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Komarovski, Yaroslav, "From the Three Natures to the Two Natures: On a Fluid Approach to the Two Versions of Other-Emptiness from 15th Century Tibet" (2016). *Faculty Publications, Classics and Religious Studies Department*. 132.
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From the Three Natures to the Two Natures

On a Fluid Approach to the Two Versions of
Other-Emptiness from Fifteenth-Century Tibet

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IN RECENT YEARS THERE HAS been a surge of scholarly interest in diverse systems of Buddhist thought and practice that Tibetan thinkers characterize as “other-emptiness” (*gzhan stong*), contrasting them with systems of “self-emptiness” (*rang stong*). While the theories of such exponents of other-emptiness as Dölpopa Sherap Gyeltsen (*dol po pa shes rab rgyal mtshan*, 1292–1361)¹ are relatively well known, those of other Tibetan thinkers are only beginning to receive scholarly attention. This paper addresses one such lesser-known other-emptiness theory that was developed by the seminal Tibetan thinker Serdok Penchen Shakya Chokden (*gser mdog pañ chen shākya mchog ldan*, 1428–1507).

Shakya Chokden articulated his position on other-emptiness in works written during the last thirty years of his life. In those works he advocated both Alikākāravāda Yogācāra and Niḥsvabhāvavāda Madhyamaka systems as equally valid forms of Madhyamaka, regarding the former as a system of other-emptiness and the latter as a system of self-emptiness.² Instead of approaching the two systems as irreconcilable, he presented them as equally

valid and effective, emphasized their respective strengths, and promoted one or the other depending on context and audience. Partly for these reasons, his own philosophical outlook does not neatly fall into the categories of other-emptiness or self-emptiness, and placing him squarely into the camp of “followers of other-emptiness” (*gzhan stong pa*)—as some advocates of later sectarian traditions did—does not do justice to him as a thinker.³

According to Shakya Chokden, virtually all seminal Yogācāra authors, such as Maitreya, Asaṅga, and Vasubandhu, as well as leading Buddhist logicians, such as Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, were adherents of Alikākāravāda and, by extension, proponents of other-emptiness. This assessment follows from his understanding of the distinction between the two Yogācāra systems—Satyākāravāda and Alikākāravāda—that ultimately boils down to the question of the reality of mental appearances. In Shakya Chokden’s opinion, although Yogācāras in general do not accept the existence of an external material world, according to Satyākāravāda its appearances or “representations” (*rnam pa, ākāra*) reflected in consciousness have a real or true existence, because they are of one nature with the really existent consciousness, their creator. According to Alikākāravāda, neither external phenomena nor their appearances and consciousnesses that reflect them really exist. What exists in reality is only primordial mind (*ye shes, jñāna*).⁴ Because only this latter position represents the final Yogācāra view, according to Shakya Chokden, to claim that any key Yogācāra thinker was a follower of Satyākāravāda would entail that he did not fully understand the final view of the Yogācāra system.⁵

While presenting the final view of reality held by key Yogācāra thinkers as identical, Shakya Chokden was also aware that they were far from being unanimous in their approaches to that view. He found two different versions of that view in Yogācāra works, but insisted that both versions are valid and do not contradict each other. Consequently, he himself did not interpret the view of other-emptiness in one way only, but shifted focus depending on what materials he was addressing. In the process, he articulated a provocative approach to the three natures (*ngo bo nyid gsum, trisvabhāva*)—the key Yogācāra categories involved in its teachings on reality—thereby contributing to our understanding of the diversity of Yogācāra theories and their interpretations in subsequent commentarial literature.

Discussion of specific details of those theories and their comparison with Shakya Chokden’s views are beyond the scope of this paper. Nevertheless, one important feature of Yogācāra writings should be mentioned. As is well known to contemporary scholars, Indian Yogācāra texts are far from being unanimous in their interpretations even of such key teachings as the three

natures, allowing for multiple interpretations of those teachings by South and East Asian commentators.⁶ Tibetans were very well aware of those diverse positions, as well as the apparently conflicting statements found at times even in the same text. In their attempts to discern a deeper meaning underlying that diversity (paint a coherent picture of Yogācāra thought and place it into the broader context of Mahāyāna Buddhism), such thinkers as Tsongkhapa Lopzang Drakpa (*tsong kha pa blo bzang grags pa*, 1357–1419) and Dölpopa developed competing and highly ingenious commentarial systems.⁷ Shakya Chokden's interpretation of other-emptiness, too, was formed in response to divergent positions contained in Yogācāra writings, in particular, those dealing with the three natures. Let us now turn to his interpretation of those positions.

In his *Rain of Ambrosia*, Shakya Chokden describes two different versions of other-emptiness articulated in Yogācāra writings:

There emerged two dissimilar [approaches] regarding the mode of identifying the subject-basis of other-emptiness. In the Yogācāra texts, the reality, [understood as] the basis of emptiness, the dependent, being empty of the object of negation, the imaginary, is explained as the thoroughly established. In the *Sublime Continuum* and the *Conquest over Objections about the [Three] Mother Scriptures*, the reality, the thoroughly established, is explained as empty of the imaginary. [These] two also [stem] from [interpretive] differences: including all knowables into two, the imaginary and thoroughly established, or dividing them into three: [the imaginary, thoroughly established] and dependent. They are not contradictory.⁸

As this passage demonstrates, Shakya Chokden traces the two interpretations of other-emptiness to two different sets of texts. One is found in Yogācāra texts other than Maitreya's *Sublime Continuum of Mahāyāna* and Asaṅga's *Explanation of [Maitreya's] 'Sublime Continuum of Mahāyāna'*.⁹ The other is found in these two texts as well as in the *Conquest over Objections about the [Three] Mother Scriptures* attributed to Vasubandhu.¹⁰ Note that according to Shakya Chokden's overall position articulated in such texts as the *Rain of Ambrosia*, all the "Five Dharmas of Maitreya"—including the *Sublime Continuum* and its commentary by Asaṅga—are Madhyamaka works of other-emptiness.¹¹ Thus, the passage should not be taken as implying that Yogācāra works contain only the former approach.

The passage argues that the main difference between the two approaches lies in dissimilar identifications of the basis of emptiness (*stong gzhi*) or the subject-basis of other-emptiness (*gzhan stong gi gzhi*

chos can). This difference is dictated by two dissimilar contexts: division of all phenomena into the three natures (*ngo bo nyid, svabhāva*) or the two natures. The first approach is a well-known Yogācāra position: the dependent (*gzhan dbang, paratantra*) is taken as the basis of emptiness, the imaginary (*kun btags / kun brtags, parikalpita*) is negated on that basis, and that negation is explained as the thoroughly established (*yongs grub, pariniṣpanna*). According to the second approach, the thoroughly established itself is taken as the basis of emptiness and explained as empty of the imaginary. Despite these differences, Shakya Chokden does not see the two approaches as contradictory.

The *Rain of Ambrosia* points out that in the *Sublime Continuum* and its commentary by Asaṅga, the subject-basis of emptiness is explained as the reality-limit (*yang dag pa'i mtha', bhūtakoti*), that is, ultimate reality, in contrast to other Yogācāra texts where the subject-basis of emptiness is explained as the dependent. According to Shakya Chokden, Asaṅga interpreted other-emptiness differently in his commentary on the *Sublime Continuum* and the *Summary of Higher Knowledge*.¹² Among other differences, in the commentary on the *Sublime Continuum* he did *not* explain the three characteristics (*mtshan nyid gsum, trilakṣaṇa*), that is, the three natures. These interpretive differences, Shakya Chokden argues, stem from the different sūtras explored in those texts.¹³

While there are many Yogācāra texts utilizing the terminology of the three natures, the *Sublime Continuum* and its commentary by Asaṅga mention neither the imaginary and thoroughly established pair nor the whole trio. Shakya Chokden was no doubt aware of this because he commented on the *Sublime Continuum* separately¹⁴ and also referred to different passages from the text in many other works. Therefore, the above reference to the two natures in the *Sublime Continuum* should not be understood in terms of those categories per se but rather in terms of the translation of the *Sublime Continuum*'s approach into those categories. When the *Sublime Continuum*'s basic position that the ultimate is empty of adventitious phenomena is translated into the Yogācāra categories of the three natures, the ultimate can be treated only as the thoroughly established, while adventitious, conventional phenomena have to be subsumed under the category of the imaginary.

What makes such translation possible in the first place is Shakya Chokden's basic claim that all major Yogācāra thinkers hold the same view of reality and only use different terms and categories for approaching it. Shakya Chokden also shared the broader Tibetan perspective on Buddhist philosophical systems: regardless of which system one deals with, it should be possible to classify all phenomena into two realities or truths: ultimate truth (*don dam bden pa, paramārthasatya*) and relative truth (*kun rdzob*

bden pa, samvṛtisatya). Tibetan thinkers generally tend to subsume the imaginary and dependent under the category of relative truth. Shakya Chokden goes further and splits the dependent into two parts—the imaginary and thoroughly established—that are in turn equated with the relative and ultimate truths respectively.

Shakya Chokden's understanding of the nature of the two truths also plays an important role in his interpretation of the three natures. His basic position is that if something exists, it has to exist really and truly, exist as reality and truth. Because relative truth does not exist truly, it does not exist (although it appears to exist to deluded minds).¹⁵ Translated into the language of the three natures, it means that only the thoroughly established exists—nothing else. Consequently, divisions of relative phenomena—including those of the other two natures—are different types of nonexistence, not existence. From this perspective, differences between the dependent and the imaginary, respectively, are similar to those between dreams and dreams within dreams—neither of them exist from the point of view of the wakeful state.

In order to understand how Shakya Chokden came up with this approach we must take a closer look at his interpretation of the three natures. We will then give special attention to the dependent that is clearly the most pivotal (literally and metaphorically) and ambiguous of the three natures: while the other two natures are retained in both theories of other-emptiness, it appears in the three natures theory but disappears in the two natures theory.

Shakya Chokden addresses the three natures in many texts scattered throughout the twenty-four volumes of his collected writings. Among those works, especially helpful for our task is his *Enjoyment Ocean of Scriptural Statements and Reasoning*, which provides very clear and succinct definitions and divisions of the three natures.¹⁶ In its presentation of the three natures, that text refers to such diverse sources as Asāṅga's *Summary of Mahāyāna*,¹⁷ Maitreya's *Differentiation of the Middle and Extremes*,¹⁸ and Vasubandhu's *Thirty Stanzas*,¹⁹ clearly treating them as sharing the same view and complementing each other.

The text gives the following definition of the imaginary: “that which appears—but is not established as it appears—to knowing dualistically appearing as apprehended and apprehender due to predispositions.”²⁰ Among its different divisions, the one that is relevant for the foregoing discussion is the division into the apprehended-imaginary (*gzung ba kun btags*) and the apprehender-imaginary (*'dzin pa kun btags*).²¹

The definition of the dependent is: “‘cognition that—due to predispositions—dualistically appears as apprehended and apprehender,’ or ‘cognition that—due to those [predispositions]—appears as having

representations of the three realms.”²² Among its different divisions, the one that is relevant for the foregoing discussion is the division into the dependent with the characteristics of the apprehended and with the characteristics of the apprehender (*gzung dang ’dzin pa’i mtshan nyid can*), which are respectively the dependent appearing as objects, etc., and the dependent appearing as conceptual minds, etc., apprehending those objects.²³ Note that according to Shakya Chokden, all types of the dependent are created by the power of the predispositions of dualistic appearances. He therefore rejects its division into the pure dependent and the impure dependent (*dag pa’i gzhan dbang* and *ma dag pa’i gzhan dbang*, respectively) advocated by some thinkers.²⁴ Arguing that no pure dependent is possible, he effectively rejects the possibility of the dependent becoming the thoroughly established either prior to or after the realization of the latter has taken place (more on this below).

Shakya Chokden defines the thoroughly established as “suchness which is empty of the imaginary on the basis of the subject [of emptiness], the dependent” (*chos can gzhan dbang gi steng du kun tu btags pas stong pa’i de bzhin nyid*). It is divided into the unchangeable thoroughly established (*’gyur ba med pa’i yongs grub*), which is the factor of experience, clarity, and cognition characterized by the negation of the imaginary (*de bkag pas khyad par du byas pa’i myong ba gsal rig gi cha*), and the non-erroneous thoroughly established (*phyin ci ma log pa’i yongs grub*), which is the primordial mind of the meditative equipoise of āryas that directly realizes that unchangeable thoroughly established (*de mngon sum du rtogs pa’i ’phags pa’i mnyam gzhang ye shes*). Note that in the above definition of the thoroughly established Shakya Chokden places emphasis on suchness, to wit, primordial mind, which is empty of the imaginary. Nevertheless, the dependent is retained as the basis of that emptiness. We will return to this point when discussing the relationship between the two approaches to other-emptiness.

Shakya Chokden’s interpretation of the three natures allows for a few overlaps. First, the two divisions of the thoroughly established overlap: in the context of meditative equipoise of Mahāyāna āryas, the non-erroneous thoroughly established and the unchangeable thoroughly established have the same nature: experience, clarity, and cognition characterized by the negation of the imaginary are inseparable characteristics of the primordial mind of the meditative equipoise of āryas.²⁵ Second, the imaginary and dependent overlap among themselves: the apprehender-imaginary has the same nature as consciousness that projects dualistic appearances. This being said, no overlap is possible between the dependent and thoroughly established. I will address these two latter points below, when elaborating on the ambiguous status of the dependent.

In the *Great Path of Ambrosia of Emptiness*, Shakyā Chokden presents further details of the other-emptiness mode of relationship between the three natures:

The basis that is empty is the dependent: all knowing that has dualistic appearance of the apprehended and apprehender (*gzung 'dzin gnyis snang can gyi shes pa*). The object of negation is the imaginary. It is of two types, due to the division into the apprehended (*gzung ba, grāhya*) and the apprehender (*'dzin pa, grāhaka*). Each of these two, the apprehended and apprehender, also has two [subdivisions]: in terms of persons and in terms of phenomena....The way in which [phenomena] are empty is [as follows:] the basis of negation is empty of the object of negation in terms of other-emptiness, not in terms of self-emptiness. This is because in relation to the bases of negation, i.e., the two types of dualistically appearing knowing (*gnyis snang gi shes pa*), the objects of negation, i.e., the two types of apprehended and apprehender, are other entities (*gzhan gyi ngo bo*); they are not posited as the own entities (*rang gyi ngo bo*) of those [bases of negation].²⁶

From this perspective of other-emptiness, the dependent, namely, consciousnesses with dualistic appearances, is taken as the basis of emptiness/basis of negation. The imaginary, that is, all dualistic appearances of persons and phenomena appearing as objects and subjects apprehending those objects, is taken as the object of negation. In other words, consciousnesses with dualistic appearances both appear as the imaginary and are empty of it at the same time. In this approach, the nonexistent entity of the imaginary is posited as different from—or other than—the existent entity of the dependent. This is the theory of other-emptiness, because it treats the entities of the basis of negation and the object of negation as different. (Shakyā Chokden contrasts this position with the self-emptiness approach that takes the basis of negation and the object of negation as the same, treating all phenomena as being empty of themselves.)²⁷

Note that the above passage also suggests an overlap between the dependent and imaginary: mind that has dualistic appearances of the apprehended and apprehender is none other than the apprehender. As Shakyā Chokden puts it in the *Rain of Ambrosia*: “[T]he word ‘apprehender’ is explained as [referring] to that very mind which appears as the apprehended and apprehends that [appearance].”²⁸ Further citations from Shakyā Chokden’s works below will clarify this point.

But if the dualistically appearing consciousness is both the dependent and imaginary, then how can the dependent be empty of the imaginary in terms of other-emptiness and not self-emptiness, how can the dependent

and imaginary have different entities, and finally, what is the “own entity” of the dependent? To answer these questions, we have to take a closer look at Shakyā Chokden’s interpretation of the dependent in the Alikākāravāda system.

In contrast to the other two natures—the thoroughly established that ultimately exists and the imaginary that does not exist at all (although like an illusion, it appears to exist)—the dependent has neither an independent existence nor, for that matter, an independent nonexistence. In other words, it is nothing more than a provisional conglomerate of the other two natures with no separate entity of its own. Shakyā Chokden explains this point in the *Ocean of Scriptural Statements and Reasoning* where, invoking the authority of Asaṅga’s *Summary of Mahāyāna*, he writes that the dependent “belongs to both parts” (*gnyis ka’i char gtogs*), being comprised of the imaginary and thoroughly established. The part of dualistic appearance (*gnyis snang gi cha*) of the dependent is subsumed under the imaginary, while its part of clarity and cognition (*gsal rig gi cha*) is subsumed under the thoroughly established. By itself, the dependent does not have a separate entity:

In the *Summary of Mahāyāna* too, having explained that the dependent “belongs to both parts,” [Asaṅga further] explained that [its] part of dualistic appearance is subsumed under the imaginary, while its part of clarity and cognition is subsumed under the thoroughly established. Apart from those two, [the dependent itself] was not taught [by Asaṅga] as truly established.²⁹

The *Summary of Mahāyāna* passage that Shakyā Chokden is referring to goes as follows: “The imaginary nature present in the dependent nature belongs to the thoroughly afflicted part. The thoroughly established nature present [in the dependent nature] belongs to the purified part. As for the dependent itself, it belongs to both parts.”³⁰

Note that Shakyā Chokden is not arguing that the dependent exists even though it does not exist truly. Rather, he argues that apart from the other two natures the dependent does not exist at all. This point is made clear by the following passage from the *Snatching Away the Heart’s Torments*, where he explains that according to Alikākāravāda, both the apprehended and apprehender are the imaginary, only nondual primordial mind is the ultimate, and no dependent can be identified apart from them:

On the level of the final tenets of Yogācāra texts
Both the apprehended and apprehender are [treated as] the imaginary part,
And only non-dual primordial mind is [treated as] the ultimate.

If not a single dependent can be identified apart from those,
What is a chance [for it to be] truly existent?³¹

In the *Answers to Three Universally Known Questions* he also writes:

As for the dependent, it is determined as [being splittable] into two parts: the part of mistaken dualistic appearance and the part of experience, clarity, and cognition. The first one is called the “apprehender-imaginary,” while the second is subsumed under the thoroughly established. This is why, as it has been explained in the *Summary of Mahāyāna*, no dependent exists apart from the thoroughly established.³²

The statement that the dependent does not exist apart from the thoroughly established should not be read as implying that the former can be subsumed under or overlaps with the latter. On the contrary, it means that the only real part of the dependent—clarity and cognition—is the thoroughly established, not the dependent. As Shakya Chokden puts it in the *Appearance of the Sun*, “The clarity and cognition part has been explained as the thoroughly established; [it] is not explained as the dependent.”³³

Although the dependent is comprised of the other two natures, it is posited primarily in terms of the imaginary. From the *Ocean of Scriptural Statements and Reasoning*:

The main [feature] of the dependent is posited in terms of [its] part of stains of dualistic appearances. It is not posited in terms of the part of [its] entity—clarity and cognition. This is because that very [part] is the main [feature] of the thoroughly established.³⁴

In other words, because clarity and cognition are the key characteristics of the thoroughly established they cannot be used to posit the dependent. Dualistic appearances, on the other hand, are taken as the defining characteristics of the dependent although, as we already know, they are the primary characteristics of the imaginary too. This relates to a point made earlier: that the dependent overlaps with the imaginary but not with the thoroughly established. The former overlap is possible and the latter impossible because both the imaginary and the dependent are produced by the power of predispositions of dualistic appearances, while the thoroughly established is not. Thus, although the two parts that comprise the dependent are subsumed under—or in fact *are*—either of the other two natures, the dependent overlaps only with the imaginary.

But if the dependent does not have a separate existence, how can it have its own entity which is different from the imaginary? The answer to this

question, paradoxical as it is, is that the entity of the dependent is not the dependent. As Shakya Chokden puts it in the *Snatching Away the Heart's Torments*,

Although the entity of the dependent is accepted,
Its entity is not it...³⁵

Although the dependent does not have a separate existence apart from the other two natures, and although it does not truly exist, it does have an entity that is truly existent. That truly existent entity is none other than primordial mind, the thoroughly established. From the *Ocean of Scriptural Statements and Reasoning*:

The explanation of the entity of the dependent as truly established does not establish that very [dependent itself] as truly established. This is because its ultimate entity does not transcend the thoroughly established.³⁶

This position allows for the dependent to be unreal but exist by nature and have a truly existent entity. Because the two natures' entities are different, it also allows for the dependent to be empty of the imaginary nature in terms of other-emptiness, not self-emptiness.

According to Shakya Chokden, the position that having a real or ultimate entity or nature does not entail being itself real or ultimate is similar to that of proponents of self-emptiness, who explain the emptiness of a pot as the ultimate nature or reality of a pot, but do not accept the pot itself as ultimate reality. He refers to this approach as an example in order to reiterate his position in the Yogācāra context. From the *Rain of Ambrosia*:

The dependent being truly established is not a tenet of honorable Asaṅga, because in his texts that [dependent] was explained as [being] like an illusion. That [dependent] does not become truly established [simply] because its entity was explained as truth. This is like the case of explaining the entity of a pot, etc., as reality [while not accepting a pot, etc., as reality].³⁷

Shakya Chokden assigns this position paramount importance for understanding the view of other-emptiness, writing in the *Great Path of Ambrosia of Emptiness*:

[T]he non-contradictory explanation of the dependent as existent by nature and [at the same time] being truthless like an illusion should be understood as the key that opens the [treasury of] thatness of the texts of proponents of other-emptiness.³⁸

He further argues that as long as one accepts the dependent as truly established, one has no chance to affirm the emptiness of the apprehended/apprehender duality. Without that, in turn, one cannot access the essence of the final definitive meaning of the ocean of Yogācāras' texts (*rnal 'byor spyod gzhung rgya mtsho yi nges don mthar thug snying po*)³⁹—the Alikākāravāda view of reality.⁴⁰ To fully understand it, one has to realize that the dependent is like an illusion in its not being truly established.

Despite its illusory nature, Shakya Chokden strongly objects to the interpretation of the dependent as self-empty. From the *Great Path of Ambrosia of Emptiness*:

[T]here is no proof and there are factors damaging to the description of the dependent in terms of self-emptiness. There is no proof, because no such explanation is given in those scriptures [of Asaṅga, Maitreya, and others]. Damaging factors exist: if the entity of the dependent were not truly established, the entity of the thoroughly established, reality, would not be truly existent. This is because thatness free from duality of apprehended and apprehender (*gzung 'dzin gnyis med kyi de kho na nyid*) is asserted as the entity of dualistically appearing knowing (*gnyis snang gi shes pa'i ngo bo*). That [thatness] is explained as the entity of that [dualistically appearing knowing] by the text [of Dharmakīrti's *Commentary on Valid Cognition*: "Thus,] that [emptiness of duality] is the thatness of that."⁴¹

In this passage Shakya Chokden argues that although dualistically appearing minds are unreal, nevertheless they are not lacking their own entity or nature. This is because their own entity is not themselves, but the thoroughly established. Therefore, to treat them as self-empty in this context would imply the nonexistence of their entity, which in turn would imply the nonexistence of the thoroughly established. This is why the dependent cannot be treated as self-empty.

What is the nature of relationship between the dualistically appearing consciousness and its entity described as the thoroughly established, and why does Shakya Chokden insist so strongly on their separation? The following passage from his commentary on the *Sublime Continuum*, the *Previously Unseen Sun*, provides the answers:

Every phenomenon of a mistaken consciousness has the factor of the inward-looking primordial mind [related with it]. Nevertheless, it is impossible for the clarity factor of primordial mind (*ye shes kyi gsal cha*) to become the entity of consciousness, and it is also impossible for that [entity of consciousness] to become that [clarity factor of

primordial mind]. Otherwise, it would follow that primordial mind is an experiencer of worldly pleasures and sufferings. [Also,] it would follow that those unreal ideations (*yang dag pa ma yin pa'i kun tu rtog pa, abhūtaparikalpa*) that bear the name of consciousness, are the very basis of accomplishment of all stainless positive qualities. Without that original primordial mind (*gdod ma'i ye shes*), adventitious consciousness (*blo bur gyi mam shes*) does not emerge as mistaken appearances. Nevertheless, the possibility of a common locus (*gzhi mthun*) of the two is not asserted. [Rather, they are] similar to clouds in the sky, oxide on gold, and dirt in pure water.⁴²

As this passage makes clear, Shakya Chokden does not want to allow any overlap between—or mixture of—primordial mind and dualistic consciousness. Rather, he argues that the two exist side by side as two polarities that never mix to assume the same nature. Clouds and sky never become one, nor rust and gold, nor even dirt and water. They can coexist, but can never completely blend.

Note that in this passage Shakya Chokden says that the clarity factor of primordial mind cannot become or turn into the entity of consciousness while, as pointed out earlier, he also argues that the thoroughly established is the entity of the dependent. The two statements should not be taken as contradictory, because one is meant to indicate that the two natures cannot become a single entity (hence the notion of a common locus in the above passage), while the other indicates that one nature has or possesses the other nature without the two becoming one (hence the earlier notion that the entity of the dependent is not the dependent).

But if primordial mind and dualistically appearing consciousness do not assume each other's nature, while the factors of clarity and cognition are exclusive qualities of primordial mind only, then will it not follow that dualistic consciousness lacks these two key characteristics—clarity and cognition—and therefore is not different from inanimate matter? Shakya Chokden provides a truly striking answer to this question, which sheds more light on his fluid approach to other-emptiness:

Objection: If consciousness's own entity is not accepted as clarity and cognition, then it will not cognize objects because of [having absurdly turned into inanimate] matter.

Answer: No [such] absurd consequence will apply [here]: in general, it is accepted that although consciousness is not established by valid cognition, because of a mistake it is only superimposed as existent. It is not accepted even as existent—how much less a cognition—precisely because it is a relative truth.⁴³

Shakya Chokden makes it clear that similar to the dualistic appearances it produces, dualistically appearing consciousness does not exist. It does not exist because it is a relative truth. Only ultimate truth, nondual primordial mind exists. If dualistic consciousness existed, then without the qualities of clarity and cognition it would indeed become an inanimate matter. Nevertheless, since it does not exist, the question whether it is clear and cognizing simply does not apply. In the end we are left with only one existent thing: primordial mind. Nothing else exists.

This position helps answer the question of why Shakya Chokden treats the two approaches to other-emptiness as noncontradictory. The main reason is that although the dependent is not self-empty, and although it is used as the basis of negation of the imaginary, when the latter has been negated on its basis, it does not remain either. From the *Rain of Ambrosia*:

[Alikākāravāda] Yogācāras explain that the imaginary is empty of its own entity, the dependent is empty of other entities, and what is left in remainder of that [emptiness] as not being empty of one's own entity is that very entity of the dependent which is otherwise called the "thoroughly established." Or, in other words, they explain that the subject-basis of emptiness is the dependent, the object of negation of which it is empty is the imaginary, and the phenomenon [which is characterized as] that subject [of emptiness] being empty of that object of negation is the thoroughly established.⁴⁴

This passage reiterates Shakya Chokden's basic position that in the Alikākāravāda system the dependent is used as the subject-basis of emptiness and that it is empty of the imaginary in terms of other-emptiness, not self-emptiness. But it also demonstrates that not only the imaginary but the dependent too has to go in the process of negation: what is left as the remainder of negation is not the dependent per se but only its entity—the thoroughly established.

Thus, not only is the dependent a conglomerate of the other two natures, but it is also a provisional or temporary conglomerate. Shakya Chokden clearly treats it as a vehicle that transports the mind to the cosmic expanse of the ultimate view, but is itself shattered into pieces when the final Alikākāravāda view is realized. The dependent is important as the basis of emptiness—the basis on which the imaginary is negated. Nevertheless, when as a result of that negation one has reached the final view of reality—the thoroughly established—then the dependent also has to go, together with the imaginary. In that state the dualistic appearances of apprehended and apprehender disappear and only the clarity and cognition characterized by negation of those appearances remain.

Illusory and provisional as it is, the dependent is needed as a starting point in the process of realizing emptiness. Were the thoroughly established taken as the basis of emptiness from the start, its realization would be impossible in the Yogācāra system as Shakya Chokden understands it. From the *Great Path of Ambrosia of Emptiness*:

[The thoroughly established] is not posited as a subject-basis of emptiness, because there is no proof and there are factors damaging to it. There is no proof, because [valid] scriptures providing such explanation do not exist. The damaging factors are as follows: if the reasoning establishing emptiness had to establish the thoroughly established [taken as] the subject[-basis of emptiness], as being empty of [both] the imaginary and dependent [taken as] negated phenomena, it would follow that at the time of ascertaining the subject-basis for dispute (*rtsod gzhi'i chos can*), the probandum (*bsgrub bya, sādhyā*) would have been proved. Otherwise, there could exist a correct syllogism that establishes the probandum without [initially] ascertaining the subject-basis for dispute.⁴⁵

Because in the process of determining emptiness through reasoning the subject-basis for dispute has to be ascertained *before* the mechanism of a correct syllogism is triggered and its probandum is proved, it is wrong to treat the thoroughly established as empty of the other two natures. Were it taken as the subject-basis for dispute about whether the thoroughly established is empty of the other two natures, then the probandum, “the thoroughly established is empty of the other two natures,” would be ascertained at the same moment that the subject-basis for dispute was ascertained. The syllogism would simply prove what had already been ascertained, and therefore would be defective.

Note that the context in which Shakya Chokden insists on retaining the dependent as the basis of emptiness is that of positing emptiness through reasoning. It is in this context that the dependent is needed as the basis of negation. Nevertheless, the process of realizing emptiness does not stop there, but continues to eventually culminate in the realization of ultimate reality in the meditative equipoise of āryas. It is in this context that one directly realizes the thoroughly established, the self-illuminating and self-cognizing primordial mind. It is described in the *Profound Thunder Amidst the Clouds of the Ocean of Definitive Meaning* as follows:

Honorable Asaṅga explained as the definitive meaning of the [last] two dharmacakras

The non-dual primordial mind free from all proliferations,

The self-illuminating self-cognition,
The final ultimate [truth], the “Buddha-essence.”⁴⁶

Not only is this primordial mind empty of all conventional phenomena, not only is it nonconceptual, but it is also the only phenomenon that can cognize primordial mind. In other words, it is self-cognizing.⁴⁷

Going all the way back to the first citation in this paper, I should also point out that the meaning of the term *subject-basis of other-emptiness* changes depending on whether it is applied to the first or the second approach to other-emptiness articulated by Shakyā Chokden. In the context of determining emptiness through reasoning, it is the basis upon which one negates the object of negation. Therefore, it is different from emptiness that is realized through that process. In the context of subsequent realization of emptiness triggered by that process it is the emptiness itself, the thoroughly established. That primordial mind—which is left as the remainder of negation of the imaginary on the basis of the dependent—is the basis of emptiness in terms of being an empty basis, the basis that is emptied of everything else.

The forgoing discussion explains why in different statements scattered throughout his works Shakyā Chokden sometimes articulates the three natures approach and sometimes the two natures approach. He adopts one position or the other depending on which elements in the process of realization of reality he wants to emphasize. From the broader perspective of his interpretation of the Yogācāra system, not only are the two approaches not contradictory, but they actually complement each other.⁴⁸ One approach pertains to positing emptiness through reasoning and unpacking details of the process of reaching the ultimate. The other pertains to the level of realization of the ultimate in the meditative equipoise of āryas.

The former approach is articulated, among others, by the following statement from the *Rain of Ambrosia*:

[Alikākāravāda] Yogācāras explain that the definitive meaning of the explicit teachings of the last pronouncement is that very primordial mind [characterized by] the dependent being empty of the imaginary. They also explain that this [primordial mind] itself is taught by the truly perfect Buddha himself as the main topic of the middle pronouncement.⁴⁹

The latter is articulated in the passage from the *Seventeen Wondrous Answers*: “[H]aving determined all relative truths as self-empty, one posits as remaining only the ultimate primordial mind (*don dam pa'i ye shes*).”⁵⁰ Shakyā Chokden also says that this approach stems from the explicit teachings (*dnegos bstan*) of the third dharmacakra and the *Dharmas of*

Maitreya interpreted by Asaṅga and Vasubandhu.⁵¹ What is emphasized in either context is primordial mind, but in the former case Shakyā Chokden unpacks the process of accessing that primordial mind, while in the latter he highlights the ultimate nature of primordial mind, which is empty of all relative, conventional phenomena.

The earlier statement that the imaginary is empty of its own entity while the dependent is empty of other entities should not be taken as contradicting the statement in the last passage that Alikākāravāda asserts *all* relative truths or conventional phenomena as self-empty. This is because the former statement was made in the three natures context while the latter is made in the two natures context. In the former context the dependent had to be posited as the basis of emptiness whose entity is different from the object of negation. The second approach refers to the state in which all phenomena have been boiled down to the two truths—relative and ultimate—and the dependent has been split into the imaginary and thoroughly established that correspond to those truths. Were it possible to find the dependent apart from those two natures, the two approaches would be contradictory. But because such is not possible, the second statement does not imply that the dependent is self-empty. Rather, it presupposes that there is no dependent apart from the self-empty dualistic appearances (the imaginary) and the other-empty primordial mind (the thoroughly established).

Shakyā Chokden's interpretation of the Alikākāravāda approach to other-emptiness can be summarized as follows. The dependent is comprised of two parts: the imaginary part of nonexistent dualistically appearing consciousness and the thoroughly established part of truly existent primordial mind qualified by clarity and cognition. The latter is the entity of the dependent but it does not overlap with it. The former does overlap with it but it is not its entity. In the process of negation of the imaginary the dependent evaporates too. After all, when one part of a pair is missing, the pair itself also should disappear. More specifically, all that remains in the process of negation is the thoroughly established, which does not overlap with the dependent. The imaginary does overlap with it, but disappears in the process of negation.

Shakyā Chokden's fluid approach to the two versions of other-emptiness clearly hinges on his understanding of the dependent. Two points in particular—that the dependent is a conglomerate of the other two natures and that it disappears in the process of negation of the imaginary—are crucial for understanding why he finds the two approaches to other-emptiness to be noncontradictory. The two ways of dividing phenomena utilized in the two approaches are not contradictory because the dependent ultimately boils down to the other two natures.

This boiling down happens not out of context but in the context of determining the view of other-emptiness by reasoning and subsequently realizing that view in contemplative practice culminating in the meditative equipoise of āryas. The dependent's composite and transitory status allows one to start with taking it as the basis of emptiness and negating the imaginary on its basis, but in the process letting the dependent go as well. When the part of dualistic appearances that is subsumed under the imaginary evaporates, all that is left as the remainder is the clarity and cognition part that is the thoroughly established. Thus, the three natures approach is indispensable at the beginning of this process while the two natures approach expresses its end result. The former is the prerequisite for the latter, while the latter is the outcome of the former. Each one has its place.

Before closing, I want to briefly address several elements found in seminal Indian Yogācāra texts that can be seen as anticipating Shakya Chokden's interpretive approach. Those elements pertain to (1) the close relationship between the three natures and the two truths, (2) different approaches to the three natures, (3) the unreality and destructibility of the dependent, (4) similes of the three natures, and (5) characteristics of the dependent outlined in the *Summary of Mahāyāna*.

1. The three natures theory shares common origins with that of the two truths. Elements of both can be found in the *Prajñāpāramitā* sūtras.⁵² The two truths and the three natures are likewise connected in such Yogācāra texts as Maitreya's *Differentiation of the Middle and Extremes* (which presents only the thoroughly established as a fit candidate for the ultimate truth)⁵³ and Maitreya's *Ornament of Mahāyāna Sūtras*⁵⁴ with its commentary by Vasubandhu⁵⁵ (which categorize the dependent together with the imaginary as a phenomenal, conventional aspect of reality).⁵⁶

Having formed both in response to—and as a further expansion of—the two truths theory,⁵⁷ the three natures theory can be approached as its elaborate extension. Although the two theories have different emphases and perspectives—the three natures are more concerned with dynamic epistemological processes of conceiving unreality and realizing reality, while the two truths focus on ontology—they are not incompatible. As if folding and unfolding a fan, the former can be reduced to the latter and the latter expanded to the former. This feature no doubt contributed to Shakya Chokden's claim of the lack of contradiction between the three natures model and the two natures model.

2. The philosophical focuses of the basic Yogācāra texts appear to be different,⁵⁸ and the three natures theory in particular is far from being clear-cut, having undergone extensive changes over time.⁵⁹ Any one articulation of this theory is complicated by the fact that it was developed

by different authors with diverse philosophical outlooks during different historical periods.⁶⁰

Similar to different models of the two truths, models of the three natures are far from being uniform, providing various interpretations of their relationship and identity. Alan Sponberg, for example, delineates three models of the three natures: the pivotal model that is based primarily on the second chapter of the *Summary of Mahāyāna*, the progressive model that came to be standard in the later East Asian tradition, and the model articulated by the Chinese thinker K'uei-chi that has parts of both of those models. The first model places emphasis on the dependent: while progressing on the path, one undergoes an epistemic shift from the imaginary to the thoroughly established (the two being understood as two mutually exclusive aspects of the dependent), but ontologically, the dependent is neither rejected nor, strictly speaking, transcended in the process. According to the second model, one first transcends or cuts off the imaginary, but then also transcends or cuts off the dependent, thereby finally attaining the thoroughly established, which lies beyond the conventional reality of the dependent.⁶¹

The first two models can be traced to Indian Yogācāra texts. According to Klaus-Dieter Mathes, for example, Maitreya's *Differentiation of the Middle and Extremes* contains two models of the three natures that come close to Sponberg's pivotal and progressive models.⁶² According to Mario D'Amato, the *Ornament of Mahāyāna Sūtras* and its commentary by Vasubandhu propose the soteriologico-ontological model of the three natures that identifies stages of ontological gnosis traversed in the process of achieving buddhahood. One starts by moving from the level of the imaginary constructed by ordinary beings to the level of the dependent, where one realizes the nonexistence of conceptually constructed entities but accepts the conventional existence of an interdependent web of causes and conditions that serve as their basis. Eventually, one reaches the level of the thoroughly established—buddhahood—where the basis of the matrix of conceptual construction has been abandoned.⁶³

According to Sponberg, the progressive model stands in marked contrast to the approach of the *Summary of Mahāyāna*, because that text argues that there can be no thoroughly established without the existence of the dependent.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, the *Summary of Mahāyāna*'s position does not necessarily have to be interpreted as indicating that the dependent should persist even when the thoroughly established has been fully realized. It can be understood as the dependent being indispensable only as a temporary basis of that realization. One can further argue that the text's interpretation of the snake-rope-hemp simile (see below) in its third chapter also strongly suggests the progressive model of the three natures.

Because seminal Yogācāra texts allow for *different* interpretations of their positions on the three natures—as illustrated by the pivotal and progressive models—it is not surprising that later commentators attempted to stress their chosen models of the three natures over others, or to synthesize elements of different models. According to Sponberg, K'uei-chi utilized elements of both dynamic and progressive models by retaining the dynamic role of the dependent while shifting focus to the thoroughly established. As we have seen, Shakyā Chokden in his own way attempted to reconcile two different models where the key role played by the dependent in realization of reality is retained, but the emphasis is eventually shifted to the thoroughly established.

3. One of the main reasons why different models of the three natures are possible is the ambiguous status of the dependent. The widespread Yogācāra position—accepted by Shakyā Chokden as well—is that the dependent appears as the imaginary, while the thoroughly established is understood as the nonexistence of the dependent the way it appears—the nonexistence, that is, of the imaginary in the dependent. According to this scenario, the imaginary does not exist while the thoroughly established always exists. This state of affairs does not change regardless of whether or not the realization of the thoroughly established has been achieved and the appearance of the imaginary eliminated. The dependent, in contrast, performs many contradictory roles, and its existence is either admitted or negated depending on context.

The dependent serves as the basis of the emergence of dualistic appearances—the imaginary. It likewise serves as the basis of realizing the nonexistence of the imaginary—realizing the thoroughly established. While its illusion-like status is admitted, in its role as this twofold basis the dependent is neither negated nor eliminated. It also continues to appear in the postmeditative state of subsequent attainment (*rjes thob, prṣṭhalabdha*) even after the direct realization of reality has taken place. This being said, it is not destined to exist forever in this or any other role: it ceases or is transformed when the magic show of saṃsāra is over and a buddha's nirvāṇa—the ultimate goal of the Mahāyāna path—has been achieved. It is this final transformation of the dependent—the last role it is to play—that brings about the resultant state of buddhahood.

From among these and other characteristics of the dependent, two figure prominently in such seminal Yogācāra texts as the *Sūtra Unraveling the Intent*,⁶⁵ *Ornament of Mahāyāna Sūtras* (with its commentary by Vasubandhu), and *Thirty Stanzas*. The first is that the dependent does not have real existence and exists only as an illusion; the second is that upon its final transformation the dependent ceases to exist. According to the *Ornament of Mahāyāna Sūtras* and its commentary by Vasubandhu, for

example, the dependent does not ultimately exist and is to be abandoned, destroyed through the knowledge of the three natures as they are.⁶⁶ The *Summary of Mahāyāna* likens the dependent to a mirage, a reflection, etc.⁶⁷ The *Sūtra Unraveling the Intent*, too, likens it to a phantom, magical creation, etc.,⁶⁸ and argues that eventually it is to be eliminated.⁶⁹

What these two features signify is that when all illusion-like states of mind have been eliminated and the final result of the path achieved, the dependent ceases and thereby becomes equal to the imaginary in terms of both of them being nonexistent. Only the thoroughly established persists forever: prior to buddhahood it exists as the state of nonexistence of the imaginary in the dependent, and afterward it exists also as the state free from both the imaginary and the dependent. These two features lend support to Shakya Chokden's claim that the three natures can be reduced to the two natures, and that in the process of negation of the imaginary on the basis of the dependent, the dependent has to go too, and what remains after that negation is only the thoroughly established.

4. Although similes can illustrate actual things only to a limited extent and allow for different interpretations, three well-known similes of the three natures—the snake-rope-hemp, gold-ore, and magic show⁷⁰—serve well to clarify the above-mentioned characteristics of the dependent and its relationship to the other two natures.

The first simile demonstrates that similar to a rope serving as a basis for a mistaken appearance of a snake and subsequent realization of the snake's nonexistence in the rope, the dependent serves as the basis for appearance of the imaginary and subsequent realization of its nonexistence in the dependent. The simile further points out that what is "really out there" is not even the rope but only strands of hemp and other elements that comprise the rope, illustrating that in reality only the thoroughly established exists while the dependent does not.⁷¹ It thereby first demonstrates the basal, pivotal role of the dependent, but then shifts emphasis to the perspective of the thoroughly established, in which the dependent has been transcended.

A similar mechanism is at play in the gold-ore simile used to illustrate the *Summary of Mahāyāna's* statement that the dependent is comprised of two parts: the imaginary and the thoroughly established. The gold-bearing ore (the dependent) initially appears simply as clay (the imaginary), but when it has been burned with fire (nonconceptual realization of ultimate reality), gold (the thoroughly established) appears and clay disappears. Here too we can see the emphasis on the basal, pivotal role of the dependent illustrated by the ore appearing first as clay and then as gold. But note the dynamics at play here: similar to the gold-ore that appears as mere clay, the dependent appears as the imaginary. Yet, when the clay has been burned down, all

that remains is not even the ore but only pure gold. Likewise, when the dependent has been burned with the fire of nonconceptual wisdom, all that remains is the thoroughly established.⁷² Thus, while indicating the pivotal role of the dependent, this simile also demonstrates that after the pivoting has taken place, the pivot—the dependent—itself disappears.

In the magic show simile, the appearance of the magically created elephant stands for the dependent, the magically created elephant itself stands for the imaginary, and the wood, etc. stand for the thoroughly established.⁷³ Here, the basal role of the dependent is limited only to its projecting the imaginary, and from the start the emphasis is put on the thoroughly established that serves as the basis of both the dependent and the imaginary. Similar to a magically created elephant and its appearance, these two natures arise together and disappear together, while the thoroughly established, similar to pieces of wood, pebbles, etc., persists throughout.⁷⁴

All three similes can be interpreted as illustrating the unreality of the dependent and its destructibility, and the gold-ore simile in particular demonstrates the composite character of the dependent that plays the key role in Shakya Chokden's approach to the three natures.

5. Because Shakya Chokden believes that his interpretation of the dependent as a composite of the other two natures is supported by Asaṅga's *Summary of Mahāyāna*, it is worth taking a closer look at that text's perspectives on the dependent. According to Noritoshi Aramaki, these perspectives can be summarized in nine categories: (1) the basis of appearance of all phenomena (*sarvadharmapratibhāsāśraya*), (2) dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*), (3) mere cognizance (*viññaptimātratā*), (4) neither different nor non-different [from the other two natures] (*na bhinno nāpy abhinnaḥ*), (5) like magical illusion, etc. (*māyādivat*), (6) pertaining to afflictions and pertaining to purification (*saṃkleśāṃśīko vyavadānāṃśīkaś ca*), (7) the object known in subsequent attainment (*ālambanaṃ pṛṣṭhalabdha jñānasya*), (8) nonabiding nirvāṇa (*apraṭiṣṭhitanirvāṇa*), and (9) dharma-body (*dharmakāya*).⁷⁵ (As is clear from the list, most of these categories characterize the dependent itself while others are only related to it.)⁷⁶

The nine categories demonstrate characteristics of the dependent in general, and in particular the ones emphasized in this paper. Category 1 refers to the dependent in terms of its general function as a basis of manifesting phenomenal appearances, while category 2 refers to its character of dependent origination. Category 3 refers to the mental "stuff" it is made of, category 4 refers to its close and interdependent relationship with the other two natures, and category 5 refers to the fact that it is unreal and illusory. Category 6 refers to its being comprised of the contradictory elements of afflictions and their purification. Category 7 refers to it as an object of mind

that arises subsequent to the direct realization of reality. Category 8 refers to it as a composite of the imaginary and thoroughly established natures and uses this as the reason for the Buddha teaching the inseparability of *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa*. And category 9 refers to its final transformation as a result of the path—the state where the dependent belonging to the afflicted part has been eliminated and the dependent belonging to the purified part has been assumed.

Categories 1–5 and 7 hardly require additional comment. As for categories 6, 8, and 9, together they demonstrate an important feature of the dependent: while being a composite of the other two natures, it will not last in this role forever, because eventually its afflicted, *samsāric* part will be destroyed, and only the purified, *nirvāṇic* part retained.⁷⁷ As we already know, according to the *Summary of Mahāyāna*, the purified part of the dependent is the thoroughly established.

Embedded in the interconnected web of *Yogācāra* ideas, these five elements (1–5) provided a fertile ground for the fluid approach to the three natures developed by Shakyā Chokden. To recapitulate, this approach was anticipated by the possibility of reducing the three natures to the two truths/natures, the lack of real existence of the dependent, the composite character of the dependent, the destructibility of the dependent, and the eventual shift of emphasis to the thoroughly established as a result of progress on the path. Although Shakyā Chokden worked in a historical, social, and philosophical milieu very different from that of the authors of the *Yogācāra* works mentioned above, and although his is only one among many possible interpretations of the three natures and related ideas contained in those works, in his interpretive approach he clearly built upon, responded to, and further articulated those ideas.

NOTES

1. Hereafter, I am using the simplified phonetic transcription of Tibetan based on the usage adopted by the Tibetan and Himalayan Library. For details, see <http://www.thlib.org/reference/transliteration>.
2. I focus on this unique approach to the two systems in my *Visions of Unity: The Golden Paṇḍita Shakyā Chokden's New Interpretation of Yogācāra and Madhyamaka* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2011). Hereafter, *Visions of Unity*.
3. These issues are discussed in chapter 2 section 4 of the *Visions of Unity*.
4. For details, see *Visions of Unity*, chapter 4 section 1.
5. For further reasons see the last two sections of chapter 3 of the *Visions of Unity*. For the discussion of differences between *Satyākāravāda* and *Alikākāravāda* see its chapter 4 section 1.

6. See, for example, Ake Boquist, *Trisvabhāva: A Study of the Development of the Three-nature-theory in Yogācāra Buddhism*, Lund studies in African and Asian religions, 8 (Lund, Sweden: Department of History of Religions, University of Lund, 1993); Klaus-Dieter Mathes, “Tāranātha’s Presentation of *trisvabhāva* in the *g’zhan ston sñin po*,” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 23, no. 2 (2000): 195–223; Mario D’Amato, “Three Natures, Three Stages: An Interpretation of the Yogācāra *Trisvabhāva*-Theory,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 33, no. 2 (2005): 185–207; and Alan Sponberg, “The *Trisvabhāva* Doctrine in India and China: A Study of Three Exegetical Models,” *Ryūkoku Daigaku Bukkyō Bunka Kenkyūjo Kiyō*, vol. 21 (1981): 97–119. I will return to this issue in the last section of this paper.
7. On Dölpopa’s position see Jeffrey Hopkins, *Mountain Doctrine: Tibet’s Fundamental Treatise on Other-Emptiness and the Buddha-Matrix* (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 2006); on Tsongkhapa’s position see Jeffrey Hopkins, *Emptiness in the Mind-Only School of Buddhism: Dynamic Responses to Dzongka-ba’s The Essence of Eloquence: I* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), and *Reflections on Reality: The Three Natures and Non-Natures in Cittamātra School, Dynamic Responses to Dzongka-ba’s The Essence of Eloquence, Volume 2* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).
8. *gzhan stong gi gzhi chos can ngos ’dzin tshul la mi ’dra ba gnyis byung ste / rnal ’byor spyod pa’i gzhung du / stong gzhi gzhan dbang dgag bya kun btags kyis stong pa’i chos nyid yongs grub tu bshad pa dang / rgyud bla ma dang yum gyi gnod ’joms su chos nyid yongs grub dgag bya kun btags kyis stong par bshad pa’o // gnyis po yang shes bya thams cad kun btags dang yongs grub gnyis su bsdus pa dang / gzhan dbang dang gsum du phye ba’i khyad par las yin gyi ’gal ba ni ma yin no. Rain of Ambrosia: Extensive [Auto-]Commentary on the ‘Profound Thunder amidst the Clouds of the Ocean of Definitive Meaning’ (Nges don rgya mtsho sprin gyi ’brug sgra zab mo’i rgyas ’grel bdud rtsi’i char ’bebs), in *Two Controversial Mādhyamika Treatises* (Bir, India: Yashodhara Publications, 1996), 379–80.*
9. Respectively, *Mahāyānottaratantraśāstra, Theg pa chen po rgyud bla ma*, D4024, sems tsam, phi, 54b–73a, and *Mahāyānottaratantraśāstravyākhyā, Theg pa chen po’i rgyud bla ma’i bstan bcos kyi rnam par bshad pa*, D4025, sems tsam, phi, 74b–129a. Sanskrit of both texts is edited in Edward H. Johnston, ed., *Ratnagotravibhāga Mahāyānottaratantraśāstra* (Patna: The Bihar Research Society, 1950). Translated in Jikido Takasaki, *A Study on the Ratnagotravibhāga* (Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1966).
10. *Conquest over Objections about the Three Mother Scriptures: Extensive Explanation of the Superior One Hundred Thousand Stanza, Twenty-five Thousand Stanza, and Eighteen Thousand Stanza Perfection of Wisdom Sūtras (Āryaśatasāhasrikāpañcaviṃsatisāhasrikāṣṭadaśasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitābṛhaṭṭikā, ’Phags pa shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa ’bum pa dang nyi khri lnga stong pa dang khri brgyad stong pa’i rgya cher bshad pa / yum gsum gnod ’joms)*, D3808, mdo ’grel, pha, 1a–292b.

11. For details see chapters 3 and 4 of *Visions of Unity*. While Shakya Chokden highlights unique features of the *Sublime Continuum* that make it superior to other Yogācāra works (writing, for example, that it contains all definitive meanings of the three dharmacakras), he argues that the *Sublime Continuum* also articulates the final Yogācāra view. See *Rain of Ambrosia*, 407 ff. For further details of his interpretation of the *Sublime Continuum* see my “Reburying the Treasure—Maintaining the Continuity: Two Texts by Shakya Chokden on the Buddha-Essence,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 34, no. 6 (2006): 521–70. As for the *Conquest over Objections*, in the *Rain of Ambrosia* Shakya Chokden writes that this text too articulates the final view of Yogācāra in agreement with the works of Maitreya (444, 484–85). In *Great Path of Ambrosia of Emptiness* he also indicates that he sees no problem with the *Conquest over Objections* positing the reality-form (*chos nyid kyī gzugs*, corresponds to the thoroughly established) as being empty of both the imaginary form (*kun brtags pa’i gzugs*, corresponds to the imaginary) and the imputational form (*rnam par brtags pa’i gzugs*, corresponds to the dependent). Nevertheless, he expresses qualms about its positing the reality-form as the basis of emptiness, arguing that this approach contradicts Yogācāra texts in general and Vasubandhu’s textual tradition in particular. See *Great Path of Ambrosia of Emptiness: Explanation of Profound Pacification Free from Proliferations* (*Zab zhi spros bral gyi bshad pa stong nyid bdud rtsi’i lam po che*), in *Collected Writings of Gser-mdog paṅ-chen Śākya-mchog-ldan* (Thimphu, Bhutan: Kunzang Tobgey, 1975), vol. 4, 139. For details of Shakya Chokden’s interpretation of the *Conquest over Objections*, see *Great Path of Ambrosia of Emptiness*, 136 ff.
12. *Abhidharmasamuccaya*, *Chos mngon pa kun las btus pa*, D4053, sems tsam, li, 1a–117a.
13. *Rain of Ambrosia*, 407–408.
14. See “Reburying the Treasure—Maintaining the Continuity” for a complete translation and discussion of his commentary on the *Sublime Continuum* called *Previously Unseen Sun: The Definitive Meaning of the “Sublime Continuum” Treatise* (*Rgyud bla ma’i bstan bcos kyī nges don sngon med nyi ma*), in *Collected Writings of Gser-mdog paṅ-chen Śākya-mchog-ldan*, vol. 13 (Thimphu, Bhutan: Kunzang Tobgey, 1975), 113–124. In that article it is translated under the title *The Sun Unseen Before: The Definitive Meaning of the “Sublime Continuum” Treatise*.
15. This applies to both the Alikākāravāda and Niḥsvabhāvavāda systems of Madhyamaka. I discuss this position in different sections of my *Visions of Unity* (94, 241, 249).
16. *Enjoyment Ocean of Scriptural Statements and Reasoning Differentiating One’s Own and Others’ Tenets: Explanation of Difficult Points of the “Ornament of Clear Realizations” Treatise of Quintessential Instructions on the Perfection of Wisdom Together with Its Commentaries* (*Shes rab kyī pha rol tu phyin pa’i man ngag*

- gi bstan bcos mngon par rtogs pa'i rgyan 'grel pa dang bcas pa'i dka' ba'i gnas rnam rnam par bshad pa rang gzhan gyi grub mtha' rnam par dbye ba lung rigs kyi rol mtsho), in *Collected Writings of Gser-mdog pañ-chen Śākya-mchog-ldan* (Thimphu, Bhutan: Kunzang Tobgey, 1975), vol. 1, 9–vol. 2, 469.
17. *Mahāyāna-saṃgraha*, *Theg pa chen po bsdu pa*, D4048, sems tsam, ri, 1a–43a.
 18. *Differentiation of the Middle and Extremes (Madhyāntavibhāga, Dbus dang mtha' rnam par' byed pa)*, D4021, sems tsam, phi, 40b–45a. Edited Sanskrit text: Gadjin M. Nagao, *Madhyāntavibhāga-Bhāṣya: A Buddhist Philosophical Treatise Edited for the First Time from a Sanskrit Manuscript* (Tokyo: Suzuki Research Foundation, 1964).
 19. *Triṃśīkākārikā*, *Sum cu pa'i tshig le'ur byas pa*, D4055, sems tsam, shi, 1a–3a. Sanskrit text with Chinese and English translations in: Dan Lusthaus, *Buddhist Phenomenology: A Philosophical Investigation of Yogācāra Buddhism and the Ch'eng Wei-shih Lun* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002), 273–304.
 20. *bag chags kyi dbang gis gzung 'dzin gnyis su snang ba'i shes pa la snang zhing snang ba ltar ma grub pa. Enjoyment Ocean of Scriptural Statements and Reasoning*, vol. 2, 133.
 21. *Ibid.*
 22. *bag chags kyi dbang gis gzung 'dzin gnyis su snang ba'i rig pa zhes pa'am / de'i dbang gis kham gsom gyi rnam pa can du snang ba'i rig pa. Ibid.*
 23. *Ibid.*, 134.
 24. *Ibid.*, 129–132. For example, in the Yogācāra context Geluk thinkers reserve the category of the pure dependent for the nonconceptual realization of emptiness, etc. See Jeffrey Hopkins, *Maps of the Profound: Jam-yang-shay-ba's Great Exposition of Buddhist and Non-Buddhist Views on the Nature of Reality* (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion, 2003), 376. I should note in passing that Shakya Chokden's discussion of the three natures in the *Enjoyment Ocean of Scriptural Statements and Reasoning* contains criticisms of their interpretations by Tsongkhapa, and is very useful for comparing the views of the two thinkers on this matter.
 25. Experience, clarity, and cognition are inseparable characteristics of primordial mind, which is not limited to meditative equipoise only. Here, they are qualified by the negation of the imaginary because of being placed in the context of the meditative equipoise of āryas. Note that it is Shakya Chokden's basic position that the ultimate reality in Alikākāravāda is primordial mind, not a mere negation, and this pertains to both the non-erroneous thoroughly established and the unchangeable thoroughly established. Shakya Chokden's position on primordial mind is clarified below.
 26. *gang stong pa'i gzhi ni gzhan dbang ste gzung 'dzin gnyis snang can gyi shes pa mtha' dag go // dgag bya ni kun brtags pa ste / gzung ba dang 'dzin pa'i dbye bas gnyis yin la / de re re la'ang gang zag gi dbang du byas pa dang / chos kyi dbang du byas pa'i gzung 'dzin gnyis gnyis so...ji ltar stong pa'i tshul ni / dgag bya des dgag gzhi de gzhan stong gi tshul gyis stong pa yin gyi / rang stong gi tshul gyis*

- ni ma yin te / dgag bya gzung 'dzin gnyis po de dgag gzhi gnyis snang gi shes pa gnyis po de la ltos pa'i gzhan gyi ngo bo yin gyi / de'i rang gi ngo bor mi 'jog pa'i phyir. *Great Path of Ambrosia of Emptiness*, vol. 4, 114–15. See also *Rain of Ambrosia*, 377–78, 387, etc.
27. See *Visions of Unity*, chapter 3 section 3.
 28. 'dzin pa zhes bya ba'i sgra ni gzung bar snang zhing de 'dzin pa'i blo nyid la bshad pa yin. *Rain of Ambrosia*, 326.
 29. theg bsdus las kyang / gzhan dbang la gnyis ka'i char gtogs pa zhes bshad nas / gnyis snang gi cha kun btags dang / gsal rig gi cha yongs grub tu bsdus nas bshad pa yin gyi / de gnyis las logs su bden grub tu gsungs pa med. *Ocean of Scriptural Statements and Reasoning: Treasury of Ascertainment of Mahāyāna Madhyamaka (Theg pa chen po dbu ma rnam par nges pa'i bang mdzod lung dang rigs pa'i rgya mtsho)*, in *Collected Writings of Gser-mdog paṅ-chen Śākya-mchog-ldan* (Thimphu, Bhutan: Kunzang Tobgey, 1975), vol. 14, 381.
 30. gzhan gya [sic] dbang gi ngo bo nyid la kun tu brtags pa'i ngo bo nyid yod pa ni kun nas nyon mongs pa'i char gtogs pa'o // yongs su grub pa'i ngo bo nyid yod pa ni rnam par byang ba'i char gtogs pa'o // gzhan gyi dbang de nyid ni de gnyi ga'i char gtogs pa. *Summary of Mahāyāna*, 19b.
 31. rnal 'byor spyod gzhung grub mtha'i mthar thug tshe // gzung 'dzin gnyis ka kun tu btags pa'i cha // gnyis med ye shes kho na don dam yin // de las logs na gzhan dbang nyag gcig kyang // ngos bzung med na bden pa'i go skabs ci. *Snatching Away the Heart's Torments with the Garland of the White Moonrays of Definitive Meaning: Expression of Realizations of Honorable Ārya Asaṅga (Phags pa thogs med zhabs kyi rtogs pa brjod pa nges don zla zer dkar po'i phreng bas snying gi gdung ba 'phrog byed)*, in *Collected Writings of Gser-mdog paṅ-chen Śākya-mchog-ldan* (Thimphu, Bhutan: Kunzang Tobgey, 1975), vol. 16, 570.
 32. gzhan dbang ni gnyis snang 'khrul pa'i cha dang / myong ba gsal rig gi cha gnyis su kha tshon chod / dang po la ni / 'dzin pa kun btags zhes bya la / gnyis pa ni / yongs grub kyi nang du 'dus pas / de'i phyir / yongs grub las logs su gzhan dbang yod pa ma yin par theg bsdus las bshad pa bzhin no. *Answers to Three Universally Known Questions from the "One Hundred and Eight Questions on the 'Thorough Differentiation of the Three Types of Vows'" (Sdom pa gsum gyi rab dbye'i dri ba brgya dang brgyad las kun la grags che ba'i dri ba gsum gyi lan gdabs pa)*, in *Collected Writings of Gser-mdog paṅ-chen Śākya-mchog-ldan* (Thimphu, Bhutan: Kunzang Tobgey, 1975), vol.17, 396.
 33. gsal rig gi cha ni yongs grub tu bshad kyi gzhan dbang du mi 'chad. *Appearance of the Sun Pleasing All Thinkers: Discussion of the History of the Chariot Ways of [Dignāga's] "Sūtra on Valid Cognition" and [its] Treatises (Tshad ma'i bstan bcos kyi shin rta'i srol rnam ji ltar 'byung ba'i tshul gtam du bya ba nyin mor byed pa'i snang bas dpyod ldan mtha' dag dga' bar byed pa)*, in *Collected Writings of Gser-mdog paṅ-chen Śākya-mchog-ldan* (Thimphu, Bhutan: Kunzang Tobgey, 1975), vol. 19, 92.

34. *gzhan dbang gi tso bo ni gnyis snang gi dri ma'i cha nas 'jog pa yin gyi / ngo bo gsal rig gi cha nas 'jog pa ma yin te / de ni yongs grub kyi gtso bo yin pa'i phyir. Ocean of Scriptural Statements and Reasoning, vol. 14, 382–83.*
35. *gzhan gyi dbang gi ngo bo khas blangs kyang // de yi ngo bo de ma yin. Snatching Away the Heart's Torments, vol.16, 570.*
36. *gzhan dbang gi ngo bo bden grub tu bshad pas de nyid bden grub tu mi 'grub ste / de'i don dam pa'i ngo bo ni yongs grub las ma 'das pa'i phyir. Ocean of Scriptural Statements and Reasoning, vol. 14, 383.*
37. *gzhan dbang bden grub ni thogs med zhabs kyi grub pa'i mtha' ma yin te / de'i gzhung du de sgyu ma lta bur bshad pa'i phyir / de'i ngo bo bden par bshad pas de bden par mi 'gyur te / bum sogs kyi ngo bo chos nyid du 'chad pa'i skabs bzhin no. Rain of Ambrosia, 388.*
38. *gzhan dbang rang bzhin gyis yod pa dang / bden med sgyu ma lta bur 'chad pa mi 'gal ba ni gzhan stong smra ba'i gzhung gi de kho na nyid 'byed pa'i lde mig tu shes par bya'o. Great Path of Ambrosia of Emptiness, vol. 4, 115.*
39. *Snatching Away the Heart's Torments, vol.16, 569.*
40. When Shakyā Chokden addresses differences between Satyākāravāda and Alikākāravāda, he argues that it is only Satyākāravāda, not Alikākāravāda, that accepts the dependent as truly existent. See the *Visions of Unity*, 164–65.
41. *gzhan dbang gi dngos po rang stong du 'chad pa la'ang sgrub byed med cing gnod byed yod do // sgrub byed med pa ni / gzhung lugs de dan de dag nas de ltar ma bshad pa'o // gnod byed yod pa ni gzhan dbang gi ngo bo bden par ma grub na chos nyid yongs grub kyi ngo bo bden par med pa nyid du 'gyur te / gzung 'dzin gnyis med kyi de kho na nyid ni gnyis snang gi shes pa'i ngo bor bzhed pa'i phyir te / ji skad du / de ni de yi de nyid yin / zhes pa'i gzhung gis de'i ngo bor bstan pa'i phyir. Great Path of Ambrosia of Emptiness, vol. 4, 118. The passage Shakyā Chokden is referring to is found in the *Commentary on Valid Cognition (Pramāṇavārttikakārikā, Tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi tshig le'ur byas pa)*, D4210, tshad ma, ce, 126b: *de la gcig ni med pas kyang // gnyis ka'ang nyams par 'gyur ba yin // de phyir gnyis stong gang yin pa // de ni de yi'ang de nyid yin. Skt.: tatraikasyāpy abhāvena dvayam apy avahīyate / tasmāt tad eva tasyāpi tattvaṃ yā dvayaśūnyatā*, in Yūsho Miyasaka, ed., “Pramāṇavārttika-kārikā (Sanskrit and Tibetan),” *Acta Indologica* 2 (1971/72): 68.*
42. *rnam shes 'khrul pa'i chos ji nyid [sic; should read snyed] pa la nang blta ye shes kyi cha re re yod kyang / ye shes kyi gsal cha rnam shes kyi ngo bor 'gyur srid pa dang / cig shos kyang der 'gyur srid pa ni ma yin te / gzhan du na / ye shes srid pa'i bde sdug myong ba por thal ba dang / rnam shes kyi ming can yang dag pa ma yin pa'i kun tu rtog pa de dag zag med kyi yon tan mtha' dag gi sgrub gzhi nyid du thal bar 'gyur pa'i phyir ro // gdod ma'i ye shes de med par blo bur gyi rnam shes 'khrul snang du mi 'byung mod / gnyis po'i gzhi mthun srid par 'dod pa ni ma yin te / nam mkha' la sprin dang / gser la g.ya' dang / chu dangs ba la rnyog pa bzhin no. Previously Unseen Sun, vol. 13, 121.*

43. *nam shes rang gi ngo bo gsal rig tu khas mi len na / bems po nyid kyi phyir yul ma rig par 'gyur ro zhe na / ha cang thal ba nyid du mi 'gyur te / spyir rnam shes ni tshad mas mi 'grub kyang /'khrul pas yod par sgro btags pa nyid du khas len gyi / rig pa lta ci smos / yod par yang khas mi len te / kun rdzob bden pa nyid kyi phyir ro. Previously Unseen Sun, vol. 13, 121–22.*
44. *rnal 'byor spyod pa pas ni / kun btags rang gi ngo bos stong pa dang / gzhan dbang gzhan gi ngo bos stong pa dang / de'i shul du rang gi ngo bos mi stong par lus pa ni / gzhan dbang gi ngo bo'am yongs grub ces bya ba de nyid do // zhes 'chad pa'am yang na stong gzhi'i chos can ni gzhan dbang / de gang gis stong pa'i dgag bya ni kun btags / chos can de dgag bya des stong pa'i dngos po ni yongs grub ces 'chad do. Rain of Ambrosia, 333–34.*
45. *stong gzhi'i chos can du 'jog pa ma yin te / de la sgrub byed med cing gnod byed yod pa'i phyir / sgrub byed med pa ni de ltar 'chad byed kyi gzhung med pa dang / gnod byed ni stong nyid sgrub byed kyi rigs pas chos can yongs grub kyi steng du dgag chos kun brtags dang gzhan dbang gis stong par sgrub dgos na rtsod gzhi'i chos can nges pa'i dus su bsgrub bya grub zin par thal ba dang / yang na rtsod gzhi'i chos can ma nges par bsgrub bya sgrub pa'i gtan tshigs yang dag srid par 'gyur ro. Great Path of Ambrosia of Emptiness, vol. 4, 117–18.*
46. *thogs med zhabs kyis spros pa kun bral ba'i // gnyis med ye shes rang rig rang gsal ba // don dam mthar thug sangs rgyas snying po zhes // chos 'khor gnyis kyi nges don yin par bkral. Profound Thunder amidst the Clouds of the Ocean of Definitive Meaning: Differentiation of the Two Systems of the Great Madhyamaka Deriving from the Two Great Chariot Ways (Shing rta'i srol chen gnyis las 'byung ba'i dbu ma chen po'i lugs gnyis rnam par dbye ba / nges don rgya mtsho'i sprin gyi 'brug sgra zab mo), in Two Controversial Mādhyamika Treatises (Bir, India: Yashodhara Publications, 1996), 310.*
47. For more details on the self-cognizing quality of primordial mind see chapter 5 section 4 of *Visions of Unity*.
48. Shakya Chokden's position is also summarized in Tāranātha's (1575–1634) *Twenty-one Differences Regarding the Profound Meaning*, which eloquently incorporates both the two and the three natures approaches in a single sentence: “The basis of emptiness, the dependent's own scope, is empty of the object of negation, the imaginary, and that very [emptiness] is taken to be the ultimate empty of relative [phenomena]” (*stong gzhi gzhan dbang gi rang ngo de dgag bya kun btags kyis stong pa ste / de nyid kun rdzob kyis stong pa'i don dam du mdzad do*). Tāranātha, *Twenty-One Differences Regarding the Profound Meaning (Zab don nyer gcig pa)*, in *Collected Works of Jo-nañ rJe-btsun Tāranātha*, vol. 4 (nga), (Leh, Ladakh: Smarntsis Shesrig Dpemzod, 1985), 788. This description—which starts with the three natures and then moves to the two natures approach—catches Shakya Chokden's fluid position exceptionally well. The only term that might sound problematic here is *rang ngo*. I do not take it to be simply an abbreviation of *rang gi ngo bo* and therefore mean “own-entity”

because, as we already know, in Shakya Chokden's opinion the dependent's own entity is not the dependent but the thoroughly established. Presuming that Tāranātha knew Shakya Chokden's views very well and was aware of this important point, I take *rang ngo* in this context as having the same meaning as *rang ngo* in the *rang ngo / gzhan ngo* ("one's own scope" / "other scope") pair, and thereby meaning "oneself" or "itself," i.e., the dependent itself.

49. *rnal 'byor spyod pa pas ni / bka' tha ba'i [sic] dngos bstan gyi nges don ni gzhan dbang kun btags kyis stong pa'i ye shes de nyid yin la / de nyid bka' bar ba'i bstan bya'i gtso bo nyid du yang dag par rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas nyid kyis gsungs so // zhes 'chad pa yin. Rain of Ambrosia, 336.*
50. *kun rdzob kyi bden pa thams cad rang stong du gtan la phab nas / don dam pa'i ye shes 'ba' zhig lhag par 'jog pa. Seventeen Wondrous Answers to the Questions of the Whole Monastic Community of Zi Samdrupling (Gzi bsam 'grub gling pa'i dge 'dun spyi'i dris lan ya mtshan bcu bdun pa), in Collected Writings of Gsermdog pañ-chen Śākya-mchog-ldan (Thimphu, Bhutan: Kunzang Tobgey, 1975), vol. 23, 440.*
51. *Ibid.*, 439.
52. See Chen-Kuo Lin, "The Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra': A Liberating Hermeneutic" (PhD Dissertation, Temple University, 1991), 31, esp. note 44.
53. Mathes, "Tāranātha's Presentation of *trīsvabhāva* in the *g'zhan ston sñiñ po*," 208.
54. *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra, Theg pa chen po mdo sde'i rgyan, D4020, sems tsam, phi, 1a–39a. Sanskrit text and French translation: Sylvain Levi, Mahāyāna-sūtrālamkāra: exposé de la doctrine du grand véhicule selon le système Yogācāra, 2 vols. (Paris: Bibliotheque de l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes, 1907, 1911).*
55. *Commentary on [Maitreya's] "Ornament of Mahāyāna Sūtras" (Mahāyānasūtrālamkārahāṣya, Theg pa chen po'i mdo sde rgyan gyi bshad pa), D4026, sems tsam, phi, 129b–260a.*
56. D'Amato, "Three Natures, Three Stages," 201.
57. Sponberg, "The Trīsvabhāva Doctrine in India and China," 97.
58. John P. Keenan, "Original Purity and the Focus of Early Yogācāra," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 5, no. 1 (1982): 7.
59. Ronald M. Davidson, "Buddhist Systems of Transformation: Āśraya parivṛtti/ parāvṛtti among the Yogācāra" (PhD Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1985), 228.
60. Sponberg, "The Trīsvabhāva Doctrine in India and China," 98.
61. *Ibid.*, 101–102.
62. See Mathes, "Tāranātha's Presentation of *trīsvabhāva* in the *g'zhan ston sñiñ po*," 200, especially 211–12.
63. D'Amato, "Three Natures, Three Stages," 203–204.
64. "The Trīsvabhāva Doctrine in India and China," 102, 116 note 11.
65. *Āryasaṃdhinirmocanānamahāyānasūtra, 'Phags pa dgongs pa nges par 'grel pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo, D0106, mdo sde, ca, 1b–55b. English*

- translation in John Powers, *Wisdom of Buddha: The Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra* (Berkeley: Dharma Publishing, 1995); also a selected translation in Lin, “The Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra’: A Liberating Hermeneutic,” 182–300.
66. D’Amato, “Three Natures, Three Stages,” 197, 200. According to Keenan, the *Sūtra Unraveling the Intent* and the *Ornament of Mahāyāna Sūtras* parallel each other in their explanation of the three natures, although their focuses are different (“Original Purity and the Focus of Early Yogācāra,” 10). While offering different perspectives on the dependent, they agree on two important points: that its function is to account for the delusions of the imaginary and that it is destroyed through wisdom (*ibid.*, 11).
 67. *Summary of Mahāyāna*, 19a ff.
 68. Lin, “The Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra’: A Liberating Hermeneutic,” 153–54.
 69. *Ibid.*, 156 note 19, 232. Powers, *Wisdom of Buddha*, 111.
 70. Both the first and second similes are found in the *Summary of Mahāyāna*. The magic show simile is found in numerous texts, including the *Ornament of Mahāyāna Sūtras*. See discussions in Gadjin M. Nagao, “The Buddhist World View as Elucidated in the Three-Nature Theory and its Similes,” in Gadjin Nagao, *Mādhyamika and Yogācāra: A Study of Mahāyāna Philosophies*, ed. and trans. Leslie Kawamura (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 67.
 71. For details see *Summary of Mahāyāna*, 24b–25a. Also, see discussion in Nagao, “The Buddhist World View,” 67. This simile can be approached slightly differently. Sponberg, for example, cites K’uei-chi as arguing that the progression from rope to its constituents demonstrates that the *notion* of the dependent is to be abandoned—not the dependent itself (“The Trisvabhāva Doctrine in India and China,” 107).
 72. *Summary of Mahāyāna*, 19b–20a. Also, see Nagao, “The Buddhist World View,” 68.
 73. This simile too can be approached differently. According to Nagao, the wood, etc. stand for both the dependent *and* the thoroughly established. *Mādhyamika and Yogācāra*, 69.
 74. Arguably, the magic show simile eventually supplanted the crystal simile found in such texts as the *Sūtra Unraveling the Intent* (Davidson, “Buddhist Systems of Transformation,” 91). In that simile, the dependent is likened to a transparent crystal that assumes different colors when contacting different dyestuff, the imaginary is likened to the crystal’s appearance as different jewels, and the thoroughly established is likened to the lack of reality of the latter constructed upon the former (Lin, “The Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra’: A Liberating Hermeneutic,” 141–42, 219–20; Powers, *Wisdom of Buddha*, 85–87). This can be taken to imply that the dependent remains even after the appearances of the imaginary have ceased, and that it is no different from the thoroughly established when no such appearances are present. Yet, as has been mentioned above, the same sūtra argues that the dependent is eventually to be eliminated.

This is further suggested by the clouded vision simile discussed in the sūtra immediately before the crystal simile. There, the imaginary is likened to the defects of clouded vision, the dependent is likened to mistaken appearances of hairs, etc., and the thoroughly established is likened to what is naturally seen by a person whose eyes are free from the defects of clouded vision (Lin, “The Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra’: A Liberating Hermeneutic,” 218–19; Powers, *Wisdom of Buddha*, 83). That simile thereby also suggests the eventual destruction of the dependent, together with the imaginary, when the complete realization of the thoroughly established has been achieved.

75. Noritoshi, Aramaki, “Paratantrasvabhāva—A Diagrammatic Account,” *Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies (Indogaku Bukkyōgaku Kenkyū)* 30–32 (1967–68): 41. I have retained the Sanskrit but changed the translation.
76. In the article, Aramaki describes these categories as the “nine meanings of the *paratantrasvabhāva*.” But as is clear from their detailed discussion in his “Shōdaijōron no Etakishō” (Dependent Nature according to the *Summary of Mahāyāna*), *Miscellaneous Indologica Kiotiensia (Indogaku Shironshū)*, nos. 4–5 (1963): 39, not all of those categories refer to the dependent proper.
77. One might argue that category 9 indicates that the dependent—now in its purified form—exists even after the dharma-body has been achieved, thereby supporting the claim of the existence of the pure dependent rejected by Shakyā Chokden. This argument is strongly suggested by such passages as, “What the transformation is is the abandonment of the thoroughly afflicted part and the turning into the purified part when the antidote of that very dependent nature has been generated” (*gzhan gyur ba ni gang gzhan gyi dbang gi ngo bo nyid de nyid kyi gnyen po skyes na gang kun nas nyon mongs pa’i cha ldog cing rnam par byang ba’i char gyur pa’o*; *Summary of Mahāyāna*, 36b) and “The characteristic of the change of state is the turning into the dependent nature that belongs to the purified part, free from all obscurations, and has power over all phenomena when the dependent nature that belongs to the thoroughly afflicted part possessing all obscurations has been turned away (*gnas gyur pa’i mtshan nyid ni sgrib pa thams cad pa kun nas nyon mongs pa’i char gtogs pa’i gzhan gyi dbang gi ngo bo nyid rnam par log na sgrib pa thams cad las rnam par grol zhing chos thams cad la dbang sgyur ba nye bar gnas pa rnam par byang ba’i char gtogs pa gzhan gyi dbang gi ngo bo nyid du gyur pa’i phyir ro*; *ibid.*, 37b). Nevertheless, one should note that the *Summary of Mahāyāna* refers to the dependent nature as follows: “What is the dependent’s characteristic? It is the cognizance subsumed under the unreal ideation possessing the seed of the storehouse consciousness (*gzhan gyi dbang gi msthan nyid gang zhe na // gang kun gzhi rnam par shes pa’i sa bon can yang dag pa ma yin pa kun rtog pas bsdu pa’i rnam par rig pa’o*. *Ibid.*, 13a). Because the unreal ideation in general, and the storehouse consciousness with its seeds in particular, are eliminated in the state of buddhahood, the same should apply to the dependent. Note too that

the first passage cited in this footnote mentions generation of the antidote of the dependent, thereby also presupposing its eventual destruction. Based on the composite character of the dependent and its eventual destructibility, one can argue that the purified dependent is no more the dependent than a dead human is a human. (Whether a dead human [*shi ba'i mi*] is a human [*mi*] is a fun debate topic used by beginner debaters in Tibetan monastic institutions.) According to Buddhism, a human is comprised of, among other things, the physical body and consciousness. Because at death consciousness leaves the body, a dead human is not, properly speaking, a human. In a similar vein, because, according to the *Summary of Mahāyāna*, the dependent consists of both afflicted and purified elements, saṃsāric and nirvāṇic elements, etc., and because at the final transformation its afflicted, saṃsāric, imaginary elements cease, the transformed dependent is not, properly speaking, the dependent.

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