

OTHER-EMPTINESS IN THE JONANG SCHOOL: THE THEO-LOGIC OF BUDDHIST DUALISM



Douglas S. Duckworth

Department of Religion, Temple University
douglas.duckworth@temple.edu

Introduction

In this essay I aim to clarify the meaning of other-emptiness in the Jonang (*jo nang*) tradition of Buddhism of Tibet. I will focus on the writings of Dölpopa (*dol po pa shes rab rgyal mtshan*) (1292–1361), the renowned forefather of this tradition. Dölpopa famously differentiated two types of emptiness, or two ways of being empty—self-emptiness (*rang stong*) and other-emptiness (*gzhan stong*)—and proclaimed the superiority of the latter.

In contrast to the meaning of self-emptiness, other-emptiness is not a phenomenon's emptiness of its own essence. It refers to ultimate reality's emptiness of all that it is not. Also, it does not just refer to a (relative) phenomenon being empty of another phenomenon (like an ox lacking the quality of a sheep), but rather refers to the *ultimate* ground that is empty of all relative phenomena. Other-emptiness also is a way of articulating that the qualities of *nirvāṇa* lack the qualities of *saṃsāra* (i.e., *nirvāṇa* is empty of its other). By endorsing the superiority of other-emptiness, Dölpopa laid out a distinctive claim that became the hallmark of his Jonang tradition's interpretation of emptiness:

All that is said about emptiness is not exclusively self-emptiness; there is a division between the emptiness that is the profound other-emptiness and the emptiness that is self-emptiness, which is not profound. Moreover, there are two: the emptiness that is ultimate and the emptiness that is relative. And there are two: the emptiness that is thoroughly established and the emptiness that is imputed. Furthermore, there are two: the emptiness that is natural and innate and the emptiness that is artificial and contingent.¹

While it is not controversial for a Buddhist to claim that the ultimate truth is not the relative truth or that *nirvāṇa* lacks the qualities of *saṃsāra*, it is controversial to claim that other-emptiness is a more profound form of emptiness than self-emptiness, or that it is the most profound meaning of emptiness. This is just what Dölpopa claims.

Why should one form of emptiness—self- or other-emptiness—be said to be superior to the other? That is, is it a question of which one is right (the true representation of reality)? Or which one is more effective to elucidate knowledge of reality? The onus is on the proponents of self- or other-emptiness, and the tradition they defend, to establish why one form is better. We will see that Dölpopa maintains that other-emptiness is better because it represents what really exists while self-emptiness does not, and that it also offers a more effective means to gain access to the real. His

dualistic system hinges upon the existence of this reality—a reality that starkly contrasts with the contingent world of impermanent, (self-)empty, and dependently arisen phenomena.

While Dölpopa is famous for asserting the real existence of a nondual ultimate reality, I will argue that his depiction of other-emptiness represents a fairly clear-cut account of dualism. It is to defend this dualism that Dölpopa affirms other-emptiness as superior to self-emptiness. The dualism he portrays for the Jonang tradition is structurally similar to what we find in the classical theism of the Abrahamic traditions. For Dölpopa, ultimate reality functions in some of the ways that God does (as an unconditioned ground), and the relationship between the ultimate reality and the relative world is similar to that of God and world: it is a *hierarchical* dichotomy, and the primacy of the former element in the dichotomy is the necessary condition for the latter. This is the case with nirvāṇa in relation to saṃsāra, as well as with the ultimate truth in relation to the relative truth—as it is with buddha and sentient being, wisdom (*ye shes*) and consciousness (*rnam shes*), the other-empty and the self-empty, et cetera. The two form a strict dichotomy, and the former is a necessary condition for the latter *but not vice versa*. To uphold his hierarchical and dualistic system, Dölpopa contends that other-emptiness is superior to self-emptiness.

Other-Emptiness: Buddhist Dualism

In the words of Dölpopa, the relationship between the ultimate and relative truths is expressed as one of *support* and *supported* (*rten brten pa*) or *pervader* and *pervaded* (*khyab byed khyab bya*):

Since eliminating the pervader will eliminate the pervaded and
Since eliminating the support will eliminate the supported:
If you eliminate the ultimate, the relative will be eliminated,
If you eliminate the basic nature (*chos nyid*), phenomena (*chos*) will be eliminated. . . .
If you eliminate the other-empty, the self-empty will be eliminated,
If you eliminate the essential nature, the defilements will be eliminated,
If you eliminate purity, impurity will be eliminated,
If you eliminate the supreme self, all phenomena will be eliminated,
If you eliminate great bliss, suffering will be eliminated,
If you eliminate the permanent, the impermanent will be eliminated,
If there were no buddhas, there would be no sentient beings,
If there were no wisdom, there would be no consciousness,
If there were no self-arisen, there would be no other-arisen,
If there were no supreme other, there would be no inner and outer.²

The duality expressed here is one that is hierarchical; it is not reciprocal. That is, it is not the case that by eliminating saṃsāra that you thereby eliminate nirvāṇa, or by eliminating sentient beings you eliminate buddhas.³ Consequently, the two elements in the dichotomy do not co-exist in mutual co-dependence like left/right or up/down. Furthermore, the permanence that Dölpopa contrasts here with impermanence is a

permanence that is an eternal ground. It is transcendent and unchanging. Thus, it is not a permanence that is codependent with impermanence nor is it eliminated by eliminating impermanence. The permanent reality is also self-arisen (or self-existing), so it is not produced like something that is “other-arisen” (which is a product and thus impermanent and conditioned).⁴ Thus, he says that the ultimate truth is beyond dependently arisen phenomena.⁵

Also, he refers to this ultimate truth (or reality) as “the supreme self” (*bdag mchog*) and “purity” (*gtsang*), which he says is beyond the relative dichotomies of self/no-self, pure/impure, and permanence/impermanent.⁶ In this way, the ultimate is distinguished as the supreme “other” (*gzhan*) beyond the inner and outer, the internal and external. This is the “other” of the famed “other-emptiness,” which functions as a third category beyond conventional dichotomies (*phung po gsum*). This third category—the “other”—is an important feature of Dölpopa’s system of interpretation:

Those who state that all objects of knowledge are strictly limited to two, entities and nonentities, simply do not realize the basic nature of reality, the ultimate abiding reality, because although it is an object of knowledge, it is neither an entity nor a nonentity. Consequently, it is also established as just a third category, an in-between or middle.⁷

For Dölpopa, when reality is seen as it is, this third category, the other(-empty), is manifestly present. For a proponent of other-emptiness, it is this reality that cannot be negated; to negate it is to make a category mistake (by applying conventional reasoning about conceptually constructed things to the unconstructed nature where conventional reasoning does not apply).

Unlike Buddhist traditions that maintain a relationship between the ultimate and relative truths (or buddha and sentient being) as one of nondualism or monism—as in the reciprocal relationship maintained in the Geluk (*dge lugs*) tradition or as the unity found in the Nyingma (*nying ma*) tradition—the Jonang tradition is unique in its fully embracing the *ultimate* primacy of the former member of the dichotomy. Dölpopa maintains that “there can be a buddha without a sentient being, but there can be no sentient being without a buddha.”⁸ We can see in this statement how the function of a buddha here plays a role corresponding to one that God plays in classical theism: as a prior, transcendent, and necessary being that is the foundation for a world that is contingent. In a similar vein, Dölpopa says:

Complete purity (*rnam byang*) can exist without thorough affliction (*kun nas nyong mong pa*), but there can be no thorough affliction without complete purity. The uncontaminated (*zag med*) can exist without the contaminated, but the contaminated cannot exist without the uncontaminated. The undefiled buddha-nature can exist without defilements, but there can be no defilements without that buddha-nature. There can be the basic nature (*chos nyid*) without phenomena (*chos*), but there can be no phenomena without the basic nature. There can be the middle (*dbu ma*) without extremes, but there can be no extremes without the middle. There can be wisdom (*ye shes*) without consciousness (*rnam shes*), but there can be no consciousness without wisdom.⁹

We can see that the dualism in the Jonang tradition is such that the former members of the dichotomy have priority. As with the God/world relation in classical theism, the distinction between the two truths in the Jonang tradition is a difference between the necessary and the contingent. Therefore, in this tradition the line between the ultimate and relative truths is marked by a clear difference between what really exists and what does not really exist:

Many pure, exalted scriptures such as the *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga* state that the basic nature (*chos nyid*) exists and phenomena (*chos*) do not exist in reality. If you are skilled in interpreting the meaning of several similar statements of existing and not existing in reality (*gnas lugs la yod med*)—that the ultimate exists and the relative does not, that nirvāṇa exists and saṃsāra does not, that the truth of cessation exists and the other three truths do not . . .—then you will know through differentiating well the existent and the nonexistent.¹⁰

Dölpopa maintains that the relative truth does not exist *in reality* whereas the ultimate truth does. To put it another way, he holds that real existence equals ultimate existence (i.e., pure, eternal nirvāṇa) and relative existence lacks this kind of *real existence* (it is deceptive and impermanent). Although relative phenomena appear and function from a mistaken perspective, these phenomena are nonexistent in reality for Dölpopa:

These karmic appearances mistaken by sentient beings are private phenomena for only sentient beings, yet they are utterly impossible within the abiding reality—like the horns of a rabbit, the child of barren woman, a space-flower, and so forth.¹¹

Dölpopa clearly denies the equal status of the relative and ultimate truths, yet he does not assert their absolute difference, either. Rather, he formulates their relation by stating that they are “different in the sense of not being one nature” (*ngo bo gcig pa bkag pa’i tha dad*).¹² This is the relationship he lays out between what exists in reality and what does not, and the means by which he lays out his “Great Middle Way”:

Whereas relative phenomena do not at all exist within the abiding reality, the extreme of existence is the superimposition that they do. Whereas the irreducible, omnipresent wisdom of the expanse of phenomena (*chos kyi dbyings, dharmadhātu*) always abides pervading everywhere, the extreme of nonexistence is the denigration that it does not exist, is not established, and is empty of its own essence. That which is the middle free from those extremes is the ground free from all extremes such as existence and nonexistence, superimposition and denigration, permanence and annihilation, and so forth, due to which it is the consummate Great Middle Way.¹³

Moreover, since he affirms that ultimate reality really *exists*, he denies that it is some kind of third category (*phung po gsum*) between the dichotomy of “existence” and “nonexistence”: “The ultimate truth is also an object of knowledge; it must be either existent or nonexistent if it is an object of knowledge (*shes bya*).”¹⁴ Rather than describing the ultimate *via negativa* (as it is characterized in the *apophysis* of “self-emptiness”), he opts for *kataphasis*—a clear *affirmation* of ultimate truth:

There is no third category in between existence and nonexistence,
So get rid of this argument that it is neither existent nor nonexistent
And assert one or the other!¹⁵

His statements here contrast not only with others who claim that the ultimate truth is neither existent nor nonexistent (*yod min med min*),¹⁶ but with his own statements that the ultimate is a third category beyond conventional dichotomies. Yet Dölpopa delineates the realm of relative truth (in which he affirms the dichotomy of existence and nonexistence as mutually exclusive) from a realm of ultimate truth (that transcends dichotomization):

The meaning of being free from the extremes of existence and nonexistence is twofold: (1) when in extreme meditative equipoise on the profound basic nature, all constructs such as existence and nonexistence are discarded and there is no speech, thought, or expression; and (2) when determining the nature of reality in the contexts of postmeditation, there is no fault in differentiating in accord with reality by saying that what exists is existent and that what does not exist is nonexistent.¹⁷

When differentiating what exists from what does not in postmeditation, Dölpopa unapologetically claims that the ultimate reality exists. In meditative equipoise, however, he affirms that reality is beyond “existence” and “nonexistence”:

What is said regarding the freedom from all constructs such as existence and nonexistence, bliss and suffering, truth and falsehood, permanence and impermanence, the empty and non-empty, the pure and impure . . . is intended for the contexts of conclusively settling in profound, nonconceptual meditative equipoise.¹⁸

These two contexts—of postmeditation and meditative equipoise—are crucial to differentiating with regard to statements about the ultimate, and are particularly important for contextualizing the language of other-emptiness, which we will return to below.

Consciousness and Wisdom

The distinction between the two cognitive modalities of consciousness (*rnam shes*) and wisdom (*ye shes*) conveys the strong dualism in the Jonang tradition both ontologically and epistemologically, where consciousness is the relative truth and wisdom is the ultimate truth. Ontologically, wisdom is ultimate, as Dölpopa states: “The ultimate mind is the mind that exists with the abiding reality; relative mind is a mind that does not exist with the abiding reality.”¹⁹ In other words, wisdom is real; consciousness is not. Furthermore, Dölpopa conveys the epistemological implications of this: “Since the relative does not exist in reality, it is self-empty. It appears to consciousness, but not to wisdom. Since the ultimate exists in reality, it is not empty of itself but is other-empty. It appears to wisdom but never to consciousness.”²⁰ In this way, consciousness and what appears to it are self-empty; while wisdom and its domain are other-empty.

Dölpopa also speaks of the “universal ground wisdom” (*kun gzhi ye shes, ālaya-jñāna*) in contrast to the universal ground consciousness (*kun gzhi rnam shes, ālayavijñāna*).²¹ The difference between these two cognitive modes is effectively the difference between *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* (i.e., consciousness is the mind of *saṃsāra*; wisdom is the mind of *nirvāṇa*). This duality is comprehensive, comprising the totality of what is and what falsely appears. The distinction between the mutually exclusive domains of consciousness and wisdom is also how Dölpopa differentiates the inferior system of Mind-Only from his Great Madhyamaka. Moreover, he claims a distinction between Mind-Only’s realism (*dngos smra*) and his tradition’s empty-ground free from extremes, and cites that while he accepts the ground as an (ultimate) third category, the ground that the philosophy of Mind-Only asserts is a (relative) entity.²²

Another way duality plays out in Dölpopa’s works is in terms of the “three natures,” which are commonly found in Yogācāra treatises. The three natures—the imputed (*kun btags, parikalpita*), dependent (*gzhan dbang, paratantra*), and thoroughly established (*yongs grub, pariniṣpanna*)—get a distinctive twofold interpretation in the Jonang school, characteristic of Dölpopa’s dualism:

The imputed nature is the emptiness that is always nonexistent. The dependent nature, while temporarily existent, is the emptiness that is nonexistent in reality. These two are artificial and contingent. The basic nature that is the thoroughly established nature is natural and innate; thus it is the emptiness that is the nature of nonentities (*dngos po med pa’i ngo bo nyid*).²³

Rather than the thoroughly established nature simply being the emptiness of conceptual construction (e.g., duality) upon the causal processes of consciousness, in Dölpopa’s interpretation both consciousness and its conceptual constructions are taken to be negated, and the thoroughly established nature (i.e., wisdom) is the ultimate basis of negation. Thus, in his model, the thoroughly established nature stands in for ultimate truth, while the dependent nature—as the realm of consciousness in contrast to wisdom—is effectively collapsed into the imputed nature (the relative truth):

Temporarily (*re zhig*), it is said that the aggregates, constituents, and sense-fields, which are contained within the dependent nature, are the ground that is empty of the imputed nature, the self, and self-possession. In the end (*mthar thug*), the ground that is empty of even the dependent nature is the basic nature, the thoroughly established nature. . . . In this way, the ground that is empty of the imputed nature is the dependent nature. The ground that is empty of the dependent nature is the thoroughly established nature. A ground that is empty of the basic nature, the thoroughly established nature, is utterly impossible because it is the thusness that abides as spontaneously present, all the time and everywhere.²⁴

In this way, the three natures ultimately come to take a twofold explanation for Dölpopa, with the thoroughly established nature being the real foundation of the other two natures, which are ultimately unreal.

As we can see, the basic structure of duality—ultimate truth as the ground of the relative truth—is a recurrent theme in his work. It is reiterated in a number of ways:

The manifold qualities of the ultimate are the support and pervader and everything that is relative is supported and pervaded. Thus, without the manifold qualities of the ultimate, all that is relative would be impossible. Yet since the relative exists, the manifold qualities of the ultimate exist. . . . The manifold qualities of the innate (*gnyug ma*) are the support and pervader, and everything contingent (*glo bur ba*) is supported and pervaded. Thus, without the manifold qualities of the innate, all that is contingent would be impossible. Yet since these contingencies exist, the manifold qualities of the innate exist.²⁵

We see how the ultimate, transcendent ground functions as a condition for the possibility of relative phenomena and how he uses the existence of the contingent (relative) to establish the necessary existence of the unconditioned (ultimate).

The Theo-logic of Other-Emptiness

The other-empty reality, as an innate ground for the contingent, takes on the status of a necessary being (what cannot be nonexistent) for the Jonang school. In the arguments above we see a parallel to the cosmological arguments found in the work of the medieval Muslim theologian Ibn Sina (930–1037)²⁶ and which are echoed again by Leibniz: why is there something rather than nothing? There is something. We all experience it. So there must be a sufficient reason to explain it: there must be an unconditioned reality (God) that is not contingent.²⁷

Yet proponents of other-emptiness like Dölpopa deny being simple foundationalists by asserting that the unconditioned foundation of reality is not knowable by *ordinary* means. They agree that any notion of a conceptual foundation is to be rejected. Such foundations are exactly what the arguments of self-emptiness seek to undermine, for the logic of self-emptiness targets any ground or foundation of reality, self, et cetera and aims to show it to be simply an imputation and hence a delusion if taken to be real. The foundation that proponents of other-emptiness assert is one that purports not to be *conceptually* knowable. It is a transcendent, metaphysical ground, or, rather, a mystical reality that is only knowable through wisdom, the cognitive mode that allows us truly to access what is and who we are (as opposed to consciousness, the distorted mode of being). The foundation that proponents of other-emptiness appeal to is claimed to be known through the meditative wisdom of a sublime being (*'phags pa, ārya*).

To negate even this ground, and thereby all grounds, is held to be extending the reach of conceptual knowledge too far, as Dölpopa states: “Empty of all and empty of all phenomena are extremely different because within the abiding reality there is an emptiness of phenomena but not an emptiness of the basic nature.”²⁸ Dölpopa’s assertion here curtails the universality of emptiness and hinges on the point that we can *never* negate the ground that we ultimately stand on, the basic nature that we truly are: for this would be a performative contradiction—a theory divorced from

reality. It would be like saying that “This sentence does not (conventionally) exist.” Despite what it claims to say, the facticity of the utterance *shows* its undeniable existence. We can only argue to deny our reality if we prioritize logic over direct experience, or take a radically skeptical stance that denies our ability to say or know anything.

Since proponents of self-emptiness and other-emptiness do not dispute the emancipatory power of knowledge derived from nonconceptual meditative equipoise, the differences lie in their assertions in postmeditation. A noteworthy distinction is in the attribution of nonconceptual content: while proponents of other-emptiness embrace nonconceptual content—pure appearances, luminous clarity, forms of emptiness (*stong gzugs*), et cetera—for self-emptiness exclusivists, appearance is co-extensive with conceptuality. In other words, for a position that claims self-emptiness exclusively, to appear is to be (conceptually) distorted; thus, all appearances lose their ultimate (undistorted) status by virtue of showing up phenomenally.²⁹ In contrast, for proponents of other-emptiness and compatible views,³⁰ there can be phenomenal content that is not deceptive; that is, appearances can be ultimate.

Since the discourse of “self-emptiness” is concerned with the *lack* of ultimate reality, it simply articulates the ruptures and discontinuities of our self and world—the ontological status of unreality. “Other-emptiness,” however, seeks to affirm the content that remains when distortions have been removed—the ontological status of reality. For proponents of self-emptiness, the ultimate truth is what is “found” through rational analysis. That is, the lack of any true essence is the ultimate nature of reality; the ultimate truth is emptiness, a term that lacks any *real* referent. In contrast, the discourse of other-emptiness concerns descriptive (or prescriptive) statements about the nature of reality that draws its authority from a sublime being’s direct perception of reality within meditative equipoise. In contrast to a negative claim derived from a rational analysis, other-emptiness aims to signify the nonconceptual ultimate by a positive affirmation derived from direct perception.

Yet while the other-empty is said to “refer” to the ultimate truth, how can it be said to do so? Does it refer in a literal or a figurative sense? Is it a metaphor? Isn’t it supposed to be the definitive meaning (*nges don, nītārtha*) and not merely an expedient meaning (*drang don, neyārtha*)? Proponents of other-emptiness (as well as self-emptiness) are explicitly skeptical about the roles of discursive thought and language in gaining access to ultimate reality. Yet the traditions of other-emptiness embrace the language of “the other” (*gzhan*)—“supreme self” (*bdag mchog*), “purity” (*gtsang*), “permanence” (*rtag*)—to describe and evoke it. Is this a theory and practice in conflict? In other words, is the purported denial of conceptual thought and language to give an accurate account of reality not explicitly (or performatively) contradicted by stating that an other-empty reality is true, pure, and unchanging (yet beyond thought)?

We saw above how Dōlpopa delineates the contexts of nonconceptual meditative equipoise and conceptual postmeditation, where his claims to existence and nonexistence are made. The claims to ultimate existence in other-emptiness are based on authoritative statements (scriptures) that describe experience (in a sublime

being's meditative experience), but unless the experiences are one's own, they remain theoretical assertions or theological claims (assertions of faith). The *modus operandi* of other-emptiness can thus be stated as "faith seeking understanding," to use Anselm's apt phrase, a phrase that can help bring into focus the scholastic and emancipatory concerns at stake in this Buddhist philosophy. These dimensions of Buddhist philosophy are particularly important to keep in mind here because a generous reading and engagement with the philosophy of other-emptiness demand optimism about the nature of reality and our potential to experience it fully. Self-emptiness, on the other hand, does not carry these demands upon its participants to this extent. Rather, it requires a capacity to follow reason unopposed to its conclusions about an ultimate nature, particularly when those conclusions conflict with our most cherished beliefs (e.g., the existence of an enduring self or ultimate foundation).

Conclusion

Even while asserting that reality is free from conceptual extremes (in the context of meditative equipoise) and that reality in itself is nondual, we can see how Dölpopa sets up a structure of metaphysical dualism in his depiction of other-emptiness (in the context of postmeditation). As I have argued, the dichotomy of (1) an unconditioned ultimate truth (that exists in reality and is necessary as the condition for the possibility of contingent phenomena) and (2) a relative truth (that does not exist in reality and is contingent) is similar to the duality of God and world that we find in classical theism. Moreover, not unlike theology, the logic of other-emptiness (which is based on authoritative statements derived from the meditative wisdom of sublime beings) hinges upon scriptural authority and the ultimate irreducibility of (wisdom's) experience. Thus, we can see how the (theo-)logic that supports a hierarchically structured dualism lies at the heart of Dölpopa's Jonang tradition.

Notes

- 1 – Dölpopa, *Elucidation of Emptiness*, pp. 294–295.
- 2 – Dolpopa, *The Great Assessment of the Doctrine*, pp. 10–11; see also Stearns, *The Buddha from Dolpo*, p. 139.
- 3 – Dölpopa, *The Categories of the Possible and the Impossible*, pp. 306–307.
- 4 – Dölpopa makes a distinction between self-existing (or self-arisen) wisdom and other-arisen wisdom: the former is the unconditioned ultimate truth, while the latter, which is newly arisen as the result of cultivating the path, is conditioned (Dölpopa, *The Mountain Doctrine*, p. 314).
- 5 – Dölpopa, *The Mountain Doctrine*, p. 505.
- 6 – *Ibid.*, pp. 523–524.

- 7 – *shes bya thams cad dngos po dngos med gnyis su kha tshon chos par smra ba rnams kyis ni chos nyid don dam pa'i gnas lugs ma rtogs pa nyid du zad de/ de ni shes bya yin yang dngos po dang dngos med gang yang ma yin pa'i phyir ro/ /des na de ni phung po gsum pa dang dbus ma'am bar ma nyid du yang grub bo* (Dölpopa, *The Mountain Doctrine*, p. 513; see also Stearns, *The Buddha from Dolpo*, pp. 133, 251 n. 27).
- 8 – Dölpopa, *The Categories of the Possible and the Impossible*, pp. 306–307.
- 9 – Ibid.
- 10 – Dölpopa, *The Mountain Doctrine*, pp. 725–726.
- 11 – *sems can rnams kyis las snang 'khrul pa 'di ni sems can pa nyid kyi sgos chos yin gyi/ gnas lugs la ri bong gi rwa dang mo sham kyi bu dang nam mkha'i me tog la sogs pa ltar gtan mi srid pa'i phyir* (Dölpopa, *The Mountain Doctrine*, p. 727).
- 12 – Dölpopa also stated: “The two truths are not expressible as essentially the same or different; they are different in the sense of not being one” (*bden gnyis ngo bo de nyid dang/ gzhan du brjod du med pa gcig pa bkag pa'i tha dad pa yin*) (Dölpopa, *The Sun Elucidating the Two Truths*, p. 71; see also Dölpopa, *The Mountain Doctrine*, p. 603).
- 13 – *yod pa'i mtha' ni kun rdzob kyi chos rnams gnas lugs la gtan nas med pa yin yang yod do zhes sgro 'dogs pa gang yin pa'o/ /med pa'i mtha' ni chos kyi dbyings kyi ye shes cha med kun 'gro kun la khyab par rtag tu bzhugs kyang med cing ma grub la rang gi ngo bos stong ngo zhes skur 'debs pa gang yin pa'o/ /mtha' de dag dang bral ba'i dbus gang yin pa de ni yod med dang sgro skur dang rtag chad la sogs pa mtha' thams cad dang bral ba'i gzhi yin pa'i phyir dbu ma chen po mthar thug pa ste*. See also Dölpopa's *bka' bsdu bzhi pa'i rang 'grel* (Dölpopa, *The Mountain Doctrine*, p. 501; cited in Stearns, *The Buddha from Dolpo*, p. 248 n. 11).
- 14 – Dölpopa, *Dispelling the Darkness in the Mind*, p. 682.
- 15 – Ibid., p. 685.
- 16 – The Sakya scholar, Gorampa (go rams pa bsod nams seng ge) (1429–1489), critiqued both Dölpopa and Tsongkhapa (tsong kha pa blo bzang grags pa) (1357–1419) for their determinate assertions of the ultimate truth (as existent and nonexistent, respectively), and posited that the ultimate is neither existent nor nonexistent (see Gorampa, *Distinguishing the Views*). It is interesting to point out Dölpopa's affinity with Tsongkhapa here, yet in contrast to Tsongkhapa's delineation of ultimate truth as the nonexistent (essence), Dölpopa made precisely the opposite assertion by asserting the ultimate truth as existent. Tsongkhapa stated: “The ultimate truth is posited as solely the negation of truth [that is, inherent existence] upon a subject that is a basis of negation” (Tsongkhapa, *The Lesser Exposition of the Stages of the Path*, p. 396).

- 17 – Dölpopa, *The Mountain Doctrine*, p. 515.
- 18 – *Ibid.*, p. 523.
- 19 – *don dam gyi sems ni gnas lugs la yod pa'i sems so /kun rdzob kyi sems ni gnas lugs la med pa'i sems so* (Dölpopa, *The Mountain Doctrine*, p. 581).
- 20 – Dölpopa, *The Sun Elucidating the Two Truths*, p. 697.
- 21 – Dölpopa, *The Great Assessment of the Doctrine*, p. 13.
- 22 – *de rnam sems tsam min pa'i rgyu mtshan ni/ mtha' bral stong gzhi phung gsum yin phyir dang/ sems tsam yin na dngos smra yin pa'i phyir/ stong gzhi de rnam rnam shes chos las 'das/ gnyis med ye shes tshul 'chang yin phyir dang/ skad cig gcig dang du ma dang bral phyir / de dag dngos smra'i chos su ga la rung* (Dölpopa, *The Great Assessment of the Doctrine*, p. 20; see Stearns, *The Buddha from Dolpo*, p. 152).
- 23 – Dölpopa, *The Mountain Doctrine*, p. 379.
- 24 – *re zhig gzhan dbang du gtogs pa'i phung po khams dang skye mched rnam kun btags bdag dang bdag gi bas stong pa'i gzhi gsungs kyang mthar stong gzhi gzhan dbang gis kyang stong pa'i gzhi chos nyid yongs grub yin . . . de ltar kun btags kyi stong pa'i gzhi ni gzhan dbang ngo/ gzhan dbang gi stong pa'i gzhi ni yongs grub po/ chos nyid yongs grub kyis stong pa'i gzhi ni gtan mi srid de/ de ni nam yang gang na'ang lhun grub tu bzhugs pa de bzhin nyid yin pa'i phyir* (Dölpopa, *The Mountain Doctrine*, p. 378).
- 25 – Dölpopa, *The Categories of the Possible and the Impossible*, pp. 312–315.
- 26 – For Ibn Sina's (Avicenna's) argument for a necessary being, see *Avicenna on Theology*, trans. Arthur Arberry (London: John Murray, 1951), p. 25.
- 27 – In his *Monadology*, §§ 36–38, Leibniz states:
- But there must also be a *sufficient reason* for *contingent truths* or *truths of fact*. . . . And as all this *detail* again involves other prior or more detailed contingent things, each of which still needs a similar analysis to yield its reason, we are no further forward; and the sufficient or final reason must be outside of the sequence or *series* of particular contingent things, however infinite the series may be. Thus the final reason of things must be in a necessary substance, in which the variety of particular changes exists only eminently, as in its source and this substance we call *God*. (*The Monadology and Other Philosophical Writings*, pp. 237–238)
- 28 – *thams cad kyis stong pa dang chos thams cad kyis stong pa ni khyad par shin tu che ste/ gnas lugs la chos kyis stong yang chos nyid kyis mi stong pa'i phyir ro* (Dölpopa, *The Mountain Doctrine*, p. 602).
- 29 – The exceptional case here is the experience of a Buddha. Buddhist scholastic traditions have struggled with ways to explain how a Buddha's knowledge can both have phenomenal content and be undistorted. One way this is answered is that a Buddha's way of knowing is unique by perceiving both the relative and ultimate truths simultaneously.

30 – One could characterize an “other-emptiness compatibilist” view as a claim that accords with other-emptiness without the explicit metaphysical commitments to that position, as in the case of Mipam. See Duckworth, *Mipam on Buddha-Nature*.

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