WISDOM

CHAPTER NINE OF SHANTIDEVA'S

BODHICHARYAVATARA

THE WAY OF THE BODHISATTVA

SOURCE BOOK

For internal use only
Exclusively for the Rime Shedra NYC Core Texts Program
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Buddhist philosophy, Daniel Cozort and Craig Preston:

Emptiness: Foundations of Buddhist Thought Volume Five, by Geshe Tashi Tsering:

Relative Truth, Ultimate Truth, by Geshe Tashi Tsering:

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Moonshadows: Conventional Truth and Buddhist Philosophy, by The Cow Herds
- Identifying the Object of Negation in the Status of Conventional Truth: Why the dGah Bya Matters So Much to the Tibetan Madhyamakas, Jay Garfield and Sonam Thakchoe, pp. 73-87.

RIME SHEDRA NYC
SMCNY ADVANCED BUDDHIST STUDIES

CHANTS

ASPIRATION

In order that all sentient beings may attain Buddhahood,
From my heart I take refuge in the three jewels.

This was composed by Mipham. Translated by the Nalanda Translation Committee

MANJUSHRI SUPPLICATION

Whatever the virtues of the many fields of knowledge
All are steps on the path of omniscience.
May these arise in the clear mirror of intellect.
O Manjushri, please accomplish this.

This was specially composed by Mangala (Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche). Translated by the Nalanda Translation Committee

THE FOUR IMMEASURABLES

May all sentient beings enjoy happiness and the root of happiness
May they be free from suffering and the root of suffering
May they not be separated from the great happiness devoid of suffering
May they enjoy the great equanimity free from passion, aggression and prejudice.

DEDICATION OF MERIT

By this merit may all obtain omniscience
May it defeat the enemy, wrong doing.
From the stormy waves of birth, old age, sickness and death,
From the ocean of samsara, may I free all beings

By the confidence of the golden sun of the great east
May the lotus garden of the Rigden's wisdom bloom,
May the dark ignorance of sentient beings be dispelled.
May all beings enjoy profound, brilliant glory.

Translated by the Nalanda Translation Committee

CHAPTER NINE - WISDOM
OF THE BODHICARYAVATARA BY SHANTIDEVA

13 Tuesdays from September 17. 2013 through January 7, 2014

MAIN SOURCES

- PW: *Practicing Wisdom*, HH The Dalai Lama and Geshe Thupten Jinpa
- SB: Sourcebook Sources, including primarily:
    - BCA: *The Way of the Bodhisattva,* Translated by Padmakara
    - NMS: *The Nectar of Manjushri's Speech*, Kunzang Pelden

READINGS SYLLABUS

I) 9/17/13: Introduction and Overview

A) *The Center of the Sunlit Sky*, Karl Brunnholzl, *Some Remarks on the* Bodhicary›vatara *and Pawo Rinpoche's Commentary,* pp. 601-605
   1) A Brief Account of Sh›ntideva's Life
   2) *The Entrance to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* and Its Ninth Chapter

9/25/13 – No Class, Only Readings

- What are Buddhist tenets, *Buddhist philosophy*, Cozort & Preston, pp. 12-18
- What are the Buddhist schools, *Buddhist philosophy*, Cozort & Preston, pp. 19-28
- What is ignorance, *Buddhist philosophy*, Cozort & Preston, pp. 29-36
- What is the person, *Buddhist philosophy*, Cozort & Preston, pp. 37-43
- What are the two truths, *Buddhist philosophy*, Cozort & Preston, pp. 54-59

II) 10/1/13: Background for the Text

A) PW: Introduction pp. 1-5
B) PW: The **B**uddhist Context, pp. 5-15
C) Insight, *Emptiness*, by Tashi Tsering, pp. 30- 34

III) 10/8/13: Ignorance & wisdom, v. 1-5

A) BCA: v. 1-5
B) NMS:, pp. 313-322 = 10
C) PW: The two truths, pp. 16-30

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A) BCA: v. 6-15
B) NMS: pp. 323-326
C) PW: Critiquing the Buddhist Realists, pp. 31-45
D) What is valid cognition, *Buddhist philosophy*, Cozort & Preston, pp. 66 to 73

V) 10/22/13: Background on Tenets and Emptiness

A) The Vaibhashika School, *Relative Truth, Ultimate Truth*, Tashi Tsering, pp. 35-52
B) The Object of Negation, *Emptiness*, by Geshe Tashi Tsering, pp. 77- 89

VI) 10/29/13: The two truths in the four tenet systems - Cittamatra, v. 16-29

A) BCA: v. 16-29
B) NMS: pp. 326-332
C) PW The mind-only viewpoint, pp. 46-57
D) Levels of Selfhood, *Emptiness,* Tashi Tsering, pp. 39-50

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B) NMS: pp. 332-336
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D) PW: The authenticity of the Mahayana, pp. 62-74

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A) BCA: v. 41-55
B) NMS: pp. 337-345
C) PW: Emptiness according to the middle way school, pp. 75-89

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B) NMS: pp. 346-357
C) PW: Emptiness according to the middle way school, pp. 89-92
D) PW: The nature and existence of self, p. 93-108

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- Special Insight: The Perfection of Wisdom, in *The Easy Path*, *Illuminating the First Dalai Lama's Secret Instructions*, Gyumed Khensur Lobsang Jampa
  - Meditation on the Emptiness of Persons, pp. 243-257
  - Meditation on the Emptiness of Phenomena, pp. 258-264
- Unfindable and Yet Being Validly Established, *Emptiness Yoga*, Jeffrey Hopkins, pp. 252-262
- Excerpt from False Appearance, *Emptiness Yoga*, Jeffrey Hopkins, pp. 77-81

X) 12/3/13: Not finding anything, v. 78-105

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12/31/13 No Class; Reading yet to be Determined

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B) NMS: pp. 383-389
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D) The Reasoning, from Inducing Realization, Emptiness Yoga, Jeffrey Hopkins, pp. 192-203

TONGLEN INSTRUCTION BY PEMA CHODRON

The Tonglen practice is a method for connecting with suffering--ours and that which is all around us--everywhere we go. It is a method for overcoming our fear of suffering and for dissolving the tightness of our heart. Primarily it is a method for awakening the compassion that is inherent in all of us, no matter how cruel or cold we might seem to be.

We begin the practice by taking on the suffering of a person we know to be hurting and whom we wish to help. For instance, if you know of a child who is being hurt, you breathe in with the wish to take away all the pain and fear of that child. Then, as you breathe out, you send the child happiness, joy or whatever would relieve their pain. This is the core of the practice: breathing in other's pain so they can be well and have more space to relax and open, and breathing out, sending them relaxation or whatever you feel would bring them relief and happiness. However, we often cannot do this practice because we come face to face with our own fear, our own resistance, anger, or whatever our personal pain, our personal stuckness happens to be at that moment.

At that point you can change the focus and begin to do tonglen for what you are feeling and for millions of others just like you who at that very moment of time are feeling exactly the same stuckness and misery. Maybe you are able to name your pain. You recognize it clearly as terror or revulsion or anger or wanting to get revenge. So you breathe in for all the people who are caught with that same emotion and you send out relief or whatever opens up the space for yourself and all those countless others. Maybe you can't name what you're feeling but you can feel it--a tightness in the stomach, a heavy darkness or whatever. Just contact what you are feeling and breathe in, take it in--for all of us and send out relief to all of us.

When you do tonglen "on the spot", simply breathe in and breathe out, taking in pain and sending out spaciousness and relief. When you do tonglen as a formal meditation practice it has four stages.

1. First rest your mind briefly, for a second or two, in a state of openness or stillness. This stage is traditionally called "flashing on Absolute bodhicitta" or suddenly opening to basic spaciousness and clarity.

2. Second, work with texture. You breathe in a feeling of hot, dark and heavy--a sense of claustrophobia, and you breathe out a feeling of cool, bright and light--a sense of freshness. You breathe in completely through all the pores of your body and you breathe out, radiate out, completely through all the pores of your body. You do this until it feels synchronized with your in and outbreath.

3. Third, you work with a personal situation--any painful situation which is real to you. Traditionally you begin by doing tonglen for someone you care about and wish to help. However, as I described, if you are stuck, do the practice for the pain you are feeling and simultaneously for all those just like you who feel that kind of suffering. For instance if you are feeling inadequate--you breathe that in for yourself and all the others in the same boat--and you send out confidence or relief in any form you wish.

4. Finally make the taking in and sending out larger. If you are doing tong!en for someone you love, extend it out to everyone who is in the same situation. If you are doing tonglen for someone you see on television or on the street, do it for all the others in the same boat-make it larger than just that one person. If you are doing tonglen for all those who are feeling the anger or fear that you are caught with, maybe that is big enough. But you could go further in all these cases. You could do tonglen for people you consider to be your enemies- those that hurt you or hurt others. Do tonglen for them, thinking of them as having the same confusion and stuckness as your friend or yourself. Breathe in their pain and send them relief.

SHANTIDEVA'S *BODHICHARYAVATARA* or *THE WAY OF THE BODHISATTVA*

TEXTUAL OUTLINE BASED UPON THE NECTAR OF MANJUSHRI'S SPEECH

By Kunzang Pelden; Translated by the Padmakara Translation Group

Part One:
The Generation of Bodhichitta Where It Has Not Previously Existed

Part Two:
How to Prevent Bodhichitta from Weakening Once It Has Been Generated

***THE BODHICARYAVATARA* BY SHANTIDEVA**
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The Wisdom Chapter
Of The Way of the Bodhisattva
Translated by the Padmakara Translation Committee

I) The Subject, Prajna or Wisdom, v. 1

1. All these branches of the Doctrine
The Enlightened Sage expounded for the sake of wisdom.
Therefore they must cultivate this wisdom
Who wish to have an end of suffering.

II) The Ground of Prajna: Gaining Certainty in the View of the Two Truths

A) Introduction, v. 2-4

2. Relative and ultimate,
These the two truths are declared to be.
The ultimate is not within the reach of intellect,
For intellect is said to be the relative.

3. In light of this, within the world, two kinds of people are observed:
Those with yogic insight and the common run of people.
In this regard, the views of ordinary folk
Are undermined by yogis who themselves are in the world

B) Common folk, v. 5

4. (Within whose ranks
The lower, in degrees of insight, are confuted by the higher)
By means of the examples that the yogis and the worldly both accept.
And for the sake of the result, analysis is left aside.

5. When ordinary folk perceive phenomena,
They look on them as real, and not illusory.
This, then, is the subject of debate
Where ordinary and yogis differ.

C) Shravaka, v. 6-15

6. Forms and so forth, which we all perceive,
Exist by general acclaim but not by valid reasoning.
They're false just like, for instance, unclean things
Regarded in the common view as pure.

7. But that he might instruct the worldly,

Our Protector spoke of “things.”
But these in truth lack even momentariness.
Now if you say it’s wrong to claim the momentary as relative,

8. There is no fault. For momentariness
Is relative for yogis, but for worldly beings, ultimate.
Were it otherwise, the common view
Could fault the yogic insight into corporal impurity.

9. “Through a Buddha, who is but illusion, how does merit spring?”
As if the Buddha were existing truly.
“But,” you ask, “if beings are like illusions,
How, when dying, can they take rebirth?”

10. As long as the conditions are assembled,
Illusions, likewise, will persist and manifest.
Why, through simply being more protracted,
Should sentient beings be regarded as more real?

11. If one kills or harms the magical illusion of a man,
There is no mind in such a thing and therefore there’s no sin.
But beings do indeed have mirage-like minds;
Sin and merit will, in consequence, arise.

12. There is no power in things like spells,
So mirage-like minds do not occur through them.
Illusions spring from various causes;
Thus illusions are of different kinds.

13. A single cause for everything
There never was!
“If ultimately, beings are in nirvāṇa,” you will say,
“But relatively circle in saṃsāra,

14. “Even Buddhahood reverts to the saṃsāric state.
So why,” you ask, “pursue the Bodhisattva path?”
As long as there’s no cutting of the causal stream,
There is no halting even of illusory displays.

15. But when the causal stream is severed,
Even relative phenomena do not appear.
“If even that which is deceived does not exist,
What is it,” you will ask, “that sees illusion?”

D) Chittamatra, v. 16-29

16. But if, for you, these same illusions have no being,
What, indeed, is there to be perceived?
“But objects have another mode of being,” you will say,
“That very mode is but the mind itself.”

17. But if the mirage is the mind itself,
What is then perceived by what?
The Guardian of the World himself has said
That mind cannot be seen by mind.

18. In just the same way, he has said,
The sword’s edge cannot cut the sword.
“But,” you say, “it’s like the flame
That perfectly illuminates itself.”

19. The flame, in fact, can never light itself.
And why? Because the darkness never dims it!
“The blueness of a thing by nature blue,” you say,
“Depends, unlike a crystal, upon nothing else.

20. “Likewise some perceptions
Come from other things, while some do not.”
But something that’s by nature blue has never of itself imposed
A blueness on its non-blue self.

21. The phrase “The lamp illuminates itself”
The mind can know and formulate.
But what is there to know and say
That “mind is self-illuminating?”

22. The mind, indeed, is never seen by anything.
And therefore, whether it can know, or cannot know, itself,
Is like the beauty of a barren woman’s daughter:
Something that it’s pointless to discuss.

23. “But if,” you ask, “the mind is not self-knowing,
How does it remember what it knew?”
We say that, like the poison of the water rat,
It’s through the link with things experienced that memory occurs.

24. “In certain cases,” you will say, “the mind
Can see the minds of others, how then not itself?”
But through the application of a magic balm,

The eye may see the treasure, but the salve it does not see.

25. It's not indeed our purpose to disprove
Experiences of sight or sound or knowing.
Our aim is here to undermine the cause of sorrow:
The thought that such phenomena have true existence.

26. "Illusions are not other than the mind," you say,
And yet you don't consider them the same.
How could they not be different if the mind is real?
And how can mind be real if you deny a difference?

27. Although it is unreal, a mirage can be seen;
And that which sees is just the same.
"But saṃsāra must be based on something real," you say,
"Or else it is like empty space."

28. But how could the unreal be causally effective,
Even if it rests on something real?
This mind of yours is isolated and alone,
Alone, in solitude, and unaccompanied.

29. If the mind indeed is free of objects,
All beings must be Buddhas, Thus-Gone and enlightened.
And so, what purpose can there be
In saying thus, that there is "Only Mind"?

E) Responding to Objections to the Madhyamaka View, v. 30-39

30. "Even if we know that all is like illusion,
How," you ask, "will this dispel afflictive passion?
Magicians may indeed themselves desire
The mirage-women they themselves create."

31. The reason is they have not rid themselves
Of habits of desiring objects of perception;
And when they gaze upon such things,
Their aptitude for emptiness is weak indeed.

32. By training in this aptitude for emptiness,
The habit to perceive real things will be relinquished.
By training in the thought "There isn't anything,"
This view itself will also be abandoned.

33. "There is nothing"—when this is asserted,
No *thing* is there to be examined.

How can a “nothing,” wholly unsupported,
Rest before the mind as something present?

34. When something and its nonexistence
Both are absent from before the mind,
Nothing else remains for the mind to do
But rest in perfect peace, from concepts free.

35. As the wishing jewel and tree of miracles
Fulfill and satisfy all hopes and wishes,
Likewise, through their prayers for those who might be trained,
The physical appearance of the Conquerors occurs.

36. The healing shrine of the *garuḍa,*
Even when its builder was long dead,
Continued even ages thence
To remedy and soothe all plagues and venom.

37. Likewise having gained the “shrine of victory”
In accordance with their deeds for sake of Buddhahood,
Though Bodhisattvas pass beyond all grief,
They yet can satisfy all ends.

38. “But how,” you ask, “can offerings made
To beings freed from all discursiveness give fruit?”
It’s said that whether Buddhas live or pass beyond,
The offerings made to them are equal in their merit.

39. Whether you assert them in the ultimate or relative,
Merit, so the scriptures say, arises,
Just as there will be results
When Buddhas are considered truly real.

F) Authenticity of the Mahayana, v. 40-51

40. “We’re free,” you say, “through seeing the (Four) Truths—
What use is it to us, this view of emptiness?”
But as the scriptures have themselves proclaimed,
Without this path there can be no enlightenment.

41. You say the Mahāyāna has no certainty.
But how do you substantiate your own tradition?
“Because it is accepted by both parties,” you will say.
But at the outset, you yourself lacked proof!

42. The reasons why you trust in your tradition

May likewise be applied to Mahāyāna.
Moreover, if accord between two parties shows the truth,
The Vedas and the rest are also true.

43. “Mahāyāna is at fault,” you say, “because it is contested.”
But Buddhist texts are questioned by extremists,
While Buddhists also vie among themselves;
And so your own tradition you must now abandon.

44. The true monk is the root of Dharma,
And to be a monk is difficult indeed.
It’s hard for minds enmeshed in thoughts
To pass beyond the bonds of suffering.

45. You say there’s liberation in the instant
That defilements are entirely forsaken.
Yet those who from defilements are set free
Continue to display the influence of karma.

46. “Only for a while,” you say. “For it is certain
That the causes of rebirth, their cravings, are no more.”
They have no craving, granted, through defilement,
But like their ignorance, why should they not have craving undefiled?

47. This craving is produced by virtue of sensation,
And sensation, this they surely have.
Concepts linger still within their minds;
And it is to these concepts that they cling.

48. The mind that has not realized voidness,
May be halted, but will once again arise,
Just as from a non-perceptual absorption.
Therefore one must train in emptiness.

49. If all the words recorded in the sūtras
You admit to be the Buddha’s perfect speech,
Why don’t you now accept the greater part of Mahāyāna,
With which your sūtras are in perfect harmony?

50. If due to just a single jarring element,
The whole is held to be at fault,
Why should a single sūtra in agreement with your texts
Not vindicate the rest as Buddha’s teaching?

51. Mahākāshyapa [110] himself and others

Could not sound the depths of such a teaching.
Who will therefore say they are to be rejected
Just because they are not grasped by you!

G) Necessity of Realizing Emptiness, v. 52-55

52. To linger and abide within saṃsāra,
Freed from every craving and from every fear,
In order to achieve the good of those who ignorantly suffer:
Such is the fruit that emptiness will bear.

53. Therefore it is incorrect
To find fault with this view of emptiness.
And so, with every doubt abandoned,
We should meditate on it!

54. Afflictive passion and the veil upon cognition—
The cure for their obscurity is emptiness.
How then shall they not meditate on this
Who wish for swift attainment of omniscience?

55. Whatever is the source of suffering,
Let that be the object of our fear.
But voidness will allay our every grief,
How could it be for us a thing of dread?

III) The Path of Prajna: Contemplation and Meditation on the Two-fold Selflessness

A) Selflessness, v. 56

56. If such a thing as "I" exists indeed,
Then terrors, granted, will torment it.
But since no self or "I" exists at all,
What is there left for fears to terrify?

B) Contemplating the selflessness of persons by reasoning, v. 57-77

1. The Self as Related to the Aggregates

57. The teeth, the hair, the nails are not the "I,"
And "I" is not the bones or blood,
The mucus from the nose and phlegm are not the "I,"
And neither is it made of lymph or pus.

58. The "I" is not the body's grease or sweat,
The lungs and liver likewise do not constitute it.

Neither are the inner organs “I,”
Nor yet the body’s excrement and waste.

59. The flesh and skin are not the “I,”
And neither are the body’s warmth and breath.
The cavities within the frame are not the “I,”
And “I” is not accounted for in sixfold consciousness.

60. If the hearing consciousness is permanent,
It follows that it’s hearing all the time.
And if there is no object, what does it cognize?
On what grounds do you call it consciousness?

61. If something that’s unconscious knows,
It follows that a stick has knowledge also.
Therefore in the absence of a thing to know,
It’s clear that consciousness will not arise.

62. If the selfsame consciousness detects a form,
At that time, why does it not hear?
Perhaps you say the sound’s no longer there.
Then neither is there consciousness of sound.

63. How could that which has the nature of a sound-perceiver
Ever be transformed into a form-perceiver?
“A single man,” you say, “can be both son and father.”
But these are merely names; his nature is not so.

64. And likewise “pain,” “neutrality,” and “pleasure”
Are neither fatherhood nor sonship;
And we indeed have never yet observed
A consciousness of form perceiving sound.

2. The Self as Separate from the Aggregates

65. “But like an actor,” you reply, “it takes a different role and sees.”
If so, this consciousness is not a constant thing.
And if its later mode is still the first,
That’s identity indeed and never seen before!

66. “But its different modes,” you say, “are quite unreal.”
Its essence therefore you must now describe.
You say that this is simply knowing.
It follows that all beings are a single thing.

67. What has mind and what does not have mind

Are thus identical, for both are equal in existing.
If the different kinds of mind are all unreal,
What common basis can there be for them?

68. Something destitute of mind, we hold, is not a self.
For mindlessness means matter, like a vase.
"But", you say, "the self has consciousness, when joined to mind."
But this refutes its nature of consciousness.

69. If the self, moreover, is immutable,
What change in it could mingling with the mind produce?
And selfhood we might equally affirm
Of empty space, inert and destitute of mind.

3. Responses to Objections to Selflessness

70. "If self does not exist," you say,
"There is no link connecting actions with results.
If when the deed is done, the doer is no more,
Who is there to reap the karmic fruit?"

71. The bases of the act and fruit are not the same,
In both a self is without scope for action.
This is valid both for you and us;
What point is there, therefore, in our debate?

72. "A cause coterminous with its result"
Is something quite impossible to see.
And only in the context of a single mental stream
Can it be said that one who acts will later reap the fruit.

73. The thoughts now passed, and those to come, are not the self;
They are no more, or are not yet.
Is then the self the thought which now is born?
If so, it sinks to nothing when the latter fades.

74. For instance, we may take banana trees—
Cutting through the fibers, finding nothing.
Likewise analytical investigation
Will find no "I," no underlying self.

75. "If beings," you will say, "have no existence,
Who will be the object of compassion?"
Those whom ignorance imputes,

For whose sake we have pledged ourselves.

76. "If," you ask, "there are no beings, who will gain the fruit?"
It's true! It is through ignorance that they are said to be!
But for the total vanquishing of sorrow,
The goal, which ignorance conceives, should not be spurned.

77. The source of sorrow is the pride of saying "I,"
It's fostered and increased by false belief in self.
To this you may believe that there is no redress,
But meditation on no-self will be the supreme way.

C) Meditation on selflessness using the four foundations of mindfulness, v. 78-106

1) Body, v. 78-87

78. What we call the body is not feet or shins;
The body, likewise, is not thighs or loins.
It's not the belly nor indeed the back,
And from the chest and arms the body is not formed.

79. The body is not ribs or hands,
Armpits, shoulders, bowels, or entrails.
It is not the head, and it is not the throat.
What is the "body," then, in all of this?

80. If the "body" spreads itself
And with the members coincides,
Its parts indeed are present in those parts.
But where does "body," in itself, abide?

81. But if the "body," single and entire
Is present in the hands and other members,
However many parts there are, the hands and all the rest,
You'll find an equal quantity of "bodies."

82. If "body" is not outside or within its parts,
How is it, then, residing in its members?
And since it is not other than its parts,
How can you say that it exists at all?

83. Thus there is no "body." It is through illusion,
With regard to hands and other parts, that "body" as a notion is conceived—
Just as on account of its specific shape

A pile of stones is taken for a man.

84. As long as the conditions are assembled,
The body will appear to be a man.
As long as all the parts are likewise present,
A body will appear therein.

85. Likewise, since it is a group of fingers,
The hand itself does not exist as such.

86. These parts themselves will break down into particles,
And particles divide according to direction.
These fragments, too, lack partless parts; they are like space.
Thus even particles have no existence.

2) Feelings, v. 88-101

87. All form, therefore, is like a dream,
And who will be attached to it, who thus investigates?
The body, in this way, has no existence;
What, therefore, is male and what is female?

88. If suffering itself is truly real,
Why is joy not altogether quenched thereby? I
f pleasure's real, then why will pleasant tastes
Not comfort and amuse a man in agony?

89. If the feeling fails to be experienced,
Through being overwhelmed by something stronger,
How can "feeling" rightly be ascribed
To that which lacks the character of being felt?

90. Perhaps you say that only subtle pain remains,
Its grosser form has now been overmastered—
Or rather it is felt as "mere pleasure."
But what is subtle still remains itself.

91. If, because its opposite is present,
Discomfort fails to manifest,
Is not the claim that it's a "feeling"
No more than a mental imputation?

92. Since so it is, the antidote
Is meditation and analysis.
Absorption grown in fields of their investigation

Is indeed the food and sustenance of yogis.

93. If between the sense power and a thing
There is a space, how will the two terms meet?
And if there is no space, they form a unity,
And therefore what is it that meets with what?

94. No penetration can there be of particle by particle,
For they are both the same in lacking volume.
But if they do not penetrate, they do not merge;
And if they do not merge, there's no encounter.

95. For how could anyone accept
That what is partless could be said to meet?
And you must show me, if you ever saw,
A contact taking place between two partless things.

96. Consciousness is immaterial,
And so one cannot speak of contact with it.
A combination, too, has no reality,
Just as we have previously shown.

97. If therefore there's no touch or contact,
Whence is it that feeling takes its rise?
What purpose is there, then, in all our toil,
For what is it, indeed, that torments what?

98. Since there is no subject for sensation,
And sensation, too, lacks all existence,
How is craving not arrested
When all this is clearly understood?

99. What we see and what we touch
Is stuff of dreams and mirages.
If feeling is coincident with consciousness,
It follows that it is not seen thereby.

100. If the one arises first, the other after,
Memory occurs and not direct sensation.
Sensation is without perception of itself
And likewise, by another it is not perceived.

101. The agent of sensation has no real existence,
Thus sensation, likewise, has no being.
What damage, therefore, can sensation do to it—

This aggregate deprived of self?

102. The mind within the senses does not dwell,
It has no place in outer things like form.
And in between them, the mind does not abide:
Not out, not in, not elsewhere can the mind be found.

3) Mind, v. 102-105ab

103. It is not in the body, yet is nowhere else.
It does not merge with it nor stand apart—
Something such as this does not exist, not even slightly.
Beings by their nature are beyond the reach of suffering.

104. If consciousness precedes the cognized object,
With regard to what does it arise?
If consciousness arises at the same time as its object,
Again, regarding what does it arise?

105. If consciousness comes later than its object,
Once again, from what does it arise?

4) Phenomena, v. 105cd

Thus the origin of all phenomena
Exceeds the reach of understanding.

D) Contemplating selflessness of phenomena, v. 106-150

1. Investigation of Interdependence

106. “If this is so,” you say, “there is no relative,
And then the two truths—what becomes of them?
Moreover, if the relative derives from beings’ minds,
How can they pass beyond their sorrows?”

107. But that is just the thought of others;
It is not what I mean by the relative.
If subsequently there are thoughts, the relative’s still there;
If not, the relative has ceased indeed.

108. The analyzing mind and what is analyzed
Are linked together, mutually dependent.
It is on the basis of conventional consensus

That all investigation is expressed.

109. “But when,” you say, “the process of analysis
Is made, in turn, the object of our scrutiny,
This investigation likewise may be analyzed,
And thus we find an infinite regress.”

110. If phenomena are truly analyzed,
No basis for analysis remains.
And when the object is removed, the subject too subsides.
That indeed is said to be nirvāṇa.

111. Those who say that both are true,
Are hard-pressed to maintain their case.
If consciousness reveals the truth of things,
On what grounds, in its turn, does consciousness exist?

112. If knowledge objects show that consciousness exists,
What is it that shows that *they* exist?
If both subsist through mutual dependence,
Both will thereby lose their true existence.

113. If, without a son, a man cannot be father,
Whence, indeed, will such a son arise?
There is no father in the absence of a son.
Just so, the mind and object have no true existence.

114. “The plant arises from the seed,” you say,
“And through it is the seed deduced.
It’s just the same with consciousness arising from its object.
How can it fail to show the thing’s existence?”

2. Investigation of Causation

a. Introduction

115. A consciousness that’s different from the plant itself
Deduces the existence of the seed.
But what will show that consciousness exists,
Whereby the object is itself established?

116. In everyday perception
There’s a cause for everything.
The different segments of the lotus flower

Arise from a variety of causes.

117. “But what gives rise,” you ask, “to such variety of causes?”
An even earlier variety of causes, we declare.
“And how,” you ask, “do causes give their fruits?”
Through power, we answer, of preceding causes.

b. Production from Other

118. If Īshvara is held to be the cause of beings,
You must now define for us his nature.
If, by this, you simply mean the elements,
No need to tire ourselves disputing names!

119. Yet earth and other elements are many,
Impermanent, inert, without divinity.
Trampled underfoot, they are impure,
And thus they cannot be a God Omnipotent.

120. The Deity cannot be space—inert and unproductive.
He cannot be the self, for this we have refuted.
He’s inconceivable, they say—then likewise his creatorship.
Is there any point, therefore, to such a claim?

121. What is it that he wishes to create?
Has he made the self and all the elements?
But are not self and elements and he himself eternal?
And consciousness, we know, arises from its object.

122. Pain and pleasure have, from all time, sprung from karma,
So tell us, what has his Divinity produced?
And if there’s no beginning in the cause,
How can there be beginnings in its fruits?

123. Why are creatures not created constantly,
For Īshvara relies on nothing but himself?
And if there’s nothing that he has not made,
What remains on which he might depend?

124. If Īshvara *depends,* the cause of all
Is but the meeting of conditions and not Īshvara.
When these obtain, he cannot but create;
When these are absent, he is powerless to make.

125. If Almighty God does not intend,
But yet creates, another thing has forced him.

If he wishes to create, he's swayed by his desire.
So even though Creator, what of his omnipotence?

c. Self Production

126. Those who hold the permanence of particles
Were indeed refuted earlier.
The Sāṃkhyas are the ones who hold
That permanent prakriti is the cause of the evolving world.

127. "Pleasure," "pain," "neutrality," so-called,
Are qualities which, when they rest
In equilibrium are termed "prakriti."
The universe arises when this balance is disturbed.

128. Three natures in a unity are disallowed,
And thus prakriti is without existence.
These qualities likewise do not exist,
For each of them indeed is three.

129. If these qualities have no existence,
A thing like sound is very far from plausible!
And cloth and other mindless objects
Cannot be the seat of feelings such as pleasure.

130. "But," you say, "these things possess the nature of their cause."
But have we not investigated "things" already?
For you the cause is "pleasure" and the like,
And yet from pleasure, cloth has never sprung!

131. Pleasure, rather, is produced from cloth.
If this is nonexistent, pleasure likewise.
As for permanence of pleasure and the rest—
Well, there's a thing that's never been observed!

132. If pleasure and the rest are manifestly present,
How comes it that they're not perceived?
And if you claim they take on subtle form,
How is it that they are both gross and subtle?

133. If coarseness is abandoned, subtlety assumed,
Subtlety and grossness both lack permanence.
So why not grant that, in this way,
All things possess the character of transience?

134. If the coarser aspect is none other than the pleasure,

It's clear that pleasure is itself impermanent.
If you claim that what does not exist in any sense
(Because it has no being) cannot manifest,

135. Although you have denied the birth of things
That did not previously exist, it's this that you're now saying!
But if results exist within their cause,
Those who eat their food consume their excrement.

136. And likewise with the money they would spend on clothing,
Let them rather buy the cotton grains to wear!
"But," you say, "the world is ignorant and blind."
Since this is taught by *those who know the truth*,

137. This knowledge must be present in the worldly too!
And if they have it, why do they not see?
If now you say that what the worldly see has no validity,
This means that what they clearly see is false.

138. "If," you ask, "there's no validity in valid knowledge,
Is not all that it assesses false?
And therefore it becomes untenable
To meditate on voidness, ultimate reality."

139. If there is no object for analysis,
There can be no grasping of its nonexistence.
And so deceptive objects of whatever kind
Will also have a nonexistence equally deceptive.

140. When therefore in one's dream a child has died,
The state of mind that thinks it is no more
Supplants the thought that it is living still.
And yet both thoughts are equally deceptive.

d. Conclusion

141. Therefore, as we see through such investigation,
Nothing is that does not have a cause;
And nothing is existent in its causes
Taken one by one or in the aggregate.

142. It does not come from somewhere else,
Neither does it stay nor yet depart.
How will what confusion takes for truth

In any sense be different from a mirage?

143. Things, then, bodied forth by magic spells,
And that which is displayed by dint of causes—
Whence have these arisen? we should ask;
And where they go to, that we should examine!

144. What is seen when circumstances meet
And is not seen in absence of the same
Is not real; it is like an image in a mirror.
How can true existence be ascribed to it?

3. Investigation of Results

145. What need is there for cause
In something that's already real?
But then, what need is there for cause
In something that does not exist?

146. Even through a hundred million causes,
No change takes place in nonexistent things,
For in that state of "non-thing," how could "things" occur?
And into what could nonexistent things transform?

147. Since things cannot become when they are nonexistent,
When could such existent things occur?
For insofar as entities do not arise,
Nonentities themselves will not depart.

148. And if nonentity is not dispersed,
No chance is there for entity to manifest.
And entity cannot be changed into nonentity,
For otherwise it has a double nature.

149. Thus there are no entities
And likewise there's no ceasing of the same.
And therefore beings, each and every one,
Are without origin and never cease.

150. Wandering beings, thus, resemble dreams,
And also the banana tree, if you examine well.
In ultimate reality there's no distinguishing
Between the states of sorrow and beyond all sorrow.

IV) The Results of Prajna: Accomplishing the Benefit of Self and Others, v. 151-167

A) Abandon the eight worldly concerns, v. 151-154

151. With things that in this way are empty
What is there to gain and what to lose?
Who is there to pay me court and honors,
And who is there to scorn and to revile me?

152. Pleasure, sorrow—whence do these arise?
What is there to give me joy and pain?
And if I search their very suchness,
Who is craving? What is craved?

153. Examine now this world of living beings:
Who is there therein to pass away?
What is there to come, and what has been?
And who, indeed, are relatives and friends?

154. May beings like myself discern and grasp
That all things have the character of space!
But those who seek their happiness and ease,
Through disputes or enjoyments,

B) Uselessness of worldly pursuits, v. 155-165

155. All are deeply troubled, or else thrilled with joy.
They suffer, strive, contend among themselves,
Slashing, stabbing, injuring each other:
They live their lives engulfed in evil and travail.

156. From time to time they surface in the states of bliss,
Abandoning themselves to many pleasures.
But dying, down they fall to suffer torment,
Long, unbearable, in realms of sorrow.

157. Many are the chasms and abysses of existence,
Where the truth of suchness is not found.
All is contradiction, all denial;
Suchness in this world is not like this.

158. Here, exceeding all description,
Is the shoreless sea of pain unbearable.
Here it is that strength is low,
And lives are flickering and brief.

159. All activities for sake of life and health,
Relief of hunger and of weariness,

Time consumed in sleep, all accident and injury,
And sterile friendships with the childish—

160. Thus life passes quickly, meaningless.
True discernment—hard it is to have!
How therefore shall we ever find the means
To curb the futile wanderings of the mind?

161. Further, evil forces work and strain
To cast us down into the states of woe;
Manifold are false, deceptive trails,
And it is hard to dissipate our doubts.

162. Hard it is to find again this state of freedom,
Harder yet to come upon enlightened teachers,
Hard, indeed, to turn aside the torrent of defilement!
Alas, our sorrows fall in endless streams!

163. Alas indeed that living beings,
Carried on the flood of bitter pain,
However terrible their plight may be,
Do not perceive they suffer so!

164. They are like those who bathe themselves repeatedly
And then proceed to scorch themselves with fire.
They suffer greatly in this way,
Yet there they stay, proclaiming loud their bliss.

165. Likewise there are some who live and act
As though old age and death will never come to them.
But first they're slain and then there comes
The dreadful fall into the states of loss.

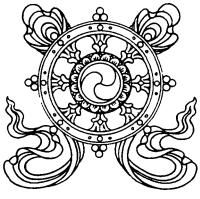
A) Embodying great compassion, v. 166-167

166. When shall I be able to allay and quench
The dreadful heat of suffering's blazing fires
With plenteous rains of my own bliss
That pour torrential from my clouds of merit?

167. My wealth of merit gathered in,
With reverence but without conceptual target,
When shall I reveal this truth of emptiness
To those who go to ruin through belief in real existence?

The NECTAR of MANJUSHRI'S SPEECH

A Detailed Commentary on Shantideva's *Way of the Bodhisattva*



Kunzang Pelden

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• 9 •

WISDOM

Whereby Precious Ultimate Bodhichitta Is Intensified

1. Brief exposition

[verse 1] If each of the six perfections (generosity and so forth, as explained above) is regarded as being based on the perfection preceding it, it follows that the cultivation of the perfection of wisdom is founded on that of concentration. In the present text, however, we will follow the interpretation of the Lord Manjughosha our teacher.[185] Accordingly, the Buddha, the great enlightened Sage, expounded "all these branches of the Doctrine," that is, all skillful methods, which are contained in the five preceding perfections from generosity to concentration, for the sake of, or as auxiliaries to, the attainment of wisdom. This wisdom is the principal aspect of the extraordinary path and is the direct cause of omniscience; it removes the two kinds of obscuration and actualizes ultimate primordial wisdom[186] endowed with twofold knowledge.[187] It is as when a king arms himself for war. He is surrounded by the four divisions of his army, which go with him like auxiliaries and help him to attain his goals. In the *Prajnaparamita-sutra* in a hundred thousand verses, it is also written that, "Just as all the rivers that empty into the Ganges are carried along thereby to the great ocean, likewise the paramitas, when seized by wisdom, will lead to omniscience." And in *Ratnagunasanchayagatha* it is said that:

Blind from birth, without a guide,
The teeming multitudes know not which path to take.
How can they reach the town?
When wisdom is not there, the five perfections are deprived
of sight.
Unguided, they are powerless to reach enlightenment.
Yet when they are caught up and seized by wisdom,
They gain their sight and thus assume their name.

This is explained at length in the greater, medium, and shorter *Prajnaparamita-sutras,* the meaning of which in brief is to proclaim wisdom as the main and indispensable aspect of the path, thus revealing its great importance. Likewise, the expressions "branches" and "for the sake of," used in the root text, are meant to imply that wisdom itself is the main factor.

In the digest of the *Ashtasahasrika,* the *Prajnaparamita-sutra* in eight thousand verses, it is said that:

The wisdom paramita is nondual primal wisdom,
Tathagata, buddhahood itself.
And to the texts and path that have this as their goal,
The name of "wisdom paramita" also is applied.

This means that in order to attain the perfection of wisdom, which is the fruit, it is necessary to hear and reflect correctly upon the Prajnaparamita texts. Then experience must be gained in the supreme method, the Prajnaparamita path, in such a way, however, that wisdom and skillful means are never separated. It is therefore said that all who wish to have the complete end of all the sufferings of existence, both for themselves and others, must diligently cultivate the wisdom that realizes suchness.

As it is said in the *Bodhichittavivarana,* when emptiness is realized,

The minds of yogis
Used to emptiness
Are turned with ease and joy
Toward the benefit of others.

This same text also speaks of "emptiness with the essence of compas-

sion," referring to the fact that, as the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas have proclaimed, the realization of emptiness occurs simultaneously with the birth of compassion. And out of compassion, emptiness is taught to others, so that all the sufferings of oneself and others may be brought to nothing.

1. Detailed explanation

2. Wisdom established by means of the view

3. An outline of the two truths

4. Distinguishing the two truths

[verse 2] All phenomena, of both samsara and nirvana, have two modes. There is the "appearing mode," the mere appearance of things, in all their multiplicity. This is the relative truth. Then there is the "abiding mode," the way these things really are, their emptiness. This is the ultimate truth.

These two aspects are, on their respective levels, incontrovertible, and this is why they are regarded as two *truths.* It is incorrect to say that the two truths are distinct on the ultimate level or that they are one and the same on the relative level. Both these claims are invalidated by four unwanted consequences.[188] In fact, as it is said in the *Sandhinirmochana-sutra,* the two truths should be understood as being neither identical nor distinct.

4. Definition of the two truths

It follows from what has just been said that the way of being of things, their ultimate truth—since it is free from all ontological extremes of existence, nonexistence, both existence and nonexistence, and neither existence nor nonexistence—is not the object of the ordinary mind. Indeed the intellect that thinks that things exist or do not exist and the language that speaks in these terms are said to be relative ("all-concealing") and not ultimate. It should therefore be understood that the ultimate truth transcends the ordinary mind and cannot be expressed in thought or word. By contrast, the relative truth is defined as the deluded mind and its object.

Briefly, from the point of view of the ultimate mode of being, the two truths are not cut off and separated from each other with existence referring to the relative truth and nonexistence referring to the ultimate. For

the scriptures say, "Form is emptiness; emptiness is form. Emptiness is none other than form; and form is none other than emptiness." This being so, the dharmadhatu, the union of appearance and emptiness, is beyond the four, eight, and thirty-two extremes of misconception. It is inexpressible in thought and word. It is mind-transcending primordial wisdom, self-cognizing awareness. It is the perfection of wisdom, Prajnaparamita, the actual ultimate truth in itself. On the other hand, whatever the ordinary mind conceives and whatever language expresses: All such things, which thus become the object of thought and word, if examined, are found to be nonexistent. They are empty like mirages and it is never possible for them to withstand analysis. Therefore the Lord Buddha has said in one of the sutras:

> If the ultimate truth, Devaputra, were to become the object of body, speech, or mind, it could not be accounted ultimate; it would be relative. The ultimate truth, O Devaputra, transcends all expression; it is utterly unoriginate and has no cessation; it is utterly beyond signifier and signified, the knower and the known. Insofar as it is not even the object of primordial wisdom, which is omniscient and altogether supreme, it is the ultimate truth itself.

Now when it is said that the dharmata (or ultimate nature) is not an object of knowledge, this means that since the dharmata transcends all conceptual constructs, it is not *conceivable.* Indeed, how could something that is neither subject nor object and is totally devoid of characteristics be properly called an object of knowledge? As it has been said:

> People say, "I see a space."
> They certainly express themselves in words like these.
> But how can space be seen? Examine what this means.
> In such a way, the Buddha spoke of "seeing" the dharmata.
> No other image can express such vision.

But though this is the case, when speaking in ordinary terms of how Aryas rest in meditation, it is quite all right to speak in terms of subject and object, and to consider the dharmadhatu as an object of knowledge. For as it has been said in the *Madhyamakavatara:*

Suchness is unborn, and mind itself is also free from birth;
And when the mind is tuned to this, it is as though it knows
the ultimate reality.
For since you say that consciousness cognizes when it takes
the aspect of a thing,
It's right for us to speak in such a way.[189]

Again, given that the basis for the division into two truths consists of phenomena as objects of knowledge, the ultimate truth in this context is referred to as an object of knowledge; this assertion is made from the standpoint of exclusion. This does not conflict with the earlier contention that the ultimate truth is not an object of knowledge—an assertion made from the standpoint of detection.[190] For one should have recourse to the intended meaning of the teachings.

4. Concerning those who establish the two truths

[verse 3] With regard to the understanding of the two truths, one finds two classes or groups of worldly people. There are (Buddhist) yogis who are as yet worldly beings[191] but who possess the qualities of shamatha and vipashyana; and there are ordinary worldly people who are without these qualities. And within the category of ordinary people, there are those who are disinclined to philosophical investigation and those who are not. The former are people who believe implicitly that their "I" is an unchanging reality. They regard their bodies as single, unitary wholes, and their minds as permanent entities. The latter are philosophers expounding non-Buddhist tenets, which, though they are very numerous, may all be subsumed under the two headings of eternalism and nihilism. To assert the existence of an eternal self and primal substance is an example of eternalism. To deny the existence of past and future lives and the karmic law of cause and effect is what we refer to as nihilism. All such theories, however, are successively refuted by the worldly yogis of the Buddhist tradition, who teach that bodies are aggregates of parts and not whole and single entities, and that the mind is impermanent, a process of constant change. The arguments that disprove the theories of eternalism and nihilism will be explained in due course.

Buddhist yogis who are still worldly beings, are, for their part, classified according to four distinct schools of tenets. The first is that of the Vaibhashikas (a Shravaka school). They accept the existence of external

objects but reject the idea that consciousness can know itself. Their system has many distinctive features, for example the assertion of the five bases of knowledge objects, the existence of the past, present, and future as real (substantial) entities, and the belief that, apart from the simultaneous cognition by the senses of external things, the mind knows neither objects nor itself.[192]

The Vaibhashika way of positing the two truths is as follows. It is said in the *Abhidharmakosha* that:

> When objects are destroyed or mentally dissected,
> There is nothing left of them for mind to recognize.
> Such things are relative, like water
> Or like vessels. All else is ultimate.

The meaning of this is that physical objects may be crushed and destroyed, for instance with a hammer, whereas things like visual consciousness may be dissected by mental analysis [to the point of being no longer understood as such]. Gross objects like these, which can be crushed or dissipated, have a relative existence. By contrast, the smallest constituent of material form, namely, the infinitesimal partless particle, and the shortest constituent of consciousness, namely, the indivisible moment—neither of which can be destroyed or split—are held to have ultimate existence. These ideas are held in common by both the Vaibhashikas and the Sautrantikas.

The Sautrantikas[193] (the second Shravaka school of tenets) assert the existence of the external object and the self-knowing mind. Their distinctive tenets are that extramental objects are concealed by the mental objects,[194] that nonassociated conditioning factors[195] are mere names, and that nirvana is a nonthing (without real existence). Nonassociated conditioning factors and nirvana are for them mere imputations. They assert that the mind is both self-knowing and object-knowing.

And within the context of the two truths, when the Sautrantikas refer to the relative, they [make a further distinction and] say, as detailed in the *Pramanavarttika:*

> Everything that's functional
> Is here ascribed an ultimate existence;
> The rest exists but relatively.
> The one, we say, is specific, the other general in character.

In other words, all specifically characterized phenomena (both mind and matter) that are functional or causally effective are defined as ultimate; all that is not causally effective and is generally characterized is relative. For the Sautrantikas, "specifically characterized" (*rang mtshan*), "thing" (*dngos po*), "impermanent" (*mi rtag pa*), "functional or causally effective" (*don byed nus pa*), and "ultimate" (*don dam*) all have the same meaning. By contrast "generally characterized" (*spyi mtshan*), "nonthing" (*dngos med*), "permanent" (*rtag pa*), "nonfunctional or causally ineffective" (*don byed mi nus pa*), and "relative" (*kun rdzob*) are likewise synonyms. Some of these expressions, which seem to be in agreement with Vaibhashika terminology, in fact undermine the latter's tenets. Both schools affirm, however, that the indivisible particles of matter and instants of consciousness are the ultimate truth; and in this they are refuted by the Chittamatrins, who constitute the third school of tenets.

The Chittamatrins reject the existence of outer objects but affirm the ultimate reality of self-cognizing consciousness. They disprove the theory of the Vaibhashikas and Sautrantikas concerning the ultimate existence of the infinitesimal partless particle with arguments such as that of the venerable Vasubandhu:

> If six particles are joined to one,
> This partless one acquires six parts.
> If these six particles all coincide,
> Then even heaps become a single particle.

If one particle is in contact with six other particles, above, below, and in the four directions, the question is: Does the central particle have parts or not? If it has parts, the so-called partless particle is divided into six. If it has no parts, then however many particles we assemble, the result will only ever be a single partless particle, and even gross aggregations like mountains would be reduced to a single particle. The particles could never produce extended objects, and phenomena could not exist. It is thus that Vasubandhu refutes the theory of indivisible particles.

The Chittamatrins also reject the view that the inward mental perceiver, that is, the indivisible moment of consciousness, is an ultimate truth. For the question is: In the mental activity of cognizing the syllables OM AH HUNG, do the two successive instants of consciousness which know OM and AH have contact with each other or not? If there is no contact between

them and they are separated by unconsciousness, it follows that there is no link between successive instants of knowing, and therefore no such thing as a continuation of awareness. If, however, there is contact between moments of consciousness, the question is whether these moments have segments, some of which touch while others do not? If there are such segments, this means that the instant of consciousness that knows OM has a first part that does not touch the consciousness of AH, and a second part that does. And likewise, there is a first part of the consciousness of AH that touches the consciousness of OM, and a second part that does not. Thus, four parts are accounted for altogether. In other words, there is a proliferation and therefore no such thing as an indivisible instant. Again, if the instants do not have parts, of which some meet and some do not, then all instants become identical, and one ends up with such faults as asserting an immutable consciousness that is not divided into earlier and later moments.

Consequently, the Chittamatrins say that whatever seems to be an external object, in fact, appears only in the mind and exists nowhere else. All phenomena are therefore said to be mind, like the horses and oxen one sees in a dream. As for the mind itself, only self-knowing, self-illuminating consciousness, devoid of the duality of subject and object, is posited as ultimate.

In this tradition, the two truths are posited in the following way. All objects of knowledge are accounted for within three natures: imputed, dependent, and completely existent. "Imputed" refers to phenomena that appear according to a separation of subject and object. This is relative truth. "Dependent" refers to nondual consciousness beyond subject and object. This, according to the way it appears [in mental events or factors (*sems byung*)], is relative. According to the way it is in itself, however, it is the "subject ultimate" (*chos can don dam*). "Completely existent" indicates the ultimate truth pure and simple. The Chittamatrins consequently attribute true existence to the self-knowing mind, and this position is refuted by the arguments of the Madhyamikas, as will be shown in due course.

Madhyamaka[196] constitutes the fourth school and attributes ultimate reality neither to external objects nor to the self-cognizing mind. The Madhyamikas say that all knowable phenomena are, in their very nature, beyond conceptual construction; they are the union of the two truths; they are equal. For this reason, Madhyamaka is supreme and enormously superior to other tenet systems. According to the acuity with which the two

truths are investigated, the Madhyamikas are divided into two subgroups: the Svatantrikas and the Prasangikas.

Madhyamaka has two ways of positing the two truths. The first is in terms of an examination of the ultimate status [of phenomena]. According to this method, the way phenomena appear is their relative truth; the way they actually are is their ultimate truth. The second method is in terms of an examination of the relative status, the way phenomena appear. When subject and object appear in such a way that there is a discrepancy between the way they appear and the way they really are, this is the relative truth. By contrast, when subject and object appear in accordance to the way they actually are, this is the ultimate truth.

The faults of the lower tenet systems may be summarized as follows. The two Shravaka schools, Vaibhashika and Sautrantika, have two main defects. With regard to the relative level, they are self-concerned. As for the ultimate level, they attribute an absolute reality to the partless material particle and the indivisible instant of consciousness. The Chittamatrins say that the self-knowing, self-illuminating mind is the ultimate truth. Finally, the Svatantrika Madhyamikas insist on separating the two truths.

[verse 4] So it is that, through varying degrees of insight into the status of phenomena, there are, even within the ranks of Buddhist practitioners, those who are refuted and overmastered by others of successively elevated view. For in proportion as their insight into the nature of things becomes more acute, those equipped with valid cognition are able to refute inferior theories and not otherwise. In just the same way, as realization increases on the five paths and ten grounds, and their qualities are acquired, lower realizations and qualities are superseded.

3. Refutation of objections to the two truths

4. Refutation of objections with regard to the ground, the two truths

5. Refutation of the objections of ordinary people

How are Buddhist practitioners able to disprove the point of view of ordinary people? It could be argued that, since ordinary people perceive origination and so forth as realities and are convinced of this (whereas the Buddhists reject such a view), there is no shared ground on which one side might invalidate the other. One says that all things lack true existence, the

other that all things have it. There is nevertheless an example of something that both sides accept to be illusory and not real. The example in question is that of mirages or dreams, which, though they appear, are not in fact truly existent [in the way they seem]. Thus it may be demonstrated to ordinary people that, just as objects appear in mirages or dreams without actually existing, in the same way, all things, material form and so on, appear without really existing. By contrast, there is no commonly held example that could be used to show that something appears and also exists truly. It is for this reason that worldly people can never prove to Buddhist practitioners that phenomena truly exist.

At this point the objection may be made that, if all phenomena were unreal and illusory like mirages, what would be the point of training on the path with such activities as generosity and so on? It is completely unnecessary, like exhausting oneself trying to buy the mirage of a horse! The answer is that, although phenomena are found, on investigation, to be nonexistent, one must, for the sake of necessity (in other words, in order to achieve the goal), follow the path without subjecting it to analysis. And the attainment of the goal is necessary for the simple reason that, through the power of interdependent origination, the appearances of samsara and nirvana, though illusory, are inescapable.[197] Until the dualistic fixation on subject and object is dispersed in the expanse of suchness, these same appearances will continue without interruption to affect living beings—to help or harm them as the case may be. It is as a means to dispel the sufferings of ourselves and others, and to acquire benefit and happiness, that we persevere on this path—not because we believe in its real existence or in the reality of its result. It is like emanating a phantom army in order to deliver people from their [illusory] enemies or like trying to wake up someone who is suffering in his sleep.

But if the perception of things is the same for both Buddhist thinkers and ordinary people, what is there to disagree about? Actually, the disagreement is not about the existence or nonexistence of phenomenal *appearance.* No Madhyamika would ever deny the way things appear. [verse 5] The point at issue is that, when ordinary people perceive objects, they believe that they exist in just the way that they appear: perfectly real and absolutely existent. They do not have the insight of Buddhist yogis, who understand that though objects appear, they are like mirages and do not exist truly. This is the point on which they disagree.

5. Refutation of the objections of the Shravakas

The Shravakas object that if all is emptiness and without basis, this runs contrary to the fact that there are forms and other things that impinge upon our sight and the other senses. [verse 6] To this the Madhyamikas reply that to claim that form and other sense objects exist because they are perceived is the unexamined assumption of worldly people; it is just the common consensus. When such things are examined, however, they are not established by valid cognition. For, as will be explained, they can be disproved by investigating whether the sense faculties contact their objects or not. The assertion that material forms and so forth are truly existent is as deceptive as the worldly opinion that the human body is pure and permanent, whereas in reality it is impure and transient.

It could also be objected that forms and other things must exist truly, since the Buddha affirmed the existence of the aggregates, elements, and the sense fields, and defined the aggregates as momentary. But in this case, Buddha was speaking on the level of expedient meaning; his real intention was only implied.[198] [verse 7] Thinking only of the mode of appearance—his purpose being to lead the worldly (as yet unable to understand emptiness) gradually onto the path of the authentic Middle Way—the universal protector, the perfect Buddha, taught that things like forms exist. But on the ultimate level, the aggregates and so on, have no such momentary being because, on investigation, they are not established, either in the singular or plural;[199] they are without origin or cessation.

The Shravakas say, however, that if momentariness is not the ultimate truth, it follows that, since it is a contradiction to posit it as the relative, it cannot be accounted for within the two truths. Both reason and the authority of the scriptures show how momentariness cannot be posited as the relative truth. For, given that the relative is defined as that which is commonly perceptible to all, it follows that momentariness should be perceived even by ordinary people. Since this is not the case, momentariness is not the relative. Finally, did not the Lord himself say that to see momentariness is to see the true mode of being of phenomena?

In reply to this, we might say that the ordinary minds of worldly people are deceived by the illusion created by the arising of a series of different entities that seem the same; they are unaware that objects like pots are momentary. But yogis who contemplate the mode of being of the conventional level

see and ascertain the momentary nature of phenomena—which is therefore relative for them.[200] [verse 8] Consequently, the objection mentioned above that momentariness is not accounted for in either of the two truths is resolved. In relation to ordinary people, who conceive of things as permanent and unchanging, the insight of yogis into momentariness represents a kind of ultimate nature within the boundaries of the conventional. Otherwise, if there were no difference between the way yogis and ordinary people understand the way things are on the relative level, it would follow that clear insight into the impurity of the human body by one who meditates on ugliness could be invalidated by ordinary people, who perceive it as pure—since the understanding of the nature of things of both parties would be on a level. Thus, while the insight of yogis into the body's impurity invalidates the ordinary perception of the body's purity, that insight cannot itself be invalidated.

But if, the Shravakas will say, all phenomena are unreal and mere illusions, then the Buddha himself is an illusion too. That being so, how could merit be gained from making offerings to him? [verse 9] The answer to this is that illusory offerings made to the illusory Buddha give rise to illusory merit, in the same way that the Shravakas consider real merit to be accumulated by making real offerings to a real Buddha. The only difference lies in the respective reality or nonreality of the merit (and of the Buddha); it does not lie in the arising or nonarising of such merit.

Again, how, if beings are like illusions, could they be reborn after death? They ought to be like the horses and oxen of a magical display, which, once they disappear, are not reborn elsewhere. [verse 10] The fact is, however, that as long as the ingredients, the magic spell, and so on, are assembled, the illusory display of the horse or ox will continue to manifest. In the same way, as long as the conditions of karma and defiled emotion are present, beings will continue to be reborn. Whether or not beings or illusions manifest depends on the presence or absence of the full complement of their causes; it does not depend on whether they are truly existent or not. But even if this is the case, it could still be argued that since samsara is beginningless and endless, sentient beings last for a very long time. This is not so with magical illusions, which cannot therefore be compared with them. No one is saying, however, that beings or magical displays are similar in all respects—duration, for example. Both may be short or long; they are said to be similar only because, although they appear, they are empty of true existence. How can true existence be attributed to sentient beings merely on

account of their long duration? Indeed it cannot. Otherwise it would follow that, because some illusions last a long time and some beings last only a brief moment, true existence is to be ascribed to the former but not to the latter.

Again, if beings are illusory, it might be objected that, just as with positive or negative acts done to people encountered in magical apparitions, no merit is to be gained by giving them food and clothing, and likewise no sin is involved in killing them or harming them in some other way. [verse 11] To this it must be pointed out that even if one has the intention to help or kill an illusory man [created in a magical display], and even if one does actually proceed to slay or injure him, because no mind is present in this phantom being that could experience phantom happiness or sorrow based on such events, it follows that, aside from the subjective fault of intending an evil action, the sin of actual murder, and so on, is not committed. But in the case of sentient beings who possess minds (albeit illusory), merit and sin do arise on the basis of the good or evil done to them. In sum, the difference between living beings and magical apparitions lies in the presence or absence of a mind. There is no difference between them from the point of view of their ontological status (their real existence or illusoriness).

But then it will be argued that it is because beings have minds that they cannot be compared with magical apparitions: Their ontological status is different. But though sentient beings possess minds, these minds are themselves like illusions—how could they be truly existent? [verse 12] Because there is nothing in an incantation, or in the material ingredients for a magical display, that has the power to bring minds into existence, no illusory mind manifests. By contrast, the cause of sentient beings does have that power. One cannot say, however, that a thing is real just because it is produced by something able to produce a mind, nor can we say that a thing is not real when this capacity it lacking. A multiplicity of causes gives rise to a corresponding multiplicity of illusions. [verse 13] Nowhere in the universe is there a single cause able to produce the whole ensemble of extramental and intramental effects. From different causes, different effects appear; but they are not different [from each other] according to real existence or illusoriness. It is like apparitions of horses and oxen produced by magic. You might make a difference between them according to whether or not they have horns, but not according to whether they are real or illusory.

Those who hold that nirvana is a real entity (the Vaibhashikas) take issue with the Madhyamikas, who deny that things exist inherently. They

say that the Madhyamikas believe that, on the ultimate level, all the phenomena of samsara are intrinsically nirvana and that relative truth is samsara endowed with the characteristics of birth, aging, sickness, and death. If this is so, they say, then because samsara and nirvana have a common basis, [verse 14] it follows that even if the level of buddhahood is attained, it must revert back to samsara. In other words, the exhaustion of samsara does not result in the attainment of buddhahood because [the Madhyamikas have said that] nirvana is actually samsara. Therefore what, they ask, is the point of practicing as a Bodhisattva in order to attain buddhahood? It is completely futile!

According to the Madhyamikas, this is not so; for there is a difference between nirvana that is the utterly pure nature [of phenomena] and nirvana that is freedom from adventitious defilements. [verse 15] If the stream of causes that result in different phenomena is not severed, there will be no cessation either of samsara or of magical appearances. But if the continuum of causes is interrupted, their effects will not manifest even on the relative level. And if they do not manifest on the relative level, there is no need to talk about [their manifesting on] the ultimate level. Therefore, for those who, through the wisdom of realizing the absence of self, uproot ignorance together with its seeds, there is no returning to samsara, for there is no further cause for it. The Buddha's birth in this world was not a samsaric event. It was through the strength of primordial wisdom and the cooperating conditions of his aspirations and concentrations that the Buddha displayed deeds that were like a magical illusion, while never once stirring from the dharmadhatu.

5. Refutation of the objections of the Chittamatrins

The True Aspectarians, a subdivision of the Chittamatra school,[201] say that all things, which appear to be real—whether in the outer or inner sphere—are like optical illusions or dreams. They have no reality outside the mind. Our perception of a physical environment, mental states, and other beings is due to the ripening of various specific habitual tendencies. Therefore, even though external things do not exist, the mind itself does; and even in dreams, it experiences objects, such as color. How, they ask, can the Madhyamikas say that external objects are mere illusions and do not exist

and then say that the deluded mind itself does not exist either? For if it has no existence, what is it (since there is no mind) that observes the illusory object?

The Madhyamikas respond with the same argument. [verse 16] If, they say, the Chittamatrins assert that the illusory object has no reality, then, even if they claim that the mind itself exists, what is it that could be perceived? For if either of the two poles, subject or object, is lacking, it is impossible for perception to occur. The Chittamatrins reply, however, that, according to their theory, things are not held to be completely nonexistent. They are like objects, horses or oxen, for example, seen in dreams. Instead of a material object, the mind perceives a mental object in its place. This apprehended aspect is apparently an exterior thing but is in fact the mind itself, not something extramental.

[verse 17] The problem here, as the Madhyamikas point out, is that if the perceived illusory object is the mind, what object is seen by what subject? If the two are identical, no seeing can take place. And why? The Lord Buddha, the guardian of the whole world, has himself said that the mind cannot see the mind. [verse 18] Indeed, just as the sword's edge cannot cut itself, just as the finger tip cannot touch itself, just as an acrobat cannot climb on his own shoulders, likewise the mind cannot see itself. As it is said in the *Ratnachudaparipriccha-sutra*, "It is thus: Just as the blade cannot cut itself and the finger tip cannot touch itself, even so the mind itself cannot see the mind." The crucial point here is that as long as the mind is established as truly existent, it is partless and one; and this undermines the notion that it could be divided twofold into a seen object and a seeing subject. If something appears as an object, it cannot be the subject; and if something does not appear as an object, it cannot be apprehended as one. Therefore to say that the mind is self-knowing on the ultimate level is just words; it has no truth.[202]

But why, the Chittamatrins contend, should the mind *not* know itself? It is, after all, no different from a flame, which sheds light on pots and other things and perfectly illuminates itself at the same time without relying on any other source of radiance. But to say that a flame "illuminates itself" is simply a conventional expression; it is not strictly true. [verse 19] A flame in fact has no need of illumination, for, since there is no darkness in a flame, what is there to be illuminated? If it were possible to illuminate something even when there is nothing to be lit up, the absurd conclusion

would follow that a flame could illuminate even the sun and moon! Furthermore, if a flame is the object of its own illuminating, the same could be said, mutatis mutandis, of darkness, in other words, that darkness obscures itself. Consequently, if an object, such as a pot, were placed in the dark, it would be the darkness itself that could not be seen, whereas the pot itself would remain visible!

The Chittamatrins object, however, that in the context they are discussing, the illuminator and that which is illuminated are not two separate things. The flame illuminates itself by its very nature just as a lapis lazuli is blue in and of itself. A distinction can be made, they say, in the way that things are blue. There is a blue color that arises in dependence on external factors, as when a white crystal becomes blue by being placed on a blue cloth. On the other hand, there is a blue color, the blueness of which exists independently of any extraneous agency, as in the case of a lapis lazuli, which is blue by nature. [verse 20] In the same way, it may be understood that there are agents of illumination and objects that are illuminated [which are separate and interdependent], as in the case of visual consciousness and a visible form. On the other hand, there is also a consciousness that is by *nature* self-aware and self-illuminating, and here there is no mutual dependence between a distinct illuminator and a distinct object illuminated.

The example employed here by the Chittamatrins is inapplicable. It is false to say that lapis lazuli is blue independently of other factors. It appears blue due to an accumulation of extraneous causes and conditions; it is impossible to claim that at some point, and independently of extrinsic causal factors, it produced its own blueness. It is a mistake to say that blueness is self-producing.

[verse 21] Their intended meaning is also untenable. When it is said that "the flame is self-illuminating," this is understood and expressed in terms of an "other-knowing mind" distinct from the flame itself.[203] But in the case of the expression "the mind illuminates, [i.e., knows,] itself," what is the status of the mind conceiving and expressing this? Is that which knows the mind to be self-illuminating identical with that mind or is it some other mind, some other knower? To state the first of these alternatives is clearly unacceptable here, since this is precisely the subject of investigation [between Madhyamikas and Chittamatrins] and it is not established. If, on the other hand, another knower is needed, different from the first consciousness, we will find ourselves with an infinite regression of knowers with the result that knowledge becomes impossible.

Moreover, if such moments of knowing [in this infinite stream of knowers] are not simultaneous, there can be no knowledge of past objects, [or knowledge moments], which have ceased to be; or of future ones, which have not yet occurred. On the other hand, if they are simultaneous, they must be independent of each other, with the result that, once again, knowledge is impossible. [verse 22] Therefore, if the consciousness (that is, the dependent reality) is not seen by anything—whether by itself or by a consciousness distinct from it—it is meaningless to examine whether it is illuminating or non-illuminating. To talk about the characteristics of something which is never perceived is as futile as discussing the grace and posture of a barren woman's daughter. It is completely meaningless.

The Chittamatrins claim, however, that though they are unable to prove it on the basis of valid perception, nevertheless, the self-knowing mind is demonstrated inferentially. [verse 23] If, they say, the mind does not know or experience itself, then, being without self-knowledge or self-experience in the past, how could it remember anything at a later stage? Memory indeed would be impossible; it would be like having a result without a cause. Consequently, how is it that, when the blue object experienced in the past is remembered, the subject that experienced it (the apprehending consciousness) is also recalled?

The Madhyamikas reply that the fact that the mind can now remember that it experienced blue is not evidence that, in the past, it knew or experienced itself perceiving blue. The mind's present memory of itself experiencing blue [in the past] derives from the earlier perception of a blue thing and from the fact that (in every experience) subject and object are always interdependent. (Indeed, one never finds a subjective consciousness of blueness divorced from blue objects.) By the same token, when one remembers a blue thing experienced in the past, there occurs also the recollection of the subject that perceived the blue. But this is not a matter of some independent consciousness apprehending blue separate from the blue thing formerly experienced. This is illustrated by the example of the venom of the water rat. Suppose in winter one were bitten by a poisonous water rat. One would, at that moment, be aware that one had been bitten, but not that one had been poisoned. It is only later, at the sound of spring thunder, that the venom begins to act and one realizes that one had been poisoned at the same time as being bitten. In other words, there occurs a newly arisen consciousness whereby one thinks that one was poisoned in the past.[204]

[verse 24] The Chittamatrins go on to object that if it is true that those who have achieved great concentration in the practice of shamatha are able to see the minds of others, how is it that the mind cannot know something as close to it as itself? The mind must be self-cognizing! If one can see a hair at a distance, they say, one can surely see a rope close by! But there is nothing certain in this. The situation is rather like that of a certain eye ointment prepared with magical incantations and so on. When this is applied to the eyes, one can see things at a great distance or perceive things like treasure vases hidden under the earth. But one cannot see the ointment itself, which is of course very close to the eye.

But, the Chittamatrins say, if the mind is not self-illuminating and self-knowing, consciousness of other things is impossible. All conventionalities seen with the eyes and heard with the ears, and all mental cognitions, would be prevented. For they are all necessarily based on the mind's clarity and self-cognition. They are impossible otherwise. [verse 25] The Madhyamikas answer that they are not refuting experiences such as sight, hearing, and understanding, which appear to have a satisfactory existence provided they are not subjected to analysis. For it is impossible to deny them, and there is no need to do so. What, then, are the Madhyamikas attacking? The cause of suffering: the belief and clinging to the *true existence* of all things. In this context, "things" are explained as referring to conventionalities validly perceived through sight, hearing, or the mind. And here, "sight" refers to sense perceptions generally; "hearing" refers to reports from other sources; and "mind" refers to the process of inference.

[verse 26] The view of the False Aspectarians, who also belong to the Chittamatra school, is as follows.[205] They say that illusion-like objects, which appear to be external to the mind, are not distinct extramental things: The extramental object therefore does not exist. But in answer to the question of whether these objects, which are not different from the mind (for it is the mind appearing in their guise), are one with the mind, the False Aspectarians consider that they are not. For if [the illusory outer objects] were identical with the mind, this would undermine the latter's oneness and partlessness. They say therefore that the external object is just like a mirage hanging in space—a groundless appearance—and that the mind is by nature free from all aspects. It is like a sphere of pure crystal. And they claim that this resolves any possible flaw in their position.

But the Madhyamikas reply that if the Chittamatrins hold the mind to be really existent, how can the aspect or object not be different from it? For

they have said that aspects are unreal, while they believe that the mind is real, and between real and unreal there is no common ground. They may be frightened by this objection into admitting that aspects are not different from the mind. But in that case, the Madhyamikas say, if the mind is identical with unreal aspects, it follows that it is unreal as well.

But if the mind were unreal, the Chittamatrins reply, it could not be a perceiving agent. [verse 27] The Madhyamaka reply to this is that, in just the same way as an object, though unreal and illusory, is said by them to be perceived by the mind, likewise the mind, though unreal and illusory, may act as a perceiver of objects. This argument has just been used for purposes of refutation; now it is being used to serve as a proof.

The Chittamatrins also say that samsara is supported by dependent reality, the really existing mind. If the situation were otherwise, if the mind were not truly existent, samsara would simply be nothing, like empty space. It would be impossible for the appearances of samsara to arise, for they would be without anything to support them. It would be like having a pot without clay or a cloth without yarn. But if samsara is real, the Madhyamikas ask, is it identical with the mind, or different from it? If it is identical, it is impossible to escape from it. On the other hand, if it is different from the mind, this is inconsistent with the Chittamatra position (which is why they say it is unreal). [verse 28] But if samsara is like this, if it is unreal, it is causally ineffective. Therefore, even though it is supported by a truly existent mind, how can one be either imprisoned in it or freed from it? One cannot hold a rabbit's horn in one's hand and dig with it. An unreal thing cannot be supported by anything. If it could, it would become a thing, part of the sequence of cause and effect.

The Tibetan expression *dngos med* [translated as "nonthing," "nonexistence," "unreal," or "untrue"] is used in two different senses. On the one hand, it is used to refer to what has no existence at all, even conventionally. On the other hand, it denotes things that are untrue in the sense of being like mirages. This is how Madhyamikas reply to those who believe in true existence, who, through not understanding that things may very well appear without truly existing, think that the "absence of true existence" means utter nothingness.

Since there can never be any connection between a truly existing mind and something that is unreal, it follows that the self-knowing, self-illuminating mind propounded by the Chittamatrins is solitary and completely isolated. [verse 29] But if the mind is without a perceived object, it is empty

also of a perceiving subject. Now according to the Chittamatrins, when the "emptiness of subject and object" is actualized, ultimate reality manifests. So [according to their argument] this must mean that all beings are Buddhas from the very beginning, without needing to endeavor on the path. In which case, what is the point of elaborating a philosophical system saying that everything is mind? By affirming that all is mind, the Chittamatrins say that objects do not exist separate from the mind, and they claim to establish that ultimate reality is voidness of the subject-object dichotomy. Even so, what is the use of such a system, given that both these assertions (that of refuting dualistic appearance and that of establishing nonduality) have become superfluous? If therefore one asserts that mental aspects do not exist, it follows that the appearances of samsara are groundless, with the result that all experience becomes impossible.

4. Refutation of objections with regard to the path, that is, emptiness

[verse 30] Even if it is known that all phenomena exist in the manner of an illusion, how could this understanding repel afflictive emotion such as desire? For it might be argued that a magician who produces the illusory appearance of a beautiful woman might himself feel desire for her, even though he has himself created her and knows that she is an apparition.

[verse 31] The reason for this is that the creator of the illusory woman has not eradicated the habitual patterns in himself of afflictive emotions (in this case desire) toward phenomena such as women. And so, when the creator of the apparition sees the woman, because his familiarity with the antidote to the passions, namely, emptiness, is extremely weak, how can he possibly resist the affliction of lust? There is no understanding of emptiness in his mind to counteract his fixation on real existence and the substantiality of things. If, on the other hand, he realized that the women encountered in his ordinary experience are not at all real, he would not feel any interest in an illusory one nor have any hope to have an involvement with her.

The root of craving is thought born from conceptual elaboration. Now [the realization of] emptiness gradually eliminates such thought-elaboration and leads to the destruction of both types of ignorance: all-labeling ignorance and coemergent ignorance. Finally, the mind itself assumes the

nature of the antidote. It becomes like the mandala of the sun, without a trace of darkness, so that even the subtlest seeds of such ignorance are eliminated, never to return.

It may be objected here that since belief in the reality of phenomena and the conviction of the truth of emptiness both lie within the purview of conceptuality, it follows that, come what may, we are caught in the web of thoughts—like elephants washing themselves in mud. How can we ever put a stop to conceptual activity?

[verse 32] The answer is that when people cultivate the habit of considering all phenomena as empty of inherent existence (an attitude that runs contrary to fixation), they are ridding themselves of the ingrained belief in the reality of things. At the same time, by using the argument of dependent origination, they will also conclude that even the conviction in the unreality of phenomena is merely one thought supplanting another, and that it cannot in itself be the true mode of being of phenomena. Meditating on the fact that both the reality and unreality of things are completely lacking in true existence, they will finally overcome even their clinging to emptiness or nonexistence. As it is said, "Existence and nonexistence both are inexistent. The Bodhisattva who knows this is free indeed from samsara." And Nagarjuna says in his *Lokatitastava:*

> That conceptualization might be relinquished,
> You have taught the ambrosia of voidness;
> And whatever clinging there might be to this,
> That indeed you have yourself discarded.

Given, however, that the real existence of phenomena is disproved, how is it possible, some people ask, to refute the nonexistence of phenomena as well? When the nonexistence of something is refuted, its existence returns. For denial of nonexistence is the assertion of existence, and the reality of a thing is the contrary of its unreality.

The fact is that we have the habit, from time without beginning, of taking phenomena as truly existent; for this reason we must establish, and accustom ourselves to, their nonexistence. For indeed, if we do not understand that phenomena lack inherent existence, the moment of certainty as to their ultimate nature beyond all ontological extremes will never come to us. Nevertheless, mere nonexistence is not the ultimate mode of being.

[verse 33] When things, such as material forms, are examined and analyzed, nothing at all is found. One discovers that the object under investigation, on the relative plane, has no existence, no origin, and so forth from its own side. At that point, the nonexistence (*dngos med*) of that object (posited in relation to its real existence) is thus deprived of all support (since there is nothing there), and consequently, there is no way in which it can present itself as a conceptual target to the mind. It is just like the son of a barren woman: If he is not born, it is impossible to conceive of his dying. This is to say that nonexistence is posited only on the basis of a supposed existence. It is not an independent entity in its own right.

[verse 34] Therefore, when neither the thing (to be negated) nor the nonexistence of the thing (the negation thereof) are present to the mind, no alternatives for true existence remain (in terms of being both existent and nonexistent or neither existent nor nonexistent). Consequently, the mind has no other object to fix on, no ideas like "It is empty" or "It is not empty." All conceptual activity is brought to complete stillness. This is a state of equality, which is like the abyss of space. There is no name for it; it is beyond thought and explanation, perfectly revealed only by self-cognizing awareness wisdom. It is said in *The Praise to the Mother:*

> No name, no thought, no explanation is there for the Wisdom
> that has Gone Beyond;
> Unceasing and unborn, the very character of space.
> It is the sphere of awareness-wisdom self-cognizing:
> To this, the mother of the Buddhas past, present, and to come,
> I bow.

And in the *Mulamadhyamaka-karika,* it is said:

> It is not known through other sources, it is peace;
> And not through mind's construction can it be constructed;
> Free of thought, it is beyond distinctions:
> This describes the character of suchness.

And again we find, "Since this is the ultimate mode of being, Bodhisattvas who entertain the notion 'The aggregates are empty' are enmeshed in ideas of characteristics. They have no faith in the unborn nature [of phenomena]." And:

The Buddhas say that voidness
Is the banishment of all assertion;
Those who "have a view" of voidness,
Are barred, they say, from its accomplishment.

4. Refutation of objections with regard to the fruit, that is, the benefit of others

When the level of buddhahood is attained, all discursive thought dissolves into the expanse of emptiness, and as a consequence, the concept of endeavoring for the sake of others cannot occur. How then is it possible to work for the benefit of beings?

[verse 35] It is just as with the wish-fulfilling jewel or the tree of miracles, which, while not having the intention to benefit anyone, nevertheless perfectly satisfy the hopes of those who pray before them. In just the same way, through the power of their former aspirations, Buddhas appear in forms appropriate to the needs of beings and constantly deploy their activity for the happiness and good of all, setting forth the Doctrine and so on. One who has attained the ultimate nirvana, wherein all efforts made along the path of training are completely stilled, and which never diverges from the dharmadhatu, has no concept of endeavor, and yet activity occurs for the welfare of beings. This, as we have said, is illustrated by the wishing jewel and other things, as well as eight further examples such as the reflection of Indra.[206]

It could of course be objected that if, at the present moment, a Buddha does not strive to accomplish the benefit of a given being through any specific miraculous work, how could such a thing come about through aspirations made in the past? But why should it not be so? [verse 36] The case is no different from that of the brahmin Shangku who once accomplished the magical enchantment of the garuda.[207] Because of the power infused into them by the brahmin's mantra and concentration, the sacred objects, such as the shrines or images of the garuda, which he made of earth and stone, had, for all who saw them, the capacity to counteract any ailment caused by the nagas and so on. And for a long time after the brahmin had passed away, these objects manifestly retained the power to counteract poison and evil influences. In the same way, why should the welfare of beings not be accomplished now without any effort being made, through an impetus set in motion beforehand?

[verse 37] A similar thing may be said for the supreme Bodhisattvas, who, in accordance with their tremendous exploits in the twofold accumulation directed at enlightenment, achieve the sacred object of enlightenment, that is, the level of buddhahood. Although such Bodhisattvas pass beyond suffering into the dharmadhatu, which abides in neither extreme, and although all their labors and dualistic mental activity now completely subside, they nevertheless effect the temporary and ultimate welfare of other beings.

An objection is raised at this point with regard to the making of offerings. The merit accruing from an offering depends on the interaction of one who offers and of someone else who consciously accepts the oblation. [verse 38] But if the Buddhas do not have thoughts or intentions, how can something offered to them give rise to merit? Of course, if nothing results from making offerings to inanimate objects, it must follow that nothing will be gained from making offerings to the relics of the Tathagatas or to stupas. Nevertheless, it is asserted repeatedly in scriptures such as the *Maitreyamahasimhanada-sutra* that the merit arising from making offerings to a living Buddha and the merit of offering to his or her mortal remains, or to stupas containing them, after such a Buddha has passed into nirvana, are one and the same. As it has been said:

> Offerings made to me today,
> And those made in the future to my relics:
> Both have equal merit and the same result.

[verse 39] Therefore, regardless of whether one considers (as Madhyamikas do) that the Buddhas themselves and the merit gained from making offerings to them are just illusions on the level of relative truth, or whether one believes (as do those who raised this objection) that both exist truly in an ultimate sense, the merit gained from making such offerings is extremely great. There is scriptural authority for this assertion. To repeat, just as the making of offerings to a truly existent Buddha is productive of merit, in the same way, illusion-like merits arise from making offerings to a Buddha devoid of true existence. Both positions, in fact, have the support of scripture.

3. Proofs of the supremacy of the Mahayana

4. The Mahayana is the Buddha's teaching

There are in general four kinds of Shravaka: those who are emanations, those who will attain great enlightenment, those who are only journeying toward peace, and the so-called sendhavas, who have much intellectual pride.[208] The latter two claim to see or realize the truth, though they do not, and are strongly attached to their theories. [verse 40] They say, for example, that the direct vision and assimilation of the sixteen aspects of the four noble truths[209] (such as impermanence) is sufficient to achieve complete freedom, the fruit of arhatship. Since this is the case, what use is there, they ask, in realizing that all phenomena are empty, without inherent existence?

It is, of course, in the Mahayana that the emptiness of all phenomena is expounded, and it is out of fear, in fact, that the Shravakas reject it. They have no understanding of this teaching on emptiness, and yet they argue against it, claiming that they realize the No-Self of the individual person. Their objection is however futile. If the emptiness of phenomena is rejected, there remains no possible antidote able to uproot completely the afflictive emotions. This is why the scriptures, such as the *Prajnaparamita-sutra,* say that without following the path whereby emptiness is realized, liberation, namely, the three kinds of enlightenment[210] cannot be attained. For it is said that for those who retain a belief in the reality of things, liberation in any of the three types of enlightenment is impossible. As a matter of fact, even the attainment of the Shravakas and Pratyekabuddhas cannot be reached without relying on emptiness, namely, the perfection of wisdom, which in consequence is referred to as the mother of the four kinds of noble beings or Aryas.

But the Shravakas do not accept the authority of the Mahayana scriptures just cited. They do not accept these scriptures as the pure word of the Buddha, but consider that they are writings composed, after the Buddha had passed into nirvana, by mere intellectuals under the influence of Mara, and that therefore no reliance can be placed in them.

[verse 41] Given that the Shravakas do not accept the Mahayana as the genuine teaching of the Buddha, the question how they prove the authenticity of their own scriptures should now be asked. The Shravakas say that their canon derives from the four texts of Vinaya, one section of Sutra and so forth, and it includes seven sections of Abhidharma. The authenticity of these scriptures, they say, is demonstrated by the fact that they are accepted by both parties—meaning that there is no disagreement on the matter.

What exactly is meant by the expression "both parties"? The Shravakas must either intend themselves and some other group, or else they must be

referring to two other authorities entirely separate from themselves. Let us begin by considering the first of these alternatives. The Shravakas themselves do not possess an innate certainty that the Tripitaka of the Shravakayana constitutes the Buddha's word. So they cannot appeal to a commonly held opinion of "both parties." On what grounds, therefore, do they claim their scriptures to be authentic? Since there is no intrinsic link between the teachings and the Shravakas, it is impossible for these scriptures to be established for them a priori as authoritative.

[verse 42] The Shravakas accept this, but they say, nevertheless, that there is good reason for trusting in their scriptures. First, they say, the Buddha expounded the Doctrine. Subsequently, his words were compiled by the Arhats and elucidated in their commentaries, and finally the Doctrine was passed down by the teachers of the lineage. Reasoning proves that their tradition does not contravene any of the three criteria for examining the doctrine;[211] it is therefore a teaching that reveals the pure path. These facts, they say, show that their doctrine of the four sections of Vinaya and so on, is indeed the authentic teaching of the Buddha.

This is all very well, but the Mahayana disposes of exactly the same arguments to establish its own credibility. In the first place, the Buddha set forth the teachings. These were subsequently compiled by Manjushri, Maitreya, and others. Maitreya and Nagarjuna elucidated them with commentaries, and they were handed down by a lineage of teachers in whom we can have total confidence. Again, they do not offend against the three criteria for examining teachings and will be accepted by anyone who is intelligent and honest. This is all perfectly demonstrable, and these teachings may thus be established to the satisfaction of followers both of the Mahayana and Shravakayana.

In the second case, if by "both parties" the Shravakas mean that the common assertion of any two parties is sufficient to demonstrate the truth of a position, it follows also that the non-Buddhist doctrines, such as the four Vedas and so on, are also true. For they are believed in by many more than two individuals!

[verse 43] All the same, it might be argued that whereas, among Buddhists, there is no debate about the validity of the Shravakayana, the Mahayana *is* disputed, and this is enough to discredit it. But a doctrine is not disproved merely by the fact of its being objected to. If that were the case, then since the Buddhadharma in general is disputed by non-Buddhists, and since the different Buddhist schools (each with their spe-

cific tenets based on a particular aspect of the teachings, not to mention the eighteen Shravaka schools) all argue amongst themselves, it follows that the Shravakas should reject their own system of teachings as well.

[verse 44] The root of the perfect doctrine is the perfect monk, but to be a perfect monk is not an easy matter. It is said that five categories of men receive the designation of monk. There are those who are simply called "monk," those whose vows are degenerate, those who are just the recipients of alms, those who are fully ordained, and those who have abandoned negative emotions. Of these, the first three are only nominally monks. The latter two are the best kind, and it is they who are the root of the doctrine. Of these, the supreme monk in the ultimate sense is the one who has abandoned negative emotion.

It is difficult (for the Shravakas) to achieve such a status, because it is impossible for them to realize the truth that brings about the elimination of negative emotion. For, as they themselves admit, they do not possess an understanding of emptiness, the true nature of phenomena. The state of the fully ordained monk also presents difficulties. This is inevitable since it is a subject of controversy, and the Shravakas have already said that all controversial subjects are to be rejected. By the same token, the four sections of the Vinaya scriptures should be discarded as well.

But why, the Shravakas ask, should they not to be considered as monks who have abandoned negative emotions? After all, even if they are lacking in the view of emptiness, they do have a complete understanding of the four noble truths. The reason given in reply is that the realization of impermanence and the other aspects of the four truths are not in fact the most important aspects of the path. What is crucial however is the wisdom of No-Self that completely eradicates afflictive emotion. This alone is the perfect remedy. Therefore, those who reject the doctrine of emptiness and whose minds are still engrossed in concepts will have difficulty in attaining nirvana. For without the complete destruction of clinging to self, there is no way to overcome afflictive emotion; and it is only through the realization of the emptiness of phenomena that clinging to self is uprooted. No other way is possible. Moreover, if the habitual tendency to assume the true existence of phenomena has not been eliminated, then even if it is temporarily suppressed by means of certain concentrations, it will later reassert itself—as will be explained—in much the same way as when one emerges from a meditative absorption of nonperception. Consequently, there is no other way of overcoming afflictive emotion than the realization

of the truth. And by "truth" is meant the perfect comprehension of emptiness: the understanding that the self, the conceived object of the innate process of ego-clinging, does not exist inherently.

The Shravakas of course are in perfect agreement about the need to realize No-Self, but they do not consider No-Self and emptiness to be the same. For them, emptiness means the denial of phenomenal existence like material form; it is a frightening, nihilistic notion. By contrast, the recognition of the nonexistence of the personal self (which has never at any time existed) constitutes for them the perfect view in accordance with the true nature of things.

As a matter of fact, there is no difference at all between these two assertions of emptiness: that of the personal No-Self and that of the phenomenal No-Self. Personal No-Self means that the person is merely an imputation on the basis of the aggregates; it has no objective existence from its own side. Similarly, phenomenal No-Self means that even aggregates like a body, for example, or a pot, are imputed on the basis of their assembled parts. They are empty of themselves. The only difference between these two emptinesses lies in the thing considered to be empty. The understanding of the phenomenal No-Self undermines clinging to phenomena in general, while the realization of the personal No-Self acts against the root of samsara. Aside from this, there is no difference between these two modes of emptiness.

The Shravakas, on the other hand, claim that the difference between the personal and the phenomenal No-Self is very considerable. They say too that [the realization of] the phenomenal No-Self (or emptiness) is unnecessary: Liberation is attained merely through the realization of the personal No-Self. This means that, for them, existent phenomena are not empty, whereas the personal self, which has never at any time existed, is as unreal as a rabbit's horns. They consequently have no use for the belief in the phenomenal No-Self. And so they debate, without realizing that a personal self imputed in dependence on the aggregates is in fact the very same thing [as the phenomenal self].

If one considers the matter carefully, it will be seen that the absence of a personal self and the absence of phenomenal self are of one taste. [These absences are] simply the emptiness of phenomena that are interdependently imputed. There is absolutely no difference between them. In view of this, the Shravakas and Pratyekabuddhas do indeed possess a realization of phenomenal No-Self or emptiness. This is evident from the fact that, if

they were without such a realization, they would be unable to overcome afflictive emotion. It is necessary to understand that the emptiness of the person (its lack of inherent existence) is just a case of the phenomenal No-Self or emptiness. The primordial wisdom, therefore, which realizes the phenomenal No-Self, may be regarded as the general term, while the wisdom that realizes the No-Self of persons may be taken as a specific instance, a lesser category. Conversely, the belief in the self of phenomena corresponds to ignorance generally, whereas the belief in the personal self is a particular case of this. It is like the relationship between the genus tree and the species juniper.

From the belief in the personal self, emotional obscurations like avarice arise. From the belief in the phenomenal self derive the cognitive obscurations, namely, the concepts of the three spheres.[212] It should thus be understood that whereas the Bodhisattvas, who realize the two types of No-Self, have a wisdom that overcomes both kinds of obscuration, those on the Shravaka path only manage to eradicate afflictive emotion.

Yet again, the Shravakas say that afflictive emotions are eliminated through the realization of the four truths and that nirvana is thus attained, in the same way as a fire goes out when the wood has been consumed. It has however been proved that it is impossible to behold the (ultimate) truth without the realization of emptiness. And the position of the Shravakas exhibits a further drawback in that the realization of personal No-Self leads only to the elimination of the emotions and therefore not to ultimate liberation. [verse 45] The Shravakas contend that by simply overcoming afflictive emotion, one is liberated from all sufferings. This would mean that as soon as all negative emotion has been eradicated and arhatship attained, liberation from suffering should occur. For the Shravakas say that there is no more bondage. If this is indeed their position, it is apparently contradicted by the examples of the noble Arhats, the great Maudgalyayana and Kubja the Small, who though they were free from negative emotion, nevertheless suffered from the maturation of past karma. [verse 46] The Shravakas get around this difficulty by saying that even though the effects of karma were observable in their continued physical existence, propelled as it was by former karmas and emotions, nevertheless, since all craving, which is the cause for the taking of subsequent existences, was extinguished, it may be affirmed with certainty that they could never take another rebirth.

The Madhyamikas also hold that the Shravaka and Pratyekabuddha

Arhats are no longer subject to rebirth resulting from karma and emotions. They deny however that they remain in the peace of nirvana like extinguished flames, as the Shravakas believe. On the contrary, they have all the causes unhindered for the appearance of a subtle mental body. And why? Because, although Arhats do not have afflictive craving engendered by clinging to self, they do have a nonafflictive ignorance—as the Shravakas themselves admit—on account of which, the knowledge of objects is impeded through the effects of time and space.[213] Likewise, there is no point in denying that they have a nonafflictive craving. For since they have not overcome the cause, namely, ignorance, they cannot in any way be immune to its effect. [verse 47] Craving arises from feelings, and even Arhats have feelings. This is an inevitable conclusion, since all the causes are complete. On account of their propensity to ignorance, and by virtue of the pure actions performed under the influence of this—and because they are not beyond the transference at death into inconceivable mental bodies—Arhats are not completely liberated. The continuum of subtle aggregates is not severed and it remains for them to enter the Mahayana. All this is because they have not meditated, to the point of perfect realization, on the No-Self of phenomena; and therefore they have not eradicated the extremely subtle defilements that are to be abandoned.

Yet, the Shravakas ask, when Arhats die, how could the continuum of their aggregates *not* be terminated, with the result that they do attain the peace of nirvana? After all, the causes of rebirth are lacking; they are like lamps, the oil of which is all consumed. The answer the Madhyamikas would give is that such Arhats do not take rebirth in the world since the causes of reappearance in samsara, namely, negative emotions, are no longer present. Nevertheless, since they do not have a perfect realization of emptiness (the lack of inherent existence of phenomena), their minds are still oriented toward conceptuality and are attached to ideas such as "Samsara is to be abandoned" and "Nirvana is to be sought." They are not in a state of perfect peace free from conceptuality.

[verse 48] As a result, their minds, which do not have a realization of emptiness free from all extremes, and still conceive of existence and nonexistence, come to rest for a time in the expanse of cessation—only to manifest and take birth again later on. For their minds' latent propensity for ignorance, as well as their pure activity, continue to act as causes for the propulsion of their mental bodies. Because they have not gained a perfect realization of emptiness (the antidote through which all concepts vanish),

they remain, as it were, in a condition similar to the absorption of nonperception or else in a state produced by this, namely, the condition of the insensate gods. Therefore, those who wish to go totally beyond sorrow should meditate on emptiness, for, without it, it is impossible to transcend suffering either temporarily or ultimately. With regard to the fact that, in the case just mentioned, ultimate nirvana is not attained, the *Saddharmapundarika-sutra* has this to say:

> Thus you say that you have passed beyond all pain,
> But from the sorrows of samsara only are you free.
> You have not yet transcended every misery;
> The Buddha's highest vehicle you should now pursue.

And in the *Uttaratantra-shastra,* it is also said:

> Until the state of buddhahood is gained,
> The state beyond all sorrow is not reached;
> Likewise with its light and beams removed,
> The sun alone we could not see.

And again, in the *Bodhichittavivarana* we find:

> The Arhat Shravakas,
> Till the Buddhas call them,
> Rest in wisdom bodies,
> Drunk on concentration.
>
> Roused, they take on various forms,
> And work with love for beings' sake,
> Merit and wisdom gathered in,
> They reach the awakening of buddhahood.

[verse 49] We will now consider other objections raised by the Shravakas against the authenticity of the Mahayana scriptures. They say that the teachings on higher mental training are found in the sutras; that those that deal with training in discipline are found in the Vinaya; and that there is no contradiction between those that expound the training in wisdom and the authentic Abhidharma. All these teachings, they say, must be

accepted as the Buddha's word. But since the Mahayana propounds the emptiness of phenomena, it runs counter to these same three trainings. This goes to show that, taken as a whole, the Mahayana cannot be the authentic teaching of Buddha.

But is it not believed that most of the Mahayana scriptures are similar to their own sutras? They may claim that some of the Mahayana sutras teach that it is possible to avoid the fruition of even the five sins of immediate effect; that some speak about an everlasting sambhogakaya; that others assert that it is unnecessary to abandon samsara; while others say that forms and so on, do not exist. All this is considered incompatible with the scriptures of the Shravakayana. But such objections are logically inconsistent. [verse 50] If it is claimed that the existence of a single sutra, expounding an uncommon subject peculiar to the Mahayana, and which is consequently not found in the scriptures of the Shravakayana, is sufficient to invalidate the *whole* body of Mahayana doctrine as being the Buddha's word, why should the converse also not be true? Why should a single text in agreement with the sutras of the Shravakayana not be enough to prove the whole of the Mahayana as the authentic teaching of the Buddha? They do not have to be all similar to the collections of teachings of the Shravakayana. In point of fact, thinking of their compatibility with the three trainings, we may say that the Mahayana provides a much more extensive treatment on this subject than does the Shravakayana. As it is said in the *Sutralankara:*

> Mahayana harmonizes with the Sutras
> And it is in tune with the Vinaya;
> Being profound and vast,
> It does not contradict the truth of things.

Again, the Shravakas object to the *Prajnaparamita-sutras.* If they were the authentic teaching of the Buddha, they should have been understood by Mahakashyapa and the like and handed down by them through an uninterrupted lineage. This is not the case; therefore the *Prajnaparamita-sutras* are not genuine.

[verse 51] The fact is that the Shravakas themselves do not understand a subject the depths of which even the great Mahakashyapa and others could not fathom; this is the reason why they contend that these scriptures are inauthentic. But who would accept this as a valid reason for rejecting them? It

is a well-known fact that the Mahayana is hard to understand because of its profundity. It is also possible to interpret Shantideva as meaning that the argument is weak because the Shravakas are not in a position to know whether Mahakashyapa and his confreres understood the Prajnaparamita or not.

It should be noted that some authorities have questioned the authorship of verses 49 to 51.

4. Proofs that the theory and practice of emptiness are the real solution

The objection may be made that if one were to realize emptiness, one would not remain in samsara and would not therefore endeavor in respect of the path and fruit. [verse 52] Although, from the point of view of the ultimate, there is no such thing as suffering, beings suffer because their minds are stultified by delusion. It is for the sake of such beings that those who realize the emptiness and mirage-like appearance of phenomena dwell in the world—which they neither crave nor fear, being freed from these two extremes. Though they abide in the world, they are untainted by its defects, like lotuses that grow in the mud. Now the ability to live in the world in such a way is indeed the fruit of realizing emptiness. On the other hand, it is precisely through not understanding the equality of samsara and nirvana that a mind sees faults in samsara and advantages in nirvana and leans exclusively toward the latter. [verse 53] It is therefore a mistake to find fault with the view of emptiness. Rather than being troubled by doubts, one should meditate upon it correctly.

[verse 54] To be sure, emptiness is the only corrective for the darkness of the emotional obscurations (the principal obstacle to liberation) and of the cognitive obscurations (which obstruct omniscience). Therefore, those who wish swiftly to rid themselves of these two obscuring veils and thus attain omniscience should by all means meditate on emptiness.

It might be thought that people do not meditate on emptiness because they are afraid of it. [verse 55] Of course, one would be right to fear something that causes suffering in this or future lives, but since emptiness brings about the complete pacification of all suffering, how can it be a cause for fear? There is nothing to be afraid of! [verse 56] If there existed a self, susceptible to fear, then of course anything frightening could alarm it. But since there is no self, who is there to be afraid? No one at all. Fear is

inappropriate. Faintheartedness therefore should be cast aside. Let us be quick to meditate on emptiness!

2. Wisdom experienced by means of meditation

3. Meditation on the absence of self in individuals

4. Meditation on the emptiness of the coemergent self

On the basis of the five mental and physical aggregates there occurs the thought "I am." This "I" or self, which is identified with the "five perishable aggregates," and which, in the absence of critical analysis, is assumed to exist, must be found somewhere among those five aggregates. No one would say that it was somewhere else.

Now through the application of wisdom, the mode of existence of this self may be investigated along the following lines. [verse 57] It may be inquired whether the self or "I" is the same as, or different from, one's thirty-two teeth (for example)—whether taken individually or as the whole set together. If it is identical, it follows that the self is inanimate, impermanent, and thirty-two in number, and also that it ceases to exist when one's teeth fall out—which is, of course, absurd! On the other hand, if the self is regarded as distinct from the teeth, it is also absurd to say that *I* am ill when my teeth ache. Moreover, what one refers to as a set of teeth is not something different from the teeth themselves, and it, [the set,] does not exist as such. Therefore it cannot constitute the self.

The same kind of argument may be applied in the case of the body's twenty-one thousand hairs or its twenty nails. They are not the self. Neither is the self the three hundred and sixty bones of the skeleton. It is not the blood, nor any of the watery substances in the form of nasal mucus or phlegm. It is neither lymph nor rotten blood in the form of pus. [verse 58] The self is not the outer or inner fats, nor the perspiration of the body. The lungs are not the self; neither is the liver, nor the heart nor any of the body's inner organs. It is not the body's excrement, the feces or urine. [verse 59] The flesh and skin are not the self; the body's warmth and respiration are not the self; neither are the body's cavities, for instance the ears.

All these elements consist of many separate components, arising from infinitesimal particles. And all are impermanent. Neither individually, nor

in the aggregate, can they constitute the self, for this would be in conflict with the very definition of a self. By the same token, the six types of consciousness, for example that of vision, cannot ever constitute the self, for they are a multiplicity and are impermanent.

A discussion of this matter is to be found in the *Pitaputrasamagama-sutra.* The elements of earth and water account for the body's constitution, from teeth to skin; the element of fire accounts for the body's warmth. Then there is the element of wind and that of space, corresponding to the body's cavities, together with the element of consciousness. When these six elements come together, a personal identity is imputed to them and is the object of fixation. And yet the "I" as such has no real existence of its own.

The situation is comparable to what might happen in the gathering twilight when one cannot see very clearly. One sees a striped rope and thinks that it is a snake—a conviction that will remain unshaken for as long as the circumstantial conditions persist. Applying this example to the question in hand, the rope corresponds to the aggregates, the gathering twilight and unclear eyesight refer to the ignorance that gives rise to delusion, while the conviction that there is a snake corresponds to the belief in a self-identity. To pursue the analogy, one may try to locate the snake, reaching out in the gloom with one's hand, but even though one's hand does not encounter anything, it is difficult to shake off one's feeling that the snake is there, and one is filled with dread. In just the same way, one can examine the entire body, asking whether the head is the self, or the hand, and so on, only to find that they are not. Nevertheless one might still be quite unsure as to the nonexistence of the self. This only shows that the investigation has not penetrated to the crucial point. Now if a bright lamp were to be set up in the dark house, illuminating the whole place, no snake would be seen, but only a rope, and one would realize one's mistake. One would see that there was no snake, and one's earlier conviction would naturally subside. In just the same way, if this hesitant questioning is supplanted by a firm conviction that the self which is grasped at as the personal identity of the five aggregates is nothing but a mere imputation, and if one becomes accustomed to this, the absence of self will be clearly seen.

To this end, we have been told to examine where this sense of "I" arises, where it abides, and where it subsides. In accordance with this instruction, we should make a thorough investigation and should then simply rest in the state of finding nothing. When we are unable to continue with this, we should proceed with the analytical meditation described earlier. These two

kinds of meditation should be practiced alternately. The first counteracts excited mental activity, while the second is an antidote for dullness and torpor.

4. Meditation on the emptiness of the imputed self

5. Refutation of the belief in a self that is conscious

The Samkhya school accounts for all objects of knowledge in terms of twenty-five principles. The self, according to their theory, is the purusha, which is conscious and experiences, or "tastes," the flux of manifestation. It is not, however, the creator of it. It is a real, eternal entity, disassociated from the three gunas, or universal constituents, and it is nonactive. All objects of its experience arise from prakriti, the primal substance. This is the name used when the three universal constituents are in a state of equilibrium. These constituents are rajas, corresponding to pain; sattva, corresponding to pleasure; and tamas, corresponding to neutrality. This prakriti is the cause of the twenty-three modulations in the same way as clay is the material cause of a pot. From this manifests the intellect, which the Samkhyas call the "great principle." From this, there arises the threefold sense of self, thence the five elementary principles, five elements, and eleven faculties. Both prakriti (the primal substance) and purusha (the self) are deemed permanent. Everything else is impermanent. Further, while the Samkhyas believe that the self is conscious, the Vaisheshikas and others hold the contrary opinion, that the self is unconscious. Now, if these two antithetical positions are refuted, all other [intermediary] positions will be disproved at the same time.

A self that is conscious and (as the Samkhyas say) permanent by nature does not exist. [verse 60] If the consciousness that perceives a sound is permanent, it must perceive sound all the time—for the Samkhyas believe that the consciousness in any given moment of audition is permanent. They reply that, although sound is not constantly perceived, this does not mean that consciousness is impermanent; it only means that it no longer has sound as its object. But if there is no object of cognition (in this case sound), what is consciousness aware of; what is it conscious of? What reason can there be for claiming that consciousness knows this or that object?

It does not make sense. [verse 61] For if the Samkhyas say that something that is not conscious of an object is still conscious, the absurd consequence follows that even a stick can be conscious (of sounds and so forth). For it is still conscious even though it is not conscious of anything. To be sure, when there is no object like sound present, there is certainly no consciousness that is conscious of it. Consciousness depends upon whatever objects it is conscious of. It is not possible for something to be a consciousness without its being a consciousness of something.

The Samkhyas do not consider this a problem. [verse 62] They say that the consciousness which perceives sound earlier on can perfectly well perceive something else, say a shape, at a later stage. Consciousness is permanent; there is simply a difference of focus on individual knowledge objects.

But if the consciousness that previously was perceiving sound is permanent, how is it that when it later perceives a form or something else, it does not still perceive sound, since it has not discarded the (permanent) nature which it had before? When the Samkhyas reply that this is because the sound is not present, the Madhyamikas respond as previously: If the object is absent, the consciousness of the object is also absent. [verse 63] Furthermore, how can a consciousness that perceives sound change into a consciousness that perceives form? The two are essentially different. This argument militates against the idea that consciousness is both a permanent and single true reality. (It should not be thought, on the other hand, that the perception of sound in a single continuum of consciousness precludes the perception of form. For the simultaneous experience of several different nonconceptual perceptions is perfectly possible.)

The Samkhyas say, however, that just as a single man can be both a father and a son at the same time, likewise objects like sound and form do not exclude each other. From the point of view of modulation in prakriti, all form, if considered under the aspect of its nature, *is* the same as sound; for this nature is one and the same in both cases. Thus, when form is perceived, even though there is no perception of sound-modulation, nevertheless there is a perception of sound's nature. This avoids (so the Samkhyas say) the unwanted consequence that auditive consciousness is impermanent.

The example that the Samkhyas give is invalid. When one says that a man is both father and son, one is merely attaching labels to him on the basis of two distinct relationships. He cannot, in any absolute sense, and *by nature,* be both father and son. If by nature he is truly existent as father, it

is impossible for him ever to assume the condition of being a son, since in that case, fatherhood takes precedence over sonship. On the other hand, if *by nature* he is truly existent as a son, it is impossible for him to become a father, because it is impossible for [the truly existent state of] sonship to precede [a later] state of fatherhood. This whole matter is simply one of labeling. As such, we have certainly no intention of refuting it, and in any case it does not prove what the Samkhyas want it to prove.[214]

[verse 64] If the man is simultaneously both father and son in an absolute sense, it follows that these (attributes) must exist in the three gunas, since the Samkhyas do not accept any absolute other than these. But the nature of sattva, rajas, and tamas (pleasure, pain, and neutrality) is neither "son" nor "father." If all modulations have such a nature, in respect of whom, ultimately speaking, can the man be posited as son, and in respect of whom can he be posited as father? Indeed, it is incorrect to posit him as the one or the other.

[So much for the example that the Samkhyas use.] Now for the meaning, which is also invalid. If the apprehension of a visible form exists in the nature of the perception of sound, this ought to be obvious and clearly observed. But we have never yet observed the consciousness of form to have the nature of perceiving sound. In other words, no one has ever experienced a visual form with the properties of sound.

The Samkhyas reply that even though the perception of form as having the nature of the perception of sound is not a matter of experience, the nature of consciousness is nevertheless *one.* [verse 65] They say that it is just as when a dancer dresses in the costume of a god in the morning and as a demon in the afternoon; likewise, the earlier consciousness of sound appears later in the aspect of a consciousness of form, and thereby sees. But the consequence of this is that the previous sound consciousness is impermanent, because the earlier aspect is lost and another one is assumed. If consciousness assumes a new aspect, which is dissimilar from the first but is nevertheless considered to be one with it and not different (even though the two aspects appear quite separately), then, as Shantideva sardonically remarks, this is a kind of identity unknown anywhere in the world and is something that has never been seen before!

Things are said to be one or identical when they cannot, by their nature, be separated. They are said to be different when they can be so separated. So Shantideva is saying that to assert as one or identical what can clearly be seen to belong to two different categories is plainly contradictory. If

things are seen to be distinct but are still one and the same, the absurd consequence follows that everything must be a single whole. Thus it cannot be that a dancer is [really] different at various moments (namely, when he assumes different guises) but stays the same ultimately speaking. If this is claimed, the same investigation may be applied as previously.[215]

[verse 66] The Samkhyas go on to say that the variously appearing forms of consciousness, such as consciousness qualified by sound, are no more than deceptive appearances, contingent upon circumstances. They do not exist truly. It is just as when a white crystal ball becomes iridescent; the color is not truly existent in the nature of the crystal.

Although it is acceptable to say that the different types of consciousness qualified according to an object (as in the case of auditive consciousness) do not truly exist, Shantideva asks whether the Samkhyas can tell him something about this *truly existent* consciousness of theirs. They reply that it is just consciousness, unqualified by any object. It is a single entity of consciousness that is present in all [specific] conscious experiences, past or future.

But if this is the case, it follows that all beings are one, for this mere, unqualified consciousness is necessarily present in the mind streams of everyone. [verse 67] Moreover, the conscious self (purusha), as well as the twenty-four unconscious principles (prakriti and so on), would, by the same argument, have to be identical. For they are all alike in simply existing. On that level, there is no difference between them.

Finally, the Samkhyas say that various and specific types of consciousness, the hearing of sounds, the seeing of objects, and so forth, are untrue and deceptive and therefore have no true existence as separate things. But once one has totally discounted all specificity (of experience), what remains of this mere consciousness, which is supposedly real, single, universal, and, as it were, the general foundation? There is nothing left of it.

5. Refutation of the belief in a self that is unconscious

The Naiyayikas believe that the self is, like space, all-pervading and permanent. This being so, it is unconscious, for if it were conscious it would be impermanent and nonpervasive. For the Naiyayikas therefore, the self is unconscious and inanimate. When, however, it is joined with consciousness, this self supposedly identifies experiences (happiness and so on) as its

own and clings to them. [verse 68] But that which is mindless cannot, for that very reason, be the self. After all, even if they were to claim that a self which is similar to a jug or a piece of cloth could perpetrate an action and therefore be the basis of happiness or suffering, things that are unconscious could never actually experience happiness.

The Naiyayikas say, however, that although the self is not of the same nature as the mind, it is concomitant [or in partnership] with it; and due to the mind's power, it cognizes objects. But this completely undermines the assertion that the self is unconscious and unaware of objects. For the self thus comes to acquire the awareness of something. By the same token, it also becomes impermanent. [verse 69] In any case, if it is claimed that the self is immutable and permanent, what object-cognizing effect could the consciousness produce in it? Obviously none. Consciousness cannot cause an immutable self to pass from one state to another, any more than one can make the sky blue by using paint! Their statement that the unconscious and inanimate thing, which, like space, is free from all activity, is the self is no more than a dogmatic claim. Alas, so much for the intelligence of the Naiyayikas!

5. Answers to objections concerning the nonexistence of the self

6. The nonexistence of the self is not incompatible with the principle of cause and effect

[verse 70] Those who believe in the existence of the self object that if, as the Madhyamikas say, the self does not exist, this contradicts the assertion that causal actions of good and evil are unconfusedly linked with their resultant experiences of happiness and suffering. For if there is no possible passage of the self, or agent of actions, to future lives, there is nothing that might experience the results of actions. Since [the five aggregates] arise and cease moment by moment and the agent vanishes the instant after the action is accomplished, it is impossible for such an agent to be affected by the maturation of the act. And since no maturation is experienced, and since it is impossible for the results of one person's actions to ripen upon another, who is there to undergo the karmic result?

[verse 71] In their reply, the Madhyamikas employ the same kind of rea-

soning, pointing out that they and their opponents both accept that the aggregates which form the basis of an action and the aggregates which underlie the experience of its fruit are different from each other. On the other hand, a permanent self, separate from the aggregates on both occasions, would necessarily be unconscious and unchanging; and being unchanging, it would be inert or actionless. This, the Madhyamikas say, is a matter of simple logic and is as valid for their opponents as for themselves. Both parties must therefore abandon this kind of argumentation; it is nonsense to say that the relationship of cause and effect is invalid only for the Madhyamikas.[216] The latter, however, go on to say that, whereas in their tradition they are able to resolve this difficulty, their opponents are unable to do so. For, they say, the Buddha, their Teacher, has said: "The result, O monks, of an action once performed does not affect inanimate elements such as earth and so forth. It ripens on the aggregates, elements, and sense powers that are assumed by a consciousness." The result that ripens on the doer of an action is thus posited in terms of a single mental continuum.

[verse 72] For it is impossible to find an effect, the substantial cause of which has not ceased and is still present, for effects must manifest *from* causes. According to an alternative explanation, it has been said that it is impossible to find the performance of a causal action occurring in the same moment as the experience of its result, any more than a father and his son can be born simultaneously. Thus, at the time when the effect occurs, the cause has necessarily ceased. Nevertheless, by the ineluctable force of interdependence, it is certain that the effect will happen. Furthermore, this effect ripens wherever the causal conditions are all complete—in the mind stream of a specific person and not elsewhere. It is just as when seeds are sown in the earth. They spring up from the soil, not from rock. It is due to the fact that there is a single stream (one uninterrupted, homogeneous continuity) of the five aggregates, that the perpetrator of an act and the one who enjoys the result are said to be one and the same—which is, of course, the opinion that people commonly hold.

The question may be asked whether this mental continuum does not in fact constitute a single self. It does not. "Continuum" is just a label. Like a garland, it does not actually exist as such. And it is easy to see that the aged and youthful bodies of a single life, and likewise earlier and later births, are not the same. [verse 73] With regard to the mind, it is said that past and future mental states do not make up the self, for the simple reason that, the

former having elapsed and the latter having not yet occurred, they do not exist. The possibility of their being the self is thus excluded. But suppose that one were to consider the present thought, occurring now, to be the self. This would mean that when this thought passes, the self does likewise. In any case, those who believe that the self exists claim that it passes from the past to the present and from the present to the future, which means that the self cannot be identified with the present mental state. It is said in the *Madhyamakavatara:*

> Qualities ascribed to Maitreya and to Upagupta
> Are distinct and cannot be assigned to one continuum.
> Phenomena that differ by their varying particulars,
> Do not compose a single continuity.[217]

Thus the theory that the mental continuum is the self is refuted. [verse 74] It is just as when one cuts open a banana tree, which is full of sap but is hollow and without any firmness or body to it. Gradually cutting through the fibers, one finds nothing substantial, and eventually the tree disintegrates. So too, if one searches analytically, one will find that the self has no reality, no ultimate existence.

6. The nonexistence of the self is not incompatible with compassion

[verse 75] If there are no selves or living beings, on whom do the Bodhisattvas focus when they meditate on compassion? There is nothing to act as an object! In reply to this question, the Madhyamikas say that, on the ultimate level, there is neither an object nor an agent of compassion. "Migrating beings are never ceasing and are never born," as will be explained later. If the state of mind beyond all reference is not perfected, compassion does not become completely pure and limitless. This is indeed the case.

All the same, for beings, who impute a self upon the aggregates and become fixated on it, it is undeniable that on the level of appearance, happiness and sorrow invariably arise. There is therefore a need to liberate beings into the expanse of nonabiding nirvana whereby the continuum of dream-like appearances of suffering is severed. This is why we take the vow to liberate them.

And yet these beings, whose burden we assume, have no existence in an ultimate sense. They exist only insofar as they are imputed as selves, through the force of ignorance. Consequently, although the Bodhisattvas realize No-Self, they take as the object of their compassion all beings who do not have this realization and who incessantly and pointlessly experience the appearances of suffering, through their belief in selfhood.

Likewise, the Bodhisattvas have no regard for their own welfare. They see that others suffer meaninglessly, and the attitude of cherishing them more than themselves naturally arises in their minds. They perceive that the suffering of beings is like a deep sleep and that they are able to wake them from it.

6. A DEMONSTRATION THAT THE SELF AS LABEL IS NOT REFUTED

[verse 76] If beings do not exist, it might be asked, who is it that attains buddhahood, and on account of whom is all the effort made? Surely, it will be urged, there is no sense in taking a vow to attain such a goal. The Madhyamaka answer to this is: Yes, on the ultimate level, this is perfectly true. The person who attains such a result, the beings on account of whom the result is gained, and the result that is to be attained—not one of them has true existence in itself. Neither, on the ultimate level, is there any difference between going beyond suffering and not doing so. But in the perception of beings all these things do exist. As we have just said, they are affirmed in ignorance. It is through our ignorant belief in the self that all that pertains to samsara, karmas and afflictive emotions—and likewise the opposite, all that belongs to perfect purity—is produced. For what we call nirvana (literally, going beyond suffering) is nothing other than the exhaustion of the deluded mind's thoughts. As the *Sutralankara* says, "Liberation is but the elimination of error."

For one who, through ignorance, is enmeshed in dualistic mental patterns, samsara incontestably appears. And because of this, nirvana, the reverse of samsara, also exists. It is rather like a man oppressed by malignant spirits. He lives in the same kind of place as ordinary people, but he suffers because he sees demonic shapes and things that others do not perceive—and yet all the while he is in a perfectly wholesome and pleasant environment. In an ultimate sense, neither samsara nor the peace of nirvana has true existence. It is for this very reason that such things as bondage in samsara and

liberation from it are possible; if they had real existence, neither could actually occur. This is a key point, which should be fully assimilated.

But why then, it will be asked, should we train on the path, why hope to gain what is unobtainable—surely every kind of confusion is to be dispelled? The answer to this is that, although on the ultimate level there is nothing to obtain, on the level of appearance, there is. For the sake of dissipating the sorrows of existence, and until the attainment of buddhahood, when ultimate reality appears directly, the ignorance of thinking on the relative level that nonabiding nirvana is something that can be attained should not be shunned. For it is on this basis that suffering will be removed. In the end, when one is free from every kind of dualistic concept, even the subtlest cognitive veils (arising from the firm belief in samsara and nirvana) are drawn aside.

This indeed is the level of buddhahood. But at the present moment, this is not possible for us. For us, the two truths are not in union—which is why the way things appear to us never corresponds to their true mode of existence. It therefore stands to reason that, in terms of phenomenal appearance, we should train ourselves with a view to gaining a result. It is true, we have to overcome the discrepancy between the appearance of, and the true nature of, phenomena, but for the time being we are unable. On the other hand, when this discrepancy is utterly eliminated, ultimate reality, where there is nothing to be obtained—and also nothing to be abandoned—will manifest. But until that happens, it is impossible to rid ourselves of the expectation and wish for the goal.

But that being so, why do we have to remove our ignorance regarding the self? In reply to this objection, it must be said that the two cases are not the same. The mind that seeks to obtain the fruit of enlightenment will extinguish suffering and will also put an end to itself, like wood from which fire springs and which is consumed thereby. [verse 77] The cause of all the sufferings of samsara is ego-clinging—the pride of thinking, "I am," which is fed and enlarged by the ignorance of actively believing in the existence of a personal self. The ignorance that ascribes existence to the nonexistent self is what is to be overcome. Once it is dispelled, there will be no more clinging to self, and once that has been eliminated, there will be no further birth, no further turning, in samsara.

It will be argued that just as it is impossible to turn the mind away from the merely designated self, in the same way it is wholly impossible for the

mind to overcome [the belief in] the inherently existent self. After all, our natures have been imbued with it from time without beginning.

Once again, these two cases are not the same.[218] The sense of self that is just a label arises through the power of interdependence, and it is impossible for reasoning to prove that it does not appear in the experience of ordinary people. Moreover, there is no need to do so. On the other hand, belief in the inherently existing self may be annihilated by a mind that meditates on No-Self and realizes the nature of phenomena, just as darkness is scattered by the presence of light. This has the backing of perfectly coherent logic as well as reality itself. The view of self is a temporary deviation of the mind away from the nature of things and is due to extrinsic circumstances. Through the application of scriptural authority and reasoning, this aberration is overthrown. The mind thus penetrates the nature of phenomena, and since this is also the nature of the mind, the nature of things and the nature of the mind can never be separated. It is said in the *Pramanavarttika,* "The nature of the mind is luminous clarity; all stains are adventitious."

To sum up therefore, belief in selfhood is the root of samsaric existence. As long as this is not eliminated, no matter what practices one undertakes, whether austerities or meditation, one cannot get beyond samsara. Consequently, it has been said that those graced with good fortune who wish for liberation should constantly make their practice a remedy to self-clinging.

3. Meditation on the absence of self in phenomena

4. Close mindfulness of the body

5. Examination of the body in general

[verse 78] What we call "the body" is a mere imputation; it does not exist inherently. Our reason for saying this is that if a body, which is apprehended as a single (partless) whole complete with all its sense faculties, existed as such, it would have to be present in its members, for example the hand. But the various body parts, the foot, the shins and calves, are not the body. The thighs and hips, the waist and loins, the belly, back, chest and arms, and so on and so forth—none of these is the body. As Shantideva

says [verse 79]: The body is not ribs or hands, armpits, shoulders, bowels or entrails such as lungs and heart. It is not the head and it is not the throat. What is the "body," then, in all of this? None of these different elements in fact conforms to the actual definition of the whole body. Indeed, they appear to be related to each other, but like body parts scattered on a charnel ground, they do not make up a single whole. How could any member, left to itself, constitute the body? Moreover, a hand may be amputated, but the body is still considered to remain. What, therefore, is this so-called body, this aggregate of many parts? In itself, it is nothing.

Here it will be objected that, granted that the individual parts are not the body, the body nevertheless is a reality and is present throughout its parts. It should be pointed out, however, that if this is so, it means either that one "body" with all its parts is present throughout our whole anatomy or that an entire body is present in each of our physical parts (thus implying a multiplicity of bodies). [verse 80] If it is meant that the parts of the "body" coincide with the physical parts, hands and so forth, this means that the body's parts correspond to the physical members in which it is present. But if we examine to see where this body, whole and entire, is actually located, checking off each part one by one, no single, pervasive body is found. [verse 81] If, on the other hand, an entire body, complete with all its parts, subsists in the hand and all the other members, this means that there are as many bodies as there are bodily parts. But this is impossible, since we cling to the body as a single whole.

[verse 82] Therefore, since there is no body, or rather since no body appears, when we search for it analytically within the outer and inner fields of the sense faculties, how can the body be said to exist in its parts? Obviously, it cannot. Finally, since there is no ground of imputation for the body, other than its parts, how can it be said to exist at all? It cannot. The root verse 78, beginning with the words "What we call the body . . ." shows that the body is not one with its parts. Root verse 80, which starts "If the 'body' . . ." indicates that the body is not something different from its interrelated parts.

[verse 83] Consequently, although the body does not exist as such, it is through ignorance that the idea "body" occurs to the mind on the basis of the assemblage of physical parts. Aside from being a mere label, the "body" has in fact no existence. It is just as when a pile of stones is mistaken for a man, on account of the similarity of its appearance. [verse 84] As long as the conditions are fulfilled with regard to a specific shape, the body will

continue to appear as a man or a woman. But when these conditions are not complete, it will not do so, as when a change of sex occurs or during the development of an unborn child or when the body is cremated and only ashes are left. In just the same way, as long as the circumstances for the imputation of the body are found (that is, the interconnected physical parts), a body will appear. But in themselves these parts are not the body; they are just pieces of flesh and bone.

5. Specific examination of physical parts

But even if the body does not exist, can we not still say that its limbs, the arms and so on, which we can see before our very eyes, really exist? [verse 85] No, just as the body itself does not exist truly, likewise the hand is simply a collection of fingers and so on, and is merely ascribed to the assembly of its parts. It does not exist as such. The fingers also are themselves assemblages of joints, and they too are therefore without true existence; and the joints in turn are divided into their separate sides and are therefore composite, not single units. [verse 86] Again, these parts may be progressively subdivided, from the comparatively gross down to the most subtle particles, and even the tiniest particle may be split sixfold—above, below, and in the four directions. Ultimately, not one truly existent fragment can be found in any of these directional segments; even the fragments themselves disappear. Thus, if all apparent forms, for example the hand, are assessed by dissecting them in this way, going from comparatively gross to more subtle fragments, down to the directional segments of the infinitesimal particle, they are seen to be empty, like space; they have no existence as physical forms. Even the infinitesimal particle does not exist.

5. The need for relinquishing attachment to one's body

[verse 87] On investigation of its true mode of being, how could anyone cling to this physical form, which is so like a dream, appearing but devoid of inherent existence? It does not make sense to cling to it! Since the body is thus without inherent existence, what is the status of its particular character as man or woman? Neither category has ultimate existence.

Just as one analyzes one's own body, so too should one analyze the bodies of other living beings, as well as other phenomena in the outer universe, such

as mountains and continents, arriving at the firm conviction that they are like space, without inherent existence. Once this has been understood, and when all dualistic clinging to one's body and the bodies of others has been rejected, all that manifests in the postmeditative state should be regarded as illusory—appearing but without inherent existence. And when meditating, one should rest in the natural state, spacious and free from conceptual activity. As it is said in the sutras, "Whoever, O Manjushri, sees that his body is like space is applying to his body the close mindfulness of the body."

4. Close mindfulness of the feelings

5. Examination of the nature of the feelings

[verse 88] If the feelings of suffering in the mind stream are ultimately and by nature real, how is it that they do not prevent the occurrence of happiness? For they ought to stop happiness from ever arising, whereas obviously they do not do so definitively. The same would also apply in the case of an ultimately real happiness with regard to suffering, and there is no need to discuss it separately. Feelings are thereby shown to be without true existence in the mind. The text goes on to prove that, in respect of the external world, feelings such as pleasure are not inherent in outer objects either. If a beautiful form or a sweet taste and so on, are intrinsically pleasurable, how is it that delicious food or an interesting sight do not make people happy when, for instance, they are in agony over the death of their child or when they are out of their minds with fear? If in pleasant tastes and other phenomena, pleasure were intrinsically present, it would have to be felt, like the heat of fire. But this is obviously not the case.

[verse 89] Again, it might be thought that discomfort is present in the mind but that it may be overwhelmed by a particularly powerful sense of inner joy and therefore not experienced, in exactly the same way as the stars are outshone by the sun. But how can something that is not at all experienced be a feeling—lacking, as it does, any such qualification?

[verse 90] Even if this last point is conceded, however, it could still be argued that when a powerful sense of pleasure supervenes, it is not that pain is not experienced at all, but that it is present in a very subtle form and therefore it is not recognized or felt, just as when a tiny drop of brine falls into a large quantity of molasses. But it is impossible for a subtle form of pain and a powerful sense of pleasure to coexist within a single mind

stream. If it were, it ought to be possible for them to be felt at the same time, whereas this never happens. And since it was contended earlier that the powerful, gross aspect of pain may be suppressed by feelings of pleasure, how is it that the subtle aspect is not dispelled likewise, in the face of such a powerful antidote, as when something cold touches a surface that is totally suffused with a fierce heat?

Perhaps it could be said that the subtle pain does, nevertheless, exist, but that it is prevented from acting like pain. It is transformed by the powerful sense of bliss into a sensation of mere pleasurableness; it is experienced as a sort of subtle pleasure. It nevertheless remains what it is, like a clear crystal stained with vermilion, which looks red but is still a clear crystal underneath. To this it must be said that the subtle pain classified as mere pleasurableness is a form of pleasure; it is not pain at all. What purpose is served by calling it "pain"? And what difference is there in a mere pleasurableness that is pain experienced as subtle pleasure and a mere pleasurableness that is a subtler form of pleasure? What is the point of racking one's brains to find such nonexistent distinctions, like trying to tie knots in the sky! These examples are themselves incoherent, yet they have been adduced as proofs. But what can they prove? Nothing at all!

[verse 91] Again, one might think that when the antithesis of pain, namely, a powerful sense of pleasure arises, pain is not experienced because its causes are not all present. But in that case, if the word "feeling" is attributed to something that has no reality, surely this is a clear case of merely conceptual imputation. For according to circumstances as they arise by turns, one can see that, when the mind experiences pleasure, there is no pain; when pain is experienced, there is no pleasure. Therefore to consider that so-called pleasure and pain exist in and of themselves and to strive purposely to gain the one and avoid the other is delusion. Aside from the imputation of pleasure and pain by the mind itself, there is no such thing as self-subsistent pleasure and pain, whether inside the mind or outside it. This can be exemplified by the effect of melted butter on a hungry person as compared with someone who is sick and nauseous, or the effect of a heap of manure on a person obsessed with cleanliness as compared with a pig, or the effect of a woman on a lustful man as compared with one who is meditating on the body's impurities. Pleasure, and so on, arise by virtue of the subject's thought; there is no such thing as a sensation that is intrinsically pleasant or otherwise.

[verse 92] For this reason, the remedy for clinging to pleasure and other

feelings as though they were real and the delusory chain of thoughts connected therewith (wanting this, not wanting that) is the meditation that examines and shows that feelings have no inherent existence in themselves. Apart from this meditation, there is no other antidote to grasping at the supposed reality of feelings—something that convulses the world with a kind of collective insanity. The contemplation or meditation on the unreality of feelings, arising from such a rich field of analysis, is the food enjoyed by yogis. Just as food satisfies and nourishes the body, likewise yogis, through the experience of pleasure free from desire, nourish the body of the qualities of realization.

Since feelings are the root of craving and constitute the main grounds for all disagreements and quarrels, it has been said that it is of vital importance to come to a clear-cut conviction that they are without any inherent existence, and to become accustomed to this. Whether one performs analytical or resting meditation as described above, the most important thing in the beginning is to acquire wisdom through listening to the teachings. It has been said that among the disciples of Buddha Shakyamuni, those who realized the truth were the ones who had imbibed the teachings of the preceding Buddha Kashyapa. In the future, therefore, when the Buddha Maitreya appears, those who listen to the teachings now will be born as the first of his followers and will see the truth.

5. Examination of the cause of the feelings

[verse 93] A physical sense faculty and its physical object such as form are either separated by space, or they are not so separated. If they are separated, how can contact take place? If they are not conjoined, they do not meet, but are like two mountains, one in the east and one in the west. On the other hand, if there is no gap between the faculty and the object, the two become one. In that case, what faculty encounters what object? It would be meaningless to say, for example, that the eye is in contact with itself.

But could it not be argued that the faculty and the object simply touch each other, like the palms of one's hands joining? No, the contact is only apparent and not real, merely attributed by thought. The reason for this is that a sense organ and a physical object do not have omnidirectional contact. If contact is made from the front, no contact is made from behind. According to this kind of analysis, particles that are separated from each other by other particles cannot be said to touch.

On the other hand, it might be thought perhaps that infinitesimal particles, unseparated by other particles, of the faculty and the object, should meet. [verse 94] Yet, the infinitesimal atomic particle of the sense faculty cannot penetrate the infinitesimal atomic particle of the object. Since they are partless, they lack all dimension with which to accommodate any kind of joining or intermingling. In relation to each other, they enjoy a status of perfect parity. On the other hand, if the two particles touch on one side only, but do not have contact throughout, they cannot be partless.

Leaving aside the particles that do not have contact, and considering those particles that do, if they were to have contact in all their parts, they must mutually interpenetrate and fuse into one. They do not however interpenetrate since neither of them has the volume that would enable them to do so. If there is no interpenetration, the particles do not intermingle. If there is no intermingling, there is no contact. For if two partless entities meet, they must have uniform contact in every direction; contact from only one side is impossible. [verse 95] How, therefore, is it acceptable to speak of contact between partless entities? It is impossible for them to have contact either from one side or from all sides. And so, Shantideva demands rhetorically, if ever contact has been observed between partless entities, let it be demonstrated and it will be established. He knows, of course, that such a demonstration is impossible.

Thus, with regard to the so-called union of object, sense power, and consciousness, Shantideva has demonstrated that the sense power and the object do not meet. [verse 96] If, however, it is contended that there is, nevertheless, contact between the mind and objects, he replies that it is unacceptable to speak of a meeting between a physical thing and the mind, which is incorporeal. One might just as well say that one could touch the sky with one's hand or meet with the child of a barren woman. Of course, it will be said that it is inappropriate to cite such examples with regard to the mind, because the mind exists. It is not inappropriate, however, because the point at issue is the possibility of contact [between a material] and an immaterial thing. Even so, given that there is no meeting or touching, surely there must be some sort of convergence of object, sense power, and consciousness? But no, even this putative "gathering" is unreal, as was shown in the earlier investigations, for example in verse 85, "Likewise, since it is a group of fingers . . ."

[verse 97] Therefore, if there is no contact acting as cause, from where do feelings result? Feelings themselves have no existence on the ultimate

level, and if that is so, what sense is there in exhausting ourselves in demanding pleasure and turning away from pain? The pleasures that people desire and work for are nonexistent. It is the same with suffering. Therefore, what suffering is tormenting whom? It is just the delusion of the mind, and the mind is itself illusory.

5. Examination of the result of the feelings

If craving arises constantly in all sentient beings, how could feeling, which is its cause, be nonexistent? The answer is that craving too is no more than a delusion; it is not real. [verse 98] That which feels, namely, the mind and the self, and that which it experiences, namely, the feeling, have no inherent existence at all. When it is realized that that which feels and that which is felt are both without true existence, how could the result of feeling, namely, craving, *not* be averted, since its cause is removed?

5. Examination of the feeling subject

If both the feelings and the one who feels do not exist, how is it possible to admit such perceptions as sight and hearing? [verse 99] By mentioning sight with regard to form and tactility with regard to physical contact, which are the first and last of the sense feelings, the root verse indicates the whole range of sensory experience: sight, sound, smell, and so on. None of them has true existence; they appear like dreams and mirages; they are simply our unexamined designations. They are mere appearances without true existence. Ultimately there is nothing to be found.

The question could be asked whether feeling and the conscious experiencer of it are simultaneous or not. Let us consider simultaneity first. If the conscious experiencer and the feeling itself were to occur at one and the same time, with the one coming neither before nor after the other, it would be impossible for the mind to observe the feeling. If distinct entities occur at exactly the same time, without the one preceding the other, they must both be completely independent of each other. Being different, they are unconnected. Therefore experience is impossible.

But what if they are not simultaneous, but rather the feeling comes first and consciousness later; what if the mind assumes the aspect of the feeling [and is thus able to experience it]? [verse 100] If a feeling precedes and the

consciousness of it follows, it must be admitted that when the consciousness arises, the feeling is no longer present: It is just a recollection. Now all thoughts of things past are memories, and what is past does not exist in the present moment, and cannot, now, be really and clearly experienced. Feeling thus becomes impossible. If we examine the memory of something in the past, we find something that is deceptive. For what is past no longer abides as an object in the present. The consciousness of the past moment—the subject when the feeling was being experienced—is now no more; it can no longer experience anything. And logic proves that the feeling cannot be experienced by the present and future moments of consciousness. Consequently, the past feeling can now be experienced only as memory; the present feeling cannot be experienced; and the future is not yet here and so obviously cannot be felt by the present consciousness.

Neither can it be right to say that feeling is "self-feeling," since it is contradictory to say that a sensation acts on itself. This argument is similar to the refutation of the self-knowing mind. [verse 101] On the other hand, as we have just explained, the consciousness that is distinct from the feelings cannot experience them either. That which experiences the feelings, the agent of sensation, has no true existence. Thus, such feelings are devoid of intrinsic reality. How then can this agent of experience, self-less and like a mirage or dream-vision, composed of a collection of aggregates, be affected by a feeling designated as "suffering" but which has no inherent existence? In truth, such an agent can neither be helped nor harmed.

4. Close mindfulness of the mind

5. The mind is without inherent existence

[verse 102] No matter where we look for the mind, we cannot find it. It is not located in the six organs of sense, like the eyes, nor in the six objects of sense: form and so on. Neither is it somewhere in between these two poles of experience. The mind cannot be located somewhere inside the torso, nor within the body's outer limbs; and it cannot be found elsewhere. [verse 103] Whatever is body is not mind. But while the mind is not to be found separate from a body, as it were in exterior objects, neither does it mingle and merge with the body. But since it can have no independent existence, not even slightly, apart from the body, the root verse says, "Beings by their

nature are beyond the reach of suffering." As it is said in the *Ratnakuta,* "The mind is not within; the mind is not without; neither is it both. You cannot point to it." And later, "The mind, O Kashyapa—even all the Buddhas have never seen it! They do not see it and they never shall!" And as the *Prajnaparamita-sutra* in eight thousand verses says, "The mind indeed is not a 'mind'; the nature of the mind is lucent clarity."

5. The mind is unborn

[verse 104] If the mind, for example a visual consciousness, exists prior to its object of cognition (in this case a visible form), in respect of what object is this consciousness produced? For at that earlier moment, no object had presented itself, with the result that no subject could be generated. If, on the other hand, the consciousness and the object of cognition arise simultaneously, once again, in respect of what object is consciousness produced? If there is no consciousness present, a perceptual condition does not occur, and so it is unable to generate the consciousness. For if a perceptual condition has arisen, there must have already been a consciousness present, perceiving it. It is thus inappropriate to say that the object is the origin of that consciousness, since both terms are in that case (causally) unrelated.

[verse 105] If, however, consciousness arises subsequent to its object, again, from what does it arise, since the object of its perception has ceased to be? Does the object that has ceased continue to exist or not? If it still exists, it has not yet ceased and thus becomes simultaneous with the perceiving consciousness. If, on the contrary, something derives from it even though it does not exist, then we would have to say that a plant can arise from a burnt seed or that even a rabbit's horns can give rise to a visual consciousness!

4. Close mindfulness of phenomena

5. Actual close mindfulness of phenomena

As we have just explained, the way in which phenomena, whether compounded or uncompounded, arise is beyond our conceptual grasp. Phenomena do not come into being before, after, or simultaneously with their cause; they do not arise from themselves nor from something else nor from both nor from neither. They are without origin; and what is without origin can have no abiding or cessation. Indeed, as it has been said:

Do not cease to be and do not come to be.
They have no ending and they are not permanent.
They do not come; they do not go.
They are not different; they are not the same.

5. Refutation of objections

6. Eliminating the objection that the two truths are untenable

[verse 106] It will be objected that if phenomena never arise or subside, and so on, the relative truth—which is itself characterized by origin and cessation, coming and going—collapses. And if the relative truth is not asserted, the ultimate cannot be retained either. What then happens to the two truths? They are reduced to one.

To this it must be said that the system of the two truths is propounded solely for didactic purposes, as an entry to the path. On the ultimate level, the division into two truths has no place. There is only the inconceivable dharmadhatu, pure suchness, the ultimate mode of being. As it is written in the sutra:

There is but one truth, absence of all origin,
But some will crow about there being four.
Yet in the essence of enlightenment,
Not one is found, why speak of four?

But whereas on the ultimate level, the two truths are not posited, on the relative level, they are. For there is certainly a difference between the way things are and the way they appear; and this corresponds to two truths as was declared earlier.[219]

It may be objected that if, of the two truths thus posited, the specifically characterized things of the relative do not exist, the so-called relative is necessarily posited by something other than it, namely, by the mind. Being so posited, [the relative] occurs in the mind, which means that beings will never pass beyond suffering. For as long as beings last, their minds last; as long as their minds last, the mind-posited relative truth also lasts.[220] Therefore nirvana, in which all dualistic conceptions of object and subject are exhausted, will never occur.

[verse 107] The answer to this is that these appearances of the relative, the continuum of which is insuperable, are what occurs through the thought-elaboration of individual sentient beings (which is "other" in the sense given above). They are like optical illusions, dreams, and so on. But this is not the relative that appears to someone who has passed beyond suffering.

This being so, it is not because others have dualistic conceptions that one cannot go beyond suffering, and conversely beings do not all attain the state of nonduality simply because the dualistic clinging of one individual vanishes into the space of dharmata. During sleep, objects appear like wild beasts, rivers, and so on, posited through the power of thought. They are not specifically characterized things. The appearances occurring during sleep cease in the experience of each individual who wakes. And though such things may continue to appear to those who are still asleep, they can have no effect upon those who have awakened. It is said in the *Madhyamakavatara:*

> Both when we are awake and when we are not roused
> From sleep, these three appear to be;[221]
> These same three melt away when from our dreams we stir,
> And so it is when waking from the sleep of nescience.[222]

If, after the attainment of buddhahood in the expanse beyond suffering (when even the subtle traces of dualistic perception disappear), the relative conceptions of origination and so forth were still to occur, this would mean that one was still caught up in the relative—in other words, mental elaborations dependent on oneself.[223] But this is not how it is. All the elaborations of the relative level cease to exist and this is therefore the state beyond suffering. Again the *Madhyamakavatara* says:

> The tinder of phenomena is all consumed,
> And this is peace, the dharmakaya of the Conquerors;
> There is no origin and no cessation.
> The mind is stopped, the kaya manifests.[224]

Just as when the firewood is all consumed and the fire goes out, every idea of origin, and so on, subsides; all movements of the mind and mental factors are arrested without exception. This is the dharmadhatu. In this ineffable union of appearance and emptiness, like water mingled with water, the self-arisen primal wisdom beyond all ontological extremes sees all ob-

jects of knowledge, and yet it is itself completely nonconceptual. For it should be understood that when the activity of the mind and its mental factors come to rest without any further movement, ultimate primordial wisdom manifests. When self-arisen wisdom appears, the [ordinary] mind ceases. If, bemused by ordinary opinions, we were to think that the discursive mind cannot come to a halt, or that if it could, then (as with an extinguished fire) no wisdom would ensue, this would be a great disparagement of the Buddha. This fault is to be avoided through the cultivation of certainty concerning the profound meaning.

6. Refutation of the objection that phenomena are inaccessible to reasoned analysis

[verse 108] It could be objected that if knower and known are both by nature empty, it does not make sense to analyze them. The answer is that, although the subject (the mind) and the object to be analyzed are empty by their nature, they are said to be mutually dependent. And since all analysis is conducted on the basis of the conventionalities of the common consensus in which things seem real as long as they are not subjected to close investigation, the analysis of them is quite tenable.

6. Refutation of the objection that analysis must result in an infinite regress

[verse 109] In order to understand that *all* imputed phenomena are without true existence, the investigation or systematic examination made to show that all objects are by their nature unreal may itself be examined. But if so, it will be objected that the investigation cannot be the object of its own investigating. A first investigation must be examined [by a second and so on]; and in this way, the analysis must lead to an infinite regress.

[verse 110] In reply to this, Shantideva says that when phenomena are investigated and are found to be without true existence, and when it is ascertained with certainty that they cannot be characterized as produced or unproduced, analysis itself ceases to have an identifiable object or basis. When there is no longer any object or basis to act as a target, no analyzing subject will arise to focus on it. All concepts are stilled, and the analysis itself subsides like ripples on the water. This is called the "natural nirvana in the state of dharmata."

2. Misconceptions dispelled through reasoning

3. A refutation of the argument of those who believe in true existence

[verse 111] The belief in the true existence of both object and consciousness, as put forward in substantialist philosophies, is very difficult to maintain, since it cannot be established by valid cognition. The proponents of such philosophies will of course say that consciousness is established as a valid cognizer and that therefore the very fact that, as valid cognizer, it observes things as existing is enough to establish that they do in fact exist. In reply to such an objection, however, the question need only be asked: On what grounds is consciousness itself said to be truly existent? It cannot, of itself, establish its own existence on the ultimate level, and if another consciousness is needed to do so, we find ourselves with an infinite regress. On the other hand, there is no other proof.

[verse 112] It could be argued perhaps that the existence of consciousness is established by the fact that it perceives truly existent objects. But in that case, what proof is there of the existence of the cognized object? If it is again said that the proof is consciousness, in other words, that object and consciousness both prove the existence of each other, then obviously the two are without inherent existence; they exist only through mutual interdependence, just like the relative concepts of shortness and length. In other words, it is impossible to use either term as proof of the other; [the argument is circular]. [verse 113] Ultimately speaking, neither of the two has true existence; it is just as in the absence of a son, one cannot talk about there being a father, since the grounds for positing fatherhood are absent. Likewise, if there is no father, where would the son come from (for he would have no cause)? Consequently, both are untenable. When no son exists, no father can be posited as having preceded him. And likewise in the context of consciousness and objects of consciousness—whichever of the two is to be proven—if one of them (the son according to our example) is not established, the other (a father) cannot exist prior to it in the past to serve as proof. In the end, neither of the two [consciousness and objects] has real existence.

[verse 114] Those who raised the objection continue by saying that they do not claim that the two terms mutually prove each other. Rather it is just as when a shoot is produced from a seed: The existence of the seed is understood from the presence of the plant. In the same way, consciousness,

which is the effect arising from the object of cognition, itself demonstrates the existence of the object. Unfortunately, this example is inadequate. For it is not the case that the existence of the seed is understood simply by virtue of the plant. [verse 115] It is our minds, different from the shoot, that infer that the shoot (the result), was preceded by a seed (the cause). It does this by separately considering seeds and plants and ascertaining the causal relationship between them. If, however, a causal relationship has not been previously ascertained, [the existence of the seed] is not revealed simply by observing the plant. What therefore proves the real existence of consciousness, in other words, the very thing that is in turn taken as evidence for the existence of the cognized object? On the ultimate level, it cannot be established by a self-knowing consciousness, nor by an other-knowing consciousness.

It may be seen from this that it is extremely difficult to render conventional reality tenable from the point of view of those who hold to real existence. On the other hand, this is highly acceptable for those who say that [true existence] is just an imputation.

3. An exposition of the proofs of those who uphold the doctrine of emptiness

4. Investigation of the cause: the diamond splinters argument

5. Refutation of the belief in uncaused origination

Philosophical schools, such as that of the Charvakas, argue that just as no one made the sharpness of a thorn or the brilliant hue of the peacock's tail, likewise, so they say, the universe has simply "happened" by itself. [verse 116] But it is a matter of everyday perception that all results are seen to be produced by causes; it is impossible to find something that arises uncaused. Here, the term perception is being used in a general sense and it covers the notion of inference.

It could perhaps be argued that the whole variety of items of which a lotus is composed: the stem, the size and number of the petals, and so on, are not to be found in the lotus's cause, and that therefore it is unacceptable to say that its various aspects have each a cause of their own. But in reply to this it should be pointed out that if a result were really present in

its cause, a causal relationship could hardly be said to exist between them. On the other hand, it is evident that a lotus does not grow without dependence upon its seed; one can see that it grows out of the grain. This being so, it is a variety in the cause that produces a variety in the result. In other words, as the verse says, a variety in the result proves that there was a division or variety of potency within the cause.

[verse 117] But who or what, it may be asked, has so arranged that there is this variety in the cause? The answer is that there is no extraneous agency. The seed itself cannot arise in the absence of its own cause; its own variety arises from yet an earlier causal variety. But again, if there can be a variety of potentialities in a cause, how is it that only a seed of barley can give rise to the barley plant, and not a seed of rice? Actually, it is not that a given barley grain contains distinct capacities as it were in and of itself. It is through the power of previous causes that the grain is brought forth as something that generates according to its own kind. This is simply the nature of things, which no one can alter.

An alternative reading would be to ask why different causes can produce different effects. The answer is that they manifest owing to their respective earlier causes; and this, once again, is simply the nature of things. It follows, therefore, that what arises without a cause must either be eternal or else nonexistent; whereas phenomena are established as being caused, since they are observed sporadically in one situation or another.

5. Refutation of the belief in other-production

6. Refutation of the belief in production from a permanent cause

Extraneous production may be discussed according to whether the supposed cause is impermanent or eternal. The first of these alternatives has already been dealt with; we will therefore consider the second. Those who believe in Ishvara say that he is the Lord, all-knowing, eternal, and self-arising. He is divine, pure and worshipful, permanent [immutable], one, and, in the movements of his mind, he is the maker of everything. Possessed of these five attributes, he has created the universe by his premeditated will.

[verse 118] If an almighty deity is said to be the cause of beings, it is incumbent upon those who make this assertion to define his nature.[225] It will be said, perhaps, that he is the great elements: earth, air, fire, and water. Let

us admit this [for the sake of argument]. Since all things come into being on the basis of these elements, the latter may be regarded as the (material) cause of the former. This is in fact the Buddhist position also; the only difference is in the name. What they call "God," we Buddhists refer to as the elements. And since people can name things as they wish, why go to the trouble of proving the existence of God? It does not make sense. Or again, why, Shantideva asks, should we weary ourselves with questions of mere terminology? He, for his part, will not do so.

[verse 119] The theists have said, however, that God is eternal, one, and worthy of veneration, whereas the elements are multiple and transient. Moreover, the latter are without any movement of mind; neither are they divinities to be revered, for they may be trampled underfoot and are not objects of veneration. They are also impure. The theists therefore cannot mean that the elements are God for they attribute to him characteristics that are inconsistent with them. [verse 120] Perhaps they will say that he is space. But this cannot be right either, since space is inert or devoid of creative movement; it is unable to produce anything. In any case, the idea that space is the same as purusha or the self has already been refuted.[226]

The use of such images, the theists will say, does not in fact weaken their position, since, viewed from the side of creatures, the divine nature is inconceivable. But if God is beyond understanding, so is his creative role. If he is inconceivable, what is to be gained by calling him creator? Assertions must be based on reflection and knowledge. If God is utterly unknowable, who can say that he is the creator? [verse 121] Moreover, if the cause, the creator, is unknown, how can we say that creation is willed by him? It is in knowing both the "creator" and the "created" that the causal relationship between them is to be ascertained and expressed. If this were not so, it would follow that even a barren woman's son could be the creator.

But what is the created work of this almighty deity? Does he create the permanent self and so on, or the transient states of consciousness? In the first case, the theists may say that God creates the self. But do they not also say that the self and the particles of the physical elements (the created effects) are eternal, just like God? If so, how is the attribution of eternity to both cause and effect consistent with their relationship of creator and created? For such a cause is without creative function and such a result is without the character of being created. [verse 122] In the second case it could be argued that a consciousness of blue arises through the perceptual circumstance of a blue object and so on. And from time without beginning, the

feelings of joy and sorrow, arising again and again in the mind stream, do so on the basis of preceding actions. This being so, what, the root verse asks, has God created? There cannot be any effects produced by him.

If God, the cause, is beginningless, then, given that he is an immediate cause of unobstructed power, how is it that his created effects could have beginnings? For if this thesis is true, it is impossible to assert that these effects arise only at a given moment and not before. They would have to exist from all time, for it does not make sense for them to be perceptible only momentarily; and the absurd consequence follows that the men and women living today have existed from all eternity.

[verse 123] In reply to this, the theists may defend themselves saying that God creates the universe in stages, and that there are times when he brings forth some things and not others. But granted that they are all God's creation, how is it that they are not all produced constantly and at once? For if the cause of the whole of creation is God and God alone, and if God is dependent on no other conditional circumstances, the cause for creation in its entirety is present constantly, and therefore the whole of it ought to be created simultaneously.

On the other hand it might be argued that God does in fact depend on various cooperative conditions. But even if that were the case, how is it that these conditions are not entirely present all the time? If it is true that there is nothing that God has not made, it is impossible to claim that what God creates depends also on some cause other than himself. [verse 124] And if he does indeed depend on other conditions, it follows that the cause of creation is rather the coincidence of cause and conditions; it is not God. For this means in effect that when cause and conditions are present, God cannot but bring forth the effects, and conversely, when the cause and conditions do not converge, God is powerless to create. [verse 125] Furthermore, granted that God is dependent on the convergence of cause and conditions, if he is thereby constrained against his will to bring about the suffering of others, it is clear that he is subject to an extraneous power.

And even if he creates according to his pleasure, he is dependent on his wishes and is once again constrained by something else, for he is caught on the hook of his desire. Finally, even if we were to accept that God is the creator of the world, in what does his omnipotent divinity consist? For if he is accounted the maker of objects, he is necessarily impermanent; if he is permanent, this can only mean that he is without causal effectiveness.

[verse 126] Finally, the Mimamsaka theory, that the [material] cause of

the universe is the infinitesimal and permanent particle, was disposed of above with the argument that particles may be directionally divided. There is no need to discuss it separately here.

5. Refutation of the belief in self-production

6. Refutation of the primal substance

A primal substance that is the cause of the world and is characterized in five points as being eternal, one, devoid of consciousness, invisible to ordinary sight, and universally creative is propounded by the Samkhya school, which classifies all phenomena into twenty-five principles. [verse 127] The nature of this primal matter, or prakriti, is defined as the equilibrium of the three universal constituents, or gunas: sattva (pleasure), rajas (pain), and tamas (neutrality). Prakriti is the cause of all manifestation and is thus referred to as "primal." For the Samkhyas say that, when its constituent elements fall into a state of imbalance, the modulation [or appearance] of the whole multiplicity of the world is set in motion.

[verse 128] It is inconsistent to say that the primal substance is truly one and then say that its nature is threefold. If it has three elements, it is not *one.* There can be no such thing, therefore, as a primal cause that is both one and permanent. Likewise, the three universal constituents have no real existence in themselves either. For each constituent is again divisible into three. In other words, there is rajas of rajas, sattva of rajas, and tamas of rajas, and so on. Otherwise they would be more fundamental than the primal substance itself. [verse 129] Now if these three causal constituents are nonexistent, the theory of such things as "sound modulation" arising from them becomes, as the root text says, extremely far-fetched. In other words, these modulations must also be nonexistent. [To talk about them] is like talking about [clay] pots not made of clay.

Moreover, if it can be validly established that feelings fall within the mental sphere, it is obviously impossible for pleasure, and so on, to be located in inanimate things like clothing. [verse 130] The Samkhyas may object, however, that their position is tenable because inanimate objects like sounds or clothing do in fact give rise to pleasure, pain, or indifference. But did not Shantideva examine phenomena such as clothes and show them to be nonexistent, at the time that he refuted the existence of bodies?

The Samkhyas should understand too that from the relative point of

view, they undermine their own position. For they claim that the cause of woollen cloth is the gunas, pleasure and so forth, and then go on to say that the effect of woollen cloth is pleasure also. In other words, pleasure is made out to be both the cause and the result of cloth. This is ridiculous. It is like saying that a man is both the father and son of the same person. If it is protested that there are different kinds of pleasure, then this militates against the single nature of pleasure and is manifestly at variance with what is perceived. [verse 131] Woollen cloth has certainly never been seen to arise from pleasure and the like, while on the other hand, it is true that things like blankets or garlands of sandal flowers may be seen to give rise to pleasure. But given that things like cloth have no real existence even on the level of the infinitesimal particles, the feelings of pleasure and so on that arise from them cannot exist separately on their own.

But pleasure, the Samkhyas say, is not necessarily dependent on such things as cloth, it is the eternal nature of the primal substance. If that is so, however, it follows that pleasure must be perceived constantly and cannot be averted, for this observable pleasure cannot diverge from its previous nature. Pleasure, on the other hand, is not at all permanently perceived, and thus the assertion of the Samkhyas is untenable. They insist however, that although the gunas have a permanent existence, they have a particular feature of being sometimes manifest and sometimes not. Thus, they say, it does not inevitably follow that they should be constantly detectable. The answer to this is that if pleasure and suchlike were not at all manifest, they would be beyond all knowledge, and it would be inappropriate to speak of their existence. The Samkhyas do not indeed claim this. [verse 132] But if pleasure and so forth are manifest intermittently, the question is: Why are they not the object of constant perception? For the Samkhyas claim that pleasure and the other gunas are perceptible—they pervade the object of perception and dwell constantly in it. The gunas should therefore be as obvious as a lighted lamp before one's very eyes.

In fact, the Samkhyas make a distinction, saying that if pleasure and the rest, in a gross apparent form, become more subtle, they exist in a state of nonmanifest potentiality and cannot be perceived. But it is a contradiction to say that pleasure and so forth, defined as one and permanent, have opposite states of grossness and subtlety. How can they possibly be both? [verse 133] The Samkhyas may try to defend themselves by saying that a preceding state of grossness may be cast off and a new state of subtlety assumed. But a pleasure that can become gross or subtle is demonstrably

impermanent. And if the Samkhyas assert that pleasure and the other gunas, when manifest, can throw off a preceding state and enter into another, why do they not also attribute impermanence to *all* of the twenty-five principles? For it is never possible for all of them to be observed with the same mode of appearance. The Samkhyas may say that, whether gross or subtle, the actual nature of pleasure is never lost, and therefore its permanent character is not impaired. To this it must be said that pleasure and its character of grossness are either two different things or the same. If they are different, it follows that when its grossness subsides, the pleasure itself does not subside and is still manifest, and should therefore continue to be felt. [verse 134] If, on the other hand, it is said that this gross aspect is not different from the pleasure but is actually the same thing, the impermanence of pleasure is clearly and certainly established.

6. The actual refutation of self-production: the main argument

The Samkhyas argue that when the guna of pleasure ceases to manifest, it abides hidden, in a potential state, within the expanse of prakriti, the primal substance. When it reappears later, it is merely the manifestation of what was already there. For if it did not preexist in any sense, it would be incorrect to speak of its coming into being. It would be like a rabbit's horns being produced from clay. Therefore whatever becomes manifest must have existed until that moment, according to its own nature, within the sphere of the primal substance. This amounts to saying that the cause and the result coexist.

[verse 135] But the question must be asked, If all results are contemporaneous with their causes, why is it that they are not constantly perceptible? The Samkhyas reply that it is simply because these results are not, at a given moment, apparent to consciousness. Later on they become so, just like a pot in a darkened room becomes visible in the light of a lamp.

In speaking like this, the Samkhyas are undermining their own main thesis. Although they do not mean, and do not say, that manifestation is absent at the time of the cause and that it arises newly, what they have just said in fact comes to this. And if manifestation does occur at the time of the cause, they cannot assert a distinction between manifestation and nonmanifestation; and it follows that there must be manifestation from the very beginning. The position of the Samkhyas is both self-contradictory

and irrational. For if, for the Samkhyas, the result is truly manifest in the cause, it follows that when they eat their food, they eat their excrement! [verse 136] Moreover, with the money that they use to purchase their clothing made of fine cotton, let them rather buy cotton seeds from which the fabric comes and wear those! That, says Shantideva, is how they might substantiate their doctrine!

The Samkhyas insist, however, that the result coexists in the cause but that ordinary people do not perceive this because their eyes are dimmed by the darkness of stupidity. [verse 137] But [Shantideva replies] this is said by the Samkhya teachers, who claim to have a knowledge of the truth (that the result is already present in the cause). Well then, since this knowledge of the truth exists in the minds of ordinary people, how is it that they do not see it as well (for the cause for it is complete)? How is it that they do not? If we follow the theory of the Samkhyas, a conscious knowledge of reality, being a result, should be present in all sentient beings. But even supposing that people accepted the proposition of the Samkhyas that the result is present in the cause, who was ever seen to consume filth when they ate or to show an interest in cotton seeds when they were buying material for their clothes? The fact is that no one has ever under any circumstances been observed to live according to the Samkhya description of reality, which collapses as a result.

The Samkhyas will perhaps retort that the perceptions of ordinary people have no validity and therefore do not constitute a refutation. But in that case, the manifestations, which have the nature of results and which ordinary people perceive, must be unreal and not true. If they are unreal, to say that these results were present in their causes because they manifested later is meaningless.

[verse 138] The Samkhyas tax the Madhyamikas with the following question. If, because an agent of assessment is deceptive, an object of assessment is not established, and if, as the Madhyamikas say, the assessing consciousness is not a valid (that is, an ultimately valid) cognition, does it not follow that a tenet system assessed by such a consciousness is also deceptive? Consequently, when such an analytical cognition (which is deceptive) makes an assessment saying that, ultimately, on the level of suchness, all is emptiness, and when such emptiness is meditated upon, does not this become an untenable position, for the reason just given?

[verse 139] The answer is that Madhyamikas have not, in fact, elaborated any system of tenets based on the true existence of a specifically locatable

object called "emptiness," regarded as something established by valid cognition. The reason is that, without referring to or basing oneself on a pot or some other actual thing, it is never possible to conceive of a "nonpot" or "nonexistent pot," [a nonthing or nonexistent thing,] as if this were a separate entity. For this reason, the emptiness of the pot, in the sense of the nonexistent pot, is a lesser, approximate form of emptiness. For it is just the clearing away or refutation of its existence aspect.[227] Therefore the Madhyamikas say that because things are deceptive or unreal *in themselves,* their nonexistence is also clearly and certainly unreal also.[228]

Well then, say the Samkhyas, what is the point of meditating, telling oneself that phenomena do not exist, given that both their existence and their nonexistence are equally false and unreal? The Madhyamikas reply that it is our clinging to the inherent existence of phenomena, a habit acquired from time without beginning, that is, at the moment, binding us to samsara. The antidote to this is quite simply to acquire the habit of considering phenomena to be without inherent existence. But both their existence or nonexistence are equally unreal. [verse 140] It is just as when people suffer when they dream that they have a child which then dies. In the dream, the thought of the death supplants the thought that the child was alive, yet the thought of the child's death is itself unreal. Two sticks which, when rubbed together, produce a fire, are themselves burned up in the blaze. Just so, the dense forest of all conceptual bearings, which posit phenomena as existent and nonexistent, will be totally consumed by the fires of the wisdom of ascertaining that all phenomena are without true existence. To abide in that primal wisdom in which all concepts have subsided is the Great Madhyamaka, the Great Middle Way, free from all assertion. It is written in the *Mulamadhyamaka-karika:*

> What is called "existence" is but clinging to things'
> permanence;
> And "nonexistence" is the view of nothingness.
> And thus the wise and learned do not rest
> In either "This thing is" or "It is not."

5. Conclusion of the argument

[verse 141] On the basis of the reasons and analytical methods given above, we can see that things do not exist uncaused and also that they do not

proceed from an eternal cause. Just like shoots burgeoning from their seeds, all inanimate phenomena arise in dependence on their own causes and conditions; and all animate phenomena arise dependently in a continuous chain, from ignorance down to old age and death. Nevertheless, none of these resultant phenomena coexist in their own causes and conditions, either one by one or in the aggregate. Causal elements taken one by one, are unable to produce effects, and a combination of such elements is not the slightest bit different from these individual elements. For example, a flint stone, steel, and tinder taken individually are unable to produce a flame, and a combination of them, being no different from the said elements, is equally unproductive. This does not mean, however, that the effect arises from causes other than these or that it has coexisted in these causes from the outset.

[verse 142] It does not mean that, when the result appears, it *arises* from something other than its own causes and conditions. Neither does it mean that the result *abides* in the present, produced in dependence upon its causes but nevertheless different from them by nature. Furthermore, when it *subsides,* it does not depart hence and go elsewhere. This is why it is said that all phenomena are by nature empty of their causes.

In this context, the expression "causes taken one by one" refers to the refutation of origination from self and from other. The expression "in the aggregate" indicates the refutation of origination from both [and neither]. This is also explained as the refutation of the four theories of production.

4. Investigation of the nature: the great interdependence argument

[verse 143] Outer and inner entities, which the ignorant accept as real, appear but are without true existence. How are they different from mirages? They are not at all different. We need only investigate the horses and oxen of a magical illusion and then the things produced from causes, considering where they come from, where they abide, and where they go to when they subside. We will find that both have an equal status.

[verse 144] Be that as it may, if a resultant effect comes about through the convergence of productive causes, its appearance and the perception of it occur on account of those causes, or through their power. If, on the other hand, the causes are not present, the effect does not appear and is not to be

seen. Therefore how can real, objective existence be attributed to what is in fact like a reflection, a figment put together from causes and conditions?

It should be understood that interdependent origination involves none of the extreme positions implied in terms like permanence, annihilation, arising and subsiding, existence and nonexistence. It accords, rather, with the eight examples of illusoriness.[229] As it is written in the sutra, Whatever is produced from causal conditions is not produced; it does not have the nature of a produced thing. Dependence on conditions is the same as emptiness, and those who understand emptiness are careful [in their actions]. The master Nagarjuna said:

> But for what originates dependently,
> There are no phenomena;
> There are no phenomena, therefore,
> That are not empty.

4. Investigation of the result: the argument that refutes the origination of the existent and the nonexistent effect

[verse 145] When an investigation is made into resultant effects, is a produced effect found to exist or not to exist? If the resultant thing is truly an entity, or rather, if it exists inherently, what need is there for a cause? A relationship of cause and effect cannot properly be ascribed to it. On the other hand, if it were said that the [previously] nonexistent result is produced by a cause, one could reply by asking why a cause is necessary for a result, the nature of which is nonexistence? Generally speaking, what does not exist has no cause. It just abides in its essence of nonbeing. It might perhaps be thought, however, that, even if mere nonbeing is not produced by causes, it is nevertheless through causes that a nonexistent effect is made into an existent thing. This, however, is impossible.

[verse 146] Even if millions of causes were to join forces, they could never make a "nonexistent thing" (something intrinsically nonexistent) pass into existence. In exactly the same way, however many causes there are, they are unable to impart existence to a rabbit's horns. Nonexistence can never act as the basis of anything. The reason why there can be no passage from "nonexistent thing" into "existent thing" is that a transformation in which

the character of nonexistence is not discarded and a transformation in which it is discarded are both untenable. In the first place, how can a nonexistent thing be at the same time an existent thing? Both notions invalidate each other; there is just nothing. In the second place, it is through the removal of its nonexistence that the nonexistent thing is transformed into an existent one, but what can this newly existent thing be? Nothing is possible.

[verse 147] Thus, what is defined as nonexistent cannot, throughout its nonexistence, be a real thing. When can such a thing be said to come into existence? The answer is that it never can. For as long as there is no assumption of existence, there is no relinquishing of nonexistence. [verse 148] If there is no laying aside of the character of nonexistence, there is no possible occasion for coming into existence. Therefore how can one ever speak of a nonexistent thing becoming an existent thing? Clearly, it is impossible. Conversely, just as a nonexistent thing does not become an existent thing, likewise an existent thing does not become a nonexistent thing. Once again, since both terms are mutually exclusive, one can apply the same kind of reasoning as has just been used.

[verse 149] If, on the other hand, an existent thing could become a nonexistent thing, it follows that it would possess the nature of both existence and nonexistence simultaneously. This is why, according to ultimate reality, there is no such thing as cessation and why things have no true existence. And this in turn is the reason why, throughout the three times, beings are never born and never pass away. [verse 150] Thus all beings who appear in the various dimensions of existence manifest and yet have no reality; they are like the visions of a dream. When subjected to reasoned analysis, we find that, just like the banana tree, they are devoid of an underlying essence able to withstand analysis. Therefore, on the ultimate level, there is no difference between attaining nirvana and not attaining it, because where there is no bondage, there is no liberation. For at all times, there is nothing but the state of perfect equality. The *Mulamadhyamaka-karika* says:

> Between these two is not the slightest,
> Not the subtlest, distinction.

Although there are different ways of classifying the Madhyamaka arguments, in the present text, they establish that all phenomena, which appear to exist in the manner of cause, result, and nature, are the three doors of liberation. The examination of causes shows that they are (1) devoid of all

conceptual characteristics; [in other words, there are no causes]. As regards the nature of phenomena, analysis shows that this is (2) emptiness. And as for the results, analysis reveals that they are (3) beyond expectancy.

2. The benefits of realizing emptiness

3. The equivalence of the eight worldly concerns

[verse 151] Since all things, such as food and clothing, are empty by their nature, what is there for us to gain or lose? Nothing at all. What praise and honor, what insults and humiliation can be heaped on us and by whom? Again, none. [verse 152] Examine the causes for the experience of joy and sadness. They are found to lack inherent existence. What, then, is there that could be unpleasant in being slandered? What is there that could be delightful in being celebrated? Nothing at all. Let us cast aside all discrimination with regard to these eight worldly concerns and place our minds in meditation on profound emptiness. As Nagarjuna says in his *Suhrillekha:*

> Regard as equal, you who know the world,
> All gain and loss, all joy and pain,
> All good and ill repute, all praise and blame:
> These eight mundane concerns are not the worthy objects of your mind.

If an examination is made on the level of ultimate truth, the question arises: Who is the person craving and what is it that is craved? Neither has inherent existence. [verse 153] Since this world of living beings, if we consider well, has no real existence, who can ever be said to die who lives therein? Who will ever be born in the next life, and who was ever born in the past? Who, moreover, are our friends, and who our dear relations? [verse 154] Let those who, like the wise master Shantideva, investigate the nature of things fully understand that all phenomena are like space and elude the conceptual categories of "is" and "is not." Let them regard as equal the eight mundane concerns.

3. The effortless display of great compassion

The glorious master Atisha has said that when emptiness is realized, all sin and nonvirtue come to an end and great compassion arises. Emptiness

possesses the essence of compassion. Therefore, when emptiness is realized, it is in the nature of things that great compassion manifests.

Not realizing that phenomena are empty and that their mode of being lies beyond all conceptuality, ordinary beings take as real what is unreal: They attribute existence to what is nonexistent and selfhood to what is not a self. Therein lies their delusion. They long for happiness, but they are ignorant of how to attain it. They struggle against all that seems hostile, and love and cling to what appears as friendly. [verse 155] Thus they are troubled in body and mind. In situations of joy and pleasure, they distract themselves physically and mentally with dancing and song. But when adversity befalls them, when death occurs or the loss of livestock, or when they fail to get what they want, they suffer. High and low, strong and weak, rich and poor, for friends and family, for wealth and pleasures—all that is desired—everyone strives and competes with someone else. They slash each other with swords and stab each other with spears. Their possessions, ill-gotten through the sins of body, speech, and mind, are the source of lives of great toil and sorrow, both now and in the future. People pass their time, their minds completely taken in by the senseless pleasures of life.

[verse 156] Through the kindness of religious teachers, the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, beings occasionally perform a little virtue such as observing the eight-precept upavasa vow and so on. Because of this, they are fortunate in their migrations, appearing again and again in the many states of high rebirth in the various universes. There they live, enjoying all the pleasures they desire. But because they fail to practice virtue and instead commit evil actions, they fall, at death, into hell or other of the three lower destinies, and for a long time they suffer unbearable pains. High and low, through states of joy and sorrow—such are the unpredictable wanderings of sentient beings. [verse 157] Within the three realms of existence, every evil thought of attachment, hatred, stupidity, craving, and so on, will precipitate beings into infernal and other states of loss—into many chasmic abysses of dreadful woe. In such a world, no learning and understanding of reality (the means of liberation) is to be found. Instead, on account of an intense clinging to self with respect to outer and inner phenomena, there arises something quite different: the false conviction in permanence and true existence. In such a situation, the understanding of emptiness free of all conceptual construction is the very antithesis of such mistaken clinging to the true existence of things. Indeed, the study and realization of such-

ness or profound emptiness is something quite different in this world. It is like a light shining in an immense darkness.

But now, through the kindness of the compassionate Teacher and his Bodhisattva children, profound doctrines such as the teaching on voidness are expounded and listened to. But perhaps we grow despondent and think to ourselves, "How will someone like me ever be able to understand and realize a teaching like this chapter on the perfection of wisdom, which expounds the teachings on emptiness?" If so, we should understand that we have fallen prey to the "fear of emptiness" (however undaunted we may be by enemies and negative forces). Moreover, it has been said that when people nowadays show no interest in hearing and studying the texts that expound the doctrine of emptiness, and have no grasp of them, this is a sign that emptiness is something to which, in their previous lives, they have never turned their minds.

On the other hand, it has been said that if, when we hear the teachings on emptiness, our minds become elated, and if, through our strength of faith, our eyes fill with tears and our skin stands up in gooseflesh, this is a sign that we already possess a propensity for study and reflection instilled in us in our earlier existences. And it is said too that even though we may not gain realization in this life, if nonetheless we turn our minds to the profound doctrine of emptiness, listening to the teachings and reflecting and meditating on them, it is certain that in our subsequent lives we will hear such teachings again and attain realization. This view is confirmed by the *Yogacharachatushataka:*

> Even though we do not, in this life transcend—
> Through understanding suchness—every sorrow,
> It is, like any action, certain that, in later lives,
> We will without travail attain this goal.

In times gone by, Kubja the Small and Lekyong fell victim to terrible suffering on account of strongly negative karmic residues. Nevertheless, when they encountered the Buddha, they realized the truth and attained arhatship simply through hearing his teachings. The scriptures say that this was through the karma of having become learned in the teachings on the aggregates, elements, and sense fields at the time of the Buddha Kashyapa.

On the other hand, when it comes to emptiness, people who are dull

and narrow never even wonder whether phenomena are empty or not. Had they the slightest doubt about it, samsaric existence would fall to shreds for them. As it is said:

> Due to little merit, not the slightest doubt
> Will rise against phenomena.
> Let the slightest doubt arise,
> And this existence falls to shreds.

Consequently, at this time, when we have come upon this profound teaching on emptiness, we should give meaning to this encounter, by listening, reflecting, and meditating with joyful hearts.

[verse 158] In this realm of existence, in which the light of suchness does not shine, afflicted by unexampled difficulties, beings languish for ages in a vast ocean of unbearable suffering, stretching beyond the limits of space and time. There, as we have just explained, they are oppressed and beaten down by the strength of their karma and negative emotions. They are feeble in their ability to practice virtue. For even if a good intention surfaces in their minds, the proper support for wholesome activity, namely, a human existence endowed with freedoms and advantages, is short-lived, and they have not the leisure for the practice of virtue.

[verse 159] Throughout their short lives, beings spend their time hoping for longevity, caring for their bodies in all sorts of ways, taking different remedies and cures to maintain a healthy constitution. Then there are others who lack the necessities of food, drink, and so on; they are hungry and destitute and must labor wearily for their livelihood. They spend half their lives in the stupefaction of sleep. Outside and in, they are assailed by different troubles. They abandon themselves to futile behavior in the company of ordinary people whose conduct is no better than that of children. And in their various doings life goes quickly by. It is frittered away, without any virtuous accomplishment to render it significant.

[verse 160] The cause of liberation from samsaric existence, the mind's discernment of the ultimate reality—the No-Self of phenomena, their lack of true existence—all this is extremely difficult to find. The habit of mental wandering of those who dwell in samsara is extremely powerful, like a river in spate. How could there ever be a way to stop it short, all of a sudden?

[verse 161] Not only is it impossible, but there are demons like Devaputra,

friends of darkness, who work and labor to cast us down, to cause us to fall into hell and the other evil destinies. For the lord of demons will not tolerate that a Bodhisattva (for a single one will set many hundreds and thousands of beings in the state of enlightenment) should ever receive an earnest or portent of the attainment of buddhahood. And thus, he will throw many obstacles in the Bodhisattva's way. He will take false and lying forms, appearing as a Buddha, a Bodhisattva, or the disciple's teacher, declaring that the disciple has now gained superior qualities. He will denigrate the true Dharma as false, substituting a parody in its place. And he will send his daughters, the mistresses of distraction and stupidity, to create obstacles. As the proverb says, "For profound Dharma, a profound dark demon."

Moreover, there are many false trails, such as eternalist and nihilist views. And if one does not gain certainty, coming to the conclusion that "This is the pure and unmistaken path," by discerning its goal and point of view, it is hard to free oneself from doubts and hesitation. For it is difficult to have all the outer and inner conditions favorable to their removal. Nowadays, people love novelty and thus neglect the ancient texts, excellent and pure though they be, liking only what is new. But among the recent texts, there are some that are genuine and some false, and it is difficult to discern the goal and point of view of a genuine teaching from a false one—it is difficult to have certainty, unclouded by doubt.

And even if a teaching is authentic, if it is practiced with doubt, it will be fruitless and without meaning. It is thus hard to have a true discernment. It is hard to overcome distraction. Moreover, if because of doubts and so forth, one dies without ever discovering the light of the Doctrine, [verse 162] it will be extremely hard to find the freedoms of the human state again and to encounter the enlightened beings present in this world. It will be difficult to find time to practice their teachings wholeheartedly and so be able to turn back the flood of desire and the other negative emotions.

[verse 163] "Alas!" says Shantideva. With love and great regret, he laments that in this state of samsara, beings go continuously from sorrow to sorrow. Given their various kinds of suffering, they live in great torment. In their ignorance they are unable to understand what they should do and what they should not do. They are not aware that they are foundering in suffering; they cherish and cling to this existence. Alas, how can one not lament at the thought of their being carried away on the flood of sorrow? [verse 164] There are some people, for example, who wish for the sensation of coolness

and bathe themselves repeatedly. Afterward, they are discomforted by the cold and wish to be warm again. Thereupon they apply heat to themselves until they are tormented by the searing temperatures and have to bathe again. They thus torture themselves through this alternation of heat and cold, but, blinded by their desires, they claim that all is well and that they are perfectly happy!

[verse 165] So it is that people live "happily," abandoning themselves to carefree pleasures, as if the terrible hardships of old age and death will never come to them. But old age will befall them first of all, with incurable sickness in its train, and then at last the implacable Lord of Death will come upon them to kill them. And once again they will have to undergo the unbearable pains of falling into the lower realms.

[verse 166] Destitute of insight into the meaning of suchness, and taking suffering for happiness, beings are tormented in the fires of misery in the three worlds of samsara. When, asks Shantideva, will he be able to extinguish this fire with a rain of happiness that issues from the clouds of his unlimited accumulation of merit? When indeed will such a heavy downpour of all good things supply beings with all that they desire (wealth and comfort, clothing, places of rest, and so on), satisfying their every want and removing the misery of their poverty? And it is with thoughts like these that we should aim for the temporal happiness of beings.

[verse 167] And again in Shantideva's words, with a view to the state of definite goodness, when will we too understand and assimilate the profound emptiness of all phenomena, the state free of all conceptual constructs—the voidness of the three spheres? For, to the extent that we understand it, we will, with joy and reverence for the welfare of living beings, bring our store of merit to fulfillment. When will we too have a direct experience of the suchness of all things, the union of appearance and emptiness—equality itself free from all concepts? And when might we too be able to set this doctrine forth—the medicine for beings poisoned by their clinging to the true existence of things and brought to ruin in the three worlds of samsara? O may this come to pass!

When we reflect like this, great compassion is brought to birth. And when we see that phenomena are indeed devoid of true existence, we will be engulfed by such a strength of great compassion that we will never abandon living beings who circle in samsara through their fixated belief in true existence. In sum, the birth in the mind of great compassion and love

for others, and complete indifference to the eight worldly concerns, will naturally occur, as this text has explained.

If those, therefore, who wish for fortunate destinies in samsara and the definite goodness of nirvana practice wholesome ways such as generosity, ethical discipline, and meditation, they will certainly reap great benefit thereby. But greater than these is the wisdom of realizing profound emptiness beyond all conceptual elaborations, the deep and final remedy for the two kinds of obscuration. In order to generate it, we must strive in proper study and reflection. As it is said in the *Uttaratantra-shastra:*

> Thus it is by giving that all wealth will be produced;
> Perfect ethics lead to high rebirth, while meditation rids you of defilement.
> But the veils, emotional and cognitive, are both removed by wisdom.
> Therefore wisdom is supreme. Its cause is study of this teaching.

Here ends the ninth chapter of the *Bodhicharyavatara,* on wisdom.

subject and predicate, supported by a valid sign or reason, and illustrated by an example. The standard model of a probative argument runs as follows: "This hill has fire on it (thesis) because there is smoke there (sign or reason), just as we find in a kitchen (example)." Following the same format, Shantideva's argument runs, "I will eliminate the sufferings of others (thesis) because suffering does not benefit them (reason), just as I remove my own discomforts (example)." Given that probative arguments are normally understood to effect a demonstration or proof that "such and such is the case," to describe the justificatory statement in verse 94 in such terms may seem rather forced. But it is important to realize that for Shantideva, the decision to benefit others is a matter of logical necessity rather than a sense of duty experienced in response to moral exhortation.

180. *rigs 'dra rgyun mi chad pa.* This means that when a moment of consciousness ceases, a new one arises identical to it in nature—i.e., mere clarity and cognizance—but varying in "color" according to karmic circumstances. There is simply a continuum of interlinked moments; there is no subpositum, no underlying entity, that endures as the "experiencer" of a stream of extrinsic events.

181. In the root text, throughout this description of the exchange of self and other, Shantideva uses the contrasting pronouns "I" and "he." According to custom, these same pronouns are retained in the commentary without the meaning being obscured. In the translation, however, we have found it clearer to render the Tibetan word *bdag* ("I") as "you," since the "speaker" is Khenpo Kunpel addressing the reader. Needless to say, his reflections are directed at all readers regardless of sex, so that the third person pronoun (used to refer to one's "other self") could just as well be "she" as "he." Since the constant repetition of both pronouns would be very tedious, we have, in deference to Shantideva's own personal situation (that of a man living in a community of monks), kept the masculine pronoun.

182. *thub pa dgongs gsal.*

183. In other words, at this point in the root text, Shantideva discontinues the I/he division used in the previous meditation, where he created an imaginative division in himself, playing one side off against the other. He now returns to the more normal practice of soliloquy as he continues his introspective reflections.

184. I.e., in expectation (if you were cutting meat, it would).

185. This is a reference to Mipham Rinpoche, whose *Norbu Ketaka* is closely followed (almost verbatim) in this chapter.

186. Generally speaking in the present context, we translate the Tibetan word *shes rab* (Skt. *prajna*) as "wisdom," and *ye shes* (Skt. *jnana*) as "primordial wisdom."

187. The knowledge of the ultimate status of things and the knowledge of the whole multiplicity of things.
188. If, on the ultimate level, the two truths are taken to be distinct, it follows that (1) when the Aryas actually realize the ultimate truth they would still have to realize the relative truth; (2) ultimate truth would not be the ultimate nature of phenomena on the relative level; (3) when the empty nature of relative truth (e.g., the aggregates) is realized, it would not suffice as an understanding of ultimate truth; (4) the realization of the ultimate and relative truth would be mutually exclusive in a single mind. By contrast, if, on the relative level, the two truths are taken to be the same, it follows that (1) when ordinary people perceive sense objects, they would also perceive the ultimate truth; (2) since relative phenomena are not beyond conceptual elaborations, the ultimate truth would not be either; (3) since ordinary perception lies within the sphere of defiled emotion, the ultimate truth would not be free of defilements; (4) it would be impossible to show that ultimate truth is different from the relative truth that ordinary beings perceive.
189. See *Introduction to the Middle Way,* chap. 11, v. 13.
190. To affirm that the ultimate truth is an object of knowledge from the standpoint of detection amounts to asserting that emptiness is a truly existent thing (*dngos po*). A discussion of the terms "exclusion" and "detection" (*rnam bcad, yongs gcod*) can be found in Mipham Rinpoche's commentary on the *Madhyamakalankara.* See *Adornment of the Middle Way,* p. 275.
191. In the case of Buddhist practitioners, the expression "worldly being" refers to those who have not yet attained the Mahayana path of seeing.
192. According to the Vaibhashikas, it is the visual organ that directly apprehends its object (a material thing apprehends another material thing); the visual consciousness merely accompanies this process of perception. Conceptual consciousness then identifies the perceived form. The three factors (object, sense organ, and consciousness) being simultaneous, there is no relation of causality between them.
193. No doubt in a bid to keep things simple, Khenpo Kunpel makes no mention here of the fact that the Sautrantika school is commonly divided into two subgroups: Sautrantikas following scripture (*lung gi rjes 'brang gi mdo sde pa*) and Sautrantikas following reasoning (*rigs kyi rjes 'brang gi mdo sde pa*). The Sautrantikas following scripture are perhaps so called because, adhering strictly to the sutras, they reduced the number of scriptures regarded as authentic by relegating the seven sections of Abhidharma (accepted by the Vaibhashikas as the word of Buddha) to the level of shastras composed by Arhats (Shariputra, etc.) Their philosophical position, however, does not seem to have differed greatly from that of the Vaibhashikas in that they considered the indivisible instant of mind and

particle of matter to be ultimate truths, and extended objects as only relatively existent.

"Sautrantika following reasoning" denotes the doctrine of Dignaga and Dharmakirti. The naming of these masters as Sautrantikas reflects the fact that they appear to accept the existence of an extramental material world (which is in turn reducible to the agglomeration of partless particles). This identification, which is largely a matter of doxographical tidiness, is however called into question by the fact that on occasions, Dignaga and Dharmakirti seem to adopt a Yogachara position. The representationalist theory of knowledge implied in the doctrine of hidden objects and the distinction, on the level of relative truth, between functional (i.e., causally effective), specifically characterized phenomena (which are real), as contrasted with nonfunctional, generally characterized phenomena (which are unreal) are features typical of the epistemology and ontology of the Sautrantikas following reasoning, a system that has played a major role in the development of Buddhist thought down the centuries. A detailed presentation of the views of Dignaga and Dharmakirti, and their reception in Tibet, is to be found in Dreyfus, *Recognizing Reality.*

194. According to the Sautrantikas following reasoning, external objects, although existent, are known by means of the mental aspects that they cast upon the mind (like reflections in a mirror). It is only the aspect, which is itself mental by nature, that the mind cognizes directly. Although a causal relationship exists between them, the external, nonmental phenomenon is said to be "concealed" by the mental aspect, which, of necessity, comes between it and the cognizing mind.
195. *ldan min 'du byed;* a subsection of the skandha of conditioning factors; factors associated with neither mind nor form (e.g., impermanence, continuity, acquisition).
196. In the present context, we follow the convention of using *madhyamaka* to refer to the system of tenets and *madhyamika* to refer to its advocates.
197. I.e., they cannot be prevented from appearing and do affect us.
198. See *Treasury,* pp. 246–52.
199. This is a reference to the "argument of neither one nor many," one of several classic arguments used in Madhyamaka to establish the ultimate status of phenomena. See *Adornment of the Middle Way,* p. 39.
200. This is a reference to the Buddhist teaching of impermanence, according to which an apparently stable object is in fact a series of point-instants, flashing into, and out of, existence at every moment. Each instant is a separate entity similar to, but not identical with, the entities that precede and follow it. In contrast with the Samkhya notion of a flexible and ever-evolving substrate, change according to the Abhidharma means *replacement.* An appar-

ently single phenomenon is in fact a sequence of separate, but like, events. Its apparent solidity and continuity is as illusory as the circle of light created by a firebrand whirled in the air.

201. See *Adornment of the Middle Way,* p. 240.

202. This crucial point should be born in mind throughout the ensuing discussion. Khenpo Kunpel, following Mipham Rinpoche, is asserting that *rang rig,* the self-knowing mind, has no existence on the ultimate level. It is Mipham's view, however, following Shantarakshita (see *Adornment of the Middle Way,* p. 202) that the self-knowing mind exists on the level of relative truth. In this he differs from Je Tsongkhapa, one of whose *Eight Difficult Points* is the assertion that the self-knowing mind is nonexistent even on the conventional level (see Dreyfus, *The Svatantrika-Prasangika Distinction,* p. 324).

203. I.e., *gzhan don rig gi shes pa,* a consciousness that cognizes objects other than itself (as distinct from self-aware consciousness, *rang rig gi shes pa*). In other words, the process of illumination is understood in terms of a subject-object polarity.

204. One has a wound and one remembers that it was inflicted by a water rat. But the present condition of the wound (it is now festering) reveals something about the bite that one does not remember (for one was not aware of it at the time), namely, the fact that it was poisoned. According to the terms of the comparison, the simple memory of the color blue corresponds to the simple memory of the bite; the thought "I saw blue" corresponds to the thought "I was poisoned." Just as the present understanding that one was poisoned does not require the awareness (at the time of the bite) that one was being poisoned, by the same token, the thought "I remember blue" does not require the self-awareness "I am seeing blue" at the time when the color was experienced. According to the Madhyamaka argument, because subject and object are necessary interdependent aspects of all experience, the memory of blue automatically implies the thought "I remember blue." In itself, memory is no proof of the self-cognizing mind.

205. The False Aspectarians consider that the mental aspect is completely unreal and nonexistent. See *Adornment of the Middle Way,* p. 247.

206. These eight examples are mentioned in the *Uttaratantra-shastra.* The glory of Indra's reflection seen in the crystal floor before him is such that, without intending to do so, it effortlessly inspires respect in others and the desire to emulate him. See *The Changeless Nature,* by Arya Maitreya and Acarya Asanga, translated by Ken and Katia Holmes, p. 123.

207. A mythical bird that preys on nagas, serpent-like beings which are said to cause certain types of disease.

208. The sendhavas were a group of Shravakas opposed to the Mahayana. See Taranatha, *History of Buddhism in India,* p. 279.
209. See *Treasury,* p. 283.
210. I.e., of the Shravakas, Pratyekabuddhas, and Bodhisattvas. The goal of the first two is arhatship; the goal of the third is buddhahood.
211. Perception, inference, and scriptural authority.
212. The belief that, in any given action, the subject, object, and act are real entities.
213. Maudgalyayana was ignorant of where his mother had been reborn, and Shariputra did not know when the seed of liberation had arisen in a certain person's mind stream. See p. 16.
214. Tom, the father of Dick, is the son of Harry. It is only in terms of his connections with Dick and Harry that Tom can be simultaneously described as both father and son. The mistake of the Samkhyas is to absolutize relations, which are by definition relative. If the definition of Tom is completely exhausted in the fact of his sonship (which must be the case if he is indivisibly "one" and *by nature* a *truly existent* son), he is locked for all eternity in his relation with Harry. There is no room for his relation with Dick. The same is true, mutatis mutandis, regarding his fatherhood.
215. As with the discussion of sense consciousnesses of form and sound.
216. In other words, the opponents complain that the Madhyamaka denial of an existent self renders karma unintelligible. The Madhyamikas reply that their opponents' doctrine of a changeless self does the same.
217. See *Introduction to the Middle Way,* chap. 6, v. 61.
218. It is helpful to remember that the pairing "*imputed self* versus *innate or coemergent self*" (*brtags pa'i bdag* and *lhan skyes kyi bdag*) is not the same as the pairing "*the self as mere designation* versus *the inherently existent self*" (*btags pa'i bdag* and *rang bzhin kyis grub pa'i bdag*). In the first case, a contrast is made between the intellectual belief in the self, which is inculcated by incorrect religious and philosophical tenets, is acquired anew in any given existence, and may be demolished by reasoning, and, on the other hand, the innate sense of self, which is deeply ingrained in the mind, remains active from one life to the next, and can be dislodged only by prolonged meditative practice. In the second pairing, which is the one referred to in the present context, the conviction that the self is truly real is contrasted with the mere, unreflective, designation of self, which is no more than a convenient label and is useful in interpersonal discourse (when we talk to other people) and subjective reflection (when we talk to ourselves). Refutation of this mere designation is unnecessary, since it is not the deep-seated clinging that forms the basis of karma and defilement. It is also impossible, for no amount of reasoning will convince people to stop using the

pronoun "I." In comparing these two contrasted pairings of notions of the self, it will be found that the imputed self and the coemergent self are subdivisions of the supposedly inherently existent self.

219. See commentary to verse 2 of the present chapter, p. 315.
220. If the phenomena of the relative truth are not specifically characterized (extramental) phenomena, they must be mental projections. If the relative is a mental projection, it follows that it (that is, samsara) must last as long as the mind lasts.
221. Objects, senses, and consciousness.
222. See *Introduction to the Middle Way,* chap. 6, v. 53.
223. To return to the comparison just employed, it would be like someone continuing to dream even after waking up.
224. See *Introduction to the Middle Way,* chap. 11, v. 17.
225. It is perhaps worth remembering that the Buddhist critique here is directed at the pantheistic notions of Indian philosophy, not the beliefs of the three monotheistic religions of Semitic origin, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, to which only some of Shantideva's arguments are relevant.
226. See commentary on chapter 9, verses 68 and 69.
227. The pairing "thing-nonthing" (*dngos po-dngos med*) is familiar from the classification of phenomena in the Sautrantika system of Dignaga and Dharmakirti. Here it refers to the distinction between concrete, extramental, functioning things (*dngos po*), which are the objects of perception, and general ideas, mental aspects, and so on (*dngos med*), which are the objects of conception. In the Madhyamaka context, however, the contrast between thing and nonthing refers to the difference between "things that are existent" and "things that are nonexistent"—the existent pot (*bum pa*) and the nonexistent pot (*bum med*). Without going into the (considerable) philosophical complexities implied by such expressions, the point being made here is that, in the bid to understand and establish emptiness, we might use reasoning to prove that a concrete object, such as a pot, has no true existence. We thus arrive at the idea of the nonexistent pot as compared with the existent pot that we had previously thought of. To prove that a phenomenon is not truly existent in the way that it appears is a major step toward understanding its emptiness (for that reason it is referred to as an "approximate or lesser emptiness"). This, however, is not the Madhyamaka view, which is a refutation of all four ontological extremes. The true status of phenomena is beyond conceptual and verbal expression. Phenomena are empty not only of existence, but also of nonexistence and of both and of neither.
228. Since the referent (the existent phenomenon) is unreal, that which is based on it (the nonexistent phenomenon) is also unreal.

229. These are a dream, an illusion, a trompe l'oeil, a mirage, the moon's reflection in water, an echo, a city in the clouds, and an apparition.
230. These prayers are taken from the *Prayer of Good Action* found in the *Avatamsaka-sutra.*
231. A unit of measurement in ancient India, corresponding to one quart.
232. See *Treasury,* p. 35.
233. A kind of ancestral spirit.
234. *snying gi thur ma,* a text composed by Butön Rinchen Drup.
235. The basic code of Tibetan law, founded on Buddhist principles and established by King Songtsen Gampo (616–49).
236. In this context, "four medicines" is a technical term used in monastic parlance. These are *dus rung* (the food taken at the proper time, namely, before noon, in order to "cure" hunger), *thun tshod* (liquid food that may be taken in the afternoon), *zhag bdun pa* (a preparation taken for a period of seven days to reduce disturbances of phlegm), *'tsho bcang* (a preparation in order to dispel phlegm, which may be taken throughout the course of one's life).
237. See *Treasury,* p. 380, n. 174.
238. See *Treasury,* p. 57.
239. This is a commentarial gloss on the colophon appearing at the end of the *Bodhicharyavatara* itself.
240. Sazang Mati Panchen, Jamyang Lodrö Gyaltsen, was one of the main disciples of Dolpopa Sherab Gyaltsen of the Jonangpa school.

The Center of the Sunlit Sky

Madhyamaka in the Kagyü Tradition

Karl Brunnhölzl

Including a Translation of Pawo Rinpoche's Commentary on the Knowledge Section of Śāntideva's The Entrance to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life (Bodhicaryāvatāra)

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Some Remarks on the Bodhicaryāvatāra *and Pawo Rinpoche's Commentary*

A Brief Account of Śāntideva's Life

The bodhisattva later known as Śāntideva was born in a small kingdom in Saurāṣṭra in India as the first son of King Kalyāṇavarman and was named Śāntivarman.[1443] From an early age, he had visions of Mañjuśrī in his dreams. As the young crown prince grew up, the day approached when he was to ascend the throne. The night before his coronation, Śāntideva had a dream in which he saw the throne of the kingdom already occupied by Mañjuśrī, who said to him, "This is my throne and I am your spiritual friend. It is very inappropriate to sit on the same throne as me." He also dreamed of Āryatārā in the guise of his own mother, who poured hot water over his head. When the young prince asked her why she did so, she replied, "A kingdom is just like the boiling waters of hell, and I am blessing you with this water." Śāntideva regarded these visions as clear indications that he should not take over his kingdom, and thus, before the break of dawn, he ran away. After twenty-one days of walking, tired and thirsty, he happened upon a beautiful spring at the edge of a forest. As he was about to have a sip, a beautiful young lady suddenly appeared. She told him not to drink this water—which turned out to be poisonous—and offered him some much more delicious water to quench his thirst. She then escorted him to her teacher Mañjuśrīvajrasiddhi, who was meditating nearby, and Śāntideva stayed to study with this master for a long time. Needless to say, the young lady was none other than Tārā, and the teacher was Mañjuśrī.

After about twelve years, Śāntideva's teacher said that he should go to the eastern part of India, so he went and lived among the attendants of King Pañcamasiṃha. Because of Śāntideva's skill in all arts and crafts as well as his intelligence, the king requested him to become one of his ministers, and he accepted for the time being. During that period, Śāntideva had a strong and beneficial spiritual influence in the kingdom, which made the other ministers jealous. They said to the king, "This man is very deceitful. Even his sword is not a real one; it is just made of wood." (In fact, this sword, which Śāntideva always carried, was the symbol of his teacher Mañjuśrī.) Upon hearing this, the king asked all the

ministers to show him their swords. When Śāntideva's turn came, he said, "O Lord, it is not good for you to view my sword, it will harm you." Of course, the king only became more suspicious and insisted on seeing the sword. Śāntideva answered, "If you really want to see it, please cover your right eye and look at it only with your left." When Śāntideva drew his sword out of its sheath, the shine was so powerfully dazzling that the king's left eye went blind for a while. Quickly Śāntideva put the sword back, and everybody realized that he was not just an ordinary person but a great siddha. The king and his ministers requested him to stay on, but he refused and advised the king to rule the country in accordance with the dharma and to establish twenty centers for Buddhist learning.

Having given this advice, he left the kingdom and journeyed toward the central part of India. When he arrived at the great Buddhist university of Nālandā, he was ordained by the preceptor Jayadeva and received the name Śāntideva. After his ordination, he lived among all the other great masters and mahāpaṇḍitas at Nālandā. Inwardly, he continuously received teachings from Mañjuśrī and, in his cell, wrote two scriptures known as *The Compendium of Training* and *The Compendium of Sūtras*.[1444] In his outer appearance, however, Śāntideva was just sleeping day and night. The only time his fellow monks would see him was at meals, when he would eat a huge amount of rice. After a while, everybody became quite upset about him. They said, "He is just wasting the offerings of food and drink that people make to the monastery out of devotion. Monastics are supposed to engage in study, reflection, and meditation, but he is doing none of these."

So the paṇḍitas discussed the matter and decided to expel him from Nālandā. They came up with a scheme to have the monks take turns reciting the scriptures. They thought this would make Śāntideva leave on his own, since he would have nothing to say. When his turn came to recite something, at first he refused to do it. Upon being repeatedly pressed, he eventually agreed and asked the monks to set up a seat for him. At this, some of them became a little suspicious, but nevertheless they built a throne and assembled with the intention to humiliate Śāntideva. He came, sat on the throne, and asked them, "What do you want me to teach, something that has already been taught or something that has never been taught before?" Eager to make fun of him, they cried, "Recite something new!" So Śāntideva recited the entire *Bodhicaryāvatāra* as spontaneous verse. It soon became clear to this audience of great scholars that his teaching was something extraordinary, and they started to memorize it. Eventually, Śāntideva came to verse IX.34:

> Once neither entities nor nonentities
> Remain before the mind,
> There is no other mental flux [either].
> Therefore, it is utter nonreferential peace.

At this point, he rose up into the sky, and soon his body disappeared completely, but his voice continued to be heard until the end of the last chapter. After his voice had stopped, the paṇḍitas compared what they had memorized and found that among them they had three versions. The Kashmiri scholars had memorized more than a thousand verses but had missed the verses of homage in the beginning. Of course, nobody had been paying attention at the beginning, since everybody thought that Śāntideva had no clue about anything. The scholars from eastern India had only seven hundred verses, again missing the homage and also the second and ninth chapters. The version of the scholars from central India was missing the homage and the tenth chapter on dedication. So they discussed the matter and finally decided to send three scholars to see Śāntideva and ask for his advice.

Tāranātha's account says that Śāntideva was staying in a place called Kaliṅga in Triliṅga, while other historical reports say that he lived in Śrī Dakṣiṇa in south India. When the three scholars found Śāntideva, they supplicated him to return to Nālandā, but he refused. They then asked, "So how should we study *The Compendium of Training* and *The Compendium of Sūtras* that you mentioned in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*? Where are these three texts?" Śāntideva replied, "The first two texts are written on birch bark, and you can find them on the windowsill of my cell at Nālandā. As for the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, the version of the scholars from central India is the correct one."[1445]

At that time, Śāntideva was living with five hundred other monks in a great Buddhist monastery located in a nearby forest full of deer and other animals These creatures were very tame and used to come to the humans in the monastery. However, many of the deer that Śāntideva's fellow monastics saw going into his room never came out again. They also noticed that the number of wild animals in the forest kept decreasing. So some monks started to peep through his window, and they saw Śāntideva eating the flesh of these animals. Especially for a monk, this was considered a really bad thing to do in India. However, when the monks accused him of doing this, Śāntideva instantly revived all the animals, and they came out of his room stronger and healthier than before. As usual, he was asked to stay and, as usual, he refused.

This time, though, Śāntideva did not just leave the monastery but left monasticism altogether. He became a wandering yogin practicing Vajrayāna in many unconventional ways. Thus, he acted just like other great siddhas, such as Nāropa and Maitrīpa, who had also been mahāpaṇḍitas at Nālandā and also left. Śāntideva went to southern India and engaged in contests of debate and magic with non-Buddhist scholars and yogins. He performed many supernatural activities for the benefit of others, such as miraculously providing food or stopping a war. Thus, he became one of the well-known mahāsiddhas of this time in India.

The Entrance to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life and Its Ninth Chapter

As can be seen, *The Entrance to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* was not created as a scholarly work but as a *dohā*, a spontaneous yogic song of realization. All mahāsiddhas, such as Saraha, Tilopa, and Nāropa, sang many such songs, and Milarepa's *Hundred Thousand Songs* are very well known by most Buddhists. In a similar way, Śāntideva delivered his text as extemporaneous verses in superb Sanskrit poetry. However, it is more than just a masterpiece of Sanskrit literature. More important for the Buddhist practitioner is that, because of the way this text originated, it also carries the blessing of the supreme realization of a great bodhisattva and mahāsiddha. At the same time, in terms of its content, Śāntideva's text describes the entire path of a bodhisattva in a lucid style that is very practice oriented and often sounds like personal advice. For these two reasons, this text is said to represent the lineage of practice and blessing.[1446] Thus, it is highly accessible even for ordinary beings who wish to follow the path of a bodhisattva and at the same time masterfully spreads both of the two great wings of this path: the knowledge of cultivating the profound view of emptiness and the compassionate means of vast skillful activities. Therefore, the text is said to represent the lineage of the unity of view and activity,[1447] starting with the cultivation of the mind of enlightenment as the root of all practices of the great vehicle and then presenting detailed instructions on all six perfections, from generosity up through supreme knowledge. For all these reasons, at all times, Buddhist scholars and practitioners alike consider Śāntideva's text to be very special, and it has enjoyed great popularity to the present day.

In this vein, its ninth chapter on the perfection of prajñā has to be seen as an organic and integral part of the whole text and not as standing in sharp contrast to the other chapters that seem so much more accessible and down-to-earth. Despite Śāntideva's rising into the sky while reciting the ninth chapter, it is not something far out. Just like the rest of *The Entrance to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, it is meant to be practiced, not just read or studied. People going through this text from the beginning are often quite shocked upon encountering the acuity and dissecting quality of the ninth chapter. It seems to annihilate the entire beautiful edifice of the path of compassion that Śāntideva so eloquently built throughout the first eight chapters. To put it bluntly, many feel that they plunge from "love and light" right into "brainy hairsplitting." However, after all that has been said about the project of Centrism, it should be clear that this is not at all what the ninth chapter is about. Rather, as the chapter's title says, it is about perfecting the most profound insight into the true nature of all phenomena. Moreover, Śāntideva uses reasoning in other chapters of his text too, particularly in the sixth on patience. Obviously, for him, intellect and compassion—or insight and means—are not mutually exclusive, nor do they obstruct each other. Rather,

the whole text is an expression of the inseparable unity of wisdom and compassion. It is precisely through cultivating this unity that one practices the way of life of a bodhisattva. Thus, the other chapters of *The Entrance to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* are in fact included in the ninth and support it, while the spirit of this chapter pervades them all. This is expressed by verse IX.1:

> All of these branches
> Were taught by the Sage for the sake of knowledge.
> Therefore, those who wish for suffering
> To subside should develop knowledge.

As for Śāntideva's view, Pawo Rinpoche quotes Atīśa as saying that his ultimate view is the undifferentiable unity of wisdom and the expanse of dharmas. His approach in the chapter on prajñā is aimed at opening our minds into wakeful spaciousness by relentlessly undermining all clinging to reference points. By mainly just formulating absurd consequences that follow from the positions of others, he clearly follows the style of a Consequentialist. In a way, Śāntideva surveys the whole range of Centrist opponents and arguments from the time of Nāgārjuna to the eighth century. For example, Nāgārjuna mainly challenged the realism of the Buddhist systematizers of the Abhidharma. Āryadeva concentrated on the ātman of the Enumerators and the theories of the Logicians and the Analyzers. Later, Candrakīrti launched his attack on Mere Mentalism and Bhāvaviveka's way of reasoning. Śāntideva addresses both Buddhist and non-Buddhist opponents but focuses on the systems of the Enumerators, Logicians, and Analyzers as well as on the notion of a creator god in the form of the Hindu deity Īśvara.

Śāntideva's Presentation of the Two Realities

In verse IX.2 of his *Entrance to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, Śāntideva describes the two realities as follows:

> The seeming and the ultimate—
> These are asserted as the two realities.
> The ultimate is not the sphere of cognition.
> It is said that cognition is the seeming.

Here, "cognition" translates the Sanskrit term *buddhi* (Tib. blo), which has a wide range of meanings. In its most general sense, it refers to the basic cognitive capacity or intelligence of the mind, be it in sense perception or conceptual thinking. More specifically—as outlined in detail in the teachings on valid cognition—this term is applied to all facets of the entire spectrum of consciousness, be they

conceptual or nonconceptual, ordinary or yogic. Both in this verse and in general, the usual translation of this term as "intellect" or "conception" suggests only the conceptual aspect of the mind.[1448] However, in the next verse, Śāntideva clearly refers to the entire way in which the world is seen:

> Thus, two kinds of world are seen:
> The one of yogins and the one of common people.[1449]

Almost all commentaries explicitly state that the term "cognition" refers not only to conceptual thinking but to all consciousnesses that entail the duality of subject and object; that is, it also applies to nonconceptual cognitions, such as sense perception. Pawo Rinpoche says:

> Thus, the native nature of all phenomena was not, is not, and cannot become the sphere of the consciousnesses of any ordinary beings, noble ones, learners, or nonlearners whatsoever, be they conceptual or nonconceptual [consciousnesses], perceptions, or inferential cognitions.[1450]

The Sūtra of Richly Adorned agrees:

> [The ultimate] is free from cognition and knowable objects.
> Measure and faculties have been relinquished.
> It is not the object of minds and consciousnesses.
> This is the object of those who are released.[1451]

Atīśa's *Entrance into the Two Realities* declares:

> The learned master Bhavya said
> That the scriptures are clear about
> [The ultimate] being realized neither through
> Conceptual nor nonconceptual consciousnesses.[1452]

Moreover, if it were just the intellect and its objects that constitute seeming reality, then sense perceptions and other nonconceptual consciousnesses would not be included in such a seeming reality. Either they would then have to be a third category of reality altogether or, if the definite number of only two realities is retained, sense perceptions and so on would have to be ultimate reality and thus the perceivers of the ultimate. As *The Sūtra of the King of Meditative Concentration* says:

> Neither the eye, the ear, nor the nose is valid cognition,
> Nor is the tongue, the body, or mental cognition valid cognition.

> If these sense faculties were valid cognition,
> Whom would the path of noble ones do any good?[1453]

Prajñākaramati's commentary on *The Entrance to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* quotes *The Sūtra of Engaging in the Two Realities*:[1454]

> Devaputra, if ultimate reality were ultimately the sphere of body, speech, and mind, it would not fall into the category of "ultimate reality." It would be nothing but just seeming reality. However, Devaputra, ultimate reality is beyond all conventions. Actually, it is unarisen and unceasing, free from any object of expression or means of expression, free from knowable object and knower. It even transcends being an object of the omniscient wisdom that is endowed with the supreme of all aspects. This is ultimate reality.[1455]

As illustrated by such passages, the majority of sūtras and all Indian commentaries on Śāntideva's text support the reading of the above verse on the two realities as it was explained. Thus, no type of dualistic consciousness can perceive ultimate reality. Rather, it is often said that ultimate reality is seen by "personally experienced wisdom." There are two major objections that can be raised here:

1) In general, in Buddhism, the terms "cognition" and "consciousness" are equivalent. Thus, if the ultimate is not the sphere of cognition, this contradicts the explanation that the ultimate is the sphere of personally experienced wisdom. Thus, this verse cannot be taken literally.
2) It follows that the ultimate is not a knowable object, because the definition of knowable object is "that which is suitable to be taken as an object of a cognition."[1456]

The first objection does not apply to Śāntideva's verse, as this verse is surely not to be understood as negating that the personally experienced wisdom of the noble ones sees the nature of phenomena just as it is. When all mistaken clinging has completely vanished, the nondual unity of expanse and awareness in the mental continua of noble ones is without any conceptual entanglement. It is like a still pond when the wind has subsided: free from waves. In this unity of expanse and awareness, there are no reference points of subject and object. However, following this meditative equipoise, the consciousness during the phase of subsequent attainment applies the conventional terms "what is realized" and "what realizes" to expanse and awareness respectively. The expression "personally experienced wisdom realizes the ultimate" is used solely in this way. On the other

hand, in meditative equipoise, there are not even the most subtle characteristics of cognition, such as realizing or not realizing. So how should any perceptual mode of self-awareness or a perceptual mode that is not self-awareness remain there? With this in mind, the reason Śāntideva did not assert personally experienced wisdom and such in this context was to reverse our clinging to characteristics with regard to the ultimate. Had he asserted personally experienced wisdom and such, it would be difficult to relinquish the Mere Mentalists' clinging to the existence of self-awareness. Moreover, from the perspective of debate, such an assertion would have amounted to a claim—such as "This is the self-awareness that we call the ultimate"—that could be attacked through reasoning. Also, one does not get any closer to the nature of phenomena merely by thinking, "The ultimate is the object of personally experienced wisdom." On the other hand, the elimination of all characteristics of reference points does not become an obstacle to approaching the nature of phenomena via cultivating and refining a conceptual mental image of the ultimate during the paths of accumulation and junction.

The second objection also does not apply. To state the definition of knowable object as "that which is suitable to be taken as an object of a cognition" is only taught in texts for beginners[1457] as a step in order to unfold their intelligence. However, these texts also give the definition of consciousness as "the cognition that is clear and aware of objects." Thus, not only in terms of definition but also in the actual process of perception, consciousness and the object that it cognizes mutually depend on each other. Thus, one can never ascertain one of them without the other. In general, knowing consciousnesses and knowable objects are only imagined by the ignorance of ordinary beings. Actually, there are no such entities. When the Buddha used such labels, he did so only provisionally for certain purposes, such as to communicate his teachings about ultimate reality.

So then is the ultimate a knowable object or not? For beginners, the following is taught: Through knowing the seeming, one just cognizes worldly conventional terms and events, but this has no greater significance. Through knowing the ultimate, one goes beyond cyclic existence. Therefore, the only correct object to be known is the ultimate. However, again, this is said only for a specific purpose, which is to introduce beginners to the nominal ultimate. For those who are already intensely trained in the path and then conceptualize the ultimate as a thing with characteristics, it is taught that the ultimate is not even a mere knowable object, since knower and knowable object are just conventions on the level of seeming reality. This is said in order to remove all mental reference points that cling to the ultimate in terms of subject and object. If these are not removed, they function as subtle obstacles to "actually" perceiving the ultimate as it is. The direct cognition of the ultimate only engages in the nature of phenomena just as it is, when there are no more remainders of knower, knowable object, true seeing, false seeing, and so on in such a cognition.

In brief, existence, nonexistence, and so on are nothing but what is grasped at by the mind through certain modes of apprehension. No matter how cognitions apprehend the nature of phenomena, this is not how it actually is. When analyzed, in principle, there is no phenomenon whatsoever that could be apprehended by cognition. Still, due to mistaken habituations, we imagine that we apprehend and seize "something," although it is unreal. Thus, some intrinsic "existence" or "nonexistence" that is more than just an imaginary notion apprehended by certain cognitions is impossible. As *The Sūtra That Unravels the Intention* says:

> Conditioned phenomena are neither conditioned nor unconditioned. As for unconditioned phenomena, they are also neither unconditioned nor conditioned. O son of good family, "conditioned phenomena" are words that are imputed by the Teacher. Words that are imputed by the Teacher originate from imagination and are expressed as conventional terms. What is expressed as the conventional terms of various imaginations is not at all established.[1458]

How does mind apprehend existence and nonexistence? To take an example, neither the horns of a cow nor the horns of a rabbit are real in the sense of intrinsically existing or intrinsically nonexisting. Still, when we see these two things that stand out from the head of a cow, we ascribe certain characteristics to them; we say, "These are horns" and "There are horns on the head of this cow." When we see a rabbit later, we do not see on its head the things we saw on the cow's head. Therefore, we ascribe the feature of nonexistence to the mere fact of not seeing here and now what we saw somewhere else before and say, "There are no horns on the head of a rabbit." So the common consensus that the horns of a cow exist while the horns of a rabbit do not exist comes from common conventional expressions. If there is no cognition that apprehends the existence of horns on a cow in the first place, there will also be no cognition that apprehends the nonexistence of horns on a rabbit. Thus, we may apprehend what we imagine as existence or nonexistence, but none of this is real as some kind of intrinsic existence or nonexistence apart from what appears to our mind. We may see a movie in which a cow and a rabbit appear, or we may dream of them, but once the movie stops or we wake up, we gain certainty that both the existence of the cow's horns and the nonexistence of the rabbit's horns were equally unreal. Even while watching such a movie or a dream, there is not the slightest difference between the existence of cow horns and the nonexistence of rabbit horns, or between the one being real and the other delusive. If even the very bases—cow and rabbit—to which we attribute certain features do not really exist in any way other than being mere appearances, what is there to say about any real specific features, such as the existence or nonexistence of horns, that we attribute to these bases?

In this way, all our mental operations of imputing existence, nonexistence, entities, nonentities, being real or delusive, and so on are compared to tying knots into space. When these dissolve, there is nothing else that binds us. Thus, what is conventionally called "seeing true reality" or "seeing the ultimate" is just like the subsiding of our grasping at a mirage as being water. At this point, neither do we see something that did not exist before nor does anything that existed before cease. It is not that the water of the mirage dried up, nor that the nonexistence of water is added. However, as long as our apprehension of this water has not dissolved, we tire ourselves out trying to get there to drink it. As soon as we become "dis-illusioned" from this fantasy of water, we know that such efforts are pointless, and we relax.

Again, the essential point here is to let go of our grasping that constantly superimposes or denies something with regard to the display of mere appearances. It is not a matter of annihilating or eradicating the appearance of things and producing some spacelike nothingness instead. As Śāntideva says:

> How something is seen, heard, or known
> Is not what is negated here.
> Rather, the object of refutation
> Is the cause for suffering, which is the conception of reality.[1459]

When our clinging to a mirage as being water stops, this obviously does not depend on whether or not the mere visual aspect of some shape and color that looks like water appears to us. Likewise, we now entertain ordinary worldly types of consciousness that take whatever appears to be real in just the way that it appears. On the Buddhist path, we might furthermore try to make these appearances nonexistent through the remedy of a misunderstood and contrived emptiness. Thus, we might cling to the ultimate as being like an extinguished flame or like the empty space that is left after an old house has collapsed. Once both of these mistaken cognitions—clinging to real existence or some kind of nonexistence—have subsided, in terms of the plain appearance of illusionlike phenomena when their specific causes have come together versus their nonappearance when their causes are incomplete, there is no difference between the time when superimposition and denial were still operating and the time when these have vanished. However, there is a difference as to whether the nature of these appearances is realized or not. Therefore, from the point of such realization onward, one is not under the sway of either appearances or the lack thereof, much like someone who, while dreaming, recognizes this dream as a dream and just enjoys its appearances. This is what it means to abide within cyclic existence without being affected by its flaws, just like a lotus grows in muddy water without being stained by it.

Since such realization is undeceiving, it is called "seeing what is true." As it is the opposite of worldly seeing, it may also be called "not seeing anything." Since it is the opposite of reification, it is expressed as "seeing emptiness." It is also referred to as "being released from empty and nonempty," because neither something empty nor something nonempty is observed. Since emptiness is nothing but a name, it is also described as "not seeing emptiness." Because it is the source of all positive qualities, it is designated as "seeing the emptiness endowed with the supreme of all aspects." It is called "seeing identitylessness," for it is the opposite of clinging to personal and phenomenal identities. Since it is the opposite of both clinging to a self and clinging to the lack of a self, it is said to be "seeing the genuine self." As any notion of a mind has vanished, it is labeled as "mind having vanished." It is also referred to as "realizing or seeing one's own mind," because the primordial basic nature of one's own mind is realized in just the primordial way it is. When "not seeing anything" is explained as "seeing what is true," this is to be understood just like our immediate certainty that we see space when we do not see anything. As the Buddha said:

> Beings constantly use the words, "I see space."
> You should examine the point of how you see space.
> Those who see in this way see all phenomena.
> I am not able to explain seeing through another example.

The Indian Commentaries on the Bodhicaryāvatāra

Tibetan sources say that there existed more than one hundred Indian commentaries on *The Entrance to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, but only a few of them have survived. The only one that is preserved in Sanskrit is Prajñākaramati's *Commentary on the Difficult Points*. All others exist only in Tibetan translations.[1460] In due order, volume 100 of the *Tengyur* lists the following ten texts as commentaries on *The Entrance to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*:

Prajñākaramati (ca. 950–1000). *Commentary on the Difficult Points of The Entrance to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*. (Bodhicaryāvatārapañjikā. Byang chub kyi spyod pa la 'jug pa'i dka' 'grel). Commentary on chapters 1–9. P5273, pp. 1.1.7–113.1.5.

Anonymous (possibly Dānaśīla). *Commentary on the Difficult Points in the Exposition of The Entrance to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*. (Bodhisattvacaryāvatāravivṛttipañjikā. Byang chub sems dpa'i spyod pa la 'jug pa'i rnam par bshad pa'i dka' 'grel). P5274, pp. 113.1.5–141.3.5.

Buddhist Philosophy

Losang Gönchok's Short Commentary to Jamyang Shayba's Root Text on Tenets

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are anthologies of pertinent texts from across the Indian and Tibetan traditions, present him with multiple points of view, and he hears more from his teachers. Finally, he explores the topics in fine detail through testing them in the debating courtyard. For Gelukbas, it is much more important to memorize and debate than it is to read broadly.

When we studied tenets with lamas in India and America, our teachers subjected the texts to probing analysis and often tried to debate with us. Those from Drebung Monastery's Loseling College, which does not use Jamyang Shayba's texts, were particularly free with their criticisms of his assertions, although they sometimes agreed with him, even when it contradicted the explanations of their own debate manual author, Paòchen Sönam Drakba (1478–1554).[1]

In terms of the content of the monastic curriculum, it is easy to see that monks are exposed to the different schools of tenets in stages. From the beginning, they learn logic, epistemology, and psychology in texts composed from the point of view of the lower schools. The Collected Topics book that is their starting point is a summation of some fundamental points from the same material, the writings of Dharmakīrti, that are the basis for the school of the Followers of Reasoning of the Sautråntika and Cittamåtra schools. They study Vasubandhu's *Treasury of Abhidharma* and his own separate explanation of it, respectively, the bases for the Vaibhåýikas and for the Sautråntikas Following Scripture. They study the main texts of the Mådhyamika school, which also serves as a study of the Cittamåtra school inasmuch as those texts throughly explain and refute the school.

In the debating courtyard, therefore, everyone takes on the roles of proponents of the lower schools of tenets beginning with the Sautråntika presentation. It is even the source of a Westerner's aphorism: "When you scratch a Gelukba geshe, there is a Sautråntika underneath."

[1]However, on occasions of important public debate, such as those for the geshe degree, it is expected that a monk will uphold the manuals of his college. Also, the freedom of expression that characterizes the debating courtyard does not necessarily extend to publication, as Georges Dreyfus notes in his account of his own fifteen years as a monk *(Sound)*. In print, a monk is expected to hew to the positions established in his college.

What Are Buddhist Tenets?

We have now discussed how tenets have come about and how and why they should be an object of serious study. Before going on to some of the key issues that divide schools of Buddhist philosophy, we should briefly consider what unites them. One way to begin to explore that is to do what our text does and ask how Buddhism differs from the schools it rejects.

What Buddhists Have in Common With Other Indian Schools

The first part of Jamyang Shayba's root text concerns non-Buddhist Indian philosophies. It must be admitted that for the most part, he has misrepresented them, sometimes badly. However, there is value in these presentations, for they explain some of the concerns of Buddhist philosophy, both in the positive sense that Buddhists are in agreement with the general worldview of most of these schools and in the negative sense that some Buddhist tenets are rejections of their central assertions.

With a few exceptions, the Indian schools, Buddhism included, accepted the reality of rebirth and karma in a universe that is vast, perhaps infinite, and is populated by many types of beings who are experiencing different realities, mostly unaware of each other. Saôsåra, the "wandering" of beings from one kind to another of these rebirths, life after life, is the basic problem. Although a small minority of living beings enjoy fabulous comforts and delights, most experience a great deal of suffering.

Although this may seem to be a pessimistic outlook on life, nearly all[1] of the Indian schools share a common hope of liberation (*mokña*) or passage beyond suffering (nirvåòa). They agree that the cause of bondage is neither the machination of a malevolent spirit nor the misjudgment of a primordial ancestor, as we see so often in the world's religions. Rather, the cause of saôsåra is our very own ignorance about our true nature, and therefore, we ourselves can do something about it. Thus, they also agree that personal experience leading to wisdom is the answer. Wisdom is supra-rational but reason is not rejected; it is the first step.

It is in their identification of ignorance that the schools vary considerably.

The **Sāṃkhya** school is the one on which our authors concentrate the most, perhaps because its description of self is the one with which Buddhism most clearly differs. The Såôkhyas are the principle "dualistic" school; they say that there are two eternal, uncaused principles, Nature (*prakṛti*, or *pradāna*) and Spirit *(puruña)*. Everything that exists, except Spirit, is included within Nature, even subtle states of consciousness that we might not expect to be lumped in with material constituents.

Our ignorance is that we mistakenly think that Nature itself or something within it is our true self. However, our true self is Spirit, that pure, indivisible, mere "witness" to events. The reason for this confusion is the very manifestation of Nature, which occurs through the interaction of the three "strands" of which it is composed. We can have direct experience only of that which has evolved from pure Nature. Spirit is experienced only indirectly, reflected to our ordinary mentality through the subtle level of consciousness called *buddhi*, the subconscious awareness. The most common error, therefore, is to mistake that subtle level of our own minds for the immutable and infinite Spirit.

The goal of spiritual discipline is to reverse the process of manifestation until even the subconscious awareness is withdrawn, at which point Spirit is isolated and ignorance is eliminated.

Advaita Vedānta is the principle "monistic" school, although it is treated very briefly here. Advaita Vedåntins say that our ignorance is to believe in our own reality, identifying "self" with our bodies and/or minds. However, only one ("mono") entity really exists; it is the Infinite, Bra¯man, which is permanent and indivisible. The spiritual path, primarily one of meditation, reveals the illusion in

[1]They are not mentioned specifically in our text but the Ajîvakas are one school that recognized the faults of saôsåra without believing in an escape from it.

which we live and allows us to shed our birth identity and become, or merge with, the Infinite. (There are also dualistic Vedåntins, for whom our souls are not identical with the Infinite and who rely on a devotional relationship with God for liberation.)

Vaiśeṣikas and **Naiyāyikas** explain that the primary cause of fear, suffering, and death is ignorance in which the self is wrongly identified with the body. Self is an entity separate from the body and mind, and liberation comes from knowing this. (By the way, the VaiŸeýikas are famous for their explanation of the composition of things by the aggregation of tiny particles, which has led some to conclude that there is a connection between this school and the Buddhist Vaibhåýika school.)

Jainism (Nirgrantha) shares many views with Buddhism. Ignorance refers to our lack of understanding about the limits of our knowledge and the true cause-effect relationships in the world. We act with desire and hatred because of limited knowledge and the incorrect inferences that flow from it. Liberation from rebirth is not only a matter of knowledge, however, because karma, a material substance, encrusts the soul and can be removed only through asceticism. Knowledge prevents the further accumulation of karma. When liberation occurs, it is a state of bliss and omniscience, fused with the universe.

There are various theologies among the **Vaiṣṇavas** (those who worship Viýòu) and **Śaivas** (those who worship õiva). Most of them are based on the philosophies of Så ô khya or Vedånta, with Viýòu or õiva as the eternal principle with whom (or which) we seek union or who is reality itself.

In India there are always exceptions, and there was a school that rejected the prevailing viewpoint that we have been describing. The **Ayatas** differ from the preceding schools because they reject rebirth. Some of them also reject karma and the existence of beings other than those that appear on earth. Of all the schools discussed in our text, they are the only "proponents of annihilation" (that is, who say we are annihilated at death; we might call them "scientific materialists").

Some of the other schools are lukewarm in their concern with sa ô såra. **Mīmāṃsaka** developed as a response of Vedic priests to the criticisms of several schools, including Buddhism. It is mainly concerned with the interpretation of the wisdom texts, the Vedas, and how the performance of sacrifices can improve life now and prevent bad rebirth in the future. According to Losang Gönchok, it teaches that one

type of rebirth, in the heaven of Brahmå, is permanent. However, liberation is just the dissolution of the mind and body at the time of death without subsequent rebirth. The schools identified as **Brāhmaṇa, Vaiyākarana**, and **Guhyaka** in our text are minor schools that are linked by similar concerns.

In summary, Buddhism shares the concerns of most of these schools: the problem of sa ô såra; its basis, delusion; its perpetuation, by karma; and the path of wisdom that leads away from it. In many ways, Buddhism stands in the middle of the views of these schools, since they include nihilists (who do not believe in future lives), eternalists (who believe in a permanent self, spirit or god), determinists (who think our lives are predetermined), and indeterminists (who think that events are random). It even forms a middle way not only between hedonists and ascetics (the middle way of behavior promulgated by the Buddha) but in style between the dry rationalists and the ecstatic devotionalists.

However, in one way Buddhism is quite distinct. It defines ignorance in a radically different way, one that is exactly the opposite of most of the non-Buddhist schools. In Buddhism, wisdom consists in understanding the *non*-existence of the self as it is defined in the non-Buddhist schools. Hence, the presentation of non-Buddhist tenets emphasizes the way in which the self is described, and, to a lesser extent, what is said about causality.

What Is a Buddhist?

Buddhism is not a "natural" religion, to use Joachim Wach's term, because we are not automatically Buddhists by birth (as we might be Hindus or Jews by birth, for instance, whether or not we ever become religiously observant). We have to *choose* to become Buddhists. And since it is a matter of choice, anyone can be a Buddhist; no one is excluded because they do not meet a standard of bloodline or ethnicity. That has helped to make Buddhism one of the few true "world" religions—religions that can easily cross cultural boundaries and become a global fellowship.

A Buddhist is simply a person who "goes for refuge" to the Three Jewels—the Buddha, his Teaching, and his Spiritual Community—which means that such a person considers them to be a haven from the terrors of sa ô såra. The *actual* refuge is the Teaching—in particular, true paths (the method) and true cessations (the elimination of the afflictive karma that causes rebirth). The Buddha is the teacher of the refuge, and the Spiritual Community is a congregation of helpmates and teachers. The Jewels act as helpers, not saviors; we must still make our own efforts.

Janggya says that going for refuge means: to know the qualities of the Three Jewels; to know the difference between them; to accept them; and not to go elsewhere for refuge.[1] He adds that it is not necessary to understand the Teaching fully in order to know its qualities and distinguish it from the other Jewels. We may go for refuge out of mere faith or out of a desire to avoid bad migrations.

Two particularly interesting points stem from this definition. First, it seems possible that we could *be* Buddhists without having formally identified ourselves in this manner. It is sufficient to meet the definition if we find ourselves fundamentally in agreement with the essential teachings of Buddhism and believe that it has salvific power, even if we do not practice it ourselves.

Second, it is clear that a Buddhist does not necessarily have a deep understanding of profound matters such as emptiness, as otherwise there would be few Buddhists! Nevertheless, being a Buddhist is not a matter of faith in the man, Buddha, or faith in claims that cannot be verified by reason; it is a matter of having concluded, insofar as we are able, that what the Buddha taught is correct.[2] In short, it is a matter of having "established conclusions," or tenets, that are Buddhist. (Then, depending on what they are, we may or may not be identifiable as belonging to a particular school of tenets.)

What is a Buddhist Tenet-Holder?

In the sense that anyone who takes refuge in the Teaching has arrived at certain conclusions that he or she feels are characteristically Buddhist, all Buddhists hold tenets. However, the tenets themselves might not be Buddhist, since they may not meet the standard of what are called "the four seals," described below. For instance, we might not understand properly the meaning of "selflessness," erroneously concluding that Buddhists reject any kind of self. In that case, although we might be Buddhists because of meeting the standard of taking refuge and might in a sense

[1] *Presentation*, 14.1.

[2] For *some* matters, Buddhists must take statements on faith. Although everything can be established by reasoning, sometimes this occurs only indirectly, as in the case of the subtle workings of karma. A "scriptural proof" is a statement such as, "Through giving, resources; from ethics, a good migration" (that is, if one performs acts of giving in this life, one will be born with good resources in a future life; if one practices good ethics, one will have a good rebirth).
This is a "proof" only in the sense that once we have established by reasoning that the Buddha's teaching on the Four Noble Truths or emptiness is correct, we trust that his unverifiable statements are also correct.

even be holders of tenets because of having come to reasoned conclusions, we would not be holding a Buddhist tenet.

The "four seals" are tenets that are so called because they "stamp" a tenet as Buddhist. All Buddhist partisans, i.e., tenet-holders, propound the four seals, though they may disagree about certain aspects of them.

1. **All composed phenomena are impermanent**. This simply means that anything that has causes will change moment by moment, even if that change is imperceptible.[1]
2. **All contaminated things are miserable**. Everything in our experience is "contaminated" because it is ultimately the product of our ignorance. That is, intentional actions (karma) performed while misunderstanding the way things exist are the forces that cause our own births and the formation of the cosmos itself. All of these things are "miserable" in the sense that impermanence itself is a kind of suffering.
3. **All phenomena are selfless**. "Self" refers to what non-Buddhist schools describe as our true selves: a permanent (i.e., unchanging), unitary (i.e., indivisible), independent entity at the core of our being. No such "self" exists and there are no objects that are used by such a "self."
4. **Nirvāṇa is peace**. Nirvåòa is not a place or a kind of consciousness but the absence of the afflictions of desire, hatred, and ignorance.

These characteristics are continuous with early Buddhism. The Buddha taught about the "three marks" of impermanence, selflessness, and suffering; the four seals are these three marks with the addition of the assurance of nirvåòa. The four seals are also all implied in the teaching of the Four Noble Truths.

Alternately, the Buddhist view could be described as a middle way avoiding the two extremes of "permanence" or "nihilism." All of the non-Buddhist schools described in the first part of *The Clear Crystal Mirror* are guilty of one or the other. Let us discuss these a little further.

[1] "All composed phenomena" refers to things that have causes. Vaibhåýikas deny the permanence of things merely on the grounds that they do not have continual existence but the other schools go further, understanding that things actually undergo change very rapidly at all times ("subtle" impermanence). The Vaibhåýikas think that production, abiding, aging, and disintegration occur serially but the other schools say they occur simultaneously. That is, a thing lasts only for the moment of its production and must be reproduced in every succeeding moment until its final moment.

Proponents of Permanence are those who "deny too little." They say that something exists that in fact does not, such as a permanent self. It is the conception of a self found in the Hindu Upaniýads: an individual soul (*ātman*) that is identical with Brahman—infinite being, consciousness, and bliss (*sat-cit-ananda*). Therefore, this soul/self is (1) permanent (in the sense of not changing moment to moment); (2) indivisible; and (3) independent (it is uncaused and does not produce an effect). Buddhists maintain that this is merely a *coarse*, or crude, false conception of a self. Therefore, its refutation would not be sufficient to win liberation from saÔsåra. We must overcome the most *subtle* false conception of a self. Also, this conception is merely *artificial*—one learned from parents or teachers—not one that we would naturally, innately hold.

Proponents of Annihilation are nihilists, those who "deny too much." They believe only what they see, hear, and so forth. In other words, they are skeptical materialists, and most secular Westerners would probably find much in common with them. They do not believe in karma or rebirth, for which Buddhists accuse them of lacking belief in inference itself. Specifically, they deny that persons can be designated in dependence on mind and body.

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As we have seen, all non-Buddhist sects (except the Ayata, which is nihilistic) fall grossly to an extreme of permanence because of their assertion of a permanent, indivisible self. Each Buddhist school has its own interpretation of the "middle way" between the extremes of denying too much or too little, about which we will say more below. Of course, all views other than that of the Prāsaêgika-Mådhyamikas fall to an extreme. The non-Prāsaêgika Buddhist schools also fall to an extreme of permanence because they assert that phenomena truly exist. However, this error is considered to be less harmful than that of the non-Buddhists.

The views of the Buddhist schools are increasingly subtle as we consider in turn the Vaibhåýika, Sautråntika, Cittamåtra, and Svåtantrika-Mådhyamika schools. But because the views of the higher schools are quite subtle and require the refutation of grosser views, familiarizing ourselves with the views of a lower school can enable us to grasp the full meaning of the views of a higher one.

What Are the Buddhist Schools?

The idea of four schools of tenets was received from late Indian Buddhism. Within the four main schools, three are split into sub-schools and one sub-school is split into sub-sub-schools, for a total of eight schools (not counting the many sub-schools of Vaibhåýika). In ascending order of proximity to the correct position of the highest school, the Prāsaêgika school, they are as follows.

The Four Schools and Their Branches

Vaibhāṣika (Great Exposition School)
Sautrāntika (SÒtra School)
- Sautråntikas Following Reasoning
- Sautråntikas Following Scripture

Cittamātra (Mind Only School)
- Cittamåtrins Following Reasoning
- Cittamåtrins Following Scripture

Mādhyamika (Middle Way School)
- Svåtantrika (Autonomy School)
  - Yogåcåra-Svåtantrika (Autonomy Yogic Practice School)
  - Sautråntika-Svåtantrika (Autonomy SÒtra School)
- Prāsaêgika (Consequence School)

This hierarchy is highly disputable. For instance, there is little evidence of real Indian "schools" in the sense of lineages dedicated to a certain systematic view.

However, for Gelukbas this scheme represents the distillation of certain definite and strong currents in Indian thinking, based on the intellectual heritage translated from Sanskrit to Tibetan during the formative period of Tibetan Buddhism (sixth century C.E. onwards). What follows is a thumbnail sketch of each of them.

"**Vaibhāṣika**" is a cover term for many small sects that can be identified in early Buddhism. There are generally held to be eighteen sub-schools, although different ancient authors had different lists. Historically, the most important sub-school seems to have been the Sarvåstivåda. Their relationships are very complex, as our text indicates.

The term Vaibhåýika means "follower of the *Mahāvibhāṣā*" (the *Great Exposition of Particulars*, an anonymous collection of teachings on the topics of the Abhidharma). However, not all of them follow that text, about which our authors knew little anyway because it had not been translated into Tibetan. Tibetan authors take Vasubandhu's fourth-century *Treasury of Abhidharma* as their main source for understanding Vaibhåýika. Philosophically, Vaibhåýikas are the most "realist" of the schools in the sense that they regard as truly real the tiny atoms out of which material things are made. Anything larger, constructed out of the aggregation of these atoms, is just "imputedly existent" and is "conventional" as opposed to "ultimate."

"**Sautrāntika**" just means "follower of SÒtra" (i.e., scripture), which in itself would seem to mean nothing because all Buddhist schools are followers of scripture. However, Sautråntikas doubt that the Abhidharma literature or the Mahåyåna scriptures are the word of Buddha; therefore, they rely on their unique list of authentic scriptures. The Sautråntikas probably began as dissenters from the Vaibhåýikas, who rely on the Abhidharma to such a great extent.

Some are called Followers of Reasoning because they rely upon works by Dignåga and Dharmakòrti, who lived in the fifth and seventh centuries and are renowned for the development of logic and epistemology in response to Hindu schools. They differ from Vaibhåýikas and the other Sautråntikas in many small ways, such as the way in which they define ultimate and conventional truths. Others are called Followers of Scripture, which really means only that they are not the Followers of Reasoning. They rely on Vasubandhu's *Explanation of the "Treasury of Abhidharma,"* wherein he modifies some of the positions of his original Vaibhåýika work. It is not clear that the Sautråntikas existed very long, since the latter is their only unique text.

"**Cittamātra**" is a term applied to those who take literally the teaching in the *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra* and some other places that there is nothing external to consciousness, i.e., that the world is "mind only" (*citta-mātra*). Some are called Followers of Reasoning because, like their Sautråntika counterparts, they rely upon the works of Dignåga and Dharmakòrti. The others are, of course, called Followers of Scripture. They follow the works of Asaêga and Vasubandhu. (Asaêga converted his half-brother, Vasubandhu, to the Mahåyåna; hence, Vasubandhu is an important source for three of the four main schools—Vaibhåýika, Sautråntika, and Cittamåtra. Vasubandhu is even indirectly related to the Followers of Reasoning, both Sautråntika and Cittamåtrin, through his student Dignåga.)

The most significant of their differences from the Sautråntikas is that they reject the existence of external objects. Also, the Followers of Reasoning argue that all persons eventually become Buddhas (a teaching known as "one final vehicle").

"**Mādhyamika**" just means "follower of the Middle Way," which is true of all Buddhist schools, but connects us to this school's foremost text, Någårjuna's *Mādhyamikakārikā* or "Treatise on the Middle Way." Någårjuna demonstrated that nothing truly or ultimately exists but that things do conventionally exist. That is, although things do not exist the way in which they appear, which is as if they had their own independent existence, they actually do exist.

Tibetan traditions consider the Mådhyamika school to have two branches, the split having taken place in the sixth century C.E. when Bhåvaviveka criticized Buddhapålita, who lived a century earlier, for his interpretation of the *Treatise on the Middle Way*. Candrakòrti (seventh century), in turn, defended Buddhapålita.[1] Bhåvaviveka's school is called Svåtantrika ("Autonomy"), Candrakòrti's, Pråsaêgika ("Consequence"). These names reflect two methods for helping others to realize emptiness, which in themselves are not very different. Bhåvaviveka would present the listener with a formal argument, a syllogism, whereas Buddhapålita and Candrakòrti would only present the consequences of an opponent's view.

However, Dzongkaba ascertained that there is a significant difference in view between the two because they have a different idea of "conventional truths," about which we will say more later. Svåtantrikas include within existing phenomena (in the category of "conventional truths") some things that are unreal. These include

[1]This division was not recognized in India but was probably made in the late eleventh or early twelfth century after Candrakòrti's works were translated into Tibetan. The three texts in question are commentaries by Bhåvaviveka, Buddhapålita, and Candrakòrti on Någårjuna's *Treatise on the Middle Way*. For an extensive analysis of the Bhåvaviveka/Buddhapålita/Candrakòrti debate, see Hopkins, *Meditation,* 441–530 and the recent Dreyfus/McClintock volume.

optical illusions such as reflections or mirages, but more seriously, they also include truly existent things, things that seem as though they do not depend even on the awarenesses to which they appear. Although Svåtantrikas themselves admit that nothing actually does exist this way, because they know that this is how things appear to ordinary people, they count such things as legitimately existent. Pråsaêgikas also try to remain true to the conventions of the world, but they do not endorse truly existent things as conventional truths.[1]

Svåtantrikas can themselves be divided into Yogåcåra and Sautråntika branches, the former relying on the views of the Indian abbot õåntarakýita, who was instrumental (along with Padmasambhåva) in establishing the first monastery in Tibet, Samye. The Yogåcåra branch, like the Cittamåtra school (Yogåcåra, "practice of discipline," is an alternate name for Cittamåtra), maintains that there are no external objects.

The Hierarchy of the Schools

The way in which these schools form a hierarchy is nothing that was self-evident in the Indian context. It has been constructed by Gelukbas who are looking at Indian Buddhist treatises through the lens of Dzongkaba's interpretation of Pråsaêgika-Mådhyamika. It may not even be appropriate, for instance, to place the Sautråntikas in the "Hïnayåna" camp; they may have been Mahåyånists who did not clearly identify themselves as such.

Nevertheless, it is fascinating to consider the criteria by which one school is "better" than another. They are not in order of founding, for instance, as we might expect. To be sure, the Vaibhåýika school, the main type of which was the Sarvastivåda, does predate the arising of the Mahåyåna tradition and the founding of the Mådhyamika school, which can be roughly placed in the first century C.E. However, the Sautråntikas and Cittamåtrins rely upon works written in the fourth and seventh centuries C.E.

[1]Although it may not be obvious, there is a connection between the use of syllogisms as opposed to logical consequences and the way in which the Svåtantrikas maintain that ruly existent things are conventional truths. Dzongkaba reasoned that if we rely on syllogisms, we must be assuming that there is an appearance common to both the stater and the hearer. Since at least one of the two persons, the one to whom the syllogism is directed, perceives truly existent objects, it must be the case that truly existent objects exist, at least on the level of conventional truths. If we rely on consequences, however, we are not stating any positive thesis but merely drawing attention to the deficiencies of the other person's view.

Rather, as indicated in the last chapter, the schools are arranged according to their approach to the "middle way" of denying the extremes of permanence and annihilation. Each succeeding school includes more in what it regards as "permanence" and less in what it regards as "annihilation."[1]

Roughly, we move gradually from radical "substantiality" to radical "insubstantiality" as we go from Vaibhåýikas to Pråsaêgikas. At the one end, Vaibhåýikas call "ultimate truths" the substance particles out of which they say all things are built; they have substantial existence, by which they mean that they can be perceived without depending on anything else. At the other end, Pråsaêgikas say that nothing substantially, truly, inherently, or ultimately exists (these terms all being equivalent); absolutely nothing has anything other than a mere nominal, imputed, interdependent existence, even the ultimate truth of all things, their emptiness of inherent existence.

Avoiding Permanence. We can see this movement as we consider how the schools claim to avoid the extreme of permanence. Each succeeding school enlarges the category of "permanence."

- Vaibhåýikas think that it is sufficient to *deny the existence of a permanent, independent, singular self and to assert that anything that is caused, disintegrates*. (Some non-Buddhist schools, e.g., Såô khya, claim that the cause continues to exist in the effect, since manifest existence is not new creation but an unfolding of what already exists in Nature, which contains all things.) However, they regard all things as substantially *established*, i.e., as having independent existence, and they regard irreducible particles as substantially *existent*, i.e., as being something we can recognize without depending on any other things.
- The Sautråntikas Following Reason go further, maintaining that despite appearances, *things change rapidly, moment by moment* (a notion called "subtle impermanence"), and that *there are some things that exist not on their own but only by imputation*, such as space. However, they, like the Vaibhåýikas, regard other things as having substantial existence.
- The Cittamåtrins avoid the extreme of permanence by *denying that external objects truly exist* and by maintaining that *things are not by their own nature the basis of names* (i.e., that they do not have identity until we give it to them conceptually). They do not accept the existence of

[1]This way of putting it was suggested by Newland, *Appearance*, 59–60.

"indivisible particles," either. However, they do not apply the same criticism to the mind.[1]

- Mådhyamikas *deny that anything has true existence*, ultimately. However, the Pråsaêgika branch goes further by denying that things have true existence in any way, even conventionally.[2]

Avoiding Annihilation. We can also see the movement from "more to less" when we consider how the schools avoid the extreme of annihilation. Each succeeding school accepts a greater level of non-existence.

- Vaibhåýikas say that *all phenomena have substantial establishment*. They mean, basically, that all things exist independently of other things.[3]
- Sautråntikas say that *things are established by their own character* as the bases of names and concepts and that the continuum of a product exists even after its destruction. (For instance, ashes exist after wood is burned.)
- Cittamåtrins deny the existence of external objects but assert that those *non-external things are truly existent*.[4]
- Mådhyamikas deny the true existence of things, ultimately, and Pråsaêgikas go further by denying the inherent existence of things in any sense, but they insist that *things do conventionally exist*.

[1]There is some controversy over whether Asaêga asserts that the mind truly exists (see Nakamura, 279) but our texts do not reflect it.

[2]The twentieth-century Gelukba abbot Kensur Yeshey Tupden felt that the Cittamåtrins come closer to the Pråsaêgika view than do the other Mådhyamikas, the Svåtantrikas, primarily because they give more primacy to the mind and less to the mind's object.

[3]In addition, those things that we can recognize even when they are physically broken or imaginatively separated (which, as we shall see, are what they regard as "ultimate truths") are also said to be *substantially* existent.

[4]Impermanent things *must* truly exist. There are *permanent* phenomena, too, and they are merely imputedly, not truly, existent. "Permanent" phenomena are so called because they have no causes but are just negations of some sort. For instance, space, the mere absence of obstructive contact; the mere absence of a marching band in my office; the mere absence of an inherently existent thing in my meditation (i.e., its emptiness)—all these are not caused and not changing moment to moment.

School	Avoids Permanence	Avoids Annihilation
Vaibhåýikas	No permanent self; causes disintegrate	All things are substantially established
Sautråntikas Following Reasoning	Subtle impermanence	Impermanent things are established by their own character
Cittamåtrins	No external objects	Impermanent things truly exist
Svåtantrika-Mådhyamikas	No true existence ultimately	True existence conventionally
Pråsaêgika-Mådhyamika	No true existence even conventionally	Conventional existence

Hīnayāna vs. Mahāyāna

Buddhist schools are either Hïnayåna (Lesser Vehicle) or Mahåyåna (Great Vehicle).[1] There is no third "vehicle" to enlightenment, despite the fact that in contemporary Western literature the Vajrayåna (Diamond Vehicle), the tantric teachings, is sometimes called a third vehicle; it is simply tantric Mahåyåna. The Vaibhåýika and Sautråntika schools are considered to be Hïnayåna; the Cittamåtra and Mådhyamika schools, Mahåyåna.

The grounds for distinguishing Hïnayåna and Mahåyåna are new ideas based on the Mahåyåna scriptures. What are these scriptures? We know that they were unknown to the world before about the first century. Jamyang Shayba explains that this is because after the Buddha taught them to appropriate audiences in his own time, they had to be hidden for four hundred years in the underwater world of the Någas so that they would not be misunderstood. They were recovered by the great

[1]Hïnayåna is an obviously pejorative term taken from the Mahåyåna sÒtras. Some modern authors use "Theravåda" instead, reasoning that it is the sole modern heir of the Hïnayåna schools, but Theravåda historically was just one of many non-Mahåyåna schools. We use the term here mainly because it is the one employed by our authors. Roger Jackson has suggested that we think of "lesser" as meaning "fewer sÒtras"!

Någårjuna, who was able to explain them properly, establishing the Mådhyamika school.

We might expect that the Hïnayåna would reject the authenticity of these newly discovered scriptures, and indeed they did. However, Jamyang Shayba, without explaining further, maintains that later Hïnayåna schools came to accept the authenticity of the Mahåyåna scriptures, although obviously they did not adopt new tenets.

Whatever is the actual case, it is clear that the Mahåyåna introduced new ideas that were not present in the scriptures followed by the Hïnayånists alone. Let us first look at three interrelated concepts: the *selflessness of phenomena*, the *obstructions to omniscience*, and the *Bodhisattva grounds*.

Selflessness of Phenomena. Both Mahåyåna schools (Cittamåtra and Mådhyamika) maintain that we have misconceptions not only about the nature of the person, as "selflessness" implies, but about the nature of things in general. The same term, "self," is used to refer to a kind of misconception that actually has to do with things such as houses and cars. (Perhaps this is not so confusing, since sometimes we do talk about our possessions as though they were persons.) The Mahåyåna schools differ on their description of the selflessness of phenomena but we will explore that in another chapter.

Obstructions to Omniscience. The misconceptions about phenomena other than persons do not prevent one from becoming an Arhat, one who is liberated from saôsåra. (Arhat was rendered in Tibetan as "Foe Destroyer," referring to the Arhat's destruction of the "foes" of the afflictions of ignorance, etc.) However, these misconceptions do obstruct omniscience, which is a very important quality of Buddhas. Since the aspiration of a Bodhisattva, the ideal person, is to become a Buddha, they must be eliminated.

The Hïnayåna schools do not speak of obstructions to omniscience as such. Vaibhåýikas say that those rare persons who become Buddhas are able, by accumulating great merit, to remove "non-afflictive obstructions" that prevent ordinary persons from knowing the past or foretelling the future, from knowing what is happening in distant places, from knowing the specific karmic cause of events, and from knowing the special qualities of Buddhas. ("Non-afflicted" means "not connected with ignorance," which is why Hïnayåna and Mahåyåna are so

different on this point.)[1] Buddhas are able to know anything to which they turn their attention (a more modest "all-knowingness" as opposed to the sense of omniscience in the Mahåyåna, which is that Buddhas know everything at every moment).

Bodhisattva Grounds. The scheme of Bodhisattva grounds is related to the ideas of the selflessness of phenomena and the obstructions to omniscience. These are ten gradations of the last major stage of the spiritual path leading to Buddhahood, the path of "meditation." They are set forth exactly as successive levels of the removal of the obstructions to omniscience, which in turn results from realizing the selflessness of phenomena. In other words, continued meditation gradually expands our abilities, our good qualities, and our scope of knowledge.

Bodhisattva Ideal. We have not mentioned the Bodhisattva ideal as a way to distinguish Hïnayåna and Mahåyåna. That is because our text makes clear that this would be incorrect. The Bodhisattva is distinguished by embodying *bodhicitta—the* selfless, altruistic great compassion that seeks Buddhahood in order to be maximally helpful to others. It is well known that the Mahåyåna tradition places great emphasis on the Bodhisattva ideal; most of its schools maintain that all persons eventually become Bodhisattvas themselves.

However, Jamyang Shayba considers this to be a distortion, since, although rare, there are Bodhisattvas within the Hïnayåna, too. To be a Bodhisattva is a matter of motivation, not philosophy, so it is conceivable that some persons would be Hïnayånists by tenet but Mahåyånists by path, and the reverse would be true as well. In fact, it is likely, since if it is so difficult to become a Bodhisattva, few holders of Mahåyåna tenets would be true Bodhisattvas.

Holding Tenets vs. Practicing the Path

One of the controversies in *The Clear Crystal Mirror* concerns attempts to correlate the three types of Buddhist practitioners (Hearers, Solitary Realizers, and Bodhisattvas) with particular schools. Jamyang Shayba says that such attempts are mistaken because all three types are found in each school.

[1] Guy Newland (*Appearance,* 23) makes the observation that since Vaibhåýikas deny the ultimacy of most things, making it clear that they have only an imputed existence (one that requires dependence on other things), they also identify a sort of selflessness of phenomena.

A Hearer is one who hears doctrine, practices it, and proclaims it to others but who has not yet developed *bodhicitta* (altruistic compassion). Such a person may become liberated in a minimum of three lifetimes but will not become a Buddha until he or she switches to the Bodhisattva path.

Solitary Realizers are persons who have no teacher in their last lives; they also extend their practice for a hundred eons, which is why they get a similitude of a Buddha's body when they become enlightened. There are two types of Solitary Realizers: the *rhinoceros-like* who extend their practice because they believe they are to become Buddhas, and the *congregating*, who, because they had a teacher earlier in their last lives, are not so solitary.

Bodhisattvas have the extraordinary motivation to attain enlightenment for the sake of others. They also practice for an extraordinary length of time, up to three periods of "countless" great eons.

Any of these types can be found among any of the proponents of the tenet systems. For instance, a Hīnayānist *by tenet* can be a Bodhisattva *by motivation*. That is, there can be Hearers who, although they are Hīnayānists *by tenet* (i.e., are Sautrāntikas or Vaibhāýikas), are Mahāyānists *by path* because of their altruistic motivation. Therefore, they respect Mahāyānists such as Nāgārjuna. The reverse is also certainly true. There are Mahāyānists by tenet who lack the Bodhisattva motivation and, therefore, are still Hīnayānists by path.

Summary

We have seen that the various schools of Buddhist tenets do not represent different types of practice or motivation. Their differences are philosophical.

The two Hīnayāna schools can be distinguished from the two Mahāyāna schools by their distinctive stances on the inter-related issues of the selflessness of persons, the obstructions to omniscience, and the Bodhisattva grounds. However, the principal means by which the schools are arranged in a hierarchy is through their take on the Buddha's middle way between the extremes of affirming or denying too much of how the world appears to us.

What Is Ignorance?

Why do we suffer and die? Buddhism answers: because we do not understand ourselves and our world. Suffering and death are not inevitable, as many religions teach; they are not our punishment for sin; they are not what a mythic ancestor chose for us. Rather, this regrettable condition is the result of a terrible misunderstanding.

It is important to keep in mind that the ignorance with which we are concerned is not a lack of knowledge, such as my ignorance of Swahili; it is bad knowledge, a *mis*-understanding, a *mis*-conception. To some degree, our ignorance is of our own making, since we may have been taught to believe in a false kind of existence. Buddhism indicts many of the non-Buddhist Indian schools, and by extension the world's largest religions, for teaching that there is a soul, or inner self, that is unchanging, independent of whatever is going on in our minds and bodies, and is singular. One of the four "seals" that mark a doctrine as Buddhist is the denial of precisely this sort of entity.

However, these sorts of ideas are "artificial"; they are constructions, ideas that must come to us from outside. Although they are very unhelpful, no Buddhist school regards them as being the real cause of our problem, which is a level of misconception that is somewhat more subtle and much more insidious, since it comes to us naturally—it is "innate." Ignorance is not, therefore, fundamentally a matter of taking the wrong stance, of having an incorrect philosophical position; it is a universal problem of the tutored and untutored alike.

We will look below at what the various schools identify as this innate ignorance but all of them involve the concept that with regard to a person or thing there is something that independently *is* that person or thing—the essence, or true reality of it—which then may be conceived in different relationships to the mind and body (in the case of the person) or to the parts of the thing. Put another way, they all

involve something other than what wisdom understands, which is that nothing has that sort of independent existence.

To use a crude metaphor, ignorance is, in some way, to think of the self as our hard core, like the pit of a peach. Even after the flesh of the peach has dried up and blown away, the pit remains. All Buddhist schools reject the concepts of the non-Buddhist schools on the grounds that they see the self as a peach. However, most of the Buddhist schools also have a tendency towards "peachiness," one that is more subtle.

The Prāsaṅgika school says that the self is really an onion; if we peel away the layers (all the different aspects of mind and body), we find that the core is empty. What constitutes our aggregates of body and mind are our "layers." "Self" is just a convenient way to refer to the whole, but it is inevitably made into a peach pit rather than being recognized as the empty onion core it really is. There is no "essence" or intrinsic character to anything; our existence is relational and dependent. In the next chapter we will discuss the various choices Buddhist schools have made regarding the basis for designating a relational and dependent "self."

The following table shows the range of misconceptions and the harm that the various schools think they do.[1] It is arranged in terms of how these misconceptions prevent liberation from suffering or the liberation of the mind from its obstructions to omniscience. Only the elimination of those labeled "subtle" will change one's status but dealing with the "coarse" conceptions may be an important step towards that result.

The harmful misconceptions are listed in order of most coarse to most subtle from the point of view of the Prāsaṅgika school. Again, it is important to bear in mind that we are not discussing philosophical views but the sorts of innate misconceptions that ordinary people may have. Any given individual tends to one or another of them in ordinary situations. After the table we will sketch them individually.

[1]Adapted from Hopkins, *Meditation,* 300–1.

Conception	Obstructiveness	Schools
Permanent, single, independent person	Coarse obstruction to liberation	All schools (but Prāsaṅgika considers it an "artificial" conception)
Self-sufficient person	Coarse obstruction to liberation	Prāsaṅgika
Self-sufficient person	Subtle obstruction to liberation	All schools except Prāsaṅgika
Phenomena are naturally bases of names; subject and object are different entities	Subtle obstruction to omniscience	Cittamātra
Subject and object are different entities	Coarse obstruction to omniscience	Yogācāra-Svātantrika
True existence	Subtle obstruction to omniscience	Svātantrika
Inherent existence	Subtle obstruction to liberation	Prāsaṅgika
Appearance of inherent existence; *stains* of conceiving the two truths as different entities.	Subtle obstruction to omniscience	Prāsaṅgika

Permanent, Indivisible, Independent Person. This is the conception that there is a self that is uncaused and does not act as a cause, is without parts, and is independent of the mind and body. This is the classic formulation of the Indian Upaniṣads about the *ātman*, the individual soul that is in truth identical to the Infinite, the Brahman. It does not match exactly the concept of soul in any other religion, although in most religions there is at least one soul that survives death and, therefore, is independent of the mind and body in life.

Although all Buddhists reject this concept, even the Hïnayåna schools regard it as a "coarse" conception and think that there is a slightly more subtle level of ignorance. Therefore, overcoming this type of ignorance is not sufficient to win liberation. Pråsaêgikas make the further qualification that this conception is not innate, or natural, but is the result of tutoring.

Self-Sufficient Person. This is the conception of a self that is not only permanent and unitary but is the "boss" of the mind and body. That the self is "self-sufficient" means that it can appear to the mind without depending on other objects, i.e., that it can appear to our minds without depending on the mind and body.

This conception prevails in our ordinary talk about the self. Do we not speak of "my body" or "my mind" as though the "I" is the owner or master of mind and body, which are like its possessions or subjects? When we reminisce, or plan for the future, do we not say "When *I* was five…," or "When *I* am sixty…," as though the "I" of the child, the adult, and the senior is exactly the same? In our hearts we feel that there is something irreducibly *me* here, which is special, unique, and unlike the mind and body, not changing all the time. Do we not describe a search for identity as "finding" ourselves, as though there was a "real" me underneath the flux of personality? Do we not believe that we have utter free will? In the West, at least, we believe in our individual integrity—that we can do without other people and just be ourselves (a richer, better version of what we are presently).

Most of the Buddhist schools consider this type of conception to be the crucial obstacle to liberation. The Pråsaêgika school alone identifies a yet more subtle type of conception, the conception of inherent existence, which is described below.

Phenomena Are Naturally Bases of Names. When we see something familiar, it seems to be *naturally* the basis of the name we give it; that is, it does not appear to be something that *has to be named*. For instance, when we see a flat surface supported by legs, we immediately feel that it *is* a table, not merely that it is something to which we must attach the name "table." According to the Cittamåtra school, the flat-surface-with-legs appears to our eye consciousness to be a table, and then we immediately conceive that this appearance is correct. (Pråsaêgikas say that this is absurd, since if it were true, we would know flat-surface-with-legs as a table even if we had no concept of table or knew the name "table.")

Subject and Object Are Different Entities. This is the conception that our consciousnesses (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mental) are independent of their objects, such that an object causes perception. For instance, we assume that first the sun rises, and then that the light entering our eyes leads to an awareness of the sun.

Cittamåtrins (and Yogåcåra-Svatantrikas) contend that there are no external objects; subject and object are caused simultaneously by a single karmic potency. Because they necessarily arise together, they are one entity, like flame and heat. This conception goes together with the previous one since it is precisely because we misconceive of things as naturally the basis of a name—again, as being something without having to be named—that we conceive of them as being different entities from consciousness.

True Existence. This is a conception that applies to all phenomena, not just persons. It is that any phenomenon has what we might call "pointable existence": that there is something—one of the aggregates or parts; their collection; or, something apart from them—that can be pointed to *as being* that phenomenon. For instance, it is said that when we refer to ourselves, we conceive of some aspect, such as the mind itself or the feelings, as *being* what we really are; when we point to a table, we feel that there is something that really *is* the table, such as its top or the mere collection of its parts. Somehow the table itself is *within* the parts of which it is made. This conception is subtler than the conception of a self-sufficient person because it usually does not involve conceiving that there is an entity apart from the mind and body that controls them.

Inherent Existence. This conception also applies to all phenomena. Like the conception of true existence, we conceive of something we can point to; however, we do not conceive of this as being anything from among the aggregates (or parts). Rather, the self or thing just seems to be indistinguishable from the aggregates or parts. The "I" or the "thingness" is somehow more important but not distinguishable from that to which it is intimately related. With another phenomenon, such as a table, the conception is that there is some "tableness" that pervades the table and is its real identity, without any conception that the table is some specific part, etc. Again, this conception is *innate*, not something learned.

Appearance **of Inherent Existence**. As stated, this includes the "stains" of conceiving the two truths as different entities. Pråsaêgikas do not differentiate between what we must understand to become liberated persons (Arhats) and what we must understand to become Buddhas. The conception of inherent existence is always the target. At one point along the path, our direct realization of the emptiness of inherent existence will eliminate all of the afflictions of ignorance, desire, and hatred

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 sa ô såra. 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 Vedåntins, 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 Pråsaêgikas, for whom the person is also inexpressible in that way; but for Pråsaêgikas, 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. (Pråsaêgika) The Pråsaêgika designation of the person aptly demonstrates why it might be best to approach Pråsaêgika only after having considered the other schools, since it is a subtle view and one that follows upon the refutation of the others. Pråsaêgikas 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, Pråsaêgikas say, an analytical search will not result in the finding of anything that exists independently. All things are "empty." Pråsaêgikas 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 Pråsaêgikas, 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 Saô-mitïya—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.

Präsaêgikas 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 Präsaêgikas 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 Präsaêgikas, 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 Are The Two Truths?

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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 Sautråntikas, for whom sense cognition is ultimate) or because it yields liberating insight (for the Mahåyånists, 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 Mahåyåna 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 Vaibhåýika and Sautråntika schools have a markedly different perspective on the two truths from the Mahåyåna schools. For the Mahåyåna 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 Hīnayåna schools, on the other hand, ultimate truths are *certain kinds of things themselves*.

For Vaibhåýikas and Sautråntikas 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 Hīnayånists 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 Sautråntikas 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.

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

[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.

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 Präsaêgikas, 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 Präsaêgikas, 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. Pråsaêgikas, 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]

Pråsaêgikas use a different standard. For Pråsaêgikas, 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. Pråsaêgikas 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 Pråsaêgikas, 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
Vaibhåýikas	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
Pråsaêgika-Mådhyamikas	All phenomena other than emptinesses	Emptinesses

What Is Valid Cognition?

Since our problem, saô såra, 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.

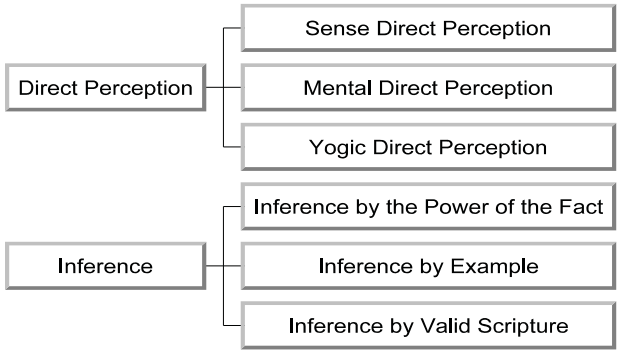
[1] Much of the discussion of direct perception that follows is based on Napper and Lati Rinbochay, *Mind in Tibetan Buddhism.*

What is "Valid"?

Except for Asaêga's system and for that of the Vaibhåýikas, Buddhist philosophers explain consciousness very similarly, taking their cues from the works of Dharmakîrti. 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 Vaibhåýika, 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 Sautråntikas 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 Vaiïeýika 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. Pråsaêgikas 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. Pråsaêgikas 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 Pråsaêgikas 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"; Pråsaêgikas 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.

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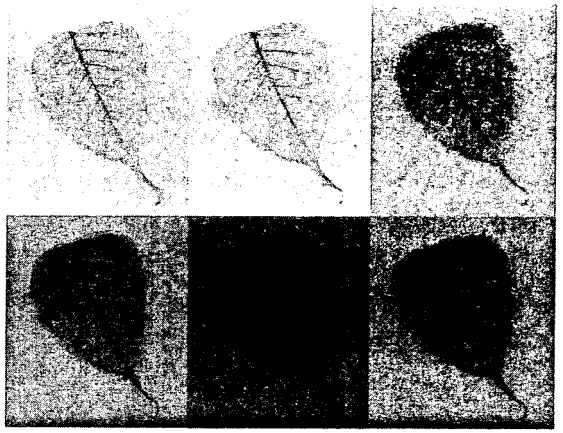
Emptiness



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alertness when there is no risk of laxity or excitement. Constantly applying alertness is detrimental to our meditation, so we should learn when to apply and when to refrain.

When the meditator experiences the mind of clarity, stability, and pliancy, then he or she has achieved calm abiding. As the *Sutra Unraveling the Thought* says:

> While dwelling in solitude and properly directing your attention inward, you apply yourself solely to those topics you have carefully contemplated on. Your attention is mentally engaged by being continuously directed inward. The state of mind where you abide in such a state, which brings about the arising of both physical and mental pliancy, is called calm abiding.[15]

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Insight

Although the term *insight* (Skt. *vipasyana*, Pali. *vipassana*) is used in both Buddhist and non-Buddhist traditions, even within Buddhism the term has different interpretations. For some traditions, insight is seen as simply observing the present, observing what is happening right here and now, in our body, our mind, and our environment. There are other traditions in which insight means more than that; it means pursuing a reasoned analysis in order to bring a degree of certainty on a subject of meditation, such as the nature of impermanence. Having learned that all compounded phenomena are impermanent, the meditator simply observes that, for instance, the body is impermanent. Then he or she brings reasoning into the meditation to deepen the appreciation of impermanence and develop realization of it.

Following the great monastic tradition of Nalanda introduced by masters such as Kamalashila, Tibetan Buddhism goes even further. Here the meditator does not just observe what is happening in the mind, and does not use insight just to prove the nature of impermanence and suffering. Rather, the Tibetan tradition of insight emphasizes the systematic use of logical statements, employing high degrees of concentration to bring conceptualized analysis to a degree that the mind cannot refute.

Insight, no matter how it is used, is vital to experience the complete annihilation of aversion, attachment, and ignorance. Concentration will temporarily suppress the deluded minds—while we are concentrated—but it will not destroy the root of the three poisons. Although concentration and insight have different functions—one to produce mental stability and the other to act as an antidote to the three poisons—both minds are needed.

On one level, insight can also be used to counteract manifest afflictions. For example, based on concentration, the meditator can apply insight to realize that attachment to sensory objects brings suffering, and to reduce and finally eliminate that attachment. This kind of insight is called "mundane" insight, in the sense of being able to counteract the gross afflictions but unable to act as an antidote to the root.

There is also a further level of insight called "supramundane," in the sense of being able to directly counteract the root of the afflictions—the self-grasping that apprehends things and events as having a self nature or intrinsic reality. Of this, Lama Tsongkhapa says:

> Mundane insight consists of meditation with the aspects of being both calm and gross, where [the meditator] observes the grossness of the lower levels and the calmness of the higher levels. As stated in the *Shravaka Levels*, supramundane insight consists of meditation observing the sixteen aspects of the four

noble truths, such as impermanence and so forth, in which the view of the selflessness of persons is cultivated.[16]

How Insight Is Cultivated According to Tibetan Buddhism

It is clearly stated in all four schools of Tibetan Buddhism that insight, whether mundane or supramundane, must be cultivated based on complete calm abiding. Without this, it is impossible to attain.

In sutrayana practices, calm abiding and then insight must be cultivated sequentially. In Tibetan Buddhism, however, vajrayana texts state that calm abiding and insight can be cultivated simultaneously.

Insight is seen as more than the simple observation of what is happening here and now. No matter how powerful or blissful, no matter how revealing such meditation can be, it seems to me that it does not have the power to discern the reality of the subtle impermanent nature, or the final mode of being of things and events. To penetrate the object of meditation incontrovertably, a unique and very powerful meditation is needed.

The mind is first set firmly in calm abiding, then the meditator enters into analysis. It is possible that the mind of calm abiding that has developed clarity and stability can turn toward investigation, and so calm abiding itself can become insight. This is called the *union of calm abiding and insight* in the sense that the mind that has fully developed clarity and stability develops into the mind that analyzes, and so both qualities abide within one mind at one time.

Tibetan Buddhism closely follows the texts of Indian masters like Kamalashila and Asanga (and Maitreya), who have clearly taught that insight must be based on fully developed calm abiding, these two properties eventually becoming one mind. This message is especially strong in the short and concise teachings of Kamalashila, particularly

his three texts on the stages of meditation that Lama Tsongkhapa refers to in his *Lamrim Chenmo*. Lama Tsongkhapa asks:

> Why is calm abiding required for insight? According to the *Sutra Unraveling the Thought*, until the practices of discrimination and special discrimination with discerning wisdom can cultivate physical and mental pliancy, it is only attention that approximates insight. When it can generate pliancy, then it is insight. If you have therefore not cultivated calm abiding, no matter how much analysis you do with discerning wisdom, you will be unable to cultivate the joy and bliss of physical and mental pliancy. [On the other hand], once you have cultivated calm abiding, even an analytical meditation of discerning wisdom will result in mental pliancy.[17]

Alone, neither analysis nor concentration have the power to fully realize an object. This power belongs to the concentrated mind of calm abiding that apprehends its object through thorough analysis.

For those who practice the six perfections, even fully developed concentration only becomes perfect concentration when conjoined with the wisdom realizing emptiness. This perfection is achieved when the practitioner first engages his or her understanding of emptiness before entering into meditation on the union of calm abiding and insight. Beginning with a mind infused with emptiness, calm abiding meditation can become the perfection of concentration.

When engaging in the bodhisattva's deeds, the method side of the practice involves generosity, patience, morality, meditation on the mind of enlightenment, and compassion—all those physical, verbal, and mental activities that concern the conventional world—while the wisdom side of practice involves cultivating and meditating on emptiness, the final mode of being of things and events.

The method and wisdom practices not only support each other, but combine with each other. Concentration only becomes a perfection when the mind engaged in it is conjoined with the realization of selflessness or emptiness. If not, even though the meditation might be a pure meditation on either calm abiding or insight, it is still just concentration and not its perfection.

The next few chapters deal with the final perfection, the perfection of wisdom. Of course, in general there are many different levels of wisdom, such as the wisdom realizing impermanence, the nature of suffering, and so on, but here the main discussion will be on the wisdom realizing the final mode of being, which is selflessness or emptiness. This is what the great masters invariably mean when they talk about the perfection of wisdom.

3 The Concepts of Selfhood

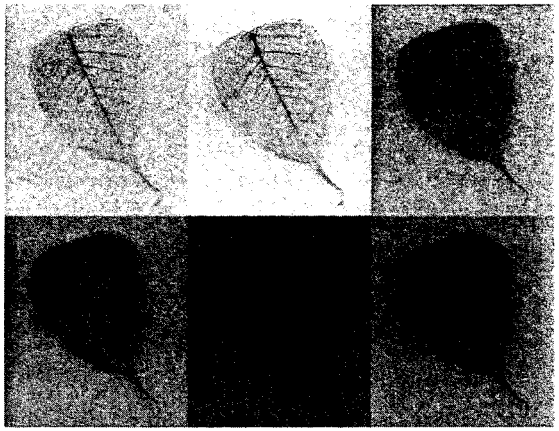
All Things Are No-Self

Right View Is Supramundane Insight

In the earlier chapters I have used the terms *selflessness* and *emptiness* almost synonymously. This key concept of Buddhism stems from the very earliest of the Buddha's teachings, *The Four Noble Truths Sutra*, where he lists right view as one aspect of the noble eightfold path. The importance of holding right view—a clear understanding of the way things and events actually exist—is beyond dispute, but what that actually entails is a matter of great debate.

Of the mundane and supramundane insight that we talked about in the previous chapter, right view is equated with the supramundane insight that is powerful enough to free us from all delusions and enable us to experience liberation and enlightenment. All Buddhist traditions agree that this entails the clear realization of a very important idea that permeates the Buddha's teachings: *anatman*, no-self, or selflessness. Common throughout the various schools of Buddhism, the different interpretations of this term are what we will look at in this chapter.

Emptiness



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5 PRASANGIKA'S UNIQUE PRESENTATION OF EMPTINESS

The Object of Negation

EMPTY OF WHAT?

THE SIXTH PERFECTION, of wisdom, refers to the wisdom that realizes the final mode of being of things and events, which, for Prasangika Madhyamaka, is the absence of intrinsic or inherent existence. Insight refers to the mind that realizes that kind of reality. It is therefore of prime importance to identify just what that intrinsic existence is, in order to see that the object of meditation is in fact *empty* of that intrinsic existence.

As I mentioned in chapter 3, before we catch the thief we must first identify him, and so before we can realize emptiness or even understand it, we must first see exactly what phenomena are empty of, the object to be negated. What is this "self" that we are "selfless" of? When we say emptiness, empty of what? If we have a clear idea of this thing we wrongly assume exists—this notion of selfhood on whatever level we perceive it—then it will not be that difficult to understand selflessness or emptiness. If, on the other hand, we have no idea of what we are supposed to be negating, it will be very problematic to get a clear understanding of emptiness.

If we observe that our notion of the "I" is something quite separate from the aggregates, whether it does in fact exist in this manner is the

base to analyze. In the same way, on the second level, if we see that the "I" seems to stand by itself, with some substantial reality within the aggregates, we should then investigate whether it does in fact exist in that manner.

Therefore within Lama Tsongkhapa's five most important Madhyamaka texts, he argues strongly that to understand emptiness it is crucial to identify clearly the *object of negation*. That's what we are doing here. Our sense of what we are, our sense of identity, the "I," the self—whatever it is we feel is at the core of our being—*that* is what we need to see clearly, before we can analyze whether it does actually exist in that manner.

In his *Lamrim Chenmo* he says:

> Regarding objects of negation in general, there are objects negated by the path and objects negated by reason. Maitreya talks of the first of these in his *Separation of the Middle from the Extremes*:
>
> There are teachings on obscurations to liberation
> And [teachings] on obscurations to enlightenment.
> It is said that all obscurations are among these,
> And when they are eliminated you are free.[36]

Lama Tsongkhapa talks about two objects of negation that need to be separated from our mindstreams:

- objects negated by the path
- objects negated by reason

Objects negated by the path are existent objects such as our attachment, hatred, and so on, and can be obscurations to either liberation or enlightenment. Whatever hold us back from complete freedom

from samsara—our thoughts, emotions, physical and verbal habits, and so on—are considered obscurations to liberation, and the most subtle propensities left by them are considered obscurations to our enlightenment. Both these obscurations exist, and both are reduced and finally eliminated by following the method side of the path.

If we harbor hatred, for example, within our mindstream, that needs to be reduced and finally eliminated, and the actual method is to cultivate love, which is part of the path to both liberation and enlightenment. Hence, hatred is *negated by the path*. Similarly, the instinctive grasping on to the permanence of our body (despite logically knowing it is impermanent) needs to be negated and that is done by realizing impermanence. When this happens, permanence is said to be negated by the path.

The second level Lama Tsongkhapa talks about is *objects negated by reason*. This means that through rational analysis we come to understand that something held to exist in a particular way does not, in fact, and thereby it is negated by reason.

Say, for instance, that a seriously ill person is hallucinating. That hallucination does not exist, but only when the medicine is taken and the person recovers will the hallucination be eliminated. It is the same thing with inherent existence. The mind apprehends an object as existing inherently, whereas it does not. Through rational analysis we come to see this, and the appearance of inherent existence is eliminated. It is *negated by reason*.

The object negated by reason must be nonexistent, otherwise reason could not negate it. It is not the case that because inherent reality does not exist we can just forget about it. Our mind perceives it as existing and, thus, it informs everything we do and brings us all sorts of problems, so we need to see how our mind falsely superimposes this sense of true existence onto things, and then through rational analysis see that inherent reality doesn't exist. If we do that, the mind that grasps it as such will stop.

Lama Tsongkhapa says:

> [Nagarjuna] divides the objects of negation into both the misconceptions and the inherent nature that those misconceptions apprehend. Of these two kinds of objects of negation, the main object of negation is the latter. [This is because] in order to stop a misconception you must first negate the object it apprehends, in the way that dependent arising negates the inherent existence of persons and phenomena.
>
> This latter object cannot be an object of knowledge because if it did exist it could not be negated [by reason]. You must negate the supposition that apprehends it as existing. This is not like destroying a pot with a hammer, but rather by developing a certain understanding that realizes nonexistent things as being nonexistent. Developing such understanding, the misconception apprehending them as existing will cease.[37]

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There are two aspects here: the mind mistakenly apprehending inherent existence, and the mistaken appearance of inherent existence itself. Of these, Lama Tsongkhapa says that the latter is more important. Of course, what causes us the difficulties is the grasping mind, but to deal with such a mind, the method is to bring understanding through rational analysis that shows what we thought to exist does not.

Reason reveals what exists as existent and reveals what doesn't exist as nonexistent. It does not create existent things from nonexistent things, or make nonexistent things from existent things. Analyzing if a chair exists, reason shows it does. Analyzing if a chair exists intrinsically, reason shows it does not.

At this level it is called *ultimate analysis*. The ultimate mind in ultimate analysis finds that things and events lack the intrinsic nature they appear to have, and so that intrinsic nature is negated. It is not that it exists, and by some sleight of hand ultimate analysis makes it nonexistent, but it is simply the discovery of the nonexistence of something we erroneously thought to exist.

Refuting the Referent Object

It is said that the Prasangika stance is "balanced on the edge of a knife"—to waver slightly either way is to tip into eternalism or nihilism. Therefore there is great emphasis on what is to be negated and what is not. When we meditate on the emptiness of an object such as the self, it is *not* the object we are negating but its inherent existence.

Here we need to differentiate between the *observed object* and the *referent object*. These are terms used in Buddhist psychology to refer to the overall field of observation—what the mind takes as its main object—and the specific aspect of that object on which the mind focuses. So, for example, in a rational analysis of the emptiness of the self, the observed object is the self, whereas the main focus of the inquiry is not that, but rather the referent object, which is the inherent existence of the self that appears to the analyzing mind.

Out of these two objects of our example, the observed object (the self) *does* exist; the referent object (the intrinsic existence of the self) on the other hand, does *not* exist.

Mistaking the object of negation is the main obstacle to realizing emptiness, and Lama Tsongkhapa is quite clear that it is the referent object that we need to focus on. He says:

> Based on the [incorrect] referent object...Buddhist and non-Buddhist essentialist schools reify objects. When you negate the referent of the ignorant mind's conceptualization you

> destroy these doctrine-related reifications, like cutting a tree at its root. Therefore, those possessed of wisdom should understand that the referent object of innate ignorance is the fundamental object of negation... Innate ignorance alone ties all beings to cyclic existence; intellectually-acquired ignorance is the domain of those who hold philosophical doctrines and so cannot be the root of cyclic existence. It is extremely important to understand this point fully.[38]

It is very difficult to identify the object of negation precisely. Because it is such a subtle object, it is very possible to either over- or under-exaggerate it, and hence, to refute it either too much or too little. If we confuse inherent existence with existence itself and refute that, then we have refuted too much and have fallen into nihilism. On the other hand, if we don't take our analysis far enough and, for instance, refute only the self as unchanging, unitary, and independent, then we have not gone far enough and, by our eternalistic stance, will still be blocked from realization.

Even refuting the self as self-sufficient, substantial reality, as the lower schools up to Svatantrika do, is still not enough to understand the final mode of being of self and phenomena. Nor is it enough to understand the Chittamatra stance that the duality of subject and object is an innate misconception. This is the root of cyclic existence according to Chittamatra, but not according to Prasangika. For them, to understand the final mode of being of self and phenomena is to understand that the self is absent of intrinsic nature.

The Object of Ultimate Analysis

There are different levels of rational analysis. On one level, our rational mind thinks through the logic of what goes on all around us,

seeking reasons, checking if something is as it seems to us. If we want a sunflower to grow, we plant a sunflower seed, not that of a potato, because we can rationalize that sunflower seeds become sunflowers. In a myriad of ways, everyday, we are using this kind of conventional rational analysis.

There is also the rational mind that analyzes what lies beyond these conventional existences. Here we see how within the chains of cause and effect that dominate our lives there is an underlying sense that things have some kind of independence, and so we look deeper to see if this is so. That is what is called ultimate analysis. In the next chapter we will look at some of the most powerful rational analyses used within the Madhyamaka school.

We know the "I" exists, but does it have any form of independent existence? If there were any degree of intrinsic reality within the "I" these rational analyses would reveal it, because that is what they are searching for. Using incredibly deep lines of reasoning, intrinsic reality is not found, and so it is said that it "cannot withstand rational analysis," a phrase you will read often in Madhyamaka logic.

It is vital that we are clear that the Prasangika Madhyamaka masters are not denying the existence of self, body, pain, table, and so on; they are arguing that the mind apprehends these things as if they have inherent nature, which they do not.

Lama Tsongkhapa says:

> This is searching to discover whether forms and so on have an inherent nature that is produced, ceases, and so forth. And so [the purpose of such a] rational analysis is not to merely see that forms and so on have production and cessation, but rather to see whether that production and cessation exists essentially. It is thus said to "analyze reality" because it analyzes whether production, cessation and so on are established in reality.[39]

Not finding true existence, intrinsic reality, existing from its own side—whatever term we use—by rational analysis of conventionally existing phenomena, the conclusion is reached that they do not exist in such a manner. It is like searching for a particular person, such as John, in the library. If we use every means possible and still can't find him, that's a sign that John isn't in the library. If John were there, that mind searching for him must find him.

Because we couldn't find John doesn't mean he doesn't exist. Nor can we say that John's book isn't in the library, because our rational inquiry extends only as far as John and not his book. Not finding John, the correct conclusion is that he is not in the library; not seeing his book, we can't conclude that his book isn't there, because that is not what the mind is looking for.

It's the same here. If the object we are analyzing did possess any intrinsic nature, then by using all means at our disposal—all these methods of rational analysis—we must be able to find it. But because that kind of analysis cannot find the intrinsic nature of the "I" or table or whatever, that does not mean that the thing itself does not exist.

At the end of the analysis the rational mind cannot find any trace of intrinsic existence, which is the meaning of being "unable to withstand analysis." Quite often this kind of analysis is called "analysis on ultimate reality" because it is searching for the final mode of being of things and events.

"Refuted" by rational analysis and "not found" by rational analysis are different. The conventional existence of forms and so on is not found by such an analysis simply because it is not being looked for. The intrinsic existence is not only not found by such an analysis, but also refuted by it, because *that* is exactly what it is looking for.

Only a conventional consciousness can establish the production or cessation of an object. That is its job. Only an ultimate analysis can establish the lack of intrinsic reality of that production or cessation. *That* is *its* job.

What Is Intrinsic Nature?

For Prasangika Madhyamaka, when the absence of intrinsic existence is associated with the sense of identity—the "I"—it is called the *selflessness of persons*, and when it associated with anything other than the sense of identity it is called the *selflessness of phenomena*.

So this subschool is different from the previous subschool, Svatantrika, in that emptiness or selflessness is the same quality given different names depending on the object it is associated with. In terms of what it is empty of, there is no difference in the characteristics of the emptiness; lower than Prasangika Madhyamaka there is a huge difference. Svatantrika Madhyamaka and Chittamatra both assert the two types of emptiness, but when they posit them, they not only differentiate the basis, but what it is empty of. For example, in Svatantrika, the emptiness of persons is grosser than the emptiness of phenomena. Selflessness of persons in the two lower schools, as we have discussed, is the absence of self-sufficient, substantial reality.

This self has what Lama Tsongkhapa calls an "independent ontological status" in that it is not only independent of causes and conditions but also—and this is very important—of the consciousness apprehending it. Prasangika Madhyamaka denies that the self can exist in this way and asserts that to "depend on other" means to be dependent on both the causes and conditions that bring it into existence and the conventional consciousness that apprehends it.

Lama Tsongkhapa says:

> Therefore, what exists objectively or essentially is called self or inherent nature, and the absence of this quality in the person is called the selflessness of persons while its absence in phenomena such as eyes, ears, and so on is called selflessness of phenomena. You may thus understand by implication that

misconceptions of both person and objects as having inherent nature are the objects of the two selves. In his *Commentary on the Four Hundred Verses*, Chandrakirti says:

> Self is the essential nature of things that is independent of others, its inherent nature. That this is nonexistent is its selflessness. Because [all] phenomena are divided into two: person and phenomena, so selflessness is divided into selflessness of person and selflessness of phenomena.[40]

The masters use many examples to show how things do not exist from their own side. One of the most effective examples is of the coiled rope being perceived as a snake when certain circumstances arise, such as seeing it at dusk by a roadside. From the coiled rope's own side there is nothing at all that is a snake; it comes completely from the side of the person. This is what Prasangika means by "posited by the mind." But even if it were a snake, likewise there would be nothing at all from its side that is a snake; even then it comes completely from the side of the consciousness perceiving it.

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There is nothing from the snake's side that is inherently "snake" and nothing from the rope's side that is inherently "rope." By this time in the argument Svatantrika scholars would be throwing their hands up and demanding to know how anything can then be determined. Surely, then, we can label anything on anything and it will be valid. There must be *something* from the snake's side that determines it is a snake as opposed to a rope. The Prasangika response is a flat "no!," there is nothing. However, the mind perceiving the rope as a snake and the mind perceiving the rope as a rope are two different minds, and quite simply the first is wrong and the second is correct, or, to use the Prasangikan term, "valid."

The gap through which the argument falls is the tiny but crucial

one of inherent existence. There is nothing from either the rope's side "by way of its own nature" or from the snake's side "by way of its own nature" that makes either inherently a snake, and in that sense a consciousness that perceives an inherent snake as an inherent snake is just as mistaken as a consciousness that perceives an inherent rope as an inherent snake.

On a conventional level, of course, there is a huge difference, and to misperceive a rope as a snake is simply wrong. It can be proved to be wrong by another conventional valid consciousness analyzing the situation. In this case, for instance, when someone else comes along who knows the area and has a flashlight, it can be easily ascertained that the snake is in fact a rope. Say, however, it really is a snake, then the separate valid consciousness will see it as such, and the first mind perceiving the snake as a snake will be proved correct, or more precisely "valid."

Except for direct perceptions of emptiness, *all* direct perceptions of unenlightened beings are mistaken, as they perceive the object to have inherent existence, but some are valid—on a conventional level they apprehend the object as it is (a snake as a snake)—and some are wrong.

The big lesson here, the Prasangika masters tell us, is that by misperceiving the rope as a snake, the fear generated is the same as if it were a snake. And this is true of all samsara. Misperceiving all objects as inherently existing, and hence inherently desirable, fearful, hateful, and so on, we generate negative minds, and so are stuck forever in cyclic existence.

"Valid" and "wrong" consciousnesses are determined by another valid consciousness that analyzes their validity. That's the only difference. From the object's side, whether it is the coiled rope or the reptile, there is nothing existing as a snake objectively or ontologically. It is posited entirely by the conventional consciousness.

Some Clarification of Innate Self-Grasping

In some of Chandrakirti's teachings, such as his *Commentary on the Middle Way* and his *Clear Words*, he says the false view of the transitory collection as "I" and "mine" is the root of cyclic existence. Elsewhere we read that the first of the twelve links of dependent origination—ignorance—is the root of cyclic existence, and that is the innate self-grasping that grasps self and phenomena as having inherent existence. The question then arises: are there two roots of cyclic existence; one, the innate self-grasping, and the other, the false view of the transitory collection as "I" and "mine"?

In general, the false view of the transitory collection is the mind using the five aggregates (either all five or one or more) as a base and then holding them as "self" or "I." That is why it is called "the false view of transitory collection." The five aggregates—the collection—which are subject to change—transitory—are falsely viewed as the inherently existing "I," the observed object (from the Prasangika stance), or the truly or ultimately existing "I" (from the Svatantrika stance).

In the medium scope of his *Lamrim Chenmo*, when Lama Tsongkhapa explains the order in which afflictions arise, he gives two views. For the first way, he gives, as we have seen above, the example of the coiled rope being mistaken as a snake at dusk, saying that the misapprehension due to lack of light matches the way the mind misapprehends how the aggregates exist due to the darkness of ignorance. The other afflictions develop from this. The rope appears as a snake because of the conditions—the appearance of the rope, the darkness of the road, our own propensities—and *that* is ignorance. The false view of the transitory collection, on the other hand, is not the collection of causes and conditions that make the rope appear as a snake, but the mind perceiving the rope as a snake. That means that the false view of the transitory collection occurs *from* the ignorance and is not

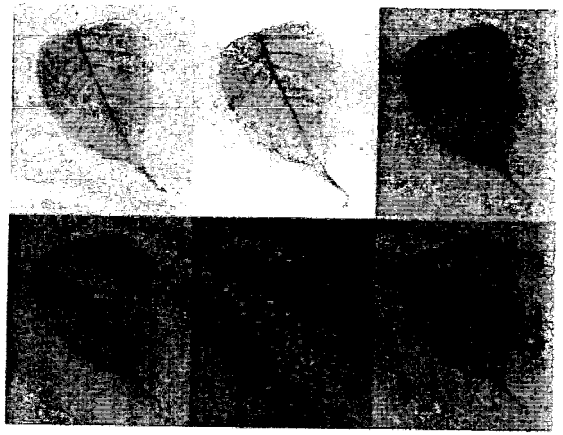
primary. The other option is to see these two as identical; the false view of the transitory collection itself *is* ignorance, and there is no difference between them.

In the *Insight* section of the *Lamrim Chenmo* he takes this further, clarifying Chandrakirti's explanation of the false view of the transitory collection, by saying that the ignorance that is the root of cyclic existence is the innate self-grasping, whether it is of the self or of other phenomena such as feeling, the body, or other objects. Innate self-grasping is broader than the false view of the transitory collection, where the observed must be the more specific "I." Based on the five aggregates the mind holds that the "I" that is within those five aggregates has inherent nature. This is the innate false view of the transitory collection and this is also ignorance.

There are not two roots of cyclic existence. Grasping all phenomena (including the "I") as having intrinsic nature is broader than just specifically grasping the "I," which is the false view of the transitory collection, but both point to the same root of cyclic existence.

The "self" we see in the term *self-grasping* is not the self that conventionally exists. In this context, "self" refers to an intrinsically-existing self, and when that refers to the self-grasping of the "I" *that* becomes the false view of the transitory collection. We are not negating the self as the observed object; we are negating its referent object, the sense of inherent existence the mind attributes to it.

Emptiness



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Therefore this most subtle notion of selflessness—presented in the Prasangika writings—was taught by the Buddha in the Theravada sutras.

There are two kinds of obscurations considered to block us from freedom: the obscurations to liberation and the obscurations to enlightenment. To go beyond even the obscurations to liberation, the practitioner must realize the final mode of existence of things and events. Without it, even individual liberation is impossible, therefore those great masters strongly argue that in the sutras on individual liberation, the Buddha taught the final mode of being.[22]

These interpretations of the meaning of selflessness are not different views but different degrees of subtlety of the same view, and so we should be clear that the view of emptiness explained in the Madhyamaka school—particularly the Prasangika subschool—is there in the Theravada sutras taught by the Buddha. If the Buddha had not taught selflessness in the Theravada teachings, then it would be very difficult for the Prasangika masters of the Mahayana to show that the Buddha taught selflessness or emptiness at all. When we can see the progressive degrees of subtlety of view, we can see that there is in fact no contradiction between the original teachings and the Prasangika interpretation.

Levels of Selfhood

The Two Types of Emptiness

At present we suffer because we misread how all phenomena exist. The study of emptiness is to redress that misunderstanding and eliminate our suffering. It is a vast subject, and of course we don't need to realize the final mode of existence of each phenomenon of the universe, individually and one by one. What can help us the most is what

is closest to us: our sense of identity, our body and mind, and our immediate possessions. To that end the Mahayana masters have divided all things into two categories, self and other. "Self" refers to our own sense of identity—the "I"—and "other" refers to all experiences other than that central sense of "I." The lack of inherent existence of these two categories is expressed as:

- the emptiness of person
- the emptiness of phenomena

Of these two, Buddhist masters have found it more helpful to approach the final mode of existence of the self or "I" first, because at the end of the day dealing with our misunderstanding of how the "I" exists is the key to free us from suffering and its origin, regardless of whether we see that freedom as liberation or enlightenment.

This "I" we cherish so dearly is the white-hot center of our universe, and all other things emerge from it, whether the body/mind aggregates, our possessions, the environment, or the whole world. If that statement seems a little shocking, be honest. If I were to ask you where the center of *your* universe is, wouldn't your forefinger point back to the center of your chest? Practically and psychologically speaking, I think this is quite true.

Understanding the final mode of existence of all other things can come later. What is most important now is that we sort ourselves out. It's our habitual reification of the sense of personal identity that keeps us locked into cyclic existence, not our body, our television, or our friends, and that is what we need to work on right now. Consequently, the Buddhist masters urge us to start the search to understand the final mode of being with the "I."

Having gained calm abiding, we then use our insight to seek out the final mode of being of the self. In his *Clear Words*, Chandrakirti says:

> Yogis wishing to enter reality and eliminate all afflictions and mistakes consider the question, "What is the root of cyclic existence?" When they thoroughly examine this they see that the root of cyclic existence is the false view of the transitory collection. Furthermore, they see that the self is the object observed by that false view of transitory collection and that not following the self leads to the elimination of this false view of transitory collection, and, through that, all afflictions and mistakes are overcome. Therefore, at the very beginning they only examine the self, asking what is this "self" that is the object of the conception of self.[23]

It is a long road to the final mode of being. We hold the concept of selfhood in varying degrees of subtlety. Lama Tsongkhapa has delineated three main ones:

1. the self as an unchanging, unitary, and autonomous entity
2. the self as a self-sufficient, substantial entity
3. the self as an intrinsic entity

The first view was the view of the non-Buddhist Indian philosophies that the Buddha was focusing on when he talked of "no-self," and both that and the second view are rejected by all Buddhist schools. However, only Prasangika, the highest subschool of Madhyamaka, also rejects the third view, that self exists as an intrinsic entity. Anything other than seeing the absence of the self as an intrinsic entity, assert the Prasangikas, is a form of self-grasping.

Acquired and Innate Self-Grasping

Through insight, the great masters have realized that we perceive our

people comes from encountering the beliefs of philosophies or religions. On a level deeper than external influences, however, we all hold some sense of a self-existing "I" that operates at different degrees of subtlety. Some of these give us no problems, but many are quite erroneous and lead to all our suffering. These two main ways of grasping at the "I" are therefore listed as:

- intellectually-acquired self-grasping
- innate self-grasping

Innate self-grasping is so deep within us that getting some sense of it, let alone dealing with it, is extremely difficult. We will look at this a little later. Intellectually-acquired self-grasping, as the name implies, has been picked up from outside—from our environment, our culture, our religion, and so on—and as such it can cause quite a lot of suffering but is not as fundamental as innate self-grasping, and can be dealt with more easily.

Acquired self-grasping is not exactly the same as what we generally call "I." When we simply use the pronouns "I" or "me," such as "I eat," "I am a man," "Please give it to me," this is the "I" that operates on a deeper, more subtle level. Acquired self-grasping tends to be the examined "I." It is the essence or nature of the sense of identity that appears when we think about it. As such it is quite different from the "I" of everyday speech.

We acquire an intellectual form of self-grasping through meeting various ideas about what the self is: subliminally, through cultural concepts of the "I," or overtly, through studying a philosophy or religion, or indeed just thinking about it ourselves. "Who am I?" lies at the heart of many philosophies and religions, and some posit answers that are very convincing, and so we find one that suits us and we adopt it. We take it on, or "acquire" it. This is self-grasping in the sense that

the notions of self coming from philosophies or belief systems give us some concrete sense of "I" and so we naturally grasp on to it, as if the self had some kind of essence or nature.

The Self as an Unchanging, Unitary, and Autonomous Entity

What all self-grasping, whether acquired or innate, does is to reify the concept of the self, to give it a concreteness it does not possess. Whether it is the Hindu notion of *atman*, the Christian idea of the soul, or any other form this "self" takes, there is always an erroneous sense of realness that causes us to cling to it, making attachment and aversion possible.

Because Buddhism grew within the context of the many religions in India, the Buddhist masters investigated the concept of *atman* to reveal the operation of acquired self-grasping. Although I have little knowledge of Abrahamic God-based religions (Islam, Judaism, and Christianity), or Western philosophies, from the little I do know, I think that by taking the *atman* as a template we can easily see how our own personal concept of "I" fits with this investigation.

For Brahmanism and Jainism, and the many other religions that flourished in the Buddha's time, the goal was for the self to transcend samsara and achieve liberation or *moksha*. The self that experiences pain and difficulties due to being trapped in conditioned existence was seen as something within the body/mind aggregates yet at the same time completely independent of them. This self has three features:

- unchanging (Tib. *rtag pa*)
- unitary (Tib. *gcig pu*)
- autonomous (Tib. *rang dbang can*)

If you have grown up in a culture in which the Abrahamic religions are either dominant or still permeate, or in a capitalistic materialist, consumer culture (and both seem to operate in the Americas, Australasia, and Europe), these will influence how you see your sense of self. This holds regardless of whether you are a believer, an atheist, a materialist, or a nihilist. If you investigate from such a background, you might see that the "I" has not only some kind of enduring, abiding nature, but also that it is without causes. It appears uncreated and uncomposed.

Check this out and see if this is your view of the "I." My body, my feelings, my views, my theories are composed of many other things, but my "I" is not. For many of us, the "I" is this driver sitting in our head directing operations—getting the legs to move, deciding it's time to eat, and so on—quite separate from the body and the events happening in the mind.

And it lasts. We know our body is changing constantly and our mind never stays the same, but there is a certain "me-ness" that is constant. It abides as some kind of unitary entity. Overlaid on your ideas of karma—I create the cause, I experience the result, and so on—is this sense of an "I" that is not only unchanging, but unitary, and has nothing to do with the physical body and the mental events that make it up.

An analogy for this concept of selfhood would be a person and the burden he or she carries—the self is the person, and the burden is the body/mind construct known by Buddhists as the five aggregates.[24] Here there is a very clear distinction between the person and the burden. So this first view of the self is that it is completely independent of the aggregates.

If you look at it from a logical perspective, the absurdity of these concepts is probably obvious, but we need to think very thoroughly about it to see if we do actually hold such notions.

Of course our body is changing all the time. Of course our mind is changing from thought to thought. If we really investigate, we might catch sight of something that does not seem to change. I think we all live with some notion of something that was with us as a child, is with us now, and will still be with us at our death. (In fact, if we believe in rebirth or heaven, it will still be with us after death.) That is the unchanging thing at the core of ourselves, some essence that, if we want to give it a label, we can call "soul" or "*atman*."

There is no doubt that a person holding such a view can receive tremendous help from it, and religious or philosophical beliefs can help us develop into better people. The Buddha saw, however, that as long as we hold the view of the self as an unchanging, unitary, and autonomous entity, that creates the room for attachment to develop.

This is quite logical if you think about it. If we hold such a view, it creates a separation between the self and the world around it, and a need to defend that self from the external world. We naturally cling to that abiding, enduring "I," and with self-grasping all the other forms of attachment also naturally arise. Once on the mindstream, the most subtle levels of attachment can develop into grosser and grosser levels that can easily slide into overt desire, and the manifest problems that brings.

All Buddhist philosophical schools agree that the self does not exist in this manner, that it lacks the qualities—unchanging, unitary, and autonomous—we attribute to it. It is not a permanent, single entity that exists completely separate from the aggregates. That does not, however, mean that all the Buddhist philosophical schools have a unified notion of how the self does exist.

To grasp at the self as if it were a completely separate, unchanging entity is the grossest kind of self-grasping, and is traditionally said to be the intellectually-acquired product of familiarization with philosophies and religions.

The Self as a Self-Sufficient, Substantial Entity

Another concept of selfhood is the self as a self-sufficient, substantial entity. Here, we have moved beyond the notion of the self as completely separate from the body/mind aggregates, but still see it as something self-sufficient and substantial that exists within the aggregates. It is related to, rather than distinct from, the five aggregates, and yet it can stand on its own and hence is "self-sufficient." Furthermore, it possesses more than a nominal reality; it is actually substantial in some way.

There is some debate whether this second concept of selfhood occurs naturally (and hence is "innate") or whether it must be learned from philosophies (and hence is "acquired"). There is no clear consensus, but it seems that while it certainly can be acquired intellectually, there is also the tendency within us to see the self as self-sufficient and substantial. It seems this notion of self is something we hold naturally without training, feeling that the self is there within the body/mind complex, dependent on but separate from it in some way, able to stand on its own and with its own substantial reality.

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However, the self is impermanent, it is changing, it is dependent on the five aggregates. I think it doesn't take too much analysis to realize how the first level of the concept of selfhood is mistaken. And yet, if we really investigate, we might think we see something more. Above these properties of being impermanent, changing, and dependent, there is an "I" that somehow stands out from the great complexity of all the thoughts and emotions, and the body that holds it all. There is something that is somehow not related to the five aggregates that we call "self."

There are likewise different interpretations of the meaning of *sufficient* in self-sufficient. Although this view and the previous view of selfhood both have a sense of independence, this second view has a lesser degree of it. A person and the burden carried by that person are

two utterly different entities, but here the link between self and aggregates is much stronger. The sense of self depends on and is part of the physical and mental aggregates in some way; yet, despite this, it still has its own self-sufficiency.

We have the notion of the self as master and the aggregates as servants. The self gives orders and the aggregates do the work. Check this out to see if you ever have this feeling. Is your body a thing you use for your own benefit, and hence a "servant" to your "master"?

Another analogy is that of the executive and his employees, where everyone in the office is a business person, but still there is one among them who gives the orders. Similarly, the self is not different or separate from the aggregates and yet is superior to, and in charge of, the subservient aggregates.

This is the "I" we live with when we don't actively investigate it. It is the "I" in a simple action like "I go," "I eat," or a simple statement like "I am a Buddhist." Beneath the words, or even beneath the conscious experience of the "I" going, eating, or being a Buddhist, there is still the sense that there is more to the "I" than the doer of an action.

Investigate as subtly as you can whether you can feel any sense of "I" in the simple act of moving. It's very difficult to pick up a flavor of selfhood, because as soon as you look you are examining, and the first notion of selfhood presents itself. This is much more subtle than that. If you are quick (and sneaky), maybe you'll pick up a sense that there is something more than this, that even uninvestigated, below thought and language, there still lies a sense of self.

Because this involves thinking about a notion that works below the conscious level, it is not simple. Walking along a street we are just walking along a street, not consciously placing one foot in front of another, but still, within that unconscious act, there is an underlying sense of "I." It is generally too subtle to catch, but it grows and diminishes in grossness all the time. Perhaps in meditation it is at its most

subtle, or in walking it is still too subtle to register, but when an object of desire comes into view, like the cakes in a bakery we walk past, we are then able to glimpse the "I" of "*I* want."

By investigating this sense of self through insight, we will come to see that in fact it does not exist in this manner, and so this is the second level of selflessness, that the self is absent of being self-sufficient and substantial.

With the exception of the Prasangika, who assert the need to go further, all Buddhist philosophical schools assert that the "selflessness of persons" means to be empty of a self-sufficient, substantial entity.

The non-Mahayana schools (Vaibhashika and Sautrantika) explain that to achieve individual liberation, the antidote is the insight that realizes this level of the absence of self (as a self-sufficient, substantial reality). When the practitioner passes through the conceptual understanding to a direct realization of this level of selflessness, she has actually cut the root of cyclic existence, because such a notion of selfhood is fundamental self-grasping—ignorance—the first of the twelve links of dependent origination. When that is eliminated, cyclic existence is destroyed.

The Mahayana schools of Chittamatra and Svatantrika Madhyamaka agree that a fundamental cause of cyclic existence is ignorance of the selflessness of the person, empty of self-sufficient, substantial reality. They also assert, however, that there is not just the selflessness of persons to deal with but also the selflessness of phenomena. We'll look at this later when we look at these four schools' notions of selflessness and emptiness.

The Self as an Intrinsic Entity

Prasangika Madhyamaka argues that this notion of selfhood as self-sufficient, substantial reality is not the first of the twelve links of dependent origination, and hence is not the actual root of cyclic existence. Although eliminating this notion of self may destroy much of our self-grasping, that is not our final deconstruction of the grasping at the "I." The notion of selfhood we need to eliminate is even more subtle.

This third level of the notion of selfhood is the self as an intrinsic entity; the self exists within our five aggregates with some kind of intrinsic or inherent nature. Only the Prasangika Madhyamaka subschool asserts that this notion of selfhood is mistaken. For the Prasangika masters, until we eliminate the notion of the self as being intrinsically within the five aggregates we cannot be completely free from our sense of identity, and we are still locked in cyclic existence. We still haven't managed to cut the first of the twelve links, ignorance.

This notion of selfhood is innately something we all possess, whether we train in philosophy or not. For example, within the Buddhist philosophical schools, from Vaibhashika to Svatantrika Madhyamaka, all assert that the self exists intrinsically or inherently, even though there may be some differences in the understandings of the term *intrinsic*.

The body/mind aggregates that are impermanent and constantly changing form the base upon which we create the concept of selfhood. The non-Prasangika schools assert that, although it is constantly changing along with the aggregates that form its base, the self has some sort of intrinsic existence. Otherwise, it would be nothing more than a random appellation.

People who have investigated their existence down to this level of selfhood might somehow see that the self as it appears to them does not exist. But then again, they reason, there is certainly a doer of actions and actions certainly get done, so therefore although there is no "self," there is an inherently existent agent. It is the sense of identity that lacks reality, not the "me" as the doer of actions. The fact that I can do things proves that I intrinsically exist.

The Prasangika masters reject even this level of selfhood, saying *this* is the root of cyclic existence, the first of the twelve links of dependent origination. Conversely, the antidote to ignorance is the insight that realizes that the self does not exist inherently within the aggregates.

Therefore although all the Buddhist philosophical schools assert that we are being kept in cyclic existence because of the twelve links of dependent origination, the root of which is the first link, ignorance, there are differences when it comes to defining what that ignorance is. Vaibhashika up to Svatantrika Madhyamaka have one view, and Prasangika Madhyamaka has another. For the former, that ignorance is the mind that grasps the self as a self-sufficient, substantially-existing entity. This is innate and not just intellectually-acquired. For Prasangika, getting rid of that kind of self-grasping will not free us from cyclic existence. We must also get rid of the notion of the self as an intrinsic entity.

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Identifying the Thief

It is very important that we explore whether we hold our sense of "I" in any of these three manners. (We can, in fact, hold one or more at different times.)

We should examine in a very natural manner—not philosophically, but just as it arises on a day-to-day basis—how this "I" appears to us under various conditions. It helps to check the "I" when powerful or dramatic circumstances arise. When a person praises us, we should check who is being praised. In a life-threatening circumstance, or if someone violently and falsely accuses us in a very public manner, we should see how strongly the "I" arises, and check how it appears to us.

We all hold one or more of these three notions of selfhood, and yet these are not how the "I" actually exists. We should understand this, and then bring it to an experiential level by observing closely how we

perceive the sense of "I." Repeated and detailed observation in this manner will lead us to clear and powerful insight meditation.

If we observe that our notion of the "I" is as something quite separate from the aggregates, *that* is the base from which to analyze whether it does exist in this manner. That is the insight analysis. In the same way, on the second level, although the "I" is not completely separate, nor is it permanent and unitary. But still, when we observe it, it seems to stand by itself, with some substantial reality within the aggregates. We should then investigate whether it does in fact exist in that manner. This is the insight meditation on this second level of the notion of selfhood.

In his *Succinct Guide to the Middle View*, Lama Tsongkhapa says:

> In many sutras it is stated that the reality of persons must be negated. In *Nirnayasamgraha* [it is stated that] the ultimate [reality of persons] should be negated, while in *Viniscayasamgrahani*, *Mahayanasutralamkara*, and *Abhidharmakoshabhashya*, it is said that the substantial reality [of persons] must be negated. All of these are making the same point. Thus, the meaning of substantial reality and nominal reality is the following. When a thing [or an event] appears to the mind, if it does so in dependence on the perception of another phenomenon that shares characteristics different from said object, then the object is said to be nominal reality. That which does not depend upon others in such a manner is said to be substantially real.[25]

Likewise, we examine the third notion, whether the self has some intrinsic reality within the aggregates. It is important to realize how our mind apprehends the sense of "I." That will clearly show at which level of the notion of selfhood our mistake occurs.

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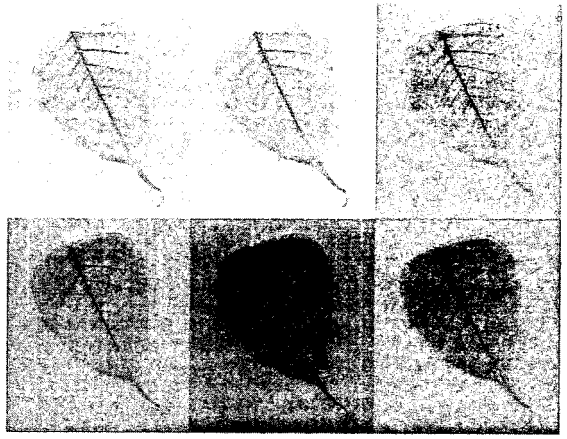

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3 The Vaibhashika School

The Great Exposition

As I mentioned above, the four Buddhist philosophical schools as presented in the monastic universities were not so neatly demarcated historically. The huge advantage, however, in such a manner of presentation is the clarity and (relative) simplicity that such a structure allows. For that reason, I will follow this structure here.

The first of the schools studied in Tibetan monasteries, the Vaibhashika (Great Exposition) school, takes its name from a text called the *Great Exposition of Particulars* (*Mahavibhasha*), because this school's core assertions on the base, path, and result all come from this text.

As we have seen, the *base* refers to how a particular school perceives the manner of existence of phenomena, the *path* to what should be adopted and what abandoned based on a thorough knowledge of the base, and the *result* to the goal that a practitioner attains by following such a path. Again, this is the standard template used in the monasteries to explain each school.

The *Great Exposition of Particulars* is a thorough presentation of seven Abhidharma texts that the Vaibhashika masters assert were taught by the Buddha. The seven texts are: *Dharmasamgrahani* by Shariputra, *Prajñaptishastra* by Maudgalyaputra, *Prakaranapada* by

Vasumitra, *Jñanaprastan* by Katyayanaputra, *Vijñanakaya* by Devasharma, *Sangitiparyaya* by Mahakaustila, and *Dhatukaya* by Purna.

There have been several attempts to translate the entire *Great Exposition of Particulars* into Tibetan, but unfortunately it is currently only available in Pali and Chinese. Whatever we study about the text is reliant on what subsequent commentators have said about it. Of the seven Abhidharma treatises that make up the text, only two are available in Tibetan.

Generally, we take what we know about this school from Vasubandhu's *Treasury of Higher Knowledge* (*Abhidharmakosha*) and his autocommentary (*Abhidharmakoshabhashyam*). Most of the subsequent writings on this school from Tibetan masters are based on Vasubandhu.

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Divisions of Phenomena

The Vaibhashika school is the first and least subtle of the schools and is largely dismissed by the later schools except as a means of refining their own views. In spite of this, there is one area where Vaibhashika ideas have proved to be not only an excellent primer but also so succinct that their approach has carried through to all the other schools, and that is in the area of the classification of phenomena, where all things and events in the universe are categorized in order to better understand them. Before undertaking an extensive investigation of *how* things exist, it is very useful to be clear about *what* exists in the universe. The basic categories that are presented in this school have been so workable that none of the other schools have been tempted to change them radically. Of course, when it comes to the finer details there are some differences, and some ideas particular to one school are redefined or rejected by another school. But the overall structure and the concepts used in Vaibhashika classification apply for all the schools.

Compounded and Uncompounded Phenomena

In the Abhidharma texts, existent things are presented in two categories:

- compounded phenomena
- uncompounded phenomena

All existent things, both within and outside of cyclic existence, fit into one of these two categories. From them, Vasubandhu's *Treasury of Higher Knowledge* starts with an explanation of uncompounded phenomena, simply because there are significantly fewer divisions. Thus, it is easier to understand and memorize—a very important point for a young monk in a monastery.

Here, *uncompounded* means:

- something that is not created by the coming together of causes and conditions,
- something that does not change moment by moment during its existence, and therefore,
- something that cannot perform a function.

In the *Treasury of Higher Knowledge*, the main examples of uncompounded phenomena are space and the two types of cessation, non-analytical and analytical. *Non-analytical cessation* refers to the temporary ceasing of certain types of negativities, misperceptions, and so on when we enter the meditative concentration that interrupts our attachment to sensory objects. When the concentration stops, our attachment naturally returns. *Analytical cessation* occurs by means of the meditation analyzing the reality of things and events, and is a complete cessation in that there is no reversal. It is the full cessation borne of realization.

Space is the mere absence of obstruction; as such it is not the result of any causes and conditions.

The term *compounded phenomena* is a synonym for impermanent phenomena and refers to those things that come into being because of causes and conditions. You will remember the first of the four Buddhist seals discussed above: "All compounded phenomena are impermanent." Vasubandhu defines a compounded phenomenon as:

> ...an object that has arisen in dependence on the aggregation of causes and conditions.[7]

Compounded phenomena, which include all other existent things, can be categorized in many different ways, but the main subdivisions are:

1. form
2. consciousness
3. nonassociated compositional factors

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All things and events that come into existence due to causes and conditions can be found within these three subdivisions. Whether they are within samsara or beyond it, whether they should be abandoned or adopted, whether they are external phenomena or internal mental events—anything that comes into existence in dependence on the aggregation of causes and conditions is here.

Form does not refer here only to gross material things—shape, color, pen, book, and so forth—but also to any object of the sensory consciousnesses. It thus includes things like odors and sounds as well.

Consciousness refers to all mental events. Again, the basic concept of consciousness that the Vaibhashikas assert has proved so useful and unassailable that it has been adopted by all the other schools. This understanding of material and mental phenomena is at the core of any presentation on Buddhist philosophy.[8]

There are six main consciousnesses. The first five are related to the sense organs: sight (eye), hearing (ear), smell (nose), taste (tongue), and touch (body). The sixth is the mental consciousness, in which we can include all sorts of mental processes: thoughts, emotions, intelligence, feelings, and so on, as well as all uncontaminated consciousnesses.

The third category, *nonassociated compositional factors*, refers to all other phenomena that come together due to causes and conditions but don't fit into the other two categories. A classic example of this is an image we see in a dream. Perhaps we have dreamed of a nice beach. Although the dream itself is consciousness, the image that appears in the dream is not consciousness, nor is it form; nevertheless, it is a compounded phenomenon, since it has come into existence due to causes and conditions.

Nonassociated compositional factors also includes abstract phenomena, such as time, continuity, aging, birth, and the very important phenomenon of person. Person—our sense of identity, our "I"—is neither form nor consciousness, and yet it is a compounded phenomenon because it comes into existence due to the aggregation of causes and conditions. All Buddhist schools assert that this is correct.

The Vaibhashika View of the Two Truths

Since we need to examine each school's explanation of reality and how we generally perceive that reality, we tend to force the Vaibhashika views into the template of the two truths. Unlike the Mahayana schools, however, there is no real comparable presentation of the two truths either in this school or in the next, the Sautrantika, even though the terms "conventional" and "ultimate" are often used in connection with other things.

The main focus of this school's presentation is on the thirty-seven

aspects of the path to enlightenment. These thirty-seven are divided into seven groups; they provide a general structure of the entire Buddhist path. To me, the thirty-seven aspects are an integral framework for anyone who is studying Buddhism, since they clearly show what is needed, and at what stage, on the journey to enlightenment. Starting from the first group, the four mindfulnesses, up to the last group, the noble eightfold path, everything about the thirty-seven aspects is related to the four noble truths, and the practices associated with each of the thirty-seven aspects are tools that can take us from where we are now all the way up to enlightenment.[9]

If you are a student of Tibetan Buddhism, it might seem that these practices are not essential, as they are not emphasized in the Tibetan tradition. But in reality, they are vital; they are the basic structure of any Buddhist practice. The six perfections and the four means of drawing students to the Dharma are very advanced and are in addition to these, not substitutes for them.

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Although these thirty-seven aspects are the main focus for both the Vaibhashika and Sautrantika schools, their scholars did consider the Buddha's all-important concept of selflessness from the point of view of how we misconceive reality. The two truths are present in their philosophies, albeit implicitly. In the *Treasury of Higher Knowledge*, however, when referring to this school, Vasubandhu uses not only the terms *conventional* and *ultimate*, but also *conventional truth* and *ultimate truth*. From that, we are able to trace back and infer what the Vaibhashikas consider to be the two truths.

In the seventh chapter of the *Treasury of Higher Knowledge*, for example, there is a section about contaminated and uncontaminated consciousnesses. Vasubandhu explains that the objects that appear to a contaminated consciousness are the objects of a conventional mind. He connects these concepts further by showing that a contaminated consciousness refers to the mindstream of a being who has not realized

selflessness directly. From this, it can be surmised that conversely, objects of an uncontaminated consciousness—the mind of a being who *has* realized selflessness directly—must be objects of an ultimate mind. In the seventh chapter of Vasubandhu's autocommentary, it says:

> Contaminated things—vase, cloth, person, male, female, and so on—
> Such things the contaminated mind apprehends;
> Therefore, it is called a conventional consciousness.[10]

The examples cited by Vasubandhu—vase, cloth, person, male, female—are objects of contaminated consciousnesses because they are conventional objects apprehended by a consciousness that has not realized selflessness directly. In the Vaibhashika presentation, *conventional* generally refers to something that is not true as it appears.

Although the term *truth* is not added, it is implied by the way that *conventional* and *ultimate* are used. Thus, objects are defined depending on whether they are perceived truly or falsely, which in turn depends on whether the mind perceiving them is uncontaminated (hence, correct) or contaminated (hence, faulty). What defines *true* and *false* really depends on the various schools' interpretation, but even here *true* is presented more as ultimate truth and *false* more as conventional truth.

Another verse from the fifth chapter of the *Autocommentary* says:

> The earlier masters assert that objects of supramundane consciousnesses and of consciousnesses obtained after supramundane consciousnesses are called ultimate truths.
>
> Objects apprehended by other consciousnesses are conventional truths.[11]

By "earlier masters" Vasubandhu is apparently referring to the Vaibhashika masters.[12] It is quite clear from the quote that they assert conventional and ultimate truths from the point of view of mundane and supramundane consciousnesses, which are close, if not synonymous, with contaminated and uncontaminated consciousnesses. Thus, a mundane, contaminated consciousness—one that has not realized emptiness or selflessness—knows conventional truths, whereas a supramundane, uncontaminated consciousness—one that has realized selflessness directly—knows ultimate truths. Similarly, there is a quote from Purnavardhana in his commentary on the *Treasury of Higher Knowledge* that says:

> It is called *ultimate truth* because it is the object of superior wisdom.
> It is the ultimate and it is also true, and therefore, it is called *ultimate truth*.[13]

This kind of usage is very similar to the Madhyamaka presentation. It is clear from all this that the terms *conventional* and *ultimate* are used in many different ways in the texts of the Vaibhashika school.

Conventional Truth and Imputed Existence

Had there been explicit explanations of the two truths in the Vaibhashika writings, I'm sure the later Tibetan masters would have seized them and used them in explaining this school's tenets. As it is, the Tibetan commentators always come back to one particular verse from the sixth chapter of Vasubandhu's *Treasury of Higher Knowledge*, the text that explains the Vaibhashika view of conventional and ultimate truth most clearly:

> If the awareness of something does not operate after that thing
> Is destroyed or mentally separated into other things,
> Then that thing exists conventionally, like a pot or water.
> Others exist ultimately.[14]

This is the simplest explanation of conventional truth, but one that nonetheless requires a degree of flexibility in our thinking. It says that when an object is destroyed or mentally separated into parts, the mind can no longer hold on to that object; therefore, it is a conventional truth. For example, if a glass jar is dropped on the floor, it will shatter and no longer be a glass jar. At that moment, the mind that apprehended the glass jar can no longer apprehend it, because it no longer exists.

Vasubandhu also uses the example of water, which is called a "collection" (rather than a "shape" as with objects such as jars). Water has no shape of its own but fits into whatever contains it, such as a glass or a riverbank. When water is confined by riverbanks, we see it as a river, but if the thing that gives the water shape (the banks) is gone, as in the time of a flood, we can no longer perceive the water as a river, and so "river" is a conventional truth.

For mental events, although the object cannot be destroyed, it can be separated into parts. The mind perceiving an hour can break that hour down into minutes and the minutes into seconds; time can be "mentally separated." Therefore, the mind no longer apprehends its original object. Objects that have this quality are called *conventional truths*.

In each of the above examples the whole object is imputed onto its parts—that is, the complete thing is imposed onto what is nothing more than a collection of substantial parts. When those parts are separated, the object can no longer hold as an entity.

Therefore, according to Vaibhashika, these are examples of *imputedly existent objects*. Imputed existence and conventional truth are

synonyms. Conversely, as we will see below, if the object is not a collection of substantial parts but is the actual substance that makes up those parts, then it is a *substantially existent object*. Substantial existence and ultimate truth are synonyms.

These two sets of synonyms, imputed existence and conventional truth, and substantial existence and ultimate truth, appear again in the other schools. It is important to understand that the meaning changes from school to school. Whether each school accepts substantial existence is another matter, but each one has its own interpretation of what substantial existence means. We should not regard the meaning described here as valid for any other school.

This category of conventional truth fits with the three types of compounded phenomena we looked at previously: form, consciousness, and nonassociated compounded phenomena. That which can be destroyed is form, and that which can be mentally separated is either consciousness or a nonassociated compounded phenomenon. Whatever the type of compounded phenomenon, if the mind holding it ceases when the object ceases, it is a conventional truth and an imputed object.

This tradition asserts that gross forms and continuities are imputed objects. It provides examples of gross objects—vase, mountain, house, and so on—and of continuities—year, month, week, and so on. These are conventional truths because they are purely imputed onto other things. When the thing onto which they are imputed, as I've said, is physically destroyed, such as when a plate is destroyed, the mind that apprehended it as a plate can no longer operate.

Sometimes the term *collective convention* is used. A house is a collective convention because it comes into existence dependent on all the bits—the bricks, windows, and so on; the mind apprehends the whole house in dependence on all those things. Sometimes the term

conventional dependence on others is used. For the mind to apprehend "year," it must depend on the continuity of each of the twelve months, so the mind is unable to apprehend "year" without it being a collection of the twelve months of which it is comprised. This is conventional dependence on others.

The term *conventional truth dependent on other substances* is also used. The molecules that make up water are not the whole glass of water nor the stream that we apprehend. When the water molecules come together as a glass of water or as a stream, this is a conventional truth dependent on other substances.

Ultimate Truth and Substantial Existence

After the three lines that describe conventional truth, Vasubandhu merely states, "Others exist ultimately." This is elaborated on in his autocommentary, where it says:

> Other than those are the ultimate truths, because even if the mind is separated from the object, such as when [the object] is destroyed, the mind apprehending it still operates, for example, the mind apprehending form.[15]

Other here refers to anything that cannot be destroyed or mentally separated into other things. This is ultimate truth according to this school, and as we have seen, ultimate truth is synonymous here with substantially existent.

What can't be broken down? There are three main categories:

1. the aggregates
2. uncompounded phenomena
3. substantial particles (of matter or mind)

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For this school, although the actual aggregation—the collection of parts that make up an object—can be separated further and further, the aggregate itself—form, feeling, consciousness, and so on—cannot. The Vaibhashikas differentiate between the aspect of having form and the form itself.

A body is made of a collection of parts, which are further made up of collections of particles. But body, parts, and particles are all form. If you break the congregation of particles up into smaller groups, the large congregation is destroyed, but it is still form. As the object is progressively broken up, the mind apprehending the various levels of congregation is cancelled, but the mind apprehending form is never destroyed.

Take the previous example we used in the discussion of conventional truth: the glass jar. A glass jar has a nature as a jar; it also has a nature of being form. As a glass jar it is a conventional truth, but as form it is an ultimate truth, because even if the jar is shattered by a hammer and the mind that apprehends the jar can no longer operate, thousands of small pieces exist that are still form, and that form is something that the mind can still apprehend. The mind that apprehended the glass jar as a glass jar is cancelled, but the mind that apprehends form still operates because form can never be cancelled.

Form exists substantially because in order to exist it does not depend on other substances. And form exists ultimately because no matter how much you cut it into pieces, it will still stay as form.

Feeling is another example. Whether we consider a feeling of great pain or just a subtle pain, whether it is pain that lasts for a long time or a short duration, all of these instances are still feeling and cannot be broken down.

The feeling of happiness is a conventional truth because as a specific mental event it must have a duration, and that duration, whether long or short, can be divided into shorter periods. No matter how long

that happiness lasts, however, it is still feeling and that is an ultimate truth. All these collections—form, feeling, and so on—are ultimate truths because the individual aspects of that phenomenon can be separated into parts, but the actual overall collection can never be.

From this school's point of view, both conventional truth and ultimate truth coexist within one object. The body is a conventional truth and the body as form is an ultimate truth.

For this school, *uncompounded phenomena*, such as the cessation of suffering or space—the mere absence of obstruction—substantially exist and are, therefore, ultimate truths because their existence does not depend on other things and they do not change while they exist.

Substantial objects are also ultimate truths. Here, however, *substantial* does not mean "made of substances" but the actual substance itself. For this school it means the fundamental building block of the universe, called the *partless particle*, or in the case of mental events, the *partless moment of consciousness*. We will discuss these further below. They are ultimate truths because they cannot be destroyed or further reduced, and the mind that apprehends these partless particles or partless moments will never be stopped. They are substantially existent because their existence is not dependent on other substances.

Ultimate Truth, Selflessness, and Emptiness

In order to refute the non-Buddhists' concept of the self as permanent, unitary, and indivisible, Vaibhashikas assert that the self cannot exist as a different entity from the mind/body aggregates. In the same way that the body is imputed onto the substantially existing particles that make it up, the sense of "I" is imputed onto the mind/body aggregation.

The Vaibhashika understanding of the nature of self goes only as far as the selflessness of person; this is the extent of their emptiness.

They do not talk about the other type of emptiness that we find in the higher schools, the emptiness of other phenomena, such as body, house, and car. At this level, the term *emptiness* refers only to the person being empty of a permanent, unitary, and indivisible reality.

For the Vaibhashika school, emptiness is an ultimate truth. These are not synonyms, however—ultimate truths are not necessarily emptinesses. For Vaibhashikas, there are other ultimate truths within the compounded phenomena—form, feeling, and so on, or the fundamental building blocks of matter, or the shortest moments of consciousness. They assert all these as ultimate truths, but of course they are not emptinesses.

The seventh chapter of the *Treasury of Valid Knowledge* says: "Emptiness and selflessness are two to be entered into [i.e., realized]." It is clear from that statement that even though the Vaibhashikas use the term *emptiness*, it means something different here than it does in the context of the later schools. This, the simplest explanation of emptiness in Buddhism, accords with the meaning of emptiness found in the *Four Noble Truths Sutra*.

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Partless Particles and Partless Moments of Consciousness

The first two realist schools (Vaibhashika and Sautrantika) assert that there are substantially, truly existing objects. As we have seen, a glass jar is not substantially existent but is imputed onto something that is. The quest for what substantially exists was one of the prime foci of the Vaibhashika scholars. In searching for the mode of existence of phenomena, they sought some sort of fundamental particle that serves as the basic building block for all other things. It was only the later, more subtle philosophies that argued that an assertion of any intrinsically existent phenomenon at all is basically flawed.

If we enter for a moment the mind of a Vaibhashika scholar of two thousand years ago, we would be earnestly searching for the primal particle from which all else derives. An object is made of parts, and those parts are made of parts. Logically, then, following this line of investigation, we *must* come to an endpoint, where we will have gone as far as we can, and where we find a particle that can no longer be broken down.

Even though this basic building block may be partless, Vaibhashika scholars assert that it must nevertheless be made of different constituents in order for the myriad objects of this universe to be formed. There must exist within each partless particle the potential for the different elements that constitute our universe: earth, water, fire, and air. These are not the gross elements that we would generally associate with the names, but the aspects of firmness, moistness, heat, and movement. The Vaibhashikas also considered that these partless particles must have within them the potential to be experienced, so they must contain the sense objects of visual form, tactile form, smell, and taste. (It's interesting that sound is not included. The early Buddhist schools, like the Greeks, regarded sound as a wave and therefore not among the components that make up material things.)

Therefore, in the desire realm (the realm we live in), said the Vaibhashikas, partless particles are made of eight constituents: earth, water, fire, and air, and visual form, tactile form, odor, and taste. Buddhism also asserts other realms, so they determined that partless particles in the form realm, where there are only limited senses, have six constituents: earth, water, fire, and air, smell, and taste.

It might seem strange to a Western scientific mind that experiential factors such as touch, smell, and taste are included in the constituents that make up the universe's fundamental particle. This stems from the very basic Buddhist doctrine of karma, which states that if the cause does not have the potential to bring the result, then it is impossible for

that result to arise. Therefore, for a partless particle to be experienced in whatever way we experience it—as a car, a hamburger, a stick of incense—there needs to be within that particle the potential to be experienced by the senses. If these fundamental building blocks of external objects do not possess the potential to produce smell, then no matter how much we try, smell cannot be produced.

In the same way that they posited that the smallest form of matter must be the partless particle, the early Vaibhashika philosophers posited a similar fundamental building block of mental events, the *partless moment of consciousness*.

Our consciousness is a stream. I can have a memory of my time at Sera Monastery that flows like a sequence from a movie. Within that there are smaller "scenes" of the memory, and within that there are moments of time remembered. There are still smaller moments of time within that stream of consciousness, and just as with material phenomena, argue the Vaibhashika scholars, there must logically come a point where those moments of consciousness can no longer be broken down—the partless moment of consciousness. Our consciousness is an aggregation of these moments.

The debate between the Vaibhashikas and the other schools is not about whether a partless particle can be further divided but whether the fundamental constituents of the particle, such as the earth and water elements, can stand by themselves without relying on the other elements. Vaibhashika scholars say that the partless particle is the smallest unit of matter or mind and, hence, is indivisible. Scholars of the other schools contend that the elements (earth, fire, and so on) that constitute a partless particle are themselves constituents of that particle, and that in itself makes the particle divisible. In this way, the whole concept of partless particles is called into question.

This is a very rarefied argument, and the other schools see something utterly illogical in the Vaibhashika stance. If, they ask the Vaibhashikas, these smallest units of matter have no parts, which implies no sides or directions and so on, then it stands to reason that two particles would take up no more room than just one. Either these particles have sides and are "atoms" as we would know them, or they are partless and without sides. In this case, there could be no spatial relationship wherein the left side of one particle would touch the right side of another. That being so, two particles would take up the same space as one, as would three, one hundred, one million, and so on. An object, which supposedly consists of millions of these partless particles, would itself take up no more space than one particle. Therefore, the other schools argue, it is impossible for matter to be built from such fundamental partless particles.

This is how it must appear to the modern, logical, scientific mind. Don't forget, however, that these concepts were being formulated in the early centuries of the first millennium. Those who formulated them must have been very astute to devise such sophisticated philosophical arguments. These concepts brought the practitioners who worked with them a long way toward an understanding of reality. It may seem illogical that a Vaibhashika scholar wouldn't concede the point to a Prasangika scholar when confronted with the inconsistencies. But in the first place, such a confrontation probably never took place. And in the second, think about the way that scientists resisted similar assertions made by quantum physicists.

As the formulation came along later, the two truths—relative and ultimate—are not explicit in the Vaibhashika teachings. Nonetheless, the seeds of understanding are there as Vaibhashika proponents strived to explain how the universe exists and how we misperceive it. Relying on Vasubandhu's interpretation of the tenets of the Vaibhashika school, however, we can see that there are unstated assumptions that we can take to be their own two truths: that conventional

existence—that is, the world seen from the point of view of a contaminated or mundane consciousness—is imputed existence, and that ultimate existence—that is, the world seen from the point of view of an uncontaminated or supramundane consciousness—is substantial existence.

It is very helpful for us to understand as clearly as possible this school's ideas of the two truths, particularly with regard to substantial and imputed existence, for then we will see how much misperception we have in our daily lives when we encounter compounded phenomena—in other words, all the things and events we encounter in our everyday lives. We impute substantial reality onto compounded phenomena all the time and create suffering for ourselves as a result. Studying this school will help us to reflect on the many misperceptions we hold, and by seeing clearly at this relatively simple level, we can start to reduce those misconceptions and the difficulties that they create for us.

4 The Sautrantika School

The Sutra School

There is little definite information on the second school, the Sautrantika, but it seems that the views attributed to it existed quite early on in the development of Buddhist philosophy. It is even unclear what specifically constitutes Sautrantika tenets as opposed to those of the Vaibhashika school. Consequently, a Sautrantika scholar (if there were such a person) reading the words that the Madhyamaka masters put in his mouth might be quite surprised. If he were a modern Sautrantika, he might even sue for libel! Nonetheless, the clear and simple divisions that we use as study guides are vital as we refine and sharpen our ideas about the meaning of reality.

Traditionally, it is said that over time, the views of the Vaibhashika school became more diverse, causing it to divide into eighteen different subschools; it seems that the Sautrantika school arose as a continuation of one of these subschools. There are different assertions about the origins of the school, but it is generally felt that the break came because the scholars who would come to form the nucleus of Sautrantika thinking refuted the Vaibhashika claim that the seven Abhidharma texts they used were actual sutras, counterclaiming that they were in fact just *shastras*, that is, commentaries by later Indian masters.

The Easy Path

Illuminating the First Panchen Lama's Secret Instructions

Gyumed Khensur Lobsang Jampa

Edited by Lorne Ladner

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11. Special Insight: The Perfection of Wisdom

Before addressing the instructions on special insight, I'd like to share a few quotes about the benefits of meditation on emptiness. In the *Sutra Bestowed to Kumara Ratnadatta*, the Buddha said, "Manjushri, if someone listens to this teaching even with doubt, that one accumulates more merit than bodhisattvas practicing the six perfections for hundreds of thousands of eons without skillful means. What need is there to mention if someone listens to it without doubt?" In the *Sutra of the Tathagata's Treasury*, the Buddha said that if someone who has committed the ten negative actions enters intensively into the teachings on selflessness and has conviction and faith in the primordial purity of all phenomena, that sentient being will not go to the lower realms. In the *Sutra of Ajatashatru*, the Buddha said, "[If] someone who has committed the five uninterrupted negative actions later hears, enters into, and generates faith in this Dharma, then I do not call that person's karma a karmic obscuration." In his *Four Hundred Stanzas*, Aryadeva mentions in verse 180:

> Those of little merit
> have no doubts about this Dharma.
> Even by merely generating doubt,
> samsara is torn to tatters.

These passages make clear how even merely studying emptiness, much less deeply contemplating and meditating upon it, is extremely powerful

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These passages make clear how even merely studying emptiness, much less deeply contemplating and meditating upon it, is extremely powerful

for counteracting negative karma and putting an end to samsara. Even the mere suspicion that things do not exist inherently as they appear to is more powerful than the vastest positive actions performed without that insight.

Preparation

(b) The way to train in special insight—the entity of wisdom
1' What to do during the actual meditation session
a' Preparation
b' Actual session
c' Conclusion
2' What to do between meditation sessions

Preparation

It is like the explanation on calm abiding, but there are differences:

1. Relying properly on a skilled spiritual teacher, one listens to his or her precepts on special insight.
2. Having made the guru inseparable from the special deity, one makes fervent supplication.
3. One makes effort to assemble [the two accumulations], purify, and so on.

One should intertwine these three as a preliminary to realizing the view.

Prior to meditating on special insight, engage in the same preliminaries described for calm abiding plus the additional ones mentioned here. The first is to listen to teachings on emptiness from your guru. For those practicing tantra, the second is to view your guru as inseparable from your special deity and make fervent prayers and supplications. Those who are not practicing tantra can engage in guru-yoga practice for the second of these special preliminaries. Third is to accumulate merit and purify negative karma extensively to help prepare you to realize special insight.

Meditation on the Emptiness of Persons

Actual Session

1" How to meditate [on special insight], having determined the selflessness of persons
2" How to meditate [on special insight], having determined the selflessness of phenomena other than persons
a" How to meditate [on special insight], having determined the lack of inherent existence of composite phenomena
1: Matter
2: Consciousness
3: Nonassociated compositional factors
b" How to meditate [on special insight], having determined the lack of inherent existence of noncomposite phenomena

1" How to Meditate [on Special Insight], Having Determined the Selflessness of Persons

Numberless proofs of selflessness are taught in the scriptures of the Conqueror. However, for beginners to understand, it is easiest to determine it from the perspective of the four vital points. The way you do that is as follows.

So regarding the actual teachings on special insight, there are two types of selflessness—selflessness of persons and selflessness of phenomena. *Easy Path* explains that there are numberless analyses and reasons given in the Buddha's teachings to prove emptiness, but the easiest way for beginners to progress is by meditating on four vital points. These four points are (1) identifying the object of negation, (2) understanding the entailment, (3) understanding that self is not the same as the aggregates, and (4) understanding that self is not different from the aggregates.

Identifying the Object of Negation

All the time, even in deep sleep, the mind clings tightly in the center of the heart to the thought "I, I." This is the innate

> misconception of a self. For instance, say that having done nothing wrong, you are accused falsely by someone, "You did such and such bad deed." There then arises tightly in the center of your heart the thought "I, I": "I did no such a wrong thing, yet I am being accused falsely." At that time the way that the "I" is conceived by the innate misconception of a self is clear.

Correctly, precisely identifying the object of negation is extremely important for meditation on selflessness. The Panchen Lama describes how you hold the thought "I, I" in the center of your chest, giving the example of how that feeling of "I" is intensified in your heart when you are falsely accused. This innate self-grasping is always there but appears more strongly and clearly when you are falsely accused.

"Object of negation" refers to the way you experience the self: as though it exists from its own side, without depending on the mind and body, the five psychophyscial aggregates. It is, in other words, an instinctive sense that the self exists from its own side. Such a self does not exist at all.

Lama Tsongkhapa explains in his *Concise Instructions* how this "self" that is the object of negation arises and appears experientially. It is not something that arises due to analysis. It spontaneously appears as though it exists from its own side, without having to depend on its basis of imputation—the five aggregates. Lama Tsongkhapa says that experientially, this self appears *solidly*. He uses the analogy of walking in pitch darkness, reaching out your hand, and suddenly touching a pillar. At such a moment, the pillar appears very solid to you. The pillar doesn't seem at all to depend on anything—on having been constructed, on its parts, or on the label "pillar." The experience of the self that is the object of negation is similar. Lama Tsongkhapa also says that that self appears *like a lingering thought*, always there in the back of your mind. This is likened to how when you touch a pillar in the dark, the pillar seems to you to have always been in that spot, primordially present. And he says that that self also appears *vividly* to you. Again this can be likened to the experience of suddenly coming upon a pillar in the dark and how that pillar

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appears to your mind. This analogy and these adjectives are intended to help you identify the object of negation in your own experience.

Shar Kalden Gyatso, a mahasiddha of the Geluk tradition sometimes called "a second Milarepa" due to his accomplishment of *siddhis*,[45] describes in detail how the object of negation appears. He begins with an analogy, like Lama Tsongkhapa's, of reaching out in the pitch darkness and touching a table. When you lay your hand on the table, you instinctually think and feel that the table exists from its own side and always has. It seems like you're touching something that's always been there, primordially. Although the existence of the table depends on many factors such as its component parts and your own imputation of "table" once you laid your hand on it, it ordinarily would never occur to you when you touch a table in the dark that it doesn't exist from its own side. You never think at such a moment that it only arises in dependence on many factors including its component parts and your own labeling! You instinctively think that it existed prior to your touching it, that it exists from its own side, and that it doesn't depend on its parts or your labeling. This is how you experience the object of negation. You instinctively think that the self existed in your mental and physical aggregates prior to your labeling it. You think it exists from its own side, and it doesn't occur to you that it's merely labeled by yourself. Your thought that a self exists from the side of the aggregates—that it exists there independently of your imputation—is the object that must be refuted.

Kalden Gyatso continues by explaining that there are actually two objects that must be refuted or destroyed. One is that object just described—the independently existent "I" on the aggregates—which is actually a totally nonexistent entity. That is like a hallucination—something that appears to you but has never existed at all. The other is the subjective self—the mind that clings and grasps at that hallucination as though it did exist. It's like a person with jaundice perceiving a Himalayan mountain as yellow. The yellow mountain doesn't exist, but the person with jaundice does exist. Just so, while the object of negation—the truly existent self—doesn't exist, the mind grasping at that false "I" does exist. This is important for your practice of meditation

on emptiness. As you meditate on emptiness, you must come to see that the objective self doesn't exist. But the subjective mind grasping at that object is not capable of such insight or analysis. That mind of ignorance cannot become wisdom; when emptiness is recognized, that subjective mind grasping at true existence has its continuum severed. So you must employ another part of your mind to analyze whether the truly existent self exists. One part of your mind experiences grasping at the truly existent self while another part of your mind analyzes that self, looking at all the logical contradictions. This second part of your mind eventually refutes the existence of the objective self. This is what destroys the continuum of the subjective mind grasping it. What continues is a wisdom mind.

Kalden Gyatso concludes his discussion of the object of negation by offering to reveal the object of negation nakedly, just as it is. He then says that everything that appears to you is the object of negation! Your own body and mind as well as all external things appear to you as truly, inherently existent, and you then grasp and cling to that false mode of appearance. Although things do exist conventionally in mere name, ordinary beings have not yet realized emptiness and so cannot differentiate experientially between what's conventionally existent and what's the object of negation. Ordinary beings are always mistaken in actually believing in the false appearance of things existing from their own side. When you negate this false appearance, that simple negation induces the experience of emptiness.

> At that time, therefore, analyze with a subtle portion of the mind how that ["I, I"] mind conceives the self and where it conceives the self to be. When the analytical portion of the mind becomes too strong, the misconceiving mind disappears. Then nothing will come to mind except for a vacuity. Therefore, while the main mind is firmly and continuously generating the thought "I," analyze it with a subtle portion of the mind.
>
> When analyzing in that way, the locus where the innate conception of a self has apprehended an "I" is not somewhere other than your combined body and mind or your five aggregates. It is also neither upon each of the five aggregates taken singularly, nor the body or mind taken singularly. However, an "I" that is able to set itself up from the beginning is conceived as existing without being merely designated by thought upon the mass that is either a mere collection of body and mind combined, or a mere collection of the five aggregates. This is the way that the innate misconception of a self conceives an "I." The "I" that is its object is the object of negation that will be refuted.
>
> The way of identifying the object of negation must be realized nakedly in your own mental continuum without its being just an idea presented by others or a generic image evoked by words. This is the first vital point, ascertaining how the object of negation appears.

Here the Panchen Lama is describing a process like the one Kalden Gyatso taught of having the main part of your mind grasp at the objective, inherently existent "self" while another portion of your mind analyzes whether that self exists. In order to bring that self-grasping mind into your experience clearly and strongly, you imagine being falsely accused of something until you feel upset. A strong sense of grasping at a self in your heart will arise as you think, "I didn't do that!" When that clinging to a sense of self arises strongly, don't let it go. Sustain it with mindfulness. While most of your mind is engaged in grasping at the truly existent self, engage a small part of your mind in analyzing your experience of how that self-grasping mind is generated. Begin checking if it corresponds to something that exists in reality! If you engage most of your mind in such analysis, you will lose the vividness of the object of negation. Then your analysis won't be useful. You must keep most of your mind engaging in grasping at the inherently existent "I" in your heart.

The fact that you have a strong experience of self-grasping—the object of negation—doesn't prove it's valid any more than someone's experiencing a hallucination proves that the object of his or her hallucination exists. If it's valid, it must correspond to something in reality. If that inherently existent self actually exists, then it must exist in your mind

or body. So you search your own body and mind, first checking each of the five aggregates one by one. When you search your body, feelings, consciousness, and so forth, you find it cannot exist in any one of them. Then you check whether it can exist in all five aggregates combined. But if you found that it didn't exist in any one, then it cannot exist in their collection. Through your own analysis, you'll discover that there is no truly existent self in the body, in the mind, or in the collection of those two. You then see how the mind imputes or labels a self on the basis of the aggregates. When you think that the self exists from its own side, independent of being merely imputed by the mind on the aggregates, this is the "self" that is the object of negation! By going though this step-by-step meditation process, you can come to see clearly that object of negation in your own experience.

Analyzing the Entailment

> Second is the vital point of ascertaining the entailment. The mind holds tightly in the center of your heart the thought "I." If the "I" that is conceived by that mind exists upon your five aggregates, then it must be either the same as or different from the five aggregates. No third way of existing other than those two is possible. Whatever exists must be either singular or plural. So think and decide that, "It is not possible at all to have a third way of existing other than those two ways of existing."

The second vital point is entailment, which is a point of logic recognizing that if the truly existent self you grasp at actually exists, then there are only two possibilities—it must exist as one with the aggregates or as separate from the aggregates. If such a self exists, it must either be identical with or separate from the aggregates. If something truly exists, it must be singular or plural—one or many. These points of logic must be understood for successful meditation. You analyze each of the aggregates, checking if the self exists in one of them. If the self existed in each of the five, then you would have five selves! If the self existed pervading all five, then those five would have to be inherently one thing, which

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of course they are not. You also check if the self could exist inherently apart from those five. For your analysis to have an impact, you must be convinced that you have exhausted all logical alternatives for how that self could exist.

The Self Is Not the Same as the Aggregates

> The third vital point is ascertaining the lack of true sameness. If you think that the "I" that has been conceived in that way [as able to set itself up from the beginning] is the same as the five aggregates, then there are many faults. For instance, just as one person has five aggregates, the "I" would also be five different continua. Or just as there is one "I," the five aggregates would also become a partless whole. Therefore think, "The 'I' that has been conceived in that way is not the same as the five aggregates."

The third vital point is that the self is not one with the aggregates. If you assert that the self is the same as the five aggregates, many absurd logical consequences ensue. As there are five aggregates, if each is the truly existent self, then you must conclude that you are five people! Or you'd have to assert that those five things are actually just one thing!

In meditation, you investigate which of the five is the self or where it exists on them. If the body were the self, you would be able to find it on the body. The body is likewise made up of many parts, so then you'd again have the problem of many selves. Also, the self you experience is a composite of mind and body, but the body alone is merely matter. So you can see that form alone is not the self.

Then you can check whether feelings are the self. Feelings are temporary and quite fleeting, whereas the self seems to be lasting and eternal. So self and feelings are not identical. You then analyze if discrimination is the self. Discrimination is mental in nature, but the self also has a physical component, so this is not the self. Then you can check compositional factors for a truly existent self. Through analysis, you can see that the self seems to have power over all the aggregates, but compositional factors

do not. If you analyze consciousness, the last aggregate, you find that the self seems to have all the aggregates including form, but consciousness doesn't have form.

You might think that the collection of all five aggregates is the self, but that's not so because the self is singular while the aggregates are plural. Also the collection of the aggregates is nothing other than the basis of imputation for the self. The basis of imputation and the self are not identical.

> Furthermore, if the "I" that has been conceived in that way were the same as the five aggregates, then just as the five aggregates are produced and perish, so the "I," which is able to set itself up and which is conceived by that mind, would be produced and perish. In that case, the "I" that is produced and perishes would be established as either [inherently] the same as or [inherently] different from its former and later moments.
>
> If it is the same, the "I" of former and future lives and the "I" of this life would be one partless whole. If it is different, then the "I" of future and former lives and the "I" of this life would have to be different, without any connection at all. The reason is that although in general it's not necessary for mere difference to be a difference that is without any connection, it is necessarily so when it is an inherent difference. Therefore the former and later moments of such an "I" are not [inherently] different; for if they were, it would incur many faults, such as our meeting with actions that we had not done and actions we had done having no effect.
>
> Thus you should think, "The 'I' that has been conceived by the mind in that way [as able to set itself up from the beginning] is not the same as the five aggregates."

Furthermore, if the self and the five aggregates existed as one and the same thing, then just as the aggregates arise and perish, not going on to the next life, so also the self wouldn't connect to the next life. Similarly, if the self truly existed as one with the aggregates, which are

always changing, then either the self of this present moment would have to be perfectly identical with the self of yesterday, or today's self and yesterday's would have to be totally unrelated. This same reasoning applies to previous lives and this current life, childhood and adulthood, or yesterday and today. If you assert that the self and the ever-changing aggregates are identical, you get stuck with the absurd conclusion that the self of the past and the self of the present are identical, contradicting your experience of change.

If you assert that the self and the ever-changing aggregates are inherently different, then you must accept that they are totally unrelated, which sticks you with the absurd consequence that your present experiences have nothing to do with your past experiences and karma. If two things are different, it doesn't generally mean that they're unrelated, but if things are inherently or ultimately different, then they can't be related. So if the "I" were truly existent, it would either have to be totally one with previous moments or would have to be totally unrelated to those previous moments. Neither of these positions is tenable. The self of today is indeed related to the self of childhood but is not identical to that self.

> Furthermore, if the "I" that has been conceived in that way is the same as the five aggregates, all its parts would have to be the same in all aspects, because it is a truly existent sameness. In that case, there would be many faults, such as that the "I" or "self" would not be that which appropriates the five aggregates and the five aggregates would not be that which is appropriated by the "I" or "self."

Also, if the "I" were the same as the aggregates, then they couldn't be appropriated by the person. Yet we naturally speak of "my body," "my mind," "my feelings," and so forth. Through analyzing your experience of the object of negation, checking if it is indeed identical to one or all of the aggregates of body and mind, you will come to the clear conclusion that it is not.

The Self Is Not Different from the Aggregates

> The fourth vital point is ascertaining the lack of true difference. You might think, "Since the 'I' that has been conceived in that way is not the same as the five aggregates, it must be different from the five aggregates." After you have eliminated individually the aggregates—form and so on—you are able to identify separately, "This is the aggregate of consciousness." Just so, after eliminating individually the mental and physical aggregates, you should be able to identify the "I" as different: "This is the 'I' that has been conceived in that way." However, it is not so.
>
> Therefore you should think, "The 'I' that has been conceived in that way is not different from the five aggregates."

The fourth vital point is ascertaining the lack of true difference—that the self does not truly exist as something separate from the five aggregates. If it did, then you should be able to eliminate all of the aggregates and then find an "I" there, existing as something real, separate from those aggregates. In that case, the self and the aggregates would be like a vase and a pillar—two separate things, either of which can be found in the absence of the other. You should be able to pinpoint something that is the "I" that is findable apart from the aggregates. But you cannot find anything apart from the aggregates of body and mind that corresponds to a truly existing self!

Space-Like Equipoise

> Having depended on the analysis of the four vital points in that way, you ascertain that the "I" that has been conceived by the innate misconception of a self does not exist. Then you should sustain the continuum of that ascertaining consciousness one-pointedly, free of sinking and excitement.
>
> Furthermore, if that ascertaining consciousness becomes a little weaker, beginners rely on doing the analysis of the four vital points as above and induce an ascertainment of the lack of true existence.
>
> Those of higher intelligence rely on doing an analysis of whether the "I" is established or not as it appears to the innate misconception of a self and induce an ascertainment of the lack of true existence similar to doing the analysis of the four vital points.

Since the logical entailment is valid, being unable to find a truly existent self as one with or different from the aggregates induces an experience of emptiness. Once you go through those four vital points to ascertain the lack of a truly existent self, you then sustain your awareness of that emptiness in meditative concentration without sinking or excitement as described earlier. For beginners, when your concentration wanes, it's good to again rely on the reasoning of the four vital points to re-establish your understanding. Those of higher capacity don't have to go through the four vital points again but can instead rely on a briefer reasoning or recollection to again bring a clear understanding of emptiness to mind to focus upon single-pointedly. I'll share some additional lines of reasoning below.

> At that time you possess two attributes: subjectively there is a firm ascertaining consciousness that apprehends the lack of inherent existence of the self, and objectively there is the appearance of clear vacuity that is the mere negation of true existence, the object of negation. Sustaining these two one-pointedly is the way to practice space-like meditative equipoise.

Space-like meditative equipoise on emptiness has two important qualities. In terms of understanding, you are ascertaining with certainty that things lack inherent existence. In terms of appearance, a great, space-like emptiness or vacuity dawns to the mind. Dwelling in the mere negation of true existence with these two attributes is called "space-like meditative equipoise on emptiness."

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> In post-meditation, you should view all phenomena—the self and so on—as being the sport of emptiness, like a magician's illusions. That is, in meditative equipoise you should rely on inducing a strong ascertainment of the lack of true existence. Then, after meditation, you should learn to understand whatever appears, though appearing [to be inherently existent], as sport, like a magician's illusion—false, without truth.

When you come out of that equipoise, view everything as illusion-like. As you go about daily activities, focus on seeing things as dependently arisen like a magician's illusions.

If something truly exists, then when you search for its ultimate existence, you should be able to find it, but you cannot. This does not refute things existing conventionally, as merely labeled. Conventional existence is different from inherent existence. Conventionally, we can say that things exist in the manner of illusions. They exist in dependence upon many causes
and conditions, including mere imputation.

Take the example of walking. If walking existed inherently rather than conventionally or like an illusion, then walking would have to exist without relying on causes and conditions. But where can you find such an inherently existent act of walking? Does it exist in the ground or in the feet? It's clearly not in the ground. You cannot find truly existent walking in the floor itself! Then if you search the feet, does it exist in the front foot or the rear foot? The foot that has not yet taken a step isn't walking yet, so it's not there. If you assert that walking exists on the front foot, then you must check which part of the front foot it truly exists in. Does it exist in the toes, the sole, or the heel? The heel hasn't yet reached the spot where the toes are. So, relative to the tips of the toes, the heel hasn't yet reached the destination. If it's in the tips of the toes, then can you find walking in one of the atoms that make up the toes? Which atom of which toe has taken the step? Search as you wish, you cannot ever find anything that exists that is, inherently, the act of walking. No truly existent thing can be found that ultimately corresponds with "walking," and yet walking does exist in an illusion-like, relational manner.

Whether you analyze the self or walking, if you search for something to point to as ultimately being that thing, you cannot find it! They exist like illusions, dependent upon many causes and conditions including your own imputation. You have to be satisfied with the self and all other appearances existing conventionally, depending on many factors, including mere mental imputation. If you search for something more than that, you cannot find it.

Additional Lines of Reasoning Establishing the Emptiness of Persons

All the lines of reasoning establishing the emptiness of the self of persons come down to identifying the object of negation in your own experience and then analyzing that. You must begin by clearly identifying just how you experience a self that exists inherently, from its own side, without depending on other factors such as the basis of imputation and imputation itself. You must see how you cling and grasp at that false appearance of an intrinsically existing self.

Having identified the object of negation, you investigate the four vital points as described to induce ascertainment of emptiness and then dwell in space-like meditative equipoise on emptiness. When the appearance of a truly existent self reasserts itself, you can use other lines of reasoning to refute it.

A second approach to investigating emptiness of persons is the sevenfold reasoning taught by Master Chandrakirti, which is usually illustrated using the example of a chariot. The seven points of reasoning are that the self is not one with aggregates, it's not other than the aggregates, it doesn't inherently depend on the aggregates, it's not a basis on which the aggregates inherently depend, it's not the owner of the aggregates, it's not the mere collection of the aggregates, and it's not the shape of the aggregates. Contemplating these reasons is a powerful means for establishing emptiness.

Another extremely profound contemplation to prove emptiness is the reasoning of dependent arising. Dependent arising is the most important line of reasoning proving emptiness. Self-grasping clings to an independent, inherently existent self. Recognizing dependent arising directly reveals that all phenomena lack such independent existence, since a

thing cannot exist both independently and dependently. Also, all meditations on emptiness eliminate eternalism—the view of permanence. As you refute eternalism, you risk falling into nihilism, believing that even the conventionally existent self doesn't exist. The reasoning of dependent arising shows how things do exist as mere mental imputations. Through such reasoning, you must develop great certainty regarding how things do exist conventionally in that way while at the same time lacking any independent, inherent nature whatsoever.

Contemplation of dependent arising has two aspects. One is that things arise in dependence upon causes and conditions. The other, subtler reasoning is that things arise in dependence upon imputation or labeling. For the first of those, you reason, "The self doesn't truly exist because it arises depending on causes and conditions." In the *Sutra Requested by the Naga King Anavatapta*, the Buddha said:

> Whatever arises based on conditions is not arisen.
> That does not have the nature of arising.
> Whatever depends on conditions should be understood
> as empty.
> Whoever understands emptiness is conscientious.

If things exist depending on causes and conditions, then they don't exist independently or truly. Regarding the second reasoning of dependent on mere imputation, you must begin by identifying the object of negation as described earlier. Then you refute that self that appears to exist from its own side and the mind that grasps at that false appearance. You do so by reasoning that such a self does not exist because the self is merely imputed by your own mind in dependence upon the component parts. How things dependently arise due to mental imputation is expressed in the *Sutra Requested by Upali*, where the Buddha said:

> Flowers of many colors bloom, bringing joy.
> Exquisite, brilliant mansions of gold please the mind.
> These do not have a creator, for they are imputed by thought.
> The world is imputed through the power of thoughts.

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As you analyze, you can see that the "self" is imputed on the five aggregates. In his *Precious Garland*, Arya Nagarjuna also teaches a method of analyzing selflessness by seeing how "self" is imputed on the elements. He advises first clearly identifying the object of negation and then examining all the six elements to see that each of the elements is not the self. So you look at flesh and bones, which constitute the earth element; the blood and other bodily fluids, which constitute the water element; heat, which is the fire element; breath, which is the wind element; consciousness; and space within your body. You find that none of these is the self. Nagarjuna says:

> The person is neither earth nor water,
> not fire, wind, or space,
> nor is it consciousness or all of them together.
> What is a person separate from these?

If you analyze in this way, you will see that person or self exists as something merely imputed or labeled on the elements.

Thus you can say that the conventional self exists, but it doesn't have to exist within the basis of imputation—the body or the mind—to exist. Even the conventional self cannot be found anywhere in the body or mind. It exists as something merely labeled on the basis of the body and mind. The conventionally existent self does not exist from the side of the object; it's not something that can be pointed out anywhere. It exists merely as a mental imputation, but it doesn't exist from its own side.

When people bring up the object of negation in a visceral way and then meditate in the ways described on its emptiness, it's normal to experience intense fear at first, as though you were about to lose something you've felt was very precious for a long time. Some people experience such fear at the beginning. Others who've been seeking the meaning of emptiness for a long time may experience great joy, as though they've found something wonderful that they'd lost. Either of these emotional experiences is a good sign your meditation on emptiness is being effective, and both sorts of individuals will experience bliss and joy if they persist with their contemplation at such times.

Meditation on the Emptiness of Phenomena

Easy Path next explains meditation on the emptiness of phenomena. "Phenomena" refers here to everything that exists other than persons. This includes produced phenomena—matter, consciousness, and non-associated compositional factors—as well as unproduced phenomena, such as space.

Matter

> Take the example of the body. This is the way that the object of negation appears: It appears to us undeniably as a whole, palpable, singular body that is able to set itself up without being merely designated by thought upon this body, a mere collection of five limbs—a mass of flesh and bones.
>
> If such a body exists upon this body that is a mere collection of five limbs—a mass of flesh and bones—it must be either the same as or different from this body that is a mere collection of five limbs—a mass of flesh and bones.
>
> This body that is a mere collection of five limbs—a mass of flesh and bones—comes from the sperm and blood of your parents. Therefore, if the [truly existent] body is the same as this body, even that drop of blood and semen that is the basis for the entry of the consciousness would have to be a body that is a mere collection of five limbs—a mass of flesh and bones. Or, just as there are five limbs, the body would also have to be five bodies that are collections of five limbs.
>
> If they are different, you would have to show "This is the body" after eliminating each of the limbs—the head and so on. However, it is not so. Therefore, having induced the ascertaining consciousness that thinks, "Such a body completely does not exist," sustain it.

When meditating on the emptiness of matter, take the example of your own body. Then, as you did when meditating on the emptiness of the self, identify the object of negation. The object of negation here is the

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way your body typically appears to you, as a truly existent whole that does not arise as something merely imputed on its parts. The "five limbs" the Panchen Lama refers to are the arms, the legs, and the head. You see your body as something singular and whole, but if the body were inherently one with its parts, then because there are many parts, you would have many bodies. If the body were inherently different from its parts, then those parts would be unrelated to your body; you'd have to be able to eliminate all the parts of your body and still point to something that is your body existing apart from its parts. Clearly this is impossible. Furthermore, if your body existed as inherently the same as its parts, then all the limbs you have now would have had to have already been present when you were an embryo. But at that stage your limbs and many other parts hadn't yet arisen. Such contemplations reveal that the body is produced based on its parts, which proves that it lacks inherent, independent existence.

Take the example of a vase. When we say that a conventional vase exists, we're not saying that we can find the vase on the base, the handle, the bulbous body, or the spout. It is not findable on any of those parts. It is merely imputed on that material basis. We feel that a truly existent vase does exist there, from the side of the object, but it's not findable on the basis of imputation. A merely labeled vase does not need to be findable from its own side, as it exists as something merely labeled! A truly existent vase or body should be findable as existing from its own side. But when you search you cannot find anything existing from its own side. It exists in mere name, labeled upon the basis of designation.

Consciousness

> Take the example of today's consciousness. If there exists a consciousness of today that is established in its own right, without being merely designated by thought upon both the consciousness of the earlier and the consciousness of later parts of today, then it would have to be either the same as or different from both the consciousness of the earlier and the consciousness of the later part of today.
>
> If it were the same, the consciousness of later part of today

would have to already exist with the consciousness of the earlier part of today. And if it were different, you would have to show it, saying "This is today's consciousness" after eliminating individually the consciousness of the earlier part of today and the consciousness of the later part of today. However, it is not so. Therefore, having induced the ascertaining consciousness that thinks "Such a consciousness completely does not exist," meditate as before.

The basis of imputation for your consciousness today is the consciousnesses of the morning, afternoon, and evening. So analyze if it exists as one with or as different from those. If it's inherently one with both the morning's consciousness and the evening's consciousness, then you have to accept the absurd conclusion that the morning's consciousness exists in the evening and that the evening's consciousness already existed in the morning! These absurdities only arise if you hold to a view of true existence. If they are inherently different—if today's consciousness exists as something inherently separate from the morning's and evening's consciousnesses—then you must be able to find a consciousness of today that exists apart from those two. That's impossible. When you gain certainty regarding the emptiness of such an independent, inherently existing consciousness through such reasoning, sustain that awareness in your meditation.

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Nonassociated Compositional Factors

Take the example of a span of time, such as one year. If there exists a year that is established in its own right, not merely designated by thought upon its basis of designation—the twelve months—it would have to be either the same as or different from the twelve months.

If it is the same, then just as there are twelve months, there would also be twelve years. If it is different, you would have to show it, saying "This is that year" after eliminating individually

the twelve months. However, it is not so. Therefore, having induced the ascertaining consciousness that thinks "Such a year completely does not exist," sustain it as before.

Nonassociated compositional factors are produced phenomena that are neither matter nor consciousness. The example given here is one year. If a year exists inherently, then it must exist as one with or as separate from the twelve months that comprise it. The logic here is similar to that employed earlier. If it's inherently one with the twelve months, you come to the absurd conclusion that there are twelve years in one year; or you conclude that the twelve months are inherently one thing. If they inherently exist separately, then you must be able to find the year totally apart from the months that make it up! If there's one year that truly exists, then you should be able to find it on its basis of imputation. But can you find the year on the first month? The second month? The third? Of course you cannot. If you eliminate all the months, you cannot find a year existing apart from them. Therefore a year doesn't exist inherently in any of the months that make it up or apart from those months. Rather, a year exists as merely labeled on the twelve months that are its basis of designation.

Unproduced Phenomena

The Way to Meditate [on Special Insight], Having Determined the Lack of Inherent Existence of Unproduced Phenomena

Take space as an example. There are many parts to space—cardinal directions and intermediate directions. Examine whether space is the same as or different from its directions and induce an ascertainment of its lack of true existence, and then meditate as before.

Space is given as the example of an unproduced phenomenon. Such phenomena don't depend on causes and conditions as people or things do, so we may think that they exist inherently. But take the example of

space. Within space there are four cardinal directions—front, back, right, and left—as well as intermediate directions, up, down, and so forth. In your meditation, contemplate whether space exists independently of the space in those different directions. If space were inherently one with the directions, then you'd be stuck with the absurd conclusion that space is many. Also "up" only exists in dependence upon "down" and so forth. If space existed apart from those directions, then you'd have to be able to take away all the space in all the directions and still have something to point to as being truly existent space.

These logical absurdities only apply to truly existent space. They don't apply when you accept that space just exists conventionally, as something merely imputed.

> In short, there is the yoga of space-like meditative equipoise, which sustains in one point the ascertainment of the lack of existence in its own right, without being merely designated by thought, of even a mere atom of any phenomenon of samsara and nirvana—self, aggregate, mountain, fence, house, other dwelling, and so on. And there is the yoga of illusion, the subsequent attainment that knows that all objects and their appearances arise from depending on assemblages of causes and conditions but are naturally false and without truth. The definition of *special insight* is the meditative equipoise that is based on sustaining well those two yogas and is conjoined with the bliss of mental and physical pliancy induced by the strength of having analyzed.

Easy Path advises engaging in the yoga of space-like meditative equipoise on emptiness and then, between sessions, viewing everything as like a magician's illusion, as described earlier. Sustaining these two yogas leads to the attainment of special insight. When one first gains calm abiding in accord with the approach taught in the Sutra Vehicle, exceptional physical and mental pliancy and bliss arise through single-pointed absorption on an object of meditation that is not analyzed. Here one generates such bliss and pliancy in deep meditative absorption through analyzing

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the meaning of emptiness. When that happens, you've attained genuine special insight.

> *Conclusion*
> It is the same as before.
>
> *What to Do Between Sessions*
> It is the same as before—look at the scriptures and commentaries that present special insight and so forth.
>
> Having trained ourselves in the general path in that way, we must certainly enter the Vajra Vehicle. Based on that path, we will accomplish easily both accumulations without having to persist for three immeasurable eons.
>
> Furthermore, the best way to make the most of this life of leisure is to receive experiential instruction on [all the topics of the stages of the path, from] the way to rely on the spiritual teacher up to calm abiding and special insight, and then to practice them each day in four sessions—or at least one session—causing transformational experience of the stages of the path to arise.

The conclusion of the session and what to do between meditative sessions are just the same as described earlier except that for one meditating on special insight, the study of texts on the subject are recommended.

It's also advised that having trained yourself in the stages of the path as taught here, you must enter the Vajra Vehicle. To enter the Vajra Vehicle, you must receive initiation from a qualified guru and keep the vows and commitments you take during the initiation. Many essential points of tantric practice have been integrated throughout this discussion of the stages of the path, in accord with the unique approach of *Easy Path*, so I won't go into more detail here. If you practice taking guru yoga as the life of your practice along with visualizing the descent of five-colored nectars and lights in conjunction with the contemplations and meditations explained here, you'll find that it will strongly support your understanding and practice of tantra.

Finally, the Panchen Lama advises four practice sessions per day—or at very least, one session per day—of meditation on the stages of the path to enlightenment as they've been explained. Doing so is truly the best way to take the essence of your precious, brief human life.

Colophon
This arrangement of the concise stages of practice—
the import of the peerless Buddha's thought—
illuminated by the second Conqueror, Losang [Drakpa],
and Shri Dipankara and his disciples,
I, the so-called Chokyi Gyaltsen, composed well
as a means for the fortunate traveling to liberation.
By this virtue may all transmigrators, myself and others,
accomplish the practice of the beings of the three scopes.

This *Stages of the Path to Enlightenment: Practical Instructions on the Easy Path to Omniscience* was given directly to an ocean-like assembly of the spiritual community at the summer debating retreat by the Dharma teacher Losang Chokyi Gyaltsen. It is from notes taken from that presentation, which he reviewed and corrected. By this may it be a victory banner of the never-disappearing precious doctrine.

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Appendix I

An Extremely Brief Preliminary Practice According to the Condensed Jewel Tradition

This preliminary practice is to be performed prior to engaging in a direct meditation on the stages of the path to enlightenment. First choose a topic and then proceed as described. This extremely brief version is for those who find themselves too busy or distracted to engage in longer versions of the preliminary practices. For citations of those longer versions and some background on the condensed jewel tradition, see the preface.

Imagine your guru in his or her ordinary form atop your head.

Cultivate the conviction that in the space in front of you all your teachers are arrayed along with the lineage teachers, deities, buddhas, bodhisattvas, solitary realizers, arhats, dakas, dakinis, and Dharma protectors.

Recite three times:

I go for refuge until I am enlightened
to the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.
Through the merits I create by practicing generosity and the other perfections,
may I attain the state of a buddha to be
able to benefit all sentient beings.

SELF, REALITY AND REASON IN TIBETAN PHILOSOPHY

Tsongkhapa's Quest for the Middle Way

Thupten Jinpa

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Identifying the object of negation

Another integral part of Tsongkhapa's philosophical strategy for delineating the 'correct' domain of reasoning is what he calls the '[proper] identification of the object of negation.'[29] Aware that everyone who professes to be a Mādhyamika is familiar with the premise that all things and events lack an ultimate ontological status, Tsongkhapa did not believe, however, that all Mādhyamikas understand clearly what exactly is meant by the absence of an ultimate mode of being. Moreover, in Tsongkhapa's view, confusion about this can have grave consequences. Going too far in one's negation can result in a position that denigrates the everyday world of valid experience, thus bringing one closer to the abyss of nihilism. On the other hand, if the net of what is to be negated is cast over too confined an area, one may let certain residues of reification – that is, of that elusive intrinsic existence (*svabhāva*) – slip through, thus leading more towards the position of absolutism. Therefore, what is required, according to Tsongkhapa, is to skilfully tread a fine line between the two extremes of under-negation and over-negation.[30] Tsongkhapa argues that it is crucial to have a clear conception of what is to be negated.[31] Without this, he suggests that statements like 'nothing exists in an absolute sense' and 'if things and events are still claimed to exist in such a manner, such and such objections can be raised' and so on, remain only grand words with no real effect.[32]

What exactly does it mean to identify correctly the object of negation? Is it an analytic distinction based on a correct understanding of a definition, or is it a practical distinction that each Mādhyamika has to make drawing from his or her own personal experience? Does Tsongkhapa consider a correct identification of the object of negation to be a prerequisite of the Madhyamaka dialectic? If so, for whom and for what purpose? Is it a prerequisite for a Mādhyamika who is arguing against the metaphysical postulates of the essentialist schools? Or, is it a requirement for a Mādhyamika practitioner seeking insight into the emptiness of intrinsic existence?

At first glance, it would appear that for Tsongkhapa this correct identification means nothing more than developing a clear understanding of the meaning of the term 'ultimate' (*paramārtha*) in the context of the Madhyamaka premise that all things and events lack ultimate ontological status. This is evident from the various treatments he gives to an important passage from *Tarkajvālā* where

Bhāvaviveka (known also by his short name Bhāvya) enumerates three different senses of 'ultimate' (*paramārtha*). According to Bhāvya, emptiness is the 'ultimate meaning' (*paramārtha*) because it is both 'supreme' and 'meaning.' It is also the 'ultimate object' (*paramārtha*) because it is the object of supreme gnosis, namely, the nonconceptual awareness of an *ārya* being. And emptiness can also be said to be 'ultimate' in that it is the object of an awareness that is in accord with the cognition of the supreme object.[33] Of these three, Tsongkhapa asserts that it is the third sense of 'ultimate' that is directly relevant in the context of the Madhyamaka refutation of essentialist ontology.[34] He substantiates this point further by quoting from *Madhyamakāloka* in which Kamalaśīla states that when it is said that nothing comes into being ultimately, we should understand this to mean that their coming into being is not affirmed by a supreme cognition.[35] Tsongkhapa concludes by observing that when Mādhyamikas contend that things and events do not exist on the absolute level, what they wish to reject is that things and events *can* be found to exist ultimately when they are sought through an analysis that investigates their ultimate nature. Once again this takes us back to the critical distinction we drew earlier between the ultimate and conventional perspectives and their corresponding domains of discourse.

But is this all there is, or is there more to Tsongkhapa's insistence on correctly identifying the object of negation? Clearly, there is more. The interpretation in the above argument of the use of the all-important ontological term 'ultimately' in Madhyamaka is too narrow, not sufficiently comprehensive. Tsongkhapa's insistence on a correct identification of the object of negation must not only apply to the process of countering other philosophical positions – essentialist ontology, for example – but must also apply to how we perceive things on a normal daily basis. In other words, a Mādhyamika proponent must clearly understand how even our normal, naive, and pre-philosophical ways of perceiving the world are effected by a belief in some kind of intrinsic existence of things and events. Without such an understanding, the Madhyamaka emptiness of intrinsic existence becomes merely a deconstructive device to rebut other philosophical viewpoints.

It is interesting to note that although Tsongkhapa seems clear from an early stage that the principal objects of negation in the Madhyamaka dialectic are our innate apprehension[36] of self-existence and their contents, it is not, however, until the writing of

GR that he explicitly relates this point to the hermeneutic of understanding the all-important qualifier 'ultimately' in the context of the Madhyamaka refutation of essentialist ontology. In *LTC* Tsongkhapa states that an understanding of the significance of the qualifying term 'ultimately' in the Madhyamaka discourse on emptiness is indispensable. He rejects the suggestion that only the Svātantrika-Mādhyamikas, not the Prāsaṅgikas, use this qualification. However, when it comes to defining the meaning of the term, Tsongkhapa relates it to Bhāvya's way of distinguishing among the three senses of ultimacy (*paramārtha*).[37] We find a similar approach in *LN* as well.

In contrast, in *GR* Tsongkhapa develops a convincing case to distinguish between two senses of 'ultimate' (*don dam*) as it is used as a qualifying term in the Madhyamaka refutation of intrinsic existence. Tsongkhapa writes:

> It is necessary to understand that there are two senses to the term 'ultimate' when the qualifier 'ultimately' is applied in relation to the object of negation. The first is the case where critical insights into emptiness, such as those derived from hearing, reflection, and meditation, are known as the ultimate [perspective]. In this sense, to say 'things do not exist ultimately' is to say that they cannot be found by such a cognition. Second, there is ultimate in the sense of something that is said to possess an objective mode of being that is not posited in dependence upon the mind. Of these two senses of ultimate, not only does the first ultimate exist, but also something can be said to exist from its perspective. [In contrast] both the second ultimate and its object *cannot* exist. Therefore, if anything exists from the perspective of the second ultimate, it must also exist from the perspective of the first ultimate. However, apprehension of the first ultimate is not innate, for this requires the [apprehension of the] second kind of ultimate.[38]

Tsongkhapa makes this critical observation in *GR* in the section on identifying the object of negation according to the Svātantrika-Mādhyamikas. This, however, is not a cause of concern, for Tsongkhapa makes the following point:

> Insofar as it is necessary to understand that there are two senses to the qualifying term 'ultimately,' this is also true in

> the case here [Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka]. Although the Svātantrika-Mādhyamikas maintain that the three, such as 'substantially real existence' and so on, are untenable within the sphere of objects of knowledge, they accept on the conventional level the existence of the three, such as 'existing by means of intrinsic being' and so on.[39]

There isn't much in the Indian Madhyamaka literature to substantiate by means of direct citations Tsongkhapa's point regarding the importance of prior identification of the object of negation. Tsongkhapa quotes *Bodhicaryāvatāra* 9:139[40] to make a general point about the critical importance of cultivating a clear conceptual understanding of the object of negation. But to the best of my knowledge, no commentator in India seems to have associated this verse with *identifying* the object of negation. Nor did any Tibetan commentators on Madhyamaka before Tsongkhapa. However, Tsongkhapa literally forces the texts, as it were, to say what he wishes them to state. In *GR* Tsongkhapa shows how a close reading of a passage from Kamalaśīla's *Madhyamakāloka* can reveal a clear identification of the object of negation that is being rejected by the Madhyamaka. He argues that when reversed, the passage that defines conventional existence gives us the criterion of its direct opposite, absolute existence.[41] If a Madhyamaka refutation of essentialist ontology is to lead to liberation, as Mādhyamikas of all shades appear to agree, it is essential that the object to be negated is one that is conceived by an innate faculty, an ignorance (*avidyā*) that is inherent in all beings and not just in those with philosophical views. After all, according to Buddhism, liberation (*nirvāṇa*) entails cutting off the root of unenlightened existence (*saṃsāra*), which is precisely this innate ignorance (*avidyā*). So Tsongkhapa seems to assert that not only is the prior correct identification of the object of negation crucial for the Mādhyamika philosopher, it is equally essential for the Mādhyamika spiritual aspirant as well.

What does it mean to say that someone must have a prior understanding of what is to be negated? Tsongkhapa gives the analogy of someone who is trying to ascertain the absence or presence of a certain person. For this, he argues, it is necessary to have some idea of who that person is in the first place.[42] Judging by this analogy, Tsongkhapa is asserting that a Mādhyamika must develop a clear sense of what is to be negated by the Madhyamaka

dialectic before the actual process of deconstruction has even begun. If this is true, this raises, in my view, some epistemological problems for Tsongkhapa. First, this implies that the Mādhyamika aspirant is able to coherently distinguish between 'existence only' (*yod tsam*) on the one hand, and 'intrinsic existence' (*rang bzhin gyis yod pa*) on the other. Not only that, he or she must be able to distinguish this within his or her own personal experience, i.e., how things and events appear to the naive worldview. The problem with this, however, is that such distinctions can be made, if at all, only in the aftermath of having cognized the absence of intrinsic existence (*niḥsvabhāva*) by true knowledge. Until then, existence and intrinsic existence remain completely indistinguishable so far as the perception of the average individual is concerned. They are, to use Tsongkhapa's own imagery, like a face and its reflection in a mirror. As far as visual perception is concerned, the face that you see in the mirror and its reflection are one and the same image. There is no separate image of the face apart from the reflection that appears in the mirror.[43] Tsongkhapa himself seems to be fully aware of this problem of circularity. In *LN*, Tsongkhapa states that until and unless the individual himself has [experientially] deconstructed intrinsic existence, no amount of verbal explanation given by a third person can help him clearly distinguish between existence only and intrinsic existence of things and events.[44]

Judging by Tsongkhapa's overall approach, we might expect that he would reconcile this seeming paradox by invoking a popular Tibetan epistemological distinction between cognition by true knowledge and intellectual understanding. In this view, prior to a cognition of emptiness, a Mādhyamika aspirant first develops an intellectual or conceptual understanding of the distinction between existence only and intrinsic existence. However, a *true cognition* of such a distinction arises only subsequent to the actual deconstruction of intrinsic existence. This response does seem to go a long way in resolving the epistemological problem, but only if one is prepared to accept the epistemological distinction between intellectual understanding and true cognition.[45] It is interesting to note that Tsongkhapa himself does not invoke this contrast between intellectual understanding and true cognition to deal with the problem of circularity. Perhaps, he did not think of it as a real problem.

That which is 'not found' and that which is 'negated'

Tsongkhapa acknowledges that the tetralemma argument has only a negative function: the process of rejecting all four possibilities of the 'four-cornered' argument illustrates the limits of any essentialist metaphysical description of reality. The primary function of the tetralemma is criticism, as it deftly moves from critiquing a thesis to critiquing its antithesis, leaving no room for even the slightest tendency towards reification. However, so far as the actuality of our everyday world is concerned, the tetralemma argument leaves it completely unscathed. The reality of this world need not be exhausted within any of the four ontological possibilities being negated in the Madhyamaka dialectic. It is only when one steps outside the bounds of conventional common sense and seeks a metaphysical grounding for the world that one becomes susceptible to the deconstructive power of the dialectic. Hence, from Tsongkhapa's point of view, there is nothing surprising in finding that even the reality of everyday objects like tables, chairs, and so on are found to be untenable when searched for through such critical analysis. This does not entail that they are in some profound sense negated by reasoning. Something can be negated by reasoning only if it falls within the scope of that particular analysis and is unable to withstand it. The following is a useful analogy. If there is a flowerpot in front of the speaker, it should be observable; when it cannot be seen, we can safely conclude that there is no such object in front of the speaker. In this context, there is a coincidence between not finding or not observing an object on the one hand, and finding its absence on the other. This is, however, not the case with, for instance, the presence of a ghost (supposing such things exist!) in front of the speaker. In the latter case, the non-observance of it simply cannot be taken as adequate grounds for its non-existence.

This distinction is clearly strongly influenced by Dharmakīrti's logic of inference. In his *Pramāṇavārttika*, Dharmakīrti draws a distinction between two types of negative inference. In the first instance, the negantum (*dgag bya'i chos*) is negated by means of asserting its non-observance or the non-observance of objects that are either causally or logically related to it. This type of negation is applicable only in instances where what is to be negated is generally perceptible. However, this does not apply to cases where the object of negation is, even in general terms, non-observable

(*mi snangs ba ma dmigs pa*). In the latter case, we can only infer the absence of its perception rather than the absence of the object of negation itself.[46] For Tsongkhapa, just as there is a world of difference between a *non-observance* of something and an *observance of its absence*, there is also a difference between that which is *not found* by reasoning and that which is *negated* by reasoning.[47] This distinction is critical if Tsongkhapa is to succeed in his task of delineating the scope of reason. Again, we can see that this relates to the critical distinction made earlier between the domains of ultimate analysis and conventional analysis.

It is clear that Tsongkhapa wants to develop a methodology that will allow for a coherent distinction between the absence of intrinsic existence of everyday objects of experience on the one hand, and what he perceives as unnecessary (and at worst, harmful) metaphysical postulates like *ātman*, primal substance (*prakṛti*), etc. on the other. Without the subtle distinctions that have been drawn between these two different perspectives, he argues, one will be forced to admit that there is no significant difference between them. For insofar as the ability or inability to withstand analysis is concerned, both categories are equal. There is also no difference between the two insofar as they are both objects of discursive thought. Thus, Tsongkhapa writes:

> Some lack a comprehensive and detailed critical understanding of the above points and negate ultimate existence by means of some partial [and ineffectual] reasoning. [They also] maintain that the reality of things and events, which exist on the conventional level, can be posited insofar as they are perceived so by some distorting consciousness, for to be an object of such [distorting] consciousness is the criterion of conventional existence. If one thinks thus, one cannot maintain the distinction between the following two propositions: 'Pain and pleasure are created by īśvara (a transcendent, supernatural being),' and 'Pain and pleasure are caused by negative and positive *karma*.' [For on this view], if one proposition is true, the other must also be true. Similarly, if the former is false, so must the latter be. This is because, when subjected to critical analysis as characterized earlier, even the latter [proposition] becomes untenable; and insofar as being the object of a distorting consciousness is concerned, even the former [proposition] can be said to be true.[48]

Tsongkhapa argues that those who maintain that the Prāsaṅgikas do not accept the existence of everyday objects even on the conventional level do so because of their failure to appreciate the subtle distinction between that which is 'not found through reasoning' and that which is 'negated by reasoning.' Furthermore, according to Tsongkhapa, they are ignorant of the critical distinction between the different domains of ultimate and conventional discourses. Such ignorance, according to Tsongkhapa, leads to a certain impoverishment in one's philosophical thinking that can compel one to make absurd statements such as 'the world exists only from the perspective of the other,' 'I have no views of my own,' and so on. This, according to Tsongkhapa, is certainly not the silence of the noble sage that the Madhyamaka dialectic should bring about; rather, it is the silence of an impoverished sceptical philosophy.

Earlier, I suggested that Tsongkhapa does not see the tetralemma itself as a form of paradox. Even if there appears to be some element of paradox in the classical formulation of the argument, Tsongkhapa has successfully resolved it with his penetrating distinctions among the various perspectives involved in the argument. The crucial question is whether or not, at the end of the negation of the four lemmas, we are still left dangling with a paradox, and if so, whether or not it is a paradox born of a *paralysis of reason* brought about by the Madhyamaka dialectic. Given Tsongkhapa's overall approach – that is, his clarity of vision, his thoroughgoing rationality, and most importantly, his refusal to seek the option of viewing the ultimate nature of reality in some indeterminate, absolute mode – the temptation is indeed great to answer in the negative. However, let us not hasten. A closer reading of Tsongkhapa reveals an interesting situation. It is certain that Tsongkhapa does not believe that the tetralemma leaves you in a state of indecision, or 'non-commitment', as some modern scholars have called it.[49] So far as the conclusion that all things and events are devoid of intrinsic existence and intrinsic identity is concerned, there is nothing undecided or non-committal about it. A Mādhyamika's conviction is as certain as any belief could possibly be. The negation of such a reified ontology is absolute and final. Paradox, if it can be called this at all, arises only when one redirects one's perception to the everyday world of experience in the aftermath of the Madhyamaka dialectical process. At the core of one's perception of reality, or worldview, lies what could best be

described as a paradox – a sense of perplexity at a world constituted by interrelationships among entities that are not 'real.' This is paradoxical in that one is at a total loss (conceptually) to reconcile the world of appearance and its underlying reality (or unreality), its thoroughly empty nature.[50] Coming to terms with this, according to Tsongkhapa, is the greatest challenge for Madhyamaka philosophy. Tsongkhapa himself describes the experience as follows:

> O friends, [you who are] learned in the profound Middle Way treatises,
> Difficult though it is to posit
> Causality and dependence without 'intrinsic being';
> Still, it is wiser to rely on this [Prāsaṅgika] line of thought,
> Hailing it as the way of the Middle.[51]

A logical analysis of the forms of negation

We now come to the final element in our examination of Tsongkhapa's Madhyamaka dialectic. We have observed that Tsongkhapa acknowledges that the Madhyamaka dialectic functions only in the form of negation.[52] We have also seen that the negation of intrinsic existence in Madhyamaka is absolute and total. We must now look at Tsongkhapa's analysis of the various forms of negation so that we can assess how it relates to his soteriological concerns. In most of his substantial works on the Madhyamaka philosophy of emptiness, Tsongkhapa gives a separate treatment of the analysis of the principal forms of negation employed in Buddhist philosophy.[53] If a negation of intrinsic existence is not categorical and, therefore, not absolute, there will always be a tendency, no matter how slight and residual, towards reification. Moreover, reification, according to Tsongkhapa, always obstructs true liberation – it constricts our ability to relate to the world in an appropriate manner. In other words, it obscures our vision of reality and chains us to a vicious cycle of illusion and projections. Therefore, in order for negation to be thorough, it must be a 'non-implicative negation' (*prasajya*), namely, a negation that leaves no room for any affirmation or implication in its aftermath. This is in contrast to an 'implicative negation' (*paryudāsa*), which while negating one thing implies or affirms something else. Although these negations have a lot to do with what, in the wake

of John Searle's work,[54] may be called speech acts, the difference between them is essentially logical and semantic.

The following much-quoted verse from Nāgārjuna illustrates a typical case of a 'non-implicative' negation:

> Here, its existence is negated only,
> But its non-existence is not upheld.
> For when one says that it is not black,
> One doesn't assert that it is white![55]

To have a clearer understanding of Tsongkhapa's emphasis on the use of the non-implicative negation in Madhyamaka dialectics, let us look at some of the propositional forms used linguistically to express negation. A typical illustration of this form of negation that we find in Tsongkhapa's writing is the following proposition: 'Brahmins do not drink alcohol.' This is a simple negative statement. Of course, brahmins may drink water, or tea, or juice, or other beverages, but none of these, nor any other characteristics of brahmins, such as the fact that they don't eat meat and so forth, are implied in any way. It is a clear, precise, unambiguous statement whose purpose is simply to deny that brahmins drink alcohol. Compare this with the following statement: 'This fat man doesn't eat during the day.' This form of negation is called implicative for it involves more than a simple negation. In addition to denying that the man eats during the daytime, the statement implies that he eats at night. Tsongkhapa, citing a verse quoted in Avalokitavrata's commentary on Bhāvaviveka's *Prajñāpradīpa*,[56] lists the following four types of implicative negation:

(1) Affirmation by implication, e.g., 'The fat Devadatta does not eat during the day.'
(2) Negation and affirmation both effected explicitly by the same proposition, e.g., 'The absence of self exists.'
(3) Affirmation effected both explicitly and implicitly as well, e.g., 'The fat Devadatta doesn't eat during the day yet does not lose any weight.'
(4) Affirmation implied by context, e.g., 'This man is not a brahmin' in the context where the person is known to be either a brahmin or a royal.[57]

Interestingly, Tsongkhapa and many Tibetan Mādhyamikas do not seem to distinguish clearly between statements and their propositional contents when examining the nature of various forms of

negations. Often the discussion on forms of negation is conducted in terms of negative phenomena (*dgag pa*) versus positive phenomena (*sgrub pa*), as if these were objective characteristics of reality.[58] There could be several reasons for this. First, there is an ambiguity in the Tibetan language about the grammatical status of many verbs. Words like *dgag pa* (to negate) and *sgrub pa* (to posit) can be read, depending upon the context, both as nouns and as verbs. When read as nouns, *dgag pa* can be translated as 'negative phenomena' and *sgrub pa* as 'positive phenomena.' Another reason is perhaps that Tibetan thinkers, including Tsongkhapa, are generally more interested in the actual philosophical content of a theory than in the linguistic aspects. This might also explain why Tibetan philosophers, unlike their Indian counterparts, very rarely consider grammatical analysis to be crucial for philosophical examination.

Some modern interpreters of Madhyamaka thought have suggested that we read Nāgārjuna's refutation of all four lemmas of the four-cornered argument as illocutionary rather than as propositional.[59] The difference between these two forms of negation comes from the scope of the negative particle *not*. Take the following case: 'I do not say that there is an afterlife,' and 'there is no afterlife.'[60] Clearly, there is a difference between the two propositions. In the first sentence the negation applies only to the proposition, in that the statement does not claim that there is no afterlife. In contrast, in the second sentence even the propositional content – that is, the existence of an afterlife – is also denied. The problem with this reading is that it inevitably leads to an interpretation of Madhyamaka dialectics as purely deconstructive with no commitments of its own.[61] As we can see, Tsongkhapa's reading of the argument differs from this. For Tsongkhapa, Nāgārjuna's refutation of all four lemmas is absolute, which means in Searlian language that the negation involved in their refutation is propositional and not illocutionary. Furthermore, Tsongkhapa would agree with contemporary interpreters of Madhyamaka thought who would characterize negation in the Madhyamaka dialectic as ontological rather than linguistic.[62]

Tsongkhapa argues that just as the appreciation of the thoroughly negative, that is, non-implicative, character of emptiness is critical in that it removes all possibilities for reification, it is equally important not to confuse this negation with nihilism. He warns us not to get carried away by the frequent usage of terms like

'mere' (*tsam*), and its analogues such as 'only' (*gcig pu*), 'just' (*kho na*), and 'alone' (*'ba' zhig*).[63] What is being denied by all these terms of exclusion is the notion that something positive, perhaps a deeper reality, is being affirmed in the aftermath of negation. This is in direct contrast to those who think that the ultimate nature of reality according to Madhyamaka thought is some kind of an absolute – something along the lines of Leibnizian plenitude or Vedānta's Brahman – that serves in some way as the fundamental substratum of reality.[64] According to Tsongkhapa, anyone who characterizes the ultimate nature of reality in positive terms ultimately falls victim to the deeply ingrained human tendency towards reification. No matter what terms you may use to describe it, be it Brahman, plenitude, buddha-nature, the absolute, and so on, such a reified entity still remains an essentialist, metaphysical concept. Only a thoroughgoing negation can lead to full liberation from our tendency for grasping.

Table 1: Objects of Negation by Madhyamaka Dialectics According to Tsongkhapa

1. Intrinsic existence or existence by means of intrinsic nature *rang bzhin gyis yod pa*[65]	Instrumental case
2. Existing by means of self-defining characteristics *rang gi mtshan nyid kyis yod pa*	Instrumental case
3. Existing in-and-of-itself *rang ngos nas yod pa*	Ablative case
4. Existing in an absolute sense *don dam par yod pa*	Adverbial (*de nyid* case)
5. Existing as intrinsically real *bden par yod pa*	Adverbial case
6. Existing with thoroughly [definable] nature *yang dag par yod pa*	Adverbial case

For Tsongkhapa, an understanding of the nature of non-implicative negation is crucial to fully appreciate the scope of negation in the Mādhyamika's critique of intrinsic existence. This takes us back to the central point, i.e., delineating the scope of reason, especially in its role of negating essentialist ontology. Tsongkhapa argues that even the Svātantrika-Madhyamaka school

of Bhāvaviveka cannot deny the view that the negation involved in establishing the theory of emptiness (*śūnyatā*) must be thoroughly non-implicative.[66] Tsongkhapa's point is this. Unless the negation involved in applying the Madhyamaka dialectic, which is aimed at arriving at the true cognition of emptiness (*śūnyatā*), is final and universal, the negation cannot fulfill its soteriological function. Interestingly, those who criticize Tsongkhapa's understanding of emptiness as a mere negation raise exactly the same soteriological objection.[67]

It is beyond question that Tsongkhapa saw the emptiness expounded by the Madhyamaka as a non-implicative, namely an absolute negation. It is, however, not a mere negation *per se*; it is an absolute negation of intrinsic existence. By maintaining this, Tsongkhapa is suggesting that the absence of intrinsic being is the ultimate nature of reality! And since, according to the Mādhyamikas, emptiness is the (ultimate) reality of things as they are (*tathatā*), the absence of intrinsic existence also becomes the reality of things as they are. This has been, of course, an object of vehement criticism by subsequent Tibetan thinkers. For example, Gorampa calls this 'nihilistic emptiness' (*chad stong*),[68] while Shakya Chokden labels it an 'inferior version of extrinsic emptiness' (*gzhan stong tha shal ba*).[69] Mikyö Dorje too makes a similar criticism. In their view, Tsongkhapa's notion of emptiness is inadequate and, therefore, cannot serve as the content of a liberating gnosis. They argue that such gnosis must have a more positive content.[70] Tsongkhapa would respond to this by arguing that his emptiness *can* serve as the content of an *ārya*'s liberating gnosis. For according to Tsongkhapa, insofar as the actual object of cognition is concerned, there is no difference between an *ārya*'s nonconceptual awareness and an inferential cognition of emptiness.[71] Moreover, in the context of inferential cognition, the negation of intrinsic existence *is* the cognition of the emptiness of intrinsic existence (*niḥsvabhāva*).

For Tsongkhapa the soteriological dimension of the Madhyamaka dialectic is crucial. He does not agree with those who assert that for the Mādhyamikas, argument and debate only function to critique an opponent's viewpoint. According to that assertion, argument and debate have only a reactive role within the Madhyamaka project. A Mādhyamika supposedly waits for an opponent to come up with a theory and then, by using his own logic, as it were, turns it back on him. A true Mādhyamika dialectician, the proponents of

this view argue, acts only as a parasite upon other philosophies, never committing himself to any conclusive thesis. This is in sharp contrast to Tsongkhapa's position. As far as he is concerned, these interpreters are only caught up in the rhetoric of *Prāsaṅgika*, and have missed the point. For Tsongkhapa, all types of reasoning found in Madhyamaka literature primarily function as self-criticism (if they can be called such at all). They are aimed at liberating the Mādhyamika's own mind from the deep-seated tendency for reification, which in Tsongkhapa's view is the fundamental obscuration lying at the root of all our suffering and which makes our existence unenlightened and imprisoning. Additionally, the dialectical nature of many of these arguments is designed to prevent the virtuoso Mādhyamika from succumbing to any of the possible metaphysical havens that he may otherwise seek. That many of these standpoints represent tenets of actual historical schools is, as far as Tsongkhapa is concerned, an interesting coincidence. In fact, it strengthens his point that these are possible routes one might quite naturally take to seek refuge if one is not vigilant through a critical approach. In *LN* Tsongkhapa writes:

> All Madhyamaka reasoning is part of the [overall] task of uprooting the apprehension of our fundamental ignorance, which is the root cause of [our unenlightened] cyclic existence (*saṃsāra*). Therefore, by identifying the manner in which your innate ignorant mind grasps [at entities], you should endeavour to bring about its elimination. You should not be attracted towards the scholarship that indulges in mere sophistic disputation with opposing philosophical schools.[72]

Earlier in the same book he writes:

> ... there is no contradiction between the fact that the non-analysing, innate apprehension of self-existence is the principal object of negation [of the Madhyamaka dialectics], and yet, in the [Madhyamaka] literature the refutation is done always through critical analysis. So, one should not think that it is only the intellectually acquired apprehensions and their contents that are to be negated.[73]

To summarise, by giving special attention to the various forms of negation in philosophical discourse, Tsongkhapa has sought to achieve two things. First and foremost, Tsongkhapa's aim has been to clarify and emphasise that the Madhyamaka refutation of the

essentialist ontology, an ontology that entails a belief in intrinsic existence, must be unqualified and absolute. Only by ensuring this, he contends, will Mādhyamikas succeed in their project of deconstructing all tendencies towards reification. Second, Tsongkhapa has endeavoured to establish that Madhyamaka emptiness is very different from mere nothingness. It is the absolute negation of intrinsic existence and not of existence in general. Thus, it becomes critical for Tsongkhapa to correctly delineate the scope of negation in Madhyamaka reasoning. In other words, the negation of intrinsic existence must be absolute and universal, yet it should not destroy the reality of our everyday world of experience.

Tsongkhapa's critique of autonomous reasoning

Now that we have followed the trajectory of Tsongkhapa's efforts to delineate the parameters of Madhyamaka reasoning, it is critical to look at the position held by reasoning itself. In other words, we must now address the following question: If, according to Tsongkhapa, Madhyamaka philosophy can be seen as denying all possible havens for some kind of intrinsic nature (*svabhāva*), does this mean that reason too is devoid of any intrinsic being? To answer this, we must explore what Tibetan interpreters of Indian Madhyamaka thought perceived to be perhaps one of the most crucial debates between two principal schools of interpretation of Nāgārjuna's thought. In its historical context, the dispute evolves through the writings of Bhāvaviveka and Candrakīrti following the former's criticism of Buddhapālita and Candrakīrti's subsequent defence of his views.

From a contemporary philosophical point of view, a refutation of the autonomous syllogism represents a critique of what could be called the 'autonomy of reason' – that is, that reason, or logic, possesses its own ontological status as an independent, ultimate reality. This critique is too complex to be treated fully here, and substantive studies have already been done elsewhere on the issue.[74] In the following, I shall present a brief summary of the main arguments of this critique.

In commenting upon this ancient Indian philosophical debate, Tsongkhapa follows Candrakīrti very closely. Commenting on Candrakīrti's critique of the Sāṃkhya theory of self-production (*ātmotpāda*) in the *Prasannapadā*, Tsongkhapa clarifies extensively the fundamental philosophical difference between Candrakīrti's and

SELF, REALITY AND REASON IN TIBETAN PHILOSOPHY

Tsongkhapa's Quest for the Middle Way

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An analysis of the concept of intrinsic existence

Before we embark on our exploration, we must analyse a few of the critical Sanskrit terms that are key to Tsongkhapa's understanding of the concept of intrinsic existence. These are *svabhāva*, *svarūpa*, *svalakṣaṇa*, and *prakṛti*. The first three terms share the philosophically pregnant prefix *sva*. The classical Tibetan equivalents for these words are, respectively, *rang bzhin* (intrinsic nature), *rang gi ngo bo* (intrinsic being), *rang gi msthan nyid* (self-defining characteristics), and again, *rang bzhin*.[77] Although, linguistically speaking, these three terms – *rang bzhin*, *rang gi ngo bo*, and *rang gi mtshan nyid* – have distinct senses, Tsongkhapa often uses them interchangeably, implying that in some sense, they share the same referents. Perhaps one of the most systematic definitions of intrinsic nature (*svabhāva*) in Nāgārjuna's writings is that found in the fifteenth chapter of *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*. Tsongkhapa agrees with Nāgārjuna that the notion of *svabhāva* (intrinsic nature) is incompatible with the idea of causation. This is because causation implies contingency, whereas an intrinsic nature entails an unchanging, independent entity. Tsongkhapa elaborates on this point by arguing that anything that is contingent must be created or, better still, fabricated, and since 'created' (*bcos pa*) and 'uncreated' (*ma bcos pa*) are mutually exclusive, nothing can be said to be both. Hence, he concludes that intrinsic being (*gsis*) and contingency (*byas pa*) cannot coexist in a common locus.[78] As in the case of the English word 'fabrication,' the Tibetan word *bcos ma* has a double meaning. It can mean something being constructed in the straightforward sense, and it can also mean something artificial. I think both Candrakīrti and Tsongkhapa trade on this double meaning to make their point that contingency and possessing an intrinsic nature are incompatible.[79]

In order to bring home the inherent contradiction between the concepts of contingency and intrinsic nature, Tsongkhapa gives Candrakīrti's example from our ordinary, everyday experience. In *RG* Tsongkhapa writes:

> Even within worldly convention the heat of [boiling] water and artificial rubies created by jewellers from *karketana* are not regarded as natural properties of these things.[80]

Candrakīrti asserts that even in ordinary language we would never describe the quality of being hot as something intrinsic or essential

to boiling water. Intrinsicality entails naturalness, whereas the heat of boiling water is 'artificial' in that it is acquired.[81] In one sense, Candrakīrti is suggesting that the heat is a temporarily borrowed property. However, both Tsongkhapa and Candrakīrti seem to go further. They argue that to be thoroughly consistent, even within the bounds of ordinary linguistic convention, we must accept that, ultimately, even the heat of a fire is not its intrinsic nature. Just as the heat of boiling water is caused by other factors so is the heat of fire. As it is a product of causes and conditions, it is contingent, and according to Candrakīrti, nothing that is contingent can be either uncreated or intrinsic.[82]

According to Tsongkhapa, a belief in intrinsic existence often results from a confusion between uniqueness and intrinsic nature. He writes that,

> The childish grasp at the intrinsic nature of things, even though such natures do not exist. And when they see that [property] in one and not in others, they cling to the idea that, for instance, heat is the unique property of fire and make assertions that it is so. By so doing, they are suggesting that the intrinsic nature [of a thing] is also its defining characteristic. Because of this convention, the Buddha too taught in the Abhidharma a conventional [notion] of 'self-defining characteristics' (*svalakṣaṇa*) and taught that common properties such as impermanence and so on are 'general,' or shared, characteristics (*sāmānya-lakṣaṇa*). Although heat as fire's essential property and impermanence as composite phenomena's characteristic do not exist even at the conventional level, we can accept, given that one is unique while the other is common, that a distinction is drawn in the Abhidharma between unique characteristics and general characteristics. Therefore, there is an enormous difference between existing by means of self-defining characteristics or own-being on the one hand, and [possessing] defining characteristics that are unique to a phenomenon on the other.[83]

Tsongkhapa contends that because of this natural tendency to conflate uniqueness and intrinsic nature, the Buddha, out of compassionate skilfulness, made a distinction between the 'unique characteristics' (*svalakṣaṇa*) and the 'general, shared characteristics' (*sāmānya-lakṣaṇa*) of a phenomenon. By this Tsongkhapa is referring to two distinct approaches in Buddhism to understanding

the nature of phenomena. One is meditative contemplation whereby the individual penetrates the nature of a phenomenon by means of focusing on its individual and general characteristics. The other is a key aspect of the realist ontology of the Sautrāntikas wherein this distinction between unique and general characteristics lies at the heart of the interface between epistemology and ontology.[84] As stated in the above quotation, it is not the general principle of the distinction that Tsongkhapa is criticising (for he himself accepts such a distinction); rather, it is the notion, for example, that heat is an intrinsic nature of fire that is being questioned.

The importance of not conflating the senses of *svabhāva* in terms of uniqueness and intrinsic nature suggests the critical importance of appreciating the different contexts in which the notion of *svabhāva* emerges in Buddhist philosophical discourse. Tsongkhapa identifies three principal contexts. He writes,

> In the epistemological texts, functional things alone are described as 'unique particulars' (*rang mtshan*); in the Abhidharma sūtras, unique properties, such as the heat of fire, that distinguish one thing from another are taught as unique characteristics (*rang mtshan*). [There is also] intrinsic being (*rang mtshan*) in the sense of something existing by means of self-defining characteristics. The differences [in meaning] between these are indeed very great.[85]

Thus, we have three different connotations of the term *rang mtshan*: (1) *rang mtshan* as 'unique particulars,' (2) *rang mtshan* as 'unique properties,' and finally, (3) *rang mtshan* as 'intrinsic being.'[86] What repeatedly emerges here is that the property of heat cannot be regarded as ultimately intrinsic to fire. One may be able to define fire in terms of heat, but this does not mean that heat constitutes the ultimate nature of fire.

So what exactly is the definition of intrinsic existence (*svabhāva*) that is being negated by the Madhyamaka in relation to all things and events? Tsongkhapa sees the following passage from Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* as pivotal in articulating the Madhyamaka critique of intrinsic existence and intrinsic identity:

> Intrinsic nature (*svabhāva*) is that which is non-contingent (*akṛtrima*)and not dependent on others (*nirapekṣa*).[87]

Tsongkhapa begins his comments on this verse by posing two questions: (1) What are the defining characteristics of an intrinsic

nature (*svabhāva*)? and (2) What exactly *is* this intrinsic nature (*svabhāva*)? While responding to the first question, Tsongkhapa elaborates on the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā's* cryptic definition of *svabhāva*. In addition to non-contingence and independence, he adds one more feature: invariability (*ma khrul ba*).[88] In doing so, Tsongkhapa is closely following Candrakīrti's reading of the passage. This, then, gives us the following definition. The intrinsic nature of fire, for example, must be such that:

(a) it must not be 'artificial' or contingent (*ma bcos pa*) – i.e., it must be innate to fire;
(b) it must also be invariable to fire in all the three times, i.e., past, present, and future (*dus gsum du me la mi 'khrul ba*);
(c) it must be, unlike the heat of boiling water, not dependent on other factors (*rgyu rkyen gzhan la ma bltos pa*).

In order to do greater justice to Tsongkhapa's treatment of this issue it is worth quoting from Tsongkhapa's own words at some length. In response to the first question concerning the definition of *svabhāva*, Tsongkhapa writes:

> Since here 'own-being' is termed 'intrinsic nature,' we shall call that thing of an entity that is 'its own' its *svabhāva*. What makes something its own? It is that property of the thing that is non-contingent. Whatever is contingent is not its own – for example, the heat of [boiling] water. That which is not dependent on others too is its own, such as one's servants and wealth. In contrast, that which is dependent on others is not its own, such as temporary fame over which one has no control. This does not mean that everything that is contingent and dependent on others cannot be said to be its own. What is being demonstrated here is that insofar as something is its own, in the sense of being the intrinsic nature of a thing, it must be neither contingent nor, like a borrowed item, dependent.[89]

Following a close reading of Candrakīrti's *Prasannapadā*, Tsongkhapa unpacks the concept of intrinsic nature (*svabhāva*) by correlating *svabhāva* with other crucial terms. In the above he seems to equate it in the following ways:

> *Svabhāva* or intrinsic nature (*rang bzhin*) = own-being (*rang gi ngo bo*) = being-its-own (*bdag gi ba*) = non-contingent or unfabricated (*ma bcos pa*) + not dependent on others (*gzhan la rag ma las pa*).

Thus, we find that, in the final analysis, the meaning of *svabhāva* as defined in *MMK* 15:2b is reduced to a concept that is inextricably connected to our notions of identity. In Tibetan, *bdag gi ba* (being-its-own) can also be interchangeably used with *nga yi ba*, which literally means 'mine.' In fact, the same word, *bdag gi ba*, is also used to translate the Sanskrit term *mama* (mine), which is closely associated with the Buddhist discussions on egoism, where 'I' (*nga*) is contrasted with 'mine' (*nga yi ba*) as objects of our natural, innate thought 'I am.' It is exactly because of this that Tsongkhapa distinguishes between two senses of 'being-its-own.' One is the conventional sense, where we can talk about one's own body, wealth, and friends as being 'mine'; the second is the sense of intrinsic nature of being. Needless to say, we are concerned here only with the second sense. So the question is, when can something be said to be its own? In other words, by what criterion can something be said to be the intrinsic nature of a thing? Answer: That which is non-contingent and not dependent on others. Is there such an intrinsic nature or *svabhāva*? If so, what is it?

Tsongkhapa paraphrases Candrakīrti's response to this question from *Prasannapadā* where Candrakīrti states that 'it [*svabhāva*] does not exist by means of its own-being nor is it non-existent.'[90] Of course, Tsongkhapa takes this to mean that according to Candrakīrti, the *svabhāva* of a thing *does* exist but not by means of some kind of intrinsic nature. To substantiate his point, Tsongkhapa cites, in addition to the above quotation from *Prasannapadā*, two passages from Candrakīrti's *Madhyamakāvatārabhāṣya*. The first passage stresses the point that *svabhāva* as defined by Nāgārjuna must exist, for otherwise all the efforts of the bodhisattvas engaging in the path of the perfection of wisdom would be fruitless. Candrakīrti concludes by saying that not only does such *svabhāva* exist, it is also the object that is cognized by an awareness that is free from the obscurations of misknowing.[91] The second passage is the one where, according to Tsongkhapa, Candrakīrti asserts, 'Such *svabhāva* is not only accepted by the master [Nāgārjuna], but one can also enable others to accept this point. Hence, this *svabhāva* is presented [by Nāgārjuna] as if it is already established to both [parties].'[92] What, then, is this *svabhāva*? Tsongkhapa answers:

> It is the nature of all things, this nature is their intrinsic nature, and this intrinsic nature is their emptiness. The emptiness is the absence of intrinsic existence, which is suchness [the way things really are], and remains unchanged and permanently abides in the nature of suchness.[93]

From the above it is clear that, so far as Tsongkhapa is concerned, *svabhāva* as defined by Nāgārjuna in his fifteenth chapter of *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* does exist, and it is none other than emptiness itself, namely, the emptiness of intrinsic existence (*niḥsvabhāva-śūnyatā*). How does Tsongkhapa square this claim with the central Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka assertion that all things and events are empty of intrinsic existence? Doesn't emptiness itself become the exception? Given that it is *svabhāva,* doesn't emptiness exist by means of its own intrinsic nature? This is indeed the crux of the issue. Simply put, the problem is this. If emptiness exists by means of *svabhāva* – by means of an intrinsic nature – what point is there in maintaining that all things and events are empty of intrinsic existence? Moreover, doesn't Nāgārjuna himself warn against the perils of medicine itself becoming poison? On the other hand, if emptiness doesn't exist as *svabhāva,* what significant sense can we make of the claim that it is the 'mode of being' of all things?

Of course, Tsongkhapa does not believe that emptiness is an exception to the principle that nothing possesses intrinsic existence. In the final analysis, Tsongkhapa's solution to this problem involves drawing a critical distinction between 'to be an intrinsic nature' (*svabhāva*) and 'to exist by means of intrinsic nature.' Tsongkhapa accepts the first and rejects the second. Something, for instance *x*, can be said to be the *svabhāva* of a thing, but *x* can never exist by means of *svabhāva.* For Tsongkhapa, emptiness is the intrinsic nature (*svabhāva*) in that it is the ultimate mode of being of all things and events; yet, it cannot be said to exist by means of an intrinsic nature (*svabhāva*), for the latter would imply that emptiness exists in some essential or absolute sense. Emptiness equals *x*'s absence of intrinsic existence, which is *x*'s own nature in that it is non-contingent and not dependent on others. However, emptiness cannot be said to be its own nature independently of a subject. Hence, when emptiness itself becomes the existential subject *x*, it cannot be said to be its own nature (*svabhāva*), for it is equally absent of intrinsic reality. Instead, it is now the emptiness of emptiness that is *x*'s own nature.[94] This predication could, in principle, go on *ad infinitum.*

This situation demonstrates how, when a property in a first order predication becomes an existential subject in a second order predication, its ontological status too is revealed to be equally empty. Needless to say, according to Tsongkhapa emptiness should not be taken as a property in any affirmative sense.[95] Rather, emptiness is the absence of intrinsic existence as argued by the Mādhyamikas – that all things and events are empty of intrinsic identity and intrinsic existence. Furthermore, in terms of being empty of intrinsic existence, there is no distinction whatsoever between everyday objects such as tables, chairs, and so on on the one hand, and what Tsongkhapa considers as ultimate truth – that is, emptiness – on the other. So in Tsongkhapa's view, when a Mādhyamika says that everything is empty, he really means everything, which includes even emptiness itself.

Given this, there must be a way of defining *svabhāva* (intrinsic being) such that it can be negated equally in relation to both empirical objects and emptiness. In other words, how do we define *svabhāva* so that its negation embraces the entire spectrum of existence? Let us invoke an observation we made earlier regarding the diverse connotations of the term *paramārtha* (ultimate). We spoke of *paramārtha* in the sense of an *ārya*'s final insight into the ultimate nature of reality (*don dam dpyod pa'i rigs shes*), and *paramārtha* in the sense of absolute reality (*don dam par grub pa*).[96] While no empirical objects can be said to exist from the perspective of the first *paramārtha* (ultimate), the situation is different with respect to emptiness; in fact, emptiness itself exists from that perspective. It is the very thing that is found by a critical awareness probing into the ultimate nature of reality. However, *nothing* can be said to be true from the second perspective, i.e., *paramārtha* in the sense of an absolute. Tsongkhapa would draw exactly the same distinction here. In Tsongkhapa's mind, the two senses of *svabhāva* are distinguished primarily on the basis of their contexts, which are, in turn, determined by the grammatical cases in which the term *svabhāva* is used. Tsongkhapa associates usage of the term invariably with ontological contexts; as a result, *svabhāva* becomes identifiable with the principal object of negation by the Madhyamaka dialectic.

For the sake of convenience we can speak of the two connotations of *svabhāva* by drawing a distinction between *svabhāva* and *svabhāva**. The first refers to a universal ontological

status that is negated across the board, while *svabhāva** cannot be rejected in such a categorical manner. Let me elaborate further.

1) *svabhāva* = existing by means of intrinsic nature (*rang bzhin gyis grub pa*)

In this sense, *svabhāva* refers to an intrinsic nature of things that is thought to be self-enclosed, independent, and possessing self-defining characteristics. According to this view, *svabhāva* becomes synonymous with many ontological terms (as noted in chapter 2, table 1) that are rejected by the Mādhyamikas.

2) *svabhāva** = emptiness (*śūnyatā*)

In this sense, *svabhāva* is the absence of intrinsic existence and intrinsic identity of all things and events and is also the ultimate mode of being (*paramārtha*) of all things and events. This is the sense of *svabhāva* defined by Nāgārjuna on the basis of two criteria: non-contingence and independence.[97]

What is the relation between these two connotations of *svabhāva*? More importantly, in which sense of *svabhāva* does the Mādhyamika negate the intrinsic existence of all things and events? From his earliest writings on the Madhyamaka philosophy of emptiness Tsongkhapa has been extremely clear in identifying the main sense in which *svabhāva* is being refuted.[98] In *LTC* Tsongkhapa criticises those who confine their understanding of the nature of *svabhāva* only to Nāgārjuna's two criteria, namely, non-contingence and independence. Tsongkhapa argues that such an approach reduces the force and scope of the Madhyamaka project of refuting all possible grounds for reification. He is suggesting that to define *svabhāva* only in terms of the above two criteria causes one to fall victim to the fallacy of under-negation.[99] Tsongkhapa presents several interrelated objections, all of which, unsurprisingly, relate to his deep concerns for the soteriological implications.

Tsongkhapa argues that although it is true that if an entity exists by means of its own intrinsic nature (*svabhāva*), it must be non-contingent and independent of other factors, yet non-contingence and independence in themselves cannot exhaust the full meaning of *svabhāva*.[100] If this were so, then the Mādhyamikas would have no dispute with the essentialists on the ontological status of empirical objects. Even the essentialists (the Vaibhāṣikas and Sautrāntikas) do not deny the contingent and dependent nature of phenomena

given their acceptance of the fundamental Buddhist principles of momentariness and conditionality of all existent things.[101] So when notions such as non-contingence and independence are refuted in Madhyamaka literature, we should, according to Tsongkhapa, understand that these are refutations of certain aspects of *svabhāva* that do not in themselves constitute the totality of the Madhyamaka critique of *svabhāva*. The parallel here is that the statement, 'whatever is a jar is necessarily impermanent,' does not imply that impermanence constitutes the meaning of the term 'jar.' One is only making a statement concerning a particular characteristic of the jar.[102]

Tsongkhapa further argues that, similarly, one could charge someone with the consequence that, if an entity is posited as established in an absolute sense, that entity must be indivisible and unitary. At the same time, that indivisible entity itself cannot be taken as the central object of negation in the context of understanding emptiness. That is because the apprehensions of such pseudo-entities as, for instance, indivisible atoms are specific only to people who are conditioned in their ways of thinking by philosophical speculations. Therefore, such apprehensions cannot be regarded as being at the root of our unenlightened existence. Furthermore, the realization and meditative experience of the non-existence of such indivisible entities cannot undermine the most fundamental misapprehension – our fundamental ignorance (*avidyā*) – which has been present from beginningless time.[103] Because of this, even if one were to perfect this cognition of the absence of these entities into a direct, unmediated experience, it would not uproot the innate delusion of ignorance and its derivative afflictions. Tsongkhapa concludes his discussion of this issue with the following observation:

> Therefore, conditioned phenomena such as eyes and so on do not exist in terms of *svabhāva* in the sense of being established by means of their intrinsic natures, nor do they exist in terms of *svabhāva* in the sense of being the ultimate nature of things. Thus, they do not exist in terms of *svabhāva* in any sense at all. The ultimate truth [on the other hand] does exist as *svabhāva* in the sense of being the ultimate nature of things. However, the criteria by which it is affirmed as *svabhāva*, namely, non-contingence and independence, themselves do not exist even in the slightest way as *svabhāva*

> defined in terms of existing by means of their intrinsic natures. They exist merely on the conventional level.[104]

Our study so far seems to reveal that in the final analysis, Tsongkhapa does not take the definition of *svabhāva* in terms of non-contingence, independence of others, and invariability as suggested by Candrakīrti as constituting the final understanding of the meaning of intrinsic existence. Although he accepts what appears to be Candrakīrti's key point – that the notion of an intrinsic nature is incompatible with causation – Tsongkhapa does not appear to give much weight to Candrakīrti's overall argument wherein the definition of intrinsic existence is developed primarily through associating *svabhāva* with 'naturalness' and 'unfabricated by other things.'[105] As we observed earlier, for Tsongkhapa these are partial aspects as opposed to the whole meaning of intrinsic existence. Furthermore, according to Tsongkhapa, to confine one's understanding of intrinsic existence only to such criteria would result in the problem of under-negation. Tsongkhapa's own preferred approach seems to be to rely on the psychological insight that somehow we instinctively impose a kind of intrinsic existence and identity in our thoughts and perceptions when we relate to the world, including to our own existence. In other words, he is suggesting that when we perceive things and events, we do so as if they enjoy some kind of objective, intrinsic reality that is independent of mind. This, he would suggest, results from our basic human tendency to reify, which Buddhists would argue is a natural expression of our fundamental ignorance (*avidyā*). In brief, as we observed in chapter 2, for Tsongkhapa the *svabhāva* that is the object of negation by the Madhyamaka dialectic must pertain to both a fundamental ontological status of things and events as well as to their identities.

That the notion of identity is integrally connected to the Madhyamaka analysis of the concept of *svabhāva* is beyond doubt. The etymological basis for this thesis is very strong, especially in the Tibetan language. The Tibetan term *rang gi ngo bo* (intrinsic being, or self-nature) can also be translated as 'one's own face.' In this sense, 'being' (*ngo bo*) also has the connotation of identity, for it is that which distinguishes us from others. The face is the principal feature of the body by which we generally recognize a person in relation to others. So, *ngo* has multiple meanings. In addition to 'being,' 'identity,' and 'face,' *ngo* can also mean

'surface,' 'angle,' 'perspective,' and interestingly enough, also 'genuine.' Admittedly, Tsongkhapa does not draw explicit correlations among these various meanings of the term *ngo*. Nevertheless, the common thread that connects these different meanings appears to be the notion of identity, for all of these ideas have something to do with our understanding of identity.

The close association of our notions of identity with existence as exemplified by the concept of *svabhāva* has profound philosophical implications. It suggests that there is a fundamental problem of circularity inherent in the concepts of existence and identity. Identity presupposes existence in that it assumes the existence of an entity, since without an entity with an enduring nature, how can we make sense of any notion of identity? After all, identity must be an identity of something that remains constant through time. Yet existence, or entity, seems to presuppose identity, for it may be asked, how can we even begin to talk about something that doesn't possess an identity? For example, when we say such and such a person exists, we take it for granted that we are talking about someone who has a recognizable face (*ngo*)! Because of this circularity, it can be argued that, unless we define them in conventional terms, both existence and identity become untenable. Tsongkhapa is clearly aware of this critical problem. In fact, he repeatedly stresses that the crux of the philosophical challenge for a Mādhayamika is not so much the actual deconstruction of *svabhāva*; rather, it is to maintain a coherent and meaningful notion of dependently originated existence and identity in the aftermath of a thoroughgoing negation of intrinsic existence and intrinsic identity.[106]

Guy Bugault has suggested an interesting way of looking at the problem of identity as underlined by Madhyamaka thought in terms of exploring what he calls the 'synchronic' and 'diachronic' aspects of identity. He writes:

> Now, it seems to us that in this strong sense, that of intrinsicness, the concept of identity of a thing with itself has a double dimension: synchronic and diachronic. The first implies a precise determination of an existence, and would thus verge on an essence, including what this existent is and excluding what it is not ...
>
> There is another aspect of identity to which Buddhists are particularly sensitive: the diachronic aspect. In order to

> meaningfully think that a thing is identical with itself, one must suppose that it remains constant throughout time. Now, experience tells us that everything which exists is transitory and impermanent: *sarvam anityam*.[107]

Tsongkhapa would agree that, unless we are talking in the conventional sense, identity as characterized above with dual aspects is not possible. However, if things and events do possess intrinsic natures (*svabhāva*), they must also have identities as characterized above. Judging by his analysis of the concept of intrinsic existence, we can infer that Tsongkhapa is sensitive to the synchronic aspect of identity as well. He argues that in order for something to be an intrinsic nature, it must be something that is 'its own' (*bdag gi ba*). This 'being-its-own' has been defined in terms of two criteria – non-contingence and independence. An identity that is intrinsic must be non-contingent in that it must relate to that unique thing that makes the entity what it is. In some sense it must necessarily be true of the entity. Independence, on the other hand, ensures that the identity the thing possesses is not something that is defined in contrast to others, for such an identity would be relative. In other words, independence entails that an identity is not derived through difference. However, the existence of such an identity is untenable for it goes directly against the fundamentally interconnected and conditioned nature of existence (*pratītya-samutpāda*). One could say that not only is the material existence of a thing dependent upon others but even the identity of a thing as it is, is intimately linked to the identity and existence of others.[108]

No-self as the emptiness of intrinsic existence

From the above, we can now conclude that for Tsongkhapa to say that no self exists is to say that persons do not exist by means of intrinsic natures. In other words, he is saying that when Buddhists reject the notion of self, it is the intrinsic reality of persons that is being denied, in terms of both their existence and identity. Tsongkhapa is suggesting that any conception of persons that entails a belief in some form of intrinsic being is untenable. Because, as shown earlier, the concept of intrinsic nature is incompatible with causation. Furthermore, the intrinsic existence and identity of things and persons have been shown to be both logically untenable and conceptually incoherent. As suggested

before, this untenability of intrinsic existence is not confined to persons alone. It is true of the entire spectrum of reality: that is to say, the whole universe is said to be empty of intrinsic existence. Tsongkhapa exhorts the Mādhyamika aspirant to extend this insight to all factors of existence. In both *LTC* and *GR* Tsongkhapa quotes the following verse from *Samādhirājasūtra* to underline the point:

> Just as you have discerned the [nature of] self,
> So must you extend this [insight] to all.
> All phenomena are thoroughly calmed in that sphere
> As [if assimilated] into [infinite] space.[109]

In fact, in *LTCh* Tsongkhapa states that insight into the emptiness of intrinsic existence of persons – the no-self of persons (*pudgalanairātmya*) – must come prior to insight into the emptiness of all phenomena. This, he argues, is because to realize the no-self of persons is easier (*sla ba*) than to cognize the no-self of its factors of existence.[110] Tsongkhapa does not tell us why this is so. Perhaps his suggestion is based on the premise that compared to the various physical and mental states, the nominal nature of the person can be demonstrated more easily. In fact, as pointed out earlier, except for the Vātsīputrīyas, all classical Indian Buddhist schools accept in one way or another that the person is a nominal reality (*prajñaptisat*).

We can now put forth in broad strokes some of the key conclusions derived from Tsongkhapa's deconstruction of the self. First and foremost, it is evident that Tsongkhapa rejects any notion of a self that possesses intrinsic existence or intrinsic identity. All three candidates for such an intrinsically real self – a self that is independent and possesses an ontologically distinct status from the physical and mental states, a self that is ultimately identifiable with the physical and mental states, and a self that is neither of the previous two but possesses instead an ineffable, indeterminate existential status – have all been shown, at least to Tsongkhapa's mind, to be utterly unsuitable as candidates for the imagined self. The moral we can draw from this is that any metaphysical attempt to ground the self in an essentialist ontology is bound to be frustrated. This is because underlying all such attempts is the fundamental assumption of the presence of the *svabhāva* of the self, which, in Tsongkhapa's opinion, has been demonstrated to be untenable by Madhyamaka dialectics. Furthermore, we have found that at the very heart of our concepts of identity and entity is a

fundamental problem of circularity: one presupposes the other. This makes the notion of intrinsic existence and intrinsic identity incoherent on an ultimate level. Thus, we are forced to conclude that identity and existence can only be maintained as thoroughly contingent and in some profound sense 'unreal.' Surely, we have arrived at a most radical proposition! However, this is only one part of the story. The cogency and strength of Tsongkhapa's deconstruction of the self cannot be judged purely on the basis of his arguments against metaphysical theories of the self. They also depend on the extent of Tsongkhapa's success in formulating his own constructive theory of persons. Thus, we must relate Tsongkhapa's deconstruction of the self to his reconstruction of persons following an application of the Madhyamaka dialectic. The challenge is to determine what kind of conception of person emerges at the 'post-critical' level.

CHAPTER FOUR

Personal Identity, Continuity, and the I-consciousness

Personal identity and dependent origination

If, as Tsongkhapa contends, there is no intrinsically real referent to our first person pronoun 'I,' how can we account for the unity of our experience that seems so overwhelmingly apparent? What makes a series of experiences 'mine' as opposed to someone else's? How do we account for the many phenomenal facts that contribute to our conventional notions of personal identity, including, amongst others, the unity of consciousness, memory and recognition of previously experienced objects, self-consciousness, and motivated, sustained activity for future results? These questions point towards the fundamental problem of understanding the relationship between our concepts of identity on the one hand and the unity of human experience on the other. It may, perhaps, be useful to reflect here on two questions that John Perry raises in his introduction to *Personal Identity.* Perry suggests that the main technical problems for a theory of personal identity are related to answering the following two questions:

(i) What relation obtains between simultaneous events of a person's life where these events are said to be events belonging to the same person?
(ii) What relation obtains between person-stages that can be said to be stages of the same person?[1]

I certainly agree with Perry that any viable theory of personal identity must deal with these two questions. This is because they pertain to the fundamental issue of the relationship between

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The nature of the I-consciousness

One of the fundamental premises of Tsongkhapa's thought, and in fact, of Buddhist philosophy as a whole, is that an individual's sense of self, or I-consciousness, is innate. It is instinctual and natural. It is neither linguistic nor even conceptual, if by conceptual one presupposes self-awareness. It is a natural, reflexive consciousness, almost like an underlying sense of one's own existence. For Tsongkhapa, this fundamental, natural I-consciousness relates to a unity of character that transcends any particular momentary stage of existence. And the object of this consciousness is the I that underlies all our natural intuitive senses of self when we say, 'I think,' 'I was there,' 'I went to such and such place,' 'So and so told me this,' and so on. Tsongkhapa calls this the 'mere I' (*nga tsam*) to indicate that it is not confined to any specific space and time. Tsongkhapa first develops this idea of the mere I as a generality unconfined by individual temporal stages in his *Ocean of Reasoning*. He writes:

> The self that is the focus of Devadatta's instinctual sense 'I am' when not thinking of a specific temporal stage [of his existence] is the mere I that is within him since beginningless time. The individual selves [of Devadatta] when he appropriated the body of a celestial being and so on are only instances of the former [mere I]. Therefore, when an I-consciousness arises in Devadatta focusing specifically on a particular form of existence [e.g., as a human], the object of his I-consciousness is a particular instance of Devadatta's self.[45]

Further on, Tsongkhapa elaborates on what he means by the mere I that is said to be present through the successive lives of an individual. As a conventional realist, Tsongkhapa appeals to an intuition that is fundamental to our common sense notion of ourselves. He writes:

> In the same way, regarding future lives, although the person of this life does not go into the next life, a mere I that is the object of our instinctual thought 'I am' does reach there [i.e., the next life] as well. Therefore, it is valid that out of fear of suffering in our next life, we strive here to discard evil deeds that are the causes and endeavour in virtuous deeds in order to attain happiness. This is analogous to the following example.

> Although [strictly speaking] today's person is no more tomorrow, out of fear that one might suffer through thirst and hunger tomorrow, one saves food and drinks today. Similarly, in order not to suffer in old age one accumulates wealth when one is young. In all of these situations, [people] do not make distinctions between the self of this time or that time. Rather, these endeavours are motivated by the simple wish for the self in general to be happy and overcome suffering. And since the self as a generality does pervade all temporal stages [of a person's existence], these acts also cannot be said to be deluded.[46]

The question now is 'How do we know that such an I exists?' Tsongkhapa draws extensively from our conventional, natural intuitions about our own identities. The key to understanding the nature of this identity is to analyse our faculty of memory and the process of identification that is involved in such experience. For example, we find that the more we can extend the process of recollection into the past, the greater the scope of the I-consciousness for identification. In the case of highly evolved individuals who are believed to be capable of recalling their previous lives, their natural I-consciousness will inevitably have, according to this view, a much greater reach. To make this point, Tsongkhapa often quotes from the scripture where the Buddha is reported to have stated, 'At such a time, during such a period I was King Māndhaṭṛ.'[47]

By invoking the process of recollection, Tsongkhapa is making what I believe is a valid claim that remembering an experience invariably involves the occurrence of the I-consciousness. In other words, he is suggesting that recollection necessarily occurs from a first-person perspective. Even when I remember, say, John McInroe winning the Wimbledon title for the last time in 1985, my actual memory is that of either my having seen it on television or having read it in the paper, or something of the sort. It remains a memory from a first-person perspective. Furthermore, according to Tsongkhapa, the object of this first-person, or I-consciousness, perspective that is associated with the experience of recollection is the mere I, which is not specific to any particular stage of the person's history. One might feel that when a person – for instance, a middle-aged golfer – remembers having smoked marijuana in his teenage years, it is actually the teenager that is the object of his I-consciousness. This, according to Tsongkhapa, is a mistaken belief. Such a view

reflects a deep ignorance concerning the experience of recollection. Thus, Tsongkhapa writes:

> One might think thus: 'Granted that the Devadatta of this life may have memories of being born in this or that realm in his past lives, still one need not accept that such memories are valid. For if they are, this entails that the Devadatta of this life existed in his previous lives. This, in turn, would imply that Devadatta is eternal.'
>
> This is certainly an objection that derives from an ignorance of how memory occurs. For example, in a debate, when one party previously held that, for example, sound is permanent, and later forgets his thesis and accepts that it is impermanent, the person may be reminded of the contradiction by his opponent. At that point, the guilty party will have the thought, 'Yes, I did subscribe to the view that sound is permanent.' However, the recollection does not proceed in terms of the thought, 'I, who exists now at this point in time, maintained in some remote past that sound is permanent.' Because of this, it is possible to point out the contradiction. If this were not so, we could not demonstrate any contradiction in a person's view, for the person who held earlier that sound is permanent did not maintain that it is impermanent later![48]

Why does Tsongkhapa insist that it is the mere I – the generality of an individual's personal identity – that is the primary object of the I-consciousness that naturally occurs in an experience of recollection? Although Tsongkhapa does not anticipate this question explicitly, it is not difficult to guess what his response would be. He would argue that any form of genuine recollection takes place only as a natural, spontaneous process. Therefore, the I-consciousness involved in such recollection cannot be something that is consciously and cognitively constructed; rather, it must invariably be an innate sense of I. And the object of this I-consciousness is, as argued before, the mere generality of the sense 'I am' that we experience at the most fundamental level of existence.

Given the above line of reasoning, one might accept the thesis that an understanding of the workings of memory leads to a better appreciation of the nature of our I-consciousness. However, a question can still be raised: How, if there is no unified, continuing self, is memory possible at all?[49] Tsongkhapa is

familiar with two distinct lines of response to the above question. The first is the theory of memory found in the writings of the logical-epistemological schools of Dharmakīrti and Dignāga. The second is the Prāsaṅgikas' nominalist account of memory as articulated by Candrakīrti and Śāntideva. In the first view, recollection occurs because of the presence of a unique cognitive faculty of apperception, known as 'self-cognizing awareness' (*svasaṃvedanā*), that is believed to be inherent in all of us. According to this theory, whenever a cognitive event occurs in us, it is, to use Matilal's language, *reflexively* aware of itself. As Matilal points out, according to this theory there is a 'self-luminous character to all mental events, beginning from human passion to the Buddha's compassion.'[50] Moreover, it is this aspect of self-awareness that makes it possible for us to remember things later. According to the proponents of this theory, there is a necessary causal relationship between this apperceptive faculty and the subsequent memory of an experience. For example, when we have a perception of a blue flower, at that very instant there is a dual perceptual process taking place: the perception of the blue object on the one hand, and a further awareness, what can be called a second-order cognition on the other, namely, the awareness of the experience itself. It is because of this second-order cognitive activity that when we later remember the blue flower, we actually recollect the experience of seeing it as well. These theorists argue, in fact, that a recollection of an object invariably occurs with the recollection of its experience.[51]

The key objection of those Buddhist epistemologists who assert a self-cognizing faculty of consciousness to those who do not so assert is that not asserting a self-cognizer leads to an epistemological conundrum. They argue that if there is no second-order cognitive activity at the time of a perceptual experience of an external event or object, then there is nothing to verify that the perception actually took place. If, on the other hand, it is asserted that this second-order cognition – the cognition of the perception itself – takes place since there is a separate continuum of consciousness that is aware of the experience, then these epistemologists argue that this faculty too must be cognized by another consciousness, and that one cognized by still another consciousness, and on and on, *ad infinitum*. This problem is resolved, they maintain, if we posit an apperceptive quality to all mental events that is integral to the perceptions themselves.

I shall not go into the details of Tsongkhapa's critique of the concept of a self-cognizing awareness.[52] Suffice it here to say that he categorically rejects it. Tsongkhapa's central objection is that positing such a faculty is tantamount to resuscitating the ghost of *svabhāva*, i.e., intrinsic being, which he has vehemently argued against. In the final analysis, *svasaṃvedanā* remains another metaphysical postulate whose purpose is to provide a firm grounding for a substantially real world of consciousness. This, according to Tsongkhapa, is nothing but an attempt to absolutize consciousness.[53] Following other Prāsaṅgika authors, Tsongkhapa also criticises this concept on the grounds of conceptual incoherence. He argues that just as fire does not burn itself, a lamp does not light itself, and a blade does not cut itself, the idea of an awareness illuminating itself is incoherent. Tsongkhapa quotes the following verse from the *Lankāvatārasūtra*:

> Just as the blade of a sword cannot cut itself,
> and just as a fingernail cannot touch itself,
> so too is it true of one's mind.[54]

This argument is also invoked in Śāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra* (9:18). Tsongkhapa, in *GR* also cites Jñānagarbha's objection that an acceptance of a self-cognizing consciousness, like the Sautrāntika's concept of an indivisible atom, is nothing but an assertion with no evidence to support it.[55]

What, then, is Tsongkhapa's own explanation for the phenomenon of memory? Needless to say, Tsongkhapa attempts to present a coherent account of memory that does not invoke any essentialist metaphysical concepts. His is a nominal account based on an appreciation of our conventional beliefs concerning the phenomena of memory and recollection. Tsongkhapa is less concerned with the question of why memory occurs than with the practical question of how it occurs. Given his basic standpoint as a Prāsaṅgika-Mādhyamika that he does not dispute the conventions of the world, Tsongkhapa seems to take it as fact that memory *does* occur. According to him, any attempt to theorize beyond the phenomenal facts of the actual experience of memory inevitably leads to hypostatizing the phenomenon. In other words, it leads to a restoration of belief in the intrinsic nature (*svabhāva*) of things. He rejects the inference that because our memory of an object invariably arises with the memory of its subjective experience, both subject and object must be cognized at the time of the actual

perception. According to Tsongkhapa, the invariability of subjective and objective components in our recollection has to do with the actual nature of memory itself.[56] For, as argued earlier, memory necessarily occurs from a first-person perspective. Thus, although Tsongkhapa accepts the general premise that there can be no memory without a prior cognition, he rejects the stricter claim that without a prior cognition of the very object (or subject) there cannot be a memory of it.[57] Tsongkhapa cites the memorable analogy that Śāntideva gives in the ninth chapter of his *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. This is the story of how hibernating animals are said to be able to 'remember' being bitten by rats when they feel the pain in the spring although the bite itself took place in the winter when they were hibernating.[58]

Tsongkhapa's own account of how memory occurs appears to be rather pragmatic.[59] He suggests that there are two principal reasons or causes for our experience of memory. First, both the person who remembers and the person whose experience or action is being remembered share the same timeline of a single continuum (*rgyud gcig*) of physical and mental aggregates.[60] That is, they are one and the same. Second, the memory experience and its antecedent, the perception itself, also share the same intentional object.[61] This is not to say that person *A* at *t*2 perceives exactly the same object that was perceived by person *A* at *t*1, for in a strict temporal sense, the object of person *A* at *t*1 no longer exists at the time of person *A* at *t*2. Tsongkhapa is saying that, in the conventional sense, the objects of the two mental events can be said to be the same. For example, if the memory is that of seeing an elephant when you were ten, even though the memory may be occurring at the age of thirty, the two mental events can be said to relate to the same object – the elephant. This is all that is implied by the conventions of the everyday world when we say that so-and-so remembers seeing such and such. Beyond this, the world does not posit a substantially real entity that can be considered to be present both at the time of perception and of its subsequent memory experience. Tsongkhapa makes the following concluding observation:

> Although we say, '[I saw] this Jhampa,' in actual fact, when we utter the above [sentence], we do not specify by thinking that I saw Jhampa of this particular time and at that particular place. We refer to Jhampa as [if he were] a mere generality. We can infer this simply by observing our own thoughts.[62]

Given that Tsongkhapa attributes a crucial role to memory in explaining the nature of our instinctual I-consciousness and its object, the mere I, does this not render his theory open to all the criticisms of a memory-based theory of personal identity? Furthermore, what happens in the case of a person who is clearly experiencing a false memory of having won the Wimbledon title in 1996, for example? I do not think that Tsongkhapa is vulnerable to these objections. First, Tsongkhapa's use of memory to account for our identities appears to be very different from those Western philosophers who have used memory as a *criterion* of personal identity.[63] Certainly, Tsongkhapa is not making the claim that person *A* at *t*1 is equal to person *A* at *t*2 if, and only if, *A* at *t*2 remembers *A* at *t*1. Nor is Tsongkhapa making the claim that all cases of memory experiences are veridical by default. It is conceivable that I may falsely 'remember' that I have been to China when, in fact, I have never set foot on Chinese soil.

Of course, one could argue that in such cases, what is being experienced is not real memory, even though it is labelled as memory. But then the dispute becomes a matter of mere semantics. Whether we accept the possibility of false memories or not, this does not affect Tsongkhapa's views. I do not think that Tsongkhapa's position implies an acceptance of the incorrigibility of first-person accounts. Instead, Tsongkhapa is saying that whenever someone remembers an experience, that person always does so from a first-person perspective. That is to say, those actions and events being remembered are automatically ascribed to that person, the 'viewer' of the memory. And these experiences always accompany the natural occurrence of an I-consciousness. It is this mere I, unspecified in terms of any relative, temporal stages of the individual's existence, to which the events and actions are being ascribed. Hence, even in the case of false memories, the I being ascribed to the remembered events still remains the object of the person's instinctual sense of self. Thus, according to Tsongkhapa, when the middle-aged golfer remembers smoking when he was eighteen, he is not ascribing the I of the middle-aged person, which is temporally specific, to the teenager's action. He is ascribing to his actions a general sense of I, which embraces the temporal stages of both the teenager and the middle-aged golfer. Second, unlike the proponents of memory-based criteria of personal identity, Tsongkhapa does not assume the existence of something substantially 'real' that can be said to extend across time, which would thereby

provide the link between the different stages of the person's existence.

From our analysis so far, two things become clear. First, an understanding of the nature of the mere I, the mere generality of an individual's sense of self, holds the key if we are to make any real sense of Tsongkhapa's views on personal identity. Second, given that Tsongkhapa often invokes our conventional beliefs in validating his philosophical perspectives on personal identity, it becomes crucial for us to develop a clear notion of what Tsongkhapa means by 'valid conventional beliefs.' As the second point pertains to the wider concerns of a theory of reality at large, I shall deal with it in the next chapter. Regarding the first point, there is the crucial question of how to distinguish between the 'general' and the 'particular' identities of a person? As we observed earlier, the mere generality is the I that extends to all three stages in time and yet is not identical with any individual state. It can also be called a nominal unity, that which is presupposed when attributing actions to an individual. On the basis of this I, we can speak of having come from a previous life and going on to a future one. Strictly speaking, to say 'This human being will go into a next life' is a contradiction in terms. Tsongkhapa argues that if the Devadatta of this life were to migrate into the next life, he would have to be eternal, for this would mean that Devadatta does not perish in every single moment as all other phenomena naturally do.[64] Such a view of personal continuity would contradict the basic Buddhist doctrine of momentariness (*anitya*). However, all conventions, such as 'The individual came into existence from a previous life,' 'He will be reborn in a future life,' and so on, can be *validly* ascribed to an individual on the basis of an idea of a mere generality, i.e., the mere I.

The personal identity that is based upon existence as a human being is not a mere generality in that it is specific to a particular stage of existence.[65] Clearly, this claim makes sense only within a framework where one supposes multiple lives in an individual's existence. For our purposes, however, it is not necessary to make this supposition. Thus, it may be more appropriate in our discussion on personal identity if we characterize the personal identity of an individual human being as a 'generality' and its various stages as 'particulars.' Furthermore, particular personal identities are, in this view, relative personal identities. It is quite reasonable simply to speak of relative personal identities within an

individual's life history. This specificity may arise from the relativity of time, status, career, birth, race, gender, or other factors. Because of this dual aspect of an individual's personal identity – the general and the particular – we can speak of a person's multiple identities. For example, an individual can be a human being, a man, a Tibetan, a monk, a scholar, and so on. All of these can obviously be objects of one and the same person's I-consciousness. Therefore, we can see that there is a high degree of flexibility reflected in these identities. Each identity is specific to a particular stage of an individual's personal history. Moreover, underlying them all is our general personal identity, which corresponds to our innate sense of self.[66] The object of this innate I-consciousness is the mere generality (*nga tsam*). Tsongkhapa argues that we should not mistake the person who constructs the thought 'I am' for the objects of that I-consciousness. In other words, the former is a particular instance of the latter, the mere I, which according to Tsongkhapa is a generality. Thus, he concludes:

> Therefore, one should not be mistaken by thinking that the human being who constructs the thought 'I am' and the self that is the basis of that thought are one and mutually inclusive. One must know that the human being [concerned] is only an instance of that self [i.e., the I generality].[67]

Given Tsongkhapa's radical nominalism concerning personal identity, in the final analysis does he not obliterate the distinction between self and I on the one hand, and our sense of self and I-consciousness on the other? This is a question that requires serious thought. To state the conclusion in advance, the answer is no. Because of Tsongkhapa's overall philosophical position, a degree of objectivity must be accorded even to the object of our I-consciousness. In other words, it cannot be the case that it is only our intuitive sense of self that remains. On several occasions, Tsongkhapa explicitly distinguishes between the I-consciousness on the one hand, and its object I on the other. For example, after arguing for the need to distinguish between the mere generality and the particular identities corresponding to various stages of a person's life, Tsongkhapa makes the following statement:

> Just as [in the case of] the object I, one should know that also [in the case of] consciousnesses apprehending that I there are those with general and particular modes of conceiving.[68]

Having said this, it still remains an open question whether Tsongkhapa, and for that matter the Prāsaṅgika school as a whole, can maintain a meaningful distinction between the I-consciousness and the mere I. In other words, given his fundamentally nominal conception of the self, can Tsongkhapa maintain a clear distinction between our natural sense of self on the one hand, and its supposed object, the self, on the other? This question takes us to the heart of Tsongkhapa's ontology. It also pertains to several other important philosophical questions, including the relationship between language and reality, the role of thought and imagination in constructing reality, what is left behind in the aftermath of deconstructing intrinsic existence and the identity of things, and so on. I shall deal with these issues in the next chapter. Suffice it here to reiterate the basic point that the object of our natural, intuitive sense of self is that which is presupposed when we ascribe actions and attributes to an individual. And this, according to Tsongkhapa, is the 'defined person,' for it is the object of our naturally occurring I-consciousness.

If, as Tsongkhapa suggests, the person is that object of one's innate thought 'I am' and thus is the mere I conceptualized in dependence upon the aggregates, does this not lead to solipsism? For example, if I am the mere I conceptualized by me in dependence upon my aggregates, then the mere I that is the object of my thought 'I am' will be different from the 'mere Jinpa' as conceptualized by my wife, for example. Thus, the mere I that is the object of my I-consciousness is different from the mere Jinpa as conceived by my wife. Similarly, the mere Jinpa as conceptualized by my friends will be different from the mere Jinpa as conceptualized by those who do not know me well, and so on. The question then arises as to which is the 'real me.' Is the real me only the mere I that is the object of my instinctual thought 'I am?' If this is so, how does Tsongkhapa avoid the problem of solipsism? Alternatively, is the real me the mere Jinpa conceptualized by my wife and those who know me well? Or is it the mere Jinpa conceptualized by those who do *not* know me well, since in their conception of me there is a degree of 'objective' detachment? Or am I, in some peculiar way, the sum total of all the different conceptualizations that take place in dependence upon my physical and mental aggregates?[69]

That Tsongkhapa does not address this problem of solipsism when articulating his constructive theory of persons appears to point

to a critical difference between his own discourse on personal identity and that of contemporary Western philosophy. On the whole, Tsongkhapa's discourse pertains to understanding the identity of person and its continuity from the first-person perspective – namely, how we experience our own existence and sense of selfhood. Tsongkhapa's endeavour has been to understand the occurrences of our instinctual thoughts of 'I am' and to explain many aspects of our personal identity – such as the unity and continuity of our experience, individuality, and so on – on the basis of this object of our I-consciousness. Furthermore, a key feature of this approach has been to account for these phenomenal facts of our existence without presupposing the presence of some enduring, unchanging, unitary entity, whether we call it soul, self, or *ātman*. In this sense, Tsongkhapa's approach to understanding our existence and identity may be described as primarily 'phenomenological.'

In contrast, in contemporary Western philosophical discourse on personal identity it is the perspective of the third person that is most important. The nearest to a comment on a third-person perspective on the self that we can find in Tsongkhapa's writings occurs in the context of his discussion on our memories of other people. Earlier we observed that, according to Tsongkhapa, when we say, 'I saw *this* Jhampa,' in actual fact, we do not qualify the identity of Jhampa with specific spatial and temporal facts. In other words, when we utter the above sentence, we do not do so with the thought 'I saw Jhampa of this particular time and at that particular time.' We refer to Jhampa, and quite rightly so, as a mere generality.[70] From this, we can certainly surmise that for Tsongkhapa questions about the 'real me' and the attendant problems of solipsism betray an essentialist assumption that there must be something intrinsically real behind our thoughts of 'I am' as well as other people's conceptualizations about us. To enquire as to which one is the *real me* (Is it the mere I conceptualized by myself? Is it the mere Jinpa as conceptualized by my wife? Is it the mere Jinpa as conceived by others? and so on) is to go beyond the bounds of conventional truth and to search for some kind of intrinsically real Jinpa. That being so, we can say that instead of resolving the problem of solipsism, Tsongkhapa's approach suggests a way of 'dissolving' the problem!

How should we characterize Tsongkhapa's theory of personal identity? Duerlinger suggests that Candrakīrti is a non-revisionist in his conception of personal identity in that he does not seek to excise

either the reductionist or the non-reductionist components of our conventional notions of ourselves.[71] To a degree, Tsongkhapa can also be seen as a non-revisionist. However, this does not entail that Tsongkhapa accepts the validity of all our pre-philosophical beliefs pertaining to our personal identities. To reiterate, according to Tsongkhapa, all our conventional beliefs are permeated, at least at a perceptual level, by a fundamental belief in a *svabhāva* nature, that is, the intrinsic existence of things and events. Moreover, to the extent that this is so, the process of generating insight into the way things really are will necessarily entail correcting our pre-analytic, intuitive thoughts about ourselves and the world.

Tsongkhapa asserts that there are three primary perspectives that an individual can have on any given object or an event. An individual may view his or her own self as (i) something enduring and possessing intrinsic nature, (ii) something that is ultimately unreal and lacking any kind of intrinsic existence, or (iii) something having mere existence without the previous two opposing ontological qualifications. In *LTC* Tsongkhapa writes:

> To explain in detail, there are three modes of apprehending the existence of something – for example, a sprout. One mode is to apprehend the sprout as existing by means of its intrinsic nature, thereby holding it as essentially real. Another is to hold that although the sprout does not exist by means of intrinsic nature, it does exist as an illusion. Then there is an apprehension of the sprout as a mere existence, unqualified as either essentially real or unreal.[72]

According to Tsongkhapa, ordinary people like ourselves who have not gained any insight into the ultimately empty nature of phenomena possess the first and the third perspectives.[73] Those who have cognized emptiness may possess all three perspectives, while the fully enlightened Buddhas are said to possess only the second perspective since there is no awareness in the mind of a fully enlightened being that is not directly informed by his or her direct insight into emptiness. The question now is whether these perspectives should best be seen as distinct strands of consciousness or as three distinct aspects of a composite sense of self. Tsongkhapa himself does not anticipate this point; however, the latter model is better suited to his argument. With this model, it is still possible to accord a high degree of validating authority to our natural, conventional notions of personal identity.

To the extent that some of our perceptions may actually apprehend objects of the world without grasping them as real or as possessing intrinsic existence, we can say that a portion of even ordinary people's perceptions of themselves and the world can be considered valid. From this, we can surmise that Tsongkhapa does not reject all instances of I-consciousness as delusory. There is a level of I-consciousness that is related to our identity in a manner that does not impose any imagined modes of being. The object of such a consciousness is known as the 'conventional self' (*tha snyad kyi bdag*).

Having identified the nature of the person according to Tsongkhapa, we must now account for the phenomenal facts of its continuity and individuality. We must consider the following questions: In what terms does Tsongkhapa understand the temporal continuity of the person? and What enables us to differentiate one person from another?

Individuality, continuity, and rebirth

Even though Tsongkhapa rejects what is alleged to be an invariable causal link between the supposed apperceptive faculty of consciousness and subsequent memories, he still entertains the following question.[74] Given that there is no intrinsically real and abiding self that connects an earlier perceptual experience and its subsequent recollection, does this mean that there is no logical contradiction in believing that John McInroe could have memories of the personal experiences of Jimmy Connor? This is a problem well anticipated by Vasubandhu in his chapter on 'Refutations of Selfhood' in *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* and hinted at by Candrakīrti in his *Madhyamakāvatāra*.[75] All three masters – Vasubandhu, Candrakīrti, and Tsongkhapa – invoke the concept of the individual's mental continuum (*rgyun*) to counter this problem. They all respond to this question by asserting that genuine memory can occur only within a single continuum of consciousness. This concept of continuum has deep roots in the earliest Buddhist writings. It is often described by the metaphor of a stream or river. Tsongkhapa gives a succinct yet comprehensive definition of what he understands by continuum (*rgyun*). He states:

> Like the continuum of a running stream, as it maintains a link through the relatedness of cause and effect, it abides

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quality. Then, there is the *self*, or mistakenly imputed quality of inherent existence, that is negated in the view of selflessness. Third, there is the *selflessness*, or emptiness, the lack of a false quality such as inherent existence mistakenly imputed to an object.

When Consequentialists divide selflessnesses into those of persons and other phenomena, they are making a division of different kinds of emptinesses in terms not of the object negated but of the bases or phenomena that have the attribute of emptiness. The other Great Vehicle tenet systems, the Autonomy School and the Mind Only School, assert a distinction between different kinds of emptiness in terms of the object negated.

Out of this comes the fact that, in the Consequence School, the term "phenomena"[142] — in the context of the division of all objects of knowledge into persons and other phenomena — does not refer to persons. In general, phenomena include persons, but in the context of the two emptinesses the term "phenomena" refers to phenomena that are not a person, such as a mind, a body, or a house.

> Just as an emptiness of true existence of a phenomenon such as a [mental or physical] aggregate is posited as a selflessness of a phenomenon, so also must an emptiness of true existence of a person be posited as a selflessness of a person. For the reason [to do so in both instances] is the same. That is the thought [of the Consequence School].

It is important to understand that one usually meditates on *an* emptiness — for instance, an emptiness of your body. About a direct cognition of emptiness, we can speak with more cogency of emptiness in general rather than *an* emptiness, since all emptinesses are being realized at that time within the context of their not appearing to be different. However, prior to that level, it is very helpful to orient oneself to *an* emptiness as well as emptiness*es* instead of an amorphous emptiness, for *a* reasoning with a specific subject, predicate, and sign proves *an* emptiness. Even when, in tantric practice, you visualize a deity appearing out of the sphere of emptiness, this is the emptiness or ultimate nature of oneself and the deity; you first contemplate the specific emptiness of inherent existence of yourself and the deity, and then appear out of that emptiness.

Therefore, Chandrakīrti's *Supplement to (Nāgārjuna's) "Treatise on the Middle Way"* says:[143]

> In order to release transmigrators [from the afflictive obstructions and the obstructions to omniscience], this selflessness was set forth in two aspects by way of a division into phenomena and persons.

Sentient beings are called transmigrators because through the force of various virtuous and non-virtuous actions they travel from one birth to another in the six realms of cyclic existence — hell-being, hungry ghost, animal, human, demigod, and god — moving from one level to another, but always caught within cyclic existence like a fly trapped in a jar.

Persons and other phenomena are the bases for the imputation of a false predicate — self, or inherent existence. At present, although we know that certain things exist, we do not know *how* these things exist. All persons and phenomena appearing to our minds seem to exist inherently. Therefore, although these bases of emptiness are actually the *conventionally existent* person and other *conventionally existent* phenomena, we do not have knowledge of them *as* only conventionally existent. We see them with an overlay that prevents seeing them as they are.

Suppose from always wearing green tinted glasses you saw a white building as green; if you knew merely from repute that the building was white without yourself knowing what white is, you could not say that you know that the color of the building is white. We are in a similar situation.

For example, when something such as a house is stated as

the subject of a syllogism, it actually is a conventionally or merely nominally existent house, but we do not know what such actually is. A Proponent of the Middle Way does not hold that his or her consciousness certifying the subject of a debate — a house, for instance — also certifies that it exists from its own side. Thus, he or she cannot hold that there are commonly appearing subjects because their opponents assert that the consciousness certifying the subject of the debate also certifies its existing from its own side. It also seems to me that the Consequentialists' preference for consequences over syllogisms reflects a preference for using a form of communication that other persons realize as operating within their own assertions, in order to jar them out of thinking that the consciousness certifying the subject also certifies that it is established from its own side.

The house that is the subject of debate or the subject of meditation appears to exist inherently; the very thing that you are trying to refute is utterly mixed with what is appearing. Thus, you must be forcefully caused to realize that your consciousness that certifies the existence of the subject does not also certify its inherent existence.

Nevertheless, although the right and wrong appearances of the subject are utterly mixed, realization of emptiness is not a matter of merely seeing the right appearance of the object. For, most Ge-luk-ba scholars hold that, in the sūtra system, during explicit realization of emptiness by anyone except a Buddha, the object entirely disappears.[144] This is because you are searching to determine whether the object inherently exists or not through examining whether the object can withstand analysis, and finally you cannot come up with anything to posit as the object. You are left with a mere vacuity that is the absence of the object's inherent existence, and you remain in meditative equipoise as vividly and as long as you can without losing the force of the non-finding of the object under ultimate analysis. Then, after dwelling as long as you can in this vacuity of inherent existence, it is helpful, when loosening from meditative

equipoise, to watch the reappearance of the object as qualified by an absence of inherent existence.

You might think that this would be the order from the very beginning, that the seemingly inherently existent object would change right in front of you and become something that in itself was qualified by an absence of inherent existence. This, however, is not the way that meditation on emptiness proceeds, at least according to most Ge-luk-ba explanations. When meditating on the final nature of a house, for instance, you search to see whether or not you can find an inherently existent one, such as now appears, by taking as your reason that the house is a dependent-arising, and eventually understand that an inherently existent house cannot be found under such analysis. At that point, appearance of the object, the house, vanishes; a conventionally existent house does not appear when its emptiness is realized.

Although there is nothing at all to be found and the object has completely disappeared, you have not fallen to an extreme of annihilation because you are within ultimate analysis. For, since a house only conventionally exists, if it were to appear upon ultimate analysis, it would have to be ultimately existent.

When the object has disappeared and nothing appears but an utter vacuity, it is important to keep remembering that this vacuity is not a vacuity of nothingness, but is just the absence of a solidly, or concretely, existent house covering its parts, that such a house as presently appears to our minds does not exist.

When an inferential cognition of emptiness is attained, it is through the route of the appearance of an *image* of the negative — the absence — of inherent existence. As one approaches closer to direct cognition, this imagistic appearance slowly disappears, eventually leaving only the utter vacuity, which, however, is still not a nothingness, but a specific absence of concrete or inherent existence. Direct cognition, although without conceptuality, is not content-

less; the absence of inherent existence is being *realized*, is being *known*, is being *comprehended*.

After dwelling in that state for some time, let the house reappear. There should be a change in its appearance such that its very appearance means that it is analytically unfindable.

Because now we do not have the benefit of such meditation, the appearance of a house calls forth our agreement that it inherently exists. However, when a meditator has become used to this type of reasoned investigation, the strong adherence to the false appearance of inherent existence lessens. This, in turn, causes a change in the appearance of the object. Technically speaking, you are not yet actually removing the appearance of inherent existence, but the house's appearance as very solid due to adherence to its false appearance will partially disappear. Also, through becoming used to the deep import of the reasoning establishing that a house does not inherently exist, eventually even the appearance of its inherent existence induces understanding of its lack of inherent existence. At that point, the conflict between appearance and reality has been realized to the degree that the false appearance itself induces mindfulness that it is false. The Dalai Lama has compared this to the colors seen when wearing sunglasses; the very appearance of the distorted color induces knowledge that it is not true.

You can only accomplish this through trying to find an inherently existent object, discovering that it cannot be found, and then, within knowledge that it cannot be found, again looking at the object. Initially, there was something at the end of your finger at which you were pointing and which was the house, for inherent existence is pointability. Then, when analyzing, you see that there is really not anything that you can point to; the appearance of such a concrete, massive house is recognized as false. By getting used to investigating things with reasoning, you come to realize that you have been deceived. As Nāgārjuna's *Treatise*

on the Middle Way says,[145] "All conditioned phenomena have the attribute of deception; therefore, they are falsities."

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12 Inducing Realization

COMMENTS ON THE REFUTATION OF PRODUCTION

Though we live in the midst of these things appearing to exist inherently, somewhere deep in the mind, this solidity must bother us. Depending on our predispositions, the tension of questioning these concrete appearances is more or less near the surface, more or less affecting us. But in any case we have a feeling not to consider it, a feeling that it cannot be figured out. For, we are faced with the overwhelming appearance of things as inherently existent. Even when exposed to Buddha's teaching and to the reasonings that refute true existence, we still feel that these appearances are "there" and that these reasonings are incredible. What has appeared to us for countless lifetimes makes us resist coming to a conclusion, and eventually when we understand a little about emptiness, it seems even painful.

We have a network of anxiety and, based on it, a network of desires and hatreds. When we do not investigate objects and just take them at face value, it seems as if we are down to bare facts. We feel that here is something that matters, that, for example, our life, or future, or happiness is at stake.

In support of the inherently existent I and this network of desires and hatreds, we need inherently existent production of help and harm. However, emptiness means that there is no inherently existent production of harm when someone stops you on the street at midnight, beats you up, and takes your money. You would certainly feel that there was an inherently existent effect there — you were beaten up and you have no more money! However, if you understand it well, there is no way for any kind of production *as we understand it*, qualified by inherent existence, to occur.

We can destroy the exaggerations of harmer and the harmed that are created by the conception of true existence — these being almost all of what we experience. Still, we cannot deny conventionally existent harmer and harmed without deprecating what does indeed exist. Conventionally and validly, of course, there are help and harm. However, we have a strong sense that help and harm are analytically findable, existing from their own side, concretely, most palpably. Conventionally, within the context of cause and effect not being analytically findable, it is important to value cause and effect even though they are not analytically findable. For, though we exaggerate the status of cause and effect, the removal of that exaggeration does not mean that cause and effect are removed; rather, the removal of the exaggeration yields greater understanding and appreciation of cause and effect. This is difficult. How could you not concretely find that one person's arm was cut off and another's was not? But if you can probe these reasonings, it is said that you will be able to see your own arm being cut off, and there will be nothing to point to which is the cutting off of the arm, the person whose arm is being cut off, or the arm that is cut off, all within not denying that the arm is being cut off.

For instance, ultimately there is no production from other, but conventionally there is production of effects that are other than their causes. Still, this does not mean that there are two levels of reality, one that is the ultimate level

of emptiness and one that is our normal world. It would be incorrect to say that when we rise from meditating on emptiness, forget the absence of inherent existence, and again fall into ignorance, we are then in the conventional level. For, our ordinary misperceptions of inherently existent objects do not constitute the conventional level. Inherent existence is an object of ignorance and does not exist, not even conventionally. Rather, we must see the compatibility of the ultimate and the conventional. We must *act within* the context of understanding the non-concreteness of phenomena, knowing that these things are unfindable.

Dzong-ka-ba and his followers say that the consciousness that certifies, or establishes, the existence of a conventional truth is a valid cognition. Others, however, say that conventionally existent phenomena are posited by ignorance. For the Ge-luk-ba system, ignorance falsely certifies the *portion* of perception that is the appearance of inherent existence, but there is also a portion of correct appearance that is certified by conventional valid cognition. The appearance of objects is partly right and partly wrong, but it is not that the underside is wrong and the topside is correct. Everything throughout the appearance is colored by falsity. In other interpretations of the Consequence School, it is felt that because every portion of the object is affected by the false appearance of inherent existence, the whole object is posited by ignorance.

From the way that many speak of conventional and ultimate truths, it might seem that they are two levels of operation on the same object. However, the aim is to practice a union of conventional truths and ultimate truths, realizing that conventional truths only nominally exist and that ultimate truths negate only inherent existence and not existence in general.

"Conventional truth" (*saṃvṛti-satya*) can also be translated as "concealer-truth" or "truth-for-a-concealing-consciousness". The "concealer" is ignorance because ignorance conceals, obscures, or obstructs perception of the

actual nature of phenomena. These objects are truths for a concealing, ignorant consciousness; however, a "concealer-truth" is not an object that is posited by ignorance, but a phenomenon that is a *truth* for ignorance. A "truth" is what exists the way it appears, whereas conventional objects falsely appear — even in direct perception — to be inherently existent; hence, conventional objects are not truths in fact. Ignorance affirms this false appearance of inherent existence and, therefore, is the concealer of suchness. Everything that we see is a concealer-truth, taken by ignorance to exist the way it appears, but actually appearing one way and existing in another; these appearances are fraudulent. Meditative investigation is used to penetrate this falsity.

The Reasoning

Almost everything with which we come into contact is compounded, produced. We have a very firm sense that all these products are there in and of themselves. If we want to find out if these products are really there in the way that they appear, one technique is to examine how they are produced. For, if we can refute their substantially established production, we can negate this very solid, bold, and forthright appearance as if they are right there in their own right.

First, decide whether these appearances are permanent or not. This can be done easily. These are impermanent and hence must be products. Once they are products, we have only four choices. Production has to be either caused or causeless; if it is caused, then there are three choices — the effect has to be produced from a cause that is either the same as itself, different, or both same and different.

In order to succeed, you have to tie the reasoning to these very forceful appearances. What we usually do is to take the things appearing here as data, as facts, and then try to figure out an intellectual system that will accord with them. What is needed here is quite different. We have to figure

out some way to extricate our minds from these wrong appearances so that we will quit assenting to them; then we have to destroy the wrong appearances themselves so that things will appear correctly. This Buddhist system is opposite to what we are accustomed to.

Many people talk about quieting the mind down, about ceasing the frozen overlay we put on things and experiencing them more the way they are. Perhaps this is a way of getting closer to the innate mind; artificial conceptions are being quieted, and the mind is being withdrawn from intellectually acquired ideas. There is no question that if we can do this, we will perceive the world differently. However, even if you could completely keep the mind away from even the innate conceptions, the appearance of phenomena would still be wrong. By sinking down into appearances, you are getting deeper into your problem and, in a sense, identifying it more, but your realization is getting no deeper. As mentioned before, it is insufficient merely to withdraw the mind from things. Although attempting to put people more into the present moment, these systems do not have any means of actually opposing our wrong conceptions and wrong appearances. Their method of opposing is merely to push them out of the way.

The system here, however, is to provide a weapon explicitly countering wrong conceptions. We have to get to the point where, when we look at our object of meditation, we will understand that one of its qualities is that it is not produced from self, other, both, or without causes. These four points have to move your mind deeply; they have to be able to show you that things do not exist in the way that they appear. The non-production of things in these four ways contradicts how things appear. Thus, with this, the very appearance of phenomena will begin to change. The refutation of production of the four extreme types is like a diamond weapon.

Whether this reasoning works for you or whether you will have to find some other reasoning is something to be

discovered by playing with these reasonings and getting into them, learning how they work. The four positions of production from self, other, both, or causelessly are the only possibilities of inherently existent production. We get upset because it looks as if the Buddhists are forcing people like the Sāṃkhyas and Nihilists into positions they would not themselves accept. We may even feel to support the side being refuted. However, when you meditate, you have to throw yourself to the Buddhists' side; play the Buddhists' game for a while and get into it. This will work itself down into your mind and cause your natural resistance to come out. Then you really have to start looking at it, from inside.

Since these phenomena are not permanent, they must be products. If they are produced and this production is findable — as being from self, other, both, or causelessly — then this appearance of things as findable is correct. If their production cannot be found, then what is appearing is not right. We have a very important matter to decide here; it will apply to all phenomena. Throw your mind completely into this, put all your energy behind it. There is a lot at stake: if there is no findable production, then we are wrong in our usual way of living. These meditations change the appearance of things. Normally, when things appear and we assent to the way they appear, the appearance becomes even more encrusted. Then, we make up systems and freeze this appearance of inherent existence all the more. Reasonings such as these that refute inherently existent production do just the opposite; they change the way things appear, making it easier not to assent to that appearance. Meditation on emptiness is a real antidote.

This reasoning in which the four extreme types of production are refuted is an analysis of causation. Jang-gya calls this both a "refutation of production from the four extremes"[248] and "diamond fragments".[249] The reasoning refuting production of an effect that is existent, non-existent, both existent and non-existent, or neither is also sometimes called a "refutation of production from the four

extremes", though here Jang-gya calls it a "reasoning refuting production of the existent and the non-existent".[250] Such a reasoning is an investigation into effects. To investigate both causes and effects, one uses the reasoning Jang-gya calls a "refutation of production of the four alternatives"[251] — of one cause producing one effect, one cause producing many effects, many causes producing one effect, and many causes producing many effects. The reasoning of a lack of being one or many and the sevenfold reasoning are analyses of entities.

When analyzing causes, you are not taking what is in front of you and thinking of it as a cause but are thinking of the causes that produced it. Since its causes are not in front of you, in order to do this reasoning you must reflect on something you are not seeing. This, in my opinion, makes it difficult for the reasoning to appear to the mind. Although many treatises present this investigation of production by way of causation, Chandrakīrti advises yogis to start out using the sevenfold reasoning (which will be explained in chapters fourteen through nineteen). Perhaps it is easier to understand because it is an investigation into an entity, an investigation of the thing itself. As that entity presently appears to us, it is not necessary to think of something else.

Again, with the reasoning refuting production of the existent, the non-existent, both, and neither, you have to think of your object of meditation as an effect. You are not thinking just of the entity of the object itself but of the fact that it is an effect. You have to think about the object in terms of something else, not just the entity appearing to you. The same is true for the reasoning refuting production of the four alternative types — one cause producing one effect, one cause producing many effects, and many causes producing many effects. You have to think about something that is not appearing to you, and thus you may not have a sufficiently vivid sense of what is being refuted for the reasoning to affect it.

In the reasoning that refutes production from the four

extremes, or the reasoning that refutes the existent or non-existent, or the reasoning that refutes the four alternatives, you must think of something else in relation to the subject of the reasoning; they depend on your having understood that production is essential to that subject. In order for the diamond fragments, for instance, to work, your mind must be imbued with the fact that whatever you are taking as your object is indeed a product. Compared to the sevenfold reasoning, this can be almost abstract or imaginary for a beginner, even though it is not.

In the sevenfold reasoning, you are basically refuting two positions, sameness and difference of the basis of designation and the designated phenomenon, both of which are right there in your imagination. You can point to something right there, identifying the basis of designation — such as the collection of arms, legs, and a trunk, for example — and the designated phenomenon — the body. However, when you analyze causes, they are not quite in your field of vision. You have to put more thought into it. When you are analyzing effects, it is indeed true that your object is an effect, but this fact is not obvious just through its appearance. We are not always impressed by a thing's being an effect; however, we are impressed by the thing itself.

This is only to say that it can be difficult to apply the reasoning of the diamond fragments. Still, once you can use these reasonings, they will apply to what is right in front of you. If something exists in the way it appears, then it must be produced from itself, from some other, from both, or neither. If you can slowly go through these and eliminate them, you will see that the non-affirming negative that is the emptiness of truly existent production is a quality of this object itself. This will show you that its current solid appearance is incorrect and that you should not assent to this appearance. Although you have to approach this reasoning through a lot of thought, in the end you must bring it back to what you are seeing.

For instance, if you leave the analysis of production from

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inherently existent others at mere words, it will not mean much. You have to develop the sense of other such that you can look at, for instance, your chair as being just other. Once you can see things as being, in their nature, other, then you can use these reasonings that get at inherently existent otherness.

We take things to be others from their own side and nevertheless designate a relationship between them despite their otherness. We need to investigate this feeling of otherness and see just how sensible it is. For example, if you write letters at random on a blackboard, it is easy to see that they are all other. But when you put them together in a word, you no longer perform the activity of making them so other. For instance, take the word "work". It is one word; the letters are related and are usually seen as one unit. However, if you put the same letters in the wrong order, they become very other. Put them back in the right order again, and you suddenly feel them coalesce. At some point when you are putting them together and they are very close, they come together and become locked into a unit. Something very powerful substantializes things over and beyond what is actually there.

If we did not substantialize things, if this coalescing were very light and were just considered a mental fabrication, we would be convinced of the error of such gross substantialization quite easily. However, this is not the case. This substantialization differentiates the external world from ourselves.

We might be willing to accept, at least philosophically, that the external world is not as grossly other as we see it, but when we are faced with an external existent that seems to have its own being, we definitely feel that it exists in its own right. At that time it impinges upon us with tremendous force, and we feel very strongly that we have to accept it as independent.

We go to sleep every night; appearances impinge on us, and we are totally convinced. The fact that dreams are

wrong does not itself make waking life wrong, but the very same tendency towards substantialization that convinces us that dream objects are external real objects convinces us now that the external world exists from its own side.

Another way to look at this is to take all these things that appear and wipe out this sense of substantiality that convinces you they are there in and of themselves. Identify what it is in dreams that impinges on you; get at it, feel it, understand it, and then do away with it utterly in waking experience. When you have done that, try to come up with something that will prove to you that these waking appearances are substantially established external objects.

For instance, if a loud noise suddenly happens nearby, there is something very bold, forthright, and solid right there. If you are tuned into your experience, you will feel right then that the reasonings we are discussing here are wrong, that things do happen, that these happenings are findable. However, when you analyze and get into your investigation, intently attempting to find what is appearing to you, you will not be able to come up with such massive, solid, bold, seemingly findable and forthright happenings as are appearing to your mind. These forthright happenings are production — something that is appearing or happening in front of you. Moreover, production is not just production of an entity; the product's coming into your ken — your perception of it — is also produced.

These products cover a certain spot, but activities cover this spot also. When some bad event happens, that is production of trouble. It is produced, and then it ceases. It seems to be a findable thing, and then it is no longer there. Suppose, for instance, your house is destroyed. You have feelings of inherent existence about the house, about its destruction, about what it will cost to replace all your possessions, about what is there. This kind of harm, the harm induced by the conception of true existence, can be eliminated.

What if I were sitting next to you and someone came

along and cut off my ear? You would certainly feel that my ear was cut off, but even an experience of something as forceful as that, when you know how to analyze, becomes transformed. For, this analysis is not a vague process of turning your mind away from events. When you analyze, you are more engaged than you ever were before in your life. It is said, "One who knows emptiness is aware," more perceptive, more awake, more conscientious. It is not that when an event happens you superimpose emptiness on it or turn your head away from it in order to remember its emptiness. The only way that you can get into emptiness is to get more into objects. When you realize emptiness, you will become more familiar with objects; your mind will be more brilliant, more clear. By turning your mind away from experiences, you will never get to emptiness. You have to go right to the thing itself as it is happening and let it happen again and again mentally. Then, analyze. You can, without analyzing, turn the mind away to some sort of a vacuity, but in doing so you are just tricking yourself.

There is a different vacuity that is the absence of inherent existence in suffering. If suffering were not empty of true existence, if this vacuity were not there, suffering would be firm and massive. It would always be there, and you could never get over it; if it existed from its own side, it would be uncaused and, therefore, not caused by ignorance; it would not be a mistake of understanding. Once that were the case, then correct understanding could not get rid of suffering. However much we may now feel that pain is indeed massive and existing in and of itself, it is not that way at all. Suffering is empty of existing from its own side, it is caused by ignorance, and thoroughly understanding emptiness will get rid of it.

So much of our experience of pain is induced by our conception of inherent existence that if we were to get rid of some of this mistaken conception, we would say that there is no longer any pain, for whatever pain was left would be almost unrecognizable. Even beyond that, it is said that

when you become fully accustomed to cognizing emptiness there is pleasure in everything. This is a special power of meditation; it is said that many who do not understand emptiness also have some of these powers.

When searching for an object with one of these reasonings, you are unable to find anything, and a vacuity appears to your mind. This vacuity is the absence of inherent existence, the analytical unfindability, of the object you are seeking. The appearance of such a vacuity is the mental image that is the "appearing object"[252] of the initial view of the middle way. As you become used to this vacuity, the image will disappear. Finally, only the vacuity will be left — the vacuity itself will be the appearing object. That is direct cognition. On the path of preparation (the second of the five paths of accumulation, preparation, seeing, meditation, and no more learning), the imagistic element as well as the sense of subject and object becomes less and less until it disappears completely at the path of seeing. Until that time, the vacuity that is a negation of inherent existence is realized through the medium of an image.

At the beginning of the path of preparation, yogis can ascertain a subject and an object — the wisdom consciousness and its object, emptiness. As they progress along the path of preparation, they can no longer ascertain the sense of an object, even if they were to reflect on it. By the time they have reached the end of the path of preparation, they can no longer ascertain the appearance of the subject either. Both subject and object are still appearing, but they can no longer ascertain either one. Finally, the sense of subject and object vanishes, and yogis have direct cognition of emptiness. At this point, they are on the path of seeing; their mental consciousness *is* a path of seeing.

All Buddhist schools of tenets speak of five paths: accumulation, preparation, seeing, meditation, and no more learning. These paths are developments of a consciousness over time. It helps to imagine them. Imagine finding the vacuity that is a negation of inherent existence — there still

being a sense of subject and object. Then imagine subject and object disappearing in terms of ascertainment but still subtly appearing to the mind. Then imagine there being merely a vacuity fused with mind; this would be the path of seeing, which is non-dual in the sense that there is no appearance of subject and object, no appearance of conventional phenomena, no appearance of inherent existence, no appearance of conceptual images, and no appearance of difference. Then, imagine that the meaning of the vacuity is so vivid that it eliminates a certain level of the conception of inherent existence. The things that are overcome through cognizing emptiness on the path of seeing are called objects abandoned through seeing, and due to this one cognition, you will no longer have that level of defilement for the rest of infinite time. Among the four noble truths — true sufferings, true sources, true cessations, and true paths — these abandonments are true cessations. True cessations last forever.

When you take refuge in Buddha, his Doctrine, and the Spiritual Community, your actual refuge is the Doctrine, verbal and realizational — mainly the latter. Thus, when you take refuge in the Doctrine, true cessations should appear to your mind. These are not just something temporary, like having no desire for food at present. True cessations are absences of things that will never occur again. There will be a time when, due to cognition of emptiness, desire will never appear again. It will become utterly nonexistent through the power of its antidote, a consciousness with an opposite mode of apprehension. True cessations are not just absences of things due to the incompleteness of the conditions for their production, such as the lack of desire for food when intensely involved in some other activity; they are absences of afflictive emotions brought about by the realizations that act as their antidotes.

The main refuge is true cessations. How are they achieved? Through true paths. Thus, true cessations and paths are the actual objects of practice and hence the actual

refuge. The teacher of this refuge is Buddha, who laid out what should be practiced in order to attain exactly what he attained. The Spiritual Community are the indispensable friends who help us to understand and practice this refuge of true paths in order to attain true cessations.

The direct cognition of emptiness is such that it will bring about a true cessation of a certain level of the afflictions. Although meditative suppression can yield a sense of bliss, clarity, non-conceptuality, and even greater intellectual power, if you want utterly and forever to get rid of desire, hatred, and ignorance, merely suppressing them is not enough. You have to destroy them by means of their antidote, direct cognition of emptiness. How can you arrive at this direct cognition of emptiness? Through inference. The meaning of the vacuity that appears to an inferential cognition is that these concrete events and objects to which we are accustomed do not exist as they appear. This vacuity has to keep meaning this for you because otherwise, it will become a vacuity of nothingness.

At the level of direct cognition, you do not have to worry about sustaining the meaning of the cognition, you do not have to think about whether the force of the intent of your cognition is still there or not, you do not have to keep reminding yourself what you are looking for and not finding. Your mind is at a level where all these are there. However, with our kind of conceptual cognition or, even more so, with its precursor, correct assumption, we have to sustain the intention of our cognition.

A strong sense of being unable to find what you were formerly sure could be found must be maintained — once you are impressed, you have to sustain that impression. If, when meditating on emptiness, you merely race through the reasonings, get to the point of utter vacuity, and are no longer impressed with it, that vacuity has become mere nothingness. At that time you are cultivating a wrong view, an impediment to the path, because you have lost the sense of the object of negation, inherent existence, and are now

becoming accustomed to a view that nothing exists.

When done properly, one is deeply impressed with not being able to find the object of negation. For instance, when I was studying at the Tibetan Buddhist Learning Center in New Jersey, a student came one day to see Geshe Wangyal, the founder and main teacher, at a time when Geshe-la was away. The student was very impressed by the fact that Geshe-la was not there. He went into the monastery and asked someone who would definitely have known of Geshe-la's presence if he was there. This person told him that he was not. The student probably even thought, "Geshe-la's car is not here," and he may have even wandered about the monastery and looked to see if he was there. The student was truly impressed by Geshe-la's absence — he was impressed by it for months. He did not forget that Geshe-la was not there because it meant something to him.

The absence of an object of negation is a negative. There is a negative right here with us which is our absence of inherent existence. This negative is not a negation performed by a person. "Negation" can be viewed in two ways, from the point of view of two types of agents: one type of negator — not the kind of negation we are speaking of here — is a person who is thinking about and meditating on the right view, thereby negating or ceasing the wrong view; the other type of negator is a negative that negates something in the sense of being the absence of it — here, an emptiness of inherent existence. This latter negative is not as if there is something there always punching away at inherent existence and destroying it. It is a mere absence of the object of negation.

This negative exists. It is not non-existent, as the word might seem to imply. Even non-affirming negatives are phenomena, but this does not mean that when emptiness is cognized, the meditator thinks that this negative *is* an emptiness. Realization of emptiness is merely the non-finding of the object of negation. You do not enter into any

thought, "This is emptiness." A consciousness that thinks such would be a valid cognition of conventional phenomena, for it is dealing with the *existence* of something, in this case emptiness.

Furthermore, even though a non-affirming negative exists, to cognize this non-affirming negative does not mean to cognize its existence. This is technical but very helpful to know. For example, when you cognize a book, you cognize the existence of that book. Your eye consciousness is both the certifier of the book and the certifier of the existence of that book. However, when you cognize emptiness, it is different, for you are not cognizing the existence of emptiness. Thus, the uncommon certifier of emptiness is a consciousness directly cognizing emptiness, and through its power — or also through the power of an inferential realization of emptiness — the existence of emptiness is later understood without any further cogitation.

When emptiness is directly cognized, the emptinesses of all phenomena including emptiness itself are directly cognized but without any sense of their difference. Because the cognition is direct, the cognition of the absence of inherent existence of all phenomena and the cognition of the absence of inherent existence of that absence of inherent existence do not have to be serial. With inferential cognition (which is necessarily a conceptual cognition) it is serial, but a direct cognition is a different type of mind. A direct cognition of emptiness is a wisdom consciousness of meditative equipoise that simultaneously realizes the emptiness of inherent existence of all phenomena.

The point of this discussion is to emphasize that we are searching to find the inherent existence of the object. This needs to be remembered; otherwise, when searching, you will think that you are seeking emptiness. In fact, you are searching to find the inherent existence of an object such as your body, but come up with an utter vacuity. This utter vacuity is called "emptiness", although you are not seeking to identify it as such. You are to remain with the feeling that

concrete objects such as these now appearing to our minds do not exist. What the student saw and remembered was that Geshe-la was not at the monastery. He did not turn around and say, "This is the absence of Geshe-la at the monastery."

Emptiness Yoga

The Tibetan Middle Way

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16 Bringing the Reasoning to Life

COMMENTS

An example is easier to understand than the thing itself. Taken at face value, this should mean that it is easier to understand the absence of inherent existence of a chariot than it is to understand the absence of inherent existence of a person. However, it is traditionally said that the selflessness of persons is easier to understand than the selflessness of phenomena and that this is the reason why one meditates on the selflessness of persons first. As Dzong-ka-ba says in his *Middling Exposition of Special Insight:*[273]

Chandrakīrti's *Clear Words* and Buddhapālita's *Commentary on (Nāgārjuna's) "Treatise on the Middle Way"* explain that when entering into suchness, one initially enters by way of the selflessness of persons. Shāntideva also says the same. The reason why it must be done this way is that, although there is no difference in subtlety with regard to the selflessness to be ascertained in terms of the persons or the phenomena that are its base, selflessness is easier to ascertain in terms of a person, due to essentials of the substratum, whereas it is more difficult to ascertain in terms of [other]

phenomena. For example, since it is more difficult to ascertain the selflessness of phenomena in terms of an eye, ear, and so forth and easier to ascertain it it terms of a reflection and so forth, the latter are posited as examples for settling selflessness in terms of the former.

Dzong-ka-ba clearly says that selflessness is to be ascertained first with respect to persons and then with respect to other phenomena; he says that this is due to "essentials of the substratum" but does not say what these essentials are. Lati Rinbochay, recently abbot of the Shar-dzay College of Gan-den Monastic University in Mundgod, Karnataka State, in South India, explained that the person is always present and thus it is easier to realize its emptiness than that of other phenomena. However, our minds are also always present, and they are phenomena other than persons.

The Dalai Lama explained that we already have some suspicions about the status of the person, since the lower Buddhist schools hold that only persons are empty of self-sufficient, substantial existence. Because we already have suspicions that persons do not exist in accordance with their appearance, it is easier to realize emptiness in terms of a person than in terms of other phenomena.

Still, Chandrakīrti seems to use a selflessness of a phenomenon other than a person (a chariot) as the example for the selflessness of persons in the sevenfold reasoning. Putting this together with what Dzong-ka-ba and the Dalai Lama have said, perhaps it is that although, in the strict usage of examples in Buddhist reasoning, the predicate of a thesis (such as the absence of inherent existence) is realized first in terms of the example and then in terms of the subject, here that is not case; rather, you are not fully cognizing the emptiness of a chariot but are merely gaining some familiarity with the procedure of the reasoning. Perhaps the tradition first examines a chariot because it is an external object, such that when we analyze it and take it

apart, it does not affect us quite as much as would taking apart our own sense of self and thus is easier for getting a sense of how the reasoning works.

In any case, we have to throw ourselves into the analysis of a chariot, after which that understanding is to be applied to the person, oneself. Since it is the person who travels in cyclic existence and who is the focus, or the knot, of all the trouble, emphasis has to be put on it. It may be the case that until we work on breaking through the heavy encrustations of inherent existence that are superimposed on this I which is most important in terms of being caught in cyclic existence, it is impossible to *realize* the selflessness of another phenomenon no matter how facilely the format of the reasoning may appear to our minds.

It is a basic tenet of the Consequence School that when the emptiness of inherent existence of one subject is realized, all superimpositions of inherent existence have been removed with respect to all other phenomena, due to which you need only turn your mind to other phenomena in order to realize their emptiness. Thus, overcoming the superimpositions of inherent existence and realizing emptiness is an horrendous task, and without explicitly taking the person, I, which is the center of all the troubles of cyclic existence as the basis of your meditation, it is impossible to penetrate the webs, veils, and encrustations of the superimpositions of inherent existence with respect to another phenomenon to the point of *realizing* emptiness. Although it is the case that when you apply the sevenfold reasoning to a chariot, or a car, you can be shocked to the very depth of your being that it is not an analytically findable entity as you previously thought, still actual *realization* of emptiness is even more profound. The Dalai Lama described developing a correct assumption of emptiness as like being hit by lightning, and thus the development of inferential realization must be a thousand times more shocking. Therefore, the reason why the emptiness of a chariot is given as an example of the emptiness of a person may be that it is easier to learn the

format of the reasoning with this less touchy subject even though it is not easier to realize the *emptiness* of this less touchy subject.[274]

Being Unfindable and Yet Being Validly Established

A chariot is analytically unfindable but is nevertheless validly established. We usually think that if something is valid, it must be findable. For instance, a valid car must be usable, able to perform its functions. Suppose I told you that I had bought a great new car and would take you for a ride. If we went outside, and there was only a bumper and a part of an engine, you would say, "That is not a car, it cannot perform the functions of a car." This is not the unfindability the Proponents of the Middle Way are talking about. A car that has valid nominal establishment can perform the functions of a car, even though it cannot be found under the sevenfold analysis.

If you went to a movie and the film was ripped so badly that you could see only the left half of the picture, there is no question that the film would not be performing its proper function. You would get fed up with it and leave the theatre, maybe go to another movie. You would have become discouraged about that movie. Or, suppose you go to a store and buy a lot of heavy things, canned goods, milk, and so on, and the clerk gives you a wet paper bag to put them in. You would say, "This is not a paper bag," and would start thinking about how you could get a paper bag to put your groceries in. Your mind would race to something else. Just so, because we are not accustomed to the Middle Way view, when we search to find things and do not find them, we become discouraged and depressed. Our minds want to race on to something else and are not impressed by this unfindability since we take it to be a type of non-finding that we are already used to.

We have little choice but to work within the context of our own mind, and indeed this is the way in which our minds have been conditioned to operate. However, discouragement at the lack of analytical findability is mistaken; it comes from our foolish habituation to the sense of inherent existence. In this vein, the Fifth Dalai Lama says that for a beginner the experience of emptiness carries with it a sense of loss:[275]

If you have no predispositions for emptiness from a former life, it seems that a thing which was in the hand has suddenly been lost. If you have predispositions, it seems that a lost jewel which had been in the hand has suddenly been found.

Emptiness is the key to mental and physical transformation; thus, for someone who is used to it, it is not at all like losing something. Rank beginners, however, would have a hard time staying with the process of realization due to their sense of loss; we have ingrained tendencies to leave such a state.

We have to be able to search for objects, not find them, and then remain in the vivid realization that they cannot be found. We have to realize, for instance, that there is a book here, Jang-gya's *Presentation of Tenets*, which he wrote and yet we cannot analytically find any writer who wrote it, subject written about, or readers for whom it was written. We have to understand, moreover, that this unfindable writing nominally performs a function and realize that unfindability is not a reason for giving something up.

Thus, it is within the context of their being unfindable that things are validly established. It is not that unfindability contradicts the valid establishment of the object; it contradicts the object's inherent existence. Also, it is not that you first develop a wisdom consciousness that does not find inherent existence and then, when you cease meditating, ignorance comes back, within the context of which things are validly established and exist.

We can also say that a conventionally existent table is refuted as ultimately existing, but this only means that an *inherently existent* table is refuted as being conventionally

existent. Ultimate analysis cannot negate a conventionally existent table. It can only negate a findable, ultimately existing table. We also need to counteract the tendency to consider even nominal existence as if it were findable, as if it could bear ultimate analysis.

The cognition of emptiness has great meaning; in time, it will get us out of cyclic existence. If we immediately cognized it *directly*, we would naturally appreciate its significance, but when we set out on a path to this direct realization and get to a point where we tend toward depression or want to turn away to something new, we have to be careful not to veer off this path. Thus, you need firm motivation for meditation, as well as perseverance. If you have tremendously good predispositions, you will appreciate the significance of this unfindability right away. If you do not, you just have to keep reminding yourself that this is the real nature of objects, or, if you have the wish to help others, that this is a supreme way to bring that about. In cultivating altruism you are developing love and compassion for all sentient beings and the determination to attain enlightenment in order to help them. Necessary for attaining this position through which you can help sentient beings on a vast scale is direct cognition of emptiness. If you cannot make effort at realizing emptiness, then your desire to help all beings is merely words. So, here is something you can do: you can stay with this realization that will help clear up your mind so that eventually you can liberate all other beings. If you do not do this, what are you going to do?

In his *Precious Garland*,[276] Nāgārjuna says that if you saw a mirage in the distance and, after going over to see if water was there and finding none, thought, "That water no longer exists," you would be very stupid, for that water never existed. You were living with a mistake, a dream; now you have awakened, and you mourn the loss of the dream-objects. Similarly, although since beginningless time we have been convinced that the object of negation, inherent existence, has existed, we have to realize that it is just made

up, that it was not there at all, and that now we are seeing the reality that was there all the time. Proud people do not have the slightest hope of realizing this. People who insist on being right have no hope at all. It must be that when you realize emptiness, you understand that you were mistaken in every perception you have ever had. We are wrong from beginning to end, completely foolish in terms of the status of objects. Ignorance may actually be a small thing when you see the truth — wisdom and ignorance being as if you could have gone this way or that way; still, it produces a huge error. Those who are proud and want to be right all the time just cannot face how wrong they have been. It is no one's fault but our own.

At the beginning of 1965 at the Tibetan Buddhist Learning Center in New Jersey, I spent a lot of time just meditating on the fact that I was wrong, given that in all my perceptions everything appeared to exist from its own side. I kept repeating to myself, "I am wrong, I am wrong, I am wrong," imagining people pointing their fingers at me and saying that I was wrong. In time, I was able to think, "There is just no question about it. I accept it completely, I am wrong." We are afraid to be wrong; it takes courage to be wrong, to be able to take being wrong. If you are willing to accept your error, you develop greater strength of character just from the fact that you are wrong. You can even carry it further and let yourself be wrong in every instance where someone thought it was a question of right or wrong, for no matter what the situation was, you really were wrong — about the mode of existence of the object. Which is more important, the way in which the whole world exists or whether so-and-so said this or said that? Even if you win the argument, you are still wrong; you should face the fact that you are wrong.

You might become proud that you are facing the fact that you are wrong, but this means that you are looking at it incorrectly. You have to take this vastly, as when you do everything for the sake of all beings. You can take the very

pride that swells up and meditate from within that, thinking that this pride itself is for the sake of all sentient beings. Inside, where you want it for yourself, it is all knotted up; if you take this pride outside for the sake of all sentient beings, the knot will loosen. It is no longer the same kind of pride that it used to be.

The main point is to realize how wrong one is. We have to get rid of the pride that always wants to be right and accept being wrong about the most important thing. Suppose that when you were a child you learned that all people of a certain country were bad. This was reinforced over and over again in newspapers and so on. If you later studied and found out that all people of that country are not bad, you would go back in your memory through your whole lifetime to undo this conditioning, seeing yourself as wrong in every single one of these instances where the opinion that all those people are bad was reinforced. The meditation on wrongness is similar.

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Determining the Entailment

Once you understand something about how these seven reasons work, it can be determined whether or not it follows from them that a chariot is not inherently existent: if something does not exist in any of these seven ways, does it then follow that it is not inherently existent? First, you have to be able to decide that if a chariot exists in accordance with its concrete appearance to you — like your car or your house — you ought to be able to find it. Once you have determined this, the question becomes, "What kind of a mind is qualified to find such concrete existence?" If you thought, for example, that you had termites in your house, you would put a lot of energy into trying to find out whether or not you actually did have termites. You would try to find someone who knew where the termites would likely be found. Just so, you have to give inherent existence every possible chance there is. Go out to your car and try to find it, really.

If you determine that the object must not inherently exist if, after looking in all seven of these places, you still do not find it, then you have established the entailment, the second of the nine essentials. For me, these seven ways cover all possibilities. Take a car, for example. You have some parts: metal, paint, seat, an engine and so forth, and you have a car. This car, if it is really there, must either be, in brief, the same as these parts or different from them. This is so; there is nothing unfair in saying that. Still, as soon as you realize that if something inherently exists, it must exist in one of these seven ways, you already have some doubt about its inherent existence. When you realize the entailment, the pervasion, you have already changed a bit. You have not yet found that the car does not exist in any of these seven ways, but your usual mind that is overwhelmed by the appearance of a car is interrupted.

There is no question that we are now overwhelmed by what appears to us. Why else would we be so deceived by dreams unless we were overwhelmed by appearances? We feel that the basic stuff of the universe is impinging on us and that we are correct in responding to these appearances. I have had many dreams about getting on and off buses searching for a place; all of a sudden there I am, there is a bus, and I am getting on it. The wish to get on it and the wish to find a certain place are already there. I do not even consider whether I want to find the place or not; the mind to do so already exists right there. I am already completely inside this unfolding scene, and yet it is merely beginning. I accept it as if it were all logical and sensible, as if there were a whole sequence of events that led up to it. But, actually, all I have done is to lay my head on a pillow. For us to agree with it, the appearance must be very powerful; we must be addicted to accepting appearances. We have acquired a need and have to fulfill it. In meditation on emptiness, reason is being used to counteract this.

If something were inherently existent, it would have to exist in one of these seven ways. If it does not exist in one of

these seven, it is not inherently existent and, therefore, does not exist the way it appears. What seems so bothersome about the reasoning is its decisiveness. We could decide that although it is possible to consider these things from many points of view, there is nothing that one can really do about the basic appearance, and thus we should just put up with it. Or, we could decide that the reasoning simply is incapable of indicating anything about the basic appearance. However, what we are doing here is the opposite; we are getting down to the raw stuff of existence itself, challenging through reasoning the very way that things appear to us, not just abstractly dealing in theories. Many people nowadays think that reasoning is useless with respect to direct experience; however, here reasoning is used to refute direct experience by telling us something earth-shattering about it: that is, that objects falsely appear to have a far more substantial status than they actually do.

Presently, we are part of the end result of a process of over-concretization. Object and subject are already there, appearing to us. Thus, to make any kind of decision about the way in which things appear seems to contradict our own status. Nevermind searching, in seven ways, for the phenomenon designated, even to ascertain the entailment is for us like challenging the process of appearance. Who are we to make such a judgment? It seems tantamount to creating our own data. We feel as if this is not our place at all, that our place is to be someone who is just a responder.

Our usual sense is of a reality that is there like Mother Nature herself; we feel that there is nothing we can do about it, it is just there. The sevenfold analysis interferes with all this. It changes our position in the carnival of appearance — instead of being the end result of appearance, we are going back down inside it. We are taking this end-result, the responder-mind that agrees with things as they appear, and analyzing, "Do these things exist the way that they appear?"

Upon initially analyzing in this manner, it is not as if we

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suddenly have a new kind of mind. We are consuming the fuel of wrong conception with the fire of conception itself. We are lighting the fire of right thought which will burn away wrong thought so that in the end there will be no conceptual thought left at all. The "Kāshyapa Chapter" of the *Pile of Jewels Sūtra* says:[277]

Kāshyapa, it is thus: For example, fire arises when the wind rubs two branches together. Once the fire has arisen, the two branches are burned. Just so Kāshyapa, if you have the correct analytical intellect, a Superior's faculty of wisdom is generated. Through its generation, the correct analytical intellect is consumed.

By using conceptuality to burn conceptuality away, only direct perception is left at Buddhahood.

This kind of practice is emotionally harrowing, for our mind has been convinced to remain in its place for eons and eons. Over and over and over again everything has convinced us that it would be better to stay as we are and leave things be. The inertia to stay with the status quo is great. We feel that otherwise there would be no way at all for us to get along, whereas in fact we would get along much better if we could figure out the actual status of objects.

This conceptual mind, the mental consciousness, has to make a decision, has to do some unusual thinking. Instead of taking everything as given, it must challenge appearances. Children often enter into these kinds of probing thoughts; eventually, however, they are conditioned such that they no longer ask these questions. At a certain point, we accept things as reality, no longer feeling to question. For, "reality" will not bear these questions. If this is going to be reality, its very precondition is that you will not ask such questions of it. Thus, when you do ask them, it is upsetting. We have become used to it this way. We need a willingness for new experience even if it entails the reopening of wounds of emotions built on views of reality. This

analysis involves anxiety, fear. It is necessary to build the kind of mind that will not want to sink back and be overcome by inertia, a mind willing to change, willing to see everything change.

Practices that are a great help in the midst of these changes are love, compassion, and the altruistic intention to become enlightened. Realizing emptiness helps to develop such altruism, but altruism also helps in understanding emptiness. No matter what type of practice you are doing, meritorious power helps, and altruism is the best kind of merit. It loosens up the mind and relaxes it so that, when these changes in state occur, bad events do not have the chance to take over.

If you can challenge appearances, you can ask whether these seven questions are sufficient. We have to determine whether, through employing these seven reasonings, we can create a consciousness that is like a pest control person who knows how to find cockroaches. Is this consciousness that applies these seven criteria sufficient to find inherent existence? A policeman, for example, applies criteria in order to find out if someone is the killer or not. Are these seven criteria sufficient to investigate inherent existence?

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If you leave it for the rest of the world to decide, people will say that you should not ask these questions. They will say that you are being too literal, that since everything is related and mutually dependent, it is not necessary to be so literal. Dependence for them means inherent existence. They feel that the way things appear is correct. Furthermore, if you were to ask philosophy experts how many agree that these seven criteria are sufficient to establish or reject, once and for all, the existence of things as we conceive of them, I think that not many would feel they are; it is too conclusive.

We need a competent mind, one that could find inherent existence if it were there. You will perhaps feel that you already have a mind that is finding inherent existence. For when you think about your car, there it is. You already have

a mind capable of finding it, why look for another one? Why structure one, why use a whole lot of words? This car is a valid appearance, isn't it? This, however, is to accept the given, living in the end result of appearance. Is such a mind actually competent? Just because when you go out, the car appears to you to exist from its own side and you think about it that way, is such a thing valid?

The Nying-ma lama Khetsun Sangpo tells a story about someone who finds a scorpion and, not knowing that it is a scorpion, puts it in his hand. Looking at it, he says, "How fantastic! How beautiful, how black!" Then someone says, "That's a scorpion," and he goes, "Eek!" Now what was that lovely thing he saw? Was such a mind competent? Suppose you think that you have termites in your house and want to find out where they are. Some person comes up to your door, a real bum, who comes into your house and says, "Man, that's a termite trail; you give me five hundred dollars, and I'll get rid of your termites for you." You will wonder if he is competent. He has come in, and he is definitely there; he is very vividly appearing to you. However, is he competent? Does he have the materials? Does he have the training, and could he get rid of the termites? Is five hundred dollars a fair price?

Is the dream-mind that accepts the so vivid appearances of dreams competent? Usually we do not stop in dreams and think about them; it is rare to have a mind that can relate to dreams in this fashion. However, is our dream-mind a competent mind? When, in a dream, I try to find out if I am dreaming or not, whether these things are false appearances or not, I find that at times I am just overwhelmed by appearances. Though I start out realizing that I am dreaming, having the very strong thought, "Dream, dream, dream ...", after a while it is as if I am being pressured out of retaining the thought that I am in a dream, and I capitulate. Eventually, I wake up, see that it was a dream, and feel like a fool. This experience makes me question whether these non-dream minds are competent or not in that they

accept how things appear just because they appear vividly.

Here you might think, "Since our minds have been conditioned from time without beginning to assent to this appearance of objects as if they are established by way of their own character, how can we possibly have a mind competent to determine the truth or falsity of this appearance?" If it were possible to develop ignorance limitlessly, which it is not, we would indeed be without any hope. If you could bring ignorance to full, utter completion, there would be no point in trying to overcome it. But ignorance does not accord with the fact, whereas what does accord with the fact can, over time, develop force. Emptiness has valid backing. Therefore, the wisdom that cognizes emptiness also has valid backing and can be developed limitlessly and brought to full fruition.

The beginning of a wisdom consciousness cognizing emptiness is developed by reflecting on the reasons proving an emptiness. The reasoning process is a chain leading from what is in experience to something that is not obvious. Still, you do not take two obvious things and put them together and have another obvious thing. You have to go through what may seem like a dark passage where you start with a few obvious things and then progress to the unknown. It is not like passing from one room to another, but is more like finding out that there is a palace of jewels right here under your basement. The reasoning is not like reading a map in order to learn the route to go to some *other* city. It seems that when emptiness is realized, you are doing something the very type of which you have not done before.

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17 I As a Basis of Emptiness

We have studied the example, a chariot; now, let us consider the meaning exemplified, the person.

APPLYING THE EXAMPLE TO THE MEANING

> One should consider whether this so-called person or self which is the basis of the conception thinking "I" is the same as one's own [mental and physical] aggregates or different from them.

The person or self is the basis of a consciousness conceiving "I" and is the object that generates the thought "I". It is the conventionally existent I. A consciousness that apprehends or conceives it is correct, valid, because a conventionally existent I does indeed exist. This explanation, despite the fact that it is technically correct, is, at this point, only theoretical since, prior to realizing emptiness, it is impossible to realize that a person or any other phenomenon only conventionally exists.

As with the chariot, what we are considering is the relationship between the phenomenon designated and its basis of designation. A person in our realm, the Desire Realm, is

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Identifying the Object of Negation and the Status of Conventional Truth: Why the *dGag Bya* Matters So Much to Tibetan Mādhyamikas

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Emptiness as a Negation and the Object of Negation

Emptiness is the emptiness of intrinsic existence. It is, according to all of Nāgārjuna's canonical commentators in India and in Tibet, a negation and, more specifically, an *external* negation. To say that the statement,

(1) This person is empty of this intrinsic nature.

is a negation is to say that it is logically equivalent to

(2) This person does not have this intrinsic nature.

But that statement in turn is ambiguous. We could read the negation *internally* and paraphrase as follows:

(3) This person's intrinsic nature is not *this*.

Or we could read it *externally* and paraphrase thus:

(4) It is not the case that a person has this intrinsic nature.

No matter how much they affirm or deny the reality of that which is conventional, Buddhapālita, Bhāvaviveka, and Candrakīrti (as well

as both Tsongkhapa and Gorampa, whose dispute regarding the import of this point will occupy most of this chapter) agree that (4) is the correct paraphrase of (1).

This might seem surprising, especially in the context of a discussion of the two realities/truths. After all, it might seem that (3), in virtue of its implication of another kind of intrinsic nature, presumably, is *conventional existence*. But that would be to miss the importance of the *identity* of the two realities/truths, not their mere *consistency*. The person has *no other intrinsic nature*, even its emptiness. The fact that the person exists only conventionally just consists in the fact that it *is empty of any intrinsic nature*. Statement (4), in virtue of implicating no *other* kind of intrinsic nature, gets things just right. Statement (3), on the other hand, despite its superficial plausibility as the best paraphrase, sneaks in an intrinsic nature as part of conventional reality *in addition to* the negative ultimate reality. This may be one of the subtlest issues in understanding the relations between the two realities/truths and the reason for so much emphasis on the *kind* of negation emptiness represents, as well as on its *object*. To see it as an internal negation is to lose focus on the important identity.

Nonetheless, as Candrakīrti emphasizes (see Mav VI.23 cited in chapter 1), the two realities are in fact two distinct natures of each phenomenon, each of which is apprehended by a different kind of cognitive process. For this reason, even though ultimate reality is an external negation and conventional reality is nondifferent from it in one respect, there must be another respect in which they are distinct. It is with regard to this respect that disputes arise in Tibet between those like Tsongkhapa, who regard conventional truth as a kind of *truth*, and conventional reality as a *way* of being *real* on the one hand, and those like Gorampa, who regard conventional truth as *entirely false* and conventional reality as *unreal* on the other.

Negations, in Indian and then Tibetan logical theory, always have *objects*. We can always ask *what* is negated. And whereas in most Western logical theory, this question is always asked in the *formal* mode, taking the object of negation to be essentially linguistic, in Indian and Tibetan theory it is asked in the *material* mode, with the object of negation taken to be in the extralinguistic world (except, of course, in the case of metalinguistic discourse). This difference has important implications for how the distinction is to be drawn between the two kinds of negation. In the West, the two are distinguished in terms of the respective objects that are negated. In India and Tibet, they are distinguished instead in terms of the way in which a single object is negated.

In the West, that is, we would think of the object of an internal negation as a predicate expression or a property (conceived as an intentional object) and the object of an external negation as a proposition or a sentence. The internal

negation "my horse is not white" presupposes that I have a horse and denies that he satisfies the predicate *is white*. It follows (from the sentence together with appropriate discourse presuppositions) that I have a horse of another color. The negation operator applies to the predicate. The external negation, "it is not the case that I have a white horse," on the other hand, involves an operator that applies to the entire sentence. That is what is denied. There is no implication that I have any horse of any color. In India and Tibet, however, the *object* of the two negations is taken to be the same, but the manner in which they eliminate it is taken to be different. In each case, it is an extralinguistic fact, not a linguistic expression, and is the fact that is asserted to obtain by the sentence negated. The internal negation and the external negation each eliminate the fact that my horse is white. The whiteness of the horse is the object of negation in each case. The external negation eliminates it without implying that I have a horse of a different color; the internal negation eliminates it while implying that I do.

Given that emptiness is the negation of intrinsic natures in things, it is therefore important to answer two questions in order to understand just what that negation is and what it says about things: First, what kind of negation is it? Second, what is the object of negation? We have made it clear at least in a preliminary fashion that the *kind* of negation is *external*. We now turn to the question of the *object* of negation, the question that divides Tsongkhapa and Gorampa. We will first consider Tsongkhapa's account, according to which the object of negation is *intrinsic existence* or *intrinsic nature*. We then turn to Gorampa's, according to which it is *existence*, unqualified. We will show that Tsongkhapa's position on the object of negation leads to an understanding of conventional truth as in an important sense a *truth* and of conventional existence as a kind of *existence*, whereas Gorampa's account leads to a view of conventional truth as entirely *false* and of conventional existence as a kind of *nonexistence*.

Conventional Truth and that Negation: Two Models

Here is one possibility: The object of negation is the conventional phenomenon itself. Let us see how that plays out in an account of the status of conventional truth. Since ultimate truth—emptiness—is an external negation, and since an external negation eliminates its object while leaving nothing behind, when we say that a person is empty, we eliminate the *person*, leaving nothing else behind. To be sure, we must, as Mādhyamikas, in agreement with ordinary persons, admit that the person exists *conventionally* despite not existing *ultimately*. But,

if emptiness eliminates the person, that conventional existence is a complete illusion: The ultimate emptiness of the person shows that the person simply does not exist. It is no more actual than Santa Claus, the protestations of ordinary people and small children to the contrary notwithstanding.

Here is another possibility: The object of negation is not the conventional phenomenon itself but instead the *intrinsic nature* or *intrinsic existence* of the conventional phenomenon. The consequences of taking the object of negation this way are very different. On this account, when we say that the person does not exist ultimately, what is eliminated by its ultimate emptiness is its intrinsic existence. No other intrinsic identity is projected in the place of that which was undermined by emptiness, even emptiness or conventional reality. But the person is not thereby eliminated. Its conventional existence is therefore, on this account, simply its existence devoid of intrinsic identity as an interdependent phenomenon. On this view, conventional reality is no illusion; it is the actual mode of existence of actual things. We now turn to Tsongkhapa's reasons for taking this second option and Gorampa's reasons for taking the first option and examine the implications for their accounts of conventional truth and of the relation between the two truths.

Tsongkhapa on the Object of Negation

In the *lhag mthong* (Special Insight) section of *Lam rim chen mo*[1] *(Extensive Exposition of the Stages of the Path)*, Tsongkhapa distinguishes between the soteriological object of negation (*lam gyi dgag bya*) and the epistemological object of negation (*rigs pa'i dgag bya*). The soteriological object of negation is something that exists as an object of knowledge (*shes bya la yod pa*); it comprises the obstructions to *nirvāṇa* and awakening, which are to be eliminated on the path, and will not concern us here (1993, 651).[2] The epistemological object of negation comprises two aspects: "erroneous apprehension" (*phyin ci log gi 'dzin pa*) and "the existence of intrinsic nature thereby apprehended" (*des bzung ba'i rang bzhin yod pa*). Of these, Tsongkhapa identifies the apprehended intrinsic nature as the *fundamental* epistemological object of negation since the reified object must first be negated in order to eliminate the erroneous subjective state.

1. We heavily relied on Cutler et al, and Newland (2002) for their translation of the text, although we have made changes wherever we thought they were appropriate.

2. *spyir dgag bya la lam gyi dgag bya dang rigs pa'i dgag bya gnyis yod do / de la dang po ni / . . . nyon mongs pa dang shes bya'i sgrib pa gnyis so / / 'di ni shes bya la yod pa'i dgag bya yin te / 'di med na lus can thams cad 'bad med du grol bar 'gyur ba'i phyir ro //.*

Although the soteriological and subjective epistemological objects of negation exist and are to be actively eliminated, the principal epistemological object of negation, the existence of an intrinsic nature (*rang bzhin yod pa*), is not an object of knowledge (*shes bya la med pa*); instead, it is erroneously reified (1993, 652).[3] The fact that intrinsic nature is purely a metaphysical fiction is central to Tsongkhapa's account. If it were to exist even conventionally, on Tsongkhapa's view, it could never be negated. This is because, argues Tsongkhapa, *epistemic* negation is not like eliminating a jar by hammering it. It involves only purging the mind of fictions. It is because intrinsic nature is a fiction that the error that takes it to be real can be effectively eliminated through philosophical practice (1993, 652).[4]

It follows that this object of negation (henceforth simply *the object of negation*) is not conventionally existent and that conventional truth is not an object of negation. In the same text Tsongkhapa provides us four key arguments defending his position that Madhyamaka's object of negation does not entail negating conventional existence.

The first argument is based on a distinction between "inability to withstand rational analysis" (*rigs pas dpyad mi bzod pa*) and "being undermined by rational analysis" (*rigs pas gnod pa*). This argument states that the investigation into whether conventional reality is capable of withstanding rational analysis does not result in its negation because, in spite of the fact that conventional reality does not withstand logical analysis and is established to be empty of intrinsic existence, conventional reality is nevertheless not undermined by the rational analysis:

> A proper analysis of whether these phenomena—such things as material objects—exist, or are produced in reality, is "a line of reasoning that analyses reality," or "a line of reasoning that analyses the ultimate." We do not assert that the production of such things as material objects can withstand analysis by such reasoning. Therefore our position avoids the fallacy that there are truly existent things. One might then ask: If these phenomena cannot withstand rational analysis, then what does it mean to be "rationally undermined" (*rigs pas khegs pa*)? This challenge mistakenly conflates the "inability to

3. *rigs pa'i dgag bya ni / . . . phyin ci log gi 'dzin pa la dgag byar gsungs pa dang des bzung ba'i rang bzhin yod pa la dgag byar mdzad pa gnyis yod do / 'on kyang dgag bya'i gtso bo ni phyi ma yin te / yul can phyin ci log ldog pa la des bzung ba'i yul thog mar dgag dgos pas so / . . . dgag bya 'di ni shes bya la med pa zhig dgos te / /yod na dgag par mi nus pa'i phyir ro / /.*

4. *de lta yin na'ang yod par 'dzin pa'i sgro 'dogs skye bas dgag dgos la / 'gog pa'ang tho bas bum pa bshig pa lta bu min gyi / med pa la med par ngo shes pa'i nges shes bskyed pa ste med par nges pa skyes na yod par 'dzin pa'i 'khrul shes ldog pa yin no //.*

withstand rational analysis" with that of "being undermined by rational analysis." (1993, 606)[5]

To ask whether something can withstand rational analyses is to ask whether it is found by a line of reasoning that analyses reality. As Candrakīrti's *Catuḥśatakaṭīkā* states: ". . . because our analysis is intent upon seeking intrinsic nature," it aims to discover whether such things as material objects have the intrinsic nature of being produced, of cessation, etc. Thus, the analysis is to discover whether such things as material objects have production and cessation that exist intrinsically; it *is not the case that this line of reasoning searches for mere production and cessation*. Therefore this line of reasoning is described as "that which analyses reality" because it analyses to discover whether production, cessation and the like are established in reality (1993, 607).[6]

When such a line of reasoning analyses or searches for such things as production, it does not find a trace of them; and this is what "inability to withstand analysis" means. However, the fact that this line of reasoning does not find them does not entail that it negates (*khegs pa*) them. Rather if they did exist [ultimately] this reasoning would establish them, and since it does not, they are negated [ultimately]. The production and cessation of such things as material objects are established by conventional consciousness. They do exist but rational consciousness does not establish them; it does not find them, so how could it negate them? This is similar to a *visual consciousness: while it does not find sounds, it does not negate them* (1993, 607).[7]

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5. *gzugs la sogs pa'i chos 'di dag don yin lugs la yod dam med skye'am mi skye zhes pa la sogs pa'i sgo nas tshul bzhin du dpyod pa ni/ de kho na nyid la dpyod pa'i rigs pa dang mthar thug dpyod pa'i rigs pa zhes bya ba yin la / rigs pa des gzugs sogs kyi skye ba dpyad bzod par ni kho bo cag mi 'dod pas bden dngos su thal ba'i skyon med do / /gal te de dag rigs pas dpyad mi bzod na rigs pas khegs pa'i don yod par ji ltar 'thad snyam na / 'di ni rigs pas dpyad mi bzod pa dang rigs pas gnod pa gnyis gcig tu 'khrul ba ste //.*

6. *rigs pas dpyad bzod mi bzod kyi don ni de kho na nyid la dpyod pa'i rigs pa des rnyed ma myed yin la / de yang bzhi rgya pa'i 'grel ba las / kho bo cag gyi rnam par dpyod pa ni rang bzhin 'tshol ba lhur byed pa nyid kyi phyir ro / zhes gsungs pa ltar / gzugs sogs la skye 'gag la sogs pa'i rang bzhin yod med 'tshol ba yin no / / de lta na gzugs la sogs pa la rang gi ngo bos grub pa'i skye 'gag yod med btsal ba yin gyi / rigs pa des skye 'gag tsam 'tshol ba min no / /des na rigs pa de la de nyid la dpyod pa zhes bya ste de kho na nyid du skye 'gag sogs grub ma grub dpyod pa yin pa'i phyir ro //.*

7. *de lta bu'i rigs pa des dpyad pa'am btsal ba na skye ba la sogs pa cung zad kyang mi rnyed pa la dpyad mi bzod pa zhes zer la rigs pa des ma myed pa tsam gyis khegs pa min gyi / yod na rigs pa des 'grub dgos pa las des ma grub na khegs pa yin no / /gzugs la sogs pa'i skye 'gag rnams kyang tha snyad pa'i shes pas 'grub pa yin gyi / de dag yod kyang rigs shes kyis mi 'grub pas des ma rnyed pas de dag ji ltar khegs te / dper na / mig gi shes pas sgra ma rnyed kyang des mi khegs pa bzhin no //.*

Therefore, if such things as production and cessation existed intrinsically, i.e., were established in reality, then reason would have to find them because it accurately analyses whether such things as material objects have intrinsically existent production and cessation. Since such analysis does not find production and the like, it negates essentially established or ultimately real production, cessation, and the like (1993, 607).[8]

Tsongkhapa's second argument is based on a distinction between the "conventionally existent" (*tha snyad du yod pa*) and the "conventionally nonexistent" (*tha snyad du med pa*). On this argument what is conventionally existent (production for example) cannot be regarded as an object of negation because it satisfies the triple criterion of conventional existence: (1) its existence is taken for granted by ordinary people, (2) its existence is not undermined by conventional epistemic instruments, and (3) its conventional existence is not undermined by critical rational analysis of its ultimate nature. Its intrinsic nature, on the other hand, is regarded as the object of negation because it does not satisfy these criteria.

Intrinsically existent production (1) is not taken for granted by ordinary people (although the production is real, we don't take it to be intrinsically real); (2) no conventional epistemic instruments reveal an intrinsic nature, and (3) the idea that production has an intrinsic nature is undermined by rational analysis. Hence, when considering the ultimate nature of the production, the object of negation is its *intrinsic nature*, not *the production* (1993, 607).[9] (See also 2003, 63 ff).

The third argument is grounded in his account of the negation of the four alternatives regarding production (*mu bzhi'i skye ba*). According to this argument, the Mādhyamika negates production from self, from another, from both, as well as causelessly, but this does not entail the negation of "mere production" (*skye ba tsam*) or "conventional production" (*tha snyad kyi skye ba*). This is

8. *des na skye 'gag la sogs pa rang gi ngo bos grub pa'am de kho nar grub na rigs pa des de rnyed dgos te / rigs pa des gzugs sogs la rang gi ngo bos grub pa'i skye 'gag yod med tshul bzhin du dpyod pa yin pa'i phyir ro / /de lta bu des skye ba sogs ma rnyed pas rang gi ngo bos grub pa'am de kho nar grub pa'i skye 'gag sogs 'gog pa yin te / rang gi ngo bos grub na des rnyed dgos pa las ma rnyed phyir ro / /dper na / shar phyogs su bum pa yod na rnyed par nges pa'i 'tshol mkhan gyis shar du bum pa btsal ba'i tshe ma rnyed na des shar na bum pa yod pa khegs pa yin gyi / bum pa yod pa tsam des ji ltar khegs / de bzhin du rang gi ngo bos grub pa'i skye ba yod na rnyed par nges pa'i dbu ma pa'i rigs pas btsal ba na skye ba ma rnyed pa des rang bzhin nam rang gi ngo bos grub pa'i skye ba khegs pa yin gyi / skye ba tsam ji ltar khegs //.*

9. *tha snyad du yod par 'dod pa dang med par 'dod pa ni ji 'dra ba zhig gi sgo nas 'jog pa yin snyam na / tha snyad pa'i shes pa la grags pa yin pa dang / ji ltar grags pa'i don de la tha snyad pa'i tshad ma gzhan gyis gnod pa med dang / de kho na nyid la'ang rang bzhin yod med tshul bzhin du dpyod pa'i rigs pas gnod pa mi 'bab pa zhig ni tha snyad du yod par 'dod la / de dag las ldog pa ni med par 'dod do //.*

because the four alternative kinds of production represent four distinct reificationist views of production. Inasmuch as each involves the superimposition of intrinsic nature on mere production, they are all conceptual fiction. They do not even reflect our ordinary conventional talk about production. Hence, to negate them is not to negate mere, conventionally existent production, which is nothing more than dependent arising:

> Suppose one argued as follows: Madhyamaka negates production from self, from another, from both and causelessly. Does this negate production? (i) If you claim that it does, then since these four alternative modes of production do not exist even conventionally in this system, there would be no need to qualify the negation of production. (ii) If you claim that it does not, then the negation of the four alternative modes of production would fail to negate ultimate production.
>
> We reply: We do not accept the former, so I will explain the rejoinder to the latter. Those who posit ultimate production must assert that it withstands analysis by reasoning that analyses reality. As this is so, they must use reason to analyse production so as to discover in which of the four alternatives it consists—production from self, from another, etc. Hence, those who posit ultimate production are definitely required to assert that it can be analytically identified as falling under one of the four alternatives. Because we assert mere production—the arising of particular effects in dependence on particular causes and conditions—we do not accept ultimately existent production. Since we do not accept ultimately existent production, why would we use reasoning that analyses ultimate reality to analyse production as to which it is—production from self, another, and the like? For, we are not required to assert that production withstands rational analysis (1993, 633–634).[10]

The fourth argument relies on the negative tetralemma. Tsongkhapa maintains here that the object of negation for Madhyamaka cannot exist in any of the ways

10. *rang gzhan dang gnyis ka dang rgyu med las skye ba bkag pas skye ba khegs na mu bzhi'i skye ba 'di pa'i lugs la tha snyad du'ang med pas skye ba 'gog pa la khyad par sbyar mi dgos la / mi khegs na mu bzhi'i skye ba bkag pas don dam gyi skye ba'ang mi khegs par 'gyur ro zhes smra ba'i snga ma mi 'dod pas phyi ma'i len bshad par bya ste / don dam gyi skye ba khas len na de nyid dpyod pa'i rigs pas dpyad bzod du 'dod dgos la / de'i tshe rigs pas bdag dang gzhan la sogs pa bzhi gang las skye dpyad dgos pas don dam gyi skye ba 'dod pas mu bzhi gang rung gi dpyad pa nges par khas blang dgos so / /rgyu dang rkyen 'di la brten nas 'di 'byung gi skye ba tsam zhig 'dod pas ni de kho na'i skye ba khas ma blangs la / de ma blangs pas de kho na nyid la dpyod pa'i rigs pas bdag dang gzhan la sogs pa gang las skye zhes ji ltar dpyod de rigs pas dpyad bzod du 'dod mi dgos pa'i phyir ro / /.*

specified by the tetralemma (existence, nonexistence, both, and neither). But this is not a problem for *mere* existence. This is because the negative tetralemma rejects only reified existence, reified nonexistence, reified existence and nonexistence, and a reified sense of neither existence nor nonexistence. It therefore denies neither the existence of conventional phenomena nor the nonexistence of conventionally fictional phenomena nor the fact that the previously existent can become nonexistent nor the fact that such entities as illusions and mirages are neither existent in any unqualified sense nor nonexistent in any unqualified sense (1993: 637–638).[11]

Moreover, to negate conventional truth, according to Tsongkhapa, would be to negate dependent arising, and to negate dependent arising would be to negate emptiness. To negate emptiness is to negate ultimate truth. Ultimate truth therefore makes sense only when it is understood simply as the ultimate nature of real conventional phenomena since emptiness is simply their dependent arising (see chapter 2 of this volume).

In the *rTen 'brel stod pa (Praise of Dependent Arising)*, Tsongkhapa makes this point clearly:

> 11. Since, as you have seen,
> The meaning of "emptiness" is *dependent arising*,
> Emptiness of intrinsic nature and
> Efficacy of agent and action are not inconsistent.
>
> 12. If it were seen to preclude them,
> One could make no sense of action in the context of emptiness.
> We say that since the efficacious would have to be non-empty,
> you would plunge into a terrifying abyss.[12]
>
> 15. Thus, since there are absolutely no phenomena,
> Other than the dependently arisen,
> There are absolutely no phenomena
> Other than those that are empty of intrinsic nature.[13]

11. *de 'dra ba'i khyad pa sbyar rgyu med par mu bzhi ka 'gog na dngos po yod pa dang dngos po med pa 'gog pa'i tshe de gnyis ka ma yin te zhes bkag nas / slar yang gnyis ka ma yin pa'ang ma yin zhes bkag na ni khas blangs dngos su 'gal ba yin la / de ltar yin kyang skyon med do zhes bsnyon na ni kho bo cag bsnyon pa dang lhan cig tu mi rtsod do //.*

12. *khyod ni nam gzhig stong pa nyid/ /rten 'byung don du mthong ba na/ /rang bzhin gyis ni stong pa dang/ / bya byed 'thad pa'ang mi 'gal zhing/11/ de las bzlog par mthong ba na/ stong la bya ba mi rung zhing/ /bya dang bcas la stong med pas/ nyam nga'i g.yang du ltung bar bzhed/12/.* See also Tsongkhapa (1994).

13. *de phyir brten nas 'byung ba las/ /ma gtogs chos 'ga' yod min pas/ /rang bzhin gyis ni stong pa las/ /ma gtogs chos 'ga' med par gsungs/ 15/.*

In the *Lam gtso rnam gsum (Three Principal Aspects of the Path)*, Tsongkhapa argues that things are able to appear to us as they do because that they lack intrinsic nature. Therefore, by accepting the conventional existence of mere appearance, Tsongkhapa argues, the Mādhyamika eschews reification without eschewing commitment to conventional reality; reificationism is a conceptual error, and its elimination requires a correct understanding— not the elimination—of conventional truth. Moreover, he argues, seeing things to be empty of intrinsic nature undermines nihilism because to see things as empty is to see them as they really are. Hence, emptiness alone resolves the problem of nihilism because only in the context of emptiness is causal efficacy possible and hence conventional existence.

Tsongkhapa hence delivers an account of the object of negation according to which while emptiness is an external negation, it is a negation of intrinsic nature, not a negation of conventional truth. This allows him to preserve a robust sense of the reality of the conventional world in the context of emptiness and to provide an analysis of the relation between emptiness and conventional reality that makes clear sense of the identity of the two truths. We now turn to Gorampa's account of the object of negation, according to which conventional reality itself is that object.

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Gorampa on the Object of Negation

In the *Lta ba ngan sel (Elimination of Erroneous Views)*, Gorampa also distinguishes the soteriological object of negation from the epistemic object of negation. According to Gorampa, the soteriological object of negation, which will play a greater role in Gorampa's account than it does in Tsongkhapa's, "comprises all false appearances" (2001, 101–102; 1969b, 595f).[14] By "false appearance," Gorampa means anything that appears to our mind. Therefore, all conventional phenomena are false appearances. Appearances, he claims, are conceptually produced. So, when conceptual reification ceases, appearance also ceases. Insight into reality puts an end to conceptual reification and so to appearance. Therefore, Gorampa insists that the Mādhyamikas "should aim to develop a correct understanding of both the 'illusory-like conventional' (*kun rdzob sgyu ma lta bu*) and the 'ultimate freedom from conceptual fabrication'" (*don dam spros bral*) (2001, 101; 1969b, 594–594).[15] To achieve this cessation, the Mādhyamikas' "first priority should be the negation of the reality of appearances; thus the

14. *lam gyi dgag bya ni 'khrul pa'i snang ba mtha' dag yin na/.*
15. *bsgrub bya ni kun rdzob sgyu ma lta bu dang/ don dam spros dral [sic] gnyis yin la/.*

unreality of appearances is the principal thing to be established" (1969b, 594–595).[16] Appearance progressively disappears as one's naïve and false view of things disappears.

Gorampa refers to the epistemic object of negation as the "object of negation by scripture and reasoning" (*lung dang rigs pa'i dgag bya*). He distinguishes two types: the object (*yul*), comprising all conventional truths, and the subject (*yul can*), comprising all cognitions except an ārya's meditative equipoise. This distinction between the subjective and the objective epistemic objects of negation is fundamental to his framework. He emphasizes the distinction between nonerroneous nondual knowledge and erroneous dualistic appearance. All conventional knowledge is dualistic in virtue of being constituted by an apprehending subject and its apprehended object; it inevitably reifies the dichotomy between subject and object.

Gorampa claims that the object of negation consists in all conventional truth—subjective and objective. In the *Nges don rab gsal (Illumination of the Object of Ascertainment)* he writes:

> So, in the case of the first extreme, the basis of negation is this: the very basis of the debate (*rtsod gzhi*) for arguing about whether a thing exists or not is itself the basis of negation (*'gog gzhi*). (1969a, 388d; 2002, 163–164)[17]

> All phenomena which are apprehended as positive entities—characterized as "truly established" (*bden par grub pa*), "ultimately established" (*don dam par grub pa*), "really established" (*yang dag par grub pa*), "essentially established" (*ngo bo nyid kyis grub pa*), "intrinsically established" (*rang bzhin gyis grub pa*), "established through their own characteristics" (*rang gi mtshan nyid kyis grub pa*), "truly produced" (*bden pa'i skye ba*), "merely existent as true entities" (*bden pa'i dngos po yod pa tsam*), etc.—must be negated. This is because none of these are affirmatively established as positive phenomena when these bases of negation are subjected either to Prāsaṅgika or to Svātantrika forms of logical analysis. (1969a, 389a–b; 2002, 164–165)[18]

16. *des gnyis ka la yang thog mar snang ba la bden pa dgag dgos pas snang ba bden med bsgrub bya'i gtso bo yin no/.*
17. *des na mtha' dang po gang la 'gog pa'i gzhi ni gang zhig bden par yod med rtsod pa'i rtsod gzhi de nyid yin te/.*
18. *gzhi de dag gi steng du bden par grub pa / don dam par grub pa / yang dag par grub ba / ngo bo nyid kyis grub pa / rang bzhin gyis grub pa / rang gi mtshan nyid kyis grub pa / bden pa'i skye ba / bden pa'i dngos po yod pa tsam la sogs pa sgrub pa'i sgo nas gzung ba'i chos thams cad 'gog ste thal rang gnyis char gyis dgag gzhi de dag la rigs pas dpyad pa'i tshe yongs gcod du grub pa'i chos ci yang med par 'dod pa'i phyir ro /.*

Gorampa argues that since the Mādhyamika's investigation into whether things are "real/true" (*bden pa*), "existent" (*yod pa*), or "truly/really established" (*bden grub*), and so on purports to be an analysis of real phenomena rather than fictional entities, the failure to find the reality of things through such analysis entails that those things do not exist and so that so-called conventional reality is entirely nonexistent. Gorampa writes:

> Suppose someone replied: If that were the case, even conventional truths would have to be the object of negation from the perspective of the ultimate rational analysis.
>
> Precisely, absolutely. This is because they are not found at all when subjected to ultimate rational analysis. (1969a, 392c; 2002, 178)[19]

Gorampa also agues that the Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamika rejects the reality of all existent objects because s/he rejects the existence of any common object that can be a basis of philosophical debate between the Ābhidharmika and the Prāsaṅgika. He argues that since the Ābhidharmika is committed to the reality of things and because Prāsaṅgika and Ābhidharmika have no object that they accept in common, the Prāsaṅgika must be interpreted as rejecting the reality of things. If, as Tsongkhapa would have it, the Prāsaṅgika's negation of intrinsic existence did not entail negating the reality of the things themselves, then, in Gorampa's view, there could be an object accepted by both as the basis of the debate. But that would be contradictory to the Prāsaṅgika claim to positionlessness in virtue of the impossibility of such a debate:

> Otherwise, if one were debating whether or not appearances are real, the subject would have to be taken to appear in the same way to both the proponent and the opponent. Then if you agreed to this on the grounds of maintaining that only the reality of appearances is to be negated, but not the appearances themselves, you would fall from the Prāsaṅgika position. (1969a, 392c; 2002, 178)[20]

As we have seen, for Tsongkhapa, "mere appearance" is a conventional *truth* and is not the object of negation. What is negated is only appearance established as real, that is, *really established appearance* (*bden grub kyi snang ba*), a conceptual fiction superimposed on the mere appearance. However, for

19. *'o na kun rdzob bden pa'ang mthar thug dpyod pa'i rigs ngor dgag byar 'gyur ro zhe na shin tu'ang 'dod de / mthar thug dpyod pa'i rigs pas brtsal ba'i tshe mi rnyed pa'i phyir ro /.*

20. *de lta ma yin na snang ba'i steng du bden par yod med rtsod pa'i tshe rgol phyi rgol gnyis ka la mthun snang du grub pa'i chos can snang ba yod par 'gyur te / de'i tshe snang ba'i steng du bden pa tsam 'gog gi snang ba mi 'gog par khas blangs pa'i phyir 'dod na thal 'gyur ba'i lugs las nyams so /.*

Gorampa, Tsongkhapa's distinction between *mere appearance* (*snang ba tsam*) and *really established appearance* is of no significance. Neither is real. To endorse either is to reify and to provide a common object for debate, at least in the realm of appearance, hence undermining Candrakīrti's account of Prāsaṅgika.

Gorampa also argues that endorsing the conventional reality of conventional truth undermines soteriology:

> If there is grasping to the reality of phenomena, i.e., the [five] aggregates, then similarly grasping to the reality of person (*gang zag kyi bden 'dzin*) will surely arise, which is itself primal confusion, the first of the twelve links. And all of the subsequent links arise from this one. Thus the root of suffering is grasping to the reality of phenomena (*chos kyi bden 'dzin*). (1969a, 389b–c; 2002, 165)[21]

Gorampa also argues that awakening requires the denial of the reality of conventional phenomena:

> Those who seek to achieve awakening must negate reality: seekers of the awakening of the śrāvakas must negate the reality of the five appropriated aggregates; seekers of the awakening of the pratyekabuddha must, in addition to the former, negate the reality of the external objects and of afflictive defiled phenomena; and seekers of the awakening of the Mahāyāna must negate the fabrication *(spros pa)* of all four extremes. (1969a, 389c–d; 2002, 166–167)[22]

Since all forms of reality must be negated in order to attain full awakening, for Gorampa there is no room for conventional truth as reality.

Moreover, Gorampa argues, conventional realities are objects of negation because their existence is not verified by a buddha's enlightened gnosis. He asserts in *Yang dag lta ba'i 'od zer (The Bright Light of the True View):*

> From the perspective of that kind of cognition, dependently arisen things are the objects of negation; since they are essentially pacified, dependent arising itself too is termed "peace." (1969c, 292a)[23]

21. *chos phung po la bden par 'dzin pa'i bden 'dzin yod na dngos 'dras gang zag gi bden 'dzin nges par 'byung / de nyid yan lag bcu gnyis kyi thog ma'i ma rig pa yin zing / de las yan lag phyi ma rnams 'byung bas sdug bsngal gyi rgyu'i gtso bo ni chos la bden par 'dzin pa'i bden 'dzin yin te /.*

22. *byang chub thob par 'dod pa dag gis bden pa dgag dgos te / nyan thos kyi byang chub thob pa la nyer len gyi phung po'i steng du bden pa dgag dgos / rang rgyal gyi byang chub thob pa la de'i steng du gzung ba phyi rol gyi don dang kun nas nyon mongs kyi chos sogs la bden pa dgag dgos / theg chen gyi byang chub thob pa la mtha' bzhi char gyi spros pa dgag dgos pa'i phyir ro/.*

23. *blo de'i ngor rten 'brel de nyid dgag bya de dag zhi ba'i rang bzhin du gnas pas rten 'brel de nyid la yang zhi ba zhes bya'o /.*

In *Nges don rab gsal*, under the section called "Analysis of whether or not the two truths exist at the level of buddhahood," Gorampa is more direct:

> Conventional realities presented in the contexts [of Nāgārjuna's MMK XXIV.8–10 and Candrakīrti's Mav VI.23–24] are nonexistent [at the level of buddhahood] because where there is no erroneous apprehending subject, its corresponding object [i.e., conventional reality] cannot exist. (1969a, 446b; 2002, 399)[24]

Finally, Gorampa argues that conventional reality is the object of negation on the grounds that all conventional realities are fabrications and that awakening requires the transcendence of all fabrication (*spros bral*). Gorampa identifies fabrication (*spros pa*) and conventional reality in *Nges don rab gsal:*

> In short, the entire conventional and nominal framework, including the eight entities such as arising and cessation addressed in the homage verses of the *Mūlamadhyamakārikā*, as well as everything examined in the twenty-seven chapters, from the one on conditions to the one on views, plus what they present, is fabrication. (1969a, 447c)[25]

Given that fabrication must be negated to achieve awakening, it is clear that all of conventional reality must go. For Gorampa, therefore, there simply is no truth in conventional truth; to be conventionally real is to be completely unreal. To see things as they are is to see nothing at all.

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The Central Insight: The Degree to Which Conventional Truth Is True Hinges upon the Understanding of the Object of Negation

Our task here is not to adjudicate the debate between Tsongkhapa and Gorampa. Thakchöe (2007) addresses that issue in detail. Instead, we wish to draw attention to an important refinement that Tibetan thinkers introduced into Madhyamaka philosophy's understanding of the nature of conventional truth and the relation between the two truths. Emptiness was always understood in Madhyamaka thought as a negation and always understood as an external negation. But

24. *zhes pa'i skabs nas bstan pa'i kun rdzob bden pa ni med de / yul can mthong ba brdzun pa med pas / de'i yul med pa'i phyir ro//.*

25. *mdor na rtsa ba shes rab kyi mchod brjod kyi skabs kyi skye 'gag la sogs pa brgyad dang/ rab byed nyi shu rtsa bdun gyis dpyad par bya ba'i rkyen nas lta ba'i bar nyi shu rtsa bdun dang/ des mtshon nas kun rdzob tha snyad kyi rnam gzhag thams cad spros pa yin . . ./.*

going this far does not allow one to determine precisely the status of conventional truth or the relation between the two truths.

By asking the more precise question concerning the object of negation, we can understand the ambivalence in Indian Madhyamaka philosophy and in subsequent traditions more deeply. If one takes the object of negation to be conventional phenomena themselves, conventional truth must be regarded as entirely false, truth only from the perspective of fools, and conventional phenomena as nothing at all. There is no correct perception of conventional phenomena. The only truth on this view is ultimate truth, and the apprehension of ultimate truth is the apprehension of emptiness; in virtue of the fact that emptiness on this view amounts to the nonexistence of apparent phenomena, this is the apprehension of nothing at all.

If, on the other hand, one takes the object of negation to be *intrinsic nature*, superimposed conceptually through primal confusion on conventional phenomena that are in fact empty of such natures, conventional truth is a kind of truth, correlative with ultimate truth. To understand conventional truth correctly is to perceive conventional phenomena as dependently arisen, as empty of intrinsic nature. Ultimate truth on this view is the truth about conventional phenomena, and without them, there would be no ultimate truth either. Perception of ultimate truth is not the perception of nothing but the perception that conventional truth is empty of anything more than nominal existence.

These are radically distinct views of the nature of conventional truth and of the relation between the two truths. Each view, as an account of Indian Madhyamaka thought, has scriptural support, and indeed each view can be supported by citations from different passages of the same text or even slightly different contextual interpretations of the same passage. But by directing our attention to the question of the object of negation, Tibetan scholars have developed a productive way of prosecuting debates about the status of the conventional that reveals more nuance than would have been available otherwise.