

Part 1

Guy Newland · Tsong Khapa

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The Nature of Things

Emptiness and Essence in the Gelug World

by William Magee

(This book investigates emptiness and nature according to three Buddhist philosophers of the Middle Way School: Nagarjuna, Chandrakirti, Tsong Khapa. In order to provide textual support for Tsong Khapa's discussion of nature, Part Two of this book provides translations of portions of five texts important to this lineage.)

(Using Tsong Khapa's argumentation against modern detractors accusations against Nagarjuna and the Consequentialists method -- prasanga.)

Sub-section titles are in the form: L#: [...]

These can be used to regenerate the structure using a Word Processor.

L1: [CONTENTS] :L1

L1: [CONTENTS] :L1

L1: [Abbreviations] :L1

L1: [1. Emptiness and Essence] :L1

L2: [Introduction -- necessity of the reasonings on the emptiness of inherent existence of both persons and phenomena] :L2

L3: [To do this : the Middle Way, three authors, five texts] :L3

L3: [The importance of the realization of the way things really are: not inherently existent, not completely non-existent – the Middle Way] :L3

L3: [The benefits of Tsong Khapa's approach in understanding the Middle Way; combining both virtuous methods and wisdom – the two accumulations] :L3

L3: [Nagarjuna's Treatise: reasonings, ultimate analysis of the essence or nature of everything] :L3

L3: [Chandrakirti's explanations of Nagarjuna Treatise: the inseparability of the Two Truths, of dependent origination and emptiness, of method and wisdom] :L3

L2: [Emptiness in the Middle Way School [between the extremes of realism and nihilism] :L2

L3: [Inseparability of the Two Truths (emptiness and conventional truths), non-duality: not two, not one] :L3

L3: [Emptiness is a non-affirming negative] :L3

L3: [The unique nature that is refuted both in persons and in all phenomena: a thing's establishment by way of its own entity] :L3

L3: [Tsong Khapa's adapted skillful means against the dangers of nihilism: affirming an existent emptiness nature] :L3

L3: [The Two Truths] :L3

L3: [The nature of emptiness: it is called ultimate truth, but it is also conceptually interdependently arisen like any other conventional truths] :L3

L1: [2. Nature [svabhava, the essential nature] in the Consequence School [as seen by the author] :L1

L2: [The meanings of nature [trying to describe the absolute nature of everything that is beyond all conceptualization using various skillful means: the Tetralemma: not existent, not non-existent, not both, not neither, or the two natures] :L2

L2: [The scriptural sources for [the two senses of] nature] :L2

L2: [Nagarjuna: the art of the treatise [trying to drag Nagarjuna into this mess] :L2

L2: [Treatise on the middle -- Chapter XV -- mainly concentrates on refuting the fabricated nature, but the author seems to be trying to prove that Nagarjuna is affirming a nature with three attributes] :L2

L1: [3. Existent natures [antidote to nihilism] :L1

L2: [Does the triply-qualified nature exist? [some say yes, some say no] :L2

L2: [Does the reality nature exist? [it is not existent, not non-existent, not both, not neither – we cannot describe it using concepts – it is beyond the duality existence vs. non-existence] :L2

L2: [The reality nature exists conventionally [the ultimate truth is also a conventional truth] :L2

L2: [The reality nature endowed with the three attributes [the progression in the realization of emptiness] :L2

L3: [Refuting origination, duration and cessation – without affirming their opposite] :L3

L3: [The progressive understanding of the exact object of refutation, or of the type of independence that is refuted] :L3

L3: [The object refuted according to the Madhyamika-Prasangika school is the very subtle thing that appears to be not merely imputed by the mind – inherently existing, on its own ...] :L3

L3: [Ultimately, dependent-arising means dependent on the thought, on the labeling] :L3

L3: [Two more types of dependence ??] :L3

L3: [About the “dependence” of nature] :L3

L1: [4. Natures that do not exist [antidote to realism / eternalism] :L1

L2: [What it means to exist] :L2

L3: [The definitions of nature that are refuted] :L3

L3: [Tsong Khapa's clarification of the object of negation: innovation or simple elaboration?] :L3

L4: [The exact object of refutation: inherent existence, and not any existence] :L4

L4: [The four differentiated states] :L4

L4: [So everything is not inherently existent, but still not completely non-existent either – the Middle Way between the two extremes – they are said to be conventionally existent as a skillful means] :L4

L4: [The importance of clarifying the object of refutation before applying the reasoning: not too narrow, not too broad] :L4

L4: [Tsong Khapa's contributions] :L4

L2: [Twofold division of the object-to-be-negated [subjective and objective aspects – the duality self vs. world or appearances vs. mind] :L2

L2: [Nagarjuna is] Refuting a fabricated nature [without affirming its opposite – but the

author cannot understand this] :L2

L2: [Heat is not the nature of fire] :L2

L2: [Categorization of the three attributes into entity, state, and certification [falling more deeply into reification] :L2

L2: [Confusing a nature of things having the three attributes with that which is to be negated] :L2

L2: [Tsong Khapa's identification of the object-to-be-negated [inherent existence, establishment by way of its own entity, independently of the labeling] :L2

L2: [Innate versus artificial ignorance: refuting that the three attributes are the object-to-be-negated nature] :L2

L2: [Modern scholars on Nagarjuna's triply-qualified nature] :L2

L2: [The independent and positive nature [a permanent, stable positive tathagatagarbha – another skilful means against the danger of nihilism] :L2

L2: [Dol-bo's Synthesis [an omniscient Buddha nature that is not any conventional phenomenon] :L2

L2: [Refuting the independent and positive nature [no absolute, only adapted skillful means] :L2

L1: [5. Nagarjuna and his detractors [Robinson and Hayes] :L1

L2: [Trivializing Nagarjuna [the six mistaken assumptions of Robinson & Hayes – who are succumbing to the fear of emptiness] :L2

L3: [Nagarjuna is not primarily [/only] concerned with refuting opponents' views [but with finding ways to ultimately refute the innate ignorance] :L3

L3: [Nagarjuna does not employ 'axioms' but rather the putative consequences of inherent existence [he adopts the opponent's point of view, and show its absurd consequences from the inside] :L3

L3: [Nagarjuna does not use the term svabhava in several different senses [Hayes thinks Nagarjuna is a nihilist; but a proper understanding of emptiness would show that emptiness doesn't deny dependent origination; they are inseparable, non-dual: not two, not one.] :L3

L2: [Conclusions [a case for Tsong Khapa's beneficent contribution] :L2

L1: [Part two: translations of the texts] :L1

L2: [Document one : Nagarjuna's Treatise on the Middle] :L2

L3: [Chapter XV: "The analysis of nature"] :L3

L2: [Document two: Chandrakirti's Clear Words - Chapter XV: "The Analysis of Nature"] :L2

L3: [Chapter XV: "The analysis of nature"] :L3

L2: [Document three: Tsong Khapa 's Ocean of reasonings] :L2

L3: [Chapter XV: "The analysis of nature"] :L3

L4: [I. Explaining the text of the chapter] :L4

L5: [Refuting that things exist by way of their nature] :L5

L6: [Refuting the proofs of existence by way of nature] :L6

L7: [The actual meaning] :L7

L8: [Indicating that nature does not need causes and conditions and that [to have them] would be contradictory] :L8

L8: [Indicating the defining character of nature in our own system] :L8

L7: [Second, indicating that this refutes the other three extremes] :L7

L7: [Third, criticizing the views [of those who hold such] for the sake of refuting them] :L7

L6: [Indicating damage to existence by way of an object's nature] :L6

L7: [Indicating scriptural damage] :L7

L7: [Indicating damage by reasoning] :L7

L5: [Indicating that if one propounds existence by way of nature, one does not pass beyond holding an extreme] :L5

L4: [II. Conjoining this with scriptures of definitive meaning] :L4

L4: [III. Condensing the meaning and indicating the title] :L4

L2: [Document four: from Tsong Khapa 's Great exposition] :L2

L3: [The refutation of an identification of the object-to-be-negated that is too narrow] :L3

L4: [First, refuting the assertion that the object- to-be-negated is that which possesses the three attributes] :L4

L4: [Second, in our system the nature possessing the three attributes is emptiness] :L4

L4: [Third, refuting the assertion that reality is independent and positive] :L4

L2: [Document five: Four Interwoven Annotations] :L2

L3: [The refutation of an identification of the object-to-be-negated that is too narrow] :L3

L3: [First, refuting the assertion that the object-to-be-negated possesses the three attributes] :L3

L4: [First, confusing the mode of subsistence of things possessing the three attributes with that which is to be negated] :L4

L4: [Second, that is not the nature which is the object-to-be-negated] :L4

L4: [Third, the hearer schools refute such a nature therefore it is not suitable to be the object-to-be-negated here [in the consequence school] :L4

L4: [Fourth, although it is logically implied that if something is established from its own side then it must be established in a manner possessing these three attributes, that which possesses these three attributes is not the object-to-be-negated] :L4

L4: [Fifth, if something is truly established it must not be produced by causes and conditions, and so forth; but non-production by causes and conditions, and so forth, is not the meaning of being truly established] :L4

L4: [Sixth, since the innate mode of apprehension does not have such [a mode of apprehension as is involved with these artificial conceptions], although one refuted these [artificial conceptions], there is no benefit] :L4

L4: [Seventh, how the wise are amazed at such] :L4

L3: [Second, in our system the nature possessing the three attributes is the mode of subsistence, emptiness] :L3

L4: [First, the meaning of that scripture] :L4

L4: [Second, though the nature refuted formerly and the nature which is the mode of subsistence of things have the same name, the meaning is different] :L4

L4: [Third, abandoning objections] :L4

L4: [Fourth, not only must it exist but also both parties can assert it] :L4

L4: [Fifth, if the nature did not exist, then since even nirvana would not be an ultimate truth, there would be no release] :L4

L4: [Sixth, indicating that when nirvana is attained one must actualize the ultimate truth of cessation] :L4

L4: [Seventh, although [the emptiness] nature has all three attributes, since it exists conventionally it is not established from its own side] :L4

L4: [Eighth, the explanation of the meaning of the three attributes] :L4

L4: [Ninth, answering another disputant's objection that this is contradictory] :L4

L4: [Tenth, the meaning of that is that the ultimate does not exist by way of its own entity and is not utterly non-existent] :L4

L4: [Eleventh, the imputational ultimate] :L4

L4: [Twelfth, the way the actual ultimate is free from elaborations] :L4

L4: [Thirteenth, although the ultimate is free from elaborations it need not be established

from its own side] :L4

L3: [Third, refuting the assertion that reality is independent and positive] :L3

L4: [First, in any mind only or middle way system a negative phenomenon must be imputedly existent; therefore the assertion that reality is positive and independent and does not depend upon the elimination of an object-to-be-negated is wrong] :L4

L4: [Second, the advice that those who want goodness for themselves banish this [view] to the distance] :L4

L4: [Third, the value of not mistaking the object-to-be-negated] :L4

L1: [Other articles] :L1

L2: [Did Nagarjuna Really Refute All Philosophical Views? - by Richard H. Robinson] :L2

L2: [Bhavaviveka's Svatantra-Anumana (Inference) and its soteriological implication] :L2

L3: [The limits of conceptualization and logic] :L3

L3: [Prasangika approach] :L3

L3: [Svatantrika approach – trying to prove emptiness through syllogisms] :L3

L3: [Still ... a useful adapted skillful means] :L3

L1: [Abbreviations] :L1

In citing the following Sanskrit, Tibetan, or English language works in the text, abbreviations are used. All other works — less frequently cited — are referred to in English first by their complete name, thereafter by a brief version of that name if such an abbreviation is possible and desirable. See Bibliography for full citations.

-- DAE Elizabeth Napper, *Dependent-Arising and Emptiness* (London: Wisdom Publications, 1989).

-- DBU *Treatise on the Middle I Fundamental Treatise Called "Wisdom"* (dbu ma rtsa ba'i tshig le'ur by as pa shes rab ces bya ba), Tibetan edition, P5224, Vol. 95.

-- D-TSHIG Clear Words Commentary on (Nagarjuna's) "Treatise on the Middle" (dbu ma rtsa ba'i 'grepa tshig gsal ba) by Chandrakirti, Tibetan language edition (Dharamsala: Tibetan Publishing House, 1968).

-- GRS *Illumination of the Thought* (dbu ma la 'jug pa'i rgya cher bshad pa dgongs pa rab gsal) by Tsong Khapa, P6143 (Dharamsala: 'Bras spungs bio gsal gling dpe mdzod khang, 1973).

-- LRC *Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path* (lam rim chen mo / skyes bu gsum gyi rnyams su blang ba'i rim pa thams cad tshang bar ston pa 'i byang chub lam gyi rim pa) by Tsong Khapa, P6001 (Dharamsala: Shes rig par khang, no date).

-- MAB *Madhyamakavatara* par Chandrakirti. Tibetan edition of the madhyamakavatarabhāṣya by Louis de la Vallée Poussin, *Bibliotheca Buddhica IX* (Osnabruck: Biblio Verlag, 1970).

-- MCHAN *Four Interwoven Annotations* (lam rim mchan bzhi sbrags ma I mnyam med rje btsun tsong kha pa chen pos mdzadpa'i byang chub lam rim chen mo'i dka' ba'i gnad rnams mchan bu bzhi'i sgo nas legs par bshad pa theg chen lam gyi gsal sgron] with the interlineal notes of Jam-yang-shay-ba (1648-1721), Ba-so Cho-gyi-gyel-tsen⁵ (1402-1473), De-druk-ken-chen Nga-wang-rap-den (17th century), and Dra-di Geshay Rin-chen-don-drup⁷ (17th century); (New Delhi: Chos-'phel-legs-ldan, 1972).

-- MED Jeffrey Hopkins, *Meditation on Emptiness* (London: Wisdom Publications, 1983; 2nd edition, 1996).

-- MMK Nagarjuna *MulaMadhyamikakarikah*. Sanskrit edition by J.W. de Jong (Adyar: The Adyar Library and Research Centre, 1977).

-- P The Tibetan Tripitaka, Peking Edition, edited by Daisetz T. Suzuki (Tokyo-Kyoto: Tibetan Tripitika Research Institute, 1961).

-- PP Clear Words, MulaMadhyamikakarikas de Nagarjuna avec la Prasannapada Commentaire de Chandrakirti. Sanskrit edition by Louis de la Vallee Poussin, Bibliotheca Buddhica IV (Osnabrück: Biblio Verlag, 1970).

-- RGT Ocean of Reasonings (dbu ma rtsa ba'i tshig le'ur byas pa shes rab ces by a ba'i mam bshad rigs pa'i rgya mtsho) by Tsong Khapa, P6153 (Sarnath: Pleasure of Elegant Sayings Printing Press, 1973).

-- TSHIG Clear Words Commentary on (Nagarjuna's) "Treatise on the Middle, "dbu ma rtsa ba'i 'grel pa tshig gsal ba, P5260, Vol. 98.

L1: [1. Emptiness and Essence] :L1

L2: [Introduction -- necessity of the reasonings on the emptiness of inherent existence of both persons and phenomena] :L2

L3: [To do this : the Middle Way, three authors, five texts] :L3

This book investigates emptiness and nature according to three Buddhist philosophers of the Middle Way School:

-- Nagarjuna (1st-2nd C.E.),
 -- Chandrakirti¹³ (6th-7th C.E.¹⁴),
 -- and Je Tsong Khapa Lo-sang-drak-ba¹⁵ (1359-1417), founder of the Tibetan Gelug lineage.

In order to provide textual support for Tsong Khapa's discussion of nature, Part Two of this book provides translations of portions of five texts important to this lineage:

-- Nagarjuna's Fundamental Treatise on the Middle, Chapter XV: "The Analysis of Nature,"
 -- Chandrakirti's commentary on Chapter XV in the Clear Words,
 -- Tsong Khapa's Ocean of Reasonings on Chapter XV,
 -- Tsong Khapa's Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path¹⁹ section entitled "The Refutation of an Identification of the Object-to-be-negated That Is Too Narrow," and
 -- an interwoven commentary — entitled Four Interwoven Annotations — on Tsong Khapa's Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path.

L3: [The importance of the realization of the way things really are: not inherently existent, not completely non-existent – the Middle Way] :L3

~ Then Manjusri propounded to Je Tsong Khapa a penetrating analysis of the view of the Consequence and Autonomy schools.⁸

~ — The Secret Biography

The Middle Way School is a Great Vehicle²¹ Buddhist tenet system that purports to describe how phenomena exist, just as they are, avoiding the two extremes of true establishment and non-existence. In this school, each material and mental phenomenon in the universe is said to exist conventionally, as a mere designation. Things do not exist by way of their own entity, but only as terms and names.

While things exist conventionally as names, their ultimate truth is an emptiness of a nature that is established by way of its own entity. Such a nature established by way of its own entity does not exist, but is only imagined to exist by innate ignorance conceiving of a self.

The Middle Way School holds that realization of emptiness yields the wisdom that acts as an

antidote to the ignorance that binds us in cyclic existence. Complete familiarity with emptiness leads to the omniscient consciousness of enlightenment. Without the correct view of emptiness, one is not released from bondage in cyclic existence.

L3: [The benefits of Tsong Khapa's approach in understanding the Middle Way; combining both virtuous methods and wisdom – the two accumulations] :L3

Tsong Khapa Lo-sang-drak-ba established a logically structured, methodical approach to establishing a view that upholds conventional existence and conventionally existent causes and effects, while rejecting any sort of existence that exists by way of its own side or nature. He called this approach the Path of Reasoning.²² One of the purposes of this study is to determine the extent of Tsong Khapa's contribution to the topic of nature.

The Path of Reasoning gives each practitioner a large measure of responsibility, since the inferential reasoning process must take place within each individual. Nevertheless, the view realizing emptiness is said to be difficult to realize. The correct view is as narrow as a razor's edge. One can judge the narrowness of the edge by seeing how the mind rebels from the idea that nominal existence is existence, and how the mind clings to the notion that existent things must be established from their own side. .

Due to the philosophical and psychological difficulties involved (to say nothing of the social and economic problems posed by a contemplative path), the correct view of emptiness is not often achieved. In order to ease this difficulty, Tsong Khapa urges practitioners to rely on one of the two great Indian commentators prophesied by the Buddha: Asanga (4th century C.E.) and Nagarjuna.

-- Asanga was the Chariot Way Opener of the Mind Only School

-- and Nagarjuna was the Chariot Way Opener of the Middle Way School.

This work is limited to a consideration of Nagarjuna, but without relying on one of these philosophical guides, the seeker after reality is "like a blind person without a guide fleeing in fright."

L3: [Nagarjuna's Treatise: reasonings, ultimate analysis of the essence or nature of everything] :L3

Nagarjuna is held to be the Chariot Way Opener of the Middle Way School because in the Treatise on the Middle he explained the teachings on emptiness in the Buddha's Perfection of Wisdom Sutras. Nagarjuna propagated Great Vehicle teachings two millennia ago at Nalanda Monastic University in Magadha. Although little is known of his life or times, it seems likely that he was a seminal figure in the emergence of the Mahayana, and is considered the earliest of the Mahayana treatise authors. An extensive mythology surrounds Nagarjuna, and this also indicates his importance for the Mahayana.

For later followers of the Middle Way School, one of the most highly valued aspects of the Treatise on the Middle is Nagarjuna's investigative method. Nagarjuna employs ultimate analysis to determine the ontological status of things. Ultimate analysis searches for a findable mode of subsistence. Such analysis seeks an inherently existent essence or nature through examining material objects or mental events for evidence of inherent existence. Thus, the sphere of an ultimate analysis is limited to determining the presence or absence of inherent existence. In practice, it always finds nothing, confirming the presence of emptiness.

L3: [Chandrakirti's explanations of Nagarjuna Treatise: the inseparability of the Two

Truths, of dependent origination and emptiness, of method and wisdom] :L3

Since Nagarjuna's Treatise is extremely terse and difficult to unpack, Tibetan exegetes usually do not approach it without a commentary. For Gelugs, the preferred commentary is Chandrakirti's Clear Words. In the Clear Words, Chandrakirti describes the purpose of Nagarjuna's Treatise as being a hermeneutical one.

The Clear Words says:

~ This Treatise on the Middle was composed by the master [Nagarjuna] for the sake of showing the difference between that requiring interpretation and the definitive.

Thus, the purpose of the Treatise is not so much to establish the mode of subsistence of phenomena (although it does so) as it is to determine the interpretable and the definitive among passages of scripture. It does this through providing numerous examples of ultimate analysis proving that phenomena are empty of true establishment.

Although the purpose of the Treatise is to determine the interpretable and the definitive, the subject matter of the Treatise is extensive, covering many topics, especially emptiness:

~ The Treatise extensively sets forth
~ the suitability of conventional phenomena within an
~ emptiness of inherent existence
~ as well as the four truths, actions and their effects, the Three Jewels, the eight levels of approaching and abiding in the fruits of Stream Enterer, Once Returner, Never Returner, and Foe Destroyer, and so forth...Still...these varieties are not the principal object of discourse in the Treatise; the profound emptiness is.

Tsong Khapa agrees that, in order to attain their goal, Mahayana practitioners must depend on discriminating between the interpretable and definitive. Unfortunately, discriminating between the two is not possible just through hearing scriptural passages saying, "this is interpretable," or "this is definitive."

He gives three reasons for this:

-- If it were otherwise, the commentary authors composing commentaries differentiating the interpretable and the definitive would be senseless.
-- Sutras relate numerous different ways of positing the interpretable and the definitive.
-- Sutra statements that "this is definitive" are insufficient to establish the interpretable and the definitive.

Since sutras alone are insufficient to determine definitiveness, Tsong Khapa recommends relying on those commentarial authors who "settle [suchness] well with reasonings that (1) fault interpreting definitive scriptures as having some other meaning and (2) prove the definitive meaning as unsuitable to be interpreted otherwise."

Nagarjuna fulfills both these criteria for being a reliable commentarial author. The Treatise is a repository of reasonings to help meditators refute inherent existence with respect to persons and other phenomena. The syllogistic reasonings employed in meditations on emptiness are designed to generate a valid cognition of the definitive meaning.

As Aryadeva's Four Hundred says:

\ ###
\ When selflessness is seen in objects,
\ The seeds of cyclic existence are destroyed.²⁸

The seeds of cyclic existence are the actions and afflictive emotions caused by the root, ignorance. These ignorance-inspired actions and emotions keep beings revolving in cyclic existence. Meditation on emptiness destroys ignorance and thus is one of the principal aspects of the path as described by Je Tsong Khapa.

L2: [Emptiness in the Middle Way School [between the extremes of realism and nihilism] :L2

L3: [Inseparability of the Two Truths (emptiness and conventional truths), non-duality: not two, not one] :L3

According to Tsong Khapa, and to the many Gelug thinkers who have followed in Tsong Khapa's path, an emptiness is a thing's absence of inherent existence. The thing (a conventional truth) and its emptiness (an ultimate truth) are one entity but differentiable to thought. This means that although a jar and its emptiness exist in the same time and space, thought can differentiate them. The emptiness of a thing such as a jar can be considered in isolation from the jar itself. This isolating process is called a reverse. When one reverses a jar and its emptiness — approaching them in reverse as (1) not not jar and (2) not not emptiness of jar — it can be seen that they appear very differently to the mind. In this way, using the conceptual mind as an isolator, one is able to meditate on the emptiness of a jar without engaging the jar itself as an object of meditation.

L3: [Emptiness is a non-affirming negative] :L3

Let us continue to discuss the jar and its emptiness by saying that a jar is a positive phenomenon,³⁰ manufactured and having causes and conditions. The emptiness of a jar is a negative phenomenon, like all emptinesses.

For Gelug philosophers, both positive phenomena and negative phenomena are existent because they are observed by valid cognitions. All phenomena, positive and negative, are equal ontologically in being empty. The differentiation between positives and negatives does not lie in their mode of subsistence. Rather, the division is made by way of how these objects appear to the conceptual mind. Negatives are cognized through explicitly eliminating an object-to-be-negated. Hopkins makes the point that "to realize non-cow, cow must be openly eliminated, but to realize cow, non-cow does not have to be explicitly eliminated though indeed it is implicitly eliminated. Thus, non-cow is a negative phenomenon and cow is a positive phenomenon."

Emptiness is a negative phenomenon because it is an absence of *svabhava*, that is cognized through the explicit elimination of an object-to-be-negated. Within being a negative, emptiness is said to be a non-affirming negative because nothing remains following the refutation of the object-to-be-negated.

Negatives can be divided into affirming negatives and non-affirming negatives. An affirming negative leaves something after the elimination. For instance, the affirming negative "the fat Devadatta does not eat during the day" affirms that he eats during the night. Non-affirming negatives leave nothing to be affirmed after the negation. Emptiness is a non-affirming negative because it is a mere elimination of inherent existence in a thing.

This is an important point for the Consequence School, because Consequentialists use reasoning to eliminate inherent existence; when all trace of *svabhava* has been eliminated by reasoning, emptiness can be realized. If emptiness were an affirming negative, something would always be left over to be investigated, and there would never be a point at which the meditator could be realizing emptiness. Moreover, if jar were to remain after determining

the nature of jar (which might happen if emptiness was an affirming negative), then jar would be its own nature and would truly exist. The ultimate analysis would have yielded a truly existent jar.

Due to these problems, Consequentialists are firm in saying that emptiness is a non-affirming negative. As long as emptiness is non-affirming, it follows that there is a point when emptiness can be realized by reasoning. This is because emptiness is the mere elimination of the object-to-be-negated, *svabhava*.

L3: [The unique nature that is refuted both in persons and in all phenomena: a thing's establishment by way of its own entity] :L3

Every emptiness of inherent existence is a mere absence of the object-to-be-negated nature. This non-existent object-to-be-negated nature is only one type of *svabhava*.

Tsong Khapa describes this type of *svabhava* as "a thing's establishment by way of its own entity."

The Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path states:

~ There does not exist in phenomena even a particle of the nature that is establishment by way of a thing's own entity.³⁵

-- The object-to-be-negated nature does not exist as an external reality. Nothing is established by way of its own entity, and this nature is a thing's establishment by way of its own entity. Nevertheless, the object-to-be-negated nature is seen to exist by ignorant consciousnesses, and we assent to its existence implicitly in all we think, say, and do.

-- The absence of the object-to-be-negated nature does exist. This is called the emptiness nature.

L3: [Tsong Khapa's adapted skillful means against the dangers of nihilism: affirming an existent emptiness nature] :L3

Thus, it is important to note that there are opposing usages of the term *svabhava*:

-- A non-existent, object-to-be-negated nature (*dgag bya'i rang bzhin*) that is an object's establishment by way of its own entity (*ranggi ngo bos grub pa*).

-- An existent, reality nature (*rang bzhin chos nyid*) that is a phenomenon's ultimate truth (*don dam bden pa*) or emptiness (*stong pa nyid*).

As we shall see, there are also other usages of *svabhava*.

Speaking of these two *svabhava* in terms of whether they exist or not, the *svabhava* that is imagined to exist and that is the object of innate ignorance is itself non-existent.

Although an ignorant consciousness fashions an appearance of it, that appearance has no existent referent in reality, because nothing is established by way of its own entity.

Things are empty of an object-to-be-negated nature. This means things are not established by way of their own entity. This does not imply that things do not exist. Things do not have to be established by way of their own entity in order to exist. Instead, Gelugs argue that they can and do exist imputedly, through dependence on names and mental imputations.

L3: [The Two Truths] :L3

All phenomena are merely imputed by thought and empty of inherent existence.

Thus, the Gelugs are saying that we live in a world of entities that appear to exist by way

of their own nature, and yet are merely imputations. All these entities function and yet are empty of inherent existence. They fall under the category of conventional truths. Things that exist conventionally, such as tables, jars, mental events, and so forth, are all said to be conventional truths.

Each phenomena also has an ultimate truth, an emptiness of inherent existence. The conventional truth, the table, and the ultimate truth, the emptiness of the table, are related as one entity, but different isolates (i.e., isolatable by thought). In this way there are two truths for each phenomenon.

L3: [The nature of emptiness: it is called ultimate truth, but it is also conceptually interdependently arisen like any other conventional truths] :L3

Emptiness is also empty. However, it is an ultimate rather than a conventional truth because it exists the way it appears to an ultimate consciousness.

An ultimate consciousness does not cognize conventionalities but instead is a reasoning consciousness realizing emptiness.

Ultimate consciousnesses can be conceptual and non-conceptual.

-- A non-conceptual ultimate consciousness is a meditative equipoise directly realizing emptiness.

-- A conceptual ultimate consciousness realizes emptiness through a conceptual image. Since emptiness is a slightly hidden phenomenon (like impermanence), it can be brought to mind indirectly at first through an inference and then, eventually, directly in meditation.

Perception of the emptiness of any phenomenon leads to a realization of the emptiness of all phenomena.

Just as there exist ultimate and conventional consciousnesses capable of certifying the two truths for a phenomenon, so too there are conventional and ultimate analyses.

-- Conventional analysis is any type of logical process that inquires into conventionalities to determine facts. We perform conventional analysis when we inquire into the facts of ordinary matters: medicinal questions, the temperature of the stars, how to stop war, and so forth.

-- Ultimate analysis, on the other hand, attempts to determine the ontological status of things. Ultimate analysis searches for a mode of subsistence that is findable. Such analysis seeks an inherently existent essence or nature through examining material objects or mental events for evidence of inherent existence. Thus, the sphere of an ultimate analysis is limited to determining the presence or absence of inherent existence. In practice, ultimate analysis always finds nothing — no evidence of svabhava. This non-finding confirms the presence of emptiness, which is the absence of svabhava. In the face of the ultimate analyses of Nagarjuna, the non-finding of inherent existence is the finding of emptiness.

Emptiness is an absence of inherent existence; but what is inherent existence, and what is its relation to nature? The next chapter begins our discussion of svabhava, the essential nature.

L1: [2. Nature [svabhava, the essential nature] in the Consequence School [as seen by the author] :L1

L2: [The meanings of nature [trying to describe the absolute nature of everything that is beyond all conceptualization using various skillful means: the Tetralemma: not existent, not non-existent, not both, not neither, or the two natures] :L2

- ~ 1:63. How could the world exist in fact,
- ~ With a nature passed beyond the three times?
- ~ Not going when destroyed, not coming,
- ~ And not staying even for an instant?
- ~ — The Precious Garland (i.e. refuting the coming and going)

"Nature" does not have a fixed meaning in Indian and Tibetan philosophical literature. There are a variety of natures. A glance at Sanskrit and Tibetan sources reveals at least twelve different meanings of nature from Buddhist and non-Buddhist scriptures and commentaries. These meanings vary from the divine to the fabricated:

- Nature (prakṛti) in the Katha Upaniṣad: the underlying principle of the universe; an aspect of atman.
- Nature (svabhava) in the Svetisvatara Upaniṣad: one of five principles that are involved in the workings of causality.
- Nature (prakṛti) in the Bhagavat Gita: the universe's fundamental essence; aspect of the god Kṛṣṇa.
- Nature (svabhavi) in the Bhagavat Gita: the nature of persons that is their uncommon character in accordance with their caste (varṇa) and qualities (guṇi).
- For the Nihilists, a nature that allows a thing to arise causelessly.
- The fundamental nature (rtsa ba'i rang bzhin, prakṛti / mulaprakṛti) in Sāṃkhya; a basic principle of the universe, unmanifest but present in all phenomena.
- Nature in the context of three-nature (ngo bo nyid gsum, trisvabhavi) doctrines found in a variety of Buddhist scriptures and treatises.
- The fabricated nature, i.e., the heat of fire (see page 79).
- A non-existent object-to-be-negated nature (dgag bya 'i rang bzhin. See page 39).
- an existent reality nature (rang bzhin chos nyid) endowed with the three features of emptiness (see page 37).
- The conventional nature of a phenomenon (tha snyad pa'i rang bzhin. See page 143).
- A positive and independent nature: the Nature Body (rang bzhin gyi sku) asserted by Dol-bo Shay-rap-gyel-tsen (see page 108).

Within these various meanings of nature,

- Nagarjuna and Chandrakīrti mainly concentrate on refuting (8) the fabricated nature, while
- Tsong Khapa and his followers also refute (9) the object-to-be-negated nature and (12) a positive and independent nature.
- Both Indian and Tibetan authors also concentrate on asserting (10) an existent reality nature that is emptiness.

ALTHOUGH THIS EMPTINESS IS THE ULTIMATE, IT IS ITSELF EMPTY.

In the Middle Way School, the term "nature" (like the term "thing") is given a number of different meanings and is used for different purposes. Chandrakīrti and Je Tsong Khapa concur in identifying three meanings of nature:

- A non-existent, object-to-be-negated nature (dgag bya'i rang bzhin) that is an object's establishment by way of its own entity (rang gi ngo bos grub pa). (i.e. # 9 above)
- An existent, reality nature (rang bzhin chos nyid) that is a phenomenon's ultimate truth

(don dam bden pa) or emptiness (stong pa nyid). (i.e. # 10 above; “Although this emptiness is the ultimate, it is itself empty.”)

-- The conventional nature of a phenomenon (tha snyad pa'i rang bzhin). (i.e. # 11 above)

Writing in the Four Interwoven Annotations, Jam-yang-shay-ba provides advice to dispel confusion over these various meanings:

- ~ Moreover, in general, just as one must understand "thing" (dngos po, bhava) as having two meanings — one as able to perform a function and the other as the nature that is the object-to-be-negated — so there are many usages of "nature":
- ~ (1) the mode of subsistence of objects [emptiness],
- ~ (2) the conventional nature of forms and so forth,
- ~ (3) establishment from an object's own side, the [non-existent] object-to-be-negated.
- ~ Thus there are many meanings of nature. One should know which meaning by way of the context.

When the nature of things being spoken of is reality — the ultimate truth of an object — then that nature exists in fact.

However, when the nature of things being spoken of is the object-to-be-negated in the view of selflessness, that nature is only imagined to exist.

Je Tsong Khapa's Illumination of the Thought confirms the two main meanings of nature in texts of the Consequence School when he speaks of a nature to be negated and a nature to be asserted:

- ~ The nature that is refuted is a refutation of [its] being the basic disposition of eyes, etc.
- ~ The nature that is asserted is that negative which is accepted as a nature called "the reality of eyes, etc.

According to Je Tsong Khapa, only the second of these two types of nature exists. Although they are both called "nature," they have nothing in common, except perhaps that the former is hypothetically non-fabricated and the latter is actually non-fabricated.

L2: [The scriptural sources for [the two senses of] nature] :L2

Middle Way School scriptural sources for discussions involving nature are passages in the Perfection of Wisdom Sūtras, the Descent into Lanka Sūtra, and Nagarjuna's Treatise on the Middle. Most later discussions of nature in the Consequence School are derived from these sources.

The importance of the Descent into Lanka Sūtra to the study of nature in the Consequence School is shown in the fact that it is quoted by Chandrakīrti during his discussion of nature in the Clear Words (XV):

- \ ###
- \ Just as those having ophthalmia wrongly apprehend falling hairs,
- \ So this imputation as thing (dngos por brtag pa, bhavavikalpa) is a wrong imputation by childish beings.
- \ There is no nature (rang bzhin med, na svabhava), no consciousness, no basis-of-all, and no things (dngos med, na svabhava), them.

In this passage the sūtra presents a refutation of "imputation as thing." The "thing"

imputed to exist refers to the nature mentioned in the next line — "there is no nature."
This nature does not exist but is conceived to exist by children, and so forth.

Buddhist scriptures also mention an "emptiness of nature" and an "emptiness of entityness/nature" as two of the divisions of emptiness into twenty. Although these divisions occur in a variety of classical sources, the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras are the most significant.

The origins of these sutras are obscure. Williams says, "It is not possible at the present stage of our knowledge to make many very certain statements regarding the origins and development of the Prajnaparamita literature." Buddhist tradition traces the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras to the Buddha, but some recent scholarship places their composition at a variety of later dates. Conze gives a range from 100 B.C.E. to 1200 C.E. and places the Eight Thousand Stanza Perfection of Wisdom Sutra as the oldest of the texts. 7 Lancaster confirms this in his report that the Eight Thousand Stanza Perfection of Wisdom Sutra was the first of the Mahayana sutras to appear in China, around 180 C.E.

Nature is discussed in a number of the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras. The Eight Thousand Stanza Perfection of Wisdom Sutra brings up nature (svabhava) in its discussion of the emptiness of the five aggregates.

The Eight Thousand Stanza Perfection of Wisdom Sutra states:

~ Subhuti, since the five aggregates are without nature, they have a nature of emptiness.

The five aggregates are often spoken of in Perfection of Wisdom Sutras in terms of being empty, and in this passage we are told that their emptiness is due to their lack of nature.

The passage speaks of nature in two senses:

- the imagined nature that the aggregates are without is the object-to-be-negated.
- Their nature of emptiness is their reality nature.

The Eight Thousand Stanza Perfection of Wisdom Sutra also offers the argument that a lack of own-entity is the reason that the form⁶² aggregate is neither bound nor freed through the three times:

~ Form is neither bound nor freed, because form has no own-being. The past starting point of a material process [=form] is neither bound nor freed, because the past starting point of a material process is without own-being. The end of a material process, in the future, is neither bound nor freed, because the future end of a material process is without own-being. A present material process is neither bound nor freed, because the fact of being present is not part of the own-being of a present form. And so for the remaining skandhas.⁶⁴

Forms, and so forth, are beyond bondage and liberation because they are empty. The terms "bondage" and "liberation" only apply to those who conceive of forms as possessing an object-to-be-negated nature.

The Eight Thousand Stanza Perfection of Wisdom Sutra shows the early usage of "nature" in the two senses

- of the reality nature
- and the object-to-be-negated nature.

The Perfection of Wisdom Sutras are also a source for the assertion that emptiness itself is devoid of nature. Thus, although the object-to-be-negated nature becomes more important for Gelug exegetes than it originally appears to be in sutras and Indian commentaries, it is not

entirely a later Gelug innovation.

L2: [Nagarjuna: the art of the treatise [trying to drag Nagarjuna into this mess] :L2

Nagarjuna is considered by his followers to have expressed the essence of the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras in his seven treatises:

- Fundamental Treatise Called "Wisdom"(dbu ma'i bstan bcos / dbu ma rtsa ba'i tshig le'ur by as pa shes rab ces bya ba, madhyamaka'sastra prajnanamulamadyamakakarika).
- Essay on the Mind of Enlightenment (byang chub sems kyi 'grel pa, bodhicittavivarana).
- Refutation of Objections (rtsodpa bzlog pa'i tshig le'ur by as pa, vighrahavyavartamkarika).
- Seventy Stanzas on Emptiness (stong pa nyid bdun cu pa'i tshig le'ur by as pa, sunyatasaptatikarika).
- Sixty Stanzas of Reasoning (rigs pa drug cu pa'i tshig le'ur byaspa, yuktisastikakarika).
- Treatise Called "The Finely Woven" (zhib mo rnam par 'thagpa zhes by a ba'i mdo, vaidalyasutranama).
- Precious Garland of Advice for the King (rgyal po la gtam by a rinpo che'iphreng ba, rajaparikatharatnavali).

From among these, Nagarjuna's Treatise on the Middle is the central treatise of the Middle Way Consequence tradition. Gelug exegetes usually approach Nagarjuna's Treatise through Chandrakirti's Clear Words commentary. Chandrakirti describes the purpose of Nagarjuna's Treatise as being a hermeneutical one, to determine the interpretable and the definitive amongst passages of scripture.

As mentioned earlier, it does this through providing examples of ultimate analysis proving that phenomena are empty of true establishment. Although the purpose of the Treatise is to determine the interpretable and the definitive amongst passages of scripture, the subject matter of the Treatise is extensive, covering many topics regarding emptiness, and not just emptiness.

Hopkins states a number of these other topics:

~ The Treatise extensively sets forth the suitability of conventional phenomena within an emptiness of inherent existence as well as the four truths, actions and their effects, the Three Jewels, the eight levels of approaching and abiding in the fruits of Stream Enterer, Once Returner, Never Returner and Foe Destroyer, and so forth...Still...these varieties are not the principal object of discourse in the Treatise; the profound emptiness is.

L2: [Treatise on the middle -- Chapter XV -- mainly concentrates on refuting the fabricated nature, but the author seems to be trying to prove that Nagarjuna is affirming a nature with three attributes] :L2

Nagarjuna's Treatise on the Middle (XV), "The Analysis of Nature," investigates and refutes a nature that is fabricated. One of the important projects of Chapter XV is to discredit the possibility that an ultimate nature of things is caused (see the complete treatment of this topic, page 79).

The Treatise on the Middle states:

\ ###

\ 15:1ab
\ The arising of nature due to causes and conditions (rgyu dang rkyen, hetupratyayd] is not reasonable. 8

- ~ 15.1.
- ~ The production of a self-existent thing by a conditioning cause is not possible,
- ~ [For,] being produced through dependence on a cause, a self-existent thing would be "something which is produced" (krtaka).

Nagarjuna mounts his argument on the maxim that the nature of something must be non-fabricated.⁶⁹

In the Treatise he says:

\ ###
\ 15.2cd
\ Nature is non-fabricated...

Being non-fabricated, nature cannot be a product of causes and conditions. This means that a nature cannot be, for instance, the heat of fire.

Not only does Nagarjuna reject a fabricated nature that is produced by causes and conditions, but — as Tsong Khapa points out in the Great Exposition (see page 185) — he also maintains that a nature must be endowed with the three attributes of being non-fabricated, immutable, and independent.

Two of these attributes — independence and non-fabrication — are mentioned at the beginning of Chapter XV of the Treatise (XV.2cd):

\ ###
\ 15.2cd
\ Nature is non-fabricated and does not depend on another.⁷¹

- ~ 15.2.
- ~ How, indeed, will a self-existent thing become "something which is produced"?
- ~ Certainly, a self-existent thing [by definition] is "not-produced" and is independent of anything else.

The third attribute of a nature — its unchanging state, its immutability — is mentioned in the Treatise (XV. 8cd):

\ ###
\ 15.8cd
\ Change of a nature is never feasible.

- ~ 8.
- ~ If there would be an existent thing by its own nature, there could not be "non-existence" of that [thing].
- ~ Certainly an existent thing different from its own nature would never obtain.

In these stanzas, Nagarjuna refutes a nature arisen from causes and conditions. He also points out that a nature of things (1) must not be dependent and (2) must be unchanging. The existence of a causally arisen nature of things, such as the heat of fire, is contradictory with the necessity that a nature be non-fabricated, immutable, and independent. In this way,

Nagarjuna's Chapter XV refutes the possibility of a fabricated nature and instead makes the point that an essential nature must be non-fabricated, immutable, and independent.

Interpretations of this assertion vary.

- Some Tibetans have felt that Nagarjuna is describing the putative (i.e. generally accepted, thought to exist) qualities of a non-existent svabhava.
- Some modern scholars have taken Nagarjuna to mean that there is no possibility of a nature existing anywhere. (i.e. That would be nihilism)
- In the Middle Way tradition of Chandrakirti, Nagarjuna is said to be describing the reality nature, emptiness.

L1: [3. Existent natures [antidote to nihilism] :L1

- ~ Subhuti, since the five aggregates are without nature, they have a nature of emptiness.⁷³
- ~ — Eight Thousand Stanza Perfection of Wisdom Sutra

L2: [Does the triply-qualified nature exist? [some say yes, some say no] :L2

Although the Treatise on the Middle indicates non-fabrication, independence, and immutability to be three features of a nature, it does not explicitly mention whether a nature possessing these three features exists or not.

If it exists, Nagarjuna does not explain how this nature can be said to possess these three attributes. On the other hand, if the nature possessing the three attributes is meant to be identified as the object-to-be-negated, Nagarjuna does not explain if the three attributes are to be taken hypothetically as being the object-to-be-negated or as logical implications of a more subtle object-to-be-negated.

Although Nagarjuna does not address these issues, Chandrakirti, Tsong Khapa, and their followers address all of them in their commentaries on the Treatise's crucial yet mercurial analysis of nature.

Chandrakirti assumes that Nagarjuna is referring to an existent nature and also explicitly identifies Nagarjuna's triply-qualified nature as emptiness (see page 147). This is interesting, since Nagarjuna himself does not actually say here in the Treatise that such a triply-qualified nature exists.

Still, Nagarjuna does speak elsewhere of an existent nature. For instance, the Precious Garland implies that things have a nature, and speaks in stanza LXIII of such a nature as "passed beyond the three times."

The Precious Garland states:

- ~ 1:63. How could the world exist in fact,
- ~ With a nature passed beyond the three times?
- ~ Not going when destroyed, not coming,
- ~ And not staying even for an instant?
- ~ — The Precious Garland

Such brief statements are all that Nagarjuna has to say about the triply-qualified nature.

Due to this absence of an explicit description of the triply-qualified nature, at least two contradictory schools of thought have arisen regarding the meaning of Nagarjuna's triply-qualified nature:

- The triply qualified nature is emptiness. Chandrakirti and Tsong Khapa explicitly identify Nagarjuna's triply-qualified nature as emptiness, the reality nature.
- The triply qualified nature is a non-existent object-to-be-negated nature. Some Tibetans hold the three attributes to be features of a non-existent object-to-be-negated nature.

The identity of those Tibetans who held the second position remains obscured.

Here is Tsong Khapa's Great Exposition (with some bracketed material from Jam-yang-shay-ba) discussing these unnamed Tibetans:

- ~ Some [Tibetans] say:
- ~ [On the occasion of this Consequence School] that which is to be refuted is nature and that [object-to-be-negated nature] has the three attributes which are
- ~ -- an entity attribute, that it is not produced by causes and conditions,
- ~ -- a state attribute, that it is immutable, and
- ~ -- a certification attribute, that it does not depend on another.⁷⁶

These unnamed Tibetans interpret Chapter XV very differently from Chandrakirti and Tsong Khapa. They do not follow Chandrakirti's understanding that Nagarjuna is speaking of the reality nature. Instead, they understand Nagarjuna to be speaking of a nature that does not exist but is only imagined to exist by ignorance, but which would be triply qualified if it did exist.

Tsong Khapa does not identify these Tibetans explicitly, but he does strenuously object to their belief that the Consequence School asserts such an object-to-be-negated. His objection is based on the grounds that the triply-qualified nature is too narrow⁷⁷ to be the object to be negated by a wisdom consciousness negating inherent existence and realizing emptiness.

In Je Tsong Khapa's view, simply negating the false belief that things have a nature of being non-fabricated, immutable, and independent is insufficient to break the bonds of cyclic existence. One must also negate the false belief that things are established by way of their own entities, which is more subtle and broader in scope. Only this is the object of innate ignorance in the Consequence school.

Who were these Tibetans with their divergent opinion about the Consequentialists' identification of the triply-qualified nature? Possible candidates to be the referent of "some Tibetans" are the Kadampa lineage of Ngok-lo-tsa-wa Lo-den-shay-rap⁷⁸ (1059-1109) and the abbots of Sang-pu Monastery. This group included Cha-ba⁷⁹ (1109-1169). The scholarly abbots of Sang-pu maintained a Yogic Practice Autonomy (Yogacara Svatantrika) view prior to their order's conversion to the Consequentialist view. Tibetan historians relate that their conversion to Consequentialism was the result of Ba-tsap Nyi-ma-drak⁸⁰ (b. 1055) translating and disseminating Chandrakirti's Consequentialist texts in the early 12th century. Thus, it was not until Ba-tsap that Chandrakirti's commentaries on Nagarjuna and Aryadeva became popular in the Kadampa lineage.

Karen Lang traces this development:

- ~ Nyi-ma-grag's excellent translations and his skill in teaching Madhyamika texts in the light of Chandrakirti's Prasangika viewpoint led the bKa'-dam-pa school to adopt this interpretation, so that it prevailed over the Svatantrika interpretation from the 12th century onwards.⁸¹

Nya-cha-wa Tson-dru-seng-gay — author of one of the only available texts of the Sang-pu lineage — studied the commentaries of Chandrakirti with Ba-tsap Nyi-ma-drak. He and Tsang Nag-pa, among others, were influential in disseminating Chandrakirti's interpretation of Nagarjuna and Aryadeva throughout central Tibet. There is no mention of confusing the nature having the three attributes with the object-to-be-negated in Nya-cha-wa Tson-dru-seng-gay's extant 12th-century commentary on the Treatise. Instead, Nya-cha-wa speaks of Nagarjuna's discussion of nature in the Treatise (XV) in terms of an existent nature that is emptiness, the "suchness nature"⁸³ having the three attributes; he does not discuss an object-to-be-negated that possesses the three attributes.

L2: [Does the reality nature exist? [it is not existent, not non-existent, not both, not neither – we cannot describe it using concepts – it is beyond the duality existence vs. non-existence] :L2

Nagarjuna does not explicitly and clearly mention a reality nature in the Treatise (XV). He merely mentions that nature must be non-fabricated, and so forth, without further explanation. Nevertheless, Chandrakirti and Tsong Khapa confidently identify Nagarjuna to be referring to a reality nature that is the ultimate truth, emptiness.

In the Consequence School, the process of liberation involves realizing emptiness with reasoning. For Gelugs, it follows that emptiness must exist in order for it to be realizable, since only an emptiness that is an object of knowledge can be realized with a reasoning consciousness.

Gelug exegetes following Tsong Khapa point to the Treatise on the Middle (XV) — as well as Chandrakirti's commentary on that text in the Auto-Commentary (quoted below) which supplies a scriptural source — as a locus classicus for the assertion that emptiness exists.

Chandrakirti's Auto-Commentary presents a question and answer section addressing the issue of whether the nature exists.

In this passage (cited in the Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path), Chandrakirti claims that an existent nature is the thought of Nagarjuna:

~ Objection: Does the master Nagarjuna assert that a nature qualified in such a way exists or not?

~ Response: That reality in terms of which the Supramundane Victor says in the Perfection of Wisdom Sūtras, "Whether the Tathagatas appear or not, the reality of phenomena just abides," exists.

~ Objection: What is this reality?

~ Response: It is the final mode of abiding of these phenomena, eyes, and so forth.

~ Objection: What is the nature that is the mode of abiding of these like?

~ Response: It is their non-fabricatedness, i.e., non-falsity, their mode of subsistence which does not depend on other causes and conditions and is the entity realized by a Superior's knowledge [of meditative equipoise] free from the visual dimness of ignorance and its predispositions by way of not being polluted by those.

~ Objection: Does that nature exist?

~ Response: Who could say that it does not exist? If it did not exist, for what purpose would Bodhisattvas cultivate the path of the perfections? Bodhisattvas initiate hundreds of efforts for the sake of realizing such a reality.⁸⁵

Here, Chandrakirti gives reasons that the nature does exist, and he quotes a Perfection of Wisdom Sutra to the effect that "Whether the Tathagatas appear or not, the reality of phenomena just abides." This quote serves as a scriptural source to establish that the Consequence School posits an existent reality nature. It is a non-fabricated mode of subsistence that does not depend on causes and conditions and is the entity realized by the wisdom of meditative equipoise.

The Clear Words provides Chandrakirti with another opportunity to embellish his discussion of an existent reality nature.

The Clear Words describes an existent entity that is "an entity of suchness⁸⁶ that always abides":

~ What is this suchness? It is that entity of suchness that does not change and always abides. For, that which is not produced in any way, because of not being fabricated and because of not relying on another, is called the nature (rang bzhin, svabhava) of fire and so forth.

Chandrakirti's assertions of an existent nature show that even though Nagarjuna does not explicitly refer to an existent reality nature, it is traditional for the Consequence School to assert an existent reality nature, based on scriptural sources.

In his discussion of the reality nature, Chandrakirti equates reality, emptiness, and suchness and refers to nature in terms of the three attributes. Chandrakirti and Tsong Khapa agree that Nagarjuna speaks of a reality nature and that this reality nature exists. Tsong Khapa identifies emptiness not as nothingness or as a mere linguistic convention but as a phenomenon. This opinion is at odds with the opinion of many non-traditional scholars who hold emptiness to be a non-entity or a mere linguistic convention.

Within the broad perspective of Tibetan Buddhism, Tsong Khapa's assertion that emptiness exists is by no means normative. Discussing this, Jam-yang-shay-ba laments that in Tibet "few have wished to meditate on emptiness and have called meditation on a vacuity of nothingness meditation on emptiness."⁸⁹ Ngok-lo-tsa-wa Lo-den-shay-rap is an early example of a Tibetan scholar who held the position that emptiness does not exist. Ngok asserted that the ultimate truth is not an object of knowledge because no thing can withstand reasoned analysis.

Though Chandrakirti's texts present evidence for a Middle Way tradition asserting an existent reality nature, the situation is not quite so simple. Chandrakirti also makes statements that provide evidence that he holds a more nihilistic view.

Regarding the non-existence of change,

The Clear Words states:

~ Also, the explanation, "Because change is seen, there is no nature," is said in the context of a seeing of change that is renowned to others. We do not assert ever anywhere that change exists. Therefore, in this way, nature does not exist at all, and all phenomena are that of which nature does not exist, and also change of those does not exist.

Tsong Khapa addresses the first two sentences of this quotation in the Ocean of Reasonings, where he argues that Chandrakirti is discussing nature in the context of there being "change of that which exists by way of its nature." That which exists by way of its nature is that which exists inherently. Chandrakirti is denying that inherently existent things have change, he is not refuting "mere change."

The Ocean of Reasonings states:

- ~ Here in the [Clear Words] commentary Chandrakirti says:
- ~ Also, the explanation, "Because change is seen, there is no nature," is said in the context of a seeing of change that is renowned to others. We do not assert ever anywhere that change exists.

This is said with respect to explaining the statements made earlier, above, "Even you observe change of that which exists by way of its nature, fire and so forth," [and] since nature is seen to change, there is no existence by way of [something's] nature; [Chandrakirti] is not saying that he does not assert mere change.⁹²

In other words, the opponent, who propounds that the nature of fire is heat, accepts that that nature is seen to change. The point is that the Consequentialists do not assert that the nature of fire — emptiness — ever changes. It is just this sort of change — change of an immutable nature — that Tsong Khapa says Chandrakirti never asserts, not mere change.

It is interesting that the Ocean of Reasonings does not address the following quotation that strongly suggests that Chandrakirti asserts a non-existent reality nature.

In the context of a discussion of no production,

The Clear Words states:

- ~ You should [also] know that just this lack of production which is the nature of things, is just a non-thing due to not being anything at all, whereby...it is not the nature of things.⁹³

Unlike the situation with Chandrakirti's statement about the non-existence of change, it is difficult to interpret this statement as referring to inherent production, and not mere production, since the subject is the "lack of production, which is the nature of things." Chandrakirti clearly predicates this lack with the phrase, "just a non-thing due to not being anything at all."

This would seem to be a clear statement that the negative of true production is a non-existent. However, Dra-di Ge-shay, writing in the Four Interwoven Annotations, cleverly interprets the words "is not anything at all" to mean "not anything at all" in the sense of "not explicitly provable to others."

The Four Interwoven Annotations says:

- ~ The emptiness which is the lack of production by nature and which is the final nature that is the mode of subsistence of things such as forms — as it appears in meditative equipoise devoid of all the two elaborations⁹⁶ — is not anything at all in the sense that it is not explicitly provable to others — in accordance with how it appears — through analyses, verbalizations, examples, and reasons and hence it is just a non-thing in that it is the vanishing of things such as forms. Therefore in the face of that meditative equipoise, its entity is not apprehendable. Hence, that nature of things abides in this way, and that nature does not exist in the face of that meditative equipoise in the manner of things such as forms being the support and the nature being the supported.⁹⁸

That is, since the things that are empty do not appear, that emptiness in the face of that meditative equipoise does not appear in the aspect of being the nature of those things. It cannot, since appearing in the aspect of being the nature of things involves the necessary appearance of things.

Dra-di Ge-shay's commentary is ingenious, and although it may seem forced, it is a necessary commentarial "patch" to preserve the Gelug presentation of Chandrakirti as asserting an existent emptiness.

In favor of this reading of Chandrakirti, we shall see in the next section that he also explicitly makes the case that the reality nature exists conventionally.

L2: [The reality nature exists conventionally [the ultimate truth is also a conventional truth] :L2

Even though emptiness is the ultimate, the reality nature, its mode of subsistence is not different from that of other phenomena. This is because, according to Nagarjuna, all phenomena — conventional and ultimate — are dependent-arisings.

The Treatise on the Middle (XXIV. 19) states:

\ ###
\ Because there are no phenomena
\ That are not dependent-arisings,
\ There are no phenomena that are not
\ Empty [of inherent existence]."

- ~ Karikas 24:19.
- ~ Since there is no dharma whatever originating independently,
- ~ No dharma whatever exists which is not empty.

Having no nature of their own that exists by way of its own nature, phenomena are merely imputed through superimposition.

Chandrakirti explains that this does not mean they are non-existent. When an opponent in the Clear Words asks Chandrakirti if the emptiness of such a phenomenon exists, Chandrakirti says "It exists conventionally."

The Clear Words states:

- ~ Objection: Does there exist such a non-fabricated and non-relative entity of fire?
- ~ Response: Such a nature is not existent by way of its own entity and is not [utterly] non-existent either. Though it is so, in order to get rid of the fear of the listeners, when this is taught, it is said upon making a superimposition that it exists conventionally.

Although the reality nature does not possess an ontological status that privileges it in some way "above" conventional truths, that nature also does not utterly not exist. As Chandrakirti says, "it exists conventionally."

Tsong Khapa explains that the meaning of this statement is that emptiness is a conventionally existent phenomenon like all dependent-arisings. The Ocean of Reasonings addresses the qualm that a nature that exists "upon superimposition" does not exist.

There, Tsong Khapa asserts that even a conventionally existent reality nature exists:

- ~ Also propounding that since [Chandrakirti] says "upon superimposition," the ultimate truth is not an object of knowledge, is not reasonable. For, as a source for the statement that it exists upon superimposition, [Chandrakirti] cites a verse from the King of Meditative Stabilizations Sutra, which states:

\ ###
\ What hearing, what teaching is there
\ Of the inexpressible doctrine?
\ The inexpressible is heard and taught
\ Upon superimposition.

~ In this, the hearers, explainers, and doctrines to be explained are all said to be done upon superimposition, whereby these too would come not to be objects of knowledge.
~ Therefore, since even with regard to teachings upon imputation by the mind, it is often said, "upon superimposition," this need not be something like the superimposition of the two selves.¹⁰²

The two selves spoken of here are the self of persons and the self of phenomena other than persons. The coarse and subtle aspects of the two selves are variously described in the Mind Only and Middle Way Schools — the Great Exposition and Sutra Schools do not assert a putative self of phenomena — but in Tsong Khapa's interpretation of the Consequence School, the object-to-be-negated nature is the subtle self of persons and of phenomena. These two selves do not exist, and thus they are only superimposed on persons and phenomena.

In the statement above, when it is said that all phenomena are superimposed, including ultimate truth, this does not mean that phenomena do not actually exist. The ultimate truth, for instance, is a superimposition that does exist — a non-erroneous superimposition. There are, however, superimpositions that do not exist: the two selves are superimpositions that do not exist — erroneous superimpositions.

Tsong Khapa reaffirms Chandrakirti's view that the reality nature is not an absolute in the sense that it is not established by way of its own entity.

The Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path states:

~ Thus Chandrakirti refutes that a nature is established by way of its own entity and says that it exists conventionally. °5

Emptiness exists, and is the ultimate, but it is not an absolute. It just exists conventionally, upon imputation, as do all phenomena according to the Consequentialist system.

Tsong Khapa provides a further explanation of why ultimates are conventionally existent: they are posited by way of the two "positors" of non-fabrication and non-dependence on another.

The Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path states:

~ Although the ultimate truth is established [as the nature in the sense of] positing reality as nature, [an ultimate truth] is posited by way of its two positors, non-fabrication and non-dependence on another, and hence [the ultimate] does not at all come to be established by way of its own entity. Therefore [the ultimate] is only established conventionally.

Nothing that is posited in dependence on other factors exists by way of its own entity, and the ultimate is posited by way of non-fabrication and non-dependence on another. As these quotations reveal, it is the thought of Chandrakirti and Tsong Khapa that it is not contradictory for an ultimate to exist conventionally.

We have seen Chandrakirti put forth his contention that the Treatise on the Middle (XV)

speaks of the reality nature that possesses the three attributes. Tsong Khapa agrees with Chandrakirti, and criticizes those who identify Nagarjuna's stanzas as referring to an object-to-be-negated nature. In Gelug soteriology, this wrong identification is a significant mistake, since it is the identification of an object-to-be-negated nature that is too narrow. Moreover, this object-to-be-negated [with only the three attributes] is a learned ignorance, whereas the actual object-to-be-negated — a thing's establishment by its own entity — (1) is more subtle than the three attributes and (2) conceiving of it is the innate ignorance that binds sentient beings in cyclic existence. The reality nature, on the other hand, which is the lack of the object-to-be-negated nature in a phenomenon, does possess the three attributes of non-fabrication, independence, and immutability.

L2: [The reality nature endowed with the three attributes [the progression in the realization of emptiness] :L2

L3: [Refuting origination, duration and cessation – without affirming their opposite] :L3

The Consequence School describes emptiness as having the three attributes of non-fabrication, immutability, and independence.

What exactly do the three attributes of the reality nature mean?

The Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path provides a brief description of fabrication and dependence:

~ Being fabricated means not existing earlier and being created as a new arising.

Depending on another means depending on causes and conditions.¹⁰⁸

The Four Interwoven Annotations slightly expands on this. Jam-yang-shay-ba's commentary states:

~ Here, being fabricated means not existing earlier and being created later as a new arising, or being produced later contingently. Depending on another means depending on other causes and conditions.

Here, Tsong Khapa says depending on another means depending on causes and conditions, and the Four Interwoven Annotations concurs. However, earlier in the Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path, Tsong Khapa speaks of the entity attribute (non-fabrication) as not being produced by causes and conditions and the certification attribute (independence) as "not depending on another."¹¹⁰ This confuses the entity and certification attributes of non-fabrication and independence, since they both seem to mean not depending on causes and conditions. (See page 87 for a discussion of the three attributes.)

In order to differentiate the two, an exegetical patch is applied. This can be seen in Dra-di Ge-shay's gloss in a note, where he qualifies "not depending" with "not depending on another positing awareness." Later in the Great Exposition, Tsong Khapa states that non-dependence on a positing consciousness is the meaning Chandrakirti intends in his use of the term "non-dependence on another" in his commentary on Aryadeva's Four Hundred (see page 59).

"Non-fabricated" has the meaning "not existing earlier and being created later as a new arising." Non-fabrication is a feature of emptiness since emptiness — like all permanent phenomena — is not created. The term "immutable" is not mentioned in this context but one assumes it means "permanent" in the sense of non-momentary. Immutability is also a feature of emptiness, just as it is a feature of all permanent phenomena.

The independence attribute is more problematic. How can the reality nature — emptiness, a dependent-arising like all phenomena — be endowed with an attribute of independence? After all, in Tsong Khapa's own system, emptiness, although ultimate, is similar to all other phenomena in that it arises dependently. Is it not the case that being a dependent-arising is inconsistent with being independent?

L3: [The progressive understanding of the exact object of refutation, or of the type of independence that is refuted] :L3

The answer is that "independence" is given a variety of meanings in the Gelug system.

Just in the context of speaking of dependent-arising, Gelugs discuss three types of dependence:

- arising through meeting ('phrad 'byung, praptyasamutpada),
- existing in reliance (Itos grub, apeksyasamutpada), and
- dependent-existence (rten grub, pratityasamutpada).

Nga-wang-bel-den (born 1797 in Mongolia), in his Annotations for (Jam-yang-shay-ba's) "Great Exposition of Tenets," Freeing the Knots of the Difficult Points, Precious Jewel of Clear Thought, discusses these three types of dependence as set forth in Jang-gya:

- "Arising through meeting" is held to refer to a thing that is a dependent-arising that is produced by its causes. This is a lower school tenet and also a Consequentialist tenet.
- "Existing in reliance" means phenomena — compounded and non-compounded — gain their own entity in reliance on their own parts...This is more pervasive than the earlier and just the meaning that is actually indicated is accepted by other [i.e., Autonomist] Proponents of the Middle and is also a Consequentialist tenet.
- "Dependent-existence" refers to the fact that all phenomena are dependently imputed. They are established just as imputations on their own bases of imputation. This is a special feature of only the excellent [Consequentialist] system.

"Arising through meeting." The dependence of compounded phenomena on their causes and conditions is called "mere conditionality."¹¹⁹

Nga-wang-bel-den's Annotations states:

- ~ "Mere conditionality" is a name for the dependent arising of compounded phenomena. It is explained that only Consequentialists assert causes as being dependent on effects and that all Buddhist proponents of tenets assert that effects depend on causes.

Nga-wang-bel-den's note makes the two points that (1) mere conditionality refers only to the dependent-arising of impermanent things and (2) whereas all Buddhist proponents of tenets assert that effects depend on causes, only Consequentialists assert causes as being dependent on effects. .

"Existing in reliance" Permanent phenomena do not depend on causes and conditions. Instead, non-products such as space, emptiness, and so forth, "exist in reliance"; i.e., they gain their own entity in reliance on their own parts. Existing in reliance on a collection of parts is the second meaning of "dependence" in the context of discussing dependent-arising that are both permanent and impermanent.

"Dependent-existence" Refers to the fact that all phenomena are dependently imputed. Permanent and impermanent phenomena arise in dependence on a conceptual consciousness that imputes them.

L3: [The object refuted according to the Madhyamika-Prasangika school is the very subtle

thing that appears to be not merely imputed by the mind – inherently existing, on its own ...]
:L3

Jam-yang-shay-ba's Great Exposition of Tenets quotes Chandrakirti as a source that the meaning of "no dependence on another" is that phenomena are not dependent on thought.

Jam-yang-shay-ba states:

~ Chandrakirti's commentary [on Aryadeva's Four Hundred] says, "Here, that which has its own entity, has nature, has its own power, or has no dependence on another would exist by itself; therefore, it would not be a dependent-arising."¹²¹

Tsong Khapa takes this statement by Chandrakirti — that "no dependence on another" means the opposite of "dependent-arising" — to imply that independence and nature are equivalent. Therefore, independence must have a broader meaning than "non-dependence on causes and conditions," for such is too narrow an identification of nature. Gelug exegetes take Chandrakirti's statement about non-dependence to mean that an object is not posited through the power of a conventional consciousness. This is the third meaning of dependence in the context of dependent-arising: "dependent-existence" refers to the fact that all phenomena are dependently imputed.

L3: [Ultimately, dependent-arising means dependent on the thought, on the labeling] :L3

From Tsong Khapa's point of view, the opposite of "dependent-existence" means a thing is not posited through the power of a conventional consciousness. In the absence of dependent-existence, things would not be dependent-arisings and thus things would be established by way of their nature.

Nga-wang-bel-den's Annotations traces this opinion through Tsong Khapa to Chandrakirti:

~ Tsong Khapa's "Great Exposition of Special Insight" states that this passage [i.e., Chandrakirti's commentary on Aryadeva's Four Hundred] states that own-entity, nature, own-power, and no dependence on another are equivalent:

~ Here, "no dependence on another" is not no dependence on causes and conditions; rather, "other" refers to an object-possessor, a conventional consciousness, and not being posited through the power of that [object-possessor] is called "no dependence on another."

~ Therefore, "independent existence" is an entity of these objects which has its own uncommon mode of subsistence or abiding. Just this is called own-entity and nature.

This passage shows Tsong Khapa defining "non-dependence on another" in a context where "other" refers to a conventional consciousness. He does so in commentary on Chandrakirti's statement that any phenomenon that exists by itself without the need of such positing would not be a dependent-arising.

L3: [Two more types of dependence ??] :L3

Tsong Khapa also employed a relative meaning of "independent" in his discussion of a thing's "mine" (see page 85). To exemplify the independence of "the mine," he gives "one's servant" and "one's wealth." One's servant and wealth do not depend on others in the sense that others do not control one's servant or wealth since oneself controls them. Thus, this fourth type of dependence has the meaning of "beyond one's control." The corollary, independence, has the meaning of "under one's control."

A fifth meaning of "dependence" — and therefore also its corollary, "independence" — surfaces on the occasion of explaining how a feature of emptiness is non-dependence on

another, at which point both Chandrakirti and Tsong Khapa employ a comparative meaning of "independent." This meaning explains how the reality nature is independent in the sense of not being a changeably relative phenomenon, like long and short or hot and cold.

The Clear Words states:

~ That which, even in all three times, is the non-fabricated fundamental entity non-mistaken in fire, that which is not the subsequent arising of something that did not arise previously, and that which does not have reliance on causes and conditions, as do the heat of water or near and far, or long and short, is said to be the nature [of fire].¹²³

Chandrakirti employs a special meaning of "dependent" here — dependently comparative. Hot is only posited relative to cold, long is posited relative to short, and so forth. Using this identification of dependent, emptiness can be said not to be dependent in the sense that emptiness does not require a comparable phenomenon for its positing. That is to say, whereas a person's perception of a thing as hot may switch to a perception of that same thing as cold in the presence of something hotter, and the perception of long may become a perception of short in the presence of something longer, emptiness will never be perceived to switch to become something not empty.

In the Great Exposition, Tsong Khapa provides little gloss to Chandrakirti's usage of "dependent," and the Four Interwoven Annotations also presents an uninspired paraphrase. Neither commentarial source remarks upon Chandrakirti's unusual usage of dependent.

However, in the Four Interwoven Annotations, Jam-yang-shay-ba speaks of nature in terms of a fundamental entity that existed from the start and is independent:

~ [Nature] from the beginning does not depend on another — unlike the heat of water which depends on fire as a condition and does not depend on a positing factor because it does not pass beyond a natural emptiness from the very start, without being like positing here and there, long and short, and so forth, in dependence on any [comparative] basis.

L3: [About the “dependence” of nature] :L3

We have seen five meanings of "dependent" employed in Gelug commentary.

-- The reality nature cannot be said to be independent in the first sense of "arising through meeting" since it does not depend on being produced by causes and conditions.

-- It cannot be said to be independent in the senses of "existing in reliance" and "dependent-existence," since even emptiness depends on its parts for gaining its own entity and also is imputed onto its bases of imputation.

-- The reality nature is not independent according to the fourth type of dependence because issues pertaining to one's control of the reality nature do not apply.

-- However, the reality nature can be said to be independent from comparisons, the corollary of the fifth meaning of dependence, because emptiness, unlike hot and cold, does not switch to something else following comparison.

In this way, through employing this narrow meaning of independent as "independence from comparisons," Chandrakirti, Tsong Khapa, and their Gelug followers are able to assert an independent reality nature without violating the central Consequence School premise that emptiness itself is a dependent-arising. Perhaps most importantly, they are able to contend that, in the Treatise on the Middle (XV.2), Nagarjuna speaks of a reality nature endowed with the three features or attributes of emptiness.

L1: [4. Natures that do not exist [antidote to realism / eternalism] :L1

~ When there is an apprehension of things existing as established by way of their nature, conceptions apprehending extremes arise.

~ — Tsong Khapa's Illumination of the Thought

L2: [What it means to exist] :L2

In previous chapters we looked into Tsong Khapa's identification of the reality nature.

L3: [The definitions of nature that are refuted] :L3

Now let us observe his refutation of natures that do not exist.

From Tsong Khapa's point of view, natures that do not exist are:

- a fabricated nature, such as the heat of fire,
- the Consequence School's uncommon object-to-be-negated nature (a thing's establishment by way of its own entity),
- an object-to-be-negated nature possessing the three attributes that is mistakenly held to be the Consequence School's uncommon object-to-be-negated nature, and
- a nature that is positive and independent that is asserted by Dol-bo Shay-rap-gyel-tsen.

All of these natures are identified and refuted in the Great Exposition's delineation of the view of selflessness.

The identification of an object-to-be-negated that is refuted in the delineation of the view of selflessness is a topic that does not receive much attention in Consequentialist writings before Tsong Khapa, although it does originate in Indian Buddhism.

L3: [Tsong Khapa's clarification of the object of negation: innovation or simple elaboration?] :L3

Since Tsong Khapa's development of the topic goes far beyond the mention it receives in India, his developed discussion of the object-to-be-negated deserves close scrutiny:

- is he elaborating upon a received tradition that implicitly describes an object-to-be-negated,
- or is he innovatively supplying an object-to-be-negated that goes beyond the thought of the Middle Way School's Indian forebears?

L4: [The exact object of refutation: inherent existence, and not any existence] :L4

To decide this question, let us first examine the role of the identification of the object-to-be-negated in the Consequence School.

One of the basic teachings of the Buddha is that suffering is the result of activities¹²⁷ that are either virtuous or non-virtuous.¹²⁸ These activities occur because they are prompted at their root by an individual's innate ignorance. This ignorance is the extreme conception of a self of persons and phenomena.

According to Tsong Khapa (see his commentary in the Illumination of the Thought below), Chandrakirti's Introduction (VI. 116) refers to such conceptions when it states that conceptions arise in the presence of a view that things exist. Chandrakirti's stanza states:

\ ###
\ When things exist, conceptions arise.
\ It has been analyzed how things do not exist.
\ These do not arise without existent things,
\ Just as without fuel fire does not exist.

Chandrakirti's stanza says that when things are seen to be existent, conceptions arise. The opposite is also true: without seeing things as existent, such conceptions do not arise. Seeing things as existent is necessary to the conception of an extreme, just as fuel is necessary to fire.

It is crucial, here, to determine what is meant by existent. Chandrakirti does not explain whether the phrase "things exist"¹³² in the stanza (VI. 116) refers to existence in general, or to a superimposed inherent existence. Tsong Khapa determines that it is the second interpretation that is true.

His commentary in the Illumination of the Thought explains the meaning of "things existing" in Chandrakirti's stanza to be "things existing as established by way of their nature":

~ When there is an apprehension of things existing as established by way of their nature, conceptions apprehending extremes arise. It has been analyzed by reasoning just explained how things do not have establishment by way of their nature and these conceptions apprehending extremes do not arise without apprehending things to be established by way of their nature; for example, without the cause — fuel — the effect — fire — does not exist.¹³⁴

Tsong Khapa's commentary modifies the Introduction stanza VI. 116 so Chandrakirti's statement to the effect that seeing things as existent is ignorance becomes instead a statement that ignorance is seeing things as established by way of their own nature. In Tsong Khapa's system, things appear to be established by way of their own nature, but this appearance is the object-to-be-negated, not the things' mode of subsistence. Seeing things to exist like this is to see them as existent in the wrong way, such that one is mistakenly assenting to the appearance of a thing's object-to-be-negated nature. When one understands that there is such an object-to-be-negated that is deceptive about things, then one can appreciate the need to differentiate between things existing in general and their existing inherently.

The need to differentiate between things existing in general and their existing inherently is the point of Tsong Khapa's statement in the Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path:

~ Therefore, it is clear that you who propound, "If there is no nature, that is to say, establishment by way of own-entity, then what else is there?" have unquestionably not differentiated the two, the lack of inherent existence of a sprout and the non-existence of a sprout, and, due to that, you have also not differentiated the existence of a sprout and the establishment of a sprout by way of its own entity.

Tsong Khapa criticizes those Proponents of the Middle who experience Nagarjuna's dialectic as annihilation. Not understanding that inherent existence can be refuted without refuting existence in general, they believe an existent must be established by way of its own entity. The correct position, according to Tsong Khapa, involves differentiating nominally existent phenomena from the appearances of inherent existence.

Tsong Khapa's statement that "exists" means "exists by way of its nature" is one of his most commonly used exegetical stratagems.

This strategem has its roots in Indian Buddhism. Chandrakirti's Commentary on (Aryadeva's) "Four Hundred" states:

~ According to Proponents of [Truly] Existent Things, as long as there is an existence of things, there is also an own-entity of them (rang gi ngo bo, svarupasya),¹³⁶

L4: [The four differentiated states] :L4

The Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path — commenting upon this passage in Chandrakirti's Commentary on (Aryadeva's) "Four Hundred" — explains its import:

~ As long as you do not realize this differentiation by the glorious Chandrakirti between the four — inherent existence and existence and lack of inherent existence and non-existence, you will unquestionably fall to the two extremes, whereby you will not realize the meaning of the middle free from the extremes.

~ For, when a phenomenon comes to be utterly without establishment by way of its own entity, it will come to be utterly non-existent. In that case, since there is utterly no way to posit cause and effect within the emptiness that is an emptiness of inherent existence, you fall to an extreme of annihilation.

~ Also, once a phenomenon is asserted as existing, it must be asserted as established by way of its own entity. In that case, since there comes to be no way to take cause and effect as illusory-like, appearing to exist inherently whereas they do not, you fall to an extreme of permanence. ¹³⁷

Four differentiated states are set forth in the Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path:

- inherent existence,
- existence,
- lack of inherent existence, and
- non-existence.

-- The first, inherent existence, does not exist but is conceived to exist by a mistaken awareness.

-- The second, existence, is used in this context to mean conventional existence, the only sort of existence asserted by Tsong Khapa.

-- The third state, lack of inherent existence, is the ultimate truth as asserted in the Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path.

-- Finally, non-existence is not being a phenomenon. Non-existents, such as the horns of a rabbit, are utterly without an entity.

Tsong Khapa's point is that one can go wrong with respect to the Middle Way view

- by conflating inherent existence with existence in general,
- and mistaking the lack of inherent existence for non-existence.

Differentiating well between these four is a way to avoid falling to the two extremes.

L4: [So everything is not inherently existent, but still not completely non-existent either — the Middle Way between the two extremes — they are said to be conventionally existent as a skillful means] :L4

How is it that inherent existence — the object-to-be-negated — is non-existent?

Dreyfus explains that it is the putative object grasped by our own minds — it is not the actual mode of subsistence of things:

~ The Gelug-ba's point is that Nagarjuna's attack against the view that things exist is in fact directed at what the Gelug thinkers refer to as the object-to-be-negated (dgag bya),

ultimate existence (don dam par yod pa), real existence (bden par grub pa), or intrinsic existence (rang bzhin gyis grub pa). According to this interpretation, Nagarjuna is negating the putative real existence of things, not their conventional existence. Things do not truly exist, but they do exist nevertheless because they have a conventional validity that can be ascertained. Since they are observed by valid cognition, things exist.¹³⁸

As Dreyfus remarks, positing nominal existence allows Consequentialists to interpret Nagarjuna's statements that things do not exist as a statement that things do not inherently exist but that they do conventionally exist.¹³⁹

Dreyfus emphasizes the importance of this distinction between inherent existence and nominal existence for the tradition when he says:

~ Therefore, positing the meaning of nominal existence as being different from real existence and as fulfilling the meaning of existence is a crucial move in Gelug philosophy. It allows this tradition to reconcile the antisubstantialist character of Buddhist philosophy with common-sense.¹⁴⁰

Gelugs posit the meaning of nominal existence as:

-- different from inherent existence and
-- fulfilling the meaning of "existence" (dngos po, bhava) in the works of Nagarjuna and Chandrakirti.

For Dreyfus, this differentiation between inherent existence and nominal existence reconciles the antisubstantialist character of Buddhist philosophy with common-sense. This is because nominally existent phenomena do not need to withstand analysis, as do inherently existent phenomena, and yet they fulfill the meaning of existence since they are observed by certifying valid consciousnesses.

L4: [The importance of clarifying the object of refutation before applying the reasoning: not too narrow, not too broad] :L4

Tsong Khapa makes the related point that it is necessary for those seeking liberation to identify the object-to-be-negated. The general existence of a phenomenon is not refuted, but the inherent existence of a phenomenon is to be identified and refuted. It is crucial that the object-to-be-negated nature be identified precisely.

The Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path begins its discussion of this identification when it states:

~ Just as, for example, in order to ascertain that a certain person is not here, you must know the person who is not here, so in order to ascertain the meaning of "selflessness" and "lack of [inherent] nature" (rang bzhin med) you must also identify well that self and nature that do not exist. This is because, if the [meaning] generality of that which is to be negated does not appear well, then also the negative of that [object-to-be-negated] will not unmistakably be ascertained.

Here Tsong Khapa is saying that realization of emptiness must be preceded by an identification of the nature that does not exist. Failure to identify this putative object means that its negative — emptiness — will not clearly be seen either. In discussing the importance of the correct identification of the object-to-be-negated, Tsong Khapa cites Shantideva's¹⁴² (8th century C.E.) *Entering the Deeds of Bodhisattvas*¹⁴³ (IX.140ab) as his locus classicus:

\ ###

\ Without contacting the entity which is imputed,
\ One will not apprehend the lack of that entity.¹

- - - other translation:

\ ###
\ Without contacting the superimposed existent
\ One cannot apprehend its non-existence.

\ ###
\ [9:138]
\ [Samkhya:] If verifying cognition is not verifying cognition, then is that not verified falsely? In reality, the emptiness of phenomena is not ascertained through that verifying cognition.

\ ###
\ [Madhyamika:] Without detecting an imagined thing, its non-existence is not apprehended. Therefore, if a thing is false, its non-existence is clearly false.

\ ###
\ Thus, when in a dream a son has died, the thought "He does not exist" prevents the arising of the thought of his existence; and that too is false.

This quotation from Entering the Deeds of Bodhisattvas — which occurs in the context of refuting the Samkhya assertion of self-production — is employed by Tsong Khapa to affirm the importance of identifying the object-to-be-negated. Although this statement does not explicitly use the term "object-to-be-negated," it serves to point out the importance of the correct identification of the object-to-be-negated.

In the Great Exposition, Tsong Khapa discusses an object-to-be-negated that is insufficient or too narrow (literally, "underpervaded"). This section together with its complement — the previous section of the Great Exposition, which describes the refutation of an object-to-be-negated that is too broad — completes the identifications of overly-broad and insufficient negations that are intended to assist Proponents of the Middle School in the avoidance of extreme views. It points to an understanding of the actual object-to-be-negated asserted by Tsong Khapa: that things are established by way of their own entities.

L4: [Tsong Khapa's contributions] :L4

Tsong Khapa addresses the topic of essential nature in his commentaries on Nagarjuna's Treatise (XV), found in the Ocean of Reasonings and in the Great Exposition. The Ocean of Reasonings (see Part Two, page 159) addresses the text in the traditional commentarial manner, following the logical flow of Chapter XV. This means that Tsong Khapa's commentary on Chapter XV in the Ocean of Reasonings mainly addresses the philosophical import of refuting the two-cornered "tetralemmas" of (1) self-entities/other-entities and (2) being/non-being.

Interestingly, Tsong Khapa's discussion of Chapter XV in the Great Exposition (see Part Two, page 179) has very different aims. First, Tsong Khapa uses his discussion of essential nature in Chapter XV to refute the assertion by "some Tibetans" that the Consequentialist object-to-be-negated is that imaginary nature that possesses the three attributes of being non-fabricated, immutable, and independent (see page 40). Then, Tsong Khapa reaffirms Chandrakirti's claim that Nagarjuna refers to a reality nature that possesses the three

attributes (see page 147). Finally, he refutes the assertion by Dol-bo Shay-rap-gyel-tsen (1292-1361) that reality is positive and independent (see page 104).

It is interesting that Tsong Khapa presents his detailed identification of an object-to-be-negated as though it were normal for Buddhists to do so; for although Shantideva and others may mention the concept of the object-to-be-negated, they do not clearly and explicitly employ the term "object-to-be-negated" in this context of identifying the putative object of innate ignorance. Tsong Khapa does not offer other citations from Indian sources discussing the identification of an object-to-be-negated, and I have been unable to find any Indian Buddhist texts that speak of the object-to-be-negated in an explicit manner.

Perhaps the closest Chandrakirti comes to presenting an explicit discussion of the object-to-be-negated is in the Clear Words (XV), where he employs the term "object of negation." The usage appears when explaining that someone cognizing emptiness might say, "That does not exist," due to realizing that the object-to-be-negated does not exist.

The Clear Words says:

~ But, someone who, like those without ophthalmia with respect to the falling hairs observed by those with ophthalmia, does not observe anything at all says, "That does not exist," and thus propounds non-existence due to the non-existence of the object of negation.

Here Chandrakirti refers to a Superior who has cognized emptiness and is able to pronounce authoritatively upon the non-existence of just that which is seen by the ignorant — inherent existence. Such a person is like one without ophthalmia, who is able to certify that there are no falling hairs. Tsong Khapa's commentary upon this passage adds more information regarding the observable nature of the negative of the object-to-be-negated, emptiness.

His Ocean of Reasonings remarks:

~ These [things] that are observed by the power of the ophthalmia of ignorance, if they existed as [their own] suchness, would have to be observed by a Superior's non-contaminated exalted wisdom of meditative equipoise; but instead, in the manner of not seeing those at all, their suchness is the object of that exalted wisdom. This is because that exalted wisdom realizes the suchness of things, and because just the non-establishment of things as nature is the suchness of those things and because, whereas if the object-to-be-negated existed, it would be observable, just due to not observing it, one is posited as having realized the negative of the object-to-be-negated.¹⁵⁰

Tsong Khapa makes the point that things themselves are not suchness, else they would be observed by the meditative stabilization of Superiors, which is a non-contaminated wisdom that observes suchness. Such a wisdom does not observe things; rather, this exalted wisdom observes the suchness that is the non-establishment of things as nature, i.e., their emptiness. He describes the observation of this suchness as occurring in "the manner of not seeing these at all."¹⁵¹ In Tsong Khapa's system, prior to Buddhahood, things other than ultimates do not appear at all to consciousnesses that directly cognize the ultimate.

L2: [Twofold division of the object-to-be-negated [subjective and objective aspects – the duality self vs. world or appearances vs. mind] :L2

In the Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path, Tsong Khapa describes both subjective and objective aspects of the object-to-be-negated:

- ~ In general, there are two objects of negation:
 - ~ -- a path object-to-be-negated
 - ~ -- and an object to be negated by reasoning.
 - ~ The first consists of the two, the afflictive obstructions and the obstructions to omniscience, as described in [Maitreya's] Discrimination of the Middle and the Extremes, which states:
 - ~ It is asserted that one is liberated having exhausted all the obstructions — those which are indicated as the afflictive obstructions and as the obstructions to omniscience.
 - ~ These are the objects of negation that exist among objects of knowledge because if these did not exist, all beings would be liberated without striving.
 - ~ Regarding the object to be negated by reasoning, Nagarjuna's Refutation of Objections states, "Or, some person thinks an emanated woman is a woman. Refuting that wrong conception by means of an emanation is like [refuting] that [object to be negated by reasoning]."
- Nagarjuna's Auto-Commentary to the Refutation of Objections states:
- ~ With respect to an emanated woman who is empty by way of nature (rang bzhin gyis stong pa), a certain person has a wrong conception thinking that the woman exists ultimately. Therefore, due to that wrong conception, desire is generated. A Tathagata or his Hearer emanates an emanation, overcoming that wrong conception. Similarly, my words, which are empty like an emanation, overcome the conception of inherent existence with respect to all things which are without inherent existence and empty, like an emanated woman.
 - ~ Accordingly, there are two [objects of negation]:
 - ~ -- wrongly conceiving consciousnesses that are called "the object-to-be-negated" and
 - ~ -- inherent existence that is apprehended by them that is called "the object-to-be-negated."
 - ~ However, the main of these is the latter [i.e., the object to be negated by reasoning] because in order to overturn the incorrect consciousness, one must initially refute the object apprehended by that.¹⁵³

In this passage, Tsong Khapa divides the object-to-be-negated topic into subjective and objective spheres.

-- The subjective object-to-be-negated, i.e., the path object-to-be-negated,¹⁵ consists of the two obstructions, the afflictive obstructions and the obstructions to omniscience.¹⁵ These obstructions are both wrongly conceiving consciousnesses. They exist in the continua of ordinary sentient beings but may be gradually eradicated through meditation.

-- The objective object-to-be-negated, i.e., the object to be negated by reasoning,¹⁵⁸ is the imagined inherent existence. This is the nature misapprehended to exist. In Tsong Khapa's system, the object-to-be-negated nature is a status of objects — establishment from its own side or establishment by way of its own entity — that does not exist and that is merely imagined to exist.

L2: [Nagarjuna is] Refuting a fabricated nature [without affirming its opposite – but the author cannot understand this] :L2

Nagarjuna's Treatise on the Middle (XV), "The Analysis of Nature," investigates and refutes a nature that is fabricated. In the eleven stanzas [of chapter 15] comprising his analysis of nature, he seeks to discredit the possibility that a nature of things is caused.

The Treatise on the Middle states:

\ ###
\ 15:1ab
\ The arising of nature due to causes and conditions (rgyu dang rkyen, hetupratyaya) is not reasonable.161

- ~ 15.1.
- ~ The production of a self-existent thing by a conditioning cause is not possible,
- ~ [For,] being produced through dependence on a cause, a self-existent thing would be "something which is produced" (krtaka).

Chandrakirti's commentary restructures Nagarjuna's declarative statement so that it becomes a reply to an unnamed proponent's objection.

The Clear Words states:

- ~ Objection: A nature of things just exists because of the causal contributors (nye bar len pa, upadana) — the causes and conditions that produce them (de dag skyed par byed pa, tannispadaka).

Here, the objector is arguing for the existence of a nature arisen from a causal process. Tsong Khapa's commentary further identifies that the opponent views nature as a fabricated nature.

His Ocean of Reasonings states:

- ~ Objection: Things exist by way of their nature because [their] causal contributors exist — the causes and conditions, i.e., seeds, ignorance, and so forth, that produce sprouts, compositional factors, and so forth.

Tsong Khapa identifies the nature being discussed here as a nature that arises with the effect of a causal process. A caused nature is unacceptable to Chandrakirti and later Consequentialists, who agree with Nagarjuna's statement in the Treatise on the Middle:

\ ###
\ 15:1ab
\ The arising of nature due to causes and conditions is not reasonable.164

Nagarjuna argues that the nature of a thing must be just that which is non-fabricated about that thing.

The Treatise on the Middle (XV.2cd) states:

\ ###
\ 15:2cd
\ Nature is non-fabricated...1 5

- ~ 15.2.
- ~ How, indeed, will a self-existent thing become "something which is produced"?
- ~ Certainly, a self-existent thing [by definition] is "not-produced" and is independent of anything else.

Not only does Nagarjuna reject a fabricated nature that is produced by causes and conditions, but he also maintains that a nature must be endowed with the three attributes of being non-fabricated, immutable, and independent.

Two of these attributes, independence and non-fabrication, are mentioned in the Treatise on

the Middle (XV.2cd), which says:

```
\      ###  
\      15:2cd  
\      Nature is non-fabricated and does not depend on another.
```

~ 15.2.

- ~ How, indeed, will a self-existent thing become "something which is produced"?
- ~ Certainly, a self-existent thing [by definition] is "not-produced" and is independent of anything else.

The third attribute of a nature is its unchanging state, or immutability, which is mentioned in the Treatise (XV.8cd):

```
\      ###  
\      15.8cd  
\      Change of a nature is never feasible.167
```

~ 8.

- ~ If there would be an existent thing by its own nature, there could not be "non-existence" of that [thing].
- ~ Certainly an existent thing different from its own nature would never obtain.

In these stanzas, Nagarjuna refutes a nature arisen from causes and conditions through asserting that the existence of a causally arisen nature of things is contradictory with the necessity that a nature be non-fabricated, immutable, and independent. If a nature exists, it must not be a product, created by causes and conditions. According to the Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path, "Being fabricated means not existing earlier and being created as a new arising."¹⁶⁸ Thus, nature cannot be fabricated since a nature by definition is not a new arising.

In the Clear Words, Chandrakirti replies to the above-quoted opponent's assertion that caused things have a nature by flinging the opposite consequence that if things have nature, their production by causes and conditions would be unnecessary:

- ~ Response: If things — compositional factors, sprouts, and so forth — have nature, then what need have those existing things for causes and conditions?

Chandrakirti's point is that a thing with its own essential nature has no need for causation since such a nature does not require production. This reasoning is based on the consideration that nature must be unproduced in the sense of being non-fabricated.

Tsong Khapa agrees in the Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path, where he states:

- ~ ...if something is ultimately established, really established, and truly established, then it must not be produced by causes and conditions.¹⁷⁰

Nagarjuna, Chandrakirti, and Tsong Khapa are in agreement that a nature must be non-fabricated. An ultimate nature of things can in part be identified by its feature of non-fabricatedness.

L2: [Heat is not the nature of fire] :L2

Chandrakirti continues to press his attack on a fabricated nature by arguing against the

notion that heat is the nature of fire. The Clear Words (XV) argues against the worldly understanding that heat is the nature of fire and attempts to demonstrate that heat is not the nature of fire, even conventionally. His discussion that heat is not the nature of fire exemplifies Nagarjuna's refutation of a fabricated nature in the Treatise on the Middle (XV). Chandrakirti bases his argument on the Consequentialist position that a nature must be non-fabricated.

The Clear Words says:

~ This [heat] is not suitable to be the nature [of fire] because of lacking a defining character of nature.

Heat is not the nature of fire, and lacks a "defining character of nature," because of being fabricated. As we saw, fabricated means not existing earlier and being newly created. Although Nagarjuna does not mention the commonly held opinion that heat is the nature of fire, he does state that nature is non-fabricated and does not depend on another. Heat is fabricated by causes and conditions — fuel and friction, for instance. Moreover, heat is dependent and mutable — the opposite of their corresponding attributes of a nature, independence and immutability.

Chandrakirti expands upon this description of a nature by asserting that a nature is that which is the innermost entity of a thing, the entity that is the "mine" of something.¹⁷³

The Clear Words states:

~ Here, since "own-nature" (rang gi dngos po, svo bhavah) is nature (rang bzhin, svabhava), that which is the entity that is the "mine" of whatsoever thing is said to be its nature. What is the "mine" of something? That which is non-fabricated.¹⁷

Chandrakirti includes in his description of nature that the non-fabricated aspect of a nature is also "the entity that is the 'mine.'" What is this innermost entity?

Chandrakirti describes it in greater detail in this citation from the Clear Words:

~ That which, even in all three times, is the non-fabricated fundamental entity non-mistaken in fire, that which is not the subsequent arising of something that did not arise previously, and that which does not have reliance on causes and conditions, as do the heat of water or near and far, or long and short, is said to be the nature [of fire].¹⁷⁵

Heat is not qualified to be the nature of fire because it is (1) fabricated in the sense of not existing before and being newly arisen and also (2) produced by causes and conditions. A produced thing cannot be a non-fabricated entity and thus cannot be the nature of fire. For Chandrakirti, the "mine" of something must be non-fabricated.

Tsong Khapa gives a more detailed description of the "innermost entity," i.e., that which is the "mine" of something.

The Ocean of Reasonings states:

~ What — and of what — is the "mine"? That which is a non-fabricated quality of whatsoever substratum is [the "mine"] of that [substratum]. Whatever is fabricated is not the "mine" of that [substratum], like, for example, the heat of water. Whatever does not depend on something else is the "mine" of that [substratum], like for instance, one's servant and one's wealth [which do not depend on someone else, but on oneself]. Whatever does depend on something [or someone] else, is not the "mine" of that [substratum], like for instance, a temporarily loaned thing not under one's control.

To exemplify the independence of the "mine," Tsong Khapa gives the rather curious examples of "one's servant" and "one's wealth."¹⁷⁸ It is curious for Tsong Khapa to label one's servants and one's wealth "independent" because, of course, those two things are dependent-arising. Nevertheless, there is a sense in which they are independent: they are independent of other people's influences, even though this is only because both our servants and our wealth are dependent on our influences.

However, Tsong Khapa is not using these examples to illustrate the Consequentialist meanings of dependence. His more relative intentions come clear when he gives "a temporarily loaned thing not under one's control" as an example for what is not the "mine" of something. Just as a temporarily loaned thing not under one's control is dependent on others, so it can be said in relation to that, that one's servant or wealth is not dependent on others. One's servant and wealth do not depend on others in the sense that others do not control one's servant or wealth since one oneself controls them. Thus, a common usage of dependent is given here as an analogy for a more technical usage.

Tsong Khapa employs examples expressing a qualified type of dependence here, because he employs a narrow usage of dependence discussing the "mine" — dependence on comparisons, such as long and short. This type of qualification is perhaps inevitable on the occasion of explaining how a feature of emptiness (a dependent-arising) can be non-dependence on another.

Noteworthy is the fact that later Gelug exegetes adapt an unusual meaning of dependence so that non-dependence can be a feature of something that is the "mine." In this situation, the reformulating of the meaning of dependence insures that there is nothing contradictory in the assertion that the innermost entity of a thing is independent and yet remains a dependent-arising.

L2: [Categorization of the three attributes into entity, state, and certification [falling more deeply into reification] :L2

Following Nagarjuna's description of the triply-qualified reality nature in the Treatise on the Middle (XV), later Consequentialists devised a scheme placing each attribute in its own category of entity, certification, and state.

Tsong Khapa uses this scheme in his discussion of nature in the Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path:

- the entity attribute is not fabricated by causes and conditions (ngo bo rgyu rkyen gyis bcos ma minpa),
- the conventional certification attribute does not depend on another (tha snyad rnam 'jog chos gzhan la Itos pa med pa),and
- the state attribute is immutable (gzhan du mi 'gyur pa).

This scheme provides a frame for the presentation of the three attributes by speaking of the individual attributes from three generic points of view.

The origin of this categorization of the three attributes is uncertain. It does not appear in Nagarjuna or Chandrakirti, nor does it originate with Tsong Khapa. Nya-cha-wa Tsbn-dru-seng-gay — who studied the commentaries of Chandrakirti with Ba-tsap Nyima-drak — in his 12th-century Ornament of Logical Correctness (a commentary on the Treatise on the Middle) presents an earlier version of the threefold categorization.¹⁸⁰

The Ornament of Logical Correctness presents its commentary on the Treatise on the Middle (XV) in this way:

~ The defining character of objects of uncontaminated exalted wisdom consciousnesses — the natures that are the suchness of phenomena — is that which is endowed with the three qualities of:

~ -- its entity is not fabricated by causes and conditions (ngo bo rgyu rkyen gyis bcos ma minpa),

~ -- its conventional certification does not depend on another (tha snyad rnam 'jog chos gzhan la Itos pa med pa), and

~ -- [its state is] immutable (gzhan du mi 'gyur pa).m

Nya-cha-wa Tson-dru-seng-gay omits mention of the category of a state attribute, immutability, but this omission is probably without significance. Further research may determine that the categorization of the three attributes into entity, certification, and state originated with Ba-tsap.

L2: [Confusing a nature of things having the three attributes with that which is to be negated] :L2

In the Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path, Tsong Khapa treats the topic of nature at length in the section entitled "The Refutation of an Identification of the Object-to-be-negated That Is Too Narrow." In this section, Tsong Khapa denounces the position of certain unnamed Tibetans who assert that the Treatise on the Middle (XV) expresses the Consequence School's object-to-be-negated in a manner that is insufficient or partial from the point of view of being too narrow, or of too small scope.¹⁸³

The word "narrow" can have many meanings, but here Je Tsong Khapa is specifically referring to the identification of an object-to-be-negated nature merely being a nature endowed with the three attributes¹⁸ of being non-fabricated, immutable, and independent. Tsong Khapa ascribes these three attributes as features of emptiness, but he does not consider them to be the uncommon object-to-be-negated of the Consequence School.

The Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path makes the following statement (with bracketed commentary by Dra-di Ge-shay writing in the Four Interwoven Annotations):

~ In general, if it were asserted that external and internal things such as sprouts and so forth are established as such natures having the three attributes, then Proponents of the Middle also would have to refute such [but the refutation of such a nature is not sufficient].

It is clear that the Gelug system does not at all agree that refuting a nature endowed with these three attributes constitutes a refutation of the nature that represents the "self in selflessness. Briefly, the negated nature is said to be "wider" than a nature endowed with the three attributes in the sense that it is the object conceived by an innate ignorance. The nature having the three attributes, on the other hand, is said to be "narrower" in that it is an object conceived of by a learned ignorance.

These confused Tibetans (perhaps the abbots of Sang-pu — see page 40) mistakenly believed that the presentation in Chapter XV of a nature endowed with three attributes is descriptive of the Consequentialist's uncommon object-to-be-negated. Tsong Khapa disagrees with their identification of the three attributes as the object-to-be-negated. His reaction to their

opinion that he finds confused is twofold:

- the three attributes are posited as features of emptiness and
- the three attributes are not subtle enough to be identified as the Consequence School object-to-be-negated.

Writing in the Four Interwoven Annotations, Jam-yang-shay-ba makes these two points:

~ Since these [three attributes] are a feature of emptiness, how could the nature [mentioned in the Treatise] be suitable as the object-to-be-negated! One who propounds such, [i.e., that the object-to-be-negated nature possesses the three attributes] has not identified the object-to-be-negated well.¹⁸⁸

The first of these reactions — that the three attributes are posited as features of emptiness — is dictated by Chandrakirti's insistence that Nagarjuna's discussion of a triply-qualified nature concerns the reality nature.

To indicate this,

The Clear Words states:

~ What is this nature? It is emptiness.

Tsong Khapa is following the tradition of Chandrakirti when he holds that the triply-qualified nature refers to the attributes of emptiness. The second of Tsong Khapa's reactions to the identification of the three attributes as the object-to-be-negated — that the three attributes are not subtle enough to be identified as the Consequence School object-to-be-negated — is more innovative.

L2: [Tsong Khapa's identification of the object-to-be-negated [inherent existence, establishment by way of its own entity, independently of the labeling] :L2

Tsong Khapa denies that negation of just these three attributes is sufficient to be the actual object-to-be-negated in the Consequence School. To underscore this point, Tsong Khapa's annotators draw a parallel between identifying the object-to-be-negated as the nature having the three attributes and citing "thing" in order to identify a pot.

Writing in the Four Interwoven Annotations, Dra-di Ge-shay states:

~ For, like the example of showing the entity of thing (dngos po, bhava) when identifying pot, identifying the uncommon object-to-be-negated of the view [of emptiness] as this nature that possesses the three attributes [is incorrect because] such a nature is wider than that.¹⁹⁰

It is incorrect to identify the object-to-be-negated as this nature that possesses the three attributes because the three attributes are wider than the object-to-be-negated. Why are they being said here to be wider when they have already been identified as too narrow? The Four Interwoven Annotations do not elaborate, but the three attributes are probably being called "wide" here because they are not just limited to discussions of the object-to-be-negated since they are features of a reality nature, and thus can be applied to a discussion of emptiness also. As the example demonstrates, citing "thing" does not identify pot — "thing" is too wide. Citing the three attributes does not identify the object-to-be-negated because these three actually identify the reality nature.

From Tsong Khapa's point of view, the actual object-to-be-negated of the Consequence School is more subtle than the three attributes: it is a thing's establishment by way of its own

entity¹⁹¹ or from its own side.¹⁹²

The Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path states:

~ There does not exist in phenomena even a particle of the nature that is establishment by way of a thing's own entity.¹⁹³

Tsong Khapa reveals more of his understanding of the object-to-be-negated being "establishment by way of a thing's own entity" or "establishment from a thing's own side" in the Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path:

~ Compounded phenomena such as eyes, and so forth, are not established as a nature in the sense of establishment by way of own entity or nature... Hence, [compounded phenomena such as eyes, and so forth] are not established as any nature. Although the ultimate truth is established [as the nature in the sense of] positing reality as nature, [an ultimate truth] is posited by way of its two positors, non-fabrication and non-dependence on another, and hence [the ultimate] does not at all come to be established by way of its own entity. Therefore [the ultimate] is only established conventionally.¹⁹⁴

Tsong Khapa makes it clear that phenomena do not possess the object-to-be-negated nature, and that includes emptiness itself. Nothing at all is established by way of its own nature, and refutation of such a status eliminates the most subtle ignorance regarding the self of persons and phenomena.

Although Chandrakirti in the Clear Words does not elaborate upon Nagarjuna's discussion of the three attributes — except to explain them as the attributes of the reality nature — his Commentary on (Aryadeva's) "Four Hundred" is reminiscent of the Treatise on the Middle (XV.2) in its description of the object-to-be-negated nature as independent:

~ Here "self" is a nature of phenomena, that is, non-dependence on another. The non-existence of this is selflessness.

Chandrakirti appears to be taking a position that Tsong Khapa asserts to be confused and insufficient — that the triply-qualified nature is the object-to-be-negated.

His Clear Words also describes an entity of suchness¹⁹⁵ that possesses the three attributes:

~ What is this suchness? It is that entity of suchness that does not change and always abides. For, that which is not produced in any way, because of not being fabricated and because of not relying on another, is called the nature of fire and so forth.

Later Gelug exegetes such as Nga-wang-bel-den place an interpretive spin on Chandrakirti's description (in the previous citation) of the object-to-be-negated, in order to make his statement accord with that of Tsong Khapa.

Nga-wang-bel-den's Annotations states:

~ ...non-dependence on another in this [statement by Chandrakirti] is to be taken as establishment in the object from the point of view of its own entity and not being posited through the force of another, i.e., a conventional consciousness. This is called "self" or "nature".

Nga-wang-bel-den interprets Chandrakirti's use of "independent" in two ways: (1) "independent" means establishment in the object from the point of view of its own entity (which Tsong Khapa considers to be more subtle than independence in the triad of qualities) and (2) "independent" means not being posited through the force of a conventional consciousness.

L2: [Innate versus artificial ignorance: refuting that the three attributes are the object-to-be-negated nature] :L2

Je Tsong Khapa — in denying that the three attributes are the object-to-be-negated nature — makes the point that the ignorance that binds creatures in cyclic existence must be innate¹ rather than artificial.²⁰⁰

The Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path states:

~ When the view is delineated, one is to consider the refutation of the conceived object of innate ignorance to be the main point, and refute the conceived object of artificial ignorance as a branch of that.

Tsong Khapa's point is that the conception of the three attributes is not innate, but rather is artificial or learned. Since conceiving of the three attributes is not an innate ignorance but an artificial one, realizing the lack of the three attributes in impermanent phenomena is missing the main point.

Tsong Khapa's brief discussion does not attempt to provide reasonings proving that the conception of the three attributes is learned. However, to better illustrate his point, Lo-sang-dor-jay²⁰² (20th century), in his Ship for Entering into the Ocean of Textual Systems, Decisive Analysis of (Tsong Khapa's) "Stages of the Path to Enlightenment," offers the example of an ant to demonstrate that the conception of the three attributes is learned:

~ ...that which possesses the three such attributes is not the final object to be negated by a correct sign analyzing the ultimate because a valid cognition that realizes a sprout as empty of possessing the three features does not realize the opposite of the referent object of the conception of true existence which conceives a sprout to truly exist. That the reason is so follows because

~ -- the conception of true existence exists in the continua of ants and so forth whose minds have not been affected by tenets and

~ -- they do not conceive phenomena as possessing the three attributes.

Since the conception of inherent existence is an innate ignorance, it exists even in the minds of insects. Therefore, that conception cannot be that a thing has a nature endowed with the three attributes. For, conceiving of a nature having the three attributes in a thing is a misconception learned from wrong scriptures and/or reasoning. Insects do not have this sort of misconception, or any other misconceptions derived from wrong tenets. Thus, this cannot be the root innate conception of self because not all creatures share it.

An artificially conceived status of objects is an ignorance that is learned in this life through incorrect scriptures and/or reasoning. However, this artificially conceived status is not the putative object of innate ignorance, and refuting a coarser artificial conception is not an antidote to the innate conception and thus will not bring about liberation.

In laying the ground for the argument that refuting the three attributes only identifies artificial ignorance, the Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path draws a parallel between two other insufficient refutations and that of the three attributes:

~ If, not knowing that the main thing is to use the artificial as a branch of that, one forsook refuting the mode of apprehension of an innately ignorant consciousness and at the time of refuting a self of persons refuted a permanent, unitary, independent self and at the time of refuting a self of phenomena refuted (1) apprehended objects that are partless

particles and (2) apprehending consciousnesses that are partless moments and (3) the nature possessing the three attributes, and so forth — that are imputed only by proponents of tenets — then such refutations are unsuitable in all ways.

Tsong Khapa is saying that these three insufficient refutations are not the modes of apprehension of an innately ignorant consciousness but instead are modes of apprehension of artificial ignorant consciousnesses. Although he does not mention textual sources for this threefold enumeration of the modes of apprehension of artificial ignorant consciousness, the first two modes are discussed in Gelug texts on tenets, where

- the conception of a permanent, unitary, independent self is a coarse afflictive obstruction for all Buddhist schools of tenets below the Consequence School, and
- partless particles and moments are asserted to be ultimate truths in the Great Exposition School.²⁰⁶

According to this same scheme of tenets, the Consequence School asserts that the conception of a self-sufficient person is a coarse afflictive obstruction, and also asserts non-establishment by way of a thing's own nature as the principal object of meditation.

Tsong Khapa's argument in the Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path makes another point: the three attributes are not subtle enough to be the object-to-be-negated nature because they are refuted even in the Great Exposition and Sutra Schools. Since these schools are "lower" than the Consequence School, it follows they must have as their object-to-be-negated a coarser object than that propounded by the Consequence School. Dra-di Ge-shay — contributing in the Four Interwoven Annotations to Tsong Khapa's twofold reason why the triply-qualified nature is not the object-to-be-negated — provides a succinct statement of Gelug reasoning on this point:

~ For, our own schools such as the Great Exposition and Sutra Schools, and so forth, have already established that products, compounded phenomena, are created by causes and conditions and that they change state by way of disintegrating each moment. Therefore if the object-to-be-negated [is as you say it is, then] there would be the faults that (1) it would not be necessary to prove the lack of existence by nature to those schools — the Great Exposition and Sutra Schools, and so forth — and (2) those Proponents of the Great Exposition, Proponents of Sutra, and so forth, even would absurdly cognize the lack of existence by nature of things. Hence, how could your identification be getting at the final uncommon object-to-be-negated for the view realizing emptiness!²⁰⁷

The quotation makes the two points that if the three attributes were the object-to-be-negated then

- it would not be necessary to prove the lack of inherent existence to Hearers because they would already assert it themselves, since they have refutations of the three attributes.
- Also, those Great Exposition and Sutra School proponents would absurdly cognize the lack of inherent existence of things since the lack of inherent existence would be realized through the refutation of the three attributes.

L2: [Modern scholars on Nagarjuna's triply-qualified nature] :L2

Some modern non-Tibetan scholars hold — in common with Tsong Khapa's unnamed Tibetan disputants — that the Treatise on the Middle (XV.2) speaks of a non-existent object-to-be-negated nature.

- Richard Robinson holds that Nagarjuna speaks of a non-existent independent nature in

Chapter XV. Richard

-- Richard Hayes concurs with Robinson's statement that "It is absurd to maintain that a svabhava exists."

Robinson states:

~ If it [i.e., the svabhava spoken of by Nagarjuna] exists, it must belong to an existent entity, that is, it must be conditioned, dependent on other entities, and possessed of causes. But by definition it is free from conditions, non-dependent on others, and not caused. Therefore, it is absurd to maintain that a svabhava exists.

-- D. S. Ruegg is also confident that Nagarjuna is discussing a non-existent nature in XV.2. When Ruegg discusses the definition of svabhava, he states that it must be "independent of any other thing causing or conditioning it," and he also claims that following the tetralemmic refutations of the Treatise, "No entity possessing a svabhava of any kind is to be postulated."

Giving a brief synopsis of the subject-matter of Chapter XV, Ruegg states:

~ (XV) Own being (svabhava, 'aseity', which would be entailed by the causality of hetu-pratyayas). This notion is subjected to a critique showing that it is not compatible with the idea of production by causes and conditions because by definition svabhava should be independent of any other thing causing or conditioning it; it is therefore not produced.

Ruegg understands the non-fabricated svabhava to be a non-existent. He states that it is subjected to a critique by Nagarjuna since it is not compatible with the idea of production by causes and conditions. This description of Chapter XV runs counter to the assertions by Chandrakirti and Tsong Khapa that it is a fabricated nature that is being subjected to critique, not an independent nature of aseity. According to them, the independent nature, emptiness, is not subjected to critique in Chapter XV, but is simply described as possessing the three features of non-fabrication, independence, and immutability.

-- Jay Garfield feels that Nagarjuna's purpose in writing Chapter XV is to "reject the coherence of the concept of essence." He believes that the only "essence" (Garfield's translation of svabhava) spoken of by Nagarjuna is non-existent.

Garfield states: .

~ Essence by definition is eternal and independent. So it can't arise dependently. Chapter XV: 1, 2 develop this point directly. But since all entities arise dependently, it follows that

For Garfield, Nagarjuna is describing an essence of which phenomena are empty.

He states:

~ In these first two verses, Nagarjuna indicates the three cardinal characteristics of an essence: An essence (or an entity that exists in virtue of possessing an essence) is uncaused, independent of other phenomena, and not fabricated from other things. It is important to bear this in mind in any Madhyamika analysis of emptiness. For when Nagarjuna argues that phenomena are all empty, it is of essence in this sense that they are empty.²¹⁵

Garfield asserts that phenomena are empty of the putative nature having the three attributes and also feels this is taught in the first two stanzas. He identifies the meaning intended by the term svabhava to be the non-existent nature possessing the three attributes of non-fabrication, independence, and immutability.

-- William Ames' discussion of svabhava is in some ways closer to that of Chandrakirti and Tsong Khapa than those of the scholars cited above. Ames concurs with Tsong Khapa that Chandrakirti describes two different kinds of svabhava. He sees that there is a svabhava that is an intrinsic establishment that things do not have and that does not exist, and also realizes that "Chandrakirti asserts that Nagarjuna does, indeed, accept that a svabhava of the sort which he defines in MMK 15-2cd exists."

Ames recognizes that Chandrakirti asserts Nagarjuna to be speaking of emptiness in XV.2, yet he is puzzled about the existential status of this svabhava.

He states:

~ Chandrakirti apparently equates this genuine svabhava with ultimate reality (paramartha). Thus although svabhava exists, it, like paramartha, is neither an entity nor a non-entity.²¹⁷

In Tsong Khapa's presentation, emptiness is an existent entity. Although the reality nature exists, the object-to-be-negated nature does not exist at all as a real object.

L2: [The independent and positive nature [a permanent, stable positive tathagatagarbha – another skilful means against the danger of nihilism] :L2

Dol-bo Shay-rap-gyel-tsen, one of the most influential religious thinkers of Tibet's 14th century, developed an innovative doctrinal synthesis composed of themes borrowed from sutra and tantra. He called his synthesis the Great Middle Way.²¹⁸ One of the central Great Middle Way teachings was that the ultimate is an uncontaminated primordial wisdom, empty of all contaminated phenomena while being a positive, independent tathagatagarbha.

Praised by some and excoriated by others, Shay-rap-gyel-tsen's doctrines took hold in the latter half of the 14th and early 15th centuries, and his school — the Jonangpa — became widespread in a religious climate that seemed to favor creative synthesis.

Tsong Khapa came of age in a disputatious tradition. His own Sakya lama, the scholar Rendawa, disputed the Jonang assertion of a positive Buddha nature and even cast aspersions on the Jonangpa's tantric lineage, the Kalachakra. In turn, later Jonangs called Rendawa "an evil demon who would spread the nihilist view."²¹⁹

Tsong Khapa himself did not target the Kalachakra, but he did subject almost every other aspect of Dol-bo's synthesis to scathing rebuttal, not only in the Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path, but also — and principally — in his later The Essence of Eloquence. In these works Tsong Khapa tries to reverse the syncretism introduced by Dol-bo that contained the view of a permanent, stable tathagatagarbha. In The Essence of Eloquence, Tsong Khapa expends considerable energy refuting the Jonang notion that passages of the Sutra Unravelling the Thought — usually held to be Mind Only — present the views of Dol-bo's Great Middle Way. In the Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path, he devotes a section of the chapter on refuting a too narrow object-to-be-negated to the refutation of the Jonangpa concept of a positive, independent nature.

L2: [Dol-bo's Synthesis [an omniscient Buddha nature that is not any conventional phenomenon] :L2

The presence in the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras of discussions of the three natures was held to be significant by the syncretic Dol-bo Shay-rap-gyel-tsen. For Shay-rap-gyel-tsen, the presence of three-nature discussions in the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras was evidence that the three natures are not just Mind Only doctrines but are also part of an overarching Great Middle Way.

Stearns describes this situation:

~ Although the trisvabhava theory is an integral part of the Yogacara system, as Dol-bo pa pointed out it is also found in some of the Prajnaparamitasutras. In Tibet this fact had important hermeneutical implications for the understanding of the development of Indian Buddhist doctrine. In particular, what might be called the "orthodox" Tibetan view of the Three Turnings of the Dharmacakra was challenged by the presence of this theory in the Prajnaparamitasutra.

The presence of the three-nature doctrines in the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras was evidence, for Dol-bo Shay-rap-gyel-tsen, of a system hinted at by Indian authors of an ontologically substantial called "self-emptiness" usually associated with the Middle Way School. According to Stearns, this innovative hermeneutic by Dol-bo Shay-rap-gyel-tsen draws from discussions of the three natures expounded in the Brhattika commentary on the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras.

Dol-bo Shay-rap-gyel-tsen drew not only on the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras, but also on treatise literature. For instance, his Ocean of Definitive Meaning quotes Maitreya's Treatise on the Later Scriptures of the Mahayana to the effect that the afflictions preventing Buddhahood do not exist as their own reality and thus the basic constituent (the tathagatagarbha) has a pure nature of good qualities:

\ ###
\ Because of being fabricated [by conditions] and being adventitious,
\ The faults [i.e., the afflictive emotions and so forth] of sentient beings do not
[exist as their] own reality.
\ In reality these faults are selfless
\ [And thus the basic constituent has from the start] a pure nature of beneficent
qualities.²²⁶

Dol-bo Shay-rap-gyel-tsen's understanding of the nature in the phrase, "a pure nature of beneficent qualities," is that it is the ultimate reality.

-- In Tsong Khapa's system,

---- the ultimate is a negative phenomena — the substrata that is the lack of the object-to-be-negated nature.

---- It exists as one entity with its conventional truth.

-- For Dol-bo Shay-rap-gyel-tsen, the nature is the Great Middle Way "other-emptiness;" an ultimate truth that is a substantially ontic tathagatagarbha²²⁷ present in all beings.

---- On the conventional level, phenomena are empty of self nature;²²⁸ they are actually non-existent.

---- On the ultimate level exists the tathagatagarbha, itself empty of other phenomena.

Stearns explains the situation succinctly:

~ Dol-bo used the term gzhan stong, "empty of other," to describe absolute reality as empty of other relative phenomena. This view is Dol-bo's primary legacy...In Dol-bo's view the absolute and the relative are both empty, as Buddhism has always proclaimed, but they

must be empty in different ways.

~ Phenomena at the relative level (samvrti, kun dzob) are empty of self-nature (svabhava'sunya, rang stong), and are no more real than the fictitious horn of a rabbit, or the child of a barren woman.

~ In contrast, the reality of absolute truth (paramartha, don dam bden pa) is empty only of other (*parabhavasunya, gzhan stong) relative phenomena, and not itself empty.²³⁰

Dol-bo identified the ultimate of this school with a substantially existent tathagatagarbha inherent in everyone's continuum, having all the major and minor marks of a fully enlightened Buddha. This other-emptiness is a positive, independent, and enlightened nature within each individual's continuum.

-- Unlike the ultimate found in Tsong Khapa's Consequentialist system, which is a negative — a mere lack of inherent existence,

-- the Jonang ultimate is positive and independent. Although it is not a conventional consciousness, this other-emptiness is still gnosis. Stearns reports that Dol-bo describes this tathagatagarbha to be "naturally luminous clear light, which is synonymous with the dharmakaya, and a primordial, indestructible, and eternal state of great bliss inherently present in all its glory within every living being."

Although this tathagatagarbha which is dharmakaya is a gnosis, it is not impermanent, since it is the essential nature.

Dol-bo's Fourth Council states:

~ Therefore the Victors have stated, "Gnosis transcending the momentary is the ultimate essential nature of all dharmas."

Stearns remarks that this quote from Dol-bo paraphrases the Kalachakra commentary, Great Commentary on the "Kalachakra Tantra" the Stainless Light, which states that, "Gnosis free from single and multiple moments is the essential nature of the Victors."

Stearns reports, moreover, that Dol-bo thinks of this gnosis in terms of its being a "wisdom basis of all":

~ The tathagatagarbha is the gnosis which is the ground or substratum (kun gzhi ye shes, *alayajnana) for every phenomenon experienced in samsara and nirvana.

Thus, the nature asserted by the Jonangpas is revealed here to be positive in that it is a consciousness. It is independent in the sense that it is absolute. Empty of all conventional phenomena, this nature is self-arisen, not a dependent-arising.

Dol-bo Shay-rap-gyel-tsen agrees with Nagarjuna that nature must be non-fabricated. In his commentary on the Treatise on the Middle (XV. 2) — in the Ocean of Definitive Meaning — Dol-bo places an interesting spin on Nagarjuna's statement that "Nature is non-fabricated and does not depend on another."

He states:

~ Nature is the Nature Body. This is because the statements [in the Treatise on the Middle] that "Nature is non-fabricated and does not depend on another," and "Change of a nature is never feasible" refer to the Sugatagarbha.²³⁷

Dol-bo Shay-rap-gyel-tsen's interpretation of these stanzas differs radically from that of Tsong Khapa. Not subscribing to an ultimate beyond that of the Middle Way School emptiness, -- Tsong Khapa asserts that the emptiness spoken of by Nagarjuna is a negative phenomenon, one entity with its corresponding subject or base.

-- Dol-bo Shay-rap-gyel-tsen thinks of the other-emptiness ultimate as an omniscient Buddha nature that is not any conventional phenomenon.

L2: [Refuting the independent and positive nature [no absolute, only adapted skillful means]
:L2

Tsong Khapa devotes a section of the Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path to the refutation of an assertion by Dol-bo to the effect that nature is positive and independent:

~ Some [i.e., the Jonangpas following Dol-bo Shay-rap-gyel-tsen] did not posit the ultimate truth as a mere elimination of the elaborations of the two selves, the object-to-be-negated, and so forth. They asserted that when one realizes the ultimate mode of being, [that entity] appears — as the object of a non-erroneous mind — in the way that blue, yellow, and so forth appear in the manner of being established, independently. They also asserted that the ascertainment of its existing in this way is the view realizing the profound meaning.

~ Also, they assert that the realization of these external and internal phenomena — which are the bases that sentient beings misapprehend as the two selves — as not existent [by] nature, is a place for going astray with respect to the correct view (Ita ba'i gol sa).²³

Tsong Khapa himself holds that the ultimate truth is a mere negative of the elaboration of the two selves of persons and phenomena. It is the Gelug view that all Mind Only and Middle Way systems assert that negative phenomena must be imputedly existent.

Jam-yang-shay-ba, writing in the Four Interwoven Annotations, states:

~ In any Mind Only or Middle Way system a negative phenomenon must be imputedly existent; therefore the assertion that reality is a positive independent phenomenon that does not depend upon the elimination of an object-to-be-negated is wrong.

Therefore, the assertion that reality is positive and independent and does not depend upon the elimination of an object-to-be-negated goes against a basic Gelug tenet.

Writing in the Four Interwoven Annotations, Jam-yang-shay-ba provides further information:

~ The Jonangpas, who pretended²⁴² to take as their source the Kalacakra and Maitreya's Treatise on the Later Scriptures of the Great Vehicle, or some Tibetans who profess to be wise, did not posit the ultimate truth as a mere elimination of the elaborations of the two selves of persons and phenomena, the object-to-be-negated, and so forth. They asserted that even when one realizes the ultimate mode of being, that entity appears — as the object of a non-erroneous mind — in the way that blue, yellow, and so forth appear to the mind as unmixed diverse substances in the manner of its entity being established independently (rang dbang du), unmixed with any other, from its own side, and not dependent on another. They also asserted that what appears in this way exists in accordance with its appearance and that the ascertainment of its existing in this way is the final view realizing the profound meaning in the Kalacakra system and Asanga's system.

~ Also, they assert that the realization by Nagarjuna, Haribhadra, and so forth, of these external and internal phenomena — which are the bases that sentient beings misapprehend as the two selves of persons and phenomena — as not existent by nature (rang bzhin gyis med pa), is a view of annihilation and a place for going astray with respect to the correct view (Ita ba 'i gol sa).

The annotators add their opinion that the Jonangpa view is the result of a mistaken

syncretistic mixture of the Kalacakra Tantra and Maitreya's Treatise on the Later Scriptures of the Mahayana.

The Jonangpa position as stated here in the Four Interwoven Annotations is that the ultimate entity, when perceived by a non-erroneous mind (i.e., a Superior's uncontaminated meditative equipoise), appears in the way that diverse substances appear to the mind as if (1) unmixed, like blue and yellow, (2) on the side of the object, (3) independent, and (4) established under its own power.

Tsong Khapa finds these doctrines so heterodox as to be non-Buddhist.

The Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path states:

~ Such assertions are outside the sphere of all the scriptures of the Greater and Lesser Vehicles because (1) those [Jonangpas] assert that it is necessary to overcome the conception of self that is the root binding persons in cyclic existence, and (2) the bases that are apprehended by this [conception] as self are these [phenomena] realized as not existent by nature. Hence, without overcoming that, they assert that the conception of self is overcome through realizing some other phenomenon unrelated with that [conception of self] as true.²⁴⁷

Tsong Khapa makes the point that the Jonangpas themselves assert that individuals must overcome the conception of inherent existence to free themselves from cyclic existence. Although they assert this, they attempt to reverse the conception of self not through realizing the lack of the object-to-be-negated nature but instead through realizing some other, unrelated phenomenon.

Although Tsong Khapa and the annotators of the Four Interwoven Annotations do not establish either of these points with a quotation from Dol-bo Shay-rap-gyel-tsen, Tsong Khapa does present an analogy that aptly describes the situation as he sees it:

~ Regarding this, for instance, it is no different than if [some person] conceives there is a snake to the east and becomes distressed, and if [someone else] thinking the distress cannot be overcome by thinking there is no snake to the east — instead says, "Think on the fact that to the west there is a tree. Through this, you will get rid of your conception of a snake in the room and will overcome your distress."²⁴⁸

In this analogy the snake in the east is the object-to-be-negated nature, the cause of fear and distress. For Tsong Khapa, putting forth the other-emptiness of Dol-bo Shay-rap-gyel-tsen is akin to speaking of a tree in the west to dispell the conception of the snake in the east — it is completely beside the point. This analogy helps Tsong Khapa clarify his primary point: the positive, independent nature spoken of by Dol-bo Shay-rap-gyel-tsen is not a Mahayana assertion because Mahayana ultimates are negative phenomena.

Dol-bo Shay-rap-gyel-tsen's positive, independent ultimate violates these criteria. Moreover, Tsong Khapa believes that realization of it does not address the main issue of Buddhist soteriology: abandoning the conception of inherent existence that underlies all afflictive emotions. Instead, Tsong Khapa says, Dol-bo Shay-rap-gyel-tsen's ultimate involves an unrelated topic, as unrelated to the realization of emptiness as thinking about a tree in the west is unrelated to a snake in the east.

L1: [5. Nagarjuna and his detractors [Robinson and Hayes] :L1

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\ Monks, do not lament after I am gone, for all karmically constituted things are subject to disintegration.

\ — Mahaparinirvanasutra

L2: [Trivializing Nagarjuna [the six mistaken assumptions of Robinson & Hayes – who are succumbing to the fear of emptiness] :L2

Robinson and Hayes are two of the greatest modern scholars of Madhyamika. Nevertheless, they share a hostile presentation of Nagarjuna, accusing him of being a philosophical charlatan who employed fallacious and misleading methods. How can their conclusions regarding this philosopher be so different from those of millions of Buddhists who have revered Nagarjuna for centuries? The answer is that their conclusions are based on six assumptions about Nagarjuna's methodology not shared by Tsong Khapa.

Robinson and Hayes believe the following:

- Nagarjuna is primarily concerned with refuting opponents' views.
- Nagarjuna defines his opponents' views in a self-contradictory axiomatic way.
- Nagarjuna's axioms are at variance with common sense.
- Nagarjuna's axioms need to be accepted in their entirety by other philosophies but are not.
- Nagarjuna uses the term svabhava in ways that none of his opponents do.
- Nagarjuna uses the term svabhava in several different senses at key points in his argument.

To adopt for a moment Je Tsong Khapa's point of view, these six assumptions about Nagarjuna can be refuted under three topic headings:

- Nagarjuna is not primarily concerned with refuting opponents' views, but instead with refuting innate ignorant misconceptions. This argument shows that Nagarjuna does not define his opponents' views in a self-contradictory axiomatic way.
- Nagarjuna does not employ axioms that are at variance with common sense because he employs the putative consequences of inherent existence as evidence of svabhava. This argument shows that Nagarjuna's "axioms" need not be accepted by other philosophical schools.
- Nagarjuna does not use the term svabhava in several different senses at key points in his argument because in the Treatise on the Middle Chapter XV. 1-2, Nagarjuna consistently uses the term svabhava to refer to the reality nature. This argument shows why Robinson and Hayes are wrong in criticizing Nagarjuna for using the term svabhava in ways that none of his opponents do.

Let us look into each of these topics in order to see Tsong Khapa's opposing viewpoints regarding Nagarjuna's aims and methods.

L3: [Nagarjuna is not primarily [/only] concerned with refuting opponents' views [but with finding ways to ultimately refute the innate ignorance] :L3

A number of Richard Robinson's conclusions in his article "Did Nagarjuna Really Refute All Philosophical Views" are based on the assumption that Nagarjuna's dialectic is mainly concerned with refuting the views of other Indian Buddhist or non-Buddhist philosophical

schools.

Robinson states:

~ The validity of Nagarjuna's refutations hinges upon whether his opponents really upheld the existence of a svabhava or svabhava as he defines the term.

Although Robinson is convinced that Nagarjuna's dialectic is mainly focused upon refuting the systems of other philosophical schools, Je Tsong Khapa and his followers do not mainly discuss Nagarjuna's dialectic in the context of its refuting other schools' views. Instead, they feel his dialectic is designed logically to undermine the conceived object of innate ignorance — the conception that things are inherently existent.

In evidence of that, the Great Exposition praises Nagarjuna's texts in terms of their commenting on the profound meaning, emptiness, and not in terms of refuting other schools.

The Great Exposition states:

~ Since the Superior Nagarjuna, renowned in the three levels, was very clearly prophesied by Buddha, the Supramundane Victor himself, in many sutras and tantras as commenting on the profound meaning free from all extremes of existence and non-existence, the essence of the teaching, you should seek the view realizing emptiness based on his texts.²⁵⁰

For Tsong Khapa, Nagarjuna's texts demonstrate a view that is capable of dispelling the innate ignorance that binds beings to cyclic existence.

The Great Exposition says:

~ When the view is delineated, one is to consider the refutation of the conceived object of innate ignorance to be the main point.

Thus, in Tsong Khapa's opinion, Nagarjuna is refuting the conceived object of innate ignorance, not the learned or artificial tenets of some erroneous school of thought. This is an important aspect of Buddhist soteriology, and thus Nagarjuna's analyses are an important aspect of the Buddhist path.

Further discussion showing that Nagarjuna is refuting innate ignorance and not primarily refuting philosophical schools is presented in Tsong Khapa's *Essence of Eloquence*.

In his commentary on that, the *Interwoven Annotations on the Difficult Points of the Essence of Eloquence* Da-din-rap-den²⁵³ (1920-1986) states:

~ All the ultimate analysis of the Middle Way School is said to be solely for the purpose of uprooting the mode of apprehension of the ignorance which is the root of cyclic existence. Having identified how this ignorance exists in one's own continuum, make effort for the sake of refuting just that [ignorance]. Do not admire those scholars who are mere sophists and propounders of tenets.

The question of whether — here in his discussion of nature — Nagarjuna is primarily refuting philosophical schools or not is an important one.

If Nagarjuna is primarily refuting philosophical schools, then, as Robinson remarks,

~ "The validity of Nagarjuna's refutations hinges upon whether his opponents really upheld the existence of a svabhava or svabhava as he defines the term."

However, if Tsong Khapa is correct in assuming that Nagarjuna is refuting the innate ignorance misconceiving a self, then there is no necessity that Nagarjuna's points be accepted by other philosophical schools.

L3: [Nagarjuna does not employ 'axioms' but rather the putative consequences of inherent existence [he adopts the opponent's point of view, and show its absurd consequences from the inside] :L3

Je Tsong Khapa's Great Exposition implies that Nagarjuna's texts are capable of dispelling the innate ignorance that binds beings to cyclic existence. From his perspective, Nagarjuna's texts do this, in part, by positing the consequences of inherent existence, and then searching for these putative qualities in things. Putative consequences themselves inherent existence, but rather serve as evidence of the presence of inherent existence.

The identification and use of these putative consequences of inherent existence can perhaps best be demonstrated by referring to their employment in the refutation of true production known as the diamond chips — sometimes referred to as "refuting production by the four extreme [types]."258 The diamond chips presents a tetralemmic refutation of the mode of subsistence of production, and is derived from Chapter I of Nagarjuna's Treatise on the Middle, called "Analysis of Conditionality." The investigation into production is useful not only for its insights into the nature of production, but also for the study of Nagarjuna's use of putative consequences of inherent existence. This is because the diamond chips clearly and vividly demonstrates the process of ultimate analysis through conducting an exhaustive search for the putative consequences of inherently existent production.

The diamond chips refutes inherent existence by refuting that things have inherent production from (1) causes that are either the same as their effects, or (2) other than their effects, or (3) both, or (4) production without causes. Ruegg identifies this type of four-cornered reasoning as a tetralemma (catuskoti) in which:

~ ...the nature of a postulated entity and its relation to a predicate is investigated in such a way that all conceptually imaginable positions are exhausted; for an entity and its predicate can be conceptually related only in terms of these four limiting positions.

In the case of the refutation of production by the four extreme types, the "nature of a postulated entity" is inherently existent things and its relation to a predicate is that these must be produced from self, other, both, or causelessly. The thesis, that things are not inherently produced, has the meaning of the emptiness discoursed upon by the Buddha in the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras.

Geshe Gendun Lodro and Kensur Lekden both state that the four extreme types are individually theses which are non-affirming negatives:

~ They do not imply anything positive in their place, such as the existence of no production from self. Still, they do imply another non-affirming negative — that things are not inherently produced.

Thus, according to Gelug scholars, the diamond chips reasoning establishes a non-affirming negative phenomenon, which is the absence of true production of a thing from self, other, both, and causelessly. It does not establish any positive phenomenon, such as imputed production of a thing, but it does establish a concomitant negative, that things are not inherently produced.

The diamond chips offers many examples of the analytical process that identifies the putative consequences of inherent existence and searches for these as evidence of inherent existence. To give one example of such a clear Gelug usage of putative consequences, in the Annotations, Nga-wang-bel-den refutes inherently existent production from other in part with the reasoning that cause and effect would have to be simultaneous.

The Annotations states:

~ The two, seed and sprout, are not inherently established others because a sprout is not simultaneous with the seed. There is entailment because, if something exists inherently, its time is never abolished, and hence, the sprout would have to exist even at the time of the seed.²⁶²

Here it is explicitly noted that the presence or absence of simultaneity — a putative quality of inherently existent production — is taken as evidence for the presence or absence of inherent existence itself. The analysis concludes that since inherent things must always exist, there would be simultaneity of seed and sprout. Because such simultaneity is not seen, the analysis concludes that seed and sprout are not inherently existent others. This example, using the putative consequence of the simultaneity of seed and sprout, is similar to the way other putative consequences — immutability, visible entities of otherness, endless production, darkness arising from a flame, and so forth — are used to refute true production.

The four refutations of true production from self, other, both, and causelessly are able to prove that things are not inherently produced because these four represent all possibilities of true production. This is what Ruegg means when he states, "The predicate is investigated in such a way that all conceptually imaginable positions are exhausted; for an entity and its predicate can be conceptually related only in terms of these four limiting positions."

According to typical Gelug exegesis, although the tetralemma exhausts possibilities of extreme types of production for causes and effects that are inherently existent, it is not exhaustive regarding possibilities for production in general. This is because the tetralemma does not include within its analytical scope the search for conventionally existent production from other. Conventionally existent production of effects from causes that are merely conventionally other is not refuted by the diamond chips because the diamond chips is an ultimate analytical reasoning. From Gelug perspectives, the presence or absence of the putative consequences of inherent existence — which are the objects searched for by the diamond chips — are not evidence of the presence or absence of imputed production that exists only conventionally. Imputed production from other is the only type of production that Gelugs assert.

Does such unsubstantial production as imputed production really count as production? Radhakrishnan recognizes that Proponents of the Middle do not just posit a dichotomy of inherent existence and non-existence but assert a middle way of dependently-arisen existence.

He states the position of Proponents of the Middle this way:

~ There is no real production (samutpada), but only conditioned (pratitya), relative, apparent production.²⁶⁴

Radhakrishnan's "relative, apparent production" is similar to conventional or nominal production as presented in Gelug texts, for this is the sort of production that Gelug Consequentialists assert is not negated by the four-cornered reasoning. For Gelug Consequentialists, an utter refutation of production would be an extreme of annihilation, since it would be a deprecation of something that exists conventionally.

According to the followers of Tsong Khapa's system, Nagarjuna does not define self-contradictory views for opponents as Robinson suggests, because the axioms Robinson observes Nagarjuna using are not axioms at all, but rather the putative consequences of

inherent existence.

For instance, Robinson identifies three putative consequences of inherent existence from Nagarjuna's text but identifies them as philosophical "axioms." Robinson notes that according to these axioms, phenomena possessing svabhava must be:

- indivisible,
- manifest, and
- existent in isolation from all others.

Robinson scorns these three points as philosophical "axioms" and accuses Nagarjuna of employing them dishonestly.

Gelugs do not share this opinion, since they take these "axioms" to be putative consequences of inherent existence, to be searched for as evidence of inherent existence. Because Robinson has taken these putative consequences to be philosophical "axioms," he misses the point of the Gelug view that Nagarjuna is identifying the hypothetical outflows of inherent existence.

L3: [Nagarjuna does not use the term svabhava in several different senses [Hayes thinks Nagarjuna is a nihilist; but a proper understanding of emptiness would show that emptiness doesn't deny dependent origination; they are inseparable, non-dual: not two, not one.] :L3

Richard Robinson accuses Nagarjuna of faulty argumentation: specifically, of using the fallacy of equivocation in Chapter XV of the Treatise on the Middle.

Hayes elaborates by accusing Nagarjuna of intellectual dishonesty:

~ To the various fallacies and tricks brought to light by Robinson in his articles, we can now add the informal fallacy of equivocation as outlined above. That is, not only did Nagarjuna use the term "svabhava" in ways that none of his opponents did, but he himself used it in several different senses at key points in his argument.

Hayes' first point is that none of Nagarjuna's opponents define the word svabhava in just the ways Hayes feels Nagarjuna defines it: as (1) a thing's own, distinct "nature that no other simple property has," i.e., its identity²⁶⁷ and as (2) the causally independent nature:

~ ...the word "svabhava" can be interpreted in two different ways. It can be rendered either as identity (which I shall call svabhava) or as causal independence (svabhava).²⁶⁸

Although Hayes does not explicitly say so, it appears that he feels that when Nagarjuna speaks of the "causally independent" svabhava in Chapter XV.2, he is referring to a non-existent nature.

Regarding this nature, Hayes says:

~ Nagarjuna observed that a being that has identity (prakṛti, svabhava) cannot undergo change. Add this to the abhidharma conclusion that the change of complex beings is a derivative idea rather than a primitive fact of the world, and one arrives at Theorem 2: nothing can undergo the process of change.²⁶⁹

Hayes feels that Nagarjuna's statement that a nature must be immutable implies that there are no phenomena that are mutable. Thus, Nagarjuna speaks of a nature to be negated by the dialectic. Further evidence that Hayes believes Nagarjuna speaks of a non-existent nature is that he concurs with Robinson's statement that "It is absurd to maintain that a svabhava. [mentioned by Nagarjuna in XV.2] exists."

From Tsong Khapa's point of view, Hayes is misidentifying Nagarjuna's intended meaning of svabhava.

In contradistinction to

-- Hayes' belief that Nagarjuna speaks equivocably of an identity nature and a causally independent, non-existent nature,

-- Tsong Khapa feels that in Chapter XV. 1-2 Nagarjuna uses the term svabhava to refer to an existent emptiness nature.

The Great Exposition states:

~ [Objection:] When the Master Nagarjuna set forth non-fabrication and non-dependence on another as the characteristics of the entity of nature, did he speak hypothetically or does such a nature exist in fact?

~ Response: The reality which is mentioned [in the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras] in the phrase "whether the Tathagatas appear or not the reality of phenomena [just abides]" posited as the nature. This is non-fabricated and does not depend on another. That nature does exist.²⁷²

Chandrakirti shares this view that Nagarjuna is speaking of emptiness as being non-fabricated, independent, and immutable. However, the existent reality nature to which Chandrakirti and Tsong Khapa feel Nagarjuna is referring is not one of the two meanings of svabhava that Hayes puts forth as Nagarjuna's intent. Since Chandrakirti and Tsong Khapa see Nagarjuna as consistently referring to emptiness with the word svabhava, they do not see him to be guilty of the fault of equivocation.

L2: [Conclusions [a case for Tsong Khapa's beneficent contribution] :L2

As the above sections have shown, Robinson's and Hayes' three crucial assumptions about Nagarjuna are not shared by Je Tsong Khapa. From the Gelug perspective, Nagarjuna is seeking to demonstrate how phenomena exist for a soteriological purpose. To ignore Tsong Khapa's explanation of the soteriological implications of Nagarjuna's dialectic is to trivialize Nagarjuna.

We have also seen that Tsong Khapa presents his discussion of nature as if it were just Chandrakirti's. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that Tsong Khapa is an innovative thinker whose assertions about reality go beyond Chandrakirti.

The question remains: which of Tsong Khapa's assertions about nature originate with Chandrakirti and which are innovations originating in Tibet with Tsong Khapa himself?

In the course of his discussion of the meaning of Nagarjuna's verses on nature, Tsong Khapa makes the following points:

-- The triply-qualified nature mentioned in the Treatise on the Middle (XV) refers to a reality nature, emptiness.

-- The reality nature is a mere lack of the object-to-be-negated and therefore a negative phenomenon (dgag pa, pratishedha).

-- That the triply-qualified nature refers to the object-to-be-negated is a misrepresentation of the Consequence School's uncommon object-to-be-negated (mthun mongs ma yin pa'i dgag bya).

-- The triply-qualified nature is not the Consequence School's uncommon object-to-be-negated because (1) the Hearer schools refute such and (2) the apprehension of such is merely a

learned or artificial conception of self (bdag 'dzin kun btags) and not the innate conception of self.

-- The Consequence School's uncommon object-to-be-negated is a thing's "establishment by way of its own nature" (rang gi ngo bos grub pa).

Only the first and the last of these points are explicitly made by Chandrakirti:

~ The triply-qualified nature (1) mentioned in the Treatise on the Middle (XV) refers to a reality nature, emptiness.

The Clear Words (see page 147) states that the triply-qualified nature refers to emptiness:

~ What is this nature? It is emptiness. What is this emptiness? It is the lack of nature. What is this lack of nature? It is suchness. What is this suchness? It is that entity of suchness that does not change and always abides. For, that which is not produced in any way, because of not being fabricated and because of not relying on another, is called the nature of fire and so forth.

-- And (5) the Consequence School's uncommon object-to-be-negated is a thing's "establishment by way of its own nature." In his Commentary on (Aryadeva's) "Four Hundred," in the context of a discussion of desire, Chandrakirti states that desire is empty because it is "not established by way of its own entity."

Except for these two points, Tsong Khapa's presentation of nature differs considerably from that of Chandrakirti. Among these differences is that

- Tsong Khapa explicitly describes emptiness as an existent negative,
- he identifies the object-to-be-negated in terms of avoiding views that are too broad or narrow,
- he denounces unnamed opponents for mistaking Nagarjuna's triply-qualified nature as the object of innate ignorance, and
- he rejects the idea of a positive, independent nature.

Our investigation must conclude that portions of the Gelug exegetical enterprise commenting upon the topic of nature go beyond what is explicitly stated in the Treatise on the Middle. Nevertheless, other interpretations of the text seem to be justifiably obvious extensions of Nagarjuna's meaning. Tsong Khapa makes a strong case for his doctrines and also for their conformity to the underlying meaning of the Treatise on the Middle, but we must not forget that along with his philosophical need to avoid identifying an object-to-be-negated that negates too little, he also has a partisan agenda: he must identify for the Consequentialists an object-to-be-negated that is more subtle than that identified in other schools. He must do so even if it means adjusting the subtlety of an object-to-be-negated which, after all, is not clearly identified in Chandrakirti's text.

Tsong Khapa's precise identification of the object-to-be-negated is as central to his philosophical method as is his search for the putative consequences of inherent existence with ultimate analysis. Chandrakirti does not perform such an identification, although he does search for the putative consequences of inherent existence.

Tsong Khapa is both an innovator and a fairly strict follower of Chandrakirti's Middle Way thought. Whether one is pleased with Tsong Khapa's innovations or feels them to be distortions of Nagarjuna's original thought, one can still admire Tsong Khapa's and Chandrakirti's brilliant theoretical extensions of Nagarjuna's svabhava theory.

L1: [Part two: translations of the texts] :L1

In order to provide textual support for Tsong Khapa's discussion of svabhava, Part Two of this book provides translations of portions of five texts important to his lineage:

-- Nagarjuna's Treatise on the Middle, Chapter XV: "The Analysis of Nature" (page 134). In the Treatise, Nagarjuna scrutinizes a variety of phenomena — motion, production, cause and effect, and so forth — to demonstrate that phenomena cannot be found under analysis. Phenomena that cannot be found under analysis must be empty of inherent existence, or own-being (svabhava). In Chapter XV, Nagarjuna discusses own-being itself and also rejects the notion that a nature can be fabricated.

-- Chandrakirti's commentary on XV in the Clear Words (page 141). In this influential commentary, Chandrakirti demonstrates that the nature of fire is not heat, and also identifies the non-fabricated nature as emptiness (dharmata).

-- Tsong Khapa's Ocean of Reasonings Chapter XV (page 159), explains the text of Nagarjuna's Chapter XV in terms of emptiness being a negative, yet existent, phenomena that is the absence of establishment by way of a thing's own entity. Tsong Khapa gives the defining character of nature when he says, "It is the entity of phenomena, and entity is nature; nature is emptiness; and emptiness is the lack of nature; that [lack of nature] is suchness; and that [suchness] immutably and always abides as the entity of suchness.

-- Tsong Khapa's Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path is not a commentary on Nagarjuna's Treatise, but rather a meditation manual. Nevertheless, Chapter XV is treated during Identification of the object-to-be-negated. There, Tsong Khapa criticizes those Tibetans who do not follow Chandrakirti's explanation of nature as emptiness. He refutes their contention that nature is the illusion that things are non-fabricated, independent, and immutable in his section entitled "The Refutation of an Identification of the Object-to-be-negated That Is Too Narrow"²⁷⁵ (page 179).

-- An interwoven commentary—entitled Four Interwoven Annotations—on Tsong Khapa's Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path, The Refutation of an Identification of the Object-to-be-negated That Is Too Narrow"²⁷⁶ (page 193). This useful commentary is a composite by four later Gelug authors, Jam-yang-shay-ba (1648-1721),²⁷⁷ Ba-so Cho-gyi-gyel-tsen (1402-1473),²⁷⁸ Dedruk-ken-chen Nga-wang-rap-den (17th century), and Dra-di Ge-shay Rin-chen-don-drup (17th century).²⁸⁰ Although these authors do not depart significantly from Tsong Khapa's interpretation of Chandrakirti, they do provide a wealth of grammatical elaboration and scholarly referencing that is always useful and sometimes necessary for understanding Tsong Khapa's text.

L2: [Document one : Nagarjuna's Treatise on the Middle] :L2

L3: [Chapter XV: "The analysis of nature"] :L3

The following English translation of Chapter XV is extracted from the translation of the Clear Words commentary presented below as Document Two. ...

\ ###
\ 15:1
\ The arising of nature due to causes and conditions is
\ not reasonable.

\ A nature produced by causes and conditions would have
\ a nature of fabrication.

\ ###

\ 2.
\ How could nature be said to be fabricated?
\ Nature is non-fabricated and does not depend on
\ another.

\ ###

\ 3.
\ When there is no own-being, how could there be other-being?
\ For an own-being of other-being is said to be an
\ [other-] being.

\ ###

\ 4.
\ Where again is being apart from own-being and other-being?
\ And if there is own-being or other-being, being would
\ be established.

\ ###

\ 5.
\ If there is no establishment of being, non-being also is
\ not established.
\ People call non-being the change of being.

\ ###

\ 6.
\ Those who see own-being, other-being, being, and non-being
\ Do not see the suchness in the Buddha's teaching.

\ ###

\ 7.
\ The Blessed One, knowing being and non-being,
\ Refuted in the Advice to Katyayana both existence and
\ non-existence.

\ ###

\ 8.
\ If there were existence by way of nature, there would
\ not be a non-existence of it.
\ Change of a nature is never feasible.

\ ###

\ 9.
\ If there is no nature, of what would there be change?
\ If nature did exist, how could change be suitable?

\ ###

\ 10.
\ Saying "exists" is a conception of permanence; saying
\ "does not exist" is a view of annihilation.

\ Therefore, the wise do not abide in existence or non-existence.

\ ###

\ 11.

\ Whatever exists by way of its nature is permanent since
\ it does not become non-existent.

\ If you say that what arose formerly [by way of its nature] is now non-existent,
through that [an extreme] of annihilation is entailed.

L2: [Document two: Chandrakirti's Clear Words - Chapter XV: "The Analysis of Nature"] :L2

The Clear Words is Chandrakirti's commentary to the Treatise on the Middle. Unlike Chandrakirti's Introduction (written before the Clear Words) — which is not available in Sanskrit — the Sanskrit and Tibetan for the Clear Words are both extant. The Sanskrit text of the following translation of Chapter XV is Louis de la Vallee Poussin's MulaMadhyamikakarika de Nagarjuna avec la Prasannapada. Commentaire de Chandrakirti, pp. 259-279. The Tibetan text is Peking 5260, Vol. 98, 42.1.8-45.2.1. This translation of Chapter XV was originally prepared at the University of Virginia in 1987 under the Sanskrit tutelage of Karen Lang.

L3: [Chapter XV: "The analysis of nature"] :L3

Objection: A nature of things just exists because of the causal contributors (nye bar len pa, upadana) — the causes and conditions that produce them (de dag skyed par byed pa, tannispadaka). Here, that which does not exist does not have causation by causes and conditions producing [it], like, for example, a flower of the sky. The seeds, ignorance and so forth, that are the causes and conditions producing sprouts, compositional factors, and so forth are causal contributors, and, therefore, a nature of things just exists.

Response: If things — compositional factors, sprouts, and so forth — have nature, then what need have those existing things for causes and conditions? Just as ignorance, seeds, and so forth do not act as causal contributors for the sake of producing again presently existing things such as compositional factors, sprouts, and so forth, so also at other [times], there would not be causation for the sake of producing them because their nature would [already] exist.

In order to indicate this, [Nagarjuna] said: ~ 15:1.

~ The arising of nature due to causes and conditions is not reasonable.

Objection: Due to something's existing [already] production would be senseless; [hence] there is no nature of anything prior to its production. Then what is the case? Only a nature that does not exist prior to [a thing's] production arises later [i.e., after production] in dependence on causes and conditions.

Even if such is asserted, [Nagarjuna says]:

~ A nature produced by causes and conditions would have a nature of fabrication.

Objection: We just assert that due to arising from causes and conditions nature is produced. Therefore, because we assert that nature is indeed produced, the [unwanted] consequence [that nature is] produced does not harm us.

[Response:] This, too, is not reasonable. [Nagarjuna] says:

~ How could nature be said to be fabricated?

Since they are mutually contradictory, to say something is a product and is also nature is a meaningless statement. For, here, because the etymology of "nature" is "own-entity" (rang gi ngo bo, svah bhavah), that which is a produced thing is not called nature in the world. This is like, for example, produced things such as the heat of water, and the [artificial] rubies and so forth [that are produced] through the exertions of one skilled in transforming quartz, and so forth.

Whatever is nature is not produced; this is like, for instance, the heat of fire, or entities of rubies etc., which are of the actual type of rubies. These, because of not being produced through contact with some other thing are [incorrectly] called the nature of those.

Therefore, in this way it abides in the conventions of the world that nature is not produced. And, now, we propound that it should be apprehended that even heat, because of being produced, is not the nature of fire. Here, fire, which arises from the meeting of a crystal, fuel, and the sun, or from the rubbing of sticks, is observed as relying on causes and conditions. And, because just heat apart from fire does not exist, heat also is produced by causes and conditions. Therefore, it is produced, and because of being a product, it is clearly ascertained that, like the heat of water, [heat] is not the nature [of fire].

Objection: Is not it renowned to beings, shepherds, women, and above, that just heat is the nature of fire?

[Response:] Did we say it was not renowned? [But] we propound that this is not suitable to be the nature [of fire] because of lacking a defining character of nature. Because of following the error of ignorance, the world conceives aspects of things that do not have nature as having nature. Just as those having opthomalia, due to the condition of opthomalia, adhere to that which lacks a nature of falling hairs and so forth as [such] a nature, so childish beings, due to the degeneration of the eye of intelligence by the opthomalia of ignorance, adhere to aspects of things that lack nature as having nature.

In accordance with their conception, they speak of "own-character," saying, "Due to being uncommon because of not being observed separately [from fire], the nature, that is to say, own-character, of fire is heat." For, "its own character" is "own-character."²⁸³

By way of just what is renowned to them, the Supramundane Victor, in the abhidharma, made a presentation of a conventional own-entty of those and explained that that which is shared, impermanence and so forth, is their general character.

When [considered] in terms of the perception of those having the eye of stainless wisdom free from the opthomalia of ignorance, at that time, just as those free from opthomalia do not see the falling hairs observed by those having opthomalia, so Superiors do not perceive the nature that is imputed by the minds of childish beings, whereby they say clearly, "This is not the nature of things."

In this way the Descent into Lanka Sutra says:

\ ###
\ Just as those having opthomalia wrongly apprehend falling
\ hairs,
\ So this imputation as thing is a wrong imputation by
\ childish beings.

\ There is no nature, no consciousness, no basis-of-all, and no
\ things,
\ But children, bad logicians, and those like corpses impute
\ them.

Similarly, it is set forth extensively, "Great Intelligent One, thinking of the non-production of a nature, I said, 'All phenomena are not produced.'"

Objection: If you propound that just the heat and so forth of fire and so forth, because of being produced due to arising from causes and conditions are not the nature [of fire and so forth], then you should say what a defining character of the nature of those is and what that nature is.

Response:

\ ###
\ Nature is that which is non-fabricated
\ And does not depend on another.

Here, since "own-nature" is nature, that which is the entity that is the "mine" of whatsoever thing is said to be its nature. What is the "mine" of something? That which is non-fabricated. That which is fabricated is not its "mine," like for example, the heat of water. Also, that which does not depend on something else is the "mine" of something, like, for example, one's servant and one's wealth. Whatever is controlled by another of something is not its "mine," like for example a temporarily loaned thing not under one's control.

Because we do not assert that that which is fabricated and depends on another in this way is a nature, therefore it is unreasonable to say that just heat is the nature of fire because it depends upon causes and conditions and because it is a later arising of something that did not arise previously, whereby it is produced.

Because it is thus, therefore, that which, even in all three times, is the non-fabricated fundamental entity non-mistaken in fire, that which is not the subsequent arising of something that did not arise previously, and that which does not have reliance on causes and conditions, as do the heat of water, or near and far, or long and short, is said to be the nature [of fire].²⁸⁸

Objection: Does there exist such a non-fabricated and non-relative entity of fire?

Response: Such a nature is not existent by way of its own entity²⁸⁹ and is not [utterly] non-existent either. Though it is so, in order to get rid of the fear of the listeners, when this is taught, it is said upon making a superimposition that it exists conventionally.²⁹⁰

It is like the statement by the Supramundane Victor in this vein [in the King of Meditative Stabilizations Sutra]:

\ ###
\ What hearing, what teaching is there
\ Of the inexpressible doctrine?
\ The inexpressible is heard and taught
\ Upon superimposition.

This same text [i.e., Chapter XXII of the Treatise on the Middle] will explain:

\ ###
\ We do not say "empty"
\ Nor should one say "not empty."
\ Nor both nor neither.
\ [These] are expressed for the sake of imputation.

Objection: In that it is said that [nature] exists upon superimposition, what is it like?
[264.11]

[Response:] That which is the own-entity of those, called the reality of phenomena is that [nature]. In that case, what is this reality of phenomena? It is the entity of phenomena. What is this entity? It is nature. What is this nature? It is emptiness. What is this emptiness? It is the lack of nature. What is this lack of nature? It is suchness. What is this suchness? It is that entity of suchness that does not change and always abides. For, that which is not produced in any way, because of not being fabricated and because of not relying on another, is called the nature of fire and so forth.

This is what was said: That entityness which by its nature becomes the object of those Superiors free from the opthomalia of ignorance, in the manner of non-perception of the aspects of things that are observed through the force of the opthomalia of ignorance, is posited as the nature of those [things].293

~ Nature is non-fabricated and does not depend on another.

You should know that this statement by the master [Nagarjuna] presents a defining character of this [nature]. [265.7]

You should [also] know that just this lack of [true] production, which is the nature of things, is just a non-thing due to not being anything at all, whereby because [its] entity [i.e., that of a lack of true production] does not exist, it is not the nature of things.

In this vein the Supramundane Victor says:

\ ###
\ Whoever knows things as non-things
\ Is never attached to all things.
\ Whoever is never attached to all things
\ Contacts the meditative stabilization without signs.

Objection: Even if things have no own-being, nonetheless, they have other-being because that has not been refuted.

[Response:] If they had an other-being, they would also have own-being because, without own-being, other-being is not established.

Hence [Nagarjuna says:]

\ ###
\ When there is no own-being, how could there be other-being?
\ A own-being of other-being is called [other-] being.

Objection: Here, in the world, only some natures are called other-being in terms of another nature.

[Response-] If heat were the nature of fire, then it would be called other-being in terms of

water, which has a nature of wetness. But, when upon analyzing, [it is seen] that own-being itself does not exist anywhere, then how could otherness exist? Since otherness does not exist, it is established that own-being also does not exist.

Objection: Even if own-being and other-being do not exist, nonetheless being, for one, exists because of not having been refuted.

[Response:] If being existed, then it would have to be either own-being or other-being, and therefore, own-being and other-being also would exist.

[Nagarjuna] says:

\ ###
\ How could there be being
\ Apart from own-being and other-being?
\ If own-being and other-being existed
\ Being would be established.

If one investigates being in this way, it must be either own-being or other-being. But those do not exist in the manner that has been previously explained. Therefore, one should ascertain that since those two do not exist, being also does not exist.

Objection: Even if you have refuted being, nonetheless non-being just exists because of not having been refuted. [270] Therefore, because the opposite class exists, being also would exist, just like non-being.

Response: [Nagarjuna,] saying, "If non-being alone existed, then being also would exist, but it does not exist," says:

\ ###
\ If being is not established
\ Non-being also would not be established.
\ Persons propound as non-being
\ The change of being.

That is, if some "being" existed, due to its change, there would be non-being. For pots and so forth degenerate from their present state, attain another [state], and are, in the world, expressed with the term, "non-being." "When these pots and so forth are not established as an entityness of being, then how could there be change of these whose nature is non-existent? Therefore, non-being also does not exist.

Therefore, with respect to this non-existence in all ways of nature, other-being, being, and non-being, [regarding] those who, due to the degeneration of the eye of intelligence by the dimness of ignorance erroneously [view nature, it is said]:

\ ###
\ Those who view nature, other-being,
\ Being, and non-being
\ Do not see the suchness
\ In the Buddha's teaching.

Whoever, through claiming to be explaining non-erroneously the scriptures of the One Gone Thus, propounds a nature of things, (such as, the nature of earth is hardness), [or] of feeling, [or] experience, [or that] the nature of consciousness is individual knowledge of

objects, and propounds other-being, such as "form is other, consciousness is also other and feeling too is just other;" and propounds the present state of consciousness and so forth, as being and the past state of consciousness and so forth as non-being, those persons do not propound the suchness that is supremely profound dependent-arising. [271.5]

The existence of nature, other-being, and so forth is contradictory with the reasonings already explained, and the One Gone Thus did not speak of a nature of things that is contradictory with reasoning because he himself has realized non-erroneously the reality of all things. Therefore, scholars call "authoritative" the speech of only the Buddha, the Supramundane Victor, because it is non-deceptive due to having reasonings.

Therefore, because of coming from one who has abandoned all faults and is believable, or, because of causing thorough understanding — that is, causing thorough understanding of suchness — or, because of going in the direction of it — that is, because in dependence upon it — the world goes to nirvana, just the speech of the fully enlightened one is presented as "scripture" (lung, agama), and textual systems which are other than that, due to lacking reasoning, are presented as not authoritative and not "scripture."

Because these views of nature, other-being, being, and non-being — because of lacking reasonings — are not suchness, for beings who are trainees wishing liberation:

\ ###
\ The Supramundane Victor, due to knowing
\ Being and non-being,
\ In the Advice to Katyayana refuted
\ Both existence and non-existence.

The Supramundane Victor, in the Sutra of Advice to Katyayana, said extensively:

~ Katyayana, because worldly beings mostly adhere to existence and non-existence, therefore they are not released from birth, aging, sickness and death, from sorrow and lamentation, suffering, mental unease, and disturbance; they are not released from the suffering of the torment of death.

And, this sutra is recited by all the [Buddhist] schools.

Therefore, because of this scripture and the reasonings that have been explained, it is unsuitable for the wise to assert a view of nature, other-being, being, and non-being, this being very contradictory with the words of the One Gone Thus. For, the Supramundane Victor refuted [such].

What distinguishes the Supramundane Victor? Knowledge of being and non-being, for, since he has an inner mode of knowing being and non-being he knows being and non-being. Because of knowing thoroughly and non-mistakenly just as it is the nature of being and non-being, just the Supramundane Victor is called "knower of being and non-being." Because the Supramundane Victor, the knower of being and non-being, refuted both existence and non-existence, it is not reasonable to assert that the view of being and non-being is suchness.

Similarly [Buddha said in the Heap of Jewels Sutra]:

~ Kasyapa, "existence" is one extreme; "non-existence" is another extreme. That which is the middle between those two — without analysis, without indication, not dependent, without appearance, unperceived, without abiding — that, Kasyapa, is the path of the Middle Way, called individual analysis of phenomena.

Similarly [Buddha said in the King of Meditative Stabilizations Sutra]:

\ ###
\ Both existence and non-existence are extremes;
\ Purity and impurity are also extremes.
\ Therefore, having thoroughly abandoned both extremes
\ Scholars do not make a standpoint even in the middle.

\ ###
\ Existence and non-existence is a dispute;
\ Purity and impurity is also a dispute.
\ Through dispute, suffering is not pacified;
\ When there is no dispute suffering is stopped.

Objection: Even if there were existence by way of their nature of fire and so forth, what fault would there be?

[Response:] The fault has already been set forth:

~ A nature arisen from causes and conditions would be fabricated.

And so forth. Furthermore, in order to indicate that if just this nature of these, fire and so forth, did exist, that which existed would not change, [Nagarjuna] said:

~ If there were existence by way of nature, there would not be a non-existence of it.

That is, if there were a nature, i.e., an own-entity, of these things, fire and so forth, then that nature which existed by way of its nature would not later change. Why?

~ Change of a nature is never feasible.

If there were nature of these, fire and so forth, then because that nature is just immutable, it is not feasible that it would ever change. Just as the non-obstructiveness of space never changes, so also fire and so forth, those things that exist by way of their nature, also would not later change. But even you observe their destruction, whose definition is change, the cessation of continuity.

Therefore, you should know that, because of having the quality of change, like the heat of water, there is no nature of these.

Objection: Even if it is said that, because that which exists by way of its nature does not change and because change is observed, these things do not have nature, nonetheless:

~ If there is no nature, of what would there be change?

Because this — like a sky-flower — does not exist by way of its nature, that is, its entity, of what would there be change? Therefore, because change is not observed among what does not have nature, and because change is seen, nature exists.

Response: If it is being propounded by your system that, because there is no change among what does not exist by way of its nature, that is, its [own] entity, and because change is seen, nature exists, then [Nagarjuna responds]:

~ If nature did exist, how could change be suitable?

Because of existing now, at present, by way of its nature, that is, its [own] entity, of what would there be change? Therefore, because there is no change among what exists by way of its nature, change would in all ways not occur. Therefore, it should be known that things

do not have nature.

Also, the explanation, "Because change is seen, there is no nature," is said in the context of a seeing of change that is renowned to others. We do not assert ever anywhere that change exists.

Therefore, in this way, nature does not exist at all, and all phenomena are that of which nature does not exist, and also change of those does not exist. But, now, some conceive that things just exist and just do not exist; for those who conceive such, it definitely only follows that:

- \ ###
- \ Saying "exists" is a conception of permanence;
- \ Saying "does not exist" is a view of annihilation.

Since these views of permanence and annihilation are obstacles to the paths [leading] to high status [in cyclic existence] and liberation, they are a great impropriety.

- \ ###
- \ Therefore, the wise do not abide
- \ In existence or non-existence.

Objection: Why is it that when there are views of being and non-being, it follows that there are views of permanence and annihilation?

Response: As follows:

- \ ###
- \ Whatever exists by way of its nature is permanent
- \ Since it does not become non-existent.
- \ If one says that what arose formerly [as existent
- \ By way of its nature] is now non-existent,
- \ Through that [an extreme of] annihilation is entailed.

That which is said to exist by way of its nature is never non-existent since nature is not overcome. In that case, through asserting [something] as just existent by way of its nature, one comes to have a view of permanence.

And, having asserted a nature of things when formerly they were abiding, through asserting that now, later, they are destroyed whereby they do not exist, it follows that one has a view of annihilation.

For that person for whom a nature of things is not feasible, views of permanence and annihilation are not entailed due to the non-observation of a nature of things.

Objection: One who asserts, "Things do not exist by way of their nature," due to not having a view of being, indeed does not have a view of permanence. But is it not the case that there definitely is the entailment of [that person's having] a view of annihilation?

Response: There is no such view of non-existence. For, whoever, having formerly asserted a nature of things, later relies upon a reversal of those, would have a view of non-existence due to deprecating that nature of things observed formerly. But, someone who, like those without opthomalia with respect to the falling hairs observed by those with opthomalia, does not observe anything at all says, "That does not exist," and thus propounds non-existence

due to the non-existence of the object-to-be-negated. In order to overcome the wrong conceptions of those who are in error, we, like those without dimness of sight, propound, "All things do not exist." But, when we propound such, there is no entailment that we have a view of annihilation. [274.2]

In this vein, sutra says extensively:

~ Supramundane Victor, that one who having formerly asserted desire, hatred, and bewilderment as things, later propounds that these things of desire, hatred, and ignorance do not exist, is a Nihilist.

Some, having asserted just the things that are other-powered phenomena — minds and mental factors — [say that] since an imputed entityness does not exist in them, the view of existence is dispelled, and, since other-powered things exist merely as the causes of the thoroughly afflicted and the very pure, the view of non-existence is dispelled.

In that case, because the thoroughly imputed does not exist and because other-powered phenomena do exist, there would be both views of existence and non-existence, whereby how could the two extremes have been abandoned? Because it has already been shown that the things that are produced by causes and conditions having nature is not reasonable, their explanations are just not reasonable.

Therefore, one should know in this way, that only the view of the Middle Way School is without the entailment of views of existence and non-existence, and that those of others — the views of those who propound consciousness and so forth — are not.

Because of that, Nagarjuna's Precious Garland (LXI) says:

\ ###
\ Ask the Worldlings, the Samkhyas,
\ Owl-Followers, and Nirgranthas,
\ The proponents of a person and aggregates,
\ If they propound what passes beyond "is" and "is not."

\ ###
\ Thereby know that the ambrosia
\ Of the Buddha's teaching is called profound,
\ An uncommon doctrine passing
\ Far beyond existence and non-existence.

----- (i.e. another translation:)

\ ###
\ 1:61. Ask the Samkhyas, the followers of Kanada,^b Nirgranthas,^c
\ And the worldly proponents of a person and aggregates, ^d
\ Whether they propound
\ What passes beyond "is" and "is not."

\ ###
\ 62. Thereby know that the ambrosia
\ Of the Buddhas' e teaching is called profound,
\ An exclusive doctrine passing
\ Far beyond "is" and "is not."

One should know that, like the propounding of a [substantially existent] person of the

Sammitiyas, the propounding of [mere] consciousness is a teaching of interpretable meaning, taught by the Supramundane Victor, due to the other-power of compassion, for the conceptuality of such trainees, for the sake of serving as a method for seeing the ultimate. It is not of definitive meaning.

In this vein the King of Meditative Stabilizations Sutra says:

\ ###
\ One knows as instances of sutras of definitive meaning [those which teach]
\ In accordance with the emptiness explained by the Sugata.
\ One knows as of interpretable meaning all those [verbal] doctrines
\ In which "sentient being," "person," and "creature" are taught.

This should be known in detail from the Teachings of Akshayamati Sutra and so forth.

Therefore, those who desire the excellent liberation, having realized that as long as there exists opportunity for controversy regarding the two views of being and non-being there is cyclic existence, clear away those two views. They should meditate in accordance with the Middle Path.

The Supramundane Victor said:

\ ###
\ Since all is inconceivable and unarisen,
\ Apprehension of things and non-things should be destroyed.
\ Those children who are under the control of thought
\ Suffer in hundreds often millions of cyclic existences.

And:

\ ###
\ I remember a former past time.
\ An inconceivable number of aeons ago, a chief of men,
\ A great sage, was born for the sake of the world.
\ He was named "Arisen from Non-being."

\ ###
\ Just after he was born, remaining in the sky
\ He taught all phenomena as without being.
\ At that time given a name concordant with that,
\ He was renowned by that name in all the world.

\ ###
\ All the gods proclaimed
\ This one called "Non-being" will be a Conqueror.
\ As soon as he was born, taking seven steps
\ This Conqueror explained phenomena as without being.

\ ###
\ Whenever a subduer, a Buddha who teaches
\ All phenomena, a king of doctrine, arises,
\ The sound "All phenomena lack being" comes forth
\ From grass, trees, bushes, medicinal plants, rocks, and
\ mountains.

\ ###
\ As far as sound extends in the world,
\ "All lacks being, there is nothing at all,"
\ For so far does there very much arise
\ The roar of sound of the leader of the world.

Because a nature of things is not correct, [the sutra] says, "Phenomena lack nature." Thus, one should understand the meaning of the sutra in this way. And, because [the sutra] says, "As far as sound extends in the world, 'All lacks being, there is nothing at all,'" because of a wish to express a non-affirming negative, "lacking being" means a lack of nature.

This is the commentary on the fifteenth chapter [of Nagarjuna's Treatise on the Middle] "The Analysis of Nature" from the Clear Words by the master Chandrakirti.

L2: [Document three: Tsong Khapa 's Ocean of reasonings] :L2

L3: [Chapter XV: "The analysis of nature"] :L3

The composition of the Ocean of Reasonings, Explanation of (Nagarjuna's) "Treatise on the Middle" began in 1407, when Tsong Khapa was fifty years old. Tsong Khapa had already written the Great Exposition in 1402. Although he began the text at Cho-ding (chos sdings) Hermitage on the northern outskirts of Hla-sa, and continued work on it at "Goat-Face Crag" (rva kha brag), Tsong Khapa discontinued work on the Ocean of Reasonings in order to compose his The Essence of Eloquence. After completing The Essence of Eloquence in 1408, Tsong Khapa returned to work on the Ocean of Reasonings. In 1415, he went on to write the Medium Exposition of the Stages of the Path,²⁹⁸ and finally, at age sixty-one, one year before his death, he wrote a commentary on Chandrakirti's Introduction to (Nagarjuna's) "Treatise on the Middle, "the Illumination of the Thought.

This translation was first prepared in a third-year Sanskrit course taught in 1987 at the University of Virginia by Karen Lang. It has since been revised by me under the direction of Jeffrey Hopkins. The edition used here is Varanasi: Pleasure of Elegant Sayings Printing Press, 1975, pages 727.19-742.2.

CHAPTER XV: "THE ANALYSIS OF NATURE"

Refuting that those which are causal contributors, i.e., causes and conditions, exist by way of [their] nature has three parts: [728]

- (I) explaining the text of the chapter;
- (II) conjoining this with scriptures of definitive meaning; and
- (III) condensing the meaning and indicating the title.

L4: [I. Explaining the text of the chapter] :L4

Objection: Things exist by way of their nature because [their] causal contributors exist — the causes and conditions, i.e., seeds, ignorance, and so forth, that produce sprouts, compositional factors, and so forth.

This is how Chandrakirti makes the transition [to this chapter] in the Clear Words.

In the Buddhapalita Commentary on [Nagarjuna's] "Treatise on the Middle, "it is said:
~ [Objection} You [Proponents of the Middle] assert that things are dependent-arising and you also propound them as without entityness; if that is so, [i.e., in that case] how is

it that things could both arise and be without entityness? If the entityness of things does not arise from causes and conditions, then what other thing would arise from those? If just the entityness of wool does not arise from threads, its causes, does just an entityness of the causes, thread, arise, or does nothing arise? In that case, why is "arise" said?

~ [Response] Are you like someone who while riding on a horse does not see that horse? Even you propound that things are dependent-arising, yet you do not see that there is just no entityness of them.

Thus [Buddhapalita] makes the transition to the explanation by this [statement in] Chapter [XV of Nagarjuna's Treatise on the Middle] that the two — (1) an entityness of things that are established by way of their own entities not being suitable in the least, and (2) asserting that nonetheless things arise in dependence upon causes and conditions — which [the Proponents of Truly Existent Things] conceive to be contradictory, are not contradictory.

This differentiation mixing these two [i.e., no entityness and production in dependence on causes and conditions] is the most important essential to these reasonings.

With regard to refuting in this way the propounding of establishment by way of nature, there are two parts: refuting that things exist by way of their nature and indicating that if one propounds existence by way of nature, one does not pass beyond holding an extreme.

L5: [Refuting that things exist by way of their nature] :L5

This has two parts, refuting the proofs of existence by way of nature and indicating damage to existence by way of nature.

L6: [Refuting the proofs of existence by way of nature] :L6

This has three parts: the actual meaning, indicating that this refutes the other three extremes, [729] and criticizing the views [of those who hold such] for the sake of refuting them.

L7: [The actual meaning] :L7

This has two parts: indicating that nature does not need causes and conditions and that [to have them] would be contradictory, and indicating the defining character of nature in our own system.

L8: [Indicating that nature does not need causes and conditions and that [to have them] would be contradictory] :L8

If compositional factors, sprouts, and so forth had nature, then it would be unreasonable for them to arise from causes and conditions such as ignorance, seeds, and so forth. For, that which has nature does not need to be produced.

Objection: Although if [that nature] existed prior to [something's] production, production would be senseless, only a nature that does not exist prior [to production] arises in dependence on causes and conditions.

[Response:] In that case, that nature, which is an effect because of arising from causes and conditions, would be fabricated.

Objection: I just assert that its being a product is entailed.

[Response:] How could it be suitable to propound that something is both a product and nature? That is to say, it is not, for [those two] are mutually exclusive. With respect to that, the two, fabricated and non-fabricated, are a dichotomy, whereby if one eliminates one in terms of a particular base, the other must be positively included. Products are necessarily fabricated, and nature, that is, an essence (gshis), is necessarily non-fabricated, whereby the two, that which is a product and that which is an essence, are unsuitable to be included in one basis.

This is like the way in which, in the world, the heat of water and the transformation of quartz and so forth into fabricated rubies and so forth by one skilled in transforming jewels are not called the nature of those [rubies and so forth].

You might wonder, since, in the world, the heat of fire and entities of the actual type [that is, the actual non-fabricated type] of rubies and so forth are called the nature of those [fire and rubies], how is it reasonable that whatever is a product is not an essence?

[Response:] That in the world the verbal convention "nature" or "essence" is not used for the fabricated, here [in the Consequence system] is also asserted, but we propound that, in that case, even though the heat of fire is indeed renowned in the world as the nature, or essence, of fire, [730] it is not the essence of fire for it lacks the defining character of essence. Fire is observed in reliance on its causes and conditions, a fire crystal, and so forth, and heat also is similar. Hence, because of being a product, it is clearly ascertained that, like the heat of water, [the heat of fire] is not [fire's] nature.

Here, it is indeed renowned in the world that although the two, the heat of water and the heat of fire, are similar in being produced by causes and conditions, they are not similar in being fabricated or not being fabricated, whereby they are not similar in being or not being the nature of [water and fire, respectively]. However, Proponents of True Existence do not assert, with regard to water's being produced as hot and fire's being produced as hot, a difference of one's being produced by way of its nature and one's not, whereby they do not assert this worldly mode of not using the verbal convention "nature" if something is posited as fabricated, but, in our own system, such is asserted.

When childish beings, believing that things that do not exist by way of their nature do exist by way of their nature, see [something] in just this phenomenon and do not see it in other phenomena, they propound [it] as its defining character, just as they believe that fire's own character is heat. For, they take own-defining character (bdag nyid kyi mtshan nyid) to be own self-character (rang gi mtshan nyid). [730.13]

By way of what is renowned to them, the Teacher presented in the abhidharma a conventional "own-entity" (rang gi ngo bo) of those and explained that impermanence and so forth, which are shared with other phenomena, are "general characters" (spyi'i mtshan).

With respect to that, even though it is not the case even conventionally that heat is the essence of fire and impermanence is the essence of compounded phenomenon, from among common and uncommon characteristics, it is our own system that, in accordance with the statement in the abhidharma, they do exist conventionally as the specific [or self-character] and general characters of those.

Therefore, there is a very great difference between the two, [something's] existing by way of its own character or by way of its own-entity and [something's having] its own unshared characteristics (thun mong mayin pa'i rang gi mtshan nyid). The statement in the Commentary

that specific and general characters are explained in the abhidharma by way of just their being renowned to those [worldly beings] refers to the fact that since childish beings apprehend this and that defining character of this and that phenomenon as being their essence (gshis), Buddha — without refuting that [link between defining character and essence, even though he did not accept it] — explains [in the abhidharma] two characters [specific and general] with respect to those [phenomena] . It is not saying that just as [childish beings] apprehend the heat of fire and so forth as being the essence [of fire and so forth], so also in the abhidharma the two characters are posited with respect to the essences of those because:

~ (1) Chandrakirti's Introduction says those [two characters] were refuted equally by the Buddha in the sutras on the mode of the Perfections and were set forth equally in the teachings on manifest knowledge [that is, in the abhidharma].

And, in the Auto-Commentary on the "Introduction to (Nagarjuna's) 'Treatise on the Middle'" it is said that since in the abhidharma all five aggregates are equally indicated by way of differentiations such as their specific and general characters and in the Mother Sutras [the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras] all five are said to be just empty of nature (rang bzhin gyis stong pa nyid), they are equal in not existing ultimately and existing conventionally.

~ (2) ..and we do not assert even conventionally that the heat of fire is the essence of fire.

Therefore, something like the heat of fire is not said to be renowned to others because we do not assert it ourselves; rather it is posited as being merely being renowned to others because just that apprehension of the two — the heat of fire and the nature of fire — as one, without differentiating them individually, is not established for us.

L8: [Indicating the defining character of nature in our own system] :L8

Objection: If you propound that due to being a product [something] is not a nature, then what is the definition of nature and what is that nature?

Response: Since in this [text], the verbal convention "own-entity" (rang gi ngo bo) is used for nature (rang bzhin), whatever is the "mine" (bdag gi ba) of whatsoever thing is said to be its nature. What — and of what — is the "mine"? That which is a non-fabricated quality of whatsoever substratum is [the "mine"] of that [substratum]. Whatever is fabricated is not the "mine" of that [substratum], like, for example, the heat of water. Whatever does not depend on something else is the "mine" of that [substratum], like for instance, one's servant and one's wealth [which do not depend on someone else, but on oneself]. Whatever does depend on something [or someone] else, [732] is not the "mine" of that [substratum], like for instance, a temporarily loaned thing not under one's control.

Since such is said, this does not indicate that all things that are fabricated and depend on something else are not the "mine" of those phenomena, but rather indicates that the "mine" which is posited as the nature or essence of some phenomenon must be non-fabricated in terms of it and must be something that is not like a borrowed thing that depends on someone other than oneself. [The Clear Words states:]

~ Because it is thus, therefore, that which, even in all three times, is the non-fabricated fundamental entity non-mistaken in fire, that which is not the subsequent arising of something that did not arise previously, and that which does not have reliance on causes and conditions, as do the heat of water, or near and far, or long and short, is said

to be the nature [of fire].300

Does such a nature of fire exist? [Chandrakirti's] statement, "It does not exist by way of its own entity and it also does not not exist by way of its own entity," means that it does indeed exist but it does not exist by way of its own entity.

This is as was said in Chandrakirti's Auto-Commentary:

~ With respect to this, the ultimate is the "its own entity" (bdag gi rang gi ngo bo) found due to being just the special object of the exalted wisdom (ye shes kyi khyad par gyi yul) of those who see reality; it is not established by way of its own selfness (rang gi bdag nyid kyi ma grub pa).

Although indeed such does not exist by way of its own entity, in order to dispell the fear of the listeners, we propound, upon superimposition, "It exists conventionally." It is unreasonable, for the sake of that purpose, to propound that since the ultimate truth is said to exist here [in Chandrakirti's Clear Words], it is not an object of knowledge.

For, the Compendium of Perfect Teachings Sutra (chos yang dag par sdud pa) says:

~ In order to thoroughly dispel the source of fear of the world, it is said through the force of verbal conventions, "There is production; there is cessation."

Production and cessation also would not be objects of knowledge. Also propounding that since [Chandrakirti] says "upon superimposition," the ultimate truth is not an object of knowledge, is not reasonable. For, as a source for the statement that it exists upon superimposition, [Chandrakirti] cites a stanza from the King of Meditative Stabilizations Sutra, which states: [733.2]

\ ###
\ What hearing, what teaching is there
\ Of the inexpressible doctrine?
\ The inexpressible is heard and taught
\ Upon superimposition.

In this, the hearers, explainers, and doctrines to be explained are all said to be done upon superimposition, whereby these too would come not to be objects of knowledge.

Therefore, since even with regard to teachings upon imputation by the mind, it is often said, "upon superimposition," this need not be something like the superimposition of the two selves.

Objection: [In that] it is said that that [nature] exists upon superimposition, what is it like?

[Response:] [Chandrakirti's] statement, "That which is the own-entity (rang gi ngo bo, svarupam) of those, which is called the reality (chos nyid, dharmata) of phenomena," and so forth, is the answer to the previous second question [above — what is the defining character of that final nature and what is that final nature?]. It is the entity of phenomena, and entity is nature; nature is emptiness; and emptiness is the lack of nature; that [lack of nature] is suchness; and that [suchness] immutably and always abides as the entity of suchness. [733.11]

These [things] that are observed by the power of the opthomalia of ignorance, if they existed as [their own] suchness, would have to be observed by a Superior's non-contaminated exalted wisdom of meditative equipoise; but instead, in the manner of not seeing those at

all, their suchness is the object of that exalted wisdom. This is because that exalted wisdom realizes the suchness of things, and because just the non-establishment of things as nature is the suchness of those things, and because, whereas, if the object-to-be-negated existed, it would be observable, but it is not observed, due to which one is posited as having realized the negative of the object-to-be-negated.

Moreover, with regard to the meaning of the statement [in sutra], "Non-seeing is the highest seeing," not seeing anything is not ascertained as seeing. Rather, as explained earlier, not seeing the elaborations [of inherent existence] is posited as seeing what is free from elaborations, whereby seeing and not seeing do not refer to one basis. Similarly, the Condensed Perfection of Wisdom Sutra says:303 [734]

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\    ###
\    The Tathagata teaches that one who does not see forms,
\    Does not see feelings, does not see discriminations,
\    Does not see intentions, does not see consciousness,
\    Mind, or intellect sees reality (chos, dbarma).

\    ###
\    "Space is seen," sentient beings express with words.
\    Investigate the meaning of how space is "seen."
\    The Tathagatha teaches that seeing reality is like that.
\    The seeing cannot be explained by another example.
```

Hence this says that what is not seen are the five aggregates and what is seen is reality (chos). And, that means suchness; this is like the statement "The one who sees dependent-arising sees reality."

Furthermore, to give an example: Space is the mere elimination of obstructive contact. Seeing, or realizing [it], refers to not seeing the object-to-be-negated, obstructive hindrance, which, if it existed, would be observable. Here also, what is seen is space and what is not seen is an obstructive hindrance.

The last two lines [of the above sutra passage] refute that one sees suchness while seeing blue; this is not a "seeing" in accordance with the example.

The statement that the five aggregates are not seen indicates that subjects are not seen by a non-contaminated meditative equipoise. In that case, seeing suchness is not — without being real — a mere imputation, but the ultimate is also not established by way of its own entity. Although all subjects (chos can) are not established as such a nature, reality (chos nyid) is established; but, no phenomenon (chos) is established as a nature which is established by way of its own entity.

L7: [Second, indicating that this refutes the other three extremes] :L7

Objection: Even if through refuting that things exist by way of their nature, self-entities (rang dngos), [i.e., own-being] have been refuted, still it has not been refuted that other-entities (gzhan dngos), [i.e., other-being] exist by way of their nature, whereby, if those exist, then own-being also would exist by way of its nature.

[Response:] If heat were established as the own-being of fire, then it would be suitable to posit as an other-being in relation to an own-being of wetness, in which case, in that, when analyzed there is no thing that exists as an own-being, then how could other-being exist by

way of its nature? It could not, because the establishment by way of its own-being of a nature — that is, an entity — of other-being is called the establishment by way of its nature of other-being.

Objection: Indeed one [thing being] its own-being, or entity, and other-being, or entity, has been refuted, but being exists by way of its nature because it has not been refuted.

[Response:] How could there be a being that was not either own-being or other-being? There could not, whereby if something existed by way of its own entityness as either own-being or other-being, the existence of being by way of its nature would be established. But, since those two have been refuted previously, it does not exist.

Objection: Even if you have refuted being, still, non-being, since you have not refuted it, exists by way of its nature, and if that exists, since its opposite class would exist, being would also exist.

[Response:] If the existence by way of nature of being is not established, then the existence by way of its nature of non-being would not be established. For, in the world, persons propound the change from a present state of being of pots and so forth as the non-existence of that former being.

Here, although indeed one must refute true existence also with respect to non-being whose object-to-be-negated does not occur among objects of knowledge, due to the essential of greater or lesser force of the conception of true existence with respect to existent versus non-existent objects of negation, [Nagarjuna's] thought is that if one establishes as without true existence the non-being of the state of destructedness of an existent being which is its object-to-be-negated, it is then easier to establish other [types of] non-being as without true existence.

L7: [Third, criticizing the views [of those who hold such] for the sake of refuting them]
:L7

Thus, whoever — with respect to this non-establishment by way of entityness of own-being, other-being, being, and non-being — due to claiming to explain the scriptures non-erroneously [736] views the two, nature and other-being, by means of such statements as "the nature of fire is heat" and "the nature of feeling is the experience of objects," and so forth, and views the present of consciousness and so forth as existing by way of [its own] entityness as being and the past and so forth of those as existing by way of [their own] entityness as non-being does not see or propound the suchness which is the supreme profound dependent-arising in the teachings of the Buddha, the Supramundane Victor.

For, nature and so forth existing by way of entityness is contradictory with reasoning, and the Conquerors also do not explain a nature of things that is contradictory with reasoning because they understand non-erroneously the suchness of all things.

Therefore, the wise take the speech of only the Conqueror as authoritative because, since it has reasonings, it is non-deceptive. Through making an explanation in terms of the Sanskrit equivalent of "scripture" (agama), only the words of the fully accomplished Buddha are posited as "scripture" due to (1) coming from a trustworthy person who has extinguished all faults, (2) causing understanding in all ways, that is causing understanding in all ways of suchness, and (3) going in the direction — that is, in dependence on this — the world goes to nirvana. And, textual systems which are other than this, since they are devoid of reasoning, are not posited as "scripture."

L6: [Indicating damage to existence by way of an object's nature] :L6

This has two parts: indicating scriptural damage and indicating damage by reasoning.

L7: [Indicating scriptural damage] :L7

Own-being, other-being, being, and non-being, viewed as existing by way of [their own] entityness, are not suchness because of a lack of reasoning [to support such a view]. Therefore, to those beings wishing liberation who are trainees, the Supramundane Victor, in the Advice to Katyayana Sutra, refuted both extremes, of existence and non-existence:
~ Katyayana, because worldly beings mostly adhere to existence and non-existence, therefore they are not released from birth, aging, sickness and death, from sorrow and lamentation, suffering, mental unease, and disturbance; they are not released from the suffering of the torment of death.

Also, since this sutra is recited by all [Buddhist] schools, because of this scripture as well as the reasonings that have been explained, we do not assert that the four, own-being, and so forth, exist by way of [their own] entityness.

By what is the Supramundane Victor distinguished? He knows unmistakably the nature of being and non-being.

L7: [Indicating damage by reasoning] :L7

Furthermore, if fire and so forth exist by way of their nature, then that nature which exists by way of its nature would not become non-existent by way of later change. Why? Because change of what exists by way of its nature would never be feasible, like the way in which the non-obstructiveness of space never changes. Because of being a quality that changes, [the heat of fire], like the heat of water, is not a nature.

Objection: If it is propounded that because there is no change among that which exists by way of its nature, and because change is observed, things do not exist by way of their nature, if there is no existence by way of its nature, of what would there be change? Therefore, among that which does not exist by way of its nature, change is not feasible, and because that [i.e., change] is seen, things exist by way of their nature.

[Response:] If there were existence by way of its nature, that is, its entity, how would change be suitable? It would not.

In the Buddhapalita Commentary, the first two lines [of stanza 9] refute the existence of things that change due to the non-existence by way of their nature of things that would change; the last two lines refute that things exist by way of their nature, since change is unfeasible among what exists by way of its nature. All four are one's own system.

Here in the [Clear Words] commentary Chandrakirti says:

~ Also, the explanation, "Because change is seen, there is no nature," is said in the context of a seeing of change that is renowned to others. We do not assert ever anywhere that change exists. [235.1-5]

This is said with respect to explaining the statements made earlier, above, "Even you observe change of that which exists by way of its nature, fire and so forth," [and] since nature is seen to change, there is no existence by way of something's nature; [Chandrakirti] is not saying that he does not assert mere change.

L5: [Indicating that if one propounds existence by way of nature, one does not pass beyond holding an extreme] :L5

For that person who, whereas there is not in the least existence by way of nature, conceives of things as existing [by way of their nature] and of the formerly [existent becoming] non-existent upon disintegration, it follows only definitely that saying "exists" is a conception of permanence and saying "does not exist" is a view of annihilation.

Further, views of permanence and annihilation are obstacles to high status and liberation, whereby they are a great impropriety.

Therefore, the wise should not abide in the two extremes of existence and non-existence.

Objection: Why, if one has views of being and non-being, does one have views of permanence and annihilation?

Response: Whatever is expressed as existing by way of nature would never become non-existent, since nature is not overcome. Therefore, through asserting existence by way of nature there comes to be a view of permanence, whereas through asserting mere existence, there is not.

Having asserted that a thing that arose at a former time is established by way of its nature, if one asserts that now, that is, later, having been destroyed, it does not exist, [739] it follows that one has a view of annihilation whereas through asserting merely that what exists at a former time disintegrates at a later time, one does not.

We have no views of permanence and annihilation that depend upon nature because we do not assert that things exist by way of their nature.

Objection: Even if you do not have a view of permanence, still you have a view of annihilation.

Response: If, having asserted formerly an existence by way of its nature of a thing that was to be annihilated, one later asserts it as non-existent, since one is deprecating that existence by way of its nature, which must always exist, one comes to have a view of annihilation. However, if one says with respect to that which is utterly without establishment by nature, "It does not exist," since there is no deprecation with respect to that, one does not come to have a view of annihilation.

In this fashion, the Descent into Lanka Sutra says:

\ ###
\ Supramundane Victor, the one who, having previously asserted desire, hatred, and bewilderment, later propounds,
\ "Desire, hatred, and bewilderment are not things," is a Nihilist.

If one asserts that things exist by way of their nature, even if one does not propound them as permanent, one comes to have a view of permanence. And, if one asserts that something that existed by way of its nature at a former time is destroyed at a later time, then even if one does not assert that its continuum is annihilated, one comes to have a view of annihilation. Hence, once one asserts that things are established by way of their nature, one does not pass beyond views of permanence and annihilation.

If one does not assert things to be established by way of their nature, one does not have

views of both permanence and annihilation that depend upon nature. But, if one has no way to posit cause and effect, then since one comes to deprecation, one has a view of annihilation.

Here one cannot propound, "Because I do not assert things that are to be annihilated, I do not have a view of annihilation." For, this is like the way in which the worldly Materialists even though they do not, having formerly asserted things that are to be annihilated — former and later lives, the effects of actions, and so forth — later propound them as non-existent, cannot dispell [the fact] that they are those having a view of annihilation.

Followers of Yogic Practice [740] assert that they dispell the view of annihilation due to [their assertion that] other-powered phenomena — mere minds and mental factors — are established by way of their own character, and dispell the view of permanence due to [their assertion that] other-powered phenomena lack the imputed. With respect to this, due to [their] deprecation of the conventional existence of apprehended [objects] and apprehending [subjects] in terms of external [objects] and due to their superimpositions with respect to non-truly existent other-powered phenomena, they fall into the extremes of both permanence and annihilation. Therefore, only the view of the Madhyamikas does not fall into the extremes of existence and non-existence and is free from the faults of permanence and annihilation. Others are not.

In this vein, Nagarjuna's Precious Garland says:

\ ###
\ Ask the Worldlings, the Samkhyas,
\ Owl-Followers and Nirgranthas,
\ The proponents of a person and aggregates,
\ If they propound what passes beyond "is" and "is not."

\ ###
\ Thereby know that the ambrosia
\ Of the Buddhas' teaching is called profound,
\ An uncommon doctrine passing
\ Far beyond existence and non-existence.

----- (i.e. another translation:)

\ ###
\ 1:61. Ask the Samkhyas, the followers of Kanada,^b Nirgranthas,^c
\ And the worldly proponents of a person and aggregates, ^d
\ Whether they propound
\ What passes beyond "is" and "is not."

\ ###
\ 62. Thereby know that the ambrosia
\ Of the Buddhas' e teaching is called profound,
\ An exclusive doctrine passing
\ Far beyond "is" and "is not."

Those who propound mere persons are the Buddhist proponents of the person as substantially existent. Those who propound merely the aggregates are the Buddhists who propound the person as not substantially existent but the aggregates as substantially existent.

In brief, for as long as one does not know how to posit the effects of actions and bondage and release and so forth as existing within a lack of nature, that is to say, establishment by way of own-entity, no matter what sort of mode of dispelling views of permanence and annihilation one engages in, one does not pass beyond the two extremes. For, when one dispells the view of annihilation, one must assert an extreme of existence, and when one dispells the view of permanence, one must assert an extreme of non-existence.

Therefore, the mode of the [proponents of] mere knowledge who say that form does not exist but consciousness exists, and that imputations are not established by way of their own character but the other two natures are established by way of their own character, is [a teaching of] interpretable meaning, that, like the propounding of the person [as substantially existent] of the Sammitiyas, was set forth for such trainees by the compassionate Teacher for the sake of leading [them] gradually to techniques for realizing the ultimate. It is not of definitive meaning.

What sort of scriptures are to be posited as of interpretable meaning and what sort are to be posited as of definitive meaning should be known in accordance with the King of Meditative Stabilizations Sutra and the Teachings of Akshayamati Sutra. These points should be known in detail from [my] Essence of the Good Explanations, Treatise Discriminating the Interpretable and the Definitive.

L4: [II. Conjoining this with scriptures of definitive meaning] :L4

This which has been taught with reasoning in this way — that all things are without nature, that is to say, establishment by way of their own entities — is also established by profound scriptures. In order to indicate that all scriptures teaching such are explained by this chapter, there is a partial exemplification that associates this with scriptures of definitive meaning.

The King of Meditative Stabilizations Sutra says:

\ ###
\ Since all is inconceivable and unarisen,
\ Knowledge of things and non-things should be destroyed.
\ Those children who are under the control of thought
\ Suffer in hundreds of ten millions of cyclic existences.

And:

\ ###
\ I remember a former past time.
\ An inconceivable number of aeons ago, a chief of men,
\ A great sage, was born for the sake of the world.
\ He was named "Arisen from Non-being."

\ ###
\ Just after he was born, remaining in the sky
\ He taught all phenomena as without being.
\ At that time given a name concordant with that,
\ He was renowned by that name in all the world.

\ ###
\ All the gods proclaimed

\ This one called "Non-being" will be a Conqueror.
 \ As soon as he was born, taking seven steps
 \ This Conqueror explained phenomena as without being.
 \ ###
 \ Whenever a subduer, a Buddha who teaches
 \ All phenomena, a king of doctrine, arises,
 \ The sound "All phenomena lack being" comes forth
 \ From grass, trees, bushes, medicinal plants, rocks, and mountains.
 \ ###
 \ As far as sound extends in the world,
 \ "All lacks being, there is nothing at all,"
 \ For so far does there very much arise
 \ The roar of sound of the leader of the world.

Here, the meaning of "non-being" has the meaning of "lack of nature." [742.2]

L4: [III. Condensing the meaning and indicating the title] :L4

One should ascertain the meaning which is taught explicitly, namely that being and non-being in general, and nature, other-being, and the nature which is the suchness of phenomena in particular, are not at all positable within existence through the force of own-entity. And, at that time, implicitly, one should induce ascertainment of dependent-arising, thinking, "All those are very correct within a mere positing [of phenomena] as existing through the force of verbal conventions."

This is the explanation of Chapter XV, called "The Analysis of Nature," having a nature of eleven verses.

L2: [Document four: from Tsong Khapa 's Great exposition] :L2

The Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path is the earliest of Tsong Khapa's five major works on the Middle Way School. He composed it in 1402 when he was forty-five years old. The last section of the Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path is on special insight (lhag mthong, vipasyana) into emptiness. From within this, the following section is called "The Refutation of an Identification of the Object-to-be-negated That Is Too Narrow."

Page numbers to the Dharamsala edition of the Tibetan text [860.4-870.1] are inserted into the translation in square brackets. Headings are according to Jam-yang-shay-ba's interlinear table of contents included within the Four Interwoven Annotations. See the Tibetan text for this section, pages 246-257.

L3: [The refutation of an identification of the object-to-be-negated that is too narrow] :L3

This section has three parts: (1) refuting the assertion that the object-to-be-negated is that which possesses the three attributes (khyad chos gsum Idan); (2) in our system, the nature possessing the three attributes (khyadpar gsum Idan gyi rang bzhiri) is emptiness; and (3) refuting the assertion that reality (chos nyid, dharmata) is independent and positive.

L4: [First, refuting the assertion that the object- to-be-negated is that which possesses

the three attributes] :L4

Some [Tibetans] say:

~ [On the occasion of this Consequence School,] that which is to be refuted is nature and that [Consequence School object-to-be-negated nature] possesses the three attributes of (1) an entity attribute, that it is not produced by causes and conditions, (2) a state attribute, that it is immutable, and (3) a certification attribute, that it does not depend on another.

These three attributes, moreover, are mentioned in the Treatise on the Middle, which says:

\ ###
\ 15:1
\ The arising of nature due to causes and conditions is not reasonable.
\ A nature produced by causes and conditions would have a nature of fabrication.
\ How could nature be said to be fabricated?
\ Nature is non-fabricated and does not depend on another.
\ [861]

In general, if it were asserted that external and internal things such as sprouts and so forth are established as such natures having the three attributes, then Proponents of the Middle also would have to refute such [but the refutation of such a nature is not sufficient] .

Here the identification of the object-to-be-negated is the identification of the root object-to-be-negated, through which the Middle Way view realizing the lack of nature of phenomena is generated in one's continuum when it is refuted without depending [on negating something else also].

For, our own schools such as the Great Exposition and Sutra Schools, and so forth, have already established that products, compounded phenomena, are created by causes and conditions and that they change. Therefore [if the object-to-be-negated is as you say it is] then there would be the faults that it would not be necessary to prove the lack of existence by way of nature to those schools [i.e., the Great Exposition and Sutra Schools], and so forth. Hence, how could your identification be getting at the final uncommon object-to-be-negated!

[Proponents of True Existence say that] things have a nature in the sense of establishment by way of their own entities. In response to that, [the Consequentialists] make the logical extension that "if things were established by way of their own entities, then they would not depend on causes and conditions, they would be immutable, and so forth." Although there are many such logical extensions in Middle Way texts, those are cases of expressing fallacies from the viewpoint of a pervader [something wider]. This is not an identification of the object-to-be-negated from the viewpoint of its own entity.

[Another reason is that] if something is ultimately established, really established, and truly established, then it must not be produced by causes and conditions, it must be immutable, and so forth; but even if that is so, still, not³⁰⁷ being produced by causes and conditions and so forth is not the meaning of being ultimately established and so forth.

For example, although impermanence pervades pots, impermanence is not suitable as the meaning of pot; whereas that which is a bulbous thing, and so forth, is posited as the meaning of pot. Similarly, if something is ultimately established and so forth, then it

would have to be a partless thing. Still, partless thing is not asserted to be the basic object-to-be-negated here. Since such partless things are just imputed by the uncommon conceptions of proponents of [false] tenets, such a conception [exists only among those whose mental continua are affected by tenets and thus] is not the root that binds the embodied in cyclic existence.

Although one meditated on partless things as empty of nature upon delineating [such a view], that would not damage at all the innately ignorant conception (ma rigpa'i 'dzin pa) that has operated since beginningless time. Hence, even though one brought to completion the direct realization of that meaning [i.e., the lack of inherent existence of partless things, and so forth], this would not at all damage the innate afflictive emotions (than skyes kyi nyon mongs) as well.

When the view is delineated, one is to consider the refutation of the conceived object of innate ignorance to be the main point, and refute the conceived object of artificial ignorance as a branch of that.

If, not knowing that the main thing is to use the artificial as a branch of that, one forsook refuting the mode of apprehension of an innately ignorant consciousness and at the time of refuting a self of persons refuted a permanent, unitary, independent self, and at the time of refuting a self of phenomena refuted (1) the apprehended, objects that are partless particles, (2) apprehending consciousnesses that are partless moments, and (3) the nature possessing the three attributes, and so forth, that are imputed only by proponents of tenets, then such refutations are unsuitable in all ways. [862.5]

If it were not unsuitable, then, since when delineating the view one delineated nothing beyond the non-existence of a permanent, unitary, and independent [self], and so forth, then at the time of meditation also one would have to meditate only on such. Why? Delineation of the view is for the sake of meditation. Therefore, even if one manifested such a selflessness upon meditation, and completed familiarization with it, that would be exhausted as only that [i.e., manifestly perceiving the non-existence of a permanent, unitary, and independent self]. [863]

If one did assert in that way that merely directly perceiving the non-existence of the two selves only as they are imputed by artificial conceptions can abandon the innate afflictions, desire, and so forth, that would be extremely absurd. Chandrakirti's Introduction [VI. 140] states:

\ ###
\ [You propound] that when selflessness is realized
\ One abandons the permanent self, [but] you do not assert that
\ As the base of the conception of self. Hence, it is fantastic to propound
\ That through knowing selflessness the view of self is eradicated.³¹⁰

Chandrakirti's Auto-Commentary says:

~ In order to illuminate by way of an example this senseless proposition that the innate conception of a self is abandoned through only refuting a permanent self, the root text says that:

~ When an ignorant person sees a snake living inside the wall of the house and is frightened, another person says, "Do not be frightened by that snake. There is no elephant inside the wall." Alas, the assertion that fears of a snake could be removed by the words that there is no elephant is source of laughter by others, when they see this. [863.3]

Even though this is mentioned with respect to the selflessness of persons it also should be applied to the selflessness of phenomena:

~ When [they assert that] the selflessness [of phenomena] is realized, they abandon an artificial self [of phenomena] and therefore they do not assert this [artificial self] as the basis that is ignorance. Therefore the proposition that [the innate] ignorance is removed by knowing the non-existence of [artificial] self [of phenomena] is very amazing.³¹¹ [863.5]

L4: [Second, in our system the nature possessing the three attributes is emptiness] :L4

[Objection:] When the Master Nagarjuna set forth non-fabrication and non-dependence on another as the characteristics of the entity of nature, did he speak hypothetically or does such a nature exist in fact?

Response: The reality that is mentioned [in the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras] in the phrase "whether the Tathagatas appear or not the reality of phenomena [just abides]" is posited as the nature. This is non-fabricated and does not depend on another. That nature does exist. [863.6] Chandrakirti's Auto-Commentary supplies a scriptural source:

~ Objection: Does the Master Nagarjuna assert that a nature qualified in such a way exists or not?

~ Response: That reality in terms of which the Supramundane Victor says in the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras, "Whether the Tathagatas appear or not the reality of phenomena just abides," exists.

~ Objection: What is this reality?

~ Response: It is the final mode of abiding of these phenomena, eyes, and so forth.

~ Objection: What is the nature that is the mode of abiding of these like?

~ Response: It is their non-fabricatedness, i.e., non-falsity, their mode of subsistence which does not depend on other causes and conditions and is the entity realized by a Superior's knowledge [of meditative equipoise] free from the visual dimness of ignorance and its predispositions by way of not being polluted by those.

~ Objection: Does that nature exist?

~ Response: Who could say that it does not exist? If it did not exist, for what purpose would Bodhisattvas cultivate the path of the perfections? Bodhisattvas initiate hundreds of efforts for the sake of realizing such a reality.

Objection: Did you not earlier refute an establishment by nature with respect to all phenomena?

Response: Did we not say earlier many times that there does not exist in phenomena even a particle of the nature that is establishment by way of a thing's own entity (rang gi ngo bos grub pa'i rang bzhin) and which does not depend on internal mental imputation? Therefore what need is there to say anything about other phenomena, products and so forth, as being established as a nature in the sense of being established by way of their own entities without depending on internal imputation! Even the reality of things, the ultimate truth, is not in the least established as such a nature.

Chandrakirti's Clear Words says:

~ Because it is thus, therefore, that which, even in all three times, is the non-fabricated fundamental entity non-mistaken in fire, that which is not the subsequent arising of something that did not arise previously, and that which does not have reliance on causes and conditions, as do the heat of water, or near and far, or long and short, is said

to be the nature [of fire].³¹²

~ Objection: Does there exist such a non-fabricated and non-relative entity of fire?

~ Response: Such a nature is not existent by way of its own entity (rang gi ngo bo, svarupam) and is not [utterly] non-existent either. Though it is so, in order to get rid of the fear of the listeners, when this is taught, it is said upon making a superimposition that it exists conventionally.

Thus Chandrakirti refutes that a nature is established by way of its own entity and says that it exists conventionally.

Objection: Chandrakirti says that [such a non-fabricated entity of fire] is taught to be conventionally existent upon making a superimposition in order to get rid of the fear of listeners. The Master [Chandrakirti] himself does not assert that it exists.

Response: That is not reasonable. Those which [exist conventionally] upon imputation for the purpose of abandoning the fear of listeners are not just the nature but other phenomena also. If such a nature did not exist, then all other phenomena also would be senseless.

Also, Chandrakirti's Auto-Commentary states: [865.4]

~ It is not just that the master Nagarjuna asserts this nature; also other persons can be caused to assert the meaning of this nature [in debate]. Hence, this nature is also presented as just established for both [disputants].

Otherwise [if nature were non-existent], one would have to assert that the Middle Way system asserted that release could not be attained [because the cessation that is an ultimate truth did not exist]. The attainment of nirvana means the actualization of nirvana, and nirvana on this occasion is explained as true cessation and because [true cessation] is said to be the ultimate truth, the ultimate truth would not exist [if the nature did not exist]. Moreover, the source for this — Chandrakirti's Commentary on (Nagarjuna's) "Sixty Stanzas of Reasoning"— proves with much vigor that when nirvana is attained the ultimate truth of cessation must be actualized. [866]

Compounded phenomena such as eyes, and so forth, are not established as a nature in the sense of establishment by way of own-entity or nature, meaning reality when reality is posited as nature. Hence, [compounded phenomena such as eyes, and so forth] are not established as any nature. Although the ultimate truth is established [as the nature in the sense of] positing reality as nature, [an ultimate truth] is posited by way of its two positors, non-fabrication and non-dependence on another, and hence [the ultimate] does not at all come to be established by way of its own entity. Therefore [the ultimate] is only established conventionally.

Here, being fabricated means not existing earlier and being created as a new arising. Depending on another means depending on causes and conditions. [866.3]

Forms and so forth are not established as either of those two types of nature. Therefore, one cultivates the path in order to see the nature that is reality. Hence, [Chandrakirti] says that its basis, pure behavior, is not senseless.

Moreover, it is explained that it is not contradictory (1) utterly not to assert a nature of phenomena in the sense of their establishment by way of their own entity and (2) to assert for each phenomena a [reality] nature that is a convention.

Chandrakirti's Auto-Commentary states:

~ Objection: Incredible! Amazing! You persons who assert there are no inherently existent things at all and who also contingently, i.e., conventionally, assert a nature that is non-fabricated and not dependent on others are propounding something that is mutually contradictory and senseless.

~ Response: You who say such do not understand that the thought of these statements in [Nagarjuna's] Treatise is that if just these entities of eyes, and so forth, which are dependent-arising and which are apprehendable by childish ordinary beings, were the nature of those entities of eyes and so forth, then such a nature would be realized even by those who are erroneous. In that case, maintenance of purity would be senseless. Therefore, just these [entities of eyes and so forth] are not the final nature, and hence maintenance of purity for the sake of viewing that [final nature] is purposeful.

~ [Regarding how it conventionally exists having the three attributes, Chandrakirti himself] says that, in terms of conventional truth, [the final nature] is not fabricated and is not dependent on other [causes and conditions].

~ That [entity] which is not something seen by childish beings is suitable to be the [final] nature. Due to just those [positors of this as a nature], just that ultimate is not a thing (dngos po, bhava) and is also not a non-thing, because that ultimate is by nature pacified [of all elaborations].

Here [in this context of the above quotation from Chandrakirti's Auto-Commentary], "existing as a thing" (dngos po yod pa) — as explained before on the occasion of discussing the dualistic propositions [of existing as a thing or not existing as a thing] — means "existing by way of own-entity" (rang gi ngo bos yod pa). "Not existing as a thing" (dngos po med pa) means "[its entity] not existing at all" (ngo bo ye med).

When one delineates that phenomena do not have a particle of establishment as nature in the sense of being established by way of their own entity, the emptiness of nature exists as an attribute (khyad chos) of these phenomena, forms and so forth, which serve as the substrata (khyad gzhi). Hence, there is no contradiction in both existing as objects of one mind and since that dualistic appearance has not vanished, that emptiness becomes an imputed ultimate truth.

When through cultivating just that view realizing a lack of nature [in the sense of inherent existence] one directly realizes that meaning, in the face of that all mistaken [appearances] that are the appearances of [phenomena as established by] nature — whereas none are established by nature — have vanished. Hence the consciousness that directly actualizes reality does not observe or see the subjects, forms and so forth. Therefore, the pair — the reality and the subjects — does not exist in the face of that awareness. Hence, the positing of those two, reality and substrata, must be done by way of some other conventional awareness.

In that case, the ultimate truth is posited as a mere vanishing of all mistaken appearances that are the appearances of [phenomena] as established by nature [in the sense of inherent existence] — whereas none are established by nature — in addition to (steng du) the pacification of all elaborations of the object-to-be-negated, that is to say, establishment by way of a thing's own entity. Hence, although such [an ultimate truth] is asserted, how can it be necessary to assert a [reality] nature that is established by way of its own entity?

Chandrakirti's Clear Words says:

~ That entityness which by its nature becomes the object of those Superiors free from the

dimness of ignorance, in the manner of non-perception of the aspects of things that are observed through the force of the dimness of ignorance, is posited as the nature of those [things].

It also says:

~ The lack of production which is the [final] nature of things is not anything at all and hence is just a non-thing because it lacks entityness. Therefore, that nature of things does not exist. [868.5]

L4: [Third, refuting the assertion that reality is independent and positive] :L4

Some [i.e., the Jo-nag-bas following Dol-bo Shay-rap-gyel-tsen] did not posit the ultimate truth as a mere elimination of the elaborations of the two selves, the object-to-be-negated, and so forth. They asserted that when one realizes the ultimate mode of being, [that entity] appears — as the object of a non-erroneous mind — in the way that blue, yellow, and so forth appear in the manner of being established independently (rang dbang du). They also asserted that the ascertainment of its existing in this way is the view realizing the profound meaning.

Also, they assert that the realization of these external and internal phenomena — which are the bases that sentient beings misapprehend as the two selves — as not existent [by] nature (rang bzhin [gyis] med pa), is a place for going astray with respect to the correct view (Ita ba'i gol sa).

Such assertions are outside the sphere of all the scriptures of the Greater and Lesser Vehicles (theg pa che chung) because (1) those [Jonangpas] assert that it is necessary to overcome the conception of self that is the root binding persons in cyclic existence, and (2) the bases that are apprehended by this [conception] as self are these [phenomena] realized as not existent by nature. Hence, without overcoming that, they assert that the conception of self is overcome through realizing some other phenomenon unrelated with that [conception of self] as true.³¹⁶

Regarding this, for instance, it is no different than if [some person] conceives there is a snake to the east and becomes distressed, and if [someone else] thinking the distress cannot be overcome by thinking there is no snake to the east — instead says, "Think on the fact that to the west there is a tree. Through this, you will get rid of your conception of a snake in the room and will overcome your distress."

Therefore, those who wish goodness for themselves banish such to the distance and [work vigorously at] the means of eradicating the mode of apprehension of ignorance — that which binds beings in cyclic existence and is the root of all ruin. In dependence on the texts of the superior Nagarjuna and his sons, which clearly set forth the vast and manifold collections of reasonings that establish deep ascertainment of the scriptures of definitive meaning and show that the meaning of those is not suitable to be interpreted otherwise, one will go beyond the ocean of cyclic existence.

[I, Tsong Khapa,] have seen that these refutations of wrong ideas with respect to the object-to-be-negated are very valuable for eliminating the places where one goes wrong in finding the Middle View. Therefore I have explained them at length. [870.1]

L2: [Document five: Four Interwoven Annotations] :L2

This document is the section of the Four Interwoven Annotations to (Tsong Khapa's) "Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path"⁵¹⁷ commenting upon the chapter of Tsong Khapa's text from within the "Special Insight" section entitled, "The Refutation of an Identification of the Object-to-be-negated That Is Too Narrow." The Four Interwoven Annotations is a composite interlinear commentary on Tsong Khapa's Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path that appears to be an accreted compilation in successive editions. The four annotators are Jam-yang-shay-ba ('jam dbyangs bzhad pa, 1648-1721), Ba-so Cho-gyi-gyel-tsen (bet so chos kyi rgyal mtshan, 1402-1473; dates uncertain), De-druk-ken-chen Nga-wang-rap-den (sde drug mkhan chen ngag dbang rab rten, 17ⁿ century), and Dra-di Ge-shay Rin-chen-don-drup (bra sti dge bshes rin chen don grub, 17ⁿ century).

The Tibetan text employs the typographical device of large and small font sizes often identified with the first initial of the annotator. As Napper points out, a literal translation of the Four Interwoven Annotations is unfeasible, due to the repetitious complexity of the interwoven commentarial voices. Therefore, I have presented the translation here as a coherent whole — as it would be read by a Tibetan scholar — without attempting to identify the individual commentators or differentiate Tsong Khapa's original words within the interwoven text.

In the past there were editions of the text that contained only the annotations of one, two, and three of the authors. Although the earlier editions with fewer commentators are not now extant, the current text including the annotations of all four authors survives in two editions, the New Delhi edition employed here and a Chinese edition with no publication data.

Page numbers to the New Delhi edition of the Tibetan text are inserted into the text in square brackets. The three major subject headings are from Tsong Khapa's text; subheadings are supplied from Jam-yang-shay-ba's commentary in the Four Interwoven Annotations,

L3: [The refutation of an identification of the object-to-be-negated that is too narrow] :L3

This section has three parts:

-- refuting the assertion that the object-to-be-negated possesses the three attributes (khyad chos gsum Idan);

-- in our system, the nature possessing the three attributes (khyad par gsum Idan gyi rang bzhin) is emptiness; and

-- refuting the assertion that reality (chos nyid, dharmata) is independent and positive.

[387]

L3: [First, refuting the assertion that the object-to-be-negated possesses the three attributes] :L3

This section has seven parts: (1) confusing the mode of subsistence of things possessing the three attributes with that which is to be negated; (2) that [the nature of things possessing the three attributes] is not the nature which is the object-to-be-negated; (3)

the Hearer schools refute such a nature, therefore it is not suitable to be the object-to-be-negated here [in the Middle Way Consequence School]; (4) although it is logically implied that if something is established from its own side then it must be established in a manner possessing these three attributes, that which possesses these three attributes is not the object-to-be-negated; (5) if something is truly established it must not be produced by causes and conditions, and so forth, but non-production by causes and

conditions, and so forth, is not the meaning of being truly established; (6) since the innate mode of apprehension does not have such [a mode of apprehension as is involved with these artificial conceptions], although one refuted these [artificial conceptions], there is no benefit [of liberation]; and (7) how the wise are amazed at such.

L4: [First, confusing the mode of subsistence of things possessing the three attributes with that which is to be negated] :L4

[387.1] With respect to the mode of refuting too narrow an identification of the object-to-be-negated, if the establishment of things as possessing the three attributes of a nature did occur, it would be an object-to-be-negated of reasoning by a consciousness analyzing the ultimate, and the conception of that would be an artificial conception of true existence. However since those three qualities do exist with the nature or mode of subsistence of phenomena they are [not]319 refuted.

Moreover, in general, just as one must understand "thing" (dngos po, bhava) as having two meanings — one as able to perform a function and the other as the nature that is the object-to-be-negated — so there are many usages of "nature":

- (1) the mode of subsistence of objects,
- (2) the conventional nature of forms and so forth, and
- (3) establishment from an object's own side, the object-to-be-negated.

Thus there are many meanings of "nature." One should know which it is by way of the context.

Moreover, regarding the three attributes, (1) non-fabricated means not newly fabricated by causes and conditions and (2) [not] depending on another means [not] depending on causes and conditions. Thus, [the three attributes] are not the meaning of [the object-to-be-negated, i.e.,] establishment by way of its own entity.

[Nevertheless] some Tibetans say:

~ On the occasion of this [Consequence School,] that which is to be negated is nature and that [Consequence School object-to-be-negated] nature possesses the three attributes of (1) an entity attribute, that it is not produced by causes and conditions, (2) a state attribute, that it is immutable, and (3) a certification attribute, that it does not depend on another. These three attributes, moreover, are mentioned in the Treatise on the Middle, which says that:

~ It is not reasonable that the nature should arise from causes and conditions. If such a nature did arise from causes and conditions, that nature would be something made (byes pa can). How could it be suitable for something to be both the nature that is how things subsist and something "made up," that is, fabricated by causes and conditions? Since being such a nature and being fabricated by causes and conditions is very contradictory, such is not suitable. Such natures are non-fabricated, i.e., not produced by causes and conditions, and do not depend on another mind that certifies them.

[Reply:] Since these [three attributes] are a feature of emptiness, how could the nature [mentioned in the Treatise on the Middle] be suitable as the object-to-be-negated? [388.1] One who propounds such, [i.e., that the object-to-be-negated nature possesses the three attributes] has not identified the object-to-be-negated well. For, like the example of showing the entity of thing (dngos po, bhava) when identifying pot, identifying the uncommon object-to-be-negated of the view [of emptiness] as this nature that possesses the three attributes [is incorrect because] such a nature is wider than that.

L4: [Second, that is not the nature which is the object-to-be-negated] :L4

In general, if it were asserted that external and internal things such as sprouts and so forth are established as such natures having the three attributes, then Proponents of the Middle also would have to refute such; but the refutation of such a nature is not sufficient. A non-mistaken good identification of the object-to-be-negated is to identify it upon examining the final root of an object-to-be-negated, which is such that, through just refuting it, the Middle Way view realizing just the lack of existence by nature (rang bzhin gyis med pa nyid) of phenomena is definitely generated in one's continuum without depending on negating something else. [388.6]

L4: [Third, the hearer schools refute such a nature therefore it is not suitable to be the object-to-be-negated here [in the consequence school] :L4

It being the case that one must make such an identification, your identification of the object-to-be-negated given earlier is just a partial (phyogs re ba) identification and thus too narrow (khyab chung ba). For, our own schools such as the Great Exposition and Sutra Schools, and so forth, have already established that products, compounded phenomena, are created by causes and conditions and that they change state by way of disintegrating each moment. Therefore if the object-to-be-negated [is as you say it is, then] there would be the faults that (1) it would not be necessary to prove the lack of existence by nature to those schools — the Great Exposition and Sutra Schools, and so forth — and (2) those Proponents of the Great Exposition, Proponents of Sutra, and so forth, even would absurdly cognize the lack of existence by nature of things. Hence, how could your identification be getting at the final uncommon object-to-be-negated for the view realizing emptiness!

L4: [Fourth, although it is logically implied that if something is established from its own side then it must be established in a manner possessing these three attributes, that which possesses these three attributes is not the object-to-be-negated] :L4

The Proponents of True Existence, and so forth, say in general that things have a nature in the sense of establishment by way of their own entities. In response to that, [the Consequentialists] make the logical extension that "if things were established by way of their own entities, then they would not depend on causes and conditions, would be immutable, and so forth." Although there are many such logical extensions in Nagarjuna's Treatise, Chandrakirti's Clear Words, and so forth, those are cases of expressing fallacies from the viewpoint of a pervader [something wider]. This is not an identification of the object-to-be-negated from the viewpoint of its own entity.

To someone who, for example, asserts that something that is not a pot is a pot, thinking that if it is refuted that this non-pot is a thing by saying "then it would be a thing" it would perforce refute its being a pot, for "thing" is wider and "pot" is narrower. Thinking such, [an opponent] expresses fallacy from the viewpoint of something wider: "It follows it is a thing." However, this is not a case of identifying pot's own entity, which is narrower. [390] Similarly, if someone asserts that things have establishment by way of their own entity — which is something narrower — this would entail that things have a nature possessing the three attributes, which is wider. Thinking such, from that point of view they draw an unwanted consequence, "They would be natures having the three attributes." They are not identifying the entity of the special object-to-be-negated which is narrower, through the wider expression of fallacy. [390.1]

L4: [Fifth, if something is truly established it must not be produced by causes and

conditions, and so forth; but non-production by causes and conditions, and so forth, is not the meaning of being truly established] :L4

Another reason is that if something is ultimately established, really established, and truly established, then it must not be produced by causes and conditions — it must be immutable, and so forth; but even if that is so, still, not³²¹ being produced by causes and conditions and so forth is not posited as the meaning of being ultimately established and so forth. For example, although impermanence pervades pots, impermanence is not suitable as the meaning of pot; whereas that which is a bulbous thing, and so forth, and can serve as a pot without being confused with any other object, must be posited as the meaning of pot.

Similarly, if something is ultimately established and so forth, then it would have to be a partless thing. Still, partless thing is not asserted to be the object to be negated here. Since such partless things are just imputed by the uncommon conceptions of proponents of [false] tenets, such a conception exists only among those whose mental continua are affected by tenets, and thus is not the root that binds the embodied in cyclic existence. [390.5] Although one meditated on partless things as empty of inherent existence upon delineating [such a view], that would not damage at all the innately ignorant conception (ma rig pa i 'dzin pa) that has operated since beginningless time. Hence, even though one brought to completion the direct realization of that meaning [i.e., the lack of inherent existence of partless things, and so forth], this would not at all damage ignorance or the innate afflictive emotions (lhan skyes kyi nyon mongs) as well. [391.1]

L4: [Sixth, since the innate mode of apprehension does not have such [a mode of apprehension as is involved with these artificial conceptions], although one refuted these [artificial conceptions], there is no benefit] :L4

Due to the aforementioned reasons, when delineating the nature of phenomena by way of the view, one takes as the main point just that fact that what is conceived by an innately ignorant consciousness does not exist. As a branch of that, one refutes the objects apprehended by the artificial conceptions of true existence and the conception of a permanent, unitary, independent self, and so forth. [391.4]

The meaning of [Tsong Khapa's statement that], "When the view is delineated, one is to consider the refutation of the conceived object of innate ignorance to be the main point, and refute the conceived object of artificial ignorance as a branch of that," is that: since most artificial conceptions of true existence are fully qualified conceptions of true existence, one refutes the innate conceived object through designating it [i.e., the negation of the conceived object of the artificial conception of true existence,] as the reason, as for example in the statement, "Such-and-such lacks true existence because of not being established as able to bear analysis by reasoning."

This is like the statement [in Chandrakirti's Introduction]:

\ ###
\ Therefore this reasoning of dependent-arising
\ Cuts the extremes, the nets of bad views.³²² [391.3]³²³

If, not knowing that this mode [of refuting the objects apprehended by the artificial conceptions of true existence and the conception of a permanent, unitary, independent self, and so forth, is a branch of refuting the innate conception,] one forsakes refuting the mode of apprehension of an innately ignorant consciousness, and at the time of refuting a self of

persons refuted a permanent, unitary, independent self and at the time of refuting a self of phenomena refuted

- (1) apprehended objects that are partless particles,
- (2) apprehending consciousnesses that are partless moments, and
- (3) the nature possessing the three attributes, and so forth — that are imputed only by proponents of tenets — then such refutations are unsuitable in all ways. [392]

If it were not unsuitable, then, since when delineating the view one delineated nothing beyond the non-existence of a permanent, unitary, and independent [self of persons], and so forth,³² then at the time of meditation also one would have to meditate only on such. Why? Delineation of the view is for the sake of meditation. [392.2]

L4: [Seventh, how the wise are amazed at such] :L4

Therefore, even if one manifested such a selflessness upon meditation, and completed familiarization with it, that would be exhausted as only manifestly perceiving the non-existence of a permanent, unitary, and independent self, and so forth. If one did assert in that way, as explained above, that merely directly perceiving the non-existence of the two selves only as they are imputed by artificial conceptions can overcome and abandon the innate afflictions — desire, and so forth — that would be extremely absurd.

The reason for this is that Chandrakirti's Introduction states: [392.4]

- ~ When they assert that the selflessness of persons is directly realized, they do their abandonment by way of perceiving the non-existence only of a permanent self but they do not assert this permanent self as the basis that is the object of observation or as the basis of the subjective aspect of the innate conception of "I." Therefore the proposition that the innate view of a self is thoroughly removed by knowing the non-existence of only a permanent self is a source of much amazement.³²⁵ [392.6]

Chandrakirti's Auto-Commentary says:

- ~ In order to illuminate by way of an example this senseless proposition that the innate conception of a self is abandoned through only refuting a permanent self, the root text says that: [393.1]
- ~ When an ignorant person sees a snake living inside the wall of the house and is frightened, another person says, "Do not be frightened by that snake. There is no elephant inside the wall." Alas, the assertion that fears of a snake could be removed by the words that there is no elephant is source of laughter by others — i.e., the intelligent — when they see this.

Even though this is mentioned with respect to the selflessness of persons, it also should be applied to the selflessness of phenomena.

With respect to how to apply [this to the selflessness of phenomena] :

- ~ When they assert that the selflessness of phenomena is directly realized, they do their abandonment by way of perceiving the non-existence only of an artificial self of phenomena, but they do not assert this artificial self of phenomena as the basis that is the object of observation or as the basis of the subjective aspect of innate ignorance. Therefore the proposition that the innate ignorance is thoroughly removed by knowing the non-existence of only the artificial self of phenomena is a source of much amazement.

L3: [Second, in our system the nature possessing the three attributes is the mode of subsistence, emptiness] :L3

This section has thirteen parts. [393.5]

L4: [First, the meaning of that scripture] :L4

[Objection:] If the triply-qualified mode of subsistence does not exist, there would be no hearing, thinking, and meditating [on it]. When the master Nagarjuna set forth non-fabrication and non-dependence on another as the characteristics of the entity of nature, did he speak hypothetically or does such a nature exist in fact?

Response: A nature having those three attributes is refuted with respect to certain substrata, i.e., compounded phenomena, but in general does exist. Although emptiness — the mode of subsistence — exists as that nature which is the nature having the three attributes, it does not exist as a nature that is established by way of its own entity.

The Clear Words says that:

- ~ That factor which is non-erroneous with respect to fire in the three times is the nature of fire, its emptiness. Fire is only empty of nature [i.e., inherent existence] over the three times, and therefore this fundamental entity which existed from the start and which:
 - ~ (1) is not newly fabricated by causes and conditions,
 - ~ (2) is not a new arising of what did not exist before, and
 - ~ (3) from the beginning does not depend on another — unlike the heat of water, which depends on fire as a condition and does not depend on a positing factor because it does not pass beyond a natural emptiness from the very start, without being like positing here and there, long and short, and so forth, in dependence on any [comparative] basis is the nature of fire [i.e., its emptiness]. [394.3]
- ~ The natural emptiness in the entity of fire is not existent by way of its own entity and is also not non-existent conventionally. Though indeed it does not exist by way of its own entity, in order to relieve listeners of fear it is said that it conventionally exists as only an imputation by thought. [394.4]

Response: The reality which is mentioned in the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras in the phrase "whether the Tathagatas appear or not the reality of phenomena just abides" is posited as the nature. This is non-fabricated and does not depend on another.

That nature does exist. [Chandrakirti] proves that it exists together with a source for this in his Auto-Commentary:

- ~ Objection: Does the Master Nagarjuna assert that a nature qualified in such a way exists or not?
- ~ Response: That reality in terms of which the Supramundane Victor says in the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras, "Whether the Tathagatas appear or not the reality of phenomena just abides" just definitely exists.
- ~ Objection: Also, what is this reality?
- ~ Response: It is the final mode of abiding of these phenomena, eyes, and so forth.

[395.2]

- ~ Objection: What is the nature that is the mode of abiding of these like?
- ~ Response: It is their non-fabricatedness, i.e., non-falsity, their mode of abiding or subsistence which does not depend on other causes and conditions. Furthermore, that mode of subsistence is the entity realized by a Superior's knowledge of meditative equipoise free from the visual dimness of ignorance and its predispositions by way of not being polluted by those.

~ Objection: Does that nature exist?

~ Response: Who could say that it does not exist? If it did not exist, for what purpose would Bodhisattvas cultivate the path of the perfections? Bodhisattvas initiate hundreds of efforts for the sake of realizing such a reality. [395.7]

L4: [Second, though the nature refuted formerly and the nature which is the mode of subsistence of things have the same name, the meaning is different] :L4

Objection: Did you not earlier refute an establishment by nature with respect to all phenomena?

Response: Did we not say earlier many times that there does not exist in phenomena even a particle of the nature that is establishment by way of a thing's own entity (rang gi ngo bos grub pa 'i rang bzhin) and that does not depend on internal mental imputation? Therefore what need is there to say anything about other phenomena, products and so forth, as being established as a nature in the sense of being established by way of their own entities without depending on internal imputation! Even the reality of things, the ultimate truth, is not in the least established as such a nature. The Clear Words, upon refuting a nature established by way of its own entity, says that it exists conventionally.

Earlier Chandrakirti said [in the Clear Words] that:

~ Because the heat of fire is produced by other causes and conditions, it is not the nature of fire.

Thereupon, in order to identify the nature of fire he says that:

~ That which abides non-erroneously in fire throughout the three times — past, future, and present — which is the fundamental entity of fire — i.e., the basic entity or basic disposition of fire:

~ (1) which is not fabricated by causes and conditions, not being something that did not arise before and arose newly due to some other causes like, for example, the heat of water,
~ (2) and which does not depend on causes and conditions, like for example here and there or long and short — which have a mode of mutual dependence on each other — is called nature. [396.4]

~ Objection: Does there exist such a non-fabricated and non-relative entity of fire?

~ Response: Such a nature is not existent by way of its own entity and also is not utterly non-existent either. Though it is so, in order to get rid of the fear of the listeners, when it is taught it is said upon making a superimposition that it exists conventionally. The conventions of "nature" and "reality" which did not exist before [for those listeners] are newly associated [with the reality nature].

L4: [Third, abandoning objections] :L4

Objection: Since Chandrakirti says that it [i.e., the non-fabricated entity of fire] is taught to be conventionally existent upon making a superimposition in order to get rid of the fear of listeners, the Master [Chandrakirti] himself does not assert that it exists.

Response: That is not reasonable. Those which [exist conventionally] upon imputation for the purpose of abandoning the fear of listeners are not just the nature but other phenomena also. If such a nature did not exist, then all other phenomena also would be senseless.

L4: [Fourth, not only must it exist but also both parties can assert it] :L4

Therefore, that nature exists because, as quoted earlier in the Auto-Commentary,

Chandrakirti — expressing the damage that if such a nature did not exist it would absurdly follow that pure behavior would be senseless — proves in this way that it does exist.

And also Chandrakirti's Auto-Commentary says that:

~ It is not just that the master Nagarjuna asserts this nature; also other persons can be caused to assert the meaning of this nature [in debate]. Hence, this nature is also presented as just established for both oneself and others (or, both disputants). [398.2]

L4: [Fifth, if the nature did not exist, then since even nirvana would not be an ultimate truth, there would be no release] :L4

If, other than the existence of that nature, one asserted that it did not exist, in the Middle Way system it would have to be asserted that release could not be attained because the cessation which is an ultimate truth would not exist.

The ultimate true cessation would not exist because Chandrakirti's Commentary on (Nagarjuna's) "Sixty Stanzas of Reasoning" states:

~ That which is called the attainment of nirvana means the actualization of nirvana, and nirvana on this occasion is described as a true cessation. And that true cessation is the ultimate truth. And because true cessation is the ultimate, the ultimate truth would not exist [if the nature did not exist].

L4: [Sixth, indicating that when nirvana is attained one must actualize the ultimate truth of cessation] :L4

Moreover, the source for this — Chandrakirti's Commentary on (Nagarjuna's) "Sixty Stanzas of Reasoning"— proves with much vigor that when nirvana is attained the ultimate truth of cessation must be actualized. [398.5]

L4: [Seventh, although [the emptiness] nature has all three attributes, since it exists conventionally it is not established from its own side] :L4

As explained above, compounded phenomena such as eyes, and so forth, fulfill neither of the meanings of nature: (1) establishment as a nature in the sense of establishment by way of own-entity or (2) nature meaning reality when reality is posited as nature. Hence, compounded phenomena such as eyes, and so forth, are not established as any nature.

Although the ultimate truth is established as the nature in the sense of positing reality as nature, an ultimate truth is posited — as such a reality that is nature — by way of its two positors, non-fabrication and non-dependence on another, and hence the ultimate does not at all come to be established by way of its own entity. Therefore, since the ultimate must be posited as not in the least established as a nature in the sense of being established by way of its own entity, the ultimate is only established conventionally.

L4: [Eighth, the explanation of the meaning of the three attributes] :L4

Here, being fabricated means not existing earlier and being created later as a new arising, or being produced later contingently. Depending on another means depending on other causes and conditions.³²⁸ [399.3]

L4: [Ninth, answering another disputant's objection that this is contradictory] :L4

Forms and so forth are not established as either of those two types of nature — neither the reality referred to as nature nor the nature that is establishment from a thing's own side.

Hence, by remaining with just forms, and so forth, one does not see the nature that is reality. Since it is not seen that way, one cultivates the path in order to see the nature that is reality. Hence, [Chandrakirti] says that its basis, pure behavior, is not senseless.

Moreover, it is explained that it is not contradictory (1) utterly not to assert a nature of phenomena in the sense of their establishment by way of their own entity and (2) contingently to assert for each phenomena a [reality] nature that is a convention.³²⁹ In the Auto-Commentary [Chandrakirti] initially states another's objection that these are contradictory. [It begins with the exclamations] "Incredible!" (kye ma), "Amazing!" (ma la). From among the many usages of "incredible" this is a term of derision. "Amazing" is like saying in common language, "improper from the base" (gzhi nas ma 'grig) or, "not established from the root" (rtsa ba nas ma byung), or like saying "not established from the foot!" (rkang nas ma byung).

The Auto-Commentary states:

~ Objection: Incredible! Amazing! You persons who assert there are no inherently existent things at all and who also contingently, i.e., conventionally, assert a nature that is non-fabricated and not dependent on others are propounding something that is mutually contradictory and senseless.

~ Response: You who say such do not understand that the thought of these statements in [Nagarjuna's] Treatise is that if just these entities of eyes, and so forth, which are dependent-arising produced by causes and conditions and which are apprehendable by way of being directly realizable even by childish ordinary beings were the final nature of those entities of eyes and so forth, then such a nature would be directly realized even by those who are erroneous, i.e., mistaken. In that case, cultivating the path for the sake of directly seeing that nature and maintenance of purity would be senseless. Therefore, just these entities of eyes and so forth are not the final nature, and hence cultivation of the path and maintenance of purity for the sake of viewing that final nature are purposeful and fruitful.

~ Regarding how it conventionally exists having the three attributes, Chandrakirti himself says in terms of contingent conventions that the final nature is not fabricated in the sense of being something that formerly did not exist and newly arose and says that the final nature is not dependent on other causes and conditions.

~ That entity which is not something seen by childish ordinary beings is suitable to be the final nature. Due to just those positors of this as a nature — being non-fabricated, and so forth and not being an object seen [by childish beings] — just that ultimate is not a thing (dngos po, bhava) in the sense of being truly established or being established by way of its own character and is also not a non-thing in the sense of its entity not existing at all, because that ultimate is by nature devoid and pacified of all elaborations. [401.3]

L4: [Tenth, the meaning of that is that the ultimate does not exist by way of its own entity and is not utterly non-existent] :L4

Here in this context [of the above quotation from Chandrakirti's Auto-Commentary], "existing as a thing" (dngos po yodpa) — as explained before on the occasion of discussing the dualistic propositions of existing as a thing or not existing as a thing — must be taken as meaning "existing by way of own-entity" (rang gi ngo bos yod pa). "Not existing as a thing" (dngos po med pa) must be taken as referring to its "entity not existing at all" (ngo bo ye med). [401.4]

L4: [Eleventh, the imputational ultimate] :L4

At this time of initially delineating the view now while a common being, when one delineates that phenomena do not have a particle of establishment as nature in the sense of being established by way of their own entity, the emptiness of nature which is delineated exists as an attribute (khyad chos) of these phenomena, forms and so forth, which serve as the substrata (khyad gzhi). Hence, there is no contradiction in both the substrata — forms and so forth — and the attribute — emptiness — existing as objects of one mind. To that [inferential consciousness realizing emptiness] there is the dualistic appearance of [a phenomenon] appearing to exist by way of its own nature, whereas [phenomena] do not exist by way of their own nature and since that dualistic appearance has not vanished, that emptiness — which for that mind is together with appearance — becomes an imputed, but not metaphorical, ultimate truth. [401.2]

However it is very important to distinguish between the emptiness in the face of the ascertainment factor of that awareness and the emptiness in the face of the appearance factor of that awareness. For, the emptiness in the face of the ascertainment factor of that awareness [i.e., an inferential consciousness realizing emptiness] is an actual emptiness.

What is being said [here in the Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path] is: in that way the emptiness which is an emptiness of nature [in the sense of establishment by way of own-entity] with respect to forms, and so forth, exists as an attribute of forms, and so forth. The collection of such a substratum and attribute — for instance the collection of a sprout and the lack of true existence of that sprout — exists in the face of an inferential reasoning consciousness realizing the selflessness of a sprout. Since such dualistic appearance has not vanished, emptiness in the face of that inferential consciousness is an imputed ultimate truth. However, such dualistic appearance has vanished in the face of a Superior's meditative equipoise directly realizing the selflessness of a sprout and hence, since the positing of those two — substratum and attribute — is not feasible in the face of such an awareness, another awareness must posit them. [402.3]

The meaning of this is explained in the Smaller Exposition of the Stages of the Path: With respect to that [directly realized] ultimate, although there is no difference in terms of entity, that ultimate — from the point of view of the object — must be one that is endowed with the two features of (1) a pacification of all elaborations of the object-to-be-negated, i.e., establishment by way of its own entity and (2) a pacification of all elaborations of dualistic appearance. [402.4]

Moreover — in the face of a Superior's exalted wisdom of meditative equipoise realizing the lack of true existence — the lack of true existence of a sprout is both. However, the elaborations of dualistic appearance have not vanished for an inferential consciousness realizing a sprout as selfless. In the face of that inferential cognition, the lack of true existence of the sprout is a suchness that involves a pacification of the elaborations of the object-to-be-negated, but is not a suchness that involves a pacification of the elaborations of dualistic appearance. Therefore, from that point of view, it is an imputed ultimate truth in the face of that consciousness, but in general it is not an imputed ultimate truth in the face of that consciousness. However, it is said that through this, distinctions may need to be made also with respect to the Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path. [402.6]

L4: [Twelfth, the way the actual ultimate is free from elaborations] :L4

When through cultivating just that view realizing a lack of nature [in the sense of inherent

existence] one directly realizes that meaning, in the face of that direct realization all mistaken [appearances] that are the appearances of [phenomena] as established by nature — whereas none are established by nature — have vanished. Hence the consciousness that directly actualizes reality does not observe or see the subjects, forms, and so forth. Therefore, the pair — the emptiness which is such a reality and the subjects, forms, and so forth — does not exist in the face of that awareness. Since the pair does not exist in the face of it, the positing of those two, reality and substrata, as reality and substrata is not done by that awareness directly realizing reality and therefore must be done by way of some other conventional awareness. [403.3]

L4: [Thirteenth, although the ultimate is free from elaborations it need not be established from its own side] :L4

In that case, the ultimate truth is posited as a mere vanishing of all mistaken appearances that are the appearances of [phenomena] as established by nature [in the sense of inherent existence] — whereas none are established by nature — in addition to (steng du) the pacification of all elaborations of the object-to-be-negated, that is to say, establishment by way of a thing's own entity. Hence, although such an ultimate truth is asserted, how can it be necessary to assert a [reality] nature that is established by way of its own entity?

[In the citation from the Clear Words below] Chandrakirti says that "things are observed through the force of the dimness of ignorance;" this means "things that are observed through the force of the dimness of ignorance." With respect to the meaning of many such occurrences, on learner paths there do not exist consciousnesses that are not polluted by the dimness of ignorance except for a Superior's non-contaminated wisdom of meditative equipoise. Therefore, thinking that the pollution of ignorance exists in the conventional consciousnesses that are the positors of conventionalities, forms and so forth, it is said — with respect to conventionalities — on many occasions that they are "posited by ignorance," they are "produced by ignorance," and they are "observed by ignorance."

Moreover, Chandrakirti's Clear Words says that:³³⁵

~ Just that entity or nature of things becomes an object of meditative equipoise of Superiors — who are not polluted by ignorance and are free from its predispositions — in the manner of the non-perception of false entities since it does not become an object by way of the aspects of things — that is to say, the false entities of forms, and so forth, from between the two [i.e., conventional and ultimate] entities — that appear and are observed to be established by nature [in the sense of being inherently existent] through the force of the dimness of ignorance. This entity is posited as just the final nature (rang bzhin mthar thug nyid) of those things.

And it says:

~ The emptiness which is the lack of production by nature and which is the final nature that is the mode of subsistence of things such as forms — as it appears in meditative equipoise devoid of all the two elaborations — is not anything at all in the sense that it is not explicitly provable to others — in accordance with how it appears — through analyses, verbalizations, examples, and reasons and hence it is just a non-thing in that it is the vanishing of things such as forms. Therefore in the face of that meditative equipoise, its entity is not apprehendable.³³⁷ Hence, that nature of things abides in this way, and that nature does not exist in the face of that meditative equipoise in the manner of things such as forms being the support and the nature being the supported. [404.6]

L3: [Third, refuting the assertion that reality is independent and positive] :L3

This section has three parts: (1) in any Mind Only or Middle Way system a negative phenomenon must be imputedly existent, therefore the assertion that reality is a positive independent phenomenon that does not depend upon the elimination of an object-to-be-negated is wrong; (2) advice that those who want goodness for themselves should abandon this extremism; and (3) the value of the unmistaken object-to-be-negated.

L4: [First, in any mind only or middle way system a negative phenomenon must be imputedly existent; therefore the assertion that reality is positive and independent and does not depend upon the elimination of an object-to-be-negated is wrong] :L4

The Jonangpas, who pretended to take as their source the Kalacakra and Maitreya's Treatise on the Later Scriptures of the Mahayana, or some Tibetans who profess to be wise, did not posit the ultimate truth as a mere elimination of the elaborations of the two selves of persons and phenomena, the object-to-be-negated, and so forth. They asserted that even when one realizes the ultimate mode of being, that entity appears — as the object of a non-erroneous mind — in the way that blue, yellow, and so forth appear to the mind as unmixed diverse substances in the manner of its entity being established independently (rang dbang du), unmixed with any other, from its own side, and not dependent on another. [405.3] They also asserted that what appears in this way exists in accordance with its appearance and that the ascertainment of its existing in this way is the final view realizing the profound meaning in the Kalacakra system and in Asanga's system.

Also, they assert that the realization by Nagarjuna, Haribhadra, and so forth, of these external and internal phenomena — which are the bases that sentient beings misapprehend as the two selves of persons and phenomena — as not existent by nature (rang bzhin gyis med pa), is a view of annihilation and a place for going astray with respect to the correct view (ha ba'i gol sa). [405.5] The meaning of "place for going astray" is "opposite (log) [view]" or "wrong (nor) [view]." The phrase, "place for going astray with respect to the correct view" comes to mean, "direction opposite to the correct view" (yang dag pa'i Ita ba'i log phyogs), "a place deviating from the view" (Ita ba log sa), or, "a wrong view" (log Ita). For example, this is like saying, "went on an opposite path" (lam log sar phyin pa) and "went astray from the path" (lam gol sar phyin pa), for "having gone on a wrong path" (lam nor sar phyin pa). Hence, it needs to be known that just as, "place for going astray from the path" (lam gyi gol sa), "place that is wrong on the path" (lam gyi nor sa), "place that deviates from the path" (lam gyi log sa), and so forth, are equivalent, so "place for going astray from the view" (Ita ba'i gol sa), "place that is wrong regarding the view" (Ita ba'i nor so), "place that deviates from the view" (Ita ba'i log sa), and so forth, are equivalent. [406.1]

Regarding how those [assertions that (1) when one realizes the ultimate mode of being, that entity appears unmixed, independent, established under its own power, and so forth, and that (2) realizing phenomena as not existent by nature is a view of annihilation and a place for going astray with respect to the correct view] are not even among Buddhist systems:

Such assertions are outside the sphere of all the scriptures of the Greater and Lesser Vehicles (theg pa che chung) because (1) those [Jonangpas] themselves very much assert that it is necessary to overcome the conception of self that is the root binding persons in cyclic existence and (2) the bases that are apprehended by this [conception] as self in the sense of establishment by nature (rang bzhin gyis grub pa nyid) are these phenomena which

are the external and internal aggregates, and so forth, and hence in dependence on apprehending those bases as established by nature one is bound in cyclic existence by attachment, having been deceived by the appearance of those [bases] as existent by way of nature, whereas they are not existent by nature.

Hence, these bonds must be cut through realizing that just these bases are without nature, and, whereas this is the case, they assert that realizing such does not overcome the conception of self which is such a bond. [406.4] Also, they assert the wrong opinion that through realizing some other phenomenon — which is independent and unrelated with the conception of self in the sense that it does not exist as an object of that conception of self or in its sphere — the conception of self is overcome. [406.5]

These assertions are very amazing. For instance, it is no different than if some person conceives there is a snake to the east and becomes distressed, and if someone else as a technique for removing this distress — thinking the distress cannot be overcome by thinking there is no snake to the east — instead says, "Think on the fact that to the west there is a tree. If you think about this you will get rid of your conception of a snake in the room and will overcome your distress." [407.2]

L4: [Second, the advice that those who want goodness for themselves banish this [view] to the distance] :L4

Therefore those beings who wish to accomplish goodness for themselves banish such wrong views to the distance and work vigorously at the unmistakable means of eradicating the mode of apprehension of ignorance — that which binds beings in cyclic existence and is the root of all ruin, i.e., loss or diminution. In dependence on the texts of the superior Nagarjuna and his sons — the Treatise on the Middle and its commentaries — that clearly set forth the vast and manifold collections of reasonings that establish deep ascertainment of the scriptures of definitive meaning and show that the meaning of those scriptures is not suitable to be interpreted otherwise, those beings go beyond the ocean of cyclic existence through knowing those meanings and meditating on them. [407.7]

L4: [Third, the value of not mistaking the object-to-be-negated] :L4

I, Tsong Khapa,] have seen that these aforementioned refutations of wrong ideas with respect to the object-to-be-negated are very valuable and helpful for eliminating the places where one goes wrong in the process of finding the Middle View. Therefore I have explained them at length. What has preceded here has been the mode of refuting wrong conceptions by others with respect to the object-to-be-negated. [408.1]

L1: [Other articles] :L1

L2: [Did Nagarjuna Really Refute All Philosophical Views? - by Richard H. Robinson] :L2

The treatment Madhyamika has received from its ancient opponents and modern discussants is, in one respect, as peculiar as the way in which it handled the views against which its criticisms were directed. Far from admitting that they must either refute the Madhyamika objections or concede defeat, most classical systems either ignored Nagarjuna's incisive and forceful attacks, or contented themselves with answering one or two specific objections, or tried rather ineptly to discredit the Madhyamika method of refutation. Unsympathetic modern

writers such as A. B. Keith have remarked briefly and categorically that this method is sophistic, but have not attempted to demonstrate their charge in detail. Sympathetic authorities such as T. R. V. Murti have shown clearly and concretely how this destructive dialectic works, but have not subjected to a searching examination its claim to demolish all constructive philosophical views (drsti). If this claim is sound, it will be in order to examine why those philosophies to which it has been applied have not considered themselves refuted. Even if the Madhyamika claim is false and its methods sophistic, philosophy stands to gain from discovering precisely how this form of sophistry works, and why it seems so formally convincing even while arousing suspicion in the observer.

In American country fairs there used to be a well-known game played with three walnut half-shells and one pea. The operator first held up all three shells for the audience to see. Then he turned all three upside down, placed the pea under one shell, and proceeded to shuffle the shells. When he stopped, a member of the audience would try to guess which shell the pea was under. Nagarjuna's system resembles the shell game in several ways. Its elements are few and its operations are simple, though performed at lightning speed and with great dexterity. And the very fact that he cannot quite follow each move reinforces the observer's conviction that there is a trick somewhere. The objective of this article is to identify the trick and to determine on some points whether or not it is legitimate.

Nagarjuna has a standard mechanism for refutation, the pattern of which may be abstracted as follows:

~ You say that C relates A and B. A and B must be either completely identical or completely different. If they are completely identical, C cannot obtain, because it is transitive and requires two terms. If they are completely different c cannot obtain, because two things that are completely different can have no common ground and so cannot be related. Therefore it is false that c obtains between A and B.

Several features of this formula excite immediate suspicion. That it can be applied so readily to almost any thesis suggests affinity with a number of well-known sophistic tricks. That it relies on dichotomy calls for caution, since false dichotomies are so easy to: make and are so frequent in philosophizing. And that it seems to contradict common sense ought to arouse distrust, since even in philosophy common sense statements that seem true are not rejected until disproved.

But before we give way to offhand disbelief, it is proper to note the definitions and presuppositions that underlie this formula and render it more plausible.

-- The first key term is own-being (svabhava), which is defined as unmade and not dependent on another (Madhyamika-Karikas 15.2) ; it is that of which otherwise-being (or change) never occurs (MK 15.8). It does not have another as its condition, it is calm, is not manifested discursively, is non-conceptual, and has no diversity (MK 18.9).

-- Emptiness (sunyata) is defined as equivalent to dependent coarising (MK 24.18). It equals absence of own-being. All entities (bhava) are dependently coarisen (MK 24.19).

-- Own-being is defined as non-dependent, so own-being cannot arise and so does not exist. It follows that all entities are empty and have no own-being: This is the sole thesis that Nagarjuna wishes to prove. He asserts that when emptiness holds good all the Buddha's teachings hold good, and that when emptiness does not hold good, nothing is valid (MK 24.18).

-- The insistence in the refutation formula that A and B must be completely identical or different, rather than partly identical, follows from the definition of svabhava as not dependent on another. Qualifications such as "some" and "partly" are excluded because the

discussion is concerned not with the denial or affirmation of common-sense assertions such as "some fuel is burning and some is not," but with the concepts of own-being and essence. What pertains to part of an essence must pertain to the whole essence. A defining property is either essential or non-essential. If it is non-essential it is not really a defining property of an essence. If it is essential, then the essence can never be devoid of the property.

This set of definitions is clear and consistent. Wherever one of the terms can be applied, the others will follow and refutation occurs. This is not really mysterious, since svabhava is by definition self-contradictory. If it exists, it must belong to an existent entity, that is, it must be conditioned, dependent on other entities, and possessed of causes. But by definition it is free from conditions, non-dependent on others, and not caused. Therefore, it is absurd to maintain that a svabhava exists.

The validity of Nagarjuna's refutations hinges upon whether his opponents really upheld the existence of a svabhava or svabhava as he defines the term. Those who uphold the existence of a svabhava are clearly self-contradictory. The possibility remains, however, that any one of the classical darsanas could 'purge' itself of the self-contradictory svabhava concept and become as unobjectionable as the Buddha-vacana which Nagarjuna accepts as legitimate. If, on the other hand, some non-Buddhist theories turn out not to be guilty of holding the svabhava concept in the form Nagarjuna defines, then his critique will find no mark, and his dialectic will fail to destroy some constructive philosophy.

A further possibility is that Nagarjuna's critique, when applied, would fail to damage certain modern metaphysical systems that dispense with the category of essence. A good proportion of the axioms that he presupposes are not considered necessary or even acceptable by many European philosophers. Of course a neo-Madhyamika might try to adapt the old technique to the presuppositions of the new philosophies, but the success of this attempt could not be assumed before hand. For the present, let us just examine the adequacy of Nagarjuna's accommodation to the presuppositions of his classical antagonists.

~ [Ok:] We can concede immediately the soundness of Nagarjuna's defense of his prasanga method (in the Vigrahavyavartani). Denial that an entity exists does not imply that its opposite exists. That the words and statements in the refutation are empty does not deprive them of validity. The debater who seeks only to expose self-contradictions in his opponent's arguments need not make any affirmative statements about what exists. He may assume his opponent's axioms for the sake of argument without committing himself to his opponent's truth. But if he uses an axiom or a rule that is not accepted by his opponent, then his argument is disqualified.

[But:] Does Nagarjuna succeed in refuting all views without making any assumptions that are not conceded by the adherents of the particular view under attack? We can list some axioms upon which his arguments depend, and then go on to inquire how widely others accepted them.

-- Whatever has extension is divisible, hence is composite, not permanent and not real.

---- Corollary: An indivisible, infinitesimal thing could have no extension.

-- To exist means to be arisen; hence existence is synonymous with manifestation, and there is no unmanifested existence.

-- A real thing would have to be an utterly simple individual which contains no diversity. If it had diversity, it would have extension and therefore would not be indivisible and real.

-- The perception of arising and ceasing is illusory (MK 21.11, 17.31-33, 7.34).

-- Only transitive actions and relations are admissible; reflexive actions are disallowed (the eye cannot see itself) (MK 3.2), the fingertip cannot touch itself, etc.), and seemingly intransitive expressions such as "the goer goes" must be recast in transitive form as "the goer goes a distance."

-- The Buddha's teach truly that two truths or levels of being are to be distinguished, the mundane-conventional (lokasamv.rti) and the absolute (paramartha) (MK 24.8).

Axiom 1 disagrees with the consensus of all schools, including the sunyavada of the sutras, that akasa is ubiquitous and indivisible. Thus there is at least one entity that is not composite, has extension, and is permanent. Nagarjuna's attempt to demolish the concept of akasa (MK chap. 8) selects the relation of akasa to its laksana as the vulnerable point. But as we will see later, his denial of the entity-attribute relation presupposes his denial of extension and is not admissible until after he has disproved the commonly accepted thesis that akasa is extended and indivisible.

If it is admitted that there is one extended, permanent and noncomposite entity, then it is not absurd to hold that there are others. And if extension is admitted, then duration must be admitted, too, since the arguments against duration involve the same operations of segmentation as those against extension. What the example of akasa does not render admissible, however, is diversity within an extended substance. Diversity was commonly considered to belong to the objects that occupied space and occurred in time.

Axiom 2 stands in contradiction to another axiom accepted by all schools and even invoked by Nagarjuna himself: that the real is that which has never arisen (has no cause), and hence has no beginning or end, is permanent. One must choose between these two axioms. If reality means becoming, then that which is empty is real, that which is real is empty. But if reality means non-becoming, then either there is nothing real (a rather pointless inversion of the ordinary meaning of the word "real"), or there is a plane of being which is free from becoming. Nagarjuna is not alone among the thinkers of classical India in promiscuously adhering now to one and later to another of these axioms.

Axiom 3 is simply not accepted by the pari.namavadins-Isvarakrsna and Ramanuja, for example. In classical Samkhya, prakrti has the three gunas, hence has diversity as an intrinsic property (SK 11). The gravest difficulty with this position is that there is no ready common-sense example of a variegated and nondivisible entity; apparent examples turn out to be composite. But if lack of a common-sense example militates against diversity-within-unity, Nagarjuna's Axiom 4 is even more vulnerable on this score. His ostensible examples--a hallucination (maya), a dream, a mirage--are all instances that common sense can establish illusions. Nagarjuna gives no common-sense perceptual criterion for considering all phenomena as maya. He does not examine perception empirically, does not attempt to show that the senses are bad witnesses in all cases, and merely asserts dogmatically that perception is marked by vikalpa (conceptualization), which falsifies. This is an empirical proposition, be it noted, and Nagarjuna's claim is that he does not make empirical assertions apart from those conceded by his opponents. He ought to admit either that he maintains mayavada on the authority of the sunyavadin sutras, which are not agama for the Hinayanist opponents or for the astikas, or that he requires an empirically derived theory of error in order to exclude empirical arguments from the rest of his dialectic. If he adduces the experience of the Buddhist contemplatives (which he does only obliquely in the Karikas, but which the commentators do explicitly), he is not making an empirical assertion but making one that his opponents are not prepared to concede. Non-Buddhists are not going to accept that the Buddhist, aryas are authorities, and other Buddhists do not

take the experience of the aryas as evidence for sunyavada. There appears to be no way of forcing a realist opponent to concede that common-sense experience is erroneous except to examine experience and to demonstrate empirically that it is delusive. Merely citing well-known varieties of illusion does not prove the point.

Axiom 5 seems sounder than it actually is because the examples are so graphic. It really presupposes Axiom: 1. If an entity possesses extension, then one region of it can act upon or relate to another region of it. This is the commonest sense of reflexive expressions. Nagarjuna, incidentally, is guilty of a sheer quibble when he says that since the eye cannot see itself it cannot see another (MK 3.2). This is not seriously detrimental to his case, which can quite easily be restated without the quibble. But more serious is his failure either to accept or to disqualify the instances of genuine intransitive action that occur in common-sense experience plus the metaphysical ones that are affirmed by some of his opponents. When he denies that the lamp illuminates itself (MK 7.8), he is simply arbitrarily choosing to consider the reflexive object as if it were a non-reflexive object. He is refusing to allow, as ordinary language does, that reflexive statements are either pseudo-reflexive or pseudo-transitive. "I saw myself in the mirror" and "I scratched myself" are pseudo-reflexives. "Light illuminates itself" and "Water makes itself wet" are pseudo-transitive, better expressed by "Light is inherently bright" and "Water is inherently wet."

This brings us to Nagarjuna's treatment of the relation between entity and attribute. It has already been mentioned that if extension were granted to entities then attributes might belong to them, but that since Nagarjuna denies extension he denies the attributive relation. According to Axiom 3, a real thing must be utterly simple; it cannot have more than one property. But if it has even one property, then it consists of two entities--itself and its property--which is incompatible with Axiom 3. The weakness here is that none of Nagarjuna's opponents really adhered to Axiom 3. The realists' infinitesimals were not utterly without extension and permitted each simple to have one attribute.

An allied but distinct argument against the entity-attribute relation charges that it involves vicious infinite regress. If A is the attribute, B is the entity, and C is the relation between them, then there must be another relation D which relates C to A, another relation E which relates C to B, other relations F and C which relate E to its relata, and so on ad infinitum. Nagarjuna employs this argument against the properties (laksana) of the momentary dharmas of the Abhidharmikas--arising, abiding, and ceasing. He says that there would have to be an arising of arising, and an arising of the arising of arising, and so on infinitely (MK 7.3).^[1] See Karl H. Potter, *Presuppositions of India's Philosophies* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963), no. 82-83, for a clear account of anavastha.] The Abhidharmikas simply did not accept the charge. The Abhidharmakosa (Chinese a-p'i-t'an-hsin-lun, Taisho 1550, 811b2off.), reports the objection and replies that the operation is reflexive and reciprocal; each dharma effects itself and each of the seven others. For example, arising (a) arises of itself, and (b) constitutes the arising of abiding, disintegration, and ceasing and of the four anulaksanas. This implies Abhidharmikas acceptance of complex entities with multiple functions, and rejection of Nagarjuna's axiom.

An important example of an intransitive function is the svaprakasa of Advaita Vedanta. This tenet has been skillfully and extensively defended against heterodox interpretations, and certainly suffices to show that Nagarjuna's critique does not damage the Advaita Vedantic position on this point. Thus it appears that the systems under attack commonly defended themselves by affirming a reflexive, non-transitive or reciprocal operation which obviated

vicious infinite regression. The weakness in the defense lies in its arbitrary selection of one, rather than other, place in which to posit non-transitivity.

Axiom 5 concerns the arbitrary introduction of pseudo-subjects and pseudo-objects. This operation is permitted and even encouraged by grammatical conventions in English and Sanskrit. The event which can be reported adequately with the single finite verb "rains" is more usually furnished with a dummy subject "it." Thus we may say "It rains" or "Rain rains," and adding a dummy object in reply to the dubious question "What does rain rain?" we may say "Rain rains rain." That the subject and object are dummies is shown by the fact that rain never does anything but rain, and nothing but rain is ever rained in the primary sense of the verb (excluding the other meaning, as in "Flowers rained down"). English "rain" is ambivalently transitive and intransitive, thus permitting the addition of dummy objects. The option of adding such objects, though, is not a sufficient warrant for transforming all statements to this form, and then treating the objects as if they were not dummies.

Axiom 6 is dogmatic and serves little purpose in the destructive dialectic. The distinction is not admitted by non-Buddhists, as Candrakīrti points out (MKV 27.1), and so the Madhyamika is forced either to refute Samkhya, for instance, from just one viewpoint, which is irrelevant to the opponent, or from both viewpoints, which is cumbersome for the proponent and irrelevant for the antagonist. This axiom is enunciated in Chapter 24 of the Karikas where Nagarjuna is explaining why he cannot be charged with denying all the Buddha's teachings. The opponent here is a Hīnayānist who accepts the authority of the Āgamas or Nikayas but certainly would not accept as Buddhavacana the śūnyavādin sūtras in which Nagarjuna's doctrine of the two truths is stated, Hence Nagarjuna departs from his avowed method, makes an existential statement about an exegetical principle, and bases his argument on an axiom not acceptable to his opponent.

The nature of the Madhyamika trick is now quite clear. It consists of (a) reading into the opponent's views a few terms which one defines for him in a self-contradictory way, and (b) insisting on a small set of axioms which are at variance with common sense and not accepted in their entirety by any known philosophy. It needs no insistence to emphasize that the application of such a critique does not demonstrate the inadequacy of reason and experience to provide intelligible answers to the usual philosophical questions.

This critique of Nagarjuna's critique does demonstrate, however, that critical self-examination is fruitful for philosophy. A similar examination of the axioms and definitions of the other classical darsanas would reveal that each depends on a set of arbitrary axioms and hence does not arrive at any non-experiential propositions which all reasonable men must accept. More cogent than Nagarjuna's criticism of constructive philosophy is that which T.R.V. Murti makes under Nagarjuna's banner: "By its defective procedure dogmatic metaphysics wrongly understands the transcendent in terms of the empirical modes; it illegitimately extends, to the unconditioned, the categories of thought that are true within phenomena alone." [2: T. R. V. Murti, *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1955), p. 332.]

I may add that dogmatic metaphysics, like the Madhyamika critique, usually fails to do justice to the categories of thought we commonly employ in thinking about the phenomenal realm. This observable fact furnishes some justification for the Savage in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, who extracted from Hamlet's passing remark the definition: "A philosopher is someone who thinks of fewer things than there are in heaven and earth."

L2: [Bhavaviveka's Svatantra-Anumana (Inference) and its soteriological implication] :L2

Bhavaviveka's Svatantra-Anumana (Inference) and its soteriological implication, Toshi Makihara

L3: [The limits of conceptualization and logic] :L3

A logical proof of Emptiness in the philosophy of Madhyamika Buddhism seems, from the outset, quite contradictory and an impossible task. This is because logic itself is inseparably correlated with conceptualization or linguistic diversification, and a vision of Emptiness is in fact achieved only through the total obliteration of this very linguistic diversification.

-- Emptiness in this sense cannot be "asserted" as a positive state of being.

-- It may rather be accomplished through a total negation of svabhava ("intrinsic nature" or "thing-in-itself") advanced by such philosophical schools like Nyaya-Vaisesika or Sarvastvada.

-- However, since language itself and therefore logic in the end seem to presuppose svabhava, even a negation of it, being an assertion in itself, cannot escape the threat of self-contradiction.

-- Considering this perplexing nature of Emptiness, svatantra-anumana (independent syllogism, inference) initiated by Bhavaviveka in the sixth century CE attempting to logically and positively prove this Madhyamika doctrine appears to be a paradoxical venture.

L3: [Prasangika approach] :L3

In fact Nagarjuna centuries earlier, and Buddhapalita and Chandrakirti who were contemporaries of Bhavaviveka, employed the method of reductio ad absurdum (prasanga-vakya) to indirectly point out Emptiness as nihsvabhava (void-of-intrinsic-nature). Prasanga-vakya is a dialectical method in which one provisionally concedes to a particular view of opponent and then using the very logical principles applied by the opponent, demonstrates its logical contradiction as the necessary consequence. Prasangikas, in other words, sought to deduce their proposition namely that of nihsvabhava for example only indirectly by demonstrating the logical contradiction of the counter thesis, in this case that of svabhava, advanced by the opponent. Thus, strictly speaking, such a process is not an assertion of anything. Emptiness is, according to Prasangikas, neither affirmable nor achieved through the process of negation within the logical or linguistic framework because it can only intuitively be seen through the abandonment of this very framework.

L3: [Svatantrika approach – trying to prove emptiness through syllogisms] :L3

Contrasting to the prasanga method, Bhavaviveka's attempt was to reestablish the propositions of the Madhyamika school such as nihsvabhava and Emptiness within the logical framework, and to prove their legitimacy by means of syllogistic method. While Prasangikas, by using their dialectical method, directed themselves toward a non-logical sphere of Emptiness, Bhavaviveka with his own commentary on Nagarjuna attempted to use the method of svatantra-anumana as a positive and logical view on the reality of Emptiness as such.

First, Nagarjuna's method was, according to Bhavaviveka, logically verifiable, and therefore his works, particularly Madhyamika-karika, could legitimately be transcribed into a syllogistic form. That is, with some permissible modifications to the syllogistic structure, particularly in terms of so-called Two Truths theory, the Madhyamika concept of Emptiness

could successfully be demonstrated by the use of svatantra-anumana. Moreover, the prasanga method was, in Bhavaviveka's view, initiated not by Nargajuna but by Buddhapalita in his Buddhapalita-Mulamadhyamaka-vritti, and this work was logically erroneous as well as methodologically unacceptable. Prasanga-vakya of Buddhapalita was considered by Bhavaviveka as distortion and misrepresentation of the original intention set forward by Nagarjuna. Bhavaviveka, thus, in response to the works of Buddhapalita, contended to establish an alternative presentation of Madhyamika doctrine with svatantra-anumana, and by doing this he tried to establish himself as the authentic successor of Nagarjuna in the Madhyamika legacy.

Second, prior to Bhavaviveka's time, Dignaga had established a comprehensive system of Buddhist Logic (hetu-vidya) especially in his most well-known work Pramanasamuccayavritti. Influenced by this, various philosophical schools in India at the time of Bhavaviveka had begun to consolidate or to reformulate their theories in accordance with this logical format. Bhavaviveka was perhaps well-versed in all these philosophical theories, and thus he too must have felt the urgency to give the Madhyamika doctrine a logical foundation in order to rival with various philosophical schools of his time. Moreover, it seems, logic, and logic alone, was, for Bhavaviveka, the only genuine tool to present his philosophy and to criticize others. Syllogism was the most verifiable and reliable model to prove his proposition. Emptiness too had to be proven by this most verifiable method. The syllogism which is capable to present an impeccable proof of Emptiness would embody, for him, the most preeminent achievement in philosophy, and in fact he devoted his life in order to realize it. He knew that Emptiness itself cannot directly be realized within the realm of language/logic. But he thought its proof could certainly be given in the syllogistic form. Logic for Bhavaviveka was an indispensable medium through which Emptiness could be illuminated. Bhavaviveka thus had two distinctive but not contradictory starting points, namely the Madhyamika of Nagarjuna as the theoretical guidance and Dignaga's hetu-vidya as the methodological standard.

L3: [Still ... a useful adapted skillful means] :L3

At this point however, it must be further understood that there was an integral and more essential foundation upon which Bhavaviveka constructs his entire philosophy. This foundation, namely the Teaching of the Buddha, pervades through the works of Bhavaviveka as a life thread. His philosophy stands firmly upon this soteriological ground. Thus Bhavaviveka's words need to be examined within the context of Buddhism at large and in relation to other non-Buddhist philosophical schools. For example, the concept of Two Truths, the chief principle set forward by Nargajuna and further developed by both Prasangika and Svatantra schools, was not only examined and explained on his papers, but also subjectively experienced by Bhavaviveka himself. While his philosophy conveys the highest form of human understanding into the reality of Emptiness, the Emptiness itself is the principle of entire Buddhist soteriology, or simply, that of Nirvana. In short, while philosophy conveys Bhavaviveka to the highest level within the realm of Lower Truth, its soteriological foundation, the Teaching of the Buddha, realizes the Higher Truth as such. (will be continued)

[End]

