Knowing Knowledge: 15th Century Tibet Meets 20th Century America[1]

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Janet Gyatso has contributed enormously to our understanding of the emergence and nature of Tibetan modernity, calling our attention to the seeds of modern thought in classical Tibetan metaphysics, literary practice, and medicine, as well as to the important interactions between Tibetan and other scholars that have supported the modernization of Tibetan thought. This essay addresses how to understand Tibetan modernity in the domain of epistemology. Has Buddhist Tibet *always* been modern, in virtue of its commitment to "inner science," as the Dalai Lama XIV sometimes suggests, or has Tibet only recently emerged into modernity in virtue of its interaction with the West following the exile of 1959? To what degree to Tibetan epistemological ideas and their evolution map onto Western epistemological ideas and their evolution? I will approach these questions in a roundabout way, beginning with some general reflections on epistemology and the modern, taking a detour through an instructive episode in 20th century American philosophy, and then turning to the debate between Geluk scholars and their Sakya and Kagyu interlocutors concerning the very possibility of making sense of *tshad ma/pramāṇa* in the context of Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka as a way of understanding the basis of current thinking about science and knowledge in the Tibetan world.

1. Two Approaches to Epistemology

The Yakherds (2021) distinguish two approaches to epistemology taken by Indian and Tibetan philosophers exploring the idea of *pramāṇa/tshad ma,* or epistemic warrant.[2] The

first is what we might call *transcendental epistemology.* This is the most frequent register of epistemological reflection, both in the Indo-Tibetan world and in the West. When we pursue epistemology this way, we begin by thinking analytically about the nature of justification itself, bracketing actual human practices, and develop a purely prescriptive account of epistemic warrant embodying a set of standards that might or might not be met by actual human practice. We might, for instance, determine that a claim can only be warranted if it is logically derivable from claims that are themselves reports of our own cognitive states, or that a claim is warranted if and only if it is delivered by either the direct perception of particulars or by inference from such perceptual judgments. It might then turn out that some or none of what we take ourselves to know is actually known; but we would know what it is, or what it *would be* to know.

The second approach to epistemology is the *anthropological* approach. On this approach, we begin not with analytical reflection on the meanings of epistemic terms, but rather by asking what actual people *do* when they claim to be justifying statements, or when they certify statements by others as warranted.   In this approach to epistemology, we bracket questions about whether those practices meet some transcendental standard, and develop a purely descriptive account of actual epistemic practices. On this approach, we take what counts as knowledge to be a social or institutional affair, like what counts as currency or as a legal vote, and then ask about the institutional conditions on bestowing that honorific on a cognitive or linguistic episode. We might, for instance, discover that those in some community count as knowledge only that which is endorsed by scientists, or that another community includes the deliverances of certain oracles as knowledge. If we take this approach, we take it for granted that there is knowledge, and ask only what leads us to classify some statements under that head.[3]

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[2] These terms are variously translated in English. Popular translations include *valid cognition, means of knowledge, evidence, instruments of knowledge, epistemic instruments, epistemic warrant.* I will use *epistemic warrant* when justification is at issue, and *epistemic instruments* when the means of acquiring knowledge is at issue, following the use of the Yakherds.

[3] Compare an attitude towards baptism. A transcendentalist might argue that since baptism must involve the invocation of the Holy Spirit, baptism is possible if, and only if, the Holy Spirit exists and can be invoked by immersion in water. Otherwise, what looks like a baptism ritual is just a dunking. An anthropologist would argue that baptism just is the appropriate dunking performed using the

There are broad reasons that might be adduced for favoring each of these approaches to epistemology. Transcendental epistemology can be understood as conceptual analysis. We have a concept of knowledge—perhaps captured roughly by the so-called "JTB+ formula" of justified true belief plus some yet-to-be-specified Gettier-proofing condition—and it is the job of philosophy to reveal what is contained in that concept. Moreover, we should not presume of any concept that it is in fact satisfied by any instances, just as the geometric definition of a circle does not entail that any perfect circles have ever been drawn. So, we should begin by understanding the concept itself, and then determine the degree to which we may or may not satisfy it in our epistemic life. Moreover, one might argue, since knowledge is an epistemic *ideal,* as goodness is, for instance in the moral domain, it is quite appropriate to represent it as something that nobody ever achieves, but yet stands as a regulative goal in practice. Only a transcendental epistemology can accomplish this task.

On the other hand, one might argue that inasmuch as epistemic activity is human activity—no different from speaking a language, playing a game, or dining with friends in that respect—any epistemology should characterize that activity. And, one might point out, since knowing is effectively like winning the epistemic game, not the achievement of perfection, and since we do often both claim to know and credit others with knowledge, an epistemology should tells us under what circumstances we in fact do that, and what the norms are that govern such attributions. Such an epistemology can only be anthropological.

This is only a preliminary sketch of how one might map the conceptual terrain defined by this debate. We will return to the question of the consequences of adopting each of these strategies later in this discussion, first by examining an instance of each in recent Western epistemology, and then by examining an instance of each in a debate with origins in 15th century Tibet. These case studies will give us more purchase on why this debate matters. They will also allow us to ask when Tibetan epistemology really becomes modern.

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appropriate ritual by the appropriate person, that is, that social practices, not spiritual events, define it.

Note that the distinction between transcendental and anthropological epistemology is different from that between *naturalized* and *non-natural* epistemology, although they are related to one another. That latter distinction classifies approaches to epistemology by asking whether or not they are grounded in facts about human psychology. A naturalized epistemology is one that takes psychology seriously, and develops an account of epistemic warrant that is specific to knowers like us, taking into consideration our powers and limitations as knowers. So, for instance, a transcendental theory that argues that since each of our sense faculties is tuned to a particular kind of information, only vision can warrant color judgments, and only hearing judgments about pitch, would still be naturalistic.

A non-natural epistemology is one that abstracts from our psychological powers and limitations, and proposes an account of knowledge for knowers *per se,* whatever their actual capacities might be, based on reflection on the very nature of justification and the relation of cognition to reality. Pursuing such an epistemology might lead us to determine that some, or all, epistemic subjects are incapable of knowledge. To the extent that such an epistemology reveals, for instance, that human beings are incapable of knowledge, it can lead to a profound form of skepticism. Many Pyrrhonian arguments, such as the argument regarding the criterion, or the tropes of Aenesidemus, take us in this direction.

These two distinctions are not the same, even though it is apparent that the intuitions that drive one to naturalism might also drive one in the anthropological direction, and that non-naturalism is always transcendental in form. This is because we can imagine two forms of naturalized epistemology. Epistemic naturalists could argue that their naturalistic account of epistemology should propose transcendental conditions on knowledge *for knowers like us,* taking into account our own biological and psychological constitution and environment, but nonetheless establishing standards that reflect a kind of ideal that may or may not be satisfied. Or they could argue the appropriate form of naturalism is an anthropology of our linguistic practices. So, naturalism alone does not determine whether one signs up for the anthropological or the transcendental program. There is no space, however, for a position that is simultaneously non-natural and anthropological. In what follows, it is the distinction between the anthropological and the transcendental that will take center stage.

2. Modernity and Epistemology: The Centrality of Science

Before we get down to cases and enter the history of philosophy to make some of these abstract distinctions a bit more concrete, we must address one more broad question about the relation of epistemology to modernity and eventually to postmodernity. Doing so will help us to get a handle both on the respects in which some Tibetan and Western debates about knowledge differ from one another despite deep homologies, and on the respects in which some current Tibetan approaches to knowledge may look more like their Western counterparts. This will also help to us see what it is for Tibetan epistemology to become modern, or even postmodern.

It is widely recognized that among the important characteristics of modern epistemology as it emerges in 17th and 18th century Europe (and for better or worse, this is at least a paradigm case of the application of the term *modern*) are these: (1) the recognition of the individual rational subject as the knower; (2) the recognition of the responsibility of that subject to common standards of rational inquiry in order to count as a knower; (3) an understanding of the subject as immediately aware of her own inner states, providing an epistemic foundation for access to the external world . Knowledge of the external world is then regarded as mediated by our sensory and cognitive faculties, faculties which may be fallible, and which may interpose a kind of veil between us and the external world. These are features of modern approaches to epistemology regardless of whether they are rationalist or empiricist, foundationalist or coherentist.[4]

But a second, and perhaps ultimately more important characteristic of European modernity in epistemology derives from its origins in the Galileo affair. That is the installation of science as the paradigm of rational inquiry and as the final arbiter of truth regarding the nature of reality. This displacement of tradition, of collective wisdom, and of religious authority is what enabled the faith in progress, in reason, and in the power of the individual subject operating in the public sphere that constitute the heart of the modern sensibility.

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[4] See Garfield (1996) for a more detailed exploration of these themes.

This faith in science has several momentous consequences for epistemology as it has been understood in Europe since the Enlightenment. The first of these has been the introduction of a distinction between what Sellars has famously called the "manifest" and the "scientific" images of "man in the world." (1963a) That is, we distinguish a world as it appears to us in everyday experience from that revealed by scientific inquiry, replete with unobservable theoretical entities, and we take it that while both images of the world are accurate, the scientific image is capable of explaining and even correcting the manifest image. It has a *kind* of epistemic priority, but only a kind: whereas the scientific image may have epistemic priority with respect to the fundamental nature of reality and the causal principles that govern physical processes, the manifest is the source of the norms that govern scientific inquiry, as well as the home of the observations that vindicate its discoveries.[5]   The important point for our purposes is that science is nonetheless granted authority over the basic structure of reality, and our own everyday experience answer to it in that domain.

This dichotomy leads to a second, surprising, and little-remarked consequence: a subtle but pervasive transformation in our understanding of truth. Truth and trust are cognate notions. And a primary sense of *truth* in English is *trustworthy.* A true friend is one we can trust; a true coin is one we can use; to be true to a partner is to repay her trust, etc… The application of the term to sentences or to beliefs was homologous: a true statement, or a true belief is one on which an agent can rely in reasoning, or as a ground for action. To say that a statement is true is to commit oneself to using it as a basis for investigation or as a reason for action.[6]

The rise of science as the measure of reality altered the semantic balance in our understanding of truth. Because science is now taken as the arbiter of the real, we end p adopting the attitude that the real is fully determinate, and independent of our own views or knowledge, the attitude we now call *scientific realism.* And since science is also taken as the arbiter of *truth,* truth comes to be understood as connected directly to the reality

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[5] See Garfield (1988, 2012) for more complete explorations of this reciprocal relation.
[6] Note that this is consistent with many classical Indian accounts of truth as that which enables one to achieve one's ends (*puruṣārtha*). I develop this notion further in Garfield (2019).

science delivers. It is no longer simply the property of being reliable in our everyday practices. This in turn introduces the idea that true sentences or true beliefs *correspond to reality,* a view we now call the *correspondence theory of truth,* another hallmark of modernity. (And note that nobody has ever proposed a contentful account of just in what that correspondence could consist.)

Finally, the manifest-scientific dichotomy, with its recognition of science as the measure (*pramāṇa*?) of reality leads inevitably to a kind of reciprocity between the manifest and scientific image that introduces a deep tension in modernity itself regarding self-knowledge, a tension that arguably contains the seeds of the postmodern attitude. Since our own bodies and minds are present in, and not external to the real world, the final story about how they work is the scientific story, the story to be told by biology, neuroscience, psychology, and even the social sciences. That authority in turn reinscribes the manifest-scientific dichotomy in the domain of the inner. We now must distinguish our minds (and bodies) as they appear to us from our minds and bodies as science understands them, and this includes our sensory and cognitive faculties, our basic means of access to the world (once again, *pramāṇa*).

The fact of this dichotomy, and the fact that our introspective awareness of ourselves, like our everyday awareness of everything around us means that we must jettison the view that we have immediate privileged access to our own inner states as they are. This is the foundation of Sellars attack on the Myth of the Given in "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind." (1963b, henceforth EPM) Although the commitment to indubitable knowledge of our own minds as a foundation for possibly fallible access to the external world is a cornerstone of modernity, we now see that the commitment to *scientia mensura* or science as the principle *pramāṇa* undermines that very cornerstone, a tension that issues in the postmodern revolution in epistemology initiated by Quine and Sellars.[7] The authority of science means that the nature of our minds, of our sensory apparatus, and of our access to any objects of knowledge is opaque to introspection. We are strangers to ourselves.

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[7] See Garfield (2018) for a detailed consideration of the connections between the Sellarsian critique of the Myth of the Given and Buddhist epistemology of the inner.

We can now turn to an important case study of a debate that raises the question of transcendental vs anthropological epistemology in the context of this transition from the modern to the postmodern in 20th century epistemology. This will constitute a lens through which to examine a much older Tibetan debate on the same terrain, a debate with a different relation to the modern.

3. Responding to Carnap: Quine and Sellars

In the *Aufbau* (The Logical Structure of the World 1967) first published in 1925, Carnap (1891-1970) proposes an account of our knowledge of the external world that takes as its foundations "the stream of experience," to which he also refers as "the given." (102) He emphasizes that his goal is "to construct the objective by starting with the stream of experience," a method he characterizes as "methodological solipsism" or "autopsychology." (107) These terms emphasize the first-person (singular) foundation of all knowledge on this model. Basic knowledge is independent of any knowledge of the external world or of other knowers. The account is complex, but the details need not detain us. The idea is this: We have immediate knowledge of the given, the stream of experience, or what was later to be called by the logical positivists *sense data.* (Ayer 1963) This knowledge is achieved simply in virtue of their immediate givenness.

Concepts and external objects are then "logical constructions" out of actual or counterfactual experiences or sense data. We form the concept of *redness* on the basis of red sense data; of an apple as that kind of thing which leads to red sense data when seen at a distance, white ones and sweet ones when bitten; of fruit as either an apple, an orange, or…; etc…, logically constructing both the world and the concepts adequate to it in a foundation of immediately known sensation. Meaning is grounded in reference: words refer ultimately to patterns of actual or possible sense experience. So, on this understanding of the structure of knowledge, knowledge has a foundation; that foundation is in individual first person sense experience; the most basic known objects are sensations; all other objects and judgments are logical constructions therefrom.

I introduce the *Aufbau* framework not for its own sake, but because I am interested in the two most prominent responses to this short-lived (but, during its heyday, overwhelmingly popular) proposal, a proposal that those in Buddhist Studies will note is

intriguingly akin to ideas floated in the Indian Buddhist *pramāṇavāda* tradition of Digṅāga and Dharmakīrti. Those are the responses of the two American philosophers WV Quine (1908-2000) and Wilfrid Sellars (1912-1989), responses that echo in fascinating ways those of Tsongkhapa and Takstang to Dharmakīrti. Sellars and Quine are each naturalists about epistemology, but their approaches differ sharply. We will see that Quine presupposes a transcendental understanding of epistemology, and that Sellars advocates an anthropological account. And that difference generates very different attitudes towards the possibility of knowledge and of meaning.

Quine and Sellars each see that at least one fundamental difficulty of Carnap's program lies in its foundationalism. Carnap requires sensations, or basic experiences, to be *nonconceptual* and *immediate* and at the same time to constitute both *knowledge* and *semantic primitives* serving as the foundations for both the edifice of knowledge and the edifice of meaning. (As we will see, Sellars points to a second fatal problem in Carnap's program—its methodological solipsism—but we will get to that in a bit.). Although I want to begin with Quine's response to Carnap, he agrees with Sellars' diagnosis of the problem here, and given its clarity, it is useful to take the Sellarsian diagnostic account as our basis here.

In EPM, Sellars points to an inconsistent triad that lies at the base of all sense-datum theories, one that we will see Tsongkhapa anticipates. Sense data are meant to be *given,* that is, to be immediate and nonconceptual; all knowledge is expressible in language, and therefore conceptual; sense data are meant to constitute *knowledge,* indeed the most secure of all knowledge. Sellars and Quine each conclude from the inconsistency of that triad that nothing could satisfy the description that sense data are meant to satisfy, and indeed that it makes no sense to talk about foundations of knowledge, although their routes to this conclusion and the way the deploy it going forward are somewhat different.[8]

This argument against the possibility of epistemic foundations, which rests on the insight that nothing can be immediate and foundational and at the same time lie in what

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[8] There is insufficient space to go into the details of the complex argument of EPM here. But de Vries and Triplett (2000) present an excellent overview.

Sellars calls "the space of reasons," that is, the domain of justification that constitutes knowledge, constitutes the heart of the epistemological attack on the Myth of the Given. But there is a semantic argument as well, which we will see is also relevant to the Tibetan debates to which we will soon turn. It is important to Carnap that sense data are not only epistemic primitives, known immediately without any justification or conceptualization, but that they are also semantic primitives, the denotations of the most basic terms in our language.

Carnap takes these to be observation terms, corresponding to immediately given sensory qualities, which might be rendered as *looks green, looks red, sounds like C#,* etc… These observation terms, he supposes, get their meanings directly by referring to immediate sense experiences, or, we might say, by being connected as labels for those experiences. More complex descriptive predicates, such as *is green, is red, is a C#*, etc… are then logical constructions from these primitively referential terms, denoting the properties of tending to produce the experiences of *looking green, looking red, sounding like C#,* etc…. And on to the rest of language. On this view—just as in the case of the epistemic side of the foundationalist program in which all of knowledge is grounded in the sensory given—all of meaning is grounded in the immediate referential relation between appearance terms and experiences. This entails that the constitution of meaning, like the constitution of knowledge, is *solipsistic* in Carnap's sense, that is, that a single knower or reporter could be a knower and a language user.[9]

This view also entails that appearance talk—predicates of the form *appearing to be F*—is logically and semantically prior to direct predication—the use of predicates of the form *is F*. Sellars put paid to this idea as well in EMP, pointing out that one can only learn such appearance predicates if one has already mastered the corresponding descriptive predicates, and that mastering those requires being socialized into linguistic norms and practices, just as learning to justify one's claims requires being socialized into epistemic

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[9] It is noteworthy that this approach to semantics is akin to that of Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus,* and is also the target of the decisive attack on private language in *Philosophical Investigations.* I will leave aside the comparison of Candrakīrti's and Tsongkhapa's position on language and meaning to Wittgenstein's. But there are rich parallels there, also suggesting a postmodern turn in premodern Tibetan philosophy. See Thurman (1980).

norms and practices. That is, one cannot know what is for something to *look red* if one does not already know what it is for something to *be red.* One cannot know something to be a red sense datum unless one already has the concept of redness that is meant to be derived from knowledge of red sense data.

So much for what was wrong with the *Aufbau* program. Let us now turn to the very different conclusions that Quine and Sellars draw from its failure. Quine, as a transcendentalist, accepts Carnap's claims that meaning demands primitive, determinate referential contact with particular moments of experience, and that any normatively rich account of knowledge—one that generates the possibility of epistemic obligation, criticism, etc—demands immediate contact with reality to ground those norms. He concludes from this that since there is no fundamental meaning-inducing relation between language and the world, there can be no such thing as meaning, that the very idea of linguistic meaning is incoherent. He also concludes that since there are no basic epistemic relations between minds and the world that could determine what one ought to believe, that normative epistemology is impossible.

Quine's proposal in this domain is to naturalize epistemology by making it a subdiscipline of psychology and the social sciences, that is, by adopting an anthropological approach to epistemology, eschewing any normative pretensions. On his view, we can ask what people say and do when they claim to pursue knowledge, but we cannot ask whether they are right to say and to do those things; we can ask about the regularities of uses of words, and about the conditions under which people approve or disapprove of their use, but not about their meanings. This is why he is both a naturalist and a transcendentalist.[10]

Sellars draws very different conclusions from the incoherence of Carnap's program. He concludes from the impossibility of primitive semantic and epistemic relations of language and thought to the world that neither language nor knowledge can have any foundations. But converting Quine's *modus tollens* into a *modus ponens,* he argues that neither meaning nor knowledge require foundations: meaning is constituted simply in the network of practices that constitute language use, practices that themselves induce the

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[10] See Quine (1960, 1981) for the details of the arguments.

norms that govern syntax, semantics, and pragmatics; knowledge is that which is achieved by the appropriate use of epistemic conventions that themselves are justified by the knowledge they enable. He thus argues that we can make perfect sense of the norms that induce linguistic meaning as well as those that govern epistemic activity by attending to the power of conventions to induce normativity. Indeed, we can see Sellars' focus on Carnap's solipsism as leading him in this direction.[11]

Sellars argues instead that empirical knowledge has no foundation (or as Wittgenstein puts a similar point so perfectly: "the foundations are held up by the walls of the house." [1972, ¶ 248]). We become knowers, on his account, when we come to participate competently in the collective social practice of justification and criticism; knowledge is just what we as a community of knowers take to be justified by our conventions of justification; no primitive world-experience relations are needed in order to constitute knowledge. We use language meaningfully, on this account, when we come to participate competently in collective social practice of language use; meaning is just the use that a word, or a phrase by the members of the community of language users; no primitive semantic word-world relations are necessary to constitute meaning.

Sellars thus does not *deny* the normativity that governs meaning and judgment. Instead he *explains* it. He explains that it derives from convention, the only possible source of normativity. Sellars hence joins Quine in his naturalism; but unlike Quine his approach to epistemology is *normative,* not *anthropological*, simply because he believes that we can naturalize normativity itself. Whereas Quine's naturalism leads him to deny that we can make any sense of the normativity presupposed by meaning and knowledge, Sellars' naturalism leads him to an explanation of how that normativity arises in nature.

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[11] This point also connects Sellars' thought to that of Hume and Wittgenstein, each of whom emphasized convention, or custom, as the source of normativity, as well as the fact that conventions are ungrounded, constituted only by the implicit agreement of those who participate in them, opening a wide avenue towards the naturalization of meaning and epistemology. See Garfield (2019) for a discussion of how this works in Hume's philosophy and Kripke (1982) for a discussion of how it works in Wittgenstein's philosophy. Note also that this connection forces one to take the *Empiricism* in the title of EPM very seriously. Many read this essay simply as an attack on the logical empiricism of Carnap and his followers in the sense data industry; but it is also the defense of an older form of empiricism found in Hume.

4. Responding to Dharmakīrti: Tsongkhapa and Taktsang

It is hard to miss the parallels between the Pramaṇavāda account of knowledge and Carnap's. Digṅāga and Dharmakīrti (henceforth I will generally only refer to Dharmakīrti, as it was he who was influential in Tibet, not so much Digṅāga) also take knowledge to have a foundation in immediate sensory experience, or *pratyakṣa,* perception that puts us in direct contact with sensible particulars (*svalakṣana*). On their account as well, the macroscopic phenomena we encounter in daily life are logical constructs out of these sensory experiences, known inferentially (via *anumāna*) through the engagement of universals (*samanyalakṣana*). And Dharmakīrti also takes sense perception to be immediate and veridical, absent any conceptual mediation, and directly presenting sensory experiences as they are. The possibility of error in experience enters with conceptual thought and the engagement with unreal universals. The foundationalism, the commitment to the given, the methodological solipsism, and the nonconceptual nature of perception we encountered in Carnap's program are all presaged in early Indian Buddhist epistemology.

The semantic side of Carnap's program also has antecedents in Buddhist Pramāṇavāda*,* although the homologies are not so tight in this case. This is because the Pramāṅavādins did not think that the sense experiences delivered by perception are expressible at all. They argue that language and conceptuality go hand in hand, and that language always engages with universals, not the particulars given to us in perceptual experience. Nonetheless, there is an important point of agreement: Carnap, as we have seen, thought that our ordinary language denotes things that are logical constructions from a sensory given, and that words get their meaning through a semantic relation to the world mediated in the first instance by reference to those objects, and in the final analysis by the particulars into which those macroscopic objects resolve on analysis. The only difference is that whereas Carnap takes the meanings of ordinary terms themselves to be analayzable in terms of terms denoting experiences, Dhamakīrti, because he takes that more primitive denotation to be impossible, does not adopt this analytic semantic foundationalism.[12]

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[12] Instead, following a general Buddhist suspicion of the adequacy of language to the world in virtue of the falsifying nature of conceptuality, Dharmakīrti could be regarded as a kind of semantic nihilist. Language, on his view, appears to be meaningful and to denote real phenomena, but that is mere appearance; in the end, it is meaningless chatter.

Because of his enormous impact on Buddhist (and for that matter non-Buddhist) epistemology in India, Dharmakīrti, and hia commentators attracted a great deal of philosophical attention in Tibet. Nonetheless, they were not without rivals. His Mādhyamika critic Candrakīrti had a very different epistemological perspective. Candrakīrti argues in *Clear Words (Prasannapadā)* against limiting the number of *pramāṇas* to two (adding at least testimony (*śabda*) and analogy (*upamāna*) to the list, suggesting that it is open-ended. He also rejects their foundationalism, following Nāgārjuna in taking the *pramāṇas* to be vindicated by the objects they deliver (*prameyas*) and by one another in a coherentist epistemology. In these two respects, we also see Candrakīrti rejecting the methodological solipsism shared by the Pramāṇavādins and Carnap.

Candrakīrti also diverges from the Pramāṇavāda tradition in his understanding of linguistic meaning. In a careful analysis of the idea of convention (*samvṛti/lokavyāvahāra*) he takes meaning to be constituted not by direct referential relations to extralinguistic reality, but by a network of customs for the use of words. This idea, championed in the 20th century in Europe and the United States by Wittgenstein and Sellars, not only runs counter to the Dharmakīrti's reductionism, but also to his methodological solipsism. For it forces us, if we want to understand the content of language and thought, to look to the community of language users and thinkers, and not to the individual speaker or subject.

This is particularly important in the present context because Tsongkhapa and his followers in the Geluk tradition, as well as Taktsang and his followers in the Sakya and Kagyu traditions all take themselves to follow Candrakīrti and not the Pramāṇavādins in their understanding of knowledge and justification in the context of Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka. But just how they take themselves to do so is a matter of contention. They each reject the Dharmakīrti's foundationalism, as well as his individualism. But while Tsongkhapa argues that this is consistent with a robust normative epistemology and the possibility of expressing a true Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka position, Taktsang argues that at most it leaves us with an anthropological account of people's deluded epistemic practices, and reduces Madhyamaka to inexpressibility. We hence see Tsongkhapa as following

Sellars' approach to the Carnap in his response to Dignāga, and Takstang following Quine's approach in his very different response.

Let us begin with Tsongkhapa. In the *Special Insight (lhag tong)* section of *Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment (Lam rim chen mo,* 2004), Tsongkhapa explains how he interprets Candrakīrti's exposition of Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka and how he interprets Candrakīrti's epistemology in this context. There are four central issues to which we need to attend: how he takes Candrakīrti's account of *pramāṇa* to differ from that of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti; his account of knowledge as always conceptual; his understanding of conventional truth as *truth*; his argument that the Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka position must be expressible.

Tsongkhapa notes that according to those in the Pramāṇavāda tradition, perception is an epistemic warrant because it puts us in direct, conceptually unmediated causal contact with particulars, which it delivers to consciousness nondeceptively, that is, with a mode of appearance congruent with their mode of existence. This is both why perception can serve as a foundation for knowledge, and why perception is nondeceptive, hence warranting. It is foundational because it depends on nothing else; it is warranting because it is always direct and nondeceptive. Candrakīrti, on the other hand, he argues, follows Nāgārjuna's account in *Reply to Objections (Vigrahavyāvartanī)*, arguing that the *pramāṇas* and their *prameyas* are mutually dependent, and that the various *pramāṇas* also are mutually supportive, like the sheaves in a stack.[13] We learn to trust our vision when we are told that it is good; inference only gives us general knowledge when we can discern analogies between cases, etc… Tsongkhapa is clear in the *Special Insight (lhag tong)* section of *Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment (Lam rim chen mo)* that he sides with Candrakīrti, not Dharmakīrti in his understanding of epistemic warrant. He writes, "As to assertions about forms and such, we do not hold that valid cognition does not establish them; valid cognition does establish them." (2015, v.3, p. 163) And a bit later,

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[13] One should point out that while Candrakīrti enumerates four *pramāṇas,* adding testimony (*śabda*) and analogy (*upamāna*) to the two recognized by Pramāṇavādins, without closing the door to any conventional epistemic instrument or warrant, Tsongkhapa does follow Dharmakīrti in arguing that all other *pramāṇas* reduce to perception and inference. (See Garfield 2015, c. 7 for more on this issue.)

...the logicians hold that a perception is a consciousness that is free from conceptuality and is non-mistaken... Therefore it is in relation to the intrinsic character of these five objects that they consider such perceptions to be valid.

...Candrakīrti does not accept even conventionally tha anything exists essentially or by way of its intrinsic character.... Thus, how could he accept this claim that the sensory consciousnesses are valid with regard to the intrinsic character of their objects? (*Ibid.,* p. 165)

Tsongkhapa's student Khedrupje (1385-1438) puts the point this way:

Focusing on the various designations of persons and phenomena—labeling this a pot, and that Devadatta—based just on that, we can engage in effective action. Therefore, these are conventionally nondeceptive. But if it were first necessary to initially search for the referent of those names, nothing could be accomplished. (1972, 171-172)

And again:

In the Prāsaṅgika system, one determines whether or not something is a mistaken cognition based on whether or not there is an epistemic warrant that contradicts how it apprehends its object, not on whether or not the conceived object (*zhen yul*) appears erroneously, or on whether or not there is an epistemic warrant that contradicts how it appears. (*Ibid.*, 458)

That is, on this understanding, what generates epistemic warrant is not direct contact with things as they are, but rather a role in ordinary activity and confirmation by other warrants and they objects they deliver.

Moreover, Tsongkhapa and his Geluk followers argue, a *pramāṇa* may be veridical or trustworthy with respect to an object in some respects, but not in others. Perception, for instance, may be a warrant for the size, shape, or location of an external object, but might mistakenly deliver it to us as intrinsically real. There is thus a kind of fallibilism built into Tsongkhapa's understanding of epistemic warrant. He cashes this out by distinguishing

between conventional and ultimate *pramāṇas,* and emphasizing that conventional *pramāṇas* are nondeceptive with respect to conventional truth, in virtue of being confirmed by, and not being undermined by, other conventional *pramāṇas,* but are nonetheless deceptive with regard to ultimate truth, a domain accessible only by ultimate *pramāṇas.* We thus end up with an epistemology grounded in interdependence and in collective epistemic activity. Warrant arises not from direct, nondeceptive access to reality as it is, but from participation in a set of conventions that are mutually supportive and that constitute conventional justification. The first Panchen Lama, Losang Chökyi Gyaltsen (1570-1662) explains Tsongkhapa's position as follows:

> The visual consciousness that apprehends material form is epistemically reliable with regard to: (a) form, (b) the *appearance* of form, and (c) the *appearance* of form's existing essentially; but it is *not* epistemically warranting in regard to (d) form's existing essentially. Therefore, even though an ordinary visual consciousness apprehending form is an erroneous consciousness, this does not contradict its being epistemically warranted in regard to form. (Yakherds 2020 vol. 2, p xxx)

Geshe Yeshes Thabkhas summarizes this point nicely:

> Consider a visual cognition apprehending a blazing object such as fire. The visual cognition apprehending a fire is an epistemic warrant with respect to the object's ability to produce heat and burn things; but the same visual cognition is not an epistemic warrant with regard to the object's objective existence, because although the object appears to exist objectively, this appearance does not constitute the object's mode of existence. If the blazing entity that the cognition apprehends as a fire can produce heat and burn things, the cognition apprehending the fire is non-deceptive with respect to the fire. (Yakherds 2020, p xxx).

Tsongkhapa also rejects the idea that knowledge can ever be nonconceptual. Even perceptual knowledge, he argues, must be assertable and communicable. Even nonconceptual meditative equipoise only yields actual knowledge in the postmeditative

state when it can be verbalized, when it achieves a structure that can be assessed as *true* or *false,* and validated by appeal to appropriate *pramāṇas.* He writes that the point of uniting meditation and analysis is to "experience both serenity which observes a non-discursive image and insight which observes a discursive image." (2015, v. 3, p. 358) If this is so, even perceptual knowledge is *knowledge that,* and is therefore conceptually mediated. If so, once again, there are no foundations for knowledge, and what validates knowledge is not direct connection with reality, but rather the use of conventionally accepted epistemic practices, even if those practices are not always veridical. Tsongkhapa relies here on Candrakīrti's analysis in *Clear Words*:

> Since cyclic existence is also a concept (*rtog*), nirvana too must be a
> concept, for the both exist as mundane linguistic conventions. ... [Ultimate
> truth] is called *ultimate truth* by means of mundane linguistic convention
> because its nature is not to deceive the world. [5cd, 7b, translated in
> Yakherds 2020, vol. 1, pp xxx)

This takes us straight to the issue of the nature of conventional truth. Candrakīrti famously notes that *samvṛti* can either mean *conventional* in all of its familiar senses, indicating *by agreement, ordinary, nominal, everyday, etc…* or *concealing, obscuring.* So, we can gloss *samvṛti-satya* accurately either as *conventional truth* or as *concealing* or *obscurational truth.* One's attitude towards the status of conventional truth depends a good deal on which of these readings one takes to be primary.[14] Tsongkhapa takes the first route, emphasizing that to be conventionally true is a way of being *true,* not a sham that conceals the truth. He leans hard on Nāgārjuna's doctrine of two truths, arguing that there can only

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[14] Dan Arnold observes (forthcoming) "the differently valenced senses of the word *samvṛti* here in play – the sense of this as 'concealing' the nature of reality from us, and the sense of it as also denoting the "customary truth" that is a condition of the possibility of our knowing anything at all – would be in tension only if it is thought that what ordinary experience conceals is something *real*. If what ordinary experience prevents us from seeing is the kind of 'intrinsic identity that is an existent', then it would make sense to say that conventional truth has, relative to that, a basically deficient status. There is no such problem, however, if it is recognized that what is concealed from us is the 'mere absence' of the existential status habitually imputed to entities – that the radical contingency of dependently originated existents tends to be hidden from view does not change the fact that it is only *because* all existents are contingent that this obscuration can in the first place be overcome. To that extent, it makes sense that the reality that 'conceals' its own contingency is nonetheless the only reality there is.

be two of each of them is in fact a kind of truth. And since truth, or reality, and validation by *pramāṇas* are coextensive terms in this tradition, conventional truth is very much a way of being real, a way of being true, of being trustworthy. This is why Tsongkhapa can argue that the basis of division of the two truths is objects of knowledge: conventional and ultimate are each objects of knowledge, each real. We thus see a tight connection between normativity and reality: what is real is what is warranted by normative practices.[15]

And this brings us to the issue of the expressibility of the Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka position. The question gains poignancy not only because this is a central bone of contention between Tsongkhapa and Taktsang, but also because of the consensus that emptiness, or the ultimate truth, is a non-implicative negation (*med dgag*) and Nāgārjuna's insistence in *Fundamental Verses on the Middle Way (Mūlamadhyamakakārikā)* that emptiness is not a *view,* (13.8) as well as his claim in *Replies to Objections* not to assert any proposition. (29) These claims can be taken to suggest that if we really take Madhyamaka seriously, no claim about ultimate truth, and so no comprehensive assertion of any Madhyamaka position, can make any sense, that all would be self-refuting.

Tsongkhapa replies to this suggestion by arguing that even to deny a claim is to assert a negation; that even if emptiness is a non-implicative negation, Mādhyamikas assert that all phenomena are empty. Moreover, since Nāgārjuna argues for the equivalence of emptiness an dependent origination, and since all Mādhyamikas assert that all phenomena—including emptiness—are dependently originated, we can certainly say things both about the conventional and the ultimate truth, and positively affirm the truth of the Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka vision. This is enabled by Candrakīrti's understanding of meaning in terms of linguistic use. Even if we say that language does not latch directly onto the world and consider it only to be *upāya,* the fact that it is *upāya* constitutes its utility as language. And if use can determine meaning, then even in the absence of direct word-world referential links, there is no bar to meaning, even in the context of Prāsaṅgika dialectic. Here is the first Purbuchok, Ngawang Jampa, (1682-1762) defending Tsongkhapa's position against Taktsang:

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[15] See Cowherds (2010) for a more detailed discussion of the senses in which Candrakīrti and Tsongkhapa take conventional truth to be *bona fide* truth.

Again, you claim that the principle of double negation elimination (*dgag pa gnyis kyis rnal ma go ba*)—the fact that, for example, whatever phenomenon does not exist must be nonexistent—is something that only the lower philosophical schools accept, whereas the Great Madhyamaka rejects the view that all phenomena are either existent or nonexistent. Hence, you assert that Mādhyamikas have no theses and no claims whatsoever, for to have theses and claims is to commit to reification or nihilism. …

[This] is a fallacy that comes from not reading *Reply to Objections* even in a cursory fashion, much less reading Nāgārjuna's other works such as those in the collected hymns of praise and in the collection of analytical texts. *Reply to Objections* says:

> To oppose essencelessness
> Is to support essentialism. (26cd)

Therefore, consider your two theses—that "the relative truth is not epistemically warranted," and that "all phenomena are neither existent, nor nonexistent." It would follow that it is a fallacy for Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamikas to accept these because they are theses. Checkmate! (Yakherds 2020, p xxx)

So, on each of these issues, Tsongkhapa and his followers have a clear positive position: we can be warranted with regard to the conventional even though there is no foundation of empirical knowledge; all knowledge is conceptually mediated; conventional truth is a kind of truth; and the Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka position is assertable. We now turn to Taktsang and his followers, who, we will see, will disagree with each of these positions.

In the fifth chapter of *Freedom from Extremes Accomplished through Comprehensive Knowledge of Philosophy (Grub mtha' kun shes nas mtha' 'bral sgrub pa)*, Taktsang Lotsawa adduces what he calls "the 18 great contradictions in the thought of Tsongkhapa." (Yakherds 2020, vol. 2) The vast majority of these concern what he sees as Tsongkhapa's

illegitimate importation of the language of *pramāṇa,* which he sees as inextricably tied to Digṅāga's and Dharmakīrti's project, into Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka, as well as Tsongkhapa's insistence on the expressibility of the Prāsaṅgika position. He summarizes the point nicely in this verse from the root text of *Freedom from Extremes:*

> 18. The reason for this heavy burden of contradictions
> Is their harping on a purely mundane and nonanalytic perspective
> While imposing rationality, they analyze and justify
> Because of their logic habit.

The "logic habit" and the analysis and justification to which Taktsang objects is the use of the conventional *pramāṇas* that the Geluk tradition takes to be essential to the project of understanding the two truths, and to be completely consistent with Candrakīrti's project. Taktsang, on the other hand, takes each of these to be inconsistent with Candrakīrti's articulation of Madhyamaka.

        While there are many ways to understand the dispute between Tsongkhapa and Taktsang and the extensive debate it engendered, and a great deal of nuance in Takstang's own articulation of Prāsaṅgika philosophical practice (Yakherds 2020, vol.1), much of this is beside the present point. For now, note that when we see this dispute as framed by distinct responses to the Pramāṇavāda project, we will see Taktsang as playing Quine to Tsongkhapa's Sellars. Like Tsongkhapa, Taktsang takes Dharmakīrti and his followers to be committed to a foundationalist understanding of warrant and of meaning and to methodological solipsism; like Tsongkhapa, he rejects both of these ideas. But whereas Tsongkhapa argues that epistemic warrant and meaning can be reconstructed through a realistic account of normativity grounded in convention, Taktsang argues that any commitment to warrant or to meaning presupposes the foundationalist, solipsistic framework in which they are articulated, and hence that neither in the end makes any sense.

        For present purposes, among the more important of the contradictions Taktsang adduces against Tsongkhapa are these:

> All objects being false contradicts their subjects being non-deceptive
>
> [13a]

> Accepting inference contradicts not articulating probative arguments. [13c]
>
> Things being true or false contradicts nothing being correct or incorrect. [15b]
>
> The nonexistence of floating hairs contradicts the existence of the rivers of pus. [14c]
>
> Refuting the foundation consciousness, reflexive awareness and other such doctrines…
> Contradicts the recognition of epistemic warrants in one's own framework. [17]

Let us spend a moment simply explaining each of these, before turning to Taktsang's diagnosis of their common root. The first of these concerns the tension between the assertion that all conventionally real things are ultimately false (*rdzun pa*) in virtue of the discordance between their mode of existence (conventionally real) and their mode of appearance (ultimately real) on the one hand and the claim that they are nondeceptive (*mi slu ba)* conventionally, in virtue of being ascertained by conventional epistemic warrants. Taktsang argues that the same thing cannot both be deceptive and non-deceptive.

The second in this sampler concerns the role of logic and reasoned argument in the Prāsaṅgika project. Tsongkhapa argues that Prāsaṅgika is distinguished from Svātantrika in part on the grounds that the latter school admits the use of Indian probative arguments (*prayoga*) whose terms are understood in common by both dialectical parties, whereas the former—while it admits the use of reasoning, including both *reductio ad absurdum (prāsaṅga)* and argument acceptable only to the Prāsaṅgika herself in which there is no presupposition that any non-Prāsaṅgika interlocutor would use terms in the same way— rejects the use of those probative arguments. Taktsang argues that once one is committed to the validity of inference, it is inconsistent to admit some kinds of inference while rejecting others.

The third and fourth are each connected to the first. The third raises a very important issue relevant to the response to foundationalism: if there is no absolute standard of correctness or incorrectness—no foundation for such judgments—how can truth or falsity mean anything at all? Are these judgments simply matters of subjective approval or disapproval? And the fourth introduces the problem of relativism. Were a human being to see falling hairs in her visual field, she would be wrong; they would be an illusion caused by eye disease. And if she were to see pus and blood where there is really water, she would be equally wrong. But if a preta were to see pus and blood in the same location, he would be correct. How is it that the perception of water by a human being, and that of pus and blood by a preta are both correct, while the perception of hairs by the peson with ophthalmia and the perception of their absence by everyone else are not? Let us now turn to the four issues we raised above, and see how Taktsang differs from Tsongkhapa on each of these.

First, there is the issue of the relationship between *pramāṇa* and foundations. As we saw above, Tsongkhapa responds to the incoherence of epistemic foundationalism by reconstructing normativity in a coherentist, conventionalist framework. Taktsang reacts very differently, accepting the entailment between a truly normative account of warrant and foundations to ground that warrant, he uses *modus tollens* to conclude from the incoherence of foundationalism that there is no possibility of a normative epistemology, asserting that we can only say in an everyday, non-analytic context, what people say about justification, not what justification is. He writes:

> They might reply that they do not accept foundations. But not being foundational contradicts being epistemically warranted; for to be epistemically warranted means to be nondeceptive, and being nondeceptive means nothing more than being foundational. (Yakherds 2020, vol. 2, p. xxx)

That is, he adopts what we have called an anthropological account of warrant, an account that pretends to nothing more than a description of deluded practice. When we move to a more sophisticated context—that of slight analysis, in which we engaged in Prāsaṅgika reflection, warrant has no place at all.

Second, there is the issue of the possibility of knowledge given that conceptuality always issues in some kind of falsification. We have seen that Tsongkhapa argues that even if when we cognize an object we are incorrect in some respects, we can nonetheless be correct in others, and that since knowledge is always expressible in a proposition asserting that an object has some property, it is always conceptual; nonetheless, assuming that we follow the epistemic practices appropriate to the conventional world, we can have knowledge of that world. Taktsang once again goes the other way. Since, he argues, knowledge must rely on infallible epistemic faculties and so must always be non-conceptual, and since there is no such access to the conventional world, there can be no genuine knowledge of conventional reality. This is articulated in the first several contradictions he adduces against Tsongkhapa. Here, for example, is the first:

> All objects being false contradicts their subjects being non-deceptive. (13a)

> Our opponents explain that unless one realizes that the object is false, one will fail to understand the meaning of relative truth. This is exactly right. In the Prāsaṅgika's own system, one indeed realizes that the relative is false. Therefore, it is contradictory to hold on the one hand that all relative objects are false and on the other hand that the cognitions that are their subjects can be nondeceptive and epistemically warranting. (Yakherds 2020, vol. 2, p xxx)

This is closely related to the third issue that divides Tsongkhapa and Taktsang in this domain: the very status of conventional truth. We have seen that Tsongkhapa, emphasizing that it is delivered by conventional *pramāṇas,* concludes that conventional truth is a kind of *truth.* Taktsang, on the other hand, rejecting the validity of any conventional *pramāṇa,* and focusing on the concealing nature of convention, and the

deceptive character of conventional truths, argues that it is not truth at all, and hence that to talk about knowing it is utter nonsense. He asserts, for instance, that "Things being true or false contradicts nothing being correct or incorrect," (Yakherds 2020, vol. 2, p. xxx) concluding that since all conventional things are false, there can be no standard of correctness in the conventional world.

We finally arrive at the question concerning the expressibility of the Prāsaṅgika philosophical approach, and so of the meaningfulness of anything we might say about reality. Tsongkhapa urges that we must be able to say what we mean and to endorse what we say when doing philosophy, and that the meaningfulness of the language we use derives from the conventions that govern its ordinary use. Taktsang, on the other hand, argues that since ultimate reality must be inexpressible, so must the Prāsaṅgika position; that since there are no truthmakers for our language, and no connection of language to the world, it is ultimately meaningless. All we can do is to talk about what people say; we never see through language to reality, and we never take our own utterances to be actual assertions. Taktsang's defender the 9th Karmapa Wangchuk Dorje (1556-1603) puts the point this way:

> In [the Prāsaṅgika] context, unless a proposition is considered from the perspective of others, double negation elimination is never accepted. Hence, to deny existence is not to accept nonexistence; to deny nonexistence is not to accept existence. The law of the excluded middle fails.
>
> Some might propose the following *reductio*s: "Because others say that there is a Madhyamaka system, there is a Madhyamaka system"; or, "Because others say that there is karmic causality, there is karmic causality." Neither follows. There is no proof of karmic causality, even though others accept it. This appears to be how we should formulate our response.
>
> If we grant that karmic causality exists and is a valid principle according to others, then we may also say that karmic causality according to others exists and is a valid principle. Does the karmic causality known

to others exist or not? We accept neither. Does the karmic causality known to others exist according to others? It does. But to parse that proposition to mean that its subject is taken as "the karmic causality known to others according to others" amounts to sophistry. (Yakherds 2020, vol, 2, p.xxx)

I hope that by now the extraordinary parallels between these two philosophical debates regarding the proper response to foundationalism—despite their separation by five centuries and a massive cultural divide—are apparent. Digṅāga and Dharmakīrti—like Carnap—propose an epistemology grounded in direct perceptual access to particulars, individualistic in character, and one that offers a semantic theory grounded in direct referential relations of singular terms to independently real objects. Knowledge and meaning are, in each case, vindicated by foundationalism; collective practice is regarded as the sum of individual competencies in this domain.

Taktsang and Tsongkhapa, as Quine and Sellars were to do, reacted against this foundationalism. As Quine and Sellars were to do, they each focused on the merely conventional character of language and the absence of any transcendent ontology that could ground knowledge and meaning. And Quine and Sellars, like Taktsang and Tsongkhapa before them, despite this broad agreement, disagreed vehemently about what this entailed, about whether *modus ponens* or *modus tollens* represented the correct response to this predicament. Taktsang and Quine took the negative route, conceding that any account of knowledge and meaning that is genuinely normative must be transcendent, and so rejecting the possibility of a normative epistemology and of linguistic meaning, settling for a merely anthropological account of epistemic and linguistic practice. Tsongkhapa and Sellars took the positive route, arguing that convention could—and indeed must—ground normativity, and so arguing for a naturalistic but normative account of knowledge and of meaning that is conventional and coherentist, not foundationalist in character. So, while there is agreement among the principals in each of these debates that no transcendent account of normativity is possible, there is substantial disagreement about whether this dooms the search for normativity *tout court.*

Reasonable people can disagree about who wins these parallel debates. Here I offer some words in defense of the Tsongkhapa/Sellars side of the argument. First of all, we must make sense of the role that normativity plays in our lives. Perhaps the most significant characteristic of our shared humanity is our disposition to institute, to recognize, to enforce, and to conform to rules.[16] This is true whether those are rules for the use of words that make language possible, rules for inference that make reasoning possible, rules for conduct that enable us to respect morality and the law, or rules or etiquette and religious observance that bind us more tightly into the communities that constitute these rules. The norms we live by are not *sui generis,* and they do not come to us from any transcendental source. As Candrakīrti and Hume each make clear, they derive from the way that our biological nature works itself out in the social contexts for which we are biologically tuned. Nonetheless, rules, and the normativity they require and induce, are real, as real is money, as real as governments, as real as thought, that is, as real as anything we encounter.

Any account of our lives that denies the reality of the norms that governs them therefore denies our very humanity. Moreover, any account that denies the reality of meaning or the authority of the arguments that establish that account denies its own cogency. And any account of expressibility that denies that it is expressible is a *reductio* on itself. For these reasons, the purely anthropological accounts of our normative life, and of language and epistemology in particular, advanced by Taktsang and Quine, appears not simply wrong, but self-defeating. Tsongkhapa and Sellars, on the other hand, by affirming the reality and the binding character of human norms, while grounding them in convention manage both to avoid the foundationalism that is their shared target, together with the essentialism that it entails, while embracing the naturalism that motivates it. They do not eliminate normativity, but show how to make sense of it as conventionally real. We might initially balk at the ideas that conventions themselves are only conventionally real; but that regress is virtuous, not vicious, reflecting the groundless reality that Madhyamaka affirms. For these reasons, Tsongkhapa's and Sellars' version of conventionalism and naturalism

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[16] See the essays collected in Roughley and Bayertz (2019) for a range of discussions of the role of normativity in human life and of its biological and social basis.

appears to be a more cogent response to Dharmakīrti and to Carnap than that of Taktsang and Quine.

5. Tibetan Modernity Revisited: the Dalai Lama XIV and Modern Science
I have been arguing that the debate inaugurated by Taktsang's attack on Tsongkhapa anticipates that between Sellars and Quine in the 20th century. But, it is now time to ask, is this really an indication of *modernity* in Tibetan philosophy in the 15th century? Was Tibet, indeed, modern *avant a lettre?* I think not, and the reasons for this indicate a tension in Tibetan modernity even in the present.

Modernity, as I noted above, comes to Europe and infuses philosophical thought not simply through the advance of time, and not even simply through the advance of ideologies such as individualism, rationalism, or secularity, although these are critical components of the modern complex. The other critical component, I emphasized, is the deference to science as the arbiter of the fundamental nature of reality, as the ultimate epistemic authority. We might say fairly that European philosophy chose to be modern when philosophers sided with Galileo against the Church in the contest for that epistemic authority. The rest follows from that.

It is noteworthy that Carnap, Quine, and Sellars, despite the enormous differences in philosophical outlook that divide them, share this commitment to *scientia mensura.* Indeed, each grounds his respective position on an account of what science demands or does not demand. This commitment is notably absent in the work of Dharmakīrti, Tsongkhapa, and Taktsang. And no talk of Buddhist "inner science," of the kind made popular by the work of the Dalai Lama XIV (2006, 2018) and others such as Allan Wallace (2009) can undermine this claim. For while it is true that Buddhist meditators and adepts in Tibet during that period developed great philosophical insight into the mind, it is not true that they deployed anything like the scientific method in that endeavor. There are no controlled experiments; there is no third-person study of these phenomena, and no scientific suspicion of the veridicality of first-person report. Buddhist philosophical approaches to the mind—while they do embed a distinction between a theoretical and an observation language, and while they do appeal to theoretical entities to explain observations—do not subject their theories to the tests that constitute science.

We can fairly say that modernity enters Tibetan philosophy with the present Dalai Lama's engagement with science, and with his explicit commitment to *scientia mensura*. He has repeatedly asserted that where science contradicts Buddhist doctrine, science trumps Buddhism. And his personal engagement with and endorsement of science has percolated deep into Tibetan academic culture, as evidenced not only by the *Mind and Life* dialogues, but more importantly by the recent revisions in Tibetan monastic curricula spearheaded by the *Science for Monks* program jointly administered by Emory University and the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives. To be sure, the heritage of philosophical reflection he inherits, in virtue not only of its systematic rigor, but also in virtue of its recognition of the distinction between observation and theory, and its attention to the important epistemological issues we have scouted, enables this venture into modernity. But philosophical modernity really only arrives with the serious engagement with science that we now see in the Tibetan community.

This is not to say that Tsongkhapa is not an important precursor to this developing modernity. His commitment to reason, his insistence on the fact that knowledge is discursive and conceptual, and that we can make sense of truth, knowledge, and meaning in the ordinary conventional world, are all necessary ingredients of a modern outlook, and indeed are necessary precursors to science itself. They make possible the engagement with science that is transforming Tibetan approaches to understanding reality today, and that usher in a genuine Tibetan modernity.

But this modernity is not yet complete. And paradoxically, it is much of the rhetoric about "inner science" that stands in the way of a true modernity. For too many involved in the rapprochement between the Tibetan Buddhist world and the contemporary scientific world—prominently including the Dalai Lama XIV—persist in the idea that the mind is directly accessible to itself in introspection, and the valorization of what has been called a "first person" science of consciousness. To do so is not only at odds with the scientific method, which demands intersubjectivity and which takes seriously the idea that all observation is mediated by potential distortion, but is also, paradoxically, to disregard the advice of Tsongkhapa. For to do so is to succumb to the Myth of the Given that he so astutely rejected long before Sellars named it. It is to suggest that our access to our inner

space is conceptually unmediated, direct, and presents the mind and its psychological processes to observation *as they are,* as opposed to *as they appear to potentially erroneous introspective processes.*

To put the point most bluntly, if our goal is to understand the nature of the mind, we must presuppose that we do not yet do so. But if the mind is the very instrument by means of which we investigate the mind, we must confess that we have no idea how that instrument works, or how veridical its output is: is it the microscope that those who valorize this approach claim it to be, or is it the kaleidoscope as anyone convinced of the pervasiveness of cognitive illusion must suspect that it is? Without answering this question, we have no reason to be at all confident about any introspective methodology in cognitive science. This is why the idea that Buddhism has incorporated an "inner science" for millennia is so flawed. A systematic study of the inner is not yet a *science* of the inner, and that transition from philosophical reflection to scientific study is only happening in the last few decades.

Philosophical modernity is hence a work in progress in the Tibetan world. That is not to say that there is no progress, only that modernity is not yet fully here. But the modernity that is arriving, we have seen, has very old roots indeed, and emerges in a form not all that different from that it has taken in Western philosophy.

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