



Name:

Date:

Grade:

*Homework, Class One*

1) Give the title of the primary text we will be reading for our study of the art of interpretation; name its author, and give his dates. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

2) Our text compares and contrasts the beliefs of two of the great schools of classical Indian Buddhism—the Mind-Only School and the Middle-Way School—about what Lord Buddha really meant, and how to determine what Lord Buddha really meant, when he turned the wheel of the Dharma. Name the important source that each school uses to make their presentation, and the author of each. (Tibetan track name source, and also each school, in Tibetan.)

a) Mind-Only School:

b) Middle-Way School:

3) Nowadays some people say that a knowledge of emptiness is not the main point of Buddhism, while others say that emptiness is something known only intuitively, and not from a foundation of determined, organized study. Describe a quotation by Lord Buddha himself that disproves these ideas.

4) Why do we have to learn to distinguish between the literal and figurative; why do we have to learn to interpret what the Buddha said, in order to find out what he really meant?

5) Describe three different levels of the terms "literal" and "figurative."

a)

b)

c)

6) Je Tsongkapa points out that—if what the Buddha said must be divided into what he said that was figurative and what he said that was literal—then the Buddha's own statements about when he was being figurative and when he was being literal cannot necessarily be taken literally. Rather, we must in the end rely on what is logical and makes sense to us. Describe the three logical tests recommended by Lord Buddha, and state the source for them.

7) If many of the beliefs of schools like the Mind-Only are actually wrong, then why is it so important for us to study them carefully?

8) How can the principle of "figurative and literal" be useful to us in our daily lives?

*Meditation assignment:* 15 minutes per day, do an analytical meditation focussing on one or two people in your world who irritate you, checking to see if there is some way we could interpret their actions as secretly intended to help us or bring us further along our spiritual path.

*Meditation dates and times (must be filled in, or homework will not be accepted):*



Name:
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*Homework, Class Two*

1) In his answer to the bodhisattva in the *Commentary on the True Intent of the Sutras*, Lord Buddha states that he was referring to three different lacks of things when he said that no existing object at all had any nature of its own. Name these three. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

a)

b)

c)

2) Name the famous three attributes which form the cornerstone of the beliefs of the Mind-Only School, and which relate to the three different lacks of things mentioned in question one. After naming them, describe them briefly. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

a)

b)

c)

3) Constructs are said to "lack any definitive nature." Explain what it means in the Mind-Only School when we say this; and then contrast it to what we mean in the Middle-Way School when we say this.

a) Mind-Only School:

b) Middle-Way School:

4) Explain, for each of these three attributes, *why* it is that they can be described as the corresponding lack of a self-nature. (Don't forget to keep on your Mind-Only School hat!)

a)

b)

c)

5) Describe briefly Je Tsongkapa's refutation of the idea of the Jonangpa school of Tibet that changeless totality, or emptiness, is a self-standing, positive object.

6) Give an illustration for each of these three lacks of a self-nature, or attributes. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

a)

b)

c)

*Meditation assignment:* 15 minutes a day, alternate in meditation between seeing how a water glass *does* exist by definition as the Mind-Only School teaches it, and *doesn't* exist by definition as the Middle-Way School teaches it.

*Meditation dates and times (must be filled in, or homework will not be accepted):*



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*Homework, Class Three*

1) The second time he turned the wheel of the Dharma, Lord Buddha characterized all existing objects in five apparently very extreme ways. We have finished discussing the first; list the latter four. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

a)

b)

c)

d)

2) Why is it we can say that constructs neither grow nor stop?

3) Why are constructs themselves free of the mentally-afflicted side of things?

4) Why, according to the sutra, can we say that totality neither grows nor stops?

5) Why does the sutra called *Commentary on the True Intent* explain the latter four characterizations only with regard to the first and last of the three lacks of a self-nature, and not with regard to the middle one? (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

6) If we do take the latter four characterizations as applying to dependent things as well, then how must we interpret them? (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

*Meditation assignment:* 15 minutes per day, careful analytical meditation on what the Mind-Only School means when they say that dependent things do grow and stop by definition, and what they mean when they say that constructs do not grow or stop by definition.

*Meditation dates and times (must be filled in, or homework will not be accepted):*





Name:
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*Homework, Class Four*

1) The sutra called the *Commentary on the True Intent* next turns to the question of how we identify the three attributes. It helps us understand the attribute of constructs by showing how they relate to dependent things. List the three ways in which the sutra says that constructs relate to dependent things. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

a)

b)

c)

2) In explanations of the process of making constructs that follow from the sutra references just mentioned, a distinction is made between the dependent thing that is the object of the constructing state of mind; the constructing state of mind itself; and the construct that "lies between" them. Explain these three as they occur in the example of the boy named Tashi.

3) In the illustration of the boy named "Tashi," what is the indication that (according to the Mind-Only School) the construct does not exist by definition?

4) The sutra goes on to use the three expressions "arena in which the constructing state of mind acts" and so on as a basis for describing dependent things and totality (or emptiness) as well as constructs. In other words, these three expressions are being used to get at the real meaning of the three attributes in the Mind-Only School; and more especially how they relate to each other. Describe this interrelation of the three attributes.

5) The text states that this principle of establishing the three attributes with different objects applies to a whole list of different objects. Name some of them. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

6) Describe two ways in which something could be "empty" or "devoid" of something; then state which of these two ways is more relevant here when we say that totality (or emptiness) is "empty" of certain constructs. (Tibetan track also give two different Tibetan verbs that help illustrate the difference.)

7) Constructs can be applied either to the essence of an object or to some feature of an object. Give an example of each of these for the first of the four arya truths. (Tibetan track also name this principle in Tibetan.)

*Meditation assignment:* 15 minutes per day, careful analytical meditation on what the Mind-Only School means when they say that dependent things do grow and stop by definition, and what they mean when they say that constructs do not grow or stop by definition.

*Meditation dates and times (must be filled in, or homework will not be accepted):*



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*Homework, Class Five*

1) What does the expression "the outcome of the exchange" refer to? (Tibetan track also give the Tibetan for this expression.)

2) Name the three famous turnings of the wheel of the Dharma, the three great convocations, and state (a) when they were primarily taught; (b) where they were primarily taught; (c) for whom they were primarily taught; (d) their basic subject matter; and (e) what, from the point of view of the "outcome of the exchange," their view was on whether things have their own nature or not. (Tibetan track all in Tibetan!)

(1) First turning of the wheel of the Dharma—

Name:

Period:

Place:

Disciples:

Basic subject matter:

View:

(2) Second turning of the wheel of the Dharma—

Name:

Period:

Place:

Disciples:

Basic subject matter:

View:

(3) Third turning of the wheel of the Dharma—

Name:

Period:

Place:

Disciples:

Basic subject matter:

View:

3) According to the Mind-Only School, which of these three turnings of the wheel (also called "groups of sutra") were spoken literally, and which are figurative, or something we must interpret further? According to the Middle-Way School, which are to be taken on face value, and which are not? Why so, in each case?

a) Mind-Only School:

b) Middle-Way School:

4) Give, in English, the four expressions that the bodhisattva Paramarta Samudgata uses to express the fact that (according to the Mind-Only School) the first two turnings of the wheel are figurative.

5) What, in the context of the *Commentary on the True Intent*, is the real criterion that decides whether a person belongs to the "lower way" (Hinayana) or the "higher way" (Mahayana)?

6) Name and explain the image that is being referred to in the expression "wheel of the Dharma"? (Tibetan track name in Tibetan and explain in English.)

7) Name the two classical types of "wheels of the Dharma." (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

a)

b)

8) What does it mean to "turn" the wheel of the Dharma?

*Meditation assignment:* 15 minutes per day, analytical meditation in which you alternate going through the three turnings of the wheel as a Mind-Only thinker and then as a Middle-Way thinker, evaluating each wheel to see if it should be taken on face value or not.

*Meditation dates and times (must be filled in, or homework will not be accepted):*



Name:
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*Homework, Class Six*

1) When we refer to the first turning of the wheel as something which is either figurative or literal, are we speaking about any teaching that Lord Buddha gave during the initial period of his teaching career? Give an example to explain why or why not. (Tibetan track answer in English and give the example in Tibetan.)

2) When we speak of the final turning of the wheel as being "literal," are we talking about anything that was taught during the final period of Lord Buddha's teaching career? Give an example to explain why or why not. (Tibetan track answer in English and give the example in Tibetan.)

3) Name three goals that the *Commentary on the True Intent* has in mind for us when it takes the trouble to divide the three turnings of the wheel into the categories of figurative or literal.

a)

b)

c)



4) Je Tsongkapa takes pains to disprove the idea of some Tibetan thinkers that all three turnings of the wheel were meant literally. These thinkers would even say that Lord Buddha was speaking literally when he said (actually in order to attract some non-Buddhist groups) that things do have some kind of self-nature. What object do they say that Lord Buddha was referring to, and how is this object sometimes misinterpreted? (Tibetan track name the object in Tibetan and explain the misinterpretation in English.)

5) What is the position of the sutra called the *King of Mystic Words* on the actual order of the three turnings of the wheel? (Tibetan track name the sutra and give the order in Tibetan.)

6) Is there a difference between the "final period of the teaching" and "final turning of the wheel"?

7) After deciding that other more extensive definitions may be problematic, the great textbook writer of Sera Mey Tibetan Monastery, Kedrup Tenpa Dargye (1493-1568), gives a very revealing general definition of the first turning of the wheel of the Dharma. Write it here. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

8) How does Kedrup Tenpa Dargye then distinguish between the disciples for whom the second wheel was turned, and the disciples for whom the third was turned?

9) The main sutra of the Mind-Only School, called the *Commentary on the True Intent*, says that the specific disciples for whom the third turning of the wheel was taught are "those who have entered, perfectly, every one of the different ways." This seems to imply that it was taught for students of both the higher and lower ways, which would seem like a contradiction; how does Kedrup Tenpa Dargye clarify this point for us?

*Meditation assignment:* 15 minutes per day, analytical meditation in which you practice alternating between the way the Middle-Way School thinks of the content of the second turning of the wheel, and the way the Mind-Only School thinks of it (with their three attributes).

*Meditation dates and times (must be filled in, or homework will not be accepted):*



Name:
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*Homework, Class Seven*

1) Who was the innovator who revived the Mind-Only School system in this world; what book did he base this work on; how do we know that this was the book?

2) This innovator sets forth the meaning of thusness largely through a description of the two extremes, and how to avoid them. Name the two states of mind that hold to these two extremes. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

a)

b)

3) Describe the difference between an extreme and the view which holds to the extreme. (Tibetan track also give the Tibetan name for "extreme.")

4) Describe the specific idea which, according to the Mind-Only School, is held by the view of "concocting" something. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

5) How, according to the Mind-Only School, would you help someone get over the extreme view of concocting something?

6) According to the Mind-Only School, what causes the extreme of concocting things?

7) Describe the idea which, according to the Mind-Only School, is held by the view of "discounting" something. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

8) How, according to the Mind-Only School, would you help someone get over the extreme view of discounting something?

9) Who, according to the Mind-Only School, is guilty of the extreme of discounting things?

10) Describe, in a brief sentence, the Middle-Way idea about these two extreme views. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

*Meditation assignment:* 15 minutes per day, analytical meditation, practice alternating between the Mind-Only and the Middle-Way versions of the two extreme views. (These comparisons are exactly why learning Mind-Only is so useful!)

*Meditation dates and times (must be filled in, or homework will not be accepted):*



Name:
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*Homework, Class Eight*

1) What, according to the Middle-Way School, is "the ultimate" (also called "ultimate truth" or "ultimate reality")? (Tibetan track answer in Tibetan.)

2) Is there a difference, in the Middle-Way School, between something being "the ultimate" and something existing "ultimately"? Why or why not? (Tibetan track use Tibetan to answer.)

3) How does the Middle-Way School describe deceptive reality? (Tibetan track name in Tibetan and describe in English.)

4) Now how does the Mind-Only School draw the difference between "ultimate reality" and "deceptive reality"?

5) Explain how the Consequence part of the Middle-Way School describes what it means to "exist as an external object."

6) Explain how the lower two schools—the Higher-Knowledge (Abhidharma) School and the Sutrists School—describe what it means to "exist as an external object."

7) The followers of the lower half of the Middle-Way School (the "Independent" or Svatantrika group) may be divided into two philosophical camps. Name them. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

8) One of these camps describes in yet a different way what it means to "exist as an external object." Name them, and state their belief.

9) This question has two separate parts. (a) What do the members of the Mind-Only School (and those of the Independent part of the Middle-Way School who lean towards them on points such as these) have in mind when they say that "nothing exists as an external object"? (b) What do the Consequence group and the Independents who lean the other way have in mind when they say that they are wrong?

a)

b)

10) What does the Mind-Only School mean when they say that the valid perception which is the subject that perceives a physical object, and the physical object which it perceives, are "of the same substance"? (Tibetan track also give the Tibetan for this concept.)

11) Explain where the name of the Mind-Only School comes from.

*Meditation assignment:* Try to alternate, in 15 minutes of analytical meditation per day, between identifying the things around you that fit the Middle-Way idea of what is ultimate or deceptive, and those that fit the Mind-Only idea of what is ultimate or deceptive. Very good for perceiving emptiness directly later!

*Meditation dates and times (must be filled in, or homework will not be accepted):*





Name:

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*Homework, Class Nine*

1) Now that we have examined how the Mind-Only School thinks that Lord Buddha taught emptiness, we turn to what the Independent group in the Middle-Way School thinks—which hinges on an idea of multiple levels of selflessness. Name this concept in general, and list its three parts. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

2) Name the even grosser idea of the self of a person which relates to this Independent-group concept. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

3) Name the kinds of practitioners on the first track; state the "vehicle" or way they belong to; and name the type of "self" that they come to realize does not exist. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

4) Name the kinds of practitioners on the second track; state the "vehicle" or way they belong to; and name the type of "self" that they come to realize does not exist. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

5) Name the kinds of practitioners on the third track; state the "vehicle" or way they belong to; and name the type of "self" that they come to realize does not exist. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

6) In the Independent group of the Middle-Way School, what does it mean to say that a thing "exists truly"? (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

7) The word "substantial" (as opposed to "constructed") in the great books of Buddhism has five distinct meanings. Name and describe each one briefly. (Tibetan track also give the Tibetan for "substantial" and "constructed.")

a)

b)

c)

d)

e)

8) It's easy to confuse the idea of "persons of three scopes" in the teachings on the steps of the path to enlightenment (*lam-rim*) with the idea of people on the three tracks mentioned above. Describe the difference between the two. (Tibetan track give the name for each in Tibetan, and then describe the difference in English.)

9) It's also easy to confuse the three tracks with the three different ways mentioned in scripture, especially since the Tibetan for both is the same. State the difference. (Tibetan track name and clarify the three ways in Tibetan.)

*Meditation assignment:* 15 minutes of analytical meditation per day, going through the three supposed degrees of selflessness mentally and trying to appreciate why the Independent group would teach them.

*Meditation dates and times (must be filled in, or homework will not be accepted):*



Name:

Date:

Grade:

*Homework, Class Ten*

1) When three different types of being look at the same object, they see three different objects. Are each of them having a valid perception, or not?

2) The *Abbreviation of the Greater Way* says that "each being, according to their class, has differing perceptions of a single thing," and that therefore "we can say that these things have no reality." Does this mean then that we should never consider anything one way or the other? Why or why not?

3) The Mind-Only School has asserted that there are things that can exist from their own side, through some unique identity of their own. The Independent part of the Middle-Way School has asserted that the perception of things depends on their appearing from their own side to a state of mind which, from its side, is unerring. How does the Consequence part of the Middle-Way School assert that things exist? (Tibetan track answer in Tibetan.)

4) What does Je Tsongkapa say his own position in this regard is? (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

5) When we say that things are only projections, does that mean that we can make anything anything we want it to be?

6) Does the fact that things are only projections mean that leading an ethical way of life is unimportant?

7) Why does the Consequence presentation of the meaning of emptiness have especially important implications for our own search for enlightenment?

8) The *Heart Sutra* says that the real goal of Buddhism is to "stop the process of aging and death" through "stopping our ignorance." Is this a literal or a figurative statement? If it is literal, then why have we not seen any person who stopped the process of aging and death?

*Meditation assignment:* 15 minutes per day, analytical meditation on the difference between the Mind-Only, Independent, and Consequence versions of how the reality of something like a pen works.

*Meditation dates and times (must be filled in, or homework will not be accepted):*