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THE GREAT TREATISE ON THE STAGES OF THE PATH TO ENLIGHTENMENT

by
Tsong-kha-pa

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The Lamrim Chenmo Translation Committee

Joshua W. C. Cutler, Editor-in-Chief
Guy Newland, Editor

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> no other teaching that can cause that extinction of attachment. Thus, selflessness—characterized by the absence of intrinsic existence—is the one and only door to peace. As a gateway to the city of nirvāṇa, it is alone, and nothing can match it.

Although there are the three doors of liberation called "emptiness," "signlessness," and "wishlessness," still only the view of selflessness takes priority. If you know phenomena without exception as selfless and thereby extinguish every attachment to all things, then how could you ever long for anything or apprehend signs in anything? Because of this, selflessness alone is the one and only door to peace. [643] Therefore, the *Equipment for Enlightenment* (*Byang chub kyi tshogs*) explains:[399]

> Because phenomena do not intrinsically exist, they are empty.
> Further, because phenomena are empty, what use are signs?
> Inasmuch as they have overcome all signs
> Why would the learned wish for such phenomena?

Thus Candrakīrti clears up the apparent contradiction between scriptural explanations that there are three doors to liberation and other texts which explain that the view of emptiness of intrinsic existence is the only door to liberation. He uses scripture and reason to prove that just this view is the door to liberation.

Why should the mere negation of intrinsic nature imply the refutation of the object of wisdom? It should not, for such knowledge remedies the conceptions of the two selves as signs and it lacks even a trace of such a misconception. If you regard as defective even such a conception, and refute all conceptuality of any sort—good or bad—then it is evident that you want to set up the system of the Chinese abbot Ha-shang.

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Not Negating Enough

(2)) Refuting an overly restricted identification of the object to be negated

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Opponent: The object to be negated is an intrinsic nature that has three attributes: (1) causes and conditions do not bring it into being, (2) its condition is immutable, and (3) it is posited without depending on some other phenomenon. For, Nāgārjuna's *Fundamental Treatise* says:[400]

> It is not reasonable that a nature
> Should arise from causes and conditions.
> If it did arise from causes and conditions
> Then a nature would be something that is made.
>
> How could it be suitable
> For a nature to be something that is made?
> A nature is not fabricated
> And does not depend on another.

Reply: In general, if someone claims that internal and external things—e.g., seedlings—have "intrinsic nature" in this sense, then Mādhyamikas indeed must refute such. However, here, identifying the object to be negated means identifying the fundamental object of negation. When you refute the fundamental object of

negation, then the Madhyamaka view—knowledge that phenomena lack intrinsic nature—develops in your mind-stream. [644]

Fallacies arise if we follow this opponent's interpretation. Since the partisans of non-Madhyamaka Buddhist schools have already established that compounded phenomena are produced by causes and conditions and are mutable, we should not have to demonstrate to them the absence of intrinsic nature. They also should have recognized that things lack intrinsic nature. So how can this be the unique Madhyamaka object of negation?

Many Madhyamaka texts adduce arguments such as: If things existed essentially, then they could not depend on causes and conditions, they would have to be immutable, and so forth. However, these statements indicate fallacies that would be entailed if things existed essentially; they do not identify the object of negation on its own terms.

It is the case that if something existed ultimately, existed in reality, or truly existed, then it could not depend on causes and conditions, and so forth; however, that is not what ultimate existence means. For example, even though being a pot entails being impermanent, impermanence is not the proper meaning of pot; rather you have to say that it means a "bulbous splay-based thing able to perform the function of holding water."

Likewise, if something existed ultimately, etc., it would have to be a partless thing; still, here in Madhyamaka we do not suggest that "partless thing" is the fundamental object of negation. Since partless things are merely imputed from the unique perspective of advocates of philosophical tenets, such notions are not the fundamental cause that binds embodied beings in cyclic existence. Further, even if you determined that those partless things lack intrinsic nature and then meditated on that, this would not at all counter the ignorant conception which has operated from beginningless time. Therefore, even optimal and direct knowledge of that would not overcome the innate afflictions.

Thus, when making philosophical determinations, make your principal task to determine that an object as conceived by innate ignorance does not exist. Ancillary to that, refute objects of acquired misconceptions. [645] If you do not understand this, and fail to eradicate the perspective of innate ignorance, then, when you refute a personal self, you will only refute a self that is permanent, unitary, and independent. When you refute an objective self, you will only refute things that are imputed by the advocates of philosophical

tenets—such as objects that are partless particles, partless moments of experience, or a natural substrate (*pradhāna*) with three *guṇas* ("strands") asserted by the Sāṃkhyas. This is completely inappropriate. If you think otherwise, then when you make philosophical determinations, you will establish nothing more than this shallow selflessness. As philosophical determinations are made for the purposes of meditation, when you meditate you will have to meditate only on this. Therefore, even if you actualized such a selflessness in meditation and consummated your cultivation of it, nothing would come of it. It would be extremely absurd to claim that you can overcome innate afflictions by seeing as nonexistent the two selves imputed by acquired misconceptions.[401] Candrakirti's *Commentary on the "Middle Way"* says:[402]

> When knowing selflessness, some eliminate a permanent self,
> But we do not consider this the basis of the conception of "I."
> It is therefore astonishing to claim that knowing this selflessness
> Expunges and uproots the view of self.

Also, Candrakirti's *Explanation of the "Middle Way" Commentary* says:[403]

> To elucidate this very point, the irrelevance of such to innate afflictions, by way of an example:
>
> > Someone sees a snake living in the wall of his house.
> > To ease his concern, someone else says, "There is no elephant here."
> > Alas, to others it is ridiculous
> > To suppose that this would dispel the fear of the snake.

Candrakirti refers to the selflessness of the person, but it is the same for the selflessness of objects; he could have added:

> When knowing selflessness, some eliminate an acquired conception of self,
> But we do not consider this the basis of ignorance.
> It is therefore astonishing to claim that knowing this selflessness
> Expunges and uproots ignorance. [646]

Question: In the statement by Nāgārjuna set forth above,[404] he says that the defining characteristics of a "nature" are not being fabricated and not depending upon something else. Was he speaking hypothetically or does such a nature exist?

Reply: The Buddha posits a "nature," saying, "This is the reality of phenomena."[405] It is not fabricated and does not depend on something

else. Candrakīrti's *Explanation of the "Middle Way" Commentary* establishes that it exists, citing a sūtra source:[406]

> Is there a nature that has such qualifications as the master Nāgārjuna claims? Yes, it is the "reality" of which the Bhagavan spoke extensively, saying, "Whether *tathāgatas* appear or not, the reality of phenomena remains."[407] What is this "reality"? It is the nature of things such as these eyes. And, what is their nature? It is that in them which is neither fabricated nor dependent upon something else; it is their identity as known by knowledge free from the impairment of ignorance. Does it exist or not? If it did not exist, for what purpose would bodhisattvas cultivate the path of the perfections? Why would bodhisattvas undergo hundreds of hardships in order to know reality?

Question: Did you not previously argue that all phenomena lack intrinsic nature?

Reply: Even phenomena that are not internal mental constructs lack even a particle of essential or intrinsic nature. Have we not given this answer several times? Therefore, what need is there to speak of other phenomena in terms of such a nature? Even reality, the ultimate truth, has no intrinsic nature at all. For, Candrakīrti's *Clear Words* says:[408]

> The "final nature" is the unfabricated fundamental entity which is ineluctably present in fire in the past, present, and future; **[647]** it is not the later occurrence of something that was not there before; it does not depend on causes and conditions like the heat of water, or here and there, or long and short. Does fire have such a nature? It neither essentially has it nor essentially lacks it. Nevertheless, to avoid frightening listeners, I reify it and say, "It exists conventionally."

Thus Candrakīrti refutes the view that this nature exists essentially; he says that it exists conventionally.

Objection: He does not assert that it exists, for he says that he reifies it in order to avoid frightening listeners.

Reply: That is not reasonable. He also spoke of other phenomena, having imputed them for that same reason. So if the final nature did not exist, those other phenomena also would not exist. As cited earlier, Candrakīrti proves that the final nature exists, making the argument that if it did not exist, then it would absurdly follow that pure conduct is senseless. Also, Candrakīrti's *Explanation of the "Middle Way" Commentary* says:[409]

> Not only does the master Nāgārjuna assert this nature, others also can be made to accept it. Thus he posits this nature as established for both parties to the debate.

If it were otherwise, then you would have to hold that in Madhyamaka it is impossible to attain freedom. This is because (1) Candrakīrti says that to attain nirvāṇa means to perceive nirvāṇa, and he says that nirvāṇa is considered a true cessation and that true cessations are ultimate truths; and (2) ultimate truths would not exist. In his *Commentary on the Sixty Stanzas of Reasoning*, Candrakīrti takes pains to prove that when you attain nirvāṇa, you must perceive the ultimate truth of cessation. **[648]**

Accordingly, compounded phenomena such as eyes are not natures in the sense of being essentially existent, nor are they natures when reality is posited as the final nature. So they are neither sort of nature. Ultimate truths are natures when reality is posited as the final nature, but what establishes them as such natures is that they are non-fabricated and do not depend upon something else. They do not at all exist as natures in the sense of being essentially existent. Thus, they exist merely conventionally.

"Fabricated" means "produced" in the sense of a new occurrence of something that did not exist before; "to depend upon something else" means to depend on causes and conditions.

Since forms and so forth are neither type of nature, when you speak of cultivating the path in order to view the final nature, "nature" has the sense of reality. Therefore, Candrakīrti says that pure conduct is not senseless. Moreover, he explains that his utter lack of an assertion that phenomena have a nature in the sense of essential existence does not contradict his incidental assertion of a final nature.[410] Candrakīrti's *Explanation of the "Middle Way" Commentary* says:[411]

> *Objection*: Alas, utterly wrong! You do not assert real things at all, but also incidentally assert a nature that is non-fabricated and does not depend upon something else. You are saying things that are blatantly contradictory.
>
> *Reply*: In saying this, you miss the point of the *Fundamental Treatise*. This is what it means: If eyes and such—dependent-arisings that are evident to ordinary childish beings—were their own nature, then pure conduct would be senseless because even inaccurate consciousnesses could know that nature. Because they are not their own nature, pure conduct for the sake of viewing that nature does have a purpose. Further, I say that this nature, as

> compared to conventional truths, is non-fabricated and does not depend upon something else. **[649]** Only something that ordinary childish beings do not see is suitable to be the nature. Therefore, the ultimate is neither a thing nor a non-thing; by nature, it is simply peace.

Here "thing" and "non-thing" refer to essential existence and utter nonexistence, as explained above in the section on dualism.[412]

Now when you as an ordinary being determine that phenomena lack even a particle of essential or intrinsic nature, you find that emptiness—emptiness of intrinsic nature—is an attribute of the phenomena, such as form, that serve as its substrata. Thus, it is not contradictory for both substrata and attribute to be objects of a single mind. Since you have not stopped dualistic appearance, that emptiness is a nominal rather than actual ultimate truth.

By accustoming yourself to that view which knows the absence of intrinsic nature, you will know it by perceiving it. For such a consciousness, all mistaken appearances stop. Mistaken appearance here means the appearance of intrinsic existence where there is no intrinsic existence. Therefore, since the consciousness directly perceiving that reality does not perceive substrata such as forms, neither that reality nor its substrata exist from the perspective of that mind. So emptiness and forms, etc. must be posited as reality and substrata from the perspective of some other mind, a conventional mind.

As this is so, an ultimate truth is posited where, in addition to the stilling of all elaborations of essential existence, there is also a sheer stoppage of all elaborations of mistaken appearances, appearances of intrinsic existence where there is none. Thus, while we assert a final nature, how could we be forced to accept an essentially existent nature? Candrakīrti's *Clear Words* says:[413]

> Driven by the impairment of ignorance, ordinary beings perceive a certain aspect in things. As noble beings who are free from the impairment of ignorance do not see that mistaken aspect, there is something else that serves as their object. That very entity is posited as the final nature of those things.

Also:[414] **[650]**

> Things' lack of intrinsically existent production is not anything. Thus, since it is just a non-thing, it has no essence. Therefore, it is not the intrinsic nature of things.

Some [Tibetans] do not posit ultimate truth as the sheer elimination of the elaborations of the objects of negation, e.g., the two selves. Instead they hold that, as the object of a mind that non-mistakenly knows how things exist, the ultimate appears to exist under its own power—just as things such as blue and yellow appear to an ordinary mind. Ascertaining that it does exist in that way is the view that knows the profound. They also claim that it is a misstep with regard to the correct view to regard external and internal phenomena—the bases with regard to which living beings cling to the two selves—as lacking intrinsic existence.

These assertions stand outside the sphere of all the scriptures, Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna. They accept that it is necessary to stop the conception of self, the root that binds all living beings in cyclic existence. They then assert that you do not stop the conception of self by realizing that there is no intrinsic existence in the substrata it apprehends as a self; rather, you stop it by knowing as truly existent some other unrelated phenomenon. This is no different from the following scenario: Suppose that there is no snake in the east, but someone thinks that there is and is terrified. You say to the distressed person, "You cannot stop your idea that there is a snake by thinking, 'In the east there is no snake at all.' Rather you should think, 'There is a tree in the west.' That will stop your idea that there is a snake and will end your distress."

Hence, you who wish the good for yourselves should stay far away from such wrong views. You should work on the method for eradicating the way that ignorance apprehends things, this ignorance being the root of all that binds you and degrades you in cyclic existence. Regarding this method, the texts of the father, the noble Nāgārjuna, and his spiritual son Āryadeva clearly set forth vast collections of arguments that build deep and certain knowledge of the definitive scriptures and how it is that the meaning of these scriptures cannot be otherwise interpreted.[415] **[651]** Relying on these texts by Nāgārjuna and Āryadeva, cross to the other side of the ocean of cyclic existence.

To avoid missteps in reaching the Madhyamaka view, it is most crucial to refute wrong ideas about the object of negation. For that reason I have given an extended explanation.

Tibetan painting showing a vision of Tsoṅ-kha-pa with hands in teaching gesture, two disciples immediately below, and attendant deities
Courtesy Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Calming the Mind and Discerning the Real

Buddhist Meditation and the Middle View

From the *Lam rim chen mo* of Tsoṅ-kha-pa

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main), you reject the view of reality. In short, it is necessary (for you) also to accept it, disavowing (your rejection), to wit: "The door to quiescence which has no second one . . ." (*Catuḥ-ś*, k. 288a):[177] The *Catuḥ-ś-ṭ* states:

The destruction of attachment is the cause of attaining *nirvāṇa*; and there is no cause for that kind of destruction of attachment other than the view that there is no self-existence. For that very reason, the non-self-ness which has the character of no self-existence is the door to quiescence which has no second one, namely this is the sole incomparable gate for entering the city of *nirvāṇa*. Though voidness, signless, and wishless are called the three gates to liberation, even so the view (*darśana*) of nonself is the substratum (for the other three). For the one who has realized the non-self-ness in all *dharmas*, having destroyed the attachment to all entities, nowhere is there any assiduous pursuit, and how could he apprehend (by way of) sign-sources! For that reason, non-self-ness is the door to quiescence which has no second one.

For the same reason the *Byaṅ chub kyi tshogs* says this:[178]

When the void is by reason of no self-existence, there is the void. Also what is there to do with sign-sources! Since all sign-sources lead astray, how would a wise man form a resolution!

These texts explain that there are three doors to liberation and explain that the view which observes the void of self-existence is the sole gate to liberation.[179] And having, by scripture and principle, eliminated the conflict, only this (view) accomplishes the gate of liberation.

Also, why should merely deciding about self-existence require a rejecting of the objective domain! That is, the view understanding in this manner (i.e., nonexistence by self-existence) is the adversary to the adherence to sign-sources (the reifying imputation) in terms of the two selves (self of *dharma* and self of *pudgala*), so it is not just a question of adhering to sign-sources therein. But clearly the position which permeates the texts of the Chinese teacher Hva-śaṅ is to regard even such a (distinguished) reflection as this (which is the basis of the path to *nirvāna*) to be a fault, thus rejecting good reflections and bad reflections (indiscriminatively).[180]

b. Refutation of Nonpervasion in Determining the Refutable

Some persons say that the refutable thing (in this case), namely, the self-existence, has three distinctions, namely, (the distinction of) own-nature, i.e., not generated by causes and conditions; (the distinction of) level, i.e., not changing into something else; and (the distinction of) establishment, i.e., not dependent on another. They say, moreover, (it is) because the *Mūla-madhyamaka(-kārikā)* states (XV, 1–2):

It is not right that a self-existent arise from causes and conditions. If it arose from causes and conditions, a self-existent would be create (*kṛtaka*).

Besides, how could a self-existent come to be called "create"? For a self-existent is uncreate and not dependent on another.

In general, if one claims that such external and personal entities as shoots are accomplished as self-existent in that fashion (with the three distinctions), the Mādhyamika must refute this. However, in this case the determination of the refutable thing (should be as follows): when one refutes something, he should generate in the stream of consciousness the Mādhyamika view which comprehends the non-self-existence of *dharmas*, and thus determine the basis of the refutable thing. Accordingly, when insiders (i.e., the Vaibhāṣikas, Sautrāntikas, etc.) hold that constructed natures (*saṃskṛta*) are generated by causes and conditions, if it is not required for them (i.e., those insiders) to hold the non-self-existence, and if it is a fault for them (those insiders) to comprehend that entities lack self-existence, with that (i.e., your determination) where is the unshared refutable (pertaining to the view that comprehends voidness)!

If (an entity) were produced by self-nature and produced in self-existence (as the realist believes), it follows that (the entity) would be independent of causes and conditions and would not change into something else. Now this evaluation is frequently found in the Mādhyamika texts (such as the *Madhyamika-kārikā* and the *Prasannapadā*). Still, such (evaluations) express the fault by way of the pervader (*vyāpaka*), but do not determine the refutable by way of self-nature.

Moreover, if (an entity) were (produced) in the absolute sense, were genuinely produced and really produced, it would follow that it is not generated by causes and conditions, (does not change into something

else) and so on. Still, those (criteria) do not explain "production in the absolute sense" and so on. For example, let us grant that a pot is pervaded by impermanence; still, the impermanence is unable to explain the pot, while a large bulbous pot is able to establish the meaning of that (i.e., a pot).[181] Likewise, if (an entity) were produced in the absolute sense, and so on, it would follow that it is an impartite entity. Now in this (context) an impartite entity is not held to be the basic refutable, although this (impartite entity) is just imagined by adherents of theory-systems in an unshared manner—because this (impartite entity) is not the root that binds the subject (*dehin*) to the cyclical flow; and because even when one contemplates those (partless entities), establishing them as devoid of self-existence, this in no way injures the adherence to immemorial nescience, so that even at the climax of understanding directly the meaning of those (partless entities as non-self-existent) there is no averting of the concomitant defilements.

Hence, at the time one establishes with a view, to the extent that he grasps it with concomitant nescience he mainly grasps the establishment without the meaning, and ancillary to that, he does not know how to oppose the objective domains that are the grasping of imagination. Since he fails to oppose the grasping pattern of concomitant nescience, at the time he rejects the *pudgala*-self, i.e., a self that is permanent, unique, and independent; and at the time he rejects the *dharma*-self, i.e., the apprehender partless atom, the apprehender partless moment, the self-existence possessed of the three distinctions—imagined only by the adherents of theory-systems—he is completely incapable of the rejections. If he were not (incapable), at the time of establishment with a view, even when he contemplates without having established it through those rudiments (permanence, etc.) he would necessarily contemplate those rudiments, because establishment with a view is the meaning of the contemplation.

For that reason, even when one realizes directly after contemplating, and reaches the climax of the contemplation, it amounts to those rudiments; accordingly, viewing the two *nairātmyas* (i.e., nonself of *pudgala* and of *dharma*) is just a figmental tenet of the imagination; and if one claims to have warded off the concomitant defilements by just that (viewing) he has certainly missed the mark. In this connection, the *Avatāra* (VI, 140) states:

At the time one understands nairātmya (of *pudgala*) and rejects (by such vision) the permanent self, he also denies the basis[182] for this ego (the permanent self). For that reason, when one says that by knowing *nairātmya* he also has finally expunged the view of self, this is astonishing!

And the commentary states:

In order to clarify by way of example that the meaning (of that person) is incoherent, (the *kārikā* VI, 141) states:[183]

> Seeing a snake coiled in a recess of his house and thinking, "There is no elephant here" his alarm is dispelled (as to an elephant), and he abandons fear for the snake. Behold the rectitude of our opponent!

This is stated in regard to nonself of *pudgala,* but it applies likewise to nonself of *dharma,* as added (in the verse):[184]

At the time one comprehends the nonself (of *dharma*) and rejects the imaginary self (of *dharma*), he also denies the nescience basis. Therefore, when one says that by knowing nonself he also has finally expunged nescience, this is astonishing!

However, the *ācārya* (Nāgārjuna), as previously explained, said that the uncreate and the not-dependent-on-another have the characteristic of self-existence. The question arises: Is that stated by way of positing alternatives of consideration (e.g., is it self-existent or is it create) or does it refer to some entity that is self-existent? (In answer,) it is said: "This is the true nature of *dharmas.*"[185] And he posits *svabhāva* that is uncreate and not dependent on another. That (*svabhāva*) exists. (Informing us of this) the *Avatāra*-commentary says:[186]

Regarding this sort of *svabhāva* as written in particular (*Madhyamaka-kārikā,* XV, 1–2), received from the mouth of the *ācārya* (=Nāgārjuna), does it exist? (In answer:) As to its authorization, the Bhagavat proclaimed that whether Tathāgatas arise or do not arise, this true nature of *dharmas* abides,[187] and so on, extensively. The "true nature" (of that text, =*svabhāva*) (necessarily) exists. Which (elements) have this "true nature"? These, the eye, etc. have this *svabhāva.* And what is their *svabhāva?* Their uncreate nature and their non-dependence on another; the self-nature which is to be understood by knowledge

(in *āryasamāpatti*) free from the caul of nescience (and its associated habit-energy). When it is asked, "Does that sort of thing exist?" who would answer, "No"? If it does not exist, for which goal do the Bodhisattvas cultivate the path of the perfections? For what reason do the Bodhisattvas, in order to comprehend the true-nature, assume myriads of difficulties that way?

Thus he proves it along with sūtra information. (The adversary says:) However, is it not the case that previously you refuted the accomplishment by self-existence (*svabhāva*) of all the dharmas? (In reply:) Did we not answer many times that there is not even an atom that is self-existent, accomplished by own-nature, among the *dharmas* which (however) are not present by dint of inner notion's conception? Hence, we need not speak of other (*saṃskṛta*) *dharmas* as self-existent that way! True nature, the absolute truth, is not at all accomplished (as self-existent that way)! (Informing us of this,) the *Prasannapadā* (in chap. XV) states:[188]

By *svabhāva* one understands this innate nature, uncreate, which has not deviated in the fire in the past, present, and future; which did not arise earlier and will not arise later; which is not dependent on causes and conditions as are the heat of water, (one or another) of this side and the other side, long and short. Well, then, does this own-nature of fire that is of such manner (i.e., uncreate, not dependent) exist? (In reply:) This (*svabhāva* of such sort) neither exists nor does not exist by reason of own-nature.[189] While that is the case, still in order to avoid frightening the hearers, we conventionally make affirmations (such as *"svabhāva"* and *"dharmatā"*) and say it exists.

Thus that *svabhāva* is also said conventionally to exist, after its accomplishment by own-nature was denied. Now, while that represents to teach with designations so as to avoid frightening the hearers, does that not contradict the *ācārya* himself? (In reply:) That is not right, because it is necessary (to avoid frightening the hearers); in fact, all other *dharmas* as well are expressed by designations, because they are (all) nonexistent! As was cited above (*Avatāra*-commentary), if there were not that meaning (i.e., that sort of *svabhāva*), the pure life (*brahmacarya*) would be purposeless; and so he (the *ācārya*) proves it by showing the absurdity of denial, because the *Avatāra*-commentary says:[190]

Not only was this *"svabhāva"* received from the mouth of the *ācārya* (= Nāgārjuna), but also so other persons could be brought to accept this meaning (this sort of *svabhāva*), this *svabhāva* was established so as to prove it to both (the disputants and his adversary).

If it were otherwise (i.e., if one were to deny that sort of *svabhāva*), it would be necessary to believe that the Mādhyamika school has no possibility of achieving liberation, because attaining *nirvāṇa* means realizing *nirvāṇa;* and *nirvāṇa* is explained (in this context) as the Truth of Cessation (*nirodha-satya*), and the latter is also said to be *paramārtha-satya;* and because there would not be *paramārtha-satya* (if it were otherwise). That it is necessary, at the time of attaining *nirvāṇa,* to realize directly the Truth of Cessation which is *paramārtha,* the *Yuktiṣaṣṭikā-vṛtti* attempts to prove at length.

Accordingly, not only are these *saṃskṛtas* of eye, etc. not accomplished as self-existent, accomplished by own-nature; but also the true nature (*dharmatā*) posited as self-existent, is not proved in that (self-existence), so (neither) is proved in any self-existence. Also, *Paramārtha-satya* is the true nature posited in *svabhāva* and accomplished in it. But the uncreate and the nondependent on another, which are posited in that *svabhāva,* are only accomplished in conventional terms because there is no (accomplishing) at all in that *svabhāva* which is "accomplished by own-nature." Here, "create" means caused to newly arise because not previously existing; and "dependent on another" means dependent on causes and conditions.

The (elements) such as form are not accomplished in either of the two *svabhāvas* (the *svabhāva* in the meaning of true nature and the *svabhāva* accomplished by own nature). Since one cultivates the path so as to view the *svabhāva* that is the *svabhāva* in the meaning of true nature, it is also said that the pure life is not purposeless. (And that is not all:) it is explained that there is no conflict between our positively not accepting the *svabhāva* of *dharmas* accomplished by own nature, and our accepting the *svabhāva* in the adventitious sense (with individual designations). Such is the position of the *Avatāra*-commentary:[191]

Some persons, exclaiming, "Fooey," go on to say: You not only do not believe in any entities, but you also believe in a self-existence (*svabhāva*) that is uncreate, yet adventitiously (designated), and not dependent on another. Your meaning is mutually inconsistent and incoherent. (In reply:) We shall explain (that there is no inconsistency). As to your own *śāstra,* its purport is nescience;

its purport is as follows: If even the childish, ordinary person may apprehend the own-form of eye, etc. that arises dependently, this (own form) is (ultimately) the self-existence of those (the eye, etc.). But such a self-existence is wayward, because it can be comprehended directly; and then there is no purpose for the pure life (*brahmacarya*), because there is no (ultimate) *svabhāva* of those (own-forms of eye, etc.). Consequently, it is for the purpose of witnessing that (ultimate *svabhāva*) that the pure life (and path cultivation) becomes meaningful. Moreover, it is in dependence on *saṃvṛti-satya* (with adventitious designations) that I (*ācārya* Candrakīrti) speak of the uncreate and the nondependent on another. The reality (i.e., own-form) which no childish person can witness is the principle which (ultimately) is *svabhāva;* and with just that (which cannot be witnessed), there is no *paramārtha*-entity, but also it is not the case that there is no entity, because that (*paramārtha*) is intrinsically quiescent.

In this context, the existence and nonexistence of the entity was explained previously when speaking of the two possibilities, to wit, it exists with its own-form or it doesn't exist at all.

Nowadays, they establish the *dharmas* that are without even an atom accomplished as self-existent, accomplished by own-nature, as the voidness of what is void of self-existence. Now these *dharmas* of form, etc. amount to the "special basis" (*khyad gźi*) (i.e., void of self-existence); and thereupon there is a presence in the sense of the "special *dharma*" (*khyad chos*)[192] (i.e., voidness), thus in the scope of a single discrimination (*eka-buddhi*). (They say that) there is no contradiction in there being both of these (i.e., the special basis—form, etc.; and the special *dharma*—voidness), and that the second appearance is not wayward. But this voidness is the factitious (*kālpanika*) *paramārtha-satya.*

At whatever time, by habituation in that view which comprehends the absence of self-existence, one comprehends this entity in immediacy—on this face (of comprehension) one wards off all delusive appearance that takes what is without self-existence to be self-existent. The awareness which realizes directly that true nature (*dharmatā*) does not have in view the factual bases (*dharmin*) form, etc. Thus the two, the true nature of that sort (= voidness) and factual bases (form, etc.), are the absence on the face of *buddhi.* So the positing of those two, the true nature and the factual base, requires a positing by the face of a different *buddhi* that is conventional.[193] That being the case, *paramārtha-satya* is the quiescence of all elaboration (*prapañca*) accomplished by own-form,

and on it is the absence of self-existence; but whatever appears there, namely all the elaboration of delusive appearance, is what one posits just in waywardness. So, while accepting that (*paramārtha*), where is the necessity to accept a self-existence accomplished by own-form! Also, the *Prasannapadā* (on chapter XV, 2) states:

> By whatever (deluded) self one approaches the form of entities (form, etc.) perceptively reached by the power of nescience's coat; and by whatever method of nonseeing belonging to the nobles who are rid of nescience's coat one approaches the domain (of *samāpatti*)—just that own-form (*svarūpa*) is established as the *svabhāva* of those (entities).
>
> And that is the (ultimate) *svabhāva* with unoriginated nature of the entities. Moreover, by reason of nothing-at-all, by reason of absence-only, and because it lacks self-existence, one should understand that there is no self-existence of entities.

Those persons[194] who do not posit the *paramārtha-satya* refutable, which is only the cutting-off of elaboration of the two selves (*dharma* and *pudgala*), and understand the manner-of-being (*yin lugs*) as green, yellow, etc., (at that time) claim that the objective domain arises in discrimination (*buddhi*) by independent accomplishment and without mistake, and claim that the certainty (of the arising of the objective domain) that way is the (ultimate) view which understands the profound meaning. And they claim that those persons (i.e., Nāgārjuna, Haribhadra, etc.) who understand as without self-existence these external and personal *dharmas* that are the occasion of attachment to the two selves, have been misled[195] from the right view. But those claims are outside (i.e., heretical) of all the Buddhist scriptures whether Hīnayāna or Mahāyāna. The reason is that it is necessary to avert the positing of self, which for all sentient beings is the root of bondage in the cyclical flow (*saṃsāra*); and those claims have an understanding of non-self-existence that is an occasion of adhering to self (*ātma-grāha*), and do not avert it because their other incoherent *dharma* claims to avert the adherence to self by understanding that there is a presence in truth.

This (meaning, indeed astonishing) is like the case of a man who perceiving that there is no snake in the eastern corner, becomes frightened (of a snake) and suffers; then to ward off his suffering, (someone else)

says to him, "You perceived that no snake at all was actually in the eastern corner, and cannot ward off your adherence to a snake (*āhi-grāha*); well then, imagine that there is a tree in the western corner and adhere to that; by such (adherence) you will (certainly) ward off your snake-adherence and suffering," and that by no means appears a superior (solution).

Hence, those who wish to prove our good side should eliminate at length those kinds (of wayward views) and apply the means which opposes the grasping pattern of nescience that is the root of all the troubles of bondage in *saṃsāra*. For that means you must rely on the scripture of final meaning (*nītārtha*); and since it is not proper to be led away from that meaning (i.e., final meaning), (rely) on the texts of *ārya* Nāgārjuna and disciples which clearly state the extensive set of principles (*rigs tshogs*) which penetrate the depth of certainty; and may you (thereby) cross the ocean of phenomenal life!

Those rejections of wayward conception regarding the refutable thing constitute the most important essential for getting rid of the misleading point for reaching the Mādhyamika view. Consequently, I have explained the matter extensively.

3. OUR OWN SCHOOL'S METHOD OF DETERMINING THE REFUTABLE

There are three parts to this: a. Determining the refutable with its basic meaning; b. The method of treating or not treating the other refutables; c. Explanation of treating or not treating the *paramārtha* distinction in regard to the refutable.

a. Determining the Refutable with Its Basic Meaning

In general for the refutable there are two kinds—the refutable of the path and the refutable of the principle. Regarding the first of these (the refutable of the path), the *Madhyāntavibhāga* states (II, 17):

The hindrance of defilement (= consciousness, *citta*) and the hindrance of the knowable (= of consciousness, *cittasya*)[196] are taught. In these (two) are all hindrances, by the destruction of which, liberation (= *nirvāṇa*) is claimed.

According to this there are two hindrances—defilement and the knowable. As long as there is this knowable there is the refutable, because

when this is absent, the subjects (*dehin*) have no more endeavor and become liberated.

(The second of these,) the refutable of the principle, is stated in the *Vigrahavyāvartinī* (k. 27):

Suppose a man, in regard to a female body that was magically manifested, would think, "That is a woman," and a magical manifestation would destroy the (sensual) adherence to the delusive thing. In the same way (as that example), would be this (my words).

The self-commentary states:

Suppose a man, in regard to a female body magically created, that is void of self-existence, would think with adherence to the delusive thing. "That is positively a woman." In that way the adherence to a delusive thing would arouse sensual desire toward her. Accordingly the Tathāgata and his *śrāvakas* magically manifest magical creations, and these (magical creations) ward off that man's adherence to a delusive thing. In the same way (as that example) my words, like a magical creation that is void, would, in regard to all the entities that are without self-existence like the magically created woman, ward off the adherence to them as having self-existence.

As this states, the refutable is the adherence (by the subject with *ātmagrāha*) to a delusive thing; and one takes as another refutable the presence of self-existence as it is apprehended by that (subject's adherence). However, (of these) the chief refutable is the latter one, because, for warding off the waywardness of the subject, it is necessary first to oppose the objective domain that is apprehended by that (subject). And this (opposition to such a domain) is tantamount to the various opposing arguments[197] to the presence of self-existence accomplished by own-nature superimposed on the *pudgala* and *dharma* that (in fact) arise dependently. This refutable is necessarily the nonexistent knowable, because if it were existent one would not be able to deny it. If it be this way (i.e., nonexistent) then it is necessary to refute the attribution (*sgro 'dogs*) which apprehends it (this refutable) as existent.

As to the (method of) refutation—when a pot is shattered by a hammer and ceases to exist, one generates the cognition with certainty that recognizes what is not as not; in the same way, if one arouses the certainty that (the refutable) is not existent, one averts the erroneous cogni-