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An Adornment of Essential Explanations of the Two Realities According to the Four Tenets

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KHYENTSE VISION
PROJECT

grub mtha' bzhi'i bden gnyis kyi legs bshad snying po'i rgyan

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Khyentse Vision Project: Translating the Works of
Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo

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TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

On the Main Topic

The theme of the two realities (often translated as the “two truths”) holds a central place in Buddhist thought across traditions. With his landmark teachings on the four truths and the twelve links of dependent arising, the Buddha explained that ignorance is the root of all suffering and that overcoming it leads to lasting peace. “Ignorance” means not knowing, or rather misunderstanding, the nature of reality. To address the crux of this misunderstanding, the Buddha uses the dialectic method of the two realities to differentiate between the way things appear, called “relative reality,” and the way things really are, or “ultimate reality.”

To understand these terms, it is helpful to briefly examine their literal meaning. “Relative reality” renders the Sanskrit compound *saṃvṛtisatya*, with “reality” as the translation of *satya* and “relative” of *saṃvṛti*. The latter term is composed of the prefix *saṃ-*, which means “together” or “complete,” and *vṛti*, to “conceal” or “cover.”¹ Relative reality therefore means “a reality that conceals.” The Sanskrit *paramārthasatya* is translated as “ultimate reality.” *Paramārtha* is composed of two terms: *parama*, which means “highest” or “ultimate,” and *artha*, which has a broad semantic range, including “object,” “thing,” “meaning,” and “purpose.”² It fundamentally means reality in its highest sense, as things really are.

As seen in the *Adornment of Essential Explanations*, the interpretation of these categories varies greatly from school to school. What all schools of thought agree upon, however, is the notion that due to sentient beings’ inability to distinguish these two levels of reality, they act in mistaken ways, which ultimately keeps them trapped in *saṃsāra*.

Summary of the Text

As the title suggests, this text is a concise exposition of the relative and ultimate realities according to the four Indian Buddhist tenet systems. The text follows the traditional Tibetan Buddhist hierarchy of views, beginning with the two Hīnayāna tenet systems of Vaibhāṣika and Sautrāntika, followed by the Mahāyāna tenets of Cittamātra and Madhyamaka. The first three sections are rather brief expositions of the two realities according to the first three tenets. The fourth section, dedicated to the Madhyamaka school, offers more detailed analysis. It is also here that the Geluk background of this text is most clearly revealed, with its typical distinction between the views of the Svātantrika and Prāsaṅgika.

Sources

References to the two realities abound throughout the Tibetan Buddhist canon, with some scriptures dedicated specifically to this subject, such as the Mahāyāna sūtra *Teaching the Relative and Ultimate Truths* (*Āryasaṃvṛtiparamārthasatyānirdeśa-nāmamahāyānasūtra*), or Jñānagarbha's *Distinguishing the Two Truths* (*Satyadvayavibhaṅga*).³ In the Madhyamaka tradition, founded on the writings of Nāgārjuna, the two realities become the central point of focus. In Tibet, the Madhyamaka view is generally regarded as the pinnacle of Buddhist philosophy, and all traditions consider themselves the heirs of Nāgārjuna's system. This fertile ground produced important innovations and contributions to Madhyamaka thought, as the intellectual brilliance of masters such as Tsongkhapa, Gorampa, and Śākya Chogden kindled debates that span the centuries and continue today.

Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo's exposition is based on a text by Dragpa Shedrub,⁴ an important Geluk teacher from Amdo in northeastern Tibet, who was active roughly 150 years before Khyentse Wangpo.⁵ It has the character of a summary of Dragpa Shedrub's longer exposition, being composed of entire passages copied verbatim and others that are abridged, while omitting all but one citation from other masters found in the source text. Dragpa Shedrub goes into significantly more detail in his discussion of the Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka presentation of the two realities. He relies heavily on Indian sources, including sūtras and the writings of Nāgārjuna, Candrakīrti, and Jñānagarbha, as well as the founders of the Gelugpa tradition (Tsongkhapa, Gyaltsab Je, and Khedrub Je), quoting and glossing their teachings. This makes his work significantly longer than the one by Khyentse Wangpo translated here.

Since Khyentse Wangpo's text has no colophon, we do not know why or when it was composed. We can speculate that he either wrote it in the course of his own studies or that it was composed under his guidance by one of his own students and then offered to him. In any case, the text was regarded as a helpful introduction to the subject and preserved among the works of Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo.

On this Translation

Since this text closely relies on a treatise by Dragpa Shedrub, his work was read in parallel during the translation. This proved to be very helpful for difficult passages or when the text in the Khyentse collection was abridged or incomplete. Significant variations in reading are indicated in the notes.

OUTLINE

I. THE VAIBHĀṢIKA SYSTEM

II. THE SAUTRĀNTIKA SYSTEM

III. THE CITTAMĀTRA SYSTEM

IV. THE MADHYAMAKA SYSTEM

A. Svātantrika Madhyamaka

B. Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka

1. Distinguishing the Two Realities
2. Explanation of Their Respective Natures
3. Etymologies
4. Are the Two Realities the Same or Distinct?
5. The Purpose of Ascertaining the Two Realities

བདེན་གཉིས་ཀྱི་ལེགས་བཤད་སྒྲིང་པོའི་རྒྱན།

An Adornment of Essential Explanations of the Two Realities

*Namo munīndrāya!*⁶

This brief exposition of the two realities has four parts.

I. The Vaibhāṣika System

According to the *Treasury of Abhidharma*,⁷ if the perception of a given phenomenon ends when the phenomenon is destroyed or conceptually deconstructed, that phenomenon is defined as a “relative reality.”⁸ Phenomena that have this characteristic are, for example, a jug and the water it contains. When the jug is smashed into pieces, the mind that apprehended the jug is no longer active, and when the different particles of matter that comprise the water are conceptually removed, the mind that apprehended water is equally no longer active. This can also be illustrated by other examples, such as pillars and so forth.

If the perception of a given phenomenon does not end when that phenomenon is destroyed or conceptually deconstructed, that phenomenon is defined as an “ultimate reality.”⁹ Phenomena that possess this characteristic are, for example, form, subtle particles, and uncompounded phenomena. Here, “form” refers to a form that remains perceivable even when it is broken down into particles. Subtle particles and uncompounded phenomena are regarded as ultimate realities because these particles cannot be broken down any further, and because uncompounded phenomena do not change, regardless of the extent to which they are conceptually deconstructed.

II. The Sautrāntika System

In the *Commentary on Valid Cognition*, it is stated:

Whatever is able to actually perform a function
Is here said to exist in the ultimate sense.
Everything else exists in a relative sense.
These are explained to be particulars and universals.¹⁰ [159]

Accordingly, an ultimate reality is defined as any phenomenon that is capable of actually performing a function.¹¹ Phenomena that possess this characteristic are, for instance, a jug, a pillar, and so forth. According to this tradition, the terms “ultimate reality,” “impermanent phenomenon,” “entity,” “compounded phenomenon,” and “particular” are synonyms and ontologically identical. This is because they assert that phenomena that are able to perform a function—such as benefiting or harming—are ultimate realities, and because they maintain that real entities are truly existent.

A relative reality is defined as any phenomenon that is not capable of actually performing a function. Phenomena that possess this characteristic are, for instance, space and conceptual designations such as “being one” and “being different” with regard to any phenomenon. The terms “relative reality,” “permanent phenomenon,” “non-entity,” “uncompounded phenomenon,” and “universal” are all ontologically identical. Since in this tradition all uncompounded phenomena¹² are relative realities, emptiness is also categorized as a relative reality.

III. The Cittamātra System

In terms of the defining characteristics of the two realities, their divisions, and so forth, Cittamātra is mostly in accord with the Svātantrika doctrine. However, the schools differ in their understanding of the instances of the two realities.¹³ According to the Cittamātra system, the fact that form is empty of outer phenomena and the fact that the imagined nature, which consists of imputations regarding the nature and attributes of appearances, [160] is not established in terms of an individual characteristic are accepted as instances of ultimate reality. The proponents of Svātantrika do not maintain this.

Furthermore, the proponents of Cittamātra assert that all ultimate realities are truly existent. This implies that whatever is a phenomenon of perfected or dependent nature is necessarily truly existent. Phenomena of perfected nature are truly existent because they are the final nature of phenomena. Phenomena of dependent nature are truly existent because they have the capacity to produce their own results.

IV. The Madhyamaka System

A. Svātantrika Madhyamaka

Even though most assertions of the proponents of Svātantrika are similar to those of the Prāsaṅgika school, there are differences. For instance, according to Svātantrika, the defining characteristic of an ultimate reality is that it is that through which a valid cognition becomes a valid analytical cognition that discerns the final nature, and the defining characteristic of a relative reality is that it is that through which a valid cognition becomes a valid analytical cognition that discerns the conventional.¹⁴

In terms of instances of the two realities, forms and so forth, which are established as merely posited through their appearance to a non-defective mind, are asserted as instances of relative realities. An instance of an ultimate reality is the fact that, rather than being merely posited in that way, the object is not established from the perspective of its own nature.

Furthermore, [161] two kinds of relative realities are distinguished. Undistorted relative realities are defined as relative realities that exist just as they appear to a mind that takes them as their main appearing objects. Water, pillars, and jugs—as well as uncompounded phenomena, cognitions, and colors—are all instances of this.

Distorted relative realities are defined as relative realities that do not exist in the way they appear to a mind that takes them as their main appearing objects. Mirages, reflections in a mirror, magically created horses and oxen, and people in dreams are instances of this. Besides these points, there are many subtle differences in the way that Prāsaṅgika and Svātantrika distinguish the two realities.

B. Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka

1. DISTINGUISHING THE TWO REALITIES

For Prāsaṅgika, the basis of distinction is the object of cognition. In this respect, phenomena are categorized as either one of the two realities and as either real or false. If, upon a given basis, real existence is excluded and negated, it is determined and proven to be false. If something is determined and proven to be false, its real existence is excluded and negated, for these two are in direct opposition in the sense of being mutually exclusive.

All phenomena possess two natures: their lack of inherent existence is their ultimate nature and their conventional existence is their relative nature. An ultimate reality is therefore defined as that which is found by a valid analytical cognition that discerns the final nature. An instance of this is the lack of inherent existence of a seedling. [162] A valid cognition that discerns the final nature is a valid cognition that induces the discernment of ultimate reality. It is the valid cognition that sees the ultimate nature of form and so forth. However, it is appropriate to say that the object of an ārya buddha's

valid cognition that discerns ultimate reality is not identical with the object of a general valid cognition that discerns ultimate reality.

2. EXPLANATION OF THEIR RESPECTIVE NATURES

When ultimate reality is differentiated from the perspective of its nature or the basis of emptiness, one distinguishes between the subtle selflessness of the individual and the subtle selflessness of phenomena. One also speaks of the sixteen kinds of emptiness in this context. When it is differentiated from the perspective of the various ways of communication, there are two types: the ultimate reality that is enumerable and the ultimate reality that is not enumerable.¹⁵

Generally speaking, the former comprises two aspects: the ultimate reality of an accepted object and the ultimate reality of the subject. An example of the first is [163] the illusory appearance aspect of a seedling that is devoid of true existence. An example of the second is the inferential valid cognition that cognizes this. These are merely designated as ultimate reality, as they are not ultimate realities in an actual sense.

The latter can also be terminologically differentiated in terms of the ultimate reality of the object and the ultimate reality of the subject. The first refers, for instance, to emptiness. Here, the terms “ultimate reality,” “the way things are,” “emptiness,” “the perfected,” “the extent of reality,” and “dharmadhātu” are all ontologically identical. The second is, for example, the wisdom cognition in the mind stream of a learner that directly perceives emptiness. Even though some say that this is a true non-enumerable ultimate reality, it is not an ultimate reality in an actual sense.

A relative reality is defined as an object of a valid cognition that discerns the conventional nature. An instance of this would be a seedling. A valid cognition that discerns the conventional nature is a valid cognition that induces the discernment of relative reality.

Regarding the categories of relative reality, even though the Prāsaṅgika tradition does not generally differentiate relative reality in terms of undistorted and distorted, this distinction is made in terms of the worldly perspective. This means that, even though a mind that has an object is [by definition] affected by ignorance as a deeper cause of delusion, these categories are posited on the basis of whether or not it is affected by a more superficial cause of delusion.¹⁶ Relative reality is not subdivided, because the distinction of whether it exists as it appears does not apply: if it is a relative reality, it does not necessarily exist as it appears.

3. ETYMOLOGIES

A jug’s emptiness of true existence is called an “ultimate reality” because it is real from the perspective of an ultimate mind—that is, the wisdom cognition of equipoise that directly cognizes emptiness—and because it is real in an ultimate sense. The wisdom cognition of equipoise is called an “ultimate subject” because it sees its object—ultimate reality—as it is. [164]

A jug is called a “relative reality” because it is real from the perspective of the relative mind, which apprehends phenomena as truly existent, and because it is false when compared to the way things really are. Apprehending things as truly existent is called “relative” because it obstructs the seeing of reality.

4. ARE THE TWO REALITIES THE SAME OR DISTINCT?

The two realities cannot be distinct in nature, because they would then be separate phenomena without any relation. It would then follow that the cultivation of the view that the jug is empty of true existence would be incapable of eliminating the apprehension of true existence.

They are also not the same, without any difference; if they were, it would follow that by seeing the jug, its ultimate nature would be directly realized. If this were maintained, it would follow that even the visual cognition of ordinary beings directly realizes emptiness. This cannot be accepted, because the generation of the ārya paths would then be futile.

The two realities are therefore of one nature but distinct isolates¹⁷ mutually dependent on each other. It is important to understand that all phenomena are empty of inherent existence and that emptiness is posited on the basis of these phenomena.

5. THE PURPOSE OF ASCERTAINING THE TWO REALITIES

Thus, the purpose of knowing the system of the two realities is to know the intent of the Victorious One’s discourses and to awaken by completing the accumulations. Also, to realize ultimate reality one must posit the relative reality of conventional designations in a certain manner.¹⁸ [165] Furthermore, knowing the basis, the systematic presentation of the two realities, one engages in the path by gathering the two accumulations in order to accomplish the result, the two kāyas. This is the connection. Those who do not know this are therefore mistaken. As the glorious Candrakīrti states:

Conventional reality is the means,
And ultimate reality is that which is attained through it.
Those who do not know how to distinguish the two
Enter bad paths due to their mistaken notions.¹⁹

It is therefore essential to ascertain the actual nature of the two realities by means of scripture and reasoning. This is an essential topic.

*Śubham.*²⁰

NOTES

1. The Tibetan term is *kun rdzob bden pa*, where *kun* means “all” or “complete,” *rdzob* to “cover” or “conceal,” and *bden pa* “reality” or “truth.”
2. The Tibetan is *don dam bden pa*, with *don* being the translation of the Sanskrit *artha*, and *dam* (short for *dam pa*) for “best,” “supreme,” or “ultimate.”
3. Refer to the bibliography for publication details.
4. On the life of the Geluk master, Dragpa Shedrub (co ne bla ma grags pa bshad sgrub, 1675–1748; BDRC P1629), see [Treasury of Lives](#).
5. Based on the current research on Khyentse Wangpo’s collected works, it is the second text in this collection based on the writings of this master. The other text is entitled *Seminal Words: A Systematic Presentation of the Four Truths and Dependent Arising*.
6. “Homage to the chief of the sages.”
7. See *Abhidharmakośa* 6.4.
8. In other words, a relative reality is any phenomenon that can no longer be perceived as such when it is physically damaged or deconstructed through analysis.
9. That is, an ultimate reality is any phenomenon that is still perceived as such, despite the application of destructive physical force or conceptual analysis.
10. *Pramāṇavārttika* 3.3.
11. In this context, stating that a phenomenon can “actually” perform a function means that it can have efficacy on the factual level of physical reality, as opposed to conceptual constructs, which do not have this ability.
12. Here the translation follows Dragpa Shedrub’s reading *’dus byas ma yin pa*, rather than the *’dus ma byas ma yin pa* attested in the texts in the Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo collection.
13. The Tibetan for “instance” is *mtshan gzhi (laksya)*, literally “basis of characteristics.” It denotes the phenomena that possess the characteristics in question.
14. In other words, an ultimate reality is that which is findable through a valid cognition investigating the ultimate nature, and a relative reality is that which is findable through a valid cognition investigating the relative nature.

15. All editions of this text in the Khyentse Kabum mistakenly have the section on enumerable and non-enumerable ultimate realities inserted into the discussion of relative reality (162.4–6). The paragraph was moved up to its correct place to align with the content and accord with Dragpa Shedrub’s original text.
16. That is to say, even though a dualistic mind is by definition affected by ignorance and in this sense faulty, on a superficial level, distorted worldly perceptions are furthermore affected by other conditions, and in this sense faulty even from the perspective of an undistorted worldly perception.
17. The editions of the Khyentse Kabum read: *des na bden gnyis ngo bo gcig la ldog pa tha dad med cing/med na*, which would be translated as: “The two realities are therefore one in nature and without separate isolates.” The repetition of the negation *med* is clearly a typo, as confirmed by the reading of the corresponding passage in Dragpa Shedrub’s text: *des na/ bden gnyis ngo bo gcig la ldog pa tha dad cing med na* (Dragpa Shedrub, 369); this is the reading followed here.
18. This probably refers to the use of reasoning to establish the dependent arising of conventional designations.
19. *Madhyamakāvatāra* 6.80. See Padmakara 2002.
20. Literally, “good” or “auspicious.”

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GLOSSARY

accumulations

ཚོགས་གཉིས། • *tsbogs gnyis* • sambhāradvaya

The accumulations of merit and wisdom, which form the causes for the achievement of the two kāyas or bodies of awakening: the rūpakāya (i.e., the form body that appears to other beings) and dharmakāya (i.e., the wisdom mind of a buddha).

ārya, ārya being

འཕགས་པ། • *'phags pa*

Literally, “noble one.” Those who have attained direct cognition of reality through the path of seeing. According to the Śrāvakayāna, those who have directly cognized the sixteen aspects of the four noble truths. According to the Mahāyāna, those who have directly perceived emptiness, the ultimate nature of phenomena.

Cittamātra

སེམས་ཅོམ་པ། • *sems tsam pa*

The Cittamātra or Mind-Only school of thought belongs to the Mahāyāna tradition. The term is related to the cognate concept of Vijñaptimātra (Cognition-Only) and to the Yogācāra tradition founded by the Indian masters Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, which is also sometimes called Vijñānavāda (School of Consciousness). The unique approach consists of aiming to demonstrate that everything in the world is nothing but mind; in other words, the objects one relates to are nothing but mental representations devoid of external independent existence (hence the name Mind-Only).

compounded

འདུས་བྱས། • *'dus byas* • saṃskṛta

Dependent on causes and conditions.

convention; conventional designation

ཐ་སྟོན། • *tha snyad* • vyavahāra

A designation or convention used for the sake of communication.

dependent

གཞན་དབང་། • *gzhan dbang* • paratantra

See *three natures*.

dharmadhātu

ཆོས་དབྱིངས། • *chos dbyings*

Synonym of ultimate reality and emptiness. Literally, “essence of phenomena” with *dhātu* carrying the meaning of essence.

emptiness

སྟོང་པ་ཉིད། • *stong pa nyid* • śūnyatā

The lack of inherent existence.

entity

དངོས་པོ། • *ngos po* • vastu, bhāva

A validly cognizable phenomenon that has the ability to perform a function.

final

མཐར་ཐུག། • *mtar thug* • paryanta

Relating to the deepest level of analysis and existence.

form

གནུགས། • *gzugs* • rūpa

The first of the five skandhas or categories of phenomenal existence. The category of form denotes all phenomena based on or derived from the subtle material elements of earth, water, fire, and wind, and includes all objects of sense perceptions.

imagined

ཀུན་བརྟགས། • *kun brtags* • parikalpita

See *three natures*.

kāya

སྐུ། • *sku*

A buddha’s awakening has two dimensions or levels of manifestation, called kāyas (literally, “bodies”). These are the dharmakāya or dharma-body (*chos sku*), which is a buddha’s wisdom mind, not perceptible to others; and the rūpakāya or form body (*gzugs sku*), which comprises the forms manifested in order to benefit others. The form body has two levels of manifestations: sambhogakāya or body of enjoyment (*longs sku*), the form perceptible only to highly realized bodhisattvas; and the nirmāṇakāya or emanation body (*sprul sku*), the manifestation visible to ordinary beings. Sometimes a fourth kāya is added: the svabhāvikakāya or essence body (*ngo bo nyid kyi sku*), which refers to the inseparability of the three kāyas.

learner

སྟོབ་པ། • *slob pa* • śaikṣa; śikṣā

An individual on the path who has not yet attained the highest level of accomplishment.

Madhyamaka

དབུ་མ། • *dbu ma*

Literally, “Middle Way.” One of the two philosophical systems of the Mahāyāna, the other being the Cittamātra, or Mind-Only. Going back to the writings of the Indian master Nāgārjuna, the Madhyamaka school emphasizes the lack of inherent existence of all phenomena, based on the doctrine of dependent arising. It is called the Middle Way because it frees the mind of the two conceptual extremes of existence and nonexistence.

non-entity

དངོས་མེད། དངོས་པོ་མེད་པ། • *dnegos med, dnegos po med pa* • avastu; abhāva

A phenomenon that is not validly cognizable and lacks the ability to perform a function.

particular(s)

རང་གི་མཚན་ཉིད། • *rang gi mtshan nyid* • svalakṣaṇa

Particulars, or specifically characterized phenomena, are objects of direct perception and have the ability to perform a function in actuality. They are so called because they are defined by the specific features unique to each individual phenomenon. See *universal(s)*.

perfected

ཡོངས་གྲུབ། • *yongs grub* • pariniṣpanna

See *three natures*.

Prāsaṅgika

ཐལ་འགྱུར་བ། • *thal 'gyur ba* • prāsaṅgika

Literally, “Consequentialist.” One of the two main subschool of Madhyamaka. Proponents of this school do not establish any thesis on their own but merely demonstrate that any thesis about ultimate reality is untenable by pointing out the unwanted or impossible consequences of such views. See Svātantrika.

relative reality

ཀུན་རྫོབ་བདེན་པ། • *kun rdzob bden pa* • saṃvṛtisatya

One of the two categories used to determine the nature of phenomena. The relative or conventional reality is explained to be the way things appear, as opposed to the way they really are. See *two realities* and *ultimate reality*.

Sautrāntika

སངས་སྤྲེལ་པ། • *mdo sde pa* • sautrāntika

Literally, “the Sūtra followers.” One of the two philosophical systems of the Hīnayāna, the other being the Vaibhāṣika. The Sautrāntika system relies closely on the sūtras and rejects the authority of the Abhidharma treatises accepted by the Vaibhāṣika. Both schools accept the true existence of outer phenomena in terms of indivisible particles and of mind in terms of indivisible moments of awareness.

selflessness of phenomena

ཆོས་ཀྱི་བདག་མེད། • *chos kyi bdag med* • dharmanairātmya

The lack of inherent identity in phenomena.

selflessness of the individual

གང་ཟག་གི་བདག་མེད། • *gang zag gi bdag med* • pudgalanairātmya

The nonexistence of a self or inherent identity in the individual.

subtle particle

རྩལ་སྤྲ་བ། • *rdul phra rab* • paramāṇu

The smallest unit of physical matter.

Svātantrika

རང་རྒྱུད་པ། • *rang rgyud pa*

Literally, “Autonomist.” One of the two main subschools of Madhyamaka. Proponents of this school use their own syllogistic arguments to establish the view of emptiness. See *Prāsaṅgika*.

three natures

དོན་གསུམ། • *ngo bo gsum* • trisvabhāva

Also “three characteristics.” The model of reality according to the Yogācāra system, consisting of the imagined, the dependent, and the perfected. The imagined (*parikalpita*; *kun brtags*) is the erroneously imputed existence of apprehended objects and the apprehending mind; the dependent (*paratantra*; *gzhan dbang*) refers to all appearances or phenomena arising in dependence on causes and conditions; and the perfected (*pariniṣpanna*; *yongs grub*) is the realization of the true nature of appearances (i.e., the dependent nature freed of the imputed duality).

two realities

བདེན་པ་གཉིས། • *bden pa gnyis* • satyadvaya

The two categories used to determine the nature of phenomena and perception: conventional reality and ultimate reality. These are interpreted differently according to the various tenets. See *conventional reality* and *ultimate reality*.

ultimate reality

དོན་དམ་བདེན་པ། • *don dam bden pa* • paramārthasatya

One of the two categories used to determine the nature of phenomena. The ultimate, or ultimate reality, is explained to be the way things really exist, as opposed to the way they appear. See *two realities* and *relative reality*.

uncompounded phenomena

འདུས་མ་བྱས། • *'dus ma byas* • asaṃskṛta

Phenomena, the existence of which does not dependent on causes and conditions.

universal(s)

སྤྱི་མཚན་ཉིད། • *spyi'i mtshan nyid* • sāmānyalakṣaṇa

Universals, or generally characterized phenomena, are objects of the conceptual mind that have no ability to perform any function in actuality. They are termed universals, or generally characterized, because the features that define them are shared with other objects of the same conceptual category. See *particular(s)*.

Vaibhāṣika

བེ་བླ་སྦྲུབ། • *bye brag smra ba* • vaibhāṣika

Literally, “the Vibhāṣa followers.” One of the two philosophical systems of the Hīnayāna, the other being the Sautrāntika. The Vaibhāṣika system relies on the authority of the encyclopedic Abhidharma work known as the *Mahāvibhāṣa*, or *Great Commentary*. Both schools accept the true existence of outer phenomena in terms of indivisible particles and of mind in terms of indivisible moments of awareness.