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**Phywa pa's argumentative analogy  
between factive assessment (*yid dpyod*)  
and conceptual thought (*rtog pa*)**

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In order to understand how knowledge is obtained, it is important first to understand the workings of the mind. Thus, it is not surprising that when Tibetan Buddhist philosophers began composing epistemological “summaries” (*bsdus pa*) in the eleventh or twelfth century, they placed a discussion of mental states – or, more accurately, mental episodes – at the very beginning of those texts. Because the authors of these texts held that all cognitive episodes take some object as their content, part of this investigation into cognitive episodes involves explaining the relations that these episodes bear to those objects. In this paper, I will be delving into one particular topic within this Buddhist theory of cognition. I will examine a single argument by Phywa pa Chos kyi señ ge (henceforth, Phywa pa; 1109–1169) contained within his famous epistemology text, the *Tshad ma yid kyi mun sel*, drawing out the philosophical implications that this argument has on his theory of cognition and his account of ontological dependence.<sup>1</sup> Specifically, I will make

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<sup>1</sup> I use the term “dependence” to translate the Tibetan term *'brel ba*. Many other writers translate *'brel ba* as “relation,” which is what the term means in its colloquial usage. In philosophical contexts, however, the term clearly has the stronger sense of dependence – of one object depending on another. One further consideration that motivates my decision to translate the term *'brel ba* as “dependence” is the following:

- a. *Dependence* ( $x$  depends on  $y$ ) is an *asymmetric* relation [i.e., if  $x$  depends on  $y$ , it needn't necessarily be the case that  $y$  depends on  $x$ ]
- b. *Relatedness* ( $x$  is related to  $y$ ) is a *symmetric* relation [i.e., if  $x$  is related

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the case that Phywa pa's argument fails to explain adequately the nature of the relation between certain cognitive episodes and the contents of those episodes. In addition, I will show that Phywa pa is forced to accept an arguably dubious version of externalism about mental content.

### Mental operations and their contents

Before evaluating Phywa pa's argument, it is important to clarify a number of points about the nature of cognitive states/episodes. In so doing, it will be possible both to see more clearly what issue Phywa pa is grappling with in his argument, and to better understand some of the potential problems Phywa pa's position might face. Following the lead of his predecessor rNog Blo ldan śes rab (1059–1109), Phywa pa develops an account of cognition in which it is maintained that there are seven distinct kinds of cognitive episodes.<sup>2</sup> What exactly does it mean, however, to be a “kind of cognitive episode,” and what sorts of features distinguish cognitive episodes as being of different kinds?

All cognitive states and cognitive episodes are, at the very least, some sort of *mental operation* on some *content*. To take an example from contemporary philosophy, consider a mental state such as *believing that Jones will win the lottery*. Here, the mental operation is that of *believing*, and the content of this operation is the proposition *that Jones will win the lottery*. If we change the content to some other proposition – such as the proposition *that Jones will lose the*

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to  $y$ , it necessarily follows that  $y$  is related to  $x$ ].

The Tibetan term *'brel ba*, when used in its philosophical sense in epistemology treatises, is clearly an asymmetric relation (for example, while smoke [*du ba*] causally depends on fire [*me*], the opposite is not the case; fire does not depend on smoke).

<sup>2</sup> See rNog (2006), 9b5 and following, and Phywa pa (2006), 8a6 and following. The seven kinds of cognitive episodes are: valid perception (*mñon sum tshad ma*), inference (*rjes dpag*), indeterminate appearing (*snañ la ma ñes pa*), subsequent cognition (*bcad pa'i yul can*), factive assessment (*vid dpyod*), false cognition (*log śes*), and doubt (*the tshom*).

*lottery* – the particular mental state will no doubt be different, but it will not (all other things being equal) be a different *kind* of mental state. On the other hand, if one were to change the original mental operation to one of *desiring*, then the resultant mental state, *desiring that Jones will win the lottery*, would be different in kind from the original. This suggests that it is the particular operation that determines what type of mental state one is in. By contrast, changes in content do not necessarily entail changes in the type of mental state.<sup>3</sup> That said, as will be explained below, it is possible that certain facts about the content of the mental state could play a role in determining the type of mental state one is in or the type of mental operation that occurs.

Putting this in the context of Phywa pa's epistemological program, we can now articulate more clearly what is meant when he speaks of there being seven types of cognitive episodes (*blo bdun*). Each of the seven kinds of cognitive episodes is a distinct kind of mental operation. For instance, *perceiving* a fire on a hill is different from *inferring* the existence of a fire on a hill. Both of these cognitive episodes take a fire on a hill as their object of engagement (*'jug yul*), but the mental operations – those of perceiving and inferring – are different in kind.

One additional point of note is that while each of the seven types of cognitive episodes described by Phywa pa is a distinct kind of mental operation, it may still be the case that these seven types of cognitive episodes share in common more basic mental operations.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> It is possible, however, that changes in the *type* of content could necessitate changes in the type of mental state one is in. For example, a mental operation that takes propositions as its content will likely be different in kind from a mental operation that takes some non-propositional object as its content. In the Tibetan tradition, one of Phywa pa's typologies of cognitive episodes – his three-fold typology of *rtog pa*, *rtog med ma 'khrul pa*, and *rtog med 'khrul pa* – is one where cognitions are divided into three different kinds by way of the *types* of objects appearing in those episodes. See Phywa pa (2006), 4a1ff.

<sup>4</sup> By analogy, while the operations of doubling ( $f(x) = 2x$ ) and tripling ( $f(x) = 3x$ ) are distinct mathematical operations, both could be said to be instances of the operation of multiplying. More generally, even when

Specifically, all seven kinds of cognitive episodes share in common the operation of ‘affirming their object(s)’ (*don yoñs su gcod pa*). Thus, while perceiving (*mñon sum*) a fire is a different kind of cognitive episode from falsely cognizing (*log śes*) a fire, both of these types of cognitive episodes are instances of the mental operation of cognitively affirming a fire. The moral to draw from this is that just because two cognitive episodes are instances of the same general mental operation on the same content, it does not necessarily follow that they are the same type of cognitive episode full stop, for they may differ with respect to being instances of other, more specific, mental operations.

### The argument

Among the seven kinds of cognitive episodes described by Phywa pa, one, *yid dpyod* – which I translate into English as “factive assessment” – is portrayed as a conceptual mental episode similar to inference that, by definition, has novel, true content, but that falls short of being an episode of knowledge due to its not being grounded in adequate evidence.<sup>5</sup> For example, if, upon seeing people carrying water up a hill, I were to form the belief that there is a fire burning on the top of that hill (due to my mistakenly thinking that whenever people carry water up a hill there must be a fire on the hilltop), my resulting judgment, if true, would be an instance of factive assessment. I make a true judgment through an inference-like process, but the mental episode is not genuinely inferential, because it is based on faulty reasoning.

After providing his definition of factive assessment and offering a nuanced typology of the various subtypes of this mental epi-

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A and B are two different types of operations, there may still be some operation C, such that performing operation A entails performing operation C and performing operation B entails performing operation C.

<sup>5</sup> For more on the role played by factive assessment in bKa’ gdams Tibetan epistemology, see my (2007). In that article I address some of the broader ways in which Phywa pa’s argument bears on our understanding of Tibetan views of cognition. Phywa pa discusses factive assessment most extensively in his (2006), 10a7ff.

sode, Phywa pa goes on to defend his account of factive assessment against possible criticisms. In his defense of factive assessment against one of these criticisms, Phywa pa provides an argument by analogy, comparing the relationship between factive assessment and its object to the relationship between conceptual thought and its object – concepts.<sup>6</sup> By examining this argument, much can be learned about Phywa pa's overarching theory of cognition and cognitive objects.

The argument by analogy that I will be focusing on is just one component strand within a larger argument that Phywa pa takes up in this particular passage. The more general thrust of the argument relates to the issue of how evidence is used in inferential reasoning, and whether the definition of factive assessment requires us to accept a new type of evidence: evidence lacking dependence. More specifically, Phywa pa argues that while episodes of factive assessment logically entail the possession of a true object, it does not follow that one can appeal to an occurrence of factive assessment as evidence for inferring that there is a true object, for one can ascertain that one is having an episode of factive assessment only after already identifying the object as true. While keeping in mind that much of his argument deals with that issue, I have framed the argument by analogy in such a way as to focus exclusively on the issue of cognitive episodes and their contents.

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<sup>6</sup> Our understanding of Phywa pa's use of analogical reasoning has been greatly enhanced through recent research by Pascale Hugon (2008). She has shown in intricate detail how analogical reasoning is employed in Phywa pa's writing, and has speculated on what these appeals to analogies can tell us about Phywa pa's theory of argumentation and inference. In the remainder of this paper I will focus on just one of Phywa pa's arguments that employs analogical reasoning. Instead of looking at this analogy with the intent of understanding Phywa pa's theory of *argumentation*, however, I will dissect the analogy in the hopes of learning more about Phywa pa's philosophical views concerning *the nature of mental content*.

The argument is presented as a back and forth dialectic between Phywa pa and a hypothetical philosophical antagonist.<sup>7</sup> The dialectic contains four parts:

1. The antagonist begins by *raising the problem*: Since all episodes of factive assessment (*yid dpyod*) must have true contents (*yul bden pa*), it would follow either that all such cognitive episodes depend on their contents, or that there is a type of evidence (one that could be used to draw inferences) that is not grounded in any sort of dependence relation (*'brel med kyi rtags*). But neither of these possibilities is acceptable. In short, the criticism is that if all episodes of factive assessment have true contents, unacceptable consequences follow.
2. Phywa pa replies by posing *an analogous problem*. Specifically, he constructs a case parallel to the antagonist's, dealing with the relation between conceptual thought (*rtog pa*) and concepts (*don spyi*). Just as in the original case, Phywa pa points out that, by analogy, if all episodes of conceptual thought entail the presence of concepts, then an unacceptable consequence follows.
3. The antagonist provides *a solution to Phywa pa's analogous case*, showing that there is really nothing problematic about the relation between conceptual thought and concepts, for this is a case where, while conceptual thought *entails* the presence of concepts, conceptual thought cannot be *evidence* for the presence of concepts. This is because one could never be in the epistemic position of knowing that one is having an episode of conceptual thought without already knowing that concepts are present.
4. Phywa pa applies the antagonist's *solution to the original case*, showing that, similarly, there is no problem making sense of

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<sup>7</sup> Phywa pa (2006), 10b6–9. The text of the argument and an English translation are included in the appendix. This same argument is spelled out by one of Phywa pa's successors, the author of the *Tshad ma'i de kho na ñid bsdu pa*, a work which has been, likely mistakenly, attributed to Kloñ chen pa. See Kloñ chen (2000), pp. 58–59. For more on the authorship of the above text see van der Kuijp (2003).

the relation between factive assessment and its object for the same relationship holds.

### Factive assessment and true content

This argument by analogy highlights a number of important philosophical issues. I find the most interesting of these issues to be that of how mental episodes are related to the contents of those episodes. Phywa pa, like other bKa' gdams epistemologists, maintains that all cognitive episodes (*blo*) have some sort of object (*yul*). That is, all cognitive episodes are cognitions *of* something. In the above argument, Phywa pa is focusing in on the relation between one particular kind of cognitive episode – factive assessment (*vid dpyod*) – and the objects or contents of those cognitive episodes.

With his argument by analogy, Phywa pa is attempting to defend factive assessment against the criticism that there is something illegitimate about its postulated existence. Given its definition, all episodes of factive assessment have a true object (*yul bden pa* or *don bden pa*). Put in another way, episodes of factive assessment are truth entailing: if someone factively assesses *P*, it follows that *P* is a true object.

Provided that it is of the nature of episodes of factive assessment that they are truth entailing, one might presume that this entailment is ensured by some sort of deep metaphysical relationship between this kind of mental episode and its content. That is, one might think that episodes of factive assessment *depend* on their objects. Since, for example, I cannot factively assess that there is a fire on the other side of the hill unless there actually is a fire on the other side of the hill, one might think that my having this mental episode depends on the existence of that fire.

Phywa pa cannot accept any such dependence, however. As is stated in his argument, Phywa pa supports the now standard Buddhist view that there are only two types of dependence grounded in the nature of entities (*rañ bžin gyi 'brel pa*, *svabhāvapratibandha*), and neither of these types of dependence is compatible with the rela-

tionship between factive assessment and its object.<sup>8</sup> Episodes of factive assessment cannot *essentially depend* (*bdag gcig tu 'brel ba*) on their objects, for essential dependence is a relation that requires the two relata (ordinarily, properties) to share the same ontological substratum. In this case that would require factive assessment to be physical matter, since it must be of the same nature as its object. Nor can the relation between factive assessment and its object of engagement be one of *causal dependence* (*de byuñ 'brel ba*), for if an extra-mental object did cause a person's cognition of it, such a cognition would actually be a form of knowledge (a *pramāṇa*) akin to perception and inference.<sup>9</sup>

As such, Phywa pa seeks to accept the following two theses:

- (a) All episodes of factive assessment have true objects.
- (b) Episodes of factive assessment do not *depend* on their objects.

In order to support his contention that (a) and (b) can both be true, Phywa pa draws an analogy in which he appeals to the relationship between episodes of conceptual thought and their phenomenal contents, concepts. Without explicitly endorsing it, he is presenting the view that the relationship between factive assessment (*yid dpyod*) and its object is analogous to the relationship between conceptual thought (*rtog pa*) and its object – concepts (*don spyi*). Phywa pa takes it to be obvious that,

- (a\*) All episodes of conceptual thought take concepts as their objects,

and yet,

- (b\*) Episodes of conceptual thought do not depend on concepts.

<sup>8</sup> The view that there are just two forms of dependence (*bdag gcig tu 'brel ba* and *de byuñ 'brel ba*, Skt. *tādātmya/tadutpatti*) becomes standard with Dharmakīrti (see Dunne 2004, p. 152).

<sup>9</sup> The reasoning here is that if factive assessment causally depended on its object, it would not arise in the absence of its object (*med na mi 'byuñ ba, avinābhāva*), which would be a sufficient condition for knowledge (*tshad ma, pramāṇa*).



The first claim (a\*), just like the parallel claim (a), is true by definition. On Phywa pa's analysis of conceptual thought, it is precisely the class of mental states that take concepts (*don spyi*) as their phenomenal objects (*gzun yul*). The second claim (b\*) is true because were the relationship between conceptual thought and concepts to be one of dependence, it would have to follow that concepts are real, causally effective things (*dnos po*). Neither Phywa pa nor his hypothetical antagonist, however, take concepts to be real objects.

The insinuation here is that just as there is nothing problematic about asserting the conjunction of (a\*) and (b\*), so too, by analogy, there is nothing problematic about asserting the conjunction of (a) and (b). Now, of course, Phywa pa's argument hinges on the idea that the relationship between factive assessment and its object is analogous to the relationship between conceptual thought and its object. It is thus important to look more closely at the parallels between these two cases.

In order to determine whether Phywa pa's analogy is cogent, we must focus on whether the relationship between conceptual thought and concepts is sufficiently similar in structure to the relationship between factive assessment and its objects. On the one side there are two types of mental episodes: factive assessment and conceptual thought. While each of these are, in Phywa pa's epistemological system, types of cognitive episodes, conceptual thought is a much broader category than is factive assessment.<sup>10</sup> In fact, all episodes of factive assessment are episodes of conceptual thought (but not vice versa). What is odd about the analogy, however, are the structural dissimilarities between the two objects of these mental episodes. In the case of conceptual thought, a point is being made about the mental episodes' *phenomenal* objects (*gzun yul*), which are the objects that directly appear to the mind. Yet, in his remarks about factive assessment, when he speaks of "true objects" (*don bden pa* or *yul bden pa*) Phywa pa is certainly *not* making a point

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<sup>10</sup> In Phywa pa's system, factive assessment is one of the seven cognitions within his *blo bdun* typology, while conceptual thought is one of the three cognitions within his *blo gsum* typology.

about the mental episodes' phenomenal objects.<sup>11</sup> Rather, he is apparently talking about the objects of engagement (*'jug yul*). This is no small difference, for in the case of conceptual mental episodes the relation between a mental episode and its phenomenal object (*gzun yul*) is fundamentally different from the relation between a mental episode and the cognition's object of engagement (*'jug yul*).

The phenomenal objects of conceptual thought – concepts (*don spyi*) – are mentally constructed entities that dawn (*'char ba*) in one's mind. In Phywa pa's claims about factive assessment, however, the objects about which he is most concerned are ones that are not typically mentally constructed. Rather, in many cases they are held to be external objects (*phyi rol gyi don*), that are causally efficacious (*don byed nus pa*) and hence real (*dños po*). For example, when factively assessing – from incorrect evidence – that there is a fire on the hill, the object at issue is a real, external thing. Given the differences between these two types of objects – (1) the phenomenal objects of conceptual thought and (2) the objects of engagement in episodes of factive assessment – one might have suspicions about whether Phywa pa's analogy is really adequate. In particular, given that the analogous case is grounded on claims about phenomenal objects whereas the original case is not, there is reason to think that the explanation for why conceptual thought entails the existence of concepts will be quite different from the explanation for why factive assessment entails the existence of a true object. That a given mental episode can entail the existence of some mentally constructed entity is not surprising at all. What would be surprising is a mental episode entailing the existence of an independently existing external object. Allowing for such mental episodes is tantamount to accepting *externalism* with respect to mental content. In essence, what this means is that *which* particular cognitive episode a person is having is not intrinsic to the mind. Part of what determines a person's cognitive episodes are features of the world external to and independent of the mind.

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<sup>11</sup> We know this because Phywa pa's definition of "true phenomenal object" (*gzun yul bden pa*) is "being able to perform functions" (*don byed nus pa*), which is a feature that the phenomenal objects of factive assessment (concepts) are known not to possess. See Phywa pa (2006), 9a1–2.

### Externalism

In order to better understand what I am speaking of when I say that Phywa pa is committed to externalism, let us look at a couple of examples. First, consider two situations,  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$ . Situation  $\alpha$  is one in which a person, upon glimpsing something looking like a cloud of smoke on the top of a hill – though it is actually a huge swarm of flies – mistakenly believes that it is smoke. As a result of believing there is smoke on the hilltop, this person illicitly “infers” that there is a fire on the top of the hill. Moreover, in situation  $\alpha$  there really is a fire on the top of the hill. As such, in this situation, the person's resultant cognitive episode is, by Phywa pa's standards, one of *factive assessment*, for the person forms a true judgment, but does so without relying on good evidence. Situation  $\beta$  is, *mutatis mutandis*, identical to  $\alpha$  except that in this case there actually is smoke rising from a fire on the top of the hill. In this latter case then, the person *correctly* draws an inference from the presence of the smoke to the presence of a fire on the hill. Thus, in situation  $\beta$ , the person's resultant cognitive episode is one of *inference*. In short, the person in  $\alpha$  has a different kind of cognitive episode than the person has in  $\beta$ , despite it being the case that the facts about the objects in both situations are identical. That is, in both situations, there really is a fire on the hill.

What the above two cases show is that the difference between episodes of inferential knowledge and episodes of factive assessment must be located in the way or manner in which the mental operations occur (*blo'i 'dzin stans*), and not in differences between the objects cognized. Despite having the same objects, the mental operation that occurs in a genuine case of inferential reasoning is different from the operation that occurs in factive assessment.

In contrast to the above, consider a third situation  $\gamma$ . This third situation is, *mutatis mutandis*, identical to situation  $\alpha$ , except that in  $\gamma$  there is *no* fire on the hill. In this third situation, the resultant cognitive episode, by definition, cannot be one of factive assessment. Instead, it would be labeled by Phywa pa as an episode of false cognition (*log ses*). We thus have two cases,  $\alpha$  and  $\gamma$ , that are very similar, but that differ in the kind of cognitive episode that

results: in  $\alpha$ , the person has an episode of factive assessment, and in  $\gamma$  the person has an episode of false cognition. Situations  $\alpha$  and  $\gamma$  are identical, however, with respect to the manner in which the cognitive episodes occur. That is, the causal geneses of the cognitive episodes are identical in the two situations, as are all other relevant aspects contributing to the occurrence of the cognitive episodes. Yet, in the one situation the cognitive episode is of one type – factive assessment – whereas in the other it is an episode of a different type – false cognition. The only difference between the two cognitive episodes is a difference between the contents. In case  $\alpha$  the resulting cognitive episode is one whose object has the property of being true, while in case  $\gamma$  the resulting cognitive episode is one whose object has the property of being false. But since, in these cases, the content or object of the cognitive episodes does not seem to be relevant to their occurrence, it is difficult to see why the episode in situation  $\alpha$  should be of a different type than the episode in situation  $\gamma$ . And yet, as Phywa pa and other bKa' gdams (and dGe lugs) epistemologists contend, in these cases it is precisely a characteristic of the object of the cognitive episode – its being true or false – and only this characteristic, that determines what kind of cognitive episode a person is having. It is precisely in this way that Phywa pa and his followers are committed to *externalism* about mental content.

We can also see from this example why Phywa pa's claims about dependence are so puzzling. While being forced to maintain that what *determines* the type of cognitive episode a person is having – what determines whether it is an episode of factive assessment or false cognition – is a fact of the matter about the object of the cognition, he still holds the view that having an episode of factive assessment does not *depend* on the object of the cognition being true. How is this possible?

### Dependence

Phywa pa's response in both the case of factive assessment's relation to its object and in the case of conceptual thought's relation to concepts is to maintain that while having such a cognitive episode entails the existence of a certain kind of object, it still isn't the case

that the cognitive episode depends on that object. While this stance makes it possible for Phywa pa to show the reader more clearly why there needn't be any additional forms of evidence (*rtags*) – forms of evidence that are not rooted in a dependence between the involved entities – his position still does not remove the tension noted at the end of the preceding section. Phywa pa is committed to the view that part of what determines the kind of cognitive episode a person is having is the truth status of the object of the episode, but also that this determination relation doesn't imply dependence. Although such a position is not contradictory, it is still philosophically tenuous. In the paragraphs that follow, I will offer two ways in which the tensions in Phywa pa's account could be resolved.

As should be obvious, one way in which Phywa's account could be made more tenable is simply by biting the bullet and granting that the relationship between factive assessment (*vid dpyod*) and true content (*yul bden pa*) is in fact one of dependence. At least in terms of what Phywa pa is ultimately trying to accomplish in this analogical argument – viz., to show that the existence of factive assessment does not require us to accept an additional form of evidence (*rtags*) capable of being used in inferential reasoning – there is no loss associated with granting that these two items do stand in a relation of dependence. Nevertheless, such a move is not something Phywa pa is in favor of, as it conflicts with the traditional Buddhist view that there are just two forms of dependence: essential dependence (*bdag gcig tu 'brel ba*) and causal dependence (*de byung 'brel ba*). Since the relation between factive assessment and true objects fails to fit into either of these two categories of dependence, Phywa pa assumes that episodes of factive assessment can't depend on having true objects.

The broader philosophical point at issue is just what we take the nature of dependence (*'brel ba*) to be. There are two general approaches one could take. On the one hand, one can hold that what it is for one entity to depend on another *just is* for the one entity either to essentially depend or causally depend on the other. Inasmuch as Phywa pa takes it for granted that factive assessment does not depend on its having a true object *simply because* it neither essentially nor causally depends on its true object, his position

is most similar to this first approach. On the other hand, one could hold that there is a more general concept of dependence – e.g.,  $x$  depends on  $y$  iff  $x$  could not exist unless  $y$  exists – within which essential and causal dependence are merely two salient subtypes. This latter approach would leave open the possibility of denying the central Buddhist assumption that those are the only two forms of dependence. My own view is that it is this second approach that results in a more philosophically tenable position, especially given the influence of externalism present in Phywa pa’s overarching account of cognition.

One final possibility, one that requires no changes to be made to the Buddhist tradition’s understanding of dependence, would be to conclude that there is something fundamentally wrong with the notion of factive assessment. Put simply, one could reject Phywa pa’s claims about the relationship between factive assessment (*vid dpyod*) and its object (*yul*). Interestingly enough, something like this position is adopted by Sa skya Paṇḍita in his *Tshad ma rigs gter*. He rejects the claims made by supporters of factive assessment on the grounds that they illegitimately assume the existence of a kind of entity that simply does not exist. Sa skya Paṇḍita maintains that there are fundamental problems with bKa’ gdams Tibetan accounts of factive assessment.<sup>12</sup> On Sa skya Paṇḍita’s view, there is no such type of cognitive episode as factive assessment. All of the cognitions that bKa’ gdams writers consider to be episodes of factive assessment, Sa skya Paṇḍita classifies as episodes of doubt (*the tshom*).<sup>13</sup>

In summary, in accepting Phywa pa’s definition of factive assessment one is confronted by a set of unappealing consequences.

<sup>12</sup> Sa skya Paṇḍita (1989), pp. 59–64.

<sup>13</sup> Sa skya Paṇḍita would be critical of the other half of Phywa pa’s analogy as well (dealing with the relation between conceptual thought and concepts [*don spyi*]). At the very beginning of his *Tshad ma rigs gter* Sa skya Paṇḍita passionately argues that concepts do not genuinely exist (1989, pp. 40–43). In particular, he argues this point by showing that – hypothetically speaking – if concepts were to exist, they would be mind dependent entities incapable of being grasped by other cognitive agents.

First, his account of factive assessment requires a strong version of externalism about mental content, a version of externalism that is highly counterintuitive. The consequences are even less intuitive and more controversial if one goes along with Phywa pa and denies that episodes of factive assessment *depend* on their having true content. If, on the other hand, one admits that these cognitive episodes do depend on their having true objects, one faces the interpretive difficulty of squaring that position with the view that there are only two types of dependence relations. In my own estimation, the difficulties here are best dealt with by denying that the definition of factive assessment describes a genuine type of cognitive episode.<sup>14</sup> Philosophically speaking, there is something quite bizarre about claiming that episodes of factive assessment represent a distinct type of cognitive episode. While Sa skya Paṇḍita does not express his criticisms in the same manner as I have above, he is on the right track in his criticisms of factive assessment.

## Appendix

Translation of Phywa pa's argumentative analogy between factive assessment (*yid dpyod*) and conceptual thought (*rtog pa*):

- A: Well, if it is the case that factive assessment entails having an ascertaining consciousness with true content, then in requiring that it entails true content is there (1) entailment by essential [dependence], (2) entailment by causal [dependence], or (3) entailment without dependence? If (1) then [mental episodes of] factive assessment would become physical matter, since they would share the same essence as physical matter. If (2) then [factive assessment] would become a type of knowledge, since the cognition wouldn't arise in the absence of the affirmed object. If (3) then the acceptability of this en-

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<sup>14</sup> Of course, this is not to deny the existence of cognitive episodes that, without relying on good evidence, take true, novel objects as their contents, it is just to deny that these factors are essential to the nature of the cognitive episodes themselves.

tailment without any form of dependence would imply the possibility of “evidence (*rtags*, logical reason) [that proves a property to be proved] without depending [on it].”

- P: Well then, such is the case also for conceptual thought entailing concepts as their phenomenal objects. Is that entailment due to (1) essential [dependence], (2) causal [dependence], or is it (3) without dependence? If (1) or (2) then insofar as concepts would be either materially identical with conceptual thought or the cause of conceptual thought, concepts would be real things. If (3) then since that would bring about entailing and entailed items (*khyab byed* and *khyab bya*) that are [nonetheless] not dependent [on each other], it would be possible for there to be “evidence [that proves a property to be proved] without depending [on it].”
- A: But since I don’t accept [that the link between conceptual thought and concepts is based on] either of these two forms of dependence, concepts would not become real things. And although there are entailing and entailed items that don’t depend on each other, this doesn’t amount to evidence (*rtags*), because there is no inference that can be drawn – since in ascertaining a cognitive episode as conceptual, one [must already have] ascertained its object, concepts, as well. Thus, this wouldn’t lead to the possibility of “evidence [that proves a property to be proved] without depending [on it].”
- P: So too for factive assessment; since I don’t assert either of the two forms of dependence on objects, I suffer neither of the first two faults. And although these are entailing and entailed items that don’t depend on each other, if one is to ascertain a cognitive episode as being factive assessment, one must already have ascertained that it had a true object. Because this rules out inference [i.e., it rules out the possibility of inferring that a cognition has a true object due to its being an episode of factive assessment], it wouldn’t lead to the possibility of “evidence [that proves a property to be proved] without depending [on it].”



Phywa pa's argument (Phywa pa 2006, 10b6–9):

'o na yid dpyod la yul bden pa ñes pas khyab na yul bden pas kyañ khyab dgos na bdag cig pas khyab pam de las byuñ pas khyab pa 'am 'brel pa med kyañ khyab / dañ po ltar na yid dpyod yul bems po dañ bdag cig pas bems por 'gyur la / gñis pa ltar na blo de yoñs su bcad pa'i don med na mi 'byuñ pas tshad mar 'gyur ba dañ / gsum pa ltar na 'brel med la khyab pa 'thad pas 'brel med kyi rtags srid par 'gyur ro že na /

'o na rtog pa la gzuñ pa don spyis khyab pa'an bdag cig pas sam de las byuñ nas sam 'brel pa med kyañ khyab / dañ po gñis ltar na don spyi rtog pa dañ rdzas cig pa 'am rtog pa'i rgyu yin pas dños por 'gyur la gsum pa ltar na 'brel med kyi khyab bya dañ khyab byed byuñ pas 'brel med kyi rtags srid par 'gyur ro /

gal te 'brel pa gñis mi 'dod pas dños por yañ mi 'gyur la / 'brel med kyi khyab bya dañ khyab byed yin yañ rtags ma yin te blo rtog par ñes pa na yul don spyi'an ñes pas dpag tu med pa'i phyir ro // des na 'brel med kyi rtags srid par mi 'gyur ro že na /

yid dpyod kyañ yul dañ 'brel pa gñis khas mi len pas ñes pa dañ po gñis med la / 'brel med kyi khyab bya dañ khyab byed yin yañ blo yid dpyod du ñes pa na yul bden pa'an ñes zin te dpag tu med pa'i phyir 'brel med kyi rtags srid par yañ mi 'gyur ro //

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