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DELINEATING REASON'S SCOPE FOR NEGATION TSONGKHAPA'S CONTRIBUTION TO MADHYAMAKA'S DIALECTICAL METHOD

The history of the development of Madhyamaka philosophy in Tibet is highly complex and much remains to be fully worked out. One of the greatest difficulties lies perhaps in the fact that to understand this history it is not adequate simply to trace the lineage of the Indian Madhyamaka texts in Tibet; what is required is also a 're-construction' of the process of the 'evolution' of Madhyamaka thought in Tibet. By this latter, I am referring to the question of how the Tibetan interpreters of the Madhyamaka tradition have 'appropriated' the tenets of the Indian Madhyamaka schools.[1] There is also the critical issue of whether or not the Tibetan Mādhyamikas have taken what could be called the 'Madhyamaka discourse' further than their Indian predecessors. My own view is that they have. One such Tibetan figure in this development is Tsongkhapa (1357–1419), the 14th century Tibetan religious reformer and one of Tibet's greatest philosophers. Tsongkhapa wrote extensively on Madhyamaka philosophy including a number of highly influential commentaries on some of the principal Indian Madhyamaka texts. In these works Tsongkhapa takes great pains to explore the wider philosophical implications of the Madhyamaka's key insight that things and events are devoid of intrinsic existence and intrinsic identity. I have examined some of these explorations elsewhere.[2]

In this paper, I shall concentrate on Tsongkhapa's understanding and, more importantly, his contribution to the development of Madhyamaka's dialectical method. I shall argue that the central concern underlying Tsongkhapa's extensive discourse on the Madhyamaka method is to delineate 'reason's scope for negation', so that the Madhyamaka dialectics is not seen as negating objects of everyday experience and, more importantly, ethics and religious activity. Perhaps the challenge for Tsongkhapa is to demonstrate coherently that the Madhyamaka's arguments in general and the so-called *catuṣkoṭi* (or tetralemma) argument in particular do not destroy the validity of our everyday world of experience. As I see it, the following appear to be the key elements of Tsongkhapa's strategy:

(i) distinguishing between the domains of 'conventional' and 'ultimate' discourses;
(ii) distinguishing between two senses of 'ultimate' in the context of Madhyamaka dialectics;
(iii) identifying 'correctly' the objection of negation prior to the application of Madhyamaka dialectics;
(iv) distinguishing between that which is 'negated by reason' and 'not found by reason';
(v) understanding correctly the logical form of the negation involved in the dialectics.

I shall argue that the above points are intergral to Tsongkhapa's attempt to delineate reason's scope for negation in the context of Madhyamaka dialectics. Given this, the viability and coherence of Tsongkhapa's interpretation of the Madhyamaka dialectics depends, to a large extent, on how far he can be seen to have been successful in making a case for these approaches. If Tsongkhapa's enterprise can be shown to be successful – or, at least rationally tenable –, this may provide the Mādhyamikas with a better defence against the perpetual charge that they are nihilistic.

TSONGKHAPA'S READING OF THE MADHYAMAKA'S *CATUṢKOṬI* ARGUMENT

Perhaps the best place to begin is to examine Tsongkhapa's reading of the Mādhyamika's argument known as *catuṣkoṭi*, i.e. tetralemma.[3] A typical formulation of the Madhyamaka tetralemma could be presented as follows. A supposed entity, or a thing possessing 'intrinsic being' (*svabhāva*) cannot be said to exist under either of the following four possibilities:

(1) that it is existent, or
(2) that it is non-existent, or
(3) that it is both existent and non-existent, or
(4) that it is neither existent nor non-existent.

In other words, all the above four possibilities are rejected. Like any thorough-going Mādhyamika philosopher, Tsongkhapa gives serious consideration to this argument. To call this pattern of argument 'dialectic', as some noted modern Mādhyamika scholars have done, is not too misleading.[4] Certainly, Tsongkhapa does not agree with those who claim that the Madhyamaka's use of the tetralemma entails a denial of fundamental logical principles like the law of the excluded middle

and the principle of contradiction. He does not believe that the tetralemma argument suggests an ontological standpoint which is somehow supposed to transcend these fundamental principles of logic. This is to say that Tsongkhapa does not share the views of those who assert that the Madhayamaka dialectic aims to lead us to an 'awakening' where we perceive the 'absolute' (which is supposedly indeterminate, indivisible, and ineffable) through a higher faculty. This higher faculty (or intuition), in this view, is supposed to be awakened within us by the 'paralysis of reason' brought about by the Madhyamaka dialectic.[5] Tsongkhapa reads the Madhyamaka dialectic as arguing against what may be called 'essentialist ontology', i.e. an ontology that entails a belief in 'intrinsic being' (*svabhāva*).

According to Tsongkhapa there is nothing to indicate that the tetralemma argument is open to the charge of logical inconsistency, nor is there anything paradoxical about the Mādhyamika's use of it. If there is any paradox at all, it remains at the surface, only a seeming one which naturally dissolves when one takes a closer look at the structure of the argument. According to Tsongkhapa, the fact that the dialectic is structured in the form of tetralemma is an indication that the logical principles such as the law of the excluded middle and the law of contradiction are at work here. For him, the force of the argument derives from the fact that if any self-enclosed entity exists (note the subjunctive), as the essentialists[6] would like to assert, it must do so within the framework of the tetralemma. In other words, if an entity possessing a self-enclosed nature or intrinsic being exists, there are only four conceivable possibilities. And the *catuṣkoṭi* is the best pattern of argument whereby the central thesis – i.e. *svabhāva* – is negated by means of negating the four possibilities. However, this raises a crucial question, why four lemmas when the negation of the first lemma seems to serve the purpose of negating the central thesis, i.e. the total negation of *svabhāva*? In other words, what is the difference of scope between the negation of the first lemma and the total negation of *svabhāva* itself?

For Tsongkhapa this point is critical. The four lemmas have to be not only logically exhaustive but also *conceptually* inclusive in order to prove effective in the argument.[7] For this, he must show a distinction between the scope of the negation of the first lemma and the conclusion of the entire argument. He does this by making several important distinctions. Crucial to this is the appreciation of the various meanings of the terms *dngos po/bhāva* (entity, actuality, or existence) and *dngos med/abhāva* (non-entity, non-actuality, or non-existence). On

this critical point Tsongkhapa makes the following general observation in *LTC*:

> One might wonder thus: "Given that in the Madhyamaka literature all four lemmas (*koṭis*) – i.e., an entity or intrinsic being is existent, [it is] non-existent, [it is] both, or [it is] neither – are negated, and since there is nothing which exists outside them, isn't it the case that everything is negated by reason?"
>
> [Response:] As explained earlier, here too there are two distinct senses to the term *dngos po* (entity). In that it refers to an intrinsically established being (*rang gi ngo bos grub pa'i dngos po*) *dngos po* must be negated at whichever of the two [the conventional and the ultimate] levels of reality it is being posited. However, in the sense of an actuality, i.e. a functional thing or an event (*don byed nus pa'i dngos po*), *dngos po* cannot be denied at the level of conventional truth. Similarly, in the case of *dngos med* (non-entity) too, if non-composite phenomena such as space are being asserted as intrinsically established as non-entity (*rang gi ngos bos grub pa'i dngos med*) then *dngos med* too must be negated. Also, both the existence and non-existence of such *dngos po* (entity) must be negated, and so too must the intrinsic reality of their opposites. It is in this way that all types of negation involving the tetralemma (*catuṣkoṭi*) should be understood.[8]

Tsongkhapa also treats the Madhyamaka argument known as 'diamond splinters' (*rdo rje gzegs ma*) that de-constructs the concept of causality, in a similar manner. In its classical formulation in Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, the argument is stated in the following manner:

> Never, nowhere, does anything arise;
> not from itself, nor from an other,
> not from both, nor without any cause.[9]

If anything arises from anything in an essential way, it must do so in either of the above four possible ways. An intrinsically real production (*bden pa'i skye ba*) must imply an essential production, which means that a thing must come into being either from itself, or from an intrinsically true other, or in some sense from both self and the other, or from no cause at all, for these four modes exhaust all the conceptual possibilities of a thing coming into being in an essential way. However, the negation of all the four leaves intact the actual production itself, which is operational within the framework of mere conditionality. For according to Tsongkhapa, within the framework of our everyday world of conventional reality, we simply accept that effects come into being due to their corresponding causes and conditions. The statement that "sprouts arise from their seeds" should imply no metaphysical claim on causality over and above what it asserts on the linguistic surface. The conventions of the world do not posit the notion of causality on the basis of an analysis determining whether something arises from a cause that is identical, or different, or from a cause that is a synthesis of both, or that is neither identical nor different from the effect. According to Tsongkhapa such metaphysical considerations arise only as a result of philosophical reflections. Tsongkhapa makes the following point in *LTC*:

> If origination [of things] is accepted on the ultimate level (*don dam par*) one must also maintain that it can withstand an analysis pertaining to its true mode of being (*de nyid la dpyod pa'i rigs pa*). In such a case, the concept of origination arises through an analysis determining whether the effect comes into being from itself or from an other, or from one of the four possibilities; one must then accept the relevance of the tetralemma reasoning. However, by simply accepting [the empirical fact] that this and that effect come into being due to this cause and that condition (*rgyu dang rkyen 'di la brten nas 'di byung gi skye ba tsam zhig*), one does not necessarily accept causation in an ultimate sense (*de kho na'i skye ba*). Since this is not accepted, how can one analyse from the ultimate standpoint whether it comes into being from itself, or an other, etc. Hence there is no need to admit that it [origination] *can* withstand [critical] analysis (*rigs pa'i dpyad bzod*).[10]

In Tsongkhapa's treatment of the Madhyamaka dialectic we can see the overwhelming influence of a critical distinction which he makes between two types of analysis and their differing domains of application. To appropriate a well-known Anglo-American philosophical term, Tsongkhapa brings an 'analytic' dimension to his reading of the Madhyamaka's *catuṣkoṭi* argument. With great consistency he brings to his reading a methodological principle that delineates the domains of two distinctive perspectives: 'analysis from the ultimate standpoint' (*don dam dpyod byed*) and 'conventional analysis' (*kun rdzob dpyod byed*).[11] This distinction has far-reaching ramifications.

DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN THE DOMAINS OF 'CONVENTIONAL' AND 'ULTIMATE' ANALYSES

Let us first examine how and on what grounds Tsongkhapa draws the above distinction. This will then enable us to deal with the question of the various logical and philosophical implications of the distinction. In *GR* Tsongkhapa alludes to a story from Buddhapālita's commentary on Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*.[12] The story involves a dispute between two persons regarding the correct identity of a figure depicted in a mural. One claims that the deity holding a sceptre in his right hand is Indra while the other argues that it is Viṣṇu. As they cannot resolve the dispute themselves they approach a third person to arbitrate. However, the arbitrator settles the dispute in the most unlikely manner. He concludes that, since the object in question is a mere drawing, it is neither Indra nor Viṣṇu and so none of the parties is right! Buddhapālita states that in actual fact it is the arbitrator himself who is in the wrong. The moral of the story is this: By simply stating that the identity of

the subject in dispute is a mere drawing (hence neither Indra nor Viṣṇu in person) the arbitrator has totally missed the point. The fact that it is a drawing is not in question, it is an assumption common to both the disputing parties. What is in question is the identity of the figure represented in the picture. So in some sense, the arbitrator has committed a major offence – he has stepped outside the domain of their relevant discussion by conflating two distinct perspectives. Hence his statement that neither of the parties is right has simply no place within the domain of the current discourse. Therefore, the question of whether the verdict he has given is true or not simply does not arise. This is reminiscent of the Wittgensteinian notion of language games.

Just as in the story, Tsongkhapa distinguishes between two distinct domains of discourse, namely that which pertains to the reality of our everyday world of convention and that which pertains to the ultimate ontological status of things and events. Corresponding to these two, Tsongkhapa conceives of two distinct categories of discourse and analysis.[13] This immediately raises a crucial question: "By what criterion does Tsongkhapa delineate the demarcations of the two perspectives?" In other words, how does he define his 'analysis from the ultimate perspective' and 'conventional analysis'? On the surface it seems that this distinction is nothing but a different way of describing the Madhyamaka doctrine of two truths (*satyadvaya*). On closer examination, however, we find that the issue is far more complex demanding a treatment independent of the two truths.

We find that the above distinction between the scope of the two analyses is already fully developed in *LTC*. Tsongkhapa writes:

> Although the objects of conventional reality such as form, sound, and so on exist, they can never be established through a reasoning process that examines whether or not they possess intrinsic being (*rang bzhin*). Our master [Candrakīrti] has repeatedly stated that they [form, sound, and so on] are not susceptible to ['critical'] analysis (*rigs pa'i brtag pa mi 'jug*). ... If the reasoning that determines whether or not intrinsic beings exist *can* negate them [the objects of the conventional world], one can say that they are susceptible to analysis. But this [point] is categorically rejected in the writings of this master [Candrakīrti].[14]

So, as Tsongkhapa claims, if the objects of our everyday world are not open to 'critical' analysis in the sense that they can be neither *affirmed* nor *negated* by an analysis which seeks the ultimate ontological status of things, what forms of analysis and discourse *are* appropriate to dealing with the everyday world? Tsongkhapa devotes a large section in *LN* to distinguishing between 'ultimate' and 'conventional' forms of discourse. He writes:

> If this is so [referring to the point that objects of the everyday world cannot be subjected to ultimate analysis], as there are [still] many questions involving analysis [operative within the everyday world] such as whether one is coming or not, whether something has grown or not, can one not respond to these questions in the positive?
>
> [Answer:] This way of probing is very different from the mode of analysis defined earlier [i.e. ultimate analysis]. Questions of this kind [e.g. going and coming, etc.] do not operate from a premise whereby, being not contented by the [mere] conventions of 'goer' and 'comer', and the acts of 'going' and 'coming', one seeks intrisically real referents to propositions. For these questions operate only at the level of everyday discourse. Therefore, why should there be any [logical] contradictions (*'gal ba*) for accepting such a mode of analysis.[15]

Similarly in *RG*, while delineating the differing scopes of the two analyses according to the Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka school, Tsongkhapa first makes the following observation:

> There is not the slightest difference between the following two statements "Devadatta sees a form" and "A substantially existent Devadatta sees a form" insofar as nothing substantial can be found as the referent of the subjective terms. However, if we deny the validity of the first [sentence] we go against conventional knowledge. In contrast, the second assertion is something which can even be negated by a valid knowledge (*paramāṇa*). Therefore, at the relative level the two propositions are totally different. The reason for this is that *substantiality* (*rdzas yod*) is something that if it exists must be found when sought through analysis. Therefore when it cannot be found we can conclude that it is negated by reason. Whereas in the case of "mere existence" (*yod tsam*) or actuality there is no need for it to be findable when sought analytically. Furthermore, its unfindability through analysis cannot be taken as [a proof of its] non-existence.[16]

The point being made here is this. Although the above two statements – i.e. "Devadatta sees a form" and "A substantially existent Devadatta sees a form" – share many common features they differ in a philosophically significant way. The first is making a statement only within the framework of the ordinary usage of language while the other is clearly making a metaphysical assertion. Because of this difference in the respective scopes of the two claims the second statement remains open to philosophical objections while the first is not. For example, in *LTC*, Tsongkhapa states that because he does not accept events such as 'origination' (*skye ba*), 'cessation' (*dgag pa*), and so on as being capable of withstanding 'ultimate analysis', he cannot be criticised for being committed to any notion of 'true beings' or 'entities'.[17] In other words, Tsongkhapa is clearly distinguishing between essentialistic metaphysical concepts of causality and causal processes such as 'production' as understood in everyday usage. Tsongkhapa argues that much of the philosophical incoherence and also the problems of nihilism which were endemic in Tibet at his time result from conflating the scopes of these two perspectives.[18] In contemporary terminology, we can say

that what Tsongkhapa is engaged in here is an attempt philosophically to define the scope of reason in relation to our understanding of the nature of existence. Following the general lineage of the Madhyamaka philosophico-soteriological approach, Tsongkhapa wishes to destroy every single metaphysical basis that might otherwise lead to hypostatisation. Nevertheless Tsongkhapa is also keen to maintain a 'meaningful' level of reality for the everyday world of cause and effects. He sees the clear demarcation of the scope of the Madhyamaka's dialectics as essential to this purpose. And a coherent analytic distinction between the scope of the ultimate and conventional perspectives is a crucial element of this strategy.

So what exactly is an 'ultimate analysis'? Tsongkhapa gives a general definition of the 'analysis pertaining to the ultimate' in a succinct way in *LTC*. He states that any form of reasoning which examines in the following manner – i.e. whether all things and events such as form, etc. exist in a true mode of being or not (*bden par yod dam med*), or whether they come into being in an essential way or not (*rang gi ngo bo'i sgo nas grub bam ma grub*) – is an analysis pertaining to the ultimate status of objects in question. Such types of reasoning can also be called the 'analysis of the final status' (*mthar thug dpyod byed*).[19]

Tsongkhapa does not claim originality in this distinction. He sees Candrakīrti as having made clear this point. Tsongkhapa quotes particularly the following passage from Candrakīrti's *Yogācāryacatuḥśatakaṭīkā*:

> Our analysis focuses only on those that search for the intrinsically real referent. What we are refuting here is that things [and events] are established by means of their own-being. We do not [however] negate [the existence of] eyes, etc. that are [causally] conditioned (*byas pa*) and are dependently originated in that they are the fruits of *karma*.[20]

For Tsongkhapa, the crucial expression in this quote is what Candrakīrti calls the "search for the intrinsically real referent" (*don rang bzhin 'tshol ba*). Tsongkhapa identifies several other similar important expressions in Candrakīrti's works, which according to him carry the same sense. He argues that Candrakīrti uses interchangeably expressions such as 'thorough analysis' (*rnam par dpyad pa*) (as in the statement "It does not exist when sought by means of a thorough analysis"), 'search for the intrisically real referent' (*don rang bzhin 'tshol ba*) (as in "It is not found when searched for the intrisically real referent"), and 'in the ultimate sense' (as in the context of "There is nothing to attain in the ultimate sense").[21] In Tsongkhapa's view the considerations concerning the different scopes of the two types of analysis are, in general terms, common to both the Svātantrika school of Madhyamaka and that of Candrakīrti's Prāsaṅgika as well.[22] In other words, Tsongkhapa is

asserting that anyone who claims to follow the lineage of Nāgārjuna's Madhyamaka must accept some form of analytic distinction between two domains of discourse roughly corresponding to the two levels of reality, i.e. the ultimate (*paramārtha*) and the conventional (*saṃvṛti*). Regardless of whether Candrakīrti was conscious of the logical distinction between the domains of the two perspectives, it is clear that the way in which this distinction is understood and used as a fundamental methodological principle is unique to Tsongkhapa.

TWO SENSES OF *PARAMĀRTHA* IN THE *MADHYAMAKA* DIALECTIC

The above distinction is closely related to what Tsongkhapa reads as two key senses of the term *paramārtha* (the ultimate) in the context of the Madhyamaka's argument for *śūnyatā*, i.e. emptiness. By this I am referring to the Mādhyamikas' usage of the term when they speak of things and events as being non-existent on the ultimate level. First and foremost, it is used in the context of Madhyamaka ontology (or the negation of it) where all things and events are denied as having existence and identity in any absolute sense.[23] In this usage, *paramārtha* becomes synonymous with 'true mode of being' as in the expression 'established in its true mode of being' (*bden par grub pa*), and 'thorough' as in 'thoroughly established' (*yang dag par grub pa*). Second, *paramārtha* is 'ultimate' when contrasted with the 'relative' (*saṃvṛti*) in the pan-Mahāyāna doctrine of the two truths (*satyadvaya*). In this latter context, it functions as the ultimate nature (*don dam pa'i ngo bo*) of all things and events as opposed to their relative, empirical and conventional level of reality. Though the two senses of *paramārtha* overlap, each has a distinct meaning. Nothing can be said to be real in the first sense of *paramārtha* – i.e. the absolute – because all things and events, and even *śūnyatā*, the emptiness of intrinsic being, are ultimately devoid of identity and existence. However, *śūnyatā* or emptiness can be said to be 'real' in the second sense, i.e. *paramārtha* as the ultimate. It is the truth (*bden pa*), and the ultimate nature of phenomena (*chos rnams kyi mthar thug gi rang bzhin*). This is because only emptiness (*śūnyatā*) is found to remain at the end of an analysis pertaining to the ultimate status of things and events. This does not mean that Tsongkhapa accepts that emptiness can withstand ultimate analysis for nothing can withstand such probing. When subjected to such de-constructive analysis, emptiness too is found to be empty. Hence the emptiness of emptiness.[24]

This distinction between two senses of the term *paramārtha* allows Tsongkhapa to make seemingly paradoxical statements like "emptiness

is the ultimate reality but it is not ultimately real", "it is the truth but not truly established", "it is the intrinsic nature but not intrinsically established" and so on. For example, in *GR*, Tsongkhapa writes:

> If this [distinction between the two senses of the term *paramārtha*] is ascertained well, one will understand the significances which indicate that there is no contradiction between [maintaining] that nothing exists as its own essence and that nothing exists in the ultimate sense, while holding that ultimate nature (*chos nyid*) exists and that it is the mode of being (*gshis lugs*) and the ultimate object (*don dam*).[25]

Although it is quite customary for modem scholars on Mahāyāna Buddhism to translate *paramārtha* as the 'absolute' within the context of the Madhyamaka doctrine of two truths, my view is that its usage should not be accepted as unproblematic. Following Tsongkhapa, there seem to be adequate grounds to make a case for distinguishing between *paramārtha* as the absolute and *paramārtha* as the ultimate. The first sense of *paramārtha* is totally rejected in the Madhyamaka dialectic even in relation to *śūnyatā*, emptiness. However, *paramārtha* as the ultimate is accepted, as it is the perspective contrary to the relative, veiled truth, *saṃvṛti*. Tsongkhapa writes:

> Therefore, it cannot be the case that the ultimate referent (*don dam pa*), the nature (*chos nyid*), the suchness (*de kho na nyid*) and the mode of being (*gshis lugs*) [of all phenomena] do not exist. However, to suggest that if they exist in what sense other than the absolute or as the true mode of being can they exist is to demonstrate a total lack of understanding of the modes of analysis from the perspectives of the ultimate standpoint.[26]

Tsongkhapa concludes the above discussion by stating that it is due to the lack of appreciating this subtle distinction, i.e. between the ultimate and the absolute, that some [e.g. Ngog Loden Sherap] maintained that *paramārtha* is unknowable, while others [such as Jonangpas] asserted that it is the absolute.[27] In brief, Tsongkhapa is saying that nothing, not even emptiness, can be said to exist from the absolute standpoint, yet something, e.g. emptiness, can be said to be the ultimate nature. In other words, nothing exists 'ultimately' (*don dam par*) although something can be said to be the ultimate (*don dam pa*). It is interesting to note here that so much philosophical significance hangs on what seems to be a peculiar linguistic, or grammatical form. Tsongkhapa seems to imply that any form of a particular usage of the term *paramārtha* in this peculiar grammatical case entails ontological claims. The grammatical case in point is what is known in Tibetan as *de nyid*, which is a unique case of prepositional usage, almost exclusively pertaining to the notion of identity. This usage could be perhaps best compared to the adverbial case in English. Instances such as *don dam par grub* (established as the ultimate), *yang dag par grub* (thoroughly established), *bden par yod* (truly existing), *gshis lugs su grub* (established as its nature), *rang dbang du grub* (independently established), *rdzas su yod* (substantially existing), *tshugs thub tu yod* (existing with autonomous reality), are cases of this usage.[28]

Again, the manner in which Tsongkhapa has defined the meaning of 'ultimacy' in the context of Madhyamaka dialectics, based on disguishing between the two different senses of *paramārtha*, does seem to contribute greatly towards a greater clarity to the Madhyamaka analysis. It enables us to have clearer appreciation of what exactly is being negated when the Mādhyamikas assert that things and events do not exist at the 'ultimate' level. This, then, takes us to the next element.

'CORRECT' IDENTIFICATION OF THE OBJECT OF NEGATION

Another integral part of Tsongkhapa's philosophical strategy for delineating the 'correct' domain of reason is what he calls the '[proper] identification of the object of negation' (*dgags bya ngos 'dzin*).[29] Tsongkhapa is aware that everyone who professes to be a Mādhyamika is familiar with the claim that all things and events lack an ultimate ontological status. He thinks, however, that not everyone is clear as to what exactly is meant by the absence of ultimate modes of being. And according to him, confusion about this can have grave consequences. If you go too far in your negation, it can result in a position that denigrates the everyday world of valid experience thus leading to a position of nihilism. On the other hand, if you cast your net to too confined an area, you may let certain residues of the reified categories slip. This is to say that you may leave the elusive *svabhāva* undetected, thus pushing you more towards the abyss of 'absolutism'. So what is required, according to Tsongkhapa, is a skilful treading of a fine line between the two extremes of 'over-negation' and 'under-negation'.[30] Tsongkhapa argues that it is crucial to have a clear conception of what is to be negated.[31] Without this, he suggests that statements like "Nothing can exist in an absolute sense", and "If things and events are still claimed to exist in such a manner, such and such objections can be raised", and so on, remain only grand words with no real effect.[32]

This raises some interesting questions. What exactly is constituted by this so-called correct identification of the object of negation? In other words, is it an analytic distinction based on a 'correct' understanding of a definition, or is it a practical distinction that the Mādhyamika has to make drawing from his or her personal experience? Does Tsongkhapa perceive this 'correct' identification of the object of negation to be a

prerequisite of the Madhyamaka dialectic? If so, for whom and for what purpose? Is it a prerequisite for the Mādhyamika who is arguing against the metaphysical postulates of the essentialist schools? Or, is it a requirement for the Mādhyamika practitioner whose main concern is to gain insight into the emptiness of intrinsic being?

It appears that, for Tsongkhapa, this 'correct identification' means nothing more than developing a clear understanding of the meaning of the term 'ultimate referent' (*paramārtha*) in the context of the Madhyamaka's rejection of the ultimate ontological status of things and events. This is evident from the serious treatment he gives to an important passage from Bhāvaviveka's *Tarkajvālā* where Bhāvaviveka enumerates three different senses of the term *paramārtha*. According to Bhāvaviveka, emptiness is the 'ultimate referent' (*paramārtha*) because it is both "supreme" and "referent". It is also the ultimate object (*paramārtha*) because it is the object (*don*) of the supreme gnosis (*ye shes dam pa*), namely the nonconceptual awareness of an ārya. It can also be said to be the ultimate in that it is the object of an awareness that is in accord with the cognition of the supreme object.[33] Of these three, Tsongkhapa asserts that it is the third sense of *paramārtha* that is directly relevant in the context of Madhyamaka's rejection of essentialist ontology.[34] He substantiates this point further by quoting from Kamalaśīla's *Madhyamakāloka* where Kamalaśīla states that when it is said that nothing comes into being in the ultimate sense, we should understand this to mean that their (i.e. things and events) coming into being is not affirmed by the supreme cognition.[35] Tsongkhapa concludes by observing that when the Mādhyamikas argue with the others (i.e. the essentialists), contending that things and events do not exist in the absolute sense, what they wish to reject is that things and events *can* be found to exist when sought through an analysis pertaining to their ultimate nature. Once again this takes us back to the critical distinction we drew earlier between the ultimate and conventional perspectives and their corresponding domains of discourse.

Is this all there is to Tsongkhapa's insistence on the 'correct' identification of the object of negation? The answer appears to be, "no". The problem with the above reading is that, for Tsongkhapa, its understanding of the Madhyamaka's usage of the all-important ontological term *paramārtha* is not comprehensive enough. In other words, Tsongkhapa must argue that the Mādhyamika needs to have a conceptual understanding of how we perceive things and events within our naive, normal, pre-philosophical ways of seeing things. For without this, the Madhyamaka's emptiness becomes merely a de-constructive device to criticise other philosophical theories.

It is interesting that although Tsongkhapa seems clear from an early stage on the point that the principal objects of negation in the context of the Madhyamaka dialectic are our innate apprehensions[36] of self-existence and their content, it is not, however, until the writing of *GR* that this point is explicitly related to the hermeneutic of understanding the all-important qualification "ultimately" in the Mādhyamika's rejection of essentialist ontology. In *LTC* Tsongkhapa states that it is important to understand the significance of the qualifying term "ultimately" in the context of Madhyamaka discourse on emptiness. He rejects the suggestion that it is only the Svātantrika-Mādhyamikas who use this qualification, and not the Prāsaṅgikas. However, when it comes to defining the meaning of the term, Tsongkhapa relates it to the discussion of Bhāvaviveka's distinction between the three senses of ultimacy (*paramārtha*).[37] We find a similar approach in *LN* as well.

In contrast, in *GR* Tsongkhapa develops a convincing case to distinguish between two senses of ultimacy (*don dam*) as it is used as a qualifying term in the Mādhyamika's rejection of intrinsic being (*svabhāva*). Tsongkhapa writes:

> It is necessary to understand that there are two senses to the qualifying term "ultimate" (*don dam*) in the context of identifying the object of negation in the ultimate sense. One is the case where the critical consciousnesses such as those derived through hearing, reflection, and meditation are known as the ultimate [perspectives]. In this sense, to say that "things do not exist ultimately" means that they are not found by such consciousnesses. Secondly, there is the "ultimate" (*don dam*) in the sense of something that is said to possess a mode of being that is not posited in dependence upon the mind (*blo'i dbang gis bzhag pa mm pa'i sdod lugs*). Of these two senses of ultimacy (*don dam*), not only does the first *don dam* exist, but also something can be said to exist from its perspective (*de'i ngor grub pa*). [In contrast] both the second *don dam* and its object *cannot* exist (*yod mi srid*). Therefore, if anything exists from the perspective of the second *don dam*, it must also exist from the perspective of the first *don dam*. However, apprehension of the first *don dam* is not innate (*lhan skyes*) for [innate apprehensions] this requires the second kind of *don dam*.[38]

Tsongkhapa makes this critical observation in *GR* in the section on the identification of the objection of negation according to Svātantrika-Madhyamaka. This, however, is not a cause of concern for Tsongkhapa makes the following point:

> Insofar as it is necessary to understand that there are two senses to the qualifying term "ultimately" (*don dam par*) this is true also in the case here [Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka]. Although the Svātantrantika-Mādhyamikas maintain that the three such as "true being" (*bden par grub pa*) ["absolute being" (*don dam par grub pa*), and "thoroughly established being" (*yang dag par grub pa*)], cannot exist, they accept at the conventional level the existence of the three such as "established by means of its own being" (*rang gi ngo bos grub pa*) ["established by its own characteristics"

(*rang gi mtshan nyid kyis grub pa*), and "established by means of intrinsic being" (*rang bzhin gyis grub pa*)].[39]

There is not much in the Indian Madhyamaka literature to substantiate the point about the importance of prior identification of the object of negation by means of direct citations. Tsongkhapa quotes *Bodhisattvacaryāvatāra* 9:139[40] to make a general point about the critical importance of cultivating a clear conceptual understanding of one's object of negation. But, to the best of my knowledge, no commentator in India seems to have associated this verse with identifying one's object of negation. Nor did any Tibetan commentators on Madhyamaka before Tsongkhapa either. However, Tsongkhapa literally beats the texts, as it were, to say what he wishes them to state. In *GR* Tsongkhapa shows how a close reading between the lines of a passage from Kamalaśīla's *Madhyamakāloka* can reveal a clear identification of the object of negation that is being rejected by the Madhyamaka. He argues that the passage that defines 'conventional existence', when reversed, gives us the criterion of its direct opposite, namely 'ultimate existence'.[41] If the Madhyamaka's negation of essentialist ontology is to lead to liberation as Mādhyamikas of all shades appear to agree, it does seem essential that the object that is negated is that which is conceived by the innate *avidyā*, an ignorance that is inherent in all beings and not just those with philosophical views. After all, liberation (*nirvāṇa*) according to Buddhism, entails cutting off the root of *saṃsāra*, which according to the Madhyamaka *is* the innate *avidyā*. So Tsongkhapa seems to assert that not only is the prior correct identification of the object of negation crucial for the Mādhyamika philosopher, it is equally essential for the Mādhyamika spiritual aspirant as well.

What does it mean to say that someone must have a prior understanding of what is to be negated? Tsongkhapa gives the analogy of someone who is trying to ascertain the absence or presence of a certain person. For this, he argues, it is necessary to have some idea of who that person is in the first place.[42] Judging by this analogy, Tsongkhapa seems to assert that the Mādhyamika must develop a clear sense of what is to be negated by the Madhyamaka dialectic before even the actual process of de-construction has begun. If this is true, in my view, this raises some epistemological problems for Tsongkhapa. First of all, this implies that the Mādhyamika aspirant is able coherently to distinguish between 'existence only' (*yod tsam*) on the one hand, and 'intrinsic existence' (*rang bzhin gyis yod pa*) on the other. Not only that, he or she must be able to distinguish this within his or her own personal experience, i.e. how things and events appear to the naive worldview.

The problem with this, however, is that such distinctions can be made, if at all, only in the aftermath of one's true cognition of the absence of intrinsic being (*niḥsvabhāva*). Until then, 'existence' and 'intrinsic existence' are completely indistinguishable so far as the perception of the individual is concerned. They are, to use Tsongkhapa's own imagery, like a face and the reflection of the face that appears in the mirror. As far as the visual perception is concerned, the face that you see in the mirror and the reflection of the face are one and the same image. There is no separate image of the face apart from the reflection that appears in the mirror.[43] Tsongkhapa himself seems to be fully aware of this problem of circularity. In *LN* Tsongkhapa states that until the individual himself has [experientially] de-constructed *svabhāva*, no amount of verbal explanation given by a third person can help him clearly distinguish between 'existence only' and 'intrinsic existence'.[44]

Judging by Tsongkhapa's overall approach, we might expect that he would reconcile this seeming paradox by invoking a popular Tibetan epistemological distinction between 'true cognition' (*tshad mas rtogs pa*) and an 'intellectual understanding' (*yid dpyod kyi go ba chags pa*). On this view, prior to his cognition of *śūnyatā*, the Mādhyamika aspirant should develop an intellectual or conceptual understanding of the distinction between 'existence only' and 'intrinsic existence'. However, a 'true cognition' of such a distinction arises only subsequent to the actual de-construction of intrinsic reality (*svabhāva*). This response does seem to go a long way in resolving the epistemological problem, i.e. only if one is prepared to accept the epistemological distinction between an 'intellectual understanding' and 'true cognition'.[45] It is interesting to note that Tsongkhapa himself does not invoke this concept of 'intellectual understanding' as opposed to 'true cognition' to deal with the problem of circularity. Perhaps he did not think it a real problem.

THAT WHICH IS 'NEGATED BY REASON' AND 'NOT FOUND BY REASON'

Tsongkhapa accepts that the tetralemma argument definitely has only a negative function in that by rejecting all four possibilities (*koṭis*) it illustrates the limits of any essentialist metaphysical description of reality. Its primary function is that of criticism, constantly moving from the critique of a thesis to its antithesis so that no room is left even for the slightest tendency towards reification. However, so far as the actuality of our everyday world is concerned, the tetralemma argument leaves it completely unscathed. The reality of this world need not be exhausted within any of the four ontological possibilities being negated

in the Madhyamaka dialectic. It is only when one steps outside the bounds of conventional sense and seeks a metaphysical grounding for the world that one becomes susceptible to the de-constructive power of the dialectic. Hence, from Tsongkhapa's point of view, there is nothing surprising in finding that even the reality of everyday objects like tables, chairs, etc., is found to be untenable when searched for through such critical analysis. This does not entail that these things are in some profound sense negated by reason (*rigs pas bkag pa*). Something can be said to be negated by reason only if it falls within the scope of that particular analysis and yet cannot withstand that analysis. The following is a useful analogy. If there is a flower-pot in front of the speaker it should be observable, and when it cannot be seen we can safely conclude that there is no such object in front of the speaker. In this context, there is a coincidence between 'non-finding' of an object and 'finding its absence'. This is, however, not the case with, say for instance, the presence of a ghost (supposing such things exist!) in front of the speaker. In the latter case, the non-observance of it simply cannot be taken as an adequate ground for its non-existence. This distinction reflects a strong influence of Dharmakīrti's logic of inference. In his *Pramāṇavārttika*, Dharmakīrti draws a distinction between two types of negative inference. One instance is where the negantum (*dgag bya'i chos*) is negated by means of asserting its non-observance or the non-observance of objects that are naturally related to it. This type of negation is applicable only in instances where the thing to be negated is generally perceptible. However, this does not apply to cases where the object of negation is even in general terms non-observable (*mi snangs ba ma dmigs pa*). In the latter case, we can only infer the absence of its perception rather than the object of negation itself.[46] For Tsongkhapa, just as between 'non-observance' of something and the 'observance of its absence', there is a world of difference between that which is 'not found by reason' (*rigs pas ma brnyed pa*) and that which is 'negated by reason' (*rigs pas bkag pa*).[47] This distinction is critical if Tsongkhapa is to succeed in his task of delineating the scope of reason. Again, we can see that this relates to the critical distinction made earlier between the scopes of 'ultimate analysis' and 'conventional analysis'.

Tsongkhapa wants to develop a methodology which will allow him to make a coherent distinction between the non-intrinsic existence of everyday objects of experience on the one hand and what he perceives as unnecessary (at worst harmful) metaphysical postulates like *ātman*, primal substance (*prakṛti*), etc., on the other. Without the subtle distinctions which he has drawn between different perspectives, he argues, one will be forced to admit that there is no significant difference between these two categories. For insofar as the inability or ability to withstand analysis is concerned both categories are equal. Also there is no difference between the two insofar as they are both objects of discursive thought. Thus, Tsongkhapa writes:

> Without a comprehensive and detailed critical analysis, if one negates ultimate existence (*don dam du grub pa*) by means of some partial reasoning, and upholds the reality of things that exist on the conventional level on the grounds that they are perceived so by distorted consciousnesses (*'khrul shes*) – i.e. maintaining that being an object of such consciousness *is* the criterion of conventional reality – no distinctions can be maintained between the propositions that "pain and pleasure are created by *Īśvara* (transcendent, supernatural being) or primal substance" and that "pain and pleasure are caused by karma". [According to the proponent of the above view], if one proposition is true, the other must be true too; similarly, if the former is false, so must the latter be. This is because when subjected to critical analysis as characterised earlier, even the latter [proposition] becomes untenable (*sngar bzhin dpyad na ni dpyod byed kyis phyi ma yang mi rnyed la*); and, insofar as being the object of a distorted consciousness is concerned, even the former [proposition] can be said to be true (*'khrul ngor ni snga ma yang yod*).[48]

Tsongkhapa argues that those who maintain that the Prāsaṅgikas do not accept the existence of everyday objects even on the conventional level, do so because of their failure to appreciate the subtle distinction between that which is 'not found by reason' and that which is 'negated by reason'. Furthermore, according to Tsongkhapa, they are ignorant of the critical distinction between the different domains of ultimate and conventional discourses. Such ignorance, according to Tsongkhapa, leads to certain impoverishment in one's philosophical thinking often compelling one to make absurd statements like "the world exists only from the perspective of the other", and "I have no views of my own", etc. For Tsongkhapa, this is certainly not the silence of the noble sage the Madhyamaka dialectic is supposed to lead to; rather it is the silence of an impoverished sceptical philosophy.

Earlier I suggested that Tsongkhapa does not see the tetralemma itself as a form of paradox. Even if there may appear to be some element of paradox in the classical formulation of the argument, Tsongkhapa has successfully resolved it with his penetrating distinctions between the various perspectives involved in the argument. The crucial question is whether or not, at the end of the negation of the four lemmas, we are still left dangling with a paradox, a paradox born of a paralysis of *reason* brought about by the Madhyamaka dialectic. Given Tsongkhapa's overall approach – i.e. his clarity of vision, his thorough-going rationality, and most importantly his refusal to seek any easy option of viewing reality in some indeterminate, absolute mode – the temptation is indeed great to

answer in the negative. However, let us not hasten. A closer reading of Tsongkhapa reveals an interesting situation. One thing which is certain is that Tsongkhapa does not believe that the tetralemma leaves you in a state of indecision, or 'non-commitment', as some modern scholars have called it.[49] So far as the conclusion that all things and events lack *svabhāva* ('intrinsic being', or 'essence') is concerned, there is nothing undecided or noncommittal about it. The Mādhyamika conviction is as certain as any belief could possibly be. The negation of such reified ontology is absolute and final. Paradox, if it can be called this at all, arises only when you redirect your perception to the everyday world of experience in the aftermath of the Madhyamaka dialectical process. At the core of one's perception of reality, or world view, lies what could best be described as a paradox – a sense of perplexity at the world constituted by interrelations with no 'real' entities. This is paradoxical in that you are at a total loss (conceptually) to reconcile the world of appearance and its underlying reality (or unreality), i.e. its thoroughly empty nature. Coming to terms with this, according to Tsongkhapa, is the greatest challenge for the Madhyamaka philosopher. Tsongkhapa himself describes the experience as follows:

> O friends, [you who are] learned in the profound Middle Way treatises,
> difficult though it is to posit
> causality and dependence without 'intrinsic being',
> Still it is wiser to rely on this [Prāsaṅgika] line of thought,
> hailing it as the way of the Middle.[50]

LOGICAL ANALYSIS OF FORMS OF NEGATION

We now come to the final element in our examination of Tsongkhapa's Madhyamaka dialectic. It is clear that Tsongkhapa accepts that the Madhyamaka dialectic functions only in the form of negation, and also that as far as the negation of *svabhāva* is concerned it is absolute or total. We must now look at Tsongkhapa's analysis of the various forms of negation so that we can assess how it relates to his soteriological concerns. In most of his substantial works on the Madhyamaka philosophy of emptiness Tsongkhapa gives a separate treatment of the analysis of the principal forms of negation employed in Buddhist philosophy.[51] If the negation of *svabhāva* ('essence' or 'intrinsic being') is not categorical and therefore absolute, there will always be a tendency, no matter how slight and residual, towards reification.[52] And reification, according to Tsongkhapa, always obstructs true liberation – it constricts our ability to relate to the world in an appropriate manner. In other words, it obscures

our vision of reality and chains us to a vicious cycle of illusion and projections. Therefore, in order for negation to be thorough, it must be what is known as *prasajya* – nonimplicative negation, i.e. a negation which leaves no room for any affirmation or implication in its aftermath. This is in contrast to a type of negation which is known as *paryudāsa* – implicative negation – which in place of the negated subject makes an implication or a supposition of something positive. Although these negations have a lot to do with what (in the wake of Searle's work[53]) may be called speech acts, the difference between them is essentially logical and semantic.[54]

To have a clearer understanding of Tsongkhapa's emphasis on the use of *prasajya* negation in the Madhyamaka dialectic, let us look at some of the propositional forms in which negation is used in language. A typical illustration of the *prasajya* form we find in Tsongkhapa's writing is this: "Brahmins don't drink alcohol." What is unique about this is that it makes a simple negative statement to the effect that Brahmins do not drink alcohol. Of course, Brahmins may drink water, or tea, or juice, etc. but none of these is implied in that statement, nor are any other features like the fact that they don't eat meat, etc. also supposed in any way. It is a clear, precise, unambiguous statement whose purpose is simply to deny that Brahmins drink alcohol. Compare this with the following statement: "This fat man doesn't eat during the day." This form of negation is called *paryudāsa* for it involves more than a simple negation. In the present context, the speaker, in addition to denying that the man eats during daytime, implies that he eats during the night. Tsongkhapa, by citing a verse quoted in Avalokitavrata's commentary on Bhāvaviveka's *Prajñāpradīpa*,[55] lists four types of 'implicative negation' (*paryudāsapratiṣedha*) : 1) affirmation by implication (*don gyis bstan pa*), e.g. "This fat Devadatta doesn't eat during the day"; 2) negation and affirmation both effected explicitly by the same proposition (*tshig gcig gis bsgrub pa*), e.g. "the absence of self exists"; 3) affirmation effected both explicitly and implicitly as well (*dngos shugs gnyis ka la 'phen pa*), "This fat Devadatta doesn't eat during the day yet does not lose any weight"; and finally, 4) affirmation implied by context (*skabs stobs kyis 'phen pa*), "This man is not a Brahmin" in the context where the person is known to be either a Brahmin or a royal.[56]

Interestingly, Tsongkhapa and many Tibetan Mādhyamikas do not seem to distinguish clearly, when examining the nature of various forms of negations, between statements and their propositional contents. Often the discussion on forms of negation is conducted in terms of 'negative phenomena' (*dgag pa*) versus 'positive phenomena' (*sgrub pa*) as if they

are objective features of reality. There could be several reasons for this. There is a basic ambiguity in the Tibetan language about the grammatical status of many verbs. Words like *dgag pa* (to negate) and *sgrub pa* (to posit) can be read, depending upon the context, both as nouns and also as verbs. When read as nouns, *dgag pa* can be translated as 'negative phenomena' and *sgrub pa* as 'positive phenomena'. Unfortunately, most of the contemporary Western scholars of Tibetan Buddhist philosophy appear to have read these only as nouns, thus failing to appreciate the logical and philosophical significance of the distinction between negation and affirmation. One reason is perhaps because Tibetan thinkers on the whole, including Tsongkhapa, are always more interested in the actual philosophical content of a theory than in the linguistic aspects of it. This might also explain why, unlike their Indian counterparts, Tibetan philosophers very rarely take grammatical analysis as being crucial for philosophical examination. Nevertheless, I do not feel that this has led to any serious shortfalls in Tibetan understanding of the nature of negation in propositional language.

Tsongkhapa argues that just as the appreciation of the thoroughly negative character of emptiness, i.e. its *prasajya* nature, is critical in that it removes all possibilities for reification, it is equally important not to confuse this negation with nihilism. He warns us against being carried away by frequent usage of terms like 'mere' (*tsam*), and its analogues such as 'only' (*gcig pu*), 'just' (*kho na*), 'alone' (*'ba' zhig*).[57] What is being denied by all these terms of exclusion is the notion that something positive, perhaps a deeper reality, is being affirmed in the aftermath of the negation. This is in direct contrast to those who perceive the ultimate nature of reality in the Madhyamaka in terms of an absolute, something along the lines of Leibnizian plenitude or the Brahman of the Vedānta, which somehow serves as the fundamental substratum of reality.[58] According to Tsongkhapa, anyone who characterises the ultimate nature of reality in positive terms ultimately falls victim to the deeply ingrained human trait for reification. No matter what terms you may use to describe it, be it Brahman, plenitude, Buddha nature, the absolute, etc., it still remains a metaphysical concept. Only a thorough-going negation can lead to full liberation from our tendency for grasping.

Tsongkhapa would agree with Ruegg when the latter characterises the negation involved in the Madhyamaka dialectic as ontological rather than linguistic.[59] According to Tsongkhapa, there are two principal types of *prasajya* negation. One is a type of *prasajya* whose object of negation is actual in that at the level of everyday reality it possesses

a certain status of existence and identity (*dgag bya shes bya la srid pa'i med dgag*).[60] In this case, although the denial or negation of the object in question may be final and total, its scope is limited. It may be limited by spatial location, for example, in the statement: "There are no yaks." This is limited in that the non-existence of yaks can be taken only within the context of a limited location. Or, the limit may be temporal, e.g. "It is not snowing." In both cases, the negation is said to be absolute in that there is no element of "may be" involved. So far as the speaker is concerned, his or her commitment to the denial is final. There is a second category of *prasajya*, where the object of negation does not exist at all (*dgag bya shes bya la mi srid pa'i med dgag*).[61] Examples of the second type include such negative expressions like "the non-existence of rabbit's horn, sky flower, son of a barren woman, etc." Here, not only is the negation total but it is also universal in that it is free of any spatio-temporal constraints. The negation of *svabhāva* ('essence' or 'intrinsic-being') by the Madhyamaka dialectic belongs to this category.[62]

For Tsongkhapa, the understanding of the nature of *prasajya* negation is crucial for fully appreciating the scope of the negation involved in the Mādhyamika's critique of intrinsic being. This takes us back to the central point, i.e. delineating the scope of reason, especially in its role of negating essentialist ontology. Tsongkhapa argues that even the Svātantrika-Madhyamaka school of Bhāvaviveka cannot deny the view that the negation involved in establishing the theory of śūnyatā must be that of *prasajya*.[63] Tsongkhapa's point is this. Unless the negation involved in the application of the Madhyamaka dialectic aimed at arriving at the true cognition of emptiness (*śūnyatā*) is final and universal, the negation cannot fulfil its soteriological function. Interestingly, those who criticise Tsongkhapa's understanding of emptiness as a mere negation, i.e. a *prasajya*, raise exactly the same soteriological objection.[64]

In that Tsongkhapa saw the Madhyamaka's *śūnyatā* (emptiness) to be a non-implicative, absolute negation is beyond question. It is, however, not a mere negation *per se*; it is an absolute negation of *svabhāva* (intrinsic being). By maintaining this, Tsongkhapa is suggesting that the absence of intrinsic being is the ultimate nature of reality! And, since, according to the Mādhyamika, *śūnyatā* (emptiness) is the *tathatā* (essence), the absence of intrinsic being also becomes the essence. This has, of course, been an object of vehement criticism by subsequent Tibetan thinkers. For example, Gowo Rabjampa calls this *chad stong* (nihilistic emptiness),[65] while Shākya Chogden labels it an inferior version of extrinsic emptiness (*gzhan stong tha shal ba*).[66] Mikyö

Dorje too makes a similar criticism. In their view, Tsongkhapa's notion of *śūnyatā* is inadequate and therefore cannot serve as the content of the liberating gnosis. They argue that such gnosis must have a more positive content.[67] Tsongkhapa would respond to this by arguing that his *śūnyatā can* serve as the content of an Ārya's liberating gnosis. For, according to Tsongkhapa, insofar as the actual object of cognition is concerned there is no difference between an Ārya's nonconceptual awareness and inferential cognition of *śūnyatā*.[68] And, as for inferential cognition, negation of *svabhāva* is the cognition of *niḥsvabhāva*.

For Tsongkhapa the soteriological dimension of the dialectic is crucial. He does not agree with those who assert that for the Mādhyamika argument functions only as a critique of the opponent's viewpoint. On this view, within the Madhyamaka project, argument has only a reactive role. You wait for the opponent to come up with a theory and then by using his own logic, as it were, turn the table back on him. A true Mādhyamika dialectician, the proponents of this view argue, acts only as a parasite upon other philosophies, never committing himself to any conclusive thesis. This is in sharp contrast to Tsongkhapa's position. As far as he is concerned these interpreters are only caught up in the rhetoric of *Prāsaṅgika*, and have totally missed the point. For Tsongkhapa, all types of reasoning found in the Madhyamaka literature primarily function as self-criticism (if it can be called such at all). They are aimed at liberating the mind of the Mādhyamika from his deep-seated tendency for reification, which in Tsongkhapa's view is the fundamental obscuration lying at the root of all our suffering and which makes our existence samsaric, unenlightened and an imprisonment. And the dialectical nature of many of the arguments is designed to prevent the Mādhyamika virtuoso from succumbing to any of the possible metaphysical havens which he may otherwise seek. The fact that many of these standpoints do represent tenets of actual historical schools is, as far as Tsongkhapa is concerned, an interesting coincidence. In fact, it strengthens his point that these are possible routes one might quite naturally take to seek refuge if one is not vigilant through a critical approach. In *LN* Tsongkhapa writes:

> All Madhyamaka reasonings are parts of the [overall] task of uprooting the apprehension of our fundamental ignorance which is the root cause of cyclic existence, *saṃsāra*. Therefore, by identifying the manner in which your innate ignorant mind grasps [at entities], you should endeavour to bring about its elimination. You should not indulge in mere sophistic disputation with opposing philosophical schools.[69]

and earlier in the same book he writes,

> ... there is no contradiction between the fact that the innate conception of self-existence (*bdag 'dzin lhan skyes*) is the principal object of negation [of the Madhyamaka dialectic] and yet in the [Madhyamaka] literature [often] the refutation is done through analysis. So, one should not think that it is only the intellectually acquired apprehension and its content which are to be negated.[70]

To sum up, by giving special attention to the various forms of negation in philosophical discourse, Tsongkhapa wishes to achieve two things. First and foremost, he wants to make it clear that the Mādhyamika's rejection of *svabhāva* ontology must be unqualified and absolute. Only by ensuring this, he contends, will the Mādhyamikas succeed in their project to de-construct all tendencies for reification. Second, Tsongkhapa wishes to establish that the Mādhyamika's emptiness is very different from mere nothingness. It is the absolute negation of intrinsic existence and not of existence *per se*. Thus, it becomes critical for Tsongkhapa correctly to delineate reason's scope of negation. The negation of *svabhāva*, i.e. intrinsic being, must be absolute and universal, yet it should not destroy the reality of the everyday world of experience. Although Tsongkhapa believes that there is an element of what could be called 'pre-critical innocence' in our everyday perspectives on the world, he thinks that they are nevertheless 'tainted' by an underlying belief in intrinsic being of things. Thus, the role of the dialectic is to 'cleanse' our perceptions of this pollution so that we can arrive at a 'post-critical innocence'. Once this principal objective is identified, we can then appreciate with greater coherence all the various elements of Tsongkhapa's de-constructive methodology.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we must raise the question about the validity and coherence of Tsongkhapa's reading of the Madhyamaka dialectic. At the core of Tsongkhapa's approach seems to be the assumption of a systematic coherence in the Madhyamaka philosophy of emptiness. This means that, according to Tsongkhapa, there must be a systematic way by which the Mādhyamika should be able conceptually to articulate his so-called 'middle point' (*madhyama*). Of course, this requires the Mādhyamika to maintain a 'meaningful' level of reality of the everyday world while rejecting all tendencies for reification. According to Tsongkhapa, crucial to this project is to delineate the 'correct' scope of reason so that the Madhyamaka dialectic is not seen as destroying the validity of our everyday world of experience. In arguing thus, Tsongkhapa can be seen as continuing in the long lineage of Mādhyamika philosophers who are sensitive to the charge that the Madhyamaka theory of emptiness is nihilistic. A further assumption Tsongkhapa appears to

make, from what we have discussed so far, is that the application of the Madhyamaka dialectic is a crucial aspect of the process of eliminating the innate *avidyā*. Needless to say this presupposes the centrality of reason in Madhyamaka soteriology. Those who wish to take issue with Tsongkhapa's reading of the Madhyamaka philosophy may question these presuppositions.

My personal view is that if the Madhyamaka is to be seen as an important lineage within the Buddhist religious and philosophical milieu – i.e. sharing the basic soteriological concerns of a Buddhist path – something like Tsongkhapa's interpretation of the school's key tenets is unavoidable. Tsongkhapa's distinction between the domains of the conventional and ultimate perspectives, his insistence on a prior, correct conceptual identification of the object of negation, his identifying of different senses of the all-important term *paramārtha*, and finally the distinction he draws between what is *negated* by reason and what is *not found* by reason, all contribute greatly towards a more coherent understanding of the Madhyamaka's rejection of essentialist ontology.

If what I have sketched in this paper represents an accurate reading of Tsongkhapa's understanding of the Madhyamaka dialectics, his approach to defend Madhyamaka against the charge of nihilism appears to be somewhat different from his Indian predecessors. The Indian Mādhyamika's response, on the whole, primarily involves invoking the idea of illusion-like nature of reality. For example, in *BCA*, 9:11–17, Śantideva defends ethical responsibility on the grounds that killing an illusion-like person accrues illusion-like karma. This approach is very much in line with the approach of the Mahāyāna *sūtras* which present the doctrine of emptiness through a multitude of metaphors all of which intimate the illusion-like character of things and events. In contrast, Tsongkhapa's approach involves, in addition to invoking the illusion-like nature of reality, a logical dimension as well in that he wishes to conceptually stipulate the parameters of the Madhyamaka dialectical analysis. Perhaps, the Indian Mādhyamikas felt that it is not necessary analytically to determine the scope of negation prior to one's cognition of emptiness for what *exists* is what is left behind in the aftermath of the application of the Madhyamaka dialectic. As a philosopher, however, Tsongkhapa is not satisfied by this assumption. He wants to demonstrate that the Madhyamaka dialectic does not destroy everything and that indeed the world of everyday reality is left intact. More importantly, Tsongkhapa must have felt this need to stipulate the parameters of reason's domain to counter the pervasive influence of the

so-called 'thesisless' interpretation of the Madhyamaka's philosophy of emptiness in Tibet.[71]

Regardless of the enormous influence of Tsongkhapa's Madhyamaka writings not all Tibetan Mādhyamika thinkers agree with his interpretation. The Sakya scholars Gorampa Sonam Senge (1429–1489), Shakya Chogden (1428–1507), and the Kagyü hierarch Karmapa Mikyö Dorje (1507–1554), have criticised Tsongkhapa's claim that the Madhyamaka's emptiness is the absolute negation of intrinsic being – i.e. it is a mere absence of intrinsic being with no positive content. Others such as Taktshang Lotsawa (b. 1405) have taken issue with Tsongkhapa's premise that everyday reality must be accorded a status that is logically defensible and is grounded in valid cognition. At the core of all of these disputes is the role of rationality within Buddhist soteriology, an issue that is relevant to many areas of dispute between Tsongkhapa and his critics. Tsongkhapa wishes to argue that the ultimate truth according to Madhyamaka – i.e. emptiness – *can* be and *must* be initially accessed through reason and discursive thought. For, according to him, negation of intrinsic being through reason *is* the cognition of emptiness, albeit at the intellectual level. In contrast, for the critics of Tsongkhapa the gulf between rationality and insight into the ultimate truth is so great that only by discarding thought can one access it. Needless to say, Tsongkhapa's followers have defended his reading of Madhyamaka and these defences have been attacked further by other subsequent thinkers. Thus the debate goes on.

NOTES

[1] For example, there is now a general consensus within modern Madhyamaka scholarship that the labels Prāsaṅgika and Svātantrika and the sharp division within the Indian Madhyamaka thinkers along the two distinct lines as suggested by such labels are most probably retrospective Tibetan creations. See, for example, Williams (1989, Spring), p. 3.

[2] See Jinpa (1997).

[3] Madhyamaka's *catuṣkoṭi* argument has received extensive treatment in modern Buddhist scholarship. For an in-depth review of the modern scholarship on *catuṣkoṭi*, see Wood (1994).

[4] One of the first modern scholars on Madhyamaka philosophy to characterise the Madhyamaka tetralemma as a 'dialectic' was T.R.V. Murti. His example has been followed by modern Madhyamaka interpreters like Richard Robinson and David S. Ruegg.

[5] See, for example, Murti (1955), p. 59. Interestingly, this seems to be Gorampa's view too. See *lTa ba'i shan 'byed*, folio 40a.

[6] By 'essentialist' I am referring to what Tsongkhapa calls *dngos smra ba* which literally means 'one who propounds the notion of entity'. This should not be confused with an 'objective realist' (*don smra*) as in the case of 'the two proponents of objective

realism' (*don smra sde gnyis*): Vaibhāśika and Sautrāntika. I use 'objective realism' in that these two schools assert an objective reality of the external world rather than the real existence of universals. According to Tsongkhapa the essentialists include, in addition to almost all non-Buddhist ancient Indian philosophical schools, Vaibhāśika, Sautrāntika and Cittamātra schools of Buddhism. All of these schools accept in one form or another the existence of a 'truly real' entity (*bden pa'i dngos po*). In the case of Vaibhāśika it is the irreducible *dharmas* while for the Sautrāntika, it is the *svalakṣaṇas* – the unique, indivisible particulars, e.g. atoms, indivisible points of consciousness and time. As for Cittamātra they accept the ultimate reality of consciousness, be it in the form of *ālayavijñāna* (foundational counsciousness) or *svasaṃvedana*, the aperceptive faculty of all mental events.

[7] Inasmuch as this need for logical exhaustiveness is seen to be necessary for satisfying oneself one could say that there is also a psychological element in the formulation of the *catuṣkoṭi* argument.

[8] *LTC*, p. 83: dbu ma'i gzhung rnams nas dngos po'am rang bzhin yod pa dang med pa dang gnyis ka dang gnyis ka min pa'i mu bzhi thams cad bkag la/ der ma 'dus pa'i chos kyang med pas rigs pas thams cad 'gog go snyam na/ 'di ni sngar bstan pa ltar dngos po la gnyis las rang gi ngo bos grub pa'i dngos po ni bden pa gnyis gang du yod par 'dod kyang 'gog la/ don byed nus pa'i dngos po ni tha snyad du 'gog pa ma yin no// dngos po med pa'ang 'dus ma byas rnams la rang gi ngo bos grub pa'i dngos med du 'dod na ni de 'dra ba'i dngos med kyang 'gog go// de bzhin du de 'dra ba'i dngos po yod med gnyis char yang 'gog la/ gnyis ka ma yin par rang gi ngo bos grub pa'ang 'gog pas mu bzhi 'gog tshul thams cad ni de ltar du shes par bya'o// The pages references of Tibetan texts are to modern typeset editions if it is listed in the bibliography. All translations of citations are mine unless otherwise stated.

[9]

bdag las ma yin gzhan las min//
gnyis las ma yin rgyu med min//
dngos po gang dag gang na yang//
skye ba nam yang yod ma yin//

Na svato nāpi parato na dvābhyaṃ nāpy ahetutaḥ,
utpannā jātu vidyante bhāvāḥ kvacana kecana. (*MMK*, 1:1)

[10] *LTC*, p. 79: don dam gyi skye ba khas len na de nyid dpyod pa'i rigs pas dpyad bzod du 'dod dgos la/ de'i tshe rigs pas bdag dang gzhan la sogs mu bzhi gang las skye dpyad dgos pas don dam gyi skye ba 'dod pas mu bzhi gang rung gi dpyad pa nges par khas blang dgos so// rgyu dang rkyen 'di la brten nas 'di 'byung gi skye ba tsam zhig 'dod pas ni de kho na'i skye ba khas ma blangs la/ de ma blangs pas de kho ne nyid la dpyod pa'i rigs pas bdag dang gzhan la sogs pa gang las skyes zhes ji ltar dpyod de rigs pas dpyad bzod du 'dod mi dgos pa'i phyir ro//

[11] Gadjin Nagao translates these two expressions respectively as 'truly reasoned understanding' and 'knowledge based on criteria'. See Nagao (1989), p. 125. Hopkins (1983), Napper (1989) and Cabezón (1994) discuss this critical distinction. However, to my mind, they do not fully appreciate the philosophical significance of it. Although Cabezón's treatment is philosophically more sophisticated than the other two, his suggestion that the distinction should be read primarily as pertaining to a linguistic formulation of the doctrine of emptiness hinders him from understanding what I have called the 'analytic' dimension of the distinction. As a consequence, Cabezón fails to relate this to Tsongkhapa's overall project of delineating reason's scope for negation. See Cabezón (1994), pp. 161–66.

[12] Buddhapālita, *Buddhapālitamūlamadhyamakavṛtti*. P, No. 5242, Vol. 95; Toh. 3842.

[13] It is crucial to understand that *dpyod pa* (literally, analysis) here covers both analysis and also forms of discourse. Both Thurman and Napper have failed to appreciate this, thus weakening their reading of Tsongkhapa's Madhyamaka dialectic.

[14] *LTC*, pp. 52–53: gzugs sgra la sogs pa kun rdzob pa 'di rnams yod du chug kyang de kho na la dpyod pa'am rang bzhin yod med dpyod pa'i rigs pas gtan mi grub pas de dag la rigs pa'i brtag pa mi 'jug go zhes ... gal te rang bzhin yod med dpyod pa'i rigs pas 'di dag dgag par nus na gzugs dang 'tshor ba la sogs pa'i kun rdzob pa 'di dag la rigs pa'i brtag pa shin tu gzhug dgos pa yin na de 'dra ba ni slob dpon 'di yi gzhung las rnam pa thams cad du bkag pas ...

[15] *LN*, pp. 141–2: 'di'i 'tshol tshul dang dpyod lugs snga ma ches mi 'dra ste/ 'dis ni 'gro 'ong byed mkhan dang 'gro 'ong gi tha snyad btags pa tsam gyis ma tshim par tha snyad de ltar btags pa'i don de gang yin dpyad nas 'gro 'ong dris pa min gyis/ 'gro 'ong gi tha snyad rang dga' bar 'jug pa la rang dga' ba'i brtag pa byas pa yin pas de'i brtag pa khas blangs pa la 'gal ba ci zhig yod/

[16] *RG*, p. 32: de yang mchod sbyin gyis gzugs mthong zhes pa dang mchod sbyin rdzas yod kyis gzugs mthong zhes pa'i tha snyad btags pa'i btags sa'i don de ji ltar yod btsal bas cung zad kyang mi rnyed pa la khyad par ci yang med kyang/ snga mas mthong ba tha snyad du med pa la tshad mad gnod pa'i phyir tha snyad du yod med gtan mi mtshungs so// de'i rgyu mtshan yang rdzas yod rigs pas btsal na rnyed dgos pas des ma rnyed na dgag nus la yod tsam rigs pas btsal na rnyed dgos pa min pas des ma rnyed pas 'gog mi nus pa'i phyir ro//

[17] rigs pa des gzugs sogs kyi skye ba dpyad bzod par ni kho bo cag mi 'dod pas bden dngos thal ba'i skyon med do// *LTC*, p. 50.

[18] See *LN*, pp. 214–218; *LTC*, pp. 50–58.

[19] *LTC*, p. 50.

[20] *CST*, P5266 p. 261:3. Kho bo cag gi rnam par dpyod pa don rang bzhin tshol ba lhur byed pa nyid kyi phyir ro/ Kho bo cag ni 'dir dngos po rnams rang gi ngo bos grub pa 'gog gi mig la sogs pa byas shing rten cing 'brel bar 'byung ba las kyi rnam par smin pa ni mi 'gog pa'o//

[21] *LTC*, p. 112.

[22] In his *LN* (p. 140), Tsongkhapa maintains that both schools of Madhyamaka share the basic premise that the conventional world cannot be subjected to an ultimate analysis. Where they differ is what exactly constitutes this ultimate analysis.

[23] In *LTC*, Tsongkhapa devotes a whole section to explaining what exactly is meant by the all-important qualification "on the ultimate level" (*don dam par*) when Mādhyamīkas reject any notion of intrinsic existence within their ontology. *LTC*, pp. 113–120.

[24] *RG*, p. 21, 48.

[25] *GR*, p. 132: 'di legs par shes na gshis lugs la dang/ don dam du med zer ba dang/ yang chos nyid yod par 'dod cing de nyis gshis lugs dang don dam yin par smra ba mi 'gal ba'i gdnad rnams shes par 'gyur ro//

[26] *RG*, p. 22: de'i phyir don dam dang chos nyid dang de kho na nyid dang gshis lugs rnams med par mi 'thad la/ yod na'ang de dag du ma grub na gzhan gang du grub ces smra ba ni don dam par grub ma grub dpyod pa'i dpyod lugs kyi rnam pa ma chags pa'i gtam mo//

[27] Ibid.

[28] In all of these examples what is common is the grammatical case in which the prepositions (*la don*) such as *su, ra, ru, du,* and *tu* are used. Admitedly, Tsongkhapa himself does not draw attention to this linguistic form although he is fully versed in the intricacies of Tibetan grammar. But the above quote, i.e. note 25, provides good evidence for my case. It is interesting to note that Tsongkhapa seems to pay less attention to linguistic points in his writings that follow the so-called period of maturity.

[29] *LTC*, p. 23; *GR*, p. 130.

[30] Tsongkhapa gives a lengthy treatment of the problems of 'over-negation' and 'under-negation' in *LTC*, pp. 23–97. See also Napper (1989), chapters 4 and 5.
[31] *LTC*, p. 23.
[32] *LN*, p. 125: de rnams su grub pa mi sris ces pa'i brda 'jigs pa tsam la brten nas/ de ltar grub na gnod pa 'di yod dang ma grub pa'i sgrub byed 'di'o zhes mang du smras kyang don legs por mi go bas dgag bya ngos bzung ba ni shin tu gal che'o// In some editions of *LN*, the word *'jigs pa* which literally means 'terrifying' (I have translated it as 'grand' here) is mispelt as *'jags pa*, i.e. without the vowel *i*. Thurman does not detect this error in his translation thus weakening the point Tsongkhapa is making with regard to the importance of having a prior, clear identification of the object of negation. See Thurman (1984), p. 282.
[33] Don zhes bya ba ni shes par bya ba yin pa'i phyir don te brtag par bya ba dang go bar bya ba zhes bya ba'i tha tshig go// Dam pa zhes bya ba ni ... don dam pa de yod pas don dam pa dang mthun pa'o// Cited in *LN*, p. 125.
[34] *LN*, p. 125–26.
[35] Des na 'di skad du don dam par skye ba med do zhes bya ba ni 'di dag yang dag par shes pas skye bar ma grub pa'o zhes bya ba yin no zhes bshad par 'gyur ro// Quoted in *LN*, p. 126–7. It is interesting to note that although Tsongkhapa sees himself as a Prāsaṅgika-Mādhyamika following in the footsteps of Buddhapālita and Candrakīrti, on number of critical points of Madhyamaka discourse Tsongkhapa relies heavily on *Kamalaśīla's Madhyamakāloka*. Further research may help us ascertain the extent of *Madhyamakāloka's* influence on Tsongkhapa's Madhyamaka.
[36] Gendün Chöphel (1903–1951) questions the validity of the distinction between 'innate apprehensions of self-existence' (*bdag 'dzin lhan skyes*) and 'intellectually acquired apprehensions of self-existence' (*bdag 'dzin kun btags*). He argues that because there is nothing within human thought that is not conditioned by some form of reasoning process, to speak of "innate conceptions" – i.e. thoughts and perceptions not conditioned by intellectual thinking – is nonsensical. According to him, such types of conception, if there are any, can be found only in animals like birds. See *dBu ma klu srgub dgongs rgyan*, p. 336. In my view, Tsongkhapa's position is much more subtle than what this criticism allows. Tsongkhapa explicitly states that by speaking of non-analytic, naive worldly understanding, he is not precluding analysis *per se*. What he is precluding are those analyses that seek to establish intrinsic reality of things and events. There are serious doubts concerning the authenticity of some sections of *Klu rgub dgongs rgyan* which is a post-humous work purported to be a compilation of notes taken from Gendün Chöphel's lectures on Madhyamaka philosophy.
[37] 'o na don dam par med pa'i don gang yin snyam na/ ... *LTC*, pp. 116–120. See above, pp. 45–6.
[38] *GR*, pp. 131–2: dgag bya la don dam gyi khyad par sbyar ba'i don dam de la gnyis su shes dgos te/ thos bsam sgom gsum gyi rigs shes la don dam du byes nas/ des sngar bshad pa ltar ma grub pa cig dang/ blo'i dbang gis bzhag pa min par don gyi sdod lugs su yod pa la/ don dam du yod par bzhag pa gnyis kyi dang po'i don dam dang/ de'i ngor grub pa yang yod la/ phyi ma'i don dam dang der yod pa gnyis ka mi srid do// des na don dam di yod pa la dnga ma'i don dam du yod pas khyab kyang/ snga ma'i yod 'dzin ni lhan skyes kyi bden 'dzi min la/ de'i bden 'dzin la ni phyi ma'i yod 'dzin dgos so// The above quotation is considered to be one of the most obscure passages in *GR* and generates, to this day, much discussion within the Geluk monastic colleges. My interpretation is informed by what I see as Tsongkhapa's overall project of delineating the reason's scope for negation.
[39] *GR*, pp. 140–41: dgag bya la don dam gyi khyad par sbyar ba'i don dam la tshul gnyis shes dgos pa ni 'dir yang 'dra la/ dbu ma rang rgyud pa rnams bden pa sogs

gsum du grub pa shes bya la mi sris par bzhed kyang/ rang gi ngo bos grub pa sogs gsum ni tha snyad du yod par bzhed de/ ...
[40]

brtag pa'i dngos la ma reg par/
de yi dngos med 'dzin ma yin/

Without touching the imagined entity,
its nonactuality cannot be [cognised].

Perhaps, the earliest textual evidence from Tsongkhapa underlining the philosophical point about the critical importance of having a clear identification of the object of negation is his *Queries*, p. 15. Interestingly, in this text Tsongkhapa does not cite Śāntideva's verse. Tsongkhapa begins to cite this verse only from *LTC*. For a detailed survey of the divergent readings of *BCA*, 9:139ab by Tibetan commentators, see Williams (1998), chapter 4.
[41] Following is the passage Tsongkhapa quotes from *Madhyamakāloka*: dngos po yang dag par ngo bo nyid med pa dag la yang de las ldog pa'i rnam par sgro 'dogs pa'i 'khrul pa'i blo gang yin pa de ni kun rdzob ces bya ste/ 'di'am 'dis de kho na nyid mthong ba la sgrib pa lta bur byed/ 'gebs pa lta bur byed pa'i phyir ro// ... de'i phyir de dag gi bsam pa'i dbang gis dngos po rdzun pa'i ngo bo thams cad ni kun rdzob tu yod pa kho na'o zhes bya'o// Quoted in full in *GR*, p. 130; referred to in *LN*, p. 128.
[42] *LTC*, p. 23. In *Queries*, p. 15, Tsongkhapa uses the process of identifying a thief as an analogy.
[43] *GR*, p. 222.
[44] *LN*, p. 186: phyi rgol la bsgrub bya grub ma zin gyi gong du rang gi ngo bos yod med gang gis kyang khyad par du ma byas pa'i tshad mas gzhal bya grub lugs 'di 'dra zhig yin no/ zhes nges par bya mi nus pas ...
[45] That Tsongkhapa is aware of this concept of *yid dpyod* (intellectual understanding) is evident from *lDe bdun la 'jug pa'i sgo don gnyer yid kyi mun sel*, *TKSB*, vol. *tsha*. The notion must have evolved from Chapa's Sangphu school. Interestingly, Sakya Paṇḍita subjects this notion to detailed criticism and suggests that it is an unnecessary epistemological category. See *Rigs gter rang 'grel*, pp. 172–3. On key differences between Chapa and Sapeṇ's epistemological views, see Dreyfus (1997).
[46] See *Pramāṇavārttika*, "Svātantṛānumāna", verse 5&6.
[47] *RG*, p. 32; *LN*, p. 215; *LTC*, p. 51. Gendün Chöphel takes issue with this distinction too. He argues that if the sense of 'non-finding' here is nothing more than that of a visual perception's inability to hear sounds, then surely one could say that inanimate objects like earth and pebbles never 'find' absolute being. In that case, he contends, we must accept that these objects have long since attained true liberation (*dBu ma klu sgrub dgongs rgyan*, p. 338). Again we can see here that this criticism trades on a certain caricature of Tsongkhapa's views. I think that Tsongkhapa is making a philosophically valid point when he draws our attention to the distinction between 'that which is not found' (*ma rnyed pa*) and 'that which is negated' (*bkag pa*).
[48] *LN*, p. 215: de dag zhib tu 'byed pa'i dpyad pa ma rdzogs par rigs pa ltar snang res don dam du grub pa bkag cing/ kun rdzob tu yod pa rnams 'khrul shes res yod par bzung na de'i ngor yod pa tsam gyis 'jog nus te/ de'i don ni 'khrul ngor yod pa tsam yin pa'i phyir ro snyam du bsams na ni/ dbang phyug dang gtso bo la sogs pa las bde sdug skye ba dang dkar nag gi las gnyis las skye ba gnyis 'thad na 'thad mnyam dang ma 'thad na ma 'thad mnyam du 'gro ste/ sngar bzhin dpyad na ni dpyod byed kyis phyi ma yang mi rnyed la 'khrul ngor ni snga ma yang yod pa'i phyir ro//
[49] See, for example, Matilal (1971), p. 164; and Huntington (1989), p. 98.
[50] *LTC*, p. 222.
[51] *LN*, pp. 220–27; *RG*, pp. 39–41; *GR*, pp. 148–50. *LTC* is an interesting exception

to this. It seems that although Tsongkhapa is clear that the Madhyamaka's emptiness is best understood in terms of a non-implicative negation, it was only when he began to write *LN* that the full significance of this point dawned upon him.

[52] B.K. Matilal has suggested that we read Nāgārjuna's rejection of all four lemmas of the *catuṣkoṭi* as 'illocutionary' and not 'propositional' negation. See Matilal (1985) p. 18. The difference between these two forms of negation comes from the scope of the negative particle 'not'. Take the following case: "I do not say that there is an after-life", and "There is no after-life". (Matilal's example, p. 18.) Clearly, there is a difference between the two propositions. In the first sentence the negation applies only to the proposition in that the speaker is stating that he does not claim that there is an after-life. In contrast, in the second sentence even the propositional content, i.e. the existence of after-life, is also denied. As we can see, Tsongkhapa's reading of the *catuṣkoṭi* differs from this. For Tsongkhapa, Nāgārjuna's rejection of all four lemmas is absolute, which means that in Searlian language the negation involved in their rejection is 'propositional' as opposed to 'illocutionary'. The problem with Matilal's reading is that it inevitably leads to the interpretation of the Madhyamaka dialectics as purely de-constructive with no commitments of one's own. See Matilal (1971), p. 164.

[53] Searle (1969), pp. 32–33.

[54] The much-quoted following verse from Nāgārjuna illustrates a typical case of *prasajya* negation:

> Here, the existence is negated only,
> but its non-existence is not upheld.
> For when I say that it is not black,
> I don't assert that it is white!

Tsongkhapa attributes this verse to Nāgārjuna and states that according to Avalokitavrata the verse is in Nāgārjuna's *Lokātītastava*. See *RG*, p. 225. However, the verse cannot be found in the Tibetan translation that exists in the *bstan 'gyur* collection. Bhāvaviveka quotes this verse in his *Prajñāpradīpa* (thus reinforcing the impression that it is from Nāgārjuna) but does not give its source.

[55]

> Negations that show [the other] implicitly,
> or by an explicit term,
> or through both, or not by its own name,
> are implicative; the others are different.

Quoted by Tsongkhapa in both his *LN*, p. 222; and *GR*, p. 149.

[56] The above examples and enumeration of the four negations are from Tsongkhapa. See *LN*, p. 221; *RG*, pp. 39–41. On contemporary work on the Gelug theories about negations, see Klein (1990).

[57] *LN*, p. 141.

[58] Murti (1955) and Stcherbatsky (1968) seem to subscribe to this view.

[59] Ruegg, (1977), p. 36.

[60] In *GR*, p. 113, Tsongkhapa identifies the absence of pot (*bum med*) as an example of this negation.

[61] See *GR*, p. 113. In accepting these two kinds of nonimplicative negation, I think Tsongkhapa is following a distinction made earlier by the Tibetan epistemologist Chapa Chökyi Senge.

[62] chos gzhan mi phen no zhes med dgag tu bstan ... *RG*, p. 42.

[63] rang bzhin 'gog pa'i rtags kyi bsgrub bya med dgag yin pa dang ... dbu ma thal rang la khyad par yod pa ma yin no// *Ibid.* p. 43.

[64] See, for example for Mikyö Dorje's critique, Williams (1983), p. 134.

[65] In *lTa ba'i shan 'byed* Gowo Rabjampa lists Tsongkhapa's view of emptiness as nihilism.

[66] *dBu ma'i byung tshul*, p. 247. Much of Shākya Chogden's critique of Tsongkhapa's view of emptiness seems to be based on the premise that Zhentong Madhyamaka represents the apex of the Madhyamaka doctrine of emptiness. He sees Maitreya, Asaṅga, and Vasubandhu as principal proponents of this highest Madhyamaka teaching. As Tillemans & Tomabechi (1995) have underlined, it is crucial to recognise that Shākya Chogden's Zhentong is significantly different from that of Dolpopa Sherap Gyaltsen's. For one, unlike Dolpopa's Jonang school, Shākya Chogden accords greater significance to the Rangtong interpretation of emptiness. A detailed discussion of Shākya Chogden's critique of Tsongkhapa lies beyond the scope of our study.

[67] Williams (1992), p. 204.

[68] *LTCh*, p. 731. It is interesting that in *LTC* Tsongkhapa appears to think that the mere absence of intrinsic being which is the content of an inferential cognition (*rigs shes rjes dpag*) is a 'similitude' of the ultimate referent (*don dam rjes mthun*) thus not the genuine ultimate object (*don dam mtshan nyid pa*). He writes "rigs shes kyi gzhal bya ni don dam bden pa dang mthun pas don dam zhes btags par ... don dam bden par mi bzhed pas legs pa min no//" *LTC*, p. 15–16. On variants between *LTC* and *LTCh* on the question of whether or not the object of the inferential cognition of emptiness is a genuine ultimate truth, see my "The Question of 'Development' in Tsongkhapa's Madhyamaka Philosophy", unpublished paper. For a standard Geluk hermeneutics on this issue, see Zhamar Gendün Tenzin's *Lhad mthong dka' 'grel*, folio 12–15a.

[69] *LN*, p. 158: des na dbu ma'i rigs pa thams cad ni 'khor ba'i rtsa ba ma rig pa'i 'dzin stangs sun dbyung ba'i yan lag yin pas/ rang rgyud kyi lhan skyes kyi ma rig pas ji ltar bzung ngos zin par byas la de nyid 'gog pa la brtson par bya yi/ grub mtha' smra ba dang gshags 'gyed pa tsam gyi mkhas pa dga' bar mi bya'o//

[70] *Ibid*, p. 142: des na ma dpyad pa'i 'dzin pa lhan skyes kyi bdag 'diz yul dang bcas pa rigs pa'i dgag bya'i gtso bo yin pa dang/ gzhung rnams nas dpyad nas 'gog pa sha stag 'byung ba'ang mi 'gal bas kun btags kyi 'dzin pa yul bcas kho na 'gog go snyam du mi gzung ngo//

[71] On the debate of whether or not the Mādhyamika has a thesis, see Ruegg (1989). For an analysis of Tsongkhapa's critique of the 'no thesis' view, see Jinpa (1997), chapter 5.

TIBETAN NAMES IN PHONETICS AND THEIR CORRESPONDENCE IN WYLIE TRANSLITERATION

Chapa Chökyi Senge	Phya pa chos kyi seng ge
Dolpopa Sherap Gyaltsen	Dol po pa shes rab rgyal mtshan
Geluk	dGe lugs
Gendün Chöphel	dGe 'dun chos 'phel
Gowo Rabjampa, Sonam Senge	Go bo rab 'byams pa, bSod nams seng ge
Jonangpa	Jo nang pa
Kagyü	dKa' brgyud
Karmapa Mikyö Dorje	Karmapa Mi bskyod rdo rje
Ngog Loden Sherap	rNgog blo ldan shes rab
Nyagpa Dawa Zangpo	Nyag pa zla ba bzang po
Nyingma	rNying ma
Paṇchen Lobsang Chögyen	Paṇ chan blo bzang chos rgyan

Rangtong	Rang stong
Sakya	Sa skya
Shākya Chogden, Serdok Paṇchen	Shā kya mchog Idan, gSer mdog Paṇ chen
Taktshang Lotsāwa, Sherap Rinchen	sTag tshang Lo tsā ba, Shes rab rin chen
Tashi Lhünpo	bKra shis lhun po
Tsongkhapa,Lobsang Drakpa	Tsong kha pa, blo bzang grags pa
Zhamar Gendün Tenzin	Zha dmar dge 'dun bstan 'dzin
Zhentong	gZhan stong

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LTCh *Lhag mthong chung ba* ("Abridged Special Insight") in *Byang chub lam rim chung ba (An Abridged version of the Path to Enlightenment)*, *TKSB*, vol. *pha*. Reprinted in typeset in *rJe'i gsung lta ba'i skor*. Dharamsala: Office of H.H. the Dalai Lama, 1975, vol. 2, pp. 668–757.

RG *dBu ma rtsa ba'i tshig le'ur byas pa shes rab ces bya ba'i rnam bshad rigs pa'i rgya mtsho, ("Ocean of Reasoning" being a Commentary of Mūlamadhyamakākarikā)*, *TKSB*, vol. *ba*. Reprinted in typeset, Sarnath: Gelukpa Students Union, 1973.

LN *Drang ba dang nges pa'i don rnam par 'byed pa'i bstan bcos legs bshad snying po, (Essence of True Eloquence distinguishing between the Provisional and the Definitive Meaning of the Scriptures)*, *TKSB*, vol. *pha*. Reprinted in typeset, Mundgod: Drepung Loseling Library, 1991. For an English translation of this work, see Thurman (1984).

LTC *Lhag mthong chen mo* ("Special Insight") in *Byang chub Lam rim chen mo, (Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment)*, *TKSB* vol. *pa*. Reprinted in typeset in *rJe'i gsung lta ba'i skor*. Dharamsala: Office of H.H. the Dalai Lama, 1975, vol. 1, pp. 7–261. For a complete English translation, see Wayman (1978). A partial translation exists in Napper (1989).

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THE PROSPECTS OF MEMORY

You say, 'After I know what lies ahead,
I'll forget what went before.'
Can you know what lies ahead?
How can you forget
what went before?[1]

1. RECOGNITION

It is springtime, a sad and lonely spring; Duṣyanta, amnesiac hero of Kālidāsa's masterpiece, the *Abhijñānaśakuntalā*, is going home. He has completed his most recent mission in heaven, destroying Indra's demon foes; this latest feat has temporarily extricated the king from the forlorn and self-pitying state to which his own forgetfulness had reduced him. This act of forgetting was the central, defining episode of Duṣyanta's career; and his story, now cyclically moving toward closure in the final act of Kālidāsa's play, is undoubtedly the most famous meditation on memory and forgetting in the whole classical literature of India. It is this aspect of the work that I wish to explore, together with a glance at related themes in the linguistic domain as formulated by Bhartṛhari in the *Vākya-padīya*, perhaps some decades after Kālidāsa.

Let me remind you of the main lines of the story. Some six or seven years before, Duṣyanta, hunting in the wilderness, had stumbled on the innocent and ravishing Śakuntalā, whom he eventually left, pregnant with child and with hope, to return to his kingdom. Unfortunately, Śakuntalā, heedless with longing, was then cursed by the irascible sage Durvāsas to be forgotten by her lover – until the moment when that lover would see again a concrete token of their love. In due course Śakuntalā arrived in Duṣyanta's court, only to be publicly rejected by the king, who, of course, had no recollection of ever meeting or loving her. Only later, when the ring he had given her, engraved with the syllables of his name, miraculously turned up in the belly of a fish, did Duṣyanta recover the memory of a love now cruelly lost. Despairing, heavy with remorse, he has submerged his sorrows in the military campaign just mentioned.

Now, descending through the skies toward the earth, Duṣyanta pauses to pay his respects to the divine Kaśyapa on Hemakūṭa Mountain. But

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