that cause rebirth, and we will become Arhats.[1] We will never again conceive of things as inherently existing. However, because of our beginningless conditioning to this way of seeing things, they continue to *appear* to us in the usual, false way. There is no longer any danger that we might believe this appearance but nevertheless, it continues, only slowly giving way. Until it completely disappears, we cannot simultaneously know things and their emptinesses (which, as we will discuss later, are known as the "two truths"). Therefore, we are not omniscient.

In brief, all schools other than Pråsaêgika are said to be "Proponents of True Existence" because they do not completely reject the idea that phenomena have some kind of "pointable" existence. Cittamåtrins deny that *external objects* have true existence but they do not deny that *mere* objects or the *mind* does; Svåtantrika-Mådhyamikas deny true existence *ultimately* but they say that *conventionally*, in the world, "truly existent" is the way things really exist. Only Pråsaêgikas say that *even in the conventions of the world* nothing truly exists. That is, there is no valid cognition of any inherently existent object. Their rejection of it is total, so they are the sole "Proponents of Non-True Existence," or "Proponents of Only-Imputed Existence," since they say that things can only be said to exist as mere imputations or designations in dependence upon parts or thought.

If no other school recognizes the conception of inherent existence, does this mean that only Pråsaêgikas can become liberated? Not exactly. The Pråsaêgika school thinks that it is necessary to realize directly the absence of inherent existence in order to become liberated from saôsåra. At the same time, they do not deny that non-Pråsaêgikas can attain liberation. How can that be? We must recall that we are talking about innate conceptions that are identified and analyzed in meditation, not propositions that are argued in the debating courtyard. It is possible for anyone to realize something more subtle than what their own schools teach, if they are, in fact, even a proponent of tenets. That is, such people simply discover, in meditation, a deeper truth than they were seeking.

[1]The obstructions to liberation are eliminated at the seventh of the ten Bodhisattva grounds into which the fourth of the five paths is divided. The fifth path, the path of no more learning, is Buddhahood, when the obstructions to omniscience have been eliminated as well. To indicate how much more work must be done to eliminate the obstructions to omniscience (and how much greater are Buddhas than Arhats), it is said that this period is one of countless great eons.

Why Are We Ignorant?

Buddhists generally do not speculate about the causes of ignorance other than to say that it is as beginningless as the universe and perpetuates itself endlessly unless we are fortunate enough to encounter the Dharma and learn how to challenge it. It is felt to be enough to identify it as the problem and to find methods to overcome it. However, thinking that it might help our readers to understand how these conceptions might take form in themselves, what follows are some brief indications of how the operation of ordinary consciousness helps to create an illusory sense of self.

In the first place, consciousness (that is, mental consciousness, to use the Buddhist terminology) is primarily the ability to *imagine*. One of the ways we believe that we differ from the lower animals and from humans who lived more than a few millennia ago is our capacity to create mental analogues of ourselves and other things so that we might replay past events and plan for the future. To plan for the future implies goals and intentions, which are intimately bound up with our image of self. Indeed, the self might be described, as Csikszentmihalyi does, as the "dynamic mental representation we have of the entire system of our goals."[1] Our experience continually refers to this structure and brings to it a greater level of complexity. Perhaps ignorance about the self derives in no small part from this capacity to create an analogue of ourselves and imagine it interacting with other people and things.

Similarly, consciousness has a powerful capacity to create the illusion of a stable world around us. It is obvious that since we have at any given moment a limited scope of knowledge and do not have the ability to keep track of everything at once, consciousness must construct a picture of the world for us. It operates by what might be called "screening" and "story-making." First, it is necessary to screen out much of the sensory data available to us at any given moment, as we would otherwise be overwhelmed. We are able to do this with such success that sometimes, when we are very focused, we have virtually no awareness of anything except the task at hand.

Nevertheless, we have a remarkable sense of continuity, both of our own being and of our environments, due to the way that human consciousness fills in the gaps to make experience seem fluid, connected, and whole. It maintains the illusion that there is a continuous "me" keeping track of everything. Hour after hour, day after day, we maintain a description of ourselves and the world that is based upon only

[1]*Flow*, 35.

fragmentary information. Moreover, this is a highly conservative process, tending to resist strongly new information or perspectives that conflict with the storyline. We suggest that perhaps this powerful and extremely subtle feature of consciousness supports the illusion of a continuous, central self.

Another relevant aspect of consciousness is the way in which recognition occurs. The Buddhist epistemologists as represented by the Sautråntika school give us the best discussion of perception, one accepted by the higher schools as well. How do we recognize things? The epistemologists answer that we all have a store of "generic images"—mental constructs of *types* of things. We have a construct for every phenomenon we are capable of recognizing. When we recognize something, we "match up" the external sense data with mental images of the *types* of things we are perceiving. To recognize a "tree," for instance, I make reference to my *idea* of "tree," which is not any specific, real tree but rather the amalgam of all trees I've ever experienced. My present perception then gets *mixed* with past experiences; it becomes impossible to experience anything nakedly, freshly. We suggest that perhaps the very existence of such generic, or *a priori*, images, makes us tend to *assume* "tree-ness" as something real, not merely a projection from our own side.

Finally, it seems obvious that we might indulge in the imagined self of ignorance in part because we are disturbed by aging, death, and the transience of the things of our experience. It is deeply unsettling to see everything in constant change. (Western existentialism focuses upon this experience of the mere "contingency" or non-necessity of everything.) It is comforting to assume that at the core, persons and other phenomena are stable.

Whatever might be the mechanisms by which we come to have an erroneous, overly solidified sense of self, it is clear that it is intimately connected with tendencies to be aggressive, acquisitive, intolerant, jealous, and miserly, to name but a few. Recalling Csikszentmihalyi's description of the self as a set of goals, we know that our primary goal is self-preservation and, beyond that, self-enhancement, as might occur through the extension of the self in representations such as material possessions, power over others, and identification with larger entities such as nations, political movements, religions, and so forth. Buddhism contends that to become aware of the construction of self and its ramifications is to become free of them. Perhaps this is what the Japanese Zen master Dogen meant when he said, "To study the self is to forget the self."

What Is a Person?

Buddhist philosophers use the word "person" more broadly than do most of us, since not only humans but also animals, hell beings, hungry ghosts, demi-gods, and gods are persons. But they also use the term in a special sense to designate that which is the most essential aspect of our individual beings. To put it another way, they ask, "What is it about me that constitutes my personhood? What is really *me*?"

One way to begin to answer this question is to make an inventory of the various aspects of living beings. We are all complex creatures, having a certain type of body and a mentality that can be distinguished into various kinds of consciousness, certain feelings, certain moods and motivations, and certain discriminations. The Buddha spoke often about the five "aggregates" of body and mind, categories into which he placed all of these elements.

But when we refer to the "person,"or even "me," just what among these factors *is* it? Am I my body? My mind? Some combination of them? Problems immediately arise when we consider any of these possibilities, for both the body and mind change continuously, and some aspects of them may become absented. How can I identify "me" with my body if I lose my arms or legs in an accident, or if I receive mechanical or transplanted organs or joints? How can I identify "me" with my memories if amnesia or Alzheimer's might rob me of them? Am I whatever I am thinking, moment to moment? Do I cease to exist if I am not thinking, such as when I'm asleep or unconscious? Where is "me" if I'm in a coma?

As we have seen, one point that differentiates Buddhist schools from the non-Buddhists is that the latter tend to define a person as something that is the unchanging core of the body and mind but is different from either; it is emphatically *not* the body and *not* the mind. Religions that speak about the "soul" are generally referring to such an entity. For them, my soul is irreducibly *me*, from the moment of my conception to the moment of my death, and possibly also before and after the present life.

But Buddhists begin with the rejection of such entities, and, therefore, must answer the question, "What does 'person' refer to?" in some way that can rely upon the five aggregates of body and mind. It is not a question, as some have thought, of denying that the word "person" or "self" means anything at all. "Selflessness" has always meant the negation of some *concept about* the self rather than selfhood itself.[1] To deny selfhood would be to deny multiplicity and come to rest in a view, like the Indian Vedântins, wherein the only real existence is that of God, or whatever term we might choose to use for the Infinite and All-Inclusive.

So, given the existence of five aggregates of mind and body, what should be regarded as the "person"? It is not a trivial question, since most of the Buddhist schools regard the person as that to which the seeds of intentional actions (karma) are infused or attached. Therefore, they sought to identify something that would be present continuously. (Which is not to say it would be unchanging; it only means that at all times there is something whose existence is not in doubt.)

Remembering, again, that the answers given by Jamyang Shayba for the various schools are sometimes based on inference rather than forthright assertions, let us survey the range of possibilities as he and Losang Gönchok explained them.

Mere Collection of the Aggregates. (Most Vaibhåýikas) There are many kinds of Vaibhåýikas, and this is one of the issues on which they disagree. However, most of them would say that the person is the "mere collection" of the five aggregates of body and mind, there being no "substantially existent" person. What they mean by "mere" is also what is meant by "not substantially existent": a person is something that comes to mind only in dependence on perceiving something else first. For instance, I cannot say that I have perceived a person until I have at least seen a body, heard a voice, or seen writing. The "person" is whatever is used within the five aggregates as a basis for recognizing someone as a person. It is not an independent category.

This understanding of "person" would seem to avoid the problems mentioned in relation to the non-Buddhist schools. It is not some sort of permanent, unchanging entity apart from mind and body; nor is it some aspect of the aggregates that would not be continuously able to provide a place to "point." But it is, to be sure, a slippery concept. It is supposedly not separate from the aggregates, yet it is not any of them itself.

[1]In general, there is no reason why "person" and "self" cannot be used interchangeably, once it is understood that when speaking of the selflessness of persons, "self" means a certain *kind* of self, not self in general. However, to avoid confusion we will use "person" in this section.

Inexpressible Reality. (Some Vaibhåýikas—the Saômitîya schools) This is a very different sort of notion. The Saômitîyas say that the person is an entity that, although it definitely exists, cannot be *said* to be either the same as the five aggregates or different from them. It is "inexpressible." They reason that if it were identical to the five aggregates, it would cease at death; if it were not, it would be separate from them and, therefore, would be like the non-Buddhist *ātman*, which is eternal and beyond limits.[1]

This idea is in some ways close to that of the Präsaêgikas, for whom the person is also inexpressible in that way; but for Präsaêgikas, it is not a "substantial entity," one with its own independent existence. Nevertheless, the "inexpressible reality" is not a cogent assertion, since although it is supposed to be a substantial entity, it does not amount to anything to which we can point.

Continuum of the Aggregates. (Sautråntikas Following Scripture, Kashmiri Vaibhåýikas, and Sautråntika-Svåtantrika-Mådhyamikas) Perhaps these schools realized that there were significant problems with the possibility of "collection"; in any case, they identified as the person the continuum or stream—the mere successions of moments—of the mind and body. This, too, avoids the problems of identifying an entity that exists outside of the aggregates or cannot always be present. Change is always occurring in our bodies and minds, and quite possibly there are times when there is no particular functioning *consciousness*, but there is always *something* present such that we can say that a stream continues. During life there is always a body but even before and after life as well as during it there is a stream of moments of consciousness.

Mental Consciousness. (Sautråntikas and Cittamåtrins Following Reasoning) These followers of Dharmakîrti, who differ on other tenets, say that a subtle, neutral form of the mental consciousness is the person. In Dharmakîrti's system and

[1]This view, regarded by other Buddhist schools as heretical, was very popular. According to the seventh-century Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang, it was the view of 66,000 of 254,000 monks at that time. Considerable space is devoted in Losang Gönchok's commentary to defending the view that these schools *are* Buddhist. What he argues there is that just because they say that the person cannot be said to be *within* the five aggregates, they are not necessarily asserting its opposite, namely that the person exists *outside* the five aggregates. Only if they had, would they be outside the Buddhist view. However, Jamyang Shayba's own commentary in the *Great Exposition of Tenets* differs from Losang Gönchok's; he does not think that the Vatsiputriya sub-school's person is a substantial entity. Also, according to Gönchok Jikmay Wangbo, the Avantakas, one of the Saômitîya schools, maintain that the mind alone is the person.

in Buddhism generally, there are six types of consciousness. In addition to'the mental consciousness, which discriminates and cogitates, there are five consciousnesses associated with the senses.

This solution seems to suffer the objection that the mental consciousness does not operate continuously, at least at times of unconsciousness. Vasubandhu says in his *Thirty Stanzas* that there are five such states. Deep sleep (without dreams) and fainting are two that all of us experience (and along these lines there are several other types of unconsciousness that he might have included as well). Then there are two kinds of special meditative states, the absorptions of non-discrimination and cessation, which are devoid of feelings and discriminations. As a result of experiencing the absorption of non-discrimination, we might be born in a heaven (which in Buddhism is a temporary abode), specifically the Form Realm heaven called "Without Discrimination."

Subtle Neutral Mental Consciousness. (Svåtantrikas) This is not the conceptual mind but a substratum without content. Some subtle form of the mental consciousness must always be present, it is thought, for consciousness does not arise by itself but is caused.[1] It cannot be caused by the body but must be caused by a previous moment of consciousness. Consciousness is a never ending stream. Hence, some kind of mental consciousness *must* be present, even when we are in a coma or in the circumstances named by Vasubandhu, which means that there is a subtle level of consciousness even if "coarse" feelings and discriminations are absent. This subtle consciousness cannot ordinarily be remembered, so the proof of its existence is merely that it is logically necessary.

Mind-Basis-of-All. (Cittamåtrins Following Scripture and Yogåcåra-Svåtantrika-Mådhyamikas) These followers of Asaêga introduce a new concept, that of the mind-basis-of-all, a neutral, continuously operating consciousness with no other function than to hold the seeds of actions. Indeed, the karmic latencies and the mind-basis-of-all are a single substantial entity; they are never found apart from one another and are different only conceptually.

Cittamåtrins reject the other possibilities because they contend that all other consciousnesses are absent at some time or another. Sense consciousnesses do not operate continuously (and some cannot operate at all, if their physical basis is gone,

[1]There are three conditions for the production of a sense consciousness: an "empowering condition" such as an eye sense power, an "immediately preceding condition"such as a previous moment of consciousness, and an "observed object condition" such as an external object.

such as in the case of blindness). Even if that were not the case, they see a problem in designating the mental consciousness, even a subtle level of it, as the person because the mental consciousness can be virtuous or non-virtuous. They felt that whatever is the basis of seeds established by virtue or non-virtue should itself be neutral. Also, they asked,'if the seed-bearer were the mental consciousness, would not that mean that whenever we had a thought, there would be two simultaneous mental consciousnesses?

Mere I. (Råsaêgika) The Råsaêgika designation of the person aptly demonstrates why it might be best to approach Råsaêgika only after having considered the other schools, since it is a subtle view and one that follows upon the refutation of the others. Råsaêgikas consider all of the possibilities mentioned above to be indefensible, since they are all based upon the assumption of the "true existence"of the person that, when sought among the "bases of designation" such as the mind and body, can be found. Rather, Råsaêgikas say, an analytical search will not result in the finding of anything that exists independently. All things are "empty." Råsaêgikas also generally uphold the conventions of the world. Since the mind-basis-of-all is something unknown to ordinary persons, we should be skeptical of its existence.

The "mere I" is just that: the person is a name. It is a nominal designation made on the basis of the aggregates but it is not itself any of the aggregates. As we saw in the last chapter, the various possibilities outlined above assume substantial existence. That is precisely what is wrong with them.

Sometimes it is said that for Råsaêgikas, the subtle mental consciousness can also be designated as the person. The subtle mental consciousness certainly can give rise to the thought "I," and as long as it is understood that the "I" is merely designated *in dependence on* the mental consciousness rather than *being* the mental consciousness, there is no problem. The mind-basis-of-all and some other entities that will be discussed below, however, are unnecessary additions that go beyond worldly conventions.

The Transmission of Karma

The topic of the "person," as we said earlier, is linked to the topic of karma. The various possibilities mentioned here are ways to account for the transmission of karmic potentials from one life to the next. The problem faced by all Buddhist tenet systems, which share with most other Indian philosophical systems a cosmology based on the notions of karma and reincarnation, is that there must be a continual

basis for such latencies; otherwise, actions and their effects would not necessarily be related.

We have already seen that most of the sub-schools comprising the Vaibhåýika school (from what has been gathered from a close reading of Vasubandhu's *Treasury of Abhidharma*) identify the person as the mere collection of the aggregates. How do they explain how karmic latencies attach to this mere collection? The Vaibhåýika schools introduce a factor called "acquisition," the function of which is to attach the latencies to the continuum of the sentient being who has acquired them.

Several other Vaibhåýika sub-sects—the Sarvåstivåda, Vibhajyavåda, and Saômitlya—refer to a factor called "non-wastage" of actions, meaning that the potencies of karma persist until their fruition without being "wasted." In the case of other schools, no additional factors are mentioned: Kashmiri Vaibhåýikas, Sautråntikas, and the Sautråntika-Svåtantrika-Mådhyamika school consider the continuum of mind to be the basis of infusion, while Cittamåtrins and the Yogåcåra-Svåtantrika-Mådhyamika school use the idea of a mind-basis-of-all.

Page 29

Råsaêgikas criticize these "karmic seed-holders" because they are presented as substantially existent entities, as are the seeds themselves. They believe that it is not necessary to invent any of these possibilities. Rather, a fact about actions themselves, their "disintegratedness," which requires neither intervening causes nor making actions into permanent entities, is responsible for the production of effects. "Disintegratedness" is not a very elegant term but it refers to the state that exists once something has occurred and is now in the past. Jamyang Shayba explains at some length how this state can function to produce effects.

Here, the Råsaêgikas have changed the terminology of karmic cause and effect. It is no longer necessary to say that actions establish "seeds" for future effects or to say that they are held in a neutral medium until ripened by appropriate conditions into an individual fruition, for each virtuous or non-virtuous action has a later continuum—its continuum of disintegratedness—that serves to link the action and its effect. It might be said that for Råsaêgikas, the disintegratedness of actions simply performs the same functions that, in other explanations, are performed by a karmic seed.

Persons and Other Things

It is now obvious that it is quite difficult to identify a person, since unless we admit that nothing inherently *is* the person, that we only *designate* a person, we are misconceiving of it. But we should not think that the phenomenon of a person is any different than any other phenomenon.

For instance, what is a table? We might answer: it is a manufactured article on which objects can rest, consisting of a horizontal top and at least one leg that supports it. Has top and legs, acts as a platform. Right? But wait: can we point to something that *is* the table? It could not be the top alone, nor the leg or legs alone. If it is the *collection* of these parts, we have the difficulty not only of pointing to "collection," which is an abstract concept, but of explaining how there can still be a table if a part (say a brace or an ornamental foot) falls off, thereby changing the collection.

No, there is no table save the one that we designate upon perceiving the objects and relationships that meet our definition of table. And perhaps that is a good way to remember the meaning of "mere nominal designation": a table is something that fits the definition of table. By speaking of it in that way, we are reminded that the existence of things depends on *us*.

What Is the World?

Buddhist philosophers differ in their description of the world but all of them agree that it is impossible to speak of its existence without speaking of the mind.[1] What is the creator of the world? Not God but the mind. In the *Collection of Related Sayings*[2] the Buddha says:

> The world is led by mind and drawn along by mind. All phenomena are controlled by one phenomenon, mind.

Actions contaminated by ignorance give rise to the material worlds and bodies of all the different types of beings in saôsåra. Actions are themselves primarily the mental factor of intention. In short, the worlds of rebirth and the bodies in which we live are products of our intentions.

Moreover, the very measure of existence is that something can be established by mind. In the monastic textbooks[3] used in Tibetan monasteries, "existent" and all of its synonyms emphasize this point. For example, here are some key terms and their definitions:

- existent: "that which is observed by valid cognition"
- established base: "established by valid cognition"
- object of comprehension: "an object of realization by valid cognition"

[1]This section is drawn largely from Cozort's *Unique Tenets*.

[2]Translation from Bodhi, 130.

[3]For example, the Collected Topics text entitled *Festival for the Wise* written by Jambel Trinlay is used by young students of Drebung Monastic University's Loseling College.

Also, all Buddhists accept that an external world is not absolutely necessary, since an entire realm of saôsåra, the Formless, is populated by beings without bodies. Even in the other realms, it is possible to have vivid experiences without an external world through the medium of dreams, visions, or meditative states.

Given this emphasis on the primacy of mind, it should not be surprising that one of the major points of contention within Buddhist tenets is whether an external world exists at all. The Cittamåtra school, as well as the Yogåcåra branch of the Svåtantrika-Mådhyamika school, relies on scriptures that seem to agree that there is no external world. The *Sūtra on the Ten Grounds* is the source of what is perhaps the most famous statement:

> [The Bodhisattva] thinks as follows, "What belongs to the triple world, that is (of) mere mind."[1]

The *Descent to Laṅkā Sūtra* says:

> [Objects] do not appear as external objects as perceived.
> The mind appears as various [objects].
> [Because the mind is generated] in the likeness of bodies [senses], enjoyments [objects of senses], and abodes [physical sense organs and environments],
> I have explained [that all phenomena are] mind only.[2]

In interpreting these passages, Gelukbas take "mind only" to mean that although minds and their objects, such as a visual consciousness and a visible object, seem to us to be unconnected entities, they are actually one inseparable entity. Minds and appearances arise simultaneously from a single cause, the ripening of a predisposition established by a previous action. Roughly speaking, the world is a film projected upon the screen of mind.

It would be easy to misunderstand this position. Cittamåtrins are *not* denying the *existence* of the world. If the world is a like a film, something projected that appears to be something it is not, it is at least a documentary, not a cartoon. Something real is appearing to us, even if it does not exist in the way that it appears. It is not random or arbitrary. It appears to us in a particular way because of our individual karma.

[1]Translation from Honda, 189.

[2]This is translated by Hopkins, *Meditation*, 613.

When they say the world does not exist as something separable from mind, they are *not* saying that everything *is* mind. A table and the mind apprehending it are one entity with each other but they are not identical; neither *is* the other. Similarly, a table and the space it occupies are one entity but no one would claim that the space *is* the table or that the table *is* the space.

They especially are not saying that only *one* mind exists. There are as many minds as there are living beings, which is a vast, vast number.

But they *are* saying that the world does not exist as it appears, as something separate from our minds. According to our authors, they attempt to prove this remarkable position, so much at odds with common sense, with the following five arguments:[1]

1. No external objects appear to the wisdom consciousnesses of one absorbed in meditation on emptiness.
2. When different types of beings see fluid, they see different things in accordance with their own karma.
3. The same person seen simultaneously by enemies and friends can appear to be pleasant or unpleasant.
4. For yogis in meditation, earth can appear to be water.
5. Dreams and other experiences show that it is possible to have vivid experiences without real external objects.

These arguments can be resolved into three categories: (1) meditative experiences in which external objects are not found, either because there is simply an absence of any positive appearance or because an internal mental image has blocked out the appearance of external objects; (2) cases in which different types of individuals validly perceive different objects in the same place, which would seem to be impossible if external objects really existed; and (3) vivid experiences that occur in the absence of external objects. Let us explore these categories a little further.

[1]146.6 ff. There are other arguments not mentioned here. For instance, the Yogåcåra-Svåtantrikas ask: if a thing is supposed to depend upon being perceived by consciousness in order to establish its existence, how can it be said to exist before that? Yet the model of consciousness supposes that an object exists in the moment before it is perceived. Therefore, the model must be wrong; subjects and objects must arise together.

Meditative Experiences Devoid of External Objects

Asaêga points out that no external objects appear to the mind at the time the mind is absorbed in meditative equipoise on emptiness. The Cittamåtra school and the Mådhyamika school agree that at the time of direct realization of emptiness, when we are in meditative equipoise on emptiness, only emptiness itself appears to the mind. Asaêga takes this as an indication that those objects do not exist.[1]

Råsaêgikas reply in two ways. First, it must be remembered that the mind that is absorbed in emptiness came about because it was involved in analyzing the way that objects appear to us naturally. Råsaêgikas would describe it as an examination of the existence of something inherently existent. When that something is not found, its lack of inherent existence—its emptiness—appears to the mind. Why *should* anything else appear?

The other Råsaêgika reply is that what establishes the existence—or non-existence—of anything is an ordinary valid awareness, that is, ordinary direct perception or inference that is not affected by causes of error. Since there is no such consciousness that certifies the absence of external objects, it cannot be said that they do not exist.

Different Valid Perceptions in the Same Place

The Mahåyåna schools also agree that there are cases in which different types of individuals validly perceive different objects in the same place. There were yogis who practiced a type of meditation in which, after much concentration on earth or water, they entered a trance in which all that appeared to their minds was water or earth, the water "totality" or earth "totality." This cognition is certainly considered valid.[2] Asaêga raises the difficulty that if these appearances are valid and external to mind, would not the rest of us who cannot see the water or earth be wrong?

[1]Some Western scholars, such as Schmithausen (247), think that "mind only" means something else. It does *not* mean that no external objects exist but only that they cannot *appear* to the mind. He has suggested that the Cittamåtra philosophy stems from the meditative experience of having the object itself disappear at the moment of realizing its emptiness.

[2]Jamyang Shayba (*Great Exposition of the Middle Way*, 638.7), considering a hypothetical debate about a yogi's cognition of the ground being covered with skeletons, denies that all such appearances are just imaginary form. To him it would absurdly entail that "the actual appearance of such emanated by the two [types of Hïnayåna] Arhats and Bodhisattva Superiors on the pure grounds is [an imaginary form-source]." In other words, what such persons see is real.

We will discuss the Pråsaêgika response after another example, one that is particularly evocative. It concerns a certain trio consisting of a human, a god, and a hungry ghost. (Gods and goddesses live long, blissful lives in sublime surroundings; hungry ghosts live in continual desperation in hot, dry, filthy places.) Asaêga's commentator, Asvabhåva,[1] suggested that if these three were to stand together, viewing a flowing fluid, all would see something different. Some gods would perceive nothing but space; other gods, who evidently in their previous lives possessed the karmic predispositions to "ripen" upon death into a new lifetime full of sensual delights, would see a stream of nectar, perhaps with a delicious fragrance wafting upwards. The hungry ghost, always surrounded by a disgusting and frustrating environment, would observe a slow-moving stream of blood and pus. The human, of course, would see a river of water. It is notable that there is no suggestion that any Buddhist school would reject this scenario.

How can we explain this situation? There are three possible solutions:

1. Only *one* of the beings has correct perception; the other two suffer from elaborate hallucinations.
2. All of the beings have deluded perception such that *none* of them sees what is really there.
3. Somehow, *all* of the beings have correct perception, entailing that water, nectar, and blood and pus are all actually present in the same place.

The first of these possibilities is the one that surely most of us would choose. We believe in the fundamental correctness of our own human perception. The second interpretation, that all three beings are deluded, is essentially that of the Cittamåtrins. They would say that there is no river, blood and pus, nectar, or even space that exists externally to the beings who perceive those objects.

The third interpretation of the example—that all three beings are correct—is the explanation of the Pråsaêgikas. Their basic assumption is that existence is established by valid cognition and that the six consciousnesses of *all* beings are fundamentally valid. Assuming that all three beings in the example have awarenesses that are neither affected by a deep cause of error—such as a defect in the eye—nor a superficial cause of error—such as fog, dim light, etc.—they respectively establish the existence of water, nectar, and blood and pus. Therefore, all three substances must exist. Yet since it is not possible for water also to *be* blood and pus or to *be* nectar, it cannot be the case that the three substances are also one substance. Rather,

[1]In his *Connected Explanation of (Asaṅga's) "Compendium of the Mahāyāna."*

three distinct entities are present in one place, each seen only by beings with the karmic propensities to be able to see them.

To illustrate this position, Jamyang Shayba uses two analogies. First, each being has six types of consciousness that certify their own specific types of objects. Eyes do not hear sounds and ears do not see forms, but this non-hearing and non-seeing do not prove the non-existence of sounds and forms. The fact that an eye consciousness cannot certify a sound does not preclude the existence of the sound, just as the fact that an ear consciousness cannot certify a visible form does not preclude the existence of that form. In the same way, the eye consciousness of a hungry ghost has a different purview than that of a human and does not contradict the human's perception. It certifies the existence of blood and pus but does not preclude the existence of water. What can be sensed by one type of being is out of reach of the senses of another.

The other metaphor Jamyang Shayba uses concerns the partial viewing of an object. When we see an object, we typically see only that part of it that faces us; we do not see its far side or interior. Just so, we do not see the nectar or blood and pus that are hidden from us, only the water that appears. Only the water casts its aspect toward our eye consciousness and forms it in its image. The other substances are, for us, beyond our range.[1]

Jamyang Shayba apparently says that these universes interpenetrate, that the totality of saôsåra is immeasurably richer than we are capable of apprehending.[2] This is itself taken as a very powerful indication that phenomena lack any kind of enduring substantial existence. For the Gelukba interpreters, the interpenetration of phenomena (in this sense) precludes that they could have true existence. An important aspect of our ignorance is that we misconceive of phenomena as though they exist independently of our karma, whereas our karma actually is the cause of their very existence.

The Same Person Can be Seen as Friend or Foe

Along the same lines as the previous example, Dharmakīrti pointed to the fact that when one person is simultaneously seen by a friend and an enemy, the friend sees

[1]Another metaphor that might be helpful is that of color-blindness. The perception of two different people in one place will be considerably different if one can see colors and the other cannot.

[2]This is contested in the Gelukba monasteries, according to Kensur Yeshay Tupden.

the person as attractive whereas the enemy sees the person as repulsive. Or as Någ̊arjuna says in his *Essay on the Mind of Enlightenment* (verse 20), an ascetic, a lover, and a wild dog respectively see a woman as a corpse, the beloved, and a source of food. How can one person be both attractive and repulsive? Rather, beauty and ugliness must be in the "eye of the beholder"; that is, they must be mental representations rather than external objects.

However, this is a rather weak argument, for it has to do only with an intangible quality of the observed object rather than its basic entity. That is, it would be easy enough to concede that beauty or ugliness is a mere superimposition without conceding that the beautiful or ugly *person* is a mere projection or superimposition.

Things Can Appear to Mind Without Having External Reality

Both Asaêga and Vasubandhu show that consciousness can be generated in the absence of external objects. They refer to dreams, illusions, faults in the sense powers, the experiences of yogis, and the experiences of beings in the hells; all involve the generation of consciousnesses, apparently without external objects. Let us explore these examples in more detail.

Dreams. As we all know, dreams can be so vivid that when we awake, we can scarcely believe that what we experienced did not actually occur. Dream-objects are capable of producing effects in dreamers, such as a pleasant or unpleasant feeling, and even physical effects such as perspiration or talking out loud.

Mirror images. Although mirror images are nothing but reflections, they can provoke a reaction equivalent to that produced by what they reflect.

Optical illusions. Along the same lines as the dream example is that of a person with amblyopia, an eye condition that, like cataracts, causes the appearance of squiggly lines in the air that can be mistaken for hairs, insects in one's food, and so forth. Similarly, Asaêga refers to a person who sees a "double moon," i.e., a double image of the moon, voluntarily or not. As in the case of dreaming, there is a consciousness generated without an external object (that is, at least the "second" moon is not an external object).

Yogic perception. We have already referred to yogis who practice a type of meditation in which all that appears to their minds is water or earth, the water "totality" or earth "totality." The water or earth is called an object for one with "meditative power," these being phenomena that appear only to the mental consciousness and then only to the mental consciousness of the person who has performed the meditation.

Guardians of the hells. Vasubandhu writes about the guards, tormenters, creatures, etc., of the Buddhist hells.[1] As he points out, it is not fitting that these beings be sentient beings themselves who have been born in the hells, since the hells exist as places of suffering and these beings do not suffer from the hells' intense heat or cold or other discomfitures. Hence, he argues, their appearance is not based on an external reality; rather, they are mere projections of the consciousnesses of the hell beings. Others who explain this phenomenon are forced to say that the guards are appearances of external elements generated by the karma of beings born in the hells but are not real sentient beings.

In response to these examples, Pråsaêgikas argue that the fact that a dream horse, a mirage, or a mirror image can be an object of consciousness does not necessarily demonstrate that external objects are not needed for the production of awareness, only that the observed objects of consciousnesses are not necessarily objects that exist the way they appear. Candrakîrti implies that even forms such as dream images, reflections, and echoes are external objects even though they are deceptive and immaterial, serving as the observed objects of the awarenesses that perceive them. Even though phenomena such as reflections are deceptive, they arise in dependence on causes and conditions and are capable of serving as a cause for consciousnesses that are produced in the aspect of those objects. The appearance of imaginary "falling hairs" to a person with amblyopia is similar. Although the hairs, like the reflection, do not exist in the way they appear, the false appearance of hairs nevertheless functions as an external object by serving as a cause for the eye consciousness that apprehends them.

But beyond this, Pråsaêgikas argue that these examples demonstrate only that external objects have no true or ultimate existence, something with which they have no quarrel, for the false appearance of these objects precludes their being truly existent. Instead, they criticize Cittamåtrins for not being sufficiently radical—for failing to extend their reasoning similarly to consciousness, which also lacks true existence.

External objects are also asserted to exist in the conventions of the world, and the acceptance of ordinary worldly awareness is a frequent theme in Mådhyamika

[1]There are eight hot and eight cold hells, and in several of these there are guards who inflict torture on those born there as hell beings. As is the case with every other type of rebirth, birth as a hell being is temporary.

school writings. Candrakîrti, for instance, says in his *Entrance to the Middle Way*, "We assert that worldly [people], abiding in their own views, are valid."[1] In his *Clear Words* he says, "…the Buddhas help beings who are trainees and who do not know suchness with reasoning as it is renowned to them."[2]

"Indivisible Particles"

This chapter has focused upon the presentation and refutation of the Cittamåtra view of the world's reality but there is another perspective that arises frequently in our texts. According to the Vaibhåýikas and perhaps some Sautråntikas,[3] the basic elements that comprise gross objects are so-called "indivisible particles." These tiny or "subtle" particles are for them the principal units of impermanent physical entities, the "building blocks" for gross objects. Hypothetically, these particles are indivisible because they are too minute to be physically subdivided. They are too small to have directions, so that we could not say they have sides to the north, south, east, or west.

There is, however, controversy over whether or not indivisible particles touch one another or have interstices.[4] The difficulty of maintaining that particles can touch each other is that it would seem to imply that they have parts, since certainly if a particle touched a particle below it, the part that touched the bottommost particle would not also be touching a particle above it. On the other hand, it is difficult to explain the cohesiveness of conglomerations of particles if they do not touch.

The Cittamåtra school makes the refutation of indivisible particles part of its case for the rejection of external objects. The principle source is Vasubandhu, who makes two points. First, he says that if we imagine several particles in an array, surely a different part of the central particle would touch (or come close to touching) a particle to its west than would touch (or come close to touching) a

[1] *Entrance* (6.22), 5b.2–3.

[2] Translated by Hopkins, *Meditation*, 526.

[3] Another author, Gönchok Jikmay Wangbo, does not mention *any* Sautråntikas that do not assert indivisible atoms.

[4] Losang Gönchok (99.4) makes the general statement that Vaibhåýikas assert that particles do not touch but according to other Gelukba authorities this is apparently a position only of the Kashmiri Vaibhåýikas (Hopkins, *Meditation*, 337–8).

particle to its east. That being the case, it is argued, subtle particles are not "directionless" after all. Second, he argues that if one side of a particle were also its opposite side—that is, if there were no "sides" at all, the particle being without directions—it would be impossible to construct gross forms out of them. All other particles would touch the same place; effectively, there would be just one particle, for no matter how many particles were put together, the aggregate could not get any larger. Hence, the notion of directionally indivisible particles is not viable.

Råsaêgikas agree with Cittamåtrins that there are no directionally indivisible atoms or particles.[1] In fact, the Cittamåtra school's rejection of indivisible particles is said to make them superior to the lower schools, even though they mistakenly deny the existence of external objects.[2] The indivisible particles described by the philosophers of the Vaibhåýika and Sautråntika schools are truly existent particles—things able to withstand analysis, things that exist from their own side and are not just imputations. It is better to assert, as the Cittamåtra school does, that there are no external objects than to speak of truly existent indivisible particles. However, Råsaêgikas do not agree that the rejection of directionally indivisible particles amounts to a rejection of external objects.

[1] However, according to Losang Gönchok (145.4–6.1), Daktsang is said maintain that both the Mådhyamika and Cittamåtra schools actually accept indivisible particles.

[2] Ngawang Belden, *Annotations*, 109a.7-b.1.

What Are The Two Truths?

In all of the Buddhist schools, real things are called either ultimate truths or conventional truths. We might not be surprised to learn that Buddhist philosophers consider some things more real than others, which is what "ultimate" and "conventional" imply, but the use of the word "truth" is very curious. We might expect that it refers to propositions, but it does not. It refers to the objects themselves. We might expect that this implies that some objects are just what they seem to be, whereas others are somehow less real. However, that is not the case either.

If we recall the tremendous emphasis of Buddhism on the primacy of mind, it will not be surprising that, generally speaking, objects are divided into these categories mostly because of the kinds of minds that apprehend them. Ultimate truths are those that are the objects of ultimate valid cognition; conventional truths are those that are the objects of conventional valid cognition. Ultimate valid cognition is a "purer" type of mind, either because it is unmediated (for the Sautrântikas, for whom sense cognition is ultimate) or because it yields liberating insight (for the Mahâyânists, for whom either inference or a direct personal understanding of emptiness is ultimate).

There are other ways to divide phenomena, such as into the permanent or impermanent, the specifically or generally characterized, or the three natures. The division into two truths are used by all the schools as another way to show how the mind works.

Before reviewing the specific tenets of the schools, it is important to understand that the two truths are not in opposition. Indeed, the word "truth" indicates that *both* are valid. Indeed, for the Mahâyâna schools, they are intimately related. Every particular thing in our experience has two truths. A ball is a conventional truth because it is something that is known by conventional valid cognition; the ball's

emptiness (however that is defined by the school) is an ultimate truth because it is something that is known by ultimate valid cognition.

Hīnayāna Perspectives

The Vaibhâ¡ika and Sautrântika schools have a markedly different perspective on the two truths from the Mahâyâna schools. For the Mahâyâna schools, ultimate truths are the real way that phenomena exist, i.e., their emptiness of something superimposed by our ignorance. Depending on which school we look at, the emptiness is: (1) of naturally being the basis of names, (2) of being a different entity from consciousness, (3) of truly existing, or (4) of inherently existing. For the Hînayâna schools, on the other hand, ultimate truths are *certain kinds of things themselves*.

For Vaibhâ¡ikas and Sautrântikas Following Scripture, *ultimate truths* are the kinds of things for which any part is recognizable as that thing. Sky, for instance, is an ultimate truth because whether we see the whole dome of the sky above us or only a sliver glimpsed between tall buildings, it is recognizably sky. Categories, i.e, universals, are like that as well. To use Jamyang Shayba's example, if we smash a pot, we no longer have a pot, just its shards. But the pot was material *form* before we smashed it, and we recognize it as material *form* afterwards, too. Finally, since these Hînayânists believe that everything is built out of so-called "indivisible" substance particles, atoms so small that they cannot be further divided, those tiny particles are ultimate truths as well.

Conventional truths for them are simply anything that does not meet the standard of ultimate truth. If we can break something down, even if just in our imaginations, it is a conventional truth. For instance, water has qualities such as taste, odor, and touch.[1] If these were removed, we would not recognize it as water. But sky and form lack particular characteristics that would allow us to analyze them in that way, so they are ultimate truths.

For Sautrântikas Following Reasoning, *ultimate* truths are things that are able to perform functions, particularly the function of acting as a cause. All things act as causes, if not of their own next moment, then of something else. For example, the last moment of a pot is the cause of its shards and the last moment of a bolt of lightning is the cause of an illumination in the sky. For them, all impermanent phenomena are ultimate truths.

[1]This example is Newland's in *Appearance*, 18–9.

Conventional truths are synonymous with permanent phenomena. "Permanent" generally means not changing moment by moment, so this refers to all phenomena that are mere negations or are mental images. For example, space, defined as the mere absence of obstructive contact, is permanent; so are our mental constructs, or "generic images," of things.[1]

These are involved in the process of thinking. When I see an apple, its "aspect" (color and shape, in this case) is "cast" to my eye and I know it. But when I *think* "apple," I have had to match the particular color and shape in front of me with my pre-existing concept of apple, what Sautråntikas call a "meaning-generality," i.e., a generic image, as we have discussed earlier. We have such concepts or images for everything we are capable of recognizing; they are built out of our life experience. For instance, when I see an apple, I recognize it because of my previous experiences with many kinds of apples. I have a personal definition of apple that, consciously or not, I apply to the particular thing in front of me.

With the Sautråntikas Following Reasoning, we are getting closer to the concerns that guide the Mahåyåna schools in their division of things into the two truths. That is because what really matters to them is the kind of *mind* to which the two truths appear. Ultimate truths appear to direct perception. Direct perception is the ultimate type of consciousness because there is no mediation by a generic image between the object and the consciousness that apprehends it. But *thought* about an object requires a mixing with generic images. Therefore, it lacks the purity and richness of direct perception and, by comparison, is not ultimate.

Mahāyāna Perspectives

The relationship of the two truths in the Mahåyåna schools is both simpler and more complex than in the Hînayåna schools. The Mahåyåna schools agree that *conventional truths are all existents except for emptinesses; ultimate truths are emptinesses.* They also all agree that the two truths abide together; for example, my apple is a conventional truth, my apple's emptiness an ultimate truth. An ultimate truth is simply the final nature of any conventional truth. They also agree that what we have translated as "conventional truth" (*saṃvṛti-satya*), which is literally "truth

[1]Generalities are classified as permanent, meaning that they do not disintegrate moment by moment. However, our generic images obviously change over time, being the amalgam of our experiences.

for a concealer," is best understood as "truth for an ignorant consciousness," a consciousness that conceals the true nature of things.

The complexity arises from the different ways that these schools define emptiness. It also stems from a disagreement over whether "conventional" can include things that are only imagined but do not actually exist.

For Cittamåtrins, *ultimate* truths are the emptinesses of things. They are a person's emptiness of being substantially existent or self-sufficient; for phenomena other than persons, they are their emptiness of naturally being the basis of names or the emptiness of object and subject being different entities.

Conventional truths are those things that are empty, i.e., all other existing things. These are further divided into "other-powered natures," or impermanent things, and "existent imputations," or permanent phenomena other than emptinesses. As before, these are phenomena such as space, cessations, or general categories, that do not change moment to moment; they are imputations because they only appear to the mind through imputation. (In order to recognize space, for instance, I must ascertain mentally that there are no obstructions in a place; I *infer* that space is present.)

With Mådhyamikas, the explanation gets more complex. *Ultimate* truths are emptinesses of inherent, ultimate, true, etc., existence (all of these terms are equivalent). Again, there are other types of emptiness, inasmuch as there are different kinds of misconceptions, but ultimate truths are the most subtle of the emptinesses.

However, Dzongkaba ascertained that there is a significant difference in view between the two types of Mådhyamikas, the Svåtantrikas and the Råsaêgikas, regarding conventional truths. Svåtantrikas assert that conventional truths should be the things that appear to ordinary people who have accurate ways of perceiving them. The problem, say Råsaêgikas, is that what appears to us are things that do not exist. That is, what appears to us are things that seem to exist inherently—things that seem as though they do not depend even on the awarenesses to which they appear.

Svåtantrikas understand that since things do *not* truly exist, this appearance is false. However, since it is what ordinarily appears and *seems* true for an ignorant consciousness, it is counted as conventional truth, which is also called "truth for a concealer."[1]

[1]To explain a little more deeply, Svåtantrikas maintain that a thing can be said to exist if and only if it appears to a non-mistaken consciousness. For example, an apple does not exist by itself but by being experienced by my eye, nose, body, or tongue, assuming that I have no defects in these senses. However, the apple is not a *mere imputation* made in dependence on the aspects I

As we have seen before, Svåtantrikas are supposed to be distinguished by their use of syllogisms. Because of their position on conventional truths, these syllogisms are called *svātantra* ("autonomous," synonymous with "inherently existent"). The Svåtantrikas say that the terms used in a syllogism are established in a manner common to the Svåtantrika and whoever the other person might be. Råsaêgikas, looking at what Svåtantrikas say about conventional truths, reason that since the person to whom the Svåtantrika poses a syllogistic argument naturally assumes the inherent existence of the terms of the syllogism, it follows that the syllogism itself is thought to be inherently existent.[1]

Råsaêgikas use a different standard. For Råsaêgikas, a *conventional* truth is simply something that can be established by conventional valid cognition. For instance, my eye consciousness can establish the existence of an apple on my desk. It may be true that the apple appears to be a *truly existent* apple but that is not what my eye consciousness is certifying; it is merely seeing the apple. In the same way, although a mirror reflection might appear to be a face, only the *reflection* is ascertained by my eye. Therefore, just an apple, not a truly existent apple—or just a reflection, not a face—is the conventional truth.[2]

experience (skin, smoothness, fragrance, flavor, etc.) but actually has its own objective status (to use Newland's term), its own "inherent existence" without which it would not be able to appear to my senses in the first place. Råsaêgikas disagree with that assertion.

[1]Jamyang Shayba (*Great Exposition of the Middle Way*, 424.2) glosses "autonomous syllogism" as that a syllogism in which "the three modes exist from their own side." The three modes of a sign are (1) the presence of the reason in the subject, (2) the forward entailment and (3) the reverse entailment. For example, in the syllogism "The subject, a pot, is impermanent because of being a product," the first mode—the presence of the reason in the subject—is the applicability of the reason (product) to the subject (pot), i.e., that pot is a product; the forward entailment, roughly speaking, is that whatever is a product is necessarily impermanent; and the reverse entailment, roughly speaking, is that whatever is not impermanent is necessarily not a product. These modes of the sign are said by Svåtantrikas to exist from their own side because they say that conventionally, phenomena *do* inherently or autonomously exist. Therefore, the phenomena used in their syllogisms, and the relationships between them, exist inherently or autonomously.

[2]It may be a bit confusing but it should be noted that to be a *conventional truth* is not the same thing as *existing conventionally*. That is because conventional truths obviously do not include everything that exists, since there are also ultimate truths. On the other hand, everything that exists, exists conventionally. Nothing exists ultimately, not even ultimate truths. (Even emptiness is empty!) Kensur Yeshey Tupden (Klein, *Path*, 48) explained that a consciousness directly realizing emptiness, which is not involved in analysis, is a *conventional* consciousness whose object is a *conventionally existent* phenomenon (although it is, of course, an ultimate truth).

A classic example is that a coiled rope in a darkened corner may appear to be a coiled snake, ready to strike. Despite this appearance, the rope is not in any way a snake. It is only because of an error in perception that it seems to be so. We would not say that a snake exists just because we happened to imagine one.

An *ultimate* truth, according to Råsaêgikas, is the emptiness of inherent existence of a conventional truth. It is perfectly compatible with the conventional truth of which it is the true nature.

The following table presents briefly these complex views of the four schools and their branches. (When reading it, keep in mind that "phenomena" refers to things that actually exist.)

School	Conventional Truths	Ultimate Truths
Vaibhåÿikas	Phenomena that are not ultimate truths	Irreducible atoms and phenomena that are recognizable even if broken down
Sautråntikas Following Reasoning	Permanent phenomena	Impermanent phenomena
Cittamåtrins	All phenomena other than emptinesses	Emptinesses (thoroughly established natures)
Svåtantrika-Mådhyamikas	All phenomena other than emptinesses *and* non-existent things that appear to ordinary persons as though they exist	Emptinesses
Råsaêgika-Mådhyamikas	All phenomena other than emptinesses	Emptinesses

What Did Buddha Mean?

The Mahåyåna schools agree that the Buddha taught tenets that apparently contradict each other. To convince the Hïnayånists who doubt the Mahåyåna because of its apparent contradictions with previously canonized scriptures, Mahåyånists have generally argued that the Blessed One, from the depths of his compassion, taught a broad range of doctrines to captivate diverse types of people.

They do not agree, however, on exactly what the Buddha *meant* when he did this. What, in the end, was his own view? Both the Cittamåtrins and Mådhyamikas believe that the Buddha's own viewpoints are reflected in the proper understanding of the sÒtras on which they themselves rely. Therefore, they criticize the sources or methods of the other. Mådhyamikas say that the scriptures upon which Cittamåtrins rely either have been misunderstood by them or have not been understood to be merely provisional teachings for those incapable of grasping the more profound doctrine of the emptiness of inherent existence.

Before looking at the controversy over the sÒtras in which the Buddha taught mind only, we should understand that all of the Mahåyåna schools accept the teaching in the *Sūtra Unraveling the Thought* that the Buddha "turned the wheel of doctrine" three times, although they disagree about some details. The sÒtra states that in successive time periods the Buddha taught about the nature of reality in three different ways.

- The *first turning* of the wheel of doctrine is what we generally recognize as the Hïnayåna teachings. The sÒtras in this wheel teach that there is no self of persons. Generally speaking, they do not say anything about the selflessness of phenomena and, in particular, do not say anything about the absence of inherent existence. The Pråsaêgikas, however, maintain that some do teach the absence of inherent existence, arguing that otherwise no Hïnayånist could be liberated from saôsåra whereas it is clear that some have become Arhats.

- The *second turning* of the wheel is that of the Perfection of Wisdom sÒtras, on which the Mådhyamika school depends. These sÒtras teach explicitly that everything lacks true existence.
- The *third turning* is that of the "mind only" teaching: the *Sūtra Unraveling the Thought*, the *Sūtra on the Ten Grounds*, the *Descent to Laṅkā Sūtra*, and the *Mahāyāna Abhidharma Sūtra*. These sÒtras distinguish between the true existence of most things and the non-true existence of imputational natures.

The Cittamåtra and Mådhyamika schools alike characterize the sÒtras accorded primacy by the other as authentic but "requiring interpretation," whereas their own authoritative sÒtras are labeled "definitive."[1] This might seem to mean that the definitive sÒtras are superior to the others but that is not necessarily the case. The Cittamåtrins recognize the superiority of the Perfection of Wisdom sÒtras despite the fact that they require interpretation. Their "yardstick" is whether the teaching in the sÒtra is literally acceptable. Because the Perfection of Wisdom sÒtras teach that things lack existence by their own character (which exceeds the measure of selflessness that Cittamåtrins use), they cannot be understood literally.[2]

Similarly, Svåtantrikas would need to interpret Perfection of Wisdom sÒtras because Svåtantrikas make a special distinction about statements that things do not have inherent existence. They maintain that while phenomena *ultimately* do not exist inherently, *conventionally* they do exist inherently.

Pråsaêgikas understand "sÒtra" to mean an individual statement by the Buddha, not necessarily whole collections of statements made into a text, as we usually use the term. Hence, a single text could contain both definitive sÒtras and those that require interpretation. Definitive sÒtras are statements that teach ultimate truths and, therefore, need no further comment to understand properly the mode of being of the things being discussed; other sÒtras require interpretation. Thus, within the texts called the Perfection of Wisdom sÒtras, which generally teach about ultimate truths, there are passages that are not "actual" Perfection of Wisdom sÒtras.

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[1]The question of definitive and interpretable sÒtras is actually quite a bit more complex than this, since *sūtra* can mean a *portion* of a larger text; hence, there are parts of scriptures that the other school finds generally authoritative that might be definitive rather than requiring interpretation, and vice versa. Janggya discusses this problem in his *Presentation*, which is translated and annotated in Cozort, *Unique Tenets*, 487–91.

[2]They say that when the Buddha taught about emptiness, he meant only that *objects* are empty, not minds.

In all cases, the schools get at the final thought of Buddha by logical analysis. Even if there were no sÒtras like the *Sūtra Unraveling the Thought* or *The Teaching of Akṣayamati* that give a scriptural basis for the division of sÒtras, no school would accept as definitive anything that does not stand up to reasoning, for of course, the Buddha's own final view, the definitive view, could not be logically subordinate to any other.[1] The Buddha's own dictum was that his doctrine be subjected to reasoning in the way in which a goldsmith analyzes a gold nugget. It should be burned, rubbed, and scratched until all qualms are laid to rest.

This principle is the main thrust of what are called the "four reliances."

1. One should *rely on truth, not person*. What is important is the truth, not the source. Buddha may have said something but it may not be logical as it stands and may require interpretation.
2. One should *rely on meaning, not word*. We should search for the underlying intention rather than being hung up on the literal statement.
3. One should *rely on the definitive, not the interpretable*. We should rely on sÒtras that do not require interpretation. Of course, once we have interpreted them, this qualification no longer applies.
4. One should *rely on wisdom, not dualistic consciousness*. Only wisdom is reliable when it comes to ultimate truths.

How to Interpret Scripture: Cittamātrins

Once it is determined that a scripture is not definitive, how should we go about interpreting it? The schools agree on three criteria for interpretation.

1. *The basis in Buddha's thought*: What does the Buddha know? What was Buddha *really* thinking to himself when he made a certain statement?
2. *Buddha's purpose*: What did Buddha intend to accomplish by a certain statement? (Of course, his overall purpose is always the same—to help his listeners.)
3. *The damage to the literal teaching*: In what way would this teaching, understood literally, be illogical?

[1]For a discussion of the criterion of truth as established by reasoning in the classification of Buddhist scriptures, see Cabezon, "Concepts of Truth…," 7–23.

Since Cittamåtrins think that there are no external objects, they must explain why the Buddha did not say so in the first and second turnings of the wheel of doctrine.

When the Buddha first turned the wheel of doctrine, he taught that there are external objects. Cittamåtrins claim that the Buddha's *basis* in this case is that Buddha himself knew that no external objects exist but he was aware that to ordinary beings, there *seem* to be external objects. They claim that his *purpose* was that he knew that his particular listeners would benefit from hearing that all phenomena truly exist but that a permanent, indivisible self does not. They claim that the *damage to the literal teaching* is that since it can be shown that objects are not external, it cannot be literally true that all phenomena truly exist.

When the Buddha next turned the wheel of doctrine, he taught that nothing is truly existent. Regarding these sÒtras (the Perfection of Wisdom sÒtras), the Cittamåtrins explain things in terms of their division of phenomena into three natures.

1. *Other-powered* natures are impermanent phenomena, i.e., things that have causes *other* than themselves.
2. *Imputational natures* are things that we must impute by thought; some exist, such as space (which is permanent and understood through a process of elimination), and some, such as the falsely conceived self or the appearance of external objects, do not exist.
3. *Thoroughly established* natures are emptinesses.

Cittamåtrins say that other-powered natures and thoroughly established natures truly exist but that imputational natures do not.

Therefore, in these sÒtras, the Buddha's *basis* is that he knew that imputational natures lack true existence, that other-powered natures lack self-production, and that thoroughly established phenomena are the lack of a self of phenomena. His *purpose* was to help those who would benefit from this type of teaching, namely people who needed a strong dose of anti-substantialism. The *damage to the literal teaching* is that it is not possible for anything other than a few imputational natures to exist without having something of their own character to which we can point.

How to Interpret Scripture: Mādhyamikas

For Mådhyamikas, definitive sÒtras are those that teach ultimate truths. Other sÒtras require interpretation in order to be understood properly. The sÒtras of the first wheel were taught to those who could not yet understand the emptiness of

inherent existence. That things lack inherent existence can be established by any number of reasonings that examine our false conceptions.

The sÒtras of the third turning of the wheel of doctrine, those that teach mind only, are a different sort of problem. Although they require interpretation, some Mådhyamikas say that they literally teach mind only and others say they do not.

Bhåvaviveka, the original Svåtantrika, does not deny the authenticity of so-called Cittamåtra scriptures. His criticism of Cittamåtra is to deny that the Buddha literally taught in *any* of those scriptures that there are no external objects. He implies that the basic thrust of the philosophy of Cittamåtra is based on a misunderstanding. According to Bhåvaviveka, when, in scriptures such as the *Sūtra on the Ten Grounds*, Buddha said that the "three realms" (the Form Realm, Formless Realm, and Desire Realm which comprise the whole of saÔsåra) are "mind only," he did not mean that there are no external objects. He meant only that mind, in the sense of intentions to act or in the sense of karmic latencies with the mind, is the creator of saÔsåra.[1] Thus, in Bhåvaviveka's view, these sÒtras are not even literal.

In saying this, he goes far beyond CandrakÒrti, the *de facto* founder of Pråsaêgika, who is willing to say that in most cases, Buddha actually *did* mean to say that there are no external objects (although that was not the Buddha's own final view). The Buddha taught mind only just provisionally and for certain persons—those not yet capable of understanding the absence of inherent existence. As he says in his *Entrance to the Middle Way*.

> These sÒtras teaching no external objects of perception, that is,
> Teaching that the mind appears as the variety of objects,
> Turn away from forms those who are extremely attached to forms.
> These also require interpretation.[2]

In this way, the Buddha is like a doctor who acts for the good of his patients; the *Descent to Laṅkā Sūtra* states:

> Just as a doctor distributes
> Medicines to the ill,

[1]The context in which this famous statement appears in the *Sūtra on the Ten Grounds* suggests that Bhåvaviveka and CandrakÒrti are correct. It is followed by a statement that the twelve links of dependent-arising depend on the mind, and since that mind is that of ignorance, it conditions the rest of the process (Honda, 189).

[2]*Entrance* (6.94), 8b.6–8. The translation is from Hopkins, *Meditation*, 614.

> So Buddha teaches
> Mind only to sentient beings.[1]

Of course, the Cittamåtrins understand this sÒtra to teach that "mind only" is real medicine. For Pråsaêgikas, it is a placebo—something that cures a minor problem despite the fact that it lacks the potency necessary to cure the major one. In order finally to be cured of the sickness of saÔsåra, it is necessary to identify the conception of inherent existence and apply the strong medicine of Någårjuna's reasonings.

[1]Peking edition 775, vol. 29, 34.3.5 (chapter 2). It is cited in Janggya, *Presentation*, 482.20–3.1.

What Is Valid Cognition?

Since our problem, saôsåra, is a matter of making an error in judgment, Buddhism is very concerned with how to distinguish faulty cognition from reliable, valid cognition.[1] This has been a major topic in Buddhist philosophy since the very beginning, as it has been in many of the non-Buddhist schools.

All of the Buddhist schools identify at least six types of consciousness. Unlike the Western model of mind, in which we think of consciousness as singular and as fed by the senses, in Buddhism each of the senses is itself conscious and is capable of a kind of recognition. Our eyes, ears, nose, tongue, or body in general have consciousness and can know things that are familiar to them even before the mental consciousness, the sixth one, applies its conceptual labels.

The Cittamåtrins Following Scripture add two more types of consciousness: the afflicted mentality and the mind-basis-of-all. The *afflicted mentality* is ignorance; in this case, it is the conception that the mind-basis-of-all, which is the "person" in this system, is a self-sufficient, substantial entity. The *mind-basis-of-all* is a very odd sort of entity that neither thinks nor perceives but is a kind of neutral, continuous medium to hold the karmic predispositions.

Asaêga felt that if there were no mind-basis-of-all, there would be no continuously operating consciousness to be a basis for the infusion of karmic latencies, to appropriate a new body at the time of rebirth, or to be present during "mindless" states such as the meditative equipoise of cessation. As we have seen, other schools have been able to account for these functions without adding to the basic list of six consciousnesses.

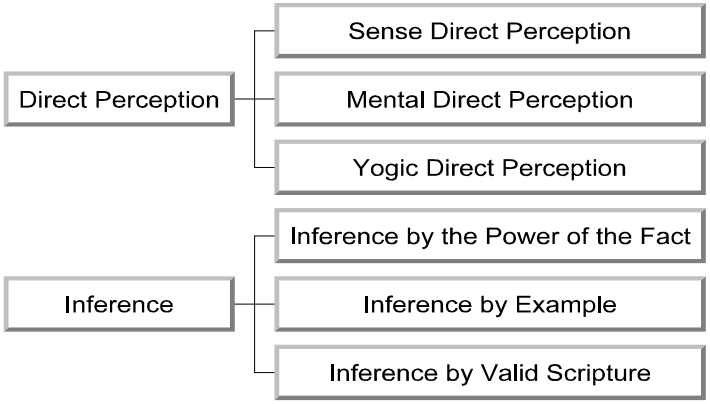
[1]Much of the discussion of direct perception that follows is based on Napper and Lati Rinbochay, *Mind in Tibetan Buddhism*.

What is "Valid"?

Except for Asaêga's system and for that of the Vaibhåÿikas, Buddhist philosophers explain consciousness very similarly, taking their cues from the works of DharmakØrti. This seventh-century writer used the term *pramāṇa* for valid cognition. His followers, whether they be otherwise classed as Cittamåtrins or Sautråntikas, have sometimes been called Pramåòavådins ("Proponents of Valid Cognition") because of the centrality of this concept for them. In general, for a consciousness to be *pramāṇa* it must be "incontrovertible" regarding what it sees, hears, or thinks; it cannot be overturned.

Many of our awarenesses cannot meet that standard. *Correct assumptions* are cases when we choose correctly but without the conviction that reason might bring. *Unobservant awareness* occurs when we see or hear something but are too distracted to really notice it. *Doubt* is when we are not sure of where we stand. *Wrong consciousnesses* are common. We might experience some sort of a distortion, such as a mirage or a problem with our eyes, etc., or we might have faulty reasoning.

Valid cognition is of two main types: direct perception and inference. The main types of each are shown in the chart below.



Types of Direct Perception

Direct perception is knowledge that does not involve conceptuality. Thought, as we have previously discussed, is indirect because it employs generic images. When I recognize the thing before me as a table, I do so by mixing my sense perception of the top and legs with my idea of "table" gained from many exposures to tables. Direct perception, on the other hand, is unmediated. It has two types: sense direct perception and mental direct perception.

Sense direct perception is of the five well-known types: eye, ear, nose, tongue, and touch. But we should note that it requires three conditions:

1 the observed object
2 a sense power
3 a preceding moment of consciousness

The *observed object* is whatever form, sound, odor, taste, or tactile sensation is presented to awareness.

The *sense powers* are thought to be invisible, clear material forms that are located in the organs of perception. So, it is not precisely the case that my eyeball sees a flower; rather, the eye sense power transforms into the shape and color of the flower. This is called "taking on the aspect" of the object and it is the common tenet of all schools except Vaibhåÿika, which asserts that sense direct perception happens "nakedly." My "wind" (energy) flows out through my open eyes and knows the object without any transformation. In the case of a body consciousness, which is how we know tactile sensations and internal sensations, the body sense power is spread throughout the body (with the exception of the hair, nails, etc., which experience no sensations).

That there must be a *preceding moment of consciousness* not only makes the point that consciousness is an unbroken continuum—we are never without some sort of mind, even in special meditative states that are supposedly "mindless"—but also that perception takes time. We are well aware within our own experience that if we are exposed to something for only an instant we will not be able to notice it, getting at best a subliminal perception that we cannot remember. For sense direct perception to occur, it must be preceded by many moments ("moments" being fractions of a second) of attention.

Mental direct perception is a special type of knowing, very valued in Buddhism, wherein we know something without using the senses or conceptuality. Normally, this type of knowing is very, very brief; just before sense direct perception induces conceptuality, where we will attach a concept to what has been observed, there is a flash of mental direct perception. Otherwise, for ordinary persons, mental direct perception is what we would call extrasensory perception, which is rather rare.[1] Some of us occasionally, and others of us frequently, are able to know things that are beyond the limits of our senses. The Buddhist tradition recognizes many types of clairvoyance, clairaudience, etc. but does not consider instances other than those induced by meditation to be particularly significant.

Yogic direct perception is, in fact, a kind of mental direct perception but it is set forth separately because it is important and because it is produced in a special way, through the power of meditation. It designates the type of consciousness that can bring about liberation and omniscience. This consciousness is one that combines impeccable strength of concentration, the state of "calm abiding," with the inferential understanding of selflessness, the state of "special insight." It is, therefore, only found amongst Superiors, those who have directly understood selflessness (however it is defined in the various schools).

Types of Inference

An inference is an understanding based on reasoning. For instance, if we know that smoke and fire are related such that whenever we see smoke, we know that there must be fire, when we see smoke in a particular place, we are able to infer that fire exists there, too.

There are actually "three modes" in such a process. The first mode is the *presence of the reason in the subject*. If we say, "In a smoke-filled room, fire exists, because smoke exists," the *reason* is "smoke," and it is present in the subject, "smoke-filled room."

The second mode is the *forward entailment*, the logical relationship of the third element and the second, stated in that order. In our example, it would be, "Wherever there is smoke, there is fire."

The third mode is the other side of that coin, called the *reverse entailment*. Here, it is, "If there is no fire, there is no smoke." When we understand the three modes, we make an inference and have valid cognition.

[1] Jamyang Shayba actually classifies these as mental consciousnesses and direct cognition but not as mental direct perception.

There are three main types of inference. The main one is **inference by the power of the fact**, i.e., inference based on the statement of valid reasons. The example of fire and smoke would be such an inference.

Inference comprehending through an analogy is to know something by way of an example. We might be said to comprehend a building through studying a scale model of it, for instance.

Finally, **scriptural inference** is to accept what a scripture teaches, having ascertained that it is not contradicted by direct perception, inference, or other scriptures. For instance, the Buddha taught about the subtle workings of karma, which is not something that we who are without omniscience can establish or disprove by direct perception or inference. It is a "very hidden phenomenon." Although in general the Buddha's statements are to be analyzed carefully, in some cases one simply trusts him on the basis of having analyzed his major teachings and having found them persuasive.[1]

Does the Mind Know Itself?

Those who follow Dharmakîrti—the Sautrântikas Following Reasoning, the Cittamåtrins Following Reasoning and the Yogåcåra-Svåtantrikas[2]—contend that our subjective consciousness is also an *object* of consciousness. That is, the mind is itself known at the same time that it knows its object. Otherwise, they argue, we could not remember not only the things we experience but our experiencing itself. That we *can* remember our own seeing, hearing, etc., is broadly accepted.

Self-consciousness is part of the "mind only" concept, for it is said to occur simultaneously with the mind that it observes (just as the Cittamåtrins, etc., say that

[1]This typology of inference is the one that Losang Gönchok uses in the Pråsaêgika school section but there are other lists of inferences, too. All include these types. Some of the non-Buddhist schools put a great deal of emphasis on inference, also. The Såôkhya school propounded two main types, inferences made for oneself and those made for others; the latter were divided into proof statements and consequences (roughly similar to the main logical forms used by the Svåtantrika and Pråsaêgika schools in Buddhism). The VaiŸeÿika and Naiyåyika schools used the same divisions but added that reliance on valid scriptures is a type of valid cognition.

[2]The root text does not specify which Cittamåtrins accept self-consciousness, but Losang Gönchok attributes it only to those who Follow Reasoning. He is probably following the *Great Exposition of the Middle Way*, where Jamyang Shayba points out that Asaêga never mentions self-consciousness. But Losang Gönchok might have gone the other way as well, since Jamyang Shayba also states that some Cittamåtrins Following Scripture diverge from Asaêga on this point.

mind and object occur simultaneously, produced by the same karmic seed). Those who say self-consciousness exists say that mind is like a lamp: at the same time it illuminates other things, it illuminates itself.

Those who dispute self-consciousness use a different metaphor. Mind is like a measuring weight: it cannot measure itself at the same time it measures something else. Or, say the Pråsaêgikas, it *is* like a lamp; but since the very nature of a lamp is illumination, it does not *act upon itself* to illuminate itself.

But how, other than self-consciousness, can we account for memory of the subjective aspect of experience? Except for the Pråsaêgikas, other schools account for memory of consciousness itself by the mind's ability to perform "introspection" (looking inside), which observes a mental state (but a moment *after* it occurs, as with any other object).

Pråsaêgikas deny that self-consciousness is necessary for several other reasons. The most intriguing is that my memories are times when I train my mind upon a past object. This is quite unlike our "mechanical" model of memory, in which we imagine that memory retrieves stored records of past events and displays them on the screen of consciousness. Rather, we are making contact again with a past object and subject. õåntideva, the ninth-century author of the famous *Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds*, even says that memory can reach the subjective aspect of experience even if that awareness was not *noticed* at the time, just by remembering the object. For instance, as long as I can remember Niagara Falls, I can remember my *seeing* of Niagara Falls through association.

Other Controversies

There are many other small differences between the schools on the subject of valid cognition. What follows are brief summaries of four issues on which Losang Gönchok dwells.

Valid Cognition Can be "Mistaken." Pråsaêgikas are usually keen to uphold the conventions of the world and thus are inclined to classify as valid the cognitions that the world would agree are valid. However, as Jamyang Shayba says, "Until Buddhahood is attained, one has no non-mistaken consciousnesses except for a

Superior's exalted wisdom of meditative equipoise."[1] Because things appear to exist inherently, there is a falseness to every appearance outside of meditation.

However, a consciousness does not have to be non-mistaken in order to be correct about the existence of its object. For instance, when we see mountains in the distance, they appear to be blue because of the haze. Although we might be mistaken about the color, we can still be correct regarding the mountains themselves.

Although this seems to be a minor point, it is a way of refuting the Svåtantrika claim that things truly exist on a conventional level, as they appear, because otherwise the consciousnesses that realize things would not be valid. Råsaêgikas are saying, to the contrary, that a consciousness can be valid about the *existence* of its object without being correct about the *way* the object exists.

Direct Perception Can be Conceptual. Råsaêgikas also are alone in regarding our inferential cognitions as leading very quickly to a kind of direct cognition. They say that once we have had a real inference, which again means an incontrovertible understanding, we no longer depend on the reason that produced our inference. Our understanding is "direct," in that sense; it is still indirect in another sense, because conceptuality always involves a generic image, but it is powerful. Therefore, we can have a mental direct perception that is not merely the "flash" at the end of sense direct perception but which goes on for some time after an inference is made. This mental direct perception is memory, and memory is always conceptual.[2]

Do Objects Cast a True Aspect to Consciousness? True and False Aspectarians, who can be found among the Sautråntikas and Cittamåtrins, agree that the appearance of coarse objects as external is distorted by ignorance.[3] They disagree over whether the coarse appearances of wholes exists as they appear. For example, a patch of blue is actually many tiny parts that are blue; is the appearance of a "patch" true or false? Among True Aspectarians are those who contend that in

[1] *Great Exposition of Tenets* 37a.2–3 (in DSK edition), a commentary on a passage in Candrakîrti's *Clear Words*.

[2] This point is made by Dzongkaba in *Illumination of the Thought*, which is cited by Jamyang Shayba.

[3] There are several explanations of the differences between True and False Aspectarians and between types of each but here we are following Jamyang Shayba. Gönchok Jikmay Wangbo gives three versions and much more attention to the topic in his much shorter text (see Hopkins and Sopa, *Cutting*).

relation to a multifarious multicolored object there are as many eye consciousnesses as there are colors (or other aspects) of the object and those who say there is only one.[1]

Pramāṇa Does Not Mean "New." Of less consequence is that there is a difference between Råsaêgikas and others over whether *pramāṇa*, the term we have simply said means valid cognition, actually means "prime cognition," i.e., means only a *new* knower which is also incontrovertible. Dharmakîrti and his followers understand the prefix *pra* to mean "new"; Råsaêgikas regard it simply as meaning "foremost," or best.

[1] The three divisions are (1) the Proponents of Equal Number of Subjects and Objects, who hold the position that there are as many eye consciousnesses as there are colors (or other aspects) of the object; (2) "Half-Eggists" who speak of only one consciousness but who note that because of self-consciousness, both subject and object are observed simultaneously and are, therefore, one substantial entity; and (3) "Non-Pluralists" who speak of only one consciousness that perceives one multicolored object. Among False Aspectarians, Gönchok Jikmay Wangpo (but no one else, apparently) asserts that there are some Tainted False Aspectarians who either say that the mind is polluted by ignorance or that even Buddhas suffer from false appearances. Most Buddhists would say that neither is possible.