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The Compatible and the Comparable – Searching for Doctrinal Sharedness between Kamalaśīla and Northern Chan

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Abstract: The Samyé debate (792–794) between the Chinese Chan monk Moheyan and his Indo-Tibetan opponents has long been one of the key issues in the study of Indo-Tibetan Buddhism. This article attempts to approach this debate from a different angle, by focussing on the common ground that enabled the debate in the first place, instead of the doctrinal opposition between the two parties. This article argues that there are several areas where Kamalaśīla’s doctrinal positions are comparable to or even compatible with the doctrinal positions found in Northern Chan texts. First, the article points to the centrality of the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* and how it signifies their commitment to a form of Yogācāra-Madhyamaka synthesis. Second, the controversy revolving around the “Single Vehicle” (Ekayāna) is discussed. Third, the article discusses how to understand the “interface” between Yogācāra and Madhyamaka in Kamalaśīla’s texts and Northern Chan texts. Lastly, the article compares yogic perception discussed by Kamalaśīla and the extrasensory apprehension alluded to in Northern Chan texts.

Keywords: Chan; Kamalaśīla; Madhyamaka; Moheyan; Yogācāra

1 Introduction

Although the historical impact attached to the so-called “Samyé Debate” (792–794) between the Chinese Chan monk Moheyan 摩訶衍 (Tib. Ma ha yan) and his

I thank Paul Harrison, Robert Sharf, Birgit Kellner, and Chiou Pei-Lin for reading my draft and providing many suggestions and corrections. Any errors are mine alone. All translations are my own unless otherwise noted, and I convert Chinese characters in quoted texts from Wade-Giles to *Pinyin* when possible.

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Indo-Tibetan opponents¹ has been called into question by modern scholars, the doctrinal significance of this debate is still taken seriously by followers of Tibetan Buddhism and scholars of Buddhist philosophy alike.² Despite the amount of scholarship on this topic, it seems that the general contour, together with some specific points of contention, is still not well understood. For instance, Moheyan's own positions have not been teased out in a more systematic manner, partially because of the existing tendency to prefer Tibetan caricatures of Moheyan over the more historical Moheyan presented in the *Judgement*.³ The fact that scholars who mostly rely on Demiéville's French translation are not able to take full advantage of the *Judgement* compounds the problem.⁴ Furthermore, little effort has been

1 Although the *Third Bhāvanākrama* criticises anonymous opponents who sufficiently resemble Moheyan and his followers, it is unknown whether Kamalaśīla and Moheyan actually met with each other. Seyfort Ruegg assumes that “the source of the questions put to Mohoyen according to Wang Xi's *Zhengli jue* is the so-called ‘Brahman monk,’ presumably Kamalaśīla” (Seyfort Ruegg 1989b: 57 note 101), but this statement requires clarification. First, as Wang Xi is only the author of the preface, the main text titled *Dasheng dunwu zhengli jue* 大乘頓悟正理決 (*The Judgement on Sudden Awakening Being the True Principle of the Great Vehicle*, hereafter *Judgement*) should be attributed to Moheyan (Ding 2022). Second, the preface to the *Judgement* mentions, instead of a Brahman monk, “thirty some Brahman monks invited from the five parts of India” (於五天竺國請婆羅門僧等卅人) (Demiéville 1987: 25). Third, not only does the *Judgement* not mention Kamalaśīla by name, but it also fails to mention Kamalaśīla's key ideas, such as *vipaśyanā*, *yogipratyakṣa*, etc., and scriptures important to Kamalaśīla's positions, such as the *Samdhinirmocana Sūtra*, the *Ratnamegha*, the *Nirvikalpapraveśadhāraṇī*, etc. Therefore, it is very likely that the source of the questions was a group of Indian monks who did not include Kamalaśīla or were, at least, not dominated by Kamalaśīla. Ueyama argues that Kamalaśīla did not engage with Moheyan personally and composed the *Bhāvanākramas* only after Moheyan had left; see Ueyama 2012: 304–325. The term Brahman (*poluomen* 婆羅門) used by Wang Xi and Moheyan does not refer to the caste of these monks; instead, it is probably used to signal that they were well versed in Sanskrit Buddhist literature. For Kamalaśīla's activities and works, see Marks/Eltschinger 2019.

2 For the dating of the debate, see Ding 2022: 3 note 1. For the mythographical aspects of the Samyé Debate, see Tucci 1958: 5–68, Seyfort Ruegg 1989a, Bretfeld 2004, Biondo 2021, and Shen 2021; for the doctrinal differences, see Seyfort Ruegg 1989b and Tillemans 2016.

3 Scholars in Tibetan Studies sometimes unintentionally downplay the relevance of the *Judgement* by reconstructing Moheyan's doctrinal positions through Kamalaśīla's *Third Bhāvanākrama* and Tibetan historiography. The “Moheyan” in Tibetan historiography is actually different from the Moheyan that appears in the *Judgement* for three reasons. First, because there is virtually no overlap between the questions and answers provided by the *Judgement* and those by the debate proceedings in the *Testament of Wa* (*dBa bzhed*), the *Judgement* and traditional Tibetan historiography cannot be thought as mutually complementary. Second, because the Dunhuang Tibetan documents seen as Moheyan-related by modern scholars were mostly produced decades after the debate, they cannot be regarded as complementary to the *Judgement*; for instance, none of the various fragments discussed by Gómez 1983 as Moheyan's writings can be safely traced back to Moheyan. Third, as Tillemans 2016 points out, Kamalaśīla's *Third Bhāvanākrama* often presents Moheyan's positions in a *reductio ad absurdum* manner.

4 For the limitations of Demiéville's translation, see Ding 2022.

made to explain the fact that Moheyan belonged to an early brand of Chan significantly different from the received Chan/Sōn/Zen/*Thiền* traditions in East Asia.⁵ As a consequence, the common ground between the two parties that made the Indo-Tibetan-Chinese exchange of ideas possible in the first place has not been scrutinised, even though it appears that an understanding of the common ground should be a precondition for making sense of most of the debate-related documents.⁶

Moheyan belonged to a Chan lineage polemically designated as “Northern School [of Chan]” (Beizong 北宗) by the followers of the so-called “Southern School [of Chan]” (Nanzong 南宗).⁷ For the sake of brevity, hereafter I will simply use the term Northern Chan and Southern Chan to refer to these two reputed “schools”. On the whole, Northern Chan is much closer to Kamalaśīla’s thought than Southern Chan,⁸ as Southern Chan does not prominently feature a Yogācāra-Madhyamaka synthesis or emphasise the importance of non-conceptuality.⁹

This article argues that there are several areas where Kamalaśīla’s doctrinal positions are comparable to or even compatible with the doctrinal positions in a selection of Chan texts from Dunhuang, including Moheyan’s *Judgement*.¹⁰ For the

5 While Tibetologists often fail to take note of Moheyan’s Northern Chan affiliation (e.g., Seyfort Rugg 1989a, Karmay 2007, Bretfeld 2004, and Tillemans 2016), Sinologists tend to underestimate the usefulness of Moheyan’s works. McRae 1986 and Faure 1997, though dealing with the history of Northern Chan, only mention Moheyan in passing (McRae 1986: 71–72, 240 and Faure 1997: 128–129). For scholars of Chan Buddhism, the rationale behind the underutilisation of the *Judgement* seems to partially stem from the impression that Moheyan was not an innovative thinker.

6 Otherwise, one is left to assume that Moheyan was talking past his opponents to the point that there was no earnest debate in the first place. For instance, Demiéville claims, “Ma traduction n’y gagnera pas en clarté; je n’ai pas voulu biaiser sur les obscurités d’un texte qui fourmille de malentendus terminologiques” (Demiéville 1987: 22). “[T]he potential was extremely high for a debate at cross purposes. Such indeed seems to have been the conviction of Paul Demiéville” (Tillemans 2016: 182). As Ding 2022 points out, Demiéville clearly underestimates the effectiveness of the communications between the two parties.

7 For a discussion of these two labels, see Faure 1997: 177–180.

8 Henrik Sørensen provides an apt observation, “Although meditation clearly was the focus of the spiritual endeavours of the collateral lineages of Northern Chan, nevertheless all of them maintained a close doctrinal connection with the scriptural tradition of Mahāyāna Buddhism” (2012: 65).

9 No-thought meditation is advocated by Moheyan, who repeatedly claims that “One is able to become the Buddha only by getting rid of delusional thoughts (*vikalpa*)” 只[離]妄想得成佛 (*Judgement*, folio 129b3). For Moheyan’s attempt to equate *nirvikalpa* with *buguan* 不觀/*wuguan* 無觀, see Ding 2022. Similar terms such as *wuxin* 無心, *jueguan* 絕觀, *wunian* 無念 are also used by early Chan texts; for the opposition between “mindfulness” and “mindlessness” in early Chan, see Sharf 2014a. For Kamalaśīla, the meditative techniques that lead to the mental state of non-conceptuality are not devoid of concepts.

10 As I explain in Ding 2022, the questions in the *Judgement* were translated from Tibetan to Chinese and some of the original questions in Tibetan survive in PT 823/1 and PT 827/2. In this paper, I will use

compatible, the article points to the centrality of the *Laṅkāvatāra* and the “Single Vehicle” (Ekayāna) position advocated by both sides. For the comparable, it discusses the approaches to a Yogācāra-Madhyamaka synthesis and the possibility of directly perceiving reality. It is not my intention to claim that there exists no substantial disagreement between Moheyan and Kamalaśīla over various issues; instead, I simply argue that a re-evaluation of the chasm needs to be preceded by a better understanding of the actual doctrinal agreement.

2 “Northern Chan” as a Category

As many scholars have pointed out, early Chan polemicists did not share the inveterate hostility to doctrine with received forms of Southern Chan; quite the contrary, early Chan treatises, which include Northern Chan texts, are rife with doctrinal assertions and disputations.¹¹ Yamabe Nobuyoshi demonstrates that many Yogācāra elements were explicitly borrowed by three Northern Chan texts, namely, *The Gist of Guiding the Mortal to Sagehood* (*Daofan qusheng xinjue* 導凡趣聖心訣; hereafter *Gist*), *The Treatise on the Perfectly Luminous* (*Yuanming lun* 圓明論; *Luminous*), and *The Treatise on the True Tenets of Sudden Awakening* (*Dunwu zhenzong lun* 頓悟真宗論; hereafter *Tenets*).¹² In the current article, in addition to these three texts and Moheyan’s *Judgement*, my list of Northern Chan texts also includes three works conventionally attributed to Northern Chan by modern scholars: *The Quintessence of the True School of Sudden Awakening* (*Dunwu zhenzong yaojue* 頓悟真宗要訣; hereafter *Quintessence*), *The Account of the Laṅkā Masters* (*Lengqie shiziji* 楞伽師資記; hereafter *Masters*) by Jingjue 淨覺, and *The Treatise on the Realisation of the Nature* (*Wuxing lun* 悟性論; hereafter *Realisation*).¹³ The *Gist*, the *Luminous*, the

PC 4646 + S. 8609 for the Chinese text of the *Judgement* and also supplement the original Tibetan question when it is available.

11 For a list of scholars who question the alleged ties between anti-scholastic sentiments and early Chan depicted in traditional historiography, see Yamabe 2014: 252.

12 Yamabe 2014. I agree with Yamabe that the *Tenets* should be taken as a Northern Chan text.

13 The author(s) of the *Quintessence* and Jingjue were affiliated with the lineages later designated as “Northern School.” The actual labels – “Northern School” and “Southern School” – were invented by Shenhui 神會 (d. 760?) at the earliest in 732. For a biography of Jingjue, see Wang Wei 王維, “Jingjue shi taming” 淨覺師塔銘, Dong et al. 1983: 327.5a–7b. The *Masters* is a compilation that includes passages attributed to the five common “ancestors” of both Northern Chan and Southern Chan, i.e., Bodhidharma, Huike, Sengcan, Daoxin (d. 651), and Hongren (d. 675?). These passages, mostly consistent with Northern Chan positions, do not survive in China proper. Therefore, the *Masters* represents a text ignored, if not rejected, by Southern Chan. The *Masters* also incorporates a passage on meditation attributed to Guṇabhadra, the translator of the *Laṅkāvatāra*; the original text is probably titled *Batuo sanzang anxinfa* 跋陀三藏安心法, which has been rediscovered in Japan; see

Quintessence, and the *Masters* can be dated to the early to mid-eighth century, while the *Tenets* and the *Realisation* were perhaps composed in the late eighth or the early ninth century and the *Judgement* around 795. The *Judgement* has yet to be taken seriously as the longest extant Northern Chan text.¹⁴

Because of the existence of two Chan Schools, there exist two gradualist/subitist divides: an earlier divide between opponents and proponents of Chan and a later divide between Northern Chan writers and Southern Chan polemicists.¹⁵ In terms of the earlier divide, for opponents of Chan, sudden awakening is an impossibility because liberation must be preceded by gradual cultivation that features various kinds of training. This position is largely congruent with Kamalaśīla's. In contrast, Northern Chan clearly embraces the rhetoric of "sudden awakening";¹⁶ for practitioners oriented towards Northern Chan, sudden awakening means that Chan meditation is the only fast track with which one can circumvent gradual cultivation. However, in terms of the later divide, Southern Chan polemicists argue that even a fast

Ibuki 2017. For the intellectual affiliation of the *Realisation*, see Yanagida 1985: 269–276. For an English translation of the Tibetan version of the *Masters*, see van Schaik 2019.

14 The doctrinal orientations of the *Judgement* are squarely in line with works heuristically labelled as "Northern Chan" in this paper. In addition, the *Judgement* explicitly claims that the author was the disciple of famous "Northern Chan" masters; for example, "I, Moheyan, was trained by six monks, including Xiangmo, Xiaofu, Zhang heshang, Zhunyang, Dafu, who together taught me the Chan school of the Great Vehicle" 摩訶衍依止和上法號降魔, 小福、張和上、准仰、大福六和上, 同教示大乘禪門 (*Judgement*, folios 156b6–157a1). Here Xiangmo refers to Xiangmozang 降魔藏 (Tib. bDud 'dul snying po), who was a disciple of Shenxiu, the sixth patriarch of Northern Chan; see McRae 1986: 63. Nupchen asserts that "[Chan teachings] reached Heshang Moheyan, the last of the seven generations of transmission from Dharmottāra (i.e., Bodhidharma) and others to the Chinese" (*dar mō dha ra la sogs pa nas/rgya nag por bdun rgyud tha ma ha shang ma hā ya na la thug*) (Nupchen 1974: 15.2–15.3). However, we cannot infer from this assertion that Moheyan "in fact belonged strictly speaking neither to the Northern School . . . nor to the Southern School" (Seyfort Ruegg 1989b: 199), because Nupchen could refer to the fact that Moheyan belonged to the seventh generation *after* Bodhidharma. Japanese scholars used to speculate that Moheyan "later moved closer to the Southern School represented by Shenhui" and that there were possible "affinities between Moheyan and the Baotang School of Chan in Sichuan" (Seyfort Ruegg 1989b: 199), but both claims are not supported by the evidence available to us. There is no discernible influence from the Baotang school or Shenhui in the *Judgement*. For the limited importance of the Baotang School in Tibetan Chan, see van Schaik 2020: 17–19.

15 Here I am largely rehearsing the explanation in Ding Forthcoming.

16 The tombstone inscription for Shenxiu (d. 706) composed shortly after his death already features the idea that "one can suddenly embody the buddha within a thought" 一念而頓受佛身 (Dong et al. 1983: 231.1a); the tombstone inscription for Jingjue similarly claims that "in one instance [the cultivation of] numerous eons is transcended" 一瞬超於累劫 (Dong et al. 1983: 327.6a). The *Quintessence*, *Tenets*, and *Judgement* feature the term *dun* in their titles; Chengguan 澄觀 (738–839) observes that "[The claims made by] both the Southern School and the Northern School do not go beyond the teachings of subitism" 南北宗禪, 不出頓教 (*Dafangguang fo huayan jing suishu yanyichao* 大方廣佛華嚴經隨疏演義鈔, T 1736, 36.62b4).

track such as *nirvikalpa*-oriented meditation is still a gradual path because no form of meditation or a fixed assumption of meditation should be prescribed. At any rate, the “Samyé Debate” had nothing to do with the later disputes between Northern Chan and Southern Chan, because no Southern Chan figure was involved in the debate.

Tibetan Chan by and large represents a development largely based on Northern Chan. Shenhui’s works and the *Platform Sūtra*, together with their condemnation of Northern Chan, were seemingly not translated into Tibetan, and the existence of the disputes between the two Chan factions is not reflected in Tibetan materials. The lack of the influence of Southern Chan in Tibet is perhaps coincidental. On the one hand, Moheyan and his disciples were perhaps the only Chinese Chan group who successfully gained a foothold in the Tibetan-speaking “religious market” in the Tibetan empire; on the other hand, Southern Chan texts started to circulate in China proper mostly after the Hexi corridor was effectively cut off from the Tang in 763, and, as a result, were not influential among the Chinese-speaking subjects of the Tibetan empire.¹⁷ After the Tibetan empire collapsed in the 840s and Dunhuang gained independence in 848, translating Southern Chan texts into Tibetan would have become an unlikely scenario.

The label “Northern Chan” used in this article is largely heuristic. It refers to a group of converging Dunhuang texts that share strong family resemblance with Moheyan’s teachings, but I do not claim that the term represents a genealogical entity that historically exists, nor a well-homogenised school of thought. Nevertheless, the six Northern Chan texts composed before the “Samyé Debate” (i.e., the *Gist*, the *Record*, the *Masters*, the *Quintessence*, the *Heart*, and the *Luminous*) constitute the most important part of Moheyan’s doctrinal background and should be examined together with Moheyan’s *Judgement* as a single textual group.

3 Lañkāvatāra-Centrism

In the *Testament of Wa* (*dBa bzhed*), a historical work responsible for informing later Tibetan historians about the debate, it is said, “The subitists took up the *Śatasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā*, shut the doors of the Chan monastery [at which they reside], and studied debate for two months. The *Samdhinirmocanasūtra* was

¹⁷ Although some of Shenhui’s works might have composed as early as 732 CE when the “Huatai Debate” happened, they could not have been widely accepted in China proper before he was recalled from his exile around 757; the wider circulation of his works would have to wait until the end of the An Lushan Rebellion in 763.

trampled over, bundled up, and discarded.”¹⁸ The compiler of the *Testament of Wa* clearly thinks that Moheyan rejects Yogācāra texts. However, this narrative contradicts Moheyan’s own testimony in the *Judgement*. In a sermon that concludes the *Judgement*, Moheyan describes his own doctrinal background and training in the following manner,

I, Moheyan, have solely focused on the meditation of the Great Vehicle for my whole life, and am not a *dharma* master [i.e., an expert on doctrine]. If people would like to listen to ‘aspects of the *dharma*’ [i.e., doctrinal expositions], I would ask them to stay by the side of Indian masters of doctrine and listen to them. Whatever I have advocated does not rely on commentaries or abhidharmic literature; I only follow instructions from scriptures of the Great Vehicle. What I have studied are *sūtras* such as the (1) *Mahāprajñāpāramitā*, (2) *Laṅkāvatāra*, (3) *Brahmapariṣcchā*, (4) *Ghanavyūha*, (5) *Vajracchedikā*, (6) *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*, (7) *Mahabuddhoṣṇīṣa* [i.e., Pseudo-*Śūraṅgamasūtra*],¹⁹ (8) *Buddhāvataṃsaka*, (9) *Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, (10) *Ratnakūṭa*, and (11) *Ajātaśatrukaukṛtyavinodanā*. I have faith in and uphold them accordingly.

摩訶衍一生已來，唯習大乘禪，不是法師；若欲聽法相，令於婆羅門法師邊聽。摩訶衍所說，不依疏論，准大乘經文指示。摩訶衍所修習者：依大般若、楞伽、思益、密嚴、金剛、維摩、大佛頂、花嚴、涅槃、寶積、普起(= 超)三昧等經，信受奉行。²⁰

Moheyan claims that he is not a theorist and does not rely on Indian commentaries and abhidharmic literature, as these texts would lend legitimacy to his Indian opponents.²¹ At the same time, he asserts that there exist eleven scriptures that legitimise the Northern Chan approach. These scriptures include six Madhyamaka-leaning *sūtras* (nos. 1, 3, 5, 6, 10, and 11), one *tathāgatagarbha*-centric *sūtra* (no. 9), and four *sūtras* that attempt to synthesise Madhyamaka, Yogācāra, and the *tathāgatagarbha*-related thought (nos. 2, 4, 7, and 8). Out of these eleven *sūtras*, the *Judgement* cites the *Laṅkāvatāra* twenty times, the *Brahmapariṣcchā* eight times, the *Vajracchedikā* five times, the *Ghanavyūha* three times, and the Pseudo-*Śūraṅgama* three

¹⁸ Doney 2021: 136: *ton mun pas shes rab 'bum blangs te bsam gtan gling gi sgo bcad nas zla ba gnyis su shags bslabs/dgongs pa nges par 'grel pa rdog pas dril te bor*/(translation mine). I read *rdog pas dril te* in light of the idiom *rdog pas brdzis pa* (“to trample over”) instead of treating it as a synonym of *rdog dril* (“summarisation”).

¹⁹ The Tibetan catalogues compiled in the imperial period indicate that this apocryphon was not suspected of being composed in China (Herrmann-Pfandt 2008: 143). In general, Tibetan catalogues do not aware of the existence of Chinese apocrypha, i.e., Buddhist scriptures composed directly in China.

²⁰ *Judgement*, folios 156b3–156b6.

²¹ Tillemans, interpreting the same passage, claims that Moheyan “himself admitted to Kamalaśīla that he was no match for him, lacking scholarship and skill in debate” (Tillemans 2016: 181). However, such a reading perhaps misrepresents Moheyan’s intention here.

times. It is not surprising that the *Laṅkāvatāra* is statistically the most important *sūtra* in the *Judgement*, as it was central to the early Chan movement as a source of inspiration.²²

The *Laṅkāvatāra* is similarly important for Kamalaśīla as a source of authority because it provides justification for his approach to the Yogācāra-Madhyamaka synthesis. In the *Madhyamakāloka* (hereafter MĀ), Kamalaśīla cites the *Laṅkāvatāra* twenty-three times,²³ and the title of the second most cited *sūtra* —the *Samdhinirmocana* — only appears fifteen times. In the *Bhāvanākramas*, although Kamalaśīla cites both the *Laṅkāvatāra* and the *Samdhinirmocana* fifteen times,²⁴ the centrality of this *sūtra* is still palpable in his choice of using three verses from the *Laṅkāvatāra* (10.256–258) to capture his program of meditative cultivation (*bhāvanā*).²⁵

Although we are not told by the *Judgement* whether Kamalaśīla was among the thirty some monks invited from India, the questions formulated by these Indian scholar-monks also treat the *Laṅkāvatāra* as one of the most authoritative scriptures.²⁶ When Moheyan quotes statements such as “The triple realm is mind-only”²⁷ from the *Laṅkāvatāra*, there is no pushback from his Indian opponents. It seems that it is safe to assume that both sides agreed that the syncretic view presented in the *Laṅkāvatāra* should be seen as authoritative, if not orthodox.

22 See Faure 1997: 145–159. The tombstone inscription for Shenxiu claims that “[he] upheld the *Laṅkāvatāra* respectfully and compared it to the essence of mind” 持奉楞伽，近為心要 (Dong et al. 1983: 231.2b). The *Masters* compiled in the first half of the eighth century explicitly traces the beginning of Chan to the translation of the *Laṅkāvatāra*; the Northern Chan text titled *Foshuo Lengjia jing chanmen xitanzhang* 佛說楞伽經禪門悉談章 (T 2779) composed in the late eighth century also attributes the inception of Chan to this *sūtra*.

23 Five times in the *Pūrvapakṣa*, and eighteen times in the *Uttarapakṣa*.

24 See Goshima 1983: 90–92.

25 For an exposition of Kamalaśīla’s interpretation of these three verses, see Keira 2019; Kellner 2020.

26 In the questions raised by Moheyan’s opponents in *Judgement*, the *Laṅkāvatāra* is explicitly cited twice (Q II.1c and Q III.6); the *Śūraṅgāma-samādhi* twice (Q II.2 and Q III.8); the *Kāśyapaparivarta* once (Q III.1); the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* once (Q III.4). The *Laṅkāvatāra* is also alluded to in Q II.12a–12c (*Judgement*, folios 142a3–142b2), when the opponents ask him about the difference between Buddha nature that originally exists in sentient beings and the *ātmavāda* (“theory of the self”) proposed by the non-Buddhists; for the corresponding passage in the *Laṅkāvatāra*, see Nanjio 1923: 77–78; also see Jones 2021: 183–88.

27 The phrase *sanjie weixin* 三界唯心 is mentioned twice in the *Judgement* (folios 142a5 and 149a5). The corresponding Sanskrit phrases in the *Laṅkāvatāra* are *svacittamātram idaṃ traidhātukam* and *cittamanomanovijñānamātram traidhātukaṃ* (Nanjio 1923: 80.7 & 212.7–8).

4 The Single Vehicle (Ekayāna)

In the beginning of the *Judgement*, Moheyan is questioned about how he would define Mahāyāna – the Great Vehicle.²⁸ Moheyan, invoking both no-thought meditation and Madhyamaka, picks out two and a half verses from the *Laṅkāvatāra* and repurposes them for the definition of the Great Vehicle,

[Answer I.1b] It is said in the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*, “because of the existence of delusional thoughts, people see the differences between the Great Vehicle and the Small Vehicle. Once one is free of delusional thoughts, there will be no difference between the Great Vehicle and the Small Vehicle or between those who commit themselves to a vehicle and those who do not. I declare that the Great Vehicle is the non-existence of an established vehicle.”

《楞伽經》曰：緣有妄想，則見有大小乘。若無妄想，則離大小乘，無乘及乘者，無有乘建立，我說為大乘。²⁹

Upon closer examination, one can see that Moheyan’s definition differs from the original Sanskrit wording of the *Laṅkāvatāra*.³⁰ First, the Sanskrit verse does not literally mention “being free of delusional thoughts;” instead, it refers to the “transmutation of the consciousness” (*citta-parāvṛtta-*) in a Yogācāra sense.³¹ Second, the Sanskrit verse lacks the phrase “I declare that such is the Great Vehicle” (我說為大乘).³² By slightly modifying the canonical verses, Moheyan equates

28 Question I.1b: “You explain and talk about ‘sūtras of the Great Vehicle’. How do you define ‘the Great Vehicle’?” *theg pa chen po'i mdo las bshad shing smos pa // theg pa chen po zhes bya ba'i gzhung ci lta bu //* (PT 827/2, ll. 19–20). Cf. *Judgement*, folio 129a6: 問：所言大乘經者，何名大乘義。

29 *Judgement*, folio 129a6–b1. The Tibetan translation of this answer reads: *myi bden bden pa'i 'du shes dang bral na/theg pa che chung du smosu yang myed de/theg pa zhes/bya ba'i mying yang med na/de'i nang mying theg chen po zhes bshad do //* (PT 827/2, ll 21–23).

30 Nanjio 1923: 134–135: *devayānaṃ brahmayānaṃ śrāvakīyaṃ tathāiva ca | tāthāgataṃ ca pratyekaṃ yānānetān vadāmy aham || yānānaṃ nāsti vai niṣṭhā yāvac cittaṃ pravartate | citte tu vai parāvṛtte na yānaṃ na ca yāninaḥ || yānavyavasthānaṃ naivāsti yānabhedam vadāmy aham |*.

31 The Chinese translations obscure this Yogācāra reference by translating *citta-parāvṛtta-* as “the extinction of the mind” (心滅盡) in both Guṇabhadra’s and Bodhiruci’s translation (T 670, 16.497b26 and T 671, 16.540a25) and as “the cessation of the working of the mind” (心轉滅) in Śikṣānanda’s translation (T 672, 16.607b2). It seems that Guṇabhadra mistakenly reads *citte tu vai parāvṛtte na* (若彼心滅盡) together as a unit and *yānaṃ na ca yāninaḥ* (無乘及乘者) as another unit, and Bodhiruci simply follows suit in his translation. Note that in the Sagātha section of Bodhiruci’s translation, *citte tu vai parāvṛtte na* is rendered as “the extinction of the mind does not exist” (心轉滅亦無) (T 671, 16.576b3); the verse cannot be found in the Sagātha section of Śikṣānanda’s translation.

32 The three Chinese translations all have the phrase 我說為一乘, which deviates from the Sanskrit text. Moheyan later quotes the same line with the phrase “I declare that such is the Single Vehicle” (我說為一乘) conforming to the Chinese translations; see *Judgement*, folio 134a1–a2.

Northern Chan with the Single Vehicle described in the *Laṅkāvatāra*.³³ Moheyan's opponents are seemingly aware of the textual discrepancies and press Moheyan with two follow-up questions,

[Question II.1b] Another question: There are heavenly beings who suppress their delusional thoughts. Because [they have previously practised] suppressing their delusional thoughts, they are born as beings in the heaven of unconsciousness [(Skt. *asaṃjñīsattvā devāḥ*)]. [Practices] such as this would not lead one to the awakening of the Buddha. It illustrates that one cannot [directly] achieve buddhahood by eliminating one's thoughts.

又問：「有天人制于妄想，以制妄想故，生無想天，此等不至佛道，明知除想，不得成佛。」

[Question II.1c] Question: It is said in the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*, “When talking about bestowing prophecies to *śrāvakas*, [the Buddha refers to] a phantom-buddha bestowing the prophecy [of buddhahood] to a phantom-*śrāvaka*.”³⁴ Therefore, it is only for the convenience of converting sentient beings. In several aspects, there are three vehicles on the path to nirvāṇa. For people who are free of concepts, they are [of course] not able to talk about the Great Vehicle and the Small Vehicle. Even though the unconscious (*asaṃjñī*) cannot conceptualise the Great Vehicle or the Small Vehicle, it does not mean that the Great Vehicle and the Small Vehicle do not exist. For instance, after *śrāvakas* attain nirvāṇa, they will not conceptualise either the Great Vehicle or the Small Vehicle. Can you claim that these *śrāvakas* have entered the path of the Great Vehicle?

問：「《楞伽經》云，所言與聲聞授記，化佛化聲聞授記。據此只是方便調伏眾生。數箇義中，涅槃道是三乘也。若離於想，大小之乘，無可言者，謂無想不觀大小乘，非無大小。譬如，聲聞證涅槃後，大小之乘，更無所觀，此聲聞人，豈得言入大乘道不？」³⁵

Both questions concern themselves with the difference between Chan's no-thought and “meditative attainment of being unconscious” (*asaṃjñī-samāpatti*; *wuxiang ding* 無想定). First, if Chan leads the practitioners to a state of unconsciousness (*asaṃjñīka*) where various concepts do not appear, Chan would logically belong to neither the Great Vehicle nor the Small Vehicle.³⁶ Second, since *śrāvakas* are not even

³³ In the *Masters*, Guṇabhadra is said to claim, “When the method is taught, it is about [reaching] a place where mind does not rise. This method transcends the three vehicles and surpasses the Ten Stages, and [reaches] the ultimate state of buddhahood” 教授法時，心不起處是也。此法超度三乘，越過十地，究竟佛果處; Bingenheimer/Zhang 2018: 15. In the *Tenets*, it is claimed that “Being able to see there is nothing in the mind is the Single Vehicle” 可見心空無所有即是一乘 (*Tenets*, T 2835, 85. 1279c2–c3).

³⁴ This is not an exact quote, but a paraphrase of the following lines: *tan nirmitaśrāvakān nirmāṇakāyair vyākaroti na ca dharmatābuddhaiḥ | etat saṃdhāya mahāmate śrāvakavyākaraṇaṃ nirdiṣṭam | na hi mahāmate śrāvakapratyekabuddhānāṃ kleśāvaraṇaprahāṇaviśeṣo vimuktyekarasatayāi* (Nanjio 1923: 241).

³⁵ *Judgement*, folio 131(1)a6, 131(1)b5–131(2)a2. Note there are two consecutive folios numbered as 131.

³⁶ For a discussion of the theoretical challenges that *asaṃjñīsamāpatti* poses, see Sharf 2014b.

placed on the path to buddhahood, real *śrāvakas* cannot be prophesied by real buddhas and, by the same token, cannot reach Buddhahood.

Moheyan dismisses the first objection by insisting that Chan leads to the consciousness of non-conceptuality, which is different from unconsciousness. “From the perspective of the Dharma gate of the ultimate meaning, ... how can one establish three vehicles when one abides in a state of non-[conceptuality]?”³⁷ He counters the second objection by pointing out that those *śrāvakas* who practise “cessation” (*jimie* 寂滅)—a term referring to either *asaṃjñīsamāpatti* or *nirodha* in this context³⁸—still hold fast to the very concept of “cessation” and, as a result, they are not totally free of delusional thoughts. Once *śrāvakas* give up their addiction to the tastes of *nirodha* or *asaṃjñīsamāpatti*, they will be able to “ride the Great Vehicle”.³⁹

In the MĀ, Kamalaśīla explicitly uses Moheyan’s quote from the *Laṅkāvatāra* and makes similar arguments. Unlike Moheyan, who constantly invokes the two-truth hermeneutic to deflate the meaningfulness of conceptual distinctions, Kamalaśīla deploys the distinction between the definitive meaning (*nītārtha*) and the derived meaning (*neyārtha*) from the *Lotus Sūtra*.

Although the blessed one, for the sake of benefiting the dull-witted, taught the establishment of the distinctions between vehicles (**yānabheda*), he explains that it is not the definitive articulation (**nītārtha*). It is said in the *Ārya-Laṅkāvatāra*,

I explained accordingly

the vehicle of gods, the vehicle of brahmins,

and the vehicle of *śrāvakas*,

as well as the vehicles of *tathāgatas* and *pratyekabuddhas*.

³⁷ *Judgement*, folio 131(2)b1: 第一義法門 ... 住於無境界, 何建立三乘; This is a quote from the *Laṅkāvatāra*; cf. T 670, 16.487b15–16; T 672, 16.597c5–6. A similar claim is found in the *Realisation*: “The so-called Highest Vehicle of the Great Vehicle is the way bodhisattvas practise: [bodhisattvas] ride on everything, and they ride on nothing. They ride all day long, and they never ride. This is the Buddha Vehicle (Buddhayāna). It is said in the *sūtras*, ‘The Buddha Vehicle has no vehicle’” 言大乘最上乘者皆菩薩所行之處也, 無所不乘, 亦無所乘。終日乘, 未嘗乘。此為佛乘。經云: 無乘為佛乘也 (T 2009, 48.370c22–c25).

³⁸ The difference between *asaṃjñīsamāpatti* and *nirodha* is not obvious in Chinese Buddhism, as they both refer to an unconscious state. Moheyan seemingly does not recognise the Indic nuance that *nirodha* is an acceptable Buddhist practise while *asaṃjñīsamāpatti* is not. “In short, Buddhist scholiasts needed not just one kind of mindlessness to contrast with *nirvāṇa*, but two: one (*nirodha-samāpatti*) which is acceptable if not laudable, and another (*asaṃjñī-samāpatti*) which is baneful” (Sharf 2014b: 155).

³⁹ Moheyan reinterprets two stanzas from the *Laṅkāvatāra* as a support for this idea; see *Judgement*, folio 132a3–a5; cf. Nanjio 1923: 135.10–15; Demiéville 1987: 68–70.

There is no end to [the existence of] the vehicles
as long as mind operates.

Once the mind is transmuted (*parāvṛtta*),⁴⁰
there would be no vehicle nor vehicle-rider (*yānin*).

I expound the single vehicle,
and there are no differences among the vehicles.

I talk about different vehicles
for the sake of guiding the dull-witted.

Thus is it said.

Therefore, according to the *Lotus Sūtra* and others, the teaching of the Single Vehicle is not a derived meaning (**neyārtha*). It is said, “... Śāriputra! There only exists one vehicle! It is called the ‘Buddha Vehicle!’”

*bcom ldan 'das kyis kyang byis pa rnams gzung pa'i phyir theg pa'i bye brag rnam par gzhang par
bstan gyi / nges pa'i don ni ma yin no zhes bshad de / 'phags pa lang kar gshegs pa las ji skad du /*

lha yi theg dang tshangs pa'i theg // de bzhin du ni nyan thos dang /

/ de bzhin gshegs dang rang rgyal gyi // theg pa 'di dag ngas bshad de /

/ ji srid sems ni 'byung ba'i bar // theg pa rnams la thug pa med /

/ sems ni yongs su gyur pa na // theg pa med cing 'gro ba med /

/ theg pa gcig tu nga smra ste // theg pa rnam gzhang yod ma yin /

/ byis pa rnams ni yongs drang phyir // theg pa tha dad ngas bshad do //

zhes gsungs pa lta bu'o //

*de'i phyir 'phags pa dam pa'i chos padma dkar po la sogs pa las / theg pa gcig tu bstan pa drang
ba'i don ma yin te / de skad du ... shā ri'i bu theg pa ni 'di gcig kho nar zad de / 'di lta ste sangs rgyas
kyi theg pa'o zhes gsungs so //*⁴¹

40 Matsumoto, perhaps influenced by the Chinese translations of the *Laṅkāvatāra*, renders *yongs su gyur pa* as “to cease” (停止する); see Matsumoto 1982: 288.

41 MĀ, 238a7–b4; for a Japanese translation, see Matsumoto 1982: 14.

For Kamalaśīla, there is only one vehicle termed the Buddha Vehicle (*sangs rgyas kyi theg pa*) as the definitive teachings of the Buddha. The Buddha Vehicle includes both the Great Vehicle and the Small Vehicle: a *śrāvaka* can join the Great Vehicle and eventually reach buddhahood, because everyone has the potentiality of becoming a buddha.⁴² This is explained as a response to a challenge to the Single Vehicle in the *pūrvapakṣa* section of the MĀ,

In the *Lotus Sūtra*, the Blessed One bestowed prophecies of buddhahood to *śrāvakas*. Such an act should be understood as intended to be done to either phantom-*śrāvakas* magically conjured up or [*śrāvakas*] who have redirected themselves to awakening. This is taught by the Blessed One in the *Laṅkāvatāra*.

*gang yang bcom ldan 'das kyis dam pa'i chos padma dkar po las nyan thos rnams sangs rgyas nyid du lung bstan pa mdzad pa gang yin pa de ni sprul pa'i nyan thos rnams sprul nas sam / byang chub tu yongs su bsngo ba rnams las dgongs nas mdzad pa yin no zhes bya bar blta ste / 'di ni bcom ldan 'das kyis 'phags pa lang kar gshegs pa la sogs pa las bstan pa nyid do //*⁴³

This challenge is essentially the same as the second question (Question II.1c) from Moheyan's opponents. Since “*śrāvakas* who have redirected themselves to awakening”⁴⁴ can be taken as *śrāvakas* who have forsaken the *śrāvaka* path, effectively it is argued that no real *śrāvaka* can receive a real prophecy of buddhahood. Kamalaśīla's counterargument claims that “*śrāvakas* who are free of outside influence and have their fetters of existence totally cut off” (*zag pa ma mchis pa srid par kun tu sbyor ba yang dag par chad pa; *anāsrava- parikṣiṇa-bhava-saṃyojana*) are “bodhisattvas with dull faculties who belong to the lineage [of buddhas]” (*byang chub sems dpa' dbang po rtul po rigs dang ldan pa*).⁴⁵ According to Kamalaśīla's interpretation of the *Daśadharmaka*, these *śrāvakas*, after having exhausted all afflictions (*kleśa*), would keep on practising until they reach buddhahood.⁴⁶

42 “By saying ‘all sentient beings have *tathāgatagarbha*,’ it is taught that it is possible for all [sentient beings] to attain the state of supreme, perfect awakening” *sems can thams cad ni de bzhin gshegs pa'i snying po can no zhes bya ba 'dis kyang/thams can bla na med pa yang dag par rdzogs pa'i byang chub kyi go 'phang thob par rung ba nyid du yongs su bstan te/* (MĀ, 242b4–b6). Also see Ino 2019: 75–77; Matsumoto 1982: 22.

43 MĀ, 147b2–b3.

44 The *Luminous* refers to the same idea as “*śrāvakas* can turn their mind around and enter the bodhisattva path” 聲聞人迴心入菩薩道 (Han 2017: 92).

45 MĀ, 242a4–b1. Cf. *Daśadharmaka*, D 53, 175b1–b6.

46 “Bodhisattvas with dull faculties who belong to the lineage [of buddhas] first exhaust their afflictions via the path of cultivation (i.e., *Śrāvakayāna*) and later become fully awakened to the unsurpassed, perfect bodhi” *byang chub sems dpa' dbang po rtul po rigs dang ldan pa sngar bsgom pa'i lam gyis nyon mongs pa zad par byed cing/phyis bla na med pa yang dag par rdzogs pa'i byang chub mngon par rdzogs par 'tshang rgya* (MĀ, 242a7–b1; cf. *Daśadharmaka*, D 53, 175b5–b6).

5 The Perspectival Synthesis

One of the difficulties in synthesising two different philosophical systems is how to deal with the “interface” between the two systems. In the Yogācāra-Madhyamaka synthesis advocated by Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla, the two truth hermeneutic is enlisted to compartmentalise the Yogācāra theory of mind-only (*cittamātra*) and the Madhyamaka claim of universal naturelessness (*niḥsvabhāvatā*). However, it is not explicitly explained why the two truth hermeneutic as an a priori framework must be at work and why it is necessarily preferable to other possible “interfaces”, except for the fact that Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla clearly are intellectually invested in the primacy of Madhyamaka. Is it possible to consider the two truth hermeneutic not a sine qua non in the description of a Yogācāra-Madhyamaka synthesis?

According to the *Tattvasaṃgraha* and the *Tattvasaṃgrahapañjikā*, only sentient beings possess world-projecting basal consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*), which gives rise to mental representations of both the body and the external world.⁴⁷ On this reading, external reality is reducible to consciousness. At the same time, Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla maintain that the difference between sentient beings and insentient objects ultimately lies in the fact that the former have self-awareness (*svasaṃvitti/svasaṃvedana*).

[*Tattvasaṃgraha* 1999] Consciousness exists as the opposite of insentient form;

it possesses the self-awareness that is the state of not being an insentient form.

vijñānaṃ jaḍarūpebhyo vyāvṛttam upajāyate |

*iyam evātmasaṃvittir asya yā 'jaḍarūpatā || Tattvasaṃgraha 1999 ||*⁴⁸

[*Tattvasaṃgrahapañjikā* ad 1999] Self-awareness is not posited because of the existence of the perceived or the perceiver. Rather, [it is posited] because of its nature of illumination in a spontaneous and natural manner like a light beam traveling in the firmament.

*na hi grāhyagrāhakabhāvenātmasaṃvedanam abhipretam | kiṃ tarhi svayaṃ prakṛtyā prakāśātmatayā nabhastalavartyālokavat || Tattvasaṃgrahapañjikā ad 1999 ||*⁴⁹

47 For the role of *ālayavijñāna* in the makings of a body, “It is suitable for me as a proponent of consciousness-only to maintain that ‘the body [has consciousness as its nature (**jñānātmaka*)] on account of the nature of *ālayavijñāna* [that gives rise to transmigration]’”; *mama tu yuktaṃ vijñānamātravādina ālayavijñānasvabhāvatvāt kāyasyety abhiprāyaḥ* (*Tattvasaṃgrahapañjikā* ad 1908); *rnam par shes pa tsam du smra ba nged cag la ni rigs te/lus ni kun gzhi rnam par shes pa'i rang bzhin yin pa'i phyir ro snyam du bsams pa yin no //* (*Tattvasaṃgrahapañjikā*, D 4267, 'e 102b).

48 The same verse appears as verse 16 in the *Madhyamakālaṃkāra*; see Ichigō 1985: 70.

49 For the Sanskrit text of the *Tattvasaṃgraha* and the *Tattvasaṃgrahapañjikā*, see Śāstrī 1968: 2.682 and Saccone 2018: 174. Cf. *Tattvasaṃgrahapañjikā*, D 4267, 'e 116a5: *gzung ba dang 'dzin pa'i ngo bos*

According to Kamalaśīla, the prefix *sva-* (“self-”) in the *tatpuruṣa* compound “self-awareness” does not refer to either the perceived or the perceiver; *sva-* refers to a spontaneous, natural manner.⁵⁰ Śāntarakṣita further adds that “self-awareness is posited because consciousness has experience (*myong ba*) as its own nature”.⁵¹ How can consciousness occur without involving the existence of the perceived or the perceiver? Mipham, when commenting on this passage in the *Madhyamakālaṃkāra*, uses the mind in a dream to clarify Śāntarakṣita’s point. In a dream projected by one’s consciousness, there does not exist the perceived nor the perceiver, even though the ruse of perception is happening as dreaming experience unfolds.⁵² On this reading, self-awareness is not really reflexive, despite the fact it does create the illusion of reflexivity. As Kamalaśīla’s metaphor suggests, self-awareness naturally (*prakṛtiyā*) unfolds by itself (*svayaṃ*) just like light naturally travels through the void. Therefore, self-awareness is de facto defined as self-unfolding conscious experience.⁵³ Consciousness naturally unfolds and generates conscious experience in the same way as a dreaming mind naturally unfolds by itself and generates conscious experience. Here I will refrain from venturing into the debate over whether Śāntarakṣita’s treatment of self-awareness really steers clear of the criticism from Prāsaṅgika-

bdag nyid rig par 'dod pa ni ma yin no // 'o na ci zhe na nam mkha'i dkyil du gnas pa'i snang ba bzhin du rang nyid rang bzhin gyis gsal ba yin no //. Cf. Williams 1998: 29–30.

50 It seems to me that *svayaṃ* and *prakṛtyā* would become redundant if not considered two glosses for the suffix *sva-*; cf. “For self-awareness [of cognition] is not intended with the conditions of apprehended and apprehender, but rather as having, by its own nature, the nature of light, like the light abiding in the firmament” (Saccone 2018: 258). Cf. *Madhyamakālaṃkāravṛtti* ad Verse 16 (Ichigō 1985: 70): “[Self-awareness] has spontaneous illumination as its self-nature” *rang bzhin gyis gsal ba'i bdag nyid yin*; cf. *Madhyamakālaṃkārapañjikā* ad Verse 16 (Ichigō 1985: 71): “[consciousness] relies on no other illumination” *gsal ba gzhan la mi ltos pa*. Dan Arnold translates *svasaṃvitti* as “intrinsic awareness,” which fits Kamalaśīla’s explanation; Arnold 2020: 156.

51 *Madhyamakālaṃkāravṛtti* ad Verse 18 (Ichigō 1985: 74): *rnam par shes pa yang myong ba'i bdag nyid yin pa'i phyir rang rig par 'dod do //*.

52 “In the mental state of a dream, for instance, places, horses, and elephants seem to exist externally, while the mind as a faculty perceiving them seems to exist internally. In fact, because the vividness of their appearances is just consciousness, the appearances of what is perceived and what is perceiving are no other than consciousness itself. Yet, there exists vivid experience. For this reason, the conventional term ‘self-awareness’ is appropriate” *dper na rmi lam gyi blo ngor yul rta glang phyi rol na yod pa lta bu dang/der 'dzin dbang po'i blo nang na yod pa ltar snang yang/don la shes pa der snang gi gsal cha tsam yin pas gzung cha dang 'dzin char snang ba de dag shes pa rang las gzhan min cing gsal bar nyams su myong ba'ang yod pa'i phyir rang rig ces pa'i tha snyad 'thad de/* (Mipham 1992: 207–208).

53 “What Śāntarakṣita affirms when he introduces self-awareness, then, is just that cognitions are constitutively subjective – an idea so commonsensical as to be tantamount to his affirming simply that there are conscious experiences” (Arnold 2020: 156).

Madhyamaka;⁵⁴ suffice it to say that self-awareness defined by Śāntarakṣita clearly presupposes the existence of first-person access to consciousness and, by extension, the existence of a first-person perspective. In contrast, Madhyamaka does not presuppose the existence of first-personal access to consciousness, and, therefore, the existence of consciousness need not be presumed.⁵⁵ The difference between Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla's Yogācāra and their Madhyamaka can be considered as perspectival: while Yogācāra is correct from a first-person perspective, Madhyamaka is correct when one avoids privileging a first-person perspective.⁵⁶

In Northern Chan, both Yogācāra and Madhyamaka are foundational to the Chan movement, and a synthesis of Yogācāra and Madhyamaka is maintained without explicitly invoking the two-truth hermeneutic.⁵⁷ In the *Judgement*, when Moheyan is questioned about his own doctrinal position, he provides a Madhyamaka answer,

Question: Given that there are three [ontological positions], one that clings to external objects, one that clings to consciousness, and one that clings to Madhyamaka, which one is the principle (Tib. *gzhung*) discussed in your explanations?

driś pa / bśhad pa la yul 'dzin pa dang / rnam par shes pa 'dzin pa dang dbu ma 'dzin pa gsum yod na / 'di skad du bśhad pa'i gzhung gang /

54 Cf. Williams 1998: 19–36, Garfield 2006: 212, Arnold 2020: 160–174.

55 Kamalaśīla maintains, “In terms of the ultimate meaning, no independently existing yogi with an *ātman* and the like is there, nor anyone who sees. However, conventionally speaking, just as there is consciousness merely by the occurrence of cognition of the sensory contents such as forms, it is expressed in the world that ‘Devadatta sees Yajñadatta through cognition,’ even though there is no one with an *ātman* and the like” *na paramārthataḥ kaścīd ātmādiḥ svatantra 'sti yogī nāpi kaścīd paśyati | kiṃ tu samvṛtyā yathā rūpādīviśayākārajñānotpādamātrena vijñānam eva loke tathā tathā vyavahriyate devadatto yajñadattaṃ jñānena paśyatīti na tu kaścīd ātmādir asti |* (Tucci 1958: 218, ll. 7–12). Even yogic cognition (*yogijñāna*) ultimately does not exist (Tucci 1958: 219, ll. 3–5).

56 Cf. the “robo-buddha” interpretation proposed in Siderits 2011. The argument is that, for Mādhyamikas, a buddha can be seen as a perfect automaton, i.e., a robo-buddha, that interacts with external reality automatically and perfectly without resorting to consciousness as a device mediating between itself and external reality. The lack of subjectivity of a robo-buddha eliminates the need to postulate the existence of consciousness or a first-person perspective.

57 For the Yogācāra elements in Northern Chan texts, see Yamabe 2014. The Yogācāra slogan *cittamātram idaṃ yad idaṃ traidhātukam* is explicitly mentioned in the *Essentials of Cultivating the Mind* (*Xiuxin yaolun* 修心要論), *On Contemplating the Mind* (*Guanxin lun* 觀心論), the *Heart*, and the *Judgement*. The *Judgement* invoke the maxim “the Three Worlds are mind-only” (Chin. *sanjie weixin* 三界唯心; Skt. *cittamātram tribhavaṃ*) two times; *Judgement*, folios 142a5 and 149a5. When asked about the difference between Buddha nature advocated by Northern Chan and *Ātman* in non-Buddhists sources, Moheyan points out that non-Buddhists do not accept the mind-only theory to begin with (*Judgement*, folios 142a3–142b1); the *Luminous* also claims that non-Buddhists are wrong in that, unlike Buddhists, they do not think that “all sense bases, including the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind, are from the *ālayavijñāna*” 眼、耳、鼻、舌、身、意等根 ... 皆從賴耶識中來 (Han 2017: 93).

[Answer]: My position is the no-thought Chan School of the Great Vehicle in accordance with *prajñāpāramitā*. In the meaning of no-thought, there does not exist even one [fixed standpoint], let alone three.

此義是般若波羅蜜無思大乘禪門，「無思」義中，何論有三，一亦不立。《般若經》中廣說。⁵⁸

Moheyan clearly does not want to reiterate his own proposition (*pratijñā*), even though he commits himself to the mind-only (*cittamātra*) explanation of external reality⁵⁹ and the existence of primordially pure *ālayavijñāna*.⁶⁰ How can the Yogācāra claims co-exist with his understanding of Madhyamaka derived from the *prajñāpāramitā* literature?⁶¹ I would argue that one might find some hints at a perspectival approach in Moheyan's terminology.⁶² In the *Judgement*, the reality of phenomena (*dharmatā*) is referred to as “the principle as the nature of *dharma*” (*faxingli* 法性理).⁶³ The “principle” (*li* 理) is a term early Chan writers borrowed from the Huayan School,⁶⁴ and, in Northern Chan texts, it is deployed to discuss the phenomenal world with “an equation of the self with others” (自他...等一) or, in other words, without a privileged perspective.⁶⁵ Similarly, the *Masters* claims, “When the mind becomes impartial, it is termed the ‘principle’” 心能平等，名之為理。⁶⁶ Once the mind rids itself of its privileged

58 The original question in Tibetan is in PT 823/1, and the original answer in Chinese is in *Judgement*, folio 141a1–a2.

59 “The vehicle of the gods [and others that you] are asking about are all delusional concepts [created by] one's own mind”; *Judgement*, folio 148b1: 所問天乘者，皆是自心妄想分別。

60 Moheyan, citing the *Ghanavyūha*, claims, “*Ālayavijñāna* is also like the [lotus]. Once it emerges from the mud-like karmic imprints, it regains its purity.” 阿賴耶識，亦復如是，出習氣泥，而得明潔 (*Judgement*, folio 140b1–b2).

61 It seems that Moheyan avoids citing Nāgārjuna who is considered an Indian scholiast. Moheyan, instead, claims that he derives his Madhyamaka-like claims from *prajñāpāramitā* literature.

62 Sharf argues that some Chan *koans* from the Song and Yuan periods “are designed to allow aspiring Chan students to come to grip with, and give expression to, the loop without trying to tame it” (Sharf 2021: 1066). The “loop” here refers to “the paradoxical nature of human embodiment”, i.e., Thomas Nagel's argument that “first- and third-person perspectives are simultaneously antithetical to, yet interdependent on, one another” (Sharf 2021: 1044 n. 7). I do not suggest that Moheyan or other Northern Chan authors consciously understood the existence of the “loop”, even though their writings, predating the times of *koans*, sometimes grapple with it.

63 Demiéville thinks Moheyan's term of choice *faxingli* is ‘fautif’ (Demiéville 1987: 67). This term, however, is frequently used in Chinese commentary traditions and Moheyan probably picked it up from the *Xin Huayanjing lun* 新華嚴經論 [A New Treatise on the *Buddhāvataṃsaka*] (T 1739) by Li Tongxuan 李通玄 (635–730).

64 For an analysis of the emergence of “a kataphatic mode of discourse” in Chinese Buddhism and the concept *li* in early Huayan texts, see Gimello 1976.

65 *Masters*, Bingenheimer/Zhang 2018: 24. This is from the *Erru sixing Lun* 二入四行論 attributed to Bodhidharma.

66 *Masters*, Bingenheimer/Zhang 2018: 17. This claim also appears in *Tenets*, T 2835, 85.1278b26.

perspective after reaching a state of no-thought, it is termed the “principle.” In a similar manner, Moheyān paraphrases a passage from the apocryphal *Scripture of the Vajra Samādhi* (*Jīngāng sanmei jīng* 金剛三昧經) and uses it to claim that one must meditatively jettison subjectivity to realise “the ‘principle’ of reality as it is” (*ruru zhi li* 如如之理).

When there is a thought that agitates the mind, all five aggregates are created. [Therefore,] if people meditate and have their mind stay in the *vajra* (i.e., immovable) ground, they would have not even a single thought. [Then they realise]⁶⁷ the “principle” of reality as it is, which underlies all phenomena.

一念心動，五蔭俱生，令彼眾生安坐，心神住金剛地，既無一念。此如如之理，具一切法。⁶⁸

This is not directly taken from the *Scripture of the Vajra Samādhi*, but a combination of two separate assertions made in this apocryphon, one about the mind and the other about the “principle.”⁶⁹ The exegetic move to connect the two claims implies that Moheyān understands that the existence of a privileged perspective is at stake here.

Northern Chan texts were composed for reasons different from Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla’s writings, as they mostly argue with their Chinese rivals and have no intention to construct a scholastic edifice to reconcile Yogācāra with Madhyamaka. Nonetheless, it seems that a perspectival approach that sews up the seams between Yogācāra and Madhyamaka could be at work.

6 Yogic Perception and Extrasensory Apprehension

Although Kamalaśīla nominally endorses the idea of *ālayavijñāna*, his soteriology has little to do with *ālayavijñāna* and he speaks little about the “transmutation of the basis” (*āśrayaparivṛtti*) of the seeds (*bīja*) supposedly central to Yogācāra soteriology.⁷⁰ Similarly, even though the concept of *ālayavijñāna* is constantly deployed or

67 The insertion is justified because Moheyān in Answer III.10 explains this scriptural passage with the phrase “realising the ‘principle’ of suchness” (通達如如之理); *Judgement*, folio 151b3.

68 *Judgement*, folio 130a1–a2.

69 *Jīngāng sanmei jīng*, T 273, 9.369a16–17 and 371a5–11.

70 In Kamalaśīla’s commentary on the *Śālistamba Sūtra* (*Śālistambakaṭikā*), he explains the workings of the “seed consciousness” (*sa bon rnam par shes pa*), another term for *ālayavijñāna*. However, he only mentions *āśrayaparivṛtti* (*gnas ’gyur*) once in a non-soteriological sense; see *Śālistambakaṭikā*, D 4001, mdo ’grel, ji, 150b6–7. In the *Third Bhāvanākrama*, the term appears once and refers to the gradual purification of mind. Tucci 1971: 2, ll.11–15: “after the transmutation of the basis on

alluded to in Northern Chan texts,⁷¹ the Yogācāra notion of transmutation is rarely discussed. At the same time, authors of Northern Chan texts do not engage with the Indian logico-epistemological traditions as Kamalaśīla does.⁷² As a result, Kamalaśīla and Northern Chan, while jettisoning *ālayavijñāna*-based soteriology, provide different solutions. According to the *Tattvasaṃgrahaṇīkā*, meditative cultivation (*bhāvanā*) culminates in the ability to perform “yogic perception” (*yogipratyakṣa*), a logico-epistemological concept that describes the direct apprehension of selflessness (*nairātmya*);⁷³ in the *Bhāvanākramas*, yogic perception is defined as the direct apprehension of “everything as it is” (*sakalam vastu yathāvat*).⁷⁴ Without going into the details of the differences, suffice it to say that, for Kamalaśīla, yogic perception is extrasensory and its attainment needs to be preceded by an assiduously prolonged process of meditative cultivation. For Northern Chan, no-thought meditation enables the practitioner to enter a non-conceptual state of mind, which allows omniscience to naturally emerge.⁷⁵ Therefore, the extrasensory apprehension advocated by Northern Chan can be achieved via a meditative shortcut.

account of [the mind’s] becoming more and more purified one moment after another, when every conduct has been completely done, the very consciousness in the Buddha Stage is the basis for the perfection of conducts” *krameṇa viśuddhataratamakṣaṇodayād āśrayaparāvṛttau satyāṃ āvaraṇaprahāṇalakṣaṇā kāryaparisaṃpāptir yadā bhāvati tadā buddhabhūmau tad eva jñānaṃ kāryapariniṣpattyālabhanam*. I thank Chiou Pei-Lin for pointing this reference out to me.

71 For example, the *Luminous* discusses *laiye* 賴耶 (*ālayavijñāna*) at length (Han 2017: 93); in the *Judgement*, the term *alaiyeshi* 阿賴耶識 is used twice (*Judgement*, folios 140b1, 144b4); In the *Quintessence*, *ālayavijñāna* is alluded to as “the pure great home” (*qingjing dazhai* 清淨大宅; Tib. *gtsang gdang ba’i khyim*) that the practitioner should return to (Ueyama 1976: 75, 100).

72 The only exception is in the *Gist*, where the existence of self-awareness is rejected; see Yamabe 2014: 285. It seems there is no translation of the term *yogipratyakṣa* that exists in pre-modern Chinese Buddhist texts. For the Chinese rendering of the term *pratyakṣa*, see Funayama 2014.

73 See McClintock 2000: 235–240; Kellner 2020: 58.

74 Tucci 1958: 216.15–16. After he explains, “The light of cognition as yogic perception proceeds like a sunbeam unhindered everywhere in clouds.” *ravikiranavad ... nabhasi sarvatrāvyāhato yogipratyakṣo jñānālokaḥ pravartate* | (Tucci 1958: 216.10–12), Kamalaśīla defines yogic perception as “the consciousness with the form of light [that reveals] the nature of things” (*vastusvabhāvaprakāśarūpaṃ vijñānam*) (Tucci 1958: 216.12–13). In the *Third Bhāvanākrama*, it is defined as “[the practitioner] apprehends the cognitive object (*ālambana*) that is the ultimate reality of things” (*vastuparyantatālambanaṃ pratilabdhaṃ bhavati*); Tucci 1971, 30, ll. 6–7. see Funayama 2011: 106–107. Funayama argues that the yogic perception in the *Bhāvanākramas* is different from the term found in the *Tattvasaṃgrahaṇīkā*. Also see Kellner 2020: 67–71.

75 According to Zongmi’s summarisation, Northern Chan claims that “As soon as thoughts are exhausted, one is awakened and becomes omniscient” 念盡即覺悟，無所不知 (Zongmi, *Chanyuan zhuquan jidu xu* 禪源諸詮集都序, T 2015, 48.402b26). In his response to Question I.11, Moheyan states: “If the delusional mind does not rise and one is free of all delusional thoughts, the true nature that originally exists and omniscience will naturally manifest” 若妄心不起，離一切妄想者，真性本有，及一切種智，自然顯現 (*Judgement*, folio 140a3–a4).

In the *Judgement*, this divide becomes a point of contention in the discussion of the *prajñāpāramitā* catchphrase that “the seeing of the ultimate meaning is the non-seeing of all *dharmas*.”⁷⁶ This oxymoronic sentence is also discussed in Kamalaśīla’s *First Bhāvanākrama* and the *MĀ*.⁷⁷ While Moheyan reads it as a straightforward endorsement of the efficacy of no-thought meditation, which directly brings about extrasensory apprehension, Kamalaśīla rejects such a “naive” interpretation of this sentence. Instead, Kamalaśīla insists that “non-seeing” as an *implicative negation* refers to an unusual form of seeing via his definition of yogic perception and that “non-seeing” has to be preceded by the use of wisdom in meditation.⁷⁸ “The seeing of ultimate reality is the non-seeing [of all phenomena] when there appears a vision of perfect cognition *after* examining all phenomena with the wisdom eye.”⁷⁹ In the *Judgement*, Moheyan claims the opposite is the case.

The *Brahmapariṣcchā* says, “With regard to the principle that is the nature of phenomena, even if one practises the Way for ten million eons, one will not increase or decrease the principle as the nature of phenomena.” If one thoroughly apprehends this principle, it is called the great *prajñā*.

《思益經》云：『說法性理，若人千萬億劫行道，於法性理不增不減。』若了知此理，是名大智慧。⁸⁰

The great *prajñā* is the result of “non-seeing,” not the cause of “non-seeing”. The term “thoroughly apprehending” (*liao zhi* 了知) refers to some sort of extrasensory apprehension of reality. According to Zongmi, one of the central claims made by Northern Chan is that “the buddhas [are the buddhas because they] have abandoned delusional thoughts and, therefore, see the nature [of reality] thoroughly” 諸佛已斷

76 The catchphrase is cited by Moheyan as a quote from the *Laṅkāvatāra* and *Brahmapariṣcchā*, “If one is free of all kinds of seeing, it is termed ‘correct seeing’” 離一切諸見，名為正見 (*Judgement*, folio 152a6). The Indo-Tibetan side explains their understanding of this quote is in Question II.2, when they discuss a line from the *Vajracchedikā*, “The *Vajracchedikā* means ‘With regard to thoroughly understanding phenomena, one, after having seeing them, unsees them’” 金剛經云若了達諸法，觀了然後不觀者 (*Judgement*, folio 132b2–b3). Note that in the *Brahmapariṣcchā*, the character *jian* 見 translates Skt. *dṛṣṭi* (“a doctrinal view”) instead of *darśana* (“seeing”), even though a Chinese reader would probably fail to recognise the difference.

77 The sentence is quoted in the *First Bhāvanākrama* as *katamaṃ paramārthadarśanam | sarvadharmāṇām adarśanam* (Tucci 1958: 212); for an English translation of the relevant passage in the *First Bhāvanākrama*, see Kellner 2020: 73. For the treatment in the *MĀ*, see Keira 2004: 102–105.

78 For the difference between implicative negation (*pariyudāsa*) and non-implicative negation (*prasajyapratiṣedha*), see Keira 2004: 33–34, n. 67.

79 Tucci 1958: 211.22–212.2: *etad eva tat paramatattvadarśanam yat sarvadharmān prajñācakṣuṣā nirūpayataḥ samyagjñānāvaloke saty adarśanam |*.

80 *Judgement*, folio 133a5–6.

妄想, 故見性了了。⁸¹ Here Zongmi echoes a comment on the *Vajracchedikā* found in the beginning of the *Realisation*,

The [*Vajracchedikā*]sūtra says, “Once they are free of all marks,⁸² they are called buddhas.” Therefore, the mark of existence is the mark of being empty of marks. [This understanding] cannot be seen through eyes, but it can be apprehended through the intellect.

經云:「離一切諸相, 即名諸佛。」是知有相是無相之相, 不可以眼見, 唯可以智知。⁸³

The commentator attempts to clarify that the ability to apprehend reality is the result of no-thought meditation. When extrasensory apprehension is involved, the word “seeing” is merely a metaphor, as the human eye as a sensory organ is not really involved.⁸⁴ Elsewhere, extrasensory apprehension of reality is expressed as “seeing the principle vividly” (*jian li ming* 見理明)⁸⁵ in the *Gist* and “seeing the nature” (*jianxing* 見性) in the *Tenets*.⁸⁶

It is worth noting that texts associated with Southern Chan and Northern Chan also feature a different type of extrasensory apprehension – the “seeing [buddha] nature [from within]” (*jianxing* 見性). This idea is premised on the notion that *tathāgatagarbha* can be equated to suchness (*tathātā*). Why would one need to apprehend anything external when buddha nature can be directly apprehended from within? Incidentally, this equation is also criticised by Kamalaśīla in the *MĀ* as mistakenly equating the characteristic of suchness to suchness itself.⁸⁷ For Kamalaśīla, *tathāgatagarbha* should be understood as the universal possibility of buddhahood instead of suchness itself.

81 *Chanyuan zhuquan jiduxu* 禪源諸詮集都序, T 2015, 48: 402b23–b24.

82 In the *Vajracchedikā* translated into Chinese by Kumārajīva, the character *xiang* 相 as a rendering of *saṃjñā* refers to both marks and concepts (*xiang* 想); see Harrison 2010: 240.

83 *Realisation*, T 2009, 48.370c15–16.

84 A similar idea is also expressed in a Southern Chan text titled *Dunwu rudao yaomen lun* 頓悟入道要門論. “Now when I speak of ‘seeing,’ it does not matter whether there is an object or not. Why is that? It is because [I am referring to] seeing the nature that is constant. When there is an object, I see it; when there is no object, I also see it. Therefore, one should know this: although objects come and go, one sees the nature that does not come and go.” 今言見者, 不論對物與不對物。何以故? 為見性常故。有物之時即見, 無物之時, 亦見也。故知物自有去來, 見性無來去也 (X 1223, 63.18c13–15).

85 Han 2018: 73. The same phrase also appears in a Dunhuang text titled *Dasheng yaoyu* 大乘要語 (T 2822 and S. 985v).

86 *Tenets*, T 2835, 85.1279c9.

87 This is introduced by Kamalaśīla as the penultimate *pūrvapakṣa*, “According to some, the claim ‘all sentient beings have *tathāgatagarbha*’ means [the Buddha] took the characteristic of suchness as suchness” *kha cig las sems can thams cad ni de bzhin gshegs pa'i snying po can no zhes 'byung ba gang yin pa de yang de bzhin nyid kyi mtshan nyid de bzhin nyid la dgongs nas gsungs pa yin no //* (MĀ, 147b4–b5; Ichigō 2005: 141). Matsumoto suggests that the second *de bzhin nyid* be emended to *de bzhin gshegs pa*; see Matsumoto 1982: 46.

7 Concluding Remarks

The Samyé Debate, occasioned by an interest in embracing Buddhism as a state-sponsored religion, was made possible first and foremost by some doctrinal common ground shared between the two parties of the debate. The doctrinal sharedness between Kamalaśīla and Moheyan starts with the compatible – the *Laṅkāvatāra* and the “Single Vehicle” vision – and ends with the comparable – the Yogācāra-Madhyamaka synthesis and the need for extrasensory perception. This paper, though far from being methodical and exhaustive, serves as the starting point of a different line of inquiry.

Reading through both Kamalaśīla’s writings and Northern Chan texts, one cannot help but notice that there are two contrastive approaches to Mahāyāna. Northern Chan authors, Moheyan included, clearly favour a cherry-picking approach, as they attempt to justify their claims by searching for scriptural support from a limited selection of *sūtras*. They see no point in building a philosophical edifice that minimises the inconsistency between Northern Chan and the rest of Mahāyāna.⁸⁸ In other words, the strategy was to defend the plausibility of Northern Chan as “the true principle of the Great Vehicle,” while ignoring the possible inconsistencies between Northern Chan and the rest of Mahāyāna. In contrast, Kamalaśīla, as an encyclopaedic synthesiser, takes the internal consistency of Mahāyāna much more seriously and, as a result, finds it an imperative to build an all-inclusive philosophical framework. I am not, however, suggesting that the entire debate should be essentialised into two contrasting approaches – if anything, the doctrinal sharedness warns us against our tendency to reduce the richness of the relevant texts to a single doctrinal divide.

Abbreviations

D	<i>sDe dge bsTan 'gyur. The Tibetan Tripitaka</i> . Ed. A.W. Barber (Taipei: SMC Publishing Inc., 1991).
Gist	<i>The Gist of Guiding the Mortal to Sagehood (Daofan qusheng xinjue 導凡趣聖心決)</i> transcribed in Han 2018.
Judgement	<i>The Judgement on Sudden Awakening Being the True Principle of the Great Vehicle (Dasheng dunwu zhengli jue 大乘頓悟正理決)</i> (PC 4646+S. 8609); transcribed in Ueyama 2012: 540–598.
PC	Fonds Pelliot chinois at Biblioth.que nationale de France.

⁸⁸ As Moheyan puts it, if one “has faith in the ultimate meaning” (Chin. *xin shengyi* 信勝義), there is no need “to vainly study [doctrinal] texts” (Chin. *kongxue wenzi* 空學文字) (*Judgement*, folio 157b2, 158a1).

- PT Fonds Pelliot tib.tain at Biblioth.que nationale de France.
- Quintessence* *The Quintessence of the True School of Sudden Awakening (Dunwu zhenzong yaojue 頓悟真宗要訣)* transcribed in Ueyama 1976.
- Luminous* *The Treatise on the Perfectly Luminous (Yuanming lun 圓明論)* transcribed in Han 2017.
- MĀ *Madhyamakāloka*, D 3887, dbu ma, sa 133b4–244a7.
- Masters* *The Account of the Laṅkā Masters (Lengqie shiziji 楞伽師資記)* transcribed in Bingenheimer/Zhang 2018: 1–70.
- Realisation* *The Treatise on the Realisation of the Nature (Wuxing lun 悟性論)* transcribed in T 2009/5.
- Record* *The Record of the Transmitting the Dharma as a Treasure (Chuan fabao ji 傳法寶紀)* transcribed in T 2838.
- S. The Stein Collection Or.8210 at British Library.
- T *Taishō shinshū Daizōkyō* 大正新修大藏經, ed. J. Takukusu and K. Watanabe, Tokyo: Taishō shinshū daizōkyō kankō kai, 1924–1934.
- Tenets* *The Treatise on the True Tenets of Sudden Awakening (Dunwu zhenzong lun 頓悟真宗論)* transcribed in T 2835.
- X *Shinsan dainihon zokuzōkyō* 新纂大日本續藏經, ed. Kawamura Kōshō 河村照孝, et al., Tokyo: Kokusho Kankōkai, 1975–1989.

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