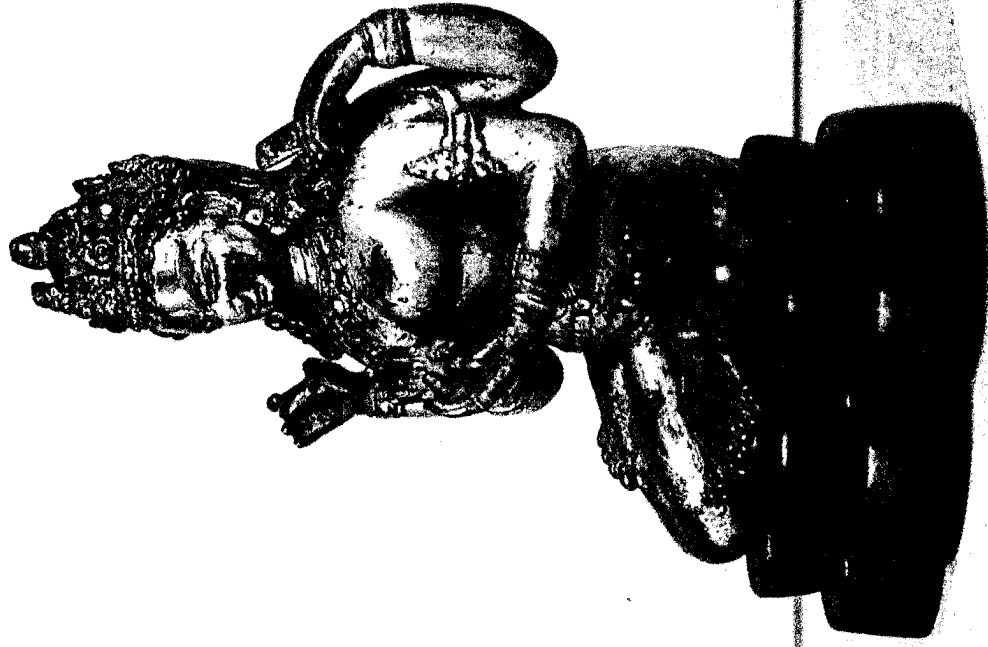


SELECTED SAYINGS
FROM THE
PERFECTION OF WISDOM

Chosen, arranged, and translated by

EDWARD CONZE



The Prajñāpāramitā figure referred to on page 7

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the fact that it is neither unmoved nor destroyed. And it is not made by either cognition or vision. For this is its essential nature.

4. MAGICAL ILLUSION

The reality character of empty dharmas is further defined by a number of similes which occur very frequently in these Sūtras.

83.

Subhūti : How does a Bodhisattva come to the knowledge of the five grasping skandhas when he trains himself in the deep perfection of wisdom ?

The Lord : He comes to the knowledge of the five skandhas when he knows, according to the truth, (1) what the marks of the skandhas are, (2) how they are produced and stopped, (3) what is meant by their Suchness.

(1) Form is like a mass of foam, it has no solidity, it is full of cracks and holes, and it has no substantial inner core. Feeling is like a bubble, which swiftly rises and swiftly disappears, and it has no durable subsistence. Perception is like a mirage. As in a mirage pool absolutely no water at all can be found (so there is nothing substantial in that which is perceived). Impulses are like the trunk of a plantain tree : when you strip off one leaf-sheath after another, nothing remains, and you cannot lay hand on a core within. Consciousness is like a mock show, as when magically created soldiers, conjured up by a magician, are seen marching through the streets.

(2) The Bodhisattva wisely knows the production of the skandhas when he knows that they have come from nowhere, (although they seem to manifest themselves actually before him). He wisely knows the stopping of the skandhas when he knows that they do not go to anywhere, (although they seem to disappear altogether out of sight).

(3) The Bodhisattva perceives according to the truth that there is what is to be known as the Suchness of the five skandhas, in which there is no production or stopping, no coming or going, no defilement or purification, no growth or diminution. This Suchness is never false to its nature, and therefore it is called "Suchness". In it there is no perversion, and that is also why it is called "Suchness".

84.

The Lord : As stars, a fault of vision, as a lamp, A mock show, dewdrops, or a bubble, A dream, a lightning flash, or cloud, So we should view what is conditioned.

85.

Sariputra : How should a Bodhisattva course in perfect wisdom ?

The Lord : Here a Bodhisattva, coursing in the perfection of wisdom, is truly a Bodhisattva, but he does not review a Bodhisattva, or the word "Bodhisattva", or the course of a Bodhisattva, does not review perfect wisdom, nor the word "perfect wisdom". He does not review that "he courses", nor that "he does not course". Form also he does not review, nor feeling, etc. For a Bodhisattva is empty of the own-being of a Bodhisattva, and also perfect wisdom is by its own being empty. That is its essential original nature. Because it is not through emptiness that form is empty. What is the emptiness of form that is not form. Nor is emptiness other than form. For the very form is emptiness, the very emptiness is form. Because "Bodhisattva", "perfect wisdom", "form", etc., are mere words. They are like magical illusions. Illusions and words do not stand at any point, nor on any spot. They are not, do not arise, are false to behold. For there is no production nor stopping, no defilement nor purification of something which has an own-being that is seen to be a magical illusion. A Bodhisattva who courses in perfect wisdom does therefore not review the production of a dharma, or its stopping, or its abiding, its decrease or increase, its defilement or purification. He does not review anything, from form to enlightenment, and what is called an "enlightenment-being", that also he does not review. Because words are merely artificial constructions, which do not represent dharmas. They express dharmas through adventitious designations, which are imagined and unreal. A Bodhisattva who courses in perfect wisdom does not review any realities behind those words, and, in consequence, does not settle down in them.

86.

Thereupon the thought came to some of the Gods in that

*THE PERFECTION OF WISDOM
IN EIGHT THOUSAND LINES
& ITS VERSE SUMMARY*

translated by **Edward Conze**

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produced; as well as those who resolutely believe that "all dharmas are calmly quiet," without, however, having entered into the attainment of the irreversible domain over all dharmas; those Bodhisattvas who dwell in this dwelling are honoured by the Buddhas in the above manner. [452] But Bodhisattvas of whom the Buddhas proclaim the name, etc., and over whom they exult, must have forsaken the level of the Disciples and Pratyekabuddhas, and one must expect them to be on the level of the Buddha. And they shall be predicted to full enlightenment. For Bodhisattvas of whom the Buddhas proclaim the name, etc., and over whom they exult, they also shall stand in irreversibility.

4. ENLIGHTENMENT AND SUCHNESS

Moreover, Subhuti, Bodhisattvas will stand in irreversibility if, when they hear this deep perfection of wisdom being taught, they resolutely believe in it, are not stupefied, do not hesitate or doubt; if in the resolute belief that "so it is, as the Tathagata has taught" they go on listening to it in greater detail; and if they make up their minds that they will want to listen in still greater detail to this perfection of wisdom in the presence of the Tathagata Akshobhya; and if they will resolutely believe when they listen to just this perfection of wisdom in the presence of persons belonging to the vehicle of the Bodhisattvas who in his Buddha-field lead the holy life. [453] Thus I teach that merely to hear the perfection of wisdom achieves much. How much more will be achieved by those who resolutely believe in it, who, after that, take up a position in relation to Thusness and progress to Thusness, and who, after that, stand firmly in Suchness and who, standing firmly in Suchness and in all-knowledge, will demonstrate dharma.

Subhuti: If, O Lord, one cannot get at any different dharma, distinct from Suchness, then what is that dharma that will stand firmly in Suchness, or that will know full enlightenment, or that will demonstrate this dharma?

The Lord: One cannot get at any different dharma, distinct from Suchness, that will stand firmly in Suchness. The very Suchness, to begin with, is not apprehended, how much less he who will stand firmly in Suchness. Suchness does not know full enlightenment, and no dharma is got at that has known full enlightenment, that will do so, or that does so. Suchness does not demonstrate dharma, and that dharma cannot be got at [which would be demonstrated. [454]

5. EMPTINESS AND DWELLING IN PERFECT WISDOM

Sakra: Deep, O Lord, is the perfection of wisdom. Doers of what is hard are the Bodhisattvas who want to know full enlightenment. For, indeed, no dharma stands in Suchness, no dharma knows full enlightenment, no one demonstrates dharma. And yet that does not cow them, nor do they hesitate, nor are they stupefied.

Subhuti: You say, Kausika, that "doers of what is hard are the Bodhisattvas who, when dharmas as deep as these are being taught, feel neither hesitation nor stupefaction." But, where all dharmas are empty who can therein feel hesitation or stupefaction?

Sakra: Whatever the holy Subhuti may expound, that he expounds with reference to emptiness, and he does not get stuck anywhere. The holy Subhuti's demonstration of dharma does not get stuck anywhere, no more than an arrow shot into the air. Then perhaps, O Lord, I, if I take into consideration Subhuti the Elder, as he thus teaches and expounds, may become one who correctly preaches the Tathagata-truth, a preacher of Dharma, and one who declares also the logical sequence of dharma.

The Lord: So it is, Kausika. When you teach and expound as he does, then you become one who correctly preaches the Tathagata-truth, a preacher of dharma, and one who declares also the dharma's logical sequence. For whatever [455] the Elder Subhuti makes clear, that he makes clear with reference to emptiness. Because the Elder Subhuti does not, to begin with, even review or apprehend the perfection of wisdom, how much less him who courses in the perfection of wisdom. Even enlightenment, to begin with, he does not get at, how much less at him who will know full enlightenment. Even all-knowledge he does not get at, how much less at him who will reach all-knowledge. Even Suchness he does not get at, how much less at him who will become a Tathagata. Even non-production he does not get at, how much less at him who will fully awake to enlightenment. Even the powers he does not get at, how much less at him who will possess the powers. Even the grounds of self-confidence he does not review, how much less him who will be self-confident. Even the dharma he does not get at, how much less at him who will demonstrate dharma. For Subhuti the Elder dwells in the dwelling of the isolatedness of all dharmas, in the dwelling of the baselessness of all dharmas. And it is quite certain that this dwelling in the isolatedness and baselessness of all dharmas, on the part of Subhuti the Elder, is of infinitesimal value compared with the dwelling of a Bodhisattva who courses in perfect wisdom, and who dwells in it. Because, except for the dwelling of a Tathagata this dwelling of a Bodhisattva who courses in perfect wisdom, who dwells in it, surpasses all other dwellings. [456] This dwelling has been described as the foremost of

PERFECT WISDOM

The Short

Prajñāpāramitā Texts

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can enjoy or use the wealth¹ of the great lion, the fully enlightened Buddha. But those who are the whelps of the fully enlightened Buddha, the offspring of the Buddha, the great lion, (24a) sprung from the cognition of the Self-Existent—they enjoy the roar of the great lion, of the fully enlightened Buddha, and will do so for ever.

Sāradvatīputra: It is wonderful, O Lord, how pure an assembly has congregated here for the Tathagata, it is exceedingly wonderful how pure is this assembly of the Tathagata, which is an assembly of the Self-existent, an assembly which cannot be crushed, an adamant assembly, an assembly which is immovable, unshakable, imperturbable.

The Lord: You proclaim the virtues of this assembly?

Sāradvatīputra: I could not possibly proclaim the virtues of this assembly. And why? Like Sumeru is this assembly, endowed with infinite virtues.²

The Lord: So it is, Sāradvatīputra. Endowed with infinite virtues is this assembly. Even the fully enlightened Buddhas themselves cannot get to the end of these virtues, how much less other beings! But this assembly has not been brought together by the Tathagata, nor has the Tathagata had any zeal with regard to it—but simply by its own wholesome roots has this assembly congregated here, when it heard My name. Nor has anyone in this assembly been set to work by the Tathagata, or been bidden (to come), but simply by their own wholesome roots have they been impelled (to come). That they have come to this assembly, that is in the nature of things.³ For it is a law that, where there is such a demonstration of Dharma, there an assembly of great beings of this kind takes place. Such an assembly also comes together for those other Buddhas and Lords, who reveal this Bodhisattva-Pitaka which cuts off all uncertainties. That just such an assembly-circle is bound to be effected where there is this demonstration of Dharma, that is in the nature of things.

CHAPTER III: SUCHNESS

The Lord: "Perfection of Wisdom, Perfection of Wisdom," Suvikrāntavikrāmin, what is the Bodhisattva's Perfection of Wisdom?⁴ The actual transcendental understanding of all dharmas,⁵

¹Ti: Dharmā, for dhana.

²or: qualities.

³dharmataiṣā

⁴prajñā-pāram-itā. Lit.: wisdom which has gone beyond. Also: transcendental wisdom.

⁵gañ chos thams-cad-kyi tshu-rol rtags-pa stc. ā-pāram-itā.

that cannot be expounded. But to the extent that an understanding takes place in you, to that extent (25a) I will expound the Perfection of Wisdom by way of conventional expressions.

Not are form, or the other skandhas, the perfection of wisdom; nor are they other than it. And why? For what is the Beyond of the skandhas, not that are the skandhas. And as the Beyond of the skandhas, so are the skandhas. And as the Beyond of the skandhas, so that of all dharmas. What is the Beyond of all dharmas, not that are all dharmas; and as the Beyond of all dharmas, so are all dharmas.

The words "what is the (25b) Beyond of the skandhas, not that are the skandhas" expound the disjoining of¹ the skandhas, whereas the words "as the Beyond of the skandhas, so are the skandhas" are an exposition of the own-being of the skandhas. In this way one has expounded the skandhas as they actually are, their essential original nature, their non-apprehension. The words "what is the Beyond of all dharmas, not that are all dharmas" expound the disjoining of² all dharmas, whereas the words "as the Beyond of all dharmas so are all dharmas" are an exposition of the own-being of all dharmas. In this way one has expounded all dharmas as they actually are, their essential original nature, (26a) their non-apprehension. And as the reality of all dharmas such as they actually are, as their essential original nature, as their non-apprehension, so is the Perfection of Wisdom.

For the Perfection of Wisdom is not supported by the skandhas, it does not stand inside the skandhas or outside them, nor does it stand about somewhere between the two (i.e. inside and outside) at a remote distance. It is not conjoined with the skandhas, nor disjoined from them; for it is not conjoined with any dharma, nor disjoined from it. But the Suchness of the skandhas, their non-falseness, unaltered Suchness, Suchness such as it actually is, that is the Perfection of Wisdom. (26b)

"Form,"³ that is without form. And why? Because no form exists in form; and this fact of (its) non-existence (in itself), that is the wisdom which has gone beyond. For form is without the own-being of form; and this being without own-being, that is the wisdom which has gone beyond. For the non-own-being of form that is form; and this absence of own-being, that is the wisdom which has gone beyond. For form is not the range of form; and because it is not its

¹from

²In the following the text first makes a statement about form, and then repeats it for the other skandhas. The reader can supply the repetitions for himself.

range, form does not perceive or see form—this non-knowledge, this not seeing of form, that is the wisdom which has gone beyond. (27a) Nor does form cognize¹ the own-being of form; it is this comprehension of the absence of own-being that is called the wisdom which has gone beyond. For form is not conjoined with form, nor disjoined from it; this absence of conjoining and disjoining, that is the perfection of wisdom which has gone beyond.

They do not increase or decrease, and this absence of increase and decrease, that is the wisdom which has gone beyond²; they are not defiled or purified; (27b) they are not subject to³ purity or non-purity; they do not transmigrate or not transmigrate⁴; they are not conjoined nor disjoined; they do not decrease nor are they reborn; (28a) they are not born nor do they die; they do not wander about in birth-and-death, nor are they subject to doing so; they do not get extinct and are not subject to extinction; they are not subject to origination or stopping, (28b) nor to production or passing away; they are not liable to reversal nor not liable to reversal; they are not permanent or impermanent, (29a) not ease or ill, not salubrious or insalubrious, not self or not-self; not subject to greed or dispassion, to hate or non-hate, (29b) to delusion or freedom from delusion; they have no doer and no doing,⁵ no ariser and no raiser, no knower and no one who makes known, no feeler and no feeling, no cognizer and no one who sees; no annihilation or eternity concerns them, (30b) they have no end and are not endless; they are not bound up with false views, nor have they forsaken that which is bound up with false views; they are not craving or its forsaking; they are not wholesome or unwholesome. (31a)

For of them no going or coming⁶ is conceived,⁷ no stability or instability, not this shore or the shore beyond,⁸ no morality or

¹So Ti and Ms. against Hikata and Ch who read "abandon".

²The following passage has been greatly abbreviated. They stands for form and the other skandhas. The second part, put into italics, should be supplied for each item, i.e. and this absence of defilement and purification, that is the wisdom which has gone beyond, etc., etc.

³-dharma

⁴ni 'pho-ba; avakrāmati, "depart".

⁵kārayitā, byed-dū 'jug-pa

⁶So Ti. Hikata: not going.

⁷This section is also greatly abbreviated. The original reads: "For, Suvikrānt-avikrāntin, of form no going or coming is conceived; even so of feeling, perception, impulses and consciousness no going or coming is conceived. Wherein one does not conceive the going or coming of form—feeling—perception—impulse—consciousness, that is the wisdom which has gone beyond. With the help of this example the reader can easily supply the omitted portions.

⁸āram. pārām

immorality, (31b) no affection or aversion; they do not give or receive; for them there is no patience and no non-patience, no vigour and no sloth, no concentration and no distracted mentality, no (32a) wisdom or stupidity; no perverted views and no unperverted views; no applications of mindfulness and no non-applications of mindfulness; no right efforts and no non-right-efforts; no roads to psychic power and no boundless states; (32b) no faculties, no powers, limbs of enlightenment or path; no (sacred) knowledge or emancipation; no trances, emancipations, concentrations, attainments, superknowledges, and also no non-superknowledges; no emptiness, signlessness or wishlessness; (33a) they are not conditioned or unconditioned, not attachment or non-attachment, not cognition or non-cognition; no minding, vapouring, or discursing; (33b) no perception or non-perception; not appeased and not unappeased; not the Blessed Rest nor its absence.

For the wisdom which has gone beyond is not an exposition which implies the real creation¹ of the five skandhas; but it is the Suchness of the exposition which implies the real creation of the five skandhas, its non-falseness, unaltered Suchness, Suchness such as it really is (=etc.). And the same holds good if we replace the five skandhas by: the elements, sense-fields, conditioned co-production; (34a) the perverted views and the hindrances; the thirty-six modes of craving; the sixty-two false views. For the wisdom which has gone beyond is not an exposition of the trances, emancipations, concentrations and meditational attainments; but it is the Suchness, etc., of the exposition of the trances, emancipations, concentrations, and likewise for the five super-meditational attainments; (34b) and likewise for the five super-knowledges. For the wisdom which has gone beyond is not an exposition which includes the real creation of all worldly dharmas, be they wholesome or unwholesome, that are included in the conditioned; but it is the Suchness, etc., of that exposition; and likewise for: the applications of mindfulness, the right efforts, roads to psychic power, faculties, powers, limbs of enlightenment, and path. (35a) For the wisdom which has gone beyond is not an exposition of the four holy truths, but it is the Suchness, etc., of the purity of morality, concentration, wisdom, liberation and vision and cognition of liberation; an exposition of the supramundane dharmas, which do not lean on anything, are without outflows and

¹abhinirvṛti-paryāpanna-nirvāṇa. This is very awkward. An explanation of that which is included in the five skandhas as really created?

are included in the Unconditioned; an exposition of the Dharma which is emptiness, the Signless, the Wishless, Non-production or the Unaffected; (35b) an exposition of (sacred) knowledge, liberation, dispassion, stopping and Nirvana.

And why? Because the wisdom which has gone beyond is not included in form, or the other skandhas; in earth, water, fire, air or space; in the world of sense-desire, the world of form or the formless world; in dharmas which are conditioned or unconditioned, worldly or supramundane, with or without outflows, wholesome or unwholesome; in the world of beings or in the world of non-beings. Nor is the wisdom which has gone beyond (36a) distinct¹ from these dharmas.

For the wisdom which has gone beyond is not included in any dharma whatsoever, nor unincorporated in it; but it is the Suchness, etc., of dharmas, both included and unincorporated.

"Suchness," Suvikrāntavikrāmin, of what is that a synonym? For these dharmas are not such as they have been apprehended by the foolish common people, nor are they otherwise; but as these dharmas have been seen by the Tathagatas, by their Disciples and by the Bodhisattvas, just so are all these dharmas, (that is their) Suchness, non-falseness, unaltered Suchness, Suchness such as it really is—it is in that sense that one speaks of "Suchness". This is the exposition of the wisdom which has gone beyond for the Bodhisattvas, the great beings.

For certainly this perfection of wisdom has not been set up for the decrease or increase of any dharma, for its conjunction or disjunction, its depletion or repletion, its removal or accumulation, its arrival or (36b) departure, its production or stopping, defilement or purification, for its worldly activity or withdrawal from it, for its origination or disappearance, for marking it as with or without marks, for its sameness or unequality, for conventional or ultimate truth, ease or ill, permanence or impermanence, salubrity or unsalubrity, selfness or not-selfness, truthfulness or fraudulence, activity or non-activity, effectiveness or non-effectiveness,² possibility or impossibility, own-beingness or non-own-beingness, decrease or rebirth, birth or no-birth, real creation or no real creation, for rebirth or the complete cutting off of rebirths, for concord or discord, for causing greed or dispassion, hate or freedom from hate, delusion or freedom from delusion, perverted views or unperverted views,

¹*vairmukta*, set free. *nam-par grol-ba*. Derge as Hikata, but Narthang says, on the contrary, that it is set free from these things. That is equally true, but probably not meant here.

²*kāraṇatvena vā-akāraṇatvena vā*. om. Ti and Ch.

objective supports or no objective supports, extinction or non-extinction, (37a) cognition or non-cognition, inferiority or superiority, service or disservice, for going or not going, beingness or non-beingness, affection or aversion, light or darkness, sloth or vigorous energy, emptiness or non-emptiness, sign-ness or signlessness, wishfulness or wishlessness, effectiveness or ineffectiveness,¹ disappearance or non-disappearance, (sacred) knowledge² or liberation, calm or non-calm, creation or no real creation, wise (attention) or unwise (attention), comprehension or non-comprehension, going forth and no going-forth, discipline or no discipline, morality or immorality, distractedness or no distractedness, wisdom or stupidity, consciousness or no consciousness, stability or instability, companionship or (37b) no-companionship, becoming or unbecoming, attainment or non-attainment, reunion or non-reunion, realization or non-realization, penetration or non-penetration.

CHAPTER IV: SIMILES

Just as a man when he sees a dream may expound an exposition which in its own-being is a *dream*, and yet no exposition which is in its own-being a dream does exist. And why? The dream just does not exist, how much less the exposition which is in its essence a dream; just so the own-being of the perfection of wisdom is expounded, and yet no own-being of the perfection of wisdom does exist; just as the dream does not entail the definition of any dharma whatever, just so the perfection of wisdom does not entail the definition of any dharma whatsoever.

The same formula with: (38a) *magical illusion*; *reflected image*; (38b) *mirage*.

Just as, Suvikrāntavikrāmin, a man who stands within the range of an *echo*, hears the sound of the echo, but does not perceive it; but when he himself pronounces it, then he hears the sound repeated; just so the words expounding the perfection of wisdom reach the hearing, but it is not the exposition of any dharma which reaches the hearing; it is only (39a) that the words addressed to one are noticed and reach the ear.

Just as, Suvikrāntavikrāmin, a man who sees a *mass of foam* may expound the own-being of the mass of foam, and yet no own-being of the mass of foam can be apprehended, either inwardly or outwardly, how much less will there be an apprehension or own-being of that exposition; just so, the perfection of wisdom is expounded, and

¹*abhīsaṃskārāya vā-anabhīsaṃskārāya vā*. Formativeness or non-formativeness.

²Ch. has "ignorance", which gives a better sense, against Sanskrit and Tib.