Contemplation and Identity in Evagrius Ponticus & Tsongkhapa

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I certify that this is my own work except where otherwise indicated.

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Brief Abstract

This thesis is an exercise in comparative theology as developed by Francis Clooney. It brings selected texts of Patristic Christian monastic Evagrius Ponticus into critical comparative dialogue with the seminal "Stages of the Path" (*Lamrim Chenmo*) text of Tibetan Buddhist monastic Tsongkhapa. This comparative analysis is undertaken in the context of the more recent phenomena of Buddhist-Christian dual belonging claims in which Buddhists and/or Christians borrow from the "other" tradition in forming a spiritual identity asserted to be *simultaneously* Buddhist and Christian. In fact, theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar considered Evagrius' theology to be closer to Buddhism than Christianity. In essence, the thesis analyses whether and to what extent the texts of Evagrius and Tsongkhapa provide support for Buddhist-Christian dual belonging claims. The *Introduction* provides an overview of how this research question emerged from both pastoral experience and dissatisfaction with the relevant literature. *Chapter one* surveys the literature concerning dual religious belonging which admits to an abundance of methodological, anthropological or sociological exploration but relatively little comparative *theological* exploration. Having surveyed several candidate methodologies, *Chapter two* defends the use of comparative theology as the most workably efficient methodology for analysing the research question. It also explains why incorporating Pierre Hadot's "*Ancient Texts as Spiritual Exercises"* hermeneutic supports such analysis. *Chapter three* introduces Evagrius Ponticus, Tsongkhapa and their texts while *chapters four* and *five* explain their respective spiritual systems. *Chapter six* evaluates apparent similarities in developing meditative / prayer states while *chapter seven* evaluates apparent similarities in wisdom / epistemology. Despite a conclusion of incommensurability, *chapter eight* proposes a ground of dialogue based on comparatively reading these texts as "spiritual exercises". The thesis concludes that although Buddhist-Christian dual belonging claims are likely judged incoherent, dialogue concerning shared attention-regulating practices and ascesis is not only possible, but to be encouraged.

Extended Abstract

Introduction - What is this Thesis About?

This thesis is an exercise in comparative theology as envisaged by Francis Clooney and James. L Fredericks. In this context, *comparative theology* involves bringing texts from different religious traditions into critical dialogue to answer the question; “in reading together these texts, what fresh insights will they reveal about how I appropriate my own religious tradition as both a philosophical and living system of spiritual transformation?" (Clooney 2010). The thesis brings selected texts of Patristic Christian monastic Evagrius Ponticus (345-399 CE) into critical comparative dialogue with the seminal “Great Stages of the Path to Enlightenment” text (*Lamrim Chenmo*) of Tibetan Buddhist monastic Tsongkhapa (1357-1429 CE).

These texts are brought into comparative dialogue and analysis within the context of the more recent phenomenon of Buddhist-Christian dual belonging claims (Valkenberg 2022). Dual belonging refers to attempts by practitioners of one religious tradition to appropriate and incorporate the practices or tenets of a second religious tradition (Phan 2004). *Buddhist-Christian* dual-belonging may be thought of as a subset within the broader phenomenon, gaining significant academic and pastoral momentum over the last two decades (D’Costa and Thompson 2016), (Corneille 2016). It refers to attempts by Christians or Buddhists to appropriate and integrate the tenets and/or practices of the “other” into their home Christian or Buddhist tradition, or to create a blended spiritual identity as *simultaneously* Christian and Buddhist (Takacs and Kimmel 2024).

However, while there is significant literature devoted to religious dual belonging generally, much of it is focused on process, anthropological, sociological and methodological issues. Without diminishing the importance of these, the literature itself frankly admits to a relative absence of deep comparative *theological* / *philosophical* engagement with the texts, languages and commentaries of different religious traditions, especially in the context of Buddhist-Christian dual belonging claims (D'Costa and Thompson 2016). This is understandable because it is difficult enough for one person to master the languages, philosophy, theology, texts and authoritative commentaries associated with a single spiritual tradition, let alone *two* spiritual traditions (Cornille 2022). Nevertheless, the relative absence of this deeper, comparative theological analysis makes it very difficult to evaluate the coherency of Buddhist-Christian dual belonging claims (Drew 2011).

In these circumstances and stated more formally, the principal research question investigated by the thesis is:

> "When read together in an exercise of comparative theology, do the contemplative and meditative practices developed by Evagrius and Tsongkhapa throughout their texts support Buddhist-Christian dual belonging claims? Or are those contemplative and meditative practices predicated upon incommensurable metaphysics and epistemologies generating so radically different spiritual identities that Buddhist-Christian dual belonging claims must be judged incoherent?"

Origins of the Principal Research Question

Explained more comprehensively in the *Introduction* to the thesis, this research question originated in my experience as an academic and Buddhist chaplain at the Australian National University in attempting to provide sensitive but theologically accurate pastoral responses to everyday women and men genuinely seeking to create, or had tentatively created, a religious identity that purported to be *both* Buddhist and Christian. Most of these seekers had been born and raised into a Western, Christian tradition and now, usually later in life, had either encountered Buddhism for the first time, or had experimented with a variety of Buddhist meditation practices throughout their lives and were now wanting to deepen their practice but in a way that seemed to blend aspects of their Christian tradition.

Occasionally, I also encountered students from Asian countries whose families had converted from Buddhism to Christianity only one or two generations previously. These students were often struggling in their attempts to either separate out their historical, cultural Buddhist or traditional religious traditions from their relatively recent Christian identity or to incorporate aspects of their Buddhist or traditional cultural traditions into their Christian identity.

As I researched this phenomenon of "Dual Religious Belonging" generally and "Buddhist-Christian" dual belonging specifically, I was left unsatisfied with the scholarly and pastoral literature. In reviewing the literature, *chapter one* of the thesis demonstrates that while there are many first-person experiential testimonies of attempts at creating a Buddhist-Christian religious identity, they generally lack comparative theological or philosophical depth.

These first-person narratives are often inspirational, but usually lacking coherent theological or philosophical foundations for what is asserted to be a spiritual identity that is *simultaneously* Buddhist and Christian.

Curiously though, amongst the literature associated with Buddhism and Christianity, I would occasionally encounter an observation by Twentieth Century Christian Theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905 – 1988) to the effect that "the mystical teaching of Evagrius in its fully developed consistency stands closer to Buddhism than to Christianity." (Balthasar 1939). I noticed that past and present scholars had repeated, to greater or lesser degrees of scrutiny, Balthasar's comment as a basis for arguing for apparent similarities between the contemplative and meditative practices developed by Evagrius and those found in different Buddhist traditions (Dalai Lama 2012); (Linge 2000); (Leloup 2009); Tiso (2009) (2016) and Geiman (2023).

Who *was* Evagrius Ponticus and *what* was it about his texts and theology such that no less a theologian than Balthasar and others could assert Evagrius' affinity with Buddhism? And *which* Buddhist scholar and texts are optimal candidates for comparative analysis with Evagrius and his texts? Finally, depending on the answers to those questions, *what might be* the implications for those seeking to develop a Buddhist-Christian dual identity when Evagrius and his texts are brought into critical dialogue with the chosen Buddhist scholar and their texts? Having surveyed several candidate methodologies, *chapter two* defends the use of comparative theology as the most workably efficient methodology for analysing the research question. It also explains why incorporating Pierre Hadot's "*Ancient Texts as Spiritual Exercises"* hermeneutic supports such analysis.

Evagrius, Tsongkhapa & their Texts

Chapter three is biographical and textual. It presents both Evagrius and the chosen Tibetan monk scholar, Tsongkhapa as vital, living spiritual figures who profoundly influenced generations of Christians and Buddhists respectively. In presenting their lives, the chapter draws upon a wide range of primary and secondary sources.

An important qualification is needed. This thesis is not holding out Evagrius or Tsongkhapa as representatives of "Christianity" or "Buddhism" respectively. It is doubtful whether such an identification is even possible given the sheer variety of cultural expression and doctrinal differences characterising the world's Christian and Buddhist traditions[1] prompting Cabezón (1992) to observe that because both Christianity and Buddhism are so doctrinally rich and diverse, the term "Buddhist-Christian dialogue" is meaningful "only as a shorthand expression for the process of interchange between *individual* Buddhists and Christians, each an advocate of *specific* doctrinal views"[2]. But even this task of individuation is difficult because those who assert a Buddhist-Christian spiritual identity are often unable to be specific about *which* "Christian" or "Buddhist" tradition and associated metaphysical principles they are seeking to blend (Drew 2011).

[1] In his text: *Lost Christianities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), Bart Ehrman wryly observes: "There are Roman Catholic missionaries in developing countries who devote themselves to voluntary poverty for the sake of others, and evangelical televangelists who run twelve step programs to ensure financial success. There are New England Presbyterians and Appalachian snake handlers. There are Greek Orthodox priests committed to the liturgical service of God, replete with set prayers, incantations and incense, and fundamentalist preachers who view high-church liturgy as a demonic invention. There are liberal Methodist political activists intent on transforming society and Pentecostals who think that society will soon come to a crashing halt with the return of Jesus."

[2] J. I. Cabezón, 'Liberation: An Indo-Tibetan Perspective', *Buddhist-Christian Studies*, vol. 12 (1992), 191.

Chapters six and seven identify these definitional and metaphysical difficulties as profoundly inimical to the construction of a Buddhist-Christian dual identity and thus, an alternative ground of construction is required. This thesis explores that alternative ground in certain ascetic and behaviour-regulating practices and thus concurs with Linge (2000) that: "Evagrius' discussion of a reflective dimension of ascetic practice marks a very different and, I think, much more fruitful area of convergence with Buddhism than do metaphysical issues."[3]

The choice of Evagrius Ponticus is not based on an assumption that he *is* a typical, representative Christian, but simply because the literature concerning Buddhist-Christian dual-belonging does refer to *Evagrius*' (and not someone else) and his contemplative / ascetic 'system'. And Tsongkhapa was not chosen because he *is* a typical representative Buddhist, but simply because his *Lamrim Chenmo* bears structural and pedagogical similarities to the Evagrian texts. It is therefore worthwhile investigating whether and to what extent *Evagrius'* texts, when brought into dialogue with the *Lamrim Chenmo* by Tsongkhapa from within the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, might support Buddhist – Christian dual belonging claims.

This qualification *does not* justify ignoring or minimising the difficult and fractured reception of Evagrius' thinking and his texts, (particularly the *Kephalaia Gnostika* (Κεφάλαια Γνωστικά) following his death in 399 CE as part of the so-called "Origenist controversies" festering from the late fourth to the sixth centuries and culminating in the 15 *anathemata* of the Council of 553 CE (Rubenson 2022, Hombergen 2021).

[3] D. E. Linge, 'Leading the Life of Angels: Ascetic Practice and Reflection in the Writings of Evagrius of Pontus', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 68, no. 3 (2000), 560.

While it is well beyond the scope of this thesis to critically (re)evaluate the Christian "orthodoxy", or otherwise, of Evagrius, Chapter three of this thesis will discuss the implications of the Council of 553 and the significance of the S_1 and S_2 recensions of Evagrius' *Kephalaia Gnostika.* *Chapter three* therefore turns to the major texts written by both monastics intended to embody and communicate those insights and practices in terms of a path of spiritual progression. Evagrius' principal monastic trilogy; *The Praktikos* (Πρακτικός), the *Gnostikos* (Γνωστικός) and the *Kephalaia Gnostika (*Κεφάλαια Γνωστικά) are brought into critical, comparative dialogue with Tsongkhapa's *Lamrim Chenmo* ("Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment.") Noted above, the *Lamrim Chenmo* was chosen because while there are many *śāstras* (treatises) that might be brought into critical dialogue, the *Lamrim Chenmo* bears striking pedagogical similarities to the Evagrian texts. Accordingly, chapter three establishes the necessary biographical and textual foundations for an overview of the Evagrian Christian tradition and the Buddhist path to enlightenment presented by Tsongkhapa provided in *chapters four* and *five* respectively.

Evagrius, Tsongkhapa & their Spiritual Traditions

Evagrius' creates an elegant but very complex Christian metaphysical, epistemological and ethical system, drawing not only upon earlier Christian theologians, principally Origen but also upon concepts from pre-Christian philosophers, particularly Plotinus and Plato. Adding to this complexity is the terse, cryptic compositional style Evagrius adopted in writing his texts *and* his assumption that the reader of his texts is *already* aware of the basic framework of his Christian metaphysical system.

The lack of systemisation in Evagrius' writings has led one contemporary commentator to remark that the reader may "feel lost in a hall of mirrors" (Stefaniw 2007). Understanding Evagrius is *not* made easier by the fact that: "the present state of the Evagrian corpus of writings is tangled, and those recovering his vision of the monastic life must negotiate a series of textual and linguistic challenges." (Stewart 2001).

Accordingly, *chapter four* intends to provide the necessary basic framework of Evagrius' Christian metaphysical system. This framework is intended as a form of Evagrian "primer" enabling a deeper conceptual analysis in *chapters six* and *seven* of specific metaphysical, epistemological and ethical aspects of the Evagrian Christian system brought into dialogue with similar aspects of the Tibetan Buddhist system of Tsongkhapa. It proceeds by exploring the way Evagrius approaches four foundational issues (Driscoll 2003). First, an understanding of humanity's existential situation or cosmology. What is creation? What is the spiritual "problem" experienced by people? Second, theological anthropology. What is a person? What does it mean to be a person in relation to others and to the ultimate? Third, the process of spiritual progression.

How does a person progress along the paths to spiritual perfection? Finally, the telos or goal*;* what is the goal of spiritual practice? What spiritual state is attained at the end of the spiritual journey? *Chapter five* then presents Tsongkhapa's approach to these same four foundational issues as he develops them in his *Lamrim Chenmo*, composed to reflect the Tibetan Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition. However significant context is needed before analysing how, like Evagrius, Tsongkhapa develops the notions of *cosmology*, *theological anthropology*, *pedagogy* and *eschatology* (telos) of the spiritual path throughout the *Lamrim Chenmo*.

By the time of Jesus Christ, Buddhism had already experienced approximately 500 years of Councils, differentiation into various interpretative "schools" and doctrinal developments (Carpenter 2014, Westerhoff 2018). By the time of Evagrius, the *Prajñāpāramita Sūtras* - foundational texts for Mahāyāna Buddhism appeared and the Indian monk-scholar Nāgārjuna (c 2nd Century CE) had composed his seminal *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* a foundational text for the *Madhyamaka* ("Middle Way") interpretative school of Mahāyāna Buddhism. By the time of Evagrius' death in 399 CE, the *Saṃdhinirmocana* and *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtras*, foundational texts for the *Yogācāra* ("Mind Only") interpretative school of Mahāyāna Buddhism had also appeared.

And like Evagrius, Tsongkhapa wrote for a very specific audience; in his case, 15th Century Tibetan Buddhist monastics already familiar with these principal dynamics and the "presuppositions and principles underlying his approach." (Napper 2003). Tsongkhapa therefore does not provide the 21st Century, Western, possibly non-Buddhist reader with an explanation of these principal dynamics of Tibetan Mahāyāna Buddhist philosophy developed throughout the *Lamrim Chenmo*.

Chapter five of the thesis provides this necessary historical, philosophical and textual background. Chapters three, four and five of this thesis are therefore intended to be read as a trilogy establishing the necessary bibliographic, textual and philosophical / theological foundations for the deeper comparative analysis of these issues in chapters six and seven of the thesis.

Comparative Analysis

Chapters four and five of this thesis identify *apatheia* and serenity as essential cognitive attainments in a practitioner's progression through their respective Evagrian Christian and Tsongkhapa's Tibetan Buddhist spiritual paths.

Chapter six therefore starts comparative analysis of those states of consciousness described as *apatheia* by Evagrius and as "serenity" (*śamatha*) (*zhi gnas*) by Tsongkhapa. The comparative analysis in *chapter six* begins with a condensed précis of the role and importance of serenity and *apatheia* in Evagrius' and Tsongkhapa's respective spiritual systems. It then proposes a three-fold framework within which serenity and *apatheia* may be comparatively analysed. That framework involves (i) serenity / *apatheia* functioning as bases enabling a practitioner to temporarily suppress manifest afflictions / *logismoi* in progressing along what Tsongkhapa describes as a "mundane path"; (ii) serenity / *apatheia*, functioning as bases enabling a practitioner to eliminate afflictive obscurations and their seeds and thus attain liberation from *saṃsāra* / attain the *Natural Contemplations*; and (iii) when serenity / *apatheia* are conjoined with *bodhicitta* / *agapē*, respectively, possibly functioning as bases enabling a practitioner to attain *enlightenment / Theologiké*.

Chapter six analyses the first possibility while the second and third possibilities are described by the *Lamrim Chenmo* as "supramundane paths" and are explored in *chapter seven. Chapter six* demonstrates that although there are certain superficial similarities in the cultivation and functioning of serenity and *apatheia*, those mental states are informed by and oriented toward by incommensurable metaphysical dynamics and thus cannot provide coherent support for Buddhist-Christian dual belonging claims.

Chapter seven progresses the analysis of *apatheia,* and serenity developed by reference to the three-fold framework outlined in *chapter six*, to its teleological conclusion - a practitioner utilising the serenity / *apatheia* they have attained as a basis for progression along a "supramundane path", characterised by "supramundane insight" (*vipaśyāna*) (Tsongkhapa), and the *Second* then *First Natural Contemplations* and *Theologiké* (Evagrius). For Tsongkhapa, the cultivation of insight in the sense of *vipaśyāna* enables the complete elimination (not mere suppression) of afflictions and their seeds while for Evagrius, the cultivation of *Second* and then *First Natural Contemplation* leads to the discovery and insight into the *logoi* of material and immaterial creation and finally, *Theologiké.* The emphasis is on wisdom / *gnosis* functioning as causes for liberation from *saṃsāra* and enlightenment (Tsongkhapa) and the *Natural Contemplations* and *Theologiké* (Evagrius).

Chapter seven then asks: "how does the nature of a practitioner's identity change as she generates an increasingly refined understanding of the *logoi* of material and immaterial creation?" From Evagrius' perspective, the progressive refinement of the *nous* to accurately perceive and contemplate the *logoi* "is a way of growing into one's authentic, sound, self – the very knowing person – the *gnōstikos*." (Konstantinovsky 2009). However, for Tsongkhapa, when creation-as-*saṃsāra* is transcended by disciples developing direct, perceptual insight into the *emptiness* of persons and phenomena and using that insight to overcome the afflictive and cognitive obscurations they attain *nirvāṇa* – liberation from creation-as-*saṃsāra* and eventually, enlightenment itself.

In Buddhist Madhyamaka philosophy "emptiness" (*śūnyata*) is a non-affirming negation (*med dgag*) which does not permit the possible existence of a positive supernatural existential or ontological "thing".

To assume the existence of *logoi* inherent in creation and to actively seek out such *logoi* through meditative practice would only deepen disciples' ignorance which in turn, would only propel rebirth within creation-as-*saṃsāra* and its attendant suffering. *Chapter seven* demonstrates that although both Tsongkhapa and Evagrius advocate the cultivation of "wisdom" – the epistemological content of the wisdom that is developed are completely antithetical and cannot provide coherent support for Buddhist-Christian dual belonging claims.

Ground of Dialogue - Conclusion

While Evagrius and Tsongkhapa were writing for different monastics in very different metaphysical traditions, they were nevertheless writing for *human beings* struggling with common psychological experiences of anger, lust, attachment, pride and sorrow held in tension with contrary aspirations to virtue, to self-mastery, to happiness and to attaining wisdom.

In this context, and using the example of overcoming the common experience of anger, *chapter eight* of the thesis will argue that a careful application of Hadot's hermeneutic of reading ancient texts as "spiritual exercises" (*protreptic devices*) in support of Buddhist-Christian dual belonging claims enables practitioners to avoid incoherencies associated with fundamentally inconsistent metaphysical, epistemological and spiritual truth claims of the kind demonstrated in chapters six and seven. *Chapter eight* concludes that it is at the level of *praxis* based on love that true Buddhist-Christian identities may flourish.

Abbreviations & Translations

Evagrian Textual Sources

PR:	*The Praktikos*
Gn:	*The Gnostikos*
KG:	*Kephalaia Gnostika*
Th:	*On Thoughts*

Translations of Evagrian Texts

Traité Pratique ou Le Moine:	Translation: *Praktikos or The Monk* 1971, Sources Chrétiennes, 170 (Antoine and Clair Guillaumont).
À Euloge: Les Vices Opposés aux Vertus:	Translation: *An Exhortation: The Vices and Opposing Virtues*, 2017, Sources Chrétiennes 591 (Charles-Antoine Fogielman).
Sur Les Pensées:	Translation: *On the Thoughts*, 2017, Sources Chrétiennes 438 (Paul Géhin, Claire & Antoine Guillaumont).
Chapitres Sur La Prière:	Translation: *Chapters on Prayer*, 2017, Sources Chrétiennes 589 (Paul Géhin)
Scholies Aux Psaumes: *Tome II (Psaumes 71-150)*,	Translation: *Commentary on Psalms,* 2021, *Sources Chrétiennes* 614 Rondeau, Gehin and Cassin (eds)

Indian Buddhist Sources

BCA: *Bodhicaryāvatāra*

MAV: *Madhyamakāvatāra*

MMK: *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*

PsP: *Prasannapadā*

Tibetan Buddhist Sources

LRCM: *Lamrim Chenmo*

Translations of Pāli Buddhist Texts

The Dīgha Nikāya: Translation: Walshe, M. *The Long Discourses of the Buddha*, Wisdom Publications, 1991, United States.

The Majjhima Nikāya: Translation: Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi, *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*, 1995, Wisdom Publications, United States.

The Saṃyutta Nikāya: Translation: Bhikkhu Bodhi, *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha*, 2000, Wisdom Publications, United States.

The Aṅguttara Nikāya: Translation: Bhikkhu Bodhi, *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha*, 2012, Wisdom Publications, United States.

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Introduction

> "Western and Indian thought are both, each in its own way, incomplete and do not go far enough. If one wants to give each its due, one must not only look to their fundamental difference but must also take into consideration the fact that both are undergoing change."
>
> Albert Schweitzer, *Indian Thought and Its Development*

Origins of the Principal Research Question

This thesis is an exercise in comparative theology analysing one very specific example of the recent phenomenon of Buddhist-Christian dual-belonging claims. "Dual belonging" refers to attempts by practitioners of one religious tradition to appropriate and incorporate the practices or tenets of a second religious tradition while asserting an identity composed of *both* traditions[4]. Buddhist-Christian dual-belonging is a more specific manifestation gaining significant academic and pastoral momentum over the last decade[5]. It refers to attempts by Christians or Buddhists to appropriate and integrate the tenets and/or practices of the "other" into their home Christian or Buddhist tradition, and to create a blended spiritual identity as simultaneously Christian and Buddhist.[6]

This research question originated in my attempts to provide sensitive but theologically accurate pastoral responses to everyday women and men who were genuinely seeking to create, or had tentatively created, a religious identity that purported to be *both* Buddhist and Christian.

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[4] P.C. Phan, 'Multiple Religious Belonging: Opportunities and Challenges for Theology and Church' (2003) 64 *Theological Studies* 495.
[5] C. Cornille, 'Strategies of Negotiation in Buddhist-Christian Dual Belonging', in G. D'Costa and R. Thompson, eds., *Buddhist-Christian Dual Belonging: Affirmations, Objections, Explorations* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2016), 143.
[6] R. Drew, *Buddhist and Christian? An Exploration of Dual Belonging* (London: Routledge, 2011).

Most of these seekers had been born and raised into a Western, Christian tradition and now, usually later in life, had either encountered Buddhism for the first time, or had experimented with a variety of Buddhist meditation practices throughout their lives and were now wanting to deepen their practice but in a way that seemed to blend aspects of their Christian tradition. Occasionally, in my time as chaplain at the Australian National University, I also encountered students from Asian countries whose families had converted from Buddhism to Christianity only one or two generations previously. These students were often struggling in their attempts to either separate out their historical, cultural Buddhist or traditional religious traditions from their relatively recent Christian identity or to incorporate aspects of their Buddhist or traditional cultural traditions into their Christian identity.

Undeveloped Ambit of the Literature

As I researched this phenomenon of "Dual Religious Belonging" generally and "Buddhist-Christian" dual belonging specifically, I was left unsatisfied with the scholarly and pastoral literature. In reviewing the literature, chapter one of the thesis demonstrates that while there are many first-person experiential testimonies of attempts at creating a Buddhist-Christian religious identity, they generally lack comparative theological or philosophical depth. These first-person narratives are often inspirational, but usually lacking coherent theological or philosophical foundations for what is asserted to be a spiritual identity that is *simultaneously* Buddhist and Christian. The emphasis seems to be on *feeling* and *intuition* reflecting some of Rose Drew's (2011) surveys where subjective, emotional experience or "mysticism" seems to be preferred over the hard work associated with learning the languages, studying the foundational texts, philosophies and theologies of each of the chosen religious traditions.

As a social and anthropological phenomenon, religious dual-belonging *has* generated scholarly research. However, as chapter one demonstrates, much of it is focussed on process, characterisation and/or identification of the process as well as challenges to established interreligious methodologies. There seems to be a relative *absence* of literature devoted to engagement with the important foundational texts and deeper theological and philosophical tenets of Buddhist and Christian traditions appropriated by those crafting a dual Buddhist-Christian religious identity. This absence has been recently noted by the literature with an admission by D'Costa[7] that despite considerable sociological and cultural investigation of religious dual belonging there is "very little theological investigation." Chapter one of the thesis suggests two reasons for this absence; first, Buddhist-Christian dual-belonging is a relatively recent phenomenon and practitioners are still exploring ways of appropriating and expressing multiple religious traditions. Second, relatively few Christian theologians have also been trained in Buddhist philosophy and few Buddhist philosophers are also trained in Christian theology.[8]

Curiously, amongst the literature associated with Buddhism and Christianity, I would occasionally encounter an observation by Twentieth Century Christian Theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905 – 1988) to the effect that "the mystical teaching of Evagrius in its fully developed consistency stands closer to Buddhism than to Christianity."[9] Balthasar's observation will be discussed below.

[7] D'Costa and Thompson, *Buddhist-Christian Dual Belonging*.
[8] There is, however, very fine comparative scholarship involving the Hindu and Christian traditions, evidenced in texts by Jesuit scholars Francis Clooney and Michael Barnes and Oxford Scholar Gavin Flood.
[9] H. Urs von Balthasar, 'Metaphysik und Mystik des Evagrius Pontikus', *Zeitschrift für Askese und Mystik*, 15 (1939), 31–47. An English translation is available: Hans Urs von Balthasar, 'The Metaphysics and Mystical Theology of Evagrius', tr., B. Ward, *Monastic Studies*, 3 (1965), 183–202.

As chapter one notes, Balthasar's comment seems to have been adopted and repeated in the literature with various degrees of critique[10] to the point where, in exploring this phenomenon of Buddhist-Christian dual belonging, an investigation of Evagrius Ponticus (345 – 399 CE), his texts and his Patristic Christian tradition seemed very inviting. Who *was* Evagrius Ponticus and *what* was it about his texts and theology such that no less a theologian than Balthasar could assert Evagrius' affinity with Buddhism? And, depending on the answers to those questions, *what might be* the implications of Evagrius' texts and his "mysticism" for those seeking to develop a Buddhist-Christian dual identity?

Chapter three of the thesis traces and explores the contours of Evagrius' life, noting how his character matured from living life as a *bon vivant* and slightly scandalous scholar in Constantinople to living as an ascetic monastic in Kellia, Egypt. Chapter three also introduces three of his principal texts oriented toward training and progressing in the monastic life; *The Praktikos* (Πρακτικός), the *Gnostikos* (Γνωστικός) and the *Kephalaia Gnostika (*Κεφάλαια Γνωστικά). In chapters six and seven - the more comparatively analytical chapters of the thesis, these texts are supplemented with Evagrius' *Chapters on Prayer*, *On the Eight Thoughts*, *On Thoughts*, the *Antirrhētikos* ("Talking Back") and *Reflections*. Could these texts, and the Patristic Christian theology developed in them be usefully brought into dialogue with the texts of (for example) a Tibetan *Buddhist* scholar?

[10] B. Ruhe, *Freeing the Buddha: Diversity on a Sacred Path—Large Scale Concerns* (Vancouver: Buddhist Spectrum Study Group, 3rd edn, 1999); L. Dysinger, *Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); M. DelCogliano, '*The Quest for Evagrius of Pontus: A Historiographical Essay*' (2011) 26(4) American Benedictine Review 387.

And if these texts of Evagrius and those of a chosen Buddhist monk-scholar were to be read and analysed together as an exercise in comparative theology, would the result provide the much needed theological / philosophical rigour to the construction and evaluation of Buddhist-Christian dual belonging claims?

Identifying a Buddhist Scholar and Why Comparative Theology?

As I researched and read into Evagrius' texts and began to identify his spiritual "framework" those texts revealed, it seemed appropriate to bring the Tibetan Buddhist scholar Tsongkhapa (CE 1357 – 1419) and his seminal text, the *Lamrim Chenmo* ("*Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*")[11] into comparative dialogue with Evagrius' Patristic Christian texts. Chapter three of the thesis introduces the life of Tsongkhapa as well as his seminal *Lamrim* text on training and progression in the spiritual life. *Both* Evagrius and Tsongkhapa intended their respective texts to provide the foundational training in transforming a monastic's spiritual identity and thus seemed appropriate comparators.

But *how* was this analytical comparison to proceed? What methodological frameworks existed to optimally facilitate an analysis and evaluation of Buddhist-Christian dual belonging claims by reference to these texts of Evagrius and Tsongkhapa?

[11] Tsongkhapa, *The Great Treatise on the Path to Enlightenment* (Lamrim Chenmo), 3 vols, ed., J. Cutler and G. Newland, The Lamrim Chenmo Translation Committee (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 2000–2002). Note, for ease of referencing, subsequent citations to material from the three volumes of the English translation of the Lamrim Chenmo will "pinpoint" the source of the relevant material by reference to Volume and page number. For example, a reference to "LRCM 3:256", refers to a quote from Volume Three, Page 256 of the English translation.

Chapter two of the thesis identifies and analyses several methodological candidates, including "comparative studies of religion" and the "theology of religions" before arguing for the discipline of "comparative theology" as the most *workably efficient* methodology. Chapter two argues that amongst the methodologies identified, comparative theology is best suited to the particular contours of the central research question because it exhibits three important features; first, it is rigorously comparative, second, it is grounded in a thorough-going textual and theological / philosophical analysis while thirdly and importantly given the origins of this research question, it is also pastorally sensitive to the needs of those seeking to forge a Buddhist-Christian dual identity.[12]

However, it also seemed an intuitive conclusion that despite von Balthasar's comment, the transformative result of bringing Evagrius' texts into critical dialogue with Tsongkhapa's *Lamrim Chenmo* in an exercise of comparative theology would be to render Buddhist-Christian dual belonging claims simply incoherent. Why then research and write a thesis about what seems so obvious? As chapter eight of the thesis will explain, the answer lies in what is revealed in the *process* of bringing Evagrius' and Tsongkhapa's texts into critical, comparative dialogue. It is this *revelatory* character that Clooney identifies and defends as bringing value to the discipline (Clooney 2010).

[12] F. X. Clooney, *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning Across Religious Borders* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).

Comparative Theology – A Potential Ground for Dialogue is Revealed

And what is revealed is that while Evagrius and Tsongkhapa were indeed writing at different times, for different monastics in very different metaphysical traditions, they were nevertheless writing for *human beings* struggling with common psychological experiences of anger, lust, attachment, pride and sorrow held in tension with contrary aspirations to virtue, to self-mastery, to happiness and to attaining wisdom. In this context and despite very different metaphysical and religious contexts, both Evagrius and Tsongkhapa intended their texts to effect a profound transformation in a practitioner's spiritual identity[13]. For this reason, chapter two also argues that both Evagrius' and Tsongkhapa's respective texts function as "spiritual exercises" in the sense of Pierre Hadot's (1922 – 2010) *Philosophy as Spiritual Exercise* hermeneutic[14].

Hadot himself concluded that Evagrius' *The Praktikos* embodied his approach enabling a monastic to catalyse the desired shift in spiritual identity.[15] In this way chapter eight of the thesis demonstrates how Hadot's approach *could* assist in creating a ground of dialogue between Buddhists and Christians by reading Evagrius' texts and Tsongkhapa's *Lamrim Chenmo* as philosophy embodying "spiritual exercises as a way of life", with the texts functioning as *protreptic devices:* "designed to make persons rethink their ethical beliefs and convert to a fundamental change of outlook and behaviour"[16].

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[13] I. Graiver, 'Possible Selves in Late Antiquity: Ideal Selfhood and Embodied Selves in Evagrian Anthropology', *The Journal of Religion*, 98.1 (2018), 1–25, & I. Graiver 'Demonic Machinations and Cognitive Mechanisms: Cognitive Insights into Early Monastic Demonology', *The Journal of Religion*, 102.2 (2022), 183–204.
[14] P. Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, ed. A. I. Davidson, tr. M. Chase (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995).
[15] P. Hadot, *What Is Ancient Philosophy?*, tr. M. Chase (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).
[16] J. Ganeri, 'Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from the Buddha to Tagore', *in Philosophy as a Way of Life: Ancients and Moderns – Essays in Honor of Pierre Hadot*, ed. by M. Chase, S. Clark and M. McGhee (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2013).

Chapter eight will also critique the way in which scholars have begun to explore the application of Hadot's conception of "philosophy as spiritual exercises" to Buddhist philosophy[17]. Reading Evagrius' and Tsongkhapa's texts through Hadot's hermeneutic enables chapter eight of the thesis to distinguish between the analytical implications of comparative theology as a *theoretical exercise*, rendering dual-belonging claims normatively incoherent on the one hand, while permitting the creation of mutually informative and coherent meditative and contemplative *practices* on the other.

In this way, chapter eight of the thesis constructs a ground of dialogue between Buddhists and Christians at the level of *praktike* or *ascesis* without triggering incoherency by either seeking metaphysical equivalency where there is none, or by placing so many qualifications upon incommensurable metaphysical tenets that each traditions' distinctive truth claims are negated, and dialogue is thus rendered meaningless. But what then, to make of von Balthasar's observation about the apparent affinities (or even equivalencies) asserted to exist between Evagrian "mysticism" and Buddhism?

Avoiding False Metaphysical & Cognitive Equivalency

Is it true that Evagrius' Patristic Christian "mysticism" expressed in his texts is as close to Buddhism as suggested by Balthasar? Answering this question necessitates a close, comparative reading of Evagrius and his texts together with Tsongkhapa and his text.

[17] C. W. Gowans, 'Buddhist Philosophy as a Way of Life: The Spiritual Exercises of Tsong-kha-pa', in S. M. Emmanuel, ed., *Buddhist Philosophy: A Comparative Approach* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2018), 11–28.

Chapter four of the thesis therefore provides an overview of the Evagrian Patristic Christian system as he developed and explained it throughout his texts while chapter five provides an overview of Tsongkhapa's Tibetan Buddhist system as he developed and explained it in the *Lamrim Chenmo*.

Chapters four and five of the thesis explore how Evagrius' texts and Tsongkhapa's *Lamrim Chenmo* approach four issues fundamental to both; first an understanding of humanity's existential situation; what is the spiritual "problem" experienced by people? Second, theological anthropology; what is a person - what does it mean to be a person in relation to others and to the ultimate? Third, spiritual pedagogy - how does a person progress along the paths to spiritual perfection? What practices, prayers and learning must a person engage in to make spiritual progress toward the goal?

And finally, identifying the *telos* or *summum bonum* of spiritual practice itself. What is the goal of spiritual practice? What state, or identity is attained as the fruit of spiritual journey? These chapters provide the textual, theological and philosophical foundations for the deeper comparative analysis, in chapters six and seven of the thesis, of Buddhist-Christian dual-belonging claims based on Evagrius' texts and Tsongkhapa's *Lamrim Chenmo* as exemplar of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. And because affinities between Evagrius and Buddhism are asserted to be grounded in contemplation as a ground for the cultivation of wisdom, it makes sense to start with contemplation leading to *apatheia* (Evagrius) and serenity (*śamatha*) (Tsongkhapa).

Contemplation, Apatheia and Serenity

Chapters four and five of the thesis will explain that despite the very different teleological *orientation* of Tsongkhapa's and Evagrius' ascetic processes, both monastics share a deep concern for certain attention regulating ascetic practices as a foundation for achieving respective metaphysical goals. This concern explains why both Tsongkhapa and Evagrius identify and locate *apatheia* and serenity(*śamatha*) as essential initial cognitive attainments in a practitioner's progression through their respective Christian and Tibetan Buddhist spiritual paths. Is Evagrius' conception of *apatheia* the same as or sufficiently similar to Tsongkhapa's conception of *serenity*, whether in entity and/or in function, to enable some concordance?

Chapter six therefore focusses on these 'reflective dimensions of ascetic practice',[18] especially investigating whether and to what extent the initial cultivation and then attainment of serenity / *apatheia* might enable a practitioner to temporarily suppress manifest afflictions and / or *logismoi*. In this way, the analysis in chapter six analyses shared concerns to enable practitioners to gain control over their thoughts, feelings and behavioural tendencies, through *praktiké* (Evagrius) and the elimination of obstacles to concentrative 'serenity' - *śamatha* (Tsongkhapa), in order to develop highly refined and focussed states of concentration and prayer while avoiding incommensurable anthropological and metaphysical frameworks.

[18]I. Graiver '*Demonic Machinations and Cognitive Mechanisms'* (2022), 183-204.

Chapter six commences by exploring the way in which Tsongkhapa in his *Lamrim Chenmo* presents the initial development of concentration (*samādhi*) as necessary support for the progressive cultivation of the "nine mental states" through eliminating the "five faults" via the application of the "eight antidotes".[19] Guided by mindfulness (*smṛti*) (*dran pa*) and vigilance (*saṃprajanya*) (*shes bzhin*) the application of these eight antidotes *appears* to perform a similar function to Evagrian *praktiké* in defending the stability and clarity of the *nous* against the onslaught of the *logismoi*.

With this apparent similarity in mind, chapter six turns to a deeper analysis of Evagrius' methodology for developing *apatheia,* developed throughout his texts including *The Praktikos, Chapters on Prayer*, *On the Eight Thoughts*, *On Thoughts*, the *Antirrhētikos* ("Talking Back") and *Skemmata* ("Reflections). Chapter six identifies that for Evagrius, a practitioner needs to initially cultivate *hesychia* (ἡσυχία) (stillness) in support of the development of *apatheia* including the importance of cultivating both discernment (*diakrisis*) (διάκρισις) and self-control (*enkrateia*) (ἐνκράτεια) that function as accompanying modalities of *praktiké* necessary to combat the eight *logismoi*, the demonically inspired thoughts that constantly threaten to destroy the monastic's ability to attain *apatheia*, engage in pure prayer and attain to the *Second and First Natural Contemplations* and finally to knowledge of God; *Theologiké* (θεωλογική).[20]

[19] LRCM 3:57.

[20] Evagrius of Ponticus, 'The Foundations of the Monastic Life: A Presentation of the Practice of Stillness', in R. E. Sinkewicz., ed and tr., *Evagrius of Ponticus: The Greek Ascetic Corpus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 1–11.

In this context, and despite quite obvious metaphysical differences, practices associated with the common psychological experience of struggling for mastery over body, emotions and mind appear to represent a "much more fruitful area of convergence with Buddhism than do metaphysical issues"[21]. These observations and the consequences flowing from them that emerge from the close analysis of *apatheia* and serenity(*śamatha*) in chapter six, then forms one of the foundations for the discussion in chapter eight of the thesis and in which a potential ground of dialogue is identified.

Contemplation, Epistemology and Identity

While chapter six focusses upon certain reflective and contemplative practices (*apatheia* and *serenity*) as a potential ground of dialogue, chapter seven focusses upon another: whether and to what extent the epistemic content and phenomenological processes of *Second Natural Contemplation,* then *First Natural Contemplations* and *Theologiké* as presented by Evagrius approximates the nature, content and function of the insight / wisdom necessary for liberation from *saṃsāra* as presented from Tsongkhapa's *Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka* perspective. And, from Evagrius' perspective, chapter seven will explore whether and to what extent serenity and insight as developed by Tsongkhapa in his *Lamrim Chenmo* might approximate the nature, content and function of *Second* then *First Natural Contemplations* and eventually *Theologiké.*

[21] D. E. Linge, 'Leading the Life of Angels: Ascetic Practice and Reflection in the Writings of Evagrius of Pontus', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 68.3 (2000), 537–568.

While both chapters six and seven involve exploration of contemplative progression along a defined "path", the *cognitive mechanisms* underlying that progression are very different. The mechanism in chapter six involves techniques directed toward the identification and temporary suppression of what Tsongkhapa identifies as manifest afflictions and what Evagrius identifies as the *logismoi* and related emotional and afflictive cognitive states. The emphasis is therefore on *praktiké* / inner discipline functioning as causes for attaining the peace, stability and focus of mind associated with *apatheia* and serenity respectively.

However, chapter seven will demonstrate that for Tsongkhapa, the cognitive mechanism central to the cultivation of wisdom involves cultivation of *insight* in the sense of *vipaśyāna* enabling the complete elimination (not mere suppression) of afflictions and their seeds. For Evagrius, chapter seven identifies the perception of the *logoi* of creation through *Second* and *First Natural Contemplations* and finally, *Theologiké* as the basis for *gnosis* / wisdom. Thus, the emphasis for Evagrius and Tsongkhapa is on wisdom / *gnosis* functioning as causes for liberation from *saṃsāra* or enlightenment (Tsongkhapa) and eschatological cognitive reunion with God as Holy Trinity - *Theologiké* (Evagrius).

Chapter seven demonstrates that *both* Evagrius and Tsongkhapa, draw distinctions between the epistemic authority of ordinary, conventional sense perception of everyday objects and persons on the one hand and forms of non-conventional, superior perception that "sees" beyond such conventional sense perception to the *ultimate mode* of existence of those same objects and persons on the other.

For Evagrius, while God's *Second Creation* is mediated to practitioners through their "corruptible sense perception", having developed *apatheia*, practitioners are able to cultivate and progress through the *Natural Contemplations* which reveal the *logoi* of visible and invisible creation God's spiritual principles pervading material and immaterial creation. This is possible because of the way Evagrius characterises all of visible and invisible creation as a "letter", or "Book" from God to His creatures and which contains the spiritual principles and reasons for God's providence in *Second Creation*. Through cultivating the *Natural Contemplations,* "reading creation" (as God's letter or book) in the sense of discovering and understanding the *logoi* within visible and invisible creation becomes the framework and means by which the fallen *nous* begins its cognitive re-ascent to God, resulting in the eschatological state of *Theologiké*.

However, chapter seven also demonstrates that for Tsongkhapa, "creation" is not the providential expression of God's love for sentient beings characterised as a letter or book containing inherently existing *logoi* of material and immaterial creation.

Rather, creation-as-*saṃsāra* is characterised by sentient beings helplessly cycling through the *desire realm, form realm* and *formless realm* manifesting as the ripening of sentient beings' karma and afflictions. Therefore, while disciples of Evagrius seek to refine their minds to perceive the *logoi* of creation; the "real" underlying substance and constitutive principles of creation, disciples of Tsongkhapa undertake deep analysis to purify their minds from any perception of persons or phenomena as inherently existent or "real" or as being composed of any inherently existing "substance" let alone the principles of a Divine Creator.

Chapter seven also reveals significant differences in the cognitive and epistemological *processes* associated with cultivating the *nature* of the "insight" characterising the *Natural Contemplations* (Evagrius) and insight into the emptiness of persons and phenomena (Tsongkhapa). It demonstrates that while Evagrius rarely attempts to identify or define the actual *substance* of the *logoi* of material and immaterial creation, there are tantalising hints concerning the use of "proofs" or "logical demonstrations" (*apodeixeis*) (ἀπόδειξις) to do so. The chapter explains and demonstrates how Tsongkhapa relies upon "logical demonstrations" taking the form of both consequentialist and syllogistic reasoning accepted by his *Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka* school of tenets and drawn from Chapter 6 of Candrakīrti's *Madhyamakāvatāra* as means to developing supramundane insight. The chapter also identifies the use of "logical demonstrations" as a potential area for future comparative scholarship.

Nevertheless, while Evagrius may have pedagogical reasons for not answering the question directly, chapter seven suggests a more revealing question might ask: "how does the nature of a practitioner's identity change as she generates an increasingly refined understanding of the *logoi* of material and immaterial creation?"

From Evagrius' perspective, the practitioner progressively refines her *nous* to accurately perceive and contemplate the *logoi* "is a way of growing into one's authentic, sound, self – the very knowing person – the *gnōstikos* – God preeternally meant one to be."[22] In doing so, "the monk becomes a real *gnōstic*, a knower of the Holy Trinity, a recipient of eternal life and light by Christ's intercession."[23]

[22] J. Konstantinovsky, *Evagrius Ponticus: The Making of a Gnostic* (Oxfordshire, Routledge 2016), 148.
[23] A. Corbu, 'Evagrius Ponticus: Guide to the Divine Light', *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, 64.3–4 (2020), 129 – 145.

However, for Tsongkhapa, when creation-as-*saṃsāra* is transcended by disciples developing direct, perceptual insight into the *emptiness* of persons and phenomena and using that insight to overcome the afflictive and cognitive obscurations they attain *nirvāṇa* – liberation from creation-as-*saṃsāra* and eventually, enlightenment itself. Chapter seven therefore demonstrates that the very purpose, substance and pedagogical processes of Tsongkhapa's Tibetan Buddhist insight and Evagrius Patristic Christian *Natural Contemplations* developed along the "supramundane path" are completely antithetical. The chapter also demonstrates that Evagrius' and Tsongkhapa's conceptions of material and immaterial creation, the limitations associated with the human experience of material and immaterial creation, the methods for transcending those limitations and the metaphysical goal of their respective spiritual paths are also antithetical. Thus, it is chapter seven that most directly exposes the incommensurable metaphysical, epistemological and anthropological foundations of Evagrius' and Tsongkhapa's respective spiritual traditions demanding that any temptation to equate Evagrian transformation of a practitioner's spiritual identity through contemplation as effecting the same or substantially similar transformation in the spiritual identify of a follower of Tsongkhapa's Tibetan Buddhist tradition, to be firmly resisted.

The comparative analysis undertaken in chapter seven demonstrates that Buddhist-Christian dual belonging claims based on apparent similarities between Evagrian and Tibetan Buddhist meditative and analytical techniques, while well-intentioned, are unsupportable. It also means that Balthasar is simply incorrect in his conclusion that Evagrian mysticism is closer to Buddhism than Christianity and attempts to formulate a Buddhist-Christian dual-belonging identity on this basis must be judged incoherent.

This conclusion does *not mean* that there can be no common ground between disciples of the Evagrian Patristic Christian tradition and Tsongkhapa's Tibetan Buddhist tradition. *Both* Evagrius and Tsongkhapa place considerable emphasis on the nature and role of "love" as part of the spiritual path. If little concordance is possible in terms of "wisdom" then perhaps an appeal to commonality of *agape* and *bodhicitta* might be possible?

Agapē & Bodhicitta?

Tsongkhapa noted that if serenity is "imbued with the precious spirit of enlightenment, it turns into the Mahāyāna path"[24] while for Evagrius, "*agapē* (selfless love) is the child of *apatheia*"[25] affirming that "the goal of the ascetic life is *agapē*". If a practitioner *does* attain *apatheia* and thus selfless love (*agapē)*, will *agapē* be sufficient to function as a path consciousness for enlightenment?

Perhaps if a practitioner has developed *bodhicitta* then maybe that person has <u>also</u> attained *apatheia.* Is *agapē* also a "child of serenity"? As tempting as it is, chapter eight will demonstrate why it is simply not possible to equate Evagrius' conception of "love" / *agape* with Tsongkhapa's conception of *bodhicitta*.

[24] LRCM 3:87.

[25] J. E. Bamberger, tr.*, Evagrius Ponticus: The Praktikos and Chapters on Prayer* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1981), [81]. Note, for ease of referencing, subsequent citations to material from Bamberger's English translation of The Praktikos will "pinpoint" the source of the relevant material by reference to abbreviated title and paragraph number. For example, a reference to PR [81] refers to a quote from paragraph 81 of Bamberger's English translation of The Praktikos.

However, while this is true chapter eight will also demonstrate that the techniques for cultivating *bodhicitta* outlined by Tsongkhapa in his *Lamrim Chenmo* include exercises in the cultivation of love as a necessary prerequisite. And the nature of this prerequisite quality of love is such that Evagrius *would*, it is argued, recognise it as being similar to *agape*. Chapter eight argues that the two exercises / techniques for training in the development of *bodhicitta* mentioned by Tsongkhapa in the *Lamrim Chenmo;* the "seven cause-and-effect personal instructions" and "exchanging self and other contain instructions for the modification of a practitioner's behaviour and outlook that would be recognised by Evagrius as appropriate for the cultivation of *agape* / love.

Spiritual Exercises as a Potential Ground of Dialogue

Despite the incommensurability revealed by the analysis in chapters six and seven, the thesis will conclude that it *is possible* to read and interpret Tsongkhapa's *Lamrim Chenmo* and Evagrius' texts through the lens of Pierre Hadot's conception of reading ancient texts as "spiritual exercises"; a technique or hermeneutic ideally suited for exploring religious traditions that embody very different metaphysical foundations while advocating a common concern with spiritual progression.

Chapter eight will therefore argue that Evagrius' texts and Tsongkhapa's *Lamrim Chenmo* could be read as *protreptic devices* in support of Buddhist-Christian dual belonging claims at a certain level of praxis.

Chapter eight demonstrates how this might work by using the common human experience of anger as example of an affliction that, when left unaddressed, radically destroys the cultivation of *apatheia, agape*, the *Natural Contemplations* and *Theologiké* (Evagrius) and *śamatha, vipaśyāna* and *bodhicitta* (Tsongkhapa).

However, through the cultivation of certain praxis / activities identified from a close reading of the Evagrian texts and Tsongkhapa's *Lamrim Chenmo* and constituting *Spiritual Exercises*, it is possible to become aware of the destructive qualities of anger, to understand the benefits of cultivating its opposite cognitive state of patience and ultimately love, and how doing so enables progression along the spiritual path. At some point along this continuum of ethical conduct, acquisition of knowledge, the intelligent understanding and application of this knowledge, genuine, transformative wisdom arises.

As the practitioner allows her former worldly "self" / identity and its infantile demands to be exposed and stripped away along this continuum of spiritual exercises, she eventually changes to such an extent that, in Evagrian terms, she occupies a state of pure prayer "which by means of a supreme love carries off to the intelligible height the spiritual mind beloved of wisdom" and to which "the light of the Holy Trinity comes in the time of prayer", or in the context of Tsongkhapa's Tibetan Buddhist tradition, she will have gathered enormous amounts of merit through the ethical practices of a *bodhisattva*, purified all afflictive and cognitive obscurations through application of wisdom and thus attained enlightenment.

The thesis concludes that it is *here* at the level of shared practice in addressing common concerns that Christian and Buddhist practitioners may share wisdom and practice without incoherencies that plague unreflective attempts to create a Buddhist-Christian dual spiritual identity.

Chapter One:

Threshold Questions, Literature and Methodologies

"Any theology in any tradition that takes religious pluralism seriously must eventually become comparative theology"

David Tracey, *Comparative Theology*

Introduction

This chapter one demonstrates how the central research question of this thesis - stated as follows: "whether and to what extent, in an exercise of comparative theology, the contemplative and meditative practices taught by Evagrius and Tsongkhapa throughout their texts might support Buddhist-Christian dual belonging claims" - emerges from the relevant literature. Chapter one reviews four classes of literature from the very general, concerning interreligious dialogue and theology to the very specific, concerning Buddhist-Christian dual-belonging. It demonstrates that this very specific "apex literature" is largely focussed on sociological, methodological and anthropological approaches to Buddhist-Christian dual-belonging revealing an absence of more critical, *applied* comparative scholarship focussing on and exploring the philosophical and theological texts and tenets of Buddhism and Christianity, an absence noted by the literature itself.[26]

[26] D'Costa and Thompson, *Buddhist-Christian Dual Belonging*, 1.

Chapter one argues that the absence of critical and applied comparative analysis of the seminal texts, languages and commentaries of chosen Buddhist and Christian traditions risks private and scholarly syncretism or, in the exploration of Buddhist - Christian dialogue generally, the imposition of so many qualifications on competing truth claims that Christianity and Buddhism are effectively emptied of their distinctive metaphysical, epistemological and soteriological substance. Chapter one concludes by explaining how the critical and applied analysis throughout this thesis is to be undertaken through the methodology of "comparative theology" as developed by Francis Clooney and James L Fredericks; that is, bringing sacred texts from different religious traditions into critical, comparative dialogue to discover what is revealed in that *process*. Chapter one then argues that what is revealed by these texts may then function as a catalyst for a change in one's spiritual identity by further reading them through the hermeneutical lens of Pierre Hadot's conception of ancient texts as a means of spiritual exercise.[27]

Why Buddhist-Christian dual belonging claims require closer analysis?

While there is a large body of literature associated with the phenomenon of religious dual-belonging, much of it is tentative, focussing on process[28], characterisation and identification,[29] challenges to established interreligious methodologies[30] or first-person experiential testimonies of attempts at creating a Buddhist-Christian religious identity.[31]

[27] P. Hadot, "There Are Nowadays Professors of Philosophy, but not Philosophers," trans. J. A. Simmons with M. Marshall, *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, 19.3 (2005), 229.
[28] J. Homrighausen, 'Spiritually Bilingual: Buddhist Christians and the Process of Dual Religious Belonging' (2015) *35 Buddhist-Christian Studies* 57.
[29] P. Schmidt-Leukel, '*Pluralist Theologies*' (2010) 122(2) The Expository Times 53.
[30] P. Phan, 'Multiple Religious Belonging: Opportunities and Challenges for Theology and Church' (2003) 64 *Theological Studies* 495.
[31] E. Beltramini, 'Can One Person Belong to Two Faith? The Experience of Three Catholic Monks' (2014) 20(2) *Studies in World Christianity* 103.

However, the literature also reveals a relative absence of engagement by Buddhist-Christian dual-belonging practitioners and scholars with the important foundational texts and deeper theological and philosophical tenets of the Buddhist and Christian traditions that are sought to be appropriated. There are at least four "levels" of such literature, from the very general to the explicit - focussing on Buddhist-Christian dual-belonging. The literature can be imagined as forming a pyramid of four levels, with the first and most general level at the base with the fourth and most focussed level constituting the apex. These different levels of literature enable a clearer definition of the parameters of the principal research question.

First, at the base of the pyramid, there is an abundance of literature investigating the relationship between comparative theology or the "study of religions" on the one hand, and wider socio-cultural currents on the other. For example, there are texts exploring the utility of comparative study of religions in a post-modern world suspicious of metaphysics and religious meta-narratives; "if we are to take the philosophical claims of postmodernism seriously, the possibility of describing religious systems with integrity of comparing them to one another is thus permanently compromised."[32] Likewise, such literature explores whether and to what extent the study of religions might be disentangled from the weight of colonialism, religious imperialism and cultural appropriation that characterised religious practice and expression over the past two hundred years: "there is also the political charge implied by the work of a Lyotard or that of an Adorno: to compare is to abstract, and abstraction is construed as a political act aimed at domination and annihilation."[33]

[32] K. Patton and B. Ray, *'Introduction: A Magic Still Dwells: Comparative Religion in the Postmodern Age'* (University of California Press, United States, 2000).
[33] K. Patton and B. Ray, *'Introduction: A Magic Still Dwells'.*

The literature in this category also addresses postmodernism's intellectual progeny, deconstructivism and relativism that deny the possibility of *objective* comparative religious discourse since the task would be a "fantasy reality of a reality fantasy".[34] The relationship of these larger socio-cultural forces with comparative theology and interreligious exchange is treated at length in the various essays in Patton and Ray (eds) *A Magic Still Dwells*[35] and more recently in Cheetham, Pratt and Thomas' text: *Understanding Interreligious Relations*.[36]

Second, there is a body of literature recognising the importance of comparative theology and inter-religious study and dialogue and seeking to investigate the *processes* or *methodologies* by which this occurs[37]. Here the focus is on *how* scholars frame the process by which different religious traditions might be studied and understood. It is in this literature that we find discussion about whether the process is about inclusion, exclusion, limited accommodation or open disagreement[38]. Put another way, the focus of this body of literature concerns scholars talking about *how they are talking about* comparative religious studies or inter-religious dialogue.[39] The focus is on framing the assumption that are brought to bear on the process itself rather than actual engagement with the texts and theological or philosophical substance of different religious traditions themselves.[40]

[34] J. Clifford, 'Introduction: Partial Truths', in J. Clifford and G. Marcus (eds), *Writing Culture* (University of California Press, United States, 1986).
[35] K. Patton and B. Ray, *'Introduction: A Magic Still Dwells'* (2000).
[36] D. Cheetham, D. Pratt and D. Thomas (eds*), Understanding Interreligious Relations* (Oxford University Press, 2013).
[37] D. Cheetham, D. Pratt and D. Thomas (eds*), Understanding Interreligious Relations*; (2013), P. Griffiths, *Problems of Interreligious Diversity* (Blackwell Press, Oxford, United Kingdom, 2001), C. Cornille (ed.), The *Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Interreligious Dialogue* (Wiley-Blackwell, Oxford, United Kingdom, 2013).
[38] F. Clooney, 'Comparative Theology and Interreligious Dialogue', in C. Cornille (ed.), *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Interreligious Dialogue* (Wiley-Blackwell, Oxford, 2013), 52.
[39] P. Ingram, *The Process of Buddhist-Christian Dialogue* (Cambridge University Press, United Kingdom, 2011).
[40] M. Moyaert, 'Interreligious Dialogue', in D. Cheetham, D. Pratt and D. Thomas (eds*), Understanding Interreligious Relations* (Oxford University Press, United States, 2013).

Catherine Cornille's and André van der Braak's respective essays in the 2022 Brill *Companion to Comparative Theology* demonstrate the complex debates associated with the difference between talking about methodologies on the one hand, and actually engaging in the task of comparative theology.[41] Also included in this important category are chapters one through seven in the 2024 *Wiley Blackwell Companion to Comparative Theology: A Festschrift in Honor of Francis X. Clooney SJ*.[42]

Third, the literature narrows to focus on the methods and processes of comparative religious studies *per se*[43]. The wider socio-cultural forces are not ignored but tend to be implicitly reflected in the literature. For example, Catholic Christian theologians rightly approach their investigation with Buddhism through the larger theological hermeneutic of the Second Vatican Council (1962 - 1965) and its seminal document on the world's non-Christian religions; *Nostra Aetate*.[44] Arguably, the Catholic Christian tradition has the most developed theology of interreligious dialogue, both through the institution of the Catholic Church, and through the work of Catholic theologians.[45]

[41] C. Cornille, '*Comparative Theology: More than Comparing Theologies'* and A. van der Braak, '*Multiple Religious Belonging and Comparative Theology*', in P. Valkenberg (ed.), Brill Companion to Comparative Theology (Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, The Netherlands).
[42] A. M. O. Takacs and J. Kimmel, *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Comparative Theology: A Festschrift in Honour of Francis X. Clooney SJ* (Wiley Blackwell, United States & United Kingdom, 2024). Note that I was able to access this text only recently and have not had the opportunity to critically read and thus incorporate the essays into this thesis.
[43] P. Griffiths, *Problems of Interreligious Diversity* (Blackwell Press, Oxford, United Kingdom, 2001).
[44] Leo D. Lefebure, Chapter 18 in Alex M. Oaks Takacs (ed) (2024) and Gavin D'Costa, Part 6 in Gavin D'Costa and Ross Thompson (eds), (2016).
[45] J. Dupuis, *Towards a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (Orbis Books, United States, 1997).), G. O'Collins and M. Farrugia, *Catholicism: The Story of Catholic Christianity* (Oxford University Press, United States, 2015).

Finally, at the apex of the literary pyramid, there is a growing body of literature from both theologians and practitioners of different religious traditions describing their personal views and experiences in navigating and appropriating different theological and religious traditions within the *specific context* of Buddhist-Christian dual-belonging.

This "apex literature" itself generally takes one of three forms. First, the literature includes material from inter-religious dialogue groups such as the well-established "Gethsemani Encounter" between Buddhist and Christian monastics[46] or occasional publications following symposia where a prominent Buddhist, such as the Dalai Lama meets with representatives of Christian traditions to discuss commonalities and differences.[47]

Second, there is a growing body of first-person narratives where a Christian practitioner might explain how and why they are attempting to incorporate Buddhist practices and/or philosophy into their Christian tradition, or (more rarely) how and why a Buddhist practitioner seeks to incorporate Christian practices/theology into their own practices[48]. The texts by Vietnamese Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh commenting on his understanding of Christianity and the person of Jesus Christ exemplify this category of literature.[49] Also included are texts written by Christian religious or theologians attempting, with varying degrees of sophistication, to evaluate Buddhist philosophy in its relation to different expressions of Christianity.

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[46] D. Mitchell, 'The Gethsemani Encounter on the Spiritual Life' (1997) 17 *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 205; D. Mitchell and J. Wiseman, *Gethsemani Encounter: A Dialogue on the Spiritual Life by Buddhist and Christian Monastics* (The Continuum Publishing Company, United States, 1999).

[47] Dalai Lama, *The Good Heart: A Buddhist Perspective on the Teachings of Jesus* (Wisdom Publications, United States, 1996).).

[48] P. Knitter, *Without Buddha I Could Not Be a Christian* (Oneworld Publications, United States, 2009); P. Williams, *The Unexpected Way: On Converting from Buddhism to Catholicism* (T&T Clark Limited, United States, 2002).

[49] Thich Nhat Hanh, *Living Buddha, Living Christ* (Riverhead Books, United States, 1995); Thich Nhat Hanh, *Going Home: Jesus and Buddha as Brothers* (Riverhead Books, United States, 1999.

Examples include Keith Yandell and Harold Netland's Evangelical Christian evaluation of Buddhism[50] and Kristen Johnston Largen's Lutheran Christian evaluation of Buddhism[51]. Within the specific context of Buddhist-Christian comparative theology, much contemporary literature takes the form of these confessional explorations of Buddhism or Christianity.[52]

The third and final form of this "apex literature" are texts that attempt to grapple with some of the theological and philosophical implications of Buddhist-Christian dual-belonging. Literature in this category ranges from largely informal "sharing of views" such as Rita M. Goss and Terry C. Muck's edited collection of essays where Buddhists and Christians talk about meditation and prayer[53] to serious but tentative explorations of specific metaphysical and philosophical issues such as the notion of "creation" discussed in Perry Schmidt-Leukel's edited text, *Buddhism, Christianity and the Question of Creation: Karmic or Divine?*[54] or the notion of the "self", explored in Kiseong Shin's 2017 text, *The Concept of Self in Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity and its Implications for Interfaith Relations*.[55]

[50] K. Yandell and H. Netland*, Buddhism: A Christian Exploration and Appraisal* (Intervarsity Press, United States, 2009).
[51] K. Johnston Largen, *What Christians Can Learn from Buddhism: Rethinking Salvation* (Fortress Press, United States, 2009).
[52] For example, R. Thompson, *Buddhist Christianity: A Passionate Openness* (O-Books, United States, 2010).
[53] R. M. Goss and T. Muck (eds), *Christians Talk about Buddhist Meditation. Buddhists Talk about Christian Prayer* (Continuum International Publishing Group Inc, United States, 2003).
[54] P. Schmidt-Leukel (ed.), *Buddhism, Christianity and the Question of Creation: Karmic or Divine?* (Ashgate Publishing Limited, United Kingdom, 2006).
[55] K. Shin, *The Concept of Self in Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity and Its Implications for Interfaith Relations* (Pickwick Publications, United Kingdom, 2017).

Also included are selected chapters from James L. Fredericks' *Buddhists and Christians: Through Comparative Theology to Solidarity*[56] and Orthodox Christian theologian Ernst M. Valea's *Buddhist-Christian Dialogue as Theological Exchange: An Orthodox Contribution to Comparative Theology*.[57] Texts within this category also include broader methodological explorations of traditional relational paradigms of exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism associated with the theology of religions, but from a Buddhist perspective[58] as well as texts addressing methodology. Recent examples including Rose Drew's text *Buddhist and Christian? An Exploration of Dual Belonging*[59] and an edited collection of essays by Gavin D'Costa and Ross Thompson titled *Buddhist-Christian Dual Belonging: Affirmations, Objections, Explorations*.[60] Both of these texts are tentative forays into Buddhist-Christian dialogue taking the form of dual-belonging; where practitioners from one religion attempt to identify with the religious tradition of another.

As at 2024, there is only one book-length investigation of potential parallels between Evagrius and Buddhism. Shodhin Geiman's text *Obstacles to Stillness: Thoughts, Hindrances and Self-Surrender in Evagrius and the Buddha*[61] admirably maps "the points of contact, as well as some of the differences, between the ways the Evagrian and the early Buddhist tradition discuss the inner obstacles to realization – what Evagrius calls the

[56] J. L. Fredericks, *Buddhists and Christians: Through Comparative Theology to Solidarity* (Orbis Books, United States, 2004).
[57] E. M. Valea*, Buddhist-Christian Dialogue as Theological Exchange: An Orthodox Contribution to Comparative Theology* (James Clarke & Co, United States, 2015).
[58] J. Vélez de Cea, *The Buddha and Religious Diversity* (Routledge, United Kingdom, 2013).
[59] R. Drew, *Buddhist and Christian? An Exploration of Dual Belonging* (London: Routledge, 2011).
[60] G. D'Costa and R. Thompson (eds*), Buddhist-Christian Dual Belonging: Affirmations, Objections, Explorations* (Ashgate Publishing Limited, United States, 2016).
[61] Shodhin K. Geiman, *Obstacles to Stillness: Thoughts, Hindrances, and Self-Surrender in Evagrius and the Buddha* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2023).

logismoi (obstructive thoughts) and what in the teaching of the Buddha are called the *nīvaraṇas* (hindrances)."[62]

While an excellent contribution, Thomas Cattoi's review observes two features of Geiman's text that emphasise the investigation undertaken by this thesis. First, Cattoi notes that the text seeks to "compare one author - Evagrius Ponticus – with a variety of early (Buddhist) texts, even if the tradition claims that they all reflect the teaching of the Buddha"…. (and second), "…what is missing is an engagement of the metaphysical frameworks of these two forms of practice".[63] This thesis addresses both of these observations, firstly by refining the scope of the Buddhist analysis; bringing Tsongkhapa's *Lamrim Chenmo* from the Tibetan Buddhist tradition into dialogue with Evagrian texts, and secondly, in so doing, undertaking the much-needed deeper engagement with the fundamental metaphysical foundations of Evagrian and here, Tibetan Buddhist systems of thought

The Tentative Nature of the Literature and Examples of the Problem

The tentative nature of the literature reflects the relative absence of deeper comparative textual and philosophical scrutiny of Buddhist-Christian dual-belonging claims; "up until now there has been considerable sociological and cultural investigation of dual belonging but very little theological investigation."[64]

[62] T. Cattoi, Review of Obstacles to Stillness: Thoughts, Hindrances, and Self-Surrender in Evagrius and the Buddha, by Shodhin K. Geiman, (2024) 44 *Buddhist-Christian Studies*, 248.
[63] T. Cattoi, Review of Obstacles to Stillness, 251.
[64] G. D'Costa and R. Thompson (eds), *Buddhist-Christian Dual Belonging*.

With a few notable exceptions[65], the literature concerning Buddhist-Christian dual-belonging rarely brings key primary Tibetan Buddhist Mahāyāna and Christian textual sources and secondary philosophical or theological commentary into critical dialogue in the process of exploring how a practitioner attempts to create a religious identify that is *both* Buddhist and Christian. To be sure, the contributors to these texts are aware of the theological difficulties associated with (for example) confessing to be a Christian striving for soteriological fulfilment in union with God, while also confessing to be a Buddhist striving for enlightenment and release from *saṃsāra*.[66] However, they generally do not seek to explore the theological or philosophical texts or seminal thinkers relevant to each tradition and the implications of those texts and conclusions for these difficulties.

For example, the two most recent book-length treatments of Buddhist-Christian dual belonging are edited collections of first-person narratives[67] and tentative explorations of basic theological principles without close scrutiny of textual or philosophical sources and associated commentary;[68] "Candrakīrti", "Śāntideva" and their seminal works do not appear in their texts. I suggest that the literature is tentative for two reasons.

First, the phenomena of Buddhist-Christian dual-belonging is relatively recent and practitioners are still exploring ways of appropriating and expressing multiple religious traditions; a process Cornille refers to as "strategies of negotiation".[69]

[65] F. Tiso, 'Evagrius of Pontus and Buddhist Abhidharma' (2005) 5 *Religion East and West* 41.
[66] See for example, D. Strange, in G. D'Costa and R. Thompson (eds), *Buddhist-Christian Dual Belonging* (2016).
[67] R. Drew, *Buddhist and Christian*?
[68] G. D'Costa and R. Thompson (eds), *Buddhist-Christian Dual Belonging*.
[69] C. Cornille, '*Strategies of Negotiation in Buddhist-Christian Dual Belonging'*, in G. D'Costa and R. Thompson (eds), *Buddhist-Christian Dual Belonging*, 143.

Second, relatively few Christian theologians have also been trained in Buddhist philosophy and few Buddhist philosophers are also trained in Christian theology[70]. Outside those few notable exceptions referred to earlier, there is a somewhat "lop-sided" quality to the literature concerning Buddhist-Christian dual-belonging because either Buddhist philosophy or Christian theology dominates a given discussion without further exploration,[71] Cornille observing "scholars engaged in comparative work are rarely able to study and become experts in more than two traditions."[72]

And this can be a problem for the coherency of Buddhist-Christian dual-belonging either because of incoherency that follows from conflating Buddhist-Christian concepts without exploring the textual or philosophical sources of those concepts, or with attempts by Buddhist-Christian dual-belongers to uncritically appropriate apparent similarities between the writings of Evagrius Ponticus and Buddhist philosophy. In some ways, this second example is a manifestation of the first.

Conflating Buddhist-Christian Concepts

In 2015, the Catholic Theological Society of American hosted a debate between Christian theologians Paul Knitter[73] and Peter Felmeier[74] focussing on the commensurability of

[70] For example, R. Gethin's *The Buddhist Faith of Non-Buddhists: From Dual Belonging to Dual Attachment*, does refer to Christian theological principles, but does not explore them in any detail. D'Costa and Ross Thompson (eds) *Buddhist-Christian Dual Belonging* (2016).
[71] It should be noted that there is one refereed journal; "The Journal of Buddhist-Christian Studies" published out of the University of Hawaii.
[72] C. Cornille, '*Comparative Theology: More than Comparing Theologies*', in P. Valkenberg (ed.), Brill Companion to Comparative Theology (Brill NV, Leiden, The Netherlands, 2022), 586.
[73] Paul Knitter is currently the Paul Tillich Professor of Theology, World Religions and Culture at Union Theological Seminary in New York City. In his text *Without Buddha I could not be a Christian*, 2009, Oneworld Publications, Knitter states that he is a Buddhist-Christian dual-belonger.
[74] Peter Felmeier is Professor of Catholic Studies at the University of Toledo and specialises in comparative religion studies.

Buddhism and Christianity. The debate and associated discussion appears in the 2016 edition of the *Journal of Buddhist-Christian Studies*.[75] Paul Knitter, who identifies as a Christian-Buddhist dual-belonger (Catholic-Christian and Tibetan-Buddhist), suggested, *inter alia*, that "We can discover God more profoundly when we (Christians) take on the Buddhist understanding of the Nature of Mind, which is Ground of Being, Primordial Awareness, Universal Consciousness, Unrestricted Compassion, and Essence Love; and expressed in Emptiness as Form and Form is Emptiness."[76] Knitter does not attempt to engage with the *Heart Sutra,*[77] the apparent source of the reference to "Emptiness as Form and Form is Emptiness".

Nor is there engagement with any of the texts or commentaries concerning the Tibetan Buddhist conception of the mind and its functions.[78] While it may be attractive to equate the Christian conception of God with the Buddhist notion of "emptiness" (*śūnyatā*)[79], or even to impute qualities such as compassion to the nature of mind, doing so would be confusing to a Buddhist, a sentiment noted by Feldmeier.[80] This is because Knitter's statement appears to imply that philosophically, emptiness is an affirming-negation (Skt: *paryudāsapratiṣedha*), (Tib: *ma yin dgag*); that is, a negation that carries with it the possibility of another value, that of "God" or "Essence Love".

[75] P. Knitter and P. Feldmeier, 'Are Buddhism and Christianity Commensurable? A Debate/Dialogue between Paul Knitter and Peter Feldmeier' (2016) 36 *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 165.
[76] P. Knitter and P. Feldmeier, *Are Buddhism and Christianity Commensurable*, 173.
[77] Tib: *bcom ldan 'das ma shes rab kyi pha rol du phyin pa' snying po zhes bya ba bzhugs so;* Skt: *Bhagavatī Prājñaparamitā Hṛdaya Sūtra*.
[78] There is extensive literature and commentary concerning the Tibetan Buddhist study of the mind and its functions; the *blo rig* literature – see: L. Rinbochay and E. Napper, *Mind in Tibetan Buddhism* (Snow Lion Publications, United States, 1980).
[79] There appears to be some sort of syllogistic reasoning here: "Emptiness is the 'Ground of Being', God is the 'Ground of Being' therefore, Emptiness is also God".
[80] P. Knitter and P. Feldmeier, *Are Buddhism and Christianity Commensurable?* 174.

However, seminal Buddhist Madhyamaka philosophical texts such as Candrakīrti's *Madhyamakāvatāra* demonstrate that *śūnyatā* is in fact a non-affirming negation (Skt: *prasajyapratiṣedha*), (Tib: *med dgag*) which does not permit the possible existence of a positive supernatural existential or ontological "thing".[81] While Mādhyamaka philosophy *does* recognise the conventional nature of phenomena, the absence of "self-nature" or "own-nature" (*svabhāva*) that follows from *śūnyatā* cannot then be positively conceived of as qualities of "God" and "essence love" that Knitter refers to. To be sure, there *is* an important relationship between *śūnyata* and compassion, but this relationship needs to be carefully explored by reference to key Tibetan texts such as Śāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra* and *Śikṣāsamuccaya;* texts that provide an analytical framework for integrating Mahāyāna Buddhist ethical theory within the Madhyamaka philosophical context generally and Tsongkhapa's *Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka* (Middle Way Consequence) school particularly.

Doing so is especially important given the philosophical subtlety involved in simultaneously maintaining a normative ethical theory operating on a conventional level, with the fundamental Madhyamaka tenet of *śūnyatā* [82]

Likewise, approaching the Buddha and Jesus Christ as "mediators of the path to transcendence" may sound attractive, but it makes no sense for a dual-belonger to equate Buddha and Jesus Christ when in fact the crucial texts and theological foundations of Christianity hold that Jesus Christ is not just a mediator of a path, but *is the path itself*, a conclusion that is profoundly alien to both Śrāvakayāna[83] and Tibetan Mahāyāna Buddhist

[81] P. Fenner, *The Ontology of the Middle Way* (Studies of Classical India, Kluwer Publishing, The Netherlands, 1990), 143.
[82] B. Clayton, 'Compassion as a Matter of Fact: The Argument from no-self to selflessness in Śāntideva's Śikṣāsamuccaya' (2001) 2(1) *Contemporary Buddhism* 83.
[83] Throughout the *Lamrim Chenmo* Tsongkhapa differentiates between three different Buddhist "vehicles" in terms of the goal to be achieved; "Śrāvakas" ('Hearers'), and *"Pratyekabuddhas"* ('Solitary Realisers") and

texts and commentaries. To characterise both Jesus Christ and the Buddha as co-equal mediators of what is essentially a similar "path of transcendence" is to profoundly misrepresent both the nature of Jesus Christ and the Buddha as they are understood by their respective traditions, and the nature of the "path" advocated by them.

These difficulties extend to affective qualities such as "love". Bonnie Thurston accepts a description of Buddhist love as "systematic, calculated, indirect and impersonal, and atomistically individualistic."[84] Thurston's conclusion does not appear to have been derived from a study of any Buddhist texts, but is simply repeating and then endorsing an earlier statement by Winston King in his 1962 text *Buddhism and Christianity: Some Bridges of Understanding*.[85] An investigation of King's 1962 statement does not reveal the sources from which he arrived at this view. There is no evidence that either Thurston or King before her investigated important Buddhist texts before reaching these conclusions.

If they had studied Śāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, they would have discovered the concept of *bodhicitta*, the "Awakening Mind" in which the Bodhisattva assumes personal responsibility for liberating all beings without exception from suffering and vows to attain enlightenment in order to do so perfectly. Likewise, even a brief perusal of the opening stanzas of Candrakīrti's *Madhyamakāvatāra* would dispel any suggestion of Buddhist "love" as coldly calculated and individualistic.

Bodhisattvas – the Mahāyāna. According to Tsongkhapa's Mahāyāna lineage, *śrāvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas* are considered the "lower vehicles" because the spiritual goal to be achieved is liberation from *saṃsāra* whereas consistent with the Mahāyāna or "great vehicle", *bodhisattvas* aspire to enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings.

[84] B. Thurston, 'In the Beginning: God, A Christian's View of Ultimate Reality', Chapter 5 in P. Ingram and S. King (eds), *The Sound of Liberating Truth: Buddhist-Christian Dialogues in Honor of Frederick J. Streng* (Continuum, United States, 1999), 72

[85] W. King, *Buddhism and Christianity: Some Bridges of Understanding* (Westminster Press, United Kingdom, 1962), 91.

Appropriating Evagrius Ponticus

In recent years, several texts concerning Buddhist-Christian dialogue have made reference to Evagrius Ponticus who lived in Egypt during the latter part of the late fourth century and wrote a number of beautiful and insightful texts charting the mystical, inward journey to God.[86] These texts, translated into English only recently, have been uncritically appropriated by some authors claiming direct concordance between Buddhist and Christian philosophy/theology and practice. Their starting point is usually a single comment, intended to be critical, by important Christian theologian and Catholic priest Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905 - 1988) who stated; "the mystical teaching of Evagrius in its fully developed consistency stands closer to Buddhism than to Christianity."[87] Balthasar's comment has been appropriated so frequently that it has become something of a trope in the literature exploring Buddhist-Christian dialogue in relation to Evagrius. Several authors seem to use this comment as establishing the truth of the concordance between Buddhism and Christianity[88].

For example, Brian Ruhe confidently asserts that; "Buddhist insight meditation is non-theistic...it is free of any concept. This is what Evagrius and the desert fathers were doing."[89] Dan Merkur goes even further stating that "the strong resemblance of Evagrian watching to Buddhist *vipassana* is presumably no accident.

[86] See generally: J. Konstantinovsky, *Evagrius Ponticus, The Making of a Gnostic* (Ashgate Press, United Kingdom, 2009).
[87] H. Urs von Balthasar, 'Metaphysik und Mystik des Evagrius Pontikus' (1939) *31 Zeitschrift für Askese und Mystik*, 31-47. An English translation is available: H. Urs von Balthasar, 'The Metaphysics and Mystical Theology of Evagrius' (1965) 3 *Monastic Studies* 183.
[88] This of course simply "begs the question"; that is, some authors seem to accept the truth of von Balthasar's conclusion before being satisfied of the truth of the premises on which his conclusion in based.
[89] B. Ruhe, *Freeing the Buddha: Diversity on a Sacred Path—Large Scale Concerns* (Vancouver: Buddhist Spectrum Study Group, 3rd ed, 1999).

The principal differences between the two practices arise from their definition of negative thoughts. Because Buddhists hold all things to be *maya* "illusion", *vipassana* meditation aims at detachments from all emotions and all cognitions, without exception. Evagrian watching instead, accepts the virtue of the world and the soul."[90] However, these comments are so inaccurate that it is doubtful whether they are of any real value in navigating Buddhist-Christian dual-belonging.

More promising are rare, tentative explorations of Evagrian - Buddhist texts themselves. For example, Catholic Priest Francis Tiso has written an article exploring potential similarities between Evagrian writings and Buddhist Abhidharma literature[91] and David Linge devotes several paragraphs of an article about Evagrius to exploring parallels between Evagrian meditation and discourses from the Theravāda Buddhist tradition and in doing so expressly moderates Balthasar's comments.[92] However, while Linge is surely correct in moderating Balthasar's comments, I respectfully disagree with his conclusion that "Evagrius joins Buddhism in moving down a path of reflection very different from those modes of theological reflection that are dominated by the model of discursive demonstration."[93] The reason is that, once again, a closer reading of both the Evagrian and Tibetan Buddhist texts strongly suggests otherwise.[94]

[90] D. Merker, *The Psychedelic Sacrament: Manna, Meditations and Mystical Experience* (Park Street Press, United States, 2001), 71.
[91] F. Tiso, 'Evagrius of Pontus and Buddhist Abhidharma' (2005) 5 *Religion East and West* 41.
[92] D. E. Linge, "Leading the Life of Angels: Ascetic Practice and Reflection in the Writings of Evagrius of Pontus," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 68, no. 3 (2000), 560 - 562.
[93] D. Linge, "Leading the Life of Angels", 560 - 562.
[94] See: A. Klein, *Knowledge and Liberation: Tibetan Buddhist Epistemology in Support of Transformative Religious Experience* (Snow Lion Publications, United States, 1998); J. Driscoll, *Steps to Spiritual Perfection: Studies on Spiritual Progress in Evagrius Ponticus* (The Newman Press, United States, 2005).

Balthasar & Buddhism

Respectfully, a closer reading of Balthasar's 1939 article suggests that his conclusions about what "Buddhism" does and does not teach, is underdeveloped and as such, cannot meaningfully be considered a yard stick with which to evaluate Evagrian metaphysics. Balthasar believes that "the subtle idealism of Mahayana (sic) is really the basic experience of Evagrius"[95] meaning that the world and individuals within the world are mere illusion, an illusion that must be "passed through" using knowledge that "penetrates of what has reality for only the sensible part of man." [96]

Although Balthasar does not refer to Buddhist literature in support of, nor in developing these thoughts, his ultimate conclusion seems to be that such Mahāyāna Buddhist views are deeply antithetical to Christianity which is "profoundly incarnational."[97] His thought seems to be that the radical idealism of Mahāyāna Buddhism characterises the ontological status of the world and individuals as a kind of epistemological mirage ("world and individuals in the world as mere illusions") that must be penetrated by "knowledge" which thereby becomes the "highest form of life".[98] The implication is that Evagrius' metaphysics are "profoundly *anti-incarnational*".

However, Balthasar's characterisation of Mahāyāna Buddhism is only partially correct.

[95] Balthasar, "The Metaphysics and Mystical Theology of Evagrius, 193.
[96] Balthasar, "The Metaphysics and Mystical Theology of Evagrius*," Monastic Studies*, 3 (1965), 193.
[97] R. Gawronski, *Word and Silence: Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Spiritual Encounter Between East and West*, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 89.
[98] Balthasar, "*The Metaphysics and Mystical Theology of Evagrius*", 193.

This is because while "Mahāyāna Buddhism" does regard persons and phenomena as illusion-like, persons and phenomena are *not* illusions – they do exist and the "knowledge" that must be cultivated by Buddhists is not in aid of establishing the *non-existence* of persons and phenomena, but understanding how persons and phenomena do not *inherently exist* in the way they appear. In his *Lamrim Chenmo* Tsongkhapa takes great care to emphasise the importance of not negating too much, thus falling into nihilist views that diminishes the importance of persons and phenomena, while not negating too little, thus falling into a sense that persons and phenomena exist in the way they appear (i.e – inherently).[99]

In this context, Tsongkhapa would counter Balthasar's objection by referring to what he calls the "distinguishing feature of the Madhyamaka" – that is; "the admissibility of all the teachings about cyclic existence and nirvana - the agents and objects of production, refutation, proof, and so forth - in the absence of even a particle of essential or intrinsic nature."[100] Put another way, despite the complete lack of even a particle or essential or intrinsic existence of persons and phenomena, the "distinguishing feature of the Madhyamaka" ensures the view that persons and phenomena do exist conventionally and function perfectly well. Why? Because of the complementarity (harmony) of dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*) (*rten 'brel*) and emptiness (*śūnyatā*) (*stong pa nyid*).

Nevertheless, the incarnational characteristic of Christianity, where the Second Person of the Trinity (Jesus Christ) assumed flesh and dwelt amongst us is perhaps a greater apparent objection to Evagrius' metaphysics and the subject of one of the fifteen *anathemata* of the Second Council of Constantinople in 553 CE. This will be discussed below.

[99] LRCM, Volume 3, Chapters 14-17.
[100] LCRM 3:131

This overview of the literature, the issues it reveals and the metaphysical problems it generates, indicates the *need and utility* of engaging in comparative theology in a post-modern world where it may be suggested that the literature concerning Buddhist-Christian dual-belonging is sufficiently broad to accommodate a multiplicity of visions. A closer and more rigorous comparative approach to the fundamental texts and commentaries is necessary precisely *because* Buddhist-Christian dual-belonging is becoming increasingly attractive to Christians and Buddhists who feel free to pick and choose between elements of different religious traditions in creating their own faith formation.[101]

This process appears to be occurring despite the apparent incommensurability of Christian - Buddhist metaphysical, epistemological and soteriological frameworks[102]. There seems to be a sense of "the tail wagging the dog" about this process. Christians who identify as "dual-belonging" tend to initially become attracted to Buddhist meditative practices, or feel some intellectual resonance with certain Buddhist philosophical principles and then seek to integrate them into their Christian tradition[103]. In times past, a practitioner might have closely studied the texts and philosophical traditions of another religious tradition *before* seeking to convert to or appropriate from that other tradition. For example, this was the path taken by Edith Stein who first studied Catholic theology in great depth before converting from her Jewish heritage[104]. However, in the 21st post-modern, post-Christian century, the reverse appears to be the norm.

[101] G. Goosen, 'An Empirical Study of Dual Religious Belonging' (2007) 20 *Journal of Empirical Theology* 159.
[102] S. Prothero, *God is not One: The Eight Rival Religions that Run the World* (HarperOne [HarperCollins], United States, 2010).
[103] P. Knitter and R. Haight, *Jesus and Buddha: Friends in Conversation* (Orbis Books, United States, 2015).
[104] A. MacIntyre, *Edith Stein: The Philosophical Background* (Continuum International Publishing Group, United States, 2007).

Practitioners may feel an initial attraction to Buddhist meditation practices after being introduced to meditation or reading something about it and then attempt to appropriate it as Part of their own religious practices.[105] Rarely do these practitioners attempt a deep study of the Buddhist scriptures, texts and commentaries associated with those practices or philosophical principles. Rarely do these practitioners approach Buddhist practices or philosophical principles *on their own terms*. Rarely it seems, do practitioners investigate whether and to what extent those Buddhist practices or philosophical principles are even *capable* of being appropriated in these ways. *Because* Buddhist-Christian dual-belonging is happening, established religious traditions are therefore faced with significant pastoral challenges while theologians and scholars of religion are faced with issues of intelligibility and coherence.[106]

Unless these challenges are addressed, the apparent incommensurability referred to above and explained particularly in chapters six and seven this thesis, may result in private and scholarly syncretism or, in the exploration of Buddhist - Christian dialogue, the imposition of so many qualifications on competing truth claims that Christianity and Buddhism are effectively emptied of their distinctive metaphysical, epistemological and soteriological contents[107]; after all; "define any two things generally enough and one can say that they are the same."[108]

[105] See especially the interviews in Rose Drew, *Buddhist and Christian*?
[106] P. Phan, 'Multiple Religious Belonging: Opportunities and Challenges for Theology and Church' (2003) 64 *Theological Studies* 495.
[107] With respect, this seems to have been the approach of John Hick who argues that Buddhism and Christianity share an ultimate salvific goal, the 'transformation of human existence from self-centredness to Reality-centredness" – see: J. Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion: Human Responses to the Transcendent* (Yale University Press, United States, 1989).
[108] Rose Drew, Part 1 in G. D'Costa and R. Thompson (eds) *Buddhist-Christian Dual Belonging*.

Accordingly, this thesis argues that the natural and much needed next step in the developing field of Buddhist-Christian inter-religious dialogue generally and Buddhist-Christian dual-belonging specifically, involves deeper comparative engagement with the texts, philosophy and seminal thinkers of each tradition. It is needed because "the dialogue between religions presents primarily a hermeneutical challenge. It involves the question of mutual understanding or the degree to which individuals belonging to one religion *can grasp the meaning of symbols, teachings and practices of another."*[109](italics mine). This engagement is not intended to reinforce historical methodological paradigms such as "exclusivity" or "inclusivity" (discussed below) but to think through and evaluate the claims made by spiritual practitioners who maintain that it is possible to "dual-belong"; that is, to be *both* Christian and Buddhist without incoherency or cognitive dissonance.

The approach taken by this thesis is therefore both comparative-textual and comparative-philosophical. It is *comparative-textual* because its adopts Francis Clooney's seminal methodology, which involves bringing sacred texts from different religious traditions into critical dialogue with each other in order to ask a very specific question; "in reading together these texts, what fresh insights will they reveal about how I appropriate my own religious tradition as both a philosophical and living system of spiritual transformation?"[110]It is *comparative-philosophical* because it adopts Pierre Hadot's hermeneutic of reading ancient texts as spiritual exercises in aid of transformation of identity, acknowledging that "dialogue is connected deep down with the search for truth and a striving for wisdom"[111].

[109] M. Moyaert, 'Interreligious Dialogue', in D. Cheetham, D. Pratt and D. Thomas (eds), *Understanding Interreligious Relations* (Oxford University Press, United States, 2013).
[110] F. Clooney, *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning Across Religious Borders* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).
[111] M. Moyaert, 'Interreligious Dialogue', D. Cheetham, D. Pratt and D. Thomas (eds*) Understanding Interreligious Relations*.

Accordingly, Clooney's comparative-textual methodology is applied to Buddhist-Christian dual-belonging within the framework of key philosophical hermeneutics of (i) metaphysics, (ii) epistemology and (iii) ethics. This approach to exploring the content of a given religious tradition has been adopted by scholars of religion generally,[112] and specifically by scholars of Buddhism in more recent texts.[113] Exploring and defending comparative theology as the optimal and "workably efficient"[114] methodological process suited to the research question of this thesis is now discussed in chapter two.

[112] C. Taliaferro and C. Meister, *Contemporary Philosophical Theology* (Routledge, United Kingdom, 2016).
[113] J. Westerhoff, *The Golden Age of Indian Buddhist Philosophy* (Oxford University Press, United Kingdom, 2018); J. Garfield, *Engaging Buddhism: Why it Matters to Philosophy* (Oxford University Press, United States, 2015); M. Siderits, in J. Westerhoff (ed.), *Studies in Buddhist* Philosophy (Oxford University Press, 2016).); A. Carpenter, *Indian Buddhist Philosophy* (Routledge, United States, 2014).
[114] None of the established methodologies, comparative religion studies, theology of religions and comparative theology is perfectly suited to the task of analysing and Buddhist-Christian dual-belonging claims. However, I argue below that absolute suitability is not required, but that any methodology must be "workably efficient" to the task. This concept is borrowed from Antitrust Law and its use in defending the choice of comparative theology for this thesis is discussed below.

Chapter Two - An Appropriate Methodology & Hermeneutic

Introduction

Chapter Two is concerned with the search for an appropriate and workably efficient methodology and hermeneutic necessary for a rigorous evaluation of whether and to what extent the texts of Evagrius Ponticus and Tsongkhapa might support potential Buddhist-Christian dual belonging claims. It reviews literature associated with three methodologies (i) comparative religion studies (ii) theology of religions and (iii) comparative theology before answering the question; "why does this thesis identify *comparative theology* as the appropriate means to analyse, evaluate and revision Buddhist-Christian dual-belonging claims?" It is crucial to locate and employ a process, a methodology that is an *optimal fit* to the specific features of the research question.

There is a *vast* literature devoted to methods of investigating the diversity of the world's religions and it was noted earlier that much of the literature specifically devoted to Buddhist-Christian dual belonging has tended to focus on methodological, anthropological or sociological issues.[115] Although it is beyond the scope of this Chapter (indeed this thesis) to provide a comprehensive review and analysis of the entirety of this literature, three methodologies may be readily identified; (i) comparative studies of religion, (ii) a theology of religions, and (iii) comparative theology. While each of these methodologies offers advantages and disadvantages to the task of evaluating and Buddhist-Christian dual-belonging claims, this thesis argues that comparative theology is the most *workably efficient* fit to the particular contours of the research question.

[115] M. Moyaert, 'Interreligious Dialogue', D. Cheetham, D. Pratt and D. Thomas (eds*) Understanding Interreligious Relations*.

Chapter two therefore explores these advantages and disadvantages before defending the choice of comparative theology as the preferred method for this thesis. In doing so, it is important to keep in mind five limitations associated with the search for a methodology appropriate to the task of analysing and evaluating Buddhist-Christian dual-belonging claims. These limitations have shaped the analysis throughout this chapter.

First, the search for the *perfect* methodology is likely to be an exercise in frustration. None of the three methodologies mentioned above contains constitutive elements universally accepted by theologians. What theologian A might consider to be an important element of "comparative religion studies" might be considered marginal by theologian B.[116] Second, even amongst theologians broadly subscribing to a given methodology, such as "theology of religions", there is vigorous disagreement about the *foundations* of that methodology. For example, within theology of religions, those who identify themselves as "pluralist" have been accused of falling into exclusivist perspectives. By advocating for the existence of a "supernatural existential" (for example) and then evaluating non-Christian religions against that supernatural existential, pluralists are accused of failing to recognise their own exclusivist perspectives.[117]

[116] For example, sensitivity to the enculturated elements of a non-Christian religious tradition might not be foremost in comparative religion studies for one theologian (Karl Bath) while those same elements might be considered important for another (John Hick).
[117] M. Heim, *Salvations: Truth and Difference in Religion* (Orbis Books, United States, 1995); H. Nicholson, *Comparative Theology and the Problem of Religious Rivalry* (Oxford University Press, United Kingdom, 2011), 27 - 28.

Third, there is little agreement amongst theologians about the utility of *any* of the three proposed methodologies for the task of understanding the relationship between Christian and non-Christian religions. Where theologian A argues that comparative theology is the solution to the "exclusivism, inclusivism, pluralism impasse" said to characterise comparative religion studies and theology of religions, theologian B argues for the exact opposite.[118]

Fourth, the literature associated with these three methodologies reveals a struggle to accommodate the subjective presuppositions and subconscious biases that the theologian herself brings to the exercise of comparison[119]. And finally, the very nature of both philosophical and theological inquiry means that arriving at the "absolute truth or utility" of a given methodology or hermeneutic is vastly unlikely since "it takes little effort to turn up serious limitations in each of the (ethical) theories."[120]

Given these limitations, the task of identifying *the* perfect methodology seems fraught with disagreement and it is beyond the scope of this to work through, evaluate and adjudicate the many different positions offered in a quest to settle on the *perfect* methodological vehicle. In these circumstances I suggest that while it is important to search for an appropriate methodology, it is neither reasonable nor necessary to find *the* perfect, optimal methodology. Why?

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[118] P. Schmidt-Leukel, in N. Hintersteiner*, Naming and Thinking God in Europe Today: Theology in Global Dialogue* (Brill Publishing, Editions Rodopi, The Netherlands, 2007), 494.

[119] Hence P. Schmidt-Leukel's criticism of comparative theology as a solution to the "impasse" constituted by paradigms of exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism: in N. Hintersteiner; *, Naming and Thinking God in Europe Today*, 501.

[120] E. Goodman, 'Animal Ethics and the Law: A Review of Animal Rights: Current Debates and New Directions' (2006) 79 *Temple Law Review* 1291. Readers of a certain age and musical disposition may recall the lyrics to "*Industrial Disease*" by Dire Straits from their 1982 album "*Love over Gold*". Perhaps in frustration, Mark Knopfler sings "philosophy is useless, theology is worse..."

Because I suggest that while the above three methodologies are efficient for their general tasks, not all of them are *workably efficient* for the specific research problem of this thesis. The concept of workable efficiency is borrowed from antitrust law and economics. It refers to a "workably competitive" market. No market is perfectly competitive and therefore the goal of competition policy is not to make markets perfect but to make them workably efficient or competitive.[121] In selecting appropriate regulatory options, governments choose those that, while never guaranteeing perfectly competitive market conditions, will nevertheless facilitate workably efficient competition.

Accordingly, I argue that since no methodology is perfectly suited, the search should be for a *workably efficient* methodology that, in contrast to other available methodologies, most efficiently adapts itself to the contours of the research question thus enabling clear and accurate evaluation of the different metaphysical, epistemological and ethical foundations of Evagrius' Patristic Christian and Tsongkhapa's Tibetan Buddhist traditions explained in chapters four and five and comparatively analysed in chapters six and seven. The process of identifying a workably efficient methodology also serves to reveal deficiencies and benefits associated with existing candidate methodologies in the way that its counterpart in competition law and economics reveals deficiencies and benefits associated with candidate economic models of competitive markets.[122]

[121] J. Clark, 'Toward a Concept of Workable Competition' (1940) 30(2) *The American Economic Review* 241.
[122] S. Bishop and M. Walker, *The Economics of EC Competition Law: Concepts, Applications and Measurements* (Sweet & Maxwell, United Kingdom, 2010), 15-16.

For the reasons set out below, I argue that comparative theology is the preferred workably efficient methodology given the very particular features associated with the need for closer and more rigorous comparative scrutiny of Buddhist-Christian dual-belonging claims. What are those particular features?

The Particular Features of the Research Issue

The literature associated with Buddhist-Christian dual-belonging claims and reviewed throughout chapter one reveal three specific features. First, they are concerned with comparing at least two different religious traditions (Buddhism and Christianity). Second, the claims are pastoral in orientation; that is, Buddhist-Christian dual-belongers are seeking ways to deepen their own day-to-day commitment to a spiritual path[123]. And third, as the literature itself confesses, the construction of these claims is often made in the absence of critical engagement with the constituent texts and the theological / philosophical tenets of the respective Buddhist-Christian traditions.

Because the literature reveals these specific features associated with the construction of Buddhist-Christian dual-belonging claims, an appropriate methodology addressing them must be (i) comparative, (iii) grounded in textual and theological / philosophical analysis and (ii) pastorally sensitive to the desire by Buddhist-Christian dual-belongers to make spiritual progression, to transform their lives and practices.

Two well-established methodologies immediately present themselves; those associated with Comparative Religion Studies and Theology of Religions. Comparative Religion Studies is a discipline that is secular in orientation, objective and impartial.

[123] K. Johnston Largen, *What Christians Can Learn from Buddhism: Rethinking Salvation* (Fortress Press, United States, 2009).

Its aim is to objectively identify and study the normative elements of the world's religions traditions. It is not a discipline associated with confessional advocacy, apologetics or pastoral development. Instead, its principal audience are communities of scholars.[124]

Comparative Religion Studies does enable fruitful comparison of different religious traditions and so may go some way to addressing the first specific feature of Buddhist-Christian dual-belonging claims identified above. However, its methodological processes are neither pastorally-oriented nor necessarily focussed on the details of individual religious traditions. Instead, Comparative Religion Studies is more usually concerned with the larger narratives of individual traditions and not the close, comparative reading of specific texts.[125]

Theology of Religions is a more promising methodological candidate. Its methodologies *do* play close attention to both the distinctive pastoral and theological implications of different religious traditions. However, there are very significant difficulties associated with Theology of Religions that make it unsuitable as a methodology for analysing and evaluating Buddhist-Christian dual-belonging claims. What are these difficulties? Traditionally, the discipline of Theology of Religions is Christian-centric; focussing almost exclusively on questions of soteriology. In its approach to non-Christian traditions, Theology of Religions usually proceeds from the question: "what is the nature and function of non-Christian religious traditions in light of Christian faith in the salvific character of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ?"[126]

[124] M. Moyaert, 'Interreligious Dialogue', D. Cheetham, D. Pratt and D. Thomas (eds*) Understanding Interreligious Relations*, 164.
[125] P. Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religions* (Orbis Books, United States, 2002).
[126] M. Moyaert, 'Interreligious Dialogue', D. Cheetham, D. Pratt and D. Thomas (eds*) Understanding Interreligious Relations*, 165.

The long association of Theology of Religions with the many non-Christian traditions of the world generated three responses to this question: (i) exclusivism, (ii) inclusivism and (iii) pluralism. These categories are defined by Schmidt-Leukel in the following terms:

> "exclusivist assert that salvific knowledge of a transcendent reality is meditated by only one religion; inclusivists assert that salvific knowledge of a transcendent reality is mediated by more than one religion...but only one of these mediates it in a uniquely superior way; and pluralists assert that salvific knowledge of a transcendent reality is meditated by more than one religion (not necessarily by all of them), and there is none among them whose mediation of that knowledge is superior to all the rest."[127]

Over the years, these three responses appear to have calcified into normative evaluative standards at the heart of the Theology of Religions. Interestingly, the relationship of Buddhist philosophy to non-Buddhist religious traditions had also been explored through these three responses, although, as expected, not without vigorous disagreement amongst scholars about whether Buddhism can be characterised as exclusivist, inclusivist, pluralist or even some combination of these three.[128] Several Buddhist-Christian dual-belongers assert that both Buddhism and Christianity are reflections of a larger "supernatural existential".

[127] P. Schmidt-Leukel, 'Exclusivism, Inclusivism and Pluralism: The Tripolar Typology—Clarified and Reaffirmed', in P. Knitter (ed.), *The Myth of Religious Superiority: A Multifaith Exploration* (Orbis Books, 2005), 19-20.
[128] J. Vélez de Cea, *The Buddha and Religious Diversity;* K. Beise Kiblinger*, Buddhist Inclusivism: Attitudes Towards Religious Others* (Routledge, United Kingdom, 2005).

In making such claims, they reveal themselves to be "pluralists". However, for the reasons discussed later in this thesis, such claims are incoherent. In fact, there are two major difficulties with methodologies associated with the Theology of Religions that militate against its value for evaluating Buddhist-Christian dual-belonging claims: (i) allegations of a priorism and (ii) theological hegemony.[129]

Theology of Religions tends to start from *a priori* conclusions about the soteriological efficiency of non-Christian religious traditions *before* seeking to understand those traditions. Conclusions *precede* hermeneutics. This has meant that Theology of Religions has tended to focus on creating theological interpretations of non-Christian religions rather than seeking to identify the self-understanding of those religions. Since it starts from certain assumptions, Theology of Religions has not tended to focus on the detailed study of texts or practices of the religious other.[130] In its inclusivist or pluralist modalities, Theology of Religions also tends to become hegemonic. Since both assume the existence of a universal, supernatural existential reality *prior to* cultural incorporation, non-Christian religions are not usually investigated on their own unique terms.[131]

The assumption of a prior supernatural existential encompassing all religions then directs the search away from investigating differences resulting in what Fredericks calls "the domestication of difference."[132]

[129] J. L. Fredericks, *Introduction* in Francis Clooney (ed), (2010) at xiv - xv.
[130] F. Clooney, *Theology After Vedanta: An Experiment in Comparative Theology* (State University of New York Press, United States, 1993), 194.
[131] P. Schmidt-Leukel, 'Pluralist Theologies' (2010) 122(2) *The Expository Times* 53.
[132] J. Fredericks, *Faith Among Faiths: Christian Theology and Non-Christian* Religions (Paulist Press, United States, 1999).

So corrosive are these deficiencies that Fredericks has suggested that "the time has come to put aside the quest for an adequate theology of religions."[133]

Given these acknowledged deficiencies, neither is an optimal, workably efficient "fit" for the specific features of the research problem. Why? Recalling that the literature associated with Buddhist-Christian dual-belonging reveals three specific features of the research problem to be addressed; any proposed methodology must be (i) comparative, (ii) pastorally sensitive while also (iii) being grounded in textual and theological / philosophical analysis.

Starting from *a priori* assumptions of soteriological insufficiency or reflecting a common supernatural existential completely discounts approaching Buddhist-Christian dual-belonging claims *on their own terms*. In other words; "the religious other is understood without being heard. The soteriological fixation is contrary to hermeneutical openness."[134] The very real metaphysical, epistemological and ethical differences inherent in Buddhism and Christianity risk being minimised or ignored in a search for pastoral tolerance, inclusivism or ecumenical hybridism. While perhaps pastorally comfortable, the approaches associated with Comparative Religion Studies and Theology of Religions are likely to lead to syncretism or incoherency. But is there an alternative?

This thesis argues that the (re)emerging discipline of "Comparative Theology", as envisaged by James L. Fredericks and Francis Clooney, while not perfect, is an optimal, workably efficient fit for evaluating and Buddhist-Christian dual-belonging claims.

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[133] J. Fredericks, *Buddhists and Christians: Through Comparative Theology to Solidarity* (Orbis Books, United States, 2004), xiii. Of course, other scholars disagree and these disagreements are considered below.
[134] M. Moyaert, 'Interreligious Dialogue', D. Cheetham, D. Pratt and D. Thomas (eds) *Understanding Interreligious Relations*, 163.

This is because comparative theology does not make *a priori* assumptions about the way to approach non-Christian religions, nor does it seek to flatten out differences. The balance of this chapter explains why comparative theology is the preferred methodology *despite* its alleged methodological and hermeneutical deficiencies, before turning to arguments in favour of adopting Pierre Hadot's hermeneutic.

The (Re)emergence of Comparative Theology

As an academic discipline, comparative theology is not a new method of exploring and attempting to understand the relationship between the many different religious traditions of the world. Clooney himself notes that the term has been utilised since around 1700 CE, "when James Garden published his *Comparative Theology: or the True and Solid Grounds of Pure and Peaceable Theology: A Subject very Necessary, tho hitherto almost wholly neglected*."[135] During the 19th and early 20th centuries, comparative theology was viewed as a project of the Enlightenment; where a principally Caucasian, European and "scientific" approach to the world's religions resulted in texts intended to "prove" the objective superiority of Christianity.

Accordingly, James Freeman Clarke's text *Ten Great Religions: An Essay in Comparative Theology*[136], and Frederick Denison Maurice's *The Religions of the World and the Relations to Christianity*[137] were intended to demonstrate the objective superiority of Christianity. The "Zeitgeist" is best reflected in J.A. MacCulloch's 1905 text *Comparative Theology* where he writes: "my own view is that God has never left Himself without witness, and that these

[135] F. Clooney, 'Comparative Theology', in K. Tanner, J. Webster and I. Torrance (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology* (Oxford University Press, United Kingdom, 2007).
[136] J. Freeman Clarke, *Ten Great Religions: An Essay in Comparative Theology* (Houghton Mifflin Company, The University Press, United States, 1899).
[137] F. D. Maurice, *The Religions of the World and Their Relations to Christianity* (Gould and Lincoln, United States, 1895).

beliefs of the heathen races - the hopes of paganism - have been fulfilled in Christianity."[138] It is ironic that the Enlightenment project, which attempted to scientifically identify universal religious principles in the form of a natural theology was itself utilized to "prove" the specific superiority of Christianity based on those same universal principles, an exercise in what is now accepted as "an expression of Christian and/or Western hegemony."[139]

In response, it has been suggested that "comparative Theology is "one of the potentially most interesting and productive ventures in contemporary constructive theological endeavor."[140] Some argue that "like magic, comparative religion (theology) can be an efficacious way of conjuring, or delineating and evoking homologous relationships while simultaneously holding in view, and thus in fruitful tension, undisputed differentials."[141] What is it about the process of comparative theology that motivates these comments? What is "comparative theology"? As the process is envisioned by Fredericks; "doing theology comparatively means crossing over into the world of another religious believer and learning the truths that animate the life of that believer. Doing theology comparatively also means coming back to Christianity transformed by those truths, now able to ask new questions about Christian faith and its meaning for today."[142]

Clooney himself describes the endeavour as "acts of faith seeking understanding which are rooted in a particular faith tradition, but which, from that foundation, venture into learning from one or more other faith traditions.

[138] J. A. MacCulloch, *Comparative Theology* (Methuen & Co, United Kingdom, 1905), ix.
[139] H. Nicholson, 'Comparative Theology after Liberalism' (2007) 23(2) *Modern Theology* 229.
[140] P. Hedges, 'Comparative Theology and Hermeneutics: A Gadamerian Approach to Interreligious Interpretation' (2016) 7 *Religions* 16.
[141] K. Patton and B. Ray, '*Introduction: A Magic Still Dwells: Comparative Religion in the Postmodern Age'* (University of California Press, United States, 2000), 18.
[142] J. Fredericks, *Buddhists and Christians: Through Comparative Theology to Solidarity*, xii.

This learning is sought for the sake of fresh theological insights that are indebted to the newly encountered tradition/s as well as the home tradition."[143] It is therefore a "discipline of faith seeking understanding which engages in border crossing to bring insights from other religious traditions into creative interpretation with the Christian tradition."[144]

Described broadly, comparative theology is a process whereby sacred texts are bought into critical dialogue in order to answer a very specific but fundamental question; "in reading together these texts, what fresh insights will they reveal about how I appropriate my own religious tradition as both a philosophical and living system of spiritual transformation?"[145] More widely, comparative theology invites deep cross-textual reading in order to "traverse new frontiers of knowledge, glean rational insights into other belief systems and comprehend how these other systems tackle matters of enduring human concern. At the spiritual level, the endeavour invites us to weigh up cherished convictions in the light of other truth claims".[146]

At least five elements therefore differentiate comparative theology from the study of religions and theology of religions; "it (comparative theology) is not an exercise in the study of religions for the sake of clarifying the phenomenon. It reduces neither to a theology about religions nor to the practice of dialogue."[147]

[143] F. Clooney, *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning Across Religious Borders* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 10.
[144] P. Hedges, '*Comparative Theology and Hermeneutics*"
[145] The elements and implications of this question are set out below.
[146] A. Ray, '(Re)discovering Comparative Theology: An Australian Perspective' (2014) 27(1) Pacifica 50.
[147] F. Clooney, *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning Across Religious Borders*, 10.

First, comparative theology is not primarily an exercise in evaluating similarities or differences between different religious traditions. It is a more *intuitive* process; "it ordinarily starts with the intuition of an intriguing resemblance that prompts us to place two realities - texts, practices, images, doctrines - near one another, so that they may be seen over and again."[148]

Second, comparative theology involves a certain intellectual / theological vulnerability; the encounter of the religious other may deeply challenge a person's relationship with her "home" religious tradition because it involves a "willingness to see newly the truths of our own religion in the light of another."[149] Third, the act of comparison a *purposive exercise*, it is a "reflective and contemplative endeavour by which we see the other in light of our own, and our own in light of the other."[150]

If the reader concludes that these characteristics are rather "warm and fuzzy", a fourth characteristic of comparative theology is its dedication to deep and difficult scholarly work; "because the comparative theologian is engaged in the study of a religious tradition other than her own, she needs to be an academic scholar proficient in the study of that religion. That is necessary if comparative theology is to be faithful to text and language, history and context, and not mistaken or lazy in (mis)using what is known about the religions in question."[151]

[148] F. Clooney, *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning Across Religious Borders*, 10.
[149] F. Clooney, *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning Across Religious Borders*, 10.
[150] F. Clooney, *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning Across Religious Borders*, 10.
[151] F. Clooney, *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning Across Religious Borders*, 10.

This is because comparative theology involves dedicated study of the seminal texts and commentaries of the religious other with the intention of understanding the truths of the other *from the inside*; "as a practice, comparative theology is best appreciated as having to do with reading, a reading that is specific enough that the complexity of texts is central to the learning....texts made demands on careful readers, and reading blocks any shift to a merely higher viewpoint beyond reading."[152]

Finally, the intellectual and spiritual discipline of comparative theology necessarily calls for an *affective* response from the theologian; "Religious literature ....aims for the affective transformation of the reader who pays attention to the clues available in the text..... Read attentively, the religious classic... renders legible a particular ... situation, opportunity, challenge, etc. – that begs for and provokes interpretive and affective responses that enable the reader to fit intelligently and affectively into the religious situation... presented.[153]

For these reasons, comparative theology has often been presented as *the* methodological approach to the study of different religious traditions because it is said to overcome the impasse constituted by the "exclusivist, inclusivist, pluralist" modes of theology of religion.[154] And because comparative theology pays attention to the specific textual and philosophical features of the religious other, it does not flatten out differences and thus avoids allegations of hegemonism.[155]

[152] F. Clooney, 'Carefully Uncertain: The Limits of Clarity at Interreligious Borders' (2012) 18(2*) Common Knowledge* 313.
[153] F. Clooney, 'Passionate Comparison: The Intensification of Affect in Interreligious Reading of Hindu and Christian Texts' (2005) 98 *Harvard Theological Review* 385.
[154] J. Fredericks, 'Introduction', in F. Clooney (ed.), *The New Comparative Theology* (T&T Clark Limited, United States, 2010), xiv.
[155] P. Hedges, '*Comparative Theology and Hermeneutics'*.

In fact, there are four features to the enterprise of comparative theology as envisioned by Fredericks and Clooney that I argue make it a *workably efficient* methodology for analysing and evaluating Buddhist-Christian dual-belonging claims; "comparative theology understands itself as a procedure which is normative, constructive, and revisionist, and which is often done by believers for the benefit of believers, even as it includes the academy of scholars."[156]

First, comparative theology is *normative* in the sense that it presents itself as a methodology of how interreligious dialectical investigation should proceed. Second, it is *constructive* because the interpretation of and relationship with one's own religious tradition is deepened and challenged by dialectical engagement with the seminal texts and commentaries of the religious other. Third, it is *revisionist* because serious and thoughtful engagement with the texts of the religious other will result in a recognition of similarity or, more likely, a recognition of difference. Finally, it is *pastoral* in that comparative theology is often undertaken "for believers for the benefit of believers."

Critiques of Comparative Theology

Other scholars strongly disagree with every one of these views, arguing that "the desire to shift away from theology of religions, or to proceed with comparative theology without first setting out theology of religions presuppositions about the religious other, has been treated with suspicion and challenged by numerous respondents."[157]

[156] James L. Fredericks, *Introduction* in Francis Clooney (ed), xi-xii.
[157] K. Beise Kiblinger, 'Relating Theology of Religions and Comparative Theology', in F. Clooney (ed.*), The New Comparative Theology: Interreligious Insights from the New Generation* (Continuum, United States, 2010), 24.

Scholars such as Catherine Cornille, Perry Schmidt-Leukel, Gavin D'Costa and Paul Knitter maintain that comparative theology is "mature neither in its theoretical nor its practical dimensions"[158] and that it is "lacking a clearly developed hermeneutical framework"[159]. They conclude that "comparative theology will not lead out of the impasse of theology of religion but straight into it"[160] For these scholars, comparative theology remains a "marginal and not widely understood discipline within theological studies"[161] that intrudes awkwardly between the disciplines of theology and religious studies while "coming under suspicion from both sides."[162]

Much of the recent literature critical of comparative theology relates to its relative immaturity as a discipline and identifies potential difficulties from both within the enterprise of comparative theology as well as from without; in the relationship of comparative theology to the wider social science disciplines. For example, Marianne Moyaert[163] argues that comparative theology lacks thorough hermeneutical support while Kristen Kiblinger argues that comparative theology lacks sufficient *theological* supports.[164] Others, such as Hugh Nicholson, argues that comparative theology has not sufficiently detached itself from socio-political hegemonism and therefore requires a more considered methodology.[165]

[158] in N. Hintersteiner (ed.), *Naming and Thinking God in Europe Today: Theology in Global Dialogue* (Editions Rodopi, 2007), 467.
[159] M. Moyaert, 'Comparative Theology in Search of a Hermeneutical Framework', in D. Cheetham et al. (eds), *Interreligious Hermeneutics in Pluralistic Europe* (Editions Rodopi, The Netherlands, 2011), 170.
[160] P. Schmidt-Leukel, 'Limits and Prospects of Comparative Theology', in N. Hintersteiner (ed.*), Naming and Thinking God in Europe Toda*y, 494.
[161] H. Nicholson, 'Comparative Theology after Liberalism' (2007) 23(2) *Modern Theology* 229.
[162] R. Bernhardt, 'Comparative Theology: Between Theology and Religious Studies' (2012) 3 *Religions* 964.
[163] M. Moyaert*, In Response to the Religious Other: Ricoeur and the Fragility of Interreligious Encounters* (Lexington Books, 2014).
[164] K. Beise Kiblinger, 'Relating Theology of Religions and Comparative Theology', in F. Clooney (ed.), *The New Comparative Theology,* 21.
[165] P. Hedges, '*Comparative Theology and Hermeneutics'*

Others go even further, denying that comparative theology even answers the description "methodology"[166] with Hedges suggesting that "I am not clear that the proposed system , as Clooney describes it, allows us what may, in a more scientific sense, be spoken of as a methodology."[167] Clooney himself is aware of these criticisms and frankly admits that "comparative theology is a constructive and reflective theological discipline that is not yet mature in either its theoretical or its practical dimensions."[168]

In response, Clooney wisely counsels patience and the need to "keep paying attention to what actually happens when one attends to traditions other than one's own, drawing comparisons on a small scale and prizing both similarities and differences, and for a time sacrificing the clarity to which we may feel accustomed in more well-established areas of theology."[169] This response reflects Clooney's own hesitancy to shape the enterprise of comparative theology through specific theological methodologies, preferring instead to adopt a more intuitive and *ad hoc* approach,[170] leading one scholar to dryly remark: "nevertheless, it may be felt that in academia, claiming intuition as a method and taking an *ad hoc* approach lacks sufficient rigour."[171] However, closer scrutiny of Clooney's approach undertaken by the essays in the 2024 *Wiley Companion to Comparative Theology* demonstrate the rigour associated with his methodology.[172]

[166] P. Hedges, '*Comparative Theology and Hermeneutics'*, 622 – 623.
[167] P. Hedges, 'Comparative Theology and Hermeneutics'.
[168] F. Clooney, 'Comparative Theology', in K. Tanner, J. Webster and I. Torrance (eds*), The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology* (Oxford University Press, United Kingdom, 2007).
[169] F. Clooney, 'Comparative Theology', in K. Tanner, J. Webster and I. Torrance (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology* (Oxford University Press, United Kingdom, 2007).
[170] F. Clooney, *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning Across Religious Borders,* 20.
[171] P. Hedges, 'Comparative Theology and Hermeneutics', 1
[172] See the essays in Part IV in A. M. O. Takacs and J. Kimmel, *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Comparative Theology: A Festschrift in Honour of Francis X. Clooney SJ* (Wiley Blackwell, United States & United Kingdom, 2024).

Two of the criticisms discussed above need to be more thoroughly addressed. The first involves the concern that despite its promise, comparative theology will not lead beyond the impasse of exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism said to infect religious studies and theology of religions, but will lead straight into it. The second is the concern that comparative theology lacks a sufficiently rigorous hermeneutical foundation such that any meaningful way of reading texts and interpreting competing truth claims is impossible.

The implication of the first concern is that despite the attention comparative theologians pay to the philosophical / theological specifics and important textual foundations of the "other" religious tradition, a person is simply not able to avoid judging the other religious tradition from a Christian-centric perspective. The implication of the second concern is that even if a person can avoid Christian-centric judgements, the very process of reading the texts of the religious other remains inchoate, lacking in well-established hermeneutical method to guide the reader. This issue is especially acute because chapters six and seven of the thesis demonstrates that investigating Evagrian and Tsongkhapa's texts through the lens of comparative theology reveals completely incommensurable metaphysical, epistemological and ethical framework. In such circumstances, the temptation may be to retreat into the impasse of exclusivism, inclusivism or some pan-inclusivism.

Returning to an Imagined Impasse?

Earlier, this chapter argued for rejecting methodologies associated with the theology of religions because critics allege that it has become fossilised in the impasse of exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism. While comparative theology has been touted as a method avoiding this impasse, other scholars disagree.

Several scholars argue that comparative theologians have in effect, misrepresented the assumptions underpinning theology of religions and in so doing, have been over-hasty in concluding that it leads to an impasse.[173] They argue that "theology of religions has evolved to distinguish variations among these (exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism) according to their particular methodologies"[174]. These new variations on traditional categories of exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism are said to constitute "new subtypes within theology of religions categories....that separate features that have been heavily criticised from alternative strategies that seem less prone to certain difficulties"[175], including the criticism from comparative theologians that theology of religions leads directly into the impasse.

While it is beyond the scope of this Chapter to explore these emergent subtypes within theologies of religion[176] two theologians have recently debated this issue with Klaus von Stosch arguing for comparative theology as a methodological solution to the impasse and Perry Schmidt-Leukel arguing for a completely opposite view.[177] Stated concisely, Schmidt-Leukel argues that even though a theologian will commence her comparative analysis of the distinctive texts and theological tenets of the religious other without any pre-determined views, she nevertheless imports to the task a philosophical interest in notions of truth and value. As she more deeply engages the texts of both religious traditions, the theologian inevitably reaches a point where she *must* make an evaluation about the value and truth of the other religious tradition.

[173] P. Ingram, Review of Buddhists and Christians by James L. Fredericks (2006) 26 *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 225.
[174] K. Beise Kiblinger, 'Relating Theology of Religions and Comparative Theology', in F. Clooney (ed.), *The New Comparative Theology*, 26.
[175] K. B. Kiblinger, 'Relating Theology of Religions and Comparative Theology', 26.
[176] Indeed, entire texts have been written attempting to demonstrate their application within an interreligious context, see K. B. Kiblinger, in Perry Schmidt-Leukel (ed) (2008).
[177] N. Hintersteiner (ed.), *Naming and Thinking God in Europe Today*.

At that point, she must either affirm the truth of her "home" religious tradition (exclusivism), admit to the equal truth of the other religious tradition (pluralism) or reach some hybrid view (inclusivism). At that point, the theologian finds herself squarely within the tri-modal impasse associated particularly with the theology of religions.[178]

Klaus von Stosch disagrees, arguing that comparative theology as he interprets it has "a philosophical framework that excludes the possibility of a theoretical comparison of religions".[179] In reality von Stosch's "philosophical framework" is actually a hermeneutic. He reads the texts of the different religious traditions through the hermeneutical lens of philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein to assert that there is simply no possibility that the theologian will find herself in the position of having to make a decision based on the truth-claims of the religious "other". Why? Because Wittgenstein's views mean that understanding religion can only occur from the practice of that religion, which in turn is wholly dependent on "language-games" embedded in the *particular* truth-claims of the religious other. According to von Stosch, employing a Wittgenstein hermeneutic means that[180]:

> "Theological investigations must be developed as a collection of examples that consider individual meanings in representative language games according to differing types of religious belief...The attempt of the theology of religions to provide a pluralist or inclusivist interpretation to the differing truth claims of different religions is

[178] P. Schmidt-Leukel, 'Limits and Prospects of Comparative Theology', in N. Hintersteiner (ed.*), Naming and Thinking God in Europe Today*, 494.501.
[179] K. von Stosch, 'Comparative Theology as an Alternative to the Theology of Religions', in N. Hintersteiner (ed.)*, Naming and Thinking God in Europe Today: Theology in Global Dialogue* (Editions Rodopi, The Netherlands, 2007), 508-509.
[180] K. von Stosch, 'Comparative Theology as an Alternative to the Theology of Religions', 510-511.

mistaken because one cannot construct a general interpretation of these truth claims at all."

In other words, since different religions embody different language-games-practice, there can be no universal "truth" uncovered, analysed and evaluated according to the categories of exclusivism, pluralism and inclusivism. For von Stosch, the very question is a form of category error.

If there is no way around the impasse of the exclusivism, inclusivism, pluralism paradigm, then how is it possible for Buddhist-Christian dual-belongers to inhabit *both* spiritualities when, as chapters six and seven of this thesis will demonstrate, Buddhism and Christianity embody fundamentally incommensurable metaphysical, epistemological and ethical frameworks? And if comparative theology is hermeneutically immature, then what is to stop dual-belongers simply defending the coherency of their claims based on the most convenient hermeneutic, such as post-modernism that flattens out difficult notions of competing truth claims?

The hermeneutical immaturity of comparative theology as a discrete methodology carries with it three further subtle but important implications. First, theologians reading the texts of different religious traditions through certain linguistic hermeneutics actually *reinforce* the notion that each of the world's religious traditions is an island unto itself and therefore radically incommensurable with any other religious tradition. For example, "postliberal" theologians such as George Lindbeck read religious texts as an expression of the cultural-linguistic circumstances in which those texts were formed.

While these theologians do pay close attention to the specifics of these circumstances, they conclude that all religions must "be incommensurable in such a way that no equivalents can be found in one language or religion for the crucial terms of the other."[181] The implication is that an exercise of comparative theology, as envisaged by Clooney is simply impossible; fresh insights into one's home religious tradition cannot result from engaging with the texts of another religious tradition because crucial linguistic terms and concepts have no equivalents. Nor does Clooney's focus on particularities assist; "the view that religions are incommensurable suggests that the problem of distortion in interreligious comparison is not simply a contingent matter to be solved by better empirical knowledge and more cultural sensitivity."[182] The end result is therefore similar to the analysis undertaken by scholars in comparative religion studies.

The second important implication is a consequence of the first. If each of the world's religions embodies incommensurable foundations, then the meaning and truth claims of religious tradition X are irrelevant to the meaning and truth claims of religious tradition Y. Hugh Nicholson explains: "the comparison of Christian claims of meaning and truth to those of other religions is extrinsic to the determination of the former. The meaning of Christian beliefs and practices does not essentially depend on an understanding of what other religions teach. Comparison therefore remains a secondary and ad hoc theological activity."[183] The end result is therefore similar to the analysis and ultimately the impasse characterising the theology of religions.

[181] G. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Westminster Press, United Kingdom, 1984).48.
[182] H. Nicholson, 'Comparative Theology after Liberalism', 229 - 230.
[183] H. Nicholson, 'Comparative Theology after Liberalism' 229 - 230.

There is yet *a third* criticism of the use of comparative theology in the evaluation and of Buddhist-Christian dual-belonging claims. Even if foundational Buddhist and Christian texts and commentaries are read together in an exercise of comparative theology, how is it possible for practitioners to even learn from each other let alone claim to be simultaneously Christian and Buddhist when the analysis reveals fundamentally incommensurable metaphysical, epistemological and ethical spiritual frameworks? In such circumstances, Paul Griffiths concludes (for example): [184]

> "It seems reasonable to say that Greek Orthodox Christianity and Gelug Tibetan Buddhism are different religious traditions just because it is performatively impossible to belong to both at once - in much the same way that its performatively impossible simultaneously to be a sumo wrestler and a balance-beam gymnast."

Where do these three criticisms leave the defence of comparative theology?

In Defence of Comparative Theology

Criticisms of comparative theology are essentially about inconsistency, subjectivity and futility. There is a fundamental *inconsistency* with conceptualising comparative theology as both a methodological solution to the "impasse" of categories of exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism associated with comparative religion studies and theology of religions on the one hand, and as method leading inevitably into that impasse on the other.[185]

[184] P. Griffiths, *Problems of Interreligious Diversity* (Blackwell Press, Oxford, United Kingdom, 2001), 13.
[185] Contrasting Perry Schmidt-Leukel, with Klaus von Stosch.

Likewise, its alleged hermeneutical immaturity exposes comparative theology to allegations of *subjectivism*; it becomes whatever any particular theologian reads into it.[186] And when the result of comparative theology reveals the incommensurable metaphysical, epistemological and ethical foundations of Christianity and Buddhism any attempt to learn from each other becomes *futile*.

While these may be some validity to these criticisms, I argue that they are not so great as to neutralise comparative theology as the optimal and workably efficient methodology for evaluating Buddhist-Christian dual-belonging claims. While he is aware of these criticisms (and others) and acknowledges the relative immaturity of comparative theology, Clooney himself simply gets on with the task. Clooney's "aspiration is to do comparative theology, to get on and interact creatively with texts. He further elaborates that it is too soon to refine a methodology and hermeneutics, or advance grand theories, because the endeavour is still in a 'pre-systematic' and 'pre-dogmatic' phase, requiring much more work over a much longer period."[187] Accordingly, Clooney views his research and scholarship in terms of experimental inquiries, "I undertake....experiments without tidying up the theory, hoping that the beauty of the texts and what is generated from the reading of them will carry the day."[188]

[186] Marianne Moyaert, in David Cheetham et al.(eds.) (2011), 170.
[187] A. Ray, '(Re)discovering Comparative Theology: An Australian Perspective' (2014) 27(1) *Pacifica* 50.
[188] F. Clooney, *Comparative Theology*, 68.

Thus, Clooney is willing to subordinate questions relating to methodological or hermeneutical theory to the actual results of *doing* comparative theology:

> "comparative theology has to be done... it takes time, and is hard work. Questions about what comparative theology is... are best taken up after comparative theological practice and with respect to specific cases.....We really are only at the start of a process that will take centuries to come to fruition.....Only in the light of specific research [and] reflection on comparative theology will real progress be made in this field."[189]

But what of the concern that a lack of methodology will result in an incoherent juxtaposition of multiple religions where "truth" is relative and thus any meaningful evaluation rendered useless? Further, doesn't the absence of accepted methodological frameworks balancing the openness to the "other" while maintaining commitment to the "home" religious tradition endanger the religious practitioner's stability?

Anita Ray argues that "the work of Clooney and Fredericks contains an inbuilt safety net, which effectively prevents people from wandering off into the by-ways of fantasy. Both insist on accountability to the home tradition, emphasize the importance of precise exegesis and are resolute about the reflective dimension of the discipline."[190] Likewise, Keith Ward believes that theologians and practitioners committed to their religious tradition will be able to approach the doctrines and practices of the religious "other" without falling into some sort of religious relativism.[191]

[189] A. Ray, '(Re)discovering Comparative Theology: An Australian Perspective', 62.
[190] A. Ray, '(Re)discovering Comparative Theology: An Australian Perspective', 62.
[191] K. Ward, 'The Idea of God', in N. Hintersteiner (ed.), *Naming and Thinking God in Europe Today*, 379-380.

While accepting the force of these responses by Ray and Ward to the criticisms of methodological insufficiency, they do pre-suppose that the theologian or spiritual practitioner is investing difficult and lengthy work in studying and understanding the religious other that Clooney suggests (above) is a necessary precondition for honesty and accuracy in the comparative enterprise. Chapter one of the thesis noted that much of the "apex literature" associated with Buddhist-Christian dual-belonging claims is still at a level of intellectual apprenticeship; both Christian theologians and Buddhist philosophers have only begun to undertake this work. It is principally for this reason Chapter one explained the relatively tentative nature of the literature concerning Buddhist-Christian dual-belonging summarised by Gavin D'Costa: "up until now there has been considerable sociological and cultural investigation of dual belonging but very little theological investigation."[192]

Given the importance of the need for hard study and learning, it becomes important to address criticism concerning the alleged hermeneutical "immaturity" of comparative theology.

Difficulties with Hermeneutics?

One of the distinguishing features of comparative theology is the importance it places on the study and reading of seminal texts and commentaries of the religious other. Advocates of comparative theology assert that the careful attention devoted to texts ensures that the particularities of the religious other are recognised and confronted.

[192] D'Costa and Thompson, *Buddhist-Christian Dual Belonging*, 1.

In so doing, comparative theology is said to avoid both hegemonic interpretative hermeneutics and domestication of differences by reducing comparison to preconceived textual concepts or patterns.[193] It was noted above that Clooney himself views his research and scholarship in terms of experimental inquiries rather than exercises in the application of particular methodological or hermeneutical techniques, "I undertake....experiments without tidying up the theory, hoping that the beauty of the texts and what is generated from the reading of them will carry the day."[194] The flexibility of Clooney's approach to the interpretation of religious texts has been criticised by scholars such as Marianne Moyaert[195] and Klaus von Stosch[196] who express frustration with what they perceive as the hermeneutical immaturity of comparative theology[197]. Does this mean that comparative theology is an "arbitrary and undisciplined exercise"?[198]

Central to Clooney and Frederick's understanding of comparative theology is the priority of reading texts in a process of crossing over and back between different religious traditions; "ordinarily the priority is more simply the dynamics of back-and-forth learning. It is a theological discipline confident about the possibility of being intelligently faithful to tradition even while seeking fresh understanding outside that tradition."[199] The hermeneutic of reading back and forth, of crossing over and back again is a process that reveals and illuminates differences and similarities.

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[193] P. Hedges, 'The Old and New Comparative Theologies: Discourse on Religion, the Theology of Religions, Orientalism and the Boundaries of Traditions' (2012) 3 *Religions* 1120.
[194] F. Clooney, *Comparative Theology*, 68.
[195] M. Moyaert, *In Response to the Religious Other: Ricoeur and the Fragility of Interreligious Encounters* (Lexington Books, 2014).
[196] K. von Stosch, 'Comparative Theology as an Alternative to the Theology of Religions', 508 – 509.
[197] It should be noted that despite these criticisms, Marianne Moyaert is generally supportive of comparative theology. In a recent article, Moyaert (2015) defends comparative theology against criticisms that it does not comply with traditional Catholic Christian theology – M. Moyaert, 'Theology Today: Comparative Theology as a Catholic Theological Approach' (2015) 76(1) *Theological Studies* 43–64.
[198] P. Hedges, '*Comparative Theology and Hermeneutics*'.
[199] F. Clooney, *Comparative Theology*, 11.

It is a hermeneutic or way of reading texts from different religious traditions adopted by Paul Knitter in his text *Without the Buddha I Could Not be a Christian*.[200] While critics may accept such a method, they then argue that "it does not give a clear method for the practice of what and how to compare".[201]

Despite these criticisms, no scholar has suggested that any one or other hermeneutic is *the definitive hermeneutic* that is always appropriate for an exercise in comparative theology. Accordingly, recent papers have explored comparative theology through a variety of hermeneutical techniques including Paul Ricœur's *Interpretation Theory,*[202] those of Hans-Georg Gadamer[203] and of Wittgenstein.[204] There is something of a "damned if it does, damned if it doesn't" quality to these criticisms. One the one hand, comparative theology is criticised for not revealing a fully-formed hermeneutical framework, but on the other, comparative theology is also criticised for being so open to varieties of interpretation that it either falls prey to theological or philosophical relativism or fragments into "different types of comparative theology."[205]

I argue that both these criticisms are unrealistic. Rarely does a new or revitalised methodology in any academic discipline appear fully formed. This is especially so in academic fields that are cross-disciplinary and quite difficult.

[200] P. Knitter, *Without Buddha I Could Not Be a Christian* (Oneworld Publications, United States, 2009).
[201] P. Hedges, '*Comparative Theology and Hermeneutics*'.
[202] M. Moyaert, 'Comparative Theology in Search of a Hermeneutical Framework', in D. Cheetham et al. (eds), 164.
[203] P. Hedges, 'Comparative Theology and Hermeneutics'.
[204] K. von Stosch, 'Comparative Theology as an Alternative to the Theology of Religions', 508 – 509.
[205] U. Winkler, 'What is Comparative Theology?', in D. Cheetham et al. (eds*), Interreligious Hermeneutics in Pluralistic Europe: Between Texts and People* (Rodopi, The Netherlands, 2011), 231.

The risk of settling upon an agreed hermeneutic too quickly is its potential chilling effect; those who seek to bring new interpretative techniques to the enterprise of comparative theology become reluctant to do so because of constraints associated with the "accepted" hermeneutic. Perhaps it is for this reason that Clooney himself cautions against an overly hasty scramble for hermeneutical certainty;

> "comparative theology ..... takes time, and is hard work. Questions about what comparative theology is... are best taken up after comparative theological practice and with respect to specific cases.....We really are only at the start of a process that will take centuries to come to fruition."[206]

The second criticism; that comparative theology exposes itself to a potentially open-ended variety of hermeneutical techniques carries a little more force. Comparative theology is a *purposive* exercise, intended to permit the texts of the different religious tradition to reveal their truths that are then brought into dialogue. Given this truth-seeking, back and forth enterprise of comparative theology, I argue that while it is important for scholars to remain open to a variety of hermeneutical techniques, some hermeneutical techniques "are more equal than others"[207] in working towards this purpose. Accordingly, I submit that Klaus von Stosch's use of Wittgenstein's "language games" hermeneutic to deny the very existence of religious "truths" intended to be brought into dialogue is not at all equal to the purposive intention of comparative theology. The same criticism might be directed toward all forms of post-modern hermeneutics that relativise all truth claims that (I suggest) would have the effect of pluralising all religious truth claims.

[206] A. Ray, '(Re)discovering Comparative Theology: An Australian Perspective', 62.
[207] With apologies to George Orwell, *Animal Farm*.

The implication of my argument is that amongst the many hermeneutical principles available, there are some that I argue are more consistent or "workably efficient" in facilitating the stated purposes of the enterprise of comparative theology. I also argue that there *is* at least one hermeneutical technique that satisfactorily address the final concern; that the now identified metaphysical, epistemological and ethical frameworks of Christianity and Buddhism are so foreign that it is simply not possible for practitioners to learn from each other, let alone sensibly claim to be *both* Christian and Buddhist dual-belongers.

Pierre Hadot and "Philosophy-as-Spiritual-Exercises"

Is there a hermeneutic that is consistent with the enterprise of comparative theology *while also* facilitating learning across religious traditions that embody incommensurable metaphysical, epistemological and ethical frameworks? For the reasons set out in the balance of Chapter Two, I argue that Pierre Hadot's way of reading ancient philosophical texts as exercises in spiritual development satisfies these requirements. For Hadot, ancient texts and philosophies are approached "not as a theoretical construct, but as a method for training people to live and to look at the world in a new way. It is an attempt to transform mankind."[208]

Hadot's hermeneutics involves a conception of philosophy-as-spiritual exercise and necessitates a shift in how ancient philosophical texts are read and read and interpreted: "we are to change from a vision of things dominated by individual passions to a representation of the world government by the universality and objectivity of thought.

[208] P. Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, ed. A. I. Davidson, tr. M. Chase (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 107.

This constructs a conversion (*metastrophe*) brought about with the totality of the soul."[209] What does this mean? Matthew Kapstein provides an example, suggesting that Stoic philosophy, when read through Hadot's hermeneutic "is now seen to be less concerned with supplying a complete and coherent account of the material world than with the cultivation by the philosopher of a particular attitude...inextricably tied to ethics and to the formation of oneself as a specific type of agent."[210]

To understand how and why Hadot's hermeneutic answers the central question posed above[211], it necessary to answer three subsidiary but related questions. First, what are the components of Hadot's hermeneutic (the what). Second, *how* does the reading of ancient texts and philosophies initiate the inner-transformation suggested by Hadot (the how), and third, why do the answers to these questions justify the use of Hadot's hermeneutic in furthering the enterprise of comparative theology in the context of evaluating and Buddhist-Christian dual-belonging claims? (the why).

Born in Paris in 1922, Pierre Hadot's initial entry into the spiritual life was through the Catholic Church where he was ordained priest in 1944. He left the priesthood sometime after 1950, unable to resolve personal disagreement with the content of Pope Pius XII's Encyclical *Humani Generis*.

[209] P. Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 96.
[210] M. Kapstein, *Reason's Traces: Identity and Interpretation in Indian and Tibetan Buddhist Thought* (Wisdom Publications, United States, 2013), 8.
[211] The question is: "if the result of reading together the foundational texts and commentaries is a conclusion that the metaphysical, epistemological and ethical frameworks of Christianity and Buddhism are so foreign, how is it possible for practitioners to learn from each other, let alone sensibly claim to be *both* Christian and Buddhist dual-belongers"?

Hadot then spent most of his academic career at the *École Pratique des Hautes Etudes* where he held a chair in Latin Patristics from 1964-83 and at *Collège de France* until 1991 where he held the chair of History of Hellenistic and Roman Thought. Hadot passed away in 2010 at the age of 88.[212] Hadot's important philosophical works have only recently been translated into and published in English. Most of his views on philosophy-as-spiritual-exercises are found in three sources; his 1987 text *Exercises Spirituels et Philosophie Antique*, published as *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault* in 1995[213] his 1995 text *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie antique?* published as *What is Ancient Philosophy?* in 2004[214] and his 1994 address to the *Collège de France* published in 2005 as *There Are Nowadays Professors of Philosophy, but not Philosophers.*[215]

Hadot shared the concerns of 19th century American philosopher Henry David Thoreau (1817 - 1862) that modern philosophers tend to conceive of philosophy as an exercise in intellectual abstraction, divorced from the lives of ordinary people and the day-to-day problems they endure. Hadot admired Thoreau's *Walden* in which Thoreau recorded his thoughts and experiences in living a solitary, contemplative life for a little over two years between 1845 - 1847 in a small cabin on Walden Pond in Massachusetts in the United States.[216]

[212] P. Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 1.
[213] P. Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 1.
[214] P. Hadot, *What Is Ancient Philosophy?,* tr. M. Chase (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).
[215] P. Hadot, J. Aaron Simmons and M. Marshall, 'There Are Nowadays Professors of Philosophy, but not Philosophers' (2005) 19(3) *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 229–237.
[216] Henry David Thoreau (2016).

What impressed Hadot was Thoreau's willingness to endure considerable physical hardship and isolation in an effort to cultivate philosophy-as-action: [217]

> "The experience recounted in [Thoreau's book] *Walden* seems… extremely interesting for us because in choosing to live in the woods for some time, Thoreau wanted to perform a philosophical act, that is to say, to devote himself to a certain mode of philosophical life that included… manual labor and poverty, but also opened up to him an immensely enlarged perception of the world."

As philosophy in action, Thoreau's experiment was diametrically opposed to academic philosophers "because, being content with theoretical discourse, they encourage men to keep living in an absurd manner."[218] For Hadot, philosophy was not simply an abstract speculative pastime, but like the ancients, an *activity* that was intended to actively shape the soul and intellect of those who trained in its disciplines; "for ancient philosophy, at least beginning from the sophists and Socrates, intended, in the first instance, to form people and to transform souls."[219] In this sense Hadot conceives of philosophy as a verb rather than simply a noun.

What is it then, that a philosopher "does"? What *are* the spiritual exercises? Hadot proposes that philosophers adopt a certain style of life; "either in the order of inner discourse and of spiritual activity: meditation, dialogue, examination of conscience, exercises of the imagination or in the order of action and of daily behaviour."[220]

[217] P. Hadot, J. Aaron Simmons and M. Marshall, 'There Are Nowadays Professors of Philosophy."
[218] P. Hadot, J. Aaron Simmons and M. Marshall, 'There Are Nowadays Professors of Philosophy', 230.
[219] P. Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 20.
[220] P. Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 31.

These exercises include the careful reading and then *meditating* on the significance of what is read for the transformation of the reader; "... we have forgotten *how* to read: how to pause, liberate ourselves from our worries, return into ourselves, and leave aside our search for subtlety and originality, in order to meditate calmly, ruminate, and let the texts speak to us".[221] The relationship between reading and action (askesis) is made clear; "by focussing on the *askesis* of philosophy, on the practice of spiritual exercises, and by linking this practice to a specific representation of the goals and motivations of philosophy, Hadot forces us to rethink our own presumptions in reading ancient texts."[222] Of special concern to Hadot is to challenge the presumption of reading ancient texts solely for theoretical knowledge, "from this perspective, then, we may oppose a purely theoretic philosophical discourse to a practical, lived philosophical life".[223]

The second of the identified subsidiary questions defending the use of Hadot's hermeneutic concerns its apparently alchemical process. How does Hadot's approach to reading ancient philosophical texts as spiritual exercises generate spiritual transformation? Understood as a form of life, exercises were "neither simply exercises of thought nor even moral exercises, but rather, in the full sense of this term, *spiritual* exercises. Since they were aimed at realising a transformation of one's vision of the world and a metamorphosis of one's personality, these exercises has an existential value, not only a moral one."[224]

[221] P. Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 109.
[222] A. Davidson, 'Spiritual Exercises and Ancient Philosophy: An Introduction to Pierre Hadot' (1990) 16(3) *Critical Inquiry* 480.
[223] P. Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy*?, M. Chase (trans.)
[224] A. Davidson 'Spiritual Exercises and Ancient Philosophy: An Introduction to Pierre Hadot'.

Exactly *how* this occurs is a vast subject and Hadot devotes several Parts of his text *Philosophy as a Way of Life* to explaining how philosophy as "spiritual exercises" generates the desired inner transformation[225]. For example, Hadot's exploration notes Plutarch's *ethismoi* is intended to as a means of cultivating ethical habits, Plato's meditations are intended to develop a high degree of concentration and those of Plotinus are intended to transfigure the entire personality.[226]

Despite this variety, Hadot argues that they are united in both the means the exercises employ and the ends they pursue; "all schools agree that (by) mastering one's inner dialogue and mental concentration...(man) can accede to genuine life, improve himself, transform himself, and attain a state of perfection."[227] Hadot likens the process to that of an athlete who transform their bodies through vigorous physical exercises and training; "just as by dint of repeated physical exercises, athletes give new form and strength to their bodies, so the philosopher develops his strength of soul, modifies his inner climate, transforms his vision of the world, and finally, his entire being."[228] If the philosopher adapts herself to the imperatives of spiritual exercises, she becomes liberated; "the self, liberated in this way is no longer merely our egoistic, passionate individuality: it is our *moral* person, open to universality and objectivity, and participating in universal nature or thought."[229]

[225] P. Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, especially Parts II and III of this text.
[226] P. Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 101.
[227] P. Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 102.
[228] P. Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 103.
[229] P. Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 103.

For the purposes of this thesis, the question becomes how these sublime thoughts relate to the task of reading ancient spiritual texts? Hadot answers this question by arguing that when ancient philosophical texts are read, careful attention must be paid to their existential background. He means that ancient texts cannot be read in ignorance of the contexts that gave rise to them; "they are products of a philosophical school...in which a master forms his disciples, trying to guide them to self-transformation and realization."[230]

Philosophical or theological texts thus become *vehicles* for this transformation to the extent that the student permits the contents of the text to work its alchemical process, transforming the leaden habits of egoic distraction and self-concern into the gold of spiritual realization. Clooney himself acknowledges the role of reading-as-agent-of change as part of a spiritual practice; "the reader is as it were reconstituted in relation to the text, re-created as a person who learns-by-study, a "homo lector" (who) changes....as they are inevitably drawn into the worlds brought to life in their reading."[231]

This relationship between the text being read and the process of transformation exists because a distinction is drawn between a text as bearer of a certain content on the one hand, and the same text as vehicle for transformation on the other. Jonardon Ganeri therefore asks; "how does a text facilitate in its reader that transformation as a result of which the reader is brought into accord with the declared content the text announces?"[232] Drawing upon ancient Greek and Buddhist texts, Ganeri answers by identifying the *protreptic* nature of these texts.

[230] P. Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 104 - 105.
[231] F. Clooney, *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning Across Religious Borders*, 58.
[232] J. Ganeri, *The Concealed Art of the Soul: Theories of Self and Practices of Truth in Indian Ethics and Epistemology* (Oxford University Press, United Kingdom, 2010), 97.

Adopting A.A Long's account, Ganeri explains that protreptic texts constitute; "a type of exhortative or admonitory discourse, either in monologue or in question-and-answer form, designed to make persons rethink their ethical beliefs and convert to a fundamental change of outlook and behaviour."[233]

The above analysis addresses the final question posed above; why do the answers to the previous two questions justify the use of Hadot's hermeneutic in furthering the enterprise of comparative theology in the context of evaluating Buddhist-Christian dual-belonging claims? An adequate answer to this third, "capstone" question is important because of the objection noted above that even if Christian and Buddhist texts are read together in an exercise of comparative theology, their metaphysical, epistemological and ethical frameworks are so different that it is simply not possible for Buddhists and Christians to learn from each other.

It is true that later chapters of the thesis intend to demonstrate that the chosen Buddhist and Christian texts embody metaphysical incommensurable world-views in which humanity is situated. This world-view encompasses tenets about what it means to be human being (theological anthropology), an explanation for the varied conditions in which humans find themselves (happiness and suffering) and how human beings might be "saved" from their mortal condition (soteriology). Necessarily underpinning these metaphysical tenets lies the capacity of humans to understand the circumstances in which they find themselves and their capacity to develop wisdom (epistemology).

[233] J. Ganeri, *The Concealed Art of the Soul*, 100, quoting A.A.Long, *Epictetus: A Stoic and Socratic Guide to Life* (2012).

To harness wisdom in service of "salvation" involves continuous discipline and "right conduct" (ethics). In this sense, metaphysics, epistemology and ethics are inter-related.[234] What we believe to be true directly influences how we behave in relation to that truth-belief. Our metaphysical conclusions may support or even clash with given ethical systems and directly influence the composition of our ethical formations.

Similarly, what we believe to be true is a direct result of how and what we perceive and know. Our minds constantly filter and shape what we think we know about the world, how we make sense of it and how we respond. The relationship between epistemology and ethics becomes clearer when we realise that *because* the mind continually creates and recreates its awareness of reality through the way it responds to experience, then with greater awareness, our responses can become a matter of ethical choice rather than reflexive impulses. In these ways, the interrelationship between metaphysics and epistemology is directly relevant to ethics and ultimately perhaps, to "salvation".

Curiously, the Western Christian and Eastern Buddhist traditions tend to start this philosophical process at opposite ends and work toward the middle. Generally speaking, the Christian tradition begins with certain metaphysical propositions, formulated in the various Creeds; "it is not uncommon for Western philosophical systems to begin with metaphysical presuppositions and secondarily to generate epistemological criteria by which to verify those presuppositions."[235] This process is clearly observable in the content and structure of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.[236]

[234] Here I am drawing upon the discussion in: A. Carpenter, *Indian Buddhist Philosophy* (Routledge, United States, 2014).
[235] Noa Ronkin, (2005) at 3.
[236] *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (2004) (2nd ed).

However, the Buddhist tradition identifies the fundamental cause of suffering as "our lack of insight into the dynamics of cognition, and its prescribed soteriological solution is therefore to gain insight into the conditions of our cognitive apparatus."[237] As a product of Indian philosophy, the emphasis is on valid cognition as the determinant of what can then be said to be metaphysically "true".[238]

The point being made is that *despite* the metaphysical, epistemological differences revealed by reading together the chosen Christian and Buddhist texts, each text functions in a protreptic manner, effecting profound spiritual changes as the reader engages the texts as a form of spiritual exercise. And it is Pierre Hadot's hermeneutic that is optimal for this process. Clooney explicitly acknowledges and appropriates Hadot's process, arguing, "by extension, I suggest the reading of religious texts as comparative theological practice is an instance of this direct and unitary reflection, action intended to transform human ways of living, so that we can receive wisdom - now the wisdom of another tradition - as our wisdom too."[239]

In what sense are the texts by Evagrius of Ponticus and the selected Into-Tibetan Mahāyāna Buddhist texts protreptic or transformative in their reading and study? Hadot himself argues that as a spiritual exercise, the Evagrian cultivation of *apatheia* is facilitated by philosophy; "it is with Evagrius however, that we can see most clearly just how closely Christian *apatheia* can be linked to philosophical concepts."[240]

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[237] N. Ronkin, *Early Buddhist Metaphysics: The Making of a Philosophical Tradition* (Routledge, United Kingdom, 2005), 4.
[238] A. Klein, *Knowledge and Liberation: Tibetan Buddhist Epistemology in Support of Transformative Religious Experience* (Snow Lion Publications, United States, 1998).
[239] F. Clooney, *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning Across Religious Borders,* 59.
[240] P. Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 136.

Using an extract from Evagrius' *Praktikos* concerning the relationship of "knowledge" to *apatheia*, Hadot demonstrates that relationship was "well known to Origen, and is attested to in Platonism at least since the time of Plutarch."[241] Hadot therefore reads the Evagrian texts in such a way that the text "facilitates in its reader that transformation as a result of which the reader is brought into accord with the declared content the text announces"[242]

This thesis argues that the case for reading the selected Into-Tibetan Mahāyāna Buddhist texts as protreptic or transformative vehicles is even stronger and indeed, several scholars have begun the tentative task of exploring the application of Hadot's hermeneutic to Buddhist philosophical texts.[243] Tsongkhapa's *Lamrim Chenmo* explored in this thesis is intended to bring about a radical transformation in the reader; "the trajectories for the appropriation of Hadot's methodology may be most relevant in understanding Asian religious and philosophical literature composed by Indian Buddhist scholar-monk figures like Nāgārjuna, Candrakīrti, Śāntideva, whose metrical works may be seen as philosophical dialogues consisting of spiritual exercises utilized for the transformation of one's whole being."[244]

[241] P. Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 137.
[242] J. Ganeri, *The Concealed Art of the Soul*, 97.
[243] J. Apple, 'Can Buddhist Thought be Construed as a Philosophia or a Way of Life? Relating Pierre Hadot to Buddhist Discourses on Self-Cultivation' (2010) 3 *Journal of Oriental Philosophy* 191; M. Kapstein, 'Stoics and Bodhisattvas: Spiritual Exercise and Faith in Two Philosophical Traditions', in C. Chase et al. (eds), *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Ancients and Moderns – Essays in Honor of Pierre Hadot* (John Wiley & Sons, United States, 2013).
[244] J. Apple, 'Can Buddhist Thought be Construed as a Philosophia or a Way of Life?

Jonardon Ganeri devotes Chapter Four of his text *The Concealed Art of the Soul*, to explaining how the texts of Nāgārjuna, Candrakīrti and Śāntideva achieve this purpose; "the proper grasp and reflective acceptance of the truths taught by the Buddha *upturns* the mind of the student, and transforms their vision. As a genre, the recoded dialogues of the Buddha are closer to the meditation...than to the summa or disposition."[245] The Tibetan doxographical presentation of Buddhist philosophical tenets (*grub mtha'*) may be thought of in a similar fashion; "such trajectories would lead to a re-visioning of the much-translated Tibetan philosophical literature known as 'tenets'....from the Hadotian perspective, these texts might be understood as heuristic training manuals in the cultivation of spiritual insight."[246]

Such an understanding is supported by Jeffrey Hopkins, whose annotated translation of an 18th Century Tibetan text *Precious Garland of Tenets*[247] is studied; "not to refute other systems (of tenets) but to develop an internal force that can counteract one's own *innate* adherence to misapprehension that are part and parcel of ordinary life."[248] Hopkins notes that Tibetan Buddhist monks not only *read* the text, but also think, analyse, debate and meditate on conclusions generated from debate.[249] Similar exercises are undertaken in studying texts on Buddhist epistemology and psychology (blo rig), since "intellectual endeavor, both in preparation for and during practice of meditation is instrumental in attaining particular forms of direct, non-conceptual or mystical experience."[250]

[245] J. Ganeri, *The Concealed Art of the Soul*, 100.
[246] J. Apple, 'Can Buddhist Thought be Construed as a Philosophia or a Way of Life?
[247]Gön chok jik may wang bo, 'Precious Garland of Tenets', in J. Hopkins and L. Sopa, *Cutting Through Appearances: Practice and Theory of Tibetan Buddhism* (Snow Lion, 1989), 111.
[248] Gön chok jik may wang bo, *Cutting Through Appearances,* 112.
[249] Gön chok jik may wang bo, *Cutting Through Appearances,* 112.
[250] A. Klein*, Knowledge and Liberation: Tibetan Buddhist Epistemology in Support of Transformative Religious Experience* (Snow Lion Publications, United States, 1998, 13 – 14; L. Rinbochay and E. Napper (Snow Lion Publications, United States, 1980).

Tibetan Buddhist monks studying texts on philosophical tenets, epistemology and psychology for the purposes of achieving enlightenment are engaging in the sort of transformative pedagogical practices Hadot recognises as "spiritual exercises".[251]

Given these possibilities, I argue that *even if* (as I also argue) a close, comparative reading of foundational texts and commentaries of the Christian and Buddhist traditions reveals fundamental incommensurable metaphysical, epistemological and ethical frameworks, it is *still possible* to sensibly learn from each other's texts as agents of spiritual transformation without descent into either metaphysical or epistemological incoherency. How might this work?

To anticipate later chapters, if the content of the Evagrian texts and chosen Tibetan Mahāyāna Buddhist texts were visualised as a Venn diagram, we would notice an important intersection. This intersection or common ground is centred on the role of epistemology (cognition) and psychology (mental states) in pursuing the different metaphysical aims of Christianity and Buddhism. Chapter eight of the thesis will demonstrate that spiritual seekers in the Christian and Buddhist traditions struggle with common psychological experiences of anger, lust, attachment, pride and sorrow held in tension with contrary aspirations to virtue, to self-mastery, to happiness, to attaining wisdom and happiness. Hadot's hermeneutic thus enables a reading of these texts for the purpose of mastering techniques associated with those cognitive and psychological states as an essential prerequisite to spiritual progression in both the Buddhist and Christian paths, *despite* metaphysical incommensurability.

[251] P. Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 103 – 104.

Conclusion

Chapters one and two of the thesis set itself several tasks. First, it intended to demonstrate how the central research question; the need to re-evaluate and revision Buddhist-Christian dual-belonging claims was important and in need of scholarly attention.

Chapter one achieved this task by reviewing the relevant literature devoted to such claims. It identified four discrete classes of literature, from a large amount of very general material focussing on interreligious studies generally, to a much smaller amount of "apex literature" devoted to Buddhist-Christian dual-belonging claims. The review identified a somewhat lop-sided tendency in the literature; much that focussed on methodology, sociology and anthropology, but relatively little that explored comparative *theological* elements of Buddhism and Christianity.

The relative lack of this more detailed comparative textual, philosophical and theological analysis was frankly admitted by recent (2016) book-length works concerning Buddhist-Christian dual-belonging claims and chapter one demonstrated how the absence of this more detailed scholarship has resulted in several scholars conflating Christian and Buddhist concepts to draw incoherent conclusions and how the works of Evagrius of Ponticus have been uncritically appropriated in support of Buddhist-Christian dual-belonging claims. For these reasons, chapter one justified the central research question of this thesis.

Chapter two then identified, evaluated and then defended the choice of a particular methodology and hermeneutic by which Buddhist-Christian dual-belonging claims are to be evaluate. Chapter two achieved this task by systematically evaluating three potential methodologies; (i) comparative religion studies, (ii) theology of religions and (iii) comparative theology.

Chapter two argued that while none of these potential methodologies was perfect or optimal to the task, *comparative theology* as envisioned by James L. Fredericks and Francis Clooney was a workably efficient and preferred methodology.

Chapter two argued that despite criticisms, comparative theology was particularly suited to the enterprise of this thesis because of its (i) normative (ii) constructive, (iii) revisionist and (iv) pastoral elements. These four elements coalesced on the central dynamic of comparative theology, the detailed reading together of foundational texts and commentaries of different religious traditions in ways that overcome tendencies of *apriorism* and hegemonism said to compromise the efficacy of studies of religions and comparative theology.

Chapter two also addressed a very *particular* but important criticism of comparative theology as methodology; that of hermeneutical immaturity. The implication was that since comparative theology does not carry with it a fully formed hermeneutical framework, then it cannot effectively guide the reader in *how* to comparatively read different religious texts. Further, if close reading of foundational texts and commentaries of the Buddhist and Christian spiritual traditions reveals incommensurable metaphysical foundations, then it vastly unlikely that Christians and Buddhist could learn from each other anyway.

In response, Chapter two argued that this ambiguity was more than compensated for by the breadth of hermeneutical techniques (Ricoeur, Gadamer and Wittgenstein) that several theologians were bringing to the task. Importantly, Chapter two argued that the hermeneutic of Pierre Hadot was particularly valuable since it focussed on reading ancient religious and philosophical texts as spiritual exercises intended to transform the reader.

Hadot's hermeneutic therefore enables readers of texts from very different spiritual or philosophical traditions to learn techniques from the texts of "the other" as a form of spiritual exercise intended to empower the practitioner to make further progress along their respective spiritual path. Chapter two concluded by demonstrating that several scholars had in fact begun to explore the application of Hadot's hermeneutic within a Buddhist context.

Having outlined the methodological and hermeneutical framework of the thesis, chapter three introduces the lives and times of both Evagrius Ponticus and Tsongkhapa. Chapter four introduces the Evagrian spiritual tradition and textual corpus while chapter five introduces Tsongkhapa's Tibetan Buddhist spiritual tradition and the *Lamrim Chenmo*. The discussion in chapters three, four and five demonstrate how both sets of texts reveal very different metaphysical processes to spiritual progression characterising the Christian and Buddhist spiritual traditions. Building upon that discussion, chapters six and seven comparatively analyse these different spiritual systems demonstrating the fundamental incommensurability of the Christian and Buddhist metaphysical systems and by extension, the incoherency of attempts to formulate a spiritual identity based on Buddhist-Christian dual belonging claims.

CHAPTER THREE

Evagrius & Tsongkhapa

Introduction

This chapter is biographical and textual, presenting both Evagrius and Tsongkhapa as vital, living spiritual figures who profoundly influenced generations of Christians and Buddhists respectively. In presenting their lives, chapter three draws upon a wide range of primary and secondary sources. Importantly, it seeks to present Evagrius and Tsongkhapa as *human beings*, rather than remote, unapproachable beings, but men who experienced the full range of human emotions and failings. It demonstrates how both monastics confronted and overcame loneliness, pain and other suffering through their unique spiritual insights and practices.

Chapter three also identifies the major texts written by both monastics intended to embody and communicate those insights and practices in terms of a path of spiritual progression. In doing so, the chapter establishes the necessary biographical and textual foundations for an overview of the Evagrian Christian metaphysical system and the Buddhist path to enlightenment presented by Tsongkhapa.

Evagrius Ponticus: From Constantinople to Egypt

Patristic scholarship throughout the 20th century achieved much in recovering and exploring the texts and mystical theology of 4th Century Desert Father Evagrius Ponticus (345 - 399 CE). Evagrius emerges from this scholarship as one of early Christianity's most compelling and influential figures. He is compelling because the texts that have come down to us today and that recount his life reveal a wonderfully *human* person, far removed from the remote lives of Saints appearing in ancient and modern hagiographies[252]. Evagrius is presented as a talented scholar and orator struggling mightily to balance and direct his deep desire for holiness, his vocation as a Christian monastic and his equally deep passions.

Evagrius was writing within a period of Church history that contemporary scholars characterise as "Patristic". Noted by Harman[253]: "Patristics (from the Latin genitive noun *patris*, "of" or "pertaining to a father") is the discipline of Christian theological studies that is concerned with the history, literature, and theology of postapostolic Christianity in late antiquity. In its broadest periodization, its concern is with Christianity between ad 100 and 800, but the span of the patristic period is sometimes shortened to ad 100–500 or 600 for Latin Christianity." Although not *strictly* a "Father" of the Church, "Evagrius both nourished and provoked the minds of the fathers. He thus belongs to the patristic period of late antiquity."[254]

[252] There are several primary sources recounting the life of Evagrius. These include Paladius' *Lausiac History*, Socrates' *Ecclesial History*, Sozomen's *Ecclesial History* and Blanchard, Griffin, Horn and Timbie's *Armenian Version of the "Life of Evagrius of Pontus"*. There are several secondary sources contained in contemporary works about Evagrius and these will be discussed in later Chapters.

[253] S. R. Harman, "Patristic" entry in *The Encyclopedia of Christian Civilization* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011).

[254] J. Konstantinovsky, *Evagrius Ponticus: The Making of a Gnostic* (London: Routledge, 2009), 183.

In introducing Evagrius' life, this Chapter principally relies upon primary sources contained in Palladius' *The Lausiac History*[255] read with *The Coptic Life of Evagrius*[256], referred to here as *The Coptic Palladia* (since it is the Coptic version of Palladius' *Lausiac History*) and supplemented by Socrates'' *Ecclesial History*[257] and Sozomen's *History of the Church*.[258] Where necessary, material is also drawn from the *Armenian Version of the "Life of Evagrius of Pontus"*[259] and from secondary academic scholarship concerning Evagrius' life and times.[260]

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to investigate and explain the philological history, authenticity and reception of the primary textual sources for the life of Evagrius and the biographical information in this chapter is based upon texts accepted by scholars as reliable for the information about Evagrius they provide.[261] Yet, it is precisely *because* Evagrius was so conflicted and suffered much in the successful resolution of those conflicts that he was able at a later stage in his life, to write texts of sublime psychological insight and penetrating analysis of the human condition. The value of these texts and Evagrius' insights into the human condition has prompted 21st Century psychologists, pastoral counsellors and philosophers to explore his writings in an astonishing wide range of disciplines, settings and applications.

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[255] Palladius, *The Lausiac History*, R. Meyer (ed.) (Paulist Press, United States, 1964).
[256] T. Vivian (trans.), 'Coptic Palladiana II: The Life of Evagrius (Lausiac History 38)' (2008) 21(1) *Coptic Church Review* 8.
[257] Socrates*, Ecclesiastical History*, (London, H. G. Bohn, 1853).
[258] Sozomen, in Henry G Bohn (1855).
[259] M. Blanchard et al., 'The Armenian Version of the "Life of Evagrius of Pontus"' (2000–2001) 5–6 St. *Nersess Theological Review* 25.
[260] For example; M. DelCogliano, 'The Quest for Evagrius of Pontus: A Historiographical Essay', *American Benedictine Review*, 62(4) (2011), 387–401.
[261] Commentary concerning the authenticity and reception of these primary sources and the literature of early monasticism associated with Evagrius are discussed in Robert Meyer's translation of *The Lausiac History* (1964) at 200, fn 337; J. Konstantinovsky, *Evagrius Ponticus, The Making of a Gnostic* (Ashgate Press, United Kingdom, 2009), 11-12; W. Harmless, *Desert Christians: An Introduction to the Literature of Early Monasticism* (Oxford University Press, United Kingdom, 2004), 311ff; and A. Casiday*, Reconstructing the Theology of Evagrius Ponticus: Beyond Heresy* (Cambridge University Press, United Kingdom, 2013), Chapter 2.

These include cognitive science[262], the psychology of emotional stability[263], the relationship between Evagrian / Desert asceticism and the experience of cancer patients[264], the Christian pastoral interpretation of the "Seven Deadly Sins"[265], diagnosing and treating boredom and depression[266] and the relationship between theology and psychology.[267] Evagrius is influential not only because of the wider interest in his thinking, but also because his texts and thinking have both directly and indirectly influenced the development of the Western Christian traditions through his disciple John Cassian, and of the Eastern Christian tradition through Maximus the Confessor and the authors of the *Philokalia*.

He was born in 345 CE in the city of Ibora, located in the former Roman Province of Helenopontus near the Black Sea in what is now the modern Country of Turkey. Pontus was known for producing thinkers and philosophers; the renowned geographer Strabo (c 63 BCE - c 24 CE) and Diogenes of Sinope (c 412 BCE - c 323 BCE) also originated from Pontus. From his birth, Evagrius was inculcated into the Christian Church; his father was a χωρεπίσκοπος (*chorepiskopos*), a Bishop of a defined country district with limited ecclesial powers.[268]

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[262] G. Tsakiridis, *Evagrius Ponticus and Cognitive Science* (Pickwick Publications, United States, 2010).
[263] R. Sorabji, *Emotion and Peace of Mind: From Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation* (Oxford University Press, United Kingdom, 2010), 357.
[264] M. Weaver, 'Asceticism Imposed: The Desert Theology of Oncology' (2014) 19 *The Oncologist* 310.
[265] A. Tilby, *The Seven Deadly Sins: Their Origin in the Spiritual Teaching of Evagrius the Hermit* (SPCK, United Kingdom, 2009).
[266] S. Buju, 'From Spiritual "Akedia" Towards the Understanding of Student's Lack of Motivation', in A. Gavriluta, M. Frasin and A. Vasiliu (eds), *Unity and Diversity in Knowledge Society, Proceedings of the International Conference* Iasi, September 2012 (Romania, 2012), 223.
[267] J. Nelson and C. Thomason, 'Theistic Psychology: A Patristic Perspective' (2012) *23 Research in the Social Scientific Study of Religion* 95; J. Nelson and B. Slife, 'A New Positive Psychology: A Critique of the Movement Based on Early Christian Thought' (2017) 12(5) *The Journal of Positive Psychology* 459.
[268] In his translation of the *Lausiac History*, Robert Meyer translates χωρεπίσκοπος (*chorepiskopos*) as "chorbishop" denoting a bishop "in full episcopal orders, but with restricted powers. A Chorbishop could confer only minor orders and was under a metropolitan bishop," Palladius, *The Lausiac History* in Robert Meyer (ed) (1964) at 200 fn 340.

All accounts of his life indicate that Evagrius received an excellent education and as a young man, was "well known throughout Constantinople for having combatted the heretics with forceful and eloquent language."[269] Evagrius' skill in theological and philosophical argument had been fostered by interaction with the famed "Cappadocian Fathers"; Evagrius was ordained *Lector* by Basil of Caesarea (c329 - c379 CE) and then *Deacon* by Gregory of Nazianzus (c329 - c390 CE). In a letter to Evagrius' father written around 359 CE, Gregory praised Evagrius' keen intellect and rhetorical skills suggesting that he "needed no further eloquence".[270]

Casiday notes in his study of Evagrius' theology that "Evagrius' education (as it can be deduced from his later writings) included not only oratory, but also philosophy and at least a smattering of other liberal subjects like mathematics, medicine and astronomy."[271] After Gregory of Nazianzus was made Archbishop of Constantinople in 379 CE, Evagrius accompanied him serving as Gregory's deacon during the Council of Constantinople in 381 CE. There he "acquired a reputation for acumen and persuasiveness in the theological debates going on at the time and was even viewed as a worthy candidate for a bishopric."[272]

[269] T. Vivian (trans.), '*Coptic Palladiana II*"
[270] Gregory of Nazianzus, *Letter 6*, in C.G Browne and J.E Swallow (trans) (1894). Quoted by A. Casiday, *Reconstructing the Theology of Evagrius Ponticus: Beyond Heresy* (Cambridge University Press, United Kingdom, 2013), 13.
[271] A. Casiday, *Reconstructing the Theology of Evagrius Ponticus*, 13.
[272] M. DelCogliano, 'The Quest for Evagrius of Pontus: A Histographical Essay' (2011) 26(4*) American Benedictine Review* 387.

However, Evagrius' eloquence in rhetoric was matched by the strength of his vanity; Sozomen noting that he was "handsome in person and careful in his mode of attire."[273] Young, handsome and eloquent; "the composite picture of Evagrius during this period is one of a charismatic, hot-blooded and sexy youth".[274] Unsurprisingly, Evagrius was attractive to and attracted to the women of Constantinople and several biographies recount that he found himself entangled in an affair with a "woman of the highest social class" and who "loved him in return."[275]

We do not know who this woman was; Harmless and Fitzgerald describe her as "the wife of a high imperial official"[276] while the *Armenian Version of the Life of Evagrius* describes her as being of "high rank and very attractive."[277] If discovered, an affair with a woman of high social status and who was married to a person of power and influence would have caused great scandal. In fact, the histories hint that Evagrius' affair was indeed exposed at some point. The *Coptic Palladia* records that "in truth the woman persisted in her madness for him to the point that she made a public spectacle of herself"[278] and Sozomen records that the affair "excited the jealousy of her husband who determined upon slaying him."[279]

What was he to do? Palladius' account records that Evagrius was torn between intensely conflicting emotions[280]:

[273] Sozomen, *History of the Church*, in Henry G Bohn (1895) at 295.
[274] A. Casiday, *Reconstructing the Theology of Evagrius Ponticus*, 18.
[275] Palladius, *The Lausiac History*, in Robert Meyer (ed) (1964), 111.
[276] W. Harmless and R. Fitzgerald, 'The Sapphire Light of the Mind: The Skemmata of Evagrius Ponticus' (2001) 62 *Theological Studies* 499.
[277] M. Blanchard et al., '*The Armenian Version of the "Life of Evagrius of Pontus"*'
[278] T. Vivian (trans.), "*Coptic Palladiana II*"
[279] Sozomen, *History of the Church*, in H. G Bohn, 295.
[280] Palladius, *The Lausiac History*, R. Meyer (ed.), 111.

> "Evagrius, with a fear of God and a respect for his own conscience, perceived plainly the magnitude of the disgrace and the delight which heretics would take in his transgression, and he prayed humbly to God to put some impediment in his path. he wished to break off with the woman....but could not do so, so caught up was he in the bonds of concupiscence."

This unresolved conflict imprisoned and paralysed Evagrius; the *Armenian Version of the Life of Evagrius* describes Evagrius as being "bound as if by fetters and was not able to move"[281] while the *Coptic Palladia* reveals that he "wanted to flee from her but could not summon up the courage to do so for in truth his thoughts were held captive by pleasure like a child."[282] What exactly was it that bound Evagrius as if by fetters? What exactly was it that held him captive? On one level, the answers seem obvious; lust, pleasure and the fear of losing the object of his affections in the event that Evagrius were to flee Constantinople. However, the histories provide a more refined analysis.

The *Coptic Palladia* states that "on account of his pride and arrogance, he fell into the hands of the demon who brings about lustful thoughts for women."[283] The *Armenian Version of the Life of Evagrius* goes even further, asserting that "the evil and jealous Satan cast him into desire."[284] It is not surprising that the histories implicate the role of demons in the emotional and psychological conflicts experienced by Evagrius while in Constantinople, especially since his later writings carefully identify and assign specific demons to specific emotional and afflictive states.

[281] M. Blanchard et al., '*The Armenian Version of the "Life of Evagrius of Pontus"*'
[282] T. Vivian (trans.), "*Coptic Palladiana II*"
[283] T. Vivian (trans.), "*Coptic Palladiana II*"
[284] M. Blanchard et al., '*The Armenian Version of the "Life of Evagrius of Pontus"*'.

Both the *Armenian Version of the Life of Evagrius* and the *Coptic Palladia* expressly note that Evagrius himself at a much later stage in his life, told his disciple Palladius of the causative role played by demons during this period of crisis. By this time, Evagrius' inability to resolve his inner conflict over the affair was potentially lethal. The woman's husband intended to murder Evagrius and Sozomen notes that "assassins were waiting for an opportunity to take his life."[285]

Before this could occur, Evagrius experienced a dream in which the solution presented itself. He dreamt of himself bound by chains and brought before a judge. In his dream, Evagrius was in the company of other prisoners who were being punished for their crimes and he grew fearful. At that moment, an angel appeared to Evagrius in the form of a friend asking him why he was in such a state. Both Palladius and the *Coptic Palladia* record that although Evagrius was well aware that his arrest was likely the consequence of his affair, he was reluctant to admit it, dissembling: "the truth is, I don't know, but I think someone denounced me, perhaps because he was seized by ignorant jealousy".[286]

As a form of denial, not even the angel believed him, responding (probably incredulously) "don't you have any thoughts on the matter yourself?"[287] Nevertheless, the angel promised that Evagrius would be spared his nightmare if he swore on the Gospels that he would leave Constantinople immediately. Evagrius agreed to make the oath but only after negotiating a delay of a further day with the angel so that he could arrange for his entire wardrobe to be placed aboard a ship![288]

[285] Sozomen, *History of the Church*, in H. G Bohn, 295.
[286] Palladius, *in* Robert Meyer (ed) (1964), 111-112; Tim Vivian (trans) (2008).
[287] M. Blanchard et al., '*The Armenian Version of the "Life of Evagrius of Pontus"*'.
[288] Palladius, *The Lausiac History*, R. Meyer (ed.), 112.

Making good on his promise, Evagrius left Constantinople for Jerusalem. Simple physical distance from both the affair and the threat of being assassinated because of it, did not translate into inner distance from the unresolved emotional and intellectual afflictions tearing at Evagrius; "it is one thing to evade the jealousy of a cuckolded husband; resolving inner turmoil is quite another."[289]

Palladius records that upon arrival in Jerusalem, Evagrius fell into his old ways; his speech becoming exceedingly vainglorious, "and because of his large and splendid wardrobe (he would change clothes *twice a day*), he fell into vain habits and bodily pleasure."[290] Once again, this inner conflict manifested itself to Evagrius. However, instead of a dream communicating a warning, Evagrius fell dangerously ill with a "six-month fever (that) wasted away his flesh which had been his great impediment."[291]

Contemporary psychologists might suggest that Evagrius was suffering from profound cognitive dissonance, the result of an inability or unwillingness to resolve the conflict between his inner call to a religious vocation on the one hand and his outer behaviour on the other.[292] The nexus between intensive cognitive dissonance and psychosomatic illness is well known.[293] That Evagrius' fever was psychosomatic in orientation is suggested by Palladius, noting that "the doctors were in a quandary and could find no treatment to cure him."[294]

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[289] A. Casiday, *Reconstructing the Theology of Evagrius Ponticus*, 19.
[290] T. Vivian (trans.), "*Coptic Palladiana II*".
[291] Palladius, *The Lausiac History*, R. Meyer (ed.), 112.
[292] Developed by Stanford psychologist Leon Festinger, Cognitive Dissonance is experienced when people "find themselves doing things that don't fit with what they know, or having opinions that do not fit with the other options they hold"; L. Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (Stanford University Press, United States, 1957).
[293] J. Robinson and H. Demaree, 'Physiological and Cognitive Effects of Expressive Dissonance' (2007) 63(1) *Brain and Cognition* 70.
[294] Palladius, *The Lausiac History*, R. Meyer (ed.), 112 - 113.

It was only after Evagrius confessed his inner torment to the remarkable Melania[295], the founder of a monastery on the Mount of Olives and who had taken care of Evagrius upon his arrival in Jerusalem, that the fever lifted and he was able to make a recovery. After listening to Evagrius' inner torments, Melania made him promise to aim for the monastic life. Upon the promise being given, Evagrius "was well again in a matter of days."[296] Following his recovery, the histories record that Evagrius received a "change of clothing". Was this a simply an exchange of Evagrius' former ornate clothes for something simpler or was it the conferral of a monastic habit? Palladius notes that Evagrius "received a change of clothing at her hands" i.e., from Melania.

However, writing to Rufinus, in his *Letter 22,* Evagrius states: "But now I give praise to our Lord and to the day of his resurrection, on which you have me the holy schema, and mixed me into the number of the solitaries."[297] This would suggest that after his recovery, Evagrius was clothed in the monastic habit by Rufinus before setting out for the monasteries in the Egyptian desert where he would compose his most important works.[298] Initially, Evagrius journeyed to what Palladius calls "the mountain of Nitria in Egypt", a monastic site south of the city of Alexandria.[299]

[295] Melania the Elder as she is called, was originally from Egypt. However, finding herself widowed at 22, she sold her property and left for Jerusalem in 373 CE. There, she established a monastery on the Mount of Olives and when later joined by Rufinus of Aquileia (c 345 - c 411 CE) transformed the monastery into a place of hospitality and scholarship. Palladius devotes a Chapter to the Life of Melania in his *Lausiac History*.
[296] Palladius, *The Lausiac History*, R. Meyer (ed.) at 113.
[297] Evagrius Ponticus, *Letter 22* quoted by R. Darling Young, 'The Role of Letters in the Works of Evagrius', in K. Kalvesmaki and R. Darling Young (eds), *Evagrius and His Legacy* (University of Notre Dame Press, United States, 2016), 166.
[298] The term "clothed" is a translation of the verb μεταμθιέζομαι (first p. sing. Pass.: "I was clothed by.") which is used in the context of dressing up in a costume rather than simply changing one's ordinary clothes.
[299] T. Vivian (trans.), "Coptic Palladiana II", 113. Sozomen notes that "Nitria….derives its name from its vicinity to a village in which nitre is found": Sozomen, *History of the Church*, at 296. "Nitre" is probably a reference to natron, a salt mixture used by the Egyptians during the mummification process.

Interestingly, the *Coptic Palladia* relates that leaving Melania and Rufinus, Evagrius "walked and came to the monastic community of Pernouj"[300] while the *Armenian Version of the Life of Evagrius* states that Evagrius: "left and set out toward Mt Rebon in Egypt".[301] Early monastic records indicate that "Pernouj" was another name for the community at Nitria and that although described in Greek as ὄρος ("mountain") in reality, "the areas were mostly flat and topographically uninteresting, featuring brackish pools that contained deposits of natron."[302]

Evagrius stayed with the community at Nitria for two years before departing further into the desert for another monastic community known as "Kellia" (the Cells).[303] There he remained until his death in 399 CE at the relatively early age of fifty-five.
Evagrius' most important texts concerning spiritual progress were composed while he lived in Kellia and many of them are described, even if only by their titles, in the biographies of Evagrius that have come down to us today[304]. This thesis intends to principally focus on three of these texts that are intended to form a trilogy; the *Praktikos*, the *Gnostikos* and the *Kephalaia Gnostika*. We know these texts were intended to be read together because in his letter to Anatolius, that constitutes the introduction to the *Praktikos*, Evagrius states[305]:

[300] T. Vivian (trans.), "*Coptic Palladiana II*",
[301] M. Blanchard et al., '*The Armenian Version of the "Life of Evagrius of Pontus*".
[302] C. Stewart, 'Desert Fathers', in K. Johnston (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Monasticism* (Routledge, United States, 2000), 371.
[303] In his *History of the Egyptian Monks*, Rufinus visited Kellia and observed that it lay in the "interior desert" (*in deserto interiore*) and was a "vast wasteland" (*eremus vasta*). See: W. Harmless, *Desert Christians*, 280.
[304] While Palladius only mentions two or three texts, Socrates provides a detailed list: Socrates, in Henry G Bohn (1855) at 237.
[305] Evagrius, *Praktikos*, in John Eudes Bamberger (1981) at 14-15. The one hundred chapters constitute the *Praktikos*, the fifty chapters constitute the *Gnostikos* and the six hundred chapters constitute the *Kephalaia Gnostika*.

> "…and now let us go on to the discussion of the ways of the ascetic and contemplative lives. We shall not, to be sure, tell everything that we have seen or heard, but as much as we have been taught by the Fathers to tell to others. We shall make a concise distribution of the material into one hundred chapters on the ascetic life and fifty plus another six hundred on contemplative matters."

These texts will be investigated more thoroughly in the next Chapter and are therefore introduced here only briefly to provide context. Evagrius famously wrote; "Christianity is the dogma of Christ our Savior. It is composed of *praktiké*, of contemplation of the physical work and of the contemplation of God."[306] In order for the monastic to achieve contemplative (re)union with God, it was necessary for him or her to purify the body and mind.

Accordingly, the *Praktikos* first instructs the monastic on the ascetic life, on seeking and acquiring virtue, on purifying the heart, body and soul. Such purification through ascetic practices creates an inner capacity for progressively higher and more refined levels of contemplation necessary to engage with the meditations in the *Kephalaia Gnostika*. However, the meditative gradient between the *Praktikos* and the *Kephalia Gnostika* is simply too steep without a "transitional work" and so the *Gnostika* functions as that transitional work. The program is summarised by Jeremy Driscoll: "These three works express in their relation to each other, the whole sweep of the journey that the monk travels as he makes progress, from its beginning in *praktiké* to its goal of knowledge."[307]

[306] Evagrius, *Praktikos*, J. E. Bamberger*, Evagrius Ponticus: The Praktikos & Chapters on Prayer* (Cistercian Publications, United States, 1981), 15.
[307] J. Driscoll, *Steps to Spiritual Perfection: Studies on Spiritual Progress in Evagrius Ponticus* (The Newman Press, United States, 2005), 13.

Tsongkhapa: "A Buddha in the Land of Snows"[308]

It is difficult to estimate just how many biographical works concerning the life and scholarship of Tsongkhapa Blo bzang grags pa (1357 - 1419 CE) ("Tsongkhapa") exist. According to the author of the *Crystal Mirror of Philosophical Systems*, 19th Century survey of the principal Indian and Tibetan Buddhist schools of philosophy, "there are so very many biographies of Jé Lama written by various holy beings."[309]
Lokesh Chandra's study of Tibetan literature from the same period suggests there were at least fourteen biographies of Tsongkhapa written by either his direct disciples or later monastics.[310] More recent scholarship by Elijah Ary also suggests that the Tibetan language biographies of Tsongkhapa "are many, and vary in length as well as content."[311]

Most of the Tibetan source biographical material concerning Tsongkhapa that have come down to us today belong to a certain traditional literary genre known as *"rnam thar"* which is itself a contraction of *rnam thar thar par*, literally meaning "complete liberation". As the name suggests, biographies within this genre were not intended to provide clinical and impartial details of the life of a particular Buddhist master, but to function as an inspiring guide for others on the spiritual path seeking liberation.[312]

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[308] The title is taken from T. Jinpa, *Tsongkhapa: A Buddha in the Land of Snows* (Shambhala Publications Inc., United States, 2019).
[309] Thuken Losang Chökyi Nyima (1737 - 1802), *The Crystal Mirror of Philosophical Systems* (Grub mtha' shel gyi me long). This text has been translated by Geshe Lhundub Sopa et all as Volume 25 of the *Library of Tibetan Classics* and published as *The Crystal Mirror of Philosophical Systems: A Tibetan Study of Asian Religious Thought*, 2009, Wisdom Publications, United States. The quote appears at p 216 of the Wisdom Publications text.
[310] L. Chandra (ed.), *Materials for a History of Tibetan Literature*, vol. 3 (International Academy of Indian Culture New Delhi, India, 1963), 503-514.
[311] E. Ary, *Authorized Lives: Biography and the Early Formation of Geluk Identity* (Wisdom Publications, United States, 2015), 11.
[312] J. Willis, 'On the Nature of rNam-thar: Early dGe-lugs-pa Siddha Biographies', in B.N. Aziz and M. Kapstein (eds.), *Soundings in Tibetan Civilization* (Vajra Publications, India, 2009), 304 – 319.

Tsongkhapa himself wrote a brief autobiographical account of his studies and realisations in the form of a prayer of several verses variously titled *Destiny Fulfilled* or *Realisation Narrative.*[313]

However, the earliest independent biography of Tsongkhapa was written by his immediate disciple, Khedrup Gelek Palsang (1358 - 1438 CE). Titled, *Haven of Faith*[314] "Khedrup's account has come to be the standard source for all other renditions of Tsongkhapa's life."[315] Commenting on the nature of this biography, Schaffer, Kapstein and Tuttle's in their text: *Sources of Tibetan Tradition* note that "Khedrupjé provides both a vivid portrait of his master and an idealized vision of how a Buddhist scholar should behave."[316] This comment is important because it underscores the fact that many traditional sources of information concerning the life and scholarship of Tsongkhapa take the form of prayers and exhortations expressed in poetic literary forms usually praising Tsongkhapa's vast qualities and achievements in way that it also becomes a teaching about Buddhist philosophy, hence; "Khedrup's life of Tsongkhapa could be considered a treatise on Buddhist ethics as well as a biography.[317] At different times, monk-scholars attempted to write surveys or histories of the development of Buddhism in India and Tibet that incorporate biographical material on key religious personalities, including Tsongkhapa.

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[313] Tsongkhapa, *rTogs brjod mdun legs ma*; *Destiny Fulfilled*, in R. Thurman*, Life and Teachings of Tsongkhapa* (Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, India, 1982)

[314] Khedrup Gelek Palsang (1385-1438). Ngo mtshar rmad du byung ba'i rnam thar dad pa'i 'jug ngogs (*Haven of Faith*), TKSB, vol. ka. Typeset edition, Xining: Qingai Minorities Press, 1982.

[315] E. Ary, *Authorized Lives*, 11. Almost all contemporary biographical commentaries concerning Tsongkhapa start from Khedrup's biography: See: R. Thurman, *Life and Teachings of Tsongkhapa;* S. van Schaik, *Tibet: A History* (Yale University Press, United States, 2011), at 107; T. Jinpa*, Tsongkhapa: A Buddha in the Land of Snows* at 16; K. Schaeffer, M. Kapstein and G. Tuttle (eds), *Sources of the Tibetan Tradition* (Columbia University Press, United States, 2013), 518.

[316] M. Kapstein and G. Tuttle (eds), *Sources of the Tibetan Tradition*, 518.

[317] M. Kapstein and G. Tuttle (eds), *Sources of the Tibetan Tradition,* 509-510.

Completed around 1478 CE by Gö Lotsawa (1392 - 1481 CE), the *Blue Annals*[318] "is a principal source for later Tibetan historians and its author is famed for his painstaking endeavour - unusual in Tibet - to establish an exact chronology."[319]

Another important 19th Century historical survey of Indian and Tibetan Buddhist philosophical schools already mentioned is the *Crystal Mirror of Philosophical Systems* completed in 1802 CE by Lozang Chökyi Nyima (1737 - 1802 CE) shortly before his death.[320]

While more recent Tibetan historical literature, such as Muge Samten's *A History of Traditional Fields of Learning*, has adopted a more objective focus, they necessarily continue to work with traditional hagiographical sources.[321] Likewise, recent and popular works on the life of Tsongkhapa are clearly hagiographical in orientation.[322] A number of Western scholars have reconstructed the shape of Tsongkhapa's life and literary scholarship including Rudolf Kaschewski's two-volume work in German on the life of Tsongkhapa[323] and Robert Thurman's *Life and Teachings of Tsongkhapa* published in English by the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives and which includes a partial translation of Khedrup's *Haven of Faith*.[324]

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[318] Gö Lotsawa (*gos lo tsā ba gzhon nu dpal*); *Blue Annals* (*deb ther sngon po)*, G. Roerich, *Blue Annals* (Motilal Banarsidass, India, 1949).
[319] H. Richardson, Review of The Blue Annals by G. N. Roerich (1955) 1(2) *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, 76.
[320] Thuken Lozang Chökyi Nyima, *Grub mtha' shel gyi me long*, in L. Sopa et al. (eds*), The Crystal Mirror of Philosophical Systems: A Tibetan Study of Asian Religious Thought*, Vol. 25, Library of Tibetan Classics (Wisdom Publications, United States, 2009).
[321] M. Samten, *A History of Traditional Fields of Learning: A Concise History of Dissemination of Traditional Fields of Learning in Tibet* (Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, India, 2005), 49-52.
[322] T. Lim and K. Y. Yee, *The Illustrated Life Story of Lama Tsongkhapa* (Kechara Media & Publications, Malaysia, 2015).
[323] R. Kaschewsky, *Das Leben des Lamaistischen Heiligen Tsongkhapa bLo-bzaṅ-grags-pa* (1357–1419), dargestellt und erläutert anhand seiner Vita: »Quellort allen Glückes« (Wiesbaden, 1971).
[324] R. Thurman, *Life and Teachings of Tsongkhapa.*

The most recent book-length treatments of the life and legacy of Tsongkhapa are Thupten Jinpa's *Tsongkhapa: A Buddha in the Land of Snows*[325] and the edited collection of essays in David B. Gray's: *Tsongkhapa: The Legacy of Tibet's Great Philosopher-Saint.*[326] More recent reference works on Buddhism and Buddhist philosophy generally also include biographical details concerning the life and scholarship of Tsongkhapa[327] as do recent scholarly histories of Tibet[328] and scholarly works on the literary sources of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition.[329]

Importantly, over the last 20 years, English resources devoted to the scholarship and philosophical *oeuvre* of Tsongkhapa have flourished. Many of these texts commence with a biography of Tsongkhapa including the three-volume complete translation of Tsongkhapa's *Lamrim Chenmo* by the Lamrim Chenmo Translation Committee[330] and the five-volume commentary on the *Lamrim Chenmo* by contemporary Tibetan Geshe Lhundub Sopa (1923 - 2014)[331]. Recent scholarship by the Institute of Tibetan Classics, particularly the texts included within its *Library of Tibetan Classics* series, also include biographical material concerning Tsongkhapa and his works.[332]

[325] T. Jinpa, Tsongkhapa: A Buddha in the Land of Snows.
[326] D. B. Gray (ed.), *Tsongkhapa: The Legacy of Tibet's Great Philosopher-Saint* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2024).
[327] For example, José Ignacio Cabezón, *Tsongkhapa*, in Lindsay Jones (ed), *Encyclopedia of Religion* (2005); R. Buswell and D. Lopez, 'Tsongkhapa Blo bzang grags pa', entry in *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism* (Princeton University Press, United States, 2014), 929.
[328] S. van Schaik, Tibet: *A History*.
[329] K. Schaeffer, M. Kapstein and G. Tuttle (eds), *Sources of the Tibetan Tradition* at 507.
[330] Tsongkhapa, *The Great Treatise on the Path to Enlightenment (Lamrim Chenmo)*, 3 Vols, 2000 - 2002, Joshua Cutler and Guy Newland (eds), The Lamrim Chenmo Translation Committee, United States.
[331] L. Sopa (with D. Pratt), *Steps on the Path to Enlightenment*, Five Vols. (Wisdom Publications, United States, 2004–2018).
[332] Dölpa, Gampopa, and Sakya Paṇḍita, *Stages of the Buddha's Teachings: Three Key Texts*, U. Roesler, K. Holmes and D. Jackson (trs.) (The Library of Tibetan Classics, Wisdom Publications, United States, 2015), 23ff.

For the purposes of introducing the life of Tsongkhapa, this section of the thesis draws upon all of this scholarship, balancing traditional hagiographical accounts of his life referred to above with relevant chapters from Sam van Schaik's scholarly text; *Tibet: A History* ("*History*"), Joona Repo's biography of Tsongkhapa in *The Treasury of Lives*[333] (*"Treasury"*) and Gareth Sparham's extensive presentation of the life and scholarship of Tsongkhapa in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.[334]

It is well beyond the scope of this thesis to analyse the philological authenticity and reception of these textual sources for the life of Tsongkhapa. Such analyses can be found in the introductory chapters to most of the texts referred to in this part of the thesis.
In addition, while scholars of Tibetan Buddhism and culture have also begun to investigate whether and to what extent personal, political and social forces influenced the construction of Tibetan biographical works, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore this scholarship.[335] While this thesis has chosen Tsongkhapa's *Lamrim Chenmo* as the text to be brought into critical dialogue with Evagrius' three principal texts on the monastic life (*Praktikos, Gnostikos* and the *Kephalaia Gnostika*), it is important to note that these texts represent a "snapshot" of their author's thinking at the time the texts were written.

Consistent with the discussion concerning "Methodology and Hermeneutics" in chapter two of the thesis, Comparative Theology is largely a synchronic endeavour, where *particular* texts of particular writers are brought into critical dialogue.

[333] *The Treasury of Lives* is a peer-reviewed, biographical encyclopedia of Tibet, Inner Asia and the Himalayas: < https://treasuryoflives.org/about> (accessed 4 January, 2018).
[334] Gareth Sparham, *Tsongkhapa*, in Edward N. Zalta (ed), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* (Fall 2017 Edition) <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2017/entries/tsongkhapa/> (accessed 4 January, 2018).
[335] For example: Donald Lopez (2006).

For example, Clooney's text *His Hiding Place is Darkness*: *A Hindu-Catholic Theopoetics of Divine Absence*,[336] brings the *Song of Songs* from the Hebrew Biblical tradition into dialogue with the Hindu poem *Tiruvaymoli*.

Comparative Theology is not generally regarded as a *diachronic* endeavour, tracing how the views of particular writers on particular themes evolved across time and across different texts as their thinking matured. Nevertheless, both Tsongkhapa and Evagrius matured as monastics and thinkers and their later texts reflect a corresponding maturity of thought on particular themes and issues.

For example, Hiroshi Nemoto has explored Tsongkhapa's views in what he calls the "Formative Period" of Tsongkhapa's thought [337] and Yōichi Fukuda recently speculated about the development of Tsongkhapa's thought across both sūtra and tantra.[338] Similarly, Joel Kalvesmaki has recently argued for a redating of the composition of Evagrius' *Kephalaia Gnostika* as reflecting an earlier development of Evagrius' thinking.[339] Consistent with its identity as an exercise in Comparative Theology, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to trace the evolution of both Tsongkhapa and Evagrius' views concerning particular themes across throughout their respective lives and texts. Nevertheless, where appropriate, this thesis will refer to different texts of both Evagrius and Tsongkhapa composed at different stages in their respective lives to provide context to the analysis.

[336] F. X. Clooney, *His Hiding Place Is Darkness: A Hindu-Catholic Theopoetics of Divine Absence* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013).
[337] H. Nemoto, 'Tsong kha pa's Madhyamaka Philosophy in the Formative Period', *Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies*, vol. 68, no. 3 (2020), pp. 158–164
[338] F. Yōichi, 'The Development of Madhyamaka, Lam Rim, and Esoteric Thought in the Case of Tsongkhapa' (2018) *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toyo* Bunko 81.
[339] J. Kalvesmaki, 'Evagrius the Cappadocian: Redating the Kephalaia Gnostika', *Journal of Early Christian Studies,* vol. 31, no. 4 (2023),

Biographical Approaches to the Life of Tsongkhapa

A close reading of the traditional biographical material reveals that the authors tended to follow a pattern in presenting the life and scholarship of Tsongkhapa consistent with the *rnam thar* genre of biography. This genre usually divides the life of a subject into an inner and outer category.[340] Information relating to the outer category concern the usual, every-day features of any person's life; their birth, family background, details of ordination, education history, teaching career and death. Information relating to the inner category traces the contours of the subject's inner, spiritual life. Such information usually includes details of the subject's ascetic practices (such as prostrations), esoteric tantric initiations given received as well as the number and content of teachings received and given. Tsongkhapa's biographies include information from both outer and inner categories.

The outer biographical information was intended to benefit the general reader interested in the life and works of the subject, the inner information functioned as a form of exhortation to the general spiritual practitioner to model herself on the subject, while the secret information was intended to benefit the more advanced spiritual practitioners and disciples, serving as signposts for the path of spiritual progression[341] The biographies of Tsongkhapa contain all three categories of information and are similar to the biographical information concerning Evagrius of Ponticus. For readers of the life of Evagrius and Tsongkhapa, biographical information was intended to inform, inspire and encourage spiritual disciples.

[340] J. Gyatso, *Apparitions of the Self: The Secret Autobiographies of a Tibetan Visionary: A Translation and Study of Jigme Lingpa's Dancing Moon in the Water and Dakki's Grand Secret Talk* (Princeton University Press, United States, 1998), 6.
[341] J. Willis, *Enlightened Beings: Life Stories from the Ganden Oral Tradition* (Wisdom Publications, United States, 1995), 5-6.

However, the literature also includes a third category relating to very personal spiritual matters such as visions experienced during meditation and realisations gained after study and intense retreat. Such deeply personal information usually took the form of "secret biographies" not generally intended for public circulation, but for the edification of close disciples of the subject. In her study of Tibetan biographies, Jan Willis suggests that most biographies contained all three categories of information, intended for the benefit of different classes of readers; outer, inner and secret categories of information.

In 1357 CE, while Europe was being decimated by the Black Death and England and France were waging the Hundred Years War, in far off Tibet, a boy was born to poor, probably semi-nomadic parents in the Tsong kha area of the Amdo region in Tibet.[342] Consistent with the life of the great Indian Buddhist philosopher Nāgārjuna, the birth of Tsongkhapa was said to have been prophesised by the Buddha. Thurman's *Life* recounts that during the time of Shakyamuni Buddha, a young boy made an offering of a string of crystal prayer beads to the Buddha who then: "...called his disciple Ananda to him and prophesied that the boy would be born in Tibet and be instrumental in the flourishing of the Doctrine in Tibet. The Buddha gave the young boy the future name of ... Losang Drakpa."[343]

Traditional biographical material moves forward from this prophecy to recount the many miraculous signs and dreams experienced by Tsongkhapa's parents before he was born, all of which heralded the birth of an extraordinary being.

[342] "Tsong kha" can be translated as: "Field of Onions". Tsongkhapa can therefore be translated as the "man from the field of onions". Amdo (near Xining in modern Qinghai) is one of three Tibetan regions, the others being Ütsang and Kham.
[343] R. Thurman, *Life and Teachings of Tsongkhapa,* 3.

Tsongkhapa's birth was said to coincide with the appearance of an auspicious star in the sky.[344] At three years of age, he was given lay vows (Skt. *upāsaka*, Tib. *dge bsnyen*), novice monastic vows (Skt. *śrāmanera*, Tib. *dge tshul*) at age seven and full monastic vows (Skt. *bhikṣu, Tib. dge slong*) at age 24. Unlike Evagrius then, from the very earliest of ages through to maturity, Tsongkhapa was formed within a strict Buddhist monastic environment with its associated framework of vows (Skt. *Prātimokṣa*) and pedagogical systems.[345]

In the *Crystal Mirror of Philosophical Systems,* Thuken Losang Chökyi Nyima describes this formation by dividing biographical information concerning Tsongkhapa into two broad categories; first "how he himself attained good qualities" and second, "how, because of that, he served the teaching."[346] This division serves as a useful framework for introducing Tsongkhapa and his scholastic works because it seeks to establish a causal nexus between his prodigious learning, religious and ascetical practices on the one hand, and the penetrating philosophical insights that characterise his scholastic works on the other.[347]

[344] Miraculous signs, dreams, visitations and cosmic events traditionally accompany the birth stories of great saints and holy beings of all religious traditions. One need only compare the experiences of Tsongkhapa's mother with the experiences of Mary of Nazareth at the time of the birth of Jesus Christ. The Synoptic Gospels report miraculous visitations, offerings by wise sages and the appearance of a bright star.

[345] Buddhist monastic codes of conduct, vows and rules of training originally formed the *Vinayapiṭaka*, itself one of the three "baskets" (*Tripiṭaka*) of Buddhist scriptures. The other "baskets" are the *Sūtrapiṭaka* and the *Abhidharmapiṭaka*. Over subsequent centuries, different versions of the *Vinaya* developed. By the time of Tsongkhapa, the Tibetans adhered to the *Vinayasūtra* (Tib. *'Dul ba'i mdo*), composed by the Indian Buddhist monk Guṇaprabha (c 5 - 7 Century CE) which is itself a commentary on the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya*. See: R. Buswell and D. Lopez, *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, 976-977.

[346] L. Sopa et al. (eds*), The Crystal Mirror of Philosophical Systems: A Tibetan Study of Asian Religious Thought*, Vol. 25, Library of Tibetan Classics (Wisdom Publications, United States, 2009), 116.

[347] Tsongkhapa himself explicitly makes this nexus in several of his philosophical works. For example, in his *Lines of Experience* (Tib. *lam rim nyams bsdu don*), Tsongkhapa concludes most verses with the exhortation: "I, the yogi, have practiced just that. If you would also seek Liberation, please cultivate yourself in the same way." - see: Robert Thurman, *Life and Teachings of Tsongkhapa,* 67.

In the same manner, I suggest that the profundity of Evagrius' later scholarship reflects the way in which his deep learning enabled him to integrate and resolve his earlier struggles, his emotional and physical breakdown and subsequent move into the Egyptian desert.

Until he was about sixteen years of age (c 1373 CE), Tsongkhapa studied under Kadam master Choje Dondrup Rinchen (*chos rje don drub rin chen*) (c 1309 - c 1385 CE) who had given Tsongkhapa his novice monastic vows.[348] During this time, the *Blue Annals* reveal that Tsongkhapa "was introduced into the gates of the Pratimokṣa and Tantra."[349] It was during these formative years, that Tsongkhapa received many tantric initiations and teachings concerning Buddhist philosophy and monastic behaviour.

According to a brief biography of written by his disciple Jamyang Chöjé Tashi Palden (1379 - 1449 CE), Tsongkhapa began to experience visions of Atiśa and of various tantric deities.[350] For both Tsongkhapa and Evagrius, the possibility of discarnate entities instructing one's spiritual practice was accepted and all biographers credit a direct encounter with the bodhisattva Manjusri as the event that enabled Tsongkhapa to breakthrough to his most refined understanding of Madhyamaka philosophy.

When he turned sixteen, Tsongkhapa travelled to Ütsang (Central Tibet), at that time the leading area for the study of Buddhist philosophy.

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[348] "Kadam" or "Kadampa" is the name of an influential Tibetan Buddhist order influenced by the teachings of Indian monk Dīpaṅkaraśrijñāna, known in Tibet as Atīśa (c 982 - c 1054 CE) a former "Dean" of Nālānda Monastery. Atīśa had arrived in Tibet in 1042 CE and set about teaching Buddhist philosophy in a way that integrated Abhidharma, Mahāyāna and Tantric Buddhism. His seminal work: *Bodhipathapradīpa* ("Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment") profoundly influenced Tsongkhapa - see D. Mitchell*, Buddhism: Introducing the Buddhist Experience* (Oxford University Press, United Kingdom, 2002), 153-155.

[349] G. Roerich, *The Blue Annals,* 1073.

[350] Jamyang Chöjé Tashi Palden, *Supplication* in: Elijah Ary (2015) at 36; Joona Repo, *Tsongkhapa Lobzang Drakpa*, Entry in *The Treasury of Lives*: < https://treasuryoflives.org/about> (accessed 4 January 2018).

By this time, c 1373 CE, Tsongkhapa, was the beneficiary of what has become known as the "later diffusion" of Buddhism in Tibet. This was a period from around the late tenth century to the time of the monk-scholar Butön (*Bu ston rin chen grub*) (1290 - 1364 CE) who is credited as a principal editor of the Tibetan *Kangyur*, the collection of sutras said to have been spoken by the Buddha.[351]It was during this later spread, the *phyi dar*, that:

> "numerous Buddhist masters - Indian and Tibetans - brought Indian traditions of Buddhist exegesis, philosophy and ritual to Tibet and thereby revived what was left of Tibetan Buddhism after the collapse of the old empire. This period can be regarded as formative for Tibetan Buddhism...since the origins of the monastic traditions with all their social and doctrinal diversities are connected to these early movements in some way or other."[352]

Thus, Tsongkhapa's education in Buddhist philosophy drew upon the extensive literature made available by the compilation of the exoteric *Kangyur* as well as the more esoteric tantric initiations and teachings. Both the *Blue Annals* and the *Crystal Mirror* provide very detailed information on both the teachers with whom Tsongkhapa studied and the texts that formed the basis of that study.[353]

[351] Scholars generally discuss the diffusion of Buddhism into Tibet in two "waves" or "spreads"; an early wave or spread, referred to as *snga dar* from the seventh to the ninth centuries of the Common Era, and a later spread from the late tenth century to the present and referred to as the *phyi dar*; see: K. Kollmar-Paulenz, 'The Buddhist Way Into Tibet', in A. Heirmann and S. Bumbacher (eds), *The Spread of Buddhism* (Brill Publishers, Boston, United States, 2007), 305; U. Roesler, '"As it is said in a Sutra": Freedom and Variation in Quotations from the Buddhist Scriptures in Early Bka' gdams pa Literature' (2014) *23 Journal of Indian Philosophy* 493.
[352] S. Brefeld, 'The Later Spread of Buddhism in Tibet', in A. Heirmann and S. Bumbacher (eds), *The Spread of Buddhism* (Brill Publishers, Boston, United States, 2007), 341.341.
[353] Gö Lotsawa in George Roerich, *The Blue Annals,* 1074-1075.

While his intellectual power was recognised, Tsongkhapa was restless: "by temperament, he was unwilling to be institutionalised, and so never settled at any of the monastic universities…he moved on again and again."[354] It was during his travels, that Tsongkhapa met and studied with his most influential teacher, Rendawa Zhonnu Lodro (*red mda ba gzhon nu blo gros*) ("Rendawa" 1349 – 1412 CE). Rendawa was a forceful advocate of the Prāsaṅgika school of interpretation of Madhyamaka and he encouraged Tsongkhapa's understanding and devotion to the Prāsaṅgika view of the "Middle Way" philosophy, a view that forms the basis of his monumental treatise on Buddhist philosophy, the *Lamrim Chenmo*. It was under the spiritual and intellectual guidance of Rendawa that Tsongkhapa was able to find the stability necessary for him to pass his exams in the various fields of Buddhist philosophical study.[355]

Rendawa exercises a critical role in both the consolidation and development of *Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka* in Tibet during the beginning of the "second dissemination" of Indian Buddhist texts into Tibetan culture (*phyi dar*) and in the intellectual development of his pupil Tsongkhapa.

Various frameworks for understanding the transmission and consolidation of Indian Buddhist texts and the development of different interpretative tenet systems into Tibet have been formulated. Two of these are discussed by Roloff[356] in her translation of a biography of Rendawa, composed by his own disciple, *mNga' ris pa Sangs rgyas rtse mo*.

[354] S. van Schaik, *Tibet: A History*, 102.
[355] R. Thurman, *Life and Teachings of Tsongkhapa,* 11.
[356] C. Roloff, '*Red mda' ba: Buddhist Yogi-Scholar of the Fourteenth Century – The Forgotten Reviver of Madhyamaka Philosophy in Tibet'* (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2009), 17-18.

These two frameworks restate the transmission of Indian Buddhist texts into Tibet through an early transmission (*snga dar*) and a later transmission (*phyi dar*) beginning in the 11th Century, before further dividing the later transmission into at least three further periods; (i) a period of reception (late 10th to 14th Centuries), (ii) a classical period (14th to 16th Centuries) representing the peak consolidation and development of Madhyamaka thought, and (iii) a scholastic period (16th Century onwards) representing the flourishing of commentarial and scholastic exegesis of texts consolidated and developed during the classical period.[357]

Roloff makes the point that while there may be some debate about whether and to what extent it was Tsongkhapa who is, or was, or should be credited with the revival, development and defence of *Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka* during the classical period, it was Rendawa who should be credited as "the actual reviver of *Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka* at the very beginning of the classical period before Tsongkhapa."[358]While the scope of some of Roloff's claims have been challenged[359] there can be little doubt as to the importance of Rendawa in transmitting to Tsongkhapa, seminal Madhyamaka texts, including the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, the *Prasannapadā*, the *Catuḥśataka* and, crucially, the *Madhyamakāvatāra*.[360]

[357] Roloff, *Red mda' ba: Buddhist Yogi-Scholar of the Fourteenth Century*, 17.
[358] Roloff, *Red mda' ba: Buddhist Yogi-Scholar of the Fourteenth Century*, 18.
[359] C.K. Wedemeyer, Review of Red mda' ba: Buddhist Yogi-Scholar of the Fourteenth Century – The Forgotten Reviver of Madhyamaka Philosophy in Tibet, by Carola Roloff, *Religious Studies Review*, 36.2 (2010).
[360] Roloff, *Red mda' ba: Buddhist Yogi-Scholar of the Fourteenth Century*, 22.

Although most of his biographies suggest Tsongkhapa effortlessly mastered these text and his studies in an atmosphere of almost superhuman composure, the *Blue Annals* reveal that: "while he was staying among fellow-students of philosophy, though endowed with perfect understanding, he avoided such practices as abusing others, shouting, running, jumping and dancing, and felt very downcast."[361] It is a rare admission of Tsongkhapa's emotional vulnerability; he also suffered chronic backpain for most of his life and the occasional bout of insomnia.[362] Both Evagrius and Tsongkhapa were to experience physical and emotional pain and discomfort for most of their lives, no doubt exacerbated by the extreme ascetic practices both Evagrius[363] and Tsongkhapa engaged in.[364]

Tsongkhapa completed his formal studies by the early 1390s CE. He was in his early thirties and by that time had established himself as a brilliant scholar and debater[365]. However, for the next decade, he alternated periods of teaching, study and retreat. It was in 1392, when Tsongkhapa was 35 years of age that he and eight close disciples entered a four-year retreat in caves in Olkha Cholung, located in the lower reaches of the Yarlung Valley.

[361] Gö Lotsawa in George Roerich, *The Blue Annals*, 1075.
[362] R. Thurman: *Life and Teachings of Tsongkhapa,* 9, 10, 28 and 31.
[363] Palladius records Evagrius as stating: "I did not touch lettuce or any vegetable greens, or fruit, or grapes, nor did I even take a bath, since the time I came into the desert." Palladius, *in* R. Meyer (ed) (1964), 114. At least one contemporary health care ethicist suggests that: "Today, Evagrius' spiritual practices might be described as the habits of a reclusive, masochistic anorexic with obsessive-compulsive tendencies and religious delusions." – D. Stahl, 'On Poor Religious Coping: Spiritually Assessing Christianity's Great Theologians' (2013) 19(3) *The Journal of Christian Bioethics* 299 – 303.
[364] Khedrup's biography records that during a four-year retreat with eight close disciples, Tsongkhapa performed 3.5 *million* full length prostrations and 1.8 *million* mandala offerings; "Indeed, his prostrating form wore and impression in the floor of the temple; and at the conclusion of the mandala offerings, his forearm was raw and bleeding." -R. Thurman, *Life and Teachings of Tsongkhapa,* 17.
[365] Concerning the debates forming the basis of these examinations, Khedrup notes of Tsong kha: "Tempers are sometimes short during a debate, but he always remained calm and spoke with amazing mastery." R. Thurman, *Life and Teachings of Tsongkhapa,* 11.

It was during this retreat that Tsongkhapa was said to have completed an extraordinary number of ascetic practices including 3.5 million full-length prostrations and 3.8 million mandala offerings stripping the flesh from his forearm in the process.[366] Going into this retreat, Tsongkhapa had demonstrated his philosophical and technical mastery of the great Buddhist texts and commentaries. However, "there was one area where Tsongkhapa never felt content with his progress: his understanding of the view of emptiness, with its implications for Buddhist thought, practice, and the entire path to full enlightenment."[367]

Tsongkhapa's hesitation concerned reconciling the apparent contradiction between the implications of the *Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka* tenet system in which there can be no essence or findable "thing" that constitutes persons and phenomena on the one hand, with the obvious experience that persons and phenomena function perfectly well. Prior to this retreat Tsongkhapa had been "receiving" instructions and answers to his questions from Mañjuśrī through the medium of the mystic Lama Umapa (*Tsöndru Sengé*).[368]

However, such hesitation or uncertainty was dispelled when, one evening during the retreat, Tsongkhapa dreamt that he was visited by Nāgārjuna accompanied by a retinue composed of Āryadeva, Buddhapālita, Bhāviveka and Candrakīrti. In this dream, Buddhapālita touched a text to the crown of Tsongkhapa's head. Tsongkhapa took this to mean that he should seek answers to his questions about the correct view by close study of Buddhapālita's own commentary[369] (the *Buddhapālita-Mūlamadhyamakavṛtti*) on Nāgārjuna's "Root Verses on the Middle Way" (*Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*).

[366] R. Thurman, *Life and Teachings of Tsongkhapa,* 17.
[367] T. Jinpa, *Tsongkhapa: A Buddha in the Land of Snows*, 157.
[368] T. Jinpa, *Tsongkhapa: A Buddha in the Land of Snows*, 158.
[369] Buddhapālita*, Buddhapālita's Commentary on Nāgārjuna's Middle Way: Buddhapālita-Mūlamadhyamakavṛtti*, trans. Ian James Coghlan (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2021).

After closely studying and meditating on the chapter of the text concerning *Analysis of Self and Phenomena*, "all of Tsongkhapa's long-standing doubts-especially regarding how to find the extremely fine line demarcating what is negated in emptiness and what is left untouched-vanished without a trace."[370] Tsongkhapa had not just intellectually understood, but directly *realised* the harmony of emptiness and dependent origination, a realisation that generated in him a profound joy and gratitude for the Buddha's teaching on dependent origination. Tsongkhapa would later compose a hymn; *In Praise of Dependent Origination* (*tendrel toepa*) as an expression of this joy and gratitude.[371]

Following this retreat, the biographical information relates that Tsongkhapa now commenced work on his "four great deeds"; (i) restoration of a statue of Maitreya Buddha (the future Buddha to come), (ii) giving extensive teachings and composing extensive works on aspects of Buddhist philosophy, (iii) institution of the annual Great Prayer Festival (*smon lam chen mo*) in Lhasa, the capital of Tibet at the time of the Tibetan New Year, and (iv) the construction of several monasteries and temples.[372]

For the purposes of this thesis, the most significant event occurred in 1402 when Tsongkhapa, then aged 46, completed his monumental treatise on Buddhist philosophy, the *Lamrim Chenmo*; "The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment."[373]

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[370] T. Jinpa, *Tsongkhapa: A Buddha in the Land of Snows*, 166.
[371] T. Jinpa, *Tsongkhapa: A Buddha in the Land of Snows*, 168.
[372] In the Tibetan tradition, the lives of great Buddhist masters are often oriented toward them achieving certain acts or fulfilling certain promises that all enlightened beings are said to engage in out of compassion for sentient beings. For example, the life of the Buddha is often presented in terms of his accomplishing 12 great acts, including descending from an enlightened abode, renouncing the life of a householder, turning the wheel of Dharma and teaching the path to enlightenment – see, R. Gethin*, The Foundations of Buddhism* (Oxford University Press, United Kingdom, 1998), 17.
[373] Tsongkhapa, *The Great Treatise on the Path to Enlightenment (Lamrim Chenmo)*, 3 Vols, Joshua Cutler and Guy Newland (eds) (2000 – 2002).

The *Lamrim Chenmo* has been described as: "awesome in its erudition and in the clarity of its argumentation; it is a highpoint of Tibetan literature representing the assimilation of Indian scholastic tradition."[374] Tsongkhapa's work generally sits within the *bstan rim* (stages of the doctrine) literary genre.[375] Explicitly modelled on the great Indian scholar Dīpaṅkaraśrijñāna's (Atīśa c 982 - c 1054 CE) seminal work: *Bodhipathapradīpa* ("Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment") the *Lamrim Chenmo* expressly presents the entire Buddhist path to enlightenment in a graduated format. In doing so it: "cites, often at very considerable length, a large number of sources drawn from Buddhist scriptural (*sūtra*) and, above all, exegetical (*śāstra*) literature."[376] Accordingly, the *Lamrim Chenmo* represents: "an independent *summa* and synthesis of Buddhist ethical, religious and philosophical thought and practice"[377] and will therefore be the principal Tibetan Buddhist text that will be brought into dialogue with Evagrius' *Praktikos, Gnostikos* and *Kephalaia Gnostika*.

From 1402 CE onwards, Tsongkhapa travelled extensively around the Tibetan region teaching, composing a large number of texts, receiving and giving tantric initiations and engaging in retreat. By the time he had founded the annual *Prayer Festival* in 1409 CE, Tsongkhapa was fifty-three and the relentless travelling and ascetic practice had taken its toll on his health. His concerned disciples began constructing a monastery (*Ganden*) which would serve as a stable home for him and he even accepted an invitation from his disciples to bathe in restorative hot springs near Lhasa, although such was Tsongkhapa fame that he consented to give many teachings rather than bathe in the hot springs.[378]

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[374] M. Tatz, Review of "Calming the Mind and Discerning the Real" by Alex Wayman (1980) 39(3*) The Journal of Asian Studies,* 616.
[375] J. I. Cabezón and R. R. Jackson (eds), *Tibetan Literature: Studies in Genre* (Snow Lion Publications, United States, 1996), 229.
[376] LRCM 1:22
[377] LRCM 1:23
[378] S. van Schaik, *Tibet: A History,* 104.

As he neared the end of his life, Tsongkhapa gave several signs that suggested he was aware of his impending death. During a lengthy discourse on a certain tantric text, he stopped before the text was finished (a traditional indication that the teacher was departing their present life and would finish teaching in the next) and while visiting the great temple in Lhasa, he prostrated: "which was unusual because it is only done in such circumstances when return to that place will be impossible for a long time; he said that he might be unable to come again to the Cathedral."[379]

In 1419, at the age of sixty-two, Tsongkhapa passed away while seated in meditation, accompanied (according to traditional biographical sources) by earthquakes, the appearance of rainbows in clear skies and showers of flower petals manifesting from nowhere.[380] Tsongkhapa's body was placed in an elaborate *stupa* (tomb) constructed on the grounds of Ganden Monastery. There it remained for five hundred years until the invasion and destruction of Tibet by the Chinese People's Liberation Army in 1959. Chinese soldiers destroyed the monastery and tomb, forcing a monk to throw the mummified body of Tsongkhapa onto a fire that was burning thousands of scriptural texts and monastic practice manuals.[381]

Tsongkhapa's influence on the development of Tibetan Buddhism has been immense; his published writings alone fill some eighteen volumes. Most importantly, Tsongkhapa's followers consolidated themselves into a sect traditionally known as the *Gadenpas* ("those of Dga' ldan") after the monastery that was created for him.

[379] R. Thurman, *Life and Teachings of Tsongkhapa,* 30.
[380] R. Thurman, *Life and Teachings of Tsongkhapa,* 32.
[381] T. Laird, *The Story of Tibet: Conversations with the Dalai Lama* (Grove Press, United States, 2006), 126.

Over time, the name was sometimes contracted to *Dga' lugs pa* but, according to the *Crystal Mirror*, mispronounced as *Dge lugs pa* (*Gelukpa*).[382] Thus, the *Geluk* "school" forms one of four major schools of Tibetan Buddhism but historically the most influential because of the establishment of the Dalai Lama, who is a Geluk monastic.[383]

Conclusion

Both Evagrius and Tsongkhapa alloyed their scholastic brilliance to deep spiritual practice and in so doing, proposed a vision of human perfection in their respective Christian and Buddhist traditions. Finding methods to transfigure emotional and physical pain, they developed profound insights for others to follow as they progress along their respective Christian and Buddhist paths. Both Evagrius and Tsongkhapa attempted to communicate these insights to others through the medium of their presence, their teaching and their writing. While Evagrius and Tsongkhapa can no longer be physically present to us, their teachings remain, preserved in their texts and carefully conserved by subsequent generations of monastics and practitioners who detect in them profound spiritual advice for progression along their spiritual paths to perfection. It is to Evagrius Ponticus and his texts that chapter four of this thesis now turns.

[382] Thubten Lozang Chökyi Nyima, *The Crystal Mirror of Philosophical Systems*, 458 fn.899.
[383] R. Buswell and D. Lopez, *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism* (Princeton University Press, United States, 2014), 929.

CHAPTER FOUR – *Evagrius & his Spiritual Tradition*

"Each stanza is concise to the extreme, consisting of paradoxical turns of thought which disappear when one tries to capture it."[384]
James B. Apple

Introduction

Chapter three traced the contours of the life of Evagrius of Ponticus and introduced the trilogy of his texts that will be analysed by this thesis; the *Praktikos* (Πρακτικός), the *Gnostikos* (Γνωστικός) and the *Kephalaia Gnostika (*Κεφάλαια Γνωστικά). It also introduced the life of Tibetan Buddhist monk-scholar Tsongkhapa and his seminal text; the *Lamrim Chenmo*. This Chapter four is thematic and textual in content, providing an overview of the Evagrian Christian metaphysical system as he developed and explained it principally throughout these three texts. Chapter five will then provide an overview of Tsongkhapa's Tibetan Buddhist metaphysical system as he developed and explained it in the *Lamrim Chenmo*.

Evagrius' creates an elegant but very complex Christian metaphysical, epistemological and ethical system, drawing not only upon earlier Christian theologians, principally Origen but also upon concepts from non-Christian philosophers, particularly Plotinus[385] and Plato[386]. Adding to this complexity is the terse, cryptic compositional style Evagrius adopted in writing his texts.

[384] J. Apple, 'Can Buddhist Thought be Construed as a Philosophia or a Way of Life? Relating Pierre Hadot to Buddhist Discourses on Self-Cultivation' (2010) *3 Journal of Oriental Philosophy*, 197-198.
[385] Evagrius' conception of creation, fall and redemption reflects those of Plotinus in *The Enneads*.
[386] Evagrius' conception of the human soul, its constituent parts and qualities reflects those of Plato in the *Timeaus, The Republic* and *Phaedrus*.

Like Plotinus, Evagrius often appears to assume that the reader of his texts is *already* aware of the basic framework of his Christian metaphysical system and is able to draw upon this prior knowledge in reading and interpreting Evagrius' texts. Accordingly, Chapter four intends to provide this necessary basic framework of Evagrius' Christian metaphysical system. This framework is intended as a form of Evagrian "primer" enabling a deeper conceptual analysis in later chapters of specific metaphysical, epistemological and ethical aspects of the Evagrian Christian system brought into dialogue with similar aspects of the Tibetan Buddhist system of Tsongkhapa.

It proceeds by exploring the way Evagrius approaches four issues and is thus composed of four sections[387]. First, an understanding of humanity's existential situation or *cosmology*. What is creation? What is the spiritual "problem" experienced by people? Second, *theological anthropology*. What is a person? What does it mean to be a person in relation to others and to the ultimate? Third, the *process of spiritual progression*. How does a person progress along the paths to spiritual perfection? What practices, prayers and learning must a person engage in to make spiritual progress toward the goal? Finally, *the telos or goal of spiritual practice* itself. What is the goal of spiritual practice? What spiritual state is attained at the end of the spiritual journey? If the final spiritual state is characterised as an effect, then how do the previous three issues function as its causes?

[387] This is a modification of the approach adopted by J. Driscoll, *Steps to Spiritual Perfection: Studies on Spiritual Progress in Evagrius Ponticus* (The Newman Press, United States, 2005), 6.

At the conclusion of the discussion in each of these four sections, the chapter will identify and pose several difficult questions relating to Evagrius' metaphysical, epistemological and ethical framework. The issues raised by these questions will be addressed in chapter five by analysing similar issues and questions arising from Tsongkhapa's *Lamrim Chenmo*. As chapter four explores these issues, it will reveal the way Evagrius develops a close relationship between one's identity (theological anthropology) and the process of contemplation in which *"praxis* and *theōria* concern the rise of a self that is both authentically true and radically new: the seer-*gnōstikos*".[388] For Evagrius, this authentically true and radically new identity commences with the determined but gradual displacement of the monk's former feelings, emotions and behaviours that collectively constituted and supported the monk's former identity as a "house holder". Ascetic practices, but especially vows of celibacy and poverty powerfully displaced the sexuality and acquisitiveness associated with the monk's former identity in the world as actual or potential husband, father, builder of a career and provider of goods.[389]

The Colourful Life of Evagrius

By the time Evagrius departed Jerusalem, initially for Nitria and then Kellia, he was already the beneficiary of a comprehensive classical and theological education. Sozomen describes Evagrius as: "a very learned man, powerful in thought and in word."[390]

[388] J. Konstantinovsky, 'Evagrius Ponticus and Maximus the Confessor: The Building of the Self in Praxis and Contemplation', in J. Kalvesmaki and R. Darling Young (eds), *Evagrius and His Legacy* (University of Notre Dame Press, United States, 2016), 129.
[389] D. Linge, 'Leading the Life of Angels: Ascetic Practice and Reflection in the Writings of Evagrius of Pontus' (2000) 68(3) *Journal of the American Academy of* Religion 537
[390] Sozomen, *in* Henry G Bohn (1855) at 294.

Casiday notes that in reading Evagrius' later monastic writings; "it is possible to find evidence that he benefited from training in philosophy and rhetoric, and had a gentlemanly appreciation of mathematics, medicine and astronomy."[391] During his time in Kellia, Evagrius added spiritual insight to theological learning, his disciple and biographer Palladius noting; "within fifteen years he had so purified his mind that the was deemed worthy of the gift of knowledge and wisdom and the discernment of spirits."[392]

Evagrius' academic and theological education must have commenced at an early age, first under the influence of his father and then as a youth in Neocasearea, influenced by Basil of Caesarea, Gregory Nazianzen and eventually, Gregory of Nyssa; "there is certainly biographical and historical evidence that they and their wider circle of friends gave Evagrius his start as a churchman and a thinker."[393] While the warm and supporting personal relationship between Evagrius, his family and Basil and Gregory is attested to in extant correspondence, whether and to what extent Evagrius' theological views were defined by his encounter with Basil and Gregory remains a subject of debate.[394]

The dimensions of Evagrius' relationship with Basil and Gregory is significant because it informs the extent to which Evagrius and his texts were influenced by the philosophy of Origen (c 185 – c 251 CE); "the reassessment of Origen and Evagrius's thought, and Origen's direct and indirect influence on Evagrius, is one of the most remarkable issues in Greek patristic study."[395]

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[391] A. M. Casiday, *Evagrius Ponticus* (The Early Church Fathers) (Routledge, United Kingdom, 2006), 6.
[392] Palladius, *The Lausiac History*, R. Meyer (ed.), 113.
[393] B. E. Daley, 'Evagrius and Cappadocian Orthodoxy', in K. Kalvesmaki and R. Darling Young (eds), *Evagrius and His Legacy* (University of Notre Dame Press, United States, 2016), 15.
[394] J. Konstantinovsky, *Evagrius Ponticus, The Making of a Gnostic,* 12-14.
[395] I. Ramelli, *Evagrius's Kephalaia Gnostika: A New Translation of the Unreformed Text from the Syriac* (SBL Press, United States, 2015), xii.

At this time, around the late 350s CE, Gregory was collaborating with Basil in compiling an anthology of the works of Origen (c 185 – c 251 CE) and known as the *Philocalia*.[396] It is not known whether Evagrius studied this text, however it is clear that he was deeply influenced by Origen's writings. Melania, who cared for Evagrius while he was in Jerusalem, may also have influenced Evagrius in reading Origen. Palladius notes that Melania; "was most erudite and fond of literature, and she turned night into day going through every writing of the ancient commentators – three million lines of Origen…and she did not read them once only and in an offhand way, but she worked on them, dredging through each work seven or eight times."[397]

Evagrius, the "Origenist Controversies" and his *Kephalaia Gnostika*

Within a few short years following Evagrius' death in 399 CE, his metaphysical writings, particularly expressed in the *Kephalaia Gnostika* became inextricably linked to what has come to be known as the "First and Second Origenist Controversies" that sparked fierce dissention in the early Church between the early fifth and into the sixth Centuries of the Common Era.[398] These controversies culminated in the Second Council of Constantinople in 553 CE ("the Council of 553 CE") in which fifteen *anathemata* were issued condemning aspects of Origen's metaphysics.[399]

[396] This publication is not to be confused with the anthology of monastic writings created in the late 18th Century CE by monks from Mt. Athos.
[397] Palladius, *The Lausiac History*, R. Meyer (ed.), 136 – 137.
[398] C. Stewart, "Evagrius Beyond Byzantium: The Latin and Syriac Receptions," in J. Kalvesmaki and R. Darling Young (eds), *Evagrius and His Legacy* (United States: University of Notre Dame Press, 2016), 218-219.
[399] E. A. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014).

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to substantially explore the extent to which Evagrius' theological fabric was influenced by Origen (particularly *Peri Archon*[400] and *Contra Celsum*.[401]) and to untangle the "orthodoxy – heterodoxy" debate since the Council of 553 CE. These issues, all of them contested (the grounds of contest are set out below), have been dealt with at length by other scholars.[402]

However, any discussion of Evagrius' theological framework and particularly analysis of his *Kephalaia Gnostika* must recognise both its theological antecedents in the thought of Origen and the later condemnation of Origen's work at the Council of 553 CE. This is so for at least two reasons. The first reason is that perhaps only 25% of the *Kephalaia Gnostika* has survived in the original Greek in which Evagrius must have composed the text.[403] As at 2025, there exists at least three extant recensions of *Kephalaia Gnostika*; the "S_1" and "S_2" Syriac recensions, and an Arabic recension recently published by Stephen J. Davis.[404] These different recensions exist because of attempts by different redactors to eliminate or modify those parts of the *Kephalaia Gnostika* considered to reflect the metaphysical speculation of the condemned Origen.[405] The second reason is that differences in the S_1 and S_2 recensions carry implications for practitioners seeking to rely on Evagrian metaphysics as a foundation for building a Buddhist-Christian identity.

[400] Origen, *Peri Archon (On First Principles*), 2013 ed., Christian Classics, Ave Maria Press, United States.
[401] Origen, *Contra Celsum (Against Celsus*), H. Chadwick (trans.) (Cambridge University Press, United States, 1953).
[402] Recent scholarship into the Evagrian – Origen relationship includes: J. Konstantinovsky, *Evagrius Ponticus, The Making of a Gnostic* (2009); K A. Casiday, *Reconstructing the Theology of Evagrius Ponticus* (2013).); I. Ramelli*, Evagrius's Kephalaia Gnostika: A New Translation* (2015); and the contributions in K. Kalvesmaki and R. Darling Young (eds*), Evagrius and His Legacy* (University of Notre Dame Press, United States, 2016.
[403] J. Muyldermans, Evagriana: Extrait de la revue Le Muséon, vol. 44, *augmenté de nouveaux fragments grecs inédits*, (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1931).
[404] S. J. Davis, *The Gnostic Chapters: A Critical Edition and Translation of Evagrius Ponticus' Kephalaia Gnostika in Arabic*, (Leiden: Brill, 2023). Davis also wryly observes that "the transmission of the *Kephalaia Gnostika* is a complicated one" (p 6).
[405] C. Stewart*, "Evagrius Beyond Byzantium: The Latin and Syriac Receptions",* 217-218.

The Council of 553CE

While none of the fifteen *anathemata* promulgated by the Council of 553[406] mention Evagrius by name, in 1962, leading Evagrian scholar Antoine Guillaumont confidently concluded that Evagrius was prominently behind the "Origenism" condemned in 553 CE with his influence representing a form of "Evagrian Origenism".[407]

Noted above, following the Council of 553 CE, *two* versions of the *Kephalaia Gnostika* were produced in Syriac. The S_1 recension was formulated by Wilhelm Frankenberg in 1912 on the basis of two late ancient and early medieval Syriac commentaries. The S_2 recension was produced by Antoine Guillaumont in the late 1950s on the basis of several other manuscripts. Guillaumont then published a synoptic version of the S_1 and S_2 recensions in his *Les six centuries des "Kephalaia Gnostika" d'Évagre le Pontique* in 1958.[408] In comparing these two recensions, and noting their differences, Guillaumont and his wife Claire proposed that the S_1 recension was most likely an "edited" version intentionally amended to mitigate the *anathemata* of the Council of 553 CE whereas the S_2 recension more authentically reflected Evagrius' original metaphysical views.[409] Most contemporary Evagrian scholars have accepted the Guillaumont's conclusions and have produced English translations and studies based upon the S_2 recension.[410]

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[406] These 15 *anathemata* can be found in J. Konstantinovsky*, Evagrius Ponticus: The Making of a Gnostic*, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 20-22.

[407] A. Guillaumont, *Les "Képhalaia Gnostica" d'Évagre le Pontique et l'histoire de l'origénisme chez les Grecs et chez les Syriens*, (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1962). Guillaumont concludes: *"…. on peut affirmer de´sormais que la part d'Evagre dans l'orige´nisme condamne´ en 553 est pre´ponde´rante et que celui-ci est essentiellement l'orige´nisme e´vagrien"*, p 159.

[408] A. Guillaumont, Les six centuries des "Kephalaia Gnostika" d'Évagre le Pontique*, Patrologia Orientalis* 28, (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1958.)

[409] A. Guillaumont and C. Guillaumont. 'Le texte véritable des "Gnostica" d'Évagre le Pontique'. *Revue de l'histoire des Religions*, vol. 142, no. 2 (1952), 156–205.

[410] For example, I. L. E. Ramelli, *Evagrius's Kephalaia Gnostika*; J. Konstantinovsky, *Evagrius Ponticus: The Making of a Gnostic*.

Since that time however, almost every aspect of the relationship between Origen, Evagrius, the Council of 553 CE, and the implications of these have been debated and contested. For example, contemporary scholarship is questioning whether and to what extent the *anathemata* issued by the Council of 553 CE were criticising Origen's *actual* metaphysics as opposed to criticising a "straw man" form of "Origenism"[411], why and when the "Origenist Controversy" actually began[412], what "Origenism" even *meant* in the sixth century,[413] whether and to what extent Evagrius' metaphysics can accurately be described as a form of "Origenism,"[414] whether Evagrius was condemned at *any* Council[415] and whether and to what extent the "Expurgated Syriac Version (S_1) of the *Kephalaia Gnostica"* accurately reflects the philosophical structures of Origenism.[416]

A sense of "reasonable doubt" arising from these contests have motivated attempts to rehabilitate Evagrius, whether by distancing him from Origen on the basis that Evagrius never mentions Origen by name, was never considered a "Origenist" by his contemporaries, the "Origenism" condemned by the Council of 553 did not in fact exists at the time of Evagrius and finally, that condemnation of Evagrian metaphysics results in an impermissible diminishment of the importance of his unquestioned ascetic writings.[417]

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[411] I. L. E. Ramelli, "Evagrius Ponticus, the Origenian Ascetic (and Not the Origenistic 'Heretic')," in A. Bucur and A. Nicolăescu (eds), *Orthodox Monasticism Past and Present* (Gorgias Press LLC, 2019),
[412] S. Rubenson, "Why Did the Origenist Controversy Begin? Re-thinking the Standard Narratives," Modern Theology, 38.2 (2022), 318–337.
[413] B. E. Daley, "What did 'Origenism' Mean in the Sixth Century?," in G. Dorival and A. Le Boulluec (eds), *Origeniana Sexta: Origène et la Bible: Actes du Colloquium Origenianum Sextum*, Chantilly, 30 août–3 septembre 1993 (Leuven: Peeters, 1995), 627–638.
[414] M. O'Laughlin, "New Questions Concerning the Origenism of Evagrius," in R. J. Daly (ed.), *Origeniana Quinta: Historica, Text and Method, Biblica, Philosophica, Theologica, Origenism and Later Developments*, Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium 105 (Leuven: Peeters, 1992), 528–534.
[415] L. Dysinger, *"The Condemnation of Evagrius Reconsidered*," paper presented at the Oxford Patristics Conference, Oxford, August 22, 2003, 577 – 584.
[416] D. Bundy, "The Philosophical Structures of Origenism: The Case of the Expurgated Version (S1) of the Kephalaia Gnostica of Evagrius," in R. J. Daly (ed.), *Origeniana Quinta: Historica, Text and Method, Biblica, Philosophica, Theologica, Origenism and Later Developments* (Leuven: Peeters, 1992), 577–584.
[417] G. Bunge, "Origenismus–Gnostizismus: zum geistesgeschichtlichen Standort des Evagrios Pontikos," *Vigiliae Christianae,* 40.1 (1986), 24–54.

In this context, recovering and reconstructing Evagrius' texts and shape of his theological vision is therefore difficult: "the present state of the Evagrian corpus of writings is tangled, and those recovering his vision of the monastic life must negotiate a series of textual and linguistic challenges."[418] That said, and in relation to the *Kephalaia Gnostika*, Konstantinovsky holds that the "S_2 is good enough for rendering sufficiently accurately the author's original intention."[419]

If so, then attention must be paid to the fact that several of the *anathemata* from the Council of 553 CE directly impugn aspects of Evagrian metaphysics developed throughout his *Kephalaia Gnostika*. The text of these 15 *anathemata* can be found in Chart 1B over the page.[420] The potentially impugned aspects include aspects of Evagrius' metaphysics, his Christology, anthropology and eschatology, particularly his conception of "universal restoration" (*apokatastasis*). These aspects of Evagrian metaphysics and principles associated with these aspects may constitute significant obstacles to formulating the "Christian" aspect of any Buddhist-Christian dual identity. The reason is straightforward – those aspects of Evagrian thinking may be considered inconsistent with contemporary Christian theological orthodoxy. The reader is referred to Chart 1C, immediately following Chart 1B which indicates and explains those aspects of Evagrian metaphysics alleged to have been impugned by the *anathemata* of the Council of 553 CE.[421]

[418] C. Stewart, 'Imageless Prayer and the Theological Vision of Evagrius Ponticus' (2001) 9(2) *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 182.
[419] J. Konstantinovsky, *Evagrius Ponticus: The Making of a Gnostic*, 24.
[420] These are reproduced from R. Price, *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople of 553: With Related Texts on the Three Chapters Controversy*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009), 284–286.
[421] I use the word "alleged" in this context because of recent work by several scholars questioning whether and to what extent Evagrius' metaphysics were accurately understood by those formulating the *anathemata* of the Council of 553 CE. See for example; A. Casiday*, Reconstructing the Theology of Evagrius Ponticus: Beyond Heresy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013) and J. Konstantinovsky*, Evagrius Ponticus: The Making of a Gnostic*, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009).

Chart 1B

The Fifteen *Anathemata* of the Second Council of Constantinople 553 CE

Reproduced from: R. Price, *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople of 553: With Related Texts on the Three Chapters Controversy*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009), 284–286

1. If anyone advocates the mythical pre-existence of souls and the monstrous restoration that follows from this, let him be anathema.

2. If anyone says that the origin of all rational beings was incorporeal and material minds without any number or name, with the result that there was a *henad* of them all through identity of substance, power and operation and through their union with and knowledge of God the Word, but that they reached satiety with divine contemplation and turned to what is worse, according to what the drive to this in each one corresponded to, and that they took more subtle or denser bodies and were allotted names such that the powers above have different names just as they have different bodies ,as a result of which they became and were named some cherubim, some seraphim, and others principalities, powers, dominations, thrones, angels, and whatever heavenly orders there are, let him be anathema.

3. If anyone says that the sun, the moon and the stars, belonging themselves to the same *henad* of rational beings, became what they are through turning to what is worse, let him be anathema.

4. If anyone says that the rational beings who grew cold in divine love were bound to our more dense bodies and were named human beings, while those who had reached the acme of evil were bound to cold and dark bodies and are and are called demons and spirits of wickedness, let him be anathema.

5. If anyone says that from the state of the angels and archangels originates that of the soul, and from that of the soul that of demons and human beings, and from that of human beings, angels and demons originate again, and that each order of the heavenly powers is constituted either entirely from those below or those above or from both those above and those below, let him be anathema.

6. If anyone says that the genus of demons had a double origin, being compounded both from human souls and from more powerful spirits that descend to this, but that from the whole *henad* of rational beings one mind alone remained constant in divine love and contemplation, and that it became Christ and king of all rational beings and created the whole of corporeal nature, both heaven and earth, and what is intermediate, and that the universe came into being containing real elements that are older than its own existence, that is, the dry, the liquid, heat and cold, and also the form according to which it was fashioned, and that the all-holy and consubstantial Trinity did not fashion the universe as the cause of its creation but that mind, as they assert, existing before the universe as creator, gave being to the universe itself and made it created, let him be anathema.

7. If anyone says that Christ, described as existing in the form of God, united to God the Word even before all the ages, and as having emptied himself in the last days into what is human, took pity, as they assert, upon the multifarious fall of the beings in the same *henad* and, wishing to restore them, passed through everything and took on various bodies and received various names, becoming all things to all, among angels an angel, among powers a power, and among the other orders or genera of rational beings took on appropriately the form of each, and then like us partook of flesh and blood and became for human beings a human being, [if anyone says this] and does not profess that God the Word emptied himself and became a human being, let him be anathema.

8. If anyone says that God the Word, consubstantial with God the Father and the Holy Spirit, who was incarnate and became man, one of the holy Trinity, is not truly Christ but only catachrestically, on account of the mind which, as they assert, emptied itself, because it is united to God the Word and is truly called Christ, while the Word is called Christ because of this mind and this mind is called God because of the Word, let him be anathema.

9. If anyone says that it was not the Word of God, incarnate in flesh ensouled by a rational and intelligent soul, who descended into hell and the same ascended back to heaven, but rather the mind they mention, whom impiously they assert to have truly been made Christ through knowledge of the monad, let him be anathema.

10. If anyone says that the Lord's body after the resurrection was ethereal and spherical in form, and that the same will be true of the other bodies after the resurrection, and that, with first the Lord himself shedding his own body and [then] all likewise, the nature of bodies will pass into non-existence, let him be anathema.

11. If anyone says that the coming judgment means the total destruction of bodies and that the end of the story will be an immaterial nature, and that thereafter nothing that is material will exist but only pure mind, let him be anathema.

12. If anyone says that the heavenly powers, all human beings, the devil, and the spirits of wickedness will be united to God the Word in just the same way as the mind they call Christ, which is in the form of God and emptied itself, as they assert, and that the kingdom of Christ will have an end, let him be anathema.

13. If anyone says that there will not be a single difference at all between Christ and other rational beings, neither in substance nor in knowledge nor in power over everything nor in operation, but that all will be at the righthand of God as Christ beside them will be, as indeed they were also in their mythical pre-existence, let him be anathema.

14. If anyone says that there will be one *henad* of all rational beings ,when the hypostases and numbers are annihilated together with bodies, and that knowledge about rational beings will be accompanied by the destruction of the universes, the shedding of bodies, and the abolition of names, and there will be identity of knowledge as of hypostases, and that in this mythical restoration there will be only pure spirits, as there were in their nonsensical notion of pre-existence, let him be anathema.

15. If anyone says that the mode of life of the minds will be identical to that earlier one when they had not yet descended or fallen, with the result that the beginning is identical to the end and the end is the measure of the beginning, let him be anathema.

Chart 1C

Three Aspects of Evagrian Metaphysics & the Fifteen *Anathemata* of the Second Council of Constantinople in 553CE.

Pre-existence of souls

Anathemas 1 – 4 concern protology. Evagrius' teaching that all *νόες* primordially existed in a state of contemplative unity (*Theologiké*) with God as Holy Trinity before differentiating "cooling" into angels, humans and demons seem to contradict orthodox teaching that God created souls for each body, presumably at the time of birth. These *anathemata* condemned the prexistence of souls (A1), the cooling of intellect and fall into different embodiments (A2 and A4), the idea that astronomical objects such as the sun, stars and moon are also fallen intellects (A3).

Christology

Anathemas 6 – 9 concern Christology. Evagrius' understanding of Christ appears to be characterized by "subordinationism": the idea that Christ was a created intellect like other *νόες* except that Christ did not fall away from contemplative unity with God - (*Theologiké*). Anathemata 6 and 9 appear to attack the implications of these teachings – that the "Christ" who became flesh and dwelt amongst us was *not* the *logos* as the Second Person of the Trinity, but "Christ" the created intellect who did not fall or "condense" into Second Creation, but who becomes a *vehicle* for the "divine logos to enter the world, but without the necessity to assumer flesh" –[L. Dysinger, "*The Condemnation of Evagrius Reconsidered*," paper presented at the Oxford Patristics Conference, Oxford, August 22, 2003.]

Universal Restoration / Apokatastasis

Anathema 11 - 14 concerns "universal restoration" / *apokatastasis* and attacks Evagrius' view that, at the end of time, there will be no "resurrection of bodies", but a reconciliation of all beings rejoined in contemplative unity (*Theologiké*) with God as Holy Trinity.

Evagrius teaches that in the eschaton, all qualitative and quantitative differences between *νόες* will be eliminated and absorption into God. In his "Great Letter" (letter to Melania), Evagrius employs the evocative metaphor of all rivers (representing fallen *νόες*) flowing back into the ocean (contemplative union with God as Holy Trinity).

These anathemata are intended to counter two apparent implications of Evagrius' *apokatastasis*. First, that all minds will rejoin God, including Satan, who, in Evagrius' schema is simply another fallen *nous* and who will apparently become equal to Christ. Second, that all *νόες* will attain the status of Christ (who is another, albeit unfallen) *nous*. If so, then the consequence seems to "result either in a change within the divine essence to admit a created essence and therefore division into the Godhead, or a change whereby creation becomes uncreated and thereby introduces additional persons into the Godhead bringing about a situation of pantheism." [J. Konstantinovsky, *Evagrius Ponticus: The Making of a Gnostic*, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 169]

These *anathemata* are therefore intended to eliminate a sense of universal restoration as well as the idea that *νόες* will become "other Christs" (*isochristi*).

For now, however, the principal task of this comparative thesis is to explain and analyse the theological and philosophical frameworks of Evagrius and Tsongkhapa respectively, within the context of their own times. This is consistent with the approach by Bamberger in his translation of The Praktikos; noting that while admitting to important antecedence influences on Evagrius, he nevertheless declares: "let us simply underline the fact that in spite of these influences he retained his own proper character." An exploration of the theology expressed in Evagrius' principal texts reveals the extent of his own character.

Evagrius & the Path to Spiritual Perfection

Fortunately, much Evagrian scholarship throughout the 20th and early 21st centuries has been devoted to meeting these challenges and tracing the reception of Evagrian texts throughout the Latin West and Orthodox East. The relative success of this scholarship enables a detailed and confident exploration of Evagrius' vision of Christian spiritual perfection.[422]

Formulating that vision was not an easy task for Evagrius. Departing the relatively familiar Greek speaking theological world once he was in Egypt, Evagrius apprenticed himself under two of the more famous of the Egyptian desert monastics, Macarius the Egyptian and Macarius the Alexandrian. Doing so required him to "work hard to learn and absorb the new alphabet of the Coptic monks he lived with."[423]

[422] C. Stewart, 'Evagrius Beyond Byzantium: The Latin and Syriac Receptions', Chapter 8 in J. Kalvesmaki and R. Darling Young (eds*), Evagrius and His Legacy* (University of Notre Dame Press, United States, 2016), 206 and G. Collins, 'The Evagrian Heritage in Late Byzantine Monasticism', Chapter 12 in K. Kalvesmaki and R. Darling Young (eds), Evagrius and His Legacy (University of Notre Dame Press, United States, 2016), 317.
[423] W. Harmless, *Desert Christians: An Introduction to the Literature of Early Monasticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 314.

In addition, Evagrius was required to make the difficult transition from intellectual theologian to living theologian, Socrates noting that "Evagrius became a disciple of these men and acquired from them the philosophy of deeds, whereas before he knew only a philosophy of words."[424]

Evagrius' success in integrating his deep philosophical learning with Christian monastic life made him both popular and a target for jealousy. Like most Egyptian desert monastics, Evagrius engaged in manual work in order to generate a meagre income, sufficient to cover the cost of the bare essentials needed for the maintenance of the monastic life. Most Egyptian monks were illiterate and thus worked with their hands, often weaving baskets, maps and rope out of strips of palm fronds.[425] With his excellent education, Evagrius was able to support himself through work as a calligrapher and Palladius notes that Evagrius "wrote during the year only the price of as much as he ate, for he wrote very gracefully the Oxyrhynchus character."[426]Despite the austerity of his monastic lifestyle during his fifteen years in Kellia, Evagrius' "unique combination of excellent education, penetrating psychological insight and a rich theological imagination generated a substantial corpus of writings in a variety of genres."[427] These texts include letters, commentaries and treatises.[428]

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[424] Socrates, *Ecclesial History*, in Henry G Bohn (1855).
[425] D. Keller, *Oasis of Wisdom: The Worlds of the Desert Fathers and Mothers* (Liturgical Press, United States, 2005).42.
[426] Palladius, *The Lausiac History*, in Robert Meyer (ed) (1964) at 113. In his commentary to this edition of Palladius, Robert Meyer notes that the term "Oxyrhynchus" was not a style of writing originating from the town of that name approximately 160km Southwest from Cairo, but refers to the sharp-snouted writing style itself. In the late Eighteenth and early Nineteenth Centuries CE, archaeologists uncovered a massive trove of papyri at Oxyrhynchus. These documents included fragments of works by Aristotle, Euclid, Pindar, Menander and Sappho as well as fragments of non-canonical Christian Gospels.
[427] C. Stewart, 'Evagrius Ponticus on Monastic Pedagogy', in J. Behr et al., *The Tradition of Orthodoxy in the West: Festschrift for Bishop Kallistos (Ware) of Diokleia* (St Vladimir's Seminary Press, United States, 2003), 251-252.
[428] A brief overview of the Evagrian corpus is provided by J. Konstantinovsky, *Evagrius Ponticus: The Making of a Gnostic* (2009), 22-26 and Evagrius of Ponticus, 'The Foundations of the Monastic Life: A Presentation of the

Three of these texts are amongst the most influential; the *Praktikos* (Πρακτικός), the *Gnostikos* (Γνωστικός) and the *Kephalaia Gnostika* (Κεφάλαια Γνωστικά). These texts are intended to form a trilogy constituting a pedagogical system of Christian spiritual formation and progression. In his letter to Anatolius, constituting the introduction to the *Praktikos*, Evagrius states[429]: "…and now let us go on to the discussion of the ways of the ascetic and contemplative lives….We shall make a concise distribution of the material into one hundred chapters on the ascetic life and fifty plus another six hundred on contemplative matters." In this *Letter*, the one hundred chapters constitute the *Praktikos*, the fifty chapters constitute the *Gnostikos* and the six hundred chapters constitute the *Kephalaia Gnostika*.[430]

Evagrius' articulates his conception of Christianity in the opening paragraph of the *Praktikos:* "Christianity is the doctrine (δόγμα) (dogma) of Jesus Christ our Saviour, consisting in ethics (πρακτική), and philosophy of nature (φυσική) and theology (θεολογική)."[431] Evagrius, no less than Tsongkhapa, displays remarkable economy in expressing complex ideas. In fact, the trilogy of the *Praktikos*, the *Gnostikos* and the *Kephalaia Gnostika* are not written in discursive prose as contemporary texts might be. Nor does Evagrius provide a comprehensive and systematic explanation of is conception of Christianity.

Practice of Stillness', in R. E. Sinkewicz., ed and tr., *Evagrius of Ponticus: The Greek Ascetic Corpus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), xvii – xl.

[429] J. E. Bamberger, tr*., Evagrius Ponticus: The Praktikos and Chapters on Prayer* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1981), 14-15.

[430] Evagrius also refers to the *Praktikos* as *Ad Monachos* ("The Monk") – See J. Driscoll*, Evagrius Ponticus: Ad Monachos* (Ancient Christian Writers Series, The Newman Press, United States, 2003.

[431] J. E. Bamberger, tr*., Evagrius Ponticus: The Praktikos and Chapters on Prayer* [1], 15.

Most of Evagrius' texts are composed of brief and theologically dense sentences collected in paragraphs called "chapters" or "*kephalaia*" (κεφάλαια) and each of these three texts deploys several rhetorical devices in communicating its message through their *kephalaia*.

These rhetorical devices include *antimetabole* (where words in one sentence are reversed in another, later sentence), *anadiplosis* (where a sequence of words ends with a word that becomes the first word of the next sentence), *balanced chiasms* (where two ideas in sentences are balanced against their variants in a later sentence) and *antithetical parallelism* (setting two opposites in contrast).[432] Expressing theologically dense material through the nature of these literary devices was intended to "draw the monk, by means of a hand-full of tight-wrapped words, form the sensible to the intelligible and from the intelligible to the divine."[433]

This cryptic style of Evagrius' writing and the fact that he "hardly ever expressed himself in a systematic way"[434] means that understanding his theological system presupposes the reader's understanding of much of his thinking. Because Evagrius does not offer a systematic presentation of his world, scholars have had to "find their way around in the various concepts that unfold only in bits and pieces throughout Evagrius' works."[435] Two of these works are generally regarded as the "hermeneutical keys" to understanding Evagrius' system; "the *Kephalaia Gnostika* supplemented by the *Epistle to Melania*, are the chief sources for the analysis of his implicit world-view and theological system."[436]

[432] W. Harmless, Salt for the Impure, Light for the Pure: Reflections on the Pedagogy of Evagrius Ponticus' (2001) XXXVII *Studia Patristica*, 515-516.
[433] W. Harmless, Salt for the Impure, Light for the Pure, 518.
[434] J. Driscoll, *Evagrius Ponticus: Ad Monachos*, 4.
[435] J. Driscoll, *Evagrius Ponticus: Ad Monachos*, 4.
[436] J. E. Bamberger, tr., *Evagrius Ponticus: The Praktikos and Chapters on Prayer*, lxx and; I. Ramelli, *Evagrius's Kephalaia Gnostika,* xxixff.

Reading these texts together, Jeremy Driscoll proposes three topics as framing an overview of Evagrius' system; (i) the original creation of the mind, (ii) the mind's condition of being in a soul and a body, and (iii) a three-fold division of the soul.[437]

Noted above, this chapter four proceeds by exploring the way Evagrius approaches four metaphysical, theological and pedagogical issues[438];first, *cosmology*. What is creation? What is the spiritual "problem" experienced by people? Second, *theological anthropology*. What is a person? Third, the *process or pedagogy of spiritual progression*. How does a person progress along the paths to spiritual perfection? And finally, *eschatology – the end times and goal of spiritual practice* itself. What is the goal of spiritual practice? If the final spiritual state is characterised as an effect, then how do the previous three issues function as its causes?

For both Evagrius and Tsongkhapa, humanity's problematic existential situation is intimately related to what is means to be a fallen or ignorant human being. However, the very nature of humans and their existential situation also becomes the basis for making progress along a well-signposted path of spiritual progression. When this path is practiced diligently, it leads to a result; for Evagrius, the reunion of the *nous* in contemplation of essential knowledge that is the Holy Trinity and for Tsongkhapa, enlightenment. Framed this way, it is possible to comparatively investigate Evagrius' and Tsongkhapa's spiritual systems through the hermeneutical lens of cosmology & anthropology (basis), the process of spiritual progression (path) and the *telos* or goal of that spiritual practice (result).

[437] J. Driscoll, *Evagrius Ponticus: Ad Monachos*, 6.
[438] This is a modification of the approach adopted by J. Driscoll *Evagrius Ponticus: Ad Monachos*, 6.

Cosmology – First Creation and Second Creation

Evagrius' cosmology, his explanation of the creation of the cosmos, of various beings in the cosmos and the world these beings inhabit is very much a product of the theological and philosophical sources of his time since "a stream cannot rise above its source".[439] Writing in the mid to late Fourth Century CE, Evagrius drew at first instance from the Scriptures and then from the best exegetical, theological and philosophical sources of his time, consistent with Christian theological orthodoxy recently affirmed at the *Council of Constantinople* in 381 CE and in which Evagrius participated as deacon.

Evagrius' biographer and disciple, Palladius notes the very significant influence that Origen's theology exercised over the Church at that time, including Gregory of Nyssa and Evagrius. Ramelli suggests that: "Gregory was the closest follower of Origen and the spiritual father of Evagrius and Palladius profoundly admired both Origen and Evagrius."[440] The extent of Gregory of Nyssa's influence upon Evagrius, both personally and theologically is an open question. Both Ramelli and Corrigan argue that of the two "Gregorys" (of Nyssa and Nazianzus), it was Gregory of Nyssa who exerted the stronger influence on Evagrius.[441]

[439] A phrase commonly found, but quoted by the High Court of Australia in *Australian Communist Party v The Commonwealth* (1950) 83 CLR 1 at 258 (per Fullagar J) explaining that the Australian Commonwealth Government could not enact a law where the power to do so was not expressly or impliedly provided for in the Constitution.

[440] I. L. E. Ramelli, *Evagrius's Kephalaia Gnostika: A New Translation of the Unreformed Text from the Syriac*, (United States: SBL Press, 2015), xiv.

[441] K. Corrigan, *Evagrius and Gregory: Mind, Soul and Body in the 4th Century*, (United Kingdom: Routledge), 2009.

Ramelli maintains her view on several bases, including Palladius' assertion that it was Gregory of Nyssa who ordained Evagrius as deacon and Evagrius' reference to "our wise teacher" in *Praktikos* [89], while assumed to identify Gregory of Nazianzen is actually Gregory of Nyssa. [442]

Whatever the resolution of which "Gregory" exerted the greater influence on Evagrius, it is not surprising that his cosmology resembles Origen in reading the Creation Narratives in the *Book of Genesis* in terms of a hypostases of God, Christ and the Holy Spirit, an initial creation of rational creatures united in contemplation of the Trinity, a subsequent "cooling" and falling away from that contemplation by rational creatures through the exercise of their free will, the coming into existence of material creation and the eventual return of rational creatures to the original contemplative state.[443]

Accordingly, Evagrius proposes a three-fold metaphysical dynamic; first, the creation by God of rational beings who exist in a state of epistemological receptivity, pure intellects created to know God though the reception of essential knowledge. Second, through the negligent exercise of free will, rational beings "fell away" from God by deflecting their contemplation of God to lesser phenomena.

However, God does not abandon fallen intellects, but God's judgement or "providence" manifests as a second creation whereby each intellect is clothed in a soul in a body and in a "world-form" consistent with the degree of that intellect's fall.

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[442] I. L. E. Ramelli, "Evagrius and Gregory: Nazianzen or Nyssen?," *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies*, 53 (2013), 124, 130.

[443] Origen's economy of creation-turning away-descent-return is developed in *De Principiis* (*On First Principles*), See also; M. Scott, *Journey Back to God: Origen on the Problem of Evil* (Oxford University Press, United Kingdom, 2012).

In this way, the world is comprised of angels, who fell the least, humans and then demons. Third, Evagrius anticipates a return of intellects to be reunited with God in essential knowledge. Through ascetic practices, prayer and meditation, the intellect is progressively refined until the body is subsumed into the soul, the soul into the mind and the mind once again perfectly receptive to essential knowledge of God.

Evagrius writes that in the beginning, God created rational beings, *logikoi* (λογικοί) consisting of pure minds (νόες) who dwelt in perfect contemplation of God as Trinity; "the bare (naked) intellect is that which, by means of the contemplation that regards it, is joined to the knowledge of the Trinity."[444]That which is described in *Genesis* as being made in the "image and likeness of God" for Evagrius is the mind (νοῦς): "but that which is susceptible of the Unity is the image of God."[445] Accordingly, "in this creation there was unity between God and all *logikoi* and among the *logikoi* themselves there was common purpose, the contemplation of the Trinity, 'essential knowledge'; Θεολογία (*theologia*)".[446]

This was the "first creation", characterised by a perfect reciprocity of knowledge, knowing and contemplation between creator God and created *logikoi*, minds (νοές) that are the image, *ikon* (εἰκών) of God. From this original unity *logikoi* through negligence, began to focus their contemplative powers elsewhere and on inferior phenomena; "the Unity did not bring itself in motion by itself, but it was brought into motion by the receptivity of the mind which, by its negligence, turned its face away from it and, because it was deprived of it, generated ignorance."[447] Here Evagrius explains the "movement", *kinesis* (κίνησις) of

[444] KG 3.6.
[445] KG 3.32.
[446] C. Stewart, 'Imageless Prayer and the Theological Vision of Evagrius Ponticus' (2001) 9(2*) Journal of Early Christian Studies,* 176.
[447] KG 1.49.

the *logikoi* by which they separated themselves from God; "the first movement of rational creatures is the separation of the intellect from the unity that is in it."[448] Such movement displaced *theologia*, perfect, essential knowledge of the trinity, generating ignorance, *agnosia* (ἀγνωσία).

This separation of the intellect from God consequent upon the movement (*kinesis*) being the exercise of free will by the *logikoi* to turn away from contemplation of God resulted in a metaphysical modulation of the nature of the *logikoi*. Is there a distinction between the exercise of free will constituting the movement on the one hand, and this modulated metaphysical state described as the fall on the other? Is one phenomena causative of the other or are they simply different terms describing a continuum of metaphysical events? Following von Balthasar[449], Monica Tobon argues for a "cause-effect" interpretation; "when Evagrius refers to the primal deflection of the *logikoi* from God he speaks in terms of the 'movement' rather than of 'the Fall', reserving the word 'fall' for the consequences of the movement."[450] At this stage, it is not necessary to resolve this issue. However, chapter six and seven of this thesis will return to the *process* by which *logikoi* exercise free will in making decisions.

Having exercised their free will against God through negligence and without more, the separated *logikos* ("os" indicating nominative case as first-person singular subject) would be mired in ignorance, *agnosia* and unable to regain its former state of contemplative union with God.

[448] KG 3.22.
[449] H. Urs von Balthasar, 'The Metaphysics and Mystical Theology of Evagrius' (1965) *3 Monastic Studies* 183 (English translation of original 1939 publication), 184.
[450] M. Tobon, *Apatheia in the Teaching of Evagrius Ponticus* (PhD Thesis, University College London, 2010), 19.

However, God does not abandon the *logikoi*, but causes the material world to come into existence. In this world, each *logikos* receives an ontological state consistent with the degree to which it's intelligence moved away from God; "a judgement of God is the coming into being of a world to which he gives a mortal body, in accord with the degree (of development) of each one of the rational creatures."[451]

Although not using the term "Second Creation", Evagrius refers to this as a process where the ontological "form" each rational creature assumed after the movement is consistent with the extent to which each creature exercised its free will to turn from contemplating God. Some become human, some angels and others become demons: "each one of the changes is established in order to nourish rational creatures. And those who are thus nourished arrive at a better change, whereas those who are not thus nourished arrive at a bad change."[452] The Second Creation is not seen by Evagrius as a punishment, but as God's providence [προνοία] "in which each intellect was given a body as well as a status (world or eon) appropriate to its degree of declination from God. Thus angels, humans and demons are all rational creatures but they differ in bodily form and dominant energizing force".[453]

In this economy, angels moved least from contemplating God, humans moved further while demons moved furthest of all[454] "what we call demons, humans and angels are in reality different stages in the process of transformation whereby mind, nous, gradually recovers its capacity to apprehend God".[455]

[451] KG 3.38.
[452] KG 3.7.
[453] C. Stewart, 'Imageless Prayer and the Theological Vision of Evagrius Ponticus', 176.
[454] KG 2.68; KG 2.79.
[455] D. Linge, 'Leading the Life of Angels', 547.

Angels, humans and demons are able to recover their capacity to apprehend God through the proper use of contemplation according to their state; "the three orders of beings, in the bodies and worlds assigned to them, each possess a knowledge or contemplation proper to their state, 'thick' or obscure contemplation for the demons, secondary natural contemplation for human beings and primary natural contemplation for the angels."[456] Evagrius considers that by the diligent exercise of contemplation proper to its nature, every rational being is able to progressively ascend through secondary, then primary natural contemplation and then to essential knowledge which is the mind's original state of union with the substantial knowledge and contemplation of God.[457]

At this point, it is important to note that these events should not be understood as temporal sequential realities, as if there was an identifiable moment *in time* when rational beings were created, then another, later identifiable moment *in time* when those being turned from contemplating the Trinity. In his study of Evagrius' *Ad Monachos*, Jeremy Driscoll draws attention to the debate concerning temporality and Evagrian orthodoxy contained in Guillamont's scholarship (events occurring *within* the temporary order) and Bunge's scholarship (events are metahistorical realities *outside* of the temporal order).[458]
This view is reinforced by a close reading of the Evagrian texts themselves, for example; "temporal is the movement of bodies, but timeless is the transformation of the incorporeals."[459]

[456] R. E. Sinkewicz., ed and tr., *Evagrius of Ponticus: The Greek Ascetic Corpus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 1–llxxxviii.
[457] R. E. Sinkewicz, *Evagrius of Ponticus: The Greek Ascetic Corpus,* xxxviii. See also KG 2.4; KG 3.47 and KG 3.51.
[458] J. Driscoll, *Evagrius Ponticus: Ad Monachos*, 5-6.
[459] KG 2.87.

To mistake a text such as the *Kephalaia Gnostika* which contains metaphysical meditations, for a text describing temporal realities and then to evaluate the orthodoxy of Evagrius' writings on that basis is to greatly misrepresent Evagrius; "one would need to exercise great care in using texts from (the KG) to assess the orthodoxy of Evagrius' dogmatic theology. Nevertheless, this is precisely what theologians from Justinian down to the present have attempted to do."[460]

Anthropology – The Human Condition

Evagrius' account of the creation and fall of the *logikoi* is premised upon an intimate and mutually influential relationship between identity and contemplation. Before the Fall, *logikoi* existed as pure intellect in receptivity of essential knowledge of God and in harmony with each other. What defined the *logikoi* was their existential status as rightly-oriented contemplative beings. Likewise, the subsequent deflection of *logikoi* from essential knowledge resulted in the Fall, God's judgement and the Second Creation events that, for Evagrius were not punitive in nature, but providential. They were providential because God created a cosmos or "world" for each *logikos* consistent with the extent to which that *logikos* fell away from contemplation.

The point here is that for Evagrius, the post-Fall anthropological state of *logikoi* is configured to assisting them rehabilitate their fallen state and regain essential knowledge of God.

[460] L. Dysinger, *Psalmody and Prayer in the Writing of Evagrius Ponticus* (Oxford University Press, United Kingdom, 2006), 206-207.

But if humans (excluding angels and demons for the moment) are no longer pure intellects, how does an embodied being achieve this rehabilitative gnostic state when they are thickly mired in passion and strife? How did Evagrius conceive what it meant to be a human being?

Patristic theologians naturally looked to scripture in attempting to understand what it meant to be a human being. Drawing upon St. Paul's *Letter to the Thessalonians*, most Patristic authors adopted a trichotomic anthropology: "May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit (πνεῦμα) and soul (ψυχή) and body (σῶμα) be kept sound and blameless…".[461] While this division presents a comprehensively inclusive anthropology, the dominant view in early Christian thought postulates: "a mind-matter duality of some kind which pertains to the origin of the immaterial and material rational creation."[462]

In his works *The Republic, Timaeus and Phaedrus* Plato had asserted that the human soul was constituted by the rational (ἡγεμονικόν), the irascible / anger-energy (θυμός) and the desiring or concupiscible (ἐπιθυμία).[463] Origen then created a synthesis of the Platonic and scriptural divisions of a human person, dividing humans into body (σῶμα), soul (ψυχή) and spirit (πνεῦμα).[464]

[461] L. Misiarczyk, 'The Relationship between nous, pneuma and logistikon in Evagrius Ponticus Anthropology' (2011) LXVIII *Studia Patristica* 149.
[462] J. Konstantinovsky, 'Soul and Body in Early Christian Thought: A Unified Duality?' (2010) *XLIV Studia Patristica* 351.
[463] A. Louth, 'Evagrios on Prayer', in D. Hogg, B. Girard and E. Le Blévec (eds), *Stand Up To Godwards: Essays in Mystical and Monastic Theology in Honour of the Reverend John Clark on his Sixty-Fifth Birthday* (Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik Universität, Salzburg, Austria, 2002), 164.
[464] H. Crouzel, *Origen* (T&T Clark, United Kingdom, 1989), 87 – 88.

Evagrius modified Origen's understanding of the human person by describing the existence of an anthropological triad of body (σῶμα), soul (ψυχή) and mind (νοῦς) **and** a further division of the soul into a psychological triad of rationality (λογιστικόν), irascibility (θυμικόν) and concupiscence / appetitive (ἐπιθυμικόν).[465]

In developing his thoughts concerning the interrelationship between these aspects of the human being, Evagrius' analysis is actually "much closer to Plato and Plotinus than it is to Origen."[466] For Evagrius, it is the mind or *nous* (νοῦς) which is at the heart of both Fall and return to God. The mind is not a part or function of the soul or the body: "the νοῦς is not just a faculty of the soul, but the essence itself of the person, of which the body and the soul do not represent anything more that lower gradations."[467] In KG 3.28, Evagrius writes: "A soul is an intellect that, in its carelessness, has fallen from Unity and, due to its lack of vigilance, has descended to the order of *praktiké*". The "order of *praktiké*" here is, according to Ramelli, "the level of the soul embodied in a mortal body liable to passions, in its battle against passion, is inferior to that of the *nous* and the unity it enjoyed in the initial state of *homonoiai*"[468]

Here, Evagrius is asserting that the soul has the nature of affectivity which is capable of influencing, for better or worse, the body and the mind, even while the soul remains separate from the mind. How does this interdependent exchange between body, soul and mind function?

[465] L. Misiarczyk, 'The Relationship between nous, pneuma and logistikon in Evagrius Ponticus Anthropology' 150.
[466] D. E Linge, 'Leading the Life of Angels', 544.
[467] M. O'Laughlin, quoting Irénée Hausherr, 'The Anthropology of Evagrius Ponticus and its Sources', in C. Kannengiesser and W. L. Petersen (eds), *Origen of Alexandria: His World and His Legacy* (University of Notre Dame Press, United States, 1988), 354.
[468] I. Ramelli, *Evagrius's Kephalaia Gnostika,* 157.

In *Praktikos* [89], Evagrius explains that the concupiscence / appetitive (ἐπιθυμικόν) and the irascible (θυμικόν) parts of the soul "depend upon and respond to the world of sense experience and change" which in turn trap the mind.[469] The soul, experiencing emotions, delusions and sin can hinder the task of the mind in seeking return to God: "the νοῦς, if it advances along its own path, is reunited with the holy powers, but if it follows that of the organ of the soul, it falls among the demons."[470]

However, despite this possibility, the passionate elements of the soul remain free of evil: "if all evil indeed arises out of the rational, the irascible of the concupiscible spheres, and it is through these powers that we are able to act well or badly, clearly it is the result of our usage of these parts that evils befall us; and if this is the case, for nothing which God has made is evil."[471] It is within this framework of theological anthropology that Evagrius directs his attention to explaining the pedagogy of spiritual progression where the central concern is to progressively free the mind from the adverse influences of body and soul, thus permitting the mind to ascent through progressively higher contemplative states during its long journey back to contemplative reunion with God as Holy Trinity. For Evagrius then, the "ideal Christian and the wise man" is the *Gnostikos* (γνϛστικός).[472]

[469] D. E Linge, Leading the Life of Angels, 545.
[470] KG 2.48.
[471] KG 3.59.
[472] J. Konstantinovsky , *Evagrius Ponticus: The Making of a Gnostic,* 27.

Pedagogy of Gnostic Ascent

Up to this point, Evagrius has explained that the deflection of the *nous* away from *Theologiké,* essential knowledge of God as Holy Trinity has resulted in the Fall and a Second Creation encompassing the creation of angels, humans with minds in souls in bodies and demons. For humans, the soul is divided into a rational part (*logistikon*) and an irrational or passionate part that is itself composed of two sub-parts; the desiring or appetitive part (*epithumikon*) and the irascible part (*thumos / thumikon*). To regain its original contemplative unity with God in essential knowledge, the mind (*nous*) must travel a path that facilitates a series of ascending gnostic transformations, described by Evagrius in KG 2.4:

> "While transformations are many, we have received the knowledge of only four (of them); of the first, of the second, of the last and of the penultimate. And the first is, as has been said, the passage from evilness to virtue, whereas the second is that from impassivity to the secondary natural contemplation and the third is that from the latter to the knowledge concerning rational creatures and the fourth is the passage of all to the knowledge of the Holy Trinity."[473]

These four progressive transformations are explained in several passages in the *Kephalaia Gnostika*. Starting with "the second" (second natural contemplation), KG 3.10 states: "the intellect that is imperfect is that which still needs the contemplation that is known by means of the mortal corporeal nature."

[473] I. Ramelli, *Evagrius's Kephalaia Gnostika,* 89.

In relation to the transition from second natural contemplation to "the knowledge concerning rational creatures" (first natural contemplation) described above as "the third", KG 3.8 states: "the intellect that possesses the last garment is that which knows the contemplation only of all secondary beings". The fourth is the *nous* reunited in essential knowledge of God as Trinity, described by KG 3.6 as "the bare (naked intellect) is that which by means of the contemplation that regards it, is joined to the knowledge of the Trinity." Such a purified intellect is then once again receptive to essential knowledge, expressed in KG 3.12; "the perfect intellect is that which can easily receive essential knowledge".

This process of progressively higher states of contemplative capacity involves the mind ascending from *second natural contemplation* (πρῶτα) to *first natural contemplation* (δευτέρα) and then to *Theologiké*, essential knowledge of God as Trinity; "the perfect mind is the one which easily receives essential knowledge (KG 3.12) and essential knowledge is another expression for knowledge of the Trinity (KG 3.6)".[474] However, before the mind can attain to second natural contemplation, it must first battle with and pacify the demons and thoughts (*logismoi*) that prevent such a contemplative state. This is a battle because the irrational / passionate parts of the soul dominate in humans, moving the mind away from contemplation to sinful thoughts, words and deeds; "part of the ascetic challenge is that the nous is easily moved (ευκίνετος) particularly under the influence of the irrational part of the soul."[475]

[474] J. Driscoll*, Steps to Spiritual Perfection*, 33.
[475] C. Stewart, 'Evagrius Ponticus and the "Eight Generic Logismoi"', Chapter 1 in R. Newhauser (ed.*), In the Garden of Evil: The Vices and Culture in the Middle Ages* (Brepols, Belgium, 2005), 22.

Accordingly, attaining to second natural contemplation depends on the monastic achieving a certain level of cognitive impassibility or equanimity, *apatheia* (ἀπάθεια) characterised as a stillness of mind. In turn, *apatheia* itself is dependent upon ascecis and practice of virtue (*praktiké*) by which the body and soul are disciplined, the *logismoi* defeated and relevant virtues cultivated: "the spiritual struggle of the monk is conceived as a battle for establishing virtue in (the) various parts (of the soul). Different virtues are suitably established in a part of the soul to which they correspond, while various vices can also be identified as trouble in one or other part of the soul."[476] Defeating the vices and establishing the virtues involves, *inter alia,* stabilising the mind through monastic practices of prayer, fasting and other ascetic practices - *praktikē*: "when the *nous* wanders, reading, vigils and prayer bring it to a standstill.

When *epithumia* bursts into flame, hunger, toil and *anachorēsis* extinguish it. When the *thumos* becomes agitated, psalmody, patience and mercy calm it."[477] In this way, monastic practices, prayer and the struggle to attain virtue and knowledge in the Evagrian scheme become mutually influential factors in pacifying the mind and acting as catalysts for the transition from second natural contemplation and first natural contemplation: "virtues show the secondary natural contemplation to the intellect and this (contemplation) shows it the primary (natural contemplation) and the latter, in turn shows it the Holy Trinity."[478] In this way, "even before lower knowledge, is virtue, which one exercises in the praktikē. This enables the lower knowledge."[479] In describing a spiritual path involving both *praktiké* and *theoretiké* Evagrius drew upon well-established categories.

[476] J. Driscoll, *Evagrius Ponticus: Ad Monachos*, 8.
[477] PR [15].
[478] KG 3.61.
[479] I. Ramelli, *Evagrius's Kephalaia Gnostika,* 177.

Both Plato and Aristotle had written about the advantages and disadvantages of aspects of the practical life (ὁ βίος πρακτικός) and the contemplative life (ὁ βίος θεωρητικός) concluding that the contemplative life in which knowledge is attained through study leads to "happiness" (εὐδαιμονία).[480]

The precision with which Evagrius is able to express his spiritual system is made possible because of his preference for the Platonic model of the soul; "by focussing on soul with the nous as its superior aspect and the faculties of desire (epithymia) and aversion / reaction (thumos) as its inferior aspect, Evagrius could accent the nous while developing an ascetic psychology of the irrational aspect of the soul."[481] How does Evagrius integrate these elements of his spiritual economy into a systematic path?

The answer is found in Evagrius' conception of Christianity, expressed in the opening paragraph of the *Praktikos*[482]: "Christianity is the doctrine (δόγμα) (dogma) of Jesus Christ our Saviour, consisting in ethics (πρακτική), and philosophy of nature (φυσική) and theology (θεολογική)." Evagrius' conception of Christianity is thus formed from a two-stage reasoning; first, Christianity is the doctrine of Jesus Christ, and second, the doctrine of Jesus Christ is constituted by ethics (πρακτική), and philosophy of nature (φυσική) and theology (θεολογική). In using these terms, and using them in the order in which they appear, Evagrius intends to convey very specific information.

[480] In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle writes: "Hence the gods' activity that is superior in blessedness will be an activity of study. And so the human activity that is most akin to the gods' activity will, more than any others, have the character of happiness". T. Irwin (trans.), *Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics* (2nd ed., Hackett Publishing, United States, 1999), 1178a, 22-25.
[481] C. Stewart, 'Evagrius Ponticus and the "Eight Generic Logismoi"', 22.
[482] J. E. Bamberger, tr., *Evagrius Ponticus: The Praktikos and Chapters on Prayer* [1] at 15.

By "ethics", *praktiké* (πρακτική), he refers to asceticism: "the ascetic life is the spiritual method for cleansing the affective part of the soul."[483] By "philosophy of nature" (φυσική - literally *physics*), he means: "the goal of physics is to reveal the truth within all things"[484]. *Theologika* is the goal of contemplative life, a turning of "the mind away from material things and turning it towards the First Cause."[485] By placing these terms in this order, Evagrius is indicating that ethics, *praktiké* is the foundation for the levels of contemplative ascent that the mind is to attempt.

Content and Structure of *The Praktikos*

Evagrius' first text in his trilogy of monastic training and progression is *The Praktikos* (Πρακτικός). Composed of 100 tightly drafted verses or *kephalaia*, the *Praktikos* functions as the monk's basic handbook of training in the spiritual life.

Throughout the text Evagrius identifies eight "passionate thoughts" or *logismoi* (λογισμοί) that agitate the two passionate parts of the soul, the appetitive part, *epithumikon* (ἐπιθυμητικόν) and the irascible part, *thumikon* (θυμικόν). Initiated from memories, fantasies or external demonic influences, these eight *logismoi* prevent the monastic from attaining the degree of equanimity of mind, *apatheia* (ἀπάθεια) necessary for secondary natural contemplation, then first natural contemplation and finally a return to essential knowledge, *Theologiké*.

[483] J. E. Bamberger, tr., *Evagrius Ponticus: The Praktikos and Chapters on Prayer*, [78] at 36.
[484] *Gnostikos* [49].
[485] W. Harmless, 'Salt for the Impure, Light for the Pure', 519.

Evagrius devotes considerable energy to the taxonomy of these eight *logismoi*, detecting them and how a monastic should combat them[486]. In *Praktikos* [6-14], he identifies these eight *logismoi* as; (i) gluttony, *gastrimargia* (γαστριμαργία); (ii) sexual temptation / fornication, *porneia* (πορνεία); (iii) love of money, *philarguria* (φιλαργυία); (iv) anger, *orge* (ὀργή); (v) sadness, *lupe* (λύπη);(vi) listlessness, *accedia* (ἀκηδία); (vii) vainglory, *kenodoxia* (κενοδοξία); and (viii) pride, *uperophania* (ὑπερηφανία). These eight *logismoi* are both causally interrelated and inclusive of every other thought *Praktikos* [6]. Throughout the next part of the *Praktikos* [15 – 33], Evagrius suggests methods of facing down and defeating these thoughts. These methods are oriented toward the development of virtues in the different parts of the soul in opposition to the thoughts that agitate those parts.

These thoughts are treated in *Praktikos* [34-39] where Evagrius provides a meditation on how this occurs. Recognizing that the *logismoi* may be ignited both internally and externally by demons, Evagrius then devotes *Praktikos* [40-53] to advising monastics about recognising and dealing with demons.

Having identified the eight principal *logismoi*, explained how they are related to various parts of the soul, provided advice about the development of countervailing virtues and advice concerning demons, Evagrius moves on to the all-important topic of *apatheia* (ἀπάθεια), a state that, for reasons explained in subsequent chapters, I translate as "equanimity".

[486] This overview of *The Prakitikos* is based upon J. Driscoll, *Steps to Spiritual Perfection: Studies on Spiritual Progress in Evagrius Ponticus* (The Newman Press, United States, 2005), 23-24.

Praktikos [54-90] advise the monastic about distinguishing between "imperfect" and "perfect" *apatheia* and the importance and signs of progressively developing *apatheia* in consequence of defeating the *logismoi* and demons that inspire them. It is here that Evagrius most clearly states the implicit relationship between ascetic practice (*praktiké*), *apatheia* and love: "*agape* (ἀγάπη) is the progeny of *apatheia*. *Apatheia* is the very flower of *ascecis*", *Praktikos* [81]; and "the goal of ascetic life is charity; the goal of contemplative life is knowledge"; *Praktikos* [84]. In other words, *ascecis* (*praktiké*) enables the monk to tame the *logismoi* resulting in the "flowering" of internal equanimity, *apatheia* that, in turn "gives birth" to its progeny, love (*agape*).

And it is love that "keeps the door to deep knowledge of the universe"[487] and characterises the purified *nous* in its eschatological state of essential knowledge, *Theologiké*, with God: "there is one good kind of love, which is forever: that which is true knowledge chooses, and it is said to be inseparable from the intellect" [KG 4.50]. By this point in the text, Evagrius has concluded his advice about the ascetic or practical training of the monastic. *Praktikos* [90-100] are a series of "sayings" (*apophthegmata*) of more senior monastic Fathers who have preceded the monk studying the text.

Content and Structure of *The Gnostikos* and *Kephalaia Gnostika*

Having attained *apatheia* the next step in monastic training involves the cultivation of second natural contemplation, then first natural contemplation before the final stage,

[487] *Letter to Anatolius* in J. E. Bamberger, tr., *Evagrius Ponticus: The Praktikos and Chapters on Prayer*, 14.

attaining perfect knowledge (*Theologiké*) characterised as reunion with God as Holy Trinity. At this stage in his or her training, the monastic's mind and soul have reached a sufficient state of inner stability or equanimity to facilitate higher contemplation. Evagrius' instructions and training for developing these higher contemplative states is most comprehensively set out in the *third* text of his trilogy, the *Kephalia Gnostika.*

However, the philosophical gradient between the *Praktikos* and the *Kephalia Gnostika* is simply too steep without a "transitional work" and so the fifty verses of the *Gnostikos* (Γνωστικός) functions as that transitional work; "this arrangement presupposes a principle of reverse, in which beginning students are not instructed in the deeper meaning of Scripture before they are readied by training to understand it. Certain truths are deliberately hidden from them."[488] Like much of the Evagrian corpus, the *Gnostikos* is itself a difficult text to read and even more difficult to understand; "the *Gnostikos* is a form of divine reading and writing, whose goal is, in part to reveal the reflexive mind to itself as a sacred image mediated through the gnostic in his care for the other and his gaze upon Christ."[489]

Nevertheless, Evagrius acknowledges the transition from beginner monastic to more advanced in the opening three verses of the *Gnostikos* in which he contrasts monastics at an earlier stage of formation (*praktikoi*), engaging with the one hundred verses of the *Praktikos* one the one hand, with those monastics who have attained a sufficient state of *apatheia* (*gnostikoi*) and who are focussing on contemplative matters on the other.

[488] R. Darling Young, 'Evagrius the Iconographer: Monastic Pedagogy in the Gnostikos' (2001) 9(1*) Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 58.
[489] K. Corrigan, *Evagrius and Gregory: Mind, Soul and Body in the 4th Century* (Routledge, United Kingdom, 2009), 162.

Evagrius writes in verse 1: "the ascetics (*praktikoi*) will understand the deep purposes of asceticism; the knowers (*gnostikoi*) will see matters of knowledge." Verses 2 and 3 are then read together: "the ascetic (*praktikos*)on the one hand, is he who has acquired the passionate part of the soul alone [so that it] is dispassionate."[490] "The gnostic on the other hand is he who takes the place of salt for those who are unclean, but [the place of light] for those who are pure."[491]

With these verses, Evagrius signals the purpose of the *Gnostikos*; providing advice to the advancing monastic about the importance of maintaining their progression and being of service to others: "the *Gnostikos*, rather than presenting a content, is full of advice and warnings about proper entrance into knowledge and movement within it, advice that always keeps one eye vigilantly focussed on guarding the progress attained thus far in the work of *praktiké*"[492] Because of this distinction, a major theme of the *Gnostikos* concerns the importance, role and exercise of discernment, *diakrisis* (διάκρισις) of both spiritual progress[493] and the need to carefully avoid anger while cultivating its opposite quality, gentleness.[494]

Like the *Praktikos,* Evagrius concludes the *Gnostikos* with five "sayings" (*apophthegmata*) from other monastic teachers before anticipating the work of the third and final text in his monastic trilogy, the *Kephalaia Gnostika*.

[490] *Gnostikos* [2]. Translation of *Gnostikos* by Constantine Theophanes (2006).
[491] *Gnostikos* [3].
[492] J. Driscoll, *Steps to Spiritual Perfection: Studies on Spiritual Progress in Evagrius Ponticus* (The Newman Press, United States, 2005).27.
[493] A. Rich, 'Discerning Evagrius Ponticus Discerning: Διάκρισις in the Works of Evagrius' (2010) *XLVII Studia Patristica* 203.
[494] J. Driscoll, 'A Key for Reading the Ad Monachos of Evagrius Ponticus' (1990) 30(2) *Augustinianum* 361–392.

Evagrius writes; "the goal of the *praktiké* is to purify the intellect and to render it free of passions; that of the *gnostiké* is to reveal the truth hidden in all beings but to distance the intellect from matter and to turn it towards the First Cause (which) is a gift of *theologiké*."[495]

There is a very complex epistemological-psychological framework that informs the relationship between the *Praktikos* and the *Gnostikos.* Evagrius creates a sophisticated theory of cognition, sense perception and of the formation and influence of thoughts, emotions and memories on the *nous* as it struggles to attain *apatheia* before ascending through the different contemplative levels.[496] These issues will be analysed in detail in later chapters as they are brought into conversation with similar issues treated by Tsongkhapa in the *Lamrim Chenmo*.

Evagrius most complex and poetic work is the *Kephalaia Gnostika*, a large text of six chapters ("centuries"), each containing ninety verses (*kephalaia*). These 540 *kephalaia* traverse a very wide and esoteric range of metaphysical, epistemological and ethical subjects: "in this work, more than in all others, Evagrius refuses to shape his meditation in a linear fashion."[497] Despite it's apparent complexity, there is a discernible order to the *Kephalaia Gnostika* because each of its six chapters develops a particular theme and then collectively, the chapters outline the path of spiritual progression[498].

[495] *Gnostikos* [49].
[496] These issues are considered at some length by K. Corrigan*, Evagrius and Gregory: Mind, Soul and Body in the 4th Century* and J. Konstantinovsky, *Evagrius Ponticus: The Making of a Gnostic.*
[497] J. Driscoll, *Steps to Spiritual Perfection*, 32.
[498] J. Driscoll, *Steps to Spiritual Perfection*, 32.

Chapter one invites the monastic to mediation upon the nature of existence as a created being following the Fall. Chapters two and three provide advice concerning the ascent of the mind to perfect, essential knowledge, *Theologiké*. Chapters four and five explain the role and soteriological efficacy of Christ while chapter six concerning eschatology, the restoration of all beings into the original unity of essential knowledge with God as Holy Trinity in the *eschaton* (ἔσχατον).

Accordingly, Evagrius' monastic training program as it is constituted by the *Praktikos,* the *Gnostikos* and the *Kephalaia Gnostika* can be summarised by Driscoll: "these three works express in their relation to each other, the whole sweep of the journey that the monk travels as he makes progress, from its beginning in *praktikē* to its goal of knowledge."[499] This descriptive overview of Evagrius' conception of the path of progressive spiritual process is quite dense and assumes an understanding of several important concepts and processes that may usefully be addressed under the headings "metaphysics", "epistemology" and "ethics" and raise difficult questions that must be addressed. For example, in Evagrius' metaphysics of soul, what is the relationship between the different parts of the soul and the *logismoi*?

How does Evagrius' his epistemological framework, including the role of cognition and sense impression function? What is the relationship between cognition and behaviour, that is, how do epistemological processes influence either the proliferation or abandonment of the *logismoi?* How does the *logismoi* occlude the cultivation of *apatheia*? How are epistemology and ethics related to perfect and imperfect *apatheia*?

[499] J. Driscoll, *Steps to Spiritual Perfection*, 13.

How does *apatheia* differ from mere sensory and emotive passivity? What are the cognitive distinctions between Second and First natural contemplations? What is the relationship between the different levels of contemplation and prayer? What is the role of Jesus Christ within this framework (Evagrius' Christology)? Finally, how does Evagrius relate his conceptions of the metaphysics of the human person striving within a certain epistemological and ethical framework, to the larger soteriological goal of *Theologiké*. These concepts and processes will be explored in greater detail in chapters six and seven as they are brought into dialogue with the concepts and processes constituting the framework of Tsongkhapa's conception of the path of spiritual progress.

Eschatology – Final Things

Given the complexity and subtlety of Evagrius' metaphysical system, it is not surprising that his eschatological framework is controversial and scholars are divided over key elements of Evagrius' writings. We have seen that Evagrian pedagogy is oriented toward the refinement of the *nous* through different dimensions of contemplative purity, culminating in the restoration of the *nous* to essential knowledge, *Theologiké* which is itself the pre-Fall state of the *nous* in receptive contemplation of God as Holy Trinity in love. But what does this mean for humans who are minds, in souls in bodies, existing within a temporal, corporeal world?

In overview, Evagrius advocated a "restorationist", *apokatastasis* (ἀποκατάστασις) conception of the end times, *eschaton*, when God will restore all things and all beings to himself, with all beings becoming one with him.

All of the *logikoi* including demons, will eventually be restored to their original gnostic state of *Theologiké* in receptive contemplation of God as Holy Trinity. Two stages in this *eschaton* seem to be anticipated by Evagrius. First, *in this life* a monastic who has attained *apatheia* and passed from first natural contemplation to second natural contemplation, experiences the nature of her mind, *nous* within the divine light of God's essence. Evagrius himself refers to this experience in his text *Skemmata* which may have originally taken the form of a supplement to the *Kephalaia Gnostika*.[500] In another of his works, *On Thoughts*, Evagrius writes about this light: "when the mind – after having stripped off the old man – has been reclothed in the [new] one who comes from grace, then it will see its state, at the moment of prayer, similar to sapphire or to the color of the sky."[501]

This experience is accompanied by a certain *gnosis* of created reality which is a foretaste of the *Theologiké* to be experienced in the *eschaton*. Second, after death, and at the eventual end of creation and time, each purified *nous* will be rehabilitated to its pre-fallen state. In his *Letter to Melania*, Evagrius employs several metaphors in describing the fate of intellects at the *eschaton* and which is worth quoting at length:[502]

> "And do not wonder at my saying that in the unification of the rational beings with God the father, that they will be one nature in three persons, without addition or subtraction. For take the case of the visible seas, which is one in nature, color and taste. Many rivers of different tastes mix into it. But not only dies it not get changed into their variations on the contrary, without difficulty, it changes them completely

[500] W. Harmless and R. Fitzgerald, 'The Sapphire Light of the Mind: The Skemmata of Evagrius Ponticus' (2001) 62 *Theological Studies*, 503.
[501] W. Harmless and R. Fitzgerald, 'The Sapphire Light of the Mind: The Skemmata of Evagrius Ponticus' (2001) 62 *Theological Studies,* 518.
[502] Extract translated in A. M. Casiday, *Evagrius Ponticus: The Early Church Fathers,* 69.

> into its own nature, color and taste…when mind flow back to him [God] like torrents into the sea, he changes them completely into his own nature, color and taste. They will no longer be many but one in his unending and inseparable unity, because they are united and joined to him."

When extracts from the *Letter to Melania* are then read with the *Kephalia Gnostika*, difficult questions about the nature of the final *eschaton* arise[503]. Does Evagrius mean to say that physicality (bodies) and immaterial souls will cease to exist and only pure *nous* remain? And if "they will no longer be many but one", does this mean that individuation is also eliminated and each *nous* will become part of God? Do *logikoi*, with *nous* now purified, become "like Christ" or "equal to Christ" (*isochristoi*)?

If individuation is eliminated such that each *nous* <u>becomes</u> of the same essence as God, then this would "result either in a change within the divine essence to admit a created essence and therefore division into the Godhead, or a change whereby creation becomes uncreated and thereby introduces additional persons into the Godhead bringing about a situation of pantheism."[504] A third consequence of course is that "this apparent cessation of human distinctiveness according to nature and hypostasis….(means that)….it is highly doubtful whether 'Peter remains Peter, and 'Paul remains Paul'".[505]

[503] A. M Casiday, 'Universal Restoration in Evagrius Ponticus' "Great Letter"' (2010) 47 *Studia Patristica* 223
[504] J. Konstantinovsky*, Evagrius Ponticus: The Making of a Gnostic*, 169.
[505] M. Plested, "Deification in Macarius, Evagrius, and Dionysius," in P. L. Gavrilyuk, A. Hofer, O.P., and M. Levering (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Deification* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024), 132.

These issues are not easily resolved, despite several of the *anathemata* of the Council of 553 CE seeming to explicitly condemn those implications (see Charts 1B and Chart 1C) and several contemporary Evagrian scholars have accused the Council of 553 CE of either "cherry picking" selected texts or extracts of texts from Evagrius to justify the *anathemata*, thus failing to have regard to the totality of Evagrius' texts, failing to distinguish between metaphor and defined dogma[506] and / or failing to consider alternative interpretations within the context of Evagrius' other writings.[507]

Whatever the resolution of those issues, it is clear that when Evagrius writes about the *eschaton* occurring at the end of aeons (αἰῶνες) after *logikoi* have acquired essential knowledge[508] is he speaking of the pre-existence of souls taking rebirth in multiple bodies in each successive aeon, with each aeon preceded by a judgement of *logikoi* at the end of the previous aeon?[509] These deeper and more difficult questions will be explored in chapters six and seven of this thesis in the context of analysis of Tsongkhapa's eschatological framework in the *Lamrim Chenmo.*

Summary & Conclusion

This chapter intended to introduce the basic framework of Evagrius Ponticus' Christian metaphysics; the stages and paths taken by monastics in attaining to spiritual perfection.

[506] J. Konstantinovsky*, Evagrius Ponticus: The Making of a Gnostic*, 169.
[507] A.M. Casiday*, Reconstructing the Theology of Evagrius Ponticus: Beyond Heresy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 201-204,
[508] KG 6.67.
[509] KG 2.75.

It did so by exploring four issues: (i) cosmology, (ii) theological anthropology, (iii) monastic pedagogy and (iv) eschatology – final things. The conceptual arc of Evagrius' Christian system might be traced as follows:[510] First, a human person is fundamentally a *logikos* whose innermost essence is a mind or *nous*. Each *logikos* was created by God to exist in perfect receptivity to essential knowledge, *Theologiké*, which is received by the *nous* as gnostic participation in the Holy Trinity.

Second, *logikoi* (plural) possess free will and, at some non-temporal moment, this relationship of gnostic receptivity was deflected by the *logikoi* resulting in the Fall, the Second Creation of worlds and eons and differentiation of each *logikos* into *nous*, body and soul, whether as angels, humans or demons at differing levels of descent. Third, the soul of each *logikos* is divided into three natures, the rational, (λογιστικόν) (*logistikon*), the appetitive, (ἐπιθυμητικόν) (*epithumetikon*) and the irascible (θυμικόν) (*thumikon*). The balance of these in each soul differs according to the level of descent of each *logistikon*, angel, human or demon. Fourth, each *logikos* possesses a capacity for contemplation commensurate with the degree of its fall. Accordingly, the first step in the ascent of the *nous* back to gnostic reunion with God as Holy Trinity involves *ascecis* or *praktiké* which disciplines the passionate parts of the soul (*epithumetikon* and *thumikon*) in order to make this contemplation possible through the attainment of *apatheia* or equanimity.

Finally, over many aeons and worlds, *logikoi* strive to perfect their contemplative abilities before the final *eschaton* in which they regain their original unity of contemplation with God as Holy Trinity.

[510] This scheme is loosely based on M. Tobon, 'Raising Body and Soul to the Order of the Nous: Anthropology and Contemplation in Evagrius' (2013) *LVII Studia Patristica*, 59-61.

As chapter four progressively unpacked the Evagrian Christian framework through these four issues, it also posed several difficult questions concerning the nature of and relationship between Evagrius' metaphysics, epistemology and ethics. These questions, the issues they raise and the analysis of them in chapters six and seven of this thesis will demonstrate the intimate relationship between the monastic's fundamental identity and the very significant modulation of identity resulting from success at contemplation. We will see that a similar modulation of identity occurs for Tsongkhapa and his Tibetan Buddhist system, thus enabling a comparative analysis of considerable depth. Accordingly, it is to an overview of Tsongkhapa's *Lamrim Chenmo* that this thesis now turns.

CHAPTER Five – Tsongkhapa & the *Lamrim Chenmo*

Who fabricated this being? Where is the being's maker? Whence has the being arisen? When does the being cease to be? (*Samyutta Nikāya* I.135)

Introduction

Chapter three introduced Evagrius Ponticus and Tsongkhapa, tracing the contours of their lives, the major influences in the development of their respective Patristic Christian and Tibetan Mahāyāna Buddhist traditions and briefly introduced the principal texts composed by them to be comparatively analysed by this thesis. Chapter four then provided an overview of the substance and structure of Evagrius' Patristic Christian tradition as he developed it through his trilogy of monastic texts, the *Praktikos*, the *Gnostikos* and the *Kephalaia Gnostika*. The scaffolding for that overview involved exploring how Evagrius' developed four foundational concepts through his texts: *cosmology*, *theological anthropology*, *pedagogy* (the process of spiritual progression) and *eschatology* or the *telos* of the spiritual path.

As it explored these four concepts, chapter four identified and posed several difficult metaphysical and epistemological questions arising from Evagrius' presentation. Those questions were there bracketed, to be later brought into dialogue with similar questions arising from an overview of the Tibetan Mahāyāna Buddhist system as it is presented by Tsongkhapa in his *Lamrim Chenmo* and this is the subject of chapter five.

Chapters three, four and five of this thesis are therefore intended to be read as a trilogy establishing the necessary bibliographic, textual and philosophical / theological foundations for the deeper comparative analysis of these issues in chapters six and seven of the thesis.

However, significant context is needed before analysing how, like Evagrius, Tsongkhapa develops the notions of *cosmology*, *theological anthropology*, *pedagogy* and *eschatology* (telos) of the spiritual path throughout the *Lamrim Chenmo*. By the time of Jesus Christ, Buddhism had already experienced approximately 500 years of Councils, differentiation into various interpretative "schools" and doctrinal developments including the formation of the "Three Baskets" (*Tripiṭaka*) of scripture (*sūtras*), discipline (*vinaya*) and metaphysics (*Abhidharma*). An important point to note here is that these "500 years of Councils.." did not involve ecumenical gatherings of Buddhist "bishops" or monastics to settle doctrinal disputes, or to agree on Credal formulations in the manner of the Council of Nicaea (325 CE) (for example). Rather, they usually involved gatherings of monastics to debate and decide issues of monastic discipline (*Vinaya*).[511] Disagreements about these rules of monastic disciplines did not result in "schisms" so much as the formation of different ordination lineages following different versions of the *Vinaya* and at one stage, there were about 18 different Buddhist traditions. In contemporary times, the texts of only two of these eighteen traditions survive – the *Theravāda* which exist in Pāli, and the *Sarvāstivāda* which exist in Chinese and Tibetan.[512] Further details can be found in Gethin[513] and Carpenter.[514]

[511] J. Westerhoff, *The Golden Age of Buddhist Philosophy*, 43 ff.
[512] J. Westerhoff, *The Golden Age of Buddhist Philosophy*, 43 ff
[513] R. Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism*, 51f
[514] A. Carpenter, *Indian Buddhist Philosophy*.

By the time of Evagrius (345 – 399 CE), the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras* (the "Perfection of Wisdom"), foundational texts for Mahāyāna Buddhism appeared and the Indian monk-scholar Nāgārjuna (c 2nd Century CE) had composed his seminal *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* (the "Root Verses on the Middle Way") a foundational text for the *Madhyamaka* ("Middle Way") interpretative school of Mahāyāna Buddhism. By the time of Evagrius' death in 399 CE, the *Saṃdhinirmocana* and *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtras*, foundational texts for the *Yogācāra* ("Mind Only") interpretative school of Mahāyāna Buddhism, soon to be developed by brothers Vasubandhu and Asaṅga (c 4th-5th Century CE) had also appeared.

Thus, by the time of Evagrius' death at the dawn of the 5th Century CE, the principal dynamics of the content of Buddhist philosophy inherited by Tsongkhapa had substantially taken shape. And like Evagrius, Tsongkhapa wrote for a very specific audience; in his case, 15th Century Tibetan Buddhist monastics already familiar with these principal dynamics and the "presuppositions and principles underlying his approach."[515] Tsongkhapa therefore does not provide the 21st Century, Western, possibly non-Buddhist reader with an explanation of these principal dynamics of Tibetan Mahāyāna Buddhist philosophy that he develops throughout the *Lamrim Chenmo*. Nor does Tsongkhapa provide any background to vital historical, political and intellectual events associated with the transmission and reception of Indian Mahāyāna Buddhists texts and philosophy into Tibet, events that informed the structure and content of the *Lamrim Chenmo* and the cultural context of his principal monastic audience.

[515] E. Napper, *Dependent-Arising and Emptiness: A Tibetan Buddhist Interpretation of Mādhyamika Philosophy* (Wisdom Publications, United States, 2003), 16.

Accordingly, after placing Tsongkhapa within his historical context, chapter five introduces four historical, philological and intellectual events that profoundly influenced the structure and content of the *Lamrim Chenmo* and its presentation of *cosmology*, *theological anthropology*, *pedagogy* and *eschatology* (telos) associated with the Tibetan Buddhist path. First, a brief explanation of Classical Indian Buddhist philosophical principles that were later transmitted into Tibet is provided. Second, and related to this, the debate at Samye (*bSam yas*) monastery in Tibet in the late 8th Century CE determined the reception of Classical Indian Buddhist philosophy and texts consistent with the "gradualist", and not "sudden enlightenment" approach.

Third, the arrival of Atiśa Dīpaṃkara Śrījñāna (982 – 1054 CE) in Tibet in the 11th Century CE and whose text *Bodhipathapradīpa* (*Byang chub lam sgrom*) ("Lamp for the Path") inspired later Tibetan composers (including Tsongkhapa) of "stages of the path" (*lam rim*) and "stages of the doctrine" or *tenrim* (*bstan rim*) texts. And finally, the later diffusion and translation (*phyi dar*) of seminal Indian Madhyamaka texts, particularly those of Candrakīrti, into Tibet throughout the 11th Century CE were interpreted by Tsongkhapa in support of *Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka* (*thal 'gyur ba*) (Middle Way Consequentialist) "interpretative school" of Buddhist philosophy. Understanding these four events will provide context to the more detailed comparative analysis in chapters six and seven.

Tsongkhapa and his Times.

Over one thousand years after Evagrius lived and died, Tsongkhapa was born into a very different part of the world and into a very different cultural and religious society.

Although there is some epigraphic evidence that Persian Manichaeism and Christian Nestorianism were known in Tibet throughout the first Millennium of the Common Era[516], and despite missionary efforts by the remarkable Jesuit, Ippolito Desideri in the 17th Century[517] Tibet was never completely evangelised by Christianity, remaining a Buddhist country surrounded by Buddhist countries, particularly India, China and Nepal.

By the time Tsongkhapa wrote the *Lamrim Chenmo* in 1402 CE, Buddhism had flowered throughout India for almost two thousand years, both amongst the general population and in renowned monastic universities that included Nālandā and Vikramaśila.
However, from the late 10th Century CE, Muslim warlords from Afghanistan began invading Northern India, destroying Buddhist centres of learning, forcing conversions to Islam and smashing Buddhist iconography. By around 1200 CE the great monastic universities of Nālandā and Vikramaśila were in decline and in began to devolve. At the time, the derogatory Islamic word for "idol" was "budd".[518] Buddhism survived the Muslim purge by initially migrating to Southern India, concentrated around Tamil Nadu and then out of India altogether into the Island of Ceylon (Sri Lanka) then Nepal and Tibet.[519] In these countries, Buddhist philosophy was preserved and prospered. Like Evagrius then, Tsongkhapa was the beneficiary of an enormously productive philosophical Buddhist tradition, and he drew deeply from that tradition in composing the *Lamrim Chenmo*.

[516] G. Uray, 'Tibet's Connection with Nestorianism and Manicheism in the 8th–10th Centuries', in E. Steinkellner and H. Tauscher (eds), *Contributions on Tibetan Language, History and Culture: Proceedings of the Csoma de Kőrös Symposium*, Vienna, Austria, 13–19 September 1981.
[517] M. Sweet (trans.) and L. Zwilling (ed.), *Mission to Tibet: The Extraordinary Eighteenth-Century Account of Father Ippolito Desideri* (Wisdom Publications, United States, 2010).
[518] P. Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, History and Practices* (2nd ed., Cambridge University Press, United Kingdom, 2013), 194.
[519] T. Ling, *Buddhist Revival in India: Aspects of the Sociology of Buddhism* (Palgrave Macmillan, United Kingdom, 1980), 24-26.

Chapters three and four explained how Evagrius belonged to a certain Christian spiritual tradition, one particularly influenced by Plato, Plotinus, Origen, Gregory of Nazianzen and Gregory of Nyssa. These antecedent influences profoundly informed the shape and content of Evagrius' texts, his theology and the treatment of them by the Church and theologians in subsequent centuries. The diverse and original nature of Evagrius' texts and theology makes him resistant to superficial characterisation; hence the careful scholarship undertaken throughout the 21st Century in rehabilitating his theology from overly blunt characterisations by past theologians and Church Councils.

Likewise, characterising Tsongkhapa's Buddhist orientation and scholarship resists simple description and like Evagrius, he was the subject of polemical attacks by contemporary and subsequent Buddhist monk-scholars during his lifetime.[520] Where Evagrius was influenced by Plato, Plotinus and Origen and the Gregorys, Tsongkhapa was influenced by the Bengali monk-scholar, Atiśa Dīpaṃkara Śrījñāna (982 – 1054 CE), Ngok Loden Sherap (*rngog blo ldan shes rab*) (1059 – 1109 CE), his disciple Drolungpa (*gro lunga pa*) (c late 1000s – early 1100s CE) and other authors in adopting a "gradualist", basis-path-result structure for the *Lamrim Chenmo*.[521]

Likewise, in the *Lamrim Chenmo's* philosophical orientation to the *Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka* interpretative school of Buddhist philosophy Tsongkhapa was influenced by texts composed by Indian monk-scholars Nāgārjuna (c. 150 – c. 250 CE), Buddhapālita (c 470–550), Candrakīrti (c. 570– c.650 CE) and Śāntideva (c 8th Century CE).

[520] Tsongkhapa's use of Dharmakīrti's *pramāṇa* epistemology in support of Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka philosophy was criticised by Stag tsang lotsāwa (1405 – 1455 CE), Go rampa senge (1429 – 1489 CE) and others – see: S. Thakchoe, 'Prāsaṅgika Epistemology: A Reply to Stag tsang's Charge Against Tsongkhapa's Use of Pramāṇa in Candrakīrti's Philosophy' (2013) 41 *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 535.

[521] In his *Colophon* to the *Lamrim Chenmo,* Tsongkhapa specifically acknowledges the influence of these other *lam rim* texts: LRCM 3:372.

Some of these texts had only been translated from Sanskrit into Tibetan during the "later" (*phyi dar*) dissemination in the 11th and 12 Centuries CE before being eventually consolidated into the Tibetan Buddhist canon of sūtras, the *Kangyur* (*bka' 'gyur*) and śāstras, the *Tengyur* (*bstan 'gyur*) (commentaries) in the 14th Century CE.[522] In orientation therefore, Tsongkhapa is identified as a Mahāyāna (and not Theravāda) Buddhist monk and in philosophical view as advocating the *Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka* interpretative school of Buddhist philosophy as the highest liberative wisdom taught by the historical Buddha and as interpreted by Nāgārjuna and Candrakīrti. In his *Lamrim Chenmo* Tsongkhapa explicitly discusses these views in opposition to those of Bhāvaviveka, who was later identified by Tibetan doxographers to follow the *Svātantrika - Madhyamaka* (*rang gyu pa*) school.

The discussion above is of more than bibliographic or doxographical interest. That Tsongkhapa adheres to the *Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka* tenet system directly influences the "mundane path" vs "supramundane path" method in comparatively analysing the *Natural Contemplations* (Evagrius) and *serenity / śamatha* (Tsongkhapa) in chapter six. It also informs comparative analysis of the nature of the "wisdom" developed through the *Natural Contemplations* -particularly the perception of the *logoi* of material and immaterial creation (Evagrius) and the nature of "supramundane insight" / *vipaśyāna* (Tsongkhapa) in chapter seven. That Tsongkhapa identifies with Mahāyāna Buddhism directly influences the comparative analysis of *agape* (Evagrius) and *bodhicitta* (Tsongkhapa) in chapter eight.

[522] K. Lang, 'Spa-Tshab-Ma-Grags and the Introduction of Madhyamaka-Prāsaṅgika Into Tibet', in M. T. Kapstein and B. J. Cuevas (eds*), Reflections on Tibetan Culture: Essays in Memory of Turrell Wylie* (Edwin Mellen Press, United States, 1989), 127.

Classical Indian Buddhist Principles

Preceding chapters telegraphed an intention to comparatively explore Evagrius' and Tsongkhapa' presentations of *cosmology*, *theological anthropology*, *pedagogy* and *eschatology* (telos). Questions concerning these four dynamics are perennial amongst the religious traditions of the world, including Buddhism. However, *unlike* Evagrius, in two early *sūtras*, the *Cūḷamālunkya* and *Alagadūpama*[523] the Buddha is heard to "dismiss the whole gamut of metaphysical speculation as a futile speculation."[524]

In these *sūtras*, the Buddha compares his teachings to a raft for crossing from the shore of ignorance to the far shore of liberation from suffering. And when pressed for answers by the overwrought monk Mālunkyāputta, the Buddha (perhaps with some exasperation) famously compares him to a person shot with a poison arrow. Instead of immediately extracting the arrow and seeking an antidote, the person, insists on identifying the kind of wood from which the arrow is made, the nature of the bird whose feathers formed the fletch, the name of the archer and so forth, but dies before the antidote is obtained. The Buddha declared that he taught only what is conducive to the end of suffering and the attaining of liberation. All else is distracting and, like the man shot with the poisoned arrow, so too, those who seek answers to deeply metaphysical questions are likely to die and be reborn within *saṃsāra* before obtaining them.[525]

[523] *Cūḷamālunkya* and *Alagadūpama Sūtras*; B. Ñāṇamoli and B. Bodhi (trans.*), The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Majjhima Nikāya* (Wisdom Publications, United States, 1995).
[524] *Cūḷamālunkya* and *Alagadūpama Sūtras:* B. Ñāṇamoli and B. Bodhi (trans.*), The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha:*
[525] *Cūḷamālunkya Sūtra*; B. Ñāṇamoli and B. Bodhi (trans.*), The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha.*

But it is also clear that there *is* a deeply metaphysical content to the Buddha's teachings, involving notions of rebirth within different realms of *saṃsāra*, the relationship between karma and rebirth within those realms, the concepts of *dependent origination* (*pratītyasamutpāda*) (*rten 'brel*), "emptiness" (*śūnyatā*) (*stong pa nyid*) as a rejection of a person's inherent existence (*svabhāva*) (*rang bzhin*), an explanation of what it is that takes rebirth within *saṃsāra* given the "empty" nature of persons and the concept of a wisdom consciousness (*prajñā*) (*shes rab*) that functions as an antidote to the ignorance (*avidyā*) (*ma rig pa*) underpinning the entire sorry cycle of birth, ageing, sickness, death and rebirth.

Likewise, the Buddha's teaching also contains much in the way of ontology (what exists) and epistemology[526] (how do we know what exists) and how both ontology and epistemology inform ethical conduct[527]. All these concepts are discussed by Tsongkhapa throughout the *Lamrim Chenmo* in presenting the path to enlightenment and he assumes his audience is aware of the basic constitutive principles of Buddhist metaphysics, anthropology, epistemology and ethics, all of which have their origin in Classical Indian Buddhist texts.

[526] *Madhupiṇḍika Sutta*; B. Ñāṇamoli and B. Bodhi (trans.*), The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha,* 201.
[527] *Poṭṭhapāda Sutta*; M. Walshe (trans.), *The Long Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Dīgha Nikāya* (Wisdom Publications, United States, 2012), 159.

The 'Dependent Origination' of Buddhism

Buddhism as a "philosophy"[528] is traced to the insights and teachings of Siddhārtha Gautama, who lived in Nepal and India around 563/480 – c. 483/400 BCE.[529] Motivated by his experience of suffering, dis-ease and the general unsatisfactory nature of life as he knew it, Siddhārtha embarked on a religious / spiritual quest for answers to his questions; "why do we suffer, what are the causes of this suffering and is there a way to end this suffering?"[530]

Leaving his family, possessions and social status, Siddhārtha sought out different teachers and from them learned and practiced diverse meditative techniques and subjected himself to severe physical austerities in the search for answers. Unsatisfied with the experiences of severe mortification, Siddhārtha considered that perhaps the answers he sought might be found in a "middle way" between extremes of sensory indulgence and bodily mortification.

[528] I am aware of the on-going debates associated with the question of whether Buddhism is a "philosophy" or a "religion", both or neither. I do not intend to engage with this debate, but see the discussion in: K. Schaeffer, M. Kapstein and G. Tuttle (eds), *Sources of the Tibetan Tradition* (Columbia University Press, United States, 2013), 3-26; J. Bronkhorst, *Buddhist Teachings in India* (Wisdom Publications, United States, 2009), 1ff; 19. D. Smith and J. Whitaker, 'Reading the Buddha as a Philosopher' (2016) 66(2*) Philosophy East and West* 518 and D. Fiordalis (ed.*), Buddhist Spiritual Practices: Thinking with Pierre Hadot on Buddhism, Philosophy and the Path* (Mangalam Press, United States, 2018).1-19.

[529] There are many biographies of the Buddha. However, a particularly insightful presentation of the Buddha's life and teachings can be found in: V. Blomfield*, Gautama Buddha: The Life and Teachings of the Awakened One* (Quercus, United Kingdom, 2011).). See also: K. Armstrong, *Buddha* (Orion Books, United Kingdom, 2002).); J. S. Strong, *The Buddha: A Short Biography* (Oneworld Publications, United Kingdom, 2002) and B. Ñāṇamoli, *The Life of the Buddha According to the Pali Canon* (BPS Pariyatti Publishing, United States, 2021).

[530] Amber Carpenter poses the interesting question that if, as tradition suggests, Siddhārtha Gautama was the son of a wealthy clan leader and enjoyed sufficient wealth to insulate himself from the day-to-day suffering experienced by most others, why did he not "shrink back in horror, decide his father was right, appreciate that he was himself a very lucky young man indeed and go on to become a powerful ruler"? Clearly these questions generated an existential terror that meant he was seeing things very differently: A. Carpenter*, Indian Buddhist Philosophy* (Routledge, United States, 2014), 2.

Recalling an experience of meditative tranquillity from his childhood in which his mind was calm, serviceable and saw deeply, Siddhārtha abandoned his severe ascetic practices, travelled to a park in Bodhgāya and, composing himself in meditation under a Bodhi Tree (*ficus religiosa*) determined not to arise until he had attained the answers he sought. Tradition notes that throughout the evening, the Buddha attained to successively more refined states of insight and awareness until, just toward dawn, he attained enlightenment and with that experience, the answers he sought. By the time of Evagrius' death at the beginning of the 5th Century CE, successive generations of interpretation and scholarship devoted to those answers formed the basis of the foundational textual sources and principles of the Madhyamaka interpretative school of Mahāyāna Buddhist philosophy appropriated and defended by Tsongkhapa in composing his *Lamrim Chenmo* in the 14th Century CE.

How is this evolution of Buddhist philosophy from its inception in India by Siddhārtha Gautama around the 6th-5th Century BCE to its appropriation in Tibet by Tsongkhapa in the 14th Century CE to be understood?

Three Turnings of the Dharma Wheel

From the Buddha's initial experience of enlightenment and for the next forty or so years, he journeyed throughout India teaching his experiences to and sharing his insights with people from all levels of society, all levels of education, disposition and spiritual capacity. It is not surprising therefore that many different interpretations and understandings of the Buddha's teachings developed.

Eventually, different approaches evolved to "systematize these teachings (and) that reveal how they form a cohesive whole and build on each other, leading to an ever deeper understanding of the Dharma."[531] One of those approaches is outlined in chapter seven of the *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra* (the "Sutra Unravelling the Thought") one of the textual sources for the development of Mahāyāna Buddhism and specifically the Yogācāra (Mind Only) interpretative school. That *sūtra* presents a thematic characterisation of the Buddha's teachings in terms of "Three Turnings of the Wheel of the Dharma" (the "Three Turnings"). As a heuristic device, the Three Turnings represent "an example of a kind of doxographical framework extremely widespread in Indian philosophy, which (allows) for the comprehensive description of an entire body of teachings."[532] So too, contemporary textual outlines of Buddhist philosophy appeal to the "Three Turnings" to present and contextualise the evolution of Buddhist texts and thought because it "correspond(s) to the sequence in which the corresponding texts appeared in the history of Buddhism, (and) also considered to represent an ascent in terms of sophistication and authoritativeness."[533]

Chapter seven of the *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra* explains the presentation as follows[534]:

> "Then the Bodhisattva Paramārthasamudgata said to the Bhagavan: "Initially, in the Vārānasī area, in the Deer Park called Sages' Teaching, the Bhagavan taught the aspects of the four truths of the Āryas for those who were genuinely engaged in the [Srāvaka] vehicle. The wheel of doctrine you turned at first is wondrous….however, this wheel of doctrine that the Bhagavan turned is surpassable, provides an

[531] Dalai Lama and T. Chodron*, Approaching the Buddhist Path* (Wisdom Publications, United States, 2017), 99.
[532] J. Westerhoff, *The Golden Age of Indian Buddhist Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 186.
[533] J. Westerhoff, The Golden Age of Indian Buddhist Philosophy, 186.
[534] J. Powers, *Wisdom of the Buddha: The Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra* (Berkeley: Dharma Publishing, 1995), Tibetan Translation Series, 93.

opportunity [for refutation], is of interpretable meaning, and serves as a basis for dispute."

"Then the Bhagavan turned a second wheel of doctrine...for those who are genuinely engaged in the Great Vehicle, because of the aspect of teaching emptiness, beginning with the lack of own-being of phenomena, and beginning with their absence of production, absence of cessation, quiescence from the start, and being naturally in a state of nirvana. However, this wheel of doctrine …is surpassable, provides an opportunity [for refutation], is of interpretable meaning, and serves as a basis for dispute."

"Then the Bhagavan turned a third wheel of doctrine, exceedingly wondrous, for those genuinely engaged in all vehicles, beginning with the lack of own-being of phenomena, and beginning with their absence of production, absence of cessation, quiescence from the start, and being naturally in a state of nirvāṇa. Moreover, that wheel of doctrine….is unsurpassable, does not provide an opportunity [for refutation], is of definitive meaning, and does not serve as a basis for dispute."

In brief,[535] the *sūtra* explains apparent contradictions detected in the Buddha's decades of teachings concerning the non-existence of a "self" (*ātman*) allegedly constituted by an absolute essence (*svabhāva*) while also appearing to teach the existence of certain ontological substances, *dharmas*.

[535] The following is based on: J. S. Strong, *The Experience of Buddhism: Sources and Interpretations* (3rd ed., Thompson Wadsworth, United States, 2008), 163 – 164; P. Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, History and Practices* (2nd ed., Cambridge University Press, United Kingdom, 2013), Dalai Lama and T. Chodron, *Approaching the Buddhist Path* (Wisdom Publications, United States, 2017) and R. Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism* (Oxford University Press, United Kingdom, 1998).

The "First Turning of the Wheel" accords with the first and most foundations teachings of the Buddha, taught shortly after his experience of enlightenment and involves the "Four Noble Truths", "Noble Eightfold Path" where the Buddha taught the non-existence or "emptiness" of the self, but did affirm the reality of irreducible ontological particles, *dharmas*, as building blocks of ontological reality. Tradition equates these teachings with the later *Abhidharma* Buddhist schools.

The "Second Turning of the Wheel" is held to have originated from the discovery and exegesis on the "Perfection of Wisdom Sūtras" (the *Prajñāpāramita Sūtras*) where the Buddha taught *absolute* emptiness of persons and phenomena, including those *dharmas* previously affirmed as existent. Tradition equates these teachings with the *Madhyamaka* (Middle Way) Buddhist school of the Mahāyāna. Tsongkhapa identified with the Middle Way school and throughout the *Lamrim Chenmo* and defends the *Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka*, Consequentialist interpretative "sub-school" of the Madhyamaka.

The "Third Turning of the Wheel" is associated with the Yogācāra ("Mind Only") Buddhist school of the Mahāyāna. According to the *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra*, the teachings of the Buddha supporting the *Abhidharma* and *Madhyamaka* schools are correct, but require interpretation to be understood correctly.

Appearing *after* the Madhyamaka, the *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra* and its Yogācāra off-spring therefore "marks the transition between the *Perfection of Wisdom* texts and the full development of the Vijñānavāda (Yogācāra) school."[536]

[536] J. S. Strong, *The Experience of Buddhism: Sources and Interpretations*, 163.

Despite this neat taxonomy, proponents of the *Madhyamaka* school deny the philosophical efficacy of the teachings comprising the Third Turning of the Wheel, asserting: "these third-turning sūtras were taught primarily to benefit trainees who, although inclined toward the bodhisattva Path, are not yet suitable vessels for the teachings on the absence of inherent existence."[537] The argument made by the Mādhyamikas is that trainees might listen to the teachings on emptiness contained in the *Prajñāpāramita Sūtras* and then fall into the extreme of nihilism. To avoid that possibility, the Buddha taught the tenets of the Yogācāra school.[538]

Tsongkhapa's most explicit treatment of the Three Turnings is found in his text *Essence of Eloquence* (*legs bshad syning po*) ("the *Essence"*).[539] Composed in 1408 at the age of 51 and noted for its "great difficulty and profundity",[540] the *Essence* is an extended defence of the Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka system of tenets against Svātantrika-Madhyamaka, Yogācāra, Sautrāntika and other tenet holders.

In doing so Tsongkhapa uses the opening chapter of the *Essence* to investigate the issue of which of the Buddha's teaching might be considered definitive (*nītārtha*) or interpretable (*neyārtha*).[541] In this context, and consistent with his defence of Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka, Tsongkhapa considers the Second Turning in which the *Perfection of Wisdom Sūtras* were expounded to represent the final and definitive teachings of the Buddha. While the *Lamrim Chemo* was composed approximately six years before the *Essence,* Tsongkhapa's characterisation of the Three Turning is *implicitly* reflected in several chapters.

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[537] Dalai Lama and T. Chodron, *Approaching the Buddhist Path*, 101.
[538] Dalai Lama and T. Chodron, *Approaching the Buddhist Path*, 101.
[539] R. Thurman, *The Central Philosophy of Tibet: A Study and Translation of Jey Tsong Khapa's Essence of True Eloquence* (Princeton University Press, United States, 1984)
[540] J. Gyatso, Review of Tsongkhapa's Speech of Gold in the Essence of True Eloquence: Reason and Enlightenment in the Central Philosophy of Tibet, trans. R. Thurman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, vol. 9, no. 1 (1986), pp. 138–140.
[541] R. Thurman*, The Central Philosophy of Tibet*, 204.

For example, in the chapter titled *Relying on Definitive Sources* (in the English translation) Tsongkhapa reminds practitioners that: "those who wish to know reality must rely on the Conqueror's scriptures (which involves knowing) reality in reliance upon scriptures of definitive meaning."[542] Likewise in a difficult chapter concerning *Valid Establishment*, Tsongkhapa's critique of both Svātantrika-Madhyamaka and Yogācāra positions concerning the role of sense consciousness as valid epistemic instruments, is pervaded by his views of the Three Turnings.[543]

The *Trilakṣaṇa* and The *Four Noble Truths*

The realizations of the Buddha upon his enlightenment reflect his observation that: "whether Tathāgatas (Buddhas) arise or not, there persists that law….that all conditioned phenomena are impermanent…are suffering……are no-self."[544]

Briefly, these "three marks of existence" (*trilakṣaṇa*) are said to characterise the nature of existential reality; all persons and phenomena are impermanent because they arise, abide for a time and then pass away, they are suffering (*duḥkha*) because being impermanent and ever-changing, persons and phenomena are unable to provide a lasting source of happiness and satisfaction, and they are no-self (*anitya*)in the sense that persons and phenomena lack inherent or intrinsic existence (*svabhāva*) but simply exist conventionally, dependently, impermanently.[545]

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[542] LRCM 3:111.
[543] L. Sopa, with D. Rochard, *Steps on the Path to Enlightenment, Volume 5: Insight* (Wisdom Publications, United States, 2017), 169
[544] B. Bodhi, *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Aṅguttara Nikāya* (Wisdom Publications, United States, 2012), 363-364.
[545] D. Mitchell and S. Jacoby, *Buddhism: Introducing the Buddhist Experience* (3rd ed., Oxford University Press, United States, 2014), 33-36.

This conceptually nested observation implicates the notion that persons and phenomena are impermanent (*anitya*) because of the concept of interdependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*) (*rten 'brel*) and likewise, that persons and phenomena have no-self, later being conceived of as "emptiness" (*śūnyatā*) (*stong pa nyid*) and that sentient beings' failure to understand these concepts gives rise to suffering (*duḥkha*).

These observations became foundations for the Buddha's most important teachings, traditionally presented in terms of the *Four Noble Truths* (*catvāri āryasatyāni*) (*bden pa bzhi*) and recorded in several places within the early Pāli *suttas.*[546] They are most prominently presented in the *Dhammacakkappavatana Sutta*[547] (the "Setting in Motion the Wheel of Dharma" Sūtra) in which the Buddha explains the "Four Noble Truths".[548]
In essence, the Buddha taught that the experience of life is characterised by *duḥkha* (*sdug bsngal*), a term that is most commonly translated into English as "suffering" but is probably more accurately conceived of as "dissatisfaction"[549].

[546] The term "Pāli *sūtras*" refers to the collection of texts comprising the Theravāda Canon of sacred writings. "Theravāda" refers to the name of one of three Buddhist traditions (including the Jetavanna and the Abhayagiri) centred in Sri Lanka following the migration of Buddhism from India. Throughout the first millennium, these three Buddhist traditions competed for royal patronage with the Mahāvihara monks of the Theravāda becoming dominant. The Theravāda Canon was completed in about the 5th Century CE and comprised the "three baskets" (*Tipiṭaka*); the *Vinaya-piṭaka* (ordained monastic's rules), the *Sutta-piṭaka* (the collection of the Buddha's teachings) and the *Abhidhamma-piṭaka* (more abstract philosophical lists) – see; C. Anderson, *Pain and It's Ending: The Four Noble Truths in the Theravāda Buddhist Canon* (Routledge, United Kingdom, 2014), 8-9.
[547] *Saccasaṃyutta: Setting in Motion the Wheel of the Dharma*: B. Bodhi*, The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Saṃyutta Nikāya*, 1843.
[548] "Four Noble Truths" is the generally accepted English term for the Buddha's foundational teachings. I am aware that although the Sanskrit word "*satya*" (truth) translates the Pāli *"sacca"*, there is some academic debate about the accuracy of rendering both terms in English as "truth" – see . P. Harvey, 'The Four Ariya-saccas as "True Realities for the Spiritually Ennobled" – the Painful, its Origin, its Cessation, and the Way Going to This – Rather than "Noble Truths" Concerning These' (2009) 26(2*) Buddhist Studies Review* 197.
[549] There is considerable scholarship concerning the accuracy of this translation – see P. Harvey, 'Dukkha, Non-Self, and the Teaching on the Four "Noble Truths"', in S. Emmanuel (ed.), *A Companion to Buddhist Philosophy* (Wiley Blackwell, United Kingdom, 2016), 26.

The Buddha declared:

> "now this, bhikkhus (monks), is the noble truth of suffering: birth is suffering, aging is suffering, death is suffering, union with what is displeasing is suffering; separation from what is pleasing is suffering; not to get what one wants is suffering; in brief, the five aggregates subject to clinging are suffering."[550]

With this "first noble truth", the Buddha pointed out that sentient beings experience suffering in a variety of forms, from coarse physical and emotional pain to more subtle experiences of change-as-suffering, including involuntarily taking rebirth over and again with aggregates that, of their nature, are vulnerable to suffering.

What is it about phenomena, events and people such that they are identified as causes of *duḥkha*? And what is the nature of the suffering experienced? This concerns the "Second Noble Truth"; the truth of the origin of suffering. Ignorant of the interdependent and therefore impermanent nature of persons and phenomena, sentient beings relate to them *as if* they were permanent, self-existent sources of happiness, thereby giving rise to desire, attachment and aversion, emotions and thoughts that *cause* suffering:

> "now this bhikkhus, is the noble truth of the origin of suffering: it is the craving which leads to renewed existence, accompanied by delight and lust, seeking delight here and there; that is, craving for sensual pleasures, craving for existence, craving for extermination."[551]

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[550] *Saccasaṃyutta: Setting in Motion the Wheel of the Dharma*, in B. Bodhi, *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Saṃyutta Nikāya*, 1844.
[551] B. Bodhi, *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Aṅguttara Nikāya,* 363-364.

The Buddha identified the *cause* of suffering as *grasping, craving* (*tṛṣṇā*) (or thirst) and *attachment* fundamentally caused by *ignorance*. Ignorant of the impermanent and essence-less nature of persons and phenomena, sentient beings develop emotions of attachment, lust, desire, *thirst* and grasping; "the basic perspective is that the afflictive emotions, such as desire, hatred, enmity, jealousy and belligerence that bind beings in a round of uncontrolled birth, aging, sickness and death are founded on misperception on the nature of persons and other phenomena."[552] Ignited by ignorance, these afflictive emotions once translated into volitional actions (*karma*) function as the engine for *saṃsāra*; the endless cycle of rebirth, characterised by suffering / dissatisfaction.

By identifying this misconception, this ignorance of the ultimately empty nature of persons and phenomena, the Buddha underscored the importance of "overcoming limitations and errors of ordinary perception in order to gain a liberating knowledge of reality."[553] Wisdom is key. However, the wisdom that functions as the antidote to ignorance is not mere intelligence or knowledge but "an actual antidote that overcomes ignorance through its contradictory mode of apprehension, such that once the antidote is of sufficient strength, it is impossible for ignorance to return."[554] What this means is that Buddhist philosophy is not simply concerned with knowledge:

> "but also with ensuring that one's conduct comes into accord with what one knows....liberation is the result not of knowledge alone, but rather of wisdom - the wise person being the individual who knows the impermanence of entities, who

[552] L. Sopa and J. Hopkins, *Cutting Through Appearances: Practice and Theory of Tibetan Buddhism* (Snow Lion, United States, 1989), 111.
[553] A. Klein, *Knowledge and Liberation: Tibetan Buddhist Epistemology in Support of Transformative Religious Experience* (Snow Lion Publications, United States, 1998), 18.
[554] J. Hopkins, *The Tantric Distinction* (Wisdom Publications, United States, 1999), 80-81.

knows that one ought not to crave and be attached to such entities and finally - by means of constant attentiveness to and transformation of his or her mental, verbal and bodily conduct - does not crave and get attached to entities."[555]

Therefore, like Evagrius, the Buddha places cultivation of wisdom (*prajñā*) (*shes rab*) at the centre of his philosophy of liberation. Doing so enables a comparative analysis of *the nature* of the wisdom that is to be cultivated, *how* that wisdom can be cultivated through certain cognitive processes and then *how*, once cultivated, that wisdom functions as a catalyst of spiritual transformation of personal identity for both Evagrius and Tsongkhapa.

The identification of wisdom as an antidote to suffering implies the potential to attain to the cessation of suffering. However, the "ignorance" that is at the heart of suffering is <u>not</u> a negligent deflection of contemplation of God in receptivity of *Theologiké* as described by Evagrius. Rather, it is an ignorance of the *Four Noble Truths* and their liberative potential.[556] Because suffering has these identifiable causes, it can be eliminated; "now this, bhikkhus, is the noble truth of the cessation of suffering: it is the remainderless fading away and cessation of that same craving, the giving up and relinquishment of it, freedom from it, non-reliance on it."[557]

This "third noble truth" points to the possibility of attaining to a state of complete cessation of suffering; a state of "Nirvana" (*nirvāṇa*) and likened by the Buddha to a "blowing out" or extinguishment of suffering.

[555] D. Burton, 'Knowledge and Liberation: Philosophical Ruminations on a Buddhist Conundrum' (2002) 52(3) *Philosophy East and West* 342.
[556] P. Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, History and Practices*, 68.
[557] B. Bodhi, *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Aṅguttara Nikāya*, 363-364.

The concept of *nirvāṇa* is much debated and often misunderstood. *Nirvāṇa* is not a physical location, nor a state of existential annihilation. Rather, it is a complex description of what happens at (i) the moment of awakening, including (ii) a certain arising of wisdom and cessation of ignorance and (iii) a state or condition in which an enlightened being exist after he or she has died.[558] The notion of *nirvāṇa* and its conception in the *Lamrim Chenmo* will be explored in subsequent chapters.

Since suffering has causes that can be extinguished, so too, *nirvāṇa* can be considered a result of certain causes, the endpoint of a path to be cultivated. The process is summarised by Carpenter:[559] "although suffering exists, it does not arise arbitrarily. Suffering has causes that we can understand and grasp and thus remove. Experience does not have to be one of suffering and we ourselves can make it otherwise."

The Buddha stated: "now this bhikkhus, is the noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering: it is this Noble Eightfold Path; that is, right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration."[560] These eight components of the Noble Eightfold Path comprise the *Fourth Noble Truth* and are traditionally divided into three: "ethics" (right speech, right action, right livelihood), "concentration" (right thought, right mindfulness) and "wisdom" (right concentration, right view).

[558] R. Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism*, 75.
[559] A. Carpenter, *Indian Buddhist Philosophy*, 6.
[560] *Saccasaṃyutta: Setting in Motion the Wheel of the Dharma*, B. Bodhi, *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Saṃyutta Nikāya*, 1844.

The basic idea is that through cultivating an ethical life, curbing desire, hatred and attachment, one's mind begins to settle and calm down. A calm mind facilitates a depth of mindfulness and concentration not possible when agitated by strong desire or hatred. A calm mind facilitates a deeper analysis of the quality and strength of wisdom necessary to displace the ignorance that drives desire, attachment and anger and thus cyclic existence. When the Eightfold Path and its accompanying wisdom and ethics are cultivated to its highest expression, the Buddha explained the result:

> "bhikkhus, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me vision, knowledge, wisdom, true knowledge and light. When my knowledge of and vision of these Four Noble Truths as they really are was thoroughly purified, then I claimed to have awakened to the unsurpassed perfect enlightenment…the knowledge and vision arose in me: unshakable is the liberation of my mind. This is my last birth, now there is no more renewed existence"[561]

Pratītyasamutpāda - Dependent Origination

Exactly *how* the Four Noble Truths function, both within a single lifetime and across multiple rebirths, is described by the Buddha in the seminal concept of dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*) (*rten 'brel*). It appears in several places and contexts within the Pāli sūttas, sometimes in connection with a discourse on the *Four Noble Truths*, and sometimes as an independent teaching.

[561] *Saccasaṃyutta: Setting in Motion the Wheel of the Dharma*, B. Bodhi, *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Saṃyutta Nikāya*, 1845 – 1846.

In the *Bahudhātuka Sūtra*, it is expressed succinctly by the Buddha: "when this exists, that comes to be; with the arising of this, that arises. When this does not exist, that does not come to be; with the cessation of this, that ceases."[562] It is difficult to over-estimate the importance of the principle of dependent origination for Buddhist philosophy. In the *Mahāhatthipadopama Sutta*, Sāriputta recalled the Buddha *equating* the Dharma with dependent origination: "one who sees dependent origination sees the Dhamma; one who sees the Dhamma see dependent origination."[563]

How does dependent origination function as both the cause and ending of suffering and *saṃsāra*? Its mechanism, involving 12 "links" (*nidānas*) is described at length in the *Nidānasaṃyutta Sūtra*.[564] The *Sūtra* records the Buddha teaching about the twelve-links of dependent origination:[565]

> "Bhikkhus, I will teach you dependent origination. Listen to that and attend closely, I will speak…..And what, bhikkhus, is dependent origination? With (i) ignorance as condition, (ii) volitional formations come to be; with volitional formations as condition, (iii) consciousness (comes to be); with consciousness as condition, (iv) name and form (comes to be); with name and form as condition, (v) the six sense bases (comes to be); with the six sense bases as condition, (vi) contact (comes to be); with contact as condition, (vii) feeling (comes to be); with feeling as condition, (vii) craving (comes to be); with craving as condition, (ix) clinging (attachment, comes to

[562] *Bahudhātuka Sūtra,* B. Ñāṇamoli, B. and B. Bodhi, *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Majjhima Nikāya,* 927.
[563] *Mahāhatthipadopama Sutta*, B. Ñāṇamoli, B. and B. Bodhi, *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Majjhima Nikāya,* 284.
[564] *Nidānasaṃyutta Sūtra*, B. Bodhi, *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Saṃyutta Nikāya,* 533ff.
[565] *Nidānasaṃyutta Sūtra,* B. Bodhi, *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Saṃyutta Nikāya,* 533ff.

be); with clinging (attachment); (x) existence (comes to be); with existence as condition, (xi) birth (comes to be); with birth; (xii) aging-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure and despair come to be. Such is the origin of this whole mass of suffering."

These 12 links are traditionally read in a "forward mode" (*anuloma*) as an explanation of how suffering / *duḥkha* arises and in a "reverse mode" (*paṭiloma*) as an explanation of how suffering / *duḥkha* ceases.[566] Briefly and in overview, when a person is (i) ignorant of the nature and cause of suffering, the potential for its cessation and the path to that cessation (the Four Noble Truths), she generates (ii) volitional (mental) formations such as the afflictive emotions of desire, anger and attachment. Those afflictive emotions then condition the state of her (iii) consciousness, which assumes the disposition of those afflictive mental formations and which, in turn, influences how she experiences the world and others.

It is this foundational consciousness, characterised by both positive and negative qualities that continues after death until the consciousness takes rebirth in a new (iv) name and form (*nāma-rūpa*) a "new" embodied person still influenced and conditioned by the disposition of that consciousness. As that "new" person becomes involved with the world, her (v) senses, under the influence of the dispositions of her consciousness, become oriented to different persons and objects forming the world, perhaps noticing some but not others.

[566] D. Mitchell and S. Jacoby, Buddhism*: Introducing the Buddhist Experience*, 38ff and P. Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, History and Practices*, 66ff.

The disposition of her senses then influences her (vi) contact with persons and objects forming the world which are subjectively experienced as the arising of certain (vii) feelings of happiness or suffering or any shade in between. The intensity of these feelings of happiness, suffering or otherwise generate (viii) craving to continue the subjective experiences of happy feelings or to end the experience of unhappy feelings. These cravings inevitably amplify into (ix) clinging / attachment to those experiences.

The Buddha identified clinging / attachment as the energetic cause of (x) existence, the coming into existence of a new incarnation. The person's consciousness, coloured or shaped by the attachments and aversion formed by the person throughout their life influences the condition of (xi) their future (re)birth; "this continuing process of becoming, marked by one's personality-forming attachments, conditions one's *birth,*"[567] a birth that ultimately arising in dependence on ignorance brings with it (xii) aging-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure and despair the whole mass of *saṃsāra*.

And while this formulation of *pratītyasamutpāda* may seem depressing, when read in its "reverse mode", it becomes a formula for liberation since; "what is implied here is that the process of dependent arising can also be a process of dependent cessation."[568]

[567] D. Mitchell and S. Jacoby, *Buddhism: Introducing the Buddhist Experience*, 40.
[568] D. Mitchell and S. Jacoby, *Buddhism: Introducing the Buddhist Experience*, 41.

The process is described in the *Nidānasaṃyutta Sūtra*.[569]

> "But with the fading away and cessation of (i) ignorance comes cessation of (ii) volitional formations; with the cessation of volitional formations comes cessation of (iii) consciousness; with the cessation of consciousness comes cessation of (iv) name and form; with the cessation of name and form comes cessation of the (v) six sense bases; with the cessation of the six sense bases comes cessation of (vi) contact; with the cessation of contact comes cessation of (vii) feeling; with the cessation of feeling comes the cessation of (viii) craving; with the cessation of craving comes the cessation of (ix) clinging (attachment); with the cessation of clinging (attachment) comes the cessation of (x) existence; with the cessation of existence comes the cessation of (xi) birth; with the cessation of birth, comes the cessation of (xii) aging and death, sorrow lamentation, pain, displeasure and despair the whole mass of *saṃsāra.*

In the later Mahāyāna tradition, Nāgārjuna in his *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, explicitly states that it is impossible to understand the *Four Noble Truths* without also understanding dependent origination.[570] How this is so is described in the *Dasakanipāta* (the Book of Tens) in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* in the context of the context of the Eight-Fold Path (the Fourth Noble Truth):[571]

[569] *Nidānasaṃyutta Sūtra*, B. Bodhi, *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Saṃyutta Nikāya,* 534.
[570] M. Siderits and S. Katsura, *Nāgārjuna's Middle Way: Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* (Wisdom Publications, United States, 2013), 288.
[571] *Dasakanipāta*, B. Bodhi*, The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Saṃyutta Nikāya*, 1503.

> "For one of right view, right intention originates. For one of right intention, right speech originates. For one of right speech, right action originates. For one of right action, right livelihood originated. For one of right livelihood, right effort originates. For one of right effort, right mindfulness originates. For one of right mindfulness, right concentration originates. For one of right concentration, right knowledge originates. For one of right knowledge, right liberation originates."

These Twelve Links might be thought of as the "mechanics"; the gears and wheels by which the principle of dependent origination operates. The corollary of dependent origination is the understanding of emptiness – since all persons and phenomena have their origin in dependence upon causes and conditions, there *can be no* cause-less, no un-conditioned, permanent, inherently existent persons or phenomena. And yet, persons and phenomena *do exist* and function perfectly well.

Despite his brilliance, Tsongkhapa remained perturbed by the implications of the principle of dependent origination; negate too much and a practitioner falls into nihilism, but negate too little and there remains something, however, subtle for a practitioner to generate attachment and aversion and thus generate karma and thus remain trapped within *saṃsāra*.

It was only after a mystical experience during a retreat in the Wölkha Valley in 1397, that Tsongkhapa claimed to completely understand the relationship between dependent origination and emptiness in a way that dispelled all confusion.[572]

[572] T.Jinpa, *Tsongkhapa: A Buddha in the Land of Snows*, 166-168.

Tsongkhapa's breakthrough is reflected in several texts written after the Wölkha Valley retreat, most immediately producing an. ecstatic poem of praise to the Buddha for teaching dependent origination *(rten cing 'brel bar 'byung ba la bstod pa*). Five years later, Tsongkhapa would incorporate his insights into dependent origination in his *Lamrim Chenmo* and then, six years *after* composing the *Lamrim Chenmo*, he would compose the *Ocean of Reasoning* (*rigs pa'i rgya mtsho*) his principal commentary on Nāgārjuna's *Root Verses on the Middle Way* (*Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*) in which he devotes an entire chapter to explaining how dependent origination is perfectly compatible with Nāgārjuna's exegesis on emptiness.[573]

For Tsongkhapa, liberation, the cessation of one's endless and uncontrolled rebirth within *saṃsāra* with its inescapable sufferings, is first and foremost a function of *knowledge*, of the cultivation of a certain form of *wisdom* (*prajñā*): "how we understand the basic nature of reality makes a difference to how our life goes and to who we are as persons. Without a correct view of reality, life will not really go well."[574]

He then avers to this correct view of reality and explicitly incorporates the principle of dependent origination into his *Lamrim Chenmo* where he urges practitioners to reflect on the process as a method for developing renunciation and the mind that seeks liberation from *saṃsāra*.[575] Tsongkhapa summarises the significance of dependent origination in the following terms:[576]

[573] Tsongkhapa, *Ocean of Reasoning: A Great Commentary on Nāgārjuna's Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, trans. Geshe Ngawang Samten and Jay L. Garfield (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).
[574] A. Carpenter, *Indian Buddhist Philosophy,* 12.
[575] LRCM 1:315.
[576] LRCM 1:315.

> "You should understand well how cyclic existence – the aggregates of suffering-is formed through the power of its origin-karma and the afflictions-and, in particular, how the wheel of existence turns in the context of the twelve factors. Understanding this, and becoming familiar with it destroys the unbearable gloom of confusion – the root of all problems…..and it is what motivates you toward the path to liberation through exact knowledge of the characteristics of cyclic existence and intense disenchantment with them."

The Three Vehicles & "*Nirvāṇa"*

At this point, it is important to note that in the centuries following the death of the Buddha the Pāli and Sanskrit Indian traditions came to characterise his teachings in different ways, including the notion that his teachings represented a "vehicle" (yāna) by which a practitioner might progress along a "path" (*mārga*) beyond *saṃsāra* to liberation, to *nirvāṇa*.[577] These vehicles are the "Hearer Vehicle" (*Śrāvakayāna*), the "Solitary Realiser Vehicle" (*Pratyekabuddhayāna*) and the "Bodhisattva Vehicle" (*Bodhisattvayāna*) – also commonly referred to as the "*Mahāyāna*".

Although both the "Pāli and Sanskrit traditions contain teachings on all three vehicles…the Pāli tradition places more emphasis on the *Śrāvaka* Vehicle and the Sanskrit tradition on the *Bodhisattva* Vehicle."[578]

[577] R. E. Buswell and R. M. Gimello (eds), *Paths to Liberation: The Mārga and Its Transformations in Buddhist Thought* (University of Hawaii Press, 1992).
[578] Dalai Lama and T. Chodron, *Approaching the Buddhist Path,* 77.

In addition, the *Śrāvakayāna*, the *Pratyekabuddhayāna* and the *Bodhisattvayāna* describes a path and practices "leading to its own awakening.[579] The reference to "awakening" directs attention to the summation and culmination of Buddhist practice – most commonly referred to as "*nirvāṇa*".

Throughout his *Lamrim Chenmo* Tsongkhapa frequently employs the term "*nirvāṇa*" to describe the summit of Buddhist practice. He devotes a chapter within the Insight Section describing the "Stages of Entry into Reality" in the following terms: "*Nirvāṇa* is the reality one seeks to attain, but what is it?"[580] This question does not admit to a straightforward answer because as noted above, and from Tsongkhapa's perspective, the *nirvāṇa* attained by *Śrāvakas*, *Pratyekabuddhas* and *Bodhisattvas* differs to such an extent that Tsongkhapa urges practitioners to "abandon the two lower vehicles" (*Śrāvakayāna* and *Pratyekabuddhayāna*) and to enter the *Bodhisattvayāna*.[581]

Why Tsongkhapa urges pursuit of the bodhisattva vehicle has to do with the way the *Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka* ("Middle Way Consequence") tenet system evaluates the capacity of other tenet systems to facilitate in practitioners the development of the *kind of* wisdom and compassion needed to overcome the obstacles to enlightenment.

[579] Dalai Lama and T. Chodron, *Approaching the Buddhist Path*, 76-77.
[580] LRCM 3:119.
[581] LRCM 2:14, citing Āryaśūra's *Compendium of the Perfections* (*Pārmitāsamāsa*).

Explained in further detail in chapter seven of the thesis and throughout the *Lamrim Chenmo* Tsongkhapa adheres to the traditional doxography of Indian Buddhist Tenets (Skt *siddhānta*) (Tib: *grub mtha'*): *Vaibhāṣika*, *Sautrāntika*, *Yogācāra / Cittamātra* / (Mind Only) and the two Madhyamaka sub-schools: *Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka*, and *Svātantrika-Madhyamaka* with Tsongkhapa himself identifying as an adherent of the *Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka* tenet school.

This traditional presentation of Buddhist tenets stands apart from the "three vehicles" (*yānas*) discussed above. Therefore, a practitioner may be a follower of the *Śrāvakayāna* or *Pratyekabuddhayāna* but also propound *Mahāyāna* tenets of the *Yogācāra* or *Madhyamaka* systems. Likewise, a practitioner may be following the *bodhisattva* path (*Mahāyāna*) in motivation while propounding *Vaibhāṣika* or *Sautrāntika* tenets. Referring to Vasubandhu (c 4^{th} – 5^{th} centuries CE), Lamotte remarks: "who can believe that Vasubandhu…was a *Vaibhāṣika* in his youth, a *Sautrāntika* in his mature years, a *Vijjñānnavādin* (*Yogācārin*) in his old age, and a *Pure Land* follower of Amitābha at his death?"[582]

Discussed below, but briefly summarised here for context, *Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka* holds that practitioners following the *Śrāvakayāna* or *Pratyekabuddhayāna* (and usually propounding *Vaibhāṣika* or *Sautrāntika* tenets), may indeed achieve *nirvāṇa* as liberation from cyclic existence. However, such *arhats* do not achieve "enlightenment" (Skt: *bodhi*) (Tib: *byang chub*), because they have not eliminated *all* of the obstacles to enlightenment. Chart A1 (over) summarises the different "*nirvāṇas*".

[582] É. Lamotte, *History of Indian Buddhism: From the Origins to the Śaka Era*, S. Boin-Webb (trans.) (Université catholique de Louvain, Institut orientaliste, Louvain-la-Neuve, 1988), 39.

Chart 1A

Different Understandings of "Nirvāṇa"

Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka

[contrasted with "lower" tenet systems]

*Svātantrika Madhyamaka, Yogācāra (*Mind Only), *Vaibhāṣika & Sautrāntika.*

Nirvāṇa	Sanskrit prefix "nir" (out) + root: "√va" (blow) (therefore = "to blow out")
Natural Nirvāṇa (*prakṛtinirṇati*) (*Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka*)	The mind's emptiness of inherent existence. "Since only emptiness has the character of stopping all elaborations, it is called nirvāṇa" (Candrakīrti, *Clear Words / Prasannapadā*)
Nirvāṇa *with* remainder (*sopadhiśeṣanirvāṇa*) (Lower tenet schools)	Śrāvaka or Pratyekabuddha arhats who attain liberation (nirvāṇa) while continuing to possess contaminated, appropriated aggregates (still alive).
Nirvāṇa *without* remainder (*nirupadhiseṣanirvāṇa*) (Lower tenet systems)	Śrāvaka or Pratyekabuddha arhats who attain liberation (nirvāṇa) while alive and upon death shed their contaminated, appropriated aggregates.
Nirvāṇa *with* remainder (*Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka*)	The *appearance* of inherent existence / dualistic appearance of subject and object to Śrāvaka or Pratyekabuddha arhats while not in meditative equipoise on emptiness. (Why? Because such arhats have not overcome *cognitive obscurations*)
Nirvāṇa *without* remainder (*Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka*)	The *cessation* of inherent existence / dualistic appearance of subject and object and of afflictive obscurations when Śrāvaka or Pratyekabuddha arhats are in single pointed meditative equipoise on emptiness.
Non-abiding Nirvāṇa (*apratiṣṭhanirvāṇa*) (*Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka*)	The purified aspect of the mind of a Buddha, free from both *afflictive* and *cognitive* obscurations. For *Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka*, no such distinction between nirvāṇa *with* remainder and nirvāṇa *without* remainder. A Buddha has overcome *both* afflictive and cognitive obscurations

These were /are the Classical Indian Buddhist principles developed in India during the lifetime of the Buddha and expounded upon in the centuries following his death.
The transmission and reception of Buddhist philosophy and the texts that communicate it from India into Tibet is a vast and contested arena of scholarship[583] and it is not within the scope of this thesis to recapitulate this scholarship or attempt resolution of contested issues.

Noted above, the *second* important event shaping the content and structure of Tsongkhapa's *Lamrim Chenmo* concerned a debate between two monks in the 8th Century CE and upon which the fate of Tibetan Buddhism would be decided.

The Samyé Debate and Ascendency of the "Gradualist" Spiritual Path

Both Evagrius Ponticus and Tsongkhapa characterise progression in their respective spiritual traditions as a *gradual process* undertaken by monastics over the course of their lives.

[583] M. Kapstein, *The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism: Conversion, Contestation and Memory* (Oxford University Press, United States, 2000); D. Seyfort Ruegg, *Three Studies in the History of Indian and Tibetan Madhyamaka Philosophy, Studies in Indian and Tibetan Madhyamaka Thought* (University of Austria, 2000); A. Heirmann and S. Bumbacher (eds), *The Spread of Buddhism* (Brill Publishers, Boston, United States, 2007); K. Schaeffer, M. Kapstein and G. Tuttle (eds), *Sources of the Tibetan Tradition* (Columbia University Press, United States, 2013); D. Snellgrove*, Indo-Tibetan Buddhism: Indian Buddhists & Their Tibetan Successors* (Orchid Press, Thailand, 2004); L. Stein and N. Zangpo (trans.*), Butön's History of Buddhism in India and Its Spread to Tibet* (Snow Lion Publications, United States, 2013); M. Kapstein, *The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism: Conversion, Contestation and Memory* (Oxford University Press, United States, 2000).); P. Williams, 'Some Random Reflections on the Study of Tibetan Madhyamaka' (1989) 14(1) *The Tibet Journal* 1; J. Dunne, 'Madhyamaka in India and Tibet', in J. Garfield and W. Edelglass (eds*), The Oxford Handbook of World Philosophy* (Oxford University Press, United Kingdom, 2011), 215; K. Lang, 'Spa-Tshab-Ma-Grags and the Introduction of Madhyamaka-Prāsaṅgika Into Tibet', in M. T. Kapstein and B. J. Cuevas (eds), *Reflections on Tibetan Culture: Essays in Memory of Turrell Wylie* (Edwin Mellen Press, United States, 1989), 127; D. Lopez (ed.*), Buddhist Hermeneutics* (Studies in East Asian Buddhism No. 6, The Kuroda Institute, United States, 1992).

This is evident from the "stages of the path" trilogy of Evagrius' texts, the *Praktikos, Gnostikos* and *Kephalaia Gnostika* introduced in Chapter Two and from the internal structure of Tsongkhapa's *Lamrim Chenmo*. For Evagrius and Tsongkhapa respectively, the transformation of individual identity from mind in a soul in a body constituting embodied personhood, to *Gnostikos* (mind in union with God) and from an ignorant, suffering sentient being endlessly and helplessly cycling within *saṃsāra,* to an enlightened being, is the fruit of a disciplined life dedicated to *praktiké* / ethics, contemplation / meditation and *gnostike* / wisdom. It is not an instantaneous event.[584]

However, Tsongkhapa might never have composed his *Lamrim Chenmo* with this gradualist structure were it not for the outcome of a debate (or series of debates) in the late 8th Century CE and described as "an historical event of the greatest importance (and) what has aptly been called 'a major turn in the religious history of Tibet.'"[585] In its significance for the establishment of a gradualist approach to Buddhist philosophy within Tibet, the *Samyé* debate was similar but not identical to the various Christian Councils that resolved competing theological issues and thus determined future orthodoxy.[586] In discussing the *Samyé* debate from the sources mentioned below, Ruegg's observation is to be noted: "it would be illusory however, to think that from any of those sources, we can now retrieve a definitive factual version of events exactly as they happened."[587]

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[584] C. Stewart, 'Evagrius Ponticus on Monastic Pedagogy', in J. Behr et al., *The Tradition of Orthodoxy in the West: Festschrift for Bishop Kallistos (Ware) of Diokleia*, 241 and J. Garfield, 'Buddhist Ethics in the Context of Conventional Truth: Path and Transformation', in The Cowherds (eds*), Moonpaths: Emptiness and Ethics* (Oxford University Press, United States, 2016), 80.

[585] J. Roccasalvo, 'The Debate at bSam yas: A Study in Religious Contrast and Correspondence' (1980) 30(4) *Philosophy East and West* 506.

[586] I am aware that the *Samye* debate was not identical to the Christian Councils, a point made by Ruegg who notes that the debate was neither a Council "nor even a synod"; D. Seyfort Ruegg, 'The Great Debate Between Gradualists and Simultaneists in Eighth-Century Tibet', in *Buddha-Nature, Mind and the Problem of Gradualism in a Comparative Perspective: On the Transmission and Reception of Buddhism in India and Tibet* (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1989), 57.

[587] D. Seyfort Ruegg, 'The Great Debate Between Gradualists and Simultaneists in Eighth-Century Tibet', 58.

Ruegg's discussion of the extant documentary sources should mitigate attempts to advocate for definitive philological or doctrinal conclusions about the debate.[588]

What then is the relationship between the *Samyé* debate and the composition of the *Lamrim Chenmo*?

Noted above, scholars generally discuss the transmission and reception of Buddhism into Tibet within the contest of two diffusions; an early diffusion from the 7th to the 9th centuries CE and referred to as the *snga dar*, and a later diffusion from the late 10th century to the 12th century and referred to as the *phyi dar*.[589] Between these two diffusions, an unhappy interregnum of civil unrest and religious persecution under the reign of the Tibetan king *Lang Darma* (r. 838-842 CE) threw the original early spread into disarray.[590]

During the early diffusion, King *Songtsen Gampo* (r. 605 – 650 CE) consolidated various alliances with neighbouring countries by entering into politically astute marriages, including taking a Chinese and Nepalese Buddhist princess as wives. These Buddhist wives were largely responsible for the construction of the first Buddhist temples and statues in *Lhasa*, the Capital of Tibet and for the introduction of Chinese Ch'an (Zen) Buddhism in Tibet.[591]

[588] A point underscored by the five contributors to the Panel Discussion concerning the *Samyé* debate in the *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, 2016 Vol 39.
[589] K. Kollmar-Paulenz, 'The Buddhist Way Into Tibet', in A. Heirmann and S. Bumbacher (eds), *The Spread of Buddhism* (Brill Publishers, Boston, United States, 2007), 305 and U. Roesler, '"As it is said in a Sutra": Freedom and Variation in Quotations from the Buddhist Scriptures in Early Bka' gdams pa Literature' (2014) *23 Journal of Indian Philosophy* 493.
[590] S. Van Schaik, *Tibet: A History,* 46ff; D. Mitchell and S. Jacoby*, Buddhism: Introducing the Buddhist Experience* (3rd ed., Oxford University Press, United States, 2014), 180-181.
[591] D. Mitchell and S. Jacoby*, Buddhism: Introducing the Buddhist Experience*, 177ff.

Over the century between the death of King *Songtsen Gampo* and the accession of his descendant King *Tri Songdetsen* (r. 755-797), both Indian and Chinese, Ch'an Buddhist traditions had established themselves within Tibet and attracted influential followers amongst the clans whose members constituted the Tibetan Royal Court. A narrative of this period is recorded in the *Testament of Ba* (*dBa' bzhed*) ("the *Testament*") allegedly written by a member of King *Tri Songdetsen's* Imperial Court named Ba Selnang (*dba' gsal snang*).

The *Testament* belongs to the Royal Discourse (*bka' mchid*) genre and at its core is the "historical narrative of the establishment of Buddhism in Tibet during the reign of the Khri srong lde bstan."[592] According to the *Testament*, a Chinese Ch'an monk-scholar Hwa shan Mahāyāna (also variously referred to in the literature as *Hvashang, Hva 'san* and *Heshang Moheyan*)[593] arrived in Tibet and gained many followers (Demiéville suggests up to 5000)[594] attracted to the Ch'an (Zen) Buddhist tradition. These followers of Hvashang came into open conflict with the followers of the Indian Buddhist tradition represented by Śāntarakṣita (ca. 723 – 787 CE) and his disciple Kamalaśīla (ca. 740 – 795 CE) and who had previously been invited to Tibet, established the *Samyé* monastery and ordained the first indigenous Tibetans as monks in the Indian Buddhist lineage.

[592] S. van Schaik and K. Iwao, 'Fragments of the Testament of Ba from Dunhuang' (2008) 128(3) *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 477.
[593] Buswell and Lopez note that the term "Moheyen" is the Chinese translation of "Mahāyāna: R. Buswell and D. Lopez, *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism* (Princeton University Press, United States, 2014), 147.
[594] P. Demiéville, *Le Councile de Lhasa. Une controverse sur le quiétisme entre Bouddhistes de l'Inde et de la Chine au VIIIe siècle de l'ère chrétienne*, vol. 1 (Presses Universitaires de France, 1952), 24.

Büton's text, "*History*", suggests that these conflicts were sparked by the increasing number of Tibetans adopting the Ch'an school of Buddhism thus causing a great deal of resentment amongst the Indian Buddhists.[595] From the Ch'an perspective, the *Testament* suggests that "the disappointed followers of Hwa shang Mahāyāna expressed their protests with acts of self-mortification, and threatened to kill their opponents and commit collective suicide."[596]

Ruegg expresses the tension between the different traditions less dramatically: "As a consequence of this teaching activity flowing from the Chinese and Indian Buddhist traditions, there came to the fore certain differences between the doctrinal and monastic traditions of Śāntarakṣita's school and the apparently less organized meditative and teaching traditions of the Ho-shangs that were linked in particular with the Ch'an (*Dhyāna*) Buddhism."[597] However, given the support of the Ch'an Buddhist tradition by some of the most influential Tibetan clans at Court, it was imperative for King *Tri Songdetsen* to reach a solution to the deteriorating religious environment.[598]

His solution was to arrange for a debate between representatives of the Indian and Chinese Ch'an Buddhist schools. By this time Śāntarakṣita had died, but not before advising that in the event of doctrinal disputes, his disciple Kamalaśīla should be consulted. And so it was that sometime around 797 CE a debate or series of debates between Kamalaśīla and Hvashang Mahāyāna took place in a temple at the monastery of *Samyé,* allegedly

[595] J. Roccasalvo, 'The Debate at bSam yas: A Study in Religious Contrast and Correspondence' (1980) 30(4) *Philosophy East and West* 505.
[596] P. Wangdu and H. Diemberger*, dBa' bzhed: The Royal Narrative Concerning the Bringing of the Buddha's Doctrine to Tibet* (Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften – Tibetan Academy of Social Sciences of the Autonomous Region Tibet, Austria, 2000), 20.
[597] D. Seyfort Ruegg, '*The Great Debate Between Gradualists and Simultaneists in Eighth-Century Tibet*', 60.
[598] Karenina Kollmar-Paulenz in Ann Heirmann and Stephen Bumbacher (eds) (2007) at 324.

adjudicated by King *Tri Songdetsen* himself, an "event of the greatest significance for Tibetan history and culture which had an enduring influence on later religious and philosophical development in Tibet."[599] The eventual outcome of the debate was so important because the Buddhist philosophical "school" that prevailed would, from that time on, inform the future reception and development of Buddhism within Tibet.

Ruegg expresses the conflict as less of a clash between Indian and Chinese expressions of Buddhism, arguing instead that "...it may be more accurate to speak not (as has so often been done) of a clash in Tibet between Indian and Chinese Buddhism and of an ensuing Sino-Indian-debate or council, but rather of the encounter, tension and confrontation between certain Indo-Tibetan and Sino-Tibetan traditions."[600] Ruegg subsequently clarified his observation arguing that to broadly characterise the *Samyé* debate as a Sino-Indian or an Indo-Chinese controversy may "lead to a misapprehension as to its nature and purpose, for the discussions were evidently set in train by the Tibetans themselves in order to clarify acute problems of theory and practice that had urgently come to their attention."[601]

In clarifying these "acute problems" during the debate and according to the established Tibetan textual sources, Hvashang Mahāyāna argued from the perspective of the "instantaneists" (*cig car ba*). Büton's *History* records Hvashang argument:[602]

[599] D. Seyfort Ruegg, 'On the Tibetan Historiography and Doxography of the "Great Debate of Bsam yas"', in D. Seyfort Ruegg, *The Buddhist Philosophy of the Middle* (Wisdom Publications, United States, 2014), 253.
[600] D. Seyfort Ruegg, '*The Great Debate Between Gradualists and Simultaneists in Eighth-Century Tibet*', 63.
[601] D. Seyfort Ruegg, 'On the Tibetan Historiography and Doxography of the "Great Debate of Bsam yas", 257.
[602] L. Stein and N. Zangpo (trans.), *Butön's History of Buddhism in India and Its Spread to Tibet* (Snow Lion Publications, United States, 2013), 180.

> "Virtuous or non-virtuous acts lead either to higher realms or to miserable existences and therefore do not free you from the wheel of life. They veil the attainment of enlightenment, just as clouds, either black or white, veil the sky. Whoever does not think of anything whatsoever or ponder anything whatsoever becomes completely free from the wheel of life. To not think, conceptualize or analyse anything whatsoever is non-referential (emptiness)."

Essentially, Hvashang argued that a Buddhist should not engage in any discursive, analytical thinking or any explicit conduct. At best, virtuous conduct might lead to a fortunate rebirth, at worst, non-virtuous conduct certainly leads to rebirth in a lower realm. Either way, the Buddhist is still doomed to rebirth within cyclic existence (*saṃsāra*) with its attendant forms of suffering. But if one stops thinking, analysing and engaging in conduct, whether virtuous or non-virtuous, then one also eliminates the production of karma and thus causes for continued rebirth within *saṃsāra*. Accordingly, there is no need to practice any of the *pārāmitas* (practices of a Bodhisattva) or to actively cultivate wisdom as an antidote to the ignorance motivating karmic actions.

All that is necessary to attain enlightenment is to enter a state of quietude and await the revelation of one's innate "Buddha nature" (*tathāgatagarbha*) which is an instantaneous experience. In fact, discoveries of fragments at *Dunhuang* suggest that Hvashang's argument was a good deal more nuanced than the traditional Tibetan sources might suggest, however, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to reconstruct the debate.[603]

[603] P. Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations* (2nd ed., Routledge, United Kingdom, 2009), 193; S. van Schaik and K. Iwao, 'Fragments of the Testament of Ba from Dunhuang' (2008) 128(3) *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 477.

The Tibetan textual sources[604] note that Kamalaśīla, arguing from the perspective of the Indian "gradualists" (*rim gyis pa*) did not accept Hvashang's argument or its conclusion. Essentially, Kamalaśīla pointed out that if what Hvashang was suggesting were true, then it would be impossible to cultivate the wisdom necessary to overcome ignorance – since the cultivation of wisdom is itself a form of conceptual activity.

Further, Kamalaśīla noted the absurdity involved in conceptualizing the thought not to engage in conceptual thinking *prior to* attempting to engage in the cultivation of non-conceptualization.[605] For Kamalaśīla, because sentient beings have been trapped within cyclic existence (*saṃsāra*) for eons they have accumulated many mental afflictions and defilements that will not be overcome in a single instant of religious realization. Instead, Kamalaśīla argued that to overcome those afflictions and defilements, one must engage in a gradual path of training in ethics, meditative concentration and the cultivation of a wisdom consciousness sufficient to displace the ignorance that pervades the minds of sentient beings. For this reason, enlightenment must *necessarily be* the result of a long process of cultivation and practice of wisdom and compassion.[606]

The Tibetan textual sources indicate that Kamalaśīla was declared the winner of the debate with the result that "from this point on, Tibet largely sought its Buddhism from India (and) no school of Chinese Buddhism subsequently exerted any major influence in Tibet."[607]

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[604] Dölpa, Gampopa, and Sakya Paṇḍita, *Stages of the Buddha's Teachings: Three Key Texts*, U. Roesler, K. Holmes and D. Jackson (trans.) (The Library of Tibetan Classics, Wisdom Publications, United States, 2015), 287-288.

[605] Kamalaśīla states that such an assertion would be like breaking an observance of silence by saying "don't make any noise."

[606] D. Mitchell and S. Jacoby*, Buddhism: Introducing the Buddhist Experience*, 180.

[607] R. Buswell and D. Lopez, *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism,* 147; Dölpa, Gampopa, and Sakya Paṇḍita, *Stages of the Buddha's Teachings: Three Key Texts*, U. Roesler, K. Holmes and D. Jackson (trans.) (The Library of Tibetan Classics, Wisdom Publications, United States, 2015), 292.

Kamalaśīla subsequently composed the *Bhāvanākrama*, (*gom pa'i rim* pa) (*Stages of the Path of Meditation*); a three-part text in which he emphasises the importance of systematic training in calm abiding (*śamatha*) and insight (*vipaśyanā*) meditation in progressing along the spiritual path.[608] Importantly, Kamalaśīla emphasises the role of reason and epistemology (especially inferential reasoning) in his text; "for on his view liberative insight does not spontaneously emerge from simply stopping thought; it must instead arise through the careful cultivation of a particular realization that results from rational analysis."[609]

Recent scholarship has opened a debate about how Kamalaśīla *framed* the debate; with Tillemans arguing that the issues at the heart of the debate were principally concerned with *epistemology*. For Tillemans, the debate is therefore "…in part about the efficacy of various types of meditation, but, more broadly….about the respective worth of analysis and meditation as approaches to knowledge and enlightenment."[610] However, Adam disagrees, suggesting that (Tillemans') "..way of framing the debate – as one based upon an opposition between analysis and meditation – participates in a dichotomy that Kamalaśīla himself did not accept."[611] Instead, Adam argues that Kamalaśīla "himself took considerable pains to outline a system in which a binary conception of analysis and meditation does not apply."[612]

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[608] Dalai Lama, *Stages of Meditation* (Rider Books, United Kingdom, 2001); M. Ichishima, 'Sources of Tibetan Buddhist Meditation' (1982) 2 *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 119; P. Sharma (trans.), *Bhāvanākrama of Kamalaśīla* (Aditya Prakashan, India, 1997).
[609] J. Dunne, 'Madhyamaka in India and Tibet', in J. Garfield and W. Edelglass (eds*), The Oxford Handbook of World Philosophy* (Oxford University Press, United Kingdom, 2011), 215.
[610] T. J. F. Tillemans, 'Yogic Perception, Meditation and Enlightenment: The Epistemological Issues in a Key Debate Between Madhyamaka and Chan Buddhism', *in A Companion to Buddhist Philosophy*, ed. S. M. Emmanuel (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 290.
[611] M. T. Adam, 'Philosophy, Meditation, and Experience in the Great Debate at Bsam yas'*, Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, 39 (2016), 351–374.
[612] M. T. Adam, 'Philosophy, Meditation, and Experience in the Great Debate at Bsam yas', 352.

Discussed in chapters six and seven of the thesis, in his *Lamrim Chenmo*, Tsongkhapa quotes extensively from the *Bhāvanākrama* in advocating for a system that is a combination of *both* concentrative and analytical meditation.

Butön's *History* records that following the debate the Chinese monks were banished, but not before alleging that Hvashang vindictively arranged for Kamalaśīla to be assassinated by killers "squeezing his kidneys".[613] Chinese texts however record that it was Hvashang who was declared by King *Tri Songdetsen* to be winner of the debate.[614] Whatever the truth, the debate and it's outcome have become enmeshed within Tibetan religious culture as a form of religious *topos* referencing the expulsion of erroneous Chinese views from Tibet and re-enacted each year in Tscham mystery-dances throughout Tibetan Buddhist monasteries.[615] In this contexts Havshang is presented "as a more or less dehistoricized and emblematic figure standing as it were for a certain typological variety of Buddhism."[616]

Tsongkhapa was influenced by Kamalaśīla's success in two important respects. *First*, his *Lamrim Chenmo* exemplifies the gradualist approach in its presentation of the Buddhist path and draws upon many *Indian* and not Chinese, Buddhist sūtras and śāstras in developing and explaining the progressive unfolding of that path. *Second*, following the reception of those Indian texts during the later diffusion, an elaborate doxology of philosophical interpretative schools was developed.

[613] L. Stein and N. Zangpo (trans.), *Butön's History of Buddhism in India and Its Spread to Tibet*, 289.
[614] J. Roccasalvo, 'The Debate at bSam yas: A Study in Religious Contrast and Correspondence' (1980) 30(4) *Philosophy East and West* 505.
[615] J. Roccasalvo, 'The Debate at bSam yas: A Study in Religious Contrast and, 505.
[616] D. Seyfort Ruegg, 'On the Tibetan Historiography and Doxography of the "Great Debate of Bsam yas"', in D. Seyfort Ruegg, *The Buddhist Philosophy of the Middle* (Wisdom Publications, United States, 2014), 259.

Although the identification and significance of the different philosophical schools of interpretation was not an explicit issue for the participants of the *Samyé* debate, it later became an important issue for Tsongkhapa. For him, the creation of doxographical hierarchies heralded *much more* than just a convenient method of organisation or identifying "differing dialectical strategies (but) involve significantly different ontological presuppositions."[617]

These differences informed Tsongkhapa's strident criticism of the *Svātantrika - Madhyamaka* (*rang gyu pa*) interpretative school throughout his *Lamrim Chenmo*. The reasons for Tsongkhapa's views are well beyond the scope of this thesis and references to the literature concerning the *Svātantrika / Prasaṅgika* distinction will be referred to in chapter seven of the thesis.

The Arrival of Atiśa in Tibet and the Later Diffusion

Given these complex textual and philosophical dynamics, how was Tsongkhapa to organise, structure and communicate his views? He found his answer in an extremely influential text the *Bodhipathapradīpa* (*Byang chub lam sgrom*) ("Lamp for the Path") written in the 11th Century by one of India's foremost Buddhist scholars, Atiśa Dīpaṃkara Śrījñāna (982 – 1054 CE). The arrival of Atiśa in the 11th Century CE was part of the later diffusion (*phyi dar*), of Buddhist texts and philosophy into Tibet and in so doing "revived what was left of Tibetan Buddhism after the collapse of the old empire.

[617] Dan Arnold (2006) <http://www.iep.utm.edu/b-madhya/> (accessed 11 April, 2018).

This period can be regarded as formative for Tibetan Buddhism...since the origins of the monastic traditions with all their social and doctrinal diversities are connected to these early movements in some way or other."[618] Atiśa's arrival and the composition of the *Bodhipathapradīpa* as part of the later diffusion of Indian Buddhist texts into Tibet are the third and fourth dynamics respectively that profoundly shaped the form and content of Tsongkhapa's *Lamrim Chenmo*.

Exactly *how* Atiśa came to be in Tibet is an adventure story involving imprisonment, escape, a fabulous quantity of gold, self-sacrifice and not a little political manoeuvring; however, it is beyond the scope of this Chapter to recount the saga.[619]

Tsongkhapa opens his *Lamrim Chenmo* with a *Prologue* that (inter alia) pays homage to Atiśa, referred to as the "bearer of the treasury of the instructions that comprise the key points, unmistaken and complete of the paths of the profound view and vast deeds."[620] Although he does acknowledge the influence of other stages of the path or "stages of the doctrine" *tenrim* (*bstan rim*) texts literature in the colophon[621], Tsongkhapa devotes the first section of the *Lamrim Chenmo* to extolling the virtuous deeds and achievements of Atiśa.

[618] S. Brefeld, 'The Later Spread of Buddhism in Tibet', in A. Heirmann and S. Bumbacher (eds), *The Spread of Buddhism,* 341.
[619] Interested readers can consult S. van Schaik, *Tibet: A History* (2011); T. Kelsang, *Atisha: A Biography of the Renowned Buddhist Sage* (The Social Science Association Press, Thailand, 1974).); S. Rinchen*, Atisha's Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*, Sonam (trans. and ed.) (Snow Lion Publications, United States, 1997), 7-18 and; L. Sopa (with D. Pratt), *Steps on the Path to Enlightenment*, Five Vols. (Wisdom Publications, United States, 2004–2018), 36-38.
[620] LRCM 1:33.
[621] In his *Colophon* to the *Lamrim Chenmo,* Tsongkhapa specifically acknowledges the influence of these other *lam rim* texts: LRCM 1:372.

In doing so, Tsongkhapa follows a tradition from Vikramalaśila monastic university where scholars began their teachings by showing (inter alia) the "greatness of the teaching's author in order to establish that it is of noble origin."[622]

Geshe Sopa asserts that Tsongkhapa "says that since the primary source of the *Lamrim Chenmo* is Atiśa's *Lamp for the Path*, the author of the text is also the author of this one (showing) that the lamrim system is authoritative and pure."[623] However, when the relationship between the *Lamrim Chenmo* and *Bodhipathapradīpa* is scrutinized, it becomes apparent that Tsongkhapa reproduces very little of Atiśa's material; quoting only three of the *Bodhipathapradīpa's* sixty-eight verses.[624]

For this reason, "the two texts differ enough that the *Lamrim Chenmo* can in no way be considered an explication of the *Bodhipathapradīpa*."[625] Why did Tsongkhapa suggest otherwise? The most likely reason is that he wanted to use Atiśa's text as a structure for the content of his *Lamrim Chenmo* and in so doing infuse his text with the "weight of authority derived from the great respect with which Atiśa is regarded in the Tibetan tradition."[626] It is a classic example of conferring authority by retrojection.

Three final points should be noted before moving on. First, and following Atiśa's presentation, throughout the *Lamrim Chenmo*, Tsongkhapa characterises spiritual progression as the gradual development of wisdom and compassion through Five Paths and

[622] LRCM 1:34.
[623] L. Sopa (with D. Pratt), *Steps on the Path to Enlightenment*, Vol 1 (2004), 22.
[624] E. Napper, 'Ethics as the Basis of a Tantric Tradition', in G. Newland (ed.*), Changing Minds: Contributions to the Study of Buddhism and Tibet in Honor of Jeffrey Hopkins* (Snow Lion [Shambhala Publications Inc.], United States, 2011), 110.
[625] E. Napper, 'Ethics as the Basis of a Tantric Tradition', 110.
[626] E. Napper, 'Ethics as the Basis of a Tantric Tradition', 110.

Ten Bodhisattva Grounds.[627] There are numerous presentations of these Grounds (*sa*) and Paths (*lam*) throughout the Buddhist literature most commonly drawing from the *Daśabhūmikasūtra* (Discourse on the Ten Bhūmis) (*sa bcu pa 'i mdo*). Tsongkhapa also frequently refers to both the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* ("Ornament of Clear Realization") (*mngon par rtogs pa 'i rgyan*) attributed to Maitreya and Candrakīrti's *Madhyamakāvatāra* ("Supplement to the Middle Way") (*dbu ma la 'jug pa*).

What emerges from this "grounds and paths" structure is the idea of an organisational principle that "incorporates, underlies or presupposes everything else in Buddhism from the simplest act of charity to the most refined meditative experience and the most rigorous philosophical argument...(the path) directs attention to a general pattern of discipline encompassing both the individual and the community."[628]

Second, by the time Tsongkhapa was composing the *Lamrim Chenmo*, Candrakīrti's *Madhyamakāvatāra* and *Prasannapadā* had reached Tibet and been translated as part of the later diffusion[629]. The date of the availability and use of Candrakīrti's texts by Tsongkhapa relates to the second point above concerning interpretative schools of thought. When Atiśa composed the *Bodhipathapradīpa*, the Yogācāra-Madhyamaka interpretative school associated with Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla prevailed[630]; Atiśa himself "used mainly Bhavaviveka's texts, such as the Heart of the Middle Way (*Madhyamakahridaya*)

[627] Verse 59 of Atiśa's *Bodhipathapradīpa* states: "having thus meditated on suchness, eventually after reaching 'heat' and so forth, the 'very joyful' and the others are attained and before long, the enlightened state of Buddhahood." See S. Rinchen, *Atisha's Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*, 126.
[628] R. E. Buswell and R. M. Gimello (eds), *Paths to Liberation: The Mārga and its Transformations in Buddhist Thought* (Kuroda Institute Studies in East Asian Buddhism 7, 1992), 6.
[629] S. Brefeld, 'The Later Spread of Buddhism in Tibet', in A. Heirmann and S. Bumbacher (eds), *The Spread of Buddhism* (Brill Publishers, Boston, United States, 2007), 341.
[630] P. Williams, 'Some Random Reflections on the Study of Tibetan Madhyamaka' (1989) 14(1) *The Tibet Journal* 1.

and Blaze of Reasoning (*Tarkajvala*)".[631] As mentioned above, while Tsongkhapa adhered to the *Madhyamaka* interpretative school (like Atiśa) he took great care to assert what he thought to be the more philosophically sophisticated Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka interpretative school and relied heavily on Candrakīrti's texts as well as the texts of Indian scholars such as Buddhapālita, Kamalaśīla and Śāntideva.[632]

Finally, while the *Lamrim Chenmo* is accorded a place of high honour in the "Stages of the Path" genre of Tibetan philosophical literature, it does not represent the totality of Tsongkhapa's thinking about Madhyamaka generally or Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka specifically. Having completed the *Lamrim Chenmo,* Tsongkhapa composed many texts on *sūtra* and tantra. However, four key texts are collectively regarded as evidencing the substance and evolution of his thinking in terms of both "Stages of the Path" and Madhyamaka.[633] These include the *Essence of Eloquence* (*legs bshad snying po*) in 1407 / 8, the *Ocean of Reasoning* (*rigs pa'i rgya mtsho*) in 1408, the *Middle Length Exposition of the Stages of the Path* (*lamrim 'bring ba*) in 1415 and in 1418, the year before his death, the *Illumination of the Thought* (*dgongs pa rab gsal*).[634] While the focus of this thesis is the *Lamrim Chenmo*, it will refer to these other texts in order to contextualise Tsongkhapa's thinking.

[631] Dalai Lama*, Illuminating the Path to Enlightenment: A Commentary on Atisha Dipamkara Shrijnana's A Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment and Lama Je Tsongkhapa's Lines of Experience*, T. Jinpa (trans.) (Thubten Dhargye Ling, United States, 2002), 36.
[632] T. Jinpa, *Self, Reality and Reason in Tibetan Philosophy: Tsongkhapa's Quest for the Middle Way* (RoutledgeCurzon, United Kingdom, 2002).
[633] J. Hopkins*, Tsong-kha-pa's Final Exposition of Wisdom* (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 2008), 16-17.
[634] E. Napper*, Dependent-Arising and Emptiness: A Tibetan Buddhist Interpretation of Madhyamika Philosophy* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2003).

Brief Summary for Context

Drawing the threads of this part of the Chapter together reveals that (i) the intersection of the *Samye* debate establishing the orthodoxy of the "gradualist" path-structure to the spiritual life in dependence on Indian sūtras and śāstras, an approach adopted by (ii) Atiśa in his massively influential *Bodhipathapradīpa*, and (iii) the availability of newly translated Indian texts, particularly those of Candrakīrti, in the period of the later diffusion, inspired both the structure and philosophical orientation of Tsongkhapa's *Lamrim Chenmo*. And although it is an astonishingly original treatise, the *Lamrim Chenmo* stands firmly in line with established Indian Buddhist philosophy because:

> "a key concern of Tsongkhapa was to support each and every point he made with copious citation of sources to demonstrate how thoroughly grounded in tradition he was....Tsongkhapa backs up every major point he makes with extracts from the Indian Buddhist tradition, citing figures such as Nāgārjuna, Candrakīrti, Kamalaśila, Asanga, Śāntideva and so forth."[635]

In this way, the *Lamrim Chenmo* is "an independent *summa* and synthesis of Buddhist ethical, religious and philosophical thought and practice....a theoretically grounded treatise on soteriology and gnoseology"[636] representing "a synthesis of all facets of Mahāyāna doctrine."[637]

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[635] E. Napper, 'Ethics as the Basis of a Tantric Tradition', in G. Newland (ed.), *Changing Minds: Contributions to the Study of Buddhism and Tibet in Honor of Jeffrey Hopkins*, 108.
[636] D Seyfort Reugg, *Introduction* to *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*, 2000, Vol. 1, Joshua Cutler and Guy Newland (eds), Snow Lion Publications, 23.
[637] K. Schaeffer, M. Kapstein and G. Tuttle (eds*), Sources of the Tibetan Tradition* (Columbia University Press, United States, 2013), 509.

Having traced the importance of the above dynamics for the eventual structure and content of the *Lamrim Chenmo*, chapter five turns now to the way Tsongkhapa addresses the four concepts of *cosmology*, *theological anthropology*, *pedagogy* (the process of spiritual progression) and *eschatology* or the *telos* of the Buddhist spiritual path. As noted above, this will sometimes necessitate a return to the basic principles of Indian Buddhist philosophy explained earlier, the appropriation of those principles by the later-emerging Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition with which Tsongkhapa identified and how he treats those principles throughout the *Lamrim Chenmo*. Because this Chapter is intended as an introduction, these topics will be presented in overview with a deeper comparative exploration of them undertaken throughout chapters six and seven.

Cosmology: Cyclic Existence & Anthropology - The Human Condition.

It is convenient to explore the first two of these topics within the same discussion. For reasons that will become clear, Tsongkhapa's analysis of the fundamentally important Buddhist principle of dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*) (*rten 'brel*) directly informs his discussion of cyclic existence (*saṃsāra*) (*'kor ba*) as the fundamental nature of the various realms of existence constituting the universe as well as what it means to be a human being experiencing suffering *duḥkha* (*sdug bsngal*) within these realms of existence.

With this perspective and consistent with the macro-structure of Atiśa's *Bodhipathapradīpa*, Tsongkhapa frames his *Lamrim Chenmo* in terms of motivations of the "three types of persons."[638] In overview, the first person's motivation is to seek happiness and minimise suffering in their present life and to avoid rebirth in an unfortunate state or realm within cyclic existence. To that end, the *Lamrim Chenmo* exhorts the person to recall the fragility and contingency of their human rebirth, the inevitability and uncertainty of the time of death, the sufferings particular to the lower realms of rebirth, the importance of seeking Refuge, understanding the dynamics of *karma* (*las*), the importance of cultivating ethics and virtue which are the causes for happiness, and eliminating the causes for suffering by abstaining from non-virtuous conduct and engaging in purification practices. Such a person is sometimes referred to as a practitioner of the "lower scope".[639]

The person of the middling scope also wishes for these things but also realises that happiness will not be found while they remain trapped within *saṃsāra*. Even if they were to take rebirth within a higher realm, the *karma* for existence in that realm will eventually be extinguished and there is no guarantee that they not migrate to a lower realm. The person realises that while remining within *saṃsāra*, they remain vulnerable to birth, aging, illness and death and must therefore seek a means of liberation.

Accordingly, this person develops renunciation (*niḥsaraṇa*) (*nges 'byung*), described as the intention to definitively emerge from *saṃsāra*, cultivates a thorough understanding of the *Four Noble Truths*, cultivates the causes for happiness, eliminates the causes for suffering,

[638] LRCM 1:129.
[639] E. Napper, *Dependent-Arising and Emptiness: A Tibetan Buddhist Interpretation of Mādhyamika Philosophy* (Wisdom Publications, United States, 2003), 18-19.

but also seeks to develop the wisdom (*prajñā*) sufficient to liberate them from the ignorance that underpins *saṃsāra*.

The person of the "great scope" wishes for all of these things but, understanding that other sentient beings are likewise trapped within *saṃsāra*, and moved by compassion for their ignorance and suffering develops the "mind of enlightenment" (*bodhicitta*) (*byang chub kyi sems*). This is the wish to attain enlightenment in order to assist those sentient beings to escape suffering, become liberated from *saṃsāra* and attain enlightenment. With this motivation, the "practitioner of the great scope", develops *bodhicitta*, an aspiration that is oriented toward the liberation and enlightenment of all sentient beings; "the metaphysics that gives structure and coherence to the practical teachings must be understood as being in the service of moral and intellectual practices pursued in the quest for a final goal."[640]

The great scope practitioner systematically cultivates the practice of the "six perfections" (*pāramitās*), generosity, ethics, patience, enthusiastic perseverance, concentration and wisdom. The practice of these *pāramitās* motivated by *bodhicitta* empowers the person in especially developing concentration; also known as "calm abiding" (*śamatha*) and wisdom; also known as "special insight" (*vipaśyanā*).

The cultivation of special insight enables the person to develop the wisdom necessary to overcome obstacles to liberation and thus escape *saṃsāra* and, when alloyed with bodhicitta enables the practitioner to overcome the obstacles to omniscience and thus attain enlightenment itself.[641]

[640] D. Smith and J. Whitaker, 'Reading the Buddha as a Philosopher' (2016) 66(2*) Philosophy East and West* 518 - 519.
[641] J. Hopkins, Compassion in Tibetan Buddhism (Snow Lion Publications, United States, 1980).101ff.

This three-fold classification of practitioners did not originate with the *Lamrim Chenmo*, nor with Tsongkhapa's inspiration; Atiśa's *Bodhipathapradīpa* ("Lamp for the Path"). As Roesler notes,[642] systems of classification of practitioners are found in the *Nikāyas* and in the *Abhidharma* literature. After an examination of early Indian Buddhist textual sources and of the later Tibetan *Lamrim* texts, Roesler concludes that "the classification found in *lam rim* works is not an altogether new idea specific to the tradition, but that it is in accordance with ideas expressed in the Pāli canon as well as in the works of the two major schools of Mahāyāna philosophy, Yogācāra and Madhyamaka."[643]

The preceding paragraphs spoke of "cyclic existence" or *saṃsāra*, "*karma"*, "migrations to lower realms", the "mind of enlightenment" (*bodhicitta*) and "liberation". What do these terms mean? How does Tsongkhapa understand the world to have been formed, humans and animals to have come into existence, the 'meaning' of their lives, their potential for spiritual practices and advancement and what happens when they die?

What is the Universe? What is a Person?

We have seen that the Four Noble Truths and the principle of Dependent Origination constitute the foundations of Buddhist philosophy and that they are focussed on identifying the causes for the cessation of suffering, the liberation from *saṃsāra* and the attainment of "liberation" (*nirvāṇa*). But where is *saṃsāra* and what is it about people that requires "liberation"?

[642] U. Roesler, '*Once Again on the "Three Kinds of Individuals" in Indian and Tibetan Buddhism'*, in Pāsādikadānam: Festschrift für Bhikkhu Pāsādika, ed. by M. Straube, R. Steiner, J. Soni, M. Hanh and M. Demoto-Hanh (Marburg: Indica et Tibetana Verlag, 2009), 343.
[643] Roesler, '*Once Again on the "Three Kinds of Individuals" in Indian and Tibetan Buddhism'*, 345.

Where does a person *go* once liberated from *saṃsāra*? In his *Lamrim Chenmo*, Tsongkhapa urges his readers to develop the mind that seeks liberation from cyclic existence (*saṃsāra*) by identifying the state of liberation:[644]

> "Liberation means freedom from bondage, and what binds you to cyclic existence is karma and the afflictions. Under their power, the aggregates are reborn in a threefold manner: in terms of the three realms they are born in the desire realm, and so forth; in terms of kinds of beings, they are reborn as the five (deities, humans, animals, hungry ghosts and hell-beings) or six kinds of beings (the five plus demi-gods). Since this is the nature of bondage, freedom from rebirth impelled by karma and the afflictions is liberation."

Tsongkhapa thus follows the classical Indian Buddhist *Abhidharma* (see below) presentation of cosmology as a universe composed, in its basic form, of three macro-realms populated by six forms of sentient beings, each within its own micro-realm, helplessly and endlessly taking rebirth throughout each realm under the influence of karma and afflictions.

The sentiment is vividly captured by Candrakīrti in the opening verses of his *Madhyamakāvatāra:* "Homage to that compassion for migrators who are powerless like a bucket travelling in a well. Through initially adhering to a self, an "I", and then generating attachment for things, 'this is mine'". [645] In his commentary on this verse, Jeffrey Hopkins explains that:[646]

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[644] LRCM 1:267.
[645] Quoted in; J. Hopkins, *Compassion in Tibetan Buddhism,* 83.
[646] J. Hopkins, *Compassion in Tibetan Buddhism*, 85.

> "The wandering of the bucket from the top to the bottom of the well is the wandering of sentient beings in cyclic existence due to the force of the afflictions-desire, hatred and ignorance – and the action that are motivated by these afflictions. The turner of the windlass is an untamed mind. The top of the well represents the realms of gods, demigods and humans, and the bottom the realms of animals, hungry ghosts and hell-beings. It is easy to descent from a good to a bad migration and hard to rise from a bad migration to a good one."

Consistent with his reluctance to speculate on certain metaphysical matters, the Buddha did not elaborate an extensive cosmology. The *Dīgha Nikāya* does contain the curious *Aggañña Sutta* in which the Buddha comforts two of his monastics who were experiencing ridicule for renouncing their Brahmin caste.[647] In his discourse, the Buddha provides an explanation for the emergence of life on Earth and the formation of social stratification but not an elaborate taxonomy of multiple realms of existence.

However, various utterances by the Buddha about the different realms of existence that *were* recorded in different places throughout the early *Nikāyas* were collected and an elaborate cosmology systematised in the later *Abhidharma* texts.[648] These texts were then incorporated by the Sarvāstivādin Buddhist school whose views were later transmitted into Tibet.[649]

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[647] M. Walshe (trans.), *The Long Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Dīgha Nikāya* (Wisdom Publications, United States, 2012), 407.
[648] *Vīthimuttasangahavibhāga,* B. Bodhi (ed.), *A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma* (BSP Pariyatti Editions, United States, 1999), 185.
[649] R. Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism,* 115.

According to these *Abhidharma* texts, the desire realm is further divided into several sub-realms, characterised as pleasant or unpleasant, higher or lower. Higher sub-realms are populated by those sentient beings whose karma ripens as a fortunate re-birth. This includes human beings, and certain forms of celestial gods (*devas*). Lower sub-realms are populated by animals, "hungry ghosts" (*pretas*) and hell-beings. The structure of the desire realm and its functional relationship with dependent origination is often represented iconographically by the "Wheel of Life" (*Bhavachakra*) (*srid pa'i 'khor lo*).

These images present cyclic existence as composed of six sub-realms: (i) gods; (ii) demi-gods; (iii) humans; (iv) animals; (v) hungry ghosts; and (vi) hell beings. Inhabitants of each of these sub-realms take rebirth into a sub-realm consistent with the karma they have created. Existence within these sub-realms is not permanent and sentient beings continually take rebirth when their karma for another rebirth ripens.[650]

Within this scheme, the human rebirth is considered a sort of spiritual "Goldilocks-zone" where conditions are not too inimical to spiritual practice but not so luxuriant that there is no motivation to engage in spiritual practice.[651] A human rebirth is thus considered very precious as it affords the leisure to engage in spiritual practice: "not just any life will suffice for the practice of such pure teachings in general or for the practice of the *Mahāyāna* in particular."[652]

[650] See: Dalai Lama and J. Hopkins (trans.), *The Wheel of Life: Buddhist Perspectives on Cause and Effect* (Wisdom Publications, United States, 2015.

[651] The "Goldilocks-zone" is a term from Astrophysics denoting an ideal placement of a planet for its potential to support life. The planet must not be too close nor too distant from the sun that it orbits – see R. Wordsworth and R. Pierrehumbert, 'Abiotic Oxygen-Dominated Atmospheres on Terrestrial Habitable Zone Planets' (2014) *The Astrophysical Journal Letters* (April) 1.

[652] LRCM 1:121.

In his "Letter to a Friend" (*Suhrllekha*) (*bshes-pa'i springs-yig*), Nāgārjuna writes:[653]

> "To be reborn with wrong views or without a conqueror's word, or as an animal, a hungry ghost, a hell-being, an uncultured person in a border region, a stupid and mute person, or a deity of long life, it to be afflicted by one of the eight faults that are conditions that lack leisure. After you have attained leisure, which is freedom from these, strive to end birth."

Tsongkhapa develops Nāgārjuna's statement in urging practitioners to recognise whether and to what extent their lives are characterised by the presence of "leisure and opportunity" and to take full advantage of it in practicing the Dharma.[654] In his *Lamrim Chenmo* Tsongkhapa characterises a *human life* as one of leisure and opportunity to the extent that it reflects "eight freedoms" and "ten endowments".

Stated briefly, the eight freedoms are freedom from: (i) having taken rebirth as an animal, or (ii) as a hungry ghost, or (iii) as a hell being, or (iv) as a long-life god, (v) having taken rebirth as a human but in a location "without a conqueror's word", or (vi) as an "uncultured person in a border region", or (vii) as a "stupid or mute person" or (vii) as a person with "wrong views".[655]

The nature of "leisure" referred to in the *Lamrim Chenmo* is qualitatively different from contemporary senses of "leisure" as simply not working, but allocating time to engage in recreational activities, sport or entertainment or to pursue hobbies.

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[653] LRCM 1:118.
[654] LRCM 1:117 ff. This discussion draws upon Chapter Seven of Volume One of the English translation.
[655] LRCM 1:117-118.

For Tsongkhapa, "leisure" is understood as the capacity to engage in acts of virtue: "In these eight states (the *lack* of these eight freedoms) there is no time for acts of virtue, therefore they are called 'conditions that lack leisure'".[656] If a practitioner is reborn as an animal, a hell being or a hungry ghost, their capacity to engage in acts of virtue by practicing the Dharma is overwhelmed by the suffering characterising those rebirths.[657] Likewise, rebirth in the higher realms is so pleasurable, there is no *incentive* to practice the Dharma.

However, even rebirth as a human is not sufficient to quality as a life of leisure. Tsongkhapa notes that such a person may have been born where there are no Buddhist teachings available or where there are no monastics practicing the Dharma. And even *if* a person is reborn as a human in a place where the Dharma exists and where monastics practice the Dharma, a person may lack the physical or intellectual capacity to understand the Dharma or, even if possessing that capacity, holding views inconsistent with the Dharma or simply not being interested in the Dharma.[658]

To these eight "freedoms" Tsongkhapa adds ten "aspects of opportunity" that characterise a fortunate human rebirth; five that pertain to the self and five that pertain to others.[659] Some of the aspects that pertain to the self, overlap with the freedoms discussed above; being human, being born where the Dharma is present and having complete sense faculties while two are unique; (i) "having reversable karma" and (ii) "having faith in the source."[660]

[656] LRCM 1:119.
[657] Tsongkhapa devotes an entire chapter to explaining the intense sufferings of beings in the lower realms: LRCM 1:161. This is Chapter Ten: "Reflecting on your Future Life" in Volume One of the English translation.
[658] LRCM 1:118.
[659] LRCM 1:119 – 120.
[660] LRCM 1:119.

"Having reversable karma" refers to having refrained from generating karma associated with committing the "five deeds of immediate retribution", also known as the "five heinous crimes" (Skt: *Pañcānantarya*) (Tib: *mtshams med lnga*). These five are: (i) killing one's mother, (ii) killing one's father, (iii) killing an *arhat*, (iv) shedding the blood of a Buddha and (v) causing a schism in the *sangha.* Committing any of these five actions generates karma of such negativity that the person committing them will immediately take rebirth in the hell realms.[661]

The five that pertain to others are: (i) that a buddha has visited, (ii) that the sublime teachings are being taught, (iii) that the teaching remains, (iv) that there are those who follow it, and (v) that there is caring for others.[662]

Tsongkhapa notes that in his time (and surely ours), the first four of these are "at present incomplete" because there is no living Buddha teaching the Dharma, which has not degenerated, and it is not taught by direct disciples of the Buddha.[663] Nevertheless, Tsongkhapa considers it "suitable to consider an approximation of three of these four – the sublime teaching being taught, the teachings given remaining and there being followers of the teaching which abides – to be complete."[664]

[661] These "five deeds of immediate retribution" appear in the *Pāli Suttas;* see – *Aṅguttara Nikāya "Book of Fives"*: B. Bodhi, *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha: A Complete Translation of the Aṅguttara Nikāya* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2012), 743.
[662] LRCM 1:120.
[663] LRCM 1:120.
[664] LRCM 1:120.

In this way, Tsongkhapa demonstrates the urgency of recognising whether and to what extent a practitioner enjoys these eight freedoms and ten endowments, recognises that they provide the foundation for the effective practice of the Dharma and in so doing, take the essence of their fortunate human rebirth. However, what *exactly* is the nature of this human being so urged to take advantage of their freedoms and endowments?

The Five Psycho-Physical Human Aggregates

When he taught the Four Noble Truths, recorded in the *Dhammacakkappavatana Sutta*, the Buddha stated: "now this, bhikkhus (monks), is the noble truth of suffering: birth is suffering, aging is suffering, death is suffering, union with what is displeasing is suffering; separation from what is pleasing is suffering; not to get what one wants is suffering; in brief, the five aggregates subject to clinging are suffering."[665]

When he spoke about the "five aggregates subject to clinging", the Buddha was referring to the collection (*skandhas*) (*phung po*) of five, psycho-physical "elements" or "heaps" that constitute a human being. Classical Buddhist philosophy asserts that when examined, there is no findable "person" or "essence" that *is* a person.

This assertion accords with the doctrine of "no-self" (*anātman*), one of the "three marks of existence" (*trilakṣaṇa*) referred to above and said to characterise the nature of existential reality. However, the Buddha did not deny the existence of conventional "selves" that interact with the world and other "selves".

[665] *Saccasaṃyutta: Setting in Motion the Wheel of the Dharma*, in B. Bodhi, *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Saṃyutta Nikāya*, 1844.

The Buddha was not a nihilist. However, he did reject the notion of some "own-nature" (*svabhāva*), soul or intrinsic essence that could be identified as the "real self" of a person. Neither was the Buddha an eternalist. He taught that a "person" was, like all phenomena, an ever-changing collection of causes and conditions, subject to impermanence and *duḥkha* that "ordinarily produce mental and physical processes that are experienced as ultimately dissatisfactory."[666]

What are these ever-changing collections of mental and physical processes that constitute a conventional "person" and with which we identify as "I" or "mine"? [667] The first aggregate is that of form (*rūpa*) and refers to the physical body and its elements. The second is sensation or feeling (*vedāna*) and refers to the subjective "taste" of any experience as pleasant, painful or neutral. The third is perception or discrimination (*saṃjña*) and refers to the identifying, labelling and interpretation of phenomena.

The fourth is mental formations (*saṃskāras*) and refers to the different mental states, dispositions and habits that motivate everyday actions. And the final aggregate is consciousness (*vijñāna*) and refers to the basic awareness that precedes discrimination and interpretation of phenomena.

When they collectively function, the aggregates arise in the following manner: A person composed of *form* is walking down the street and her *consciousness* apprehends the form of another person walking towards them.

[666] D. Mitchell and S. Jacoby, *Buddhism: Introducing the Buddhist Experience,* 35-36.
[667] The following is based on P. Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, History and Practices* (2nd ed., Cambridge University Press, United Kingdom, 2013), 56; D. Mitchell and S. Jacoby, Buddhism*: Introducing the Buddhist Experience*, 35-36; W. Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught* (Grove Press, United States, 1974), 20ff and T. Piyadassi, *The Buddha's Ancient Path* (Rider & Company, United Kingdom, 1964), 45ff.

Her *discrimination* resolves that other form into a "human, male, student, younger, tall, boyfriend". Almost instantaneously, her subjective experience of this encounter with her boyfriend is "coloured" by *feeling* that interprets the encounter as a happy experience and, motivated by *mental formations* she engages in certain behaviour toward her boyfriend. Those motivated actions create *karma* that will later ripen into other subjective experiences at a later time.

But for the Buddha, there is no findable essence or person who encounters "her" boyfriend: "why now do you assume a being? There is a heap of sheer formations: here, no being is found. Just as, with an assemblage of parts, the word 'chariot' is used, so, when the aggregates exist, there is the convention 'a being'".[668] These five aggregates constitute fuel for the fire of suffering and in the *Khandhasaṃyutta*, the Buddha stated: "form is burning, feeling is burning, perception is burning, volitional formations are burning, consciousness is burning."[669]

Tsongkhapa incorporates the Buddha's teachings on the Five Aggregates at several places within his *Lamrim Chenmo* and for different purposes. It was noted above that Tsongkhapa orients his text toward the "three types of beings": those of the lower scope, middle scope and higher scope. Not content in seeking happiness in their present life, nor with seeking a fortunate rebirth, the being of the middle scope seeks liberation from cyclic existence altogether.

[668] *Vajirā Sutta,* B. Bodhi, *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Saṃyutta Nikāya*, 229-230.
[669] *Khandhasaṃyutta*, B. Bodhi, *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Saṃyutta Nikāya,* 904-905.

In doing so, they must cultivate renunciation (*niḥsaraṇa*) (*nges 'byung*), an overwhelming mental intention to definitively emerge from *saṃsāra* and its attendant sufferings. Tsongkhapa encourages such a being to meditate repeatedly on the sufferings associated with the different realms of *saṃsāra* **and** to reflect on the five appropriated aggregates as being of the nature of suffering. Tsongkhapa advises: "the desire to attain liberation-which relieves the suffering of the aggregates appropriated by karma and the afflictions-is based upon seeing that the appropriated aggregates are flawed insofar as they have suffering as their nature."[670]

With this established, Tsongkhapa urges the middle scope being to cultivate the correct view of the aggregates in meditation, developing the understanding of how the aggregates are reified by the mind to be "the self":[671]

> "You will thereby become certain from the depths of your heart that the reifying view of the perishing aggregates, or ignorance, acts as the root of cyclic existence. You then need to develop a sincere wish to eliminate that. Next, see that overcoming the reifying view of the perishing aggregates depends upon developing the wisdom that knows that the self, as thus conceived, does not exist. You will then see that you have to refute that self."

[670] LRCM 1:268.
[671] LRCM 3:120.

Tsongkhapa devotes a considerable portion of his *Lamrim Chenmo* to the importance of correctly understanding the relationship between the five aggregates and the tendency of the mind to impute an "I", "mine", "self" or "other" onto those aggregates and these are examined and explained in chapter seven of the thesis[672]. It is here that the Buddha's teachings on impermanence, no-self and dependent origination cohere around the doctrine of emptiness (*śūnyatā*) (*stong pad nyid*).

As this chapter noted earlier, the later Tibetan doxographical distinctions between different "schools" concern the correct interpretation of emptiness. It was noted that for Tsongkhapa, drawing out the implications of these doxographical distinctions in the process of asserting the superiority of *Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka* was not simply a pedantic exercise because of his conviction that only the *Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka* interpretative school deployed the correct philosophical approach in bringing a person to the wisdom that realises emptiness and thus to the end of suffering, liberation from cyclic existence and then enlightenment itself.

[672] That part of chapter seven follows Jinpa's exposition of Tsongkhapa's use of "*The Madhyamaka Seven-Point Analysis of Self*" which in turn, draws upon Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* and Candrakīrti's *Madhyamakāvatāra* – T. Jinpa*, Self, Reality and Reason in Tibetan Philosophy: Tsongkhapa's Quest for the Middle Way* (London: Routledge, 2002), 82ff.

Pedagogy of the Spiritual Path in the *Lamrim Chenmo*

Chapter four noted that Evagrius Ponticus intended the *Praktikos* (Πρακτικός), the *Gnostikos* (Γνωστικός) and the *Kephalaia Gnostika* (Κεφάλαια Γνωστικά) to form a trilogy constituting a pedagogical system of Christian spiritual formation and progression.[673]

Tsongkhapa's *Lamrim Chenmo* also reflects a tri-fold pedagogical structure to the Buddhist spiritual path, focussing on the motivations, practices and outcomes of the persons of the "three scopes" introduced above. In fact, the pedagogical structure of the *Lamrim Chenmo* evidences a concurrent and cumulative series of ascetic and meditative practices, commencing with the person of the lower scope, progressing to the person of the middle scope, who in addition to the practices specific to their scope, also engages with the practices in common with the person of the lower scope and culminating with the person of the higher scope who, in addition to the practices specific to their scope, also engages in the practices in common with the persons of the lower and middle scope.

Like the Evagrian pedagogy, the practices engaged in by the persons of the middle and higher scopes are not sequential, but concurrent and on-going. It is here that the differences between the Theravāda and Mahāyāna Buddhist traditions become more sharply differentiated.

[673] J. E. Bamberger, tr., *Evagrius Ponticus: The Praktikos and Chapters on Prayer* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1981), 14 – 15.

There is a significant amount of literature[674] concerning the rise and distinctive features of the Mahāyāna and it is beyond the scope of this thesis to recapitulate it. Generally speaking, and from the perspective of the Mahāyāna, śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas seek to attain *nirvana*, a state of liberation from cyclic existence but for themselves alone; the liberated practitioner being referred to as an *Arhat*. While practitioners of the Mahāyāna also seek liberation from cyclic existence, their motivation is qualified by the aspiration to seek enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings, an aspiration that involves cultivating the *bodhisattva path*. The Mahāyāna also assert that the quality of wisdom necessary to attain enlightenment is more profound than that required for liberation alone. Thus: "the 'greatness' of the new vehicle (Mahāyāna) was seen to lie in three areas; its compassionate motivation, directed at the salvation of countless beings; the profundity of the wisdom it cultivated; and its superior goal Buddhahood."[675]

Throughout the *Lamrim Chenmo*, Tsongkhapa outlines progress in terms of these three areas. However, it is easier to understand the logic of Tsongkhapa's pedagogical structure by starting with the desired result of spiritual practice, enlightenment, conceptualising it as a result, and then work backwards through the various causes for enlightenment; the nature of the wisdom that is cultivated and the "compassionate motivation" that is an essential

[674] P. Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations* (2nd ed., Routledge, United Kingdom, 2009); J. Blumenthal and D. Duckworth, both in S. Emmanuel, *Buddhist Philosophy: A Comparative Approach* (Wiley Blackwell, United States, 2018), 86 and 99 respectively; M. Kapstein, *The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism: Conversion, Contestation and Memory* (Oxford University Press, United States, 2000), D. Snellgrove*, Indo-Tibetan Buddhism: Indian Buddhists & Their Tibetan Successors* (Orchid Press, Thailand, 2004), 58ff; J. Bronkhorst*, Buddhist Teachings in India* (Wisdom Publications, United States, 2009), 115ff D. Mitchell and S. Jacoby, *Buddhism: Introducing the Buddhist Experience* (3rd ed., Oxford University Press, United States, 2014), 115ff, J. Strong, *The Experience of Buddhism: Sources and Interpretations* (3rd ed., Thompson Wadsworth, United States, 2008), 145ff; S. Laumakis, *An Introduction to Buddhist Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press, United States, 2008), 61ff; A. Wynne, *Buddhism: An Introduction* (I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, United Kingdom, 2015), 136ff; P. Williams, A. Tribe and A. Wynne*, Buddhist Thought: A Complete Introduction to the Indian Tradition* (2nd ed Routledge, United Kingdom, 2012), 98ff.

[675] P. Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, History and Practices* (2nd ed., Cambridge University Press, United Kingdom, 2013), 110.

cause for the development of that wisdom. The discussion below concerning the obstacles to enlightenment becomes important in chapters six and seven.

Obstacles to Enlightenment and Wisdom

What are the principal obstacles preventing people achieving enlightenment? Tsongkhapa initially answers this question by referring to a passage from Kamalaśīlas *Bhāvanākrama*, (*Stages of the Path of Meditation*):[676]

> "Meditative serenity alone does not lead to pure, sublime wisdom; nor will it clear away the darkness of the obscurations. However, if I use wisdom to meditate well on reality, I will reach pure, sublime wisdom and know reality. Only through wisdom can I really get rid of the obscurations."

The goal of enlightenment is therefore reached once the practitioner eliminates the "obscurations" (*āvaranas*) (*sgrib pa*). What are these obstacles to enlightenment? Tsongkhapa states:[677]: "there are teachings on afflictive obscuration and on cognitive obscuration. We hold that all obscurations are among these, and when they are gone, you are free." From Tsongkhapa's Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka perspective, and drawing upon Candrakīrti, an afflictive obscuration (*kleśā*) (*nyon mong*) is "a conceptual consciousness superimposing an incorrect sense of intrinsic existence".[678]

[676] LRCM 3:109.
[677] LRCM 3:203.
[678] LRCM 3:211.

Thus, afflictive obscurations are constituted by the ignorance that apprehends the true existence of persons *and* phenomena, the afflictive delusions (such as anger, attachment etc) that are induced by that ignorant apprehension of true existence and the "seeds" (*bīja*) (*sa bon*) or traces of that ignorance that colour the mind.

The basic process involves a person apprehending an object and, due to ignorance, superimposes upon it an ontological status that it does not have; that the object inherently exists in the way that it appears when in fact, the object is impermanent, dependently originated and empty. Ignorant of the "true" nature of this object, the person generates (for example), desire, attachment and craving in relation to the object.

If the object is another person, and motivated by these afflictions, the person engages in willed activity (*karma*) that may be virtuous, such as assisting the other person, or non-virtuous, such as harming the other person. In either case, the person generates *karma* that functions as the cause for continued rebirth within cyclic existence.

What are "cognitive obscurations" (*jñeyavaraṇa*) (*shes sgrib*)? Tsongkhapa defines them as:[679]

> "Certain latent propensities are firmly set in the mind-stream through its being beginninglessly suffused with strong attachment to things regarded as intrinsically existent; these latent propensities give rise to errors of dualistic appearance, so that things appear to be intrinsically existent when they are not. These errors are cognitive obscurations."

[679] LRCM 3:323.

Cognitive obscurations are therefore far more subtle *imprints* (*lag rjes*) of the ignorance that apprehends inherent existence. Tsongkhapa is stating that for eons, our minds have been under the influence of ignorance that mistakenly superimposes upon objects and persons, an ontological status (inherent existence) they do not have.

So habituated are we with this ignorance, that even after developing the wisdom that overcomes ignorance, persons and object continue to *appear* to us *as if* they inherently existed. These are the "latent propensities" that Tsongkhapa refers to. What is the significance of these two forms of obscurations? From Tsongkhapa's *Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka* perspective, *Arhats* who achieve liberation from cyclic existence (*nirvāṇa*), have only removed the *afflictive obscurations*. Because they have not removed the *cognitive obscurations*, they have not achieved omniscience and thus have not achieved enlightenment. Tsongkhapa states:[680]

> "Even (*Arhats*) can know that all phenomena lack intrinsic existence. For, they state that liberation from cyclic existence is achieved through the view of emptiness of intrinsic existence. *(Arhats)* meditate on that view for as long as their afflictions remain. When their afflictions are extinguished, they are satisfied and do not persist in meditation; hence they are unable to eliminate cognitive obscurations."

Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamikas assert that while followers of "lower" tenet systems (*Svātantrika Madhyamaka*, *Yogācāra, Vaibhāṣika* and *Sautrāntika*) as well as śrāvakas and *pratyekabuddhas* may eliminate the afflictive obscurations - and thus attain liberation, they do not abandon the *cognitive* obscurations and so do not achieve enlightenment (Chart 1A).

[680] LRCM 3:322.

This characterisation of the obscurations by *Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamikas* is regarded as one of the "Eight Difficult (or Unique) Points of the Middle Way Consequence School."[681] These "unique or difficult points" were compiled by Gyaltsab Je from lectures or teachings that Tsongkhapa gave over time in order to explain and defend certain implications of *Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka* tenets as he conceived them and to refute certain issues particularly associated with the *Svātantrika Madhyamaka* and *Yogācāra* tenet systems.[682]

Aspects of these *Eight Difficult Points* are also found in Tsongkhapa's *Illumination of the Thought* (*dgongs pa rab gsal*) completed in 1418, the year before his death. The subject matter of Gyaltsab Je's *Eight Difficult Points* has also been the subject of two contemporary texts; Daniel Cozort's (1998) *Unique Tenets of the Middle Way Consequence School*[683] and David Seyfort Ruegg's (2002) *Two Prolegomena to Madhyamaka Philosophy*.[684]

Explained briefly, and by reference to Chart 2 (in chapter six) *Svātantrika Madhyamaka* hold that once a bodhisattva attains the *Path of Seeing*, she begins to destroy both the afflictive obscurations and the cognitive obscurations. This stands in contrast to the *Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka* assertion that a bodhisattva cannot start to eliminate the cognitive obscurations until she has destroyed all of the afflictive obscurations. [685]

[681] *dka' gnas brgyad kyi zin bris* – These were notes taken and arranged by *Gyaltsab Je*, one of Tsongkhapa's principal disciples based on Tsongkhapa's further explanation of *Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka*.
[682] D. Cozort, *Unique Tenets of the Middle Way Consequence School* (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 1998), 16.
[683] D. Cozort, *Unique Tenets.*
[684] D.S. Ruegg, *Two Prolegomena to Madhyamaka Philosophy*, (Arbeitskreis Für Tibetische Und Buddhistische Studen Universität, Wein, 2002).
[685] D. Cozort, *Unique Tenets*, 243.

At least one reason for this difference has to do with the different ways that *Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka* and *Svātantrika Madhyamaka* characterise afflictive and cognitive obscurations. Both tenet systems recognise the pervasive influence of (i) grasping at a self of persons and (ii) grasping at a self of phenomena, and both tenet systems characterise these "graspings" as obstacles.[686] Noted above, *Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka* asserts that afflictive obscurations are "conceptual consciousness superimposing an incorrect sense of intrinsic existence"[687] and are constituted by the ignorance that apprehends the true existence of persons *and* phenomena, the afflictive delusions (such as anger, attachment etc) that are induced by that ignorant apprehension of true existence and the "seeds" (*bīja*) (*sa bon*) or traces of that ignorance that colour the mind.

For *Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka*, this ignorant, superimposing consciousness lies at the heart of grasping at a self of persons and a self of phenomena – it is the same ignorance – the only difference being the object which is the focus of the ignorant consciousness apprehending it. Cognitive obscurations are then defined by Tsongkhapa as "latent propensities" that give rise to "errors of dualistic appearance" – that is, "that things *appear* to be intrinsically existent when they are not."[688] For *Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka* these appearances of inherent existence are caused by *latencies* of the afflictive obscurations.

[686] L. Sopa, *Steps on the Path to Enlightenment: A Commentary on Tsongkhapa's Lamrim Chenmo, Volume 5: Insight,* trans. Dechen Rochard (Boulder, CO: Wisdom Publications, 2017), 266.
[687] LRCM 3:211.
[688] LRCM 3:323.

Following this characterisation and from Tsongkhapa's perspective, those holding non-*Prāsaṅgika* tenets, including *śrāvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas* cannot simultaneously abandon the afflictive and cognitive obscurations because until a practitioner abandons all of the afflictive obscurations, those afflictive obscurations will continue to foment *cognitive obscurations*. In his *Illumination of the Thought* (*dgongs pa rab gsal*) Tsongkhapa states: "As for obscurations that are in the form of residual imprints – which are distinct from seeds – identified here as "obscurations to knowledge", their elimination does not occur until the eighth ground".[689]

Given this distinction between the afflictive and cognitive obscurations drawn by *Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka,* by what processes are the cognitive obscurations eliminated? Tsongkhapa answers this question by pointing to the intention to seek enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings (*bodhicitta*) and practices associated with that intention:[690]

> "When their afflictions are extinguished, they (*Arhats*) are satisfied and do not persist in meditation; Hence, they are unable to eliminate cognitive obscurations. Bodhisattvas, not content with mere liberation from cyclic existence through the mere extinction of afflictions, seek buddhahood for the sake of all living beings; hence they meditate so as to utterly extinguish cognitive obscurations. Thus, they meditate for a very long time and are adorned with limitless collections of merit and wisdom."

[689] Tsongkhapa, *Illuminating the Intent: An Exposition of Candrakirti's Entering the Middle Way*, trans. T.Jinpa (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2021), 78.
[690] LRCM 3:322.

Motivation of Bodhicitta

What initially distinguishes a Mahāyāna Buddhist practitioner from a śrāvaka or pratyekabuddha following lesser tenet systems is the bodhisattva's motivation for practice. A Mahāyāna practitioner generates the "mind of enlightenment" (*bodhicitta*) (*byang chub kyi sems*), defined in the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* as follows: "The generated mind (bodhicitta) is desire for perfect complete enlightenment for others' welfare."[691] Tsongkhapa refers to bodhicitta as the "entrance to the Mahāyāna": "once you have generated this spirit in your mind, you are recognized as a Mahāyāna practitioner even though you may not have generated any other good quality."[692]

Bodhicitta, as an aspirational mental state, is regarded as so important for the Mahāyāna Buddhist practitioner because of its relationship with the cultivation of wisdom. Tsongkhapa notes that while śrāvakas, pratkeyabuddhas and Mahāyāna bodhisattvas cultivate the wisdom that overcomes ignorance at the heart of cyclic existence, the Mahāyāna assert that the "depth" of ignorance overcome by śrāvaka and pratkeyabuddha practitioners does not go far enough. From the Mahāyāna perspective, those beings (*Arhats*) who achieve liberation from cyclic existence (*nirvana*) have not overcome the subtlest obstacles to omniscient enlightenment.[693]

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[691] Maitreya, *Abhisamayālaṃkāra: Treatise of Quintessential Instructions of the Perfection of Wisdom: Ornament for Clear Realization* (Toh Sze Gee trans.), 2009, Nalanda Monastery, France, [1.19].
[692] LRCM 3:16.
[693] LRCM 3: 323.

Throughout the *Lamrim Chenmo*, Tsongkhapa devotes considerable space to teaching the techniques by which a Mahāyāna Buddhist practitioner cultivates *bodhicitta*. These techniques will become relevant for the comparative analysis in chapter eight.

Telos – The Mahāyāna Spiritual Path

What are the "stages of the path" traversed by a Mahāyāna Buddhist practitioner from an initial intention to escape suffering and cyclic existence to generating *bodhicitta*, the great compassion intent on attaining enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings, overcoming the afflictive and cognitive obscurations through the development of wisdom and then attaining enlightenment itself? Throughout the *Lamrim Chenmo*, Tsongkhapa characterises spiritual progression as the gradual development of wisdom and compassion through Five Paths and Ten Bodhisattva Grounds.[694]

There are numerous presentations of these Grounds (*sa*) and Paths (*lam*) throughout the Buddhist literature, but Tsongkhapa also frequently refers to both the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* ("Ornament of Clear Realizations") (*mngon par rtogs pa 'i rgyan*) attributed to Maitreya and Candrakīrti's *Madhyamakāvatāra* ("Supplement to the Middle Way") (*dbu ma la 'jug pa*). These five paths are not physical or educative attainments but describe progressively refined states of consciousness qualified by the removal or purification of certain forms of ignorance and the concurrent development of wisdom.

[694] Verse 59 of Atiśa's *Bodhipathapradīpa* states: "having thus meditated on suchness, eventually after reaching 'heat' and so forth, the 'very joyful' and the others are attained and before long, the enlightened state of Buddhahood." See S. Rinchen, *Atisha's Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*, 126.

The five paths are:

1. The Mahāyāna Path of Accumulation (*tsog lam*);
2. The Mahāyāna Path of Preparation (*sbyor lam*);
3. The Mahāyāna Path of Seeing (*mthong lam*);
4. The Mahāyāna Path of Meditation (*sgom lam*); and
5. The Mahāyāna Path of No-More-Learning (*mi slob lam*)

In overview, a person enters the Mahāyāna Path of Accumulation when she has developed uncontrived *bodhicitta*; where the aspiration to attain enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings is her "default state" of motivation. Before reaching this stage, the person has directly and perceptually understood the faults of cyclic existence and has developed an intention to seek liberation from it. With this mind of renunciation, she also realises that all other sentient beings are similarly trapped within cyclic existence and so wishes to liberate them as well.

Understanding that she needs to develop wisdom in order to overcome the afflictive and cognitive obscurations, the practitioner strives to become proficient in calm-abiding and insight meditation focussed on emptiness as the antidote to ignorance. When she has achieved the union of calm-abiding meditation and special insight, she enters the Mahāyāna Path of Preparation. Her wisdom at this stage is conceptual, intellectually generated through certain techniques. On this Path, she is "preparing" to make the all-important leap from conceptual realization of emptiness to direct, unmediated, *perceptual* realization of emptiness.

When this occurs, she enters the Mahāyāna Path of Seeing, so called because the practitioner "see" emptiness, wisdom, in a direct, perceptual manner. The very next instant, she enters the Mahāyāna Path of Meditation. On this path, she alternates between engaging in direct meditative equipoise focussed on emptiness, with post-meditative daily duties and activities as a *bodhisattva*. It is on this Mahāyāna Path of Seeing that the practitioner begins to eliminate the *afflictive* and *cognitive* obscurations to enlightenment explained above.

On the Mahāyāna Path of Meditation, the practitioner traverses 10 *Bodhisattva Levels* (*Bhūmis*) with each level involving the removal of different grades of obscuration and the concomitant attainment of increasingly refined wisdom. The practitioner removes the *afflictive obscurations* on Grounds 1-7 and then removes the *cognitive obscurations* on Grounds 8-10. Finally, after the most subtle of the subtle of the cognitive obscurations have been removed, the practitioner achieves enlightenment. She becomes a Buddha. Chapters six and seven will return to the dynamics associated with traversing these paths.

Summary & Conclusion

This chapter intended to introduce the basic framework of Tsongkhapa's Tibetan Mahāyāna Buddhist philosophy set out in his *Lamrim Chenmo*. Consistent with the chapter introducing Evagrius, this chapter five explored Tsongkhapa's presentation of four concepts; *cosmology*, *theological anthropology*, *pedagogy* (the process of spiritual progression) and *eschatology* or the *telos* of the spiritual path.

In doing so, chapter five was intended as a form of "primer" grounding a deeper conceptual analysis of specific metaphysical, epistemological and ethical issues arising out of the Tibetan Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition as they are developed by Tsongkhapa in his *Lamrim Chenmo*. However, in order to do so, chapter five explored several historical, political and intellectual events that profoundly influenced the structure and content of the *Lamrim Chenmo*; the foundational principles of classical Indian Buddhism. The debate at Samye monastery in the late 8th Century CE that determined the reception of the "gradualist" *Indian* (and not "sudden-enlightenment" Chinese) Buddhist philosophy and texts into Tibet; the arrival of Atiśa in the 11th Century CE and whose text *Bodhipathapradīpa* inspired Tsongkhapa in the basis-path-result structure of the *Lamrim Chenmo* and the later diffusion and translation (*phyi dar*) of seminal Indian Madhyamaka texts, particularly those of Candrakīrti, into Tibet throughout the 11th Century CE and incorporated by Tsongkhapa in his *Lamrim Chenmo* in support of Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka "interpretative school" of Buddhist philosophy.

With this basic philosophical foundation in place, chapter five then turned to the way Tsongkhapa develops his understanding of *cosmology*, *theological anthropology*, *pedagogy* and *eschatology* or the *telos* of the spiritual path throughout his *Lamrim Chenmo*. In essence, Tsongkhapa describes multiple realms of sentient beings, including humans, cycling endlessly and helplessly through *saṃsāra*, a process fundamentally powered by ignorance. This ignorance consists in sentient beings actively and habitually misconstruing the nature of persons and phenomena as inherently existent when, in fact, they merely exist conventionally, in dependence on causes and conditions.

Not understanding the "true" nature of persons and phenomena, sentient beings generate attachment, aversion and all forms of afflictive obscurations that give rise to actions that, in turn, generate *karma*.

However, while the cause of cyclic existence (ignorance) can be traced to an ignorant consciousness, the remedy or solution can be traced to a wisdom consciousness that overcomes the mistaken view of reality. When this wisdom consciousness is developed to the point where it can function as an antidote to the afflictive obscurations, the person is liberated from cyclic existence, achieves *nirvana* and is known as an *Arhat*. This is the principal goal of śrāvakas and pratkeyabuddhas.

Drawing upon texts from the Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition, Tsongkhapa asserts that while śrāvakas and pratkeyabuddhas have not achieved *enlightenment* because they not removed the *cognitive obscurations*. The removal of these obscurations and the attainment of enlightenment is the goal of the Mahāyāna Buddhist practitioner. The Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition is distinguished by differences in the motivation of its practitioner, the nature of the wisdom that is developed and the *telos* or eventual goal of spiritual practice.

Throughout his *Lamrim Chenmo*, Tsongkhapa develops a pedagogical system centred around these three qualities. In this sense, the "entry way to the Mahāyāna" is the development of *bodhicitta*, an intention to achieve enlightenment in order to attain the capacity and wisdom sufficient to liberate *all* sentient beings from cyclic existence.

However, the state of enlightenment requires removal of not only the afflictive obscurations, but also the *cognitive obscurations*. These cognitive obscurations are the latent *impressions* of the appearance of inherent existence that, according to Tsongkhapa linger even after the person has attained *nirvana*. According to the Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition, *Arhats* do not achieve enlightenment because they do not develop the meditative strength necessary to eliminate the cognitive obscurations. For this to occur, the practitioner needs to develop uncontrived *bodhicitta* and then progress along the Five Mahāyāna Paths and Ten *Bodhisattva Grounds / Bhūmis*.

In progressing along these paths and levels, Tsongkhapa states that the Mahāyāna Buddhist practitioner abandons the *afflictive obscurations* on Grounds 1-7 of the Mahāyāna Path of Meditation and then abandons the *cognitive obscurations* on Grounds 8-10 of that Path. When these have eventually been abandoned, the practitioner becomes a Buddha, and enlightened being now capable of implementing her aspiration to assist all other sentient being to achieve liberation.

For both Evagrius and Tsongkhapa, progress along their respective spiritual paths involves *ascetic practice*, *meditation / contemplation* and the systematic cultivation of *wisdom*. However, the essential prerequisite to these practices involves cultivation of those states of consciousness described as *apatheia* by Evagrius and as "serenity" (*śamatha*) by Tsongkhapa. Chapters four and five of this thesis identified and located *apatheia* and serenity as essential cognitive attainments in a practitioner's progression through their respective Evagrian Christian and Tsongkhapa's Tibetan Buddhist spiritual paths. Chapter six now turns to a comparative analysis of *apatheia* and serenity / *śamatha*.

CHAPTER SIX –*Śamatha* and *Apatheia*

"Maitreya, you should know that all mundane and supramundane virtuous qualities, whether of śrāvakas, bodhisattvas, or tathāgatas, are the result of tranquil abiding and insight".

Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra

"The Kingdom of heaven is *apatheia* of the soul along with true knowledge of existing things."

Praktikos [2].

Introduction

This chapter six engages in comparative analysis of those states of consciousness described as *apatheia* by Evagrius and as "serenity"[695] (*śamatha*) (*zhi gnas*) by Tsongkhapa. Chapters four and five of this thesis identified and located *apatheia* and serenity as essential cognitive attainments in a practitioner's progression through their respective Evagrian Christian and Tsongkhapa's Tibetan Buddhist spiritual paths. The comparative analysis in this chapter begins with a condensed précis of the role and importance of serenity and *apatheia* in Evagrius' and Tsongkhapa's respective spiritual systems. It then proposes a three-fold framework within which serenity and *apatheia* may be comparatively analysed; a framework adopted from Tsongkhapa's response to a question about serenity.[696]

[695] "Serenity" is the term chosen by the editors of the English Translation of the *Lamrim Chenmo* for "*śamatha*" and, for consistency, is the term used in this thesis rather than "calm abiding", the term often appearing in wider English presentations of Tibetan Buddhist philosophy and practice – see for example: J. Hopkins, *Meditation on Emptiness* (Wisdom Publications, United States, 1996), 67 and L. Zahler, *Study and Practice of Meditation: Tibetan Interpretations of the Concentrations & Formless Absorptions* (Snow Lion Publications, United States, 2009), 63.

[696] A hypothetical interlocutor asks Tsongkhapa where, in terms of the five Mahāyāna Paths, serenity occurs. Tsongkhapa's unexpected response *inverts* the premise behind the question, affirming that it is not entry into a particular path, but the nature of "serenity" attained that determines the path it qualifies (LRCM 3:87). The significance of this exchange for the method of analysis deployed in this chapter is discussed below.

This framework is: first, the possibility of serenity / *apatheia* functioning as bases enabling a practitioner to temporarily suppress manifest afflictions / *logismoi* in progressing along what Tsongkhapa (following Asaṅga's *Śrāvakabhūmi*) describes as a "mundane path".[697] Second, the possibility of serenity / *apatheia*, functioning as bases enabling a practitioner to eliminate afflictive obscurations and their seeds and thus attain liberation from *saṃsāra* / attain the *Natural Contemplations* and third, when serenity / *apatheia* are conjoined with *bodhicitta / agapē*, respectively, possibly functioning as bases enabling a practitioner to attain *enlightenment / theōria*. Both the second and third possibilities are described by the *Lamrim Chenmo* as "supramundane paths".[698]

Within this framework, chapter six engages in comparative analysis of the first possibility; whether and to what extent the initial cultivation and then attainment of serenity / *apatheia* might function as bases enabling a practitioner to progress along a "mundane path." Discussed in more detail below, progression along a mundane path involves the practitioner attaining serenity and, from that "access" meditative state, initially comparing the relative coarseness of the *desire realm* and the relative peace of the concentrations of the *form realm* and then comparing those concentrations with the absorptions of the *formless realm*.

[697] Tsongkhapa's presentation of the "mundane path" follows that of Asaṅga in his *Śrāvakabhūmi* ("Hearer's Levels"). It is defined by Asaṅga as "the practice of the eight attainments (*samāpatti*)" at [3.2] – corresponding to the four concentrations of the *Form Realm* and the four absorptions of the *Formless Realm*. References to the *Śravakabhūmi* and particularly references to the mundane path are drawn from the critical edition by F. Deleanu, 'The Chapter on the Mundane Path (Laukikamārga) in the Śrāvakabhūmi' (2006*) Studia Philologica Buddhica Monograph Series XXa,* The Institute for Buddhist Studies, Tokyo.

[698] Tsongkhapa's presentation of the "supramundane path" also follows that of Asaṅga in his *Śrāvakabhūmi*, describing it as representing "the contemplation of the Four Noble Truths and knowing them as they are in reality" at [3.3]. The supramundane path is characterised by "insight" in the sense that "principally you cultivate the view which is the knowledge of selflessness of the person." LRCM 3:92.

In doing so, the practitioner's dismay / disgust at the relative coarseness of (for example) the *desire realm* when compared with the peace of the first concentration of the *form realm* enables the practitioner to temporarily suppress manifest afflictions associated with the *desire realm* – and continuing to suppress afflictions up to the third absorption of the *formless realm*.[699]

This chapter then proceeds with a deeper comparative analysis by bringing Tsongkhapa's methodology for cultivating serenity developed in his *Lamrim Chenmo,* into critical comparison with Evagrius' methodology for cultivating *apatheia* developed throughout his texts including *The Praktikos, Chapters on Prayer*, *On the Eight Thoughts*, *On Thoughts*, the *Antirrhētikos* ("Talking Back") and *Skemmata* ("Reflections).

The deeper analysis of Tsongkhapa's methodology commences with the initial development of concentration (*samādhi*) (*ting nge 'dzin*) as necessary support for the progressive cultivation of the "nine mental states" by eliminating the "five faults" through the application of the "eight antidotes". Guided by mindfulness (*smṛti*) (*dran pa*) and vigilance (*saṃprajanya*) (*shes bzhin*) the application of these eight antidotes performs a similar function to Evagrian *praktiké* in defending the stability and clarity of the *nous* against the onslaught of the *logismoi*.

The chapter then turns to a deeper analysis of Evagrius' methodology for developing *apatheia,* commencing with the need to initially cultivate *hesychia* (*ἡσυχία*) (stillness) which supports the development of *apatheia*.

[699] Why the mundane path does not lead to liberation from *saṃsāra* will also be explained below.

Enabling the cultivation of both *hesychia* and *apatheia* are discernment (*diakrisis*) (*διάκρισις*) and self-control (*enkrateia*) (ἐγράτια) that function as accompanying modalities of *praktiké* necessary to combat the eight *logismoi*, the demonically inspired thoughts that constantly threaten to destroy the monastic's ability to attain *apatheia*, engage in pure prayer and attain to the *Second and First Natural Contemplations* and *theōria.*

Because both the initial précis and this deeper, methodological examination of serenity and *apatheia* recalls technically structured material from two very different metaphysical systems, the discussion is supported by several illustrative Charts.

Chapter seven will then explore the second and third possibilities in terms of progression along what Tsongkhapa identifies as a "supramundane path". They are analysed together because they involve similar but more complex considerations. In terms of the second possibility and for Tsongkhapa, serenity functions as a path consciousness for liberation from *saṃsāra*, when it is qualified by renunciation and insight in the sense of *vipaśyāna* ("the view that knows selflessness"). It will explore whether and to what extent the nature and content of the wisdom necessary for liberation from *saṃsāra* as presented from Tsongkhapa's *Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka* (Middle Way Consequence) perspective approximates the epistemic content and phenomenological processes of *Second Natural Contemplation, First Natural Contemplations* and *Theōria* as presented by Evagrius. Likewise, for Evagrius, *apatheia* is the necessary foundation for *Second* and *First Natural Contemplations* and eventually *Theōria*. From his perspective, one can ask; can serenity and insight in terms of *vipaśyāna* function as the necessary foundation for the development of the two *Natural Contemplations* and *Theōria*?

In terms of the third possibility Tsongkhapa notes that if serenity is "imbued with the precious spirit of enlightenment, it turns into the Mahāyāna path."[700] For Evagrius, "*agapē* (selfless love) is the child of *apatheia*"[701] affirming that "the goal of the ascetic life is *agapē*"[702]. If a practitioner *does* attain *apatheia* and thus selfless love (*agapē)*, will *agapē* be sufficient to function as a path consciousness for enlightenment? If a practitioner has developed *bodhicitta* has that person also attained *apatheia*? Is *agapē* also a "child of serenity"? In analysing these questions, chapter seven will particularly focus on the *epistemological* dimensions of Tsongkhapa's presentation of insight and on the Evagrian presentation of *Second* and *First Natural Contemplations* and *Theologiké*.

The analysis in chapters six and seven therefore differ because while they both involve exploration of contemplative progression along a defined "path", the *cognitive mechanisms* underlying that progression are very different. The mechanism in chapter six involves techniques directed toward the identification and temporary suppression of what Tsongkhapa identifies as manifest afflictions and what Evagrius identifies as the *logismoi* and related emotional and afflictive cognitive states. The emphasis is therefore on *praktiké* / inner discipline functioning as causes for attaining the peace, stability and focus of mind associated with *apatheia* and serenity respectively. However, in chapter seven and for Tsongkhapa, the cognitive mechanism involves cultivation of *insight* in the sense of *vipaśyāna* which enables the complete elimination (not mere suppression) of afflictions and their seeds and, for Evagrius, the perception of the *logoi* of creation through *Second* and *First Natural Contemplations* and finally, *Theōria.* The emphasis is on wisdom / *gnosis* functioning as causes for liberation from *saṃsāra*, enlightenment and *Theologiké.*

[700] LRCM 3:92
[701] *Praktikos* [81].
[702] *Praktikos* [84].

How do serenity and *apatheia* function as causes for these spiritual effects?

Précis of the Role and Importance of Serenity & *Apatheia*

Why does Tsongkhapa emphasise the importance of attaining "serenity", the fifth of the six *pāramitās* as part of his Tibetan Buddhist Path to Enlightenment? Why does Evagrius emphasise the importance of attaining *apatheia* as part of his spiritual economy in which the *nous*, now a mind in a soul in a body experiencing Second Creation, seeks to regain *theōria,* cognitive reunion with God as Holy Trinity? These questions are briefly answered here at the outset to provide thematic context to the more extensive discussion and analysis of serenity and *apatheia* developed throughout this chapter six.

Chapter five of this thesis provided an overview of Tsongkhapa's Tibetan Buddhist tradition as he expounded upon it in the *Lamrim Chenmo*. It noted that within Tsongkhapa's Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition, it is helpful to understand the relationship between the different realms (*dhātu*) of existence posited by the Buddhist *Abhidharma* literature and the phenomenological states of consciousness experienced by sentient beings corresponding to those realms of existence.[703] Chapter three of Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośa* explains that sentient beings cycle through three realms (*trilokadhātu*) of *saṃsāra*; the desire realm (*kāmadhātu*), the form realm (*rūpadhātu*) and formless realm (*ārūpyadhātu*) according to the ripening of their karma.[704]

[703] As Gethin (1998) suggests; "*The key to understanding the Buddhist cosmological scheme lies in the principle of the equivalence of cosmology and psychology…in the traditional understanding, the various realms of existence relate rather closely to certain commonly experienced states of mind."* R. Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism* (Oxford University Press, United Kingdom, 1998), 119-120.
[704] See Chim Jampaiyang, *Ornament of Abhidharma: A Commentary on Vasubandhu's Abhidharmakośa*, I. Coghlan (trans.) (Wisdom Publications, Somerville, United States, 2018), 366ff.

In this presentation there is a causative relationship between the three realms of existence and the meditative / concentrative / psychological state of any given sentient being in that realm. Hence, there exists a desire realm consciousness, a form realm consciousness and a formless realm consciousness in which "sentient beings in a particular realm have the sphere of consciousness corresponding to that realm."[705] This framework is illustrated in Chart 1 on the following page.

Chapter four of the thesis explained that in Tsongkhapa's Tibetan Buddhist tradition, sentient beings are prevented from attaining liberation from these realms of *saṃsāra* and from attaining enlightenment, by the existence of afflictive obscurations (*kleśāvaraṇas*) (*nyons sgrib*) and cognitive obscurations (*jñeyāvaraṇas*) (*shes sgrib*) respectively.

[705] Dalai Lama and T. Chodron, *Following in the Buddha's Footsteps, Volume 4 of The Library of Wisdom and Compassion* (Wisdom Publications, United States, 2019), 212 – 213.

Chart 1

Saṃsāric Realms, Concentrations, Absorptions, Levels and Stages

(LRCM 3:25)

Formless Realm

9. Peak of cyclic existence (4th Absorption)
8. Nothingness (3rd Absorption)
7. Limitless Consciousness (2nd Absorption)
6. Limitless Space (1st Absorption)

Form Realm

5. Fourth Concentration
4. Third Concentration
3. Second Concentration
2. First Concentration / meditative stabilization

(Attains śamatha) (Preparation for a concentration "not unable")

Desire Realm

Gods (*devas*)
Demigods (*asuras*)
Humans (*manusyas*)
Animals (*tiryañc*)
Hungry Ghosts (*pretas*)
Hell Beings (*nārakas*)

1. First Level

9. Setting in equipoise
8. Making one-pointed
7. Thorough pacifying
6. Pacifying
5. Discipling
4. Close setting
3. Resetting
2. Continuous setting
1. Setting the mind.

Briefly, afflictive obscurations include both manifest afflictive states of consciousness such as anger, jealousy, attachment or pride, as well as the *seeds*; "potentialities" or "latencies" (*bījas*) (*bag chags*) of those afflictive states of consciousnesses that enable afflictive consciousnesses to manifest at a later time.[706] Cognitive obscurations are more subtle latent propensities described by Tsongkhapa as "(giving) rise to errors of dualistic appearance, so that things appear to be intrinsically existent when they are not."[707] These "errors of dualistic appearance" are generated by the mind having been "beginninglessly suffused with strong attachment to things regarded as intrinsically existent."[708] From Tsongkhapa's *Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka* perspective, to attain enlightenment, it is necessary for a practitioner to eliminate *both* afflictive and cognitive obscurations.[709]

Chapter five of the thesis explained that the *Lamrim Chenmo* presents the mechanics by which a practitioner progressively eliminates these obscurations by reference to the Five Mahāyāna Paths and the Ten Bodhisattva Levels (*bhūmis*) outlined in the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*[710] and in the Ten Bhūmis Chapter (the *Daśabhūmika*) from the *Mahāvaipulya Sūtra*[711] respectively. Within this general framework, serenity is the *basis* from which direct, perceptual "insight" or realisation into emptiness (*śuñyatā*) (*stong pa nyid*) is attained.

[706] L. Sopa (with D. Rochard), *Steps on the Path to Enlightenment, Volume 5: Insight* (Wisdom Publications, United States, 2017), 129.
[707] LRCM 3:323.
[708] LRCM 3:323.
[709] Although not strictly relevant here, Tsongkhapa's *Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka* tenet system holds that while practitioners of non-Mahāyāna Buddhist traditions attain liberation from *saṃsāra;* their insight into emptiness enables them to eliminate the *afflictive obscurations*, but not to attain *enlightenment* because they do not cultivate *bodhicitta*. According to *Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka*, bodhicitta is necessary for the elimination of the *cognitive obscurations*.
[710] The relationship between the *Lamrim Chenmo* and the "Five Paths and Ten Levels" are more explicitly presented in Geshe Lhundup Sopa's five-volume commentary on the *Lamrim Chenmo*.
[711] *Daśabhūmika - The Ten Bhūmis Chapter from the Mahāvaipulya Sūtra "A Multitude of Buddhas*". Toh 44-31 Degé Kangyur vol. 36, folios 166.a–283.a.

This direct perceptual realisation into emptiness marks a practitioner's entry into the Mahāyāna Path of Seeing (*darśana-mārga*) (*mthong lam*) and from which the practitioner begins to abandon the afflictive obscurations. Over the next seven Grounds on the Mahāyāna Path of Meditation (*bhāvanā-mārga*) (*sgom lam*) the practitioner progressively abandons the afflictive obscurations and their seeds. Upon abandoning those afflictive obscurations, the practitioner has attained liberation from *saṃsāra* and has become an *arhat* (*dgra bcom pa*). The practitioner then abandons the cognitive obscurations over Grounds 8-10 of the Mahāyāna Path of Meditation to attain the Mahāyāna Path of No More Learning (*aśaikṣa-mārga*) (*mi slob lam*) and the state of enlightenment. This gradual process is illustrated in Chart 2 on the following page.

Attaining serenity is a fundamental prerequisite to success in this process. A practitioner transitions to the Mahāyāna Path of Seeing from the Mahāyāna Path of Preparation (*prayoga-mārga*) (*sbyor lam*) which, in turn is achieved *after* the practitioner has attained a meditative concentration (*samādhi*) (*ting nge 'dzin*) that is a union of serenity and special insight into emptiness. The causes for such a meditative concentration are cultivated over the Mahāyāna Path of Accumulation (*saṃbhāra-mārga*) (*tshogs lam*) and the two entry way consciousnesses to this path are developed from the attainment of serenity[712]. Hence, without first attaining serenity, it is impossible to cultivate the insight (in the sense of *vipaśyāna*) necessary to eliminate the afflictive and cognitive obscurations, it is impossible to attain liberation from *saṃsāra* and completely impossible to achieve enlightenment.[713]

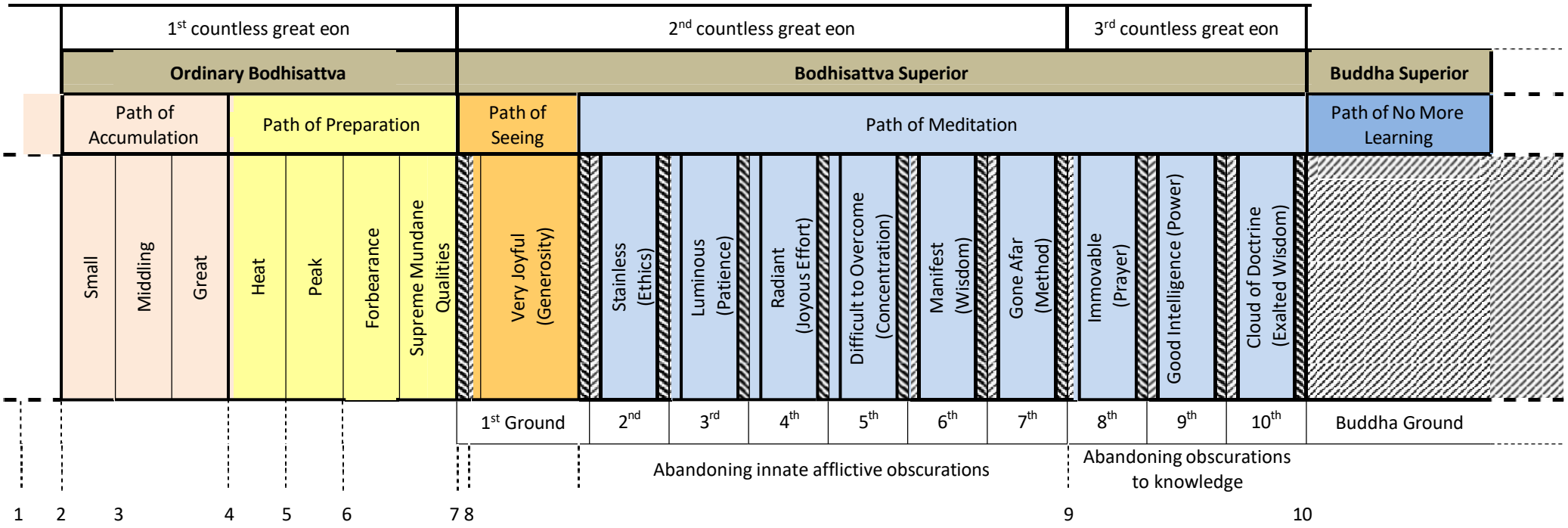
[712] Uncontrived *renunciation* is the first and uncontrived *bodhicitta* is the second consciousness qualifying entry to the Mahāyāna Path of Accumulation (LRCM 2:19) developed from the basis of serenity.

[713] Tsongkhapa recognizes that it is possible for a non-Buddhist practitioner to cultivate a form of serenity unaccompanied by supramundane insight and enabling the temporary suppression of the manifest afflictive obscurations. However, as will be explained, this meditative state is insufficient to enable a practitioner to eliminate the seeds of the afflictions. Hence, the practitioner will remain within *saṃsāra.*

Chart extracted from the FPMT Basic Program Istituto Lama Tzong Khapa (2024).

Chart 2

Great Vehicle Path According to the Middle Way Consequence School (Prasangika)



Milestones

1 – Sharp faculty trainees are pervaded by an inferential realization of emptiness
2 – Uncontrived renunciation and mind of enlightenment
3 – Will never fall to a lower vehicle
4 – Union of calm abiding and special insight observing emptiness
5 – Roots of virtue cannot be severed
6 – No more rebirths in lower realms
7 – Initial direct realization of emptiness (Superior)

Uninterrupted path

Liberated path

Afflictive Obscurations (Obstructions to liberation)	**Obscurations to Knowledge** (Obstructions to omniscience)
Conception of inherent existence along with its seeds	Latencies of the conception of inherent existence and all factors of mistaken dualistic appearance that arise due to the force of those

8 – Abandoned intellectually acquired afflictive obscurations
9 – Abandoned innate afflictive obscurations
10 – Enlightenment (Buddha)

Why does Evagrius emphasise the importance of attaining *apatheia*? Chapter four of this thesis provided an overview of the Evagrian Christian metaphysical system reflected in his principal trilogy of monastic texts, the *Praktikos* the *Gnostikos* and the *Kephalaia Gnostika.* Evagrius explained that God created rational beings, *logikoi* consisting of pure minds (*noi / logikoi*) initially dwelling in perfect contemplation of God as Holy Trinity[714]. This relationship between Creator and created was characterised by "unity between God and all *logikoi* and among the *logikoi* themselves there was common purpose, the contemplation of the Trinity, 'essential knowledge'; *theologia*"[715]. This relationship did not last, Evagrius explaining that, through neglect, *logikoi* "turned (their) face away" from God, separating themselves from receptivity to God as Holy Trinity.[716]

However, God did not abandon his negligent creatures, but in a movement akin to a second creation, God created worlds "in which each intellect was given a body as well as a status (world or eon) appropriate to its degree of declination from God. Thus angels, humans and demons are all rational creatures, but they differ in bodily form and dominant energizing force".[717] For Evagrius, embodied creatures are able to exercise a degree of contemplation proper to their nature[718] and through pure prayer[719], progressively ascend through *Second Natural Contemplation*, then to *First Natural Contemplation*, then to *Theōria*, cognitive reunion with God as Holy Trinity.

[714] KG 3.6.
[715] KG 1.88, KG 1.89, KG 2.47. See also: C. Stewart, 'Imageless Prayer and the Theological Vision of Evagrius Ponticus' (2001) 9(2) *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 173, 176.
[716] KG 1.49, KG 3.22.
[717] KG 3.7, KG 3.38. See aso: C. Stewart, 'Imageless Prayer and the Theological Vision of Evagrius, 176.
[718] KG 2.4, KG 3.47, KG 3.51.
[719] "Pure Prayer" involves "a state of mind destructive of every mental representation." (*Reflections* [26]), the "laying aside of mental representations." (*Chapters on Prayer* [70]), especially those "mental representations tied to the passions." (*Chapters on Prayer* [53]). Pure Prayer will be developed further in Chapter 7.

This scheme is reflected at the very start of the *Praktikos* where Evagrius draws a distinction between the "kingdom of heaven" described as "impassibility - *apatheia* of the soul accompanied by true knowledge of beings" and the "kingdom of God" described as "knowledge of the Holy Trinity co-extensive with the substance of the mind and surpassing its incorruptibility".[720] This framework is illustrated in Chart 3 on the following page.

[720] PR 2 and PR 3.

Chart 3

Overview of Spiritual Progression in the Evagrian System

Contemplation of God ("Essential Knowledge" - *Theologiké*)

"Essential contemplation" (*theōria*)

The *Natural Contemplations* (*physiké*)

Contemplation of *logoi* of incorporeal nature (*First Natural Contemplation*)

Contemplation of *logoi* of corporeal nature: (*Second Natural Contemplation*)

Apatheia

Praktiké

Essential to the development of these differing "knowledges" is the initial cultivation of *apatheia*; "we call *apatheia* the health of the soul. The food of the soul can be said to be contemplative knowledge since it alone is able to unite us with the holy powers".[721] *Apatheia* is thus the necessary base-level mental state enabling practitioners to ascend through pure prayer to the contemplations and finally to *Theologiké*, knowledge of God as Holy Trinity.[722] It is the *basis* for pure prayer which facilitates *Second Natural Contemplation, First Natural Contemplations* and finally *Theologiké*. However, pure prayer is a state in which the mind remains undistracted by images, impressions, fantasies, memories and other sensory phenomena associated with, or initiated by the *logismoi*.[723]

In his text *Foundations* and employing an analogy that I suspect Tsongkhapa would approve of, Evagrius explains the need for mental stability and clarity: "notice how a jar of wine left in its place for awhile to lie unmoved renders the wine clear, settled and perfumed. But if it is carried about here and there, it leaves the wine troubled, cloudy, and showing evidence of the unpleasantness of all the badness coming from the lees."[724] The malign forces that "leaves the wine (*nous*) troubled, cloudy and unpleasant" are the eight principal, demonically inspired *logismoi*. In the early part of his *Praktikos,* Evagrius, identifies these eight *logismoi* that disturb the soul and darken the mind, preventing it from achieving *apatheia*[725]: (i) gluttony, *gastrimargia* (γαστριμαργία); (ii) sexual temptation / fornication, *porneia* (πορνεία); (iii) love of money, *philarguria* (φιλαργυία); (iv) anger, *orge* (ὀργή); (v) sadness, *lupe* (λύπη);

[721] PR [5]6.
[722] D. Prassas, 'Evagrius and the Re-ascent of the voῦς to Union with God', in G. Springer and P. Clarke (eds), *Patristic Spirituality: Classical Perspectives on Ascent in the Journey to God* (Brill, 2022), 276.
[723] In his *Chapters on Prayer*, Evagrius writes [70] "You cannot practice pure prayer while entangled in material things and agitated by continuous concerns, for prayer is the laying aside of mental representations."
[724] Evagrius, *Foundations* [7] Sinkewicz (2001).
[725] PR [6] – [14].

(vi) listlessness, *accedia* (ἀκηδία); (vii) vainglory, *kenodoxia* (κενοδοξία); and (viii) pride, *uperophania* (ὑπερηφανία).

These eight, demonic *logismoi* "seize hold of the passionate part of the soul (and) are said to be opposed to the practical life; (and) in turn, those that cause great vexation to the rational part are called enemies of all truth and adversaries of contemplation."[726] Finer analysis reveals that gluttony, fornication and avarice are especially associated with the concupiscible (*epithumikon*) part of the soul; sadness, anger and acedia are associated with the irascible (*thumikon*) part of the soul while vainglory and pride are associated with the rational (*logistikon*) part of the soul.[727] This finer analysis is reflected throughout Evagrius' texts where he presents the arising of the *logismoi* in terms of a cause – effect relationship.[728]

For example, in the opening section of his text *On Thoughts* Evagrius identifies gluttony, avarice and vainglory, *logismoi* associated with the concupiscible / appetitive (*epithumikon*) part of the soul, as the "three fundamental thoughts (and) all the other demons march along behind these ones."[729] For example, Evagrius observes that it is not possible "to trouble the irascible part (*thumikon*) unless one is fighting for food, wealth or esteem."[730] Accordingly, combatting the *logismoi* through engaging in *praktiké* enable the appetitive (*epithumikon*) and irascible (*thumikon*) parts of the soul to be brought under control.[731]

[726] PR [84].
[727] This division is proposed by L. Misiarczyk, *Eight Logismoi in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus* (Brepols, Turnhout, 2021).
[728] The sequencing, relationships and effect of the *logismoi* are particular subjects of Evagrius' texts *On Thoughts* and *Skemmata*.
[729] *On Thoughts* [1].
[730] *On Thoughts* [1].
[731] Evagrius explains this process in *Praktikos* [86].

Once under control, the appetitive and irascible parts of the soul then actively assist the rational part of the soul (*logistikon*) to bring the mind into a state of *apatheia*, which makes possible attaining to love (*agapē*) (ἀγάπη), pure prayer and the various contemplations.[732]

In this way, *praktiké* works toward the reduction and eventual elimination of the malign influence of the eight *logismoi* as distractions to pure prayer and contemplation: "a mind engaged in the practical life is one that always receives the mental representations of this world in a manner free of passions."[733] Why is this? If the *nous* is preoccupied with *logismoi*, plagued by passions, or obsessed with memories or fantasies, then it cannot "see the place of God":[734]

> "The mind could not see the place of God within itself, unless it has transcended all the mental representations associated with objects. Nor will it transcend them, if it has not put off the passions that bind it to sensible objects through mental representations."

"Demonic thoughts (*logismoi*) blind the left eye of the soul which perceived the contemplation of beings (*Second Natural Contemplation*); the mental representations that leave an impress and a form on our ruling faculty cloud the right eye which in the time of prayer, contemplates the blessed light of the Trinity." (*First Natural Contemplation / theoriā*) (italics added).*:*[735]

[732] *Praktikos* [78].
[733] Evagrius *Reflections* [16]; R. E. Sinkewicz., ed and tr*., Evagrius of Ponticus: The Greek Ascetic Corpus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003),
[734] Evagrius, *On Thoughts* [40] R.E. Sinckewicz, *Evagrius of Ponticus: The Greek Ascetic Corpus.*
[735] Evagrius, *On Thoughts*, R.E Sinckewicz, *Evagrius of Ponticus: The Greek Ascetic Corpus*.

The implicit ordering of the struggle through *praktiké* therefore reveals "the progression from the corporeal, passionate thoughts to the spiritual"[736] indicating the centrality of control of the *logoi* to developing the *Natural Contemplations*. *Praktiké* in aid of spiritual progression is particularly important to this order.

In his *Kephalaia Gnostika*, Evagrius notes the deleterious effects of the *logismoi* on attaining the *Natural Contemplations*; "the various movements (*logismoi*) and the different passions of rational creatures have compelled by force, the intellections (*logoi*) concerning Providence to be seen in an obscure way."[737]

These extracts from *The Praktikos*, *Reflections, On Thoughts*, the *Chapters on Prayer,* and the *Kephalaia Gnostika,* enable the reader to understand the causal sequence identified by Evagrius as the process by which the *nous* becomes agitated by the *logismoi*, unable to engage in pure prayer and unable to attain *apatheia*. First, the bodily senses receive mental representations of the sensible objects of the wider world,[738] second, the various demonically-instigated *logismoi* (but principally eight of them) introduce these representations into the soul,[739] third, these representations stir the passions (*pathé*)[740] – so that the mind is agitated, racing wildly and unable to develop the focus necessary for prayer.

Hence Evagrius notes that "a blameworthy kiss is an impassioned mental representation of a sensible object."[741]

[736] Ibid 93.
[737] *Kephalaia Gnostika* [5.23].
[738] *Reflections* [16]
[739] *On Thoughts* [2].
[740] *Praktikos* [38].
[741] *Reflections* [7].

This is why Evagrius describes prayer as "a state of mind destructive of every earthly representation"[742] more technically advising that "one who wishes to pray in truth must not only govern the irascible and concupiscible parts (of the soul) but also be beyond mental representations tied to the passions."[743]

The inflammatory link between mental representations and the passions are the *logismoi* which explains the great insight and effort Evagrius devotes in his texts *On Thoughts, On the Eight Thoughts* and the first part of *The Praktikos* to identifying the nature and functioning of the *logismoi*. Thus, for both Tsongkhapa and Evagrius, battling to cultivate and then attain the mental consciousness of serenity and *apatheia* respectively is foundational to even the most elementary spiritual progression.

As this chapter will explain, for Tsongkhapa, attaining serenity *principally* involves overcoming laxity and excitement and their near approximates, collateral mental states antithetical to cultivating and maintaining stability and focus[744]. For Evagrius, attaining *apatheia* principally involves restoring harmonious functioning to the soul through taming its passionate aspects in aid of its rational aspect.

[742] *On Thoughts* [26].
[743] *Chapters on Prayer* [53].
[744] The actual mental consciousness that is serenity is also characterised by the bliss of physical and mental pliancy, attained after a practitioner has achieved the ninth concentrative state. This process is discussed in detail later in this chapter.

Proposing an Analytical Framework - The Question to Ask

With this preciś having briefly explored the nature, purpose and importance of serenity and *apatheia* as respectively presented by Tsongkhapa in his *Lamrim Chenmo* and by Evagrius throughout his principal texts, it remains to bring them into comparative analysis. However, in the absence of an *explicit* structure or framework for doing so, it becomes necessary to formulate an *implicit* analytical framework. Noted above, chapters six and seven of this thesis derive such a framework from Tsongkhapa's response to the following question posed by a hypothetical interlocutor: "in terms of the five paths, where does this (attainment of serenity) occur?"[745] In his multi-volume commentary to this part of the *Lamrim Chenmo*, Geshe Lhundup Sopa suggests, apparently counterintuitively, that "we should *not* begin by asking 'how are things empty' (but) by considering how to enter a spiritual path."[746] Tsongkhapa's response unexpectedly *inverts* the sense of the interlocutor's question:

> "…in the case of this question, you do not investigate whether it becomes a path of liberation and omniscience in terms of its being imbued with other paths; *rather you investigate which path it becomes by the very nature of the concentration itself*."[747] (emphasis added).

In other words, while the interlocutor is expecting Tsongkhapa to explain *which path* marks the attainment of serenity, Tsongkhapa affirms it is the nature of serenity attained that determines the particular path it qualifies rather than any particular path determining the attainment of serenity.

[745] LRCM 3:86.
[746] L. Sopa (with D. Rochard*), Steps on the Path to Enlightenment, Volume 5: Insight,* 52.
[747] LRCM 3:87.

Understood this way, serenity *becomes* a path for non-Buddhist practitioners who seek to overcome the afflictions associated with the various realms of *saṃsāra* by means of a "mundane path."[748] Serenity *becomes* a path of liberation for Śrāvakas or Pratyekabuddhas when it is "imbued with the view that knows selflessness, and with the attitude to be free….and diligently strives for liberation."[749] And if serenity is "imbued with the precious spirit of enlightenment, it turns into the Mahāyāna path."[750]

Within this framework therefore, attaining serenity empowers a practitioner to proceed along one of three possible paths; (i) a non-Buddhist, mundane path in which manifest afflictive obscurations, are temporarily suppressed as the practitioner progressively attains to the third formless absorption within the formless realm. Such a path does not lead to liberation from *saṃsāra* because a practitioner either remains in meditative absorption without cultivating insight, or the practitioner cultivates a form of "mundane insight" that is not *vipaśyāna*[751], and thus is unable to eliminate the *seeds* of the manifest afflictions.

Serenity becomes (ii) a Buddhist path in which a practitioner conjoins serenity with renunciation *and* insight (in the sense of *vipaśyāna*) leading to the elimination of the afflictive obscurations and their seeds and thus liberation from *saṃsāra*. Because of the nature of insight on this path, it is described as a "supramundane path", and finally, serenity becomes (iii) a Mahāyāna Buddhist path in which a practitioner conjoins serenity with *bodhicitta* and insight (in the sense of *vipaśyāna*) leading to the elimination of *both* afflictive and cognitive

[748] LRCM 3:87.
[749] LRCM 3:87.
[750] LRCM 3:87.
[751] Tsongkhapa describes this "insight" as "just the insight bearing the aspects of calmness and coarseness. In this way, they proceed solely by the mundane path." (LRCM 3:93).

obscurations and their seeds after which enlightenment is attained (also a "supramundane path).

This chapter explores the first possibility - whether and to what extent the initial ascetic practices associated with developing Evagrian *apatheia* and then the attainment of that state might function as a "mundane" path consciousness in the sense that attaining *apatheia* enables a practitioner to pacify what Tsongkhapa identifies as "manifest afflictive obscurations."[752] Likewise, this chapter explores whether and to what extent the cultivation and attainment of serenity as understood by Tsongkhapa might function like *apatheia* in the sense of being characterised by the control over or even elimination of the *logismoi.*

These considerations, posed at a certain level of generality, suggest tempting possibilities for building bridges between Tsongkhapa's and Evagrius' respective traditions in pursuit of Buddhist-Christian dual belonging claims. However, as chapters six and seven argue, when these questions are posed and then answered in more forensic detail, the gulf between what *appears* possible and what is *actually* possible, becomes apparent. [753]

[752] LRCM 3:22.

[753] The literature generally responds to this gulf in one of three ways. First, some scholars explore apparent similarities between the Evagrian and Buddhist traditions at a general level, thus minimising or even avoiding inconsistencies or contradictions. An example is S. Cloete, 'Dwelling at the Heart of Holiness: Locating the Buddha-Land and the Place of God' (2020) 40 *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 204. Cloete highlights similarities in relating Evagrius' *logismoi* and the *ten fetters* and *ten defilements* outlined in the *Theravāda* text *The Vimuttimagga* ("Path to Freedom") but does not substantively engage with the complex theology and philosophy behind the texts. Second, some scholars avoid inconsistencies and contradictions by discussing Evagrian and Buddhist issues without any reference to underlying theological and philosophical content. An example is J. Carey, 'Dispassion as an Ethical Ideal' (2018) 5(24) *Ergo* 645. Carey discusses "dispassion" (apatheia) in the Stoic, Buddhist and Eastern Orthodox Christian tradition, *without* explicitly engaging with the theological content of those traditions. Finally, a more rigorous (and preferred) response is demonstrated in T. Cattoi, 'Holy Anger, Holy Wrath: The Role of Anger and the Emotions in Early Christian Spirituality and the Mahāyāna Buddhist Tradition' (2019) 39 *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 53. Cattoi's closer forensic reading demonstrates how apparent similarities between the Evagrian Christian and Mahāyāna Buddhist traditions actually reveal themselves to be vast differences.

This more detailed, forensic exploration commences by exploring the nature of Tsongkhapa's "mundane path", how attaining serenity enables a person to attain to this path, what it means to move through this path and in what sense these dynamics can be compared with Evagrian *praktiké* in aid of attaining *apatheia*.

Serenity, *Apatheia* & The "Mundane Path",

Throughout the chapters in his *Lamrim Chenmo* concerning serenity, Tsongkhapa draws extensively from Asaṅga's Ś*rāvakabhūmi* ("Hearer's Levels")[754] where the mundane path is defined as "the practice of the eight attainments (*samāpatti*)"[755] corresponding to the four concentrations of the *form realm* and the four absorptions of the *formless realm*.[756] Progressing through these concentrations and absorptions from an established basis of serenity *without* the use of discerning wisdom (in the sense of *vipaśyāna*) to sustain an analysis of the selflessness of the person"[757] represents the mundane path and Tsongkhapa identifies four types of persons, including non-Buddhist yogis as those who might proceed solely by the mundane path.[758] This would include consideration of Evagrius and his path and methods as a non-Buddhist practitioner.

[754] Noted above, references to the *Śravakabhūmi* and particularly references to the mundane path are drawn from the critical edition by Florin Deleanu (2006).
[755] *Śravakabhūmi* 3.2, 24.
[756] *Samāpatti*, defined in R. Buswell and D. Lopez, *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism* (Princeton University Press, United States, 2014), 746.
[757] LRCM 3:93, noting that from Tsongkhapa's *Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka* perspective, to achieve liberation and enlightenment, a practitioner must realise the selflessness of *both* persons and phenomena.
[758] LRCM 3:92-93. The four persons are (i) non-Buddhists, (ii) Buddhists who are of dull faculties, (iii) Buddhists who possess sharp faculties, but whose "roots of virtue" have not matured, and (iv) bodhisattvas who wish to achieve enlightenment in a future life.

The path consciousness cultivated by these persons are mundane for one of three main reasons; first, because they *are not* Buddhist practitioners and thus do not cultivate insight into selflessness, instead remaining in a state of extended meditative serenity; second, because *whether or not* they are Buddhist practitioners, they utilise mundane insight "bearing the aspects of calmness and coarseness, in which you observe the coarseness of the lower levels and the calmness of the higher levels"[759] and third, if they *are* Buddhist practitioners, because they are of dull faculties and unable to cultivate the requisite insight into selflessness.[760] For Tsongkhapa, when serenity is attained, but is not conjoined with insight in the sense of *vipaśyāna*, it is unable to function as a path to liberation from *saṃsāra* and is thus a mundane path.

Why this might be so can be understood in considering an example of a non-Buddhist yogi teaching serenity as a basis for a mundane path and mentioned in the *Samāadhirāja Sūtra*:

> "If you meditate on a worldly samādhi and do not eliminate the conception of a self, then the klésas will arise once more as happened in the samādhi practice of Udraka."[761]

This extract from the *Samāadhirāja Sūtra* is warning that although manifest afflictions (the *klésas*) such as anger, jealousy and craving may be temporarily subdued in attaining serenity and in progressing along the mundane path, without then developing insight based on serenity, the *seeds* of those afflictions remain and will later ripen as rebirth within the realms of *saṃsāra* and, once reborn, those karmic seeds will later ripen as suffering or happiness.[762]

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[759] LRCM 3:92 – discussed below.
[760] LRCM 3:93.
[761] *Samādhirāja Sūtra* (King of Samādhis Sūtra) v 9.43 - Toh 127 Degé Kangyur, vol. 55, folios 1.b–170.b
[762] This is describing the three principal dynamics associated with ripening karma. At LRCM 1:239, Tsongkhapa refers to (i) projecting karma (realm of rebirth), and "completing karma" as (ii) tendencies similar to the cause and (iii) experiences similar to the cause.

The reference to "Udraka" concerns traditional accounts of the life of the Buddha in which it is said that before he attained enlightenment, Siddhārtha Gautama studied with two yogis, Ȧḷāra Kālāma and Udraka Rāmaputra.[763] The *Ariyapariyesanā Sūtra* recounts that Siddhārtha quickly mastered the meditative state of "the sphere of nothingness" (*ākiṃcanyāyatana*) taught by Ȧḷāra Kālāma and the meditative state of "neither-perception-nor-non-perception" (*naivasṃjñānāsṃjñāyatana*) [764] taught by Udraka Rāmaputra,[765] but was not satisfied with attaining either of them.[766]

Accordingly, Tsongkhapa holds out Udraka as an example of a non-Buddhist practitioner who does attain serenity but failing to develop insight in the sense of *vipaśyāna*, fails to free himself from *saṃsāra*.

With this in mind and noting that Evagrius would be considered a non-Buddhist practitioner[767], his understanding of Christianity; expressed in *Praktikos* [1] as "the doctrine of Jesus Christ our Saviour, consisting in ethics (*praktiké*), and philosophy of nature (*theoretiké*) and theology (*theologiké*)" cannot be easily mapped across to the framework of the mundane path adopted from the Ś*rāvakabhūmi* outlined above.

[763] LRCM 3:395. See also the *Ariyapariyesanā Sūtra* (The Noble Search) in Bhikku Ñāṇamoli and Bhikku Bodhi (eds) (1995) at 256-259. The sūtra recounts that Siddhārtha Gautama initially studied with the non-Buddhist yogi Ȧḷāra Kālāma before studying with "Udraka" (referred to as "Uddaka").

[764] *Ākiṃcanyāyatana* is the third absorption of the formless realm and *naivasṃjñānāsṃjñāyatana* is the fourth absorption of the formless realm.

[765] A. Wynne, *The Origin of Buddhist Meditation* (Routledge, United Kingdom, 2007) thoroughly discusses the historicity and teachings associated with both Ȧḷāra Kālāma and Udraka Rāmaputra and suggests that the teachings of both yogis contained similarities "the philosophical literature of early Brahaminism", 2.

[766] Both meditative states are within saṃsāra and explain Siddhārtha Gautama's dissatisfaction despite attaining them – the *Ariyapariyesanā Sūtra* simply records Siddhārtha saying: "Not being satisfied with that Dhamma, disappointed with it, I left."

[767] Interestingly, in *The Praktikos* [81], Evagrius observes that faith in God, as an "interior good….is to be found even in those who do not yet believe in God." Would Evagrius consider that Tsongkhapa possesses "faith"?

However, the warning in the *Samāadhirāja Sūtra* above that failing to eliminate the conception of self will mean that "the klésas will arise once more" invites comparative analysis of serenity and *apatheia* through exploring whether and to what extent afflictions and *logismoi* are neutralised in the processes of cultivating serenity / *apatheia* and from the perspective of the practitioner *having attained* serenity or *apatheia* and advancing along the mundane path noted above.

Both possibilities will be explored in the context of this mundane path, and it will be seen that while Evagrius does distinguish perfect from imperfect *apatheia*[768], such distinction has no analogue to Tsongkhapa's distinction between the mundane and supramundane paths. This comparative analysis, exploring whether and to what extent *praktiké* in combatting the *logismoi* (Evagrius) and deploying the "eight antidotes" against the "five faults" in attaining serenity (Tsongkhapa) becomes important for the analysis in chapter eight of this thesis in which the hermeneutics of Pierre Hadot's *Spiritual Exercises* enables the construction of a basis for genuine exploration of Buddhist-Christian dual belonging claims. Why is this?

From the Evagrian perspective, cultivating *praktiké* as foundation for *apatheia* enables manifest afflictive emotional states such as gluttony, sexual temptation, greed, anger, sadness, listlessness, vainglory, and pride to be gradually pacified as the practitioner attains *apatheia*. Likewise, Tsongkhapa's presentation of the "eight antidotes" deployed against the "five faults" in advancing through the "nine levels" to initially attain serenity serves an approximately similar function as a form of *praktiké*.

[768] *Praktikos* [60].

Then, having attained serenity, progression through the mundane path is achieved through the exercise of "mundane insight" which "consists of meditation bearing the aspects of calmness and coarseness, in which you observe the coarseness of the lower levels and the calmness of the higher levels."[769]

The nature of this meditative process involves the practitioner initially pacifying the afflictive obscurations associated with the *desire realm* thus freeing herself from attachment to the *desire realm*. The relative coarseness of the *desire realm* is compared with the relative calmness of (for example), the First Concentration of the *form realm* and so on through to the comparison of the third absorption of the *formless realm* with the fourth absorption of the *formless realm.* Pacification of afflictions occurs upon attaining to an *actual* concentration of the *form realm* or absorption of the *formless realm* which, in turn, is achieved through application of the "seven types of attention" (concentrations) that function as causes for the respective concentration or absorption.[770]

However, as a first step, Tsongkhapa emphasises the importance of *samādhi* (concentration) as a necessary prerequisite to developing serenity, and Evagrius emphasises the importance of *hesychia* (*ἡσυχία*) (stillness) as a necessary prerequisite to developing *apatheia*.

[769] LRCM 3:92.
[770] LCRM 3:99-101.

Samādhi as Foundation of Serenity, *Hesychia* as Foundation of *Apatheia*

Noted in the Introduction to this chapter, Tsongkhapa identifies "five faults" as the principal obstacles to cultivating serenity while Evagrius identifies eight *logismoi* as the principal obstacles to *apatheia,* pure prayer and the *Natural Contemplations*.

However, long before a practitioner begins their assault on the faults and the *logismoi,* both Tsongkhapa and Evagrius prescribe certain foundational prerequisite *praktiké* that include the reorienting, indeed *renunciation* of outer, worldly activities and the cultivation of inner qualities of mindfulness (*smṛti*) (*dran pa*) and vigilance (*saṃprajanya*) (*shes bzhin*), in developing serenity and "inner stillness" (*hesychia*) accompanied by discernment (*diakrisis*) (*διάκρισις*) and self-control (*enkrateia*) (ἐγράτια) in developing *apatheia*.

In an observation equally applicable to Evagrius and Tsongkhapa: "both in his choice of physical space and in his regulation of his own interior space, the monk seeks for the state of perfect tranquillity that will allow him to devote himself single-mindedly to the practice of contemplation."[771] However then as now, both inner and outer tranquillity are very difficult to establish. Although separated by a thousand years, both monastics were aware that the emotional, intellectual and physical dynamics associated with everyday family and business life lived in towns and cities were inconsistent with the cultivation of serenity and *apatheia*.

[771] R. E. Sinkewicz., ed and tr., *Evagrius of Ponticus: The Greek Ascetic Corpus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

The 21st Century's distractive dynamics have only exponentially increased since the time of Evagrius and Tsongkhapa.[772] Unsurprisingly therefore, both Evagrius and Tsongkhapa recommend certain fundamental prerequisite practices / behaviours for the person seeking to cultivate *apatheia* or serenity to address these distractions. These include a radical simplification of lifestyle characterised by voluntary physical withdrawal (*xenitia*) (ξενιτιά) from household or civic life[773], a severe reduction of external distractions[774], curbing sensory desire, reorienting one's prior relationships with others[775] and assiduous cultivation of virtue. In his *Lamrim Chenmo* and following both Kamalaśīla's second *Stages of Meditation* (*Bhāvanākrama*) and Asaṅga's *Śrāvakabhūmi*, Tsongkhapa lists six prerequisites reflecting the above[776].

Although Evagrius does not present a similarly ordered list in his *Praktikos*, he does note in *On Thoughts* that "it is not possible to acquire knowledge without having made the first, the second and the third renunciation."[777] In the present context, the "first renunciation" refers to "the voluntary abandonment of the things of the world for the sake of the knowledge of God."[778]

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[772] The Dalai Lama and Ven Thubten Chodron identify contemporary distractions to include "writing emails, texting, social media, keeping a blog, stock market speculation": Dalai Lama and T. Chodron, *Following in the Buddha's Footsteps, Volume 4 of The Library of Wisdom and Compassion (*Wisdom Publications, United States, 2019), 151.

[773] LRCM 3:28. In the Prologue to his text *To Eulogios* [2], Evagrius writes: "*The first of the illustrious contests is voluntary exile, especially when to the end one should go abroad alone, like an athletes stripped of homeland, family and possessions."* Why? Because as Evagrius advises in *Foundations* [3], "*Do you want, therefore, beloved, to take up the solitary life for what it is and to race after the trophies of stillness / apatheia? Leave behind the concerns of the world."*

[774] In *Foundations* [6], Evagrius writes: "*Indeed I tell you, love voluntary exile….for it allows you to enjoy the unique benefits of practicing stillness…therefore go after places that are secluded and free from distractions."*

[775] LRCM 3:29, Tsongkhapa advises against "*base activities such as buying and selling and excessive socialising."*

[776] LRCM 3:28 – 30. These are (i) dwelling in an appropriate area, (ii) having little desire, (iii) being content, (iv) completely giving up many activities, (v) pure ethical discipline, and (vi) completely ridding oneself of thoughts of desire.

[777] *On Thoughts* [26].

[778] *On Thoughts* [26] – the "second renunciation" refers to the rejection of evil through the grace of Christ and the "third renunciation" is the separation from ignorance characterising the state of the practitioner.

Echoing Tsongkhapa's admonition concerning possessions Evagrius observes that "the person without possessions enjoys the pleasure of a life free from cares…when you do not give your heart to considerations of material things, at that moment you may drive away captivity by the crowd of thoughts."[779] Evagrius draws a distinction between "goods" in the sense of the kind of material goods of concern to the householder on the one hand, and, on the other, inner spiritual goods; "when, having renounced external material goods in freedom from passion, you walk in the path of the superior goods."[780]

Evagrius also comments on prerequisites to "stillness" (*hesychia*) in his texts *Foundations,*[781] *Treatise to Eulogios*[782]and *Causes.*[783] Fine distinctions may be drawn between the states of *hesychia* and *apatheia*. Both terms refer to states of "stillness" or equanimity, however in his texts Evagrius presents them as states of consciousness situated along a phenomenological continuum culminating in *apatheia.* In this sense, while the state of *hesychia* approximates *apatheia*, it is a coarser state than *apatheia,* which is a more subtle mental state enabling pure prayer, the *Natural Contemplations* and then *theōria*. This continuum is reminiscent of Tsongkhapa's distinction between the concentration attained on the ninth mental state[784], which may *approximate* serenity and the concentration on the ninth mental state *conjoined* with physical and mental pliancy that is *actual* serenity enabling the development of insight.[785]

[779] *To Eulogios* [11].
[780] *To Eulogios* [11].
[781] *The Foundations of the Monastic Life: A Presentation of the Practice of Stillness*, in Sinkewicz, *Evagrius of Ponticus: The Greek Ascetic Corpus* (2003) Oxford University Press, 1.
[782] *To Eulogios* [12].
[783] Evagrius, *The Causes for Monastic Observances* in A. M. Casiday*, Evagrius Ponticus (The Early Church Fathers)* (Routledge, United Kingdom, 2006), 81.
[784] These nine mental states will be discussed below.
[785] LRCM 3:78.

While Evagrius does not explicitly propose a stage of concentrative development similar to *samādhi* as a basis for attaining serenity, he does emphasise the importance of cultivating discernment (*diakrisis*) (*διάκρισις*) and self-control (*enkrateia*) (ἐγράτια) as necessary skills in developing *apatheia*. *Diakrisis* and *enkrateia* are mutually reinforcing cognitive skills enabling the monastic to "control the focus of her attention beyond the immediate *logismoi* that appear to her…(because) a significant part of what constitutes control over the thoughts is attention control."[786]

According to Palladius', *Lausiac History*, Evagrius "was deemed worthy of the gift of knowledge and wisdom and the discernment of spirits"[787] and in his text *Chapters on Prayer*, he invited monks to "consider how great a watchfulness and discernment is required for us to offer at the intelligible altar incense acceptable to God."[788] Evagrius therefore urges his monks to seek the gift of *diakrisis* at all stages of the spiritual life; "it is absolutely necessary for someone who serves as a soldier in this warfare to seek *διάκρισις* from the Lord, neglecting nothing that contributes towards the reception of such a gift."[789] For Evagrius, *diakrisis* is *the* essential cognitive skill necessary for identifying and distinguishing *logismoi*, sense impressions and emotions; "*διάκρισις* is believed (to judge rightly) the fantasies concerning the mind, distinguishing between holy and profane, pure and impure *λογισμοί.*" *Diakrisis* is also a necessary skill in developing spiritual insight into created reality.

[786] M. Gaigiulo and S. Vázquez, 'Self-Attention in Evagrius Ponticus: A Specific Modality of Self-Regulation of Attention as a Way of Self-Knowledge' (2022) *Pastoral Psychology* (published online 2 November 2022) https://doi.org/10.1007/s11089-022-0135-x.
[787] *Palladius*, in Robert Meyer (trans) (1964) at 113.
[788] *Chapters on Prayer* [147].
[789] *Epistle 4.5*, in A. Rich*, Discernment in the Desert Fathers: Diakrisis in the Life and Thought of Early Egyptian Monasticism* (Studies in Christian History and Thought, Wipf & Stock Publishers, United States, 2007).43.

Hence, in his *Kephalaia Gnostica*, Evagrius advises that the mind requires a "sharpened spiritual sense to distinguish spiritual things"[790]. Why? Because "the *nous* is a spiritual organ of sense, which Evagrius equates with ἀπάθεια, by exercising *διάκρισις* in the *nous*."[791]

This is why in *The Praktikos*, Evagrius instructs the monk; "….let him keep careful watch over his thoughts. Let him observe their intensity, their periods of decline and follow them as they rise and fall. Let him note well the complexity of his thoughts…"[792] The gift of *diakrisis* is therefore necessary for identifying and attacking the *logismoi*; "the first step in *antirrhēsis* is, then, to identify an impression as a demonic thought (*logismos*), a task that requires the gift of discernment."[793]

For Tsongkhapa, serenity is attained as a culmination of disciplined preparatory practices and concentrative abilities that serve as its causes. Before attaining serenity, a practitioner develops "concentration" (*samādhi*) (*ting nge 'dzin*) a state Tsongkhapa describes as one's "attention remaining one-pointedly on an object of meditation (and) in addition, it must stay with the object continuously."[794] While not the state of serenity (understood in terms of *śamatha*) concentration / *samādhi* is cultivated by the "flawless method"[795] by which concentration gains its two special features; "vivid intensity and non-discursive stability."[796]

[790] KG 1.33.
[791] A. Rich, *Discernment in the Desert Fathers: Diakrisis in the Life and Thought of Early Egyptian Monasticism* 44.
[792] *Praktikos* [50].
[793] D. Brakke (trans.), *Antirrhētikos: Talking Back – A Monastic Handbook for Combatting Demons* (Liturgical Press, United States, 2009), 26.
[794] LRCM 3:48.
[795] LRCM 3:47.
[796] LRCM 3:47.

In this way, a practitioner radically simplifies her lifestyle in the sense discussed above before beginning to develop techniques intended to both sharpen and stabilise her mental focus on an appropriate object of concentration. The techniques she deploys are described by Tsongkhapa: "two things are needed for this (concentration), (1) a technique in which your attention is not distracted from whatever it has as its original object of meditation and (2) an accurate awareness of whether you are distracted and whether you are becoming distracted."[797]

The first of these "things needed" is mindfulness (*smṛti*) (*dran pa*) and the second, "accurate awareness of such distraction" is vigilance (*saṃprajanya*) (*shes bzhin*). These two states also exist in a cause-effect relationship, Śāntideva noting in his *Bodhicaryāvatāra* "when mindfulness dwells at the gate of your mind for its protection, then vigilance will appear."[798]

Mindfulness and vigilance are necessary antidotes to two faults that destroy concentration (and hence attainment of serenity) (i) laxity (*laya*) (*bying ba*) which may manifest in coarse or subtle form as sleepiness or lethargy thus blurring sharp focus, and (ii) excitement (*auddhatya*) (*rgod pa*) which manifests as mental scattering thus undermining stability. From establishing concentration to the best of one's abilities, the practitioner moves onto cultivating the much deeper cognitive state of serenity.

[797] LRCM 3:48.

[798] This is the translation of Chapter 5, Verse 33 of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* by Sopa. Kate Crosby and Andrew Skilton's translation reads: "Awareness comes and, once come, does not go again, if mindfulness remains at the door to the mind in order to act as guard." K. Crosby and A. Skilton (trans.), *Śāntideva: The Bodhicaryāvatāra* (Oxford University Press, United Kingdom), 37.

Tsongkhapa's Analysis of and Framework for Cultivating Serenity

Tsongkhapa devotes considerable attention to the final two of the six *pāramitās* in his *Lamrim Chenmo*, devoting an entire volume in the English translation to the analysis of "serenity" and "insight"; his explication of serenity unfolding in a tightly structured manner[799]. With this structure, Tsongkhapa stresses the importance of understanding what the terms "serenity" (*śamatha*) (*zhi gnas*) and "insight" (*vipaśyāna*) (*lhag mthong*) actually mean. He does this by explaining their Tibetan etymology.[800] Translated as "serenity", the Tibetan "*zhi gnas*" expresses qualities of pacification (*zhi*) and enduring stability (*gnas*). Both qualities are evident in Tsongkhapa's definition of serenity adopted from Chapter Eight of the *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra*:[801]

> "While you dwell in solitude and properly direct your attention inward, you attend to just those topics upon which you have carefully reflected. Your attention is mentally engaged by continuously attending inwardly. The state of mind wherein you do this, and stay this way often, and in which both physical and mental pliancy arise, is called 'serenity.'"

Likewise, "*lhag mthong*", translated as "insight" expresses the idea of an intensified or superior (*lhag pa*) quality of seeing or perception (*mthong*).

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[799] LRCM 3:5.

[800] Tsongkhapa discusses this etymology at LRCM 3:18.

[801] LRCM 3:15-16. *Sūtra Unravelling the Intent* – J. Powers, *Wisdom of the Buddha: The Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra* (Tibetan Translation Series, Dharma Publishing, United States, 1995) has published an English translation of the *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra*.

Tsongkhapa differentiates serenity and insight by reference to the *Mahāyānasūtralaṃkara*: "know as the path of serenity abbreviating the name of a phenomenon; understand the path of insight to be analysis of its meaning."[802] Insight, or "special insight" is the wisdom that "properly discerns", "differentiates" and engages in analysis of the object of meditation.

Tsongkhapa notes that serenity characterised by the bliss of physical and mental pliancy, is *non-discursive* but nevertheless functions as the necessary foundation for the development of insight where, in turn, attainment of a meditative stabilisation of both serenity and insight[803] becomes the necessary foundation for the direct, perceptual realisation of emptiness (*śunyatā*).[804]

Chapter five of this thesis explained that the *Lamrim Chenmo* implicitly presents a practitioner's progression along the spiritual paths, from ignorance and suffering to enlightenment within the context of the Five Mahāyāna Paths and the Ten Bodhisattva Levels outlined in the Ten Bhūmis Chapter (the *Daśabhūmika*) from the *Mahāvaipulya Sūtra*[805] and the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*.[806]

As explained above, a Buddhist practitioner traverses this Path-Ground framework as she eliminates the afflictive obscurations and their seeds (preventing liberation from *saṃsāra*) and the cognitive obscurations (preventing attainment of enlightenment) to escape continual rebirth within *saṃsāra* with its constituent *desire realm, form realm* and *formless realm*.

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[802] LRCM 3:17. "Abbreviating the name of a phenomenon" refers to non-discursive focus upon the chosen object of meditative concentration.
[803] This Chapter will later explain the significance of the attainment of serenity and then the attainment of a meditative union of serenity and insight into emptiness in terms of the Five Mahāyāna Paths.
[804] LRCM 3:24.
[805] *Daśabhūmika - The Ten Bhūmis Chapter from the Mahāvaipulya Sūtra "A Multitude of Buddhas*". Toh 44-31 Degé Kangyur vol. 36 (*phal chen, kha*), folios 166.a–283.a.
[806] The relationship between the *Lamrim Chenmo* and the "Five Paths and Ten Levels" are more explicitly presented in Geshe Lhundup Sopa's five-volume commentary on the *Lamrim Chenmo*.

This basic framework of Buddhist cosmology was presented in Chapter five.[807] For the moment, it should be noted that developing the focussed and sustained insight necessary to eliminate the afflictive and cognitive obscurations in traversing these Grounds and Paths depends upon the prior development of serenity.

Therefore, before the mind can sustain insightful analysis without distraction, it must be single-pointedly *focussed* upon an object of observation, and for that focus to be *stabilised and prolonged*: "the stabilization of your mind on the basis of genuine concentration is serenity."[808] The cultivation of serenity explained in the *Lamrim Chenmo* involves a presentation of "the five faults", the "eight antidotes" and the "nine mental abidings."[809] Tsongkhapa did not invent this presentation, instead creating a synthesis of Maitreya's *Madhyāntavibhāga* and *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra*[810] and Asaṅga's *Śrāvakabhūmi* and *Abhidharmasamuccaya*[811]. This presentation and the use of these texts is particularly associated with Tsongkhapa's *Geluk* (*Dge lugs*) tradition which remains a living tradition of both scholarly inquiry and meditative practice, praised for its practical utility: [812]

> "…anyone who cultivates the abandonment of the five faults and reliance on the eight antidotes necessarily passes through the nine mental abidings. Similarly, a person wishing to progress through the nine mental abidings can do so only by abandoning the five faults and relying on the eight antidotes."

[807] Tsongkhapa discusses the various realms of *saṃsāra* in LRCM 1:143 "Mindfulness of Death" and LRCM 1:161 "Reflecting on your Future Life."
[808] LRCM 3:17.
[809] LRCM 3:57 – 71 (the five faults and eight antidotes); LRCM 3:73-90 (the nine mental abidings).
[810] "Differentiation of the Middle and the Extremes" (presenting the five faults and eight antidotes) and "Ornament for the Mahāyāna Sūtras" (presenting the nine mental abidings) respectively.
[811] "Grounds of Hearers" and "Compendium of Knowledge" respectively (both texts presenting the nine mental abidings).
[812] G. Lodrö, *Walking Through Walls: A Presentation of Tibetan Meditation*, J. Hopkins, A. Klein and L. Zahler (eds and trans.) (Snow Lion Publications, United States, 1992), 163; L. Zahler, *Study and Practice of Meditation: Tibetan Interpretations of the Concentrations & Formless Absorptions* (Snow Lion Publications, United States, 2009).) and Lati. Rinbochay and Denma Lochö Rinbochay, *Meditative States in Tibetan Buddhism* (Wisdom Publications, United States, 1997).

This framework and the relationship between the “five faults”, the “eight antidotes” is illustrated in Chart Four on the following page.

Chart 4

The Five Faults and Eight Antidotes:

Laziness: → (i) confidence,
→ (ii) yearning,
→ (iii) effort,
→ (iv) pliancy

Forgetfulness: → (v) mindfulness.

Laxity & Excitement: → (vi) vigilance.

Non-Application: → (vii) intention of application.

Application: → (viii) calmly established equanimity.

Serenity – Nine Mental States, Five Faults & Eight Antidotes.

Tsongkhapa explains "the actual stages in which the mental states develop," the five principal faults that prevent the development of such mental states and the eight antidotes to those faults, across several chapters of the English translation of the *Lamrim Chenmo*.[813] As the meditator begins the cultivation of these nine mental states, Tsongkhapa recognises his or her perennial vulnerability to either laxity or excitement that quickly threaten to derail attempts to focus and stabilise the mind. He devotes an entire chapter to these vulnerabilities.[814] It is in this Chapter that Tsongkhapa discusses the "five faults" and the "eight antidotes" to those faults, summarising them by quoting from Maitreya's *Madhyāntavibhānta*:[815]

> "Your mind becomes serviceable, and you attain all goals…..as a result of eliminating the five faults and relying on the eight antidotes. The five faults are laziness, forgetting the instructions, laxity and excitement, non-application and application. The eight antidotes are the basis (yearning), that based on it (effort) the cause (confidence), the effect (pliancy), not forgetting (the object of meditation), recognising laxity and excitement, application (to eliminate them) and stabilising your mind (having eliminated them)."

Although Tsongkhapa discusses these *before* presenting the nine mental states culminating in serenity, he intends the practitioner to be continually alert to the arising of the faults and to apply the relevant antidote while progressing through the nine mental states.

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[813] Tsongkhapa discusses the "five faults" and "eight antidotes" in Vol. 3 Chapter 3 ("Preparing for Meditative Serenity") and Chapter 4 ("Dealing with Laxity and Excitement"). He discusses the cultivation of the nine mental states leading to serenity in Chapter 5 ("Attaining Serenity").

[814] LRCM 3:57 ff. This is Chapter 3 of Volume 3 of the English translation of the *Lamrim Chenmo*.

[815] LRCM 3:69. See also, *Maitreya, Middle Beyond Extremes: Maitreya's Madhyāntavibhāga with Commentaries by Khenpo Shenga and Ju Mipham, Dharmachakra Translation Committee (trans.) (Snow Lion Publications, United States, 2006).*, IV.4 (p 106 – the five flaws) and IV.5 (p 107 – the eight antidotes).

There is a cause-effect relationship between the five faults and the eight antidotes differing with respect to when in the meditative cycle they tend to arise.[816] At the time of preparing to engage in meditation, (i) *laziness* tends to arise. While engaging in concentration, (ii) *forgetting the instructions* concerning what the person was to meditate upon tends to arise. Once a degree of mental stability has been achieved, (iii) *laxity and excitement* tend to arise.

When these faults arise, it becomes very easy for a meditator to either drift into dullness or lethargy or for excitement to draw their attention away from the object of meditation. This becomes possible through the fault of (iv) *non-application*, meaning that the meditator does not make the effort to apply the relevant antidotes to laxity or excitement. At this stage it is also possible for a meditator to become overly vigilant to laxity and excitement, destabilising the mind in the (v) *application* of antidotes that are not in fact required.[817]

Following Maitreya's *Madhyāntavibhānta* Tsongkhapa then presents eight antidotes to these faults. Laziness is overcome by the application of (i) *confidence,* (ii) *yearning,*
(iii) *effort* and (iv) *pliancy*. Forgetfulness of the instructions is overcome through the application of (v) *mindfulness*. Laxity and Excitement are overcome through the remedies discussed earlier (vi) *mindfulness and vigilance*. Non-application of remedies when needed is overcome through (vii) *intent to apply* the needed remedies and inappropriate application of remedies is overcome through (viii) *equanimity*. As noted above, the relationship between the "five faults" and the "eight antidotes" is illustrated in the Chart Four above. With this advice, Tsongkhapa turns to his presentation of the nine mental states that lead to serenity.[818]

[816] Tsongkhapa outlines this cause – effect relationship at LRCM 3:69-70).
[817] This presentation is derived from LRCM 3:69.
[818] Tsongkhapa presents this in Volume 3, Chapter 5 of the English Translation (LRCM 3:73 ff).

Using a technique he employed earlier in the *Lamrim Chenmo* to explain the workings of the *"Twelve Factors of Dependent Arising"*[819] Tsongkhapa presents these nine mental states in both forward and reverse order of development. In adopting this framework, Tsongkhapa demonstrates the cause-effect relationship between these nine mental states. In "forward order"[820], a meditator commences with (i) *mental placement*, attempting to focus their attention on the object of meditation. This initial focus tends to be continually interrupted but, with some effort, the meditator is able to maintain (ii) *continuous placement* – that is, an ability to remain undistracted upon the object of meditation for a period of time. This is a little misleading because "this may only be for a minute, perhaps even less at first. Even a minute can be a long time for a beginner."[821] In his commentary, Sopa notes that during the first two mental states "the mind has very little actual stabilization. The two faults of excitement and laxity are prominent, and the object of meditation is often unclear."[822]

An inability to maintain continuous placement and the lack of stability necessitates the development of the next state (iii) *patched placement*, so named because the mediator's distracted attention must be patched up again and again. At this stage, the meditator is employing mindfulness and vigilance to recognise laxity, excitement or other distractions and using conscious effort to re-place their attention. The difference between *patched placement* and the first two states is said to be "the length of time you remain distracted" with time of distraction diminishing by the time of this third state.[823] This is due to increased familiarity and proficiency with recognising faults to concentration and with relevant antidotes.

[819] LRCM 1:325.
[820] This "forward order" is presented at LRCM 3:73 – 75.
[821] L. Sopa (with D. Pratt), *Steps on the Path to Enlightenment*, Vol 4. (Wisdom Publications, United States,2016) 125.
[822] L. Sopa, *Steps on the Path to Enlightenment Vol* 4, 125.
[823] L. Sopa, *Steps on the Path to Enlightenment Vol* 4, 126.

This increased familiarity and proficiency eventually enables the meditator to eliminate distractions to concentration and, with effort, develop (iv) *close placement*. This state is characterised by the ability to "employ strong effort…directing your energy to remining on the object" of meditation.[824] This strong effort yields an ability to "establish ever greater stability"[825] because the meditator's attention becomes "refined to a more subtle and focussed awareness (that) counteracts the tendency of the mind to scatter again."[826] With repeated practice, sitting down to develop concentration is no longer experienced by the meditator as a chore, but she begins to experience the pleasure of cultivating more refined concentrative states. This is the state of (v) *taming*, where the meditator "takes delight in concentration."[827] Sopa describes these phenomenological states as "feeling happy and enthusiastic about your practice (and where) you are less attracted to the distractions of the senses."[828]

However, while the meditator remains vulnerable to both coarse and subtle distractions at this stage, she is able to quell them through reflecting on their disadvantages[829]. In practice, what is happening is this: the meditator is able to enter into and sustain concentrative states for longer and longer periods of time. While engaged in concentration, the mind is not actually investigating any object. Nor is it engaged in analysis, inspection or understanding an object or some philosophical proposition. Serenity is a *non-discursive* mental state of (hopefully) laser-like focus and crystal clarity. In this state, the meditator subjectively experiences her consciousness as something very spacious, very clear and very strong. This experience is accompanied by feelings of peace, equanimity and a sense of timelessness.

[824] L. Sopa, Steps on the Path to Enlightenment Vol 4, 126.
[825] LRCM 3:74.
[826] L. Sopa, *Steps on the Path to Enlightenment Vol 4*, 126.
[827] LRCM 3:74.
[828] L. Sopa, *Steps on the Path to Enlightenment Vol* 4, 126.
[829] LRCM 3:74.

With repeated practice, the meditator discovers that "the mind" is almost like an onion in the sense that the different thoughts, feelings and ideas one experiences are recognised to be simply different layers, reflections and expressions of some fundamental quality of consciousness.

By this stage, the meditator recognises that sensory objects that formerly excited feelings of great attraction or repulsion to the point of *distraction*, are just not helpful to the task of developing concentration and are to be neither desired nor repelled; but understood that they just *are.* At times, there is a profound experience of peace and objectivity in this understanding. This peaceful objectivity also enables the meditator to recognise the potential arising of coarse faults *before* they actually manifest. Hence, Tsongkhapa calls this stage of mental development (vi) *pacification*[830] so called not just because of this subjective feeling, but former dislike for engaging in concentration is pacified. However, at this stage, *subtle* faults of distraction remain. Continued practice simply deepens this experience to the point of (vii) *complete pacification* where even those subtle distractions are pacified, and without expending significant energy in doing so.[831]

At some point, this process becomes self-reinforcing and feelings of inner energy seem to the meditator to *further* reinforce their capacity for concentration. It can feel as if there is a "flow" of energy welling up from within which can initially feel very unsettling, to the point where there may be a temptation to energetic physical activity to burn off this energy. However, by remaining calm and recalling the training, the meditator is able to channel this energy into one-pointed focus on the object of meditation with very little effort.

[830] LRCM 3:74.
[831] LRCM 3:74-75.

Hence, this stage is known as (viii) *one-pointed attention*.[832] And yet, despite these subjective experiences of inner stability, clarity and energy, the meditator has not yet attained serenity.

The final stage of mental development is (ix) *balanced placement* so called because the equanimity of mind is subjectively experienced as fully balanced attention and focus, requiring no effort to manifest, no longer threatened by either coarse or subtle laxity or excitement, but occurs spontaneously and naturally.[833] It is a described as a state where "concentration becomes natural, and effort is no longer needed. Your mind is able to continuously concentrate without any form of distraction."[834] While even this state falls short of serenity, "the ninth stage is the direct or immediate cause of *śamatha*."[835] In what sense?

In his *Lamrim Chenmo*, a hypothetical interlocutor demands to know, perhaps with some exasperation, why a meditator who has successfully progressed through all these nine mental states, is now completely untroubled by both coarse and subtle faults and is able to effortlessly and spontaneously sustain concentration for extended periods of time, in a subjective state of happiness and equanimity has *not attained* serenity.[836] Tsongkhapa's (perhaps equally exasperating) response appeals to the *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra* ("the *Sūtra Unravelling the Intended Meaning"*):[837]

> "Bhagavan, when bodhisattvas direct their attention inward and focus it upon their minds, what is this attention called for as long as physical pliancy and mental pliancy are not achieved? Maitreya, this is not meditative serenity. You should say that it is associated with an aspiration that approximates meditative serenity."

[832] LRCM 3:75.
[833] LRCM 3:75.
[834] L. Sopa, *Steps on the Path to Enlightenment Vol* 4, 129.
[835] L. Sopa, *Steps on the Path to Enlightenment Vol* 4, 129.
[836] LRCM 3:80.
[837] *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra*, Chapter 8, v. 5: Toh 106. Degé Kangyur, vol. 49, folios 1.b–55.b.

The crucial factor distinguishing a deep meditative state that *approximates* serenity on the one hand, and the *actual state* of serenity on the other is the presence of physical and mental pliancy.[838] When discussing serenity, Tsongkhapa often cites Kamalaśīla's three *Bhāvanākramas* ("Stages of Meditation") composed after the debate at Samye Monastery.[839] In his *Second Stages of Meditation*, Kamalaśīla clarifies:[840]

> "For you who have cultivated meditative serenity in this way, when your body and mind become pliant and you have mastery over your mind in directing it as you wish, at that time know that you have accomplished serenity."

Crucially, the presence or absence of physical and mental pliancy influences *another* feature distinguishing the attainment of the ninth mental state, which Tsongkhapa calls an 'approximation of meditative serenity' (above), and the attainment of *actual* serenity. To understand this point it is necessary to realise that each of the four concentrations of the *form realm* and the four absorptions of the *formless realm* are themselves further divided into "access" or preparatory levels and actual levels.[841] Tsongkhapa notes that if a practitioner attains the ninth mental state, but not the bliss of physical of mental pliancy, that concentrative state "is included in the level of the desire realm…and is not at or above access to the first meditative stabilisation."[842] However, once serenity *is* attained, the practitioner does attain to this access concentration marking the entry to the first (of seven) *preparatory* stages of the first meditative concentration of the *Form Realm*. Chart One (above) and Five (over) will assist with understanding this discussion and the analysis that follows.

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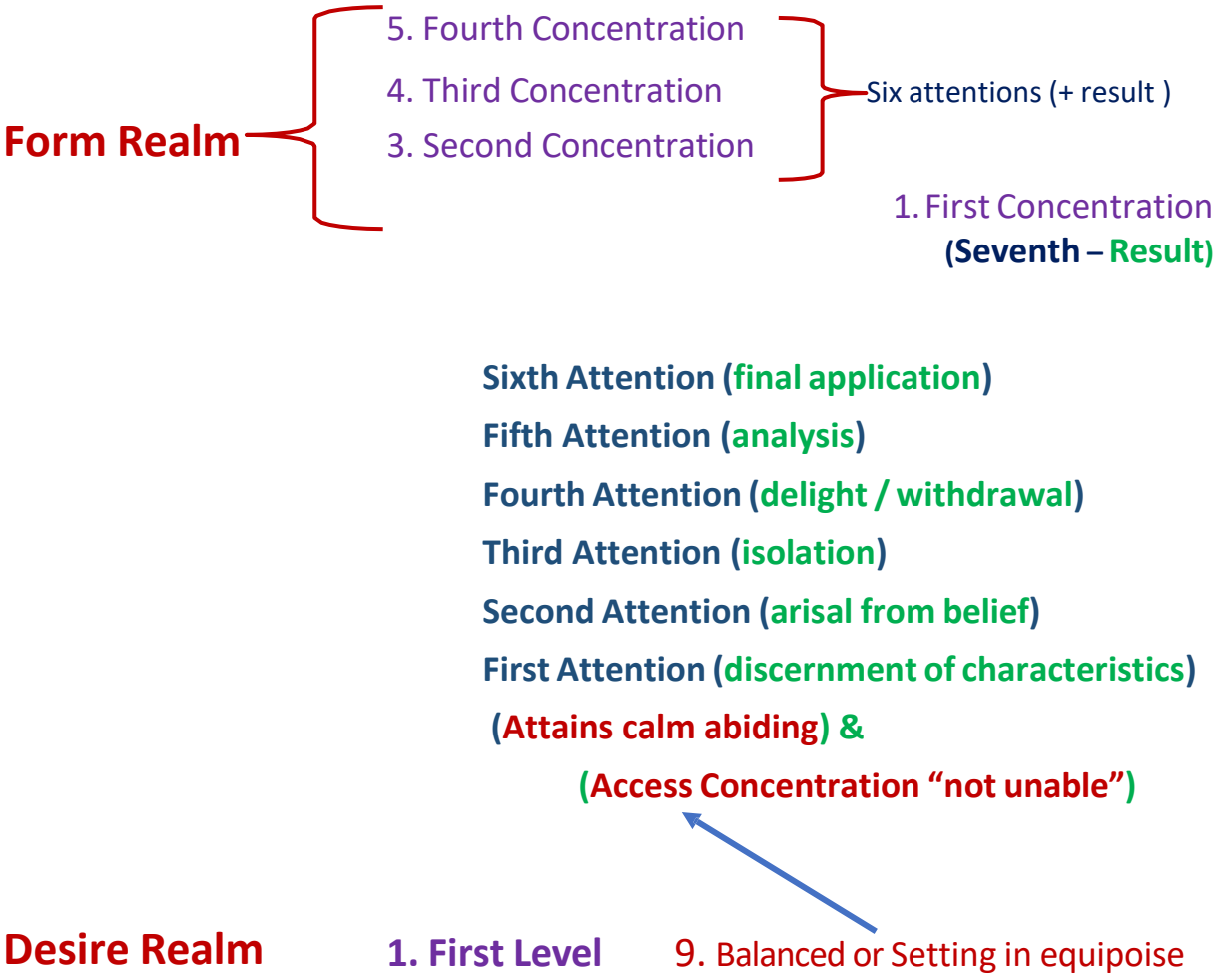
[838] *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra*, 8.3.
[839] This debate and Kamalaśīla's influence on the reception of Classical Indian Buddhist philosophy into Tibet was discussed in Chapter 5.
[840] Kamalaśīla, *Bhāvanākrama II*, Geshe Sopa (trans) (1998) at 15.
[841] LRCM 3:81.
[842] LRCM 3:81.

Although this access concentration is not the *actual* first concentration of the *Form Realm* itself, it functions as the necessary mental basis upon which the practitioner then goes on to progress through the four *Form Realm Concentrations* and the four *Formless Realm Absorptions* – following either a mundane path or a supramundane path.

Chart 5

Progressing Through the Levels and Paths:
Desire to Form Realm



In other words, it is the presence of physical and mental pliancy that transforms the quality of the concentrative state at that ninth mental level such that it becomes suitable to function as an "access concentration" for attaining the *actual* first concentration of the *form realm*.[843] It is at *this point* having attained serenity, and concurrently an access concentration, that the practitioner must decide whether and to what extent she should progress along the mundane or supramundane paths. Discussed above, Tsongkhapa notes that if the practitioner progresses aided by insight in the sense of *vipaśyāna*, she proceeds by the supramundane path. However, if she is one of the four types of persons, including non-Buddhist yogis, identified by Tsongkhapa who do not or cannot develop *vipaśyāna*, then she proceeds solely by the mundane path.[844] This would include consideration of the non-Buddhist Evagrius and his path and methods.

When the ninth concentrative state (*balanced equipoise*) is achieved (see above Chart 5), the practitioner is said to have attained the first of nine levels of consciousness characterising the *desire realm,* the *form realm* and the *formless realm* that collectively constitute *saṃsāra*. The ninth concentrative state corresponds to the *first level* which corresponds to the *desire realm*. Noted above, once the practitioner generates the bliss of physical and mental pliancy, they have attained serenity and, simultaneously, an access concentration to the first concentration of the *form realm*.

[843] LRCM 3:81.
[844] LRCM 3:92-93.

Each concentration of the *form realm* and each meditative absorption of the *formless realm* have an access concentration before attainment of the respective, actual concentration or absorption. Further, between the access concentration and the relevant actual concentration or absorption, there are seven "attentions" that must be cultivated. Quoting Asaṅga's Ś*rāvakabhūmi*, Tsongkhapa notes: "for the sake of freedom from the desire realm, diligent yogis use the seven types of attention and subsequently achieve their freedom."[845] It is upon attaining the seventh type of attention (result) that freedom from the afflictions associated with the relevant level or realm is attained. This process is illustrated in Chart Five above.

Within this larger framework, the *second* through *fifth levels* correspond to the Four Concentrations of the *form realm* while the *sixth* through *ninth levels* correspond to the Four Absorptions of the *formless realm*. This framework, outlined earlier in this chapter by reference to Chapter Three of Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośa* explains the causative relationship between these three realms of existence and the meditative / concentrative / psychological state of any given sentient being in that realm. The macro relationship between the respective concentrations and absorptions of the *form and formless realms*, the access concentrations and the micro level seven attentions prior to attaining an actual concentration or absorption, are illustrated by reading Chart One and Chart Five (both above) together.

[845] LRCM 3:98

Apatheia – The Eight *Logismoi* and *Praktiké*

Evagrius' presentation of *apatheia* throughout his texts, but particularly in the *Praktikos*, the text most concerned with *apatheia*, is far less structured than Tsongkhapa's presentation of serenity because of the deliberately gnomic manner in which Evagrius composed them; contemporary scholars remarking (perhaps forgivingly): "Evagrius' writings are an elegant polyphony, a fugue-like weave of motifs, built from self-contained morsels".[846] Nowhere in any one of his texts does Evagrius present *apatheia* in a conceptually structured manner similar to Tsongkhapa's presentation of serenity.

However, like Tsongkhapa, Evagrius did not invent the notion of *apatheia* as an essential component of his Christian spiritual path. Despite suggestions that *apatheia* "is a term virtually impossible to translate into English"[847], it emerged from the Stoic tradition and the nature and extent of its reception into Christianity is a contested field of scholarly inquiry.[848] As a fundamental feature of the Stoic tradition, *apatheia* was received by Evagrius via both Clement of Alexandria (c150 – 215 CE)[849] and then by Origen (c 185 – 251 CE) in modified form.[850] Thus, the early Christian reception of *apatheia* from the Stoic philosophical tradition differs from its origins and so too, Evagrius' use of the term differs substantially[851].

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[846] W. Harmless and R. Fitzgerald, 'The Sapphire Light of the Mind: The Skemmata of Evagrius Ponticus' (2001) 62 *Theological Studies*, 504.

[847] A. Louth, 'Evagrios on Prayer', in D. Hogg, B. Girard and E. Le Blévec (eds*), Stand Up To Godwards: Essays in Mystical and Monastic Theology in Honour of the Reverend John Clark on his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, 163 and 166.

[848] T. Rasimus, T. Engberg-Pedersen and I. Dunderberg (eds), *Stoicism in Early Christianity* (Baker Academic, United States, 2010).

[849] Clement equates *apatheia* with the complete eradication of passions and thus the *complete cessation* of all desire – "For complete eradication of desire reaps as its fruit, *apatheia*." - see *Stromateis* 6.9.

[850] Origen's reading of Seneca's "Three Movements" (*On Anger*, 2.4:1) initiates a fundamentally important change in the conception of *apatheia* adopted by Evagrius.

[851] R. Sorabji, *Emotion and Peace of Mind: From Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation* (Oxford University Press, United Kingdom, 2010).

The literature[852] recognizes at least three significant differences between the Stoic conception of *apatheia* and the early Christian reception and understanding of that state. First, the Stoics considered that once attained, the inner state of *apatheia* was immutable whereas Evagrius draws a distinction between "perfect *apatheia*" and "imperfect *apatheia*" in his *Praktikos*[853]. Second, Evagrius maintains that *agapē* (selfless love) is the "child of *apatheia*"[854] a teleological outcome not found in the Stoic notion of *apatheia*. Finally, we have seen that in the Evagrian spiritual economy, attaining *apatheia* is a necessary but preliminary state for engaging in the *Natural Contemplations* and *Theōria* whereas for the Stoics, *apatheia* is an end in itself.

Despite these differences, Evagrius' *did* import the Stoic notion of *propatheia*, alloying it to his framework of *logismoi* in such a way that the external "first movement" or "proto-passion"[855] of the Stoics became identified with demonically initiated *logismoi*. In so doing, Evagrius adopts Origen's approach. In his commentary on the *Gospel of Matthew*, Origen states: "Therefore the source and beginnings of every sin is 'evil reasonings'. For if these reasonings did not prevail, there would be neither murder nor acts of adultery nor any other of such things."[856] The sequence Origen reveals is *logismoi* – consent to *logismoi* – stirring of passions - resultant behaviour as sin.

[852] M. Tobon, *Apatheia in the Teaching of Evagrius Ponticus* (PhD Thesis, University College London, 2010), 192 and J. Nguyen, *Apatheia in the Christian Tradition* (Cascade Books, United States, 2018), 2-3.
[853] PR [60].
[854] PR [81].
[855] So called because it is said to be a spontaneous, involuntary affective force occurring *before* the exercise of agency by the individual It is the nature of the agent's *voluntary response* to that affective force that determines the moral quality of that response – see R. Layton, 'Propatheia: Origen and Didymus on the Origin of the Passions' (2000) 54 *Vigiliae Christianae*; M. Graver, 'Feelings Without Assent', in *Stoicism and Emotion* (University of Chicago Press, United States, 2007), 85.
[856] Origen, Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, in M. Simonetti (ed.), *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament 1b* (InterVarsity Press, United States, 2002), 25.

Origen underscores these views in his text *On First Principles*:

> "But we must think that nothing else happens to us as a result of the good or bad things that are suggested to our heart, except a mere agitation and incitement that provokes us to good or bad things. It is possible for us, when a malign power has begun to incite us to evil, to repel the wicked suggestions from us and to resist."[857]

For Evagrius, the *logismoi* are not themselves excessive emotions or passions, but *temptations* that are often demonically initiated.[858] In this sense, the *logismoi* are not sins but "thoughts" that have the *potential* to stir the passions than, in turn *lead* the monastic to engage in sin when consent to the thoughts and passions is given: "it is not in our power to determine whether we are disturbed by these thoughts, but it is up to us to decide if they are to linger and whether they are able to stir the passions."[859]

Therefore, as received and interpreted by Evagrius, *apatheia* becomes an effect whose cause lies in identifying and combatting the temptation of the monastic to consent to often demonically inspired thoughts - *logismoi* before those thoughts motivate behavioural choices that, in turn, ignite the variety of emotional states that function as suffering, as obstacles to prayer and the cultivation of *Second* and *First Natural Contemplations* and ultimately *Theologiké.*

[857] Origen, Peri Archon (On First Principles), 2013 ed., Christian Classics, Ave Maria Press, United States., 293-284.
[858] R. Sorabji, *Emotion and Peace of Mind: From Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation* (Oxford University Press, United Kingdom, 2010), 357.
[859] *Praktikos* [6].

This cause-effect relationship is reflected in the *Praktikos*:

> "Temptation is the lot of the monk, for thoughts which darken his mind will inevitably arise from the part of his soul that is the seat of passion……The sin that a monk has particularly to watch out for is that of giving mental consent to some forbidden pleasure."[860]

The brief explanation above is necessary background for understanding Evagrius' approach to two cognitive dynamics; first, the importance of cultivating discernment (*diakrisis*) (*διάκρισις*) and self-control (*enkrateia*) (ἐγράτια) as necessary skills in developing *apatheia* and second, Evagrius' strategies for battling the *logismoi*, particularly expressed in his text *Antirrhētikos.*[861] In this wider context, Evagrius' sense of *apatheia* and its importance to his spiritual economy becomes clear when reading the *Praktikos* synoptically with several other texts, particularly the *Chapters on Prayer*,[862] *On Thoughts*[863] & *Ad Monachos.*[864]

Evagrius' presentation of *apatheia* and *theōria* is expressed in terms of a cause-effect relationship although it is explained in different terms and in different texts. In his text *Causes*[865] Evagrius presents a sequence involving recalling the "vanity in this world", remembrance of death, the suffering of souls in Hell, the certainty of Judgement before God and the need to generate fear of joining sinners in Hell.

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[860] *Praktikos*, [74], [75].
[861] D. Brakke (trans.*), Antirrhētikos: Talking Back – A Monastic Handbook for Combatting Demons* (Liturgical Press, United States, 2009), 25 – 26.
[862] The 153 "chapters" comprising *On Prayer* are translated by Sinkewicz in *Evagrius of Ponticus: The Greek Ascetic Corpus* 2001, Oxford University Press, UK, as well as Bamberger: *The Praktikos & Chapters on Prayer*, 1981 Cistercian Studies Series, Michigan, United States of America, and appear in the *Philokalia* under the name of St Nilus.
[863] The 43 "chapters" of *On Thoughts* are also translated by Sinkewicz in *Evagrius of Ponticus: The Greek Ascetic Corpus* 2003, Oxford University Press, UK as well as A.M Casiday's *The Early Church Fathers: Evagrius Ponticus*, 2006, Routledge, UK.
[864] J. Driscoll, *Evagrius Ponticus: Ad Monachos* (Ancient Christian Writers Series, The Newman Press, United States, 2003).
[865] A.M Casiday, *Evagrius Ponticus (The Early Church Fathers): The Causes for Monastic Observances*, [9] at 87.

In order to avoid these sufferings of Hell, Evagrius counsels discernment, reflection and the avoidance of "sordid and dangerous thoughts (*logismoi*)."[866] With these considerations as motivation, the most comprehensive, self-contained presentations for the cultivation of *apatheia* are then found in the *Kephalaia Gnostika*, the third of Evagrius' principal trilogy of monastic training texts,[867] and in which *apatheia* and *theōria* are situated within either a four or five-stage spiritual path.[868] Evagrius presents a *five*-stage progression in KG 1.27:[869]

> The main contemplations are five, under which all contemplation is comprised. And they say that the first is the contemplation of the most Holy Trinity, and that the second and third are the contemplation of the incorporeal and corporeal realities and that the fourth and fifth are contemplation of the Judgement and of Providence."

Evagrius' cosmology was explained in chapter four of this thesis and briefly summarised above. It was noted that the "fall" of negligent *logikoi* into "ensoulment" was not a punishment, but God's providence in providing His creatures with the possibility of ascent and cognitive reunion with God as Trinity.

In terms of meditative practice, the process in which a practitioner contemplates his or her present "fallen" situation as God's providence and the possibility of its reunion, culminating in God's judgement, is referred to in the "fourth and fifth" referred to in his *Kephalaia Gnostika,* 1.27.

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[866] *The Causes for Monastic Observances* in Casiday (2006) [9] at 87.
[867] Chapter four explained that Evagrius' understanding of the Christian spiritual path is detailed in a trilogy of his texts, the *Praktikos*, the *Gnostikos* and the *Kephalaia Gnostika*.
[868] KG 1.27 presents contemplative progression in terms of a five-stage process. However, this Chapter draws upon the more explicitly relevant and comprehensive presentation in KG 2.4.
[869] KG 1.27.

The *causative process* by which this cognitive ascent and potential reunion occurs is referred to in terms of the first, second and third contemplations. In reverse order, the third contemplation refers to *Second Natural Contemplation*, the second refers to the *First Natural Contemplation* and the third refers to the effect of these, *Theologiké*, unitive contemplation of the God as Holy Trinity. Evagrius presents a concise and clearer explanation of contemplative progression in KG 2.4, expressed in *four* stages:

> "While transformations are many, we have received the knowledge of only four of them: of the first, of the second, of the last and of the penultimate. And the first is, as has been said, the passage from evilness to virtue, whereas the second is that from impassivity (*apatheia*) to the secondary natural contemplation and the third is that from the latter to the knowledge concerning rational creatures and the fourth is the passage of all to the knowledge of the Holy Trinity."

In this presentation, "the first" involves *praktiké*, the struggle against the *logismoi* with the goal of attaining *apatheia*. "The second" refers to the transition from *apatheia* to *Second Natural Contemplation*; the contemplation of the *logoi* of creatures and created phenomena. "The third" refers to the transition from *Second Natural Contemplation* to *First Natural Contemplation*; the contemplation of the incorporeal realities of creation. The culmination of these steps is the "fourth", referring to *Theologiké*, contemplative union with God as Holy Trinity.

The Mundane Path

Having now explored the nature and role of serenity and *apatheia* and the deeper methodology employed by Tsongkhapa and Evagrius respectively to develop those states, it remains to analyse them in terms of the "mundane path" framework identified earlier; specifically, whether and to what extent the discipline, techniques and *praktiké* that are necessary prerequisites to attaining serenity and *apatheia* enable a practitioner to battle or even conquer the *logismoi* or afflictive obscurations.

Tsongkhapa presents the mechanics of a practitioner's movement through the mundane path in his chapter of the *Lamrim Chenmo* titled "Serenity as Part of the Path."[870] Noted above, and in the context of this discussion, it is important to recall that Tsongkhapa, relying on Asaṅga's Ś*rāvakabhūmi,* uses the term "insight" in two different senses: "mundane insight" and "supramundane insight". Tsongkhapa explains:[871]

> "Mundane insight consists of meditation bearing the aspects of calmness and coarseness, in which you observe the coarseness of the lower levels and the calmness of the higher levels. Supramundane insight, as states in the *Śrāvaka Levels*, consists of meditation (in which)….you principally cultivate the view which is the knowledge of the selflessness of the person."

[870] LRCM 3:91.
[871] LRCM 3:92.

According to Tsongkhapa, even if a non-Buddhist practitioner like Evagrius *did attain* serenity, because he would not then cultivate insight in the sense of the view of the selflessness of the person, Evagrius could only develop "mundane insight" and therefore could only proceed via the mundane path.

Having attained serenity, how does Tsongkhapa explain to a practitioner that progression through the mundane path enables her to either overcome or diminish the suffering associated with afflictive obscurations?[872] He answers that question in the *Lamrim Chenmo* in a section titled: "On the basis of meditative serenity, the way to freedom from attachment to the desire realm."[873] This section focuses on what happens as a practitioner having attained serenity, and from an access concentration, then cultivates the seven types of concentration culminating in the attainment of an *actual* meditative concentration. Chart 5 illustrates this process of moving through the seven concentrative states in the context of moving from the first level (the *desire realm*) to eventually attaining the actual First Concentration of the *Form Realm*. Again, drawing from Asaṅga's Ś*rāvakabhūmi*, Tsongkhapa quotes:[874]

> For the sake of freedom from the desire realm, diligent yogis use the seven types of attention and subsequently achieve their freedom. The seven types of attention are: the attention of (1) the discernment of characteristics, (2) arisal from belief, (3) isolation, (4) delight or withdrawal, (5) analysis, (6) final application, and (7) the result of final application.

[872] An excellent, concise overview of this discussion can be found in J. Blumenthal, '*Śamatha and its Relation to the Mundane and Supra-Mundane Paths According to Geluk Traditions of Tibetan Buddhism', in Buddhist Philosophy and Meditation Practice: Papers Presented to the 2nd International Association of Buddhist Universities* (Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Thailand, 2012), 65.
[873] LRCM 3:98.
[874] LRCM 3:98.

As the practitioner moves from the access concentration of the *desire realm*, she progressively cultivates the first six of the above attentions / concentration. The seventh (*result*) marks the actual attainment of the First Concentration of the *form realm*. The point is that as the practitioner attains to each attention / concentration, she progressively eliminates (in the sense of suppressing) the different levels of afflictive obscurations associated with (for example) the *desire realm*.[875]

In explaining how the different "grades" of afflictions associated with the *desire, form and form realms* are overcome in progressing along the mundane and supramundane paths, Tsongkhapa adopts the presentation of the afflictions set out in the *Abhidharmakośa*.[876] In this system, the eighty-one afflictive obscurations associated with the *desire realm*, the *form realm* and the *formless realms* are traditionally divided into three grades of intensity of attachment: "great" (or coarse), "middling" and "small" (or subtle).[877] Since the general formulation in the *Abhidharmakośa,* the Tibetan Buddhist presentation of how different spiritual practitioners abandon different kinds of afflictions along different spiritual paths has coalesced into a discrete and complex field of study known as the *Twenty Saṅghas*,[878] its complexity described by the Dalai Lama: "texts present this topic in various ways, and scholars differ in their presentations…the topics presented in a detailed or abbreviated

[875] There are nine "grades" of afflictions associated with the *desire realm* (9) nine grades of afflictions associated with each of the four concentrations of the *form realm* (36) and nine grades of afflictions associated with each of the four absorptions of the *formless realm* (36). Thus, the practitioner must abandon eighty-one afflictions collectively associated with the three realms of *saṃsāra*. From Tsongkhapa's unless a practitioner develops insight in the sense of *vipaśyāna* and even then, from the *Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka* tenet system, she will not attain liberation from *saṃsāra,* much less attain enlightenment.

[876] Chim Jampaiyang, *Ornament of Abhidharma: A Commentary on Vasubandhu's Abhidharmakośa*, Ian Coghlan (trans.) (Wisdom Publications, United States, 2019), 779 ff.

[877] Further explanation of the eighty-one afflictions associated with the *desire, form and form realms* can be found in J. Hopkins, *Meditation on Emptiness* (Wisdom Publications, United States, 1996), 106.

[878] See generally J. Apple, A Stairway Taken by the Lucid: Tsongkhapa's Study of Noble Beings (Aditya Prakashan, India, 2013).

manner which may sound different from each other even when the same scholar wrote both presentations!"[879] For this reason, the explanation in this chapter is "abbreviated".

As the practitioner moves through the six concentrations / attentions, for the *desire realm,* then for each of the four concentrations of the *form realm* and four absorptions of the *formless realm*, the practitioner initially abandons the "great of the great", then the "middling of the great" and then the "small of the great". This process continues through to the elimination of the "small of the small". This framework is illustrated in Chart 6 on the following page.

[879] Dalai Lama and T. Chodron, *Following in the Buddha's Footsteps, Volume 4 of The Library of Wisdom and Compassion* (Wisdom Publications, United States, 2019), 226.

Chart 6

Afflictive Obscurations Abandoned Over Three Realms & Nine Levels

Realm	Structure	Afflictive Obscurations
Formless Realm	Peak of Cyclic Existence (4th Formless Absorption)	[73] – [81]
	Nothingness (3rd Formless Absorption)	[64] – [72]
	Infinite Consciousness (2nd Formless Absorption)	[55]- [63]
	Infinite Space (1st Formless Absorption)	[46] – [54]
Form Realm	Fourth Concentration	[37] – [45]
	Third Concentration	[28] – [36]
	Second Concentration	[19] – [27]
	First Concentration	[10] – [18]

Realm	Structure	Afflictive Obscurations
Desire Realm	Small	Small of the Small [9] Middling of the Small [8] Great of the Small [7]
	Middling	Small of the Middling [6] Middling of the Middling [5] Great of the Middling [4]
	Great	Small of the Great [3] Middling of the Great [2] Great of the Great [1]

The process pictured in Chart 6 unfolds in the following manner.[880] As the practitioner studies and contemplates the teachings, she becomes able to make definite distinctions / comparisons between the coarseness of the lower levels and the relative calm of the higher levels. In doing so, she is able to (i) *discern the characteristics* that underpin this comparison. Deep meditation on the content of this discerning / distinction making process, generates (ii) *arisal from belief*, that is, belief in the *objects* of calmness and coarseness engendered through the skilful use of serenity and mundane insight. Familiarity with the process of alternating serenity with mundane insight gives rise to the state of (iii) *isolated attention* which functions as the antidote to the "great" level of the afflictions. The elimination of the great level of afflictions engenders greater familiarity and depth in alternating between serenity and mundane insight leading to the state of (iv) *attention of delight and withdrawal* which functions as the antidote to the "middling" level of the afflictions.

At this point, Tsongkhapa warns against complacency, resisting the temptation to think: "now I have eliminated the afflictions."[881] The danger here is that because the practitioner has overcome the "great" (coarse) and "middling" levels of the afflictions, she becomes conceited or complacent. To test this danger, Tsongkhapa invites the practitioner to direct their focus toward a "very beautiful object of attachment" and analyse whether and to what extent attachment arises. The purpose of this (v) *analysis / analytical attention* is to re-focus the practitioner's meditation to the analysis needed to overcome attachments that may still arise.

[880] This explanation draws from Tsongkhapa's explanation at LRCM 3:99 – 100.
[881] LRCM 3:100.

As she continues to deepen her skill at working with serenity and mundane insight in discriminating / comparing the relative coarseness and peace of the different concentration and absorptions of the different realms, it reaches a certain depth referred to as the (vi) *attention of final application* which functions as the antidote to the "small" (subtle) level of the afflictions.

At this point, with the removal of the great, middling and small levels of the manifest afflictions, the practitioner achieves (vii) *the result of final application*, which is the temporary suppression of the different grades of the manifest afflictive obscurations.[882] This attainment is only temporary, and the practitioner does not achieve liberation from *saṃsāra*. While the practitioner is in a meditation state, she does not experience the arising of "big" or coarse afflictions such as anger, nor more subtle afflictions such as pride.

However, Tsongkhapa reminds her that "by this means, you are freed from attachment to states up to Nothingness, but since you are unable to stop even the manifest afflictions of the Peak of Cyclic Existence, you cannot transcend the cycle of existence."[883] What he means is this: the practitioner has been proceeding through the mundane path, doing so utilising mundane insight in the sense of Asaṅga's definition in his Ś*rāvakabhūmi*. Explained above, "mundane insight" involves comparison of the relative coarseness of one concentrative state with the relative peacefulness of the next, higher concentrative state. By referring to Chart 1, it becomes clear that a practitioner can compare these concentrations (of the *form realm*) and the absorptions (of the *formless realm*) up to Nothingness (the third absorption of the *formless realm*).

[882] LRCM 3:100.
[883] LRCM 3:100 (underlining mine).

By comparing the relative coarseness of the third absorption of the *formless realm* (Nothingness) with the relative calmness of the fourth absorption of the *formless realm* (Peak of Cyclic Existence), the practitioner is able to eliminate the various afflictions associated with the third absorption, but no higher. Why? Because once the practitioner has reached the fourth absorption, the Peak of Cyclic Existence, there is *no higher state within saṃsāra* against which to compare the relative coarseness of the fourth absorption of the *formless realm*.

Because the practitioner cannot cultivate the seven attentions / concentrations (discussed above) necessary to move beyond the Peak of Cyclic Existence, she remains trapped within *saṃsāra* and cannot achieve liberation. *This* was the problem, discussed above encountered by the young Siddhārtha Gautama after studying the meditative techniques taught by Ȧḷāra Kālāma and Udraka Rāmaputra. He quickly reached the fourth absorption of the *formless realm*, the Peak of Cyclic Existence, but after emerging from his state of meditation, realised the afflictions remained, and thus remained trapped within *saṃsāra*.[884]

More technically, progressing through the mundane path, utilising serenity as the foundation to cultivate mundane insight, is not powerful enough to remove the *seeds* of the afflictive obscurations. The practitioner may temporarily suppress the different afflictions associated with the various *realms,* but this is only because she is using the process of comparison described above to seek out progressively higher and more refined states of peace. While in meditation, the different afflictions may be unable to manifest, but the *seeds* of the afflictions remain, ready to be ignited in conducive circumstances.

[884] LRCM 3:395. See also the *Ariyapariyesanā Sūtra* (The Noble Search) in Bhikku Ñāṇamoli and Bhikku Bodhi (eds) (1995) at 256-259. The sūtra recounts that Siddhārtha Gautama initially studied with the non-Buddhist yogi Ȧḷāra Kālāma before studying with "Udraka" (referred to as "Uddaka").

The only way to completely eradicate the afflictions *and their seeds* and the only way to escape from *saṃsāra*, is to progress along a supramundane path, utilising supramundane insight; the wisdom that knows selflessness. Tsongkhapa explains that if a practitioner *does* cultivate supramundane insight from "the serenity included in the level of access to the first meditative stabilization (concentration), then you can achieve liberation – freedom from all the fetters of cyclic existence – by cultivating insight based on that serenity."[885] The nature and qualities of supramundane insight and its significance will be explored in chapter seven of this thesis. But how does this discussion relate to Evagrius?

Tsongkhapa's presentation of the mundane path raises difficult questions when it is brought into dialogue with Evagrius' Patristic Christian system. How is "mundane insight" to be thought of from the perspective of Evagrius? As explained above "mundane insight", adopted by Tsongkhapa from Asaṅga's Ś*rāvakabhūmi* is said to involve: "meditation bearing the aspects of calmness and coarseness, in which you observe the coarseness of the lower levels and the calmness of the higher levels."[886] But there is no sense of this kind of meditative process in Evagrius' metaphysical system. Evagrius does not assert the existence of *form* and *formless realms* and thus does not assert the existence of the associated four concentrations and four absorptions. There is no sense of Evagrius teaching meditation (or prayer) in which coarse states of experience constituted by lower levels of concentrations or absorptions are compared with the calmness of states of experience constituted by higher concentrations and absorptions as the practitioner ascends through the *desire, the form and formless* realms.

[885] LRCM 3:95.
[886] LRCM 3:92.

There are simply no metaphysical categories in Evagrius' spiritual scheme that approximate realms collectively constituting *saṃsāra*. How then, can there be any basis for comparison? For example, when His Holiness the Dalai Lama refers to Evagrius' teaching of continual prayer exhibiting: "clear resemblances to…. the union of tranquillity with *insight*, which is the key instrument for *meditative development*"[887](italics mine) how are we to understand the nature of the "insight" referred to? And depending on the answer to that question, how are we to understand the nature of the "meditative development" it leads to?

This chapter six proposes answers to these questions, not by minimising or ignoring the vast differences between Tsongkhapa's Tibetan Buddhist and Evagrius' Patristic Christian metaphysical systems, but by focussing on their shared concern to enable practitioners to gain control over their thoughts, feelings and behavioural tendencies in service of exquisitely refined states of concentration and prayer.

It becomes apparent from a close reading of the material in this chapter that for both Evagrius and Tsongkhapa attaining to *Theologiké, liberation* and *enlightenment* respectively, requires monastics within each spiritual system to successfully navigate and integrate two different but fundamentally interrelated cognitive dynamics. The first involves the monastic *stabilising* the mind in attaining *apatheia* (Evagrius) or serenity conjoined with uncontrived *bodhicitta* (Tsongkhapa) and the second involves the progressive *refinement* of the now stabilised mind in progressing through the different *natural contemplations* to *Theologiké* (Evagrius) or to attaining direct, perceptual realisation of emptiness and the progressive elimination of the afflictive and cognitive obscurations to enlightenment (Tsongkhapa).

[887] Dalai Lama*, Towards the True Kinship of Faiths: How the World's Religions Can Come Together* (Abacus Press, United States, 2012.

These cognitive dynamics, and their related behavioural supports are different because each involves a "different set of exercises and emphasises a different domain of self-control"[888]. However, they are fundamentally interrelated because one dynamic, *apatheia* and serenity functions as the substantial cause for attaining the other, *Theologiké* and *enlightenment* respectively. In this way, cultivating serenity and then attaining that state through the progressive "elimination" or at least suppression of the afflictive obscurations along Tsongkhapa's mundane path is analogous to Evagrian *praktiké.*

For example, Evagrius' identification of and strategies for combatting the demonically inspired *logismoi* that function as obstacles to attaining *apatheia* functions in a manner similar to the eight antidotes to the five faults identified by Tsongkhapa. This is evident in *Praktikos* [87] where Evagrius speaks of *praktiké* in cultivating *apatheia* "diminishing the force of passions" and in *Praktikos* [64], where *apatheia* is said to be evidenced by the spirit "able to maintain its calm as it beholds the affairs of life".

Therefore, like Tsongkhapa's analysis of progression along the mundane path, for Evagrius, progress toward attaining *apatheia* can be ascertained (at least in part) by the steady diminishment of the passions and the growth in virtue and wisdom: "The person making progress in the practical life diminishes the passions; the one progressing in contemplation diminishes ignorance".[889] As wisdom develops, the mind is able to discern the many different negative thoughts (*logismoi*), simple ideas (*noēmata*) and fantasies (*fantasia*), integrating or rejecting them insofar as they enable progress to *apatheia*.

[888] I. Graiver, 'Training the Mind: The Ascetic Path to Self-Transformation in Late Antique Christian Monasticism' (2022) 24(3) *Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health*, 256.
[889] PR [87].

In this way, there is "a symbiotic relationship between the practical and the gnostic life and by moving back and forth between the two, the monk gravitates closer to God."[890]

At this point two very significant metaphysical differences between Evagrius' and Tsongkhapa's respective systems present; the first concerning the existence of God as creator of all and the second concerning the existence of a "soul". It is *well beyond* the scope of this thesis to explore whether and to what extent Tibetan Buddhism as expressed by Tsongkhapa in his *Lamrim Chenmo* admits to the existence of God and the soul. At the risk of reducing a nuanced issue amenable to a simple response, Tsongkhapa would deny the existence of both.

Why this is so will be at least partially explored in chapter seven. However, for the purposes of this chapter six, it may be noted that, for Evagrius, combatting the *logismoi* through engaging in *praktiké* enable the appetitive (*epithumetikon*) and irascible (*thumikon*) parts of the soul to be brought under control and to ensure the soul functions according to its nature.[891] When the three parts of the soul are not functioning according to nature it becomes impossible to develop *apatheia*:[892]

> "The rational soul operates according to nature when the following conditions are realised; the concupiscible part desires virtue; the irascible part fights to obtain it; the rational part, finally applies itself to the contemplation of created things."

[890] D. Prassas, 'Evagrius and the Re-ascent of the νοῦς to Union with God', in G. Springer and P. Clarke (eds), *Patristic Spirituality: Classical Perspectives on Ascent in the Journey to God* (Brill, 2022), 277.
[891] Evagrius explains this process in *Praktikos* [86].
[892] PR [86].

Then, once under control, the appetitive and irascible parts of the soul then actively assist the rational part of the soul (*logistikon*) to bring the mind into a state of *apatheia*, which makes possible attaining to love (*agapē*), pure prayer and the various contemplations. "the rational soul acts according to nature when its appetitive part longs for virtue, and the irascible part struggles on its behalf, and the rational part perceives the contemplation of beings."[893]

However, as noted above, Tsongkhapa would *deny* the existence of a discrete metaphysical substance, created by God and called "the soul" as it would be conceived of by Evagrius and explained in *The Praktikos.* Tsongkhapa would approach Evagrian *praktiké* as cultivating discrete states of consciousness, a process unrelated to restoring balance to a soul. From Tsongkhapa's perspective and following traditional Geluk interpretation of *Sautrāntika* presentation of Buddhist epistemology and psychology[894], Evagrian *logismoi* such as anger or lust would be regarded as afflictive mental states rather than separate, discrete characteristics of an inherently existent, indwelling soul.

Even this issue; whether and to what extent "the soul" as presented by Evagrius can be fairly described as an "inherently existent entity" and thus an object of negation in the sense of Tsongkhapa's *Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka* tenet system is not straightforward.

[893] PR [86].

[894] A. Klein, *Knowing, Naming and Negation: A Sourcebook on Tibetan Sautrāntika* (Snow Lion Publications, United States, 1991) noting: "The Sautrāntika tenet system…has been for six centuries an object of intense study in the Gelukba monasteries of Tibet……The Sautrāntika system, as Gelukba formulates it, is valued for detailed descriptions of how thoughts and direct perception know their objects, and for relevant interpretations of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti." 19.

The fact that the Evagrian soul is composed of different, mutually interrelated components (the appetitive, the irascible and the rational) which are themselves mutable suggests that "the soul" may not be easily equated to "the object of negation" as understood by Vaibhāṣika, Sautrāntika, Yogācāra and Madhyamaka tenet systems and thus *may* become the target of supramundane insight.

Approached another way, the Evagrian "soul" might be conceived of as more of a collective noun referring to differently manifesting mental states dependently arising as a continuum of consciousness, sometimes very coarse (irascible states like anger), sometimes less coarse (appetitive states like desire) and sometimes subtle (rational states like cognitive evaluation). However even if viewed this way, the conception of these dependently arising and diminishing mental states as inhering to a "soul" suggests that the Evagrian soul *may be* analogous to the "reifying view of the perishing aggregates" and thus remain a legitimate object of negation from the Buddhist perspective. These deeper, *epistemological* issues and their implications will be discussed in chapter seven.

Conclusion

While the teleological *orientation* of their ascetic processes may differ, Tsongkhapa and Evagrius share concern for certain attention regulating ascetic practices as a foundation for achieving their respective metaphysical goals. As Linge notes: "Evagrius' discussion of a reflective dimension of ascetic practice marks a very different and, I think, much more fruitful area of convergence with Buddhism than do metaphysical issues."[895]

[895] D. Linge *Leading the Life of Angels*, 560.

Chapter six of this thesis has therefore focussed on these 'reflective dimensions of ascetic practice', especially investigating whether and to what extent the initial cultivation and then attainment of serenity / *apatheia* might enable a practitioner to temporarily suppress manifest afflictions and / or *logismoi*.

It achieved this by offering an initial précis of the role and importance of serenity and *apatheia* to Tsongkhapa's and Evagrius' respective spiritual systems. Noting similarities but also significant metaphysical difference, the chapter then proposed a threefold framework for comparatively analysing the cultivation of serenity and *apatheia*. That framework involved exploring Evagrius' and Tsongkhapa's respective presentations of *apatheia* and serenity in terms of a practitioner's progression along a "mundane path" and a "supramundane path" (which has two aspects).

This chapter six focussed on progression through the mundane path, initially by explaining the importance of training in *samādhi* (concentration) as a necessary prerequisite to developing serenity (Tsongkhapa), and the importance of training in *hesychia* (stillness) as a necessary prerequisite to developing *apatheia* (Evagrius).

The chapter explained Tsongkhapa's presentation serenity by reference to the "nine mental states", the "five faults" and the "eight antidotes." It then examined Evagrius' presentation of *apatheia* by reference to the eight *logismoi* and the various forms of *praktiké* necessary for restoring harmony to the different parts of the soul – the appetitive / concupiscible (*epithumetikon*), the irascible (*thumikon*) and the rational (*logistikon*) as the fundamental prerequisite to attaining *apatheia*.

Following this discussion, the chapter proceeded to analyse progression along the mundane path characterised by mundane insight. It noted that from Tsongkhapa's perspective, as a non-Buddhist, Evagrius would *necessarily* progress along a mundane path. However, the chapter noted the metaphysical difficulties and differences with such an approach; most obviously, that Evagrius' spiritual system does not propose the existence of the *desire, form and formless realms* constituting *saṃsāra*. As a way of accommodating these deep metaphysical differences, the chapter focussed on the "reflective dimensions of ascetic practice" that might be common to both Tsongkhapa and Evagrius, despite serenity and *apatheia* involving a "different set of exercises and emphasing a different domain of self-control"[896].

That commonality centred on shared concerns to enable practitioners to gain control over their thoughts, feelings and behavioural tendencies, through *praktiké* and meditation, in order to develop highly refined and focussed states of concentration and prayer. It is in this sense that while Evagrius and Tsongkhapa were certainly writing at different times, for different monastics in very different metaphysical traditions, they were nevertheless writing for *human beings* struggling with common psychological experiences of anger, lust, attachment, pride and sorrow held in tension with contrary aspirations to virtue, to self-mastery, to happiness and to attaining wisdom.

Having now explored Evagrius' and Tsongkhapa's presentation of the mundane path, it remains to explore progression along the *supramundane path* characterised by supramundane insight.

[896] I. Graiver, 'Training the Mind: The Ascetic Path to Self-Transformation in Late Antique Christian Monasticism' (2022) 24(3) *Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health*, 256.

That is the task of chapter seven which will explore the nature of this supramundane insight as "knowledge of the selflessness of the person", from Tsongkhapa's *Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka* tenet system, and the implications of this perspective for comparison with the Evagrian *Contemplations* and *Theologiké*.

CHAPTER SEVEN – The *Natural Contemplations, Theōria & Vipaśyāna*

"Form is empty. Emptiness is form. Emptiness is not other than form; form is also not other than emptiness. In the same way, feeling, discrimination, compositional factors, and consciousness are empty.

Aryabhagavatī-prajñāpāramitā-hṛdaya Sūtra

(The Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra)

"My book, O philosopher, is the nature of created things, and it is always at hand when I wish to read the words of God." *Praktikos* [92].

Introduction

This chapter seven progresses the analysis of *apatheia,* and serenity developed by reference to the three-fold framework outlined in chapter six,[897] to its teleological conclusion where a practitioner utilises the serenity / *apatheia* they have attained as a basis for progression along a "supramundane path", characterised by "supramundane insight" (*vipaśyāna*) (Tsongkhapa), and the *Second* then *First Natural Contemplations* and *Theologiké* (Evagrius). Chapter six established the foundation for this analysis by analysing a practitioner's progression along what Tsongkhapa defined as a "mundane path"; exploring whether and to what extent inner and outer disciplines and *praktike*́ involved in cultivating and attaining serenity / *apatheia* might function as bases enabling a practitioner to temporarily suppress manifest afflictions / *logismoi*.

[897] This three-fold framework involved exploring; first, the possibility of serenity / *apatheia* functioning as bases enabling a practitioner to temporarily suppress manifest afflictions / *logismoi* in progressing along what Tsongkhapa (following Asaṅga's *Śrāvakabhūmi*) describes as a "mundane path". Second, the possibility of serenity / *apatheia*, functioning as bases enabling a practitioner to eliminate afflictive obscurations and their seeds and thus attain liberation from *saṃsāra* / attain the *Natural Contemplations* and third, when serenity / *apatheia* are conjoined with bodhicitta / *agapē*, respectively, possibly functioning as bases enabling a practitioner to attain enlightenment / *theōria*. Both the second and third possibilities are described by the *Lamrim Chenmo* as "supramundane paths".

The comparative analysis in chapter six was therefore directed toward the "reflective dimension of ascetic practice;"[898] exploring similarities associated with *praktiké* / inner discipline functioning as causes for regulating attention, as a foundation for attaining the peace, stability and focus of mind associated with *apatheia* and serenity respectively. The similarities and convergences in Tsongkhapa's and Evagrius' training for serenity and *apatheia* revealed in that discussion and the implications for Buddhist-Christian dual belonging claims will be explored in chapter eight.

Chapter six identified three principal differences between the mundane and supramundane paths, the first concerned the *kind of practitioner* who might pursue the mundane or supramundane path, the second concerned the *nature of the path consciousness* cultivated on each path while the third concerned the *consequences* or end spiritual result of pursuing each path.

Briefly as to the first, Tsongkhapa identifies several kinds of practitioners who might proceed solely via the mundane path including non-Buddhists as well as Buddhists who do not cultivate insight in the sense of *vipaśyāna*.[899] As a non-Buddhist practitioner, Evagrius, his path and methodology would be evaluated by Tsongkhapa in the context of the mundane path.

[898] D. Linge, *Leading the Life of Angels,* 560.
[899] LRCM 3:92-93. The four persons are (i) non-Buddhists, (ii) Buddhists who are of dull faculties, (iii) Buddhists who possess sharp faculties, but whose "roots of virtue" have not matured, and (iv) bodhisattvas who wish to achieve enlightenment in a future life.

As to the second, path consciousnesses cultivated by non-Buddhist practitioners are considered "mundane", principally because they do not cultivate either "mundane insight"[900] as certain Buddhist practitioners might as they progress along the mundane path or "supramundane insight" into selflessness which is a feature of the supramundane path.

Instead of cultivating either supramundane or mundane insight, non-Buddhist practitioners either remain in a state of extended meditative serenity or achieve a state of consciousness approximating Evagrian *apatheia* and from this state, strive to temporarily suppress manifest afflictions / *logismoi* / passions. Finally, as to the third, as chapter six demonstrated, whether practitioners are Buddhist or non-Buddhist, attaining serenity and *apatheia* and then progressing along the mundane path will not enable them to attain liberation from saṃsāra.

Nor will such practitioners have cultivated the framework for the Evagrian *Natural Contemplations* with the result that they will also not discover the *logoi* inherent in material and immaterial creation. Attaining serenity and *apatheia* and utilising mundane insight to progress along the mundane path may enable practitioners to temporarily suppress manifest afflictions / *logismoi* / passions; "when an affliction is suppressed, it is prevented from arising temporarily because another, incompatible mental state is present."[901] However, without *something more,* the serenity and *apatheia* deployed as the basis for the mundane path not be sufficient to completely undermine those afflictions.

[900] Following Asaṅga's *Śrāvakabhūmi* Tsongkhapa defines "mundane insight" as consisting of "meditation bearing the aspects of calmness and coarseness, in which you observe the coarseness of the lower levels and the calmness of the higher levels." LRCM 3:92.
[901] Dalai Lama, *Science and Philosophy in the Indian Buddhist Classics, Volume 2: The Mind*, T. Jinpa (ed.) (Wisdom Publications, United States, 2020), 345.

Chapter seven therefore turns to analyse this *something more*, identifying it as "supramundane insight"[902] / wisdom cultivated on the supramundane path. For Tsongkhapa, it is the cultivation of insight in the sense of *vipaśyāna* which enables the complete elimination (not mere suppression) of afflictions and their seeds; "when a mental state such as wisdom *undermines* an affliction such as craving, it has eliminated the cognitive mechanisms that are required for craving to arise…when a mental state is *undermined*, the very conditions for its occurrence have been eliminated."[903]

For Evagrius, it is the cultivation of *Second* and then *First Natural Contemplation* leading to the discovery and insight into the *logoi* of material and immaterial creation and finally, *Theologiké.* The emphasis is on wisdom / *gnosis* functioning as causes for liberation from *saṃsāra* and enlightenment (Tsongkhapa) and the *Natural Contemplations* and *Theologiké* (Evagrius). In doing so, chapter seven will bring into critical dialogue the epistemic content and processes associated the *Natural Contemplations* (Evagrius) and supramundane insight (Tsongkhapa).

In exploring Evagrius' presentation of *Natural Contemplations*, his principal monastic trilogy of *Praktikos, Gnostikos and Kephalaia Gnostika* will supplemented with a second trilogy of his texts; *On the Thoughts, Reflections* ("*Skemmata"*) and *On Prayer*.[904]

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[902] It is clear that "insight" in the sense of *vipaśyāna* and as understood by Tsongkhapa is not at all the same as "insight" in the sense of perception of the *logoi* of material and immaterial creation as understood by Evagrius. In this chapter, I am using the term "insight" in two contexts. First, I use it in referring generally to the "something more" – the additional cognitive characteristic enabling practitioners to move beyond serenity / *apatheia.* Second, where necessary, I will identify "insight" more precisely when referring to it in specific discussions of *vipaśyāna* (Tsongkhapa) or the *Natural Contemplations* (Evagrius).

[903] Dalai Lama, *Science and Philosophy in the Indian Buddhist Classics, Volume 2: The Mind*, T. Jinpa (ed.) (Wisdom Publications, United States, 2020), 354.

[904] English translation of *On the Thoughts* and *On Prayer* can be found in Sinkewicz; *Evagrius of Pontus: The Greek Ascetic Corpus* (2003) Oxford University Press, United Kingdom; while an English translation of *Reflections / Skemmata* can be found in W. Harmless (trans); The Sapphire Light of the Mind: The Skemmata of Evagrius Ponticus (2001) 62 *Theological Studies* 498.

While there is some debate concerning the date of composition of this "second trilogy" and its relationship to the "first trilogy" of *Praktikos, Gnostikos and Kephalaia Gnostika,*[905] it seems reasonable to accept Stewart's characterisation of them as being "probably the fruit of his (Evagrius') mature consideration."[906] Given Evagrius died at the relatively early age of 54 and had joined his Egyptian monastic community relatively late in life, it is likely that Evagrius was formulating these more "mature considerations" during or soon after the composition of the *Praktikos, Gnostikos* and *Kephalaia Gnostika*.[907]

Therefore, in terms of the larger three-fold framework, the analysis in chapter seven comparatively investigates whether and to what extent the epistemic content and phenomenological processes of *Second Natural Contemplation,* then *First Natural Contemplations* and *Theologiké* as presented by Evagrius approximates the nature, content and function of the insight / wisdom necessary for liberation from *saṃsāra* as presented from Tsongkhapa's *Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka* (Middle Way Consequence) perspective. From Evagrius' perspective, chapter seven also considers whether and to what extent serenity and insight as developed by Tsongkhapa in his *Lamrim Chenmo* might approximate the nature, content and function of *Second* then *First Natural Contemplations* and eventually *Theologiké.*

Such comparative analysis is both fruitful and interesting for several reasons.

[905] See the discussion and notes in C. Stewart, 'Imageless Prayer and the Theological Vision of Evagrius Ponticus' (2001) 9(2) *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 182 – 183 and L. Dysinger*, Psalmody and Prayer in the Writing of Evagrius Ponticus* (Oxford University Press, United Kingdom, 2006), 26.
[906] C. Stewart, 'Imageless Prayer and the Theological Vision of Evagrius Ponticus' ,183.
[907] Noting J. Kalvesmaki's dissenting view to the effect that Evagrius had probably composed the *Kephalaia Gnostika* before or at the same time as *The Praktikos* and *Gnostikos*. J. Kalvesmaki, 'Evagrius the Cappadocian: Redating the Kephalaia Gnostika' (2023) 31(4) *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 523.

Both Evagrius and Tsongkhapa draw distinctions between the epistemic authority of ordinary, conventional sense perception of everyday objects and persons on the one hand and forms of non-conventional, superior perception / insight that "sees" beyond such conventional sense perception to the *ultimate mode* of existence of those same objects and persons on the other[908]. For Evagrius, this distinction manifests in two ways. First, Evagrius maintains that God's *Second Creation* is mediated to practitioners through their "corruptible sense perception"[909] but that these perceptions, impressions or cognitions of material objects in the wider environment are of insufficient strength to generate "knowledge" of the *logoi* of visible and invisible creation.[910] Second, Evagrius maintains that the *quality* of a practitioner's knowledge changes or modulates in the progression from *Second Natural Contemplation* to *First Natural Contemplation* and finally to *Theologiké* as "ordinary" sense perception yields to an understanding of the *logoi*; God's spiritual principles pervading material and immaterial creation[911].

In this way, it is possible to discern in Evagrius' system an ascending sense of epistemic authority from (a) ordinary, corruptible sense perception, (b) insight into the *logoi* of material creation and (c) insight into the *logoi* of immaterial creation.

[908] This epistemic distinction is clearly reflected in the Tibetan etymology of insight as *"lhag mthong"* which expresses the idea of an intensified or superior (*lhag pa*) quality of seeing or perception (*mthong*).
[909] KG [3.55].
[910] KG [2.10].
[911] For Evagrius, and explained below, material and immaterial creation is pervaded by *logoi*, God's spiritual principles for creation with the monastic utilising sense perception of everyday material creation / objects as the basis for *Second Natural Contemplation* in discovering their *logoi* and then perception of the *logoi* of immaterial creation as the basis for the *First Natural Contemplation*.

For Tsongkhapa, this distinction manifests most clearly as a practitioner utilises various logical reasoning techniques to discern and then understand the "distinguishing feature of the Madhyamaka" described as "the admissibility of all the teachings about cyclic existence and nirvāṇa – the agents and objects of production, refutation, proof, and so forth - in the absence of even a particle of essential or intrinsic nature." [912] Tsongkhapa asserts that reaching an understanding of this distinguishing feature of the Madhyamaka "depends on how you establish your philosophical view of the basic situation. The way to establish that view is to reach certain knowledge of the two truths."[913] What Tsongkhapa means by "the two truths" and its importance for the analysis in this chapter will be explained below.

However, briefly and for the sake of context, in his *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* (Root Verses on the Middle Way) Nāgārjuna explained that: "doctrines taught by the Buddha rely wholly on the two truths: worldly concealer truths and truths that are ultimate."[914] The two truths is thus a philosophical hermeneutic enabling persons and phenomena to be understood in terms of "two levels".[915] Explained below, the two truths are commonly referred to in the literature as "conventional truth" and "ultimate truth".

[912] At LRCM 3:131, Tsongkhapa notes that this "distinguishing feature" of the Madhyamaka view necessitates the difficult task of integrating the profound view of emptiness of inherent existence with its equally profound corollary, dependent origination. At LRCM 3:303, Tsongkhapa despairs of the capacity of scholars of his time to find this view: "It scarcely happens that someone combines the capacities to posit both of these, so it is very difficult to find the Madhyamaka view."
[913] LRCM 3:130.
[914] M. Siderits and S. Katsura, *Nāgārjuna's Middle Way: Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* (Wisdom Publications, United States, 2013), 278.
[915] T. Jinpa, *Self, Reality and Reason in Tibetan Philosophy*, 149.

These "two levels" do not imply that there are two different "persons" or "phenomena" but that it is possible to understand that there are two different *perspectives* or "ways of looking at the same entity".[916] If this sounds difficult to understand then that is because the subject of the two truth *is* difficult, "*extremely difficult*" according to Tsongkhapa who laments that because of this extreme difficulty, "accurate knowledge of the presentation of the two truths scarcely exists."[917]

Building upon the explanation in chapter six, as a practitioner progresses along the supramundane path, the epistemic quality and authority of her "insight" into the two truths novates dramatically from an intellectual understanding of conventional truth derived from conventional, conceptual analysis principally cultivated on the Mahāyāna Paths of Accumulation and Preparation, to a deep, *non-conceptual* direct *perceptual* realisation of emptiness, (*sūnyatā*) (*stong pad nyid*) the ultimate truth of the way persons and phenomena exist and which is marks the gateway consciousness to the Mahāyāna Path of Seeing.

An additional issue of comparative interest in the context of cognition and reasoning concerns a tantalising, but undeveloped comment Evagrius makes in his text *On Thoughts*: "All those people who have contemplated certain of the realities present in natures on the basis of objects have also produced proofs on the basis of what they have contemplated."[918] The term used for "proofs" is *apodeixeis* (ἀποδειζεις), a term that can also be translated as "logical demonstrations." As a mode of proof or "logical demonstration", *apodeixeis* can be traced back to Aristotle's theories of demonstrative syllogisms in his text *Prior Analytics*[919].

[916] J. Westerhoff, *The Golden Age of Indian Buddhist Philosophy* (Oxford University Press, United Kingdom, 2018), 72.
[917] LRCM 3:177.
[918] *On Thoughts* [25].
[919] Aristotle, *Prior Analytics Book I,* G. Striker (trans), Clarendon Aristotle Series (Clarendon Press, United Kingdom, 2009).

Evagrius' use of *apodeixeis* in *On Thoughts* suggests that before and during *Natural Contemplation*, a practitioner may seek to utilise syllogistic reasoning as a means of revealing the *logoi* of creation, a possibility noted by Julia Konstantinovsky: "some (certain) of the realities present in natures appear to be what elsewhere in his *oeuvre* Evagrius terms the *λόγοι* of creation."[920] This is an observation taken up but not developed by Corrigan: "contemplation of realities present in nature, a contemplation drawn from objects, Evagrius states, yields proofs or demonstrations (*apodeixeis*) drawn from what has been contemplated."[921]

Of interest and relevance here is the extensive discussion by Tsongkhapa in his *Lamrim Chenmo* concerning a practitioner's use of syllogistic reasoning, principally while on the Mahāyāna Paths of Accumulation and Preparation, as a logical technique enabling her to generate valid inferential cognition into the lack of inherent existence of persons and phenomena and, from that knowledge-basis, to eventually attain direct, perceptual realisation of emptiness marking entry into the Mahāyāna Path of Seeing.[922]

Tsongkhapa's discussion principally occurs in the context of the perennial debate between his *Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka* tenet school and the *Svātantrika-Madhyamaka* school concerning the admissibility of "autonomous syllogisms" as appropriate means of generating inferential valid cognition.[923] This is a debate well beyond the scope of this thesis and is discussed extensively elsewhere.[924]

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[920] J. Konstantinovsky, *Evagrius Ponticus: The Making of a Gnostic*, 41-42; see also Kevin Corrigan (2009) at 117-118.
[921] K. Corrigan, *Evagrius and Gregory: Mind, Soul and Body in the 4th Century* (Routledge, United Kingdom, 2009), 116.
[922] LRCM Volume 3, Chapters 18 – 22.
[923] See especially LRCM Volume 3, Chapters 18 and 19.
[924] Representatives of the literature include: Dalai Lama, *Science and Philosophy in the Indian Buddhist Classics, Volume 3: Philosophical Schools*, T. Jinpa (ed.) (Wisdom Publications, United States, 2022), 390ff; G. Dreyfus

However, this chapter, will demonstrate how Tsongkhapa and *Prāsaṅgika-Mādhyamikas* do employ syllogisms (but not *autonomous* syllogisms) for the purposes of generating valid inferential cognition into ultimate truth and as a prelude to developing direct, perceptual insight into ultimate truth – the emptiness of persons and phenomena.

How Tsongkhapa employs syllogistic reasoning in cultivating supramundane insight / *vipaśyāna* as a preferred logical technique for progressing along the supramundane path and the evaluation of the "three modes" of a valid syllogism will be discussed later in this chapter. Although presently undeveloped in the literature, exploring the use of syllogistic reasoning by Evagrius and Tsongkhapa as logical mechanisms for cultivating direct, un-mediated perception of the *logoi* of creation and insight into emptiness respectively is a promising avenue for future comparative research.

Related to that issue, future comparative research might also explore the *apparent* conundrum implicit in both Evagrius' and Tsongkhapa's systems of how ordinary, minds operating within a framework of every-day, unreliable, deceptive or corruptible, conventional sense perception and discursive / analytical cognitive states, afflicted with passions, ignorance and hostile emotions, are capable of generating non-afflicted, non-conceptual and non-analytical spiritual realisations of the kind constituting the *Natural Contemplations* and *Theologiké* and special insight into emptiness.[925]

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and S. McClintock, *The Svātantrika-Prāsaṅgika Distinction* (Studies in Indian and Tibetan Buddhism, Wisdom Publications, United States, 2014), 173; J. Westerhoff, *The Golden Age of Indian Buddhist Philosophy* (Oxford University Press, United Kingdom, 2018), Chapter 5; D. Lopez, *A Study of Svātantrika* (Snow Lion Publications, United States, 2016).); E. Falls, 'Tsongkhapa and the Myth of the Given' (2016) *2 Journal of Buddhist Philosophy* 132.); J. Yi, 'Controversy Among dGe lugs pa Scholars about What is Negated According to the Svātantrika-Mādhyamika School' (2015) 1 *Journal of Buddhist Studies* 156 and D. Seyfort Ruegg, 'The Svātantrika-Prāsaṅgika Distinction in the History of Madhyamaka Thought' (2006) 49 *Indo-Iranian Journal* 319.

[925] Y. Komarovski, *Tibetan Buddhism and Mystical Experience* (Oxford University Press, United Kingdom, 2016)., especially at 10, 117 and 166. A. Klein has more directly broached this issue in *Mental Concentration and the Unconditioned: A Buddhist Case for Unmediated Experience*, in *Paths to Liberation: The Mārga and its*

One major point of difference here lies in the role that the grace of God plays in illuminating the mind of the Evagrian practitioner. To Evagrius, the project of Buddhist "enlightenment" may seem entirely self-focussed, solipsistic even.

The structure of this comparative framework of difference is illustrated in Chart 7 (over) and unfolds in the manner explained on the following pages.

Transformations in Buddhist Thought, 1992 Robert Buswell and Robert Gimello (eds), Kuroda Institute Studies in East Asian Buddhism 7 at 269.

Chart 7

Evagrius		Tsongkhapa
➢ Second Creation as God's providential "letter" / Book "encoded" with *logoi*		➢ "Creation" as different realms of *saṃsāra* dependently arisen and "empty" of any inherent structure, form or constitutive *logoi*.
➢ *Second & First Natural Contemplations* <u>Substance & Structure</u> To discover and understand the *logoi* encoded within and pervading material and immaterial creation.		➢ Insight (*vipaśyāna*) <u>Substance & Structure</u> Through analytical meditation, accurately identifying the "object of negation", initially realising the emptiness of persons and phenomena conceptually and eventually attaining non-conceptual realisation of emptiness.
➢ Theory of Cognition How and why sense data, *logismoi*, demonic attack and other affective phenomena distort and hinder the capacity of the monastic to perceive the *logoi* of creation through the *natural contemplations*.		➢ Theory of Cognition "Reifying view of the perishing aggregates" as mistaken mode of apprehension, not established by valid cognition. Different to actual mode of abidance of persons or phenomena.
➢ Telos Attain to *Theologiké* and eventual eschatological reunion with God as Holy Trinity.		➢ Telos Eliminate afflictive and cognitive obscurations in attaining liberation & enlightenment.

A Comparative Framework of Difference

Chapter seven begins by explaining the very different metaphysical conceptions of "creation"[926] presented by Evagrius and Tsongkhapa and from within which the two *Natural Contemplations*, *Theologiké* and insight respectively are developed. The foundations of Evagrius' and Tsongkhapa's understanding of material and immaterial "creation" were explained in chapters four and five of this thesis respectively. Chapter seven builds upon that understanding. Why? For Evagrius cultivation of the *Natural Contemplations* and *Theologiké* takes place within a conception of both visible and invisible creation pervaded by and encoded with God's providential *logoi*, the spiritual reasons for creation which become the raw material for the *Natural Contemplations*. Through contemplation of "*the logoi of providence and judgement*", the practitioner attains to pure prayer in which the mind "*sees the place or ground of God*" echoing Evagrius' conception of prayer as "a conversation / communion of the *nous* with God"[927] thereby facilitating the progressive ascent of the *nous* – eventually to *Theologiké.*

Evagrius' relatively benevolent presentation of creation differs dramatically from creation as explained by Tsongkhapa. Throughout his *Lamrim Chenmo*, Tsongkhapa explains that cultivation of insight takes place within a conception of creation as *saṃsāra*, comprising the *desire realm, form realm* and *formless realm* and devoid of providential *logoi* or inherently existent persons, "souls" or physical phenomena.

[926] Tsongkhapa and Evagrius have very different metaphysical presentations of the nature and content of "creation"; the worlds, eons and realms inhabited by different sentient beings in their respective traditions. In this chapter, I use the term "creation" in its broadest sense and, where necessary, I will qualify the use of the term when discussing aspects of either Tsongkhapa's or Evagrius' *particular* presentation of "creation".
[927] *Chapters on Prayer* [3].

For Tsongkhapa, creation-as-*saṃsāra* is not the providential expression of God's love for sentient beings, and insight is not cultivated to discover and understand inherently existent *logoi* pervading creation. Rather, insight is cultivated to *eliminate* the mistaken apprehension that persons and phenomena (creation) possess some form of inherent existence or self-sufficient substantially existent characteristics whether such characteristics can be considered Evagrian *logoi* or inherently existent self (*ātman*) or other form of essence (*svabhāva*).[928]

Having explained the significance of these very different conceptions of creation, chapter seven turns to examine the actual content and substance of *Second* and *First Natural Contemplations* (Evagrius) and supramundane insight (Tsongkhapa). It investigates the substance of what is involved in the phenomenological experience of cultivating the *Natural Contemplations* and insight; identifying the meditative / cognitive techniques practitioners engage in when cultivating those states. The role of *cognition* and sense-perception in developing these cognitive states will be treated as part of the same discussion because there is an intimate relationship between the *Natural Contemplations* and insight. Why?

Noted above, both Evagrius and Tsongkhapa assert that there is something about the way a practitioner perceives, interprets and understands how persons, sentient beings and phenomena making up their environment exist that hinders cultivation of the *Natural Contemplations* and discovery of the *logoi* of creation and that hinders the development of insight respectively.

[928] I acknowledge that in one sense, creation-as-*saṃsāra* is pervaded by "emptiness". However, emptiness is a *non-affirming negation* the realisation of which does not reveal some previously concealed and ontologically "real" person or "essential" phenomena in the way that Evagrian *Natural Contemplations* reveal the essential *logoi* hidden within creation.

For Evagrius, demonically inspired *logismoi*, passions, memories, fantasies and appearances can distort and compromise a practitioner's ability to perceive the *logoi* of creation – hence the importance of purification, *praktike'* in attaining *apatheia* as the basis for "knowing the *logoi.*"[929]. This is why Evagrius reminds us: "virtues show the secondary natural contemplation to the mind and this one shows the first and the first in its turn, shows the holy Unity."[930]

For Tsongkhapa, an unenlightened being's sense perception is always mistaken; it confuses the way in which persons and phenomena appear to their senses; that is, the mind confuses the *conventional* mode of apprehension of the person or phenomena (as inherently existent) with the *actual* mode of existence of those persons and phenomena (as lacking a single shred of inherent existence). Tsongkhapa identifies this "gap" between the way persons or phenomena appear to exist on the one hand, and on the other, the way they *actually* exist, as an expression of unenlightened ignorance.[931] It follows that for Tsongkhapa, "ignorance" (*avidyā*) (*ma rig pa*) has a very specific meaning beyond its everyday sense of not knowing a fact or thing. Rather, "ignorance" refers to a process by which unenlightened sentient beings' minds actively *obscure* or *conceals* the actual mode of existence of persons and phenomena.[932]

[929] KG [5.57].
[930] KG [3.61].
[931] LRCM 3:167 where Tsongkhapa notes that if a person's eye-sense consciousness is not defective (whether by disease or injury) then the cause of the mistaken appearance of persons and phenomena as existing inherently or intrinsically, lies in ignorance.
[932] LRCM 3:175. This distinction will be discussed later in this chapter.

Therefore, while disciples of Evagrius seek to refine their minds to perceive the *logoi* inherent in creation; the "real" underlying substance and constitutive principles of creation, disciples of Tsongkhapa undertake deep analysis to purify their minds from any perception of persons or phenomena as inherently existent or "real". From Tsongkhapa's perspective, a monastic who engages in contemplation expecting to discover inherently existent *logoi* encoded within creation only reinforces her misapprehension of the way persons and phenomena exist. From Evagrius' perspective, a monastic who engages in analytical meditation expecting to completely eliminate the sense of inherently existent *logoi* will be unable to progress through any spiritual paths, much less attain eschatological cognitive reunion with God as Holy Trinity. The very purpose, substance and pedagogical processes of Tsongkhapa's Tibetan Buddhist insight and Evagrius Patristic Christian *Natural Contemplations* are thus antithetical.

It follows from these foundational differences that Evagrius and Tsongkhapa have very different understandings of the *telos* or end goal of the spiritual path. Success for disciples of Evagrius is to attain *Theologiké*, eschatological cognitive reunion with God as Holy Trinity, a recovery of the primordial state of loving intellectual receptivity. A disciple may experience a foretaste of this eschatological state before physical death when the *nous* is sufficiently refined and prayer is subjectively experienced as the "place of God": In *On Thoughts*, Evagrius writes:[933] "When the mind has put off the old self and shall put on the one born of grace, then it will see its own state in the time of prayer resembling sapphire or the colour of heaven; this state scripture calls the place of God that was seen by the elders on Mt Sinai."

[933] *On Thoughts* [39].

The eschatological spiritual *summum bonum* is relational; the subjective experience of loving, cognitive receptivity to God as Holy Trinity; the restoration of the relationship between the Creator and the created.

However, from Tsongkhapa's *Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka* perspective, the spiritual *summum bonum* is initially, escape from *saṃsāra* through elimination of the afflictive obscurations and then, through elimination of the cognitive obscurations, attaining the state of enlightenment. There is no sense of "seeing" inherently existent *logoi* of material and immaterial creation as God's providential design in creation, much less seeing *logoi* as the means of an eventual eschatological cognitive reunion with God. Interestingly, in this context, of "seeing", in the Gospel of John, one of the apostles, Philip, asks "Lord, show us the Father", to which Jesus responds, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you do not know me, Philip? He who has seen me has seen the Father."[934] And in the Pāli *Saṃyutta Nikāya* the Buddha reassures a very ill monk named Vakkali who expresses his remorse and regret at being so ill that he had not come to see the Buddha in person.

In response, the Buddha gently chides; "Enough, Vakkali! One who sees the Dhamma sees me; one who sees me sees the Dhamma."[935] Both Jesus Christ and the Buddha identified themselves with their teachings to such an extent that even those who did not and cannot meet them are nevertheless assured of the *equivalence* of teaching / Teacher.[936]

[934] Gospel of John 14:8-9, *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: New Testament* 2010, Ignatius Press, United States, 190.
[935] B. Bodhi, *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Saṃyutta Nikāya* (Wisdom Publications, United States, 2000).Part III: The Book of Aggregates *Khandhasaṃyutta*, *Vakkali* 87(5), 939.
[936] Tsongkhapa made similar comments: "For those future students who might be saddened by not having met me in person, I would say this: Read the two syntheses I have written, one on Sūtra and the other on Tantra. If you do so, this will be no different from having met me in person." T. Jinpa, *Tsongkhapa: A Buddha in the Land of Snows* (Shambhala Publications Inc., United States, 2019), 320-321.

The asserted equivalence of teaching / Teacher is also an interesting area for future comparative research.

From this introductory overview, it quickly becomes obvious that the relative similarity characterising techniques of asceticism / *praktike*′ taught by Tsongkhapa and Evagrius discussed in chapter six and utilised by the practitioner in regulating her outer physical and inner cognitive environments in pursuit of optimal mental states of serenity / *apatheia*, is starkly absent from the analysis in chapter seven. Why this is so is explored below, commencing with Evagrius' and Tsongkhapa's very different understanding of "creation" and what it contains.

Creation as "Letter" or "Book" of God and *Logoi* & Creation-as-*Saṃsāra.*

The hermeneutical key to Evagrius' presentation of the *First* and *Second Natural Contemplations* and ultimately *Theologiké* lies in understanding how and why Evagrius characterises all of visible and invisible creation as a "letter", or "Book" from God to His creatures and which contains the spiritual principles and reasons for God's providence in *Second Creation*.

Discussed below, "reading creation" (as God's letter or book) in the sense of discovering and understanding the *logoi* within visible and invisible creation becomes the framework and means by which the fallen *nous* begins its cognitive re-ascent to God. However, noted above, understanding this process is assisted and deepened by understanding the relationship between two overlapping spiritual dynamics Evagrius develops throughout his texts and in the context of his theory of cognition and reasoning.

The first dynamic concerns "*the logoi of providence and judgement*"[937], described as "the keys to interpreting the Book of God"[938] and the second concerns "*the place or ground of God*."[939] The framework in which Evagrius most comprehensively presents these interrelated spiritual dynamics occurs in his commentary to *Scholion 8 on Psalm 138* [940]

> "The book of God is the contemplation of bodies and incorporeal (beings) in which a pur(ified) *nous* comes to be written through knowledge. For in this book are written the *logoi* of providence and judgement, through which book God is known a creator, wise, provident and judging. God is creator through the things that have come from non-being into being (and) wise through the *logoi* concealed in them; provident through those contributing to our virtue and knowledge; and judge through the variety of bodies of reasoning beings..."[941]

This *Scholion 8* needs to be read while keeping in mind Evagrius' metaphysics of creation explained in chapter four of this thesis. Briefly for context, Evagrius' understanding of Christianity is expressed at the very start of his *Praktikos*: "Christianity is the doctrine of Jesus Christ our Saviour, consisting in *ethics*, and *philosophy of nature* and *theology*."[942] (italics mine).

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[937] The phrase appears prominently in Evagrius' *Gnostikos* and *Kephalaia Gnostika.* Scholars have likened the phrase "*the logoi of providence and judgement*" to a kind of formula unique to Evagrius' writings and therefore, when it appears in a text, functions as a reliable indicator of Evagrian authorship Luke Dysinger (2001).

[938] Luke Dysinger (2013) at 35.

[939] "The place of God" is frequently referred to as the purified mind's encounter with the light of God in prayer. The phrase appears prominently in Evagrius' *On Thoughts* and *Reflections / Skemmata*.

[940] Evagrius, *Scholies Aux Psaumes: Tome II (Psaumes 71-150)*, 2021, Marie-Josèphe Rondeau, Paul Géhin and Matthieu Cassin (eds) *Sources Chrétiennes* (SC 614), Paris.

[941] L. Dysinger, *Psalmody and Prayer in the Writing of Evagrius Ponticus* (Oxford University Press, United Kingdom, 2006), 171-172 (translation of *Scholion 8 on Psalm 138*).

[942] *Praktikos* [1]. The underlining is mine for emphasis.

Within this three-fold conception of Christianity, Evagrius develops a spiritual program of *praktike*′(ethics) leading to *apatheia* which enables the *Natural Contemplations* which reveal the *logoi* of creation (philosophy of nature) that enable eventual attainment of *Theologiké* (essential knowledge / theology).

Initially[943], God created all *logikoi* in perfect unity with each other and with God as Holy Trinity. This unity with God was characterised by *Theologiké*, receptivity and contemplation of essential knowledge by *logikoi*. However, through an exercise of their free will, *logikoi* directed their attention away from God resulting in self-alienation, a "fall" from God and unity; "the first movement of rational creatures is the separation of the intellect from the unity that is in it."[944] In response and, through his judgement[945] and providence[946], God initiated a *Second Creation* in which each of the *logikoi*, whether angel, human or demon, was assigned a world and ontological existence (body, soul and *nous*)[947] appropriate to its distance from God and with each *logikoi* characterised by a dominant motivating characteristic, with angels enjoying a disposition to contemplation, humans disposed to desire and demons to anger.[948]

Relevant to this chapter, a crucial aspect of God's providence is the fact that all of visible and invisible matter constituting *Second Creation* is pervaded with God's *logoi* - reasons, intelligence and wisdom.

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[943] This brief summary is helpfully set out by Columba Stewart (2001) at 176 – 177.
[944] KG [3.22].
[945] In KG [3.88] Evagrius notes that God's "judgement" is not understood in a legalistic sense of punishment. Rather, "judgement" is meant to be thought of in terms of a reasoned evaluation of the most optimal response to the negligence of *logikoi* – see also KG [2.75].
[946] Dysinger comments that "providence is here defined as what God does to help the logikoi attain the goals of the praktiké and the theoretiké."
[947] KG [3.28]: "The soul is the *nous* which, through negligence, has fallen from the Unity; and through its carelessness, has descended to the rank of *praktike*".
[948] Evagrius explains this taxonomy of *logikoi* at KG [1.68].

Creation itself is therefore an expression of God's design, reasoning and wisdom and Evagrius likens the relationship between God and God's creation to the relationship between an architect and the designs of the architect; "God is said to be in mortal body nature just like the architect is in those things made by him."[949]

In the same way that a structure reflects and embodies the architect's methodology and reasons for construction, so too, God communicates with *logikoi* by means of an intermediary, that is, God's sense-perceptible creation.[950] The relationship with the *"logoi of providence and judgement*" is expressed in the *Gnostikos*: "..and you will discover the *logoi* of judgement in the diversity of bodies and worlds, and those of providence in the means by which we return from vice and ignorance to virtue or knowledge."[951]

Like the notion of *apatheia*, Evagrius did not invent the conception of creation as pervaded and encoded by *logoi,* the spiritual principles, designs and plans of its Creator. He borrowed and adapted earlier writings of Origen[952] and before him, Plotinus[953] and Plato[954] who conceived of the visible and invisible matter of the universe as "…created by God as copies of the spiritual exemplars and paradigms for creation that were pre-eternally present in the divine mind."[955] Evagrius incorporates these "exemplarist" [956] metaphysics of creation into his spiritual system; reflected in his *Kephalaia Gnostika*:[957]

[949] KG [6.82].
[950] Ramelli *Kephalaia Gnostika*, xxxii.
[951] Gnostikos [48].
[952] Origen, *On First Principles* 2.11.5, 176-183 wrote: "…he would learn more clearly the reasons for all things….he will perceive what is the reason for souls and the meaning of diversity among animals…and what purpose of the Creator or indication of his wisdom is concealed in each individual thing." (at 188).
[953] Plotinus in his *Enneads III.2.2* wrote: "so, intellect, (gave) something of itself to matter…(and) this something of itself is the rational formative principle flowing from Intellect." (Stephen MacKenna trans at 185).
[954] In the *Timaeus* (39d-40a) Plato writes about the "Demiurge" fashioning the principles of the cosmos on the model of the eternal, transcendent "forms".
[955] J. Konstantinovsky, *Evagrius Ponticus: The Making of a Gnostic,* 140.
[956] The term "exemplarist" is preferred by Julia Konstantinovsky (2009).
[957] KG [2.1].

> "The mirror of the intellections of God's grace, power and wisdom is how he created everything from nothing" and in his *Skemmata*:[958] "Christ insofar as he is the Christ, possesses knowledge of being. Insofar as he is Creator, he possesses the (underlying principles of ages and worlds. Insofar as he in incorporeal, he possesses the underlying principles of incorporeal things."

With this background, the mechanics of Evagrius' exemplarist metaphysics, and their framework, reflected in *Scholion 8 on Psalm 138* becomes clearer, especially when reading it with his *Letter to Melania.*[959] In his *Letter*, Evagrius develops the theme of written letters communicating the intent of author and reader across the distance separating them; "God in his love has fashioned creation as an intermediary, God's letter; through his power and his wisdom, he made known abroad his love for them so that they might be aware of it and draw near."[960]

In the way that the author of a letter makes known her love for another separated by distance, so too, God uses *Second Creation*, to make known His love for separated creatures by pervading and "encoding" creation with God's *logoi*, or "reasons"; the essential spiritual principles for which *Second Creation*, as an act of God's *providence,* came to be[961]. Through cultivating increasingly refined contemplative states, *logikoi* are able to "read" the inherent *logoi* of creation, "discovering and understanding the incorporeal, intelligible elements (*logoi*) which matter contains."[962]

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[958] W. Harmless and R. Fitzgerald, 'The Sapphire Light of the Mind: The Skemmata of Evagrius Ponticus' (2001) 62 *Theological Studies* 499, 521.
[959] *Letter to Melania*, M. Parmentier (trans) (1985). The literature refers to Evagrius' *Letter to Melania* by a number of names including "*Ad Melaniam*" and "*The Great Letter".*
[960] *Letter to Melania*, M. Parmentier (trans) (1985), 22.
[961] KG [3.42].
[962] *Letter to Melania*, M. Parmentier (trans) (1985), 22.

Visible and invisible creation therefore functions in the way a letter bridges the physical distance between the writer and reader. In this manner, the material and immaterial "matter" of the universe also becomes the very means by which the cognitive gap between creatures and God is closed, culminating in the eschatological state of *Theologiké* whereby the *nous* is once again dwelling in noetic receptivity to God as Holy Trinity[963]. For these reasons, Evagrius admonishes:[964]

> "Exercise yourself continuously in the *logoi* of providence and judgement….and you will discover the *logoi* of judgement in the diversity of bodies and worlds and those of providence in the means by which we return from vice and ignorance to virtue and knowledge."

Accordingly, the "mind acquires knowledge through a gradual process, first contemplating corporeal reality, then incorporeal reality and finally God."[965] As the *nous* advances through the *Natural Contemplations*, moving closer to God, the soul will be pervaded by the light of God and "eventually the body will be returned to the rank of soul, the soul to that of mind and the mind returned to unity".[966] In this way, the conception and contemplation of material creation makes way for contemplation of immaterial *logoi* which, in turn, makes way for *Theologiké*; "if the perfection of the *nous* is immaterial knowledge and if immaterial knowledge is solely the Trinity, it is evidence that in perfection there will not be anything of matter. And if that is so, the *nous* forevermore naked will come to vision of the Trinity."[967] This brief summary is illustrated in Chart 3 (in Chapter Six).

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[963] A. Casiday, *Reconstructing the Theology of Evagrius Ponticus: Beyond Heresy* (Cambridge University Press, United Kingdom, 2013), 151-152.
[964] Gnostikos [48].
[965] K. Y. Tsui, 'The Body in the Ascetic Thought of Evagrius Ponticus', Chapter 5 in A. Usacheva, U. Ulrich and S. Bhayro (eds), *The Unity of Body and Soul in Patristic and Byzantine Thought* (Brill Publishers, Germany, 2021), 111.
[966] K. Y. Tsui, 'The Body in the Ascetic Thought of Evagrius Ponticus', 111.
[967] KG [3.15].

Evagrius' characterisation of *Second Creation* as the providential response of God to his "fallen" *logikoi* is starkly opposed to Tsongkhapa's characterisation of creation-as-*saṃsāra* which was explained at length in chapter five and reviewed in chapter six. It is not necessary to repeat that explanation except to recall that within Tsongkhapa's Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition, there is a close relationship between the different realms of existence posited by the Buddhist *Abhidharma* literature and the phenomenological states of consciousness experienced by sentient beings corresponding to those realms of existence.[968]

Chapter six explained that in the Buddhist tradition, sentient beings cycle through three realms of *saṃsāra* comprising the desire realm, the form realm and the formless realm according to the ripening of their karma.[969] In this presentation there exists a desire realm consciousness, a form realm consciousness and a formless realm consciousness in which "sentient beings in a particular realm have the sphere of consciousness corresponding to that realm."[970] This framework, explained in chapter six is illustrated in Chart 1 (in Chapter Five). Unlike Evagrius, Tsongkhapa would characterise, visible and invisible "creation" as referring to the different realms of *saṃsāra*, arising through the ripening of sentient beings' karma and being of the nature of suffering.[971]

[968] As Gethin suggests; "*The key to understanding the Buddhist cosmological scheme lies in the principle of the equivalence of cosmology and psychology…in the traditional understanding, the various realms of existence relate rather closely to certain commonly experienced states of mind."*: R. Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism* (Oxford University Press, United Kingdom, 1998), 119 – 120.
[969] See Chim Jampaiyang, *Ornament of Abhidharma: A Commentary on Vasubandhu's Abhidharmakośa*, Ian Coghlan (trans.) (Wisdom Publications, United States, 2019), 366 ff.
[970] Dalai Lama and T. Chodron, *Following in the Buddha's Footsteps, Volume 4 of The Library of Wisdom and Compassion* (Wisdom Publications, United States, 2019), 212 – 213.
[971] LRCM 1:279. Tsongkhapa quotes the Buddha: "in brief, the five appropriates aggregates are suffering."

As states manifesting from ripening karma, creation-as-*saṃsāra* is therefore not a providential response by a benevolent creator. And although both Evagrius' and Tsongkhapa's trainings are oriented toward empowering their disciples to *transcend* creation, their motivations for doing so are completely different.

For Evagrius, creation is transcended by disciples refining their minds through searching out and understanding the inherent *logoi* of visible and invisible creation, the product of God's grace and benevolence and through which disciples eventually attain eschatological gnostic reunion with God as Holy Trinity. For Tsongkhapa, creation-as-*saṃsāra* is transcended by disciples developing direct, perceptual insight into the *emptiness* of persons and phenomena and using that insight to overcome the afflictive and cognitive obscurations. To assume the existence of *logoi* inherent in creation and to actively seek out such *logoi* through meditative practice would only deepen disciples' ignorance which in turn, would only propel rebirth within creation-as-*saṃsāra* and its attendant suffering.

Despite these differences, and as noted above, both Tsongkhapa and Evagrius acknowledge an explicit cause-effect relationship between a practitioner's ability to cultivate insight and the *Natural Contemplations* on the one hand, and the way in which a practitioner receives, interprets, analyses and then understands the vast quantity of external sense-data constantly presented to her consciousness via her six sense faculties on the other.

Accordingly, in terms of progression along the supramundane path, analysing whether and to what extent the nature and content of the insight / wisdom necessary for liberation from *saṃsāra* as presented from Tsongkhapa's *Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka* (Middle Way Consequence) perspective approximates the epistemic content and phenomenological processes of *Second Natural Contemplation, First Natural Contemplations* and *Theologiké* as presented by Evagrius (and vice versa) requires an understanding of Evagrius' and Tsongkhapa's respective theories of cognition / epistemology.

The *Natural Contemplations* & Theories of Cognition / Epistemology

When the *logikoi* "fell" from original contemplative unity with God as Holy Trinity, God's response could have taken the form of punishment, some form of cognitively nihilistic exile from which state fallen creatures could never hope for eschatological reunion. However, we have seen that God's judgement and providence involved *Second Creation*, the formation of worlds, eons and an ontological state especially suited to creatures according to the extent of their cognitive declination from God. Further, God encoded and pervaded visible and invisible creation with His *logoi*, the spiritual principles and reasons for existence.

In this way, and with Christ as Divine Teacher, creatures are able to reconstruct their experience of reality to greater or lesser approximation of their original state of cognitive unity with God through the *Natural Contemplations*.

While still alive and engaging the world, humans are able to bring themselves ever closer to receptivity to God, the culmination of which is the eschatological state of *Theologiké* following physical death. This scheme is reflected in *On Thoughts* [17][972], summarised by Dysinger:

> "For Evagrius, it is the inner world of concepts, temptations, fantasies and prayers that constitute the principal subject matter for natural contemplation. God has entrusted each human being with responsibility for an inner universe of thoughts and concepts that must be tended and guarded just as a shepherd guards a flock."[973]

However, as previous chapters of this thesis have explained, demonically inspired *logismoi*, passions, memories, fantasies, and appearances can and do function as wolves attacking this flock by "exploiting the monk's capacities for sense perception by exploiting the basic sense data acquired through the senses."[974] The more a monastic assents to *logismoi* and representations created by faulty sense perception and interpretation, the more her mind is changed for the worse: "just as the sense are changed by the perceptions of different qualities, likewise the intellect too is changed, when it meditates on contemplations that are different every moment."[975] Hence the importance of purification, *praktike*́ in attaining *apatheia* as the basis for "knowing the *logoi*."[976]

[972] *On Thoughts* [17].
[973] L. Dysinger, 'An Exegetical Way of Seeing: Contemplation and Spiritual Guidance in Evagrius Ponticus' (2013) LVII *Studia Patristica* 31.
[974] K. Gibbons, 'Passions, Pleasures and Perceptions: Rethinking Evagrius Ponticus on Mental Representation' (2015) 19(2) *ZAC* 297, 319.
[975] KG [2.83].
[976] KG [5.57].

The relationship between the *logismoi* and the necessity of *praktike*΄ as a monastic attempts to develop *apatheia,* was discussed in chapter six; briefly, *praktike*΄ enables the aspiring monastic to identify and combat the *logismoi,* purify herself by bringing the warring parts of her soul (the *thumikon, epithumetikon* and *logistikon*) into harmony thus creating the foundations for cultivating *apatheia*, the *Natural Contemplations*, and through the grace of Christ, engage in pure payer. In his *Kephalaia Gnostika* Evagrius affirms the causative relationship between the movements of the passionate parts of the soul and the capacity of those movements to influence the monastic's capacity for cognition; "the irascible faculty (*thumikon*), when it is troubled, blinds the seer, the concupiscible faculty (*epithumetikon*), when bestially moved, hides the visible objects."[977]

Thus, in his *Scholia on Proverbs*, Evagrius affirms that the *logoi* inherent in visible and invisible creation "will be understood by the one who widens his heart through purity,"[978] especially given that "virtues show the secondary natural contemplation to the intellect and this one shows the first and the first, in its turn shows the Holy Unity."[979] But what is the *mechanism* by which images, thoughts, memories, fantasies and passions influence a monastic's mind / *nous* leading her toward or (more often) away from *apatheia*, pure prayer and the *Natural Contemplations*?

[977] KG [5.27].
[978] *Scholia on Proverbs*, quoted in B. Ekman, 'Natural Contemplation in Evagrius Ponticus Scholia on Proverbs' (2017) XCV *Studia Patristica,* 434.
[979] KG [3.61].

While all extant studies into Evagrius' *oeuvre* necessarily include (to greater or lesser degrees of breadth and depth) discussion about how thoughts, memories, sense impressions and cognition influence a practitioner's ability to attain *apatheia* and, from that basis, cultivate the *Natural Contemplations,*[980] there are few scholarly works *dedicated* to Evagrius' theories of cognition and epistemology[981] making it "no easy task to systematise Evagrius' doctrine of natural contemplation."[982] Nevertheless, the second trilogy of Evagrius' texts; *On the Thoughts, Reflections* ("*Skemmata"*) and *On Prayer* does offer considerable guidance in illuminating this causative relationship.[983]

It starts with sense perception since "the contemplation of this sense perceptible world is given as nourishment…"[984] For Evagrius, a monastic initially encounters the external objects comprising their 'sense perceptible world' through their different bodily senses. In his *Reflections / Skemmata*, Evagrius notes; [985] "there are four ways by which the mind grasps mental representation (*nōemata*); the first way is through the eyes, the second through hearing, the third through memory and the fourth through temperament."

[980] One of the most comprehensive treatments of Evagrian epistemology found in a monograph are chapters two and three of J. Konstantinovsky, *Evagrius Ponticus* (2009). This is also alluded to by Kevin Corrigan in his discussion of aspects of Evagrian cognition in chapter 2 of the edited text *Evagrius and His Legacy*, (Kalvesmaki and Darling-Young eds), 2016, University of Notre Dame Press; while chapter five of A. N. Williams, *The Divine Sense: The Intellect in Patristic Theology* (Cambridge University Press, United Kingdom, 2007 includes discussion of Evagrian epistemology. More recently, K. Harrison has helpfully collected and discussed the different terms and concepts associated with Evagrian epistemology, K. Harrison 'Recipes for Passion: Understanding the Role of Representations, Thoughts and Demons in the Event of Passions in Evagrius Ponticus' (2021) *CXV Studia Patristica* 353.

[981] George Tsakiridis' small text *Evagrius Ponticus and Cognitive Science: A Look at Moral Evil and the Thoughts*, 2010, Pickwick Publications, United States is the only stand-alone text concerning Evagrius and cognition that I have been able to find. However, Tsakiridis' text only partially addresses epistemological concerns, with most of the text discussing philosophical concepts of "evil".

[982] J. Konstantinovsky, *Evagrius Ponticus,* 48.

[983] K. Gibbons, 'Passions, Pleasures and Perceptions: Rethinking Evagrius Ponticus on Mental Representation' (2015) 19(2) *ZAC* 297.); B. Stefaniw, 'Evagrius Ponticus on Image and Material' (2007) 42(2*) Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 125; D. Bradford, 'Evagrius Ponticus and the Psychology of "Natural Contemplation"' (2012) 22 *Studies in Spirituality* 109.

[984] KG [2.88].

[985] *Reflections / Skemmata* (2006), 212.

This interaction of sense perception and an object generates a representation of that object in the mind of the monastic. In this way, objects are "imprinted" or "stamped" upon the mind; "the mind naturally receives the mental representations of sensible objects and their impressions through the instrumentality of this body of ours. Whatever may be the form of the object, such is necessarily the image the mind receives…"[986] Here, Evagrius appears to follow, at least in part, Aristotle's assertion that "it is impossible to think without a mental picture."[987] Hence, in the *Chapters of the Disciples of Evagrius* we read: "The intellect can only receive the *nōmata* and it assumes the form of each *nōma*, as the eye does when it sees itself in mirrors."[988]

This relational process of sense perception encountering external object and the intellect's reception of a mental representation of that object is most clearly expressed by Evagrius in *On Thoughts*:[989] "One should start from the proposition that the mind receives naturally the mental representations of sensible objects and their impression through the instrumentality of this body of ours. Whatever may be the form of the object, such is necessarily the image that the mind receives." Therefore, for Evagrius, persons and phenomena exist "out there", separate from a monastic's observing consciousness. [990] Thus, Evagrius holds that contemplative objects are entirely real noting that "all contemplation appears with an underlying object" thus shaping the monastic's contemplation of that object.[991]

[986] *On Thoughts* [25].
[987] Aristotle, *Parva Naturalia*, in (W.S.Hett trans) (1957), 291. The scholarship concerning Aristotelian epistemology is extensive and contested – see K. Scheiter, 'Images, Appearance and Phantasia in Aristotle' (2012) 57 *Phronesis* 251–278,
[988] *Chapters of the Disciples of Evagrius* [77].
[989] *On Thoughts* [25].
[990] KG [4.87]. Of the Buddhist Mahāyāna Systems, the *Yogācāra School* (Mind Only) School is most opposed to Evagrius' idea that sense perception arises in dependence upon external objects, separate from the observing consciousness.
[991] D. Bradford, 'Evagrius Ponticus and the Psychology of "Natural Contemplation", 113.

However, cognitive investigation and contemplation of the forms of external objects only occurs *within*; "objects are outside the intellect and the contemplation concerning them is constituted within it."[992] In the context of his theories of mind, cognition and knowledge, Evagrius employs a sometimes-bewildering range of terminology throughout his texts. These include "mental representations" (*nōemata*) (νοήματα); "objects" (*pragmata*) (πραγμάτα); "fantasies" (*phantasia)* (φαντάσια), "mental image" *ikon* (εἰκόν), "likeness" (*homoiomata*) (ὁμοιώματα) and what might be termed "impassioned representations" *empathē* (ἐμπαθῆ).[993] The difficulty is that rarely does Evagrius define these terms with precision, often using them interchangeably, "without explaining why"[994] leading one Evagrian scholar to confess somewhat ruefully: "when confronted with the various things Evagrius considers to be images, one may begin to feel lost in a hall of mirrors."[995]

Nevertheless, as Harrison demonstrates[996], Evagrius uses this variety of terms to illustrate a consistent causative relationship between sensory input, whether from demonically inspired *logismoi*, from memories or representations from external objects induced by sense perception on the one hand and the arising of passions on the other. Whatever the causative "chain" (demons or sense perception) emotions that stir the passionate parts of the soul blind the monastic to the perception of *logoi* within material and immaterial creation. This is why Evagrius warns: "the impure mind is one that dallies among sensible objects with blameworthy passion."[997]

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[992] KG [4.77].
[993] See generally: C. Stewart, 'Imageless Prayer and the Theological Vision of Evagrius Ponticus' (2001) 9(2) *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 173 and M. Tobon, 'Raising Body and Soul to the Order of the Nous: Anthropology and Contemplation in Evagrius' (2013) LVII *Studia Patristica* 59.
[994] K. Harrison, 'Recipes for Passion: Understanding the Role of Representations, Thoughts and Demons in the Event of Passions in Evagrius Ponticus' (2021) CXV *Studia Patristica* 353
[995] B. Stefaniw, 'Evagrius Ponticus on Image and Material' (2007) 42(2) *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 125.
[996] K. Harrison, 'Recipes for Passion"
[997] *Reflections / Skemmata* [36].

In understanding why, it is helpful to recall the dynamically reinforcing nature of *praktike*΄ (virtue) and knowledge as enabling contemplation of the *logoi*, which in turn, enables knowledge of God as Holy Trinity:[998]

> "Just as now by means of the senses we approach sense-perceptible objects, but in the end, after being purified, we shall know their *logoi* too, in the same way, first we see the objects themselves and after being purified more, we shall also know the contemplation about them, after which it is possible to know, from that point on, the Holy Trinity."

In his *Kephalaia Gnostika,* Evagrius explains; "In the beginning, the intellect had God, who is incorruptible, as teacher of immaterial intellections (*logoi*). Now, however, it has received corruptible sense perception as teacher of immaterial intellections."[999]

Therefore, while Evagrius was a spiritual *realist*, holding that contemplative objects are objectively real, the accuracy of a practitioner's *perception* and therefore *reception* of that object is often severely compromised by the *logismoi* and associated arising of passions. More precisely, demons are usually responsible for insinuating *logismoi* constituting mental representations of sensible objects and that stir the passionate part of the soul, thus preventing cultivation of *apatheia*, the practice of pure prayer and the attainment of the *Natural Contemplations*.[1000]

[998] KG [5.57].
[999] KG [3.55].
[1000] *Reflections / Skemmata: Supplementary Chapters* [2].

It is here we can clearly see Evagrius distinguishing between the epistemic authority of mental representations, impressions, ideas and likenesses of persons and objects received through the medium of conventional but "corruptible sense perception" on the one hand, and the perception of hidden *logoi* pervading those persons and objects on the other.

God's *Second Creation* is now mediated to monastics through their "corruptible sense perception" thus requiring monastics to go beyond their immediate sense perceptions of visible objects if they are to attain the *Natural Contemplations* and perceive the *logoi:* "Evagrius wants to say that the contemplation of creation as matter is one thing, but that we are really meant to discover the incorporeal, intelligible elements (*logoi*) which this matter contains."[1001] Accordingly, Evagrius assigns greater epistemic authority to knowledge - *gnōsis* - writing: "but since sense perception does not attain knowledge, because of our weakness, the former is considered to be superior to the latter."[1002]

In other words, basic, corruptible sense perception does not generate the strength or acuity of "insight" necessary for perception of the *logoi* within material and immaterial creation as part of the *Natural Contemplations.*

However, at this point, great care needs to be exercised in understanding Evagrius' teachings on the relationship between sense perception, cognition and "imageless prayer." Chapter six of this thesis explained the importance to Evagrius of engaging in *praktike'* as a pre-requisite to attaining *apatheia*.

[1001] *Letter to Melania* in M. Parmentier (trans) (1985) at 22.
[1002] KG [2.10].

Time and again, Evagrius writes of the need for the monastic to learn how to recognise, discern and then banish images, thoughts, representations and especially passions as a necessary precondition for attaining *apatheia*. Then, from that state, Evagrius advises his followers to cultivate "imageless prayer", a state in which the mind has "transcended all the mental representations associated with objects"[1003] only transcending them when the follower has "put off the passions that bind it to sensible objects."[1004]

Such admonitions to resist "representations" or images during times of prayer are particularly evident in Evagrius' texts *On Thoughts* and *On Prayer* in which he writes (for example): "blessed is the mind which has acquired perfect freedom from the impression of forms during the time of prayer."[1005] These extracts *appear* to cast Evagrius as an iconoclast, who advocated a form of mental quietude in which having attained *apatheia,* the monastic then simply closes her eyes and shuts off her mind so that all impressions, thoughts, memories and sensations are eliminated, leaving only a form of cognitive or meditative vacuity.

Such a form of "imageless prayer" superficially resembles the form of Buddhist meditation advocated by Chinese Ch'an master Hvashang Mahāyāna during the debates at the monastery of *Samye* in Tibet around 797 CE and discussed in chapter five of this thesis. During the *"Samye Debate*" Hvashang asserted that; "whoever does not think of anything whatsoever or ponder anything whatsoever becomes completely free from the wheel of life.

[1003] *On Thoughts* [39].
[1004] *Reflections / Skemmata* [23].
[1005] *On Prayer* [117].

To not think, conceptualize or analyse anything whatsoever is non-referential (emptiness)."[1006] This view was successfully defeated by his opponent, the Indian Buddhist master Kamalaśīla with the result that the subsequent reception of Buddhism in Tibet generally, and by Tsongkhapa specifically, emphasised the need for *both* "serenity" and insight.

However, the substance of Evagrian *Natural Contemplations* revealed in his texts is <u>not</u> mere cognitive vacuity but the gradual infusion of God's grace revealing the *logoi* of material and immaterial creation, *gnōsis* that is characterised by substance and as we have seen, *sapphire luminosity*.[1007] The theological, textual and philosophical antecedents of the arguments associated with the difficult question of whether Evagrius was an iconoclast is well beyond the scope of this thesis.

Contemporary scholars have drawn attention to the need to read the Evagrian textual *oeuvre* as a whole rather than drawing conclusions from one or more textual sources in isolation thus requiring more subtle considerations; "the balanced and realistic view on the spiritual journey that he (Evagrius) held, clearly calls for more nuanced distinctions to be introduced into the assessment of his theory of images and sense perception."[1008]

[1006] L. Stein and N. Zangpo (trans.), *Butön's History of Buddhism in India and Its Spread to Tibet* (Snow Lion Publications, United States, 2013), 180.
[1007] *Reflections / Skemmata* [23].
[1008] J. Konstantinovsky, *Evagrius Ponticus,* 29.

That Evagrius is not opposed to perception of forms and images is reflected time and again in his texts; for example, he writes in the *Kephalaia Gnostika*: "desirable are things that approach us through our sensing them, but more desirable than them is their contemplation."[1009]

If the substance of Evagrian *Natural Contemplations* is thus not mere cognitive vacuity but the gradual infusion of God's grace revealing the *logoi* of material and immaterial creation and characterised by substantial "knowledge"[1010] or *gnōsis* then what *exactly constitutes* this knowledge or *gnōsis*? In his *Kephalaia Gnostika*, Evagrius explains: "the primary and secondary contemplations have in common the fact that they have a bare seer, whereas they have (each one) as a property the fact that the one (*First Natural Contemplation*) is immaterial while the other is in matter (*Second Natural Contemplation*)."[1011] In this sense, the difference between the *Natural Contemplations* is not the subject (the practitioner) but the object of contemplation; where *Second Natural Contemplation* has the *logoi* of material creation / knowledge of corporeals as its object while *First Natural Contemplation* has immaterial creation / knowledge of incorporeals as its object.[1012] And in relation to *Theologiké*; "the bare intellect is that which by means of the contemplation that regards it, is joined to the knowledge of the Trinity."[1013]

[1009] KG [2.10].
[1010] KG [2.10].
[1011] KG [3.19].
[1012] Jeremy Driscoll identifies *Second Natural Contemplation* with "knowledge of the corporeals - the knowledge that discovers reasons in the material world" and *First Natural Contemplation* as "knowledge of the incorporeals – the knowledge "discovering the immaterial world and its purposes which lie behind the material world." J. Driscoll, *Evagrius Ponticus: Ad Monachos* (Ancient Christian Writers Series, The Newman Press, United States, 2003), 15.
[1013] KG [3.6].

While this explanation clarifies the subject / object relationship characterising the *Natural Contemplations*, it still does not reveal *what the logoi* of material / corporeal creation and immaterial / incorporeal creation actually *are*. In fact, identifying the actual substance and content of the *logoi* of material and immaterial creation apprehended by the mind of a practitioner as she initially attains *Second Natural Contemplation,* then *First Natural Contemplation* and finally *Theologiké* is extremely elusive and Kevin Corrigan's attempt at precision begs the question[1014]: "*logoi* are the inner principles of things that really make them what they are and which we can grasp. *Logoi* for Evagrius are (as Robin Darling Young puts it) 'the ontological principles that form the reason and reasoning of created beings' or the forming principles according to which they are made, immanent in them."[1015] But *what are* these inner, ontological principles and reasons that make persons and phenomena "what they are"?

In fact, from Evagrius' perspective, it may be meaningless to seek such precision in circumstances where a practitioner is still at the level of *praktiké,* struggling with the *logismoi* and passions, and has not actually attained *apatheia* and therefore has not begun to discern the *logoi* of material / corporeal creation.

[1014] For example, Jeremy Driscoll observes that "several general terms cover the whole area of the knowledge that lies below that of the Trinity." Driscoll (2003) at 14. John Eudes Bamberger states that *First Natural Contemplation* involves "angelic knowledge" while *Second Natural Contemplation* is possessed by "men who, by the practice of prayer and asceticism become worthy of it." Bamberger (1981) at lxxvii – lxxxviii. Luke Dysinger has identified at least "four different interpretations of the ascent from Second to First Natural Contemplation"; Dysinger (2005) at 42-43, while Andrew Louth simply concludes that "The details of Evagrius' doctrine here (the *Natural Contemplations* revealing the *logoi*) are not clear"; A. Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition* (Oxford University Press, United Kingdom, 2007), 104.

[1015] K. Corrigan, *Evagrius and Gregory: Mind, Soul and Body in the 4th Century* (Routledge, United Kingdom, 2009), 442.

There are two reasons for this. Firstly, as explained in chapter four of this thesis, in presenting his spiritual system Evagrius deliberately decided not to "tell everything we have seen or heard…So as not to 'give what is holy to the dogs or cast pearls before swine' some of these matters will be kept in concealment and other alluded to only obscurely."[1016]

Secondly, even if Evagrius *were* to attempt such an explanation, it is unlikely that a beginning practitioner would understand it. It would be similar to asking a Buddhist practitioner beginning to progress along the Mahāyāna Paths of Accumulation and Preparation to precisely explain the substance of a direct, perceptual realisation of emptiness which marks entry into the Mahāyāna Path of Seeing. Like plunging into cold water or the "experience of eating an orange"[1017], unless one has actually experienced it, explaining what it means to discern the *logoi* of material and immaterial creation through the *Natural Contemplations* or to suddenly attain a direct perceptual realisation of emptiness while in single pointed meditative equipoise, is very difficult.

For the purposes of this thesis, I suggest a more revealing question asks: "how does the nature of a practitioner's identity change as she generates an increasingly refined understanding of the *logoi* of material and immaterial creation, or as she achieves a direct, unmediated perceptual realisation of emptiness?" Julia Konstantinovsky has suggested an answer to the Evagrian part of that question: "to Evagrius, perceiving things through undistorted sense perception and then contemplating them in their *logoi* is a way of growing

[1016] *Letter to Anatolius*; ijn J. E. Bamberger (trans) (1981), 12-13.
[1017] A. Klein, 'Mental Concentration and the Unconditioned: A Buddhist Case for Unmediated Experience', in R. E. Buswell and R. M. Gimello (eds*), Paths to Liberation: The Mārga and its Transformations in Buddhist Thought* (Kuroda Institute Studies in East Asian Buddhism 7, 1992), 275.

into one's authentic, sound, self – the very knowing person – the *gnōstikos* – God preeternally meant one to be."[1018]

Agapie Corbu agrees: "through the vision of the light, this spiritual *gnōsis* is communicated to the monastic through his intellect and spiritual senses of the soul and thus the monk becomes a real *gnōstic*, a knower of the Holy Trinity, a recipient of eternal life and light by Christ's intercession."[1019] But how does this analysis of Evagrius' epistemology and psychology relate to progression along the supramundane path as understood by Tsongkhapa?

Tsongkhapa and the Supramundane Path

As he did with the mundane path, Tsongkhapa's presentation of the "supramundane path" follows the *Śrāvakabhūmi*, in which Asaṅga describes it as representing "the contemplation of the Four Noble Truths and knowing them as they are in reality"[1020] to which Tsongkhapa adds that it is characterised by "supramundane insight" in the sense that "principally you cultivate the view which is the knowledge of selflessness of the person"[1021] which culminates in liberation / nirvāṇa.[1022]

[1018] J. Konstantinovsky, *Evagrius Ponticus,* 148.
[1019] A. Corbu, 'Evagrius Ponticus: Guide to the Divine Light', *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, 64.3–4 (2020), 129 – 145.
[1020] Florin Deleanu (2006) Chapter One, [3.3] at 24.
[1021] LRCM 3:92.
[1022] Throughout his *Lamrim Chenmo*, Tsongkhapa sometimes uses the terms "nirvāṇa" and "liberation" and "enlightenment" interchangeably. Contemporary Tibetan Masters in Tsongkhapa's tradition emphasise the need to read and understand the *Lamrim Chenmo* from the *Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka* tenet system.

In fact, although the lower tenet systems[1023] assert that attaining "knowledge of the selflessness of persons" is sufficient to attain liberation from *saṃsāra* from the perspective of Tsongkhapa's *Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka* tenet system, practitioners also need to realise the selflessness of *phenomena* in order to attain enlightenment.

Quoting Kamalaśīla's *Second Stages of Meditation*[1024], Tsongkhapa asserts: "I will not be satisfied with meditative serenity alone. What is this reality? Ultimately all things are empty of the two selves - the self of persons and *the self of phenomena*."[1025] (italics mine). The *Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka* system maintains that all lower tenet systems *and* vehicles[1026] do not accurately identify the "object of negation" asserting that they "propound a view that external phenomena truly exist."[1027]And as long as there remains the slightest view that *any* dependently arisen object, whether sentient or non-sentient contains even an atom of inherent existence, afflictive ignorance also remains.

[1023] Chapter five of this thesis noted that Tsongkhapa adheres to the traditional doxography of Indian Buddhist Tenets; *Vaibhāṣika*, *Sautrāntika*, *Cittamātra* (Mind Only) and the two Madhyamaka sub-schools: *Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka*, and *Svātantrika-Madhyamaka* with Tsongkhapa himself identifying as an adherent of the *Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka* ("Middle Way Consequence") tenet school. See particularly: Dalai Lama and T. Chodron, *Searching for the Self, Volume 7 of The Library of Wisdom and Compassion* (Wisdom Publications, United States; J. Westerhoff, *The Golden Age of Indian Buddhist Philosophy* (Oxford University Press, United Kingdom, 2018); S. Thakchoe, *The Two Truths in Indian Buddhism: Reality, Knowledge and Freedom* (Wisdom Publications, United States, 2023); J. Hopkins, *Meditation on Emptiness* (Wisdom Publications, United States, 1996) and G. Newland, *The Two Truths* (Snow Lion Publications, United States, 1992).

[1024] L. Sopa (trans.), *Kamalaśīla, Bhāvanākrama II, The Stages of Meditation: Middle Volume* (Bhāvanākrama II) (Deer Park Books, United States, 1998), 15.

[1025] LRCM 3:109. See also G. Newland, *Appearance & Reality: The Two Truths in the Four Buddhist Tenet Systems* (Snow Lion Publications, United States, 1999), 38.

[1026] A distinction needs to be drawn between a practitioner by *vehicle* – the Mahāyāna Vehicle (also known as the "Great Vehicle") or the Fundamental Vehicle (also known as "Hīnayāna) and the philosophical *tenets* or views of a practitioner. Noted above, the traditional Tibetan doxography broadly identifies four tenet systems - *Vaibhāṣika*, *Sautrāntika*, *Cittamātra* (Mind Only) and Madhyamaka, as well as two Madhyamaka sub-schools: *Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka*, and *Svātantrika-Madhyamaka*. Thus, a Buddhist practitioner may be a follower of the Mahāyāna Vehicle by motivation, but (for example) adhere to the *Cittamātra* (Mind Only) tenet system.

[1027] D. Perdue, *Debate in Tibetan Buddhism* (Snow Lion Publications, United States, 1992), 269.

In the final volume of his *Lamrim Chenmo* in a chapter titled "*The Stages of Entry into Reality"*[1028] Tsongkhapa provides a concise outline of how afflictive ignorance is gradually eliminated by progressing through the supramundane path. The chapter opens with a hypothetical interlocutor asking the following question: "Nirvāṇa is the reality that one seeks to attain, but what is nirvāṇa? If 'entry into reality' means a method for attaining it, then how do you enter?"[1029] At first glance, Tsongkhapa's response appears to rival Evagrius in its opacity and gnomic nature[1030]:

> "The reality that you seek to attain - the embodiment of truth - is the total extinction of conceptions of both the self and that which belongs to the self, specifically by stopping all the various internal and external phenomena from appearing as though they were reality itself - which they are not - along with the latent predispositions for such false appearances."

Noted above however, Tsongkhapa immediately follows up his answer by proposing a pedagogical framework he describes as "an indispensable technique for anyone who seeks liberation"[1031] that will enable a practitioner to adequately understand the dimensions of the question and then to work toward an answer. *First*, a practitioner must reflect on the faults of cyclic existence / *saṃsāra*. If a practitioner is not convinced that rebirth within *saṃsāra* is a sub-optimal state, she will hardly be motivated to seek liberation.

[1028] LRCM Volume 3, Chapter 9, 119 – 124.
[1029] In the English translation of the *Lamrim Chenmo* this is found in Volume 3, Chapter 9 at 119. Throughout the *Lamrim Chenmo*, Tsongkhapa often employs the device of a hypothetical interlocutor posing questions enabling Tsongkhapa to develop different philosophical points or to draw out various implications of differing philosophical views. In this sense, the hypothetical interlocutor performs a similar function to Socrates in the various Platonic Dialogues.
[1030] LRCM 3:119.
[1031] LRCM 3:120.

Accordingly, the *second* step involves the practitioner generating the wish to be free from *saṃsāra*. This wish is described as "renunciation" (*nges 'byung*) which is more accurately translated as an inner motivation of "intention to definitively emerge" from *saṃsāra.*[1032] Having cultivated the wish to emerge from *saṃsāra*, the *third* step involves investigation of its root cause. Tsongkhapa states[1033] that after this investigation "you will thereby become certain from the depths of your heart that the reifying view of the perishing aggregates *('jig tsog la lta ba*) or ignorance, acts as the root of cyclic existence" (underlining mine).

With this root cause of *saṃsāra* identified, the *final* step involves seeing "that overcoming the reifying view of the perishing aggregates depends upon developing the wisdom that knows that the self, as thus conceived does not exist. You will then see that you have to refute that self."[1034] The wisdom that overcomes the reifying view of the perishing aggregates, that refutes "the self" imputed upon these aggregates, is the "philosophical view that discerns that the self and that which belongs to the self, lack even a shred of intrinsic nature."[1035]

How does this pedagogical framework, with its emphasis on eliminating the reifying view of the perishing aggregates relate to the supramundane path? Tsongkhapa's definition of the supramundane path (quoted above) contains three essential elements. Firstly, - "knowing the *Four Noble Truths* as they are in reality." Secondly, the reality of the *Four Noble Truths* is "known" when they are understood with "insight". Thirdly, cultivating supramundane insight is characterised by "the knowledge of the selflessness of the person."[1036]

[1032] Geshe Lhundup Sopa states: "Renunciation is a genuine, spontaneous desire to definitively emerge from samsara forever." *Sopa*, Vol 5 (2017) at 608.
[1033] LRCM 3:120.
[1034] LRCM 3:120.
[1035] LRCM 3:120.
[1036] LRCM 3:92.

What is this selflessness of the person and what has it to do with the *Four Noble Truths*? Chapter five of this thesis explained the foundational Buddhist teachings contained in the *Four Noble Truths;* Tsongkhapa reminding us[1037]:

> "Once there is suffering (*First Noble Truth*), then the origins of suffering (*Second Noble Truth*), the cessation of suffering (*Third Noble Truth*), and the paths leading to the cessation of suffering (*Fourth Noble Truth*) make sense. Therefore, thorough understanding of suffering, elimination of origins, actualization of cessation, and cultivation of paths also makes sense." (*italics added*)

In this context, and consistent with the Classical Buddhist Tradition, Tsongkhapa identifies the *cause* of suffering as the reifying view of the perishing aggregates and the *cause* of the elimination of suffering as cultivation of the insight that is the knowledge of the selflessness of the person – entailing elimination of this reifying view of the perishing aggregates. Maintaining and defending the reifying view of the perishing aggregates, which manifests as conception of and assent to the self of persons and phenomena lies at the heart of the origin of suffering. Cultivating a path enabling a practitioner to develop supramundane insight, which is "knowledge of the selflessness of the person" provides the fuel enabling a practitioner to attain liberation from *saṃsāra*.

When a practitioner realises this dynamic then in terms of the definition of the supramundane path set out above, she has thus "known the *Four Noble Truths* as they are in reality" through the cultivation of "insight which is the cultivation of the view of the selflessness of the person" that, in turn, functions to eliminate the reifying view of the perishing aggregates leading to liberation from *saṃsāra*.

[1037] LRCM 3:136.

Reifying View of the Perishing Aggregates

It follows that understanding what Tsongkhapa *means* by the phrase "reifying view of the perishing aggregates" (*satkāyadṛṣṭi*) (*'jig tsog la lta ba*) is crucial. Here, it is important to distinguish the *existence* of the "perishing aggregates" (*skandhas*) on the one hand, and the "reifying *view*" of those same perishing aggregates and assenting to them as constituting an inherently existent "self" on the other. It is the latter that Tsongkhapa emphasises here. What does Tsongkhapa mean by "the reifying view of the perishing aggregates"? And how does this reifying view relate to the *Four Noble Truths*?

Chapter five of this thesis referred to the *Dhammacakkappavatana Sutta* in which the Buddha explained (*inter alia*) the nature and order of the *Four Noble Truths*. In relation to the *First Noble Truth,* he declared:[1038]

> "now this, bhikkhus (monks), is the noble truth of suffering: birth is suffering, aging is suffering, death is suffering, union with what is displeasing is suffering; separation from what is pleasing is suffering; not to get what one wants is suffering; in brief, the five aggregates subject to clinging are suffering." (underlining mine).

Chapter five noted that consistent with the doctrine of "no-self" (*anātman*) when the Buddha spoke about the "five aggregates subject to clinging", he was referring to the collection of five, psycho-physical "elements" or "heaps" that constitute a human being[1039].

[1038] *Dhammacakkappavatana Sutta:* "Setting in Motion the Wheel of the Dharma", in B. Bodhi*, The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Saṃyutta Nikāya* (Wisdom Publications, United States, 2000), 1844.

[1039] Form, consciousness, discrimination, feeling and compositional factors.

Following this reasoning, Tsongkhapa is making the point that human beings are merely compounded collections (*tsog*) of ever-changing (*'jig*) aggregates that may *appear* to an unenlightened consciousness as an entity that may be mistaken for an inherently existent person, self or *ātman*. Instinctively assenting to such an appearance, an unenlightened person grasps or "reifies" those aggregates to *be* the self or function as a basis for the imputation of unique self-identity.

However, classical Buddhist philosophy asserts that when the aggregates are examined, there is no findable "person" or "essence" that *is* a person constituted by the aggregates or co-extensive with any one or more of them. The *reifying view* mistakenly holds "that the impermanent components of the body (*kāya*) are in fact real (*sat*)".[1040] Buddhist philosophy asserts that when examined, there is no findable "person" or "essence" that is *the* person constituted by those five aggregates or co-extensive with any one or more of them.

At its most basic then, the "self (as) the object observed by that reifying view of the perishing aggregates" is a conception of the inherent existence of a "real person" constituted by those aggregates and to whom they belong. Such a view is revealed through linguistic convention; "my hand, my thoughts or my feelings", as if there were some inherent "owner" of those aggregates of form, discrimination and feelings. It is this view of the self commonly taken to be the "real person" that must be protected, cared for and exerted over and against other "selves" in the world.

[1040] R. Buswell and D. Lopez, *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism* (Princeton University Press, United States, 2014), 786-787.

Noted above however, from Tsongkhapa's *Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka* perspective, the elimination of the reifying view of the perishing aggregates is a necessary but not sufficient prerequisite to attaining full enlightenment.[1041] Tsongkhapa therefore exhorts practitioners to recall Candrakirtī's observation in his *Prasannapadā* ('Clear Words"):[1042]

> Yogis who wish to enter reality and who wish to eliminate all afflictions and faults examine the question: "What does this cyclic existence have as its root?" When they thoroughly investigate this, they see that cyclic existence has as its root the reifying view of the perishing aggregates, and they see that the self is the object observed by that reifying view of the perishing aggregates. They see that not observing the self leads to eliminating the reifying view of the perishing aggregates, and that through eliminating that, all afflictions and faults are overcome.

All four of the major Tibetan Buddhist interpretative schools (*Vaibhāṣika*, *Sautrāntika, Yogācāra* and *Madhyamaka*) therefore agree that the fundamental "problem" at the heart of the "reifying view of the perishing aggregates" consists in falsely imputing some "substance", "essence" or "person-ness" to the ever changing five psycho-physical and perishing aggregates; "all Buddhist schools agree that the root of our current ignorance is an excess of foundationalism: we invest things with more substance and solidity than they warrant."[1043]

[1041] Chapter six noted the *Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka* view that the elimination of the reifying view of the perishing aggregates (eliminating the self of persons) will eventually lead to the elimination of the *afflictive* obscurations, it will not eliminate the *cognitive obscurations* (which requires eliminating the self of phenomena).

[1042] J.W.de Jong, 1949: Ch XVII - "Le Yogin, désirant entrer dans la réalité et détruire totalement les passions et les fautes, examine quelle est la racine de la transmigration. Examinant ainsin la transmigration il voit que la transmigration a pour racine la vue fausse sue la personnalité, que le moi seul est l'objet de la vue fausse sur la personnalité et que par cette destruction il fait cesser toutes les passions."

[1043] S. Thakchoe, *The Two Truths in Indian Buddhism: Reality, Knowledge and Freedom* (Wisdom Publications, United States, 2023).

However, they *differ* over the degree of subtlety of this substance or "self" that is the object observed by the reifying view of the perishing aggregates; an ignorance that must be eliminated by wisdom: "the route from that ignorance to wisdom is to divest ourselves of surplus foundationalism."[1044] It is well beyond the scope of this thesis to explain the complex and contested debates concerning what and how the different philosophical schools understand the nature of the substance or "foundationalism" that must be divested in order to understand the correct view. For context, a recent brief but insightful summary is provided by Sonam Thakchoe[1045] set out below (explanatory text *in italics* added):

> "As we examine the schools…. we are studying positions that deny, in steady progression, slightly more substance. The substance we intuit, that of gross objects (*everyday, unenlightened consciousness*) is rejected for the substance of their tiny, momentary components (*Vaibhāṣika, Sautrāntika*); the substance of the physical is rejected for the substance of the mental (*Yogācāra*); the substance of the mental is rejected for the substance of convention (*Svātantrika-Madhyamaka*); the substance of convention is reject for an utter lack of substance (*Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka*)."

Generally speaking, from Tsongkhapa's *Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka* perspective, other tenet systems either negate too little (*Vaibhāṣika*, *Sautrāntika* and *Svātantrika-Madhyamaka*), with the result that those systems continue to admit some measure of inherent existence or they negate too much (*Yogācāra*) with the result that they deny conventionally existing and functioning phenomena. In this sense, Tsongkhapa argues that negating too much leads to the extreme of nihilism, while negating too little leads to the extreme of eternalism.[1046]

[1044] S. Thakchoe, *The Two Truths in Indian Buddhism* 7.
[1045] S. Thakchoe, *The Two Truths in Indian Buddhism 7*.
[1046] LRCM 3:292.

Thus; “there is only one consciousness that can uproot it - by apprehending things in a way that explicitly contradicts it. That consciousness is the wisdom that knows selflessness, the absence of intrinsic existence.”[1047]. Developing such a consciousness, such a view of reality means “reaching a profound certainty that all phenomena lack even a particle of essential or intrinsic existence.”[1048] For Tsongkhapa, reaching this certainty depends on how a person establishes their philosophical view of reality, which he refers to as “the basic situation”[1049] concluding that “the way to establish that view is to reach certain knowledge of the two truths”.[1050]

It is clear from the discussion above that what all four philosophical tenet systems emphasise is the necessity of refuting any form of foundationalism or “substance” inherent to persons and phenomena while also affirming the conventional, day-to-day reality of those same persons and phenomena functioning perfectly well.

Tsongkhapa notes that striking this balance necessitates correctly understanding the “distinguishing feature of the Madhyamaka”, which he describes as “the admissibility of all the teachings about cyclic existence and nirvāṇa – the agents and objects of production, refutation, proof, and so forth - in the absence of even a particle of essential or intrinsic nature.”[1051]

[1047] LRCM 3:193
[1048] LRCM 3: 129
[1049] LRCM 3: 129
[1050] LRCM 3: 130
[1051] At LRCM 3:131, Tsongkhapa notes that this “distinguishing feature” of the Madhyamaka view necessitates the difficult task of integrating the profound view of emptiness of inherent existence with its equally profound corollary, dependent origination. At LRCM 3:303, Tsongkhapa despairs of the capacity of scholars of his time to find this view: “It scarcely happens that someone combines the capacities to posit both of these, so it is very difficult to find the Madhyamaka view.”

Chapter five noted that at the time he wrote the *Lamrim Chenmo,* Tsongkhapa expressed dismay at what he considered to be both a philosophical naivety and epistemological scepticism characterising past and contemporary *Mādhyamikas'* understanding of the coherency and efficacy of the *Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka* system.[1052] This is why Tsongkhapa devotes several chapters[1053] of his *Lamrim Chenmo* to the importance of correctly identifying the relevant object of negation, to warning of the consequences of not doing so and defending the methodology deployed by the *Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka* system against criticisms from other tenet systems which he believes to be a misunderstanding or misinterpretation of that methodology.

Brief Summary for Context

In summary then, according to Tsongkhapa's explanation in his *Lamrim Chenmo*, the *cause* (Second Noble Truth) of the *existence* of suffering (First Noble Truth) lies in the ignorance that superimposes qualities of inherent existence onto persons and phenomena; but particularly the tendency to reify the "perishing aggregates" as constituting a sentient being and thus conceived of as "self", "me" and "mine". Based on such a reifying view, attachment, aversion and other afflictive obscurations are generated in an attempt to reinforce and defend this sense of "self" which, in turn, generates karma that, in turn, perpetuates the myriad manifestations of suffering within *saṃsāra*, cyclic existence.

[1052] T. Jinpa, *Self, Reality and Reason in Tibetan Philosophy: Tsongkhapa's Quest for the Middle Way* (RoutledgeCurzon, United Kingdom, 2002), 25.
[1053] LRCM, Volume 3, Chapter 10 (*Misidentifying the Object to the Negated*), Chapter 13 (*Valid Establishment*), Chapter 16 (*Not Negating Enough*), Chapter 17 (*The Actual Object to be Negated*) and Chapters 18 – 21 concerning the *Svātantrika-Madhyamaka - Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka* distinction.

However, it is possible to attain liberation from suffering *saṃsāra* (Third Noble Truth) by following a path (Fourth Noble Truth) that includes, *inter alia*, cultivating the wisdom that displaces the ignorance underlying the reifying view of the perishing aggregates. This wisdom involves developing the "correct philosophical view of reality" which realises that the perishing aggregates lack "even an atom of inherent existence" as a valid basis for supporting a view of an inherently existing self - the "reifying view". In turn, developing the correct philosophical view of the *emptiness* of the perishing aggregates, requires an understanding of the "two truths."

At this point, the vast difference between progression along the mundane path and progression along the supramundane path also becomes clearer. As chapter six explained, for non-Buddhists and for Buddhists progressing along the mundane path utilising mundane insight, the cultivation of serenity and / or a state of equanimity approximating Evagrian *apatheia* may enable temporary suppression of afflictive states of mind. However, only the cultivation of supramundane insight, itself developed on the basis of attaining serenity and specifically directed toward understanding the two truths utilised to eliminate the reifying view of the perishing aggregates will be sufficient to empower a practitioner to attain liberation from *saṃsāra* because only this wisdom-knowledge can destroy afflictions from their roots.

Quoting the *Samāadhirāja Sūtra*; Tsongkhapa affirms:[1054] "if you analytically discern the lack of self in phenomena and if you cultivate that analysis in meditation, this will cause the result, attainment of nirvāṇa; there is no peace through any other means."

[1054] LRCM 3:108 quoting the *Samādhirāja Sūtra* (King of Samādhis Sūtra) v 9.43 - Toh 127 Degé Kangyur, vol. 55.

The Two Truths

There is a vast literature devoted to the topic of the two truths and it is beyond the scope of this thesis to treat it comprehensively. Nor is it necessary to do so because this thesis is drawing upon the presentation of the Buddhist path, its constitutive principles and framing philosophy as presented by Tsongkhapa in his *Lamrim Chenmo;* the Buddhist text chosen to engage in comparative analysis with the chosen Evagrian Patristic Christian texts. However, even within the *Lamrim Chemo* itself, Tsongkhapa's treatment of the two truths is not as comprehensive as his treatment of them in his other texts.

While his two sūtric "Stages of the Path" texts, the *Lamrim Chemo* and the *Lamrim 'bringba* (Middle Length Treatise) present the same topics, "one major addition to the *Middle-Length Treatise* is a discussion of conventional and ultimate truth – accounting for almost a third of the entire insight section." [1055] Tsongkhapa's discussion of the two truths in the *Lamrim Chenmo* is narrower but more deliberately focussed, enabling him to address specific issues.

These issues include the nature of "rational analysis",[1056] how this rational analysis of the two truths enables Tsongkhapa to refute what he considers to be misrepresentations of how *Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka* distinguishes itself from the *Svātantrika-Madhyamaka* system,[1057] and finally, deploying the two truths as a means of deconstructing the notion of inherently existent objects such as a chariot.[1058]

[1055]Tsongkhapa; *The Middle-Length Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*, Philip Quarcoo (trans) (2021) at xiv. Tsongkhapa composed this text in 1415 CE, thirteen years after composition of the *Lamrim Chenmo*.
[1056] LRCM 3:161.
[1057] LRCM 3:264-265.
[1058] LRCM 3:277.

Chapter seven will discuss the two truths in this context; as a deconstructive mechanism by which a practitioner cultivates the wisdom that destroys the ignorance underpinning the reifying view of the perishing aggregates thus enabling the cultivation of supramundane insight and progression along the supramundane path, the fruit of which is the "reality you seek", liberation from *saṃsāra* – the state of *nirvāṇa*. Tsongkhapa adopts[1059] Nāgārjuna's formulation of the two truths; expressed in his *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* (Root Verses on the Middle Way): "doctrines taught by the Buddha rely wholly on the two truths: worldly concealer truths and truths that are ultimate."[1060] Throughout much of the *Lamrim Chenmo*, Tsongkhapa also uses the term "conventional truth" to refer to "worldly concealer truths".[1061]

Conventional / "Concealer Truths" & Ultimate Truths

What do these terms mean and what, exactly is partitioned into two truths? From Tsongkhapa's *Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka* perspective, the question is not about whether there are two different "persons" or "phenomena" but is about understanding that there are two different perspectives or "ways of looking at the same entity".[1062]

Answers are revealed by terminology. Tsongkhapa refers to conventional truths as "concealer truths" (*saṃvṛtisatya*) (*kun rdzob bden pa*) and ultimate truths as "truths that are ultimate" (*paramārthasatya*) (*don dam bden pa*). In the Sanskrit, "*saṃvṛti"* designates phenomena as existing conventionally or relatively but also deceptively because "*vṛti*" refers to "concealment" or "obstruction".

[1059] LRCM 3:218.
[1060] M. Siderits and S. Katsura, *Nāgārjuna's Middle Way: Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* (Wisdom Publications, United States, 2013), Chapter 24 Verse 8 at 278.
[1061] For example, LRCM 3:173, 175 and 182.
[1062] J. Westerhoff, *The Golden Age of Indian Buddhist Philosophy*, 72.

With *"sat"* then translated as "truth", the compound term, "*saṃvṛtisatya"* does not so much refer to something intrinsic to the object under observation, but to the nature of the awareness with which the *subject* perceives that object. Tsongkhapa quotes Candrakīrti to explain[1063]:

> "the Sage said that because ignorance obscures the nature of phenomena, it is called a 'concealer' (*kun rdzob, saṃvṛti)*. The fabrications that it perceives as true are called 'truths-for-a-concealer' (*kun rdzob bden pa, saṃvṛtisatya*)". Ultimate truth is thus the opposite of conventional, deceptive truth: "ultimate truth is the way enlightened beings (*ārya*s) see the world, conventional truth is that which is reflected in the way ordinary beings conceive of it."[1064]

Relationship with the Supramundane Path?

How is this relevant to the "reifying view of the perishing aggregates" and progression along the supramundane path? In essence[1065], an ordinary, unenlightened person conceives of "themselves" and others as autonomous, inherently existent entities possessing body, memories, thoughts and feelings.

However, this "reifying view of the perishing aggregates" is an illusion, a concealer truth, an ignorance qualifying the unenlightened mind that, in turn prompts grasping at the aggregates as the self.

[1063] LRCM 3:182, quoting Candrakīrti's *Madhyamakāvatāra* (Entering the Middle Way). The quote originates from Ch 6 v 28 of Candrakīrti's text, the translation of which I have taken from Tsongkhapa, *Illuminating the Intent: An Exposition of Candrakīrti's Entering the Middle Way*, 2021, Thupten Jinpa (ed), The Library of Tibetan Classics, Wisdom Publications, United States, 234.
[1064] J. Westerhoff, *The Golden Age of Indian Buddhist Philosophy*, 72.
[1065] What follows is reflected in T. Jinpa*, Self, Reality and Reason in Tibetan Philosophy: Tsongkhapa's Quest for the Middle Way* (RoutledgeCurzon, United Kingdom, 2002).

The consequence is explained by Tsongkhapa, again by reference to Candrakīrti: "thus, conventional truths are posited through the force of the afflictive ignorance which is included within the factors of cyclic existence."[1066] It follows that liberation from *saṃsāra* requires the cultivation of a wisdom-consciousness that displaces afflictive ignorance and concealer truths thus overcoming the view of self and phenomena as inherently existent. It is this falsely imputed "self" that is the "object of negation."

Tsongkhapa states[1067]: "an ultimate truth is posited where, in addition to the stilling of all elaborations of essential existence, there is also a sheer stoppage of all elaborations of mistaken appearances, appearances of intrinsic existence where there is none." How does direct perception of an ultimate truth operate to assist liberation from *saṃsāra*? Tsongkhapa quotes Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*:[1068]

> Through extinguishing karma and afflictions, there is liberation.Karma and afflictions arise from misconceptions. These misconceptions arise from elaborations. These elaborations are stopped by emptiness. Because of the pacification of the self and that which the self owns, the conception "I" and the conception "mine" will be gone. When thoughts of the self and that which belongs to the self are extinguished in regard to internal and external things, grasping will stop. Through its extinction, birth will be extinguished.

[1066] LRCM 3: 208.
[1067] LRCM 3: 200.
[1068] LRCM 3: 321.

Accordingly, "the inquiry into whether or not self exists is both an ontological and epistemological one – that is – how can we know the way persons actually exist"[1069] or, as he expressed it in the *Lamrim Chenmo*; "overcoming the reifying view of the perishing aggregates depends upon developing the wisdom that knows that the self, as thus conceived, does not exist."[1070] Such a wisdom-consciousness that "overcomes the reifying view of the perishing aggregates" is one that is free from superimposing an essence (*svabhāva*) or self (*ātman*) onto phenomena and persons under the influence of ignorance. In this context then, what is most important is to *accurately identify* the reifying view of the perishing aggregates as the relevant "object of negation" and to *understand why* and *how* that object of negation must be "negated by reason."[1071]

The Two Truths & Accurately Identifying the Object of Negation

Noted above, ordinary unenlightened beings perceive other beings and phenomena as somehow existing inherently, possessing their own unique defining characteristics, as being self-sufficient, substantially existent "things". When this conception is applied to self and others, Tsongkhapa notes that it manifests as the "reifying view of the perishing aggregates." This reifying view is an ignorant and deceptive consciousness because it *conceals* the ultimate nature of a person – as merely arising in dependence upon various causes, constituent elements and, ultimately, upon linguistic and cultural conventions – as being "empty". This false, deceptive and cognitively imputed conception of persons and phenomena as existing inherently *is* the object of negation.

[1069] T. Jinpa, *Self, Reality and Reason in Tibetan Philosophy: Tsongkhapa's Quest for the Middle Way*, 71.
[1070] LRCM 3:120.
[1071] LRCM 3:125 ff.

What is to be negated through the cultivation of wisdom is the imputed false, inherently existent "self" that never existed in the first place. Tsongkhapa quotes Śāntideva; "without contacting the entity that is imputed, you will not apprehend the absence of that entity."[1072] Crosby and Skilton's translation of this quote from the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*: "when there is no perception of something falsely projected as existent, there is no understanding of the non-existence of that entity"[1073] brings into clear focus an apparent contradiction. How can an "object of negation" that never existed in the first place ever be an object of knowledge? If "these things cannot withstand rational analysis, then how is it possible for something to exist when reason has refuted it."[1074] And if reason *has* refuted it, surely such a non-existent object cannot be an object of knowledge. And if that is correct then why is such importance placed on accurately identifying this non-existent object of negation?

Tsongkhapa responds to these questions, dismissing them as "reckless chatter" originating from faulty reasoning: "you are mistakenly conflating the inability to withstand rational analysis with invalidation by reason….. This is reckless chatter, so we do not agree."[1075] In other words, Tsongkhapa emphasises the necessity to carefully demarcate the use of conventional analysis to demonstrate that persons and phenomena do exist and function *conventionally*, while using rational analysis to simultaneously demonstrate that those same persons and phenomena do not exist *inherently*. In other words, while rational analysis establishes the absence of an inherently existent object, such analysis does *not* then entail the *non-existence* of the conventionally existent object itself.

[1072] LRCM 3:126, quoting Śāntideva: *The Bodhicaryāvatāra v 139a-b*, Kate Crosby and Andrew Skilton (trans) (2008) at 129.
[1073] LRCM 3:126, quoting Śāntideva: *The Bodhicaryāvatāra v 139a-b*, Kate Crosby and Andrew Skilton (trans) (2008) at 129.
[1074] LRCM 3:156.
[1075] LRCM 3:156.

"Soteriological" & "Epistemological" Object of Negation"

Tsongkhapa affirms:[1076]"… the fact that this line of reasoning does not find them does not entail that it refutes them. Rather, reason refutes something that - if it did exist - would have to be established by reason, but which reason does not establish." Put another way, in cultivating supramundane insight that undermines the object of negation (an inherently existent person or phenomena), a practitioner from the *Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka* perspective does not start from the proposition that such a person or phenomena *does* actually exist before then deciding to apply various logical reasonings to deconstruct that prior existent object. Rather, they ask the question: "if it were true that the 'self' existed inherently, then what *consequences* (*prasaṅga)* would that inherent existence necessarily entail?"[1077]

When explored, this question reveals certain absurd consequences would necessarily follow, indicating that the object of negation, the inherently existent entity cannot be established by reason, while preserving the conventionally existent, dependently arisen, entity. In this context, Garfield and Thakchoe draw a helpful distinction between the "soteriological object of negation" and the "epistemological object of negation".[1078] The epistemological object of negation refers to faulty, deceptive conceptions of conventional persons and phenomena as inherently existent while the soteriological object of negation refers to the ultimate nature of persons and phenomena as being empty of inherent existence.

[1076] LRCM 3:156.

[1077] In LRCM Volume 3, Chapter 24, Tsongkhapa demonstrates these consequences in terms of refutation of production.

[1078] J. Garfield and S. Thakchoe, 'Identifying the Object of Negation and the Status of Conventional Truth: Why the dGag Bya Matters So Much to Tibetan Mādhyamikas', in The Cowherds (eds), *Moonshadows: Conventional Truth in Buddhist Philosophy* (Oxford University Press, United States, 2011), 76-77.

The epistemological object of negation (the faulty, deceptive conception of an inherently existent object) is challenged through correct reasoning leading to the realisation of the emptiness of that object which, in turn, exerts a soteriological function in undermining the ignorance that traps sentient beings within cyclic existence.

It follows that if the object of negation, if the reifying view of the perishing aggregates is *misidentified*, *under identified* or *over identified*, the correct view will not have been reached and liberation will not be possible[1079]. Therefore, in progressing along the supramundane path, a practitioner must necessarily cultivate reliable, analytical methods that will enable her to initially identify the object of negation – the false sense of self constituting the reifying view of the perishing aggregates and then to apply rational analysis[1080] demonstrating that such a false sense of self cannot and never did exist.

The Two Truths, Epistemology & Logic

Like Evagrius in his system, Tsongkhapa acknowledges the existence of an explicit cause-effect relationship between the way in which a practitioner receives, interprets, analyses and then understands the vast quantity of external sense-data constantly presented to her consciousness via her six sense faculties on the one hand and her ability to cultivate supramundane insight into the two truths on the other.

[1079] Tsongkhapa discusses the importance of correctly identifying the object of negation in three chapters in Volume 3 of his *Lamrim Chenmo;* Chapter 10 *Misidentifying the Object of Negation*; Chapter 16 *Not Negating Enough* and Chapter 17 *The Actual Object to be Negated.*

[1080] In Volume 3, Chapter 12, Tsongkhapa explains why "rational analysis", the logical mechanism demonstrating the lack of inherent existence of persons and phenomena nevertheless preserves the conventional existence of those same persons and phenomena.

Unlike Evagrius however, Buddhist practitioners do not cultivate insight in order to reveal and understand God's spiritual principles, dynamics or *logoi* within creation. For Tsongkhapa, insight into the two truths is cultivated to *deconstruct* any sense of persons or phenomena being characterised by inherently existent constituents. However, for *both* Evagrius and Tsongkhapa, the *logoi* of material and immaterial creation and the two truths respectively are things that can be known – they are "objects of knowledge."

Two Truths as Objects of Knowledge

In his text *Illuminating the Intent* Tsongkhapa states: "there seem to be a variety of views when it comes to the basis for differentiating the two truths. Here however, we take as that basis the object of knowledge."[1081] This phrase "object of knowledge" (*shes bya*) is used by Tsongkhapa throughout his *Lamrim Chenmo* to describe the two truths as objects of knowledge, of *reason* and not solely as ontological or existential dimensions of persons or phenomena.[1082] This is significant because in the Madhyamaka system as, the two truths are objects of knowledge and they can be realized both at the level of intellectual conception and non-conceptual insight.

Therefore, like Evagrius, Tsongkhapa draws distinctions between the lesser epistemic authority of everyday, conceptual but deceptive cognition of conventional phenomena on the one hand (conventional truth), and the greater direct, non-conceptual realisation of the ultimate truth of phenomena on the other.

[1081] Tsongkhapa *Illuminating the Intent: An Exposition of Candrakīrti's Entering the Middle Way* in T. Jinpa (ed) (2021) at 225.
[1082] LRCM 3:265.

This is possible since, as Napper observes, because emptiness is an object of knowledge there is a separation between emptiness as an object and the subject mind that realizes emptiness as an ultimate truth: [1083] "emptiness, although a negative phenomenon; a non-affirming negation (*med dag*) that is, the mere absence of the object of realization – ie – inherent existence (*svabhāva*) (*rag bzhin*) does exist and does exist as an object of knowledge (*shes bya*) and as such, can be realized." This is broadly similar to the Evagrian scheme where external objects comprising material creation exist as objects of knowledge of the *logoi*; "objects are outside the intellect and the contemplation concerning them is constituted within it."[1084]

Influence of Diṅnāga & Dharmakīrti

Tsongkhapa's presentation of epistemology and logic has its origins in the works of Indian Buddhist logicians Diṅnāga (also referred to as Dignāga) (c 480 – 540 CE) and Dharmakīrti (c 600 – 660 CE) and[1085] Jinpa notes that by the time Tsongkhapa was pursuing his studies, "Dharmakīrti's *Pramāṇavārtikka* was the standard text on logic and epistemology."[1086]

[1083] E. Napper, *Dependent-Arising and Emptiness: A Tibetan Buddhist Interpretation of Madhyamika Philosophy* (Wisdom Publications, United States, 1989), 132-133.
[1084] KG [4.77].
[1085] A very thorough presentation of Diṅnāga and Dharmakīrti's antecedents, principal works and influence on the Buddhist philosophical tradition is provided by Jan Westerhoff (2018) at 217 ff.
[1086] T. Jinpa, Tsongkhapa: *A Buddha in the Land of Snows*, 375.

There is a very significant body of literature[1087] devoted to Buddhist epistemology and logic generally and Tsongkhapa's "marriage of Dharmakīrti's epistemology to Nāgārjuna's philosophy of emptiness as read through Candrakīrti"[1088] specifically.

Tsongkhapa's use of the "foundationalist epistemological tradition of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti"[1089] in support of his *anti*-foundationalist *Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka* perspective on emptiness was controversial even during his time and remains a contested issue to this day.[1090] Because this chapter is focussing on the methodology for cultivating supramundane insight explained by Tsongkhapa in his *Lamrim Chenmo* it is beyond the scope of this chapter to (re)visit these wider historical and contemporary debates questioning Tsongkhapa's underlying epistemological and logical orthodoxy and interested readers are referred to a recent book-length analysis of these debates published by "*The Yakherds*".[1091]

[1087] Representative literature includes: G. Dreyfus, *Recognizing Reality: Dharmakīrti's Philosophy and Its Tibetan Interpretations* (State University of New York Press, United States, 1997); J. Dunne, *Foundations of Dharmakīrti's Philosophy* (Studies in Indian and Tibetan Buddhism, Wisdom Publications, United States, 2004).; T. Namdak and T. Legtsok, *Freedom Through Correct Knowing: Khedrup Je's Interpretation of Dharmakīrti's Seven Treatises on Valid Cognition* (Wisdom Publications, United States, 2022). J. Stoltz, *Illuminating the Mind: An Introduction to Buddhist Epistemology* (Oxford University Press, United States, 2021); R. Jackson, *Is Enlightenment Possible? Dharmakīrti and rGyal tshab rje on Knowledge, Rebirth, No-Self and Liberation* (Snow Lion Publications, United States, 1993).); D. Duckworth, *Tibetan Buddhist Philosophy of Mind and Nature* (Oxford University Press, United States, 2019).); M. Chattopadhyay, *Walking Along the Paths of Buddhist Epistemology* (DK Printworld Ltd, Jadavpur University, India, 2007).); K. Rogers, *Tibetan Logic* (Snow Lion Publications, United States, 2009).

[1088] T. Jinpa, *Self, Reality and Reason in Tibetan Philosophy*, 12.

[1089] See the discussion in S. Thakchoe, 'Prāsaṅgika Epistemology: A Reply to Stag tsang's Charge Against Tsongkhapa's Use of Pramāṇa in Candrakīrti's Philosophy' (2013) 41 *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 535.

[1090] See the discussion in J. Forman, 'Polemical Paths: Tsongkhapa and Takstang on Yogic Perception' (2023) 103(1) *The Journal of Religion* 5.

[1091] The Yakherds, *Knowing Illusion: Bringing a Tibetan Debate into Contemporary Discourse*: *A Philosophical History of the Debate*, Vol 1, 2021, Oxford University Press, United States.

Brief Summary for Context

Placing the foregoing discussion within the wider context of this chapter, it was noted that path consciousnesses cultivated by non-Buddhist practitioners (such as Evagrius) are considered "mundane", principally because they do not cultivate either "mundane insight"[1092] as certain Buddhist practitioners might as they progress along the mundane path or "supramundane insight" into selflessness which is feature of the supramundane path. However, for Tsongkhapa, it is the cultivation of supramundane insight in the sense of *vipaśyāna* which enables the complete elimination (not mere suppression) of afflictions and their seeds; "when a mental state such as wisdom *undermines* an affliction such as craving, it has eliminated the cognitive mechanisms that are required for craving to arise…when a mental state is *undermined*, the very conditions for its occurrence have been eliminated."[1093]

The discussion in this chapter seven is therefore analysing Tsongkhapa's methodology for developing supramundane insight as antidote to the ignorance that grasps at an inherently existent self of persons or phenomena, manifesting as the reifying view of the perishing aggregates.[1094] This chapter now turns to Tsongkhapa's selected use of logical arguments known generally as the *Five Great Arguments of the Middle Way* and his particular his reliance upon "the King of Reasoning" – an argument based upon dependent origination

[1092] Following Asaṅga's *Śrāvakabhūmi* Tsongkhapa defines "mundane insight" as consisting of "meditation bearing the aspects of calmness and coarseness, in which you observe the coarseness of the lower levels and the calmness of the higher levels." LRCM 3:92.
[1093] Dalai Lama, *Science and Philosophy in the Indian Buddhist Classics, Volume 2: The Mind*, T. Jinpa (ed.) (Wisdom Publications, United States, 2020), 354.
[1094] Recalling that "mundane insight" cultivated by a Buddhist practitioner on the mundane path compares the relative coarseness and refinement of the lower and higher levels within the realms of cyclic existence, whereas "supramundane insight" focuses on knowing the *Four Noble Truths* "as they are in reality" and cultivating insight into emptiness.

based on a passage from Candrakīrti's *Madhyamakāvatāra* – as his preferred method for eliminating the reifying view of the perishing aggregates.[1095]

Tsongkhapa's Selected Use of the "Five Great Arguments of the Middle Way"

Tsongkhapa devotes three chapters in Volume Three of the English translation of the *Lamrim Chenmo* to using logical techniques as the means to "develop the right philosophical view in your mind-stream using a *Prāsaṅgika* procedure."[1096] By this, Tsongkhapa means using certain logical reasoning techniques preferred by the *Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka* school directed toward eliminating the ignorant, reifying view of the perishing aggregates; the sense of an inherently existent self.[1097]

Drawing from the Classical "Indian sūtra and sāstra literature as well as commentarial literature"[1098] all four Tibetan Buddhist schools employ five principal arguments to negate the possibility that persons and phenomena can exist inherently by way of their own defining characteristics.

[1095] LRCM Volume 3, Chapter 23.
[1096] LRCM 3:277. These three chapters include Chapter 22 *Analysing a Chariot*; Chapter 23 *The Person Lacks Intrinsic Nature* and Chapter 24 *Objects Lack Intrinsic Nature*.
[1097] Noted above, the *Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka* system criticises the *Svātantrika-Madhyamaka* system for the latter's use of "autonomous syllogisms" in debate. There is a significant body of literature devoted to this disagreement – see for example: G. Dreyfus and S. McClintock, *The Svātantrika-Prāsaṅgika Distinction* (Studies in Indian and Tibetan Buddhism, Wisdom Publications, United States, 2014); D. Lopez, *A Study of Svātantrika* (Snow Lion Publications, United States, 2016); Dalai Lama and T. Chodron, *Searching for the Self, Volume 7 of The Library of Wisdom and Compassion* (Wisdom Publications, United States, 2022); J. I. Cabezon, 'The Prāsaṅgika's View on Logic: Tibetan dGe lugs pa Exegesis on the Question of Svatantras' (1988) 16(3*) Journal of Indian Philosophy* 217.and 11 and K. Vose, 'When Did Svatantra Inference Gain its Autonomy? Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla as Sources for a Tibetan Distinction' (2020) 48 *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 703.
[1098] J. Blumenthal, *The Ornament of the Middle Way: A Study of the Madhyamaka Thought of Śāntarakṣita* (Snow Lion Publications, United States, 2013), 350.

These five great arguments of the Middle Way are collectively referred to by different names and use different logical processes and structures to demonstrate the absence of inherent existence.[1099] For reference, these five great arguments and their essential components are set out in Chart 8 on the following two pages.

[1099] Dalai Lama and T. Chodron, *Searching for the Self, Volume 7,* 12ff.

Chart 8

The Five Great Logical Arguments of the Middle Way

1. Investigation of the cause / production: the "Diamond Slivers"

This mode of reasoning refutes the idea that an inherently existent person or object can arise (a) from itself, (b) from another inherently existent person or object, (c) from both itself, and an inherently existent other or (d) from neither (that is, arise from no cause).

2. Investigation of the result: refuting existent or non-existent effects

This mode of reasoning refutes the idea that a cause can produce an effect which is (a) existent, (b) non-existent, (c) both existent and non-existent (d) neither existent nor non-existent.

3. Investigation of both: refuting the four possibilities of arising.

This mode of reasoning demonstrates that an effect (result) (a) was not present at the time of its own cause, (b) was not absent at the time of its own cause, (c) was both present and absent, (d) was neither present nor absent.

4. Investigation of essential identity: 'neither one nor many'

This mode of reasoning demonstrates that the inherently existent self (a) is not inherently one with the aggregates and is (b) not inherently different / separate from the aggregates. It involves a process of reasoning moving through four steps:

(a) Ascertaining the object of negation (the mode of appearance of the self)
(b) Ascertaining the pervasion (if it exists, the self must be either one or many)
(c) The self is not inherently identical to or one with the aggregates.
(d) The self is not inherently separate from the aggregates.

5. The "King of Reasoning" – Dependent Origination.

This mode of reasoning refutes the idea that persons or objects inherently exist apart from their composite aggregates but arise in dependence upon (a) causes and conditions, (b) parts and components, and (c) being 'merely labelled' on the basis of designation.

In his *Lamrim Chenmo*, Tsongkhapa employs several of these logical arguments, selectively directed toward refuting what he considers to be misinterpretations or outright misrepresentations by others of the methodology employed by the *Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka* school in correctly identifying the object of negation, to correct misunderstandings of how *Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka* distinguishes itself from *Svātantrika-Madhyamaka* and to explain "our interpretation" (*Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka*) of the *Svātantrika* / *Prāsaṅgika* distinction.[1100]

After he has addressed these concerns, Tsongkhapa then develops *one* of these five great arguments in asserting the coherency of the "distinguishing feature of the Madhyamaka"; that is, the coherency of a view simultaneously accepting the "admissibility of all the teachings about cyclic existence and nirvāṇa -the agents and objects of production, refutation, proof, and so forth – in the absence of even a particle of essential or intrinsic nature."[1101]

Tsongkhapa's use of "the King of Reasoning" – Analysing a Chariot

Over three chapters[1102], Tsongkhapa relies on "the King of Reasoning" (argument from dependent origination) by developing the following passage from Candrakīrti's *Madhyamakāvatāra*:[1103]

[1100] See especially LRCM 3, Chapters 18 – 21.
[1101] LRCM 3:131.
[1102] LRCM 3, Chapters 22-24.
[1103] The quote originates from Ch 6 v.151 of Candrakīrti's text, the translation of which I have taken from T. Jinpa, *Illuminating the Intent: An Exposition of Candrakirti's "Entering the Middle Way"* (Library of Tibetan Classics 19, Wisdom Publications, United States, 2021), 457.

> "A chariot is neither asserted to be [1]other than its parts, [2]nor to be non-other. It [3]does not possess them. It [4]does not depend on the parts and [5]the parts do not depend on it. It is [6]neither the mere collection of the parts, [7]nor is it their shape. It is like this." (superscript numbers added).

It is important to understand that Tsongkhapa is going to use this "seven-fold logical reasoning" to demonstrate why a chariot cannot be said to exist inherently; why there is no intrinsic, findable "chariot" other than an object composed of parts, assembled in a certain shape, used to perform certain functions and, ultimately merely labelled "chariot" as opposed to "elephant". Tsongkhapa's starting point is the idea that "if the chariot had an essential or intrinsic nature, it undoubtedly would be established by reasoned knowledge that analyses whether it exists intrinsically in any of the seven ways."[1104] Note that from the *Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka* perspective, Tsongkhapa is *not* starting from the proposition that there *is* an inherently existent chariot which must then be deconstructed.

Instead, he is using *consequentialist* reasoning – if it were true that the chariot existed inherently, then it follows that logical reasoning must demonstrate that it exists in one of the above seven ways.[1105] Tsongkhapa demonstrates that "since it is not established by such knowledge in any of the seven ways, it does not intrinsically exist."[1106]

[1104] LRCM 3:279.
[1105] LRCM 3:279 – 282.
[1106] LRCM 3:279.

The formulation from Ch 6 v 151 of Candrakīrti's *Madhyamakāvatāra* and quoted by Tsongkhapa therefore aims to demonstrate; (1) there is no chariot which is different from its parts, (2) there is no chariot which is the same as its parts, (3) there is no chariot which inherently possesses its parts, (4) there is no chariot which inherently depends on its parts, (5) there is no chariot upon which its parts are inherently dependent, (6) there is no chariot which is the mere collection of its parts, (7) there is no chariot which is the shape of its parts. Tsongkhapa is then going to utilise the first two of Candrakīrti's seven factors in demonstrating how sentient beings, persons lack intrinsic nature.[1107]

Tsongkhapa's presentation of this the sevenfold reasoning[1108] unfolds in a slightly different order to the above. Initially, the constituent parts of a chariot (it's aggregates) are identified as the axle, the wheels, the nails and yoke. Then, analysis is used to demonstrate that (2) the chariot is not intrinsically one with those parts, (1) nor is a chariot intrinsically separate from its parts, (4) a chariot is not the basis for its parts, like a bowl holding yogurt, (5) a chariot (does not) rest in its parts, (3) the possibility of possession is also impossible since it is also unreasonable that a chariot should possess its parts, (6) nor is it tenable for the chariot to be the mere collection of its parts and finally (7) the "distinctive shape" of the parts is also not the chariot. Tsongkhapa explains the reasoning process in a few terse and cryptic sentences:[1109]

> "After you have developed certainty that the pervaded – intrinsic existence - does not extend beyond the pervader - the seven ways, such as one and different - you then show that each of those seven is contradicted. When you determine that every one of those seven is contradicted, this negates the pervader, whereby the pervaded is also

[1107] LRCM 3, Chapter 23.
[1108] At LRCM 3:279 – 280, Tsongkhapa applies Candrakīrti's reasoning in a slightly different order.
[1109] LRCM 3:286.

negated. After you have done this once, you then repeatedly develop decisive certainty that there is no intrinsic existence."

"Decoding" this explanation reveals two analytical aspects to Tsongkhapa's reasoning; first, establishing that "the pervaded does not extend beyond the pervader," and second, by negating the pervader, "the pervaded is necessarily negated." What Tsongkhapa means by these two phrases is discussed below under the heading "The Pervaded", "The Pervading", Syllogisms & Consequences".

The *consequence* or result of this reasoning is crucial: "after you have done this once, you then repeatedly develop decisive certainty that there is no intrinsic existence and (will) see that you cannot repudiate the convention of the chariot even though there is no intrinsic existence."[1110] In other words, this analytical process demonstrates the coherency of the "distinguishing feature of the Madhyamaka" by which Tsongkhapa, and the *Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka* system can admit the conventional existence of everyday functioning persons and phenomena while simultaneously asserting the complete *absence* of intrinsic existence of those same persons and phenomena.[1111]

Once a practitioner understands the implications of this reasoning, Tsongkhapa anticipates astonishment:[1112] "when you do see that you cannot repudiate a conventionally existent chariot, you think: 'Oh, it is amazing how the magicians of karma and the afflictions conjure up these illusions, such as chariots!'"

[1110] LRCM 3:286.
[1111] LRCM 3:131.
[1112] LRCM 3:286.

What Tsongkhapa means is that although persons and phenomena *appear* to our sense consciousnesses to inherently exist, in fact, these appearances are illusion-like because having undertaken searching, logical analysis, it becomes clear that those persons and phenomena *do not* inherently exist. However, this reasoning does not then repudiate the *conventional existence* of people or phenomena. And since there is nothing inherently existent, it is "the magicians" of karma and afflictions that are responsible for the appearances of those illusions of inherent existence. Noted in chapter six, these *appearances* of inherent existence are cognitive obscurations, defined by Tsongkhapa as[1113]:

> "Certain latent propensities are firmly set in the mind-stream (that) give rise to errors of dualistic appearance, so that things appear to be intrinsically existent when they are not. These errors are cognitive obscurations."

"The Pervaded", "The Pervading", Syllogisms & Consequences

To understand Tsongkhapa's logic, it is necessary to understand what he means by the phrases: "*the pervaded does not extend beyond the pervader*" and "*the pervaded is necessarily negated*." In this context "the pervaded" is an inherently existent chariot, while "the pervaded" is any of the seven possible ways identified by Candrakīrti of how a such chariot *could* logically exist inherently. When Tsongkhapa claims that "the pervaded does not extend beyond the pervader", he is asserting that "the chariot does not exist inherently because it is not pervaded (established) by any one of those seven ways of potential existence."

[1113] LRCM 3:323.

When he then claims that "the pervaded is necessarily negated," he is asserting that when you establish that none of these seven ways supports the existence of an inherently existent chariot, it logically follows that such an inherently existent chariot simply cannot exist. Note however that neither Tsongkhapa nor Candrakīrti conclude that a dependently arisen chariot does not exist!

How Tsongkhapa reaches such conclusions requires an understanding of syllogisms,[1114] consequences and how *Prāsaṅgika-Mādhyamikas* utilise both techniques in formulating arguments.[1115] For the sake of economy these will be explained by reference to the sixth aspect of Candrakīrti's seven-fold reasoning; a chariot "is not the mere collection of its parts." The context involves an ordinary, unenlightened consciousness apprehending a chariot which appears to inherently exist "out there" *as* a chariot because of its collective parts. An inherently existent chariot appears to exist as a collective object. An opponent then advances a syllogism in support:

> "The subject, a chariot, inherently exists (the predicate), because it is the collection of its parts (the reason / sign)."

The structure and logical conditions that *Prāsaṅgika-Mādhyamikas* accept as forming a valid syllogism and for consequences expressed as syllogisms are explained in Charts 9 and 10 over the following two pages and will be of assistance in following this analysis.

[1114] For the purposes of this explanation, the debate between the *Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka* system and the *Svātantrika-Madhyamaka* system concerning the admissibility of "autonomous syllogisms" is not relevant.
[1115] The mechanics of Tibetan Buddhist debate is a highly technical discipline and remains a living tradition. Different "schools" rely upon specific Debate Manuals and Texts (*yig cha*) as part of this process. See generally, D. Perdue, *Debate in Tibetan Buddhism* (Snow Lion Publications, United States, 1992) and D. Perdue, *Debate in Tibetan Buddhism* (Snow Lion Publications, United States, 1992).

Prāsaṅgikas initially respond by pointing out the unwanted or unacceptable consequences or internal contradictions that flow from the opponent's syllogism. They do this by demonstrating how the opponent must *necessarily* confront unacceptable or unwanted consequences flowing from her assumptions. Having exposed these inconsistencies and unwanted or unacceptable consequences, *Prāsaṅgikas* then reformulate these consequentialist implications into a formal syllogistic statement. Tsongkhapa therefore initially responds by suggesting:

> "It is not tenable for the chariot to be the mere collection of its parts…It is contrary to reason. A chariot would exist even in a complete collection of separated parts - wheels and such, lying in pieces - since the mere collection of parts is a chariot."[1116]

[1116] LRCM 3:280.

Chart 9 – Logical Structure of Syllogisms & Consequences

Logical Structure of Syllogisms

Syllogisms – Are composed of a subject, a predicate (what is sought to be proven) and a reason or sign that stands as support for that predicate. The subject and predicate are also collectively known as [the thesis].

Example: "The subject, a pot, does not inherently exist because it is a dependent arising."

"A Pot" = the subject of the debate (does a pot inherently exist or not?)
"Does not inherently exist" = the predicate (what is sought to be proven)
"Because it is a dependent arising" = the reason ("the sign")

Syllogisms Expressed as a Consequentialist Argument

Example "*It follows that* the subject, a pot, does not inherently exist because it is a dependent arising".

"A Pot" = the subject of the debate (does a pot inherently exist or not?)
"Does not inherently exist" = the predicate (what is to be proven by the reason)
"Dependent arising" = the reason.

This is called a "consequentialist argument" because the predicate: "does not inherently exist" *is a consequence* of the reason (that the subject pot is a "dependent arising").

Chart 10 – Logical Conditions of a Valid Syllogism

The "Three Modes"

A valid syllogism is one that enables the practitioner to develop valid cognition into a given subject. However, such cognitive certainty is only possible where the syllogism satisfies the "three modes" which concern the way that the subject, the predicate and the sign / reason relate to each other:

Mode 1: The reason applies to the subject – ie – that the reason is a property of the subject.

Mode 2: The forward pervasion – ie – the relationship between the reason and the predicate. If something is the reason, it is necessarily the predicate.

Mode 3: The counterpervasion – ie – the relationship between the opposite of the predicate and the opposite of the reason. If something it not the predicate, it is necessarily not the reason.

Example: "The subject, a pot, does not inherently exist because it is a dependent arising" (this is a valid syllogism for the reasons below).

Mode 1 = The relationship between the sign / reason and the subject. The subject must be pervaded by the sign / reason – ie – the reason must apply to the subject. So, is the pot a dependent arising? Yes!

Mode 2 = Forward pervasion. The relationship between the sign / reason and the predicate. The sign/reason must be pervaded by the predicate. Is it the case that whatever is a dependent arising does not inherently exist? Yes!

Mode 3 = Counter pervasion– The non-predicate must be pervaded by the non-reason. Is it the case that whatever is inherently existent is necessarily not dependently arisen? Yes!

Closer analysis of Tsongkhapa's statement enables the formulation of three formal syllogisms:

> (1) "it follows that the subject, a chariot must exist even when the collection of its parts are unassembled";
>
> (2) "it follows that if the collection of parts (the single assembled chariot) were the same as those parts, then just as there are many parts, there would be many collections (many assembled chariots)" and
>
> (3) "it follows that if there is only one collection of parts (the single assembled chariot) and that collection were the same as its parts, then there would only be one part!"

These three syllogisms attempt to demonstrate the unwanted consequences of the opponent's reasoning as embodied in the syllogism. The first demonstrates that if a chariot inherently existed because of being the collection of its parts, then a recognizable "chariot" would exist whatever the configuration of those parts (whether jumbled up or separated out). This forces the opponent to accept the unwanted consequence of a fundamental conflict in (i) there being an identifiable, inherently existent chariot, which can nevertheless (ii) remain identifiable as a chariot even when its parts are all jumbled up in a heap, or separately laid out.

The second demonstrates that if the collection of parts constituting a *single* chariot were the same as those parts, then since there are many parts, there would also be many collections of those parts (many chariots) while the third demonstrates that if there is only one collection of parts (the single assembled chariot) and that collection were the same as its parts, then there would only be one part constituting the entire assembled chariot. These second and third syllogisms force the opponent to accept the unwanted consequence of a fundamental conflict in: (i) there being a single collection of parts that is the chariot, and (ii) the chariot being composed of many parts; and/or (iii) the chariot being composed of one collection of parts, and (iv) there being many parts to the chariot but not many collections of chariots.

Reformulating these consequentialist statements as a syllogism, *Prāsaṅgikas* assert:

> "The subject, a chariot, does not inherently exist as the collection of its parts, because it is merely imputed in dependence upon the collection of its parts."

Prāsaṅgikas defend the validity of this syllogism asserting that it satisfies the "three modes" outlined in Chart Ten in the following manner.

Mode one concerns the relationship between the sign / reason and the subject such that the subject must be *pervaded* by the reason. It asks whether the subject, the chariot is pervaded by the reason; that is, whether the chariot is merely imputed in dependence upon the collection of its parts. Based on the consequences identified above, the answer is "yes" and mode one is satisfied. Mode two, the "forward pervasion" requires the reason to be pervaded by the predicate. It asks: "is it the case that whatever is merely imputed in dependence upon a collection of its parts does not inherently exist?"

Again, based upon the consequences identified above, the answer is "yes" and mode two is satisfied. Mode three, the "counter pervasion" requires the non-predicate to be pervaded by the non-reason. It asks: "is it the case that whatever does not – not inherently exist (ie – whatever exists inherently) is necessarily *not merely imputed* in dependence upon the collection of its parts?" Again, the answer is "yes" and mode three is satisfied.

In this manner, Tsongkhapa is able to formally demonstrate that chariots do not inherently exist as the collection of their parts, but that "chariots" are merely imputed *in dependence* upon the collection of their parts. When this formal reasoning is applied to the remaining five of Candrakīrti's seven-fold reasoning concerning chariots, Tsongkhapa is able to comprehensively demonstrate that *inherently existent* chariots cannot and never did exist and that when this reasoning is also applied to sentient beings, Tsongkhapa is also able to demonstrate that "the person lacks intrinsic nature."[1117] Through analytical meditation, a practitioner is able to identify their tendency to "reify the perishing aggregates" and apply various modes of logical reasoning to demonstrate how the "reified" self does not and has never existed. Utilising supramundane insight - the "emptiness" of the self and phenomena enables the practitioner to advance along the supramundane path, destroy afflictions at their root and attain liberation - *nirvāṇa.*

[1117] LRCM Volume 3, Chapter 23.

Conclusions

This chapter seven set itself the task of comparatively analysing whether and to what extent the epistemic content and phenomenological processes of *Second Natural Contemplation,* then *First Natural Contemplations* and *Theologiké* as presented by Evagrius approximated the nature, content and function of the insight / wisdom necessary for liberation from *saṃsāra* as presented from Tsongkhapa's *Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka* perspective. And, from Evagrius' perspective, chapter seven also intended to explore whether and to what extent serenity and insight as developed by Tsongkhapa in his *Lamrim Chenmo* might approximate the nature, content and function of *Second* then *First Natural Contemplations* and eventually *Theologiké.*

Chapter seven achieved this by analysing the *supramundane path* and insight cultivated on the supramundane path. For Tsongkhapa, "insight" cultivated along the supramundane path was identified with *vipaśyāna*, insight into the "emptiness" of persons and phenomena. Unlike mundane insight cultivated on the mundane path, supramundane insight is of sufficient strength and acuity to completely eliminate and not merely suppress afflictions and their seeds. For Evagrius, the "insight" cultivated *after* a practitioner has attained *apatheia* was identified as the cultivation of *Second* and then *First Natural Contemplation* leading to the discovery and insight into the *logoi* of material and immaterial creation and finally, *Theologiké*. The emphasis in chapter seven therefore focussed on wisdom / *gnosis* cultivated on the supramundane path and functioning as causes for liberation from *saṃsāra* and enlightenment (Tsongkhapa) and the *Natural Contemplations* and *Theologiké* (Evagrius).

Chapter seven demonstrated that *both* Evagrius and Tsongkhapa, drew distinctions between the epistemic authority of ordinary, conventional sense perception of everyday objects and persons on the one hand and forms of non-conventional, superior perception / insight that "sees" beyond such conventional sense perception to the *ultimate mode* of existence of those same objects and persons on the other.

For Evagrius, while God's *Second Creation* is mediated to practitioners through their "corruptible sense perception", having developed *apatheia*, practitioners are able to cultivate and progress through the *Natural Contemplations* which reveal the *logoi* of visible and invisible creation God's spiritual principles pervading material and immaterial creation. This is possible because of the way Evagrius characterises all of visible and invisible creation as a "letter", or "Book" from God to His creatures and which contains the spiritual principles and reasons for God's providence in *Second Creation*.

Through cultivating the *Natural Contemplations,* "reading creation" (as God's letter or book) in the sense of discovering and understanding the *logoi* within visible and invisible creation becomes the framework and means by which the fallen *nous* begins its cognitive re-ascent to God, resulting in the eschatological state of *Theologiké.*

However, chapter seven demonstrated that for Tsongkhapa, "creation" is not the providential expression of God's love for sentient beings characterised as a letter or book containing inherently existing *logoi* of material and immaterial creation. For Tsongkhapa, creation-as-*saṃsāra* is characterised by sentient beings helplessly cycling through the *desire realm, form realm* and *formless realm* manifesting as the ripening of sentient beings' karma and afflictions.

Therefore, while disciples of Evagrius seek to refine their minds to perceive the *logoi* of creation; the "real" underlying substance and constitutive principles of creation, disciples of Tsongkhapa undertake deep analysis to purify their minds from any perception of persons or phenomena as inherently existent or "real".

Chapter seven also demonstrated significant differences in the cognitive and epistemological processes associated with cultivating the *nature* of the "insight" characterising the *Natural Contemplations* (Evagrius) and insight into the emptiness of persons and phenomena (Tsongkhapa). It demonstrated that while Evagrius rarely attempts to identify or define the actual *substance* of the *logoi* of material and immaterial creation, there are tantalising hints concerning the use of "proofs" or "logical demonstrations" (*apodeixeis* - ἀποδειζεις) to do so. This chapter explained and demonstrated how Tsongkhapa relies upon "logical demonstrations" taking the form of both consequentialist and syllogistic reasoning accepted by his *Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka* school of tenets and drawn from Chapter 6 of Candrakīrti's *Madhyamakāvatāra* as means to developing supramundane insight. This chapter also identified the use of "logical demonstrations" as a potential area for future comparative scholarship.

Nevertheless, while Evagrius may have pedagogical reasons for not answering the question directly, this chapter suggested a more revealing question asks: "how does the nature of a practitioner's identity change as she generates an increasingly refined understanding of the *logoi* of material and immaterial creation?" From Evagrius' perspective, the practitioner progressively refines her *nous* to accurately perceive and contemplate the *logoi* "is a way of growing into one's authentic, sound, self – the very knowing person – the *gnōstikos* – God

pre-eternally meant one to be."[1118] In doing so, "the monk becomes a real *gnōstic*, a knower of the Holy Trinity, a recipient of eternal life and light by Christ's intercession."[1119]

However, for Tsongkhapa, when creation-as-*saṃsāra* is transcended by disciples developing direct, perceptual insight into the *emptiness* of persons and phenomena and using that insight to overcome the afflictive and cognitive obscurations they attain *nirvāṇa* – liberation from creation-as-*saṃsāra* and eventually, enlightenment itself. To assume the existence of *logoi* inherent in creation and to actively seek out such *logoi* through meditative practice would only deepen disciples' ignorance which in turn, would only propel rebirth within creation-as-*saṃsāra* and its attendant suffering.

Chapter seven therefore demonstrated that the very purpose, substance and pedagogical processes of Tsongkhapa's Tibetan Buddhist insight and Evagrius Patristic Christian *Natural Contemplations* developed along the "supramundane path" are antithetical. The chapter also demonstrated that Evagrius' and Tsongkhapa's conceptions of material and immaterial creation, the limitations associated with the human experience of material and immaterial creation, the methods for transcending those limitations and the metaphysical goal of their respective spiritual paths are also antithetical.

For these reasons, the comparative analysis undertaken in chapter seven argues that Buddhist-Christian dual belonging claims based on apparent similarities between Evagrian and Tibetan Buddhist meditative and analytical techniques are largely incoherent.

[1118] J. Konstantinovsky, *Evagrius Ponticus,* 148.
[1119] A. Corbu, 'Evagrius Ponticus: Guide to the Divine Light', *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, 64.3–4 (2020), 151.

However, this conclusion does *not mean* that there can be no common ground between disciples of the Evagrian Patristic Christian tradition and Tsongkhapa's Tibetan Buddhist tradition. The final chapter of this thesis suggests that it is possible to read and interpret Tsongkhapa's *Lamrim Chenmo* and Evagrius' texts through the lens of Pierre Hadot's conception of reading ancient texts as "spiritual exercises". Chapter eight will explain that Hadot's hermeneutic provides an optimal framework for exploring religious traditions that embody very different metaphysical foundations while advocating a common concern with spiritual progression.

Chapter eight will explain that for Hadot, ancient texts and philosophies are approached "not as a theoretical construct, but as a method for training people to live and to look at the world in a new way. It is an attempt to transform mankind."[1120] Chapter eight will therefore argue that a careful application of Hadot's hermeneutic of reading ancient spiritual texts as *protreptic devices* in support of Buddhist-Christian dual belonging claims enables practitioners to avoid incoherencies associated with fundamentally inconsistent metaphysical, epistemological and spiritual truth claims of the kind demonstrated in chapters six and seven.

[1120] P. Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, A. Davidson (ed.) (Blackwell Publishing, United States, 1995), 107.

CHAPTER EIGHT – *Spiritual Exercises* as Ground of Dialogue

"I tried to persuade each one of you to concern himself less with what he has then what he is, so as to render himself as excellent and rational as possible."

Socrates, in Plato's *Apology*

"What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem?" (or Lhasa?)

Tertullian, *Prescription Against Heretics*

Introduction

Does the comparative analysis just undertaken in chapters six and seven irretrievably condemn attempts to formulate a religious identity characterised by some form of Buddhist-Christian dual belonging? In one sense, the answer to that question must be "yes", whether by reference to Christianity and Buddhism generally, or by reference to Evagrius' Patristic Christian and Tsongkhapa's Tibetan Buddhist traditions specifically. In terms of that comparative analysis it is just incoherent for a practitioner to affirm their Christian identity as a soul created by God, corrupted by sin as a result of a primordial "Fall", destined to live a single lifetime and ultimately redeemed by the salvific death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, while *simultaneously* affirming their Buddhist identity as a dependently-arisen bundle of five psycho-physical aggregates (*sans* "soul"), formed by projecting karma (and not by God), taking rebirth in endless lives within three specific realms of *saṃsāra* until they "redeem" *themselves* through the cultivation of a specific kind of wisdom that displaces an even more specific form of ignorance (and not sin) underlying *saṃsāra*.

Nor is coherency attained by adding to, subtracting from or otherwise modifying the essential but radically incommensurable metaphysical truth claims asserted by Buddhism and Christianity analysed in chapters six and seven in an attempt to construct a religious identity as *simultaneously* Buddhist and Christian. Any religious identity resulting from such a syncretic process is *neither* Buddhist nor Christian but something else altogether. Put in these terms, it hardly seems to require a thesis to establish that claims to a Buddhist-Christian dual identity based on such incommensurable metaphysics are simply incoherent.

And yet, as this thesis has also revealed, there is a substantial literature and vibrant pastoral phenomenon associated with practitioners of Buddhism and Christianity who *are* attempting to create an identity they claim to be simultaneously Buddhist and Christian.[1121] Chapter one noted that much of the literature concerning such attempts, is tentative, focussing on process[1122], characterisation and identification,[1123] challenges to established interreligious methodologies[1124] or first-person experiential testimonies of attempts at creating a Buddhist-Christian religious identity.[1125] That chapter also noted the relative absence within the literature of attempts to engage more deeply with the substantive theological / philosophical content, constituent texts and commentarial treatises of different traditions of Buddhism and Christianity chosen by practitioners as they attempt to formulate their dual-belonging identity.[1126]

[1121] This pastoral phenomenon and the importance to practitioners of such attempts are discussed in detail by R. Drew, *Buddhist and Christian? An Exploration of Dual Belonging* (London: Routledge, 2011).
[1122] J. Homrighausen, 'Spiritually Bilingual: Buddhist Christians and the Process of Dual Religious Belonging' (2015) 35 *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 57.
[1123] P. Schmidt-Leukel, 'Pluralist Theologies' (2010) 122(2) *The Expository Times* 53.
[1124] P. Phan, 'Multiple Religious Belonging: Opportunities and Challenges for Theology and Church' (2003) 64 *Theological Studies* 495.
[1125] E. Beltramini, 'Can One Person Belong to Two Faith? The Experience of Three Catholic Monks' (2014) 20(2) *Studies in World Christianity* 103.
[1126] In the conclusion of their recent edited text on Buddhist-Christian dual belonging, Ross Thompson and Gavin D'Costa confess that the complexity and multi-dimensional nature of Buddhist-Christian dialogue means that "no conclusion regarding the appropriateness or otherwise of Buddhist-Christian Dual Belonging" can be

Given these apparently contradictory dynamics, any serious attempt to critically evaluate the coherency of claims to a dual Buddhist-Christian identity in this deeper manner as an exercise in Comparative Theology with its explicit, comparative analysis of the texts, languages and opposing metaphysics associated with chosen Buddhist and Christian traditions *would seem* to require a thesis. This is so even though the ultimate and perhaps intuitive conclusion of such a thesis - fundamental incommensurability - may be articulated in just a few words. Therefore, the *value* of this comparative analysis is not measured solely by such a reductively expressed conclusion, but by what is revealed and learned through the *process* of bringing Evagrius' texts and Tsongkhapa's *Lamrim Chenmo* into critical and comparative dialogue.[1127]

Chapter two of the thesis noted that application of Clooney's seminal methodology, his *process* of Comparative Theology involves bringing sacred texts from different religious traditions into critical dialogue with each other in order to ask; "in reading together these texts, what fresh insights will they reveal about how I appropriate my own religious tradition as both a philosophical and living system of spiritual transformation?"[1128] In answer to that question, and despite the incommensurable metaphysics underlying Evagrius' texts and Tsongkhapa's *Lamrim Chenmo* what chapters six and seven revealed in "reading together these texts" was a common concern with techniques or practices facilitating the radical transformation of a practitioner's identity as she struggles with psychological experiences of anger, lust, attachment, ignorance, pride and sorrow held in tension with competing aspirations to virtue, to self-mastery, to happiness, to attaining wisdom and happiness.

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drawn. G. D'Costa and R. Thompson (eds*), Buddhist-Christian Dual Belonging: Affirmations, Objections, Explorations* (Ashgate Publishing Limited, United States, 2016), 233.

[1127] It is what is revealed in the *process* of this deeper comparative analysis that simultaneously motivates and informs the research of comparative theologians like Clooney.

[1128] F. Clooney, *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning Across Religious Borders* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).

This chapter eight, the final of the thesis argues that it is here, at the level of *praxis* as struggle in aid of spiritual transformation that coherent learning from metaphysically different traditions can occur, the foundation of which is the application of Pierre Hadot's approach to *Philosophy as Spiritual Exercises* discussed in chapter two. More formally, in its application to the Evagrian Christian and Tibetan Buddhist tradition of Tsongkhapa, Hadot's approach enables the thesis to distinguish between the analytical implications of comparative theology which render dual-belonging claims normatively incoherent on the one hand, while permitting the creation of mutually informative coherent behavioural and contemplative exercises on the other. While Hadot himself did not research and write about Buddhist philosophy during his lifetime, chapter two noted the recent emergence of literature tentatively exploring the potential intersection of Hadot's approach to ancient texts as *Spiritual Exercises* and Buddhist philosophy generally.[1129]

Hadot's approach thus enables chapter eight to propose a ground of dialogue between Buddhists and Christians which respects the incommensurable metaphysics analysed in chapters six and seven while permitting the shared practice of certain spiritual exercises, practices and techniques in addressing the common human concerns and aspirations mentioned above and which function as the catalyst for transformation of the self / spiritual identity.[1130]

[1129] D. Fiordalis (ed.*), Buddhist Spiritual Practices: Thinking with Pierre Hadot on Buddhism, Philosophy and the Path* (Mangalam Press, United States, 2018).

[1130] Spiritual and religious concern with "transformation of the self" through regulating attention, cultivating concentration and formative ascetic practices has been the focus of recent scholarship by Inbar Graiver in the context of Christian monasticism generally – see I. Graiver, *Asceticism of the Mind: Forms of Attention and Self-Transformation in Late Antique Monasticism* (Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, Toronto, Canada, 2018)

Structure of Chapter

This chapter briefly explains how reading ancient philosophical texts as protreptic devices can function as a form of "spiritual exercise" exhorting a practitioner to profound spiritual change. After noting that Hadot himself identified Evagrius' text, *The Praktikos* as such a text, the chapter discusses and then critiques Christopher Gowans' specific analysis of whether and to what extent Tsongkhapa's *Lamrim Chenmo* falls within the ambit of Hadot's notion of "spiritual exercises." In doing so, the chapter identifies two aspects of Gowans' analysis that potentially constrict comparative reading of the *Lamrim Chenmo* and Evagrius' texts as forms of spiritual exercises. The first relates to Gowans' restriction of the term "philosophy", in the phrase "philosophy as a way of life", to supramundane insight cultivated by practitioners of the middle and great scope thus excluding practitioners of the small or initial scope. The second aspect informs the first and relates to Gowans' approach to evaluating the *Lamrim Chenmo* by reference to the motivations of practitioners of the "three scopes": initial (or small), middling and great scope practitioners.

Both of these aspects potentially constrict comparative reading of the *Lamrim Chenmo* and Evagrius' texts as forms of spiritual exercises. In foreclosing ethical exercises and contemplations cultivated by practitioners of the initial or small scope, Gowans also forecloses comparison with the various forms of *praktiké* engaged in by Evagrian monastics *before* they attain to "philosophy", direct perception of the *logoi* of material and immaterial creation arising from the *Natural Contemplations*.

In focussing on the motivation for engaging in spiritual practice, Gowans also forecloses comparison with Evagrian practitioners because, as Hopkins notes[1131], even the most compassionate Christians are not motivated by *any* of the motivations of practitioners of the three scopes. In this context, the chapter argues that Gowan's approach, while understandable, discounts a crucial distinction between the *substance* of any given school of philosophy and the *practice* of "philosophy as a way of life."[1132] This chapter argues that a careful reading of this distinction reunites the "way of life" element to the "philosophy" element in Hadot's formula of "philosophy as a way of life."

This distinction enables the chapter to propose a framework for comparative analysis of spiritual exercises found in the *Lamrim Chenmo* and the Evagrian texts based on the ethical and contemplative practices / exercises of *ethics, concentration* and *wisdom* (Tsongkhapa) and *praktiké*, *natural contemplations* and insight into the *logoi* of material and immaterial creation (Evagrius). Chapter eight demonstrates how this framework of spiritual exercises functions by reference to the common psychological experience of *anger*, identified by both Evagrius and Tsongkhapa as the principal obstacle to spiritual progression[1133]. The chapter identifies remedies, strategies and techniques of spiritual exercises common to both Evagrius and Tsongkhapa that function as antidotes to anger. These include the cultivation of patience, the practice of ethical behaviour, generosity, seeking forgiveness and above all, the cultivation and practice of love / *agape* (Evagrius) or *bodhicitta* (Tsongkhapa) as the very best antidote to anger.

[1131] J. Hopkins, 'A Tibetan Perspective on the Nature of Spiritual Experience', in R. E. Buswell and R. M. Gimello (eds), *Paths to Liberation: The Mārga and Its Transformations in Buddhist Thought* (University of Hawaii Press, 1992), 239 – 240.

[1132] P. Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?,* M. Chase (trans.) (Harvard University Press, United States, 2004), 3.

[1133] T. Cattoi, 'Holy Anger, Holy Wrath: The Role of Anger and the Emotions in Early Christian Spirituality and the Mahāyāna Buddhist Tradition' (2019) 39 *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 53.

Although these remedies, the spiritual exercises undertaken to counter anger identified by Evagrius appear similar to the *six perfections* (*paramitas)* cultivated by a *bodhisattva,* a practitioner identified in the *Lamrim Chenmo* as a practitioner of the great scope, there are crucial differences. It is especially important not to conflate *agape* / love in the Evagrian sense, with *bodhicitta*, the "spirit of enlightenment" advocated by Tsongkhapa. However, while *bodhicitta* is not *agape* / love, practices engaged in by an aspiring *bodhisattva* prior to developing uncontrived *bodhicitta* do include the cultivation of love.

Based on this analysis, chapter eight concludes by demonstrating how dialogue between followers of Evagrius' Patristic Christian tradition and followers of Tsongkhapa's Tibetan Buddhist tradition is possible through the sharing of certain strategies, techniques and practices ("spiritual exercises") oriented toward the common enterprise of spiritual transformation in cultivating aspects of *bodhicitta* (Tsongkhapa) and *agape* / love (Evagrius) while respecting incommensurable metaphysical contexts.

Identifying "Spiritual Exercises"

Chapter two identified and discussed the nature and substance of how Hadot approached ancient philosophy as "spiritual exercises". Briefly, Hadot proposed reading ancient philosophical texts in creating a certain life; "either in the order of inner discourse and of spiritual activity: meditation, dialogue, examination of conscience, exercises of the imagination or in the order of action and of daily behaviour."[1134]

[1134] P. Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, A. Davidson (ed.) (Blackwell Publishing, United States, 1995), 31.

Reading and then meditating on the significance of what has been read is intended for the transformation of the reader; "... we have forgotten *how* to read: how to pause, liberate ourselves from our worries, return into ourselves, and leave aside our search for subtlety and originality, in order to meditate calmly, ruminate, and let the texts speak to us".[1135] Hadot's emphasis on a certain way of *reading* and then *meditating* upon ancient philosophical texts emphasises a distinction between texts as bearers of certain intellectual and propositional content on the one hand, and texts as vehicles for spiritual transformation on the other. Jonardon Ganeri illustrates this distinction: "how does a text facilitate in its reader that transformation as a result of which the reader is brought into accord with the declared content the text announces?"[1136] Drawing upon ancient Greek and Buddhist texts, Ganeri identifies the *protreptic* nature of these texts, explaining that protreptic texts constitute; "a type of exhortative or admonitory discourse, either in monologue or in question-and-answer form, designed to make persons rethink their ethical beliefs and convert to a fundamental change of outlook and behaviour."[1137]

Hadot himself holds out Evagrius' text, *The Praktikos* as an example of such a protreptic text[1138] arguing that the text's concern for the cultivation of *apatheia* is facilitated by philosophy as spiritual exercise; "it is with Evagrius however, that we can see most clearly just how closely Christian *apatheia* can be linked to philosophical concepts."[1139] It is not difficult to understand why Hadot regarded Evagrius' *Praktikos* as an example of a protreptic text rich in material for spiritual exercises in aid of spiritual transformation.

[1135] P. Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 31.
[1136] J. Ganeri, *The Concealed Art of the Soul: Theories of Self and Practices of Truth in Indian Ethics and Epistemology* (Oxford University Press, United Kingdom, 2010), 97.
[1137] J. Ganeri, *The Concealed Art of the Soul,* 100.
[1138] P. Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?,* 245-246.
[1139] P. Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 136.

Chapter four discussed the nature and structure of the *Praktikos*, explaining how it functions as the monk's basic handbook of training in the spiritual life. How the *Praktikos*, and other important Evagrian texts, *Gnostikos*, *Kephalaia Gnostika*, *Chapters on Prayer*, *On the Eight Thoughts*, *On Thoughts*, the *Antirrhētikos* ("Talking Back") and *Skemmata* ("Reflections) collectively function in this way was analysed in chapters six and seven.

Likewise, chapters six and seven analysed the way in which Tsongkhapa's *Lamrim Chenmo* functions as a monk's handbook for training in the spiritual life, echoing Christopher Gowans' observation that "*The Great Treatise* is plausibly and informatively read as presupposing a concept of philosophy as a way of life"[1140] adding that because "it exemplifies Hadot's concept of philosophy as a way of life…(it provides) powerful support for the contention that Hadot's concept is useful for understanding Buddhist thought."[1141] To date, Gowans' chapter appears to be the only attempt to specifically evaluate Tsongkhapa's *Lamrim Chenmo* within the context of Hadot's notion of "philosophy as spiritual exercises."

While it is not necessary to revisit chapters six and seven, it is important to note two limitations to Gowans' approach that I suggest, unnecessarily restrict understanding how the *Lamrim Chenmo* exemplifies Hadot's *Spiritual Exercises* and thus makes it difficult to engage comparatively with the Evagrian Patristic Christian tradition.

[1140] P. Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 17.
[1141] C. W. Gowans, 'Buddhist Philosophy as a Way of Life: The Spiritual Exercises of Tsong-kha-pa', in S. M. Emmanuel, ed., *Buddhist Philosophy: A Comparative Approach* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2018), 16.

First, in the phrase "philosophy as a way of life", Gowans restricts the term "*philosophy*" to "the perfection of wisdom on the basis of insight…(requiring) reasoning, analysis and examination, all requiring conceptual thought in order to understand the ultimate truths of selflessness and emptiness."[1142]

In doing so, Gowans draws a distinction between meditative practices oriented toward the cultivation of "supramundane insight" (*vipaśyāna*) into selflessness and emptiness (and related reasoning and analysis), which *are* to be considered spiritual exercises, and practices that are not. Gowans draws this distinction because he evaluates the *Lamrim Chenmo* as exemplar of Hadot's *Spiritual Exercises* through the lens of the "persons of the three scopes" structure of Tsongkhapa's text and confines "philosophy" to the concern of practitioner of the middle and great scope. For the reasons set out below, although a distinction based on this "three scopes" structure seems intuitive, it does not provide an optimal framework for comparative theological analysis. Why is this?

Chapter five of the thesis explained that Tsongkhapa modelled the *Lamrim Chemo* upon Atiśa's text *Bodhipathapradīpa* ("Lamp for the Path") written approximately 300 years earlier and in which Atiśa, and then later, Tsongkhapa presents the Buddhist "Stages of the Path" in terms of the motivations of different spiritual practitioners. Briefly, a practitioner of the "initial scope" is motivated to maximise happiness and minimise suffering in their present life, and to attain a happy rebirth in the next life.

[1142] C. W. Gowans, 'Buddhist Philosophy as a Way of Life: The Spiritual Exercises of Tsong-kha-pa', 17.

For such practitioners, Tsongkhapa urges them to consider the preciousness of their current human rebirth because it is so contingent and fragile – death is certainly on its way, can happen at any time and worldly possessions and honours will not assist at the time of death.[1143] Therefore, one's life should not be wasted on the mere pursuit of worldly, mundane matters since at the time of death the only thing of assistance will be one's Dharma practice.

Tsongkhapa advises practitioners who have this initial motivation for engaging in spiritual practice to take *Refuge* in the Three Jewels (*Buddha, Dharma and Sangha*) and to recall the way karma is generated and functions.[1144] By understanding the mechanics of karma, the practitioner of the initial scope is thus advised to avoid non-virtuous behaviour and engage in ethical behaviour since ethical conduct is the cause for karma that ripens as happiness in the present life and potentially ripens as a fortunate rebirth in the next life.

However, within this "practitioners of the three scopes" framework, Gowans does not consider practitioners of the *initial scope* to fall within Hadot's conception of philosophy as a way of life, noting; "he (Tsongkhapa) does not propose that they be given any real philosophical instruction or training. This is reserved for the higher stages. Insofar as many Buddhists in this life strive only for a better rebirth, philosophy is not really part of their way of life as Tsongkhapa understands it."[1145] For Gowans, only practitioners of the middling and great scope engage in philosophy as spiritual exercises in the Hadotian sense because both the middle scope and great scope practitioners seek complete liberation from *saṃsāra*, while in addition, great scope practitioners cultivate *bodhicitta,* the mind that aspires to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings.

[1143] LRCM 1:143.
[1144] LRCM 1:177; 209-261.
[1145] C. W. Gowans, 'Buddhist Philosophy as a Way of Life: The Spiritual Exercises of Tsong-kha-pa', 20.

It is true that Tsongkhapa's discussion of "the three trainings" (ethics, concentration and wisdom), the most intuitive candidates for being considered "spiritual exercises" commences only *after* his discussion of the persons of the lower scope and as a foundation for the practices on the path of persons of the middling and higher scopes.[1146]

In order to achieve their spiritual aspirations, practitioners of both middling and great scopes must cultivate supramundane insight into selflessness and emptiness and engage in such practices as support the cultivation of supramundane insight. Gowans therefore concludes "insight is a recognizable kind of philosophy and as a crucial spiritual exercise in Tsongkhapa's program we evidently have a form of Hadot's philosophy as a way of life."[1147]

Chapters six and seven clearly demonstrated the profound metaphysical and epistemological differences between "insight" in the sense of *vipaśyāna* (Tsongkhapa) and "insight" in the sense of perceiving the *logoi* of material and immaterial creation via the *Natural Contemplations* leading to *Theologiké* (Evagrius). Following Gowans, and in its application to the Evagrian texts, "philosophy" would presumably be restricted to "insight" into the *logoi* of material and immaterial creation following the *Natural Contemplations*. Evagrian monastics who are engaged in various techniques of *praktiké* as they attempt to develop *apatheia* but *before* they have developed insight into the *logoi* via the *Natural Contemplations* would, on Gowans' reading, seem to be excluded from Hadot's conception of philosophy as a way of life in the way Buddhist practitioners of the initial scope were.

[1146] LRCM 1:327; 329.
[1147] LRCM 1:327; 329.

However, confining the nature of "philosophy" in this way discounts an important distinction drawn by Hadot himself, between the substance of a given "school of philosophical discourse" and the practice of "a philosophical way of life".[1148] Philosophical schools may advocate very different philosophical principles, founded upon very different metaphysical structures and yet share common *practices* in aid of their respective vision of a philosophical way of life.

On this basis, excluding *praktiké* and *praxis* - study, contemplation, meditation and other exercises of practitioners of the lower scope, excludes practices and exercises that Hadot himself would regard as "spiritual exercises" and in so doing, restricts potential avenues of comparison. It also limits the potential for Hadot's "philosophy-as-spiritual-exercises" to function as a potential ground of dialogue between Buddhists and Christians since there is little commonality in such incommensurable notions of "philosophy".

A wider approach reunites the "way of life" element to the "philosophy" element - an approach suggested by Apple as involving;[1149] "creative efforts of interpretation and translation that, in negotiating with differences in human cultural productions, provides cognitive advantage for intelligibility through acts of comparison." These "differences in human cultural production" encompass both the wider differences in the metaphysics of Evagrius and Tsongkhapa, but also differences *within* each tradition. Excluding practices and exercises of persons of the lower scope from the ambit of "philosophy as spiritual exercises" thus reduces "intelligibility through acts of comparison."

[1148] P. Hadot, *What Is Ancient Philosophy?,* 3.
[1149] J. Apple, 'Can Buddhist Thought be Construed as a Philosophia or a Way of Life? Relating Pierre Hadot to Buddhist Discourses on Self-Cultivation' (2010) 3 *Journal of Oriental Philosophy* 191.

The second difficulty lies in attempts to find common ground by transposing Tsongkhapa's "practitioners of the three scopes" framework into Evagrius' theological framework as a basis for comparative analysis. Evagrius' texts clearly anticipated and were written for monastics harbouring a wide range of worldly and spiritual motivations and abilities. Chapter four explained that the relationship between the *Praktikos*, the *Gnostikos* and the *Kephalaia Gnostika* reflected these different motivations, abilities and dispositions of beginner, intermediate and advanced monastics.

However, nothing in Evagrius' principal textual trilogy invites comparison with Tsongkhapa's framework of the "persons of the three scopes". Attempts to do so run aground on the more fundamental metaphysical difficulty identified Jeffrey Hopkins:[1150]

> "As a typology for humanity in general, this system has obvious faults. For instance, it cannot classify the most compassionate Christians as any of these, since they are not mainly seeking either (1) 'an exalted knower of all aspects so that Buddhahood might be attained in the continuums of other sentient beings" as a being of great capacity would, (2) 'liberation for one's own sake' as a being of middling capacity would, (3) 'the mere happiness of (this) or a future lifetime" as a being of low capacity would."[1151]

[1150] J. Hopkins, 'A Tibetan Perspective on the Nature of Spiritual Experience', in R. E. Buswell and R. M. Gimello (eds), *Paths to Liberation: The Mārga and Its Transformations in Buddhist Thought* (University of Hawaii Press, 1992), 239 – 240.

[1151] Hopkins reference to "an exalted knower of all aspects" is a reference to the *Abhisamayālamkāra* (the "Ornament of Clear Realisations") in which the Buddha's enlightened omniscience is said to "know all aspects" and thus has the capacity to teach all manner of sentient beings.

Proposing an Analytical Framework for Dialogue

This discussion thus far demonstrates that, in the context of Tsongkhapa's *Lamrim Chenmo* and the Evagrian textual corpus, common ground for dialogue between Buddhists and Christians cannot be founded upon incommensurable conceptions of "philosophy". Nor can common ground be found in attempts to "transpose" different hierarchies of practitioners' spiritual motivation addressed by Tsongkhapa and Evagrius in their texts. The analysis in chapters six and seven of this thesis demonstrated why such attempts would be incoherent.

However, emerging from the comparative analysis in chapters six and seven are three broad forms of activities underlying Tsongkhapa's *Lamrim Chenmo* but also clearly discernible in Evagrius' texts, that individually and collectively function as *spiritual exercises* even though they are oriented toward different metaphysical "ways of life." These three broad forms of interrelated physical and spiritual activities are (a) *ethical conduct* (b) *concentration* and (c) *wisdom*. In the context of Tsongkhapa's *Lamrim Chenmo*, these are the "three trainings" (*triśikṣa*) (*lhagpé labpa sum*) consisting of (a) ethical discipline (*śīla*) (b) concentration / meditation (*samādhi*) (*ting ngé dzin*) and resulting (c) wisdom (*prajñā*) (*shes rab*)[1152]. In the context of the Evagrian system and his texts referred to above, the three broad interrelated activities are (a) *praktiké*, (b) *the natural contemplations* overlapping with (c) insight into the *logoi* of creation and, eventually *Theologiké*.[1153]

[1152] LRCM 1:341.

[1153] Broadly falling within the subject matter of *The Praktikos*, the *Gnostikos* and the *Kephalaia Gnostika* generally.

In turn, *ethics*, *concentration* and *wisdom* are supported by three subsidiary but related activities enabling the cultivation of wisdom; (i) *study* generating a base level of wisdom, (ii) *contemplation* of what has been studied in generating a deeper level of wisdom and (iii) *meditation* upon the conclusions one has reached following contemplation of what one has studied in order to generate the most profound wisdom. It is argued that these activities both collectively and individually function as *spiritual exercises* and *do* have the potential to form a useful framework for dialogue between Buddhist and Christians without risk of falling into the various forms of metaphysical incoherency identified earlier. This chapter eight demonstrates how these interrelated activities function as a framework of spiritual exercises enabling Buddhists and Christians to engage in meaningful dialogue in aid of transformation of spiritual identity. It does this using as example, the common experience[1154] of *anger* as an obstacle to spiritual progression because both Tsongkhapa[1155] and Evagrius[1156] identify anger as perhaps the most serious obstacle to spiritual progression and personal transformation.

Evagrius & Anger

Earlier chapters noted Evagrius includes the psychological state of anger / *orge* (ὀργή) amongst the eight "general and basic" categories of demonically inspired "thoughts" *logismoi*.[1157]

[1154] T. Cattoi, 'Holy Anger, Holy Wrath: The Role of Anger and the Emotions in Early Christian Spirituality and the Mahāyāna Buddhist Tradition' (2019) 39 *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 53.
[1155] At LRCM 2:158, Tsongkhapa notes that anger produces obstacles to spiritual progression that are visible in this life and invisible obstacles that will be encountered in future rebirths. For this reason he concludes quite bluntly at LRCM 2:78: "Stop your anger on all occasions, and if it arises, immediately confess it and strive to restrain yourself."
[1156] It has been observed that Evagrius' works "fairly crackle with the problem of anger." C. Stewart, 'Evagrius Ponticus on Prayer and Anger', Chapter 4 in R. Valantasis (ed.), *Religions of Late Antiquity in Practice* (Princeton University Press, United States, 2000), 66.
[1157] PR [6].

However, the mental state of "anger" or "wrath" carries a certain ambivalence in Evagrius' theology because he asserts that there is a "natural function" to anger whereby its furious energy can be harnessed and directed toward confronting and dispelling the *logismoi*.[1158] For example, in his text *Thoughts,* Evagrius notes that against thoughts of fornication, "the boiling heat of the irascible part directed against this demon is extremely useful. The demon fears this wrath most of all."[1159] The discussion in this chapter therefore focuses upon anger in the sense meant by Evagrius as "a boiling and stirring up of wrath against one who has given injury or is thought to have done so"[1160] a state he describes as the "most fierce passion."[1161]

Evagrius paints a vivid picture of the inner spiritual destruction wrought by anger; "(it) is a plundering of prudence, a destruction of one's state, a confusion of nature, a form turned savage, a furnace of the heart, an eruption of flames, a law of irascibility, a wrath of insults, a mother of wild beasts, a silent battle, an impediment to prayer."[1162] Such inner desolation is also reflected in outer, existential deterioration; "then there comes a time when it persists longer, is transformed into indignation, stirs up alarming experiences by night. This is succeeded by a general debility of the body, malnutrition with its attendant pallor, and the illusion of being attacked by poisonous wild beasts."[1163]

[1158] For example, in *Praktikos* [42], Evagrius notes that the "natural function of anger" involves directing angry words against a temptation so as to "dispel the mental representation coming from your adversaries."
[1159] *Thoughts* [16].
[1160] PR [11].
[1161] PR [11].
[1162] *To Eulogios: On the Vices Opposed to the Virtues* [5].
[1163] PR [11].

The existential result is catastrophic: "the person consumed by anger gradually loses his humanity also in the gradual but inevitable descent into a kind of madness and a loss of one's wits, manifested in hallucinations and terrifying nightmares." [1164]

However, the most insidious damage wrought by anger lies in its opposition to prayer, to contemplation, to the cultivation of *apatheia* and to insight into the *logoi* of material and immaterial creation through the *Natural Contemplations*. In his text *Eight Thoughts*, Evagrius writes:[1165] "remove thoughts of anger from your soul, and let not irascibility lodge in your heart, and you will not be troubled at the time of prayer. In the same way as the smoke from chaff irritates the eyes, so does resentment irritate the mind in the time of prayer." This irritation at the time of prayer usually takes the form of some form of seizure of the mind where the image or likeness "of the offensive person (appears) before one's eyes."[1166] If such an image or likeness induces anger, it "provides fuel for anger, and anger, in turn is calculated to cloud the eye of your spirit and destroy your state of prayer."[1167]

In fact, Evagrius warns that attempting to persevere in prayer while remaining angry may lead to madness:[1168] "no one who loves true prayer and yet give way to anger, or resentment can be absolved from the imputation of madness. For he resembles a man who wishes to see clearly and for this purpose he scratches his eyes." This theme of anger functioning to blind oneself while seeking higher wisdom is repeated in the *Gnostikos*; "all virtues clear the road for the gnostic, but superior to all others is the absence of anger.

[1164] R. E. Sinkewicz., ed and tr., *Evagrius of Ponticus: The Greek Ascetic Corpus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 71.
[1165] *Eight Thoughts* [4 (16)].
[1166] PR [11].
[1167] *Chapters on Prayer* [27].
[1168] *Chapters on Prayer* [64].

Indeed, one who has touched knowledge and is easily moved to anger is like a man who pierces himself in the eyes with a metal stylus."[1169] Elsewhere, Evagrius describes an intellect disturbed by anger as seeing a "kind of fog lying on objects."[1170] Such a person, who "shamelessly" strives after divine knowledge while held by anger is to be rebuked.[1171] For these reasons, Evagrius takes great care in urging practitioners to purify the mind of anger; "just as a spring that purifies itself of the surrounding material elements flows with clear water, so too the mind that purifies itself of anger, resentment and bodily concern discovers true knowledge."[1172] Evagrius notes the result of this purification;"if you restrain your anger you yourself will be spared and in the process prove yourself too wise a man to indulge in arrogance. *Further you will be counted among the men of prayer.*"[1173]

Tsongkhapa & Anger

Throughout his *Lamrim Chenmo,* Tsongkhapa discusses anger (*pratigha*) (*khong khro*) and malice (*vihimsa*) (*gnod sems*) interchangeably[1174] and in a variety of contexts naturally reflecting the Tibetan metaphysical system discussed earlier, in chapters five, six and seven. For example, in the context of reflecting on the fortunate aspects of a human rebirth[1175] Tsongkhapa urges practitioners to contemplate the sheer difficulty of attaining the causes for rebirth as a human noting that "for even a single instance of anger towards a bodhisattva you must stay for an eon in the Unrelenting Hell."[1176]

[1169] *Gnostikos* [5].
[1170] KG [6.63]
[1171] *Chapters on Prayer* [145].
[1172] *Exhortations* [15].
[1173] *Chapters on Prayer* [26]. Italics added for emphasis.
[1174] LRCM 1:226, 232, 235 and LRCM 2:135, 161, 171. In his multivolume commentary on the *Lamrim Chenmo*, Geshe Lhundub Sopa discusses anger in the context of dislike and discouragement.: Sopa Vol 3 (2008) at 343.
[1175] LRCM Vol 1, Chapter 7: *A Human Life of Leisure and Opportunity*.
[1176] LRCM 1:124. Although the negative karmic "weight" of anger expressed toward a *bodhisattva* is considerably more than that of anger expressed toward an "ordinary" being, the principle holds.

Unlike Evagrius, Tsongkhapa does not explicitly *define* the term "anger" in his *Lamrim Chenmo* but presumes monastic readers are already familiar with the Tibetan literature on epistemology and psychology (mind and awareness) forming the *blo rig* genre studied at the monasteries as well as the more fundamental *Abhidharma* literature where anger is referred to as one of the "roots of non-virtue" in the desire realm[1177] and that give rise to "resentment and violence"[1178] as well as "wrath and envy".[1179] Tsongkhapa reserves his most thorough analysis of the destructive effects of anger and strategies for combatting it, in his discussion of the bodhisattva's practice of the perfection (*paramita*) of forbearance / patience (*kṣānti*) (*bzod pa*).[1180]

In that chapter of the *Lamrim Chemo*, Tsongkhapa draws heavily upon Śāntideva's text, the *Bodhisattvacaryāvatāra* ("Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life")[1181] and upon Candrakīrti's *Madhyamakāvatāra* ("Entering the Middle Way")[1182]. Like Evagrius, Tsongkhapa characterises anger as *the* capital mental affliction, quoting Śāntideva: "there is no sin like hatred"[1183] and Candrakīrti: "you cannot measure the fruitions of anger, just as you cannot measure the water in the ocean with a balance scale. Therefore, for projecting unpleasant effects and damaging virtue, there is no sin greater than a lack of patience."[1184]

[1177] See Chin Jampaiyang, *Ornament of Abhidharma: A Commentary on Vasubandhu's Abhidharmakośa*, Ian Coghlan (trans.) (Wisdom Publications, United States, 2018), [5.19], 755.
[1178] Chin Jampaiyang, *Ornament of Abhidharma,* [5.50], 795
[1179] Chin Jampaiyang, *Ornament of Abhidharma*, [5.49] at 794.
[1180] LCRM Vol 2, Chapter 12: *The Perfection of Patience*
[1181] This thesis has been referring to the English translation of the *Bodhisattvacaryāvatāra,* K. Crosby and A. Skilton (trans.), *Śāntideva: The Bodhicaryāvatāra* (Oxford University Press, United Kingdom).
[1182] This thesis has been referring to Tsongkhapa's commentary on the *Madhyamakāvatāra*, titled *Illuminating the Intent: An Exposition of Candrakirti's Entering the Middle Way*, 2021, Thubten Jinpa (ed), The Library of Tibetan Classics, Wisdom Publications, United States.
[1183] LRCM 2:159, quoting BCA 6.2. The translator's use of the English word "sin" does not imply that anger is a species of offence against God in the Christian sense. Rather, "sin" is a translation of the Tibetan "*sdig pa*" which refers to "non-virtue" or "harmful action". The point being made by both Śāntideva and Tsongkhapa is that anger / hatred is a particularly virulent species of non-virtuous action with very heavy karmic consequences – discussed below.
[1184] LRCM 1:159.

Accordingly, Tsongkhapa takes care to clearly explain the destructive effects of anger noting that it carries both visible and invisible negative effects.[1185] These "visible" negative effects of anger are remarkably similar to those negativities outlined by Evagrius; Tsongkhapa notes that:[1186] "the faults of anger visible in this lifetime are that you do not experience a peaceful and good mind; the joy and happiness that you had previously perish, and you cannot regain them; you cannot sleep well; and you weaken the stability wherein your mind stays calm." Instability of mind is a particularly insidious effect of anger and it is of common concern to Evagrius and Tsongkhapa because it prevents prayer, meditation and the cultivation of ethical conduct.

Tsongkhapa quotes the *Samādhirāja Sūtra* (the "King of Concentrations Sutra"):[1187] "when people have malice toward each other, learning and ethical discipline cannot protect them from its fruition, concentration does not protect them, nor can living in solitude; generosity does not protect them, nor does offering to the buddhas."

This brief survey of Evagrius' and Tsongkhapa's treatment of anger reveals how and why anger is so destructive of the three forms of *spiritual exercises* outlined above. Conduct of body, speech and mind motivated by anger is most likely to be unethical and may even incite others to non-virtue. For example, Evagrius admonishes: "be very attentive lest you cause some brother to become a fugitive through your anger….

[1185] At LRCM 2:157, when Tsongkhapa is referring to "visible" effects, he is referring to the ripening effects of anger in the present life while "invisible" effects refers to the fact that karmically, anger "projects its own fruitions…. (and) prevents the arising of very pleasant fruitions of its opposite (virtue)."
[1186] LRCM 2:158.
[1187] LRCM 1:235.

At the time of prayer this will be a constant stumbling block"[1188] and Tsongkhapa observes: "when you have great hatred, even those for whom you formerly cared forget your kindness and kill you; even friends and relatives will get annoyed and leave you."[1189] Likewise, for the reasons discussed earlier, anger destroys stability of mind, makes concentration and prayer impossible to practice and consequently, anger destroys any hope of cultivating "wisdom" whether supramundane insight (Tsongkhapa) or perception of the *logoi* of material and immaterial creation (Evagrius).

Comparative Spiritual Exercises

Despite the incommensurable metaphysics discussed in chapters six and seven, Evagrius and Tsongkhapa agree that anger is spiritually destructive and to a significant extent, agree on the nature of the practical *remedies, techniques* or *spiritual exercises* necessary to overcome anger. These remedies include concrete behaviours and practices falling within the broad strategies of ethics, concentration and wisdom. A proposed *framework* for this comparative example is found very early in Tsongkhapa's *Lamrim Chenmo* where he refutes a fundamental misconception concerning the proper relationship between stabilising meditation (concentration) and analytical meditation.

[1188] PR [25].
[1189] LRCM 2:157.

Early in his *Lamrim Chenmo*, Tsongkhapa responds to a qualm in which a hypothetical interlocutor suggests that only stabilising meditation should be undertaken "when you meditate upon the path"[1190] because discursive, analytical meditation "apprehends signs of true existence"[1191] thereby further entrenching ignorance underpinning cyclic existence. Tsongkhapa caustically dismisses such views as "the nonsensical chatter of someone who is utterly ignorant of the crucial points of practice."[1192] What is important here are Tsongkhapa's reasons for dismissing such views. In a crucial passage, worth setting out in full, he writes:[1193]

"You need both repeated analytical meditation and nonanalytical stabilizing meditation, because meditation involves both nonanalytical stabilization on the meaning of what you originally intended to practice that was determined through study and reflection and the use of discerning wisdom to analyze this meaning. Moreover, just as study must precede the wisdom that comes from study, and reflection must precede the wisdom that comes from reflection, so too meditation must precede the wisdom that comes from meditation. As this is so, meditation means becoming familiar with what you have ascertained using the wisdom that comes from reflection. Therefore, it is said that the wisdom that comes from meditation is a product of the wisdom that comes from reflection."

[1190] LRCM 1:109

[1191] The qualm is that "meditation" should be non-analytical because during analytical meditation there may be a temptation to grasp as truly existent what one is studying or analysing. Because doing so perpetuates ignorance, "meditation" should involve solely non-analytical activity – see Sopa, Volume 1 (2004) at 231.

[1192] LRCM 1:109.

[1193] LRCM 1:109.

Consistent with the explanation in chapter six, for Tsongkhapa, success in meditation therefore involves understanding the *meaning* of "what you originally intended to practice", for example, why anger is so destructive to spiritual progression and why the practice of patience and other exercises function as antidotes to anger. However, the "understanding" that is referred to here is itself a product of stabilising meditation on "what was determined through study", followed by what was determined through "reflection" before then applying "discerning wisdom" to analyse the *meaning* of "what you originally intended to practice" as determined through study and reflection.

Pedagogical Hierarchy: Intellectual Knowledge & Wisdom

Tsongkhapa therefore presents a pedagogical hierarchy facilitating the progression of the spiritual practitioner from intellectual knowledge of certain philosophical principles to a deeper more contemplative, *conceptual* understanding of those principles to an eventual non-conceptual *wisdom;* "Hadot emphasises that one of the fundamental themes of his works is the distance which separates philosophy from wisdom. Philosophy he notes, is merely a preparatory exercise for wisdom." [1194] A similar distinction is made by Evagrius. In his text *On Prayer*, he distinguishes between "knowledge", prayer and the wisdom that arises from *Natural Contemplation*: "knowledge is excellent, for it cooperates with prayer to awaken the intellectual power of the mind to contemplation of divine knowledge."[1195]

[1194] J. Apple, 'The Spiritual Exercises of the Middle Way: Reading Atisa's Madhyamakopadesa with Hadot', in Fiordalis (ed), *Buddhist Spiritual Practices: Thinking with Pierre Hadot on Buddhism, Philosophy and the Path (*Mangalam Press, Berkeley, United States, 2018), 110.
[1195] *On Prayer* [86].

Following this hierarchy, a practitioner initially observes principles of ethical conduct, creating the inner and outer conditions for "study" a composite activity comprising reading and listening to teachings from elder masters, memorisation, reasoning procedures and chanting sacred texts and scriptures; "it is a very necessary thing also to examine carefully the ways of the monks who have travelled, in an earlier age, straight along the road and to direct oneself along the same paths."[1196] The hoped-for result of study, reading and listening to teachings is a form of "wisdom", being the acquisition of basic philosophical information and knowledge about a given topic such as anger and its dangers and potential remedial exercises.

At this point Tsongkhapa observes that "the depth of the wisdom that comes from your studies is commensurate with your studies."[1197] Chapters six and seven explained that for both Evagrius and Tsongkhapa, the study of scriptures, commentaries and attending to the teachings of elder masters is crucial. The "wisdom" gained from study is largely factual, propositional and content-based. A student can recite formulas, recall facts, remember dates, names and locations; it is largely the substance and content of a given philosophical system. Second, once basic information and knowledge is attained, the practitioner must "reflect" or contemplate upon the information / knowledge gained. The goal here is to move beyond the mere possession of information acquired through study and to begin to *understand* the meaning of what has been studied. Tsongkhapa notes: "the breadth of your reflection is commensurate with this wisdom (ie, what is known through study), while the depth of the wisdom that comes from your reflections is proportionate to your reflections."[1198]

[1196] PR [91].
[1197] LRCM 1:110
[1198] LRCM 1:110

However, the "wisdom" gained from reflection builds upon the knowledge gained through study enabling the student to *apply* or *extrapolate* that knowledge in different contexts. It is roughly akin to the difference between knowledge and intelligence – for example, the Buddhist is able to *apply* Candrakīrti's "Seven-Fold Reasoning" concerning a chariot to another dependently-arisen object such as a person, making suitable modifications to accommodate the difference in the focal object of meditation. Evagrian monastics are able (for example) to understand how the demon of anger as defined in the *Praktikos* also gives rise to sadness when anger is frustrated.[1199]

Tsongkhapa completes his explanation by noting that because meditation means becoming familiar with what has been ascertained using the wisdom that comes from reflection; "it is said that the wisdom that comes from meditation is a product of the wisdom that comes from reflection"[1200] which, in turn means that the "magnitude of your practice of meditation corresponds to the depth of your wisdom of reflection."[1201] In the context of the *Lamrim Chenmo* and the Evagrian system, the "wisdom" that is ultimately sought through this process is more than just a keen intellect in possession of many spiritual facts, sayings and teachings and able to both approach and implement them with flexibility. Chapters six and seven explained that for both, "wisdom" is instead, a deep, non-conceptual *knowing* that eliminates the ignorance that is the "reifying view of the perishing aggregates" (Tsongkhapa) or that penetrates both material and immaterial creation while cultivating the *Natural Contemplations* to perceive the *logoi*, God's hidden reasons and meaning within creation (Evagrius).

[1199] *Eight Thoughts* [5.1].
[1200] LRCM 1:110
[1201] LRCM 1:110

Finally, this deep *knowing* species of wisdom returns to empower the practice of ethics and makes love possible. Tsongkhapa noting that "your ability to stop faults and achieve good qualities is commensurate with your practice of meditation."[1202] For Evagrius, ethics (*praktiké*) enables the monk to tame the *logismoi* resulting in the "flowering" of internal equanimity, *apatheia* that, in turn "gives birth" to its progeny, love (*agape*) and it is love that "keeps the door to deep knowledge of the universe"[1203] and characterises the purified *nous* in its eschatological state of essential knowledge, *Theologiké*, with God.[1204]

However, both Tsongkhapa and Evagrius are adamant that a practitioner is unable to attain these spiritual qualities, these meditative states, or develop love if she is plagued by the passions and particularly by anger.

Spiritual Exercises as Remedies to Anger

Unsurprisingly, Evagrius' *Praktikos*, the monastic's basic handbook for spiritual training contains several exercises directed toward overcoming anger. Initially, Evagrius urges *prevention*; maintaining an awareness of one's thoughts, memories and emotions that may ignite anger and then urges the swift elimination of those triggers. Noting that since anger tends to be a self-perpetuating passion; "both anger and hatred increase anger,"[1205] it is necessary to stop oneself from assenting or submitting to such desire: "do not submit to any powerful desire. For it is these which provide fuel for anger."[1206]

[1202] LRCM 1:110
[1203] *Letter to Anatolius* in J.E. Bamberger, *Evagrius Ponticus: The Praktikos & Chapters on Prayer*, 1981, Cistercian Publications, United States, 14.
[1204] KG 4.50
[1205] PR [20].
[1206] *Chapters on Prayer* [27].

In relation to the images that such desires ignite, Evagrius urges the practitioner to "be attentive to such things and immediately tear such idols out of one's mind, lest by dwelling on them one become a 'smoking fire-brand' at the time of prayer."[1207] Especially in the context of resentment as a trigger for anger, Evagrius warns: "do not give yourself over to your angry thoughts so as to fight in your mind with the one who has vexed you."[1208]

Accordingly, as discussed in chapter six, it is important for the practitioner to initially cultivate some degree of mindfulness or watchfulness (*nepsis*) and discernment (*diakrisis*) and Evagrius urges: "….let him keep careful watch over his thoughts. Let him observe their intensity, their periods of decline and follow them as they rise and fall. Let him note well the complexity of his thoughts…"[1209] Consistent with his preventative approach, Evagrius urges: "if you really try you will find some way to *arrange the matter without showing anger*. So then, employ every device to *avoid a display of anger*."[1210]

Drawing together the various qualities and strategies against anger, the various "devices" recommended by Evagrius throughout his texts reveals the following collection: (a) generosity, "a gift snuffs out the fire of resentment"[1211] (b) patience, (c) psalmody, (d) perseverance (e) cultivating humility[1212] (f) seeking forgiveness[1213], and above all, (g) love / *agape*.

[1207] *On Thoughts* [17].
[1208] PR [23].
[1209] PR [50].
[1210] Ibid, italics added for emphasis.
[1211] PR [26].
[1212] PR [14] and PR [20].
[1213] PR [21} and PR [25].

Most of these qualities and strategies are in fact well-known to the Tibetan *Mahāyāna* Buddhist tradition, especially in the context of the path of the *bodhisattva* who engages in the practice of the six perfections (*paramitas*) (a) generosity, (b) ethical discipline, (c) patience, (d) perseverance, (e) meditative equipoise / concentration and (f) wisdom. The *Lamrim Chenmo* analyses the six *paramitas* in considerable detail[1214] in the context of the practitioner of the great scope – the *bodhisattva*.

Like Evagrius, Tsongkhapa insists that these practices and strategies must take concrete form in benefitting sentient beings: "Those who have great compassion for others feel the need to relieve others' suffering. To relieve it, the kind thought, "may they be free of the suffering" is not enough, they must engage in the methods that will bring it about."[1215] Followers of the Evagrian Patristic Christian tradition and those of Tsongkhapa's Tibetan Budhdist tradition can therefore engage in fruitful comparative dialogue at the level of these shared techniques for cultivating certain optimal spiritual states and for attacking corresponding sub-optimal spiritual states.

Agape / Love as the Greatest Remedy

However, the greatest of the remedies identified above, the greatest "spiritual exercise" against anger is the practical cultivation and tangible expression of love / *agape*: "anger stands more in need of remedies than concupiscence and for that reason the love that is charity is to be reckoned a great thing indeed in that it is able to bridle anger."[1216]

[1214] Tsongkhapa discusses the Six *Paramitas* in detail in Volumes 2 and 3 of the English translation of the *Lamrim Chenmo*. In Volume 2, the *paramitas* of (a) ethics, (b) generosity, (c) patience and (d) perseverance are discussed while (e) meditative equipoise / concentration and (f) wisdom are discussed in Volume 3.
[1215] LRCM 2:86.
[1216] PR [38].

In this context, it is important to recall the mutually informative relationship between *praktiké / ascecis*, *apatheia* and *agape* (love): "*agape* is the progeny of *apatheia. Apatheia* is the very flower of *ascesis / praktiké*".[1217] This is why Evagrius insists that the expression of love manifests in concrete form in one's practical, ethical behaviour toward one's neighbour in community: "be very attentive lest you cause some brother to become a fugitive through your anger."[1218]

For example, Evagrius recounts that one of the Fathers delivered a monk ("a certain brother") from demons in the evening (a sign of anger) by requiring the monk to fast and serve the sick and ill. When asked why *that* particular remedy, the Father replied: "such afflictions are extinguished by no other remedy so well as by love."[1219] Evagrius was well aware that while it was not possible to love *everyone* just as *equally*, he nevertheless insisted that "it is possible to associate with all in a manner that is above passion, that is to say, free of resentment and hatred."[1220] And even if a person felt that her anger toward another was *valid* or *justified*, Evagrius disagrees: "when you are praying such matters will come to mind as would seem clearly to justify your getting angry. But anger is completely unjustified against your neighbour."[1221]

[1217] PR [81].
[1218] PR [25].
[1219] PR [91].
[1220] PR [100].
[1221] *Chapters on Prayer* [24].

Tsongkhapa, Love, Compassion & *Bodhicitta*

Throughout his *Lamrim Chenmo*, Tsongkhapa frequently uses the compound phrase "love and compassion"[1222]. While these terms may seem interchangeable, in the context of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, "love" (*byams pa*) is a different consciousness from that identified as "compassion" (*snying rje*) and thus they have different meanings. Tsongkhapa identifies love as the consciousness that "wishes beings to have happiness" and compassion as the consciousness that "wishes them to be free from suffering."[1223] Because they are different consciousnesses, "the causal relationship between compassion and the love that is the wish for all beings to have happiness is not definite."[1224]

In the Tibetan, *Mahāyāna* Buddhist tradition, love and compassion are essential components in the cultivation of *bodhicitta*, the "spirit of enlightenment" the attainment of which determines the "initial entrance into the Mahāyāna"[1225] and marks out the practitioner as a *bodhisattva*. While it is tempting to equate *bodhicitta* with love / *agape* in the Evagrian Christian sense, or with some universalised compassion, *agape* and *bodhiciatta* are in fact very different consciousnesses. Therefore, when (for example) Thompson in his text "*Buddhist-Christianity*" speaks of *bodhicitta* in terms of a "total openness to all beings (with) a wisdom creating a compassion that fills all beings indiscriminately"[1226], this "total openness" is not *bodhicitta* as it is defined in the classical Buddhist tradition and understood by Tsongkhapa.

[1222] For example: LRCM 1:134; 135, 324; LRCM 2:23, 24, 32, 36, 43, 44, 45, 47; LRCM 3:21, 341, 362.
[1223] LRCM 2:32.
[1224] Ibid.
[1225] LRCM 3:16.
[1226] R. Thompson, *Buddhist-Christianity: A Passionate Openness* (Winchester Books, United Kingdom, 2010), 134.

Defined in the classical Buddhist *śāstras*, for example in Asaṅga's, *Bodhisattvabhūmi, bodhicitta* is:

> "The wish to attain unsurpassed true and complete enlightenment! (Accompanied by the wish) may I be the one who accomplishes the welfare of all sentient beings, and may I establish them in the form of nirvana that is an absolute termination and in the knowledge of a *tathāgata*."[1227]

In his *Lamrim Chenmo*, Tsongkhapa refers to *bodhicitta* as the "spirit of enlightenment" noting: "the initial entrance into the Mahāyāna is determined by the development of this spirit alone…(and) once you have generated this spirit in your mind, you are recognized as a Mahāyāna (and) it says that once you have generated this spirit, you are called a bodhisattva."[1228] The desire to attain enlightenment in order to benefit all sentient beings is not the same consciousness as Evagrian *agape*:

> "The differences between the two concepts should not be underplayed: Bodhicitta is very specifically the mind resolved upon becoming a buddha, a resolution that makes sense only in terms of a specific cosmology and specific beliefs about human potential." [1229]

This observation of the radically different metaphysical frameworks underpinning *agape* and *bodhicitta* explains Hopkins' conclusion stated earlier that the "persons of the three scopes" framework of the *Lamrim Chenmo* simply cannot be extended to include "the most compassionate Christians since they are not seeking an exalted knower of all aspects so that

[1227] *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, ("The Bodhisattva Path to Unsurpassed Enlightenment"), Asaṅga, (trans. A. B. Engle) (2016, Snow Lion, United States), 21.
[1228] LRCM 2:16.
[1229] L. Perera, 'Bodhicitta and Charity: A Comparison' (2015) 35 *Buddhist-Christian Studies*, 124.

Buddhahood might be attained in the continuums of other sentient beings" as a being of great capacity would."[1230] While this is true, the techniques for cultivating *bodhicitta* outlined by Tsongkhapa in his *Lamrim Chenmo* include exercises in the cultivation of love as a necessary prerequisite.[1231] The nature of this prerequisite quality of love is such that Evagrius *would* recognise it as being similar to *agape*.

Bodhicitta, the spirit of enlightenment is identified by the presence of two mutually reinforcing aspirations; first to assume personal responsibility to relieve all sentient beings from suffering and to settle them in ultimate states of happiness and second, to attain the peerless state of enlightenment in order to accomplish this task[1232].

Such aspirations do not come naturally to most sentient beings and must therefore be progressively cultivated. In the *Lamrim Chenmo*, Tsongkhapa discusses two exercises / techniques for training in the development of *bodhicitta*; the "seven cause-and-effect personal instructions" said to have been transmitted through Atīśa [1233]and "exchanging self and other" said to have been transmitted through Śāntideva.[1234] Both of these exercises / techniques contain instructions for the modification of a practitioner's behaviour and outlook that would be recognised by Evagrius as appropriate for the cultivation of *agape* / love.

[1230] J. Hopkins, 'A Tibetan Perspective on the Nature of Spiritual Experience', in R. E. Buswell and R. M. Gimello (eds), *Paths to Liberation: The Mārga and Its Transformations in Buddhist Thought* (University of Hawaii Press, 1992), 239 - 240
[1231] LRCM 2:28 - This discussion concerns the cultivation of *bodhicitta* through the "seven-fold-cause-and-effect" instruction.
[1232] LRCM 2:15 ff.
[1233] LRCM 2:35.
[1234] LRCM 2:51.

For example, when Evagrius urges practitioners to "be very attentive lest you cause some brother to become a fugitive through your anger"[1235] he is inviting consideration of how one's own anger may impact on others, particularly those who are close. Evagrius continually urges practitioners to expand the geography of their love for others, even toward those who would "seem clearly to justify your getting angry."[1236] Likewise, in cultivating love, Tsongkhapa urges practitioners to expand their love for others by initially considering friends as objects of love, then to consider those toward whom one is indifferent, and finally, to consider those regarded as enemies as objects of one's love.[1237]

Evagrius also urges practitioners to re-frame the context giving rise to their anger and to create solutions to prevent anger arising: "if you really try you will find some way to arrange the matter without showing anger. So then, employ every device to avoid a display of anger."[1238]

In his instructions for "exchanging self and other", Tsongkhapa recommends that practitioners consider how *changeable* circumstances are such that at one time, a friend may have been an enemy and a former enemy may now be a dear friend."[1239] Engaging in this meditative exercise enables a practitioner to (in the words of Evagrius) to "arrange the matter without showing anger." The result of engaging in these exercises can be summarized in the following extract from the *Lamrim Chenmo* that Evagrius would likely approve of: "now I understand the faults of self-cherishing and the benefits of cherishing others.

[1235] PR [25].
[1236] *Chapters on Prayer* [24].
[1237] LRCM 2:43-44.
[1238] *Chapters on Prayer* [24].
[1239] LRCM 2:52.

With great effort, relying on mindfulness and vigilance, I will discontinue the present self-cherishing, my greatest enemy."[1240]

Chapter eight concludes by demonstrating how Buddhists and Christians might realise these aspirations through application of Tsongkhapa's methodology, discussed earlier, whereby insight and wisdom is progressively deepened through study, reflection / concentration and meditation, underwritten by ethical conduct, cumulatively generating a fundamental change in a practitioner's spiritual identity.

Conclusion

At the start of the spiritual path, and in the context of combatting anger, it is said, "the depth of the wisdom that comes from your studies is commensurate with your studies."[1241] Both Buddhist and Christian practitioners listen to teachings about anger, read and study relevant texts and other teachings about anger to learn about its nature (definitions), forms (divisions) and relationships with other mental states, (boundaries), its spiritually lethal effects, its opposite mental state of patience and ultimately, love. In dependence upon these studies, practitioners generate the wisdom arisen from hearing, studying and reading. This "wisdom" takes the form of acquired *knowledge*.

The second step is characterized by wisdom arising from reflection upon the knowledge gain through studying; "the depth of the wisdom that comes from your reflections is proportionate to your reflections".[1242]

[1240] LRCM 2:55.
[1241] LRCM 1:110.
[1242] LRCM 1:110.

Having gathered much information and knowledge about the deficiencies of anger, its harmful effects and the benefits of patience and love, practitioners begin to contemplate / reflect upon that knowledge.

They do so by recalling and mentally replaying the essential points of the teachings about anger and its definitions, divisions and boundaries, its spiritually lethal effects and the necessity of developing patience and love. As they do, practitioners begin to *understand* how and why anger is so detrimental to spiritual progression and develop confidence in the teachings based on reasoning; it is wisdom arising from intelligent reflection on what has been studied and learned. The "wisdom" acquired at both stages progressively influences a practitioner's behaviour; she follows Evagrius' advice to give gifts, to seek forgiveness for harms or offence she may have cause others and to follow Tsongkhapa's advice to forebear harsh words or insults that others may direct toward her[1243].

Having created an intelligent grasp of the material, the third step involves engaging in analytical meditation in order to generate not just intellectual insights but deeply felt *realisations* of the kind that generate change in behaviour; "the magnitude of your practice of meditation corresponds to the depth of your wisdom of reflection."[1244] It is at this stage that practitioners (ideally) employ analytical meditation taking the form of logical reasoning, the use of syllogisms and consequences, the application of scriptural verses in support of argument against anger and in favour of patience and love. This "wisdom" arisen from analytical meditation is *deeper* and more *insightful* than the wisdom arisen from study and the wisdom arisen from reflection / contemplation.

[1243] LRCM 152-153.
[1244] LRCM 1:110.

Again, this deeper and more insightful wisdom enables a practitioner to engage in the more difficult exercises in opposition to anger. For example, she may now be able to follow Evagrius advice to "employ every device in order to avoid a display of anger,"[1245] enabling her to so moderate her emotions such that impulses to anger do not arise. And, following Tsongkhapa, she may be able to understand why anger is not an appropriate or wise response to harm caused by others.[1246]

Having developed a deeper and more insightful wisdom arisen from analytical meditation into the faults of anger and the benefits of patience and love, practitioners must allow this hard-won wisdom to work its spiritually alchemical process. This occurs through repeated meditation, reflection and prayer, especially investigating how this wisdom enables practitioners to overcome afflictions and to develop good qualities Evagrius noting: "knowledge is excellent, for it cooperates with prayer to awaken the intellectual power of the mind to contemplation of divine knowledge"[1247] while Tsongkhapa affirms: "your ability to stop faults and achieve good qualities is commensurate with your practice of meditation."[1248]

At some point along this continuum of ethical conduct, acquisition of knowledge, the intelligent understanding and application of this knowledge, genuine, transformative wisdom arises.

[1245] *Chapters on Prayer* [24].
[1246] LRCM 2:170-171
[1247] *On Prayer* [86].
[1248] LRCM 1:110.

As the practitioner allows her former worldly "self" / identity and its infantile demands to be exposed and stripped away along this continuum of spiritual exercises, she eventually changes to such an extent that, in Evagrian terms, she occupies a state of pure prayer "which by means of a supreme love carries off to the intelligible height the spiritual mind beloved of wisdom"[1249] and to which "the light of the Holy Trinity comes in the time of prayer",[1250] or in the context of Tsongkhapa's Tibetan Buddhist tradition, she will have gathered enormous amounts of merit through the ethical practices of a *bodhisattva*, purified all afflictive and cognitive obscurations through application of wisdom and thus attained enlightenment.

[1249] *On Prayer* [52]
[1250] *Reflections / Skemmata* [4].

Conclusion

"There will be no peace between the civilizations without a peace between the religions. And there will be no peace between the religions without a dialogue between the religions."

Hans Küng
A Global Ethic for Global Politics and Economics 1998: 92

This concluding chapter reviews the research undertaken throughout this thesis as it analysed whether and to what extent in an exercise of comparative theology, the contemplative and meditative practices taught by Evagrius and Tsongkhapa throughout their texts might support Buddhist-Christian dual belonging claims. Noted in the Introduction, "Buddhist-Christian dual-belonging" refers to attempts by Christians or Buddhists to appropriate and integrate tenets and/or practices of the "other" into their home Christian or Buddhist tradition, thereby creating a blended spiritual identity said to be simultaneously Christian *and* Buddhist. Because comparative theology is a *revelatory exercise* (also noted in chapter one), this conclusion also explains what has been revealed as the texts of Evagrius and Tsongkhapa were brought into critical, comparative dialogue in exploring the research question while also identifying areas for future research and scholarship.

Principal Research Question & Literature

The Introduction explained that the research question explored by this thesis initially emerged from pastoral encounters with Buddhist-Christian dual belonging claims followed closely by academic analysis / evaluation of these encounters in an attempt to understand them.

However, as the literature review in chapter one noted, "Buddhist-Christian dual belonging" is a protean phenomenon meaning very different things to different people and thus resistant to precise definition. This partially explains why the existing literature devoted to Buddhist-Christian dual belonging outlined in chapter one has tended to focus on "ancillary" issues such as its sociological or anthropological nature, first-person confessional narratives and broader explorations of different methodological approaches to the phenomenon generally. The two most recent book-length edited collections of essays (in 2022 and 2023) about comparative theology and multiple religious belonging are substantially devoted to these issues, especially methodological issues.[1251]

Chapter one identified "apex literature" *specifically* devoted to Buddhist-Christian dual-belonging issues and to some extent the 2022 *Brill Companion to Comparative Theology* does engage with different aspects of Buddhism and Christianity.[1252] However these engagements appear to continue earlier trends in confusing fundamentally incompatible metaphysical concepts[1253] or seek to apply various linguistic-interpretative strategies to minimise such confusion.[1254] While such methodological, linguistic or interpretative strategies may enable a semblance of "doctrinal compatibility" (Drew 2016), they tend to elide truly incommensurable metaphysical truth claims inherent to Buddhism and

[1251] A. M. O. Takacs and J. Kimmel, *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Comparative Theology: A Festschrift in Honour of Francis X. Clooney SJ* (Wiley Blackwell, United States & United Kingdom, 2024).) and A. van der Braak, 'Multiple Religious Belonging and Comparative Theology', in P. Valkenberg (ed.*), Brill Companion to Comparative Theology* (2022, Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, The Netherlands), 532.
[1252] Pim Valkenberg et al (2022), especially the chapters in Part 5 of that text.
[1253] For example, James L Fredericks' *Buddhist Reading of Mark's Gospel* (2022) attempts to draw parallels between *Bodhisattvas* abiding in cyclic existence with Christ's resurrected metaphysical state (at 345).
[1254] A. van der Braak, 'Multiple Religious Belonging and Comparative Theology', in P. Valkenberg (ed.*), Brill Companion to Comparative Theology* (2022, Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, The Netherlands), 532.536.

Christianity (van der Braak 2022). And in that case, as Catherine Cornielle warns; "one must wonder whether it still makes sense to speak of dual belonging."[1255]

Chapter one revealed that the literature itself is aware of these potential limitations noting that what is required are comparative studies that engage deeply with the actual texts, languages, philosophical and theological *substance* of both Christianity and Buddhism (D'Costa 2016). As this thesis has argued, Balthasar's comment is an example of the confusion mentioned above, in this case - where the metaphysics underpinning the Evagrian Patristic Christian tradition and those of the "Buddhist" tradition (Balthasar does not specify *which* Buddhist tradition) are not adequately investigated before drawing such a conclusion.

While there *are* several texts discussing aspects of Buddhism and Christianity generally, there are very few that do so as an exercise in comparative theology, focussing on one specific Buddhist and Christian tradition and engaging in a deep comparative analysis of texts, languages and philosophy / theology underpinning those tradition.[1256] I suggest that researching and writing such a text would be a very fruitful avenue for future research and contribution to this emerging area of comparative theological scholarship.

[1255] C. Cornille, 'Strategies of Negotiation in Buddhist-Christian Dual Belonging', in G. D'Costa and R. Thompson (eds), *Buddhist-Christian Dual Belonging: Affirmations, Objections, Explorations* (Ashgate Publishing Limited, United States, 2016), 154.

[1256] Examples include: S. Mark Heim, 'Comparative Theology at Twenty-Five: The End of the Beginning' (2019) 35(1) *Modern Theology* 163–180; R. Thompson*, Buddhist-Christianity: A Passionate Openness* (Winchester Books, United Kingdom, 2010) and P. Knitter and R. Haight*, Jesus and Buddha: Friends in Conversation* (Orbis Books, United States, 2015).

In these circumstances, chapter one explained that it seemed appropriate to bring the Tibetan Buddhist scholar Tsongkhapa (1357 – 1419) and his seminal text, the *Lamrim Chenmo* ("*Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*")[1257] into comparative dialogue with Evagrius' Patristic Christian texts.

These texts seemed appropriate comparators because both Evagrius and Tsongkhapa intended their respective texts to provide the foundational training in transforming a monastic's spiritual identity and therefore reflect similar pedagogical structures. The principal research question of this thesis therefore attempted exactly this deeper substance-engagement, albeit focussing on a very narrow comparative subject.

Without ignoring the importance of anthropological, sociological or methodological issues associated with dual religious belonging, and without setting itself the unrealistic task of comparatively analysing the *entirety* of the various Christian or Buddhist traditions, the thesis focussed on the actual texts, languages and philosophical / theological *substance* of the Evagrian Patristic Christian tradition in comparative dialogue with Tsongkhapa's Tibetan Buddhist tradition. Over its eight chapters, the thesis therefore investigated whether and to what extent, in an exercise of comparative theology, the contemplative and meditative practices taught by Evagrius and Tsongkhapa throughout their texts might support Buddhist-Christian dual belonging claims.

[1257] Tsongkhapa, *The Great Treatise on the Path to Enlightenment (Lamrim Chenmo)*, 3 Vols, 2000 - 2002, Joshua Cutler and Guy Newland (eds), The Lamrim Chenmo Translation Committee, United States.

Methodological Issues.

In proceeding with this analytical comparison, a number of methodological frameworks presented themselves. Chapter two acknowledged the vast literature devoted to methodological, anthropological and sociological approaches associated with the task of comparing one religious tradition with another. The chapters in the recent *Brill Companion to Comparative Theology* (2022) and even more recent *Wiley Blackwell Companion to Comparative Theology: A Festschrift in Honor of Francis X Clooney SJ* (2003) demonstrate the breadth, depth and contested nature of such methodological approaches and issues.

However, as chapter two noted, although these are important matters, the principal research question of this thesis did not focus on the methodological orthodoxy, anthropological dimensions and academic integrity associated with comparative theology in preference to *other* identified methodologies. Chapter two of the thesis identified and analysed several of these methodologies; "comparative studies of religion" and the "theology of religions" before arguing for the discipline of "comparative theology" as the most *workably efficient* methodology. Chapter two argued that amongst the methodologies identified, "comparative theology" as it has been developed and argued for by Francis Clooney, is best suited to the particular contours of the principal research question. There were three reasons for this. First comparative theology is rigorously comparative. Second, it is grounded in a thorough-going textual and theological / philosophical analysis. And third, given the origins of this research question, comparative theology is also pastorally sensitive to the needs of those seeking to forge a Buddhist-Christian dual identity.

Avoiding Tempting but False Equivalencies

Comparative theology is rigorously analytical *because* it requires close scholarly attention to the texts, languages and philosophies / theologies underpinning the different religious traditions brought into dialogue. Accordingly, pursuing the principal research question necessitated a close, comparative reading of Evagrius and his texts together with Tsongkhapa and his text. Chapter four of the thesis therefore provided an overview of the Evagrian Patristic Christian system as he developed and explained it throughout his texts while chapter five provided an overview of Tsongkhapa's Tibetan Buddhist system as he developed and explained it in the *Lamrim Chenmo*.

The comparative analysis in these chapters was built around a framework of four issues fundamental to both traditions: First, an understanding of humanity's existential situation; what is the spiritual "problem" experienced by people? Second, theological anthropology; what is a person - what does it mean to be a person in relation to others and to the ultimate? Third, spiritual pedagogy - how does a person progress along the paths to spiritual perfection? What practices, prayers and learning must a person engage in to make spiritual progress toward the goal? And finally, identifying the *telos* or *summum bonum* of spiritual practice itself. What is the goal of spiritual practice? What state, or identity is attained as the fruit of spiritual journey? Chapter four and five thus provided the textual, theological and philosophical foundations for the deeper *comparative* analysis in chapters six and seven of the thesis. And because affinities between Evagrius and Buddhism are asserted to be grounded in contemplation as a ground for the cultivation of wisdom, it made sense to start with contemplation leading to *apatheia* (Evagrius) and serenity (*śamatha*) (Tsongkhapa).

The largely discursive, as opposed to analytical exploration in chapters four and five revealed tempting similarities in the approach of Evagrius and Tsongkhapa in explaining techniques for the cultivation of mental attention, prayer and wisdom. However, apparent similarities gave way to actual incommensurability when chapters six and seven brought closer analytical scrutiny to bear on Evagrius' and Tsongkhapa's respective systems.

Contemplation, Apatheia and Serenity

Chapters four and five of the thesis explained that despite the very different teleological *orientation* of Tsongkhapa's and Evagrius' ascetic processes, both monastics shared a deep concern for certain attention regulating ascetic practices as a foundation for achieving their respective metaphysical goals. This is why both Tsongkhapa and Evagrius identified and located *apatheia* and serenity (*śamatha*) as essential initial cognitive attainments in a practitioner's progression through their respective Christian and Tibetan Buddhist spiritual paths.

The important question explored by chapter six involved whether and to what extent Evagrius' conception of *apatheia* could be said to be the same as or sufficiently similar to Tsongkhapa's conception of *serenity*, whether in entity and/or in function, to enable some concordance?

Chapter six therefore focussed on these 'reflective dimensions of ascetic practice',[1258] especially investigating whether the initial cultivation and then attainment of serenity / *apatheia* might enable a practitioner to temporarily suppress manifest afflictions and / or *logismoi*. In this way, the analysis in chapter six analysed shared concerns to enable practitioners to gain control over their thoughts, feelings and behavioural tendencies, through *praktiké* (Evagrius) and the elimination of obstacles to concentrative 'serenity' - *śamatha* (Tsongkhapa), in order to develop highly refined and focussed states of concentration and prayer while avoiding incommensurable anthropological and metaphysical frameworks.

Chapter six revealed the way in which Tsongkhapa in his *Lamrim Chenmo* presents the initial development of concentration (*samādhi*) as necessary support for the progressive cultivation of the "nine mental states" through eliminating the "five faults" via the application of the "eight antidotes".[1259] Guided by mindfulness and vigilance the application of these eight antidotes *appears* to perform a similar function to Evagrian *praktiké* in defending the stability and clarity of the *nous* against the onslaught of the *logismoi*.

With this apparent similarity in mind, chapter six turned to a deeper analysis of Evagrius' methodology for developing *apatheia,* developed throughout his texts including *The Praktikos, Chapters on Prayer*, *On the Eight Thoughts*, *On Thoughts*, the *Antirrhētikos* ("Talking Back") and *Skemmata* ("Reflections). Chapter six revealed that for Evagrius, a practitioner needs to initially cultivate *hesychia* (stillness) in support of the development of *apatheia* including the importance of cultivating both discernment (*diakrisis*) and self-control (*enkrateia*) that function as accompanying modalities of *praktiké* necessary to

[1258] I. Graiver 'Demonic Machinations and Cognitive Mechanisms: Cognitive Insights into Early Monastic Demonology', *The Journal of Religion*, 102.2 (2022),
[1259] LRCM 3:57.

combat the eight *logismoi*, the demonically inspired thoughts that constantly threaten to destroy the monastic's ability to attain *apatheia*, engage in pure prayer and attain to the *Second and First Natural Contemplations* and *Theologiké.*[1260]

In this context, and despite quite obvious metaphysical differences, chapter six argued that practices associated with the common psychological experience of struggling for mastery over body, emotions and mind appear to represent a "much more fruitful area of convergence with Buddhism than do metaphysical issues"[1261]. These observations then formed one of the foundations for the discussion in chapter eight of the thesis and in which a potential ground of dialogue is identified.

Contemplation, Epistemology and Identity

While chapter six focussed upon certain reflective and contemplative practices (*apatheia* and *serenity*) as a potential ground of dialogue, chapter seven focussed upon another: whether and to what extent the epistemic content and phenomenological processes of *Second Natural Contemplation,* then *First Natural Contemplations* and *Theōria* as presented by Evagrius approximates the nature, content and function of the insight / wisdom necessary for liberation from *saṃsāra* as presented from Tsongkhapa's *Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka* perspective.

[1260] Evagrius, *The Foundations of the Monastic Life: A Presentation of the Practice of Stillness*, in Sinkewicz, *Evagrius of Ponticus: The Greek Ascetic Corpus* (2003) Oxford University Press.
[1261] D. Linge, *Leading the Life of Angels*.

And, from Evagrius' perspective, chapter seven explored whether and to what extent serenity and insight as developed by Tsongkhapa in his *Lamrim Chenmo* might approximate the nature, content and function of *Second* then *First Natural Contemplations* and eventually *Theologiké.*

While both chapters six and seven involved exploration of contemplative progression along a defined "path", the *cognitive mechanisms* underlying that progression are very different. The mechanism in chapter six involved techniques directed toward the identification and temporary suppression of what Tsongkhapa identifies as manifest afflictions and what Evagrius identifies as the *logismoi* and related emotional and afflictive cognitive states. The emphasis was therefore on *praktiké* / inner discipline functioning as causes for attaining the peace, stability and focus of mind associated with *apatheia* and serenity respectively.

However, chapter seven demonstrated that for Tsongkhapa, the cognitive mechanism central to the cultivation of wisdom involved cultivation of *insight* in the sense of *vipaśyāna* enabling the complete elimination (not mere suppression) of afflictions and their seeds. For Evagrius, chapter seven identified the perception of the *logoi* of creation through *Second* and *First Natural Contemplations* and finally, *Theologiké* as the basis for *gnosis* / wisdom. Thus, the emphasis for Evagrius and Tsongkhapa was on wisdom / *gnosis* functioning as causes for liberation from *saṃsāra* or enlightenment (Tsongkhapa) and eschatological cognitive reunion with God as Holy Trinity - *Theologiké* (Evagrius).

Chapter seven demonstrated that *both* Evagrius and Tsongkhapa, draw distinctions between the epistemic authority of ordinary, conventional sense perception of everyday objects and persons on the one hand and forms of non-conventional, superior perception / insight that "sees" beyond such conventional sense perception to the *ultimate mode* of existence of those same objects and persons on the other. For Evagrius, while God's *Second Creation* is mediated to practitioners through their "corruptible sense perception", having developed *apatheia*, practitioners are able to cultivate and progress through the *Natural Contemplations* which reveal the *logoi* of visible and invisible creation God's spiritual principles pervading material and immaterial creation.

This is possible because of the way Evagrius characterises all of visible and invisible creation as a "letter", or "Book" from God to His creatures and which contains the spiritual principles and reasons for God's providence in *Second Creation*. Through cultivating the *Natural Contemplations,* "reading creation" (as God's letter or book) in the sense of discovering and understanding the *logoi* within visible and invisible creation becomes the framework and means by which the fallen *nous* begins its cognitive re-ascent to God, resulting in the eschatological state of *Theologiké.*

However, chapter seven also demonstrated that for Tsongkhapa, "creation" is not the providential expression of God's love for sentient beings characterised as a letter or book containing inherently existing *logoi* of material and immaterial creation. Rather, creation-as-*saṃsāra* is characterised by sentient beings helplessly cycling through the *desire realm, form realm* and *formless realm* manifesting as the ripening of sentient beings' karma and afflictions.

Therefore, while disciples of Evagrius seek to refine their minds to perceive the *logoi* of creation; the "real" underlying substance and constitutive principles of creation, disciples of Tsongkhapa undertake deep analysis to purify their minds from any perception of persons or phenomena as inherently existent or "real" or as being composed of any inherently existing "substance" let alone the principles of a Divine Creator.

Chapter seven also revealed significant differences in the cognitive and epistemological *processes* associated with cultivating the *nature* of the "insight" characterising the *Natural Contemplations* (Evagrius) and insight into the emptiness of persons and phenomena (Tsongkhapa). It demonstrated that while Evagrius rarely attempted to identify or define the actual *substance* of the *logoi* of material and immaterial creation, there were tantalising hints concerning the use of "proofs" or "logical demonstrations" to do so. The chapter explained and demonstrated how Tsongkhapa relies upon "logical demonstrations" taking the form of both consequentialist and syllogistic reasoning accepted by his *Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka* school of tenets and drawn from Chapter 6 of Candrakīrti's *Madhyamakāvatāra* as means to developing supramundane insight. The nature, form and power of syllogistic reasoning / logical demonstrations in developing supramundane wisdom or insight in both the Evagrian and Tibetan Buddhist tradition is undeveloped and represents another fruitful area for future comparative research.

Chapter seven of the thesis then posed what it characterised as a "more revealing question" - "how does the nature of a practitioner's identity change as she generates an increasingly refined understanding of the *logoi* of material and immaterial creation?"

From Evagrius' perspective, the practitioner progressively refines her *nous* to accurately perceive and contemplate the *logoi* "is a way of growing into one's authentic, sound, self – the very knowing person – the *gnōstikos* – God preeternally meant one to be."[1262] In doing so, "the monk becomes a real *gnōstic*, a knower of the Holy Trinity, a recipient of eternal life and light by Christ's intercession."[1263] However, for Tsongkhapa, when creation-as-*saṃsāra* is transcended by disciples developing direct, perceptual insight into the *emptiness* of persons and phenomena and using that insight to overcome the afflictive and cognitive obscurations they attain *nirvāṇa* – liberation from creation-as-*saṃsāra* and eventually, enlightenment itself.

Chapter seven therefore demonstrated that the very purpose, substance and pedagogical processes of Tsongkhapa's Tibetan Buddhist insight and Evagrius Patristic Christian *Natural Contemplations* developed along the "supramundane path" are completely antithetical. The chapter also demonstrated that Evagrius' and Tsongkhapa's conceptions of material and immaterial creation, the limitations associated with the human experience of material and immaterial creation, the methods for transcending those limitations and the metaphysical goal of their respective spiritual paths are also antithetical.

The comparative analysis undertaken in chapter seven demonstrated that Buddhist-Christian dual belonging claims based on apparent similarities between Evagrian and Tibetan Buddhist meditative and analytical techniques, while well-intentioned, are unsupportable.

[1262] J. Konstantinovsky, *Evagrius Ponticus*, 148.
[1263] A. Corbu, 'Evagrius Ponticus: Guide to the Divine Light', *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, 64.3–4 (2020), 151.

It also means that von Balthasar was simply incorrect in his conclusion that Evagrian mysticism is closer to Buddhism than Christianity and attempts to formulate a Buddhist-Christian dual-belonging identity on this basis must be judged incoherent.

However, this conclusion did *not mean* that there can be no common ground between disciples of the Evagrian Patristic Christian tradition and Tsongkhapa's Tibetan Buddhist tradition. *Both* Evagrius and Tsongkhapa place considerable emphasis on the nature and role of "love" as part of the spiritual path. Accordingly, if little concordance is possible in terms of "wisdom" then chapter seven also explored whether an appeal to commonality of *agape* and *bodhicitta* might be possible.

Agapē & Bodhicitta?

Tsongkhapa noted that if serenity is "imbued with the precious spirit of enlightenment, it turns into the Mahāyāna path"[1264] while for Evagrius, "*agapē* (selfless love) is the child of *apatheia*"[1265] affirming that "the goal of the ascetic life is *agapē*". If a practitioner *does* attain *apatheia* and thus selfless love (*agapē)*, will *agapē* be sufficient to function as a path consciousness for enlightenment? Perhaps if a practitioner has developed *bodhicitta* then maybe that person has also attained *apatheia.* Is *agapē* also a "child of serenity"?

As tempting as it is, chapter eight of the thesis demonstrated why it is simply not possible to equate Evagrius' conception of "love" / *agape* with Tsongkhapa's conception of *bodhicitta*.

[1264] LRCM 3:87.
[1265] PR [81].

However, while this is true chapter eight also revealed that the techniques for cultivating *bodhicitta* outlined by Tsongkhapa in his *Lamrim Chenmo* include exercises in the cultivation of love as a necessary prerequisite. And the nature of this prerequisite quality of love is such that Evagrius *would*, it was argued, recognise it as being similar to *agape*.

Specifically, chapter eight argued that the two exercises / techniques for training in the development of *bodhicitta* mentioned by Tsongkhapa in the *Lamrim Chenmo;* the "seven cause-and-effect personal instructions" and "exchanging self and other contain instructions for the modification of a practitioner's behaviour and outlook that would be recognised by Evagrius as appropriate for the cultivation of *agape* / love.

Spiritual Exercises as a Potential Ground of Dialogue

Despite the incommensurability revealed by the analysis in chapters six and seven, this thesis concludes that it *is possible* to read and interpret Tsongkhapa's *Lamrim Chenmo* and Evagrius' texts through the lens of Pierre Hadot's conception of reading ancient texts as "spiritual exercises"; a technique or hermeneutic ideally suited for exploring religious traditions that embody very different metaphysical foundations while advocating a common concern with spiritual progression. Chapter eight argued that Evagrius' texts and Tsongkhapa's *Lamrim Chenmo* could be read as *protreptic devices* in support of Buddhist-Christian dual belonging claims at a certain level of praxis.

Chapter eight demonstrated how this could work by using the common human experience of anger as example of an affliction that, when left unaddressed, radically destroys the cultivation of *apatheia, agape*, the *Natural Contemplations* and *Theōria* (Evagrius) and *śamatha, vipaśyāna* and *bodhicitta* (Tsongkhapa).

However, through the cultivation of certain praxis / activities identified from a close reading of the Evagrian texts and Tsongkhapa's *Lamrim Chenmo* and constituting *Spiritual Exercises*, it is possible to become aware of the destructive qualities of anger, to understand the benefits of cultivating its opposite cognitive state of patience and ultimately love, and how doing so enables progression along the spiritual path. Exploring Tibetan Buddhism through the lens of Hadot's *Spiritual Exercises* hermeneutic is relatively new and, to my knowledge, Gowans' (2018) chapter, critiqued in chapter eight, is the only attempt to explore Tsongkhapa's works in light of Hadot. This is also a potentially vast and rewarding avenue for future research and scholarship.

At some point along this continuum of ethical conduct, acquisition of knowledge, the intelligent understanding and application of this knowledge, genuine, transformative wisdom arises. As the practitioner allows her former worldly "self" / identity and its infantile demands to be exposed and stripped away along this continuum of spiritual exercises, she eventually changes to such an extent that, in Evagrian terms, she occupies a state of pure prayer "which by means of a supreme love carries off to the intelligible height the spiritual mind beloved of wisdom" and to which "the light of the Holy Trinity comes in the time of prayer".

And in the context of Tsongkhapa's Tibetan Buddhist tradition, she will have gathered enormous amounts of merit through the ethical practices of a *bodhisattva*, purified all afflictive and cognitive obscurations through application of wisdom and thus attained enlightenment.

This thesis therefore concludes that it is *here* at the level of shared practice in cultivating attention-regulating techniques and *praktiké* as a way of struggling with very human emotions of anger, jealousy, greed and ignorance while striving for wisdom, love, patience and "enlightenment". It is *here* that Christian and Buddhist practitioners may share wisdom and practice without the incoherencies plaguing unreflective attempts to create a Buddhist-Christian dual spiritual identity.

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