the transitory]. Rather, since they need to know that object which is the basis from which error arises, they then realize that the self or I, erroneously adhered to by that view in the conception, “This is the self which exists by way of its own entity,” is the object of observation mistaken by the view of the transitory. Then, through seeing that the self does not exist objectively as it is conceived to by the view of the transitory, [that view of the transitory] is abandoned.

“Thereby, after that, the yogi, that is, one who has the yoga of a union of calm abiding and special insight and is seeking liberation, refutes with correct reasoning by means of the five reasons and so forth, such inherent establishment, the self that is the object of negation, which is such that although the referent object [of the conception of inherent existence] lacks an objective mode of subsistence, it appears to have such...”

Chandrakirti says that the yogi who has the yoga of a union of calm abiding and special insight and is seeking liberation, refutes with correct reasoning by means of the five reasons and so forth, the wrong mode of existence he or she perceives in the object, but he *never* says that the presence of the absence of this mode of existence is the absolute truth (or one of an endless series of “absolute truths,” for that matter). It is the *Bhavanakramas*, belonging to the lower Swatantrika-Yogachara school, that *in terms of their own lower view* claim that this object is the absolute truth. What I have tried to show so far is that according to the Prasangika this claim is utterly wrong—which agrees with the following assertion by Gendün Chöphel:^b

There is no similarity between the negative negation asserting that a pot does not exist and the negative negation asserting that, in addition to the nonexistence of all phenomena, even nonexistence itself does not exist. In the former negation, there is no way to avoid the fault of “non-attributive negation,” with [the arising of] thoughts such as, “even though the pot does not exist, the location does exist.” When somebody is aware

^a Napper, Elizabeth, 2003, p. 290. Chandrakirti also provides us with instructions in this regard in his *Mulamadhyamakavrittprasannapada* (Tibetan in the Dharamsala ed, beginning of Ch. 18, 284.1-285.2; Sanskrit in the La Vallée Poussin ed. 340.3-340.15. For a translation of the relevant section see Napper, Elizabeth, 2003, pp. 291-292).

^b Gendün Chöphel (*dGe-'dun Chos-'phel*, 1905-1951), *dBu ma'i zab gdad snying por dril ba'i legs bshad kLu sgrub dgongs rgyan*. As we have seen, a translation of this work by Amdo scholar Pema Wangjie and US scholar Jean Mulligan is in progress as I write this book and probably will be published already by the time the reader has this book in her or his hands.

that neither existence nor nonexistence exist, because in that mind or conventional attention the only two [possibilities] are existence and nonexistence, and nothing else is possible, nothing can arise in it, [and therefore it] will surely be a mind oriented towards peaceful liberation. Shantideva said, “When conceptions of existence and nonexistence do not dwell in the mind, there is nothing else there, so with no objects, the mind is utterly tranquil.”...

...[According to Prasangika philosophy,] it is the realization in one single moment, of the fact that none of the four possibilities [consisting in nonexistence, not-nonexistence, existence-and-nonexistence, and neither-existence-nor-nonexistence] applies, which is the “ultimate meaning without distinctions,” the “ultimate meaning which is not conventional”—in short, the [realization of the] “inexpressible ultimate.”

It must be clear that the ultimate cannot be the object of any mind or conventional attention, for it can only manifest in a primordial gnosis beyond the subject-object duality. Likewise, the realization of the ultimate, which cannot be reduced to mere voidness, makes it evident that none of the four possibilities consisting in existence, nonexistence, existence-and-nonexistence, and neither-existence-nor-nonexistence, apply to any parcel of reality. Furthermore, it is often upon facing the impossibility of understanding reality in terms of any of the four extremes, that the attempt to understand in terms of concepts collapses—immediately after which there is the possibility that ultimate truth will manifest in its nakedness. It is the ineffable truth that manifests at this point that the Prasangikas referred to as “the ultimate meaning without distinctions,” “the ultimate meaning which is not conventional,” or “the inexpressible ultimate.”

A voidness appearing as object to a subject could not be the absolute truth even for the higher Swatantrikas, for these assert that, when a basic truth is known, it is understood in a wholly nondual manner, beyond the subject-object dichotomy; furthermore, they claim that only a basic truth may be understood in such a nondual manner. Tsongkhapa insists that though initially voidness appears as object and in terms of a conceptual understanding, with repeated meditative familiarization, it can be brought to a level of nonconceptual direct perception (Skt., *pratyaksha*; Tib., ngönsum^a), which in this case is of the type called yogic direct perception (Skt., *yogipratyaksha*; Tib., naljor ngönsum^b), one of the four types of direct perception described by Dignaga and Dharmakirti—which according to Tsongkhapa’s Lamrim works, when directed towards emptiness in a nondualistic cognition in which subject and object are fused like water poured in water, is the true absolute truth.^{c179} Elizabeth Napper writes:^d

“Inference is primarily conceptual, but can with repeated meditative familiarization be brought to a level of nonconceptual direct perception (*mngon sum, pratyaksha*). This is yogic direct perception (*rnal ’byor mngon sum, yogipratyaksha*), one of the four types of direct perception described by Dignaga and Dharmakirti, and when directed towards emptiness is a nondualistic cognition in which subject and object are fused like water poured in water. The content of the two types of realization—conceptual and nonconceptual—is the same, for their object, emptiness, is the same; also, both can be called “reasoning consciousnesses.” These facts allow for the continuity between the two

^a *mNgon sum*.

^b *rNal ’byor mngon sum*.

^c Napper, Elizabeth, 2003, p. 126.

^d Napper, Elizabeth, 2003, p. 126.

even though they are very different in terms of manner of cognition and in potency as antidotes to the misconception of inherent existence, direct perception being tremendously more powerful.”

Nonetheless, Napper tells us that Tsongkhapa maintains that even at this stage subject and object are distinct,^a

...and by distinguishing ontological fact from psychological reality, he is able to maintain a usage of terminology that unravels many difficult passages.

The truth is that ontological fact and psychological reality always coincide. In fact, in *samsara* the delusory valuation and absolutization of the concept of being is always concomitant with that of the directional threefold thought structure; on the ontological plane, this gives rise to the delusive phenomenon of being, and on the psychological plane, it gives rise to the subject-object dichotomy—and thus, so long as the delusory valuation of thought is active, the subject-object dichotomy is always concomitant with the delusive phenomenon of being, so that we have the illusion that the subject *is* and the illusion that the object *is* (which is the illusion that Tsongkhapa refers to as the illusion of their inherent existence). Also in *nirvana* metaontological fact and metapsychological reality coincide, for there being no delusory valuation-absolutization either of the concept of being or of the directional threefold thought structure, there is neither mind (Greek, *psyché*: hence the term “metapsychological”)—a noun that in Dzogchen terminology always implies the subject-object dichotomy—nor the delusive phenomenon of being. A sound *dharma* language must necessarily reflect these concomitances, as always does that of the Dzogchen teachings, but even if it does not, it should not introduce baseless distinctions that deceive the mind and lead away from the truth.

According to the Lamrim works by Je Tsongkhapa, the content of the two types of realization of voidness—the conceptual one and the nonconceptual one—is the same, for their object, which is emptiness, is the same. However, this is not the case, for the presence of the absence of the mode of existence we had wrongly attributed to an object and in terms of which we had always perceived that object, involves a negation and is based on the subject-object duality, and therefore is conceptual and dualistic,¹⁸⁰ contrariwise, a Gnition in which there is no subject-object duality and no conceptuality cannot entertain negatives and therefore lacks the conditions necessary for perceiving the presence of an absence. If, by applying meditative pacification (Skt., *shamatha*; Tib., *zhinai*) after the absence of an entity’s wrongly imputed “mode of existence” has presented itself, there obtains a seemingly nondualistic cognition in which subject and object are fused like water poured in water is *directed towards emptiness*, we are speaking of a *directional, conceptual, dualistic cognition* that, as a result of meditative pacification, has come to *seem* nonconceptual and nondual.

Contrarily to the view expressed by Tsongkhapa, the Gnition in which there is no subject-object duality and no conceptuality implies the absence of consciousness, for, as the prefix “co” implies, consciousness is a dualistic awareness of object. However, the founder of the Gelugpa School did not content himself with merely asserting that at this stage there is consciousness: he claimed that *both* the dualistic consciousness perceiving a conceptual voidness *and* the nonconceptual and nondualistic cognition in which “subject

^a Napper, Elizabeth, p. 132.

and object are fused like water poured in water”—in which *by definition the meditator has gone beyond reasoning*—can be called “reasoning consciousnesses.”

Tsongkhapa asserted that the nonconceptual apprehension of voidness involves the unveiling of thatness (Skt., *tathata* or *tattwa*; Tib., *denyi*^a, *dezhinnyi*^b or *dekhonanyi*^c). It is quite true that in a “nondualistic cognition in which subject and object are fused like water poured in water” thatness may as well unveil; however, as shown above, voidness *qua* the presence of an absence cannot manifest in the cognition thus defined. In fact, whereas voidness in the sense Tsongkhapa gives the term is an absence, thatness is by no means an absence: it is the true constituent of all that is, which the *Sutra of Hui-neng*^d and other Mahayana texts having definitive meaning refer to as a “positive essence” (the etymological meaning of the term is “nature of that,” for it refers to the unnamable, unthinkable true constituent of all that may be referred to as “that” [i.e., of all entities]).

The true nondual, nonconceptual absolute truth, which as the original Prasāṅgikas rightly remarked is the true condition of all entities (Skt., *dharmata*), is not apprehended by consciousness, but by absolute *prajñā* wisdom. The point is that, since, as Tsongkhapa rightly noted, absolute *prajñā* wisdom does not negate, this wisdom can apprehend the true condition of all entities (Skt., *dharmata*; Tib., *chönyi*) but cannot apprehend the presence of an absence that Tsongkhapa wrongly understood to be the absolute truth and wrongly equated with the true condition of all entities. This is so because, as we have seen, voidness understood as the presence of an absence, being conceptual insofar as it involves negation, and being an object of knowledge, can only be perceived by a consciousness, which as the prefix “co” implies, is always dualistic, and as the Latin root *scire* (“consciousness”) implies, is always conceptual. Contrariwise, the true condition of all entities cannot be understood in terms of concepts or in terms of a negation; (being) the absolute truth that unveils in the first bodhisattva level (or, what is the same, in the third bodhisattva path), it can only be apprehended by absolute *prajñā* wisdom, which, as just noted, being nondual and nonconceptual, *does not negate*.¹⁸¹

In fact, according to the original Mādhyamaka Prāsaṅgika School, in the gradual Path of the Mahāyāna, absolute truth, both as it manifests on the Path and as it manifests as the Fruit, consists in the realization, utterly beyond the subject-object duality, of the true nature of phenomena,^e which makes the voidness^f of those phenomena become patent. However, the fact that the realization beyond the subject-object duality of the true nature of phenomena makes the voidness^g of those phenomena become patent, does not imply that it involves negation—either of the type logicians call nonimplicative negation, nonaffirming negation or absolute negation (Skt. *prasajyapratishedha*; Tib. *megag*:^h the one applied in the Prāsaṅgika conceptual explanation of voidness, where self-existence is negated without leaving anything unnegated)¹⁸² or of the type they call implicative negation, affirming negation or relative negation (Skt. *paryudāsapratishedha*; Tib.

^a *De nyid*.

^b *De-bzhin-nyid*.

^c *De kho na nyid*.

^d Wong Mou-Lam, translator, 1969, p. 45.

^e Skt. *dharmatā*; Tib. *chönyi* (*chos nyid*).

^f Skt. *śūnyatā*; Tib. *tönpanyi* (*stong pa nyid*).

^g Skt. *śūnyatā*; Tib. *tönpanyi* (*stong pa nyid*).

^h *med dgag*.

mayingag (*ma yin dgag*): applied in the Mahāmādhyaṃaka and Zhentong (*gzhan stong*) conceptual explanations of voidness, for all that is not the *dharmakāya*, or the Buddha-nature, or the *dharmatā*—i.e., the true condition of reality—is negated, while leaving this condition unnegated—for it (is) utterly unelaborated.^a Master Longchenpa (corresponding yet not identical translation in Longchen Rabjam, 2007, p. 171) wrote:

Given that absolute truth is basic space,^b when the nature of basic space is directly [i.e., nonconceptually and hence nondually] apprehended, it is said that “absolute truth is apprehended.” Absolute truth is not emptiness in the sense of a void! Concepts such as the nonexistence of identity are taught as antidotes to the fixation on identity experienced by ordinary beings, who are spiritually immature, and by beginning practitioners. [In fact,] in actuality one should understand basic space to be utterly lucid, uncompounded and spontaneously manifest. The [Commentary to the *Surpassing Continuum*^c] states:

“This Buddha-nature of the accomplished Conquerors who have gone beyond [*samsāra*] is not within the scope of those who err by regarding the perishable aggregates as real, who take great delight in erroneous ideas, of whose minds are totally distracted by emptiness.”

The above does *not* mean that the brand of analytic meditation being discussed is mistaken, nor does it mean that it belongs to an extremely low vehicle (for example, to a Shrivakayana stage in a graded Mahayana Path as taught in the context of the Yogachara school, as someone may infer from the fact that it is taught in the Shrivakabhumi chapter of Asanga’s *Yogacharabhumi*). If the basic method were mistaken it would not have been taught directly by the Buddha in the *Sandhinirmochanasutra*. Were it exclusive to lower vehicles such as the Shrivakayana, it would not be applied to entities that are not human beings, for the Shrivakayana does neither posit nor realize the emptiness of such entities—not would it exist in the supreme vehicle (the Dzogchen Atiyoga), where it is one of the introductory practices that, in the “highest” series of teachings (which is the Menngagde or *Upadeshavarga*), may be applied by beginners so that subsequently they may gain access to the main practice.¹⁸³ However, none of the experiences that manifest as the result of the analytic practice we have been discussing is the unveiling of the true condition of reality.

In fact, though the teachings of the Nyingmapa agree that all phenomena lack a self-nature and a substance, according to many Nyingma teachings reducing voidness to a mere absence would be an instance of nihilism, and identifying absolute truth with such an absence would imply that this truth cannot account for the fully active manifestation of Awakening, or even for the manifestation of phenomena; therefore, they explain voidness as lying in the recognition of the absence of mental constructs that is inherent in the essence of mind in which space and awareness are indivisible, and define absolute truth as consisting in the indivisibility of emptiness and appearances, or of emptiness and awareness.^d

In particular, the teachings of *Ati* Dzogpa Chenpo make it clear that none of the experiences that manifest as the result of the analytic practice we have been discussing

^a Skt. *nishprapañcha*; Tib. tödräl (*spros-bral*) or thöme (*spros-med*).

^b Tib. jing (*dbyings*).

^c Skt. *Uttaratantraśāstra*; Tib. Gyü Lama (*rgyud bla-ma*).

^d For a discussion of the various views of voidness in the Mahayana see Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2004.

may be the unveiling of the true condition of reality; even the “nondualistic cognition in which subject and object are fused like water poured in water” alluded to above is but an illusory experience or *nyam*^a, comparable to a reflection in a mirror—which, despite its illusory character, informed practitioners can use in order to discover the nature of the mirror. Therefore, if this *nyam* is wrongly taken to be the absolute truth, the result will be but a reinforcement of delusion.

Tsongkhapa and the Alleged Samye Debate (The Gradual Practice of *Shamathavipashyana*, Contemplation in the Sudden Mahayana, and Dzogchen)

In the alleged debate of Samye, which is supposed to have pitted Kamalashila (the main disciple of the Khenpo Bodhisattva, Shantarakshita) as the proponent of the gradual Mahayana, against Hwa-shan Mahayana (a Ch’an Master of the Northern School) as the proponent of the sudden Mahayana, the former is supposed to have defended the method of pacification and analysis taught in the *Bhavanakramas*, whereas the Hwa-shan allegedly defended the sudden approach of Ch’an, which does not feature intellectual analysis.

It would be a grave error to take one of the two methods to be utterly right and the other one to be utterly wrong, for both of them have their root in Shakyamuni. In fact, we have seen that the method allegedly defended by Kamalashila has its canonical root in the *Sandhinirmochana Sutra* of the Third Promulgation; in turn, according to all Ch’an records, the approach supposedly represented by the Hwa-shan originated in the Transmission of Mind from Shakyamuni to Mahakashyapa—and, according to some interpreters, it was implicit in *Prajñaparamita* Sutras of the Second Promulgation and in Sutras of the Third Promulgation such as the *Lankavatara* and so on (for an ampler list of Sutras that have been related to Ch’an, see Part One of *Buddhism and Dzogchen*).

Furthermore, according to the *Sutra of Hui-neng*,^b Nagarjuna was the 14th Patriarch in the lineal succession of Ch’an or Zen Buddhism, and Aryadeva (called Kanadeva in the Sutra) was the 15th Patriarch in the same lineal succession (just as the traditions of the Old or Nyingmapa School of Tibetan Buddhism codified in Pawo Tsuglag Threngwa’s *Chöjung Khepai Gatön*^c tell us that both of them were lineage holders in the transmission of Dzogchen Atiyoga). Therefore, one could speculate that the Ch’an method allegedly defended by the Hwa-shan may have been applied by Nagarjuna and Aryadeva themselves. Conversely, it does not seem so likely that the method propounded by the Indian Master Kamalashila may have been applied by the founders of Madhyamaka, as it is reputed to have been absorbed by the Madhyamaka School when abbot Shantarakshita—the Madhyamika-Swatantrika-Yogachara Master who asked Trisongdetsen to invite Padmasambhava to Tibet—borrowed it from the Yogachara school.

However, Tsongkhapa did not admit any validity to the method taught by the Hwa-shan, the superworldly character of which he ardently denied, insisting that, like the means

^a *Nyams*.

^b Wong Mou-Lam and A. F. Price, translators, 1969, p. 108.

^c *dPa-'bo gtsug-lag phreng-ba, chos 'byung mkhas pa'i dga' ston*, p. 568. Peking, 1986: *Mi-rigs dpe sKrun Khang*. Cited in Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1988, pp. 26-27.

applied by the tirthikas, it led to worldly realizations only. We have seen that in his *Lamrim* works Tsongkhapa wrongly identified voidness with thatness; basing himself on the thesis according to which realization of thatness was the doorway to the supramundane sphere, he rejected the Hwa-shan's method on the grounds that it could not give access to the nondual patency of thatness (*tathata*), but merely to the temporary cessation of thought. Elizabeth Napper writes:^a

...The process of eradicating *avidya* is conceived... not as a mere stopping of thought, but as the active realization of the opposite of what ignorance misconceives. *Avidya* is not a mere absence of knowledge, but a specific misconception,¹⁸⁴ and it must be removed by realization of its opposite. In this vein, Tsongkhapa says that one cannot get rid of the misconception of "inherent existence" merely by stopping conceptuality any more than one can get rid of the idea that there is a demon in a darkened cave merely by trying not to think about it. Just as one must hold a lamp and see that there is no demon there, so the illumination of wisdom is needed to clear away the darkness of ignorance.

Contrasting the mere stopping of thought, which he attributes to the Hwa-shan, with the realization of thatness (*tathata*), Tsongkhapa cites the *Bodhisattvapitaka* (Tib., Changchub Sempai Denö^b):^c

One who, without knowing the meaning of *tathata* explained in the scriptures, is satisfied with mere meditative stabilization, might develop manifest pride, [mistaking] that for the Path that cultivates the profound meaning. Through that, such a person is not released from cyclic existence.

In order to further clarify Tsongkhapa's position, Elizabeth Napper adds:^d

Since the darkness of obscurity is not overcome until the illumination of the knowledge of *tathata* arises, but is overcome when that arises, through mere calm abiding which is a one-pointedness of mind there is no pure exalted wisdom and the darkness of obscurity is also not overcome. Therefore you should unquestionably seek wisdom, thinking, 'I will seek the wisdom ascertaining the meaning of selflessness—*tathata*. Kamalashila's middle *Bhavanakrama* says:

"Then, having achieved calm abiding, you should cultivate special insight, and should think, 'All the sayings of the Supramundane Victor were spoken well; they all manifestly illuminate *tathata* directly or indirectly and flow to *tathata*. If one knows *tathata*, one will be separated from all nets of views, just as darkness is cleared away through the arising of illumination. Through mere calm abiding there is no pure exalted wisdom, and also the darkness of obscurities is not cleared away. However, if, with wisdom, one meditates on *tathata* well, there will be pure exalted wisdom and *tathata* will be realized. Only through wisdom are the obstructions thoroughly abandoned. Therefore, I, abiding in calm abiding, will, by means of wisdom, thoroughly seek *tathata*. I will not be satisfied with mere calm abiding.'" What is this *tathata*? Ultimately all things are just empty of the two [types of] self—[that of] human beings and [that of] phenomena [that are not human beings].

^a Napper, Elizabeth, 2003, p. 103.

^b *Byang chub sems dpa'i sde snod*.

^c Napper, Elizabeth, 2003, p. 155.

^d Napper, Elizabeth, 2003, p. 156.

From among the paramitas, *tathata* is realized by the *prajñāparamita*. Since it cannot be generated by concentration and so forth [367a], you should, without mistaking mere concentration for the *prajñā paramita*, generate wisdom.

The error consisting in identifying voidness with the thatness that is apprehended by absolute *prajñā* wisdom was denounced in the preceding section of this book. Now a further error is inserted, which is that of dismissing the method of the Hwa-shan as producing mere states of thoughtlessness and being unable to lead to the realization of thatness. This is based on a misunderstanding of the meaning of the Chinese term *wu-nien*, which was used by the Hwa-shan and which could be literally rendered as non-conceptuality or thoughtlessness. The *Sutra of Hui-neng*, which is the most authoritative of Ch'an/Zen texts and the only one that adherents of this school regard as a canonical source, and which is earlier than the alleged debate of Samye (Hui-neng lived from 638 to 713 CE), makes it clear that *wu-nien* is not a mere lack of thoughts, for it will only be genuine and therefore will only lead to Awakening if it involves perfect awareness of thatness, and stresses the fact that it would be utterly misguided to seek a state without thoughts and dwell therein. The Sutra reads:^a

To keep our mind free from defilement under all circumstances is called *wu-nien* (non-conceptuality). Our mind should stand aloof from circumstances, and on no account should we allow them to influence the function of our mind. But it is a great mistake to suppress our mind from all thinking; for even if we succeed in getting rid of all thoughts, and die immediately thereafter, still we shall be reincarnated elsewhere. Mark this, treaders of the Path. It is bad enough for a man to commit blunders from not knowing the meaning of the *dharmā*, but how much worse would it be to encourage others to follow suit? Being deluded, he Sees not, and in addition he blasphemes the Buddhist Canon. Therefore we take *wu-nien* (non-conceptuality) as our object.

Learned audience, let me explain more fully why we take *wu-nien* (non-conceptuality) as our object. It is because there is a type of man under delusion who boasts of the realization of the Essence of mind; however, being carried away by circumstances, thoughts rise in his mind, followed by erroneous views which are the source of all sorts of false notions and defilements. In the Essence of mind (which is the embodiment of voidness) there is intrinsically nothing to be attained. To say that there is attainment, and to talk thoughtlessly on merits or demerits are erroneous views and defilements. For this reason we take *wu-nien* (non-conceptuality) as the object of our school.

Learned audience, (in order to find ourselves in *wu-nien* [non-conceptuality]) what should we get rid of and what should we keep our awareness on? We should get rid of the [delusory valuation-absolutization of] the 'pairs of opposites' and all defiling conceptions. We should maintain awareness of the true nature of *tathata*, for *tathata* is the true essence and nature of thought, and thoughts are but the result of the activity of *tathata*.

It is the positive essence [that] *tathata* [is], rather than the sense organs, which gives rise to thought. *Tathata* bears its own attribute, and therefore it can give rise to thought. Without *tathata* the sense organs and the sense objects would dissolve immediately. Learned audience, because it is the attribute of *tathata* to give rise to thought [and because thoughts are but manifestations of *tathata*], our sense organs—in spite of their functioning in seeing, hearing, touching, knowing, etc.—need not be tainted or defiled in all circumstances [by the interpretation of data in terms of the contents of delusorily valued thoughts, but, contrariwise,] our true nature may be self-manifested all the time. Therefore

^a Wong Mou-Lam, translator, 1969, p. 45.

the sutra says, ‘He who is an adept in the discrimination of various *dharmalakshana* (the collections of characteristics of phenomena) will be immovably installed in the first principle (i.e., in the blissful abode of *nirvana*).

Though Kamalashila, Tsongkhapa and others translated *wu-nien* in a literal way as “absence of thought,” the above shows most clearly that it is more precise to render the term as “non-conceptuality” (the meaning of the word does not seem to be too different from that of *mitokpa*^a in the Longde series of Dzogchen teachings), and that when a Ch’an Buddhist speaks of *wu-nien*, he or she is *not* referring to stopping the process of thinking, but to a state of Contemplation directly realizing thatness in a nondual cognition like the one referred to by Tsongkhapa (in which “subject and object are fused like water poured in water”), featuring the coincident manifestation of calm abiding and special insight (Skt., *shamatha-vipashyana-yuganaddha*)—though of course *not* by means like the ones taught in the *Bhavanakramas*.

Furthermore, the practice of *shamatha-vipashyana* taught in the *Bhavanakramas* is a means for attaining the first of the four stages of the second bodhisattva path, which as we have seen is reached upon the coincident manifestation of calm abiding and insight—which in turn involves the unveiling of thatness that burns away the conceptuality that distorts the true condition of reality. Thus the unveiling of thatness in the coincident manifestation of calm abiding and insight achieved through this meditation is, as we have seen, prior to the initial manifestation of absolute *prajña* wisdom, which marks the transition to the third bodhisattva path. This is absolutely not the case with the Contemplation involving *wu-nien* described in the *Sutra of Hui-neng*, for this text speaks of “being immovably installed in the first principle, the blissful abode of *nirvana*”—and the meditator is said to be installed in this condition to such a degree that thatness is not lost sight of in the sensory perceptions of any of the six senses. Therefore, in the condition of *wu-nien* the Sutra refers to, not only is the absolute *prajña* wisdom of the *Prajñāparamita* manifest, but it has been established in a remarkably stable way.¹⁸⁵ In fact, this Contemplation is what the Japanese refer to as *shikantaza*¹⁸⁶—which according to Japanese Soto Zen is the very state of Buddhahood of the Mahayana—and when fully consolidated may possibly involve the continuity of this state throughout everyday life.

However, neither the realization of absolute *prajña* wisdom in the Mahayana, nor the mere arising of *mitokpa*^b (as separate from the other three *da* of the Longde series of Dzogchen teachings), does correspond to the realization of Awake awareness (Skt., *vidya*; Tib., *rigpa*) in the Dzogchen teachings. As noted in the Introduction, the realizations of the Mahayana are partial toward voidness (which in the Dzogchen teachings corresponds to the *katak*^c or “primordial purity” aspect of the Base), for the Base’s *lhundrub*^d or spontaneous perfection aspect is not fully unveiled in them; and even in the state of Contemplation of the sudden Mahayana, which according to this system is the very state of Buddhahood, practitioners are not fully open to that which samsaric beings experience as an external dimension, nor are they in a condition in which there is no duality between an external dimension and an internal one; contrariwise, they are somehow centered in what the Dzogchen teachings call the internal *jing* or dimension. In turn, *mitokpa*, without

^a *Mi-rtogs-pa*.

^b *Mi-rtogs-pa*.

^c *Ka-dag*.

^d *Lhun-grub*.

the simultaneous manifestation of the other three da which coincide in the Longde series of Dzogchen teachings, is but an illusory experience of nyam to be used as a gateway for realizing Awake awareness (rigpa).¹⁸⁷

The Awake awareness of Dzogchen is total, encompassing both the katak and the lhundrub aspects of the Base, and (being) totally open to the dimension that we normally experience as external—yet being utterly free from the illusion that there is an internal dimension and an external one. Awake awareness, which is compared with a mirror that does not take as object the reflections that manifest in it, has three aspects: essence or ngowo^a, which is voidness; nature or rangzhin^b, which is the luminosity, reflectiveness or clarity that allows for manifestation; and energy or thukje^c, which is the potentiality for manifestation and the uninterrupted flow of phenomena. Dualistic, deluded mind (Skt., *chitta*; Tib., sem^d) is under the illusion of being at a distance of the phenomena that it takes as object, whether these are ordinary forms such as the physical phenomena we deal with at the level of the body, or experiences of the practice such as voidness, clarity or pleasure. On the contrary, Awake awareness, like a mirror that does not take as object the reflections that manifest in it, integrates into its own patency the whole of phenomena, whether these be so-called “physical” forms and so on, or experiences of the practice such as voidness, clarity or pleasure. And in this patency its three aspects are indivisible, so that the voidness corresponding to its essence or ngowo aspect manifests coincidentally with the reflectiveness corresponding to its nature or rangzhin aspect, and with the uninterrupted flow of phenomena arising by virtue of its energy or thukje aspect and being part of this aspect.

The Menngagde^e or *Upadeshavarga* series of Dzogchen features as two of its 21 semdzin^f (methods inducing illusory experiences or nyam that may be used as images in a mirror that may allow one to discover the nature of the mirror), the method of *vipashyana* through intellectual analysis taught in the *Bhavanakramas* by Masters Shantarakshita and Kamalashila, and the non-intellectual direct method preconized by Hwa-shan Mahayana. However, this series of Dzogchen teachings does not claim that the experiences that result from any of these two semdzins are the absolute truth; contrariwise, it explicitly states that they are mere illusory experiences or nyam that, like reflections in a mirror, may be used for discovering the mirror’s reflective capacity—i.e., for discovering the nondual awareness in which it manifests. In fact, even in the ideal outcome of either semdzin, which is the patency of thatness in a nondual condition, what we have is a nyam or illusory experience involving voidness and non-conceptuality, which in some cases may be a manifestation of the nondual absorption of the base-of-all or kunzhi (*kun-gzhi*) in which neither *samsara* nor *nirvana* are active (though this is obviously not the case with the condition of *wu-nien* or non-conceptuality that is described in the *Sutra of Hui-neng*, which is supposed to involve the manifestation of absolute *prajña* wisdom). Thatness is not the same as the manifestation of absolute *prajña* wisdom, and the manifestation of this wisdom is not the same as that of the total condition that the Dzogchen Atiyoga calls Awake awareness or rigpa; for the latter to be fully realized, the nyam resulting from

^a *Ngo-bo*.

^b *Rang-bzhin*.

^c *Thugs-rje*.

^d *Sems*.

^e *Man-ngag-sde*.

^f *Sems-'dzin*.

either *semdzin* will have to be used as a reflection in a mirror, in order to discover the true condition of the mirror.

Though both the method defended by Kamalashila and the one propounded by the Hwa-shan lead to the experience or *nyam* involving the patency of thatness in a nondual condition, the latter is swifter in giving access to it; furthermore, the method defended by the Hwa-shan sometimes results in a breakthrough that allows absolute *prajña* wisdom to manifest and therefore a metaexperience of *nirvana* to obtain, in a way that is remindful of the spontaneous liberation that is the trademark of Atiyoga. These are the reasons why the *semdzin* corresponding to the method taught by Kamalashila is called “the *semdzin* of gradually arriving at voidness,” whereas the one corresponding to the method defended by the Hwa-shan is called “the *semdzin* of the direct unveiling of voidness.”

Furthermore, Ch’an or Zen Buddhism applies the dialogues known in Chinese as *wen-ta* and in Japanese as *mondo* (which sometimes may involve Hui-neng’s method of interrelated opposites, but more often resort to apparently absurdities in order to inhibit the interlocutor’s drive to understand in terms of concepts and lead him or her into a state of shock like the one referred to by the Tibetan term *heddewa*), the riddles known in Chinese as *kung-an* and in Japanese as *koan*, the private interviews known in Japanese as *dokusan*, etc. The use of these methods proves that Ch’an or Zen, rather than precluding the use of thought, resorts to it as a means leading to realization. Furthermore, these methods are all far more effective than the one taught in the *Bhavanakramas* and in the Lamrim works by Tsongkhapa as means for shattering normal samsaric delusion and giving access to the patency of thatness—which, due to the sudden and unexpected way it manifests when the methods of Ch’an or Zen are applied, contrasts far more strikingly with normal samsaric delusion than it does when the method taught in the *Bhavanakramas* and in Tsongkhapa’s Lamrim works is applied, and hence makes a far stronger impression on the individual’s mental continuum. Furthermore, as noted above, they may result in a breakthrough that allows absolute *prajña* wisdom to manifest and a metaexperience of *nirvana* to obtain, in a way that is remindful of Atiyoga-style spontaneous liberation. Even such an enthusiastic follower and apologist of Tsongkhapa like Elizabeth Napper felt compelled to write:^a

“[In Tsongkhapa] much of the shock value of the original Madhyamika writings is lost. There is not the spontaneity found in other Madhyamika interpretations that focus on the transcendent quality of realization of emptiness, the sense of simply shifting perspective and turning away from mundane descriptions.

No doubt, the original Madhyamika methods and Hui-neng’s method of interrelated opposites had a strong shock effect with a great power to inhibit judgment and induce an experience of *heddewa* (*had-de-ba*: stunning shock), and thus open a door for the possible realization of ultimate truth. Tsongkhapa’s systematic philosophy lacks this effect, as all it does is to lay out a philosophical view on the basis of which to apply specific methods of practice.

While the *nyam* called *heddewa* is manifest, we are neither asleep nor unconscious; contrariwise, there is a perfectly clear awareness. According to the Dzogchen teachings, a *precise* application of the secret oral instructions may facilitate the nondual, nonconceptual reGnition of this awareness: *in terms of these instructions*, we look and

^a Napper, Elizabeth, 2003, p. 147, and p. 724 note 281.

check to what or whom is the heddewa present—or in what awareness, just like a reflection in a mirror, is this nyam manifest. Since the illusory mental *subject* can perceive *objects* only, and by no means can perceive itself, the precise way of looking described in the instructions may provide a most precious opportunity for the subject-object duality that is the core of basic human delusion (corresponding to the second of the senses the term *avidya* or marigpa has in the Dzogchen classification adopted here) to short-circuit and collapse. Simultaneously, the nonconceptual reGnition that makes Awake nondual self-awareness’ face patent manifests, dissolving basic human unawareness (which corresponds to the first sense *avidya* or marigpa has in the Dzogchen classification adopted here), and thus allowing this self-awareness to manifest and function as chikshe kundröl or “all-liberating single gnosis.”

Thus we have seen that, in general, by themselves the methods propounded by both sides at the alleged Samye debate are more likely to give rise to the patency of thatness than result in *nirvana*—and that possibilities that they may directly lead into the manifestation of absolute *prajña* wisdom are much higher in the case of the method taught by the Hwa-shan. In terms of Tsongkhapa’s example, what makes it possible for us to see that there is no demon in the cave is not a conceptual understanding or reasoning, or even the sheer patency of thatness, but Awakening, which puts an end to the dream-like condition that causes us to perceive demons. In fact, the manifestation of absolute truth in the Contemplation state of the *arya* bodhisattva temporarily interrupts the perception of the delusive phenomena of relative truth; then, in the post-Contemplation state, when these phenomena manifest anew, the bodhisattva is increasingly aware that they are mere fictions, being progressively freed from their hold on him or her. Finally, when Buddhahood is attained, such phenomena manifest no more, and therefore all bondage with regard to them is definitively overcome.

Ashvagoshā rightly noted that we must use words [and concepts] in order to go beyond words [and concepts, into the direct realization of absolute truth]; intellectual understanding, and intellectual analysis aiming at achieving this understanding, are most important as stages preliminary to the manifestation of absolute *prajña* wisdom—for in order to gain access to *prajña* wisdom first we have to listen to the teachings and study, then we have to reflect on what we have listened and studied, and then we have to apply the appropriate techniques of meditation. However, in this third stage, the analytic method of meditation of the *Bhavanakramas* and the Lamrim works is not the swiftest and most effective: insofar as analysis is based on the delusory valuation-absolutization of thought (it is based on the subject-object duality produced by the delusory valuation-absolutization of the directional threefold thought structure, and at every stage involves the delusory valuation-absolutization of the thoughts applied in the analysis), it tends to maintain delusion. (This is not the case with the analysis of mental phenomena [in Dzogchen terms, of phenomena of the dang^a mode of manifestation of energy] taught in the Semde series of Dzogchen teachings and in Mahamudra teachings, because this analysis trips the analytic mind, so that it may collapse, allowing the nature of mind to be realized.)

^a *gDangs*.

Though in general most Tibetans, and particularly the Sarmapas^a, take for granted that the victor in the supposed debate of Samye was Kamalashila, the text that is reputedly the most ancient among those dealing with the debate gives us the Hwa-shan as the winner: the *Lopön Thangyig*^b, written shortly after the time at which the debate is supposed to have taken place and then concealed as a *terma*^c or “treasure teaching” to be revealed in the future, clearly states that the Chinese Ch’an Master defeated Kamalashila. On the other hand, Butön^d, who in his *Chöjung*^e or *History of the Dharma* had Kamalashila as the victor,^f lived several centuries after the supposed event and, given his persuasion, may have based his judgment on an ideologically and politically biased tradition in order to attribute victory to the Indian Master. Whatever the historical truth, once the Sarmapas dominated the political landscape of Tibet, the view that Kamalashila had been the victor in the debate became a Tibetan mainstream dogma, which remained widely unchallenged in the West since the initial reception of Tibetan Buddhism.

I have been referring to the debate as “alleged” because the Tibetan sources found in Tun-huang cast serious doubts on the very occurrence of the event, which was reported in the *Bhavanakramas* by Kamalashila. On the basis of the Tun-huang documents dealing with the alleged debate as presented and discussed in Imaeda, Yoshiro, 1975, Herbert V. Guenther^g asserted in quite conclusive terms:

...[the tale of the debate,] which the Tibetans eventually came to believe in, seems to have had its roots in a political situation in the eighth century [CE] which the Tibetans camouflaged with an historical hoax—the so-called Samye debate which we now, on the evidence of contemporary sources from Tun-huang, know never to have taken place.”

Though in the second millennium CE Tibetans have almost universally spoken of the debate as a historical fact, the attribution of victory to the Hwa-shan has not been equally universal. In fact, the two most famous Dzogchen Masters of the last six hundred years defended the Hwa-shan, ascribing victory to him. To begin with, the great Dzogchen Master Longchen Rabjampa^h wrote:ⁱ

Although it did not enter the minds of those with an inferior kind of intelligence, what the great teacher Hwa-shan said at the time (of the alleged debate at Samye) was a factual statement.

In turn, Herbert Guenther tells us that the great Dzogchen Master Jigme Lingpa^{j,k}

^a *gSar-ma-pa*, the followers of the teachings and schools introduced in the “second diffusion of the *dharma*” in Tibet.

^b *Lo-pon Thang-yig*.

^c *gTer-ma*.

^d *Bu-ston*.

^e *Chos-'byung*.

^f Obermiller, E., 1999.

^g Guenther, Herbert, 1977, p. vii.

^h *Long-chen Rab-'byams-pa*.

ⁱ *sDe-gsum snying-po'i don-'grel gnas-lugs rin-po-che'i mdzod ces-'bya-'ba'i grel-pa*, folio 31a, quoted in Guenther, Herbert V., 1977, p. 140, note 2.

^j *Jigs-med gLing-pa*.

^k Guenther, Herbert V., 1977, p. 140, note 2. Guenther refers to the *Kun-mkhyen zhal-lug bdud-rtsi'i thigs-pa* (a commentary to the *Gnas-lugs rdo-rje'i tshig-rkang*), folio 6b.

... openly defends the Hwa-shan and declares that what is alleged to be the defect of the Hwa-shan's teaching is actually the quintessence of the *Prajñāparamita* works. As they are the words of the Buddha, only the Buddha himself can decide if Hwa-shan understood them correctly or not.

Furthermore, according to Namkhai Nyingpo's *Kathang Denga*^a and Nubchen Sangye Yeshe's *Samten Migdrön*^b (which, as we have seen, are the most ancient sources extant for the classification of vehicles adopted in this book and developed in my *Buddhism and Dzogchen*, and which were written rather shortly after the time of the alleged debate), provided that the practitioner has the adequate capacity, the sudden Path of the Mahayana (represented by Ch'an or Zen) is swifter and more effective than the gradual one. However, we have already seen that the fact that the method defended by the Hwa-shan is "higher" than the one defended by Kamalashila does not mean that the method defended by the latter is wrong. In particular, Kennard Lipman tells us that, according to Nubchen Sangye Yeshe's *Samten Migdrön*^{c,d}:

Kamalashila taught according to sutras that were provisional in their meaning (*drang don*) and 'incomplete' (*yongs su ma rdzogs*), while Hwa-shan taught according to sutras which were 'complete' (*yongs su rdzogs*).¹⁸⁸

To conclude, it may be remarked that the Ch'an or Zen schools of our time, which derive from Hui-neng's Southern school, accuse the Northern school of pursuing a quietist deviation, even though it is not easy to appreciate a radical difference between the Ch'an taught in the texts of the Northern School found in Tun Huang and the Ch'an of the Southern School. Therefore, one may speculate that the intent by the Southern School to differentiate itself from the Northern School may be a consequence of the political effects of the alleged debate, and perhaps even of the opinion on Ch'an developed by mainstream Tibetan Buddhism.¹⁸⁹

(Some of the texts in Western languages that discuss the supposed debate of Samye are: Demiéville, Paul, 1952; Tucci, Giuseppe, 1958; Imaeda, Yoshiro, 1975; Houston, G. W., 1980; Guenther, Herbert V., 1983; Yanagida Seizan, 1983; Gómez, Luis O., 1983a; Gómez, Luis O., 1983b; Wayman, Alex, 1979 [pp. 44-58]. Brief yet quite important commentaries in this regard [some of which are included in the discussion of the debate featured in the regular text of this chapter] were also made in Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], E. Capriles, Ed., unpublished.)

“[Mere] Existence” as Different From “True Existence”?

After spending years trying to ascertain the correct meaning of the Madhyamaka, Tsongkhapa rejected the literal interpretation of the negation, both by Shakyamuni in the Second Promulgation, and by Nagarjuna in the *Madhyamakashastra* (or, what is the same, in the *Prajñānamulamadhyamakakarikā*), of the four extreme positions that may be

^a *bKa'-thang sDe-lnga*.

^b *Sam-gtan Mig-sgron*.

^c *Sam-gtan Mig-sgron*. Leh, Ladakh: S.W. Tashigangpa, 1974, pp. 23-24.

^d Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], Ed. Kennard Lipman, 1984, p. 33, note 11.

adopted with regard to forms: that they do *not* exist, that they do *not* not exist, that they do *not* both exist and not exist, and that they do *not* neither exist nor not exist. His main point was that logic necessarily had to be respected, and that since logic does not allow us to negate both a concept and its contrary, for what is not not-a must necessarily be a, simple logic showed that the assertion that something is *not* not existent meant that it is existent. Since a third position different from the assertion and the negation of existence is not allowed by logic, the literal interpretation of the negation of both existence and its negation (nonexistence) was an affront, either to logic itself, or to the memory of the Omniscient Shakyamuni and the noble Nagarjuna. Since neither of these two great beings could assert what logic showed to be sheer nonsense, the existence and the nonexistence that they negated needed to be qualified, and he found the key to their qualification in the texts by Chandrakirti, who referred to the existence to be negated as “inherent existence,” and to the nonexistence to be negated as “utter nonexistence.” Thus the Middle Way (*Madhyamaka*) was the understanding that things did not exist *inherently, in their own right*, and yet they were not *utterly nonexistent*, for no doubt they existed conventionally and relatively insofar as they produced effects: they were *actual* (i.e., what Germans call *wirlich*).

Tsongkhapa seems to have failed to see that when Shakyamuni, Nagarjuna and Aryadeva negated the famous four extreme positions, they did not intend to establish a philosophical position (which as such would be worthy of logical analysis), but to pull the conceptual carpet under the mind’s feet, so that we would have a chance of “plunging” into the realization of ultimate truth, utterly beyond concepts and beyond the logic ruling their concatenation. Had they intended to establish a philosophical position (which, as such, would be worthy of evaluation in Tsongkhapa’s terms), they would have posited the fourth position as the correct view concerning reality, and would have asserted that all forms were “neither [inherently] existent nor [utterly] nonexistent.” The very fact that Shakyamuni and the founders of *Madhyamaka* rejected this possibility as well, proves Tsongkhapa’s interpretation to be wrong, and demonstrates that the intent behind the tetralemma was to lead beings beyond conceptuality and therefore also beyond the logic that regulates conceptuality. (Moreover, had the founders of *Madhyamaka* intended to posit a view concerning reality, they would not have enunciated the first two extreme positions as not not existing and not existing, but simply as existing and not existing.)

As noted above, in his works Chandrakirti had qualified several times as “inherent” or “true” the existence *Madhyamaka* negated with the term emptiness (or nonexistence). On the basis of this blueprint, Tsongkhapa stressed the distinction between mere existence (Tib., *yöpa tsam*^a) and true existence (Tib., *denpar yöpa*^b) or inherent existence (Tib., *rangzhingyi yöpa*^c), which was extremely rare in the canonical texts of the Mahayana and in the original Tibetan translations of those texts,¹⁹⁰ and which was practically nonexistent in Nyingmapa and in general pre-Gelugpa treatises of the Land of the Snows. An example of “mere existence” was the presence in the world of the “corporeal pattern” we call “pot,” and the actuality and functionality of this “corporeal configuration.” An example of the illusion of “inherent existence” or “true existence” was our delusive apprehension of the

^a *Yod-pa tsam*.

^b *Den-par yod-pa*.

^c *Rang-bzhin-gyis yod-pa*.

same “corporeal configuration” as having a self-nature (Skt., *swabhava*; Tib., rangzhin^a) and hence as being a self-existent pot. Having taken the distinction between these two senses of the term “existence” as the key to the correct understanding of Madhyamaka, Tsongkhapa set to systematically qualify as “inherent” or “true” the existence that was the object of negation in Madhyamika refutations (though of course he did not insist that these qualifiers should be introduced into the Tibetan translations of traditional texts *each and every time* the term “existence” was used, and he did not introduce them *each and every time* he himself used the term in his own texts).

However, though at first sight the distinction may seem quite sound, the truth is that it is hardly applicable to the experience of sentient beings. The Dzogchen teachings correctly point out that in *samsara* the contents of our thoughts are always charged with illusory importance, value and truth—which I call “delusory valuation-absolutization of thought.”¹⁹¹ We have also seen that in some Dzogchen teachings this has been explained as the process whereby a vibratory function that seems to emanate from, or be concentrated in, the center of the chest at the level of the heart, *charges* thoughts with the illusion of *value* and *truth*, causing us to either confuse them with the territory they interpret and take them to be entities-in-themselves (as occurs in sensory perception), or to be the absolute truth—or an absolutely false statement—about that which the thoughts interpret (as occurs in discursive thinking).¹⁹² Furthermore, it is when the delusory valuation-absolutization of thought is more pronounced—so that the sensation in the center of the chest associated with the vibratory function at the root of delusion becomes more perceptible—that it is said that one is being affected by a *passion*.

The reason why the distinction between “mere existence” and “inherent existence” or “true existence” is hardly applicable to the experience of sentient beings is because, so long as we are in *samsara*, whenever we perceive something as *existing* or as *being* (or think of something as *existing* or as *being*) the **super-subtle thought-structure** attributing *existence* or *being* to that entity is delusorily valued, giving rise to what the Gelugpas refer to as the “illusion of inherent existence” or “illusion of true existence.” Therefore, for us sentient beings in *samsara* the term “existence” *always* refers to a *delusive phenomenon* which manifests in our mental continuum—which is what Je Tsongkhapa, on the basis of writings by Chandrakirti, systematically called “inherent existence” or “true existence.”¹⁹³ **Conversely, when we go beyond *samsara* we no longer perceive anything as *existing* or as *being*.**

When someone thinks “this is a pot,” the delusory valuation-absolutization of the **super-subtle threefold thought-structure** gives rise to the *delusive phenomenon of being*, which is what the Gelugpas call “illusion of true existence,” and the delusory valuation-absolutization of the concept of “pot” gives rise to the illusion that what is “truly existent” is a pot. When the intuitive equivalent of the thought “this is a pot” manifests in the recognition of the configuration we call “pot,” though we have not yet thought in a discursive manner “this is a pot” (i.e., we have not mentally pronounced the words “this is a pot”), we equally have the illusion that the pot exists in the manner that the Gelugpas refer to as “truly.” The reason for this is *not* that there is a second thought that establishes that the pot exists *truly*. Firstly, human beings who are ignorant of Madhyamika philosophy do not make the difference between “true existence” and “mere existence,” and therefore they could never have a discursive (coarse) thought asserting “this is a truly

^a Rang-bzhin.

existing pot”—nor could they have the equivalent intuitive (subtle) thought, for it is impossible to make a difference intuitively that **one has not previously learned with the help of discursive thinking**.¹⁹⁴ Secondly, the human mind cannot entertain two different thoughts at the same time. The illusion that the pot exists in the manner that the Gelugpas refer to as “truly” is, thus, a function of what I have called the delusory valuation-absolutization of thought.

In the framework of the conceptions proper of the gradual Mahayana, it must be acknowledged that only fully Awake Ones (i.e., Buddhas) can use the terms “existence” and “being” without giving rise to the *delusive phenomenon of being*, which as we have seen is what the Gelugpas refer to that the illusion of true existence. In fact, even superior bodhisattvas (those who range between the first and tenth levels [Skt., *bhumi*; Tib., *sa*]), while in the jethob^a or post-Contemplation state, experience that *delusive phenomenon*; however, they do so to a lower degree than normal individuals, and besides they have some residual awareness of the fact that the phenomenon in question is but an illusion (a matter which will be discussed below, and which implies that *avidya* or *marigpa* in the third of the senses these terms have in the Dzogchen classification adopted here does not manifest at this point).¹⁹⁵ This implies that ordinary beings, who are the ones in need of treading the Path, can hardly make the distinction between “mere existence” and “true existence” stressed by Chandrakirti and exacerbated by Tsongkhapa, for in their experience “existence” is always understood to refer to the phenomenon that Tsongkhapa called “true existence” (and the same would apply to any attempt to distinguish between distinctive marks [Skt., *lakshana*; Tib., *tsennyi*^b] and self-existing distinctive marks [Skt., *swalakshana*; Tib., *rangtsen*^c], for in the experience of ordinary beings distinctive marks are always experienced as self-existing distinctive marks). In fact, as Gendün Chöphel noted:^d

Those who have realized Emptiness are able to appropriately and definitely distinguish between form that should be negated and form that need not be negated. [However, this is not so in the case of ordinary people, for] when [the illusion that] form is truly real and [merely] existing form are mixed together as one thing, then the ideas ordinary people have about denying some things and leaving others is just like saying that the trunk of an illusory elephant can be left, while its legs are negated.

Chöphel’s argument is that this would be like negating the redness of a strawberry while accepting the existence of the fruit in question: if we see the strawberry and there is no problem with our vision, we see it as red, and it will be impossible to have the vision of the strawberry without that of its redness, or the vision of its redness without that of the strawberry; hence if we denied one but not the other, we would be contradicting our own vision. This is similar to Ju Mipham’s critique of Tsongkhapa’s position on the grounds

^a *rJes-thob*; Skt., *prishthalabdha*.

^b *mTsan-nyid*.

^c *Rang-mtshan*.

^d Gendün Chöphel (*dGe-'dun Chos-'phel*, 1905-1951), *dBu ma'i zab gdad snying por dril ba'i legs bshad kLu sgrub dgongs gyan*. Adapted from the translation of this work by Amdo scholar Pema Wangjie and US scholar Jean Mulligan, which is in progress as I write this book and probably will be published already by the time the reader has this book in her or his hands. Though Chöphel was a Gelugpa monk, he had come from a Nyingmapa family, and was versed on the objections the Nyingmapas made concerning the thought of Je Tsongkhapa.

that the only things that appear to exist for ordinary beings are things that falsely appear to be truly existent, and that such beings cannot imagine a thing *per se* without objectifying it and reifying it as having some kind of self-existence or *swabhava*.^{a196} Mipham^b expressed roughly the same idea by saying that ultimate analysis (i.e., analysis from the standpoint of the ultimate or absolute) negates absolute existence or self-existence but does not negate mere existence, and so if, like Je Tsongkhapa, we forbid ourselves from making entities (such as vases, human beings and so on) the object of ultimate analysis and limit ourselves to applying this analysis to what we wrongly perceive as their inherent existence, even though this ultimate analysis will show *the entity's true existence not to exist absolutely*, it will *not at all* show *the entity's mere existence not to exist absolutely*. Therefore, we will continue to believe the entity's mere existence to exist absolutely and to be self-existent.

Thus there can be no doubt that Chöphel was right in noting that the distinction between “mere existence” and “true existence” was to a great degree superfluous. In fact, the original Madhyamika terminology already distinguished between existence in the sense of an entity's capacity to produce effects—i.e., as *actuality* (in German, *Wirlichkeit*)—or, what is the same, in the sense of not being a mere illusion, and the delusive phenomenon that, according to the explanation I am following, is generated by the delusory valuation-absolutization (1) of the concept of being (or existence, etc.), and (2) of the concept in terms of which the entity is normally perceived. The Sanskrit term *bhava* and the Tibetan term ngöpo^c (translated as “thing,” “existence,” “becoming” and so on, according to the context) could always be understood (1) as referring to an entity's capacity to produce effects, or what is the same, to its *actuality*, which is indicated by the Sanskrit term *arthakriyashakti* and the Tibetan term dönche nüpa,^d or (2) as meaning “self-existence,” which is the meaning of the Sanskrit term *swabhava* and the Tibetan noun rangzhin.^e Since from the very beginning the philosophical language of the Madhyamaka School made this very clear distinction between an entity's actuality (Skt., *arthakriyashakti*; Tib., dönche nüpa) and the illusion that the entity is self-existent (Skt., *swabhava*; Tib., rangzhin), there was no need to introduce the supplementary distinction between “mere existence” (Tib., yöpa tsam) and “true existence” (Tib., denpar yöpa).

In English, we think of an entity that is capable to produce effects as being “actual,” but we can also say with regard to it that it “truly exists” so that our interlocutors understand that it does not have the type of illusory existence that is proper of the baseless appearances of fantasy, imagination, dream, hallucination and so on, but is endowed with *actuality*. In turn, as we have already seen, when we think of “existence,” in general what manifests to our mind is the delusive appearance that Tsongkhapa called “inherent existence” or “true existence.” Therefore, the terminological precision emphasized by Tsongkhapa does not help us to better understand the philosophy of Madhyamaka; contrariwise, the term “true existence” could be wrongly understood as referring to an entity's *actuality* rather than to the illusion of self-existence or substance, or lead us to believe it refers to some strange thing we are not familiar with rather than to the delusive phenomenon that manifests when we experience something as existing. The last point was

^a Cf. Pettit, John Whitney, 1999, pp. 110-111.

^b Cf. Pettit, John Whitney, 1999, p. 115.

^c *dNgos-po*.

^d *Don byed nus pa*.

^e *Rang-bzhin*.

acknowledged even by a follower and apologist of Tsongkhapa like Elizabeth Napper, who wrote:^a

(There is a serious) danger that, because Tsongkhapa chose to emphasize a verbal distinction between existence and inherent existence which cannot be realized in ordinary experience, people will miss the Madhyamika message altogether. They will not understand that Madhyamika is attacking and refuting *our very sense of existence*^b and, misled by the verbal emphasis on “inherent existence,”^c will see Madhyamika as refuting something merely intellectual, “out there,” not immediate. In spite of cautions from within the Gelugpa tradition that inherent existence should not be seen as like a hat to be put on the head and then taken off again, it is almost impossible to read Tsongkhapa without falling into such error, and Tsongkhapa has been criticized on this point even from within the Gelugpa tradition.¹⁹⁷

So, rather than distinguishing between existence and [the illusion of] true existence, or between mere existence and [the illusion of] inherent existence, I find it more appropriate to distinguish between *actuality* and what I have chosen to call *the delusive phenomenon of being* or *the delusive phenomenon of existence*. As we have seen, it is for the latter that the term “existence” stands for in the experience of human beings, for to experience something as *existing* means to experience it as having a self-nature—in the language of Tsongkhapa, as existing inherently, independently, truly and absolutely. Nevertheless, since Chandrakirti used the term “inherent existence,” and this term has become so relevant to the distinction between the views of the Swatantrikas and those of the Prasangikas, I have chosen to use it in the context of the contrast between the views of these two schools.¹⁹⁸

The reason why Tsongkhapa emphasized the distinction between what he asserted should be called “mere existence” and what he insisted should be designated the “illusion of true existence,” is that he feared practitioners of analysis with regard to absolute truth might “negate too much” and thus develop a nihilistic view. However, as Gendün Chöphel rightly noted:

Some people are afraid that if we deny the existence of pots and pillars, then we descend into a nihilistic view where nothing exists, but this is a meaningless anxiety. How can ordinary people produce the nihilistic thought that the pot they see in front of them does not exist at all?

Indeed, if such a thought did arise, because they know from direct experience that they see the pot and feel the pot, they would spontaneously begin to think, “Even though this pot appears before me, it doesn’t exist in any way as it appears.” And that thought [perfectly fits] the middle view between appearance and emptiness; it is the understanding that though things do appear, they do not exist as they appear. It would be absurd to call it a nihilistic view.

In general, whenever the thought “the pot doesn’t exist at all” occurs at the same time one actually sees a pot, the comprehension of the apparitional nature of phenomena will arise, so there is no danger of descending into nihilistic view.

When your mind says it is not

^a Napper, Elizabeth, 2003, p. 147, and p. 724 note 281.

^b Italics my own.

^c Inverted commas my own.

While your eyes clearly see it;
Even though you have not studied under the Yellow Hats
What else is this but mind realizing apparitional nature?

When you throw gold, rocks, and weeds all together in a fire without sorting them, the flammable things burn and the nonflammable ones are left. Likewise, if you analytically deny all appearances without sorting them, the world of apparitions will still remain. What need is there to sort out the apparition-like world of relativity from the start out of fear it would be harmed by logic?

The distinction between an entity's actuality and the delusive phenomenon elicited by the term "existence" (which as we have seen is what Tsongkhapa called "illusion of inherent existence") implies the distinction between the presence of the absence of the first—which is what Tsongkhapa called "mere nonexistence" (Tib., *mepa tsam*^a)—and the presence of the absence of the second—which is what he called "lack of true existence" (Tib., *denpar mepa*^b) or "lack of inherent existence" (*rangzhingyi mepa*^c), and which, as we saw in the discussion of the *vipashyana* method taught in Tsongkhapa's Lamrim works, is what in these works he considered to be voidness.

This distinction may be easily grasped in terms of an example: what Tsongkhapa called mere nonexistence is the nonexistence of a pot that, for example, broke into pieces, or was never made, etc. (which, in the case of the pot that broke into pieces, may be compared to a yak's missing horn); in turn, what he called lack of true existence or lack of inherent existence is the lack of the self-existence (Skt., *swabhava*; Tib., *rangzhin*^d) that, while the pot was still perceivable as a pot, deluded beings in *samsara* wrongly perceived it as having. Insofar as this type of existence is something that never was, it may be compared to a hare's horn—except for the fact that all beings in *samsara* wrongly perceive all entities as having this type of existence, but very few people, if any, see hares as having horns. As noted above, it is the presence of the absence of this precise type of existence that, in the practice of *vipashyana* taught in Tsongkhapa's Lamrim works, must appear at the term of this analysis to the mind applying the analysis. However, if this specific presence of an absence could actually appear as an object to the mind, the subtle thought in terms of which this emptiness would be recognized would be charged with illusory truth, value and importance, giving rise to another instance of delusion—which the Gelugpas should then refer to as the 'illusion of true nonexistence', but which, rather than so calling it, they equate with *swabhava* or self-existence (as we have seen, this is what they call *shunyata* or emptiness, and that they equate *shunyata* with *swabhava*)!

This distinction is relevant to the understanding of Buddhahood: in the Awake state, the configurations (or rather, the segments of the configuration of the totality of sense-data) that deluded beings experience as objects continue to be manifest, but they do not appear as object and the delusive phenomenon of *existence* does not manifest. And since in this state the delusive phenomenon consisting in perceiving the object as *existing* (in Tsongkhapa's terminology, as *existing inherently*) does not manifest, the presence of

^a *Med-pa tsam*.

^b *Den-par med-pa*.

^c *Rang-bzhin-gyis med-pa*.

^d *Rang-bzhin*.

the absence of this supposed *existence* cannot manifest. Therefore, Tsongkhapa is right in stating that absolute *prajña* wisdom does not negate.

To conclude, Chöphel objected that it was impossible to carry out the analysis in Tsongkhapa's terms, for it was only possible to do so if one had the capacity to distinguish between "mere existence" and what Chandrakirti called "inherent existence," but, as shown above, this capacity was lacking in those who had not yet attained the third bodhisattva path and who, therefore, had not realized the absence of what Chandrakirti called "inherent existence" and the fact that this absence does not involve that of "mere existence." Since those who apply analysis are initially ordinary beings that have not attained the third path, and in order to proceed to Buddhahood at some point they will have to attain the third path, Tsongkhapa's method would seem to block the Way to Buddhahood.¹⁹⁹ (However, in the *Bhavanakramas* and in Tsongkhapa's Lamrim works, as well as in the rest of the instructions, we are told exactly how to carry out the analysis, and if we follow these instructions and the analysis is fruitful, what will manifest at its term will be the phenomenon's emptiness as understood by Je Tsongkhapa—whether or not we enunciate it in Tsongkhapa's terms. Therefore, if the application of Tsongkhapa's method blocked the way to Buddhahood, it would not be for these reasons, but for leading practitioners to take a dualistic, conceptual perception of voidness for ultimate truth.²⁰⁰)

It is paradoxical that Tsongkhapa was such an ardent defender of Prasangika, and that he nonetheless posited a distinction that reproduces the Yogachara contrast between dependent nature (Skt., *paratantra*; Tib., *zhenwang*^a) and imaginary nature (Skt., *parikalpita*; Tib., *kuntag*^b)—which seems to respond to the Abhidharma's claim that that for there to be conceptual constructs (*prajñapti*), there will have to be a real substance (*dravya*), as no construct—except for unreal, ineffectual things such as sky-lotuses and so on—is made out of nothing. We should not overlook the fact that the meditation of the *Bhavanakramas*, which as we have seen pertain to the lower Swatantrika-Yogachara School, is an adaptation of the method introduced in the *Sandhinirmochanasutra* as interpreted in the *Yogacharabhumi*, which is one of the key roots of Yogachara (as different from the non-Yogachara works by Maitreya and Asanga). And that Je Tsongkhapa associated the Prasangika view with the method of the *Bhavanakramas*, producing the mixture of views that I have called Madhyamaka-Swatantrika-Prasangika.^c (CHECK CONSCIENTIOUSLY THIS LAST PARAGRAPH WHEN THERE IS TIME).

Independently of how we rate Tsongkhapa's system in this regard, it is a fact that his followers produced a quite flat and shallow ideology that, by emphasizing the need to respect conventionalities, could easily be made into a support of the *status quo*. As Guy Newland put it:^d

[I]t is clear that "Tsong-ka-pa's system," as institutionalized in the monastic textbooks (*yig cha*), supplies pat answers to many Ge-luk-bas and closes down their reading of Nagarjuna, Chandrakirti and even Tsong-ka-pa himself. At worst, the result is a defanged Madhyamika whose insistence upon the valid establishment (*tshad grub*) of conventional reality serves only to confirm the samsaric (and socio-political) status quo. Cutting against

^a *gZhan-dbang*.

^b *Kun-brtags*.

^c Capriles, 2005.

^d Newland, Guy, xxxx, p. 18, cited in Pettit, John W., 1999, pp. 145-146.

this tendency, Jang-gya, Den-dar-hla-ram-ba (b. 1759) and other Ge-luk-ba writers warn their fellows against taking “these concrete appearances as givens.” Inherent existence, they say, is not some horn-like or hat-like protuberance ready to be lopped off, leaving our world unscathed.

Delusion as the Root of Contradiction

Insofar as we give rise to the *delusive phenomenon of being*, which as we have seen is what the Gelugpas refer to that the illusion of true existence, we are trapped in contradiction. Contrariwise, Awake Ones do not experience contradiction even if they have to assert together the two terms that constitute one of our “pairs of opposites.” In the context of the discussion of the topic considered in the preceding subsection of this chapter, Gendün Chöphel wrote:^a

...A Middle Path between existence and nonexistence was described very clearly by [Shakyamuni] Buddha. For example, in the chapter “Protector of Light,” he says, “Protector of Light, Existence is one extreme. Nonexistence is another extreme. Between those two is the Middle Path, inexpressible and inconceivable.” In turn, in the *Maharatnakutasutra*^b, he says, “Existence and nonexistence contradict each other. Pure and impure also contradict each other. Because of contradiction, suffering cannot be calmed; when contradiction is no more, suffering comes to an end.”²⁰¹ Despite these clear statements, when scholars of our time hear talk about “Neither existence nor nonexistence,” they first inquire who is speaking. If they find out it is a scholar of Ancient, [Nyingma] Tibet who is being quoted, they insult him as being a nihilist idiot. If... the discussion is by the Buddha, [or by Nagarjuna and] the like, they patch up the words to make them agree with their own theories by saying “It doesn’t exist” means “It doesn’t exist truly” and “It isn’t nonexistent” means “It isn’t conventionally nonexistent.” However, in truth the difference [they so establish is due] solely [to the fact] that they’re afraid of getting a bad name for having evil views if they refute [Shakyamuni] Buddha, but [contrariwise] hope to be called champion scholars if they are able to refute the scholars of Ancient, [Nyingma] Tibet. [In fact, despite the well-known fact that] terms such as “nonexistent,” “not nonexistent,” “inexpressible,” and “beyond elaboration^c” appear just as frequently in the Sutras and books on logic as they do in the writings of Ancient, [Nyingma] Tibet, some refute the Tibetan scholars of the Ancient, [Nyingma] past who speak of “reality inexpressible and inconceivable” by calling them nihilistic idiots. Others, showing a little more respect, assert that, although the thoughts of those wise accomplished ones are not seriously mistaken, it is just that their explanations are not as precise as those by Tsongkhapa. If that were true, then they should say the same regarding Shakyamuni Buddha: “Although he wasn’t seriously mistaken, still [his explanations were not as precise as those by our great teacher Tsongkhapa.” In fact,

^a Gendün Chöphel (*dGe-'dun Chos-'phel*, 1905-1951), *dBu ma'i zab gdad snying por dril ba'i legs bshad kLu sgrub dgongs gyan*. Adapted from the translation of this work by Amdo scholar Pema Wangjie and US scholar Jean Mulligan, which is in progress as I write this book and probably will be published already by the time the reader has this book in her or his hands. Though Chöphel was a Gelugpa monk, he had come from a Nyingmapa family, and was versed on the objections the Nyingmapas made concerning the thought of Je Tsongkhapa.

^b The full name of the text is *Maharatnakutadharmaparyayashatasahasrikagranthasutra*; Tib., *dKon mchog brtsegs pa chen po'i chos kyi rnam grangs le'u stong phrag brgya pa'i mdo*. This name is usually translated into English as *Heap of Jewels Sutra*.

^c *sPros-bral*.

Shakyamuni Buddha never resorted to] the later embellishments of the Gelugpas, who say, “When we hold things to be truly established, that’s [only] on the surface; when we hold things to be not existing, that’s [only] on the surface.” Therefore, [on the basis of their premises they should come to the impious conclusion that] the Buddha also lacked precision in his *dharma* teaching!

So, if you’re going to refute [the way of speaking that was common to] the Tibetans of old and [Shakyamuni] Buddha, refute them both equally. If you accept it, then accept it equally [in both cases]. Please don’t perform all sorts of verbal tricks because you’re afraid that people will disapprove of you!

The contradiction Chöphel is referring to is the result of the delusory valuation-absolutization of thought and of the ensuing *delusive phenomenon of being*, basis of what Tsongkhapa called “illusion of true existence.” It is this that causes us, upon concluding that something exists, to feel that it does so truly and absolutely, and therefore to feel compelled to negate that it does not exist, and, upon concluding that something does not exist, to feel that this is the case truly and absolutely, and therefore to feel compelled to negate that it does exist; therefore, it is the root of contradiction, which may be explained as the deeply-rooted belief that if something is so it cannot be not-so, and if it is not-so it cannot be so. So long as the delusory valuation-absolutization of thought is active, we are trapped in contradiction, and as Shakyamuni noted, because of contradiction suffering cannot be calmed: only when contradiction has been completely and definitively surpassed suffering comes to an end. And this only takes place upon the full, irreversible attainment of Buddhahood, which alone involves the complete surpassing of the delusory valuation-absolutization of thought (which implies that thoughts can be used without taking them to be absolutely true or false) and therefore corresponds to the absolute attainment of the Middle Path, inexpressible and inconceivable, beyond existence and nonexistence and beyond the contradiction between these terms. In fact, only at this point the statement “it is so” does not cause us to feel it cannot be not-so, and that the statement “it is not so” does not cause us to feel it cannot be so.

It was from the standpoint of this realization and in order to help us proceed toward it that Nagarjuna negated the extremes constituted by existence and nonexistence. And it was in order to prevent clinging to the two main other alternatives that, violating the rules of logic, deluded mind could adopt, that Nagarjuna also negated the extremes constituted by both-existence-and-nonexistence, and neither-existence-nor-nonexistence. Hence the famous tetralemma according to which forms (1) do not exist, (2) do not not exist, (3) do not both exist and not exist, and (4) do not neither exist nor not exist.²⁰² (It seems relevant to note that the negation of these four extremes was also carried out in ancient Greece by Pyrrho of Elis, with regard to whose views Marcel Conche^a wrote that “The ‘radical source’ of our ‘unhappiness’ is our belief in being”—to which Patrick Carré added^b “Forced to choose [between being and nonbeing], Pyrrho replies: ‘No any more this than that, nor the two [of them], nor nothing [i.e., nor neither of them].’”)²⁰³

Gendün Chöphel rejected Tsongkhapa’s elevation of logic to the status of universal ruler of both *samsara* and *nirvana*, for logic no doubt binds all deluded human beings, but does not at all bind Buddhas, as these are beyond grasping at thoughts and at the logic that regulates the concatenation of thoughts. Furthermore, Buddhahood involves attaining the

^a Conche, 1973/1994, p. 96.

^b Carré, 2001, p. 26.

Sambhogakaya’s wisdoms of quality and quantity and the manifestation of these at the Nirmanakaya level (which in the Dzogchen Path is achieved when, as a result of the practices of Thögal^a and the Yangthik^b, the rölpa^c and tsel^d forms of manifestation of energy fuse^e). Since this dissolves the dimensional limits of what ordinary beings regard as a self-existing physical world and in general of what the Dzogchen teachings refer to as the tsel form of manifestation of energy—the violation of which deluded beings in *samsara* perceive as contradictions—ordinary people will conclude the individual has obtained a “capacity of miracles,” when in fact he or she has only adequated him or herself to the deeper and truer condition of reality. This was expressed by Gendün Chöphel in the following words:^f

If just saying that there is no difference in size between an atom and the world makes us nihilistic slanderers of the conventional world, then when Buddha goes so far as to apply such a nihilistic view by eliminating differences in size, why do we fail to count that as an enormous sin? When, after deciding that generally speaking there are differences in size, we say, “The Buddha’s doing that is an exception” and make all kinds of other exceptions, that is a clear sign that our logical thinking is riddled with leaking holes.

Properly understood, when the Buddha makes an atom and the world the same size, it is not because he has the incredible power to equalize things that are not equal. Is it not because the direct contradiction (Tib., ngögäl^g) we imagine between big and small in no way constricts the nondualistic innate wisdom of the Buddha? To the Buddha, big and small have the same taste, and because big and small do indeed taste the same, he has merely made what is, be. Where is there any magical display which changes what is not into what is?

We imagine that [the terms in] each pair [of opposites]—such as existence and nonexistence, right and wrong, big and small, good and bad—are mutually contradictory, and this imagination, which we call “valid cognizer,” conjures up the great illusion of an atom that cannot contain a world. It is we, not the Buddha, who are the real magicians.

Chandrakirti said, “Getting milk by milking the picture of a cow upsets people’s confirmed minds (Tib., denpar zhenpa^h; i.e., minds affected by delusion).” However, if all phenomena are established as validⁱ, then since the picture of a cow can have no intestines, no lungs, and no teats, [by milking the mere picture of a cow] Chandrakirti actually insulted dependent origination, but did he upset true reality?^j

^a *Thod-rgal*.

^b *Yang-thig*.

^c *Rol-pa*.

^d *rTsal*.

^e Cf. (1) Namkhai Norbu, Chögyäl, E. Capriles, Ed., unpublished, and (2) the forthcoming Part Two of my own *Buddhism and Dzogchen*.

^f Gendün Chöphel (*dGe-'dun Chos-'phel*, 1905-1951), *dBu ma'i zab gdad snying por dril ba'i legs bshad kLu sgrub dgongs gyan*. Adapted from the translation of this work by Amdo scholar Pema Wangjie and US scholar Jean Mulligan, which is in progress as I write this book and probably will be published already by the time the reader has this book in her or his hands. Though Chöphel was a Gelugpa monk, he had come from a Nyingmapa family, and was versed on the objections the Nyingmapas made concerning the thought of Je Tsongkhapa.

^g *dNgos-'gal*.

^h *bDen-par-zhen-pa*.

ⁱ *tShad-grub*.

^j In the *Mulmadhyamakavrttiprasannapada* (*dBu ma rtsa ba 'i 'grel pa tshig gsal ba*), which has been translated as *Clear Words, Commentary to [Nagarjuna's] 'Treatise on the Middle Way'*, Chandrakirti said

In Kadampa books, it is said that after Atisha performed numerous miracles such as fitting his perfect body into a small clay bowl, he said, “What I showed to you today, specious thinkers call contradictory. If they want to take it like that, let them [do so]. I could swear in front of all India and Tibet that this is the true nature of Dharma.”

To us, if something is not not existing, then it must be existing. If something is not existing, then it must be not existing. Existing and not existing are directly contradictory and there can be nothing that is not one of these two. Likewise, if something is small, it is not big. If something is big, it is not small. We scream that eliminating the difference between those two would destroy all the principles of dependent origination. If we say that viewing Essential Reality as free of the eight conceptual extremes / dualistic activities is a nihilistic view, that is because our minds can only see and recognize existence and nonexistence. But is the fact that something cannot appear in our minds proof that it is impossible and nonexistent?

Own-Mind

The above discussion is directly related to the vexed question of whether of not Madhyamika Prasangikas have theses or a system of their own. There are abundant source quotes from Nagarjuna, Aryadeva and Chandrakirti asserting that Madhyamikas have no theses or system of their own;²⁰⁴ one of the best known may be verse 29 of Nagarjuna’s *Vigrahavyavartanikarika*, which reads:²⁰⁵

If I had any thesis
then I would have that fault.
Since I have no thesis,
I am utterly faultless.

Does this mean that Nagarjuna never asserted anything? Not only implicitly, but also explicitly, he said that there was Awakening, that the bodhisattvas proceeded along a Path, and so on. Furthermore, his statement in the above stanza that he had no thesis was itself an assertion. Tsongkhapa’s interpretation of the above stanza and other similar source quotes was that in them the scope of the negation is to be understood as being limited²⁰⁶ (in order to substantiate this view he cited some assertions by Nagarjuna and Chandrakirti).²⁰⁷ However, the truth is that Nagarjuna asserted he had no thesis because he was a fully Awake individual and therefore no matter what he asserted, he did not have “own mind:” having no delusory valuation of thought, he did not adhere to the idea that he made no assertions, that there was Awakening, that the bodhisattvas proceeded along a Path, and so on—even though he may have asserted such things in order to lead beings along the Path. And, if this is so, the same must have been the case with the assertions he was forced to make upon facing different life situations; for example, upon being asked what were his family’s caste and his place of birth, most likely he would have replied he was born a Brahmin in Berar. However, being free from the delusory valuation-absolutization of thought, he would not have experienced this as being absolutely so—and if someone spoke evil of Brahmins from Berar he would not have felt “touched in the heart” by the words spoken by that person and would not have felt to the least offended.²⁰⁸

that he produced milk from the picture of a cow in the monastery where he taught in order to shatter the monks’ belief in true existence.

Elizabeth Napper wrote:^a

“Even if one, trying to be free from assertions, says that all presentations are only from others’ point of view, this too is illogical, for even saying that much is an assertion, and thus one is not free from assertions.”

Since Nagarjuna was not a mindless individual who went around contradicting himself, he could not have understood the phrase “being free from assertions” in the sense that one should refrain from making statements such as “If I had any thesis then I would have that fault; since I have no thesis, I am utterly faultless”—for, had he harbored the belief that one should not utter words that may be understood as assertions, he would not have written this stanza. The only plausible interpretation of the stanza is that Madhyamika philosophy and practice should eradicate the tendency to posit theses “from the heart,” and therefore that being a true Madhyamika necessarily implies having the realization that would allow one, upon making assertions, not to take them to be absolutely true or false, as do deluded beings. Tsongkhapa should have understood this to be so, insofar as he was following Chandrakirti, who, as we have seen, said that followers of Madhyamaka should not have “own mind” (i.e., should not cling to opinions of their own, which they take to be absolute truths). Unrealized Madhyamikas cannot do away with what Chandrakirti called “own mind,” for only fully Awake Buddhas hold no theses “from the heart” (i.e., posit no “interior-directed” theses); therefore, Tsongkhapa should have understood Nagarjuna was saying that the aim of this school was to lead beings to Awakening.

Though Buddhas hold no theses “from the heart,” again and again they make what has been called “other-directed” or “exterior-directed” assertions. As we have seen, these assertions are those an individual makes without believing them to be true—such as, for example, those an ordinary being makes upon lying. However, when ordinary beings speak, whether they “lie” or “say the truth,” their assertions will be totally incorrect, because they are deluded, and whatever is thought or said under delusion is incorrect. In fact, since they are under the power of the *delusive phenomenon of being*, ordinary beings wrongly take their “interior-directed” assertions to be absolutely true, and wrongly take their lies to be totally untrue; therefore, if they lie while being connected to a polygraph, the machine will detect a lie. Contrariwise, in the case of the “other-directed” or “exterior-directed” assertions made by Buddhas, as we will see upon reviewing Mahamadhyamaka, the conceptual positions they adopt will be *totally correct*, for being utterly undeceived and hence free from the power of conventional truth (which, as will be shown below, is “deluded truth”), Buddhas do not experience their own assertions as being either true or false; therefore, no matter whether they assert one thing of its very opposite, the polygraph will not register a lie. In fact, their assertions are part of the spontaneous activities whereby the Awake Ones lead beings to Awakening, and as such (are) totally beyond action, beyond intention, beyond self-consciousness and beyond judging in terms of right or wrong. As Jigme Lingpa remarked, Buddhas perceive no beings that must be helped, and therefore cannot harbor the intention to help beings; furthermore, being free from the delusory valuation of the directional threefold thought structure (which in this

^a Napper, Elizabeth, 2003, p. 118. In this regard, as throughout her book, Napper is following Tsongkhapa (cf. Wayman, Alex, 1978, Indian ed. 1979, pp. 288 and 296, where, according to Napper, the citation is mistranslated).

case is the concept that there is action, a doer of action and something that is acted on), they are beyond activity—and yet sentient beings, if they are devout Buddhists and are able to recognize the Buddhas as such, see the latter as carrying out numberless activities in their behalf. This is why the terms “other-directed” or “exterior-directed” are not really appropriate for categorizing the actionless activities of the Buddhas: these see no others and no exterior, and therefore, although for lack of a better term we have to call their assertions “other-directed” or “exterior-directed,” in truth these belong to a category that is totally different from that of the “exterior-directed” or “other-directed” assertions made by sentient beings.

In turn, superior bodhisattvas (which as we have seen are those in the third and fourth bodhisattva paths, or, what is the same, those ranging between the first and tenth levels [Skt., *bhumi*; Tib., *sa*]) hold no theses “from the heart” while they are in the Contemplation state, but they do so again in the post-Contemplation state, as the delusory valuation-absolutization of thought is reactivated. However, as they advance on the Path delusion is progressively neutralized, and so the strength of this delusory activity is gradually mitigated—which means that the strength of the delusive appearances that manifest in post-Contemplation diminishes. Furthermore, since in the Contemplation state they have experientially realized, in a most clear way, that the illusions resulting from the delusory valuation of thought are mere illusions, in the post-Contemplation state they maintain some awareness of this fact. Therefore, in this state they posit theses that are principally “other-directed” or “exterior-directed,” but that to a great extent are also “interior-directed” (and, in fact, in order to continue on the Path they still need to believe that there is a final Buddhahood and a means to proceed toward it, as well as a series of *dharma* truths to be admitted); therefore, the conceptual positions they adopt are *to a great extent correct*.

Finally, bodhisattvas who have not yet reached the third bodhisattva path (or, what is the same, the first level) posit from the heart “self-directed” or “interior-directed” theses in order to lead both themselves and others to Awakening. Therefore there can be no doubt that the point is not whether or not a Madhyamika may be said to posit or not to posit theses, but whether the theses he or she posits (fewer in the case of Prasangikas than in those of adherents of other philosophical schools) are other-directed / exterior-directed, self-directed / interior-directed, or both self-directed / interior-directed and other-directed / exterior-directed—which, as we have just seen, in turn depends on the status of the individual who is positing such theses.²⁰⁹ This is proven by the following words in the *Sutra of Hui-neng*:^a

Whenever an individual puts a question to you, answer him or her in antonyms, so that a “pair of opposited” will be formed, such as “coming” and “going.” When the interdependence of the two is entirely done away with there would be, in the absolute sense, neither “coming” nor “going.”

Does the above mean that replying to someone in antonyms will cause that person to become unable to move at all, and therefore he or she will not be able to either come or go? Except in the case of beings under hypnosis, words do not result in paralysis, and at any rate the activities of Buddhas do not have the function of inducing paralysis. So when

^a Wong Mou-Lam, translator, 1969, p. 99.

the Sutra says that there will be neither coming nor going what it is saying is the same Nagarjuna meant when he said he made no assertions: though there will still be what deluded beings perceive as going and coming and what they perceive as making assertions, and the Awake individual will be able to *speak of* going and coming or of making assertions, he or she will not perceive going or coming, or the making of assertions—and if he or she speaks about such things it will be solely in an other-directed way, without giving rise to own-mind.

Likewise, when Ashvagosha stated that we must use words [and concepts] in order to go beyond words [and concepts], he certainly did not mean that the purpose of teaching the dharma was to become mute and unable to think, but that listening, studying and then reflecting on what we had listened and studied were the first two of the three necessary steps on the development of the *Prajñāparamita* that is the essence of the Path leading to the eradication of the delusory valuation of thought and therefore of “own mind” and of the making of interior-directed assertions. In this sense, it may be said that insofar as full Awakening is beyond the delusory valuation of conceptuality, all theses posited by realized Masters of the Mahayana and higher vehicles necessarily have been instances of “using words [and concepts] in order to go beyond words [and concepts].”²¹⁰

In order to lead beings beyond adherence to the theses that, under the power of the delusory valuation-absolutization of thought they had always clung to, the original Madhyamikas, and later on the Madhyamika Prasangikas, rather than producing complex theories about reality, set up to refute systematically the most widely accepted theses of common sense, those of non-Buddhist schools, and those of Buddhist schools other than Madhyamaka. As we saw upon considering Hui-neng’s method of interrelated opposites, to the same purpose one can systematically assert theses that are contrary to those held by one’s interlocutor, and if necessary prove them not to be any less true than the latter. However, to the same end it is also possible to lay out a complex interpretation of reality and its functionality, as have done the Mahamadhyamaka School of the Mahayana and the Dzogchen teachings, among other systems. And yet all realized Mahamadhyamika and Dzogchen Masters may rightly say they do not posit theses of their own, insofar as they do not do so with own-mind—or, what is the same, they do not do so in an interior-directed or self-directed way. Hence it would be utterly wrong to think that only the Prasangikas or Consequentialists may be said not to make statements from the heart (or, what is the same, not to make interior-directed assertions), and that the reason why this is so is because they abstain from positing autonomous theses and from using autonomous syllogisms. In fact, also Awake Ones who posit autonomous theses and use autonomous syllogisms may be said not to make statements from the heart (or, what is the same, not to make interior-directed assertions), so long as they do so utterly beyond grasping at thoughts and words.

Therefore, it would be stupid to be concerned with whether of not Prasangikas have ever asserted anything. However, Tsongkhapa’s Lamrim works and the followers of these works seem to have willingly ignored all that has been explained in this sub-section, for as Gendün Chöphel tells us:^a

^a Gendün Chöphel, *dDu ma'i zab gdad snying por dril ba'i legs bshad kLu sgrub dgongs gyān*, as translated by Amdo scholar Pema Wangjié [*Pad-ma dbang-rgyal*] and US scholar Jean Mulligan.

The culmination of Tsongkhapa's theory is to disparage the term “assertion [from one's] own [heart],” and then take “interior-directed assertion (Tib., ranggyü du khelenpa^a) and “independent assertion (Tib., rangwang du khelenpa^b)” to be identical in meaning. This culminates in saying that [in the terms “self-directed” and “other-directed,” the words] “self” and “other” are not said with regard to persons, but rather to the way of being of [mere] objects.

It should be clear by now that “interior-directed assertion” is the same as “assertion from one's own heart:” an assertion made in the belief that their content is true and that the opposite content is false (which is said to be directed to oneself insofar as one is to take it as true and believe it). Tsongkhapa's incapacity to admit the fact that practice of the higher Buddhist systems should allow one to make only assertions that are other-directed (i.e., assertions that are not made from the heart and that therefore are not interior directed insofar as one is not supposed to believe them) gave rise to a most scandalous view, for it implicitly denied the possibility of Buddhahood—insofar as Buddhahood implies being utterly free from the delusory valuation of thought, and therefore implies solely making assertions the content of which is not taken as being either true or false.

At any rate, since Tsongkhapa disparaged the term “assertion from one's own heart,” and took “interior-directed assertion” and “independent assertion” to be identical in meaning, the term “other” in “other-directed assertion” (a synonym of “externally-directed assertion”) could not be understood to refer to an assertion made for convincing others of something that one oneself does not believe, but would have to be understood as referring to *any kind of assertion (whether or not one believes in it) concerning what is not a self* (i.e., to what it not a human individual) *and in particular what, not being a self, is **not** regarded as being part of one's own self either*. Thus an example of “other-directed assertion” would be “the house is beautiful” or “the dog is brown.”

Since Tsongkhapa also understood the term “self” in “self-directed assertion” as referring to a mere object, rather than to a self in the sense of a human individual, I tend to assume that it refers to those mere objects (i.e., those entities that are not human individuals) that are regarded as being part of one's self—such as, for example, one's arm, one's nails, and so on. Thus the term would not necessarily refer to assertions that oneself believes to be true, and therefore it is easy to see that this interpretation subverted the very essence of the Prasangika view as explained throughout this section.

(All that was explained in this section may help one understand, according to a practitioner's degree of advancement on the Path [i.e., whether he or she is in the first or second paths, in the third or fourth paths, or in the fifth path and thus has gone beyond practice], the Tantric precept obliging one to “lie.” In fact, in order to advance on the Path, beginner bodhisattvas have to tell themselves and others what they take as being the truths of the *dharma*; therefore, what they tell cannot be said to be “lies”... Higher bodhisattvas in the state of post-Contemplation have to “lie” to both themselves and others insofar as they are aware that the teachings of the *dharma* they have to posit are not really true, and that there is no self to be liberated in either themselves or others... Finally, Buddhas, insofar as they do not grasp at whatever they say, are beyond both lying and saying the truth.)

^a *Rang-rgyud du khes-len-pa.*

^b *Rang-dbang du khes-len-pa.*

Confirmed Mind Vs Valid Relative Truth?

According to a current Gelugpa interpretation of Prasangika philosophy, relative, conventional cognitions (in Buddhist language, minds) fulfilling all requisites of validity set by the epistemology and logic of the Prasangikas, need not be refuted. Conversely, in some of those occasions in which we think “I” with intense emotional involvement, the mind that so thinks, which they call a “confirmed mind,” should be refuted. As will be shown below, both what the Gelugpa consider to be valid conventional cognitions and what they deem to be “confirmed minds” are sustained by what I have been calling the delusory valuation-absolutization of thought, the principal difference between them being the force with which the vibratory function that seems to emanate from, or be concentrated in, the center of the chest at the level of the heart, *charges* thoughts with the illusion of *value* and *truth*. Since Gelugpa doctrine is based on the assumption that logical refutation is the Royal Mahayana way for overcoming delusion and *samsara*, as well as a cornerstone of the Buddhist Path in general (an assumption that is not shared by either the Nyingmapas or the Kagyüpas, even though some specific practices of these two schools involve analysis), the Gelugpa tenet according to which valid relative cognitions should not be refuted—which, according to the monk-scholar Gendün Chöphel was conceived out of the fear of emptiness typical of shravakas²¹¹—implies that most manifestations of delusion and *samsara* are *not to be overcome*, and thus that *samsara* should be allowed to go ahead unrestrainedly. Gendün Chöphel writes:^a

...once we actually pursue analysis in terms of [what is and what is not] absolutely true (Tib., *döndampai chepa*^b), we must admit that everything we hold to be true is fabricated by our minds out of thin air. With this realization [there may] come a great terror, which is actually a fear of the dawning view of emptiness. [Some claim that] when we are not engaged in analysis [aiming at determining what is and what is not] absolutely true, we should let be all our thoughts concerning the relative world—existence and nonexistence, true and false, pure and impure, good and bad, Buddha and sentient beings, heaven and hell—and take for granted that they are free of error and irrefutable, and that anything that contradicts them is a nihilistic view. [However, this is] but the dry chattering of [those] scholars [who posit the baseless distinction according to which] there is [a delusive] reality [that they call “confirmed,” which is supposedly different from the reality that manifests in most of our everyday conventional experience, and that, insofar as we are utterly wrong in taking it to be] true, must be refuted.

To such scholars, the mind that in its everyday stream of consciousness has the thought “I” is not a “confirmed mind,” [but part of valid conventional reality, and] so it need not be refuted. They distinguish something called “innate grasping at the [illusion of] selfhood (Tib., *ngardzin lhenkyai*^c),” an example of which is [supposed to be] the thought that asserts “I’m not a thief!” when somebody accuses us of being thieves. It is this strong [appearance of there being an] “I” that they call “innate grasping at the [illusion of] selfhood.”

^a This is my own modified version of the translation of Chöphel’s *dDu ma’i zab gdad snying por dril ba’i legs bshad kLu sgrub dgongs gyan* carried out by Amdo scholar Pema Wangjié [*Pad-ma dbang-rgyal*] and US scholar Jean Mulligan.

^b *Don-dam-pa’i dpyad-pa*.

^c *Ngar-’dzin lhan-skyes*.

[However,] if the everyday mind which thinks “I” is a valid cognizer, then the mind that thinks “I” in response to the words “You’re a thief” is just *a valid cognizer with more energy*; by no means has it become a confirmed mind [*qua* something different from valid cognizers, and which, unlike the latter, need be refuted]. If that were a confirmed mind [*qua* an entity different from the valid cognizer of general conventional truth], then wouldn’t it also be a confirmed mind when somebody, [upon being] told that the Buddha is not a Refuge, has the thought, “He surely is a Refuge!”? Likewise, if upon hearing the statement “That is not a pot,” someone’s immediate reaction were “What is it but a pot?,” this would be a confirmed mind towards the pot, and certainly not a valid cognizer. So the theory of these scholars is truly amazing! *They consider that a low-energy thought is a valid cognizer, but when such an unstable thought changes into a high-energy thought, they see it as a confirmed mind [that as such constitutes a delusion to be eradicated].*

It is commonly believed that it is crucial to identify that which must be negated in order to carry a view to full realization, but Tsongkhapa himself said, “Until somebody has realized emptiness, he is unable to distinguish between mere existence and true existence. Nor can he distinguish between mere nonexistence and lack of true existence.” He went on to say that this is the fundamental cause for the difference in view between the Prasangika and the Swatantrika. As long as we have not realized the view, how can we identify tenable truth (Tib., *dendrub*^a) as something apart (from untenable truth)? How can we have any confidence in those who falsely claim to be able to recognize that which must be negated?

As seen in the subsection “[Mere] Existence as Different From True Existence?”, the distinctions between mere existence and true existence, or between mere nonexistence and “lack of true / inherent existence,” cannot be applied to the experience of ordinary sentient beings, for so long as we are in *samsara*, whenever we perceive something as *existing* or as *being* (or think of something as *existing* or as *being*, etc.), the delusory valuation-absolutization of thought gives rise to the delusive phenomenon of being, which is at the root of what the Gelugpas would refer to as the “illusion of true existence.” Only those who have reached the condition of a superior bodhisattva and therefore in their Contemplation state are beyond delusion, can in their post-Contemplation state recognize the delusive phenomenon of being as such, and thus discriminate between *actuality* and the *delusive phenomenon of existence* (which are what Tsongkhapa called, respectively, “mere existence” and “illusion of true existence” or of “inherent existence”). Chöphel goes on to say:

Some say that when the valid cognition “there is a pot” arises, there is a simultaneous confirmed belief that “the pot is tenable truth,” but that it is very hard to see these as two distinct thoughts.

But how amazing that “valid cognition,” the fundamental cause of Awakening, and “confirmed mind,” the root of all evil, look so much alike that you cannot tell them apart! If one never comes without the other, and you cannot object to one without objecting to the other, how is it possible to distinguish between them?

If the thought “It’s dawn,” is a valid cognition, and the thought “I’m getting dressed” is a valid cognition, and so too are the thoughts “I’m drinking tea” and “I’m eating cereal,” then there will be no need to object to a single one of our daily thoughts. So, when do the objectionable “confirmed beliefs” arise? It would be really amazing if, after having

^a *bDen-grub*.

made a habit of confirmed belief from time immemorial, now it came up only once or twice a day!

The above does not mean that there are no grounds for distinguishing between what the Gelugpas regard as a “valid conventional cognition” and what they call a “confirmed mind;” as Chöphel has shown, what it means is that rather than referring to two different things, these terms respond to different degrees in the energy charging thoughts—which in this book have in turn been explained as resulting from different degrees of intensity in the delusory valuation-absolutization of thought.²¹²

Furthermore, the distinction being discussed here is relevant to Buddhist practice, for at the outset of the practice the arising of the minds that these Gelugpa scholars call “confirmed” may be particularly useful, not only in practices involving analysis, but even more so in Dzogchen practice: in such occasions conventional truth is sustained by greater energy and becomes quite unpleasant, and to the extent that this may make delusion more evident, it can make it much easier to recognize it as delusion—which is the condition for practitioners to be able to apply the instructions that, according to the type of practice they are doing, they are supposed to apply in order to get rid of delusion. This was beyond all doubts the use the “Great Fifth” Dalai Lama—a great tertön and consummate Dzogchen practitioner—gave this distinction in the *Prajñāparamita* chapter of his *Changchub Lamgyi Rimpai Triyig Jampai Changkyi Zhalung*,^a and as such it is a most useful distinction. I believe that it was based on this valid and useful difference that some scholars developed the unacceptable distinction into two radically different types of cognition that Chöphel rejected.

The fact that what these Gelugpas call “valid conventional truth,” just like so-called “confirmed minds,” involves delusion, is proven by the exhortation made by Madhyamaka and by some higher vehicles as well, that we must surpass relative and conventional truth by attaining Buddhahood and thus becoming established definitively in the state of absolute truth: if delusion is the sole root of *samsara*, and relative and conventional truth must be uprooted for *samsara* to be surpassed, this is beyond doubt because they are instances of delusion. Chöphel provides us with an irrefutable proof of this by reminding us that the Sanskrit term for “conventional truth” refers to delusion, for its original meaning is that of ‘obscurator to correctness’ or ‘thoroughly confused’. He writes:^b

‘Conventional’ is the word ancient scholars used for translating the Sanskrit *samvriti*, which means ‘obscurator to correctness’ or ‘thoroughly confused’. Because one is ‘deluded about the meaning’, we must also understand ‘conventional truth’ as ‘deluded truth’.

The above refers to the basic difference between the terms “valid” and “correct.” When the perception of conventional truth fulfills the requisites for validity (‘collectively perceived’ and so on) it may be said to be valid; however, this does not mean that it is correct. For the Prasangikas to say that conventional truth is correct, they must be

^a *Byang chub lam gyi rim pa's 'khrid yig 'jam pa'i dbyangs kyi zhal lung* (Thimpu, Bhutan, 1976: Kun bzang stobs rgyal). The chapter on the *Prajñāparamita* was translated in Fifth Dalai Lama, English 1974, trans. Jeffrey Hopkins.

^b Gedün Chöphel, *op. cit.*

referring to its perception by a superior bodhisattva (i.e., a bodhisattva in the third or fourth path, or, what is the same, between the first and tenth bodhisattva level) in his or her post-Contemplation state (Tib., jethob^a; Skt., *prishthalabdha*): it is then called “correct” insofar as the direct realization of ultimate truth in the Contemplation state (Tib., nyamzhak^b; Skt., *samahita*) has given rise to the certainty, in the individual’s post-Contemplation state, that conventional truth lacks existence (i.e., that it lacks what Tsongkhapa called true existence or inherent existence)—and hence has given rise to awareness that his or her cognition of conventional truth as existent (i.e., as what Tsongkhapa called “truly existent”) involves delusion. However, also in this case there is delusion insofar as relative truth is perceived as existent: this is why, as we have seen, relative truth can never be totally correct. Only absolute truth is utterly correct, for it involves no delusion whatsoever; as noted above, fully Awake Buddhas perceive no beings to be helped, and no matter what they say, they have no own mind. Chöphel goes on:

[If we let be] the existence of [most conventional entities], then how can emotional and intellectual obscurations (Skt., *kleshavarana*, *jñeyavarana*; Tib., nyöndrib^c, shedrib^d) be eradicated through cultivation of the five paths? Therefore, [it would seem that] according to this system, [“confirmed”] desire and attachment are things to be abandoned, but desire and attachment are not. [“Confirmed”] confusion is to be surpassed, but confusion is not. It seems we must distinguish many logical fine points like this (and since such distinctions are clearly absurd, the distinction being discussed has been refuted by *reductio ad absurdum* [Skt., *prasanga*]).

If we summarize what it means to combine as one the different principles of what the mind sees and what it does not see, it is a failure to understand even the term ‘conventional truth’ [as referring to a truth]. Therefore, it is said, ‘Because one is obscured by delusion [and hence what one experiences is not true], it is [called] conventional’. In fact, the Buddha said, ‘Any fabrication that appears to be true is conventional truth; any fabricated (Pali, *sankhata*; Skt., *samskrita*; Tib., düje^e) entity is conventional’. Do we need any other authority than these words, ‘because it is obscured by delusion’, ‘fabrication of that’, and ‘the Buddha said all that is fabricated is conventional truth’?

Dharmakirti’s teacher, Acharya Dignaga (480-540 CE), considered by Tibetans as the founder of the *pramana* (“valid cognition”) tradition, in his *Pramanasamuccaya*^f refuted the artificial distinction between “valid cognition” and “confirmed mind.” Chöphel quotes this refutation, which may cause one to suspect that not only Dharmakirti, but also his teacher, Dignaga, should be considered to have been a Madhyamika (at any rate, his understanding seems to be clearly superior to the views of the scholars being refuted here):

Objects of knowledge arranged by dualistic mind;
Valid cognizer depending on “true” and “false”:
I see how one falsity is derived from the other,

^a *rJes-thob*.

^b *mNyam-bzhag*.

^c *Nyon-sgrib*.

^d *Shes-sgrib*.

^e *Dus-byas*.

^f *tSad ma kun las btus pa*.

And am worried at adherence to conventional truth.

The principles of the world, unexamined and unanalyzed;
Philosophic theories, examined and analyzed:
I look at these two, one taking the other as its base,
And am worried at adherence to conventional truth.

Illusions that are but appearances in the mind;
Absolute nature [beyond mind] as it truly (is):
I see that if one is true, the other must be false,
And am worried at adherence to conventional truth.

The challenger tries to hide his mountain of flaws;
The defender seeks out needle-thin flaws:
As I watch these two taking turns at defeating each other,
I am worried at adherence to conventional truth.

(Seeing) that appearances are substance-free destroys the view of reality as true;
(Seeing) that voidness is substance-free puts an end to nihilistic views.
I see that the principle of the one destroys that of the other
And am worried at adherence to conventional truth.

Confirmed mind, which attaches itself to friendliness;
Valid cognizer, which understands the benefit of friends:
Since both alike generate attachment,
I am worried at adherence to conventional truth.

Confirmed mind, which sees the enemy as real;
Valid cognizer, which determines that enemies do harm:
I see that both alike generate hatred,
And am worried at adherence to conventional truth.

Inferential logic (Tib., *jepak tsema*^a) is born from the directly experiencing mind;
Direct experience of true and false is judged by inferential logic:
When the son is made a witness for the father,
I am worried at adherence to conventional truth.

We derive our logic by following the traditions of the founding Masters;
It is logic that [decides who are] the founding Masters:
If you can decide for yourself, you do not need to follow others;
If you cannot decide for yourself, you will not know whom to follow.

We draw our correct reasoning from the scriptures having definitive meaning,
But need faultless reasoning to tell us which scriptures are definitive:
If you already understand through logic, why look for [scriptures of] definitive meaning?
If you don't so understand, how can you tell what [scriptures have] a definitive
meaning?²¹³

When Maitreya appeared, Asanga saw only a dog;

^a *rJes-dpag tshad-ma*.

So we know the unexamined first thought (Tib., matak lhenkyai lo^a) cannot be trusted.
When so many views of the Madhyamikas and Yogacharas contradict each other,
We cannot trust the scholars with their analytical prowess.

When common people chase after truth
They get innate confirmed mind, root of corruption.
When scholars chase after truth,
They get an even worse [result]: confirmed belief in the constructs of the mind.

‘It exists’; ‘It does not’; ‘It is so’; ‘It is not [so]’; ‘It is true’; ‘It is false’:
Clamoring fills our world.

It seems that what we constantly perceive we call ‘knowledge’
And the habits we persevere in we call ‘valid cognition’.

It seems that truth is decided by the feelings of the majority:
When enough people agree, you have a sect.
In each person there is a different judge
And for each a diamond doctrine to back it up.

In each mountain valley there’s a different teaching followed by 1000 wise men and fools:
‘This is the truth’, each says, ‘infallible because of so and so’.
We present ourselves with our personal truth
And our crowd of kindred thinkers yells hurrah, while those unlike us do not even listen.

Here in our dimension with six realms (of gods, humans and so on),
When ten beings agree, hundred others disagree:
What humans see, the gods do not—
So who regulates what is true and what is false?

After devoting a lifetime to the pursuit of wisdom
Even a master of philosophy can be mistaken.
The world is [like] whatever appears to a fool;
To believe in it is a mistake.

Our minds decide what is necessary and good
And we call this ‘valid cognizer’.
An empty plain, its phantom cities destroyed,
Through our deluded eyes turns into a heap of gems.

Every little change in [the] face [reflected] and each small alteration
In the surface of the mirror cause reflections to change:
All that we know, which like [the reflections] is
Unstable and changing, will doubtless come to an end one day.

Analysis makes us suspect it is not there;
The touch of our hand tells us it is [there]:
Perceiving something directly, we think we must be right,
But perceptions can mislead, so we could be wrong.

^a *Ma-brtags lhan-skyes blo.*

When we find the root of existence, we suspect it does not exist;
When we see the pinnacle of nonexistence, we think it might exist.
Though we plant a seed of truth, we see the result as false;
Tasting the fruit of falsity, we believe it to be true.

Confirmed minds, insofar as they are sustained by intense emotional involvement, are manifestations of the coarse passional delusion called *kleshavarana* or *nyöndrib*; in turn, “valid conventional cognitions” are also manifestations of delusion and *samsara*, but in them delusion *may* manifest solely as the subtle cognitive delusion called *jñeyavarana* or *shedrib*. By trying to do away with the former and letting the latter be, the doctrine refuted by Dignaga and Chöphel is indirectly and unknowingly implying that in the Mahayana one should not go beyond the seventh level (Skt., *bhumi*; Tib., *sa*), for it is at this level that the *kleshavarana* or *nyöndrib* are exhausted and delusion manifests exclusively as *jñeyavarana* or *shedrib* (which as we have seen this system implies must not be transcended).

However, if one applies the practice only upon the manifestation of what has been called “confirmed minds,” one will never reach even the seventh level, for one will be applying the practice only occasionally, and such occasional practice will have no power to neutralize delusion and the ensuing *samsara*. Furthermore, many of the cognitions that are regarded as valid conventional truth also involve the coarse passional delusion called *kleshavarana* or *nyöndrib*, and so one will be allowing these delusions to freely manifest.

Where did the confusion at the root of the above wrong views arise from? Since these views were refuted by Dignaga (480-540 CE), a contemporary of Buddhapalita (470-540 CE), the confusion is certainly of old date. Tsongkhapa must have been already under the influence of those views by the time he developed his interpretation of Chandrakirti’s commentary on Aryadeva’s *Chatuhishatakastrakarika*. XVI.23cd reads “conceptuality sees [and] one is bound; it is to be stopped here,” and Chandrakirti glossed “conceptuality” as “that which superimposes a meaning of inherent existence which is not correct.” The founder of the Gelugpa School interpreted this as meaning that there were two types of conceptuality, one that superimposed such a meaning and one that did not—which is totally wrong, for *all* delusorily valued-absolutized conceptuality superimposes what Chandrakirti called “a meaning of inherent existence which is not correct,” and therefore in order to attain Awakening *all* delusorily valued-absolutized conceptuality must be surpassed.

Though I could still discuss the concept of “dependent on the imputations” and so on, I have decided to conclude at this point the discussion of the views Tsongkhapa laid out in his Lamrim works and their assimilation by later Gelugpas.²¹⁴

The Above Refutations and the Madhyamaka Schools Reviewed So Far

The refutation of some of the views Je Tsongkhapa expressed in his Lamrim works carried out in the section that concludes here is comparable to the refutation of some of the views Asanga expressed in his Yogachara works achieved in the chapter on the Yogachara School: in both cases the refutations are directed exclusively to the works in which the Masters chose to express lower views in order to lead beings of lower capacities on the Path, and do not imply in any sense or to any degree belittling these

great teachers, whose Mahamadhyamika works are universally recognized to be supreme expressions of Awakening.

To conclude, I must remind the reader that the Madhyamaka-Prasangika and the various types of Madhyamaka-Swatantrika that have been considered so far in this chapter are subschools within the “Swabhava Shunyata Madhyamaka” (Tib., Uma Rangtongpa^a) or “Madhyamaka of the Emptiness of Self-Existence,” which is also called “coarse, outer Madhyamaka” (Tib., Ch’i Ragpai Uma^b) and which understands voidness exclusively in the sense of “voidness of self-existence” or “intrinsic voidness” (Skt., *swabhava shunyata*; Tib., rangzhinggyi tongpanyi^c). This interpretation, which stresses the nonexistence (or, in Tsongkhapa’s terminology, non-inherent-existence) of relative entities, is based on the *Prajñāparamita Sūtras*, belonging to the Second Promulgation or *dharmachakra*.

Subtle, Inner Madhyamaka (Tib., Nang trawai uma^d)
(1) Uma^e (Madhyamaka) Zhentongpa^f

The great Jonangpa^g Master Dölpopa Sherab Gyaltzen^h and other Masters adhering to the Mādhyamaka School and having as their canonical sources both the Third and the Second Promulgation, consistently interpreted voidness in the sense of the Tibetan term zhengyi ngöpo tongpanyiⁱ, which is that of “absence of substances extraneous (to the single true nature of reality):” in this sense, voidness is the *absence of anything other than absolute truth*—the absolute truth being defined either as the *dharmakāya*, as the inseparability of clarity/appearances and emptiness, or as the indivisibility of rigpa (nondual awareness as it manifests in nonstatic *nirvana*²¹⁵) and the *dharmadhātu* (the primordially void, unborn expanse wherein all manifestation occurs).

In the discussion of the distinction between provisional meaning and definitive meaning, I classified the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra* as a text having provisional meaning with regard to some other Third Promulgation Sūtras. This is due to the fact that the canonical source in question contains many passages in which the ultimate truth is reduced to a mere absence, being asserted to be a nonimplicative negation; that the practice of *vipaśyanā* or insight it teaches consists in intellectually analyzing an entity in order to assess its mode of existence, so that the absence with which this canonical source identifies the ultimate will become present to the mind making the analysis, and this will be identified as the ultimate truth (*qua* Path, I would add); etc. These assertions and methods, which contradict the higher view expressed in various other Third Promulgation Sūtras and the methods taught

^a *dbU-ma rang-stong-pa*.

^b *Phyi rags-pa’i dbu-ma*.

^c *rang bzhing gyis stong pa nyid*.

^d *Nang phra-ba’i dbu-ma*.

^e *dBu-ma*.

^f *gZhan-stong-pa*.

^g *Jo-nang-pa*.

^h *dol po pa shes rab rgyal mtshan*, 1292–1361.

ⁱ *gzhan gyi dngos po stong pa nyid*.

in the latter, seem to be intended as a means to introduce the emptiness of the Mahāyāna to the *śrāvakas* in such a way as not to induce *panic* and dread in them, and thus allow them to gradually accustom themselves to the emptiness in question. In fact, according to the the *Samḍhinirmocanasūtra*, the nature it calls other-produced nature^a is an ultimate non-nature in the sense that it is *not* the ultimate, yet various passages in it assert the ultimately abiding nature^b to be the mere lack of the nature that it calls imputational nature^c or, in other words, the fact that entities of the other-produced nature do not exist by way of their own character (as the referents of a conceptual consciousness, most Gelugpas would emphasize). The Cittamātra School is the result of the work of five-hundred scholars who compiled all tenets in Third Promulgation canonical sources—and in particular in its root canonical source, the *Samḍhinirmocanasūtra*—that had provisional meaning with regard to other tenets in sources of the Promulgation in question, precisely in order to reassure *śrāvakas* with regard to the emptiness of the Mahāyāna.

Basing himself on many other Third Promulgation canonical sources (such as the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, the *Mahābherīhāraḥkaparivartasūtra*, the *Aṅgulimālasūtra*, the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*, the *Suvarṇaprabhāsasūtra*, the *Compendium of Precious Qualities Sūtra*, the *Āryaśrīmālādevīsiṃhanādanāmamahāyanasūtra* and so on), on a Second Promulgation *Sūtra* (namely the *Śatasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitāsūtra*), on Tantras (such as the *Kālacakratantra* and the *Hevajratantra*) and on higher Indian Mahāyāna texts such as Maitreya's *Ratnagoṭravibhāga* or *Uttaratantraśāstra* (i.e., *Mahāyānottaratantraśāstra*) and so on, Dölpopa made the point that the ultimately abiding nature^d is the *dharmakāya* or the Buddha-nature;^e that it is endowed with Buddha-qualities; and—citing a passage from the *Aṅgulimālasūtra*—that it is empty not only of (i.e., it not only lacks) the imaginary projections which constitute the imaginary nature,^f which are the source of the passions and which are *general configurations* or *general collections of characteristics*,^g but also of (i.e., that it lacks) the relative phenomena that constitute the dependent nature^h and which are *specifically characterized phenomena*, *self-patterns* or *inherent collections of characteristics*.ⁱ He writes (in Hopkins, 2002, p. 286):

Of what is it devoid? It is devoid of whatever is an imputational or an other-produced nature, conventional forms and so on.

Thus what Dölpopa did was to systematize the views expounded in *Sūtras* of the Third Promulgation that are definitive with regard to the *Samḍhinirmocanasūtra*, as well as in Second Promulgation canonical sources that are definitive with regard to the bulk of

^a Skt. *paratantra*; Tib. zhenwang (*gzhan dbang*).

^b Skt. *pariṇiṣpanna*; Tib. yongdrub (*yongs grub*).

^c Skt. *parikalpita*; Tib. kuntag (*kun brtags*).

^d Skt. *pariṇiṣpanna* or *pariṇiṣpannalakṣaṇa*; Tib., yongdrub (*yongs grub*) or [chönyi] yongdrubkyi tsennyi ([*chos-nyid*] *yongs-grub-kyi mtshan-nyid*).

^e Skt. *tathāgatagarbha*; Tib. *deshek nyingpo* (*de gshegs snying po*) or *dezhin shegpai nyingpo* (*de bzhin gshegs pa'i snying po*).

^f Skt. *parikalpita* or *parikalpitalakṣaṇa*; Tib. kuntag (*kun brtags*) or kuntagkyi tsennyi (*kun brtags kyi mtshan-nyid*).

^g Skt. *sāmānyalakṣaṇa*; Tib. chitsen (*spyi mtshan*).

^h Skt. *paratantra* or *paratantralakṣaṇa*; Tib. zhenwang (*gzhan dbang*) or zhenwangi tsennyi (*gzhan dbang gi mtshan nyid*).

ⁱ Skt. *svalakṣaṇa*; Tib. rangtsen (*rang mtshan*).

such sources (as just noted, an example being the *Śatasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitāsūtra* or *Prajñāpāramitāsūtra in 100.000 ślokas* [some verses in Conze, 1985]), Tantras and noted Indian Mahāyāna texts, so as to clarify and systematize the highest view of the Mahāyāna. And, in fact, *phenomena of the other-produced nature*—viewed as *particular* phenomena of the kind referred to as *specifically characterized phenomena, self-patterns* or *inherent collections of characteristics*^a—could not be either substantial or self-existent, for as Field Theory makes it clear (subsequent physical theories going beyond Einstein in this regard), the phenomena in question are not in themselves separate from the rest of the energy field—for they are singled out by human perception on the basis of *universal concepts of entities* [resulting from mental syntheses] that are meaning categories.^b This implies that they depend on imputational natures and hence on *synthetic mental phenomena* of the kind referred to as *general configurations* or *general collections of characteristics*^c to be what they are—and in fact, the term “unreal ideation” is a code word for other-produced natures (Hopkins, 2002, p. 331), even though from this fact such an unconventional conclusion is normally not drawn. In conclusion, the division into other-produced natures and imputational natures is to a large extent baseless, being expedient means used for helping beings to gain some intellectual understanding of how human delusion works—yet the division in question is so important that the highest philosophical school of the Mahāyāna needed to incorporate it and emphasize it.

Dr Paul Williams^d claimed that the Zhentongpa understanding of emptiness, which many lower Gelugpa teachers consider heretical²¹⁶ and assert to have originated in Tibet in the eleventh century CE, may have had its roots in Bhavaviveka’s *Ratnagotravibhāga*, written in the sixth century CE. No doubt, some of the views proper of this brand of Madhyamaka appear in this work by Bhāvaviveka (who, like the Zhentongpas and the Mahamadhyamikas, used the terms “coarse, outer Madhyamaka of Prasāngikas and Swatantrikas” and “subtle, inner Madhyamaka” [the latter including the Mahamadhyamaka and the Zhentongpa Schools], and established the superiority of the latter^e). Likewise, a little later, these views appeared in tractates by others originators of Madhyamaka Swatantrika subschools. However, long before the time of Bhavaviveka, such views had appeared in treatises that are considerably older: some are to be found in non-Yogachara books by some of the founders of the Yogachara School (e.g., Maitreyanatha’s *Mahayanottaratantrashastra* and Asanga’s *Mahayanottaratantrashastravyakhyā*); others are to be found in texts that are supposed to have been written long before the latter by the founders of the Madhyamaka School (such as Nagarjuna’s *Collection of Eulogies*^f, and in particular in the *Eulogy to the Expanse of the True Condition*^g).²¹⁷ However, this conception of emptiness did not originate in the commentators and interpreters of the Mahayana, but in canonical texts of both the Second and Third Promulgations: the Third Promulgation sūtras listed above as sources on which

^a Skt. *svalakṣaṇa*; Tib. rangtsen (*rang mtshan*).

^b Skt. *arthasāmānya*; Tib. dōnchi (*don spyi*).

^c Skt. *sāmānyalakṣaṇa*; Tib. chitsen (*spyi mtshan*).

^d Williams, Paul, 1998, p. 196.

^e Bhavya (Bhavaviveka), *The Jewel Lamp of the Madhyamaka (Madhyamakaratnapradīpa*; Tib., *bdU-ma rin-chen sgron-ma*). Quoted in Dudjom Rinpoche, J. Y. D., English 1991, Trans.: Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein, vol. I, p. 169. The quotation is reproduced below in an endnote.

^f Skt., *Stavakaya*; Tib., *bsTod-tshogs*.

^g Skt., *Dharmadhatustava*; Tib., *Chos-dbyings bstod-pa*.

Dölpopa based himself abound in such elements, and a Second Promulgation canonical source like the *Panchavimshatisahasrikaprajñāparamitasutra* goes so far as to use the term *paraśūnya* (Tib. zhentong).

As stated above, according to the Zhentongpas, absolute truth is not voidness, but the inseparability of clarity / appearances and emptiness, or the indivisibility of rigpa and the *dharmadhatu*, which is concealed in *samsara* (where we perceive appearances as though they were not empty and in general are unaware of the *dharmadhatu*) and which unveils in *nirvana*. In order to better understand that of which, according to the Zhentongpas, this absolute reality is empty, it may be useful to consider the following passage from the *Lankavatarasutra*^a:

If you ask what is the emptiness that is [inherent to] the ultimate reality of all things, [or, in other words, the emptiness that is inherent to] the great primordial gnosis of the sublime beings, it is as follows: The attainment of the primordial gnosis of the sublime beings, which is one's own spontaneous awareness, is empty of the propensities of all views and faults. This is called the emptiness that is [inherent to] the ultimate reality of all things, [the emptiness that is inherent to] the great primordial gnosis of sublime beings.

In turn, the *Panchavimshatisahasrikaprajñāparamitasutra* or *Prajñāparamita Sutra in Twenty-Five Thousand Lines*, which belongs to the Second Promulgation and which is also called the *Intermediate Mother*, states^b:

In this context, if you ask what is the emptiness [or absence of the supposed existence] of other substances, [it must be noted that] it applies whether the Tathagatas have appeared or not. As the abiding, [true] nature of [all] reality (nelug^c: the dharmakaya's primordial emptiness), as [the true condition of] reality itself, [as] the expanse of [the true condition], [as] the faultlessness of [the true condition], [as] the nature of isness, and as the genuine goal, it abides as isness. Therefore, this [true condition of all] reality, which is empty of extraneous entities, is called the emptiness of other substances. Subhuti, this is the greater vehicle of the bodhisattvas, great spiritual warriors.

These quotations prove that the Zhentongpa understanding of voidness has its roots in the canonical texts of *both* Mahayana Promulgations. However, it was in the second millennium CE that Tibetan Masters, assimilating influences from the teachings of the inner Vajrayana and of the Dzogchen Atiyoga, systematized the older views that make up the inner, subtle Madhyamaka. These Masters contrasted the views of the Rangtongpas to their own interpretations, which, as advanced above: (1) explained voidness as being the *absence of anything other than what they explain to be the absolute truth*; (2) rejected the conception of absolute truth as a mere absence, refusing to reduce this truth to any of the various conceptions of emptiness; and (3) defined absolute truth either as the inseparability of clarity / appearances and emptiness, or as the indivisibility of rigpa (nondual awareness as it manifests in *nirvana*) and the *dharmadhatu* (the primordially

^a Quoted in Dudjom Rinpoche, J. Y. D., English 1991, Trans.: Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein, vol. I, p. 172.

^b Quoted *ibidem*, vol. I, p. 172.

^c *gNas-lugs*. This term refers to the primordial emptiness of the dharmakaya.

void, unborn expanse wherein manifestation occurs). Though they rejected the conception of absolute truth as voidness, and produced sophisticated refutations of the thesis according to which absolute truth consists in the voidness of self-existence of individual phenomena, the Zhentongpas agree with the Rangtongpas that all individual phenomena lack self-existence (Skt., *swabhava shunyata*; Tib., rangtong).

The *Prajñāparamita Sutra in Twenty-Five Thousand Lines* quoted above asserts that the emptiness of other substances applies whether the Buddhas have appeared or not. This is so insofar as this conception of absolute truth aptly expresses a Mahayana view that is congruous with the Dzogchen and higher Vajrayana interpretation of the categories of Base, Path and Fruit. In fact, the two subschools of the subtle, inner Madhyamaka (Tib., Nang trawai uma^a), which are the Mahamadhyamaka and Zhentongpa schools, actually use these categories and, on the basis of a conception of Buddha-nature²¹⁸ that they trace to sutras of the Mahayana and to a whole class of Mahayana treatises (the most important of which may perhaps be Maitreyanatha's *Ratnagotravibhaga* or *Uttaratantra*), speak of Buddha-nature *qua* Base, Buddha-nature *qua* Path and Buddha-nature *qua* Fruit.²¹⁹ The Buddha-nature *qua* Base is the fact that the true nature of both Buddhas and sentient beings always has been the indivisibility of voidness and clarity / appearances, or of rigpa and the *dharmadhatu*. The Buddha-nature *qua* Path is the repeated unveiling of the Buddha-nature while on the Path, which progressively removes the obscurations that cloud the Buddha-nature *qua* Base. Finally, the Buddha-nature *qua* Fruit is the incontrovertible fact that, when all obscurations have been cleansed, the Buddha-nature is no longer veiled—and so the true nature of awareness manifests in its purity as the dharmakaya, as a result of which the supreme qualities of the Buddhas manifest spontaneously. Thus the explanation of absolute truth in the two schools of subtle, inner Madhyamaka has the advantage of accounting for the Base that is the source and true nature of all phenomena, for the Path consisting in the progression from delusion to Awakening, and for the Fruit consisting in unsurpassable, complete Awakening—in a way that voidness, understood as a mere absence (of inherent existence or whatever), can in no way account for. The reasons why this is so will be discussed in detail in the next section of this chapter.

The explanation of absolute truth as the Buddha-nature is intimately related with the conception of a nondual spontaneous awareness, *swasamvedana* or rangrig found in sutras of the Third Promulgation and in the Dzogchen teachings. The Yogachara School developed a clumsy, dualistic, metaphysical interpretation of *swasamvittih* as involving a (redundant) second consciousness that looked toward the inside (that is, toward the first consciousness or, rather, toward the internal source of all consciousness), which was rejected in the chapter on the Yogachara School. This was not the case with the two subschools of the subtle, inner Madhyamaka, which interpreted the spontaneous awareness of the sutras of the Third Promulgation in a truly nondualistic way that did full justice to the sense this awareness had in these sutras, rather than betraying it with an awkward duplication of consciousness and a dull, unwarranted metaphysical conception. In order to make it clear that their explanation of spontaneous awareness was unlike that of the Yogacharas, Tibetan Madhyamika Zhentongpas chose to refer to it by a term different from the one used by the Yogacharas and call it *sosoi rangrigpai yeshe*^b.

^a *Nang phra-ba'i dbu-ma.*

^b *So-so 'i rang-rig pa 'i ye-shes.*

The conception of spontaneous awareness by the two schools of the subtle, inner Madhyamaka will be considered in greater detail in the next section of this book, which discusses the Mahamadhyamaka subschool. For the time being, suffice to say that these two schools explain it to be simply the nondual, nondirectional awareness that is the single Base of all appearances of both *samsara* and *nirvana*: in *nirvana*, it manifests in a nondual manner the characteristics and qualities of Awakening, whereas in *samsara* it manifests as the nondual awareness (of) dualistic consciousness of objects,²²⁰ becoming the basis for the illusory dualism of subject and object—though in truth it is the nondual, common Base and true nature of both the subject and the objects. A close relation with the views of the inner or higher Vajrayana, including those of the Mahamudra tradition of the Sarmapa and the Semde series of Ati Dzogpa Chenpo, may be clearly appreciated in this conception.

We have seen that, though as a vehicle the Mahayana is lower than the Vajrayana, the Gelugpa tradition considers that the views of a Mahayana school—the Madhyamaka-Prasangika subschool—express the supreme theoretical view of Buddhism. This put pressure on Masters of the Red Hat schools to found their practice of the higher or inner Vajrayana on a theoretical school of the Mahayana; given the fact that the Madhyamaka Zhentongpa is so congruous with the teachings of inner or higher Vajrayana, and in particular with those pertaining to the Mahamudra tradition, the view of this subschool has often been taken as a theoretical basis for the practice of the latter. However, according to the Nyingmapa teachings there is no need to use a Mahayana School as the theoretical basis for the practice of a Tantric teaching, for the higher teaching has its own theoretical view, which is superior to all the views that have arisen within the Mahayana.

For Dolpopa's views, cf. Dol-bo-ba (2006), Hopkins (2002) and Stearns (2010).

Subtle, Inner Madhyamaka (Tib., Nang trawai uma^a):
 (2) Mahamadhyamaka or “Total Madhyamaka.”^b
 Encompassing Zhentong and Rangtong Voidness,
 and the Prasangika and Swatantrika subschools

The term Mahāmādhyamaka, just like the term Uma Zhentongpa, was spread in Tibet by the great Master Dölpopa Sherab Gyaltzen,^c who employed them practically as synonyms. However, in this book I am introducing a distinction between Mahāmādhyamaka, by which I refer to my own version of the Inner, Subtle Mādhyamaka, and Uma Zhentongpa, by which I refer to the views put forward by Dölpopa. The most outstanding divergences between the view I expound here and the one Dölpopa put forward are to following:

^a *Nang phra-ba'i dbu-ma*.

^b Concerning Total Madhyamaka or Mahamadhyamaka, the reader may consult Dudjom Rinpoche, J. Y. D., English 1991, Trans.: Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein. Further information concerning the various forms of Madhyamaka may be found in: Guenther, Herbert V., 1972; Thinle Norbu, 1977, 2d Ed. 1985; Khenpo Tsültrim Gyamtso, Spanish, 1983; Khenpo Tsültrim Gyamtso, 2001; Guenther, Herbert V., 1957, 2d. Ed. 1974.

^c *dol po pa shes rab rgyal mtshan*, 1292–1361.

Dölpopa asserts the absolute truth not to be empty of itself, and from this he draws the conclusion that it is self-existent. Here the view that the absolute truth is not empty of itself is accepted with enthusiasm, yet it is claimed that from this it does not follow that the absolute truth is *self-existent*—or even *existent*, in case we wished to introduce this distinction. In fact, *existence* and *nonexistence* are categories of thought, and in terms of the concepts employed in this book, *qua* phenomena they are products of the delusory valuation / absolutization of thought; since the absolute truth is not understandable in terms of thought and its categories, as no concept whatsoever may correspond to it precisely, it may not be said to be *existent*, *nonexistent*, *both existent and nonexistent*, or *neither existent nor nonexistent* (i.e., it does not fit into any of these four extremes); since the realization of the absolute truth involves the dissolution of the *phenomenon of being* that results from the delusory valuation / absolutization of the concept of being that is implicit in the threefold thought structure, and the phenomenon of nonbeing is the result of a secondary process negation based on and sustained by the *phenomenon of being* (cf. Capriles, 2007a, Vol. I), it is beyond the phenomenon of being as well as beyond that of nonbeing. Thus it is clear that when it is said that the absolute truth is not empty of itself, this should *not* be taken to mean that it is not empty of its own self-existence, or even existence.

In the same way, since, as noted above, the absolute is not a category of thought, and no concept whatsoever may correspond to it in a precise way, it is not correct to claim the absolute to be an implicative negation: the same criticism that was previously made to Tsongkhapa's Cittamātra-inspired view that the ultimate is a nonimplicative negation may be applied to Dölpopa's seeming view of the absolute as an implicative negation, for the negation is not what it negates, and pertains to a wholly different order, which is that of the functioning of the psyche in terms of digital thinking: as emphasized in this book, the map is not the territory and can never correspond precisely to it. This is most evident in the case of the *absolute*, as all concepts are relative and hence to understand it in terms of them would make it what it (is) not: it would make it *relative*. In particular, to reduce it to a *mere negation* would amount to turning it into an *understanding* that is *relative* to the understanding of it as a *positive phenomenon*, as well as to the Cittamātra and Gelug understanding of it as a *nonimplicative negation*: since the *absolute* is *not relative*, it (is) beyond positive, negative, both-positive-and-negative and neither-positive-nor-negative. Thus it is also wrong to claim that the absolute is a positive phenomenon (In his *Ocean of Definitive Meaning*, on fourteen different occasions Dölpopa [Dol-bo-ba, 2006] makes the claim that the Absolute is an implicative negation, yet he also makes three times the claim that it is positive [Hopkins, 2002, p. 317].)²²¹

Moreover, my version of Mahāmādhyaṃyaka incorporates essential elements of the view expressed by the great Sakyapa Master Gorampa Sönam Sengé,^a such as the concept of *own-mind*, the concept of *statements from the viewpoint of another*, and so on. These important concepts, which in this book were introduced in the course of the discussion of Je Tsongkhapa's understanding of the Mādhyaṃyaka Prāsaṅgika (Gorampa's views will be discussed in some detail in the upcoming, definitive version of this book, where they will be synthesized with the rest of the theses in it), are implicit in the concept of the delusory valuation of thought—for it is delusory valuation that gives rise to *own-mind*, and it is the

^a *go rams pa bsod nams seng ge*, 1429-1489.

disconnection of delusory valuation that makes it possible for Buddhas to produce statements from the viewpoint of another while being totally free from *own-mind* themselves. In the same way, and precisely in connection with the just mentioned concepts of the *delusory valuation of thought, own-mind, statements from the viewpoint of another* and so on, my version of Mahāmādhyaṃaka includes Ju Mipham's integration into a single system of the two principal branches of the Outer, Coarse Mādhyamaka, by asserting the view of the Mādhyamaka Svātantrika to express the view of the post-Contemplation state of superior bodhisattvas, and that of the Mādhyamaka Prāsaṅgika to express the Vision that manifests in these same individuals during their Contemplation state.

Aside from the fact that it is a yogic Dzogchen explanation rather than being a scholarly, merely intellectual view, one reason why the concept of the delusory valuation of thought is so important, and why it is so important to assimilate the related views of both Gorampa and Mipham, is that when confronting different views, compelled by *own-mind*, the ordinary individual is driven to determine which (if any) is right and which are wrong. Therefore those who decide that Mādhyamaka is the highest of all Sūtrayāna philosophical views will be compelled to side either with the Zhentongpa School or with the Rangtongpa subschools; in turn, those who opt for the latter will be constrained to side either with the Prāsaṅgika or with one of the branches of the Svātantrika. However, this would be a consequence of the basic delusion Buddhism calls *avidyā* or marigpa, for the truth is that the perspectives of the Zhentongpa School and the Rangtongpa subschools, and within the latter that of the Prāsaṅgikas and that of the Svātantrikas, are but mutually complementary aspects of the grand view or total vision of Mahāmādhyaṃaka as the latter term is understood here.

Bhavaviveka (Bhavya), despite being the founder of the Swatantrika subschool of the Madhyamaka Rangtongpa, wrote in *The Jewel Lamp of the Madhyamaka*:^{a222}

The Madhyamaka of the Prasangika and the Swatantrika is the coarser, outer Madhyamaka. It should indeed be expressed by those who profess well-informed intelligence during the debates with [extremist] Outsiders, during the composition of great treatises, and while establishing texts that concern supreme reasoning.²²³ However, when the subtle, inner Madhyamaka is experientially cultivated, one should meditate on the nature of Total Madhyamaka (Mahamadhyamaka).

Thus we have that, despite being the founder of the Swatantrika-Sautrantika school of Madhyamaka Rangtongpa (the earliest of Swatantrika subschools), Bhavya stated that the Rangtongpa subschools are but a tool for debating with outsiders and a propaedeutic to the experiential cultivation of actual realization through the practice of the subtle, inner Madhyamaka as taught by Mahamadhyamaka. This suggests that the philosophical systems of the Sutrāyāna were not always intended to express the ultimate, absolutely correct view of reality, and that at least some of them may have been conceived as lower or middle steps in a stairway of intellectual development. In fact, according to Mahamadhyamaka, most of the sutras of the Second Promulgation and the whole of the Rangtongpa literature based on them, confined to the negation that there is any truth to conceptual elaboration, were taught merely as a preparation for the

^a *Madhyamakaratnapradīpa* (Tib., *bdU-ma rin-chen sgron-ma*). Quoted in Dudjom Rinpoche, J. Y. D., English 1991, Trans.: Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein, vol. I, p. 169.

experiential cultivation of Madhyamaka, which subsequently must go beyond the reasoning of both the Prasangikas and the Swatantrikas.

Furthermore, a hermeneutic reading of the commentaries and original tractates by the great Indian Masters who founded or helped develop the various philosophical schools of the Mahayana, has enabled Nyingmapa scholars to establish that many of them wrote treatises expressing the total vision of Mahamadhyamaka. In the preceding section it was remarked that Nagarjuna himself, earliest among the founders of Mahayana philosophical schools, who in the various texts that constitute the *Collection of Madhyamika Reasonings*^a (which are based on the Second Promulgation) developed the views of the Madhyamaka Rangtongpa, in his *Collection of Eulogies*^b and in particular in the *Eulogy to the Expanse of the True Condition*^c expressed Zhentongpa views; since these views were included in a total, all-integrating perspective, the texts in question must be classified as belonging to Mahamadhyamaka.²²⁴ It was also noted that many of the treatises by Vasubandhu and some of the books by Asanga^d set forth the characteristic views of the Yogachara School (many of which were later on adopted and reinterpreted by the Madhyamaka-Swatantrika-Yogachara subschool of Madhyamaka), but that many of the tractates by Maitreyanatha^e and by his disciple Asanga^f set forth views pertaining to the subtle, inner Madhyamaka; given their total character, they must also be classified as Mahamadhyamika. Furthermore, some of the texts by Bhavaviveka (Bhavya) and Haribhadra (and even a specific point in a work by Kamalashila),^{g225} among other authors generally considered to be Madhyamika-Swatantrikas, clearly set forth views of the subtle, inner Madhyamaka.^h The same applies to writings by Jñanachandra, Ratnakshanti, Atisha, and Atisha's guru from Suvarnadwipa (i.e., from Sumatra) known as Dharmakirti or Dharmapala.ⁱ

The above makes it quite clear that “the first two Masters to have composed authoritative Mahayana treatises on which other commentators rely,” who were Nagarjuna and Maitreyanatha,^j and “the two sages whom Shakyamuni prophetically

^a Skt., *Yuktikaya*; Tib., (*dBu-ma*) *rigs-tshogs*.

^b Skt., *Stavakaya*; Tib., *bsTod-tshogs*.

^c Skt., *Dharmadhatustava*; Tib., *Chos-dbyings bstod-pa*.

^d I think the most outstanding example of these may be the *Yogacharabhumishastra* (Tib., *rNal-'byor spyod-pa'i sa*), also known as the *Five Treatises on Levels* (Tib., *sa-sde lnga*).

^e Most important among them is perhaps the *Mahayanottaratantrashastra*. In this work Maitreyanatha wrote (Ch. 1, v.155):

“The seed that is empty of suddenly arisen (samsaric) phenomena endowed with divisive characteristics, is not empty of the unsurpassed reality endowed with indivisible characteristics.”

(Dudjom Rinpoche, J. Y. D., English 1991, Trans.: Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein, vol. I, p. 170.)

^f Just to give an example, I refer to the *Mahayanottaratantrashastravyakhya*.

^g The conception of spontaneous awareness Kamalashila developed in the *Madhyamakalamkarapañjika* corresponds to that of Mahamadhyamaka. See Cone *mDo 'grel*, folio 83b ff. Derghe vol. 36, *Sa* pp. 167 ff. See in particular p. 188. Quoted in Williams, Paul, 1998, p. 29.

With regard to the fact that both Vabhya and Haribhadra expressed Mahamadhyamika views, see Dudjom Rinpoche, J. Y. D., English 1991, trans.: Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein, vol. I, p. 184.

^h This is referred to in various passages of Dudjom Rinpoche, J. Y. D., English 1991, trans.: Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein. In particular, cf. vol. I, p. 184.

ⁱ Dudjom Rinpoche, J. Y. D., English 1991, trans.: Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein, vol. I, p. 184. This is not the Dharmakirti who wrote the *Pramanavarttika*, nor his guru, Dharmapala.

^j Dudjom Rinpoche, J. Y. D., English 1991, Trans.: Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein, vol. I, p. 440.

declared would comment on the intention of the definitive meaning”,^a who were Nagarjuna and Asanga^b (two of the “three prophesized authors of fundamental texts”^c), in their innermost, subtlest treatises expressed the supreme Mahayana view, which is that of Mahamadhyamaka.^{d226} More important, with quotations it was shown that the views, concepts and explanations of the subtle, inner Madhyamaka in general, and of Mahamadhyamaka in particular, have their source in sutras of both the Second and Third Promulgations (the *Lankavatarasutra* was given as an example of a sutra of the Third Promulgation expressing such views, and the *Panchavimshatisahasrikaprajñaparamitasutra* was quoted as an example of a sutra of the Second Promulgation expressing them).

Just as did many of the greatest Indian Masters, some of the great Tibetan Masters developed makeshift lower views in a text or set of texts having an introductory character, and expressed their real, higher views in another text or set of texts. In a previous section of this chapter it was stated that in the *Lamrim* works Je Tsongkhapa taught the gradual meditation on emptiness that practitioners of the lower Swatantrika-Yogachara subschool apply in order to reach the experience of emptiness that this subschool considers to be the absolute truth, and taught the result of this meditation, which is the presence of the absence of the mode of existence that we had previously attributed the entity under analysis, to be the absolute truth of the Prasangikas. However, this was not Tsongkhapa’s definitive view, but a manifestation of method (skillful means) designed to lead people of lower capacities on the Gradual Path, so that they could overcome their fear of emptiness and familiarize themselves with voidness, and thus at some later point they could directly realize the Prasangika voidness that is beyond all mental constructions—so that finally they could set to cultivate experientially the subtle, inner Madhyamaka by meditating on the nature of Mahamadhyamaka. This is proven by the following quote from the *Lam tso nam sum*^e, in which the all-knowing founder of the glorious Gelugpa tradition expressed his realization of the subtle, inner Madhyamaka:^f

Whoever perceives the cause and result of all things of *samsara* and *nirvana* to be always infallible, and destroys all their referential bases, at that time enters the Path [that is] pleasing to the Buddhas. As long as one continues to differentiate between the [respective] understandings of [1] appearances which are infallibly interdependent and [2] emptiness that is free from assertions, one will not realize the Sage’s intentions.²²⁷ But when [these two understandings manifest] simultaneously, without alternation, and [when], having merely seen interdependence to be infallible, true conviction has destroyed all postures of objective clinging, at that time, the scrutiny of the view is perfected.

^a Dudjom Rinpoche, J. Y. D., English 1991, Trans.: Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein, vol. I, p. 440.

^b Dudjom Rinpoche, J. Y. D., English 1991, Trans.: Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein, vol. I, p. 184. Concerning Asanga, in particular, Shakyamuni prophesized (*ibidem*, p. 189):

“A monk who is called Asanga, learned in the meaning of these treatises, will classify into many categories the sutras of provisional and definitive meaning.”

^c Dudjom Rinpoche, J. Y. D., English 1991, Trans.: Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein, vol. I, p. 440.

^d Dudjom Rinpoche, J. Y. D., English 1991, trans.: Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein, vol. I, p. 184.

^e *Lam tso nam gsum*.

^f Je Tsongkhapa, *Three Emphases of the Path (Lam-gyi gtso-bo rnam-gsum)*. Quoted in Dudjom Rinpoche, J. Y. D., English 1991, Trans.: Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein, vol. I, p. 204.

It was noted that Mahamadhyamaka encompasses the views of both the Zhentongpa School and the Rangtongpa subschools. In fact, it is said that those who actually abide in the view of Madhyamaka do not differentiate between the Rangtongpa and Zhentongpa modes of Madhyamaka—a view that is substantiated with the texts of the greatest Masters who commented on the intention of the definitive meaning (and in particular with those by Asanga and Nagarjuna). Dudjom Rinpoche writes:^a

In general, those whose intelligence is authoritative, without falling into prejudice, do not differentiate between the two modes of emptiness (rangtong and zhentong) when abiding in the Madhyamaka [view], which is the summit of the four philosophical systems dependent on different traditions of promulgation that have been precisely enumerated.

Mahamadhyamaka is the highest Madhyamaka subschool, precisely insofar as its all-encompassing, absolutely panoramic view, like that of a garuda posed on the summit of the highest Mahayana peak, comprises and harmonizes, rather than contradicts, the perspectives seen from all lower mountaintops. Since this limitless perspective involves full awareness that every position implies a counterposition and that neither of them is absolutely true, it implies awareness of the fact that the mutually contradictory, competing views of the Zhentongpas and the Rangtongpas, and, among the latter, of the Prasangikas and the Swatantrikas, aptly respond to particular segments of reality and/or to different states of the individual who advances on the path to complete Buddhahood, and that all of them are perfectly compatible with each other, being the mutually complementary aspects of a grand view or, rather, a total vision.²²⁸ In fact, each of those partial views becomes a source of *philosophical* error only when it is extrapolated beyond the field to which it applies, being extended to the whole of reality and/or to all types of experience—just as it becomes a source of delusion when the individual takes it to be absolutely true or false. No doubt, it is appropriate to translate the term Mahamadhyamaka as Total Madhyamaka, for this school expresses the total, viewless view of the Middle Way.

We have seen that the Madhyamaka Rangtongpa subschools of coarser, outer Madhyamaka are based on the sutras of the Second Promulgation, and that, according to the Nyingma School, in general these sutras have provisional meaning (Skt., *neyartha*; Tib., *drangdön*^b). In its turn, the Madhyamaka Zhentongpa subschool of subtle, inner Madhyamaka is principally based on the sutras of the Third Promulgation, which the Nyingma School views as having definitive meaning (Skt., *nitārtha*; Tib., *ngedön*^c). Insofar as Mahamadhyamaka perfectly integrates all types of Madhyamaka, it may be said to be based on both the Second and the Third Promulgations. However, this is *not* to say that Mahamadhyamaka is based *to the same extent* on the Two Final Promulgations: this school is categorized as belonging to the subtler, inner Madhyamaka precisely insofar as it relies mainly on the sutras of the Third Promulgation, on which it is often said to be based. In fact, this school claims that the teachings of the First Promulgation purify the gross stains, that those of the Second Promulgation purify the subtle stains, and that those of the Third Promulgation purify the very subtle stains and, furthermore, reveal the fundamental structure of reality (which Mahamadhyamaka reflects more exactly than any other school). Therefore, in perfect agreement with the canonical texts of the Third

^a Dudjom Rinpoche, J. Y. D., English 1991, Trans.: Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein, vol. I, p. 209-210.

^b *Drang-don*.

^c *Nges-don*.

Promulgation, which are logically the only ones that evaluate the texts all three Promulgations,²²⁹ it establishes each subsequent Promulgation to be “higher” than the former.

Mahamadhyamaka is the supreme Sutrayana philosophical expression of the way of dharmakaya yogis,²³⁰ the Mahayana version of which has its canonical roots in the Third Promulgation. Since the realizations of such yogis are based on introspection (for rather than observing “external” objects or following syllogistic reasonings, they observe and question the occurrences in their own internal dimension), these yogis are characterized by a greatly enhanced awareness of their own experience and therefore of the process whereby experience is constructed (for this process is itself part of experience),²³¹ and they often reach a much higher level of attainment than do dialecticians. Furthermore, in the extreme instances of the way of dialecticians, realization is sought almost exclusively through intellectual analysis, and the process whereby experience is produced is neglected insofar as attention is focused on the development of lines of thought.²³²

Originally there were not two ways, one of dialecticians and another one of yogis, but only a single, universal Path of Awakening: it is an incontrovertible fact that the sutras of both the Second and Third Promulgation were taught by a single Shakyamuni, whose Awakening was not the result of following two different ways. Furthermore, the Masters who founded the Madhyamaka School, whose commentaries on the sutras of the Second Promulgation and original Rangtong treatises laid the bases of what at some point would become the Madhyamaka Prasangika (which, as stated above, became the backbone of the way of dialecticians), were practitioners of the way of dharmakaya yogis: as we have seen, both Nagarjuna and Aryadeva were links in the transmission of the way of dharmakaya yogis *par excellence*, which is the Dzogchen Atiyoga,²³³ and they were Patriarchs of the Sudden Dhyana School as well, which is the supreme expression of the way of yogis at the level of the Mahayana.²³⁴ Moreover, as stated at the beginning of this section, Nagarjuna also wrote treatises that express the panoramic, total view of Mahamadhyamaka. Therefore there can be no doubt that originally there were not two different ways, one to be followed by dialecticians and another to be followed by yogis, but a single way, the practitioners of which applied the introspective methods of the way of dharmakaya yogis and also used reasonings and dialogs as essential skillful means.

The above indivisibility of the single Path of Awakening had its continuity in Mahamadhyamaka, which emphasizes the practice of the introspective methods of the yogi and at the same time, insofar as it encompasses the views of the Madhyamaka Rangtongpa and its subschools, *includes* the way of dialecticians that uses language in order to induce an *epoche* or suspension of judgment that may serve as a springboard from which to realize the direct, nonconceptual view of the Middle Way.²³⁵ Therefore, it is clear that this subschool of Madhyamaka, which is the uppermost expression of the way of the yogis at the level of the Mahayana, and which can effectively account for the Dzogchen-like experiences and realizations of the most fortunate and sublime Mahayana practitioners, insofar as it expresses the highest and most sophisticated of Mahayana views, and insofar as it includes among its skillful means those that are proper of the way of dialecticians, is higher and more complete than other Sutrayana philosophical schools associated with the way of the yogi—or to any Sutrayana way, for that matter.

(Instances of the way of the yogi in the Path of Method of the inner Tantras involve the practices of the creation and perfection stages,²³⁶ in Mahamudra and in the

Dzogchen Semde they comprise various forms of analysis of the mind and its thoughts, which are applied after a certain level of calm abiding is attained;²³⁷ in the Dzogchen Menngagde they include the practices of Tekchö²³⁸ and Thögel²³⁹—and, in general, in the Vajrayana Path of Mahasiddhas, as different from the Path of Panditas, it comprises all practices that are based on the principle of “leaving the mind as it is.” In all of these instances, the terminology used refers to yogic experiences and metaexperiences, and thus we find terms such as “radiance” or “effulgence,” “pleasure” or “bliss,” “Gnitiveness”²⁴⁰ or “gnosis,” etc.)

We have seen that Mahamadhyamaka encompasses the more partial views of the Zhentongpa and Rangtongpa subschools of Madhyamaka, as well as those held by the two main Rangtongpa subschools—Prasangika and Swatantrika. The Rangtongpa view applies to each of the multiple phenomena that may be singled out in the Base, and the Zhentongpa view applies to the nondual primordial gnosis or spontaneous awareness that is the Base, the Path and the Fruit. Therefore, only the Mahamadhyamika combination of both views can account for the totality of reality.

Primordial Gnosis or Spontaneous Awareness in Mahamadhyamaka

As stated regarding spontaneous awareness in the section on the Madhyamaka Zhentongpa subschool, *qua* Base this nondual primordial gnosis is the true nature of all phenomena of *samsara* and metaphenomena *nirvana*;²⁴¹ in terms of the Vajrayana, it may be said to correspond to the primordially void, yet naturally all-manifesting Vajra-nature containing the three kayas of Buddhahood. *Qua* Path, it is what the teachings call rigpa (Truth-awareness or Awake awareness): its own unveiling beyond the delusory valuation of thought and therefore beyond all dualism, which progressively removes the obscurations that in *samsara* cloud this primordial gnosis.²⁴² *Qua* Fruit, it is the incontrovertible consolidation of rigpa (Truth-awareness or Awake awareness) once all obscurations have been cleansed and primordial gnosis is no longer veiled, so that its true nature manifests in its purity as the dharmakaya, and the array of supreme qualities of the Buddhas manifests spontaneously.²⁴³

Being the common essence and nature of all of reality, and as such having no *genus proximum* or *differentia specifica*, this primordial gnosis cannot be conceived: it has to be realized directly. If, in spite of the impossibility to describe it precisely, we tried to do so in an approximate way, this would have to be done exactly in the same terms in which the spontaneous awareness of the Zhentongpa subschool was portrayed—and yet it would have to be called by different terms, for Mahamadhyamaka has its own terminology. In fact, when referred to *qua* Base, this gnosis is termed primordial gnosis (Tib., yeshe^a) or primordial gnosis of spontaneous awareness (Tib., rangrigpai yeshe^b)—though it may also be called by the more general term semnyi^c.²⁴⁴ When realized in the Path or as the Fruit, it is referred to by the term “the naturally manifest primordial gnosis realized through the spontaneous awareness of the primordial, true condition” (Skt., *pratisamvid*; Tib., soso ranggi rigpa^d)—though it may also be called simply *rig-pa*. In

^a *Ye-shes*.

^b *Rang-rig pa'i ye-shes*.

^c *Sems-nyid*.

^d *So-so rang-gi rig pa*.

fact, the Nyingma teachings, which are more specific than those taught during the Sarma diffusion of the Dharma, often use one term to designate the true condition when considered *qua* Base and another different word to designate it when it manifests *qua* Path or *qua* Fruit.

In the previous section we saw that, unlike the Yogacharas, the Zhentongpas do not explain spontaneous awareness in terms of a second consciousness that “looks toward the internal source of consciousness,” but describe it as a nondual, nondirectional awareness that is the single Base where all appearances of both *samsara* and *nirvana* arise, and that is the true nature of these appearances—which in *samsara* include the subject and all of its objects. Well, exactly the same applies to the primordial gnosis of Mahamadhyamaka: in *nirvana*, it manifests in a nondual, undeceiving manner the whole of the indivisible and nondual characteristics and qualities of Awakening; in *samsara*, it manifests as the nondual awareness (of) dualistic consciousness of objects, becoming the basis for the illusion of dualism and of division. In fact, as asserted by the French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, dualistic consciousness of objects, rather than being an inherently true, substantial mind existing continuously and prior to the knowledge of objects, is but an empty appearance that manifests in dualistic knowledge.²⁴⁵ According to Mahamadhyamaka, this dualistic consciousness, which arises only in *samsara*, is inherently unaware of the Base, the true condition of which it distorts by introducing the illusory subject-object and figure-ground dichotomies, so that henceforth it gets caught in the illusion of plurality.²⁴⁶

In the above definition I put the preposition “of” in parentheses for the same reason why, in the original French version of *Being and Nothingness*, Jean-Paul Sartre spoke of a “*conscience non-thétique, non-positionnelle (de) conscience* (lit., nonthetic, nonpositional consciousness [of] consciousness),” or “*conscience non-thétique, non-positionnelle (de) Soi* (nonthetic, nonpositional consciousness [of] Self):” the brackets are for making it clear that the phrase does not posit a divisive relation of knowledge such as the one that takes place when a subject is conscious *of* an object that appears to be at a distance from it, and that the preposition “of” within the parentheses was included in the phrase only because it is required by the grammar of most current European languages.²⁴⁷ In fact, knowledge is inherently dualistic, for, as remarked by French poet Paul Claudel, “*la connaissance est la co-naissance du sujet et de l’objet*” (knowledge is the co-emergent arising of the subject and the object),^{a248} and the point in putting the preposition “of” in brackets is to make it clear that in this case we are not speaking of a (dualistic) relation of knowledge.

In order to explain the Mahamadhyamaka conception of the primordial gnosis or spontaneous awareness that may be said to be the absolute truth of the subtle, inner Madhyamaka, and which according to this brand of Madhyamaka corresponds to the inseparability of emptiness and appearances, it may be useful to illustrate it with the example of the hypothetical self-luminous mirror²⁴⁹ used in the Semde series of Ati Dzogpa Chenpo, which nowadays could be replaced by that of the surface of an LCD screen (however, in a subsequent section of this chapter we will see that there are important differences between the way Mahamadhyamaka conceives spontaneous awareness and the way the Dzogchen teachings conceive it).

^a Claudel, Paul, *Traité de la Co-naissance au monde et de soi-même*. In Claudel (1943).

Appearances can arise as the play of the self-luminosity (clarity) of the mirror or LCD screen, precisely insofar as the mirror or the surface of the LCD screen itself is empty (i.e., insofar as it has no fixed image and therefore it can manifest all kinds of images): this is the main reason why this brand of Madhyamaka asserts that appearances and emptiness are inseparable. Furthermore, we have seen that spontaneous awareness or primordial gnosis corresponds to the Buddha-nature that contains the three kayas of Buddhahood; for the simile of the self-luminous mirror of LCD screen to account for these three, we would have to say that in this mirror or screen, voidness (which illustrates one of the senses of the dharmakaya understood *qua* Base), luminosity (which illustrates one of the senses of the sambhogakaya *qua* Base) and appearances (which illustrates one of the senses of the nirmanakaya *qua* Base) are indivisible: though it is its emptiness that makes room for appearances to manifest, it is through the self-luminosity of the mirror or screen that they manifest—and there is no separation or distance whatsoever between the emptiness that makes room for appearances to manifest, the luminosity that manifests these appearances, and the appearances that so manifest.

The difference between the example of the mirror or LCD screen and reality is that the latter is not a two-dimensional manifestation in a flat surface (in fact, it does not arise in any kind of physical surface), but seems to constitute a three-dimensional realm; in turn, the similitude between the example and reality lies in the fact that there is no duality or separation between, on the one hand, that which gives rise to all phenomena and that all phenomena (are) in truth (primordial gnosis or spontaneous awareness, represented by the self-luminous mirror or LCD screen), and the multifarious phenomena manifested, on the other hand.²⁵⁰

In order to explain the manifestation of *samsara* with its subject-object duality in terms of our simile, we would have to say that both the mental subject and its objects manifest as reflections in the mirror or as images in the LCD screen, and so *neither the mental subject nor its objects* are either *at a distance* of the mirror or screen, or in a dualistic relation of knowledge with regard to it—nor are the subject and its objects separate or at a distance from each other. In fact, subject and object arise *in* primordial gnosis or spontaneous awareness, and neither of them is either at a distance from the latter or in a dualistic relation of knowledge with regard to it—nor are the subject and its objects separate from each other.

We mistakenly take the dualistic consciousness associated with the mental subject to be a separate source of reflectiveness (i.e., of knowledge) and action that perceives a reality existing independently from it, and that acts on that reality. However, the truth is that this consciousness knows by virtue of spontaneous awareness or primordial gnosis (i.e., by virtue of the mirror's reflectiveness or the screen's luminosity), and that there isn't a reality existing independently from it, or at a distance from it. The similes were chosen because in a mirror, and also in an LCD screen, there is no distance between the mirror or screen's reflectiveness / luminosity and the images it reflects, and because they make it possible to illustrate the fact that the mental subject that we wrongly take to be a separate knower and doer is not the same as the Gnitiveness of primordial awareness (represented by the reflectiveness of the mirror or to the LCD screen's luminosity), but one of the images manifested by this Gnitiveness, reflectiveness or luminosity when *samsara* is active (the fact that this image does not manifest in *nirvana*, even though in this condition the Gnitiveness illustrated by the-mirror's-reflectiveness and the-screen's-

luminosity is equally active, attests to the fact that it is not a self-existing, continuous reality, but a delusive image that comes to an end when delusion subsides).

Even though the mental subject is not separate from its objects or at a distance from them, the very existence of the subject-object duality implies the *illusion* of a *separation* and a *distance* between subject and object. It must be emphasized that the respective ways of appearance of the mental subject, on the one hand, and the physical objects it knows, on the other, are quite different from each other: while the objects known appear to be extended and to have color, form and tangibility, the mental subject does not appear to be extended or to have color, form or tangibility (which is the reason why Descartes could draw the mistaken conclusion that they were, respectively, a *res extensa* and a *res cogitans*).²⁵¹ Whenever we are conscious of an extended object having color, form and tangibility, in the mirror or screen there manifests the subtle appearance of a mental subject lacking these characteristics (which is why it is said that the subject appears “implicitly and indirectly”): this is the subject that seems to know the object (or to act on it, etc.) and that seems to be at a distance from it. However, the truth is that the cognition of the object does not occur by virtue of the mental subject, which is but an appearance in the mirror or screen, but by virtue of the mirror or screen itself, in which the reflective, cognitive or manifesting power that allows appearances to arise and cognition to occur lies.²⁵²

Though in *nirvana* the mirror or screen manifests a limitless continuum of form and color, neither this continuum nor any segment of it wrongly appears to be an object experienced by a subject: in *nirvana* there is simply no subject and no object, and thus there is no illusion that may conceal the indivisible true condition of the mirror or LCD screen. In states that do not belong to either *samsara* or *nirvana*, such as the condition that the Dzogchen teachings call *kunzhi* and some unconscious states, there is also no appearance that an object is being known by a subject; however, such states are different from *nirvana*, for in *nirvana* the nondual, nonconceptual reGnition (of) the Awake, nonpositional, nonthetic, nonreflexive self-awareness the Dzogchen teachings call *rigpa* makes this nondual awareness’ own face patent (*rangngo shepa*^a), whereby the true nature of the Base is unconcealed in the manifestation of *rigpa-qua-Path* and, in the long run, of *rigpa-qua-Fruit*, so that the three aspects of the Base listed above are effectively realized as the three kayas of Buddhahood and actualized as such. Furthermore, in *nirvana* there is a total freedom of awareness that *contrasts* with the *lack of such freedom* that manifests in the states that do not belong to either *samsara* or *nirvana*.

If a separate, individual cognitive / acting capacity were inherent to individual human consciousness, then this consciousness would be a self-existing sentient being, and Awakening, which involves the dissolution of the sentient being (for, according to the Buddhist teachings, Buddhas are not sentient beings), either would be impossible or would involve an absolute lack of awareness—and so in the latter case Buddhas would not be perceived by sentient beings as acting on their behalf, for they would be like lifeless logs or stones. The very fact that Buddhas are characterized by total awareness rather than by lack of awareness, and that they are perceived by sentient beings as acting on their behalf,²⁵³ proves that our cognitive / acting capacity is not inherent to individual human consciousness, but on the spontaneous awareness that does not arise or cease with the arising or cessation of the (samsaric) sentient being.

^a *Rang-ngo shes-pa*.

To conclude, it must be noted that the fact that spontaneous awareness / primordial gnosis is represented by a mirror does not reflect a passive conception of knowledge like the one espoused by Western “philosophers” from Aristotle to Lenin (it is well-known that the former compared the mind to wax and impressions to a seal,^a and the latter upheld an analogous, purely receptive model of knowledge so late as the twentieth century^b). This is one of the reasons why, rather than using as a simile of spontaneous awareness a normal mirror that as such is the passive reflector of an active external world, I have used a *self-luminous* mirror or a LCD screen—none of which would be apt for illustrating the merely reflective model of knowledge. (Some may object to this on the grounds that the simile of the mirror has often been used to picture *nirvana* as involving a passive, undistorted reflection of the true condition of reality that contrasts with samsaric perception, which as will be shown in the following paragraph, has always been pictured as an active process that distorts reality. However, also *nirvana* involves the processes that generate forms and those that make us capable of dealing with life situations, which are definitely active.)

As advanced above, both Buddhism in general and Dzogchen in particular have always pictured samsaric perception as an *active* process that, rather than illumining an objective reality, *distorts* the given, producing all-encompassing illusion and delusion: as we have seen, the directional structuring of consciousness, the subject-object duality, the singling out of sense data, and perception in terms of delusorily valued concepts, make us experience the relative as absolute, the dependent as independent, the spurious as true, the put as given, the conditioned as unconditioned, the contingent as inherent, the undivided as divided, etc. However, this process does not result from the activity of a separate, autonomous soul or mind, but it is part of the play (Skt., *lila*; Tib., *rölpa*^c) of the awareness inherent to the Base that is neither physical nor mental and that was illustrated with the example of the mirror.²⁵⁴

The Dzogchen teachings, in particular, use the term “mind” (Skt., *chitta*; Tib., *sem*^d) to refer *both* to the workings of awareness that are at the root of illusion and delusion (including the mental functions that single out segments of the sensory continuum, arrange them in ways conducive to the production of delusion, and then interpret them in terms of delusory concepts, etc.), *and* to the most basic phenomena of delusion (such as the illusory mental subject and the dualistic consciousness associated with it). The point is that, as remarked above, the delusive workings of the human cognitive apparatus are not the activity of an inherently separate soul or of an autonomous individual consciousness; as we have seen, according to the Dzogchen teachings these workings are the play of awareness or primordial gnosis, which is the source of the whole of phenomena of *samsara* and metaphenomena of *nirvana*, and that gives rise to the ceaseless change characteristic of our experience. In fact, according to the Semde series of Dzogchen teachings, rather than being the passive reflector of an active external reality, the awareness or primordial gnosis inherent to the Base is “the all-creating King” or *Kunche Gyälpo*^e.

^a Aristotle, this ed., 1991.

^b Lenin (Ulianov), Vladimir Illich, this ed., 1972.

^c *Rol-pa*.

^d *Sems*.

^e *Kun-byed rgyal-po*.

Voidness in Mahamadhyamaka: Unification of the Zhentongpa and Rangtongpa Views

We have seen voidness explains the capacity of manifestation of spontaneous awareness. We have also seen that Mahamadhyamaka explains absolute truth or Buddha-nature as the inseparability of appearances and emptiness. And we have seen that in Madhyamaka in general there is a rangtong and a zhentong mode of emptiness. Therefore, at this point it is important to establish the precise meaning the term “voidness” or “emptiness” has in each of these contexts, and clarify the relations between the different meanings of the term.

Let us begin with the meaning of these terms when it is said that the capacity of manifestation of spontaneous awareness depends on the latter’s voidness. A pot, a jug, a jar, a glass and any other hollow container are said to be empty when they do not contain anything liquid or solid and therefore we can fill them with anything liquid or solid we may wish to put in them. Now suppose that, in a loosely similar sense, we say that a mirror is inherently empty: the statement will make sense if what we are trying to say is that the mirror does not exhibit any fixed image, nor is filled with image-obstructing matter, and therefore it can “fill itself” with the reflection of whatever is put in front of it.

However, when a pot, a jug, a jar, a glass or any other hollow container is filled with walnuts, for it to be filled with almonds it will have to be emptied of the walnuts that had been filling it so far. This is not the case with a mirror, which does not need to be emptied of what had been filling it so far in order to “fill itself” with the image of whatever new object is placed in front of it: as the mirror “fills itself” with the new image, the old one *automatically* disappears.²⁵⁵ The fact that the mirror does not need to be actively emptied of the reflections it contains for it to fill itself with a new reflection may be taken to mean that, even while filled with images, a mirror is empty (for it is still ready to fill itself with new images), and therefore that the images that fill the mirror also are empty (among other senses of the term, they may be said to be empty in the sense in which space is said to be empty: in that they are nonobstructing). Therefore, in a very particular sense, it is possible to say that, unlike the emptiness of a pot, a jug, a jar, a glass or any other hollow container, the emptiness of a mirror is somehow inherent to it, and also that whatever fills a mirror is as inherently empty as the mirror itself. In fact, one of the eight similes of illusion taught by Shakyamuni and considered at the beginning of this chapter was that phenomena “appear without having a self-nature, like a reflected image:” the very nature of reflections illustrates the fact that phenomena do not have a self-nature and therefore that they are utterly empty in the rangtong sense of the word. (The relevance of this simile of illusion in explaining the voidness of the contents of spontaneous awareness explains one of the main reasons why the Madhyamika-Swatantrika-Yogacharas related voidness to apparitionality.)

One of the reasons why I illustrated spontaneous awareness or primordial gnosis with the simile of the mirror or LCD screen, is precisely insofar as emptiness in the above sense is inherent to the mirror or the LCD screen: just like the mirror or LCD screen, primordial gnosis or spontaneous awareness will “fill itself” with any content, depending on contributory conditions. And, as we have seen, whatever “fills” spontaneous awareness or primordial gnosis is in turn utterly void in the double sense of lacking self-existence (rangtong emptiness) and of not obstructing the capacity of spontaneous awareness to “fill itself” with different contents. (In the case of the mirror, the contributory conditions on

which reflections depend are the objects we place in front of it. In the case of the LCD screen, the conditions on which images depend are the electric impulses produced by the interaction of the hardware, the software and the input of information. In the case of spontaneous awareness or primordial gnosis, in relation to which there is nothing that may be said to be other or that may be regarded as external [zhentong emptiness], the secondary causes are the data on which perception depends, which in turn depend on that which may most appropriately be referred to as an “objective reality:” the Base.²⁵⁶ Though in *samsara* the mind is conditioned by programs, primordial awareness is not so conditioned, and therefore when mind disappears upon Awakening there is a total freedom of awareness.)

The capacity of spontaneous awareness or primordial gnosis to fill itself with any content depending on contributory circumstances may be said to be the emptiness or voidness inherent to it: it is this emptiness that allows it to manifest the multifarious phenomena of our experience, which arise as the play of the self-luminosity (i.e., of the clarity) of this gnosis or awareness. We have seen that a mirror is empty or void regardless of whether it is “filled” with images or it is “empty” of images (for example, because it is in the dark). This also is the case with spontaneous awareness or primordial gnosis, and the sense in which it is said that this awareness or gnosis is empty is a most important general meaning of the term “emptiness:” *in this sense, emptiness (is) the dharmakaya qua Base*, or, what is the same, *the dharmakaya aspect of the Buddha-nature qua Base*; though, as such, it implies the rangtong emptiness of all the phenomena that this awareness or gnosis manifests (which are necessarily empty for the reasons that were reviewed above and those that will be reviewed below), and the zhentong emptiness of this awareness or gnosis itself (for the fact that all that manifests does so thanks to this emptiness and in itself is utterly void, implies that nothing that may be said to be other or that may be regarded as external to this awareness of gnosis manifests in it, and the fact that this very voidness is the dharmakaya shows that the kayas of Buddhahood are inherent to this gnosis or awareness), emptiness in this sense—i.e., as the dharmakaya *qua* Base or as the dharmakaya aspect of the Buddha-nature *qua* Base—cannot be fully identified either with rangtong voidness, with zhentong voidness, or with the sum of both types of voidness.

If awareness were not empty in this sense—i.e., if it were not the Buddha-nature *qua* Base having a dharmakaya aspect that as such allows for the manifestation of its rupakaya aspect—it would necessarily manifest the same phenomena all the time, and the constant change that characterizes human experience would thus be impossible: it is precisely because primordial gnosis or spontaneous awareness is empty in the sense of not bearing any fixed images, and because it continues to be empty even when it is filled with images, that it can manifest all kinds of images. In turn, as shown above, it is because these images are void that they do not obstruct the manifestation of new images: they are void (1) insofar as they can manifest because of the emptiness and reflectiveness of awareness, (2) insofar as they are not obstructing and thus need not be removed in order for the mirror to “fill itself” with new images, and (3) insofar as they are like the empty images that arise by virtue of a play of light. In other words, they are neither self-existent nor subsistent, and therefore they may be said to be void in the rangtong sense of lacking self-existence.

At this point it is important to determine the sense of emptiness when it is said that the ultimate truth corresponding to the Buddha-nature is the inseparability of emptiness

and appearances. Phenomena are inseparable from emptiness in the double sense of being themselves empty of self-existence (rangtong emptiness), and of being inseparable from the all-manifesting voidness of spontaneous awareness of primordial gnosis, which, as shown above, is the dharmakaya *qua* Base, or, what is the same, the dharmakaya aspect of the Buddha-nature *qua* Base. An analogous understanding is expressed by the teachings of Dzogchen Atiyoga when they note that the fact that the phenomena of *samsara* and the metaphenomenon or metaphenomena of *nirvana* can only appear and have their existence thanks to the essence or ngowo^a aspect (i.e., the voidness) and the nature or rangzhin^b aspect (i.e., the luminosity) of the primordial gnosis that is the Base and true nature of all phenomena, **for this implies that these phenomena and metaphenomenon / metaphenomena (which are manifestations of the energy or thukje^c aspect of the Base) lack a self-nature or substance.** In fact, the sense of emptiness that we have been discussing corresponds to the ngowo aspect of the Base in the Dzogchen teachings, which is the Base's emptiness—that which allows all phenomena to manifest—precisely insofar as the ngowo aspect of the Base is but the dharmakaya *qua* Base or, what is the same, the dharmakaya aspect of the Base having the three kayas of Buddhahood.

Furthermore, insofar as the Base is empty in the zhentong sense and so nothing extraneous to the Base ever comes to manifest in the Base, insofar as appearances need not be removed for new appearances to manifest, and because of all the reasons that will be reviewed again here, the whole of the phenomena that manifest are empty in the rangtong sense.^d Indeed, the rangtong emptiness of the myriad phenomena is confirmed by the fact, asserted in the section on the Madhyamaka Rangtongpa subschools, that when subjected to analysis, these phenomena are not found as self-existent entities: we find that whatever we may have taken to be an entity, is in fact but an aggregate of other entities (the ones constituting the parts of the entity under analysis); when we analyze the other entities (i.e., the “parts”), we find that whatever we may have taken to be an entity, is in fact but an aggregate of other entities (the ones constituting the parts of the part under analysis)... and so on and on into microscopic levels that we cannot reach with our bare senses and with regard to which, no matter how ideological the sciences may be, we have no alternative but to resort to contemporary physics—which, as we have seen, clearly implies that there are no self-existing entities at any level of the dimensional spectrum.

From another perspective, it is clear that no samsaric, relative phenomenon of our experience, whether subject or object, exists inherently or independently, insofar as all phenomena depend on the spurious subject-object dichotomy that results from the delusory valuation-absolutization of the directional threefold thought structure and the concomitant structuring of consciousness in a directional manner. Phenomena that appear as object, in particular, besides depending on the subject-object duality, also depend on being singled out (which gives rise to the figure-ground dichotomy) and on being recognized and perceived in terms of a delusorily valued concept.

As we have seen, the concepts in terms of which we perceive our objects depend on the category of thought that makes up its *genus proximum* and on the category that

^a *Ngo-bo*.

^b *Rang-bzhin*.

^c *Thugs-rje*.

^d In this regard, see Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], E. Capriles, Ed., unpublished, and Capriles, Elías, 2000a.

makes up its *differentia specifica*; therefore, all phenomena can also be said to depend on these two categories and therefore on the whole of the phenomena that, upon being grouped together, gave rise to those categories. And since the above categories are established in relation to all other categories, our phenomenon can be said to depend on the totality of categories, and also on the whole of the phenomena that, upon being grouped together, gave rise to the totality of categories.

Therefore, all phenomena—including the mental subject and all of the segments of the continuum of appearance that mental functions can single out and establish as objects (whether of the kind that we consider to be mental or of the type that we consider to be physical)—are dependent and, as such, are empty and relatively rather than absolutely existent. (Je Tsongkhapa was quite right in emphasizing the fact that emptiness is implied by dependent arising, rather than being the absence of dependent arisings, something that annuls dependent arisings, or the like.)

Furthermore, as we have seen repeatedly, absolute reality, being that which has no *genus proximum* and no *differentia specifica*, is absolutely unthinkable and ineffable. In turn, all individual phenomena are in truth this unthinkable and ineffable absolute reality. Since, as shown in the discussion of general Madhyamaka, no map corresponds exactly to the territory of the given, nothing that can be asserted concerning any entity whatsoever can exactly correspond to it or exhaust it. This fact implies the rangtong emptiness of entities, for the fact that a cart can be equally said *to be a cart* and *not to be a cart* implies that *in itself it is not a cart*, and the fact that a cart can be equally said *to be* and *not to be* implies that *in itself it does not exist as an entity*.

So far we have considered the voidness of spontaneous awareness or primordial gnosis, understood as the capacity of this gnosis or awareness to fill itself with any content whatsoever; we have explored why this emptiness implies the emptiness of self-existence or voidness of self-existence of all individual phenomena; and we have reviewed some of the traditional reasons why the Rangtongpas insisted that all entities are utterly empty. We have also seen that zhentong voidness consists in the fact that absolute truth *qua* Buddha-nature is free from anything other than itself and therefore can neither contain soils or blemishes, nor lack its own Buddhist qualities. And, finally, we have seen that the fact that spontaneous awareness or primordial gnosis is empty in the zhentong sense implies that neither the phenomena of *samsara* nor the qualities of *nirvana* are other with regard to this awareness or gnosis and therefore that they are not different substances—which means that they are empty in the rangtong sense.

The above explains why, just as rangtong emptiness is inherent to individual phenomena, zhentong voidness is inherent to spontaneous awareness or primordial gnosis, which corresponds to the Buddha-nature that, according to this system, is the absolute truth. As we have seen, the simile of a mirror was used to illustrate this gnosis or awareness insofar as, just as is the case with a mirror, it is ceaselessly filling itself with contents—which implies that the former is inherently void insofar as it can always fill itself with a new phenomenon, and that the latter are empty of self-existence. Finally, the mirror had to be represented as being self-luminous insofar as the contents with which this gnosis or awareness fills itself do not come from a dimension external to it (in fact, there is no such dimension), but are manifestations of its own nature, which is the Buddha-nature.

It is insofar as spontaneous awareness or primordial gnosis does not contain and cannot contain anything other than Buddha-nature, that it is void in the zhentong sense: it

is undivided, unsullied and immaculate, and does not lack its own Buddhist qualities. Furthermore, insofar as appearances are an essential aspect of the Buddha-nature, which is defined as the indivisibility of appearances and voidness, zhentong voidness implies that all appearances, being the Buddha-nature itself, are perfect, unsullied and immaculate, and can by no means be soiled.

As repeatedly noted above, the essential point with regard to the relationship between zhentong emptiness and rangtong voidness is that they apply, respectively, to different perspectives that may be taken when considering the continuum that is the Buddha-nature. In fact, we have seen that zhentong voidness applies to this continuum *qua* indivisible whole, whereas rangtong voidness applies to each of the illusory entities that may be singled out in that continuum. When the inner, subtle Madhyamaka in general explains absolute truth as the *indivisibility of emptiness and appearances*, it is obvious that the term “emptiness” refers to the emptiness of self-existence that Tibetans call rangtong, for this type of voidness applies to each and all of the multifarious appearances. However, insofar as appearances are also indivisible from the spontaneous awareness or primordial gnosis represented with the example of the mirror, which is inherently void insofar as it has the capacity to fill itself with any content whatsoever without previously having to be emptied of pre-existing contents, and which also is void in the zhentong sense insofar as it cannot contain anything extraneous to it, the statement that appearances are inseparable from emptiness may also be understood to mean that they are inseparable from the voidness of the said gnosis or awareness, both in the sense of its capacity to fill itself with any content, and in that of its zhentong voidness—both of which, as we have seen, imply the rangtong voidness of all phenomena. Furthermore, as we have seen, zhentong voidness also applies to appearances insofar as these are an indivisible part of the immaculate Buddha-nature that contains no soils or blemishes and that possesses the whole of the perfect qualities of Buddhahood—and therefore these appearances are perfect, immaculate and unsullied.

In order to express the essence of the Rangtongpa and Zhentongpa views with regard to *samsara* and *nirvana*, it suffices to say that the Zhentongpa view refers to *nirvana* insofar as it is based on the fact that the Buddhas do not perceive delusory appearances, and the Rangtongpa view refers to *samsara* insofar as it is rooted on the fact that the appearances perceived by sentient beings are delusory. Thus the Buddhas are compared to someone who is awake and sentient beings are compared to someone who is dreaming: the one who is dreaming perceives appearances that he or she takes to be true but which are actually deceptive, whereas the one who is awake simply does not perceive such misleading appearances.

The same applies to superior bodhisattvas in the Contemplation state: from the sameness of this state they do not perceive the multifarious appearances of relative truth, and insofar as they dwell in a single truth that is characterized by sameness and that is beyond all discrimination, they do not differentiate between the two truths. The duality of the two truths is only perceived from the illusory divisiveness of the state of post-Contemplation, but since this is a delusory perception, in no state whatsoever is there a duality or plurality of truths:^a

^a Dudjom Rinpoche, J. Y. D., English 1991, Trans.: Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein, vol. I, pp. 209-210.

One should know that even [though] the intellect designates “two truths” [as being different, these] are [in truth] of a supremely pure, indivisible sameness throughout the extent of [both] existence and quiescence, because they are merely names and words, not existing independently in reality. As [Longchenpa’s *The Wish Fulfilling Treasure*] puts it:

“Since [the indivisible truth of realization] is beyond the interrupted and classified objects of relative appearance, and transcends the two designated truths [which are the relative and the absolute], all elaboration is pacified. The indivisible truth is neither proven nor disproved; since, in the [all-encompassing empty] expanse, appearances and emptiness are naturally without duality, this truth also is said to be indivisible.”

And when the two truths are allocated [in terms of] the universal logic of conventions [by determining what pertains to] the abiding nature [which is the dharmakaya’s primordial emptiness, and what pertains to] the apparitional nature, [Longchenpa’s] text says:

“Thus all things of *samsara*, which are bewildering appearances, are relative truth because they are false and fallacious. The [true condition] of *nirvana* which is profound, calm inner radiance, is held to be the ultimate truth of unchanging natural expression.”

The totality of the above shows to what extent the Madhyamaka Zhentongpa and Rangtongpa subschools deal with a single, indivisible continuum from different and yet mutually complementary standpoints, and how their respective views imply each other and would be incomplete and partial without each other. In fact, if phenomena were empty in the rangtong sense but the Base of which they are part were not void in the zhentong sense, the Base would be soiled and would not be the Buddha-nature containing the three kayas of Buddhahood; if this were so, the Path would have to consist in constructing Buddhahood, and since all that is constructed is conditioned and compounded, there would be no definitive liberation from suffering and therefore no true capacity to help others.²⁵⁷ In turn, if phenomena were not void in the rangtong sense, the Base would be the sum of a plethora of self-existing entities that arise and at some point cease, which would mean that it would not be unconditioned and uncompounded—and therefore its unveiling would not represent a definitive solution to the sufferings of *samsara* and would not result in the capacity to help others.²⁵⁸ This allows us to understand more thoroughly the reasons why the all-encompassing, absolutely panoramic view that is seen from the highest summit, which is Mahamadhyamaka, necessarily has to embrace and harmonize the perspectives seen from all lower mountaintops—and in particular the zhentong and rangtong perspectives on voidness.

Buddha-Nature *qua* Base, Path and Fruit

All that has been discussed so far has demonstrated that the Mahamadhyamika conception of absolute truth is far more thorough than its Rangtongpa equivalent and has a greater potential to explain the Base, the Path and the Fruit. Furthermore, the Rangtongpas’ absolute truth, which corresponds to mere voidness or emptiness, being but an absence (of self-existence or “inherent existence”), does not have the potential to give rise to the spontaneously perfect universe and so cannot at all account for its manifestation. The absolute truth that allows for all phenomena to manifest and that

includes all phenomena is not a mere absence: it is the primordial gnosis or spontaneous awareness that is the Base and true nature of all phenomena, which can manifest these phenomena precisely because of the “emptiness” inherent to it (an emptiness that, as we have seen, in this sense consists in the fact that this gnosis or awareness is not filled with any fixed, self-existent, subsistent form or solid matter and thus has the potential to manifest all forms). In fact, since a mere absence does not have the potentiality to produce anything, if someone claimed that a mere absence is the source and true nature of all phenomena, he or she would be granting these the status of the son of a barren woman.

(The fact that the Base cannot be reduced to a mere absence is most clear in the Dzogchen teachings and in the inner Nyingma Tantras in general, which refer to the “emptiness” aspect of the primordial gnosis or spontaneous awareness that is the Base and true nature of all phenomena as the *katak*^a or “primordial purity” aspect of our Vajra-nature.²⁵⁹ In fact, according to these teachings, emptiness is but one aspect of this nature, the other one being its *lhundrub*^b or “spontaneous perfection” aspect, corresponding to the manifestation of the multifarious phenomena and the latter’s perfect, wondrous functionality.)

As we saw in the consideration of the Zhentongpa subschool, the subtle, inner Madhyamaka speaks of Buddha-nature *qua* Base, Buddha-nature *qua* Path and Buddha-nature *qua* Fruit. The above applies to the Buddha-nature *qua* Base, which corresponds to the fact that since beginningless time the true nature of both Buddhas and sentient beings has been the indivisibility of voidness and appearances. The Buddha-nature *qua* Path is the fact that, in sentient beings treading the Path, the patency of the Buddha-nature *qua* Base progressively cleanses this indivisible nature of the obscurations that cloud it. And the Buddha-nature *qua* Fruit is the incontrovertible fact that, when all obscurations have been cleansed, the Buddha-nature *qua* Base is no longer veiled, and therefore the true nature of awareness manifests in its purity as the dharmakaya, out of which all the qualities of Buddhas spontaneously manifest.

With regard to the Buddha-nature *qua* Path, it must be noted that phenomena are countless and therefore, if the Path had to consist in analyzing the myriad phenomena one by one in order to establish their mode of existence, the Fruit would never be reached.²⁶⁰ Contrariwise, the Buddha-nature that corresponds to primordial gnosis or spontaneous awareness, and in which appearances and emptiness are inseparable, is not manifold; all phenomena manifest in this continuum, which is utterly void of substances other than itself (zhentong voidness)—and insofar as all phenomena are inseparable from this continuum, they are all empty of self-existence (rangtong emptiness). Therefore, upon realizing the true nature of this continuum, the latter’s zhentong emptiness and the rangtong voidness of all individual phenomena are automatically and simultaneously realized. However, the really important thing here is that what is realized is not a mere absence, but the Buddha-nature that is the true absolute truth of the Mahayana and that contains all the qualities of Buddhahood—and therefore that these qualities manifest spontaneously in the individual who becomes firmly established in this realization.

Finally, concerning the Buddha-nature *qua* Fruit, it is obvious that Buddhahood cannot be reduced to a mere absence (of self-existence), for it contains the totality of the supreme positive qualities of the Awake Ones, which could not be contained in a mere

^a *Ka-dag*.

^b *Lhun-grub*.

absence. Nor can a mere absence bear these qualities as Fruit, for a mere absence is necessarily sterile and cannot bring forth anything positive—and therefore, as noted above, to claim Buddhahood is the Fruit of a mere absence, would amount to granting it the status of the son of a barren woman. Furthermore, if the qualities of Buddhahood were to be produced by means of contrived activities on the Path, they would be conditioned and therefore impermanent, and thus would not represent a definitive solution to suffering, nor would they result in the capacity to help others. As remarked above, the authentic qualities of Buddhahood follow naturally from the complete, irreversible unveiling of the absolute truth that consists in the Buddha-nature containing the three kayas and the totality of the natural qualities of the Awake Ones—including the rupakaya aspect of Buddhahood that is fully active and deals with countless beings and other phenomena.²⁶¹ As Sakya Pandita wrote concerning the Rangtongpa conception of absolute truth as emptiness or voidness and therefore as a mere absence:^a

(When) the mind is realized to be empty, it cannot be estimated according to (the standards set in) the three *pitaka* and the four *Tantrapitaka*, for that is equivalent to the cessation of the pious attendants; but when it is realized to be coalescence, such an estimation can be made. In the exclusively empty aspect of mind, the Three Precious Jewels are incomplete. In the coalescence of awareness and emptiness, the seed (of Buddhahood) is complete, and if the meaning of that coalescence is well realized, (Buddhahood) is actualized completely.

The problem involved in asserting a mere absence to be the absolute truth, the full and irreversibly realization of which corresponds to Awakening, brings to mind the dire warning expressed in the *Surangama Sutra*:^b

If the causal basis is false, its fruit will be false, and the search for the Buddha's Awakening will lead to failure.

If Mahamadhyamaka is applied correctly, this will not come to pass, for, as we have seen, in it absolute truth is not a barren woman which can only bear false children (as is the case with a mere voidness), but the Buddha-nature, which may be viewed *qua* Base, *qua* Path or *qua* Fruit: as we have seen, in this case the Path consists in the repeated unveiling of the absolute truth corresponding to the authenticity of the Buddha-nature that contains the whole of the qualities of Buddhahood, and the Fruit is but the irreversible unveiling of this condition, as a result of which all the qualities of Buddhahood inherent in it manifest spontaneously.

Contrariwise, the dire consequences the sutra warns us against are most likely to obtain when the emptiness posited as the absolute truth of the Rangtongpas is not, as required by the original Prasangika, beyond all mental constructions, but consists in a conceptually tainted, conditioned experience manifesting as an object of knowledge (or in the transformation of such an experience into a nondual, nonconceptual state by means of the application of pacification [Skt., *shamatha*; Tib., *zhinai*], for that matter).

^a Sakya Pandita (*Sas-kya Pandita*), *Answers to the Questions of Nyemo Gomchen (sNy'i-mo sgom-chen-gyi dris-lan*: text No. 98 in the *Sa-skya bka'-'bum*), quoted in Dudjom Rinpoche, J. Y. D., English 1991, trans.: Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein, vol. I, p. 203.

^b Luk, Charles, trans., 1966.

Mahamadhyamika unification of the Views of the Two Rangtongpa Schools in terms of the Rangtongpa explanation of the Contemplation and post-Contemplation states of Superior Bodhisattvas

Concerning Mahamadhyamaka's unification of the view of the two subschools of Madhyamaka Rangtongpa, which are Prasangika and Swatantrika, first of all it must be remembered that Total Madhyamaka, like the Swatantrika subschools, favors yogic practice over the merely logical refutations privileged by the Prasangikas; therefore, like the Swatantrika schools, Mahamadhyamaka also makes use of a series of concepts that respond to yogic experience and that serve as a footing for yogic practice, and that the Prasangikas refute on merely logical grounds. This is the case with *swasamvedana* (which, as we have seen, Mahamadhyamaka conceives in a way that is far more correct than that in which it is understood by the Swatantrika), with the *klishtamanovijñana* and the *alaya (vijñana)*, with instantaneous time moments, etc.

However, the Mahamadhyamika view concerning the emptiness of self-existence of the multifarious phenomena that are singled out in the continuum of the Base is that of the Madhyamaka Prasangika, which according to Total Madhyamaka corresponds to the way these phenomena are apprehended in the state of absolute truth of superior bodhisattvas.²⁶² And yet, rather than dismissing as utterly baseless the Swatantrika opinion that phenomena exist inherently in the conventional plane, a most important Mahamadhyamika Master noted that this view responds to the experience of superior bodhisattvas in the post-Contemplation state in which relative truth manifests anew. In order to understand the way Mahamadhyamaka achieves this reconciliation of the views on voidness of both Prasangikas and Swatantrikas, first we need to know the supreme Rangtongpa explanation that posits two types of relative truth and two manifestations of absolute truth.

In Rangtongpa terminology, (I) Relative truth may be: (1) inverted or incorrect (Skt., *mithyasamvritisatya*; Tib., logpai kundzob denpa^a), which corresponds to the everyday experiences of normal individuals and to those of bodhisattvas before they reach the third path of the gradual Mahayana; and (2) correct or sound (Skt., *tathyasamvritisatya*; Tib., yangdaggpai kundzob denpa^b), which corresponds to the experience of bodhisattvas on the third and fourth paths of the gradual Mahayana (which include levels [Skt., *bhumi*; Tib., *sa*] one to ten) *in their post-Contemplation state*.²⁶³ (These two types of truth must not be confused with the ones considered at the very beginning of this chapter, which were: [1] ineffectual relative truth, constituted by phenomena that lack effectiveness in the sense of not being able to produce the effects that would be expected from them, as is the case with the falling hairs seen by someone with cataract, which cannot make the person bald; and [2] actual or effective relative truth, constituted by the phenomena that are fully effective, like the falling hairs that make one progressively bald.)

In terms of the same terminology, some Nyingmapa authors have classified (II) Absolute or ultimate truth (Skt., *paramarthatatya*; Tib., döndam denpa^c) into: (3)

^a *Log pa'i kun-rdzob bden-pa.*

^b *Yang-dag-pa'i kun-rdzob bden-pa.*

^c *Don-dam bden-pa.*

provisional absolute truth, which corresponds to the Contemplation state of the bodhisattva in the third and fourth paths of the gradual Mahayana; and (4) definitive absolute truth, corresponding to the fifth path of the gradual Mahayana, which according to this system is unsurpassable, complete Buddhahood beyond the alternation of a Contemplation state and a post-Contemplation state. Thus we have:

(1) Inverted or erroneous relative truth, consisting in the experience of normal individuals, who are possessed by the delusion called *avidya* in the first two of the senses the Dzogchen classification adopted here give the term, and in general are not even aware of it, but take their experiences to be perfectly sound—which means that they are also affected by the delusion called *avidya* in the third sense the term has in the Dzogchen classification adopted here.

(2) Correct relative truth, consisting in the experience of the post-Contemplation state of bodhisattvas on the third and fourth paths of the gradual Mahayana. Although delusion does arise in this state, it does so with lesser force than in the case of normal individuals. This is so because, as a result of the repeated manifestation of absolute truth in the Contemplation state, the power of the delusory valuation-absolutization of thought lessens, and as a result of the repeated manifestation of absolute truth in the Contemplation state and of the practices carried out with relative truth in the post-Contemplation state, the experience of the post-Contemplation state of these bodhisattvas involves some awareness of the fact that everything that arises is like an illusion—and therefore the third of the senses the term *avidya* or *marigpa* has in the Dzogchen classification adopted here does not manifest in their experience. Furthermore, since this awareness of the illusoriness of everything allows bodhisattvas in this state not to take any intellectual viewpoint as absolutely true or false, they are aware that all viewpoints are equally *valid* and thus can resort to whatever *valid* viewpoint concerning reality they may deem necessary to apply as a medicine in order to balance their interlocutor's one-sided clinging to another equally valid viewpoint, so as to lead the latter beyond the state of inverted or erroneous relative truth. Therefore, as we have seen, they make assertions that are mainly other-directed or exterior-directed, but which to some extent are interior-directed, for as they are still affected by the delusory valuation of thought. And, independently of whether or not Hui-neng's "method of interrelated opposites" (corresponding to the Skeptics' method of *isosthenia*) be posited as an official Madhyamaka strategy, the method taught by the Sixth Patriarch of Ch'an in China will spontaneously issue from this state of correct relative truth—or from the state of definitive absolute truth, for that matter.

(3) Provisional absolute truth, which corresponds to the meta-experience²⁶⁴ of the Contemplation state of individuals on the third and fourth bodhisattva paths (i.e., from the first through the tenth level [Skt., *bhumi*; Tib., *sa*]), in which the delusion called *avidya* does not manifest in any of the three senses the term has in the Dzogchen classification adopted here, and therefore the corresponding phenomena of *samsara* do not arise.

(4) Definitive absolute truth, which consists in the meta-experience of the state of realization of Buddhas, which is beyond the duality of true and false, but that no longer can be affected by delusion.

The Mahamadhyamika Master who achieved the unification of the Prasangika and the Swatantrika conceptions of voidness was Ju Mipham Jamyang Namgyäl^{a, 265} who

^a 'Ju Mi-pham 'Jam-dbyangs rNam-rgyal (1846-1912).

toward the end of the 19th century, in a debate presided by Dza Petrül Rinpoche (Jigme Chökyi Wangpo^a), held that the Prasangika view responded to (3) the meta-experience that manifests in the absolute state of Contemplation or nyamzhak^b of bodhisattvas treading the third and fourth Mahayana paths, and that the Swatantrika point of view responded to (2) the experience that manifests in the post-Contemplation or jethob^c state of the same bodhisattvas.²⁶⁶ All Tibetan Buddhist schools, except for the one to which Ju Mipham's opponent belonged, admitted this view.

For the above to be fully appreciated, it may be useful to review once again the views on voidness of self-existence held by the Prasangika and the Swatantrika schools. As stated in a previous section of this book, Gendün Chöphel^d notes that an essential difference between Prasangika and Swatantrika is expressed by the following dialogue:

When Jamyang Shepa^e asked Gyüchen Sang Gyamtso^f what is the difference between the views of the Prasangikas and [those of] the Swatantrikas, he pointed at a pillar in the room and said, "According to the Swatantrikas, this vertical piece of wood is a pillar. According to the Prasangikas, this is nothing more than a basis for the [imputation of the] name^g 'pillar'."

When Bälmanh^h pandita paid a visit to Arig Geshe Chenmoⁱ, the latter asked him, "Which of the five fields of philosophy are you learned in?" "Most of my training is in Madhyamika," he replied. "Well, then, according to the system of the Prasangikas, what is this?" asked Arig Geshe Chenmo, as he pointed to the table in front of them. "That is a table." "That must mean it is not a table, because it is the basis for the [imputation of the] name 'table.'" To this, Bälmanh pandita could make no reply.

These two sayings express the essence of the [respective] views of Prasangikas and Swatantrikas. Thus, believing the square piece of wood in front of us to be a table is to the Prasangikas an instance of confirmed mind (i.e., of delusion to be transcended), but to the Swatantrikas it is a valid cognition based on convention. Similarly, according to the Prasangikas, [when made by realized ones, and therefore also when found in the Buddhist teachings, the assertion] that the square piece of wood in front of us is a table, is an other-directed assertion (which, as such, is not made from the heart); [conversely,] to the Swatantrikas (who are not concerned as to whether or not it is made from the heart), it is an independent voluntary assertion^j. (Note by the author of the present book: The categories of other-directed assertion and assertion made from the heart will be discussed in a subsequent section of this chapter.)

Mipham's argument conciliating the views of Swatantrikas and Prasangikas, is that the latter's tenets respond to the meta-experience of the state of Contemplation or nyamzhak of bodhisattvas in the third and fourth paths, insofar as in it they do not

^a *Dza dPal-sprul 'Jigs-med Chos-kyi dBang-po* (1808-1887).

^b *mNyam-bzhag*; Skt., *samahita*.

^c *rJes-thob*; Skt., *prishthalabdha*.

^d Gendün Chöphel (*dGe-'dun Chos-'phel*, 1905-1951), *dBu ma'i zab gdad snying por dril ba'i legs bshad kLu sgrub dgongs rgyan*.

^e *Jam dByangs bZhad pa* (1648-1721), the student of the Fifth Dalai Lama who founded Ladrang (*bLa-brang*) Monastery in Amdo.

^f *Gyud-chen Sangs rgya-mTsho*, another student of the Fifth Dalai Lama (1653-1705).

^g *gDags-gzhi*.

^h *dBal mang pandita*, the famous scholar from Ladrang Monastery in Amdo.

ⁱ *A-rig dGe-bshes Chen-mo*, the famous scholar from Ladrang Monastery in Amdo.

^j *Rang-dbang gis khas-len*.

perceive any phenomena as being self-existent, even on the conventional plane, and those of the Swatantrikas responds to the experience of the state of post-Contemplation or jethob of the same bodhisattvas, insofar as in it once again they delusorily perceive phenomena as being self-existent on the conventional plane (though, as we have seen, this experience is not so strong as in normal deluded individuals, for superior bodhisattvas have a greater or lesser degree of awareness of illusoriness—which is reflected in the Swatantrika view according to which voidness means that both the manifold “external” phenomena and the mind that perceives them are not real but are just appearances comparable to the dream images they held to be void). Furthermore, the awareness of illusoriness that characterizes the post-Contemplation state of superior Bodhisattvas becomes more intense as the bodhisattva climbs through the levels [Skt., *bhumi*; Tib., *sa*], reaching a peak in the tenth level and disappearing in the eleventh level, which corresponds to the fifth Path and to full Buddhahood, in which illusion no longer manifests and relative truth is definitively surpassed.

The Contemplation and Post-Contemplation States of Superior Bodhisattvas Explained in Terms of the Three Natures Posited by Mahamadhyamaka

Now the four types of experience and meta-experience listed and expounded above must be explained in terms of the Mahamadhyamaka School, which is based both on the Third and the Second Promulgation, and which, like the Yogachara School, posits three essential natures, which are referred to by a terminology somehow akin to that of the Yogacharas (but which is not Yogachara, as the three natures are also expounded in Sutras of the Second Promulgation such as the *Ashtasahasrikapindartha*²⁶⁷ and the *Pañchavimshatishahasrikaprajñāparamita*,²⁶⁸ as well as in related literature.²⁶⁹ The names of the three natures in this system are: (1) absolutely or ultimately existing nature (Skt., *parinispānalakshana*; Tib., [chönyi] yongdrubkyi tsennyi^a); (2) dependent nature (Skt., *paratantralakshana*; Tib., zhenwangi tsennyi^b); and (3) imaginary nature (Skt., *parikalpītalakshana*; Tib., kuntagkyi tsennyi^c). **Before going on into this explanation, let it be repeated that the distinction between paratantralakshana and parikalpītalakshana is very similar to the one the Gellugpas make between an entity (say, a chair) and the illusion that the chair exists inherently, which has been successfully criticized by many Nyingmapas, including Ju Mipham, and scholars formed within the Gelug school itself, like Gendün Chöphel. (THIS IS TO BE EXPANDED AND WAS WRITTEN FROM THE STANDPOINT OF YOGACHARA; NOW HAS TO BE EVALUATED IN TERMS OF THE MAHAMADHYAMAKA INTERPRETATION.)**

Absolutely or ultimately existing nature is not a mere voidness; as we have already seen, it consists in the indivisibility of emptiness and appearances, and as such it is absolutely without substantiality. Though this absolutely or ultimately existing nature is empty of the dependent arisings of dependently conceived nature and of the imaginary selves and in general of the conceptual elaboration of imaginary nature, it is not empty of

^a (*Chos-nyid*) yongs-grub-kyi mtshan-nyid.

^b *gZhan-dbang-gi mtshan-nyid*.

^c *Kun-brtags-kyi mtshan-nyid*.

the enlightened attributes of the kayas and it is not empty of spontaneous awareness or primordial gnosis.

Dependent nature, which manifests only in *samsara*, comprises the basic phenomena that come into being when an image is taken as object, or, in other words, when a perceiving consciousness (to which a illusory mental subject is indissolubly associated) and its object arise co-emergently.²⁷⁰ Firstly, consciousness is structured in a directional manner and the super-subtle conceptual structure called the “directional threefold thought structure” is delusorily valued, giving rise to the illusion that there is a perceiver, a perception and something perceived. Immediately thereafter, the mental events single out a recognizable pattern in the totality of sense data that appears as object, and take the resulting image as object. It is important to underline that this nature, which is produced and compounded, and which includes the five skandhas, the psychophysical bases and the activity fields, and so on and on, is said to be utterly insubstantial insofar as creation itself lacks substantiality. (This utter lack of substantiality is explained in terms of the refutation of the four possible modes of creation, which are: creation from self, creation from other, creation from both self and others, and creation from neither self nor other [i.e., causeless creation].)²⁷¹

Imaginary nature comprises all of the illusions issuing from the delusory valuation-absolutization of the essential features of entities, or of the names and symbols applied to them (all of which are mere fictions lacking true existence), and from the mistaken projection of a self or independent self-nature (Skt., *atma*; Tib., *dagpa*^a), either unto individuals or unto phenomena other than individuals.

Dependently conceived nature is empty of the delusions of imaginary nature, for it does not involve the products of the delusory valuation-absolutization of the essential features of entities, or of the names and symbols applied to them (all of which are mere fictions lacking true existence), nor does it involve the mistaken projection of a self or independent self-nature, either unto individuals or unto phenomena other than individuals.

In turn, absolutely or ultimately existing nature is not only empty of the delusions of imaginary nature; insofar as the phenomena of dependently conceived nature in truth never come into being, but arise as mere deceptive appearances, it is also empty of dependently conceived entities. In fact, the perceiving consciousness and the image that it takes as object, which constitute dependently conceived nature (and which, as we have seen, arise co-emergently as the result of the delusory valuation-absolutization of the directional threefold thought structure which gives rise to the subject-object duality, and of the singling out of recognizable patterns out of the totality of sense data appearing as object), are just as empty and as illusory as the imaginary nature resulting from the delusory valuation-absolutization of coarser thoughts. It is evident that, insofar as the realization of absolutely or ultimately existing nature makes it clear that attributes are utterly without substantiality, this lack of substantiality is inherent to this nature.

Now we have to see how the types of truth corresponding to the experience of common individuals, to the respective experiences of the post-Contemplation and Contemplation states of bodhisattvas on the third and fourth paths of the gradual

^a *bDag-pa*.

Mahayana, and to the experience of fully Awake Buddhas on the fifth path, may be explained in terms of the three above natures. Dudjom Rinpoche writes:^a

Both modes of Madhyamaka do not differ regarding the cessation of all elaborate signs of the subject-object dichotomy during Contemplative absorption, when balanced in the expanse of the true condition without circumstances to be clarified or established. However, they differ concerning the post-Contemplation state: the coarser, outer Madhyamaka [and in particular the lower Swatantrika subschool] allocates emptiness to the ultimate [truth] and appearances to the relative [reality], whereas Mahamadhyamaka determines the two truths to be [respectively] the harmony and disharmony of the abiding nature [corresponding to the dharmakaya's primordial emptiness] and the apparitional nature [corresponding to the myriad phenomena] (*nenang thun mithun*^b).

In fact, the abiding nature or *nelug*^c, which corresponds to the dharmakaya's primordial emptiness, and the apparitional nature, which corresponds to the myriad phenomena, are said to be in mutual harmony when the apparitional nature is apprehended as being empty, as (is) the dharmakaya; conversely, they are said to be in disharmony when appearances are apprehended as being substantial and therefore as not being empty, as (is) the dharmakaya.

According to Mahamadhyamaka, the ultimately existing nature *qua* Path or *qua* Fruit is the bare apprehension of the indivisibility of the dharmakaya's primordial emptiness (the "abiding nature") and the continuum of appearances (which in this case consists in the metaphenomenon or metaphenomena of *nirvana*). Since *this apprehension does not at all involve the illusion that a perceiving consciousness is experiencing the metaphenomenon or metaphenomena of nirvana*, ultimately existing nature *qua* Path or *qua* Fruit is *not only* devoid of imaginary nature, *but also* of dependently conceived nature (which, as we have seen, necessarily must involve the dependent arising of an image that is taken as object *and* a perceiving consciousness). In fact, dependently conceived nature is delusory because, as remarked above, the appearances resulting from the delusory valuation-absolutization of the supersubtle conceptual structure known as the "directional threefold thought structure" and from the singling out of patterns out of the totality of sense data are not any less delusory than those resulting from the delusory valuation-absolutization of coarser thoughts.

In the case of the final Buddhahood corresponding to the fifth path of the gradual Mahayana, the indivisibility of emptiness and appearances is never again veiled by the manifestation of either dependently conceived nature (since a perceiving consciousness no longer arises) or of imaginary nature (as the essential features of entities, or the names and symbols applied to them, are no longer delusorily valued, and a self or independent self-nature is no longer projected either unto individuals or unto phenomena other than individuals); therefore, delusion no longer obtains.

In the case of the Contemplation state of the bodhisattvas on the third and fourth paths of the gradual Mahayana, the bare awareness of the indivisibility of emptiness and appearances precludes the delusive perception of the latter as being self-existent, but this

^a Paraphrased from Dudjom Rinpoche, J. Y. D., English 1991, trans.: Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein, vol. I, p. 206.

^b *gNas-srang mthun mi-mthun*.

^c *gNas-lugs*.

occurs only for limited periods. In this state dependently conceived nature does not arise, for no perceiving consciousness of the images of apparitional nature arises interdependently with the latter, nor does imaginary nature arise, for the delusorily valued concepts that make up imaginary nature are not projected on the images of apparitional nature.

Contrariwise, in the case of the post-Contemplation state of the bodhisattvas on the third and fourth paths, dependently conceived nature does arise as there takes place the co-emergent arising of images of apparitional nature manifesting as object, on the one hand, and a perceiving consciousness, on the other. Furthermore, imaginary nature is projected unto dependently conceived nature, just as happens in the case of common, deluded individuals. However, familiarity with the manifestation of absolute nature in the Contemplation state causes the delusory effect of these two natures to be weakened in the post-Contemplation state. Therefore, in the latter state the individual has a significant awareness of the illusory character of: (1) the core of dependently conceived nature, which is the subject-object duality together with individuation;²⁷² and (2) the main features of imaginary nature, which are (a) the delusory appearance of selfhood or self-existence, and (b) the illusion that the essential features of entities, or the meaning of the names and symbols applied to them, are absolutely true.

Finally, in the case of normal deluded individuals or bodhisattvas who have not yet reached the third path of the gradual Mahayana, the phenomena of dependent nature arise when a perceiving consciousness co-emerges with the illusory images of apparitional nature; furthermore, these phenomena are perceived in terms of the delusions of imaginary nature, and so the essential features of entities, or the names and symbols applied to them (all of which are mere fictions lacking true existence) are delusorily valued, and a self or independent self-nature is mistakenly projected on them. Therefore, the apparitional nature, which in this case is constituted by the phenomena of *samsara*, is perceived as separate and divorced from the abiding nature or *nelug*^a (which corresponds to the dharmakaya's primordial emptiness), and thus as being self-existent. Therefore, in this case there is a disharmony between these two natures.

The Unconditioned and Uncompounded, and the Conditioned and Compounded

In all brands of Buddhism the Pali *sankhata*, the Sanskrit *samskrita* and the Tibetan *düje*^b, which mean compounded, made up, configured or intentionally contrived, apply to whatever phenomena are characterized by: (1) production, birth or origination; (2) subsistence; (3) change, and (4) dissolution or disappearance. Contrariwise, the negative counterparts of these terms, which are the Pali *asankhata*, the Sanskrit *asamskrita* and the Tibetan *dümaje*^c, embrace the senses of the terms uncompounded, unoriginated, unconfigured and not intentionally contrived, and apply to all that does not involve any of the four characteristics of the conditioned and compounded.

In all Madhyamaka schools, it is understood that *sankhata*, *samskrita* or *düje* expresses the principal characteristic of samsaric phenomenal entities in their totality, for

^a *gNas-lugs*.

^b *'Du-byas*.

^c *'Dus-ma-byas*.

the incontrovertible principle of interdependent origination or *pratitya samutpada* implies that these entities are mutually conditioned and interrelated (which is understood in terms of both interpretations of that principle: that of the Pratyekabuddhayana, which views it as the temporal succession of the notorious twelve *nidana* or links, and that of the Mahayana expounded in the *Prajñāparamita Sūtras*, which rather than understanding it as temporal succession, conceives it as the synchronic, essential dependence of each and every entity with regard to all other entities).²⁷³

According to Mahamādhyamaka, the whole of the phenomena that, so long as we are in *samsara*, we perceive in conditioned terms, are in their innermost nature unconditioned, insofar as in truth they are the absolutely or ultimately existing nature that is explained as the inseparability of appearances and emptiness, and which according to this school is free of the “four conditions inherent in all that is conditioned” listed in the above paragraph.^a Therefore, it is our perception that is conditioned, and that conditions our experience of phenomena—which themselves are but aspects of the unconditioned *rupakaya* or “body of form” aspect of our Buddha-nature *qua* Base.

In fact, though most texts belonging to the Phalayana (except for some of the so-called “Essence Sūtras” of the Third Promulgation and fundamental associated texts such as Maitreyanatha’s *Ratnagoṭravibhaga* or *Uttaratantra*) view the *rupakaya* as a *product* of the accumulation of merits and the *dharmakaya* a *product* of the accumulation of wisdom (which would imply that Buddhahood is produced by contrived activities carried out on the Path, and as such it is *produced* / caused [Pali *bhēta*; Skt. *nutpada* or *nutpatti*; Tib. *kyepa*^a], born [Pali and Skt. *jata*; Tib. *kyepa*^a], and compounded / conditioned / constructed / made / contrived / fabricated [Pali, *sankhata*; Skt. *samskrita*; Tib. *dūjai*^a—by implication pertaining to *samsara* and as such being marked by threefold delusion and by the four true marks of *samsara*, among which the first three are suffering, impurity, and impermanence, and hence not representing a definitive solution to suffering—or, far less, involving the capacity to help others), Mahamādhyamaka asserts the *rupakaya* to be *inherent in the Buddha-nature qua* Base, which as we know is the indivisibility of appearances and emptiness, and therefore this school affirms *the rupakaya never to arise or cease, not to be affected or modified by conditions, and as such to be unconditioned and un compounded*. And therefore in this view Buddhahood and its authentic qualities follow naturally from the complete, irreversible unveiling of the absolute truth that consists in the Buddha-nature containing the three kayas and the totality of the natural qualities of the Awake Ones. Furthermore, insofar as phenomena are aspects of the *rupakaya qua* Base, they also are *unconditioned and un compounded*. Dudjom Rinpoche writes:^b

Then, as for the actions performed on behalf of living beings by this [emanational] body: Whenever a Tathagata manifests his [or her] all-knowing level, the oceans of the myriad realms of the sentient beings who require training and all the distinctive attributes of the means of instruction, which are derived from his [or her] own essence, are but the display of total compassion. All [those requiring training and all means of training] are of a common savor and *are spontaneously, effortlessly manifest, disregarding causes and conditions such as the provision of merit accumulated by those requiring training and*

^a In this regard the reader is advised to consult Dudjom Rinpoche, J. Y. D., English 1991, Trans.: Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein, vol. I, pp. 196-8, 206-7.

^b Dudjom Rinpoche, J. Y. D., English 1991, Trans.: Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein, vol. I, p. 146.

distinctions of the Conqueror's aspiration. Therefore, the natural expression of the mind of all sentient beings, and the all-pervasive natural expression of the true condition, which is the primordial gnosis of the Buddhas and the nucleus of the Sugata, are inseparable from each other, without coming and going, transferring and changing, as the oil that pervades the sesame seed. *Enlightened activity is manifest therein, pervading the fundamental nature of reality, and its un compounded essence is characteristically [not-im]permanent, pervasive and spontaneous.*

It says in the *Shraddhabaladhanavata ramudrasutra*:

“Mañjushri, in all the myriad world systems of the ten directions, all the domains of the extremists and all the mundane and supramundane activities that occur originate through the spontaneously manifest primordial gnosis of the Tathagata. If you ask why it is so, it is because it possesses distinct attributes.”

For further discussion of Mahamadhyamaka, and in particular of the three natures, and of the meaning the terms “conditioned” and “unconditioned” have in this system, see Dudjom Rinpoche, *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism*. The first matter is dealt with mainly in Chapter Seven of Part III of Book I (*The Fundamentals*), pp. 206-237, though in general the whole of Part III (pp. 151-237) is relevant to it. The second matter is dealt with mainly in pp. 196-8 and 206-7.

Mahamadhyamaka and the Yogachara School (With a Reference to the Madhyamaka Zhentongpa)

We have seen that, insofar as both the Yogachara School and the subtle, inner Madhyamaka are based on the sutras of the Third Promulgation and the commentaries and treatises by the great commentators of these sutras, similarities between the one and the other abound. However, the differences distinguishing these two schools are far more striking than their similarities; as a token, consider the following seven differences between them:

1.- Primordial Gnosis

Firstly, according to the Yogachara School, primordial gnosis (Skt., *jñāna*; Tib., *yeshe*^a) arises when the individual mind directs its intention to the true condition of all entities (Skt., *parinispāna*; Tib., *chönyi yongdrub*^b) and, as a result, *nirvana* obtains. According to Mahamadhyamaka, this is not at all correct. In fact, intention itself implies the existence of a subject of intention and an object of intention, and as such it is always a function of the delusory valuation-absolutization of the directional threefold thought structure that gives rise to dependent nature (Skt., *paratantralakshana*; Tib., *zhenwangi tsennyi*^c), which according to Mahamadhyamaka is a manifestation of delusion.

^a *Ye-she*.

^b *Chos-nyid yongs-grub*.

^c *gZhan-dbang-gi mtshan-nyid*.

Therefore, all kinds of intention will maintain *samsara*, and no type of intention could ever give rise to *nirvana*.

Furthermore, according to Mahamadhyamaka, primordial gnosis, which this school calls the primordial gnosis of spontaneous awareness (Tib., rangrigpai yeshe^a), is not something that arises in order to produce *nirvana*, for otherwise both this gnosis and *nirvana* itself would be conditioned or compounded. In fact, none of the four characteristics of what is conditioned or compounded applies to this gnosis, which has always been the primordially void Buddha-nature that contains the three kayas of Buddhahood and that the teachings alternatively explain *qua* Base, *qua* Path and *qua* Fruit. We have seen that the characteristics of Buddhahood are not produced at some point (for otherwise they would be conditioned or compounded), but have always been inherent to this primordial gnosis *qua* Base; however, when this gnosis is concealed by the manifestation of delusion and as a result *samsara* manifests, with all the beings and phenomena proper of this condition, this also occurs by virtue of the power of this gnosis, and these beings and phenomena are not different or separate from it—just as reflections are never separate from the voidness and the reflectiveness of a mirror (however, as we have seen, they are false appearances that *in truth* have never come into existence). *Qua* Path, this gnosis becomes evident in the state of Contemplation of the bodhisattvas in the Third and Fourth Mahayana Paths. *Qua* Fruit, it is the manifest condition of the Buddhas in the Fifth Mahayana Path.

When nondual primordial gnosis becomes fully evident (which first occurs when it manifests *qua* Path, and which consolidates immovably when it manifests *qua* Fruit), the stains constituted by the phenomena of the subject-object duality that the Rangtongpa view deals with and that it proclaims to be void, do not manifest; then, adherents of Mahamadhyamaka speak of “the naturally manifest primordial gnosis realized through the spontaneous awareness of the primordial, true condition” (Skt., *pratisamvid*; Tib., soso ranggi rigpa^b).²⁷⁴

2.- Mind-only, and the *Alaya* as the Objective Foundation of Experience

Secondly, and intimately related to the above, we have seen that the Yogachara School asserted that all sentient beings and phenomena of *samsara*, and all Awake Ones and metaphenomena of *nirvana*, were the universal mind or the process of experiencing. As we have also seen, the Mahamadhyamaka School does not at all agree with this view.

The Madhyamika Prasangikas objected to the Mind-only view that mind is a concept that, as such, is defined by *genus proximum* and *differentia specifica*, and that insofar as the meaning of the term “mind” derives from the contrast between mind and that which is not mind, if we say *all* is mind, the concept of mind becomes an utterly empty concept—i.e., a concept devoid of any meaning whatsoever. The Madhyamika Prasangikas also rejected the view according to which all is the process of experiencing; as we have seen, Shantideva compared the claim that the contents that manifest through the process of experiencing are this very process, to affirming that a jar seen by applying sight-restoring lotion is the lotion itself.²⁷⁵

^a *Rang-rig-pa'i ye-shes*.

^b *So-so rang-gi rig-pa*.

The Madhyamika understanding that mind is a concept that, as such, is defined by *genus proximum* and *differentia specifica*, and that therefore the single nature of all reality could not be defined in terms of this or any other term, is taken for granted in Mahamadhyamaka. The same applies to the inconsistencies involved in asserting that the phenomena of experience are the process of experiencing. Thus rather than stating that all phenomena are mind, or that all that manifests is the process of experiencing, this school asserts that all phenomena are the Buddha-nature, which it explained as the indivisibility of voidness and appearances manifesting *qua* Base.²⁷⁶ In fact, the Base is not the Yogacharas' "universal mind," with all the logical problems involved in this concept, but the Buddha-nature, and since this nature contains the three kayas, the Path and the Fruit do not result from creating something new, but from discovering that which has been fully manifest since beginningless time.

Occasionally Mahamadhyamaka refers to the true source and nature of phenomena by terms such as Base-awareness or nature of mind (Skt. *chittata* or *chitta-eva*; Tib., *semnyi*^{a277}), primordial gnosis (Skt., *jñāna*; Tib., *yeshe*^b) and others having an etymology to which the Madhyamika objections explained above at first sight could seem to apply. However, as we have seen, in this system these terms do not imply that there is nothing but mind, or that there is nothing but experience (or the process of experiencing); as we have seen, this school is not a metaphysical system of thought,²⁷⁸ and whenever it uses seemingly idealistic terms it does so expediently, in order to induce a poetic understanding that, as such, is mainly related to the analog aspect of mind²⁷⁹—and, furthermore, it often accompanies them with the warning that they are being used provisionally, with perfect awareness of the fact that they cannot correspond precisely to the reality they describe. Contrariwise, the Yogachara School was a metaphysical system, and as such, in its attempts to establish an objective foundation for human experience, it illegitimately made assertions that legitimately could only be made by beings with the capability to see beyond the range and limits of human experience; furthermore, it breached the rules of logic by explaining the single substance they posited in terms of dualistic concepts such as external and internal, mental and physical, etc.

All Buddhist schools rejected the solipsistic idea that the universe may be a baseless, utterly arbitrary hallucination produced and experienced by a subjective mind; however, they differed as to whether there was or there wasn't a reality external to experience. In fact, with the exception of the higher branches of Madhyamaka, all schools either asserted or denied the existence of something external to experience, trespassing the limits of legitimate human knowledge.²⁸⁰ Mahamadhyamaka, just like the Yogachara School and the sutras of the Third Promulgation, by the same stroke explained the fact that actual or effective relative truth was collectively perceived (Tib., *thunpar nangwa*^c) and discarded the extreme solipsistic, arbitrary hypothesis referred to above, by asserting the experience of individuals to be determined by *bijas* or *vasanas* carried by the *alaya vijñāna* (which, as in the case of the Yogacharas, was conceived as a continually changing stream of consciousness or *santana*); however, being the highest branch of Madhyamaka, it did so without reifying the *alaya vijñāna* and turning it into a metaphysically conceived, basic root consciousness of which all consciousnesses were supposed to be specifications

^a *Sems-nyid*.

^b *Ye-shes*.

^c *mThun-par snang-ba*.

or transformations, and without breaching the limits of legitimate human knowledge by either asserting or denying the existence of something external to experience.

3.- Is Spontaneous Awareness a Self-Existing Mind (as the Yogacharas Claim), and the Buddha-Nature a Self-Existing Ultimate with Inherent Self-Existent Qualities (as the Zhentongpas Claim)?

Thirdly, the Yogacharas conceived spontaneous awareness as being an ultimately true, self-existing substance—and, moreover, as we have seen, they explained it in terms of an unwarranted duplication of consciousness. The Madhyamikas often viewed the imputation of self-existence on spontaneous awareness as a deviation from the essential meaning of the Mahayana (and in particular of the Second Promulgation), which has been understood to imply that there are no self-existing substances or entities. Paul Williams^a asserted that the reason why the Yogachara Chittamatra made this claim is that this school is rooted in the Abhidharma, according to which, for there to be conceptual constructs (*prajñapti*), there will have to be a real substance (*dravya*), as no construct is made out of nothing (except for unreal, ineffectual things such as sky-lotuses and so on). The said author concluded that this school requires that there be a self-existing basis for all the mental constructs that Madhyamika Rangtongpas regard as being totally empty of self-existence (*swabhava shunyata*), and in the context of the ideology of the Yogacharas the most likely self-existing basis for them is spontaneous awareness (Skt., *swasamvedana*; Tib. *rang-rig*).

The Zhentongpa school as established by the Jonangpa Master Dölpopa Sherab Gyaltzen^b (1292-1361), in its turn, has been bitterly criticized by Gelugpa Masters on the grounds that it posits the ultimate or absolute to truly exist and not to be empty of itself (i.e., of a truly existing ultimate) and to possess inherent Buddha-qualities that also exist ultimately or absolutely. As shown below, Mahamadhyamaka, at least as I interpret this school here,²⁸¹ rejects the theses that the ultimate or absolute *exists* and does so *inherently*, and that this ultimate or absolute possesses inherent, ultimately existent Buddha-qualities, yet agrees that it is not empty of itself, for if the absolute were empty of its absoluteness it would not be the absolute. However, as also shown below, Chandrakirti, one of the three main sources of the Madhyamaka Prasangika, who rejected spontaneous awareness on the grounds that its proponents posit as a self-existent substance, characterized the ultimate or absolute in terms that are easily refuted by the very arguments with which he refuted spontaneous awareness. In a similar way, as Ju Mipham Ngawang Namgyal showed in his *Lion's Roar Proclaiming the Ultimate's Emptiness of Substances Other than Itself*,^c the Gelugpas who later on opposed the Zhentongpa thesis that the ultimate truly exists and is not empty of itself (i.e., of a truly existing ultimate), and that it possesses inherent Buddha-qualities that are also exist ultimately, incurred in an error exactly of the same kind as the one they perceived in the view they rejected.

In fact, I find it paradoxical that Chandrakirti should have posited the true nature of all phenomena (Skt., *dharmata*; Tib. *chönyi*) to be *existent*, and, not content with this,

^a Williams, Paul, 1998, pp. 11-18.

^b *Dol-po-pa Shes-rab rGyal-mtshan*.

^c *gZhan-stong khas-len seng-ge'i na ro*, translated and commented in Pettit, John Whitney, 1999.

to have posited it to be *self-existent* (Skt. *swabhava*; Tib. rangzhin)—postulating it, just as the Yogacharas did with spontaneous awareness and as the Zhentongpas did with the ultimate or absolute, as the self-existing basis of all existents. He wrote.^a

“Does a nature, as asserted by the Master [Nagarjuna], that is qualified in such a way [as described in {Nagarjuna’s *Mulamadhyamakakarikah*} XV.2cd, which Chandrakirti has just cited] exist? The absolute nature of phenomena (Skt., *dharmata*; Tib. chönyi^b) set forth by the Supramundane Victor—“Whether the Tathagatas appear or not, the absolute nature of phenomena just abides”—exists. Also, what is this absolute nature of phenomena? It is the absolute nature (Skt., *swabhava*; Tib. rangzhin^c) of these eyes and so forth. And, what is the nature of these? It is their non-fabricatedness, that which does not depend on another, their entity-ness that is realized by wisdom free from the dimness of unawareness. Does it exist or not? If it did not exist, for what purpose would bodhisattvas cultivate the Path of the paramitas? Why would bodhisattvas initiate hundreds of difficulties for the sake of realizing the absolute nature of phenomena?”

The Sanskrit term *bhava* means existence, while the prefix *swa* may be translated alternatively as “self-“ or “spontaneous.” In the case of *swabhava*, there is no alternative to its translation as “self-existence.” And in fact there can be no doubt that Chandrakirti is proclaiming the true nature of all phenomena that is the *dharmata* to exist, for at the end he concludes “Does [the *dharmata*] exist or not? If it did not exist, for what purpose would bodhisattvas cultivate the Path of the paramitas? Why would bodhisattvas initiate hundreds of difficulties for the sake of realizing the absolute nature of phenomena?”²⁸² And, insofar as he characterizes this *bhava* as *swabhava*, he is affirming this existence to be what Gelugpas like to qualify as “inherent.” Though these characterizations of the true nature of phenomena by Chandrakirti are rejected here, a characterization of the *dharmata* as actual (Skt., *arthakriyashakti*; Tib. dönche nüpa^d) would not be rejected insofar as direct, nondual, nonconceptual realization of the *dharmata* certainly produces effects in whoever has this realization, turning him or her into a superior bodhisattva whose two conditions—the Contemplation and the post-Contemplation states—are different from the individual’s ordinary experience previously to this realization, and whose intentionality and activities are progressively modified by the realization in question.

We have seen that the *Shambhala Dictionary of Buddhism and Zen* rightly tells us, in agreement with the understanding of many Nyingmapa and Kagyüpa Masters, that the term *dharmata* is synonymous with thatness or thusness (Skt., *tathata*; Tib. dezhinnyi^e)

^a Chandrakirti, *Madhyamakavatareshya* (*dBu ma la 'jug pa'i bshad pa / dBu ma la 'jug pa'i rang 'grel*). In the edition prepared by De La Vallée Poussin (1970: *Madhyamakavarara par Chandrakirti*. Bibliotheca Buddhica IX, Osnabrück: Biblio Verlag), 305.19-306.12; Tsongkhapa cites it in the *Lamrim Chenmo* (Dharamsala edition, 416b.6-417^a.2; Wayman’s translation, p. 256). Cited in Napper, Elizabeth, 2003, pp. 128-9.

^b *Chos-nyid*.

^c *Rang-bzhin*.

^d *Don byed nus pa*.

^e *De-bzhin-nyid* (Chinese, *chen-ju*; Japanese *shinnyo*). According to the *Shambhala Dictionary of Buddhism and Zen*, *tathata* is similar in meaning to *tathagatagarbha*, Buddha-nature, *dharmakaya* and *dharmata*. The dictionary does not mention *shunyata* (voidness or emptiness) among the terms that are similar in meaning to *tathata*. (On the basis of the teachings of various vehicles I would say that rather than corresponding to the *dharmakaya*, the *dharmata* is the indivisibility of *dharmakaya* and *dharmadhatu* [Tib., *chos-kyi dbyings*]:

and with Buddha-nature, which are not negative terms.²⁸³ We have also seen the original Prasangikas understood the true condition of all entities to (be) that which (is) nonconceptually and nondually apprehended by absolute *prajña* wisdom, and that as Tsongkhapa himself stated, this wisdom “does not negate;” therefore, this condition could by no means correspond to the presence of an absence that Tsongkhapa posited as absolute truth.

It is true that Longchenpa equated the *dharmata* with the great emptiness of all things,^a but he did not equate it with the presence of an absence, or, even less so, as did Tsongkhapa, with a limitless series of “presences of absences:” what is denominated “great voidness” (Skt., *mahashunya*; Tib. *tongpa chenpo*^b; Chinese, *ta wu*) is not negative, for it (is) the nondual Presence of ultimate reality *qua* totality, which is void in that it involves no self-existence whatsoever. It (was) this that Chandrakirti had in mind when he referred to the *dharmata* as “the non-fabricatedness (Skt. *nishprapañcha*; Tib. *thödräl*)^c of the true nature of all phenomena” (which amounts to saying that it [is] the fact that this nature is unconditioned and uncompounded), and noted that it “does not depend on another,” that it “(is) the isness of entities that is realized by wisdom free from the dimness of unawareness:” in fact, it is hardly conceivable that the presence of an absence may be referred to as “isness,” or that it may be said not to depend on that which is absent. (Especially in inner Tantric vehicles, we find a coupling of dharmakaya and *dharmadhatu* in which the former is Awake awareness and the latter is the empty expanse in which all phenomena manifest and that nondually, indivisibly pervades the former rather than being at a distance from it; the *dharmata qua* great emptiness is not a merely empty expanse, for the term refers to the true nature of all phenomena, which may be said to (be) the totality in which dharmakaya and *dharmadhatu* are indivisible, and which may be said to involve an actual, non-negative essence insofar as it is pervaded by nondual Awake awareness, which in no sense may be said to be a negativity or a mere absence, for by its very nature it is radiant and revealing, beyond arising and ceasing.)

If the true nature of phenomena or *dharmata* could be said to *exist* and, moreover, to involve *swabhava*, there would be no problem in asserting the *existence* of spontaneous awareness, which (is) but the *dharmata* or true nature of phenomena considered from the standpoint of awareness (which is a perfectly valid option insofar as there are phenomena of *samsara* and metaphenomena of *nirvana* only in awareness and inseparably from awareness)—and there should be no problem with asserting it to (be) *swabhava*, for that matter. In fact, it should be clear by now that spontaneous awareness does not arise from causes and conditions, for it is like the mirror in which all reflections arise, but which itself neither arises nor ceases, and does not depend on the reflections that manifest in it. Therefore, in this sense it seems to coincide with *swabhava* as described in the *Madhyamakavatarabhashya*^d (XV.1-2) by Chandrakirti:

the “expanse of reality”]; in turn, *tathata* would be said to be the essential constituent of both *dharmakaya* and *dharmadhatu*.)

^a kLong-chen Rab-'byams-pa, *Theg-mchog (rin-po-che 'i) mdzod*, p. 82 of the Dodrub Chen edition of 1969 (Gangtok, Sikkim).

^b *sTong-pa chen-po*. This concept is mainly used in Mahayogatantra; however, insofar as Longchenpa applied it in his definition of *dharmata*, it is legitimate to universalize it.

^c *spros-bral*.

^d This is an autocommentary to the *Madhyamakavatara*, which in turn is a supplement to Nagarjuna's *Madhyamakashastra* or *Mulamadhyamakakarikah* (*Prajñanamulamadhyamakakarikah*).

“It is not reasonable that *swabhava* [may] arise from causes and conditions; if it did arise from causes and conditions *swabhava* would be something made. How would it be suitable for *swabhava* to be made? *Swabhava* is not fabricated and does not depend on another.”

However, we do *not* follow Chandrakirti in asserting that either the *dharmata* or spontaneous awareness are *swabhava*; contrariwise, we follow the usage of the term by Nagarjuna:^a

...although Chandrakirti explicitly uses the *term swabhava* in a positive way, there are no comparably clear and explicit uses of such by Nagarjuna in the *Madhyamakashastra* or *Mulamadhyamakakarikah*; for instance, Nagarjuna does not explicitly equate the terms *swabhava* and *dharmata* as does Chandrakirti.

Like the Yogachara School, Mahamadhyamaka as understood in this book posits a spontaneous awareness, but it negates that *existence*—and *far less so self-existence*—may be predicated, either concerning the absolute nature of phenomena (Skt., *dharmata*; Tib. *chönyi*), or with regard to spontaneous awareness. Since there cannot be anything wider or more encompassing than the true condition of all entities (independently of whether we call this condition *swasamvedana* [spontaneous awareness] or *dharmata*), this condition cannot have a *genus proximum*; insofar as there is nothing that this condition excludes, it has no *differentia specifica*; therefore, it is obvious that this condition cannot be defined, referred to or explained in terms of any concept. Someone could think that, since according to a long series of Western philosophers ranging from Aristotle to Heidegger, the concept of being is the most general of concepts, the true condition of all entities (independently of whether we call it spontaneous awareness or *dharmata*) could be conceived in terms of the concept of being. However, though it is true that the concept of being, like the true nature of all entities, has no *genus proximum*, unlike the true nature of all entities the concept of being has a *differentia specifica*, for being can be said not not-to-be (and the same applies to the verb *to exist*, which in this context means *to be*²⁸⁴). Since the concept of being has a limit that does not apply to the true nature of all entities, it is utterly absurd to claim, as did Chandrakirti, that the true nature of all entities exists—and it is even more absurd to assert that it is self-existent.

Furthermore, the true nature of all entities, independently of whether we refer to it by the name spontaneous awareness or by the term *dharmata*, neither comes into being nor ceases to be; therefore, it is clear that it is beyond being and nonbeing. In the specific case of spontaneous awareness, which, as we have seen, Mahamadhyamaka compares with the mirror in which all appearances of subject and object arise, the very simile leaves no doubt that, whereas phenomena *appear* to arise and cease, this awareness does not even *appear* to come into being or to cease to be.

The above are the reasons why spontaneous awareness is necessarily beyond the four extremes consisting in nonbeing, not-nonbeing, being-and-nonbeing and neither-being-nor-nonbeing, or, what is the same, nonexistence, not-nonexistence, both-existence-and-nonexistence and neither-existence-nor-nonexistence (and this is so not only from the standpoint of analysis with reference to the ultimate, but also conventionally insofar as

^a Napper, Elizabeth, 2003, p. 713, note 243.

spontaneous awareness can by no means appear as an existent to a deluded knower). If spontaneous awareness cannot even be said to exist, far less could it ever be said to be self-existent or to “exist inherently.” However, the rest of the categorizations Chandrakirti made concerning the *dharmata* may be equally made regarding spontaneous awareness: it is not fabricated, as it corresponds to the non-fabricatedness of the true condition of phenomena (or what is the same, [is] unconditioned and uncompounded), does not depend on another, (is) the isness of entities, and is realized by primordial gnosis (Skt., *jñāna*; Tib. *yeshe*) free from the dimness of unawareness.

In Mahamadhyamika terms, as this school is understood here, all we can say is that spontaneous awareness (is) the incontrovertible Base of everything, without which no entity whatsoever can come into being, but which does not need in turn a Base to sustain it or provide it with an ontological status. In order to say this (as in some of the statements made above in the same regard), the verb “is” had to be put in parentheses for the same reason why, when Sartre refers to nonthetic, nonpositional awareness (of) consciousness, he puts the preposition “of” in parentheses: because it is required by the language in which one is writing, but if taken to correspond to reality it would distort the idea one is trying to convey.

Furthermore, in the discussion of Tsongkhapa’s views, we saw that when samsaric beings say something “is,” it is because in their experience *it is sustained by the delusory phenomenon of being* (in Tsongkhapa’s terms, when they wrongly experience it as “being inherently”), and that the *delusory phenomenon of being* that gives rise to the illusion that entities exist (in Gelugpa terms, that they “exists inherently”), is a product of the delusory valuation / absolutization of the concept of being. The delusory valuation of the *concept* of being is inherent in the delusory valuation of the directional threefold thought structure, to which the concept of being is inherent, and therefore the *phenomenon* of being always involves the illusion that there *is* an experience, that there *is* an experiencer, and that there *is* something experienced: the dualistic consciousness and the spurious mental subject associated with it, on the one hand, and the objects that arise co-emergently with this consciousness and mental subject, on the other hand, appear to *be*, appear to exist (which is what the Gelugpa refer to as “appear to exist inherently”).^a Since spontaneous awareness is not the dualistic consciousness *cum* spurious mental subject that is one of the poles of dualistic knowledge, since it cannot become an object of human perception, and since no concept whatsoever can correspond to it, it is impossible to have the experience of it as something self-existent—and since it is this experience that samsaric being refer to as “being,” it is impossible to experience it as *being* (however, it is no doubt possible to mistake the grasping at the base-of-all that gives rise to the formless realms for spontaneous awareness, and since this experience involves the illusion of self-existence, take the latter to be self-existent).²⁸⁵

Even though in the next section of this chapter we will see that the explanation of spontaneous awareness in the Dzogchen teachings is quite different from the one found in Mahamadhyamaka as understood here, in this context it may be relevant to consider what Longchenpa says of the all-inclusive Awake awareness:^b

^a See Part One of my *Buddhism and Dzogchen*. For a lengthier consideration of the way the phenomenon of being arises and so on, see my *Beyond Mind, Beyond Being: Dzogchen, Transpersonal Psychology and Western Philosophy*.

^b Longchen Rabjam (2001b), p. 75. The verse is from Longchen Rabjam (2001a), p. 29, and the following paragraph is a commentary appearing only in (2001b). The translation was modified slightly.

It is the nature of all-inclusive Awake awareness that it is not apparent, for it transcends what is apparent.

It is not empty, for it transcends that which is empty.

It is not existent, for it has no substance or characteristics.

Nor is it nonexistent, for it permeates all of *samsara* and *nirvana*.

Neither existent nor nonexistent, it (is) primordial basic space, spontaneous and uniform, not subject to extremes or division, and without substance, foundation of underlying basis.

Given that the essence of awareness is free of the limitations of conceptual or verbal elaboration, it has never existed or not existed, yet it timelessly permeates all of *samsara* and *nirvana*.

Likewise, the *Dzogpa Chenpo Kuntuzangpo Yeshe Longgi Gyü*, a Tantra of the Dzogchen Menngagde or *Upadeshavarga* revealed by Jigme Lingpa, states concerning primordial awareness:^a

The infinitude of... primordial awareness (is) such that it [cannot be said to be] something existing eternally, for its essence (ngowo^b) has no determinate traits. [Likewise, it (is) such] that [it cannot be said to be] something that has ceased to exist, insofar as its nature (rangzhin^c) is a light that is not dimmed in any way. [Furthermore, it] has neither bounds nor limits, because its manifest appearance, [which is its] energy (thukje^d), does not know any limits or partiality. Even when it is [considered as] ultimate emptiness, it cannot be compared with something that is empty [like a container with nothing solid or liquid in it] or with [a mere] nothingness. It is like the luster of the sun and moon, revealing in its Gnitiveness...

The personification of this primordial awareness then says:^e

My appearance is an outer no-thing-ness because in it there is no reified object, and, [likewise, in my inside there (is)] no-thing-ness... because in it no reifying mind is found; [furthermore,] the inalienable voidness of primordial awareness [implies that this] awareness is an infinitude because [in truth] it has [never] suffered a rift. In brief, since all entities which one admits to exist have found their fulfillment and *raison d'être* in a modality where no substance obtains, the Base is a great initial purity, the Path a great self-authentication, and the Fruit a great self-freedom.

We must agree with the Gelugpas that there is a radical difference between the use of the term “spontaneous awareness” (Tib. *rang-rig*) to refer to a characteristic of all consciousness in tenet systems such as the Yogachara School, and its specific use to refer to the (unveilings of) nondual, nonconceptual gnosis in the Path during the Contemplation state of superior bodhisattvas and advanced yogis, or as the Fruit in fully, irreversibly

^a *rDzogs-pa chen-po kun-tu bzang-po ye-shes klong-gi rgyud*. A Tantra of Dzogchen revealed by Jigme Lingpa. In Guenther, Herbert V., 1977, pp. 124-125.

^b *Ngo-bo*.

^c *Rang-bzhin*.

^d *Thugs-rje*.

^e *rDzogs-pa chen-po kun-tu bzang-po ye-shes klong-gi rgyud*. A Tantra of Dzogchen revealed by Jigme Lingpa. In Guenther, Herbert V., 1977, p. 125.

Awake Buddhas.^a In fact, the former expresses a misconception involving a duplication of consciousness and a gratuitous imputation of self-existence, whereas the latter refers to the surpassing of dualistic consciousness in a condition in which there is no subject-object duality and no delusive phenomenon of being. However, when we consider the use of the term spontaneous awareness to refer to the Base of both *nirvana* and *samsara* (and therefore of all samsaric consciousnesses) in Mahamadhyamaka, and the use of the term in the same school to refer to the (unveilings of) nondual, nonconceptual gnosis in the Path during the Contemplation state of superior bodhisattvas and advanced yogis, or as the Fruit in fully, irreversibly Awake Buddhas, there is no difference between the one and the other.²⁸⁶ This is so because in Mahamadhyamaka the spontaneous awareness that (is) the basis of all consciousness (is) the nondual awareness that was represented by the similes of the self-luminous mirror and the LCD screen (which, by the way, contains the three kayas of Buddhahood, which therefore manifest spontaneously upon reaching the Fruit), and the manifestation of nondual, nonconceptual gnosis in the Path or as the Fruit (is) but the unveiling and consequent actualization of the former: as we have seen, if this were not so, the gnoses on the Path and the gnosis that is the Fruit would arise in the Path and as the Fruit, respectively, and would thus be *produced / caused* (Pali *bhèta*; Skt. *nutpada* or *nutpatti*; Tib. *kyepa*^b), *born* (Pali and Skt. *jata*; Tib. *kyepa*^c), and compounded / conditioned / constructed / made / contrived / fabricated (Pali, *sankhata*; Skt. *samskrita*; Tib. *dūjai*^d), and as such they could not be the definitive solution to the sufferings of *samsara*—nor would they enable those who attain them to help others in the definitive sense of the term (i.e., to help then advance on the Path).²⁸⁷ Furthermore, if spontaneous awareness *qua* Base did not contain the three kayas of Buddhahood, these would have to be produced by means of intentional practice and therefore would be *produced / caused*, *born*, and compounded / conditioned / constructed / made / contrived / fabricated. These are some of the reasons why Mahamadhyamaka rejects the distinction between spontaneous awareness as the basis of all consciousness, and spontaneous awareness as the nondual, nonconceptual gnosis that unveils in the Path or as the Fruit, which may only be characterized as unproduced / unbecome / uncaused (Pali *abhèta*; Skt. *anutpada*, *anutpatti*; Tib. *makyepa*^e), unborn (Pali and Skt. *ajata*; Tib. *makyepa*^f) and unconditioned / unproduced uncompounded / unmade / uncontrived (Pali, *asankhata*; Skt., *asamskrita*; Tib., *dūmajai*^g).²⁸⁸

The point is that spontaneous awareness as understood by Mahamadhyamaka is not in any way different from the condition that, according to all Prasangikas, manifests in the Contemplation state of superior bodhisattvas and upon the attainment of Buddhahood: in it there is no duality whatsoever, and yet there is an infinite Gnitve potentiality; furthermore, it comprises and embraces what normal sentient beings perceive as the plethora of entities and sentient beings.²⁸⁹ This is the very reason why Mahamadhyamaka emphasizes the fact that the Contemplation state of superior bodhisattvas and the Fruit consisting in Buddhahood are but the unveiling of spontaneous awareness *qua* Base. If no

^a Williams, Paul, 1998, p. 209.

^b *skyes pa*.

^c *skyes pa*.

^d *'dus byas*.

^e *ma skyes pa*.

^f *ma skyes pa*.

^g *'dus ma byas*.

Prasangikas have problems agreeing that this realization of superior bodhisattvas and Buddhas is the state of absolute truth, yet is not an “inherently existing” entity or reality, why should some of them believe that whenever spontaneous awareness is posited as the basis and condition of all consciousness this must imply a mistaken assertion of “inherent existence”? The only possible reason for them to do so is a failure to grasp the essential difference between the conceptions of spontaneous awareness of Mahamadhyamaka as this school is presented here and of the Yogachara School. In fact, any sincere Prasangika who really grasps this difference will have to concede that, as stated here with regard to the view of Mahamadhyamaka, the spontaneous awareness of this school is not self-existent—or else will be forced to view the absolute truth that manifests in Buddhahood as an “inherently existent” entity or reality, and thus contradict his or her own position as a Prasangika.

Therefore it must be reiterated that, since Mahamadhyamaka shows spontaneous awareness *qua* Base, *qua* Path and *qua* Fruit to (be) exactly the same, whoever concedes that the repeated unveilings of primordial gnosis in the Path and the definitive unveiling of primordial gnosis that is the Fruit are in fact the state of absolute or ultimate truth, and yet agrees that neither these unveilings nor what they unveil are self-existing entities, will have to concede that the spontaneous awareness or primordial gnosis that is the Base in Mahamadhyamaka is the state of absolute truth *qua* Base, and yet is not a self-existing entity, but the necessary condition for all entities to manifest. In fact, *qua* Base, *qua* Path and *qua* Fruit spontaneous awareness (is) the same nondual awareness that must be acknowledged to (be) utterly beyond the four extremes which are nonbeing, not-nonbeing, both-being-and-nonbeing and neither-being-nor-nonbeing.

The fact that (something is) unconditioned and uncompounded does not mean that it exists (or, even less so, that is “exists inherently”). The “gnoses” that according to the Gelugpa Prasangika arise in the Path and the gnosis that is the Fruit are unconditioned and uncompounded, and yet cannot be said to exist—or, even less so, to “exists inherently.” And the same applies to the spontaneous awareness of Mahamadhyamaka, for what the Gelugpa view as the “gnoses” that manifest in the Path (are) but the unveilings of this awareness, and what they regard as the gnosis of the Fruit is but the definitive unveiling of this awareness. Though the basic, primordial awareness represented by the mirror does not depend on anything different from itself and does *not* arise interdependently with the images that manifest in it, all that has been considered in this section proves that this absolute nondependence, rather than implying self-existence or what the Gelugpa call “inherent existence,” signifies that spontaneous awareness is not relative. This is precisely what the Prasangikas state with regard to the manifestation of absolute truth, both in the Contemplation state of superior bodhisattvas, and in the definitive Awakening of the Buddhas—and yet, with the exception of Chandrakirti, they do not thereby claim that this truth exists inherently.²⁹⁰

The Gelugpa Master Gyaltsab Je^a asserted in his *Dartik* that the *tathagatagarbha* that is inherent all in sentient beings should be understood as consisting in the emptiness *qua* absolute negation (*prasajyapratishedha-shunyata*; megaggi tönpanyi^b) posited by Tsongkhapa, and that it should not be understood as the dharmakaya of the Buddhas, for in his view it was a “defiled suchness” (*samalatathata*) that *if purified* and *when purified*

^a *rGyal-tshab rje.*

^b *Med-dgag-gi stong-pa-nyid*

became Awakening: emptiness means that ordinary mind has no inherent existence and thus can develop the qualities of Awakening.^{a291} Although from this perspective the dharmakaya would not be produced and so the misconception of the dharmakaya as born, produced and conditioned rejected above would seem not to be involved, this is not the case because, as suggested above, if the nondual gnoses on the Path (Skt. *aryajñana*; Tib. phagpai yeshe^b) and the gnosis that is the Fruit (Skt. *buddhajñana*; Tib. sangyekyi yeshe^c) are not the unveiling of primordial, nondual, nonconceptual gnosis *qua* Base, then the gnoses in question are necessarily *produced / caused* (Pali *bhèta*; Skt. *nutpada* or *nutpatti*; Tib. kyepa^d), *born* (Pali and Skt. *jata*; Tib. kyepa^e), and *compounded / conditioned / constructed / made / contrived / fabricated* (Pali, *sankhata*; Skt. *samskrita*; Tib. düjai^f), and as such they could not represent the definitive solution to the sufferings of *samsara*. Furthermore, it is a fact that all Gelugpa methods of meditation and practice are based on action, and action cannot purify the adventitious stains that prevent realization insofar as it asserts and sustains the existence of the spurious separate doer of action and with it the subject-object duality that is the second of the layers of *avidya* or marigpa that prevent the reGnition of our true condition and is the layer that constitutes the foundation and pivot of *samsara* (in the classification favored by Longchenpa) or a key element in this second layer (in the classification espoused in this book). This applies to the Gelug interpretation of Tantra, according to which the Tantric Path, rather than a way to uncover an original Awake condition already involving the qualities of Awakening, is a powerful method for completing the accumulations of merit and wisdom that *cause* those qualities to arise.^g No matter how we explain Awakening, the stains preventing it can only be purified in a spontaneous, uncaused, unconditioned way, as occurs with the constant repetition, under special conditions, of the spontaneous liberation proper to Dzogchen.

The objections to Chandrakirti's position raised above may also be raised with regard to the Zhentongpa assertion that the ultimate or absolute truly exists, that it is not empty of itself (i.e., of a truly existing ultimate or absolute), and that it possesses inherent Buddha-qualities that also exist ultimately. The correct position in this regard seems to be the one Ju Mipham expressed in his *Desheg Nyingpo Tongthun Chenmo Sengge'i Naro*^h, which rejects the thesis that the ultimate or absolute exists, and that the Buddha qualities, insofar as they are qualities inherent to the ultimate, also exist ultimately, and retorts that the Buddha-qualities are inseparable from the Buddha-gnosis, that the Buddha-gnosis is inseparable from the Buddha-nature or *tathagatagarbha*, and that the Buddha-qualities are therefore inseparable from the Buddha-nature or *tathagatagarbha*.ⁱ However, as John Pettit has noted,^j in his *Lion's Roar Proclaiming the Ultimate's Emptiness of Substances Other than Itself*^k Mipham followed a different way of reasoning that led him to assert the ultimate or absolute to exist and to be self-existent.

^a Cf. Pettit, John Whitley, 1999, p. 118, and Hookham, Shenpen K., 1991, pp. 87-98 and 319-23.

^b 'Phags-pa'i ye-shes.

^c Sangs-rgyas-kyi ye-shes.

^d skyes pa.

^e skyes pa.

^f 'dus byas.

^g Pettit, John Whitney (1999, pp. 119-120).

^h *bDe-gshegs snying-po stong thun chen-mo seng-ge'i na-ro*.

ⁱ Pettit, John Whitney, 1999, p. 115.

^j Pettit, John Whitney, 1999, p. 116.

^k *gZhan-stong khas-len seng-ge'i na ro*, translated and commented in Pettit, John Whitney, 1999.

According to Chandrakirti, conventional cognition is valid when it accords with conventional discourse and does not contradict what is generally known to be true in the world, even though it contradicts the true mode of existence of entities, whereas ultimate valid cognition is the one that apprehends entities as empty, so that in this cognition the mode of appearance (nang tsül^a) and actual nature of the entity is the same (which means that the cognition is *correct* and what it gives us is *true*). This is why whatever the world views as existent is *conventionally* existent, and why in conventional cognition *validity* lies in perceiving as “existent” to what the world views as existent, in perceiving as “nonexistent” to what the world views as nonexistent, and in general in the conventional legitimacy of the imputations that, in perception, we make (whether intuitively / subtly or discursively / coarsely) on the bases of imputations. However, on the basis of the principle that the existence of an object of knowledge consists in its presentation (the existent being *actual* when this presentation produces effects and *ineffectual* when it does not do so), and in perfect agreement with the principle, established in Gelugpa textbooks for debate, that the compound term “object of knowledge” (Skt., *jñeya*; Tib. shecha^b) may be used as a synonym of “existent” (Skt., *bhava*; Tib. yöpa^c),^d in the *sui generis* *Lion’s Roar Proclaiming the Ultimate’s Emptiness of Substances Other than Itself*^e, Ju Mipham combines this application of the adjective *existent* to objects in general, with the principle that truth may be posited whenever there is concordance between the mode of appearance of things and the manner of existence of things [nenang thunpa^f], and seemingly on the grounds that thus the absolute or ultimate would be both *existent* and *true*, asserts, on the basis of what he called *conventional valid cognition of pure perception*^g (in which what in ordinary perception would be called the cognizer is the most valid, as there is no cognizer more valid than nondual primordial gnosis [*jñāna* or *yeshe*]),²⁹² the ultimate or absolute to be *truly existent*. This is problematic, for Mipham himself admits that the absolute cannot become an object of knowledge and can only be realized in a nondual, nonconceptual gnosis, which automatically excludes it from the category of “objects of knowledge” (by the way, on the basis of the same principle, it is clear that nondual primordial gnosis, in spite of being incomparably more valid than any dualistic cognizer, it is not a *cognizer of objects*) and hence excludes it from the category of existence that is attributed to objects of knowledge. This is the reason why in this book the category of existence is not applied to the ultimate or absolute, being restricted it to those occasions in which, in deluded perception, conventional entities are perceived as existent (perception being *valid* when the conventional entity is perceived as the entity the world deems it to be, so that there is concordance or *adaequatio* in the sense in which Prasangikas use the term with regard to conventionalities, and the object of cognition being *actual* if it produces effects in the sense in which Prasangikas understand this concept). And since from this perspective we are not entitled to speak of an object or a subject of primordial gnosis, the Zhentongpa

^a *Snang tshul*.

^b *Shes-bya*.

^c *Yod-pa*. The fact that Buddhism identifies being with becoming is reflected in this terminology.

^d Cf. the *gZhi grub* chapter of *Phur bu lcog byams pa rgya mtsho’s Rigs lam chung ngu’i rnam par bshad pa*, in the *Tshad ma’i gzhung don ’byed pa’i bsdus grwa’i rnam bzhag rigs lam ’phrul gyi sde mig*, Buxa, India, 1965. Perdue, Daniel, 1983, pp. 364 et seq. Napper, Elizabeth, 2003, pp. 57 and 671-672 note 79.

^e *gZhan-stong khas-len seng-ge’i na ro*, translated and commented in Pettit, John Whitney, 1999.

^f *Gnas snang mthun pa*.

^g *Dag-pa’i gzigs-pa tha-snyad dpyod-pa’i tshad-ma*; cf. Pettit, John Whitley, 1999, p. 116.

view may not be justified the way Mipham did. (According to J. Pettit, however, Mipham asserted the absolute to the truly existent not because this was his view—as indeed he contradicted it in his other books—but in order to comply with a request of his teacher Khyentse Wangpo, who upheld the Zhentongpa view.)

My way of using the term existence with regard to the ultimate or absolute in this book is different from that of Geluggpas and seemingly from that of Mipham insofar as I only apply the term *existence* to concordance or *adaequatio* when, in deluded perception, conventional entities that the world views as existent are perceived as existent. And since I do not accept that we are entitled to speak of an object of primordial gnosis, or that the terms “object” and “existence” are interchangeable, I could not justify the Zhentongpa view the way Mipham did so—in which, by the way, Mipham happened to coincide with Je Tsongkhapa’s interpretation of Prasangika, according to which “immunity to ultimate analysis” (Tib. *döndam chezö*^a), “true establishment (Skt. *satyasiddha*; Tib. *denpar drubpa*^b)” and “inherent existence” are the same.^c With regard to this supposed equivalence of terms, it must be noted that here the coincidence of the first two is accepted, for it would be absurd to think that the ultimate is not immune to ultimate analysis, or that it is not *satyasiddha* / *denpar drubpa*—which is that is usually translated as “truly established” and which Chandrakirti defined as what is “known independently of mental constructions and hence veridically.”^d However, for the reasons explained in detail in this section, the coincidence of immunity to ultimate analysis / true establishment with inherent existence may not be accepted here. What is fully accepted is the explanation Mipham gives in *The Desheg Nyingpo Tongthun Chenmo Sengge’i Naro*^e, of the status of the qualities of Buddhahood inherent in the ultimate or absolute. John Pettit^f expresses his view as follows:

Mipham’s interpretation [of the *tathagatagarbha*] in the TTC (*bDe-gshegs snying-po stong thun chen-mo seng-ge’i na-ro*) affirms one important aspect of the extrinsic emptiness (zhentong: emptiness of substances other than the ultimate) view, namely, the naturally present qualities of the buddha nature. However, he qualifies that acceptance with the understanding that these qualities are the spontaneous presence (*anabhoga*, *lhun grub*) or natural display (*rang bzhin gyi rtsal*) of enlightened awareness. In other words, sublime phenomena are the appearance or conventional aspect of gnosis, just as impure conventional phenomena are the inseparable aspect of deluded perception. The inseparability of form (or appearance) and emptiness applies equally to sublime (lit. superior: *arya* or *phagpa*^g) beings and ordinary beings, but the purity of conventional appearance (*snang tshul*) is determined with respect to the concordance (*mthun pa*) of the way things appear (*snang tshul*) with their ultimate nature (*gnas tshul*), which is fully possible only for sublime beings.

Thus, saying that sublime qualities manifest spontaneously and without fabrication in the state of sublime gnosis (Skt. *aryajñana*; Tib. *phagpai yeshe*^h) is not the same as

^a *Don-dam dpyad-bzod.*

^b *bDen-par grub-pa.*

^c Pettit, John Whitney, 1999, p. 116.

^d Fenner, Peter G., 1983.

^e *bDe-gshegs snying-po stong thun chen-mo seng-ge’i na-ro.*

^f Pettit, John Whitney, 1999, pp. 118-119.

^g *’Phags-pa.*

^h *’Phags-pa’i ye-shes.*

saying that pure phenomena or sublime qualities exist inherently or statically in the ultimate sense. The difference between pure and impure phenomena is that pure phenomena are inseparable from the state of gnosis and are thus never apprehended as inherently existent, while impure phenomena always appear to ordinary consciousness as if inherently existent, even if one is aware that their mode of appearance is false. To assert the spontaneous presence of sublime qualities in the state of enlightened wisdom does not commit one to accepting their inherent existence any more than asserting that the natural manifestation of paranormal perceptions (*abijñā, mngon shes*) on the basis of calm abiding meditation (*shamatha, zhi gnas*) requires one to accept the truth of their false mode of appearance as inherently existent. If ordinary states of consciousness automatically entail the presence of qualities and abilities that one has not explicitly sought to cultivate, there does not seem to be any *a priori* reason to deny the same relationship between sublime gnosis and the qualities of enlightenment.

On the contrary, the experience and meta-experience of those having access to the gnoses of the path attests to the fact that these gnoses involve the qualities of Awakening, while gradually helping develop the qualities of bodhisattvas in post-Contemplation. In fact, although as shown above the ultimate or absolute may not be said to be existent, or, even less so, self-existent, this ultimate is the Buddha-nature, to which Buddha-qualities are inherent, and the qualities in question become patent and fully actual in primordial gnosis. Moreover, if the ultimate or absolute, which is beyond relativity, may not be said to be truly existent, far less could the Buddha-qualities, which are determined in terms of comparison and hence of relativity, be said to be truly existent. In fact, these qualities are inseparable in the indivisible ultimate or absolute as it is disclosed in the Contemplation state (Skt., *prishthalabdha*; Tib. *jethob*^a) of superior bodhisattvas, yogis, siddhas and mahasiddhas, or in the condition of Dzogchen-*qua*-Path; however, in the Contemplation state or condition of Dzogchen-*qua*-Path these qualities cannot be discerned, for so long as one has not become definitively established in the Fruit of Buddhahood discernment can only be a function of conventional or relative cognition: only from the standpoint of the relative can there be differences, as differences are relativities (the difference between big and small is the relativity of the concept of big and that of small; the difference between right and left is the relativity of the concepts of right and left; etc.). In fact, it is only when, while on the Path, relative or conventional truth manifests again as the post-Contemplation state immediately after the Contemplation state, that from the standpoint of the former we discern Buddha-qualities in the immediately preceding condition, having the possibility to list them and describe them (and the same applies to the manifestation of dualism after the occurrence of the Self-*qua*-Path in Dzogchen practitioners who do not yet dwell uninterruptedly in rigpa). The situation, however, is altogether different in the Fruit of Buddhahood, where relative truth no longer manifests, yet we can use the words proper to the relative to describe the absolute as it would be seen from the standpoint of the relative: as discussed exhaustively in a previous section, fully Awake Buddhas make distinctions that ordinarily pertain to conventional or relative truth, while uninterruptedly remaining in the condition of absolute truth in which neither existence nor nonexistence, neither differences nor identities, are apprehended.

^a *rJes-thob*.

With regard to Je Tsongkhapa's stark rejection of the Zhentongpa position, in *The Lion's Roar Proclaiming the Ultimate's Emptiness of Substances Other than Itself*^a, Ju Mipham made it clear that the founder of the Gelugpa School incurred in an error just like the one he attributed to the proponents of emptiness of substances other than the absolute. In fact, we have seen that Tsongkhapa insisted that the existence of entities (say, vases, human beings) is not to be negated, for what is to be negated is their inherent existence. However, ultimate analysis (i.e., analysis from the standpoint of the ultimate or absolute) negates absolute existence or self-existence but does not negate mere existence, and so if, like Je Tsongkhapa, we forbid ourselves from making entities (say, vases, human beings) the object of ultimate analysis and limit ourselves to applying this analysis to what we wrongly perceive as their inherent existence, even though this ultimate analysis will show *the entity's true existence not to exist absolutely*, it will *not at all* show *the entity's mere existence not to exist absolutely*. Therefore, we will continue to believe the entity's mere existence to exist absolutely and to be self-existent. Ju Mipham's argument for showing Tsongkhapa's objection against the position of the Zhentongpas to be exactly the same that was just made against Tsongkhapa's position is expressed by John Whitney Pettit as follows:^b

While the Gelugpas maintain a verbal distinction between the negandum (true existence) and the basis of negation (*dgag gzhi*), that is, conventional reality—which, Mipham argues, would commit them to the ultimate existence of the basis of negation—the proponents of extrinsic emptiness (zhentong) maintain the absence of the negandum (conventional phenomena) in the basis of negation (ultimate reality), while asserting the presence of enlightened qualities in that ultimate reality. The Gelugpas say that ultimate analysis negates true existence but does not negate the basis of negation and thus assert that “a vase is not empty of being a vase, but is empty of true existence.” The gZhan stong pas likewise say that “the ultimate reality is not empty of being the ultimate reality, but is empty of deceptive reality.” In both cases a reality is established as the absence of a negandum, which does not exist at all, while requiring the true existence of the basis of negation.

However, it is not at all the same to accept the true existence of a vase, or a human being, and in general of all conventional, relative entities, as to accept the true existence of the ultimate or absolute reality, which, as we have seen, even Chandrakirti accepted—and which would not be incorrect if we were to understand the term *swabhava*, not on the basis of its etymology, but as a synonym of ultimate or absolute (for then the Zhentongpas would simply be saying that the ultimate or absolute is ultimate or absolute, which rather than an error would be a useless tautology). In Mahamadhyamaka as I understand it here, however, we do not accept that the ultimate or absolute is either existent, nonexistent, both or neither—or far less so, that it is truly existent, truly nonexistent, truly existent-and-nonexistent, or truly neither-existent-nor-nonexistent. Therefore, Mahamadhyamaka as understood here may not be subject either to the objections Gelugpas raised against the Zhentong view, or to the objections Ju Mipham raised against Tsongkhapa's view.

In fact, it is important to keep in mind that the critique of both Chandrakirti's and the Zhentongpas' attribution of self-existence to the ultimate or absolute is partly based

^a *gZhan-stong khas-len seng-ge'i na ro*, translated and commented in Pettit, John Whitney, 1999.

^b Pettit, John Whitney, 1999, p. 115.

on the *etymology* of the words, for just as the term *bhava* is used by the original, Indian Prasangikas when entities the world views as existent are conventionally apprehended as existent (whereas, as we have seen, Tsongkhapa makes *existent* a synonym of *object*), it is conceivable that the term *swabhava* could be employed when the ultimate or absolute is apprehended as ultimate or absolute—or, in other words, that *swabhava* may be made a synonym of ultimate or absolute, as in Tsongkhapa’s usage (there being nothing wrong in declaring the ultimate or absolute to be ultimate or absolute, except in that this would be a useless tautology).

It seems relevant to note at this point that Mipham showed Tsongkhapa’s position in negating the imputation of inherent existence but not so the basis of the imputation to conceive voidness as zhentong in the sense of being emptiness of substances other than the object of analysis—just that in this case the substance that if left untouched is not the ultimate or absolute, but a relative entity the mode of existence of which is being subject to ultimate analysis. In fact, Tsongkhapa’s analysis does not try to ascertain whether or not the entity exists ultimately, but whether or not the inherent existence we project on it exists conventionally or relatively; therefore, we leave the entity’s existence undiscussed and negate something different from the entity, which is the inherent existence ordinary perception projects on it and perceives it as having—and so what we can discover is that the entity is empty of something other than itself, namely the inherent existence wrongly projected on it, just as the Zhentongpas discover that the ultimate or absolute is empty of something other than itself, namely the manifold substances perceived by deluded beings.^a

4.- Awareness (of) Consciousness, Reflexivity and Remembrance

Fourthly, the Yogachara School states that awareness of consciousness, which as we have seen it understands in terms of a naïve, unwarranted duplication of consciousness, is the condition of possibility of remembrance. Mahamadhyamaka agrees to the thesis that awareness (of) consciousness (which also is posited by the Madhyamika-Swatantrika-Yogachara and Zhentongpa subschools of Madhyamaka) is the condition of possibility of remembrance, but explains this awareness in terms of its own nondual conception of spontaneous awareness.

As Paul Williams has noted,^b some have regarded awareness of consciousness as the necessary condition of remembrance at least since, in *Pramanasamuchchaya* 1:11d, Acharya Dignaga stated that whenever we have a memory of having seen the aspect of blue we also have the memory of having had ourselves the experience of seeing this aspect—from which it may be inferred that, when the perception of blue that we remember took place, it was accompanied by an awareness of being conscious of seeing the aspect of blue.

According to the Yogacharas, the awareness of the fact that we are perceiving, say, the aspect of blue, is a function of the “second consciousness” they posited in their explanation of spontaneous awareness, which supposedly looks toward the inside, in the direction of the “source of consciousness”, and which is assumed to be aware of the

^a Pettit, John W., 1999, p. 147.

^b Williams, Paul, 1998, p. 9.

consciousness that looks towards the outside and that, upon perceiving its object, sees the aspect of blue. Some Prasangikas and all Swatantrika-Sautrantikas seemingly understood this as meaning that, simultaneously with the dualistic awareness of an object, there was a dualistic, reflexive awareness of consciousness. This has often been taken to mean (we have a recent, Western example in Dr Paul Williams) that “there is an eye-consciousness of blue and there is another element in the consciousness experience which is taking that eye-consciousness of blue as an object.”^a

As we have seen, the view of the Yogacharas is completely different from that of Mahamadhyamaka, which does not involve an unwarranted, redundant, substantialistic duplication of consciousness. According to the Mahamadhyamaka school, awareness (of) consciousness is a necessary condition of memory insofar as the dualistic, positional, thetic consciousness of the aspect of blue occurs in, and by virtue of, the nondual, nonreflexive, nonpositional, nonthetic awareness that is inherent in the Buddha-nature *qua* Base and that above was compared unto a mirror—and so whenever there is a dualistic, positional and thetic consciousness of the aspect of blue, necessarily there also has to be a nondual, nonreflexive, nonpositional, nonthetic awareness (of) the dualistic, positional, thetic consciousness of the aspect of blue.

In fact, it is in the nondual, nonreflexive, nonpositional, nonthetic awareness that we have compared with the self-luminous mirror and the LCD screen, that the delusory valuation-absolutization of the directional threefold thought structure, gives rise to the *threefold directional apparitional structure* involving the illusion that there is an experiencer, an experience and something experienced—resulting in dualistic consciousness. It is this manifestation, *in* basic nondual awareness, of the *threefold directional apparitional structure*, and therefore of the subject-object duality, that *in normal, deluded sentient beings* is indispensable for remembering: if in nondual awareness there manifests the aspect of blue without there manifesting a dualistic consciousness *of* the aspect of blue, the fact that the aspect of blue manifested will not at all be remembered, insofar as there will be *no perception* of the aspect of blue and hence no mnemonic imprint will be produced.²⁹³ Therefore it is clear that the reason why Mahamadhyamaka holds awareness (of) consciousness to be the condition of remembrance is because for there to be [dualistic, thetic, positional] consciousness, necessarily there has to (be) awareness (of) [dualistic, thetic, positional] consciousness, and if there is no [dualistic, thetic, positional] consciousness of an object/event, there can be no remembrance of that object/event.

In the above explanation, the spontaneous awareness of Mahamadhyamaka, which in itself is nondual, nonpositional and nonthetic, was also said to be nonreflexive. In fact, that explanation, and the fact that spontaneous awareness is illustrated with the example of a mirror, makes it clear that Mahamadhyamaka does not explain this awareness as being a reflexive consciousness. A reflexive consciousness cannot be illustrated by the example of a mirror, for it is obvious that a mirror cannot turn toward itself or reflect on itself (for this to occur, a second mirror would be needed, but as we have seen Mahamadhyamaka does not posit a second awareness or consciousness). Furthermore, a mirror-like awareness does not need to turn toward itself in order to reflect its own reflectiveness. Nor does it need to turn toward itself in order to reflect: (1) the forms that manifest as the direct object of consciousness, and (2) the illusory mental subject that we

^a Williams, Paul, 1998, p. 10 and elsewhere.

wrongly identify with the mirror's reflectiveness, but which in truth is but another reflection, appearing in a way that is different from that in which objects manifest (as we have seen, it appears in a manner that has been called "implicit and indirect"²⁹⁴). Insofar as both subject and object manifest in the luminous, reflective, boundless nature of awareness, they are pervaded by awareness ("are illumined by it"), and yet neither of them is taken as object by awareness. Nor does awareness take itself as object in a reflexive way.²⁹⁵

Jean-Paul Sartre, upon describing the nonpositional, nonthetic awareness he posited in *Being and Nothingness*, which as we have seen is very similar to the Mahamadhyamika conception of spontaneous awareness, explicitly stated that it was nonreflexive: beside referring to it as "*conscience non thétique, non positionnelle (de) conscience [positionnelle et thétique d'objet]*"—which means "nonthetic, nonpositional awareness (of) [positional, thetic] consciousness [of object]"—he called it "*conscience non reflexive*," which I prefer to translate as "nonreflexive awareness."^a

What can be said about the Yogachara conception of spontaneous awareness or *swasamvittih*? If we assume that the explanation of spontaneous awareness in terms of two consciousnesses is merely a way of describing the functionality of a single consciousness that works in a way somehow analogous to the combination of two mirrors, then we can legitimately categorize the corresponding conception of spontaneous awareness as involving reflexivity. However, if we asserted spontaneous awareness to involve two different consciousness, then strictly speaking there would be no reflexivity, for then consciousness would neither turn toward itself nor reflect on itself: it would be a consciousness different from the consciousness(es) of the senses that would be aware of the occurrences in the latter.²⁹⁶

5.- Conditioned and Unconditioned

Fifthly, according to Mahamadhyamaka, the unconditioned *par excellence* is the Buddha-nature *qua* Base, Path and Fruit, and therefore this school does not admit that there are six unconditioned phenomena, as listed in the chapter on the Yogachara School. (As we have seen, these were: [1] *akasha* or space, which was "the unlimited and unchanging;" [2] *pratisamkhyanirodha* or cessation [*nirodha*] of the passions [*klesha*] by the power of perfect discrimination; [3] *apratismkhyanirodha* or cessation of the passions or kleshas without the intervention of perfect discrimination; [4] *achala* or disinterest concerning power and pleasure; [5] *samjñavedananirodha*, which is a state wherein *samjña* or recognition in terms of concepts and *vedana* or mental sensation are inactive; and [6] *tathata* or thatness, which was the true absolute-*qua*-Base of the Yogacharas: the basic constituent of all phenomena, which unveils in *nirvana* and becomes veiled in *samsara*.)

We have seen that, in general, in Buddhism the four characteristics of all that is conditioned or made (Pali, *sankhata*; Skt., *samskrita*; Tib., *düje*^b) are arising (Skt., *utpada*), disintegration (Skt., *vyaya*), subsistence and change (Skt., *sthityan yathava*). According to the canonic texts of the First Promulgation and to the Theravada and Vatsiputriya schools, all samsaric phenomena were conditioned and made, and only

^a Cf. the Introduction to Sartre, Jean-Paul, 1942, 31st edition, 1980. Cf. also throughout the book.

^b *Dus-byas*.

nirvana was unconditioned or unmade (Pali, *asankhata*; Skt., *asamskrita*; Tib., *dümaje*^a). However, other schools of the Hinayana posited more than one unconditioned or unmade phenomenon (we have considered the three phenomena of this kind posited by the Vaibhashika School), and some posited a higher number than the Yogachara School of the Mahayana.²⁹⁷

As shown in a preceding section of this chapter, Mahamadhyamaka, supreme among Madhyamaka subschools, just like the Vajra vehicles, sustains that, although *avidya* gives rise to the conditioned experience of phenomena that constitutes *samsara*, the true nature of all phenomena (subjects as well as objects) and all experiences, is the unmade, unconditioned, single Base of both *samsara* and *nirvana*, inherent to which are the three kayas (dimensions or aspects) of Buddhahood and all the qualities of *nirvana*. If this were not the case, the nature of reality would be intrinsically dual, for necessarily there would be two separate, radically different natures: the phenomena of *samsara* in their totality would have a conditioned nature, and the metaphenomena of *nirvana*²⁹⁸ would possess an intrinsically different, unconditioned one. However, on these grounds it would seem self-contradictory to hold *nirvana* to be unconditioned, since it would arise at some point as a totally new nature that previously was utterly nonexistent, and therefore it would be characterized by arising (Skt., *utpada*), which is one of the four characteristics of the compounded and conditioned.

If the above were so, the Path would not consist in seeing through the spurious into the beginningless, ceaseless true nature, but in producing an altogether new nature and condition, which, being produced, would be impermanent and spurious. As we have seen, intentional, self-conscious action affirms and sustains the illusion of a separate agent-perceiver that is the core of the delusion at the root of *samsara*, and therefore maintains the samsaric condition: this is the reason why action cannot give rise to *nirvana*, but, in the best of cases, can give rise to an ascent to “higher” samsaric realms that will result in a later descent to “lower” ones. In fact, the definitive uprooting of suffering is not attained through abandoning bad actions (*karma*) and accumulating good ones, but by overcoming action itself—or in other words, by transcending all *karma*. The point is that, as we have seen, *samsara* is the result of the conditioned (*samskrita*) experience of a continuum that in itself is unconditioned and unmade (*asamskrita*), and since all that is built, constructed, produced or made is conditioned and impermanent, a path that consists in producing states through training in meditational practices, in producing qualities through imitation, and in general in building, constructing, producing or making something, can only give rise to conditioned, impermanent, samsaric states that cannot represent a definitive solution to the dissatisfaction, frustration and suffering of *samsara*, and that therefore cannot result in the capacity to help others (it is well-known that, when the blind follow the blind, they fall together into the abyss).

According to both the Mahamadhyamaka subschool of Madhyamaka and the inner Vajra Vehicles (and particularly the Dzogchen teachings), the Path must consist in *Seeing through* all experiences that are conditioned and made (*samskrita*), *into* the unconditioned and unmade (*asamskrita*), which is not only *nirvana*, but also the true condition of *samsara*—for, as we have seen, if this were not so *nirvana* itself would be conditioned and impermanent, and could not represent a definitive solution for suffering. Furthermore, this *Seeing* could not be the result of an action, for, as we have seen, action sustains the

^a *Dus-ma-byas*.

delusion that is the core of the conditioned and made.

However, as we have seen in terms of a quotation from Dudjom Rinpoche, the Path *par excellence* for actualizing the above knowledge is not the Sutrayana, but the Atiyoga Dzogchen.

Therefore, according to Mahamadhyamaka the first five of the six unconditioned phenomena posited by the Yogacharas cannot be unconditioned, for they are *produced*. In fact, Ashvagosha made it quite clear that (1) *akasha* or space, which was “the unlimited and unchanging,” is *produced* by our perception, for he noted that space is but a mode or particularization having no real existence of its own, which exists only with regard to our own particularizing consciousness: Kant was right in considering space to be one of the *a priori* forms of sensibility (though he was utterly wrong in viewing the *a priori* character of forms of sensibility, or of categories and in general of concepts of the Understanding, and so on, as being a guarantee or proof of truth or correctness). Likewise, (2) *pratisamkhyanirodha* or cessation (*nirodha*) of the passions (*klesha*) by the power of perfect discrimination is *produced* by discrimination (unless by “discrimination” we understood the unveiling of primordial gnosis on the Path or as the Fruit, but this is not what the term is taken to mean in the Yogachara School). It is even clearer that (3) *apratisamkhyanirodha* or cessation of the passions or kleshas without the intervention of perfect discrimination is *produced* by the techniques applied in order to achieve this cessation. And the same applies to (4) *achala* or disinterest concerning power and pleasure, as well as to (5) *samjñavedananirodha*, which as we have seen is a state wherein *samjña* or recognition in terms of concepts and *vedana* or mental sensation are inactive. Therefore, among the six phenomena that Yogacharas regard as unconditioned, only (6) *tathata* or thatness, which may be said to be the essential constituent of what Mahamadhyamaka calls the Base, may be validly regarded as such.

6.- Metaphysical Vs Metaphenomenistic and Metaphenomenological

Sixthly, the Yogachara School developed a metaphysical conception of the *alaya vijñana* according to which it was the base and root of all consciousness, and according to which this base consciousness goes through the three “transformations of the experiencing process” (Skt., *parinama*; Tib., *gyur*^a) explained in the chapter on the Yogachara School, whereby it becomes increasingly conditioned and “gradually solidifies into the subject-object dichotomy.” As we have seen, this conception of the consciousness of the base-of-all is purely metaphysical, as it is unwarranted by experience.

Mahamadhyamaka, to some extent like Ati Dzogpa Chenpo, always kept to a metaphenomenistic and metaphenomenological approach that never looked away from experience in order to posit unwarranted metaphysical entities.

7.- The Three Natures

Finally, the Yogachara School and the Mahamadhyamaka subschool have quite different conceptions of the three natures each of them posits, which in both cases are based on the sutras of the Third Promulgation and are designated by terms used in these sutras or their derivatives.

^a *Gyur*.

In the Yogachara School the three natures are: (1) absolutely existing nature (Skt., *parinispāna*; Tib., *yongdrub*^a); (2) dependent nature (Skt., *paratantra*; Tib., *zhenwang*^b); and (3) imaginary nature (Skt., *parikalpita*; Tib., *kuntag*^c). In Mahamādhyaṃkā, the three natures are: (1) absolutely existing nature (Skt., *parinispānalakṣhaṇa*; Tib., [chönyi] *yongdrubkyi tsennyi*^d); (2) dependent nature (Skt., *paratantralakṣhaṇa*; Tib., *zhenwangi tsennyi*^e); and (3) imaginary nature (Skt., *parikalpitalakṣhaṇa*; Tib., *kuntagkyi tsennyi*^f).

In spite of the near identity of the names used to refer to them, the conception of the three natures is radically different in the two schools. To begin with, we have seen that the absolutely existing nature of the Mahamādhyaṃkā consists in the indivisibility of voidness and appearances, whereas the ultimately existing nature of the Yogacharas is mere voidness—which, moreover, is conceived in a way that causes it to fall short of the voidness of self-existence or *swabhava shunyata* posited by Madhyamika Rangtongpas. In fact, as seen in the consideration of the Yogachara School, Yogachara voidness lies in the fact that no phenomenon has a self-nature *that may be said to be different from mind* (Skt., *chitta*; Tib., *sem*^g). This is so because, as we have seen, the object perceived and the perceiving consciousness, both of which belong to *paratantra* or dependent nature, are of the nature of mind and in truth are undifferentiated.

In the Yogachara School *paratantra* or dependent nature is not only empty of imaginary objects of refutation insofar as it does not include imaginary nature, but also is the ground of emptiness insofar as both the perceiving consciousness and the image that appears as its object,²⁹⁹ which are the essential constituents of this nature, are empty in the Yogachara sense of lacking a self-nature *that may be said to be different from mind* (Skt., *chitta*; Tib., *sem*), and insofar as they are undifferentiated in this voidness. Therefore, they are themselves the very emptiness that, according to this school, is the absolutely existing nature, and so in this sense *paratantra* or dependent nature may be said to be *parinispāna* or ultimately existing nature.

The above is not so in Mahamādhyaṃkā. As we have seen, according to this school, *parinispānalakṣhaṇa* or absolutely existing nature is not merely voidness, but the *actual* Buddha-nature in which voidness and appearances are indivisible. This Buddha-nature is not the voidness of the entities of dependent nature, but the very ground in which these entities eventually arise when *samsara* manifests,³⁰⁰ and in which they do not arise when *nirvana* obtains (for, as we have seen repeatedly, in *nirvana* dualistic consciousness does not arise: though images do arise, a perceiving consciousness does not arise co-emergently with them, and therefore there is no *paratantralakṣhaṇa* or dependently conceived nature). Therefore Mahamādhyaṃkā, rather than equating the absolute nature with *paratantralakṣhaṇa*—the dependently conceived nature that is empty of imaginary objects of refutation—holds the absolute nature to be empty, *both* of imaginary objects of refutation *and* of dependently conceived entities.

^a *Yongs-grub*.

^b *gZhan-dbang*.

^c *Kun-brtags*.

^d (*Chos-nyid*) *yongs-grub-kyi mtshan-nyid*.

^e *gZhan-dbang-gi mtshan-nyid*.

^f *Kun-brtags-kyi mtshan-nyid*.

^g *Sems*.

This is so regardless of whether the absolutely existing nature that corresponds to the Buddha-nature and that this school calls *parinispānnalakshana* is considered *qua* Base, *qua* Path or *qua* Fruit. Considered *qua* Base, even while this nature manifests the phenomena of *samsara* (which are the only ones that involve the co-emergent arising of a perceiving consciousness and an image that is taken as object, which together make up dependently conceived nature or *paratantralakshana*), it continues to be empty of dependently conceived entities, for dependently conceived entities lack true existence: they are void in the rangtong (*swabhava shunyata*) sense, as they are empty of self-existence. Furthermore, as the Prasāngikas rightly asserted, the collections of inherent distinctive marks (Skt., *lakshana*; Tib., tseṅpai^a) that make the recognition of entities possible cannot be found anywhere—and therefore the term “entities” is but an empty name with no referent that may be effectively found somewhere. In turn, when the absolutely existing nature or Buddha-nature is considered *qua* Path or *qua* Fruit, it is clear that in no dependently conceived entities arise, insofar as a perceiving consciousness does not arise co-emergently with the images of apparitional nature.

Dudjom Rinpoche explains the above by asserting that the five skandhas, the psychophysical bases and the activity fields, all of which are part of the dependently conceived nature, belong to a ground that is absolutely empty of the imaginary self and its properties, as well as of the rest of the wild fictions of imaginary nature. However, the absolutely existing nature, corresponding to the Buddha-nature, is a ground that also is empty of the dependently conceived nature—for, as we have seen, *qua* Base, *qua* Path and *qua* Fruit this ground is empty of the relative entities of dependently conceived nature. Furthermore, although the Buddha-nature (in the sense of “seed of the *Sugata*” or “seed of the *Tathagata*”) that is the absolutely existing nature, *qua* Base, *qua* Path and *qua* Fruit is equally empty of the phenomena of *samsara* (which are characterized as suddenly arising and which are divided according to essential stains and substantial faults), it is not empty of the amassed Awake attributes of *nirvana*, as these have abided spontaneously in the said Buddha-nature since beginningless time (which is the reason why it was stated above that the rupakaya is not the effect of the accumulation of merits, and which is also the reason why the dharmakaya is not the result of the accumulation of wisdom). Dudjom Rinpoche writes:^b

Accordingly, the components, psychophysical bases and activity fields, which are [all] dependently conceived, are said to be a ground that is empty of the imaginary self and its properties; [in turn,] the ground that is empty of that dependent ground of emptiness is absolute reality. [This] ground of emptiness never comes into existence because it is empty of the phenomena of *samsara*, which are characterized as suddenly arising and which are divided according to essential stains and substantial faults. However, this ground is not empty of the amassed Awake attributes of *nirvana*, which [have] spontaneously abided [in this ground] from the beginning.

Accordingly, it is said in the [*Mahayanottaratantrashastravyakhyā* or] *Supreme Continuum of the Greater Vehicle* (Ch. 1, v.155):

^a *mTshan-dpe*.

^b Dudjom Rinpoche, J. Y. D., English 1991, Trans.: Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein, vol. I, pp. 170-3.

“The seed [of the *Tathagata*], which is empty of suddenly arisen phenomena endowed with divisive characteristics, is not [at all] empty of the unsurpassed reality endowed with indivisible characteristics.”

And in the Commentary [to the *Mahayanottaratantrashastravyakhyā* or *Supreme Continuum of the Greater Vehicle*, T 4025, p. 76]:

“If one asks what is revealed by this passage, the reason for there being no basis of all-conflicting emotions requiring to be clarified in this naturally pure seed of the *Tathagata* (*tathagatagarbha*) is that it is naturally free from suddenly arisen stains. It contains nothing at all that can be established as the basis for purification, for its nature is [the true condition, free] of divisive phenomena. So it is that the nucleus of the *Tathagata* is empty of divisions that may be removed and of the entire nest of conflicting emotions, but it is not empty of the inconceivable attributes of the Buddhas which outnumber all the [grains of] sand of the River Ganges and are nondivisible and inalienable.”

Now it is also said that the imaginary [nature] implies that attributes are without substantial existence, [that] the dependent [nature implies] that creation is without substantial existence, and [that] the absolute [nature implies] that ultimate reality is without substantial existence. The first two of these [signify] that the conceptual aspects of the subject-object dichotomy, which are suddenly arising fictions, are empty of their own essence, and the latter refers to emptiness as the naturally expressed, fundamental essence itself which has no substantiality. Since this [ultimate reality] is naturally pure, it abides, through its function of emptiness, as the enlightened attributes of the dharmakaya, and through its apparitional functions as the ground on which the kayas, [Buddha-]fields, celestial mansions and so forth arise. Through its function of awareness, it is spontaneously present from the beginning, free from causes and free from results, because it is the supporting ground of the ten powers [of the Buddhas], the four fearlessnesses [of the Buddhas] and the like. This natural expression of the Buddhas, which is called the nucleus of the Sugata (*sugatagarbha*), does not abide as the seed of creation, destruction, transformation, change, increase or decrease, cause or condition, and so forth, [because these never occur in truth,] and it is never uncovered, [insofar as also uncovering does not occur in truth. In fact, it is not] an object of metaphor, thought or expression. It is said in *The Play of Mañjushri* [Sutra] (*Mañjushrīvikrīḍitamahāyānasūtra*):

“Sister, although suddenly arising conflicting emotions do emerge in relation to the natural inner radiance, the natural inner radiance cannot be defiled by those suddenly arising all-conflicting emotions.”

And the regent Ajita (Maitreyanatha) has said (in *The Supreme Continuum of the Greater Vehicle*, Ch. 1, v.5):

“Uncompounded and spontaneously present, [unattainable] through external conditions, endowed with knowledge, love and power, is the Buddhahood possessing the two benefits [i.e., that of oneself and that of others].”

If one were otherwise to apprehend all things as being exclusively empty of their own substance, in the manner [set forth by] the proponents of intrinsic emptiness [or

Rangtongpas^a], then it is said that according to the same extreme [argument] the dharmakaya would also be empty of itself. The kayas, the [manifestations of nondual] primordial gnosis, [Buddha-]fields and so forth would not manifest, the accumulation of the provisions and purification of obscurations, which depend on these, would [not occur], and indeed the teachings through which the vehicles of cause (*hetuyana*) and result (*phalayana*) reveal all the means of purifying stains, whatever their [Base] or Path, would be diminished. The ground of purification being nonexistent, there would be no need [or possibility] to effect purification. [The Buddha-nature and ground of all reality] being empty of [nondual] primordial gnosis, there would be no work on behalf of others and no [Awake] understanding. There being nothing... even with respect to the relative appearances of the impure dependent nature, there would also be no Awake attributes to transform these impurities into the pure dependent nature. There would be no self [or Base whatsoever] to become the ground of bondage and liberation, and there would be no doctrine to be realized by each one individually. Many such faults would persist and by nature [would] give rise to the source of unbearable views...

The nature of [the primordial empty] expanse in the minds of sentient beings is like a treasure or precious gem within the earth, uncovered by stains in respect to its own essence, and yet it simultaneously assumes the suddenly arisen forms of *samsara*, in the manner, for example, of water and ice.³⁰¹ [It says in] Nagarjuna's *Eulogy to the Expanse of the True Condition* (v.23):

“The water that lies within the earth remains immaculately pure. The primordial gnosis within conflicting emotions, too, remains similarly immaculate.”

To conclude, S. Radhakrishnan compared the *paratantra* or dependent nature of the Yogacharas to Kant's conception of “experience determined by categories.”^b This comparison is far off the mark, for, as we have seen, the Yogacharas clearly stated that *paratantra* or dependent nature is the ground of emptiness (and therefore of *parinispanna* or absolutely existing nature), insofar as *both the image appearing as object and the perceiving consciousness are undifferentiated in voidness and devoid of independent existence*—which is quite the opposite of Kant's position, for the German philosopher made it crystal clear that the fact that experience is determined by categories is for him the very justification of the *truth* of the entities of experience.³⁰² However, the contrast with Kant's position is even more striking in the case of Mahamadhyamaka, which asserted unambiguously that the phenomena of dependently conceived nature arise as *mere deceptive appearances*, and therefore they are *the very opposite* of Kant's “experience determined by categories.”

For a more detailed comparison between the Yogachara School and the Total Madhyamaka subschool, the reader may consult Dudjom Rinpoche's *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism*, Chapter Six of the “Fundamentals,” pp. 191-205.

The subtle, inner Madhyamaka and the Dzogchen Atiyoga

^a *Rang-stong-pa*.

^b Radhakrishnan, S., 1923; 2d ed., 1929; seventh impression of 2d ed., 1962, vol. I, p. 638.

Before entering into a more detailed discussion of the differences between the subtle, inner Madhyamaka and the Dzogchen Atiyoga, let us briefly make the point that, even in its theoretical conception—and, as will be shown below, far more in its Path and its Fruit—the three series of Dzogchen teachings differ from all the theoretical schools of the Sutrayana. We have already seen that, unlike the Yogachara School, the Semde series of Dzogchen teachings assert that vision, sensory presentation or apparent phenomena (Tib., nangwa), whether in *samsara* or in *nirvana*, are always the play (Tib., rölpa^{a303}) or ornament (Tib., gyen^b) of primordial *bodhichitta* (i.e., of the Base of both *samsara* and *nirvana*). And that according to the Semde series of Dzogchen teachings the delusive samsaric perception of a seemingly external world results from dividing the given into an apparently internal dimension (what the teachings call the “internal jing^c”) and an apparently external one (the “external jing^d”), and then projecting (Tib., tsel^e) a great deal of the appearances manifesting as the energy (Tib., thukje^f) of *bodhichitta* into the dimension that appears to be external. These points are not made by Mahamadhyamaka or by any other school of the Mahayana, which hence, even in its theoretical conceptions, are radically different from the Dzogchen Atiyoga.

However, also the three series of Dzogchen teachings differ, not only in the Path each of them describes and the Fruit each of them leads to, but even in their theoretical conceptions. A work by Longchenpa makes clear the differences in the theoretical views of the four main philosophical schools of the Sutrayana and the three series of Dzogchen teachings:^g

Generally speaking, there are distinct ways of perceiving and approaches to evaluating outer and inner phenomena according to the level of one’s acumen. The Vaibhashika school of the shravaka approach holds that the material forms of the universe, for example, are relatively real in their coarse manifestation and ultimately real on the level of indivisible atoms (note by the author of this book: in terms of the views of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, of quarks, which are the particles still deemed to be indivisible).

Followers of the Chittamatra [or Yogachara] school, who admit sense data as true but view them as distorted, hold phenomena to be specific forms presented to one’s consciousness.

The division of the Madhyamaka school of philosophy called Swatantrika [or “autonomist,” both in that it allows for autonomous syllogisms and in that it provisionally posits autonomous existence] holds that, on the relative level, [external] phenomena are like reflections, simply appearing outwardly due to the interdependent connection between causes and effects. The division called Prasangika [or “employing refutation by *reductio ad absurdum*”] holds that, on the

^a *Rol-pa*.

^b *rGyan*.

^c *dByings*.

^d Introduction by Kennard Lipman to Mañjushrimitra, trans. Kennard Lipman, Namkhai Norbu and Barry Simmons, English 1983/1986, p. 20.

^e *rTsal*, which is the noun expressing this projection.

^f *Thugs-rje*.

^g Longchen Rabjam (2001b), pp 31-32. Here the translation does not reproduce that of the work in English referred to, for it had to fit the terminology and way of explaining used in this book.

relative level, the phenomena in question are clearly apparent without truly existing, like the reflection of the moon in water or an optical illusion.

Proponents of the approach of the Semde series of Dzogchen teachings hold that [seemingly external] phenomena are simply the arising of energy projection (Tib. *tsel*^a) as the display of awareness, *bodhichitta*, the nature of mind.

Proponents of the Longde series hold that phenomena are simply awareness' own manifestations, for they do not hold that awareness itself arises, but that there phenomena are arrayed as its naturally manifest adornment (Tib. *gyen*^b).

Proponents of the Mengagde (Skt. *Upadehsavarga*) series [of secret oral instructions] hold that awareness' own manifestations are factors that obscure naturally occurring timeless awareness, but that they nonetheless arise naturally through the avenue of spontaneous presentation (CHECK WHICH WAS THE ORIGINAL TERM THEY RENDERED AS "PRESENCE"). In this approach, then, awareness' own manifestations—which do not exist anywhere at all, whether outwardly, inwardly, or in between—are held to be simply manifestations that arise timelessly. And so there proponents consider the universe of appearances and possibilities to be [like] an illusion—simply the arising of empty forms—in that it is a naturally clear manifestation of what does not truly exist, appearing within the scope of awareness. They consider sensory appearances to be simply awareness' own manifestations, based on confusion and having never existed as anything whatsoever—neither as mind not as anything other than mind. The three realms have never known existence. Their nature is timelessly pure, like that of reflections, and they abide in their own place, timelessly free. Having initially realized their nature and having become familiar with it, you gain freedom in what (is) True, [just as it (is)] in all its immediacy. Confusion vanishes, leaving no sense [that it has gone or] of where it has gone, and the single state of awareness—spontaneously arising timeless awareness—abides in its natural place of rest as originally pure *dharmakaya*. It is held that benefit is ensured by the *rupakaya* arising as a spontaneous [nondual] Presence while never straying from basic space.

(COPY THE ABOVE ADDITION TO THE SCANNED VERSION, WITHOUT THE NOTES SO AS NOT TO INTRODUCE THE ERROR-MAKING PROGRAM)

We have seen that Mahamadhyamaka expresses the purest essence of the Third Promulgation, in which Shakyamuni revealed the fundamental structure of reality, but at the same time expresses the purest essence of the Second Promulgation. Since, as will be shown below, something similar is generally said concerning Ati Dzogpa Chenpo, and since Mahamadhyamaka is the Mahayana view that most closely reflects the theoretical view that can be inferred from the Dzogchen teachings, inadvertent readers could easily be misled into believing that Mahamadhyamaka and Dzogchen are identical. However, this is far from the truth, for Dzogchen is a vehicle having the three aspects of all Buddhist vehicles, which are the Base, the Path and the Fruit, rather than being merely a theoretical view expressing the fundamental structure of reality. And the three aspects of Dzogchen are radically different from those of the Mahayana.

Let us begin by considering Jigme Lingpa's comparison of Dzogchen with the two Promulgations of the Mahayana:^a

^a *rTsal*.

^b *rGyan*.

The discriminating spontaneous self-awareness that is the essence of the “three [entrances to] liberation” [which are emptiness^b, absence of aspiration^c and absence of attributes^d] taught by the Victorious [Shakyamuni] in the Second Promulgation, is naturally manifest as the *tathagatagarbha* or seed of Buddhahood in the dimension (kham^e) of living beings, and it is called Dzogpa Chenpo.

The above has been explained inaccurately as meaning that Jigme Lingpa believed Dzogchen was *based* on the Second Promulgation. However, Jigme Lingpa knew very well that Dzogchen neither was taught by the nirmanakaya Shakyamuni nor was based on the teachings of any of the Sutrayana Promulgations. Furthermore, after stating that discriminating spontaneous awareness is the essence of the “three (entrances to) liberation” taught by the Victorious (Shakyamuni) in the Second Promulgation, the all-knowing Master asserted that this essence was naturally manifest in living beings *as the tathagatagarbha or Matrix of Buddhahood*. Since the Matrix of Buddhahood or *tathagatagarbha* was *extensively* revealed in the Third Promulgation only, Jigme Lingpa’s words should be understood as saying that the Dzogchen teachings, in spite of not being based on any of the Three Promulgations of the Sutrayana, contained the essence of the Second Promulgation (discriminative awareness) in the manner of the seed of Buddhahood extensively revealed in the Third Promulgation. Therefore, Dzogchen contains the essence of both the Second and Third Promulgations, *in the form of a reality that was extensively revealed in the Third Promulgation only*. This may be said to roughly correspond to the view held by Gyurme Tsewang Chogtrub:^f

In the Second Promulgation Shakyamuni elaborately taught the inconceivable nature through the ways of nonconceptualization of the characteristics of elaboration. But in it he did not disclose the Buddha-essence. In the Third Promulgation he [extensively] disclosed the [Buddha-]essence, but he didn’t disclose the definite (tsennyipa^g) Path that realizes that essence. Dzogpa Chenpo, without contradicting them, embodies the ultimate *vision* of both Great Chariots: (a) the vision of the Second Promulgation elucidated by Nagarjuna in his [Six] *Collections of [Madhyamika] Reasoning (Rigtsog^h)* and his *Eulogy to the [Empty] Expanse [of reality] (Chöjing Töpaⁱ)* and so on, and (b) the vision of the Third Promulgation elucidated by the great regent Maitreya[natha], and the noble Asanga and his brother [Vasubandhu].

^a Tulku Thöndrup, 1989/1996, p. 93. Jigme Lingpa’s quotation is from the *Yon-tan rin-po-che’i mdzod-las, ’Bras-bu’i theg-pa’i rgya-ch’er ’grel rnam-mkhyen shing-rta*, p. 264b/3 of the edition made by Pad-ma Phrin-las for Dodrub Chen Rinpoche in 1985.

^b Skt., *shunyata*; Tib., tongpanyi (*stong-pa-nyid*).

^c Skt., *apranihita*; Tib., mönpa mepa (*smon-pa med-pa*).

^d Skt., *animitta*; Tib., tsenma mepa (*mtshan-ma med-pa*).

^e *Khams*.

^f Tulku Thöndrup, 1989/1996, p. 93. Gyurme Tsewang Chogtrub’s quotation is from the *bDe-bar gshegs-pa’i bstan-pa thams-chad kyi snying-po rig-pa ’dzin pa’i sde-snod rdo-rje theg-pa snga-’gyur rgyud-’bum rin po-che’i rtogs-pa brjod-pa lha’i rnga-bo-ch’e lta-bu’i gnam*, vol. 1, p. 118a/5 in the Jamyang Khyentse edition.

^g *mTshan-nyid-pa*.

^h (*dbU-ma*) *Rigs-tshogs (drug)*; Skt., *Yuktikaya*.

ⁱ *Chos-dbyings bstod-pa*; Skt., *Dharmadhatustava*. This text pertains to the *Collection of Eulogies* (Skt., *Stavakaya*; Tib., *bsTod-tshogs*).

Thus the Dzogchen Atiyoga encompasses the innermost meaning of both the Second and Third Promulgations, but unlike the teachings of these two Promulgations it embodies the definitive Path that discloses the Buddha-nature. Though the citation claims that Nagarjuna's *Eulogy to the Expanse of the True Condition* or *Chöjing Töpa* had its roots in the Second Promulgation (and this is true, at least with regard to some of the texts of this Promulgation), the views expressed therein seem to correspond to those expounded in the innermost texts of the Third Promulgation, and they also are in agreement with those of the inner Tantras. This is clear in the following quotation from Dudjom Rinpoche, who agrees with both Gyurme Tsewang Chogtrub and Jigme Lingpa in stating that Dzogchen contains the essence of both the Second and the Third Promulgation, and in accord with the former notes that the Atiyana^a is the definitive Path enabling practitioners to realize the definitive meaning that, in the context of the Sutrayana Promulgations, was more thoroughly revealed in the Third.^b

The Sugata [Shakyamuni], during the Intermediate [i.e., the Second] Promulgation of the transmitted precepts, did not reveal the structure of the fundamental reality, though he did extensively teach the inconceivable, abiding nature [consisting in the dharmakaya's primordial emptiness] without referring to symbols of elaborate conception. And, during the Final [i.e., the Third] Promulgation, though he did reveal the structure of the fundamental reality, he did not teach the characteristic Path through which it is actualized. Therefore, the conclusive intention of the two promulgators [i.e., Nagarjuna and Asanga] actually abides without contradiction in the nature of Dzogchen.³⁰⁴ This intention comprises: [1] the unaltered intention of the *Collection of Madhyamika Reasoning*, which consists of the commentaries on the Intermediate (i.e., the Second) Promulgation by the sublime and supreme Nagarjuna; and [2] [Nagarjuna's *Collection of Eulogies*], including the *Eulogy to the Expanse of the True Condition*, [together with] the commentaries by the regent Maitreya[natha], the sublime and supreme Asanga, and his brother (Vasubandhu) and so forth, which together express the intention of the Final [i.e., the Third Promulgation]. If one were to ask why this is the case, it is because these Masters did not refer to anything other than the profound abiding nature of the natural true condition [corresponding to the dharmakaya's primordial emptiness], and because Dzogchen itself is none other than this.

Thus it has been reiterated that the conclusive intention of the Second and the Third Promulgation abides without contradiction in the nature of Dzogchen, that the Path through which the structure of the fundamental reality is actually realized is that of Dzogchen Atiyoga (befittingly revealed by that lay manifestation of Shakyamuni who was Garab Dorje³⁰⁵), and that the canonical view of the Mahayana that *most closely reflects that structure* is that of the Third Promulgation, main source of Mahamadhyamaka—which in turn is the Mahayana school expressing the view that, as we have seen, is closest to that of the Dzogchen Atiyoga.

Since Ati Dzogpa Chenpo embodies the Path through which the structure of the fundamental reality is actually realized, which was not taught in any Promulgation or philosophical school of the Mahayana, and since a Path is far more than a mere theoretical

^a As we have seen, this is an abbreviation for Atiyogatantrayana.

^b Dudjom Rinpoche, J. Y. D., English 1991, Trans.: Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein, vol. I, pp. 300-301.

view, it is clear that Dzogchen cannot be reduced to one such view. This point has been excellently made by Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche:^a

...it is not correct, basing oneself merely on a limited vision, to define Dzogchen as a philosophical system transcending eternalism and nihilism, [for this would reduce Dzogchen to a theoretical] view. Dzogchen must in fact be understood in the completeness of the three aspects constituted by the Base, the Path and the Fruit. The [term *tawa*^b, which is generally translated as] view, [designates] only one of the three elements of the Path, [which, as just noted, is in turn *but* one of the three elements of the Atiyogatantrayana], and therefore [is far from] representing the whole [of Dzogchen].

All Buddhist Vehicles must comprise three aspects, which are the Base, the Path and the Fruit. The Base of Dzogchen is the same as the Buddha-nature *qua* Base of Mahamadhyamaka, but it is explained in quite different terms, which will be briefly reviewed below, so that the peculiarities of the Path(s) and the Fruit(s) of Dzogchen may be accounted for.³⁰⁶ The Path of Dzogchen cannot be compared to any Path of the Sutrayana, for the Path of Atiyoga is based on the principle of spontaneous liberation, and involves a masterly usage of the principle of *lhundrub*^c that is exclusive to Dzogchen. In turn, the Fruits of Dzogchen are unlike those of the Sutrayana, for they involve the rainbow body (*jalü*^d), the body of atoms (*lü dül thren du deng*^e), the body of light (*ökyiku*^f or *öpfung*^g) and the total transference (*phowa chenpo*^h), which are exclusive to the Atiyoga.³⁰⁷ Therefore, by no means could the Atiyogatantrayana (i.e., Dzogchen *qua* vehicle) fully correspond to any system of the Sutrayana.

Furthermore, the Path that is the second of the three aspects of all Buddhist vehicles must in turn comprise three aspects, which in Tibetan are called *tawa*ⁱ, *gompa*^j and *chöpa*^k. In general the term *tawa* designates a theoretical view; however, in the Dzogchen Atiyoga it refers to the direct, nonconceptual Vision (of) the Base.^l In different contexts the term *gompa* may be translated as contemplation, meditation, absorption, and so on; however, in the Dzogchen Atiyoga it refers to the continuity of *tawa* or Vision during limited sessions of practice.^m Finally, in general the term *chöpa* designates a particular way of regulating behavior; however, in Ati Dzogpa Chenpo it refers to the continuity of *gompa* or Contemplation throughout the whole of one's everyday

^a Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1988, p. 26.

^b *lTa-ba*.

^c *Lhun-grub*.

^d *'Ja'-lus*.

^e *Lus rdul phran du dungs*.

^f *'Od-kyi sku*.

^g *'Od-phung*.

^h *'Pho-ba chen-po*.

ⁱ *lTa-ba*.

^j *sGom-pa*.

^k *sPyod-pa*.

^l Namkhai Norbu, ed. John Shane, 1986, revised edition 1999. This explanation of the *tawa* of Dzogchen appears in the revised edition of 1999, pp. 110-112. For a lengthier explanation see Part One of my book *Buddhism and Dzogchen*.

^m See Capriles, Elías, Part Two of *Buddhism and Dzogchen* (work in progress).

activities—all of which are based on spontaneity rather than on regulating one's behavior.^a

Since Dzogchen Atiyoga is a Buddhist vehicle, it must be understood in the context of the totality of the three aspects constituted by the Base, the Path and the Fruit. Since the Path of Dzogchen comprises the three aspects constituted by tawa, gampa and chöpa, it cannot be reduced to a tawa. Since in Dzogchen tawa does not consist in a theoretical view, it would be an even greater blunder to reduce the Atiyoga to a theoretical view. Moreover, even the theoretical explanations of Atiyoga differ from those of the Sutrayana, insofar as they reflect the specific characteristics of the Path of spontaneous liberation: this is the reason why the Dzogchen teachings feature concepts such as katak^b and lhundrub, the three modes of manifestation of the energy or thukje aspect of the Base, and so on and on.

Though this is not the place to treat Dzogchen at length (which I have done to some extent in Part Two of *Buddhism and Dzogchen*), an extremely brief comparison of the Base, Path and Fruit in Mahamadhyamaka and Dzogchen with a focus on the properly Dzogchen concepts of katak and lhundrub seems mandatory at this point. Furthermore, since in the chapter on the Yogachara School this system's conception of spontaneous awareness was compared with its parallel in the Mahamadhyamaka School, also the way this awareness is conceived must be discussed in this short comparison between Mahamadhyamaka and Dzogchen.

The Base: an Objective Foundation of Experience

We have seen that Mahayana systems based on the Third Promulgation posit a consciousness-of-the-base-of-all (Skt., *alaya vijñana*; Tib., *kunzhi namshe*^c), which is supposed to be a foundation of experience that, in spite of being *mental*, is objective insofar as it causes experiences to be subject to rules, rather than to arise and change capriciously, and insofar as it provides a common basis for intersubjective agreement with regard to the existence of an objective reality and to the latter's structure and function. In the Dzogchen teachings, what is deemed objective is neither a purely mental consciousness-of-the-base-of-all (*alaya vijñana* or *kunzhi namshe*), nor a base-of-all (*alaya* or *kunzhi*^d) in which neither *samsara* nor *nirvana* are functioning, but the Base (Tib., *zhi*^e), which in itself is neither physical nor mental, but to which primordial awareness is inherent.

This Base is what has been termed the Vajra-nature *qua* Base, which contains the three kayas and all the qualities of Buddhahood, and that hence may be considered to be the same as the Buddha-nature *qua* Base posited by Mahamadhyamaka—though the explanations of this Base in the Dzogchen teachings are far more encompassing and thorough than the descriptions of the Buddha-nature in Mahamadhyamaka, for, as stated above, they must account for the specific features of the Path(s) and Fruit(s) of Dzogchen.

In fact, as we have seen, the Dzogchen teachings explain the Base, Path and Fruit in terms of the two aspects constituted by katak and lhundrub. Concerning the Base, katak

^a See Capriles, Elias, Part Two of *Buddhism and Dzogchen* (work in progress).

^b *Ka-dag*.

^c *Kun-gzhi rnam-shes*.

^d *Kun-gzhi*.

^e *gZhi*.

or primordial purity corresponds to the voidness that allows it to fill itself with any content and yet not to be in any sense defiled, and in a sense may be said to consist in the dharmakaya *qua* Base; in turn, lhundrub or spontaneous perfection may be said to correspond to the rupakaya *qua* Base, insofar as it comprises the uninterrupted manifestation of phenomena, the phenomena manifested, and the functionality of these phenomena—and yet, for reasons that will be shown in the explanation of the Path and the Fruit of Dzogchen, its meaning goes far beyond the sense the rupakaya has in the Mahayana.

Alternatively, these teachings explain the Base in terms of three aspects, which are (1) ngowo^a or essence, (2) rangzhin^b or nature, and (3) thukje^c or energy: katak corresponds to (1) ngowo or essence, which is voidness and consists in the dharmakaya *qua* Base; in turn, lhundrub includes (2) rangzhin or nature, which is the “luminosity” or “clarity” that allows for spontaneous manifestation, and which corresponds to the sambhogakaya *qua* Base, **and (3) thukje or energy, consisting in the disposition to manifest phenomena, the uninterrupted flow of phenomena, and the functionality or phenomena, and corresponding to the nirmanakaya *qua* Base.**

On its part, the continuum that the thukje or energy aspect of the Base is, manifests in three different ways, which are the dang^d, rölpa^e and tsel^f modes of manifestation of energy. The third, the one referred to as tsel, is illustrated by the simile of a crystal prism through which white light passes, thereby being separated into a spectrum that is projected into an external dimension, for it gives rise to phenomena that clearly appear to lie in what the Dzogchen teachings call the “external dimension or jing”, such as those that we call “physical.” The first, the one called dang, is illustrated by the simile of a crystal ball that is pure, clear and limpid, in which there is nothing in particular and which is beyond the cleavage into an internal and an external dimension; however, once tsel energy has manifested, all that may manifest in this form of energy seems to lie in an “internal dimension or jing^g,” just as happens with the reflections of external phenomena appearing in a crystal ball. Finally, the second, which is the one called rölpa, is illustrated by the simile of a mirror that manifests reflections that do not seem to be either internal or external, but to manifest nondually with the mirror’s reflectiveness: this aspect of the continuum of the Base’s energy, which links the other two, features phenomena that defy any dualistic attempt to place them in an internal or in an external dimension, the paradigmatic manifestations of which are the immaterial visions that arise in the practices of Thögel^h and the Yangthikⁱ (second and final stage of practice in the Menngagde or *Upadeshavarga* series of Dzogchen teachings).³⁰⁸

To conclude, as we have seen, the Base can function in three different ways, which are *samsara*, in which the Base is ignored and delusive processes give rise to countless delusory appearances; *nirvana*, in which the Base unveils in the self-reGnition

^a *Ngo-bo.*

^b *Rang-bzhin.*

^c *Thugs-rje.*

^d *gDangs.*

^e *Rol-pa.*

^f *rTsal.*

^g *dByings.*

^h *Thod-rgal.*

ⁱ *Yang-thig.*

of rigpa and there manifest an unhindered freedom of awareness and countless spontaneous unimpeded actions; and (the various manifestations of) the base-of-all, in which the Base is ignored but neither *samsara* nor *nirvana* are active.³⁰⁹

The Path³¹⁰

In the Mahayana, practitioners are supposed to achieve realization through the discovery of emptiness, which in Dzogchen terms corresponds to the *katak* aspect of the Base and that therefore, as we have seen, results in a limited realization that is partial toward voidness.³¹¹ However, even the limited realization that privileges one of the aspects of the Base may be precluded by the causal bias inherent to this vehicle, which sustains the cause-effect relation that is a pivotal element of the conditioned experience that makes up *samsara*, maintaining this conditioned experience and therefore preserving *samsara* and preventing the manifestation of *nirvana*. This is due to the fact that this vehicle ignores the principle of lhundrub *qua* Path, which is the key to the swift realization, not only of the lhundrub aspect of the Base, but even of its *katak* aspect: since realization cannot be *caused* and cannot result from *action*, only the spontaneity of lhundrub can allow a Path to be extremely swift and effective. This is the reason why even the partial realization of the Base that is supposed to manifest as a result of treading the Path outlined in the sutras of the Third Promulgation and in Mahamadhyamaka, is so difficult to achieve through this Path, and when achieved it takes such a long time (it is often said in Mahayana sutras that Buddhahood can only be attained at the term of three immeasurable aeons or kalpas).

In Ati Dzogpa Chenpo the *katak* aspect of spontaneous awareness also prevails in the initial unveilings of this awareness, for the first aspect of the Base to unveil is ngowo or essence, and therefore the sequence of realization in this vehicle begins by the manifestation of the dharmakaya. However, in the Atiyoga the realization of the ngowo or essence aspect of the Base is not impeded by *action* and *causality*, insofar as it is achieved through methods based on the spontaneous dynamic of the lhundrub aspect of the Base at the root of the characteristically Dzogchen principle of spontaneous liberation—which, rather than sustaining the *threefold directional apparitional structure* by means of action, leads the illusory doer-experiencer to disappear spontaneously together with the other aspects of the *threefold directional apparitional structure*.³¹² This principle depends on the inherently all-liberating character of the nondual primordial gnosis of spontaneous awareness, which lower vehicles fail both to realize and to use as the Path, but which in Dzogchen is the very pivot of the Way, allowing for the unveiling of the Base and the concomitant liberation of conditioned phenomena, which occur in a perfectly lhundrub way, utterly beyond action (which is *not* how they are supposed to occur in any other vehicle, including the highest vehicle of the Path of transformation, which as we know is the Anuyogatantrayana).

Furthermore, in the Atiyoga the more advanced levels of practice are based on the activation of spontaneous, actionless, cause-free, wrathful systemic activities that are the supreme manifestations of the principle of lhundrub, which by ceaselessly activating delusion in circumstances in which it immediately liberates itself spontaneously, enable the practitioner to neutralize the propensities for delusion in a very short time, and thus to go far beyond the highest level of realization possible in the Mahayana Path, or in any other Path other than the Atiyogatantrayana. Specifically, these practices deal with the

nature or rangzhin aspect of the Base, which as a result is realized as the sambhogakaya, and with the manifestations of the energy or thukje aspect of the Base, into which the illusory subject reintegrates, so that at some point a total fusion with the energy of the world that we regard as physical is achieved and hence the nirmanakaya manifests. Therefore, it is precisely the wrathful dynamic of the principle of lhundrub that allows for the complete realization of the Base in which the lhundrub aspect manifests as clearly as the katak aspect, and in particular for the achievement of a thorough integration with the aspects of lhundrub *qua* Base (and, in particular, of energy or thukje) that samsaric beings perceive as an objective external dimension, so that duality is thoroughly surpassed and limitless freedom is effectively achieved.³¹³ It is thus that the practitioner may reach far beyond the final realization of the Mahayana, (consisting in the eleventh level [Skt., *bhumi*; Tib., *sa*]), and even beyond the final levels of realization of the inner Tantras (which are the thirteenth and fourteenth levels, respectively), possibly reaching so far as the sixteenth level³¹⁴—and, once his or her Buddha activities are completed, obtain one of the four modes of ending life that are exclusive to Dzogchen.

The three modes of manifestation of the energy or thukje aspect of the Base are essential in the Dzogchen Path, but irrelevant in other vehicles. Let us take as an example the two successive levels of practice in the Menngagde^a or Upadesha series of Dzogchen teachings. In the initial practice, which is that of Tekchö^b or spontaneous rupture of tension, the individual deals with the phenomena of the dang mode of manifestation of energy, and mainly with discursive thoughts.³¹⁵ The delusory valuation / absolutization of thoughts gives rise to tensions in the “psychophysical organism;” however, when the practitioner looks into those thoughts’ essence, which he or she has previously reGnized (i.e., directly realized, beyond the recognition of a collection of characteristics in terms of a concept) in Direct Introduction, they liberate themselves spontaneously and the tensions inherent in delusory valuation-absolutization instantly break in a perfectly spontaneous or lhundrub way, leaving the psychophysical organism absolutely relaxed, like the firewood that falls on the ground when the string tying it breaks.³¹⁶ In the more advanced practice, which is that of Thögel^c, circumstances are arranged for visions to manifest spontaneously. In a first moment, they manifest in an apparently external dimension as tsel energy, but then the dynamic of the rölpa mode of manifestation of energy activate systemic loops that lead duality to liberate itself spontaneously in such a way that the illusory mental subject instantly dissolves and only the immaterial vision remains, now as a manifestation of nondual rölpa energy.³¹⁷ Since in this practice the energetic-volume-determining-the-scope-of-awareness is extremely high, each and every time delusion liberates itself spontaneously, the power of delusory valuation-absolutization is neutralized to a far greater extent than it would with a lower energetic-volume-determining-the-scope-of-awareness, and therefore the constant repetition of spontaneous liberation under these circumstances progressively neutralizes the propensities for dualistic experience and in general for the delusory valuation / absolutization of thought, so that *samsara* is swiftly exhausted, the rölpa and tsel modes of manifestation of energy fuse (which gives rise to a “capacity of miracles”) and, if the integration of the modes of

^a *Man-ngag-sde*; also, *man-ngag-gyi-sde*.

^b *Khregs-chod*.

^c *Thod-rgal*.

manifestation of energy goes far enough, when Buddha activities have been exhausted the individual may attain one of the four characteristically Dzogchen modes of ending life.

To summarize, the Dzogchen Path is but the primordial gnosis of spontaneous awareness *qua* Path, which as will be shown below is inherently all-liberating, and as such it may be characterized solely in terms of the spontaneous liberation of whatever arises. Thus there is no way the Atiyoga explanation of the Path may be confused with that of subtle, inner Madhyamaka—or with that of any other school or subschool of the Mahayana. As we have seen, only a Path based on the principle of lhundrub that as such is wholly beyond action will not give rise to conditioned results that sustain *samsara*, and only a Path based on the Ati principle of spontaneous liberation will result in the spontaneous liberation of *all* that is conditioned, so that no aspect of the essentially unconditioned Base will any longer be veiled by conditioned experiences. Since the more advanced levels of this Path are based on the activation of the spontaneous wrathful systemic activities that are the supreme manifestation of the principle of lhundrub and that, by ceaselessly activating delusion in circumstances in which it immediately liberates itself spontaneously, neutralize the propensities for delusion in a very short time, Dzogchen is the swift Path that may lead the practitioner far beyond the highest level of realization that may be attained through the Mahayana Path, or through any other Path other than the Atiyoga.³¹⁸

To conclude, it must be noted that what is neutralized in this Path is the power of delusory valuation-absolutization to endow thoughts with the illusion of truth, value and importance. This is why fully realized individuals do not lose their capacity to deal with life situations, or to give teachings and so on: they have access to all the knowledge they accumulated throughout life, but this knowledge is not delusorily valued-absolutized, and therefore they are not the least deluded by it. Furthermore, as shown in Volume One of my book *Buddhism and Dzogchen*, realization puts an end to the self-hindering produced by the delusory valuation-absolutization of thought and the concomitant self-consciousness, and thus the fully realized individual is far more skillful in performing activities and dealing with life situation than the deluded adult. Likewise, since the person becomes free of the selfishness at the root of evil, and of the “law of inverted effect” that causes samsaric beings to give rise to evil even when they are trying to do good, the Awake One spontaneously works for the common good.

The Fruit

Concerning the Fruit, as shown in the Introduction to this book, if we state that the realization of absolute truth in Mahamadhyamaka consists in the unveiling of the Base, we will have to concede that in the Mahayana this unveiling is not total, for it privileges its emptiness aspect, which the Dzogchen teachings call *katak*, and *to some extent* it neglects its lhundrub aspect, which includes clarity, the manifestation of appearances, and spontaneous systemic activities beyond action or causality that are pivotal in the Dzogchen Path.³¹⁹

Contrariwise, in the final realization of the Atiyoga, no aspect of the Base is privileged, and therefore the latter is perfectly realized in its totality, so that *katak* and lhundrub manifest in their indivisibility. Furthermore, the three kayas are perfectly attained through the realization of the true condition of the three aspects of the Base, which are ngowo of essence, rangzhin or nature and thukje or energy (and through the

realization of the true condition of the three modes of manifestation of energy, which are dang, rölpa and tsel). In particular, in the Menngagde or Upadeshavarga, the dharmakaya is realized in the practice of Tekchö, the sambhogakaya is realized in the practice of Thögel, (in which, as we have seen, visions arise as apparently external manifestations and then the division into external and internal, and into subject and object collapses, so that vision becomes nondual), and the final realization attained through these two successive levels involves the perfect realization of the nirmanakaya, which is the precondition for attaining any of the Dzogchen modes of ending life.

The point is that practitioners of this vehicle who tread the Path to its terminal stages achieve the total integration of the lhundrub aspect of the Base, for the illusion of a separate subject completely and irreversibly dissolves into the manifestations of energy that appeared as object while *samsara* was active, as a result of which the subject-object duality no longer manifests. According to the series of Dzogchen teachings practitioners have been applying, and to the degree to which they have achieved the integration (Tib., sewa^a) and the indivisibility (Tib., jerme^b) of what formerly manifested as the internal and the external dimension, when they complete their Buddha-activities they may attain the corresponding exclusively Dzogchen Fruit: the rainbow body, the body of atoms, the body of light or the total transference, which, as we have seen, are all exclusive to the Atiyoga.³²⁰

Inseparability of Base, Path and Fruit in Dzogchen

Above it was shown that in the Atiyoga the conception of the Base responds to the needs of the Path, and that the Fruits of Dzogchen are what they are, precisely because of the structure and function of the Dzogchen Path(s). Thus it is clear that a vehicle's Base, Path and Fruit are indivisible aspects of a single system that cannot be dissociated from each other, and therefore that it is impossible to reduce a vehicle to one of its aspects.

In my book *Buddhism and Dzogchen*, the meaning of Tantra, which may be expressed as “continuity of luminosity,” was discussed in some detail. This continuity of luminosity also involves the continuity of Base, Path and Fruit, which in Dzogchen is more perfect than in the Tantras of the Path of transformation, for in the latter the Path involves the creation of a new reality by means of visualization, but in Dzogchen the Path is but the repeated unveiling of the Base that is inherently unconditioned, and the Fruit is but the final consolidation of this unveiling so that it is never again veiled by the manifestation of deluded, conditioned experience.

The Manifestation of Spontaneous Awareness *qua* Path And some Dzogchen Implications of the Simile of the Mirror

The term rangrig^c is a contraction of the composite term rangjung rigpa^d, which if literally rendered into Sanskrit would become *swayambhuvidya*. By itself, this already suggests that the meaning of the Sanskrit prefix *swa* in *swasamvedana*

^a *bSre-ba*.

^b *dByer-med*.

^c *rang rig*.

^d *rang 'byung rig pa*.

and the Tibetan term *rang* in *rangrig* have the sense of “spontaneous” rather than that of “self-” or that of “intrinsic” or “inherent.” In terms of this understanding, the etymologies of both the Sanskrit term *swasamvedana* and the Tibetan term *rangrig*, which as we have seen are the ones that, precisely because of what is being explained at this point, here are translated as “spontaneous awareness,” correspond precisely to what they designate in the Dzogchen teachings, but do not seem to correspond so precisely to the different meanings those terms have in the Yogachara school, in the Madhyamaka Swatantrika Yogachara subschools, in the subschools that make up the inner, subtle Madhyamaka (Zhentongpa and Mahamadhyamaka), or even in the Anuyoga. In fact, in Dzogchen the term is particularly (and most appropriately) applied to the manifestation of this awareness *qua* Path, which occurs in a spontaneous way that perfectly corresponds to the understanding of the particle *swa* in the word *swasamvedana* and of the particle *rang* in the term *rang-rig* as “spontaneous.” Contrariwise, the particles *swa* and *rang* cannot be understood in this sense in the Anuyoga, in which *swasamvedana* or *rang-rig* is supposed to be *caused*—which contradicts its spontaneous manifestation.³²¹

Despite the fact that the Anuyogatantrayana does not involve the lhundrub or spontaneous manifestation of awareness or gnosis *qua* Path, or the lhundrub methods based on the activation of systemic loops effortlessly resulting in spontaneous liberation, in this vehicle the properly Atiyoga concepts of *katak* and *lhundrub* are pivotal. This is so because in this vehicle spontaneous awareness *qua* Path is supposed to manifest through practices involving instantaneous transformation, the principle of which this vehicle designates as *lhundrub*. In particular, this vehicle associates the primordial empty expanse (Skt., *dharmadhatu*; Tib., *chöjing*^a) to the female sexual organ, and, therefore, from a male standpoint it sees it as the *cause* of the flow of bliss that may arise from mystic union; since this vehicle asserts that spontaneous awareness *qua* Path manifests upon realization of the inapprehensible character of the ensuing flow of bliss, it views the primordial empty expanse as *cause* and spontaneous awareness as *effect*³²² (which also is how they are viewed in the four *nyendrub* [*nyendrub zhi*^b] of Mahayoga).³²³ The *Kunche Gyälpo*^c, the fundamental Tantra of the Semde^d series of Dzogchen teachings, declares this causal bias to be the deviation and hindrance of Anuyoga—the point being that, as we have seen, *causality* precludes the *spontaneous* manifestation of spontaneous awareness *qua* Path and in general becomes an obstacle to genuine realization.

Since the etymology of *swasamvedana* or *rang-rig*, understood in the sense made explicit in this section, responds to the fact that in the Atiyoga spontaneous awareness manifests in a perfectly *lhundrub* or spontaneous way, and since the highest and most characteristic Dzogchen methods, such as those of Thögel and the Yangthik (which are unique and exclusive to this system), are based on the principle of *lhundrub* as understood in the Dzogchen teachings, it may seem that both “*lhundrub*” and “spontaneous awareness” are properly Dzogchen terms that at some point slipped into lower vehicles.³²⁴ In fact, when considering the origin of these terms it is difficult not to be reminded of the fact that in the *Samten Migdrön*^e Nubchen Sangye Yeshe^a referred to the Dzogchen

^a *chos-dbyings*.

^b *bsNyen-sgrub bzhi*.

^c *Kun-byed rgyal-po*.

^d *Sems-sde*.

^e *sGom-gyi gnad gsal-bar phye-ba bsam-gtan mig-sgron*.

Atiyoga as the “universal ancestor of all vehicles,”^b or of the rest of the facts discussed in the last subsection of this section.

We have seen that, on the Path of Dzogchen Atiyoga, the initial manifestations of the primordial gnosis of spontaneous awareness may take place when the ngowo^c or essence aspect of this gnosis shines forth spontaneously, interrupting a nondual experience of the primordial empty expanse (an experience that may manifest in the nyam called heddewa^d that often obtains following the abrupt pronunciation of the syllable PHAT!).³²⁵ If no conceptual recognition enters into play to distort the ngowo aspect of this gnosis of awareness and the individual remains in the nondual condition inherent to its manifestation *qua* Path, this gnosis manifests as the renowned chikshe kundröl^e or “all-liberating single gnosis” of Dzogchen: the moment it manifests, and so long as it is manifest, all thoughts instantly liberate themselves spontaneously, dissolving like feathers entering fire as their true condition, which is the ngowo aspect of the primordial gnosis of awareness, becomes perfectly evident, manifesting as the dharmakaya.³²⁶

The reason for the above is explained in terms of the simile of the mirror, in a way that shows that this example responds to Dzogchen Atiyoga and as such involves aspects that cannot be applied to the lower vehicles. In fact, the nonduality of primordial gnosis or spontaneous awareness is compared unto a mirror, for in a mirror there is no distance between its reflective capacity and the reflections it manifests, and there is no illusion that this reflective capacity is a sentient being who likes some reflections and clings to them, and who dislikes other reflections and rejects them; therefore, the mirror’s reflective capacity cannot adhere to reflections either through acceptance or rejection, and hence the latter do not stick to the mirror, but disappear the very moment they arise, leaving no traces whatsoever in the looking glass. This simile allows us to explain why, when the self-reGnition of spontaneous awareness puts an end to *avidya* or marigpa in the first two of the senses the term has in the Dzogchen classification adopted here, making the nonduality of primordial gnosis fully patent, this gnosis manifests as chikshe kundröl or “all-liberating single gnosis” and hence all thoughts liberate themselves spontaneously as they are arising, dissolving like drawings made on water—which is the characteristic Atiyoga spontaneous liberation of all that arises. Conversely, the manifestation of *avidya* or marigpa in the first of the senses these terms have in the Dzogchen classification adopted here, which is that of a contingent, beclouding element of stupefaction (mongcha^f) that obscures rigpa’s inherent nondual self-awareness and that prevents it from making patent its own face, inhibits its all-liberating nature, resulting in the condition of the base-of-all (Tib., kunzhi) in which neither *samsara* nor *nirvana* are active. If, after *avidya* or marigpa has manifested in this first sense of the term, it manifests in the second of the senses these terms have in the Dzogchen classification adopted here, involving the spurious subject-object duality and the concomitant illusion of there being a distance between awareness and the phenomena it manifests, and which veils the nonduality of primordial gnosis insofar as our cognitive capacity seems to be

^a *gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas Ye-shes*.

^b 290-145b, 6 of the Tashi Gangpa (*bKra-shis sGang-pa*) Edition (Leh, Ladakh, India, 1974).

^c *Ngo-bo*.

^d *Had-de-ba*.

^e *gCik-shes kun-grol*. Chik (*gcik*) means “single;” she (*shes*) I have translated as “gnosis;” kun means “all,” and dröl (*grol*) means “liberate” or “liberating.”

^f *rMongs-cha*.

inherent to the illusory subject that appears to be at a distance from the appearances that that very cognitive capacity manifests, results in adherence to these appearances through clinging or rejection—which precludes their spontaneous liberation and gives rise to karmic traces that will produce never-ending *samsara*. When the reGnition (of) this primordial gnosis or awareness makes its own face patent, and hence it manifests as all-liberating single gnosis, the Dzogchen Semde speaks of the “state of the mirror.” When *avidya* or marigpa manifests, inhibiting the all-liberating quality of this gnosis, this series of Dzogchen teachings speak of the “state of the one reflected.”³²⁷

It was legitimate to borrow the simile of the mirror from the Dzogchen Semde to illustrate the primordial gnosis of spontaneous awareness in Mahamadhyamaka insofar as there are important coincidences between the respective teachings of these two systems (in part due to the fact that the Third Promulgation, like Dzogchen, reveals the structure of reality, and in part due to the fact that Mahamadhyamaka was influenced by the Dzogchen Semde).³²⁸ However, these coincidences exclude the spontaneous liberation that is the trademark of Dzogchen and the rest of the characteristics of the Path of Atiyoga that set it apart from the Mahayana and other lower vehicles of Buddhism. This is the reason why the theoretical explanations of Mahamudra and Dzogchen that derive from the corresponding practices and realizations, could not be applied mindlessly, and in fact have never been applied thoughtlessly, to the schools of the Mahayana. Only some of those elements of the higher teachings that were fully compatible with the Mahayana were integrated into the subtle, inner Madhyamaka, for realized Masters have always been fully aware that all analogies between Mahayana schools and systems, on the one hand, and Mahamudra and Dzogchen, on the other, are in the best of cases partial.

In Dzogchen the cognitive aspect of the common Base of both *samsara* and *nirvana* may be referred to as primordial (Tib., ye^a) gnosis (Tib., she^b) or yeshe.^c In *nirvana*, the nonduality of this gnosis is not veiled, and thus it manifests as chikshe kundröl or “all-liberating single gnosis.” In the base-of-all (Tib., kunzhi) in which neither *nirvana* nor *samsara* are active, which is a nondual state, nonduality is not veiled, but ignorance of the true condition of this gnosis inhibits spontaneous liberation and therefore *nirvana* cannot manifest. In *samsara*, the nonduality of this gnosis is veiled by the illusory subject-object duality, and so despite the fact that this nondual gnosis is the Base of all samsaric experiences, adherence to whatever arises through attachment or aversion, clinging or rejection, which is a function of delusion, impedes the spontaneous liberation of arising experiences; therefore, the gnosis referred to by the Tibetan term “she” is progressively concealed by the eight dualistic “consciousnesses,” the names of which always include the term “she” insofar as they are functions of primordial gnosis (just as, in Sanskrit, the noun *viññana* includes the term *jñāna*, and in several European languages “consciousness” may be read as co-gnosis and thus as referring to the subject-object function of primordial gnosis).³²⁹ These eight dualistic “consciousnesses” successively manifest in the sequence described in the chapter on the Yogachara School, section on Yogachara and Dzogchen.

The above shows that it would be a baneful mistake to believe that the spontaneous liberation of thought is merely the dissolution of a thought after it has had its moment, as

^a *Ye*.

^b *Shes*.

^c *Ye-shes*; Skt., *jñāna*.

occurs in normal samsaric experience: this dissolution is part of the natural process of the Base of Dzogchen, but has nothing to do with either the Path of the Fruit of Dzogchen: the genuine spontaneous liberation that is the Path of Dzogchen gradually burns out the karmic imprints for endless *samsara* that since beginningless time have been created by the manifestation of delusorily valued thoughts; contrariwise, the mere subsiding to thought has no effect on these karmic imprints. In fact, some texts compare thoughts and emotions, which are the radiance of primordial awareness, to the waves of the ocean and the rays of the sun, and say that just like the waves arise from the ocean and go back to it, thoughts and emotions, being the expression of the very nature of mind, arise from it and go back to it; asserting these thoughts and emotions do not represent a problem, these texts advise us to be patient and allow them to settle back into their essential nature. Such type of advise is very valuable so that out meditation does not become a struggle against thoughts, and it can help us develop calm abiding by developing an attitude toward thoughts like that of an old man watching children play.³³⁰ However, this is not the essential practice of Dzogchen, which is based on the spontaneous liberation of thought, which needs to be contrasted with the subsiding of thoughts of their own accord after they have had their moment, and would be more aptly illustrated by the simile of a *vajra* that, so long as it is manifest, does not allow thoughts to have their moment, for they liberate themselves spontaneously as they begin to arise, like drawings on water (this refers to the third type or capacity of spontaneous liberation, called rangdröl^a; in the first type or capacity of spontaneous liberation, called cherdröl^b, they come to have their moment, and then they liberate themselves instantly and spontaneously the very instant we look into their essence; in the second type or capacity of spontaneous liberation, called shardröl^c, as thoughts begin to arise and are about to have their moment, an automatic movement of awareness results in their reGnition and so they instantly liberate themselves spontaneously).

It is well known that when the time came for Hung-yen, Fifth Patriarch of Ch'an Buddhism in China, to establish his succession, he called a poetry contest, which was won by Hui-neng (Cantonese, Wei-lang; Japanese, Eno), who became the Six Patriarch. The most famous monk in the monastery, Shen-hsiu, had written the following poem:

Our body is the *bodhi*-tree;
a brilliant mirror is our mind.
Constantly clean it to guarantee
that dust its spotlessness will not blind.

Hui-neng replied with the poem:

There has never been a *bodhi*-tree,
nor has there been a mirror-mind;
since everything is substance-free
no dust our true nature may blind!

^a *Rang-grol.*

^b *gCer-grol.*

^c *Shar-grol.*

Though this reply proved that Hui-neng's understanding was superior to Shen-hsiu's, it reflected a Mahayana standpoint emphasizing voidness.³³¹ Had a realized Dzogchen practitioner replied to Shen-hsiu, probably he or she would have written something roughly like the following (though probably less un-poetic):

Freed from the illusory obstruction introduced by unawareness
and by the subsequent grasping to object by subject,
the nonexistent primordial mirror's inherently all-liberating nature is not hampered
and so the whole of the illusory stains liberate themselves spontaneously upon arising.

If, contrariwise, one tried to clean the looking glass,
this would be a function of grasping that impedes spontaneous liberation
which could be compared with cleaning a spotless mirror
with a dirty cloth that fictively taints the mirror.

Just as it would be illegitimate to introduce Dzogchen concepts in Mahayana systems, it would be illegitimate to introduce Mahayana concepts in the teachings of the Dzogchen Atiyoga. As remarked in the Introduction to this book, one example of this is the concept of the two truths, which cannot apply to Dzogchen insofar as in this vehicle practitioners are not supposed to leave the state of Contemplation into one of post-Contemplation wherein relative truth manifests again. Therefore, no definition of absolute truth—not even the one developed by Mahamadhyamaka, which explains it as the inseparability of emptiness and appearances—is acceptable in the context of Ati Dzogpa Chenpo.

It is most important that we avoid mixing Ati Dzogpa Chenpo with other vehicles, or even combining the three series of Dzogchen teachings with each other. For example, the Mahamudra tradition received key influences from the Semde series of Dzogchen and to a great extent corresponds to it,³³² but both the Mahamudra and the Semde are quite different from the Longde^a series of Dzogchen, which in turn is considerably different from the Menngagde^b or Upadeshavarga series. Therefore, it is possible to speak of a Mahamudra-cum-Semde level of realization, of the “higher” levels of realization that are reached by the practice of Longde, and of even “higher” levels of realization that are reached only through the practice of the Menngagde or Upadesha series of Dzogchen, and in particular of Thögel^c and the Yangthik^d. This is attested by the unique realizations that result from the Vajra-bridge or Dorje Zampa^e teachings of Longde, from the Tekchö^f and Nyingthik^g teachings of the Menngagde or Upadesha, and from the Thögel and Yangthik teachings of the Menngagde or Upadesha.

The Origin of Madhyamaka, the Sudden Mahayana and the Vajra Vehicles

^a *kLong-sde*.

^b *Man-ngag-sde* or *man-ngag-gyi-sde*.

^c *Thod-rgal*.

^d *Yang-thig*.

^e *rDo-rje zam-pa*.

^f *Khregs-chod*.

^g *sNying-thig*.

We have seen repeatedly throughout this book that, in his *Samten Migdrön*, Nubchen Sangye Yeshe designated Dzogchen Atiyoga as the “universal ancestor of all vehicles,”^a and that the very title “primordial” (*ati*) may be taken to imply the meaning of “source of everything.” In connection with this it is worth noting that, despite the fact that the Mahayana did not teach the Path through which the structure of reality is realized, which is that of Dzogchen Atiyoga, there are sutras both in the Second and Third Promulgations that contain elements in which the principle of spontaneous liberation that is the essence of this Path is quite apparent.

Insofar as the principle of spontaneous liberation of Dzogchen is the true mother of all Buddhas, no Awake One could be unfamiliar with it. And in fact, just before Awakening, Shakyamuni rested in the absorption of the dimension of the base-of-all, from which he entered the state of spontaneous liberation corresponding to *nirvana* when the morning star put an end to his absorption, in a way that corresponds to some of the characteristic methods of Atiyoga discussed in this book. Furthermore, the founder of Buddhism could not have been ignorant of the principle of Atiyoga if, as asserted in the Dzogchen teachings, Garab Dorje was his own emanation. Therefore, in one or another sense it may be said that the teachings of the Sutrayana derived from the Dzogchen Atiyoga. However, those who insist in asserting that Dzogchen Masters introduced elements belonging to the Atiyoga into the Mahayana (as allegedly has done Lopön Tenzin Namdak),³³³ would have to prove their theses with scientifically acceptable evidence—which at present is unavailable.

However, as repeatedly mentioned throughout this book, according to the traditions of the Nyingmapa^b School of Tibetan Buddhism that were codified in the authoritative treatise *Feast for the Erudite: A History of the Dharma* or *Chöjung Khepai Gatön*^c written by Pawo Tsuglag Threngwa^{d, e} Nagarjuna and Aryadeva were lineage holders in the transmission of Dzogchen Atiyoga—which has been taken to imply that the Madhyamaka is a philosophical explanation, adapted to the gradual Mahayana, of the essential View of Dzogchen Ati. In this regard, Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu has written:^f

The [theoretical] viewpoint of Dzogchen is that of the Madhyamaka-Prasangika system, aim of the teaching of Buddha and supreme among Buddhist philosophical systems, originally expounded by Nagarjuna and his disciple Aryadeva. This is confirmed by the [root Tantra of the Dzogchen Menngagde series], the *Drataljur*^g. Therefore, we could conclude that the [theoretical] view of Dzogchen [corresponds to that of] this philosophical system that transcends eternalism and nihilism. It is even possible to speculate that the [theoretical] view of Madhyamaka-Prasangika originated

^a Nubchen Sangye Yeshe (*gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas Ye-shes*), *sGom gyi gnad gsal bar phye ba bsam gtan mig sgron*, 290-145b, 6; published by Tashi Gangpa (*bKra shis sGang pa*), Leh (Ladakh, India) 1974. Another edition: *gNubs chen Sangs rgyas Ye shes rin po che'i mdzad pa'i sgom 'gyi gnad gsal-bar phye-ba bsam-gtan mig-sgron*; published by 'Khor-gdon *gTer-sprul 'Chi-med Rig-'dzin*, Shantiniketan, West Bengal, India. As we have seen, this text was hidden in Tun-huang (Dunhuang) until the very beginning of the twentieth century.

^b *rNying-ma-pa*.

^c *Chos 'byung mkhas pa's dga' ston*.

^d *dPa'-bo gTsug-lag Phreng-ba* (1504-1566).

^e Tibetan Text 8 (Ms A), p. 568, cited in Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1988, pp. 26-27.

^f Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1988, p. 26.

^g *sGra thal 'gyur chen po'i rgyud*; Skt., *Shabda maha prasamga mula tantra*.

from Dzogchen. There are two reasons to substantiate this. The first is that the [real] Knowledge (of) the true condition cannot be something different from the state of spontaneous perfection of Dzogchen, and therefore the view of Madhyamaka-Prasangika must correspond to it. The other is that Garab Dorje, the first Master of [Buddhist] Dzogchen, was the source of two lineages, one of seven disciples and one of twenty-one, and one of these twenty-one successors was Nagarjuna. Besides, it is claimed that Aryadeva vanished in light after having received Dzogchen teachings from the second Mañjushrimitra [who is considered to have been an emanation of the direct disciple of Garab Dorje bearing the same name]. All of this is clearly reported in *A Feast for the Erudite: A history of Buddhism*.

The above implies that, in its original form, Madhyamaka philosophy might have been developed by Dzogchen Masters as the theoretical basis for the practice of the Mahayana. And since *The Sutra of Hui-neng*,^a the most authoritative canonical source of Ch'an or Zen Buddhism, asserts Nagarjuna and Aryadeva to have been respectively the fourteenth and fifteenth Patriarchs in the transmission of this school, Western scholars have speculated that those Masters may have developed that philosophy as a theoretical basis for the practice of the sudden Mahayana.

As Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu pointed out in the above passage, according to the root Tantra of the Menngagde series of Dzogchen teachings, the *Drataljur*, the “theoretical viewpoint” of Dzogchen Atiyoga³³⁴ is “that of the Madhyamaka-Prasangika system, aim of the teaching of Buddha and supreme among Buddhist philosophical systems, originally expounded by Nagarjuna and his disciple Aryadeva.” The reasons why the *Drataljur* and other Dzogchen texts had to underline the essential coincidence of the theoretical view of the Prasangika with that of Dzogchen may have been mainly that:

(1) Some scholars had mistaken the Dzogchen view according to which the true nature of mind is Awake awareness, for the lower Yogachara view according to which there is a thoroughly established (yongdrub^b) Buddha-nature, and

(2) These scholars had tried to confirm the wrongly assumed identity between Yogachara and Dzogchen, on the basis of the fact that terms such as *klišta mano vijñāna*, *alaya vijñāna* and *swasamvedana*, and concepts such as that of the continuity of Base, Path and Fruit, which are featured in Maitreyanatha's *Ratnagoṭravibhāga (Uttaratantra)* (which does not belong either to the Yogachara School or the Madhyamaka Swatantrika Yogachara subschools, and which some view as a Madhyamika Prasangika text, yet other Madhyamika Rangtongpas associate to the former schools), but which are extraneous to the sutras of the Second Promulgation and to the writings of the forefathers of Prasangika philosophy, are central to *Ati Dzogpa Chenpo*.

Concerning the confusion of the *Ati* view according to which the true nature of mind is Awake awareness, with the lower Yogachara view according to which there is a thoroughly established Buddha-nature, it must be stressed that the Dzogchen teachings, rather than viewing the nature of mind as thoroughly established, assert it to be an awareness free of elaborations (thödräl^c); since freedom from elaborations is the main

^a Wong Mou-Lam, translator, 1969, pp. 50-1. As we have seen, according to this Sutra, Nagarjuna was the 14th Patriarch in the lineal succession of Ch'an or Zen Buddhism and Aryadeva (called Kanadeva in the Sutra) was the 15th Patriarch.

^b *Yongs-grub*.

^c *sPros-bral*.

trait of Prasangika philosophy, and since *Ati Dzogpa Chenpo* views all phenomena as being empty of self-existence in a way that cannot be distinguished from that of the Prasangikas, in these most essential respects the “theoretical view” of Dzogchen corresponds to that of the Prasangika subschool (furthermore, as we have seen, the conception of voidness in the Yogachara School is much lower than that of the Uma Rangtongpa or Swabhava Shunyata Madhyamaka in general, and, even more so, than that of the Dzogchen teachings—and even the conception of voidness of the Madhyamaka Swatantrika subschools is not as thorough as both that of the Prasangika School and that of the Dzogchen teachings).

Concerning the use in the Dzogchen teachings of terms featured in Sutras of the Third Promulgation that were assimilated by the Yogachara and Madhyamaka Swatantrika Yogachara schools, the reader must be reminded that the highest philosophical schools of the Mahayana, which are those that make up the subtle, inner Madhyamaka, are also mainly based on the Sutras of the Third Promulgation, and use the concepts and terms that these Sutras share with the Dzogchen teachings. However, as we have seen, the Dzogchen teachings present a much ampler and more coherent system that gives some of those terms a meaning that is quite different from the one they have in all Mahayana systems, and that includes other concepts that are not featured in any such systems—which is due to the fact that the Dzogchen teachings are much ampler and more comprehensive than any Sutric system (which in turn seems to lend credibility to the thesis according to which those terms and concepts existed in the Dzogchen teachings even before the Third Promulgation).

Mahamadhyamaka is the philosophical school of the Mahayana that is closest to Dzogchen insofar as it encompasses those aspects of the Prasangika view that correspond to the theoretical explanations proper of the Dzogchen teachings (such as the concept of “freedom from elaboration” and the corresponding conception of the voidness of relative entities), *as well as* the terms and concepts that Dzogchen shares with the sutras of the Third Promulgation—which Mahamadhyamaka understands in a way that is *least removed* from the characteristic sense they have in the Dzogchen tradition. Furthermore, rather than explaining absolute truth as a mere absence (which as such could not give rise either to manifestation, or to spontaneous liberation, or to the whole of the qualities of Awakening), Mahamadhyamaka explains it as being the Buddha-essence or Buddha-nature that has always been actual as the Base of both *samsara* and *nirvana*, emphasizing the fact that the Path and the Fruit are but the unveiling of the Base. Therefore, there can be no doubt whatsoever that Mahamadhyamaka encompasses more aspects of the theoretical view of Dzogchen than any other theoretical system of the Mahayana—even though, as is to be expected and as stressed above, it does not include any of the concepts that respond to the characteristically Dzogchen principle of spontaneous liberation and its results.

To conclude, the Dzogchen Atiyoga is the self-arisen, unelaborated vehicle of spontaneous accomplishment; if, by comparison with it, other vehicles seem to have been created by the mind, this may be due to the fact that many of their methods may have arisen from the intentional imitation of processes that occurred spontaneously in realized adepts (as often occurs in the practice of Dzogchen).

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NOTES

¹ Aryadeva’s *Chatuhishatakastrakarika* (Tib., *bStan bcos bzhi brgya pa zhes bya ba’i tshig le’ur byas pa*) reads (XVI.23cd):

“Conceptuality sees [and] one is bound; it is to be stopped here.”

² Originally the Prasangika view was expressed by saying that no entity existed, even in the conventional plane. However, Chandrakirti insisted on qualifying the term “existence” with the adjective “inherent” and/or with a series of other adjectives, and later on Je Tsongkhapa exacerbated this trend. Later on we

will see that there was no need to add such adjectives—which I have explained on the grounds that the phenomenon deluded human beings understand by “existence” is what Tsongkhapa called “inherent existence.” However, I have kept the adjective “inherent” in the context of the distinctions between Swatantrika and Prasangika so that those who are too used to the terminology and way of speaking that has come to prevail in our time may understand what I am trying to say.

³ The term *alaya vijñāna* is used in the Dzogchen teachings, in the *Lankavatarasutra*, in the Yogachara school of philosophy, and in the Mahamadhyamaka, Zhentongpa and Swatantrika-Yogachara subschools of Madhyamika philosophy. However, as shown below in the regular text of this book, in the Dzogchen teachings the meaning of the term is different from those it has in the Mahayana in general.

⁴ In particular, unlike Mahamadhyamaka, the Prasangika does not posit a continuity of Base, Path and Fruit, and therefore its view doesn’t make it quite clear that *nirvana* is *not* produced by the practices of the bodhisattva; it views the rupakaya as a product of the accumulation of merits and the dharmakaya as a product of the accumulation of wisdom; as a method, it mainly emphasizes analysis; it involves elements of antisomatism and misogyny; etc.

⁵ As will be shown in the last section of the last chapter of this book, in the Dzogchen teachings the Base is said to have three aspects, which are: ngowo (*ngo-bo*) or essence, which is voidness; rangzhin (*rang-bzhin*) or nature, which is the luminosity, clarity or reflectiveness allowing for continuous manifestation; and thukje (*thugs-rje*) or energy, which is the uninterrupted flow of manifestation of phenomena. In turn, the energy or tukje (*thugs-rje*) aspect of the Base manifests in three different ways, which are: dang (*gdangs*) energy, which is transparent, pure, clear and limpid, for it is the dharmakaya itself; rölpa (*rol-pa*) energy, which corresponds to the sambhogakaya and the phenomena of which tend to defy the division into inside and outside; and tsel (*rtsal*) energy, the phenomena of which appear to manifest in an external dimension or jing (*dbyings*)—all of which will be briefly considered in a subsequent endnote. Since these divisions and explanations are exclusive to Dzogchen, concerning the Base the explanations in the Dzogchen teachings cannot be said to correspond to those of any theoretical school of the Mahayana (or of any other vehicle, for that matter).

In turn, the Path is said to have three aspects, which are: tawa (*lta-ba*) or Vision, which is the direct realization of the Base, beyond conceptual interpretations; gompa (*sgom-pa*) or Contemplation, which is the continuity of the tawa in limited sessions of practice; and chöpa (*spyod-pa*) or Behavior, which is the continuity of gompa beyond limited sessions of practice and the use of errors and shortcomings in order to recover the gompa when its continuity has been interrupted. In Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1988, p. 26, on which I am basing myself for comparing the philosophy of the Prasangikas and the Dzogchen teachings, Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu does not warn, as he has done in other texts (see, for example, Namkhai Norbu, ed. John Shane, 1986, revised edition 1999; Namkhai Norbu, Chögyäl, ed. Cheh-Ngee Goh, 1990; etc.) that in the Dzogchen Atiyoga the term tawa (*lta-ba*) does not mean exactly the same as in the rest of Buddhist Paths and vehicles. The point is that, as shown in Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2003, and in Capriles, Elías, 2000b, though the three aspects of all Buddhist Paths and vehicles are tawa or theoretical view, gompa (*sgom-pa*) or meditation, and chöpa (*spyod pa*) or behavior, in the Path of *Atiyoga* the tawa is not an intellectual conception of reality, but the direct, undistorted Vision (of) the Base, which manifests in the state of rigpa (*rig-pa*: a term that I translate alternatively as “Truth,” as “Awake Awareness” or as “Presence,” all of them capitalized in order to distinguish the special sense given to the words in this context from their usual meanings).

Finally, the Fruit is the trikaya of Buddha. However, as also shown in Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2003, and in Capriles, Elías, 2000b, the kayas in Dzogchen are not understood in the same way as in other vehicles. To begin with, the first one to be realized in the Atiyogatantrayana is the dharmakaya, which as understood in this vehicle corresponds to the final realization of the inner Tantras of the Path of transformation, which these call swabhavikaya. The sambhogakaya and the nirmanakaya *as understood in the Dzogchen teachings*, which manifest in this order after the realization of the dharmakaya, are not attained in other vehicles or Paths.

All of this demonstrates that no philosophical system belonging to other vehicles could ever correspond to the explanations in the Dzogchen teachings, and that in the best of cases the explanations of one or another Madhyamaka subschool would coincide with one or another aspect of the Dzogchen teachings.

⁶ The reader who is not familiar with the work of Dzogchen Master Namkhai Norbu may be surprised by the explanation of the Three Paths of Buddhism as being:

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- (1) The Path of renunciation, known as the Sutra Vehicle (Sutrayana) and comprising the Hinayana and the Mahayana;
 - (2) The Path of transformation, known as Vajra Vehicle (Vajrayana), Tantra Vehicle (Tantrayana) or Secret Mantra Vehicle (Guhyamantrayana), and comprising (a) the outer or lower Tantras that properly speaking constitute the Path of Purification, and (b) the inner or higher Tantras, which constitute the Path of Transformation properly speaking; and
 - (3) The Path of spontaneous liberation, which I have decided to call Primordial Vehicle (Atiyana, which as stated in the notes is an abbreviation of Atiyogatantrayana) of total plenitude and perfection (Dzogchen), or “Atiyana-Dzogchen.”

The point is that, during the last centuries, all Tibetan traditions have divided the Way that makes up the Fourth Noble Truth into three Paths, which are the Hinayana, the Mahayana, and the Vajrayana. The classification summarized above, which belongs to what I consider to be the most complete and self-consistent system of Buddhism that has come to us, may be older than the one prevailing nowadays, for originally it was taught in Oddiyana (the valley of Kabul in present day Afghanistan and/or the valley of Swat in present day Pakistan) and then in the eighth century AD was established in Tibet, where it disappeared in the first centuries of the second millennium CE as a result of the influence and preponderance of the new or Sarmapa (*gsar-ma-pa*) schools.

While the tradition that nowadays is called “Old” or Nyingmapa classifies their teachings into nine vehicles, the “New” or Sarmapa Schools divide them into seven vehicles. The classification of the nine Buddhist vehicles of the Nyingmapa into Path of renunciation, Path of transformation and Path of spontaneous liberation has come to us through two works: (1) the *Kathang Dennga* (*bKa’thang sDe-lnga*), written by one of Padmasambhava’s most important direct disciples, Nub Namkhai Nyingpo (*gNubs Nam-mkha’i sNying-po*) and concealed as a terma (*gter-ma*) or spiritual treasure at the time of the first diffusion of the Dharma in Tibet, to be revealed at the appropriate time for it to be publicly taught and practiced—which came to pass in the sixteenth century CE, when it was revealed by tertön (*gter-ston*) Orgyen Lingpa (*O-rgyan gLing-pa*). (2) The *Samten Migdrön* (*bSam-gtan Mig-sgron*) by Nubchen Sangye Yeshe (*gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas Ye-shes*), written after the former and entombed in Tun Huang from the eleventh or twelfth century AD until 1908, when French sinologist Paul Pelliot explored the cave temples that had been accidentally discovered by a local farmer at the turn of the century. The fact that the *Samten Migdrön*, entombed for so long at Tun Huang and therefore saved from later modifications, contains precise quotations from the *Kathang Dennga*, attests to the authenticity of the terma revealed by Orgyen Lingpa. And since both texts were protected from all possible modification for nearly a millennium, there can be no doubt that the classification of the nine vehicles into these three Paths was established in Tibet before the political (and ensuing cultural and religious) dominance of the New or Sarmapa schools caused the Old or Nyingmapa Tradition to abandon this classification of its nine vehicles and stick to the one they ended up sharing with the Sarmapa—which, as we have seen, is the one that divides them into Hinayana, Mahayana and Vajrayana. To my knowledge, the only Master who, in our time and in the framework of Buddhism, has taught the ancient classification of the nine vehicles of the Nyingmapa into Path of renunciation, Path of transformation and Path of spontaneous liberation, has been Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche, who, possessing the mandate and the necessary capacity, courage and uprightness, has set to restore the teachings to their original form.

The following is a slightly more detailed review of the three Paths taken from Part One of my book *Buddhism and Dzogchen*:

“The Path of renunciation comprises the vehicles contained in the Sutra Vehicle or Sutrayana. In this Path passions are viewed as poisons, and the stimuli that activate them as venomous snakes to ward off. Perhaps it would be permissible to say that the functional principle of this Path consists in preventing passions from taking hold of the practitioner and dragging him or her into chain reactions, so that he or she may progressively develop the mental calm and capacity for introspection necessary to apply the essential methods of the specific vehicle of this Path that she or he has set to practice, and by so doing may have the possibility of attaining the condition that such vehicle regards as realization. To conclude, it must be remarked that, according to some interpretations, the arrival point of this Path is the realization of voidness (which in the Madhyamaka Rangtongpa schools is understood in the sense of the absence of self-existence of all phenomena: both those that are human beings and those that are not human beings).

“The Path of transformation comprises the vehicles contained in the immutable (unborn/undying) vehicle (Vajrayana), Tantric vehicle (Tantrayana) or secret *mantra* vehicle (Guhyamantrayana). In the Tantras in general the idea is to transform one’s vision; for example, if I have the vision that someone is creating problems for me, but I transform my vision so that I find myself in a dimension of Awake beings, dakas and dakinis and so on, there is no way I can get angry at the person whom formerly I perceived as creating problems. In the Path of transformation properly speaking (as different from the Path of purification constituted by the lower Tantras, which was defined and explained in Part One of my *Buddhism and Dzogchen*) the passions, which are particularly intense manifestations of delusion and therefore of the conditioned and made, are employed as the means for discovering the unconditioned and unmade. The use of the venom constituted by the passions in order to neutralize the delusion of which the passions are intense manifestations, thereby attaining the most precious object of human yearning, which is Awakening or Buddhahood, has been compared to the manufacture of anti-snake serum starting from snake venom, to the homeopathic principle of healing syndromes through a particular type of application of the agents that induce them, and to the transformation of poisons into medicines or of coarse metals into precious ones by alchemical means (which, as the teachings of this vehicle warn, always involves some risk). It is said that in this Path the passions are like firewood and wisdom is like fire: the more wood we have, the greater the fire. To conclude, it is important to underline that the starting point of this Path is the realization of voidness that is the arrival point of the Path of renunciation, and the arrival point of this Path is the realization of rigpa...

“The Path of spontaneous liberation is the “primordial vehicle” or Atiyana (as we have seen, this is my abbreviation of the term Atiyogatantrayana). While on the Path of transformation one purifies one’s dimension by the power of another being, which may be Vajrasattva, the deity one transforms oneself into, etc. (which, however, are manifestations of one’s own potentiality), in the Path of spontaneous liberation one purifies one’s dimension *directly* through one’s own potentiality. On this Path one does not depend either on preventing the arising of the passions, or on their manifestation. No matter what conditioned, made experience manifests, thereby veiling the unconditioned, unmade true nature, by reGnizing its true, unmade, unconditioned nature, whatever had manifested dissolves spontaneously, leaving the unmade, unconditioned, true nature evident (the neologisms “reGnition,” “reGnize” and so on, which will be discussed in a subsequent note, refer to a direct, nondual, nonconceptual unveiling that does not involve what is termed recognition). Since dualistic delusion always involves tensions, which, insofar as they depend on the illusion of duality, cannot manifest when delusion dissolves and the nondual condition becomes perfectly evident, the instantaneous transition from delusion to Truth instantaneously results in the absolute relaxation of body, speech and mind, in a way that has been compared with the fall of sticks of firewood when the rope tying them breaks. So long as this nature, which is inherently all-liberating, remains unveiled, whatever manifestation of the conditioned and made may arise will instantly liberate themselves spontaneously and will thus not veil the unconditioned and unmade, which will continue to be evident. Concerning the spontaneous liberation of the passions, in particular, it must be noted that, since these are more intense attitudes of a mental subject toward an object that the mental subject experiences as different and separate from itself, upon reGnition of the unconditioned and unmade, they liberate themselves instantly and spontaneously together with the tensions they generate. It is said that the Path of spontaneous liberation may lead those with the appropriate capacities to a more complete Awakening in shorter time. To conclude, it must be remarked that in this Path the starting point is the realization of rigpa that is the arrival point of the Path of transformation, and the arrival point is the total integration of subject and object that, when absolutely consolidated, results in characteristically Dzogchen realizations such as the rainbow body (jalü [‘ja’-lus]), the body of atoms (lü dül thren du deng [‘lus rdul phran du deng]), the body of light (ökyiku [‘od-kyi sku] or öphung [‘od-phung]) or the total transference (phowa chenpo [‘pho-ba chen-po]), which are exclusive to this supreme Path of *Ati Dzogpa Chenpo*.

“However, the above does not mean that one has to follow each Path to the end in order to approach the next: beings with the right capacity may enter directly the Path of spontaneous liberation by gaining access to the state of rigpa without previously having followed the Path of renunciation until the realization of voidness and then the Path of transformation until the realization of rigpa.”

Relaxation is total, not only in rigpa-*qua*-Path and rigpa-*qua*-Fruit, but also in the condition of the base-of-all in which neither *samsara* nor *nirvana* are active. However, in the practices of the Dzogchen Menngagde (*man-ngag-sde*) or Upadeshavarga that allow for the manifestation of rigpa-*qua*-Path, this

total relaxation takes place instantaneously after a moment of tension (and in fact, the greater the tension, and the higher the energetic-volume-determining-the-scope-of-awareness, the more effective the practice will be), and involves the reGnition (of) Awake awareness; therefore, it makes *nirvana* manifest, while it simultaneously neutralizes to some extent the propensities for *samsara* to manifest—so that we become increasingly familiar with *nirvana* and can progressively become established in it. Contrariwise, in the condition of the base-of-all the propensities for *samsara* to manifest are not neutralized, *nirvana* does not manifest, and there is no dynamic helping us become established in *nirvana*.

⁷ The katak (*ka-dag*) or “primordial purity” aspect of the Base corresponds to voidness, whereas its lhundrub (*lhun-grub*) or “spontaneous perfection” aspect in this context may be said to correspond to appearances and their functionality. In terms of the trikaya of Buddhahood, whether *qua* Base, *qua* Path or *qua* Fruit, the katak aspect is the dharmakaya, whereas the lhundrub aspect is the rupakaya. However, katak and lhundrub are aspects of the Vajra-nature as posited by the Atiyogatantra, the Anuyogatantra and the Mahayogatantra, and thus it would not be accurate to posit them concerning the *tathagatagarbha* or *sugatagarbha* of the Mahayana, or (as we will see below in the regular text of this Introduction) to equate them with the aspects constituted by voidness and appearances that, according to the *Prajñāparamitahridayasūtra*, are not different from each other. For a detailed explanation of the katak and lhundrub aspects of the Base and of their correspondences, see Part Two of my *Buddhism and Dzogchen*.

The fact that the Mahayana is partial towards voidness was underlined by Namkhai Nyingpo, who was a realized Master of the Mahayana (gradual and sudden), of the Vajrayana, and of Dzogchen Atiyoga.

⁸ The gradual teachings of the Path of renunciation or *Sūtrayāna* divide the Way into five successive paths (Skt., *marga*; Tib., lam), which are: (1) the path of accumulation (*sambharamarga*; Tib., tsoglam [*tsshogs-lam*]), (2) the path of preparation or path of application (*prayogamarga*; Tib., jorlam [*sbyor-lam*]), (3) the path of Vision (*darshanamarga*; Tib., thonglam [*mtshong-lam*]), (4) the path of Contemplation (*bhavanamarga*; Tib., gomlam [*bsgom-lam*]), and (5) the path of no more learning (*ashaikshamarga*; Tib., milobpai lam [*mi-slob-pa'i lam*]).

The accumulation of merits and wisdom, as well as the “thorough abandonings” (*samyakprahana*; Pali, *samma-prahana*; Tib., yangdak parpong [*yang dag par spong*]) whereby four factors are developed through meditation and moral training, are the essence of the path of accumulation. The path of preparation or application, as its name suggests, prepares the practitioners to enter the next path by allowing them to overcome the fear that bars entrance to it; besides, it closes the doors to lower realms. The path of Vision, being the first supramundane path, represents the entrance to the Path in a truer and more thorough sense; in the *Hinayana* this is marked by the transition from blind faith in the Four Noble Truths to the actual, true understanding of these Truths, which transforms the individual into a “stream enterer” (Pali, *shrota-apanna*); in the *Mahayana*, entrance to this path—which corresponds to the first *bodhisattva* level (Skt., *bhumi*; Tib., *sa*)—is marked by the manifestation of the ultimate *prajña* wisdom that realizes voidness and the manifestation of the so-called absolute *bodhichitta qua* indivisibility of emptiness and compassion. The path of Contemplation involves the gradual development of the realization obtained in the previous path, which in the *Mahayana* involves the individual’s progressive development from the second *bodhisattva* level to the tenth. Finally, the path of no more learning is the attainment of the final Fruit of the Path one is following; if one is a follower of the *Mahayana*, one becomes a *Samyak-sambuddha* or fully Awake One.

⁹ The opposite is true concerning the realization of Dzogchen. This is why once I said with regard to Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche, “Though it may seem that he is looking at the namkha (space), he is actually resting in the norbu (the wish-fulfilling jewel, which in this case represents the state of rangrig wherein the renowned chikshe kundröl [*gcik-shes kun-grol*] clearly manifests). In this case, looking at the namkha would have meant being in the *arupyadhātu*, clinging to one of the four arupa lokas. And being in the namkha (but not in the norbu) would have meant resting in the condition of the base-of-all (kunzhi [*kun-gzhi*]) wherein neither *samsara* nor *nirvana* is active.

¹⁰ If the simile of the hen picking grains and the person threading a needle used by Namkhai Nyingpo were applied to the Tantric vehicles of Transformation, the ground and the sky would illustrate the full realization of the Vajra nature through the practice of the inner or higher Tantras.

¹¹ Among the terms that have been rendered as “Buddha-nature” there are some that somehow reflect the etymology of this translation—such as *buddhata*, *bhutatahata* and so on—and others that do not do so—such as *tathagatagarbha* and *sugatagarbha*.

The literal meaning of the latter two terms is “matrix of the *Tathagata*” or “matrix of the *Sugata*,” however, they are often rendered as “seed of the *Tathagata*” or “seed of the *Sugata*” insofar as in the Mahayana this concept is often understood in terms of the analogy of a seed that needs contributory conditions in order to sprout and develop into the “plant” of Buddhahood. Thus conceived, the *tathagatagarbha* or *sugatagarbha* is very different from the Vajra-nature of the Tantras, which is not mere potency, for it has always been actual.

In turn, the Gelugpa understand terms such as *buddhata* and *bhutatahata* as synonyms of *shunyata* or emptiness and define it as the absence of any fixed, determinate essence, which allows for the possibility of changing and becoming Buddhas: since in general they equate ultimate truth with voidness, they claim that this *buddhata* and *bhutatahata* is realized through analysis, and that thereby the bodhisattva enters the third bodhisattva path (path of Vision; Skt., *darshanamarga*; Tib., thonglam [*mtshong-lam*]), which corresponds to the first level (Skt., *bhumi*; Tib., *sa*). However, as we shall see in the last chapter of the regular text of this book (in the section discussing Tsongkhapa’s thought and then in that discussing the Mahamadhyamaka School), the equation of absolute truth with voidness involves a series of flaws. In turn, the idea of changing and thus becoming Buddhas is far removed from the explanations featured in the inner Tantras and in particular in the Dzogchen Atiyoga, according to which there is nothing to change for us to become Buddhas, for our Vajra-nature already contains the three kayas and all the qualities of Buddhahood. In this interpretation the comparison of the Buddha-nature with a seed that must sprout is absent.

Other traditions, and in particular Chinese Buddhist traditions (including Ch’an or Zen), rather than equating *buddhata* and *bhutatahata* with voidness, view it as the fundamental nature of all reality, an immutable essence all beings possess, which if realized directly may allow them to suddenly become Buddhas. In this case *buddhata* and *bhutatahata* are not conceived negatively; if in any sense they could be identified with voidness, it would be with *ta wu* (Skt., *mahashunya*; Tib., tongpa chenpo [*stong-pa chen-po*]), the Great Void, which rather than an absence is the single, true empty, substance-free nature of all reality and of all beings. In this conception, it is clear that the idea that the Buddha-nature is like a seed that must turn into a plant by means of a long causal, conditioning process of transformation is absent.

At any rate, on the basis of canonical texts expounding a more definitive meaning, and in particular of the *Tathagatagarbhasutra*, the *Lankavatarasutra*, the *Mahaparinirvanasutra* [the Mahayana sutra extant in Tibetan and Chinese, not the Pali *Mahaparinibbanasutta*] and other key canonical texts, a series of commentators of the sutras of the Third Promulgation produced a series of subtle, inner Mahayana tractates that to a great degree conceive the *tathagatagarbha* or *sugatagarbha* as actuality, speaking of a *tathagatagarbha qua* Base, a *tathagatagarbha qua* Path and a *tathagatagarbha qua* Fruit. These are some of the texts that gave rise to the subschool known as Mahamadhyamaka. However, as will be shown in the section on Mahamadhyamaka and Dzogchen, Mahamadhyamaka continues to involve the limitations inherent in the Sutrayana, and in general the differences between this system and Dzogchen are insurmountable.

¹² There are at least two translations of this text into English and one into Italian: (1) Dowman, Keith, 1992; (2) Karmay, 1988; (3) Padmasambhava, Italian 1990.

¹³ “Metaontological,” in the sense given the term here, means: (1) “beyond the wrong belief that being is a basic truth” or “involving awareness of the delusive character of the phenomenon of being,” and (2) “positing the need to go beyond this delusive phenomenon.” The delusive character of the phenomenon of being will be discussed below in the regular text of this book.

Therefore, a metaontological hermeneutics is a hermeneutics, either of reality or of metaontological texts (i.e., of texts acknowledging that what we call being or existence is a delusive phenomenon and positing the need to go beyond this phenomenon), which can be carried out solely by those who have repeatedly gone beyond the delusive phenomenon of being, into the state of absolute truth free of delusion, and thus are aware of the fact that this phenomenon is the most basic manifestation of the delusion that characterizes *samsara*. This is so because those who have *not* undergone the fall of the veil of which the phenomenon of being is part and therefore have not discovered the Base that is the true condition of the universe, take that phenomenon to be an absolutely true reality, and hence are deluded regarding the

nature of being. Being deluded concerning the nature of being, they don't have any possibility of producing a correct ontology, which necessarily would have to show being to be delusive and posit the necessity to surpass it—and therefore necessarily must be a metaontology.

The full description of this hermeneutics is to be carried out in Capriles, work in progress. Reference to it is also made in Chapter One of Capriles, Elías, soon-to-be-published 1 (the name of the chapter is “The Meaning of Being: A Metaontological Hermeneutics of the Most General of Concepts and Phenomena”).

¹⁴ The webpage in which this book was originally published is <http://www.eliascapriles.dzogchen.ru>, where it continues to be available; however, later on my University offered me another webpage for making available the whole of my works, which is <http://webdelprofesor.ula.ve/humanidades/elicap>, and so now it is available in this webpage as well.

¹⁵ Neither the University of the Andes (Mérida, Venezuela), nor the Dzogchen Community of Venezuela, nor the author of this book, possesses a Library of Tibetan mss. Moreover, as I have already pointed out, during my years in Asia, I did not dedicate myself to study, but to the practice of the teachings.

¹⁶ This is according to the chronology most widely admitted in the West. According to Tibetan chronology, Asanga was born 900 years after the *parinirvana* of Shakyamuni—i.e., approximately in 420 CE.

¹⁷ The term “phenomenon” is derived from the Greek *phainomenon*, meaning, “that which appears.” Many translators have translated the term *dharma*, which in one of its acceptations refers to phenomena appearing as object and possessing no subjective consciousness, with the term “phenomena,” as though only phenomena of this type were phenomena in the etymological sense of “that which appears,” which is the one the term has in Western philosophy. This is the result of conditioning by common sense, Judeo-Christian religions or Western metaphysical philosophies (or even a phenomenological philosophy such as Husserl's), according to which what appears is the objects, which appear to the subject—which in its turn is deemed not to be an appearance. However, according to the higher forms of Buddhism and to the philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre, among other systems, the mental subject and the dualistic consciousness associated with it are mere appearances that have their existence only insofar and so long as they appear (according to *Mahamadhyamaka*, Dzogchen and Sartre's philosophy, they manifest in a basic nondual awareness), even though their way of appearing is radically different from that of the phenomena that appear as object. In fact, in the Introduction to Sartre, Jean-Paul, 1943; 31st edition, 1980, the author rejects Husserl's subtle assertion of the Cartesian *cogito*, and notes that:

“*Consciousness is not to any extent substantial; it is a mere ‘appearance,’* in the sense that it only exists to the extent that it appears.”

Bhavaviveka, who developed the initial form of *Svatantrika* or Autonomist *Madhyamaka*, was the first Buddhist thinker to explicitly insist that consciousness was part of the phenomenal world, and to substantiate this view with an ample set of arguments. In fact, consciousness and the mental subject, which manifest only in *samsara* when the subject-object duality is functioning, are phenomena also, even though they do not appear directly and explicitly as objects, but in a much more subtle way—which in the case of the mental subject has been referred to as “indirect and implicit.”

However, as K. Lipman pointed out in the Introduction to *Primordial Experience* (Mañjushrimitra [Trans. Kennard Lipman, Namkhai Norbu and Barry Simmons: English 1983/1986], *Primordial Experience: An Introduction to rDzogs-chen Meditation*. Boston, Shambhala), among the Yogacharas, Sthiramati had already asserted that *both* the self *and* the configurations of events and meanings with which it deals have *no* “in itself” status and do not exist at all apart from the experiencing process. In turn, Vinitadeva, sub-commentator of Vasubandhu's commentary to the *Vimshatika*, asserted that the Sanskrit prefix *matra* (the Tibetan equivalent of which is *tsam* [*tsam*]), which in general the Yogacharas seem to have understood as referring to the well-known fact that this school flatly rejected the independent, external existence of the “object” (Skt., *artha*; Tib. *dön* [*don*]), referred to *both* the subjective and the objective sides of experiencing (*rnam par shes pa las ma gtogs pa gzung dang 'dzin pa'i mtshan nyid kyi don*).

¹⁸ The awareness of consciousness designated by the Sanskrit term *swasamvittih* and the Tibetan word *rangrig* (*rang-rig*) is understood in different ways by the different schools that posit it; however, in general it may be said that *qua* Base this awareness is simultaneously aware of an external object, of dualistic consciousness and its states, and of the very source and nature of awareness; it does not distinguish or separate the object of experience from the experiencing consciousness; and it allows for remembrance (the reasons for this will be discussed in the section comparing Mahamadhyamaka and

the Yogachara School). The variants of this concept will be reviewed mainly in the discussion of the Yogachara School and in the consideration of the Mahamadhyamaka subschool of the subtle and inner Madhyamaka (however, the concept also exists in the subschool of the Sautrantika that adheres to logic, in the two Madhyamaka-Swatantrika-Yogachara subschools belonging to the outer, coarse Madhyamaka, and in the Zhentongpa school of the subtle and inner Madhyamaka).

¹⁹ *Samskara* means “repetitive mental formations;” *viprayukta* means “not associated;” and *chitta chaitasika* means “[to] minds [and/or] mental events.”

²⁰ According to this school, *jñeya* or “object of knowledge,” *sat* or “being” and *bhava* or “thing” are synonyms.

²¹ The five *Sammitiya* sub-schools of the *Vaibhashika* School held the subtle belief in an ego, which will be explained in the chapter on the *Madhyamaka* school. Furthermore, according to the *Madhyamaka Prasangika* subschool, it is impossible to have a true realization of the voidness of human beings if one does not realize the voidness of phenomena that are not human beings, which include the aggregates the interaction of which gives rise to the illusion that human beings “exist inherently” (their argument being that if one does not realize the basis of an illusion to be void, one will be unable to realize the illusion to be void). Therefore, this school does not admit that the shravakas have a genuine, true realization of selflessness or *shunyata*. And, in fact, on the basis of this Prasangika tenet, Tsongkhapa infers that the fact that non-Prasangika schools assert that the person is empty does not mean that they truly realize it to be without “inherent existence.”

It is insofar as shravakas believe entities of the aggregate of form—that is, corporeal entities—to consist of ultimately existent atoms, that they are said not to realize the emptiness of these entities.

²² *Akasha* or space, *apratisamkhyanirodha* or nonperception of phenomena due to the absence of *pratyaya* or conditions and resulting from concentration rather than from discrimination, and *pratisamkhyanirodha* or supreme wisdom of cessation deriving from discrimination.

²³ Concerning the five paths or *marga* that Shravakas must successively go through, the first two are tainted (as they are completely within *samsara*), the third is untainted, and in the fourth and fifth there are some ways that are tainted and some that are untainted. In particular, the cultivation of the higher samsaric concentrations on the fourth path is tainted, and even some ways on the fifth path are deemed to be tainted insofar as they may increase desire in others (even thought of course they do not do so in the realized practitioner who has reached this path).

²⁴ An awareness (of) consciousness is also upheld by the Madhyamaka-Swatantrika-Yogachara subschools of the outer, coarse Madhyamaka, and by the inner, subtle Madhyamaka (Tib., nang trawe uma), consisting of the Uma Zhentongpa and the Mahamadhyamaka subschools of Madhyamika philosophy.

²⁵ In Napper, Elizabeth, 2003, p. 685, note 142, we read:

“Ngawang Palden in the Sautrantika chapter of his *Explanation of the Conventional and the Ultimate in the Four Systems of Tenets* (*Grub mtha' bzhi'i lugs kyi kun rdzob dang don dam pa'i don rnam par bshad pa legs bshad dpyid kyi dpal mo'i glu dbyangs*, New Delhi: Guru Deva, 1972, 39.5-39.6) says that some such as Prajñakaragupta, Suryagupta, Shantarakshita, Kamalashila, and Jetari interpret Dharmakirti's *Commentary on [Dignaga's] Compendium of Valid Cognition* (*Tshad ma rnam 'grel, Pramanavarttika*) as a *Madhyamika* treatise.

In turn, in Dreyfus, George B. J., 1997, p. 441, we are told that Jikden Gongpo (*'jig rten mgong po*, 1143-1217), the first patriarch of the Drikungpa (*'bri gung pa*) branch of the Kagyü School, asserted that Dharmakirti was a *Madhyamika*.

²⁶ The Sautrantikas believe in the existence of an external world and the Yogacharas deny the existence of an external world; therefore, both schools could hardly be more divergent. However, some scholars who did not understand the tenets of the Sautrantikas who adhere to treatises and therefore wrongly inferred that the tenets of these Sautrantikas implied that if there were an external world it could not be known, and who overlooked the fact that the Yogachara School was based on the sutras of the Third Promulgation and the fact that this school already existed by the time Dharmakirti was born, concluded that it was the idea that the external world could not be known (which, as we have seen, they wrongly attributed to the Sautrantikas who adhere to treatises) that led some into concluding that there is no such world and thus led them to produce the Yogachara School. (According to this system *obscured minds cannot apprehend the external world, but valid knowers can apprehend it in bare perception*. Since obscured minds and valid knowers are not two types of human individuals, but two of the different

types of cognition that all human beings can have, this view does *not at all* imply that the external world cannot be perceived.)

Since this hypothesis is historically untenable, it would have been more reasonable to believe that this reputed Sautrantika sub-school arose as a propaedeutic to the Yogachara School. However, I think Dharmakirti should be classified as a Madhyamika, and that if the sub-school of the Sautrantika we are concerned with was actually meant as a propaedeutic to a system of the Mahayana, this Mahayana system must have been a subschool of the Madhyamaka. At any rate, in the Gelugpa School, training in the epistemology and logic of Dharmakirti is a preparation for approaching and understanding the Madhyamikas' theory of knowledge; since the most essential trait of Dharmakirti's thought is the impossibility of correspondence between thought and the reality it interprets, which is the most essential characteristic of Madhyamaka philosophy, this Gelugpa approach seems to be quite reasonable. At any rate, it is easy to see why the Vaibhashika and the Sautrantika are the two Shrivakayana schools included in Tibetan curricula, and why the four philosophical schools included in these curricula may be regarded as constituting a graded path of intellectual and philosophical development.

²⁷ The phenomena Dharmakirti called *samanyalakshana* or chitsen (*spyi mtshan*)—which following Dreyfus (1997) and in spite of the defects he himself acknowledged in these translation I have referred to as *generally characterized phenomena*—are “representations” in the sense given this term when used as a loose synonym of what Locke, Hume and some “ideologues” termed “ideas.” Dharmakirti contrasted them with what he called *swalakshana* (Tib. rangtsen [*rang mtshan*]), which, also following Dreyfus, I render as *specifically characterized phenomena* (but which etymologically could be translated by terms such as “inherent collections of characteristics,” “spontaneous collections of characteristics,” “self-phenomena,” etc.).

Even though the etymology of Dharmakirti's term *samanyalakshana* or chitsen—rendered here as *generally characterized phenomena*—may be taken to mean that these phenomena are what Western philosophy called “universals,” this is not at all the case. In order to show why this is so, let me begin by discussing Hume's usage of the term ideas (which he took from Locke and Berkeley but redefined for it to suit his own system). Hume insisted that the mental images he called ideas were particular insofar as they reproduced particular impressions (i.e., sensory perceptions of particular phenomena), and, somehow inverting Berkeley's view (according to which a word becomes general by its relation to a particular but representative idea), he concluded that, because of the resemblances an individual finds in his or her experience between the different patterns or configurations (whether impressions or ideas) indicated by the same word, and the contrast between these patterns and the similar patterns indicated by different words, through custom the individual forms a concept, which Hume also called a “general idea” and which consisted in the combination of an individual idea—which as we have seen is a reproduction of an impression and as such is particular—with the appropriate associative dispositions, which allowed the individual to identify all of the patterns indicated by the same word.

This, however, did not solve the problem he was responding to, for words are learned by means of particular impressions, and learning to identify a sequence of sounds as being the same word on the basis of different impressions of sequences of sound—each of which is different from the others insofar as it involves slightly different tones and intonations of the voice, pronunciations of the word and so on—would be an operation of the same kind as learning to identify the essence indicated by a word on the basis of different particular, mainly visual impressions. In fact, Hume's flaw lied, (1) in his failure to see that the words we use in discursive thinking are also mental images, in this sense belonging to the same category as our mainly visual images of corporeal entities, except in that the former are auditive, and (2) in his failure to acknowledge the existence of what I am calling *comprehensions of essence*, constituted by what Descartes called intuitive thoughts and that the higher Tantras and the Dzogchen teachings call subtle thoughts, which are what can ultimately account for the recognition (in the sense in which authors such as H. H. Price [1975] use the term) of a presentation: though it is true that we must compare our impressions with the mental images associated to words in order to recognize them, this comparison elicits a *comprehension of essence* that is abstract and that in no way could be reduced to the mental image used for comparison. Furthermore, in fantasy and hallucination we may have to recognize our mental images in the same way as we normally have to recognize our impressions. And, what is more important, in discursive reasoning, though we use the mental images of the previous impressions of words, the comprehension of the train of thought depends on the repeated occurrence of

comprehensions of essence of the type that Descartes called intuitive thoughts and that the teachings of the higher Tantras and of Dzogchen call subtle thoughts.

Although Hume's position is often deemed to be a conceptualism and as such taken to admit the existence of *universalia post rem*, these are not the mental images he called ideas, which are those that may be said to roughly correspond to Dharmakirti's *samanyalakshana*, chitsen or *generally characterized phenomena*; in Hume's flawed explanation, the universals are what he called concepts or general ideas, as defined in paragraph before last—which unlike Dharmakirti's *samanyalakshana*, chitsen or *generally characterized phenomena* are not simple mental images, but the result of *associations—between mental images* and between mental images and words. The question would thus be whether or not we are entitled to ascribe to Dharmakirti's *samanyalakshana*, chitsen or *generally characterized phenomena* the function Hume attributed to his ideas, and view them, not as the universals themselves, but as the *prima materia* used in the production of universal concepts. And the only possible reply is that unless we admit the existence of something of a nature wholly different to that of Dharmakirti's *samanyalakshana*, chitsen or *generally characterized phenomena*—namely the abstract comprehensions of essence Descartes called intuitive thoughts and the higher Tantras and the Dzogchen teachings call subtle thoughts—we would be wrong in ascribing a role to *samanyalakshana*, chitsen or *generally characterized phenomena* in the genesis and functioning of universals. In fact, we have seen that Hume's explanation fails to account for the genesis of universals and does not grasp the latter's essence. Far less could Dharmakirti's account for them, since he posits phenomena that are somehow analogous to Hume's ideas, yet does not posit what Hume called concepts or general ideas. Universals—and this applies also to *universalia post rem*—must necessarily consist in abstract comprehensions of essence rather than in mental images which by their nature are particular—even if, as in Hume's case, universals were taken to lie in the association of these images with words and with other images.

Dharmakirti's *samanyalakshana*, chitsen or *generally characterized phenomena* could be of four different types: (1) generic images, (2) images of memory, (3) the posterior image of an object that was perceived through the senses, and (4) imaginary constructions. The first three of these could be loosely said to be “representations” in the sense in which this term was used in the preceding paragraph, and to be instances of something very much like Hume's ideas. What Dharmakirti called (1) generic images (thought not so his [2] images of memory, or [3] the posterior image of an object that was perceived through the senses) first arise in early life, yet in general continue to be modified during the whole of an individual's lifetime, so that the generic images we have at different stages of our lives are not the exact reproduction of the original perception, and at each different stage the image that will enter into play in cognition will be the one we have at that stage. For example, when a person, on the occasion of perceiving what Dharmakirti called a *swalakshana*, rangtsen or *specifically characterized phenomenon* of fire (roughly corresponding to what Hume called an impression of fire) learns that this phenomenon is a fire, a generic image of fire is produced that—so long as it is not modified by subsequent perceptions—will take part in obscured perception each and every time the individual intends to cognize a *swalakshana*, rangtsen or *specifically characterized phenomenon* of fire (which as we have seen roughly corresponds to what Hume called an impression of fire), or whenever he or she thinks of fire or imagines fire.

The instant an individual initially perceives what Dharmakirti called a *swalakshana*, rangtsen or *specifically characterized phenomenon* of fire, there is an instant of perception in which an image of the object forms in the eye; however, it does so an instant after the existence reproduced by the image, so that by the time it is perceived the object has already changed—which implies that even in this circumstance the object is not directly apprehended *as it is in the precise moment* when the cognition takes place. Nonetheless, Dharmakirti still asserts that at the moment there is a bare, pure sensation of the effectual, ever-changing *swalakshana*, rangtsen or *specifically characterized phenomenon* of fire, insofar as the image in the eye is not modified by the intervention of the ineffectual phenomenon that does not change during perception that Dharmakirti called a “subsequent image.” However, the next moment this bare, pure sensation is replaced by the perception of the “subsequent image” that formed on the basis of the former, and henceforth each and every time the individual perceives a fire, initially there will be an instant of bare, pure sensation of the effectual, ever-changing *swalakshana*, rangtsen or *specifically characterized phenomenon*, but immediately thereafter a perception will occur (i.e., a mental knowledge

will arise) having as its object the ineffectual and unchanging during perception *samanyalakshana*, chitsen or *generically characterized phenomenon* that was formed on the basis of the bare, pure sensation of the effectual, ever-changing *swalakshana*, rangtsen or *specifically characterized phenomenon*—which will involve a grave confusion insofar as, on the occasion of thinking “this is a fire,” the latter object, which is ineffectual and does not change during its perception, will be mistaken for the effectual, ever-changing *swalakshana*, rangtsen or *specifically characterized phenomenon*. In short, in every cognition there is a first moment in which we apprehend the ever-changing, effectual *specifically characterized phenomenon* (even though we apprehend it *a posteriori*), and a subsequent moment in which what is apprehended is an ineffectual *generically characterized phenomenon* that does not change during perception, and which therefore could not at all correspond to the former. It is in this sense that the perception in question is deceptive. (This should make it clear that, although for didactic purposes I have compared Dharmakirti’s *swalakshana*, rangtsen or *specifically characterized phenomena* with Hume’s impressions, they are in fact very different from the latter: as noted below, Dharmakirti’s intent is very different from Hume’s and from those of most other Western philosophers, and hence his system could not correspond those of any of the latter. The reason for making the comparison in question was that, since Hume’s ideas are very similar to Dharmakirti’s *samanyalakshana*, chitsen or *generally characterized phenomena*, and since both of them were viewed as originating from a sensory perception, it seemed appropriate to expediently and provisionally relate with each other their respective conceptions of sensory perception—i.e., Hume’s impressions and Dharmakirti’s apprehension of a *swalakshana*, rangtsen or *specifically characterized phenomenon*.)

However, what we are concerned with is that what Dharmakirti called (1) generic images are not and could not be universals, because they are particular images, and they will continue to be particular images even if they are modified with the passing of time. Furthermore, they would be particular images *even if they became a collage of different* subsequent images of phenomena, for images are forms, and forms cannot be nonparticular insofar as they are collections of particular characteristics: also in the case of a collage of many different forms in which some characteristics came from one perception and others from other perceptions, these characteristics would be particular and so would be the collection of characteristics. Only the *abstract comprehensions of essence* that Descartes called intuitive thoughts and that the higher Tantras and the Dzogchen teachings call subtle thoughts, insofar as they necessarily correspond (to the limited extent to which there can be a correspondence between the abstract and the concrete, the digital and the analogue) to all entities indicated by the same name, may be deemed to be universal and as such nonparticular. (It must be noted that the difference between the mental images that constitute coarse thoughts and the comprehensions of essence that constitute subtle thoughts is not the result of abstract speculation; they are clearly distinguished in the experience of a Dzogchen meditator, who often has to deal with subtle thoughts lacking the support of mental images and has to create the conditions for their spontaneous liberation, and who clearly distinguishes between the presentation of coarse thoughts—whether auditive as in the case of discursive thoughts, or mainly visual—and the immediately posterior understanding of essence they elicit.)

(Concerning Hume, it must be noted that he distinguished between simple and complex ideas; the former always reproduced simple impressions with exactitude, but the latter did not always reproduce complex impressions precisely. Furthermore, according to Hume, besides the impressions of sensation there are impressions of reflection, which include the passions, and which in turn produce ideas of reflection (impressions of reflection arise in the following succession: impression of sensation > perception of sensation > copy of the former impression in the mind and permanence in the mind after the impression has passed > idea > return of the idea to the mind, producing new impressions > impression of reflection). Impressions of reflection gave rise to copies of these ideas by memory and the imagination, which in turn gave rise to ideas of reflection, which in turn produced new impressions and ideas. Therefore, it is clear that we cannot identify Hume’s ideas (or Locke’s, for that matter) with the conception of the Sautrantikas under discussion, for they are quite different from the latter insofar as they responded to interests different from those of the Buddhists. And the same applies to Quine’s conceptions and those of other twentieth century nominalists as well, whose interests are always different from those of Buddhist philosophers.)

For a lengthy, comprehensive, informed, intelligent discussion of Dharmakirti’s system—which, however, is partial to the Gelugpa interpretation—cf. Dreyfus (1997).

- ²⁸ This may be exemplified by the brief comparison with Hume’s ideas carried out in the preceding note.
- ²⁹ I am referring to qualities in general, which Robert Boyle divided into primary and secondary ones (a division that received its classical formulation in Locke’s *Essay*).
- ³⁰ In Dudjom Rinpoche, J. Y. D., English 1991, trans. Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein, vol. II, p. 387, Gyurme Dorje and Mathew Kapstein note that the term Yogachara and its Tibetan equivalent, which is Naljor chöpa (*rnal-’byor spyod-pa*), originally may have referred to the conduct of the bodhisattva Path in general, rather than to the idealistic school alone. There would be some points to clarify in this regard, but in the lack of a firm basis it is wiser to avoid speculation.
- ³¹ Patañjali’s *Yoga darshana* is one of the six *darshana* or theoretical views of orthodox Brahmanism, which is coupled with Kapila’s Samkhya *darshana* and, just like the latter, posits two inherently different, separate substances in the universe: Prakrit, corresponding to matter and feminine in character, which is held to be active, and Purusha, corresponding to the soul and male in character, which is held to be passive.
- Patañjali’s system, expounded in his *Yogasutras* (non-Buddhist texts that as such do not belong to any of the three Promulgations, and which contradict all basic Buddhist tenets), began with the practice of Hatha Yoga and developed through a series of states, the last three being *dharana*, *dhyana* and, finally, *samadhi*. *Dharana* was the uninterrupted concentration of the stream of thought on an object of consciousness; *dhyana* was the subsequent stage, in which “absolute consciousness” was freed from all superimpositions, and that was both the condition for attaining *samadhi* and the very way to *samadhi*—which in turn was regarded as the final, absolute state of attainment that was the very fruit of the path.
- The above is perfectly correct from the standpoint of both the *Yoga darshana* and the *Samkhya darshana*, according to which Purusha or consciousness is unable to surpass its own dualistic separation with regard to Prakrit and its play, and therefore the best it can do in order to overcome the turmoil inherent to its condition is to develop aloofness before the play of Prakrit. And there can be no doubt that the most perfect state of aloofness a dualistic consciousness can attain is the state of *samadhi* as conceived by this school.
- Mahayana Buddhism flatly rejects the idea of an unsurpassable, intrinsic, substantial duality between consciousness and matter, the mental and the physical—or, in Cartesian terms, between a *res cogitans* and a *res extensa*. Furthermore, according to it, the *definitive* surpassing of turmoil and *duhkha* cannot consist in a mere aloofness of consciousness with regard to the play of appearances, for so long as this play is experienced as external to consciousness it has the potentiality to disturb the latter. Thus turmoil and *duhkha* can only be definitively surpassed by attaining the absolutely nondual realization of the indivisibility of awareness and appearances, of appearances and voidness, and so on. I have discussed this in greater detail in other books; in particular, the reader may consult *Buddhism and Dzogchen* and *Beyond Mind, Beyond Being: Dzogchen, Transpersonal Psychology and Western Philosophy*.
- ³² On the basis of the explanations in Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], ed. John Shane, 1986, revised edition 1999, and Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], ed. Cheh-Ngee Goh, 1990, in Part One of *Buddhism and Dzogchen* I noted that the etymology of the Tibetan term “naljor” (*rnal-’byor*), which was the Nyingma translation of the Sanskrit “yoga,” but which later on was also adopted by the Sarmapa, is as follows: “nalma” (*rnal-ma*) means “unaltered condition of something;” “jorwa” (*’byor-ba*) means “to contract,” “to take” or “to adhere to.” Therefore, etymologically the combination of the two terms has the meaning of “acquiring (our own) unaltered condition and adhering to it.” However, the true meaning of the term would be expressed more correctly in terms of the phrase “discovering our original unaltered condition and remaining in it.”
- ³³ I am referring to the forms of manifestation of energy posited by the Dzogchen teachings. According to these teachings the Base has three aspects, which are ngowo (*ngo-bo*) or essence, which is voidness; rangzhin (*rang-bzhin*) or nature, which is the luminosity, clarity or reflectiveness allowing for continuous manifestation; and thukje (*thugs-rje*) or energy, which is the uninterrupted flow of manifestation of phenomena. It is the energy or thukje (*thugs-rje*) aspect of the Base that manifests in three different ways, which are: (1) dang (*gdangs*) energy; (2) rölpa (*rol-pa*) energy; and (3) tsel (*rtsal*) energy, the phenomena of which appear to manifest in an external dimension or jing (*dbyings*). These will be briefly considered in a subsequent endnote.
- ³⁴ Though the Dzogchen teachings and Buddhism in general assert the sense of sight to be the most important and determinant of the five senses, we must bear in mind that, according to the Dzogchen teachings, reality manifests through sound, light and rays, and does so in this precise order—which

some times characterizes the manifestation of the most powerful visions in the practices of Thögel (*thod-rgal*) and the Yangthik (*yang-thig*). (This, in turn, may be taken to suggest that the Vedic doctrines according to which manifestation begins with *nada* or sound may derive from pre-Aryan doctrines having their ultimate source in the Dzogchen Atiyoga, which, as shown elsewhere in this book, has been called “the universal ancestor of all vehicles.”)

As Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche warned in the 2003 Baja California retreat, sound, light and rays do *not* in any way correspond to the three aspects or wisdoms of the Base, which as stated in the preceding note are ngowo (*ngo-bo*) or essence, which is voidness; rangzhin (*rang-bzhin*) or nature, which is the luminosity, clarity or reflectiveness that allows for continuous manifestation; and thukje (*thugs-rje*) or energy, which is the uninterrupted flow of manifestation of phenomena.

³⁵ Mitigated skepticisms such as the one developed by Mersenne, by the British Empiricists, and by a series of thinkers that included sixteenth century Portuguese philosopher Francisco Sánchez (considered as a predecessor of Logical Positivism), insisted that even though we cannot be sure of the existence of a world external to our experience, and cannot assert the truth of principles such as causality and so on, we can discern recurring sequences in the *world of our experience*, and thus predict occurrences and even develop technology in order to manipulate reality (cf. Popkin, Richard H., 1968.)

In Capriles, Elias, 1994, I tried to show that the basis for scientific knowledge was uncertain (a fact long ago emphasized by thinkers so diverse as German Cabbalist H. C. Agrippa von Nettesheim and the Dutch opponent of Martin Luther, Erasmus, and which will be briefly discussed in a subsequent note), and that technology is the Golem: the project of a sorcerer’s apprentice against which so many ancient myths had warned humankind (including, in Greece, those of Prometheus, Sisyphus and Tantalus), which ended up giving rise to the current ecological crisis. This crisis represents the *reductio ad absurdum*, not only of the scientific project, but of the delusion that the Buddha called *avidya* and that Heraclitus of Ephesus called *lethe*, which developed and increased throughout the cosmic cycle (aeon or *kalpa*), and which ended up giving rise to the present crisis, which represents its *reductio ad absurdum* and that calls for its surpassing and therefore for the beginning of a new golden age, era of truth (*satyayuga*) or era of perfection (*kritayuga*).

³⁶ European phenomenology borrowed the term *epoche* from the ancient Skeptics, who used it to refer to the “suspension of judgment” that, according to Pyrrho of Elis, was the *cause* of the *ataraxia* or imperturbability that he posited as the ultimate aim of philosophy, and, according to Neoacademics Carneades and Arcesilaus, was *concomitant* with the *ataraxia*. (If one suspends one’s judgment, one cannot take for granted the category of causality; however, this does not mean that Neoacademic Skeptics were more consistent than Pyrrho and his school, which, contrariwise, in many respects seems to have been more genuinely skeptical than the former. Furthermore, Aenesidemus criticized Carneades and Arcesilaus for “dogmatically” establishing a radical distinction between the probable and the improbable.)

However, twentieth century European phenomenology limited the scope of the term *epoche*, and applied it merely to abstaining from speculating whether or not there was a physical basis of our perceptions that were external to and independent from these. This was so because this phenomenology was not interested in achieving the *ataraxia*, but merely in developing ontological systems that, rather than being based on metaphysical speculation, would limit themselves to the description of the ontological structures of human experience.

The Madhyamaka philosophy developed by Nagarjuna and Aryadeva, and later on the *Prasangika* interpretation of this philosophy developed by Buddhapalita, Chandrakirti (who never used the terms *Prasangika* and *Swatantrika*) and Shantideva, which has been compared by a series of authors to that of the Greek Skeptics (McEviley, Thomas, 1982; Capriles, Elias, 1994; Gómez de Liaño, Ignacio, 1998; Carré, Patrick, 1999 [revised ed. of Carré, Patrick, 1991]; and Carré, Patrick, 2001), seems to also put in parentheses the supposed existence of an “external” world. Even though Nagarjuna seems to reject the Mind-only or Chittamatra position of some canonic texts of the Third Promulgation as skillful means aiming at dispelling the fears of the childish, he never asserts that this rejection entails admittance of the existence of an external world. (The most clear rejection of the Chittamatra position by Nagarjuna is in the *Bodhichittavivarana*, which says that “The statement by the Subduer that all these are mind-only is for the purpose of dispelling the fear of the childish: it is not so in truth.” However, not all Western scholars agree that this is truly a text by Nagarjuna.)

³⁷ After the paragraph quoted in the regular text, Russell goes on to say (Russell, Bertrand, ed. by Felix Pirani; 4th rev. ed., 1985):

“But we are in danger of becoming entangled in psychological questions, which we must avoid if we can. Let us therefore return to the purely physical point of view.

“What I wish to suggest may be put as follows. Everything that occurs elsewhere, owing to the existence of an atom, can be explored experimentally, at least in theory, unless it occurs in certain concealed ways. But what occurs within the atom (if anything occurs there) it is absolutely impossible to know: there is no conceivable apparatus by which we could obtain even a glimpse of it. An atom is known by its ‘effects’. But the word ‘effects’ belongs to a view of causation that will not fit modern physics, and in particular will not fit relativity. All that we have a right to say is that certain groups of occurrences happen together, that is to say, in neighboring parts of space-time. A given observer will regard one member of the group as earlier than the other, but another observer may judge the time-order differently. And even when the time-order is the same for all observers, all that we really have is a connection between the two events, which works equally backwards and forwards. It is not true that the past determines the future in some sense other than that in which the future determines the past: the apparent difference is only due to our ignorance, because we know less about the future than about the past. This is a mere accident: there might be beings who would remember the future and have to infer the past. The feelings of such beings in these matters would be the exact opposite of our own, but no more fallacious.”

The above does not at all obliterate the law of *karma*, because *qua* beings who have to infer the future but who can remember the past, we are beings who are determined by the actions carried out in the past with a view to modify the future, and by the traces left by such actions (rather than being determined by actions carried out in the future in order to modify the past, which is not conceivable for any human being—even though some Sufis assert the existence of such a reverse causality).

Finally, it is important to underline that in this quotation Russell is not trying to refute the existence of a world external to awareness or to demolish the concept of matter in order to set up an idealistic view of reality, but is simply providing a popular explanation of the Theory of Relativity and exploring some of its philosophical implications. For his views concerning the problems discussed here, see Russell, Bertrand, London 1914, this edition, 1993, and the essays “The Ultimate Constituents of Matter” and “The Relations of Sense-Data to Physics,” both of which were reproduced in Russell, Bertrand, London, 1918, this edition 1957.

³⁸ The best way to understand the meaning of the term “aspect” in this context is by means of a classical example: the “aspect of blue” is the appearance of being blue that something that is blue has in a consciousness perceiving through an eye that is apprehending this color. The appearance of something blue as being a compact object also is a very common example used in this discussion. Despite the fact that, according to all types of Yogacharas, objects do not exist externally to perception, those who regard the aspect as being true, because of their phenomenistic approach, consider the appearance of blueness and compactness as true insofar as it is an aspect of a phenomenon that is validly perceived. In turn, those who regard the aspect as being false, do so because they consider that no inherent collections of characteristics are to be found anywhere (which is the view not only of higher Madhyamika-Swatantrika-Yogacharas, but of Prasangikas as well), and therefore that there is no entity existing independently from mind or experience that may have this or that aspect (color, texture, etc.).

³⁹ It has been admitted since long ago that colors are *human reactions* to the various wave-lengths of light reflected by objects, rather than being those wave-length themselves, and therefore that there are no colors outside human experience. Then the subsequent discoveries by Rutherford, Einstein and so on generated scientific consensus concerning the thesis according to which the entities that we perceive as solid are almost 100% empty space. Later on, the EPR imaginary experiment, Bell’s theorem, Alain Aspect’s real experiment in 1982 at the University of Paris-Sud, David Bohm’s theories and to on have called into question the independent existence of dimensionality itself. And so on and on.

Berkeley’s work and the philosophies derived from twentieth century physics have been mutually related even in works by adversaries of both. For example, in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* Lenin charged both against Berkeley and against the Austrian Empirio-Criticists who had developed their philosophical theories on the basis of early twentieth century physics. And, in fact, both the findings and theories of twentieth century physics, and the arguments by means of which Berkeley tried to demonstrated the nonexistence of a reality external to experience, leave us with two equally probable,

equally indemonstrable hypotheses: either there is nothing external to experience and independent from it, or else Kant is right and whatever exists outside experience does not have forms, colors and so on.

It is universally admitted that Kant's view that the category of causality was an *a priori* concept of the understanding that arose with experience but did not derive from experience, was a reaction against the theses of Scottish empiricist David Hume, which reduced causality to a fiction based on mere contiguity in time (a thesis that Kant could not admit insofar as causality as a concept is very different from contiguity and could not be derived from it). What is not acknowledged so often is that Kant's view that phenomena are structured by *a priori* forms of sensitiveness on the basis of the nondimensional *Ding-an-sich*, was a reaction against the arguments set forth by Irish empiricist George Berkeley, which also made a profound impression on him. However, as we have seen, just as the theses of Berkeley and Hume prompted Kant to adopt a position contrary to theirs and develop his particular views concerning *a priori* forms of sensitiveness and *a priori* concepts, according to some historians of philosophy Kant's arguments led the later German idealists into a position contrary to that held by the philosopher of Königsberg.

⁴⁰ According to tradition, Vasubandhu (author of Sarvastivadin texts such as the *Abhidharmakosha*, of Yogachara texts such as the *Vimshatika*, of the poetic work *Trimshika* and of a series of commentaries) had been a Hinayana teacher until his conversion to the Yogachara School of the Mahayana under the influence of his brother, Asanga. E. Frauwalner (Frauwalner, E. 1951) has proposed the alternative theory according to which the Vasubandhu who was the author of Yogachara texts and brother of Asanga (who, according to the *Sutra of Hui-neng*, had been the 21st link in the transmission of Ch'an or Zen) had lived in the 4th century CE, but the Vasubandhu who was the author of Sarvastivadin texts had been another individual, who flourished in the 5th century. This hypothesis, however, has not gained scholarly acceptance.

⁴¹ In Napper, Elizabeth, 2003, p. 662, note 63, we read:

"There is a considerable group of contemporary scholars who question whether Asanga himself asserted Mind-Only in an idealist sense of denying external objects; it includes such scholars as Lambert Schmithausen ("On the Problem of the Relation of Spiritual Practice and Philosophical Theory in Buddhism," in *German Scholars on India*, vol. II, Bombay: Nachiketa Publications, 1976), Alex Wayman ("Yogachara and the Buddhist Logicians," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 2 [1979, pp. 65-78]; Yoshifumi Ueda ("Two Main Streams of Thought in Yogachara Philosophy," *Philosophy East and West* 17 [1967], 155-65); and Janice Willis (*On Knowing Reality*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1979)."

On his part, Je Tsongkhapa discusses the question of the relationship between the view of reality put forward by Asanga in the "Chapter on Reality" in his *Bodhisattvabhumi (Byang sa)* and Mind-only in the sense of no external objects in his *Drang ba dang nges pa'i don rnam par phye ba'i bstan bcos legs bshad snying po*, and concludes the two are intertwined and Asanga does assert no external objects (Ibidem). However, this is far from being a universal view (and, on the other hand, not asserting external objects is utterly different from denying them).

⁴² Concerning Maitreyanatha's *Abhisamayalamkara* (Tib., *mNgon par rtogs pa'i rgyan*) we read in Napper, Elizabeth, p. 721, note 269:

"Although there are varying opinions as to whether the viewpoint of [the said book] is Yogachara, Swatantrika, or Prasangika, all the Gelugpa colleges agree that Swatantrika-Madhyamika is the viewpoint of Haribhadra's [*Sputartha* or *Abhisamayalamkaranamaprajñāparamitopadeshashastravritti*, which discusses Maitreyanatha's *Abhisamayalamkara*]."

Napper does not even mention the possibility that both texts be Mahamadhyamika treatises, as is in fact the case (with certainly in the latter's case, and quite likely in the former's), insofar as the Gelugpas do not admit the existence of Madhyamika subschools other than Prasangika and Swatantrika.

⁴³ Sartre (Sartre, Jean-Paul, 1942, 31st edition, 1980) confronted Husserl's re-edition of the Cartesian *cogito* by positing the thesis that consciousness is an appearance that arises in an underlying nondual awareness that is the condition of possibility of consciousness. However, this thesis seems not to have been based on the bare manifestation of nondual awareness upon the dissolution of dualistic consciousness, and thus to some extent it may be regarded as a metaphysical position (even though Sartre's philosophy was supposed to be phenomenological). This is not the case in Buddhism; though Mahamadhyamika, the inner Tantras and the Dzogchen Atiyoga posit an analogous nondual awareness, they do so on the basis of the Contemplation state of superior bodhisattvas or the full Awakening of

Buddhas, in which this nondual awareness is not veiled by the delusive appearance of a dualistic consciousness, and therefore no doubts can arise with regard to it. In the case of superior bodhisattvas, in the post-Contemplation state, when dualistic consciousness arises anew, they witness how this delusive appearance arises in the nondual awareness realized in Contemplation.

Therefore, it doesn't make sense to compare Sartre's system as expounded in *Being and Nothingness* or in *The Transcendence of the Ego* with Buddhist systems. (Later, "Marxist" works by Sartre have little in common with Buddhism, and so no one would compare them with it.)

⁴⁴ Most of the so-called "Essence Sutras" of the Third Promulgation that deal with the *tathagatagarbha*, compare the latter unto a seed that has to sprout and mature into actual Buddhahood thanks to causes and secondary conditions; however, the Nyingmapa interpret both the *Shrimaladevisimhanadasutra* (an Essence Sutra of the Third Promulgation) and Maitreyanatha's *Ratnagotravibhaga* or *Uttaratantra* as asserting the *tathagatagarbha* to have always comprised the three kayas of Buddhahood in their entire actuality.

⁴⁵ The idea that *nirvana* involves a "pure dependence" is an obvious error of this school, for in *nirvana* there is no subject-object duality and no illusion of a multiplicity of phenomena, and therefore there can be no dependence whatsoever. It is in *samsara* that there are subject and object, and that the mutual dependence of these—and indeed of all phenomena—is to be asserted.

⁴⁶ According to both the Sautrantikas who adhere to valid reasoning and the Yogacharas who adhere to valid reasoning, both of which admit the hypothesis of a spontaneous awareness or self-awareness, and both of which are based on Dharmakirti's *Pramanavinishchaya*, it is thus that there arise three of the four types of supposedly nonphysical, mental objects or generally characterized phenomena (also called "nonactual objects," "nonproduced phenomena," "phenomena that are not constantly changing" or "falsely existing phenomena") that they deemed to be *unreal*, though they held them to be true to an obscured mind (*samvriti-satya*): generic images, images of memory, the posterior image of an object that was perceived through the senses. The fourth type, which is that of imaginary constructions, does not arise in this way.

If we wished to understand the Yogachara conception explained in this note in terms of the concepts and terminology of the Dzogchen teachings, it would be necessary to note that, according to the latter, the energy or *tukje* (*thugs-rje*) aspect of the base manifests in three different ways, which are *dang* (*gdangs*) energy, of which all thoughts and mental images are manifestations, and which is of the nature of the dharmakaya; *rölpa* (*rol-pa*) energy; and *tsel* (*rtsal*) energy, the phenomena of which—which include all of those that we experience as the "physical" world—appear to manifest in an external dimension or *jing* (*dbyings*). In terms of these concepts, one may speculate that what the Yogacharas were claiming may have been that, when the *tsel* form of manifestation of energy or *thukje* manifests its concrete phenomena in the external dimension or *jing* and then an individual singles out an object and knows it through one or more of the sensory consciousnesses, simultaneously an analogous object manifests in the *dang* form of manifestation of energy (which at this time wrongly appears to constitute an internal dimension or *jing*), and that this manifestation of the object is the one that thereafter we experience as *dang* energy in the internal dimension or *jing* whenever we remember the object or use its image in imagination.

⁴⁷ Shantideva objected to this example (*Bodhicharyavatara*, Ch. 9, verses 18-19):

"If you object that it illuminates itself, as does a light, (our response is that) a light-source itself is not illuminated, because it is not concealed by darkness."

However, the point in the Yogachara example is that the same light permeates both the lamp and what it illumines, just as in the same nondual awareness there manifest dualistic mind and the objects of dualistic mind, there being nondual awareness (of) both. (The reason why I put the preposition "of" in parentheses will be explained in the chapter on Madhyamaka, section on Mahamadhyamaka.) Thus the very point of the example is that the most basic manifestation of awareness is very different from fingertips, eyes or knives, which, unlike the most basic manifestation of awareness, are all directional. Furthermore, Shantideva's objection does not refute the Yogachara simile, because before we light a lamp in the dark, there is darkness; when we light the lamp, the light radiating from it puts an end to darkness *both in the center of the lamp itself and in all that is illumined by the light radiating from it, and both in the lamp and in what it illumines the light is the same light.*

To conclude, a comparison between this view of the Yogachara School of the Mahayana and a related explanation of the Dzogchen teachings may be useful to help us grasp the core idea that the Yogacharas

were trying to convey when they posited their spontaneous awareness and explained it in terms of a duplication of consciousness and so on. As stated in the preceding note, according to the teachings of the Dzogchen Atiyoga, the energy or *tukje* (*thugs-rje*) aspect of the base manifests in three different ways, which are the *dang* (*gdangs*) form of manifestation of energy, the *rölpa* (*rol-pa*) form of manifestation of energy, and the *tsel* (*rtsal*) form of manifestation of energy (all of which will be described in greater detail in a subsequent endnote). At this point, it is enough to remember that *tsel* energy is compared to the projection of something that is not external into a seemingly external dimension (i.e., into what the Dzogchen teachings call the “external jing”), and to note that, according to the Dzogchen teachings, a bright luminosity that manifests as *dang* energy beyond the distinction into an internal dimension of *jing* and an external dimension or *jing*, is the source of the appearances that seem to manifest as *tsel* energy in an external dimension or *jing*. Thus the light of the *dang* energy that is free from the distinction into inside and outside, and the light that makes up the phenomena of the *tsel* energy that appear to manifest in an external dimension, are in truth the same light.

Therefore the Yogachara view in this regard could as well be a simplistic, hypostatic and metaphysical way of explaining a reality acknowledged by the Dzogchen teachings. However, these teachings do not explain this truth by positing a duplication of consciousness, but by affirming that everything that appears is a manifestation of the single energy or *tukje* aspect of the Base—that is, of what the Semde series of Dzogchen call *bodhichitta*, and that also is called *thigle chenpo* (*thig-le chen-po*) or total sphere, *thigle chik* (*thig-le gcig*) or single sphere, Dzogchen (*rdzogs-chen*) or Dzogpa Chenpo (*rdzogs-pa chen-po*), *semnyi* (*sems-nyid*), and so on.

⁴⁸ Mipham also refers to a Tantric source: the *bDe-mchog* ‘*byung-ba sogs sngags-kyi rgyud*, which states that since the mind is not insentient, it is aware of its own nature (Williams, Paul, 1998, p. 168).

The reason why, in the term “awareness (of) consciousness” I put the preposition “of” in parentheses will be explained in the chapter on Madhyamaka, section on Mahamadhyamaka.

⁴⁹ The actual phenomenon or dynamic at the root of the metaphysical interpretation that is reified and hypostatized by Yogachara thought may as well be one of the following: (1) the way in which the “internal” images of memory and so on arise; (2) specific yogic experiences in which there seems to be an internal source of experience; (3) an intuition of the way the human brain is structured; etc.

With regard to (1), the reader is directed to note 44, and then to note 45.

With regard to (2), it must be borne in mind that there are yogic experiences in which there seems to be a source of experience “deep inside” oneself, from which thoughts, on the one hand, and consciousness of thoughts and so on, on the other hand, arise. For example, in some manifestations of the second capacity of liberation in the practice of Dzogchen, which is the one called *shardröl* (*shar-grol*), it *may seem as though* consciousness automatically and instantaneously looked “toward the source of consciousness” precisely as a thought begins to arise. Though Dzogchen practitioners do not take this experience to mean that a second consciousness is looking toward a first consciousness that is the source of all consciousness, one may wonder whether the duplication of consciousness in the Yogachara explanation of *swasamvittih* may have arisen as the result of a naïve, metaphysical interpretation of an experience in which it *seems as though* consciousness is directing its attention to the “source of consciousness,” just as happens in the referred experiences of Dzogchen practice.

With regard to (3), the question is: could the “consciousness that looks toward the source of consciousness” posited by the Yogacharas be a metaphysical construct based on an intuition of a specific function of the cerebral cortex? Furthermore, is it possible that yogic experiences such as the ones considered in (2) may be explained in terms of this hypothesis?

⁵⁰ Among the Uma Rangtongpas (*dbU-ma rang-stong-pa*), his conception was rejected altogether by Prasangikas and Swatantrika-Sautrantikas. Some Swatantrika-Yogacharas (for example, Kamalashila) refined it into a far subtler conception. And, as will be shown below in the regular text of this book, the inner, subtle Madhyamaka produced a wonderful explanation of it, not liable to be accused of substantialism or eternalism, which I will try to express in another chapter of this book.

⁵¹ The word “phenomenon” is derived from the Greek *phainomenon*, meaning, “that which appears.” Therefore the etymology of “phenomenology” may be expressed by the phrase “understanding of what appears.” In the senses Husserl and then other twentieth century Western phenomenologists gave it, the meanings of term are too complex to discuss them here, but in general they refer to the understanding of the ontological structures of human experience, excluding metaphysical speculation regarding what does not manifest directly in experience. However, as noted in my book *Beyond Mind, Beyond Being*:

Dzogchen, Transpersonal Psychology and Western Philosophy and elsewhere, in general Western phenomenology failed to realize that being and ontological structures are delusive phenomena: they are spurious appearances that veil the Base (i.e., the true nature or condition of the whole of reality) and that manifest solely in *samsara*. The point is that Western phenomenology was limited to samsaric experience, for none of its proponents was either an Awake individual or an accomplished practitioner of an authentic Wisdom-tradition.

Though the philosophical explanations of twentieth century Western phenomenology are supposed to be based solely on experience, and not to deviate into metaphysical speculation regarding what does not directly manifest in experience, the experience on which they are based is delusive. The explanations of reality found in the Dzogchen teachings are also supposed *not* to go beyond what directly manifests to the individual (i.e., not to fall into metaphysical speculation), but the explanations of reality that they offer us are not based solely on delusive samsaric experience: they are also based on nirvanic meta-experience (see the explanation of this term in a subsequent note) and on neither-samsaric-nor-nirvanic states (e.g., the state known as the dimension of the base-of-all or *kunzhi kham* [*kun-gzhi khams*] of the Dzogchen teachings, which will be considered below in the regular text of this book).

While in *samsara* appearances veil the Base, *nirvana* involves Seeing through appearances into the Base. Thus in a specific sense *nirvana* may be said to (be) beyond “that which appears” and thus to (be) a metaphenomenon (insofar as what manifests in *nirvana* is an indivisible totality) or a series of metaphenomena (in case we choose to artificially make distinctions in the indivisible totality of *nirvana*). Likewise, insofar as being and ontological structures are delusive phenomena that veil the Base and that manifest solely in *samsara*, as stated in *Beyond Mind, Beyond Being* and others of my works, the description of what manifests in *nirvana* not only is necessarily “metaphenomenological,” but also “metaontological.” (See the explanation of this term in the last endnote to the Introduction.)

(Note that this explanation, and in general the wider explanations in this regard contained in *Beyond Mind, Beyond Being* and in other of my works, agree with the Pyrrhonist and Nietzschean thesis that being is an error or delusion, and yet reject the view that being is an empty concept. Heidegger stressed this idea that being is not an empty concept, but wrongly believed that it was Truth itself; contradicting Heidegger, I have asserted that the phenomenon of being, which results from the delusory valuation-absolutization of the concept of being (and that arises together with the subject-object duality resulting from the delusory valuation-absolutization of the “directional threefold thought structure”), is the most basic phenomenon in the ambit of the delusion called *avidya* or *marigpa* [*ma-rig-pa*], and thus the most basic veil concealing the Truth that is the Base that cannot be defined as being, nonbeing, or in terms of any other concept.)

⁵² As stated in the preceding note, the Greek *phainomenon* means “that which appears;” since in *nirvana* there is no deception by appearances, it may be said that *nirvana* is beyond mere appearance, and therefore whatever manifest in this condition may be said to be either a metaphenomenon (for what manifests in *nirvana* is an indivisible totality) or a series of metaphenomena (in case we choose to artificially make distinctions in the indivisible totality of *nirvana*).

⁵³ Though the Buddhist teachings generally refer to these as the “five sensory consciousnesses,” it would be wrong to think that the term refers to five different focuses of conscious awareness. In fact, the so-called “five consciousnesses” are but specific ways of perception that a single consciousness has concerning five different types of objects through five different senses (which are those recognized by both eastern and western thought). (This explanation corresponds to *one of the interpretations* developed by the schools based on the Third Promulgation, and to a Dzogchen way of explaining.)

⁵⁴ This consciousness also is not a different focus of conscious awareness, but a way of being conscious of a different type of object, consisting in our own thoughts and mental images, all of which belong to what the Dzogchen teachings call the *dang* (*gdangs*) mode of manifestation of energy—and which in *samsara* seem to lie in the internal dimension that these teachings call the internal *jing* (*dbyings*).

⁵⁵ This consciousness also is not a different focus of conscious awareness, but a way of being conscious of a different type of reality, which is the imaginary fiction of selfhood. Once this fiction arises with regard to our own identity (which, *according to the Yogacharas*, occurs when this consciousness reflects on the *alaya vijñāna* or *kunzhi namshe* and takes it to be a self), we try to confirm it by means of sensory contacts with objects that are taken to be self-existent, passions towards objects that are taken to be self-existent, and so on. The explanation of the illusion that the individual is a self as resulting from this

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- consciousness' being conscious of yet another consciousness is an instance of the dualistic, unwarranted, metaphysical Yogachara duplication of consciousness.
- ⁵⁶ This consciousness also is not a different focus of conscious awareness; contrariwise, it is the base of all consciousness, for the Yogacharas assert that all other consciousnesses are functions, modifications and transformations of this basic consciousness.
- As will be shown later on, in the Dzogchen teachings this term has a quite different meaning, as it refers to a readiness to know (beginning by singling out segments of the sensory totality), which arises from a profound meditative absorption wherein there is a possibility of somehow being aware of propensities established by karmic imprints (vasanas or bijas), which is called kunzhi (*kun-gzhi*). The Yogachara School does not posit the condition called kunzhi.
- ⁵⁷ As we have seen, even though, according to all Yogacharas, the appearances of objects as being external is false, there are those who phenomenistically consider as true specific aspects (Skt., *akara*; Tib., nampa [*rnam-pa*]) of the entities perceived (for example, they hold that a piece of something blue that appears as a dense and woven object in reality exists as a dense and woven object). In turn, those that take specific aspects of entities perceived as false are those who, for example, hold that a piece of something blue that appears as a dense and woven object does not exist in reality as a dense and woven object.
- ⁵⁸ According to some Gelugpa authors, these hold that the different aspects (for example, the different colors) of an object are different entities, and insist that in the knowledge of the object the different aspects (for example, the different colors) also are different entities. They are subdivided into: (1) adherents of the eight aggregates of consciousness, and (2) adherents of the six aggregates of consciousnesses (who do not posit a *klišhtamanovijñāna* or nyongmongpachen yikyī namshe [*nyong-mongs-pa-can yid-kyi rnam-shes*], and an *alaya vijñāna* or kunzhi namshe [*kun-gzhi rnam-shes*]).
- ⁵⁹ According to some Gelugpa authors, these claim that though the different aspects (for example, colors) of an object are different entities, consciousness is unitary and indivisible, so that *in the knowledge* of the object, the different aspects (for example, colors) are not different entities. Among these, some claim that there are six aggregates of consciousness and other hold to a single consciousness. And there are further subdivisions of them.
- ⁶⁰ According to some Gelugpa authors, these hold *sensa* and consciousness to be mental attributes that are the two parts of one essential consciousness, in the manner of the white and the yolk of an egg, and assert that the different aspects (for example, colors) of an object constitute a single entity, and that the different aspects (for example, colors) of a knowledge equally constitute a single entity. They are divided into those who assert that there is a single knowledge and those that affirm that there are six knowledges (one for each of the six consciousnesses constituted by the five sensory consciousnesses (Skt., *pañchadwarajñāna*; Tib., gongai namshe [*sgo-lnga'i rnam-shes*]) and the consciousness of mental phenomena (Skt., *manovijñāna*; Tib., yikyī namshe [*yid-kyi rnam-shes*]).
- ⁶¹ The canonic texts of the First Promulgation and the various treatises of the Hinayana already contained the idea that the entities of our experience were impermanent and ever-changing, and yet we experienced them as being permanent and unchanging. However, the epistemological explanations that explicitly posit the impossibility of thought to correspond to the reality it interprets are those of the Madhyamaka School (and those of Dharmakīrti, in case we decided *not* to consider him as a Madhyamika). Dignaga is generally considered to have been a Yogachara (though one who had been impressed to some extent by Sautrantika views), but to some extent he prefigured Dharmakīrti's views, which were expounded as a commentary to those of Dignaga. (Later on it will be seen that Dignaga's views were quite sophisticated, and that perhaps he should also be considered to have been a Madhyamika.)
- ⁶² I am not concerned with whether Dharmakīrti saw himself as a Madhyamika-Swatantrika or as a Yogachara, but with how *we* should view him and how *we* should classify his views. And my opinion is that most of his views are classifiable as Swatantrika-Yogachara (though some of them may be even higher).
- Tsongkhapa himself made no difference between the views of the Dignaga-Dharmakīrti *pramāna* tradition and those of the Madhyamika-Swatantrikas, for he admitted that, for both of them, sense consciousness were not mistaken when they perceived phenomena as “existing inherently,” and contrasted their views with those of the Prasāngika Master Chandrakīrti, for whom this is a mistaken appearance caused by our delusory propensities, which lead us to project the superimposition of “inherent existence.” It must

be noted that the problem of whether or not entities “exist inherently” is of no concern to the Yogacharas, whose interest lies in showing entities not to exist externally to or independently of consciousness.

⁶³ It has been claimed that Kant’s refutation of Berkeley’s “dogmatic idealism” in the *Critique of Pure Reason*’s “Refutation of Idealism” (in the last pages of Chapter II of Book II of the First Division of Part II of the Transcendental Doctrine of Elements, and fully developed only in the second German edition prepared by Kant himself, in which he profusely modified the original text [pp. 274-294 of the same German edition]), may have furthered rather than prevented the development of the ideas that supposedly he was trying to refute, and may thus have been at the root of the philosophies developed by Fichte, Schelling, Hegel and the Schlegel brothers (and even of Coleridge’s, which followed Schelling’s and Friedrich Schlegel’s).

Unlike Descartes’ attempt to cast away the doubts concerning the existence of an external world stirred by the arguments of the *nouveaux pyrrhoniens*, the above-mentioned argument by Kant was not based merely on a theological dogma. In fact, Descartes’ argument against the possible nonexistence of a reality external to and independent from experience was that, since all humans take such a reality for granted, then either it existed or else God himself had put it in our mind. However, since by definition the Christian God is absolutely good, he would not have wanted to deceive us, and thus it is impossible that our taking the external world for granted be simply a delusion. In Kant’s time, it was no longer acceptable to resort to the dogmas of faith in order to prove a metaphysical hypothesis, and so he had to overlook Descartes’ argument and develop his own “proof”—which, however, was not any more convincing than the French philosopher’s.

It must also be noted that only the theology of Semitic religions would agree to an argument like Descartes’; Shivaism, which pictures the world as the hide-and-seek game Shiva plays with himself, insists that the only consciousness there is, is God’s, so that in truth our human consciousnesses are but God’s divine consciousness, and that God deceives himself by deceiving our human consciousnesses into believing themselves to be separate and independent nuclei of consciousness in an alien world—so that all we perceive in *samsara* is the deception caused by the veil of *maya*. Likewise, in Tantric Buddhism and Dzogchen *samsara* and *nirvana* are but two functionings of what the Dzogchen teachings call the Base or zhi (*gzhi*), and both functionings manifest from the same source. In the root Tantra of the Dzogchen Semde, the *Kunche Gyälpo*, Samantabhadra, the state of *dharmakaya*, says (Namkhai Norbu and Adriano Clemente, English 1999, p. 94):

“There is nobody apart from me who has created dualism.”

As Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu remarked (*ibidem*), this does not mean that Samantabhadra has intentionally and concretely carried out an act of creation; what it means is that nothing exists apart from the Base that is the true condition of the individual. In other words, there is nothing apart from our true nature that may have created both the world and ourselves, that may have given rise to *samsara*, or that may continue to maintain *samsara* at every instant. At any rate, this type of view is at the root of the cosmogonical myth of *lila*, which, as we have seen, represents the universe as a hide-and-seek game universal awareness plays with itself.

⁶⁴ Therefore, though a Sautrantika influence on the Dignaga-Dharmakirti *pramana* tradition that the Gelugpa classify as Yogachara is to be acknowledged, this incidence rebounded and shaped the subschool of the Sautrantikas that Radhakrishnan (1923; 2d ed., 1929; seventh impression of 2d ed., 1962, vol. I, pp. 625 *et seq*), seemingly ignoring this fact and thinking that the views of this subschool represented those of all Sautrantikas, wrongly believed to have been influential in shaping the so-called Mind-only views of the Yogachara School. (Radhakrishnan claimed that the tenets of the Yogacharas arose as the logical conclusion of the views of the Sautrantikas *in general*, as he does not seem to have been aware of these facts—or even of the differences opposing the Sautrantikas who adhere to valid reasoning and who assert that there is an awareness of consciousness, on the one hand, and the Sautrantikas who adhere to the Scriptures and who assert there is no such thing as an awareness of consciousness, on the other.)

⁶⁵ This is an undiscussed fact in present-day scholarship. However, one may infer from Radhakrishnan’s assertions concerning the genesis of both the Yogachara and Madhyamaka Schools, that in his time some Indian and Western scholars, influenced by Theravada scholarship, put in doubt the authorship of the sutras of the Second and Third Promulgations (*dharmachakra*), hinting that they may have been concocted by Buddhist scholars after the Teacher’s *parinirvana*. (Nowadays similar views have resurfaced by mouth of some Bönpo teachers who claim that the whole of the higher Buddhist vehicles,

including the Mahayana, the Vajrayana, and the Atiyogatantrayana, arose as the result of the work of some highly realized Bönpo Dzogchen Masters; however, in the lack of solid proofs, such claims must be disregarded by serious scholarship.)

However, the above does not mean that the texts of the Second and Third Promulgations were available to the public since the time when they were taught. There is a tradition according to which Shakyamuni left the sutras of the Second Promulgation in the custody of the nagas until the time of Nagarjuna, who had been prophesied as the Master who would reveal them to the public, and who actually did so. Dudjom Rinpoche (Dudjom Rinpoche, J. Y. D., English 1991, Trans.: Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein: vol. I, pp. 300, and note 296 by the translators in vol. II p. 21) referred to Nagarjuna and Asanga as the “two promulgators;” therefore, one may assume that there is some tradition according to which Asanga revealed (but of course did not author) the sutras of the Third Promulgation.

⁶⁶ In fact, according to those Sautrantikas who base themselves on the Yogacharas who follow valid reasoning, the physical reality that is external to our perceptions and that cannot be known by obscured minds, but that could be directly perceived by direct knowers, is *phenomenal*, for it has form and the whole of the qualities that some Western metaphysical schools have divided into “primary and secondary.” Conversely, according to Kant, form is a product of the *a priori* forms of sensitiveness, which are space and time and that condition human perceptions but do not condition the indivisible and unconditioned *Ding-an-sich* or thing-in-itself: the latter acquires form only in the experience of sentient beings, once it has been processed by sensitiveness and thus endowed with form. Likewise, it is only in the experience of sentient beings that the *Ding-an-sich* is divided into a plethora of entities that function in terms of the categories posited by Kant, and this happens only after the *Ding-an-sich* has been processed by the understanding and has thus been structured in terms of the categories and other *a priori* concepts—and so on and on. This is not the place to elaborate the critique of Kant’s system, which I have partially developed elsewhere.

⁶⁷ As we have seen, the tukje (*thugs-rje*) or energy aspect of the Base may in turn manifest in three different ways: as dang (*gdangs*) energy, rölpa (*rol pa*) energy, and tsel (*rtsal*) energy. These three modes of manifestation of energy are described in some detail in Part Two of my book *Buddhism and Dzogchen*.

⁶⁸ Dzogchen texts and teachings often speak of recognizing thoughts as the *dharmakaya*, of recognizing the true condition, essence or nature of thoughts, and so on. In all such cases, what the texts are referring to is *not* what normally we understand for “recognition,” for what we normally understand for “recognition” is the understanding of a pattern (Skt., *lakshana*; Tib., tsenpai [*mtshan-dpe*]) in terms of a delusorily valued concept. It was in order to make clear the distinction between that which the texts refer to, and what is usually termed “recognition,” that I coined the neologisms “reGnition,” “reGnize,” and so on.

For some time I used the terms “reCognition,” “reCognize” and so on, written with a capital C so that they could be distinguished from the terms “recognition,” “recognize” and so on. However, this was far from ideal, insofar as “reCognition” (etc.) still contained the prefix “co,” which implies the *co*-emergent arising of a subject and an object, which does *not at all* take place in what I am calling reGnition (etc.). (As will be shown in the last chapter of this book, Paul Claudel [1943] correctly noted that “*la connaissance est la co-naissance du sujet et de l’objet*,” the dualistic knowledge [*connaissance*] that is a function of the state of delusion involves the *co*-emergence [*co-naissance*] of subject and object. Contrariwise, in what I call “reGnition” the subject-object duality dissolves like feathers entering fire.)

However, even the neologisms “reGnition,” “reGnize” and so on are not perfect, for the prefix “re” may convey the wrong idea that a new event called “Gnition” takes place each and every time that which I am calling “reGnition” manifests (just as, each and every time there is recognition, a new cognition takes place. This is wrong, for what in fact takes place whenever there (is) reGnition, (is) the unveiling of the primordial Gnosis that is the true nature of thought and in general of all mental phenomena, and which neither arises nor disappears. However, the Dzogchen teachings are not a theoretical construction, but guidelines for the supreme yogic practice, and therefore they have to refer to yogic experience, even if this has to result in a slight loss of precision. Since the event I have decided to refer to as “reGnition,” “reGnize” and so on takes place upon the attempt to recognize the true nature of thought and so on, I decided to keep these terms. (They may be translated into Spanish as “reGnoscimiento,” “reGnoscer” and so on, and into other Latin languages by the corresponding constructions.)

⁶⁹ The usual term used to refer to this is “automatically arising unawareness;” however, I chose to refer to it as “automatically arising beclouding of primordial awareness” insofar as nondual awareness is still there, the point being that its Awake manifestation has been beclouded in an individual’s experience. The term that is being (quite literally) translated in this way is *lenkyai marigpa* (*lhan-skyes ma-rig-pa*), which is the one used to refer to this type of *avidya* in the threefold Dzogchen classification adopted in this book; however, the alternative classification of *avidya* favored by Longchen Rabjampa uses this term to refer to the second type of *avidya* to arise (which is one aspect of the second type of *avidya* in the classification adopted here), and refers to this beclouding of primordial awareness by the term *gyu dagnyi chikpai marigpa* (*rgyu bdag nyid gcig pa’i ma rig pa*; cf. Longchenpa, 1976, p. 24, and the great encompassing work by Cornu, 2001, p. 62)

⁷⁰ In the Nyingma teachings and in particular in the Dzogchen teachings, the term *avidya* and its Tibetan equivalent, *ma-rig-pa*, have at least three different meanings.

(1) The first of the three meanings of the term, which may be called unawareness of the true condition of the Base, as it manifests in a condition that is nonconceptual and nondual, and therefore does not involve delusion as such, consists in the unawareness of the unthinkable (Skt. *achintya*) true condition of the whole of reality due to the contingent arising of a beclouding element of stupefaction (Tib. *mongcha* [*rmongs cha*]) that prevents the reGnizion of the shining forth of the (fivefold) gnosis that otherwise would have made evident the condition in question, obscuring rigpa’s inherent nondual self-awareness and preventing it from making patent rigpa’s own face in the manifestation of rigpa-*qua*-Path and rigpa-*qua*-Fruit. The point is that in this neutral (*lungmaten* [*lung-ma-bstan*]) condition of the base-of-all (which, according to circumstances may be called: “primordial, profound base-of-all” or *yedön kunzhi* [*ye-don kun-gzhi*]; “dimension of the base-of-all” or *kunzhi kham* [*kun-gzhi khams*]; and base-of-all carrying propensities or *bagchagkyi kunzhi* [*bag-chags-kyi kun-gzhi*]), *avidya* or *ma-rig-pa* has not yet manifested as active delusion giving rise to dualistic appearances, but merely as the beclouding, by the already-mentioned contingent element of stupefaction, of the clear self-awareness that “makes patent rigpa’s own face.” This is why in this case the terms *avidya* and *ma-rig-pa* are properly rendered as “unawareness” or, more precisely, as “beclouding of primordial awareness” (for nondual awareness is still there, the point being that its Awake manifestation has been beclouded) and should not be translated as “delusion” (which, as the reader knows, is how I have translated the terms *avidya* and *ma-rig-pa* consistently in the regular text of this chapter). This type of *avidya* or *marigpa* is the first one to manifest in the process that produces *samsara*, and corresponds to the first one to arise—called *gyu dagnyi chikpai marigpa* (*rgyu bdag nyid gcig pa’i ma rig pa*). Cfr. Longchenpa [1976, p. 24] and the great encompassing work by Cornu [2001, p. 62]—according to the alternative Dzogchen threefold classification of *avidya* favored by Longchen Rabjampa. It continues to be manifest when *samsara* actively arises; however, in *samsara*, *avidya* or *ma-rig-pa* also manifests in its second and third types. With regard to the first type of *avidya* or *ma-rig-pa*, it must be noted that the neutral condition of the base-of-all in which it manifests is not limited to meditative absorptions: it recurs again and again in normal human experience, though it is usually unnoticed.

(2) In our classification, the second type of *avidya* or *marigpa* is compounded of, (2a) the failure to reGnize the shining forth in question as the expression of the Base and the concomitant error of taking it to be an external reality, which involves the arising of the subject-object duality, and which the alternative threefold classification favored by Longchen Rabjampa—which calls it *lhenchik kyepai marigpa* (*lhan cig skyes pa’i ma rig pa*). Cfr. Longchenpa [1975a, p. 51; 1976, pp. 24 and 122 note 10, taken from *Kandro Yangthik*, part III, p. 117]) and Cornu [2001, p. 62]) or spontaneous illusion—lists as the second type of *avidya* to arise, and (2b), the fully-fledged illusion of selfhood in the individual and of self-existent plurality in the world, which the alternative threefold classification favored by Longchen Rabjampa—in which it is termed *kuntu tagpai marigpa* (*kun tu brtags pa’i ma rig pa*; cf. Longchenpa [1976, pp. 24 and 123 note 11] and Cornu [2001, p. 62])⁷⁰ or imaginative delusion—lists as the third type of *avidya* to arise; as the term suggests (Longchenpa favored the usage of Third Promulgation terminology in explaining the Dzogchen teachings), imaginative delusion is related to the third truth of Mahamadyamaka; it involves the singling out of objects (which depends on the existence of a divisive, hermetic focus of awareness) within the continuum that manifested as object when spontaneous illusion occurred, and the perception of what has been singled out in terms of delusorily valued-absolutized thoughts (thus involving the confusion of the digital, fragmentary maps of thought with the analog, holistic territory of the given that such maps are incapable of matching, and the mistaken belief in the

perfect correspondence of the one and the other), which gives rise to the illusion of there being a plethora of entities existing inherently, independently and disconnectedly; likewise, it involves the superimposition of the idea of an “I” on the illusory subject that is one of the poles of dualistic consciousness and the inherent drive to confirm that subject’s existence and gratify its acquisitiveness by means of contacts with the seemingly self-existing, seemingly external entities that are perceived at this stage. This type of *avidya* or *ma-rig-pa* is the confusion of categories referred to in the sentence of the regular text of this book to which the reference mark for this note was appended, whereby the relative is taken to be absolute, the insubstantial is taken to be to be substantial, the dependent is taken to be inherently existing, and so on. This type of *avidya* or *ma-rig-pa* involves grasping at appearances (*phyin-ci-log-par 'dzin-pa*), and therefore comprises the manifestation of the grasped and the grasper (Tib., *gzung-'dzin*), which introduces dualistic appearances. It involves an inverted cognition insofar as the three aspects of the Base, which are ngowo (*ngo-bo*), rangzhin (*rang-bzhin*) and thukje (*thugs-rje*), seem to be inherently separate from each other (in fact, the phenomena manifested by the thukje aspect seem to be substantial rather than void, and therefore seem to have an essence different from the ngowo aspect, which is voidness and that is completely ignored).

Finally, in our favored classification (3) is the seal of delusion that makes it impossible to realize the illusions indicated as (2) to be such and that is the condition of possibility of the maintenance of *avidya* or marigpa in general and therefore of *samsara*. It consists in ignoring (mishepa [*mi-shes-pa*]) that the dualistic appearances that arise by virtue of the second type of *avidya*, are false and baseless, and in normal individuals it always accompanies this second type of *avidya*.

Samsara always involves all three types of *avidya* or marigpa in both classifications; when the term is use in this book without qualifying it as referring to one or another type of *avidya*, it is being used to refer to the combination of the three above meanings (the latter two of which are always underlay by the first, and in normal individuals always accompany each other). In fact, it is only when *samsara* is active (and therefore when *avidya* or *ma-rig-pa* also manifests as the second and third types), that these terms are to be translated as “delusion.”

⁷¹ For an explanation of the three types of *avidya* or marigpa (*ma-rig-pa*) listed in the Dzogchen classification adopted here, see the rpeceding note.

⁷² Dunge Thinle Norbu Rinpoche has often reminded his disciples of this prophesy by Jigme Lingpa. In the English language, an instance of the warning by the all-knowing (*kun-mkhyen*) revealer or tertön (*gter-ston*) not to take the base-of-all for the dharmakaya is found in Guenther, Herbert, 1977, pp. 142-147, which contains the translation of the *rDzogs-pa chen-po'i gnad gsum shan-'byed*, a terma (*gter-ma*) revealed by Jigme Lingpa that is part of the *kLong-chen snying-gi thig-le*. After adapting the terminology to the one used throughout this book, the warning we are concerned with, which appears in p. 144, reads:

“Those who do not understand it in this way and take the base-of-all for the dharmakaya are like blind men without a guide, erring about in a desert. As they are deluded about the nature of the Base and the Fruit, the Path by which Buddhahood can be realized in one lifetime has been blocked. *Samaya*.”

Concerning the above, it must be underlined that sharp increases of the energetic-volume-determining-the-scope-of-awareness (Skt., *kundalini*; Tib., *thig-le*) may give access to the “base-of-all carrying propensities.” And, as will be shown below in the regular text of this chapter, once this condition has manifested, a drive to grasp at it may introduce an incipient, subtle manifestation of the subject-object duality, resulting in the apprehension of an apparent infinitude that is an instance of the formless realm (Skt., *arupadhatu* or *arupa loka*; Tib., *gzugs-med khams*). (A high energetic-volume-determining-the-scope-of-awareness may also be the condition of possibility of the reGnition of the Awake, nonpositional, nonthetic, nonreflexive self-awareness the Dzogchen teachings call rigpa, upon which this nondual awareness’ own face becomes patent, and whereby the true nature of the Base is unconcealed in the manifestation of rigpa-*qua*-Path or rigpa-*qua*-Fruit. However, this reGnition can only take place in duly prepared individuals having the necessary capacity, provided they have received the corresponding secret oral instructions [Skt., *upadesha*; Tib., *man-ngag*].)

When in the nineteensixties Alan Watts (Watts, Alan W., 1962) wrote that the ingestion of LSD could allow people to “experience” *nirvana*, he was confusing his own experience of the “base-of-all carrying propensities” under the effects of LSD, with the initial manifestation of *nirvana*. The point is that, as we have seen, when the energetic-volume-determining-the-scope-of-awareness increases sharply, there is a possibility that the “base-of-all carrying propensities” may manifest spontaneously as nonconceptual

experiences of “pure sensation” arise, without there being a need to apply any *dharma* method whatsoever to this end. However, the manifestation of rigpa-*qua*-Path that takes place upon reGnition of the dharmakaya cannot occur in the same way and by the same means. It is because yogis whose energetic-volume-determining-the-scope-of-awareness has been caused to increase by traditional means may incur in an error similar to Alan Watts’, that Jigme Lingpa predicted that in our time many yogis would take for the dharmakaya the condition of the base-of-all, which as we have seen corresponds to rigpa-*qua*-Base and which involves the basic obscuration that, upon the subsequent manifestation of dualism, develops as *samsara*. Contrariwise, the manifestation of rigpa-*qua*-Path does *not* contain this basic obscuration, but involves the reGnition of “rigpa’s own face,” and therefore it would be a terrible mistake to take the “base-of-all carrying propensities” for the initial stage of *nirvana* that, as we have seen, consists in the manifestation of the dharmakaya.

Furthermore, once the above condition in which neither *samsara* nor *nirvana* are manifest is taken for the manifestation of rigpa *qua* Path or rigpa *qua* Fruit, thye condition of the base-of-all has been taken as object (so to say, for once it manifests as object it is no longer rigpa *qua* Base), and so what manifests is no longer the base-of-all, but the formless realms that make up the higher strata of *samsara*. If a yogi manages to make this condition stable (which, however, is *impossible* in the case of individuals under the effect of LSD and similar substances), he or she may take birth in these realms. I believe that in Watts’ case, recognition of the condition of the base-of-all turned it into a formless experience of the top of *samsara*, so that at the time he believed he was experiencing *nirvana*, he was already having a fully-fledged samsaric experience.

The ngowo aspect of the Base, which is its voidness, manifests in the dimension of the base-of-all or kunzhi kham, and, as we have seen, out of this condition at some point this aspect of the Base shines forth as ngowo shi; furthermore, it is this very aspect that, upon being reGnized, is the dharmakaya. As stated below in the regular text of this chapter, it is when this shining forth is not reGnized nondually and nonconceptually as the dharmakaya in what is known as rangngo shepa (*rang-ngo shes-pa*), that there will be an attempt to take ngowo shi as object that will give rise to a formless realm, and, most likely, to the whole series of subsequent steps in the development of *samsara*. To conclude, when the ngowo aspect of the Base manifests in the dimension of the base-of-all or kunzhi kham, and even the very moment it shines forth as ngowo shi, neither *nirvana* nor *samsara* are active; however, when it is reGnized as the dharmakaya, it does so in the condition of *nirvana*.

At this point I find it important to comment on the translation of the quotation at the beginning of this note, which I had to modify insofar as Dr Guenther had “all-ground” instead of “base-of-all,” and “decisive existence” rather than “dharmakaya.” Though I have no objection concerning the use of “all-ground” instead of “base-of-all” (and in fact I changed the latter into the former simply in order to have a consistent terminology), “decisive existence” is a totally misleading translation of the Tibetan term chöku (*chos-sku*), which in turn translates the Sanskrit dharmakaya.

To begin with, the dharmakaya consists in *going beyond existence*. If we understand the term “existence” as a synonym of “being,” then it must be objected, not only that the nondual, unthinkable dharmakaya (is) beyond being and nonbeing, but also that, insofar as the manifestation of the dharmakaya puts an end to delusion, it involves the dissolution of that most basic instance of delusion that is the *phenomenon of being*. In turn, if we understand the term “existence” in terms of its etymology, which is “standing outside self” and which therefore implies divisiveness and lack of wholeness, the conclusion is the same, for the dharmakaya is *the very surpassing of the illusion of divisiveness and lack of wholeness* (it must be stressed that this etymology coincides with Sartre’s definition of the existent, which is the mode of being that he called being-for-itself and defined as “being always at a distance from [the] Self”—where “Self” stands for an undivided condition of self-sameness that may be made to correspond to *nirvana*).

Furthermore, it is equally wrong to say that the dharmakaya is “decisive.” In fact, in the Webster Collegiate Dictionary we are offered three meanings of this term, the first two being: (1) “having the power or quality of deciding” and (2) “resolute, determined.” Neither of these senses of the term applies to the dharmakaya, which is beyond any possibility of decision insofar as it is beyond judgment, beyond the subject-object duality, and beyond the intentionality of mind. The third meaning of the term is (3) “unmistakable, unquestionable:” if this adjective were used to qualify the noun “existence,” which, as shown in the above paragraph, refers to basic delusion, then the meaning of the phrase would be that of “unmistakable, unquestionable basic delusion.”

I object not only to the above translation of the term dharmakaya, but even to the attempt a rendering it in terms of a Western word or phrase. The reason is that the term dharmakaya has so many different meanings according to the context in which it is used, that any translation of it will necessarily do away with all but one of its manifold meanings, and therefore will distort—or, at least, restrict—the sense of the passage in which the term is found. This is why the Tibetans who produced the ancient translations, who in general rendered the words in terms of their deeper meanings rather than in terms of their etymology, in this case kept faithful to the etymology of the Sanskrit term and coined the term chöku (*chos-sku*): chö (*chos*) was the literal translation of *dharmā*, and ku (*sku*) was the literal translation of *kaya*. Unlike the Tibetans, Dr Guenther totally disregarded the etymology of the term he was translating, and, rather than finding a translation that conveyed at least one the deeper meanings of the word, used one that contradicts all possible meanings of the term.

Paradoxically, in Guenther, Herbert, 1977, p. 190, note 22, the author criticizes those who leave the term untranslated, and offers us a translation of the particle *kaya* or ku (*sku*) that contradicts all of its legitimate meanings. He writes:

“...*chos-sku*. This term corresponds to (the) Sanskrit *dharmakaya*, which is either left untranslated or mistranslated by what I call the ‘literalist fallacy’. The Tibetan term *sku* indicates ‘existence’ in the sense of ‘Being’. It almost approximates the existentialist philosopher’s conception of ‘existence’ and ‘Being’ except that it does not share the latter’s subjectivism.”

In other words, Dr Guenther thinks that the Tibetan term ku (*sku*) applies to what existentialist philosophers called ‘existence’, but what these philosophers referred to by this term was what Sartre called being-for-Self (*être-pour-Soi*) and what Heidegger referred to as *Dasein*: these philosophers never went beyond *samsara*, and they made it most clear in their writings that they were referring to the core of the being of the human entity in a dualistic context (which in Buddhist terms pertains to *samsara*). Contrariwise, the term ku is used solely in the framework of *nirvana*, and as such is contrasted with lü (*lus*), which applies only in the context of *samsara*. This matter was also considered in a previous note; for a systematic, more exhaustive explanation of the reasons why Dr Guenther’s position is so utterly wrong, my book *Beyond Mind, Beyond Being: Dzogchen, Transpersonal Psychology and Western Philosophy* may be consulted.

⁷³ In Capriles, Elias, work in progress, it is shown that all existent evidence suggests that the myth of the “cosmic egg” was shared by the pre-Indo-European, pre-Semitic peoples in a wide region that on the West reached at least as far as the Mediterranean Sea, on the North limited with present-day Russia, on the South-East included India, and on the North-East encompassed China (the latter being the only part of this region that was never dominated either by the Indo-Europeans or the Semites).

Among the pre-Indo-European, pre-Semitic peoples that shared this myth were the Sumerians, the Elamites, the pre-Indo-European peoples of Persia, the Dravidians of India and the Tibeto-Burman speaking people of Zhang-zhung, all of which had close contacts with each other and shared important cultural traits.

As noted in Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], Ed. John Shane, 1986, revised edition 1999, the myth has been central in the Bön cosmogony of Zhang-zhung and Tibet, as well as in the Dzogchen teachings (which featured a more sophisticated version of it), since at least 2800 BC. The center of irradiation of Dzogchen and Bön was Mount Kailash, which Hindus regard as the abode of the God Shiva, and which is located in the heart of Tibet. Since the Bön from Zhang-zhung and Tibet and the Shivaism of India were intimately connected, also Shivaism may have shared the myth in question. And, in fact, some of the most ancient Indian texts feature diverse versions of the myth: in Aryanized India, the myth appeared in the *Rigveda* (x. 82. 5-6 of Hymn to Vishwakarman), though at this point it had assimilated the idea of the intervention of a god. It also appeared in the Code of Manu, and in the writings of the philosopher Kanada, codifier of the Vaiseshika *darshana* (which associated it to an unacceptable pluralistic substantialism).

The same applies to Persian Zurvanism, which, as shown in Tucci, Giuseppe, 1980, had a constant presence in the region of Mount Kailash. In fact, the Pavlevi text called *Menok i Khrat (Spirit of Wisdom)* still mentions the myth in question, even though it does so in a far less pristine way that does Dzogchen in particular and Bön in general.

Gadamer (Gadamer, Hans-Georg, 1993, Spanish 1995) has suggested that the Greeks received this myth from the Sumerians and the Hittites (the latter, being an Indo-European people, likely received it from an older civilization). However, the fact that pre-Indo-European Greece shared its culture and religion

with the peoples of the wide region described above (cf. Bocchi, Gianluca and Ceruti, Mauro, 1993; Daniélou, Alain, 1979, Spanish 1987; Eisler, Riane, 1987; Gimbutas, Marija, 1989; Gimbutas, Marija, 1982) suggests that pre-Indo-European Greeks partook of the myth at a time prior to the arriving of the Hittites in the region. At any rate, just as the myth suffered many modifications in Asia, so it did in Greece, where it appeared among the Orfics, in Anaximander (as demonstrated recently: cf. Gadamer, Hans-Georg, 1993, Spanish 1995) and in atomists like Democritus and Empedocles (and in a subtler way in Anaxagoras). In Pythagoreanism, the reference was to a seed rather than an egg.

If the original version of the myth was that of the Bön tradition and/or the more sophisticated one featured in the Dzogchen tradition and explained in Norbu, Namkhai, *op. cit.*, then it did not refer to gods and had a cyclic character (it must be noted that Gadamer thinks that it could not have had this cyclic character in Anaximander [circa 610-547 a.C.], “because at such an early date it could not have acquired its cyclic character”—when this is precisely the character it had in the Bön traditions transmitted around 2,800 BC, and in other Eastern traditions that are much earlier than Anaximander). According to Bön, Dzogchen and Zurvanism, the division of the cosmic egg corresponded to the disgregation of the Total Space-Time-Awareness that Zurvanists called Zurvan and that Shivaists called Mahakala.

The myth in question appears also in China, where it is intimately associated to the very ancient *yin-yang* cosmology; in the corresponding version a character called P’an-ku has a central role, and heaven and earth, *yin* and *yang*, appear as a result of the division of the primordial cosmic egg.

⁷³ The translation reproduced here is an English rendering of the Spanish translation in Cappelletti, Angel J., 1972. In agreement with Heraclitus, Buddhism discards the creationist hypothesis. However, this does not imply asserting matter to be eternal: Heraclitus seems to have regarded matter as one of the states of a constantly mutating principle, rather than as the eternal essence of that which mutated. Furthermore, if Heidegger had been right in translating Heraclitus’ *pur* (fire) as *Lichtung*, and we understood this term in the sense of “clarity / luminosity,” then Heraclitus could not have regarded the mutating principle as being *in itself* material; in modern terms, perhaps it could be said that it was the common principle of matter and energy (like Einstein’s formula $e=mc^2$). Furthermore, it must be stressed that matter is such only so far as it is known and conceptualized as such: it is “matter” only insofar as there be “mind” and “consciousness” to make be such.

Shakyamuni Buddha replied to the question of the origin of the universe with silence. What better answer could there be to a question that is irrelevant to suffering and its cessation, and that, besides, at the time could not have been answered except in terms of an indemonstrable metaphysical hypothesis? Even today the question is problematic, for recent physical and neurophysiological theories (cf. Bohm, David, 1980, Spanish, 1987; Pribram, Karl H. and Martínez Ramírez, J., 1980; Wilber, Ken, Ed., 1982) seem to imply that space and time exist only in our experience, as a result of our own mental processes: if so, there could not be space and time before there was mind. And, if this were so, then it would be absurd to ask about the origin of the universe, for the very question implies that the universe arose at some point in objectively existent space and time. Since Superunification theories assert that with the Big Bang four dimensions “expanded,” but a bigger number of dimensions remained “shrunk,” they seem to imply a similar problem: though it is said that “at the time” all matter was “concentrated” (insofar as dimensions were shrunk), also time, being a dimension, would have been shrunk, and so with regard to this condition it would seem absurd to speak of “after” or “before.” And so on.

⁷⁴ In this instance of the base-of-all or kunzhi (*kun-gzhi*) the continuum of sensation of all sensory fields is manifest. However, as noted in the *rDzogs pa chen po kun-tu-bzang-po ye-shes klong-gi rgyud*, a Dzogchen Tantra revealed by Jigme Lingpa, the potentiality of kunzhi (*kun-gzhi*) to produce *samsara* and *nirvana* is present even in the five unconscious states—which are the absence of all thoughts, the two kinds of cessation of all mental activity (*pratisamkhyanirodha* and *apratisamkhyanirodha*), swoon and deep sleep. See Guenther, Herbert, 1977, pp. 116-117 and note 11, p. 117.

⁷⁵ This pertains to sem of mind as different from rigpa (*qua* Path or *qua* Fruit) because, even though dualism may not be manifest, it is the condition of possibility of *samsara* with its dualistic functioning, and it is an element that is manifest so long as this dualistic functioning is taking place.

⁷⁶ As asserted in note 68, the second sense of *avidya* or marigpa is that of active delusion, and the third sense is the inability to realize delusion as such (which is necessary for delusion to be delusion, rather than a lucid experience of illusion). In the case of normal individuals (i.e., of those who are not superior bodhisattvas in the post-Contemplation state), this third sense of *avidya* or marigpa always accompanies the second.

⁷⁷ This concept is *not* the same as the one indicated by the Sanskrit terms *samaropa* and *adhyaropa* and the Tibetan term *drodok* (*sgro-'dogs*), which most translators render as *overvaluation*, for the latter consists in assigning an excessive value or truth to something, and as such is contrary to that of undervaluation (Skt., *apavada*; Tib., *skur 'debs / skur ba 'debs pa*), which consists in assigning insufficient value or truth to something: the first is at the root of eternalism and substantialism, whereas the latter is at the root of nihilism. The point is that both overvaluation and undervaluation are functions of what I am calling the delusory valuation-absolutization of thought: the former results from the delusory valuation-absolutization of a thought attributing absolute value or truth, or attributing eternity, to something (or at least attributing more value and truth than it really has), whereas the latter results from the delusory valuation-absolutization of a thought attributing lack of value or truth to something (or at least attributing less value and truth than it really has). The delusory valuation-absolutization of thought assigns fictitious value and truth to the contents of thought, and when the concepts that are delusorily valued-absolutized have a positive value or refer to an excess, we have overvaluation, and when they have a negative value or refer to a deficiency, we have undervaluation.

This delusory valuation or absolutization—which is the source of *avidya* or *marigpa* in the second of the senses the term has in the Dzogchen classification adopted here—is the result of an activity of the organism that endows the contents of thought with illusory *value* and illusory *truth* and *importance*: a vibratory activity that seems to emanate from, or to be concentrated in, the center of the chest at the level of the heart, “charges” our thoughts with apparent value, apparent truth and apparent importance, even though in themselves they have neither value nor nonvalue, neither truth nor nontruth, neither importance nor nonimportance. When these thoughts are identified with segments of the sensory world, we obtain the illusion of facing self-existent entities; when they are identified with qualities, we get the illusion that the “entities” we face have such or such inherent qualities. (Of course, the thoughts have to be applicable to the segments or the “qualities” in question: we cannot call a dog “cat.” Furthermore, from the temporal point of view the sensory world can be seen as a process, and therefore the segments that we single out in this world and that we interpret as static substantial and subsistent entities can be seen as segments of a “universal process”—i.e., as an artificially abstracted subprocess within a single process. Qualities, in turn, are aspects of these sub-processes.) And so on.

A most basic thought-structure, which the inner Tantras in general and the Atiyoga in particular define as “supersubtle,” is the one known as the “directional threefold thought structure,” which consists in the conception that there is an experience (or action, etc.), an experiencer (or agent, etc.) and something experienced (or acted on, etc.), and which goes together with a directional structuring of cognition. When this thought structure is *delusorily valued / absolutized*, on the basis of this directional structuring of cognition, the illusory, delusive subject-object dichotomy arises—and does so together with the illusory, delusive dichotomy of mind (Skt., *chitta*; Tib., *sem [sems]*) and mental events (Skt., *chaitasika*; Tib., *semjung [sems-byung]*). These dichotomies veil the indivisibility of the Base or zhi (*gzhi*), for the latter seems to suffer a cleavage and therefore totality seems to be disrupted, so that it is as a result of this that there arises the subject’s feeling of lack-of-completeness that is the core of the *duhkha* that makes up the First Noble Truth. In fact, once there arises the illusory mental subject that experiences itself as intrinsically separate from the rest of the continuum that the single nature of all entities (is), producing the illusion of incompleteness, this subject has an experience of incompleteness—i.e., of lack of the plentitude and completeness that characterizes that uninterrupted continuum.

Immediately henceforth, upon facing the continuum of what appears as object, we single out, one after another, the segments of interest to us among those that conserve their configuration and that we are used to associate with one or another of the contents of our thoughts; we understand them in terms of these thoughts; and we think that they are self-existent entities, believing these to be in themselves the mental concepts in terms of which we have understood them (i.e., we believe that the segment we have singled out is a dog, a house, this or that human individual, etc.).

According to the qualities that we discover in the different entities that arise in this way, we come to positive or negative judgments that, according to the case, endow them with positive or negative value, which we will believe to be inherent to those entities. This will make us experience pleasure or displeasure and might even lead us to try to appropriate for ourselves those we deem desirable, or, conversely, to try to destroy those we find annoying or menacing. This is why *avidya* or *marigpa* is at the root of the ecological crisis and, in general, why it makes us face a series of undesirable situations and experience frustration and recurrent suffering.

For a far more detailed explanation of what I have been calling the delusory valuation-absolutization of thought and its consequences, as well as of the rest of the factors that intervene in the production of delusion and *samsara*, see Capriles, Elías, 2003, and Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2007, vol. I. Less detailed considerations are found in Capriles, Elías, 1994b, 2000a, 2000b.

⁷⁸ When the emptiness of the three spheres that arise out of the delusory valuation of the directional threefold thought structure is asserted, it is referred to as khorsum dagpa (*'khor gsum dag pa*): purity or emptiness (*dag pa*) of the three spheres (*'khor*). In turn, the surpassing of the *threefold directional apparitional structure* is referred to by terms such as khorsum nampar mitogpai yeshe (*'khor gsum rnam par mi rtog pa'i ye she*) or “primordial gnosis that does not conceive of the three spheres;” khorsum nampar mitogpai sherab (*'khor gsum rnam par mi rtog pa'i shes rab*) or “the discriminating wisdom that does not conceive of the three spheres;” khorsum nampar mitogpai tawa (*'khor gsum rnam par mi rtog pa'i lta ba*) or the Vision that does not conceive of the three spheres;” khorsum mimigpai shearb (*'khor gsum mi dmigs pa'i shes rab*) or “discriminating wisdom that does not have the three spheres as its frame of reference;” khorsum nampar mitogpai ledang drebu (*'khor gsum rnam par mi rtog pa'i las dang 'bras bu*) or “action and fruit [of action] devoid of the concept of the three spheres;” khorsum yongdaggi drubpa chöpa (*'khor gsum yongs dag gi sgrub pa' spyod pa*) or “the accomplishing practice totally free of [the conceptual projection of the] three spheres;” *'khor gsum yongs su da pa'i gtam* or “talk totally free from the conceptual [projection] of the three spheres;” *'khor gsum mi dmigs pa de kho na nyid kyi lta ba* or “the view of thatness devoid of the conceptual [projection] of the three spheres;” *'khor gsum yang dag gi bsngo ba* or “dedication totally devoid of the conceptual [projection] of the three spheres;” etc.

It must be underlined that perception or action involving the conceptual [projection] of the three spheres is described as perceptual cognitive obscuration (*'khor gsum rnam par rtog pa gang de shes bya sgrib par 'dod*).

Finally, it may be useful to note that the term *chachai lesum* (*bya byed las gsum*), which literally means “action, agent and object” and therefore refers to the three spheres discussed above, is a grammatical term rather than a properly dharma concept. And yet sometimes this term is also used to refer to the absence of the *threefold directional apparitional structure* (for example, when the term *bya byed las gsum la rnam par rmi rtog pa* is used for referring to the absence of the conception of the three spheres *qua* action, agent and object).

Most special thanks are due to the accomplished translator and scholar Elio Guarisco for the extensive research he so kindly did on my behalf concerning the usage of this term.

⁷⁹ According to the Dzogchen teachings, and, in the context of the Sūtrayāna, to the Indian Mahāyāna Buddhist philosophers Dignāga and his indirect disciple Dharmakīrti, there are two types of *entity as such*:

- (1) The *particular* phenomena they referred to as *specifically characterized phenomena, self-patterns or inherent collections of characteristics* (Skt. *svalakṣaṇa*; Tib. rangtsen [*rang mtshan*]), which are *real* and *actual / effective* (i.e., effect-producing) yet *impermanent*, and which pertain to the what Third Promulgation Sūtras refer to as *dependent nature* (Skt. *paratantra*; Tib. zhenwang [*gzhan dbang*]) and the Mahāmādhyaṃyaka philosophical school calls *dependent patterns* or *dependent collections of characteristics* (Skt., *paratantralakṣaṇa*; Tib., zhenwangi tsennyi [*gzhan dbang gi mtshan nyid*]). The paradigmatic cases of this class of phenomena—which are so because *they are the source of most other cases*—are those phenomena that are constituted by that which the Dzogchen teachings call the *tsel (rtsal)* form of manifestation of energy; however, *in the view expressed here*, for reasons explained in the following paragraph, *mere mental appearances* (which as such pertain to the *dang* [*gdangs*] form of manifestation of energy and that Tibetan epistemology—an extension of the Indian Buddhist *pramāṇa* tradition—refers to as *reflections* [Skt. *pratibimba*; Tib. zugnyen: *gzugs brnyan*] or *aspects* [Skt. *ākāra*; Tib. nampa: *rnam pa*]), may also belong to this category (and, of course, so do appearances of *rölpa* [*rol pa*] energy). It is also important to keep in mind that in the Dzogchen teachings contents of the consciousness of the base-of-all (Skt. *ālayavijñāna*; Tib. kunzhi namshe [*kun gzhi rnam shes*] or kunzhi nampar shepa [*kun gzhi rnam par shes pa*]), when this term, rather than referring to a so-called storage-consciousness, refers to a phenomenon that is a key stage in the arising of *samsāra* from the base-of-all, are phenomena of this class, which appear as such for an instantaneous moment as they are singled out for perception. And it is even more important to be mindful of the fact that, though these phenomena are said to be *real* and *effective*, this does *not* mean that they are self-existent; contrariwise, being

dependently arisen phenomena—which *depend* on our perception to be singled out and separated from the rest of the sensory field, and even to have their form—they are utterly empty of self-existence (the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra* notes that they are *empty of production* because they do not arise from their own nature or by their own power, and *empty of the absolute* because when perceived as dependently arisen phenomena, they evidently conceal the absolute rather than revealing it; however, according to Dölpopa Shenrab Gyaltzen, basing himself on other Third Promulgation and other sources, they are also empty of own nature).

- (2) The *synthetic mental phenomena* that they named *general configurations* or *general collections of characteristics* (Skt. *sāmānyalakṣaṇa*; Tib. chitsen [*spyi mtshan*]), which are *unreal* and ineffectual, yet are *permanent*—and which pertain to that which Third Promulgation Sūtras call imaginary nature (Skt. *parikalpita*; Tib. kuntag [*kun brtags*]) and which the Mahāmādhyaṃkā philosophical school calls *imaginary patterns* or *imaginary collections of characteristics* (Skt. *parikalpītalakṣaṇa*; Tib. kuntagkyi tsennyi [*kun brtags kyi mtshan nyid*]), as such being the contents of the consciousness of defilements (Skt. *kliṣṭamanovijñāna*; Tib. nyönyikyī namshé [*nyon yid kyi rnam shes*], nyönmongkyi yikyī namshé [*nyon mongs kyi yid kyi rnam shes*] or nyonmongpa chengyi yikyī gyi nampar shepa [*nyon mongs pa can gyi yid kyi rnam par shes pa*]) that are responsible for the third type of *avidyā* in the classification favored by Longchen Rabjam and other Masters and therefore for all defilements. Moreover, since imputational natures are projections made by the mind on *specifically characterized phenomena, self-patterns or inherent collections of characteristics* and as such exist and subsist only in the human mind, they do not subsist by their own nature and thus, as the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra* makes it clear, they are empty of own-nature. Each of these phenomena initially arises on the basis of the imprint left by the initial perception, right after directly apprehending a *specifically characterized phenomenon, self-pattern or inherent collection of characteristics*, of this *specifically characterized phenomenon, self-pattern or inherent collection of characteristics* as whatever the individual's society takes it to be—as such being a *model*, constructed by mental syntheses (Skt. *prapañca*; Tib. töpa [*spros pa*]; mental fabrication), of the *specifically characterized phenomenon, self-pattern or inherent collection of characteristics* in question, rather than being merely the latter's mental image. In *conceptual cognition* (a term that Dharmakīrti applied to *cognitions involving a phenomenal appearance capable of being conjoined with a linguistic expression*) a phenomenon of this kind, which is a *mental representation* (i.e., a *pratibhā* or nangwa [*snang ba*] of the sixth sense, which perceives mental phenomena), is superimposed on a *specifically characterized phenomenon, self-pattern or inherent collection of characteristics* of the same type as the one that initially served as its basis, *immediately* after the phenomenon in question is *directly perceived for an instant*, and hence it becomes mixed and confused with the latter, in such a way that what is then perceived as that phenomenon is the *general configuration* or *general collection of characteristics*. It must be noted that the *mental images* that are the *material basis* of these *general configuration or general collection of characteristics* pertain to the mode of manifestation of energy the Dzogchen teachings call dang (*gdangs*), and as such may be compared to reflections of the phenomena surrounding a crystal ball that appear inside the latter in a somehow dimmer way (however, this does not mean phenomena of dang energy are always of this kind: as implied above, *mere mental appearances*, which pertain to this mode of manifestation of energy, may be *specifically characterized phenomena, self-patterns or inherent collections of characteristics*—the reasons for this being that [a] they can be apprehended in bare perception for an instant before being replaced by a *general configuration or general collection of characteristics*, and [b] in many cases they can produce effects). (Taking fire as an example of what was described in this paragraph, when upon perceiving a *physical fire* [i.e., a *specifically characterized phenomenon, self-pattern or inherent collection of characteristics* of fire], one learns that this phenomenon *is a fire*, a *generic image* of fire arises that will take part in *obscured perception* each and every time one intends to perceive, cognize by means of thought, or imagine or visualize a fire.)

Among (2) *general configurations* or *general collections of characteristics*, we are concerned with two kinds, the first of which is based on the perception of the sound of words, whereas the second may be based on a perception of data of any sense whatsoever, namely:

- (2A) Those *coarse thoughts* called *word sound patterns* [*resulting from mental syntheses*] that are *audio categories*, which is my own translation of the Sanskrit term *śabdāsāmānya* (Tib. drachi [*sgra spyi*]), which is used in the Dzogchen teachings, which Dignāga introduced into the Sūtrayāna and which Dharmakīrti did not use, but which is nonetheless widely employed by Tibetan Buddhist epistemologists

in general, as it was introduced into Tibet seemingly through two different avenues: Śāntarakṣita introduced it in the context of the Sūtrayāna (being assimilated by practically all Tibetan epistemologists, as they found it to be most important in their field), and shortly thereafter it was reintroduced upon the arrival of the Dzogchen teachings. The *material basis* of these *sound patterns* are the *acoustic mental images of words, phrases and sentences* that take part in discursive thinking and that as such are temporal rather than spatial, which are reproductions by the imagination, on the basis of memory, of *models of the acoustic patterns* of the sound of words, phrases and sentences (which as such have been divested of the characteristics of an individual’s pronunciation—e.g., of a speaker’s pitch, softness or raspiness of the voice, pronunciation, volume, and so on) that speakers of a particular language have adopted as conventions (Skt. *vyavahāra*; Tib. *thanyé [tha snyad]*) to designate phenomena or, in general, to communicate meanings (an exception to this understanding of the term seems to be the Sakyapa Master Gorampa Sönam Sengé [*go rams pa bsod nams seng ge*, 1429-1489], who seems to have understood the term *śabdāsāmānya* or *drachi* as referring to the description of an essence [Thakchoe, 2007, p. 82], and thus roughly as what in Western terms could be called a definition). (In Alexander Berzin’s [2001] understanding of Dzogchen categories, since these models have been divested of the characteristics of an individual’s pronunciation and thus are imputable on sounds made in a variety of voices, pitches, volumes, and pronunciations, they are *categories*—according to him, *collection mental syntheses* [Tib. *tsogchi: tshogs spyi*; reconstructed Skt. *samudāyasāmānya*, though one scholar has offered *saṅghasāmānya*] and *class mental syntheses* [Skt. *jāṭisāmānya*; Tib. *rigchi: rigs spyi*]. Thus according to Berzin, *word sound patterns [resulting from mental syntheses] that are audio categories*, rather than being imputed on the *mere mental images* of words, phrases, sentences and so on, are imputed on *collection mental syntheses* and *class mental syntheses*, thus pertaining to a logical type wholly different logical type than the latter—a view that, as shown in note after next, contradicts Gorampa, who claims that *class mental syntheses* are not a category different from the *universal concepts of entities [resulting from mental syntheses] that are meaning categories* (Skt. *arthasāmānya*; Tib. *dönchi [don spyi]*) discussed in the following paragraph of this note. Note that in Gelugpa epistemology—and according to Berzin [2001] also in the Dzogchen teachings—*collection mental syntheses* are the wholes imputed on spatial, sensorial, and/or temporal parts—such as the whole “material entity *table*” imputed on a sensory / spatial flat surface resting on four legs, or the whole “word *table*” imputed on the temporal sequence of phonemes that make up the sound pattern *table*, etc.—whereas *class mental syntheses* are the type of phenomenon a specific individual item is an instance of—such as for example a material, spatial configuration being validly a *table*, or a temporal sound pattern being validly the word *table*. Gorampa’s objection lies on the fact that these *imputations* are made by the thoughts discussed in the next paragraph, which are the true source of the *imputational* nature, for as shown below they are that which provide unity to collections of sensations and that understand the resulting unity as this or that entity with these or those characteristics. It is curious that the Dzogchen teachings should coincide with the Gelugpa view on this point, for as a rule the understanding of categories in the Dzogchen teachings diverges from that of the Gelugpa, and in quite a few cases agrees with Gorampa’s.)

- (2B) **Subtle thoughts**, called *universal concepts of entities [resulting from mental syntheses] that are meaning categories* (Skt. *arthasāmānya*; Tib. *dönchi [don spyi]*). In the view of non-Gelug schools and vehicles, *general configurations* or *general collections of characteristics* of this particular kind *incorporate the meaning that a given society attributes to the specifically characterized phenomenon, self-pattern or inherent collection of characteristics they reproduce*, and hence they subsequently serve to *interpret and experience* phenomena of the same kind—the *particular phenomenon* (i.e., the *specifically characterized phenomenon, self-pattern or inherent collection of characteristics* [Skt. *svalakṣaṇa*; Tib. *rangtsen / rang mtshan*]), as noted in the discussion of this type of phenomena, being no longer perceived directly after the initial instant of presentation so long as conceptual perception prevails, for that which is then perceived is the *general configuration* or *general collection of characteristics* in terms of which we interpret it, which in this case involves a *meaning*, for it is one of the *subtle thoughts* discussed in this paragraph (i.e., a *universal concept of an entity [resulting from mental syntheses] that is a meaning category*) and as such it will necessarily convey a meaning. (However, understanding in terms of a *universal concept of an entity [resulting from mental syntheses] that is a meaning category* does not occur solely in the moment immediately following the *sensory perception* [Greek, *aisthesis*: αἴσθησις] of a *specifically characterized phenomenon, self-pattern or inherent collection of characteristics*, as it also may arise immediately after a *coarse thought* that is a *word sound pattern [resulting from a mental*

synthesis] that is an audio category in order to establish the latter's meaning, or immediately after a mental image arising in fantasy [for the same purpose], and so on [the mental image's raw material being, according to non-Gelug Sūtrayāna understanding, a specifically characterized phenomenon, self-pattern or inherent collection of characteristics]. To conclude, and most important, among phenomena of the imputational nature and hence among contents of the consciousness of defilements, the thoughts discussed in this paragraph are directly responsible for the activation of defilements.

In what regards mental appearances of dang energy, in conceptual cognition occurring in imagination, visualization, fantasy, visual memory and so on, they may be spatial, principally visual appearances, or temporal auditive appearances. However, in the latter case they are not mere mental appearances, for they are word sound patterns [resulting from mental syntheses] that are audio categories. Nevertheless, just as the former, in order to have meaning, must be understood in terms of a universal concept of an entity [resulting from a mental synthesis] that is a meaning category—or, what is the same, of a subtle thought—in discursive thinking the concatenation of word sound patterns [resulting from mental syntheses] that are audio categories, in order to be understood, requires the repeated participation of universal concepts of entities [resulting from mental syntheses] that are meaning categories. (Above it was noted that the paradigmatic coarse thoughts are the word sound patterns [resulting from mental syntheses] that are audio categories. It must be noted that in the Gelug view—which according to Berzin [2001] is also that of the Dzogchen teachings, though I have not verified this—spatial, mainly visual images need to have been synthesized into collection mental syntheses and class mental syntheses, and that, as shown in note after next, for his part Gorampa claimed that class mental syntheses may not be regarded as different from the universal concepts of entities [resulting from mental syntheses] that are meaning categories.)

(The explanation of perception and cognition in terms of the particular phenomena called specifically characterized phenomena, self-patterns or inherent collections of characteristics, and the synthetic mental phenomena named general configurations or general collections of characteristics, may at first sight seem quite similar to perceptual theories in British empiricism, and particularly to Hume's, according to which ideas [a concept Hume took from Locke and Berkeley, but which he modified for it to fit his own outlook], reproduce particular impressions [his term for the direct sensory perception of a particular phenomenon]. However, in what seems to be a somehow inversion of Berkeley's view [according to which a word becomes general by its relation to a particular but representative idea], Hume claimed that, with the passing of time, because of the resemblances an individual finds in his or her experience between the different patterns / configurations—whether impressions or ideas—indicated by the same word, and the contrast between these patterns and the similar patterns indicated by different words, through custom she or he forms that which he referred to as a concept or a general idea and which consists in the combination of an individual, particular idea with the appropriate associative dispositions, which allowed the individual to identify all of the patterns indicated by the same word. Since this means that Hume's ideas change after they are established—though even after successive syntheses they continue to be particular—they cannot be permanent in the sense in which Dharmakīrti used the term [which is not that of being eternal, but that of not changing after being established], and hence they fail to fulfill the requisites of that which Dharmakīrti called general configurations or general collections of characteristics. For Dharmakīrti it was important that these general configurations [etc.] should be permanent in his own sense because this was a key aspect of the discrepancy between them and the specifically characterized phenomena / self-patterns / inherent collections of characteristics they interpreted, which were constantly changing, and hence of the delusive character of perception in terms of the former. However, in my view this should not be important to us, as the delusive character in question may be explained in more significant ways.)

⁸⁰ In reference to the discursive thoughts, and in general to the use of language and its interpretation, as stated in the preceding note, the reproduction of the sound of words would be mere mental images—reflections (Skt. *pratibimba*; Tib. *zugnyen* [*zugs brnyan*]) or aspects (Skt. *ākāra*; Tib. *nampa* [*rnam pa*]). However, as the Dzogchen teachings make it clear—just as in the context of the Sūtrayāna Dignāga made it clear—these are not enough for discursive thinking to be possible. Here the process is explained in terms of the Dzogchen teachings, which posit two categories indispensable for the thought process to be possible: (a) the category that they—as well as Dignāga in the Sūtrayāna—call word sound patterns [resulting from mental syntheses] that are audio categories (Skt. *śabdāsāmānya*; Tib. *drachi* [*sgra spyi*]), and (b) the category that they—as well as Dignāga and Dharmakīrti in the Sūtrayāna—call universal

concepts of entities [resulting from mental syntheses] that are meaning categories (Skt. *arthasāmānya*; Tib. *dönchi [don spyi]*). Since both categories were defined in the preceding note, here it is sufficient to add the following:

- (a) With regard to *word sound patterns [resulting from mental syntheses] that are audio categories*, that unless one were talking to an orthodox brahmin (Brāhmaṇa) holding the Vedic belief that meanings are inherent in the Sanskrit language, in our time it would be a platitude to note that no meaning is inherent in them, and that when in audial, temporal cognition—whether in *sensory perception* or in *discursive thinking*—mental aspects resembling the sounds of phonemes appear one after another in sequence, in an instant a conceptual mental cognition (i.e., a cognition involving a phenomenal appearance capable of being conjoined with linguistic expression) joins them together, mentally synthesizes the representation of words, phrases, and sentences, and superimposes on them audio categories of words, phrases, and sentences (which according to Berzin’s explanation at this point would have become the material basis of *collection mental syntheses* [Tib. *tsogchi: tshogs spyi*; probable reconstructed Skt. *samudāyasāmānya*, though one scholar has *saṅghasāmānya*) and *class mental syntheses* [Skt. *jātisāmānya*; Tib. *rigchi: rigs spyi*], but which in Gorampa’s view is not the case, as it is not possible to distinguish between these categories and *universal concepts of entities [resulting from mental syntheses] that are meaning categories* [cf. the immediately following note]).
- (b) In this context, *universal concepts of entities [resulting from mental syntheses] that are meaning categories* may be said to be *patterns of significance of a language sound pattern* that has been adopted as the meaning of a word, phrase, or sentence in a particular language by members of a specific society. As suggested above, in order to refute Mīmāṃsā and in general the Vedic belief that meanings are inherent in the Sanskrit language and that the latter is inherently sacred, Dharmakīrti, like the Dzogchen teachings, stressed the nowadays commonsensical fact that meanings are not inherent in sounds or words, but are conventionally coined, assigned to words, and used as categories by the members of a society for thinking and communicating—and that even in the same society different people may assign slightly different meaning to a particular word, using that meaning as a category when reproducing that word in discursive thinking. Since most conceptual cognitions have a verbal support, as a rule they involve the superimposition of both *audio categories* and *meaning categories* onto *mental aspects* (Skt. *ākāra*; Tib. *nampa: rnam pa*). However, as stated in the preceding note, conceptual cognition may also be nonverbal, in which case it only superimposes onto mental aspects a *universal concept of an entity [resulting from mental syntheses] that is a meaning category*, such as when visualizing or remembering what someone’s face looks like (according to Berzin [2001], in this case it also superimposes unto it *collection mental syntheses* and *class mental syntheses* [defined in the preceding note]; in the view of Gorampa, this is not the case).

In discursive thinking, coarse thoughts of the kind called *word sound patterns [resulting from mental syntheses] that are audio categories* succeed each other, yet this would not be enough for a line of thought to be meaningful, or even for it to have its continuity; for the latter to be possible, the *patterns / categories* in question must alternate with *subtle thoughts*, or, what is the same, *universal abstract concepts [resulting from mental syntheses] and corresponding to a meaning category*, as the latter must provide the understanding of the meaning of the former’s concatenation.

⁸¹ As stated in note before last, in Dzogchen usage, *subtle thoughts* are that which they call—and which in the Sūtrayāna both Dignāga and Dharmakīrti called—*universal concepts of entities [resulting from mental syntheses] that are meaning categories* (Skt. *arthasāmānya*; Tib. *dönchi [don spyi]*), which, as understood in the Dzogchen teachings, (1) involve the unity Continental Western philosophy attributes to concepts and, according to the view under discussion, provide the unity in question to a diversity of sensations, and (2) have and provide meaning, just as do concepts—and in particular, *universals*—in Continental Western philosophy.

The Gelug tradition sees this meaning of *universal concepts of entities [resulting from mental syntheses] that are meaning categories* as contradicting Dharmakīrti, as it understands the term—which it peculiarly holds to exist in both the Sautrāntika and the Cittamātra Schools—as referring to a *simple mental image of vision*, possibly associated with data of other senses, and do not view any Buddhist philosophical school (which in their view are only those found in the Sūtrayāna) as explaining human understanding as a function of universal concepts as understood by Continental Western philosophy. George Dreyfus (1997, pp. 251 & 256; the spelling of Tibetan terms was changed for the one used in this book;

translations of Sanskrit and Tibetan terms were replaced by the ones I use, by the same token appending the original terms; and abbreviations were eliminated) writes:

“The Gelug view asserts that the appearance of an object to a *conceptual consciousness* (Note by E. C.: a cognition with a phenomenal appearance capable of being conjoined with linguistic expression) is an *universal concept of an entity [resulting from mental syntheses] that is a meaning category* (i.e., an *arthasāmānya*). Sakya Paṇḍita’s followers disagree, holding that the appearance is not a *universal concept of an entity [resulting from mental syntheses] that is a meaning category* but the [mere] representation of an object in consciousness, also called a *reflection* (Skt. *pratibimba*; Tib. *zugnyen [gzugs brnyan]*) or *aspect* (Skt. *ākāra*; Tib. *nampa [rnam pa]*). For them, the *universal concept of an entity [resulting from mental syntheses] that is a meaning category* is the mistaken identity attributed to a representation by thought...

“According to the Gelug tradition, a *universal concept of an entity [resulting from mental syntheses] that is a meaning category* is the conceptual appearance of a thing. It is called an *arthasāmānya* because it is an object [indicated by] words (*sgra’i don, śabdārtha*) and has the nature of a general configuration / collection of characteristics (*spyi mtshan; sāmānyalakṣaṇa*). As such it is permanent and not real...

“...the Sakya view of an *universal concept of an entity [resulting from mental syntheses] that is a meaning category* differs from Gelug realism. Śākya Chogden (*śākya mchog ldan gser mdog paṇ chen [1428-1507]*) and Gorampa (Sönam Sengé [*go rams pa bsod nams seng ge*], 1429-1489) do not accept the Gelug presentation of a *universal concept of an entity [resulting from a mental synthesis] that is a meaning category* as the conceptual appearance of an object. They suggest, rather biting, that this view is yet another inaccuracy of Chapa (Chöky Sengé [*phywa pa chos kyi seng ge* or *cha pa chos kyi seng gel*])’s legacy enshrined in the Gelug tradition. Gorampa is particularly critic of the distinction between *class mental synthesis* (Skt. *jātisāmānya*; Tib. *rigchi [rigs spyi]*: the type of phenomenon that a specific individual item is an instance of, such as an item being a “table”) and *universal concepts of entities [resulting from mental syntheses] that are meaning categories*. He says:

“Qualm: Although [it is true that] any cognition taking an *universal concept of an entity [resulting from mental syntheses] that is a meaning category* as its appearing object is a conceptual cognition, it is not the case that any cognition taking a *class mental synthesis* as its object must be conceptual.

“Answer: The idea of a *class mental synthesis* (Note by E.C.: the type of phenomenon that a specific individual item is an instance of—such as for example when a material, spatial configuration may be validly said to be a “table,” or when a sound, temporal pattern may be validly said to be the word “table”) not included in a *universal concept of an entity [resulting from mental syntheses] that is a meaning category* is like the idea of an ocean not included in water. It is like the confusion created by the intoxication of a bad teacher, for a *class mental synthesis* cannot exist outside the imputation that confuses the appearance and the denomination.’

“For Gorampa, it is not possible to distinguish *class mental syntheses* from *universal concepts of entities [resulting from mental syntheses] that are meaning categories*. The world is made of individuals and there are no real properties. All we have are conceptual representations that are taken to stand for commonalities that we assume real objects possess. This mistaken assumption is based on confusing appearance (representation) with denomination (the mistaken identity imputed on the appearance mostly on the basis of its association with a term). Śākya Chogden agrees with this view. He argues that the Gelug presentation rests on a confusion between concept and its object. He says: ‘It follows that the subject, the appearance to a conceptual consciousness [of something] as not being a nonjar, is not the elimination (Skt. *anyapoha*, Tib. *zhensel [gzhan sel]*) [belonging to] a jar because it is the conceptual aspect of a conception apprehending a jar. For Śākya Chogden, an appearance is a conceptual reflection. It is a real mental event, produced by causes and conditions. Moreover, such an appearance changes over time. For example, the appearance of a jar to my mind can become clearer or murkier. Thus it is impermanent and hence, by definition, real. In fact, the appearance is the aspect or form that the conceptual consciousness takes as its object. Therefore, this conceptual appearance cannot be an actual elimination, nor a *sāmānya*, nor an *arthasāmānya*.’”

The above is directly related to the fact that, whereas the Geluggas distinguish between existence, which they see as something that must *not* be eliminated, and inherent existence, which they see as delusory and hence as something to be eliminated, Gorampa rightly notes that all perceptions of existence are delusive perceptions positing inherent existence. In fact, just as Gorampa notes that the Geluggas confuse appearance (presentation of *sensa*) with the mistaken identity imputed on that appearance, he notes that

existence is a mistaken identity imputed on an appearance which in all cases involves the delusion the Gelugpas call inherent existence, so that the distinction between existence and inherent existence is not only superfluous, but, worse still, is a source of confusion.

As to the understanding of the term *universal concepts of entities* [resulting from mental syntheses] that are meaning categories, non-Gelugpa philosophers, just like the Dzogchen teachings, are aware that, unlike mere mental images and the sensory phenomena that these images reproduce, and as reflected by my translation of the Sanskrit term *arthasāmānya* and the Tibetan *dönchi* (*don spyi*), the *universal concepts in question convey a meaning, and meanings are inherently delusive*. This is so because, as stated in the preceding notes, since the moment they arise, those *universal concepts*—which provide unity to the diversity of the *sensory basis* of the *specifically characterized phenomenon, self-pattern* or *inherent collection of characteristics* they reproduce,* thus allowing us to perceive the *collection of characteristics* as a whole rather than as a manifold separate, disparate sensory data—become associated with the understanding of the essence, function, characteristics, qualities and so on of the entity they reproduce; with a value-judgment concerning the latter; etc. In fact, they provide the *understanding* occurring in the *recognition* (in the sense in which H. H. Price [2d. Ed. 1969], among many others, used the term) of *sensory configurations* or *collections of characteristics* (Skt. *lakṣaṇa*; Tib. *tsempai [mtshan dpe]*) of the kind called *specifically characterized phenomena, self-patterns* or *inherent collections of characteristics*. And as such they are the only type of thought that validly and properly speaking constitutes that which Western philosophy refers to as *universals*.

In short, besides providing their unity to phenomena of a given class, they convey a complex meaning that in no way could be reduced to the entity's image; on the contrary, the image is now the material basis of what Continental Western philosophy refers to as a *concept* and as a *universal*, and views as being responsible for the unity of what otherwise would be a diversity, and for human understanding. (Thus understood, *universals* are definitely *universalia post rem*, as they derive from perception. However, they may also arise *with the perception of the thing* [rather than *arising after perception of the thing*]: though it was shown that according to the *pramāṇa* [Tib. *tsema: tshad ma*] tradition concepts result from mental syntheses carried out by the human mind on the basis of collections of sensations and understanding, in a quasi-Kantian way the same tradition notes that a newborn has a *sāmānya* of mother's breast that allows she or he to go for it, and that even animals have *sāmānyas* that allow them to perform their specific functions. Thus it may be said that humans have innate *propensities* to develop some crucial *sāmānyas* without deriving them from experience—and that these propensities, which arise in primordial, nondual awareness together with the human phenomenon, are *conditions of possibility* of human experience). (*According to Gelug view, etc., together with *collection mental syntheses* and *class mental syntheses*—but not so according to Gorampa, who deems *class mental syntheses* not to be separate and different from *arthasāmānyas* / *dönchi* [*don spyi*].)

In non-Gelug Sūtrayāna understanding, *universal concepts of entities* [resulting from mental syntheses] that are meaning categories provide meanings since the instant they arise, and neither the visual image nor the meaning change subsequently, as otherwise they would not be permanent phenomena in the sense in which this term is understood in this context. How can a *universal concept of an entity* [resulting from mental syntheses] that is a meaning category arise with its full meaning the instant it is initially formed is beyond the scope of this book and a source of contention. Gorampa asserted concepts to result from associating the description of an entity's essence (which in Western terms would roughly correspond to the object's definition, and which, by contrast with both Gelugpa and Dzogchen understanding, he took to be the original meaning of the term *śabdāsāmānya* [Tib. *drachi: sgra spyi*]) and the *model* serving as the material support of *universal concepts of entities* [resulting from mental syntheses] that are meaning categories, asserting this association to be the concept itself (Thakchoe, 2007, p. 82). This may be the case in the formation of complex, abstruse concepts, but not so of simple concepts—such as those of the commonsense entities we perceive. How these are formed in ontogenesis will not be discussed here, as the problems involved are of little relevance to this book. (The distinction between complex, abstruse concepts, and simple concepts such as those of the commonsense entities we perceive, is due to the fact that not all *universal concepts of entities* [resulting from mental syntheses] that are meaning categories have as their material basis a clear, neat image of a commonsense phenomenon—whether visual, auditive or of another of the five non-mental senses that perceive that which the Dzogchen teachings refer to as *tse* (*rtsal*) energy—for there are meanings / *universal concepts* that are arrived at by means of inference on the basis of understandings having a material basis that is not as clearly and neatly visualizable as the

image of a fire, a cat or a dog. In fact, though it is an undeniable fact that all universal concepts have a material basis, the latter may be more concrete or less so, more commonsense or less so, neater or less neat, clearer or less clear, and so on.)

The abstract, universal understanding inherent in subtle thoughts *as I am understanding these here*—i.e., as *universal concepts of entities [resulting from mental syntheses] that are meaning categories*—is comparable to the intelligible intuition that Greek philosophers of Orphic extraction called *noein* (νοεῖν), except in that—contrarily to Plato’s belief, and probably Parmenides’—(1) by no means can these abstract, universal understandings manifest independently of *the mental images* to which they are associated (including the audial, temporal patterns that are the material basis of *word sound patterns [resulting from mental syntheses] that are audio categories* and the [mainly] visual, spatial patterns that are the material basis of *universal concepts of entities [resulting from mental syntheses] that are meaning categories*), and (2) instead of being Truth, Good and Beauty itself, they are the basis of what Third Promulgation Sūtras call imaginary nature (Skt., *parikalpita*; Tib., *kuntag [kun brtags]*) and the Mahāmādhyaṃka philosophical school calls *imaginary patterns* or *imaginary collections of characteristics* (Skt., *parikalpita-lakṣaṇa*; Tib., *kuntagkyi tsennyi [kun brtags kyi mtshan nyid]*), as such being sources of delusion, evil and ugliness.

Likewise, though the fact that the Buddhist *pramāṇa* tradition seems to posit *a priori* contents of thought is remindful of Kant’s philosophy, contrary to Kant’s intent on positing *a prioris* in all of the four compartments into which he divided the psyche, this does not mean that they are sources of correct perception, knowledge or values, or references for establishing the truth of human perception, values or knowledge. On the contrary, being delusive contents of what Third Promulgation Sūtras call the *consciousness of passions* or *of defilements* (Skt. *kliṣṭamanovijñāna*; Tib. *nyönyikyī namshé [nyon yid kyi rnam shes]*, *nyönmongkyī yikyī namshé [nyon mongs kyi yid kyi rnam shes]* or *nyonmongpa chengyi yikyī gyi nampar shepa [nyon mongs pa can gyi yid kyi rnam par shes pa]*), their delusory valuation-absolutization gives rise to the third aspect of *avidyā* in the classification favored by Longchen Rabjam—thus eliciting the passions.

Moreover, *specifically characterized phenomena, self-patterns* or *inherent collections of characteristics*, and *general configurations* or *general collection of characteristics* and hence *universal concepts*, may be said to exist only insofar as they manifest in human experience and to be, even while they are manifest, empty of self-existence or substance. In fact, *universals* are *comprehensions of essence* that, just as the essences they grasp, and the phenomena involving data of one or more of the five senses that may be *recognized* as concrete instances of these essences, are empty of self-existence or substance. Hence *universalia sunt realia sed rursus non sunt vera*—they are *real* in the etymological sense of the term insofar as they are essential for *rere* (thinking) to have meaning and insofar as they make it possible for us to understand the essence of *rei* (things), yet rather than being self-existent or referring to something self-existent, or than being the source of truth or the reference for the latter in the sense of perfect *adaequatio* with particular entities excluding an equally valid and correct *adaequatio* of the opposite concept with the same entities, when delusorily valued / absolutized, to the extent that they make the entities in question seem to be self-existent, or to perfectly adequate themselves to the subtle thought interpreting them, they are a source of confusion (Capriles, 2007a vol. I).

(In the understanding expressed by Berzin [2001], in conceptual nonverbal cognition not only *universal concepts of entities [resulting from mental syntheses] that are meaning categories* participate, as also *collection mental syntheses* [Tib. *tsogchi: tshogs spyi*; probable Skt. *samudāyasāmānya*, though one scholar has *saṅghasāmānya*] and *class mental syntheses* [Skt. *jāṭisāmānya*; Tib. *rigchi: rigs spyi*] do so—according to Berzin these two being what in the case of spatial, principally visual appearances is synthesized as the basis for the application of a *universal concept of an entity [resulting from mental syntheses] that is a meaning category* (a thesis that, as shown above, Gorampa rejects). In the case of temporal, auditive appearances, what is understood in terms of *universal concepts of entities [resulting from mental syntheses] that are meaning categories* is *word sound patterns [resulting from mental syntheses] that are audio categories* (Skt. *śabdāsāmānya*; Tib. *drachi [sgra spyi]*)—which according to Berzin [2001] are also synthesized on the basis of *class mental syntheses*, but which in Gorampa’s view *cannot be so*.)

For a discussion of all that was considered in this note and the two preceding ones, fully carried out in terms of Dzogchen categories and concepts, cf. the upcoming, definitive version of Capriles (2004).

⁸² The linear structure that results from the delusory valuation / absolutization of the threefold thought-structure is at the root of dimensionality because it is the linear support of the three dimensions of space and of the time dimension as well. *Universal concepts of entities [resulting from mental syntheses] that are meaning categories* (Skt. *arthatāmānya*; Tib. *dönchi [don spyi]*) are absolutely dependent on the dimensionality that ensues from the delusory valuation / absolutization of the threefold thought-structure (Skt. *trimaṇḍala*; Tib. *khorsum [’khor gsum]*) because the images that support the understanding they convey all involve dimensionality (in fact, in some of them tridimensionality has to be most conspicuous for them to support the meaning they convey, and there are some in which even four-dimensionality—i.e., the tridimensionality of space plus the time dimension—must be most conspicuous for them to convey the meaning they convey (the latter are all *universal concepts of entities [resulting from mental syntheses] that are meaning categories* that serve for understanding inherently dynamic processes, yet though all such concepts, in order to serve for understanding inherently dynamic processes, require the time dimension to be involved in the image that supports the understanding in question, certainly not all of them require the tridimensionality of space to be most conspicuous).

⁸³ Ngowo shi (*ngo-bo’i gshis*) is the term used to refer to this in a short terma revealed by Jigme Lingpa called *rDzogs-pa chen-po’i gnad-gsum shan-’byed*, which forms part of the *kLong-chen snying-gi thig-le*, and which was translated in Guenther, Herbert, 1977, pp. 142-147. Dr Guenther remarks that in Kagyüpa terminology the meaning of shi (*gshis*) is loosely the same as that of the term ngowo (*ngo-bo*) in the teachings of the Nyingmapa (Guenther, Herbert, 1977, p. 144, note 11; for an explanation of the essence or ngowo aspect of the Base see the regular text of the chapter on the Path of spontaneous liberation in Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2003, or the discussion of the three aspects of the Base in (the upcoming) Part Two of the same book. However, as witnessed in the brief *Tantra* revealed by Jigme Lingpa, in the Dzogchen teachings the combination “ngowo shi” is used when the ngowo aspect of the Base shines forth, as occurs in the initial levels of the manifestation of spontaneous awareness that makes the Base patent.

⁸⁴ Of course, the only meaning of the particles “*swa*” and “*rang*” is not “spontaneous” or “of itself,” etc.: they can also mean “intrinsic” or “inherent.” Hence the frequent translation of the terms *swasamvedana* and *rangrig* as “intrinsic awareness.”

⁸⁵ In the inner Tantras based on the principle of transformation, the first level of realization is said to be the nirmanakaya, the second level of realization is said to be the sambhogakaya, the third level of realization is said to be the dharmakaya, and the final level of realization is said to be the swabhavikaya, corresponding to the indivisibility of the three kayas. Contrariwise, in the Dzogchen Atiyoga the first level of realization is said to be the dharmakaya, the second level of realization is said to be the sambhogakaya, and the final level of realization is said to be the nirmanakaya; when the three kayas manifest simultaneously as a result of this third and final level of realization, this is the swabhavikaya or indivisibility of the manifestation of the three kayas.

One may wonder how can there be two different, contrary sequences of realization of the same aspects of Buddhahood (i.e., of the kayas) in two different Buddhist Paths. This is so because the meanings of the terms swabhavikaya, dharmakaya, sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya are not understood in exactly the same way in the Path of transformation of the inner Tantras and in the Path of spontaneous liberation of the Dzogchen Atiyoga. In fact, the final realization of the Tantric Path of Transformation, which in this Path is called swabhavikaya, corresponds to the initial realization of the dharmakaya in the Path of spontaneous liberation of Dzogchen Atiyoga; in turn, the sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya of Atiyoga are not reached in any other Buddhist Path. This is directly related to the fact that the highest level of realization in the Mahayoga of the Nyingmapa is the thirteenth level (Skt., *bhumi*; Tib., *sa*); that the summit of realization of the Anuyogatantra of the Nyingmapa (the highest vehicle of Transformation) is the fourteenth level; and that the final level of realization in the Atiyogatantra of the Nyingmapa, corresponding to the Dzogchen Path of spontaneous liberation, is the sixteenth level. The point is that in the Dzogchen Atiyoga successful practitioners may proceed further in the process of realization than in any other vehicle—including those of the Tantric Path of Transformation.

For further information in this regard, see Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2003.

⁸⁶ Of course, when we “look and check” we are no longer in the neutral condition of the base-of-all or *kunzhi lungmaten (kun-gzhi lung-ma-bstan)*.

⁸⁷ The energetic-volume-determining-the-scope-of-awareness is what Indians call *kundalini*—which in its turn is one of the two Sanskrit words rendered by the Tibetan term *thig le* (the other one being *bindu*).

Dr Herbert V. Guenther coined the term “bioenergetic input,” which suggests a von Neumann-like conception of systems in terms of input/output and a biological origin of this energy, but which I originally liked and adopted. However, at some point I replaced it by the term “bioenergetic volume,” which I deemed more graphic insofar as a high energetic-volume-determining-the-scope-of-awareness may be experienced as a huge energy flow moving through the body—and then by the term “energetic-volume-determining-the-scope-of-awareness,” which does not imply that this energy has a biological origin.

In the preceding note we saw that the state that Tarthang Tulku (1977a) characterized as “small space-time-knowledge”—which depends on a low energetic-volume-determining-the-scope-of-awareness (*kundalini* or *thig le*)—features the subject-object duality and the restriction of the scope of one’s focus of awareness which makes it encompass only a fragment at a time of the continuum of the *given* and to have scarcely permeable limits. This state is the condition of possibility of experiencing entities as self-existent and believing this experience gives us the true condition of entities—and therefore it is the condition of possibility of the manifestation of *avidya / ma rig pa* in the second and third of the meanings these terms have in the threefold classification chosen here.

The energetic-volume-determining-the-scope-of-awareness, which increases or decreases interdependently with changes in brain biochemistry, may be altered by *kundalini yoga*, *yantra yoga*, the practices of *tsa/lung/thig le* (*rtsa/rlung/thig le*), the methods of Thögel and the Yangthik, etc. However, a mere expansion of space-time-knowledge cannot directly result in Awakening: all it can do is to produce illusory experiences of the type designated by the Tibetan term *nyam* (*nyams*), the Chinese *mo-ching*, and the Japanese *makyo*—or (in Sufism) the Arabic term *hal*. In prepared individuals capable of using them as images on a mirror providing an opportunity to reGnize the true condition of the mirror, such experiences may become the condition for the reGnition of the primordial Gnitiveness represented by the mirror. However, in unprepared individuals they may elicit attachment or dread; in particular, the expansion of the hitherto narrow scope of consciousness and the permeabilization of the bounds of consciousness that accompany a sharp increase of the energetic-volume-determining-the-scope-of-awareness may induce a psychotomimetic experience or unchain a fully-fledged psychosis. For example, the increase in question may unveil the insubstantiality of the individual’s being and thus induce an episode of *panic* associated to psychotic derealization. It may allow into the individual’s conscious awareness contents that are ego-dystonic (incompatible with her or his self-image) and thus threaten the person’s ego-function and sense of identity—which in its turn could well give rise to a psychotic episode. It may cause the pain inherent in the delusory valuation of thought to be experienced in its fullness and thus activate positive feedback loops of discomfort, pain, and anxiety: the stronger the discomfort we experience, the stronger our rejection of it, and the stronger our rejection of it, the stronger the discomfort—so that there may be a runaway of discomfort as the latter increases from its own feedback.

⁸⁸ The term *gyu dagnyi chikpai marigpa* (*rgyu bdag-nyid gcig-pa’i ma-rig-pa*; cf. Longchenpa, 1976, p. 24, and Cornu, 2001, p. 62), which is extremely difficult to translate, seems to imply that this beclouding of primordial awareness is inborn (which is no doubt the case) and teleologically oriented to give rise to the illusion of single selfhood. In other words, it would be the basis for taking the true condition of reality to be a universal self, as happens in various Hindu schools.

⁸⁹ For an explanation of the three truths of Mahamadhyamaka, cf. the last chapter of this book. Longchenpa favored the explanation of Dzogchen with Third Promulgation terminology, interpreted in a way that is closer to that of Mahamadhyamaka than to those of the Yogachara school of philosophy and those of the Madhyamaka Swatantrika Yogachara subschools.

⁹⁰ The explanation of these three stages was developed on the basis of the Longsel Khandro Nyingthik terma (*gter ma*) teachings of Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu (*klong chen ’od gsal mkha’ ’gro’i snying thig*; the specific teachings were those of the *lta ba blo ’das chen po’i gnad byang*), of terma teachings of Jigme Lingpa (in particular, cf. the terma *rDzogs pa chen po’i gnad gsum shan ’byed*, which forms part of the *klong chen snying gi thig le* and which was translated in Guenther [1977], pp. 142-147 [the relevant parts appear in pp. 143-144]), and of the Kama teachings of Dzogchen—all of which were compounded in terms of my own observation of experience. Since the terma teachings of the Longsel Khandro Nyingthik are to be kept secret, I did not mention them in the note to Capriles (2003) (the definitive, corrected version of which will soon be available in print) in which I dealt with these stages; I decided to refer to them here because otherwise it could seem I was illegitimately appropriating those teachings.

⁹¹ The subject-object dichotomy is always concomitant with the dichotomy of mind (Skt. *chitta*; Tib. sem [sems]) and mental events (Skt. *chaitasika*; Tib. semjung [sems byung]). Thought these two are indivisible and do *not* constitute a duality, the illusory division of the cognitive complex that results from the delusory valuation-absolutization of the threefold projection that will be discussed next in the regular text of the paragraph to which the reference mark for this note was affixed, which corresponds to the second of the senses of *avidya* in the classification favored by Longchen Rabjam, in interaction with the third of the senses of *avidya* in the classification favored by great yogi and the author in question, causes the ensuing experiencer (i.e. the mental subject) to feel that all cognitive movements are either a product of its own agency, or are imposed on it by an external force—which results from a particular kind of *jñeyavarana* or shedrib (*shes sgrib*) called '*khor gsum rnam par rtog pa gang de shes bya sgrib par 'dod* (most special thanks are due to the accomplished translator and scholar Elio Guarisco for the extensive research he so kindly did on my behalf concerning the usage of the term '*khor gsum*).

Though mind and mental factors or mental events, being indivisible, are not a duality, the basic delusion that gives rise to *samsara* may cause them to appear to be a duality.

Different Indian Buddhist schools list different numbers of “omnipresent” mental factors or events (i.e. those that are involved in all cognitions); however, all of them acknowledge feeling-tone (Skt. *vedana*; Tib. tsorwa [*tshor-ba*]); recognition (generally translated as “perception” or “conceptualization:” Skt. *samjñā*; Tib. dushe [*'du-shes*]); impulse (often mistranslated as “volition:” Skt. *chetana*; Tib. sempa [*sems-pa*], which propels attention toward a potential object that then is singled out, or that propels the mind into action, etc.); attention (Skt. *manasikara*; Tib. yila jepa [*yid-la byed-pa*]); and contact (Skt. *sparsha*; Tib. regpa [*reg-pa*]).

Let us take the example of impulse (Skt. *chetana*; Tib. sempa [*sems-pa*]). If I am a good Buddhist monk and I set out to meditate on a statue of Shakyamuni, when I direct my attention toward the statue I get the impression that I am in control of the impulse that sets it on the object: there seems to be a duality between mind and this mental factor or mental event, but the mind seems to be in control of it. Then a very attractive girl dressed in a mini-skirt and a see-through blouse comes into the temple as a tourist and enters the periphery of my attention. At this point impulse automatically tends to direct my attention away from the statue of Shakyamuni and toward the girl, but since I am a good monk I struggle to keep it on the object: at the point when attention was automatically shifting toward the girl I was experiencing a duality between mind and this mental factor or mental event, but the mental factor or event was not fully under the control of the mind; contrariwise, it seemed to be behaving rather autonomously, and it almost managed to direct the mind toward the object against my wishes. However, then I managed to take control of the mental factor or event and concentrate on the statue, and therefore, though there was still the appearance of a duality between mind and the mental factor or event, again I felt the mind was in control of the mental factor or event.

(The above proves that it is a mistake to render the Sanskrit term *chetana* and the Tibetan term sempa as “intention” or “volition,” for it shows that the mental subject does not always feel in control of the event or factor in question.)

⁹² Sartre gives the example of one who is looking through a keyhole and suddenly discovers that he is being watched by another in this dishonourous act, instantly feeling “touched in the heart by the Other’s look,” so that a link-of-being is established between the individual’s consciousness qua being-for-Self and the object perceived as him by the watcher, via the feeling-tone he described as feeling “touched in the heart.” Sartre explains this to be different, and far deeper, than merely identifying with an object. This is also what happens when an individual becomes the infinitude perceived as object: he or she does so by means of a link-of-being of this kind.

⁹³ When we try to pay attention to ngowo shi (*ngo bo'i gshis*), what is actually manifesting is the neutral condition of the base-of-all, and in order to take it as object there arises the conceptual structure called the threefold directional experiential structure. It is immediately *after* this that we *supposedly* recognize it in terms of concepts; however, at this stage the object of our experience is neither ngowo shi nor the neutral condition of the base-of-all, but the concept in terms of which we are interpreting it. In fact, if we admitted the most essential points of Dharmakirti’s epistemology, including the difference between ontological and epistemological objects, we would say that the object that is grasped here is an unreal mental image of ngowo shi, or—as explained in the preceding note—of the illusory experiences or *nyams* associated with the shining forth of ngowo shi. In more universal terms, we could simply say that

at this point an occurrence that is no longer present is understood in terms of a concept that could by no means correspond to it, and thus that this is a manifestation of the delusion called *avidya* or marigpa (*ma rig pa*).

Furthermore, the *experiences* associated with the shining forth of ngowo shi could remain for an instant after this ngowo shi has been beclouded by the occurrence of mongcha (*rmongs cha*), and so when the drive to take as object whatever is manifest could result in taking the *experiences* in question as object. In particular in mountain solitudes, when ngowo shi shines forth, the discursive thoughts that most of the time “are heard” in the mind (so to day) may be replaced by the “roar” called the “inner sound,” which in the state of spontaneous liberation would not allow discursive thoughts to establish themselves. However, if the *experience* of this roar remains for a moment after the occurrence of the neutral condition of the base-of-all, it could be taken as object, becoming the initial step in the arising and development of *samsara*.

Concerning all of this, cf. the terma *rDzogs-pa chen-po'i gnad gsum shan-'byed* revealed by Jigme Lingpa, which forms part of the *kLong-chen snying-gi thig-le*, and which was translated in Guenther, Herbert, 1977, pp. 142-147 (the relevant parts appear in pp. 143-144). As noted above, the explanation in terms of three stages was developed on the basis of the Longsäl Khandro Nyingthik terma (*gter-ma*) teachings of Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu (*kLong chen 'od gsal mkha' 'gro'i snying thig*; the specific teachings were those of the *lTa ba blo 'das chen po'i gnad byang*) and so on—all of which were compounded in terms of my own observation of experience.

It is also relevant to reiterate that the fact that the mental subject is experienced as being other with regard to the “totality” appearing as object implies that there is something the latter excludes, and therefore that it cannot be a totality. Moreover, even though the division into figure and ground has not yet taken place, this pseudototality may not be properly considered to be formless, insofar as it is a result of the delusory valuation-absolutization of the threefold projection, which gives rise to a most basic *form* of experience. Finally, formlessness may be deemed to be a form insofar as it is what it is in contrast with forms—and so also in this sense the Mahasanghikas might be right in that formlessness involves form. (The sensory totality may be compared to the totality of a photograph, and so if we consider that photographs involve a total configuration, then so does also the sensory totality—the difference between this totality and the photograph being that the former also involves *function*, for it is always changing.)

It is because in the condition of kunzhi (*kun gzhi*) memory does not work and because anyhow that condition is indescribable, that most of those who speak of the unconcealment of the absolute without having had the corresponding realization speak of it in terms of oneness—which is one of the main concepts in terms of which the pseudototalities of formlessness are understood.

⁹⁴ As noted in the regular text, normally this indeterminate condition lasts for a very brief instant only; however, if the individual manages to prolong the manifestation of the consciousness of an apparently total, indeterminate object of this type means of a meditational training, and then fixes it through the identification of the subject with the object, this may become the basis for developing the formless (*arupa*) absorptions that constitute the summit of *samsara*. Since this will involve a process of building up a given real, from the exclusive standpoint of what Freud called “secondary process,” it could be explained in terms of R. D. Laing’s spiral of pretences (cf. Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2003, and, for a far more thorough explanation, my upcoming book *Beyond Being, Beyond Mind: Dzogchen, Transpersonal Psychology and Western Philosophy*).

Conversely, if at this stage one lets go of one’s grasping and reGnizes the true nature of this condition (for example, by searching for the mind experiencing it), it may turn into mirror-like wisdom.

Concerning all of this, see the terma *rDzogs-pa chen-po'i gnad gsum shan-'byed* revealed by Jigme Lingpa, which forms part of the *kLong-chen snying-gi thig-le*, and which was translated in Guenther, Herbert, 1977, pp. 142-147 (the relevant parts appear in pp. 143-144).

⁹⁵ The segments of the continuum of sense data that can be singled out and taken as figure are those that correspond to a given name, and to the concept of the consciousness of mental phenomena associated with that name, and that therefore can be perceived in terms of that concept (which means that the existence of entities depends on the process of naming—i.e., on the process of associating a word to a delusorily valued-absolutized concept). In turn, the fact that they correspond to concepts and to the names associated with these concepts depends on the fact that, to a certain extent, they maintain a distinctive pattern within the ever-changing pattern that is the totality of sense-data (for example, the totality of form-and-color in our visual field is always changing, but within this change there are

segments that, to some extent, maintain a continuity of form-and-color; therefore, we can have names and concepts for them and establish them as entities). In the West, Plato explained this in terms of the concept of articulations, and illustrated it with the example of the hand, the forearm and the arm: they may be considered to be *entities*, and there can be corresponding concepts and names, insofar as there is a joint or articulation between each of them and the others.

(I am using the term “concept” in the Kantian sense; i.e., as a specific type of “thought-conceived meanings.” The latter include concepts, which according to Kant belonged to the Understanding; ideas and ideals, which according to him pertained to Reason; and judgments, which according to him lied in the Faculty of Judgment, which was somehow “between” the Understanding and Reason. However, Johann Gottfried Herder and others were right in rejecting the Kantian compartmentalization of the psyche and insisting that there is a single unitary psyche rather than a multiplicity of compartments.)

⁹⁶ With regard to this simile, note that Saraha wrote in the *King Dohas* (Guenther, Herbert V., 1973):

When [in winter] still water is stirred by the wind
it takes [as ice,] the shape and texture of a rock;
when the deluded are disturbed by interpretative thoughts
what is as yet unpatterned becomes very hard and solid.

In Guenther, Herbert V., 1993, p. 153, we find a slightly different translation:

When [in winter] still water by the wind is stirred
it [becomes ice,] taking the shape and texture of a rock;
when the deluded are disturbed by interpretative thoughts
that which is as yet unpatterned turns very hard and solid.

⁹⁷ This has been dealt with in the Longchen Ösel (Longsel) Khandro Nyingthik terma (*gter-ma*) teachings of Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu (*kLong-chen 'od-gsal mkha'-'gro'i snying-thig*), and specifically in those of the *lTa-ba blo-'das chen-po'i gnad-byang*. I give no references in the bibliography insofar as these teachings are not for public diffusion.

Normally this condition lasts for a very brief instant only; however, if the individual manages to prolong the manifestation of the consciousness of an object of this type by means of a meditational training, and then fixes it through the identification of the subject with the object, this may become the basis for developing the absorptions with form (*rupa*). Since this will involve a process of building up a given reality, from the exclusive standpoint of what Freud called “secondary process,” it could be partially, imprecisely explained in terms of R. D. Laing’s spiral of pretences.

Conversely, if at this stage one lets go of one’s grasping and reGnizes the true nature of this condition (for example, by searching for the mind experiencing it), it may turn into mirror-like wisdom.

⁹⁸ Cf. note 26 to this book.

⁹⁹ **The fields of presentation / modes of consciousness corresponding to the five senses (Skt. *pañchadwarajñana*; Tib. *gongai namshe [sgo lnga'i rnam shes]*, or *gongai nampar shepa [sgo lnga'i rnam par shes pa]*), and the field of presentation / mode of consciousness of mental images (Skt. *manovijñana*; Tib. *yikyī namshe [yid kyi rnam shes]*, or *yikyī nampar shepa [yid kyi rnam par shes pa]*), are always nonconceptual, for it is the the cluster of mental operations called “consciousness of defilements” that conceptualizes them. For example, in various of our five senses there manifest presentations that may be validly understood as being aspects of a certain entity (say, color-forms, sounds, smells, etc.); these presentations first manifest in a nonconceptual cognition that lasts an extremely small fraction of a second, and in which delusiveness (Skt. *klišhtamanas*; Tib. *nyön yi [nyon yid]*) does not function. Immediately, delusiveness manifests, giving rise to the sudden intuitive understanding that such-and-such entity is present to our senses. And the same happens with the presentation of mental images—whether they are mainly visual image, or discursive thoughts—the field of persentation / mode of consciousness of mental contents.**

Take as an example the presentation of, say, a discursive thought in the field of persentation / mode of consciousness of mental contents: the thought may be compared to presentations of the consciousness of sound insofar as it consists of a succession of sounds—the only difference being that these sounds are not actually heard by the consciousness of sound, but appear only to the consciousness that is aware of mental contents in a way that is very similar to the imagination by this consciousness of data of any of the five senses. Just as would happen with a succession of sounds heard by the consciousness of sound, in an initial instant there is no understanding of what

is manifesting, for the presentation occurs in a nonconceptual cognition in which delusiveness (Skt. *klišhtamanas*; Tib. *nyön yi* [*nyon yid*]) does not function. Immediately, delusiveness manifests, giving rise to the sudden intuitive understanding of the meaning of the thought: it is at that point that the thought has been conceptualized, and so it is at this point that we can speak of *vikalpa* or *namtok* (*rnam rtog*) properly speaking.

¹⁰⁰ This also happens when we are dealing with images of fantasy or imagination appearing as *dang* (*gdangs*) energy in the so-called sixth consciousness (the *manovijñāna* or *yikyī namshe*) insofar as we take these images to be reflections of a real world constituted by the images of *tse* (*rtsal*) energy appearing through the five senses.

¹⁰¹ Cf. the note preceding note before last.

¹⁰² The way this was explained in the sentence of the regular text to which the reference mark for this note was affixed corresponds to the lowest capacity or mode of spontaneous liberation. However, according to the individual's development of capacity, and to the latter's fluctuations in different moments, spontaneous liberation may take place in one or another of the three capacities or modes described in the Dzogchen teachings.

In the first mode or spontaneous liberation one looks at the thought that is already established as object—which, like all thoughts, is a manifestation of the *ngowo* aspect of the Base—in order to apprehend its true nature, and immediately the true condition of this aspect of the Base unveils, manifesting as the *dharmakaya*. This happens as the self-reCognition of nondual Awake self-awareness that the Dzogchen teachings call *rigpa* makes the latter's own face patent (*rangngo shepa* [*rang-ngo shes-pa*]), whereby the true nature of this self-awareness is unconcealed in the manifestation of *rigpa-qua-Path* or *rigpa-qua-Fruit*, so that, as we have seen, the *ngowo* of the Base is realized as the *dharmakaya*.

In the second mode of spontaneous liberation, there is an automatic movement of attention toward what seems to be the “source of thought,” so that the true condition of the arising thought is reCnized as the latter begins to arise, and hence there is spontaneous liberation upon arising: the movement of attention, attention itself, the subject of attention and the object of attention, instantly dissolve into the patency of the true condition of the *ngowo* aspect of the Base, which thereby manifests as the *dharmakaya*.

In the third and last mode of spontaneous liberation, thought liberates itself spontaneously without there being a need either for an intentional movement of attention toward the thought, or for an automatic reaction as the thought begins to arise, and so all arising thoughts are like drawings on water, which liberate themselves spontaneously as they arise: at no point is the true condition of the *ngowo* aspect of the Base concealed, and thus the continuity of the manifestation of *dharmakaya* is not interrupted. Jigme Lingpa explained this as the coincident manifestation of emptiness and active thoughts.

¹⁰³ In the case of practitioners who are familiar enough with the manifestation of the *dharmakaya* and the spontaneous liberation that is the trademark of Dzogchen, a high energetic-volume-determining-the-scope-of-awareness will catalyze the spontaneous liberation of thoughts, which in general will take place of itself (as the name “spontaneous liberation” indicates) each and every time he or she applies the instructions for the practice of *Tekchö* (*khregs-chod*). As stated in the preceding note, in higher modes or capacities of spontaneous liberation there will be no need to intentionally apply an instruction for thoughts to liberate themselves spontaneously.

¹⁰⁴ For an explanation of the concept of “metaphenomenology” see notes 49 and 50 to this book; for a more extensive and in-depth explanation of the concept, see my book *Beyond Being, Beyond Mind: Dzogchen, Transpersonal Psychology and Western Philosophy*.

¹⁰⁵ The Base or *zhi* (*gchi*), corresponding to primordial *bodhichitta*, has three functional possibilities, which are *samsara*, *nirvana*, and the base-of-all wherein neither *samsara* nor *nirvana* are active—all of which were explained above in the regular text of this section. The Base or primordial *bodhichitta* can manifest any of these functional possibilities without being conditioned by them (in particular, the manifestation of *samsara* conditions the experience of the individual, but not the Base as a whole, and *nirvana* neutralizes the conditioning of the individual's experience by the *bijas* or *vasanas* established by the dynamic of *samsara*).

Nirvana is said to be beyond mind because the term mind (Skt., *chitta*; Tib., *sem* [*sems*]) refers to the functioning that gives rise to *samsara*, based on the delusory valuation-absolutization of thought and

therefore involving the subject-object duality that results from the delusory valuation-absolutization of the supersubtle thought-structure called the “directional threefold thought structure,” and comprising the rest of the delusive phenomena that result from this delusory valuation-absolutization.

¹⁰⁶ The assertion according to which only in *samsara* is there experience, is ratified in Thinle Norbu Rinpoche, 1997, pp. 3-4:

“...it is not said in Buddhism that Buddha “experienced” Awakening. Awakening is beyond experience. Experience occurs between the duality of subject and object, and there is no existence of subject and object in Awakening. Experience comes from feeling, and feeling belongs to sentient beings, not to fully Awake Buddhas. Awakening is completely beyond either feeling or numbness.

“From the point of view of the causal vehicle (*hetuyana*), it can be said that bodhisattvas, sublime beings who are on the Path of Awakening and have not yet attained Buddhahood, still have experience due to traces of the residue of previous habit. Therefore, it could be said that when Buddha took birth many times as a bodhisattva before attaining Awakening, he had experience, including the experience of suffering caused by the passions, which he later taught about when he attained the omniscience of fully Awake Buddhahood. But this explanation of experience can only be made from the point of view of the causal vehicle, in which bodhisattvas are differentiated from Buddhas. According to the resultant vehicle (*phalayana*), bodhisattvas are fully Awake manifestations of Buddhas effortlessly emanating for the benefit of beings and so they also are beyond experience, indivisible from the Wisdom-mind of Buddhas.

“According to the Buddhist point of view, experience is always connected with dualistic mind. Dualistic mind depends on the ordinary inner elements of sentient beings and ordinary outer elements of the [apparently] substantial world, which are the basis of all that exists in duality. These ordinary elements are affected by inner root circumstances, such as the conditions of the [apparently] substantial world, which always rely on each other and always change. The experience of sentient beings is to continually react to the circle of manipulation between subject and object, inner and outer elements, and root (cause) and contributing circumstances, which all continuously change because they are occupied by the habit of duality. The object is unreliable because the subject is unreliable, like a mental patient who depends on a schizophrenic psychiatrist. Sometimes he may feel worse and sometimes better, but he cannot transcend his situation, because of endlessly circling between the subjective problems of the self and the objective problems of the other.”

¹⁰⁷ The Tibetan term *rölpa* (*rol-pa*) means “play,” and translates the Sanskrit *lila*, which the Tantras use to indicate the fact that all phenomena and all apparent movement and change are the play of the Base (in Dzogchen terms, the play of the energy of the Base), rather than being inherently separate entities moving independently by virtue of autonomous, separate, independent moving principles.

¹⁰⁸ In Part Two of *Buddhism and Dzogchen*, the three forms of manifestation of the energy or *thukje* (*thugs-rje*) aspect of the Base, which arise as the play or *rölpa* (*rol-pa*) of the energy of the Base, will be discussed in greater detail. However, given the doubts raised by one of the readers of Part One of that book, it may be useful at this point to provide a brief explanation of how these three forms of manifestation of energy develop, of how they become the basis of *samsara*, and of how they are the means for the transcendence of *samsara* in the consolidation of *nirvana*.

The first form of manifestation of energy is *dang* (*gdangs*), which is transparent, pure, clear and limpid, and therefore features no *forms* that may be perceived vividly, as we perceive the phenomena that manifest through our senses. Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu describes this energy as follows (Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1996b, p. 32):

“Dang is a type of energy that is characteristic of the primordial state, the state of Contemplation, the state of Samantabhadra. In this case we are not talking about an inner or an outer dimension, of subject and object, but about the condition as it is, an authentic condition like the dharmakaya. So the example used is that of a crystal ball that is pure, clear and limpid, in which there is nothing in particular: this is our true nature... This is *dang* energy, the condition of dharmakaya.”

However, as we read in the terma revealed by Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu titled *kLong chen 'od gsal mkha' 'gro'i snying thig las lta ba blo 'das chen po'i gnad byang bshigs*, in the process of genesis of *samsara*, “because of dualistic ignorance [and delusion], the natural *dang* of the Base, the innate and self-originated wisdom, is covered...” and it is this that gives rise to the eight *samsaric* consciousnesses. How does this happen?

After the manifestation of dang energy, the luminous forms of rölpa (*rol-pa*) energy manifest, but these do not appear to exist externally to the individual or to be in a dualistic relation to a mental subject. Though at this point dualism has not yet arisen, the manifestation of rölpa energy is the condition of possibility of the subsequent origination of tsel energy and of dualistic appearances in general. (However, the manifestation of rölpa energy is also the condition that later on, when the individual is in *samsara*, will make it possible for the dualism inherent in tsel energy to be neutralized through practices such as those of Thögel [*thod-rgal*] and the Yangthik [*yang-thig*].)

In fact, in the next stage the apparently concrete forms of tsel energy manifest, together with the illusion that these lie in a dimension or jing (*dbyings*) external to the individual—which is the basis for the subsequent manifestation of the *threefold directional apparitional structure*, and therefore for the origination of all dualistic appearances. It is at this point that, with regard to the apparently external dimension or jing (*dbyings*) produced by the manifestation of tsel energy, dang energy—which as we have seen is neither internal nor external, for it is not dualistic—appears to constitute an internal dimension or jing. Furthermore, when the phenomena of tsel energy are reflected by dang energy in the dimmer way in which *forms* manifest in this energy, they seem to lie in this internal dimension—just as occurs when the phenomena of the “physical” world are reflected in a crystal ball, and so seem to lie inside the ball.

Furthermore, the thoughts that in *samsara* are delusorily valued—coarse (which include those that Descartes called discursive), subtle or intuitive (which are “mute” comprehensions of essence), and super-subtle (such as the directional threefold thought structure)—are not manifestations of tsel energy or of rölpa energy, but of the colorless, clear and limpid dang energy, and as such are as transparent, pure, limpid and clear as this energy. Once tsel energy arises and subsequently the three types of concepts are delusorily valued, the delusory valuation of the directional threefold thought structure causes even phenomena of the dang energy such as thoughts to be perceived dualistically, as though they were objects to a mental subject lying at a distance from the latter—and rather than being realized to be dang manifestations of the primordial state, they veil the true condition of dang energy, being taken to be self-existent concepts that either correspond to the phenomena of tsel energy (and thus are taken to be true) or fail to correspond to them (and hence are taken to be false).

It is at this point that we need a practice in order to overcome the basic delusion at the root of *samsara*. In the *Upadeshavarga* or Menngagde (*man-ngag-sde*) series of Dzogchen teachings, the first level of practice is that of Tekchö or that of the Nyingthik, which consists in reGnizing thoughts as the *dharmakaya*—upon which they liberate themselves spontaneously and dang energy manifests as it always (was) in truth: as the pure, clear and limpid *dharmakaya*. This shows that such was always the true nature of the phenomena of dang energy, and puts an end to the illusion of dualism, and in particular to the illusion of there being two different dimensions, one inside and the other one outside—until the delusory valuation of thought manifests again, giving rise to dualism and to the illusion of there being two different dimensions.

When the above practice has consolidated, the practice of Thögel or that of the Yangthik must be undertaken, so that the dynamic of rölpa energy may catalyze the process of spontaneous liberation of delusion and in the long term put an end to the illusion of there being a self-existent physical world in a dimension external to the individual—which takes place upon the irreversible merging of the rölpa and tsel modes of manifestation of energy. It is only at this point that the illusion of dualism in general, and the illusion of there being two different dimensions in particular, arise no more.

¹⁰⁹ For one such account see Namkhai Norbu, 1986, revised edition 1999, p. 41. According to other accounts, Mañjushrimitra journeyed to the Wu-tai mountains and then, upon returning to India, visited the charnel ground of Shitavana, where he met Garab Dorje, there being no reference to a debate between them; in particular, see Dudjom Rinpoche, J. Y. D., English 1991, trans. Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein, vol. I., pp. 490-494. A briefer account that does not enter into such details is given in Tarthang Tulku, 1977a, pp. 187-188.

¹¹⁰ According to the account in Namkhai Norbu, 1986, revised edition 1999, p. 41, Mañjushrimitra was much older than his Master, as he was a highly respected *acharya* from Nalanda University at the time he went to debate against Garab Dorje, whereas the latter was still a child.

¹¹¹ 55 CE is perhaps the most widely admitted date for Garab Dorje’s birth; in particular, it is the one given in Tarthang Tulku, 1977a, p. 182.

¹¹² Jetari, one of the main theorists of the higher subschool of the Madhyamaka-Swatantrika-Yogachara and teacher of King Dharmapala, was a disciple of Mañjushrimitra, from whom he is said to have received the Mahayoga *sadhana* of Yamantaka (see Dudjom Rinpoche, J. Y. D., English 1991, trans. Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein, vol. I, p. 478). However, Jetari is later, not only than Mañjushrimitra, but than the three aforementioned founders of the Yogachara School, and thus this reference presents the same problems as the assertion according to which Mañjushrimitra was a Yogachara at the time of writing the *rDo la gser zhun*. However, there was a second Mañjushrimitra, called “Mañjushrimitra the Younger,” who was regarded as the tulku of the first Mañjushrimitra (cf. Dudjom Rinpoche, *op. cit.*, p. 498 [according to the translators, the Mañjushrimitra mentioned in p. 554 in connection with the Dzogchen transmission also was Mañjushrimitra the Younger]). Was it the second Mañjushrimitra who was the teacher of Jetari, and who, having taught Yogachara doctrines, was regarded as a Master of the corresponding school?

¹¹³ Though Ashvagosha’s *Buddhacharita* is an account of the life of Shakyamuni that does not go into the subtleties of the doctrine, and his *Shariputraprakarana* is a drama, there can be no doubt that in the *Mahayanashraddhotpada* or *Discourse on the Awakening of Faith in the Mahayana* there are elements that may be attributed to the influence of the sutras of the Third Promulgation and that, therefore, may show some similarities with the doctrines of the Yogachara School. In this regard, see Suzuki, Daisetz Teitaro, 1900. Ashvagosha was so knowledgeable and influential in furthering Buddhism in general and the Ampler vehicle in particular, that together with Deva, Nagarjuna and Kumaralata (note that not all of these belonged to the Mahayana), he was considered to be one of the “four suns who illuminate the world.”

¹¹⁴ According to the *Sutra of Hui-neng* (Wong Mou-Lam, translator, 1969, in Wong Mou-Lam and A. F. Price, translators, 1969, p. 108), Ashvagosha was the twelfth Patriarch of the Dhyana (Chinese, Ch’an; Japanese, Zen) School of the Sudden Mahayana. The great Master was originally a Brahmin, but at some point a monk called Parshwa, who reputedly belonged to the Vaibhashika School of the Hinayana, converted him to Buddhism; therefore, it is generally thought that it was later on that, at some point, Ashvagosha converted from the Hinayana to the Mahayana. However, according to the *Sutra of Hui-neng* (p. 107), Parshwa was the tenth Patriarch of the Dhyana School of sudden Mahayana (and, as such, rather than belonging to the Hinayana, he was Ashvagosha’s spiritual grandfather); since the same sutra tells us that Vasubandhu was the twenty-first Patriarch of the Dhyana School of the sudden Mahayana (p. 108), it is just natural to speculate that, in case there was an oral esoteric tradition that at some point Ashvagosha expressed exoterically in writing according to his own understanding, and that at a later point the founders of the Yogachara School also expressed exoterically in writing according to their own understanding, that tradition may have been transmitted within the Dhyana School of the sudden Mahayana (a school that claims to be the depository of the transmission beyond the scriptures that Shakyamuni conveyed beyond words to Mahakashyapa, and that henceforth continued to be passed down until our days). (Note that the interpretation laid out here does not take into account the views expressed by both Western scholars and Tibetan Bönpos according to which the sudden Mahayana represented by the Ch’an or Zen School did not originate from Shakyamuni, but arose as a Trojan horse intended to introduce a Dzogchen lineage of transmission into the Buddhist Path of Renunciation.)

Nevertheless, the fact cannot be ignored that, according to the *Sutra of Hui-neng*, Nagarjuna and Aryadeva, founders of the Madhyamaka School, also were, respectively, the fourteenth and fifteenth Patriarchs of the Dhyana School of Sudden Mahayana. Therefore, in case it was this school that maintained the transmission of the idealistic doctrines of the sutras of the Third Promulgation, then it must have transmitted the doctrines of the Madhyamaka School as well. And, in fact, as will be seen in the regular text of this book, the Path of the yogis and the Path of scholars have the same origin. (Furthermore, as will be shown later on, according to an important history of the *dharma*, both Nagarjuna and Aryadeva were links in the transmission of the Dzogchen Atiyoga; cf. *A Feast for the Erudite* or *Chöjung Khepa* [*Chos ’byung mKhas pa*], an authoritative history of the *dharma* written by Pawo Tsuglag Threngwa [*dPa-’bo gtsug-lag phreng-ba*]; *Mi-rigs dpe sKrun Khang*, Peking, 1986, p. 568; cited in Namkhai Norbu [*Chögyäl*], 1988, pp. 26-27. Therefore the Westerners and Tibetan Bönpos who adhere to the theories referred to in the above paragraph may claim as well that the Madhyamaka is a result of adapting pre-Buddhist Dzogchen views to the Mahayana.)

Furthermore, it is curious that both Ashvagosha and Mañjushrimitra have been said to be Yogacharas, and that the first Mañjushrimitra, just like Ashvagosha, lived in the first century CE.

To conclude, we should not forget that, as noted elsewhere in this book, Nagarjuna and Asanga have been referred to as “the two Promulgators,” and that this seems to suggest that the sutras of the Third Promulgation were revealed by Asanga, just as those of the Second Promulgation were revealed by Nagarjuna.

¹¹⁵ According to Tibetan tradition Nagarjuna lived for 600 years, beginning 400 years after Shakyamuni’s *parinirvana* or physical death; if we assume the founder of Buddhism lived from 560 BC through 480 BC, then this tradition may be read as asserting Nagarjuna lived from 80 BC to 520 CE. Other sources give as the date of Nagarjuna’s birth 482 BC, and still others 212 BC. For an account of the various views with regard to Nagarjuna’s dating, considering those of Western scholars as well, see Ruegg, David Seyfort, 1981, pp. 4-6.

Another problem we face when trying to date Nagarjuna’s lifetime is that, according to a series of accounts dealing with the transmission of the *Guhyasamajatantra* and with the tradition of the *Treasure of Dohas* by the Mahasiddha Sarahapada (for Karma Thinle’s account concerning the latter tradition cf. Guenther, Herbert, 1993, pp. 3-7), he was Saraha’s lineage-holder. In fact, according to a well-established tradition he received the *Guhyasamajatantra* from the latter, giving rise to the Arya tradition of interpretation of this Tantra, which makes up a whole cycle of teachings (cf. [1] Dudjom Rinpoche, J. Y. D., English 1991, Trans.: Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein, vol. I, p. 464; also cf. translators’ note 481, vol. 2, p. 36; [2] Wayman, Alex, 1973, ch. 2; [3] Wayman, Alex, 1980, pp. 91-4). Though Herbert V. Guenther (Guenther, Herbert, 1993, p. 9), among others, claims that this tradition is spurious, Tibetans take it quite seriously. If it were true that Saraha lived in the eighth century CE, and if the usual dating of the *Guhyasamajatantra* by Western scholars were also correct, a Nagarjuna who died in 520 CE (the latest of all dates attributed to Nagarjuna’s death, rejected by many in the West who cannot admit that Nagarjuna may have lived for 600 years) could not be the one who received the lineage of Saraha and transmitted the *Guhyasamaja Tantra*. Also the *Hevajratantra*, which was allegedly revealed by Nagarjuna (Dudjom Rinpoche, J. Y. D., English 1991, Trans.: Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein, vol. I, p. 442), is usually considered in the West as being later than the sixth century CE. All of this has led some Western scholars to posit the existence of two Nagarjunas, and attribute to a “second Nagarjuna” the Tantric works Tibetans ascribe to him.

¹¹⁶ As stated in a previous note, according to the traditions of the Old or Nyingmapa School of Tibetan Buddhism codified in *A Feast for the Erudite* (*Chos-’byung mKhas-pa*, an authoritative history of the *dharma* written by Pawo Tsuglag Threngwa [*dPa-’bo gtsug-lag phreng-ba*]: *Mi-rigs dpe sKrun Khang*, Peking, 1986, p. 568; cited in Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1988, pp. 26-27), Nagarjuna and Aryadeva also were lineage holders in the transmission of Dzogchen Atiyoga. Some have taken this as implying that Madhyamaka is a philosophical explanation, adapted to the gradual Mahayana, of the essential View of the Dzogchen Atiyoga.

As stated in the same note, in Wong Mou-Lam and A. F. Price, translators, 1969, p. 108, we can corroborate that, according to the *Sutra of Hui-neng*, Nagarjuna was the 14th Patriarch in the lineal succession of Ch’an or Zen Buddhism and Aryadeva (called Kanadeva in the Sutra) was the 15th Patriarch in the same lineal succession.

Finally, as explained in the preceding note, there are Tantric works of the Path of transformation attributed to Nagarjuna; in particular, he is reputed to have revealed the *Hevajratantra* (cf. Dudjom Rinpoche, J. Y. D., English 1991, Trans.: Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein, vol. I, p. 442), to have initiated the Arya tradition of interpretation of the *Guhyasamajatantra* (cf. [1] Dudjom Rinpoche, J. Y. D., English 1991, Trans.: Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein, vol. I, p. 464; also cf. translators’ note 481, vol. 2, p. 36; [2] Wayman, Alex, 1973, ch. 2; [3] Wayman, Alex, 1980, pp. 91-4), and to have been Sarahapada’s Tantric lineage-holder (cf., Guenther, Herbert V., 1972; Guenther, Herbert, 1993, pp. 3-7).

A Master of Atiyoga Dzogchen, the inner or higher Tantras, and the Sudden Mahayana, would have never posited a view of voidness as the presence of an absence, and would have never asserted the presence of an absence to be absolute truth. And, in fact, as we saw in the discussion of the views Tsongkhapa lay down in his Lamrim works, Nagarjuna wrote (Quoted in Dudjom Rinpoche, J. Y. D., English 1991, Trans.: Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein, vol. I, p. 317.):

How could things which do not exist
number two or three and the like?
Free from the dogmatic conceptual elaboration

of appearances and mind,
the true condition, transcending the intellect,
is not an object of meditation.

At any rate, if an individual of the highest capacity such as Nagarjuna practiced different vehicles including Dzogchen Atiyoga, he is much more likely to have attained ultimate realization through the practice of this vehicle than through that of lower ones.

¹¹⁷ This is the case, at least, with the *Collection of Madhyamika Reasoning* (Skt., *Yuktikaya*; Tib., [*dBu-ma*] *rigs-tshogs*), which consists of Nagarjuna's commentaries to the Intermediate (i.e., the Second) Promulgation. Possibly the same cannot be said with regard to Nagarjuna's *Collection of Eulogies* (Skt., *Stavakaya*; Tib., *bsTod-tshogs*), and in particular with regard to the *Eulogy to the Expanse of the True Condition* (Skt., *Dharmadhatustava*; Tib., *Chos-dbyings bstod-pa*), which contain concepts that seem to be associated either to the Third Promulgation and to some extent to the Tantras, and which make it quite clear that ultimate reality cannot be a mere voidness or have a negative character.

¹¹⁸ Note 101 by Adriano Clemente to Norbu, Namkhai, 1999/2001, p. 138, reads:

The *gandharvas* (*dri-za*) are immaterial sky beings that feed on smells, at times known as 'celestial musicians'.

¹¹⁹ To some extent, this may also apply to the higher Madhyamika-Swatantrika-Yogacharas, who are those who regard the aspects of entities to be false precisely because they consider that no inherent collections of characteristics are to be found anywhere.

Shortly after the passage quoted above in the regular text of this book, in Norbu, Thinle, 1977/1985, p. 41 (1st ed., p. 25), we find a "higher Madhyamaka" version of the list reproduced in the quote:

"'Collectively perceived', like the eight examples of *maya*: magic, a dream, a bubble, a rainbow, lightening, the moon reflected in water, a mirage, and the city of the celestial musicians (Skt., *gandharvas*; Tib., *dri-za*);

"'Capable of entering into function' because with the realization that all phenomena are like the eight examples of *maya*, *samsara* can be abandoned and *nirvana* can be attained;

"'Produced by root cause and conditions' because of the realization of the illusory nature of phenomena. The root cause of this realization is the two accumulations of merit and wisdom. The contributing circumstance, or necessary condition, is the teachings of the precious teacher; and

"'Nonexistent when examined' because, actually, there is not even illusion; all phenomena, existence, nonexistence, truth and untruth are total emptiness (in the original, 'great emptiness')."

Note that this concept of great emptiness corresponds to the Chinese *ta wu* and the Sanskrit *mahashunya*, and therefore exclude negative interpretations of Madhyamaka such as the one Tsongkhapa made in his three Lamrim works.

¹²⁰ With regard to the concept of "metaontological," see the last endnote to the Introduction.

¹²¹ Epistemology (in Latin languages, gnoseology) is the philosophical discipline concerned with human knowledge. I say absolute truth is metaepistemological because the unveiling of absolute truth does not involve knowledge, insofar as knowledge necessarily comprises the subject-object duality (as we saw in a previous note, French poet Paul Claudel [1943] remarked that, "*la connaissance est la co-naissance du sujet et de l'objet*:" knowledge is the co-emergent arising of the subject and the object), which is absent in the unveiling of absolute truth, and insofar as knowledge necessarily involves the recognition of lakshanas (collections of characteristics) in terms of (delusorily valued / absolutized) concepts, which does not occur in the unveiling of absolute truth.

¹²² The referent of the name "Tashimar" is the older she-cat in my house; according to the highest trends of Madhyamaka, in itself Tashimar is not relative truth, but the *dharmata*. However, *qua* Tashimar, referent of the word "Tashimar," she is relative truth.

¹²³ There was a group of schools collectively referred to as *Pudgalavada* or "adhering to a person or self" because they held that there was a person or self (*pudgala*) that was the bearer of *karma* and that was the basis of transmigration. Among these schools, the most important was the *Vatsiputriya*, founded by *Vatsiputra*, which held that the *pudgala* was neither the same as the collection of the aggregates, nor different from it. Insofar as they held that the *pudgala* was not different from the collection of aggregates they did not uphold the coarse belief in a self; insofar as they held that the *pudgala* was not the same as the collection of aggregates, they did not uphold the subtle belief in a self. However, they were berated by other Buddhist schools, which accused them of positing what amounted to a subsistent self (*atman*), thus contradicting Shakyamuni's doctrine of *anatman*.

¹²⁴ The results of physical research in the last decades “prove” the entities of our experience not to exist substantially, insofar as they show them not to be in themselves separate from the rest of the field of our experience—which would hold just the same regardless of whether the said entities and their subatomic structure as studied by physicists through their scientific instruments were part of a material world existing externally to and independently of our experience, or whether they existed exclusively in our own experience. (I put “prove” in inverted commas because of the limitations of scientific “truth” outlined in the two following notes.)

For example, according to Einstein’s field theory, entities are not in themselves separate from the rest of the universal energy field. In fact, the said theory pictures the universe as an undivided, continuous energy field, and notes that there is nothing different from the field, nor is there a gap in the field, that separates entities from the rest of the field. And if entities are not in themselves separate (our singling them out for perception being what causes them to appear as separate), they cannot be considered to be substances.

What happens if we resort to the Aristotelian concept of substance as “sum of matter and form”? In terms of this criterion, for something to be a substance it will have to conserve both its form and the matter constituting it (in fact, if an entity exchanges with its environment the matter that constitutes it, then it cannot be said not to depend on anything else than itself to be what it is, for it depends on matter that presently is not part of itself in order to continue to be itself in the future). However, according to this view of Aristotle, so long as an entity conserves the matter that constitutes it, we will have the same substance even if this matter changes its state and by so doing changes its form in a predictable way; for example, water loses its liquid form when it freezes and becomes ice, or when it evaporates and becomes vapor; however, so long as it conserves the matter that constitutes it, and so long as it does not become something different from water, ice or water vapor, it will have to be considered to be the same substance. (It must be kept in mind, however, that Aristotle developed different concepts of substance in different works.) According to Albert Einstein’s Field Theory, subatomic particles, which result from the electromagnetic polarization and extreme concentration of the field’s energy, do not conserve the matter/energy that makes them up, for they are made of the energy of the area of the field through which they seem to be passing (just as a wave in the ocean is made out of the water of the area of the ocean through which it seems to be passing); therefore, they cannot be considered to be substances in the Aristotelian sense just considered. And if the particles constituting the bigger entities formed by their combinations do not conserve their matter, the latter will not conserve their matter either.

Einstein’s theories presuppose the existence of an objective space through which the particles pass and an objective time that enables them to pass through the said space. However, according to David Bohm, John Wheeler and other physicists who supported their views with the experiments carried out by Alain Aspect in 1982 at the University of Paris-Sud and other observations, at the dimensional level of quantum phenomena and Planck’s constant there is no objective, continuous space or time that may allow an observer to assert that a particle is “passing.” It is well known that Bohm’s theories are far from being widely admitted by physicists; however, as stated in note after next, after all sciences are but ideologies.

The most basic “physical” entities posited so far are the quarks (said by Geoffrey Chew to be nonexistent yet “implied by the self-consistency of the whole”, nowadays physicists no longer cast doubts regarding their existence). These “particles” are not extended, and therefore they cannot be said to be the smallest of entities, because “small” implies extension, which they do not have: they are mathematical rather than physical points, and yet they have a mass. Since quarks are concentrations of the energy-field posited by Einstein, and since the said field is a continuum (i.e., it is not interrupted by gaps or by the presence of a substance different from the field), quarks are not in themselves separate from the rest of the field and therefore cannot be considered to be self-existent entities.

Like Leibniz’s conception of space as being made of [dimensional] relations between [nondimensional] monads, rejected by Kant as contradictory (Kant, Immanuel, this ed., 1969, Part I, Ch. 3, Appendix on the Amphibology of the Concepts of Reflection), the reality constituted by quarks and the relations between them seems to be half way between the phenomenal-dimensional and a non-dimensional *Ding-an-Sich* (which, according to Kant, would involve no separations or distinctions whatsoever—for all separations and distinctions necessarily depend on dimensionality). In fact, the distance and relations between quarks implies a dimensional-phenomenal reality, as also does the fact that they have a mass; however, the fact that they do not occupy any space whatsoever makes them nondimensional and

nonphenomenal. Therefore, we have an apparently contradictory mixture of the phenomenal-dimensional and the nonphenomenal and nondimensional.

There are many books using physics as a proof of a worldview that corresponds to that of the higher forms of Buddhism and other loosely analogous systems; particularly well known among these are Fritjof Capra's *The Tao of Physics*, Gary Zukav's *The Dancing Wu-Li Masters*, Lawrence LeShan's *The Medium, the Mystic and the Physicist*, Itzak Bentov's *Stalking the Wild Pendulum*, I. and M. Bentov's *A Cosmic Book: On the Mechanics of Creation*, Matthieu Ricard and Trinh Xuan Thuan's *The Quantum and the Lotus*, etc.

¹²⁵ This was one of Herbert Marcuse's renowned theses (Habermas, Jürgen, Spanish 1984). Several authors, including W. A. Anderson (Anderson, Walter Truett, 1986) have resorted to it in order to show that the systemic so-called "new paradigm" is not the suddenly discovered truth regarding the structure and function of reality, but simply another interpretation of it, not necessarily less biased, flawed and ideological than its predecessors. Though this is not the place to demonstrate extensively that the sciences are but ideologies, I decided to provide the examples that follow in order to show that this view is neither baseless nor far-fetched (a lengthier discussion of this subject can be found in Part One of Capriles, Elías, 1994).

It is well known that universal scientific laws cannot be derived from empiric observation, because, as David Hume showed long ago (Hume, David, this ed., 1963), no matter how many observations a scientist carries out, he or she cannot carry out an infinite number of observations—and there is no way to know whether or not what repeats itself in a very high number of cases will repeat itself in *all* possible cases.

Aware of the above, and of the fact that we do not derive our theories directly from experience, but that we produce theories deductively that later on we try to validate by testing them against experience, Karl Popper (Popper, Karl R., 1959, this ed., 1961) noted that when no experience contradicts their theories, scientists are entitled to admit them provisionally as *probable* truths. Therefore, to take a scientific theory to be a definitive universal law necessarily results from a bias and involves a misrepresentation of reality—which implies that it amounts to adopting an ideology.

Another problem is that the human psyche functions in such a way as to structure its perception in terms of ideologically conditioned expectations, and so scientists tend to find what their theories require them to observe. In fact, Gaston Bachelard (1938; this edition 1957) noted that prejudices consisting in opinions and previous "knowledge" condition the way a researcher interprets empirical observations, becoming *epistemological obstacles* that impair his or her capacity to admit that the results obtained may fail to correspond to the *a priori* theoretical construction that caused him or her to expect a specific outcome (cf. Velasco, Fabiola, 2003. Velasco cites Herman Hesse's *Siddhartha*: "It may easily happen that his eye only takes notice of what it is searching for, but since he does not find it, he does not allow anything else to enter his being, for he only thinks in what he is searching for: he has an aim and is obsessed with that goal. To search means to have an aim. To find, however, means to be free, not to need any aim whatsoever.").

In turn, Edgar Morin (Morin, Edgar, 1981), in order to demonstrate that the observational judgments of scientists are conditioned by their own ideology, and that this does not happen solely in the field of scientific experimentation, but in all walks of life, offered his readers the story of how once he saw a car overlooking a red traffic light and frontally hitting a small bike. When he stopped to offer his testimony, the bike's driver acknowledged it was himself who had overlooked the red light, and it was himself who had hit the car (which was corroborated by the marks on the side of the car's body): Morin's socialist, righteous ideology had conditioned his perception and caused him to see something very different from what had actually happened. In the case of a scientific experiment planned beforehand, not only may the scientist's perception be conditioned in a way similar to Morin's at the time of the accident, but the very way the experiment is designed and the criteria for the evaluation of results are determined by the researcher's expectations, which in turn are determined by his or her ideology. (Here I am referring to phenomena depending on ideologically-determined self-deceit rather than on the fully conscious attempt to deceive others, but there are many cases in which researchers have also done the latter—as, for example, when A. S. Eddington subjected the results of his pictures of an eclipse to "cosmetic surgery" in order to demonstrate Einstein's predictions...)

In Collins, Harry and Trevor Pinch, 1998, there are also good arguments and examples showing that there is circularity in the logic of science (in Sextus' sense of the term) and that scientists often see what they want to see.

Furthermore, Brillouin's theorem has shown that "information is not gratuitous:" any observation of a physical system increases the system's entropy in the lab, and therefore the "output" of a given experiment must be defined by the relation obtained and the concomitant increase of entropy. According to Brillouin, this output is always lower than the unit (1), which would represent exactness of information, and only in rare cases it approximates it—which means that the perfect experiment is impossible to achieve, for it would involve an infinite expenditure of human activity. (De Sousa Santos, Boaventura, 1987, 2d edition 1988.)

Thomas Kuhn (Kuhn, Thomas S., 1970), has shown that all scientific paradigms and theories so far, even while they have been in vogue, were contradicted in experimentation by a number of observations, which scientists consistently ignored until those observations became too abundant—at which point scientists had to develop a new paradigm or theory in order to account for the hitherto ignored observations. Then the new paradigm or theory is in turn contradicted by a certain number of observations, which at some point become too abundant. Therefore, the process has to repeat itself again and again—which shows that so far, at any moment, taking a scientific interpretation of reality as being the perfect map of reality has involved an ideological operation.

Gregory Bateson (Bateson, Gregory, 1979) tells us that divergent sequences are unpredictable, and convergent sequences could be universally predictable only if we had access to all the necessary information; since in general we do not have all the said information, it is impossible to prove a hypothesis except in the abstract realm of pure tautology.

However, even in the realm of the formal sciences it does not seem possible to prove a hypothesis, for Kurt Gödel's incompleteness theorem showed that any logical system must have at least one premise that cannot be proven or verified without the system contradicting itself, so that it is impossible to establish the logical consistency of any complex deductive system without supposing principles of reasoning the internal consistency of which is as open to questioning as is the system itself. (Gödel, Kurt, 1962; Gödel, Kurt, 2001).

In turn, Paul K. Feyerabend (Feyerabend, Paul K., 1970, Spanish 1974/1984; Feyerabend, Paul K., 1980, Spanish 1982; Feyerabend, Paul K., Spanish 1984; 1st reprint 1987) has consistently argued that there is no scientific rationality, that the whole of the epistemological rules that sciences impose on themselves are violated every now and then and must be so violated if the sciences are to continue progressing, and that the idea that theories must adapt themselves to the results of observation implies overlooking the essentially ideological character of observational judgments. He concludes that science is but an ideology among many others and that Western reason and science are but belief systems having no greater validity than alternative systems including magic and witchcraft, and he states that "success in science not only depends on rational argument, but also on a mixture of subterfuge, rhetoric and propaganda."

Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze (Deleuze, Gilles, 1977, Spanish 1980; Foucault, Michel, 1975, Spanish 1976; Foucault, Michel, Spanish, 1978) insisted that all sciences and all philosophical systems are *more than ideologies*: firstly philosophical systems, and then scientific disciplines and theories, have had the role of an "abstract machine or generalized axiomatic" that functions as the matrix that makes possible the very existence of power—their function being to provide power with the forms of knowledge necessary to sustain the models on the basis of which it will have to structure itself in each different period.

So it seems that the only acceptable scientific criterion for the validity of science is the one established by Alfred Julius Ayer (Ayer, Alfred Julius, 1976, Spanish 1981), which is that of *practice*. He tells us that we are authorized to have faith in our procedure insofar as it carries out the function it is destined to perform—that is, as long as it allows us to predict future experience and therefore to control our environment. However, this criterion shows the very opposite of what Ayer wanted to prove, as it demonstrates that the sciences have failed in carrying out the function they were intended to perform: while the avowed aim of their technological applications was the improvement of human life and the welfare of humankind, they have produced the ecological crisis that has led us to the brink of self-destruction. Furthermore, scientific disciplines have not allowed us to predict future experience, for

leading us to the brink of self-destruction was not what scientists predicted the technological application of the sciences would achieve.

¹²⁶ See note before last.

¹²⁷ Chandrakirti asserted the *dharmata* to be existent (Chandrakirti, *Madhyamakavatareshya* [*dBu ma la 'jug pa'i bshad pa / dBu ma la 'jug pa'i rang 'gre*]). In the edition prepared by De La Vallée Poussin [1970: *Madhyamakavarara par Chandrakirti*. Bibliotheca Buddhica IX, Osnabrück: Biblio Verlag], 305.19-306.12; Tsongkhapa cites it in the *Lamrim Chenmo* [Dharamsala edition, 416b.6-417^a.2; Wayman's translation, p. 256]. Cited in Napper, Elizabeth, 2003, pp. 128-9). However, his view will be refuted in the discussion of the differences between the Mahayamadhyamaka and Yogachara schools, where it will be explained to be merely an expedient assertion.

¹²⁸ I am using the terminology of semanticist Alfred Korzybski (1879-1950), who stressed the insurmountable abyss separating our conceptual interpretations from the reality they interpret by stating that "the map is not the territory." See Korzybski, Alfred, 2d. ed., 1941.

¹²⁹ As stated in a previous note, according to David Bohm's holonomic theory, at the dimensional level of Planck's constant the universe is an "implicate order" in which there is neither space nor time (which are indispensable for there to be separations, which in turn is the condition for there to be entities), and for us to perceive a spatiotemporal reality the explicate order has to be generated out of the implicate one by a process of spatiotemporalization. Bohm's theories are the result of his own interpretation of Alain Aspect's experiment in 1982 at the University of Paris-Sud, which followed the development of Bell's theorem and of the necessary technological gadgetry for a real experiment roughly corresponding to the EPR (Einstein-Podolski-Rosen) imaginary experiment to be carried out in the lab. Several authors have claimed that Bohm's theses do not necessarily follow from Aspect's experiment.

¹³⁰ Furthermore, it would be correct to say that a mouse is not a cart. However, the opposite of "not a cart" is "a cart," and it would be not at all correct to say that the mouse is a cart.

However, possibly both the assertion that the cart is a dog and the assertion that the mouse is a cart could be made (though only provisionally, insofar as no assertion fully corresponds to reality) from the standpoint of the fourth *dharmadhatu* of the *Avatamsakasutra* and the Hua-yen school, which is that of *shih-shih-wu-ai* or the non-obstruction and mutual interpenetration of all individual phenomena.

¹³¹ As may be shown by the title of the paper in which Vlastos made his argument, he raised the objection we are concerned with, not in respect to the arguments of the Madhyamikas, but regarding those by Zeno of Elea—and in particular his proof of Q in the first argument against plurality. According to Vlastos, this proof was based on the argument according to which all that is extended and thus has a size is divisible into parts, and what is divisible into parts is not in itself a unity. I decided to consider Vlastos' objections to Zeno's proof of Q insofar as it may be thought to apply to Nagarjuna and Chandrakirti's refutation of the existence of a cart and to other similar refutations.

In fact, even though the "proofs" conceived by Zeno of Elea are universally held to have been intended to substantiate a worldview contrary to that of the Madhyamikas (i.e., to show that only thought was real, and that physical reality did not at all exist), they may be used to substantiate the view of the Madhyamikas. The point is that the proof of Q in the first argument against plurality (of entities-unities) and some of the other "proofs" produced by Zeno of Elea to show the supposed inexistence of the physical world, of plurality, and so on (which is supposed to be what Zeno was trying to demonstrate), may as well be used to show that our understanding is one-sided and yet is taken to be the single, total and absolute truth regarding that which it understands—and therefore to show that the said understanding is deluded.

¹³² The Law of the Excluded Third, Law of the Excluded Middle or Principle of Non-contradiction is essential for Madhyamika refutations to work. Hence the view set forth by T. R. V. Murti, according to which the Madhyamikas flagrantly violate this Law or principle at every step it utterly wrong: it is precisely insofar as they respect it, that their refutations can work (cf. Murti, T. V. R., 1955, this ed. 1970, p. 146).

However, this does not mean that logic also binds the fully Awake Ones: it does not insofar as Buddhas are free from the delusory valuation of thought, which is what causes contradictions to be perceived as such and to have the effects contradiction has on sentient beings. For example, what Gregory Bateson called "double bind" (and which he considered to be at the root of the type of disorders psychiatrists refer to as "schizophrenia") consists in a set of mutually contradictory injunctions (which may be either both verbal, or one verbal and the other paraverbal), so that in order to obey one of them one has to disobey

another and therefore be punished. Bateson also observed that what he called “double binds” were applied in Ch’an or Zen Buddhism in order to transform the contradiction inherent in delusion into conflict, and create the conditions in which delusion may liberate itself spontaneously. At any rate, a child with the propensities for it, upon being subject to double-binds may develop what psychiatrists refer to as “schizophrenia;” an individual who does not have such propensities will most likely experience conflict but will not develop the disorder; and a fully Awake One will experience no contradiction and thus will experience no stress or contradiction whatsoever.

Likewise, it does not mean that logic is noncontradictory. In fact, some have noted that Bertrand Russell and Alfred North Whitehead developed the Theory of Logical Types they expounded in Whitehead, Alfred North and Bertrand Russell, 1910-1913, 2nd ed. 1927, this reprint 1968, in order to save Aristotelian logic from the contradictions that some had perceived in it. It would have been to this aim that they asserted that contradictions between terms are only «real» when both terms belong to the same logical type.

However, Gregory Bateson (Bateson, Gregory, 1972) tells us that in order to apply the Theory of Logical Types one would have to break its rules. He reminds us that the theory of logical types forbids us, when solving a given problem, to consider entities or classes belonging to a logical type other than the one to which the entities or classes with which we are concerned belong (so that entities or classes belonging to other classes cannot be considered either as x or as non-x). Now, in order to know that we can neither include nor exclude them from our consideration, we must have already excluded them, violating the principles of the theory. Besides, the impossibility to consider entities as x or as non-x already violated the principle of the excluded third or of non-contradiction.

Furthermore, Kurt Gödel’s theorem of incompleteness, which he developed precisely with regard to Principia Mathematica and similar abstract logical systems, demonstrated mathematically and with the highest rigurocity that all logical systems must have at least one premise that cannot be demonstrated or verified without producing a contradiction. He writes (Gödel, Kurt, 1962):

“It is impossible to establish the logical congruence of any complex deductive system, unless we suppose principles of reasoning the inner consistence of which it as open to questioning as that of the system itself.”

If the Principle of Non-contradiction, Law of the Excluded Middle or Law of the Excluded Third ultimately implies absurd consequences, then it is refuted by *prasanga* or *reductio ad absurdum*. If contradiction does not apply to the meta-experience of fully Awake Ones, then this Principle or Law is an element of samsaric delusion rather than being Truth. However, if we want the refutations of Madhyamaka to work, and in general we are to have a theoretical system for leading beings to Awakening, this Principle or Law will have to be respected. It is precisely on the basis of its effectiveness in samsaric experience that trying to resolve a *kung-an* or *koan* and other related Ch’an or Zen methods can lead to *satori*.

¹³³ See the second paragraph in the note before last. The statement to which the reference mark for this note was affixed may cause people to think that the philosophy of Parmenides and the Eleatians was the same as that of the Madhyamikas. However, the truth is that Eleatian philosophy seems to have been the very opposite of Madhyamaka, and (as I intend to show in Capriles, Elías, work in progress) to have been to some extent akin to the various philosophies derived from Orphism—such as those of the Pythagoreans, Plato and the pseudo-monistic Neo-Platonics, which shared many of the traits of Orphism’s evil, antisomatic (hostile toward the body), life-denying and dualistic ideology. While Buddhism has the potential to uproot the delusion at the root of the ecological crisis that threatens to destroy the corporeal, material basis of all life, the ideologies associated with Orphism or derived from it, just like those associated with the rest of dualistic, antisomatic religions (with some of which later on the Orphic ideology compounded), and like that of modern scientism (which the Pythagoreans prefigured), are at the very root of that crisis. (THE FOLLOWING PARAGRAPHS ARE FROM BB BM BH)

The essence of the nontheistic spirituality of the primordial age was Communion in the unconcealment of the single true nature of all essents, which dissolves the dualistic illusion of self and other that is the condition of possibility of relationships in general, and of vertical, oppressive, exploitative, wicked relationships in particular. Therefore, so long as the spirituality in question prevailed, dischord, war, oppression, exploitation and ecological devastation could not manifest. Later on, as human delusion increased and the capacity for Communion diminished, the pan-Eurasian tradition represented in Greece by the Dionysian mysteries, and in other places by Shivaism, Zurvanism, Bön, Taoism and so on,

contained the development of the most wicked consequences of delusion. Then, when the peoples of particular regions foresaked the spirituality of Communion for the worship of gods of war and conquest and set to take over the rest of the world, among the countries that had as their religion one or another of the systems representating the pan-Eurasian tradition in question, those in which the local peoples were most successful in assimilating the conquerors, so that the previous local religion was allowed to prevail, religion restrained the worst aspects of the conquerors. In our time, I deem some Tibetan Buddhist traditions—and in particular the Dzogchen system—to be the most wholesome and healthy expressions of that pan-Eurasian tradition, insofar they conserve in their integrity the ever more powerful means that, as the illusion of selfhood gained in power, arose and developed in order to continue granting access to Communion—and not only to grant access to Communion, but to undo the illusion in question so that the final goal of uninterrupted Communion could be attained. As will be shown in Part III of this book, I also deem the system and traditions in question to have to play the pivotal function in the approaching restoration of primordial harmony, which has been made possible and indispensable by the completion of the *reductio ad absurdum* of delusion achieved by ecological crisis.

When a people lives in terms of vertical oppressive structures, these mould the psyche of its members, manifesting in the whole of their relationships: between itself and other peoples, humans and the rest of the ecosphere, mind and body, males and females (in which the *overtly* oppressed gender is the female, which insofar as its reproductive functions are more evident, is identified with nature, and whose more passive social role makes it the natural *visible* victim), parents and children, lords and slaves, rulers and ruled, those who got rich and those who were reduced to poverty, and so on. Since, in order to justify their wicked behavior, those who live in terms of such structures have to view as evil and worthless all that they injure, oppress and exploit—other peoples, nature, the body, females, children, slaves, the ruled, the poor, and so on—they develop anti-somatic (hostile toward the body), life-denying and dualistic religious systems which view the body and nature as evil, and which posit a soul separate from the human body that has to control and oppress the latter and the rest of nature. Steve Taylor (2005), among others (e.g., van der Dennen, 1995), has gathered and made available ample evidence suggesting that (with the exception of some occurrences beginning in 12,000 BCE in isolated spots in the Nile valley) violence was unknown before 4,000 BCE, when, as James DeMeo (1998) has asserted, together with the rest of the wayward, wicked characteristics under consideration, it became ubiquitous among the peoples he referred to as Saharasiens, which progressively came to conquer virtually the whole world, contaminating with their characteristics the peoples they dominated. (However, I reject DeMeo's ecological-geographical determinism, and see the development of the wayward, wicked characteristics being discussed as part of a process of development of ego-delusion determined by what in Part III of this book I call the *lila telos* of evolution, manifested in the structure and function of the human brain, to which a dynamic is inherent that gradually increases wayward, pain-begetting patterns. And yet undoubtedly, because of contributory circumstances, among which *may well lie* the ones adduced by DeMeo, wayward characteristics develop first in some particular peoples, which precisely due to this development set to conquer other peoples, which then become contaminated with the characteristics in question.) At any rate, the dualistic, anti-somatic, oppressive religious systems these peoples produced, justified and furthered the wicked, destructive courses of behavior under consideration—including those that gave rise to the ecological crisis that has put in jeopardy the survival of our species.

As Riane Eisler (1987) has noted, among the peoples that later on DeMeo called Saharasiens and that developed the above considered characteristics about 4,000 BCE, becoming marauders and then setting to conquer other peoples, the Kurgans (later called Indo-Europeans because of the territories they conquered) and the Semites are worthy of special consideration. In fact, through colonialism the Indo-Europeans gave their language to and imposed their culture on the whole of Europe (in the case of language, except for the Vasque country and the Fino-Ugryan speaking countries), America, Oceania, India and Persia, and to a great extent to parts of Africa; also through colonialism, they deeply affected the cultures of the whole of Africa and a great deal of Asia; and, more recently, through cultural imperialism and neo-colonialism, they have imposed their culture and economic power on virtually the whole of the world. The Semites, in their turn, beginning in **4,000 BCE** conquered a great deal of the Middle East; then, through the Christian religion (which incorporated the “Old Testament” and the anti-somatic structures and ideology of Hebrew religion) they imposed their mental structures and ideology on the Indo-Europeans and a sizeable proportion of the peoples that the latter dominated; finally,

through Islam, they imposed their mental structures and culture, and gave their religion to, a great deal of Africa, most of what originally they had originally failed to conquer of the Middle East, Pakistan, Bangla Desh, Indonesia, the Autonomous Republic of **Zinkiang** in China, a seizable proportion of the population of India and other Asian countries, and even parts of South-Eastern Europe.

In the holy book of Hebrews, the *Book of Genesis* tells believers, “**Fructify and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over all living things that more on earth.**” Although Jesus of Nazareth preached a religion of Communion, as made evident by the words of Michelet quoted in a note to the preceding chapter, the first Christians cursed Nature to the degree of seeing in a flower the incarnation of evil or of the demon, and of hoping that Nature would disappear, that life would come to an end, that the end of the world would be near... In its turn, Islam was a characteristically Semite religion involving few elements of Communion, which went so far as to incorporate the idea of **Jihad** (Holy War)—which in general was understood literally and used as a justification for conquest. (Of course, some of the great saints of Christianity—such as Saint Francis of Assis—understood correctly Jesus’ teachings, becoming embodiements of Communion with nature, and some of the monacal orders founded by such saints also followed the spirit of Jesus’ teachings and showed ecological awareness. Likewise, in Chiism the Ismaelian tradition was a religion of Communion, and in Sunnism the same applied to Sufism; however, though these traditions for some time managed to create a climate of tolerance and openness, they have lost their moderating power with regard to mainstream Islam.)

Among the Indo-Europeans, some examples of dualistic oppressive religious ideologies were the Orphic mysteries in Greece, to some extent **the Zoroastran religion that in Persia replaced Zurvanism** (which, however, placed extreme care in averting contamination of the ecosphere), and various Hindu systems in India. Though Sutric Buddhism had a repressive attitude toward the body and its impulses, it broke away with the caste system and admitted women to the religious life, and was effective in giving access to spiritual liberation (so that it may be regarded as a partial resurgence of the ancient pan-Eurasian Paths of Awakening, partly conditioned by Indo-European anti-somatism). The Jaina system also rejected the caste system and admitted women to the religious life, but despite its insistence on preserving all life forms was essentially life-denying, for it viewed as the paroxysm of virtue starvation with the intention of preserving the life of other creatures, and had a **spiteful, repressive attitude towards the body**—and, furthermore, given its views and methods, I find it difficult to believe it may have been effective as a means of spiritual liberation. (The Manichean religion, **according to which the final triumph of goodness lied in the destruction of the world**, was mainly Indo-European, but absorbed Semite elements through Christianity—and the same applied to other dualistic Gnostic systems.)

Orphism upheld an anti-somatic, life-denying, dualistic ideology according to which the body was evil and the soul was good, the body was the prison or the tomb of the soul, and the soul had to be purified from its contamination by the body, allowing it to free itself from the prison / rise from the tomb represented by the latter. This was supposed to be achieved by the mysteries (such as those held at Eleusis), which should purify the soul and endow it with a mystic “seal” that would be recognizable after death, so that it would be allowed to dwell with the gods rather than suffer the fate of the uninitiated and be plunged into the mud (Plato, *Phaedo* 69E), doomed to an eternity of filling sieves with water by means of other sieves (Plato, *Gorgias* 493B). The Pythagoreans followed the Orphics with regarding the soul as good and the body as evil, in categorizing the latter as the tomb of the former, and in teaching means for purifying the soul from its contamination by the body and allowing it to rise from the tomb represented by the latter. However, they replaced the mystic initiation for the practice of mathematics, music and so on as the basic means to purify and redeem the soul: mathematics was considered to be the basis of harmony (for musical tones depend on the mathematical measures of strings and so on, and upon being combined, they produce chords) and were held to have the power to free the individual from the influence of the corporeal (probably insofar as the mathematical is incorporeal—as in the case of a point or a line—whereas the physical is corporeal), and thus restore the soul to the harmony lost as a result of its confinement to the evil body. Most significant, it were the Pythagoreans that initially conceived the scientism that two millennia after their time materialized as the modern project that unleashed the ecological crisis that has put in jeopardy the survival of life on planet Earth.

Despite the mythological links between Orpheus and Dionysus, the Orphic and Dionysian traditions held contrary, struggling worldviews. In fact, Orpheus seemed to renegade of the dark Dionysus in favor of

the clear god, ‘Apollo and sun in the same person’, whom he adored (cf., e.g., Kerényi, Karl, 1994, Spanish 1998, pp. 165-166). Furthermore, there is an Orphic myth according to which it was the Thracian bacchantes known as *bassarai* who, in one of their Dionysian orgies, tore Orpheus into pieces as he (because of his dislike of the dark Dionysus, and his anti-somatic and female-despising ideology?) refused to join their ritual and grant them his favors. At any rate, the philosophies derived from Orphism were in diametral opposition to those developed by the thinkers who expressed in philosophical terms the views of the genuine Dionysian tradition, or who received influences from it—among whom, as seen in the preceding note, I rank Heraclitus, the main Skeptic Schools, some of the Sophists and the Cynics (and, though only in what regards their philosophy of history and their socio-political egalitarianism, the Stoics, who polemized so much with the Skeptics). In fact, fragments DK 40, DK 129 and DK 81 of Heraclitus’ book show the extent to which the Ephesian berated the dogmatic system of Pythagoras (whom he called “chief captain of cheaters” and whose learning he called “deceitful erudition and evil art”). It is well known that the Skeptic philosopher Sextus Empiricus also directed his book against the Pythagoreans—which may be inferred even from its title, *Adversus mathematicos*.

Since the Pythagoreans disparaged the body, basis of the human reality, to which humans are confined so long as they are alive, their ideology condemned human beings to insurmountable conflict, while favoring the development of what Gregory Bateson (1968, 1972) called *conscious purpose against nature*. Furthermore, the Pythagoreans, like most of the dualistic, anti-somatic, oppressive religious systems considered above, associated the female to evil and the male to goodness—and produced a long list of contraries in which the curve, the circle, the limitless and movement were associated to evil, whereas the straight line, the square, the limited and stillness were associated to goodness. As in the case of analogous spiritual systems, association with evil of the female, which is one of the two basic aspects of life (and which is also the *anima* aspect of men as well as one of the latter’s somatic energies) was a recipe for unsurmountable conflict. Like the rest of the traditions that despised the corporeal material universe, the Pythagoreans disparaged and opposed the physiological energies that constitute the very vehicle of realization. By viewing the corporeal, apparently material world as evil, they disparaged the *wisdom* that corporeal reality is (as shown in Chapter I of this book, in the Dzogchen teachings, the said reality is the tsel [*rtsal*] mode of manifestation of the energy of thukje [*thugs rje*] aspect of the Base, which the teachings in question refer to as a *wisdom*). Their negative view of movement (in which a similitude with the Samkhya *darshana* of Kapila and the related Yoga *darshana* of Patañjali may be observed) was also a source of unsurmountable conflict, for movement is inherent in being alive. Furthermore, Pythagorean rejection of the limitless (Greek, *ápeiron*; Skt., *aditi*) amounted to rejection of the single true condition of all essents that was to be realized in the pan-Eurasian traditions of which the Dionysian mysteries were the Greek expression. Since higher forms of Buddhism use the circle, which has no corners (which represent limits, which in their turn represent concepts, for insofar as these always exclude something they establish limits), to represent the absence of limitations of the *dharmakaya*, their rejection of the circle is the same as their rejection of the limitless. To conclude, as the Manichean ideology makes it evident, to view the corporeal, material reality as evil, ultimately may even be thought to justify the destruction of the world—and, in fact, as noted above, the Pythagorean sorcerer’s apprentices were among the earliest artificers of the project of scientific and technological development that resulted in the technological Golem that, as shown in Capriles, Elías, 1994 and in Part III this book as well, has grown beyond viability in the current ecological crisis. (To conclude, it must be noted that the Pythagorean dualism was moral—they deemed the soul to be good and the body to be evil—but not ontological, for they are supposed to have deemed the soul to be material.)

According to Diogenes Laërtius (*Lives*, IX, 21), Parmenides was a disciple of Pythagorean philosopher Ameinias. In his turn, though present day scholarship has disqualified this allegation, Plato (*Sophist*, 242 C-D) claimed that Parmenides was a disciple of Xenophon—who in his fr. 7 narrated an episode of the life of Pythagoras and who, together with the latter, was berated in Heraclitus’ fr. DK 40. In his turn, John Burnet (1892, this ed. 1964) referred to the cosmogony of Parmenides as “a sketch of Pythagorean cosmology.” Emile Bréhier (1931/1938, Spanish 1988, vol. I, p. 68) noted that the cosmogony of Parmenides was different from that of the Ionians insofar as it incorporated theogonic myths such as those described by Hesiod (also berated by Heraclitus in fr. DK 40) and those upheld by the Orphics; insofar as it regarded Love as the first god (Plato, *Symposium* 195C); and especially insofar

as, rather than viewing the *arche* or Principle to be a single primordial constituent of reality, it asserts it to be a pair of opposites (day and night, or light and darkness). Bréhier concluded that all this referred to Hesiodic fantasy rather than Ionic thought—and, more significantly, he stressed the fact that taking a pair of opposites as the basic principle is characteristic of Pythagorean dualism. Moreover, despite Parmenides’ assimilation of the Ionian structure of the heavens, the latter are to him (as in some Platonic myths) the place of transit of the souls, where necessity (*Ananké*) lied, distributing their portions (Aecius, *Synagoge ton areschonton [Aetii Placita]*, II, 7, 1). Even if there had been no direct Pythagorean influence on Parmenides, it is a fact that the latter denied any truth to the corporeal, physical world that the Pythagoreans deemed despicable; he valued thought, which he deemed to be the only reality (and which is the source of limits, valued by the Pythagoreans), and he insisted in the unreality of movement (disparaged by the Pythagoreans)—hence the objects of the refutations developed by his disciple Zeno of Elea. By denying any existence to what common sense regards as the physical world and asserting thought to be the only truth, Parmenides turned the very root of human deceit, which is thought (as we have seen, when delusorily valued-absolutized), into the only true reality, developing a theory that contradicted his own experience and practice, insofar as, like the rest of human beings, he surely experienced material phenomena as real, and surely avoided venomous snakes, speeding carts and so on. The denial of any degree of truth to corporeal reality may be seen as a more sophisticated instance of the anti-somatism that characterized both Orphics and Pythagoreans, and that, as we have seen, leads directly to the ecological Armageddon. The harsh words Parmenides directed toward those to whom “being and nonbeing seem to be the same and not the same” (fr. 6; verses 7-9) show his antagonism to the sayings of Heraclitus and other nondualists (and as such are remindful of Ko-hung’s attacks on Chuang-tzu for “claiming that life and death are the same” [Creel, Herrlee G., 1970; Watts, Alan, 1975, written in 1973, with the collaboration of Ai Chung-Liang Huang]). And, in fact, a self-appointed monism that asserts the existence and unity of thought and the nonexistence of a physical world (as a reality different from it), is a subtle dualism insofar as it refers to the physical world as one would refer to something existing and absolutely other with regard to thought (which, as we have seen, is how in their everyday life the Eleatians experienced it and dealt with it), in order to deny its existence intellectually and then assert a reality different from it as the only truth.

(It could be thought that the Eleatic ideology may have been akin to the Mayavada philosophy developed by the Hindu author Gaudapada, inspired by Yogachara Buddhist philosophy. However, Parmenides does not assert the only truth to be *jñāna* or gnosis, which by definition cannot be expressed by thought (even though it may be said to be the basic “constituent” of thought), but affirms that the only truth is *thought*, identifies thought with being, insists that *the impossibility that something be thought proves its nonexistence*, and [in fr. 8, 34-36] asserts that, “it is the same to think and to think that [the content of thought] *is*, because without being, in what is expressed you could not find thought.” The claim that *the impossibility that something be thought proves its nonexistence* implies the claim that the possibility that something be thought, together with the fact that it is actually thought, proves its existence—which, insofar as the contents of thought are manifold, implies the existence of multiplicity. How can someone who posits a monism in which the only true reality is thought = being, make an assertion that clearly implies the existence of multiplicity? The only explanation I can think of is that, since according to him the only true reality was thought = being, and the multiplicity of the contents of thought were manifestations of thought, these contents shared the being that was one with thought. However, still his system would clearly breach the principle of noncontradiction, of the excluded middle, or of the excluded third, for he asserted the sole existence (in the ordinary sense of the term) of the single principle that in his system thought = being is, and at the same time asserted the existence (in the ordinary sense of the term) of the manifold contents of thought. We might try to solve the contradiction by concluding that in his view the single being = thought was the absolute reality, the manifold contents of thought were some kind of relative reality, and the physical world was simply nonexistent. However, in the extant fragments of the book there is no mention of an absolute reality and a relative reality, not are there indications in them that he may have been positing such a view; therefore, I acknowledge my powerlessness for arriving at a clear, noncontradictory conclusion with regard to the true import of his system.)

Plato’s relation with Orphism is evident in *Gorgias* 493B, which refers to “one of the wise, who holds the body to be a tomb,” and states that in Hades the souls of the uninitiated are absolutely miserable, as they are doomed to an eternity of filling sieves with water by means of other sieves. As we have seen, in

Phaedo 69E he also referred to the torments the uninitiated face after death. In *Republic* 363D he claimed that Musaeus and Eumolpus increase the rewards of the righteous in the other world and that the initiated punish the uninitiated by means of the punishments considered above. In *Cratylus* 402B he directly attributes to the Orphic poets the doctrine that the body is the soul's tomb. In *Meno* 81A he praises his predecessors in asserting the immortality of the soul. However, Plato was worse than both the Eleatians and the Pythagoreans, for he synthesized the positions of both, developing the first openly proclaimed ontological dualism of ancient Greece (for the first time there were, on the one hand, absolutely nonmaterial, immortal ontological entities such as the *eidos* [and apparently also the demiurge and the souls] and, on the other hand, matter, which was eternal, but which was regarded as nonbeing), and placing truth in a nonphysical, eternal reality of his own invention: the world of *eidos*. This reality replaced the world of *thought* posited by Parmenides as the true reality; however, *seemingly* unlike the latter, the *eidos* existed outside the soul. In turn, nonbeing was no longer the physical world, as in Parmenides, but unformed matter: formed matter, constituting the physical world, was half-false (as it contained matter, which was untruth itself) and half-true (as it contained form [*eidos*], which was truth itself). The immortal souls Plato posited came from the Pythagoreans, and he also incorporated the Pythagorean theory that the soul was corrupted by the body; however, he modified this theory, making perception through the senses the source of contamination, as the ensuing knowledge replaced the true knowledge (*noein*) of *eidos* that the souls of the would-be philosophers had had before birth, for the half-true, half-false knowledge (opinion or *doxa*) of the half-true, half-false physical reality—which involved contamination by the corruptible and error. As we have seen, just like Parmenides' physical world, matter was nonbeing and falsehood (absence of truth), but it also was, like in the Pythagoreans, evil (absence of good) and ugliness (absence of beauty). These are some of the main elements in Plato's synthesis of Eleatic and Pythagorean thought; a simplified explanation of the reasons why Plato had to proceed this way in order to synthesize the ideas of the two philosophical traditions that he admired most, and of the way in which this synthesis was achieved, was provided in Capriles, Elías, 2000b; a lengthier and more complete discussion of the subject will appear in Capriles, Elías, work in progress 3. To conclude with Plato, it must be noted that, as shown in Koyré, Alexandre, 1973, Spanish 1977, 3d ed. 1980, the scientists who developed the vision and project that resulted in the creation of the technological Golem (including Galileo, reputed to have circumscribed science to what can be quantified [Capra, Fritjof, 1988, p. 133, conversation with R. D. Laing; Capra, Fritjof, 1996, p. 39]) replaced Aristotelianism with Platonism.

A more toned down ideology of the same kind is found in Plotinus, who adopted Plato's theory that matter was in itself something formless and indeterminate, and asserted that it was like the term in which the radiance or resplendence of the one, and therefore of the good, became exhausted. In this sense, it could be said that he deemed matter to represent evil (absence of good). And, since beauty was to him the radiance or resplendence of the good or of the one, which became exhausted in matter, the latter could be regarded as ugliness (absence of beauty). Since this implied that matter was different from the one, from good and from beauty, Plotinus' pseudo-monism was but a cover for a subtle ontological dualism and a coarse moral and aesthetical dualism having the defects of the various Orphic-inspired systems referred to above. For a lengthier critique of Plotinus' system, see Capriles, Elías, work in progress 3.

(SEE WHICH CONCEPTS OF THE ONES BELOW ARE NOT ABOVE AND SYNTHESIZE THE ONE WITH THE OTHER)

The theory according to which Heraclitus was a Dionysian high priest contradicts the widespread view that fragments DK 15 and DK 68 of Heraclitus' book meant he was an enemy of this tradition. The truth is that the criticisms expressed in those fragments were directed against those who clung to popular, gross, outer signs of worship rather than applying the instructions for gaining direct access to the *aletheia* of the *physis*—and in fact the true Masters of all genuine Wisdom traditions have berated capable individuals who forsake the quest for Awakening, favoring the gross, outer worship their respective traditions reserve for the childish (examples of this abound in Tibetan, Indian and Chinese Buddhist traditions). Furthermore, in Fr. DK 15 Heraclitus, rather than negating the divine character of Dionysus, proclaims his identity with Hades.

The essence of the nontheistic spirituality of the primordial age was Communion in the unconcealment of the true nature of all essents, which dissolves the dualistic illusion of self and other that is the condition of possibility of relationships in general, and of vertical, oppressive, exploitative, wicked relationships in particular. Therefore, so long as this nontheistic spirituality prevailed, oppression, exploitation,

discord, war and ecological devastation could not manifest. Later on, as human delusion increased and the capacity for Communion diminished, the pan-Eurasian tradition represented in Greece by the Dionysian mysteries, and in other places by Shaivism, Zurvanism, Bön, Taoism and so on, curbed the development of the most wicked consequences of delusion. Then, when the Kurgans or Indo-Europeans, the Semites and others of the peoples that dubious author James DeMeo (1998) called “Saharasian” forsook the spirituality of Communion for the worship of gods of war and conquest and set to take over the rest of the world, among the countries that had as their religion one or another of the systems representing the pan-Eurasian tradition in question, those in which the local peoples were most successful in assimilating the conquerors, so that the previous local religion was allowed to prevail, managed through their religion to restrain the worst aspects of the conquerors. In our time, I deem some Tibetan Buddhist traditions—and in particular the Dzogchen system—to be the most wholesome and healthy expressions of that pan-Eurasian tradition, insofar they conserve in their integrity the ever more powerful means that, as the illusion of selfhood gained in power, arose and developed in order to continue granting access to Communion—and not only to grant access to Communion, but to undo the illusion in question so that the final goal of making Communion uninterrupted could be attained. As will be shown in Part III of this book, I also deem the system and traditions in question to have a pivotal function in the approaching restoration of primordial harmony, which has been made possible and indispensable by the completion of the *reductio ad absurdum* of delusion achieved by ecological crisis.

When a people lives in terms of vertical oppressive structures, these mould the psyche of its members, manifesting in the whole of their relationships: between itself and other peoples, humans and the rest of the ecosphere, mind and body, males and females (in which the *overtly* oppressed gender is the female, which insofar as its reproductive functions are more evident, is identified with nature, and whose more passive social role makes it the natural *visible* victim), parents and children, lords and slaves, rulers and ruled, those who got rich and those who were reduced to poverty, and so on. Since, in order to justify their wicked behavior, those who live in terms of such structures have to view as evil and worthless all that they injure, oppress and exploit—other peoples, nature, the body, females, children, slaves, the ruled, the poor, and so on—they develop anti-somatic (hostile toward the body), life-denying and dualistic religious systems which view the body and nature as evil, and which posit a soul separate from the human body that has to control and oppress the latter and the rest of nature. Steve Taylor (2005), among others (e.g. van der Dennen [1995]), has gathered and made available ample evidence suggesting that (with the exception of some occurrences beginning in 12,000 BCE in isolated spots in the Nile valley) violence was unknown before 4,000 BCE, when, as James DeMeo (1998) has asserted, together with the rest of the wayward, wicked characteristics under consideration, violence became ubiquitous among the peoples he referred to as Saharasians, which progressively came to conquer virtually the whole world, contaminating with their characteristics the peoples they dominated. (I do not admit DeMeo’s ecological-geographical determinism, and see the development of the wayward, wicked characteristics under discussion as part of a process of development of ego-delusion determined by what in Part III of this book I call the *lila telos* of evolution, manifest in the structure and function of the human brain, to which a dynamic is inherent that gradually increases wayward, pain-begetting patterns. And yet undoubtedly, because of contributory circumstances, among which *may well lie* the ones adduced by DeMeo, wayward characteristics develop first in some particular peoples, which precisely due to this development set to conquer other peoples, which then become contaminated with the wayward characteristics in question.) At any rate, the dualistic, anti-somatic, oppressive religious systems these peoples produced, justified and furthered the wicked, destructive courses of behavior under consideration—including those that gave rise to the ecological crisis that has put in jeopardy the survival of our species.

As Riane Eisler (1987) has noted, among the peoples that later on DeMeo called Saharasians and that developed the above considered wayward characteristics about 4,000 BCE, becoming marauders and then setting to conquer other peoples, the Kurgans (later called Indo-Europeans because of the territories they conquered) and the Semites are worthy of special consideration. In fact, through colonialism the Indo-Europeans gave their language to and imposed their culture on the whole of Europe (in the case of language, except for the Basque country and the Finno-Ugrian speaking countries), America, Oceania, Persia and a great deal of India, and to a great extent on parts of Africa; also through colonialism, they deeply affected the cultures of the whole of Africa and a great deal of Asia; and, more recently, through cultural imperialism and neo-colonialism, they have imposed their culture and economic power on

virtually the whole of the world. The Semites, in their turn, after the arising of the wayward, wicked traits in the peoples DeMeo Christened “Sahasians” around 4,000 BCE, conquered a great deal of the Middle East; then, through the Christian religion (which incorporated the Old Testament and the anti-somatic structures and ideology of Hebrew religion) they imposed their mental structures and ideology on the Indo-Europeans and a sizeable proportion of the peoples that the latter dominated; finally, through Islam, they imposed their mental structures and culture, and gave their religion to, most of what originally they had originally failed to conquer of the Middle East, a great deal of Africa, Pakistan, Bangla Desh, Indonesia, the Autonomous Region of Xingjian in China, a sizeable proportion of the population of India and other Asian countries, and even parts of South-Eastern Europe.

In the holy book of Hebrews, the *Book of Genesis* (001:028) tells believers that, after creating the first humans, Adam and Eve, “...God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.” Although Jesus of Nazareth preached a religion of Communion, as made evident by the words of Michelet quoted in a note to the preceding chapter, the first Christians cursed Nature to the degree of seeing in a flower the incarnation of evil or of the demon, and of hoping that Nature would disappear, that life would come to an end, that the end of the world would be near... In its turn, Islam was a characteristically Semite religion involving few elements of Communion, which went so far as to incorporate the idea of Jihad (Holy War)—which in general was understood literally as a call for conquest. (Of course, some of the great saints of Christianity—such as Saint Francis of Assisi—understood correctly Jesus’ teachings, becoming embodiments of Communion with nature, and some of the monastic orders founded by such saints also followed the spirit of Jesus’ teachings and showed ecological awareness. Likewise, in Shi’a Islam, the Ismailians had a religion of Communion, and in Sunni Islam the same applied to Sufism; however, though these traditions for some time managed to create a climate of tolerance and openness, they have lost their moderating power with regard to mainstream Islam.)

Among the Indo-Europeans, some examples of dualistic oppressive religious ideologies were the Orphic mysteries in Greece, and various Hindu systems in India (though the Zoroastrian religion that in Persia replaced Zurvanism was dualistic, it cared for the ecosphere, which it insisted should not be polluted). Though Sutric Buddhism had a repressive attitude toward the body and its impulses, it broke away with the caste system and admitted women to the religious life, and was effective in giving access to spiritual liberation (so that it may be regarded as a resurgence of the ancient pan-Eurasian Paths of Awakening, partly conditioned by the Indo-European anti-somatic attitude). Shortly before the advent of Buddhism, the Jaina system also rejected the caste system and admitted women to the religious life, but despite the seemingly ecological insistence of this religion on preserving all life forms, it was essentially life denying insofar as it viewed as the paroxysm of virtue starvation with the intention of preserving the life of other creatures. Like Hinayana and Mahayana Buddhism, Jainism viewed the body as impure and dirty and had a spiteful, repressive attitude towards the it; however, I find its views and methods, unlike those of Hinayana and Mahayana Buddhism, not to be conducive to spiritual liberation. (Manichean dualism, according to which the final triumph of goodness lied in the destruction of the world, was mainly Indo-European, but absorbed Semite elements via the Christian religion, which was the religion of Mani’s mother, of which he incorporated aspects. Though Augustine of Hippo refuted Manichaeism, elements of this doctrine entered Christianity through his theology, which bears the imprint of the Manichaeism he harbored until his conversion to Christianity. Other dualistic Gnostic systems also resulted from the combination of Semite and Indo-European elements.)

Orphism upheld an anti-somatic, life-denying, dualistic ideology according to which the body was evil and the soul was good, the body was the prison or the tomb of the soul, and the soul had to be purified from its contamination by the body, allowing it to free itself from the prison / rise from the tomb represented by the latter. This was supposed to be achieved by the mysteries (such as those held at Eleusis), which should purify the soul and endow it with a mystic “seal” that would be recognizable after death, so that it would be allowed to dwell with the gods rather than suffer the fate of the uninitiated and be plunged into the mud (Plato, *Phaedo* [1980], 69E), doomed to an eternity of filling sieves with water by means of other sieves (Plato, *Gorgias* [1973], 493B). The Pythagoreans followed the Orphics with regarding the soul as good and the body as evil, in categorizing the latter as the tomb of the former, and in teaching means for purifying the soul from its contamination by the body and allowing it to rise from the tomb represented by the latter. However, they replaced the mystic initiation for the practice of

mathematics, music and so on as the basic means to purify and redeem the soul: mathematics was considered to be the basis of harmony (for musical tones depend on the mathematical measures of strings and so on, and upon being combined, they produce chords) and were held to have the power to free the individual from the influence of the corporeal (probably insofar as the mathematical is incorporeal—as in the case of a mathematical point or line—whereas the physical is corporeal), and thus restore the soul to the harmony lost as a result of its confinement to the evil body. Most significant, it were the Pythagoreans that first conceived and initially implemented the scientism that two millennia after their time materialized as the modern project that unleashed the ecological crisis that has put in jeopardy the survival of life on planet Earth.

Despite the mythological links between Orpheus and Dionysus, the Orphic and Dionysian traditions held contrary, struggling worldviews. In fact, Orpheus seemed to renegade of the dark Dionysus in favor of the clear god, ‘Apollo and sun in the same person’, whom he adored (cf. e.g. Kerényi [1998], pp. 165-166). Furthermore, there is an Orphic myth according to which it was the female Thracian bacchant known as *bassarai* who, in one of their Dionysian orgies, tore Orpheus into pieces as he (because of his dislike of the dark Dionysus, and his anti-somatic and female-despising ideology?) refused to join their ritual and grant them his favors. At any rate, the philosophies derived from Orphism were in diametric opposition to those developed by the thinkers who expressed in philosophical terms the views of the genuine Dionysian tradition, or who received influences from it—among whom, as seen in the preceding note, I rank Heraclitus, the main Skeptic Schools, some of the Sophists and the Cynics (and, though only in what regards philosophy of history and socio-political views, the Stoics, who polemicized so much with the Sceptics). In fact, fragments DK 40, DK 129 and DK 81 of Heraclitus’ book show the extent to which the Ephesian berated the dogmatic system of Pythagoras—whom he called “chief captain of cheaters” and whose learning he called “deceitful erudition and evil art.” It is well known that the Skeptic philosopher Sextus Empiricus also directed his book against the Pythagoreans—which may be inferred even from its title, *Adversus mathematicos*.

Since the Pythagoreans disparaged the body, basis of the human reality, to which humans are confined so long as they are alive, their ideology doomed human beings to insurmountable conflict, while favoring the development of what Gregory Bateson (1968, 1972) called *conscious purpose against nature*. Furthermore, the Pythagorean ideology, like those of most of the dualistic, anti-somatic, oppressive religious systems reviewed above, associated the female to evil and the male to goodness—and produced a long list of contraries in which the curve, the circle, the limitless and movement were associated to evil, whereas the straight line, the square, the limited and stillness were associated to goodness. As in the case of analogous spiritual systems, the association with evil of the female—one of the two basic aspects of life, as well as the *anima* aspect and one of the two main somatic energies of male human beings—was a recipe for insurmountable conflict. Like the rest of the traditions that despised the corporeal material universe, the Pythagoreans disparaged and opposed the physiological energies that constitute the very vehicle of realization. By viewing the corporeal, apparently material world as evil, they disparaged the *wisdom* that corporeal reality is (as shown in Chapter I of this book, according to the Dzogchen teachings, the reality in question is the tsel [*rtsal*] mode of manifestation of the energy of thukje [*thugs rje*] aspect of the Base, and those teachings refer to these three aspects as three *wisdoms*). Their negative view of movement (in which a similitude with the Samkhya *darshana* of Kapila and the related Yoga *darshana* of Patañjali may be observed) was also a source of insurmountable conflict, for movement is inherent to being alive. Furthermore, Pythagorean rejection of the limitless (Greek, *apeiron*; Skt. *aditi*) amounted to rejection of the single true condition of all essents that was to be realized in the pan-Eurasian traditions of which the Dionysian mysteries were the Greek expression. Since in higher forms of Buddhism the circle, which has no corners (which represent limits, which in their turn represent concepts, for insofar as these always exclude something they establish limits), represents the absence of limitations of the *dharmakaya*, their rejection of the circle is the same as their rejection of the limitless. To conclude, as the Manichean ideology makes it evident, to view the corporeal, material reality as evil, ultimately may even be thought to justify the destruction of the world—which the Pythagorean sorcerer’s apprentices set in motion by beginning to build the technological Golem that, as shown in Capriles (1994a) and in Part III this book as well, has grown beyond viability in the current ecological crisis and, unless dismantled, will destroy the fabric of human society and possibly the biological existence of our species. (To conclude, it must be noted that the

Pythagorean dualism was moral—they deemed the soul to be good and the body to be evil—but not ontological, for they are supposed to have deemed the soul to be material.)

According to Diogenes Laërtius (1972-1979, vol. 2, IX, 21), Parmenides was a disciple of Pythagorean philosopher Ameinias. Though present day scholarship has disqualified this allegation, Plato (*Sophist* [1993], 242 C-D) claimed that Parmenides was a disciple of Xenophon—who in his fr. 7 narrated an episode of the life of Pythagoras and who, together with the latter, was berated in Heraclitus’ fr. DK 40. In his turn, John Burnet (1964) referred to the cosmogony of Parmenides as “a sketch of Pythagorean cosmology.” Emile Bréhier (1988, vol. I, p. 68) noted that the cosmogony of Parmenides was different from that of the Ionians insofar as it incorporated theogonic myths such as those described by Hesiod (also berated by Heraclitus in fr. DK 40) and those upheld by the Orphics; insofar as it regarded Love as the first god (*Symposium* [Plato, 1995, 195C]; and especially insofar as, rather than viewing the *arche* or Principle to be a single primordial constituent of reality, it asserts it to be a pair of opposites (day and night, or light and darkness). Bréhier concluded that all this referred to Hesiodic fantasy rather than Ionic thought—and, more significantly, he stressed the fact that positing a pair of opposites as the *arche* is characteristic of Pythagorean dualism. Moreover, despite Parmenides’ assimilation of the Ionian structure of the heavens, the latter are to him (as in some Platonic myths) the place of transit of the souls, where necessity (*anangke*) lied, distributing their portions (Aecius, *Synagoge ton areschonton* [Aetii Placita], II, 7, 1). Even if there had been no direct Pythagorean influence on Parmenides, it is a fact that the latter denied any truth to the corporeal, physical world that the Pythagoreans deemed despicable; he valued thought, which he deemed to be the only reality (and which is the source of limits, valued by the Pythagoreans), and he insisted in the unreality of movement (disparaged by the Pythagoreans)—hence the objects of the refutations developed by his disciple Zeno of Elea. By denying any existence to what common sense regards as the physical world and asserting thought to be the only truth, Parmenides turned the very root of human deceit, which is thought (as we have seen, when delusorily valued-absolutized), into the only true reality, developing a theory that contradicted his own experience and practice, insofar as, like the rest of human beings, he surely experienced material phenomena as real, and surely avoided venomous snakes, speeding carts and so on. The denial of any degree of truth to corporeal reality may be seen as a more sophisticated instance of the anti-somatic attitude proper of both Orphics and Pythagoreans, which, as we have seen, leads directly to the ecological Armageddon. The harsh words Parmenides (1984) directed toward those to whom “being and nonbeing seem to be the same and not the same” (fr. 6; verses 7-9) show his antagonism to the sayings of Heraclitus and other nondualists (and as such are remindful of Ko-hung’s attacks on Chuang-tzu [Creel, 1970; Watts 1975b; Ware 1981]). And, in fact, a self-appointed monism that asserts the existence and unity of thought and the nonexistence of a physical world (as a reality different from it), is a subtle dualism insofar as it refers to the physical world as one would refer to something existing and absolutely other with regard to thought (which, as we have seen, is how in their everyday life the Eleatics experienced it and dealt with it), in order to deny its existence intellectually and then assert a reality different from it as the only truth.

(It could be thought that the Eleatic ideology may have been akin to the Mayavada philosophy developed by the Hindu author Gaudapada, inspired by Yogachara Buddhist philosophy. However, Parmenides (1984) does not assert the only truth to be *jñāna* or gnosis, which by definition cannot be expressed by thought (even though it may be said to be the basic “constituent” of thought), but affirms that the only truth is *thought*, identifies thought with being, insists that *the impossibility that something be thought proves its nonexistence*, and [in fr. 8, 34-36] asserts that, “it is the same to think and to think that [the content of thought] *is*, because without being, in what is expressed you could not find thought.” The claim that *the impossibility that something be thought proves its nonexistence* implies the claim that the possibility that something be thought, together with the fact that it is actually thought, proves its existence—which, insofar as the contents of thought are manifold, implies the existence of multiplicity. How can someone who posits a monism in which the only true reality is thought = being, make an assertion that clearly implies the existence of multiplicity? The only explanation I can think of is that, since according to him the only true reality was thought = being, and the manifold contents of thought were manifestations of thought, these contents shared the being that was one with thought. However, still his system would clearly breach the principle of noncontradiction, of the excluded middle, or of the excluded third, for he asserted the sole existence (in the ordinary sense of the term) of the single principle that in his system thought = being is, and at the same time asserted the existence (in the

ordinary sense of the term) of the manifold contents of thought. We might try to solve the contradiction by concluding that in his view the single being = thought was the absolute reality, the manifold contents of thought were some kind of relative reality, and the physical world was simply nonexistent. However, in the extant fragments of the book there is no mention of an absolute reality and a relative reality, not are there indications in them that he may have been positing a view like the one just described; therefore, I acknowledge my powerlessness for arriving at a clear, noncontradictory conclusion with regard to the true import of his system.)

Plato's relation with Orphism is evident in *Gorgias* (Plato [1973], 493B), which refers to "one of the wise, who holds the body to be a tomb," and states that in Hades the souls of the uninitiated are absolutely miserable, as they are doomed to an eternity of filling sieves with water by means of other sieves. As we have seen, in *Phaedo* (Plato [1980], 69E) he also referred to the torments the uninitiated face after death. In *Republic* (Plato [1979], 363D), he claimed that Musaeus and Eumolpus increase the rewards of the righteous in the other world and that the initiated punish the uninitiated by means of the punishments considered above. In *Cratylus* (Plato [1998], 402B), he directly attributes to the Orphic poets the doctrine that the body is the soul's tomb. In *Meno* (Plato [1949], 81A), he praises his predecessors in asserting the immortality of the soul. However, Plato was worse than both the Eleatics and the Pythagoreans, for he synthesized the positions of both, developing the first openly proclaimed ontological dualism of ancient Greece (for the first time there were, on the one hand, absolutely nonmaterial, immortal ontological entities such as the *eidōs* [and apparently also the demiurge and the souls] and, on the other hand, matter, which was eternal, but which was regarded as nonbeing), and placing truth in a nonphysical, eternal reality of his own invention: the world of *eidōs*. This reality replaced the world of *thought* posited by Parmenides as the true reality; however, *seemingly* unlike the latter, the *eidōs* existed outside the soul. In turn, nonbeing was no longer the physical world, as in Parmenides, but unformed matter: formed matter, constituting the physical world, was half-false (as it contained matter, which was untruth itself) and half-true (as it contained form [*eidōs*], which was truth itself). The immortal souls Plato posited came from the Pythagoreans, and he also incorporated the Pythagorean theory that the soul was corrupted by the body; however, he made perception through the senses the source of contamination, insofar as the knowledge thus obtained replaced the true knowledge (*noein*) of *eidōs* that the souls of the would-be philosophers had had before birth, for the half-true, half-false knowledge (opinion or *doxa*) of the half-true, half-false physical reality—which involved contamination by the corruptible and error. As we have seen, just like Parmenides' physical world, matter was nonbeing and falsehood (absence of truth), but it also was, like in the Pythagoreans, evil (absence of good) and ugliness (absence of beauty). These are some of the main elements in Plato's synthesis of Eleatic and Pythagorean thought; a simplified explanation of the reasons why Plato had to proceed this way in order to synthesize the ideas of the two philosophical traditions that he admired most, and of the way in which this synthesis was achieved, was provided in Capriles (2000b); a lengthier and more complete discussion of the subject will appear in Capriles (work in progress 3). To conclude with Plato, it must be noted that, as shown in Koyré (1973), the scientists who developed the vision and project that resulted in the creation of the technological Golem (including Galileo, reputed to have circumscribed science to what can be quantified [Capra, 1988, p. 133; Capra, 1996, p. 39]) replaced Aristotelianism with Platonism.

A more toned down ideology of the same sign is found in Plotinus, who adopted Plato's theory that matter was in itself something formless and indeterminate, and asserted that it was like the term in which the radiance or resplendence of the one, and therefore of the good, became exhausted. In this sense, it could be said that he deemed matter to represent evil (absence of good). And, since beauty was to him the radiance or resplendence of the good or of the one, which became exhausted in matter, the latter could be regarded as ugliness (absence of beauty). Since this implied that matter was different from the one, from good and from beauty, Plotinus' pseudo-monism was but a cover for a subtle ontological dualism and a coarse moral and aesthetical dualism having the defects of the various Orphic-inspired systems referred to above. For a lengthier critique of Plotinus' system, see Capriles (work in progress 3).

In Capriles (1998a), I asserted Indian dualistic, repressive spiritual systems to be either sheer imposition of Indo-European religion (*Rigveda*, *Samaveda*, *Yajurveda*), or more or less pronounced deformations of the doctrines and practices of the pre-Indo-European, nondual Shaiva tradition of Communion, resulting from their assimilation and reformulation in terms of those dualistic, repressive religious ideologies that responded to the oppressive / repressive structure and function of the psyche and social / environmental

relationships of the Indo-European invaders, which were among the most representative examples of the peoples DeMeo (1998) called “Sahasians” (the mutual conditioning of psychic and socioenvironmental structure and function is discussed in Capriles [1990b, 1994a] and Capriles & Hocevar [1991, 1992]). After the initial imposition of Indo-European religion, elements of pre-Indo-European spirituality were assimilated (*Atharvaveda*); then there arose a reaction against this assimilation (*Brahmanas*, *Aranyakas*; Yoga and Samkhya darshanas); later on, further elements of pre-Indo-European spirituality either were absorbed or manifested spontaneously through the realization of great sages (*Upanishads*, Hinayana Buddhism); then there arose a reaction against this assimilation (Vaishnava theism of the epics and the *Bhagavad Gita*); after this, further elements of pre-Indo-European spirituality either were absorbed or manifested spontaneously through the realization of great sages (Mahayana Buddhism; then the *Vedanta Sutra*, and finally the Vedantic casteist reformulations of Mahayana philosophy: Gaudapada’s Mayavada philosophy as an adaptation of Buddhist Yogachara and Shankaracharya’s Advaita Vedanta as a subtly dualistic adaptation of Madhyamaka)—and so on in a succession of assimilations and reactions, so that most Indian spiritual and religious systems combine pre-Indo-European Indian spirituality with Indo-European religion in different manners and proportions, except for the systems that restored the original nondual tradition, such as the various forms of higher Tantra (the most perfect and self-consistent being the Buddhist, which arose after the Vedanta) and the Dzogchen teachings (which reappeared in the ambit of Indian civilization roughly at the time of the appearance of Mahayana Buddhism). Likewise, **in the preceding endnote (of Vol. I of BB-BM-BH, not of this book: check whether there is a place to place the endnote in question)**, what Creel called Hsien Taoism—of which Ko-hung was an especially shameful yet equally representative specimen—was explained to be a deformation of the original nondual Taoist tradition of Communion resulting from its reinterpretation in terms of the dualistic, repressive ideologies of the bellicious “Sahasian” peoples who invaded China, such as the Shang and the Chou (or Zhou). We may assume that the Orphic tradition of Greece arose just in the same way as Hsien pseudo-Taoism and the dualistic, repressive spiritual ideologies and practices of India: the original pre-“Sahasian” nondual tradition of Communion, which in the case of Greece consisted in the Dionysian mysteries, was turned upside down upon being reinterpreted in terms of the repressive, dualistic ideologies of the “Sahasian” invaders, which in the case of Greece were two waves of Indo-European peoples, the first one being that of the Achaeans, Ionians and Aeolians, and the second—which, just as in the case of China, was far more oppressive and repressive than the first—that of the Dorians. (The Orphic tradition might have received important Dorian influences, insofar as the pseudophilosophical offshoots of the Orphic initiatic tradition were known for their extreme elitism and aristocraticism, which in the case of the Pythagorean tradition have been traced down to Dorian super-aristocraticism [Capriles 2000b; Cappelletti 1972b]; furthermore, Thrace, where Orphism appears to have arisen around the fourteenth century BCE, seems to have been at the time under Dorian control.) If this theory were correct, just as in India the mythological links between Shiva and the deities of the Indo-European pantheon attest to the fact that the Indo-European invaders felt revolted before the views, doctrines, practices and behavior of Shaivism, yet the development of Indo-European Indian religions attests to a gradual absorption of elements of the views, doctrines, and finally even practices and ways of behavior of Shaivism, the more dualistic and repressive types of Indo-European Indian religion turning the central tenets and methods of Shaivism upside down, in Greece the mythological links between Orpheus and Dionysos would respond to the fact that the Indo-European invaders felt revolted before the Dionysian views, doctrines, practices and behavior—and yet Orphism came to absorb key elements of this tradition while turning its central tenets and behavior upside down.

¹³⁴ We have knowledge of four arguments against motion developed by Zeno of Elea, which are called: the racecourse, the Achilles, the arrow and the moving blocks. In turn, the Madhyamikas developed a series of refutations of “going and coming:” the first were developed by Nagarjuna in the second chapter of his *Mulamadhyamakakarikah*; then these were commented on by Chandrakirti (Chandrakirti, trans. Jeffrey Hopkins, this ed., 1974) in the second chapter of the *Mulamadhyamakavrittprasannapada*; then both the refutations by Nagarjuna and the commentaries by Chandrakirti were commented on by a series of scholars and Masters, including Je Tsongkhapa (Tsong-kha-pa, Je, trans. Paul Jeffrey Hopkins; this ed., 1974), who did so in the second chapter of the reputed *dBu ma rtsa ba'i tshig le'ur byas pa shes rab ces bya ba'i rnam bshad rigs pa'i rgya misho*.

However, as stated in two previous notes, the respective intents of Zeno and the Madhyamikas were oriented in diametrically opposite ideological directions.

¹³⁵ In fact, as shown in a previous note, Leibniz claimed that space is but relations between monads, and made it clear that the latter were *nonphenomenal*. Kant (Kant, Immanuel, this ed., 1969, Part I, Ch. 3, Appendix on the Amphibology of the Concepts of Reflection), objected that if there were such a thing as nonphenomenal monads, positing phenomenal space as the result of the relations between monads would amount to mixing up two unmixable levels of reality: the phenomenal and one that would be absolutely other with regard to it. According to Russell and Whitehead's theory of logical types (1910-1913), contradictions between terms are "real" only when both terms belong to the same logical type; in terms of this theory, Leibniz incurred in a breach of logic, for he infringed the rule according to which what belongs to a logical type different from that of the class being considered may neither be included nor be excluded in the class—a breach that was neither nullified nor mitigated by Gregory Bateson's posterior observation that, for the theory of logical types to be applied, its rules have to be violated, which in its turn implies that anyone who may have thought this theory did away with the contradictions that have been perceived in Aristotelian logic, would have been utterly wrong. This is exactly the same type of error we would incur if we related the movement of phenomenal, physical entities in phenomenal, physical space and time, to nonphenomenal, mathematical instants.

¹³⁶ According to Hegel, the map had to correspond to the territory (which he deemed to be as conceptual as the map); however, given the characteristics of both the map and the territory, the map had to violate the Principle of Non-contradiction, Law of the Excluded Middle or Law of the Excluded Third, for "things are in themselves contradictory" (Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, this ed., 1999). McTaggart (McTaggart Ellis, John, 1910, this ed. 1964) noted that the denial of the principle of non-contradiction would destroy the whole of Hegelian dialectics, for the reason to surpass a dialectical stage is our perception of it as contradictory, and if the whole of reality is necessarily contradictory (as stated in the above quote from Hegel himself), then the very criterion of "revelation of error as such by the contradictions it produces" would have been eliminated (Mure's attempt to justify Hegel's position in the face of McTaggart's criticism [Mure, G. R. G., 1910, this ed. 1959] was fruitless, but some think that in the *Encyclopaedia* Hegel overcame this error).

So it is clear that Madhyamika philosophy is far removed from Hegel's, being closer to the view Nietzsche expressed upon criticizing Parmenides' position:

"We are in the opposite extreme and assert that all that can be thought must necessarily be false."

This assertion, just like those of Madhyamaka philosophy, implies upholding the conventional validity of the Principle of Non-contradiction, Law of the Excluded Middle or Law of the Excluded Third, which is the tool for refuting all conceptual positions. This is why, as stated in a previous note, it is most important to reject the position of T. R. V. Murti (Murti, T. R. V., 1955, this ed. 1970, p. 146) and others who insist that Madhyamika philosophy rejects and consistently violates this Principle or Law: had it done so, it would have incurred in an error analogous to the one that McTaggart saw in Hegel's dialectics, for Madhyamaka would have destroyed the very tool it uses to carry out its refutations, and therefore the latter would not at all be considered by deluded mind to be valid. However, conserving and applying this Principle or Law does not amount to asserting it to be an ultimate principle; in fact, it is a principle of conventional truth, and, as Gendün Chöphel rightly noted, this very term refers to delusion, for its original meaning is that of "obscuration to correctness" or "thoroughly confused," and therefore "conventional truth" means "deluded truth."

The belief that concepts are absolutely true or false, which is the condition of possibility of contradiction, is produced by the delusory valuation and absolutization of concepts that is at the root of the basic human delusion that is the core of *samsara*. As we have seen, this delusion, which the refutations developed by the Madhyamikas are intended to help us surpass, consists precisely in a confusion of categories that contravenes the rules of logic, for the relative—including the logical rules for the discursive chaining of concepts—is taken to be absolute. Therefore, Madhyamaka uses language, respecting the logical rules inherent to it, as an expedient means to lead beyond language and the logic inherent to it.

The mention of Nietzsche in this note could lead the reader to associate the positions held in this book with those held in Sprung, Mervyn, 1979 and Sprung, Mervyn, 1977. However, the ones and the others are very different; for example, he asserts (1977, p. 166) that for Madhyamaka "events have no purpose; conventional existence is denied any meaning." It is true that for Madhyamaka the purpose of events and the meaning of conventional existence are not enunciable, but in *nirvana* an inexpressible Meaning

that is far more meaningful than any expressible sense is realized—and the fact that this Meaning cannot be put into thoughts or words does not mean that it is no meaning whatsoever.

Furthermore, Nietzsche's positions seem similar to those of Buddhism insofar as the intellectually adhered to the Dionysian tradition, which (like the other traditions connected to it listed in a previous note) negates the existence of the self and of all substantiality; however, Nietzsche starkly contradicted these views by identifying with a "superior man" who should keep away from inferior, common people, and in general by the conceptions associated to his concept of *Wille zur Macht*, his despise of the feminine, etc. I believe these contradictions were more important than his syphilis and drug-addiction in unleashing his final madness.

¹³⁷ In 2000 it was demonstrated that each brain hemisphere could also perform the functions that are proper of the other one; however, each is specialized in a specific type of functioning.

¹³⁸ A signal is analog when a magnitude or quantity is used to represent a quantity that changes in a continuous manner in the referent, without leaps or intervals. Contrariwise, a signal is digital if there is a discontinuity between itself and other signals from which it must be distinguished. "Yes" and "no" are examples of digital signals, and the same applies to numbers; however, quantities—even though they are always expressed in numbers—are in themselves analog signals.

The quantifying endeavor that has characterized the sciences since Galileo requires exact measurements, but these are impossible to achieve insofar as discontinuous signals cannot correspond exactly to continuous changes. In fact, analog systems increase in a continuous manner, like the slope of a hill, whereas digital systems increase in terms of discontinuities, like a stairway. When we interpret the slope in stairway terms, a perfect correspondence between the one and the other is impossible (however, the smaller the stairs are made, the less apparent this lack of correspondence will be). Thus the definition of truth as *adaequatio intellectus et rei* (correspondence of the intellect to the things it interprets) is actually the definition of something that is by its own nature impossible. The digital may include decimals, centesimals and so on and on in order to approach the analog, but it will approach it asymptotically, as it can never correspond precisely to it. (This also refutes the Pythagorean belief that the *arche* is the number and that everything in the universe is but numbers.)

In Capriles, Elías, 1994, the first chapter ("Qué es filosofía y cuáles son las causas profundas de la crisis ecológica") explains in greater detail why the perfect *adaequatio intellectus et rei* is impossible, and how all explanatory systems must necessarily end up contradicting themselves when they try to reach absolute precision.

¹³⁹ Numbers are by their very nature digital: this term derives from the Latin *digitus digiti*, meaning "finger," and fingers are used for counting. The point is that the main trait of the digital is its discontinuity, which is paradigmatically exemplified by the one occurring between one number and the next: one, two, three; one comma one, one comma two, one comma three; one comma eleven, one comma twelve, one comma thirteen; and so on and on *ad infinitum*. This is why the French for "digital" is "numérique."

¹⁴⁰ Furthermore, our interpretations of reality are always applied to events after the processing of these events by our mental functions, and insofar as this processing takes at least a minimal amount of time, interpretations always come late. Since everything is changing continuously, this means that we never know what is, but what already ceased to be.

¹⁴¹ The method of *isosthenia* or "balancing truth," which consists in neutralizing delusory adherence to a particular viewpoint by affirming, as an other-directed assertion, a related but opposite viewpoint (and possibly providing evidence substantiating the latter), seems to fully correspond to the method taught by Hui-neng, Sixth Patriarch of Ch'an Buddhism in China, as a conceptual way toward the nonconceptual realization of Madhyamaka, which is described immediately below in the regular text of this chapter. (An example of this method is provided below in the regular text of this book, in the form of a dialogue between Ch'an Master Ta-chu Hui-hai and a Tripitaka Master [cf. also Capriles, Elías, 1994, 2000a, work in progress *Greek Philosophy and the East*]. Another example of it is a dialogue composed by Ch'an Master Ta-chu Hui-hai, in which an imaginary interlocutor asked him "What is the Middle Way," and he replied: "The extremes.")

The method of *isosthenia* is but the application, in a dialogue between individuals, of the *via oppositio*: the "way of the opposition of mutually contradictory concepts" (a concept that has been emphasized in Elorduy, Carmelo, 1977/1983), which the Madhyamikas seem to have applied as a key contributory condition toward the spontaneous collapse of the delusorily valued conceptual limits that the said school calls "extremes," and therefore toward gaining access to the limitless condition that it calls the

Middle Way. When the *via oppositio* is applied in speech or writing by a single person who combines contradictory terms in order to contribute toward the collapse in the reader or listener of the habit of combining delusory valued concepts into complex meanings that are taken to be absolutely true or false, so that the veil constituted by the net of delusorily valued thoughts may fall and as a result the true nature of reality may become evident, we have the very essence of Madhyamika dialectics as manifest in the works by Nagarjuna, Aryadeva and the Madhyamika Prasangikas. This application of the *via oppositio* also seems to be the very essence of many of the verses in Lao-tzu's *Tao-Te-Ching* and of many of the fragments by Heraclitus of Ephesus, among other non-Buddhist works. Heraclitus, in particular, often wrote sentences that asserted contrary views concerning reality. For example, fr. DK 206 reads:

“Things as a whole are whole and nonwhole, identical and not-identical, harmonic and not-harmonic; the one is born from the whole and from the one all things are born.”

There are many other fragments by Heraclitus that simultaneously assert opposite views, and which rather than being attempts to destroy the Principle of Non-contradiction, Law of the Excluded Third or Law of the Excluded Middle (as those who have interpreted Heraclitus as though he were Hegelian have taken them to be), are part of a strategy for breaking the reader's delusory valuation-absolutization of thought that, as we have seen, is at the root of the delusion that the Buddha called *avidya* and that the Ephesian called *lethe*, and that causes people to hold to one conceptual extreme as true, and reject the other extreme as false (a strategy that would work only on those who are bound by the Principle of Non-contradiction, Law of the Excluded Middle or Law of the Excluded Third).

Concerning the method of *isosthenia* properly speaking, it was popularized by Pyrrho of Elis (c. 360-c.270 BC), the founder of the Sceptic School, who purportedly received it from Anaxarchus of Abdera while both of them traveled with Alexander's army through Asia. It is claimed that Anaxarchus in turn received it from his teacher Democritus of Abdera (c.460-c.370 BC), but there is not proof whatsoever that the method was actually taught by Democritus, and therefore the possibility cannot be discarded that Pyrrho and Anaxarchus may have received it from Asian sages during their travels. At any rate, it seems certain that the method existed in Greece long before Pyrrho and Anaxarchus traveled through Asia, for the “sophist” Protagoras (c.490-c.421 BC) is reputed to have applied it. In fact, Protagoras may have been justifying this method when, as Diogenes Laërtius tells us, he asserted that “...concerning any matter (*pragma*), there are two counterposed discourses (*logoi*),” and noted he considered both as being equally valid. (However, it is impossible for us to discern after nearly two and a half millennia whether Protagoras was a link in the venerable lineage of philosophers who used the method in question to lead individuals beyond grasping at thoughts and thus into the realization of the ultimate, unborn nature, or, as held by the detractors of the sophists, whether he was teaching his pupils techniques for the manipulation of the masses in the *agora* and means for the pacification of their consciences so that they could pursue illegitimate purposes without feeling remorse)

In turn, in his treatise *On Nonbeing* Gorgias of Leontini set to destroy Eleatic ontology by expounding his renowned three doctrines: (1) Nothing exists; (2) If something existed, it could not be known; and (3) Even if (something existed and) could be known, it could not be expressed in words. “Nothing exists” could as well mean the same as in the *Prajñāparamita* Sutras and related commentaries, and as in the original Madhyamika literature: that nothing is self-existent. If this were so, the other two statements would be rhetorical assertions emphasizing the fact that conceptual knowledge cannot correspond in an absolutely precise way to what it interprets, and that it is impossible to express the nature of reality, or even its structure and function, in an absolutely precise way. However, we face the same problem again, for we cannot know whether this is so, or whether Gorgias was an opportunist teaching techniques for the manipulation of the masses in the *agora* and for the pacification of the consciences of people pursuing illegitimate purposes.

In general, scholars take the above statements by Gorgias and Protagoras to imply that they held mutually contradictory views; however, a Madhyamika would agree to the statements of both, for it is precisely insofar as no conceptual position can be *absolutely* true with regard to any given object, that mutually contradictory conceptual positions can be valid and held to be *relatively* true with regard to it. And, in fact, I tend to suspect that Gorgias may have been saying precisely that no conceptual position can be *absolutely* true with regard to any given object, whereas Protagoras may have been saying that mutually contradictory conceptual positions can be valid and held to be *relatively* true with regard to any given object—in which case both of them would have been expressing the very same view.

Another sophist, Cratylus, was renowned for raising his finger and remaining silent upon being questioned. He claimed to be a follower of Heraclitus, and concerning the Ephesian's statement that one cannot enter the same river twice, for new waters overflow (fr. DK 91), he asserted that one cannot enter the same river even once, for even while one enters the river, new waters have already overflowed (and therefore there is no continuous river that may be entered). (Plato's assertion in his *Cratylus* that the said "sophist" believed everything had a right name of its own seems to contradict this interpretation of his thought. However, in general Plato misrepresented Cratylus and other of the ancient philosophers: even his depiction of Socrates is not the most plausible one, for it does not seem congruent with the renowned statement "I only know I know nothing;" furthermore, the Cynics' depiction of Socrates provides a more plausible explanation of his death sentence.)

Neo-Academic philosopher Arcesilaus (c.315-c.240 BC) introduced the method of *isosthenia* into the Academy (where it was said to be "of Socratic inspiration," either because Socrates actually applied it, or to valorize it by ascribing it to the venerated teacher of the Founder). It was another neo-Academic, Carneades, who left as his legacy to us another, less well-known application in speech or writing of the *via oppositio* by a single person (which, however, this author doubts may be therapeutic, and, contrariwise, thinks in some cases may be dangerous): the *argumentum in utramque partem* or "argument in favor of both sides," which consists in developing an argument convincingly until the listeners or readers have been persuaded of the view being expounded, and then developing the opposite argument in an equally convincing way. This was done by Neo-Academic philosopher Carneades in Rome, who one day preached the need for justice in front of the Senate, and the next day preached against it in front of the same audience (Bénatouïl, Thomas, 2001, p. 34).

Therefore one cannot discard the possibility that Heraclitus, Democritus, Anaxarchus, Pyrrho, Protagoras, Gorgias, Cratylus, Arcesilaus and perhaps even Carneades, and quite possibly Antisthenes and the Cynics (or at least some of these) may have been links in a wisdom tradition somehow similar to that of the Madhyamikas, to that of Ch'an or Zen, and to that of Dzogchen. In fact, one may suspect such a tradition may have existed within the genuine, ancient Dionysian tradition, for as shown in Daniélou, Alain, Spanish 1987, the latter was one with the Shaiva tradition of India and the Egyptian cult of Osiris, and, as shown in Capriles, Elías, 2000b and in other works by this author, was one with Zurvanism, Taoism of unorigination [the one represented by Lao-tzu, Chuang-tzu, Lieh-tzu and the Masters of Huainan, and quite likely by Chuan Chen Taoism as discussed in Liu I-ming, 1988, and Reid, D., 2003] and ancient Bön—the latter of which, since around 1800 BC, has had its own Dzogchen tradition and its own Mantric teachings. If this were so, the fact that Cratylus raised his finger in reply to the questions of his interlocutors may have had the same meaning as the identical behavior of Ch'an Master Chu-ti, who succeeded to T'ien-lung (cf. Cleary, Thomas and J. C., 1977, vol. I, Nineteenth Case, pp. 123-128). (With regard to Chu-ti's method, consider the following: "When he was near death, Chu-ti said to his assembly, 'I attained T'ien Lung's one-finger Ch'an and have used it all my life without exhausting it. Do you want to understand?' He raised his finger, then died." [*Ibidem*, p. 125.]

Since we have enough fragments of Heraclitus' book as to assume he may have been a representative of a genuine wisdom-tradition (which, as we have seen, must have been the Dionysian tradition), it may be useful to note that the Skeptics traced their tradition to Heraclitus. As noted in Cappelletti, Angel, 1969:

"Aenesidemus, the most radical critic of the principle of causality in antiquity, ends up considering the [method of the] Skeptics as a propaedeutic to the philosophy of Heraclitus, in which paradoxically he sees the metaphysical foundation to the epistemological doctrine of the former (Capone Braga, 1931). Another Skeptic, Sextus Empiricus, refers quite extensively to the epistemology and the psychology of Heraclitus in his work *Adversus mathematicos*, where he quotes the initial paragraph of his book."

All of the above is considered in detail in my work in progress *Greek Philosophy and the East*. For a published explanation of the relationship between Shivaism and ancient Bön (note that Shiva's dwelling place is Mount Kailash in Tibet, at the foot of which around 1,800 BC the great Bönpo Master Shenrab Miwoche taught the Dzogchen tradition of the Zhang-zhung Nyengyü [*rDzogs-pa Chen-po Zhang-zhung sNyan-brgyud*]), see the initial pages of Part Two of my book *Buddhism and Dzogchen* and the notes to those pages. See also Capriles, Elías, 2000b. Concerning the relationship between the Greek Skeptics and the Madhyamaka School of Philosophy, the reader may consult the works cited in note 35 to this book. In the future this author might write a critical appraisal of the works comparing the views of Madhyamaka with those of the Greek Skeptics; reference to them is made in Capriles, Elías, work in progress.

To conclude, it should not be assumed that all thinkers of East and West associated with the *via oppositio* necessarily had the same wisdom and used it in the same way. The problem is too ample to be dealt with here; it will be further considered in my work in progress *Greek Philosophy and the East*.

(Concerning Anthistenes and the Cynics, it is clear that the latter had an *askesis* that aimed at the liberation of conditioned perceptions; if it were true that Diogenes was a disciple of Anthistenes and that the latter passed down a series of doctrines and practices to the former, then there could be hardly any doubt that Anthistenes' assertion of the illegitimacy, both of negation [his phrase *ouk estin antilegein* had been used by Protagoras], and of definition in terms of the syllogism "a is b," were "in the thread of Ariadna" of the old soteriological tradition that I assume would have been somehow akin to Madhyamaka philosophy. For an explanation of these two theses of Anthistenes' in terms of the relationship between the computations of the two cerebral hemispheres and between the two processes established in Freud's *Project* of 1895, cf. Capriles, Elías, 1999.)

¹⁴² Since the *bhutatahata* may be identified with absolute truth, and according to the Madhyamaka from the standpoint of absolute truth no changes occur, the Tripitaka Master assumed the correct view in this regard was that no changes occurred in the *bhutatahata*.

¹⁴³ Of course, according to Mahamadhyamaka the *bhutatahata* does not correspond to mere voidness, which lower varieties of the Madhyamaka Rangtongpa subschools (Prasangika and Swatantrika) regard as the absolute truth, but must necessarily include appearances, for the *bhutatahata* is the Buddha-nature, which in Mahamadhyamaka involves the inseparability of appearances and voidness. If we compare the mutually relative appearances that manifest at different moments, definitively change must be perceived within the *bhutatahata*. However, Mahamadhyamaka insists that the relative does not have true existence, and therefore this school would agree that ultimately no change occurs in the *bhutatahata*. Yet the statement "no changes occur in the *bhutatahata*," or any other statement for that matter, cannot exhaustively and precisely express the whole truth concerning reality.

Nonetheless, Hui-hai's intent was not to go into such theoretical details, which may have changed the views of his interlocutor but would have had no chance of contributing toward his Awakening; he was applying the method of interrelated opposites in order to neutralize the latter's arguments and create the conditions for him to possibly have a glimpse of nirvana. Furthermore, though here Hui-hai applies the method of interrelated opposites without contradicting the subtleties of Buddhist philosophy, this method can also be applied as though it were a slap in the face: without taking into account such philosophical subtleties.

¹⁴⁴ This reply was intended *mainly* as a principally other-directed assertion intended to work as an antidote to my interlocutor's possible clinging to a conceptual view of reality. However, in some way it refers to the view of the Mahamadhyamaka subschool of Madhyamaka, according to which relative reality absolutely lacks existence, and all there (is), (is) the absolute truth that, being defined as the inseparability of voidness and appearances, includes the "I," the place where the "I" is, and the whole of appearances (it must be warned, however, that despite the fact that all appearances are the absolute truth, the ideas of an "I" and "its surroundings" are mere fictions, and strictly speaking it would thus be wrong to say that "absolutely the I is here").

It is also possible to interpret the statement from the standpoint of the teachings of the Semde series of Dzogchen: "I" would refer to what these teachings call "Total I-ness" or Dagnyi Chenpo (*bdag-nyid chen-po*), which is the totality of the Base, and "Here" would refer to the condition of Total Space-Time-Awareness corresponding to the unveiling of the Base (an explanation of the concept of Total Space-Time-Awareness is provided in Part One of my *Buddhism and Dzogchen*; for a more complete explanation see Tarthang Tulku, 1977b).

¹⁴⁵ As stated in a previous note, the term *via oppositio* was widely used in Elorduy, Carmelo, 1977/1983.

¹⁴⁶ Since the *Ludrub Gonggyen* (*kLu sgrub dgongs rgyan*) refutes many of the views and arguments set forth by Je Tsongkhapa and in general many of the positions and ways of arguing of the Gelugpa school, on the grounds that a Gelugpa monk like Gendün Chöphel would have never developed such refutations certain Gelugpa scholars asserted that this text was not written by him. For example, in López, Donald, 1994 (p. 495), we read:

"One biographer, bKras mthong thub bstan chos dar, went so far as to claim in 1980 (in his *dGe 'dun Chos 'phel gyi lo rgyus*. Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, pp. 193-198) that of the entire seventy folio work, less than three folios of poetry are the statements of dGe 'dun Chos 'phel."

This seems to have influenced quite a few Western scholars; for example, in Ruegg, David Seyfort, 1989 (p. 309) it is written:

“An assessment of this work will be no easy undertaking because it will be necessary to determine what belongs in this text to Gendün Chöphel himself and what might have been added by his disciple and editor (the compiler Dawa Zangpo), because of the inherent difficulty of such a work that exploits the resources of Tibetan Madhyamika dialectics, because of the extensive Indo-Tibetan philosophical background it presupposes and because of the critical responses and refutations it has already called forth.”

I myself can entertain no doubts that the entire work was composed by Gendün Chöphel, for someone who had not completed the curricula of a Gelugpa college and who did not perfectly know the views and intellectual habits of this school “from inside” would lack the perfect knowledge of these views and habits evidenced in the refutations developed in the *Ludrub Gonggyen*—and on the other hand these refutations would not be so masterful had their author lacked such a knowledge. In López, Donald, 1994 (p. 496) we read:

“...it is not simply the critique of an outsider, but one who knows the inside well. It is in contradistinction to the heterodox that the borders of the orthodox become clear, and one part of the importance of the *kLu sgrub dgongs rgyan* is the possibility it provides to delineate the assumptions of dGe lugs philosophical discourse with a clarity that is difficult to attain through the works of other sects.”

Moreover, it seems evident that Dawa Zangpo did not alter those arguments in any way, for any alteration of them by a non-Gelugpa scholar would have given rise to logical inconsistencies. Furthermore, had a Nyingmapa altered Chöphel’s text with the intention to deceive its readers, it is logical to presume he would have deleted all criticisms of Nyingma views and methods—such as, for example, the following criticism of the Nyingma method for accessing the realization of emptiness:

“In the Ancient method, there is a tremendous difference in level of understanding between the realization of the lack of identity of persons and the realization of the lack of identity of phenomena. To them, the way to arrive at the view of lack of identity of persons is by taking the view opposite to the ordinary belief in true existence. But in fact, such a view does not get past conventional appearance, nor does it get past the most subtle form of our minds’ capacity for object-making, taking as objects ‘existence, nonexistence, existence-and-nonexistence, neither-existence-nor-nonexistence’. [According to Prasangika or Consequentialist philosophy,] it is the realization in one single moment, of the fact that none of these four possibilities applies, which is the ultimate meaning without distinctions, the ‘ultimate meaning which is not conventional’—in short, the realization of the ‘inexpressible ultimate’.”

Since the above paragraph appears in the *Ludrub Gonggyen* in its present form, it seems clear, not only that the book was actually authored by Gendün Chöphel, but also that its author did not intend merely to subvert the Gelugpa doctrine, and, through it, the political power this school wielded in Tibet since the time of the Great Fifth Dalai Lama: it seems evident that he intended to challenge the traditional bases of intellectual and political power in his country. In López, Donald, 1994 (p. 498) we read:

“In the end, however, *kLu sgrub dgongs rgyan* does something more than demarcate the orthodox and the heterodox in Tibetan Buddhist discourse. More than challenging a particular authority, that of the gDe lugs sect in the early decades of [the twentieth] century, it challenges the production of the very institution of authority in Tibetan Buddhist thought. It is one of those rare works that reveals what Pierre Bourdieu calls the *doxa*, that realm within which the orthodox and the heterodox are both made possible and play against each other. The *doxa* is the universe of what can be thought, the naturalized established order of a given cultural moment, and those rare works that challenge the *doxa* must have as their necessary, but not sufficient, condition, [the existence of an] objective crisis. Bourdieu writes, ‘The critique which brings the undiscussed into discussion, the unformulated into formulation, has as the condition of its possibility [the existence of an] objective crisis, which, in breaking the immediate fit between the subjective structures and the objective structures, destroys self-evidence practically’ (Bourdieu, Pierre [Richard Nice, trans.], 1977, pp. 168-169). To challenge political authority alone, as dGe ’dun Chos ’phel did, is not in itself a challenge to *doxa*. Nor is the indescribable realm that the *kLu sgrub dgongs rgyan* evokes so eloquently the same realm beyond the *doxa* which cannot be spoken because it cannot be thought. However, through its critique of authority at the most fundamental level and of the assumptions from which authority is formed, *kLu sgrub dgongs rgyan* calls into question what

had seemed most self-evident to the discourse of Tibetan Buddhism, and it succeeds in its own way ‘in pushing back the limits of *doxa* and exposing the arbitrariness of the taken for granted’ (*Ibidem*, p. 169).

¹⁴⁷ Immediately thereafter, Chöphel goes on to say:

“Otherwise, what need was there for the Buddha to say things like ‘There is no form. There is no feeling... There is no Buddha’?”

“The fundamental difference between Prasangika and Swatantrika is that the Swatantrikas believe that (in the Buddhist teachings) there are assertions (made) from the heart (i.e., made out of belief)... and that although not true, things do exist: this is an assertion of the co-existence of the two truths. For the Prasangika, the more you perceive truthlessness (in the Contemplation state or *nyamzhak*), the more illusion-like conventional aspects become (in the post-Contemplation state or *jethob*); therefore such principles as the ten stages of a bodhisattva and the enjoyment body and the perfect body fulfilling five conditions can be asserted at times, even though analysis by correct cognizers leaves them totally invalidated.”

¹⁴⁸ Shura was a Madhyamika who, like Bhavaviveka, asserted the existence of external objects (Napper, Elizabeth, 1983, p. 279); therefore, not only it would be inexact to view Bhavya as the founder of the *Swatantrika* interpretation of *Madhyamaka*, but it would be imprecise to consider him to have been the initiator of the *Madhyamaka-Swatantrika-Sautrantika* subschool. Furthermore, Arya Vimuktasena, who asserted that external objects do not exist and therefore is classified, together with Jatari and Lavapa, within one of the two main trends of *Madhyamaka-Swatantrika-Yogachara*, is earlier than both Bhavya, Shura and Shantarakshita (the latter being often considered to have been the founder of the *Madhyamaka-Swatantrika-Yogachara* subschool) (*ibidem*).

¹⁴⁹ However, if we reflect on this matter, we will see that the thesis according to which there is no “physical” or “material” substance external to our perception, different from and other to the “mental” or to the “mind,” does not necessarily imply the nonexistence of atoms understood as conventional entities. For example, the observation through the technical gadgets of our time of those phenomena that common sense regards as “material,” shows them to be constituted by atoms. Suppose it could be proven that there is no “physical” or “material” substance external to our perception, different from and other to the mental or the “mind:” the phenomenistic conclusion would be that both the technical gadgets and the atoms they reveal are mental phenomena—not that they do not exist. Likewise, the Vijñaptimatra position of those who “regard the aspect as true” should be that they are valid representations behind which there are no physical entities. (In turn, those who “deem the aspect to be false” would conclude that there are no such atoms.)

¹⁵⁰ To recapitulate, a classical example of the so-called “aspect” is the appearance as blue, of something that is blue, to the knowledge of an eye perceiving the said color. The appearance of something blue as being a compact object also is a very common example used in the context of this discussion. The distinction between those who adhere to the true aspect and those who adhere to the false aspect, first arose in the Yogachara School, and was briefly discussed in the Chapter dedicated to the said school, where it was noted that those who adhered to the false aspect were deemed “higher” than those who adhered to the true aspect insofar as they considered the aspects of a perception (such, as for example, an object’s color) to be false, whereas the former, in spite of the fact that they asserted that the object did not exist independently from or externally to mind or experience, deemed its aspects to be true.

Later on, the above distinction had its continuity in the Madhyamaka-Swatantrika-Yogachara subschool, which, like the Yogachara School, asserted that no entities exist independently from and externally to perception, and hence was bound to ask the same questions as the latter concerning the status of the objects perceived. It was thus that there arose the Madhyamaka-Swatantrika-Yogachara school of Shantarakshita, Kamalashila and Arya Vimuktasena and the Madhyamaka-Swatantrika-Yogachara school of Haribhadra, Jetari and Lavapa: the former is said to “adhere to the true aspect” because, despite asserting unequivocally that the object does not exist outside experience, it deems the latter’s appearance of blueness and compactness to be “true;” the latter is said to “adhere to the false aspect” because, on the top of asserting that the object does not exist outside experience, it affirms the latter’s appearance of blueness and compactness to be “false.” (Among the members of the latter subschool of Madhyamaka-Swatantrika-Yogachara, Jetari is said to have adhered to the tainted false aspect because he considered that the aspect perceived [e.g., blueness/compactness] was tainted by ignorance, whereas Lavapa is said to adhere to the untainted false aspect because he did not think it was tainted in this way.)

In fact, the view of those who adhered to the true aspect are interesting because of its phenomenalism and its coincidence with Korzybski's thesis that "the pattern is the thing;" however, there can be no doubt as to the superiority of the views of those Madhyamaka-Swatantrika-Yogachara who adhered to the false aspect, who uphold the higher Swatantrika view that coincides with the Prasangika view according to which inherent collections of characteristics cannot be found anywhere—which implies that since there is no inherent pattern or collection of characteristics, by no means could there be an "inherently existing thing," even in the conventional plane.

¹⁵¹ While explaining in his *Abhisamayalamkaraloka* (*mNgong-rtogs rgyan-gyi snang-ba*) the intention of Maitreyanatha's *Abhisamayalamkara* (*mNgong-rtogs rgyan*), Haribhadra stated unequivocally that nondual primordial gnosis (*ye-shes*), rather than mind or the *alaya* consciousness, etc., was alone the essence of all entities. Cf. Dudjom Rinpoche, J. Y. D., English 1991, trans.: Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein, vol. I, p. 184.

¹⁵² In this paragraph of the regular text, I classified Chandrakirti's *Madhyamakavatara* (containing an excellent discussion of the concept of "emptiness of voidness") as an original work, insofar as it was not conceived as a commentary, but as a *supplement* to the *Madhyamakashastra* (*Mulamadhyamakakarikah* or *Prajñanamulamadhyamakakarikah*) by Nagarjuna. The *Mulamadhyamakavrittprasannapada* is a commentary to the same treatise by Nagarjuna. The *Madhyamakavatarabhāṣya* is an autocommentary to the *Madhyamakavatara* (first treatise listed in this note). The *Bodhisattvayogacharachatuḥshatakātika* or *Explanation of (Aryadeva's) Chatuḥshataka* is a commentary to Aryadeva's *Chatuḥshataka*. The *Shunyatasaptativritti* is a commentary to Nagarjuna's *Shunyatasaptatikarika*. The *Yuktishashtikavritti* is a commentary to Nagarjuna's *Yuktishashtikakarika*. The *Pradipodyotana* is a Tantric commentary by Chandrakirti that is focused on the *Guhyasamajatantra*. And so on.

¹⁵³ These two denominations were used by the Sarmapa scholars in Tibet, and Tsongkhapa defended their usage in the following words (Napper, Elizabeth, 2003, p. 166):

"...the usage by scholars of the later dissemination [of the Buddhist doctrine] to the land of the snowy mountains [Tibet] of the two verbal conventions, *Prasangika* and *Svatantrika*, [is nonetheless justified,] for Madhyamikas accord with Chandrakirti's *Mulamadhyamakavrittprasannapada*. Hence, you should not think that it is their own fabrication."

Though the above assertion by Tsongkhapa has been wrongly read as meaning Chandrakirti used those labels in his *Mulamadhyamakavrittprasannapada*, this is not the case. In Napper, Elizabeth, 2003, p. 741, note 319, we find the following clarification of the above:

"In other words, even though the actual terms *Svatantrika* and *Prasangika* as names of the two *Madhyamika* schools are not found in Chandrakirti's *Mulamadhyamakavrittprasannapada*, to separate these two terms out as names for the two schools is quite in accordance with the thought of the *Mulamadhyamakavrittprasannapada* in that a large portion of that text focuses on a defense of Buddhapalita's use of consequences (*prasamga*) and a rejection of Bhavaviveka's use of autonomous (*svatantra*) syllogisms as means for generating in a person a correct understanding of emptiness, and these are concerned with a primary difference in tenets between the two systems."

¹⁵⁴ Concerning the reason why I am giving two different titles for this book, I cite the following extract from Williams, Paul, 1998, p. 39, note 1:

"Thanks to the important work by Akira Saito (Saito, A., 1993) on the Tun-huang versions of the Tibetan translation of the *Bodhicharyavatara* we know that there are two rather different versions of Shantideva's text. What we may call the 'standard received' or 'canonical' text presented in Sanskrit and the Tibetan canon is much longer and different in some important respects from that found in several versions at Tun-huang (and incidentally clearly called the '*Bodhisattvacharyavatara*'). Bu ston and others speak of disputes in India—apparently from early times—concerning which was the correct version of Shantideva's text. Saito considers that (quite probably, but not certainly) the shorter 'noncanonical' version is closer to the original than the canonical version."

¹⁵⁵ In fact, negating that a reality external to consciousness may be either asserted or negated, as the Prasangikas, unlike the Swatantrikas, do, does not imply negating that there is a difference between *swalakshana* in Dharmakirti's sense (i.e., as that which is apprehended in pure perception) and *samanyalakshana* in the sense the same author gave the term (i.e., a subsequent image). Cf. Note 27 to this book.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. note 117.

¹⁵⁷ Another enumeration of the four extremes is as follows: not being, not nonbeing, being-and-nonbeing, and neither-being-nor-nonbeing. Both enumerations are equally valid and equally well known.

¹⁵⁸ The twelve links or *nidana* of interdependent origination or *pratitya samutpada*, the understanding of which is at the root of the realization of Pratyekabuddhas, are:

- (A) The first three, which constitute the determining causes: (1) unawareness of the true condition (*avidya*), (2) repetitive mental formations (*samskara*), (3) consciousness (*vijñāna*);
- (B) The four links that constitute the result of the determining causes: (4) name-and-form (*namarupa*), (5) sense bases (*sadayatana*), (6) contact (*sparsha*), (7) sensation (*vedana*);
- (C) The three links that constitute the causes of existence: (8) desire (*trishna*), (9) attachment (*upadanaskandha*), (10) becoming (*bhava*);
- (D) The two links that constitute the result of the causes of existence: (11) birth (*jati*), and (12) old-age-and-death (*jaramarana*).

The above, which was taken from Part One of my book *Buddhism and Dzogchen*, is based on Norbu, Namkhai [Chögyäl], 1999/2001, p. 153. Note 121 by Adriano Clemente to the said book (same p.) reads:

The twelve links of interdependence or of dependent origination (*rten 'brel bcu gnyis*) define the process of generation of *samsara* on the basis of the principle of cause and effect. Ignorance (*ma rig pa*) indicates not being aware of the true nature of phenomena, ascribing selfhood [or individual self-nature] to what is devoid of self [or individual self-nature] and so on. It engenders mental formations or *samskaras* (*'du byed*) that enable action and consequently the accumulation of karmic traces. The mental formations generate consciousness (*rnam shes*) compelled to take rebirth in [one of the six] forms of existence. At this point, when consciousness enters the mother's womb the five *skandhas* or 'name and form' (*ming gzugs*) are formed; the four 'names': consciousness, sensation, perception and mental formations, and form. Then the six inner sense bases (*skye mched*) or six sense faculties are formed. Through these contact (*reg pa*) occurs with the sense objects. Contact engenders sensation (*tshor ba*), which can be pleasant, unpleasant or neutral. Pleasant sensations kindle the desire (*sred pa*) to possess the object of enjoyment. This desire then becomes attachment to the object, wishing never to be separated from the cause of pleasure (*len pa*). This attachment produces actions capable of creating the causes for a consequent rebirth (*srid pa*) thereby perpetuating becoming. Due to these causes one takes a new rebirth (*skye ba*) with all the suffering involved. Birth ineluctably entails old age and death (*rga shi*) and the cycle of *samsara* repeats itself. Thus each link generates the succeeding one and is in its turn generated by the previous one. On the basis of this principle, by eliminating the first link: ignorance, one eliminates mental formations and so on.

¹⁵⁹ The "four extremes" may be either the ones that were enumerated at the beginning of the paragraph of the regular text of the book to which the reference mark for this note was appended (not permanent, not impermanent, not existent, and not nonexistent), or the ones enumerated in a previous note (being, nonbeing, being-and-nonbeing, neither-being-nor-nonbeing). In turn, the "eight extremes" are:

- (1) unobstructed, (2) unborn, (3) unceasing, (4) not permanent, (5) not coming, (6) not going, (7) having meanings that are not distinct or separate from anything else, and (8) having meanings that are not not distinct or separate from anything else.

¹⁶⁰ The same that was said concerning the Prasangikas' rejection of the self-existence of two truths may be said regarding the higher Swatantrikas' negation of it: this negation is carried out merely on logical grounds, for they posit a Contemplation state (in which absolute truth manifests) and a post-Contemplation state (in which relative truth manifest). In turn, the Dzogchen teachings posit a single truth insofar as they reject the validity of a post-Contemplation state and insist on maintaining the state of Contemplation throughout all activities of daily life—so that it no longer can be considered to be a state of Contemplation, for there is no post-Contemplation with which it may be contrasted.

¹⁶¹ The four voidnesses are: (1) the emptiness of compounded or conditioned entities; (2) the emptiness of un-compounded or unconditioned entities; (3) the emptiness of the 'I', and (4) the emptiness of what is not the 'I'.

¹⁶² These sixteen types of voidness are predicated of what are regarded as the main sixteen bases for the imputation of true existence, or, conversely, as the main sixteen bases for the imputation of voidness. In fact, the sixteen voidnesses correspond to the lack of self-existence of: the following: (1) internal phenomena; (2) external phenomena; (3) phenomena that are neither internal nor external; (4) voidness

itself (this is the renowned “voidness of voidness”); (5) greatness, or, what is the same, everything in total space (expressed as “everything in the ten directions”); (6) ultimacy (i.e., *nirvana*: the third Noble Truth that is the cessation of both *dukkha* and its cause); (7) conditioned, made, fabricated, born phenomena; (8) unconditioned, unmade, nonfabricated, unborn phenomena; (9) that which is beyond the extremes, namely interdependent origination; (10) that which is beginningless and endless, namely *samsara* or cyclic existence; (11) that which cannot be abandoned, consisting of the stages of the Mahayana Path; (12) the nature of things; (13) everything; (14) definitions; (15) that which cannot be objectified, namely past, present and future; (16) that which is not a phenomenon, namely the lack of [true] existence of everything. It is noted that, from the standpoint of voidness, these sixteen are all the same.

¹⁶³ These correspond to the addition of the voidnesses of each of the eighteen sense constituents (Skt., *ashtadashadhatu*; Tib., kham chogye [*kham bco-brgyad*]), which are the six external constituents or sense-objects, the six internal constituents or sense organs, and the six sense-consciousnesses.

¹⁶⁴ Chandrakirti posited the true nature of all phenomena (Skt., *dharmata*; Tib., chönyi [*chos-nyid*]) to be self-existent (Skt., *swabhava*; Tib., rangzhin [*rang-bzhin*]). As we will see in the section of this chapter comparing the Yogachara and Mahamadhyamaka schools of philosophy (in the context of the discussion of the difference between the conceptions that these two schools developed with regard to spontaneous awareness), in the *Madhyamakavatareshya* (*dBu ma la 'jug pa'i bshad pa / dBu ma la 'jug pa'i rang 'grel*) Chandrakirti wrote:

“Does a nature, as asserted by the Master [Nagarjuna], that is qualified in such a way [as described in Nagarjuna’s *Mulamadhyamakakarikah* XV.2cd, which Chandrakirti has just cited] exist? The absolute nature of phenomena (Skt., *dharmata*; Tib., chönyi [*chos-nyid*]) that the Supramundane Victor set forth—“Whether the Tathagatas appear or not, the absolute nature of phenomena just abides”—exists. Also, what is this absolute nature of phenomena? It is the absolute nature (Skt., *swabhava*; Tib., rangzhin [*rang-bzhin*]) of these eyes and so forth. And, what is the nature of these? It is their non-fabricatedness, that which does not depend on another, their entity-ness that is realized by wisdom free from the dimness of unawareness. Does it exist or not? If it did not exist, for what purpose would bodhisattvas cultivate the Path of the paramitas? Why would bodhisattvas initiate hundreds of difficulties for the sake of realizing the absolute nature of phenomena?”

The Sanskrit term *bhava* means existence, while the prefix *swa* may be translated alternatively as “self-“ or “spontaneous.” In the case of *swabhava*, there is no alternative to its translation as “self-existence.” And in fact there can be no doubt that Chandrakirti is proclaiming the true nature of all phenomena that is the *dharmata* to exist, for at the end he concludes “Does [the *dharmata*] exist or not? If it did not exist, for what purpose would bodhisattvas cultivate the Path of the paramitas? Why would bodhisattvas initiate hundreds of difficulties for the sake of realizing the absolute nature of phenomena?” And, insofar as he categorizes this *bhava* as being *swabhava*, he is affirming this existence to be what Gelugpas like to refer to as inherent. (It is to this that I am objecting here; I would not object to it had Chandrakirti categorized the *dharmata* as being actual [Skt., *arthakriyashakti*; Tib., dönche nūpa].)

Existence—and hence *far less so self-existence*—may not be predicated concerning the absolute nature of phenomena (Skt., *dharmata*; Tib., chönyi); since there cannot be anything wider or more encompassing than the true condition of all entities, this condition cannot have a *genus proximum*; insofar as there is nothing that this condition excludes, it has no *differentia specifica*; therefore, it is obvious that this condition cannot be defined, referred to or explained in terms of any concept. Someone could think that, since according to a long series of Western philosophers ranging from Aristotle to Heidegger, the concept of being is the most general of concepts, the true condition of all entities (independently of whether we call it spontaneous awareness or *dharmata*) could be conceived in terms of the concept of being. However, though it is true that the concept of being, like the true nature of all entities, has no *genus proximum*, unlike the true nature of all entities the concept of being has a *differentia specifica*, for being can be said not not-to-be (and the same applies to the verb *to exist*, which in this context means *to be*). Since the concept of being has a limit that does not apply to the true nature of all entities, it is utterly absurd to claim, as did Chandrakirti, that the true nature of all entities *exists*—and it is even more absurd to assert that *it is self-existent*. Furthermore, the true nature of all entities neither comes into being nor ceases to be; therefore, it is clear that *it is beyond being and nonbeing*.

¹⁶⁵ Authorship of this text has often been attributed to “Maitreya-Asanga,” which traditionally Tibetans have interpreted as meaning that Asanga was inspired by the Buddha of the future, Maitreya. The truth is that Asanga’s thought was formed through his close association with the teacher Maitreyanatha, also called the Regent Ajita, and so nowadays it is universally admitted that whenever the name Maitreya is given as the author or co-author of a book by Asanga, it stands for Maitreyanatha-Ajita.

¹⁶⁶ In Sartre, Jean-Paul, 1942, 31st edition, 1980, the author explains that if my wallet falls from my pocket or is stolen in the queue for boarding the bus, the wallet will be absent from my pocket, but this absence will not necessarily be present to me. However, when I board the bus and reach to the wallet in order to pay the conductor, its absence will become present to me. This is the presence of the wallet’s absence. In the case of the practice being considered, it is not an object’s absence that becomes present at the term of the analysis, but the absence of the object’s self-existence. Then, immediately after this experience, the said absence is enunciated discursively in the meditator’s mind. According to this school, voidness is the presence of the absence of the object’s supposedly “inherent existence,” which ceases to manifest once the discursive enunciation of that absence takes place; therefore, the meditator is taught to use his or her calm abiding (Skt., *shamatha*; Pali, *samatha*; Tib., zhine [*zhi-gnas*]; Chinese *chih*) to sustain the said presence of the absence for as long as possible, rather than allowing its discursive enunciation to manifest immediately. Furthermore, they hold that the absolute truth is nonconceptual, and so they attempt to turn the experience of this voidness into a nonconceptual experience by means of calm abiding...

It seems that this school fails to realize that, besides there being coarse, discursive thoughts such as the ones that enunciate the object’s voidness immediately after the absence of that object’s supposedly “inherent existence” has ceased to be present to the meditator, there are also subtle, intuitive thoughts, as well as supersubtle thoughts, and that thoughts of both these two kinds are delusorily valued in the experience of emptiness that it regards as the ultimate truth—which, therefore, is but another samsaric experience.

(It must be noted that in the practice of analysis as taught by the Yogacharas the emptiness that is sought is the realization that the object is not separate or independent from the mind, whereas in the Madhyamaka-Swatantrika-Yogachara version of the practice what is sought is the object’s emptiness in the rangtong (*rang-stong*) or *swabhava shunyata* sense of the term.)

¹⁶⁷ (a) The thoughts called “coarse” correspond to what Hume called “ideas” (a concept he took from Locke and Berkeley, but which he modified in order to make it suit his own worldview), which are mental phenomena of dang (*gdangs*) energy that reproduce “material” phenomena of tsel (*rtsal*) energy, and therefore are particular rather than universal (Hume’s nominalism having to do with the fact that this is the only kind of ideas or thoughts he admitted); these include both discursive thoughts, which are copies of impressions of hearing and which, insofar as they are “pronounced” in our minds, are temporal, and the patterns or configurations of sight (in combination or not with the other senses), which are copies of the impressions received through the senses involved and which are spatial.

(b) The thoughts called “subtle” are those that Descartes called “intuitive concepts,” which rather than being sequentially pronounced by our imagination, are *instantaneous, mute comprehensions of essence* that, in the *recognition* (in the sense in which authors such as H. H. Price [1975] use the term) of sensory collections of characteristics (Skt. *lakshana*; Tib. tsempai [*mtshan dpe*])—regardless of whether the latter are what Hume called impressions or what he called ideas—interpret and experience them in terms of universals (which, however, are neither absolute truths nor sources of truth; on the contrary, when we take them for the absolute truth of essents, delusion ensues; furthermore, just like what Hume called impressions and what he termed ideas, they are phenomena that exist only insofar as they appear in the human mind, and that even while they appear are empty of self-existence or substance).

(c) The paradigmatic expression of the thoughts called “super-subtle” is the threefold directional thought structure that, as shown in the preceding chapter, consists in the notion of an experience, something experienced and an experiencer, or of an action, something done and a doer of action.

When the vibratory activity at the root of the delusory valuation-absolutization of thought sustains the “discursive thoughts”—which as we have seen are a type of (a) coarse thoughts—that follow each other in reasoning, as well as the subtle thoughts that come into play again and again in the course of the reasoning, we take them to be either the absolute truth, or something absolutely false, with regard to that which the thoughts interpret.

When the activity in question sustains (b) the subtle / intuitive thoughts coming into play in sensory perception, we confuse these thoughts with the territory they interpret and take them to be entities-in-themselves.

When this activity sustains (c) the *threefold thought-structure*, the result is the manifestation of the *threefold directional apparitional structure*, which comprises the delusive subject-object duality, condition of possibility of knowledge and action—which by the same token appears to be part of an absolutely true, objective reality, so that we feel we are mental subjects or souls at a distance from an objectively existent “physical universe” (as will be shown below, it was this that led Descartes to take no notice of the fact that the mental subject and its objects were simply projections of delusorily valued thought, and posit them as elements of a *given*, objective, self-existent reality).

As shown elsewhere, when it is said that we are being affected by a passion, what has actually happened is that the delusory valuation-absolutization of thought has become more intense, and this has intensified the sensation in the center of the chest associated with the vibratory function at the root of delusion and with the tensions it elicits, by the same token increasing the strength of thoughts and hence their power to lead us unreflectingly into action.

¹⁶⁸ The Mahayana holds that good and evil depend on intention, and intention is generally held to depend on consciousness. Besides, according to the Yogacharas the maturation of good and bad karmas depends on the continuity of consciousness. This is why in *Bodhicharyavatara* 9: 11 Shantideva offered us the following dialogue:

“[Proponent of the Chittamatra view:] If consciousness does not exist, then there is no evil in, for example, murdering an illusory man.

“[Proponent of the Madhyamika view:] On the contrary, [even though there is no consciousness], insofar as one is endowed with the illusion of consciousness, [depending on intentions] good and evil arise.”

¹⁶⁹ For a biography of Tsongkhapa cf. Thurman, Robert (1982), *The Life and Teachings of Tsong Khapa*, pp. 4-39 (Dharamsala, India, Library of Tibetan Works and Archives). This book also provides the neophyte with a sum-up of Tsongkhapa’s views.

¹⁷⁰ The original way of describing this method of *vipashyana* meditation (Pali, *vipassana*; Tib., lhantong [*lhag-mthong*]; Chinese, *kuan*) was not “analyzing whether or not an entity exists *in the way in which it appears to exist*,” but simply “analyzing whether or not an entity exists.” The point is that, as will be shown in a subsequent subsection of this discussion of Tsongkhapa’s Lamrim works, what deluded beings refer to by the verb “to exist” is precisely what in these works Tsongkhapa called “to exist independently and inherently.”

¹⁷¹ In a note four notes before the present one Sartre’s distinction between an absence and the presence of this absence’s was explained. As shown in the same note, in the case of the practice being considered, it is not an object’s absence that becomes present at the term of the analysis, but the absence of the mode of existence wrongly attributed to it: the meditator had always thought the object of analysis was “inherently existing” and had always experienced it as such, but at the term of the analysis the absence of the object’s supposedly “inherent existence” becomes present to she or he. Then, immediately after this experience, the said absence is enunciated discursively in the meditator’s mind. We have seen that, according to this school, voidness is the presence of the absence of the object’s supposedly “inherent existence,” which ceases to manifest once the discursive enunciation of that absence takes place; therefore, the meditator is taught to use his or her calm abiding (Skt., *shamatha*; Pali, *samatha*; Tib., zhine [*zhi-gnas*]; Chinese *chih*) to sustain the said presence and the absence for as long as possible, rather than allowing its discursive enunciation to manifest immediately.

In the same note it was stated that it seems that this school fails to realize that, besides there being coarse, discursive thoughts such as the ones that enunciate the object’s voidness immediately after the absence of that object’s supposedly “inherent existence” has ceased to be present to the meditator, there are also subtle, intuitive thoughts, as well as supersubtle thoughts, and that thoughts of both these two kinds are delusorily valued in the experience that it regards as the ultimate truth—which, therefore, is but another samsaric experience.

¹⁷² In a note four notes before the present one it was stated that coarse thoughts comprise, among others, those that Descartes called “discursive,” which are sequentially articulated by “mentally pronouncing” chains of words.

It was also stated that subtle thoughts are those that Descartes designated as “intuitive,” which are comprehensions of essence taking place in a state of “mental muteness,” and which are the first ones to manifest in the recognition of data of *all* senses.

Lastly, it was also stated that there are thoughts that the inner Tantric teachings designate as “super-subtle:” the basic structure known as the “directional threefold thought structure,” which upon being delusorily valued gives rise to the illusion that there is (1) an experience, (2) something experienced and (3) someone who experiences, and therefore produces the illusory subject-object duality that marks all of samsaric experience.

¹⁷³ This is the sense in which the term “absolute” is used in Buddhist philosophy, but the term has other senses also. For example, absolute alcohol is 100% alcohol—i.e., alcohol that is not mixed with water. And so on.

¹⁷⁴ A brief explanation of the term “metaontological hermeneutics” is provided in the last endnote to the Introduction.

¹⁷⁵ Nonaffirming negation, nonimplicative negation or absolute negation (Skt., *prasajyapratishedha*; Tib., megag [*med dgag*]) is a negation which negates the object of negation without implying anything else, as in the statement “A brahmin should not drink alcohol” (Capriles, 2005). Jeffrey Hopkins (1983, p. 723) defines this type of negation as “a negative which is such that the term expressing it does not suggest in place of the negation of its own object of negation another, positive phenomenon which is its own object of negation.” This is the type of negation employed by a Madhyamika negating an object’s supposed *swabhava* or self-existence.

On the other hand, affirming negation or implicative negation (Skt., *paryudasapratishedha*; Tib., *ma yin dgag*) is a negation that upon negating its object of negation implies the assertion of some other facts, as in the statement “this man is not a brahmin” (which implies he either belongs to another of the Hindu casts, or has no cast whatsoever and thus is either a *dalit*, an *adivasi* or a non-Indian).

Whereas Je Tsongkhapa views the apprehension of ultimate truth in the Contemplation state of the superior bodhisattva as involving nonaffirming negation or absolute negation, and views this type of negation as a distinguishing feature of Prasangika, Mipham (cf. Pettit, 1999, p. 109) sees it as a special emphasis of the Swatantrika system. Pettit (ibidem) writes:

“According to Mipham, absolute negation is a suitable way to conceptualize the ultimate for beginners, but because it is still a conceptual formula, it does not represent the final significance of nonelaboration (*nishprapañcha*; *spros bral*). It is a mere nonsubstantiality (*ngos med*), as opposed to substantial existence (*ngos po*). It corresponds to the analytical wisdom (*prajñā*, *shes rab*) of the post-meditative state and is adequate to emptiness as an object of ... thought but not to the nonconceptual gnosis of sublime equipoise (*aryajñāna*, *’phags pa ’i ye shes*).”

¹⁷⁶ Let us remember that in Buddhist terminology one consciousness does not correspond to an individual, but is one of the numberless, successive cognitions of each and every individual. This means that, since no individual perceives one single voidness all the time, but perceives many different objects, some of which Tsongkhapa deemed to be voidnesses and some of which he deemed not to be voidnesses, in the same individual, “consciousnesses that are concordant ultimates” succeed themselves with “consciousnesses that are relative and deluded.”

¹⁷⁷ Elizabeth Napper writes concerning Tsongkhapa’s view (Napper, Elizabeth, p. 81):

“There are two ways to approach the topic of what prevents beings’ liberation: objectively, by way of the object misconceived, or subjectively, by way of the misconceiving consciousness. Both are objects of negation. The objective—inherent existence—is the object of negation by reasoning; reasoning refutes inherent existence in the sense that through reasoning the absence of inherent existence is demonstrated, or made known, and one comes to disbelieve in inherent existence. The subjective object of negation—

the ignorance misconceiving inherent existence—is the object of negation by the Path; a Path consciousness—a wisdom consciousness realizing emptiness—acts as a direct antidote to the ignorance misconceiving the opposite of emptiness and eradicates it such that it will not reoccur. For Tsongkhapa, the former object of negation is primary, for it is by way of refuting it that the latter is overcome.”

This “former object of negation” is for Tsongkhapa the wrong perception of what “does not exist inherently” as “existing inherently.” The latter is the ignorance projecting “inherent existence.” Napper writes (note 125 p. 682):

“The formulation of this discussion in terms of the ‘object of negation’ (*dgad bya, pratishedya*) seems to be a late and perhaps Tibetan innovation. The term ‘object of negation’ is used by Nagarjuna in the *Vigrahavyavartanikarika*, verses 14 – 16 (Lindtner’s Nagarjuniana, p. 78), but not in this context. Tsongkhapa (Dharmasala edition of the *Lamrim Chenmo*, 419b.4-420^a.2, Wayman’s translation, p. 261) cites the *Vigrahavyavartanikarika*, verse 27, and Nagarjuna’s commentary on it as indicating both objects of negation although the actual term is not used there.

“The locus classicus for the non-existent object of negation, that refuted by reasoning, and the need to identify it well is the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara* (*sPyod ’jug*, IX.140ab) by the eighth century Madhyamika Shantideva: ‘Without contacting the entity which is imputed (*brtags pa’i dngos, kalpitam bhavam*) one will not apprehend the absence of that entity’, is cited by Tsongkhapa at the opening of this section on the object of negation (see p. 177).

“The idea of contacting, or identifying, that which is to be negated is an important part of Gelugpa meditation on emptiness where it is emphasized that prior to engaging in reasoned refutation of inherent existence, one must gain experientially a vivid sense of just what it is that one is refuting. See Sopa and Hopkins’ *Practice and Theory of Tibetan Buddhism* (London, Rider & Co, 1976) pp 38-9 and the Fifth Dalai Lama’s *Practice of Emptiness* [the “Perfection of Wisdom Chapter” of the Fifth Dalai Lama’s Sacred Word of Mañjushri (*Jam dpal zhal lung*)] (Jeffrey Hopkins, translator, Dharmasala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 1974), pp. 11-13.”

The Dzogchen approach is utterly different, for rather than asserting that the perception of emptiness as object neutralizes the ignorance projecting self-existence, it asserts that this sustains the subject-object duality, which is the most basic manifestation of *avidya* or marigpa in the second of the senses the term has in the Dzogchen classification adopted here and the most basic samsaric phenomenon. According to Dzogchen, what neutralizes delusion and *samsara* is the repeated, simultaneous, spontaneous liberation of subject and object upon the self-reGnition (of) nondual Awake awareness—a dissolution of delusion that again and again makes the true condition of reality patent, progressively neutralizing the propensities for it to manifest and giving rise to ever greater confidence on the direct Vision of the true condition.

¹⁷⁸ Tsongkhapa was not unaware that the *dharmata* was understood to be the absolute truth of the Prasangika, or that those who so understood it asserted that the *dharmata* could not be an object of knowledge. In fact, this was the position of Loden Sherab, which Tsongkhapa knew and which he intended to refute in his writings. In Napper, Elizabeth, 2003, p. 711, note 241, we read:

“...Shamar Tendzin (*Lhag mthong chen mo’i dka’ gnad rnams brjed byang du bkod pa dgongs zab snang ba’s sgron me*, 76.1-76.4), listing some of those whose views Tsongkhapa was refuting gives the following examples:

“Ngok-lo-tsa-wa (rngog lo chen po, i.e., Loden Sherab), thinking that since there was not in the least true establishment able to withstand analysis by reasoning, it was not feasible that a reasoning consciousness established the *dharmata* (*chos-nyid*), said that the ultimate truth was not an object of knowledge.” (For further details with regard to this criticism, see Hopkins, Jeffrey, 1983 and Thurman, Robert, 1984.)

The fact that so long as the subject-object duality is manifest the *dharmata* is veiled, that conceptualization as involved in reasoning veils the *dharmata*, that the ultimate truth is not an object of knowledge, and that therefore it is impossible for a reasoning consciousness to establish the *dharmata* (*chos-nyid*), are the most basic and self-evident truths of the Prasangika, of Madhyamaka and of the Mahayana in general. It is precisely this that the verses by both Aryadeva and Shantideva cited in the regular text are saying, and what a verse by Nagarjuna that will be cited below in the regular text also asserts.

¹⁷⁹ This is a definitively provisional (Skt., *neyartha*; Tib., drangdön [*drang-don*]) way of explaining, which is how I consider the *Sandhinirmochanasutra* to be, and which was compounded by Tsongkhapa on the basis of the *pramana* teachings by Dignaga and Dharmakirti. As will be shown below in the regular text of this chapter, according to the Dzogchen teachings, even if emptiness manifests in a cognition of this

kind, and subject and object seem to be fused like water poured in water, this is not the realization of rigpa or nondual Awake awareness, but merely an illusory experience (*nyam [nyams]*) of voidness.

¹⁸⁰ Whatever involves negation must necessarily have been processed by the digital functioning that in males is mainly associated to the left cerebral hemisphere and that in females is mainly associated to the right cerebral hemisphere, responsible for conceptual, dualistic thinking. And whatever involves the subject-object duality results from the delusory valuation-absolutization of the super-subtle conceptual structure called the “threefold projection.”

¹⁸¹ Elizabeth Napper writes (Napper, Elizabeth, 2003, p. 695, note 177):

“One of Tsongkhapa’s fine distinctions is the difference between something’s not being seen by a consciousness and its being seen as nonexistent by that consciousness. An ultimate consciousness does not see conventionalities, but it does not see them as nonexistent, and thus does not negate them.”

Here it is important to make the right distinctions: for Tsongkhapa, so long as we are not aware that in general we wrongly perceive things as “inherently existing,” we can hardly proceed on the Path; to this aim we must make the delusive perception of “inherent existence” appear, and realize that in truth there is no basis for this perception. However, when the Fruit manifests there is no longer a consciousness that sees conventionalities as nonexistent, for both the vision of conventionalities as existent and the vision of them as nonexistent are visions of conventionalities, and in the Fruit there are no longer such visions, no matter their sign. Though in this respect the Lamrim works are quite right (at least from the standpoint of a gradual Path involving analysis), they are utterly wrong in asserting that in the practice of analysis a consciousness apprehends voidness, and that this voidness is the absolute truth: absolute truth, which is not voidness, is only apprehended by nondual Primordial Gnosis/Wisdom (Skt., *jñāna*; Tib., *yeshe [ye-shes]*), which is precisely that which does not see conventionalities either as existent or as nonexistent, and which cannot apprehend nonexistences, for it does not negate. Since the wisdom that apprehends ultimate truth does not negate, ultimate truth could not be voidness, which as conceived by Tsongkhapa is a negation (the presence of the absence of the mode of existence we had wrongly projected on an entity).

¹⁸² Nonaffirming negation, nonimplicative negation or absolute negation (Skt. *prasajyapratisedha*; Tib. *megag [med dgag]*) is a negation which negates the object of negation without implying anything else, as in the statement “A brahmin should not drink alcohol” (Capriles, 2005). Jeffrey Hopkins (1983, p. 723) defines this type of negation as “a negative which is such that the term expressing it does not suggest in place of the negation of its own object of negation another, positive phenomenon which is its own object of negation.” This is the type of negation employed by a Mādhyamika negating an object’s supposed *svabhāva* or self-existence.

On the other hand, affirming negation or implicative negation (Skt. *pariyudasapratisedha*; Tib. *ma yin dgag*) is a negation that upon negating its object of negation implies the assertion of some other facts, as in the statement “this man is not a brahmin” (which implies he either belongs to another of the Hindu casts, or has no cast whatsoever and thus is either a *dalit* or “oppressed” (i.e., that which Brahmanism calls *achuta* or “untouchable” and that Gandhi referred to by the *Rigveda*-contradicting euphemism *harijan*), an *adivasi* or a non-Indian).

Whereas Je Tsongkhapa views the apprehension of ultimate truth in the Contemplation state of the superior bodhisattva as involving nonaffirming negation or absolute negation, and views this type of negation as a distinguishing feature of Prāsaṅgika, Mipham (cf. Pettit, 1999, p. 109) sees it as a special emphasis of the Svāntarika system. Pettit (*Ibidem*) writes:

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¹⁸³ The twenty-one semdzins (*sems-'dzin*) were taught in the Root Tantra of the Menngagde (*Man-ngag-sde*) or Upadeshavarga series of Dzogchen teachings, which is the *Drataljur* (*sGra-thal-'gyur: Rin po che 'byung bar byed pa sgra thal 'gyur chen po'i rgyud*), as a means to access the initial unveilings of the true condition of all phenomena that the Dzogchen teachings refer to as the Base, *bodhichitta*, Dzogchen, *thig-le chen-po*, thigle chik (*thig-le gcig*), etc.

Legitimate methods of practice may arise independently in different schools, vehicles and Paths, and even in different religions, so far as in these schools, vehicles, Paths and religions there be a breed of individuals who, during their process of Awakening, receive them as Revelation and apply them, attaining realization through their practice. In the case of the individuals called *tönpa* [*ston-pa*] or Primordial Revealers, this can occur with complete Paths and vehicles, as seemingly happened with Dzogchen-Ati, which arose both in Bön (through *tönpa* Shenrab Miwoche [*gShen-rab Mi-bo-che*], who according to the records that seem to be most trustworthy was born in 1856 BC) and in Buddhism (through the *tönpa* Garab Dorje [*dGa'-rab rDo-rje*], who according to some records was born in 55 CE). In the case of those called *tertöns* [*gter ston*] or Treasure Revealers, it cannot occur with a whole Path or vehicle, but can occur with particular methods and teachings *within* a given Buddhist Path of vehicle, as has happened with many of the *terma* (*gter ma*) teachings and methods revealed by the manifold *tertöns* that have manifested throughout the history of the *dharmā*.

However, as we will see toward the end of the regular text of this book, on the basis of the fact that Nubchen Sangye Yeshe (*gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas Ye-shes*) asserted in the *Samten Migdrön* (*bSam-gtan Mig-sgron*) that the Dzogchen Atiyoga was the “universal ancestor of all vehicles,” recently some Masters have claimed that Buddhist vehicles ranging from the Mahayana to the Anuyogatantrayana were produced by Dzogchen Atiyoga Masters to cater to the needs, propensities and likes of people of lower capacities. According to this view, the Mahayana incorporated many concepts and methods from the Dzogchen teachings, but since these had to fit into the general framework of the Sutrayana, and since the followers of the Mahayana had lower capacities than Dzogchenpas, in the lower vehicles some of the basic principles of the teachings assimilated had to be modified. In the context of this explanation, it is quite natural to conjecture that the Mahayana posited as the absolute truth the experience resulting from the gradual method taught for gaining access to the experience of voidness, despite the fact that this experience is but a *nyam* [*nyams*] or illusory experience, as a means for assuaging the shravakas’ terror of absolute voidness: it would for this reason that the method being discussed was taught in the Shrivakabhumi chapter of the *Yogacharabhumi*.

Contrariwise, those who, being conditioned by the teachings of the Sutrayana, believe in the primacy of this vehicle and think other *yanas* developed out of it, have concluded that some Dzogchen Masters took from the Mahayana the gradual method to gain access to the experience of voidness and included it in their *semdzins*.

However, since the source of the methods taught in the *Yogacharabhumi* is the *Sandhinirmochanasutra*, universally acknowledged to be a text taught directly by the Buddha Shakyamuni during the Third Promulgation, and since Shakyamuni never received Dzogchen teachings, it seems just impossible that the Mahayana may have borrowed from the Dzogchen tradition the method we are concerned with. And since the source of the 21 *semdzin* is the *Drataljur*, celebrated as the root Tantra of the Dzogchen Upadeshavarga and held to have originated directly from the dharmakaya Samantabhadra in very ancient times, it seems impossible that the Dzogchen teachings may have borrowed this method from the Mahayana. Therefore, in the absence of concrete proofs substantiating either hypothesis, scholars should abstain from asserting that either vehicle absorbed the gradual approach to the experience of voidness from the other.

¹⁸⁴ This refers specifically to the second of the three senses the terms *avidya* and *marigpa* (*ma-rig-pa*) have in the Dzogchen classification adopted here.

¹⁸⁵ As we have seen, in the gradual Mahayana *thatness* manifests in the first of the four stages of the second *bodhisattva* path, before absolute *prajña* wisdom manifests; this is so because it can manifest in non-nirvanic conditions (including the condition of *kunzhi* in which, as seen in the comparison of *Yogachara* and Dzogchen, neither *samsara* nor *nirvana* are active): it is a mere illusory experience or *nyam* that, like a reflection, manifests in the primordial awareness that the Dzogchen teachings compare with a mirror.

According to the gradual Mahayana, absolute *prajña* wisdom manifests in the third path, and according to the sudden Mahayana it manifests suddenly upon sudden Awakening. What the Sutra refers to is not the initial breakthrough in which absolute *prajña* wisdom manifests, but a subsequent condition in which it has become stable in sessions of Contemplation, and perhaps even beyond such sessions (let us remember that in the sudden Mahayana one is supposed to carry the state of Contemplation beyond sitting sessions, into the totality of one’s life).

¹⁸⁶ This Japanese term means “nothing but (*shikan*) precisely (*ta*) sitting (*za*),” a type of *zazen* in which none of the supportive techniques used by beginners are applied. Taisen Deshimaru writes (Master Dogen / Taisen Deshimaru, 1970):

“According to (Master Dogen), sitting in *zazen* is *nirvana*. Without the practice of *zazen*, *satori* cannot be obtained; in other words, the practice of *zazen* is but *satori* (itself).”

¹⁸⁷ The four *da* (*da*) of the Longde Series of Dzogchen teachings are: *selwa* (*gsal-ba*) or *selwai da* (*gsal-ba'i da*); *mitogpa* (*mi-rtog-pa*) or *mitogpai da* (*mi-rtog-pa'i da*); *dewa* (*bde-ba*) or *dewai da* (*dbe-ba'i da*); and *jermaj* (*dbyer-med*) or *jermegyi da* (*dbyer-med-gyi da*). By themselves, the first three are but illusory experiences or *nyams* (*nyams*); only when the fourth *da* is manifest are the other three *da* integrated in the state of Awake awareness or *rigpa* (*rig-pa*), and so only in this case are the first three elements of the true realization of Dzogchen.

¹⁸⁸ Kennard Lipman concludes: “See H. V. Guenther, “‘Meditation’ Trends in Early Tibet,” in *Early Ch’an in China and Tibet*, p. 352. There is a parallel passage in the *bKa’-thang sde-lnga*, edited and translated by G. Tucci in his *Minor Buddhist Texts* (Rome, Is.M.E.O., 1958), p. 68 ff. He mistranslates: The Indian *acharya* Kamalashila did not fully realize (the meaning) of the sutras, the sense of which is to be determined (i.e., relative, *drang don*, *neyartha*)... (p. 82, the passage in Tibetan in to be found on p. 69). The text has the same meaning as that of the *bSam-gtan Mig-sgron*.”

¹⁸⁹ In the *Sutra of Hui-neng* it is apparent that at the time it was preached people referred to the Northern School as the “Gradual School,” and to the Southern School as the “Sudden School.” However, Hui-neng rejected this distinction by saying (Wong Mou-Lam and A. F. Price, translators, 1969, pp. 83-4):

“So far as the *dharma* is concerned, there can be only one School. (If a distinction exists) it does so in the fact that the founder of a school is a northern man, while the other is a southerner. While there is only one *dharma*, some disciples will realize it more quickly than others. The reason why the names ‘Sudden’ and ‘Gradual’ is given is because some disciples are superior to others in mental disposition. So far as the *dharma* is concerned the distinction of ‘Sudden’ and ‘Gradual’ does not exist.”

So the idea that the Northern School was gradual, whether the Southern One was sudden, arose on the grounds that the founder of the Northern School was slower-witted than the founder of the Southern one, rather than on the principles taught by both schools, which were not different from each other.

However, the idea that the Northern School developed a quietistic deviation is not referred to in the *Sutra of Hui-neng*, and I suspect it was a later concoction having to do with the result of the alleged debate of Samye.

¹⁹⁰ Occasionally, in some sutras we find the term “existence” qualified by an adjective or by an adverb; for example, in the *Sutra of Transcendent Discriminating Wisdom in One Hundred Thousand Stanzas* (Tib., *Sher-phyin stong-phrag brgya-pa* [or ‘bum] *mdo*; Skt. *Shatasahasrikaprajñāparamitasutra*) we can find the term “existence” qualified as “absolute” or “ultimate” (Skt., *paramartha*; Tib., *döndam [don dam]*).

In turn, in the works by Nagarjuna, in a few occasions the term “inherent existence” (Skt., *swabhava*; Tib., *rangzhin [rang-bzhin]*) is found. However, in the works by Chandrakirti the term “inherent existence” is found many times, as it was Chandrakirti who first insisted on the need to qualify the term “existence” with some regularity (a regularity, which, however, is never absolute: even Tsongkhapa, who is more insistent on the need to qualify the term “existence” than Chandrakirti himself, doesn’t qualify it on each and every occasion he introduces it in his writings).

For a discussion of this, see Napper, Elizabeth, 2003, pp. 33-38.

¹⁹¹ In the past I used the term “overvaluation of thought.” However, my dictionaries define “to overvalue” as “assigning an excessive or fictitious value to.” Since in themselves our thoughts have neither value nor nonvalue, delusion consists in “assigning them a fictitious value,” and could by no means consist in “assigning them an excessive value” (for this would imply that they have some value in themselves and that we attribute them greater value than they have). It was in order to exclude the idea of “assigning an excessive value to thoughts” and circumscribe the concept to its meaning of “assigning a fictitious value to thoughts” that I coined the term “delusory valuation-absolutization of thought,” which makes it clear that assigning them *any* value is assigning them a *fictitious* value. In fact, it is this activity that leads us to take the relative as absolute, the dependent as independent, the spurious as true, the put as given, the conditioned as unconditioned, the contingent as inherent, and so on—which is the basic delusion corresponding to the second of the senses the terms *avidya* and *marigpa* have in the Dzogchen

classification adopted here. Furthermore, overvaluation is used as the translation of another Tibetan and Sanskrit term

The concept of delusory valuation-absolutization of thought is proper of the yogis, rather than being typical of scholars, for it is principally the former who, due to increased awareness of what goes on in their own internal jing (*dbyings*) or dimension, become aware of the vibratory activity that endows thoughts with the illusion of truth, value and importance.

¹⁹² For a more detailed consideration of the term “delusory valuation-absolutization,” see Capriles (2000a, 2000b); see also the explanation of “overvaluation” in Capriles (1994b).

¹⁹³ As shown in the paragraph of the regular text to which the reference mark for this note was affixed, what we normally understand by “being” is the delusive phenomenon that results from the delusory valuation-absolutization of the concept of being, and what we normally understand by “nonbeing” is the delusive phenomenon that results from the delusory valuation-absolutization of the concept of nonbeing. Since the Madhyamikas were not heedless people who contradicted the laws of logic for the sake of it, it is clear that by denying both existence and nonexistence they were asserting the delusive character, both of the experience we call “being” or “existence,” which results from the delusory valuation-absolutization of the concept of being, and of the experience we call “nonexistence” or “nonbeing,” which results from the delusory valuation and absolutization of the concept of nonbeing. Since this is so, there is no need to add the adjective “inherent” to “existence” or the adjective “utter” to “nonexistence.”

However, in the context of the discussion of Tsongkhapa’s position, it is mandatory to use his terminology, and the same applies in the context of the discussion of the differences between the Swatantrika and Prasangika views (for Prasangikas used this language when contrasting their own position to that of the Swatantrikas and therefore it is the standard terminology in this context).

¹⁹⁴ In fact, we learn our concepts, judgements and ideas from others through their words (for example, one’s parents say “dog,” “cat,” “pot,” while pointing at the respective objects, or assert “this is a very fast plane,” and so on); therefore, we first learn them in a discursive manner. Only after we have so learned our concepts, judgements and ideas can these manifest intuitively (i.e., without being “mentally pronounced” as words and chainings of words).

(For an explanation of coarse, subtle and super-subtle thoughts see notes 159 and 164.)

¹⁹⁵ For an explanation of the three senses the Dzogchen classification adopted here give the Sanskrit term *avidya* and its Tibetan equivalent, *marigpa* (*ma-rig-pa*), cf. note 68.

On the basis of the said explanation, it is easy to see that the explanation of *avidya* or *ma-rig-pa* in the regular text, to which the reference mark for this note was appended (and in general in the use of the terms throughout Part One of this book), referred to the combination of the three above meanings (the latter two of which are always underlay by the first, and in normal individuals always accompany each other). In fact, it is only when *samsara* is active (and therefore when *avidya* or *ma-rig-pa* also manifests as the second and third types), that these terms are to be translated as “delusion.”

¹⁹⁶ Pettit (1999, p. 494, note 402) writes:

Yeshe Thabkay, professor of philosophy at the Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies in Sarnath, India, notes: “Most of the ancient Tibetan scholars were of the opinion that the view of nonelaborative nonconceptuality was subtler than the view of nonaffirming negation (*prasajyapratishedha* = *med dgag*) of true [existence]. Je Rinpoche (rje Tsong kha pa blo bzang grags pa, 1357-1419) also asserted both these views. In his commentaries [*Ocean of Reasoning* and *Illumination of the Thought*, respectively] on the *Root Wisdom* [= *Madhyamakakarika* of Nagarjuna], he stated that there is no realization of the mode of existence without prior thought. In order to realize the mode of existence, it is imperative to know the mode of apprehension [*'dzin stang*] of the lack of true [existence]. The view of selflessness as a nonaffirming negation has been stated to be the ultimate view.... However, in his *Epistle to the Lord Randawa*...concerning the ‘view,’ he stated that ordinary beings cannot enter into the actual ultimate (*rnam grangs min pa'i don dam*) at first. In the beginning one should have clinging to the nominal ultimate (*rnam grangs pa'i don dam*) of noninherent dependent arising and engage in analytical meditation whereby one will perceive the actual ultimate. In order to establish the actual ultimate, it is not feasible for it to be spoken, listened to or heard. (Thabkay, p. 4).

¹⁹⁷ Napper continues: “The twentieth century renegade Gelugpa monk Gendün Chöphel wrote a work entitled *dBu ma'i zab gdad snying por dril ba'i legs bshad kLu sgrub dgongs rgyan* leveling just such charges. For a discussion of Gendün Chöphel and this issue, see Hopkins, *Meditation on Emptiness*, pp.

544-7... For more information on Gendün Chöphel, see the study by Heather Stoddard, *Le mendiant de l'Amdo* (Paris, Société d'Ethnographie, 1985)."

¹⁹⁸ When I met Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu around 1977 in Boudhanath, Nepal, one of the points the Master made in the brief teachings he gave was that there was no need to speak of "inherent existence" instead of speaking simply of "existence." At the time this seemed a bit strange to me, for I wasn't aware that this was a difference which Nagarjuna made only a few times, which Chandrakirti made more often, and which only Je Tsongkhapa made throughout his writings. Furthermore, the reasons why this difference was unnecessary or redundant didn't come to my mind.

¹⁹⁹ As we have seen, according to Tsongkhapa in this analysis we must try to determine whether or not an object exists in the way in which it appears to exist to ordinary deluded mind: inherently and truly. We have also seen that Chöphel noted that the condition for trying to determine this, is that one understands the meaning of "true existence" (Tib., denpar yöpa [*bden-par yod-pa*]), as different from "mere existence" (Tib., yöpa tsam [*yod-pa tsam*]), and objected that unrealized sentient beings lack this understanding, for in their experience "existence" is always understood to refer to the phenomenon that Tsongkhapa called "true existence:" in the comprehension manifesting in their minds upon reading, hearing, pronouncing or writing the term "existence," [the illusion that] form is truly real and [merely] existing form are mixed together as one thing, as trunk and legs are mixed as one thing in the same elephant—or, more precisely, as the redness of a strawberry is mixed with its form and its corporeality in our perception of this fruit. Chöphel's argument is that hence practitioners of this method who have not reached the third bodhisattva path will not know the meaning of "inherent existence" and how it is different from "mere existence," and therefore will not know what to look for.

²⁰⁰ The instructions for applying the analysis ask us to de-compose the object into its parts and apply arguments that will cause us to understand that the object is neither the sum of these parts, nor something different from these parts or from the sum of these parts; they tell us to check whether the object does depend or does not depend on other entities; etc. In fact, the text presented here, Chöphel himself refers to "the method of logic that can dissect a chariot into nothingness," which in note 43 the translators explain in terms of the following possibilities: "The chariot is either one with or different from its parts; the chariot is dependent on its parts or the parts depend on the chariot; the chariot possesses its parts or many parts together comprise the chariot; the form is the chariot. When you analyze in this way, none are true and the chariot cannot be established as truly existing." As a result of carrying out the analysis in terms of arguments like these, even if we do not know the meaning of "inherent existence" beforehand, or how is this different from "mere existence," emptiness as understood by Tsongkhapa may come to manifest as object in our experience. Then we will come to know that "inherent existence" is what shows itself to be nonexistent at the term of the analysis, and that "mere existence" refers to the fact that the form of the object is still present at the time.

However, as shown throughout this discussion, the resulting voidness will in no case be the ultimate truth of the *Prasangika* or Consequentialist school. If one took this result for the ultimate truth, one's Path to Buddhahood would be blocked.

²⁰¹ Contradiction comes to an end when the delusory valuation-absolutization of thought comes to an end, for then even if concepts contradict each other we experience no contradiction between them. For a more detailed discussion of this, see, among other of my works: Capriles, Elías, 1994 and Capriles, Elías, *Beyond Mind, Beyond Being: Dzogchen, Western Psychology and Transpersonal Psychology*.

²⁰² In note 184 it was shown that Tsongkhapa asserts that the rejection of existence is the rejection of what he called inherent existence and that the rejection of nonexistence is the rejection of the utter nonexistence that excludes the actuality of phenomena, and it was stated that in terms of this book the rejection of existence is the rejection of the delusive phenomenon of existence resulting from the delusory valuation-absolutization of the concept of being, and the rejection of nonexistence is the rejection of the delusive phenomenon of nonexistence resulting from the delusory valuation of the concept of nonexistence. Both views agree that it would be absurd to negate both-being-and-nonbeing, except if these are understood in terms of its own understanding of the negation of being and nonbeing; for the explanation of this see the note in question.

Though fully Awake individuals do not perceive a contradiction in the simultaneous assertion of two opposite views, sentient beings do insofar as we delusorily value thoughts, and so we must respect the principle of noncontradiction, as this respect is the condition for the Madhyamika refutations to work

for us—which is important insofar as these refutations prove to us that we are deluded and at the same time may help us go beyond delusion.

²⁰³ The full assertion by Marcel Conche, which fully coincides with the Mahayana Buddhist interpretation of the Four Noble Truths according to which the basic delusion called *avidya* is the source of *duhkha*, is as follows (Conche, 1973/1994, p. 96):

“The ‘radical source’ of our ‘unhappiness’ is our belief in being, also one of this ‘reified projections of human discourse’.”

And the full text of what Patrick Carré added is (Carré, 2001, p. 26):

“Thus being, as its opposite, nonbeing, are perfectly equal in that they are empty words, designations of a meaning too obscure to serve as a basis for a valid cognition of the real. Forced to choose, Pyrrho replies: ‘No any more this than that, nor the two (of them), nor nothing (i.e., nor neither of them)’.”

I radically disagree with Carré’s thesis that the problem with being and nonbeing is that they are “empty words, designations of a meaning too obscure to serve as a basis for a valid cognition of the real.” Such opinion is the object of refutation in Heidegger, M., 1953, English translation by Max Niemeyer, 1959/1987, pp. 79 and 82:

“The being which belongs to every essent (German, *alles Seiende*: all entities which are being) whatsoever, and which is thus dispersed among all that is most current and familiar, is more unique than all else.

“Everything else, each and every essent, even if it is unique, can be compared with other things. Its determinability is increased by these possibilities of comparison. By virtue of them it is in many respects indeterminate. Being, however, can be compared with nothing else. Over against being, the only other is nothing. And here there is no comparison. If being thus represents what is most unique and determinate, the word ‘being’ cannot be empty. And in truth it never is empty. We may easily convince ourselves of this by a comparison. When we perceive the word ‘being’, either hearing it as a phonetic unit or seeing it as a written sign, it immediately gives itself as something other than the succession of sounds and letters ‘abracadabra’. This too is a succession of sounds, but we say at once that it is meaningless, though it may have its meaning as a magic formula. But ‘being’ is not meaningless in this way. Similarly ‘being’, written and seen, is at once different from ‘kzomil’. This too is a sequence of letters but in connection with this sequence we cannot think anything. There is no such thing as an empty word; at most a word is worn out, though still filled with meaning. The name ‘being’ retains its appellative force...”

“Let us suppose that this indeterminate meaning of being does not exist and that we also do not understand what this meaning means. What then? Would there merely be a noun and a verb less in our language? No. *There would be no language at all.*²⁰³ No essent *as such* would disclose itself in words, it would no longer be possible to invoke it and speak about it in words. For to speak of an essent as such includes: to understand it in advance as an essent, that is, to understand its being. Assuming that we did not understand being at all, assuming that the word ‘being’ did not even have its vaporous meaning, there would not be a single word. We ourselves could never be *speakers*. Altogether we could not be as we are. For to be a man is to speak. Man says yes and no only because in his profound essence he is a speaker, *the* speaker. That is his distinction and at the same time his burden. It distinguishes him from stones, plants, animals, but also from the gods. Even if we had a thousand eyes and a thousand ears, a thousand hands and many other senses and organs, if our essence did not include the power of language, all essents would be closed to us, the essent that we ourselves are no less than the essent that we are not.”

Mervyn Sprung seems to have been following Heidegger when he asserted that “language, without the force of the verb ‘to be’, would seem to be mere fantasy” (Sprung, Mervyn, 1979, p. 12). In any case, in my *Beyond Being, Beyond Mind: Dzogchen, Transpersonal Psychology and Western Philosophy*, I try to show that Heidegger was right in asserting that the word being is not empty, for it indicates a phenomenon, but then I try to show that, contrarily to Heidegger’s belief, this phenomenon is a most basic manifestation of the delusion that the Buddha Shakyamuni called *avidya* (which here is to be understood in the second of the senses the term has in the Dzogchen classification adopted here) and that Heraclitus named *lethe*, and that it functions as the cornerstone of samsaric experience. Sartre (Sartre, Jean-Paul, 1942, 31st edition, 1980) stated that the phenomenon of being is the being of the phenomenon (i.e., of whichever entity we may perceive as *being*). Since the phenomenon of being is the delusive phenomenon that arises as a result of the delusory valuation and absolutization of the concept of being, rather than being something inherent to the phenomenon (i.e., to whichever entity we may

perceive as *being*), the being of the phenomenon (i.e., of whichever entity we may perceive as *being*) is but a delusion.

Actually, the idea that the radical source of our unhappiness is our belief in absolute being implies that the belief in question has very real consequences; therefore, it is not possible to discard altogether the possibility that Pyrrho's words may have been voicing a view similar to the one I express in the book in question, and that both Conche and Carré, influenced by Nietzsche, by current interpretations of Greek Skepticism, and possibly by the philosophy of language, came to the wrong conclusion that for Pyrrho "being" and "nonbeing" are empty words in the sense this is understood nowadays. In fact, Carré's interpretation of Pyrrho's ideas may have been what Nietzsche had in mind when he stated that being was an error: that being is an "empty word, a designation of a meaning too obscure to serve as a basis for a valid cognition of the real" (*sic* from the text quoted above). Being is an error, not because it is an empty word (in which case it would have no meaning, rather than having a delusive meaning), but because it is *not* an empty word: it is an error because it refers to the most basic delusive phenomenon of *samsara*, which arises from the delusory valuation-absolutization of the concept of being.

In a previous note we saw that Thomas McEviley (McEviley, Thomas, 1982), Patrick Carré (Carré, 1999 [revised and amended version of Carré, 1991]), and the author of this book (Capriles, 1994b; Capriles, 1999b), among others, have underlined the fact that Pyrrhonic skepticism shows interesting analogies with Madhyamaka philosophy. And that, on his part, Ignacio Gómez de Liaño (Gómez de Liaño, Ignacio, 1998) attempted to establish a genetic link between Pyrrhonic skepticism and Madhyamaka philosophy.

Concerning this alleged link, we have seen that Pyrrho traveled East with Anaxarchus of Abdera and the troops of Alexander the Great, and that during his journey he met many eastern sages of different traditions—including Buddhist monks and laymen, Gymnosofists, Magi, Brahmins and so on. Authors other than Gómez de Liaño have claimed that he was influenced by the Gymnosofists and the Magi; though the possible influence of the Gymnosofists cannot be discarded (especially in case they were similar to the Cynics, as suggested by Onesycritus of Astipalea [Brown, 1949; Bracht Branham and Goulet-Cazé, 1996]), the doctrines of Zarathustra could have hardly been in starker contrast with those of Pyrrho; therefore, had he been influenced by the Magi, these would have been necessarily unreformed Zurvanists [a justification of these views is provided in Capriles, work in progress 3; the said justification also may be inferred from Capriles, 2000a and 2000b]. In Capriles, Elias (1994b, 1999b), I note that it would be incorrect to discard the possible influence on Pyrrhonic skepticism of the mystical traditions that were reviving in Öddiyana, Sogdia, Bactria and Ferghana, in the form of Mahayana, Vajrayana and Atiyana Buddhism—but then I acknowledge that in the lack of concrete proof it would be equally incorrect to affirm such influences.

²⁰⁴ For a list of such source quotes, cf. Wayman, Alex, 1978, Indian ed. 1979, pp. 288-289.

²⁰⁵ *Vigrahavyavartanikarika* (*rTsod pa bzlog pa'i tshig le'ur byas pa*), 25. English translation: Bhattacharya, Kamaleshwar, 1978, p. 23. Also see Napper, Elizabeth, 2003, pp. 117 and 119.

²⁰⁶ Napper, Elizabeth, 2003, pp. 116-122.

²⁰⁷ For a list by Tsongkhapa see Wayman, Alex, 1978, Indian ed. 1979, pp. 306-308; for some examples see Napper, Elizabeth, 2003, pp. 118-119.

²⁰⁸ In twentieth century Tibet, Gendün Chöphel placed a strong emphasis on the distinction between other-directed assertions and self-directed assertions; in the West, the same emphasis was placed in Streng, Frederick, 1967.

²⁰⁹ All that was explained in this section may help one understand, according to a practitioner's degree of advancement on the Path [i.e., whether he or she is in the first or second paths, in the third or fourth paths, or in the fifth path and thus has gone beyond practice], the Tantric precept obliging one to "lie." In fact, in order to advance on the Path, beginner bodhisattvas have to tell themselves and others what they take as being the truths of the *dharma* and which as such cannot be said to be "lies"... Higher bodhisattvas in the state of post-Contemplation have to "lie" to both themselves and others insofar as they are aware that the teachings of the *dharma* they have to posit are not really true and that there is no self to be liberated in either themselves or others... Finally, Buddhas, insofar as they do not grasp at whatever they say, are beyond both lying and saying the truth.

²¹⁰ Wittgenstein also spoke of using words as a ladder to reach the place where the ladder may be thrown away. However, this coincidence does not at all mean that Wittgenstein's system and Madhyamika are

the same. I will not enter this much discussed topic here; for one discussion from a particular point of view (which is not this author's) see Loy, David, 1984.

²¹¹ Let us remember that the meditation Tsongkhapa taught as the means to access the unveiling of voidness is the one that Maitreya and Asanga taught in the Shravakabhumi chapter of their *Yogacharabhumi*, which teaches the practices that, according to the system taught in this Yogachara book, must be applied in the *shravakayana* stage of a graded path.

²¹² This is not the only criterion for differentiating the ones from the others, for as Chöphel has shown, thoughts such as “Surely the Buddha is a Refuge!” or “What is this but a pot?,” though they are high-energy thoughts, are not regarded by those who follow the views being refuted here as “confirmed minds.” However, it is certainly the main criterion for such differentiation.

²¹³ According to the *Samdhinirmochanasutra*, provisional scriptures are those that involve some kind of contradiction if they are taken verbatim, and definitive teachings are those that do not. However, on the basis of this criterion many teachings of the Hinayana would have definitive meaning, as they do not seem to involve contradictions, whereas many definitive teachings would have provisional meaning, as they may seem to involve contradictions if taken verbatim.

My own criterion is that definitive and provisional are relative categories that may apply to texts belonging to the same Promulgation, so that for example the *Samdhinirmochana Sutra* of the Third Promulgation is provisional with regard to the *Lankavatara* of the same Promulgation, etc.

The truly definitive meaning is the one apprehended nondually and nonconceptually in primordial gnosis.

²¹⁴ All Buddhist schools assert the selflessness of the person. However, whereas the other schools say that there is something that can be pinpointed as the person and which serves as the basis for karmic continuity from one life to another, the Prasangikas posit as the person the object of an awareness thinking “I” in dependence on the collection of aggregates. Nowadays, when questioned in this regard, many Gelugpas reduce the explanation of the illusion of self-identity to stating that it is “dependent on the imputations.” In the mid nineteen seventies, when I was staying at the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives in Dharamsala, I engaged in debate with a Western expert in this art. He asked me many questions in an attempt to cause me to contradict myself, but, since the strategy was so obvious, I stayed away from the trap. When my opponent gave up, I said it was my turn to ask him a question, and asked him:

“Here the illusion of self-identity is explained simply by saying that it depends on the imputations. In the case of rebirth, even if both the preceding birth and the present one had taken place in the human realm, the imputations made on the previous individual and the ones made on the new one would be as different from each other as they would be from those made on any other human being on this planet. Therefore, if identity depended solely on the imputations, rebirth would have to be discarded. If the baby of rebirth is not to be thrown away with the water of self-existence and self-subsistence, you need to add something to this explanation: what is it that the explanation is missing?”

My opponent remained dumbfounded. As shown in the regular text of this book, it is true that when we apply analysis with reference to the absolute there is not way we can find a basis for imputations, for what we regard as bases for imputations are singled out by human perception in a undivided continuum, on the basis of our interests and the context or our cognition—which is the main reason why Prasangikas claim that, when sought through analysis with reference to the absolute, collections of characteristics cannot be found. Now, even though there is not self-existing basis for imputations, in our everyday experience we are always perceiving what may be understood as being “bases for imputations,” and we do so in terms of the imputations we make on them—which the Prasangikas will regard as valid perceptions if they fulfill the due requisites of validity.

If we are not engaged in analysis with reference to the absolute, on the relative level we must be able to propound a conventional philosophical explanation of the basis for the imputation of rebirth; since the Prasangikas reject the concept of a mental stream (Skt., *santana*; Tib., *gyü* [*rgyud*]) found in canonical texts of the Third Promulgation, another provisional, expedient explanation, such as the one in terms of a cluster of energies (Skt., *bija*; Tib., *sabön* [*sa-bon*]) will be necessary. However, if then we apply analysis in reference to the absolute, this explanation will show its noncorrespondence with the basis for the imputations—and ultimately not even a basis for imputations will be found.

²¹⁵ In general, the Nyingmapa (*rNying-ma-pa*) use the term to refer to nondual awareness *qua* Path or Fruit; however, the Kagyüpas (*bKa'-brgyud-pa*) often use it to refer to nondual awareness *qua* Base as well.

²¹⁶ The Gelugpa [*dGe-lugs-pa*] claim that the Jonangpa (*Jo-nang-pa*) school was heretical was a reaction to the way in which this school presented the Awakening principle, which the Gelugpa viewed as coming too close to conceiving it as an eternal and substantial self. It was for similar reasons that some Chinese Buddhists asserted the Nirvana School of Chinese Buddhism to be heretical.

²¹⁷ Even authors who adhere to Tsongkhapa's interpretation of Madhyamaka, which reduces absolute truth to the presence of an absence and rejects positive affirmations, admit Nagarjuna's *Collection of Eulogies* (Skt., *Stavakaya*; Tib., *bsTod-tshogs*), and in particular in the *Eulogy to the Expanse of the True Condition* (Skt., *Dharmadhatustava*; Tib., *Chos-dbyings bstod-pa*), as being genuine works by Master Nagarjuna. In Napper, Elizabeth, 2003, p. 71, we read:

“Such perspectives [as Frederick Streng's and in general the ones that view Nagarjuna's works as having primarily a soteriological purpose] are part of a growing recognition that Nagarjuna's very analytical works, stunning in the negative power of their refutations, cannot be viewed in isolation but must be seen within a context that includes also his more positive works such as the *Ratnamala* and his many “praises” [or *Eulogies*]. Although there is scholarly controversy over which of the texts attributed to Nagarjuna are authentically his, there is a core of works generally accepted to be in fact by Nagarjuna, and all these must be included in an assessment of Nagarjuna's overall purpose and view.”

However, this should lead to a Mahamadhyamaka interpretation of Nagarjuna's philosophy, which would no doubt contradict the interpretation Tsongkhapa elaborated in his Lamrim works. To conclude, Napper agrees with Christian Lindtner (Lindtner, Christian, 1982) as to which works are actually Nagarjuna's. In p. 678, note 98, she writes:

“Lindtner's *Nagarjuniana* addresses just this question and arrives at a body of works that I think can be legitimately accepted as by Nagarjuna, although Paul Williams in his feature review (*Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 12, 1984, pp. 73-104) disagrees with one or two attributions...”

²¹⁸ Cf. note 11; also note 7 may be consulted.

²¹⁹ When we speak of “Base, Path and Fruit” we are always alluding to the *continuity* of these three aspects. This continuity is particularly emphasized in the Tantras, in which it finds a more thorough expression than in the Sutras, for, as we have seen, the Tantric texts explain the Base as being the Vajra-nature that contains the three kayas or aspects of Buddhahood; they explain the Path as the progressive unveiling of the Base with its three kayas; and they explain the Fruit as the definitive unveiling of the Base and the actualization of the unimpeded functioning of the three kayas *qua* aspects of final realization. However, it is in the Dzogchen teachings that the continuity of Base, Path and Fruit is most perfect, for the Atiyoga is the only vehicle in which the Path does not involve creating anything, but consists in the spontaneous, uncaused, actionless unveiling of the Base and the concomitant spontaneous liberation of whatever was veiling it. In turn, the Fruit is but the definitive neutralization or exhaustion of the propensities that caused the Base to be veiled, and of all that hindered the perfect functionality of the kayas.

Since the concepts of Base, Path and Fruit are inseparable from the concept of “continuity,” it must be noted that the latter concept is inherent to the term “Tantra” and its Tibetan equivalent, which is *gyü* (*rgyud*). In fact, although the term “Tantra” has the sense of “weft” or “woof” (i.e., woven fabric), its meaning is intimately associated with that of the Sanskrit word *prabandha*, which means both “continuity” and “luminosity.” In turn, the Tibetan word used to translate the Sanskrit term Tantra, which is “*gyü*,” in everyday language means “thread,” but in philosophy has the double meaning of “continuity” and “luminosity.” Jamgön Kongtrül the Great wrote in the *Shes bya kun la khyab pa'i gzhung lugs nyung ngu'i tshig gis rnam par 'grol ba legs bshad yongs 'du shes bya mtha' yas pa'i rgya mtsho zhes bya ba* (edition by Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, Beijing 1982, vol. 2, p. 613, 2), quoted in Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999, 2001, p. 161:

“The word *gyü* (Tantra) refers precisely to *bodhichitta*-Samantabhadra that has no beginning or end and that shines with luminous natural clarity. It ‘continues’ because from beginningless time until the attainment of Awakening it is always present without any interruption whatsoever.”

Bodhichitta-Samantabhadra is the single, true condition of the whole of reality. From the temporal standpoint, the luminous continuity of the manifestation of this true condition is compared to a rosary in which the beads (which represent experiences) and the empty spaces between beads in which there is only thread (which represent the spaces between one experience and the next) succeed each other. The Tantras work with the continuity of luminosity, or, what is the same, with this succession of beads and spaces between them: one does neither negate the bead aspect (our different experiences) in order to

affirm the blankness of the space-between-beads aspect, nor disclaims the blank spaces in order to affirm the beads. The point is that, even though all experiences are essentially void (insofar as they lack self-existence or substance), experiences never stop arising; what we have to do is to discover their primordial nature, which is empty but at the same time “luminous” in the sense of “experience-manifesting.” This is one of the reasons why the inner Nyingma Tantras explain our true condition in terms of two indivisible aspects: *katak* or “primordial purity,” corresponding to emptiness, and *lhundrub* or “spontaneous perfection,” corresponding to spontaneous manifestation and its functionality.

However, in the inner Tantras of the Path of Transformation, there is a creation stage or *kyerim* (*bskyed-rim*) in which the practitioner must create a new reality, and thus the continuity of Base, Path and Fruit is not as perfect as in the Dzogchen Atiyoga, in which, as shown above, the Path consists in the spontaneous unveiling of the Base and the concomitant spontaneous liberation of whatever was veiling it, and the Fruit is but the definitive neutralization or exhaustion of the propensities that caused the Base to be veiled and of all that hindered the perfect functionality of the *kayas*.

In spite of being so intimately connected to the Tantras, the concepts of Base, Path and Fruit are apt for expressing a more correct understanding of the Sutras, for (as stated in note 11) some Mahayanasutras that contain a conception of the Buddha-nature as being fully actual.

²²⁰ The preposition “of” goes in parentheses following the usage introduced in Sartre, Jean-Paul, 1942, 31st edition, 1980, where the author spoke of a “conscience non-thétique, non-positionnelle (de) conscience [positionnelle et tétique d’objet],” or, in my own particular English translation, of a “nonthetic, non-positional awareness (of) [positional, thetic] consciousness [of object].” Sartre noted that he was forced to include the preposition “de” (“of”) insofar as it was required by language, but that he put it in parentheses because between nondual awareness and dualistic consciousness there was no dualistic relation of knowledge, which the preposition “of” unmistakably implied. (Current English translations of Sartre’s monumental work use terms such as “non-thetic, non-positional self-consciousness,” which fail to convey the essence of Sartre’s position in this regard.)

²²¹ Dölpopa Sherab Gyaltsen and the Jonangpas (*jo nang pa*) would agree that the absolute may be identified with emptiness, yet this emptiness would be the absence of anything other than the absolutely existing nature [Skt. *pariniṣpanna*; Tib., yongdrub: *yongs grub*] that in his view is the Buddha-nature endowed with the qualities of Buddhahood, and as such it simply could not be a nonimplicative negation, which is how both the lower Cittamātra School and Je Tsongkhapa’s peculiar interpretation of the Mādhyamaka Prāsaṅgika explained voidness. However, as noted in the regular text, in most cases Dölpopa explains the absolute as a positive, and in some occasions he explained it as an implicative negation (for according to him the Buddha-nature, which is for him the absolutely existing nature, excluded all phenomena of both the dependent nature [Skt. *paratantra*; Tib. zhenwang: *gzhan dbang*] and the imaginary nature [Skt. *parikalpita*; Tib. kuntag: *kun brtags*): both positions are as inadmissible as that of Je Tsongkhapa’s and the Cittamātra School, for the absolute could not be either a positive or a negative. In fact, it could not be conceived in terms of secondary process concepts secondary process—or of any kind of concepts, for that matter—and therefore it could not involve negation. And since positivity is, as emphasized by Buddhist philosophy, the result of the negation of a negation, it could not be a positive either.

²²² It must be noted that in the original translation (Dudjom Rinpoche, J. Y. D., English 1991, trans.: Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein, vol. I, p. 169), instead of Mahamadhyamaka or Total Madhyamaka the text read Yogachara-Madhyamaka; however, note 170 explains this term as follows:

“The Total Madhyamaka (*dbu ma chen po*) is also known as Yogachara-Madhyamaka. As such it is not to be confused with the Yogachara Swatantrika (Madhyamaka) School. It integrates the view that all things in *samsara* are intrinsically empty (*rang-stong*) of their (supposedly) “inherent substantiality” with the view that all enlightened attributes are empty of extraneous (soiled) phenomena (*gzhang-stong*)... The quotation given herein does not occur in the extant Tibetan text of Bhavya’s *Madhyamakaratnapradipa*, rather it paraphrases passages found on fols. 280-1 of the Derghe canonical ed. of the text: *dbu-ma*, Vol. Tsha.”

²²³ Another most important usage of general Madhyamaka is in order to break one’s interlocutor clinging to views and concepts by means of methods such as Hui-neng’s interrelated opposites, which has already been discussed. An example of this usage of general Madhyamaka in a dialogue with an opponent is the one between Ta-chu Hui-hai and a Tripitaka Master paraphrased in this book: Hui-hai resorted to general Madhyamika logic in order to counteract his interlocutor’s clinging to dogmas and concepts,

and, if conditions were given, induce in him the *epoche* or suspension of judgment that may become a doorway to the nonconceptual View of the Middle Way.

²²⁴ In general, scholars feel compelled to date the various Buddhist schools, but this does not seem to be so easy. We have seen that such an early Master as Nagarjuna, particularly in his [*Six*] *Collections of [Madhyamika] Reasoning (Rigtsog)*, and his disciple and contemporary, Aryadeva, applied the method of *prasanga* and expressed the Prasangika view, and yet in general we are told that the Madhyamaka-Prasangika arose circa 510 CE with Buddhapalita, for it was then that the bases for a school bearing that name were laid. Likewise, some authors have stated that the subtle, inner Madhyamaka arose *circa* the eleventh century CE, and yet Nagarjuna (in his *Collection of Eulogies*, and in particular in the *Eulogy to the Expanse of the True Condition*), and Masters such as Asanga, Bhavaviveka, Haribhadra and others who lived in early times and who most scholars associate with schools other than Mahamadhyamaka, wrote texts that laid down the basic, general views of this school.

²²⁵ The particular point is his explanation of spontaneous awareness without positing a dualistic consciousness of consciousness in the *Madhyamakalamkarapañjika* (Cone *mDo 'grel*, folio 83b ff. Derghe vol. 36, *Sa* pp. 167 ff. See in particular p. 188. Quoted in Williams, Paul, 1998, p. 29), which must be held to be in full agreement with Mahamadhyamaka. However, Kamalashila's *Bhavanakramas* posit lower views that are clearly in disagreement with Mahamadhyamaka.

With regard to the Mahamadhyamika views expressed by Bhavya, the reader is directed to the quote included at the beginning of the present section of this chapter, in which that Master referred to Mahamadhyamaka as a school higher than those of the Madhyamaka Rangtongpa. Cf. also Dudjom Rinpoche, J. Y. D., English 1991, trans.: Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein, vol. I, p. 184.

Concerning Haribhadra, upon explaining the intention of the *Ornament of Emerging Realization* in his *Mirror Commentary*, he declared that primordial gnosis alone was the genuinely abiding essence, which corresponds to the view of Mahamadhyamaka. Cf. Dudjom Rinpoche, J. Y. D., English 1991, trans.: Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein, vol. I, p. 184.

²²⁶ What is being discussed here is which of the treatises based on the Third Promulgation expressed a view corresponding to the inferior views of the Yogachara School and/or of the Madhyamaka-Swatantrika-Yogachara subschool, and which expressed one that is in agreement with the superior view of subtle, inner Madhyamaka. However, the occasion seems fitting to note that the secondary literature associated with each of the Three Promulgations (commentaries, original treatises by different Masters and so on) is not classified into provisional and definitive, but in terms of other categories, according to a series of criteria. In Dudjom Rinpoche, J. Y. D., English 1991, trans.: Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein, vol. I, p. 18, Gyurme Dorje writes:

“In Buddhist terms, treatises are defined as compositions which are made so as to counteract the three poisons of delusion, desire and hatred, and to protect the mind from the suffering of cyclic existence. They require four special attributes, namely, a motivation based on compassion and discriminative awareness, expressive words in verse, an expressed meaning which reveals the means for those who desire liberation, and a purposeful composition. Treatises are then classified in six ways according to: the purpose of the composer, the qualitative standard of the composition, the status of the composer (i.e., Buddha, bodhisattva, arhat or pandita), the specific general manner of their composition, the view, conduct and integration of view and conduct as revealed in each of the three successive promulgations of the transmitted precepts, and finally the meaning they express, which may be quantitative, qualitative or conducive to liberation and omniscience.”

In fact, Dudjom Rinpoche himself lists the following characteristics as the basis for distinguishing types of treatise: (1) the standard of their composition; (2) the purpose of their composition; (3) their individual composers; (4) the manner of their composition; (5) the transmitted precepts that they explain; and (6) the meaning that they express. In terms of (6), treatises are classified into: (A) those that teach quantitatively (in turn classified into common and uncommon), (B) those that teach qualitatively (exemplified by the those of the Madhyamaka that emphatically establish the two kinds of selflessness: that of individuals and that of phenomena that are not individuals), and (C) those that teach the means for attaining liberation and omniscience (classified according to whether the author was of the superior type, like Nagarjuna and Asanga, of the middle type, like Dignaga and Chandragomin, or of the lower type, like Shrigupta or Shakyamati).

For a lengthier, more complete explanation of the different categories of treatises considered in the first three paragraphs of this note, see Dudjom Rinpoche, J. Y. D., English 1991, trans.: Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein, vol. I, pp. 88-109.

²²⁷ Napper's translation of these sentences is (Napper, Elizabeth, 2003, p. 150):

“As long as the two, realization of appearances—the inevitability of dependent arising—

And realization of emptiness—the non-assertion of inherent existence—

Seem to be separate, there is still no realization of the thought of Shakyamuni Buddha.”

²²⁸ Fully Awake individuals and higher bodhisattvas in the post-Contemplation state, insofar as they are beyond clinging to the extremes (in the first case) or have a lesser degree of clinging than normal individuals (in the second case), can contemplate opposite views without favoritism, aware of the fact that both of them are valid and none of them is absolutely correct, for no map whatsoever can exactly correspond to the territory of the given. Since Mahamadhyamaka reflects the View of such individuals, it considers the tenets of all other subschools of Madhyamaka without favoritism, and establishes to what aspects of reality or stages on the Path those tenets respond, validating the views of each subschool with respect to the type of experience or objects to which they responded.

It is well-known that even physicists lacking the wisdom of Awakening, who are subject to the drive to take one view as being right and its opposite as being wrong, have seen themselves in the need to combine mutually contradictory views. For example, it is well known that light shows some features of waves (when the crests of waves coming from two different sources coincide there should be more light than the sum of the lights emanating from both sources, and when a crest and a trough coincide there should be less) and some features of particles (ultraviolet light can “kick out” electrons from the surface of metals); therefore, physicists have seen themselves in the need to deal with light in their calculations as though it were both particles and waves (which seems impossible to common sense).

The novelist of the Jazz Age, Francis Scott Fitzgerald, who was neither an Awake One nor a physicist dealing with a reality that defies common sense, wrote “the test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in mind at the same time and still retain the ability to function.”

²²⁹ According to the sutras of the First Promulgation the only sutras are those of this Promulgation—for, in fact, at the time no other sutras had been promulgated. The sutras of the Second Promulgation imply that they themselves are the ones that convey the definitive meaning, for those of the First Promulgation are provisional with regard to those of the Second, and at the time no other sutras had been promulgated. Therefore only the sutras of the Third Promulgation can establish which are definitive among the texts of the Second and the Third Promulgation—and, in fact, they establish that those of the Third are the ones that are definitive.

Since the Buddha Shakyamuni is the source of the three Promulgations, and only in the texts of the Third Promulgation does he establish whether it is the Second or the Third Promulgation that is the definitive one, the Final Promulgation contains the final word of the Buddha concerning this matter. Furthermore, it is to be expected that each Promulgation should be more definitive than the former, revealing aspects and depths that were not considered in the previous ones. (However, some Chinese Schools that do not divide the sutras into the above Three Promulgations, but posit an alternative way of classifying the canonical texts of Buddhism, claim that after realizing that his disciples had not understood the sutras of a higher Promulgation, the Buddha went on to promulgate those of a lower one—and so that lower and higher promulgations alternate. For an account of the views of these schools in this regard, see Part One of my *Buddhism and Dzogchen*.)

In this regard I am always tempted to note that, just like the Second Promulgation is definitive with regard to the First, and as the Third is definitive with regard to the Second, the Direct Vision of the Absolutely True Nature is definitive with regard to the Third Promulgation.

²³⁰ There are yogic practices that are applied mainly with the body of an individual in order to act on that individual's energy (voice), so that his or her energy (voice) acts on his or her mind. There are yogic practices that are applied mainly with the energy (voice) of the individual, for it to act both on his or her body and on his or her mind. There are yogic practices that are applied mainly with the mind, the effects of which, however, also affect the individual's energy (voice) and, through it, his or her body. And there are yogic practices that are applied equally with these three aspects.

The way of dharmakaya yogis *par excellence* is constituted by the yogic practices that, in the context of the Dzogchen Atiyoga, are applied mainly with the mind. These allow the individual to directly realize the dharmakaya and to thus become a dharmakaya yogi from the very onset of the practice (the most direct

example of this is the practice of Tekchö [*khregs-chod*], first level of practice in the Menngagde [*man-ngag-sde*] or Upadesha series of Dzogchen teachings, in which all thoughts manifest as the dharmakaya).

Even though the Sutrayana, to which the Mahayana belongs, is centered mainly on the level of the body, it does not comprise yogic practices that are applied mainly with the body, or yogic practices that are applied mainly with the energy (voice), but only those that are applied mainly with the mind. Though these do not result directly and immediately in the realization of the dharmakaya (which is the reason why Dudjom Rinpoche has noted that the Atiyoga is the Path through which the reality described by the sutras of the Third Promulgation is actualized [Dudjom Rinpoche, J. Y. D., English 1991, Trans.: Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein, vol. I, pp. 300-301]), the most highly realized adepts at such practices, provided that they go beyond the cause-effect relation and other limitations inherent to the vehicle they practice, may possibly become dharmakaya yogis.

However, practitioners of the Dzogchen Atiyoga may go much further: after realizing the dharmakaya (for example, in the practice of Tekchö [*khregs-chod*] or the Nyingthik [*snying-thig*]), they may realize the sambhogakaya (for example, in the practice of Thögel [*thod-rgal*] or the Yangthik [*yang-thig*]) and, finally, attain the realization of the nirmanakaya—after which they may even attain the rainbow body, the body of atoms, the body of light and even the total transference.

(Note that in the Dzogchen teachings the terms nirmanakaya, sambhogakaya and dharmakaya refer to higher levels of realization than they do in the context of any other vehicle. As stated in a previous note, the highest level of realization on the Path of Transformation of the Vajrayana, which this Path calls the swabhavikaya and which follows the realization of the three kayas just mentioned, precisely in the sequence in which they were mentioned within these parentheses, corresponds to the first level of realization in Atiyoga, which in this vehicle is the dharmakaya. In this regard see Capriles, Elías, electronic publication, 2003.)

²³¹ The yogic practices that are applied mainly with the mind are essentially based on introspection, as they involve observing and questioning the way thoughts arise and subside, the moment when they have their existence, etc. The capacity of introspection develops interdependently with calm abiding (Pali, *samatha*; Skt., *shamatha*; Tib., *zhine* [*zhi-gnas*]; Chinese *chih*), insight (Pali, *vipassana*; Skt., *vipashyana*; Tib., lhantong [*lhag-mthong*]; Chinese, *kuan*), and mindfulness or collectedness (Pali, *sati*; Skt., *smriti*; Tib., *dran pa*). It is the development of introspection (which in the highly realized yogi goes hand by hand with a high energetic-volume-determining-the-scope-of-awareness [Skt., *kundalini*; Tib., *thig-le*]) that results in an enhanced awareness of the way experience is constructed. In Dzogchen terminology, introspection may be said to consist in an attentive awareness of the “internal jing (*dbyings*)” and of the dang (*gdangs*) mode of manifestation of the energy or thukje (*thugs-rje*) aspect of the Base.

In the Menngagde (*man-ngag-sde*) or Upadesha series of the Dzogchen Atiyoga, the yogi deals with the dang mode of manifestation of energy in practices such as Tekchö (*khregs-chod*) or the Nyingthik (*snying-thig*), the essence of which is the spontaneous liberation of thoughts resulting in the spontaneous release of the tensions involved in the delusory valuation-absolutization of mental contents. Once the yogi develops sufficient proficiency in this type of practice, he or she develops his or her realization by means of the practices that activate the dynamic of the lhundrub or “spontaneous perfection” aspect of the Base; in the Menngagde, this is achieved by means of the practices of Thögel (*thod-rgal*) and the Yangthik (*yang-thig*).

The above does not mean that the way of dialecticians excludes practices such as calm abiding and insight, or mindfulness, recollection or collectedness. In Tibet, in particular, dialecticians were particularly abundant among the Geluggpas and the Sakyapas, whose teachings put a strong emphasis on the practices of calm abiding and insight, mainly as taught by Shantarakshita and Kamalashila (of the lower Madhyamaka-Swatantrika-Yogachara subschool). Furthermore, both these schools stressed that there was a shortcut to Awakening, which consisted in the Anuttarayogatantra of the Sarmapas, pertaining to the way of the yogi. Therefore any deviations that may have occurred in Tibet resulting in the exclusive application of the way of dialecticians by isolate individuals, contradicted the intention of the founders of all Tibetan Buddhist schools.

²³² In fact, though both the way of the yogis and that of dialecticians, as proposed by Ashvagoshā, “use language in order to go beyond language,” the way of dialecticians is *mainly* based on the use of language (whether expressed externally with actual utterances or applied internally in the form of

purely mental reasonings), whereas that of the yogis uses language mainly to provide the disciple with an initial outline of the Base, Path and Fruit, and subsequently to provide him or her with the necessary pit instructions, to clarify doubts and so on. (A most pronounced manifestation of this way was represented by the early Kagyüpas, who often provided pit instructions to disciples who had not yet formed a clear idea of the Base, Path and Fruit of the practice. For example, when a young lady went to see the great Master Milarepa in order to ask him to guide her on the Path, he instantly told her to go to a cave nearby and watch her own mind in order to determine whether it was round or square, etc. Though this way of proceeding is appropriate for certain kinds of disciples and has been applied by some of the greatest Masters of Tibet and India, it is not the one proper of Atiyoga, which insists that before setting to practice the aspirant must attain a certain intellectual understanding of the structure and function of *samsara* and *nirvana*, and of the Path he or she intends to follow.)

²³³ As stated repeatedly throughout this book, according to the traditions of the Old or Nyingmapa School of Tibetan Buddhism codified in the authoritative history of the *dharma* by Pawo Tsuglag Threngwa (*dPa-'bo gtsug-lag phreng-ba*) titled *A Feast for the Erudite* (*Chöjung Khepa* [*Chos-'byung mKhas-pa*]: *Mirigs dpe sKrun Khang*, Peking, 1986, p. 568; cited in Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1988, pp. 26-27), Nagarjuna and Aryadeva also were lineage holders in the transmission of Dzogchen Atiyoga. We have also seen that this may as well be taken to imply that the Madhyamaka is a philosophical explanation, adapted to the gradual Mahayana, of the essential View of the Dzogchen Atiyoga.

²³⁴ As we have seen, in Wong Mou-Lam and A. F. Price, translators, 1969, p. 108, we can corroborate that, according to the *Sutra of Hui-neng*, Nagarjuna was the 14th Patriarch in the lineal succession of Ch'an or Zen Buddhism and Aryadeva (called Kanadeva in the Sutra) was the 15th Patriarch in the same lineal succession.

²³⁵ As stated in a previous note, what Pyrrho of Elis, Aenesidemus and Sextus, as well as Neoacademics Arcesilaus and Carneades, called *epoche* or "suspension of judgment," may be understood to be the condition of possibility of the *ataraxia* or imperturbability sought by the Sceptics. Some have equated the *ataraxia* with *nirvana*; no matter whether or not this equation is correct, it is a fact that, insofar as it is judgment that introduces illusory divisions into our experience (as reflected in the etymology of the German term for "judgment," which is *Urteil*: "original and originative split or partition"), *nirvana* involves the interruption of judgment, and different Buddhist schools, as well as different non-Buddhist traditions, developed their own methods as skillful means for achieving this interruption.

Among the dialectical methods applied as contributory conditions for making the occurrence of the *epoche* possible, it is worth mentioning: (1) the various instances of the *via oppositio*, including discourses that simultaneously affirm opposite concepts (such as those by Heraclitus, Lao-tzu, Nagarjuna, Aryadeva and the Prasangikas), as well as Pyrrho's method of *isosthenia* and Hui-neng's method of interrelated opposites; (2) the arguments by Nagarjuna, Aryadeva and the Prasangikas involving *reductio ad absurdum*, the ten *tropoi* taught by Aenesidemus; etc.

The way of the yogis also has its own set of methods for inducing the *epoche*; however, it differentiated quite clearly between the *epoche* and *nirvana*. For example, the Dzogchen Atiyoga teaches powerful methods to induce the illusory experience or nyam (*nyams*) called heddewa (*had-de-ba*), which involves the suspension of judgment and is often used in order to introduce the individual to the Awake state. However, these teachings warn that this nyam is not *nirvana*, but a mere *doorway* whereby fortunate individuals who know how to use it, may gain access to *nirvana*. (In this sense, supposing the *ataraxia* of the Sceptics were the same as *nirvana*, it would make more sense to claim that the *epoche* is the condition of possibility of the *ataraxia*—though not, as Pyrrho said, the *cause* of the *ataraxia*—than to assert, with the Neoacademics, that whenever there is *epoche* there is *ataraxia*.)

It is not difficult to understand that the mere absence of judgment cannot be equated with *nirvana*. An instance in which judgment does not function and yet *nirvana* is not manifest is the state that the Dzogchen teachings call the base-of-all or kunzhi (*kun-gzhi*), in which neither *samsara* nor *nirvana* are active. Furthermore, in general judgment does not function in the five unconscious states, which, as we have seen, are the absence of all thoughts, the two kinds of cessation of all mental activity (*pratisamkhyanirodha* and *apratisamkhyanirodha*), swoon and deep sleep—and yet there is clearly an abyss between, for example, swoon or deep sleep, on the one hand, and *nirvana*, on the other.

²³⁶ These practices are applied mainly with the body and energy (voice) aspects of the individual, which in turn act on the mind aspect. As we have seen, in the Sutrayana there are no practices of this kind.

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- ²³⁷ As we have seen, these practices are applied mainly with the mind aspect of the individual, which then acts on the energy (voice) aspect, which in turn acts on the body aspect.
- ²³⁸ This is the supreme instance of the practices that are applied mainly with the mind aspect of the individual, which then acts on the energy (voice) aspect, which in turn acts on the body aspect.
- ²³⁹ This practice acts on the energy level, unleashing specific systemic loops that catalyze spontaneous liberation (which as we have seen belongs to the mind level), optimizing it. See Part Two of *Buddhism and Dzogchen*, and also *Beyond Mind, Beyond Being: Dzogchen, Transpersonal Psychology and Western Philosophy*.
- ²⁴⁰ Here I write “Gnitiveness” rather than “cognitiveness” because the latter term involves the prefix “co,” which implies duality and therefore should apply solely to dualistic knowledge; since there is no English word having the connotations of “cognitiveness” and yet excluding the dualistic implications of the term, I decided to coin the term “Gnitiveness,” which can be directly related to other of the neologisms I use in my books: reGnition, reGnize, etc.
- ²⁴¹ This does not imply a metaphysical theory according to which all is mental or the like; all phenomena are this gnosis because all phenomena manifest *as such* only in our experience. The latter would be so independently of whether or not there were a material reality different and separate from this gnosis; however, in my *Buddhism and Dzogchen*, and to some extent also in this book, the thesis that there is a substantial ontological mind-matter dualism is refuted by its absurd consequences—which I have done by considering the three possibilities which are: (1) all is mental; (2) all is material; (3) there is something mental and non-material, and something material and non-mental.
- ²⁴² This is not the place for discussing whether or not rigpa manifests fully in Mahamadhyamaka, just as it does in the practice of Dzogchen, in which neither the katak (*ka-dag*) nor the lhundrub (*lhun-grub*) aspect of rigpa are privileged. At any rate, as we have seen, according to Dudjom Rinpoche in order to actualize the Buddha-nature, the Path is not Mahamadhyamaka but Dzogchen Atiyoga.
- ²⁴³ The same that was stated in the preceding note concerning the manifestation of rigpa *qua* Path in Mahamadhyamaka applies to the manifestation of rigpa *qua* Fruit in this school.
- ²⁴⁴ As we have seen, *qua* Base this awareness may also be called “rigpa *qua* Base.”
- ²⁴⁵ This thesis by Sartre was reviewed in the chapter on the Yogachara School. In a note to the corresponding explanation it was stated that Sartre’s view was outlined in the Introduction to Sartre, Jean-Paul, 1942, 31st edition, 1980, where the author rejects Husserl’s subtle assertion of the Cartesian *cogito*, and notes that:
 “Consciousness is not to any extent substantial; it is a mere ‘appearance,’ in the sense that it only exists to the extent that it appears.”
- However, as stated in note 42, Sartre’s thesis that consciousness is made possible by an underlying nondual awareness certainly wasn’t rooted in the bare manifestation of this awareness upon the dissolution of dualistic consciousness (which according to him cannot be attained by the individual), and therefore it may as well be said to be an unacknowledged metaphysical position (Sartre was allegedly producing a phenomenological, existentialist ontology, and so the fact that a metaphysical position slipped into it may have meant that his phenomenology was not really thorough). Therefore it would make no sense to assert that the system expounded in *Being and Nothingness* corresponds to any Buddhist system. Furthermore, though in this book Sartre shows human existence to be structured as essentially aiming to a condition that seems to correspond to the Buddhist Awakening, he affirms that the attainment of this condition is impossible.
- ²⁴⁶ As we have seen, according to the Dzogchen teachings, *avidya* or marigpa (*ma-rig-pa*), in the first of the three senses the Dzogchen classification adopted here gives the word (which is that of the unawareness of the true condition of the Base that results from the introduction of the contingent, beclouding element of stupefaction that obscures the nondual self-awareness inherent in rigpa, preventing it from making patent rigpa’s own face in the manifestation of rigpa-*qua*-Path and rigpa-*qua*-Fruit), manifests prior to the arising of dualistic mind, in the condition these teachings call the base-of-all. *Samsara* arises at a subsequent stage: when there manifests the dualistic consciousness to which the second of the meanings the Dzogchen classification adopted here give the term *avidya* or marigpa is inherent.
- ²⁴⁷ As suggested in a previous note, unfortunately the crucial difference between “self-consciousness,” which may be understood to mean the dualistic consciousness having as object the individual entity referred to by one’s name, and “awareness (of) Self,” which may be taken to refer to the nondual awareness of the Self as defined by Sartre—that is, of a nondual condition of totality that Sartre defined

in such a way that it can be made to correspond to Buddhist Awakening—is to some extent obliterated by current English translations that render “awareness (of) Self” as “self-consciousness.” (As stated in the preceding note, Sartre thought it was impossible to attain the Self as he defined it; according to Grofian psychologists, this was due to the fact that he got caught in a BPM2. Cf. Riedlinger, T., 1982, as well as Grof’s reviews of Riedlinger’s paper in Grof 1985 and Grof 1986 [in Grof 1986 the author attributes an earlier date to Riedlinger’s paper; therefore, there must be an earlier version of it of which I am unaware]).

²⁴⁸ We have seen that, in the Dzogchen teachings, the first stage in the arising of dualism consists in grasping at the base-of-all, in which a proto-object manifests, and that the limited objects of our experience arise at a subsequent stage, when a figure is singled out and the rest of the proto-object that arose upon the manifestation of the consciousness of the base-of-all becomes ground.

With regard to Claudel’s dictum (in his *Traité de la Co-naissance au monde et de soi-même*, included in Claudel [1943]), it must be noted that he was speaking of knowledge in the Biblical sense and of co-emergence in general rather than of the co-emergent arising of the mental subject and its objects, but his statement applies even better to the latter event. (Claudel claims that birth *qua* co-naissance, like time, occurs in Being, and that it forms a couple with Time.)

²⁴⁹ The reason why the mirror of the example has to be self-luminous is that, while the reflectiveness of a normal looking glass allows it to mirror the play of a light that is external to it, there is nothing external with regard to our primordial nature—and, in particular, the source of its luminosity is not external to it. Therefore, the dance of appearances of our primordial nature cannot be represented as the play of an external light, but has to be acknowledged to be the play of the self-luminosity of our primordial nature itself, manifesting thanks to the circumstantial concurrence of secondary causes or conditions. If we wish to represent this with a mirror, we will have to imagine a self-luminous mirror that, rather than reflecting the play of appearances projected by an external light, shows a play of appearances that is manifested by the mirror’s own inner, inherent luminosity.

²⁵⁰ We could make the simile more complex by making the images that manifest in the LCD screen be duplicated and polarized in such a way that, upon being seen through polarized glasses, they may be perceived three-dimensionally as being outside the screen. However, this would not help, for still we would be positing a two-dimensional screen, which does not exist in the reality illustrated by the smile, and, furthermore, we would be positing a viewer and polarized glasses outside the screen, while in reality there is nothing “outside” that which the LCD screen illustrates.

Another alternative would be to use holograms as a simile and say that all virtual images are made of the coherent light that makes up the laser beam, so that there is no distance between the images and the light wave-particles. However, this would not solve much, for in the perception of the virtual images produced through holography there is still a perceiver different and separate from the images and from the supposed wave-particles that are experienced as light. Actually, this modification may result in a weakening of the simile, insofar as a perceiver different from the light would be required, insofar as reflectiveness is a better simile for the appearance of images than a beam of coherent light, and insofar as human beings never perceive photons, but their own *experience of light*.

²⁵¹ As a Christian, Descartes assumed that the universe and all that exists in it had been created by God, whom he characterized as an uncreated substance. Descartes divided into two different substances all that he regarded as being created (where “substance” is defined as something that does not need anything else to exist and be what it is): the *res cogitans*, corresponding to the soul, which had no extension and therefore no characteristics such as color, form or materiality, and the *res extensa*, corresponding to what we regard as a physical universe, which was an extended substance having characteristics such as color, form and, by implication, materiality.

²⁵² Heraclitus denied that there was a plurality of souls or minds, on the one hand, and of phenomena lacking subjectivity, on the other. In fr. DK 50 he stated, “Those who listen, not to the (illusory) I, but to the *Lógos*, wisely acknowledge that all is one:” the *Lógos* was the cognitive, intelligent, spiritual aspect of the single principle that manifested as the universe and that was the true nature of both sentient beings and inanimate phenomena.

If there was a single principle and therefore there was a single reflective, cognitive or manifesting power, which was what Heraclitus called *Lógos*, then the belief that each of us had a separate, independent, autonomous soul or mind failed to correspond to reality. This is part of what I have illustrated with the simile of the mirror, and it is what Heraclitus expressed in fr. DK 2: “Though the *Lógos* is common to

all, each and every individual believes he or she has a separate, particular and private intellect of his or her own.”

The above delusion occurs because, as stated in fr. DK 123, “The Logos/Physis likes to hide:” since there is no power but the one inherent to the single principle of the universe, the delusion consisting in feeling and believing that each and every individual has a separate, particular and private intellect of his or her own must necessarily arise by virtue of the single reflective, cognitive or manifesting power that Heraclitus called *Lógos*: it is the *Lógos* that “hides” in each and every individual as it is concealed by the illusion that a separate individual soul or mind is knowing or acting autonomously. As shown in notes 61 and 100, a Tantric myth represents the world and human life as a game of hide-and-seek the god Shiva, or Primordial awareness (according to whether the Tantric system is Shaiva or Buddhist), plays with itself. In turn, the Dzogchen teachings insist that samsaric deception and delusion, as well as the nirvanic unveiling of the truth, are both the play (Skt., *lila*; Tib., *rölpa* [*rol-pa*]) of the single Base or zhi (*gzhi*).

The fact that in fr. 50 DK Heraclitus notes that “Those who listen, not to the I, but to the *Lógos*, wisely acknowledge that all is one” does not mean that the Greek philosopher, like the Indian eternalists, asserts the One to be the single, universal existent; in fact, fr. DK 206 states: “Things as a whole are whole and nonwhole, identical and not-identical, harmonic and not-harmonic; the one is born from the whole and from the one all things are born.” The use of contradictory terms in this fragment clearly shows that Heraclitus was aware that no concept (including that of “the One”) could perfectly correspond to the whole—which, as such, has neither *genus proximum* or *differentia specifica*.

The negation of any degree of truth or ontological status to plurality also occurs in the Shaiva tradition of India, in Persian Zurvanism, in ancient Bön (which, since around 1800 BC, has had its own Dzogchen tradition and Mantric teachings), in unorigination Taoism (the one represented by Lao-tzu, Chuang-tzu, Lieh-tzu and the Masters of Huainan, and quite likely by Chuan Chen Taoism as discussed in Liu I-ming, 1988, and Reid, D., 2003 [but not so in *shen hsien* Taoism as represented, e.g., by Ko-hung]) and in the Buddhist Tantrism and Dzogchen of our time. As we have seen, since the Shaiva tradition of India, Persian Zurvanism and ancient Bön have been shown to be one and the same as the Greek Dionysian tradition (and as the Egyptian cult of Osiris), I have speculated that the dialectics of Heraclitus may have been an expression of the authentic Dionysian tradition.

To conclude, it may be noted that the idea Heraclitus expressed in fr. DK 2 and the one I have expressed with the simile of the mirror contradict Descartes’ intuition that “he was the thinker of thought,” which later on he expressed syllogistically as *je pense donc je suis* or *cogito ergo sum* (“I think therefore I am”), as well as Karl Marx’s well-known definition of “consciousness” as “conscious being” (“*Das Bewußtsein ist das bewußte Sein*”), which has been understood as implying that consciousness is a “thinking being.” In fact, the view expressed by Heraclitus and the one I expressed with the simile of the mirror are much closer to the one expressed by Lichtenberg’s statement:

[It would be better to use an impersonal formula and, rather than saying *I think*,] to say “*there is thinking*,” just as one says “*there is lightening*.” (Adapted from Lichtenberg, Georg Christoph, 1902/1908, Spanish 1989/1995, section “Causes,” p. 214, and Koyré, Alexandre, 1973, p. 17 [cited in Capriles, Elías, 1994].)

Or to the one expressed in (Mexican poet) Octavio Paz’s poem (cited in Capriles, Elías, 1994):

“the words that think me upon thinking them;

I am the shadow projected by my words.”

²⁵³ Buddhists who recognize them to be Buddhas will perceive them as acting on the behalf of sentient beings; however, in our age many humans (both Buddhist and non-Buddhist) will perceive them as ordinary humans, as demons or as fakes.

²⁵⁴ See note before last. Also see notes 61 and 100.

²⁵⁵ Furthermore, the only way to “empty” the mirror of the images “it contains” is by placing a new image in front of it, the reflection of which will replace whatever images were reflected in it. In fact, since reflections are intangible and since the mirror in which they appear is impenetrable, there is no way we can get hold of the reflections in order to take them out of the mirror. If we tried to do so, we would succeed only insofar as, when we place in front of the mirror whatever tool we may plan to use to extract the images reflected, the image of the tool will replace the one that we intended to take out.

²⁵⁶ The fact that nothing is external to primordial gnosis or spontaneous awareness does not mean that, just like human imagination, this gnosis or awareness may whimsically manifest whatever it “wishes.” To

begin with, it cannot “wish.” “wishing” is only possible for a deluded consciousness that, experiencing itself as a separate entity, feels experiences are imposed on itself, and would rather change some of those experiences for others. Furthermore, it would be a truism to state that, even though there is no material world external to or independent from the Base to which primordial gnosis or spontaneous awareness is inherent, what is perceived as a material world cannot be changed at will by deluded consciousness (which alone has a will): it is precisely insofar as we perceive the world as having been there when we were born into it, as offering resistance to us, etc., that we can perceive it as being real and substantial. In terms of Heidegger’s thinking (which I have refuted in *Beyod Mind, Beyond Being* insofar as, rather than asserting being to be an error or a delusion, his system posits it as truth [*aletheia*] itself), this is precisely what happens when, in understanding the world according the mode of being of the fall (in Heidegger’s sense of this term, which is not the Biblical sense), *being* takes on the character of *reality* (Heidegger, Martin, 1927, English translation by Joan Stambaugh, 1996, pp. 187 [first paragraph in the quote] and 188 [second paragraph in the quote]. Original German edition: pp. 201 and 202):

“Here the being of things initially at hand is passed over and beings are first conceived as a context of things (*res*) objectively present. Being acquires the meaning of *reality*. Substantiality becomes the basic characteristic of being...

“But intuitive cognition has always been viewed as the way to grasp what is real... Since the character of the in-itself and the independence belongs to reality, the question of the possible independence “from consciousness” of what is real, or of the real possible transcendence of consciousness in the “sphere” of what is real, is coupled with the question of the meaning of reality. The possibility of an adequate ontological analysis of reality depend on how far that *from which* there is independence, *what* is to be transcended, is *itself* clarified with regard to its *being*.”

Heidegger realized that, when the entities he calls “intra-worldly” manifest as “reality,” human consciousness experiences them as *being* in themselves, independently of human consciousness. Common sense does not need the independent existence of the entities in question to be proven, for it is inherent to human consciousness’ mode of being, in apprehending ‘reality’, to experience those entities as being *in themselves* with regard to itself. Contrariwise, it is Buddhist philosophy that must prove that this perception of common sense is a delusion, insofar as both the phenomena that manifest as reality and the consciousness that experiences them as being substantial are baseless appearances in the same Base.

Furthermore, the phenomena that deluded consciousness experiences as existing independently of itself are not arbitrarily conceived and modified by a hypothetical universal imagination, but are subject to “objective” rules, just as the individual him or herself is subject to the law of *karma*—which is the reason why even a radically idealistic school of thought such as the Yogachara insisted that all phenomena had their basis in the *alaya vijñana* or *kunzhi namshe* (*kun-gzhi rnam-shes*), which was mental and yet was “objective” insofar as its contents did not arise and change capriciously, but were subject to rules, and insofar as it was the common basis for interpersonal agreement with regard to the structure and function of reality. (In the Dzogchen teachings, what is objective is not a mental *alaya vijñana* or *kunzhi namshe*, nor even an *alaya* or *kunzhi* [*kun-gzhi*] in which neither *samsara* nor *nirvana* are functioning, but the Base or *zhi* [*gzhi*], which is neither physical nor mental, even though primordial awareness is inherent to it.)

At any rate, no matter how we conceive or call the basis on which reality is constructed, there can be no doubt that this basis, the phenomena it manifests, and the functionality of these phenomena, are objective in the sense of not being liable to whimsical modification by either individual imagination or a supposedly universal imagination, and in the sense of allowing different perceivers to agree that they face a common “objective” reality.

To conclude, though at the level of “intermediate dimensions” of what the Dzogchen teachings call the *tsel* (*rtsal*) mode of manifestation of energy the laws of experience and dimensionality are inalterable and universal, those Mahasiddhas who, having worked long enough with the *rölpa* (*rol-pa*) mode of manifestation of energy in practices such as Thögel (*thod-rgal*) or the Yangthik (*yang-thig*), have reached the level of realization at which the *tsel* and *rölpa* energies blend, obtain what ordinary people would call a “capacity of miracles” insofar as they are not subject to such inalterable laws and dimensionality. (For an explanation of this, see Part Two of my *Buddhism and Dzogchen*.)

²⁵⁷ Liberation could not lie in something constructed or produced, for all that is constructed or produced is conditioned and compounded. Furthermore, whatever the fruit of a constructive Path would be, it would not be definitive insofar as all that is conditioned and compounded is impermanent. To conclude, such a fruit would not allow the one who obtained it to lead others to Awakening and liberation, for one who is not Awake and liberated cannot lead others to Awakening and liberation: when the blind lead the blind they fall together into the abyss.

²⁵⁸ The reasons why this would be so are those listed in the preceding note.

²⁵⁹ Previously it was said that the “emptiness” aspect of primordial gnosis or spontaneous awareness was the ngowo (*ngo-bo*) aspect of the Base. However, there is no contradiction whatsoever between both statements, for the ngowo aspect of the Base corresponds to its katak (*ka-dag*) aspect. In turn, the rangzhin (*rang-bzhin*) and thukje (*thugs-rje*) aspects of the Base make up its lhundrub (*lhun-grub*) aspect. This is so because the katak or ngowo aspect is the dharmakaya *qua* Base, and the rangzhin and thukje aspects are, respectively, the sambhogakaya and the nirmanakaya *qua* Base, which together make up the lhundrub aspect, which is the rupakaya (combination of sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya) *qua* Base. For further details see Part Two of my work *Buddhism and Dzogchen*.

²⁶⁰ This is the reason why the Madhyamaka Rangtongpa subschools do not teach that we should analyze *all* phenomena one by one; the idea is to use analysis to gain access again and again to the emptiness that in general these subschools identify as the ultimate truth, until all doubts be overcome. Then, rather than going on forever with analysis, one is supposed to go deeper into the realization of voidness, perfecting it and stabilizing it, until one becomes firmly established in the absolute voidness that is utterly beyond the subject-object duality. Furthermore, as we have seen, Mahamadhyamaka does not preclude analysis, for it considers the dialectics of the Rangtongpa to be an useful preparation on the Gradual Path, in order to enter subsequently into the experiential cultivation of the direct, naked View of Contemplation proper of Mahamadhyamaka.

²⁶¹ As we have seen, in the Dzogchen teachings the terms dharmakaya, sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya are given a more specific meaning than the ones they are given in the Sutras and in the Tantras of the Path of Transformation. I am referring specifically to the meaning of the three kayas when they are considered by the Dzogchen teachings as a sequence of realization that begins with the dharmakaya *qua* reGnition of the essence or ngowo (*ngo-bo*) aspect of the Base in Direct Introduction, and henceforth in experiences belonging to the dang (*gdangs*) mode of manifestation of energy—which in the Dzogchen Menngagde (*man-ngag-sde*) takes place again and again during a long time in the practice of Tekchö (*khregs-chod*).

Since the first level of realization in Dzogchen is the dharmakaya, it is important to note that this level of realization already involves the indivisibility of emptiness and appearances—though the appearances involved are characteristically those of the dang mode of manifestation energy. Therefore, already in the manifestation of the dharmakaya there is an indivisibility of emptiness and appearances, and therefore not even this level of realization could be accounted for by a mere voidness.

However, the next levels of realization make it even more obvious that the Path and the Fruit cannot be accounted for by a mere voidness. In fact, the second level of realization is the sambhogakaya *qua* reGnition of the nature or rangzhin (*rang-bzhin*) aspect of the Base, immediately after delusive, dualistic experiences have been rectified by the rölpa (*rol-pa*) mode of manifestation of the energy or thukje aspect of the Base, which tends to efface the illusory existence of two different dimensions or jing, one internal and the other one external. In fact, this realization is full of luminosity and impressive appearances, and it takes place by virtue of very powerful systemic activities belonging to the lhundrub (*lhun-grub*: spontaneity or spontaneous perfection) aspect of the Base.

Finally, the third level of realization is the nirmanakaya *qua* reGnition of the energy or thukje (*thugs-rje*) aspect of the Base in experiences and activities related to what in normal conditions would be the tsel (*rtsal*) mode of manifestation of energy. However, at this point the illusion of there being two dimensions or jing, one internal and another one external, has definitively dissolved or is in the process of dissolving definitively—which is explained as the fusion of the rölpa and tsel modes of manifestation of the energy or thukje aspect of the Base. At this level, the individual manifests a plethora of selfless, actionless activities which can by no means be accounted for by a mere absence, and has a “capacity of miracles” that cannot be accounted for by a mere lack either. Then, when all Buddha-activities have been completed, the individual attains one of the modes of ending life that are characteristic of the Dzogchen Menngagde or Upadesha.

- ²⁶² Superior bodhisattvas are those who have attained direct insight into emptiness—that is, bodhisattvas who are treading the third or fourth path of the bodhisattva Path. The term translated as “superior” is the Sanskrit *arya*, which is how the Indo-European peoples that conquered India called themselves, as they believed themselves to be superior to the peoples they conquered—which in India were the Dravidians, the Tibeto-Burmese, and the *adivasi*. In fact, though Buddhism may be viewed as a rebellion against the official religion of the Aryans, the texts of the Mahayana are in Sanskrit, which is the main language developed by the Indo-European invaders after their conquest of India, and which reflects their prejudices. (As I have shown in the notes to Part One of *Buddhism and Dzogchen*, the truth is that the most valuable aspects of the religion of the Aryans in India are those that were absorbed from the Dravidians and, mainly through these, from the Tibeto-Burmese.)
- ²⁶³ As we have seen, the Third Path of the bodhisattva is the “Path of Seeing” (Skt., *darshana marga*; Tib., thonglam [*mthong-lam*]), which corresponds to the first level (Skt., *bhumi*; Tib., *sa*) of superior bodhisattvas. In turn, the Fourth Path of the bodhisattva is the “Path of Contemplation” (Skt., *dhyana marga*; Tib., gomlam [*sgom lam*]), comprising levels two through ten of superior bodhisattvas.
- ²⁶⁴ In this case I speak of meta-experience rather than experience because, as we have seen, “experience” applies only to *samsara*, and *nirvana* must be said to be beyond experience. Therefore, if one still needs to use the term, it will be better to add the prefix “meta-”. As we have seen, this understanding of “experience” corresponds to the explanation of the term in Thinle Norbu Rinpoche, 1997, pp. 3-4 (for the full cite see note 99).
- ²⁶⁵ Ju Mipham Jamyang Namgyäl was a Dzogchen Master who, when dealing with the philosophical schools of the Mahayana, upheld the views of Mahamadhyamaka: this he did in his *Lion’s Roar in Affirmation of Extrinsic Emptiness* (*gZhan-stong khas-len seng-ge’i nga-ro*: see the *Mi-pham gsung-’bum*, Vol. 11 [xylo]; Ser-lo Monastery, Nepal), in his commentary to the *Bodhicharyavatara*, and in other texts. However, in other of the tractates in which he upheld some of the tenets characteristic of Mahamadhyamaka, Mipham declared himself to be a Prasangika; since this Master had spent some time in Gelugpa monasteries, one may guess that by so doing he intended to influence the Yellow Hats.
- ²⁶⁶ Personal communication by Thinle Norbu Rinpoche.
- ²⁶⁷ In the *Ashtasahasrikapindartha* (T 3808, vv.27-9) we read (Dudjom Rinpoche, p. 182):
 “The transcendental perfection of discriminative awareness genuinely depends on three teachings: the imaginary, dependent and absolute alone. By negative expressions and the like all that is imaginary is refuted. By apparition and other such similes the dependent is correctly revealed. Through the fourfold purification the absolute is well-known. Other than the transcendental perfection of discriminative awareness, the Buddhas have no teaching.”
- ²⁶⁸ In the *Pañchavimshatishahasrikaprajñāparamita* we read (Dudjom Rinpoche, p. 182):
 “Maitreya, regard any imaginary form as not substantially existent. One might regard any conceptualized form as substantially existent because thoughts [appear to] exist substantially, but do not confer independent status upon it. Then you should regard the very form of reality as being disclosed by ultimate reality, for it is neither substantially existent nor not substantially existent.”
- ²⁶⁹ In Nagamitra’s *Kayatravayavaramukha* (T 3890: Introduction to the Three Bodies) the three essential natures are summarized as the causal basis for the attainment of the three kayas, and the same point is made in the *Kayatravayavritti* (T 3891: Commentary [on the Introduction to the Three Kayas]) by Mahamadhyamika Master Jñānachandra. Cf. Dudjom Rinpoche, p. 183.
- ²⁷⁰ All schools of the Mahayana assert that subject and object arise co-emergently. However, the schools that are based mainly on the Third Promulgation emphasize the activity of what normally they regard as the side corresponding to the perceiving consciousness; though they do not go as far as Dzogchen in showing the levels through which the play of awareness establishes subject and object as these function in human ordinary experience, they stress the role of the consciousness-of-passions in establishing objects—which expresses a knowledge that results from an enhanced awareness of the process whereby experience is constructed, but which may also mislead the reader into thinking that the object is sort of a by-product of the subject.
- In their turn, the schools based mainly on the Second Promulgation explain co-emergence as the simultaneous arising of the subject and the object, for they believe views must derive from strict logical reasoning, and perhaps they make the crucial point that there is no *a priori*, self-existent consciousness in a more clear way. However, they may mislead readers in a way opposite to that in which the schools based mainly on the Third Promulgation may mislead them; for example, the reference to dualistic

consciousness and the mental subject as “the clear knower that arises in the image of its object,” despite having the merit of emphasizing the point that there is no self-existent, *a priori* consciousness, may mislead the reader into thinking that this “clear knower” is sort of a by-product of the object.

²⁷¹ In Dudjom Rinpoche, J. Y. D., English 1991, trans.: Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein, vol. I, p. 219, we read:

“The dependent is without essence in respect to creation, because creation from the four alternative limits do not exist: Things are not created from themselves because that which was created and creation itself consist of instantaneous time moments, which renders them mutually exclusive substances. Nor are things created from something else, because on analysis the specific characteristics of that something else are not [found to] exist. Then, things are not created from both [themselves and other causes], because [themselves and other causes] are mutually exclusive substances. And, [finally], without a cause, creation is impossible. ...whatever is apparitional and so forth instantly appears inasmuch as it is dependently originated, in the manner of a dream or an illusion. Such is said in the *Sarvabuddhaviśayāvatarañānalokālamkārasūtra*:

“Mañjuśrī, dreams appear but do not exist. Similarly all things, too, appear but do not exist.

“Down to:

“They are illusory, like a mirage, a castle in the sky, the moon in water, a reflected image and an emanation’.”

The above refutation is based on the view of time as a succession of instantaneous moments (which are not self-existent), according to which the illusion of there being a continuity of substances and actions would be similar to illusion of there being a continuity of substances and action in a movie picture, which results from the succession of still individual pictures in the film (with the difference that yogis have always insisted that the successive time moments have no duration whatsoever). Contrarily to the opinion of some dialecticians and scholars, this view of time is not an abstract theory of reality that the Yogacharas borrowed from the theoretical schools of the Hinayana, but is based on yogic experience. In turn, the rejection of this view by the Madhyamika Prasangikas is based on logical reasoning.

In case anyone would like to see the negation of production or creation confirmed by scriptural authority, the *Anavatāptanagarajaparipricchāsūtra* (*kLu'i rgyal po ma dros pas zhus pa'i mdo*) reads:

“Whatever is produced from conditions is not produced;
it does not have a nature of production.

Whatever depends on conditions is said to be empty;
one who knows emptiness is [rightly] mindful.”

²⁷² The dissolution of the subject-object duality each and every time the Contemplation state of the superior bodhisattva manifests, makes it evident that the subject-object duality is the core of delusion, and that the true condition is beyond all forms of dualism. Therefore, when the subject-object duality, and with it the whole of dependently conceived nature, arises in the post-Contemplation state, there is some degree of marginal awareness that this nature has the status of an illusion “insofar as creation lacks substantiality.”

²⁷³ The explanation of interdependent origination or *pratitya samutpada* as the temporal succession of the twelve links or *nidana*, which is at the root of the realization of Pratyekabuddhas, was briefly sketched in note 150. In its turn, the Mahayana interpretation of interdependent origination expounded in the *Prajñāparamita Sūtras*, which does not understand it as temporal succession, but as the synchronic, essential dependence of each and every entity with regard to all other entities, may be easily understood in terms of the following, extremely brief arguments:

As we have seen, all phenomena depend on the spurious subject-object dichotomy that results from the delusory valuation-absolutization of the directional threefold thought structure—and the phenomena appearing as object, in particular, also depend on being singled out by our mental events and on being recognized and perceived in terms of a concept. It is in terms of the mutual dependence of concepts, however, that this type of interdependence is traditionally explained. In fact, as we have seen, the concepts in terms of which we recognize the phenomena appearing as object depend on the category of thought that makes up their *genus proximum* and on the category that makes up their *differentia specifica*—and, by implication, on the whole of the phenomena that, upon being grouped together, give rise to both these categories. For example, the concept of human depends on that of animal, the concept of animal depends on that of living being, the concept of living being depends on that of entity, and so on and on. Likewise, the concept of rational is interdependent with that of irrational, black with white,

up with down, this with that, and so on and on. If we carry this reasoning to its logical term, we will realize that each and every category is established in relation to all other categories, and therefore we will conclude that each and every phenomenon depends on all categories, and therefore also on the whole of the phenomena that, upon being grouped together in different ways, give rise to the totality of categories. Therefore, all phenomena—including the mental subject and all of the segments of the continuum of appearance that mental events can single out and establish as objects (whether of the kind that we consider to be mental or of the type that we consider to be physical)—are dependent and, as such, relatively rather than absolutely existent.

Furthermore, in the case of living beings, there is also a real, ecological interdependence: not only do all living beings depend on the different kinds of nutrients and the whole of conditions necessary for their existence, but the ecosystem is a web in which each intersection of threads depends on all other intersections and on all other threads. In fact, it is precisely our inability to grasp interdependences of this kind as a result of the fragmentary perception inherent to the basic delusion called *avidya* or marigpa (*ma-rig-pa*), which has given rise to the ecological crisis that threatens the survival of our species and in general of all life on this planet. The way in which *avidya* or marigpa has produced these results was considered in extremely concise terms in Part One of my *Buddhism and Dzogchen*; a far more complete treatment of this subject was carried out in Capriles, Elías, 1994. The following is a brief quotation from *Buddhism and Dzogchen*:

“The project of Modernity is a product of the exacerbation of the delusion called *avidya* or marigpa resulting in an extreme perceptual fragmentation, which in turn causes an acute lack of overall understanding of a universe that, in itself, is a perfectly indivisible continuum. This illusory fragmentation and ensuing lack of overall understanding may be illustrated by the story found in the *Udana*, third book of the *Khuddaka Nikaya* in the Pali Canon, basis of Hinayana Buddhism (P.T.S., pp. 66-68; Venkata Ramanan, 1966, pp. 49-50, reference in note 138 to ch. I, p. 344): the one who held the elephant’s head asserted the object to be like a pot; the one who held the ear claimed that it was like a winnowing fan; etc.: each of them held so firmly to his partial view, taking it to be an accurate, absolute view of totality, that they quarreled bitterly, unable to come to an agreement as to the nature of the object before them. The same story is told in the *Tathagatagarbhasutra*, pertaining to the Sanskrit Canon of Mahayana Buddhism, as follows (**Tibetan Text 3 [???**], quoted in Dudjom Rinpoche, English 1991, vol. I, p. 295. The parts in parentheses are those I modified in order to make the text more comprehensible in the context in which it is being used):

“The king assembled many blind men and, (making them face) an elephant, commanded, ‘Describe (this object’s) particular characteristics’. Those among them who felt the elephant’s nose said that (the object) resembled an iron hook. Those who felt the eyes said that (it) resembled bowls. Those who felt the ears said (it) resembled winnowing baskets. Those who felt the back said it resembled a sedan chair, and those who felt the tail said it resembled a string. Indeed, though (their description responded to the parts of the) elephant (they touched), they were lacking in overall understanding...’

“In a modified, later version of this story that was popularized by Sufi poets in Islamic countries, each of the men grasped a different part of the pachyderm, reaching a diverse conclusion as to what the animal was: the one who took hold of its trunk said it was a hose; the one who seized its ear thought it was a fan; the one who put his hand on its back decided it was a throne; the one who clasped its leg concluded that it was a pillar... and, I would like to add to the Sufi version of the story, the one who grabbed its tail threw it away in terror, believing it to be a snake.

“The modern exacerbation of the essential human delusion called *avidya* or marigpa, by bringing to its logical extreme our sensation of being entities inherently separate and independent from the rest of nature, and in general our fragmentary perception of the universe as though it were the sum of intrinsically separate, self-existent and unconnected entities, has made us worse than the men with the elephant. It led us to develop and implement the technological project aimed at destroying the parts of the world that annoyed us and to appropriate those that pleased us, which has seriously impaired the functionality of the worldwide ecosystem of which we are parts and on which our survival as a species depends. It is as though our incapability to grasp the unity of the coin of life had led us to develop and apply extremely powerful corrosives to destroy the side that we deemed undesirable—death, illness, pain, troubles, etc.—and to protect the side of the coin that we considered desirable—life, health, pleasure, comfort, etc... and these corrosives, by boring a hole through the coin, now were on the verge of destroying the side we were intent on preserving.

“In order to illustrate the narrow and fragmentary state of consciousness inherent to *avidya*-marigpa that a tradition associated with the *Kalachakra Tantra* calls ‘small space-time-knowledge’, the Buddha Shakyamuni resorted to the example of a frog that, having been confined all its life to the bottom of a well, thought the sky was a small blue circle. This is the type of consciousness illustrated by the renowned adage of the tree that does not allow the individual to see the forest, and it is the type of consciousness of which Gregory Bateson said that, when it perceives an arc, it does not realize that it is part of a circuit. Consequently, when an arc annoys us, we aim at it our powerful technological weapons, destroying the circuit that the arc is part of; setting fire to the tree in front of us, we burn the forest in which we stand, bringing about our own destruction.”

Insofar as the current ecological crisis has reduced to absurdity the delusion at its root, it has given rise to the possibility that humankind as a whole may transcend this delusion—or, rather, that the part of humankind that does not perish in the ensuing turmoil may transcend delusion. Thereafter delusion would manifest anew, but for a very long time human beings would have the means to achieve its dissolution and have the meta-experience of communion in the unveiling of their true, common nature.

²⁷⁴ The use of a terminology to refer to spontaneous awareness or primordial gnosis *qua* Base, and a different terminology to refer to the manifestation of spontaneous awareness or primordial gnosis *qua* Path or *qua* Fruit, is typical of the Nyingmapa systems—from Dzogchen to Mahamadhyamaka. However, it is also typical of Mahamadhyamaka and of the Nyingmapa systems and doctrines of the inner Vajrayana, to emphasize the fact that primordial gnosis is exactly the same when, *qua* Base, it is being ignored in *samsara*, and when it makes patent its own face by disclosing the true nature of reality in what is known as *rigpa-qua*-Path and *rigpa-qua*-Fruit.

²⁷⁵ This statement by Shantideva is from the *Bodhicharyavatara*, Ch. 9, verse 24. The example is not totally to the point insofar as the main cause of vision is the power of the organs, and the lotion would be *but* a secondary cause that would allow that power to function again. However, it is quite evident that the objects seen are not the vision, just as the images appearing on the screen of a movie theater cannot be said to be the light emitted by the movie projector: these images *depend on* the light emitted by the projector, and will either manifest or not do so depending on whether or not the projector’s focus is graduated correctly and so on, but it would not be very accurate to simply say that the images *are* the light (in fact, if we look directly into the light issuing from the projector, we will not see any image in it).

²⁷⁶ The Tibetan translation of the term Chittamatra or “Mind only” (seldom used by the Indian Yogacharas themselves) is *Semtsampa* (*sems-tsam-pa*); however, the Tibetan word is made up by the term *semsam* (*sems-tsam*), which means “mind-only,” and *pa*, which means “(those who) adhere to.” As we have seen, Longchen Rabjampa contrasted the so-called “Mind-only” view according to which all is experiencing, with the view of the Semde (*sems-sde*) series of Dzogchen, and concluded that the latter, according to which, in both *samsara* and *nirvana*, vision or nangwa (*snang-ba*) may be said to be (1) the play or *rölpa* (*rol-pa*), (2) the projection or *tse* (*rtsal*), or (3) the ornament or *gyen* (*rgyan*), of primordial *bodhichitta*, is not at all the same as the Mind-only claim that the way things appear is our own experiencing or our own potential for experiencing. (Cf. *kLong-chen Rab-'byams-pa, Chos dbyings rin po che'i mdzod 'grel pa*, published by Dodrub Chen Rinpoche in Gangtok, Sikkim, p. 206b; quoted in Kennard Lipman’s Introduction to: Mañjushrimitra, trans. Kennard Lipman, Namkhai Norbu and Barry Simmons, English 1983/1986, p. 20.)

Mahamadhyamaka is not the Semde series of the Dzogchen Atiyoga, and in fact it does not posit the categories mentioned above; however, nor does it posit a Mind-only view, or a view according to which all is the process of experiencing. According to it, all is the Buddha-nature *qua* Base, which corresponds to the inseparability of emptiness and appearances.

²⁷⁷ This term has often been grossly mistranslated as “Mind-as-such,” which has nothing to do with the meaning of the Tibetan word *semnyi* (*sems-nyid*) or of the Sanskrit terms *chittata* and *chitta-eva*. In fact, etymologically the term “Mind-as-such” means “mind *qua* mind” or “mind itself,” which is quite the opposite of the meaning of *semnyi*, *chittata* and *chitta-eva*, which indicate precisely that with which mind—which the Dzogchen teachings, in particular, understand as the core and root of *samsara*—is contrasted, and from which it has to be distinguished in one’s experience if one is to proceed on the Path. In the Dzogchen Menngagde (*man-ngag sde*) or Upadesha, this experiential distinction is achieved through the *khorda* rushens (*'khor-'das ru-shan*) and the twenty-one *semdzins* (*sems-'dzin*).

²⁷⁸ As we have seen, Mahamadhyamaka does not go beyond the evidence constituted by the phenomena of *samsara* and the metaphenomenon or metaphenomena of *nirvana* into metaphysical speculation: it is metaphenomenistic insofar as it deals with the structure and function of the phenomena of *samsara* and the metaphenomenon or metaphenomena of *nirvana*, and it is metaphenomenological insofar as it deals with the ontological structure and function of *samsara* and the metaontological dynamic of *nirvana*.

As we have seen, all that we experience is a manifestation of primordial awareness, for only in awareness are there phenomena; however, this does not imply a metaphysical theory proclaiming that all there is, is our own experience, or the phenomena of our own mind: Mahamadhyamaka does neither assert the existence of a Kantian *Ding-an-sich*, nor denies its existence. However, it shows that there is a single, nondual reality.

²⁷⁹ In males, the analog aspect of mind is *mainly* related to the workings of the right hemisphere of the brain; in females, it is *mainly* related to the workings of the left hemisphere. Furthermore, the analog aspect is directly related to what Freud called primary process, while the digital aspect is related to what Freud called secondary process (Freud, S., original work published 1895, Spanish edition used, 1974). See Bateson, Gregory, 1972; Bateson, Gregory, 1982; Wilden, Anthony, 1972, 2d ed. 1980; Capriles, Elías, 1994; etc.

²⁸⁰ The Theravadins, the Sarvastivada schools, the Sautrantikas and other Hinayanists posited an objective foundation of experience conglomerates of atoms held to exist outside human experience and independently of it. In turn, as we have seen, the Yogachara School stated that all was mind or experience and posited the *alaya vijñana* as the internal foundation of human experience, asserting that the latter was determined by *bijas* or *vasanas* carried by the *alaya vijñana*. Thus, these schools rejected the idea that the universe may be a baseless, utterly arbitrary hallucination produced and experienced by an individual subjective mind; however, by asserting or denying the existence of something external to experience, they breached the limits of legitimate human knowledge.

The same happened to the long series of Western metaphysical thinkers who posited an objective foundation on which perceptions obtain, and then in explaining this foundation made assertions that could only be legitimately made by hypothetical beings capable of seeing beyond the range and limits of human experience: the Greek atomists posited atoms external to human experience to be the ultimate constituents of reality; Plato posited the *eidōs*, matter, souls and the demiurge; Descartes posited one uncreated substance and two created substances; Leibniz posited monads and a pre-established harmony that would allow the perceptions of the different beings to agree so that they may seem to be different perspectives on a single objective world, and stated that space arose from relations between monads, and time arose from the connection of determinations between the latter as causes and effects; Kant posited an undivided and indivisible *Ding-an-sich* as a nondimensional foundation of experience, out of which experience arose thanks to *a priori* forms of sensitivity, *a priori* categories and other concepts, *a priori* aesthetical judgments, and *a priori* ideas and ideals of reason; Hegel posited a single reality originally consisting in the idea, which then adopted the form of otherness in nature, and henceforth evolved dialectically from the human certitude of facing an alien reality to the self-recognition of the idea in nature; physicist David Bohm posited an implicate order out of which the explicate order is constructed... and so on and on.

(Concerning the above, it must be noted that Kant criticized Leibniz's conception, insisting that monads belonged to a nonphenomenal level of reality, and that insofar as relations are by nature phenomenal, Leibniz's theory implied a confusion of levels of reality [cf. Kant, Immanuel, this ed., 1969, Part I, Ch. 3, Appendix on the Amphibology of the Concepts of Reflection]. In turn, David Bohm described the implicate order, holomovement or holoflux he posited in terms that mix concepts that only apply to a phenomenal, dimensional reality, with concepts that suggest the complete lack of a phenomenal, dimensional reality, and thus his descriptions are susceptible to objections similar to the ones Kant directed against Leibniz [furthermore, Bohm insisted the nonmanifest "lies in something immensely beyond" itself, which he called "spirit:" beside the mixture of phenomenal and nonphenomenal realities that this implies, one sees no reasons to posit this "third reality," for a beyond the beyond, rather than responding to an explicative need or resolving a problem, suggests that there is another reality that the deluded then may regard as another different substance]. However, the main point in Bohm's theory is precisely that, according to him, at a certain dimensional level, which is that of quantum phenomena and Planck's constant, there is neither a continuous dimensionality like the one that is characteristic of our everyday experience, nor a complete lack of dimensionality like the one that characterizes Kant's

Din-an-sich. Therefore this level cannot be described by our usual concepts except, to some extent, by resorting to contradictory statements. However, we have seen that the same applies to all levels of reality, and that this caused Hegel to claim that “for something to move, simultaneously it has to be and not to be in the same place”—even though, as we have seen, this also fails to correspond precisely to reality.)

²⁸¹ The term Uma Chenpo (*bdu-ma chen-po*) was used by both Longchenpa and Mipham for referring to the Madhyamaka Prasangika as they understood it: as emphasizing the nonelaborate, nonconceptual, nondual ultimate or absolute, which they explain as involving the coincidence of emptiness and appearances. Other authors have used it as a synonym of Uma Zhentongpa (*dbu-ma gzhan-stong-pa*). And even Tsongkhapa used it *passim* at least in one place (the colophon to his Uma Gongpa Rabtsel [*dbu-ma dgongs-pa rab-gsal*]). (Cf. Pettit, 1999, p. 113.) I use it here, to some extent following Dudjom Rinpoche (1991), to refer to the supreme synthesis of Prasangika and Zhentongpa that accepts the emptiness of substances other than the ultimate, yet does not posit the ultimate to be truly existent, and which aptly explains the coincidence between the views of voidness of Rantongpas and Zhentongpas, and of Prasangika and Swatantrika, in a supreme synthesis (as I intend to do in this book).

²⁸² This shows that Chandrakirti is making such assertions in order to avoid discouraging neophytes of lower capacities who otherwise might conclude that there is no reason for doing the practice, and/or to assuage the fear of emptiness that is characteristic of the shravakas.

²⁸³ As I have noted, according to the *Mahayana* in general, according to the gradual Mahayana, the coincident manifestation of calm abiding and special insight (Skt., *shamatha-vipashyana-yuganaddha*; Tib., *zhinai-lhantong-zungjug*²⁸³), upon which there occurs an initial, incipient, partial glimpse of *tathata* that burns away the conceptuality that distorts the true condition of reality, marks the attainment of the first of the four stages of the second bodhisattva path—i.e., of the path of preparation or path of application (Skt., *prayoga-marga*), which is the stage called “heat” (Skt., *ushmagata*; Tib., *drö [drod]*). It full unveiling marks the transition from the path of preparation or path of application to the path of Seeing (Skt. *darshana marga*; Tib. *thonglam [mthong-lam]*).

²⁸⁴ In the context of *Existenzphilosophie* and Existentialism, *the existent* is the human individual; in turn, entities lacking consciousness and subjectivity are not existents but entities (German, *Seiende*; French, *étants*). However, this is not the sense the term has in this context, in which it is a synonym of “being”, and in which “to exist” is a synonym of “to be.”

²⁸⁵ As explained in Part One of *Buddhism and Dzogchen* and elsewhere in this book, the phenomenon of being arises as the directional threefold thought structure with its inherent concept of being is delusorily valued, giving rise to the illusion that there *is* an experience, that there *is* an experiencer and that there *is* something experienced: the dualistic consciousness and the spurious mental subject associated with it, on the one hand, and the objects that arise co-emergently with this consciousness and this mental subject, on the other hand, appear to *be*—which is that Tsongkhapa would refer to by saying they appear to “exist inherently.” Spontaneous awareness cannot seem to *be* insofar as it is neither the subject nor the object that arises from the delusory valuation-absolutization of the directional threefold thought structure and the singling out of segments of the totality of sense data, but the Base in which the subject and the object arise, and as such it has been compared to a mirror in which the reflections which are the subject and its objects manifest.

In fact, only the contents of thought may be delusorily valued, and only the subject and its objects can be sustained by the *delusive phenomenon of being* and thus appear to *be* (in Tsongkhapa’s terms, to “exist inherently”). Spontaneous awareness is not the content of any possible thought, nor is it either a subject or an object; therefore, it is absolutely impossible that spontaneous awareness may seem to *be* (or, in Tsongkhapa’s terms, that spontaneous awareness may seem to “exist inherently”)—and the same applies to the illusion that spontaneous awareness is-not, or that it is-and-is-not, or that it neither-is-nor-is-not.

However, as stated in the paragraph of the regular text to which the reference mark for this note was affixed, the *arupa* or formless experience that arises from grasping at the base-of-all—which as we have seen is a dualistic state in which the base-of-all appears as a proto-object to an incipient consciousness—is supported by the *delusive phenomenon of being*. Furthermore, mistaking the base-of-all for the dharmakaya amounts to mistaking it for spontaneous awareness; since the grasping at the base-of-all that gives rise to formless experiences involves taking base-of-all as a proto-object and sustaining this object with the *delusive phenomenon of being*, it is easy to be deluded into concluding that the object of

one's experience is spontaneous awareness (rather than a reflection-like appearance manifesting in spontaneous awareness), and therefore be deluded into concluding that this awareness *is* or *exists*.

²⁸⁶ According to the Dzogchen teachings, there is a difference between the gnosis that is the Base and the so-called “gnoses (or, more correctly, ‘unveilings of primordial gnosis’) on the Path”—or the gnosis (or, more correctly, ‘definitive unveiling of primordial gnosis’) that is the Fruit, for that matter. The point is that spontaneous awareness *qua* Base may be said to be the same as rigpa *qua* Base, which as we have seen manifests in the state referred to as the base-of-all carrying propensities (bagchagkyi kunzhi [*bag-chags-kyi kun-gzhi*]), which in turn involves the most basic of the three types of *avidya* or marigpa listed in the Dzogchen classification adopted here, which may be called “unawareness” insofar as it consists in the obscuration, by a contingent, beclouding element of stupefaction, of the nondual Awake self-awareness the Dzogchen teachings call rigpa (as it manifests in *nirvana*), so that the latter cannot make patent its own face by disclosing the true nature of reality in the manifestation of rigpa-*qua*-Path or rigpa-*qua*-Fruit, and the spontaneous liberation that is the trademark of Dzogchen cannot manifest.

Conversely, rigpa *qua* Path and rigpa *qua* Fruit involve the patency of rigpa's own face in the reGnition of the true condition, and the total unveiling of primordial gnosis that allows it to function as the renowned all-liberating primordial gnosis or chikshe kundröl (*gcik-she kun-grol*)—so that in this condition whatever arises liberates itself spontaneously upon arising.

Mahamadhyamaka, insofar as it does not belong to the Path of spontaneous liberation but to the Path of renunciation, cannot make the above distinctions, and therefore we must agree that in it there is no difference between primordial gnosis or spontaneous awareness *qua* Base and the same gnosis or awareness *qua* Path or *qua* Fruit. Furthermore, insofar as Mahamadhyamaka belongs to the Mahayana, there is a difference to be made between the Contemplation state of superior bodhisattvas and the full Awakening of Buddhas, for only the latter involves the total, uninterrupted manifestation of the capacity to carry out spontaneous selfless activities even though no sentient beings to be helped are perceived.

²⁸⁷ It must be noted that the Theravadins would not admit the argument according to which, if the gnoses on the Path and the gnosis of the Fruit would arise in the Path and as the Fruit, respectively, they would be born and conditioned (*samskrita*) and could not be the definitive solution to the sufferings of *samsara* (and that therefore the so-called ‘gnoses on the Path’ are actually ‘unveilings of primordial gnosis’). This is so because, according to that school, only *nirvana* is unconditioned (*asamskrita*), and they regard it as unconditioned in spite of it *arising* as the Fruit.

²⁸⁸ In Williams, Paul, 1998, p. 209, we are told that the Gelugpas establish a radical difference between the use of “spontaneous awareness” (Tib., *rang-rig*) as a characteristic of all consciousness in tenet systems such as the Yogachara School and the Madhyamaka-Swatantrika-Yogachara subschool, and its specific use to refer to the manifestation of nondual, nonconceptual gnosis in the Path during the Contemplation state of superior bodhisattvas and advanced yogis, or as the Fruit in fully, irreversibly Awake Buddhas.

In the same page of the same book, Dr Williams notes that Ju Mipham Jamyang Namgyäl refused to distinguish between what the English author that later on converted to Catholicism calls “these two senses of *rang-rig*”—a position explained in detail in Pettit, John Whitnew, 1999. The point is that Mipham was writing from the standpoint of Mahamadhyamaka roughly as understood here (some of the points where we do not coincide have been pinpointed in this book), and for the reasons considered in the regular text of this section (and also briefly in note before last), in this philosophical school as it is understood here (as in the rest of the higher Nyingmapa systems—except Dzogchen Atiyoga, for the specific reasons considered in note before last) there is no difference whatsoever between the meaning of the term spontaneous awareness when used to refer to the Base of all consciousness and all cognitions, and its meaning when used to refer to the nondual, nonconceptual gnosis in the Path and as the Fruit.

However, this does *not at all* imply that the meanings of *rang-rig* in Mahamadhyamaka, on the one hand, and in the Yogachara School, are the same: the gnoses that manifest in the Path or as the Fruit are not at all the same as the *rang-rig* that, according to the Yogacharas, is a characteristic of all consciousness: as we have seen, the latter implies the unnecessary, metaphysical duplication of consciousness, which is absent in the gnoses that manifest in the Path or as the Fruit. Therefore, the gnoses that manifest in the Path or as the Fruit are the unveiling of *rang-rig* as understood and explained by Mahamadhyamaka, rather than being the unveiling of the misconceptions of the Chittamatra.

²⁸⁹ Furthermore, especially in the case of Buddhas, there manifests a masterful capacity to deal with the plethora of entities and sentient beings, which is free of self-impediment. The basic human delusion called *avidya* or marigpa implies dualistic self-consciousness, as a result of which self-interference hinders the whole of our acts, making them imprecise and imperfect. As expressed in the English rhyme:

“ The centipede was happy, quite,
until the toad for fun
asked, “Pray, which leg goes after which?”
which brought his mind to such a pitch
he fell demented in a ditch
forgetting how to run.”

Contrariwise, having overcome the delusion called *avidya* or marigpa, thereby ridding oneself of the fracture that gave rise to a controlling aspect and a controlled aspect, implies having become open channels for the unobstructed flow of the spontaneity of our true nature. If one who has achieved this result has attained mastery in the fine arts or in craftsmanship, he or she will be able to produce incomparable works of art or handicrafts without being subject to self-encumbering. The *Chuang-tzu* tells us:

“Ch’ui the artisan was able to draw circles by hand better than with the compass. His fingers seemed to accommodate so easily to the thing on which he was working that he didn’t need to focus his attention. His mental faculties thus remained one (i.e., integrated) and suffered no impediment.”

If the above artisan had needed to focus his attention on the object he was working on, and on the hands he was working with, and had needed to use this attention to control his activity, like the centipede of the above poem he would have suffered obstruction. Those who have become firmly established in the state of Awakening, so as to become an unimpeded channel for the spontaneous flow of the selfless activities issuing from the true, single nature of all entities, will not be obstructed by self-consciousness even when they are observed by the most fastidious, critical, severe, respected and fearsome witnesses, and if they are skillful in the fine arts or in craftsmanship, they will be able to produce masterpieces right before the latter’s eyes.

²⁹⁰ We have seen that Chandrakirti asserted that the *dharmata* existed and, furthermore, that it was self-existent; however, in general most non-Gelugpa Prasangikas will not assert that these gnoses exist, that they are self-existent, or that they exist inherently.

We have seen repeatedly that Madhyamaka was conceived by Nagarjuna; that this great scholar was a Dzogchen Master; that in his *Six Collections of Madhyamika Reasoning* (Skt., *Yuktikaya*; Tib., *Uma Rigtsog Drug* [*dbU-ma Rigts-tshogs drug*]) he developed both his own brand of the *via oppositiois* and the system of refutation by *reductio ad absurdum* that later on became the core of Madhyamaka Prasangika; and that in his *Collection of Eulogies* (Skt., *Stavakaya*; Tib., *Tötsog* [*bsTod-tshogs*]), and in particular in his *Eulogy to the Empty Expanse of Reality* (Skt., *Dharmadhatustava*; Tib., *Chöjing Töpa* [*Chos-dbyings bstod-pa*]), he outlined the more complete and encompassing views that later on became known as Mahamadhyamaka.

However, with the passing of time some followers of Nagarjuna who adhered to the Prasangika system rejected *both* the higher and more encompassing views of Mahamadhyamaka, and the supreme vehicle, which is the Dzogchen Atiyoga. Among these, some used the Prasangika system as a stick to preclude the Nyingmapas from positing spontaneous awareness to be the Base that is not dependent on any entity, reality or activity, because according to them this would amount to positing spontaneous awareness to be an “inherently existing” entity. (Those who apply this objection to the concept of spontaneous awareness *qua* Base should necessarily apply it to the concept of *dharmata* as the absolute truth or ultimate reality, and therefore reject Chandrakirti’s view in this regard, and even to Awakening itself insofar as it involves a nondual awareness *qua* Fruit that, as we saw, cannot be distinguished from the Mahamadhyamaka conception of spontaneous awareness *qua* Base).

As we have seen, the basic awareness that I have been representing in terms of the primordial mirror is not self-existent insofar as the concepts of being, nonbeing, both-being-and-nonbeing and neither-being-nor-nonbeing cannot apply to it. Likewise, it cannot be subject to the illusion of self-existence insofar as it cannot appear either as subject or as object (which are the two types of phenomena that can be subject to the illusion of “inherent existence”) and cannot be the content of a concept (which is what can be sustained by the *delusive phenomenon of being*). Therefore, though the mirror does not depend on anything else, this nondependence does not imply either “inherent existence” or the illusion of “inherent

existence,” but only nonrelativity, which could not be rejected by Madhyamaka for this would amount to rejecting absolute truth and Awakening.

In particular, Je Tsongkhapa and his disciple Gyeltsab Je (*rGyal-tshab rje*) insisted that the refutation of *swasamvittih* should not be limited to its supposedly absolute existence, but should be extended to its supposedly relative existence as well. As we have seen, Ju Mipham Jamyang Namgyäl (*Ju Mi-pham 'Jam-dbyangs rNam-rgyal*, 1846-1912) was a Dzogchen Master who, when writing philosophical books at the level of the Mahayana, adhered to the view of Mahamadhyamaka, which he developed in texts such as the *Lion's Roar in Affirmation of Extrinsic Emptiness* (*gZhan-stong khas-len seng-ge'i nga-ro*; in *Mi-pham gsung-'bum*, Vol. 11 (xylo); Ser-lo Monastery, Nepal), and which he praised in his commentary to the *Bodhicharyavatara* and other treatises. However, in some texts, like a Trojan horse in a Gelugpa feud—or, more precisely, as the only strategy he foresaw for replying to the Gelugpa views in terms that the Yellow Hats would deem valid—Ju Mipham declared himself a Prasangika, and yet posited both *swasamvedana* and the *alaya* (*vijñāna*), explaining the former in terms that in some respect are very similar to those in which Shantarakshita had explained them (which were quite different from those of the Yogacharas), but asserting that it did not exist absolutely: that it was a relative existent that arose interdependently with objects upon cognition. By so doing, Mipham obliterated the Mahamadhyamaka conception of spontaneous awareness; in fact, if spontaneous awareness is as I have represented it in terms of the simile of the mirror, then it is the condition for all cognitions to arise, rather than being something that arises with dependence on objects. What arises coemergently with objects and depending on them is the mental subject (which as we have seen is *but* a delusive appearance comparable to a reflection appearing in the primordial mirror), or the dualistic consciousness associated with this subject.

Claiming to be a Prasangika, Mipham argued that the original Prasangikas rejected *swasamvedana* and the *alaya* (*vijñāna*) only *qua* ultimate existents. However, insofar as none of the original Prasangikas ever set to defend these postulates, perhaps it would be better for us to say that in these treatises he produced a new view (which, however, had antecedents in other authors), which I am tempted to call “Madhyamaka Prasangika Yogachara.” At any rate, nowadays we are not teaching the Nyingma Dharma in a Gelugpa dominated state, but in a plural world in which the best strategy consists in making as clear as possible what the specific difference of the Nyingma teachings is, rather than making all teachings lose their distinctive characteristics.

²⁹¹ In this regard I fully agree with Ju Mipham, who follows the Middle Way between what Shakyā Chogden (*Shakyā mChog-ldan*) called “the tradition of Contemplative interpretation” or gom lug (*sgom lugs*) of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* or *Uttaratantra*, and what he called the “tradition of study and reflection” or thösamgyi lug (*thos bsam gyi lugs*). The former views the *tathagatagarbha* as natural stainless gnosis (Skt. *prakritivishuddhajñāna*; Tib. rangzhin namdaggi yeshe [*rang-bzhin rnam-dag-gi ye-shes*]) or as the natural luminosity (Skt. *prakritiprabhaswara*; Tib. rangzhingyi ösel [*rang-bzhin-gyi 'od-gsal*]) of primordial awareness or the nature of mind, whereas the latter views it as the natural purity (Skt. *prakritivishuddhi*; Tib. rangzhin namdag [*rang-bzhin rnam-dag*]) of all phenomena, defined as the nonattributive, nonimplicative, absolute negation (Skt. *prasajyapratishedha*; Tib. megag [*med-dgag*])—which is the position of Gyeltsab Je’s Dartik which Mipham rejected. As Pettit (1999, pp. 117-118) tells us, whereas Shakyā Chgden these two approaches are complementary, the Gelug only accept the latter, viewing the former as provisional (Skt., *neyartha*; Tib., drangdön [*drang-don*]). Mipham, in his turn, accepts both and views them as complementary, yet deems luminosity to be technically more definitive (Skt., *nitartha*; Tib., ngedön [*nges-don*])—for as we have seen, no verbal expression can be ultimately definitive, and so “definitive” is always established in terms of degrees—insofar as it is the metaexperiential domain (Skt. *gochara*; Tib. chöyül [*dpyod-yul*]) of those who have access to the Seeing or gnosis that unveils the ultimate or absolute, whereas emptiness, at least intellectuall, can be understood by ordinary beings as a conceptual formula. Mipham’s Middle Way rejects the eternalistic conception of the *tathagatagarbha* as a permanent substantive entity and its nihilistic conception as a mere absence determined by a conceptual negation and devoid of intrinsic qualities. This is fully discussed in Pettit (1999, pp. 117-118).

²⁹² Mipham’s commentator Dongag Tenpai Nyima (mDo-sngags bsTan-p'i Nyi-ma) tells us in his *Tadrub shenje nekyi drönme* (*lTa grub shan 'byed gnad kyi sgron me*) that according to the *Ratnagotravibhāga* (*Uttaratantra*) and other Mahayana texts, emptiness is found in a nondual gnosis beyond the subject-object dichotomy by investigating the pure conventional nature of entities, wherein abiding nature and

appearance are harmonious. The ultimate involves the indivisibility of these otherwise seemingly two. Because the *tathagatagarbha* is not devoid of form but comprises all buddha qualities, it cannot be established as such by ultimate analysis (*don dam dpyod pa's tshad ma*), which invariably establishes only emptiness. Thus, the *tathagatagarbha* with its many qualities of Awakening manifests in the valid cognition that investigates pure perception (*dag-pa'i gzigs-pa tha-snyad dpyod-pa'i tshad-ma*), which is the term used by Mipham and just mentioned in the regular text. This kind of pure perception is necessary in order to validate the *tathagarbha* theory as well as the premise of *tantra*, namely, that all things are divine by nature, without this entailing the claim as the true existence of the ultimate made by the theory that asserts the ultimate's emptiness of substances other than itself. (Adapted from Pettit, 1999, p. 122.)

²⁹³ One could wonder how can fully Awake Buddhas manage reality if, according to this explanation, insofar as they are beyond perception and beyond the subject-object duality, they should be utterly unable to remember anything and thus their behavior should necessarily lack continuity.

The first part of the reply would be that, indeed, if a normal individual suddenly got rid of the *threefold directional apparitional structure*, going beyond perception and beyond experience, he or she would be unable to manage life situations and would have to be confined to a hospice. This is what happens when what is called “the base-of-all-carrying-propensities” manifests, so that there is no subject-object duality and no recognition of sense-data in terms of concepts: if we remain in this state and consciousness does not arise in any of its possible forms, we may be unable to remember whatever sensory data may have manifested in the said state.

The second part could be grossly summarized by saying that in Awakening all concepts function somehow, but that insofar as they are not delusorily valued / absolutized, they do not give rise to false dualistic appearances such as the subject-object duality, or the illusion that entities “exist inherently,” etc. This lack of delusory valuation-absolutization is what is referred to as the “nonconceptuality” of Buddhahood, which is a perfectly correct way of speaking insofar as concepts do not condition in any way the Awake individual's meta-experience: there is never the illusion of a subject-object duality, there is never the illusion that one is facing this or that object, there is never the illusion that one is dealing with this or that sentient being, etc. This “nonconceptuality” initially manifests in the Contemplation state of superior bodhisattvas, who progressively learn to manage reality from that state as they climb through the levels. As a result of it, a Buddha is not conditioned by karmic imprints, and since there is neither *perception* nor *action* involved in his dealings with reality, at no point does he or she generate any karmic imprints: this lack of action is what Ch'an Buddhists refer to as nonaction [*wu-wei*] or action through nonaction [*wei-wu-wei*], wherein activity takes place by itself [*tzu-jan*], without the intervention of a mental subject and its intentional action. Therefore, a Buddha is not dualistically self-conscious and thus is not subject to the self-impediment described in the poem featuring the centipede and the toad—which to a greater or lesser degree is inherent in action (i.e., in activity conditioned by the delusory valuation / absolutization of the directional threefold thought structure and other concepts)—and so he or she is like the artisan to whom reference was made in note before last.

The above process is partly analogous to learning a skill: as noted in Bateson, Gregory, 1972, while an individual is learning a skill, he or she has to place the whole of his or her attention in the task he or she is performing. However, when the skill has been learnt, the task is performed automatically and the individual's attention may be placed on other matters (for example, in thinking this or that, in talking to another person, etc.). However, the one who has learned a skill still functions in terms of concepts that are delusory valued / absolutized, and so at any time dualistic self-consciousness may leak into his or her mental continuum, hindering his or her performance. Conversely, a Buddha is wholly and irreversibly beyond delusory valuation / absolutization, and hence at no time dualistic self-consciousness may impede his or her performance.

²⁹⁴ In terms of the Menngagde (*man-ngag-sde*) or Upadesha series of Dzogchen teachings, the mental subject is a manifestation of the dang [*gdangs*] mode of manifestation of the energy or thukje [*thugs-rje*] aspect of the Base, and has the peculiarity of lacking color or spatial form (for it does not occupy any space).

²⁹⁵ The way Mahamadhyamaka conceives spontaneous awareness, it does not involve any reflexivity. In fact, in philosophy the term “reflexivity” refers to a mental act, and specifically to an intellectual act, that “changes direction,” so that, rather than being directed toward the object, it is directed toward the subject itself (since the subject cannot be known as object, it is obvious that in this definition the term

“subject” is being understood in a very loose sense). Therefore, there can be no reflexivity without a subject-object duality. And since, according to Mahamadhyamika, spontaneous awareness is not a subject directionally knowing objects, and in itself it utterly beyond duality, it is clear that it cannot involve reflexivity.

The fact that, as conceived by Mahamadhyamaka, the spontaneous awareness that is the necessary condition of remembrance is not reflexive, can be easily shown on the basis of quotations from Williams, Paul, 1998—even though his book is called *The Reflexive Nature of Awareness*, and in it the author repeatedly argues for the alleged reflexivity of awareness. (As will be shown later on, concerning this point there is also a coincidence between the Mahamadhyamika conception of spontaneous awareness and the nondual awareness posited by Sartre—which, among other names, he referred to as “*conscience non-reflexive*” [nonreflexive awareness]). Let us begin with a clear statement by Mahamadhyamika Master Ju Mipham, taken from one of the books in which he declared himself to be a Prasangika, but that expresses the Mahamadhyamika view concerning spontaneous awareness (Williams, Paul, 1998, p. 132):

“Mipham wants to make it clear that when we speak of ‘self-awareness’ we do not mean that in addition to an awareness of, say, the table, there is also a further cognitive act directed toward oneself. It is not necessary that in addition to an awareness of the table there is also produced another new action by oneself directed towards oneself (*rang la rang gi byed pa gsar du ’jug mi dgos*). It is not ‘self-awareness’ in that sense. *Swasamvedana* is the quality of consciousness *qua* consciousness.”

The statement that there is not another new action by oneself directed towards oneself plainly asserts that spontaneous awareness is not reflexive. Even in tractates by members of the lowest of Madhyamaka-Swatantrika-Yogachara school (that of Shantarakshita, Kamalashila and Arya Vimuktasena) we find statements that clearly assert the fact that spontaneous awareness does not have the nature of either object or subject, and which therefore must be regarded as expressing the view of Mahamadhyamaka in this regard. In Williams, Paul, 1998, p. 29, we read that:

“In his *Madhyamakalamkarapañjika* Kamalashila observes that when we refer to *swasamvedana* we are not maintaining that it has the nature of object or subject (p. 188: *De bzhin du gzung ba dang ’dzin pa’i dngos por yang mi ’dod pa nyid do*). Both categories are inapplicable.”

This is precisely the view Mahamadhyamaka Master Ju Mipham Jamyang Gyamtso upholds in his *Yid bzhin mdzod kyi grub mtha’ bsdus pa* (Saarnath edition, fol. 15a; cf. Guenther, Herbert V., 1977, p. 149, note 19). In Williams’ words (p. 112),

“...with Shantarakshita, Mipham simply does not accept the applicability of the action-agent-activity model as such to *swasamvedana*.”

As Dr Williams notes (p. 41), Shantarakshita acknowledged that ‘*swasamvedana*’ is a verbal derivative that, in accordance with Sanskrit grammar, implies act, agent and so on. However, as the same author notes below, Mipham will later on quite happily deny that semantics reflects or indeed has anything much to do with ontology. Dr. Williams tells us (pp. 140 and 141) that:

“...the experience of happiness is what occurs when the referent, happiness, is clearly experienced in a nondual manner. This reference to a nondual manner of experience in this context seems to reinforce the point that it is not a case of a separate mind having a separate something called an experience... it is possible to make a distinction in terms of (verbal and, therefore, conceptual) isolates between activity, agent and action (‘I experience myself’) but there is no distinction in reality; it is not really the case that awareness directs an action towards itself. Thus Mipham indicates that while the activity-agent-action model does indeed reflect the structure of language it is, nevertheless, simply a conceptual construct which represents our ways of speaking and thinking, but is no more than that and has no legislative function. *Language does not always reflect even conventional reality.*”

The above is exactly the same as having to speak of a nondual, nonthetic, nonpositional awareness of dualistic, thetic, positional consciousness, when in fact the duality between the two that the preposition “of” implies does not at all manifest. Sartre (Sartre, Jean-Paul, 1942, 31st edition, 1980) opted for putting the preposition in brackets in order to show that its insertion did not reflect the structure of what he was describing, and Mipham opted for explicitly stating that Sanskrit grammar has no legislative function and that language does not reflect even conventional reality.

If it is not really the case that awareness directs an action towards itself, then it is not really the case that spontaneous awareness is reflexive. In terms of the simile of the mirror, a mirror’s reflectiveness nondually and nonintentionally manifests this reflectiveness without having to “turn toward itself;”

therefore, the manifestation of this reflectiveness is not reflexive. In terms of the example of light, light illumines itself at the same time as it illumines an object, but in order to illumine itself it does not have to “turn toward itself,” and so in this there is no reflexivity.

In samsaric action and knowledge, which are always based on the *threefold directional apparitional structure*, there is action or knowledge, agent or perceiver, and acted-on or perceived, and therefore the subject-object duality manifests in all instances of *samsara*. However, this concerns the phenomena of subject and object that were compared with reflections in a mirror, but not the spontaneous awareness illustrated by the mirror, for this awareness is itself beyond any kind of duality even when the dualism involved in samsaric delusion manifests: as we have seen, in a mirror there is no distance or duality between the mirror’s reflectiveness (i.e., its capacity to show reflections: not a supposed capacity to turn toward itself) and the reflections that appear in it, even when the latter feature a subject that is apparently at a distance from an object. Therefore, the fact that the Sanskrit term *swasamvedana* implies activity, agent and action simply proves that *language does not reflect even conventional reality* (as we have seen, this is the reason why Hegel wrongly concluded that “for an object to move it has simultaneously to be and not to be in the same place”). As noted above, in this we find another coincidence between Mahamadhyaṃka and Sartre.

We have seen repeatedly concerning the simile of the self-luminous mirror, that in this mirror, as the play of its self-luminosity, when *samsara* is functioning there manifests the *threefold directional apparitional structure*, which involves the illusion that there is a mental subject (which becomes indissolubly associated with consciousness) and that there is an object of consciousness. The very instant this occurs, there is a nondual awareness (of) the illusory mental subject that is indissolubly associated with the dualistic consciousness, (of) the illusory dualistic consciousness, (of) all possible “acts of this consciousness,” and (of) the objects of all of these “acts of consciousness.” However, in this there is *no* reflexivity, for at no point whatsoever does spontaneous awareness turn toward itself (which, as we have seen, simply would be impossible, for this would require this awareness to be directional). Nor does this mean that the spontaneous awareness illustrated by the mirror has some kind of (dualistic) knowledge, for this awareness does not know in a dualistic, thetic, positional way any of the contents of which it has a nondual awareness (such as the illusory mental subject, the dualistic consciousness associated with it, the acts of this consciousness, or the objects of consciousness).

Therefore, there is no real contradiction between the Sutric comparison of the mind with a knife that cannot cut itself, and the *Ganavyuhasutra*’s claim that “there is some kind of self-awareness even though this is not realized” (or, on the Tantric level, the analogous claim in the *bDe mchog ‘byung ba sogs sngags kyi rgyud*): it is a fact that neither the dualistic mind nor the mental subject associated with it can perceive themselves as object, just as a knife cannot cut itself; however, it also is a fact that the primordial awareness represented by the mirror, which (in itself) is not dualistic, (in itself) is not reflexive, (in itself) is not thetic, and (in itself) is not positional, is nonetheless perfectly, nondually self-aware—which in *samsara* goes together with an absolutely nondual awareness (of) the mental subject and its object, but which in *nirvana* does not involve any of the latter (for the delusory appearances that the mental subject and its object are, simply do not manifest: since there is no delusory valuation-absolutization of concepts, the latter, including the directional threefold thought structure, do not give rise to false appearances).

Therefore, although in Williams, Paul, 1998, Ch. I, pp. 1-18, we find a distinction between two types of self-awareness, the only self-awareness there (is), (is) the one that in our example (is) inherent to the primordial mirror, which Dr Williams called self-awareness (ii), and that is simply the nondual, nonreflexive, nonthetic, nonpositional awareness inherent in the Base. What Dr Williams calls self-awareness (i) is but *self-awareness (ii) when samsara (and therefore relative truth) is working*, and therefore it consists in the “nondual, nonreflexive, nonthetic, nonpositional awareness (of) dualistic consciousness of objects” (which, as we have seen, manifests upon the co-emergent arising of the reflections corresponding to dualistic consciousness and its object, in the absolute primordial mirror in which reflections are not at a distance of the mirror and are not in a dualistic relation to it).

When *nirvana* has manifested, insofar as the directional threefold thought structure is not delusorily valued, there is no subject-object duality (and the same happens when the individual [is] in the condition in which neither *samsara* nor *nirvana* are active that the Dzogchen teachings call the base-of-all (*kun-gzhi*), for then the directional threefold thought structure and other concepts do not at all manifest), and the only self-awareness there (is), which (is) the one that Dr Williams called self-awareness (ii),

manifests as self-awareness free from the illusion of duality. However, when the *threefold directional apparitional structure* manifests upon the arising of samsaric functioning, in the nondual mirror there manifests the appearance of a subject-object duality, and so there arises what Dr Williams calls self-awareness (i): the awareness represented by the mirror's reflectiveness continues to be nondual, but now in it there manifests the *appearance of a duality*. Thus in both cases we have the same nondual self-awareness, which Dr Williams calls self-awareness (ii), and which in no case reflects on itself or takes anything as object—since, just as is the case with a mirror's reflectiveness, it cannot turn toward itself, and in no case can it separate itself from any of the appearances arising in it (whether it be the dualistic subject or the dualistic object, which are the ones that seem to be at a distance from each other).

Since the above is so, it would be far more sensible plainly to call “self-awareness” what Dr. Williams calls “self-awareness (ii)”, and regard what he calls “self-awareness (i)” as a delusive appearance that arises in self-awareness when *samsara* manifests. Thus there is a single self-awareness, in which the delusory appearance that the dualistic subject is may either arise (with *samsara*) or not arise (with either *nirvana* or the condition that the Dzogchen teachings call the base-of-all or *kun-gzhi*). This awareness if not reflexive, as there is not a second awareness that may turn toward this awareness, and yet it is perfectly, nondually self-aware. Conversely, in no case is dualistic consciousness aware of itself: it (is) the nondual awareness that allows consciousness to know, that (is) nondually, nonthetically and nonpositionally aware (of) the subject associated with dualistic consciousness.

To conclude, the difference between *nirvana* and the base-of-all is that in the former the directional threefold thought structure manifest, though it is not delusorily valued, whereas in the latter it simply does not manifest. Therefore, though in neither of both conditions there manifests the illusion of a subject-object duality, in *nirvana* it is possible to manage reality, but in the base-of-all this is not possible.

For a list of the texts in which Mipham deals with the matters discussed in this note and in Williams' book, cf. Williams, Paul, 1998, pp. 252-253.

²⁹⁶ These two interpretations correspond, respectively, to the one posited by the Yogacharas who assert that what is usually called “the eight consciousnesses” are different functionings of a single consciousness, and the one posited by the Yogacharas who insist that the explanation in terms of eight consciousnesses should be taken literally.

It must be noted that Dr Paul Williams did a good job in showing Shantideva's refutation of an awareness of consciousness (in *Bodhicharyavatara* 9: 17-24) to have been directed against the Yogachara conception of this awareness as “existing inherently,” as involving a duplication of consciousness, etc.—rather than, as asserted by Tsongkhapa, being directed against all conceptions of spontaneous awareness, including those that rejected its supposedly “inherent existence” (and by implication those that do not involve a duplication of consciousness—though Tsongkhapa does not seem to have paid much attention to such conceptions). Dr Williams also did quite a good job in showing that the rejection of an awareness of consciousness by the original Prasangikas was based on the assumptions of commonsense and what he calls “worldly commerce,” and in establishing that (even if one keeps to the Gelugpa method of not questioning what they call valid conventional truth, and only questioning what they call confirmed mind) being a Prasangika does *not* imply that one cannot as well contemplate scientific conceptions that show commonsense and “worldly commerce” to be utterly wrong. This would correspond to the attitude of the adherents of the way of the yogi who developed the various conceptions of awareness of consciousness, for they did not base themselves on commonsense and worldly commerce, but on their yogic observation of experience and of the way experience is constructed, and on a deep psychological (and, in some cases, philosophical) analysis.

Shantideva developed his refutation of awareness of consciousness as a dialogue between a Yogachara and a Madhyamika Prasangika, and so it is clear that what he intended to refute was the Yogachara conception of that awareness as involving a duplication of consciousness, according to which one consciousness takes the objects of the senses as object and another consciousness takes this consciousness as object. Paul Williams (Williams, Paul, 1998, p. 158) writes:

“What Shantideva refutes *as not existent even conventionally* is a separate (and, by implication, “inherently existent”) subjective aspect in addition to the primary referential consciousness of blue.” (Italics my own.)

In Williams, Paul, 1998, pp. 244-245, the author summarizes the theses laid out by the eighth Karmapa, Mikyo Dorje (*Mi-bskyod rdo-rje*) in the *bDu ma la 'jug pa'a rnam bshad dpal ldan dus gsum mkhyen*

pa'i zhal lung dwags brgyud grub pa'i shing rta (published in India by the Gyälwa Karmapa in 1975), according to which the original Prasangikas were dealing with commonsense and “worldly commerce.” “For Mikyo Dorje Chandrakirti’s conventional truth (which excludes awareness [of] consciousness) is simply, and only, what is held to be true in pre-critical, nonphilosophical worldly commerce. And in worldly commerce people consider themselves just to experience sensations, and then to remember them later. It is sufficient conventionally to talk of sensation and memory as it is of act and effect, but this is certainly not to be examined critically in order to seek for an explanation or founding of the world. When examined critically it is simply the case that all conventions, all ‘commonsense’ collapses and is seen to be ultimately unfounded. For Mikyo Dorje it is true in the strongest sense, and in a way that is not true for Tsongkhapa, that the Madhyamaka holds no position, it has no explanations.”

Mikyo Dorje’s view implies that the distinction between what the Gelugpa call valid conventional truth and what they call confirmed mind is utterly baseless, for both are equally delusory. Therefore, he is implying that whenever delusion manifests—i.e., whenever there is conventional truth—the instructions for overcoming delusion must be applied. This is a universal prescription, the distinction between “valid conventional truth” and “confirmed mind” being rejected by all Tibetan schools with the exception of the Gelugpa.

²⁹⁷ In particular, the Mahasanghikas posited nine categories of *asamskrita dharma*.

²⁹⁸ The concepts of metaphenomenon and metaphenomena were explained in notes 49 and 50. For a more detailed discussion cf. my *Beyond Mind, Beyond Being*.

²⁹⁹ The image that arises as object, just like the subject that perceives it, belongs to this mode of truth. As noted in the chapter on the Yogachara School, what does *not* belong to this mode of truth, but to imaginary nature, are: (1) the overvaluation of its features, or the names and symbols applied to it; and (2) the projection on it of an independent self-nature (Skt., *atma*; Tib., dag [*bdag*]).

³⁰⁰ However, when this occurs, that ground is veiled to fragmentary consciousness.

³⁰¹ As stated in a previous note, Saraha wrote in the *King Dohas* (Guenther, Herbert V., 1973):

When [in winter] still water is stirred by the wind
it [becomes ice,] taking the shape and texture of a rock;
when the deluded are disturbed by interpretative thoughts
What is as yet unpatterned becomes very hard and solid.

³⁰² To Kant, the *a priori* character of categories and other concepts would be a guarantee of their truth and would allow them in turn to be a guarantee of truth in the two Kantian senses of the term: in the one concerning the logical truth of a judgment, and in the one regarding the ontological truth of the thing (as contrary to its being a mere appearance). Concerning the former, a judgment would be *possibly* true in the empirical sense if it agreed with the rules of *a priori* forms of sensibility, of categories and of *a priori* concepts in general. Regarding the latter, *a priori* concepts would guarantee that the experience that is not like dream, fantasy and so on, but that follows the rules of causality and the rest of categories that in general rule sound awake experience, would have truth as contrary to appearance. (Kant did not simply state that the *a priori* character of some concepts guaranteed their truth, but undertook the arduous, fruitless task of justifying them through the transcendental deduction; besides, he established that the transcendental consciousness was the vehicle and the condition of possibility of all transcendental concepts.)

It is often said that Hume “awoke Kant from his dogmatic dream.” This is utterly wrong; the effect of reading Hume was that Kant had to cover under a critical cloak the dogmatism that otherwise would have characterized his defense of the possibility of both scientific and philosophical knowledge, and that he had to develop more sophisticated arguments in order to defend this possibility. As Richard H. Popkin has noted (Popkin, Richard H., 1979), many modern philosophers developed their respective systems in order to defend the possibility of knowledge in face of the demolishing criticism carried out by a long list of skeptical philosophers including Francisco Sánchez, the *nouveaux pyrrhoniens* and so on. In the case of Kant (which Popkin did not deal with in this book), among the skeptics he was reacting against, Hume was foremost—whose critical empiricism may be deemed to be a rather moderate skepticism with precedents in Francisco Sánchez, Mersenne, to some extent Gassendi, and the early British Empiricists.

To the knowledge of this author, so far no one has compared Kant’s experience determined by categories to the Buddhists’ experience determined by *vasanas*, *bijas* and so on, for it is just too obvious that the

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- latter are the basis of deception—and that Awakening, which puts an end to human deception, consists precisely in freedom from conditioning by *vasanas*, *bijas* or whatever.
- ³⁰³ The Tibetan term *rölpa* (*rol-pa*) means “play,” and translates the Sanskrit *lila*, which the Tantras use to indicate the fact that all phenomena and all apparent movement and change are the play of the Base (in Dzogchen terms, the play of the energy of the Base), rather than being inherently separate entities moving independently by virtue of autonomous, separate, independent moving principles.
- ³⁰⁴ As stated in two of the previous notes, the reference to Nagarjuna and Asanga as “the two promulgators” may be taken to suggest that, just as Nagarjuna revealed the sutras of the Second Promulgation, which Shakyamuni had left in the custody of the *nagas*, Asanga revealed the sutras of the Third Promulgation. However, though I have often found references to Nagarjuna as a revealer of Shakyamuni’s teachings, I have never found any analogous reference to Asanga.
- ³⁰⁵ As noted in Part One of my book *Buddhism and Dzogchen*, Buddhist Dzogchen was introduced into the human world by Primordial Revealer (*tönpa* [*ston-pa*]) Garab Dorje, who was an emanation of Primordial Revealer (*tönpa*) Shakyamuni. The reasons why the Dzogchen teachings, despite the fact that they were not taught by Shakyamuni in his physical body, are nonetheless a Buddhist teaching, and furthermore constitute the summit of all Buddhist teachings, are given in the final sections of Part One of that book. The reasons why it was more appropriate for a layman like Garab Dorje to reveal the Dzogchen teachings than it would have been for a monk like Shakyamuni to do so are also discussed in the book.
- ³⁰⁶ It is possible to speak of the Paths of Dzogchen (in plural) insofar as this system involves three series of teachings, each of which may be viewed as constituting a different Path, even though all of them are based on the principle of spontaneous liberation that is the trademark of Dzogchen. In turn, it is possible to speak of the Fruits of Dzogchen (also in plural) insofar as the Semde series of teachings leads to a level of realization that does not result in a special type of death, the Longde series of teachings can lead to a more complete realization resulting in a special type of death, and the two levels of the Menngagde (*man-ngag-sde*) or Upadesha series of teachings can lead to even more complete realizations resulting in two special types of death and one way of ending life that does not involve death (these four special endings of life and their relations to the Longde series of Dzogchen and to the two levels of the Menngagde series of Dzogchen are briefly discussed in the following note).
- ³⁰⁷ These four types of realization correspond, respectively, to the four modes of ending life typical of Ati Dzogpa Chenpo, which are: (1) the mode of death of *rigdzins*; (2) the mode of death of *dakinis*; (3) the mode of death that is self-consuming like a fire; and (4) the mode of ending life that is invisible like space.
- (1) **The rainbow body or *jalü* (*’ja’-lus*) results from the mode of death of those who have attained the highest realization resulting from the practice of the Vajra-bridge or Dorje Zampa (*rdo-rje zam-pa*) pertaining to the Longde (*klong-sde*) series of Dzogchen. It should not be confused with the so-called “rainbow body” resulting from some specific Tantric practices of the Path of Transformation, which is not at all the same thing. The corresponding mode of death is the one called the “mode of death of the *dakinis* or *khandros* (*mkha’-’gro*).”**
 - (2) **The body of atoms or *lü dül thren du deng* (*lus rdul phran du dengs*) results from the mode of death of those who have attained the highest realization resulting from the practice of Tekchö (*khregs-chod*), which is the initial stage in the two-tiered practice of the Menngagde (*man-ngag-sde*) series of Dzogchen. The corresponding mode of death is the one called the “mode of death of the *vidyadharas* or *rigdzins* (*rig-’dzin*).”**
 - (3) **The body of light, *ökyiku* (*’od-kyi sku*) or *öpfung* (*’od-phung*) results from the mode of death of those who have attained the second highest level of realization resulting from the practices of Thögel and/or the Yangthik, which make up the second of the two stages of practice of the Menngagde (*man-ngag sde*) series of Dzogchen. This type of body has often been called “rainbow body” as well. The corresponding mode of death is the one called “self-consuming like a fire.”**
 - (4) **The total transference or *phowa chenpo* [*’pho-ba chen-po*] results from the mode of ending life of those who have attained the highest level of realization resulting from the practices of Thögel and/or the Yangthik, which make up the second of the two stages of practice of the Menngagde (*man-ngag sde*) series of Dzogchen. The corresponding mode of ending life is the one called “invisible like space,” and it does *not* involve going through the process of death.**

For further information on these four modes of death and the respective “bodies,” see Part Two of my book *Buddhism and Dzogchen*.

³⁰⁸ This is why the phenomena of the rölpa mode of manifestation of energy are the key to some of the higher Dzogchen practices (in the context of the Menngagde [*man-ngag-sde*] of *Upadeshavarga*, they are the condition of possibility of the practices of Thögel [*thod-rgal*] and the Yangthik [*yang-thig*]).

³⁰⁹ For a discussion of the Base, its three aspects, its three forms of manifestation of energy, and its three functionings, see Part Two of my *Buddhism and Dzogchen*.

³¹⁰ As we have seen, in the Dzogchen Path there are three series of teachings. If one practices them all, one can optimize the development of one’s realization. However, this does not mean that the three series of teachings must be practiced one after the other: each of the three series is a complete Path in itself, and in particular the Menngagde or Upadesha series of teachings is an extremely effective shortcut to the highest possible level of realization.

However, all practitioners must successively develop through the three aspects of the Path constituted by tawa (*lta-ba*) or Vision, gompa (*sgom-pa*) or Contemplation and chöpa (*spyod-pa*) or Behavior: tawa is the initial unveiling of the Base; gompa is the continuity of this unveiling in sessions of sitting Contemplation; and chöpa is the continuity of this unveiling in daily life, beyond the duality of Contemplation and post-Contemplation (however, the arising of duality is not the destruction of chöpa: when duality arises, chöpa involves using the flaws involved as a catalyst of the process of Awakening).

³¹¹ The Mahayana emphasizes the fact that the realization of emptiness must be indivisible from the arising of compassion. In the gradual Mahayana, in particular, this realization is to be attained through the practices of the *bodhichitta* of intention and the *bodhichitta* of application (reviewed in Part One of my *Buddhism and Dzogchen*). However, the different schools of the Mahayana teach different ways of treading the Mahayana Path, and therefore it would be valid to speak of various Mahayana Paths.

³¹² Even though Dzogchen is based on the awareness that action, rather than producing Awakening, sustains the *threefold directional apparitional structure*, in the initial stages of the practice it is necessary to apply action, but so that the illusory agent may trip and fall, so to say. Therefore, action is part of skillful means that result in the spontaneous dissolution of the *threefold directional apparitional structure* and of the whole of the structure and function of *samsara*, but this dissolution takes place when action collapses. For an explanation of how these skillful means work, see Part Two of my book *Buddhism and Dzogchen*.

³¹³ In Dzogchen terminology, so long as the individual is unable to integrate with the tsel (*rtsal*) mode of manifestation of energy that is normally perceived as an objective, external world, even though he or she may have a high capacity of spontaneous liberation with regard to phenomena of the dang (*gdangs*) mode of manifestation of energy such as thoughts, his or her freedom cannot be total, as there is always the possibility that the objective external reality may cause him or her damage or suffering (and, moreover, fear that this may happen can interfere with the practice, giving rise to obstacles and interruptions). However, when this integration is achieved, the individual can no longer be harmed and nothing can produce any alteration in him or her. It is at this point, at which the nondual rölpa (*rol-pa*) manifestation of energy and the tsel mode of manifestation of energy fuse, that fear can no longer arise, and that the modes of death that are characteristic of Dzogchen may be achieved.

³¹⁴ The last level (Skt., *bhumi*; Tib., *sa*) in the Mahayana is the eleventh, considered to be the final state of Buddhahood. In the Mahayogatantra practitioners may go beyond the state that the Mahayana regards as final Buddhahood, reaching as far as the thirteenth level. In the Anuyogatantra it is possible to go even farther and reach as far as the fourteenth level. And in the Atiyogatantra it is possible to reach as far as the sixteenth level, which is not reached in any other vehicle, and beyond which no vehicle may reach.

For a detailed explanation of this (comprising a discussion of the top levels posited by some of the different Anuttarayogatantras of the Sarmapa) see my book *Buddhism and Dzogchen*.

³¹⁵ Practitioners of Tekchö often have to deal with subtle or intuitive thoughts as well—and sometimes even with supersubtle thoughts. In particular, advanced practitioners who do not go on to practice Thögel or the Yangthik, increasingly will have to deal with subtle and supersubtle thoughts in their practice of Tekchö—especially when the energetic-volume-determining-the-scope-of-awareness is very high.

³¹⁶ **The unveiling of the dharmakaya by looking at the present thought corresponds to the first level or capacity of spontaneous liberation of delusion, called cherdröl (*gcer-grol*): this level or capacity involves action insofar as one has to look into the thought that is present at the time; however,**

then a lhundrub dynamic takes on that results in perfectly spontaneous liberation. The next level or capacity of spontaneous liberation is shadröl (*shar-grol*), which unlike cherdröl does not involve an intentional action, but a more automatic reaction immediately followed by a lhundrub mechanism that results in perfectly spontaneous liberation. Finally, the third level or capacity of spontaneous liberation is rangdröl, which at no point involves an action or reaction on the part of the illusory mental subject: without exerting any attention in order to remain in the state of absolute awareness, “the practitioner remains at the ‘source’ of the thoughts,” and whatever arises liberates itself in a perfectly lhundrub way just as it arises, like drawings on water.

In fact, in the first mode or spontaneous liberation one looks at the thought that is already established as object—which, like all thoughts, is a manifestation of the ngowo aspect of the Base—in order to apprehend its true nature, and immediately the true condition of this aspect of the Base unveils, manifesting as the dharmakaya. This happens as the self-reGnition of nondual Awake self-awareness that the Dzogchen teachings call rigpa makes the latter’s own face patent (rangngo shepa [*rang-ngo shes-pa*]), whereby the true nature of this self-awareness is unconcealed in the manifestation of rigpa-qua-Path or rigpa-qua-Fruit, so that, as we have seen, the ngowo of the Base is realized as the dharmakaya.

In the second mode of spontaneous liberation, there is an automatic movement of attention toward what seems to be the “source of thought,” so that the true condition of the arising thought is reGnized as the latter begins to arise, and hence there is spontaneous liberation upon arising: the movement of attention, attention itself, the subject of attention and the object of attention, instantly dissolve into the patency of the true condition of the ngowo aspect of the Base and of the dang mode of manifestation of energy, which thereby manifests as the dharmakaya.

In the third and last mode of spontaneous liberation, thought liberates itself spontaneously without there being a need either for an intentional movement of attention toward the thought, or for an automatic reaction as the thought begins to arise, and so all arising thoughts are like drawings on water, which liberate themselves spontaneously as they arise: at no point is the true condition of the ngowo aspect of the Base concealed, and thus the continuity of the manifestation of dharmakaya is not interrupted. Jigme Lingpa explained this as the coincident manifestation of emptiness and active thoughts. In the first mode or spontaneous liberation one looks at the thought that is already established as object—which, like all thoughts, is a manifestation of the dang mode of manifestation of energy—in order to apprehend its true nature, and immediately the true condition of this mode of manifestation of energy unveils as the dharmakaya. This happens as the self-reGnition of nondual Awake self-awareness the Dzogchen teachings call rigpa makes the latter’s own face patent (rangngo shepa [*rang-ngo shes-pa*]), whereby the true nature of this self-awareness is unconcealed in the manifestation of rigpa-qua-Path or rigpa-qua-Fruit, so that, as we have seen, the dang mode of manifestation of energy and the ngowo aspect of the Base are realized as the dharmakaya.

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³¹⁷ As we have seen, the simile for the rölpa (*rol-pa*) energy is a mirror, for in a looking glass reflections and reflectiveness do not seem to be a distance from each other. This is the reason why the rölpa mode of manifestation of energy has the potentiality to wrathfully destroy the illusion of dualism: because it does not allow the illusion of a dualism between reflections and reflectiveness to become established, and therefore, in individuals who possess the necessary capacity of spontaneous liberation, the mechanics of the rölpa mode of manifestation of energy may catalyze the spontaneous liberation of all

that manifests, giving rise to a process of uninterrupted spontaneous liberation that progressively neutralizes the propensities for dualistic experience—as a result of which all appearances are nonconceptually apprehended as the play (*rölpa*) of the energy of the Base that is the true condition of all entities. This (which was considered in far greater detail in Part Two of my book *Buddhism and Dzogchen*) is why the manifestation of this energy is the condition of possibility of the practices of Thögel and the Yangthik.

³¹⁸ As we have seen, in the practice of the Menngagde or Upadesha series of Dzogchen the first aspect of the Base to unveil is its ngowo aspect: it unveils for the first time in Direct Introduction, and then it unveils again and again in the practice of Tekchö (*khregs-chod*), in which it is realized as the dharmakaya and manifests as such. When the practitioner attains enough proficiency in the practice of Tekchö, he or she may undertake the practice of Thögel (*thod-rgal*), which, being rooted on the most spectacular, spontaneous systemic activities of the lhundrub aspect of the Base, has no equivalent in any other vehicle, and which allows for the unveiling of the rangzhin aspect of the Base, which thereby is realized as the sambhogakaya and manifests as such. This finally results in the realization of the thukje aspect of the Base as the nirmanakaya, and its manifestation as such.

If we view the process in terms of the three forms of manifestation of the thukje aspect of the Base, which are called dang (*gdangs*), rölpa (*rol-pa*) and tsel (*rtsal*), we have that in Tekchö the practitioner deals mainly with the dang energy, which manifests as the dharmakaya; that in Thögel the practitioner deals with the tsel and rölpa energies, so that rölpa energy manifests as the sambhogakaya; and that as the Fruit the tsel and rölpa energies fuse, giving rise to the nirmanakaya. Therefore the explanation of these three modes of manifestation of energy is derived both from the Path and the Fruit of Dzogchen.

However, it must be noted that in each of the successive realizations of the dharmakaya, sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya, the three kayas are realized. Though at first sight this may seem absurd, the reasons for this to be so were explained in an endnote to Capriles (electronic publication 2003; and electronic publication 2007, vol. II).

For a more detailed explanation of the aspects of the Base according to the Dzogchen teachings and the correspondences between them, as well as of the dynamic of the successive practices of Tekchö and Thögel, and of the modes of death exclusive to Dzogchen, see Part Two of my book *Buddhism and Dzogchen*.

³¹⁹ This is partly the reason why in the Introduction to this book it was stated that, despite the fact that according to the *Prajñāparamitāhridayasūtra* voidness is no other than form and form is no other than emptiness, the realization expressed by this sūtra is far from the realization of the indivisibility of katak and lhundrub attained through the practice of the Dzogchen Atiyoga.

³²⁰ The attainment of the body of light and the total transference as a result of the practice of Thögel or the Yangthik depend on how far the “fourth vision” of this practice develops. However, in both cases the result is explained by saying that what in the context of this practice is called *semnyi* (*sems-nyid*), corresponding to the awareness that depends on the physical organism and that manifests as the internal jing (*dbyings*) or internal dimension of the individual, integrates with the *chönyi* (*chos-nyid*), which in this context refers to the external dimension or external jing that has manifested as a mass of light and that does not at all depend on the organism. When this integration (Tib., *sewa* [*bsre-ba*]) of the awareness that depends on the organism with the mass of light that manifests in the external dimension is irreversible, the sensitive organism pervaded by this awareness and on which it depends dissolves in the mass of light, becoming a “body of light.” (The nails and hair do not dissolve insofar as they are not pervaded by that awareness: this is why they can be cut without producing pain to the individual. Furthermore, they are regarded as “impurities” insofar as they are always growing out of the body.)

³²¹ The very etymology of the prefix *swa* and the Tibetan term *rang* (especially if understood in the sense of “self-,” “intrinsic” or “inherent”) absolutely excludes interpretations like the one developed by Mipham Rinpoche, according to which this awareness is a dependent arising that as such belongs to relative truth.

³²² This follows the universal dynamic of sexual life forms. In fact, in the explanation of the ten links or *nidana* of interdependent origination, *sparsha* or contact is the cause of *vedana* or sensation.

³²³ In the explanation of the four nyendrub (*bsnyen-sgrub bzhi*), the first two correspond to the stage of creation and the last two to the stage of completion or perfection; of these last two, the first, which is drubpa (*sgrub-pa*), and which corresponds to the experience of the *dharmadhatu*, is seen as the cause of the second, which is drubpa chenpo (*sgrub-pa chen po*)—which is to some extent analogous to the

rang-rig and the *yeshe* (*ye-shes*) of the Anuyoga, even though in Mahayoga it is explained in terms of *prajña* or *sherab* (*shes-rab*). The analogy cannot be perfect insofar as the realization of Anuyoga reaches further than that of Mahayoga.

For an explanation of the four nyendrub of Mahayoga, see Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2000, pp. 208-213, which in this regard follows Padmasambhava's *Man ngag lta ba'i phreng ba* [A: in SNGA 'GYUR BKA' MA'I SCHOS SDE, vol. 'a, published by Si khron bod kyi rig gnas zhib 'jug khang; B: in GDAMS NGAG MDZOD, vol. Ka, published at Paro in Bhutan, 1979] and explains the four Nyendrub in the context of Atiyoga, as the entrance door to the state of Ati.

Also see: Padmasambhava, Italian 1990, trans. G. Baroetto; Dowman, Keith, 1992; Karmay, 1988.

³²⁴ The term lhundrub (*lhun-grub*) was adopted by both Anuyoga and Mahayoga, but does not have the same meaning in these two vehicles: in the Anuyoga, but not in Mahayoga, it refers to the principle of instant transformation. The term "spontaneous awareness" (Skt., *swasamvedana*; Tib., *rang-rig*) appears in the sutras of the Third Promulgation, and therefore standard views assume that Yogacharas, Madhyamika-Swatantrika-Yogacharas, Madhyamika Zhentongpas and Mahamadhyamikas took it from these sutras; however, below in the regular text we will see that Lopön Tenzin Namdak asserted that many teachings of vehicles lower than the Dzogchen Atiyoga, including the Mahayana, derived from the latter. In the lack of concrete evidence, the idea that Mahayana Schools may have taken the term spontaneous awareness from the Dzogchen Atiyoga is to be rejected; however, for the reasons that were considered in the regular text, this author tends to believe that the Anuyoga and the Mahayoga took the concepts of lhundrub and spontaneous awareness from the Dzogchen Atiyoga.

³²⁵ As we have seen, when the primordial gnosis of spontaneous awareness manifests *qua* Path of *qua* Fruit, Mahamadhyamaka calls it "the naturally manifest primordial gnosis realized through the spontaneous awareness of the primordial, true condition" (Skt., *pratisamvid*; Tib., *soso ranggi rigpa* [*so-so rang-gi rig pa*]).

Concerning the nondual experience of the *dharmadhatu*, it must be noted that it may manifest in many different contexts, rather than manifesting solely after the abrupt pronunciation of the syllable PHAT; conversely, after the abrupt pronunciation of this syllable it does *not always* manifest. However, when it manifests in the nyam (*nyams*) called heddewa (*had-de-ba*) after the abrupt pronunciation of that syllable, and when it manifests in other contexts as well, after a while the experience may be interrupted by the spontaneous shining forth of the ngowo aspect of spontaneous awareness.

³²⁶ This *chikshe kundröl* (*gcig-shes kun-grol*) is the principle responsible for the three types or capacities of spontaneous liberation described in the Dzogchen teachings. In the first type or capacity, which is *cherdröl* (*gcer-grol*) or spontaneous liberation upon looking at a thought, *chikshe kundröl* destroys the delusorily valued thought like a vajra weapon destroys whatever it is aimed at. In the second type or capacity, which is *shardröl* (*shar-grol*), *chikshe kundröl* acts like a spring-activated mechanism that automatically releases the delusorily valued thought. In the third capacity, which is *rangdröl* (*rang-grol*), the genuine spontaneous liberation of Dzogchen as represented by the simile of the mirror, *chikshe kundröl* functions in such a way that delusion never comes to manifest, for thoughts liberate themselves spontaneously right as they begin to arise, like drawings on water. In general, however, *chikshe kundröl* is understood in the context of the third mode of spontaneous liberation, which is where it is most clearly appreciated to be such.

³²⁷ For an explanation of this, see Part Two of my *Buddhism and Dzogchen*.

³²⁸ As we have seen, the teachings of inner or higher Tantra to some extent may have influenced the subtle, inner Madhyamaka.

In particular, the Madhyamaka of the Zhentongpa may have been influenced by those varieties of the Mahamudra tradition that in turn had absorbed the teachings of the Semde series of the Dzogchen Atiyoga. (As we have seen, it is well known that the IIIrd Karmapa, Rangjung Dorje, synthesized the Mahamudra tradition of his time with the Dzogchen Semde [*rdzogs-chen sems-sde*]. However, according to Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu [in the teachings on the basis of which I compiled the as yet unpublished book *The Way of Spontaneous Liberation and our Total Plenitude and Perfection*], Gampopa, who was the teacher of the First Karmapa, had already carried out a synthesis of both traditions—so that by the time of the Third Karmapa the Mahamudra tradition had already absorbed the teachings of the Dzogchen Semde.)

In turn, Mahamadhyamaka may have absorbed some teachings of the Dzogchen Semde directly, and perhaps also some other teachings of the Dzogchen Atiyoga.

³²⁹ While the Sanskrit *jñāna*, meaning “gnosis” or “awareness,” is not a composite term, its Tibetan translation is a combination of the particle *ye*, meaning “primordial,” and the particle *shes*, meaning “gnosis,” “awareness” or Gnitiveness. In the Sanskrit term *viññāna*, meaning “consciousness,” the term *jñāna* is included in its entirety, but in the Tibetan term *namshe* (*rnam-shes*) or *nampar shepa* (*rnam-par shes-pa*) only the second particle of the term *yeshe* (*ye-shes*) is included. The point is that in spite of consciousness being always a function of primordial gnosis, consciousness ignores this gnosis and its primordial character, falling into the category of ordinary dualistic, limited experience: this is why the Tibetan for “consciousness” does not include the particle meaning “primordial.”

³³⁰ The example of an old man watching children play was used by Dudjom Rinpoche in his *Richö labcha nyamlen martri go der jöpa drubai chülen* (*Ri-chos bslab-bya nyams-len dmar-khrid go bder brjod-pa grub-pa'i bcud-len*), the official English translation of which is Dudjom Rinpoche, J. Y. D., English trans. by Matthieu Ricard, 1979. (There is an earlier translation: Dudjom Rinpoche, J. Y. D., English trans. by John Reynolds, 1978.) Though this book contains most precious instructions for reGnizing thoughts as the dharmakaya, the attitude illustrated by the example is not one such instruction, but a secondary means for helping meditators avoid developing what I call “an uptight mindfulness”—an error that may lead practitioners into what is known as “the dangerous passage in which thoughts arise as an enemy.” (Of course, when the energetic-volume-determining-the-scope-of-awareness is very high, in some particular cases even the error of being *en garde* against thoughts may be useful, for it may help unleash runaways of delusion toward a threshold at which they liberate themselves spontaneously—a lhundrup principle that is quite common in Thögel, but which in this case may be activated spontaneously because of errors in the practice of Tekchö.)

³³¹ The reason why using action in order to eliminate delusion will but maintain delusion may be clearly illustrated by the story of how Hui-neng (in Cantonese, Wei-lang; in Japanese, Eno) became the sixth patriarch of Ch’an or Zen Buddhism in China. The fifth patriarch, Hun-jen, had already recognized Hui-neng’s qualities; however, the latter was an illiterate “barbarian” from Kwangtung who previously to becoming a monk used to make his living as a woodcutter, and therefore it would have been very dangerous for his safety and wholesomeness—and for his own development on the Path as well—if he had celebrated his realization from the very onset of their relationship. Therefore, he dismissed Hui’s introductory statement of realization and sent him to work in the kitchen, taking good care that no one would come to know the newcomer had some realization and was on the way to become a most outstanding practitioner. When the time came for the patriarch to establish his succession, he called for a poetry contest, saying that the winner would obtain the patriarchy. The poem by Shen-hsiu, the most famous scholar and meditator in the monastery, which was reproduced above in the regular text of this book, was praised so profusely by Hun-jen that nobody else dared to compete against him. Since Hui-neng was illiterate, he had been unable either to participate in the contest or to read the poem of the erudite monk; consequently, for the future sixth patriarch to be aware of its contents, Hun-jen asked for it to be written on a wall and for everyone to recite it.

Upon hearing Shen-hsiu’s poem, Hui-neng knew the author still had not reached the level of realization of the fifth patriarch and found himself forced to reply with the poem that was also reproduced above in the regular text of this book, which, even though the patriarch still would not recognize him owing to the danger represented by the envy and jealousy of the scholars in the face of the success of a barbarian, illiterate woodcutter, demonstrated that he had a far more correct understanding of the Path than the renowned scholar-monk.

In fact, the action of cleaning the mirror proposed by Shen-hsiu would affirm and maintain the illusory existence of the spurious subject that appears to be a separate and autonomous source of thought and action; furthermore, since this activity would have to be carried out constantly and endlessly, the spurious subject would maintain itself so long as the human body continued to be alive. Furthermore, if we try to remove something it is because we believe it truly exists, and to the extent that we endeavor to remove it, we will confirm and maintain the illusion of its existence. Consequently, the effects of Shen-hsiu’s proposal would be like those of cleaning a mirror with a dirty rag: the more we clean it, the dirtier it will become.

In turn, Hui-neng’s example is based on using emptiness as an antidote to the delusion consisting in taking the mental subject and its objects to be self-existent, which is a typically Mahayana strategy and as such does not correspond either to the View or the Contemplation of Dzogchen. In terms of the example of the mirror, a strategy of the Semde series of Dzogchen teachings would consist in urging us to reGnize

all reflections and apparent taints that appear in it (extensive objects having color and form, the mental subject that is not extensive and that possesses neither color nor form, and the passions that the Path of renunciation considers as poisons to be eliminated) as functions of the luminosity of the mirror that are inseparable and indistinguishable from it, thereby realizing the true condition of both the mirror and the reflections and stains in it, which is primordially pure (*katak* [*ka-dag*]) and spontaneously perfect (*lhundrub* [*lhun-grub*]). In the *Tekchö* (*khregs-chod*) stage of the practice of the Dzogchen Menngagde (*man-ngag-sde*), the true nature of all thoughts must be recognized, upon which they liberate themselves spontaneously and the dharmakaya, which is their true condition, instantly manifests.

³³² See note 308.

³³³ Some of Lopön's students have reported that their teacher has made claims to this effect in his oral teachings. I am not aware of any book where he has made these claims.

³³⁴ May the reader be reminded once again that, as stated in note 2 and elsewhere, the *tawa* (*lta-ba*) of Dzogchen is not this theoretical view, but the direct Vision (of) the Base while on the Path.