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BÖN AND THE LOGIC OF THE NON-CONCEPTUAL
Preliminary Reflections on *The Authenticity of Innate Awareness*
(*gTan tshigs gal mdo rig pa'i tshad ma*)¹

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Dzogchen (*rdzogs chen*) or the Great Completeness is a form of religiosity shared by the Bön and the Nyingma Buddhist traditions in Tibet.² Both consider Dzogchen the final strata of a nine-level arrangement of practices and philosophical positions.³ In Bön, the first four stratae are known as the four causal vehicles (*rgyu yi theg pa bzhi*),⁴ and contain a variety of healing, purificatory and other complex rites, by virtue of which Bön has long been considered a “shamanic” tradition, a collection of “rituals” and “folkways,” all hallmarks of being a “little tradition”. If, as we propose, Bön’s philosophical acumen is comparable to that of Buddhism, we will want to consider how better to negotiate the categories of “shamanic”, “great” and

1 The authors are grateful to the National Endowment for the Humanities for a 1994-1995 grant funding our translation and continued research into this text.

2 See Samten KARMAY 1988, *The Great Perfection, A Philosophical and Meditative Teaching in Tibetan Buddhism*. KARMAY discusses Bön in two of his ten chapters, though he does not there mention the *Gal mdo* cycle. The title is listed in KARMAY 1977, *Catalogue of Bönpo Publications* Tokyo: Toyo Bunko, under the category of “Philosophy and Logic” (pp.141-143).

For the history, development, and central persons and places of Nyingma Dzogchen, see the encyclopedic work by DUDJOM Rinpoche 1991, tr. and ed. by Gyurme DORJE with the collaboration of Matthew KAPSTEIN, *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism: Its Fundamentals and History*. Boston: Wisdom Publications. Two pages discuss the relationship between Nyingma and Bön (936-937), especially to Transformed Bön (*'gyur bon*).

“Great Perfection” is a common translation for *rdzogs chen*. While it has merit, we prefer “great completeness”, which avoids the suggestion that there is something that has been, or will be, perfected.

3 Bön and Nyingma presentations of the nine are not identical however. Bön has three different enumerations of these nine associated with three different sets of *terma* known as the Northern, Central, and Southern Discovered Treasures. The Nyingma presentation has several categories similar to those found in the Bön Central *terma*.

4 Sanskrit equivalents are given here only when it is clear the terms in question are translations from the Sanskrit.

“little”⁵ as well as the hierarchical thought-action bifurcation on which these are based.⁶ This is one important frame for the larger project toward which our present efforts are directed.

Dzogchen understands enlightenment to be the fully manifested (*mngon du 'gyur pa*, *abhimukhī*) experience (*nyams smyong*, *anubhava*) of the natural state (*gnas lugs*) of one's mind. This state is described as primordially pure (*ka dag*) ; it neither improves when one is enlightened nor is any the worse for being unenlightened. Because this state can be known only directly, not conceptually, Dzogchen, like certain Zen traditions, does not see conceptual thought as a path to enlightenment. Yet some important Bön Dzogchen traditions include logic as part of their spiritual training. How would a school which does not find conceptual thought to be part of its path understand the use of logic? What would distinguish such from the way logic is implemented in Buddhist systems that understand conceptual inference (*rjes dpag*, *anumāna*) to be a valid type of knowledge? To put these central issues another way: what does it mean to be an authentic or valid (*tshad ma*, *pramāṇa*) mind? What kinds of minds fit those criteria, and what do they cognize? In what sense might the reasoning process be a means to accessing or establishing the authenticity of subject or object?

Such issues are central to the Bön text under consideration here, the *Authenticity of Innate Awareness: A Collection*⁷ of Essential Reasonings (*gTan tshigs gal mdo rig pa'i tshad ma*).⁸ This work is attributed to Li shu

5 Much discussed in Religious Studies since the 1960 publication of *The Little Community and Peasant Society and Culture* by Robert REDFIELD (Chicago:1960).

6 See Catherine BELL *Ritual Theory and Practice* Oxford University Press, 1992. See also KLEIN: *Meeting the Great Bliss Queen: Buddhists, Feminists, and the Art of the Self*, 183ff.

7 The term *mdo*, usually meaning “sūtra” here simply indicates that this is a “collection” of texts; no sense that these were spoken by Buddha or Shen-rab is intended.

8 There are two editions of the *Authenticity of Innate Awareness*. It was first published outside Tibet in 1972 by Lopön Tenzin NAMDAK, who made a xylographic edition from the blocks of his own Men-ri Monastery. The text was also published in 1973 on behalf of the Tibetan Bön Monastic Centre by Patshang Lama Sonam Gyaltsen in Delhi. This version, appearing under the title *gTan tshigs nges pa'i gal mdo* reproduces a cursive (*dbu med*) Tibetan manuscript preserved in the Sam-ling monastery (*bSam gling*) in Dolpo. I The text is listed as #48 of the *rDzogs chen bsgrags pa skor gsum* in KARMAI 's *Catalogue*, p.102.

stag ring, who lived in the eighth century,⁹ and is one of the most influential writings in the Bön scholarly tradition. The *Authenticity*, and the *Essential Collection* (*Gal mdo*)¹⁰ cycle of which it is a part, were for centuries a crucial part of the Bön scholastic curriculum at Men-ri (*sman ri*) monastery, the major center for Bön studies in Tibet. The *Authenticity* displays a religious imagination quite different from, and yet clearly in conversation with, the Tibetan and Indian Buddhism historically contiguous with it.¹¹ Even the title of this text is distinctive in combining the vocabularies of logic and Dzogchen: one could search far and wide among Dzogchen texts before finding one employing the term “authenticity”¹² (*tshad ma, pramāṇa*) in the technical sense intended here. Further, although the term *rig pa* is common in Buddhist sutric writings, particularly in the “presentations of minds” genre (*blo rig*), it there indicates a wide range of minds, both conceptual and non-conceptual. It is not there used, as it is here, to signify the non-conceptual innate awareness central to Dzogchen concerns. While the *Authenticity* puts forward many points common to Bön and Nyingma Dzogchen, its focus on the place of logic in the Dzogchen context is unique among the Dzogchen texts we know.¹³

A primary tension of the text lies in its promoting the use of logic while maintaining the superiority of Dzogchen to those “lower vehicles” which employ logic and conceptual thought. This tension is accommodated, in part, by using logic to embellish the position of direct perception in Dzogchen soteriology. This in turn is supported by an axiomatic distinction between establishing the view (*lta ba grub*) and realizing the view (*lta ba rtogs*). Words and the conceptual minds to which they give rise can validly

9 KARMAY does not give his dates; Bön tradition dates this work from the 8th century.

10 No. 74 in Samten G. KARMAY 1977:142ff. Except for such catalogues, this cycle and its texts are virtually unmentioned in Western scholarship.

11 A. M. BLONDEAU 1971 and 1984 were crucial in establishing Bön’s originality and the incorporation of Bön materials into Buddhist ones. See also KARMAY: 1988 pp 195ff.

12 In other contexts this term is appropriately translated “valid cognition”. Our text argues for the authenticity of innate awareness without claiming that conceptual understanding of these is “valid” as does, for example, Gelukba Mādhyamika.

13 Sections of the *rNying ma rgyud ’bum*, but not entire chapters, use logic to establish the Dzogchen view, but as a text devoted to this topic the *Authenticity* appears to be unique.

establish the perspective of Dzogchen, but do not participate in realization of it. Before turning to that however, let us take a broad view of the *Authenticity* in context.

THE BON CONTEXT: AN EMIC VIEW

Historical Perspective

Lopön Tenzin NAMDAK, abbot of Men-ri Monastery at the time of the Chinese takeover, speaks of three general categories of Bön: (1) Zhang-Zhung Bön, (2) Ancient Bön (*rnying ma'i bon*), and (3) New Bön (*bon gsar ma*).¹⁴ It is important to point out that these emic Bön categories¹⁵ differ from the ones used by Buddhists to describe Bön traditions. Buddhists speak of white Bön, whose adherents follow both Shen-rap Mi-wo, the legendary founder of Bön, and Śākyamuni Buddha; and black Bön, whose adherents follow only Shen-rap Mi-wo. Buddhists also divide Bön into the periods of Pithy Bön (*rtol bon*), Dispersed Bön (*'chal bon*) and Transformed Bön (*'gyur bon*). Bön itself does not use these terms.

According to the tradition of Lopön NAMDAK and his student Tenzin WANGYAL, Zhang-Zhung Bön existed until the 8th century, when Zhang-Zhung¹⁶ was conquered by the Buddhist king Tri-srong-day-tsen and its

14 New Bön, even more closely connected with Buddhism and with Vairocana is regarded as having four founders known as "the Four Tulkus". These are Sangs rgyas gling pa (1353-1396), bLo ldan snying po, Kun grol grags pa, and Mi shig rdo rje. See KARMAY 1972, *The Treasury of Good Sayings*. London: Oxford University Press, p.185.

15 We report this as the view of the tradition in which we are working. These categories and related dates have yet to be fully explored in the wider context of Tibetan and Western scholarship on Bön. For further discussion of divisions of Bön and on the possible existence of Dzogchen prior to entry of Buddhism in Tibet, see Erik HAARH 1969, *The Yarlun Dynasty* (Copenhagen: G.E.C. Gad's Forlag); see also Per KVAERNE 1972, "Aspects of the origin of the Buddhist tradition in Tibet", *Numen* 19, pp.36-40

16 Some Tibetans say that Zhang-Zhung extended as far as Kinois, Ladakh, and eastern Tibet; some even consider it may have included northern Nepal. We are aware of no concrete evidence for this, although the Kinois local language has many words found in Bön ritual texts. See also Samten KARMAY 1975, "A General Introduction to the History and Doctrines of Bön", in *Memoirs of the Toyo Bunko*, No. 33, pp.180-182. For a traditional description of the translation of Bön doctrines into Tibetan, see KARMAY 1972, *Treasury of Good Sayings* pp.15ff.

people became Tibetan subjects.¹⁷ Ancient Bön is of two types, both dating from about the eighth century: (1) Yung-drung (*g.yung drung*) Bön, which is the lineage of Lopön Tenzin NAMDAK and Tenzin WANGYAL, and (2) Shamanistic Bön.¹⁸

Yung-drung Bön bears many similarities with Buddhism. It is said that Vairocana, a translator and yogi who trained under Padmasambhava, translated both Buddhist and Yung-drung Bön texts. For Bön he therefore represents a conciliatory voice in the larger chorus of dissention between Bön and Buddhism. The *Authenticity* quotes him as saying that “Bön and Buddhism are like the sun and moon, I hope that both can spread equally”.¹⁹ Moreover, the author of the *Authenticity*, who himself is considered to have a special relationship with Vairocana, observes “I have all my early life practiced Bön...later in my life I also practiced the profound teaching of the Buddhists...sometimes one teaching finishes in order to allow another to arise, this does not mean one is bad and one is good, it has its own time when it is of help for people. In the future, Bön will again manifest”.²⁰

17 TUCCI 1980, (English edition) *The Religions of Tibet* New Delhi:Allied Publishers Private Limited, p.213 cites the *gLing gzhi bstan pa'i 'byung gnas* version of *rGyal rabs bon gyi 'byung gnas* (n.p., n.d.,p.6) as a source stating that *bon* is a terminological equivalent of *bod* and thus can also be used as the name of the country since “*n* and *d* are often interchanged in Tibetan”. However, a more recent view set forth in MACDONALD’s 1971 article cited above is that the name *bon* was only retrospectively applied to the religion Buddhism encountered upon its entry into Tibet. This is further discussed by R. A. STEIN 1985, “Tibetica Antiqua II. A propos du mot *gcug-lag* et de religion indigène” (BEFEO).

18 Lopön NAMDAK, who speaks English, uses this word in the classification system reported here. It does not translate any Tibetan term. However, it indicates a form of Bön little concerned with the kinds of philosophical issues discussed in the texts that are the focus of this project.

19 *Gal mdo*, 128.6

20 *Gal mdo* 127.6

Bön Dzogchen and the *Gal mdo* Cycle

Much of the vast Bön canon is attributed to the legendary founder of Bön, Shen-rab Mi-wo (*gShen rab mi bo*).²¹ There are two major ways of categorizing this material. The first is that of the Four Doors and Treasury (*sgo bzhi mdzod lnga*), rubrics unique to Bön²². The Four Doors include, respectively, teachings on spells, rituals, monastic discipline, and Dzogchen meditation; the Treasury includes all of these.²³ The second and more widely known category is the classification of Bön teachings into nine Vehicles. In fact, Bön has three different enumerations of these nine associated with three different sets of Discovered Treasures (*gter ma*) known as the Northern, Central, and Southern Discovered Treasures.²⁴ All, however, present Dzogchen as the ninth and most efficacious path.

Bön Dzogchen literature itself is categorized in two ways. The first consists of three collections associated respectively with the topics of mind, sphere, and essential instructions (*sems sde, klong sde, man ngag gi sde*).²⁵

21 All we know of Shen-rab is that he was a priest seen as capable of communicating between the living and the dead who lived some time prior to the 7th century, although Bön chronology places him earlier than the Buddha Shakyamuni. See KARMAY 1975: "A General Introduction to the History and Doctrines of Bön" in *The Memoirs of the Toyo Bunko*, Tokyo, 175ff.

22 See SNELGROVE 1967, *The Nine Ways of Bön*. London: Oxford University Press, p.16ff. Although this category is unique, sometimes the same text is claimed under different titles by both Bön and Nyingma, as mentioned in KARMAY 1988: 220-221. For example, Lopön NAMDAK notes that the second chapter of the *bsGrags pa skor gsum* (KARMAY 1977, No. 54,2) is, except for proper names and certain terms, identical with the *rGyud kyi rgyal po gser gyi rus sbal*. One place where the texts part ways is when it comes to name the Four Doors and Treasury; amidst otherwise identical wording this phrase appears only in the Bön text.

23 The Four Doors are named White Water, Black Water, the Country of 'Phan, the Leader, and the Treasury is called the Summit (*chab dkar, chab ngag, phan yul, dpon gsas, mtho thog*). See KARMAY 1975 :178-179.

24 The Nyingma presentation of nine vehicles resembles the Bön discussion in the Central Treasure in some of its categories. Classic Nyingma sources on the nine are found in the *Kun 'dus rig pa'i mdo / Sangs rgyas kun gyi dgongs pa 'dus pa'i mdo* (popularly known as *sPyi mdo*) in volume *ka* (folio 86b/1-290a/6 of the *rNying rgyud* section of the Dege *bKa' 'gyur*. These nine are also listed in the *Rig pa rang shar ch'en po*, one of "the Seventeen Tantras" in the *Man ngag sde*. See Vol *tha* of *rnying ma rgyud 'bum*. (Thanks to Ven. Tulku Thondup for these references).

25 See Samten KARMAY 1988, *The Great Perfection*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, pp.206-215.

This nomenclature is shared with the Nyingma school of Dzogchen although the texts assigned to them are different.²⁶ The second grouping, unique to Bön, consists of *Instructions on A* (*a khrid*²⁷), the *Great Completeness* (*rdzogs chen*), and the *Transmission Through Hearing* (*snyan rgyud*²⁸).

In addition, Bön Dzogchen includes a variety of text cycles.²⁹ The *Essential Collection* (*Gal mdo*) cycle is one of these. As the oldest cycle still actively engaged by the Bön tradition, it received special emphasis in the tradition in which Tenzin WANGYAL was trained.³⁰ Though virtually unknown to Western scholarship, the *Authenticity* is the most prominent, most studied, most influential text in the *Gal mdo* cycle.

26 For example, Bön would consider its *Gal mdo* cycle part of the series on mind and its *Zhang Zhung Transmission* to be part of the series on essential instructions, whereas these works are not part of the Nyingma corpus.

27 *A Khrid* was promulgated by the great hermit dGongs mdzod (1030-1096). His system is divided into eighty periods called *a khrid thun mtshams brgyad cu pa*, each period lasting one or two weeks. [There is a manuscript of this at Is.M.E.O. in Rome which Tenzin WANGYAL has seen and catalogued, but no other; it has not been studied or translated.] After completing this course the adept is given the title "Possessor of Realization" (*rtogs ldan*). The system of eighty periods was later reduced to thirty by A zha blo gros rgyal mtshan (1198-1263) and then further reduced to fifteen by Bru rgyal ba g.yung drung (1242-1296). Since then the system has been known as the *Fifteen period a khrid of Bru* (*bru'i a khrid thun mtshams bco lnga pa*). This system of *a khrid* meditation has been thoroughly studied by Per KVAERNE in "Bönpo Studies, the A-Khrid System of Meditation", Part I, *Kailash*, Vol I, No. 1, pp.1-50; Part II, *Kailash*, Vol I, No. 4, pp.247-332.

28 The *Zhang zhung snyan rgyud* is considered philosophically very close to the *Series on Direct Speech* (*man ngag sde*), even though it has its own independent lineage. See KARMAY 1988, p.209. The three are usually abbreviated as *a rdzogs snyan gsum*. See Samten KARMAY 1975, "General Introduction", p.21.5. See also KARMAY 1988, pp.201-205.

29 For brief descriptions of some of these see KARMAY 1988 p.201ff. He does not here mention the *Gal mdo* cycle.

30 Bön traditionally dates the earliest *Gal mdo texts* from the 8th century (though some are attributed to the primordial Samantabhadra); the last from the 13th century.

The Text

Although its precise date and origins remain an important object of research, the *Authenticity of Innate Awareness* (*Rig pa'i tshad ma*),³¹ is said to have been discovered by three 10th century travellers known to us as the “The Three Buddhists” (*ban dhe mi gsum*) who happened across it at a place called Lha sa yer ba in Central Tibet.³² According to one version of the tale,

31 Cited in Table of Contents. KARMAY 1977, *Catalogue* p.142A. KARMAY's catalogue describes it as “A treatise dealing with *rdzogs chen* philosophy through the apparatus of logic”.

32 Sometimes spelled *yer pa*, as in KARMAY 1977, *Catalogue* p.142. KARMAY also cites Li shu stag ring as the author. The *terma* of Yer rdzong ma, a place referred to in the *Legs bshad mdzod* as lHa sa yer ba'i rdzong, are described in that text as having been concealed by Vairocana and Dran pa nam mkha during the time of Khri srong lde btsan. The discovery of these is described in the *lung bstan*, cited in *Legs bshad mdzod*, which goes on to note that they were discovered after years of searching by “the three Buddhists of gTsang: Sum pa byang tshul, 'Bre tshul seng, and gCer bu dbang phyug”. According to KARMAY 1977 p.105, the *terma* at Yer ba were found in the 12th century. We have found two similar descriptions of *terma* discoveries, which may be different versions of the same story. The *Legs bshad mdzod* gives this description:

“Accordingly, the three Buddhists of gTsang, Sum pa byang tshul, 'Bre tshul seng, and gCer bu dbang phyug went to bSam yas in search of Buddhist textual treasures, but even after several years nothing was found. When they set out for home they said to themselves: ‘We are supposed to be great men, it is shameful not to have found any texts’. So they went to Yer ba and began to search. They discovered a textual treasure, but it was all Bön texts and (therefore) not what they wanted. They gave them away to Lung ston 'od 'bar, also known as gNyen ston gzi brjid”. *The Treasury of Good Sayings* p.152.

KARMAY (1977, p.ix) reports that the *Zab mo'i gter dang gter ston grub thob ji ltar byon pa'i lo rgyus mdor bsdus bkod pa rin chen vaidūrya'i phreng* by Yon tan rgya mtsho (1813-99) f.106b3, quoted on p.227b.6 “vaguely states that these three Buddhists came during the 5th Rab byung (i.e., 1267-1326)”.

A similar tale is found in Samten KARMAY, “A General Introduction to the History and Doctrines of Bön” in *The Memoirs of the Toyo Bunko* p.187: After describing the discovery of a variety of *terma* texts, KARMAY writes, “The religious texts found this way are not necessarily all apocryphal. Many of the Bönpo *gter-ston* were in fact simple ordinary people, and Bönpo historians do not normally pretend that these *gter-ston* displayed any kind of miraculous power in order to find the texts. It is said that in the 10th century three errant Nepalese wanderers found Bön texts in bSam yas by accident, and, having no interest in them, exchanged them for food. In the same century three hunters came across Bön texts when they were

the three had come to Tibet searching for gold. While digging for this purpose in sands near Samye, they discovered some boxes and made off with them.³³ That night, they were frightened by strange signs which they associated with the contents of the boxes. The next day they encountered a group of Bön ritualists with whom they gladly exchanged the boxed texts for food.³⁴

The *Authenticity of Innate Awareness* consists of 82 folios and is a commentary on an earlier text known as the *Authenticity of Direct Speech* (*man ngag lung gi tshad ma*), a work traditionally attributed to the primordial Buddha Samantabhadra, who is venerated by both Bön and Nyingma Dzogchen practitioners as the source of their tradition.³⁵ In addition to its focus on logic, *Authenticity* is remarkable for the many quotations it offers from over one hundred ancient tantras.

Men-ri monastery, which in recent centuries was the main center of Bön traditions in Tibet, was founded in 1405 near Shigatse. It was a continuation of Central Tibet's first Bön Monastery, known as Ye-ru En-sa-kha (*g.yas ru dben sa kha*), founded in 1072,³⁶ with logic being important

digging in the ground for some stones. In the 12th century a shepherd simply walked in a cave which to his surprise was full of books”.

Per KVAERNE's "A Chronological Table of the Bön po, the *bsTan rcis* of *Nyi ma bstan 'jin*", *Acta Orientalia* 1971, XXXIII, pp.205-48 (The transcription of the Tibetan text 249-82, has been a crucial source for the dating of Bön texts. His 1990 chronological study may revise some of our dates here.

- 33 This type of accidentally discovered Treasure Text (*terma*) is unique to Bön. It is unknown in Nyingma, where the *Tertons* or Treasure-discoverers inevitably enjoy a considerable reputation as accomplished practitioners.
- 34 See Samten KARMAY 1972, *The Treasury of Good Sayings, A Tibetan History of Bön*. London: London Oriental Series, Vol. 26, p.152ff. Neither "strange signs" nor the interest in gold are mentioned in KARMAY but are noted in the oral tradition of Tenzin WANGYAL.
- 35 He is also the stated originator of one of the major groups of Bön *rdzogs chen* texts, the *bsGrags pa skor gsum*. See KARMAY 1988: 201 and 220. This root-text was rediscovered in Bhutan during the eleventh century by gZhod ston dngos grub grags pa in the temple of Khom mthing in lHo brag in Bhutan. This represents an unusual case of the "root text" apparently being discovered after the commentary. See KARMAY 1977, p.142.
- 36 Founded in the Tsang Province of Tibet and destroyed by flood in 1386 and subsequently rebuilt. See Lopön Tenzin NAMDAK, "The Condensed Meaning of an Explanation of the Teachings of Yungdrung Bön" Kathmandu: Bönpo Foundation,

virtually from its inception. Thus, Bön early on developed a system of logic and debate specifically related with the Dzogchen teaching.³⁷ After the destruction of Ensakha, monks attended the school for logic at a nearby Sakya monastery.³⁸ In 1834 the monastery of Yung-drung-ling was founded at a site below Men-ri to be a center for logic and debate.³⁹ The traditional course of study at Men-ri and Yung-drung-ling, continues today at Dolanji, a small Indian town north of Simla, and includes training in the five topics of logic (*tshad ma*, *prāmaṇa*), Perfection of Wisdom (*phar phyin*, *pāramitā*), Mādhyamika (*dbu ma*), Abhidharma (*mdzod*), and Monastic discipline (*'dul ba*).

LOGIC AND THE PATH

The *Authenticity* declares in its opening pages that the three factors crucial to ascertaining the ultimate are (1) eradicating doubt, (2) proving textual statements, and (3) engaging in debate.⁴⁰ Logic would certainly seem to have a place in this scheme of values. And yet, because conceptual thought is not fully valid with respect to the ultimate, logic is irrevocably divorced from full participation in the path.

The issue of logic and reasoning naturally raises the question of how conceptual thought (*rtog pa*, *kalpanā*) relates to direct perception (*mngon sum*, *pratyakṣa*) and especially to direct perception of the ultimate. For the *Authenticity*, this means investigating the relationship of various minds to the “ultimate”, that is, to the single sphere (*thig le nyag gcig*). After describing this single sphere, we will move to a discussion of the types of minds that have access to it, and the kind of access they have.

n.d., p.25. For the background of this monastery and a detailed description of the present-day curriculum at Dolanji, see Krstyna CECH 1984, “The History, Teaching, and Practice of Dialectics According to the Bön Tradition” Solan, India: Hill Star Press for Yungdrung Bön Monastic Centre. gYas ru dben sa kha successively produced eighteen learned scholars, the most illustrious being mKhas pa dbyar mo thang ba (b. 1144) and 'A zha blo gros (1198-1263). (CECH,p 6).

37 Lopön NAMDAK “Yungdrung Bön”, p.25

38 *Brus yul skyed tshal*

39 During the last century, nine other Bön monasteries established schools of dialectics. CECH: 7

40 *Gal mdo* 49.2 ff

A primary distinction between Bön and Mādhyamika uses of logic is that in the latter reasoning builds toward authentic or valid understanding of the ultimate, in the former it does not. This in turn has to do with differences regarding three closely related topics: (1) the Dzogchen emphasis on singleness, in contrast with the Mādhyamika structure of the two truths, (2) the Dzogchen claim that the ultimate is in fact a factor (*cha, amśa*) of consciousness, a claim that contributes to subjectivity itself being the primary focus for discussions of the ultimate in Dzogchen. In addition to its close association with consciousness, there are other reasons why the ultimate is not a mere negative (*med dgag, prasajyapratishedha*),⁴¹ as it is in much of sūtra Mādhyamika, but a negative that includes positive elements (*ma yin dgag, paryudāsapratishedha*), most frequently described as an indivisibility of clarity and emptiness (*gsal stong dbyer med*) or of spontaneously occurring (*lhun grub*) good qualities. (3) Dzogchen understands all conceptual thought to be associated with adherence (*zhen pa*) and therefore with effort. Consequently, whereas Geluk Mādhyamika discusses two kinds of reasoning consciousness, analyzers of the conventional (*kun rdzob dpyod byed kyi rigs pa*) and ultimate (*don dam dpyod byed kyi rigs pa*) respectively, Dzogchen maintains that a reasoning consciousness can analyze only the conventional. It cannot produce a valid conceptual mind that itself experiences the ultimate. At best, logic inspires the inexperienced to salvific wisdom and allows the realized to communicate something about their experience. When it comes to understanding the ultimate, only direct perception is fully valid; conceptual understanding is not. Whereas for Geluk Mādhyamika, and much of the Indo-Tibetan Buddhist traditions influenced by the work of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, there are two types of valid perception, direct and inferential, the *Authenticity* names what it calls three “authenticators of method”. These are scripture (*lung*), direct speech (*man ngag*), and one’s own innate awareness (*rang gi rig pa*).⁴² Ultimacy is determined by these.

41 The refutation that emptiness is a mere negative remains to this day a significant aspect of Bön and Nyingma Dzogchen. For example, in the *sTong thun seng ge’i nga ro*, Mi-pham observes that, for one thing, the emptiness taught in the second turning of the wheel is not the final word of Buddha (as Nāgārjuna and Gelukba commentators, among others, maintain), and that the true ultimate, as described in the third turning of the wheel, is not a mere negative. See *The Lion’s Roar of the Great Accordance Between Emptiness and the Tathāgata Essence* (*bDe gshegs snying po’i stong thun chen mo seng ge’i nga ro*). Delhi: Ngagyur Nyingma Sungrab, Sol. 62, 575.1

42 *Gal mdo* 52.3

Leaving aside a discussion of scripture at present, our concern is with the descriptions of the ultimate and innate awareness, as well as the relation between them.

Singleness

The single sphere (*thig le nyag gcig*) is one way of naming the ultimate experienced by innate awareness. It is a well known Dzogchen category which receives particular attention in our text. The *Authentic Scripture* (*lung tshad ma*), a work quoted extensively in the *Authenticity* describes the single sphere this way:

This hidden and very secret quintessence
An un-thing⁴³ untouched by the eterne
Untouched by annihilation, knowing and clear
Untouched by extreme twoness, not part of a pair
Untouched by extreme oneness, spontaneously occurring
The essence itself, dwelling in its own place.

A key point here is that the single sphere includes all possibilities and eliminates none. Thus, nothing remains external to it to be its match, or its pair, in the way that, for example, in Gelukba and other interpretations of Mādhyamika, conventional and ultimate, or wisdom and compassion, form profoundly unified pairs. The single sphere is itself unitary, a description meant to avoid the sense of any process of unification or so central to sutric and tantric expressions of ultimacy.

The *Authenticity* emphasizes that the single sphere cannot be classified in any one way as, for example, either existent, non-existent, eternal, or annihilated. This description may sound familiar enough to students of Nāgārjuna. But, whereas Nāgārjunian logic is famous for proceeding by excluding all of these as possibilities, the *Authenticity* proceeds by saying that all are included as part of the single sphere. However, in moving toward this conclusion, it also navigates a *via negativa*, as in this quote from the *Tantra of the Blissful Wheel* (*rgyud bde ba'i 'khor lo*):⁴⁴

43 *Gal mdo* 61.2 Here the *dngos* of *dngos med* means solidly established (*grub pa*) or substantial (*rdzas yod*) rather than, as in other contexts, “impermanent thing”, and thus *dngos med* means the lack of such solid existence rather than, as in other contexts (especially classic logic texts), “a permanent phenomenon”.

44 The *Gal mdo* quotes from over a hundred different texts, many of which are no longer extant. In the larger project of which this article is a part, we will make a study

Not existent, it is undemonstrable
 Not non-existent, it is clear innate awareness.
 Not eternal, it is an un-thing
 Not annihilated, it is spontaneously there
 Not two, it lacks a pair
 Not one, it dawns as self-appearance
 The mind of enlightenment beyond extremes.

While this quote seems to accord with the well-known negative process of Mādhyamika, the *Authenticity* does not take this as its final position on the single sphere. Rather, it completes its discussion of this and similar quotes by stating that no one epithet can characterize the single sphere.

To put this another way, the descriptive capacity of these individual statements is not wholly rejected but only regarded as incomplete. All wisdom and delusion, *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa*, are to be understood as included in the single sphere (*thig le nyag gcig*). Since this single totality includes all dichotomies, the very tensions on which logic is based are only penultimate. Rather than limiting possibilities in the manner of Nāgārjuna, Bön Dzogchen logic expands the number of possibilities to be retained, even though no one of them ever offers a complete or valid picture.⁴⁵ “There is the view that the basis [the single sphere] is ascertained as existent, because one’s innate self-awareness, being self-clarified, dwells as an un-thing. It is also ascertained as non-existent, because it is not a substantially established thing. It is also *unascertained* because even Samantabhadra cannot say ‘It is only this’”.

Thus, after a series of reasoned reflections, our text observes that although particular qualities can be described, one cannot settle on any definitive characteristic of the single sphere. From one perspective it is existent, from another, non-existent, and from yet another it remains unascertained. Not even Samantabhadra can gainsay this inconclusiveness. Indeed, far from undermining variety, the concept of the single totality finds in the inevitable contradictions of the world proof for its own existence. “It follows that the subject, all of *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa* is...the single sphere

of these texts and seek to determine their presence or absence from Nyingma or Bön canonical sources.

- 45 Compare with the Jain logic known as *syādvāda* or seven-fold division (*saptabhāṅgi*), and the standpoint perspective (*nayavāda*) which could simultaneously affirm that from one point of view a tree is an individual and at the same time one of a species, or may be merely a universal or merely an individual.

because there are many contradictory perspectives". (54.1) Thus plurality proves singularity. Put another way, it is precisely being rife with pluralism that validates it as a totality. This understanding of the single totality is, to our best knowledge, unique to Bön.⁴⁶

In short, being ascertained as existent does not cancel out its being ascertained as non-existent. This avoidance of any center-point or single focus of an argument *that itself yields valid understanding* is characteristic of the *Authenticity* and distinguishes it from the certainties of Mādhyamika logic, where emptiness, for example, is in Geluk interpretations merely an absence, a lack of inherent existence, and that mere absence is validly knowable through the process of reasoning itself. Logic, like verbalization in general, isolates data that are in reality inseparable. This is one reason conceptuality falls short of accessing the multiply configured ultimate. Other reasons have to do with the Dzogchen descriptions of the ultimate subject and its object, as well as the insistence that all conceptual minds are associated with adherence.⁴⁷

Ultimate Knowers

Dzogchen traditions, whether Bön or Buddhist, agree that conceptual knowledge of emptiness, like conceptual thought in general, is a partial knowing, not a mind of complete engagement (*grub 'jug gi blo*, **viddhipravṛtti-buddhi*). This is implicitly related to the controversy regarding whether the ultimate is a mere negative or not. In Mādhyamika, only emptiness, a mere absence, is considered ultimate, and knowledge of emptiness is knowledge

46 This way of speaking about the single totality is, as far as we can determine, unique to Bön. KARMAY 1988, *Great Perfection* p.118 n. 55 notes the sense of *thig le* in Nyingma Dzogchen as "without amplification" and understands it to refer to the "Primordial Basis" and equating *thig le chen po* with *thig le nyag gcig*. According to the noted Nyingma Dzogchen scholar Tulku THONDUP, the term *thig le nyag gcig* in Nyingma Dzogchen variously signifies "*dharmakāya*" or great bliss. Further, its roundness, innocent of edges, symbolizes freedom from extremes. Khenbo Palden SHARAB, among the most respected Nyingma Dzogchen scholars today, notes that the term *thig le nyag gcig* is found in Long-chen-ba, especially *chos dbyings mdzod*, to be synonymous with *dbyings*, *rang 'grol*, and *spros pa dang 'grel ba*. Further study, especially of *chos dbyings mdzod* is necessary to develop this comparison.

47 The question of whether emptiness is a mere negative or not is also fiercely debated in intersectarian sūtric interpretations of Mādhyamika. For example, the Sakya scholar Gorampa Sönam Sengey is very much on the Dzogchen side of this debate.

of the ultimate.⁴⁸ It has only one aspect, that of absence, to be known. And indeed, for Gelukbas, even an inferential understanding of emptiness, which technically is a partial knower (*sel 'jug gi blo*, **apohapravṛtti-buddhi*), is nonetheless an actual engagement with the ultimate. For Dzogchen, only a knowing which involves both clarity and emptiness is a knowing of the ultimate.

In discussing the ultimate, the *Authenticity* like Dzogchen literature in general, is primarily discussing the state of the subject, not the nature of objects. By contrast, classic Mādhyamika discussions of the ultimate, or emptiness, from Nāgārjuna to Tsong-kha-pa, tend to focus largely on the emptiness of objects, or of persons, but not necessarily on the emptiness of the mind, even though some individual teachers may emphasize this.⁴⁹

Thus, even though the emptiness of the mind is certainly to be understood, there is much discussion of emptiness in Mādhyamika that does not refer to the mind. However, for Dzogchen, and specifically in the *Authenticity*, a discussion of the single sphere is in effect a discussion of the innate self-awareness (*rang rig*). This innate awareness is not described as a knower of the sphere in the way that wisdom is sometimes in sūtra described as a knower of emptiness. Further, to say that the single sphere is *gsal stong dbyer med*, or the inseparable state of clarity and emptiness, is also to say that it is *rig stong dbyer med*, an indivisibility of innate awareness and emptiness, the knower and the known. Innate awareness is thus described as the knowing aspect (*mkhyen cha*) of the single sphere. This indivisibility is self arisen (*rang byung*), and innate awareness is the knower of the indivisibility of innate awareness and emptiness (*rig stong dbyer med*). This means that innate awareness is naturally and continuously cognizant of its own void nature. To put this another way, when innate awareness experiences the self-arisen primordial wisdom, it is experiencing

48 For discussion from the viewpoint of the 7th Bön Vehicle (*a dkar*) of Bön sutric discussion of the ultimate or emptiness, see Lopön Tenzin NAMDAK, *Ma rgyud ye shes thig le'i mchan 'grel thar lam rab gsal zhes bya ba bzugs* p.68.1ff.

49 For example, neither Nāgārjuna, Tsong-kha-pa, Jang-gya nor Jam-yang shay-ba give particular emphasis to the emptiness of the mind, although His Holiness the Dalai Lama has said that the most important emptiness to understand is the emptiness of the mind. We can note however that the *Phar phyin* texts much studied in Gelukba equate the *bde bar gzhegs pa'i snying po* which pervades all beings with the voidness of mind. Mi-pham in *Lion's Roar* takes explicit issue with this equation (566.2).

the indivisibility of innate awareness and emptiness. This indivisibility is the single sphere. Moreover, to say that the void nature is the self-arisen primordial wisdom means that, despite the name “primordial wisdom”, this self-arisen entity is not a consciousness. Yet, the single sphere itself is not a consciousness. Herein lies an asymmetry of logic to which we shall refer again shortly.

Like emptiness, the single sphere is unconditioned and permanent. Or, to paraphrase Lopön Tenzin NAMDAK, the primordial wisdom of innate awareness (*rang rig ye shes*) is one portion (*cha*) of the single sphere; the basis of all (*kun gzhi*) is another, and the self-arisen primordial wisdom is the whole thing. All these however, are expressed as aspects of the subject, and as aspects of the ultimate.

The self-arisen primordial wisdom is “like emptiness” in that it is (1) unconditioned and (2) the essence (*ngo bo*, *vastu*) of the mind; on the other hand, the “nature” (*rang bzhin*, *svabhāva*) of the mind is not merely empty, but an indivisibility of emptiness and clarity, or emptiness and innate awareness. To put this another way, from the perspective of the base (*gzhi dbang du byed na*) there is no separation between emptiness and clarity, or emptiness and innate awareness, but verbally, there is. Is this asymmetry a philosophical weakness? An inevitable consequence of the workings of language? Or does it, intentionally or not, reflect something about the single sphere itself? At the very least, these verbal distinctions are a means of articulating the inseparability of the elements in question. If unitariness prevails, is it not logical that there would be a certain arbitrariness in the way that unitariness is divided up for the purposes of discussion? Are there criteria, by which to distinguish the arbitrary or asymmetrical from mere philosophical infelicity?

Let us pause for a moment to identify other elements which seem to distinguish the logical style of the *Authenticity* from the more familiar logical styles of Nāgārjuna and Tibetan texts modeled after or commenting on him, and especially from the various debate texts that form the basis of Geluk scholarship. While we are not yet prepared to make definitive statements regarding the overall significance of these differences, it is important to note them in order, at the very least, to demonstrate that this is an area requiring further investigation.

It is well known that in the *Collected Topics* (*bsdus grva*) texts of Geluk, for example, there are two major types of statements. There are, first of all, syllogistic theses (*dam bca'*, *pratijñā*). A syllogistic thesis that is

fully qualified (*tshul gsum tshang ba*) necessarily expresses the position of the text. There are also consequences (*thal 'gyur, prasaṅga*) which might or might not accord with the position of the text (*rangs lugs*). In a syllogism, the predicate phrase ends with some version of *yin te*, and in a consequence it concludes with some version of *yin par thal*. True or false consequences are not distinguished by any particular marker; the reader must understand this from context.

This system of markers, and even this simplified typology, does not always apply to the logic of the *Authenticity*. For example, let us consider briefly how the text establishes the single sphere (which it does without at the same time establishing the clarity of innate awareness which is inseparable from it).

“It follows that the bön-subject,⁵⁰ all these, *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa*, are the single sphere; this is the thesis, because there are many diverse perspectives”. This statement, unlike any in the *Collected Topics*, for example, is self-labeled a “thesis”.⁵¹ Thus, it presumably accords with the system of the book, in this case, a presentation of Dzogchen. However, this statement is tantamount to saying that *samsāra* is the single sphere – the equivalent, in Mādhyamika, of saying that a pillar is emptiness. Neither statement is supported by the system in which it is contained. Like emptiness, the single sphere is the nature of all things; yet here it is described as those things themselves. How can this statement be a *dam bca'*? Only, perhaps, if we accept that, in some instances, it is useful to understand the single sphere as being the objects of *samsāra*. This averral, however, has to be made in the face of acknowledging that, technically in this tradition, the term “*samsāra*” always refers to a consciousness (*'khor ba yin na, shes pa yin pas khyab*). Thus, from the viewpoint of conventions, the table is not the single sphere even though, from the viewpoint of the ultimate (*don dam du dbang du byed na*) a table is, like all other objects, pervaded by the single sphere. Indeed, from the the ultimate point of view, there is nothing other than the single sphere. Thus, to indicate that the objects of *samsāra* are the single sphere is not philosophically supportable, but such a statement may help open the mind to the multiplicity which is indeed, both philosophically and practically, at the heart of an understanding of the single sphere. The power of

50 *bon can*, the equivalent of the Buddhist *chos can*.

51 This implementation of the term *dam bca'*, which does not appear in later logical texts that we know of, may help us date the *Gal mdo*.

allusion, even of metaphor, here gains priority over the power of logic. The text itself frequently shifts from logical reflection to poetic description. In form as in principle, the text like the single sphere it describes, offers multiple points of view within a larger and flexible cogency.

Subjectivity

Whereas in *sūtra*, realizer and the object to be realized have a cause and effect relationship, here they are one entity (*ngo bo, vastu*) a status which precludes a cause and effect relationship. In other words, the innate primordial wisdom (*rang rig ye shes*) is a type of subjectivity which recognizes itself as a self-arisen primordial wisdom (*rang byung ye shes*). This emphasis on a kind of esoteric reflexivity is much stronger in Dzogchen than in sutric discussions. Further, innate awareness is the only consciousness that is aware of its own nature. Conceptual thought cannot possess such awareness, and other forms of direct perception also cannot.

Primordial wisdom of innate awareness and the self-arisen primordial wisdom are always united, whether realization is present or not. Thus, innate self awareness need only settle into itself, it does not have to come into contact newly with an ultimate object. This too denies logic the kind of role it might have in other systems, as a delineator of the ultimate object and/or shaper of the mind into a knower of that object. Whereas in *sūtra* emptiness too is always present as a quality of a consciousness, it is not described as united with its *knower* because prior to the paths of preparation and seeing that knower – whether inferential or the wisdom directly cognizing emptiness – does not yet exist. It takes a great deal of work, often with the aid of logic, to unite inferential cognition with its object, emptiness.

In a manner entirely consistent with, though not specifically articulated in, the *Authenticity*, the prominent contemporary Bön scholar Lopön Tenzin NAMDAK elaborates the epistemological uniqueness of innate awareness in his *Treatise on the Mother Tantra*.⁵² He maintains that, although innate awareness is a form of direct perception, it is not any of the forms of direct perception classically discussed in sutric presentations of the categories of mind (*blo rig*), that is those presentations common to the Sautrāntika and Cittamātra systems (*mdo sems thun mong ba*). The four types of direct

52 *Ma rgyud* pp.8-9. Although this text in general is from the viewpoint of the seventh vehicle, the discussion here is the same in the Great Completeness.

perception described in these texts are well known: sensory direct perception (*dbang po'i mngon sum*, *indriya-pratyakṣa*) mental direct perception (*yiḍ kyi mngon sum*, *mānasa-pratyakṣa*), yogic direct perception (*rnal 'byor mngon sum*, *yogi-pratyakṣa*) and, the category that on the face of it would seem compatible with the Dzogchen discussion, innate awareness direct perception (*rang rig mngon sum*, *svaśamvedana-pratyakṣa*). But from a Dzogchen perspective, innate awareness is none of these.

Innate awareness is not sensory or mental direct perception, continues Lopön, because these do not observe their own natural state.⁵³ Moreover, they lack the meditative stabilization (*ting nge 'dzin*) of innate awareness, and innate awareness is not, like these, induced by a prior sensory consciousness. Nor is the innate awareness of Dzogchen the same as the innate awareness spoken of in the Cittamātra system, because that described in Cittamātra necessarily has consciousness as its direct or explicit object (*dnegos yul*). Whereas the consciousness which is the direct object of the innate awareness described in Cittamātra is conditioned, the ultimate which is the direct object of the innate awareness described in Dzogchen is unconditioned.⁵⁴ Similarly, Cittamātra maintains that the innate awareness experiencing the wisdom cognizing emptiness has that wisdom consciousness as its explicit object, whereas the ultimate, emptiness itself, is not its explicit object. However, the *Authenticity*, like Dzogchen in general, considers *rang rig* to have the ultimate – the single sphere, which is also its own nature – as its explicit object.

Nor is innate awareness the equivalent of the yogic direct perception described in sutric texts. In discussing this, Lopön Tenzin NAMDAK specifically considers the wisdom of meditative equipoise belonging to a Superior of the Perfection Vehicle. After all, dualistic appearances dissolve for such a consciousness, and meditative equipoise experiences the natural condition of emptiness.⁵⁵ However, the innate awareness discussed in the Great Completeness is not, like the yogic direct perception described in *blo rig*, induced by a meditative stabilization (*ting nge 'dzin*, *samādhi*) which exists prior to it. Whereas the wisdom of meditative equipoise cognizing emptiness is

53 *Ibid* 9.8ff

54 For example, the innate awareness experiencing an eye consciousness observing a table has that eye consciousness as its direct object, whereas the table itself is not a direct object.

55 *Ma rgyud* 35.13 ff

described in Geluk texts as induced by inference, the innate awareness of Dzogchen is described as self-settled, and there is no process explained by which conceptual thought *itself* is transformed into wisdom. Thus, even though one may find some justification in formulating conceptual positions, that itself does not take one to ultimate understanding. Why? Because such a conceptual process, the *via negativa* alone, cannot bring about the manifestation of innate awareness.

The Issue of Adherence

The *Authenticity* suggests yet another set of considerations which preclude conceptual thought cognizing, or inducing cognition of, the ultimate. These have to do with the relationship between a mind and its objects. How is one to understand the appearance of objects? The imperative given by the *Authenticity* is “In brief, with regard to the appearance of objects, we do not do the three: abandoning, incorporating, or adhering (*spang sdud zhen gsum*)”.⁵⁶ As far as we know, the *Authenticity* is unique in emphasizing these three terms, all of which are involved with conceptual thought.

Abandonment here refers to the strategy, well known in Mādhyamika philosophy and practice, of using inferential cognition to demolish and thereby abandon one’s sense of inherent existence. Or, as the *Authenticity* puts it, “having mentally destroyed the object, emptiness is asserted”. But, continues our text, the single sphere is not like the emptiness of the Mādhyamikas (who in Bön are known as “the ceaseless, changeless minded ones” *g.yung drung sems pa*).⁵⁷ Indeed, in Bön presentations of the nine vehicles, which can be condensed into sutric, tantric, and Dzogchen vehicles, abandonment or renunciation is the defining characteristic of sūtra, just as transformation and self-liberation are the defining characteristics of tantra and Dzogchen respectively.⁵⁸

According to Dzogchen, sensory objects are not to be abandoned, but are not to be incorporated or assimilated either; meaning they are not to merge with either another object, or with the perceiving subject. The single sphere thus includes both subjects and objects without collapsing them.

56 At this juncture the text also discusses the absurdities which would result if minds were objects – e.g., then one’s own consciousness would not exist. *Gal mdo* 66.1

57 *Gal mdo* 66.4

58 *Gal mdo* 64,4 Lopön Tenzin NAMDAK discusses this in his pamphlet.

Regarding this, the *Authenticity*, considers the absurdities that ensue if, regarding the relationship of mind and object “either the mind is one with the object or the object is one with the mind. If the mind is one with the object, then just as the object is material, so mind would also be material. Or, just as the object can be destroyed ... so the mind too could be destroyed”.⁵⁹ Thus, minds and objects can be described neither as the same nor as different. Sutric Mādhyamika would agree; the Gelukba interpretation emphasizing that they can be neither inherently the same nor inherently different. The further point in *Authenticity* however is not simply the logical absurdity that results in the negation of these two positions (sameness and difference of subject and object) but that abandonment and assimilation involve effort. Though the processes of abandonment and assimilation are both associated with effort, innate awareness is not. Innate awareness, being self-liberated, is said to lack both the abandonment associated with sutric practice and the transformation associated with tantra.⁶⁰

The precise capacities of conceptual thought in relation to the ultimate was a significant topic of debate in Tibet. In Gelukba presentations of Mādhyamika, where inference is considered capable of validly cognizing emptiness, conceptual understanding of the ultimate is both possible and sought after.⁶¹ In their view, an emptiness ascertained by an inferential cognizer is the actual emptiness, the actual ultimate. The *Authenticity*, like Dzogchen generally, considers an inferential mind to be a consciousness associated with adherence (*zhen pa*), for all conceptual minds have objects of adherence (*zhen yul*). Although the range of intersectional reflection on this matter are far outside the scope of our reflections here, from a Dzogchen perspective, one can say that in Gelukba, though one must abandon adherence to the object of negation (inherent existence), adherence to emptiness itself is suitable.⁶²

59 *Gal mdo* 65.3 Just before this, the text also considers the absurdities that ensue if, in considering the relationship between the *bön sku* and unconditioned appearances, one is assimilated to the other.

60 *Gal mdo* 64.4

61 Although inference is valid with respect to emptiness, it is still technically speaking a mistaken consciousness because there is a mistaken appearance of inherent existence.

62 This is a position supported also by the Sakya scholar Gorampa Sönam SENGE in his *Discrimination of the Vehicles*. At the beginning of his section refuting Geluk

Such adherence is characteristic of thought, it is not associated with any form of direct perception, let alone with innate awareness.⁶³ Adherence is here understood as a very subtle form of attachment that, claims the *Authenticity*, clings even to sutric forms of calming – the very calm abiding (*zhi gnas*) or concentration (*bsam gtan*) that on the sutric path of preparation (*sbyor lam*) becomes integrated with an inferential understanding of emptiness, and then, on the path of seeing (*mtshong lam*) with the direct perception of emptiness itself.

The movement from the second to the third path is in sūtra made possible by the dissolution of the image of emptiness. Technically, before that image (*don spyi*, **arthasāmānya*) gives way to direct perception of emptiness, it is an appearing object (*snang yul*, **pratibhāsaviṣaya*). Rather than abandoning an appearing object, says the *Authenticity*, it is adherence which is to be abandoned. To do otherwise is to fall into one of the all-too accessible pitfalls of practice.⁶⁴ Elaborating further on the tenacity of adherence, the *Expansive Space Great Completeness Tantra* (*nam mkha' yangs pa'i rdzogs chen rgyud*)⁶⁵ says:

Although whatever appears as an external object
Is clear, nonconceptual, and so forth

interpretations of Mādhyamika, Gorampa says:

... their belief that emptiness is a mere negation, that is, a mere negation of a true object not found when searched for with reasoning, and *their belief that the manifest adherence to emptiness is not to be negated*, fall outside of the textual tradition of the Middle way. *lTa ba'i shan 'byed*, Sarnath: Sakya Students' Union, n.d., p.41.13.

(This translation based on ms. translation of José CABEZÓN, whose presentation in our seminar while he was a Rockefeller Fellow at the Rice Center for the Study of Cultures helped refine our own thinking on these topics). The introduction to our translation will develop a three-way comparison between Sakya and Geluk Mādhyamika, and Dzogchen positions on these points.

63 rGyal-ba mnyam-med-pa (Shes-rab rgyal-mtshan, 1356-1415) defines the adhered object as “suitable to be adhered to by conceptual thought” (*rtog pas zhen rung zhen yul lo*) in *rNam 'byed 'phrul gyi sgron me'i rtsa 'grel* (Varanasi, 1992). For Geluk therefore, whatever exists, or more technically whatever is an established basis (*gzhi grub*), is capable of being an object of thought, and therefore a *zhen yul*. But this is not true for either Dzogchen or Gorampa Sonam Sengey.

64 *Gal mdo* 71.6-72.1

65 *Gal mdo* 76,1

Even though the mind does nothing at all
 Because there is adherence to the taste of calm abiding
 Eliminate just that internal superimposition.

Thus, in addition to being critical of the claim that emptiness is a mere negative, the *Authenticity* also finds that the type of calm or concentration cultivated in sūtra is in fact contaminated by a subtle form of adherence. The self-settling state of manifest innate awareness is considered free of such adherence.

There is yet further import to the Dzogchen injunction that “sensory objects are not to be abandoned”. Because the basis of all and the senses are non-conceptual, they need not be changed; only the mental and afflicted consciousnesses are involved with conceptuality, and thus only they need to be transformed.⁶⁶ In this context, the *Authenticity* states: “Through changing the mental consciousness and the afflicted mind by the essential precepts, the meaning of the natural state of mind is realized...”.⁶⁷ In addition, the text cites the *Jewels Shining Like Light Tantra* (*rin po che'i 'od ltar 'bar ba'i rgyud*).⁶⁸

In the natural condition of mind, the Great Completeness,
 There is neither contrived nor uncontrived; this is clear.
 “The contrived” is a mere convention in regard to clarity
 The five doors are clear, uncontrived primordial wisdom.
 The uncontrived basis of all is the blissful Body of Bön.

The five senses themselves do not cognize the natural state, but function as doors through which the natural state can manifest.⁶⁹ That natural state, like the innate awareness which is its factor of knowing, is primordial. How then, one might well ask, does ignorance arise in the first place? This is the Bön / Buddhist equivalent of the problem of theodicy. It is also yet another way of asking what role logic might or might not play in thwarting that ignorance. To address it, Bön describes three types of innate awareness: primordial, pervasive and reflective.⁷⁰ All persons and things have primor-

66 *Ma rgyud* 116-117

67 *Gal mdo* 116.6

68 *Gal mdo* 116.6-117.2

69 Oral transmission in the tradition of the *Zhang zhung snyan rgyud*, reported by Tenzin WANGYAL.

70 *ye rig*, *khyab rig*, and *bsam rig*. As far as we are aware, these are not significant categories for Nyingma Dzogchen, if they even exist in that tradition. Tulku THONDUP

dial and pervasive innate awareness; only practitioners who discover it have reflective innate awareness. Until reflective innate awareness is found one wanders in ignorance despite the presence of primordial and pervasive innate awareness.

Significantly, only those minds which are conceptual and effortful are considered in need of rectification. The use of logic, which is both conceptual and effortful, necessarily remains outside the authentic experience of innate awareness. Whereas Geluk logic is part of *doing* the path, Dzogchen logic expresses one's *being* already in completion of the path, but does not itself bring about that experience. Geluk logic, like much of the philosophical Buddhist tradition, is unquestioningly granted "big tradition" status among Western religionists. Its intimate association with ritual, prognostication, and other purportedly "little tradition" elements is largely ignored. And what of the more problematic – because less strictly rational – logic of the *Authenticity*? Perhaps this syllogistic style, itself not always rigidly logical, can be understood to reflect the multi-directionality of the "single totality". From this perspective, the text itself embodies in style what it teaches in principle: that the single sphere has room for multiple perspectives, and the undermining of reasoning does not cancel out the presentation and use of a reasoning which itself is multivalent.

confirms that Long-chen-ba does not mention them and Khenbo Palden SHARAB concurs, adding however that similar terminology does occur. Further research is required to fully ascertain the distinctiveness of these categories in Bön. The classic source for these divisions is the Mother Tantra (*ma rgyud*) cited by Lopön Tenzin NAMDAK in *Ma rgyud ye shes thig le'i mchan 'grel thar lam rab gsal*, n.d., published by Bönpo Monastic Centre, Dolanji, at City Prints, Delhi, India, p.10.12. Even in Bön, these are categories that figure more prominently in the oral traditions (*khrid rgyun*) than in texts themselves. Lopön NAMDAK also makes a distinction between "self-arisen primordial wisdom" (*rang byung ye shes*) which he finds analogous to pervasive innate awareness (*khyab rig*), and "innately self-aware primordial wisdom" (*rang rig ye shes*) which he finds analogous to reflective awareness (*bsam rig*). These categories could be profitably engaged by contemporary debates on subjectivity, reflexivity, and the ways that language does and does not construct the subject.