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Direct Perception in dGe-lugs-pa Interpretations of Sautrāntika

by Anne C. Klein

I. Texts

In a religious-philosophical system which considers erroneous perception—ignorance—to be the chief source of suffering, and whose goal is to eradicate such error, epistemological analysis is a vital issue. Starting roughly with the Indian philosopher Dignāga in about the 5th century A.D., Buddhist philosophers began to discuss perceptual errors in terms of direct and conceptual perception (*pratyakṣa*, *mngon sum*; *kalpanā*, *rtog pa*) and their objects. According to these thinkers, there are only two types of valid cognition, direct perception (*pratyakṣa-pramāna*, *mngon sum tshad ma*) and inference (*anumāna pramāna*, *rjes dpag tshad ma*).

The works of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti were among the major Indian texts that Tibetan commentators relied upon to formulate a presentation of the Sautrāntika system. This was a task requiring considerable interpretation. Indian texts written by Sautrāntikas never came to Tibet; rather, Sautrāntika assertions were introduced into Tibet through mention of them in texts that focused mainly on other systems. Foremost among this group are Dharmakīrti's *Seven Treatises on Valid Cognition* (*Tshad ma'i bstan bcos sde bdun*), especially the *Commentary on (Dignāga's) "Compendium on Valid Cognition"* (*Pramāṇavarttikā-kārikā*) and Dignāga's *Compendium on Valid Cognition* (*Pramāṇa-samuccaya*).¹ It is widely recognized that the works of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti can be interpreted in many different ways. No less an authority than Daniel H.H. Ingalls has bluntly stated: "the *Pramāṇasamuccaya* exhibits in exaggerated form the elliptical style that characterizes Sanskrit texts of philosophy."² Vary-

ing modes of interpretation grew up in Tibet amid a rich tradition of written and oral commentarial material evolved over many centuries. In the dGe-lugs-pa order, founded by Tsongkha-pa in the 14th century, this material became an important part of the monastic college curriculum and remains so to this day. Portions from that exegetical tradition form the basis for the present investigation of direct perception.

In an effort to tap the resources of a still vibrant tradition whose ability to survive the rigors of the present century is yet uncertain, emphasis has been placed on 18th and 19th century Tibetan commentarial works in current usage among Tibetan dGe-lugs-pa scholars and the oral discourse that traditionally accompanies them. In particular, the following discussion draws on Den-dar-hla-ram-ba (bsTan-dar-lha-ram-pa, b. 1759), Ngawang-bel-den (Nga-dbang-dpal-ldan, b. 1797) who is also known as Bel-den-chö-jay, Pur-bu-jok (Phur-bu-lcog, 1825–1901), Jang-gya (lCang-skya, 1717–86), and Jam-yang-shay-ba (Jam-dbyangs-bzhad-pa, 1648–1721)—see the Bibliography for full entries. Works by these authors, together with the Tibetan translations of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, have for the last 100 years been the major sources for Sautrāntika epistemological studies in the dGe-lugs-pa monastic universities. This literature, like the Buddhist commentarial tradition generally, is often exceedingly terse and presumes a great deal of background. The books were meant to be read (1) in conjunction with an oral explanation, at which time they serve as lecture notes to the instructor, who expands on and questions points in the text and (2) as a complement to other rigorous textual study and debate. No one text is a truly self-contained unit; no one of the works by the above commentators yields a comprehensive view of the dGe-lugs-pa discussion of direct perception.

II. Scholarly Informants

In my own study and translation of these works³ I have been in systematic consultation with thinkers who are widely regarded in the Tibetan scholarly community and, increasingly, the Western one, as leading figures among the last generation of scholars to complete virtually all of their Geshe training in

Tibet. Contact with these holders of the oral philosophical tradition has been essential to the present research. My work to date indicates that the level of analytical detail in the oral scholarly tradition regarding the functioning of direct perception significantly exceeds that found in the texts alone.

Geshe Gedun Lodrö, the first Tibetan scholar with whom I discussed in some detail dGe-lugs-pa analyses of direct perception, was trained in Gomang College of Drebung Monastic University. He received the Geshe degree in 1961 when he was ranked first among all other recipients that year. For several years prior to his untimely death in 1979 at the age of 55 he taught at the University of Hamburg, Germany. I worked with him on the Sautrāntika section of Jam-yang-shay-pa's *Great Tenets* (*Grub mtha'i chen mo*) when he was a Visiting Lecturer in Religious Studies at the University of Virginia in 1978.

Kensur Yeshay Thupden, abbot emeritus of Loseling College of Drebung Monastic University in India, was the highest ranking Geshe in his year, and is widely renowned for his ability to draw out the meaning and context of questions arising from textual readings. I discussed works by Den-dar-hla-ram-ba and Bel-den-chö-jay with him as a Fulbright Dissertation Researcher in India in 1980, and during his stay as Visiting Lecturer at Virginia in 1982. One of his foremost students, Geshe Bel-Dendrak-ba, Head Librarian and Resident Scholar at the Tibet House cultural center in New Delhi, provided invaluable insight in the course of our discussions of Jang-gya's Sautrāntika chapter by drawing my attention to problems inherent in the Sautrāntika presentation of direct perception. While in India I also benefited from discussing a variety of points from Jang-gya with Ven. Tshultrim Phuntzog of Gomang, who now holds Geshe Gedun Lodrö's former post at the University of Hamburg.

My procedure with these scholars was to elicit and tape-record their commentary on the text at hand, and to use this commentary as a starting point for detailed discussions of key issues that often led us to other commentators or to their Indian sources. After each session, conducted solely in Tibetan, I would listen to the tape, translating and summarizing the discussion. This would usually generate further discussion on our next meeting; it thus became possible to have a sustained dialogue over several weeks or months devoted to identifying and dealing

with major points or problems. The material from these sessions became the raw data which was then shaped into the present discussion. Where there is general agreement among literal and oral philosophical material I have presented this as the generic dGe-lugs-pa position. Where there have been differences on key points, the merits of each argument are considered.

In brief, the discussion is formulated so as to accommodate three purposes: (1) to make available a detailed, accurate description of direct perception as it is understood in the dGe-lugs-pa interpretation of Sautrāntika, (2) to critically analyze this interpretation in the context of other Buddhist systems' discussions of direct perception and (3) to identify and probe the significance of apparent inconsistencies or other limitations in the dGe-lugs-pa presentation. It will of course be very important to clarify how the dGe-lugs-pa view contrasts with or emulates Buddhist and non-Buddhist Indian traditions which deal with perception, but that is beyond the scope of the present article. The focus here is on the discussion of direct perception—its objects and its mode of functioning—in the context of the dGe-lugs-pa interpretation of Sautrāntika.

It is axiomatic to the dGe-lugs-pa view of Sautrāntika that only impermanent or specifically characterized phenomena (*svalakṣaṇa*, *rang mtshan*) actually appear as objects of direct perception. Because directly perceiving consciousnesses are seen here as ultimate minds, the impermanent things they perceive—tables, chairs, and the like—are considered ultimate truths (*paramārtha-satya*, *don dam bden pa*) in the system of the Sautrāntika Followers of Reasoning (*nyāyānusārin*, *rigs pa'i rje su 'brangs pa*) as defined by dGe-lugs-pa scholarship. An understanding of the epistemological and ontological implications of this unusual tenet requires a detailed investigation into how directly perceiving consciousnesses take on the aspects of their objects. It is a topic on which there is a wider variety of opinion than most.

III. A Consciousness that Fully Perceives Objects

According to the dGe-lugs-pa presentation of Sautrāntika, specifically characterized phenomena are things which exist the way they appear. Their existence does not depend on imputation

by thought or terminology, for they are established by way of their own nature, and that actual nature appears to direct perception. These features greatly distinguish objects of direct perception from objects of thought. For, the image of a pot that appears to thought is like a pot but not a pot. What appears to direct perception is an actual pot, not something that is merely like one. Therefore, the eye consciousness observing a pot is an ultimate mind because the features appearing to it are what they appear to be—both in the sense that the mode of being of the pot appears just as it is and because an actual, functioning pot itself is taken as the object; it is not represented by something else.

The eye consciousness that sees a pot is a complete engager (**vidhi-pravṛtti-buddhi, sgrub 'jug gi blo*). This means that everything which co-exists with that pot, such as its mouth, base, color, subtle impermanence and so forth, appears directly to that eye consciousness. All the impermanent characteristics that come into existence and go out of existence simultaneously with the pot's own momentary production and disintegration are said to be one substantial entity of production and abiding (*grub bde rdzas gcig*) with the pot. Permanent phenomena related with the pot are not one substantial entity of production and abiding with the pot. For example, the uncaused space inside a pot is a permanent phenomenon because it does not change or disintegrate from one moment to the next. Thus, "permanent" here means static, not eternal, for that space comes into existence when the pot is produced and goes out of existence when the pot is destroyed. Even though its existence is simultaneous with that of the pot, this space is not one substantial entity of production and abiding with the pot because permanent and impermanent phenomena cannot be a single substance (**ekadravya, rdzas gcig*). Because only impermanent specific characteristics, which are one substantial entity with the pot, are explicitly realized by the eye consciousness, the permanent uncaused space is not so realized. To be explicitly realized means that the object casts its own specific characteristics toward the consciousness. Uncaused space has no such specific characteristics and, as a permanent phenomenon, cannot perform the function of casting its own aspect. Therefore, it is not realized explicitly by the eye consciousness. However, it cannot be said that the eye consciousness

does not realize uncaused space at all; rather, it realizes space implicitly (*shugs rtogs*)—that is, not by means of aspects cast toward it but through observing a gap in the material of the pot.

Even with respect to the impermanent characteristics of pot which do actually appear, the eye consciousness is not necessarily able to induce ascertainment of all that appears to it. It is a complete engager in the sense that the entire collection of specific characteristics that are one substantial entity with the pot do appear to it—cast their aspect toward it—but not in the sense that it induces ascertainment of all of them.

A consciousness which is a complete engager is defined as one which engages all parts of its object,⁴ but this does not entail the absurdity that all particles of a table, for example, appear to a single eye consciousness in the sense that those inside it, or on the side opposite to the one facing the perceiver and so forth, would appear. It simply means that all parts of the object which would normally be considered within eye range are appearing. Sautrāntikas, Cittamātrins and Svāntrikas all agree that the specific characteristics of an object must appear to direct perception. This is because if direct perception were not valid with respect to the specific characteristics of the five types of objects (forms, sounds, odors, tastes, and tangible objects) they would not be valid with respect to specifically characterized phenomena. The eye consciousness is “valid” with respect to specific characteristics not in the sense that it ascertains them, but only in the sense that they appear. What the eye consciousness is able to ascertain is that the object exists by way of its own power—or, more technically, by way of its own characterizedness, and not through being imputed by thought or terminology.

To realize the specifically characterized nature of a phenomenon means to ascertain its mode of abiding; that is, to realize everything that is one substantial entity of place, time, and nature with it—for example, production, productness, subtle impermanence, ultimate truth, form and shape, abiding and cessation.⁵ Thus, even though the eye consciousness does realize a specifically characterized phenomenon and even though the aspect cast by the object is concordant with the nature of the object, the eye consciousness or any other ultimate consciousness does not *ascertain* the actual specifically characterized nature of its object. The eye consciousness of an ordinary person cannot

ascertain all the specific characteristics that are part of this specifically characterized nature. It cannot ascertain the object's inability to abide for a second moment by its own power that is the subtle impermanence of that object, it cannot ascertain the subtle moment-by-moment disintegration of a product—the disintegration that is the definition of being a product—and thus cannot ascertain the specific nature of the table as being a product.⁶ In Sautrāntika, all these characteristics, momentary disintegration, productness and so forth, are part of the object's mode of abiding (*gnas tshul*). This is quite different from the Mādhyamika assertion that there is just one final mode of abiding (*gnas lugs mthar thug*)—an object's emptiness of inherent existence.⁷

To realize something as a specifically characterized phenomenon means to know that it exists from its own side, that is to say, without being merely imputed by thought or terminology. Even though a table, for example, is imputed to its parts in the sense that when one sees them one thinks "This is a table," a table is not imputed by thought. In this system, to be imputed by thought simply means to be an object of thought. It is not a statement about the thing's mode of existence. Thus, although the table is imputed by thought, it is not *merely* imputed by thought. It exists from its own side, independent of thought or terminology.⁸

An eye consciousness can engage the entire collection of characteristics associated with its object because all the aspects of that object appear toward the sense consciousness. Thus, an alternative definition of a consciousness that is a complete engager is "an awareness that operates through the power of the [functioning] thing."⁹ What appears to a direct perceiver or a mind of complete engagement such as an eye consciousness are the aspects cast by the object or functioning thing itself; therefore, such a perceiver observes only presently existing phenomena. Today's pot can be an object of today's eye consciousness; the eye cannot see tomorrow's pot, which is yet to be created, nor yesterday's pot, which no longer exists. Only thought can reflect on past and future objects. It is also thought, not direct perception, that superimposes onto presently existing phenomena a continuity extending from the past to the future.

For example, when a person observes a river flowing by,

what actually appears to the eye consciousness is just the minute, presently appearing particles of water as well as the impermanence and other aspects which are one substantial entity with them. The particles of water—the present stream of them—are specifically characterized phenomena, appearing objects of the eye consciousness that perceives them. The minute particles of water which have already passed and those yet to come do not appear at all to direct perception, only to thought. Nevertheless, when a person whose shoe was carried off by the water of a river early in the day returns to that spot later on, he feels, "There is the river which carried away my shoe." The stream of water that took the shoe has actually passed away long before, but such appears to his mind because earlier and later parts of the water's stream appear the same for thought.¹⁰ The person's sense of presently seeing the very river that carried off his shoe is a case of thought superimposing a mixture of former and later times onto a present object of direct perception. Nearly all ordinary experience of the world involves an unanalyzed mixture of conceptual thought and direct perception. This occurs to the point where what is merely imputed by thought often seems to be established by way of its own nature, just as an imputed stream stretching from morning to evening seems actually to appear to the eye consciousness that explicitly perceives only presently existing particles of water.

How can tiny particles of water appear to the sense consciousness of an ordinary being? The individual particles are not individually ascertained and cannot serve as causal conditions for generating an eye consciousness, but they do appear to the eye consciousness. For, as a complete engager the eye consciousness perceives all that is one substantial entity in place, time, and nature with its object. The collection of these particles at any given time, therefore, is the specifically characterized phenomenon which is an appearing object of direct perception. Moreover, the fact that the individual particles are not ascertained and so cannot serve as the objective causal condition does not contradict the fact that the cohesive unit which is a collection of numerous particles does appear. For, even though one cannot see individual trees from a distance, one does not hesitate to say that the forest can be seen. Similarly, in order for a fist to appear it is necessary for the collection of five fingers to appear.

Any whole—whether a pot, river, forest or fist—cannot appear to direct perception except by its components appearing; therefore, it must be said that the minute particles of matter that compose a pot, river, and so forth appear to the direct perceiver cognizing that object. Thus, according to the dGe-lugs-pa presentation of Sautrāntika, a whole such as a pot is not merely imputed to its parts. Just as the individual particles are specifically characterized phenomena which exist by way of their own nature without being imputed by thought or terminology, the wholes which are composites of those particles also exist by way of their own nature.

The dGe-lugs-pa assertion that in Sautrāntika wholes and parts are equally established by their own nature is unusual; other Tibetan writers, such as the Sa-skyapa Tak-tsang (sTag tshang) and most modern scholars of Sautrāntika, consider only the particles to be established by their own nature and all wholes to be merely imputed by thought. According to the dGe-lugs-pa view, if the collection of particles were not a specifically characterized phenomenon, it could not appear to direct perception and then it would be impossible to ascertain on the basis of direct sense perception that, for example, there is a table here or a bureau over there. This does not mean that the collection is considered something factually other (*don gzhan*) than or beyond the collection of particles, or that it has a separate entity (*ngo bo gzhan*) from them. It is composed of them but not superimposed by thought onto them. Thus, the presently existing stream of the river in the example does appear to direct perception and is a specifically characterized phenomenon. The further superimposition that occurs in this example is a case of seeing the presently existing continuum as one entity with the continuum of river that existed hours earlier. Thus, the collection of presently existing particles that occupies a certain area is an ultimate truth, a specifically characterized phenomenon that exists by way of its own nature. The temporal continuity of the stream, however—which is superimposed onto both presently existing particles and particles that have either ceased to exist or not yet come into existence in the sense of conceiving these to be one entity—is merely imputed by thought, and in fact does not exist at all.

Each of the five sense consciousnesses can take only one of

the five types of objects as its appearing object. That is, it is capable of observing or taking on the aspects cast by only one type of object. The eye consciousness sees only color and shape, configurations of particles; the ear consciousness hear sounds, the nose consciousness smells odors, the tongue consciousness experiences tastes, and the body consciousness feels tangible objects. Each of these consciousnesses explicitly realizes its own specific object—a smell, taste, and so forth. This is because an explicit realization (*dnegos rtogs*) can occur only when the aspect of an object is cast toward an appropriate consciousness. At that time, the eye consciousness, for example, realizes the table itself, which is a collection of particles of form. This eye consciousness realizes the specifically characterized table, but it does not realize the table's own specifically characterized nature (*svalakṣaṇa, rang mtshan*). This would involve the realization of everything that is one entity of establishment and abiding with the table, including its subtle impermanence, productness, and so forth. In other words, it would entail realizing all that characterizes the mode of abiding of the table's own nature (*rang mtshan gyi gnas lugs*). To realize the specifically characterized nature of a phenomenon is to ascertain all its specific characteristics. Although these do appear to the eye consciousness—whereby it can be called a mind of complete engagement—they are not ascertained.¹¹ The fact that the eye consciousness cannot induce ascertainment of the specifically characterized nature of its objects does not mean that it is mistaken with respect to that nature. Because that nature does appear to it, the eye consciousness is considered unmistaken with respect to the actual nature of tables and so forth and is, therefore, considered an ultimate mind. In Sautrāntika, there is no contradiction in not realizing something and being unmistaken with respect to it.¹² Since phenomena cast their aspect to the consciousness in accordance with their own mode of abiding, the direct perceiver or ultimate consciousness does not perceive anything which is not the mode of abiding of the object.¹³ In brief, whatever a sense consciousness ascertains, it ascertains correctly; however, it does not ascertain all aspects of its objects.

Explicit realization of an object means that the perceiving consciousness must take on the aspect of that object, much like a mirror reflects things by taking on an image or aspect of those

things. Because the eye consciousness, for example, can be generated only into the aspect of color or shape, only colors and shapes can be realized directly by it. Therefore, although in general a cedar table is an object of the eye consciousness apprehending such a table, only the color and shape of that table are directly realized by that consciousness. Other factors related with the table, its odor and tangibility for example, are not explicitly realized by the eye consciousness. Does this not undermine the Sautrāntika assertion that direct perceivers such as the eye consciousness are complete engagers which operate with respect to everything that is of one substantial entity of production and abiding—that is, simultaneous in existence with—that object? It is suitable to say that the eye consciousness sees the table because the table itself *is* color and shape; it is also the basis of qualities such as odor and tangibility which are actually perceived by other senses.

Similarly, it might be asked whether or not the eye consciousness sees fire or water. Although both of these have color and shape, water itself is defined as “that which is damp and moistening” and fire as “that which is hot and burning.”¹³ In other words, these are, technically, objects not of sight but of the body consciousness which can experience the dampness of water or the heat of fire; still, a dGe-lugs-pa will say that water and fire appear to the eye consciousness. Does this contradict the Buddhist assertion that the eye consciousness explicitly perceives *only* color and shape? No, because water and fire do not appear to the eye consciousness independently, as do color and shape; they appear to the eye consciousness through something else appearing first. Therefore, their appearance depends on the appearance of their color and shape to the eye consciousness. An actual object of apprehension of the eye consciousness (*mig shes kyi gzung bya*) on the other hand is something that can appear to that consciousness without depending on anything else; only color and shape fulfill this criterion, and thus only they are actual objects of apprehension for the eye consciousness. However, everything that the eye consciousness sees is not necessarily, technically speaking, its object of apprehension. For example, the impermanence of a table, its productness and so forth are not objects of apprehension of the eye consciousness, but they do appear to it by means of other phenomena—the color

and shape which *are* objects of apprehension—appearing.¹⁵ Objects of the eye consciousness, therefore, fall into two categories: (1) objects of apprehension, namely, color and shape, and (2) other phenomena, such as fire, which are known in dependence on color and shape.

Another measure of the fact that color and shape are objects of apprehension for the eye consciousness is that the eye consciousness, like a mirror, actually takes on the aspect of the colors and shapes it perceives. The eye consciousness does not, however, take on the aspects of water or fire. This is considered a sign that the eye consciousness is not actually seeing fire or water—it does not know or experience the wetness or heat which are the distinguishing characteristics of these. However, in terms of ordinary conventional speech, it is suitable to say that the eye sees water or fire due to the fact that it sees the color and shape of these.¹⁶ Moreover, as a direct perceiver the eye consciousness is a mind of complete engagement that necessarily perceives all factors of its objects which are one entity of establishment and abiding in relation to place, nature, and time. It does not necessarily perceive factors that are simply one entity with its objects, however. Thus, with respect to seeing a table, there is no contradiction in the eye consciousness explicitly perceiving the table but not its tangibility. This is because although tangibility is in general one substantial entity with the table,¹⁷ its tangibility is not infallibly concomitant with the table in terms of place, time, and nature. For, whatever is one entity with a table is not necessarily one entity with a table's tangibility. For example, a table's shape is not a tangible object.¹⁸

IV. Appearing Objects of Direct Perception

The table that appears to the eye consciousness is an impermanent thing. However, the appearing object (**pratibhāsa-viṣaya, snang yul*) of that eye consciousness is not just visible form—namely, color and shape. For, in the Buddhist presentation all functioning things are included within three categories: forms, consciousnesses, and that which is neither—non-associated compositional factors (*viprayukta-samskāra, ldan min 'du byed*) such as impermanence, which are neither form nor consciousness.¹⁹ A

fully appearing object or an actual object of apprehension of an eye consciousness cannot be included in just the category of form. This is because many phenomena that are not the impermanent table—and thus not form—but *are* non-associated compositional factors, such as productness, impermanence, and so forth, appear to the eye consciousness simultaneously with the table. These are also appearing objects of the eye consciousness, although, as in the examples of fire and water above, they are not technically objects of apprehension of the eye consciousness. The table is the basis of these appearances; thus, it is necessary to distinguish the appearing object of direct perception—the table or, specifically, the color and shape of the table—from the many phenomena related with it which are not the table but do also appear.²⁰ Everything that is one entity of establishment and abiding with table in relation to place, time, and nature is an appearing object of the collectively engaging eye consciousness that apprehends table, but all impermanent and non-associated compositional factors which are associated with table and which therefore also appear to that eye consciousness are not themselves the table.

Permanent phenomena associated with a table cannot appear to direct perception because Sautrāntika asserts that permanent phenomena, being incapable of casting an aspect, cannot be appearing objects of direct perception. Thus, the emptiness associated with a table cannot appear to direct perception, even though the table itself appears and even though the table and its emptiness are a single entity. A table's emptiness is its lack of being used or enjoyed by substantially existent persons. This can be conceptually realized but not directly perceived according to Sautrāntika. Thus, emptiness—realization of which is the chief antidote to the most subtle forms of ignorance—can be realized only implicitly, not directly by a direct perceiver. The type of valid cognition that explicitly realizes emptiness is conceptual; namely, inference (*anumāna*, *rjes dpag*).

The eye consciousness observing a table is non-conceptual; this means it does not have an articulate realization that “this is a table.” Further, although it realizes the specifically characterized table, it cannot ascertain all the specific characteristics of a table such as its subtle impermanence.²¹ Thus, the eye consciousness does not fully realize the specifically characterized

nature of the table it perceives, for such a realization would entail ascertainment of the table's subtle impermanence, productness, momentary disintegration, and so forth. It would have to realize the mode of abiding of the table's own nature (*rang mtshan gyi gnas lugs*). Because the eye consciousness is a complete engager, this would mean that it would necessarily ascertain everything that is the nature or own-character of the table. The eye consciousness, however, is not ordinarily capable of ascertaining the subtle characteristics of its objects.²²

Thus, even though a table is a specifically characterized phenomenon and a product, the direct perception observing a table does not ordinarily realize it as such, despite the fact that both specifically characterized phenomenon and product, which are one entity with the table, are appearing to it. This further emphasizes the limitations of ordinary direct perceivers or ultimate consciousnesses in Sautrāntika and indicates the necessity for cultivating a conceptual understanding of, for example, subtle impermanence, productness, and emptiness.

V. How a Direct Perceiver Knows Objects

The Buddhist systems have two ways of explaining the workings of direct perception, non-aspected and aspected. The only proponents of non-aspected direct perception are the Vaibhāṣikas; the upper three systems—Sautrāntika, Cittamātra, and Mādhyamika—all assert some type of aspected direct perception. These three systems maintain that the aspect of an object is cast toward or impinges on the consciousness. According to Vaibhāṣika, this is not the case. In this latter view, direct perception means that both the eye sense power and the eye consciousness meet the object and thereby know it. Unlike any of the upper systems, the Vaibhāṣikas maintain that *both* the eye sense and the eye consciousness perceive, for example, a table.²³ They argue that if, as the other systems assert, only the eye consciousness knew the object, there would be no explanation for why we do not see through walls and so forth. The eye sense is simultaneous with the object it cognizes and a different substantial entity from it.²⁴

Thus, according to Vaibhāṣika, a direct valid cognizer is not

necessarily a consciousness because the sense power itself—the subtle matter inside the eye organ—also cognizes its object directly. In Sautrāntika (as well as Sautrāntika-Svātantrika and Prāsaṅgika-Mādhyamika) this sense power is one of the three causal conditions for generation of an eye consciousness and exists just prior to the eye consciousness which is its own effect. All three upper systems agree that only the eye-consciousness—not the eye sense power—is a direct perceiver of the object.

Because in Vaibhāṣika the eye consciousness and eye sense extend out to the object, there is no discussion of perception by way of an aspect, that is, of the object being reflected in the consciousness. The only aspect connected with direct perception is the objective aspect (*don rnam*)—the object itself. Furthermore, because the consciousness contacts an object with which it is simultaneous, the object is not a causal condition that effects or impinges on the consciousness.

By contrast, the upper three systems concur in asserting that an aspect of the object either appears²⁵ or is cast toward the consciousness; all but the Cittamātrins and Yogacāra-Svātantrikas further maintain that the object is a causal condition or observed-object-condition for the generation of a consciousness that perceives it in the next moment. This, in the view of these systems, is the objective aspect. Thus, the proponents of both non-aspected and aspected perception agree on the existence of an objective aspect; there is a difference of opinion, however, even among proponents of aspected perception, as to whether this objective aspect is a cause of the perceiving consciousness or not. In Sautrāntika, subject and object in direct perception are not simultaneous, as in Vaibhāṣika, but serial. Even though a directly perceiving consciousness and its object are consecutive, the consciousness does clearly perceive the object, because it is one entity with the *aspect* of the object. The aspect with which it is one entity is a consciousness aspect (*shes rnam*) not an objective aspect. Thus, one reason for positing aspected direct perception is to explain how a consciousness directly perceives an object that existed in the previous moment.

For example, an eye consciousness cognizing a table knows that table by taking on or being generated into the aspect (*ākāra, rnam pa*) of table, much as a mirror takes on the aspect of an object it reflects. This means it is possible to assert that the eye

consciousness takes on the aspect of a table without actually extending out and contacting the external table. In this way one can perceive a table as “over there” but subject and object need not actually meet, as they must in the Vaibhāṣika system.²⁶

The fact that a consciousness takes on the aspect of its object does not mean that the object in any sense actually enters into the eye consciousness. For, a consciousness cannot have any specific color or shape. Just as a glass placed over a blue cloth takes on the color blue without itself becoming blue and without blue actually entering into the glass, the eye consciousness perceiving a table becomes *like* a table without actually becoming a table and without a table actually entering into it.²⁷

A direct perceiver such as an eye consciousness does not ascertain all that appears to it, and therefore is not generated in the aspect of all objects before it. Being generated in the aspect of blue, for example, is the unique characteristic or uncommon positer (*thun mong ma yin pa'i 'jog byed*) of a consciousness perceiving blue. Thus, even though yellow and so forth might also appear, this eye consciousness would not be generated in the aspect of yellow and so forth because it does not take note of yellow at that time.²⁸

A consciousness that does not ascertain an object is not generated in the aspect of that object. Thus if, for example, one is deeply absorbed in listening to music, forms and so forth can appear to the eye consciousness without that consciousness necessarily ascertaining those forms or being generated in their aspect. Similarly, when an impermanent phenomenon such as a table appears to the eye consciousness, that consciousness is generated in the aspect of table but not in the aspect of the subtle impermanence of the table—although this subtle impermanence does appear to it—because one is not ascertaining subtle impermanence. The consciousness would only be generated in that aspect if one had previously cognized subtle impermanence directly and could therefore ascertain it.

Thus, the aspect into which the consciousness is generated, even though similar to the external object, is itself of the nature of consciousness.²⁹ One indication that perception is aspected is the fact that if something is placed very close to the eye you cannot see it properly. This is because the aspect cannot appear

unless there is some distance between the object and perceiving consciousness.³⁰

An aspect similar to the object (*yul gyi 'dra rnam*) is cast toward the eye consciousness which then takes on or is generated in the aspect of that object. Both the objective (*don rnam*) and subjective aspects (*shes rnam*) are known as apprehension aspects (*bzung rnam*). When the eye consciousness perceives a table, for example, that very consciousness—like a glass placed over blue cloth—takes on the aspect similar to the table. This subjective apprehension aspect³¹ is also known as a consciousness aspect (*jñāna-ākāra, shes rnam*). In this context, some scholars say that the consciousness-aspect is an aspect similar to the object (*yul gyi 'dra rnam*).³² However, this assertion is not common to all dGe-lugs-pas. For, some monastic texts assert that only objective aspects can be aspects similar to the object and that no other aspect of the object (*yul gyi rnam pa*) is involved in direct perception.³³

In any case, the subjective and objective apprehension aspects (*bzung rnam*) are similar, like the reflection of a face in the mirror and the actual face. When it is said that the eye consciousness is generated in the aspect of the object (*dngos po'i rnam ldan du skyes pa*) the aspect referred to is the subjective apprehension aspect or consciousness aspect. To say that an eye consciousness perceiving a table, for example, is generated in the aspect of that table also means that the consciousness has become or taken on the entity of a consciousness that has table as its aspect, that is to say, which ascertains a table.

This perception of an aspected direct perception is shared by the higher systems and is a marked departure from the Vai-bhāṣika view of an aspectless direct perception. One significant reason why the Vaibhāṣikas do not posit aspected direct perception is that they cannot distinguish between subjective and objective apprehension aspects.³⁴ Hence, for them, whatever is an aspect or appearance of a table necessarily is a material table.³⁵ Therefore, they cannot posit a consciousness aspect or subjective apprehension aspect, for this would entail the absurdity either of the consciousness being material or of the object itself being immaterial.³⁶ They must argue that no aspect exists anywhere between the observing consciousness and the object itself. For,

if there were something between the consciousness and its object, that something would have to be an appearance (*snang ba*) which, in their view, is none other than the object itself. Thus, they maintain that since the appearance is not the object, there can be no proof for an object—that is, a subjective aspect—which does not appear.³⁷

That which is generated in the image of the object is the consciousness aspect, also known as the subjective apprehension aspect.³⁸ That which is apprehended is the object—also known as the apprehension aspect existing in the object (*yul la yod pa'i gzung mam*).³⁹ This apprehension aspect and the consciousness or subjective apprehension aspect are one entity, just as a mirror and the image it reflects are one entity.⁴⁰ In this assertion, the Sautrāntikas seem to be approaching the Cittamātra (Mind-Only) position that a perceiving consciousness is the same entity as its object. However, according to Sautrāntika, it is still an external object that is being realized; the aspect in the consciousness arises through the power of that external object, whereas for Cittamātrins, subject and object both arise from the same internal latency (*vāsanā, bag chags*).⁴¹ Furthermore, even though the reflected aspect of an external object is one entity with the consciousness in which it is reflected and is an aspect of the external object, Sautrāntika does not assert that whatever is an aspect of the object is necessarily the object itself.⁴² Thereby, they maintain that subject and object are different substantial entities. Unlike the Cittamātrins, the Sautrāntikas do not try to prove that the object aspect is one substantial entity with the consciousness that perceives it.⁴³ For, whatever is the aspect of a table, according to Sautrāntika, is not necessarily a table. The eye consciousness realizing a table, for example,⁴⁴ takes on the aspect of the table, and this aspect, although similar to a table, is itself the entity of consciousness, whereas the table is not. This consciousness aspect or subjective apprehension aspect has the feature of mixing or combining both the objective and subjective aspects. These aspects are “mixed” in the sense that the apprehension aspect is common to both subject and object. The way an object becomes known is through this common aspect; however, it is not the case that the object itself becomes mixed with the consciousness.⁴⁵

In short, aspected perception means that direct perception knows an object by way of an aspect similar to that object being generated in the consciousness itself.

Cittamātra, like Sautrāntika, also asserts that the consciousness is generated into or takes on the aspect of the object; however, Sautrāntika, unlike Cittamātra, asserts that the material object is external, arises from causes and conditions unrelated with the consciousness, and will continue to exist as a collection of particles even when it is no longer perceived by that particular consciousness. In brief, the Sautrāntikas (as well as Sautrāntika-Svātantrika-Mādhyamika and Prāsaṅgika-Mādhyamika) maintain that a consciousness and its object are different substantial entities arising from different substantial causes, whereas for Cittamātra and Yogacāra-Svātantrika subject and object are one substantial entity, arising simultaneously from a single cause—a predisposition previously established in the mind.

The Sautrāntikas and other proponents of aspected direct perception are specifically refuting the Vaibhāṣika tenet of aspectless perception. If an object were capable of illuminating or knowing itself, no perceiving consciousness would be required, but since material objects have no such capacity, they must be known by means of a perceiving consciousness. On this much all four systems agree. The Sautrāntikas and the others further make the case that aspectless perception is unsuitable for, if such existed, the object could only be known when the consciousness actually extended out to the object. If direct perception operated in this way, argues Sautrāntika, the eye consciousness, for example, should be able to see through walls and so forth, because consciousness is not obstructed by material objects. The Sautrāntikas reject the Vaibhāṣika explanation that the eye sense power, extending to the object along with the eye consciousness, is obstructed by walls, and therefore one cannot see through them. For, the Sautrāntikas do not consider the sense power to be a perceiver of objects. According to them, the fact that we do not see through walls is an indication that direct perception operates by way of an aspect, as it is a sign that aspectless perception does not exist. Thus, the position of Sautrāntika and the higher systems is that if there were no aspected direct perception, either objects would not be seen at

all—because the consciousness would have no way of relating to them—or we should be able to see through walls because the consciousness knows objects by actually going out to them.⁴⁶

An important Indian source for this position is a passage in Śāntarakṣita's *Ornament to the Middle Way* (*Madhyamakālamkāra, dbU ma rgyan*), quoted by Jam-yang-shay-ba in his *Great Exposition of Tenets* (*Grub mtha' chen mo*):

Regarding the position that consciousness is aspected,
Actually the two [a glass and the blue cloth on which it is placed]
are different;
[Yet] because there is an image similar to the [object]
Feeling [i.e., experience of that object] is suitable
Through the mere imputation [of seeing it in the glass].
If an aspect exists, comprehension of the object is suitable.⁴⁷

In this way, Śāntarakṣita indicates that direct perception is possible only because the perceiving consciousness can take on the aspect of its object.

VI. Location and Identification of the Aspect

Although the above explanation is clear and well reasoned, on closer examination it becomes very difficult to state precisely where the aspect arises and of what it consists. In one view, the consciousness aspect similar to the object—or the aspect into which the consciousness is generated—exists in the pupil of the eye itself. Thus, when the pupil deteriorates one cannot see very well because the proper basis for the aspect no longer exists.⁴⁸ Some scholars assert that the objective apprehension aspect exists somewhere between the object and the perceiving consciousness. An indication in support of this view is that clear perception does not occur if the eye is too close to its object, suggesting that there is not sufficient room to allow for proper generation of the aspect.⁴⁹ In this view, the eye consciousness actually perceives not the object itself but the objective aspect—which is like the object but which is not the object—and seeing this similar aspect functions as seeing the object.⁵⁰ This position, although not widely asserted among present-day dGe-lugs-pa scholars, is supported by a statement in Gyel-tsap's *Commentary*

on (*Dharmakīrti's*) "Ascertainment of Valid Cognition" (*Pramāṇavinīś-caya*), where it is asserted that the aspect does exist between the consciousness and its perceived object.⁵¹

The aspect into which the consciousness is generated is simultaneous with the directly perceiving consciousness and is itself necessarily consciousness. This is because it cannot be either the perceived object, which is material, or the subtle matter inside the eye organ, for object and eye organ are, respectively, the observed-object-condition and uncommon dominant condition of the eye consciousness, due to which they exist prior to that consciousness. Both have ceased when the eye consciousness, which is their effect, begins to function. Thus, it is not suitable that either object or sense power be the subjective apprehension aspect.

It would also not be suitable to consider the apprehension aspect to be a non-associated compositional factor, namely, an aspect common to the three components of perception—eye consciousness, eye sense, and object. For, the actual subjective apprehension aspect, the one that mixes or is similar to subject and object aspects, can only be a consciousness.⁵² Also, it is not the object because the consciousness aspect, though similar to the object, is a different substantial entity from it.

From the above, it is clear that the subjective apprehension aspect is not the actual object. However, it may be that this aspect *seems* to be the external object. Still, if the subjective apprehension aspect seems to be the object but is not, then direct perception would absurdly have the same type of mistake as conceptual thought, for to thought, the image mistakenly seems to be the actual object it represents, but is not.⁵³ Thought may or may not actually misconceive the image to be the object; in most cases it does not. However, one could argue that such a mistake *never* applies to direct perception because the similar aspect (*'dra rnam*) of the table is never construed to *be* the table; the aspect merely appears as similar to table. Since it is in fact similar to the table, there is no mistake involved.⁵⁴

Some proponents of the view that the subjective apprehension aspect exists in the pupil of the eye hold that this does not necessarily contradict the view that an apprehension aspect also exists between eye consciousness and object. This interceding apprehension aspect (*bzung rnam*) is considered an objective as-

pect (*don nam*). For, one could assert the pupil to be the locus of the subject apprehension aspect and consider that the aspect between subject and object is the objective aspect. However, this is difficult to uphold because the objective apprehension aspect itself is material, due to which there would be the absurdity of a material table existing between the eye consciousness and the actual table. It makes more sense to consider the interceding object as a subjective apprehension aspect. Still, in this case, it is implicitly contradictory to the view of a subjective apprehension aspect existing in the eye, because there is no explicit presentation of *two* subjective apprehension aspects—although this is not explicitly refuted either. In any case, there is a further problem with this assertion. If the subjective apprehension aspect itself is a consciousness, why would cognition of a table require the presence of an eye consciousness? A consciousness does not need to appear to another consciousness in order to know its own object.⁵⁵ If one asserts that the subjective apprehension aspect needs to appear, does it follow that this aspect is in fact a table and not a consciousness? Some say that the perceived aspect is in the table, others that it is not.⁵⁶ One way to settle it, as mentioned above, is to consider that from the viewpoint of the consciousness' perception of table, it is a consciousness—or subjective apprehension aspect—and from the viewpoint of its being the apprehended aspect itself it is an object or objective apprehension aspect.

This is an interesting topic for further exploration, as valuable for the problems it raises as for the presentation that could be uncovered. For, the difficulties of making a presentation that can settle all the problems it raises without self-contradiction—for example, maintaining the existence of external objects within asserting aspected direct perception—tends to draw thought on to both the Cittamātrin and Mādhyamika systems and prepares one to understand their respective positions of no external objects and no inherently existent or findable objects *or* subjects.

VII. Different Positions Asserting Aspected Perception

In general, there are three different presentations of how aspected direct perception knows an object, that of the Propo-

nents of an Equal Number of Subjects and Objects (*gzung 'dzin grang mnyam pa*), the Non-Pluralists (*sna tshogs gnyis med pa*), and the Half-Eggists (*sgo nga phyed tshal ba*). These three presentations are common to the Sautrāntika and Cittamātra systems (although, as will be explained below, there is disagreement among dGe-lugs-pa scholars as to whether or not any Sautrāntikas assert the Half-Eggist position).

The Proponents of an Equal Number of Subjects and Objects assert that whatever number of aspects exist as one substantial entity of establishment and abiding with, for example, a table, that many aspects are cast to the perceiving consciousness. Some proponents of this position assert that there are as many simultaneous consciousnesses as there are appearing aspects; others, that a single consciousness is generated into as many aspects as are cast toward it.⁵⁷

The Non-Pluralists say that the many aspects of a given object appear to a single consciousness simultaneously and that this consciousness itself takes on all the various aspects. Some scholars assert that these aspects appear not simultaneously but serially, in such quick succession that they *seem* simultaneous. Holders of this position, known as Sequential Non-Pluralists (*rim gyis pa'i sna tshogs gnyis med pa*), are said by Jam-yang-shay-pa and Jang-gya to exist among Sautrāntikas.⁵⁸

The Half-Eggists assert that only a single aspect—for example, a general aspect similar to a table or to a mottle-colored cloth—appears to a single consciousness, and that this consciousness is generated only into that aspect. One potential objection to this position is that, since direct perception is necessarily a mind of complete engagement that observes all aspects of its object, it is unsuitable to say that only the general aspect, for example, of the mottle-colored cloth is cast, because of the unwanted consequence that the particular colors would not then appear. However, the Half-Eggists maintain that although only the general aspect of the mottle is cast, the consciousness is still able to see the separate colors contained in the mottle. This is because it does not follow that only that which casts its aspect is capable of being seen. It could be said that even though the entire collection of aspects appears and can be seen, the appearance of the individual colors is weak whereas that of the collection of the colors—the mottle itself—is strong. Thus, the eye

consciousness which is generated in the aspect of a mere mottle is a fully qualified complete engager because everything that is one entity of establishment and abiding with that mottle does appear to it.⁵⁹

As to whether or not any Sautrāntikas assert the Half-Eggist position, Jang-gya writes that Tsong-ka-pa and his chief disciples, Gyel-tsap and Kay-drup, did not clearly state an opinion on this topic. However, both Jam-yang-shay-pa and Jang-gya consider that it would be difficult to posit the Half-Egg position for Sautrāntika, an opinion based on their interpretation of an important Indian source for this position, Śāntarakṣita's *Commentary to the "Ornament to the Middle Way"* (*Madhyamaka-alamkāra-vṛtti, dbU ma'i rgyan gyi 'grel pa*). Although mainly setting forth the Svātantrika tenet system, this is an important source for the Sautrāntika and Cittamātra discussions of the various ways of asserting aspected perception. This text states:

Consciousnesses arise serially
 With respect to the white and so forth [of a mottle].
 Because they arise very quickly
 Fools think they are simultaneous.⁶⁰

Jam-yang-shay-pa's commentator, Bel-den-chö-jay, considers this to be a statement of the Half-Eggist position. Jam-yang-shay-pa himself and Jang-gya do not. (This is a not so rare instance of Jam-yang-shay-pa's commentator disagreeing with him.) Hence, the former two maintain that there are Sautrāntika Half-Eggists, the latter that there are not. Their disagreement is due to the fact that they have different ways of asserting what the Half-Eggist position is. Jang-gya and Jam-yang-shay-pa consider that the Half-Eggists assert that when the aspect of a mere mottle, for example, is cast, there is *no* casting of as many aspects as are one substantial entity of establishment and abiding with that mottle. Thus, in this view, when the eye consciousness perceives a mottle-colored cloth, the aspect of the mere mottle is cast toward the eye consciousness; there is no casting of however many aspects there are of the mottle's red, yellow, and so forth. Therefore, because the above quote, in mentioning a serial generation of consciousness with respect to a single object,

indicates that many different aspects are cast to the consciousness, Jam-yang-shay-pa and Jang-gya do not consider it to indicate the Half-Eggist position. Rather, they assert this quote to be an expression of the Sequential Non-Pluralist position; namely, that all aspects of the object appear serially but in such quick succession that they seem simultaneous. In other words, both sides agree on the meaning of the quote, but not on the system it represents.

Because Śāntarakṣita's *Commentary to the "Ornament to the Middle Way"* is one of the major Indian sources for Sautrāntika,⁶¹ those who, like Bel-den-chö-jay, consider this verse to represent the Half-Eggist position maintain that there are Sautrāntika Half-Eggists; those who consider it to express the position of the Sequential Non-Pluralists do not. They posit the Half-Eggist position in relation to Cittamātra only, not Sautrāntika. In their view, the three Sautrāntika positions regarding aspected direct perception are (1) Non-Pluralists, (2) Sequential Non-Pluralists and (3) Proponents of an Equal Number of Subjects and Objects.

It seems that any of these positions can be supported, depending on one's choice of quotes and interpretations. One value of the discussion in the context of Sautrāntika and of the general course of study appears to be to draw students into critical evaluation and analysis of the relevant texts. This is done within a recognition that conclusions are made despite the difficulties of interpretation they entail.⁶² The other main value revolves around drawing one even more into examining the relationship between object and subject.

VIII. The Perceiving Consciousness as Both Subject and Object

Any perceiving consciousness is accompanied by a factor of self-knowing (*svasamvedana*, *rang rig*) which experiences or knows that consciousness. For example, while the eye consciousness is observing a circus act, the self-knower experiencing that eye consciousness takes the eye consciousness observing the circus as its object. Thus, although in relation to the circus the eye consciousness is a perceiving subject, in relation to the self-knower it is a perceived object. Proof that the self-knower exists

is said to be the fact that when one reflects on the circus seen previously, one remembers not only the circus itself but the mind that observed it.

The Sautrāntikas, Cittamātrins, and Yogacāra-Svātantrikas all assert the existence of a self-knowing consciousness, maintaining that it is the only explanation for such memories. The Vaibhāṣikas do not assert self-knowers—they cannot, because they are unable to assert a subjective apprehension aspect that could be its object.⁶³ For, the self-knower observes not merely the perceiving consciousness but the consciousness aspect which is similar to the actual object. The Sautrāntika-Svātantrika-Mādhyamikas and the Prāsaṅgika-Mādhyamikas also reject the self-knower on the basis that it would involve a confusion of agent and object.

The explicit object (*dnegos yul*) of the self-knower is the perceiving consciousness that is generated in the aspect of its object. Through observing this subjective apprehension aspect, the self-knower indirectly knows the perceived object. In relation to the self-knower, all other consciousnesses are *objective* apprehension aspects (*gzung nam*);⁶⁴ a self-knower is the only type of consciousness that is never an appearing object of any other non-conceptual consciousness in the same continuum. The consciousness which a self-knower apprehends never apprehends that self-knower.

Jam-yang-shay-pa describes the relationship between a directly perceived object, the directly perceiving consciousness, and its factor of self-knowing through the example of a stained glass:

All Buddhist proponents of [consciousness] as having aspects [the Sautrāntikas on up] assert the following: If one coats the far side of a glass with paint, then when one looks at [it] both the glass and the paint are similar in being perceived objects. [However] the glass is realized by way of its own thingness and the color by way of an image [in the glass], although there is no way of distinguishing the two, image and glass. Therefore, the master Bodhibhadra said:

When a person looks at a glass on which the color of tortoise paint has been applied, the eye apprehends both glass and paint; the glass is apprehended directly and the paint is apprehended [by

way of an image]. Therefore, just as the person apprehends two objects, [direct perception involves two objects of apprehension].⁶⁵

The two objects of apprehension indicated here are the external object, perceived by the eye consciousness, and the eye consciousness itself, perceived by the self-knower. The objective aspect of similar type (*'dra rnam kyi bzung rnam*) discussed above, which in some scholars' view could be posited as a third object—an objective apprehension aspect existing between the eye consciousness and an external object such as a table—is not represented in this example.

The self-knower experiences the eye consciousness directly, just as, in the example, the glass is seen directly. The self-knower experiences the object of the eye consciousness by way of its image—that is, through perceiving the subjective apprehension aspect into which the eye consciousness is generated—just as the blue is known indirectly by looking at it through glass. The self-knower, therefore, is aware of external objects indirectly, through the medium of the subjective apprehension aspect or the consciousness aspect. The eye consciousness knows the object directly although, as noted above, some scholars assert that what the eye consciousness actually perceives is the objective apprehension aspect and not the object itself.

Another way to express this is that in relation to the eye consciousness apprehending blue there are two aspects, apprehended and apprehending. The apprehending aspect (*grahaka-ākāra, 'dzin rnam*) is the factor of experience, the self-knower. The apprehended aspect (*grāhya-ākāra, bzung rnam*) consists of two factors of illumination: the factor of the object which is illuminated—in this case, the color blue—and the factor of the consciousness that illuminates it.

In any case, because the self-knower is a factor of experience that is one entity with the perceiving consciousness, the difficulty remains of explaining more fully how the two factors of a single directly perceiving consciousness relate to one another. For example, it is said that the self-knower observes the subjective apprehension aspect; yet, why should one consciousness or factor of consciousness need to appear to another one? Is the self-knower itself then generated in the image of the apprehension aspect? The Prāsaṅgika system rejects the assertion of a

self-knower because it considers that if a self-knower had to be posited in order to explain the self-awareness of an eye consciousness, then that self-knower would also have to possess a self-knower, and so on infinitely.

The Sautrāntika system, like the higher systems, asserts aspected direct perception in order to avoid the faults it finds with the Vaibhāṣika assertion of aspectless direct perception. The main problem with the Vaibhāṣika presentation is that it must posit sense powers such as the eye sense as knowers of external objects; otherwise, they could not explain why consciousnesses do not see through walls and so forth. This means that in Vaibhāṣika the sense-power is not considered a causal condition for perception, as it is in Sautrāntika, Sautrāntika-Svātantrika-Mādhyamika and Prāsaṅgika-Mādhyamika. Therefore, in Vaibhāṣika (as in Cittamātra) subject and object are simultaneous. In Sautrāntika, however, the main significance of categorizing impermanent phenomena as ultimate truths is the ability of such objects to act as causal conditions for the generation of an ultimate or directly perceiving consciousness. The entire Sautrāntika tenet system is built along the axis of distinguishing the appearing objects of direct perception (ultimate truths) from the appearing objects of thought (conventional truths) in terms of how these two types of valid cognizers know their respective objects. Thus, the presentation of aspected direct perception, a correlate of the assertion that an external object is prior to and a causal condition of the consciousness that directly perceives it, is central to the dGe-lugs-pa Sautrāntika system.

With certain modifications, the explanation of aspected direct perception remains valid for the higher systems as well. Nevertheless, a presentation of aspected direct perception involves a number of difficulties, such as identifying exactly what the apprehension aspect is and detailing whether or not the directly perceiving consciousness knows its objects by means of a subjective apprehension aspect. The difficulties themselves are very instructive, as the explanation that even direct perceivers are actually observing a subjective apprehension aspect leads one quite naturally to an interest in and critical appreciation of the Cittamātra system. In Cittamātra, subject and object are said to be both one entity and simultaneous, thereby avoiding certain difficulties of the Sautrāntika position (such as how to integrate

the subjective and objective apprehension aspects) but encountering other problems, such as how to account for shared experiences or clairvoyant knowledge of another's mind when there are no external objects which are a different substantial entity from one's own mind.⁶⁶ The difficulties in Sautrāntika of pinpointing exactly where the apprehension aspects exist are also provocative. These aspects are impermanent phenomena and hence ultimate truths in this system; therefore, they are, by definition, not merely imputed by either terms or thoughts but, at least in theory, specifically located and findable. The problems associated with determining exactly what that specific location is—whether external, internal, or both—leads one to an interest in and critical appreciation of the Mādhyamika system, which presents all permanent and impermanent phenomena as analytically unfindable, yet functional. In this way, the Sautrāntika presentation of direct perception is intended to fulfill its long range purpose in dGe-lugs-pa of leading the scholar-practitioner on to the higher systems.

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NOTES

1. Kensur Yeshe Tupden, oral commentary.
2. Quoted by Masatoshi Nagatomi in *Sanskrit and Indian Studies*, Reidel, 1979, p. 255.
3. See *Knowledge and Liberation* and *The Sautrāntika Tenet System in Tibet*, both forthcoming from Snow Lion Press, Ithaca, New York, 1985.
4. Pur-bu-jok, "Great Path of Reasoning," 36a.5 (definition of complete engager).
5. Kensur Yeshey Tupden, oral commentary.

6. Kensur Yeshay Tupden, oral commentary.
7. Kensur Yeshay Tupden, oral commentary.
8. Ven. Sangyay Samdrup, discussion.
9. Napper, *Mind*, p. 141; Ge-shay Jam-bel-sam-pel, *Presentation of Awareness and Knowledge*, modern blockprint, n.p., n.d., 11a.1–2.
10. Den-dar-hla-ram-ba, 161.4ff.
11. Kensur Yeshay Tupden, oral commentary.
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Ibid.*
14. Pur-bu-jok, "The Lesser Path of Reasoning" 7.3.
15. Kensur Yeshay Tupden, oral commentary.
16. Source for this and the preceding paragraph is Lati Rinbochay, oral commentary.
17. Ven. Sangyay Samdrup, discussion.
18. This is a widely accepted assertion but, according to Ven. Sangyay Samdrup, some scholars argue that a table's tangibility is *not* one entity with it.
19. Pur-bu-jok, "The Lesser Path of Reasoning" 13.2.
20. Ge-shay Belden Drakba, oral commentary.
21. Kensur Yeshay Tupden, oral commentary.
22. *Ibid.*
23. Bel-den-chö-jay, *Explanation of the Conventional and the Ultimate in the Four Systems of Tenets (Grub mtha'i bzhi'i lugs kyi kun rdzob dang don dam pa'i don nam par bshad pa)* (New Delhi: Guru Deva, 1972), 31a.2.
24. See *Practice and Theory* p. 79 for further discussion.
25. In the epistemology and physics of classical Greece there is a similar notion phrased in terms of the nature of light. For example, see Plato's *Republic, The Collected Dialogues*, p. 742ff.
26. Ge-shay Gedun Lodrö, oral commentary.
27. Kensur Yeshay Tupden, oral commentary.
28. Ge-shay Gedun Lodrö, oral commentary.
29. Ge-shay Gedun Lodrö and Ge-shay Belden Drakba, oral commentary.
30. Ge-shay Gedun Lodrö, oral commentary.
31. The Tibetan uses the term *bzung rnam*—apprehension aspect—for both subject and object. For the sake of clarity this term has been translated as subjective apprehension aspect or objective apprehension aspect according to context.
32. Kensur Yeshay Tupden, oral commentary.
33. *Ibid.*
34. Ge-shay Belden Drakba, oral commentary.
35. Kensur Yeshay Tupden, oral commentary.
36. Kensur Yeshay Tupden and Ge-shay Belden Drakba.
37. Kensur Yeshay Tupden and Ge-shay Belden Drakba. This is an argument put forth by the Vaibhāṣikas in the *Commentary on the Treasury of Knowledge by Chim-jam-bel-yang (mChims mdzod)*, text from Go-mang Library, Mundgod, from blocks available to them, p. 69: *de dag gis yul 'dzin pa ni yul gyi rnam pa ma shar bzhi du 'dzin pa yin gyi rnam pa dang bcas pa ni ma yin te*

snang ba 'di don ma yin na mi snang ba'i don yod pa la sgrub byed med pa'i phyir dang rags snang shes pa yin na rags pa rdul phran bsags pa ma yin par thal ba'i phyir ro.

38. Ge-shay Tsultrim Puntsok, oral commentary.
39. Ge-shay Gedun Lodrö, oral commentary.
40. Ge-shay Belden Drakba, oral commentary.
41. *Ibid.*
42. Kensur Yeshay Tupden, oral commentary.
43. Ge-shay Belden Drakba, oral commentary.
44. Kensur Yeshay Tupden, oral commentary.
45. *Ibid.*
46. Ge-shay Gedun Lodrö, oral commentary.
47. Quoted in *Great Tenets*, 11a.6
48. Ge-shay Belden Drakba, oral commentary.
49. Ge-shay Gedun Lodrö used the word *bzung rnam* (*apprehension aspect*). I am inferring this to signify "objective apprehension aspect."
50. Ge-shay Gedun Lodrö, oral commentary.
51. Gyel-tsap, *Commentary on (Dharmakīrti's) "Ascertainment of Valid Cognition"* (*rNam nges tik chen*), Tashi Lhunpo blockprint, n.d., p. 110.2–7.
52. Ven. Sangyay Samdrup, discussion.
53. Ge-shay Belden Drakba, oral commentary.
54. Ge-shay Tsultrim Puntsok, oral commentary.
55. Ge-shay Belden Drakba, oral commentary.
56. *Ibid.*
57. Ge-shay Gedun Lodrö, oral commentary. In either case, the position of the proponents of an equal number of subjects and objects is refuted in Śāntarakṣita's *Commentary to the Ornament to the Middle Way* (*Madhyamakālaṅkāravṛtti*).
58. Tsong-kha-pa and his chief disciples assert that the "own system" (*rang lugs*) of Dharmakīrti's *Commentary on (Dignāga's) "Treatise on Valid Cognition"* is that of the sequential non-pluralists. However, the system (*lugs*) of this text is that of the proponents of an equal number of subjects and objects. Source: Ge-shay Gedun Lodrö, oral commentary.
59. According to Kön-chok-jik-may-wang-bo, Half-Eggists are so called because they are half like Sautrāntika—that is, their assertion that an eye consciousness and its object are different entities accords with Sautrāntika, and half like Cittamātra, because of their assertion that an eye consciousness and its object are both of the nature of the mind. See *Practice and Theory* pp. 109–110. According to the present-day rNying-ma scholar and *sngags pa*, Ven. Khetsun Sangbo Rinbochay, the name reflects the Half-Eggist assertion that subject and object are like two halves of an egg.
60. Śāntarakṣita, *Madhyamakālaṅkāravṛtti*, P5285, Vol. 101, 4–5–4.
61. Jang-gya, p. 98.1.
62. It would be an interesting project to set up a controlled laboratory experiment by which these theories could be investigated and perhaps definitively established or rejected.
63. Kensur Yeshay Tupden, oral commentary.
64. Ven. Sangyay Samdrup, discussion.

65. Jam-yang-shay-ba, *Great Tenets*, 11a.2.

66. For more on the Cittamātra tenet system, see *Practice and Theory*, pp. 107–121; also, Jeffrey Hopkins, *Meditation on Emptiness* (London: Wisdom Publications, 1984), pp. 364–397.