

THE PATH OF THE MIDDLE WAY
“GOING NOWHERE FAST...”

THE FOUR GREAT REASONINGS
OF THE PRASANGIKA MADHYAMAKA

AS PRESENTED BY
JAMGON MIPHAM AND JAMGON KONGTRUL

READINGS SOURCEBOOK



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THE PATH OF THE MIDDLE WAY

GOING NOWHERE FAST

*The Four Great Reasonings of the Prasangika Madhyamaka
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THE PATH OF THE MIDDLE WAY

THE FOUR GREAT REASONINGS OF THE PRASANGIKA MADHYAMAKA

As presented by Jamgon Mipham and Jamgon Kongtrul

Six of the Seven Tuesdays from July 7 to August 18, 7 – 9:30 pm

A clear understanding of the view of the Middle Way, or Madhyamaka, is considered essential for the successful practice of Mahayana, Mahamudra or Maha Ati. This course will focus primarily on what are known as the four major reasonings or arguments of the middle way. We will use stanzas on these arguments as the basis for contemplation, and go very slowly and deeply through a short presentation of these by Mipham and the wonderful chapter on Prasangika Madhyamaka from Jamgon Kongtrul's *Treasury of Knowledge*. This will be a chance to deeply explore the essential view and practice of the middle way.

GENERAL READING

- *Profound Instruction on the View of the Middle Way*, by Mipham Rinpoche, translated by Adam Pearcey
- *The Prajnaparamita Upadesa*, by Aryadeva

COURSE SYLLABUS

I. Me, Myself and I: Things and the Middle Way

A. Topics:

1. The view and path of the Middle Way
2. The object to be negated and the method of negation

B. In Class Reading:

1. Summary, from *Knowledge and Liberation* by Anne Klein, p. 182
2. An Overview of Madhyamaka, *The Treasury of Knowledge*, pp. 195-201
3. Instructions for Contemplative Meditation, from *Turning the Mind into an Ally*, by Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche (one page)
4. Verses on Mipham's Four Skills of Madhyamaka: Analysis of the Emptiness of Essence in Phenomena, compiled from various sources

II. Ignorance and the Levels of Selflessness/Emptiness

A. Topics:

1. What are we attached to and what are we ignorant of?
2. Types and levels of the self

B. Reading:

1. The Concepts of Selfhood, from *Emptiness: The Foundation of*

- Buddhist Thought Volume 5*, Geshe Tashi Tsering, pp. 35-55
2. **Optional:** *Realizing Emptiness: The Madhyamaka Cultivation of Insight*, by Gen Lamrimpa, Trs. by B. Alan Wallace:
 - a) How One Grasps onto True Existence, pp. 47-50
 - b) The First Essential Point, pp. 61-69

III. Entering the Path of Madhyamaka and the Refutation of Identity

A. Topics:

1. Prasangika and Chandrakirti
2. Ground, path and fruition madhyamaka
3. Three levels of progression in realization of emptiness
4. The Third Skill: Refuting nature or identity

B. Reading:

1. *The Four Great Logical Arguments of the Middle Way*, by Jamgon Mipham Rinpoche, Translated by Adam Pearcey:
 - a) Investigation of the Essential Identity: 'Neither One Nor Many,' pp. 10-11
2. Prasangika, *The Treasury of Knowledge*, pp. 223-235
 - a) A Brief Account of Chandrakirti's Exegetical System, pp. 223-225
 - b) **Note: Please skip from the bottom of page 225 through the bottom of page 228**
 - c) The Two Truths, pp. 228-230
 - d) Ground Madhyamaka: The Three Levels of Analysis, 230-233
 - e) Unity of the Two Truths, pp. 233
 - f) The Way the Two Truths are Established - the Five Great Reasons:
 - (1) Nature, pp. 235

IV. The Refutation of Causation and Analytical Meditation

A. Topics:

1. What is caused by what?
2. Do diamonds splinter?

B. Reading:

1. *The Four Great Logical Arguments of the Middle Way*, by Jamgon Mipham Rinpoche, Translated by Adam Pearcey:
 - a) The Investigation of the Cause: the Diamond Splinters, pp. 1-8
2. Prasangika, *The Treasury of Knowledge*, pp. 233-240:
 - a) The Way the Two Truths are Established-the Five Great Reasons:
 - (1) Causes, pp. 236-238
3. How to Do Analytical Meditation on the Entrance to the Middle Way: A Brief Guide, from *The Karmapa's Middle Way, Feast for the Fortunate*, Karmapa Wangchuk Dorje, Translated by Tyler Dewar, pp. 601-606

V. Additional Reasons Why Not

A. Topics:

1. Can something come out of nothing?
2. Ultimate relativity

B. Reading:

1. *The Four Great Logical Arguments of the Middle Way*, by Jamgon Mipham Rinpoche, Translated by Adam Pearcey:
 - a) The Investigation of the Result: Refutation of Existent or Non-Existent Production, pp. 8-10
 - b) Analysis of All: The Logical Argument of Great Interdependence, pp. 11-12
2. Prasangika, *The Treasury of Knowledge*, pp. 238-240:
 - a) The Way the Two Truths are Established-the Five Great Reasons:
 - (1) Results, pp. 238-239
 - (2) Both, pp. 239
 - (3) Dependent Origination, pp. 239-240

VI. The Result and the Distinguishing Points of Madhyamaka

A. Topics:

1. Refutation of nature revisited: the refutation of the self of persons
2. The stages, levels and result of madhyamaka
3. The main distinguishing points of the prasangika madhyamaka

B. Reading:

1. Prasangika, *The Treasury of Knowledge*, pp. 240-247:
 - a) The Absence of a Self of Persons, pp. 240
 - b) The Actual Ultimate: the result of the analysis, pp. 240-242
 - c) Path Madhyamaka, pp. 242
 - d) Resultant Madhyamaka, pp. 242-244
 - e) A Synopsis of the Main Points of the Prasangika Philosophical Tenet System, pp. 244-247
2. Ascertainment of Personal Selflessness, Dzogchen Ponlop Rinpoche, from *Clear Thinking I Workbook*, Nitartha Institute, pp. 164-169

THE PATH OF THE MIDDLE WAY

CHANTS

MANJUSHRI SUPPLICATIONS

Through the blessings of awareness-emptiness, Prince Manjushri,
Open the eight treasures of courage, which descend from the expanse of wisdom,
So I may become the commander of the ocean of the dharma treasury of scripture
and realization.

I supplicate Mipham, the melody of gentleness (Manjughosha).

Om Arapachana Dhi Hum

This was composed by Mipham Translated by the Nalanda Translation Committee

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*

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.

act as a cause for direct sense perception, in the higher systems, a phenomenon such as emptiness — which itself is the lack of a specific type of self — can be directly cognized.

Summary

The goal set forth in all Buddhist systems of tenets is to go beyond an ordinary, ignorant and unduly binding perception of the world to an enlightened and liberating view. This entails the cognition of certain phenomena such as subtle impermanence and selflessness because understanding and direct perception of these phenomena act as an antidote which overcomes ignorance. Because these subtle phenomena are at present inaccessible to direct perception, the only recourse for a practitioner is to turn to thought, which is seen as able to develop and cultivate mental images of subtle impermanence and selflessness. These mental images are mental exclusions. The mental image of a table, for example, as impermanent involves a conceptual picture of momentary disintegration, the evocation of which serves to eliminate non-disintegration or permanence for thought. From this point of view such an image is most accurately described to be an appearance as opposite from non-permanence or opposite from non-disintegration. Through cultivating a mental image of subtle impermanence or emptiness, through making it more and more vivid, one can eventually realize the actual fact of impermanence or (in the higher systems) of emptiness in direct experience, no longer needing the medium of the conceptual image.

In order to build up a correct mental image of such subtle phenomena, it is necessary to rely on verbal description and analysis. It is essential to the Gelubka presentation of the path that words and reasoned contemplation be able to elicit correct mental images, and that the conceptual thought which has these as appearing objects does actually get at existent phenomena. Therefore, in order to investigate more fully the Gelukba claim that words and conceptual thought both relate to actual phenomena and that if properly used they can lead to direct perception — vivid experience — of such phenomena, it is necessary to grasp in more detail exactly how one learns to connect words or names with certain phenomena and the way in which words and thoughts relate to existent objects.

Verses on Mipham's Four Skills of Madhyamaka Analysis of the Emptiness of Essence in Phenomena

First, Identifying the Object to be Negated

Like taking a rope to be a snake, the self is a perceptual imputation.

The essential nature of the self is the clinging to what appears to an ordinary mind

As truly existent in terms of specific characteristics

1. Analyzing Causes, Chandrakirti's Vajra Slivers

Neither from themselves, nor from another cause,

Not from both, nor yet without a cause –

Phenomena indeed of any kind are never born.

2. Analyzing Results, by Jnanagarbha

Contributive causes cannot be ascribed to things existing or without existence.

If things do not exist, what contribution can such causes make?

And if things “are,” what is the cause accomplishing?

3. Analyzing Essence – Beyond One or Many, by Shantarakshita

See how an instant has an end and likewise a beginning and a middle.

Because an instant is in turn three instants,

Momentariness is not the nature of the world.

4. Analyzing Interdependence, by Nagarjuna

Like a moon in water, a rainbow, and a movie, mere appearances are interdependent arisings;

No phenomenon exists through possessing an essence.

But for what originates dependently, there are no phenomena;

Therefore without emptiness, there are no phenomena.

Conclusion – Freedom from Conceptual Fabrication

Not existence and not nonexistence,

Not these two conjoined nor the opposite of this:

Freed from four extremes, the truly wise

Are those who keep within the middle way.

Profound Instruction on the View of the Middle Way

by Mipham Rinpoche

Namo Mañjushriye!

Once you have gone through the training in analysis
And developed confidence in the crucial point
Of how the individual is devoid of self,
Then consider how just as the so-called “I” is

An unexamined conceptual imputation,
All phenomena included within
The five skandhas and the unconditioned are just the same,
Labeled conceptually as this or that.

Although we cling to all these various phenomena,
When we investigate and search for them they cannot be found.
And when we reach the ultimate two indivisibles,
Even the most subtle and infinitesimal can not be established.

It is the same for all that appears through dependent origination.
Entities themselves arise dependently,
Whereas ‘non-entities’ are dependently imputed.
So whether an entity or a non-entity,

Whatever is conceived of uncritically,
Once it is analyzed and investigated,
It is found to be without basis or origin,
Appearing yet unreal, like an illusion, a dream,

The moon’s reflection, an echo or city in the clouds,
A hallucination, a mirage and the like.
Appearing yet empty, empty yet appearing—
Meditate on the way empty appearances resemble illusions.

This is the ultimate that is categorized conceptually.
It has the confidence of a mind of understanding,
And it is indeed the stainless wisdom of seeing
The illusory nature of post-meditative experience.

Yet it has not gone beyond focus on apprehended objects,
Nor have the features of a subjective mind been overcome,
And so since it has not gone beyond conceptuality
The true reality of natural simplicity is not seen.

When this kind of certainty has arisen,
Then even the clinging to mere illusion
Can be understood as conceptual imputation.
There is apprehension, but no essential nature to the perceived,

And even the perceiving mind can not be found,
So without clinging, one is brought to rest in natural ease.
When you remain like this, all experiences,
Both external and internal, are not interrupted.

Within this fundamental nature free from grasping,
All the projections imposed upon phenomena,
Have never arisen and never ceased to be,
And, free from the duality of perceiver and perceived,

One rests in the all-pervading space of equality.
This is beyond any assertions such as 'is' or 'is not.'
And within this inexpressible state of true and natural rest
An experience dawns that is free from the slightest trace of doubt.

This is the actual nature of all things,
The ultimate that can not be conceptualized,
And which can only be known individually,
The non-conceptual wisdom of meditative equipoise.

When you become familiar with this state,
In which emptiness and dependent arising are an inseparable unity,
The ultimate condition in which the two truths can not be separated,
Then that is the yoga of the great Middle Way.

Those who wish to realize this swiftly
And make evident non-dual primordial wisdom
Beyond the domain of the ordinary mind,
Should meditate on the pith instructions of secret mantra.

This is the ultimate profound and crucial point
Of the progressive meditations on the Middle Way.
So begin by thoroughly refining your conduct,
And then arrive at certainty, experientially and in stages.

With confidence in the illusory nature of empty appearance,
There is nothing to be eliminated or enhanced upon the path,
And within the equality of the all-pervading space of perfect wisdom,
You will come to find complete liberation.

In a place where people suffer drought and dehydration,
Hearing about water will not be enough to quench their thirst,
And it is only by drinking that they will find relief.
The sutras say this is how it is for learning and experience.

Someone with only dry and theoretical understanding,
Who is worn out by all kinds of reasoning and ideas,
Does not need sporadic practice, but meditation in proper stages.
This is how to swiftly gain acceptance of the profound.

Jampal Gyepé Dorje wrote down whatever came to mind,
On the twenty-ninth day of the eleventh month of the Water Dragon year (1892).
May all beings realize the meaning of the profound Middle Way!

Mangalam!

Translated by Adam Pearcey
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The Prajnaparamita Upadesa by Aryadeva

<http://www.empty-universe.com/prajnaparamita/prajnaparamita.html>

*These are the direct verbal instructions (upadesa) concerning how to practice
Prajnaparamita as explained by Aryadeva in his Prajnaparamita Upadesa.*

Through awareness free of artifice and corruption
Recognize your mind as the root of both samsara and nirvana.
It's not produced by causes or conditions,
Unborn, naturally serene, its nature is emptiness.

So with regard to all phenomena with form or formless,
Whether the karmic impact is positive or negative,
Don't turn anything into a fixed reference or support,
Not even so much as an atom.

The meaning of the Prajnaparamita
Is not to be looked for elsewhere: it exists within yourself.
It's neither real nor endowed with characteristics,
The nature of the mind is the great clear light.

Neither outer nor inner, neither god nor demon,
Not existent within samsara's cycles nor nirvana's beyond,
And neither manifest nor empty:
Mind is free from any such dual appearances.

This is the Buddha's true intention, his flawless view.
If looking for a simile, one could say it is like space.
The supreme method to realize the nature of mind
Is to unite space and awareness.

When thus mixing space and awareness,
You spontaneously purify all fixed notions
Such as a reality and characteristics, negating and establishing,
And you abide in the truth of suchness, dharmata,
Free from dualistic subject-object cognition.

With both body and mind thus in their natural state,
Without further intervention fresh awareness arises,
Extending just as far as the reach of empty space,
Within this vast expanse remain absorbed without constraints or limits.

At that time you will experience a state of consciousness
Free from any support or from any sort of foundation,

An awareness abiding nowhere,
Not absorbed in either the aggregates or any outer object.

Having moved to desolate places,
When magical displays of gods or demons, grasping or aversion arise,
Separate awareness from the gross material body.
The physical body is like a stone--nothing can harm it--
And mind has no real existence, being similar to space.
So who or what could then possibly be harmed?

Pondering this, remain in suchness, with no anxiety, no fear.
Attachment to a philosophical tenet is obscuration.
Nondual, self-liberated is the ultimate nature of mind.
So take refuge in the essence of reality
And constantly generate the bodhi mind.

Shambhala Office of Practice and Education

Instructions for Contemplative Meditation

1. Calm the mind by resting on the breathing.
2. When you feel ready, bring up a certain thought of intention in the form of words.
3. Use these words as the object of meditation, continually returning to them as distractions arise.
4. In order to help rouse the heartfelt experience of their meaning, think about the words. Bring ideas and images to mind to inspire the meaning.
5. As the meaning of the words begins to penetrate, let the words drop away, and rest in that.
6. Become familiar with that meaning as it penetrates.
7. Conclude your session and arise from your meditation with the meaning in your heart. "Meaning" is direct experience, free of words.
8. Now enter the world aspiring to conduct yourself with the view of your contemplation. For example, if you have been contemplating the preciousness of human birth, your view will be one of appreciation.

From *Turning the Mind Into an Ally* by Sakyong Mipham

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THE NINTH KARMAPA,
WANGCHUK DORJE

Translated under the guidance of
Dzogchen Ponlop Rinpoche
and according to the explanations of
Acharya Lama Tenpa Gyaltsen
& Acharya Tashi Wangchuk
 by **Tyler Dewar**
 With editing by **Andy Karr**

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Appendix III

1. The Vajra Slivers (*dorje zekma/rdo rje gzezs ma*)

The vajra slivers reasoning analyzes causes. It is synonymous with the “refutation of arising from the four extremes” that is the main reasoning used by Chandrakirti to refute the self of phenomena. When one analyzes to find whether things arise from themselves, from others, from both self and other, or causelessly, one finds no arising whatsoever, and determines that, because they do not arise, phenomena lack an inherent nature.

2. The Refutation of the Result's Presence and Absence

(yö me kye gok/yod med skye 'gog)

The refutation of presence and absence analyzes results. Focusing on a given result, such as a sprout "arisen" from a seed, one investigates whether the result was present at the time of its cause, or whether it was absent, both present and absent, or neither present nor absent. When one finds no permutation from among these four in which arising is observable, one concludes that the result does not truly arise from the cause, for true arising would necessarily involve one of these four.

3. The Refutation of the Four Permutations

(mu shi kye gok/mu bzhi skye 'gog)

The refutation of the four permutations analyzes both causes and results. If inherent production were to occur, it would necessarily involve at least one of the four following permutations: 1) one cause producing one result, 2) one cause producing many results, 3) many causes producing one result, and 4) many causes producing many results. When one finds no applica-

tion of any of these permutations when analyzing, one concludes that all causes and results lack an inherent nature.

4. Beyond One or Many (*chig du dral/gcig du bral*)

"Beyond one or many" analyzes the entities of phenomena themselves. One investigates to see whether any given phenomenon is one thing or many things. Multiplicity implies a collection of many single units. Therefore, when one searches any phenomenon and finds no single unit that cannot be mentally or physically dismanded into further constituent parts, one concludes that phenomena lack an inherent nature and do not truly exist.

5. Interdependence (*tendrel/rten 'brel*)

The reasoning of interdependence analyzes all phenomena and is known as "the king of reasonings," since, in contrast with the above four, which are capable of refuting only the extreme of clinging to existence, the reasoning of interdependence is capable of refuting both extremes of existence and nonexistence. When one investigates to see if there is any phenomenon that bears its own nature, identity, or character without relying on another phenomenon to arise or be designated, one finds no phenomena that are not dependently arisen or dependently designated. Since true existence implies independent existence, one concludes that no phenomena truly exist. Furthermore, to dispel clinging to nonexistence, one reflects on how the phenomena that are determined to lack an inherent nature are not utterly nonexistent, for they appear in the world and arise in dependence upon other phenomena in a way that is renowned in the world.

: Appendix IV

HOW TO DO ANALYTICAL MEDITATION ON THE ENTRANCE TO THE MIDDLE WAY: A BRIEF GUIDE

For⁶⁶ any formal session of hearing, contemplating, and meditating, one is encouraged to begin by taking refuge in the Buddha, dharma, and saṅgha and giving rise to the excellent motivation of bodhicitta.

The first step is assuming a comfortable posture. The recommended general posture for meditation has seven points:

1. The legs can be comfortably crossed. If you cannot sit cross-legged, sitting in a chair with both legs perpendicular to the ground is fine.
2. The hands can rest, palms down, on top of the knees or thighs. Alternatively, the hands can be placed in the "gesture of equipoise" by laying one hand on top of the other, with both palms facing up and the two thumbs touching each other, around the level of the navel.
3. The back is straight but relaxed enough not to require constant muscular effort. Taking a deep breath while stretching your spine in the beginning will help align the spine in a way that it naturally sits upright.
4. The shoulders are even and relaxed, yet slightly drawn backward to facilitate a straight spine.
5. The chin is slightly tucked in to press down gently on the Adam's apple.
6. The mouth is slightly open, with the tip of the tongue joined with the upper palate above the teeth.
7. The eyes gaze softly downward, naturally open yet with no specific visual focus, toward the space in front of the nose.

One begins in earnest by practicing shamatha, or "calm-abiding," meditation to settle the mind and to support the qualities of relaxation and focus that will be required for the analysis. There are many ways in which one can practice shamatha, but one straightforward method is to focus one's attention on the coming and going of the breath.

Breathing naturally, place your attention on the movement of the breath as it enters and leaves the nostrils. In particular, rest your mind on the out-breath, while allowing the mind to relax spacioously during the inbreath. Allow your mind to simply be with the process of focusing on the out-breath and relaxing with alertness during the inbreath. You do not need to generate any other thoughts, nor do you need to combat or suppress thoughts that arise. If you notice that a thought has distracted you, simply acknowledge that a thought has arisen and return to relating to the breath as just described. It does not matter how many times you return to the breath after becoming distracted, nor does it matter how many thoughts arise in your mind without necessarily distracting you in a coarse way from the breath. Repeating the practice again and again, and cultivating familiarity with resting the mind, with or without thoughts, is foremost.

Depending on how familiar you are with the practice, you may wish to practice shamatha for ten, fifteen, twenty, or thirty minutes, etc., prior to beginning your analysis. In any case, you should have a sense of being both relaxed and focused as a result of resting your mind before you start analyzing. Don't set the bar too high: whatever constitutes a relative state of being relaxed and focused for you will suffice.

To do an analytical meditation on a section of the *Entrance to the Middle Way*, it is best to have not only read the section you will be contemplating many times, but to have received teachings on it from a capable teacher in person, and to have had the opportunity to ask questions or discuss difficult points with fellow students. If this is not possible, simply read the section several times and contemplate its meaning *before* engaging in the formal session of analytical meditation. In this way, you will be practicing *analysis* as an essential prerequisite to *analytical meditation*.

For the main practice of analytical meditation, it is always good to have an authoritative scriptural reference to serve as a basis for the topic of analysis. Many practitioners find it helpful to recite a verse or prose quotation out loud three times as a way to tune their minds in to the topic of investigation. In the case of analytical meditation on the *Entrance* or on sections

of *Feast for the Fortunate*, verses or prose quotations from the Buddha or from the authoritative Indian treatises are abundantly available in the main body of this book.

It is also good to have a "game plan" mapped out, on paper or mentally, with regard to the topics of contemplation you would like to cover during the session, along with the stages of analysis you would like to go through. It is advisable not to try to crowd the session with too many topics, but to start off sparsely and build up from there. For example, you might plan to yourself, "From the refutation of the self of persons, I would like to do an analytical meditation on the twenty reverse views of the transitory collection. From among these, I want to investigate how form is not the self." You might start off with just that one topic on your "list" for the session. Later, if you feel that including more topics will help your analysis, you could, for example, add the other three views that relate to the form aggregate. Alternatively, you could use the first view of the transitory collection and apply that to each of the five aggregates: forms are not the self, feelings are not the self, discriminations are not the self, formations are not the self, and consciousnesses are not the self.

After the initial period of shamatha, begin by mentally or verbally reciting the quotation to yourself, one, three, or however many times you feel inclined to recite. For a meditation on the twenty reverse views of the transitory collection, you could recite the root text from the *Entrance*:

Form is not the self; the self does not possess form;

The self does not exist in form; form does not exist in the self.

These four statements should be understood to apply to all the aggregates.

The reversals of these statements represent the twenty views of the self. (6.144)

Now, bring your planned topic of analysis clearly to mind. Analyze, using the questions and topics of investigation you had set up for yourself earlier. Working with the current example of "Form is not the self," you might begin by asking, "How do I conceive of my body as the self? What part of my body do I consider to be the self? Do I consider my whole body to be the self, or just certain parts of the body?" Shāntideva, in his *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, outlines wonderful stages of examination of the body as the

self in the ninth chapter, on wisdom. You may feel inspired to ask yourself some of the questions that Shāntideva provides at this stage.

When analyzing, permit yourself to make the analysis speak to your own experience. This is not just a theoretical examination of how a body cannot fulfill the characteristics of a self. Rather, the question is, how does *my* body appear as the self to *me*? In what ways do my thoughts take the body as the support for the thought of “I”? When I ask myself whether or not the body is the self, what thoughts does my mind offer in response? Engage in a dialogue in this way with yourself, allowing your map of the session and the words and concepts of the source text to keep you on track.

When you analyze in this way, at any stage of your analysis certainty may arise with regard to the main topic. For instance, you might be engaged in analysis of how you think your head is the self when you have a headache, yet when your back aches your thoughts of the self are centered on your back. A clear thought may arise, “The body is not ‘me.’ My mind simply has habits of identifying with the body in certain situations—other than that, there is no ‘self’ in the body at all.” Alternatively, a mere *feeling* of certainty in selflessness may briefly arise in your experience. You might not have brought your analysis to its full conceptual conclusion, but your experience in the present moment feels markedly different, and this difference is, without doubt, related to your contemplation.

The instruction at this stage is to drop the analysis and rest within this certainty. We do not need to set lofty goals as to what constitutes certainty, thinking, “For as long as I have not directly realized emptiness, I will not rest my mind, but continue analyzing.” If we push ourselves in that way, not only will we never receive an opportunity to rest, the quality of our analysis will also probably not improve very much. Therefore, when a mere feeling of certainty arises, or when we have a clear conceptual insight related to the topic of analysis, we rest within that feeling, that experience of unique certainty, for as long as it lasts. After a few moments, mundane discursive thoughts will start to arise again. When this happens, we resume our analysis and check in with our “game plan” to see what we will analyze next. We analyze once more, using our thoughts in a controlled way. When due to our analysis we experience certainty again, we rest again, as before.

This practice of alternating analysis and investigation with resting in

certainty is called *analytical meditation*. By analyzing and resting, analyzing and resting, we deepen our experience of the topic of contemplation. Selflessness and emptiness shift in our experience from dry understandings to realities that move us in some way. By resting in this conceptually generated certainty again and again, our understanding of emptiness becomes more and more refined, so that, at some point, we will be primed to experience the nonconceptual reality of emptiness, without the intermediary of thought or analysis.

Another gauge by which we may choose to alternate analysis with resting was taught by Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye in his *Treasury of Knowledge*:

If, due to intense analysis, the ability to rest deteriorates,

Do more resting meditation and replenish the stillness.

If due to prolonged resting you no longer want to analyze,

Do analytical meditation and strengthen the mind's clarity.

Thus, if we become distracted as a result of discursiveness generated by analyzing, we should temporarily let go of the analysis and practice the basic technique of shamatha to allow our mind to settle once more. Furthermore, if we find that our resting meditation has led to torpor, we clear away the torpor by resuming our topic of analysis.

In any case, when we become accustomed to alternating the two activities of analyzing and resting with certainty, there may come a point at which, in relation to certain topics, we do not need to rely on much analysis at all in order to give rise to certainty. Simply recalling the topic of analytical meditation will cause us to recall the certainty that is a product of our previous analysis. By recalling the certainty in this way, resting becomes the main activity of our meditation, and we no longer need to rely on extensive analysis. For this reason, analytical meditation has been summarized in three stages:

1. In the beginning, it is important to analyze.
2. In the middle, it is important to join analysis with meditation.
3. In the end, it is important to leap into the space of resting meditation, without relying on analysis.⁶⁷

One can use these basic guidelines to do analytical meditation on any topic in the *Entrance to the Middle Way* or *Feast for the Fortunate*. At the

end of the analytical meditation session, practice a brief period of shamatha once more to allow the certainty from the session to sink in further and to create a "speed bump," if necessary, between the postmeditation state and any excessive discursive momentum that might have resulted from analysis. Conclude by dedicating the merit of your efforts to the enlightenment of all beings, yourself included, and by making positive and compassionate aspirations that accord with the dharma.

: Appendix V

THE ROOT TEXT OF THE ENTRANCE TO THE MIDDLE WAY

In the language of India, *Madhyamakāvatāra-kārikā-nāma*

In the language of Tibet, *Uma la Jukpe Tsikile-wr Jépa She Jawa/dbu ma la 'jug pa'i tshig le'ur byas pa zhes bya ba*

In the English language, the "Entrance to the Middle Way," Set in Verse

Homage to the noble Mañjuśrī, the youthful one.

Hearers and middling buddhas arise from the lords of sages,

Buddhas are born from bodhisattvas,

And compassionate mind, nondual intelligence,

And bodhicitta are the causes of the victors' heirs. (1.1)

Since it is asserted that love is the seed of the victorious ones' abundant harvest,

Is like the water that causes it to grow,

And is the ripening that allows it to be enjoyed for a long time,

I therefore praise compassion first. (1.2)

First, thinking "I," they cling to a self.

Then, thinking "This is mine," attachment to things develops.

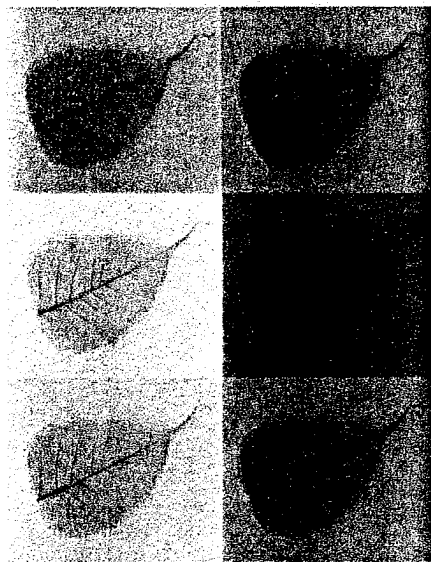
Beings are powerless, like a rambling water mill.

I bow to compassion for these wanderers. (1.3)

Beings are like a moon on rippling water:

They move and are empty of inherent nature.

Emptiness



THE FOUNDATION OF BUDDHIST THOUGHT

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GESHE TASHI TSERING

FOREWORD BY LAMA ZOPA RINPOCHE

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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.

ALL THINGS ARE NO-SELF

Right view, no-self, selflessness, emptiness, insight—whatever term we use—looks at how we see ourselves and all phenomena, and as such it relates to the four seals, the basic tenets of Buddhism. They are:

1. All compounded phenomena are impermanent.
2. All contaminated things are suffering.
3. All phenomena are selfless.
4. Nirvana is true peace.¹⁸

To hold a firm belief in these four ideas is paramount to being a Buddhist, and because the third seal is that “all phenomena are selfless,” that involves an understanding of emptiness or selflessness. No matter what kind of Buddhism you practice, no matter what level of understanding you hold, to be a Buddhist at least you need a conviction in the selflessness of phenomena.¹⁹

In his wonderful book, *What the Buddha Taught*, Walpola Rahula looks at the idea of no-self from a Theravada perspective. All my life I have been thoroughly immersed in not just Mahayana philosophy, but Mahayana philosophy from a Tibetan perspective based on Madhyamaka teachings as taught in the Gelug monasteries. I therefore find it refreshing to look at works from great Theravada scholars and practitioners such as Rahula. On no-self, Rahula says:

Buddha denied categorically, in unequivocal terms, in more than one place, the existence of the Atman, Soul, Self or Ego within man or without, or anywhere else in the universe.²⁰

What I find interesting is that Rahula quotes exactly the same three verses from the *Dhammapada* as Lama Tsongkhapa to show how the Buddha explains emptiness in the sutras of the *Shravakayana*, saying

they are “extremely important and essential in the Buddha’s teaching.” The extended verses in the *Dhammapada* read:

“All conditioned things are impermanent”;
when we see this with insight
we will tire of this life of suffering.
This is the Way to purification.

“All conditioned things are inherently lacking”;
when we see this with insight
we will tire of this life of suffering.
This is the Way to purification.

“All realities are devoid of an abiding self”;
when we see this with insight
we will tire of this life of suffering.
This is the Way to purification.²¹

Carefully notice the change of subjects between the three verses. The first two talk about “all conditioned things,” phenomena that result from contaminated causes and conditions, and are thus impermanent and unsatisfactory. The last verse, however, talks of “all realities”—all things. There is no phenomenon that is not selfless. *No-self* refers to a complete absence of self or soul.

All things, not only conditioned things, arise in dependence with other things; they are dependent arisings. Therefore no matter what term we use for it, *no-self*, *selflessness*, *the absence of self*, there is no doubt that the Buddha taught the theory of selflessness and that this theory includes all phenomena.

With this assertion, the Buddha was being truly revolutionary. It is equally radical to hold such a view even today. Were we all to see this at a heart-felt level, the world order would be overthrown and

an entirely new world would grow in its place. Almost every other philosophy and every other religion holds that there must be something within us that is enduring, unchanging, and essential, be it a soul, an ego, or atman. According to Buddhism, this is not only a wrong view, but *the* wrong view that causes us to perpetuate the suffering we have all been inflicting on ourselves and others since the beginningless past.

If we have any notion that there is something in us with these attributes, no matter what label we might give it, then we believe in a self that, according to the Buddha, does not exist. We will take a further look at this in the first of the three concepts of selfhood below.

WAS THE PRASANGIKA VIEW OF SELFLESSNESS TAUGHT BY THE BUDDHA?

Much of the later chapters of this book deals with the view of selflessness or emptiness as explained by the great masters of what is considered the highest and most subtle philosophical subschool, Prasangika Madhyamaka. The intricate and ruthlessly logical assertions of this subschool might seem far removed from the relatively simple statements we find in *The Four Noble Truths Sutra*, so it is good if we can be clear that the later assertions weren't "invented," but do in fact stem from the Buddha's actual teachings.

The great Indian masters such as Nagarjuna, his close disciple Aryadeva, and particularly Buddhapalita and Chandrakirti all assert that this must be the case. Their reasoning is this: the Theravada sutras that are used by hearers and solitary realizers—those beings on the path to individual liberation—comprise advice capable of leading a practitioner to liberation. Therefore they must present, at least implicitly, the final mode of existence of things and events, because anything less would not have the power to destroy all delusions.

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 Prasangka, 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 "I" in many different ways. On one level, the view of "I" held by many

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. *riag 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.

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 school 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.

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 *Nirayasangraha* [it is stated that] the ultimate [reality of persons] should be negated, while in *Viniscayasamgrahani*, *Mahayanasutralamkara*, and *Abhidharmakoshabhāṣya*, 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.

Lama Tsongkhapa's instruction is very clear: the first step to understanding selflessness is to be completely clear what this "self" is that we are empty of. What is the "self" that does not exist? When we say emptiness, empty of what? If we have a clear idea of this notion of what 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 we have no notion of what it is empty of, it will be very problematic to get a clear understanding of emptiness.

Therefore within Lama Tsongkhapa's five most important Madhyamaka texts, he strongly argues 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.

A burglar breaks into your home. It doesn't help the police at all if you just describe him as "a man." You need to give as clear a description as possible if they are going to help you. Our reification of the concept of self has stolen our peace and caused us suffering, so we must first identify the thief before we can deal with him.

Only when we have a clear notion of what our sense of "I" is can we negate this sense of "I" by understanding that it does not exist like that. We will explore this in some detail in chapter 5.

Selflessness in the Four Buddhist Schools

SELFLESSNESS IN THE FIRST THREE SCHOOLS

As we touched on briefly in the previous section, of the four Buddhist philosophical schools, two—Vaibhashika and Sautrantika—are considered non-Mahayana and realist, and two—Chittamatra and

Madhyamaka—are considered Mahayana and nonrealist. I have dealt with the four schools' concepts of relative and ultimate truth in some detail in the second book of the *Foundation of Buddhist Thought* series, *Relative Truth, Ultimate Truth*.

Referring to sutras and Abhidharma texts, Vaibhashika and Sautrantika consider selflessness only on the first two levels, that of being absent of an unchanging, unitary, and independent entity, and of being a self-sufficient, substantially-existing entity. In the Pali texts pertaining to the individual liberation of hearers and solitary realizers, this is what the selflessness of persons means. Although the term *emptiness* appears, it is not clear whether that notion of emptiness is the same as in the Mahayana texts. Only the selflessness of persons, not the selflessness of phenomena, is explained, and thus, it is not emptiness as explained in the Mahayana sutras and teachings.

Here it is good to bear in mind again that Prasangka Madhyamaka masters such as Buddhapalita and Chandrakirti assert that even in the Pali sutras the emptiness of the person according to the Prasangka concept—the emptiness of intrinsic existence—is there implicitly, otherwise it would be impossible for hearers and solitary realizers to eliminate ignorance and achieve their goal of liberation.

The Chittamatra school is the first school to assert the selflessness of both persons and phenomena. The selflessness of persons is identical to the lower schools; there is no difference in subtlety. By also asserting the selflessness of phenomena, they broaden out the basis of inquiry much further. To understand how drastically our mind misapprehends both the internal and external world, the first two schools concentrate on the internal world of the sense of identity. Of course, they may look at impermanence and all the other topics within Buddhism, but as a final mode of being it seems they only analyze the self.

But in the Chittamatra school, the analysis is done not only on the final mode of existence of the self, but also of all other things and

REALIZING EMPTINESS

The Madhyamaka Cultivation of Insight

by

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Chapter Three

How One Grasps onto True Existence

This presentation begins by establishing all phenomena as being conceptually designated, and then identifies the mode of grasping onto true existence, which is incompatible with the actual mode of existence of phenomena. The manner in which phenomena exist as conceptual designations has already been fairly extensively discussed.

To illustrate this, I gave the example of a hand, but you could equally take the body, or yourself. You too are merely a conceptual designation, but the meaning of this is a little easier to understand with respect to a hand. Still, when you actually meditate on emptiness, a major subject for analysis is the self. The reason for this is that the concepts of "I" and "mine" play a crucial role in our wandering about in the cycle of existence. To counter that, we must particularly focus on the lack of inherent existence of "I" and "mine."

The understanding of phenomena existing as conceptual designations can be equally applied to oneself, to others, and to all other phenomena. In terms of establishing emptiness, if one can establish this very effectively for one entity, one can see that it is equally applicable to all others. If one can clearly

realize the lack of true existence of oneself—identify the manner of grasping onto true existence of oneself—and recognize that while one lacks true existence, one can nevertheless perform all human activities that are attributed to oneself, then with that understanding with regard to oneself, one can apply the same reasoning to all other entities.

In terms of the basis of designation of “I,” one can, for example, speak of the mere collections of the five psycho-physical aggregates, or alternatively, one can speak of the mere assembly of the body and mind. Upon this basis we designate various things. We designate the basis of imputation of the “I”; we say this is this and that is that; we identify and label many parts and many attributes. When examining this array of components, it seems simply like a collection of things that can fall apart at any time. It is as if the many parts had been somehow forcibly held together. Thus, the actual mode of existence somehow seems inconceivable and inexpressible.

Inspect the manner in which you appear to yourself; inspect your own sense of “I.” You may find that the self that appears to the mind is not a composite of a lot of things that came together. Rather, it seems to exist in and of itself. The actual mode of existence and the way we apprehend it (our own sense of this reality) are utterly incompatible. Isn’t that so? The mind that apprehends the self in this way—a way that is utterly incompatible with reality—is called ignorance. However, it is clear that if one realizes the manner in which phenomena exist as mere conceptual designations, it is easy to understand how one grasps onto true existence. So how do we become deluded?

The answer is that at first we designate a certain object, we label it. In the early phases of labeling a certain entity we say, “This is called this, that is called that.” We do not yet say, “This is this.” During that phase, ignorance is not yet functioning. The entity appears as if it is truly existent, but it is not yet apprehended that way. This process is quite evident when we learn a new language. There is a phase when we have to

remind ourselves, “This is called this,” and “That is called that.” During this time nothing has been reified yet. But then we become more habituated with the new language. After a while we no longer have the sense that we are imputing something on these entities. The phrase “This is called a flower” seems to be artificial, and we have the sense that it is a flower from its own side. We lose the sense of these things being merely designated; we lose the sense of their being what they are by the force of agreement, by the force of convention. They are reified with the sense that this is simply the way they are. The object that is so apprehended to exist in and of itself is regarded as truly existent, but in reality such a truly existent object does not exist at all. Although there is no true existence, without the realization of emptiness, we identify objects as truly existent.

When one is meditating on the emptiness of the self, one is meditating on the absence of an inherent self, or truly existent self; one is not meditating upon the nonexistence of the self that is designated. Following the realization of the absence of a truly existent self, of a truly existent “I,” one establishes the self as being merely designated.

To repeat, in the first phase we impute a label or a designation on something, and then we forget that we have done so. Through that forgetting process an erroneous mental process takes place. The object itself appears in a mistaken way, and we grasp onto it. That mind that mistakenly grasps onto phenomena is called ignorance. Ignorance always entails reification. In this way we grasp onto the true existence of ourselves, and similarly, when focusing on an adversary, we grasp onto that person as truly existent. We also grasp onto loved ones as truly existent. This is how attachment and aversion arise automatically.

To reiterate: first there is the perception, and then we conceptually designate the object. The mere process of conceptually designating something basically means that we designate something as being present. But we do not designate all of its

possible attributes. When we grasp onto the true existence of something, we grasp onto a presumed quality. This is where ignorance becomes involved, which leads to attachment and other mental afflictions.

Remember that the term "ignorance" (Tib. *ma rig pa*) literally means "not knowing," but this does not simply mean a lack of knowledge. In this context if we take "knowing" to be realizing emptiness, ignorance is not merely not realizing emptiness; rather, ignorance is so called because it stands in direct opposition to such knowing. As an analogy, a lie is not merely an untrue statement, rather it stands in direct opposition to a true statement. If we say that there is a hand here, then that phrase is a true phrase because it accords with reality. But if we say that there is no hand here, then that is a lie. This is so not only because it is not true, but because such a phrase is incompatible with the presence of the hand there. It stands in direct opposition to that truth.

TWO TYPES OF IGNORANCE

There are two types of ignorance, just as there are two types of mental afflictions (Tib. *nyon mongs*, Skt. *klesā*). One is inborn, while the other is artificial. Inborn ignorance is instinctive, for it is something that all sentient beings are born with. It is a natural, inborn, instinctively false way of apprehending reality. For human beings it manifests clearly as this sense of "I am." Animals also have such ignorance, since they grasp onto themselves in a somewhat comparable way to the way human beings do. It is difficult to say exactly how their way of sensing their own identities differs from that of humans.

In contrast to inborn ignorance, there is artificial ignorance. Only those people who subject themselves to some form of intellectual training, or education, are prone to artificial ignorance. How does this occur? One learns things, thinks a lot, and speculates that things exist in such and such a way. There are many Buddhists and non-Buddhists who succumb to artificial ignorance. In fact, I suspect scientists quite possibly become heavily involved in artificial ignorance. Such people

are actually trying to find out what is true, but not finding it, they settle on conjecture. This ignorance is called artificial.

In certain non-Buddhist philosophies, the "I" is posited as something that exists apart from the psycho-physical aggregates. One of the reasons for positing such a self is the belief that the "I" doesn't change at all. Don't you kind of feel that you are not subject to change? If you do, it shows that you have some strong habitual propensities for that sense of self-identity. That is a type of artificial ignorance that grasps onto the self; it is actually based on inborn ignorance. But the artificial ignorance even further reifies the self, grasping onto it all the more strongly. For example, you may think, "When I was a child, that was me, and nowadays, this is me, and when I get older, that will be me too." A sense of an "I" arises that persists without going through all the changes of the actual person.

Even if you realize the nonexistence of this enduring "I," this object of conjecture, even if you familiarize yourself with the realization of its nonexistence and are able to gain a perceptual realization of it, you do not necessarily become an *ārya*. Generally speaking, gaining a perceptual realization of emptiness, or subtle identitylessness, means that you become an *ārya*, a superior being. However, gaining a realization of the emptiness of this "I" that is grasped by artificial ignorance does not mean that you are an *ārya*, even if it is a perceptual realization. The point is that you need to utterly eradicate the mode of grasping of the inborn ignorance. You need to realize the utter nonexistence of the "I" that is grasped by the inborn ignorance. By the force of realizing the utter nonexistence of the "I" grasped by instinctive ignorance, all mental afflictions are attenuated. All artificial mental afflictions arise as a result of artificial ignorance, while all inborn mental afflictions are based upon the inborn ignorance.

It is said that the sense of touch pervades all the other sense faculties. This means that if one lacks the tactile faculty, then all the other faculties, visual and so forth, will vanish. For example, the tongue has the capacity to feel, which is the tactile

Chapter Four

The Four Essential Points

THE FIRST ESSENTIAL POINT

It is said that one establishes the view through a process that entails the four essential points. The first essential point is identifying the object to be refuted. As I mentioned earlier, in *A Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life* (IX: 139), Śāntideva states "Without detecting an imagined thing, its nonexistence is not apprehended," clearly indicating that one needs to refute the object apprehended by ignorance. One is not to refute that which is seen by the eyes, heard by the ears, or known by the mind. Then what is to be refuted? The true existence that is apprehended by ignorance, the ignorance that acts as the source of suffering.

As mentioned before, all the mental afflictions arise from the ignorant view regarding the transitory assembly, and the merely conventionally existent self is the attended object of such ignorance. Ignorance attends to the merely conventionally existent self, but apprehends it as a truly existent self, and it is that truly existent self which is to be refuted.

The Attended Object and the Attributed Object

At this point one needs to make a distinction between the attended object (Tib. *dmigs pa'i yul*) and the attributed object (Tib. *nam pa'i yul*). The attended object is simply the "I," the

conventionally existent "I," while the attributed object is the object apprehended as having a true existence falsely imputed upon it. It is the attributed "I," that truly existent "I," which is to be refuted.

When we encounter a person what we see is the aggregate of the body. Seeing the aggregate of the body we say, "This is such and such a person." In doing so, we conventionally designate the person upon the basis of the body. Not being satisfied with merely apprehending the conventionally existing person, we grasp onto the person as if he existed in and of himself. In this way grasping onto true existence takes place.

Isn't it true in terms of our own experience as we conceive of and apprehend ourselves and others? Don't we see individuals, these selves, as being real and solid? For example, when we think, "I am learned," or "I am in good health," or "I am clever," isn't it as if something were there that is the self, the "I"? In comparison with the merely conventionally existent self, the self that is apprehended as being truly existent seems quite firm, solid, and tangible. This is how ignorance apprehends things. The basis for this apprehension of the self as being truly existent is the merely conventionally existent self.

As I commented earlier, this process of conceptual designation entails focusing on the basis of designation and then forcefully imputing upon that a designated phenomenon. Having imputed that phenomenon upon a given basis of designation, there follows a sense of its being "out there." Therefore, to speak quite accurately, if one were asked, "Are you a human being?" the appropriate answer would be, "I am called a human being." Because the human being is not to be found under analysis, one should not say "I am a human being" with the sense that one is intrinsically a human being, independent of any conceptual designation.

The attended object is the object that is seen, and the mere seeing is the attending (Tib. *dmig pa*) to it. In dependence upon attending to the object, there arises the sense that it is truly existent. The "I," for instance, is thought to really exist in and

of itself. So the attribute of true existence is applied to that being, and such an attribute is affirmed. With this affirmation there arises the attribute (Tib. *rnam pa*) of ignorance, and this truly existent "I" is the attributed object (Tib. *rnam pa'i yul*).

In your practice put to yourself the following questions: How am I looking at my object? Am I just attending to it, or am I attributing a quality to it? What do I see? Do I see simply the attended object, or do I see the object attributed with true existence? If you understand these distinctions, then you can apply them to all other types of conceptualizations or modes of understanding.

Here is the distinction between ignorance and the wisdom realizing emptiness: Ignorance attending to the basis of a merely conventionally existent self apprehends a truly existent self. Ignorance attends to the merely conventionally existent self, and that is its attended object. In contrast, the wisdom that realizes emptiness apprehends the absence of inherent existence. In other words, the attribute of the wisdom that realizes emptiness is its apprehension of the lack of inherent existence. Hence, the absence of inherent existence is the attributed object of the wisdom that realizes emptiness. That wisdom attends to the mere "I," which is conventionally existent, and that is its attended object. Therefore, both ignorance and the wisdom realizing emptiness have the same attended object, and they attend to the same thing, but the attributes of those two mental processes and their attributed objects are mutually incompatible. Regarding the attended object, the wisdom realizing emptiness refutes the attributed object grasped by ignorance.

On the one hand, we may have a cognitive apprehension of the conventional or relative "I," which is not the same as the wisdom realizing emptiness, and on the other hand we have the apprehension of the "I" by ignorance. However, the attentional processes for these two are very different. The attended object of the mind that apprehends the conventional self, and the attended object of ignorance, the reified "I," are different. Why is this so? The attended object of the mind that

grasps the relative "I" is the basis of designation of the "I," namely the aggregates. In contrast, the attended object of ignorance is the self. Now the "I" and the basis of designation upon which the "I" is designated are mutually exclusive; one is never the other.

To take another example, the attended object of great compassion is all sentient beings. The attribute of great compassion is the yearning "May I free all sentient beings from suffering." Similarly, in the case of great loving-kindness, the attended object is all sentient beings, and the attribute of that mental state is the yearning "May I bring all sentient beings to joy."

Bear in mind that ignorance as defined here is a conceptual state of mind. One can speak of a basis of observing phenomena, and also of a basis of conceiving, or apprehending, phenomena. This twofold distinction in the mode of observation and the mode of apprehension holds true for all forms of conceptualization. For sensory perception, which of course is nonconceptual, there is no distinction between the mode of observation and the mode of apprehension. For instance, in the visual perception of a flower the attended object and the attributed object are one and the same. We may see a white flower and a red flower, which are the attended objects, and their red or white attributes are different than the flowers themselves. So clearly, attributes include many qualities other than the attribute of true existence.

In contrast, in the context of conceptualization the term "attribute" (Tib. *nam pa*) refers to the aspect of conceptual grasping in which one identifies one thing as opposed to another. For example, if one thinks, "This is a flower," in that process the conceptual mind apprehends the flower and that very apprehension is the attribute of that mind. In the case of attending to the basis of designation of a flower, the attended object is the basis of designation, and what is apprehended is the flower, which becomes the attributed object.

It is important to be clear about the difference between a basis of designation and a designated object. At times the attended object arises as the basis of designation, and at other

times it will be the designated object. Similarly, the attributed object may on some occasions be the basis of designation, and on other occasions it may be the designated object. For the mind that apprehends the mere self, the conventionally existent self, the attended object is the basis of designation of the "I." For the mind that apprehends the basis of designation of the "I," the aggregates which are the basis of designation also become the attributed object.

The designated object may also be the attended object. For example, the self as a designated object is the attended object of both the ignorance that apprehends the self, as well as that of the wisdom that realizes the lack of inherent existence of the self. The mind that thinks, "I am," simply grasps the conventionally existent self, and for that mind, the self is also the attributed object. For the mind that apprehends the basis of designation, that very basis of designation serves as the attributed object. For the cognition that apprehends the designated object, the designated object serves as the attended object for that mind. As you are observing a flower, if you attend to the basis of designation of the flower and you think, "This is the basis of designation," then this basis of designation is the attributed object. But for the mind that thinks, "This is a flower," the basis of designation is now the attended object, while the flower itself is the attributed object. For the deluded mind that apprehends the flower as being truly existent, the conventionally existent flower is the attended object, while the truly existent flower is the attributed object.

On the basis of appearances we can speak of and conceive of the basis of designation, and we can speak of and conceive of a designated object. But we need to see the distinction between the basis of designation and the designated object. For example, with reference to the person, the psycho-physical aggregates are the basis of designation, and the "I" is the designated object. Consider the phrases, "I am truly existent," "I am inherently existent," "I exist by my own characteristics," "I exist by my own nature," "I exist purely objectively," and "I exist as a self." All these statements are synonymous. Moreover, such

phrases as "absence of true existence," "not existing by one's own nature," "not existing from one's own side," "not existing inherently," "not existing objectively," and "not existing as an identity," are all synonymous too. At times ignorance is called "grasping onto the self" (Tib. *bdag 'dzin*), and sometimes it is referred to as "grasping onto true existence" (Tib. *bden 'dzin*). These terms are used interchangeably, so don't be confused!

Now let's turn to the following question: Is the conventional existence of an object such as a flower independent of anybody actually observing it? When one speaks of a certain object being established, this means that it appears to the mind. It does not depend on anything else. If something does not appear to the mind, the issue of whether or not it exists cannot even be raised. Therefore, it is said that an object and the awareness of that object are mutually interdependent. In other words, if there is awareness, there must be an object of awareness, and if there is an object of awareness there must be awareness. If one of those two is missing then the other cannot possibly be established.

The mere fact that something is conceptually designated does not necessarily indicate that it exists. If it did, then blue snow-mountains could exist, for these appear to people with a certain eye disorder. In other words, if all it took for something to exist is that it is conceptually designated, then anything that comes to mind would exist. Moreover, although there is a designation of the self as being truly existent, it does not follow that this independent, permanent self in fact does exist. Even though it may be conceptually designated, that does not imply that it exists. The same is true of a Creator. Although a Creator is conceived and conceptually designated, it does not necessarily follow that such a being exists. Even in Buddhist treatises there are references to a creator of the universe. For example, in *A Guide to the Middle Way* Candrakirti states that the mind creates the universe, and *A Treasury of Knowledge* (*Abhidharmakosa*) states that the manifold worlds arise from *karma*. Still, these theories are very different from a

theistic system, and the point is that a Creator does not necessarily exist in the way it is conceived. Just because something is conceived and designated does not mean that it exists.

Conventional and Ultimate Analysis

I have explained the distinction between the attended object and the attributed object, pointing out that it is the attributed object of ignorance that is to be refuted. True existence enters in as the attributed object. When one is satisfied with the mere conventional existence of a given object, this is deemed a conventional mode of apprehending that object. If one establishes an object merely as something nominally established by its label, this is the conventional mode of establishing the existence of the phenomenon. It is the conventional mode of analysis. For example, one may ask, "What is this?" and another person may respond, "This is a flower." If we respond, "Oh, I see, this is a flower," without asking why is this a flower or what makes this a flower, then that is the conventional establishment of this phenomenon. It does not entail an investigation into the ultimate mode of existence of the flower.

In terms of conventional analysis, in contrast to ultimate analysis, there are indeed reasons why one posits something as being what it is. This does not mean that it is simply taken on authority. An example would be if I say, "I need to go," and someone asks, "Why do you need to go?" and I reply, "Because it is time for me to go to work." This is conventional reasoning. This is the type of reasoning one accepts while being satisfied with the mere conceptual designation. Similarly, when somebody says, "There is a fire over there," someone else may ask, "How do you know?" The first person may answer, "Well, there is smoke." The person is reasoning that wherever there is smoke there has to be a fire. This, too, is conventional reasoning.

This conventional mode of analysis does not lead to the realization of emptiness. So what mode of analysis does lead to a realization of emptiness?

Take the statement, "This is a flower." One may not be satisfied with the mere conventional designation, "This is a flower," but may instead proceed to ask, "What exactly is there that is a flower? Is it the stem, is it the petals, is it the roots, the left side, the right side?" Probing in this way constitutes ultimate analysis. To relate this to the self, one begins by saying, "This is 'I.'" If one justifies this by saying, "This person here is called 'I,'" that is simply conventional analysis. But one who is not satisfied with the mere conceptual designation, "This is 'I,'" will instead proceed to ask, "What exactly here is the 'I'? Is the body this 'I'? Is the mind this 'I'?" In this way one goes beyond conventional reasoning.

Why should one engage in this second type of analysis? The reason for this is because ignorance apprehends its object as if it exists purely objectively. In other words, ignorance apprehends its object as if it exists entirely from its own side. If phenomena in fact existed in this way—purely objectively from their own side—then the more carefully one investigated them, the more clearly those objects would appear to the mind. However, the more closely one examines phenomena, the more one sees that objects are not to be found under such analysis. That is why one should not remain satisfied with mere conventional analysis or reasoning.

Let's draw an analogy. If a certain situation is true, then the more carefully we examine the situation, the more clearly it appears to be true. Let's say there are two people in a dispute and we examine their claims very carefully. If one of them is telling the truth and the other is lying, then the more carefully we examine the evidence, the more clearly the truth will appear as the truth. The same holds true for false claims. Even though they may appear true in the beginning, when we inspect them closely, any kind of validity of the false claim disappears altogether.

When we use the word "attribute" (Tib. *riam pa*), as in the attribute of ignorance or the attribute of the wisdom that realizes emptiness, then the attribute of ignorance is the very thought, "I am truly existent." The attributed object of ignorance

is the true existence that is grasped by ignorance. And what is the attended object? It is the mere self. And what is the nature of the attention? It is the simple observation of the self. What is the attribute of the wisdom that realizes emptiness? It is the mind that understands that the "I" is not truly existent. And what is the attended object of the wisdom that realizes emptiness? It is simply the "I." And what is the nature of that attention? It is the very observation of the "I."

The attended object of the wisdom that realizes emptiness is called the basis of characteristics (Tib. *khayad gzhi*). It is this basis that has certain characteristics. Now the emptiness of the self, for example, is a characteristic of the self. The self is the basis of certain characteristics, and emptiness of the self is such a characteristic. The cognition of the characteristic is called the attribute of that cognition, while the cognition of the basis of characteristics is called attention (Tib. *dmigs pa*).

THE SECOND ESSENTIAL POINT

The first of the four essential points is recognizing the object to be refuted. The second essential point is that this truly existent self is not identical with the aggregates, and the third essential point is that it is not distinct from the aggregates.

As I have stated, ignorance apprehends the "I" as being truly existent; it apprehends true existence with reference to the "I," and the "I" is apprehended upon its basis of designation, the psycho-physical aggregates. If I do in fact truly exist, then I would have to be truly existent among those aggregates. If a truly existent self could be found in the aggregates, then one or more of those aggregates should be this truly existent self. As we consider this possibility, we can ask, "Is the body the self? Is the mind the self?" We can follow an analysis along these lines. Taking on the one hand this truly existent "I," and on the other hand the aggregates, we can ask whether this truly existent self is identical with the aggregates or whether it is distinct from the aggregates.

Focusing on the second essential point let's ask, "Is this truly existent 'I' in fact identical with the aggregates?" If we

The Four Great Logical Arguments of the Middle Way

by Jamgön Mipham Rinpoche

The four great logical arguments of the Middle Way are:

- I. The investigation of the cause: the Diamond Splinters
- II. The investigation of the result: refuting existent or non-existent results
- III. The investigation of the essential identity: 'neither one nor many'
- IV. The investigation of all: the Great Interdependence

I. The Investigation of the Cause: the Diamond Splinters

A. Refutation of Production from Four Extremes

1. Production from Self

On a mere conventional level, it is indeed true that an effect is produced from a cause, but, if investigated on the ultimate level, production cannot be observed. If production capable of withstanding logical analysis did exist, it must necessarily be a production by means of one of the following four extremes: self, other, both or neither (or causeless). But these are unreasonable.

As it is said in the *Root Verses of the Middle Way*:

Not from self, not from other,
Not from both and not from neither—
Not for any entity at all anywhere,
Is there ever any production.

Why? For a thing to be produced from itself is illogical, because once something exists with its own particular identity, it is pointless for it to arise once again. It is like a child that has already been born and is not born again. If a seed, for example, were produced over again, it would be produced again and again without end. There would be no opportunity for the development of the other stages, such as the sprout, the stalk and so on.

According to the Samkhyas who assert self-production, in the same way that different manifestations, such as vases, can be created from the single nature of clay, seeds and so on are of a single nature, and abandon their seed-like manifestation as they are transformed into the manifestation of a sprout. If it is claimed that the various stages such as those of the seed and sprout are one, in spite of the fact that they have distinctions in terms of existing or not existing presently, colour, shape and so on, then that is open to invalidation by consequential reasoning, since it would follow that fire and water, or virtue and evil, must also be one.

You might think that a seed and sprout are not equivalent to fire and water because they belong to the same continuum. Yet a "continuum" is merely an imputation based on the uninterrupted resemblance of momentary phenomena, and does not really exist.

As it says in the *Madhyamakavatara*:

If one supposes that what has already been produced is re-produced,
Then the actual arising of a sprout and so on will never be discovered.
The seed would go on reproducing itself until the end of the world.

For you, there can be no difference between the seed as the active cause
And the sprout in terms of shape, colour, flavour, capacity or ripening.

If this seed of yours is no different from the sprout,
Then whilst the seed exists, there is nothing one might call 'sprout',
Or else, since they are identical, whilst the sprout exists
How could that [i.e. the seed] be apprehended? It is untenable.

And:

Only once the cause has disappeared does one see the effect,
So the claim that they're the same is rejected even by the world.

It is not only according to treatises, but also the direct experience of worldly beings that the effect follows the disappearance of the cause, and so since even they would not accept the cause to be the same as the effect, self-production does not exist on either of the two levels of truth.

2. Production from Other

You might agree that production from self is illogical, and think that just as a child is born from its mother and a sprout is produced from its seed, production can only occur from something 'other.' It is indeed true that cause and effect are labeled as 'other', but this is not a self-production that can be proven logically.

If the cause were proven to be inherently different from the effect, then the effect would not need to depend on the cause, and both would be equal in terms of their capacity. While something exists, it is unnecessary for it to be produced from something else, just as two people who have already been born are not dependent upon one another.

If one thing were to arise from another, it would follow that anything could arise from anything else, like darkness arising from a butter lamp and so on, given that there is no difference in terms of their being other.

It is said [in the *Madhyamakavatara*]:

If things could arise on the basis of something 'other',
Well then, thick darkness should come from flames.

And:

For the cause and effect to be entirely 'other',
Is never feasible.
If the cause and effect were entirely other,
Causes would be just the same as non-causes.

Then you might say, "In the case of anything truly different such as light and darkness and so on, cause and effect would be unpredictable. But seeds and sprouts and so on have an uncommon acting causal relationship of influencer and influenced, and so the preceding cause produces a subsequent effect. And so there is no question of anything arising from anything else, like darkness from flames and so on."

Then, it is said [in the *Madhyamakavatara*]:

You do not accept that barley, stamens, Kimshuka and so on
Can produce a rice sprout, because they lack the capability,
They are not within the same continuum, and are not similar.
It is the same for the rice seed, we say, because of being 'other'.

In the same way that barley and flowers, stones and so on can not be included within the same continuum as the cause of a rice sprout or be said to be of 'similar type', so too, the barley seed and its sprout, if they are established as truly 'other' from the perspective of ultimate analysis, cannot ultimately belong to the same continuum.

Even though this does not affect the ultimate conclusion that it is wholly unacceptable for a thing's own producers to belong to its same continuum, it is acceptable to classify a producer as belonging to the same continuum on the conventional level, based on the ultimately incontrovertible point that things are not inherently 'other', but arise in interdependence.

Moreover, since at any given time, either the seed or the sprout will be non-existent, having not yet arisen or already ceased, how could it be feasible for them to be 'influencer' and 'influenced.' These are mere imputations.

"Although the seed and sprout do not exist at the same time, there is no fault because they arise and cease like the up and down movements of a pair of scales." If this is your claim, then while the seed is ceasing, it is approaching destruction and although it exists in the present, it does not remain in the next instant. And the sprout, while it is in the process of arising, is approaching production so it does not exist at the same time as the seed. So there never could be any contact between the two, and the example of the scales is meaningless.

The *Madhyamakavatara* says:

If the eye consciousness already exists as other than its own simultaneous producers,
Such as the eye and the co-emergent perception and so on,
What need is there for it to be produced?
If it does not exist, then the faults of this were already explained.

If eye consciousness already existed as something other than its own producers such as the eye faculty and the visual object and so on, and also its concurrent mental states such as sensation and perception, then there would be no need for its production. If it did not exist already, then these could not be something 'other'.

Therefore, the mind and mental states and the four elements that exist at the same time are merely labeled as causes and effects, whilst if the mind and mental states and so on

were produced inherently as something truly 'other', that would entail the faults already described.

So, regarding production such as that of the sprout from the seed, the Acharya Nagarjuna said:

From a seed that is destroyed or intact,
The sprout is not produced,
So you taught that all production
Is just like magical creation.

As it is said, the appearances of dependent origination cannot withstand logical analysis, and when investigated using reasoning that inquires into the ultimate, not even the slightest so-called 'production' may be observed. Yet, when left unanalyzed, just like the appearances during a dream, a sprout appears to be produced from a seed. This is simply the way in which the conventional is presented.

Similarly, at a merely conventional level, the continuum of similarity is said to remain and cease, but ultimately, since no arising is observed in the beginning, there can be no true ceasing at the end nor any abiding in the interim. Thus things are devoid of arising, dwelling and ceasing.

Therefore, appearances—when viewed from the perspective of the non-paradoxical unity of the two truths—are just like the examples of an illusion, dream, city of gandharvas, reflection of the moon in water and so on.

When analyzing in this way, using ultimate reasoning, because of the crucial point that all phenomena lack inherent existence, seeds and sprouts and so on can not be established as having any essential identity, whether as truly identical, 'other' or whatever.

Others (the proponents of real entities within the Buddhist tradition) may say: "Although the other three types of production—self-production and so on—may be refuted, if we do not accept production from other, won't we be contradicting the normal conventions of the world, such as the fact that sprouts arise from seeds and butter from curd?" There is no contradiction. In reality, if we apply reasoning, then not only at an ultimate level, but also conventionally speaking, arising is never really observed. If production were observable and proven conventionally, then it would follow that conventionally true phenomena such as the aggregates and elements would become immune to ultimate analysis. It would also follow that ultimate or truly existent arising would not be refuted. And it would follow that the equipoise of noble beings would become a cause for destroying previously existent conventional phenomena, which would lead to the extreme of deprecating the existent by labeling it non-existent. In any case, what is claimed is not possible.

In short, from the perspective of ultimate analysis, no phenomena whatsoever may be observed that are established as genuinely existent, whilst from the perspective of reasoning inquiring into the conventional, things are observed. That these two points are consistent, and established as a single reality is the assertion of the followers of the Middle Way beyond extremes.

Yet those who speak of real entities disagree, for they consider emptiness and dependently originating appearance to be mutually opposed. They believe that whatever is refuted by ultimate analysis must be completely non-existent even on a conventional level, just like the horns of a rabbit. Or else, that whatever exists conventionally, such as pillars and vases, could never be refuted by ultimate reasoning. They conceive of some independent object of negation separate from the conventional phenomena that are the basis of negation and they consider emptiness—which for them is the refutation of a separate phenomenon called “true existence”—and appearances, the basis for that refutation, to be directly opposed to one another, like the total non-existence of the horns of rabbits and the real existence of the horns of cattle. Asserting this to be a unity, by mentally ‘binding’ these two to an entity such as a vase is tantamount to claiming that emptiness is an affirming negation, and in the end it does not even go beyond the views of the proponents of true entities. This point has already been well made by the great logicians of the past.

3. Production from Both

The Samkhyas who speak of primal substance and an almighty god assert production from both self and other, but this carries the faults mentioned in both the earlier positions. As it is said [in the *Madhyamakavatara*]:

Production from both is inherently unreasonable,
Because it would entail the problems already explained.

So, this position is unacceptable from the perspective of either of the two truths.

4. Production without Cause

As for the assertion that there is no arising from self, from other or from both, but that there could be production without any cause, it is said [in the *Madhyamakavatara*]:

If the world were devoid of any cause, then it might be apprehended
Like the fragrance and colour of a blue lotus in space,
Yet this world is apprehended in all its rich variety,
And so, just like one’s own mind, it should be known to arise from causes.

This has already been refuted in more detail above, in the context of the philosophical schools, [1] where it was shown how it entails either permanent existence or non-existence.

In this way, when analyzing properly using the logical arguments that refute production from the four extremes of self, other, both and neither, no phenomenon whatsoever may be seen to arise in the beginning, and therefore to possess the other features of remaining in the middle or ceasing in the end. And so the conceptual elaborations of the eight extremes [2] such as ultimate arising and so on are pacified with regard to these unceasing mere relative appearances, and this should be understood as the unity of appearance and emptiness. This is taught more elaborately in the *Madhyamakavatara*.

B. The Refutation of Production from Four Alternatives

When analyzed, production cannot be established as occurring in any of these four possible ways:

1. Several causes producing a single result
2. Several causes producing several results
3. A single cause producing several results
4. A single cause producing a single result

You might think that it is only possible for several distinct causes, such as the object of a visible form, the unimpaired sense faculty, the immediately preceding mental attention, an unobstructed appearance and accommodating space, to produce the result of a single visual consciousness.

In which case, since several distinct causes produce only a single result, the object, faculty and so on do produce the visual consciousness, but it must follow that there can be no other cause for its singularity. Similarly, as long as a single cause is incapable of producing a single effect, there is no cause for singularity or plurality, one-ness or many-ness. And since there is no knowable phenomenon that does not fall into either category (of one or many), whatever is singular or plural must either remain that way forever or never come into being at any time or place. This is because there is no cause for being singular or plural.

You might think that several causes produce several effects, the immediate intention of wishing to look producing the visual consciousness of a mental nature, the support of the eye faculty producing the apprehension of the object, and the apparent object such as a vase producing its own particular mental features. In that case, since it would be produced by these various causes, it would have the various features just described, such as having a mental nature and so on, and so that eye consciousness would become many, equal in number to its aspects described above. If that is accepted, then the resultant visual consciousness is not produced by these causes such as the intention and so on. The particular aspects such as the mental nature, the endowment with the features of the object and so on are produced individually, but the one who possesses these aspects, the visual consciousness itself, has no cause and is therefore not produced by anything.

You might respond by saying that the apprehension of the object and the other aspects are not separate, in the sense that they are nothing other than consciousness. But then it would be meaningless to call this “several causes producing several effects”. It becomes “several causes producing a single effect”, and the problems involved in such an assertion, i.e. because one and many are uncaused, things must be either permanently existent or non-existent, have been explained above.

You may think that there is still no fault because the aspects and the possessor of these aspects are of the same essential identity, and only labelled as separate based on conceptual distinctions. In that case, the causes such as attention, would perform their function for the conceptual distinctions, the imputed phenomena such as the mental nature and so on, but the substantially existent consciousness itself would not be produced by any cause, and so consciousness would be causeless.

If you claim that the essential identity of the effect is one, but its aspects are multiple, then this leads to the fault of the qualities being separate from that which possesses them.

You might consider that the single cause of a blue flower produces several effects, such as that flower's own subsequent 'similar type' and the visual consciousness of sentient beings, for example. The question is: does that cause, i.e., the flower, perform this production by itself exclusively, without relying on any other factors, or is it done together with other assisting factors, such as the faculties? In the first case of production by itself alone, since it would not be able to produce a plurality, this implies causeless production. Similarly, since one cause also can not perform the function of producing one effect, then it follows that the single and the multiple must both lack causes, and once again there is the fault of production occurring without any cause, as explained above.

If the object, like the blue [flower], produces the visual consciousness in dependence on other causes, such as the appearance, sense faculty, attention and so on, and you say that it has been produced by other causes as well, the result will cease to be singular, because it will possess several features or qualities that have been produced by the various causes, such as the object, faculty and attention.

Then, it might be said that a single cause only produces its own single result. If that were the case, then since a cause such as the eye faculty could only produce the result of its own subsequent 'resemblance', and could never perform the function of producing anything else, such as a visual consciousness directly apprehending an object, there would be no cause for beings' visual or audial consciousnesses and so on, and so these effects would be impossible, with the absurd consequence that everyone would be deaf and blind.

As it says in the *Two Truths of the Middle Way* [by Jñānagarbha]:

Several things do not produce just one thing,
And many things do not create a multiplicity.
One thing is not produced by many things.
And from a single thing, a single thing is not produced.^[3]

This was stated in accordance with such reasoning.

Moreover, other arguments might be given in response to one who asserts that several causes, such as the appearance, faculty and attention, give rise to a single result, such as visual cognition. [For example,] even if it is granted that the resultant eye consciousness does not have several qualities and is singular, it is impossible for any knowable phenomenon to be truly singular, as in the case of a visual consciousness devoid of its accompanying mental states, such as the ever-present states and so on.

You might think that many causes produce many effects, but then since it would be impossible for several causes to produce only a single effect, it would be quite meaningless to speak of a gathering of several causes. When singular phenomena cannot be established, the 'many' that they go together to produce will not be established either, and will not exist.

The assertion that one cause produces several effects is also unsound, since it presupposes a single cause that cannot be divided into parts, and this is impossible. It can be seen that a single cause such as a seed would be incapable of producing its effect, the sprout, without relying upon other conditions, such as earth, water, warmth, time and so on.

It is also not the case that a single cause gives rise to a single effect, since this is contrary to direct experience, namely the successive production of a variety of effects like the sprout, the flower, the fruit and so on, from a variety of causes and conditions such as the seed, water, fertilizer, heat, moisture and so on.

Therefore, when thoroughly examining, a truly singular phenomenon that lacks a plurality of features or qualities cannot be established at all, whether as a causal or resultant entity. And without any such singular phenomenon, then the plural too, which must necessarily be composed of the singular, must also be non-existent.

Nevertheless, in the case of a thing such as a sprout, even though it consists of several parts such as its colour and shape and so on, they are still labeled as one thing, i.e. a sprout, based on their similarity of type and so forth. And also in the case of a single phenomenon such as a particle, when dividing it according to its features, such as substance and direction, it is labeled as multiple. Yet it is simply through the power of dependent origination or 'dependent definition', that these are conventionally designated as causes and effects. When analyzing with ultimate reasoning, they cannot be established according to any of these four alternatives of single, multiple, etc., and therefore since these conventional entities do not withstand investigation, they should be understood to be just like the appearances during a dream.

Although this reasoning is sometimes called "the investigation of both the cause and the effect: refuting production according to the four alternatives" thus giving a total of five great logical arguments—and ultimately there is no real contradiction in explaining it that way—it seems reasonable to include it within the category of investigation of the cause, so that there are a total of four great logical arguments.

There are also other arguments which investigate the cause, effect and identity, such as, for example, the division into the three times of past, present and future, i.e., the result that was produced in the past has already arisen and has now ceased, so it is not produced. The result of the future has not yet arisen in the present, and so it is not produced. And finally, the present result has already been established as its own identity and so it would be meaningless for it to be produced again.

II. The Investigation of the Result: Refutation of Existent or Non-Existent Production

This is divided into an actual explanation and elimination of doubts.

A. Actual Explanation

Regarding the effect that is produced, if one examines whether it is an existent effect that arises or a non-existent one, or one that is both or neither, the *Madhyamakavatara* says:

If it is something existent, what need is there for its production? But if it does not exist, what could be done to it?

If it is both [existent and non-existent], what can be done? And if neither, what can be done?

If you consider that the result to be produced is something existent which develops, this is unreasonable. Why? If it is existent, then it must exist having already established to its own identity as a sprout and so on, and being existent, it would be unnecessary for it to be produced anew. It is just like a grain of barley, which, having ripened once, does not need to ripen all over again. If something already existent still needed to be produced then that would lead to the fault of production continuing *ad infinitum*.

"Well then," you might think, "It is something non-existent that is produced." But in that case, it would be impossible to produce. For example, even if someone were to go to great lengths to assemble hundreds of causes and conditions, they would still never be able to produce the non-existent horns on the head of a rabbit.

You might think that the effect, such as the sprout, was formerly non-existent, but is made anew into something existent by the causes such as the seed. It is not so. Since existent and non-existent are mutually contradictory, they could never combine on the basis of a single entity. In terms of actual entities, there are no phenomena whatsoever that were formerly non-existent, and later changed into something existent. Causes and conditions could not transform unconditioned space, for example, into the identity of a conditioned, existent phenomenon.

Thus, simply on a conventional level, effects appear based on causes. Formerly, prior to the gathering of their causes and conditions, they did not appear, and now, when the causes and conditions are assembled, they do. The mind relates these two stages to one another, and then there is the merely conceptual statement, "This did not exist before, but now it is arising!"

Similarly, one mentally relates earlier and later occasions and, in relation to a given phenomenon, thinks, "This existed previously, and then it did not exist."

Thus, the phenomena that are conventional entities simply appear by the force of dependent origination, and in reality there are no existent phenomena whatsoever that transform into non-existent ones, and there are no non-existent phenomena that transform into existent ones.

It is similar in the case of conditioned formations arising anew and finally ceasing, or the continua of 'similar type' remaining and not remaining, the perception of an existent self of the individual or phenomena and the perception of no-self. The explanation is similar to that given in the case of existent and non-existent phenomena. They are all merely appearances on the conventional, relative level, and ultimately, they are empty of their own essential identity. At the level of the genuine nature of things, there is no observation of any features such as the transformation of something existent into something non-existent or non-existent into existent, of any going or coming, arising or ceasing, increasing or decreasing.

B. Eliminating Doubts

You might wonder how it is that production of results should be asserted, given that neither existent nor non-existent effects are produced, and that, aside from these two, no third mode of production is possible. It is asserted that the arising of effects is nothing other than the undeceiving appearance of dependent origination, and when analyzed as to whether it is existent or non-existent, it is not established in any way whatsoever, but is just like the example of a magical illusion and so on.

It is impossible for a knowable phenomenon to be both existent and non-existent since these two are directly opposed to one another. And it is also impossible for a phenomenon to be neither existent nor non-existent, because it is impossible for there to be some third option in between these two directly opposed positions.

“Well then,” you might think, “just as it is impossible here to have the option of neither, there can not be this option of ‘neither’ in the context of freedom from conceptual elaboration of the four extremes, such as existing, not existing and so on.” And, you might think, “Just as in the assertion made without specifying ‘not existent and not non-existent’, it is impossible for there to be a third option between direct opposites, so the natural state can be understood through the two negations, and there is nothing meaningful in defining what ‘nothing whatsoever’ means. Thus, apart from the rather deceitful position of asserting nothing at all, our own tradition does not make any kind of definite statement about how things are.” This might be how spiritually immature beginners think it is, but it is not like that at all.

As long as one still maintains a basis for conceptual reference, there can not possibly be an apprehension that does away with the four extremes altogether. Therefore, whatever assertions are made by applying particular distinctions—like saying, “There is no snake in this house, but there is a vase”—they are conceptual references involving particular conceptual ideas, and so they are not beyond the realms of ordinary conceptual thought. In the actual state of simplicity, in which all conceptual focus has subsided, there are no assertions or conceptual references whatsoever with regard to the four extremes. Even so, it is quite unlike the dull confusion of not having realized ultimate reality, or a state of unconsciousness. It is a state difficult to express by words or through examples, that is—as it says in Rahula’s *Praise to the Great Mother Prajñāparamita*—beyond words, beyond thought and beyond description. It is simplicity that is discerned by means of one’s own individual awareness, in which all doubts have been cut through: a non-conceptual primordial awareness free from dualistic perceptions, but naturally luminous like the shining sun.

III. Investigation of the Essential Identity: ‘Neither One Nor Many’

To begin with, there is an analysis of the essential identity of all conditioned and unconditioned phenomena to determine whether or not there is true singularity. In the case of those conditioned phenomena of the five aggregates possessing physical form, there is a division into above, below, the cardinal and intermediate directions and the centre. Through this, it can be seen that, for something such as a vase, singularity is simply a conceptual notion applied to the various features that are the basis for such an

imputation. True singularity is not established, and the same applies in the case of its component parts. The body and the limbs are also divided into parts in the same way.

In short, all that possesses physical form and is composed of material particles may be broken down to its basis, which is the infinitely small particle. And, according to the logic explained before, for that most subtle particle to be surrounded by particles in the various directions, it must have sides, which means it must have parts, and so on, in an infinite regression. If not, then however many subtle particles are gathered together, they could never grow any larger. Thus, all phenomena with material form lack true singularity.

In addition, the eight or the six collections of consciousness can not be established as truly singular since they consist of various cognitive acts and mental states, take various features as their focus, and arise in different forms from the gathering of the four conditions, and then cease.

By analyzing everything that has the nature of arising and ceasing deriving from its own causes, even the subtlest indivisible moment can not be established, and so all phenomena included within mind and matter lack any true singularity. As for non-concurrent formations, they are simply imputations made upon the 'occasion' of mind and matter, and so they lack any essential identity. Unconditioned phenomena are imputations made with regard to the eliminated aspects of objects of negation, and are also lacking in any essential identity.

In short, all conditioned and unconditioned phenomena can not be shown to have any true singularity, and since this is not established, plurality that is made up of what is singular must also remain unestablished. And so, since there is no mode of true existence aside from being truly singular or plural, it must follow that individuals and phenomena are proven to be without inherent identity, just as it is explained more elaborately in *The Ornament of the Middle Way*.

IV. Analysis of All: The Logical Argument of Great Interdependence

All phenomena do not come into being through their own inherent identity, but as a result of the coming together of causes and conditions, and when there are no conditions they do not arise. Even at the time when they appear, they appear whilst lacking any inherent existence, since they are like reflections, brought about by causes and conditions. Free from any conceptual elaborations such as being permanent or non-existent, going or coming, arising or ceasing or being one or many, they appear whilst lacking true reality.

When evaluating in this way, using reasoning investigating the ultimate in accordance with the actual nature of things, they are found to be mere unfailing dependent arising. Otherwise, if they were truly established in any way, such as arising according to the four extremes or four alternatives, or being existent or non-existent, or permanent or impermanent etc., then that would be inappropriate as an explanation for the conventional, and would result in a deprecation of all conventions.

According to the Middle Way tradition, for whom the unreal illusory appearances of dependent origination and emptiness arise in the same reality, all the conventions of

mere appearance are extremely reasonable. This being so, the conventions of the world, as well as the supermundane conventions of the Four Truths, Three Jewels and so on, are all perfectly established.

This kind of reasonings, the Great Interdependence, includes all the other types of ultimate logic, such as the Diamond Splinter and so on, because they are all concerned with the seemingly real, unexamined appearances of dependent origination. When analyzed, no causes, effects or essential identities whatsoever can be established. The extensive variations of this logic that investigates the meaning of dependent origination are to be found in *The Root Verses of the Middle Way* and elsewhere.

Conclusion

Therefore, at the relative level, cause, effect and inherent identity appear in that way, and are labeled with such conventions. Ultimately, causes, effects and inherent identities lack any true nature, being emptiness with the identity of the three doors of liberation. The emptiness in which the two truths are inseparably united like this is the *dharmadhatu*, the object to be realized through the path of the Middle Way. It is the supreme of all that might be realized, the 'mother' of the victorious buddhas and their heirs.

This point concerning equalness in which the truths of appearance and emptiness are indivisible is just like the sphere of space, and is beyond the realm of conceptual thought, unimaginable and inexpressible, yet with non-conceptual wisdom, it can be meditated in the manner of pure self-knowing awareness. During the post-meditation phase, one has the confident certainty that all things appear yet lack true reality, just like the examples of a magical illusion, dream, reflection, magical creations and so on. And, with the wisdom that thoroughly discerns the two truths, one is brought to an undeluded realization concerning all the categories of the ground, path and fruition.

Through comprehending the meaning of emptiness in this way, all the enlightened qualities of the path and fruition of the Great Vehicle will arise.

Footnotes:

1. i.e., earlier in the text of the *mkhas 'jug*. See *Gateway to Knowledge* vol. I, Rangjung Yeshe Publications, 1997, pp. 64-65.
2. The eight extremes are: arising, ceasing, permanence, non-existence, coming, going, plurality and singularity.
3. This is verse 14 of the text. Khenpo Nuden gives the quote with the lines in a slightly different order, but I have followed the original.

(Taken from Mipham Rinpoche's *mkhas 'jug*, with supplementary material from Khenpo Nüden's commentary.)

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THE TREASURY OF KNOWLEDGE
BOOK SIX, PART THREE
FRAMEWORKS OF BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY
A Systematic Presentation of the Cause-Based Philosophical Vehicles

By Jamgon Kongtrul Lodro Taye
Translated by Elizabeth Callahan

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The Treasury of Knowledge

Book Six, Part Three:

Frameworks of Buddhist Philosophy

*A Systematic Presentation of
the Cause-Based Philosophical Vehicles*

Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Tayé

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7. AN OVERVIEW OF MADHYAMAKA

- b' An Explanation of the Madhyamaka System [II.B.2.a.ii.bb.2'.b']
 - i' The Meaning of the Term and Its Etymology
 - ii' Its Entryway
 - iii' The Vows to Be Guarded
 - iv' The View to Be Realized
 - v' The Result to Be Attained
 - vi' The Classifications [of the Madhyamaka System]
 - aa' An Overview
 - bb' An Extensive Explanation
 - 1" The Common Madhyamaka of the Sūtra System
 - a" An Overview: The Names [of Madhyamaka Schools]
-

[This chapter is a continuation of the detailed explanation of the classifications of the Pāramitāyāna's systems of philosophical tenets and its second part, an extensive explanation of their characteristics.] It is the second division: an explanation of the Madhyamaka system.⁶⁰² This presentation has seven topics: the meaning of the term and its etymology; its entryway; the vows to be guarded; the view to be realized; the result to be attained; the classifications [of the Madhyamaka system]; and a synopsis of what is taught in all Madhyamaka systems: its ground, path, and fruition.⁶⁰³

The Meaning of the Term and Its Etymology [i']

Being free from extremes, Madhyamaka is the best philosophical tenet system.

Those who propound a complete absence of reference points are free from [beliefs] in any extreme: existence or nonexistence, arising or ceasing, and so forth. Thus they are called “Mādhyamikas.”⁶⁰⁴ In the *Stacks of Jewels*, [the *Kāshyapa Chapter Sūtra*] says:⁶⁰⁵

Do not think that phenomena are permanent. Do not think that they are impermanent. “Permanence” is one extreme and “impermanence” is a second extreme. The middle between two extremes cannot be analyzed and cannot be shown. It is not a support. It is devoid of appearance, devoid of cognition, and devoid of location. Kāshyapa: this is the middle way, the correct discernment of phenomena.

The shorter *Ornament of the Middle Way* states:⁶⁰⁶

There is no existence nor nonexistence;
neither both nor not both.
Those who are free from the four extremes
are referred to as “Mādhyamikas.”

Its Entryway [ii']

Its entryway is the two truths.
[Mādhyamikas engage] conventional reality knowing that
from the perspective of no analysis, [things] appear and
yet do not truly exist;
and they conduct themselves properly with regard to what
is to be adopted and rejected.
They encounter ultimate [reality] by knowing that there is
nothing to adopt or reject, block or encourage, in
anything—
the very [moment] things simply appear, they are empty.
This [approach] integrates the two stores.

The entryway for Mādhyamikas is the explication that, primarily from the perspective of their natures, all phenomena are included within the two truths.⁶⁰⁷

They engage conventional reality in the following manner. They know that unexamined and unanalyzed appearances, regardless of how they seem to be, do not truly exist as entities. Simply as interdependent connections [appearing] on the conventional level, [Mādhyamikas] undertake extensive virtuous actions (such as generosity) and avoid unvirtuous actions—all the while [maintaining] their motivation of bodhichitta and an awareness that things are illusionlike. In this way they train themselves in the scrupulous observance of what is to be adopted and what is to be rejected.

They encounter ultimate reality by knowing that actually there is nothing to adopt or reject, block or encourage, abandon or accept in any phenomenon. The very [moment] that things simply appear, they are empty of any nature.

Entering [the Madhyamaka path] through [understanding] the two truths is an approach that integrates the view and conduct, method and wisdom, and the two stores of merit and wisdom.

The Vows to Be Guarded [iii']

What are to be guarded are the bodhisattva vows.

What is to be guarded is the ethical conduct of the bodhisattva vows. This is a practice that is empowered by great wisdom, which [knows] that, ultimately, [all phenomena] are free from conceptual elaborations and characteristics.

The View to Be Realized [iv']

What is realized is that, on the conventional [level], phenomena appear while not existing, like the moon's reflection in water; but, ultimately, all elaborations and characteristics subside. They realize the two truths unerringly.

The view realized by Mādhyamikas is that, on the conventional [level], all phenomena appear while not existing, like the moon's reflection in water; and, ultimately, all conceptual elaborations and characteristics subside. In

this way, they unerringly and fully realize the abiding nature of the two truths.

The Result to Be Attained [v']

The result is peace, the manifestation of the two kāyas.

The three yānas are similar in that nirvāṇa is the final result to be attained in each case. Mādhyamikas, however, do not assert that the mere cessation of the mental afflictions and the aggregates is nirvāṇa. They state that [nirvāṇa] is the unmistaken realization of the suchness (*tattva, de kho na nyid*) of all phenomena, both pure and impure, by means of the pacification of all conceptual elaborations. The *Fundamental Treatise on the Middle Way* says:⁶⁰⁸

What is without abandonment, without attainment,
without annihilation, without permanence,
without cessation, and without arising
is said to be nirvāṇa.

Praises of the Incomparable One says:⁶⁰⁹

You know that afflictive phenomena
and purified phenomena are of the same taste.
Thus, you are inseparable from the dharmadhātu,
and you are utterly and completely pure.

There are many such statements.

Nirvāṇa is presented as being twofold: with remainder and without remainder. A Mahāyāna explanation of this is found in the *Genuine Golden Light Sūtras*:⁶¹⁰

The two kāyas are [nirvāṇa] with remainder;
the dharmakāya is [nirvāṇa] without remainder.

The noble Nāgārjuna also teaches these as the entryways to the three kāyas. He says that when one attains the nirvāṇa in which conceptual elaborations are pacified, by virtue of one's completion of the two stores of merit and wisdom, one manifests the dharmakāya for one's own sake and the two form kāyas [the sambhogakāya and nirmāṇakāya] for the sake of others. While remaining nonconceptual, like a precious gem, [the form kāyas] work for the welfare of the limitless beings to be tamed, both those with pure mindstreams and those with impure ones.

The Classifications [of the Madhyamaka System] [vi']

In this section, there are two parts: an overview; and an extensive explanation.

An Overview [aa']

Although Madhyamaka is classified in many ways, its two main divisions are Sūtra-Madhyamaka and Mantra-Madhyamaka.

Proponents of the Madhyamaka system of philosophical tenets were subdivided in several ways both in India and Tibet.⁶¹¹ Some⁶¹² say that there are three types: Sautrāntika-Mādhyamikas, Yogācāra-Mādhyamikas, and Mādhyamikas Who Employ Worldly Consensus.⁶¹³

- (1) Sautrāntika-Mādhyamikas, such as Bhāvaviveka,⁶¹⁴ assert as conventions that external objects exist.
- (2) Yogācāra-Mādhyamikas, such as Shāntarakṣita,⁶¹⁵ maintain that [even] as conventions external referents do not exist.
- (3) Mādhyamikas Who Employ Worldly Consensus, such as Chandra-kīrti,⁶¹⁶ speak about external objects [only] from the perspective of others, that is to say, only in terms of what is commonly acknowledged in the world.

Others say that two subdivisions can be made according to the way the ultimate is asserted: Those Who Logically Establish Illusion, and Proponents of Complete Nonabiding.⁶¹⁷

- (1) Those Who Logically Establish Illusion, such as Kamalashīla,⁶¹⁸ assert that ultimate reality is the combination of appearances' absence of reality and phenomena themselves (such as sprouts and other things).⁶¹⁹

- (2) Proponents of Complete Nonabiding, such as Buddhapālita,⁶²⁰ assert that ultimate reality is what is determined (*pariccheda*, *yongs gcod*) as [a result of] excluding (*viccheda*, *nam bcad*) all conceptual elaborations regarding appearances.

The master Ratnākarashānti⁶²¹ divides Mādhyamikas into two groups:⁶²²

- (1) those who state that conventional [reality] is an image of cognition, and
- (2) those who state that conventional [reality] is habitual tendencies.

The master Maitrīpa⁶²³ makes two divisions:⁶²⁴

- (1) Proponents of Illusionlike Nonduality, and
- (2) Proponents of the Complete Nonabiding of All Phenomena.

The Kashmiri scholar Lakṣmī[kara]⁶²⁵ provides a threefold classification:

- (1) Sautrāntika-Madhyamaka;
- (2) Yogācāra-Madhyamaka; and
- (3) Madhyamaka based on the Mother of the Victors.⁶²⁶

All such classifications of Madhyamaka are based on [the different explanations concerning] the way the ultimate is empty and, particularly, [the different] ways conventional [reality] is posited. Despite these many styles of classification, succinctly put, Madhyamaka is definitely of two types: Sūtra-Madhyamaka and Mantra-Madhyamaka.

An Extensive Explanation [bb']

This is discussed in two sections: the common Madhyamaka of the Sūtra system; and the profound Madhyamaka of Secret Mantra.

The Common Madhyamaka of the Sūtra System [1"]

This has two divisions: an overview: the names [of Madhyamaka schools]; and an extensive explanation: the characteristics [of Madhyamaka schools].

An Overview: The Names [of Madhyamaka Schools] [a"]

**The Sūtra system comprises [the teachings of] the Proponents
of the Absence of a Nature and the Yogāchāras,
which correspond [respectively] to such terms as “ordinary”
and “preeminent,” or “broad” and “subtle.”
In Tibet, they are known as Rangtong and Shentong.**

Because of the slightly different systems, or styles, of commenting on the thought of the Mahāyāna sūtras, it is clear that there are two types [of Sūtra-Mādhyamikas]:

- (1) Mādhyamika Proponents of the Absence of a Nature (Niḥsvabhāva-vādins),⁶²⁷ and
- (2) Yogāchāra-Mādhyamikas.

Some use the terms “ordinary Madhyamaka” and “preeminent Madhyamaka” for these systems. The master Bhāvaviveka⁶²⁸ and others use the phrase “broad, outer Madhyamaka” for the first and “subtle, inner Madhyamaka” for the second.⁶²⁹ In Tibet, from the time of the great omniscient dharma lord of Jonang [Dolpopa] onwards, these have been known as the systems of Rangtong-Madhyamaka and Shentong-Madhyamaka.⁶³⁰

10. PRĀSAṄGIKA

(b) The Systematic Presentation of Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka [II.B.2.a.ii. bb.2'.b'.vi'.bb'.1".b".i".bb".(3).(b)]

(i) A Brief Account of Chandrakīrti's Exegetical System

(ii) A General Description of the Model Texts' Exposition of Madhyamaka

(aa) A General Statement

(bb) The Specific Explanation

(iii) The Specific Explanation of Ground, Path, and Result [in Madhyamaka]

(aa) Ground Madhyamaka: The Unity of the Two Truths

(1') The Actual [Presentation of the Two Truths]

(2') The Explanation of the Way [the Two Truths] Are Established

(bb) Path Madhyamaka: The Unity of Method and Wisdom

(cc) Resultant Madhyamaka: The Unity of the Two Kāyas

(iv) A Synopsis of the Main Points of the [Prāsaṅgika] Philosophical Tenet System

[This chapter, a continuation of the third part of the detailed explanation of the systematic presentation of Rangtong, the explanation of the individual [Rangtong] systems, presents] the second division: the systematic presentation of Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka. This section has four parts: a brief account of Chandrakīrti's exegetical system; a general description of the model texts' exposition of Madhyamaka; the specific explanation of ground, path, and result [in Madhyamaka];⁷¹⁶ and a synopsis of the main points of the [Prāsaṅgika] philosophical tenet system.

A Brief Account of Chandrakīrti's Exegetical System [(i)]

**For eradicating conceptually elaborated characteristics,
Chandrakīrti's system
is exceptional and preeminent; it does not use independently
[verifiable] reasons.
His own system is free from assertions except [for what is
done] simply for others.**

The master Chandrakīrti elucidates the way in which Buddhapālita comments on the intention of the noble Nāgārjuna's texts. Chandrakīrti's system is exceptional and preeminent for eradicating the conceptual elaborations associated with characteristics (*mtshan ma'i spros pa*), and he is a prime example of the Prāsaṅgika-Mādhyamika.

This system does not formulate independently [verifiable] probative reasons in which the three modes are established through the power of [their relationship to real] things. In order to refute the mistaken views of others, it accepts nonarising, emptiness, and so forth from the perspective of others, and it simply uses consequences to demonstrate to Realists their internal contradictions. Other than that, this system is free from any assertions, since there is nothing to be proven.

**[This system uses] negations and affirmations that employ
four valid means of cognition—
direct perception, inference, scriptural authority, and ana-
logical proof, which are commonly acknowledged in the
world;
and four types of reasons—inferences based on what is
commonly acknowledged by others, consequences that
expose contradictions,
comparable applications of [the opponent's] reasons, and
[the demonstration of] the irrelevance [of proofs that are
equivalent to the probandum] .**

In Chandrakīrti's own system, therefore, there is nothing to be negated nor affirmed through either nonimplicative negations or implicative negations. Nevertheless, for others, [his system] does employ negations and affirmations using the four valid means of cognition and four types of reasons.

The following are the four valid means of cognition, which, from the perspective of others, are commonly acknowledged in the world:

- (1) direct perception (*pratyakṣha*, *mngon sum*);
- (2) inference (*anumāṇa*, *rjes dpag*);
- (3) scriptural authority (*āgama*, *lung*); and
- (4) analogy (*upamāṇa*, *nye bar 'jal ba*).⁷¹⁷

The four types of reasons (*liṅga*, *rtaḡs*) used for others are:

- (a) inferences based on what is commonly acknowledged by others (*gzhan la grags pa'i rjes dpag*);⁷¹⁸
- (b) consequences that expose the [opponent's] contradictions (*'gal ba brjod pa'i thal 'gyur*);
- (c) comparable applications of the [opponent's] reasons (*rgyu mtshan mtshungs pa'i mgo snyoms*); and
- (d) [demonstrations to the opponent of] the irrelevance of proofs that are equivalent to the probandum (*sgrub byed bsgrub bya dang mts-hungs pa'i ma grub pa*).⁷¹⁹

The dharma lord Gorampa⁷²⁰ explains [the application of these reasons] as follows:

Exposing contradictions (b) refutes that something arises from itself. Comparable applications of [the opponent's] reasons (c) refute arising from something other. [Demonstrations of the irrelevance of] proofs that are equivalent to the probandum (d) negate arising from both. Inferences based on what is commonly acknowledged by others (a) refute that things arise without any causes.

Serdokpa Dön-yö Pal⁷²¹ comments:

[Gorampa,] although you are omniscient, what you say indicates that you still need to study Madhyamaka. These [four reasons should be used] as follows.

Consequences that expose contradictions (b) create undesirable consequences for the reasons that the others accept. Comparable applications of the [opponents'] reasons (c) cause

certainty about the entailment of these consequences to arise in your opponents' minds by using examples. [Demonstrations of the irrelevance of] proofs that are equivalent to the probandum (d) show [your opponents] that they cannot remove the difficulties that those consequences have created for them.

Those three consequences (b-d) will prove the subject property and the entailment (which are commonly acknowledged by others) for your opponents' minds. Now you can use reasons based on what is commonly acknowledged by others (a) to generate an inferential valid cognition in your opponents' minds.

As we can see, it is explained that these four reasonings, which are unique to Prāsaṅgikas, are related to the negation of arising from each of the four extremes.⁷²² Since they are the main reasonings, I will discuss them now in some detail.

[THE VAJRA SLIVER ARGUMENT AND THE FOUR REASONS]

[Refutation of arising from self]

First, we will look at the Sāṃkhyas'⁷²³ belief that things arise from themselves. They assert that their statement, "Things arise from themselves," means that only things that exist at the time of their cause arise and that things that do not exist [at the time of their cause] do not arise. Sesame oil, they say, serves as an illustration: the reason sesame oil appears is that it already exists within sesame seeds, and the reason sesame oil does not appear from sand is that it does not already exist within sand. Prāsaṅgikas use the four reasonings to negate their position as follows.

- Prāsaṅgikas begin by saying, "It follows that for things, the subject, arising is pointless, because they already exist at the time of their causes." That is *a consequence that exposes [the opponents'] contradictions* (b).
- Sāṃkhyas then may say, "The entailment is not definite."⁷²⁴ Prāsaṅgikas would reply, "It follows that things would arise endlessly, because even though something is already present, it can arise." That is *a comparable application of [the opponents'] reason* (c).
- Next, Sāṃkhyas may say, "Those two [cases] are not comparable for the following reason."⁷²⁵ It is the pot that [is present] during the phase of the lump of clay that arises; [an already] manifestly perceptible pot does not arise [again]. These two are different: one is something manifestly perceptible and the other is not." Prāsaṅgikas would reply, "Referring to

the existence of ‘the pot not manifestly perceptible during the clay-lump phase’ is equivalent to your original probandum.”⁷²⁶ That is *[a demonstration to the opponents of] the irrelevance of proofs that are equivalent to the probandum (d)*.

- Finally, Prāsaṅgikas say, “All outer and inner things, the subject, do not arise from themselves, because they [already] exist.” That is *[the employment of] inferences based on what is commonly acknowledged by others (a)*.⁷²⁷

[Refutation of arising from other]

In our [Buddhist] schools, there are Realists⁷²⁸ who accept that phenomena arise from something other than themselves.⁷²⁹

- Prāsaṅgikas start with, “It follows that a seed and its sprout are not inherently different from each other, because a sprout arises from a seed.” That is *a consequence that exposes [the opponents’] contradictions (b)*.
- Realists may say, “The entailment is not definite.”⁷³⁰ Prāsaṅgikas would reply, “In that case, it follows that pitch-darkness could arise from flames, because even though something is inherently different from something else, it can arise [from that other thing].” That is *a comparable application of [the opponents’] reason (c)*.
- Realists may counter with, “There is a difference between something that has the potential to produce [a result] and something that does not.” Prāsaṅgikas would reply, “This is equivalent to your original probandum.”⁷³¹ That is *[a demonstration to the opponents of] the irrelevance of proofs that are equivalent to the probandum (d)*.
- Finally, Prāsaṅgikas say, “A sprout does not arise from a seed, because a seed and a sprout are inherently different from each other.” That is *[the employment of] inferences based on what is commonly acknowledged by others (a)*.

[Refutation of arising from both]

Nirgranthas [that is, Jains]⁷³² assert that phenomena arise from both themselves and things other than themselves. They say that a clay pot’s arising from the essential character of the clay is the sense in which it arises from itself. Its arising from the potter, a rope, water, and other factors is the sense in which it arises from something other than itself.

The reasonings refuting this position are the same ones used to refute

arising from self and arising from other, as the *Entrance to the Middle Way* explains:⁷³³

Arising from both is not reasonable,
because the defects already explained apply.

[Refutation of arising without causes]

The Hedonists'⁷³⁴ assertion that this world arises without causes is also negated in four steps.

- First Prāsaṅgikas say, "It follows that this world, the subject, is not perceived directly, because it is without causes." That is *a consequence that exposes [the opponents'] contradictions* (b).
- Hedonists then may say, "The entailment is not definite."⁷³⁵ Prāsaṅgikas would reply, "It follows that the color and fragrance of a blue water lily [growing] in the sky⁷³⁶ could be perceived, because even though something has no cause, it can be perceived." That is *a comparable application of [the opponents'] reason* (c).
- Hedonists may reply, "Those two [cases, this world and a flower growing in the sky,] are different: one has an existent nature and the other does not. Prāsaṅgikas reply, "This is equivalent to your original probandum." That is *[a demonstration to the opponents of] the irrelevance of proofs that are equivalent to the probandum* (d).
- Finally, Prāsaṅgikas say, "This world, the subject, does not arise without causes, because it arises sometimes."⁷³⁷ That is *[the employment of] inferences based on what is commonly acknowledged by others* (a).

[THE TWO TRUTHS]

A mind that discerns conventions is necessarily a mistaken cognition.

Correct and mistaken conventional [realities] are equal in their performance and nonperformance of functions.

The presentation of the two truths is determined by the presence of delusion and its absence.

In sum, this is the final exegesis of the Collection of Reasonings.

In this system, a mind that discerns conventions is necessarily a mistaken cognition. The *Commentary on Bodhichitta* says:⁷³⁸

When we awaken from a dream [we see that
dream objects and waking objects] do not differ in their
performance of functions.

As is said, horses and elephants in dreams or illusions and actual horses and elephants, as well as cows in drawings and actual cows, are equivalent in the way that they perform functions from a mistaken perspective. They are also equivalent in not performing [functions] from a rational perspective. In terms of the things of worldly conventionality and yogic conventionality, [things are said] to be mistaken or correct; however, that is not [Chandrakīrti's] system.⁷³⁹ His system asserts that there is nothing correct or mistaken in terms of yogic conventionality and, therefore, [yogic conventionality] is mere [conventionality].⁷⁴⁰

The criteria for positing the two truths is as follows.

- The essence of conventionality is the false appearances that [manifest] to a mind involved with delusion.
- The essence of the ultimate is what appears to an undeluded mind.

The first [conventional reality] is defined as the object found (*rnyed don*) by false seeing. The bases for this definition (*mtshan gzhi*) are, broadly, ignorance; specifically, taking [things] to be real; and, more particularly, the ignorance present in the mindstreams of ordinary beings.

The latter [ultimate reality] is defined as the object found by correct seeing. The basis for this definition is the opposite of ignorance: it is primordial wisdom, which directly realizes the absence of reality.

The *Entrance [to the Middle Way]* says:⁷⁴¹

All entities found bear two natures,
owing to being seen correctly or falsely.
It is taught that the object of correct seeing is suchness;
[the object of] false seeing is conventional reality.

The same [text] says:⁷⁴²

Those afflicted by eye diseases discern
mistaken entities, such as floaters and so forth.

Perfect vision sees their nature.

This is the way to understand suchness here.

The meaning [of these verses] is as follows.

- Conventional reality is defined as what appears as the diversity of dependently originated [phenomena] through the power of ignorance.
- The ultimate is defined as the expanse of the noble ones' primordial wisdom, in which such appearances are not seen.

These are illustrated as follows: the appearance of floaters is an analogy for conventionality; that beings without eye diseases do not see those [floaters] in any way is an analogy for the ultimate.

To sum this up, most Tibetan scholars assert that this system is the final exegesis of the thought expressed in the Collection of Madhyamaka Reasonings.⁷⁴³

A General Description of the Model Texts' Exposition of Madhyamaka [(ii)]

This is discussed in two parts: a general statement; and the specific explanation.

A General Statement [(aa)]

Scholars say, "In the system of the noble father and son, which serves as the model for all [Madhyamaka] texts, the fundamental topic of profound emptiness is explained in terms of the three phases."

Tak-tsang Lotsāwa⁷⁴⁴ and most scholars after him agree in saying, "The heart of the tathāgatas' dharma is the unerring fundamental topic of profound emptiness. When this is explained in the system of the noble father and son [Nāgārjuna and Āryadeva], which serves as the model (*phyi mo*) for the Madhyamaka textual tradition, it is related to three phases:

- (1) the phase of no examination or analysis;
- (2) the phase when rational minds⁷⁴⁵ analyze slightly; and
- (3) the phase of superb analysis, which goes beyond verbal expression.

Since this makes the explanation and practice [of emptiness] quite easy, it is a genuine key instruction.”

The Specific Explanation [(bb)]

The ground, the sphere of conduct, and the result are presented in accord with conventional expressions from a perspective of no analysis.

The absence of self-entity and the ultimate are presented from the perspective of slight analysis.

Superb analysis is the pacification of all conceptual elaborations.

[Three perspectives can be distinguished] in the teachings of the middle wheel of dharma generally and in the texts of the father Nāgārjuna and his son specifically.

[FIRST: NO ANALYSIS]

The ground (the aggregates, constituents, and sense spheres), the path (the sphere of conduct and methods), and the result (the kāyas, awakened activities, and so forth) are presented according to the expressions of worldly conventionality, that is, in terms of what is commonly understood from a perspective of no examination or analysis. Most of these topics accord with worldly conventionalities, either as things that are part of worldly consensus or as things that are suitable to become so.⁷⁴⁶ Some topics, however, [only] accord with yogic conventionalities, such as the way things appear during meditative equipoise and the subsequent state of attainment.⁷⁴⁷

[SECOND: SLIGHT ANALYSIS]

The sections of teachings that refute the two self-entities (the objects to be negated) and then expound nonarising, emptiness, and ultimate reality are presented from the perspective of a rational mind that analyzes slightly.

[THIRD: SUPERB ANALYSIS]

Many teachings, such as the majority of explicit statements in the Mother [Sūtras],⁷⁴⁸ say that nothing exists in any way: not as something existent, nonexistent, permanent, impermanent, empty, not empty, or the like. They

also say that nothing is suitable to be apprehended as anything at all. [This perspective is also expressed] in the first three lines of the following quotation from the *Fundamental Treatise [on the Middle Way, Called] Wisdom*:⁷⁴⁹

Do not say “it is empty”;
do not state “it is not empty.”
Also do not say that it is both nor neither.
[Such terms] should [only] be used as [conventional]
designations.

By explaining these and the many similar passages in relationship to the phase of superb analysis, [the teachings] do not contradict each other in any way. The *Entrance to the Wisdom of the Middle Way* says:⁷⁵⁰

In the primordial, unborn state,
there is nothing to be negated and nothing to be affirmed.

Transcending misery (nirvāṇa) and not
are undifferentiated in the unborn state.
Even nonarising itself is not so,
because arising things do not exist.

Conventionality does not exist, nor does the ultimate.
Buddhas do not exist, nor do sentient beings.
There is no view and no meditation;
no conduct and no result.

The import of that is what is to be meditated upon.
Let the nonconceptual mind remain in its own peace.
Without identifying anything or being distracted,
meditate with clarity, free from characteristics.

[That expresses] the phase of thorough analysis, which is the final position of Prāsaṅgika-Mādhyamikas.

It is necessary to relate [the teachings on emptiness] to three phases for the following reasons. To begin with, we counteract nonmeritorious acts and proceed on the path to the higher states by taking up what is virtuous and

turning away from what is negative. This does not require examination or analysis. In the middle, we reverse our belief in the two types of self-entity and progress on the path to liberation through practice that involves slight analysis. Finally, we eliminate all conceptual elaborations associated with a view and reach the end of the path to omniscience through the practice of superb analysis. Thus it is explained.

The Specific Explanation of Ground, Path, and Result [in Madhyamaka] [(iii)]

This is discussed in three sections: ground Madhyamaka: the unity of the two truths; path Madhyamaka: the unity of method and wisdom; and resultant Madhyamaka: the unity of the two kāyas.

Ground Madhyamaka: The Unity of the Two Truths [(aa)]

In this section, there are two parts: the actual [presentation of the two truths]; and the explanation of the way [the two truths] are established.

The Actual [Presentation of the Two Truths] [(1')]

**It is taught that worldly conventional [reality] is the method
and ultimate reality is what develops from that method.**

It is taught that conventional reality—which is whatever is commonly accepted as a convention in the world and talked about during the phase of no analysis using conceptual designations—is the method for realizing the ultimate. Ultimate reality is what develops from that method.⁷⁵¹ For Mādhyamikas, [the two truths] are the ground for [understanding] knowable objects. The way of unifying [an understanding of] the two truths is described in the words of the early Tibetan [masters]:

Since there are appearances, we do not disregard the
path of karma.

Since they are empty, fixations do not arise.

The unification of the two truths is the middle path.

Heed this unerring, supreme [approach].

The Explanation of the Way [the Two Truths] Are Established [(2')]

**For conventionality, [Prāsaṅgikas] cite what is commonly
acknowledged by others in the world.**

As a general presentation of conventional [reality], which is the phenomena ascertained [in the world], [Prāsaṅgikas] simply cite that which is commonly accepted by others, such as valid and invalid means of cognition, or what is true and false in terms of correct and mistaken [conventionalities], all of which are part of worldly consensus. [Prāsaṅgikas] do not cite flawed philosophical tenet systems, such as those that assert permanence, nihilism, partless particles, or a truly existent cognition empty of duality.

**In terms of the ultimate, [Prāsaṅgikas] use five types of reasons
to prove the absence of a self-entity of phenomena
and a sevenfold reasoning to prove the absence of a self of
persons.**

The first type of valid cognizer to ascertain ultimate reality is an inferential [valid cognizer], which is a rational mind that is a special outcome of reflection. [Inferential valid cognition] is based on reasons,⁷⁵² of which there are many divisions. If we summarize these, [in this context,] they are, in fact, definitely only negating reasons: refutations of reality, which is the object to be negated. It is not possible that [Prāsaṅgikas] use affirming reasons as they are used in the field of logic (*rtog ge*). Even when they say, “[Phenomena] are illusionlike because they are dependently originated,” [it is a negating reason]. The manner of presentation may make it seem that that is an affirming reason, but [if it were used in that way,] it would not result in the ascertainment of the ultimate. What [this reason] proves, in actuality, is the emptiness of reality (*bden stong nyid*), [and, therefore, it is a negating reason].

NEGATING REASONS

There are two types of negating reasons (*dgag rtags*):

- (1) reasons of the imperception of something connected [to the predicate of the negandum],⁷⁵³ and

- (2) reasons of the perception of something contradictory [to the predicate of the negandum].⁷⁵⁴

The reason of dependent origination is the second kind of reason, and the other [four reasons] are the first type. The five great reasons are common to both the Prāsaṅgika and Svātantrika systems.⁷⁵⁵ Here [in the Prāsaṅgika system], only these five (which include the reason that a phenomenon is neither a single unit nor plurality by analyzing its nature) are used to prove the nonexistence of a self-entity of phenomena. There is one reason that proves the absence of a self of persons and brings ascertainment of the ultimate: the sevenfold reasoning that uses the analogy of a chariot. This is the king of reasonings that prove the nonexistence of a self of persons.

THE FIVE GREAT REASONS

First we will look at the five reasons in detail.

(1) The analysis of a nature: the reason of being neither a unity nor a plurality

The analysis of a phenomenon's nature, which proves that it is neither a single unit nor a plurality, demonstrates emptiness as [one of three] doors to liberation.⁷⁵⁶

[First:] The formulation of the reason

All phenomena (such as sprouts), the subject, do not really exist, because they are devoid of real unity or plurality. An example of this is a reflection in a mirror.

[Second: The modes of the proof]

- The *subject* of this reason is a mere appearance that is neither examined nor analyzed.
- The *subject property* that applies to this [subject]: [a mere appearance] is not a real unity because it has parts. It is not a real plurality because there are no real single units that are the building blocks [of a plurality].
- The *entailment*: if something were real, it would necessarily be either a single unit or a plurality. This [entailment] is established because those two [possibilities] are mutually exclusive, something that is accepted by [all Realists].⁷⁵⁷

(2) The analysis of causes: the vajra sliver reasoning

The analysis of a phenomenon's cause [employs] the vajra-sliver-like reason,⁷⁵⁸ which shatters the Realists' rocky mountain of wrong views. It demonstrates the absence of characteristics (*animitta*, *mtshan ma med pa*) as a door to liberation.

First: The formulation of the reason

A sprout, the subject, does not really arise, because it does not arise from itself, from something other than itself, from both, or from neither. An example of this is a reflection.

Second: The modes of the proof

The *entailment* will always pertain to one of the four extremes [for arising, regardless of whether the assertion being refuted states that a thing] arises owing to the power of [real] things (*dnegos stobs*), arises from the side of the object, or arises from the perspective of analysis.⁷⁵⁹ Since [Nāgārjuna] considered this easy to understand, [he] did not discuss it in great detail in his [*Fundamental*] *Treatise [on the Middle Way]*.⁷⁶⁰

The proof of the *subject property* has four parts:

(a) Establishing the reason that things do not arise from themselves

Sāṃkhyas assert that a sprout is simply a manifestation of the principal substance (*pradhāna*, *gtso bo*), and that the principal substance is the primal matter (*prakṛiti*, *rang bzhin*).⁷⁶¹ Therefore, a sprout arises from its own primal matter, an already existing permanent entity. [Prāsaṅgikas refute this, saying that] if that were the case a seed would arise endlessly, since it would not be feasible that the force of a sprout's arising should cause a seed to cease. If [Sāṃkhyas] were to assert that a seed (the cause) does not cease, its result, that is, a sprout's arising and its own colors and shapes, could never materialize. If something were to arise from itself, agents and their effects would be the same.

(b) Establishing the reason that phenomena do not arise from something other than themselves

Realist scholars say, "The way the Sāṃkhya's assertion that things arise from themselves is refuted is fine, but it is established by valid forms of

cognition that phenomena arise from things other than themselves. This is because object-consistent consciousnesses arise from the four conditions,⁷⁶² and because most [other] entities arise from their causal and dominant conditions.⁷⁶³ Causes and their results are not simply conceptual designations, they exist from their own sides. [Results are seen] to arise [from causes even] when they are thoroughly examined and analyzed.”

Although there are many reasonings that negate this position, they come down to the following two points:

- (i) It is impossible for things to arise from something other than themselves.
- (ii) Otherness is impossible in [the framework of] arising.⁷⁶⁴

(i) *[It is impossible for things to arise from something other than themselves]*
 [If phenomena were to arise from something other than themselves, it would follow that] from all things that are not causes of something, phenomena that are not their results would arise, because, [for example,] a barley seed and a rice seed are equivalent in being other than a rice sprout, [and this otherness] is established through their own natures (*rang gi ngo bo nas grub pa*).⁷⁶⁵ [The reason] entails [the consequence,] because for things to be other, they [must] be present concurrently without depending upon each other, like [an animal's] left and right horns; and if such things were in a cause and result [relationship]—even while being [different from each other] in that way—there would be no reason why a rice seed, which is a substantial [cause],⁷⁶⁶ should not produce a barley sprout.

(ii) *Otherness is impossible in the framework of arising*

Those who assert that a sprout arises from a seed cannot possibly also assert that those two are different, discrete substances, for the following [reasons]. The otherness of substances is established from the objects' own side, which is not possible when [two things] are not simultaneous; and the simultaneity of a cause and its result is logically refuted. The cessation of a cause and the arising of its result cannot possibly occur simultaneously, like the rising and falling of a scale's beam.⁷⁶⁷ Furthermore, the simultaneity of a cause and its result is refuted by examining whether the result produced is existent [at the time of its cause] or not existent [at that time].⁷⁶⁸

- (c) Establishing the reason that phenomena do not arise from both
[themselves and things other than themselves]

Since the refutation [of arising from both self and other] is implicit in the [previous] two refutations, [the texts generally] do not present this in detail.

- (d) The refutation of causeless [arising]

[The assertion that phenomena] arise without causes elicits the absurd consequences that entities would arise all the time, or that they would never arise. Like [other causeless phenomena, such as] lotuses [growing] in the sky, [which do not appear, all phenomena] would not be suitable to appear—but that contradicts our perception of causes and their effects as being clearly evident. Certain flawed philosophical systems maintain that the nonexistence of past and future lives has been proven, and thus they regard [both] body and mind to be of the nature of the elements. It is taught extensively that [such notions] are [merely] the product of mistaken direct perception that apprehends the elements.

**(3) *The analysis of results: the negation of the arising of
an existent or a nonexistent***

The analysis of results (which is an extension of the refutation of arising from something other) refutes the arising of [a result that is] existent [at the time of its cause] and the arising of [a result that is] nonexistent [at the time of its cause]. It demonstrates the absence of expectancy (*apraṇihita, smon pa med pa*) as a door to liberation.

Some may ask, “What is the result that arises: is it something that exists at the time of its cause or something that does not exist at such time?” Although Svātantrikas purportedly accept the latter [position] as a convention, [the refutations of these positions] are well established for the following reasons. If a result were to exist at the time of its cause, since it already exists in dependence on something else, what would its cause do? If [a result] were something completely nonexistent, again its cause would do nothing, as in the case of the horns of a rabbit. A combination of both [possibilities] is also not tenable.

(4) *The analysis of both causes and results: the negation of arising from the four possibilities*

The analysis of both a cause and its result refutes arising from the four possibilities.⁷⁶⁹ As was stated above,⁷⁷⁰ from a mistaken perspective, it is not contradictory to make statements such as, “One sprout develops from one seed.” However, from a rational perspective, arising from any of the four possibilities—such as only one result manifesting from just a single cause—is untenable, since, in rational terms, a unity is not feasible, and that negates that a plurality could truly exist.

(5) *The king of reasonings: the reason of dependent origination*

The great reason of dependent origination is the king of reasonings used by Mādhyamikas to prove the absence of any reality. The *Fundamental Treatise [on the Middle Way]* says:⁷⁷¹

Whatever arises dependently
is in its very nature a state of peace.

[An example of such reasoning is] the statement, “A sprout, the subject, does not truly exist, because it arises dependently.” This [reasoning is applied] in two ways: (1) to eliminate the extreme of permanence, and (2) to eliminate the extreme of nihilism.

- (1) Outer and inner entities, the subject, do not exist ultimately, because they are dependently originated.
- (2) Those [entities], the subject, are not nonexistent conventionally, because they are dependently originated.

Prāsaṅgikas assert that these five reasonings are commonly acknowledged by others, whereas Svātantrikas state that they are independently [verifiable] reasonings.

To state this briefly: in the [Prāsaṅgika] system, arising from any of the four ways (self, other, and so forth) does not exist in the slightest, but since it is commonly understood in the world that arising exists, [Prāsaṅgikas] explain it accordingly. The *Entrance [to the Middle Way]* says:⁷⁷²

Having simply sown a seed,
worldly beings say, “I produced this boy,”

or think, "I planted a tree."
Therefore, even in the world, arising from something
other does not exist.

THE REASONING THAT PROVES THE ABSENCE OF A SELF OF PERSONS

The sevenfold reasoning [that uses the analogy of] a chariot proves the
absence of a self of persons.⁷⁷³ The *Entrance [to the Middle Way]* states:⁷⁷⁴

A chariot is not considered to be other than its parts.
It is not identical [with them,] nor does it possess them.
It is not in its parts, nor are the parts within it.
It is not the mere assembly nor the overall shape.

In addition to the fivefold [analysis⁷⁷⁵ that begins with seeing that] a chariot is not something other than its parts (such as the nails), [Chandrakīrti] examines the collection [of parts] and the overall shape [of the chariot]. If we investigate [a chariot] using this sevenfold analysis, we will not find that it is the parts themselves nor will we find that it is something other than those [parts]. Similarly, if we look for a self using this sevenfold analysis, we will not find that it is something other than the aggregates nor will we find that it is the aggregates themselves. In this [analysis of the chariot], the overall shape and the collection are refuted implicitly, since they cannot be found apart from that which has the shape (*dbyibs can*) or that which is the collection (*tshogs pa can*).

[THE ACTUAL ULTIMATE]

The actual ultimate is beyond the intellect; elaborations do
not apply to it.

Cutting through elaborations, such as eliminating the eight
extremes, is [itself] simply a convention.

What is proven by these reasons is not, for example, an affirmation of the ultimate through the process of other-exclusion⁷⁷⁶ on a conventional level. This is because mental elaborations do not apply to the actual ultimate (*don dam pa dngos nyid*), since it is far beyond being an object of the intellect (*blo*), or an object of terms and concepts. Therefore, techniques⁷⁷⁷ such as

eliminating the elaborations of the eight extremes—arising and cessation, permanence and annihilation, going and coming, sameness and discreteness—are [themselves] elaborations. In order to cut through the elaborations of conventionality, they are used simply as conventional expressions in keeping with what is commonly acknowledged by others.

A thesis is [the creation of] the intellect; the intellect is conventional.

Therefore, there are no independently [verifiable] theses or assertions.

Even nonarising and so forth are not a thesis, because they [simply] banish fixation to never-existent entities.

It is taught that once [reification] is overturned, clinging to nonentities must be renounced.

A thesis, whatever it may be, is the creation of the intellect, and the intellect is a conventional, mistaken cognition. Therefore, for Prāsaṅgikas, there are no independently [verifiable] theses or assertions. Even nonarising, freedom from elaborations, and so forth are not put forth as independently [verifiable] theses for the following [two] reasons. (1) Although phenomena, persons, and so forth (which are verbally stated) have never existed, non-Buddhist and Buddhist Realists fixate upon them as [real] entities, because they have fallen into the extremes of superimposition or denial.⁷⁷⁸ [Reasonings that demonstrate nonarising and so forth are stated only] to banish such [unwarranted] reification. (2) Once that reification is overturned, the intellect that clings to nonentities also must be renounced; and thus it is taught that [the ultimate] is beyond the intellect and without any clinging. This corresponds to Shāntideva's statement [in his *Entrance to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*]:⁷⁷⁹

Once neither entities nor nonentities
are present for the intellect,
there are no other possibilities.
This is complete peace, free from referents.

The [Prāsaṅgika] philosophical system emphasizes abiding in unborn peace, free from elaborations; this involves no mode of apprehension.

All [who follow] the noble father [Nāgārjuna] and his son [Āryadeva] emphasize that the rationally analyzed philosophical system of this tradition teaches that [the actual ultimate] is to abide in peace, which is unborn and free from all elaborations, and that this involves no mode of perceiving reference points.

Path Madhyamaka: The Unity of Method and Wisdom [(bb)]

The unification of method and wisdom is gradually developed
during the ten bhūmis
[when] primordial wisdom directly realizes [dharmatā].
[Primordial wisdom] is divided during subsequent attainment
in that it is the support.

The master Chandrakīrti explains [the path] by bringing together the method (*upāya*, *thabs*) taught in the *Sūtra on the Ten Bhūmis*⁷⁸⁰ and the wisdom (*prajñā*, *shes rab*) presented in the *Fundamental Treatise on the Middle Way*. He describes the way [method and wisdom] are unified through the gradual cultivation of the ten pāramitās during the ten bhūmis.⁷⁸¹ The essence of the ultimate is primordial wisdom that directly realizes dharmatā, which is free from all elaborations. As for the way in which dharmatā is realized: the primordial wisdom of noble beings does not see an essence of phenomena in any way. This is referred to with the conventional expression “realizing dharmatā.” As [Atīsha] says [in his *Entrance to the Two Truths*]:⁷⁸²

The most profound sūtras say
it is the seeing of the unseen.

In the context of the subsequent states of attainment, primordial wisdom is divided slightly in that it is the support for the virtues of generosity and so forth.⁷⁸³ The essence of primordial wisdom itself, however, has no divisions, because primordial wisdom and dharmatā are inseparable and the essence of dharmatā has no divisions.

Resultant Madhyamaka: The Unity of the Two Kāyas [(cc)]

[The result] is asserted to be the unity of the two kāyas.

I will discuss the dharmakāya and the form kāyas without differentiating them in terms of their actual and nominal types.⁷⁸⁴ As for the identification of the first, the dharmakāya is the space-like expanse free from the two obscurations and their habitual tendencies. This accords with the statement in the *Entrance to the Middle Way*.⁷⁸⁵

When the dry wood of knowable objects is fully consumed,
there is peace: the dharmakāya of the victorious ones.
At that point, there is neither arising nor cessation.
With the cessation of mind, the [sambhoga]kāya makes this
[the dharmakāya] manifest.⁷⁸⁶

Given that, does primordial wisdom, in this system, exist at the bhūmi of a buddha or not? Jetsün Drakpa Gyaltsen⁷⁸⁷ commented on this, saying:

The assertion that, in the tradition of the master Chandrakīrti, primordial wisdom does not exist on a buddha's bhūmi denigrates both the master and the buddhas.

The dharma lord Sakya Paṇḍita⁷⁸⁸ states:

If you assert that, ultimately, on the bhūmi of a buddha, primordial wisdom is beyond existence and nonexistence and, conventionally, it is mind and mental events, then on the bhūmi of a buddha [primordial wisdom] does not exist, because a buddha has exhausted delusion.

The exalted Mikyö Dorjé, Silung Paṇchen [Shākya Chokden],⁷⁸⁹ and others assert that, ultimately, on the bhūmi of a buddha, primordial wisdom is beyond existence or nonexistence, and, conventionally, primordial wisdom exists, because [the *Entrance to the Middle Way*] says:⁷⁹⁰

With your excellent omniscience, you comprehend all knowable
objects in a single moment.

In that case, if buddha[hood] is identified as being space-like dharmatā, does it mean that buddhas do not benefit others? [No, it does not, because] the power of the buddhas' previous aspirations and the merit of the beings

to be trained cause [the buddhas' activities] to appear uninterruptedly with their two form kāyas, [which manifest] for the sake of others. This is like the way wish-fulfilling gems and wish-granting trees⁷⁹¹ can fulfill the needs and desires of those who pray to them even though they do not have the idea of doing so. The *Entrance [to the Middle Way]* says:⁷⁹²

The kāya of peace is evident, like wish-granting trees,
and, like wish-fulfilling gems, it is nonconceptual.
Until all beings are liberated, it remains constant for the
sake of enriching the world.
It appears to those free from conceptual elaborations.

A Synopsis of the Main Points of the [Prāsaṅgika] Philosophical Tenet System [(iv)]

What is logically imputed is rejected: entities are simply names.

**Conditioned phenomena are deceptive; nirvāṇa is not.
Taking things to be real and what that produces is the
afflictive obscuration, the root of cyclic existence.
Because the three yānas' ways of seeing are similar,
their paths of seeing are the same.**

**Since [from the perspective of buddhas] knowable objects
have subsided, buddhas are simply appearances for
others.**

**These are the main features of this philosophical tenet
system.**

This philosophical tenet system has many distinctive features, but the following five are the main ones.

FIRST: [PHENOMENA EXIST ONLY NOMINALLY]

[Prāsaṅgikas] reject all discussions of valid forms of cognition and invalid forms of cognition, which are the logical imputations (*rtog ges btags pa*) of [the other philosophical systems] up through the Svātantrika system. [Prāsaṅgikas] reject these for their own Madhyamaka system and as worldly systems, even as mere conventional expressions, without even con-

sidering that such things [could be established] from a rational perspective. All phenomena (inner and outer, as well as causes and their results) are what is imagined (*blos brtags*), which [means that], from their own side as objects, they do not exist even as conventions: they are simply names and are [only] imputedly existent (*ming rkyang btags yod*). [Prāsaṅgikas] state that horses and elephants in dreams and the waking state are equivalent in terms of being real or false.⁷⁹³

SECOND: [CONDITIONED PHENOMENA ARE DECEPTIVE]

Whatever is conditioned is necessarily a false and deceptive phenomenon, since it does not remain for a second instant beyond its single instant of existence, and no agent and its object exist in that single instant. Not only are [conditioned phenomena] not able to withstand rational analysis, there is not even a trace of something that is established from a rational perspective. [Prāsaṅgikas,] therefore, maintain that there is no common locus (*gzhi mthun*) between conditioned phenomena and something established through valid forms of cognition. Although it is the case that when properly analyzed, nirvāṇa and any [hypothetically] superior phenomenon do not exist from their own side, [Prāsaṅgikas] assert that, from the perspective of slight analysis, the only thing that is undeceiving is nirvāṇa. This is stated in [the *Sixty Verses on Reasoning*]:⁷⁹⁴

The victors teach that
nirvāṇa alone is true.

THIRD: [THE AFFLICTIVE OBSCURATION IS TAKING THINGS TO BE REAL]

The root of cyclic existence is taking things to be real (*satyagrāha*, *bden 'dzin*). That [notion] and what it produces—the mental afflictions (such as attachment) and all their associated factors—are simply the afflictive obscuration (*kleśhāvaraṇa*, *nyon sgrīb*). Whereas [the cognitive obscuration (*jñeyāvaraṇa*, *shes bya'i sgrīb pa*) is as the *Highest Continuum* says]:⁷⁹⁵

All concepts of the three spheres⁷⁹⁶
are asserted to be the cognitive obscuration.

It is also said:

The cognitive obscuration is the one hundred [and eight] concepts concerned with percepts and perceivers.⁷⁹⁷

[Prāsaṅgikas] do not assert that there is a common locus between taking things to be real and the cognitive obscuration. Their assertion accords with statements such as [Nāgārjuna's in his *Precious Garland*]:⁷⁹⁸

As long as one clings to the aggregates,
[one will cling to a self.]

And:

It is definite that the root of saṃsāra is taking things to be real.

This also establishes that it is impossible that shrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas do not realize the absence of a self-entity of phenomena.⁷⁹⁹

FOURTH: [THE REALIZATION OF DHARMATĀ IS THE SAME IN THE THREE YĀNAS]

The three yānas' paths of seeing do not consist of many moments, such as sixteen, fifteen, twelve, or four. The *Entrance [to the Middle Way]* says:⁸⁰⁰

The intelligence that perceives suchness as its object is also
not differentiated.

[Prāsaṅgikas] assert that the way dharmatā is seen is the same in all three yānas.

FIFTH: [BUDDHAS' MANIFESTATIONS ARE SIMPLY APPEARANCES FOR OTHERS]

The buddhas' unfathomable and indescribable form kāyas and activities are nonconceptual, just as are the achievements of wish-fulfilling gems and garuda stūpas.⁸⁰¹ Moreover, they are displays of appearances for others (*gzhan snang*) that do not require even the arousing of bodhichitta. Instead, their [manifestation] is attributable to the power of [the buddhas'] previous aspirations and the positive karma of those to be trained. Āryadeva describes the perspective of a buddha:⁸⁰²

When one awakens from the deluded sleep of ignorance, these [states of] saṃsāra are not observed.

[Prāsaṅgikas] say that since, [from the perspective of a buddha,] all appearances of consciousness and knowable objects have subsided, buddhas are simply appearances for others.

[THE EIGHT UNCOMMON THESES]

A later generation of Tibetans explains that this system has eight great, uncommon theses: four theses associated with refutation and four theses associated with affirmation.⁸⁰³

[The four associated with refutation]

- (A1) The existence of things by way of their own specific characteristics (*svalakṣhaṇasiddha*, *rang mtshan kyis grub pa*) is not accepted even as a convention.
- (A2) Independently [verifiable] reasons are not accepted even as conventions.
- (A3) Reflexive awareness is not accepted even as a convention.
- (A4) An ālaya is not accepted even as a convention.

[The four associated with affirmation]

- (B1) External objects (*bāhyārtha*, *phyi don*) are accepted.
- (B2) Taking things to be real is necessarily the afflictive obscuration.
- (B3) Disintegration (*zhig pa*) is asserted to be a [functioning] thing (*dngos po*).
- (B4) Noble shrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas realize the absence of a self-entity of phenomena.⁸⁰⁴

Regarding these [eight points], Serdok Paṇchen [Shākya Chokden] and his sons say, “[We can agree] only with the words of the statement ‘Noble shrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas realize the absence of a self-entity of phenomena.’ As for the other seven points, they are philosophical tenets that Prāsaṅgika-Mādhyamikas would not consider even in their dreams.” The assertions of the eighth lord [Karmapa Mikyö Dorjé] are for the most part similar to that.⁸⁰⁵

entities] in that they derive their truth from the fact that the reason—being a product (*kṛtakatva*)—is in reality, or objectively, related with the property—impermanence—and qualifies the subject, sound . . . (Often, for convenience, we will adopt a less literal translation for this technical term, i.e., “objective inference.” The point here, very briefly, is that the usual or paradigmatic type of inference in Dharmakīrti is one which functions objectively, or “by the force of real entities,” in that it can and should be evaluated purely on the basis of facts and states of affairs, and not in any way because of belief, acceptance or faith in someone or his words.)

Since the use of reasons established through the power of [their relationship to real] things is one of the key issues said to separate Svātantrikas and Prāsaṅgikas, the Svātantrika view on the ontological status of “things” (*vastu, dngos po*) is important. To understand their position, we must look at their presentation of conventional reality, which distinguishes between correct and mistaken conventional reality, and their presentation of ultimate reality (see pp. 220–222), and identify the context in which “reasons are established through the power of [their relationship to real] things.” It is the view of Mikyö Dorjé, as stated in Brunnhölzl 2004 (361–2), that Svātantrikas only accept “established through the power of [their relationship to real] things” on a conventional level, and that these “real” things are illusionlike, dependently originated entities.

Note that TOK, II:525.5 *dngos po stong* should be *dngos po stobs*. (TN)

- 708 Longchenpa discusses these four positions regarding the two truths in the Svātantrika section of his *Precious Treasury of Philosophical Systems* (*Grub mtha' mdzod*); see forthcoming translation by Richard Barron. Longchenpa's analysis is such that the third alternative in Jamgön Kongtrül's list (the fourth in Longchenpa's)—that the two truths are discrete simply as a negation of their sameness—is considered to be the inevitable conclusion reached by Svātantrikas.

For further discussion of whether the two truths are one or different, see Brunnhölzl 2004, 88–94. For a succinct comparison of the views of Chapa Chökyi Seng-gé (*Phya pa chos kyi seng ge*), Tsongkhapa, and others on the differences between the two truths, see Tauscher 2003, 235 and 253n100.

- 709 An isolate (or reverse; distinguisher) (*vyatireka, ldog pa*) is a conceptual object and refers to the conceptual process of isolation or elimination, which operates whenever we think of something. For example, when we think “impermanent phenomena,” we conceptually exclude or eliminate everything that is not an impermanent phenomenon, and we isolate the notion of “impermanent phenomena.” The point here is that the truths are simply synonyms in the same way that “Fourteenth Dalai Lama” and “Tenzin Gyatso” are simply different names for the same person.

- 710 Capable of performing a function (*arthakriyāsamartham, don byed nus pa*): see n. 307.

- 711 “To appear [to its cognizing subject] in a way that is consistent with its respective class [of phenomena]” (*rang rang gi rigs pa mthun par snang ba*) means that objects—i.e., particulars, or specifically characterized phenomena (*svalakṣhaṇa, rang mtshan*)—that are misperceived, such as snow mountains appearing to be yellow for someone with jaundice, do not qualify as correct conventional reality. (ALTG)

- 712 See n. 537.

- 713 A nonimplicative negation that excludes [the possibility that the subject] does not possess [the quality of emptiness] (*mi ldan rnam gcod kyi med dgag*): This type of negation excludes the possibility that phenomena have any kind of real existence

without implying anything in its place. It is formulated by excluding the possibility that phenomena do not possess the “quality” of emptiness. Although this does mean that phenomena possess the quality of emptiness (and this form of negation does explicitly emphasize that all phenomena are empty), from the point of view of the way the negation is stated, it means that they do not really possess any quality. (I am grateful to both Āchārya Lama Tenpa Gyaltzen and Karl Brunnhölzl for help on this point.)

- 714 *Satyadvaya-vibhaṅga*, *bDen gnyis rnam 'byed*, by Jñānagarbha. Toh. 3881; Dg.T. Beijing 62. Jñānagarbha uses the terms “approximate ultimate” (*don dam dang mthun pa'i don dam*) and “non-nominal ultimate” (*rnam grangs ma yin pa'i don dam*). See Eckel 1992, 71–2 and 112n9.

The primary source for the twofold presentation of the ultimate seems to be Bhāvaviveka's *Summary of the Meaning of Madhyamaka* (*Madhyamakārthasaṃgraha*, *dBu ma'i don bsdus pa*) and the third chapter of his *Blaze of Reasoning*, in which texts he uses the terms “nominal ultimate” (*paryāyaparamārtha*, *rnam grangs pa'i don dam*) and “non-nominal ultimate” (*aparyāyaparamārtha*, *rnam grangs ma yin pa'i don dam*). See Lindtner 1981, 200n14; and Eckel 2003, 202n48.

These divisions are presented in Shāntarakṣita's *Ornament of the Middle Way* (see Padmakara Translation Group 2005, 108–9 and 294–311) and Longchenpa's *The Precious Treasury of Philosophical Systems* (see Barron forthcoming).

- 715 For another statement of the position of some Svāntarikas regarding fruition, see Chapter 8, p. 216.

- 716 The outline heading here is slightly different from when the section is presented (see Chapter 10, p. 233). For the sake of consistency, I am using the second form, “The Specific Explanation of Ground, Path, and Result [in Madhyamaka],” *gzhi lam 'bras gsum bye brag tu bshad* (TOK, II:533.15), as opposed to what appears here, “The Specific Classifications of Ground, Path, and Result [in Madhyamaka],” *gzhi lam 'bras gsum bye brag tu dbye* (TOK, II:527.8).

- 717 The four valid means of cognition (*pramāṇa*, *tshad ma*) were propounded by the Nyāyas (Logicians) and became widely accepted in Indian philosophical circles (see Dreyfus 1997, 293–4). Of these four, Buddhists, as followers of the epistemological treatises of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, only accept direct perception and inference as valid forms of cognition. Broadly speaking, Chandrakīrti and his followers were the exception and accepted the use of all four in debate with others.

Khenpo Tsültrim Gyamtso (1996b/2000) says, “the general definition of valid cognition is ‘a new and undeceiving awareness’” (*gsar du mi bslu ba'i rig pa tha snyad tshad ma spyi'i mtshan nyid*); and “the definition from the point of view of dispelling wrong ideas is ‘an awareness which clarifies what was not known [previously]’” (*ma shes don gsal gyi rig pa log rtog bsal ba'i dbang du byas pa'i mtshan nyid*). (In the following paragraphs, the definitions for direct perceptual valid cognition and inferential valid cognition are from Khenpo Tsültrim Gyamtso 1996b/2000.)

- (1) Direct perceptual valid cognition (*pratyakṣhapramāṇa*, *mngon sum tshad ma*) is defined as “a nonconceptual and nonmistaken awareness” (*rtog pa dang bral zhiṅ ma 'khrul pa'i rig pa*). It is of four types: sense direct perception (*indriya pratyakṣha*, *dbang po'i mngon sum*), mental direct perception (*mānasapratyakṣha*, *yid kyi mngon sum*), reflexively aware direct perception (*rang rig mngon sum*), and yogic direct perception (*yogi pratyakṣha*, *mal 'byor mngon sum*). For definitions of these subcategories, see the *Classifications of Mind* and Book Six, Part One (TOK, II:233–4).

Generally, Tibetan commentators agree that on a conventional level Prāsaṅgikas accept sense, mental, and yogic direct perceptions, but they disagree about whether Prāsaṅgikas accept reflexively aware direct perception. Tsongkhapa, for example, states that Prāsaṅgikas do not accept reflexive awareness, not even conventionally (this is one of the “eight difficult points”; see p. 247 and n. 803 for related sources); whereas Mipham states that Prāsaṅgikas do accept reflexively aware direct perception conventionally (see Pettit 1999, 129 and 497n451). According to Āchārya Lama Tenpa Gyaltzen (ALTG), Mikyö Dorjé often criticizes reflexive awareness, but he does not make a clear statement on whether the Prāsaṅgikas accept it conventionally or reject it completely. It is generally understood that Mikyö Dorjé’s refutations of reflexive awareness are only refutations on the level of slight analysis.

(2) Inferential valid cognition (*anumāṇapramāṇa*, *rjes dpag tshad ma*) is of two types: inference for oneself (*rang don rjes dpag*) and inference for others (*gzhan don rjes dpag*). Inference for oneself is defined as “an awareness newly realizing that which is to be proven by a reason having the three modes” (*tshul gsum pa can gyi rtags las bsgrub bya gсар du rtags pa’i rig pa*). It arises in dependence upon the three basic types of reasons: reasons of nature (*’bras bu’i gtan tshigs*), reasons of results (*rang bzhin gyi gtan tshigs*), and reasons of imperception (*ma dmigs pa’i gtan tshig*). Inference for others is defined as “A sentence construction fully clarifying for others the fact seen by the disputant himself, [i.e.,] a reason having the three modes” (*rgol ba rang nyid kyi mthong pa’i don tshul gsum pa can gyi gtan tshigs gzhan la rab tu gsal bar byed pa’i tshig sbyor*). See Khenpo Tsültrim Gyamtso 1996a/1999; Brunnhölzl 2004, 178–81; Dreyfus 1997, 316–27; Dunne 2004, 25–35; and Matilal 1998, 108–16.

(3) Scriptural authority (or verbal testimony) (*āgama*, *lung*) as a valid means of cognition is also called “inferential valid cognition of conviction” (*gid ches rjes dpag tshad ma*). Dreyfus says (1997, 294), “*Nyāya-sūtra* I.1.7 explains the epistemological status of testimony: ‘Verbal testimony (*śabda*) is the communication (*upadeśa*) from a trustworthy person (*āpta*).’” For Buddhists, the status of scriptural authority as a form of valid cognition is a topic of much discussion. Some consider it a form of inference, others do not. It is generally said to be the means for cognizing that which is extremely hidden (*atyantaparokṣa*, *shin tu lkog gyur*). See Tillemans 1999a, 28–32 and 37–51; Tillemans 1999b, 395–404; and Dunne 2004, 230–45.

(4) Analogy (or analogical induction) (*upamāṇa*, *nye bar ’jal ba*) is the use of examples to bring about cognition of something formerly unknown. Dreyfus says (1997, 529n41) that Buddhist epistemologists consider this to be a form of inference. See also Dunne 2004, 145–7.

718 For comments on the relationship between inferences based on what is commonly acknowledged by others and independently [verifiable] reasonings, see n. 682.

719 [Demonstrations to the opponent of] the irrelevance of proofs that are equivalent to the probandum are also called “the circularity of the argument” or “showing a reason to be invalid because it merely reiterates the thesis.”

For a similar presentation of these four reasons with some additional comments, see Brunnhölzl 2004, 351–4.

- 720 Gorampa (*Go ram pa bsod nams seng ge*) (1429–1489) was one of the most famous Sakya scholars and a critical opponent of Tsongkhapa (1357–1419).
- 721 Serdokpa Dön-yö Pal (*gSer mdog pa don yod dpal*) is also known as Silung Pañchen (*Zi lung pañ chen*) and Serdok Pañchen Shākya Chokden (*gSer mdog pañ chen shākya mchog ldan*) (1428–1509). He was a Sakya master and student of the seventh Karmapa, Chödrak Gyamtso. As we can see from Jamgön Kongtrul's liberal quoting of Shākya Chokden's works in Chapter 11, he is one of the major sources for Jamgön Kongtrul's presentation of Shentong. It also seems that much of Chapters 9 and 10 are drawn from Shākya Chokden's *The Dharma Treasury of an Ocean of Scriptures and Reasonings Ascertaining the Middle Way* (*dBu ma mam par nges pa'i chos kyi bang mdzod lung dang rigs pa'i rgya mtsho*). See also Dreyfus 1997, 27–9; Iaroslav 2000; and Mathes 2004.
- 722 In his *Entrance to the Middle Way*, Chandrakīrti devotes a large section of Chapter 6 to refuting the four possible causes for arising as a demonstration that phenomena have no self-entity (*dharmānairātmya, chos kyi bdag med*). The Sāṃkhyas' position that things arise from themselves is refuted in verses 8c–13. The refutation of the idea held by some Buddhists that things arise from something other than themselves is presented in verses 14–21 (further discussions and ramifications of this refutation are found in verses 22–97). The Jains' view that things arise from both themselves and from things other than themselves is refuted in verse 98. The Chārvākas' assertion that things arise without cause is refuted in verses 99–103. See Huntington 1989, 158–69; Padmakara Translation Group 2002, 183–266; and Goldfield et al. 2005, 35–305.
- The vajra sliver reasoning is also discussed later in this chapter. See *The Explanation of the Way [the Two Truths] Are Established*, pp. 236–238.
- 723 Sāṃkhyas (Calculators or Enumerators) (*Grangs can pa*) are followers of the oldest of the “orthodox” philosophical schools, that is, schools that take the Vedas as authoritative. The Vedic sage Kapila is traditionally said to be the founder of the Sāṃkhya school (though this is not verified), which also serves as the philosophical system for Patañjali's system of Yoga.
- Sāṃkhyas posit a metaphysical dualism between the ultimates of *prakṛiti* (primal matter) (*rang bzhin*) and *puruṣa* (person or ātman) (*skyes bu*). They believe that, with the exception of *puruṣa*, everything is a manifestation of, or transformation within, *prakṛiti*, the primal matter. In that way, all results can be said to be fundamentally identical with their causes, and Sāṃkhyas are said to hold the position that things arise from themselves. See Hirianna 1932, 267–97; Hirianna 1948, 106–28; Hopkins 1983, 321–6; and Brunnhölzl 2004, 795–6.
- 724 “The entailment is not definite” (or “[the reason's] entailment [of the consequence] is not ascertained”) (*de la khyab pa ma nges pa*) means that Sāṃkhyas do not accept that their statement (used here as the reason) entails the consequence Prāsaṅgikas have stated. In other words, they do not accept that a result being present at the time of its cause necessarily means that its arising is pointless.
- 725 When Sāṃkhyas say, “Those two [cases] are not comparable (*de gnyis mi mtshungs*),” they are objecting to the way Prāsaṅgikas apply their thesis (things arise from themselves) to both unmanifest results (e.g., sesame oil present within a sesame seed prior to its extraction) and manifest results (e.g., the extracted sesame oil).
- 726 The Prāsaṅgikas' point is that the consequences they already stated, which show the absurdity of saying that something already existent arises again, would apply to

- a vase as a lump of clay. The Sāṃkhyas' attempt to clarify their position and avoid accepting the Prāsaṅgikas' consequences amounts to nothing more than a restatement of their original position albeit with qualifications. In short, the Sāṃkhyas have not brought anything new to their argument.
- 727 Inferences based on what is commonly acknowledged by others refer to the everyday experience and understanding of people in the world, such as that planting seeds and tending crops will produce a harvest. Sāṃkhyas do not want, for example, to accept the consequence that if things arise from themselves, they will arise in a meaningless fashion, because then any work, like farming, would be useless and unjustified. Sāṃkhyas are now left with no argument to support their view that things arise from themselves.
- 728 Mādhyamikas consider the Buddhist Realists to be Vaibhāṣikas and Sautrāntikas, who believe, as is described in their abhidharma texts, that discrete results arise from existent, discrete causes. Mādhyamikas also regard Chittamātras who consider the ālaya consciousness to be truly existent to be Realists. See also n. 596.
- 729 The refutation of arising from other comes down to the fact that for two things to be inherently different from each other (*rang bzhin gyis gzhan*) they have to exist at the same time. ("Other" here does not mean simply a notion of otherness that we impute to objects.) If they exist at the same time, they cannot be in a cause and result relationship with each other. For a more detailed refutation of production from other, see pp. 236–237.
- 730 By saying that the entailment is not definite, Realists mean that even though they say one thing arises from something entirely different from itself, they do not accept the consequence the Prāsaṅgikas have stated. In other words, for these Realists, a sprout arising from a seed and a sprout and a seed being inherently other are not mutually exclusive (*'gal ba*).
- 731 Here Realists are simply adding a qualification to their position that things arise from something other than themselves and as such, it is merely a restatement of their original position. The Prāsaṅgikas' reply means that the previous consequences would apply to something that has the potential to produce a result.
- 732 Nirgranthas ("Those Freed from Bondage") (Tib. *gCer bu pa*, Naked Ones) is a common name in Buddhist works for Jains (Followers of the Victor) (*rGyal ba pa*), specifically for the *Digambaras* (Sky-Clad Ones), who were the naked ascetics (all other Jains are known as *Shvetāmbaras*, White Clad Ones). The founder of Jainism was Vardhamāna Mahāvīra, also known as Jina (the Victor), a contemporary of the Buddha. Jains observe a strict ethical code of five vows—nonviolence (*ahiṃsā*), truth (*satya*), not stealing (*asteya*), chastity (*brahmacharya*), and renunciation (or non-possessiveness) (*aparigraha*). See Hiriyanā 1932, 155–73; Hiriyanā 1948, 57–70; and Brunnhölzl 2004, 798.
- 733 Chapter 6, 98ab. Toh. 3861, f. 209a1–4.
- 734 Hedonists (or Materialists) (*Lokāyata*, [*'Jig rten*] *rgyang 'phen pa*)—more well-known as Chārvākas (probably "Sweet[-Talkers]") (*Tshu rol mdzes pa*)—belong to an ancient philosophical tradition, possibly dating from 600 BCE, whose works have not survived. Chārvākas only accept direct perception as a valid means of cognition or knowledge. Thus they do not accept any causality that is not directly perceptible, or the existence of past and future lives. They were denounced by all other philosophical traditions of their time for what were considered immoral views. See Hiriyanā,

- 1932, 187–95; Hirianna 1948, 57–60; Hopkins 1983, 237–330; and Brunnhölzl 2004, 798–9.
- 735 Hedonists do not accept the Prāsaṅgikas' consequence that something that arises without a cause is something that cannot be perceived directly by the senses.
- 736 A blue water lily (*Nymphaea stellata*) [growing] in the sky (*nam mkha'i utpa la*) is one of the traditional examples of something that does not exist at all.
- 737 The most effective way to refute the notion that things arise without any causes is to point out that things *sometimes* arise. If things had no causes, they would either always arise or never at all, that is, there would be no reason for them to appear or not appear. We can see, however, that this is not the case: things appear when their specific causes and conditions are present. (ALTG)
- 738 *Bodhichittavivaraṇa-nāma*, *Byang chub sems 'grel pa zhes bya ba*, by Nāgārjuna, verse 21cd. Toh. 1800, f. 39a5; Dg.T. Beijing 18:110. The verse in full reads: [Things] perform functions due to being similar to objects. Is this not like an offense [committed] while dreaming? When we awaken from the dream [we see that dream objects and waking objects] do not differ in their performance of functions (*don mtshungs pa yis don byed pa/ rmi lam gnod pa bzhin min nam/ rmi lam sad pa'i gnas skabs la/ don byed pa la khyad par med*). See Lindtner 1986, 41.
- 739 Worldly conventionality (*'jig rten kun rdzob*) includes both the average person's notions and experiences of conventional reality and non-Buddhist philosophical and scientific ideas about it. Yogic conventionality (*rnal 'byor kun rdzob*) is what is experienced by Buddhist yogic practitioners, beginning with their initial stage of slight analysis and conceptual understanding of emptiness, through the appearances and realizations they experience as noble beings. These divisions of conventional reality are discussed in Book Seven, Part Two (TOK, III:31–2).
- For the Svātantrikas' division of conventional reality into correct and mistaken, see Chapter 9, p. 221. For further discussion of worldly and yogic conventional realities, and conventional reality and mere conventionality, see Brunnhölzl 2004, 94–9.
- 740 Chandrakīrti differentiates between conventional reality (*saṃvṛtisatya, kun rdzob bden pa*) and mere conventionality (*saṃvṛtimātra, kun rdzob tsam*) in his auto-commentary to *Entrance to the Middle Way*, Chapter 6, verse 28. See Huntington 1989, 232–3n47. See also Goldfield et al. 2005, 79.
- 741 Chapter 6, verse 23. Toh. 3861, f. 205a3.
- 742 Chapter 6, verse 29. Toh. 3861, f. 205a5–6; Dg.T. Beijing 60:565. Note the following spelling mistakes: TOK, II:531.9: *nam btags pa* should be *nam brtags pa*; and *de ni bdag nyid* should be *de nyid bdag nyid*.
- 743 Collection of Madhyamaka Reasonings (*dBu ma rigs tshogs lnga*) is a collective name for five texts by Nāgārjuna. See n. 592.
- 744 Tak-tsang Lotsāwa (*sTag tshang lo tsā ba Shes rab rin chen*) (b. 1405) was a famous scholar of the Sakya tradition who is well known for his vigorous refutation of Tsongkhapa, founder of the Geluk tradition.
- 745 Reading *rig shes* as *rigs shes* (TOK, II:532.1) following this spelling in the next sections and Khenpo Tsültrim Gyamtso Rinpoche's explanation.
- 746 For a brief description of conventions that are suitable for common consensus (*grags rung gi tha snyad*), see Chapter 8, p. 207.

- 747 Subsequent state of attainment (*prīṣṭhalabdha*, *rjes thob*) is the period following meditative equipoise. Although often translated as “post-meditation,” it refers to the level of realization of emptiness that is attained when emerging from meditative equipoise. Bodhisattvas then apply this realization to seeing the illusionlike nature of all appearances and experiences while they engage in the six *pāramitās*. A synonym for the subsequent state of attainment is “the *śamādhi* in which [appearances are seen to be] illusionlike” (*sgyu ma lta bu'i ting nge 'dzin*).
- 748 Mother [*Sūtras*] (*mātri/ mātā, yum*): “mother” is an epithet for *Prajñāpāramitā*, the perfection of wisdom, and also is a way of referring to the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras*.
- 749 Chapter 22, verse 11. Toh. 3824, f. 13b1–2.
- 750 Verses 9cd–12. Dg.T. Beijing 60:930. On the authorship of the text, see n. 677. Note that for verse 11c, the translation follows Dg.T. Beijing: *bsgom pa med*; TOK, II:533.5: *bsgom bya med*. For verse 12a, the translation follows Dg.T. Beijing: *de yi don ni*; TOK, II:533.5: *de yi blo ni*.
- 751 Chandrakīrti, in his *Entrance to the Middle Way* (Chapter 6, verse 80ab), says, “Conventional reality serves as the method; ultimate reality is what develops from the method” (*tha snyad bden pa thabs su gyur pa dang/ don dam bden pa thabs byung gyur pa ste*). See Huntington 1989, 162; Padmakara Translation Group 2002, 79 and 80–1; and Goldfield et al. 2005, 237.
- This explanation of the two truths as method and the outcome of method should be understood in terms of the perceiving subject, our minds, not in terms of objects, such as appearances and their emptiness. The designation of the conventional reality as method and ultimate reality as the outcome indicates the way an understanding of the two truths develops in our minds—it is not that conventional reality is the cause of the ultimate nor is it that the ultimate is the result of the conventional reality. (ALTG)
- 752 TOK, II:534.11: *gtam tshigs* should be *gtan tshigs*.
- 753 Reasons of the imperception of something connected [to the predicate of the negandum] (*saṃbhandhānupalabdhīhetu*, *'brel zla ma dmigs pa'i gtan tshigs*): Something connected to the predicate of the negandum (*dgag bya'i chos*) may be (1) its nature (*rang bzhin*), (2) any of its results (*'bras bu*), (3) any of its causes (*rgyu*), or (4) a larger category to which it belongs (*khyab byed*).
- An example of a reason of the imperception of a result connected to the predicate is: “In this smoke-free room, there is no fire, because no smoke is perceived through any form of valid cognition.” The predicate of the negandum is “there is a fire.” The fact that a result (smoke) connected to the phenomenon in question (fire) is not perceived in this room serves as the reason that negates the existence of this phenomenon (fire).
- See Khenpo Tsültrim Gyamtso 1996a/1999; and Brunnhölzl 2004, 180–1.
- 754 Reasons of the perception of something contradictory [to the predicate of the negandum] (*viruddhopalabdhīhetu*, *'gal zla dmigs pa'i gtan tshigs*): Something that is contradictory to the predicate of the negandum may be (1) its nature (*rang bzhin*), (2) its result (*'bras bu*), or (3) a subset of it (*khyab bya*).
- An example of using a reason of the perception of something whose nature is contradictory to the predicate is: “Right next to a hot fire, there is no lasting sensation of coldness, because a hot fire is perceived there.” The predicate of the negandum is “a lasting feeling of coldness.” The fact that something whose nature is contradictory (a hot fire) to the phenomenon in question (an ongoing sensation of cold) is

perceived serves as the reason that negates the existence of this phenomenon (an ongoing sensation of cold).

Or to use the reasoning of dependent origination: “Outer and inner phenomena do not come into being, because they are dependently originated.” The predicate is “come into being.” The perception of something contradictory (phenomena being dependently originated) to the predicate serves as the reason to negate it.

755 The five reasons are also presented in Chapter 8; see pp. 209–211.

756 The three doors to liberation (*vimokṣhamukhatraya*, *rnam thar sgo gsum*) are avenues, or ways, to liberation presented in the Prajñāpāramitā literature. Here these three doors are demonstrated through the first three forms of analysis: By analyzing the nature of phenomena, we understand it to be emptiness (*shūnyatā*, *stong pa nyid*); that is emptiness as a door to liberation. By analyzing phenomena in terms of their causes, we see that they actually have no defining characteristics, and this absence of characteristics (*animitta*, *mtshan ma med pa*) serves as a door to liberation. By analyzing phenomena in terms of their results, we recognize that they do not really come into being, and this leads us to the absence of expectancy (*apraṇihita*, *smon pa med pa*) as a door to liberation.

757 In Buddhist logic, three modes (or criteria) (*trairūpya*/ *trirūpa*, *tshul gsum*) are examined to determine whether a reason is valid or not: the subject property, the positive entailment, and the negative entailment. These are concerned with the reason’s relationship to the subject and to the predicate. If they are determined to be correct, the reason is a valid means to establish what is to be proven. The following definitions are from Khenpo Tsültrim Gyamtso’s *Classifications of Reasons* (86).

1. The subject property (*pakṣadharmatā*/-*tva*, *phyogs chos*) is defined as “a reason that valid cognition has determined to be present in all instances of the flawless subject in question in a corresponding formulation” (*shes ’dod chos can skyon med kyi steng du ’god tshul dang mthun par yod pa nyid du tshad mas nges pa’i gtan tshigs*). Simply put, it means that the reason is a property, or quality, of the subject (that is, the subject is either equivalent to the reason or a subset of it).
2. Positive entailment (*anvayavyāpti*, *rjes khyab*) is defined as “a reason that has been determined to be present only in the homologous set [of the predicate]” (*mthun pa’i phyogs kho na la yod par nges pa’i gtan tshigs*). Simply put, the reason is equivalent to the predicate or a subset of it.
3. Negative entailment (*vyatirekavyāpti*, *ldog khyab*) is defined as “a reason that has been determined not to be present in a single instance of the heterologous set” (*mi mthun pa’i phyogs kho na la yod par nges pa’i gtan tshigs*). (See also n. 671.)

For more discussion of the three modes, see Khenpo Tsültrim Gyamtso 1996a/1999; Brunnhölzl 2004, 177–9; Dreyfus 1997; Dunne 2004; Matilal 1998, 6–7 and 90–94; and Perdue 1993.

758 The vajra sliver reasoning is presented at some length earlier in this chapter. See A Brief Account of Chandrakīrti’s Exegetical System, pp. 226–228.

759 This means that if something actually arises it will do so through one of these four ways (from itself, from something other than itself, from both, or causelessly)—there is no fifth possibility. (ALTG)

- 760 Nāgārjuna's opening statement of his *Fundamental Treatise on the Middle Way* (see Chapter 9, p. 218) states that things do not arise from any of the four possibilities, but he does not discuss this matter any further. Chandrakīrti, however, refutes arising from the four extremes in great detail in Chapter 6 of his *Entrance to the Middle Way*. See Huntington 1989, 158–69; Padmakara Translation Group 2002, 183–266; and Goldfield et al. 2005, 35–305.
- 761 See also n. 723.
- 762 Object-consistent consciousnesses (or factually concordant types of consciousness) (*shes rig don mthun*) are the six consciousnesses, which always arise in keeping with their respective objects (that is, an eye consciousness will arise only with a physical form as its object, never a sound). Vaibhāṣikas explain that the six consciousnesses arise from their four conditions (*pratyaya, rkyen*): object condition (*dmigs rkyen*); dominant condition (*bdag rkyen*); proximate condition (*de ma thag rkyen*); and causal condition (*rgyu'i rkyen*). For example, an eye consciousness arises from visual forms (its object condition), the eye sense faculty (its dominant condition), the just-ceased preceding moment of eye consciousness (its proximate condition), and, simply put, prior moments of eye consciousness (its causal condition).
The scriptural source for this is the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, Chapter 2, verse 64a: “Mind and mental events arise from the four [conditions].” See Pruden 1988, 305.
Note that at TOK, II:536.1 *shes rigs don mthun* should be *shes rig don mthun*.
- 763 “Most [other] entities” mean non-associated formative forces (*ldan min 'du byed*) and forms (*gzugs*), which are the phenomena other than the consciousnesses, mental events, and unconditioned phenomena.
The *Treasury of Abhidharma*, Chapter 2, verse 64c says, “Other [phenomena] arise from the two.” Vasubandhu explains that “other” phenomena are non-associated [formative forces] and forms, and that “the two” are causal conditions and dominant conditions. See Pruden 1988, 306. For information on non-associated formative forces, see n. 310.
Jamgön Kongtrül says, “Most [other] entities arise from their causal and dominant conditions,” to exclude the Vaibhāṣikas' category of permanent entities (*rtag pa'i dngos po*), which are unconditioned phenomena (ALTG). See Chapter 3, p. 131.
- 764 For a synopsis of the key point in the refutation of arising from other, see n. 729.
- 765 This is a terse statement of an absurd consequence that Prāsaṅgikas deduce from the assertion that phenomena actually arise from something other than themselves. To state this in a fuller way:
If it were the case that phenomena arise from things that are other than themselves, anything could arise from anything, because both the causes of a specific thing and what are not its causes are equal in being “other” than the particular result. For example, a rice sprout could arise as easily from a barley seed as from a rice seed, because a barley seed and a rice seed are equally other than the rice sprout. Another frequently stated absurd consequence is that flames would arise from darkness.
For a thorough presentation of this line of refutation, see Chapter 6 of Chandrakīrti's *Entrance to the Middle Way*, specifically verses 14–21, in Huntington 1989; Padmakara Translation Group 2002; and Goldfield et al. 2005.
- 766 Here, a substantial [cause] (*upādāna[hetu]*, *nyer len [gyi rgyu]*) is a direct cause (*dngos rgyu*), which produces its own particular result. For example, a sunflower

- seed is the substantial cause for a sunflower sprout. Substantial causes by definition must precede their results. This is an important clarification because, of the six causes and four conditions (all of which contribute to the arising of a result and some of which may exist at the same time as the result), it is the substantial cause that is the focus of this debate (ALTG). (Note that substantial cause is also translated as “primary cause” or “perpetuating cause.”)
- 767 In his *Entrance to the Middle Way*, Chandrakīrti refutes the idea that a cause and its result are simultaneous; see verses 18–20 of Chapter 6.
- 768 This is a reference to the third of the five great reasons. See p. 238.
- 769 The four possibilities (*chatuṣḥkoṭi*, *mu bzhi*) are (1) that only one result manifests from just a single cause; (2) that numerous results are produced by only one cause; (3) that a single result comes from many causes; and (4) that many results could arise from many causes.
- 770 See Chapter 8, p. 210.
- 771 Chapter 7, verse 16ab. Toh. 3824, f. 4a5.
- 772 Chapter 6, verse 32. Toh. 3861, f. 205b5.
- 773 The absence of a self of persons is discussed in more detail in Book Seven, Part Three (TOK, III:69–77).
- 774 Chapter 6, verse 151. Toh. 3861, f. 211b4–5; Dg.T. Beijing 60:579. The translation follows Dg.T. Beijing: *yan lag la min yang lag dag der min*; TOK, II:538.6: *yan lag la med yang lag dag der med*.
- 775 The Buddha used the analogy of a cart to illustrate that a “self” is just a conventional designation; see, for example, *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha* (Bodhi 2000, 230). It is also used by Nāgasena in *The Questions of King Milinda* (see Rhys Davids 1890, 43–5).
Nāgārjuna in his *Fundamental Treatise on the Middle Way* (Chapter 22, verses 1–8) presents a fivefold analysis. Chandrakīrti also presents this fivefold analysis in his *Entrance to the Middle Way*, Chapter 6, verses 121–136, and then he adds two more points in verses 150d–162.
- 776 Other-exclusion (or elimination; elimination of other) (*anyāpoha*, *gzhan sel*): Generally speaking and put very simply, the term “other-exclusion” indicates that the conceptual mind apprehends its object by way of exclusion. For example, when we think “rose,” our minds eliminate all that is not rose to arrive at the general object “rose.” This theory of exclusion, *apoha*, was first introduced in Buddhist works by Dignāga in his *Compendium on Valid Cognition*, and discussed by Dharmakīrti and later Shāntarakṣhita and Kamalashīla. For more on *apoha* theory in the works of Dharmakīrti, Shāntarakṣhita, and the Tibetan traditions, see Dreyfus 1997, particularly Chapters 11–13. For a comparison of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, see Katsura 1995. See also Bronkhorst 1999; Tillemans 1999, 209–46; and Dunne 2004.
- 777 PKTC has *tshig spros pa*; TOK, II:538.19 has *cho ga spros pa*. The translation follows the latter, although either reading seems feasible.
- 778 See n. 679.
- 779 *Bodhicharyāvatāra*, *Byang chub sems dpa'i spyod pa la 'jug pa*; Chapter 9, verse 34. Toh. 3871; Dg.T. Beijing 61:1020. See Brunnhölzl 2004, 653–4; and Padmakara Translation Group 1997, 142.

- 780 *Dashabhūmikasūtra*, *Sa bcu pa'i mdo*. Toh. 44:31. (This is Chapter 31 of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, *Phal po che*.)
- 781 In his *Entrance to the Middle Way*, Chandrakīrti presents the path to awakening in ten chapters, which correlate the ten bhūmis with the ten pāramitās (generosity, ethical conduct, patience, diligence, meditative concentration, wisdom, methods, strength, aspirations, and primordial wisdom). See Huntington 1989; and Padmakara Translation Group 2002.
- 782 *Satyadvayāvatāra*, *bDen pa gnyis la 'jug pa*; verse 7ab. Toh. 3902; Dg.T. Beijing 63:1051. See Lindtner 1981, 194; and Sherburne 2000, 353.
- 783 From the perspective of the subsequent state of attainment (i.e., not the state of meditative equipoise), we speak of the primordial wisdom of the first bhūmi, the primordial wisdom of the second bhūmi, and so on. Because primordial wisdom is the basis, or ground, for the pāramitās of the bhūmis, the primordial wisdom of the first bhūmi is equivalent to the pāramitā of generosity, the primordial wisdom of the second bhūmi to the pāramitā of ethical conduct, and so on. (ALTG)
- 784 For example, in Book Ten, Part One, Jamgön Kongtrul distinguishes the sambhogakāya in terms of the actual (*ngos*) sambhogakāya and the nominal (*btags*) sambhogakāya. (See TOK, III:598.)
- 785 Chapter 11, verse 17. Toh. 3861, f. 216b3–4. Note that Dg.T. Beijing 60:590 reads *sems 'gags pas de*; TOK, II:540.13 has *sems 'gags pa de*.
- 786 In his commentary on the *Entrance to the Middle Way*, Mikyö Dorjé explains that “cessation of mind” (*sems 'gag pa*) means that the clinging of mind and mental events (*sems dang sems 'byung ba'i 'dzin pa*) and the delusive appearances of ignorance have dissolved. The conventional expression “cessation” simply refers to such dissolution. He makes the point that any other position would involve the extremes of permanence or nihilism, e.g., it would be the extreme of nihilism to state that the mind and mental events exist up through the tenth bhūmi and then cease with the attainment of buddhahood.
- It should be noted that the term cessation (*'gags pa*) has two senses: (1) cessation as elimination (*spangs pa'i 'gags pa*), which is also called cessation that is the interruption of continuity (*rgyun chad pa'i 'gag pa*), and (2) cessation as a transformation (*gnas gyur ba'i 'gags pa*). Mikyö Dorjé makes it clear that cessation means transformation (in the sense of transforming the distorting influence of ignorance), not elimination (ALTG). See *The Chariot of the Dakpo Kagyu Siddhas*, pp. 672–3.
- 787 Jetsün Drakpa Gyaltsen (*rJe btsun grags pa rgyal mtshan*) (1147–1216), the third patriarch in the Sakya tradition.
- 788 Sakya Paṇḍita (*Sa skya paṇḍita*) (1182–1251) was the fourth and most famous of the Sakya tradition's patriarchs. Sakya Paṇḍita was not only a great master of the Sakya School, he was a pioneer in the introduction of Sanskrit poetics in the Tibetan language, the inventor of the Mongolian alphabet, and the one responsible for developing much of the scholastic disciplines of the Tibetan monastic tradition. Sakya Paṇḍita wrote many influential works and was instrumental in making the ten sciences complete in Tibet. Some of his works include the *Discrimination of the Three Vows* (*sDom gsum rab dbye*), *Treasury of Valid Means of Cognition* (*Tshad ma rigs pa'i gter*) and *Treasury of Well-Spoken Advice* (*Legs par bshad pa rin po che'i gter*). The source of this citation was not found.

- 789 Silung Pañchen (*Zi lung pañ chen*) is more commonly known as Serdok Pañchen Shākya Chokden (*gSer mdog pañ chen shākya mchog ldan*). Jamgön Kongtrul also calls him Serdokka Dön-yö Pal (*gSer mdog pa don yod dpal*). See n. 721.
- 790 Chapter 11, verse 11d. Dg.T. Beijing 60:590 reads *shes bya thugs su chud*; TOK, II:541.2 has *shes bya thams cad mkhyen*.
- 791 Legends of wish-fulfilling gems (*chintāmaṇi*, *yid bzhin gyi nor bu*) and wish-granting trees (*kalpataru/ kalpa-vṛkṣha*, *dpag bsam gyi shing*) were well known in ancient India.
- 792 Chapter 11, verse 18. Toh. 3861, f. 216b5–6.
- 793 This point is discussed on p. 229.
- 794 *Yuktiṣaṣṭikā*, *Rigs pa drug bcu pa*, by Nāgārjuna, verse 35ab. Toh. 3825; Dg.T. Beijing 57:54. The translation follows Dg.T. Beijing: *rgyal ba rnams kyis gang gsungs pa*; TOK, II:542.5: *gang tshe sangs rgyas rnams gsungs pa*.
- 795 Verse 390ab. See Fuchs 2000, 289.
- 796 The three spheres (*trimaṇḍala*, *'khor gsum*) are agent, object, and action.
- 797 The one hundred [and eight] concepts related to percepts and perceivers (*gzung 'dzin gyi nam rtog brgya rtsa brgyad*) are grouped into four sets of nine: (1) nine concepts related to percepts concerned with afflictive phenomena (*kun nas nyon mongs gzung rtog*); (2) nine concepts related to percepts concerned with purified phenomena (*nam byang gzung rtog*); (3) nine concepts related to apprehending perceivers as substantially existent persons (*rdzas yod kyi gang zag du 'dzin pa'i 'dzin rtog*); and (4) nine concepts related to apprehending perceivers as imputedly existent beings (*btags yod kyi skyes bur 'dzin pa'i 'dzin rtog*). These thirty-six concepts pertain to each of the three realms, making 108 concepts. For a complete list and discussion, see the *Ornament of Clear Realization* and its commentaries.
- 798 Verse 35ab. Dg.T. Beijing 96:291 reads *ji srid phung por 'dzin yod par/ de srid de la ngar 'dzin yod*; TOK, II:542.11: *ji srid phung por 'dzin yod pa*.
- 799 See also Brunnhölzl 2004, 421–38; Padmakara Translation Group 2002, 310–14; and Lopez 1988a.
- 800 Chapter 11, verse 45c.
- 801 A garuda stūpa (*mkha' lding gi mchod sdong*) is another example of an inanimate object that is of benefit to beings. Once in ancient India during an outbreak of leprosy, a master built stūpas with images of garudas on them. He recited the appropriate mantras and made aspirations that these stūpas would cure all lepers who circumambulated them, and, as a result, all those afflicted with leprosy who circumambulated those stūpas were cured. (ALTG)
- 802 I was unable to locate this exact passage in Āryadeva's texts, but a similar one occurs in his *Madhyamaka: Conquering Delusions* (*Madhyamaka-bhramaghāta*, *dBu ma 'khrul pa 'joms pa*) (Toh. 3850; Dg.T. Beijing 57:849):
- In that way, when one is awake, conventional consciousness
is not seen since the eye of intelligence has opened
and the sleep of ignorance has gone.
- de bzhin kun rdzob shes pa dag/ blo gros mig ni bye gyur ching/ mi shes nyid dang
bral gyur nas/ sad pa'i tshe na mi gzigs so.*

Compare with TOK, II:542.22: *ma rig rmong pa'i gnyid sad na/ 'khor ba 'di dag mi dmigs so*. I am grateful to Karl Brunnhölzl for locating this. Note that this passage is also found in Bhāvaviveka's *Blaze of Reasoning* (see Lindtner 1982).

- 803 Here, “a later generation of Tibetans” (*bod phyi rabs pa*) specifically means Tsongkhapa Lo-zang Drakpa (*Tsong kha pa blo bzang grags pa*) (1357–1419) and the Geluk school, who are known as the “later Mādhyamikas” (in contrast to the “early Mādhyamikas,” which refers to the followers of the Madhyamaka traditions in Tibet prior to the time of Tsongkhapa and to those who continue these traditions). (ALTG)

These eight great, uncommon theses (*thun mong ma yin pa'i dam bca' chen po brgyad*) are Tsongkhapa's “eight difficult points of the Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka” (*dbu ma thal 'gyur gyi dka' gnas brgyad*), which he considers to be a summary of the ways in which the Prāsaṅgika system is distinct from other Buddhist philosophical tenets.

The primary sources for these are Tsongkhapa's *Illumination of the Thought* (*dGongs pa rab gsal*); and Gyaltsap Jé's *Notes on the Eight Difficult Points* (*dKa' gnas brgyad kyi zin bris*) (see Ruegg 2002, 139–255); and Gyaltsap Jé's *Aide-Mémoire for the Eight Great Difficult Points of the “Fundamental [Treatise on] the Middle Way”* (*dBu ma'i rtsa ba'i dka' gnas chen po brgyad kyi brjed byang*). In an earlier work, *Essence of Eloquence* (*Legs bshad snying po*), Tsongkhapa presents seven points that distinguish the Prāsaṅgika system (see Thurman 1984, 288–344; and Ruegg 2002, 146–7). For overviews of these eight points, the various lists, and the Geluk works in which they are found, see Cozort 1998, 58–63; and Ruegg 2002, 142–52.

Although each of these primary sources lists eight points, there are some discrepancies between them, and Jamgön Kongtrul's list of eight does not correspond to any of them exactly in terms of content or order. Nevertheless, the elements in his list match those in Tsongkhapa's *Illumination of the Thought* with just one exception: whereas Tsongkhapa's list includes “an uncommon way of positing the three times due to [disintegration being a functioning thing]” (*de'i rgyu mtshan gyis dus gsum gyi 'jog tshul thun mong ma yin pa*), Jamgön Kongtrul's does not. Instead, Jamgön Kongtrul has “the existence of things by way of their own characteristics is not accepted even as a convention” (*tha snyad du'ang rang gi mtshan nyid kyi grub par khas mi len pa*) (A1), which is found in both texts by Gyaltsap Jé (see ACIP S5426).

Jamgön Kongtrul's presentation of these as “four theses associated with refutation and four theses associated with affirmation” (*dgag phyogs kyi dam bca' bzhi/ sgrub phyogs kyi dam bca' bzhi*) is similar to Gyaltsap Jé's comment that these constitute “four theses involving acceptance and four positions involving non-acceptance” (*khas len pa'i dam bca' bzhi dang mi len pa'i dam bca' bzhi*) (see ACIP S5426; and Ruegg 2002, 158).

These points have been the subject of much discussion and, of course, refutation. Numerous Geluk teachers have written on these, ranging from Chang-kya Rolpé Dorjé in his *Beautiful Ornament of Philosophical Tenet Systems* (see Cozort 1998, 429–78) to Jamyang Shepa, who presents a list of sixteen points in eight pairs in his *Great Exposition of Tenets* (see Hopkins 2003, 927–47; and Cozort and Preston 2003, 258–71). Brunnhölzl presents (2004, 557–62) Mikyö Dorjé's assessment of these. Mipham's views are discussed in Pettit 1998, 128–33; and Dreyfus and McClintock 2003, 324–8.

- 804 For the sake of comparison, the following is a list of Tsongkhapa's enumeration of the eight uncommon theses in his *Illumination of the Thought* (ACIP S5408@124B):

(1-2) [The Prāsaṅgika system] has an uncommon way of refuting an ālaya consciousness that is separate in essence from the six modes of consciousness

and reflexive awareness (*tshogs drug las ngo bo tha dad pa'i kun gzhi rnam shes dang rang rig 'gog lugs thun mong ma yin pa*).

- (3) It does not accept the use of independently [verifiable] probative arguments to generate [an understanding of] the view of suchness in the mindstream of opponents (*rang rgyud kyi sbyor bas phyir rgol gyi rgyud la de kho na nyid kyi lta ba skyed pa khas mi len pa*).
- (4) It is necessary to accept external objects in the same way that cognition is accepted (*shes pa khas len pa bzhin du phyi rol gyi don yang khas blang dgos pa*).
- (5) Shrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas realize that entities have no nature (*nyan rang la dngos po rang bzhin med par rtogs pa yod pa*).
- (6) Clinging to a self-entity of phenomena is posited as an affliction (*chos kyi bdag 'dzin nyon mongs su 'jog pa*).
- (7) Disintegration is a [functioning] thing (*zhig pa dngos po yin pa*).
- (8) Therefore, [this system] has an uncommon way of positing the three times (*de'i rgyu mtshan gyis dus gsum gyi 'jog tshul thun mong ma yin pa*).

805 Although it seems that Jamgön Kongtrul regards Mikyö Dorjé's position on these eight points to be mostly the same as Shākya Chokden's (that is, that he rejects seven of the eight points), many present-day Kagyu scholars say that as pedagogical conventions, Mikyö Dorjé agrees with four or five of Tsongkhapa's eight points. Brunnhölzl states (2004, 559):

There is no question that Karmapa Mikyö Dorjé denies that Consequentialists [Prāsaṅgikas] have a philosophical system of their own, let alone unique distinctive features of such a system. However, his explanations so far also clearly show that, when the points in Tsongkhapa's above lists are understood as mere pedagogic and expedient conventionalities to counteract wrong views from the perspective of others, contrary to what one might expect, the Karmapa in fact agrees with more of these points . . . than he denies.

The four or five points that Mikyö Dorjé agrees with (as conventions) are A1, possibly A3, A4, B2, and B4. Regarding A2, Mikyö Dorjé agrees that independently verifiable reasons are not accepted even as conventions from one's own perspective (i.e., as a Prāsaṅgika), but he does accept their use for others. In his *Chariot of the Dakpo Kagyu Siddhas*, Mikyö Dorjé refutes that B1 (the acceptance of external objects) is an assertion of the Prāsaṅgika system, and refutes the idea of B3 (disintegration is a functioning thing) completely. (ALTG)

Some Kagyu scholars feel that Mikyö Dorjé does not make a clear statement about A3 (to them, it seems that he accepts reflexive awareness on the level of no analysis), while others say that since he is a Prāsaṅgika he does not accept reflexive awareness even as a convention (because Prāsaṅgikas only cite what is commonly acknowledged in the world as their presentation of conventional reality, and reflexive awareness is only posited by philosophical systems).

806 This section is drawn in part from Tāranātha's *Essence of Shentong* (*gZhan stong snying po*), 182.1–6. See Hopkins 2007, 77–8.

807 The Dharma Treatises of the exalted Maitreya (*Byams pa'i chos sde*) are the following five texts: (1) *Ornament of Clear Realization* (*Abhisamayālaṅkāra*; *mNgon rtogs rgyan*); (2) *Ornament of the Mahāyāna Sūtras* (*Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra*, *Theg pa chen po mdo sde rgyan*); (3) *Differentiation of the Middle and the Extremes* (*Madhyāntavibhaṅga*, *dBus mtha' rnam 'byed*); (4) *Differentiation of Phenomena and Their Nature* (*Dharmadharmatāvibhaṅga*, *Chos dang chos nyid rnam 'byed*); and (5) *Highest Continuum* (*Mahāyānottaratantrashāstra*, *Theg pa chen po rgyud bla ma'i bstan bcos*).

CLEAR THINKING 1

workbook

ASCERTAINMENT OF PERSONAL SELFLESSNESS

THE DZOGCHEN PONLOP RINPOCHE

MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT SELF

1. Misconception of Self Being Permanent

First is the misconception about self or person being permanent. How do we misconceive that the self is permanent? Do we see ourselves as permanent? If yes, then how? When we look at our picture from ten years ago, we say, "Oh, this is how I was ten years ago. That is me, me, and me. And that will be me, with the big house, big car, big mall, big gun ..."

The misconception of the self as permanent is made on the basis of not clearly seeing and separating the three times. We misconceive the self to be permanent because we do not clearly see what is past, what is future, or what is present. We see all three times as one. We are just "I." "I" from the past, "I" from the present, and "I" from the future are one. They are not separated. We do not separate "I" in relation to time; we do not see "I" in different times. We see the "I" in all three times as one. That is how we get this first wrong view of the self as permanent. If you really contemplate the nature of impermanence, it will help to overcome this first misconception, seeing how things are momentary, changing and disintegrating in the three times. In the past, we had such and such experiences, and they are gone; now we have another experience, but it is also passing, and in the future, we will have different experiences. We have to relate to these three different environments of time with three different moments of self. It is not one moment of a self; it is three different moments of a self, and countless moments of the experience of the self.

If we look at it from the view of subtle impermanence, for example, we can start with something small, a little coarse but still subtle enough, like the moment we first entered this room and the moment we leave this room are two different moments. When we first entered this room is one moment, and you see all the people in the room, yes, that is one moment of seeing people, but when we leave this room, and you see all the people, it is a different moment; you see different forms. As the Buddhist teachings say, on the subtlest level, even one finger snap has sixty moments—science says even more—we can go to a very fine level. Even one finger snap has hundreds of different moments.

If we look at our self, we exist or function, or merely exist, in hundreds and hundreds of different moments every day, every minute. Therefore it cannot be permanent. Not only that, we can see how we get old; how we disintegrate. We can only snowboard when we are young. We can see the change. The self is not permanent. That kind of energy or ability to function does not exist all the time. It is only during a certain period of time, a moment, and then it is gone. Even our view of ourselves is not permanent. We think of ourselves as smart and aggressive in a certain way, and later we feel, "That is not me. I am really a mellow person, with a good heart and sophistication." Our sense of self is not permanent; it does not stay. It is helpful for us to see how our clinging changes. A good example is to look at the changes of fashion in clothing.

We should look at how we alter ourselves into a permanent self. In that very moment it is so real; it is not a joke; in that very moment, it is ultimately cool, beautiful, me, in that beautiful dress, so real, so solid. That is what we see.

2. Misconception of Self Being a Singular Entity

Next is the misconception of self as a singular, individual entity. When we say “self” or “I,” we feel that we are talking about one entity, a single entity. We do not think of many selves. We think of ourselves as one self. I am one. I am me. And I want to be the first. That misconception, the sense of “me” or “I” as singular comes from not separating out the basis of the label of self. The label, the thought, the concept of “I” or “me” is based on the five skandhas; it is not just one entity. When we say “I,” it is not just body, it also mind. Is one’s body single? Yes, but it has many parts. Look into each individual part and see where the self is. Is the self one with the body? If it is one entity with the body, the same entity, if you lose one part of your body, let’s say when you cut your hair, you are losing some of the self. A part of the self is gone. When you lose your arm, you are losing your self. Your self is no longer complete. The sense of self as one can easily be seen as a misconception when you look at body-mind relationship and the different parts of the body.

If you say the self is mind, which mind are you talking about? Perceptions, concepts, or conceptual mind? If it is perceptions, what perceptions are you talking about? The eye sense perception or the ear sense perception? There are six or eight kinds of consciousnesses. Consciousness is not a singular entity; it is multiple. Viewed in this way, the singular sense of “I” is easily found to be a misconception, or a wrong view about self.

3. Misconception of Self Being Independent

Last is the misconception of self as independent, self-powered, or independently existent. What is the idea of an independent self? The misconception of an independent self arises from not seeing how we are under the influence or power of other conditions. We have a strong view or strong clinging that thinks, “Yes, the sense of “me” or “I” exists without relying on anything, without relying on causes and conditions, or any dependent phenomena. The self simply exists on its own.” We feel it, right? “I”—it is there. There is a sense of independent existence. But when you really look at it, that independent self, and even the basis of that self, the five skandhas, is the creation of causes and conditions. It is a product of causes and conditions. The five skandhas do not exist without causes and conditions. And, of course, the label of self definitely depends on conditions, such as the five skandhas, or body and mind, coming together. Without that, we cannot have such a view of self-clinging. Therefore self-clinging has causes and conditions. What are the causes and conditions? The two main causes are karma and kleshas. Our label of “I” or “me” is connected to the past continuity of the mind-stream, which is connected to our karmic seeds and kleshas. Therefore karma and kleshas are the main causes and conditions of the basis of the label “self,” as well as the misconception of an independent self. It all comes from karma and kleshas. Everything is connected to causes and conditions. Nothing exists independently, and nothing is self-arisen. Skandhas and self-clinging cannot exist independently. There is no such thing in reality, and so our perception and concept of the self as independent is a wrong perception and a wrong concept.

These three misconceptions are the key to understanding the selflessness of person. You can use the sevenfold reasoning (which we will explore below), but these three are the key.

SEVENFOLD ANALYSIS OF CHARIOT

Now we will analyze how the self is not permanent, singular, and independent using the sevenfold analysis of chariot.

(1) Self Is Not Different From the Skandhas

First we will see that the self is not different from the skandhas, or the chariot is not different from its parts.

If the self is different from the skandhas, where is it? If they are different, we have a problem. They have to coexist, or simultaneously exist. But if the self and skandhas simultaneously exist, then there is no relationship between them. There is no relationship for the skandhas to be the basis upon which self-clinging arises. If they coexist, the skandhas continue their moments and the self continues its moments, and where do you find the relationship? The relationship is difficult to posit.

It is difficult to find the relationship between self-clinging onto the skandhas and the skandhas themselves. One or different—that is the main argument here—are they one or different? If you say the self and skandhas are different, where is the self? That is a good argument. You cannot see a self outside of the five skandhas; besides my mind and body, where is the self? The self would be a third entity existing somewhere. If that were the case, the body, mind, and self would not be connected. So why would the self suffer when the body suffers? Why would the self feel pain when the body feels pain, if they are totally separate entities? Why would the self be concerned when the body is sick? Why would the self feel confused when the mind is confused? These problems arise if we say that the self and skandhas are separate entities.

(2) Self Is Not One With the Skandhas

If the self and skandhas are one or the same; if the chariot and its parts are same, what is the problem? If the skandhas and self-clinging are the same, then what clings to what? We would have a hard time establishing the process of clinging. The sense of grasping or holding on cannot be established, if they are same. If they are one, how can you have the relationship or action of grasping? When we talk about holding onto something, or grasping or clinging, there is a subject, an object, and an action. If the self and skandhas are one in entity, how could you have this threefold situation? You would not have the clinging, grasping, and fixation on the five skandhas as a self. The threefold situation of subject, object, and action could not be established; therefore, we cannot establish that they are in one nature. That is one argument.

The second argument is as follows: If the self is one with the skandhas, not different, then if we have self-clinging, we would have five selves. If they are one, there would be five selves. And each skandha has many different parts, so there would be endless selves, we would be totally confused, and it would be difficult to identify one as who we are.

The rest of the reasonings are connected to the first two reasonings.

(3) Self Does Not Possess the Skandhas

The self does not possess the skandhas, or the chariot does not possess its parts. The skandhas are not qualities of the self that exist within self-clinging, or the self possessing qualities of existence—the quality of existence as the form skandha, the quality of existence as the feeling skandha, and so on. These relationships cannot be present. Why? Because when we cannot establish the skandhas and self as one or different, the third relationship of possession cannot be established.

In order for the self to possess such qualities, it has to have one of two relationships: (a) either being one entity or (b) being different.

(a) One entity would be like saying, "I have ears. I have my hair. I have this or that," the different parts of the body. That is one form of relationship. Your body and your ears have the same entity as your form skandha.

(b) Another type of this relationship is when you say, "I have a car," but it is a possession; you and the car are not the same entity. When you say "ears" and "me," you are talking about the same entity, the same skandhas. Your body and ears have the same genes, the same elements, the same blood, and so on.

Therefore when you say that the self has the qualities of the skandhas, or possesses the skandhas, it has to have one of these two relationships. It either has to be one in entity, like ears and body, or different, like a car and me. Otherwise you cannot have the notion of possession. But when we analyze it, we cannot establish a relationship of oneness or difference. Therefore the third relationship of possession cannot be established through reasonings. No true analysis can establish that relationship.

(4) Self Is Not in the Skandhas and (5) the Skandhas Are Not in the Self

The self is not in the skandhas, and the skandhas are not in the self; or the chariot is not in its parts, and the parts are not in the chariot. These two are the same argument. We argue this idea by saying that the self and the skandhas are not different. If the skandhas and the self are not different, then we cannot have this relationship, like a car and its parts. If a car and its parts are different or separate, you can say, "Yes, the parts depend on the car, and the car depends on the parts." But since we cannot establish that they are separate, this relationship cannot be established.

The first five reasonings are actually not difficult, but the wording is confusing. The wording is a little bit more sophisticated than the actual meaning. The actual meaning is to first establish whether the skandhas and the self are one or different. These two are the key, and once you have worked that out, the rest of the logic follows; it make sense. The reason additional reasonings are presented is because different kinds of beings have different views and different confusions.

(6) Self Is Not the Collection of the Skandhas

The self is not the collection of the skandhas, or the chariot is not the collection of its parts. How is this ascertained? If, first of all, each individual skandha does not exist when it is analyzed, and if we do not find the self of person in any of the five skandhas, then we cannot find it in the collection. Why? Because the collection is none other than the parts coming together. This sixth view is very conceptual. The idea of a collection is very conceptual. It is not really a substantial argument from the Madhyamaka point of view. When we say "collection," it is already concept. Therefore the view of self as the collection of the skandhas is refuted by refuting each individual skandha's existence and its self-clinging.

(7) Self Is Not the Shape of the Skandhas

The self is not the shape of skandhas, or the chariot is not the shape of its parts. Shape is easy. The self is not the shape of the skandhas, like the skandha of form. When we say "I" or "me," it cannot be the shape of the collection of the skandhas because shape is only associated with the form skandha. When we talk about shape, we are mainly talking about the form skandha. The remaining skandhas of feeling, perception, and so on do not have shape. Shape is the form skandha, and that is what we are analyzing here, whether the skandha is shape or not.

Sevenfold Reasoning

Among the seven reasonings, four (numbers 2-5) were taught by the Buddha in Pāli sūtras when he refuted Hindu philosophy. The first one (the self is not different from skandhas) was added by Nāgārjuna when he refuted the Sautrāntika view. The sixth

and seventh analyses were added by Chandrakīrti. You can read about the sevenfold reasonings and try to understand them, but I think the key point is to work on the first two: Are the skandhas and self one or different? They will take care of the rest.

Since this is a classical argument and structure, it is good for us to study the sevenfold reasoning, as well as the five Madhyamaka reasonings, but at the same time, we also have to see how they are relevant in our ordinary mind-set of clinging and fixation; so we can actually modify our clinging. Try to see how it can be most effective, for you, personally, find emptiness or selflessness, and then use it in whatever way you want to use it—as a mere understanding, to bring an experience of *shūnyatā*, or to bring an experience of enlightenment. It doesn't matter, whatever way you use it. ▲