

# Direct and indirect cognition and the definition of pramna in early Tibetan epistemology

Autor(en): **Schwabland, Peter A.**

Objekttyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **Asiatische Studien : Zeitschrift der Schweizerischen  
Asiengesellschaft = Études asiatiques : revue de la Société  
Suisse-Asie**

Band (Jahr): **49 (1995)**

Heft 4

PDF erstellt am: **27.04.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-147199>

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# DIRECT AND INDIRECT COGNITION AND THE DEFINITION OF PRAMĀṆA IN EARLY TIBETAN EPISTEMOLOGY

Peter A. Schwabland, Seattle

## I. Introduction

The efforts of the earlier Tibetan epistemological tradition (*tshad ma*, *pramāṇa*) – which, for the purposes of this paper, I mean to include roughly the eleventh through the thirteenth centuries – were tremendously fertile and heterogeneous. They are remarkable for their diverse and at times highly original attempts to make sense of, and resolve, many of the difficult issues, both explicit and implicit, in the Indian tradition, as well as for their efforts to bring these issues into systematic form. The intricate details, however, of the dependence of these efforts on, and conversely, independence from, the Indian tradition are problematic and frequently obscure. The difficulty of determining the relationship in which a certain issue stands to the Indian tradition, moreover, is rendered even more complex by the varying inter-relationships that developed between any such issue and corollary issues, which stand in perhaps quite different relationships to the Indian tradition.

One topic that was the focus of considerable controversy during this early period of Tibetan philosophy and is of interest, both for its own particular development and also for the contrasting light that it throws on a complex of related ideas, is that of *dn̄gos su rtogs pa* and *shugs la rtogs pa* (direct, or explicit, cognition; and indirect, or implicit, cognition).<sup>1</sup> In the early Tibetan epistemological literature the topic is usually dealt with under

1 For the early period of Tibetan epistemology see especially the pioneering work of Leonard W. J. VAN DER KUIJP (1983), who also suggests a periodization in VAN DER KUIJP (1989: 5ff.). The only scholarly work of which I am aware on the topic of *dn̄gos su rtogs pa* and *shugs la rtogs pa* is that of Georges DREYFUS (1991: 530-35), who presents a short, cogent account of some of the epistemological issues lying behind Sa skya Paṇḍita's critique of it.

some variant of the heading, “the mode of cognition” (*rtogs pa’i tshul*),<sup>2</sup> and forms a corollary to the overarching theme of the definition of valid cognition (*tshad ma’i mtshan nyid*).

Although the origin of the theory is obscure, it would seem that it does not lie directly within the Indian Buddhist epistemological tradition. The term *shugs* (*sāmarthya*) occurs in the Indian literature independently and is found together with *rtogs pa* in the expression *shugs kyis rtogs pa* (*sāmarthyagam*). Yet I have not found the expression *shugs la rtogs pa*, using the locative particle *la* rather than the instrumental *kyis*. Nor have I found the term *shugs rtogs*, regardless of particle, used explicitly with the term *dnegos rtogs* as part of a complementary pair.

In the Tibetan epistemological literature, one finds that Gtsang nag pa Brtson ’grus seng ge (? – at least 1192),<sup>3</sup> in his *Tshad ma rnam par nges pa’i tika legs bshad bsdus pa* (20a5-22b5; hereafter: *Bsdus pa*), and likely even his teacher, Phya pa Chos kyi seng ge (1109-1169),<sup>4</sup> promulgated the idea of direct and indirect cognition in an already fully developed form. Later sources, however, have not attributed such a theory to Rngog Lo tsā ba Blo ldan shes rab (1059-1109),<sup>5</sup> although an accurate portrayal of Rngog Lo tsā ba’s ideas must wait for an examination of the much anticipated publication

2 E.g., *Bsdus pa* (20a.5-22b.5); *Rgyan gyi me tog* (7.17-11.20; MS: 4a.4-6b.8); *Rang ’grel* (218.2.1-219.3.6), which have the respective headings of *de rtogs pa’i tshul*, *rtogs tshul gyi sgo nas dbye ba*, *don ji ltar rtogs pa’i tshul*. In the *Rang ’grel* and its commentaries this forms a subsection to the corollary topic of negation and affirmation (*dgag sgrub*), for which see *Rang ’grel* (217.4.1-219.3.6), and, e.g., *Pham byed II* (341.4-375.1), *Rol mtsho* (619.2-624.6), *Dka’ gnas* 67.3.4-69.4.3, *Don gsal* 321.2.5-322.1.1, *Nyi ma* 178.16-181.5.

3 Gtsang nag pa, one of the ‘eight lions’ of Phya pa Chos kyi seng ge, is discussed most extensively in VAN DER KUIJP (1989: *passim*). It appears, however, that the *terminus ante quem* for the date of Gtsang nag pa’s death must be revised yet again. According to the BA (709; DS: 829), Khro phu Lo tsā ba attended on Gtsang nag pa for two full years in order to study the vinaya. While these dates are not given, it may be inferred from the account that this occurred while Khro phu was between the ages of 19 and 21 (= 18 and 20), which would correspond to the years 1191-93. Thus the *terminus ante quem* for Gtsang nag pa’s death must now be taken to be, at the earliest, 1192.

4 For Phya pa, and his ideas and their influence, see VAN DER KUIJP (1978; 1983: 59ff.; 1989: 13ff.), David JACKSON (1987: 129-30), and Shunzo ONODA (1992: 13-36, 69-116).

5 But cf. *infra*, n.60.

of his commentary on the *Pramāṇaviniścaya*, the *Tshad ma rnam nges kyi dka' gnas rnam bshad*, housed in the Cultural Palace of Nationalities (Minzu Wenhua Gong) in Beijing.

A particular formulation of this theory was, like many other early ideas, rejected by Sa skya Paṇḍita Kun dga' rgyal mtshan (1182-1251) in the *Tshad ma rigs pa'i gter* and its autocommentary.<sup>6</sup> Some sixty years later, a similar formulation was also rejected by the Snar thang scholar Bcom ldan Rig(s) pa'i ral gri (1230?-1315?; henceforth: Ral gri) in his *Tshad ma'i bstan bcos sde bdun rgyan gyi me tog* (hereafter: *Rgyan gyi me tog*).<sup>7</sup> Ral gri then followed his refutation with his own notably different formulation of direct and indirect cognition, a formulation that provides not only a certain needed relief for the earlier exposition, but also an early response to arguments put forth by Sa paṇ in the *Tshad ma rigs pa'i gter*.

In the following, I will first present the early formulation of direct and indirect cognition that informed the responses of Sa paṇ and Ral gri. While I will indicate the correlation between this formulation and that of Gtsang nag pa, I will refrain, however, from considering his position directly as it was the specific target of neither Sa paṇ's nor Ral gri's arguments. Following upon this early position, I will then consider several related topics that shaped and were shaped by the positions expressed by these arguments. Finally, I will examine the modifications found in Ral gri's reformulation of direct and indirect cognition both in light of Sa paṇ's arguments against the early formulation and also taking into account their respective positions on these corollary topics.

## II. The early position

### A. Sources

Our earliest source for what was regarded by a number of later authors as the standard early Tibetan exposition of *dnegos su rtogs pa* and *shugs la rtogs pa*, is a passage adduced by Sa paṇ in his *Rang 'grel* (218.2.2-

6 On Sa paṇ's life and works see JACKSON 1987.

7 On Ral gri's life and works, and the initial chapter of the *Tshad ma'i bstan bcos sde bdun rgyan gyi me tog* in particular, see P. SCHWABLAND 1994 (M.A. thesis). For the rationale behind these tentative dates for Ral gri see pp. 6-10. For the scanty information regarding a possible date for the *Rgyan gyi me tog*, see pp. 33-4.



218.4.2).<sup>8</sup> An alternate account, quite similar in content and wording to the first half of this passage, but following a different sequence, occurs in Ral gri's *Rgyan gyi me tog* (9.1-9.14; MS: 5a.3-5b.1).<sup>9</sup>

The authorship of the passage is not clear. Both Sa paṇ and, following him, Gser mdog paṇ chen Shākya mchog ldan (1428-1507) simply attribute the passage to unnamed earlier Tibetans (*Rang 'grel* 218.2.2; *Rol mtsho* 621.4-5). Ral gri, characteristically, offers no identification, although a similar general attribution to earlier Tibetans is made by the interlinear note "bod" found in the manuscript of the *Rgyan gyi me tog* (5a.3).<sup>10</sup> The most specific attribution is made by Go rams pa Bsod nams seng ge (1429-1489), who singles out among unnamed earlier Tibetans the great Phya pa Chos kyi seng ge (*Dka' gnas* 68.3.5; *Don gsal* 321.3.6).

Go rams pa's attribution of the passage to Phya pa, himself, in lieu of extant versions of his works, cannot be verified without an independent and thorough effort to reconstruct his positions, on the whole, from later sources. Yet it is likely that he was influential in the development of the theory and promulgated at least some position along these lines. Not only does Shākya mchog ldan attribute, for example, the following citation in the *Rol mtsho* (623.5-7), also on direct and indirect cognition, to the *Bsdus pa* of Phya pa and his followers, but, as stated above, Phya pa's most renowned student in epistemology, Gtsang nag pa, addresses the issue at some length in his *Bsdus pa*, not infrequently employing much the same argument, if not always the same wording, as found in the passages cited in both the *Rang 'grel* and the *Rgyan gyi me tog*.

8 We, however, should not understand this passage as necessarily programmatic for the early period. Indeed, the actual historical development of this idea is likely more complex than the sketch offered here. As more texts become available not only will different positions and formulations likely come into view, but sharper light should also be thrown on the those proffered in the texts that we currently have.

9 The second half of the account in the *Rang 'grel*, which is not included in the rendition found in the *Rgyan gyi me tog*, considers direct and indirect cognition in terms of negation (*khegs pa*) and will not be dealt with here.

10 These frequently helpful notes have, unfortunately, not been included in the published edition.

## B. Definitions

The definitions of direct and indirect cognition are given in the accounts in the *Rang 'grel* and the *Bsdus pa* in nearly identical form, but, curiously, are omitted from that of the *Rgyan gyi me tog*.<sup>11</sup> The *Rang 'grel* defines them as “respectively, the exclusion of imputations (*sgro 'dogs gcod pa*) by means of the appearance of an aspect of the object itself, and the exclusion of imputations by means of the appearance of an aspect of another [object].” These statements are then in the *Rang 'grel* supplemented by the assertion that, “since imputations are excluded, indirectly, in the very cognition of the direct object, there is no succession of prior and subsequent mental act[s].”<sup>12</sup>

## C. Examples

The significance of these definitions is illuminated by a list of examples occurring in both the *Rang 'grel* and, slightly more extensively, in the *Rgyan gyi me tog*. These examples, as well as a similar set given in the corresponding section of the *Bsdus pa*, are grouped according to the type of valid cognition the direct cognition represents, viz., *rjes dpag* (inference), *gzhan rig* (external awareness), and *rang rig* (self awareness).<sup>13</sup>

The indirect cognitions, with one exception, correspond to a different type of valid cognition than the direct cognition with which they are paired. That is to say, if one considers the examples of indirect cognition as if they

11 *Rang 'grel* (218.2.2.-3): *kha cig dngos shugs sgo nas kyang / bsgrub pa dang ni 'gog ces zer / bod rnam 'dod pa'i dngos shugs la gsum las dang po mtshan nyid ni / rim pa ltar don de nyid kyi rnam pa snang ba'i sgo nas sgro 'dogs gcod pa dang / gzhan gyi rnam pa snang ba'i sgo nas sgro 'dogs gcod pa'o / de yang dngos yul de rtogs pa nyid na shugs kyis sgro 'dogs gcod pas blo snga phyi rim pa med do //*

*Bsdus pa* (20a.6): *re shig dngos dang shugs la rtogs pa'i mtshan nyid ni don de nyid kyi rnam pa snang pa dang don gzhan gyi rnam pa snang pa'i sgo nas sgro 'dogs gcod pa ste /*

12 In order to maintain a consistent distinction between the terms *blo* and *rtogs pa*, the former of which is commonly used for any mental activity, whether valid or not, and the latter of which tends to be reserved for only valid types of cognition, I translate the latter by ‘cognition’, and the former by the somewhat graceless term ‘mental act’.

13 The account in the *Rang 'grel* further splits the examples that in the *Rgyan gyi me tog* and the *Bsdus pa* are classified as *gzhan rig* into the distinct categories of *don rig* and *gzhan rig*.

were direct cognitions, and categorizes them according to the same typology used to categorize the examples of direct cognition, one finds that the examples combine:

- 1) a direct inference with an indirect inference (see example A below);
- 2) a direct inference with an indirect self awareness (example B);
- 3) a direct external awareness with an indirect inference (examples C and D);
- 4) a direct external awareness with an indirect self awareness (examples E and E1); or
- 5) a direct self awareness with an indirect external awareness (examples F, F1 and F2).

The following is a collated translation of these examples, including the corresponding examples from the *Bsdus pa*, with the direct cognition and corresponding indirect cognition placed respectively in left and right columns, when appropriate. The accounts in the *Rgyan gyi me tog*, *Rang 'grel* and *Bsdus pa* will be abbreviated respectively as **R**, **S** and **B**.

### 1. *rjes dpag*

#### Example A

- |                         |  |   |
|-------------------------|--|---|
| <b>R:</b> <sup>14</sup> | When permanence is directly cognized by inference as the negation of compositeness,  | the implication by means of the fulfillment of a purpose, [that] a composite thing [like] a memory is impermanent is indirectly cognized. |
| <b>S:</b> <sup>15</sup> | When permanence is directly cognized by inference as the negation of compositeness,  | the implication [that] a composite thing like a memory is impermanent is indirectly cognized.   |
| <b>B:</b> <sup>16</sup> | Whichever differential that is suitable that is inferred from the mark of compositeness is directly and indirectly established by inference. |   |

- 14 *Rgyan gyi me tog* (9.1-3; MS: 5a.3-4): *rjes dpag gis rtag pa la 'dus byas dgag pa dngos su rtogs pa na don byed pas khyab par dran pa'i byas pa de mi rtag par shugs la rtogs shing / ...*
- 15 *Rang 'grel* (218.2.3-4): [*rjes dpag gis*] *rtag pa la byas pa dgag pa dngos su rtogs pa na dran bzhin pa'i byas pa la mi rtag pas khyab pa shugs la rtogs pa ...*
- 16 *Bsdus pa* (20a.3): *rjes dpag gis byas pa'i rtags kyi rjes su 'gro ldog gang yang rung pa dngos shugs la grub pa dang /...*

## Example B

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| R: <sup>17</sup> When a mountain pass is directly cognized by inference as possessing fire,                            | the nature [of the cognition] is indirectly cognized as the apprehender of fire.  |
| S: <sup>18</sup> When a mountain pass is [directly] apprehended by inference as possessing fire,                       | the nature [of the cognition] is indirectly cognized as the apprehender of fire.  |
| B: <sup>19</sup> When an object is [directly] cognized [by inference] by means of the appearance of an aspect of fire, | even though the nature [of fire] does not appear, imputations, <i>qua</i> 'it is not the apprehension of fire', are excluded. |

2. *gzhan rig*<sup>20</sup>

## Example C

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| R: <sup>21</sup> When it is directly established by direct perception that smoke implies fire,                 | it is indirectly established that the absence [of] fire, like the memory of a river, etc., implies the absence [of] smoke. |
| S: <sup>22</sup> When it is directly established by objective awareness that smoke implies that there is fire, | it is indirectly established that the absence [of] fire implies the absence [of] smoke.                                    |
| B: <sup>23</sup> [When] fire, the cause, is directly established by externally oriented direct perception,     | smoke, the effect, is indirectly established.  |

- 17 *Rgyan gyi me tog* (9.3; MS: 5a.3-4): [rjes dpag gis] ... *la me ldan du dngos su rtogs pa na rang nyid me 'jal byed du shugs la rtogs te* /
- 18 *Rang 'grel* (218.2.3): *rjes dpag gis la me ldan du gzhal ba na bdag nyid me 'jal du shugs las rtogs pa dang* / ...
- 19 *Bsdus pa* (20b.3-4): [rjes dpag gis] *yul me'i rnam pa snang pas rtogs pa na bdag nyid mi snang yang me 'jal ma yin pa'i sgro 'dogs chod pa* ...
- 20 The *Rgyan gyi me tog* and the *Bsdus pa* refer to examples C, D and E as *gzhan rig*, whereas the *Rang 'grel* refers to C and D as *don rig* and only E and *gzhan rig*.
- 21 *Rgyan gyi me tog* (9.4-6; MS: 5a.5): *mngon sum gyis du ba la me dang sha pa la shing gis khyab pa dngos su grub pa na chu klung la sogs pa dran bzhin pa'i me med la du med dang shing med la sha pa med pas khyab pa shugs la grub cing* ...
- 22 *Rang 'grel* (218.2.6): *don rig gis du ba la me yod dang sha pa la shing yin pa khyab pa grub pas me med la du ba med dang* / *shing med la sha pa med pas khyab pa shugs la 'grub bo* //
- 23 *Bsdus pa* (20b.4): *gzhan rig mngon sum gyis me dang du ba rgyu 'bras bu dngos shugs la grub pa dang* /...

## Example D (Not in B)

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| R: <sup>24</sup> When it is directly established by direct perception that <i>sha pa</i> tree implies [that it is] a tree,   | it is indirectly established that the absence [of] tree implies the absence [of] <i>sha pa</i> tree. |
| S: <sup>25</sup> When it is directly established by objective awareness that a <i>sha pa</i> tree implies that it is a tree, | it is indirectly established that the absence [of] tree implies the absence [of] <i>sha pa</i> tree. |

## Example E

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| R: <sup>26</sup> When an object is directly established by direct perception as a blue thing,   | the nature [of] the mental act as apprehending blue is indirectly established.   |
| S: <sup>27</sup> When the apprehended object is directly established by external awareness as a blue thing,   | the nature [of] the mental act as apprehending blue is indirectly established.   |
| B: <sup>28</sup> When [there is] a cognition by externally oriented direct perception by means of the appearance of the apprehended object, a blue thing, | even though the nature [of the mental act] does not appear, imputations, <i>qua</i> '[it] is not an apprehension of blue', are excluded. |

## Example E1 (S only)

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| S: <sup>29</sup> When the object is directly established by external awareness as appearing to the [mental act], | it is indirectly established that the mental act apprehends the [object]. |
|--|---|

24 See n.21.

25 See n.22.

26 *Rgyan gyi me tog* (9.6-7; MS: 5a.5-6): [*mngon sum gyis*] ... *yul sngon por dngos su grub na blo rang nyid sngo 'dzin du shugs la 'grub ste*.

27 *Rang 'grel* (218.2.5-6): *gzhan rig gis yul der snang du dngos su grub pas blo de 'dzin shugs la grub ste / gzung yul sngon por dngos su grub pas blo rang nyid sngo 'dzin du shugs la grub pa ...*

28 *Bsdus pa* (20a.4): [*gzhan rig mngon sum gyis*] *gzung yul sngon po snang pas rtogs pa na bdag mi snang yang sngo 'dzin ma yin pa'i sgro 'dogs pa chod pa ...*

29 See n.27.

3. *rang rig*

## Example F (Not in B)

- R:**<sup>30</sup> When it is merely established directly by a self awareness [type of] direct perception that a mental act apprehends an aspect of the [object] associated with it, the mere appearance of an object as a particular or general aspect [associated with the cognition] is indirectly established.
- S:**<sup>31</sup> When the mental act is [directly] established by self awareness as apprehending the [object], the object as appearing to the [mental act] is indirectly established.

## Example F1 (Not in R)

- S:**<sup>32</sup> When the mental act is directly established by self awareness as apprehending two moons or a blue thing, the object [as] the aspect of two moons or [of] blue is indirectly established.
- B:**<sup>33</sup> When the mental act that apprehends the aspect of a blue thing is directly cognized by self awareness, even though an aspect of the object, a blue thing, does not appear, imputations, *qua* '[it] is absent', are excluded.

## Example F2 (B only)

- B:**<sup>34</sup> When the mental act that conceptualizes [oneself] as a self is directly cognized by self awareness, even though an aspect of the object, self, does not appear, imputations, *qua* '[it] is absent', are excluded.

- 30 *Rgyan gyi me tog* (9.9-10; MS: 5a.6-7): *yang rang rig mngon sum gyis blo de dang de'i rnam pa 'dzin byed du dngos su grub tsam na yul rang spyi'i rnam par snang ba tsam zhig shugs la 'grub ste /*
- 31 *Rang 'grel* (218.2.4): *rang rig gis blo de 'dzin du grub pas yul der snang du shugs la 'grub ste /*
- 32 *Rang 'grel* (218.2.4-5): *[rang rig gis] blo zla ba gnyis dang sngon po 'dzin byed du dngos su grub pas yul zla ba gnyis dang sngon po'i rnam pa shugs la 'grub pa dang / ...*
- 33 *Bsdus pa* (20a.4-5): *rang rig pas sngon po'i rnam pa 'dzin pa'i blo dngos su rtogs pas yul sngon po'i rnam pa dang / bdag tu rtog pa'i blo dngos su rtogs pas yul bdag gi rnam pa mi snang yang med pa'i sgro 'dogs chod pa ...*
- 34 See n.33.



Following these examples, which are for the most part found in similar form in all three accounts, **R** appends a clarification of example F, followed by an additional example that at least in part summarizes this schema with regard to the stock case of seeing blue (*sngo*). Neither of these are found in **S**, although similar positions are adduced in the *Bsdus pa*. After example F, **R** adds:<sup>35</sup>

Although it is established in this way [i.e., by self awareness that a mental act apprehends an aspect of the object associated with it, and the mere appearance of the object has been established indirectly as the particular or general aspect associated with the cognition], it is not established by self awareness that the merely apparent object is real or illusory or that the apprehending mental act is erroneous or non-erroneous, because [self awareness] does not discriminate [with regard to] aspect or mode of apprehension.

Example G (**R** only):<sup>36</sup>

Therefore, if a blue thing is seen, a direct [and] indirect valid cognition that is [characterized by] self and external awareness with regard to both the blue thing and the apprehending of blue consists of one substance (*rdzas*) [i.e., the seeing of blue, and] four differentials (*ldog pa*) [i.e., direct and indirect external awareness and direct and indirect self awareness].

This last and somewhat curious example involves a conceptual model in which the cognitive process of seeing a blue thing is analyzed according to four differentials. Fortunately, the particular features of these differentials can be identified by means of the previous examples E and F (see especially F1),

- 35 *Rgyan gyi me tog* (9.11-13; MS: 5a.7-8): *de ltar grub kyang snang tsam gyi yul bden brdzun dang 'dzin pa'i blo 'khrul ma 'khrul du ni rang rig gis mi 'grub ste rnam pa dang 'dzin stangs ma phyed pa'i phyir ro //*

Cf. *Bsdus pa* (20b7-8): *gal te yul dang yul can grub bde cig na gzhan rig gis 'khrul pa'i blo dngos po khegs pa dang rang rig gis yul dngos por 'grub par thal lo zhe na / dngos po yod med du grub bde' gcig par mi 'dod kyi / 'on kyang der 'dzin dang der snang par yin la / khyad par du ni bden rdzun dang 'khrul ma 'khrul du yin no /*

- 36 *Rgyan gyi me tog* (9.13-14; MS: 5a.8-5b.1): *des na sngon po mthong ba na sngon po dang sngo 'dzin gnyis la rang gzhan rig pa'i dngos shugs kyi tshad ma rdzas gcig ldog pa bzhi skye ba yin no ...*

Gtsang nag pa adduces the same four combinations in a counter-position (*Bsdus pa* 21a.1-2): *gal te sngon po mthong pa'i tshe dus cig du rang rig gzhan rig gi tshad ma dngos shugs bzhi' skye na yul dang yul can re re la tshad ma gnyis 'jug pas sngar bshad pa'i tshad ma'i byed pa myed par mi 'gyur ram zhe na / mi 'gyur te rtogs zin pa la 'jug pa myed pa'i phyir ro //*



which illustrate precisely this cognitive process. Thus, while the one substance corresponds to the seeing of blue, the four differentials correspond to:

- 1) external awareness directly establishing the object as a blue thing;
- 2) external awareness indirectly establishing the nature [of] the mental act as apprehending blue;
- 3) self awareness directly establishing that a mental act apprehends an aspect of the [object] associated with it; and
- 4) self awareness indirectly establishing the mere appearance of an object as a particular or general aspect [associated with the mental act].

What is particularly important to note in all of these examples, as mentioned above, is that the objects associated with a complementary pair of direct and indirect cognitions are, with one exception, not of the same type. Thus, with regard to the case of external awareness in example G, for instance, when the external awareness directly cognizes the object as a blue thing, the imputations that are excluded are that the object is not a blue thing. Whereas, for the corresponding indirect cognition, in which the external awareness indirectly cognizes the nature of the mental act as apprehending blue, the imputations that are excluded are that the mental act is not an apprehension of blue. For each pair of direct and indirect cognitions there are two distinct, albeit related, sets of imputations being excluded, one directly and one indirectly.

### III. Refutations

This early exposition of direct and indirect cognition was rejected both by Sa paṅ in the *Rang 'grel* and, some sixty year later, by Ral gri in the *Rgyan gyi me tog*. While a detailed examination of their respective arguments is beyond the scope of the present article, their fundamental points of attack are significant and I will summarize them briefly here.

Sa paṅ claims that “the definition of indirect cognition, [viz.,] that it excludes imputations on the basis of the appearance of an aspect of another

object, overextends to inference.”<sup>37</sup> His argument is that indirect cognition either relies on a logical mark or it does not. If it does, it would simply be inference. If it does not, and yet imputations are still excluded, then it would necessarily be some third, and hence unacceptable, type of valid cognition.<sup>38</sup>

Although Sa paṇ does not cite which of the examples he might have had in mind as being nothing more than inference, examples A, C and D, which have already been identified as having an inferential type of indirect cognition, are clearly targeted. On the other hand, with respect to the remaining examples B, E and F (Sa paṇ does not adduce G), which do not contain an inferential type of indirect cognition, Sa paṇ employs three separate arguments, each of which attempts to show that the indirect cognition in question lacks a cause or object, and hence would be unacceptable as a valid cognition.<sup>39</sup>

Since Ral gri does not adduce the definitions for this early exposition, it is not clear what his refutation of them would have been. However, his refutation of examples A, C and D as being either inference or judgment (*don gyis go ba*, *arthāpatti*) conforms closely to that of Sa paṇ.<sup>40</sup> On the

37 *Rang ’grel* (218.4.3): *shugs rtogs kyi mtshan nyid don gzhan gyi rnam pa snang ba’i sgo nas sgro ’dogs gcod pa de rjes dpag la khyab ches so* // See also DREYFUS (1991: 530ff.).

38 *Rang ’grel* (218.4.3-4): *gal te rjes dpag rtags la ltos la ’di rtags la mi ltos par don gzhan la sgro ’dogs gcod do zhe na / rtag la mi ltos pa de ci / ’brel pa la mi ltos par sgro ’dogs gcod na tshad ma gsum par ’gyur ro* //

39 Thus example B fails for having nothing to take as its cause other than the direct cognition itself (*Rang ’grel* 218.4.6: *rjes dpag gis la me ldan du rtogs pa na blo me ’jal du shugs la rtogs pa la sogs pa ni la me ldan du rtogs pa nyid blo yin pas de la shugs la rtogs rgyu’i blo gzhan med do*). E fails for the reason that it too lacks a cause, as its presumed cause, namely the aspect of the object, is already functioning as the cause of the direct cognition and cannot therefore function also as the cause of the indirect cognition (*Rang ’grel* 219.1.2-3: *gzhan rig gis yul sngon por dngos su grub pas blo sngo ’dzin shugs la grub pa’ang mi ’thad de / yul sngon por grub pa nyid yul gyi rnam pas gzhas pa’i blo yin pas des shugs la blo gzhan bsgrub rgyu med pa’i phyir ro*). F fails for the reason that an erroneous mental act has no object (*Rang ’grel* 218.2.6-219.1.1: *rang rig gis blo zla ba gnyis ’dzin du dngos su grub pas yul zla ba gnyis shugs la grub bo zhes zer ba mi ’thad de / blo ’khrul pa la yul med pa’i phyir ro*).

40 *Rgyan gyi me tog* (10.2-4; MS: 5b.6-7): *rtag pa la byas pa khegs pas de la mi rtag pas khyab pa grub pa dang / du ba la mes khyab pas me med la du med kyis khyab pa grub pa la sogs rjes dpag gam don gyis go ba yin gyi dngos rtogs dang rdzas*

other hand, his series of arguments against the remaining examples tends to focus, not on the lack of a cause or object for the indirect cognition, but on its mismatched typology. Thus, he argues presumably contra example B, for instance, that it "... is not logical, because of the [adverse] consequence that inference would operate internally [i.e., as self awareness] and not be external awareness."<sup>41</sup> This, moreover, cannot be true for then "there would be no purpose (or: object) for self awareness, since [one would] infer by a logical mark of a manifest object and apprehend internally by means of external awareness."<sup>42</sup> Likewise, he begins his argument contra F with the statement that "if self awareness cognized the external, it would be of the nature of external awareness."<sup>43</sup>

#### IV. Corollary issues

The significance of these arguments is clarified by a consideration of the context in which the topic of direct and indirect cognition had been, and continued to be, raised. In the literature of the early period of Tibetan epistemology, the topic, as stated above, usually occurs as part of a complex of themes focusing on and corollary to the definition of valid cognition. Within this complex there are several issues besides that of direct and indirect cognition that were the subject of considerable dispute, two of which I will address here. The first concerns a particular position advanced regarding the definition of valid cognition. The second concerns the issue of the ascertainment (*ngeś pa*, *niścita*) of the validity (*tshad ma nyid*, *prāmānya*) of cognition.

*gcig pa'i shugs rtogs ni ma yin te ...* ([A cognition] such as it being established that, [A] since permanence [is] a denial [of] compositeness, [compositeness] implies impermanence, or it being established that, [C] since smoke implies fire, lack of fire implies lack of smoke, etc., [i.e., and D,] is an inference or a judgment, but [it] is not a direct cognition and an indirect cognition of the same substance).

- 41 *Rgyan gyi me tog* (9.14-15; MS: 5b.1): ... *de yang rigs pa ma yin te rje[s dpa]g rang la 'jug par 'gyur zhing gzhan rig ma yin par thal bar 'gyur ro //*
- 42 *Rgyan gyi me tog* (9.15-16; MS: 5b.1-2): *de 'dod na mngon gyur rtags kyis dpog pa dang gzhan rig gis rang 'jal bas rang rig don med par 'gyur ro //*
- 43 *Rgyan gyi me tog* (9.18-19; MS: 5b.2-3): *rang rig gis gzhan rtogs na gzhan rig nyid du 'gyur zhing ...*

## A. Three characteristics

As a part of the topic of the definition of valid cognition proper in the early period of Tibetan epistemology one meets with the definition, or quasi-definition, that all valid cognitions possess three characteristics. According to Ral gri's account these are:<sup>44</sup>

- [1] the characteristic of the object (*yul gyi khyad par*), [that a valid cognition is] involved with that which has not been previously cognized;
- [2] the characteristic of the mode of apprehension (*'dzin stangs kyi khyad par*), [that a valid cognition] does not err with regard to the object (*don*); and
- [3] the characteristic of the function (*byed pa'i khyad par*), that a [valid cognition] excludes imputations.<sup>45</sup>

The origin of this position is not entirely clear. Mkhas grub Dge legs dpal bzang (1385-1438) states in his *Mun sel* that Tibetans of the earlier tradition (*snga rabs pa*) attributed it to Śāṅkaranandana, but adds the comment that, as there are no sources in which Śāṅkaranandana explains valid cognition in this way, the notion is mere hearsay.<sup>46</sup> Sa paṇ and Shākya mchog ldan both

44 *Rgyan gyi me tog* (5.12-14; MS: 2b.6-7): *yul gyi khyad par sngar ma rtogs pa la 'jug pa / 'dzin stangs kyi khyad par don la mi 'khrul ba / byed pa'i khyad par sgro 'dogs gcod pa gsum ni tshad ma thams cad la dgos par bzhed de* / See, e.g., the *Rang 'grel* (212.2.5ff.), *Mun sel* (109), *Rol mtsho* (600.3-4), and *Bsdus pa* (17a.2ff.) for comparable passages.

45 This last is also sometimes termed the characteristic of the nature (*ngo bo'i khyad par*) of cognition (e.g., at *Rol mtsho* 600.4).

46 *Mun sel* (109): *snga rabs pa dag bram ze chen po / bden pa'i don rtogs chos gsum ldan / tshad ma'i mtshan nyid du bzhed la / de yang chos gsum ni yul gyi khyad par sngar ma rtogs pa / 'dzin stangs kyi khyad par ma 'khrul ba / byed las kyi khyad par sgro 'dogs sel ba'o zhes zer ba ni tshig gi sgra sgrog pa tsam zhig snying por zad de / bram ze chen po'i gzhung bod du 'gyur ba gang na yang zur tsam yang med pa'i phyir dang / gzhan yang bram ze de ltar bzhed pa'i khungs gang yang mi snang ba'i phyir ro //* (The allegation of those of the earlier tradition – that when the great Brahmin [Śāṅkaranandana] states that the defining characteristic of valid cognition, [is] a cognition of a real object, possessed of three properties, and moreover, that the three properties [are] [(1) the property] specific to the object, [viz.,] cognizing what has not been previously [cognized]; [(2) the property] specific to the mode of apprehension, [viz., that it] does not err; and [(3) the property] specific to the function, [viz.,] that it excludes imputations – is essentially nothing more than a mere verbal

attribute it to the followers of Śāṅkaranandana, the latter further singling out Phya pa Chos kyi seng ge by name.<sup>47</sup> While the actual role of Śāṅkaranandana is unclear, it is nonetheless clear that the position was consistently associated with the period of Tibetan epistemology prior to Sa paṅ.

Unlike their assessment of the early exposition of direct and indirect cognition, Sa paṅ and Ral gri take opposite positions on this tripartite definition. While Ral gri uses it as a kind of conclusion to his treatment of the topic of the definition of valid cognition, Sa paṅ rejects it in favor of the more familiar definitions found at the beginning of the *Pramāṇasiddhi* chapter of the *Pramāṇavārttika*, namely, that a valid cognition is both non-belying and the illumination of something previously uncongnized.<sup>48</sup>

Especially significant for the issue of direct and indirect cognition, moreover, is the characteristic of the function, that a valid cognition excludes imputations. Sa paṅ, with regard to this characteristic, objects that “there is no exclusion of imputations since direct perception is free from conceptualization.”<sup>49</sup> According to Sa paṅ’s view, imputations can only be excluded by inference, but not by direct perception. This was precisely the issue upon which Sa paṅ’s refutation of direct and indirect cognition turned. As will become clear below, moreover, it is also the issue that most distinctly separates Ral gri’s own formulation of direct and indirect cognition from the earlier exposition.

## B. Ascertainment

The second issue, the ascertainment of validity, stemming from the Mīmāṃsā-Buddhist debate regarding *svataḥ* and *parataḥ prāmāṇya*, was subject to a variety of interpretations in the early period of Tibetan epistemology. Early

echo. For whenever the great Brahmin’s works were translated into Tibetan there was not even a mere scrap [such as this passage] and, moreover, because no sources are found in which the Brahmin explains [*tshad ma*] in this way.)

47 *Rang ’grel* (212.2.5-212.4.6), *Rol mtsho* (600.3-4). The presence of a similar but somewhat divergent argument in the corresponding section of the *Bsdus pa* (17a.2 ff.), moreover, would argue for some connection with Phya pa.

48 *Rigs gter* (162.1.3; 162.1.4-5) and *Rang ’grel* (212.1.4; 212.4.6): *mi slu mi shes don gsal gnyis*. These refer respectively to PV II 1a-b: *pramāṇam avisamvādi jñānam*; and 5c: *ajñātārthaprakāśo vā*.

49 *Rang ’grel* (212.4.4-5): *mngon sum rtog bral yin pas sgro ’dogs gcod pa med pa’i phyir ro //*



Tibetan arguments on this topic, and those of Sa paṇ in particular, have been the subject of a detailed investigation by Ernst STEINKELLNER (1992). I will just touch on the issue here in order to make evident some of the connections between this theme and that of direct and indirect cognition.

Although Sa paṇ does not introduce his treatment of the topic of ascertainment with definitions of intrinsic and extrinsic ascertainment, STEINKELLNER (1992: 265) has noted that Sa paṇ's own formulation can be culled from the following statement which is parenthetically imbedded in a refutation:

If an ascertainment can be elicited immediately by force of the direct perception itself, [the direct perception] is intrinsically ascertained. A [direct perception], for which an ascertainment is not able to be elicited immediately by force of the direct perception, and which must be ascertained subsequently by another valid cognition, is extrinsically ascertained.<sup>50</sup>

This formula follows, and is intended to rebut, two passages contra extrinsic ascertainment, adduced here by Sa paṇ as objections to his own position. These passages, attributed by several of Sa paṇ's commentators to various students of Rngog Lo tsā ba, are described by Sa paṇ as taking issue with ascertainment based on a consideration of, respectively, the object (*yul*) and the nature (*ngo bo*) of cognition. Sa paṇ adduces these passages as follows:

[Someone claims:] If both the ascertain[ed] valid cognition and the ascertain[ing] valid cognition have the same object, the second, the ascertain[ing] valid cognition, would be possessed of an object that is [already] determined. If [they] do not have the same object, another object is established as real [by the ascertaining valid cognition]. How is the other object [i.e., the object of the ascertained valid cognition] established as real?

Moreover, someone claims: Since [a cognition] is precisely not a valid cognition if imputations are not excluded, even by all extrinsic ascertainment, at the time of the [cognition], no extrinsic ascertainment would be possible. Yet if imputations are excluded [at that time, the cognition] would be intrinsically ascertained. Therefore, an extrinsically ascertained valid cognition is completely impossible.<sup>51</sup>

50 *Rang 'grel* (217.3.5-6): *mngon sum nyid kyi rang stobs kyis de ma thag tu nges shes 'dren nus na rang las nges yin cing / mngon sum gyi rang stobs kyis de ma thag tu nges shes 'dren ma nus pa / phyis tshad ma gzhan gyis nges dgos la / gzhan las nges yin pa'i ...*

51 *Rang 'grel* (217.3.2-4): *nges byed kyi tshad ma dang nges byed kyi tshad ma gnyis yul gcig na nges byed kyi tshad ma gnyis pa bcad pa'i yul can du 'gyur la yul mi gcig na yul gzhan dngos por grub pas / gzhan ji ltar dngos por grub ces zer ba dang /*

The former passage is based on the notion that a valid cognition must determine (*bcad pa*) its object and, therefore, cannot have as its object that which has already been determined by a previous cognition. The latter passage depends on the view that imputations are excluded for all valid cognitions and, moreover, that imputations must be excluded at the same moment when a valid cognition occurs. Thus, for a particular cognition at a particular moment, imputations are either excluded or they are not. If they are, the cognition is valid and is intrinsically ascertained as such. If they are not, the cognition is simply not a valid cognition.

Sa paṇ's categorization of these two arguments as considerations based respectively on the object and nature of cognition is not accidental. For they hinge on the same issues as the two similarly designated characteristics of the aforementioned three characteristics of valid cognition, namely, the characteristic of the object, that a valid cognition is involved with that which has not been previously cognized, and the characteristic of the function (or nature), that a valid cognition excludes imputations.

Sa paṇ's positions on the corollary topics of extrinsic ascertainment and the third of the three characteristics, involving the exclusion of imputations, are pivotal for Ral gri's exposition of direct and indirect cognition. Indeed his treatment of the entire topic is framed by his rejection of two claims that adduce precisely these issues and, although unidentified in the *Rgyan gyi me tog*, clearly paraphrase positions articulated in the *Rang 'grel*. First, Ral gri rejects Sa paṇ's position that the validity of a valid cognition can be extrinsically ascertained (*gzhan las nges pa*).<sup>52</sup> Second, he refutes Sa

*yang kha cig gzhan las nges pa thams cad kyis kyang de'i tshe sgro 'dogs ma chod na tshad ma nyid ma yin pas gzhan nges su 'ang mi 'thad la | sgro 'dogs chod na rang las nges su 'gyur ro || des na gzhan las nges kyi tshad ma gtan mi srid do zhes zer ro ||* See also STEINKELLNER's discussion and translation of these (1992: 266, n.52 and n.53).

- 52 *Rgyan gyi me tog* (7.18-19; MS: 4a.5): *kha gcig tshad mas ni don ye mi 'grub kyi rjes su skyes pa'i nges pas sgrub pa yin no zhes zer ro || 'di ni shin tu 'khrul pa yin te ...* (Someone claims that, when an object is not established by the [initial] valid means of cognition, a subsequently arising ascertainment does establish [it]. This is completely erroneous.)

Although Ral gri in his separate treatment of the theme of ascertainment similarly claims that "if ascertainment is not produced [by a cognition intrinsically, the cognition] would not have the nature of a valid cognition" (*Rgyan gyi me tog* 11.24-12.1; MS: 7a.1-2: *mi rigs te nges pa mi skyed na tshad ma nyid ma yin par 'gyur te*),



paṇ's flat denial of indirect cognition, by claiming that, if there were no indirect cognition, "there would be no complete determination of such things as a fire and a jug, etc., by a valid cognition, because the negation that determines that which is not a jug [would] not be cognized indirectly."<sup>53</sup>

Ral gri's use of these, and only these, paraphrases to frame his discussion not only indicates the fundamental incompatibility between Sa paṇ's exposition of extrinsic ascertainment and his own formulation of indirect cognition, but also locates the crux of this incompatibility in the issue of the exclusion of imputations. It is to Ral gri's formulation that I will now turn.

### V. Ral gri's position

Ral gri begins the presentation of his own views on direct and indirect cognition by defining direct cognition as "a cognition on the basis of the appearance of an aspect that is a general or intrinsic characteristic of the object itself," and indirect cognition as "a cognition of another [object] by virtue of the appearance of an aspect that is the general or intrinsic characteristic of another object."<sup>54</sup>

A comparison of Ral gri's definitions to those of the early position adduced in the *Rang 'grel* shows three notable differences: first, Ral gri omits the phrase 'the exclusion of imputations'; second, he expands the term 'aspect' to 'an aspect that is a general or intrinsic characteristic (*spyi 'am rang mtshan gyi rnam pa*)'; third, he omits the supplementary line that excludes temporally successive cognitions. The second and third differences are relatively minor. The second is merely a refinement of the term 'aspect' and does not appear to aim at distinguishing Ral gri's position from that of

he does not reject extrinsic ascertainment completely. Unlike Sa paṇ, for whom extrinsic ascertainment is appropriate only for certain types of valid direct perception, Ral gri denies any extrinsic ascertainment of valid direct perceptions, but does allow for the possibility of extrinsic ascertainment in connection to scriptural inference (*Rgyan gyi me tog* 12.13-14; MS: 7a.6-7: *lung gi rjes dpag ni kha cig rang gis nges la kha cig phyis byung ba'i lung rigs la brten* [MS: *rten*] *pa'i blo gzhan gyis nges so* //).

53 *Rgyan gyi me tog* (8.10-11; MS: 4b.4-5): *gzhan yang tshad mas me dang bum pa la sogs par yongs su bcad pa med par 'gyur te bum ma yin bcad pa'i dgag pa shugs la ma rtogs pa'i phyir ro* //

54 *Rgyan gyi me tog* (10.6-8; MS: 5b.7-8): *dngos shugs kyi rtogs pa'i mtshan nyid ni / don de nyid kyi spyi 'am rang mtshan gyi rnam pa snang nas rtogs pa ni dngos rtogs dang / don gzhan gyi spyi 'am rang mtshan gyi rnam pa snang stobs kyis gzhan rtogs pa ni shugs rtogs yin la...*

the early period, since the examples associated with the latter indicate that 'aspect' was understood to include both general and intrinsic characteristics. The third, moreover, does not contradict any of Ral gri's examples (with one possible exception, for which see *infra*) and may be taken as descriptive, if not definitive, of his position as well.

Most significant for the present discussion is the first difference, the omission of the phrase 'the exclusion of imputations'. The account in the *Rang 'grel* defines both direct and indirect cognition in terms of the exclusion of imputations and hence presents a system in which two separate cognitions, one direct and one indirect, each exclude imputations with regard to their respective objects, one of which is present and one of which is not. Ral gri, on the other hand, restricts his definitions of direct and indirect cognition simply to the cognition of the appearance of an aspect of an object that is, respectively, present or absent.

By this move, Ral gri does not deny the involvement of the exclusion of imputations with direct and indirect cognition. Rather he inverts their relationship. By omitting the phrase 'the exclusion of imputations' from the definition, Ral gri is able to shift the theory of direct and indirect cognition from its dependence on, to being able to account for, the exclusion of imputations. Ral gri illustrates this function in the third of his initial three examples, which stand apart and, as a set, illustrate the several functions of direct and indirect cognition:

If the proper epistemological object [of a valid cognition] is directly cognized [by either of the two valid means of cognition], then the negation that determines that which the [object] is not is indirectly cognized. For it is not possible to cognize a thing for which that which it is not is not determined.<sup>55</sup>

Thus, while a pair of direct and indirect cognitions, according to the early position, excludes two sets of imputations, it, according to Ral gri's, excludes one. For Ral gri, the object of the indirect cognition is the set of imputations being excluded from the object of the direct cognition. It is indirect because that which is not directly present to the cognition is not the object for which imputations are excluded, but rather the imputations themselves.<sup>56</sup>

55 *Rgyan gyi me tog* (10.11-12; 6a.1-2): ... [tshad ma gnyis kyis] rang gi gzhal bya dngos su rtogs pa na de ma yin bcad pa'i dgag pa shugs la rtogs pa bzhin te de ma yin ma bcad pa'i de rtogs pa mi srid pa'i phyir ro //

56 The relative importance of this third illustration for Ral gri is underscored by the subsequent set of examples he offers, each of which hinges on this precise issue. *Rgyan gyi me tog* (10.12-15; 6a.2-3): yang [4] rang rig gis bde ba 'ba' zhig par

In addition to functioning as the means by which imputations are excluded, direct and indirect cognition also function in two other very important and related ways. In his first example, Ral gri maintains:

If the present object is directly cognized by [either of] the two valid means of cognition, then the serial continuity of the object, as long as [one's] impression is not impaired, is indirectly cognized somewhat in the past.<sup>57</sup>

This somewhat odd example is quite unlike any of the examples associated with the early position, and may be the reason, or part of the reason, for Ral gri's omission, in his definition, of a statement regarding the temporal relationship between the direct cognition and the indirect cognition.

In his second example, Ral gri maintains:

If the object is just directly established as real [by either of the two valid means of cognition], then the mental act [that apprehends it] is indirectly cognized as non-erroneous.<sup>58</sup>

The second illustration is similar to example E cited earlier, namely that external awareness directly establishes the object as a blue thing and indirectly establishes the nature of the mental act as apprehending blue. To this basic example, however, Ral gri adds that it is explicitly the reality of the object and the non-erroneousness of the mental act that are being established. While it is not clear whether, or to what extent, the concepts of reality and non-erroneousness are implicit in example E, it is worth noting that this is the one example given in the earlier exposition against which Ral gri fails to raise a direct argument.

*myong pas sdug bsngal dang* [5] *gzugs 'dzin 'ba' zhig par myong pas sgra 'dzin gyi ngo bo yin pa bkag pa shugs la grub la* / [6] *gzhan rig gis sa phyogs 'ba' zhig par grub pas bum pa yin pa bkag pa 'ang de bzhin no* // (Moreover, [4] by the simple [i.e., direct] experience of happiness by self awareness, [the negation that happiness is of the nature of] misery [is indirectly established]. [5] By the simple [i.e., direct] experience of the apprehension of form by self awareness, the negation that [the apprehension of form] is of the nature of the apprehension of sound is indirectly established. [6] By the simple [i.e., direct] establishment of an [empty] place by external awareness, also the negation that [the empty place] is a jug is indirectly established.)

57 *Rgyan gyi me tog* (10.8-10; 5b.8-6a.1): *tshad ma gnyis kyis yul da ltar ba dngos su rtogs pa na 'du byed ma nyams kyi bar gyi yul gyi rgyun dang 'das pa cung zad shugs la rtogs pa dang* ...

58 *Rgyan gyi me tog* (10.10-11; 6a.1): ... *[tshad ma gnyis kyis] yul bden par dngos su grub tsam na blo ma 'khrul bar shugs la rtogs pa dang* ...

What is most striking about this group of three illustrations as a whole is the tacit relationship they bear to the tripartite definition of valid cognition, discussed above, and hence to the issue of ascertainment.

The third characteristic, that of the function, which holds that all valid cognitions exclude imputations, is accounted for by the third operation of direct and indirect cognition, namely, that they cognize, respectively, the proper epistemological object of the cognition and the imputations that are everything that the object is not.

The first characteristic, that of the object, which holds that a valid cognition is involved with that which has not been previously cognized, is accounted for by the first operation of direct and indirect cognition, namely, that they apprehend, respectively, the present object – that is, the present and momentary object, thus guaranteeing that the cognition is involved with an object not previously cognized – and the serial continuity of the object somewhat in the past – thus, when conjoined with the third characteristic, ensuring that the cognition is involved with an intentional object (*'jug yul*).<sup>59</sup>

The second characteristic, that of the mode of apprehension, which holds that a valid cognition does not err with regard to its object, is accounted for by the second operation of direct and indirect cognition, namely, that they ascertain respectively the reality of the object and the non-erroneousness of the mental act that apprehends it.

Each of these illustrations and characteristics is, moreover, related to the issue of ascertainment. The first and the third illustrations recall the two early arguments contra extrinsic ascertainment, based on the considerations of the object and nature of cognition. The second is reflected in Ral gri's own definition of ascertainment: "Therefore, it is intrinsic ascertainment when a valid cognition itself directly establishes an object as real [and] when [it] indirectly establishes itself as non-erroneous. [It] is extrinsic ascertainment when these two are established by another mental act."<sup>60</sup> These tacit

59 Ral gri justifies the legitimacy of these two characteristics by precisely this point (*Rgyan gyi me tog* 5.14-15; MS: 2b.7-8): ... *rtogs zin la 'jug pa dang sgro 'dogs mi gcod pa la 'jug yul ston pa med cing de med pa tshad mar mi rung pa'i phyir ro //* (... because if a previously cognized [object] were involved and if imputations were not excluded, there would be no indication of an intentional object, and it is impossible for a valid means of cognition to be without an [intentional object]).

60 *Rgyan gyi me tog* (12.9-11; 7a.5-6): *des na tshad ma de nyid kyis yul bden par dngos su grub pa na rang nyid ma 'khrul bar shugs la grub na rang nges dang de gnyis blo*

correspondences clearly attest to Ral gri's use of the theory of direct and indirect cognition not simply to account for the exclusion of imputations, but also to provide a cogent argument that would counter Sa paṅ's espousal of extrinsic ascertainment.

The situation, however, is rather different for the early exposition of direct and indirect cognition. None of its examples resemble either Ral gri's first or third illustration. Nor do they therefore bear the same relationship to the characteristics of the object or nature of cognition. Example E does approximate the second illustration, a point which is underscored by Ral gri's omission of an explicit refutation of it. Yet example E lacks precisely those elements that would link it directly with the issue of ascertainment, namely, that it is specifically the reality of the object and the non-erroneous of the cognition that are established.

Such lack of direct correspondence on the part of the early exposition to the issues of the exclusion of imputations and ascertainment indicates that a function similar to that of the later exposition should not be attributed retroactively to it. Even though it is not clear whether a general rejection of extrinsic ascertainment might be implicit in example E, it is clear that this was not the primary function of the early theory as a whole. Not only was the early exposition not tailored to support the tripartite definition of valid cognition, but it also presumed the issue, namely the exclusion of imputations, that it was later used to establish and that would allow it to function in explicit opposition to extrinsic ascertainment.

*gzhan gyis sgrub na gzhan nges so* // As mentioned above, Ral gri admits of the possibility of extrinsic ascertainment only in connection to scriptural inference.

This definition echoes an intriguing passage on intrinsic ascertainment attributed to Rngog Lo tsā ba that is preserved by Shākya mchog ldan in the *Pham byed* II (367.3-4): *tshad ma yin na rang nyid don gang la tshad ma yin pa'i don de la rang las nges yin dgos te / tshad ma yin na rang gi gzhal bya bden par nges dgos la de nges pa na rang nyid mi bslu bar shugs la nges nus pa'i phyir* (If [a mental act] is a valid cognition, [it] necessarily is an intrinsic ascertainment with regard to the object for which [the mental act's] nature is that of a valid cognition. For, if [a mental act] is a valid cognition, it must ascertain [its] proper epistemological object as real, and if [it] ascertains that, [it] is able indirectly to ascertain (*shugs la nges*) [its] nature as non-belying.) See STEINKELLNER 1992: 265-66, and n.59.



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