

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

**Herausgeber:** Schweizerische Asiengesellschaft

**Band:** 77 (2023)

**Heft:** 1

  

**Artikel:** Kamalala's "Middle Way" (madhyam pratipad) and his theory of spiritual cultivation : a study with a special focus on the fourteenth chapter of the Avikalpapraveadhrak

**Autor:** Chiou, Pei-Lin

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-1055078>

### **Nutzungsbedingungen**

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

### **Conditions d'utilisation**

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

### **Terms of use**

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

**Download PDF:** 08.01.2026

**ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>**

Pei-Lin Chiou\*

# Kamalaśīla's "Middle Way" (*madhyamā pratipad*) and His Theory of Spiritual Cultivation: A Study with a Special Focus on the Fourteenth Chapter of the *Avikalpapraveśadhāraṇīṭikā*

<https://doi.org/10.1515/asia-2023-0002>

Received January 15, 2023; accepted August 4, 2023

**Abstract:** The “middle way” (*madhyamā pratipad*) is a concept of great significance in Buddhism. For Mahāyāna philosophers, the concept of the middle way free from the two extremes of superimposition (*samāropa*) and denial (*apavāda*) has ontological import. In the history of the development of Mahāyāna thought, we also see a tendency to work out a dimension of the middle way related to yogis’ spiritual cultivation and to combine it with the middle way’s ontological aspect. The eighth-century Mādhyamika thinker Kamalaśīla is one whose theory of the middle way has a close connection with his theory of spiritual cultivation. The purpose of this paper is to explore Kamalaśīla’s view on the relationship between (1) the middle way that lies between the two extremes of superimposition and denial, and (2) his theory of spiritual cultivation. I first clarify Kamalaśīla’s definition of the two extremes of superimposition and denial by examining his *Madhyamakāloka* and *Madhyamakālaṃkārapañjikā*. Based on the knowledge thus gained, I then delve into the fourteenth chapter of the *Avikalpapraveśadhāraṇīṭikā*, a text where Kamalaśīla clearly reveals his take on the relationship between yogi’s meditative examination and the

---

I would like to thank all the participants in the symposium “Kamalaśīla’s Significance in the Intellectual History of Buddhism” at the Institute for the Cultural and Intellectual History of Asia, Austrian Academy of Sciences (4–6 March, 2022) for inspiring discussions. Special thanks go to Prof. Dr. Birgit Kellner, Dr. Anne MacDonald, and Dr. Hiroko Matsuoka for their constructive and insightful comments on earlier drafts of this paper. I am also indebted to Prof. Dr. Ryusei Keira for sharing with me his 2016 publication on Kamalaśīla. I am also grateful to Arturo Silva and Calahan Morse for correcting my English. The research for this article was supported by the Austrian Science Foundation in the context of the project “Rationality, Meditation and Liberation in Indian Buddhism: Kamalaśīla’s Scriptural Commentaries in Context” (FWF P32617).

---

**\*Corresponding author: Pei-Lin Chiou**, Institute for the Cultural and Intellectual History of Asia (IKGA), Austrian Academy of Sciences, Dr.-Ignaz-Seipel-Platz 2, 1010 Vienna, Austria,  
E-mail: [pei-lin.chiou@oeaw.ac.at](mailto:pei-lin.chiou@oeaw.ac.at)

middle way of the two extremes of superimposition and denial. My conclusion is that for Kamalaśīla, meditative examination from the perspective of Madhyamaka ontology is the means to abandon the two extremes of superimposition and denial. Moreover, the middle way itself consists in the attainment of non-conceptual gnosis (*nirvikalpajñāna*) and the awareness obtained subsequently to that (*prṣṭhalabdhajñāna*), both of which result from such meditative examination.

**Keywords:** Kamalaśīla; Avikalpapraveśadhāraṇīṭikā; madhyamā pratipad; Madhyamaka; meditation

## 1 Introduction

The “middle way” (*madhyamā pratipad*) is a concept of great significance in Buddhism. Beginning with Nāgārjuna (fl. second century), the founder of the Madhyamaka school of thought, the middle way is treated in connection with theories regarding the reality of the world; in other words, for Mahāyāna philosophers, the concept of the middle way has ontological import. In the history of the development of Mahāyāna thought, we also see a tendency to work out a dimension of the middle way related to yogis’ spiritual cultivation and to combine it with the middle way’s ontological aspect. For example, in his commentary on verses 5.23–26 of the *Madhyāntavibhāga*, the Yogācāra philosopher Vasubandhu (fl. fourth century) equates non-conceptual gnosis (*nirvikalpajñāna*) with the middle way that lies between the two extremes of superimposition (*samāropa*) and denial (*apavāda*).<sup>1</sup> In Yogācāra theories of Buddhist spiritual training, non-conceptual gnosis — that is, cognition free of all conceptual constructions (*vikalpa*) including that of the duality of subject (*grāhaka*) and object (*grāhya*) — is the supramundane awareness where true reality is directly realized, and thus what yogis should strive for.<sup>2</sup> The eighth-century

1 MVBh p. 70,11–12. According to this explanation, verses 5.23–26 of the *Madhyāntavibhāga* are expositions of the *Ratnakūṭasūtra*’s teaching of the middle way. The part of the *Ratnakūṭasūtra* on the middle way is found in sections 52–63 of von Stäel-Holstein’s 1926 edition of the *Kāśyapaparivarta*. After Vasubandhu, a tradition of commenting on the middle way in this *Sūtra* as non-conceptual gnosis was established, as a commentary on the *Kāśyapaparivarta* ascribed by the Chinese Buddhist tradition to the sixth-century Yogācāra thinker Sthiramati shows: (*Da baoji jing lun*, T.1523,26.216c19–20) 所有此二邊中間，是名無分別智，彼無分別義故。

2 For the Yogācāra classification of non-conceptual gnosis as supramundane (*lokottara*) cognition and as an awareness free of the conceptual construction of subject and object, see, for instance, verse 14.28 of the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra* and Vasubandhu’s comment thereon (MSABh p. 93,24–94,4). Of the treatises attributed by the Buddhist tradition to Maitreya and Asaṅga, the section in the *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga* on non-conceptual gnosis and the eighth chapter of the *Mahāyānasamgraha* are the two texts which deal

Mādhyaṃika scholar monk Kamalaśīla (ca. 740–795), whose thought was also deeply influenced by Yogācāra ideas, is another Indian Buddhist thinker who viewed yogis' spiritual cultivation and the middle way that lies between the two extremes of superimposition and denial as being related. Kamalaśīla makes this point particularly clear in a text dealing with meditation and cognition resulting from meditation that has not gained much attention from modern scholarship, specifically, the fourteenth chapter of his *Avikalpapraveśadhāraṇīṭīkā* (hereafter APDhṭ), a commentary on the Yogācāra-inspired Mahāyāna sūtra entitled *Avikalpapraveśadhāraṇī* (hereafter APDh).<sup>3</sup>

According to Tanji,<sup>4</sup> the two terms *samāropa* and *apavāda* — which I translate throughout this paper respectively as “superimposition” and “denial” — are used together as referring to a pair of extremes for the first time in the Yogācāra textual tradition.<sup>5</sup> Vasubandhu defines them in his comment on verse 11.23 of the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra* as follows: “For having known the nonexistence of what is not existent, one does not commit superimposition; having known the existence of what is existent, one does not commit denial.”<sup>6</sup> This definition amounts to saying that when one erroneously takes what is not existent as existent, one commits superimposition by conceptually reifying the unreal;<sup>7</sup> and that when one erroneously takes what is existent as nonexistent, one commits denial by denying its existence. After Vasubandhu, the two terms in this sense were adopted not only by Yogācāra

---

with the idea of non-conceptual gnosis in a systematic manner. For a discussion of the former, see Mathes 1996; for the latter, see Arnold 2003. Cf. also Hakamaya 1985.

3 According to Matsuda (1996b: 89–90), who edited the Gilgit and Nepal Sanskrit manuscripts of the APDh and produced a Japanese translation, the APDh was composed under the influence of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu's Yogācāra thought. The earliest known quotation from it is found in Sthiramati's (fl. sixth century) *Triṃśikāvijñaptibhāṣya*. The close textual relationship between the APDh and the Yogācāra treatise *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga*, ascribed by the Tibetan Buddhist tradition to Maitreya, has been noted and discussed in Matsuda 1996a and Mathes 2005: 12–13. Kamalaśīla's APDhṭ is a complete commentary on the APDh. The Sanskrit manuscript of the APDhṭ is lost; this work survives only in its Tibetan translation and is preserved in the *Bstan 'gyur* under the title *'Phags pa rnam par mi rtog par 'jug pa'i gzungs kyi rgya cher 'grel pa*. Throughout this paper, I will use the abbreviation APDhṭ to refer to this Tibetan translation. Moreover, for brevity's sake, I am not attaching an asterisk to the reconstructed Sanskrit title of works originally written in Sanskrit but now extant only in translation.

4 Tanji 2000.

5 In the same paper (2000), Tanji points out that *samāropa* and *apavāda* also appear in the *Laṅkāvataraśūtra*. However, *apavāda* there simply means the negative effect of *samāropa*.

6 MSABh p. 60,20–22: *abhāvasya hy abhāvatvaṃ viditvā samāropaṃ na karoti / bhāvasya bhāvatvaṃ viditvāpavādaṃ na karoti*/. If not specifically stated, all translations given in this paper are my own.

7 The act of reifying a unreal thing is often also an act of superimposing that thing as being ultimately existent on another thing. For instance, as Tanji points out (Tanji 2000: 348), in the Yogācāra system of thought, *samāropa* can mean superimposing the object on cognition.



thinkers but also Mādhyamika philosophers to refer to two extreme views regarding the reality of the world that are to be abandoned. For example, in accordance with his Yogācāra position, Sthiramati used *samāropa* and *apavāda* to refer respectively to the view of unreal conceptualized things as existent and the denial of the existence of cognition.<sup>8</sup> In contrast, Mādhyamika philosophers such as Bhāviveka (fl. sixth century) and Kamalaśīla considered *samāropa* and *apavāda* from the perspective of Madhyamaka ontology.<sup>9</sup> These different understandings as to which view is *samāropa* and which is *apavāda* were a point of contention among Yogācāras and Mādhyamikas as can be seen in (among others) Bhāviveka's *Madhyamakahrdayakārikā* and the auto-commentary *Tarkajvālā*,<sup>10</sup> his *Prajñāpradīpa*,<sup>11</sup> and Kamalaśīla's *Madhyamakāloka*.<sup>12</sup> Given this background, Kamalaśīla's way of relating his theory of the middle way between the two extremes of *samāropa* and *apavāda* to yogis' spiritual practice in the fourteenth chapter of the APDhT is, in my view, of particular importance in terms of the intellectual history of Indian Buddhism, for it presents a Madhyamaka response to the question of the relationship between yogis' spiritual training and the middle way that is free from the two extremes of *samāropa* and *apavāda*.

Basing myself on the fourteenth chapter of the APDhT, the purpose of this paper is to explore Kamalaśīla's view on the relationship between (1) the middle way that lies between the two extremes of superimposition and denial, and (2) his theory of

---

8 See Sthiramati's *Triṃśikāvijñaptibhāṣya* p. 110,4–7: *tasmād adhyāropitarūpatvād vikalpasyā-lambanam asad iti prattipattavyaṃ / anena tāvat samāropāntaṃ parihṛtyāpavādāntaparijīhṛṣayā āha / tenedaṃ sarvaṃ vijñaptimātrakam iti* / ("Therefore, the following should be known: 'Because conceptual constructs have [nothing but] a superimposed form, the object-support [of cognition, which is a conceptual construct], does not exist.' After having refuted the extreme of superimposition in this manner, intending to refute the extreme of denial, [the author Vasubandhu] says 'All is mere cognition.'") This statement shows that for Sthiramati, to take the object-support of cognition that is a conceptual construct as existent is *samāropa*, and to take cognition as nonexistent is *apavāda*. Cf. also Azami 2006 that deals with the relationship between the ideas of *samāropa* and *apavāda* and the Yogācāra theory of three natures (*svabhāva*) in the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra*, the *Yogācārabhūmi*, the *Madhyāntavibhāga*, the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra*, and the *Mahāyānasamgraha*.

9 For a discussion of Bhāviveka's use of the two terms of *samāropa* and *apavāda* and its implications, see Eckel 1985; 2008: 68. Kamalaśīla's view on *samāropa* and *apavāda* is the subject of section 2 of this paper. It is worth mentioning that another two important Indian Mādhyamika thinkers, Candrakīrti and Jñānagarbha, also adopted the two terms and used them in a Madhyamaka manner. For a discussion of Candrakīrti's use in his *Prasannapadā*, see Tanji 2000: 352ff. For a brief account of Jñānagarbha's in his *Satyadvayavibhaṅgavṛtti*, see Eckel 1992: 36–37.

10 See Eckel 2008: 213ff.

11 See Eckel 1985.

12 See the part of the *Madhyamakāloka* edited and translated in Keira 2016, where Kamalaśīla refutes the Yogācāra theory concerning the reality of the world by charging it with falling into the two extremes of *samāropa* and *apavāda*.

spiritual cultivation. This paper will first deal with how Kamalaśīla defines superimposition and denial and the middle way. Materials to be examined include passages from the section of his *Madhyamakāloka* on two realities (*satyadvaya*), and from his *Madhyamakālaṃkārapañjikā*, a commentary on his teacher Śāntarakṣita's (ca. 725–788) *Madhyamakālaṃkāra*, including the auto-commentary. I will then provide an account of the teachings of the APDh which form the background of the fourteenth chapter of the APDhṬ. After this, I will look at the fourteenth chapter of the APDhṬ. My discussion of this chapter will also be based on knowledge concerning Kamalaśīla's theory of meditative cultivation gained from his *Bhāvanākramas*.

## 2 Kamalaśīla's Ontology and His Definition of the Middle Way

The basic structure of Kamalaśīla's ontology is his theory of two realities. A Mādhyamika philosopher, Kamalaśīla upholds the belief that Madhyamaka's fundamental doctrine — that everything is without intrinsic nature (*niḥsvabhāva*) — describes the ultimate reality (*paramārthasatya*). In Kamalaśīla's view then, ultimately nothing exists as a real entity. But, like other Mādhyamika philosophers, he also holds that dependently originated things — namely things arising in dependence on causes and having causal efficacy (*arthakriyā*) — exist as customary reality (*saṃvṛti*). According to him, “What is without a cause in the customary [world] does not arise even in the customary [world], like a [completely nonexistent] hare's horn and the like. But what has a cause does arise, even though from the ultimate point of view, it is false, like illusions and reflections and so on.”<sup>13</sup> In other words, dependently originated things are customarily real, though owing to their lack of intrinsic nature, they are ultimately unreal. Moreover, in Kamalaśīla's view, they are fine in the form in which they appear as long as they are not critically investigated (*\*avicāraramaṇīya/avicāritaramaṇīya*) from the ultimate perspective.<sup>14</sup> In

<sup>13</sup> BhK I p. 218,22–25: [...] *yasya saṃvṛtyāpi kāraṇaṃ nāsti sa saṃvṛtyāpi notpadyate / yathā śaśa-viṣāṇādi / yasya tu vidyate sa paramārthato 'liko 'pi samutpadyate eva / yathā māyāpratibimbādi /*. This statement is also found in a section of the *Madhyamakāloka* where Kamalaśīla argues for the customary existence of phenomena (*dharma*) that arise dependently (see Keira 2004: 106–107), and in the APDhṬ (D139a1-2/P166a5-6).

<sup>14</sup> Kamalaśīla obviously holds the same view as his teacher Śāntarakṣita who expresses this view in verse 64 of the *Madhyamakālaṃkāra* (hereafter MA = Ichigō 1985). Śāntarakṣita states that customary reality (*saṃvṛti*) is in essence (1) that which is fine as long as it is not critically investigated; (2) that which is characterized by arising and destruction; and (3) that which has causal efficacy (MA 64: *ma brtags gcig pu nyams dga' zhing // skye dang 'jig pa'i chos can pa // don byed pa dag nus rnams kyi // rang bzhin kun rdzob pa yin rtogs //*). As Ichigō has pointed out (Ichigō 2016: 171–174 and 183–187),

the *Madhyamakāloka*, Kamalaśīla makes this point clear in his definition of \**sāṃvṛta* (“customary”), a word he uses to refer to customary entities:

Because of being produced by [erroneous cognition], all entities that are made manifest by it [i.e., erroneous cognition], and are [ultimately] false, are said to be merely customary. Moreover, [erroneous cognition], arising due to the maturation of erroneous latent inclination (\**vāsanā*) since beginningless time, makes manifest [ultimately false entities] to all sentient beings as if [they] really [possessed] an intrinsic nature of existence. Therefore, all entities that are [with] the false nature owing to thinking activities of [erroneous cognitions] are stated to be just customarily existent (\**saṃvṛtisat*). On one hand, they do not really [possess] an intrinsic nature of existence, for like appearances (\**pratibhāsa*), they are not truly real. On the other hand, they are not absolutely nonexistent — like a hare’s horn — for they appear in a fine form as long as they are not critically investigated.<sup>15</sup>

This statement also shows another important aspect of Kamalaśīla’s ontology according to which the appearance of customary entities is due to the working of erroneous cognition (\**bhrāntabuddhi*). Erroneous cognition then is the ground of their appearance. Kamalaśīla defines it as customary reality (*saṃvṛti*). In the sentences of the *Madhyamakāloka* immediately preceding the just-quoted statement on \**sāṃvṛta*, Kamalaśīla states the following:

Śāntarakṣita (as well as Kamalaśīla) follow Jñānagarbha in the definition of customary reality. For a detailed discussion of verse 64 of the *Madhyamakālaṃkāra* and the source and influence of the threefold characterization of customary reality therein, cf. also Eltschinger’s paper in the current journal issue.

15 MĀ D228b1-4/P254a4-8: *de las byung ba’i phyir des nye bar bstan pa’i dngos po brdzun pa thams cad ni kun rdzob pa kho na’o (na’o D: na P) zhes bya’o // de yang thog ma med pa’i ’khrul pa’i bag chags yongs su smin pa’i dbang gis byung la/ des kyang srog (srog P: grog D) chags thams cad la yang dag par dngos po’i ngo bo (ngo bo D: btag P) nyid lta bur nye bar ston par ’gyur te/ de’i phyir de dag gi bsam pa’i dbang gis dngos po brdzun pa’i ngo bo thams cad ni kun rdzob tu yod pa kho na’o zhes bya’o // ’di dag yang dag par dngos po’i ngo bo nyid kyang ma yin te (te D: ste P) / ji ltar snang ba de kho na nyid ma yin pa’i phyir ro // ri bong gi rwa bzhin du gtan med pa’i ngo bo nyid kyang ma yin te/ ma brtags na dga’ ba’i rnam (rnam P: dam D) par snang ba’i phyir ro //* For the statement “*de’i phyir de dag gi bsam pa’i dbang gis dngos po brdzun pa’i ngo bo thams cad ni kun rdzob tu yod pa kho na’o zhes bya’o*,” see also MAP p. 197,4–6: “*khrul ba’i blo’i bsam pa’i dbang gis brtags pa’i bdag nyid du gnas pa’i phyir de la yod pa ni kun rdzob yin no //* Cf. also Hitomi 2005: 26–27. Abhayākara Gupta’s *Munimatālaṃkāra* contains excerpts from the section of the *Madhyamakāloka* on customary reality. According to Kanō and Li’s Sanskrit edition (2017: 11), the passage corresponding to the above quotation reads: *tadbhavatvād vā sarva etadupadarśitā vyalīkā bhāvāḥ sāṃvṛtā ucyante / sā cānādivibhramavāsanāparipākavaśād asato bhāvato bhāvān sata ivopadarśayanty upajāyate sarvaprāṇabhṛtāṃ yatas tasmād abhiprāyavaśāt sarva evālikarūpā bhāvāḥ saṃvṛtisanta ucyante / na punar eṣāṃ bhāvato bhāvarūpatvam, yathāpratibhāsam atattvāt / nāpi śaśaviṣāṇavad atyantābhāvarūpatā, avicāraramaṇīyākāreṇa pratibhāsanāt //*

Erroneous cognition that superimposes a form opposite to the [true state of entities] upon entities actually devoid of intrinsic nature is called "customary [reality]," because it works as if true reality (\**tattva*) were concealed, [i.e.,] covered, [beneath] it or by it.<sup>16</sup>

A few lines later, he elaborates further on his view on customary reality:

To explain: The nature superimposed on all entities by cognitions endowed with a false image, and which is like the nature ascribed to illusory men and the like by people with erroneous cognition, is called customary reality. [In contrast,] the nature of all entities thoroughly ascertained [by means of] correct valid knowledge, and which is like the nature ascribed to exactly the [same] illusory men and so on by those with non-erroneous cognition, is the ultimate reality.<sup>17</sup>

From these excerpts from the *Madhyamakāloka*, it is reasonable to infer the following: In Kamalaśīla's view, although dependently originated entities are without intrinsic nature and thus do not possess absolute reality, they do have a customary nature of existence. This customary nature is superimposed by erroneous cognition. In other words, dependently originated entities are in essence nothing other than erroneous cognitions. Nevertheless, they appear to ordinary people as if they had their own intrinsic nature. Kamalaśīla's explanation in his *Madhyamakālaṃkārapañjikā* of \**sāṃvṛta*, according to which customary entities exist in the form of having a nature imputed to them owing to thinking activities of erroneous

16 MĀ D228a7-b1/P254a2-3: *dn̄gos po yang dag par (par P: pa D) ngo bo nyid med pa dag la yang de las bzlog pa'i rnam par sgro 'dogs par (par D: om. P) 'khrul pa'i blo gang yin pa de ni kun rdzob ces bya ste / 'di 'am 'dis de kho na nyid kun tu sgrib pa lta bur byed 'gegs pa lta bur byed pa'i phyir ro //*. The part in the *Munimatālaṃkāra* corresponding to this statement reads: (Kanō and Li 2017: 11) *niḥsvabhāveṣv api bhāvato bhāveṣu yā viparītākārādhyāropiṇī bhrāntā buddhiḥ (buddhiḥ em.: buddhiḥ Kanō and Li 2017) sā saṃvṛtir ucyate / saṃvṛtyate cchādyata ivāsyām anayā vā tattvam iti kṛtvā /*. Cf. also Hitomi 2005: 26. A similar expression of this definition of *saṃvṛti* in Kamalaśīla's works is also found in his comment on verse 63 of the *Madhyamakālaṃkāra*. See MAP p. 197,3–4: *'khrul ba'i blos dn̄gos po'i de kho na nyid bsgribs pas blo 'khrul ba thams cad ni kun rdzob yin no //* ("Because true reality of entities is concealed by erroneous cognition, all erroneous cognitions are customary reality").

17 MĀ D229a1-3/P254b7-255a1: *'di ltar sgyu ma'i skyes bu la sogs pa la 'khrul pa'i rnam par shes pa dang ldan pa'i mi dag gis gzhaḡ (gzhaḡ D: bzhaḡ P) pa'i ngo bo ji lta ba de (de D: om. P) bzhin du dn̄gos po thams cad la yang brdzun pa'i rnam pa can gyi shes pas sgro btags pa'i ngo bo gang yin pa de ni kun rdzob kyi bden pa'o zhes tha snyad (snyad D: snyad la P) gdags la / sgyu ma'i skyes bu la sogs pa de nyid la rnam par shes pa ma 'khrul pa can dag gis gzhaḡ (gzhaḡ D: bzhaḡ P) pa'i ngo bo ji lta ba de bzhin du dn̄gos po thams cad la yang dag pa'i tshad ma yongs su gtan la phab pa'i ngo bo gang yin pa de ni don dam pa'i bden pa yin no //*. Cf. MMĀ (Kanō and Li 2017: 11–12) *tathā hi māyāpuruṣāḍau yad bhrāntajñānasamaṅgibhir narair avasthāpitaṃ rūpaṃ, tadvat sarvapadārtheṣu yad alikākār-ajñānasamāropitaṃ tat saṃvṛtisatyam iti vyavahriyate / tatraiva ca māyāpuruṣāḍau yathānupa-plutavijñānair avasthāpitaṃ rūpaṃ tadvat sarvapadārthānāṃ yat samyakpramāṇapariniṣcitaṃ rūpaṃ tat paramārthasatyam //*.

cognition, also supports this inference.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, this is in accord with Kamalaśīla's adherence to the Yogācāra theory of mere-cognition as a step leading to Madhyamaka's fundamental doctrine of the absence of intrinsic nature in everything.<sup>19</sup>

Kamalaśīla's theory of customary reality and customary entities can be said to be a combination of the Yogācāra theory of mere-cognition and the Madhyamaka position on dependently originated entities.<sup>20</sup> With this combination, Kamalaśīla asserts the customary reality of dependently originated entities by defining them as appearances of erroneous cognition, while at the same time upholding the Madhyamaka principle that all things, including dependently originated entities, are devoid of intrinsic nature. This is of great import to Kamalaśīla's philosophical-religious project, which declares that although dependently originated entities lack intrinsic nature, since they are customarily real, their capacity to produce effects such as perceptions (*pratyakṣa*) is not denied. Therefore, Kamalaśīla's Madhyamaka-oriented metaphysics does not contradict our everyday experience of perceptions. Nor does it leave Buddhist spiritual practice without purpose, for in the customary world defilement (*saṃkleśa*) and purification (*vyavadāna*) are indeed possible. In his comment on verse 64 of the *Madhyamakālaṃkāra* and the accompanying auto-comment, following Śāntarakṣita's definition of customary reality,<sup>21</sup> Kamalaśīla further distinguishes between true customary reality (*\*tathyaśaṃvṛti*; *yang dag pa'i kun rdzob*) and false customary reality (*\*mithyāśaṃvṛti*; *log pa'i kun rdzob*). According to him, true customary reality has the following features: (1) it is characterized by dependent origination; (2) it is able to produce effects; (3) it is well known, even to a cowherd. In contrast, false customary reality is defined as mere verbal expressions (*\*śabdavyavahāra*).<sup>22</sup> All of this amounts to saying that

18 MAP p. 197,4–6 (ad MA 63): 'khrul ba'i blo'i bsaṃ pa'i dbang gis brtags pa'i bdag nyid du gnas pa'i phyir de la yod pa ni kun rdzob pa yin no // ("Because of existing as [having] a nature imputed owing to thinking activities of erroneous cognitions, [that which] exists there is customary.").

19 Cf. Kajiyama 1978.

20 As stated in n. 14, Śāntarakṣita and Jñānagarbha also hold the same view.

21 For Śāntarakṣita's definition of customary reality, see n. 14. From his auto-comment (MAV p. 204, 1–3) where he refers to "true customary reality" (*\*tathyaśaṃvṛti*; *yang dag pa'i kun rdzob*), it is clear that he uses the term *saṃvṛti* in the sense of true customary reality. Cf. also Ichigo 2016. The idea of true customary reality is also found in Jñānagarbha's *Satyadvayavibhaṅgakārikā*, see Ichigo 2016: 185–187.

22 At the beginning of the part of his *Madhyamakālaṃkārapañjikā* being discussed here, Kamalaśīla points out two possible views on customary reality. He says: "Since the ultimate nature is negated, is what is established as the customary nature of entities considered as the customary [reality] consisting in verbal expressions, or is exactly that [which is characterized by] dependent origination, able to produce effects, and well known even to a cowherd, referred to as the customary reality by conventional designation? These are the two alternatives." MAP p. 203,1–5: *ci ste don dam pa'i rang bzhin bkag pas dngos po rnam kun rdzob pa'i ngo bor bzhaḡ pa gang yin pa de ci sgra'i tha snyad kyi*



dependently originated entities that have the above-mentioned features are true customary reality; they are distinguished from mere verbal expressions that are false customary reality.<sup>23</sup>

In his auto-comment on verse 64 of the *Madhyamakālaṃkāra*, Śāntarakṣita cites the famous verse 24.18 of Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* (hereafter MMK) on the middle way to justify his definition of customary reality. The Tibetan text<sup>24</sup> corresponds to the Sanskrit text of MMK 24.18, which reads:

*yaḥ pratītyasamutpādaḥ śūnyatām tāṃ pracakṣmahe /  
sā prajñaptir upādāya pratipat saiva madhyamā //*

Dependent origination we declare to be emptiness.

It [emptiness] is dependent designation; just that is the middle way.<sup>25</sup>

In his comment on this quotation, Kamalaśīla reveals his view of the ontological aspect of the middle way. He reads *pratītyasamutpādaḥ* as *pratītyasamutpanna*, which refers to dependently originated entities,<sup>26</sup> and interprets the verse as follows:

Because dependently originated entities are without ultimate intrinsic nature, they are called emptiness. But it is not [the case that they are thus called] because of being similar to a [completely nonexistent] hare's horn. Therefore, [our everyday experiences] such as visual perception are not contradicted. The phrase "It [emptiness] is dependent designation" means "precisely that customary reality" because [both] words "dependent" (*upādāya*) and "designation" (*prajñapti*) are synonyms of customary reality. [...] "Just that is the middle way" means "because the two extremes of superimposition and denial are avoided, just that is stated to be the middle way that [is free] from that [i.e., superimposition] and that [i.e., denial]."<sup>27</sup>

---

*bdag nyid kyi kun rdzob par 'dod dam / 'on te rten cing 'brel par 'byung ba don bya ba byed pa gnag rdzi  
yan chad la shing tu grags pa de nyid brda'i dbang gis kun rdzob kyi sgrar brjod ces bya ba rtog pa gnyis  
so //* According to Kamalaśīla's comment that follows, the first view describes the false customary reality, while the second describes the true customary reality.

23 Keira and Eltschinger also point out in their papers included in the current journal issue that Kamalaśīla considers dependently originated entities as constituting true customary reality.

24 MAV p. 204,7–10: *rten cing 'brel par gang 'byung ba // de ni stong pa nyid du bshad // de ni rgyur byas gdags pa ste // de nyid dbu ma'i lam yin no //*

25 For a discussion of the meaning of this verse in the context of the MMK and various interpretations of it, see Oetke 2007 and Keira's paper included in the current volume.

26 This interpretation of *pratītyasamutpāda* echoes his etymological explanation of this word in the *Tattvasaṃgrahapañjikā*. See Matsuoka (2022).

27 MAP p. 205,6–15: *rten cing 'brel bar 'byung ba'i dngos po rnam kho na don dam pa'i rang bzhin dang bral ba'i phyir stong pa zhes bya'i ri bong gi rwa dang 'dra ba'i bdag nyid kyi phyir ni ma yin no // des na mthong ba la sogs pa dang mi 'gal lo // de ni rgyur byas gdags pa ste zhes bya ba ni kun rdzob de nyid ces bya ba'i tha tshig ste / rgyur byas pa dang gdags pa'i sgra ni kun rdzob kyi rnam grangs yin pa'i*



This interpretation is far from being easily understood, and a discussion of how Kamalaśīla construes MMK 24.18 that would include a comparison of his understanding with those of other commentators on the MMK would go beyond the scope of this paper.<sup>28</sup> However, Kamalaśīla's intention to read his theory of two realities into MMK 24.18 is evident. In his comment Kamalaśīla expressly points out that when he speaks of dependently originated entities as emptiness, he is denying an ultimate intrinsic nature but not negating their customary reality that is experienced in everyday life. In his view, this is the middle way that is free from the two extremes of superimposition and denial. Based on Kamalaśīla's interpretation of MMK 24.18, I think it is reasonable to say that for Kamalaśīla, the extreme of superimposition is to superimpose something as being ultimately existent on dependently originated entities,<sup>29</sup> and the extreme of denial is to deny the customary existence of those entities. This will become more clear in my discussion below of Kamalaśīla's commentary on the APDh.

### 3 The APDh's Teachings on Eliminating and on Examining "Appearances" (*nimitta*)<sup>30</sup>

The central teaching of the APDh is on eliminating *nimittas* as a means of realizing true reality (*dharmadhātu*).<sup>31</sup> This idea of eliminating *nimittas* is based on the

---

*phyir ro // [...] // de nyid dbu ma'i lam yin no zhes bya ba ni sgro 'dogs pa dang skur pa 'debs pa'i mtha' gnyis spangs pa'i phyir / de nyid de dang de las dbu ma'i lam du gsungs so zhes bya ba'i tha tshig go //*

28 For such a discussion, I refer the reader to Keira's paper in the current journal issue.

29 According to Kamalaśīla's interpretation of MMK 24.18, the extreme of superimposition is to superimpose an ultimate intrinsic nature on dependently originated entities. However, as we shall see in section 4.1.1 below, in the fourteenth chapter of the APDh, Kamalaśīla explicitly points out that the content of superimposition also includes properties. This actually proves Keira's observation he made in his study of the structure of Kamalaśīla's arguments for the absence of intrinsic nature in the *Madhyamakāloka* that Kamalaśīla's philosophy negates not only ultimate intrinsic nature but any nature and property superimposed as being ultimately existent on phenomena. See Keira 2004: 31–32. Cf. also Tillemans 2004.

30 In the APDh, *nimitta* always appears together with *vikalpa* in the form of the compound *vikalpanimitta*. Modern studies concerning the APDh, including translations, usually construe this compound as a genitive *tatpuruṣa*, taking *nimitta* to be subordinate to *vikalpa*. For instance, Matsuda 1996b: 101 translates *vikalpanimitta* as “分別の原因” (“cause of *vikalpa*”); Gómez 1983: 409 renders it as “signs of discrimination.” However, according to Kamalaśīla's commentary, *nimitta* is *vikalpa*. In other words, the compound is a *karmadhāraya*. Kamalaśīla makes this point clear at APDh D133a2/P159a1: *de bas na rnam par rtog pa ni mtshan ma'o zhes thams cad du gsungs te* / (“Therefore, conceptual construction (*vikalpa*) is everywhere said to be *nimitta*.”).

31 APDh-M pp. 94,18–95,20.

illusionist worldview of Mahāyāna Buddhism and can be traced back to the Pañcavastu ("Five Categories") theory in the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* of the *Viniścayasamgrahaṇī* of the *Yogācārabhūmi*.<sup>32</sup> The Pañcavastu theory defines *nimitta* as "the thing which is the basis of designation."<sup>33</sup> Following this definition, all manifold things in the world that ordinary people can name and describe, including physical and mental phenomena as well as abstract concepts, fall into the category of *nimitta*. Thus, *nimitta* refers to both phenomena and abstract concepts.<sup>34</sup> According to this theory, *nimittas* are not ultimately real entities, they only appear to be substantial objects. It is in this sense then that I translate *nimitta* as "appearance." Moreover, appearances and subjective conceptual constructions (*vikalpa*) condition each other. The true reality (*tathatā*) behind appearances, however, is free of conceptual construction and beyond language. Therefore, to realize true reality, the yogi has to eliminate all appearances by cultivating in meditation correct cognition (*samyagjñāna*) of the ultimate (*paramārtha*).<sup>35</sup> This illusionist worldview and the idea of eliminating appearances as a crucial step towards the realization of the true reality occupy an important position in Yogācāra thought. This is evidenced by a long passage in the eighth chapter of the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra* on the classification and elimination of appearances,<sup>36</sup> and by a reference in the *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga*, a

32 The Pañcavastu theory presents a system of analyzing the world and classifying all of its aspects into the five categories of *nimitta*, *nāman* ("name"), *vikalpa* ("conceptual construction"), *tathatā* ("true reality"), and *samyagjñāna* ("correct cognition"). For an in-depth study of this theory, see Kramer 2005.

33 See Kramer 2005: 69 [2.1]: *rgyu mtshan gang zhe na / mdor bsdu na / mngon par brjod pa'i tshig gi gzh'i'i gnas su gyur pa'i dngos po gang yin pa'o //*.

34 The term *nimitta* is polysemic in Indian Buddhist literature. It can mean "characteristic feature" or "characteristic appearance" of a thing, "sign," "mark," "cause," and so on. As Schmithausen has pointed out (Schmithausen 1969: 120 n. 67), it is also used to refer to phenomena that are bearers of characteristic features or appearances. Moreover, in a Mahāyāna context, such as the Pañcavastu theory under discussion, *nimitta* in the sense of phenomena has the implication that phenomena, whether physical or mental, are (at least co-)conditioned by subjective conceptual construction (*vikalpa*) and are ultimately illusory (cf. also Schmithausen 2007: 201 under 2.a). It should be noted that abstract concepts are also considered to be *nimitta* in this sense. The following statement from the *Abhidharmasamuccayabhāṣya* makes this point clear: (ASBh p. 14,15–16) *nimittāni rūpaṃ vedanā yāvad bodhir iti prapañcitāni* ("Nimittas are manifold conceptual constructs, [including] material form, feeling, and up to [the concept of] awakening").

35 For the Tibetan text on the practice of realizing true reality and eliminating appearances, and a German translation, see Kramer 2005: 93–94 and 164–166 [3.5.1–3.5.4.1], and Sakuma 1990: 183–190. Cf. also Kramer's account of this part at p. 47.

36 See SNS pp. 107 §29–109 §30 and Lamotte's French translation at pp. 224–226 (Lamotte 1935). For a discussion of this passage and the eighth chapter of the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra* in connection with the Pañcavastu theory, see Kramer 2005: 56–57. According to Schmithausen (Schmithausen 2007: 236),

treatise ascribed by Tibetan Buddhist tradition to Maitreya, to the elimination of appearances as an aspect through which non-conceptual gnosis is understood.<sup>37</sup>

In the APDh, eliminating all appearances is said to be the path to the non-conceptual sphere (*avikalpadhātu*), that is, to true reality or its synonym *dhar-madhātu*.<sup>38</sup> This sūtra classifies all appearances into four kinds. According to Kamalaśīla's commentary, appearances are by nature conceptual constructs (*vikalpa*).<sup>39</sup> One of the four kinds of appearances includes the five aggregates (*skandha*) of material form (*rūpa*), feeling (*vedanā*), ideation (*saṃjñā*), conditioning factors (*saṃskāra*), and consciousness (*viññāna*); the other three are appearances that consist of abstract concepts.

In the section on eliminating appearances, the APDh teaches “non-mentation” (*amanasikāra*) as a method of eliminating appearances.<sup>40</sup> A later section deals with another method, namely examining appearances.<sup>41</sup> This section, which forms the basic text of the fourteenth chapter of the APDhṬ, contains a description of the manner of examination that is to be applied to each and every kind of appearance, and a description of the cognitions resulting from such an examination. In what follows — offered here as a representative example — I shall describe the issue of “examining appearance consisting in material form.”

The APDh describes the manner of examination with a series of the formulae: *iti carati vikalpe carati* (“When one engages in thinking [...] one engages in conceptual construction”). What stands before *iti* are positive or negative assertions concerning material form. These assertions are given here in the order in which they appear in the APDh, and are grouped according to Kamalaśīla's classification (which I will discuss below in sections 4.1.1 and 4.1.2).

- (A) My body (*rūpa*). Body of others.
- (B) This material form exists.
- (C) Material form arises. It ceases. It is defiled. It is purified.
- (D) Material form does not exist.

---

the thought presented in that chapter of the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra* seems to be more advanced than the Pañcavastu theory.

<sup>37</sup> See DhDhV pp. 83,19–84,3.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Kamalaśīla's explanation of the term *avikalpa* in the title of the APDh as referring to *dhar-madhātu*: (APDhṬ D123b3-4/P147b1-2) *de ltar na 'di la rnam par rtog pa med pas (pas P: pas / D) rnam par mi rtog pa'i chos kyi dbyings zhes bya'o* / (“Because of being free of conceptual constructions, the non-conceptual realm of reality is referred to in the [title of the APDh] that way.”).

<sup>39</sup> See also n. 30.

<sup>40</sup> APDh-M pp. 94,18–95,20.

<sup>41</sup> APDh-M pp. 97,22–99,10.

- (E) It does not exist by intrinsic nature (*svabhāva*). Nor does it exist as a cause (*hetu*). Nor does it exist as a result (*phala*). Nor does it exist as activity (*karman*). Nor does it exist as connection (*yoga*). Nor does it exist as function (*ṛtti*).
- (F) Material form is mere cognition.
- (G) Just as material form does not exist, so cognition appearing as material form does not exist.<sup>42</sup>

Examining appearance consisting in material form in the above manner is stated to result in the following cognitions:<sup>43</sup>

Sons of good family! On account of which [examination of appearances in that manner] a bodhisattva mahāsattva does not apprehend material form. Nor does he apprehend cognition appearing as material form. Nonetheless, he does not make all cognitions vanish completely. Nor does he apprehend any phenomenon apart from cognition.<sup>44</sup>

Concerning the APDh's description of the manner of examining appearances, two points are to be made. First, this description might have been modeled on the statements of the *Prajñāpāramitāsūtras* on the correct exercise of the perfection of insight (*prajñāpāramitā*) that contain the formula *saced [...] iti carati nimitte carati* "When one engages in thinking [...], one engages in [grasping] *nimitta*".<sup>45</sup> According to Vetter,<sup>46</sup> these statements teach that any assertion, even the Abhidharmic analysis of the five aggregates and the assertion that the five aggregates are empty, is not the perfection of insight because it entails a grasping of appearances that should be avoided. Therefore, only one who does not engage in thinking any assertion engages

42 See APDh-M pp. 97,25–98,4: *yo mama rūpam iti carati vikalpe carati / pareṣāṃ rūpam iti carati vikalpe carati / rūpam idam iti carati vikalpe carati / rūpam utpadyate / nirudhyate / saṃkliśyate / vyavadāyata iti carati vikalpe carati / nāsti rūpam iti carati vikalpe carati / svabhāvato 'pi nāsti / hetuto 'pi nāsti / phalato 'pi nāsti / karmato 'pi nāsti / yogato 'pi nāsti / ṛttito 'pi nāsti rūpam iti carati vikalpe carati / vijñaptimātram rūpam iti carati vikalpe carati / yathā rūpaṃ nāsti tathā rūpapratiḥhāsā vijñaptir api nāstīti carati vikalpe carati /*

43 I confine my discussion of the cognitions resulting from examining appearances to this passage, as those immediately succeeding it describe modes of cognition that are beyond the scope of this paper.

44 APDh-M p. 98,5–7: *yataś ca kulaputrā bodhisattvo mahāsattvo rūpaṃ (rūpaṃ em. according to the parallel expression at APDh-M p. 99,1: rūpam iti APDh-M) nopalabhate / rūpapratiḥhāsāṃ api vijñaptiṃ nopalabhate / na ca sarveṇa sarvaṃ vijñaptiṃ viprañāśayati (viprañāśayati according to APDh-G and the occurrence of this term in a similar sentence at APDh-M p. 99,2–3: vipariñāśayati APDh-M) / na cānyatra vijñapter kaṃcid (kaṃcid according to APDh-G and APDh-M p. 57,10–58,2: anyam kañcid APDh-M) dharmam upalabhate /*

45 See, for instance, the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* pp. 57,10–58,2.

46 Vetter 1984, see particularly pp. 502–503.

in the perfection of insight, as one does not engage in grasping appearances.<sup>47</sup> Though the APDh does not contain any reference to the perfection of insight, Buddhist thinkers familiar with the *Prajñāpāramitāsūtras* such as Kamalaśīla would have understood its formula — *iti carati vikalpe carati* — as pointing out the same doctrine of not engaging with anything in a conceptualized form.

The second remarkable point of the APDh's description of the manner of examination is that the order of the statements in the *iti*-clauses presents a hierarchical way of considering phenomena that moves from the view of phenomena as substantial individual entities to the view of phenomena as mere cognition.

## 4 The Fourteenth Chapter of the APDhṬ

Kamalaśīla takes the APDh's description of the manner of examining appearances to be an exposition of the APDh's method of eliminating appearances. As Higgins has pointed out,<sup>48</sup> in the part of the APDhṬ on the APDh's section on eliminating appearances,<sup>49</sup> Kamalaśīla argues that the intended meaning of the method that is called in this section “non-mentation” (*amanasikāra*) is “consideration of what is real (*bhūtapratyavekṣā*).”<sup>50</sup> In Kamalaśīla's theory of meditative cultivation as presented

47 For a discussion of these statements, cf. also Takehashi 1991; Breet 1992: 212–213.

48 Higgins 2006: 258–259 provides a summary of Kamalaśīla's arguments for his interpretation of the method called “non-mentation.” Cf. also Mathes 2005: 13 and 2010: 7, where Mathes points out a strategy Kamalaśīla uses in those arguments, that is, that he “restricts the literal meaning of *amanasikāra* to the fruit of one's deep insight (*vipaśyanā*) practice.”

49 I.e., the seventh chapter of the APDhṬ, D130b5-137a2/P156a5-163b7.

50 See APDhṬ D131a5-b3/P156b7-157a6. Concerning the translation of the term *bhūtapratyavekṣā* in Kamalaśīla's usage, grammatically there are two ways of construing this Sanskrit compound. One is to take it as a *karmadhāraya*. Its first member *bhūta* then is an adjective and can mean “true,” “correct,” and “real” and so on. The other is to analyze it as a genitive *tatpuruṣa* and understand *bhūta* as a noun denoting something which is true/correct/real. While the two ways of analysis are grammatically possible, Kamalaśīla's explanation of the *bhūta* in this compound in the *Bhāvanākrama* III as referring to *pudgaladharmanairātmya* (“selflessness of persons and phenomena”) provides a strong textual support for the second interpretation. BhK III p. 5,17–8: *bhūtapratyavekṣāṇā ca vipaśyanocyate / bhūtaṃ punaḥ pudgaladharmanairātmyaṃ /*. As for the second member of the compound, namely the verbal noun *pratyavekṣā*, Adam (Adam 2008: 196–197) and Kellner (Kellner 2020: 50–51) have pointed out that owing to the spectrum of the meanings of the verbal root  $\sqrt{\text{ikṣ}}$  of the noun that ranges from “to look at” to “to think,” this noun can mean an act having both a perceptual aspect (“to look at”) and an intellectual aspect (“to reflect upon”). Adam translates it accordingly as “discernment,” while Kellner offers the rendering “consideration.” I here follow Kellner's translation for the reason that according to Kamalaśīla's account of the process of *bhūtapratyavekṣā* in the *Bhāvanākrama* III (BhK III pp. 5,20–8,17), this process consists of a series of analytical thinking in the form of examining progressively subtler purportedly existent things under



in his *Bhāvanākramas*, consideration of what is real is the decisive factor in the arising of non-conceptual gnosis.<sup>51</sup> It consists of meditative analytic examination of purportedly existent entities (including persons (*pudgala*), material and mental phenomena) according to reasonings establishing their selflessness (*nairātmya*) and lack of intrinsic nature (*niḥsvabhāvatā*), and is the characteristic of reflective meditation (*vipaśyanā*) and associated with insight (*prajñā*).<sup>52</sup> Moreover, Kamalaśīla holds the view that when the yogi has practiced consideration of what is real, he will not apprehend (*upa-√labh*) any intrinsic nature of those things being examined, which amounts to a non-apprehension of those things.<sup>53</sup> The basic meaning of the consideration of what is real in the APDhṬ is the same as in the *Bhāvanākramas*. That is to say, in Kamalaśīla's view, the yogi should eliminate appearances by examining them in reflective meditation according to reasonings establishing their selflessness and lack of intrinsic nature, and such examination results in a non-apprehension of appearances.<sup>54</sup> Now, in the fourteenth chapter of the APDhṬ,<sup>55</sup> in commenting on the APDh's description of the manner of examining appearances, Kamalaśīla further elaborates on the rationale behind such meditative examination. At the very beginning of the chapter, he asserts that the yogi should perform the examination in such a way that he abandons the extremes of superimposition and denial, and thus enters the middle way.<sup>56</sup>

---

the guide of reasonings proving their selflessness. And "consideration" is a term that in my view can better convey the senses of "looking at," "thinking," and "examination" at the same time.

51 BhK III p. 17,6–14.

52 BhK III p. 5,17: *bhūtapratyavekṣaṇā ca vipaśyanocyate*. Immediately after this statement, Kamalaśīla describes the process of practicing consideration of what is real (BhK III pp. 5,18–8,17) that is presented in a slightly different manner in the *Bhāvanākrama* I as the process of cultivating insight born from meditation (BhK I pp. 210,5–211,20). Cf. also Kellner 2020: 62–63.

53 BhK I p. 214,7–14: [...] *samāhitasya prajñayā nirūpayataḥ sarvadharmāṇām anupalambhaḥ / [...] / tathā hi yadā prajñayā nirūpayan na kiṃcid bhāvasvabhāvam upalabhate yogī, tadāsyā naiva bhāvavikalpo bhavati / abhāvavikalpo 'pi tasya nāsty eva* / ("When [the yogi], absorbed in meditation, has performed examination with insight, he does not apprehend all phenomena. [...] To be precise: When the yogi, having performed examination with insight, does not apprehend any intrinsic nature of [purportedly] existent things, then he does not form the concept of existence at all"). See also BhK III p. 8,12–13: *prajñayā ca nirūpayataḥ sakalavastusvabhāvanupalambhāt prajñottaradhyāyī bhavati* /.

54 See APDhṬ D132a6-b2/P158a4 and D131b2-3/P57a3-6.

55 APDhṬ D142a6-145b5/P170a7-174b1.

56 APDhṬ D142b2-3/P170b4-5: 'dir ni mtha' gnyis spangs shing (*shing D: zhing P*) ci nas kyang dbu ma'i lam la 'jug par 'gyur ba de ltar so sor brtag (*brtag D: brtags P*) par bya'o [...] //.



## 4.1 Kamalaśīla's Commentary on the APDh's Description of the Manner of Examination

Kamalaśīla explains those assertions constituting the content of the *iti*-clause of the formula *iti carati vikalpe carati* to be the extremes of superimposition and denial that are to be abandoned. He classifies the positive assertions (A, B, C, and F)<sup>57</sup> into the category of the extreme of superimposition and the negative assertions (D, E, and G) into the category of the extreme of denial. The former consists of two sub-categories, namely the extreme of superimposition of a person that includes the assertions “my body” and “body of others” (A), and the extreme of superimposition on phenomena that includes the remaining positive assertions (B, C, F).<sup>58</sup> The extreme of superimposition on phenomena is further divided into superimposition of an intrinsic nature (\**svabhāva*; *ngo bo nyid*) on phenomena and superimposition of specific properties (\**viśeṣa*; *bye brag*) on phenomena.<sup>59</sup>

### 4.1.1 Assertions Which are the Extreme of Superimposition

Kamalaśīla's comments on each of those assertions (groups A, B, C, and F) belonging to the category of the extreme of superimposition usually only contain very brief explanations of why they are classified into those groups. For example, in the case of the two assertions (A) “my body” and “body of others,” Kamalaśīla simply says: “Because the clinging to mine (\**ātmīyagraha*) with regard to material form, etc. arises on the ground of the clinging to a self (\**ātmagraha*).”<sup>60</sup> This short account indicates that when writing the comment, Kamalaśīla must have supposed that his readers were already well-equipped with knowledge regarding the two kinds of clinging and their relationship with superimposition. Such discussions can be found

57 Here and in the following, the letters given in brackets refer to the groups into which the assertions are grouped in section 3 above.

58 APDhT D142b3-4/P170b6: *de la sgro 'dogs pa'i mtha' ni rnam pa gnyis te / gang zag tu sgro 'dogs pa'i mtha' dang / chos su sgro 'dogs pa'i mtha'o //*. The Tibetan translations of the two sub-categories, *gang zag tu sgro 'dogs pa'i mtha'* and *chos su sgro 'dogs pa'i mtha'*, have the same syntactical structure. I render the former as “the extreme of superimposition of a person,” and the latter as “the extreme of superimposition on phenomena,” because according to Kamalaśīla's philosophy, a *pudgala*, being unreal both ultimately and customarily, is the content of superimposition in the sense of reification, and phenomena, being real as customary entities, are the bases on which things are superimposed as being ultimately existent. See my discussion in section 4.1.1.

59 APDhT D142b5/P170b7-8: *chos su sgro 'dogs pa'i mtha' yang rnam pa gnyis te / ngo bo nyid du sgro 'dogs pa dang / bye brag tu sgro 'dogs pa'o //*.

60 APDhT D142b4-5/P170b7: *bdag tu 'dzin pa'i sgo nas gzugs la sogs pa la bdag gir 'dzin pa kun tu (tu P: du D) 'byung ba'i phyir ro //*.

in Kamalaśīla's other works (as well as in other sources). For instance, in a passage in the last chapter of his *Tattvasaṃgrahapañjikā*, Kamalaśīla explicitly points out that the view of a self (*ātmadarśana*), which is tantamount to the clinging to a self, is the cause of the clinging to mine.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, refuting the existence of a self and a person that Kamalaśīla held to be identical with a self is one of the topics of Kamalaśīla's philosophical treatises.<sup>62</sup> In other words, according to Kamalaśīla's philosophy, a self and a person are thoroughly unreal, whether on the ultimate or the customary level of analysis. What the view of a self is involved with is nothing more than a verbal designation.<sup>63</sup> Therefore, the two assertions "my body" and "body of others" are the extreme of superimposition of a person for they are based on the clinging to mine and the clinging to mine is grounded in the clinging to a self that entails reifying a completely nonexistent self or person by verbal designation. This category of the extreme of superimposition of a person also indicates that in Kamalaśīla's philosophy, reifying something completely unreal as real is an act of superimposition (*samāropa*).

Kamalaśīla's explanations of the remaining positive assertions (B, C, and F), i.e., "This material form exists" and "Material form arises," etc., are also very concise. He points out that these assertions are the extreme of superimposition because they falsely attribute an intrinsic nature or specific properties to phenomena that phenomena do not possess from the ultimate point of view. Kamalaśīla classifies the assertion (C) "This material form exists" into the sub-category of superimposition of an intrinsic nature on phenomena.<sup>64</sup> This classification amounts to saying that when making or thinking this assertion, one is not considering material form according to its true nature, that is, of being without intrinsic nature; on the contrary, one is erroneously taking material form as having an intrinsic nature. From this perspective, the meditative examination of phenomena according to reasonings establishing their lack of intrinsic nature can be said to be the counteragent to the superimposition of an intrinsic nature on phenomena and the connected production

61 TSP<sub>Sh</sub> p. 1053,15–16 (ad TS<sub>Sh</sub> 3337) = TSP<sub>K</sub> p. 870,16–18 (ad TS<sub>K</sub> 3338): *tasmād anādikālikam (-kālikam TSP<sub>Sh</sub>: -kālinam TSP<sub>K</sub>) pūrvapūrvasajātīyābhyāsajanitam ātmadarśanam ātmīyagraham prasūte, tau cātmātmīyasneham (cātmātmīya- TSP<sub>Sh</sub>: cātmīya- TSP<sub>K</sub>), so 'pi dveṣādīkam ity //* ("Therefore, since beginningless time, the view of a self that has arisen through the cultivation of each preceding similar [view] produces the clinging to mine. And those two [produce] the love of 'I' and 'mine.' And that [love of 'I' and 'mine' produces] aversion and so on." The translation is from McClintock 2010: 194. I have substituted "view of a self" and "clinging to mine" respectively for her renderings "vision of a self" and "perception of mine" for the sake of consistency of terminology in this paper.

62 Kamalaśīla's most detailed treatment of this issue is found in his *Tattvasaṃgrahapañjikā* on verses 336–349 of the *Tattvasaṃgraha*. He also gives a lengthy discussion on this issue in his commentary on the *Vajracchedikāsūtra*. See Saccone's paper included in the current journal issue.

63 Cf. also the part of section 2 of this paper on true customary reality and false customary reality.

64 APDhT D142b5/P170b8: *gzugs 'di yod do zhes bya ba ni ngo bo nyid du sgro 'dogs pa'o //*.

of the thought “This material form exists.” In *Bhāvanākrama* III, it is stated that “When [the yogi], having examined the intrinsic nature of phenomena in the manner [that phenomena’s lack of intrinsic nature is proved], does not apprehend [an intrinsic nature], then he does not form the concept ‘something exists.’ Nor does he form the concept ‘something does not exist.’”<sup>65</sup> The end of the formation of the concept “something exists” is tantamount to abandoning superimposition of an intrinsic nature on that thing.

While Kamalaśīla’s comment on the assertion “This material form exists” as superimposition of an intrinsic nature on phenomena clearly echoes his accounts in the *Bhāvanākramas*, his comment here in the APDhṬ on the four assertions (C), “Material form arises,” “It ceases,” “It is defiled,” and “It is purified,” as superimposition of specific properties on phenomena<sup>66</sup> deals with an issue not touched upon in the *Bhāvanākramas*. That is, taking customarily acceptable properties of phenomena, namely properties caused by dependent origination such as arising, ceasing, and so on, to be their real properties involves superimposition. In the APDhṬ, to explain this kind of superimposition, Kamalaśīla resorts to the idea of non-arising (*anutpāda*). He says: “Since material form, etc. are not arisen from the very beginning, from the ultimate point of view, arising and ceasing and so on are impossible.”<sup>67</sup> This explanation needs some further clarification. According to Kamalaśīla’s metaphysics, all phenomena are not arisen because they are not really established.<sup>68</sup> Therefore, since all phenomena are not arisen, from the ultimate perspective, there is no dependent origination nor are there any properties caused by dependent origination. Kamalaśīla makes this point clear in his interpretation in the *Madhyamakāloka* of the imagined nature (*parikalpitasvabhāva*) of the three natures (*trisvabhāva*) taught in the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra*.<sup>69</sup>

65 BhK III p. 8,3–4: *sa evaṃ dharmāṇāṃ svabhāvam upaparīkṣamāṇo yadā nopalabhate, tadāstīti na vikalpayati nāstīti na vikalpayati* /. Cf. BhK I p. 214,12–14: *tathā hi yadā prajñayā nirūpayan na kiṃcid bhāvasvabhāvam upalabhate yogī, tadāsyā naiva bhāvavikalpo bhavati* /.

66 APDhṬ D142b5/P170b8-171a1: *tshig lhag ma bzhi po ni bye brag tu sgro 'dogs pa ste* /.

67 APDhṬ D142b5-6/P170b8-171a1: *tshig lhag ma bzhi po ni bye brag tu sgro 'dogs pa ste / gzugs la sogs pa ni gzod (gzod D: bzod P) ma nas ma skyes pa'i phyir don dam par skye ba dang 'gag pa la sogs pa mi srid do* //.

68 Cf. MAP p. 223,4–7 (ad MA 69): *des na don ni gang gi phyir dngos po 'ga' yang yang dag par bsgrub pa med pa de'i phyir chos thams cad ma skyes pa'o zhes bya sangs rgyas bcom ldan 'das kyis gsungs so zhes bya ba 'di yin no* //.

69 The other two natures are dependent nature (*paratantrasvabhāva*) and perfect nature (*pariṇaṣṇasvabhāva*). The idea of the three natures constitutes the core of the Yogācāra ontology and is established as corresponding to the idea of a triple absence of nature (that is, absence of nature with regard to characteristics (*lakṣaṇaniḥsvabhāvatā*), with regard to origination (*utpattiniḥsvabhāvatā*), and in the sense of ultimate reality (*paramārthanīḥsvabhāvatā*)). In the *Madhyamakāloka*, Kamalaśīla reinterprets the three natures and the corresponding three kinds of absence of nature

That which is superimposed as the ultimate essential nature, such as permanence and impermanence, on the dependent nature (*\*paratantrasvabhāva*) that is not different from illusions and other similar things, is the imagined nature. And because [imagined nature] is not established as [having] characteristics as they are imagined, it is determined as the absence of nature with respect to characteristics (*\*lakṣaṇaniḥsvabhāvatā*) [...] Therefore, because all phenomena lack the ultimate characteristics as they are posited such as being impermanent, they are not arisen. Because of [not arising], they do not cease. For this reason, they are primordially peaceful (*\*ādisānta*). Therefore, they are naturally thoroughly extinguished (*\*prakṛtiparinirvṛta*).<sup>70</sup>

This quotation shows that in Kamalaśīla's view, phenomena that are dependently originated entities, that is, the dependent nature,<sup>71</sup> do not have any ultimate characteristic as people imagine and superimpose on phenomena. It is in the sense of lacking any ultimate characteristic that Kamalaśīla states phenomena to be non-arisen and negates the ultimate reality of dependent origination and properties caused by dependent origination.<sup>72</sup> Therefore, assertions attributing properties to phenomena as the ultimate ones are the extreme of superimposition. From this perspective, not only are the four assertions under discussion ("Material form arises," "It ceases," "It is defiled," and "It is purified") examples of superimposition of specific properties on phenomena but any Buddhist doctrinal statements on phenomena such as "Material form is impermanent" should fall into this category of superimposition, as the quotation above indicates.

Following the same line of thought, Kamalaśīla classifies the assertion (F) "Material form is mere cognition" into the category of the extreme of superimposition,

---

according to his Madhyamaka-oriented ontology. See MĀ<sub>K</sub> pp. 87,26–92,18, and pp. 24–35 for Keira's Japanese translation. Cf. also Keira 2009.

70 MĀ<sub>K</sub> pp. 90,22–91,6: *gzhan gyi dbang gi ngo bo nyid sgyu ma la sogs pa dang khyad par med pa de nyid la rtag pa dang mi rtag pa la sogs pa don dam pa pa'i rang gi ngo bor sgro 'dogs pa gang yin pa de ni kun brtags pa'i ngo bo nyid do // de yang ji ltar kun brtags pa'i mtshan nyid du ma grub pa'i phyir mtshan nyid ngo bo nyid med pa nyid du rnam par gzhas go // [...] de'i phyir chos thams cad mi rtag pa la sogs pa ji ltar rnam par gzhas pa'i mtshan nyid don dam pa pas stong pa'i phyir ma skyes pa yin no // de'i phyir ma 'gags pa yin no // de'i phyir gzod ma nas zhi ba yin no // de'i phyir rang bzhin gyis yongs su mya ngan las 'das pa yin no //*

71 Kamalaśīla defines dependent nature as follows: (MĀ<sub>K</sub> p. 88,14–17) *de la dngos po ma brtags na grags pa ji ltar snang ba sgyu ma bzhin du brten nas byung ba gang yin pa de ni gzhan gyi dbang gi ngo bo nyid yin no // de yang kun rdzob tu sgyu ma bzhin du gzhan gyi rkyen gyi dbang gis sky'e'i / bdag nyid kho na ni ma yin pas sky'e ba ngo bo nyid med pa nyid du rnam par gzhas ste /* ("Of the [three natures], dependent nature consists of the illusion-like dependently-originated entities that are accepted as they appear as long as they are not critically investigated. Moreover, though it arises customarily, like illusions, by force of conditions other [than itself], because it does not [arise] on its own, it is determined as the absence of intrinsic nature concerning arising (*\*utpattiniḥsvabhāvatā*). Cf. also Keira 2016: 28,4–9.

72 Cf. section 2 of this paper. Cf. also Keira 2009: 17.

for this assertion is based on the view of cognition as a real entity that is the extreme of superimposition for the same reason as in the case of material form.<sup>73</sup>

#### 4.1.2 Assertions Which are the Extreme of Denial

As mentioned in the introductory passage of section 4.1, Kamalaśīla classifies all those negative assertions concerning material form — namely, “Material form does not exist,” “It does not exist by intrinsic nature,” “Nor does it exist as a cause,” “Nor does it exist as a result,” “Nor does it exist as activity,” “Nor does it exist as connection,” and “Nor does it exist as function” — into the category of the extreme of denial. These assertions contain a denial of the existence of material form. The main point of Kamalaśīla’s commentary on these assertions is that the denial should be understood as a denial of only the qualifiers of each statement regarding the existence of material form, that is, “by intrinsic nature,” “as a cause,” “as a result,” “as activity,” “as connection,” and “as function.” He interprets the assertion “Material form does not exist by intrinsic nature” as negating intrinsic nature, and the assertions from “Nor does it exist as a cause” to “Nor does it exist as function” as negating specific properties.<sup>74</sup> This interpretation obviously echoes his philosophical ideas as elucidated in 4.1.1 above, according to which intrinsic nature and ultimate specific properties are products of superimposition. In other words, what is to be denied is the intrinsic nature and ultimate specific properties superimposed on material form. Kamalaśīla then points out that taking the denial in the assertions under discussion as denying the customary existence of material form is the extreme of denial.<sup>75</sup> But views of purely fictitious things such as a person as being completely nonexistent do not fall into this extreme, since fictitious things do not even exist customarily.<sup>76</sup>

73 See APDhT D143a4-5/P171b1-2: *gzugs su snang ba'i (ba'i P: ba D) rnam par rig pa yang don dam par ma skyes pas de yang gzugs bzhin du brdzun pa'i phyir de bas na gzugs la rnam par rig pa tsam (tsam D: cam P) du mngon par chags pa 'di yang sgro btags pa'i mtha' yin par bstan pa'i phyir / rnam par rig pa tsam zhes bya ba la sogs pa gsungs so //*.

74 APDhT D143a2/P171a5-6: *ngo bo nyid kyis kyang med ces bya ba ni ngo bo nyid la skur pa'o // tshig lhag ma lnga po ni bye brag la skur pa'o //*.

75 APDhT D143a2/P171a6: *'di btags (btags D: brtags P) pa'i yod pa la skur na skur pa 'debs pa'i mthar 'gyur ro //*.

76 APDhT D142b7-143a1/P171a3-5: *ji ltar gzugs la sogs pa'i chos rnam kun rdzob tu gnas pa de ltar gang zag ni ma yin no zhes bstan pa'i phyir gzugs la sogs pa (sogs pa P: om. D) btags pa nyid kyis yod pa rnam la skur ba 'debs pa'i mtha'o zhes skur ba 'debs pa'i mtha' zhes ston te / gang zag de ni kun rdzob tu yang mi gnas pa'i phyir ro //* (“[The Exalted One] explains the extreme of denial as the extreme of denial of entities existing exactly as customary things such as material form, etc. in order to explain that it is not the case that a person [exists] in the way in which phenomena, namely material form and so on, exist customarily, for a person does not even exist customarily.”).



## 4.2 Kamalaśīla's Commentary on the APDh's Statements on Cognitions Resulting from Examination

Kamalaśīla interprets the APDh's statements on cognitions resulting from the examination of appearances as describing the entry into the middle way that is free from the two extremes of superimposition and denial. In his interpretation, the statements, "On account of which [examination of appearances in that manner] a bodhisattva mahāsattva does not apprehend material form. Nor does he apprehend cognition appearing as material form," mean: "Because when having examined from the ultimate perspective, the yogi neither apprehends material form nor apprehends cognition appearing as material form, therefore, in this case, he does not engage in superimposition [anymore]."<sup>77</sup> In other words, in Kamalaśīla's view, the yogi's non-apprehension due to examination from the ultimate point of view effects the abandonment of superimposition. On the other hand, Kamalaśīla associates the cognitive state expressed in the statement "Nonetheless, he does not make all cognitions vanish completely" with the abandonment of denial.<sup>78</sup> Let me now discuss the ideas and theories behind Kamalaśīla's brief comment on these statements from the APDh.

As stated above, in Kamalaśīla's theory of meditative cultivation, meditative examination — according to reasonings that establish the absence of intrinsic nature of all things, i.e., the ultimate truth in the Madhyamaka sense — results in a non-apprehension (*anupalabdhi*) of an intrinsic nature of things being examined, or more simply, a non-apprehension of things being examined.<sup>79</sup> Keira has pointed out that Kamalaśīla's idea of such non-apprehension was influenced by Dharmakīrti's (fl. seventh century) epistemology.<sup>80</sup> Put simply, such non-apprehension is not the mere absence of apprehension but "a rationally founded non-apprehension"<sup>81</sup> that is an apprehension other than (*anyopalabdhi*) the apprehension of an intrinsic nature.<sup>82</sup> It thus has the capacity to lead the yogi to the ascertainment (*niścaya*) that things being

77 APDhT D143a6-7/P171b4-5: *gang gi phyir (gi phyir P: gis D) don dam par dpyad na / rnal 'byor pas gzugs mi dmigs te / gzugs su snang ba'i rnam par rig pa yang mi dmigs pa de'i phyir 'di la sgro 'dogs par mi byed do zhes bya ba tshig gi rjes so //*.

78 APDhT D143a7-b1/P171b5-6: *skur ba'i mtha' la yang mngon par zhen pa med do // 'di ltar rnam par rig pa thams cad kyi thams cad du chud gzon (gzon em.: gson DP) pa ni ma yin no zhes bya ba ste /*.

79 Cf. n. 53.

80 See Keira 2004: 47ff., where Keira discusses how Kamalaśīla in the *Madhyamakāloka* adapts Dharmakīrti's theory of non-apprehension for his Madhyamaka philosophy and employs the idea of non-apprehension to account for the yogi's cognition of the absence of intrinsic nature of all things, which is for Kamalaśīla a direct perception of yogis (*yogipratyakṣa*) and non-conceptual gnosis. Cf. also Tillemans 2013: 297–298 and Kellner 2020.

81 This phrase is from Tillemans 2013: 297.



examined are without intrinsic nature. According to *Bhāvanākrama* I, the non-apprehension gained through meditative examination from the ultimate point of view is the only factor which enables the yogi to thoroughly abandon attachment (*abhiniveśa*) to existence and consequently to cease to form the concept “existent.”<sup>83</sup> Non-apprehension is hence the characteristic of non-conceptual gnosis, for when the concept “existent” is eliminated, the concept “nonexistent” and all other concepts/conceptual constructions likewise cease to arise, as the concept of nonexistence is dependent on the concept of existence and all other concepts/conceptual constructions are built on the two concepts of existence and nonexistence.<sup>84</sup> In the APDhṬ, Kamalaśīla basically says the same thing, but from another angle. As pointed out in section 4.1.1 above, the meditative examination described in the *Bhāvanākramas* can be said to be the counteragent to the superimposition of an intrinsic nature on phenomena. It is also the counteragent to the superimposition of a person since, as Kamalaśīla’s description in *Bhāvanākrama* III of the practice of consideration of what is real shows, having examined what is held to be a person according to the principle of the selflessness of a person, the yogi comes to the ascertainment that “I” and “mine” are false delusions.<sup>85</sup> Though in the *Bhāvanākramas* Kamalaśīla does not deal with the superimposition of specific properties on phenomena that he specifically refers to in the APDhṬ, he could also have considered meditative examination according to reasonings proving the absence of intrinsic nature of all things to be the means for the yogi to stop performing this superimposition, for it is dependent on the superimposition of an intrinsic nature on phenomena.<sup>86</sup> That is to say, according to Kamalaśīla, when the yogi has practiced meditative examination from the ultimate point of view and does not apprehend an intrinsic nature of anything, all superimposition ceases. Therefore in the APDhṬ, Kamalaśīla explains the APDh’s statement regarding the non-apprehension resulting from examining appearances to indicate the cessation of superimposition without specifying which type of superimposition. This also means that non-conceptual gnosis is a state where superimposition completely comes to an end, as it is characterized by the non-apprehension of an intrinsic nature of anything gained through meditative examination.

I turn now to Kamalaśīla’s comment on the statement “Nonetheless, he does not make all cognitions vanish completely” as indicating the abandonment of denial.

---

<sup>82</sup> In other words, Kamalaśīla takes the negation *an-* in the term “*anupalabdhi*” as an implicative negation (*paryudāsapraṭiṣedha*). See Keira 2004: 68–72.

<sup>83</sup> BhK I pp. 211,22–213,9 and 214,12–14.

<sup>84</sup> BhK I p. 214,15–22; BhK III p. 8,3–11. Cf. also MMK 15.5.

<sup>85</sup> BhK III pp. 5,20–6,5.

<sup>86</sup> The dependence of the superimposition of specific properties on phenomena on that of an intrinsic nature on phenomena can be easily inferred from the idea that all concepts are dependent on the concept of existence.

According to Kamalaśīla, this statement means: "[The yogi] does not make cognitions of material form, etc. vanish."<sup>87</sup> At first glance, this interpretation seems at odds with Kamalaśīla's idea of non-apprehension that I have just addressed, because both non-apprehension and not making cognitions of material form, etc. vanish are said to result from meditative examination. How is it possible that the yogi, after having practiced meditative examination, does not apprehend material form, etc. on the one hand, and has cognitions of material form, etc. on the other?

Kamalaśīla leaves us a clue to the answer to this question in his comment on the next statement of the APDh, "Nor does he apprehend any phenomenon apart from cognition." He explains: "The word 'cognition' in this [statement] is intended to mean complete error (*\*bhrānti*), for the reason that [cognitions] display erroneous objects."<sup>88</sup> Based on this explanation, Kamalaśīla further interprets this statement of the APDh as follows: "All phenomena are just [those] consisting of a nature conceptually constructed by mere erroneous [cognition]. Apart from it [i.e., the constructed nature], there is no independent intrinsic nature (*\*svabhāva*) in them."<sup>89</sup> This interpretation indicates that Kamalaśīla understands the cognitions referred to in the statement "Nonetheless, he does not make all cognitions vanish completely" as those cognitions of phenomena in which the yogi is clearly aware that phenomena have merely a nature superimposed by erroneous cognition. The idea behind Kamalaśīla's understanding is obviously his theory of the customary reality that is discussed in section 2 above. According to this theory, although phenomena — i.e., dependently originated entities — have merely a customary nature that is superimposed by erroneous cognition, they appear to ordinary people as having an intrinsic nature. In other words, as long as ordinary people do not critically investigate phenomena, they regard phenomena as entities having an intrinsic nature. Reading Kamalaśīla's commentary against this theoretical background, it becomes clear that here Kamalaśīla is not referring to ordinary people's cognition of phenomena but the yogi's transformed cognition of phenomena. The transformed cognition of phenomena would not be the supramundane non-conceptual gnosis, as non-conceptual gnosis is characterized by the non-apprehension of anything. The only candidate in Kamalaśīla's soteriology for being the transformed cognition of phenomena is then the so-called "subsequently obtained awareness" (*prṣṭhalabdhajñāna*) that arises when the yogi reengages with the phenomenal

---

87 APDhT D143a7-b1/P171b5-6: 'di ltar rnam par rig pa thams cad kyi thams cad du chud gzon (gzon em.: gzon DP) pa ni ma yin no zhes bya ba ste / gzugs la sogs pa'i rnam par rig pa chud mi gzon (gzon D: gzon P) to zhes bya ba'i tha tshig go //.

88 APDhT D143b2/P171b7: [...] 'dir rnam par rig pa'i sgra ni thams cad du 'khrul pa la dgongs te / (/ D: // P) phyin ci log gi don ston pa'i phyir ro //.

89 APDhT D143b2-3/P171b8: [...] chos thams cad ni 'khrul pa tsam gyis brtags pa'i bdag nyid kyi ngo bor zad de / de ma gtogs par de dag gi rang bzhin rang gi rgyud ni gang yang med do zhes dgongs pa'o //.

world after having experienced the absence of intrinsic nature of all things in non-conceptual gnosis.<sup>90</sup> In another section of the APDhT,<sup>91</sup> when commenting on the APDh's statement on the subsequently obtained awareness, Kamalaśīla explicitly expresses his view that with this awareness, the yogi cognizes the phenomenal world as being like illusions, mirages, dreams, and other similar things, clearly knowing that phenomena appear to him in an illusory form.

## 5 Concluding Remarks

Kamalaśīla uses the concept of “middle way” to refer to a position or manner of understanding that avoids the two extremes of superimposition and denial. According to his theory of the middle way, superimposition consists in reifying what is completely nonexistent and fictitious, such as a person, and in superimposing ultimate natures including intrinsic nature (*svabhāva*) and specific properties on phenomena, while denial consists in denying the customary existence of phenomena. In Kamalaśīla's system of thought, the middle way between these two extremes thus defined plays a significant role in his theory of spiritual cultivation. According to the fourteenth chapter of his APDhT, the rationale behind the practice of meditative examination is to have the yogi completely abandon these two extremes and consequently enter the middle way. Meditative examination from the ultimate perspective enables the yogi to stop all superimposition, which results in the elimination of the concept of existence and all other concepts and conceptual thoughts. But in practicing meditative examination, the yogi does not fall into the extreme of denial since he does not consider phenomena as customarily nonexistent.

Kamalaśīla's definition of the two extremes of superimposition and denial also has bearing on his view of the cognitive nature of the two cognitions resulting from meditative examination, namely non-conceptual gnosis and the subsequently obtained awareness. For Kamalaśīla, non-conceptual gnosis is a cognition that does not

---

90 Cf. BhK III p. 11,6–10: [...] *punaḥ punar antarā sakalam eva lokaṃ vyavalokya mājājalacandropamapratibhāsam avataret / tathā cōktam avikalpapraveśe / lokottareṇa jñānenākāśasamatalān sarvadharmān paśyati / prṣṭhalabdheṇa punar mājāmarīcisvapnodakacandropamān paśyatīti* / (“When in the meantime, [the yogi] looks at the whole world repeatedly [...], appearances that are like illusions and the moon in water would appear to him again [lit.: he would come down to appearances that are like illusions and the moon in water]. Likewise, the *Avikalpapraveśa[dhāraṇī]* states that ‘With supramundane gnosis, one sees that all phenomena are like the expanse of space. Moreover, with subsequently obtained awareness, one sees all phenomena as being like illusions, mirages, dreams, and the moon in water.’”).

91 APDhT D139b2-140a6/P166b8-167b7.

apprehend an intrinsic nature of anything whatsoever, because it must be a state free of superimposition, and according to Kamalaśīla, apprehending an intrinsic nature is itself the superimposition of an intrinsic nature on something. In contrast, the subsequently obtained awareness is cognition of phenomena, because it is associated with the abandonment of the denial of the customary existence of phenomena. This awareness — obtained after the experience of the absence of intrinsic nature of all things in non-conceptual gnosis — differs from ordinary people's cognition in that it cognizes phenomena as being similar to illusions and the like, clearly aware that phenomena possess only a superimposed customary nature that is not other than erroneous cognition. Moreover, from Kamalaśīla's equation of non-conceptual gnosis and the subsequently obtained awareness with the abandonment of the extremes of superimposition and denial, it is clear that for Kamalaśīla, the middle way comprises both non-conceptual gnosis and the subsequently obtained awareness. This view, based on Kamalaśīla's Madhyamaka ontology, contrasts sharply with the Yogācāra idea that the middle way is non-conceptual gnosis.

## Bibliography

### Abbreviations and Primary Literature

APDh *Avikalpapraveśadhāraṇī*.

APDh-G Transcription of the Sanskrit manuscript of the APDh from Gilgit. See Matsuda 1996: 112–113.

APDh-M Matsuda's edition of the APDh. See Matsuda 1996.

APDht Tibetan translation of the APDh. 'Phags pa rnam par mi rtog par 'jug pa zhes bya ba'i gzungs. Derge 142, mdo sde, pa, 1b1-6b1; Peking 810, mdo sna tshogs, nu, 1b1-6b8.

APDhT *Avikalpapraveśadhāraṇīṭīkā* (Kamalaśīla), Tibetan translation. 'Phags pa rnam par mi rtog par 'jug pa'i gzungs kyi rgya cher 'grel pa. Derge 4000, mdo 'grel, ji, 123a3-145b5; Peking 5501, mdo tshogs 'grel pa, ji, 146b6-174b1.

ASBh *Abhidharmasamuccayabhāṣya*. Tatia, Nathmal (ed.) (1976): *Abhidharmasamuccaya-bhāṣyam*. Patna: Kashi Prasad Jayaswal Research Institute.

*Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitāsūtra*. Wogihara, U. (ed.) (1932): *Abhisamayālaṃkāralokā Prajñāpāramitāvvyākhyā: The Work of Haribhadra*. Tokyo: Toyo Bunko.

BhK I *Bhāvanākrama* I (Kamalaśīla). Tucci, Giuseppe (ed.) (1958): *Minor Buddhist Texts*. Part II: *First Bhāvanākrama of Kamalaśīla: Sanskrit and Tibetan Texts with Introduction and English Summary*. Roma: Is. M. E. O.

BhK III *Bhāvanākrama* III (Kamalaśīla). Tucci, Giuseppe (ed.) (1971): *Minor Buddhist Texts*. Part III: *Third Bhāvanākrama*. Roma: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente.

DhDhV *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga*. See Mathes 1996.

*Da baoji jing lun* 大寶積經論 (Sthiramati), Chinese Translation. T.1523,26.204a1-230c9.

*Kāśyapaparivarta*. Von Stäel-Holstein, Baron A. (ed.) (1926): *The Kāśyapaparivarta: A Mahāyānasūtra of the Ratnakūṭa Class*. Shanghai: Shangwu yinshu guan.

- MVBh *Madhyāntavibhāga* (Vasubandhu). Nagao, Gadjin (ed.) (1964): *Madhyāntavibhāga-bhāṣya: A Buddhist Philosophical Treatise Edited for the First Time from a Sanskrit Manuscript*. Tokyo: Suzuki Research Foundation.
- MA *Madhyamakālaṃkāra* (Śāntarakṣita). See Ichigō 1985.
- MAV *Madhyamakālaṃkāravṛtti* (Śāntarakṣita). See Ichigō 1985.
- MAP *Madhyamakālaṃkārapañjikā* (Kamalaśīla). See Ichigō 1985.
- MĀ *Madhyamakāloka* (Kamalaśīla), Tibetan translation. *Dbu ma snang ba zhes bya ba*. Derge 3887, dbu ma, sa, 133b4-244a7; Peking 5287, dbu ma, sa, 143b2-275a4.
- MĀ<sub>K</sub> Keira's partial critical edition of the *Madhyamakāloka*. See Keira 2016.
- MMA *Munimatālaṃkāra* (Abhayākaragupta). See Kanō and Li 2017.
- MMK *Mūlamadhyamakārikā* (Nāgārjuna). Ye, Shaoyong (ed.) (2017): *Zhonglun song. Fan cang han hexiao, daodu, yizhu* 中论颂. 梵藏汉合校·导读·译注. Shanghai: Zhongxi shuju.
- MSABh *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkārabhāṣya* (Vasubandhu). Lévi, Sylvain (ed.) (1907): *Mahāyāna-Sūtrālaṃkāra: Exposé de la doctrine du Grand Véhicule selon le système Yogācāra*. Paris: Librairie Honoré Champion, Éditeur.
- SNS *Samdhinirmocanasūtra*, Tibetan translation. *'Phags pa dgongs pa nges par 'grel pa theg pa chen po'i mdo*. See Lamotte 1935.
- Trīṃśikāvijñaptibhāṣya (Sthiramati). Buescher, Hartmut (ed.) (2007): *Sthiramati's Trīṃśikāvijñaptibhāṣya: Critical Editions of the Sanskrit Text and its Tibetan Translation*. Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften.
- TSP<sub>K</sub> *Tattvasaṃgrahapañjikā* (Kamalaśīla). Krishnamacharya, Embar (ed.) (1926): *Tattvasaṃgraha of Śāntarakṣita with the Commentary of Kamalaśīla*. Baroda: Central Library.
- TSP<sub>Sh</sub> *Tattvasaṃgrahapañjikā* (Kamalaśīla). Shastri, Swami Dwarikadas (ed.) (1981): *Tattvasaṃgraha of Ācārya Śāntarakṣita with the Commentary Pañjikā of Shri Kamalaśīla*. Varanasi: Bauddha Bharati.

## Secondary Literature

- Adam, Martin T. (2008): "Some Notes on Kamalaśīla's Understanding of Insight Considered as the Discernment of Reality (bhūta-pratyavekṣā)". *Buddhist Studies Reviews* 25/2: 194–209.
- Arnold, Dan (2003): "Verses on Nonconceptual Awareness: A Close Reading of Mahāyānasamgraha 8.2–13". *Indian International Journal of Buddhist Studies* 4: 9–49.
- Azami, Noriaki (2006): "Yuishiki shisō ni okeru zōeki to songen ni tsuite — sanshōsetsu to no kakawari wo chūshin to shite 唯識思想における増益と損減について——三性説との関わりを中心として". *Indogaku bukkyōgaku kenkyū* 印度學佛教學研究 54/2: 1022(91)–1018(95)."
- Breet, Jan A. de (1992): "The Concept 'Upāyakauśalya' in the Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā". *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens* 36: 203–216.
- Eckel, Malcolm David (1985): "Bhāvaviveka's Critique of Yogācāra Philosophy in Chapter XXV of the *Prajñāpradīpa*". In: *Miscellanea Buddhica*. Edited by Chr. Lindtner. Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 25–75.
- Eckel, Malcolm David (1992): *Jñānagarbha on the Two Truths: An Eighth Century Handbook of Madhyamaka Philosophy*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers.
- Eckel, Malcolm David (2008): *Bhāviveka and His Buddhist Opponents*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Department of Sanskrit and Indian Studies, Harvard University.
- Gomez, Luis O. (1983): "Indian Materials on the Doctrine of Sudden Enlightenment". In: *Early Ch'an in China and Tibet*. Edited by Lewis R. Lancaster and Whalen Lai. Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 393–434.



- Hakamaya, Noriaki (1985). "Yuishiki-bunken ni okeru mufunbetsu-chi 唯識文献における無分別智". *Komazawa daigaku bukkyogaku nenpo* 駒沢大学仏教学会年報 43: 41–78.
- Higgins, David (2006): "On the Development of the Non-mentation (*Amanasikāra*) Doctrine in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism". *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 29/2: 255–304.
- Hitomi, Makio (2005): "Kamalaśīla no nitaisetsu カマラシーラの二諦説". *Nihon chibetto gakkai kaihō* 日本西藏学会会報 51: 25–35.
- Ichigō, Masamichi (1985): *Madhyamakālaṃkāra of Śāntarakṣita with His own Commentary or Vṛtti and with the Subcommentary or Pañjikā of Kamalaśīla*. Kyoto: Buneido.
- Ichigo, Masamichi (2016): "Śāntarakṣita on *Satyadvaya*". *Indogaku chibettogaku kenkyū* インド学チベット学研究 20: 166–194.
- Kajiyama, Yūichi (1978): "Later Mādhyamikas on Epistemology and Meditation". In: *Mahāyāna Buddhist Meditation: Theory and Practice*. Edited by Minoru Kiyota. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 114–143.
- Kanō, Kazuo / Li, Xuenzhu (2017): "Bonbun kōtei 'Munimatālaṃkāra' daiisshō (fol. 59v4-61r5) — 'Madhyamakāloka' sezoku no teigi kasho itsubun — 梵文校訂『牟尼意趣莊嚴』第一章 (fol. 59v4-61r5) — 『中觀光明』世俗の定義箇所佚文 —". *Mikkyō bunka* 密教文化 239: 160(7)–141(26).
- Keira, Ryusei (2004): *Mādhyamika and Epistemology. A Study of Kamalaśīla's Method for Proving the Voidness of All Dharmas. Introduction, Annotated Translations and Tibetan Texts of Selected Sections of the Second Chapter of the Madhyamakāloka*. Wien: Arbeitskreis für tibetische und buddhistische Studien, Universität Wien.
- Keira, Ryusei (2009): "The description of *niḥsvabhāvatā* and its intentional meaning: Kamalaśīla's solution for the doctrinal conflict between Mādhyamika and Yogācāra". *Acta Tibetica et Buddhica* 2: 1–24.
- Keira, Ryusei (2016): "'Madhyamakāloka' kōshuchō daiichishō 'Seiten ni yoru issaihō mujishōsei no shōmei' no kenkyū (1) (Wayaku, Chūkai, Tibettogo kōtei tekisuto) 『中觀光明論』(Madhyamakāloka) 後主張第一章「聖典による一切法無自性性の証明」の研究 (1): 和訳・註解・チベット語校訂テキスト". *Acta Tibetica et Buddhica* 9: 1–121.
- Kellner, Birgit (2020): "Using Concepts to Eliminate Conceptualization: Kamalaśīla on Non-conceptual Gnosis (*Nirvikalpajñāna*)". *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 43: 39–80.
- Kramer, Jowita (2005): *Kategorien der Wirklichkeit im frühen Yogācāra: Der Fünf-vastu Abschnitt in der Vinīścayaśaṃgrahaṇī der Yogācārabhūmi*. Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag.
- Lamotte, Étienne (1935): *Samdhinirmocanasūtra. L'explication des mystères*. Louvain/Paris: Bureaux du Recueil/Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner.
- Mathes, Klaus-Dieter (1996): *Unterscheidung der Gegebenheiten von ihrem wahren Wesen (Dharmadharmatāvibhāga): Eine Lehrschrift der Yogācāra-Schule in tibetischer Überlieferung*. Swisttal-Odendorf: Indica et Tibetica Verlag.
- Mathes, Klaus-Dieter (2005): "'Gos Lo tsā ba gZhon nu dpal's Commentary on the Dharmatā Chapter of the Dharmadharmatāvibhāgakārikās". *Indo tetsugaku bukkyōgaku kenkyū* インド学仏教学研究 12: 3–39.
- Mathes, Klaus-Dieter (2010): "Maitrīpa's *Amanasikāradhāra* ('A Justification of Becoming Mentally Disengaged')". *Journal of the Nepal Research Center* 13: 3–30.
- Matsuda, Kazunobu (1996a): "*Nirvikalpapraveśa* saikō — tokuni 'Dharmadharmatāvibhāga' tono kankei ni tsuite — *Nirvikalpapraveśa* 再考 — 特に『法法性分別論』との関係について —". *Indogaku bukkyōgaku kenkyū* 印度学仏教学研究 45/1: 369(154)–363(160).
- Matsuda, Kazunobu (1996b): "*Nirvikalpapraveśadhāraṇī*: Sanskrit Text and Japanese Translation". *Bukkyō daigaku sōgō kenkyūsho kiyō* 仏教大学総合研究所紀要 3: 89–113.



- Matsuoka, Hiroko (2022): "On *pratītyasamutpāda* in the initial statement of the *Tattvasaṅgraha*". *Hōrin* 22: 214–232.
- McClintock, Sara (2010): *Omniscience and the Rhetoric of Reason: Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla on Rationality, Argumentation, and Religious Authority*. Boston: Wisdom Publications.
- Oetke, Claus (2007): "On MMK 24.18". *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 35: 1–32.
- Sakuma, Hidenori S. (1990): *Die Āśrayaparivṛtti-Theorie in der Yogācārabhūmi, Teil II*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag.
- Schmithausen, Lambert (1969): *Der Nirvāṇa-Abschnitt in der Vinīścayasamgrahaṇī der Yogācārabhūmiḥ*. Wien, Köln, Graz: Hermann Böhlau Nachf.
- Schmithausen, Lambert (2007): "Aspects of Spiritual Practice in Early Yogācāra". *Kokusai bukkyō daigakuin daigaku kenkyū kiyō* 国際仏教学大学院大学研究紀要 11: 213–224.
- Takehashi, Futoshi (1991): "'Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitāsūtra' ni okeru nimitta no yōhō ni tsuite 「八千頌般若經」におけるnimittaの用法について". *Indogaku bukkyōgaku kenkyū* 印度学仏教学研究 39/2: 916(139)–914(141).
- Tanji, Teruyoshi (2000): "On *Samāropa*: Probing the Relationship of the Buddha's Silence and His Teaching". In: *Wisdom, Compassion, and the Search for Understanding: The Buddhist Studies Legacy of Gadjin M. Nagao*. Edited by Jonathan A. Silk. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 347–368.
- Tillemans, Tom J. F. (2004): "What are Mādhyamikas Refuting? Śāntarakṣita, Kamalaśīla et alii on Superimpositions (*samāropa*)". In: *Three Mountains and Seven Rivers: Prof. Musashi Tachikawa's Felicitation Volume*. Edited by Shoun Hino and Toshihiro Wada. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 225–237.
- Tillemans, Tom J. F. (2013): "Yogic Perception, Meditation, and Enlightenment: The Epistemological Issues in a Key Debate". In: *A Companion to Buddhist Philosophy*. Edited by Steven M. Emmanuel. Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 290–306.
- Vetter, Tilmann E. (1984): "A Comparison between the Mysticism of the Older Prajñāpāramitā Literature and the Mysticism of the Mūla-madhyamaka-kārikās of Nāgārjuna". *Acta Indologica* 6: 495–512.