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THE QUESTION OF 'DEVELOPMENT' IN TSONGKHAPA'S MADHYAMAKA PHILOSOPHY*

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The issues raised in this paper pertain to what may be described as methodological questions. At the core of these issues lie the question of how, as contemporary scholars of Tibetan studies, we should approach the thought of a historically significant thinker like Tsongkhapa. "To what extent we *can* and *should* accept the traditional Tibetan interpretations as given?", "How far can we situate the philosophy of an individual thinker like Tsongkhapa within the context of what Paul Williams calls 'interrelationships of rivalry and agreement between scholars?'"[1], and "What, if any, cultural and political factors are at play in shaping the views of a particular author?", etc. These are some of the underlying questions which we must take into account when engaging with the thought of a historical Tibetan thinker. Especially in the case of someone like Tsongkhapa, whose works have acquired such a canonical stature within the Geluk tradition, it is important for the modern scholar to be able to approach Tsongkhapa unobscured by the lenses of Geluk commentarial scholarship. In other words, we must find a way of making Tsongkhapa speak, to the extent that it is possible, in his own voice.

The aim of this paper is fairly simple. It is to demonstrate that the kind of methodological sensitivity I have suggested above *can* lead to some interesting and hopefully insightful discoveries. I have chosen the question of 'development' in Tsongkhapa's Madhyamaka philosophy as my focus to make this simple point. Thus the paper is broadly divided into two sections. The first part provides the background for our discussion and addresses the general methodological concerns involved in our Tsongkhapa-exegesis. In the second part, I shall, by way of textual exegesis, illustrate some of the key areas of Madhyamaka thought where we can definitely discern either a process of evolution or sometimes even a radical shift in Tsongkhapa's so-

* The research and writing of this paper was completed during my tenure as the Margaret Smith research fellow in Eastern religion at Girton College, Cambridge during the period of 1996-99. The paper also draws materials from Jinpa (1997), which is my doctoral thesis approved by Cambridge University, UK. I would like to thank Prof. D. Seyfort Ruegg and Prof. Tom Tillemans for their critical comments on the paper.

1 Williams (1989; Spring), p.5.

called mature period. As it will become evident in part II, many of the areas where such processes of evolution can be discerned pertain to themes which remain central to Tibetan Madhyamaka thought. Thus, my paper also aims to serve as an introduction to some of the key debates in Tibetan philosophy.

I

The question of 'development' in Tsongkhapa's thought

That there is a radical shift in Tsongkhapa's views on Madhyamaka philosophy—especially his understanding of the doctrine of emptiness—between his earlier and later life is obvious from various textual sources. Even the traditional Geluk scholarship on Tsongkhapa acknowledges this from its earliest stages of development. For example, Tsongkhapa's 'official' biographer and one of his principal students, Khedrup-Je[2] (1385-1438), writes that at one time Tsongkhapa "felt more comfortable with the interpretation of the Madhyamaka view as that which denies all standpoints and accepts no thesis of its own"[3]. However, this so-called 'no-thesis' view later became one of the principal objects of critique in Tsongkhapa's subsequent writings.

There is thus an unspoken methodological principle adopted in the Tibetan scholarship on Tsongkhapa, a convention shared at least among his Geluk interpreters. This is to treat only the writings of Tsongkhapa after a specific age as representing his 'mature' standpoint[4]. This is roughly around the age of forty when he began to write his summa *Great Exposition of the Path to Enlightenment*[5]. Certainly, this methodological choice

2 All Tibetan names of people, places, and schools are provided in phonetics to ensure that nonspecialist readers can pronounce these names. For those who wish to refer to the original Tibetan spellings of the names I have given in an appendix a list of my phonetics and their corresponding spellings according to the Wylie transliteration system.

3 Dad pa'i 'jug ngogs, p.60. All translations are mine unless otherwise stated. References to page numbers of the Tibetan texts are to modern type-set editions whenever they are listed in the bibliography.

4 For an interesting account of the so-called 'earlier' period of Tsongkapa's intellectual life, see Sparham (1993), pp.16-19.

5 Byang chub lam rim chen mo, TKSB, vol.pa. English translations of the last two sections of this important work—i.e. the sections on 'tranquil abiding' and 'special in-

seems to accord with the dating of all his works on Madhyamaka philosophy, which are subsequent to the above period. It is therefore surmised that any subsequent changes in Tsongkhapa's thought can be regarded as minor and, in terms of philosophical substance, are at best cosmetic. In fact, the traditional Geluk scholarship appears to reject that there *is* any change in Tsongkhapa's Madhyamaka of the so-called mature period. This is understandable given that the Madhyamaka philosophy of Tsongkhapa—i.e. of this latter period—is said to have emerged on the basis of direct instructions from Mañjuśrī himself. However, as I hope to reveal progressively, the traditional Geluk assumption of Tsongkhapa's Madhyamaka of the 'mature' period as emerging *en bloc* appears far from true. Not only is there a definite process of development in the so-called mature period, as I shall demonstrate later, there also appear to be some shifts in Tsongkhapa's views on certain issues. So far no modern scholarship on Tsongkhapa seems to have attempted to discern this process of development. In fact, some modern scholars appear (perhaps unconsciously) to perpetuate the traditional perspective by subscribing to the basic premise that the Madhyamaka philosophy of Tsongkhapa's mature period is a revealed tradition. Worst still, sometimes modern scholarship's lack of hermeneutic sensitivity in Tsongkhapa-exegesis creates the myth that Geluk Madhyamaka equals Tsongkhapa's Madhyamaka. That this is unacceptable is due to the simple reason that the former includes the enormous corpus of the Geluk commentarial tradition. Furthermore, Tsongkhapa's Madhyamaka belongs to what Ruegg describes as the "classical period" of Tibetan Buddhism characterised by a high point in philosophical penetration, exegesis, and systematic hermeneutics. In contrast, much of the subsequent Geluk Madhyamaka writers belong to the "scholastic period" dominated by "interpretation (often epigonal) comprising continued exegetical and hermeneutical activity largely within the bounds of the different *chos lugs*"[6].

sight'—can be found in Wayman (1978). There is also a partial translation of the section on special insight in Napper (1989), part II. A complete English translation of LRC is under preparation by a group of scholars in the United States and will soon be published by Snow Lion Publications, USA.

6 Ruegg (1980), p.278.

Problems of interpretation in Tsongkhapa-exegesis

As far as the written legacy of Tsongkhapa is concerned, there are no significant disputes pertaining to the authorship of his works[7]. By Tsongkhapa's time, the tradition of compiling and printing the collected works of noted authors appears to have been established in Tibet. Although it is difficult to infer the exact dates of the actual compilation of Tsongkhapa's own collected works, it is safe to surmise that this must have happened not too long after his death[8]. More importantly, for our purpose, all major writings on Madhyamaka philosophy by Tsongkhapa are not only extant[9] but their au-

7 Thūken Chökyi Nyima (1737-1802) has drawn attention to questions raised by Jhamling Sönam Namgyal (1400-1475) concerning the authorship of dGe sbyor gyi gnad la dri ba snyan bkul ba lhag bsam rab dkar, TKSB, vol.kha. See Grub mtha' shel gyi me long, p.159. Desi Sangye Gyatso (1652-1705) also refers to qualms he has raised about Zab lam na ro chos drug gi khrid yid ches gsum ldan, TKSB, vol.nya, in his gYa' sel. See dga' ldan chos byung vaidurya ser po, p.69,

8 A recently published bibliography of Tibetan works, Bod kyi bstan bcos khag gcig gi mtshan byang dri med shel dkar phreng ba (1985), p. 183, lists a catalogue of Tsongkhapa's collected Works by Tsangtön Kunga Gyaltsen, a student of Jamyang Chöje Tashi Palden (1379-1449), himself a student of Tsongkhapa and the founder of the famous Drepung monstery near Lhasa.

9 There is however an intriguing reference in RG to a text called sTong thun, which suggests that there is a work by this title by Tsongkhapa. Not only is this text not found in the standard edition of TKSB, so far I have also failed to find any reference to this by any subsequent Tibetan commentators or modern scholars. The reference reads: "Tshig gsal las ni 'gag pa med pa skye med pa zhes sogs ni 'gag sogs yod par gsungs pa'i lung dang mi 'gal ston pa na zag med kyi ye shes kyi yul gyi rang bzhin gyi skye 'gag med pa yin zhes pa dang don dam pa'i skye ba bkag gi kun rdzob pa'i skye ba ma bkag ces stong thun du bshad zin cing/ ..."RG, p.89. I once heard the respected Madhyamaka scholar of Drepung Loseling college, Shagkhor Khensur Nyima Rinpoche speculating that there was probably a work of Tsongkhapa by this name which was lost. I am inclined to think that by referring to stong thun Tsongkhapa is not suggesting that there is a work by him by this name. The most probable reading is that he is following a literary convention whereby the section on the critique of epistemology in Candrakīrti's Prasannapadā is called tshig gsal stong thun (the thousand doses in one from Prasannapadā). For example, Zhangzhungpa Chöwang Drakpa (1404-1469) gives the title dBuma rtsa ba'i 'grel pa tshig gsal gyi mtha' bzhi'i skye ba 'gog pa'i stong thun to his notes based on lectures of Khedrup-Je. Similarly, Jamyang Zhepa Ngawang Tsondrü (1648-1722) wrote an extended commentary on the above section of Prasannapadā again entitled Tshig gsal stong thun gyi tshad ma'i rnam bshad. For an interesting discussion on the meaning and origin of the expression stong thun, see Cabezón (1992), pp.403-4, note 41.

thorship remains beyond doubt. We are also fortunate to have in Khedrup-Je's *Haven of Faith*[10], the official biography of Tsongkhapa, a tentative dating of most of these important works on Madhyamaka thus giving us a workable basis to discern the stages of development in Tsongkhapa's Madhyamaka thought. Most importantly, we find in Tsongkhapa's own key Madhyamaka writings inter-textual references which make the chronological order of these works clearly evident. For example, in *LN* we find an explicit reference to *LTC* and also an intimation that the author wishes to write a commentary on Nāgārjuna's Mūlamadhyamakakārikā. From these two references, we know that *LTC* predates *LN*, and that *RG* is subsequent to *LN*.

A corollary to the question of 'development' is the critical issue of what may be called the 'originality' of Tsongkhapa's Madhyamaka views. For the traditional Tibetan commentators the question of originality is not an issue. As Gareth Sparham points out even Tsongkhapa himself, along with his followers, "believed that his insights were free from originality and that his vision was the exact vision of the Buddha and the Mādhyamika saints described in their various sūtras and śāstras..."[11] However, from the perspective of modern scholarship, the problem of the originality of Tsongkhapa's thought remains an important issue. If nothing else, determining the answers to this question is critical at least for our historical understanding of the development of Madhyamaka philosophy in Tibet. Admittedly, in the light of the lack of clear textual evidence of the doctrinal positions of the Kadam school, it is difficult to discern how much of Tsongkhapa's views is original[12]. The problem is further complicated by the traditional Tibetan emphasis on attributing all one's insights to an earlier 'authoritative' master. This is characteristic of a scholarship that operates within a system where 'tradition' (*gsung rgyun*) is perceived as the main source of validation, and the subsequent commentator's task is seen as discerning the 'ultimate purport' of the 'master' or 'masters'. For example, Tsongkhapa attributes almost all his views on Madhyamaka philosophy to

10 The full title is Ngo mtshar rmad du byung ba'i rnam thar dad pa'i 'jug ngogs, TKSB, vol.ka.

11 See Gareth Sparham's "Introduction" to Sparham (1993), p.15.

12 I think that this problem is not unique to Tsongkhapa's thought; there is the broader issue of how one might discern originality and creativity in the context of any system of thought that could be characterised as a 'tradition text'.

Buddhapālita (4th century CE)[13] and Candrakīrti (7th century CE), whom Tsongkhapa in turn sees as expounding the ultimate purport of Nāgārjuna (2nd century CE) and Āryadeva (2nd century CE), the founders of the Indian Madhyamaka school. Nevertheless, in so far as the interpretation of Nāgārjuna's Madhyamaka philosophy in Tibet is concerned Tsongkhapa does seem to depart at great length from both his contemporary and earlier Tibetan thinkers.

The traditional Geluk understanding of this point of departure in Tsongkhapa's thought is to attribute the development of a distinct reading of Madhyamaka to a mystical communion Tsongkhapa is reported to have had with the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī. This invocation to mystic guidance may be seen as having a special methodological significance, i.e. that often the rhetoric of revelation is a device to signal a fundamental shift away from an existing tradition. In other words, it allows the claimant to put forth his or her 'original' and often revolutionary ideas without jeopardising the demand for faithfulness to a tradition. What is interesting is that the tradition Tsongkhapa is claiming to honour is, in a strict sense, not an existing system of Tibet; rather it appears to be the tradition of Mañjuśrī as revealed in a mystic vision! Whatever their origin, it seems clear that at least many of Tsongkhapa's views on Madhyamaka were perceived by his peers and subsequent critics as heterodox. This is especially evident from the intensity of the criticism Tsongkhapa's thought attracted from Tibetan scholars, particularly from within the Sakya school of Tibetan Buddhism. For example, the Sakya critic Sönam Senge *alias* Gowo Rabjampa (1429-1489) accuses Tsongkhapa of having deviated from the mainstream of the Tibetan Madhyamaka tradition. He even goes to the extent of suggesting that the so-called mystical communion was perhaps inspired by a tutelary demon[14]! Gowo Rabjampa makes the point that Tsongkhapa himself (and presumably his followers) asserts many of Tsongkhapa's views on Madhyamaka to be unique and that others too perceive them in such light[15]. In contrast, among the followers of Tsongkhapa, there are Tsongkhapa's own contemporaries like Khedrup Gelek Palsang whose writings testify to what the author un-

13 The approximate dating of the Indian Madhyamaka thinkers are based on Ruegg (1981).

14 bdud yid dam gyi gzugs su brdzus nas chos log ston par gsungs te/ ... lTa ba'i shan 'byed, p.244.

15 de dag rang nyid kyis kyang sngon gyi mkhas pa sus kyang ma thon pa'i grub mtha' yin par sgrogs shing/ gzhan gyis kyang de ltar du mthong ngo// Ibid., p.244.

derstood to be Tsongkhapa's unique reading of Madhyamaka philosophy[16]. There is also an important Madhyamaka work[17] extant by Rendawa Zhönu Lodrö (1349-1412), the noted Sakya master and the foremost teacher of Tsongkhapa, which helps us discern the points of departure in Tsongkhapa's thought in the later part of his life. Furthermore, in addition to Gowo Rabjampa's writings[18], the polemics of Sherap Rinchen *alias* Taktsang Lotsāwa[19] (b. 1405), of the controversial Sakya scholar Shākya Chogden *alias* Serdok Paṇchen[20] (1428-1507), and of the Kagyü master Karmapa Mikyö Dorje[21] (1507-1554), help provide us with a clearer picture of what

16 Amongst Khedrup-Je's works those of particular relevance for our purpose here are in addition to his monumental work on Madhyamaka entitled sTong thun chen mo, Collected Works, vol. ka (translated in Cabezón,1992), Lam ngan mun sel sgron me, Collected Works, vol. ta; and sDom pa gsum gyi rnam gzhag mdor dus te bshad pa thub bstan byi dor, Collected Works, vol.nya. It seems that in Khedrup-Je's lifetime there was already a strong sense of Tsongkhapa's followers constituting a distinct school of thought in Tibet.

17 dBu ma la 'jug pa'i rnam bshad de kho na nyid gsal ba'i sgron me . See bibliography.

18 Gowo Rabjampa's key polemical works are his dBu ma'i spyi don and lTa ba'i shan 'byed theg mchog gnad kyi zla zer. Jamyang Galo (1429-1503) has responded to these critiques in his Go lan gnam lcags 'khor lo. Sera Jetsünpa (1469-1544) has also written a lengthy response to Gowo Rabjampa as part of his polemical work critiquing both Shākya Chogden and Gowo Rabjampa entitled Zab mo stong pa nyid lta ba la log rtog 'gog par byed pa'i bstan bcos lta ba ngan pa'i mun sel.

19 Taktsang's work is entitled Grub mtha' kun shes nas mtha' bral grub pa zhes bya ba'i bstan bcos in rebuttal of which Paṇchen Lobsang Chögyen (1570-1562) wrote sGra pa shes rab rin chen pa'i brtsod lan lung rigs pa'i seng ge'i nga ro. In addition, Jamyang Zhepa's (1648-1722) monumental work on the Buddhist philosophical tenets Grub mtha' chen mo is also intended as a rebuttal of Taktsang's critique as suggested by its subtitle. For a brief study of Paṇchen's polemical text, see Cabezon (1995). Incidentally, I think that (contra Cabezón) the object of critique by Paṇchen Lobsang Chögyen's brTsod lan is not some lost work of Taktsang Lotsāwa. All the passages which Paṇchen cites and paraphrases from Taktsang in his brTsod lan can be found in Taksang's Grub mtha' kun shes. This includes, of course, the famous "eighteen burden of contradictions" which Taktsang alleges Tsongkhapa's posititions entail. Taktsang makes it very explicit in his autocommentary of Grub mtha' kun shes that his criticisms are directed against Tsongkhapa. See Grub mtha' kun shes, especially, root text, chapter 5, verses 11-22, and commentary, pp.213-241.

20 Shākya Chogden's works are dBu ma'i 'byung stul rnam par bshad pa'i gtam yid bzhin lhun po , dBu ma rnam nges and Shin rta'i srol chen gnyis las 'byung ba'i dbu ma chen po'i lugs gnyis rnam par dbye ba and its autocommentary. For Sera Jetsunpa's response, see note 19.

21 Karmapa Mikyö Dorje's work on Madhyamaka is dBu ma la 'jug pa'i rnam bshad dpal ldan dus gsum mkhyen pa'i zhal lung d'ags brgyud grub pa'i shing rta. Sera

was seen by many thinkers as controversial in Tsongkhapa's Madhyamaka. The point I am driving at is this. In spite of the enormous difficulties at present in reconstructing a comprehensive picture of the intellectual scene of late fourteen and early fifteen century Tibet, I believe that there is adequate textual basis to discern the extent of originality in Tsongkhapa's Madhyamaka thought.

II

In this second section of my paper, I shall, by means of textual exegesis, draw attention to some areas of Tsongkhapa's Madhyamaka thought where we can discern either a shift or a definite process of development. The list I have given here is by no means exhaustive; its primary aim is to substantiate my point that there *is* a discernible process of evolution even in Tsongkhapa's so-called mature period. Almost all the examples given below pertain to issues which are still debated within the Tibetan Madhyamaka schools. Thus, our exercise also serve as an introduction to the key debates in Tibetan Madhyamaka discourse.

1. The 'similitude' versus 'genuine' ultimate truths

One of the orthodoxies of Geluk Madhyamaka is the claim that emptiness, i.e. the ultimate truth, can be the object of cognition by an inferential knowledge. On this view, it is argued that insofar as taking emptiness as its object of cognition is concerned, there is no difference between an inferential cognition and an ārya's gnosis. In fact, it is suggested that for the inferential cognition, the negation of intrinsic being arrived at through a process of negation *is* the cognition of emptiness. This view has been vehemently attacked by Gowo Rabjampa[22] and later Tibetan Mādhyamikas. For them, the object of inferential cognition is only the generic concept of emptiness and not the emptiness itself. According to Gowo Rabjampa, rationality can never access the true ultimate for the ultimate is accessible

Jetsünpa wrote a response to this entitled gSung lan klu sgrub dgongs rgyan. On a succinct study of Mikyö Dorje's critique of Tsongkhapa's Madhyamaka, see Williams (1983).

22 lTa ba'i shan 'byed, p.7, folio 14a. rjes dpag gi dngos kyi gzung byar gyur pa'i stong nyid med dgag de kun rdzob tu 'jog dgos pa'i phyir ro//

only by an ārya's transcendent gnosis. Hence, he argues, the object of inferential cognition is only a similitude of emptiness, while the object of an ārya's gnosis is the genuine ultimate. This view is based on a distinction between a similitude and genuine ultimate truths found in Śāntarakṣita's Madhyamakālaṃkāra and Kamalaśīla's Madhyamakāloka.

It is interesting that in *LTC* Tsongkhapa appears to endorse his opponent's view. He seems to think that the mere absence of intrinsic being which is the object of an inferential cognition is a 'similitude' of the ultimate thus not the genuine ultimate truth. For example, in *LTC*, he writes:

> The object of cognition by critical consciousness is [only] in accord with the ultimate truth. It is because of this, both Madhyamakālaṃkāra and Madhyamakāloka have stated that this has been labelled 'ultimate'. Other great Mādhyamikas too do not accept as ultimate truth the mere negation of elaborations by reasoning. Therefore, to accept it as the ultimate truth is not wise[23].

In *LTCh*, Tsongkhapa takes a different reading of this distinction. He argues that the distinction between a similitude and genuine ultimate truths should not be understood to suggest that there is an objective difference between the objects of an inferential cognition of emptiness and an Ārya's gnosis. Tsongkhapa suggests that the difference lies in the perspectives of the two cognitions, and argues that the basis on which the above distinction is drawn has to do with the dissolution of two types of elaborations (*spros pa/ prapanca*), namely the elaboration of true existence (*bden pa'i spros pa*) and elaborations of dualistic perception (*snang ba'i spros pa*). While the ārya's transcendent awareness is said to be free of both elaborations, the inferential cognition of emptiness is said to be free of only the elaborations of true existence.[24] Although Geluk commentators, on the whole, interpret

23 LTC, p.15-16: rigs shes kyi gzhal bya ni don dam bden pa dang mthun pas don dam zhes btags par dbu ma rgyan dang snang ba gnyis ka nas gsungs pa'i phyir ro// dbu ma pa chen po gzhan rnams kyang rigs pas spros pa bcad pa'i don de tsam ni don dam bden par mi bzhed pas legs pa min no//

24 LTCh, pp.731-32: don dam gnyis bshad pa yul can la mi byed par yul gyi don dam kho na la byed pa ni gzhung gi don min no/ /... de la yul gyi stong nyid de rigs shes rtog med kyi ngor ni/ spros pa gnyis char dang bral ba'i don dam dngos yin la/ rigs shes rtog bcas kyi ngor ni spros pa phyogs gcig tsam dang bral bas spros pa gnyis char dang bral ba'i don dam dngos min gyi/ spyir don dam dngos min zer ba min no//

LTC's reading of this distinction as being in harmony with *LTCh*, it seems clear to me that the two readings are diametrically opposed. *LTCh*'s reading seems to represent a complete reversal in Tsongkhapa's thought on this issue from his earlier position as put forth in *LTC*, and needless to say today this is the received Geluk standpoint on the question[25].

2. The use of the qualifier "ultimately" in identifying the object of negation

Although Tsongkhapa seems clear from an early stage on the point that the principal objects of negation in the context of the Madhyamaka dialectic are our innate apprehension of self-existence and its object, it is not, however, until the writing of *GR* that this point is explicitly related to the hermeneutic of understanding the all-important qualification "ultimately" in the Mādhyamika's rejection of essentialist ontology. This is particularly interesting if we consider the fact that Tsongkhapa devotes considerable attention to a systematic identification of the object of negation in *LTC*. He addresses the problems of 'over'- and 'under'-negation and suggests that the key lies in understanding the meaning of the all-important qualifier "ultimately" in the context of Madhyamaka discourse on emptiness. He rejects the suggestion that it is only the Svātantrika-Mādhyamikas who uses this qualification, and not the Prāsaṅgikas. However, when it comes to defining the meaning of the term, Tsongkhapa relates it to the discussion of Bhāvaviveka's distinction between the three senses of ultimacy[26], We find a similar approach in *LN* as well.

In contrast, in *GR* Tsongkhapa develops a convincing case to distinguish between two senses of ultimacy as it is used as a qualifying term in the Mādhyamika's rejection of intrinsic being (*svabhāva*). Tsongkhapa writes:

> It is necessary to understand that there are two senses to the qualifying term "ultimate" (*don dam*) in the context of identifying the object of negation on the ultimate level. One is the case where the critical consciousnesses such as

25 On a standard Geluk hermeneutics on this issue, see Zhamar Gendün Tenzin's Lhag mthong dka' 'grel, folio 12-15a.

26 Cited in full in LTC, pp.116-120.

> those derived through hearing, reflection, and meditation are known as the ultimate [perspectives]. In this sense, to say that "things do not exist ultimately" means that they are not found by such consciousnesses. Secondly, there is the "ultimate" in the sense of something that is said to possess a mode of being that is not posited in dependence upon the mind. Of these two senses of ultimacy, not only does the first ultimate exist, but also something can be said to exist from its perspective. [In contrast] both the second ultimate and its object *cannot* exist. Therefore, if anything exists from the perspective of the second ultimate, it must also exist from the perspective of the first ultimate. However, apprehension of the first ultimate is not innate for this [i.e. innate apprehensions] require the second kind of ultimate[27].

Tsongkhapa makes this critical observation in *GR* in the section on the identification of the objection of negation according to Svātantrika-Madhyamaka. This, however, is not a cause of concern for Tsongkhapa makes the following point:

> Insofar as it is necessary to understand that there are two senses to the qualifying term "ultimately" this is true also in the case here [Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka]. Although the Svātantrantika-Mādhyamikas maintain that the three such as "true existence" (*bden par grub pa*) ["ultimate existence" (*don dam par grub pa*), and "thoroughly established existence" (*yang dag par grub pa*)] cannot exist, they accept at the conventional level the existence of the three such as "established by means of its own being" (*rang gi ngo bos grub pa*) ["established by self-defining characteristics" (*rang gi mtshan*

27 GR, pp.131-2: dgag bya la don dam gyi khyad par sbyar ba'i don dam de la gnyis su shes dgos te/ thos bsam sgom gsum gyi rigs shes la don dam du byas nas des sngar bshad par ltar ma grub pa gcig dang/ blo'i dbang gis bzhag pa min par don gyi sdod lugs su yod pa la don dam du yod par bzhag pa gnyis kyi dang po'i don dam dang/ de'i ngor grub pa yang yod la/ phyi ma'i don dam dang der yod pa gnyis ka yang mi srid do// des na phyi ma'i don dam du yod pa la snga ma'i don dam du yod pas khyab kyang/ snga ma'i yod 'dzin ni lhan skyes kyi bden 'dzin min la/ de'i bden 'dzin la ni phyi ma'i yod dzin dgos so// The above quotation is considered to be one of the most obscure passages in GR and generates, to this day, much discussion within the Geluk monastic colleges. My interpretation is informed by what I see as Tsongkhapa's overall project of delineating the reason's scope for negation.

nyid kyis grub pa), and "established by means of intrinsic being" (*rang bzhin gyis grub pa*)][28].

How are we to account for this omission in *LTC* and *LN*? Certainly, correlating the hermeneutics of the term "ultimately" with the identification of our innate ignorance does give greater coherence to the Madhyamaka's soteriological project. Again, I am inclined to think that it was not until Tsongkhapa came to write *GR* that the full ramifications of developing a systematic identification of the object of negation dawned upon Tsongkhapa. In other words, here too, we have a clear case of a development in Tsongkhapa's thought.

There isn't much in the Indian Madhyamaka literature to substantiate the point about the importance of prior identification of the object of negation by means of direct citations. Tsongkhapa quotes Bodhisattvacaryāvatāra 9:139[29] to make a general point about the critical importance of cultivating a clear conceptual understanding of one's object of negation. But, to the best of my knowledge, no commentator in India seems to have associated this verse with identifying one's object of negation. Nor did any Tibetan commentators on Madhyamaka before Tsongkhapa either. However, Tsongkhapa literally beats the texts, as it were, to say what he wishes them to state. In his *GR*, Tsongkhapa shows how a close reading between the lines of a passage from Kamalaśīla's Madhyamakāloka can reveal a clear identification of the object of negation that is being rejected by the Mad-

28 GR, pp.140-41: dgag bya la don dam gyi khyad par sbyar ba'i don dam la tshul gnyis shes dgos pa ni 'dir yang 'dra la/ dbu ma rang rgyud pa rnams bden pa sogs gsum du grub pa shes bya mi srid par bzhed kyang/ rang gi ngo bos grub pa sogs gsum ni tha snyad du yod par bzhed de/...

29 brtag pa'i dngos la ma reg par/
de yi dngos med 'dzin ma yin/
"Without touching the imagined entity,
its nonactuality cannot be [cognised]. "

Perhaps, the earliest textual evidence from Tsongkhapa underlining the philosophical point about the critical importance of having a clear identification of the object of negation is his Queries, p.15. Interestingly, in this text Tsongkhapa does not cite Śāntideva's verse. Tsongkhapa begins to cite this verse only from LTC. Paul Williams has undertaken an in depth study of the history of the hermeneutics of BCA, 9:139 in Tibet and have arrived at a similar conclusion about Tsongkhapa's use of the passage. See Williams (1998), chapter 4.

hyamaka. He argues that the passage that defines 'conventional existence', when reversed, gives us the criterion of its direct opposite, namely 'ultimate existence'[30]. If the Madhyamaka's negation of essentialist ontology is to lead to liberation as Mādhyamikas of all shades appear to agree, it does seem essential that the object that is negated is that which is conceived by the innate avidyā, an ignorance that is inherent in all beings and not just those with philosophical views. After all, *nirvāṇa* according to Buddhism, entails cutting off the root of saṃsāra, which according to the Madhyamaka *is* the innate avidyā. So Tsongkhapa seems to assert that not only is the prior correct identification of the object of negation crucial for the Mādhyamika philosopher, it is equally essential for the Mādhyamika spiritual aspirant as well.

3. The notion of 'coarse' and 'subtle' conceptions of self-existence

The idea of distinguishing between various levels of subtlety in the understanding of the basic Buddhist doctrine of 'no-self' by the different schools is an established feature of Tsongkhapa's hermeneutics. It is also critical for his premise that only the Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka's account of 'no-self' constitutes the final understanding of the doctrine. Yet, given that Tsongkhapa believes, like many of his Tibetan colleagues, that the tenets of the other Buddhist schools are also taught by the Buddha himself, he does not wish to reject the interpretation of the 'no-self' doctrine by the other Buddhist schools. For Tsongkhapa, these interpretations are not wrong, rather that they are incomplete. Their incompleteness lies in that the conceptions of Self negated in the context of these schools' understanding of the 'no-self' doctrine are 'coarse' levels of Self. Thus, Tsongkhapa envisions various layers to our conceptions of Self. Interestingly, in *LTC*, his earliest major works on Madhyamaka, Tsongkhapa does not explicitly uses the words 'subtle' (*phra ba*) and 'coarse' (*rags pa*) to characterise the Self that is being negated in the context of the anātman theory of various Buddhist

30 Following is the passage Tsongkhapa quotes from Madhyamakāloka: dngos po yang dag par ngo bo nyid med pa dag la yang de las ldog pa'i rnam par sgro 'dogs pa'i 'khrul pa'i blo gang yin pa de ni kun rdzob ces bya ste/ 'di'am 'dis de kho na nyid mthong ba la sgrib pa lta bur byed/ 'gebs pa lta bur byed pa'i phyir ro// ... de'i phyir de dag gi bsam pa'i dbang gis dngos po rdzun pa'i ngo bo thams cad ni kun rdzob tu yod pa kho na'o zhes bya'o// Quoted in full in GR, p.130; referred to in LN, p.128.

schools. In stead, he speaks of Self that is the object of 'innate apprehensions' (*'dzin pa lhan skyes*) and 'intellectually acquired apprehensions' (*'dzin pa kun brtags*), and argues that it is the former that must be negated[31].

However, it is in *LN* that we see a full development of the idea of coarse and subtle conceptions of Self. In this text, Tsongkhapa devotes a whole section to demonstrating that the 'Self' that is negated within the context of standard Buddhist critiques of Self is on a coarse level of selfhood. For him, such a critique of Self cannot be taken as representing the final word on the Buddhist teaching on 'no-self'. He argues that it is teachings on the subtle 'no-self' which must be accepted as definitive and that it is only the Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka writings which present this definitive standpoint[32]. Thus, one is inclined to conclude that the idea of correlating innate and intellectually acquired conceptions of Self with subtle and coarse levels of Self, and also tying this distinction to the Buddhist soteriology in a systematic way with grading the tenets of the various schools must have evolved gradually to Tsongkhapa. Certainly, one can see the seeds of these ideas in *LTC*, but it is only later do we see them emerging as fully thought through doctrinal standpoints. Again here, it would be interesting to see what, if any, sources there are in the Indian Madhyamaka literature for these ideas. Judging by criticisms of Taktshang Lotsāwa, Shākya Chogden and Gowo Rabjampa, Tsongkhapa's central claim that Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka's presentation of the Buddhist doctrine of 'no-self' represents a unique development appears to have been a heterodox. These critics have argued that there is no difference in the understanding of the Buddhist doctrine of 'no-self' among the main Buddhist schools.

4. The conception of Self as a self-sufficient, substantial reality

One important premise of Tsongkhapa's assertion that the 'no-self' theory of the other Buddhist schools fall short of the final understanding of the

31 See, for example, LTC, p.106-7: shes rab can gyis ni lhan skyes kyi ma rig pa'i zhen yul dgag bya'i rtsa bar shes par bya yi/ kun brtags grub mtha' smra ba 'ba' zhig gis btags pa tsam dgag pa la lhur blang bar mi bya ste/ ...

32 des na gang zag gi bdag med ni/ ... rnam pa bdun du gang zag gi tha snyad kyi don btsal bas ma rnyed pa'i rang bzhin med pa la 'dod pas gzhan gyis 'chad pa dang khyad par shin tu che 'o// LN, p.155.

Buddha's teaching on 'no-self' is the idea that Self that is rejected by these schools is confined to what Tsongkhapa calls Self as a "self-sufficient, substantial reality" (*gang zag rang skya thub pa'i rdzas yod*). Tsongkhapa's own writings on this conception of Self appear rather contradictory. For example in *LTC*, the earliest among what I would call Tsongkhapa's 'Madhyamaka classics', there is not even a single mention of the phrase *rang skya thub pa'i rdzas yod kyi bdag* . In contrast in *LN* we find an extensive discussion of this level of Self. In this work, Tsongkhapa asserts that Self defined thus can only be an object of philosophical reflection implying that it cannot serve as the object of our natural sense of 'I'[33]. This is because, according to Tsongkhapa, within such concept of Self, the self's relation to the physical and mental constituents is viewed in the manner of a master (*rje bo*) and his servant (*'khol*)[34], which by definition creates a stark separateness between the two. And, any apprehension of Self that involves viewing Self and aggregates as separate is said to be necessarily theoretical for innate notions do not relate to their objects in terms of such conceptualisation.

We see a further change in Tsongkhapa's thought on this issue in *RG*. In this text, Tsongkhapa, in response to a question he raises about the master/servant analogy, suggests that viewing the self and aggregates in the above manner need not necessarily be intellectual[35]. He seems to suggest that it is acceptable to maintain that even innate apprehensions of Self *can* arise in the manner described above. Finally, in *GR*, literally his last word on Madhyamaka, Tsongkhapa explicitly states that there can be an innate version of the conception Self as a self-sufficient, substantial reality[36]. Interestingly, in *GR* Tsongkhapa no longer uses the master/servant analogy to characterise the putative relationship between Self and its constituents. Here Tsongkhapa draws a distinction between grasping Self as self-sufficient and

33 gzhan yang rang skya thub pa'i rdzas yod kyi bdag de ni phyi rol pas phung po las don gzhan du kun btags pa'i ... LN, p.148.

34 This metaphor may have been derived from the sūtras where sometimes the person is compared to a carrier (khur ba po) and the aggregates to a burden or load (khur). Interestingly, Sherab leu'i zin bris suggests that it is this belief in Self as some kind of master that is the source of the non-Buddhist's theory of Self as an independent entity. See She rab le'u'i zin bris, folio 15b.

35 bdag dang phung po rje khol ltar 'dzin na de gnyis ngo bo tha dad par 'dzin par mi 'gyur ram snyam na/ ... RG, p.214.

36 gang zag rang skya thub pa'i rdzas yod du 'dzin pa ni grub mthas blo ma bsgyur pa la yang yod mod kyang/ ...GR, p.191.

substantial existence on the one hand, and viewing Self as separate from the skandhas with distinct characteristics on the other, the latter being necessarily a conscious, acquired concept[37]. Since there is no explicit acknowledgement from Tsongkhapa concerning a change in his views pertaining to this notion of Self, the convention among the Geluk commentators has been to accept that there are no conflicts between Tsongkhapa's earlier and later works on this issue. This has led to a great deal of confusion within the commentarial literature in determining what exactly is the notion of Self that is being rejected in the Buddhist doctrine of anātman as understood by the mainstream Buddhist schools, i.e. other than the Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka. In my view, it makes more sense to accept that there is a shift in Tsongkhapa's thought, although the change does not represent any major revision of his earlier thought.

So, how can we characterise this Self? Cangkya Rölpai Dorje (1717-1786) suggests that according to Tsongkhapa this notion is nothing but the idea of 'substantial existence' of the person[38]. He bases his observation on the following passage from Tsongkhapa. In *GR*, Tsongkhapa writes:

> Although these [Vaibhāṣika, Sautrāntika, Yogācāra and Svātantrika Madhyamaka] schools maintain that 'listeners' and pratyekabuddhas cognise the non-substantiality of persons they do not accept that these beings have realised the non-substantiality of the two consciousnesses [mental and the foundational consciousnesses]. Therefore, when they speak of the non-substantiality of person they understand it only in terms of the [label] person itself rather than in terms of its basis, i.e. the consciousness[39].

Cangkya's suggestion does seem to be borne out by other textual evidence. In a short meditation text known simply as *An Abridged Guide to the Middle Way View*, Tsongkhapa makes the following observation:

37 Ibid.

38 Grub mtha' lhun po'i mdzes rgyan, p.125.

39 GR, p. 368: des na lugs de dag gis nyan rang gis gang zag rdzas yod du med par rtogs 'dod kyang/ rnam shes gnyis po rdzas yod du med par rtogs par 'mi 'dod pas/ gang zag rang skya thub pa'i rdzas su med par smra ba ni gang zag rang gi ldog pa nas yin gyi gang zag gi mtshan gzhi rnam shes la de ltar 'dod pa min no//

> If the mere person (*gang zag tsam*) is not to be negated, what predication is required [for the rejection of selfhood]? In many sūtras it is stated that the 'true existence' (*bden pa*) of the person must be negated. In Nirṇayasaṃgrahaṇī[it is stated that] ultimate [reality of *the* person] (*don dam*) should be negated, while in Viniścayasaṃgrahaṇī, Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra and Abhidharmakośabhāṣya, it is said that the substantial reality (dravyasat, *rdzas yod*) [of persons] must be negated. All of these are making the same point. Thus, the meaning of substantial reality and nominal reality (prajñaptisat, *brtags yod*) is this. When an object [or phenomenon] appears to consciousness if it does so by dependence on the perception of another phenomenon that shares characteristics different from the said object, then the object is said to be a nominal reality. That which does not depend in such manner is said to be substantially real (*rdzas su yod*)[40].

As observed earlier, according to *GR*, such a notion of Self need not necessarily be an intellectually acquired, conscious idea. In fact, such sense of Self and identity occurs naturally in all of us and could be said to be pre-linguistic, and pre-philosophical, in other words, innate. This is, however, not to say that all aspects of our ordinary, commonsensical notions of Self are valid. In fact Tsongkhapa believes that most of our ordinary perceptions of the world are tainted by an underlying assumption of the existence of intrinsic being, which is ultimately false.

On what grounds does Tsongkhapa suggest that the above level of Self can be the object of an intuitive sense of Self? Tsongkhapa alludes to a verse in the *Pramāṇavārttika* which he reads as suggesting a thought experiment[41]. The experiment could be formulated as follows. If a celestial

40 gang zag tsam dgag par bya ba ma yin na/ khyad par gang dang bcas pa yin snyam na/ mdo sde mang por bden pa ba 'gog ces pa dang gzhi bsdu bar don dam pa dang/ rnam par gtan la dbab pa bsdu ba dang/ mdo rgyan dang mdzod 'grel rnams su rdzas yod 'gog ces kun don gcig pas... de lta bu la mi bltos pa ni brtags par rang dbang du 'char ba ni rdzas su yod pa zhes bya'o// dBu ma'i lta khrid bsdus pa, in BTP, p.117.

41 Pramāṇavārttika (P5709), "Pramāṇasiddhi", verse 247. The Tibetan version of the verse reads: "mchog gzhan don du gnyer phyir dang/ skye 'jig blo can nyid kyi phyir/ skye bo 'di yis dbang sogs las/ bdag ni tha dad gyur par shes// The elaboration cited here is based on Gyaltshap-Je's commentary rNam bshad thar lam gsal byed, chapter 2, p.324. It is interesting that Tsongkhapa alludes to this argument in a minor text called dBu ma'i lta khrid bsdus pa, TKSB, vol. tsha, and not in any of his major works. Tsongkhapa writes: lhan skyes la'ang phung po las don gzhan pa'i bdag kho na snang

being unimaginably attractive and possessing an enviable physique appears in front of you, and proposes that you exchange your own body for his, would you be willing to do it? Similarly, if Mañjuśrī, the Buddha of wisdom, were to give you the opportunity to exchange your own unenlightened mind with his transcendent mind of true insight, would you be willing to accept the exchange? The fact that in both of these cases one would most probably endorse the exchange suggests that in the depth of one's mind there is a sense of self, a subject, or a person for whose benefit one is willing to dispense even with one's own familiar body and mind. This, according to Tsongkhapa and Gyaltsap, is the strongest indication that even in the deepest recesses of our psyche there is a non-reductionist component to our sense of self, i.e. the idea that self is irreducible to one's bodily and psychological continuums. If we identify totally with our physical and psychological states the above intuitive response simply would not make sense. For as Gyaltshap-Je correctly points out 'who would enter into a barter if the deal means that the person himself will have to be part of the exchange[42]?' This, however, is not to suggest that we never identify ourselves with any of our bodily or psychological states. Otherwise, our natural intuition that I am injured when it is actually one's hand that is hurt becomes unintelligible.

In the Buddhist world, the Personalist (Vātsīputrīya) school appears to subscribe to such a notion of Self. According to the Vātsīputrīyas, the Self is such that the only positive thing that can be said about its nature is that it is ineffable We can neither assert that it is permanent, nor say that is impermanent. Similarly, we cannot say that it is one with the aggregates, nor can we say that it is distinct from the aggregates. It is, nevertheless, inextricably connected to the physical and mental states of the person. It is the *agent* in that it is the 'doer' (*byed po*) of all the karmic actions and the *subject* for it is the 'experiencer' (*za ba po*) of the fruits of such actions. Furthermore, it is the *real person* that is imprisoned in the *samsaric* realm and liberated on the *nirvāṇa* plane. Hence, Self must possess substantial

ste/ phung po 'di dor nas bzang ba gzhan don du gnyer gyi bdag dor bar mi 'dod pa'i phyir/ BTP, p.125.

42 rNam bshad thar lam gsal byed, vol. 1, p.324. The use of thought experiment as a device to analyse our intuitive notions of personal identity is well-known in Anglo-American analytic philosophical discussions.

reality[43]. On this view, Self is conceived to be neither totally separate from the psycho-physical complex nor identical with any of its physical and mental constituents, both individually or collectively. This notion of Self seems to be one of the principal objects of refutation in Vasubandhu's ninth chapter of his *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*[44].

Tsongkhapa suggests that except for the Vātsīputrīyas, all schools of Buddhist philosophy other than the Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka concur on the identification of Self that is being rejected within the context of the fundamental Buddhist tenet of *anātman* ('no-self'). In *LN* Tsongkhapa asserts the following:

> As regards the no-self of persons (*gang zag gi bdag med*), all other [than the Prāsaṅgika] schools of both Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna accept it in terms of non-substantial existence of a person that is [supposedly] self-sufficient (*rang skya thub pa*) and possesses characteristics distinct (*mtshan nyid mi mthun pa*) from the aggregates. ... However, the tradition of Candrakīrti upholds the view that even when the above 'substantially real' person is negated, still the person as existing by means of its own being (*rang gi ngo bos grub pa*) and not merely constructed by convention remains uneliminated. And, apprehension of the existence of such a person *is* an apprehension of self-existence of person (*gang zag gi bdag 'dzin yin te*), just as it is the case with apprehensions of the substantial existence of the factors of existence[45].

From the above, it is clear that unless we allow the possibility of a shift in Tsongkhapa's views, we are confronted with what looks like a conundrum. And, this is exactly what appears to be the case if we look at the

43 MA, chapter 6:verse 146; GR, pp.391-2. A more detailed description of the Vātsīputrīyas' notion of the substantial reality of self and its critique can be found in ABh. See Duerlinger (1989), pp.138-63.

44 For an English translation of the chapter see James Duerlinger (1989).

45 LN, p.146: gang zag gi bdag med ni rang sde theg pa che chung gi grub mtha' smra ba gzhan gyi ltar na gang zag phung po dang mthsan nyid mi mthun pa'i rang skya thub pa'i rdzas su med pa tsam la 'dod do// ...zla ba'i lugs kyis de 'dra'i gang zag rdzas yod khegs kyang gang zag tha snyad du btags pa tsam min pa'i rang gi ngo bos grub pa mi khegs la de yod par 'dzin pa gang zag gi bden 'dzin yin pas gang zag gi bdag 'dzin yin te chos kyi bdag 'dzin bzhin no// Duerlinger makes a similar observation in Duerlinger (1993), p.9. Thus, from Tsongkhapa's point of view, the anātman theory of Theravāda Buddhism cannot be substantially different from that presented in Abhidharmakośabhāṣya.

traditional Geluk hermeneutics on Tsongkhapa's conception of Self as self-sufficient, substantial reality. For example, Paṇchen Sönam Drakpa (1478-1554), the influential author of the Madhyamaka textbooks of Drepung Loseling and Ganden Shartse Colleges draws a distinction between a conception of 'Self as possessing characteristics incompatible with the aggregates' (*gang zag phung po dang mtshan nyid mi mthun par 'dzin pa*) and a conception of 'Self as self-sufficient, substantial reality' (*gang zag rang skya thub pa'i rdzas yod*) and argues that the former is necessarily a conscious, intellectually acquired notion[46]. In contrast, Cangkya suggests, in an earlier work a way of resolving the conundrum by distinguishing between conceptions of Self as a self-sufficient, substantial reality (*rang skya thub pa'i rdzas yod*) and Self as a substantial reality capable of self-subsistence (*rang skya 'dzin thub pa'i rdzas yod*)[47]! Needless to say, much of this confusion can be avoided simply by acknowledging that Tsongkhapa's later views differ from his earlier writings on the issue.

5. The 'mere I' as the person

Unlike many Tibetan Mādhyamika thinkers, Tsongkhapa does not rest content with the mere rejection of Self. He strives to develop a coherent understanding of the notion of person in the aftermath of the rejection of Self. Thus, Tsongkhapa's own theory of persons could be described as 'conventional realism' in that although there is a rejection of any concept of an underlying, unchanging Self, the reality of much of our conventional notions of personal identity is preserved[48]. Simply stated, Tsongkhapa asserts that the intentional object (*dmigs pa*) of our instinctual sense of 'I' or 'self' must be accepted as the person or self. In *GR* Tsongkhapa writes

46 dBu ma la 'jug pa'i brgal lan zab don yang gsal sgron me, folio 27b.

47 rang skya thub pa dang/ rang skya 'dzin thub pa gnyis mi gcig go// Dag yig mkhas pa'i 'byung gnas, p. 412. Interestingly, this distinction has been attacked by Cangkya in his Grub mtha' lhun po'i mdzes rgyan (p.132) where he argues that such a distinction has no substantial basis in both classical Indian works and the works of Tsongkhapa and his two principal disciples, i.e. Gyaltshap-Je and Khedrup-Je.

48 For an in-depth study of Tsongkhapa's constructive theory of persons, see Jinpa (1997), chapter 4.

> As far as our innate grasping at Self—i.e. the 'view of the perishable aggregates' (*'jigs tshogs la lta ba*)—is concerned, the root text [Madhyamakāvatāra] has already ruled out the aggregates as being the object. Furthermore, in the commentary [Madhyamakāvatārabhāṣya] it has been stated that the self constructed in reliance [upon the aggregates] (*brten nas btags pa'i bdag*) *is* the object [of this self-grasping]. Given this, we should maintain that the object of our innate 'I'-consciousness is the mere person (*gang zag tsam*)—i.e. the 'mere I' (*nga tsam*) which is the focus [of our natural sense of self][49].

Tsongkhapa asserts that this 'mere I' (*nga tsam*), in addition to being the 'person' (*gang zag*), should also be accepted as the 'self' (*bdag*)[50]! Such a self or person cannot be an entity that is independent of the aggregates for our inborn clinging to self-identity does not conceive such an autonomous Self. Yet, it cannot be identical with the aggregates either (both individually or collectively) for in our innate conceptions we tend to perceive Self as possessor of these aggregates. Therefore, in the final analysis, when we search for the true referent of our concept of Self or person we discover that it is neither independent from nor identical with our physical and mental aggregates. Thus we can conclude that the person or Self is a mere construct albeit based upon our conception of physical and mental constituents which together form our personal existence. Tsongkhapa often uses the terms 'Self' (*bdag*) and 'person' (*gang zag*) interchangeably. This might appear, at first glance, somewhat crude, possibly reflecting a lack of sensitivity to general Buddhist distrust of the term 'Self'. However, this conflation of the two terms seems to be quite deliberate. I think it is done to emphasise the crucial importance of appreciating the distinction between the conventional and ultimate perspectives when dealing with questions of Self and persons. From the ultimate perspective, the concepts of both self and person are untenable. Yet, from the perspective of the everyday world, not only does person exist, but even Self too can be said to exist!

So the key to our understanding of the nature of personal identity lies in exploring what Tsongkhapa conceives to be the nominal nature of personhood. In other words, we must now unpack Tsongkhapa's oft-repeated

49 GR, p.141: bdag 'dzin gyi 'jig lta lhan skyes la ni rtsa bar phung po dmigs pa yin pa bkag cing/ 'grel par brten nas btags pa'i bdag dmigs par gsungs pas/ nga'o snyam pa tsam zhig skye ba'i dmigs pa'i nga tsam dang/ gang zag tsam zhig la dmigs par bya'o//

50 RG, p.213: rang lugs ni ngar 'dzin lhan skyes kyis gang la dmigs pa'i gzhi dmigs pa ni nga dang bdag dang gang zag tu bzhag dgos la...

expression "person is a mere construct in reliance upon aggregates" (*gang zag phung po la brten nas btags pa tsam*)[51]. This calls for an analysis of Tsongkhapa's Madhyamaka nominalism which entails examining the relationship between what Tsongkhapa calls 'designation' (*btags chos*) and 'designative basis' (*gdags gdzi*)[52].

In what sense are the physical and mental aggregates of the individual said to be the basis of the designation, a 'person'? According to Tsongkhapa, the relationship between the designative base and the designation with respect to the person is best described in terms of the process of 'appropriation' (following Nāgārjuna; upādāna, *nye bar len pa*). On this view, the physical and mental states of the person are the designative bases and the self or person, the designation. How do these physical and mental states serve as the basis for such designation? Let us take the simple case of the eye organs. What does it mean to say that the eye organs are 'appropriated' by the person? Tsongkhapa responds to this in the following manner.

> "In that case", one might ask, "what *is* the meaning of the statement 'the person appropriates [the act of] looking?'"
>
> [Answer:] When the eye organs become the agent that makes the person a looker (or seer), the person is said to have appropriated the visual faculty. At that instant, the person is simultaneous to the visual faculty and thus can be said to be prior to other faculties such as the auditory faculty and so on. One can extend this understanding to other factors as well[53].

Here Tsongkhapa is suggesting that when the person engages in the act of looking at an object it is the eye organs that actually make it possible to 'see' the object. So in a sense, it is the eye organs that make the individual a 'looker', i.e. an agent. Because of this, the act of seeing can immediately

51 LN, p.149; RG, p.206-18.

52 LN, p.149; RG, pp.216-8. Cabezón (1994), chapter 8, discusses Madhyamaka ontological nominalism based on Khedrup-Je's sTong thun chen mo. For Tsongkhapa's ontological nominalism, see Jinpa (1997), chapter 5.

53 RG, p.210: 'O na gang zag gis lta ba la sogs pa len zhes pa'i don ci yin zhe na/ gang zag de gzugs la lta ba por song ba'i byed par mig gi dbang po song ba na des de blangs pa yin la/ de'i tshe lta ba'i dbang po dang dus mnyam du yod la nyan pa'i dbang po la sogs pa'i snga rol na yod par 'dod de des gzhan yang shes par bya'o//

give rise to an instinctual thought "I am seeing." This demonstrates how 'I'-consciousness can naturally arise in reliance upon the eye organs. Similarly, it is natural for us to have the thought that "I am injured" when strictly speaking it is our hand that is injured. This natural process of identification is what is meant by 'appropriation' by Tsongkhapa. The same could be said of all other aggregates. For example, from our own personal experience we know that we tend to often identify strongly with our feelings. Thoughts such as "I am ecstatic," or "I am depressed" occur naturally in us. The process is true also of perceptions. Thoughts like "I know," "I recognise," "I realise," etc. are part of our everyday experiences of being a conscious human being.

Of all the five aggregates, perhaps the understanding of how thoughts of 'I'-consciousness arise on the basis of mental formations (*saṃskāra skandha*) requires more serious thought. The Tibetan term *'du byed* like its Sanskrit counterpart, *saṃskāra* has a strong connotation of creating or constructing something. As Steven Collins points out, the term *saṃskāra* connotes both the act of constructing or creating and the created result as well[54]. Thus, *saṃskāra* is probably the most inclusive of the five aggregates. It embraces not only all our motivational factors including the rich category of emotions but also our concepts of time, space and continuity that are so crucial for our perception of ourselves and the physical world.

In brief, if we examine the nature of every single instance of the thought "I am," we find that it occurs only in reliance upon one or a composite of our aggregates. All thoughts such as "I am going," "I shall eat," "I am ecstatic," "I am unhappy," "I am cold," "I thought about so and so," "I remember," etc., inevitably relate either to a physical or a mental state of ourselves. In other words, there is nothing in our experience to suggest that our 'I'-consciousness could arise without any context or in a total vacuum. Tsongkhapa seems to suggest that the status of the aggregates as a designative basis is not an objective one. It is not only relative to the designation but more importantly there is an element of temporal relativity as well. Generally speaking, we have no problem with the relativity of such identities as 'the president', 'prime minister', 'cook', 'plumber', etc. which are so obviously contingent upon the nature of their corresponding jobs. Yet, underlying all of this must be a presupposed unity that is the object of

54 Collins (1982), p.202.

our natural sense of self or 'I'-consciousness. This is what Tsongkhapa appears to be suggesting.

It is interesting to note that in *LTC* Tsongkhapa makes a similar observation but with a notable difference. There, he fails to mention the 'mere I' (*nga tsam*); rather the 'mere person' is identified as the object of our innate grasping at self[55]. Similarly, there is not a single reference to this so-called 'mere I' in *LN* although there is a discussion about the object of our innate 'I'-consciousness. This leads me to surmise that much of Tsongkhapa's constructive theory of persons evolved subsequent to *LTC* and *LN*. Shākya Chogden has criticised Tsongkhapa's espousal of a constructive theory of person. He has accused Tsongkhapa of reverting to the non-Buddhist tenet of believing in the existence of Self thus betraying one of the most cardinal tenets of Buddhism[56].

6. The criteria of conventional existence

We now come to our final example, i.e. Tsongkhapa's views on developing a criteria of conventional existence. From his earliest writings on Madhyamaka, Tsongkhapa has consistently maintained that the Madhyamaka dialectics does not negate the reality of everyday world of experience. More importantly, he has emphasised that the Madhyamaka's de-constructive analysis are not aimed at rejecting ethics and religious activity. Thus, for Tsongkhapa it becomes crucial to develop a systematic account of how and why the Madhyamaka dialectics leave intact the reality of the conventional world. His attempts to achieve this involves two principal approaches. One is to successfully delineate reason's scope for negation so that the parametres of the Madhyamaka dialectics is clearly set. Such a strategy involve, among others, distinguishing between the domains of conventional and ultimate analyses, correct identification of the object of negation, distinguishing between that which is negated by reason and that which is not found by reason, and distinguishing between mere nothingness and the absolute negation of intrinsic being[57]. The second approach is to develop a constructive theory of conventional existence in that there is a fully developed

55 gang zag tsam zhig dmigs pa'o// LTC, pp. 110.

56 dBu ma'i byung tshul, p.246: gang zag dang nga tsam sogs byed pa'i skyes bu bcu gnyis sogs tshad grub tu khas blangs pas mu stegs dang mtshungs pa dang/ ...

57 I have explored this approach in some depth in Jinpa (1998).

criteria of conventional existence. We find both of these approaches in almost all major works of Tsongkhapa's Madhyamaka. In the following, I shall deal with this second approach and suggests that Tsongkhapa's views on this appears to have gone through a process of evolution.

Briefly stated, the question is this: "Given that, according to Tsongkhapa, existence equals conventional existence, what are the criteria of a valid conventional existence?" In other words, "how do we determine something as conventionally real as opposed to nonreal?" Since Tsongkhapa does not dispute the conventions of the world on questions of what exists and what does not, it appears at least on the surface that the criterion of conventional existence is simply whether or not the said convention accords with perspectives of the world. On analysis, we find that Tsongkhapa has a broad understanding of what is meant by a convention(*tha snyad*) being in accordance with worldly perspectives. For instance, Tsongkhapa accepts that the perception of a snake which may arise from seeing a coiled rope in a dim light can be said to be in accordance with a worldly perspective. Tsongkhapa's calls such perceptions 'that which is familiar or known to the conventions of the world'[58]. His point is that such perceptual illusions are common occurrence and form an integral part of our everyday experience of interaction with the world. Seen in this way, worldly convention becomes equivalent to something that is capable of being experienced or taken as an intentional object (*dmigs yul*) of consciousness[59]. In contrast, many of the metaphysical postulates of the philosophers cannot be said to accord with the perspectives of the world. Therefore, Tsongkhapa does not believe in a criterion of validation based solely on a collective consensus as charged by some of his critics[60]. This, then, is at least one criterion of a valid conventional reality.

As we saw above, this alone cannot be adequate, for Tsongkhapa must be able to distinguish between the ontological status of a real snake and a coiled rope perceived as a snake. So what further criterion is required? Predictably, Tsongkhapa's second criterion directly addresses this problem. According to Tsongkhapa, in order for something to be accepted as conventionally real, not only must the convention be 'known' to the world,

58 jig rten pa'i tha snyad la grags pa LTC, p. 72.

59 LTC, p.73: shes pa der grags pa ni snang ba'am myong ba'i tha snyad 'dogs pa'i gzhir gyur pa rnams so//

60 dBu ma klu sgrub dgongs rgyan, p. 274-6.

it must also not be open to contradiction by another nominally valid cognition. For instance, in *LTC*, Tsongkhapa writes that

> The examples of those that are controverted by another valid conventional knowledge are like the perceptions of a coiled rope as a snake, or water in mirage. Although, in these two cases both are objects of cognitions (*shes pa'i yul*) that do not probe into the intrinsic being of things, their mode of apprehension is open to negation (*gnod pa*) by [other] conventional knowledge. Therefore, such objects do not exist even on the conventional level[61].
> A subsequent realisation of the coiled rope as not a snake when it is seen in brighter light automatically repudiates the validity of the previous perception. In contrast, the perception of snake based on a real snake is not open to such invalidation. Though both these perceptions are equal in having intentional objects in accordance with known perspectives of the world, one lacks grounding in valid experience, while the other does not[62].

Tsongkhapa adds a further criterion. He asserts that such a convention must also not be open to invalidation (*gnod pa*) by any analysis pertaining to the ultimate ontological status of things[63]. By including this third criterion, Tsongkhapa wishes to demonstrate that metaphysical postulates such as *ātman*, *alāya*, and eternal *dharmas*, etc. cannot be accepted as conventionally real. For they are all susceptible to repudiation through analyses from the ultimate standpoint. Thus, these metaphysical categories are incapable of withstanding ultimate analysis. Yet, if they are truly existent they should certainly be findable when searched for through critical analysis. Here again we see the critical importance of Tsongkhapa's methodological distinction between the domains of two types of analysis.

Tsongkhapa thus presents his 'criteria' of conventional existence as follows:

> "So, what *are* the criteria by which it is determined whether or not something is conventionally existent?"

61 LTC, p.73-4: tha snyad pa'i tshad ma gzhan gyis gnod pa ni/ dper ne/ thag pa la sbrul lo snyam pa dang smig rgyu la chu'o snyam du 'dzin pa na yin lugs la ji ltar yin dpyos pa med pa'i blos bzung ba yin mod kyang/ des bzung ba'i don la tha snyad pa'i tshad mas gnod pas de dag tha snyad du 'ang med pa yin no//

62 Ibid. p.73.

63 Ibid. p.72.

> [Answer:] (i) That it [i.e. the thing in question] is 'known' to the conventional knowledge; (ii) that the object thus 'known' is not liable to be controverted by some other valid conventional knowledge; and (iii) the object thus 'known' must not be 'invalidated' by any reasoning that probes into the way things [really] are—i.e. examining whether or not something exists by means of its intrinsic being. Thus anything that fulfils these three criteria is maintained as conventionally existent, while that which fails to do so does not[64].

Perhaps one might raise the following objection to Tsongkhapa's third criterion: "Given that, according to Tsongkhapa himself, no phenomena can withstand ultimate analysis, does not person too become repudiated by analyses pertaining to the ultimate nature of self and persons? Here it is vital to recall Tsongkhapa's logical distinction between 'that which is not found to exist' and 'that which is found not to exist' when critical reasoning is applied. The fact that things are unfindable when sought through such ultimate analysis does not entail that they are *negated* by such critical reasoning. For things, being conventional realities, lie beyond the scope of the negation and affirmation of ultimate analysis. Therefore, the *inability* to withstand ultimate analysis is not the same as being *negated* by such an analysis.

Tsongkhapa's insistence on the need to develop a systematic and coherent understanding of the world of conventional reality has been an object of much criticism in Tibet. Taktshang Lotsāwa saw Tsongkhapa as giving too much credence to the validity of worldly convention thus reifying the everyday world of experience. He criticises Tsongkhapa as believing in (what Taktsang calls) 'validly grounded convention' (*tha snyad tshad grub*)[65]. This term has been used by subsequent critics of Geluk Madhyamaka, nota-

64 LTC, pp.72-3: de la tha snyad du yod par 'dod pa dang med par 'dod pa ni ci 'dra ba zhig gi sgo nas 'jog pa yin snyam na/ tha snyad pa'i shes pa la grags pa yin pa dang ji ltar grags pa'i don de la tha snyad pa'i tshad ma gzhan gyis gnod pa med pa dang/ de kho na nyid la'am rang bzhin yod med tshul bzhin du dpyod pa'i rigs pas gnod pa mi 'bab pa zhig ni tha snyad du yod par 'dod la/ de dag las ldog pa ni med par 'dod do//

65 Grub mtha' kun shes, pp.208, 215. Interestingly, Tsongkhapa himself never uses the expression tha snyad tshad grub. Paṇchen Lobsang Chögyen in his brTsod lan uses only the second part tshad grub. See brTsod lan, pp.406-422.

bly Gendün Chöphel[66]. It is difficult to discern what is meant exactly by 'validly grounded convention', and also whether all critics of Tsongkhapa who use this term understand the same thing by it. To some extent, I agree with Ngagwang Palden (b. 1797) when he asserts that much of the argument of Tsongkhapa's critics is based on reading too much into Tsongkhapa's attempt to maintain a coherent notion of validity at the level of the phenomenal beings of everyday experience. According to Ngagwang Palden, the critics impose an essentialistic reading in Tsongkhapa's concept of validation[67]. Having said this, I do think, however, that the dispute brings into relief a serious philosophical difference between Tsongkhapa and his critics. For Tsongkhapa, the conventional (*saṃvṛti*) and the ultimate (*paramārtha*) are not two independent realities with a categorically different ontological status. Rather, they are two aspects of one and the same world. There is only one world, this lived-world of everyday experience. This, however tends not be the case with Tsongkhapa's critics. For them, the world of saṃvṛti is a world of illusion which has no place within the perspective of an enlightened mind. At the stage of full enlightenment, the only perception that remains is that of emptiness. Like the mirage that disappears when approached, the perceptions of the multiple world of saṃvṛti are said to dissolve at enlightenment. Because of this, conventional reality cannot be accorded any established existential status. According to Tsongkhapa, however, 'it is necessary to accept a mode of being (*gnas lugs*) which is dependently originated, without essence, like a reflection.'[68] Therefore, for Tsongkhapa, the rejection of this mode of being is not only logically incoherent, it is also spiritually dangerous, for it constitutes nihilism[69].

In Tsongkhapa's nominalist ontology things exist as valid conventions, i.e. their existential status accords with valid conventions of the world. The question for us now is to understand further the meaning of 'valid conven-

66 dBu ma klu sgrub dgongs rgyan, pp.293-8. A repudiation of Gendun Chöphel's critique of tha snyad tshad grub can be found in Zeme Lobsang Palden's Rebuttal, pp.16-102.

67 Annotations, IV, ff.129a: De'i phyir stag tshang bas don dam dang tshad grub dang tshugs thub don gcig tu 'dod pa ni nam mkha' za bar 'dod pa dang 'dra ste/ ...

68 rang bzhin med pa'i rten 'brel gzugs brnyan lta bu nges par gnas lugs la yang 'dod dgos/ de khas blangs kyang re zhig la skyon du mi 'gyur/ A Letter to Rendawa, p. 63; quoted in Williams (1983), p.130.

69 Williams (1983), p.130.

tion' and in what sense the existence of things accords *with* such a convention. In other words, "what is this 'conventional knowledge' which is said to give validity to the reality of everyday objects?" In response, Tsongkhapa writes

> The conventional knowledge refers to those types of awareness that engage with their objects purely at the level of appearance (*snang ba*) and in accordance with that mode of being (*sdod lugs*). They do not enquire into the facts about whether what is perceived exists as it appears to the mind, or whether things possess [deeper] underlying objective reality, etc.. Thus, a 'conventional cognition' is that which engages [with its object] in a 'non-analytic' manner. This alone is called a "non-analytic cognition"; it is not the case that, however, it does not engage in any analysis at all[70].

In the above, Tsongkhapa suggests that 'non-analysis' does not preclude conventional analysis such as enquiring whether a jar is breakable or not, or whether or not John goes to market, etc. Needless to say even within such types of discourse, there is a difference between truth and falsity. As mentioned earlier, a visual perception of a face is veridical while the perceptual illusion of seeing a mirror reflection as a face is not. Thus, Tsongkhapa contrasts the perspectives from a 'non-analytic mind' with the ultimate standpoint and suggests that the world exists at the level of unexamined, natural awareness. Tsongkhapa sometimes characterises this perspective as that of a 'natural, innate mind' (*blo lhan skyes*)[71]. By doing so, Tsongkhapa is not suggesting that the final authority on the question of what exists and what does not lies with the mind of a philosophically illiterate person, viz. that whatever such a person deems to be real is real, and vice versa! Tsongkhapa is clear that this so-called 'non-analytic mind' can also be found in philosophers as well. The appreciation of this point is critical for Tsongkhapa. Thus, in *LTC*, he writes:

70 LTC, p.73: de la tha snyad pa'i shes pa ni chos gang la'ang ji ltar snang pa ltar gyi rjes su 'jug pa tsam yin gyi/ snang ba'i don de blo la te ltar snang ba tsam yin nam/ 'on te don gyi yin tshul la de ltar grub pa yin snyam du mi dpyod pa'i shes pa ma brtags par 'jug pa rnams so// de nyid la ma dpyad pa'i shes pa zhes bya yi/ brtag pa ye mi byed pa ni min no//

71 For example, Tsongkhapa writes: "Therefore, in terms of the contents of our innate mind (blo lhan skyes) there are those which can be negated by reason and those which cannot be thus negated (rigs pas dgag nus mi nus gnyis yod de)." LTC, p. 78.

> It is not the case that when identifying worldly convention we should ask only an elderly person who has no philosophical training. It is sufficient only to reflect upon the mode of perception of the 'non-analytic' mind of both parties involved in a philosophical disputation. Those [things] which are capable of being experienced or becoming objects of consciousness are said to be 'known' to the world[72].

It is however not adequate for Tsongkhapa's 'valid convention' to be merely a natural cognitive event. It must be what he calls 'undamaged' (*gnod med*) cognition as well, damage here referring to cases of perceptual or cognitive illusions. So, to say that persons exist is now to say that persons are objects of undamaged, conventionally valid cognitions. Yet this cannot be all there is to Tsongkhapa's nominalism of persons for this much is maintained even by the essentialists. A word of caution is called for here. If we conclude, as a result of our analysis so far, that Tsongkhapa's ontology prioritises epistemology because existence is grounded in perception we will be making a serious error. For one thing, in Tsongkhapa's view, just as in the case of fire and fuel or self and aggregates, object and its perception are mutually dependent. One does not exist prior to the other, nor does one enjoy greater ontological status than the other. Objects exist in relation to perceptions, while cognitions exist in relation to their objects. For Tsongkhapa, an idea of a content-free consciousness is conceptually incoherent[73]. Therefore, the crux of the matter lies with understanding the expression 'existence in accordance with the world'.

Tsongkhapa reminds us that in our everyday language existence has primarily a pragmatic value. When we talk of bean shoots growing in the field we mean just that the shoots are protruding from the ground in a field. We do not analyse whether the sprouts come from a cause that is identical with

72 LTC, p.73: des na 'jig rten gyi grags pa ji ltar yin ni 'jig rten gyi rgan po grub mtha' dang bral ba kho na la 'dri ba ma yin gyi rgol phyi rgol gyi rgyud kyi ma dpyad pa'i blo'i 'jug tshul la ji ltar 'dug bltas pas chog pa yin no//

73 Tsongkhapa cites the following verse from Nāgārjuna's Lokātītastava to substantiate this point:
ma shes par ni shes bya min/
de med rnam par shes med pa/
de phyir shes dang shes bya dag/
rang bzhin med par khyod kyis gsungs/ Quoted in GR, p.281-2.

it or something that is independent of the seed. Nor does our lack of such enquiry obstruct us from making full use of the knowledge of the shoot's growth in the field. Similarly, when we say that "John is walking," we do not analyse the act of walking in terms of whether or not the lifting of his right leg constitutes walking, etc. Just as we make the simple observation that John is walking, so too John as an agent of the act is not posited through an analysis of *who* or *what* the 'real' John is. We see that fire burns, and without having any metaphysical concept of what the 'real fire' is, we cook food with fire; also we know that putting our hand in the fire is not a good idea. In brief, in our everyday interactions with the world we relate to persons and things as mere names and concepts and engage in 'effective' actions with respect to them. Therefore, the conventions of the world do not posit any ontological status over and above the existence of things as understood at the level of everyday language.

Similarly, the Prāsaṅgika does not posit anything more than 'what there is'. In a memorable passage in *LN* Tsongkhapa draws our attention to what he sees as an irony in the tenets the of Svātrantika-Madhyamaka school. He asks:

> How can you assert that things exist conventionally when the existential status [you assign to them] deviates greatly from the manner in which the world posits the referents of the conventions[74]?

According to Tsongkhapa, to say that things exist conventionally is to say that they exist in accordance with the conventions of the world. There cannot be any proof of the conventional existence of persons outside the framework of everyday language. For example, propositions such as "I was at yesterday's lecture," "I see this beautiful painting," "I am in pain," "I am thinking," "John saw me at the market this morning," etc.. constitute what we can roughly call 'proofs' of the conventional existence of myself as a person. In fact, according to Tsongkhapa, to expect something more than this for a proof of one's own existence is to fall victim to the temptation of reifying one's own existence.

74 LN, p. 214: 'jig rten pas tha snyad btags pa'i don ji ltar khas len pa'i tshul dang ches mi thun pa la 'jig rten gyi tha snyad du yod pa'o zhes smras kyang...

Tsongkhapa appears to suggest that though our appreciation of the reality of things does not require proofs since that reality is apparent to us, having the knowledge of their *nominal* reality (*tha snyad du yod pa*), on the other hand, does require prior cognition of their essential emptiness. And for this, of course, critical reasoning is vital. For unless all traces of intrinsic being of the object under investigation are de-constructed the object's nominal reality cannot be established. There is a sense that the establishment of the nominal nature of things and persons comes only as a by product of an overall negation of the intrinsic reality of things and persons. There seems to be almost a logical entailment in the cognitive process. In *LN* Tsongkhapa makes the following critical statement.

> Amongst the two, i.e. objects and conventions, if things do not exist by objective intrinsic natures, then automatically it would be established that they exist [just] due to conventions[75].

This suggests that for Tsongkhapa, at the rational level, conventional existence can only be established through a process that is in essence an inference by means of elimination. He is suggesting that existence of things and persons can only be posited in terms of either objective reference to intrinsically real things (*don*) or language (*ming*). And, through a process of critical reasoning once it has been clearly demonstrated that objective reference to intrinsically real entities is untenable with respect to the existential status of things, the only conclusion we can arrive at is the fact that existence can be said to be only nominal. However, as to the question what exactly does this nominal reality consist in, there does not seem to be any clear rational account. There appears to be an element of incompleteness here, an incompleteness which may have to do with the fundamental problem of language in describing reality. Interestingly, despite the extensive discussion on conventional existence and the development of the three criteria of conventional existence in *LTC*, Tsongkhapa does not employ what I have called the inference by means of elimination in *LTC*. Perhaps the full significance of the impossibility of developing a complete rational account of conventional existence dawned upon Tsongkhapa only later when he

75 LN, p. 217: don dang tha snyad gnyis kyi nang nas don rang gi ngo bo nyid kyis yod par ma song ba na tha snyad kyi dbang gis yod par 'os med kyis grub bo// See also RG, 31: yod par ni grub la don rang gi ngo bo nyid kyis yod par ma song ba na tha snad kyi dbang gis yod par grub bo //

came to write *LN*. Certainly, as an argument for conventional existence this second approach seems to have greater force. Again, this leads me to conclude that Tsongkhapa's final standpoint on the question of developing a criteria for conventional existence evolved later.

Conclusion

In the above, I have provided few examples to illustrate my point that even in the so-called mature period of Tsongkhapa's thought we can discern a process of evolution and change. In doing so I have also endeavoured to engage with the issues raised in these examples so that their philosophical significance can be appreciated as well. Thus, I have employed a combination of both textual exegesis and philosophical analysis in my treatment of these issues. It is my hope that the textual evidence makes it amply clear that there is such a process of evolution in Tsongkhapa's later thought. I am aware that by making this claim I am departing from the traditional Geluk commentarial tradition on Tsongkhapa scholarship. However, in determining these processes of change I find that it helps to shed new lights on some of the old problems of Tsongkhapa exegesis. For example, in some areas, what seemed previously like conundrums no longer appear to be so. Also, sensitivity to change and evolution prevent us from the temptation of canonising many of Tsongkhapa's Madhyamaka ideas as has happened with the Geluk orthodoxy. We also find that it enables us to appreciate better the originality of many of Tsongkhapa's Madhyamaka views. Finally, I feel that the kind of methodological awareness I have suggested above can help us create a more concrete basis to develop what could be called the beginnings of a history of ideas of the Tibetan Madhyamaka.

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LC *Byang chub lam rim chen mo'i dka' ba'i gnad rnams mchan bu bzhi'i sgo nas legs par bshad pa theg chen lam gyi gsal sgron* (*"Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment" with four interwoven annotations*). Reprinted in New Delhi, Chöphel Lekden, 1972.

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Tibetan names in phonetics and their correspondence in Wylie transliteration

Cangkya Rölpai Dorje	lCang skya rol pa'i rdo rje
Desi Sangye Gyatso	sDe srid sangs rgyas rgya mtsho
Geluk	dGe lugs
Gendün Chöphel	dGe 'dun chos 'phel
Gowo Rabjampa, Sonam Senge	Go bo rab 'byams pa, bSod nams seng ge
Gungthang Tenpai Drönme	Gung thang bstan pa'i sgron me
Gyaltshap Dharma Rinchen	rGyal tshab dhar ma rin chen
Jamyang Chöje Tashi Palden	'Jam dbyangs chos rje bkra shis dpal ldan
Jamyang Galo	'Jam dbyangs dga' blo
Jamyang Zhepa Ngawang Tsöndrü	'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa ngag dbang brtson grus
Jhamling Sönam Namgyal	Byams gling bsod nams rnam rgyal
Jhangchup Lama	Byang chub bla ma
Kadam	dKa' gdams
Kagyü	dKa' brgyud
Karmapa Mikyö Dorje	Karmapa Mi bskyod rdo rje
Khedrup Gelek Palsang	mKhas grub dge legs dpal bzang
Khenpo Chörin	mKhan po chos rin
Ngagwang Palden	Ngag dbang dpal ldan
Nyagpa Dawa Zangpo	Nyag pa zla ba bzang po
Nyingma	rNying ma

Paṇchen Lobsang Chögyen	Paṇ chan bLo bzang chos rgyan
Paṇchen Söonam Drakpa	Paṇchen bSod nams grags pa
Rendawa Zhönu Lodrö	Red mda ‘ ba gzhon nu blo gros
Sakya	Sa skya
Sasang Lotsāwa Ngagwang	Sa bzang lo tsā ba ngag dbang
Sera Jetsünpa	Se ra rJe btsun pa
Shakhor Khensur Nyima Rinpoche	Shag ‘khor mkhan zur nyi ma rin po che
Shākya Chogden, Serdok Paṇchen	Shā kya mchog ldan, gSer mdog Paṇchen
Taktsang Lotsāwa, Sherap Rinchen	sTag tshang Lo tsā ba, Shes rab rin chen
Tashi Khyil	bKra shis ‘khyil
Tashi Lhünpo	bKra shis lhun po
Thūken Chökyi Nyima	Thu’u kan chos kyi nyi ma
Tseten Zhabdrung	Tse tan zhabs drung
Tsongkhapa,Lobsang Drakpa	Tsongkhapa,bLo bzang grags pa
Tsangtön Kunga Gyaltsen	gTsang ston kun dga’ rgyal mtshan
Zemey Lobsang Palden	Ze smad bLo bzang dpal ldan
Zhamar Gendün Tenzin	Zha dmar dge ‘dun bstan ‘dzin
Zhangzhungpa Chöwang Drakpa	Zgang zhung pa chos dbang grags pa