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# IDENTIFYING THE OBJECT OF NEGATION ON *BODHICARYĀVATĀRA* 9:140 (TIB. 139)<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

For dGe lugs writers ever since the time of Tsong kha pa the *locus classicus* for the need to first identify precisely the object of negation in meditating on emptiness has always been Śāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra* 9:140 (Tib.: 139) ab. Tsong kha pa makes it quite clear that inasmuch as it is a negation, absence of self (*bdag med*) or absence of inherent existence (*rang bzhin med pa*), i.e. emptiness, is understood on the model of any other negation: 'In order to ascertain a person is not present, it is necessary to know that person who is not existing [here]'. On this model it is necessary to identify well the self and inherent existence which do not exist. If there does not arise well a generic impression (*spyi*) of the negandum (*dgag bya*) then the negation (*bkag pa*) of that could not occur accurately.<sup>2</sup> If one does not identify the object to be negated properly then one may fall into one or the other of the

- 1 With thanks to my friends Tom TILLEMANS and Georges DREYFUS, who first asked me what I thought of *Bodhicaryāvatāra* 9:140. (N.B. This paper is a very, very much shortened version of a 66 page manuscript with a similar title forthcoming in a volume of my papers on the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*: *Studies in the Philosophy of the Bodhicaryāvatāra*.)
- 2 See Tsong kha pa (1990), p. 579: dper na / gang zag 'di mi 'dug snyam du nges pa la med rgyu'i gang zag de shes dgos pa ltar / bdag med pa dang rang bzhin med pa zhes pa'i don nges pa la'ang med rgyu'i bdag dang rang bzhin de legs par ngos zin dgos te / dgag par bya ba'i spyi legs par ma shar na de bkag pa'ang phyin ci ma log mi nges pa'i phyir te / This corresponds to the translation by Elizabeth NAPPER (1989), p.176. For some other references, there is a similar discussion in mKhas grub rje's *sTong thun chen mo* (CABEZÓN, p. 92) and also his *Lam ngan mun sel* (mentioned *ibid.*, p. 441), where Śāntideva's half-verse is quoted, and also briefly in 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa's *Grub mtha' chen mo*, text and translation in HOPKINS (1983), p. 633.

two cardinal errors of over- or under-negating, and neither is conducive to liberation. That emptiness is a negation may be known from its being the equivalent of absence of inherent existence (*niḥsvabhāvatā*).<sup>3</sup> As a negation, it follows from *BCA* 9:140 ab that for emptiness to be apprehended it is necessary to ‘make contact with’ the negandum, and what could the negandum be but inherent existence itself? Thus for Tsong kha pa this half-verse from Śāntideva is central in his understanding that what emptiness negates is not existence as such but the *inherent existence* of entities.

The *pūrvapakṣa* – *Bodhicaryāvatāra* 9:139 (Tib. 138)

*pramāṇam apramāṇam cen nanu tatpramitaṃ mṛṣā /*  
*tattvataḥ śūnyatā tasmād bhāvānām nopapadyate //*

*gal te tshad ma tshad min na/*  
*des gzhal brdzun par mi 'gyur ram /*  
*de nyid du ni stong pa nyid /*  
*sgom pa de phyir mi 'thad 'gyur //*

If a means of valid cognition is not a means of valid cognition /  
Then would not that which is determined by it be delusory? /  
In reality, therefore, the emptiness of entities (or, with the Tibetan, ‘the meditative cultivation of emptiness’) will not [then] be acceptable. //<sup>4</sup>

3 See, for example, Candrakīrti’s *Prasannapadā* on *Madhyamakakārikā* 20:18: *tatra śūnyam ucyate yat svabhāvena nāsti /*.

4 In comparison with the Sanskrit, the Tibetan version of *BCA* 9:139 contains a significant but understandable variant. The reading *stong pa nyid / sgom pa* suggests a Sanskrit model *śūnyatā bhāvanā* rather than, as at present, *śūnyatā bhāvānām*, while on the basis of the Indian commentaries a Tibetan version of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* half-verse 9:139 cd should read something like:

*de nyid du dngos po rnams kyi /*  
*stong nyid de phyir mi 'thad 'gyur //*

The only Tibetan commentator to notice the discrepancy between the verse in its Tibetan translation and the Indian commentaries is Bu ston. He observes that the ‘*grel pa*, i.e. the *Pañjikā* (*dka' 'grel*) of Prajñākaramati, reads *bhāva* (*dngos po*) and, following an equivalent of *dharma* for *bhāva* stated by Prajñākaramati, Bu ston glosses the second part of *BCA* 9:139 with ‘the ascertainment by a means of valid cognition of emptiness, which is the absence of inherent existence of all *dharma*s, also will not be acceptable’. On the other hand, he says, if we follow the Tibetan text

According to the comprehensive Indian commentary by Prajñākaramati, the *pūrvapakṣa*'s point in *Bodhicaryāvatāra* 9:139 can be summarised as follows: The Mādhyamika claims that ultimately (*paramārthataḥ*) a means of valid cognition simply is not a means of valid cognition at all. Thus is it not the case that whatever is determined by that means of valid cognition is delusory? What is positively determined (*paricchinnaṃ* / *yongs su bcad pa*) by that means of valid cognition is delusory and false. And if this is the case then in reality, which is to say ultimately (on an ultimate level), the emptiness of entities, *dharma*s, which is the absence of inherent existence of all *dharma*s and is ascertained by such a means of valid cognition, also could not be acceptable, i.e. would be irrational. Or in other words, because the objects which are set forth by all the means of valid cognition are delusory, the same reasoning can be applied to the absence of inherent existence of all *dharma*s, which is spoken of as 'set forth by the means of valid cognition which investigates it (*tadvicāraḥ pramāṇopadarśita*)'.<sup>5</sup>

(or model – *dpe*), then we can gloss the text with 'it is not acceptable to cultivate through meditation emptiness, because [it is] delusory' (don dam par sgom pa ni / 'grel pas dngos po la bshad pas dngos po ste / chos rnams thams cad rang bzhin med pa'i stong pa nyid tshad mas nges pa yang mi 'thad par 'gyur te / ...bod dpe ltar na / stong nyid rdzun pas sgom par mi 'thad do // Bu ston (1971), p. 574).

- 5 Prajñākaramati's *Pañjikā*: (*BCA* verse 139 ab) yadi pramāṇam api paramārthataḥ pramāṇam na bhavatīti bhavatāṃ pakṣaḥ, nanu tatpramitaṃ mṛṣā, pramāṇasyāprāmāṇye tatpramitaṃ tena pramāṇena paricchinnaṃ mṛṣā alikaṃ prāpnoti / kim atah syāt? (*BCA* verse 139 cd) yadi pramāṇasyāprāmāṇye tatpramitaṃ mṛṣā, tadā yeyam bhāvāṇāṃ dharmāṇāṃ tattvataḥ paramārthataḥ śūnyatā sarvadharmāṇiḥsvabhāvatā tasmāt pramāṇān niścītā, sāpi nopapadyate, na saṃgacchate / sarvapramāṇopadarśitasya mṛṣārthatvāt sāpi sarvadharmāṇiḥsvabhāvatā tadvicāraḥ pramāṇopadarśitaiva iti samāno nyāyaḥ // The Tibetan is slightly different, although not significantly so: gal te tshad ma yang don dam par tshad mar mi 'gyur ro zhes pa khyed kyis phyogs yin na / de gzhal brdzun par mi 'gyur ram / tshad ma tshad ma ma yin pa nyid yin na des gzhal ba ste / tshad ma des yongs su bcad pa brdzun zhing bden pa ma yin pa thob bo // gzhan cir 'gyur zhe na / de'i phyir de nyid du dngos rnams stong pa nyid ni 'thad pa ma yin / (f. 272 b) gal te tshad ma ma yin de nyid yin na / des bcal ba yang brdzun pa yin no // de'i tshe gang 'dir de nyid du ste / don dam pa yin la / dngos po rnams ni chos yin te / stong pa nyid ni chos thams cad rang bzhin med pa yin la / tshad ma de'i nges pa de yang 'thad pa ma yin zhing / rigs pa ma yin te / tshad ma thams cad kyis nye bar bstan pa yang brdzun pa yin pas so // chos thams cad gang na med pa de yang de dpyod pa'i tshad ma nye bar bkod pas rigs pa mtshungs pa yin no zhe na / (Cone mDo 26, folios 272 a-b).



According to the 12th century Sa skya lama bSod nams rtse mo, the opponent in *BCA* 9:139 is setting-forth two *prasaṅga* arguments against the Mādhyamika. First, he wants to argue that given Mādhyamika premisses the inferential valid means of cognition which is supposed to cut all verbal differentiations (*spros* / *prapañca*) turns out to be mistaken (*'khrul pa*). Second, the meditative cultivation of emptiness appears to be pointless (or 'to have no referent' – *don med pa*).

(a). bSod nams rtse mo has his opponent link the first argument specifically to Śāntideva's controversial point in *Bodhicaryāvatāra* 9:2, that 'the conventional is [the referential range of] the mind'.<sup>6</sup> If Śāntideva's comment is true, then since the mind is asserted to be mistaken, then it follows absurdly (first *prasaṅga*) that the inferential means of cognition which is supposed to cut all verbal differentiations is also mistaken. In other words, if all mental activity comes within the conventional (*saṃvṛti*), and all conventional is mistaken, then all mental activity must be mistaken and the inferential mental activity which sets forth emptiness, i.e. the cutting of all *prapañcas*, must also be mistaken.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, bSod nams rtse mo's opponent would want to say, if all mental activity comes within the conventional then it cannot reach beyond that conventional to the ultimate which is said to be beyond the range of mental activity.

(b) bSod nams rtse mo's second *prasaṅga* is an argument based on the ontology of negation which links directly to Śāntideva's reply in *Bodhicaryāvatāra* 9:140. The Mādhyamika maintains against a follower of Sāṃkhya

6 buddher agocaras tattvaṃ buddhiḥ saṃvṛtir ucyate // Tibetan: don dam blo yi spyod yul min / blo ni kun rdzob yin par brjod // bSod nams rtse mo (p. 511:2) does not state that his opponent's reference is to *BCA* 9:2, but it is quite explicit: khyod dBu ma pas blo ni kun rdzob yin par 'dod ces. He is the only commentator I have examined who makes this link here with a verse earlier in Śāntideva's text. On some of the controversies among Tibetan writers concerning the interpretation of this verse see my papers 'Non-conceptuality' (1992), pp. 196-8; and 'Silence and truth' (1982), pp. 67-8.

7 Continuation of the quote from bSod nams rtse mo above: blo 'khrul par khas len na / 'o na spros pa gcod pa'i rjes dpag tshad ma'ang 'khrul par thal lo // That all the conventional is mistaken is stated by Candrakīrti in his *Madhyamakāvatāra* 6:23 ff, where conventional truth is said to be the object of delusory (*brdzun*, i.e. *mṛṣā*) perception (1978, p. 75). It is clear that for bSod nams rtse mo the expression *brdzun* (delusory) in *BCA* 9:139 equals *'khrul pa* (mistaken).

that elements of the latter's system such as cosmic matter (*prakṛti*; *pradhāna* / *gtso bo*) are untrue. But, the opponent responds, negation depends upon its negandum (*dgag bya*). Thus if the negandum is untrue the emptiness which is the negation of it must also be untrue. And if that is accepted by the Mādhyamika then in reality (*de nyid du*) the meditative cultivation of emptiness becomes pointless (*don med*).<sup>8</sup>

These two arguments of bSod nams rtse mo's opponent are different arguments which seek to make the same general point, that on Mādhyamika premisses he or she cannot treat conventional and ultimate in different ways, and also on Mādhyamika premisses there can be no move from conventional to ultimate, for there could be no valid means of cognition which could mark that move.

*Bodhicaryāvatāra* 9:140 – (i) Prajñākaramati's response

*Bodhicaryāvatāra* 9:140 (Tib. 139)

*kalpitam bhāvam asprṣtvā tadabhāvo na grhyate /*  
*tasmād bhāvo mṛṣā yo hi tasyābhāvaḥ sphuṭam mṛṣā //*

- 8 yang na gtso bo la sogs pa mi bden na bkag pa dgag bya la (p. 511:3) ltos pas dgag bya mi bden pas de bkag pa'i stong pa nyid kyang mi bden par thal la / de 'dod na de nyid du zhes pa ste 'o na stong pa nyid bsgoms pa don med par thal zhes rgol ba'o // Note that there is no gloss of *de nyid du*, and nowhere is there any mention that these arguments apply only on the ultimate level. *Don med* could be translated by 'lacks a referent' rather than 'pointless', and it is probable that both senses are intended. Nevertheless, to say that meditation on emptiness lacks a referent would in one sense be to repeat a point made already (emptiness is untrue). In another sense those Mādhyamikas who accept that emptiness is beyond duality and beyond the mind might well grant that meditation on emptiness lacks a referent, so this would not in itself stand as a criticism. Finally, bSod nams rtse mo is here glossing the expression *nopapadyate/mi 'thad 'gyur* – 'will not be acceptable', for which 'pointless' is better than 'lacks a referent'. Therefore the primary meaning here seems to be that if emptiness is untrue then meditation on it is pointless. The derivation of two arguments from the whole verse may well have been made easier not only by the reference in the Tibetan translation to the 'meditative cultivation of emptiness', a completely new factor entering the equation, but also the Tibetan interrogative final particle ('am) in 'gyur ram at the end of the first half-verse, which can also be used to express disjunction.

*brtags pa'i dngos la ma reg par /*  
*de yi dngos med 'dzin ma yin /*  
*de phyir brdzun pa'i dngos gang yin /*  
*de yi dngos med gsal bar brdzun //*

Not having contacted a conceptually-constructed entity /  
 The negation of that is not apprehended /  
 Therefore, in the case of a delusory entity /  
 The negation of that is clearly delusory //

According to Prajñākaramati, commenting on the first half of this verse, to be a conceptually-constructed entity is to be superimposed (*samāropita*), the result of *kalpanā*, an act of constructive reification.<sup>9</sup> Having not contacted that, which is to say having not apprehended it by way of a mental act of constructive reification, the negation of it is not apprehended, not perceptually appropriated.<sup>10</sup> Prajñākaramati does not wish to portray this as some complex epistemological theory. His appeal is to our normal understanding of negation. It is just like when we conceive or mentally construct a pot, which then has a form which has been superimposed (on a situation where it is not actually present), and then with reference to that superimposed form we are able to perceive the negation (or absence) of the pot. Thus Prajñākaramati makes a general point about how negation occurs, and the need for implicit or explicit reference in negation to the negandum.<sup>11</sup>

The next stage of Prajñākaramati's argument, however, involves a shift of the concern of his analysis. When the pot is subjected to analytic investigation (*vicāra*), even that analytic investigation which is of the ordinary everyday worldly sort, when no intrinsic form (*svarūpa*) abides then this applies still more to its negation, which has the form of its inversion. This is why Śāntideva states in *Bodhicaryāvatāra* 9:140 cd that 'therefore in the

9 For construction in general, and these '*kalpa*' terms in particular, see WILLIAMS (1980), esp. pp. 26 ff. On *kalpanā* in the *BCA.Pañjikā* see the reference given there to the commentary on *BCA* 9:109: *kalpanā āropikā buddhiḥ / kalpitam tayā samāropitam /*

10 *kalpanākalpitam samāropitam bhāvam asprṣtvā kalpanābuddhyā agrhītvā tadabhāvo na grhyate nālambyate /* (Tibetan f. 272 b) *brtags te rtog pas sgro btags pa'o // dngos po ni chos yin la / ma reg pa ste / rtog pa'i blos ma bzung bar de'i dngos po* (add 'med' with the Sanskrit version) *'dzin pa ma yin te / dmigs pa ma yin no //*

11 *tathāhi ghaṭam āropitarūpeṇa parikalpya tatsambandhitayā ghaṭābhāvam pratipadyate lokah /* (Tibetan) *'di ltar yang bum pa btags pa'i ngo bos yongs su brtags nas de dang 'brel ba bum pa med pa 'jig rten pas rtogs te /*

case of a delusory entity, the negation of that is clearly delusory'.<sup>12</sup> In other words, everyone will admit that if there simply does not exist any negandum then also the negation cannot exist. The conceptual shift is important. From an initial half-verse in which Śāntideva puts forward a positive point about the nature of negation, in the second half-verse there is a switch to applying that very same point to the negation of both entity (negandum) and its negation (absence). If Prajñākaramati is right, then Śāntideva as a good Mādhyamika put forward the need of negation for a negandum as a point which would be accepted by everyone – it can indeed be accepted by anyone since it is a tautology – in order then to derive the *modus tollendo tollens* inference that if there is no negandum at all then also there cannot be any negation either.<sup>13</sup>

The next stage is to argue that the negation also lacks inherent existence. Prajñākaramati explains that a separate negation, of an entity which lacks inherent existence is clearly, certainly, delusory, which is to say untrue. The reason, he explains, is because that negation too has a form which is constructed (*parikalpita*). Thus, he summarises, since both entity and its negation have forms which are constructed there abides (remains) the absence of inherent existence of all *dharma*s.<sup>14</sup> In subtly bringing into play

12 ghaṭasya vicārena lokaprasiddhenaiva yadā na kiṃcit svarūpam avatiṣṭhate, tadā tadabhāvaḥ tadviparyayarūpaḥ sutarāṃ na kaścit / tadevopadarśayann āha tasmād ityādi (v. 140 cd) / (Tibetan) bum pa la mnam par dpyad pas 'jig rten la grags pa nyid / gang gi tshe cung zad kyis ngo bor mi gnas pa de'i tshe med pa nyid yin te / de las phyin ci logs gi ngo bo shin tu 'ga' yod pa ma yin no // de nyid brtags pa bstan pa'i phyir / de'i phyir zhes bya ba la sogs pa gsungs te /

13 yasmāt kalpitabhāvaavivekena abhāvo gṛhyate, tasmād bhāvo mṛṣā asatsvabhāvo yaḥ, tasyābhāvaḥ sphuṭaṃ mṛṣā... (Tibetan) gang gi phyir brtags pa'i dngos po'i dbye bas dngos po med pa 'dzin pa ('ma' omitted with the Sanskrit) yin pa de'i phyir brdzun pa'i gang la dngos po gang na med pa'i dngos po gang yin pa'o // de yi dngos med gsal bar brdzun // The Tibetan is slightly different, and makes no reference *here* to the important introduction of the absence of inherent existence.

14 Continuation of above: tasya niḥsvabhāvasya bhāvasya abhāvo virahaḥ sphuṭaṃ niścitaṃ mṛṣā asatyah / tasyāpi parikalpitarūpatvāt / evaṃ ca bhāvābhāvayoḥ parikalpitarūpatve sarvadarmaniḥsvabhāvataiva avatiṣṭhate // The Tibetan appears rather less clear: de'i ste dngos po med pa'i rang bzhin gyis dngos po med cing bral ba gsal ba ste / des par brdzun zhing bden pa ma yin pa yin te / de yang yongs su brtags pa'i dngos po yin pa'i phyir ro // 'di ltar yang dngos po dang dngos po med pa dag yongs su brtags pa'i ngo bo la chos thams cad rang bzhin med pa nyid kyis gnas pa yin no // See also similar comments in Vibhūticandra, particularly: de ltar dngos dang dngos min brtags pa yin pas / rang bzhin med pa kho na gnas par 'gyur ro //

the concept of inherent existence, Prajñākaramati is gradually moving the concern of his analysis from issues relating to negation in general to the specific issue of concern to the Mādhyamika, absence of inherent existence as applied to all *dharma*s.

Let us conclude our examination of Prajñākaramati's response to the *pūrvapakṣa* of *BCA* 9:139 by noting the salient points of his approach inasmuch as it reflects on his interpretation of *BCA* 9:140 ab. The opponent had argued that since the means of valid cognition are not ultimately means of valid cognition they cannot set forth emptiness. Neither Śāntideva nor Prajñākaramati address *directly* the opponent's points concerning the means of valid cognition or the status of emptiness as delusory. Prajñākaramati puts forward the need for a conceptually-constructed negandum not in order to stress a need to be aware of the negandum in order to understand the negation (a stress on the 'not having contacted'), but rather in order to move *away* from the negandum which is delusory (a stress on 'conceptually-constructed') towards the delusory status of negation and therefore *bhāva* and *abhāva*. This point must be emphasised, particularly in view of the use of Śāntideva's text by dGe lugs sources. In the light of Prajñākaramati's comments (and this is confirmed, or at least not denied, by the other Indian commentaries), Śāntideva's reference to the need for contacting a conceptually-constructed negandum in order to have negation was in order to *direct attention away from the negandum* through employing the old Mādhyamika strategy of denying the inherent existence of binary opposites. He thus affirms, through accepting the opponent's premisses, universal emptiness, absence of inherent existence. Prajñākaramati's (and, I think, Śāntideva's) interest in the principle that without a negandum there is no negation is solely in order to show that there is no negandum and no negation. It is to move beyond concern with negandum and negation to emptiness, which is affirmed in that very move.<sup>15</sup>

15 The stages of this move are made clearer by Kalyāṇadeva: 'If there were not determined and examined entities through an act of constructive reification, one would not be able to apprehend the negation of a conceptually-constructed entity (on the model of "That does not exist"). In spite of that, one knows the nature of it as emptiness, and from that apprehension entities will be known as delusory.' (gang gi phyir rtog (? – unclear blockprint) pa'i dngos po rnams kyis bcal shing yongs su ma dpyad par de med pa nyid ces brtags pa'i dngos po med pa nyid 'dzin par mi nus kyi / de'i rang bzhin stong pa nyid du shes shing 'dzin pa de las dngos po rnams brdzun par



Moreover the entity (*bhāva*) referred to in *BCA* 9:140 is *any* entity inasmuch as it is occurring within a context of negation. The verse is not, in Prajñākaramati's discussion, about inherent existence and emptiness as such. Here there is reference to the negandum lacking inherent existence, but not to the negandum in this verse *being* inherent existence, with the negation its lack, i.e. emptiness. Of course, inasmuch as *bhāva* and *abhāva* refer to any entity and its negation the same basic principles could be applied to inherent existence and emptiness (its negation), and there is no doubt that Śāntideva and Prajñākaramati want this conclusion also to be drawn. In such a case not only is inherent existence said to be delusory, but also emptiness. It is an implication of emptiness that it must be delusory (i.e. empty), and therefore its delusory nature does not negate emptiness. Thus on that level also it is implicit in Prajñākaramati's discussion that he accepts most of what is contained in the opponent's argument.<sup>16</sup> He accepts that emptiness is delusory, he accepts that ultimately the conclusion of the means of valid cognition is delusory, but he holds that these are not problems – for in that very acceptance emptiness is affirmed.

*Bodhicaryāvatāra* 9:140 – (ii) Some Tibetan comments

bSod nams rtse mo makes explicit a number of the points already drawn from Śāntideva in the light of Prajñākaramati's response.<sup>17</sup> He sees the

shes par 'gyur ro) The move from negation in general to absence of inherent existence is not specifically clarified, however. Kalyāṇadeva continues with the material quoted above on the negation also being delusory in dependence on the delusory negandum. Thus, unlike Prajñākaramati, Kalyāṇadeva does appear to relate his answer specifically to the process of developing an understanding of emptiness, and he is more concerned with the specific reference of *bhāva* and *abhāva* to issues concerning inherent existence and emptiness. But he does not suggest this is the only use for these terms in this verse.

- 16 He accepts that emptiness is delusory, although he does not accept that in terms of the path to liberation this makes emptiness no different from any other delusory entity. He accepts that the means of valid cognition are ultimately not means of valid cognition. But he does not seem to accept that the inferences obtained by the means of valid cognition which set forth emptiness are descriptively false. He does not discuss this point, but implicitly he must accept that although emptiness is delusory it has been validly set-forth.
- 17 Among Tibetans, the one who probably follows Prajñākaramati most closely is Bu ston, who like Prajñākaramati indicates that this *BCA* 9:140 ab is a general account

whole of *BCA* 9:140 as a response by the Mādhyamika to the first *prasaṅga* of the opponent, and bSod nams rtse mo makes it quite clear that Śāntideva accepts that *prasaṅga* in its entirety:

It is accepted [by us] that : Because of having refuted all mentation [the means of valid cognition is] not a means of valid cognition. Or, because the negandum is not established, that emptiness which is a positively determining (*yongs gcod*) emptiness which will negate that [negandum] – because its referent (*gzhal bya*) is not true – [is] not a means of valid cognition.<sup>18</sup>

of negation based on everyday common sense. Bu ston himself makes no reference to the specific examples of inherent existence and emptiness, except simply to follow Prajñākaramati at the end of his comments with a mention of absence of inherent existence abiding because existent and non-existent entities are conceptually-constructed (*dngos po yod med brtags pa yin pas rang bzhin med pa nyid du gnas so*). The negandum and negation spoken of in this half-verse are illustrated with a pot and absence of pot at a particular place (*sa phyogs brtags pas de'i bum med rtog par 'jig rten pa'i grags pas so* (p. 574) – cf Prajñākaramati, quoted above, note 11).

- 18 bSod nams rtse mo p. 511:3: blo thams cad sun phyung bas tshad ma ma yin pa'am dgag bya ma grub pas de bkag pa'i stong nyid yongs gcod kyi stong pa nyid de gzhal bya mi bden pas tshad ma ma yin par 'dod do. There is a temptation to see as significant bSod nams rtse mo's reference to a means of valid cognition which is 'positively determining' (*yongs gcod*). We know that there were Tibetan thinkers who wished to employ Dharmakīrti's distinction between *vyavaccheda* (*rnam par gcod pa*) and *pariccheda* (*yongs su gcod pa*) in order to argue that while the Madhyamaka might employ arguments *rnam par gcod pa* (purely in order to negate, i.e. – if we can follow Tsong kha pa – in order to simply negate inherent existence, for example), the (Prāsaṅgika) Madhyamaka does not employ arguments *yongs su gcod pa* (positively determining, i.e. to demonstrate that absence of inherent existence is the case). This issue is bound up with questions of whether the Madhyamaka has a position which it argues for, or whether it simply engages in negating the positions of opponents, and what is the nature of the apparent negations which occur in Madhyamaka. Tsong kha pa argues that the distinction is incoherent, and it is at the core of his attack on the theoretical methodology of many of his predecessors. For important discussions of these issues, with particular reference to Tibetan debates, see the work of David Seyfort RUEGG, particularly (1981), pp. 205-41, and (1991) pp. 281-310. See also my 1985 paper, pp. 205-25, and Chizuko YOSHIMIZU 1993, and also Tsong kha pa's *Drang nges legs bshad snying po* (1991), pp. 220 ff especially pp. 223-4; translation by THURMAN (1984), pp. 376 ff, especially p. 379. Thus one could argue that bSod nams rtse mo, in accepting the first *prasaṅga* of the *pūrvapakṣa*, on the basis of the quotation above might be included among those who deny that Madhyamaka has an argument or thesis which is positively determining, but would accept arguments as simply negating. However, while bSod nams rtse mo



bSod nams rtse mo's whole strategy in commenting on *Bodhicaryāvatāra* 9:140 is to make the negative point that both negandum and negation are delusory, 'if the son of a barren woman is delusory, his death is also delusory' (*mo gsham gyi bu brdzun na shi ba yang brdzun no*). For bSod nams rtse mo the point of Śāntideva's argument in *Bodhicaryāvatāra* 9:140 is to show that all negation – and therefore by implication the negation which is emptiness – must occur in terms of mental operations, and therefore must be conventional and delusory. That is all there is to it, as regards *BCA* 9:140. The model, bSod nams rtse mo states, is that of 'Who is not present?', 'This [person] is not present' (*su med ce na 'di med ces*). If there is no negandum then the same in general can be said of the negation. If the negandum is delusory, then the negation also is delusory.<sup>19</sup> It is clearer

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may indeed think this, I do not believe we can argue it on the strength of his comments on *BCA* 9:140 alone. Prajñākaramati also uses the expression 'positively determined' (*paricchinna/yongs su bcad pa*) in putting forward the views of the *pūrvapakṣa* (see above, note 5), and it is probably from this source that bSod nams rtse mo decided to employ the term in this context. But there is no sign there of any correlation here in Prajñākaramati or bSod nams rtse mo with *vyavacchinna/rnam par bcad pa*. RUEGG has pointed out that Candrakīrti uses *pariccheda* in his commentary to the *Yuktiṣaṣṭikā* (RUEGG, "On *pramāṇa* theory", p.307, note 92), but there again there is no correlation with *vyavaccheda*. Thus it is difficult to read at this point any technical usage in the sense treated by Tsong kha pa, for example, into the employment of these terms in this *BCA* context. Nevertheless it may be this employment of the term by Prajñākaramati in commenting on *BCA* 9:139 and his acceptance of the *pūrvapakṣa* in 9:140 which was a major factor contributing towards the technical usage of these terms in Tibet. For clearly if the Madhyamaka does not accept arguments which are positively determining, the issue of why it is Madhyamaka uses arguments and what their role might be remains open. What are the Prāsaṅgika arguments then, if they are found to be valuable in cutting the forces of unenlightenment and yet they are not accepted as positively determining? According to *Bodhicaryāvatāra* 9:141, they occur 'like illusions', but that does not explain what they are doing or what they are if they are not positively determining. Dharmakīrti already had a distinction between *pariccheda* and *vyavaccheda*; it may well have been precisely this context in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* which suggested its employment in such a controversial way in Tibet. There are some grounds in bSod nams rtse mo's comments on *BCA* 9:141 for thinking that he may have been moving towards a distinction between *yongs gcod* and *rnam gcod* based on Svātantrika grounds, probably under the influence of his teacher Phya pa Chos kyi seng ge. For further details see the full-length version of this paper in my *Studies in the Philosophy of the Bodhicaryāvatāra*.

19 dgag bya ngos ma bzung na bye brag med pa spyir bkag pa'i phyir ro // des dgag bya brdzun na bkag pa yang brdzun te /

in bSod nams rtse mo even more than in Prajñākaramati that Śāntideva introduced the reference to contacting a conceptually-constructed entity in *BCA* 9:140 ab as an indisputable point about negation which would lead to a demonstration of negation and negandum as delusory, accepting the *pūrva-pakṣa*. For bSod nams rtse mo as for Prajñākaramati, one precisely should *not* concern oneself with the conceptually-constructed negandum. The whole direction of the verse is towards moving away from the negandum.

Which brings us to Tsong kha pa. What we notice from Tsong kha pa's short comments on *BCA* 9:140 is that his entire concern is ontology (and implicitly, of course, what might be called the 'moral and soteriological implications' of getting the ontology wrong – of over- or under-negating). The subject, Tsong kha pa tells us, is the delusory entity. It is delusory because it is established as lacking inherent existence (*chos can rdzun pa'i dngos po rang bzhin med par grub pa'i phyir* – *bLo gsal ba* commentary p. 28a). In other words Tsong kha pa immediately distinguishes between being delusory in the sense of simply not existing or being an hallucination, and being delusory in this technical sense. Thus the 'entity' of Śāntideva's verse is not just any entity but a 'non-inherently existing' entity.

Tsong kha pa initially gives the impression that his main concern in glossing *BCA* 9:140 is that of avoiding a misunderstanding about the ontological implications of 'delusory'. But he has another major concern, and that is to relate this verse from the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* to the specific issue of inherent existence as negandum and emptiness its negation, thus showing that this verse is not about accepting the opponent's argument and using it in order to reaffirm emptiness, a move away from conceptually-constructed objects like pots and their negation, but rather the verse is about the need to apprehend inherent existence in order to apprehend emptiness. It also shows that in Śāntideva's eyes emptiness itself is not an ultimate truth in the sense of an entity which is anything other than lacking in inherent existence, as are all things. Tsong kha pa seems to want to avoid any suggestion that this verse is about conceptually-constructed entities like pots. He mentions the expression 'conceptually-constructed' (*btags pa*) only in quoting Śāntideva, and glosses the conceptually-constructed entity as 'the negandum' (*dgag bya btags pa'i dngos po la ma reg ste*). We expect 'the entity' (*dngos po*) here to be the same entity introduced earlier as delusory, lacking in inherent existence (i.e. a pot), particularly as the negation of that was introduced by Tsong kha pa in terms which reflect *BCA* 9:140. But Tsong kha pa continues

by telling us that the negation of that [conceptually-constructed entity], which is to say, emptiness, is not apprehended as true (*dgag bya btags pa'i dngos po la ma reg pa ste ma bzung bar de'i dngos med de stong nyid bden par mi 'dzin pas so*). Emptiness is not the negation of entities, however, but the negation of inherent existence. Thus the negandum (*dgag bya*) here – the entity – must equal inherent existence, and Tsong kha pa has slid in a way which would have seemed to previous commentators counter-intuitive from a delusory entity as lacking inherent existence to referring to the very inherent existence itself as an entity. Therefore the conceptually-constructed entity of *BCA* 9:140 is not for Tsong kha pa something like a pot, for the negation of a pot is not emptiness.<sup>20</sup> The conceptually-constructed entity is the inherent existence of the pot. That this is scarcely the natural way to take 'conceptually-constructed entity' in this verse, which is glossed by other commentators as 'a pot and so on', is what necessitated the gradual slide in Tsong kha pa's commentary from the delusory entity (*brdzun pa'i dngos po*) which is said to lack inherent existence; to the negation which depends on it (*de la brten pa'i dngos po med*), which also lacks inherent existence and is said to be absence of truth (*bden med*); to the conceptually-constructed entity (which we all know therefore lacks inherent existence) which is the negandum (*dgag bya btags pa'i dngos po*) to the negation of that, which turns out to be emptiness and also is not apprehended as true (*de'i dngos med de stong nyid bden par mi 'dzin pas*). Tsong kha pa could have made his points about the term 'delusory' equalling 'lacking inherent existence', and emptiness as itself lacking in inherent existence, without implying a gloss on the 'conceptually-constructed entity' and its negation of *Bodhicaryāvatāra* 9:140 as 'inherent existence' and 'emptiness' respectively. One can only speculate that Tsong kha pa's reading of this verse was a reflection of the requirement elsewhere in his system (seen in the *Lam rim chen mo* for example) to use this verse from Śāntideva in order to facilitate a stress on the need to know the negandum – true establishment (*bden grub*) – in order

20 Nor could it even be an inherently-existent pot, since emptiness is not the negation of an inherently existent pot. The emptiness of a pot is the negation of an inherently existent pot. Emptiness is *niḥsvabhāvatā*, the negation of inherent existence. As Tsong kha pa says (see note 2 above), the negandum which has to be known well is the Self, or inherent existence. Thus in negating the inherent existence of the pot, the negandum (*dgag bya*) is inherent existence and the substratum for negation (*dgag gzhi*) is the pot.

to understand the meaning of emptiness, both as a point of philosophy but also (and are they here very different?) a point on the spiritual path of direct insight into emptiness (cf. v. 139: *stong pa nyid / sgom pa*).

### Conclusions

Śāntideva's Indian and early Tibetan commentators followed the Master fairly closely, and there seems to have been little objection to adopting Śāntideva's acceptance of the *pūrvapakṣa*'s premisses concerning the inadmissability of the means of valid cognition. For Tsong kha pa, however, things were very different. We know that Tsong kha pa considered himself to have had a revelation from Mañjuśrī in person concerning the final truth of the Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka perspective, and the key to that perspective was said to lie in the identity of emptiness and dependent-origination. Thus the very beginning and (in a sense) the end of Madhyamaka for Tsong kha pa lies in neither over- nor under-negating through realising that emptiness is the negation of inherent existence but not of entities themselves. Entities certainly *exist* as non-inherently existing and dependently originated. Alternative understandings of Madhyamaka all must eventually fall into one or other of the faults of under- or over-negation (and sometimes, in different respects, both). This approach of Tsong kha pa and the dGe lugs tradition after him entails in particular a stress on what remains, what exists, in the teaching of emptiness. And what remains is the conventional world, seen not through unenlightened eyes as inherently existing, but rather seen as it really is, as a *conventional* world.

When Tsong kha pa's approach is applied to *Bodhicaryāvatāra* 9:139-40 we find that there is no longer any reason why, for Tsong kha pa, Śāntideva should accept the comments of the *pūrvapakṣa* concerning the means of valid cognition. Those means *can* only occur as part of the conventional, but as part of the conventional there is no reason why they cannot be perfectly effective, valid, and lead to conclusions which are true. In other words, since the means of valid cognition can only occur conventionally, for Tsong kha pa and his tradition it is simply not true that the means of valid cognition are not means of valid cognition. In order to remain faithful to his Indian sources, therefore, Tsong kha pa clarified the assertion that the means of valid cognition are not means of valid cognition, by explaining that they



are not inherently existing, or *ultimately* means of valid cognition.<sup>21</sup> Which of course is true, but since they could not be inherently existing means of valid cognition anyway Tsong kha pa has effectively neutralised the premise employed by Śāntideva's opponent. Moreover Tsong kha pa further undermines the *pūrvapakṣa*'s position by stressing a point central to Tsong kha pa's ontology – the equivalence of 'delusory' and 'lacking inherent existence'. To call something delusory does not *as such* mean that it is less real than anything else, since both conventional and ultimate are delusory in the sense that they lack inherent existence. The result of all of this is that unlike Śāntideva, Tsong kha pa does not at all agree with the *pūrvapakṣa*'s premisses, let alone his (or her) conclusions.

It is not surprising, granted this, that Tsong kha pa's understanding of Śāntideva's reply in *BCA* 9:140 would not coincide perfectly with Śāntideva's own intentions. Śāntideva accepts the opponent's premisses, and wants to confirm that like all negations, emptiness is delusory as well. His introduction of the dependence of negation on negandum is in order to move straight away to the delusory nature of both. There is no statement here that 'delusory' equals 'lacking in inherent existence', and there is no objection to the opponent's statement that the means of valid cognition are not means of valid cognition at all. Śāntideva agrees with the opponent's premisses and seeks to underline this agreement with a move away from the negandum towards negation and the ultimately delusory nature of both. Tsong kha pa, as we have seen, does not agree with the *pūrvapakṣa*. Thus for Tsong kha pa *BCA* 9:140 must perform a different function. Fortunately it can fit perfectly within his project of neither over- nor under-negating. *Bodhicaryāvatāra* 9:140 ab provides for Tsong kha pa an Indian authority in order to support the need to identify well the negandum – inherent existence, not existence as such – in meditation on emptiness.

21 Which is not at all the same, of course, as saying that they are not means of valid cognition concerning the ultimate, as some previous Tibetan scholars seem to have thought. Actually, this interpretation by Tsong kha pa appears to be contained implicitly in Prajñākaramati's comments on *BCA* 9:139, but Tsong kha pa is possibly more radical in explicitly holding that the means of valid cognition can set-forth ultimates (emptinesses) as well as conventionalities. See CABEZÓN, especially pp. 117 ff, and 371 ff, together with associated notes.

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