

166 CE and JNS supplement these two points with extensive discussions of the two and four realities (see Appendix IIC).

167 As for the AA's essential term "conception" as the main obscuration to be relinquished, the related Sanskrit terms *vikalpa* (*rnam rtog*), *kalpana* (*rtog pa*), *parikalpa* (*kun rtog*), and their cognates all have the basic sense of "constructing," "forming," "manufacturing," or "inventing." Thus, in terms of mind, they mean "creating in the mind," "forming in the imagination," and even "assuming to be real," "feigning," and "fiction." This shows that their usual translation as "thought" or "concept" is not wrong, but often far too narrow. Fundamentally (and this is to be kept in mind throughout Buddhist texts), these terms refer to the continuous constructive yet deluded activity of the mind that never tires of producing all kinds of dualistic appearances and experiences, thus literally building its own world. Obviously, what is usually understood by "conception" or "conceptual thinking" is just a small part of this dynamic since, from a Buddhist point of view, it also includes nonconceptual imagination and even what appear as outer objects and sense consciousnesses—literally everything that goes on in a dualistic mind, be it an object or a subject, conscious or not. Webster's *Third New International Dictionary* says that "concept" comes from Latin *conceptus* (collection, gathering, fetus) and is "something conceived in the mind : THOUGHT, IDEA, NOTION: as a *philos* : a general or abstract idea : a universal notion: (1) : the resultant of a generalizing mental operation : a generic mental image abstracted from percepts; also : a directly intuited object of thought (2) : a theoretical construct . . ." About "conceive," Webster's says, "to take into one's mind . . . to form in the mind . . . evolve mentally . . . IMAGINE, VISUALIZE . . ." Thus, somewhat differing from "concept," when "conceive" is understood in these latter senses in a very general way, it comes closer to the above meanings of *kalpana* and its related terms. This meaning of deluded mental activity is particularly highlighted by the classical Yogācāra terms "false imagination" (lit. "imagination of what is unreal") and "the imaginary," with the latter being everything that appears as the division into subject and object that is produced by false imagination (these terms appear throughout CE and JNS; for more details, see below). In this more general sense, "imagination" and "conception" are equivalent, which is also what Nāgārjuna's *Cittavajrastava* (verse 5) means:

[For] the mind that has given up imagination,
 Samsāra impregnated by imagination
 Is nothing but an imagination—
 The lack of imagination is liberation.

Obviously, this does not mean that samsāra is nothing but conceptual thinking or that the mere lack of such thinking is nirvāṇa. Rather, as RT (fol. 40b.3–5) says, "All the many kinds of conceptions that are mentioned in the scriptures are included in false imagination because they have the aspects of the three realms appearing as the duality of apprehender and apprehended under the sway of latent tendencies. False imagination is threefold—the conceptions that are the mere appearance as the duality of apprehender and apprehended; those that have the aspect of coarse states of mind; and those that have the aspect of the appearance of terms and their referents. The first consist of the mere appearance, under the sway of latent tendencies, of apprehender and apprehended being different. The second are what the abhidharma explains as the confused mental discourse that is included in the portions of [the mental factors of] intention and prajñā. The third is the clinging to referents through following names." In the particular context of the AA, the four sets of conceptions about apprehender and apprehended in all their coarse and subtle degrees represent the cognitive obscurations to be relinquished throughout the paths of preparation, seeing, and familiarization (for the specific descriptions of these conceptions, see CE's general topic on I.34–35; verses I.34–35, V.5–16, and V.26–34; and Appendices I1D as well as I4B and I5A in Volume Two).