Introduction

In 1970, at the age of twenty, I left my native Switzerland and traveled to India, where I first encountered the Tibetan community that had been exiled to that country for more than ten years. The worldview I had grown up with, that of a French-speaking would-be intellectual,[1] and the countercultural spirit of the times had predisposed me toward leftist politics; but events at the end of the 1960s, particularly the collapse of the student movement and the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, had shaken my confidence in the validity of that option and left me disoriented. Like many of my contemporaries, I was seeking an alternative to wasting my life in ordinary drudgery—what French students used to refer to as "métro, boulot, dodo" (subway, work, sleep). I responded by traveling to Asia, hoping to encounter what seemed lacking in my own culture. On my first trip, I ventured to Turkey; there I met many "fellow travelers" going to India. I decided then that rather than follow the path of studying science that my father had traced for me, I would go to India, a land about which I knew nothing but which exercised an irresistible pull on my imagination. During this time, I also started to become interested in so-called Eastern spiritualities. In particular, I read Yogananda's *Autobiography of a Yogi* (1946), which further strengthened my resolve to go to India, where I could already imagine myself becoming an accomplished yogi.

Against the furious protests of my family, for once united in their thorough opposition to my crazy idea, I made my way to India, traveling overland through Eastern Europe, Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan by a variety of pleasant and less pleasant means of transportation—train, bus, and my then favorite, hitchhiking. After three months, I reached the Promised Land and quickly made my way to Vārānasi (Banaras) by squatting for

a whole night in front of the latrines of an overflowing third-class car of the Indian Railways. Vārānasi is the holy city of Hinduism, and I was hoping for some fulfilling encounters. But whereas I had expected a city of enlightened sages, all I encountered was an overwhelming mixture of dirt, misery, swarming beggars, and priestly craftiness. At this low point, when I was contemplating the dreaded return to my sarcastic but relieved family, the gods (I am not sure which ones) finally beckoned to me in the form of a young Frenchman. While we were sipping chai (Indian tea with milk and sugar) on the bank of the Ganga, he said, "I know where you should go . . . Dharamsala. . . . The Tibetans are there . . . they are wonderful, and you can study Buddhism if you wish." Although I had no idea what Buddhism was about (I remember shortly after this encounter asking a Thai monk I had just met whether there was any meditation in Buddhism), I found the idea appealing. My impression was further strengthened by the few Tibetan monks I saw while visiting Sarnath, near Vārānasi, where they were studying at the Higher Institute of Tibetan Studies. I vividly remember getting a glimpse of a group of monks from the institute while visiting the site of the Buddha's first teaching. They suddenly appeared through the bushes on their way to take a bath in the river, and I recall being impressed by the intelligence, kindness, and composure that they conveyed.

A few days later I left Vārānasi for Dharamsala, northwest of Delhi, which had been a hill station under British rule until it was almost totally destroyed by an earthquake in 1905. Because Dharamsala was thinly populated and had a cool climate, it had been chosen in the early 1960s to serve as the headquarters of the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government in exile. A sizable Tibetan community (around five thousand) had developed there, living in the upper part of the town; there they succeeded in re-creating a Tibetan lifestyle. This is where I first encountered Tibetan Buddhism. I was quickly captivated by its philosophy, which appealed to my outlook—informed, like that of many of my contemporaries, by an existentialism picked up in novels (for me, the works of Malraux and Camus) and in philosophically naive readings of Nietzsche and Heidegger. I soon entered a monastery and began studies that lasted for fifteen years. After following a traditional Tibetan monastic curriculum, I even had the good fortune of becoming the first Westerner to receive the title of Geshe (*dge bshes*, pronounced "ge-shay"), traditionally the highest degree awarded by Tibetan Buddhist monastic universities.

In this book I attempt to share with my readers some of these experiences, to explain the strength of the Tibetan intellectual culture, and to communicate the edification that I received from studying among Tibetan

monks. I examine Tibetan monastic education, analyzing its central practices: memorization, the reading of commentaries, and dialectical debate. I contend that understanding this education, which has formed many of the brilliant Tibetan teachers who have captured the modern imagination, is central to comprehending Tibetan Buddhism.

By showing the importance of the life of the mind in this tradition, I present a picture of Buddhism that differs from standard representations. Instead of straining my ears to listen to the mystical sound of one hand clapping,[2] I focus on practices such as debate, where the sound of two hands clapping can literally be heard loud and clear. In this way I make clear the important role played in Buddhism by the tradition's rational and intellectual elements. These elements have often been misrepresented as precursors of scientific inquiry or rejected as clerical corruption of an originally pure message. In *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping,* which examines the role and nature of rationality in Tibetan monastic education, I contend that each of these views seriously distorts the nature of rationality in traditional Buddhist cultures.

My claim is not that Tibetan culture is uniquely spiritual or that monasticism is the only focus of intellectual life. Tibet also enjoys a secular culture with political institutions, literature, music, folklore, and so on. Moreover, there are traditional nonmonastic forms of education, both religious and secular, as we will see later. Nevertheless, it remains true that the sophisticated intellectual culture that developed in the large monastic institutions has been at the center of traditional Tibetan life for centuries. Hence, an examination of the ways in which Tibetan monks are educated can provide an important view of the depth and richness of Tibetan culture. It can also correct the excessive emphasis on the mystical and romantic that at times have been the focus of Western understanding of Tibetan culture.[3]

INSIDE AND OUTSIDE

My approach to monastic education takes a rather unusual path. Whereas most studies examine this phenomenon from the outside, mine includes a large autobiographical element, which derives from my own extended association with Tibetan Buddhism. In many ways I am the "Tibetan Buddhist Monk" referred to in the subtitle, though there is nothing very Tibetan about me. This autobiographical dimension colors my account and thus marks the limits of this book. In studying Tibetan monastic education, I have made no pretense of being objective. I have been privileged to study with Tibetan monks, particularly with the teachers belonging to the

older generation. This has been one of the great opportunities of my life, a piece of good fortune made possible by their exile and by the ordeal of the Tibetan people in general. In many ways, I have benefited from their terrible situation, and I am deeply grateful for what I received during those years, which I consider my best and most formative.

Let me emphasize, however, that this account is not an attempt to promote the Tibetan tradition or to justify myself. Nothing could be further from my intention than to present a rosy picture of Tibetan monastic education. I do not believe that my indebtedness to the Tibetan people commits me to present a prettified account. Tibetan Buddhism is an extremely rich tradition that needs no advocates. Hence, this book offers a realistic assessment; I can only hope that my Tibetan readers will not take offense that I portray as accurately as possible the weaknesses as well as the strengths of their tradition.

The use of autobiographical material raises other, more serious problems. Some of the incidents and anecdotes I describe cannot be documented independently of my subjective account. Others could have been documented, but were not. These elements, presented in a factual rhetorical mode, reflect my own interpretations and preoccupations and my attempts at making sense of my past. Hence, they are less pictures of "what really happened" than reconstructions from my present perspective, with all the complex motivations that that approach entails. In certain ways, such complexity is characteristic of the study of human cultures in general, which necessarily has a mythological dimension that includes the author. Here, however, the mythmaking is explicitly about my experience and perspective.

Another consequence of this autobiographical orientation is my narrow focus. Although this book describes Tibetan monastic education as it existed in the twentieth century, its main point of reference is the tradition I saw in the 1970s—a time of transition, when monastic education encountered great difficulties but still could draw on the rich intellectual and religious resources it had in Tibet, resources that the circumstances of exile made readily available. The great teachers of the older generation were free from the political entrapments and the conservative pressures they would have faced in Tibet. Moreover, Tibetan Buddhism was not yet fashionable and relatively few people were competing for their attention. Newcomers could have easy access to these teachers, no longer the powerful and distant figures they had been in Tibet but vulnerable refugees. Hence, in some ways the tradition I encountered appeared in a particularly favorable light. As this book makes clear, my experience would have been quite different had I studied in premodern Tibet, where mentalities and institu-

tions were more rigid and great teachers were relatively unavailable. I also believe that the situation has already changed, with new conditions created by the disappearance of the older generation and the exponential growth of monasteries because of the influx from Tibet that I briefly describe in the conclusion.

The personal orientation of this work is further reflected in the choice of material that I analyze. My readers will notice that my attention is unevenly divided between the four Tibetan Buddhist schools (explained later) and their respective educations. Although I do present the ideas and practices of other schools, I focus mostly on the Ge-luk tradition in which I received my training. In recent years, I have been fortunate to be exposed also to the education offered in other schools, Sa-gya and Nying-ma in particular, thereby gaining a much more balanced view of Tibetan Buddhism. Hence, I can claim that my assessment of the weaknesses and strengths of the Tibetan schools is not partisan. I cannot claim, however, to present all schools with the same richness of material. My experience of Sa-gya or Nying-ma education was limited to a few months' study while I was no longer a monk, whereas I followed the Ge-luk training for fifteen years as a monk. Thus, my account cannot help but be slanted, though I have striven for as much balance as possible. I have also completely omitted any discussion of the Bön school, the only large non-Buddhist tradition in Tibet. But Bön education has been strongly influenced by that of the Buddhist schools, which it therefore largely resembles.

Yet this book is not simply an autobiographical recollection or an emic (i.e., internal) account, but also an etic (external) description of traditional monastic education. It analyzes the elements of that education, describing the way it works and the results it produces. In pursuing this aim, I draw on standard scholarly methods such as interviews and analysis of the published literature. That literature is limited, however, to a few firsthand accounts by Tibetan teachers of their education as well as a few third-person descriptions. Very few studies of Tibetan education attempt to go beyond the surface details to understand the nature of educational practices. That type of analysis is precisely what I provide here, illustrated by autobiographical elements.

In examining Tibetan monastic education, I have also included information on its history that was available to me. Such considerations counteract the tendency to naturalize the present and imagine that what we see now is what has existed for a long time. Tibetan scholastic traditions themselves often make such claims, presenting their educational practices as deriving from the great Indian scholastic centers such as Nalanda. Although

the filiation is real, we would be mistaken in assuming a high degree of continuity and failing to notice both the originality of Tibetan practices and the changes that they have undergone. In this work I examine some of these changes; but this book is not a history of Tibetan monastic education and its institutions, though such a study would obviously be welcome. My focus is mostly synchronic, examining traditional education as if it existed in the timeless present of anthropologists. This is obviously a fiction, for monastic education has changed greatly through the centuries, but such an approach is useful in presenting Tibetan monasticism as a living culture in which people are still educated, rather than as a merely historical curiosity.

I have also left out any discussion of monastic education in Tibet since 1959. That region has been dominated by the tragic events that have overtaken the Tibetan people. The senseless repression unleashed by the PRC against Tibetans in general and monks and nuns in particular has affected the situation so profoundly that any discussion of monastic education there would involve an analysis less of the nature of monastic intellectual culture than of the political situation in Tibet, a topic outside of my scope that has been ably examined by other scholars.[4]

Finally, I do not consider the education of nuns. It is said that before the seventeenth century, Tibetan nuns had their own educational institutions that produced sophisticated scholars. There are even reports (mostly oral, I believe) of public debates having taken place between nuns and monks. But the situation of nuns during the last two centuries has been quite different. Until recently, it was difficult for them to gain access to the same education as monks; the Dalai Lama has been pushing to make the kind of monastic education I describe here available to nuns. The problems and difficulties of such a task, the resistance to it from the monastic establishment, and the enthusiasm that it has generated among young nuns as well as its many successes are all elements of an important and new chapter in the history of Tibetan education, which would require a more focused examination than I can provide. Hence, my account is gender-specific. Yet I trust that most of what I am describing here applies to the education of nuns, as it is quickly developing in India.

THE COMPLEXITY OF TRADITION

I have written *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping* not just for those who are involved as scholars or as practitioners in the study of Tibet and its

Buddhism, but also for a wider nonspecialized audience, academic or not, that is interested in religious traditions and the role of intellectual life in them, the nature of education in Buddhism or other religious traditions, or the diversity of Asian cultures. It should also interest those who are intrigued by such intellectual issues as the relation between contemporary theories and traditional views of interpretation, the role of rationality and education in traditional cultures, the kind of practices found in such education, and the kind of intellectuals that it produces.

Too often tradition is understood solely in oppositional terms—as that against which modernity defines itself to assert its unquestionable authority. Tradition is then depicted as static rather than dynamic, as based on custom rather than reflection, and as repetitive rather than creative.[5] This view has been by now criticized by many thinkers, who have exposed at great length its limitations and blindnesses.[6] What may be less often appreciated is that such a critique, as necessary as it may be, still fails to do justice to traditional societies. To expose the dominant modern discourse as hegemonic does not provide an adequate view of tradition, which should be explored on its own terms, insofar as that is possible.

Once we leave the ground of stereotypical oppositions, we realize that far from being simple and mechanical, tradition is complex and multiform. This point is often obscured by reductive assumptions. One of the great temptations in analyzing tradition is to confuse it with traditionalism or fundamentalism, the belief that the validity of tradition requires only the literal repetition of some truth transmitted from the past. Such confusion arises because authority does play a central role in tradition. A tradition, particularly a religious one, is constituted around the transmission of a given truth based on the authority of the past. But that transmission is neither simple nor univocal, as traditionalism would have it, for truth needs to be constantly interpreted. This necessity introduces a tension central to the dynamic of tradition, which must negotiate between authority and the freedom required by interpretation. This intellectual dynamic, as it appears in Tibetan monastic education, will be one of my central concerns.

Those who discuss tradition face other pitfalls as well. First, such discussions tend to reinscribe a kind of great divide between tradition and modernity and to homogenize traditions as sharing some essential features that are no longer found in modern societies. This is not my intention here, as I focus on a particular culture, that of Tibet, and a particular type of traditional education, that received by monk-scholars. I do not aspire to present a general theory of traditional education, defining it once and for all

and providing the necessary and sufficient conditions by which we can differentiate it from modern education. On the contrary, I assume that tradition is multiform and escapes essentializing definitions. Hence, the best way to explore it is to provide locally grounded thick descriptions that identify features of traditional educational practices and distinguish them from modern ones.

In this work, *tradition* refers to historically located social practices and cultural forms that existed in Tibet during the first half of the twentieth century, before the PRC's invasion of Tibet, and have continued in the exile community in India where I encountered them between 1970 and 1985. Thus, the distinction drawn here between tradition and modernity is also personal and autobiographical, helping me to understand my own educational experiences as a young European immersed in the Tibetan monastic education.

Second, those who describe traditional Tibetan monastic education and compare it to modern education also are in danger of overemphasizing differences. This tendency is common in academia, where subtle distinctions are often reified into separations that obscure more fundamental commonalities. Dan Sperber puts it well: "[A]nthropologists transform into unfathomable gaps the shallow and irregular boundaries they had found not so difficult to cross, thereby protecting their own sense of identity, and providing their philosophical and lay audience with what they want to hear."[7]

In many ways, this book takes a very different approach, stressing the commonalities between modern and traditional educations as I experienced them. In discussing traditional monastic scholars, for example, I emphasize their similarities to modern ones by describing them (perhaps anachronistically) as intellectuals. But differences are obviously important as well, since they convey, as much as is possible, the idiosyncratic ideas and practices of these figures. In particular, the Tibetan monastic emphasis on reason and arguments must be differentiated from that of modern scholarly approaches; otherwise, it is reduced to an imperfect prefiguration of present scientific norms.

TRADITION AND ITS INTELLECTUALS

Clearly, this work concentrates on the education of the monastic elite, a significant but small minority. In Tibet most monks, even in the great monastic universities, did not participate in the intellectual culture I evoke here. In recent years, modern scholars have reacted against an exclusive focus on the life of the intellectual elite, which they see as leading to the ne-

glect of the culture of the larger lay groups.[8] This reaction, which Bernard Faure aptly describes as "inverted methodological scapegoating,"[9] often targets the emphasis on textuality in studying cultures in general and religions in particular.

The new interest in popular rituals and narratives is a welcome corrective, but it becomes dangerous as a normative restriction. It assumes that traditions can be understood without considering the views and practices of their intellectuals, who can be dismissed as irrelevant and bypassed for a direct contact with "authentically" marginal groups. This approach strikes me as particularly harmful to non-Western traditional cultures, which are thus deprived of their intellectual content and reduced to an atomized network of rituals and narratives displayed and controlled by modern scholars.

In Western academic discourse, traditional religious learning is often seen as something residual, an outdated leftover to be superseded as the world is inevitably secularized and modernized. Edward Shils, one of the scholars who has contributed most to the sociological analysis of intellectuals, describes them as persons "with an unusual sensibility to the sacred, an uncommon reflectiveness about the nature of the universe and the rules which govern their society."[10] He argues, however, that religious activities are increasingly irrelevant to the contemporary world, attracting a diminishing share of the creative capacities of the intellectual elite. Hence, traditional intellectuals represent a static past that has been left behind.[11]

Although this description is not entirely mistaken, it ignores the actual role of traditional intellectuals in the contemporary world; furthermore, it fails to account for their persistence. For better or for worse, traditional modes of behavior and institutions still have their place in our world. Hence, the sweeping dismissal of entire groups and modes of thought is unrealistic. This book attempts to present traditional Tibetan Buddhist intellectuals not as marginal leftovers whose meaningful role lies in the past but as vigorous thinkers in their own right.

One of the great good fortunes of my life is to have learned from these figures, who were educated in an entirely traditional context. Far from being a closed-minded lot, they came across as powerful and inquisitive thinkers, ready to tackle intellectual challenges and discuss issues on their merits. My work is a homage to this generation of scholars, now dying off. Yet it is not simply a nostalgic or hagiographic description by an admiring student. It is also an analysis of the education that produced these powerful minds, a foray into their intellectual culture, and an attempt to re-create its dynamic.

MONASTICISM AND SCHOLASTICISM

Because I focus on the formation of the Tibetan monastic elite, I am not concerned with the whole range of monastic experience but only with its scholarly dimensions. Hence, the key term of this book is *scholasticism* rather than *monasticism*.

Scholasticism is often misunderstood as involving hair-splitting discussions of irrelevant questions.[12] This modern prejudice obscures the nature and importance of scholasticism. Historically, scholastic thinking has been at the center of several traditions, and it continues to prosper today. Many modern thinkers can be considered scholastics, sometimes unbeknownst to themselves.[13] To rehabilitate scholasticism, we need to reconceptualize it as a range of diverse intellectual practices that shape its participants.

Academics typically have studied scholasticism in relation to Western traditions (including Islam), rarely considering it in relation to Buddhism or Confucianism. But in recent years, scholars have expanded this category, which can be fruitful for cross-cultural studies, and have shown that several Asian traditions can be usefully described as scholastic.[14] The question is, what do we learn about scholasticism by including these traditions? By analyzing the nature of the intellectual practices that constitute scholastic experience in the Tibetan tradition, my book attempts to make a substantial contribution to an answer. As a living and thriving tradition, Tibetan scholasticism provides an ideal venue for exploring a range of scholastic methods and their results.

In an important article on the scholastic method, George Makdisi characterizes Christian medieval scholasticism as a mode of presentation and as a way of thinking.[15] Formally, scholasticism consists of intellectual tools such as the lecture *(lectio)*, which provides students with authoritative glosses of the basic texts (mostly the scriptures), and the disputation *(disputatio)*, during which students continue their inquiry into the questions raised during the lecture. Scholasticism also involves a method of argumentation pro and contra *(sic et non)* through which doubts are raised about the contradictions that arise between authoritative texts. Affirmations about the content of the text are matched with objections, leading to a resolution. Finally, scholasticism is also characterized by texts such as Aquinas's *Summa Theologica* that rely on the pro and contra method in offering systematic, detailed, and rigorous explanations of relevant topics (mostly the articles of Christian faith).

As a mode of thinking, scholasticism is concerned with the relation be-

tween faith and understanding. As Makdisi puts it: "There is also an inner spirit, the basic characteristic of which is a deep and equal concern for both authority and reason."[16] Because both Islam and Christianity are religions of revelation, they rely on scriptures to provide the unquestionable basis of their tradition. But unconditional acceptance does not necessarily provide unequivocal direction, for the meaning of those scriptures needs to be established, the contradictions between texts resolved, and the fine points clarified. The systematic exploration of the content of faith is the main objective of the scholastic method in medieval Christianity, which assumes that reason and revelation can be harmonized, that "if God gave us reason, then reason and revelation are from the same source, and the two must be in harmony and cannot be in contradiction."[17]

Makdisi's formulation provides a useful starting point. As we will see, Tibetan scholasticism uses some of the same intellectual tools (the lecture and the disputation) as its Western counterpart. Tibetan monastic manuals *(yig cha)* often follow an approach similar to that of the *Summa,* examining each topic by refuting other positions, presenting the right view, and clearing away possible objections. Similarly, the "inner spirit" of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition is in some ways concerned with the relation between faith and understanding. But this formulation is perhaps a bit narrow and fails to include many scholastic practices. For one thing, it is too overtly theological, limiting scholasticism to a religious tradition in which faith is considered as the primary category. Even in medieval Europe, scholasticism was not limited to the study of Christian theology but affected secular branches such as dialectic, rhetoric, grammar, mathematics, and medicine. Moreover, and more relevant to our topic, the notion of faith is not the most felicitous way of approaching Tibetan scholasticism, where faith is considered secondary to the development of wisdom, the primary goal of the tradition.

Thus, rather than discuss scholasticism as revolving around the relation between faith and understanding, revelation and reason, I discuss scholastic practices as being concerned with the relation between authority and interpretation. I believe the most distinctive feature of scholasticism to be its emphasis on interpreting the great texts constitutive of the tradition within the confines of its authority, using the intellectual tools handed down from previous generations. Accordingly, I focus here on the intellectual tools of Tibetan scholars and distinguish three types of practice—or, as I like to put it, intellectual technologies: memory, commentary, and dialectical debate. I ask a series of questions about these technologies: Why do scholastics memorize so much? What is the role of memorization in the curriculum

and in the formation of monks? How does commentary function as a focus of authority? What room for interpretive freedom does commentary leave? How does debate participate in this dialectic of freedom and authority? Is the central scholastic activity reading, or is it debating?

An examination of Tibetan scholasticism has also the merit of underscoring that scholasticism is relevant to religious practice, a fact largely overlooked when it is discussed as purely intellectual. I maintain that scholasticism is concerned with important and relevant questions. It participates in the creation of a meaningful universe and provides its practitioners with comprehensive ways to shape their life and character. Thus, this book is relevant both to those who are interested in scholasticism and to students of religious phenomena. By examining education as a form of practice, it explains the ways in which Tibetan scholastic education functions, the educative technologies of its traditions, and its goals. The reader will also gain a greater insight into the ways in which Tibetan scholars practice and understand Buddhism, as well as the intellectual culture that they have developed to sustain their religious commitments.

Understanding the practical relevance of scholasticism is particularly important within the Tibetan context, where the temptation has been to oppose scholarly and hermitic traditions.[18] But it is simplistic to think of scholastic and contemplative cultures in such terms. Though Tibet has a firmly established tradition of hermits engaging single-mindedly in solitary meditation, many of these yogis retreat to their practice after undergoing a scholastic training similar to that of the monks, either within their families, where they are educated by their father or uncle who is himself a trained scholar, or in a monastery.[19] Moreover, scholarly activities and meditative practices do not exclude each other. Most of the important figures of the tradition combine the two approaches, illustrating the ideal of the master endowed with both learning and meditative accomplishments *(mkhas grub gnyis ldan)*, an ideal that Tibetan traditions hold as normative.

It is also true that there is a Tibetan tradition of anti-scholastic thinkers from Kar-ma Pak-shi to Zhab-kar, who stand in opposition to scholars such as Sa-gya Paṇḍita or Dzong-ka-ba. But many of these iconoclastic thinkers began their career with extended scholastic training and hence were not outside of the tradition they sometimes denounced. Typical in this respect is Long-chen Rab-jam-ba, who was a well-trained scholar when he left the monastic milieu to become a hermit. His works, which contain an original blend of philosophical discussions, historical considerations, and inspirational poetry, reflect the role of scholastic education in the formation of the

nonmonastic elite and are far from representing a pure hermitic culture existing independently of scholasticism. This is not to say there are no distinctions or tensions between contemplative and scholastic, tantric and nontantric orientations, but to argue, as does Matthew Kapstein, that "neither of these oppositions was absolute, and that in the lives and careers of individual masters differing facets are frequently intermingled."[20]

The Sound of Two Hands Clapping is divided into three parts. The first consists of three chapters that provide context. In chapter 1 I give a brief synopsis of the main elements of Tibetan Buddhism and sketch the history of the tradition. Chapter 2 examines the nature of Tibetan monasticism, focusing on the institutional framework in which scholastic studies take place. Chapter 3 examines monastic discipline by following the course of a typical monastic career and the role played in it by teachers; I also describe my own less typical monastic career.

In the second part, I analyze the intellectual practices that constitute scholasticism. The discussion starts in chapter 4 with memorization and the acquisition of basic literacy, which constitute the heuristic aspect of the process. It continues with an analysis of the two types of complementary interpretive practice that form the core of this work, commentary (chapters 5–9) and debate (chapters 10–12). The constitutive role of commentary is treated in chapter 5, and competing curricular models in chapter 6. Chapter 7 considers the role of oral commentary and its relation to the issue of orality. Chapter 8 discusses the soteriological role of commentary, its relation to meditation, and its participation in the construction of meaning, particularly in relation to the study of the path. Chapter 9 examines commentarial logic, contrasting it with the critical approach embodied in debate, which is taken up next. Debate as a dialectical practice is examined in chapter 10, which explains the rules of debate and how they are learned; the role of debate in the curriculum, particularly in relation to the study of logic, epistemology, and Madhyamaka, is considered in chapter 11; and the use of debate by Tibetan scholastics is the focus of chapter 12, which emphasizes the different approaches in the tradition and the function of debate as a mode of inquiry.

The final two chapters examine the results and limitations of these interpretive practices. In chapter 13, I analyze the use of rationality in Tibetan scholasticism, particularly in its relation to some of the practices associated with folk religion, thereby distinguishing it from modern scientific inquiry. Chapter 14 considers some of the limitations of Tibetan

scholastic education, particularly those intrinsic to its structure. It also sets out the external limits imposed by the sociopolitical location of scholastics, sketching how Tibetan scholasticism has been shaped by the pressure of political forces and events. And in the conclusion, I briefly consider the future of scholastic education as modern secular education develops among Tibetans and provide a very provisional evaluation of my own scholastic experience.