

# Transcending the Ultimate Duality

Graham Priest

August 22, 2022

Departments of Philosophy, the CUNY Graduate Center, the University of Melbourne, and the Ruhr University of Bochum

priest.graham@gmail.com

*Declaration of Interests:* The author has no relevant financial or non-financial interests to disclose.

*Acknowledgements:* A talk based on an earlier version of this paper was given at the (virtual) conference Monism, Ancient and Modern, at the University of St Andrews, July 2021. I am grateful to a number of members of the audience for their helpful thoughts and comments. Thanks, too, go to two anonymous referees for this journal.

## Abstract

In many philosophical traditions it is held that reality is non-dual. Of course, to be non-dual, as opposed to dual, is itself to partake of a certain duality. If reality really is non-dual, it must transcend this duality too. But what could this mean? Can one make coherent sense of it?

To keep the discussion focussed, I will locate it in one specific tradition: the Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition. The idea that ultimate reality is non-dual goes back to the earliest Mahāyāna sūtras at the turn of the Common Era. Thereafter, the question of what it means to transcend duality plays a central role in Buddhist philosophy. The point that reality must transcend even the duality between duality and non-duality plays a significant role in the Chinese Sanlun philosopher Jizang (吉藏, 549-623). His discussion points the way to an

answer to our problem which may be articulated with the techniques of contemporary paraconsistent logic, as we will see.

*Key words:* non-duality, ineffability, Buddhism, Madhyamaka, Jizang, paraconsistent logic

## 1 Introduction: Distinctions and Duality

In what follows we will be concerned with the view that there are no distinctions in reality. The view is a somewhat strange one, and apparently paradoxical. Doesn't even making the claim that there are no distinctions, imply that there is a distinction between there being distinctions and there being no distinctions? None the less, the view has been endorsed by notable philosophers.

Any monist—by which I means someone who holds that there is only one thing (as opposed to one *kind* of thing)—appears to be committed to it. Thus, consider the arch-monist, Parmenides of Elea (fl. 5th c BCE). If there is only one thing then, as Parmenides notes, it can have no parts; and if there are no parts, there are no distinct parts, and so no distinctions in reality.<sup>1</sup>

A much more modern philosopher who has endorsed this view is Michael Della Rocca,<sup>2</sup> though his argument is somewhat different. Starting from the Principle of Sufficient Reason, he argues (*à la* Bradley) that there are no relations. But if there were to be distinctions to be drawn in reality, there would be relations—if only the relation of distinctness between the distinct parts.<sup>3</sup>

These two philosophers are Western philosophers, and I shall not discuss them further here. For the purpose of this paper is to discuss one of the Asian traditions where the view also arises: Mahāyāna Buddhism. I mention the Western philosophers only to disabuse any readers who hold that the view in question is some piece of Oriental exotica.

In most Mahāyāna Buddhisms it is held that there is an ultimate reality, which transcends all distinctions. In the jargon that is used, it is said to be non-dual. In the first half of the paper, I will show exactly how this view

---

<sup>1</sup>For discussion, see Priest (2014), ch. 6.

<sup>2</sup>Della Rocca (2020).

<sup>3</sup>For discussion, see Priest (2021a).

arises. The discussion will lay bare the paradoxical nature of the claim: if reality is non-dual, it must transcend the distinction between duality and non-duality itself.

In the second part of the paper we will turn to the matter of how one may understand this situation, and show how applying some simple techniques of paraconsistent logic can be used to handle it.

## 2 Mahāyāna Buddhism

So in this section, let us see how the matter arises and plays a significant role in Mahāyāna Buddhism.

### 2.1 Early Buddhism

The exact dates of Siddhartha Gautama, the historical Buddha, are somewhat conjectural. But modern scholarship has him flourishing around 450 BCE.<sup>4</sup> His teachings were transmitted orally, but within a few hundred years there was an established canon of the teachings (or what they had developed into). This contained a large number of sūtras (Pāli: *suttas*)—texts recording the sayings and doings of the Buddha and his disciples. By about the turn of the Common Era, a number of early Buddhist schools had developed (the Abhidharma schools),<sup>5</sup> only one of which is now extant (Theravāda, the way of the elders).

At about this time, a whole new set of sūtras appeared, the *Prajñāpāramitā* (Perfection of Wisdom) *Sūtras*. These were claimed to record original teachings of the Buddha, which he had decided to keep secret until people were ready for them, since they were too difficult. However, they are clearly apocryphal. Apocryphal or not, they contained striking new metaphysical and ethical teaching (or perhaps better, extrapolations of the earlier teachings); and they generated a new form of Buddhism, Mahāyāna (Greater Vehicle).<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup>See Siderits (2019).

<sup>5</sup>See Ronkin (2018).

<sup>6</sup>Actually, over the next 1500 years, Mahāyāna itself fragmented into many different kinds. See, e.g., Williams (2009).

## 2.2 *The Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras*

In earlier Buddhist philosophy there had already appeared a distinction between conventional truth/reality (*samvṛti satya*) and ultimate truth/reality (*paramārtha satya*), originally to accommodate the sometimes apparently contradictory pronouncements of the Buddha.<sup>7</sup> The conventional truth is what one might say to the ordinary person to help them understand. The ultimate truth is what one would say when one wants to express things more precisely and correctly (and so is, in some sense, “higher”).

In Mahāyāna, the distinction takes on a whole new sense. Conventional reality is the familiar reality of our lived experience. Ultimate reality is reality as it actually is, below the appearances, as it were. And ultimate reality has some striking properties. Most notably, it is ineffable. Concepts can be applied only to things in conventional reality. Indeed, they are a device allowing us to “construct” this reality. They have no application to ultimate reality. One can, then, say nothing of such a reality. As it is put in one of the new sūtras, the *Vajracchedika* (Diamond Cutter) *Sūtra*:<sup>8</sup>

...words cannot explain the real nature of the cosmos. Only common people fettered with desire make use of this arbitrary method.

In another of the new sūtras, the *Aṣṭadaśasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* (Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra of 18,000 Lines) there is a discussion of how to grasp this ultimate reality. The Buddha replies that one needs to give up making conceptual discriminations. When asked what that means, he says:<sup>9</sup>

The non-duality of existence and non-existence, as well as the absence of intellectual multiplicity with regard to dharmas, such as form, etc. and also with regard to emptiness of form, etc. that should be viewed as the inherent mark of non-discrimination.

One cannot, then, describe the ultimate.

---

<sup>7</sup>The Sanskrit term *satya* is difficult to translate. The standard scholarly translation is *truth*, but *reality* is clearly a better translation sometimes. I will use whichever word seems most appropriate for the context.

<sup>8</sup>Price and Wong (1990), p. 51.

<sup>9</sup>Conze (1979), p. 651. The meaning of *non-duality* will concern us greatly in what follows. *Dharmas* are the elements of reality. We do not need to worry here about the meanings of the other terms of Buddhist philosophy.

That does not mean that one cannot be acquainted with it, or even refer to it as *that* (*tathā*). Indeed, it is often referred to as *thatness* (*tathātā*)—often translated as *suchness*. Thus in the *Astasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* (Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra in 8,000 Lines), we find the following:<sup>10</sup>

Suchness ... is just suchness without a trace of variety such as positivity and negativity, as nothing beyond even one, non-different, non-extinguishable, unaffected, non-dual, nor with even a question of duality.

And a little later we have:<sup>11</sup>

So again, just as this suchness of Tathagatas, immutable and undifferentiated, is nowhere obstructed, so also suchness of all dharmas is immutable and undifferentiated. Suchness of Tathagatas, and this suchness of all dharmas, are infinite and unlimited suchness; neither two, nor any division of any one is possible. A non-dual suchness, however, is nowhere, is ‘from’ nowhere, ‘belongs to’ nowhere. It is as it is. Suchness belonging nowhere, it is non-dual.

Here we have our non-duality.

### 2.3 *The Vimalakīrti Sūtra*

The *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras*, though having many philosophical aspects, are primarily religious texts. It was left to later philosophers to wrestle these aspects, such as non-duality, into philosophical order.

There were two major schools of Indian Mahāyāna: Madhyamaka, founded by Nāgārjuna (1st or 2nd c CE) and Yogācāra, founded by Vasubandhu (4th or 5th c CE). The notion of non-duality played a particularly distinctive role in the second of these. In *Trisvabhāvanirdeśa* (Treatise on the Three Natures), Vasubandhu discusses the three natures of an object. Two of these are aspects of its conventional reality, but the third, what he calls the consummate nature (*pariniṣpanna-svabhāva*), is its ultimate reality. Of this, he says:<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup>Conze (1973), pp. 271-2. Conze capitalises ‘suchness’. I have removed the capitalisation.

<sup>11</sup>Conze (1973), pp. 307-8. A *Tathāgata* (one thus gone) is a Buddha.

<sup>12</sup>Garfield (2002), p. 132, v. 16.

Since it is the essence of dual entities  
And is a unitary nonduality,  
The consummate nature  
Is said to be both dual and unitary.

The verse is cryptic. The consummate could be said to be dual simply because it is the ground of dual (conventional) objects. However, one could also read the verse as a hint that it has a contradictory nature (dual and non-dual). More of this in due course.

However, by far the most sustained discussion of non-duality in Indian texts is contained in the *Vimalakīrti Nirdeśa Sūtra* (Sūtra of the Teachings of Vimalakīrti). This is a sūtra of unknown origin, perhaps 1st c CE. It is an unusual text for several reasons, and appears to have had little influence in India. However, it had a major influence in China, where it was highly influential on the development of Chinese Buddhism.<sup>13</sup>

Chapter 9, entitled ‘The Dharma Door of Non-Duality’ is, as the name suggests, a discussion of duality, and what it means to transcend it. Many bodhisattvas<sup>14</sup> are present, and Vimalakīrti (an enlightened layman from Licchavi), invites them all to say what it means to transcend duality. Many replies are given. Here are a couple of examples:<sup>15</sup>

The bodhisattva Sunetra declared, “‘Uniqueness’ and ‘characterlessness’ are two. Not to presume or construct something is neither to establish its uniqueness nor to establish its characterlessness. To penetrate the equality of these two is to enter nonduality.”

The bodhisattva Nārāyana declared, “To say, ‘This is mundane’ and ‘That is transcendental’ is dualism. The world has the nature of voidness, so there is neither transcendence nor involvement, neither progress nor standstill. Thus, neither to transcend nor to be involved, neither to go nor to stop—this is the entrance into non-duality.”

---

<sup>13</sup>See Thurman’s preface and introduction to Thurman (2014), and Priest (2018), 6.5.

<sup>14</sup>In Mahāyāna Buddhism, a bodhisattva is someone who follows the path to enlightenment, for themselves and for all others.

<sup>15</sup>Thurman (2014), p. 73 ff.

The last bodhisattva to speak is the most important of them all. This is Mañjuśrī, the Bodhisattva of Wisdom—so he should know what he is talking about:<sup>16</sup>

Mañjuśrī, replied, “Good sirs, you have all spoken well. Nevertheless, all your explanations are themselves dualistic. To know no one teaching, to express nothing, to say nothing, to explain nothing, to announce nothing, to indicate nothing, and to designate nothing—that is the entrance into nonduality.’

Then, Mañjuśrī asks Vimalakīrti (the real hero of the dialogue) what he thinks, and we get (*ibid*):

Then the crown prince Mañjuśrī, said to the Licchavi Vimalakīrti, “We have all given our own teachings, noble sir. Now, may you elucidate the teaching of the entrance into the principle of nonduality!”

Thereupon, the Licchavi Vimalakīrti kept his silence, saying nothing at all.

The crown prince Mañjuśrī, applauded the Licchavi Vimalakīrti: “Excellent! Excellent, noble sir! This is indeed the entrance into the nonduality of the bodhisattvas. Here there is no use for syllables, sounds, and ideas.”

Mañjuśrī is impressed. The question is: why? A natural thought would be that although he has *said* what it is to transcend duality, Vimalakīrti has actually *done* it. That cannot be exactly right, however. Nothing can be done simply by keeping silent. If Vimalakīrti had forgotten what the conversation was about, or simply fallen asleep, his silence would have had no significance whatsoever. The significance it does have is determined by the context. And in this case, the context is what Mañjuśrī has just said. It is not Vimalakīrti who has transcended the duality, but Mañjuśrī and Vimalakīrti who have done it together. It is the words *plus* the silence that transcends the duality between speech and silence.

We will return to the interchange between Mañjuśrī and Vimalakīrti in due course.

---

<sup>16</sup>Thurman (2014), p. 77.

## 2.4 Jizang

To put the final piece of our jigsaw puzzle on the table. We need to look at one final text. This belongs to the Chinese Buddhist philosopher Jizang (吉藏 549-623).<sup>17</sup>

Buddhism (Mahāyāna) starts to go into China around the turn of the Common Era, where it gets tangled up with indigenous Chinese thought, most notably Daoism.<sup>18</sup> By about the 4th c CE, Chinese versions of Madhyamaka and Yogācāra are flourishing. Jizang belongs to the Chinese Madhyamaka school—called there *Sanlun* (三論, Three Treatise), since it was based on three Madhyamaka texts. By about the 6th c CE, distinctively Chinese forms of Buddhism have emerged. However even the Chinese versions of the Indian schools show notable influence of indigenous Chinese views, such as Daoist debates about *being* (Chin: *you*, 有) *vs non-being* (Chin: *wu*, 無).

In his treatise *Erdi zhang* (Treatise on the Two Levels of Truth, 二諦章), Jizang announces his project and its starting point, as follows:<sup>19</sup>

All of the three stages of two truths are a means to gradual abandonment, like a construction rising from the ground. Why? Ordinary people believe that everything is in fact existent, and don't know that it is not existent. Therefore the Buddha preached that everything is ultimately empty and is not existent.

We are to see the construction of a hierarchy of successive stages of rejection, or negation, as Hegel might have put it. The starting point concerns whether the dharmas, the elements of reality, are or are not. Jizang goes on to explain this dichotomy in more detail as follows:

The statement that everything exists is ordinary people's claim of existence. This is the common or ordinary truth. The sages truly know that the nature of everything is empty. This is the ultimate truth or the truth of sages. The doctrine of two truths at the first level is explicated so as to allow [ordinary people] to

---

<sup>17</sup>See Deguchi, Garfield, Priest, and Sharf (2021), pp. 58–63.

<sup>18</sup>See Priest (2018), 7.2.

<sup>19</sup>Translations from Jizang are from Deguchi, Garfield, Priest, and Sharf (2021), pp. 64–70. The quotes make reference to the notion of emptiness (Chin: *kong*, 空; Skt: *śūnyata*). Emptiness is a somewhat vexed notion that is central to Mahāyāna Buddhism. Fortunately, we do not have to worry about the matter here.



enter into the ultimate from the conventional and to abandon the ordinary so as to obtain the truth of sages.

It is conventional truth that dharmas have being. It is ultimate truth that they do not, that is, they are empty. We have, then, the following picture.

Stage	Conventional Truth	Ultimate Truth
1	being	non-being

Being and non-being form a duality, and so need to be transcended. Moreover, they are both expressed in language. So both are merely conventional. The ultimate is to reject both. As Jizang puts it:

Next is the second stage, where existence-and-non-existence (有無) is the conventional truth and *non-duality* is the ultimate truth. This means that existence and non-existence constitute two sides, one of which is existence and the other is non-existence... Since the conventional versus the ultimate... constitute two sides, they are taken to be the conventional truth. [On the other hand] since neither-the-ultimate-nor-the-conventional... are non-dual and the middle path, they are taken to be the ultimate truth.

In other words, *being* and *non-being* form a duality, and this is the conventional truth. Being a duality, it needs to be transcended. Denying both, not *being* and not *non-being* is the ultimate truth, and does so. Jizang glosses this as *non-duality* (the middle). This is slightly misleading: *being* and *non-being* are one duality, and so rejecting them transcends only one duality, not duality itself. However, let that go.<sup>20</sup> So, at the second stage we have the following picture:

Stage	Conventional Truth	Ultimate Truth
1	being	non-being
2	both being and non-being [duality]	neither being nor non-being [non-duality]

We are not finished yet, though. The situation with respect to the conventional and ultimate at this stage is exactly the same as before. We must therefore make exactly the same move. As Jizang puts it:

<sup>20</sup>In the passages cut out, Jizang identifies the duality between *being* and *non-being* with two others: that between permanence and impermanence, and that between *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa*. So he may naturally be understood as identifying all dualities.

Next is the third stage, where the dual and the nondual constitute the conventional truth and neither-dual-nor-nondual the ultimate. Earlier, it was explicated that since the ultimate versus the conventional... are two sides and therefore biased, they were taken as the conventional, whereas since neither-the-ultimate-nor-the-conventional... are non-dual and the middle path, they were taken as the ultimate. [However] they also constitute the two sides. Why? The dual is biased and the non-dual is middle. The biased is one side while the middle is another side. Thus the biased and the middle again constitute two sides. Since it is two sided, it is called conventional truth. Therefore neither-the-biased-nor-the-middle is the middle path and the ultimate truth.

At the second stage we have duality and non-duality. This is itself a duality, and, as Jizang realises, must itself be transcended—or *aufgehoben*, to put it in Hegelian terms. This is done in the same way as before—by rejecting both. Thus we have the following picture:

Stage	Conventional Truth	Ultimate Truth
1	being	non-being
2	duality	non-dualiy
3	both duality and non-duality	neither duality nor non-duality

At each stage, both the conventional and the ultimate at the previous stage become conventional, and the denial of both becomes ultimate.

Stage 3 appears to be Jizang’s final position on the ultimate. However, the ultimate at this stage leaves us in exactly the same situation as before. So whatever drives us to Stage 3 should drive us to a fourth stage. In fact, another Sanlun writer (at one time thought to be Jizang himself), adds a fourth stage in his text *Dasheng xuanlun* (The Profound Meaning of Mahāyāna, 大乘玄論). He terminates things at this stage.<sup>21</sup> Stopping at Stage 4 is problematic for exactly the same reason as stopping at Stage 3, however. The hierarchy should, in fact, go on to infinity.<sup>22</sup>

More to the point here, by rejecting the duality between duality and non-duality at Stage 3, Jizang takes himself to be transcending that duality, but he does not, since we still have the duality between the conventional

<sup>21</sup>See Priest (2018), 7.6, and Deguchi, Garfield, Priest, and Sharf (2021), pp. 68-70.

<sup>22</sup>See Priest (2018), 7.7.

and ultimate moments of Stage 3. Nor does iterating the scheme to infinity resolve the matter, since the same is true at every level.

Here, then, is our problem. How *do* you transcend the duality between duality and non-duality?

## 3 The Duality Between Duality and Non-Duality

### 3.1 Understanding Duality

We now have our target on the table. There is a duality between duality and non-duality. We might call this the ultimate duality. Even this must be transcended. How is one to understand this?

A natural thought about transcending the duality between being  $X$  and being  $Y$  is being *neither*  $X$  nor  $Y$ . That puts them on an equal footing. Applying this to the duality between being dual and non-dual, this gives: being neither dual nor non-dual. This was the move Jizang makes to take him from the conventional to the ultimate at Stage 3, and it does not work, as we saw. It still leaves us with a duality.

However, an equally natural thought about transcending the duality between  $X$  and being  $Y$  is being *both*  $X$  and  $Y$ . That also puts them on an equal footing.<sup>23</sup> In this case, transcending the duality between being dual and non-dual is being both dual and non-dual. This is still a duality, as Jizang was clear. But this is no longer a problem. If something is dual and non-dual, of course it is dual! The ultimate transcends the duality between duality and non-duality by being both. (Recall the hint from Vasubandhu.)

Being dual and non-dual is, of course, a contradiction. But the techniques of dialetheism and paraconsistency have taught us how contradictions of this kind may be intelligibly handled. How might one apply them in this case? First, what, exactly is it do be (non-)dual? The answer is given to us by the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras*. To be dual is to be subject to distinctions, in other words, to be effable. So to be non-dual is not to be subject to distinctions—in other words, to be ineffable. If something is ineffable, it is not a *this*, rather than a *that*, and so not subject to such distinctions. Conversely, if something is effable, something can be said about it: it will be *this*, rather than *that*. So this understanding of non-duality takes us back to the dialectic between speech and silence which concerned Mañjuśrī and Vimalakīrti.

---

<sup>23</sup>See Priest (2018), 9.12.

Hence we need a way of handling the notion of ineffability and the contradictions which may attend it. There are a number of ways of doing this. Here is one straightforward way.<sup>24</sup> For an object,  $a$ , to be ineffable (non-dual) is for it to have no properties: in the language of second-order logic,  $\neg\exists X Xa$ , that is,  $\forall X\neg Xa$ . So for it to be effable (dual) is for that not to be the case:  $\exists X Xa$ . Hence, for  $a$  to be effable and ineffable (dual and not-dual) is for it to be the case that  $\exists X Xa \wedge \neg\exists X Xa$ .<sup>25</sup>

### 3.2 Modelling the Transcendence

Of course, one now needs to be assured that there is a perfectly coherent way of understanding the matter; and one, moreover, that shows that this paradoxical contradiction does not infect more mundane matters.

This can be done with a simple model of the paraconsistent logic  $LP$ , and specifically its second-order variant.<sup>26</sup> In this logic, truth and falsity may overlap. Hence a claim may be both true and false. That is, both it and its negation may be true. A monadic predicate,  $P$ , has both an extension and an anti-extension. The things in the extension are the things of which  $P$  are true, and the things in the anti-extension are the things of which  $P$  is false. And as one would expect, the extension and anti-extension may overlap. The meaning of a predicate is a pair comprising its extension and anti-extension. (In “classical logic” the anti-extension is simply the complement of the extension, and therefore needs no separate specification.) Quantifiers work in a familiar fashion. The second-order quantifiers range over a domain of pairs, each an extension and an anti-extension.

Now, let  $a$  be some object in the domain. Choose a model in which  $a$  is in the anti-extension of every such pair, but also in the extension of some pair. Then  $\exists X Xa \wedge \neg\exists X Xa$  holds in the model. In particular, the predicate  $\neg\exists X Xx$  expresses the claim that  $x$  is ineffable. So if  $a$  is in the extension of this, one of the properties it has (one of the  $X$ s which make  $Xa$  true) is the property of being ineffable.

---

<sup>24</sup>Another can be found in Priest (2018), chs. 5, 6.

<sup>25</sup>This way of understanding ineffability was first suggested to me by Maiko Yamomori, who, sadly, passed away earlier this year.

<sup>26</sup>A paraconsistent logic is a logic in which the principle of Explosion,  $A \wedge \neg A \models B$  fails. Such a logic which accommodates contradictions but quarantines them, so that they do not spread. For a brief and informal introduction to paraconsistent logic, see Priest (1998) and (2021b). For a much longer and technical introduction, see Priest (2002).

It is easy to arrange for  $a$  to be the only object which is in both an extension and anti-extension. And in that case,  $a$  is the only contradictory object. So contradictions are very much localised.

I spell out the full and more precise details of the construction just described in a technical appendix to this essay, for those who wish to see them.

## 4 Conclusion

We have seen that duality and non-duality play important roles in Mahāyāna philosophy. We have also seen that in this philosophy the transcendence of all dualities plays a central role. For obvious reasons, this must include the (“meta-”)duality between duality and non-duality. Such transcendence is fraught with contradiction. However, we have seen how the notion and its attendant contradictions can be handled with some simple techniques from paraconsistent logic. Is this anachronistic? Of course. Is it objectionably so? Not at all, any more than using mathematical techniques that were not available to Newton to analyse his mechanics (which of course, many later mathematicians did). Applying such techniques can help us to show that an idea is coherent, and explore its consequence.<sup>27</sup> They cannot show it to be correct; that is, of course, another matter—and one for another occasion.

## 5 Technical Appendix

In this appendix I spell out the full technical details of the model described informally in 3.2.

The language of second-order  $LP$  contains predicates and constants. The connectives are  $\wedge$ ,  $\vee$  and  $\neg$ ; and there are first- and second-order variables and quantifiers. (We suppose, for simplicity, that the second-order predicates and variables are monadic.)<sup>28</sup>

An interpretation is a triple,  $\langle D_1, D_2, \delta \rangle$ . For every term,  $t$ ,  $\delta(t) \in D_1$ .  $D_2$  is a set of pairs,  $\langle Y^+, Y^- \rangle$ , such that  $Y^+ \cup Y^- = D_1$ .<sup>29</sup> For every predicate,  $P$ ,  $\delta(P) \in D_2$ . Let us write  $\delta(P)$  as  $\langle \delta^+(P), \delta^-(P) \rangle$ .

---

<sup>27</sup>For a fuller discussion of the point, see Priest (2018), ch. 10.

<sup>28</sup>On second-order  $LP$ , see Priest (2002), 7.2.

<sup>29</sup>If one replaces this constraint with the simpler  $Y^+, Y^- \subseteq D_1$  one has the logic  $FDE$ . This would do equally well for our purpose.

Write  $\Vdash^+ A$  and  $\Vdash^- A$  to mean that  $A$  is true, resp. false, in an interpretation. Then the truth/falsity conditions are as follows:

- $\Vdash^+ Pt$  iff  $\delta(t) \in \delta^+(P)$
- $\Vdash^- Pt$  iff  $\delta(t) \in \delta^-(P)$
- $\Vdash^+ \neg A$  iff  $\Vdash^- A$
- $\Vdash^- \neg A$  iff  $\Vdash^+ A$
- $\Vdash^+ A \wedge B$  iff  $\Vdash^+ A$  and  $\Vdash^+ B$
- $\Vdash^- A \wedge B$  iff  $\Vdash^- A$  or  $\Vdash^- B$
- $\Vdash^+ A \vee B$  iff  $\Vdash^+ A$  or  $\Vdash^+ B$
- $\Vdash^- A \vee B$  iff  $\Vdash^- A$  and  $\Vdash^- B$

For the quantifiers, we assume that the language has been augmented with constants,  $k_d$  for  $d \in D_1$ , such that  $\delta(k_d) = d$ , and  $K_d$  for  $d \in D_2$ , such that  $\delta(K_d) = d$ .  $A_x(d)$  is  $A$  with every free occurrence of  $x$  replaced by  $d$ . (Similarly for second-order variables.) Then:

- $\Vdash^+ \forall x A$  iff for all  $d \in D_1$   $\Vdash^+ A_x(k_d)$
- $\Vdash^- \forall x A$  iff for some  $d \in D_1$   $\Vdash^- A_x(k_d)$
- $\Vdash^+ \forall X A$  iff for all  $d \in D_2$   $\Vdash^+ A_X(K_d)$
- $\Vdash^- \forall X A$  iff for some  $d \in D_2$   $\Vdash^- A_X(K_d)$

An inference is valid,  $\Sigma \models A$ , iff for every interpretation, if  $\Vdash^+ B$  for every  $B \in \Sigma$ ,  $\Vdash^+ A$ .

Now, let  $t$  (*tathāta*) be ultimate reality. To obtain the model we require,  $\mathfrak{M}$ , take it to satisfy the conditions:

- $t \in D_1$
- for all  $\langle Y^+, Y^- \rangle \in D_2$ ,  $t \in Y^-$
- for every  $Z \subseteq D_1$ , there is a  $Y$  such that  $\langle Z, Y \rangle \in D_2$ .

It is immediate that in  $\mathfrak{M}$ ,  $\Vdash^+ \forall X \neg X k_t$ , that is,  $\Vdash^+ \neg \exists X X k_t$ .  $t$  has no properties; it is ineffable. Let  $Z = \{d \in D_1 : \Vdash^+ \neg \exists X X k_d\}$ . Then  $t \in Z$ . But for some  $Y$ ,  $d = \langle Z, Y \rangle \in D_2$ , so in  $\mathfrak{M}$ ,  $\Vdash^+ K_d k_t$ . Hence,  $\Vdash^+ \exists X X k_t$ .  $t$  has some properties—notably, the property of being ineffable. So it is effable.

Note that the contradictions in  $\mathfrak{M}$  need spread no further than  $t$ . If  $d$  is any other member of  $D_1$  it may behave quite consistently.

## References

- [1] Conze, E. (tr.) (1973), *The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines and its Verse Summary*, Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications.
- [2] Conze, E. (tr.) (1979), *The Large Sutra on Perfect Wisdom*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers.
- [3] Deguchi, Y., Garfield, J., Priest, G., and Sharf, R. (2021), *What Can't be Said: Paradox and Contradiction in East Asian Thought*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- [4] Della Rocca, M. (2020), *The Parmenidean Ascent*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- [5] Garfield, J. (2002), *Empty Words: Buddhist Philosophy and Cross-Cultural Interpretation*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- [6] Price, A. F., and Wong, M. L. (trs.) (1990), *The Diamond Sūtra and the Sūtra of Hui-Neng*, Boston, MA: Shambhala.
- [7] Priest, G. (1998), 'What's so Bad about Contradictions?', *Journal of Philosophy* 95: 410–426; reprinted as ch. 1 of G. Priest, J. Beall, and B. Armour-Garb (eds.), *New Essays on the Law of Non-Contradiction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- [8] Priest, G. (2002), 'Paraconsistent Logic', pp. 287–393, Vol. 6, of D. Gabbay and F. Guenther (eds.), *Handbook of Philosophical Logic*, 2nd edn, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- [9] Priest, G. (2014), *One*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- [10] Priest, G. (2018), *The Fifth Corner of Four*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- [11] Priest, G. (2021a), Review of Della Rocca's *The Parmenidean Ascent*, *Philosophical Review*, 130: 628–632.
- [12] Priest, G. (2021b), 'Dao De Jing and Mūlamadhyamakakārikā: Making Sense of Ineffability', *East Asian Journal of Philosophy* 1: 57–69.
- [13] Ronkin, N. (2018), 'Abhidharma', in E. Zalta (ed.), *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/abhidharma/>.
- [14] Siderits, M. (2019), 'Buddha', in E. Zalta (ed.), *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/buddha/>.
- [15] Thurman, R. (2014), *The Holy Teachings of Vimalakīrti*, University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University.
- [16] Williams, P. (2009), *Mahāyāna Buddhism: the Doctrinal Foundations*, 2nd edn, London: Routledge.