

FIRST DAY

I begin reading from *The Precious Vase*:

The essential way to practice the cultivation of relative Bodhicitta. In order for an authentic altruistic aspiration to arise within through the cultivation of relative Bodhicitta, and in order for it never to wane but on the contrary to develop through the essential practice of Dzogchen, as a secondary factor in your daily practice you can recite the following verses, originally contained in the Anuyoga text *Teaching for the Yogin's Realization (rnal 'byor grub pa'i lung)* and used by the teacher Longchenpa to express in essence the foundation of Bodhicitta commitment:

**I and all sentient beings
Are enlightened from the beginning:
Recognizing this condition
I cultivate supreme Bodhicitta.**

We should recite these verses at the beginning of every practice session fervently training our mind to really integrate their meaning within, mindful of the specific concentration to associate with the cultivation of Bodhicitta.

I

ABSOLUTE BODHICITTA

THE ABSOLUTE BODHICITTA

WHICH LIES IN THE INDIVISIBILITY OF ABSOLUTE PRAJÑĀ AND COMPASSION

OR, WHICH IS THE SAME, IN EMPTINESS AND COMPASSION,

IS THE ABSOLUTE TRUTH OF THE MAHĀYĀNA.

HOW CAN EMPTINESS BE INDIVISSIBLE FROM COMPASSION?

IN HIS KING DOHĀS, THE MAHĀSIDDHA SARAHAPĀDA USED THE EXAMPLE OF A SIMPLETON—I PREFER THAT OF A DRUNKARD—

WHO SQUINTED AND SAW TWO MOONS, BELIEVING THEM TO BE TWO SUBSTANTIALLY SEPARATE AND DIFFERENT ENTITIES.

THE INSEPARABILITY OF EMPTINESS AND COMPASSION IS LIKE THE INDIVISIBILITY OF THE MOON,

BUT THE DELUSION OF DUALISM IS LIKE THAT OF THE SIMPLETON OR DRUNKARD,

WHICH MAKES US UTTERLY INCAPABLE OF UNDERSTANDING THE INDIVISIBILITY OF THE REFERENTS OF THESE TWO TERMS.

IT IS TRUE THAT EMPTINESS SEES NO BEINGS TO LIBERATE AND NO SUFFERING TO QUENCH

AND HENCE ONE COULD BELIEVE IT TO BE INCOMPATIBLE WITH COMPASSION,

BUT THE COMPASSION THAT IS INDIVISIBLE FROM EMPTINESS IS NONREFERENTIAL

—IT CONCEIVES NO BEINGS AND NO SUFFERING—

AND ARISES FROM THE GENUINE, COMPLETE REALIZATION OF EMPTINESS.

II

SAMSKṚTA AND ASAMSKṚTA

TO FULLY UNDERSTAND BUDDHISM, WE MUST UNDERSTAND THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SAMSKṚTA AND ASAMSKṚTA

WHICH I BELIEVE MAY BE THE MOST IMPORTANT DISTINCTION IN ITS DOCTRINE.

SAMSKṚTA MEANS PRODUCED, CREATED, FABRICATED, CONTRIVED, INTENTIONAL, COMPOUNDED, CONDITIONED, ETC.

ASAMSKṚTA MEANS UNPRODUCED, UNCREATED, NON-FABRICATED, UNCONTRIVED, UNINTENTIONAL, UNCOMPOUNDED, UNCONDITIONED.

IN THE MAHĀYĀNA THE ABSOLUTE TRUTH—OR ABSOLUTE BODHICITTA— IS ASAMSKṚTA

AND WHAT IS ASAMSKṚTA IS NEITHER TRANSIENT NOR SUBJECT TO SUFFERING.

EVEN IN THERAVADA BUDDHISM NIRVĀṆA IS HELD TO BE ASAMSKṚTA

AND IT IS SAID THAT THIS IS THE REASON WHY NIRVĀṆA IS NEITHER TRANSIENT NOR SUBJECT TO SUFFERING.

IN OUR TRADITION, ALL THAT PERTAINS TO SAṂSĀRA IS SAMSKṚTA.

IN OTHER MAHĀYĀNA TRADITIONS BODHI OR AWAKENING IS HELD TO RESULT FROM THE COLLECTIONS OF METHOD AND WISDOM:

IT RESULTS FROM THE CONJUNCTION OF A MAIN CAUSE THAT IS LIKE A SEED

AND SECONDARY CONDITIONS COMPARABLE TO WATER, HEAT, EARTH, SUN, AIR, ETC.

BUT WHATEVER RESULTS FROM THE CONJUNCTION OF A MAIN CAUSE AND SECONDARY CONDITIONS IS *SAṂSKṚTA*,

FROM WHICH IT WOULD FOLLOW THAT IT IS TRANSIENT AND SUBJECT TO SUFFERING.

THE *MAHĀYĀNA* VIEW OF OUR TRADITION IS IN AGREEMENT WITH THE PRINCIPLE OF *ASAṂSKṚTA*

BECAUSE, AS EXPRESSED BY THE VERSES BY LONGCHENPA READ AT THE BEGINNING,

IT VIEWS *BODHI* OR AWAKENING AS BEING LIKE THE SUN THAT IS ALREADY SHINING

AND THE PATH AS THE DISSIPATION OF THE CLOUDS THAT TEMPORARILY COVER IT.

HOWEVER, THE *MAHĀYĀNA* PATH IS NOT IN AGREEMENT WITH THIS PRINCIPLE,

BECAUSE IT CONSISTS IN THE PURIFICATION OF THE OBSTACLES

WHICH, LIKE CLOUDS, COVER THE SUN OF BUDDHAHOOD,

AND IT INTENDS TO ACHIEVE THIS PURIFICATION BY MEANS OF ACTION,

WHICH IS AT THE ROOT OF PRODUCTION AND HENCE OF ALL THAT IS *SAṂSKṚTA*.

III

BODHICITTA IN DZOGCHEN

IN DZOGCHEN THE **TRUE CONDITION IS CALLED BODHICITTA:**

THE BASE OF DZOGCHEN (OUR TRUE CONDITION) IS BUDDHAHOOD IN ACT, RATHER THAN IN POTENCY:

IT IS NOT LIKE A SEED THAT NEEDS SECONDARY CIRCUMSTANCES BUT LIKE THE SUN THAT IS ALREADY SHINING.

ONE TYPE OF PRATYEKABUDDHA DIES FOUR DAYS AFTER REALIZATION BECAUSE THE REALIZATION OF EMPTINESS IS PARTIAL

AND HENCE IS NOT INDIVISIBLE FROM COMPASSION.

CONTRARIWISE, BUDDHAS KEEP ALIVE DUE TO THE COMPASSION THAT IS INDIVISIBLE FROM THE COMPLETE REALIZATION OF EMPTINESS.

WE ARE BUDDHAS *IN ACT* AND HENCE, THOUGH WE ARE UNAWARE OF OUR BUDDHAHOOD, WE KEEP ALIVE BECAUSE OF COMPASSION.

THE KATAK OR ESSENCE ASPECT OF THE BASE IS EMPTINESS

AND THE LHUNDUB ASPECT INVOLVES THE UNINTERRUPTED
MANIFESTATION RENDERED AS ENERGY

WHICH IN TIBETAN IS CALLED THUKJÉ, WHICH MEANS COMPASSION,

BECAUSE MANIFESTATION GOES ON BECAUSE OF THE COMPASSION OF
PRIMORDIAL BUDDHAHOOD.

THE DZOGCHEN PATH IS *ASAMSKṚTA* AND HENCE IS THE DIRECT PATH TO
BUDDHAHOOD

FOR IT IS BASED ON SELF-LIBERATION, WHICH MEANS SPONTANEOUS
LIBERATION BEYOND ACTION OR PRODUCTION.

HENCE IT IS THE ROYAL WAY TO DISCOVER AND ACTUALIZE THE TRUE
CONDITION OF THE BASE.

IV

TWO TYPES OF *PRAJÑĀ* IN THE *MAHĀYĀNA*

BACK TO THE *MAHĀYĀNA*: AS TO THE *PRAJÑĀ* THAT IS ONE OF THE
ASPECTS OF THE ABSOLUTE BODHICITTA,

RELATIVE *PRAJÑĀ* IS A DISCRIMINATING AWARENESS THAT, INSOFAR AS
IT DISCRIMINATES, IS BASED ON CONCEPTS AND HENCE IS RELATIVE.

ABSOLUTE *PRAJÑĀ* IS A NONDISCRIMINATING WISDOM THAT DIRECTLY
REALIZES THE TRUE CONDITION

BEYOND CONCEPTS AND HENCE BEYOND DUALISM.

AND HENCE IN THE TENTHFOLD DIVISION OF THE PARAMITAS ABSOLUTE
PRAJÑĀ CORRESPONDS TO THE *JÑĀNAPĀRAMITĀ*.

WHY IS ABSOLUTE *PRAJÑĀ* OR *JÑĀNA* BEYOND CONCEPTS AND
DISCRIMINATION?

THE DZOGCHEN TEACHINGS REFER TO THE TRUE CONDITION AS “THIGLE
CHENPO” OR TOTAL SPHERE

BECAUSE SPHERES HAVE NO CORNERS OR ANGLES, WHICH REPRESENT
THE LIMITS WHICH ARE OUR CONCEPTS:

THEY ARE LIMITS BECAUSE THEY ARE DEFINED BY EXCLUSION (*SKT.*
APOHA; *TIB. SELWA* [*WYLIE, SEL BA*])

OR, MORE SPECIFICALLY, BY EXCLUSION OF OTHER (*ANYĀPOHA* (*TIB.*
ZHENSEL [*WYLIE, GZHAN SEL*])):

CONCEPTS INTRODUCE LIMITS BECAUSE BY THEIR VERY NATURE THEY
EXCLUDE SOMETHING

(BIG EXCLUDES SMALL, WHITE EXCLUDES ALL OTHER COLORS, HUMAN EXCLUDES ALL OTHER ANIMALS, MALE EXCLUDES FEMALE):

THIS IS ALSO WHAT ARISTOTELIAN LOGIC CALLS *DIFFERENTIA SPECIFICA*.

THE TRUE CONDITION EXCLUDES NOTHING AND HENCE IT CAN ONLY BE REALIZED WHEN ALL CONCEPTS COLLAPSE.

V

THREE TYPES OF *PRAJÑĀ*

PRAJÑĀ IN GENERAL IS DIVIDED INTO

- (1) *PRAJÑĀ* DERIVED FROM STUDY
- (2) *PRAJÑĀ* DERIVED FROM REFLECTION
- (3) *PRAJÑĀ* DERIVED FROM MEDITATION

THE FIRST TWO ARE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE DISCRIMINATIVE AWARENESS CALLED RELATIVE *PRAJÑĀ*:

(1) *PRAJÑĀ DERIVED FROM STUDY* IS THE RESULT OF LISTENING TO TEACHINGS FROM SACRED TEACHER AND UNDERSTANDING SPECIFIC MEANINGS.

(2) *PRAJÑĀ DERIVED FROM REFLECTION* IS THE RESULT OF RELATING TO OUR OWN CONDITION UNDERSTANDING OF ALL TEACHINGS RECEIVED.

ALSO, IT CONSISTS IN EXAMINING WITH REASONINGS THE MEANING OF THE TEACHINGS RECEIVED

TRYING TO FIND FAULT WITH THEM LIKE A GOLDSEEKER TRIES GOLD TO SEE WHETHER IT'S TRUE AND WHAT IS ITS QUALITY

IN ORDER TO MAKE KNOWLEDGE OF THEM STABLE AND TO ELIMINATE ALL POSSIBLE DOUBTS

IT ALSO INVOLVES BEING ABLE TO DEVOTE OURSELVES TO PRACTICE IN SOLITUDE WITHOUT HAVING TO ASK OTHERS FOR CLARIFICATION.

THE THIRD TYPE OF *PRAJÑĀ*,

(3) *PRAJÑĀ DERIVED FROM MEDITATION*— IS SUPPOSED TO BE THE NONDISCRIMINATIVE *PRAJÑĀ* THAT DISCLOSES THE ABSOLUTE TRUTH.

THIS HAS TO DO WITH A CLASSIFICATION INTO 4 TYPES OF FAITH:

- A) Some people have faith because they were born in a Buddhist country. Though this faith may be extremely helpful for people to have a less conflictive, less miserable existence, it can hardly be a means to achieve Awakening. For example, the Tibetan people seems to be, or at least to have been until the second half of the twentieth century, less miserable than other peoples. However, as Chögyal Namkhai Norbu notes, most

Tibetans go to a Lama just to get blessings, and if given teachings they will listen to them respectfully but will not try to understand them or apply their true sense.

- B) Others have faith because they were inspired by meeting an Awake Master, by listening to or reading the words of a book, by seeing a religious image, and so on. However, just like the former, this type of faith is not conducive to applying the true sense of the teachings and thus achieving Awakening.
- C) Others develop a far more stable and rational faith through the first two elements of the Prajñāparamita: by listening to or reading the teachings, and then reflecting on them until they have no doubts. This is a very valuable form of faith that can allow us to tread the Path and to some extent apply the true meaning of the teachings.
- D) However, the best type of faith is the one that combines the faith that derives from listening and reflecting, with the one that comes from Absolute *Prajñā* or, which is the same, *Jñāna*.

Therefore, the above is related with the Three Injunctions of Garab Dorje's testament in the Dzogchen Teachings.

VI

THE TWO TRUTHS

WITH REGARD TO THE TWO TRUTHS THE *BODHISATTVA* CHARYAVATARA READS:

THE RELATIVE AND THE ABSOLUTE
ARE CALLED THE TWO TRUTHS.
THE ABSOLUTE IS NOT AN OBJECT OF THE MIND;
THE MIND IS CALLED THE RELATIVE.

THE MIND INVOLVES CONCEPTUALITY AND HENCE THE SUBJECT-OBJECT
DUALITY

WHEREAS THE ABSOLUTE TRUTH DOES NOT INVOLVE ANY OF THIS.

THE COMMENTARY *THE DROP OF NECTAR* STATES (OP. 19: P. 621, 16):

THE ABSOLUTE OR TRUE CONDITION OF PHENOMENA THAT
TRANSCENDS THE FOUR LIMITS —EXISTENCE, NON-EXISTENCE,
EXISTENCE AND NON-EXISTENCE, NEITHER EXISTENCE NOR
NONEXISTENCE— IS NOT AN OBJECT OF KNOWLEDGE BY THE MIND
BECAUSE ALL CONCEPTS OF AFFIRMATION, NEGATION ETC. AND
VERBAL EXPLANATIONS ARE CALLED THE RELATIVE AND ARE NOT THE
ABSOLUTE.

THIS IS WHY I MADE REFERENCE TO THE TOTAL THIGLE OF DZOGCHEN.

ChNN WRITES: SO, IT IS NECESSARY TO UNDERSTAND THAT THE
CHARACTERISTIC QUALITY OF THE ABSOLUTE TRUTH IS THAT IT
TRANSCENDS MIND, WORD, THOUGHT AND EXPLANATION, WHILE THE
CHARACTERISTIC QUALITY OF THE RELATIVE TRUTH IS THE DELUDED
MIND WITH ITS OBJECTS.

IN FACT, PRĀSAṄGIKA-MADHYAMAKA MAKES IT CLEAR THAT ENTITIES ARE PERCEIVED ONLY IN RELATIVE TRUTH,

WHICH (EXCEPT FOR JE TSONGKHAPA AND HIS FOLLOWERS) IS *IN ALL CASES DELUDED PSEUDO-TRUTH*.

AS GENDÜN CHÖPHEL PUT IT:¹

EARLY TRANSLATORS RENDERED INTO TIBETAN THE SANSKRIT TERM *SAṂVṚTI*, WHICH [ETYMOLOGICALLY] MEANS “OBSCURATION TO CORRECTNESS” OR “THOROUGHLY CONFUSED,” AS *KUN RDZOB*, WHICH LITERALLY MEANS “ALL-CONCEALED” (NOTE BY E.C.: AND WHICH IS THE TERM THAT GELUG TRANSLATORS RENDER AS “CONVENTIONAL” AND NON-GELUG TRANSLATORS RENDER AS “RELATIVE”). SINCE [THE EXPERIENCE OF RELATIVE TRUTH IS] DELUDED, WE MUST UNDERSTAND *RELATIVE TRUTH* AS “MISTAKEN TRUTH.”

MADHYAMAKĀVATĀRA VI-28 MAY BE RENDERED FROM ITS TIBETAN VERSION AS FOLLOWS:

“THE TRUE CONDITION OF PHENOMENA, ENSHROUDED BY DELUSION, IS “ALL CONCEALED” (TIB. KUNDZOB; SKT. *SAṂVṚTI*), YET WHAT IS CONDITIONED BY THIS DELUSION APPEARS AS TRUE, AND SO THE BUDDHA SPOKE OF “CONCEALED TRUTH” (TIB. KUNDZOB DENPA; SKT. *SAṂVṚTISATYA*).

THEREFORE, ALL THAT IS FABRICATED / PRODUCED / CONTRIVED / COMPOUNDED / CONDITIONED (SKT. *SAṂSKṚTA*; PĀḲI *SAṅKHATA*; TIB. *DÜCHÉ*) IS “ALL-CONCEALING” AND DISTORTING.

CANDRAKĪRTI EXPLAINS THE TERM *SAṂVṚTI* / *KUN RDZOB* IN THE FOLLOWING THREE SENSES:

“(1) DELUDED CONSCIOUSNESS, WHICH ACCORDING TO THE MAHĀYĀNA CONCEALS THE TRUE CONDITION OF ENTITIES AND PRODUCES A FALSE REALITY THROUGH CONCEPTUAL FABRICATIONS (SKT. *PRAPAṅCA*; TIB. *THÖPA*) THAT PRODUCE THE SUBJECT-OBJECT DICHOTOMY, OUR PERCEPTIONS OF REALITY IN TERMS OF THE CONTENTS OF COUNTLESS THOUGHTS THAT ARE CONFUSED WITH WHAT THEY INTERPRET (THUS GIVING RISE TO A PROLIFERATION OF ENTITIES), AND THE ILLUSION THAT THE ENSUING APPEARANCES ARE SELF-EXISTENT.

“(2) THAT WHICH IS MUTUALLY INTERDEPENDENT.

“(3) WORLDLY CONVENTIONS.”

IN TRUTH, THE THREE NEARLY AMOUNT TO THE SAME, FOR THAT WHICH IS INTERDEPENDENT IS THE CONCEPTUAL FABRICATIONS THAT CONDITION THE DELUDED CONSCIOUSNESS, AND WORLDLY CONVENTIONS ARE ALSO CONCEPTUAL FABRICATIONS.

IN THE TRUE, ABSOLUTE CONDITION THERE IS NO INTERDEPENDENCE; IT

¹ Chöphel & Capriles (unpublished 1); Capriles (unpublished 1).

IS ASAMSKRTA AND BEYOND RELATIVITY.

THE RELATIVE REALM WITH ITS MYRIAD ENTITIES THAT SEEM TO EXIST AND DO SO HYPOSTATICALLY / INHERENTLY IS A FUNCTION OF *AVIDYĀ*

INVOLVING UNAWARENESS OF THE TRUE CONDITION OF OURSELVES AND ALL OTHER PHENOMENA (*AVIDYA* 1)

AND (*AVIDYA* 2 & 3) HYPOSTATIZATION / REIFICATION / ABSOLUTIZATION / VALORIZATION OF THE CONTENTS OF THOUGHT, WHICH GIVES RISE TO DELUDED PERCEPTION OF SELF-EXISTENT ENTITIES HAVING INHERENT QUALITIES AND INHERENT (POSITIVE, NEGATIVE OR NEUTRAL) VALUE

MAKING US TAKE THE EMPTY AS EXISTENT, THE RELATIVE AS ABSOLUTE, THE DEPENDENT AS INDEPENDENT, THE PUT AS *GIVEN*, THE IMPERMANENT AS PERMANENT, THAT WHICH CANNOT PROVIDE SATISFACTION AS BEING CAPABLE OF PROVIDING IT, THE PRODUCED / CONTRIVED / COMPOUNDED / CONDITIONED AS UNPRODUCED / UNCONTRIVED / UNCOMPOUNDED / UNCONDITIONED, ETC.—

THIS IS THE DELUSION AT THE ROOT OF THE GLOOMY-GO-ROUND CALLED *SAMŚĀRA*.

VII

TWO TYPES OF RELATIVE AND TWO TYPES OF ABSOLUTE ON THE *MAHĀYĀNA* PATH

THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF “TRUTH” THAT *PRĀSAṄGIKA-MADHYAMAKA* PHILOSOPHY POSITS—

- (1) INVERTED RELATIVE TRUTH,
- (2) CORRECT RELATIVE TRUTH (THESE TWO BEING PSEUDO-TRUTH),
- (3) PROVISIONAL ABSOLUTE TRUTH AND
- (4) DEFINITIVE ABSOLUTE TRUTH (THESE TWO PROPERLY CALLED TRUTH, SINCE NEITHER OF THEM DOES INVOLVE DELUSION).

THESE FOUR CONDITIONS MUST BE UNDERSTOOD ON THE BASIS OF THE *BODHISATTVA*'S PROGRESS THROUGH THE PATHS AND LEVELS

INVERTED RELATIVE TRUTH IS EXPERIENCE OF THOSE WHO HAVE NOT YET REACHED THE THIRD PATH / FIRST LEVEL OF THE *BODHISATTVA*

FOR THEY ARE TOTALLY POSSESSED BY DELUSION AND, UNAWARE THAT THEY ARE DELUDED, THEY TAKE THEIR DELUSORY PERCEPTIONS AND CONCEPTUAL INTERPRETATIONS TO BE PERFECTLY SOUND.

CORRECT RELATIVE TRUTH IS ALL THAT APPEARS IN THE POST-CONTEMPLATION STATE OF THE *SUPERIOR BODHISATTVA* ON THE THIRD AND FOURTH PATHS (I.E., FROM THE FIRST TO THE TENTH *BHŪMI*);

THOUGH IN THIS CONDITION ENTITIES ARE STILL PERCEIVED AS EXISTING ABSOLUTELY AND SUBSTANTIALLY, THIS FALSE APPEARANCE IS LIGHTER OR MILDER THAN IN THE NORMAL INDIVIDUAL, AS THERE IS SOME AWARENESS OF THE APPARITIONAL NATURE OF THOSE ENTITIES—WHICH BECOMES MORE AND MORE PRONOUNCED AS THE *SUPERIOR BODHISATTVA* ADVANCES THROUGH THE LEVELS.

PROVISIONAL ABSOLUTE TRUTH—AS DIFFERENT FROM FIGURATIVE, CONCEPTUAL ULTIMATE TRUTH, WHICH IS DELUSIVE PRODUCT OF THE HYPOSTATIZATION / REIFICATION / ABSOLUTIZATION / VALORIZATION OF THOUGHT—**CORRESPONDS TO THE CONTEMPLATION STATE² OF SUPERIOR BODHISATTVAS ON THE THIRD AND FOURTH PATHS**, IN WHICH THEY HAVE A BARE, DIRECT APPREHENSION OF THE *DHARMATĀ*

DEFINITIVE ABSOLUTE TRUTH IS CIRCUMSCRIBED TO BUDDHAS, WHO ARE THOSE THAT HAVE BECOME ESTABLISHED ON THE FIFTH PATH / ELEVENTH LEVEL.

VIII

EXISTENCE AND NONEXISTENCE, FORM AND EMPTINESS, AND THE ILLUSORINESS OF ALL OF THESE

IN BRIEF, FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF THE ABSOLUTE CONDITION THERE IS NO DIVISION BETWEEN BEING AND NONBEING,

THE RELATIVE MAY NOT BE SAID TO BE EXISTENCE

AND THE ABSOLUTE MAY NOT BE SAID TO BE NONEXISTENCE

**FOR BOTH EXISTENCE AND NONEXISTENCE ARE THE RELATIVE,
WHEREAS THE ABSOLUTE IS BEYOND BOTH**

HEART SUTRA: PRAJÑAPARAMITĀHRIDAYA):

FORM IS EMPTINESS AND EMPTINESS ITSELF IS FORM. BEYOND FORM THERE IS NO EMPTINESS, BEYOND EMPTINESS THERE IS NO FORM.

THE LAMP THAT ILLUMINATES THE PATH TO LIBERATION SAYS (OP. 12: P. 255, 2):

AFTER HAVING UNDERSTOOD (ALL OF THIS) PUT IT INTO PRACTICE AND BY MEDITATION, RECOGNIZE THE TRUE CONDITION OF THE NATURAL STATE. IN FACT, AT FIRST IT IS NECESSARY TO ELIMINATE DOUBTS BY MEANS OF STUDY AND REFLECTION AND THEN, WHEN ENGAGING IN MEDITATION, TO RECOGNIZE THAT ALL OUTER PHENOMENA TIED TO THE FIVE SENSE OBJECTS:

- ALBEIT NON-EXISTENT, THEY APPEAR TO OUR DELUSORY PERCEPTION, LIKE A DREAM;

² Skt. *samāhita*; Tib. *nyamzhak* (Wylie, *mnyam bzhaq*)

- MANIFEST SUDDENLY THROUGH THE INTERDEPENDENCE OF PRIMARY AND SECONDARY CAUSES, LIKE A MAGIC SHOW;
- SEEM TO EXIST EVEN THOUGH THEY ARE NON-EXISTENT, LIKE AN OPTICAL ILLUSION;
- APPEAR ALTHOUGH UNREAL, LIKE A MIRAGE;
- EVEN THOUGH THERE IS NOTHING EITHER INSIDE OR OUTSIDE, THEY ARE PERCEIVED, LIKE AN ECHO;
- HAVE NEITHER AN ABODE NOR (CONTAIN) SOMEONE WITHIN, LIKE A CITY OF THE GANDHARVAS;
- APPEAR WITHOUT HAVING SELF-NATURE, LIKE A REFLECTED IMAGE;
- ALBEIT NON-EXISTENT, THEY MAY MANIFEST IN ANY MANNER, LIKE A CITY CONJURED TO APPEAR BY MAGIC.

EMPTINESS AND FORM ARE AS INSUBSTANTIAL AS THESE EIGHT EXAMPLES: RECOGNIZE THIS

AND UNDERSTAND THAT OUTER PHENOMENA ARE FALSE BY THEIR VERY NATURE.

IX

FINDING THE ABSOLUTE TRUTH

THEN BY EXAMINING THE CONDITION OF OUR MIND—THE SUBJECT THAT PERCEIVES OUTER VISION—

EVEN THOUGH VISION CONTINUES TO APPEAR, THE JUDGING AND GRASPING MIND ABATES.

THIS SEEMS TO BE SIMILAR TO USING A NYAM IN DZOGCHEN TO NOTICE THE AWARENESS WHICH NOTICES THE NYAM.

THE PRECIOUS VASE SAYS THAT RELAXING IN THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE SPACE-LIKE CONDITION OF EMPTINESS AND CLARITY OF THE ULTIMATE NATURE IS THE *PRAJÑAPARAMITA*.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT OUTER PHENOMENA ARE FALSE BY THEIR VERY NATURE?

THE SENSORY BASIS OF PERCEPTION IS NOT A PROBLEM.

AS PADAMPA SANGYE NOTED, THE PROBLEM IS NOT APPEARANCES, BUT OUR GRASPING AT THEM.

THAT SENSORY BASIS CONTINUES TO APPEAR TO BUDDHAS, BUT THEY DO NOT PERCEIVE IT AS HUMAN BEINGS, CHARIOTS AND SO ON—

EVEN THOUGH THEY TALK TO HUMAN BEINGS AND NOT TO VENOMOUS SNAKES, AND THEY AVOID VENOMOUS SNAKES BUT NOT HUMAN BEINGS.

IF OUTER PHENOMENA ARE FALSE BY THEIR VERY NATURE, **ARE HUMAN BEINGS TRUE?**

AS EMPHASIZED BY BHAVAVIVEKA, **HUMAN BEINGS ARE PHENOMENA. PHAINOMENON MEANS APPEARANCE, AND HUMAN BEINGS ARE MERE APPEARANCES AS WELL.**

SO, IT IS NOT ENOUGH WITH REALIZING THAT EXTERNAL PHENOMENA ARE FALSE;

WE OURSELVES ARE JUST AS FALSE AS OUTER PHENOMENA.

AND THE APPEARANCE THAT THERE IS A PERCEIVER DIFFERENT FROM PERCEPTIONS THAT PERCEIVES THEM,

A DOER DIFFERENT FROM ACTIONS THAT CARRIES THEM OUT,

A THINKER DIFFERENT FROM THOUGHTS THAT THINKS THEM,

IS UTTERLY FALSE AS WELL.

SECOND DAY

We begin by repeating the words in the Anuyoga text *Teaching for the Yogin's Realization (rnal 'byor grub pa'i lung)* and used by the teacher Longchenpa to express in essence the foundation of Bodhicitta commitment:

**I and all sentient beings
Are enlightened from the beginning:
Recognizing this condition
I cultivate the supreme Bodhicitta.**

As stated yesterday, outer phenomena are false by their very nature, but this does *not* mean that human beings are true. And emphasized by Bhavaviveka, human beings are phenomena. The Greek *phainomenon* means appearance, and human beings are mere appearances as well. So, it is not enough with realizing that external phenomena are false; we ourselves are just as false as outer phenomena. And the appearance that there is a perceiver different from perceptions that perceives them, a doer different from actions that carries them out, a thinker different from thoughts that thinks them, is utterly false as well.

BECAUSE OF THE NEED TO DESTROY OUR BASIC DELUSION OF A SELF-NATURE DENOUNCED BY SHAKYAMUNI BUDDHA, *THE PRECIOUS VASE* READS:

IN ORDER TO REALIZE THE PROFOUND CONDITION THAT THE MAHAYANA CALLS ABSOLUTE TRUTH IT IS NECESSARY TO ENGAGE WITH DILIGENCE IN THE PRACTICE OF THE TWO 'ABSENCES OF SELF-NATURE': THE ABSENCE OF SELF-NATURE IN THE PERSON AND THE ABSENCE OF SELF-NATURE IN PHENOMENA.

AT THIS POINT WE ARE CONCERNED WITH *THE ABSENCE OF SELF-NATURE IN THE PERSON*:

(THE FOLLOWING IS BASED ON *THE PRECIOUS VASE*, WHICH QUOTES FROM PETRUL RINPOCHE'S *MEDITATION PRACTICES FROM BODHISATTVACHARYAVATARA (SPYOD 'JUG SGOM RIM)*).

LET US THINK OF WHAT IS CALLED THE 'INDIVIDUAL', 'I' OR 'SENTIENT BEING', THE AGENT OF ALL GOOD OR BAD ACTIONS AND REAPER OF THE FRUITS OF THEIR KARMIC RESULTS: IS IT MADE UP OF BODY, VOICE AND MIND OR IS IT SOMETHING SEPARATE FROM THEM? IS IT ETERNAL OR IMPERMANENT? IS IT INANIMATE MATERIAL OR CONSCIOUSNESS? IN THIS AND MANY OTHER WAYS WE NEED TO ENQUIRE AND ANALYZE UNTIL WE DISCOVER THAT IT IS ONLY DUE TO THE DELUSIVE MIND THAT WE TAKE AS 'I' SOMETHING THAT IS LACKING IN ANY IDENTITY WHATSOEVER, AND LIKEWISE GRASP THE IDEA OF 'OTHERS' EVEN THOUGH THERE ARE NO (OTHER INDEPENDENT SELVES). SO, UNDERSTANDING CONCLUSIVELY THAT IN REALITY THERE IS NO INHERENTLY EXISTING 'I' OR 'INDIVIDUAL' WE SHOULD KINDLE WITHIN US THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE REAL

CONDITION DEVOID OF INDEPENDENT BEING. WE MUST ENGAGE IN ALL THIS WITH DILIGENCE.

TO THIS AIM, FOLLOWING THE PRECIOUS VASE, WE RESORT TO CHANDRAKIRTI'S SEVENFOLD REASONING, AS EXPRESSED IN THE PRASANNAPADA (CLEAR WORDS): A COMMENTARY ON NAGARJUNA'S MULAMADHYAMAKAKARIKA.

THE REASONINGS ON THE SELFLESSNESS OF PERSONS TRY TO FIND THE ABSOLUTELY TRUE SELF THAT WE FANCY.

IF SUCH A SELF EXISTED IT WOULD HAVE TO CONSIST IN ONE OF THE FOLLOWING POSSIBILITIES:

- 1) [ONE OR ALL] OF THE PARTS OF THE BODY-MIND UNITY
- 2) SOMETHING DIFFERENT FROM THE PARTS [WE DISTINGUISH IN] THE BODY-MIND UNITY
- 3) SOMETHING THAT DEPENDS ON THE PARTS [OR THE WHOLE] OF THE BODY-MIND UNITY
- 4) A SUBSTRATUM ON WHICH [BOTH] THE PARTS [AND THE WHOLE] OF THE BODY-MIND UNITY WOULD DEPEND
- 5) A PURPORTED POSSESSOR OF THE PARTS [AND THE WHOLE] OF THE BODY-MIND UNITY
- 6) THE [STRUCTURAL AND FUNCTIONAL] COMBINATION OF THE PARTS [WE DISTINGUISH IN] THE BODY-MIND UNITY
- 7) THE SHAPE OF THE [STRUCTURED WHOLE OF THE] BODY-MIND UNITY

SINCE THE ABOVE ARE THE ONLY POSSIBILITIES FOR THE EXISTENCE OF THE ABSOLUTELY TRUE SELF THAT WE FANCY,

WE MUST EXHAUSTIVELY ANALYSE THEM IN ORDER TO SEE WHETHER ANY OF THEM IS POSSIBLE.

NOTE THAT, FOR PURPOSES OF THIS MEDITATION, THE PARTS OF THE BODY-MIND

INCLUDE EVERYTHING THAT MAY SEEM PART OF THAT WHICH ONE THINKS OF AS ONE'S SELF:

IT CAN BE ANY PHYSICAL, MENTAL, MORAL OR PSYCHOLOGICAL PHENOMENON WHATSOEVER, FOR

WE MIGHT THINK OF OURSELVES AS A BODY, A MIND, SET OF MEMORIES, OR A COLLECTION OF CHARACTER VALUES, ETC.,

OR SOMETHING THAT ESSENTIALLY INCLUDES VARIOUS OR ALL OF THESE.

AS CHANDRAKIRTI MADE IT CLEAR, AS A RESULT OF THIS EXERCISE, WE MUST COME TO REALISE THAT:

1. THE SELF IS *NOT* [ONE OR ALL OF] THE PARTS OF THE BODY-MIND.
2. THE SELF IS *NOT* [SOMETHING] DIFFERENT FROM THE PARTS OF THE BODY-MIND.
3. THE SELF IS *NOT* [SOMETHING] THAT DEPENDS UPON THE PARTS OF THE BODY-MIND.
4. THE SELF IS *NOT* A [PURPORTED] SUBSTRATUM UPON WHICH THE PARTS OF THE BODY-MIND [WOULD] DEPEND.
5. THE SELF IS *NOT* [A PURPORTED] POSSESSOR OF THE PARTS OF THE BODY-MIND.
6. THE SELF IS *NOT* THE MERE [STRUCTURAL AND FUNCTIONAL] COMBINATION OF THE PARTS OF THE BODY-MIND.
7. THE SELF IS *NOT* THE SHAPE OF [EITHER] THE PARTS [OR THE WHOLE] OF THE BODY-MIND.

SINCE THERE ARE NO FURTHER POSSIBILITIES, THE REALIZATION THAT NONE OF THE ABOVE POSSIBILITIES APPLIES,

AMOUNTS TO AN ABSOLUTE / NONIMPLICATIVE NEGATION OF THE SELF'S EXISTENCE

THE REASONINGS MUST BE APPLIED AS FOLLOWS:

WITH A FIRM SENSE OF THIS SELF-EXISTENCE IN MIND, WE TRY TO ISOLATE THAT WHICH WE TAKE FOR A TRUE SELF:

IS THE SELF WE CONCEIVE AS SELF-EXISTENT EXACTLY THE SAME AS [ANY OF] THE PARTS OF THE BODY-MIND [OR AS THE SUM OF THESE PARTS]?

IS IT DIFFERENT FROM THE PARTS?

CHANDRAKIRTI ENUMERATED THESE TWO POSSIBILITIES FIRST BECAUSE THEY LOGICALLY COVER ALL OF THE BASES,

FOR THE SELF MUST BE EITHER INHERENTLY THE SAME AS, OR DIFFERENT FROM, THE PARTS

WHETHER INDIVIDUALLY (THAT IS, AS ONE OF THE PARTS) OR COLLECTIVELY (THAT IS, AS THE SUM OF THE PARTS).

EVEN THOUGH THE ABOVE COVER ALL POSSIBILITIES THE OTHER STEPS OF THE REASONINGS ARE VALUABLE

BECAUSE AS A RULE WE FEEL THAT WE ARE ONE OF THE POSSIBILITIES ENUMERATED

AND DO SO WITH A LOT OF EMOTIONAL INTENSITY

AND HENCE CONSIDERING THEM ALL KEEPS THE MEDITATION FROM BEING PURELY AN INTELLECTUAL EXERCISE.

WE MIGHT, FOR EXAMPLE, TRULY FEEL THAT THE SELF OWNS THE BODY-MIND—

IN WHICH CASE IT WOULD BE DIFFERENT FROM THE LATTER INsofar AS

JUST AS A HAND CANNOT HOLD ITSELF AND A FINGERTIP CANNOT TOUCH ITSELF

ONE CANNOT POSSESS ONESELF:

WHAT IS MINE MUST NECESSARILY BE DIFFERENT FROM ITS POSSESSOR.

IN THIS CASE, THIS IS THE CONCEPTION TO GET AT

—EVEN THOUGH IT IS ONE OF THE POSSIBILITIES IF WE ASSUME THAT THE SELF IS DIFFERENT FROM THE BODY-MIND UNITY.

ONCE ALL THE REASONINGS ARE GONE THROUGH IN DEPTH AND THE SELF WE CONCEIVE AS SELF-EXISTENT IS NOT FOUND ANYWHERE,

THIS CAN UPSET ONE'S CONCEPTION OF THE WAY THINGS ARE.

AT FIRST THIS MAY BE DISORIENTING AND, FOR BEINGS OF LOWER CAPACITIES, SCARY.

HOWEVER, FOR BEINGS OF HIGHER CAPACITIES, IT MAY BE THE SOURCE OF GREAT JOY.

WITH REGARD TO THIS EXERCISE, IT IS RELEVANT TO EXPLAIN SARTRE'S CONCEPT OF THE PRESENCE OF AN ABSENCE WITH THE EXAMPLE OF THE WALLET.

IF MY WALLET IS STOLEN BUT I DO NOT REALIZE IT, THE WALLET WILL BE ABSENT FROM MY POCKET, BUT THIS ABSENCE WILL NOT BE PRESENT TO ME.

IF THEN AT SOME POINT I TAKE THE BUS AND TRY TO REACH FOR THE WALLET IN ORDER TO PAY FOR MY TICKET, THE ABSENCE OF THE WALLET WILL BECOME PRESENT TO ME.

FINDING OUT THAT AN OBJECT IS NOT PRESENT INVOLVES WHAT SARTRE CALLED THE PRESENCE OF THE OBJECT'S ABSENCE.

REALIZING THAT THE DELUSIVE PHENOMENON CONSISTING IN PERCEIVING THE OBJECT AS EXISTING IS A DELUSION (AN INSTANCE THAT, OBVIOUSLY, SARTRE FAILED TO CONSIDER),

WOULD INVOLVE THE PRESENCE OF THE ABSENCE OF THE SELF-EXISTENCE SAMsARIC BEINGS WRONGLY PERCEIVE ALL ENTITIES AS HAVING.

IF THE RESULT OF THE SEARCH IS THE MERE PRESENCE OF THE ABSENCE OF THE ABSOLUTELY EXISTING SELF THAT WE FANCY, THAT IS STILL CONCEPTUAL AND PERTAINS TO THE RELATIVE TRUTH:

ABSENCE IS A NEGATIVE CONCEPT, AND THE ABSENCE APPEARS TO A SUBJECT THAT IS ALSO A CONCEPT:

THE SUBJECT-OBJECT DUALITY RESULTS FROM THE REIFICATION / HYPOSTATIZATION / ABSOLUTIZATION / VALORIZATION OF THE THREEFOLD DIRECTIONAL THOUGHT-STRUCTURE (SKT. TRIMAṆḌALA; TIB. KHORSUM [WYLIE, 'KHOR GSUM])

AND THE ABSENCE OF EXISTENCE RESULTS FROM THE REIFICATION / HYPOSTATIZATION / ABSOLUTIZATION / VALORIZATION OF AN INTUITIVE THOUGHT (SKT. ARTHASĀMĀNYA; TIB. DÖNCHI [WYLIE, DON SPYI]).

IN MADHYAMAKA TERMS, THIS ABSENCE IS CALLED THE FIGURATIVE ABSOLUTE TRUTH, WHICH PERTAINS TO RELATIVE TRUTH;

IN DZOGCHEN TERMS, IT IS A MERE NYAM —AN ILLUSORY EXPERIENCE— OF EMPTINESS.

IN THE 21 SEMZİN OF DZOGCHEN MENNGAGDE (UPADESHAVARGA) THERE IS THE SEMZİN OF GRADUAL EMPTINESS, WHICH MAY RESULT IN THE NYAM IN QUESTION;

THEN INSTEAD OF MERELY NOTICING THAT NYAM, WE USE THAT NYAM TO NOTICE THE AWARENESS THAT NOTICES THE NYAM.

SINCE THAT AWARENESS CANNOT APPEAR AS OBJECT, THERE IS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR DELUSION AND THE SUBJECT-OBJECT DUALITY TO COLLAPSE

AND FOR RIGPA —INSTANT NONCONCEPTUAL AND HENCE NONDUAL AWAKE AWARENESS— TO MANIFEST.

THIS IS THE SENSE OF GURU GARAB DORJE'S MUDRA OF DIRECT INTRODUCTION.

IN TIBET, ONLY JE TSONGKHAPA AND HIS FOLLOWERS ASSERTED THAT PRESENCE OF AN ABSENCE, WHICH PRESENTS ITSELF TO A MENTAL SUBJECT, TO BE THE TRUE ABSOLUTE TRUTH.

ALL OTHER TRADITIONS REJECT THIS IDEA.

HERE WE ARE NOT CONCERNED WITH IDEOLOGIES, BUT WITH HAVING THE EXPERIENCE.

AND, IF WE ARE DZOGCHEN PRACTITIONERS, WITH USING THE EXPERIENCE AS IN THE SEMZİN COMMENTED ABOVE.

A CHÁN MASTER SAID:

“BEFORE UNDERTAKING THE PRACTICE OF CHÁN, FOR ME THE MOUNTAINS WERE SIMPLY MOUNTAINS AND THE RIVERS WERE SIMPLY RIVERS.

“WHEN I PENETRATED THE PRACTICE OF CHÁN FOR ME THE MOUNTAINS WERE NO LONGER MOUNTAINS AND THE RIVERS WERE NO LONGER RIVERS.

“WHEN I ATTAINED THE TRUTH OF CHÁN FOR ME THE MOUNTAINS BECAME TRULY MOUNTAINS AND THE RIVERS BECAME TRULY RIVERS.”

THE EXPERIENCE WE MAY HAVE AT THE TERM OF THIS PRACTICE MAY CORRESPOND TO THE SECOND STAGE: IT IS NOT YET THE ABSOLUTE TRUTH OF THE MAHAYANA.

TAKING ONE OF CHANDRAKIRTI'S ARGUMENTS AT A TIME:

1. THE SELF IS NOT [ONE OR ALL OF] THE PARTS OF THE BODY-MIND.

IF WE UNDERSTAND THE PARTS AS VARIOUS GROUPS OF PHYSICAL, MENTAL, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS, WE ASK:

IS THE SELF EQUAL TO THESE THINGS?

IF IT WERE, THEN WE WOULD OBTAIN CONSEQUENCES THAT CONTRADICT THE WAY WE INTUITIVELY CONCEIVE THE SELF AS SELF-EXISTENT.

A. IS IT EQUAL TO THEM INDIVIDUALLY?

THEN THERE WOULD BE AS MANY SELVES AS PARTS WE DISCERN IN THAT WHICH IS REFERRED TO BY OUR NAME.

WHICH WOULD CONTRADICT BOTH OUR INTUITION AND THE LANGUAGE THAT EXPRESSES IT,

B. IS IT EQUAL TO THEM AS A WHOLE?

THEN THE SELF WOULD BE INHERENTLY AND INDIVISIBLY ONE

AND I COULD NOT SAY “MY ARM,” “MY HEAD,” “MY MIND,” “MY THOUGHTS,” “MY VOICE,” “MY WORDS,” “MY QUALITIES,” ETC.

C. THE CONTRADICTION

WHEN WE THINK OF A SELF, WE THINK OF AN INDIVISIBLE, INHERENT UNITY

AND WHEN WE THINK OF PARTS, WE THINK OF A MULTIPLICITY OF INDIVISIBLE, INHERENT PARTS

AND HENCE IN THE ALTERNATION OF SUCH THOUGHTS THERE IS A CLEAR CONTRADICTION.

D. OTHER UNDESIRABLE CONSEQUENCES

ALSO, IF THE SELF WERE EQUAL TO *ALL OF THE PARTS*,

THEN WHENEVER WE GET OUR HAIR OR NAILS CUT, OR LOSE A FINGER,
OR GAIN A NEW THOUGHT,

WE WOULD LOSE OUR OLD SELF AND GET A WHOLLY BRAND-NEW SELF.

BUT OUR STRONG INTUITION IS CLEARLY THAT THE SELF CAN UNDERGO
CHANGES AND KEEP ITS CONTINUITY THROUGH THESE CHANGES

RATHER THAN THE CHANGES RESULTING IN A NEW SELF.

E. CONCLUSION

SO, THE SELF CANNOT BE EQUAL TO ALL OF THE PARTS.

IT IS NOT JUST THAT WE HAVE NOT LOOKED HARD ENOUGH:

WE HAVE LOOKED AT THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE SELF WERE THE
PARTS.

*AND IN THE PARTS, WE HAVE FOUND THE LACK OF SELF-EXISTENCE OF
THE SELF.*

IT CANNOT BE THERE.

2. THE SELF IS NOT [SOMETHING] DIFFERENT FROM THE PARTS OF THE BODY-MIND.

IF WE ASSERTED THE SELF TO BE INHERENTLY DIFFERENT FROM ITS
PARTS, ODD THINGS WOULD RESULT AS WELL,

FOR ONE SHOULD BE ABLE TO APPREHEND THE SELF SOMEHOW IN
TOTAL ISOLATION FROM THE PARTS.

*CONCEPTUALLY, ONE SHOULD BE ABLE TO STRIP AWAY THE ELEMENTS
OF THE BODY-MIND UNTIL NONE ARE LEFT*

AND YET ONE WOULD STILL BE ABLE TO POINT AT THE SELF.

A. WHERE WOULD THIS PARTLESS SELF LIE?

CHANDRAKIRTI SAYS IT WOULD HAVE TO BE SUSCEPTIBLE OF HAVING A
LOCATION DIFFERENT FROM THAT OF THE BODY.

AND SO, WE COULD VERY WELL SAY, "SHOW ME THAT SELF WITH NO
PARTS."

*THE SELF WOULD BE ONE THING AND THE PARTS WOULD BE A TOTALLY
SEPARATE THING.*

SO, THE SELF IS NOT INTRINSICALLY DIFFERENT FROM THE PARTS OF
THE BODY-MIND.

B. WHAT WOULD MAKE SUCH A SELF BE MY SELF?

ONE WOULD HAVE TO STILL BE ABLE TO DISTINGUISH THIS PARTLESS SELF FROM SOMEONE ELSE'S EQUALLY PARTLESS SELF

BUT HOW COULD ONE SAY THAT ONE SELF EXTERNAL TO ONE'S BODY IS ONE'S SELF AND ANOTHER ONE IS NOT?

THE ONLY WAY WOULD BE BECAUSE MY SELF PERCEIVES THROUGH MY BODY AND TO SOME EXTENT CONTROLS MY BODY-MIND

AND OTHER SELVES PERCEIVE THROUGH OTHER BODIES AND TO SOME EXTENT CONTROL OTHER BODIES,

BUT SUCH A THING WOULD BE SHEER MAGIC—AN UNACCEPTABLE THESIS IN OUR TIME.

MOREOVER, SUCH A THING WOULD BE POSSIBLE ONLY IF A GOD HAD CREATED US

AND HAD WANTED THE SOUL TO COMMUNICATE WITH ONE BODY ONLY, WHICH THE SOUL WOULD BE INIDIVISIBLY ATTACHED TO.

C. **THE SELF AS CONCEIVED BY DESCARTES**

OF COURSE, WE COULD THINK THAT DESCARTES IS RIGHT AND THE SELF IS WHAT HE CALLED THE *RES COGITANS* OR "THINKING THING"

CONCEIVED AS A SUBSTANCE INHERENTLY DIFFERENT AND SEPARATE FROM THE WHOLE OF THE *RES EXTENSA* OR "EXTENDED THING" OF WHICH OUR BODY IS PART,

AND CONSISTING IN A SOUL AS CONCEIVED BY THE CHRISTIAN CHURCHES

THAT WOULD LIE INSIDE THE HEAD, SOMEWHERE BEHIND THE EYES AND BETWEEN THE EARS.

HOWEVER, THIS MODIFICATION OF AN ANCIENT CHRISTIAN CONCEPTION OF THE MIND

IS EASILY REFUTABLE, FOR IF THE SELF BELONGED TO A REALITY OF WHOLLY DIFFERENT NATURE THAN THE BODY,

SUCH AS A "SOUL" THAT WOULD BE WHOLLY NONSPATIAL AND WHOLLY NONPHYSICAL,

COULD NOT COMMUNICATE WITH THE SPATIAL, PHYSICAL BODY

IN ORDER TO RECEIVE DATA FROM THE SENSES OR TO CONTROL THE BODY'S MOVEMENTS.

DESCARTES SAID THAT THE SOUL COMMUNICATED WITH THE BODY THROUGH THE PINEAL GLAND,

BUT THE LATTER IS EXTENDED AND PHYSICAL

AND SO, IT COULD NOT COMMUNICATE WITH A PURPORTED NON-EXTENDED, NON-PHYSICAL SOUL—

UNLESS IT WERE BY MAGICAL MEANS,

WHICH WOULD NOT SOLVE THE PROBLEM BECAUSE OUR SCIENTIFIC MENTALITY WOULD NOT ACCEPT SUCH A THEORY.

MOREOVER, THERE WOULD BE THE NEED FOR A THIRD SUBSTANCE DIFFERENT IN NATURE FROM THE TWO HE POSITED

THAT WERE CAPABLE OF COMMUNICATING WITH BOTH OF THE LATTER, BUT SINCE IT WOULD BE DIFFERENT FROM BOTH THIS WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE.

THUS, SO WE WOULD NEED TWO FURTHER SUBSTANCES:

ONE THROUGH WHICH THE SELF THAT WOULD BE DIFFERENT FROM BOTH BODY AND SOUL COMMUNICATED WITH THE BODY

AND ONE THROUGH WHICH IT COMMUNICATED WITH THE SOUL...

AND EACH OF THE TWO NEW SUBSTANCES WOULD NEED TWO MORE SUBSTANCES, AND SO ON *AD INFINITUM*.

3. THE SELF IS NOT [SOMETHING] THAT DEPENDS UPON THE PARTS OF THE BODY-MIND (WHICH WOULD IMPLY THAT IT IS AN EFFECT OF THE PARTS)

IS THE SELF DEPENDENT UPON THE PARTS?

SOMETIMES THE SELF APPEARS AS SOMETHING ABOVE AND BEYOND THE PARTS, BUT SOMEHOW SUPPORTED OR BUOYED UP BY THE PARTS.

THUS, THIS RELATION OF DEPENDENCE IS ANOTHER CASE OF (2) ABOVE,

IN WHICH THE SELF IS CONCEIVED AS BEING AN ENTITY DIFFERENT FROM THE PARTS, AND WHICH HAS BEEN REFUTED.

SO, THE ONLY REASON TO CONSIDER THIS POSSIBILITY IS BECAUSE SOMETIMES WE CONCEIVE AND EXPERIENCE OUR SELF THAT WAY

AND BY REFUTING IT SEPARATELY WE CAN GAIN INSIGHT ON THE FALSITY OF THIS CONCEPTION AND EXPERIENCE WE OFTEN HAVE.

IT IS ALMOST AS THOUGH THE SENSE OF SELF-EXISTENCE WERE HIDING OUT IN THE SENSE WE HAVE OF DEPENDENCE

(I.E. IN ITS CONCEPTION AS AN ABSOLUTELY TRUE EFFECT).

A. A FURTHER PROBLEM WITH DEPENDENCE

WHAT IS THE LINK BETWEEN THE SELF IN QUESTION AND THIS PARTICULAR SET OF PARTS

SUCH THAT WE MAY ASSERT **THIS PARTICULAR SELF** TO BE *DEPENDENT UPON* THOSE PARTS

OR TO BE AN *EFFECT* OF THOSE PARTS?

WHY ISN'T ANOTHER SELF THAT IS DEPENDENT UPON THOSE PARTS?

CONVERSELY, WHY IS THE SELF IN QUESTION DEPENDENT ON THESE PARTICULAR PARTS AND ON NOT MY NEXT-DOOR NEIGHBOR'S PARTS?

AGAIN, THE ONLY POSSIBLE ANSWER WOULD BE THAT A GOD CREATED US AND WANTED THE SOUL TO COMMUNICATE WITH ONE BODY ONLY, WHICH THE SOUL WOULD BE INDIVISIBLY ATTACHED TO.

BESIDE THE FACT THAT IN OUR TIME WE ARE NOT ALLOWED TO RESORT TO GODS OR MAGIC AS AN EXPLANATION,

TWO MORE ODD CONSEQUENCES WOULD FOLLOW IF THERE WERE A SELF-EXISTENT SELF THAT WERE DEPENDENT ON THE PARTS.

A. WHAT WOULD MAKE THE SELF RELATED TO THESE PARTS BE MY SELF?

FOR SUCH A SELF TO BE *MY SELF* I WOULD NEED ANOTHER SELF OR SUBSTANCE

TO BIND TOGETHER THE PARTS AND THE SELF UNDER THE AUSPICES OF "MINE," BUT THIS THIRD SELF OR SUBSTANCE DOES NOT EXIST.

B. WHY IS THERE NOT MORE THAN ONE SELF THAT DEPENDS UPON THE SAME SET OF PARTS? WHY NOT?

THIS IS CONSISTENT WITH THE CONDITIONS GIVEN: SINCE THIS SELF IS TOTALLY DIFFERENT FROM THE PARTS,

IT IS SOMETHING THAT CANNOT BE SEEN, AND HENCE OTHER INVISIBLE SELVES COULD BE SUPPORTED BY THE SAME PARTS.

THE ONLY POSSIBLE REPLY WOULD BE THAT **ONLY ONE SELF IS SUPPORTED BY THE PARTS**

"BECAUSE GOD CREATED US AND WANT IT TO BE THIS WAY,"

BUT THIS WOULD NOT BE AN ACCEPTABLE REPLY IN OUR TIME.

B. CONCLUSION

IN A SEARCH FOR THE SELF-EXISTENT SELF THAT DEPENDS ON THE PARTS OF THE BODY-MIND, THIS SELF HAS PROVED UNFINDABLE

(I.E. IS HAS BEEN SHOWN THAT THE EFFECT CANNOT BE THE SAME AS, OR DIFFERENT FROM, ITS CAUSES).

4. THE SELF IS NOT A [PURPORTED] SUBSTRATUM UPON WHICH THE PARTS OF THE BODY-MIND WOULD DEPEND (I.E., IT IS NOT THE CAUSE OF THE PARTS)

DO THE PARTS INHERENTLY DEPEND UPON THE PURPORTED SELF, SO THAT THE LATTER WOULD BE SOME ENTITY SERVING AS THEIR SUBSTRATUM?

THIS IS ANOTHER CASE OF (2) REFUTED ABOVE—NAMELY THAT THE SELF IS INHERENTLY DIFFERENT FROM THE PARTS.

AND IT IS SIMILAR TO (3), WITH THE DEPENDENCE RUNNING IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION,

AND IT WOULD HAVE SIMILAR CONSEQUENCES, AS ONE COULD ASK:

“WHY THESE PARTS?”

“WHY THIS PARTICULAR SELF?”

“SHOW IT TO ME IN ISOLATION FROM THE PARTS.”

“NO! NOT THAT SELF OVER THERE, BUT THIS SELF!”

A. ONE PARTICULAR MEDITATION

IN LOOKING FOR THE SUBSTRATUM TRYING TO ISOLATE IT AS THE SELF-EXISTENT SELF, WE CAN ASK:

CAN MORE THAN ONE SUBSTRATUM SUPPORT THE SAME SET OF PARTS, EITHER SIMULTANEOUSLY OR IN SUCCESSION OVER TIME?

ASSUME FOR THE MOMENT A RELATION OF A SELF-EXISTING SELF AS THE SUBSTRATUM OF THE PARTS OF THE BODY-MIND.

IS THE SUBSTRATUM THE SAME IN TWO DIFFERENT MOMENTS?

AS BEFORE, THERE IS NO REASON IT CANNOT BE A DIFFERENT SELF AND NO PROOF THAT IT IS THE SAME SELF—

IN WHICH CASE THE SAME BODY-MIND WOULD BE SUPPORTED BY TWO SELVES OVER TIME.

THEN, I WOULD BE INHERENTLY DIFFERENT SELVES AT DIFFERENT TIMES,

WHICH CONTRADICTS MY SENSE OF BEING ALWAYS THE SAME, SINGLE SELF:

THE SUPPOSED SELF-EXISTENCE OF THE SELF CANNOT LIE IN ITS BEING SOME SUBSTRATUM ON WHICH THE PARTS OF THE BODY-MIND DEPEND

(I.E. THE EFFECT CANNOT BE THE SAME OR DIFFERENT THEN ITS CAUSES).

5. THE SELF IS NOT [A PURPORTED] POSSESSOR OF THE PARTS OF THE BODY-MIND.

THIS MAY BE EITHER A CASE OF (2), THE SELF BEING DIFFERENT FROM THE PARTS,

OR OF (1), WHERE THE SELF IS THE SAME ENTITY AS THE PARTS.

WE CONSIDER THIS POSSIBILITY BECAUSE OFTEN HAVE A STRONG CONCEPTION THAT THE SELF POSSESSES THE PARTS OF THE BODY-MIND

AS WE SPEAKS OF “MY ARM,” “MY HEAD,” AND EVEN “MY MIND.”

A. THE SELF IS THE SAME ENTITY AS THE PARTS, AS IN (1)

I FEEL THAT I POSSESS MY HAND, AND YET LANGUAGE IMPLIES I AM THE POSSESSOR OF THE HAND,

BUT A THING CANNOT POSSESS ITSELF, JUST AS THE FINGERTIP CANNOT TOUCH ITSELF OR THE HAND CANNOT HOLD ITSELF:

FOR ME TO CONCEIVE STRONGLY OF POSSESSING MY HAND, I MUST MENTALLY PULL AWAY FROM THE HAND FOR THE MOMENT AT LEAST,

AND CONCEIVE OF MYSELF AS SOMETHING OTHER THAN THE HAND.

SO, THE SELF CANNOT POSSESS THE PARTS IN THIS WAY.

AND IN THE NEGATED SUPPOSITION THAT IT COULD, WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF THE HAND WERE CUT?

B. THE POSSESSOR AND THE POSSESSED ARE TWO SEPARATE ENTITIES, AS IN (2)

I WOULD POSSESS MY HAND IN THE WAY I POSSESS THE CAR.

IN ADDITION TO THE IMPOSSIBILITY THAT THE SELF MAY BE AN ENTITY DIFFERENT FROM ITS PARTS,

WHAT WOULD LINK THE PARTS AND THE SELF AS POSSESSOR AND POSSESSED?

WHAT WOULD SERVE AS THE POSSESSOR OF THE HAND?

IT COULD NOT BE OTHER PART OF THE BODY-MIND.

WE CAN ONLY COME UP WITH AN EMPTINESS—I.E., THE ABSENCE OF THE SUPPOSED SELF-EXISTENCE OF SUCH A SELF.

6. THE SELF IS NOT INHERENTLY THE MERE [STRUCTURAL AND FUNCTIONAL] COMBINATION OF THE PARTS OF THE BODY-MIND.

PERHAPS THE SELF IS INHERENTLY THE MERE COLLECTION OF THE PARTS OF THE BODY/ ORDERED IN A PARTICULAR WAY.

HOWEVER, IN THIS CASE, IF WE LOST A LIMB, OR EVEN WHENEVER WE CUT OUR HAIR OR NAILS,

AND EVEN MORE SO IF WE HAD OUR HEART REPLACED BY AN ARTIFICIAL HEART OR HAD A HEART TRANSPLANT OR A LIVER TRANSPLANT,

WE WOULD NO LONGER BE THE SAME SELF WE WERE BEFORE.

A. THE GAP BETWEEN “I” AND “MINE”

AS MADE CLEAR IN (5), OUR SENSE OF SELF-EXISTENCE OF THE SELF SEEMS TO PUT A LITTLE DISTANCE BETWEEN THE PARTS AND THE SELF,

AS THOUGH THERE WERE A GAP BETWEEN POSSESSOR AND POSSESSED, BETWEEN AGENT AND ACTION, BETWEEN “SELF” AND “BODY-MIND”—

FOR OTHERWISE WE COULD NOT FEEL AT TIMES THAT WE ARE CONTROLLING THE BODY,

OR THAT THE BODY FAILS TO RESPOND TO OUR ATTEMPTS TO CONTROL IT,

OR THAT WE ARE CONTROLLING OUR THOUGHTS, OR THAT WE FAIL TO CONTROL THE THOUGHTS, ETC.

IN THIS ALTERNATIVE THE SELF WOULD BE THE BODY-MIND, BUT THIS IS CONTRADICTED BY THE ABOVE INTUITION OF A GAP

FOR IN THIS ALTERNATIVE, AGENT AND ACTION WOULD BE ONE, SELF AND BODY-MIND WOULD BE ONE,

AND SO, THE SELF AS CONCEIVED HERE WOULD NOT CORRESPOND TO THE ONE CONCEIVED IN OUR INTUITIONS, WHICH WOULD BE DELUSIVE.

A. IS THERE A CONVENTIONAL SELF THAT IS NOT THE PARTS THEMSELVES, BUT IS POSITED ON THE BASIS OF THE PARTS?

IN THE MADHYAMIKA PRASANGIKA SCHOOL OF BUDDHISM,

IT IS SAID THAT THE CONVENTIONAL SELF IS NOT THE PARTS THEMSELVES, BUT IS POSITED ON THE BASIS OF THE PARTS:

BASED ON THOSE PARTICULAR PARTS, A DESIGNATED SELF IS POSITED CONVENTIONALLY THAT IS *NOT* THE PARTS, BUT *IS BASED ON* THEM,

SO THAT POSSESSOR AND POSSESSED ARE SLIGHTLY AND SUBTLETY DIFFERENT, AS TWO PARTS OR ASPECTS OF THE SAME ENTITY.

HOWEVER, AS STATED YESTERDA, THE RELATIVE AND THE CONVENTIONAL ARE DELUSIONS:

SUCH A SELF IS NO MORE THAN AN ILLUSION, AND AN ILLUSION CANNOT BE THE SELF-EXISTENCE WE SOUGHT

(AT ANY RATE, THE WHOLE CANNOT BE THE SAME AS, OR DIFFERENT FROM, ITS PARTS.)

7. THE SELF IS NOT THE SHAPE OF [EITHER] THE PARTS [OR THE WHOLE] OF THE BODY-MIND.

THIS ALTERNATIVE INVESTIGATES WHETHER THE SELF IS INHERENTLY THE SHAPE OF THE PARTS OF THE BODY-MIND.

IS THIS POSSIBLE, JUST AS THE SEMANTICIST **ALFRED KORZYBSKI** SUGGESTED WHEN HE SAID, “THE PATTERN IS THE THING”?

THE SELF WOULD BE A GROSS MATERIAL THING INsofar AS COMPONENTS THAT ARE NOT GROSSLY MATERIAL,

SUCH AS MIND, THOUGHTS AND VALUES, DO NOT HAVE A SHAPE,

AND YET WE EXPERIENCE THEM AS BEING PART OF OUR SELF

EVEN THOUGH AT TIMES WE EXPERIENCE THEM AS OTHER THAN OUR SELF.

A. IS THE SHAPE CONTINUOUS, AS WE CONCEIVE AND EXPERIENCE THE SELF AS BEING?

PEOPLE GROW, GO THROUGH THE CHANGES OF PUBERTY, GET OLD, SOMETIMES GAIN WEIGHT,

SOMETIMES TAKE UP YOGA OR WEIGHTLIFTING AND TONE UP.

SOME LOSE A LIMB, MANY LOSE THEIR HAIR, MANY BECOME BENT WITH AGE.

OR A DRUG-TRAFFICKER HAS PLASTIC SURGERY SO THAT HE MAY NOT BE CAUGHT BY THE POLICE.

IF THE SELF WERE THE SHAPE, THIS WOULD ALLOW NO CHANGE IN SHAPE WITHOUT A CORRESPONDING CHANGE IN THE SELF’S IDENTITY.

EVEN IN A SINGLE DAY **THERE ARE PERCEPTUAL SHAPE CHANGES DUE TO CHANGES IN POSTURE, STANDING VS. SITTING,**

AND SHAPE CHANGES DUE TO THE ANGLE FROM WHICH THE PARTS ARE VIEWED—

FROM THE LEFT OR RIGHT, FROM NEAR OR FAR, SEEN WITH A MICROSCOPE OR ANALYZED WITH OTHER SCIENTIFIC INSTRUMENTS

THE SHAPE RADICALLY CHANGES AND HENCE THE SHAPE CRITERION

DOES NOT CORRESPOND TO OUR CONCEPTION OF A SUPPOSED SELF-EXISTENT SELF THAT PERSISTS THROUGH CHANGES IN SHAPE.

SO, THE SELF IS NOT INHERENTLY THE SHAPE OF THE [COMBINATION OF THE] PARTS.

CONCLUSION

WE HAVE SEARCHED FOR THE SUPPOSEDLY SELF-EXISTENT SELF IN ALL THAT COULD CONCEIVABLY CONSTITUTE IT,

AND WE HAVE NOT FOUND IT—WHAT WE FOUND WAS AN ABSENCE, A VACUITY, A LACK OF THIS SUPPOSEDLY SELF-EXISTING SELF—

AND HENCE SUCH A SELF SIMPLY CANNOT EXIST.

IN MADHYAMAKA TERMS, THE ABSENCE WE FIND IS THE FIGURATIVE ULTIMATE TRUTH,

WHICH RATHER THAN THE TRUE ABSOLUTE TRUTH IS AN INSTANCE OF RELATIVE TRUTH.

THERE IS AN EARTH-SHATTERING SHIFT WHEN THIS MEDITATION IS DONE AT A LEVEL DEEPER THAN THAT OF INTELLECTUAL WORD-PLAY—

I.E., WHEN IT IS DONE BY ACTUALLY TRYING TO FIND THE SELF

AND EXPECTING IT TO BE FOUND IN EACH OF THE ALTERNATIVES INVESTIGATED,

NO MATTER HOW ABSURD THEY MAY SEEM—AS WHEN A TEACHER TOLD HIS STUDENTS TO SEARCH THE SELF THROUGH THE VALLEY.

AT ANY RATE, OUR EXPERIENCE OUTRIGHT CONTRADICTS OUR INTUITION OF WHAT THE SELF IS LIKE.

IN FACT, WHEN WE THINK OF THE SELF, WE ALWAYS THINK OF IT AS ONE AND AS CONTINUOUS.

AND YET AT DIFFERENT TIMES WE CONCEIVE THE SELF AS DIFFERENT THINGS.

WHEN A BEAUTIFUL GIRL SEES HER FACE IN THE MIRROR AND LIKES IT, SHE FEELS SHE IS BEAUTIFUL: SHE FEELS SHE IS THE FACE.

THEN IF SHE GETS FACIAL PALSY OR PARALYSIS, SHE WILL FEEL SHE IS THE ONE WHO TRIES TO MOVE THE FACE,

WHICH AT THE TIME IS EXPERIENCED AS AN OBJECT DIFFERENT FROM THE SELF AND THAT FAILS TO RESPOND.

WHEN I THINK OF MYSELF IN SOME PARTICULAR WAY, I FEEL THE THOUGHT IS THE SELF,

YET IF I TRY TO CONTROL THE THOUGHT PROCESS IN THE PRACTICE OF MEDITATION, I EXPERIENCE MYSELF AS OTHER THAN THOUGHTS,

WHICH AT SOME MOMENTS I CONTROL, WHEREAS AT OTHERS MOMENTS FAILS TO DO SO.

IF I **MOVE MY HAND**, I FEEL I AM THE ONE WHO DIRECTS THE MOVEMENT AND THE HAND IS THE OBJECT MOVED, AS SUCH DIFFERENT FROM THE SELF,

BUT IF THEN SOMEONE **HITS ME IN THE HAND**, I FEEL IT WAS MY SELF THAT WAS HIT.

THERE ARE COUNTLESS EXAMPLES OF HOW WHAT WE CONCEIVE AS THE SAME CONTINUOUS SELF

IS IN OUR EXPERIENCE A DIFFERENT SELF AT EACH DIFFERENT MOMENT, SHOWING OUR CONCEPTION OF THE SELF TO BE SELF-CONTRADICTORY.

GREGORY VLASTOS HAS REJECTED ARGUMENTS OF THE ABOVE KIND

ON THE GROUNDS THAT THE **ONENESS AND THE MULTIPLICITY OF AN ENTITY ARE NOT MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE FEATURES**,

AND THEREFORE THE MULTIPLICITY OF WHAT WE CONSIDER AS BEING “ONE” AND HENCE AS CONSTITUTING A UNITY,

DOES NOT CONTRADICT ITS ONENESS AND THEREFORE DOES NOT IMPLY IT IS NOT A UNITY.^{A128}

HOWEVER, WHEN A **DELUDED BEING** RECOGNIZES AND APPREHENDS AN ENTITY,

HE OR SHE PERCEIVES THAT ENTITY AS BEING **EXCLUSIVELY AND ABSOLUTELY ONE**

(I.E., AS BEING INHERENTLY A *UNITY*),

AND THERE IS NO COMPREHENSION WHATSOEVER OF THE FACT THAT THE ENTITY MAY ALSO BE SEEN AS A MULTIPLICITY.

IF THE SAME INDIVIDUAL MENTALLY DECOMPOSES THE ENTITY,

HE OR SHE WILL PERCEIVE IT AS BEING EXCLUSIVELY AND INHERENTLY A MULTIPLICITY,

AND THERE WILL BE NO UNDERSTANDING WHATSOEVER IN THE DELUDED MIND OF THIS MULTIPLICITY AS A UNITY.

THIS **DOES NOT MEAN** THAT THE RIGHT THING TO DO IS TO SAY THAT **THE ENTITY IS BOTH ONE AND MULTIPLE**,

WHICH IF LEFT UNEXPLAINED WOULD SIMPLY VIOLATE THE LAW OF THE EXCLUDED MIDDLE

(OR THE LAW OF THE EXCLUDED THIRD, OR THE PRINCIPLE OF NON-CONTRADICTION),¹²⁹

WOULD NOT CLARIFY ANYTHING, AND WOULD BE BUT ANOTHER CONCEPTUAL POSITION,

CONTRARY TO SAYING THAT THE ENTITY IS NEITHER ONE NOR MULTIPLE, AND EQUALLY TRUE AND EQUALLY FALSE AS THE LATTER.

IT WOULD CLARIFY THINGS IF WE SAID THAT *RELATIVELY* THE ENTITY IS ONE WHEN VIEWED FROM ONE STANDPOINT

AND MULTIPLE WHEN SEEN FROM ANOTHER,

BUT THAT IT CANNOT BE SAID TO BE EITHER *ABSOLUTELY* ONE OR *ABSOLUTELY* MULTIPLE;

HOWEVER, THIS CONTRADICTS OUR FEELING THAT THE SELF IS ABSOLUTELY EXISTENT, AND THAT IT IS ABSOLUTELY ONE WAY.

SUCH UNILATERAL, ABSOLUTISTIC PERCEPTIONS ARE PRECISELY WHAT MADHYAMIKA PHILOSOPHERS

INTENDED TO DESTROY WITH THEIR ARGUMENTS.¹³⁰

THEREFORE, VLASTOS' OBJECTION IS MEANINGLESS.

SELFLESSNESS IN NON-BUDDHIST AUTHORS

THE REALIZATION OF THE SELFLESSNESS OF HUMAN BEINGS IS NOT CIRCUMSCRIBED TO BUDDHISM:

THE PURPORTEDLY YOUNGER GREEK CONTEMPORARY OF ŚĀKYAMUNI, **HERACLITUS OF EPHEBUS**, SEEMS TO HAVE EXPRESSED THIS REALIZATION AS FOLLOWS:

...ALTHOUGH THE *LOGOS* [OR UNIVERSAL INTELLIGENCE] IS [THE SINGLE AND] COMMON [NATURE OF ALL INTELLECTS], THE MAJORITY [OF HUMAN BEINGS] LIVE AS IF THEY HAD A SEPARATE AND PERSONAL INTELLIGENCE [OF THEIR OWN].

RENÉ DESCARTES, INSTEAD, DEFENDED THE COMMON-SENSE DELUSION OF AN INDEPENDENTLY EXISTING SELF. HE DERIVED HIS FAMOUS "DOUBTLESS TRUTH," "I THINK, THEREFORE I AM" (*JE PENSE, DONC JE SUIS*; *COGITO ERGO SUM*), FROM THE DELUSIVE INTUITION THAT THERE WAS A THINKER OF DISCURSIVE THOUGHT, AND FROM THIS INTUITION HE INFERRED THAT THE EXISTENCE OF THE THINKER OF THOUGHT COULD NOT BE DOUBTED (FOR THE ACTIVITY OF DOUBTING WAS ALSO SUPPOSED TO BE CARRIED OUT BY THE THINKER OF THOUGHT).

GEORG CHRISTOPH LICHTENBERG ASSERTED THAT TO ARGUE FROM SENSATIONS TO AN EGO, SELF OR SOUL AS THEIR BEARER, AS DESCARTES DID, WAS NOT LOGICALLY WARRANTED, AND IN THIS

REGARD INSISTED THAT TO SAY COGITO WAS TO SAY TOO MUCH, FOR AS SOON AS IT WAS TRANSLATED INTO “I THINK” IT SEEMED NECESSARY TO POSTULATE AN EGO, SELF OR SOUL. AND IN FACT, THE CRUX OF DESCARTES’ ERROR WAS PRECISELY THAT HE WAS TRYING TO PROVE THAT THE FACT THAT THERE WAS THINKING DEMONSTRATED THE EXISTENCE OF A THINKING EGO, SELF OR SOUL.

IN *APHORISMEN, NACH DEN HANDSCHRIFTEN*, THE REALIZATION WE ARE CONCERNED WITH IS EXPRESSED ROUGHLY AS FOLLOWS:

“ONE SHOULD NOT SAY ‘I THINK’: ONE THINKS LIKE THE SKY FLASHES LIGHTENING.”

FOR HIS PART, TWENTIETH CENTURY MEXICAN POET **OCTAVIO PAZ** WROTE,

“...LAS VOCES QUE ME PIENSAN AL PENSARLAS.
SOY LA SOMBRA QUE ARROJAN MIS PALABRAS...”

(“...THE VOICES THAT THINK ME AS I THINK THEM;
I AM THE SHADOW PROJECTED BY MY WORDS...”).