

## Insight into Emptiness—Definitions and Terms

### ***Duhkha* (Sanskrit term) has two meanings, p. 6**

1. When using phrases such as “the truth of suffering” the word “duhkha” has the connotation of “unsatisfactory,” so are used in that context instead of “suffering” or “pain”.
2. When referring to unpleasant feelings the words “pain” or “suffering” are used.

### **Two types of *extreme views* or *conceptual projections*, p. 8**

1. ***Superimpositions*** “are thinking that something exists when actually it does not”—this is synonymous with *eternalism*
2. ***Deprecations*** “are thinking that something does not exist when in fact it does”—this is synonymous with *nihilism*

### ***The three doors of liberation*, p. 11**

“*The three doors of liberation* apply to functioning things—conditioned things’ natures, their causes and their effects.”

1. ***Empty***: “In terms of their nature, they are empty of inherent existence”
2. ***Peaceful***: “In terms of their causes, all signs of true existence of their causes are pacified in the sense that such signs do not exist.”
3. ***Unborn***: “In terms of their results, no truly existent results arise—that is, truly existent results are not produced.”

These three are more commonly called **emptiness, signlessness, and wishlessness**.

### **Freedom from cyclic existence is called *liberation* and this state also actualizes *true cessation* and *nirvana*, p. 24**

- “*Liberation* is posited from the viewpoint of being free from cyclic existence and the unfortunate realms.”
- “*True cessation* is posited from the viewpoint of ceasing the causes that impel us to experience cyclic existence and the unfortunate realms.”
- “*Nirvana* is posited from the viewpoint of having gone beyond the dukkha of samsara and unfortunate realms along with their causes. *Nirvana* is translated as “the state beyond sorrow...”

### ***Ngejung, definite emergence, Renunciation*, p. 25**

the determination to be free. The desire to emerge from cyclic existence.

### ***The Perishing aggregates*, p. 29**

“The view of the perishing aggregates is so-called because the I is merely labeled in dependence of the aggregates, and the aggregates arise and cease in every moment.” Also referred to as *the transitory collection*.

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### **The *basis of designation* or basis of imputation, p. 73**

The basis upon which a label or name is given.

“For example, the aggregates are the basis of designation of the person, meaning that the self clings to and appropriates them for its own use.”

### ***Three Levels of Selflessness of a Person*, chart on p. 50**

1. Emptiness of a permanent, unitary, and independent person — “With respect to the person, no such permanent, unitary, and independent person can be found.”
2. Emptiness of a self-sufficient, substantially existent person — “Such a self-sufficient, substantially existent person would be independent of the aggregates yet in control of them.”
3. Emptiness of an inherently existent person — “The Prasangika-Madhyamikas say that persons do not exist inherently, that is, without being merely designated by name and concept. They are empty of inherent existence, both ultimately and conventionally.”

### ***Inherent*, p. 50**

The Merriam-Webster dictionary definition of “inherent” says: “Inherent literally refers to something that is ‘stuck in’ something else so firmly that they can’t be separated. A plan may have an inherent flaw that will cause it to fail; a person may have inherent virtues that everyone admires. Since the flaw and the virtues can’t be removed, the plan may simply have to be thrown out and the person will remain virtuous forever.”

### ***Doubt inclined toward emptiness*, p. 38**

There are three types of doubt: (in this context)

1. doubt inclined toward the wrong conclusion, in this case that things inherently exist,
2. doubt that is equal to both sides, and
3. doubt inclined toward the correct conclusion, that phenomena are empty of inherent existence.”

### ***The five paths*, p. 39-40**

1. *The path of accumulation*. “A practitioner focuses on accumulating merit, as well as on cultivating serenity and gaining the correct view....”
2. *The path of preparation* “is attained when the practitioner gains the union of serenity and insight on emptiness.”
3. *The path of seeing* “When the practitioner has his first direct realization of emptiness, he passes onto the path of seeing...he abandons the acquired afflictions.”
4. *The path of meditation*. The practitioner “abandons the innate afflictions.”

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5. *The path of no-more learning* “of the bodhisattva vehicle is when [practitioners] become fully enlightened buddhas.”

### Two Types of Afflictions, p. 40

- **Acquired afflictions** “are ones that we have acquired this lifetime from learning incorrect philosophies.”
- **Innate afflictions** “are much more ingrained and harder to eliminate because they have been present in our minds beginninglessly. All of these afflictions, their seeds, and the karma that causes samsaric rebirth are called *afflictive obscurations*....”  
“Practitioners following the bodhisattva path abandon an additional, subtler level of obscurations, the *cognitive obscurations* that prevent total knowledge of all phenomena.”

### The Four Seals, p. 45-48

1. *All conditioned phenomena are impermanent* “because they depend on the causes and conditions that produce them. That means they are in a state of constant flux, never remaining the same in the next moment.”
2. *All contaminated things are unsatisfactory.* “Everything that is created under the influence of ignorance is unsatisfactory. Contaminated mainly refers to the influence of self-grasping mind. Through its influence, afflictions and karma arise, so they are contaminated by ignorance. Due to afflictions and karma, the five aggregates—our present mind and body—as well as the environment, arise, so all these are contaminated by ignorance as well.”
3. *All phenomena are empty and selfless.*
4. *Nirvana is peace.*

### Demeritorious, p. 47-48

The word “*demeritorious*” in the context of the verse from Aryadeva’s *Four Hundred Stanzas* “refers to the view that the law of karma and its results does not exist. We do not believe that our actions bring results that we experience in future lives.” This means that there is not a proper understanding of “dependent origination.” “[T]he Buddha says, ‘Depending on this, that arises. Depending on the cessation of this, that ceases.’ A person who rejects the functioning of karma and its results...will not be able to understand the subtler types of dependent arising that are used to prove the emptiness of inherent existence.”

### Existing from its own side, p. 49-50

“Existing inherently, that is, without being merely designated by name and concept....”

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### ***Three types of phenomena: Obvious, slightly obscure, and very obscure, p. 54***

1. “*Obvious or manifest phenomena* are those that immediately evident to us. All the objects perceived by our five sense consciousnesses are obvious phenomena.”
2. “*Slightly obscure phenomena*, on the other hand, cannot be known straightaway.” For example, “The impermanence of sound cannot be known by the auditory consciousness of ordinary beings. We must first understand it by applying reasoning, such as the syllogism, ‘Sound is impermanent because it is a product of causes.’”
3. “*Very obscure phenomena* are those that we know by depending on the word of a reliable expert on the topic. For example, to know our birth date, we rely on our parents.” Or the Buddha, to understand the minute details of the functioning of karma.

### ***The Five Aggregates, p. 59***

1. “*The form aggregate*. When speaking of the five aggregates that are the basis of designation of the person, the form aggregate indicates the physical body.”
2. “*The feeling aggregate*. Feeling here does not mean emotion but refers to the pleasant, painful, and neutral quality of whatever we experience physically or mentally.”
3. “*The aggregate of discrimination*. This is the mental factor that discerns or identifies objects and their attributes.”
4. “*The aggregate of volitional factors*. This consists of a variety of mental factors that work together. Emotions, attitudes, and views are part of this aggregate, as are abstract composites....” Concepts, judgements, etc.
5. “*The consciousness aggregate*. This consists of the six primary minds: visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, tactile, and Mental. The mental consciousness is especially important because it is what thinks and conceptualizes. The mental consciousness is also what can be transformed into yogic direct perceivers, such as the mind directly realizing emptiness.”

### ***The Continuum of mental consciousness, p. 62***

The five aggregates are constantly arising and dissolving in each moment. These moments form a continuum. We impute a person based on this continuum. “When a particular moment of mental consciousness ceases, it gives rise to a new moment of mental consciousness. This in turn gives rise to a further moment of mental consciousness, and so on. In this way there is continuity into the next moment.” This continuum may be mistaken for a self.

### ***No Permanent, Unitary, and Independent Self, p. 63***

- “Permanent refers to not arising and disintegrating;

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- unitary means being a single entity without component parts;
  - and independent signifies not depending on causes and conditions.”
- “No Buddhist system of tenets asserts the existence of such a person.”

### Two Types of Self-Grasping, p. 64

- “*Acquired self-grasping* is the self-grasping acquired through learning a system of philosophy or psychology that teaches that a person exists in such-and-such erroneous way.”
- “*Innate self-grasping* is the self-grasping that we have had since beginningless time. It travels with us from one life to the next.”

Similar to the two types of afflictions

### Chart: Illustration of the Person, p. 74

Commentary by Derek on the distinction between the various schools’ imputed basis of a sense of self being based on something locatable—e.g. the skandhas, the continuum of consciousness etc.—as opposed to the Prasangika-Madhyamaka school in which the mere I, as defined below, is not locatable.

### The Mere I, p. 75

“What is the person that exists but is empty? The mere I is the person that exists by being merely imputed by name and concept. It’s nothing more or less than that. It exists, and yet when we search with ultimate analysis to find it, we cannot.” (Most subtle, not locatable, like mere appearance).

### The Dharmas

Derek’s commentary regarding background on the topics in the readings:

- *Primary matter* in the Buddhist scheme is made up of four elements: fire, air, water and earth.
- *Secondary matter* is what is experienced by the senses: color, taste, sound, touch etc.
- *Primary mind* is made up of the five sense consciousnesses; eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body plus the sixth, mental, consciousness, mind. Associated with the fifth skandha.
- *Secondary mind* is comprised of emotions, concepts, e.g. democracy. This is associated with the fourth skandha.

### Valid Cognition

The two ways primary mind knows things (i.e. validly):

1. *Direct Cognition* happens by means of the five senses. It cognizes apparent objects, those that are perceived directly. It is non-conceptual, occurring in the first moment

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of perception before any conceptualization, categorization, judgements, etc. takes place.

2. *Correct Inferential Cognition* enables valid perception of hidden objects using correct valid logic such as a syllogism.

### ***The Basis of Designation and the Designated Object, p. 73***

- “*The basis of designation* is the basis upon which a label or name is given.... For example, the aggregates are the *basis of designation* of the person. Without any of the aggregates appearing, there is no way to know a person is there: they are the basis depending on which the person is imputed.”
- “*The designated object* is the object designated in dependence on its *basis of designation*. While *the basis of designation* and the *designated object* depend on each other, they are not exactly the same. If we try to find what the name ‘person’ refers to within its *basis of designation*, we cannot find anything that we can isolate and point to as being the person.”

### ***Definiendum, definition, and illustration (e.g. of the person), p. 74-77***

- ***Definiendum*** “is the object that is defined....” [in this case,] “The person is the *definiendum*....”
- ***Definition:*** “‘the (mere) I imputed depending on the four or five aggregates’ is its *definition*”
- ***illustration*** would be me, my mother” etc. “[H]ere our interest lies in the *illustration* of the person that cycles in samsara, practices the path and attains liberation.”

### ***The General I and the Specific I, p.82***

“When we say, ‘The person is what goes from life to life,’ we are referring to the general person or *the general I*. This *general I* does indeed go from life to life, but not all instances or specific examples of the person go from one life to the next. For example, the person of the past life did not carry on to this life.... And the person of this life will not go on to the next life.... But the continuity of the ‘person that pervades all our lives’ does go on to the next life and enlightenment.”

### ***The Tibetan word dzin, p. 86***

“In relation to cognition, it can mean ‘to apprehend’ or ‘to grasp.’” “[W]e will use these two English words to distinguish between a valid mind apprehending the I and a mind erroneously grasping the I as inherently existent.”

### ***The I-apprehending mind, p. 86-92***

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- “*The valid I-apprehending mind* is not erroneous. It is a valid mind because there is an I that is the agent of actions...an I that is reborn in this realm and goes to that realm after death. This *I-apprehending mind* apprehends the I that exists....”
- *The erroneous (innate) I-grasping mind*. “[W]hereas *the innate I-grasping mind* grasps a truly existent I that does not exist at all... [B]ut that mind also thinks there is an inherently existing I. It believes that the appearance of an inherently existent I is true; it assents to and agrees with that appearance, and thus it grasps at an inherently existing I.”

### **Conventionally valid I, p. 85-92**

“The focal object of both the valid **I-apprehending mind** and the erroneous **I-grasping mind** is the **conventional I**... [while] **the person** who is the focal object of both these minds—is the self, the person, the I, and the being.”

“These **four** terms are synonymous and indicate the conventionally existent person.”

“The valid conventional mind that apprehends the conventionally existing I is the mind that thinks, ‘I’m coming, I’m going. I’m eating. I’m practicing Dharma.’”

### **The Aspect “I,” p. 92-93**

“The self that does not exist is sometimes referred to as ‘the aspect I’ or the ‘I that is the aspect of the mode of apprehension of the self-grasping mind.’ This means that the self-grasping mind refers to the person that exists but grasps it as truly existent.”

### **Focal Object, p. 89**

- “Every consciousness has a *focal object*, which is the main object that the consciousness is concerned with.”
- “*The appearing object* (snang yul) is the object appearing to that consciousness.” (Accessed through the first five consciousnesses.)
- “*The apprehended object* (‘dzin btangs kyi yul) is the object the mind apprehends or grasps.” (Processed via the sixth consciousness.)

### **Mistaken and erroneous, p. 89-91**

Ss used in the text and regarding the perception of appearing and apprehended objects-

Both the valid I-apprehending mind and the I-grasping (innate) mind are mistaken with respect to its appearing object; an inherently existent I appears to both. This is *mistaken*.

- “The valid I-apprehending mind [however] is incontrovertible with respect to its apprehended object.” It is apprehending the conventional I which is valid, not *erroneous*.

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- “The innate I-grasping mind is *erroneous* with respect to its apprehended object.” That is because it grasps at the I as being inherently existent.

It seems that *mistaken* here means conflating the *appearance* of something that *does* exist (the conventional I) with something that does *not* exist (an inherently existing I). Whereas *erroneous*, in this context, seems to mean completely misinterpreting the nature of what is a “person.”

The innate self-grasping mind proceeds from registering the *appearance* of an inherently existing I to relying on that appearance in order to solidify it, through the sixth consciousness, into a hardened belief in that inherently existing “I.”

### “Incontrovertible,” p. 89

“Not controvertible; not open to question or dispute; indisputable: absolute and incontrovertible truth.”

### Independent, Self-Sufficient, Inherent Existence, p. 93-94

- *Independent*: “Here independence means ‘independent of causes and conditions.’”
- *Self-sufficient*: “In this context self-sufficient means ‘independent from the aggregates.’”
- *Inherent existence*: “In this context inherent existence means ‘independent of all other factors’, including name and concept.”

### Three Modes of Apprehending Phenomena, p. 132

“The mind can apprehend phenomena in three ways:

1. As existing from their own side
2. As merely labeled
3. As neither merely labeled nor as existing from their own side.”

### Nonaffirmative negation, p. 135,151

“Emptiness is a *nonaffirming negation*, which is a mere lack or absence of the object of negation—in this case self-existence.”

This means that negating the existence of the self does not imply a statement about the existence of something else.

### Dependent Arising, p. 141

“If *dependent arising* meant ‘to come into being dependent on causes and conditions,’ then only conditioned phenomena would be *dependent arisings*. However, it means ‘to exist in dependence on other factors,’ and thus all phenomena—both impermanent and permanent—are dependent arisings.”



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### ***Ways in which phenomena are dependent, p. 141***

“In one [way of speaking about dependence], phenomena are dependent in three ways. From the coarsest level of dependence to the most subtle, these are:

1. Dependence on causes and conditions
2. Dependence on parts
3. Dependence on imputation by name and concept.”

“From another perspective, two types of dependent arising are spoken of:

1. *Causal dependence*, which is the same as dependence on causes and conditions
2. *Dependent designation*, which applies to all phenomena, both permanent and impermanent

### ***Causal dependence, p. 141-142***

“*Causal dependence* refers to the way an effect arises by depending on the causes and conditions that produced it. Dependent on prior causes, effects arise; for example, in dependence on a seed, a plant will grow.”

### ***Dependent designation, p. 144-145***

Nagarjuna said in *Treatise on the Middle Way*:

“Agent depends upon action  
Action depends upon the agent as well.  
Apart from dependent arising  
one cannot see any cause for their existence.”

“Since everything that exists depends on something else to come into existence, nothing can be self-existent. Nothing exists without relying on or being in relationship with other factors.”

### ***Dependence on Imputation by Name and Concept, p. 147-148***

“This is the subtlest type of dependence. Dependence on imputation means that things exist by being merely dependent on name and concept. Names are imputed or designated in dependence on something that is able to fulfill a unique or specific function that corresponds with the meaning of the name.”

“Saying that things are ‘mere name’ or ‘mere imputation’ in no way annihilates objects. It just negates inherent existence, existence from its own side.”

### ***The Four Essential Points, p. 155***

In the context of meditating on the reasoning of neither one nor many -

1. ***Ascertaining the object of negation, p. 156***

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“What, then, does ascertaining the object of negation mean? It means gaining certainty about the way in which the object of negation, (an inherently existing I), would exist, if it did exist.”

“The mind grasps the conventionally existent I - the I that does exist - in the aspect of inherent existence. The aspect I is also the apprehended object of the self-grasping mind. It is the I that is the object of negation when meditating in the selflessness of persons.” “It is easier to ascertain the object of negation, an inherently existing I, when it appears vividly to the mind.”

### **2. *Ascertaining the pervasion, p. 159***

“That is, it pervades that if the I exists inherently, it must be either inherently one or inherently different from the aggregates. There is no third possibility.”

### **3. *Ascertaining freedom from being one, p. 163***

Are I and the aggregates inseparably one and the same?”

### **4. *Ascertaining freedom from being many, p. 169***

“Are the I and the aggregates totally unrelated?”

## ***How Things Arise: Refuting the Four Extremes, p. 175***

### **1. *Not arising from self, p. 175***

“The Prasangika system asserts emphatically that cause and effect are different; they are different entities, natures and substances, and the effect does not exist at the time of the cause. Cause and effect are never simultaneous, and therefore the sprout definitely does not exist at the time of the seed.”

### **2. *Not arising from other, p. 179***

“If [mother and child] are related they can’t be inherently existent. Since one arises from the other and they are dependent, neither can exist inherently or from its own side.”

### **3. *Not arising from both, p. 181***

“In other words, since both means both self and others, once we refute either arising from self or arising from others, we clearly cannot have arising from both of them.”

### **4. *Not arising causelessly, p. 181***

“If we say things arise randomly and without cause, we would have to say that the hardships people go through to sow seeds, work in the fields, and harvest the crops would be pointless because the crops could grow without causes. In the same way, creating virtue in order to have a good future life would be unnecessary because what we are born as in the future would not depend on causes.”

## ***Definitive and Provisional Meanings, p. 189***

“*Definitive* meanings are those that cannot be harmed by reasoning or scripture.”

“*Provisional* meanings are those that can be harmed by reasoning or scripture.”

## ***The Four Reliances, p. 190***

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1. Don't rely on the person of the teacher, but on what he or she teaches, the doctrine.
2. Don't rely on the words, but on the meaning.
3. Don't rely on provisional teachings that require interpretation, but on the definitive teachings.
4. Don't rely on the definite meaning as found by a dualistic consciousness, but on nonconceptual wisdom.

### ***Three meanings of the term "independent," p. 192***

"While all Buddhist schools refute an independent self, their meaning of independent varies.

- When speaking about a self that is permanent, unitary and independent, independent means independent of causes and conditions.
- When speaking about a self-sufficient, substantially existent person, independent means independent of the aggregates.
- According to the Prasangikas, an even subtler meaning of independent exists: being independent of designation by term and concept."

### ***Self-Emptiness, p. 198***

"That which is empty of self-existence we call self-empty (rangtong). This is the emptiness taught in the middle turning of the wheel [of dharma], the emptiness asserted by the Prasangikas, and it means all phenomena do not exist in and of themselves; they exist dependent on other factors."

### ***Other-Emptiness, p. 201***

"An object's emptiness of existing from its own side."

### ***True and false, p. 204***

- "Something is true if the way it appears and the way it exists are concordant.
- Something is false if the way it appears and the way it exists are discordant.

Emptiness is **true** because the way in which it appears and the way in which it exists are concordant. The way emptiness appears is just as it is.

Conventional phenomena, on the other hand, are **false** because the way they appear is not in accord with the way they exist."

### ***Ultimate and conventional phenomena, p. 209***

- "Phenomena whose way of appearing and way of being are concordant in relation to the mind that directly realizes them are called ultimate phenomena. These phenomena—emptinesses—are true.
- Phenomena whose way of appearing and way of existing are discordant to the mind that directly realizes them are conventional phenomena. Conventional phenomena are false."

### ***Basis, path, and result, p. 231***

"All the Buddha taught can be encompassed under the headings of basis, path and result...." "[T]he two truths are the basis, method and wisdom are the path, and the two bodies of a buddha are the result."

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### ***The two bodies of a Buddha, p. 231***

- “Attaining the form body—*nirmanakaya*—depends mainly on the practice of method, and the method aspect of the path correlates mainly with the practice of conventional truth.”
- “Likewise the truth body—*dharmakaya*—is attained mainly by the practice of wisdom, and this practice is done mainly in reference to ultimate truths. A correct understanding of the ultimate truth is the basis for practicing wisdom, and it is mainly through the practice of wisdom that we will attain the truth body.”

### ***The two truths, p. 232***

“The two truths are objects of mind, not facts or beliefs accepted as correct as the usual meaning of truth implies. The two truths are the conventional truths and the ultimate truths, and all phenomena are either one or the other. There is nothing that is both and nothing that is neither.”

### ***Isolate, p.233***

“For our purposes here, it suffices to know that ‘one nature but different *isolates*’ means they are the same nature but are nominally different; in other words, we approach them through distinct conceptual pathways.”

### ***Conventional truth, p. 234***

“The Tibetan term for conventional truth is *kundzob denpa*. *Kun* means ‘all’ and has the connotation of a variety and of many. *Dzob* has the meaning of being false, of concealing.

- The reason that conventional truths are regarded as false is because their way of appearing and their way of existing are discordant.
- *Denpa* means ‘truth’ and in the case of conventional truths, it means ‘true from the perspective of the of the true-grasping mind’....”

### ***Ultimate truth, p. 235***

“The Tibetan term for ultimate truth is *dondam denpa*. *Don* means ‘fact’ or ‘object’. An ultimate truth is a fact or object found by the arya’s wisdom of meditative equipoise on emptiness. *Dam* means ‘amazing’ or ‘supreme,’ and *denpa* means ‘truth’.”

### ***The two truths are the same nature but they are not the same, p. 239***

- “Being able to make the distinction between saying the two truths are the same and saying they are the same nature is important. They are the same nature but they are not the same.
- If they were the same, they would be the same in name and meaning. However, as we have seen, the two truths have different names and refer to different objects. They are mutually exclusive.
- Nevertheless, they are the same nature, which means that the conventional nature of the thing—its nature of being nominally existent, its nature of depending on causes and conditions—is the nature of being empty of true existence.”