

mandel

เพาตุดิ สิ้พ ฏิพ อูสพ จิร พิ รัสา รามูพ

sashi pukyi jukshing metok tram,

# าราราสีรารดิ 3.สีญารสูง เกรา

rirab lingshi nyinde gyenpa di,

เพรพาสูพาติรารูารมิยาพาริารุฐณากรามสิบ

sangye shingdu mikte ulwar gyi,

१२र्चेग्गुब:इरु:न्य:बिन:य:ह्येन:यन: वेया ॥

drokun namdak shingla chupar shok.

เดิ้ำร้าญารูารฐามฐาณฑ้าสิรูารานามิไ

Idam guru ratna mandalakam niryatayami.

# Offering the Mandala

Here is the great Earth, Filled with the smell of incense, Covered with a blanket of flowers,

The Great Mountain, The Four Continents, Wearing a jewel Of the Sun, and Moon.

In my mind I make them The Paradise of a Buddha, And offer it all to You.

By this deed May every living being Experience The Pure World.

Idam guru ratna mandalakam niryatayami.



kyabdro semkye

sangye chudang tsokyi choknam la,

ไป๊ะ.ชึน.นะ.บ๊.นะนะเม.น.ชู.พระพ

jangchub bardu dakni kyabsu chi,

# าวาทาทิพาฐิสาพักพาวฏิพานวิเวพัวาสมพาฏิพา

dakki jinsok gyipay sunam kyi,

# १२र्वे.ज.सर्द.हुर.जटश.मुग्र.दर्यीय.तर्य. ११

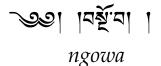
drola penchir sangye druppar shok.

# **Refuge and The Wish**

I go for refuge To the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha Until I achieve enlightenment.

By the power Of the goodness that I do In giving and the rest,

May I reach Buddhahood For the sake Of every living being.



ٳ٢ؚٵٜٛ؆؆٢

gewa diyi kyewo kun,

ารพัร สุมพาพิ เวิพาส์ โทพาย์ โกพา เวิรา

sunam yeshe tsok-dzok shing,

ารสัราสุมสาพิเวิสาณสาฏุรารสิ

sunam yeshe lejung way,

निश्रायाञ्जू याहेशावर्ष्ठेयायरा र्वेया 11

dampa kunyi topar shok.

## Dedication of the Goodness of a Deed

By the goodness Of what I have just done May all beings

Complete the collection Of merit and wisdom,

And thus gain the two Ultimate bodies That merit and wisdom make.



าสิุ้สานาสูามิราพรพาสูพาริสานีาธิา

tonpa lame sanggye rinpoche,

ાર્ગ્સેન્ગ્ય સુએન્ગ્ન અંદેશ રેન યેં ઢા

kyoppa lame damchu rinpoche,



drenpa lame gendun rinpoche,



kyabne konchok sumla chupa bul.

## A Buddhist Grace

I offer this To the Teacher Higher than any other, The precious Buddha.

I offer this To the protection Higher than any other, The precious Dharma.

I offer this To the guides Higher than any other, The precious Sangha.

I offer this To the places of refuge, To the Three Jewels, Rare and supreme.



# The Asian Classics Institute Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Level Two of the Perfection of Wisdom (Prajna Paramita)

# **Course Syllbus**

#### **Reading One**

Subject: The Bodhisattva's Question

Reading: The Essence of Eloquence, a Classical Commentary on Distinguishing between the Figurative and the Literal (Drang-ba dang nges-pa'i don rnam-par 'byed-pa'i bstan-bcos Legs-bshad snying-po), by Je Tsongkapa (1357-1419); folios 1A-3B in the ACIP digital edition (catalog number S5396), and pp. 1-7 in the ACIP Indian paper edition. The translation is based upon an oral teaching of the text by Geshe Tupten Rinchen of Sera Mey Tibetan Monastery.

#### **Reading Two**

Subject: Lord Buddha's Answer—The Three Kinds of No-Self-Nature

Reading: *The Essence of Eloquence,* folios 3B-8A in the ACIP digital edition, and pp. 7-18 in the ACIP Indian paper edition, with translation based upon oral teachings by Geshe Tupten Rinchen.

#### **Reading Three**

Subject: The Latter Four Characterizations

Reading: *The Essence of Eloquence,* folios 8A-9B in the ACIP digital edition, and pp. 18-22 in the ACIP Indian paper edition, with translation based upon oral teachings by Geshe Tupten Rinchen.

#### **Reading Four**

- Subject: An Identification of the Three Attributes
- Reading: *The Essence of Eloquence*, folios 9B-11A in the ACIP digital edition, and pp. 22-26 in the ACIP Indian paper edition, with translation based upon oral teachings by Geshe Tupten Rinchen.

#### **Reading Five**

Subject: The Outcome of the Exchange

Reading: *The Essence of Eloquence,* folios 11A-13A in the ACIP digital edition, and pp. 26-31 in the ACIP Indian paper edition, with translation based upon oral teachings by Geshe Tupten Rinchen.

#### **Reading Six**

- Subject: On the Different Methods of Interpretation
- Reading: *The Essence of Eloquence,* folios 13A-14A in the ACIP digital edition, and pp. 31-34 in the ACIP Indian paper edition, with translation based upon oral teachings by Geshe Tupten Rinchen.

#### **Reading Seven**

Subject: Master Asanga on Avoiding the Two Extremes

Reading: *The Essence of Eloquence,* folios 14A-18A in the ACIP digital edition, and pp. 34-44 in the ACIP Indian paper edition, with translation based upon oral teachings by Geshe Tupten Rinchen.

#### **Reading Eight**

Subject: On the Meaning of "Ultimate" and "Deceptive" Reality

Reading: *The Essence of Eloquence,* folios 18A-21A in the ACIP digital edition, and pp. 44-51 in the ACIP Indian paper edition, with translation based upon oral teachings by Geshe Tupten Rinchen.

#### **Reading Nine**

- Subject: Interpretations of the Independent Group of the Middle-Way School
- Reading: Selection from the *Overview of the Perfection of Wisdom (Phar-phyin spyi-don)* of Master Kedrup Tenpa Dargye (1493-1568), from Sera Mey Tibetan Monastery (ACIP electronic text catalog number SL0009, Part One), folios 12a-13b.

#### **Reading Ten**

- Subject: Interpretations of the Consequence Group, and What Je Tsongkapa Himself Believes
- Reading: Overview of the Middle Way (dBu-ma spyi-don) by Kedrup Tenpa Dargye (1493-1568), folios 125A-130A, (ACIP electronic text number S0021).

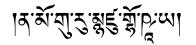
# The Asian Classics Institute Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

## **Reading One: The Bodhisattva's Question**

The following selection is taken from the Essence of Eloquence, a Classical Commentary on Distinguishing between the Figurative and the Literal (Drangba dang nges-pa'i don rnam-par 'byed-pa'i bstan-bcos Legs-bshad snying-po), by Je Tsongkapa (1357-1419); ff. 1a-3b in the ACIP digital edition (catalog number S5396), and pp. 1-7 in the ACIP Indian paper edition. The translation is based upon an oral teaching of the text by Geshe Tupten Rinchen of Sera Mey Tibetan Monastery. Please note that Je Tsongkapa's root text is extremely difficult, and is best studied with the accompanying ACI tapes.

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Herein contained is the Essence of Eloquence, a Classical Commentary upon the Subject of Distinguishing between the Figurative and the Literal



I bow down to Gentle Voice, my Lama.

าราวอูราฐิสาณตัสารราสมีรายิเมรณา าญมามีราสรสานักสาญลิาษักณามีสามา

अिन्तर्द्रयाश्वायतेप्तरं किर क्रेंग्रिश्वर्यं ये ลุ้สมารมาจรฏีราสมมาฏิมาฏรากรากิเล เมริ์ราววิ มัราวาชิ มพามิ ไว้ราวดิม ๅละ<sub>ี</sub>นาาฏารัสาละี่งานถิงชั่วานสาฏิญ าการามิเลาพานรายุพานพาพิสาฏิรานา ไล้น.ปละเพิ่งสัญญาสมุลเลย

Their roar of arrogance covers the world, And they strut with imagined self-importance: Source of Happiness, Rider on the Cloud, Child of the Golden Womb, Lord of Those Who Have No Body, Belly String, and the rest. But the minute they lay their eyes on your form It does to them what the sun does to a firefly, And they throw themselves at your feet, Touching them with their lovely crowns. I bow down to you, Lord of the Able, God of all the gods.

I bow to the sea, To Gentle Voice and the Regent; The breadth and the depth of your knowledge And your compassion are something Ever so hard to fathom, And the great powerful waves Of your bodhisattva deeds Wash to the shore unceasing—

You are truly a treasure trove of jewels, Of eloquence itself.

ا्वदित्र जाविजाका जाक्षुद्र र न र र्जु वा जाकिका वित्र है र के वित्र के वित्र के जावियाका यत्र खें ज के खेर र न के कावियाका यत्र खें ज के खेर र न के कावियाका यत्र खें ज के खेर र न के कावियाका यत्र के खेर र न के कावियाका या के का कावियाका या के कावियाका या के कावियाका या के कात्याका या के कात्याका या के कात्याका या के कात्याका या का</td

With great respect I bow To those lords among all masters, To those highest beings who hold on high The banner of the teachings Of the Able Ones, and prevent them From sinking from the sky; To those who've opened the eyes of a trillion Thoughtful ones here in this world By keeping faithfully those two systems Of those two great innovators: I mean here the magnificent Aryadeva, Aryashura, Buddhapalita, Bhavaviveka, Chandrakirti, Vasubandhu, Stiramati, Dignaga, and Dharmakirti too.

।ସ/ૡૢઽ੶ૡૢਗ਼ੑੑੑੑਸ਼੶ਸ਼੶ਫ਼੶ਖ਼ૼਸ਼੶ਸ਼ਗ਼ਸ਼੶ਖ਼ਫ਼੶ਖ਼ਸ਼੶ੑੑਫ਼ੑਫ਼੶੶। ।ઽૡ੶ਸ਼੶ਸ਼ਫ਼੶ਸ਼ਫ਼ੵੑਖ਼੶ਸ਼ਫ਼ੑਖ਼੶ਸ਼ਸ਼ਫ਼ਖ਼੶ਸ਼੶ਸ਼ਖ਼ੑ ।ૡૻਖ਼੶ਲ਼ਗ਼ਫ਼ਸ਼ਗ਼ੑਗ਼ਸ਼੶ਗ਼ੑੑੑੑਗ਼ਸ਼੶ਗ਼ੑਗ਼ਸ਼੶ਸ਼ਗ਼ੑ ੶ਫ਼ਫ਼ਸ਼੶ਸ਼ਗ਼ੑਖ਼੶ਜ਼ੑ੶ਸ਼ਫ਼੶ਫ਼ਗ਼ੑਗ਼ਸ਼੶ਗ਼ਖ਼ਫ਼੶ਖ਼ਖ਼ ੶ਗ਼ੑਖ਼੶ਜ਼ੵ੶ਸ਼ਫ਼ੑ੶ਸ਼ਫ਼੶ਸ਼ਸ਼ਗ਼ੑਸ਼੶ਸ਼ਗ਼ੑਸ਼੶ਸ਼ਗ਼ੑ

These are points that many with no little Mass of spiritual qualities— Filled with realizations won With much learning of great holy books And much pain spent in the ways Of reaching conclusions with reason— Have tried their best, but nonetheless Have failed to realize. Here though I will explain them, With thoughts of purest love, For I have seen them perfectly Through the kindness of my Lama, The Protector, the Gentle One.

Please lend your ear then, those Who hope to become themselves Matchless teachers of the way With deep insights that realize The real nature revealed In the teachings of the Buddha.

 ક્રિંગ્સ્ટ્ર'વ્સ્યગુરુપ્યપુર્વ્યયર્થર સુંદ્ર' ગૈશ્વ હુશ્વય્ય વ્યશ્વ ક્રિંદ્ર' મંજે ગર્સ્સ્ટ્રે' વર્સ્સ સુંદ્ર' મંગ ક્રિંગ્સ્ટ્રે પ્રસ્થા સે બ્લૂં પ્રસ્થા સુંદ્ર પ્ર ગ્યુ ક્રિંગ્સ મંગ્રે સુંદ્ર સ્વર્ય્ય સુંદ્ર પ્ર અંદ્ર ક્રિંગ્સ મંગ્રે સુંદ્ર સ્વર્ય સુંદ્ર સ્વર અંદ્ર સ્ટ્રા

Now the Sutra Requested by the Realized Being Rashtrapala says,

Different beings must wander here Because they have no knowledge Of the ways of emptiness, Of peace, and of things that never began. Those with compassion use skillful means And millions of different reasonings To bring them into it.

What these lines are saying is that the real nature of all things is something which is extremely difficult to perceive; and that if one fails to perceive it, one can never be freed from the circle of suffering. Our compassionate Teacher has seen these things clearly, and thus undertakes to bring beings on to a grasp of this real nature, using a great many skillful means, and a great many different types of reasoning.

For this reason, those with the capacity of insight should make great efforts in the various means of coming to a grasp of just what the real nature of things is. This, in turn, depends upon the ability to distinguish between what is figurative and what is literal among that highest of all spoken words—the speech of the victorious Buddhas.

The distinction between these two is not something that words themselves have the power to draw, saying "This part is figurative, and this part is literal." Otherwise it would have been a useless exercise for the great innovators to compose commentaries exploring the true intent of the teachings, undertaking to make distinctions between what was figurative and what was literal. Neither would there have been spoken, in that highest of spoken words itself, so many conflicting versions of how we decide what is figurative and what is literal.

And look finally at the fact that—even if a scripture does say that "This is this way, and that is that way"—this still does not enable us to decide that it really is. If it is thus the case, throughout the teachings in general, that we cannot draw any unquestionable conclusions from such statements, then why should it be true—in this more particular case—that we can conclusively establish the distinction between the figurative and the literal from any particular reference that says, "This is the one, and this the other"?

Therefore we must go about our search for the true intent of the teachings by following the two great innovators—those who the scriptures foretold would be able to draw the distinction between the figurative and the literal. It is they who have unravelled for us the idea behind the figurative and the literal; it is they who have used true reasoning to establish, in a perfect way, those teachings which are literal—by finding proofs against any attempt to interpret them in some other light; and proofs in support of their being something literal, not something figurative, not something we could say refers to something else. In the end, we must learn to make this distinction through immaculate reasoning alone.

And this is true because anyone who espouses some philosophical system that contradicts reason could never be called a perfectly credible person; and because the very nature of things is, moreover, something that must be established by reason grounded in accurate perception.

Lord Buddha himself saw the truth of this highest form of meaning, and thus spoke the following:

Whether you are a monk or some other thinker, You must accept my words only after you've finished A careful examination of them, testing them like gold— In the fire, by cutting, and using the touchstone too.

And so it is that we proceed, in our task of distinguishing between the figurative and the literal, in two steps, presenting first the ideas of the side that uses the *Commentary on the True Intent of the Sutras* to help draw this distinction, and secondly the ideas of the side that uses the *Sutra Taught at the Request of Never-Ending Wisdom* to do so.

The first step has two parts of its own: setting forth what the sutra says, and showing how its meaning is commented upon.



The first of these parts has four further divisions: a question meant to clarify apparent contradictions in the sutras; an answer that clarifies these apparent contradictions; an identification of the nature of the three real natures; and a statement, offered by the bodhisattva, of the conclusion reached by these points.

Here is the first. We find the following in the Commentary on the True Intent:

O Conqueror, you have in many of your presentations made statements that the heaps have some definitive characteristics of their own. You have also spoken of their characteristic of beginning, and their characteristic of being destroyed, and of eliminating and comprehending.

You also stated that the way in which the heaps exist is the same for the doors of sense, and for things that occur through interdependence, and for everything up to the different kinds of sustenance.

The question continues in the same pattern through the truths:

. . .And you stated that these truths were something that had definitive characteristics of their own, and were something which

we should comprehend, and something we should eliminate, and something to bring about, and something to practice. And then you spoke of the categories as having some definitive characteristics of their own, and so too did you speak of the various categories, and the many categories, and of eliminating and comprehending.

The question turns too through the different groups among the 37 qualities of enlightenment:

. . .You spoke too of these qualities as having some definitive characteristics of their own, and you spoke of their nature of being inconsistent, and of being an antidote, and of the growth of what has not grown, and of the staying of what has grown, and of there being no separation, and of coming back, and of increasing, and of spreading.

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And you said, O Conqueror, that no existing thing could have any nature of its own; you said that no existing thing ever began, or stopped; you said that they were, from the very beginning, in a state of peace; you said that they were, by nature, something that was completely beyond all grief.

What was it, O Conquering One, that you were truly thinking of when you said that no existing thing could have any nature of its own, and said that no existing thing ever began, or stopped; when you said that they were, from the very beginning, in a state of peace; when you said that they were, by nature, something that was completely beyond all grief?

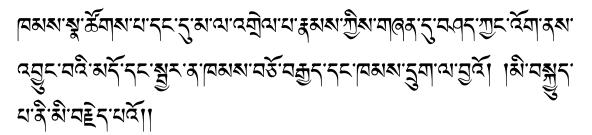
And so this is what I ask of you, O Conquering One: was it really that which the Conqueror had in mind when you said that no existing thing could have any nature of its own, and said that no existing thing ever began, or stopped; when you said that they were, from the very beginning, in a state of peace; when you said that they were, by nature, something that was completely beyond all grief?

aភិសភិ សភ៍ ឆ្និ រា ខិភា ភូ ភ័ស ឆសស ខ្យះ ភ័ ភិទិក សិក បា ស៍វាស ស្វ ភាស្ត្រ ស៍វា ភាស្ត្រ ភ័ស ឆេស ខេត្ត ភ័ ភិទិក សិក បា ស៍វាស ស្វ ភាស្ត្រ ភេ ភាស្ត្រ ភេ ភាស្ត្រ ភេ ភាស្ត្រ ភេ ភាស្ថិត ភេ ភាសិត ភេ ភាសិត ភេ ភាស្ថិត ភេ ភាសិត ភេ ភាសិត ភាសិតភាសិត ភាសិត ភាសិតភាសិត ភាសិត ភាសិតភាសិត ភា

The point of this question is as follows. In some sutras, Lord Buddha said that no existing thing had any nature of its own, and so on. In other sutras though he said that the heaps and so on did have their own definitive characteristics, and so on. The bodhisattva knows that—if we take these two types of statements on face value—then they contradict each other; but that it cannot

be the case that they do. Therefore he is asking Lord Buddha what he really had in mind when he said that no existing thing could have any nature of its own, and so on. The bodhisattva is, by implication, asking just what Lord Buddha meant by phrases such as "existing by definition" and the like.

The term here "definitive characteristic" or "definition" [in "having definitive characteristics" or "existing by definition"] has been explained in the great Chinese commentary and elsewhere as referring to the particular verbal definition of a thing. This idea though is incorrect, since—for one thing—the sutra itself clearly refers to the idea of existing *by definition* in the parts where it talks about constructs. Furthermore, even constructs have their own particular verbal descriptions which are used to define them; so if this were the meaning of "definition" here then there would be a problem if we went on to describe them as not having any nature or definitive characteristics of their own.



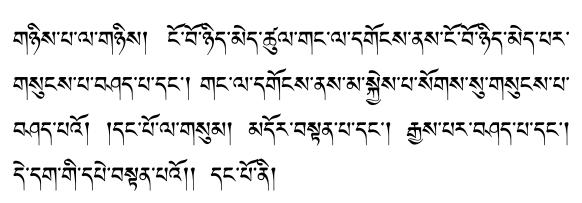
Various commentaries have described the phrases "various categories" and "many categories" otherwise, but if we refer down to what comes later in the sutra itself then we should take them to mean the eighteen categories and the six categories, respectively. The phrase "being no separation" refers to not losing something.

# The Asian Classics Institute Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

## Reading Two: Lord Buddha's Answer—The Three Kinds of No-Self-Nature

The following selection is taken from the Essence of Eloquence, a Classical Commentary on Distinguishing between the Figurative and the Literal (Drangba dang nges-pa'i don rnam-par 'byed-pa'i bstan-bcos Legs-bshad snying-po), by Je Tsongkapa (1357-1419); ff. 3b-8a in the ACIP digital edition (catalog number S5396), and pp. 7-18 in the ACIP Indian paper edition. The translation is based upon an oral teaching of the text by Geshe Tupten Rinchen of Sera Mey Tibetan Monastery. Please note that Je Tsongkapa's root text is extremely difficult, and is best studied with the accompanying ACI tapes.

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The second division, an answer that clarifies apparent contradictions in the sutras, has two further sections of its own: an explanation of just what "lack of a self nature" it was that Lord Buddha had in mind when he said that nothing had any nature of its own; and what it was that he had in mind when he said "nothing grows" and the like.

We cover the first section in three steps: a brief presentation, an expanded explanation, and illustrations for the points covered. Here is the first.

# ᡪર્વેદશ્ચ વર્ષેવ્ય વશ્વ દેવર સાયદા કર્યા વ્યવસ્ય દિશ્વ છે કે સ્ટેશ્વ સાય છે કે સ્ટે સે સાય છે કે સાય છે કે સાય છે કે સે સાય છે કે સાય છે સાય છે સાય છે સે સાય છે કે સાય છે ક સાય છે સાય છે સાય છે સાય છે કે સાય છે સાય છે સાય છે કે સાય છે છે સાય છ સાય છે સાય છે સાય છે સાય છે સાય છે સાય છે કે સાય છે છે સાય છે છે સાય છે છે સાય છે સાય છે સાય છે સાય છે સાય છે છે સાય છે સાય છે સાય છે સાય છે સાય છે સાય છે છે સાય છે સાય છે સાય છે સા

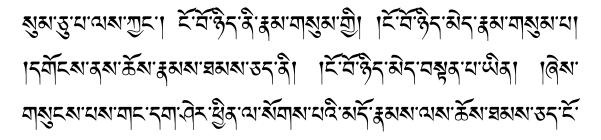
Lord Buddha replies by saying that, when he stated that nothing had any nature of its own, he was actually referring to all three lacks of a self nature; as the *True Intent of the Sutras* itself reads,

Listen, Paramarta Samudgata. When I said that no existing object at all had any nature of its own, what I was referring to was three different lacks of a self nature that existing things exhibit. These three are the quality of lacking any definitive nature, the quality of lacking any nature of growing, and the quality of lacking any nature of being ultimate.

નિશ્ચુ માબસા શુદ્ધા વર્ષે સ્થવ વર્ત્તસા શુસ્ય છે બાદ મેંદ્ર સાથસા છે સાર્ચ્ય છે સાથ સાથ છે છે છે. તે સાથ સાથ છે જે દુ સે દુ માલે સાથ સુદ્ધા સુધ્ય માલ દુ ભાદ વર્ષે દુ સાથ છે. તે દુ સાથ છે છે દુ સાથ છે છે છે. તે સાથ સુદ્ધા સુ સે દુ માલે સાથ સુધ્ય સાથ સુધ્ય માલે દુ સાથ છે. તે સાથ સુધ્ય સાથ સુધ્ય સાથ સુધ્ય સાથ સુધ્ય સાથ સુધ્ય સાથ સુધ્ય સ

The *Abbreviation* also says:

What was it that the Conqueror had in mind when he said that no existing thing had any nature of its own? I will tell you; he spoke of that to disciples of varying capacities, and what he had in mind was the three different kinds of a lack of self-nature. . .



વેં છેઽ શેઽ પર ગાસુઽ & પગ્ત દેવ ગી દેવ સાક્ષય અડ ગા રવેંદ્ર ગી દેવ રાખ પા ڔؠૼٳڂ؇؞ؾ؆ۿ؇ۼڔڣۿ؇؞ڂڡڂ؞ؾڔ؇ۑ؇؞ڂٵۑڔٵ؇؞؇ڂ؞ۼؚٵٚ؇؞؇ڂ؞ڲ ๚ลุรารราสฤณาลิราสสฤพานาพมาพุพาณาพัญพานลาญมาพาณพาฏราษิ ર્સેલાજ્સુરાયલે

The *Thirty Verses* says as well:

There are three different forms of this self-nature; And what Lord Buddha had in mind When he said that no existing object Had any nature of its own Was that there were on the other hand Three different lacks of a self-nature too.

Let us consider, in light of these different references, the explanation by certain people that—when Lord Buddha stated, in sutras such as those on the perfection of wisdom, that no existing object had any nature of its own—he was thinking only of every existing object belonging to the deceptive type, and not of those belonging to the ultimate type. Anyone who holds this position thus contradicts both the *Commentary on the True Intent* and the classics of Master Asanga and his brother; they have moreover left behind them the system followed by the realized father and his spiritual son [the realized being Nagarjuna, and Master Aryadeva], and all the others as well.

When the bodhisattva asks Lord Buddha what he had in mind when he said that objects had no nature of their own, he is really asking two different things: what Lord Buddha meant by the expression "no-self-nature," and how it is that nothing has any such nature. The answer by Lord Buddha addresses both of these points as well, one after the other. We begin by explaining the first.

Consider all the infinite variety of objects that Lord Buddha was referring to when he said that none of the existing things from physical matter up to the omniscience of an enlightened being had any nature or quality of its own. Lord Buddha grouped them into three different types of things with no nature of their own, for two reasons: first because they are all subsumed by these three types of things with no nature of their own, and secondly because it would then be easier to teach disciples how it was that they lacked any nature of their own. And this is because every existing object, whether it be something of the ultimate kind or the deceptive kind, is included within one of these three types.

Here's another reason why this is true. Lord Buddha stated, in the sutras of the Mother and others as well, that none of the individual members of the following groups had any nature of being a thing: neither the five heaps, nor the eighteen categories, nor the twelve doors of sense. He said none of them had any nature of being a thing, none had any quality of its own, and none had any nature of its own. More specifically, he mentioned by name all the different versions of the ultimate: emptiness, the sphere of being, the way things are, and so on—and then he went on to say that none of them had any nature of its own. What person in their right mind then could ever say that there were no things of the ultimate type among those objects of which Lord Buddha spoke?

Here next is the second step: the expanded explanation. Now you might think to yourself,

Consider all those things that Lord Buddha was talking about when he said that nothing had any nature of its own. Suppose they are all included within the three different types of things that have no nature of their own. What then are these three types of things, and how is it that they lack any nature of their own?

Let's begin by explaining the first type of thing that has no nature of its own. The *Commentary on the True Intent* says,

Suppose you ask what we mean when we speak of the quality of being a thing that "lacks any definitive nature." Here we are referring to those things that display the attribute of being a construct.

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And why do we speak of them as such? It is because of the fact that these things display the attribute of being established through names and terms; they are not things which abide by definition; thus can we say of them that they "lack any definitive nature."

The question and answer that appear in the first two sentences serve to identify constructs as what are being referred to when we speak of "things that lack any definitive nature." The part that begins with "And why do we speak of them as such?" serves as an answer to the question of what reason there is for us to describe them as such. Then Lord Buddha answers by giving us two reasons: one from the negative point of view, where he says that these things do not exist by definition; and one from the positive point of view, where he says that they are established through names and terms. The way in which the sutra approaches the question from these two different aspects can be understood to apply to the latter two attributes as well.

The definitive nature of their own which constructs lack refers to their existing, or abiding, by definition.

Here the question of whether something is said to exist by definition or not hinges on whether or not it is established through names and terms; and it is not necessarily the case that those things which are so established even exist at all. What is meant by this "establishing" is furthermore quite different from what the Consequence group means when it says that all existing objects are established by virtue of terms that are names; and what it means then to exist by definition or not is also something different.

It is however the case that—if one is holding things to exist definitively as it is described in this school—one is also holding things to exist by definition as it is described by the Consequence group; whereas with a certain number of objects one may still hold them in the latter way yet still not hold them in the former way.

Here is what the second lack of a self-nature refers to. The *Commentary on the True Intent of the Sutras* says:

Suppose you ask what we mean when we speak of the quality of being a thing that "lacks any nature of growing." Here we are referring to those things that display the attribute of being a dependent thing.

And why do we speak of them as such? It is because of the fact that these things have occurred by virtue of other factors, and not all by themselves, that we say of them that they "lack any nature of growing."



Given the phrase about "not all by themselves," the nature of growing that dependent things lack, or their growing through some nature of their own, refers to their growing all by themselves.

This would be a kind of growing where they grew independently, for as the *Abbreviation* says,

Because things which are factors occur through interdependence, we say that they grow by virtue of their conditions; when we say that these are the type that "lack any nature of growing," we are talking about their growing on their own.

Remember, this is a system which says that dependent things were spoken to lack any nature of their own because they have no nature of growing in this way; that is, through some quality of their own. They do not though say that something has no nature of its own just because it does not exist by definition.

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There are two different ways of establishing the third lack of a self-nature; here is how we establish the fact that dependent things have no nature of being ultimate. The *Commentary on the True Intent* says:

Suppose you ask what we mean when we say that things "lack any nature of being ultimate." Consider those things which occur through interdependence; those which lack any nature in the sense that they lack any nature of growing. These are as well that which lacks any nature in the sense of lacking any nature of being ultimate.

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And why do we speak of them as such? Listen, Paramarta Samudgata. What I have professed so thoroughly is that the "ultimate" refers to the part of things which is the object of [the path of] total purity. Because those that display the attribute of being a dependent thing are not the object of [the path of] total purity, we can speak of them as that one that lacks any nature of being ultimate.

It is because dependent things do not exist as things which have any nature of being ultimate that we can speak of that which does not have any nature of being ultimate. The point here is that "ultimate" refers to anything which, when you focus on and meditate upon it, your spiritual obstacles are brought to an end. Dependent things though cannot be described as such, since they do not have the power to help you purify yourself of your spiritual obstacles if you focus on and meditate upon them.

"Now why," one may ask, "do you not also establish constructs as being something which has no nature of being ultimate?" It's true that—if we were to establish something as being such solely on the basis of its not being an object of [the path of] total purity—then we would have to do so. It is due to the fact that we are attempting to stop wrong ideas though that we do establish dependent things as things which—because they are not objects of [the path] of total purity—have no nature of being ultimate; but do not establish constructs as things which are this way.

Why is this the case? Suppose that a person came to an understanding that they could purify themselves of their spiritual obstacles by focussing on, and then meditating upon, the fact that dependent things are empty of [certain] constructs. It is possible then that they might entertain the thought that—because to go through this process they had to focus upon dependent things as an example—then these same dependent things would be objects of [the path of] total purity. This in turn would mean that these dependent things were ultimate. A person would not though entertain this same thought about constructs.

There is in actuality by the way no problem that this particular thought might be correct. It's similar to the case where a person is able to stop his tendency of believing that sound is an unchanging thing once he has perceived that it is a changing thing. There is no contradiction in this example if one were to say though that you would not stop your tendency of believing that sound is an unchanging thing [simply] by focussing on sound.

Despite the fact that dependent things do not exist as something ultimate in the sense of being ultimate by virtue of being the object of [the path of] total purity, there still remains the question of whether they exist as something ultimate in other senses; we will cover this further on.

This second way of establishing something as a thing that lacks any nature of being ultimate is, further, described as follows in the *Commentary on the True Intent:* 

Moreover, we also refer to that attribute of totality which things have as being their "quality of lacking any nature of being ultimate."

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And why do we speak of them as such? Listen, Paramarta Samudgata. We refer to that lack of a self-nature of objects which all things have as being their "lack of a nature of their own." The "ultimate" is delineated by being that simple lack that every existing thing has of any nature of its own; and this is why we can speak of the quality of lacking any nature of being ultimate.

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Totality in the sense of the lack of a self-nature of objects which all things exhibit is an object of [the path of] total purity, and is thus on one count something ultimate. But it is also delineated by the lack that things have of any self-nature of the person, by this simple absence of something; and this is why we can speak of all things as "lacking any nature of their own." This too is a reason why we can say that things "lack any nature of being ultimate."

અમ્પન્ મેન્સ્ય વ્યોગ ગયા ગાગ છે વ્દુ શેન્ શે અઠ્ઠ જેન મુન્દ મેં મુખ્ય પ્રે અઠ્ઠ જેન મુન્દ મેં મુખ્ય પ્રે અઠ્ય છે તે મુખ્ય પ્રે મુખ્ય પ્રે મુખ્ય પ્રે મુખ્ય પ્રે મુખ્ય પ્રે મુખ્ય મુ મુખ્ય મુખય મુખ્ય મુખ્ય

This point is supported by the Commentary on the True Intent where it says,

If the characteristic of being a factor and the characteristic of being ultimate were unconnected, then there is no way that the simple lack of a self-nature to factors and their simple lack of a nature of their own could be their attribute of being ultimate.

The point is also supported by the fact that, in the sections where an illustration is used, it is stated that the lack of a self-nature is established in the same way as we establish empty space; that is, as being the simple lack of any physical matter. It is therefore extremely clear that totality, in the form of the lack of a self-nature to objects, is established for produced things as being the simple absence of their imagined self-existence: the raw exclusion of some self-nature to objects.

It is a complete contradiction on this subject to assert, on the one hand, that the descriptions of thusness in this sutra are to be taken as literal; and on the other hand to assert that this changeless totality is a self-standing, positive object: one which is not established simply as the result of a process of exclusion—the simple exclusion of what we deny when we speak of "no-self," and something which we picture as an object in our minds only by relying on the act of excluding what we deny by "no-self."

Remember that this is a school where we say that totality is the simple exclusion of a self-nature with regard to all things; and this is why Lord Buddha spoke of the "lack of a nature of being ultimate." It is not though the case that the school asserts that this absence has no nature of its own for the reason that it has a nature that lacks any quality of existing by definition.

Here finally is the third step: illustrations for the points covered. These three lacks of a self-nature can be described with three different illustrations. The *Commentary on the True Intent* begins by saying,

You can view the quality of lacking any definitive nature as being like the illustration of a flower that grows in mid-air.

It is, O Paramarta Samudgata, like this: you can view the quality of not having any nature of growing as being like the illustration of a magic show. And as for the quality of not having any nature of being ultimate, you can view it in yet a different way from those.

ર્નેન ન આ બાદ પ્રત્યા પ્રત્ય ત્ર આ ગે છે. આ બાદ પ્રત્ય સ્થા પ્ર તે આ બાદ પ્રત્ય સ્થા છે. મે સ્થા પ્ર તે બે સાંચે પ્ર તે પ્ર પ્ર તે પ્ય પ્ર તે પ્ર તે પ્ર તે પ્ર તે પ્ર તે પ્ય તે પ્ર તે પ્ર તે પ્ય તે પ્ તે પ્ય પ It is, O Paramarta Samudgata, like this: you can view this quality as being like the illustration of empty space, which is delineated by being a simple lack of anything with a physical nature, and which extends to all things. The lack of having any nature of being ultimate is the same: this particular quality is, in a way different from those others, delineated by being a lack of any selfnature to objects, and also extends to all things.

Saying that constructs are similar to a flower that grows in mid-air is only meant to illustrate how they exist merely in the imagination; the point is not to give an example of something that doesn't exist in the universe. The way in which dependent things are similar to a magic trick we will explain later on, and the point of the illustration used for totality is clear from the context in which it appears.

This is the way one should explain how it is that things lack any nature of their own when the sutra speaks of a "lack of any nature of their own." If on the other hand one were to say that "lacking any nature of their own" meant that none of the three natures existed by definition, then you would be expressing the belief that the sutras which state that nothing has any nature of its own are to be taken to mean exactly what they say. This would amount to espousing the view that nothing exists, or the view that everything has discontinued. This in turn would be discounting the existence of all three of the natures; and we could say then that you had turned into one of those people who holds the view that nothing has any definitive characteristics at all.

How this works, according to this school, is the following: if it were not the case that there were any dependent things that existed by definition, then they could never grow or stop—and one would thus be discounting their existence. If there were no examples of totality that existed by definition, then this could never be the core nature of every functional thing.

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Suppose, on this point, one were to raise the following question:

I can see how—if one were to hold the viewpoint that they did not exist by definition—one would be discounting the existence of the two natures. How is it though that you would be discounting the existence of constructs?

The point is that, if it were the case that the two natures did not exist by definition, then they could never exist at all. And if they did not exist, then there would be no object towards which we apply the constructs, and none of the terms that the one who applies the constructs uses. Constructs themselves then would become something that did not exist at all.

In this same vein, the Commentary on the True Intent says:

I will explain to you my true intent. It may be the case that you believe in things, that you fail to grasp fully the profound and pure way that things really are. And then you will come to believe, firmly, that I only meant exactly what I said about the nature of all things when I said the following:

None of these things at all has any nature of its own; and they are no other way. None of these things at all ever grows; and they are no other way. None of them ever stops; and they are no other way. They are extinct, and have been so from the very beginning; and they are no other way. They have, by their very nature, gone completely beyond the state of grief; and they are no other way.

If one were to start from this point, it would amount to espousing the view that nothing exists at all, and the view that nothing has any definitive characteristics at all. And once one reached the point of espousing the view that nothing exists, or that nothing has any definitive characteristics, then one would be discounting the existence of all things, from the point of view

of each and every one of their attributes. This is true because one would then be discounting the existence of the attribute of having constructs for every existing thing; and one would also be discounting the existence of the attributes of having dependent things and having totality.

And why would this be the case? Listen, Paramarta Samudgata. The point is that—if something displays the attribute of having a dependent thing, and the attribute of having totality—then we can understand it to display the attribute of having constructs. This being the case, anyone who holds the opinion that the attribute of having a dependent thing and the attribute of having totality have no definitive characteristics at all would also be discounting the existence of the attribute of having constructs. Such a person, we would then have to say, would be discounting the existence of all three of the attributes.

What does the "what I said" refer to in the sentence about "believing that I meant exactly what I said"? It refers to statements in the sutras where Lord Buddha taught that nothing has any nature of its own: where he stated that all

existing things are devoid of any nature which they have; void of any nature of their own; void of any nature of existing by definition. Any school that believed that these were to be taken just as they were spoken would be, in this context, a school that "believed that I meant exactly what I said."

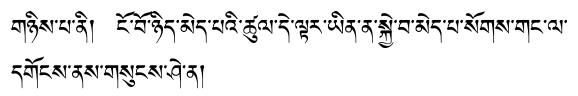
"The opinion that the attributes of having a dependent thing and having totality have no definitive characteristics at all" refers to the opinion that neither of these two exists by definition. And everything from "Why would this be the case?" on down is meant to present the rationale for saying that one would be discounting the existence of all three of the natures.

You should further understand the point that—if one were to take on face value Lord Buddha's statements that neither the growth of things nor their stopping exists by definition—then one would be discounting the existence of dependent things. This being the case, one would effectively be discounting the existence of the other two attributes as well. And this is because—in this school at least—growing and stopping themselves could never exist at all if they did not exist by definition.

# The Asian Classics Institute Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

### **Reading Three: The Latter Four Characterizations**

The following selection is taken from the Essence of Eloquence, a Classical Commentary on Distinguishing between the Figurative and the Literal (Drangba dang nges-pa'i don rnam-par 'byed-pa'i bstan-bcos Legs-bshad snying-po), by Je Tsongkapa (1357-1419); ff. 8a-9b in the ACIP digital edition (catalog number S5396), and pp. 18-22 in the ACIP Indian paper edition. The translation is based upon an oral teaching of the text by Geshe Tupten Rinchen of Sera Mey Tibetan Monastery. Please note that Je Tsongkapa's root text is extremely difficult, and is best studied with the accompanying ACI tapes.



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Here next is the second of the two sections on the answer. One may ask the following question: "If that's what Lord Buddha had in mind when he said that nothing had any nature of its own, then what was it he had in mind when he said 'nothing grows' and the like?

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What Lord Buddha had in mind when he mentioned those was the first and the last of the three kinds of a lack of any nature. The first is mentioned in the *Commentary on the True Intent* as follows:

I did say that nothing that exists ever grows, or stops; that they are all extinct, and have been so from the very beginning; and that they have, by their very nature, gone completely beyond the state of grief. What I had in mind when I said so was the quality of lacking any definitive nature.

Why is that? This is how it works, Paramarta Samudgata. Those things which do not exist by definition are things that never grow. Those things that never grow are things that never stop. Those things that never grow nor stop are things which are extinct, and which have been so from the very beginning. Those things that are extinct, and which have been so from the very beginning, are things that have, by their very nature, gone completely beyond the state of grief. And those things which have, by their very nature, gone completely beyond the state of grief have nothing at all about them which is gone completely beyond the state of grief.

नगेनियरि द्वीर क्री वगमा थेनि न र र अर्वन ग्री श मान र मालन र न र भा र र गी

# અર્ઠ્વ જેન ગોુ આવ્યુ ન મલે જ્યુ લ્વાયા ખેન મન ખાન ન જ જો

The reason given here for saying that constructs never grow or stop is that they are things which do not exist by definition. The text is thereby also indicating that—if something did exhibit growing or stopping—then it would exist by definition; and that dependent things do exhibit growing and stopping which exist by definition.

Objects of the kind that are bereft of any growing or stopping are unproduced things; and these are not the types of things that can belong to the mentally-afflicted side of things. This is why they are spoken of as "extinct, from the very beginning," and "gone, by their very nature, completely beyond grief"; for the meaning of "grief" here is the mentally-afflicted side of things.

The second of the three lacks treated here is described in the *Commentary on the True Intent* as follows:

And from another point of view did I say that nothing that exists ever grows, or stops; that they are all extinct, and have been so from the very beginning; and that they have, by their very nature, gone completely beyond the state of grief. What I had in mind when I said so was the quality of lacking any nature of being ultimate: that which is delineated by the absence of a selfnature to objects.

Why is that? This is how it works. The quality of lacking any nature of being ultimate—that which is delineated by the absence of a self-nature to objects—is something that only continues, in the time of changeless changelessness, and in the time of unshaking unshakability. This is that unproduced thing which is the real nature of all existing things, and it is free of everything mentally afflicted.

Think about this thing, that real nature of things, an unproduced thing that continues in the time of changeless changelessness, and in the time of unshaking unshakability. Because it is an unproduced thing, it neither grows nor stops. And because it is free of any of the mentally afflicted things, then it is also extinct, from the very beginning, and something which is, by its very nature, gone completely beyond the state of grief. . .

The *Great Commentary* explains the expression "time of changeless changelessness" as referring to all the time that has gone before, and the expression "time of unshaking unshakability" as meaning all the time that will come afterwards.

One might raise the following question:

When they talked about what it was that lacked any self nature, they referred to all three kinds of lacking a self-nature. But then when they talked about what it was that lacked any growing or the rest, they failed to refer to the middle kind of a lack of a selfnature. Why is that?

And why too does the *Compendium* explain the lack of any growing, and the rest, with reference to all three of the attributes where it says,

... Because the lack of any definitive nature refers to the nature of constructs; and the lack of any nature of growing refers to dependent things; and the lack of any nature of being ultimate refers to totality. And what did Lord Buddha have in mind when he spoke of things that "never grow," "never stop," are "extinct from the very beginning," and "gone—by their very nature—beyond all grief"? Things that "never grow" do so exactly as those things that have no nature of their own lack their nature. Things that "never stop" do so exactly as those things that never grow never grow. Things that are "extinct from the very beginning" are that way just as those things that never grow and never stop are those ways. And that in turn is exactly how things are, by their very nature, beyond all grief.

The *Great Commentary* from China says on this point that the reason why dependent things are not mentioned in the sutra as being what Lord Buddha was referring to with the expressions "never grow" and so on is that the sutra means to indicate that these are not things of the kind which lack any nature of occurring through dependent origination.

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The real point of the sutra though is as follows. Dependent things do exhibit growing and stopping, of a kind that exist by definition. Therefore these dependent things are not what Lord Buddha had in mind when he spoke of "never growing" or "never stopping." Moreover, the vast majority of dependent things are taken in by the mentally-afflicted side of things; and so this is why the dependent things are not described as something that Lord Buddha has in mind when he mentions the latter two expressions.

And here is what the *Compendium* is referring to when it says that things never grow the same way they have no nature; and that this is too how they never stop, and how they are extinct from the very beginning, and how they are, by their very nature, completely beyond all grief: the point is that we are to refer, in each case, to that particular nature which each one of the three natures, respectively, is said to lack when we describe it.

# The Asian Classics Institute Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

## **Reading Four: An Identification of the Three Attributes**

The following selection is taken from the Essence of Eloquence, a Classical Commentary on Distinguishing between the Figurative and the Literal (Drangba dang nges-pa'i don rnam-par 'byed-pa'i bstan-bcos Legs-bshad snying-po), by Je Tsongkapa (1357-1419); ff. 9b-11a in the ACIP digital edition (catalog number S5396), and pp. 22-26 in the ACIP Indian paper edition. The translation is based upon an oral teaching of the text by Geshe Tupten Rinchen of Sera Mey Tibetan Monastery. Please note that Je Tsongkapa's root text is extremely difficult, and is best studied with the accompanying ACI tapes.

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Here is the third division from above: an identification of the nature of the three real natures. "You have said," one may begin, "that the 'lack of a definitive nature' refers to constructs. But just what are these constructs themselves?" Our answer is drawn from the *Commentary on the True Intent:* 

Consider that thing which is established through names and terms as either the attribute that relates to the very essence, or the attribute that relates to some particular, when we focus on something which is (1) the arena in which the constructing state of mind acts; (2) the object of the attribute of constructs; and (3) that which exhibits the typical features of a factor; and speak of it as "the heap of physical matter."

Consider as well that thing which is established through names and terms as either the attribute that relates to the very essence, or the attribute that relates to some particular, when we focus on the same thing and speak of "the growing of the heap of physical matter," or its "stopping," or "eliminating" or "grasping" this heap of physical matter.

This thing is what we refer to as "the attribute of constructs."

Now the three numbered items are descriptions of the object towards which a construct is applied. The rest is a description of how the application of the construct is carried out: you either apply a construct about the general essence of an object by saying this is the "heap of physical matter," or you apply a construct about the particulars or features of the same object by saying, "the heap of physical matter is growing," or one of the others. We will be examining this point in further detail.

"And you have said," one may continue, "that the 'lack of a nature of growing' refers to dependent things. But just what are these dependent things?" Again we turn to the *Commentary on the True Intent:* 

Consider that thing which is (1) the arena in which the constructing state of mind acts; (2) the object of the attribute of constructs; and (3) that which exhibits the typical features of a factor. This thing is what we refer to as "the attribute of dependent things."

The first term indicates what it is that takes dependent things as its object; the second indicates that dependent things are the basis towards which the constructs are applied; and the third indicates the very nature of dependent things.

"You have finally said," one may conclude, "that the 'lack of a nature of being ultimate' refers to totality. But just what is totality?" Again, the *Commentary on the True Intent* says:

Consider the fact that the thing which is (1) the arena in which the constructing state of mind acts; (2) the object of the attribute of constructs; and (3) that which exhibits the typical features of a factor itself is—in its totality—free of the attribute of constructs.

Consider the fact that it is impossible for it to have any nature of having that one specific nature. Consider the fact that it is impossible for it to display any self-nature of objects. And consider that essential nature which is the object perceived by [the path of] purity. This is what we refer to as "the attribute of totality."

The phrasing around the words "of objects" is saying, "that thing we talk about as the lack of any self-nature of objects, or the essential nature of things." Totality is being identified as that one thing which—if you focus on it and then meditate upon it—your spiritual obstacles are cleaned away.

And what is the lack of a self-nature to objects? It is, as the text says, the fact that it is impossible for these things to have any nature, a nature of having that one specific nature.

One may ask just what kind of a nature it is that these things lack. The "nature of having that one specific nature" is referring to the nature that was just mentioned; that is, that of constructs. The words "that one" are meant to exclude the others, meaning the other two natures. Therefore the point here is not to say that it is impossible for these two to have any nature. The word "totality," the text is saying, refers to that one lack of a nature: the lack of a nature to constructs.

Here is what the words "the thing" that come first refer to. Everything from the words "consider the fact" down to "a factor itself" is meant to indicate that dependent things are the thing which has the emptiness. The words "free of the attribute of constructs" is a very clear statement that totality is something which refers to the fact that *these things* are empty or devoid of constructs. It is therefore a further contradiction to assert, on the one hand, that the manner in which this sutra teaches emptiness is literal, and then to assert at the same time that totality consists of the fact that the last of the three natures is empty or devoid of the first two.

The emptiness or voidness here, moreover, is not the kind you have when a specific spot is empty or devoid of a water pitcher; not just the denial of some other thing. Dependent things, rather, are empty or devoid of any nature where they exist *as* the constructs—in the same way that a person does not exist as a substantial thing.

It is for this exact reason that the sutra says that "the thing" is, "in its totality, free of the attribute of constructs."

What are the kinds of constructs that these things are devoid or empty of? The sutra, in these two places where it undertakes to identify the nature of a construct, makes no mention of any other constructs beyond the sole two: those applied towards the very essence of an object and those applied towards its features. I will explain why the sutra fails to mention the others later on.

We have thus shown how the three attributes can be applied to the heap of physical matter; similar sets of three can be applied as well to the four remaining heaps; to the twelve doors of sense; to the twelve links of dependent origination; to the four types of sustenance; to the six elements; and to the eighteen categories.

Let's take for example the truth of suffering. The constructs here are those things that are established through names and terms when you focus on the object of your construct and think to yourself either of its very essence—with the words "truth of suffering"—or of its particulars, in wording such as "The truth of suffering is something that a person should realize is happening to them." The dependent thing here is just the same as we described it above,

and so is the totality; you can even use the same expression and say it is "impossible for it to have any nature of having that one specific nature." Use this same pattern for the other truths.

The pattern applies as well to all seven groups within the elements of enlightenment. Again you are, as before, choosing a basis to receive the label, and then applying constructs either to its essence (in the words, for example, that "this is a pure state of concentration") or to its features (by speaking about the this or that that it has; speaking, as we mentioned before, about the things that work against it, or the spiritual antidote involved, or anything of the like). Then you go into the other two natures, just as we did with the truth of suffering.

All this then shows how it is that we can establish three attributes each for every one of the items mentioned in the original question meant to clarify those apparent inconsistencies: for everything from the heap of physical matter up to the various elements of the path. And Paramarta Samudgata respectfully says to the Teacher, "Now I understand why you taught the different kinds of a lack of self-nature as being three, for you were thinking of how we establish the three attributes this way."

# The Asian Classics Institute Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

## **Reading Five: The Outcome of the Exchange**

The following selection is taken from the Essence of Eloquence, a Classical Commentary on Distinguishing between the Figurative and the Literal (Drangba dang nges-pa'i don rnam-par 'byed-pa'i bstan-bcos Legs-bshad snying-po), by Je Tsongkapa (1357-1419); ff. 11a-13a in the ACIP digital edition (catalog number S5396), and pp. 26-31 in the ACIP Indian paper edition. The translation is based upon an oral teaching of the text by Geshe Tupten Rinchen of Sera Mey Tibetan Monastery. Please note that Je Tsongkapa's root text is extremely difficult, and is best studied with the accompanying ACI tapes.

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Here now is the fourth division from above: a statement, offered by the bodhisattva, of the conclusion reached through the preceding points. We proceed in two steps: a presentation of the relevant passage of the sutra, and then a brief explanation of its meaning. Here is the first.

રે સ્ટ્રમ્પ્સ્ ગાસુદ્ મ્વા ગા તે સાંદ્ર અસ્ય મ્વ્રમ્યું ગા તે તે છે દુ ગી સાળે દુ માંદ્ર દુ સાંદ્ર સ્ટ્ર સ્ટ્ર મુદ્ર ગો સર્ક્સ છે દુ ગી સાય ગુ દ્વ માંદ્ર સ્ટ્રે સ્ટ્રા માંદ્ર સ્ટ્રા માંદ્ર સ્ટ્રા માંદ્ર સ્ટ્રા માંદ્ર સ્ટ્ર ગુ દ્વ ગો માંદ્ર માંદ ગુ દ્વ ગો માંદ્ર માંદ ગુ દ્વ ગો માંદ્ર માં

ય સમય શે. બંધાય શેય તેય તર હશે ર રા

We see then that Lord Buddha has taught, in his highest of all spoken words, three different groups of sutra: one in which he said that every existing thing does exist by definition; one in which he said that no existing thing exists by definition; and a third in which he made fine distinctions between things, saying that some exist by definition, and some do not.

We see further that these various sutras can be grouped into two categories: those that do and those that do not make fine distinctions between the different ways in which things have no nature of their own at all. Those that do make these distinctions do not need to be interpreted further, and are therefore considered literal. Those that do not make these distinctions must be interpreted further, and so are considered figurative. There are two groups of the latter, and so we can say that two of the groups of sutra are figurative, and one is literal. All this we can understand by implication, from the discussions that have appeared earlier.

This way in which we speak of the three historical turnings of the wheel as being either figurative or literal, this point that we arrive at through implication from what has come before, is expressed to the Teacher by the bodhisattva Paramarta Samudgata in the following words from the *Commentary on the True Intent:* 

O Conqueror, you taught first in the land of Varanasi, in the forest full of wild animals, the wood of the saints; you imparted a teaching on the subject of the four realized truths to those who had entered, perfectly, the way of the listeners. And in doing so you turned, perfectly, a wheel of the Dharma which was amazing, and awe-inspiring; one which no being—neither god nor man—had ever turned accurately in this world ever before.

And Conqueror, this perfect turning of the wheel of the Dharma was one which had something higher; it was one which left an opening; it was one which had to be interpreted further; and it was one which could serve as a basis for contention.

And then, O Conqueror, you turned the wheel of the Dharma a second time, for the benefit of those who had entered, perfectly, the greater way. This time you took an appearance of speaking of emptiness, doing so by bringing up first the fact that no existing thing could ever have any nature of its own—and then going on to the facts that nothing could ever grow; and that nothing could ever stop; and that everything was extinct from the

very beginning, and that everything was, by its very nature, completely beyond all grief.

This turning of the wheel of the Dharma was one which was ever so amazing, and ever so awe-inspiring. And Conqueror, this turning of the wheel of the Dharma as well was one which had something higher; it was one which left an opening; it was one which had to be interpreted further; and it was one which could serve as a basis for contention.

And then, O Conqueror, you turned the wheel of the Dharma a third time, imparting a teaching to those who had entered, perfectly, every one of the different ways: you spoke to them of how to make the fine distinctions. And you did this by bringing up first the fact that no existing thing could ever have any nature of its own—and then going on to the facts that nothing could ever grow; and that nothing could ever stop; and that everything was extinct from the very beginning, and that everything was, by its very nature, completely beyond all grief. This too was a turning of the wheel which was amazing, and awe-inspiring.

But Conqueror, this turning of the wheel of the Dharma was one which had nothing higher; it was one which left no opening; it was one which could be taken literally; and it was one which could never serve as a basis for contention.

# महिरूप्यायामहिरू। सर्देवे केमार्ने रुद्रा वनामवनायानमा इमामेरूगी र्म्या कुर्या कुमार्ने संस्था महिरूप्य कुमार्ने का कि

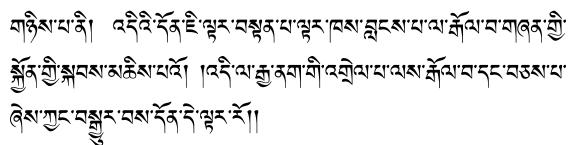
Here secondly is our brief explanation of the meaning of the sutra. Here too there are two parts: a brief explanation of the meaning of the wording of the sutra, and a brief explanation of the distinction between teaching which is figurative and teaching which is literal.

Here is the first. Wentsek explains the wording of this citation from the sutra as follows. The first part of the quotation about the first turning of the wheel of the Dharma is meant to indicate where this wheel was turned; then the second part is meant to indicate the types of disciples for whom it was turned. The part about "imparting a teaching" in a wheel "never turned before" on the subject of the "four realized truths" is meant to convey the very nature of this turning of the wheel.

The part about "imparting a teaching on the subject of the four realized truths" is intended to convey the subject matter which Lord Buddha brought up in this turning of the wheel. The phrase with "amazing" and so on is intended as a praise of this turning. The wording "this turning as well" is meant to indicate that this second turning was not something we could take literally.

"Having something higher" means that this particular turning of the wheel does have another one which is above it, in the sense of being more extraordinary. The word "opening" is to be taken as "occasion," meaning that there does exist a teaching which was imparted on an even more extraordinary occasion. We say a teaching is "something that we have to interpret further" when it either fails to teach emptiness or does have this teaching. Teachings involve "contention" in the sense that they are something that others may question, and because they provide a basis of contention for those of the Listener way.

The point of the first sutra reference at this juncture is to say that certain teachings have something "higher than them" in the sense that there are other teachings that are "above" them, since they can be taken literally.



The point of the second reference is that people who accept certain teachings as saying what they mean thereby leave an "opening" for philosophical opponents to attack them. This is in fact what the reference actually means, given the fact that we also see the wording from the Chinese commentary translated as "involving attacks from opponents."

# मार्शुसाया के रि दे दे दे मालक रु इट न में साय दे।

The point of the third reference is that one cannot accept certain teachings on face value, and must interpret them further.

The point of the fourth reference is that—if the Teacher has failed to make certain distinctions about a particular teaching clearly, if he has failed to say "This is what it really means"—then it is possible that contention may arise, with some people saying that it meant something different.

Consider the part of the sutra reference to the second turning of the Wheel, from the place where it mentions "bringing up first," all the way down to "completely beyond all grief." This is meant to describe what subject matter is brought up for the teaching to proceed. The part about those of a certain "way" and so on constitutes a description of the kinds of disciples for whom the particular wheel was turned.

The part about "an appearance of teaching emptiness" has been explained in some commentaries as referring to the lack of a self-nature to objects. We also see though in the great Chinese commentary the expression "in a way that was not evident," and this is explained as meaning "it does have this teaching, but in a concealed way."

As far as a translation of the original, this one is better; the point of it is that the latter two turnings of the wheel are similar in that Lord Buddha gives his teaching by bringing up the fact that nothing has any nature of its own. There is however a difference between the two in how they make their presentation: the middle turning teaches its subject matter in a way which is not "evident," meaning without making the distinction between things having a nature of their own or not as explained above; whereas the final turning is referred to the "one of fine distinctions" precisely because it does make this distinction.

That master of the three collections of teachings, Wentsek, says nothing more about the idea of "having something higher" than to describe it as "something higher relative to the third" turning of the wheel, and such. The Indian preceptor Yangdak Denpa has admittedly offered an explanation of this point in his work, but since it does not appear to be a good one I will not repeat it here; our own position is that already expressed.

ଦାସିଁ ନିଂଶ୍ୟାକ୍ଷ୍ୟୁଷ୍ୟ ସଂସ୍ୱାସନ୍ତି ସ୍ୱାସନ୍ଦ୍ର ସ୍ୱାସ୍ଥ୍ୟୁ ଅଭାସନ୍ତ୍ର ସ୍ଥାନ୍ତି ସ୍ଥାନ୍ତ ସ୍ଥାନ୍ତ ସ୍ଥାନ୍ତ ସ୍ଥାନ୍ତ ସ୍ଥ ଗ୍ରାଣ୍ଟ ସିସ୍ୱାସ୍ୟ ସ୍ଥ୍ୟୁ ଅଭାସନ୍ତି ସ୍ଥାନ୍ତ ସ୍ଥାନ୍ତ ସ୍ଥାନ୍ତ ସ୍ଥାନ୍ତ ସ୍ଥାନ୍ତ ସ୍ଥାନ୍ତ ଅଭାସନ୍ତି ସ୍ଥାନ୍ତ ଅଭାନ ଅଭିନ୍ତ କିଂକିଂସ୍ଥ୍ୟୁ ସ୍ଥାନ୍ତ ସ୍ଥ

The subject matter that Lord Buddha brings up in the third turning of the wheel is similar to that of the middle turning. The disciples for the third turning are "those who have entered, perfectly, every one of the different ways"; the point being that, whereas the disciples for the previous two turnings of the wheel belong one to the greater way and one to the lesser, this third turning was meant to relate to both.

The phrase "fine distinctions" here refers to the fact that all three of the various attributes can be established, as mentioned above, for each of the various objects of existence—for physical matter or any of the rest; it also refers to the fact that the lack of a nature to objects is distinguished into three different types relating to these three.

The expression "this turning of the wheel of the Dharma" includes that pronoun of relative proximity: "this." It applies to the turning of the wheel of the Dharma in which the fine distinctions were made—that turning of the wheel which is spoken of immediately afterwards. And this refers to the *Commentary on the True Intent*, as well as to other teachings that make similar distinctions. We do not however refer to those sutras which do not make this kind of distinction—between something's having a nature of its own or not—as being this particular turning of the wheel, even if they were spoken by Lord Buddha during the final period of his teaching.

The greatness of this last turning of the wheel is indicated in the various expressions such as "one which has nothing higher." Because this particular turning of the wheel is supremely awe-inspiring, and because there is no teaching which is any greater, it "has nothing higher." Because there will be no later occasion upon which some more supreme teaching is imparted, and also because with this turning of the wheel there is no opening for others to raise any questions, it "leaves no opening." Because it definitively relates what does exist and what does not, it is a turning of the wheel "which can be taken literally," and which is not a teaching that could serve as a "basis" for someone to raise any "contention."

This is how Wentsek gives his commentary; except for the former of the two explanations of the expression "leaves no opening" or "occasion," the basic

meaning of the rest corresponds to the opposite of the meanings I have already listed for the various expressions beginning with "does have something higher."

There is an opening or opportunity for criticizing the meaning of the first two groups of sutra, if you take it on face value. The reason that there is no such opening or opportunity in this group is that one may take the words on face value; they need not be interpreted further. Whether or not there is contention relates to whether or not the point taught by the particular group of sutras is that things do or do not have a nature of their own. Therefore a lack of "contention" here refers to whether, when a real thinker examines a teaching that does or does not make the presentation this way, he will find any point of contention. "Contention" here though is not meant to refer to just anything that anyone might find to argue about with regard to the teaching.

The Asian Classics Institute Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

Supplement to Reading Five

	First turning of the wheel	Second turning of the	Third turning of the
	of the Dharma—	wheel of the Dharma—	wheel of the Dharma—
Name	The Turning of the Wheel on the Four Truths चन्द्रिंद्र स्टें अप्टॉर्स्ट 1 DENSHIY CHUNKOR	The Turning of the Wheel on How Nothing Exists by Definition અર્ઝેઝે, જે, ગ્રે, ગ્રે, ગ્રે, ગ્રે, ગ્રે, ગ્રે, અર્ઝે, જે, ગ્રે,	The Turning of the Wheel on Fine Distinctions ঝিল্রান্ধাय्थ्रदिर्भेज्ञात्वर्त्तित् LEKCHEY CHUNKOR
Period	First period	Second period	Final period
	ران کھنچر کرا	र्रुभ'चर 'दा	র্ন নেদ্র ন্য
	DU DANGPO	DU BARPA	DU TAMA

	First turning of the wheel	Second turning of the	Third turning of the
	of the Dharma—	wheel of the Dharma—	wheel of the Dharma—
Place	Sarnath, near Varanasi भ्रास्टार्द्धो WARANASI	Vulture's Peak, in Rajagirha डु'र्झेन्'सुट'र्द्येते'है। JAGU PUNGPOY RI	Vaishali अत्रज्य उद्य
Disciples	Those of the lower way कुर्क चेंद्रा देश NYENTU TEKPA	Those of the greater way झेन्रा'र्रेजित् TEKCHEN	Those of all ways (meaning certain ones of the higher way) স্টিম্ব'র্মেস্ক্রির্মি'র্জ্বর্মি TEKPA TAMCHE
Basic subject matter	The four realized truths	Emptiness	The three attributes
	त्रय्याह्य योजित्य स्वित्र	ब्रॅंट 'दा'ड्रेन्	মার্কর'ঈন'শান্ত্রজা
	PAKPAY DENPA SHI	TONGPA NYI	TSENNYI SUM

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant Supplement to Reading Five

Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant Supplement to Reading Five

	First turning of the wheel of the Dharma—	Second turning of the wheel of the Dharma—	Third turning of the wheel of the Dharma—
View	Every existing thing exists by definition మేనా కైనినా ని నేగాను దేనా	No existing thing exists by definition The start of the second state of the second sta	Some things exist by definition, and some do not, and we must make fine distinctions between them
	ନିମ୍'ଅୁୁକ'ସ୍ୱା CHUNAM RANGGI TSENNYI KYI DRUPPA	ନିର୍ମା ଅୁଷା କାସୁସାସ୍ଥା CHUNAM RANGGI TSENNYI KYI MA DRUPPA	ૺ હેંચા કુરાસાવા સ્ટાવી સર્ક્ષ કેર ગ્રીત્રા સુવાસા સુવાવાયા
			टार छे CHU NAM LA RANGGI TSENNYI KYI DRUP MADRUP LEKPAR
Figurative or literal according to the Mind- Only School	Figurative	Figurative	Literal
Figurative or literal according to the Middle- Way School	Figurative	Literal	Figurative

# The Asian Classics Institute Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

### **Reading Six: On the Different Methods of Interpretation**

The following selection is taken from the Essence of Eloquence, a Classical Commentary on Distinguishing between the Figurative and the Literal (Drangba dang nges-pa'i don rnam-par 'byed-pa'i bstan-bcos Legs-bshad snying-po), by Je Tsongkapa (1357-1419); ff. 13a-14a in the ACIP digital edition (catalog number S5396), and pp. 31-34 in the ACIP Indian paper edition. The translation is based upon an oral teaching of the text by Geshe Tupten Rinchen of Sera Mey Tibetan Monastery. Please note that Je Tsongkapa's root text is extremely difficult, and is best studied with the accompanying ACI tapes.

Here is the second part from above: a brief explanation of the distinction between teaching which is figurative and teaching which is literal. The Chinese commentary refers to these different turnings of the wheel as follows. The first is the "Turning of the Wheel on the Four Truths," and the second is the "Turning of the Wheel on How Nothing Exists by Definition." The third is called the "Turning of the Wheel on Ascertaining the Ultimate." If we follow the actual wording of the sutra itself though we would refer to the third one as the "Turning of the Wheel on Fine Distinctions."

Now the way in which this particular sutra decides whether a teaching is figurative or literal hinges on the two of whether it makes certain fine distinctions or not. What it is that we are trying to decide is figurative or literal consists of all three of the teachings: the one in which it was stated equally for all existing objects that they have some nature of their own, one which exists by definition; the one in which it was stated equally for all existing objects that they have no such nature; and the one in which fine distinctions were made between them, stating that some did and some did not have such a nature.

The fact that these three are what we are trying to decide is figurative or not is extremely clear from the following:

1) from the fact that the question in which the bodhisattva is trying to rule out any apparent inconsistencies, and the answer that is given, relate to the various groups of sutra;

2) from the way in which three lacks of a self nature are set forth for every existing thing, and the statement about nothing having any nature of its own explained in terms of this treatment; and

3) from the way in which the three turnings of the wheel, delivered as they were during specific periods, are thereby understood as being either figurative or literal.

Therefore what is being indicated as figurative with regard to the first wheel is that teaching which relates to the initial period, and which starts off from the four realized truths to make statements such as that all existing things exist by definition; it is not though the case that we are referring to everything that Lord Buddha ever spoke during this initial period. Remember that he did, for example, make statements during this initial period such as his advice to the Group of Five at Varanasi urging them to "be sure to wear your lower robes in a neat circle." This is not the kind of teaching that we are concerned with here, the kind that we have to analyze to find out what it means.

Just so, the second turning of the wheel is defined here according to whether Lord Buddha made statements such as the one about nothing having any nature of its own. There are other groups of sutras that do also relate to the second period of Lord Buddha's teaching, but which are not taught from the point of view of things not having any nature of their own, or the like. But since these are not the kinds of teachings about which one might have questions of the kind that arise in the section of the sutra where the bodhisattva tries to clarify some apparent inconsistencies, they need not be clarified here as teachings which are figurative.

The third turning of the wheel that is explained as being literal too is the one mentioned before: the teachings in which those fine distinctions are made, and not just everything that was spoken. This fact is made exceedingly clear in the

sutra itself. Lord Buddha, for example, did as he was just about to enter his final nirvana give a teaching on what he declared would be appropriate monastic behavior entitled the *Summary of Vowed Morality*. This is not though a teaching which this sutra is explaining as being a literal teaching.

One may ask the following question:

What is it that this particular sutra hopes to accomplish by distinguishing the various turnings of the wheel into those that are figurative and those that are literal?

The sutra first seeks to prevent us from taking on face value those teachings which state either that all existing objects exist by definition, or that none exist by definition, without making any attempt to distinguish them into parts. It seeks to inform us that constructs do not exist by definition, but that the other two natures do exist by definition. It finally seeks to teach us that that form of emptiness represented by the absence of those constructs in dependent things is the ultimate object perceived by the path. This then is why the sutra states that the first two turnings of the wheel are figurative, and the final turning literal.

Given all this, some have used the wording of this sutra to go on and claim that it proves that everything which Lord Buddha taught during all the periods is meant to be taken literally. These people would then have to say that certain statements which the Buddha made to attract those of other religions who still believed that things could have some self-nature are teachings that we are meant to take on face value. They also say that no object but the real nature of things is anything more than the simple delusion of a mistaken state of mind; these other things have not the slightest bit of an existing nature to them. They say finally that the meaning of "fine distinctions" is the distinction between what exists in truth or not, in the sense of being this one true thing: the real nature of things.

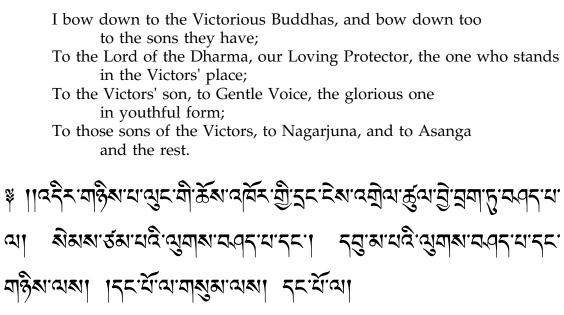
Others have had the concern that—if they were to make the distinction between the figurative and the literal in the way in which this particular sutra does so—then they would be forced to make the same claims as the group just mentioned. Therefore they deny this aspect of the sutra, saying that this method of distinguishing between the figurative and the literal cannot be something meant to be taken on face value.

Neither of these two positions seems to have examined carefully how, in this sutra, the bodhisattva raises questions seeking to explain apparent inconsistencies in the sutras; or how the Teacher gives his answer; or how, based on this exchange, certain teachings are said to be figurative, and others literal. They simply seem to be different arguments about the period represented by the teachings which make the distinction between the figurative and the literal.

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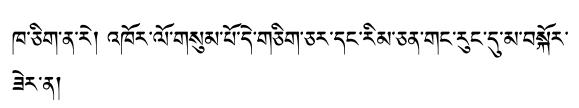
The following selection is taken from An Analysis of the Distinction between the Figurative and the Literal, a textbook used at Sera Mey Tibetan Monastery for the study of this subject. It was written by Kedrup Tenpa Dargye (1493-1568), and gives both a good sense of the detail in which the monastic textbooks treat their topics, and also a great deal more information on the three turnings of the wheel in relation to interpreting what the Buddha has stated. Several typical dialectic sections are presented here (from folios 1a-5a of the original text), followed by a brief resolution of the questions raised (from folios 9a-10a). The text that is used is the edition with ACIP electronic catalog number S0011.

Herein contained is "An Analysis of the Distinction between the Figurative and the Literal," a Work by the Illustrious Gendun Tendarwa, Wise One, Accomplished One, and a Great Bull who Walks at the Head of a Vast Herd of Masters of the Dharma



Here is the second part [of the traditional presentation on the art of interpretation]: a more detailed treatment of how we comment upon the turning of the wheel of the Dharma in the sense of the physical teachings; that is, how we decide which teachings were literal, and which were figurative.

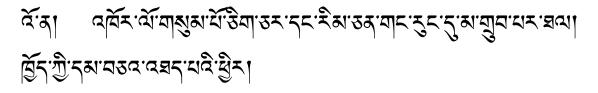
This part itself has two divisions: an explanation of the system of the Mind-Only School, and an explanation of the system of the Middle-Way School. The first of these has three sections of its own; here is the first of them.



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Suppose someone comes and makes the following claim:

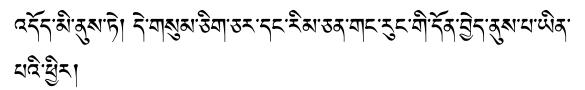
The wheel of the Dharma was turned three times; but these three times occurred neither one after the other, nor all at once.



Well then, are you saying that the three turnings of the wheel are neither successive nor simultaneous events?

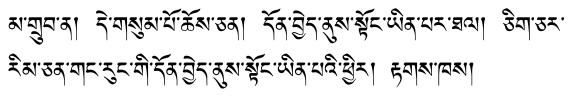
[Why do you say that?]

Because your own assertion is correct.



[Then I agree to our original statement: the three turnings of the wheel are neither successive nor simultaneous events.]

But you can't agree, because they are capable of performing a function either successively or simultaneously.



[It's not true that they are capable of performing a function either successively or simultaneously.]

Suppose you say that it's not true.

Consider these three.

Do they then lack any capacity to perform a function?

Because they lack any capacity to perform a function, whether it be successively, or simultaneously.

[It's not true that they lack any such capacity.]

But you just agreed that it was true.

વર્નેન શે સુશ્ર છે નિંત છેન સ્થય પાયે તે પવે છેન

[Then I agree that they do lack any capacity to perform a function, whether it be successively, or simultaneously.]

But you can't agree, because they do perform a function.

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Suppose someone comes and makes the following claim:

When our Teacher turned the wheel of the Dharma three times, he did so all at once.

Well, is it then the case that our Teacher turned the wheel by teaching each of the following at the same time?

- (1) The sutra in which he made those statements that begin with, "This is the realized truth of suffering";
- (2) The long, the medium, and the brief presentations of the perfection of wisdom; and
- (3) The "Chapter Requested by the Bodhisattva Named Paramarta Samudgata."

[Why do you say that?]

Because your own assertion is correct.

[Then I agree that those three were taught at the same time.]

But you can't agree. The sutra in which Lord Buddha made those statements that begin with "This is the realized truth of suffering" was spoken 49 days after our Teacher pretended to reach his total enlightenment. And the long, the medium, and the brief presentations of the perfection of wisdom—these three—were spoken on Vulture Peak the year after our Teacher pretended to reach this total enlightenment; and so on.

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# $[T:\ImT]$ [T:T] [T:T]

Suppose someone comes and makes the following claim:

Any sutra that the Conqueror spoke during the initial period necessarily belongs to the turning of the wheel where he taught the four realized truths.

Any sutra that he spoke during the middle period necessarily belongs to the turning of the wheel where he taught that nothing exists by definition.

Any sutra that he spoke during the final period necessarily belongs to the turning of the wheel where he made fine distinctions.

# 

Well then, is it the case that—if something is a sutra that the Conqueror spoke during the initial period—it necessarily belongs to the turning of the wheel, as described explicitly in the *Commentary on the True Intent*, where he taught the four realized truths, and so on?

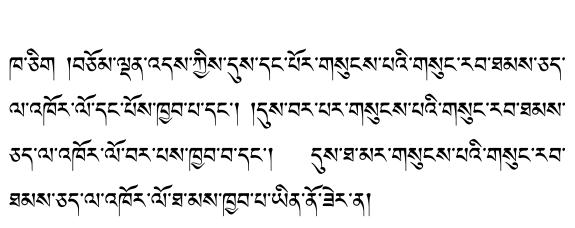
[Why do you say that?]

Because your own assertion is correct.

[I agree that it is the case that—if something is a sutra that the Conqueror spoke during the initial period—it necessarily belongs to the turning of the wheel, as described explicitly in the *Commentary on the True Intent*, where he taught the four realized truths, and so on.]

But you can't agree, because the times when Lord Buddha turned the wheel of the Dharma, as described in the *Commentary on the True Intent*, are not defined solely on the basis of the period in which they occurred.

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Suppose someone comes and makes the following claim:

It is necessarily the case that—

Any of those highest of teachings that the Conqueror spoke during the initial period belongs to the first turning of the wheel; Any of those highest of teachings that he spoke during the middle period belongs to the middle turning of the wheel; and

Any of those highest of teachings that he spoke during the final period belongs to the final turning of the wheel.

Well then, is it necessarily the case that, if something is one of the sutras that Lord Buddha spoke during the initial period, it belongs to the first turning of the wheel as described explicitly in the *Commentary on the True Intent*?

[Why do you say that?]

Because any of those highest of teachings that the Conqueror spoke during the initial period necessarily belongs to the first turning of the wheel.

Suppose you agree [that it is necessarily the case that, if something is one of the sutras that Lord Buddha spoke during the initial period, it belongs to the first turning of the wheel as described explicitly in the *Commentary on the True Intent*.]

Consider the sutra where Lord Buddha says, "O monks! You should keep to the rule of wearing a lower robe and upper robe that wrap neatly around your body."

Is it then [a sutra that belongs to the first turning of the wheel]?

[Why do you say that?]

Because it is [one of the sutras that Lord Buddha spoke during the initial period].

I agree [that the sutra where Lord Buddha says, "O monks! You should keep to the rule of wearing a lower robe and upper robe that wrap neatly around your body" is a sutra that belongs to the first turning of the wheel].

Is it then a sutra which expresses its message by taking, as its principal subject matter, some one or more of the four realized truths?

# 

I agree [that the sutra where Lord Buddha says, "O monks! You should keep to the rule of wearing a lower robe and upper robe that wrap neatly around your body" is a sutra which expresses its message by taking, as its principal subject matter, some one or more of the four realized truths].

But you can't agree, because it is a sutra which expresses only certain rules.

Now suppose you reply "It's not necessarily the case" to our original statement of necessity; [that is, you reply, "It's not necessarily the case that the sutra where Lord Buddha says, 'O monks! You should keep to the rule of wearing a lower robe and upper robe that wrap neatly around your body' is a sutra which expresses its message by taking, as its principal subject matter, some one or more of the four realized truths"].

Are you saying then that—if something belongs to the first turning of the wheel as it is described in the *King of Mystic Words*—it necessarily belongs to the first turning of the wheel?

[Why do you say that?]

Because, according to you, it's not necessarily the case [that the sutra where Lord Buddha says, 'O monks! You should keep to the rule of wearing a lower robe and upper robe that wrap neatly around your body' is a sutra which expresses its message by taking, as its principal subject matter, some one or more of the four realized truths].

[Then I agree that—if something belongs to the first turning of the wheel as it is described in the *King of Mystic Words*—it necessarily belongs to the first turning of the wheel.]

Suppose you do agree.

Consider then the following words of sutra, found in the longer Mother of the Buddhas and meant to inspire disgust for the circle of suffering: "Think of your body as the enemy."

Are you saying then that they belong to the first turning of the wheel?

[Why do you say that?]

Because they do belong to the first turning of the wheel as it is described in the *King of Mystic Words*.

## निराज्या केंशाउदाने भीवायवे सुरा

[It's not correct to say that those words of sutra belong to the first turning of the wheel as it is described in the *King of Mystic Words*.]

But it is so correct, because our example is what it is.

## २र्नेन में सुरू हो। सुरा मुरा मदे मर्ने के मा से न मदे ही न।

[Then I do agree that these words of sutra belong to the first turning of the wheel as it is described in the *King of Mystic Words*.]

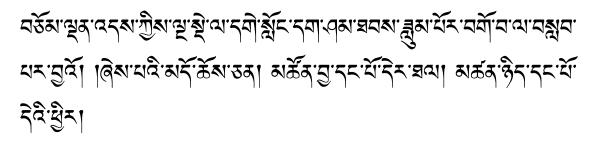
But you can't agree, because they are words of sutra that come from the longer Mother of the Buddhas. \*\*\*\*\*

Suppose someone comes and makes the following claim:

The definition of the first stage of teachings, the turning of the wheel where Lord Buddha taught the four realized truths, is: "Those sutras that Lord Buddha spoke intended primarily for a specific type of disciple—for those belonging to the lower way.

The definition of the middle stage of teachings, the turning of the wheel where Lord Buddha taught that nothing exists by definition, is: "Those sutras that Lord Buddha spoke intended primarily for a specific type of disciple—for those belonging to the greater way, and possessed of higher powers."

The definition of the final stage of teachings, the turning of the wheel where Lord Buddha taught the fine distinctions between the three qualities, is: "Those sutras that Lord Buddha spoke intended primarily for a specific type of disciple—for those belonging to the higher way, and possessed of lesser powers."



Consider then the sutra where the Conqueror says to the Group of Five, "O monks! You should keep to the rule of wearing a lower robe that wraps neatly around your body."

Are you saying that this is an example of what you are defining in the first instance above?

[Why do you say that?]

Because it is an example of something that fits your first definition.

[It's not correct to say that this sutra is an example of something that fits our first definition.]

It is so, because it is a sutra of the lower way.



[Then I agree that this sutra is an example of something that fits our first definition.]

Suppose you do agree.

Is this then a sutra which expresses its message by taking, as its principal subject matter, some one or more of the four realized truths?

[Why do you say that?]

Because you agreed.

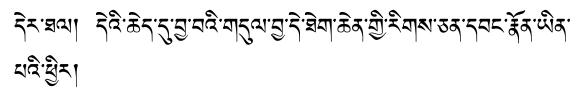
But you can't agree, because we have already disproved this idea earlier.

गलिक भाषा मुद्द कुव से समा नियत देव देव स्वा भाषा स्व सामि कि स रुवे। सर्वे वि मित्र सामे स्व से सिंह से सामि कि से सि Consider, as a further example, the "Chapter Requested by the Bodhisattva Paramarta Samudgata."

Are you saying that this is an example of what you are defining in the middle instance above?

[Why do you say that?]

Because it is an example of something that fits your middle definition.



[It's not correct to say that this work is an example of something that fits our middle definition.]

It is so correct, because the specific disciples which this particular teaching was meant for were those belonging to the greater way, and possessed of higher powers.

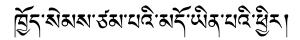
[It's not correct to say that the specific disciples that this particular teaching was meant for were those belonging to the greater way, and possessed of higher powers.]

Suppose you say it's not correct.

Consider the specific disciples for whom this teaching was meant.

They are so disciples belonging to the greater way, and possessed of higher powers,

Because they belong to the Mind-Only School.



[It's not correct to say that the specific disciples for whom this work was meant belong to the Middle-Way School.]

Suppose you say it's not correct.

Consider then the "Chapter Requested by the Bodhisattva Paramarta Samudgata."

The specific disciples for whom this teaching was meant do so belong to the Mind-Only School,

Because it is a sutra of the Mind-Only School.

[Then I agree to your original statement: the "Chapter Requested by the Bodhisattva Paramarta Samudgata" is an example of what we were defining in the middle instance above.]

But you can't agree, because it belongs to the final stage of teachings, the turning of the wheel where Lord Buddha taught the fine distinctions.

Consider moreover this same thing. Are you saying that the last of the definitions fits it? Because it is an example of last thing you were trying to define.

The reasoning here is easy.

मिंग्रेम । नर्मेन्सावम्वीया क्रान्ने सांसु मासुनाय दे वर्षित्रा ये मासुसा में ने नुसामी क्रां मासुसा में ने नुसामी क्रां से का मामिस का म

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Suppose someone comes and makes the following claim:

The three occasions of the turning of the wheel explicitly described in the *Commentary on the True Intent* are not established according to the period in which they were taught.

But they are so established in this way, because:

- there is something which enables us to establish the sutra which includes the line "O monks, this is the realized truth of suffering" as belonging to the first turning of the wheel; and
- (2) it is not the case that we establish something as belonging to the first turning of the wheel solely on the basis of its being a sutra which takes—as the principal subject matter which it expresses directly—the four realized truths; and neither is it the case that we establish something as belonging to the middle turning of the wheel, where Lord Buddha taught that nothing exists by definition, solely on the basis of its being a sutra which takes—as the principal subject matter which is express directly—the idea of emptiness.

[Your first reason above is not correct: it's not correct to say that there is something which enables us to establish the sutra which includes the line "O monks, this is the realized truth of suffering" as belonging to the first turning of the wheel.] Our first reason is so correct, because that sutra is an actual example of the first turning of the wheel.

[Then your second reason above is not correct: it's not correct to say that it is not the case that we establish something as belonging to the first turning of the wheel solely on the basis of its being a sutra which takes—as the principal subject matter which it expresses directly—the four realized truths; and it is neither the case that we do not establish something as belonging to the middle turning of the wheel solely on the basis of its being a sutra which takes—as the principal subject matter which is express directly—the idea of emptiness.]

Suppose you say that our second reason above is not correct.

Consider the following words of sutra, which are found in the *Medium-Length Mother of the Buddhas:* 

Think of physical matter as a thing which is changing, and only changing. Think of physical matter as a thing which is empty, and only empty; think of it as a thing which cannot exist by itself, and only as something which cannot exist by itself. . .

Do they then belong to the first stage of the teachings, to the turning of the wheel where Lord Buddha taught the four realized truths?

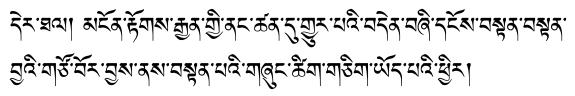
[Why do you say that?]

Because they are words of sutra which take—as the principal subject matter which they express directly—the four realized truths.

[It's not correct to say that these are words of sutra which take—as the principal subject matter which they express directly—the four realized truths.]

It is so correct, because the following words of classical commentary from the *Ornament of Realizations* take—as the principal subject matter which they express directly—the four realized truths:

Understand the way of this knowledge Of the path as being like the path Of the listeners, where those four truths Of the realized are perceived While seeing their lack of self-existence.



[It's not correct to say that these words of classical commentary take—as the principal subject matter which they express directly—the four realized truths.]

It is so correct, because there does exist a section of words that is part of the *Ornament of Realizations* and which takes—as the principal subject matter which it expresses directly—the four realized truths.



[It's not correct to say that there does exist a section of words that is part of the *Ornament of Realizations* and which takes—as the principal subject matter which it expresses directly—the four realized truths.] It is so correct, because the *Ornament of Realizations* takes—as the principal subject matter which it expresses directly—the four realized truths.

### यामुनामा दमायायें।।

[It doesn't necessarily follow that, if the *Ornament of Realizations* takes—as the principal subject matter which it expresses directly—the four realized truths, then there does exist a section of words that is part of this same work and which takes—as the principal subject matter which it expresses directly—the four realized truths.]

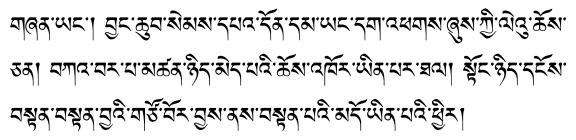
Suppose you say that it doesn't necessarily follow; that in itself would be a contradiction.

สามาราชรัฐานาสุมาริ พูมามารามนิวมรัฐมาพิสามนิชิมา

[Then I agree to your original statement: those words of sutra from the *Medium-Length Mother of the Buddhas* do belong to the first stage of the teachings, to the turning of the wheel where Lord Buddha taught the four realized truths.]

But you can't agree to our original statement,

Because they are words of sutra from the *Medium-Length Mother of the Buddhas*.



Consider, moreover, the "Chapter Requested by the Bodhisattva Paramarta Samudgata."

Does it then belong to the middle stage, to the turning of the wheel where Lord Buddha taught that nothing exists by definition?

Because it is a sutra which takes—as the principal subject matter which it expresses directly—the concept of emptiness.

[It's not correct to say that the "Chapter Requested by the Bodhisattva Paramarta Samudgata" is a sutra which takes—as the principal subject matter which it expresses directly—the concept of emptiness.]

It is so correct, because it is a sutra which takes, as the principal subject matter which it expresses directly, the fact that constructs—whether they be constructs relating to the basic nature of a thing or constructs relating to some detail of the thing—do not exist by definition.

[It's not correct to say that the "Chapter Requested by the Bodhisattva Paramarta Samudgata" is a sutra which takes, as the principal subject matter which it expresses directly, the fact that constructs—whether they be constructs relating to the basic nature of a thing or constructs relating to some detail of the thing—do not exist by definition.]

It is so correct, because this is a sutra which takes, as the principal subject matter which it expresses directly, demonstrating that the fact that constructs—whether they be constructs relating to the basic nature of a thing or constructs relating to some detail of the thing—do not exist by definition is what Lord Buddha's true thought is when he states, in the longer, medium, and briefer versions of the *Mother of the Buddhas*, that all existing things are, exclusively, such that they have no nature of their own.



[It's not correct to say that.]

It is so correct, because that particular sutra does express, in a direct way, some true thought that Lord Buddha had when stated—in the longer, medium, and briefer versions of the *Mother of the Buddhas*—that all existing things are, exclusively, such that they have no nature of their own.

## ४ जन २२ देन भे सुरा हे। नगाव घा भे जाय हो है के साथ कि मे भे से स्वीम

[Then I agree to your original statement: it is correct to say that the "Chapter Requested by the Bodhisattva Paramarta Samudgata" belongs to the middle stage, to the turning of the wheel where Lord Buddha taught that nothing exists by definition.]

But you can't agree, because it belongs to the final stage of teachings, the turning of the wheel where Lord Buddha taught the fine distinctions.

When we come and state our position that the three turnings of the wheel, as described directly in the *Commentary on the Ture Thought*, are established by all three criteria—by the period in which they were taught, by the disciples for whom the teaching was meant, and by the subject matter which they treat—then someone else comes and makes the following claim:



But isn't it the case that these three are not established by the period in which they were taught?

[Why do you say that?]

Because the *Essence of Eloquence* states the following:

When the *Commentary on the True Intent* speaks of the three stages of the turning of the wheel, it establishes them neither by the circle of disciples which had assembled for the teaching, nor by the period of his life in which the Teacher gave the teaching, nor by the rest; rather, it establishes them through the subject matter of the particular teaching. Now all this relates to setting forth what it means when we say that nothing has any nature of its own . . .

$$\exists x \cdot q \cdot \hat{M}_{q} \cdot \hat{A} \cdot \hat{C} \mid \hat{C} \hat{A} \cdot \hat{C} \hat{A} \cdot \hat{A} \mid \hat{C} \hat{A} \cdot \hat{A} \cdot \hat{A} \cdot \hat{C} \cdot \hat{C}$$

Yet there is no such problem, because the meaning of that particular section in the *Essence* is to say that these stages are established neither by period alone, nor by the disciple for whom they were meant alone, nor by the subject matter which they treat alone.

Suppose this were not the case. Are you saying then that the three turnings of the wheel, as they are described directly in the *Commentary on the True Intent*, are established by the period in which they were taught?

#### [Why do you say that?]

Because the *Essence of Eloquence* states the following:

This way in which we speak of the three historical turnings of the wheel as being either figurative or literal, this point that we arrive at through implication from what has come before, is expressed to the Teacher by the bodhisattva Paramarta Samudgata in the following words from the *Commentary on the True Intent* . . .

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Suppose someone comes and makes the following claim:

The following section from the *Essence of Eloquence* is setting forth the way in which the Consequence section of the Middle-Way School explains how to decide whether something Lord Buddha taught was literal, or whether it was figurative:

There is one set of teachings where, at the beginning, in Varanasi, Lord Buddha said that the individual had no self-nature; and then denied that something could exist in truth with no more than a very few objects, such as the parts of a person and so on; and then made many statements that something could exist in truth.

There is another set of teachings where he made none of these distinctions, and denied that any existing object, whether it be the parts of a person or anything else, could have any true existence of its own. . .

But that cannot be correct,

Because this is a section where Je Tsongkapa is describing the unique position of the Mind-Only School on how to decide whether something Lord Buddha taught was literal, or whether it was figurative.

[It's not necessarily the case that—if this is a section where Je Tsongkapa is describing the unique beliefs of the Mind-Only School on how to decide whether something Lord Buddha taught was literal or figurative—then it cannot be the section where he sets forth how the Consequence group of the Middle-Way School decides this same question.]

But this is so necessarily the case,

Because if Je Tsongkapa were to set forth how the Consequence group decides the question of what is literal and what is figurative in the very same section in which he is setting forth the unique position of Mind-Only School on this same question, then he would be making the mistake of confusing his sections.

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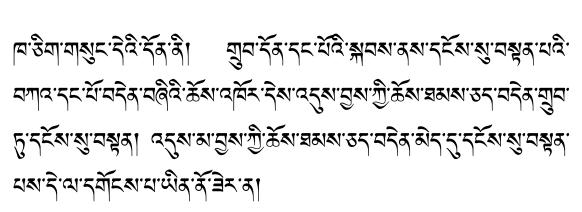
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Suppose someone counters with the following claim:

In this particular section, Je Tsongkapa has slipped back into the position of the Consequence group.

But that can't be correct, because (1) the *Essence, on How to Distinguish the Literal and the Figurative,* was composed in such a way as to explain how we examine the high word of the victorious Buddhas and come to a conclusion of its total accuracy; whereas (2) it would be impossible for a person to undertake a perfect, exhaustive examination of this high word and then confuse his sections when he got to the part where he explained the positions of the schools of the higher way.

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Suppose someone comes and makes the following claim:

Here is what Je Tsongkapa really intended to say in that particular section of his work. In the first stage of the teachings as it is described explicitly in the first of the outcomes—in the turning of the wheel where he taught the four realized truths—Lord Buddha explicitly expressed the fact that all caused things exist in truth; he also expressed, explicitly, the fact that no thing which is not caused has any true existence.

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Well then, is it necessarily the case that in the first stage of the teachings as it is described explicitly in the first of the outcomes—in the turning of the wheel where he taught the four realized truths—Lord Buddha explicitly expressed the fact that the fact that physical matter is what the term "physical matter" refers to was something that had no true existence?

[Why do you say that?]

Because, according to you, he expressed—explicitly—the fact that no thing which is not caused has any true existence.



[Then I agree that it is necessarily the case that in the first stage of the teachings as it is described explicitly in the first of the outcomes—in the turning of the wheel where he taught the four realized truths—Lord Buddha explicitly expressed the fact that the fact that physical matter is what the term "physical matter" refers to was something that had no true existence]

Suppose you do agree.

Is it then the case that Lord Buddha described things this way directing his explanation to specific disciples—to those who were members of the Sutrist school?

[Why do you say that?]

Because you agreed.

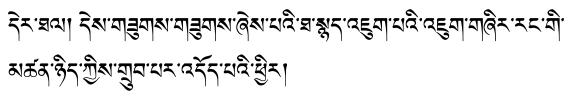


[Then I agree that Lord Buddha did describe things this way directing his explanation to specific disciples—to those who were members of the Sutrist school.]

Suppose you do agree.

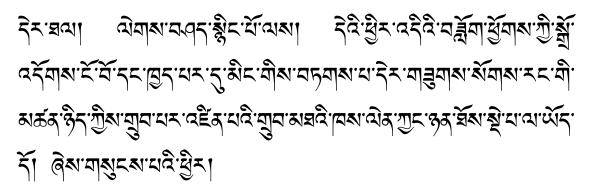
Is it then the case that the disciples to whom this explanation was supposedly directed—the Sutrists—believe that this fact is something that has no true existence?

- [I agree that the disciples to whom this explanation was directed—the Sutrists—do believe that this fact is something that has no true existence.]
- But you can't agree, because they believe that this fact is something that does have true existence.



[It's not correct to say that the Sutrists believe that this fact is something that has true existence.]

It is so correct, because they believe that the fact that physical form is what the term "physical form" refers to exists by definition.



[It's not correct to say that the Sutrists believe that the fact that physical form is what the term "physical form" refers to exists by definition.]

It is so correct, because the *Essence of Eloquence* itself states,

Therefore this same belief exists among those of the Listener groups as well; an idea which is the opposite of that other one, an idea that attributes a quality which is not in actuality there: which says that what are actually only constructed to be the primary form and various expressions of physical matter and the rest exist as such by definition.

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  $[T^{T}]$   $T^{T}$   $T^$ 

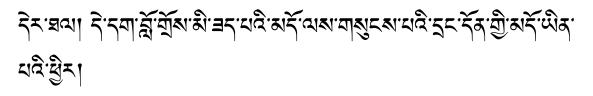
Suppose someone comes and makes the following claim:

No sutra which fails to teach some one or more of the three degrees of a lack of self-nature could ever serve as one of those teachings that we examine to see if it is literal or figurative.

$$f_{x}$$
  $f_{x}$   $f_{$ 

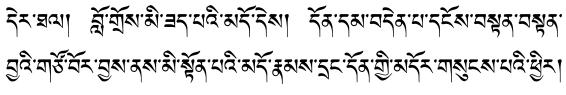
But a sutra that failed to teach this subject could so serve as one of these types of teachings,

Because it could serve as one of these types of teachings as they are described in the *Sutra Requested by Never-Ending Wisdom.* 



[It's not correct to say that it could serve as one of these types of teachings as they are described in the *Sutra of Never-Ending Wisdom*.]

It is so correct, because these types of teachings are sutras which are described in the *Sutra of Never-Ending Wisdom* as being figurative.

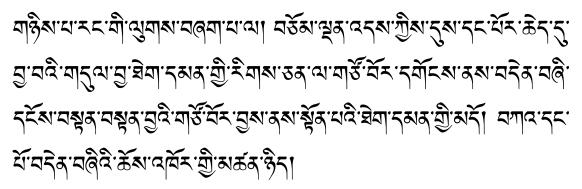


[It's not correct to say that these types of teachings are sutras which are described in the *Sutra of Never-Ending Wisdom* as being figurative.]

It is so correct, because the *Sutra of Never-Ending Wisdom* states that sutras which do not express their message by taking—as the principal subject matter which they describe explicitly—ultimate truth are figurative.

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We now jump ahead to the position our own school holds on these questions:



Here secondly is the position held by our own school. The definition of the first stage of the teachings, the turning of the wheel of the Dharma where Lord Buddha taught the four realized truths, is:

Those sutras of the lower way which were taught during the initial period, and in which the Conqueror expressed his message by taking—as the principal subject matter which he described explicitly—the four realized truths, intending the teaching for specific disciples belonging to the lower way.

A prime example of this turning of the wheel would be something like the following words of sutra:

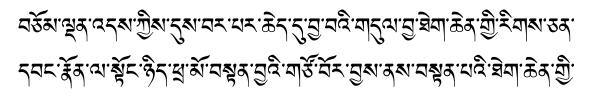
O monks, this is the realized truth of suffering. This is the realized truth of the source of suffering. This is the realized truth of the end of suffering. This is the realized truth of the path to the end of suffering.

# શ્રુમાનશ્વાપ્વેશ્વયમ્કા ગુનવકુમજ્ઞમાનમકા વર્ષેમાયઅદેવર્ડકા બચા વર્શ્વેશ્વયમ્કા

Suffering is something you have to become aware is happening. The source is something you have to eliminate. The end is something you have to bring about. The path is something you have to practice.

มูสารมุณญิญณราย มูราพราญิญณรายรามรา พูสาวยูรามรายา มูราพรามรายรามรา ณ์สุขานามรัฐารูย มูราพรามรัฐารูยรามรา ณมารมู้มานราย มูราพรารมู้มานรายรามรา ติมานรามรัฐารูเพิ่ม

Suffering is something you have to be aware is happening; then there will be nothing left to be aware of. The source is something you have to eliminate; then there will be nothing left to eliminate. The end is something you have to bring about; then there will be nothing left to bring about. The path is something you have to practice; then there will be nothing left to practice.



พรับ จุฑุณจระเพลส์สุาธิรามิรายนิาธิ์ส์มาณ์ส์ราญิพส์สุาธิรา

The definition of the middle stage of the teachings, the turning of the wheel of the Dharma where Lord Buddha taught that nothing exists by definition, is:

Those sutras of the higher way which were taught during the middle period, and in which the Conqueror expressed his message by taking—as the principal subject matter which he described—the subtle object of emptiness, intending the teaching for specific disciples belonging to the higher way, and possessed of higher powers.



A prime example of this turning of the wheel would be the longer, medium, and briefer versions of the *Mother of the Buddhas;* their abbreviation; and the *Heart of Wisdom*.

ᠴᡠᢅ᠍᠋ᡘ᠇ᡎᢋᡊᡪ᠋ᡧᡃᠭᢆᢧᢂᡃᠭᢩᢂᡃ᠋ᠴᠴᠴᠴ᠋ᡱ᠋᠆ᡪᢩᠿ᠋ᠴᡭ᠂᠋ᡏᢩ᠋ᡪᠺᢩᠬ᠋ᢖ᠍ᠯ᠋᠋ᠬ᠋ᡱᢋ᠋ᠭᢆᢧᡷ᠋ᡘᠯᢂᡃ᠍ᢌᢋ ᠬ᠋᠊ᢜᡧᡃᠭᢆᢧᠴᡪ᠋᠋᠋᠋ᠯ᠋ᢃ᠆ᡩ᠋ᠴ᠋ᠯᢂᡃᢅᢒ᠄ᢜᡘᠯᢂ᠋ᠴᢩᢂᢋᢋᢓᡭ᠂ᡘᠯᢅᡠᡸᠴ᠊ᡜᢂ᠂ᠴᢂ᠋ᢌᢋᡘᠴᡭ ᠍᠋᠋᠋ᡆ᠋ᡅ᠋ᡷᢋ᠋᠋ᡚᢂᡩ᠋᠋᠋ᡆ᠋ᡢᡊ᠊᠍ᢂ᠗ᠯᢂ᠄ᢓᡭ᠂᠋ᢜᡧᡊᡬᠯᠴ᠂᠋ᡚᢆᢂ᠋᠋᠋᠊᠋᠋᠕ᡩᡪ᠋

Those sutras of the higher way which were taught during the final period, and in which the Conqueror expressed his message by taking—as the principal subject matter which he described—either the subtle form of a lack of a self-nature to objects, the grosser form, or both, intending the teaching for specific disciples belonging to the higher way.

A prime example of this turning of the wheel would be sutras such as the "Chapter Requested by the Bodhisattva Paramarta Samudgata"; the section of the "Chapter Requested by Maitreya" from the *Commentary on the True Intent* known as "Maitreya and the Reflection in which Single-Pointed Concentration Plays."

The above are, by the way, only primary descriptions; if one were to eliminate all the problematic wording in them carefully, then the definition of the first stage of the teachings, the turning of the wheel of the Dharma where Lord Buddha taught the four realized truths, would be:

A sutra of the lower way, whichever of the three turnings of the wheel it belongs to.

The definition of the middle stage of the teachings, the turning of the wheel of the Dharma where Lord Buddha taught that nothing exists by definition, would be:

A sutra that (1) belongs to some one of the three turnings of the wheel as described in the *Commentary on the True Intent*, and which (2) was intended primarily for disciples belonging to the greater way, but of the kind who did not require a reinterpretation of the middle turning of the wheel through some teaching like the "Chapter Requested by the Bodhisattva Parmarta Samudgata."

The definition of the final stage of the teachings, the turning of the wheel of the Dharma where the fine distinctions were made, would then be:

A sutra that (1) belongs to some one of the three turnings of the wheel as described in the *Commentary on the True Intent*, and which (2) was intended primarily for disciples belonging to the greater way, and of the kind who did require a re-interpretation of the middle turning of the wheel through some teaching like the "Chapter Requested by the Bodhisattva Parmarta Samudgata."

Prime examples would be the same as above.

Now there is a reason why the sutra says that the specific disciples for whom the final stage of the teachings, the turning of the wheel of the Dharma where fine distinctions were made, were "those who had entered, perfectly, every one of the different ways." The point is that the specific disciples for whom the first wheel was turned are capable only of grasping the system of the three attributes with regard to the version of the lack of a self-nature of persons that was presented during the first turning of the wheel. They are not capable of grasping the system of the three attributes with regard to the lack of a selfnature of objects treated by the middle turning of the wheel.

Specific disciples for whom the middle wheel was turned are capable of grasping the system of the three attributes with regard to the lack of a selfnature of objects treated by the middle turning of the wheel with requiring any re-interpretation of this middle turning by any other sutra.

Specific disciples for whom the final wheel was turned are not capable of grasping the system of the three attributes with regard to the lack of a selfnature of objects treated by the middle turning of the wheel without a reinterpretation of this middle turning of the wheel through some teaching like the "Chapter Requested by the Bodhisattva Paramarta Samudgata."

When we say that they "are immediately capable of grasping the system of the three attributes with regard to the lack of a self-nature of objects treated by the middle turning of the wheel if they do rely on a re-interpretation of this middle turning of the wheel through some teaching like the "Chapter Requested by the Bodhisattva Paramarta Samudgata," the implication is that they are already a disciple who understands the system of the three attributes with regard to the lack of a self-nature of the person presented during the first turning of the wheel. And this is why the sutra speaks of those of "every one of the different ways."

#### The Asian Classics Institute Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

#### **Reading Seven: Master Asanga on Avoiding the Two Extremes**

The following selection is taken from the Essence of Eloquence, a Classical Commentary on Distinguishing between the Figurative and the Literal (Drangba dang nges-pa'i don rnam-par 'byed-pa'i bstan-bcos Legs-bshad snying-po), by Je Tsongkapa (1357-1419); ff. 14a-18a in the ACIP digital edition (catalog number S5396), and pp. 34-44 in the ACIP Indian paper edition. The translation is based upon an oral teaching of the text by Geshe Tupten Rinchen of Sera Mey Tibetan Monastery. Please note that Je Tsongkapa's root text is extremely difficult, and is best studied with the accompanying ACI tapes.

Here begins the second major part in our discussion of the art of interpretation according to the *Commentary on the True Intent;* that is, an explanation of how this sutra is commented upon. We proceed in two steps: a description of how Master Asanga relies, primarily, on the *Commentary;* and a description of how he sets forth the meaning of thusness, based on this approach.

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Here is the first. In the *Compendium*, Master Asanga cites the chapters on the ultimate from the *Commentary on the True Intent*, saying—

You should understand the ultimate as having five characteristics, as described in the *Commentary on the True Intent*.

He also cites the chapters that treat the three attributes, in the words:

You should view the attributes of all existing things as these are described in the *Commentary on the True Intent*.

He further cites the chapters on how things lack any nature of their very own, the ones that relate topics like the question and the answer about apparent inconsistencies in the sutras, and the distinction between teachings that are figurative and those that are literal, like this:

You should view, for every existing thing, the characteristic of lacking any nature of its own as described in the *Commentary on the True Intent*.

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Master Asanga further refers to the idea of the group of eight different kinds of consciousness, and the idea that—ultimately—there are three fixed tracks, both as they are spoken in the *Commentary on the True Intent*.

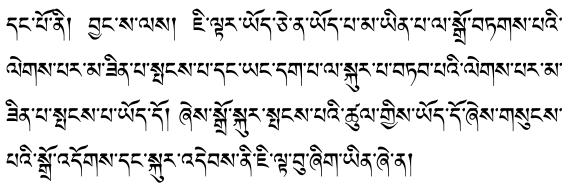
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In others of his works—in the "Chapter on Thusness" from the *Levels of the Bodhisattvas,* in the treatise upon it, and in the *Compendium* as well—he makes his presentation using a great number of explanations which come from the *Commentary on the True Intent:* explanations which show how Lord Buddha stated that totality consists of the absence of constructs relating to the basic object and to its details, with regard to dependent things.

Consider too the presentations of thusness found in the *Jewel of the Sutras*, in *Distinguishing the Middle from the Extremes*, and the various crucial points found in the commentaries upon these texts. They also are in very close agreement with the explanations found in our sutra, and so we can say that it appears that setting forth the meaning of this sutra forms the very foundation of this [Mind-Only] system.

Here secondly is our description of how Master Asanga sets forth the meaning of thusness, based on this approach of relying primarily upon the *Commentary on the True Intent*. Here there are three steps: a general presentation of how one avoids the two extremes; a more detailed refutation of the extreme of concocting things; and how here the distinction between the literal and figurative teachings of Lord Buddha is drawn.

The first of these has three further sections: the way in which the *Levels of the Bodhisattva* explains the point; the way in which the *Compendium* explains the point; and how other texts explain it. The first of these has two parts of its own: how a person who is concocting or discounting things views things, and how we refute them.



Here is the first of these two parts. One may begin with the following question:

The Levels of the Bodhisattva makes the following statement:

How then do things exist? They exist in a certain way—in which they are free of the object of a mistaken tendency to concoct things, a tendency directed at something which doesn't in reality exist; and in which they are free of the object of a mistaken tendency to discount things, a tendency directed at things which are in reality pure.

Can you explain what "concocting things" and "discounting things" mean in this description that things exist in a way free of concocting and discounting?

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These two are explained in the Levels of the Bodhisattva as follows.

The way in which concocting things works was spoken to be like this: it is that belief in which you concoct something about the very nature of the words that are used to make constructions concerning physical matter and all other existing objects, and concerning physical matter and all other functioning things; about words that are, in fact, things which do not exist by definition.

Discounting things is like this; it is saying that the following do not, all in all, exist:

that which is the foundation, with the typical features, of the words used to make constructs —that which provides the basis, with the characteristics, of the words used to make constructs;

that which exists ultimately, through an identity beyond all expression; and

that which is a pure, functioning thing.

They are, in short, things that waste one's opportunity; you should understand that these two will cause you to fall from this spiritual way of discipline.

The beginning part of this second section constitutes a description of what it is to discount something; and the part including the words "waste one's opportunity" on down is describing how a person would then fall from the profound teaching of the greater way.

The part that talks about "physical matter," continuing down to "functional things," is describing the object towards which a construct is directed. The part about "the very nature of the words that are used to make constructions" should be understood as referring to the nature [or attribute] of constructs, rather than to the words used in applying the constructs themselves; this point is made quite clear in works like the *Compendium*. You should keep in mind that—when this phrasing is used elsewhere in the *Compendium* as well—it should be read this same way.

The act of concocting things then consists of a believing that this nature constructed through the use of words—something which in fact does not exist by definition—does exist by definition.

The expression "that which is the foundation, with the typical features, of the words used to make constructs" is explained by the expression "that which provides the basis, with the typical features, of the words used to make constructs": the point is that we are talking about the object towards which the construct is directed.

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And the act of discounting things then consists of holding the idea that this thing—which "exists ultimately," in a way which is "beyond all expression"—"does not, all in all, exist."

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Given all this, concocting things is where you say, "Constructs exist ultimately"; and discounting things is something where you say, "The other two natures do not exist ultimately." This is because the first of the three actually only exists deceptively, whereas the other two exist ultimately.

If we explain discounting things as being the view that something which in actuality does exist ultimately doesn't exist at all, then it would seem that we'd have to explain concocting things as being the converse; that is, as the view that something which in actuality does not exist ultimately, does exist. The position stated at this point though is that concocting things consists of holding that constructs exist by definition—which means holding them to exist ultimately. So although it's not stated clearly in the actual wording, the point of the text here is that—if something exists by definition—then it exists ultimately. Holding that constructs exist ultimately then, according to this view, constitutes the act of concocting things.

Remember that the *Commentary on the True Intent* describes dependent things as "the object of the attribute of constructs; that which exhibits the typical features of a factor; and the object for applying constructs about the basic nature and the other features of a thing." We would have to admit, therefore, that when this text mentions holding that the "foundation, with the typical features, of the words used to make constructs" (something which in truth exists ultimately) doesn't exist, then what it is referring to explicitly is dependent things. There's no problem though if we say that the text is in effect speaking both of dependent things and totality, since—if dependent things were something that didn't exist ultimately—then totality would have to be something that didn't exist ultimately either.

This idea is supported by the *Levels of the Bodhisattva*, where it says:

If you discount objects like physical matter and other such objects that are functional things in themselves, you are still relegating thusness as well to the realm of non-existence, and it too would be something that didn't exist at all. And both these views would be equally wrong. Thus we can say that the way in which a person discounts functional things, dependent things, is not where they say "They don't exist in a normal way" or "They don't exist at all," but rather where they say, as described above, that something which does in fact exist ultimately does not.

Here is the second point, on how we refute the views in which a person either concocts things or discounts things. One may begin with the following question:

If that's what it means to either concoct things or to discount things, how then do we avoid falling into these views?

The extreme of concocting things is prevented by demonstrating how any object you choose to take at all is devoid of having a construct about it (either one about its basic nature or one about its various features) that could exist ultimately. We will cover this in greater detail later on.

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Preventing the view in which you discount things is accomplished through the following words of the *Levels of the Bodhisattva*:

The citation given just after that, and the one immediately subsequent, make the following point. If for example the various heaps of physical matter and the rest do exist, then it is appropriate for us to apply the construct of person to them. If however you believed that they did not exist, then we could never apply the construct of person to them, since one could hardly speak this way of something that was not a thing.

By the same token, whenever the objects of physical matter and the like—functional things in themselves—do exist, then it is appropriate for us to apply the labels of "physical matter" and such to them. If however one believed that they did not exist, then we could never apply a construct to them with some constructing kinds of words; they would be something that was not a thing. If one thus held that there existed no basis to apply a construct to, then—since there were no basis for construction—there would be no constructs either.

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Who is the opponent in this case; who is it that would even accept the idea of discounting things that we are disproving here? There's no reason why it would be some non-Buddhist school, nor would it be one of the listener groups, since none of them would ever assert that the functional things of physical matter and the rest that provide the foundation for applying expressions—both in names and terms—did not exist by definition.

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Therefore they are, as explained in the *Compendium*, a school that professes the tenets of the greater way; and are moreover the ones who assert that nothing that exists exists by definition. In short, we are talking about the "school that says nothing has any nature"; [that is, the Middle-Way School.]

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This school, by the way, in no way believes that the objects represented by dependent things and the like cannot exist, or that they do not exist in a nominal way. What they do say is that none of these things exists in an ultimate way.

Therefore the denial contained in the words "if functional things in themselves did not exist" is, as explained before, a denial of the idea that pure functional things, which do exist ultimately, could never exist. And this is true because, in this system, it is not the case that—just because they do not exist by definition and do not exist ultimately—constructs cannot exist at all. It is though the case here that if any of the other two natures were something that did not exist ultimately, or something that did not exist by definition, then they could not exist at all.

The way this system thinks about it is as follows. Consider the growing of several dependent things: mind and mental functions, arising as they do from their particular causes and conditions. If their growth is thus something that exists by definition, then it is an ultimate kind of growth. If this were not the case, then their growth would merely be something constructed in the mind, something where you just made it up in your own thoughts and said "they grow." And in this case, the growth of the functional things represented by mind and mental functions wouldn't be something that existed at all.

Don't respond to us then by saying that—since the growing and stopping of dependent things is only something that exists to a mistaken state of mind which is imagining that things are growing and stopping—growing and stopping are things that exist, in a deceptive way; and that therefore there is no discounting of these things occurring here.

Suppose you said something like "A rope is a snake to a mistaken state of mind which is imagining the rope to be a snake, but generally speaking there's never been a rope that was a snake." This is exactly what you're saying here

too: "The causes and effects involved in dependent things are causes and effects to a mistaken state of mind, to the state of mind in which you hold causes and effects to exist truly, but they are not causes and effects for dependent things as such." You may say this is what you believe, but it doesn't release you from the charge of discounting things; there is no way then you can set forth the laws of karma and its consequences: the fact that pleasure and pain, respectively, come from good and bad deeds.

And if you believe in the other king of cause and effect, they think in this school, then it has to be cause and effect which exists by definition, and which is then something which exists ultimately. They say therefore that—since if there's no constructing if there's nothing to apply the construct to—then neither of these two ideas could ever be true: that every existing object is simply a construct of the mind, and that this is the point behind the meaning of thusness. They would therefore explain these ideas as being the most dangerous of all versions of the viewpoint that everything must have stopped altogether.

#### As the Levels of the Bodhisattvas says,

As such there are certain people who, first of all, listened to these sutras—difficult to grasp as they are; sutras which are tied to the greater way, and which describe the true intent of that profound object, emptiness. But they failed to understand the points explained in these sutras properly, correctly. And then they made up something, they got some idea that was inspired by wrong reasoning, and said that all these things were nothing more than something constructed by the mind. Then they went on and explained this as the meaning of thusness. So the ones we are talking about are anyone who says that seeing things this way is the right way to see things; anyone who actually thinks this way, and anyone who teaches it this way.

According to them, not even the very foundation to which we apply our constructs — functional things in themselves — is something that exists. And constructing itself then would be something that didn't, all in all, exist either. How on earth then could suchness, in the form of everything being a construct, exist either? As such those who purport this idea are, according to their own beliefs, guilty of discounting both thusness and the idea of constructs. And you should understand that—since their viewpoint is one which discounts both the idea of concepts and thusness—it is the most dangerous of all those views that nothing exists.

It's with this fact in mind that the Levels of the Bodhisattvas has said that:

It's been said that "believing in a self-existent person is no problem compared to having a wrong idea about emptiness." The point here is that the former is simply a lack of awareness about knowable things; it does not represent a view in which you discount every knowable object—it is not an act that would throw you to a birth in the hell realms. The other kind of view is not one which would destroy your spiritual aspirations; nor is it one which would cause you to stray from the foundation of the rules. The latter though functions in the exact opposite way.

As such, we can say that whatever a thing lacks, that thing is empty of; and whatever's left over is something that exists. And when you see things this way, it means that you are engaged in an unerring understanding of emptiness.

The meaning of the first part of the statement just given, says the *Levels of the Bodhisattvas*, is that all functional things—physical matter and the rest—are devoid or empty of any essential nature of being constructed by words. "Whatever's left over is something that exists" refers to the existence of those functional things in themselves which act as the foundation to which constructs are applied, and the constructing itself. The thing which things are empty of is constructs; the basis or object which is empty is dependent things; and the fact that the latter is empty of the former is totality. Saying that these things either do or do not exist has the meaning described before.

When you are able to avoid this extreme view of concocting things, then you are able to avoid the extreme view of "thinking that things exist." When you are able to avoid the extreme view of discounting things, then you are able to avoid the extreme view of "thinking that things don't exist." And then you will have also delineated "indivisibility" [or emptiness].

And it is just this kind of emptiness which is explained as being the final form of the ultimate: the *Levels of the Bodhisattva* says that—

"Indivisibility" is that object which is incorporated in the nature of phenomena which is free of the existence and lack of existence of the two: of the object of the former thing [of concocting things] and of asserting that things don't exist [of discounting things]. And this kind of indivisibility is what we call the "matchless" object of the path of the middle way, the way which avoids both the extremes.

### The Asian Classics Institute Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

#### Reading Eight: On the Meaning of "Ultimate" and "Deceptive" Reality

The following selection is taken from the Essence of Eloquence, a Classical Commentary on Distinguishing between the Figurative and the Literal (Drangba dang nges-pa'i don rnam-par 'byed-pa'i bstan-bcos Legs-bshad snying-po), by Je Tsongkapa (1357-1419); ff. 18a-21a in the ACIP digital edition (catalog number S5396), and pp. 44-51 in the ACIP Indian paper edition. The translation is based upon an oral teaching of the text by Geshe Tupten Rinchen of Sera Mey Tibetan Monastery. Please note that Je Tsongkapa's root text is extremely difficult, and is best studied with the accompanying ACI tapes.

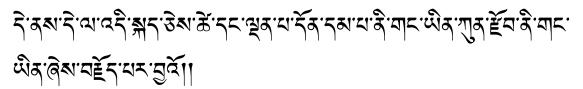
Here next is how the *Compendium* explains the point of how to avoid the two extremes. We proceed in three steps: a presentation of the opponent position, some questions and answers concerning this position, and a refutation of these answers.

Here is the first. The *Compendium* includes a section that says:

Some followers of the greater way, intent on continuing to hold to their errors, make this claim:

In a deceptive way, it is true that all things exist. Ultimately though nothing exists.

These are the followers of the Middle Way, who speak of some distinction between different ways in which all things both do exist and don't exist, saying, "No single existing thing exists ultimately; and every one of them does exist nominally."



And when they say this we reply to them with the following question:

Then we ask you, venerable sirs, what does it mean to be "ultimate"? And what does it mean to be "deceptive"?

And suppose they answer like this—

"Ultimate" refers to that thing which is the lack of a self-nature that every existing object exhibits. "Deceptive" refers to that thing which is the tendency to see all these objects—which in truth have no nature of their own—as having some nature of their own.



And why is that? Because this tendency focuses on things that don't even exist and creates a deception, and makes up something, and declares something to be, and creates an expression.

This would describe how our opponents would answer if you asked them what the two truths were.

Here the question that is posed—"What does 'ultimate' mean?"—is one in which we are asking for a typical example of ultimate truth. It is not though a question about the "ultimate" that we say doesn't exist when we say that nothing existing ultimately; not a question about how something isn't. If it were, then it would be a mistake to answer that "ultimate" referred to the fact that no existing thing has a self-nature; and this is because, when those of the Middle Way say that something exists "as the ultimate," meaning "as the lack of self-existence exhibited by all things," this is not at all what they mean when they talk about something that could exist ultimately.

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The question about "What does it mean to be 'deceptive'?" is as well a question about the state of mind to which something can be established as what we call "deceptive truth"; it is not a question about the "nominal" we speak of when we say that things exist "nominally." If it were, then it would be incorrect to speak of the "deceptive" where you hold that things have some nature of their own when—in fact—they have no such nature. Remember, this is the tendency to hold things as being true: and those of the Middle Way would say that the thing it believes in doesn't even have any nominal existence. And this is because, when you speak of things "not having any self-nature," the self-nature that you say things don't have has to be referring to a kind of self-nature which is absent: to a self-nature that existed truly.

Here secondly are some questions and answers concerning the position stated. We begin with a demonstration of inconsistencies in the other school's positions, and go on to a demonstration that our own positions are free of any inconsistency.

Here is the first. This next section starts with a refutation of how the other school has identified the idea of the "deceptive." On this point, the *Compendium* says:

And then we would say to them the following:

Consider this tendency to see things as having some nature of their own. Are you asserting that it is something which comes from certain causes which are a "declaration" and which are deceptive? Or are you asserting that it is something which is a declaration itself, or a deceptive object itself?

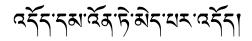
If your answer is that it is something which comes from certain cases which are a "declaration" and which are deceptive, then it would be wrong for you to state that "Because it is something which comes from certain causes which are a declaration and which are deceptive, it is not something which exists."

And if your answer is that it is a declaration itself, a deceptive object itself, then since there would be nothing to call them we could never even speak of something being a "declaration" or "deceptive."

Here is the meaning of the citation. Consider the deceptive which focusses on things which ultimately have no nature of their own and thinks to itself "they do have some nature of their own." It too becomes a declaration within you—and when it does, the question is whether it is something which has grown out of a similar, previous case; or whether it is something which is merely constructed by ideas which are deceptive and declarations.

Suppose you say that the first is the case. The part about "It would be wrong to state that, because it is something which comes from certain causes, it is not something which exists" means "it is not something which exists ultimately," since in the context here the argument is over whether or not things exist ultimately, and because the opponent has never said that, in general, nothing exists—but rather accepts the position that nothing exists ultimately.

Suppose you say that the second is the way it is; in this case then it would be wrong to say that things were just constructs of our projections. And this would be true because there would nothing to which they could refer: if the deceptive and declaration were merely constructs of our projections, then the rest would become that way as well.



Here next is the refutation of how the other school has identified the idea of the "ultimate." On this, the same work states:

And then we say to them,

And why is it, venerable sirs, that what we see doesn't exist?

And suppose they answer like this—

Because it is something which is mistaken.

We would then continue on and ask them:

Are you asserting that this mistaken thing is something which exists, or is it something which does not exist?

If you say that it does exist, then it would be wrong for you to say that "the fact that no existing thing has any nature of its own is the ultimate." If you say that it does not exist, then it would be wrong for you to say that "because it is something which is mistaken, what it sees doesn't have any nature of its own."

The point being expressed here is the following:

How could it ever be correct to say—even as you observe examples of things which exist by definition—that they don't? This is disproved by our own valid perception that these same things exist in this very way.

And suppose you say that "our position is not disproved by a state of mind which sees things this way, for it is itself a mistaken thing."

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Our answer then would be,

Well now, if this mistaken thing is itself something which exists by definition, then it would be wrong to say that the fact that nothing has its own nature is what the "ultimate" refers to. And if on the other hand it didn't exist, then it would be incorrect to say "Because it is mistaken, then what it sees doesn't exist."



We should admittedly in this case too go through the exercise of examining whether we are talking about existing or not existing, or doing so ultimately; but because the meaning is the same and because the point is easily understood from the previous examination, the section is written this way.

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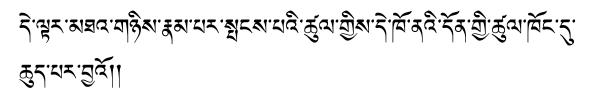
Consider the fact that, in this particular citation, no statement is made criticizing the idea that the pair of constructs and totality are not things which exist ultimately, but do exist nominally. The criticism is rather made through examining the question of whether a deceptive state of mind, and a mistaken state of mind, exist ultimately or not. The point of this approach is to refute the idea that dependent things could be something which did not exist ultimately, but which did exist deceptively. These dependent things are the things that exhibit the quality of totality; they are the ones that apply the constructs; and they too are what the constructs are applied to. And so these are what real thinkers take, primarily, as their subject when they argue about whether things exist ultimately or not.

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Moreover, the *Compendium* says:

You should understand that any tendency where you focus on the nature known as "dependent things" and the nature known as "totality" and imagine them to be the nature known as "constructs" constitutes the extreme view of concocting things.

શુમ પા વનેનયા માથે અથવ મે ગાલમ શુ ન ન મા દે મે છેન ન માથે સાથુ ગાય છે દે . વેં છેનુ ખેનુ યા બા એનુ નેં લેશ્વ મન્દ થી અર્ઠ ર છેનુ બા જીન ત્યા તેને અના વા દા ખેતુ યા છે.



And the extreme view of discounting things consists of any tendency where you focus on the nature known as "dependent things" and the nature known as "totality"—things that actually do exist—and say that they don't; this is discounting all those things which exist be definition. And so it is that you must come to a grasp of the actual meaning of thusness: by means of avoiding these two extreme views.

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The point of this citation is that—when you focus on the first and final two of the three natures, on the two that exist by definition, and say that they do not exist this way—then you are discounting all the actual examples of things that exist by definition. This text and the *Levels of the Bodhisattva* are exactly the same on the question of what the extreme views of concocting things and discounting things consist of, and on how we go about avoiding them.

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When we say that constructs don't exist we're talking about constructs that exist ultimately, not those that exist nominally. As the *Compendium* says,

One may ask the following question:

Consider constructed ideas, whether they are put together with names or with verbalizations. Are you saying that they have some existing nature, or are you rather saying that they have no existing nature?

And we answer with the following:

What we are saying is that—from a nominal point of view—they do have an existing nature. And what we are saying is that—ultimately speaking they have no existing nature.

રે ભા અદેવ પર ગદે ન પા ભા ખેન્શ શુર્ગો અશ્વ પ્લે એન્ ભા વફેવ પલે ફયાયર વેશ પલે નુએમારા ગાંવ ગફમાશ પલે દે ગે છેને ગાન ખેવ પાને કે લિશ માશુન્સ વશાવને સુર ને વે ગણમાશ પલે ખેન પા ખેવ શો ને વા પાને પ્લે ગાંધ ન પ્લે છે કે ગાંધ માશુન્સ સાંગ

It also speaks of "that thing which is the nature that we call 'constructs': the object of that consciousness which relies on names coming from a state of habituation with the declarations"; and then goes on to say that "these do have a constructed existence, but are not things that exist ultimately."

And so—despite the fact that the constructs represented by the two kinds of "self-nature" are something which is a total impossibility—it doesn't necessarily follow that all constructs are impossibilities. Therefore we can at one moment deny that things could exist substantially or that they could exist ultimately, and yet still posit that they do exist in a projected way, in a nominal way.

As such the following ideas, presented in a number of major commentaries to the *Commentary on the True Intent*, do not represent the true intent of this sutra:

the idea that constructs are something which exist with regard to neither of the two truths;

the idea that dependent things—whether represented by objects of the mind or by the states of mind which perceive these objects—are something that exists only in a deceptive way, given the fact that their dependent origination is something which has been compared to an illusion; and

the idea that totality is something ultimate, but something ultimate in the sense of existing as a thing that has no self-nature.

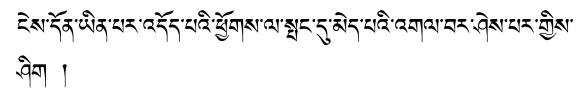
These ideas contradict the presentation in the *Summary of the Greater Way* which quotes the *Commentary on the True Intent* to show that external objects don't exist, and then goes on to explain that the idea of outer and inner things—seeing things as objects and subjects—is a construct. They also contradict both the *Levels of the Bodhisattva* and the *Compendium;* moreover, the fact that they quote lines from *Gaining a True Understanding of Valid Perception* [written by Master Dharmakirti hundreds of years later] shows that the claim made by some that they were written by Master Asanga is a gross failure to check the facts.

Moreover, the great majority of the chapters in the *Commentary on the True Intent*—all except for the chapter on the circumstances of the teaching—are quoted directly in the *Compendium*, and difficult points in them resolved quite thoroughly. And so there wouldn't appear any great need for the Master to have composed another, separate commentary.

There have been others later on too who explained the true intent of the pair—of Master Asanga and his brother—in the following way:

The first of the three natures doesn't even exist nominally. The middle one of the three natures exists nominally, but doesn't exist ultimately. The last of the three natures exists ultimately.

People like this too have wandered out of this system.



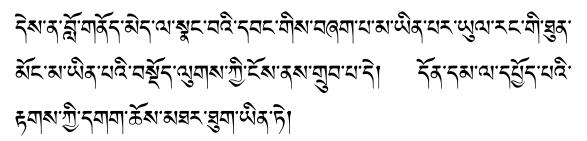
Consider especially the position that—when we speak of dependent things as existing nominally—what we mean is that a mistaken state of mind merely imagines that growing and stopping apply to them; and that qualities like growing and stopping don't even exist with functional things. This is the most extreme possible version of discounting dependent things, and for this reason it moreover constitutes discounting the other two natures as well. Being therefore a discounting of all three of the attributes, it is exactly the viewpoint which the *Levels of the Bodhisattva* mentioned above as being the primary form of the view that all things have stopped. You should finally understand that this is idea would be an inescapable contradiction for anyone who held the position that the *Commentary on the True Thought* was meant literally.

## The Asian Classics Institute Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

#### Reading Nine: Interpretations of the Independent Group of the Middle-Way School

There is no one section of Je Tsongkapa's root text on the Essence of Eloquence that easily presents all the concepts of the Independent group of the Middle-Way School on the subjects covered in the course so far. We therefore begin a group of selections, many from monastic textbooks, which together give us a good overview of the relevant ideas.

The first part of the reading helps understand the differences between the Independent group, the Mind-Only School, and the Consequence group on the question of whether things exist from their own sides, with their own unique identities. The selection is taken from the Overview of the Perfection of Wisdom (Phar-phyin spyi-don) of Master Kedrup Tenpa Dargye (1493-1568), from the glorious Sera Mey Tibetan Monastery (ACIP electronic text catalog number SL0009, Part One, folios 12a-13b). Remember that most of the descriptions of "our own system" refer to that of the Independent group!



Therefore the following is the final form of the idea denied by the reasoning which examines the ultimate:

Anything which existed from its own side with its own unique identity, rather than being simply established as existing by appearing to an unaffected state of mind.

And this is true because the final form of the way in which physical matter and all other existing objects exist deceptively is through their being established as existing by a state of mind which is unaffected by short-term circumstances that would cause it to make an error.

When we describe the state of mind which can establish that physical matter and all other existing objects exist, it is necessarily one which is not affected by some short-term circumstances which would cause it to make an error; it is not the case though that it would have to be a state of mind which was not affected by some long-term circumstances.

And this is because it is not the case that—when physical matter and other such existing objects appear to be things that exist by definition—this appearance is not something which is affected neither by short-term nor by long-term circumstances; and because it involves being affected by the innate form of the tendency to hold things as existing truly.

Here we will explain how this school decides what the two realities are, using some metaphors as well. Two things have to be present with all of these objects: with physical matter and every other existing thing. From the point of view of what appears in the world, they must be established as existing from our side—merely by virtue of their appearing to an unaffected state of mind. From the point of view of emptiness, they must be void of any kind of existence where the object exists from its own side through its own unique identity, rather than by virtue of its appearing to an unaffected state of mind.

And so two things have to come together for a functional thing like a sprout: it must be established as existing by virtue of appearing to an unaffected state of mind; and the sprout should exist from its own side through some identity.

The first is necessary since—if it were not—then a sprout would have to be a sprout even to a person who had never been introduced to the idea that the sprout was called a "sprout."

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The latter is necessary since—if it were not—then a sprout would be a sprout in exactly the same way as the horn of a rabbit is the horn of a rabbit: merely because we called it the "horn of a rabbit," or just because we imagined something called the "horn of a rabbit."

Consider, by the way, the word "merely" when we speak of physical matter and all other existing objects as being "things which are established as existing merely by virtue of their appearing to an unaffected state of mind." Its use is meant to disallow the idea that these things could be established by virtue of some unique identity of the object itself, rather than being established as existing by virtue of this appearing. It is not however meant to disallow the idea that things do not exist merely through names and terms.

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And this is true because, as the *Perfect Explanation*, an *Illumination of the True Thought*, has a part where it states—

Given the fact that those who belong to this school accept the idea that physical matter and all other existing objects do possess an identity that is not established merely through names and terms . . .

Now there is a metaphor which we can use for the idea that physical matter and all other existing objects are established as existing from our side—merely by virtue of their appearing to an unaffected state of mind, and for the idea that these objects exist through some identity of their own.

Think of a case where a magician makes a stick of wood appear as a horse or cow. Two things have to be present here. First of all, the appearance of a horse or cow there around the stick is something that is established as existing by virtue of the minds of the people whose eyes are affected by the magic words and powder, from their side. Secondly, an appearance must also be something coming from the side of the stick.

The first requirement, being established as existing by virtue of the minds of the people whose eyes are affected by the magic words and powder, is necessary since—if it were not—then those in the audience whose eyes were not affected by the magic words and powder would have to see this appearance, whereas they do not.

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In this same situation it is also necessary for the horse or cow to be appearing from the stick's side as well, since—if they were not—then the appearance of a horse or cow would have to occur even in a place where there were no stick; whereas it does not.

Physical matter—and all other existing objects—are similar, in that they are established as existing by an unaffected state of mind; and this is because they are constructed by virtue of an unaffected state of mind and names that fit.

They do not, however, exist from their own side through some unique identity of their own, without being established as existing by virtue of appearing to an unaffected state of mind. This is because—if they were to exist this way—then they would have to be some ultimate nature. And if they were some ultimate nature, then they would have to be something which is perceived directly by a certain unmistaken state of mind: that meditative wisdom of a realized being who is not yet a Buddha, and who perceives the real nature of things directly. The fact is though that they are not.

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In this situation, where a magician makes a stick appear as a horse or cow, two things apply to the members of the audience whose eyes are affected by the magic words and powder: the stick is appearing as a horse or cow, and they believe that it is.

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Consider "common" people: those who have not yet had their first experience of the perception of emptiness. Both situations apply to them for physical matter and all other existing objects: these things appear to them to exist truly, and they believe in the way they appear.

Consider now bodhisattvas who have reached one of the pure levels. Even though objects appear to their minds, during what we call the "subsequent period," as something which exists truly, they have no belief in them this way. And this is because neither situation applies to realized beings who are not yet Buddhas and who are perceiving the real nature of things directly; that is, physical matter and other objects do not appear to them as if they existed truly, and they do not believe that these objects exist that way.

ઞ્વતે સમ્પ્રસ્યુત્વયા અદ્વત્વાયર શુત્વયા દેશ્વિં સર્જે મુન્યુત્વયા દેસ ત્સાયર શુત્વયા દે ભ્રુર શુત્વયર વદે સપ્યવે દેવાય દત્વ અહ્ય સ્થય દેવ ત્યાય દુંદ્વ યવે દ્વાય શુધ્વ ગાય હુર વદે દ્વાયર દ્વાય સ્થય સ્થય સ્થય દ્વાય સ્થય છે.

The Consequence and Independent groups of the Middle-Way School hold the same belief about the following things; both schools hold them to be what is denied by the reasoning which examines the ultimate:

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a thing that could exist truly; a thing that could exist purely; a thing that could exist as thusness; a thing that could exist ultimately; and the thought where you hold that anything could exist in any of these ways.

The Independent group does not however agree that the following are what is denied by the reasoning which examines the ultimate:

- a thing that existed from its own side;
- a thing that existed by nature;
- a thing that existed as a substantial thing;
- a thing that existed by definition; and
- the thought where you hold that anything like physical matter or the rest could exist this way.

And this is true because they believe that—if something exists—it must necessarily exist as the three left over after you exclude a thing that existed as a substantial thing. There is some discussion about the status of constructs; but they believe that, if something is a functional thing, it must exist as a substantial thing.

हु:मेंग्वबिनाने।

Neither those who follow the Consequence system, nor those who follow the Independent system, accept that any of the following could be the final form of the idea denied by the reasoning which examines the ultimate:

- a thing that existed as the way things really are;
- a thing that existed as ultimate reality; and
- a thing that existed as the real nature of things.

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And this is true because—if something is ultimate reality—it must always exist as these three as well.

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And this is true first of all because the *Perfect Explanation, an Illumination of the True Thought,* states that—when the commentary to the *Sixty Verses of Reasoning* describes nirvana as deceptive reality—what it means is that nirvana must be established as existing as ultimate reality with reference to a deceived state of mind. *Distinguishing between the Figurative and the Literal* also states that the real nature of things exists as the real nature of things; and *Opening the Eyes of the Good and Fortune* states that it doesn't automatically mean that something exists ultimately just because it exists as the real nature of things.

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It would be correct to say then that there is a difference in subtlety between the Consequence and Independent versions of the final form of the idea denied by the reasoning which examines the ultimate. This is true first of all because the Independent group accepts the concept that things can exist by definition, through their accepting the concepts of an independent logical reason; of something that could grow from something other than itself; and of something that could exist as a substantial thing.

The idea is moreover supported by the manner in which the schools explain the concept of what is literal and what is figurative. Master Bhavaviveka denies extensively the idea that the Mind-Only School explains the true intent of the middle turning of the wheel to be the concept that constructs do not exist by definition. And when Shantarakshita and his spiritual son explain the way in which the final turning of the wheel comments upon the middle turning, they explain it as meaning that constructs do not exist by definition in an ultimate way, but do exist by definition in a nominal way.

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The following selection is drawn from the same text, the Overview of the Perfection of Wisdom (Part Five, ff. 9a-10a). It gives an idea of how valid the Consequence group considers the division of selflessness into three differing degrees of subtlety:

The Consequence group of the Middle-Way School draws a distinction between the lack of a self-nature of persons and of things, but only relative to the thing it is which is empty of them; they do not however make any distinction between more or less subtle versions of what it is we deny by the reasoning which examines the ultimate. Here in the Independent School though they recognize both these distinctions.

And it is relative to this fact that they can say it's not necessarily the case that something is devoid of existing as a self-standing, substantial object if it exhibits the qualities of growing and stopping. They would also say that, just because something is a person, it's not necessarily the case that it is then devoid of this same kind of existence. And this is because both are disproved by the example of consciousness of the thought.

Consciousness of the thought is [considered to be] the person: Master Bhavaviveka proves this through both scriptural authority and reasoning, and the master we are dealing with here concurs with him.



We can discuss this question in terms of three divisions: reasoning based on contemplation; deep practice based on meditation; and the result of this meditation.

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Here is the first.

Consider the heaps that we have taken on.

They are something which is devoid of being a person who exists as a self-standing, substantial object;

Because they exhibit the qualities of growing and stopping.

They are, for example, like a wagon.

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If something exhibits the qualities of growing and stopping, it cannot be something which exists as a self-standing, substantial object;

Because if something were the self-nature of a person it could never be something which exhibited the qualities of growing and stopping.

And this is true because, if something were this kind of a self-nature, it would have to be something which were unchanging, singular, and independent.

Consider the fresh, unerring state of mind which grows from this type of reasoning, and which perceives a kind of emptiness which is the fact that the person is devoid of being a self-standing, substantial object. This is a deductive form of valid perception which has realized the lack of a self-nature to the person, and we describe it as being a realization of an emptiness which has grown from contemplation.

Here is the second division, concerning deep practice based on meditation; we describe it as a kind of realization which grows from meditation: one in which a person engaged in deep practice meditates single-pointedly on this same object, utilizing primarily a combination of quietude and vision.

Now for the third division, the result of this meditation. There is such a result, because directly speaking one eliminates the manifest form of the learned tendency to hold to a self-nature of persons. The meditation also acts to lower the gross power of the innate tendency.

We have the same three divisions, of reasoning based on contemplation and so on, for the second level of deep practice. Here is the first.

Consider the color blue.

It is something which is devoid of being of a separate substance from the valid perception which perceives it;

Because it is invariably found in combination with it.

They are, for example, like your awareness in a dream and anger that you may feel during the dream.

You can understand the remaining details, of the deductive perception and so on, from the preceding presentation.

As for the second, there is a deep practice here that grows from meditation—for it would be the single-pointed meditation, combining both quietude and vision, focussed on this particular object.

The third, the result of the meditation, is also here: for its work,\* it eliminates the manifest form of the thought that objects and the subject states of mind which perceive them are of a separate substance; and this is the case because one has grasped the fact that the state of mind that perceives a disparity is mistaken.

[\*The Tibetan reading here may be a mistake for DNGOS SU, or "directly speaking."]

The third—that is, the level of deep practice in which one perceives emptiness itself—also comes in three divisions. Here is the first.

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Consider the state of mind which is "free of the two."

It is not something which exists truly,

Because it is an example of dependent origination.

It is, for example, like an illusion.

The latter two details follow.

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The next selection is also taken from the Overview (Part Five, f. 3b), and gives an insight into how the Independent group views the function of meditating upon the three degrees of selflessness.

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"Well then," you may think to yourself, "how do we in our own position describe the process by which one eliminates the various impurities?" It has been taught that:

One can gain the ability to put a total end to the three—that is, to the obstacles of the mental afflictions, to the gross obstacles to omniscience, and to the subtle obstacles to omniscience—if one meditates with that wisdom which grows from meditation and which sees directly the three degrees of the lack of a self-nature; this itself grows from following the practices of study and meditation to come to an understanding of these three.

Given this statement, it is not the case that in our own position we believe—as do those who assert the existence of functional things which exist truly—that one can eliminate impurities that one asserts exist in truth. The citation rather is demonstrating the principal tenet of how our own system describes the process of eliminating the two obstacles; that is, that we eliminate impurities by meditating upon how these same impurities lack any true existence.

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The next selection introduces, briefly, the concept of the three levels of deep practice that correlate to the three degrees of selflessness. It is taken from The "Cloud of Offerings, which Pleases the Wise, and Illuminates the True Thought of the Treatise known as the 'Ornament of Realizations,'" being a Combined Word Commentary and Dialectical Analysis of the Fifth Chapter of the Treatise, by Choney Lama Drakpa Shedrup (1675-1748), also an illustrious author of textbooks for Sera Mey Tibetan Monastery (ACIP electronic text S0195, Part Five, ff. 11b-12a).

Here secondly is the position of our own school. The essential nature of a level of deep practice can be defined as follows:

It is that state of knowledge which is of the type that provides a foundation for the combination of quietude and vision, and which can be classified as a viewpoint in the dichotomy between actions and viewpoints.

Levels of this kind can be divided into three: the level of deep practice wherein you realize the selflessness of the person; the level of deep practice wherein you realize the gross selflessness of objects; and the level of deep practice wherein you realize emptiness itself.

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We return next to Master Kedrup Tenpa Dargye's work, for more detail on the function of the realizations of the three degrees of selflessness (Part Five, f. 8b):

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In terms of their identities, the various levels of deep practice are stated to be four; but from the point of view of their actual nature, their number is exactly three, for the following reasons. Relative to the teachings which express them, the word of the Buddha, the number is precisely three. Relative to what you meditate upon—that is, the uninterrupted path—the count is also three. Relative to the disciple who is meant to be lead with them, the number is three, and so it is with the mark they leave: exactly three.

The first of these reasons is correct because the three stages of the turning of the wheel set forth, one by one, the three degrees of selflessness; and what is being explained here are the stages by which one meditates upon these three.

The second of the reasons is correct because the three levels of deep practice here are set forth according to the order of the views of reality which perceive the three degrees of selflessness.

The third reason is correct because disciples of the three types do their meditation by taking, as their principal object of meditation, these same three levels of deep practice, respectively.

The fourth is correct because one attains the three knowledges of the path through meditating upon these three levels of deep practice. In sum, the levels of deep practice number exactly three, since you must definitely meditate upon these three levels to attain the goal of the great enlightenment; no more than these three are required as parts of the view which allows one to eliminate the two obstacles, and these can not be abbreviated into fewer groups.

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The same work gives an insight into the relationship between the three types of selflessness (Part One, f. 117a):

This too would be incorrect, because at the point where the text makes the statement beginning with "Here the six objects of realization and. . ." it

is demonstrating that the fact that the thirteen practices are empty of any true existence constitutes the resident nature which is the foundation of the practice of the greater way; at this juncture (1) a rebuttal is being directed to reject the idea that the division into the three types and those who belong to these three types is incorrect. And (2) your point has no connection here.

The second part of our reason is correct, because the three degrees of selflessness are all mutually exclusive.

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We return to Choney Lama's treatise for the next selection, which comments on whether the lower degrees of selflessness are true emptiness:

Suppose someone comes and makes the following claim:

- It must too be the case that the uninterrupted path in the mind of a person at the end of the process realizes, directly, the form of emptiness which is the absence of a separate substance to physical matter and the valid perception which perceives this physical matter,
- Because it perceives this fact directly in a single briefest instant of action.

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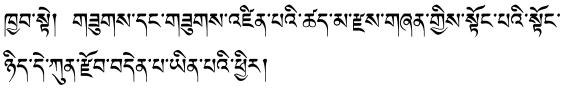
[We disagree with your reason.]

But you can't, because it does have the capacity to do so.

Our answer would be that it doesn't necessarily follow.



And one could never agree with your position, because we are talking about the uninterrupted path in the higher way.



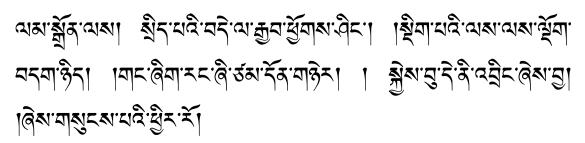
[It doesn't necessarily follow.]

But it does necessarily follow, because that emptiness represented by the absence of a separate substance to physical matter and the valid perception which perceives this physical matter is deceptive reality.

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We turn next to a discussion of the distinction between the three tracks mentioned above and the three scopes as described in the teachings on the steps of the path to enlightenment (the lam-rim). The following selection is taken from the Great Book on the Steps of the Path (the Lam-rim chen-mo) of Je Tsongkapa (ACIP electronic text S5392, f. 58b):

All those teachings that were given from the point of view of the tracks of the Listeners and the Self-Made Buddhas can be classified either as teachings that belong to the medium scope itself, or as teachings which are shared with the medium scope. This is because a person of the medium scope reaches a feeling of disgust for every form of this suffering circle of life, and works towards the goal of achieving—for his own sake—the goal of a freedom in which he is freed from the circle.



And this is so because the Lamp for the Path says,

Consider a person who has turned away From pleasures of the circle of life, And who has at this very same time turned back From actions which are negative. A person who thus is aspiring to A state of peace for themselves Is the one that we refer to As one of the "medium scope."

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Here finally is a note on the concept of being "substantial," since it is important in the Independent group's description of the gross form of a self-nature to persons. The following selection is taken from Master Changkya Rolpay Dorje's classic Presentation of the Schools of Philosophy (ACIP electronic text S0062, Part Three, ff. 26a-26b).

Generally speaking, there are a great many occurrences of the terms "substantial" and "constructed" in the great works of philosophy. In a general sense, there is no problem in applying the word "substantial" to anything that exists at all, and this is the sense in the phrase, "Once something exists, it can only be substantial." The opposite of this would be something that was constructed; something like the two kinds of a self-nature, which—even though they are held to exist by the imagination—are not something which actually exists.

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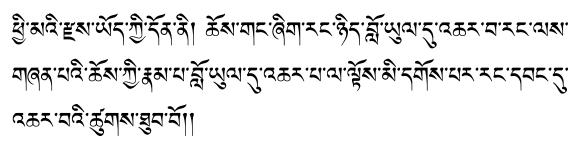
"Substantial" in the sense of being able to perform a function refers to functional things; the opposite of this one would be "constructed" things in the sense of general identities.

"Substantial" in the sense of being something stable, unchanging, refers to things like unproduced, empty space; a cessation of undesirable objects due to the separate analysis [of the four realized truths during the path of seeing]; and a cessation of undesirable objects not due to such an analysis. The "constructed" things that were the opposite of these would be changing things.

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"Substantial" in the sense of being self-standing refers to things like the objects that are held by sense consciousnesses, or self-supporting states of mind. The opposite of this kind of substantial would be "constructed" things in the form of changing things which are neither physical nor mental, as well as constructs of the mind.

As such, only the last version of "substantial" is the actual one; the previous types are all only "substantial" in name.



Here is the real meaning of this last sense of "substantial":

Anything which is (1) an existing object; and which (2) is selfsupporting, in the sense of being able to appear in the mind independently, without relying on the process of appearing in the mind only through the appearance in the mind of other objects first.

And here is the real meaning of this last sense of "constructed":

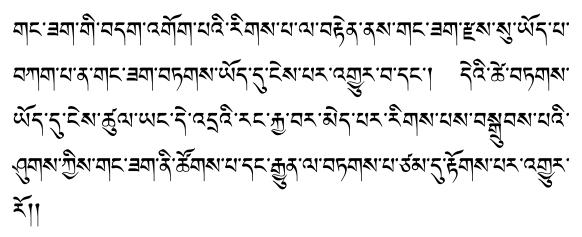
Anything which is (1) an existing object; and which (2) is something which must rely on the process of appearing in the mind only through the appearance in the mind of other objects first.

Further clarification of this point appears in the same text (Part Three, ff. 26b-27a):

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The meaning of "substantial in the sense of self-standing" here, and the meaning "substantial in the sense of self-standing" when we speak of the lack of a self-nature to the person, are not the same—great thinkers distinguish between them as follows. The phrase here is used only to describe something which can appear in the mind in an independent way, without relying on the process of appearing in the mind only after some other objects have appeared in it first. That other use of the phrase describes a controller of the heaps of a particular person who is at the same time independent of the same heaps being controlled: a kind of a director who is self-standing.



If you use the reasoning that helps you deny the possibility that a self-nature of persons could exist, and thereby deny that the person could exist substantially, then the person must beyond doubt become something which is constructed. At this point then you must establish a way to verify that a person is constructed. This is done first by establishing that there could be no person of this type that could be a self-standing object; by implication then, one comes to realize that the person is something only constructed, on the basis of a composite or a stream of parts.

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The way in which we say that a person like this is just a construct is that the specific identity of the person cannot appear in the mind without relying on a basis for the construct (the heaps)—along with words, concepts, and so on. The meaning of what it is for the person to be constructed is that the specific identity of the person can only appear in the mind through these other things appearing first. Therefore what it means when we say that a person is "something constructed" is the same as what we mean when we speak of things that are constructed here at this point in the present text.

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For this reason, the meaning of the word "substantial" as we use it with the "substantial" person whose existence we are refuting should be understood as referring to that "substantial" which is the opposite of this same "constructed"—this is something proven through the reasoning which denies other extremes. As such, the essential point is the same as with the "substantial" you find here.

# The Asian Classics Institute Course XV: What the Buddha Really Meant

# Reading Ten: Interpretations of the Consequence Group, and What Je Tsongkapa Himself Believes

The following selection gives a brief but exquisite description of how the concept of emptiness is explained by followers of the Consequence group of the Middle-Way School of Buddhism (the Madhyamika Prasangika). It is taken from the Overview of the Middle Way (dBu-ma spyi-don) by Kedrup Tenpa Dargye (1493-1568), an eminent author of textbooks for Sera Mey Tibetan Monastery (ACIP electronic text number S0021, ff. 125a-130a).

Here we will analyze the statement [from *Entering the Middle Way*, by Master Chandrakirti (650 AD)] where it says, "...The mind of a craving spirit as well, which sees a stream of water as pus." One may begin with the following question:

Let's consider the objects of the following states of mind: the visual consciousness of a craving spirit where a river of water looks like pus and blood; the visual consciousness of a person with a kind of cataract where a clean white porcelain basin looks like a hair has fallen into it; and that kind of meditation where

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you visualize skeletons—where you imagine that the entire surface of the earth is covered with the bones of corpses. Are all these objects completely equivalent, as far as being something that exists or doesn't exist?

In reply we will first set forth a relevant passage, and then we will explain the passage. Here is the first. The text called *The Abbreviation of the Greater Way* says,

Insofar as craving spirits, animals, Humans, and pleasure beings, each according To their class, have differing perceptions Of a single thing, we say it has no reality.

Asvabhava, the holy layman with lifetime vows, has explained the passage. His words include the following:

When they look at *a single thing*, a stream of water, each one sees what the ripening of his particular karma forces him to see. A *craving spirit* sees the river full of pus and blood and the like.

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An *animal* or such, on the other hand, thinks of this same water as a place to stay, and makes his home there.



Humans look at the same thing and perceive it as water—sweet, clear, and cool. They drink of it, they wash themselves with it, and they swim in it.

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Those pleasure beings who are wrapped in deep meditation at the level we call the "realm of limitless space" see the water as empty space, for their ability to conceptualize physical matter has dissolved altogether.

Here secondly we will explain the meaning of the text we quoted first. We proceed in three steps: disproving the position of others, establishing our own position, and then refuting their rebuttal. Here is the first.

Someone may make the following claim:

Given the statements that have come above, the fact is that we should never again consider anything as being one way or the other.

Well then, you must be suggesting that the system of the Buddha is all the same as the system of every non-Buddhist belief, that there is no difference in their correctness at all. And you must be saying too that we could never state that our Teacher was the highest teacher, and that the teachers of the non-Buddhists are lesser.

And you must be suggesting all this, for you have claimed that we should never again consider anything as being one way or the other.

Now if you should agree that none of the differences mentioned above exist, we must reply that they do, for as the verse says:

All other teachers now I've given up, And go for refuge now to only You; Why? Because it's You alone who has No fault, and perfected every good.

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Someone else might make the following claim:

Suppose a pleasure being, a human, and a craving spirit sit down together and look at a glass filled with water: the thing that we define as "wet and flowing." Since to the perceptions of each different type of being it is real, the glass full of wet and flowing water is in reality pus and blood to the eyes of the craving spirit, and in reality water to the eyes of the human, and in reality ambrosia to the eyes of the pleasure being.

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We ask you then a question: in the situation you've just described, is it that the visual consciousness of all three beings are a valid perception, or is it that only one or two of them are a valid perception?

Suppose you say all three are valid. Well then, the glass of something wet and flowing, of water, must be full of something that is all three different things: pus and blood, and each of the others. And then too it must be possible for there to be multiple and yet still valid perceptions which see one thing in two completely incompatible ways. And finally there must be such a thing as a valid perception which correctly perceives that the glass is filled with something which is simultaneously water and yet not water.

Why so? Because, according to your view, the three differing cases of visual consciousness possessed by the three different beings would all have to be valid perception.

And if you try to agree to these absurdities, you are wrong, for the quality of being pus and blood is incompatible with the quality of being either one of the other two substances mentioned. Moreover, the quality of being water and the quality of not being water are directly incompatible in such a way that, if something exists and lacks one of these qualities, it must then possess the other.

Someone may answer with the following claim:

In the case mentioned, the visual consciousness of the human is a valid perception, but the visual consciousnesses of the other two types of beings are not valid perception. These latter two see something like the pus and blood, and the ambrosia, only because their karma (which is good in one case, and bad in the other) forces them to.

Well then, according to you, the visual consciousness of the human wouldn't be valid perception either. Because isn't it true that the human sees the water only because his karma (which in this case is halfway between the good and the bad just mentioned) forces him to?

Moreover, aren't you implying then that there is no such thing as a valid tactile consciousness, or a valid auditory consciousness, in the mental stream of any being who is not a human? Because aren't you saying that there's no such thing as a valid visual consciousness in the mental stream of any such being?

Certainly you are, for you believe your original position to be correct. And suppose now that you do agree that such beings can have no such valid consciousnesses.

Aren't you then implying that these beings never have any case where they are able to reach a definite conclusion about something, or to analyze an object? And if so, aren't you implying that there could never be a case where one of these beings could recognize another? Of course you are, given your position.

Here secondly is the section where we establish our own position. Now suppose three different types of beings—a pleasure being, a human, and a craving spirit, each with their own karma—sit down together and look upon a glass filled with water, the thing we define as "wet and flowing." The glass of water is not at this point one thing which is simultaneously three different objects. Neither is it necessary in this situation for there to be three identical valid perceptions. And when the glass full of wet and flowing water occurs, it occurs with three different, distinct parts to it.

[*Translator's note: When the phrase "wet and flowing" (the definition of the element of water) is used here, it should be understood as emphasizing the more general concept of a liquid, rather than the water which the human perceives.*]

It is not though the case that, from the time it first started, the glass of water came with the three different parts, or that they stay with the glass of water

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until it eventually ends. What happens is that one of the parts of the glass filled with wet and flowing water provides a material cause, and the karma of the craving spirit provides a contributing factor; and then based on both of these the later continuation of one part of the glass of water starts being blood and pus.

Another part of the glass of water again provides a material cause, and the karma of the human provides a contributing factor; and then based on both of these the later continuation of one part of the glass of water starts being water.

Yet another part of the glass of water provides a material cause, and the karma of the pleasure being provides a contributing factor; and then based on both of these the later continuation of one part of the glass of water starts being ambrosia, and so on.

At this point, the glass full of wet and flowing water is something with three different parts. Nonetheless, it is not the case that all three different beings see all three parts. The craving spirit is forced by the bad karma he has collected to see the glass of water as pus and blood; and he doesn't see the other two things. One should understand that a similar case holds with the latter two types of beings.

What we just described as happening is only with reference to where a glass of something wet and flowing is an object shared by the three different beings, as they look at it together. When the craving spirit himself though picks up the glass in his hand and begins to partake of its contents, the glass of liquid is no longer something that exists with three different parts. Since at this point it is something that the craving spirit is experiencing exclusively, its continuation starts being pus and blood.

How the glass of liquid exists originally all depends on the particular outer world from where it has been taken, for each of the three different beings has a different outer world, depending on the specific karma he himself has collected. If the glass of liquid were sweet, cool water taken from the world of humans—a world created by the specific karma of the human in the group—then that would be its original condition, and so on.

धुरा

When we say that a craving spirit looks at a stream of water and sees pus and blood, by the way, we are only talking about some kinds of craving spirits, and not all of them. This is because there are many kinds of craving spirits: some with obstacles in the world around them that prevent them from relieving their craving; some with obstacles that are parts of their bodies; and some with obstacles that relate to the food or drink itself.

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There is, moreover, an example we can use for how, when the three different types of beings with their three karmas look all together at a glass full of something wet and flowing, there start to be three different objects, each confirmed by a valid perception. Suppose there is a ball of red-hot steel; one piece of this ball provides the material cause, and the "mantra of steel" provides a contributing factor. Due to these two, a person who has used the mantra of steel on his hand can touch the ball, but he doesn't undergo any sensation of heat; instead, he feels some other sensation. A person who has not used the mantra on his hand touches the ball and does feel a sensation of heat, and no other kind of sensation.

Another example would be the moon in springtime; one part of the feel of its rays on the body provides the material cause, and then the karma of a craving spirit provides a contributing factor. Based on these two, the spirit gets a sensation of heat, which is experienced by the consciousness of the body.

So too with the wintertime sun; one part of the feel of its rays on the body provides the material cause, and then the karma of the craving spirit provides a contributing factor. Based on these two, the spirit gets a sensation cold, which is experienced by the consciousness of the body.

It is a fact that they get this kind of sensation, for [Arya Nagarjuna's] *Letter to a Friend* states:

For craving spirits, even the light of the moon In the spring is hot, and even the winter sun cold.

All of this is caused by the extraordinary circumstances of the particular time and place, for generally speaking it never happens this way: there is nothing at all about the sun that can feel cold, and nothing about the moon that can feel hot. This too is a fact, for there does not exist on the sun any case of that substance we call "covered space."

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Here is the third part of our presentation, where we refute the rebuttal of representatives of other views. You will recall that our own position is describing a situation where beings of three different types, each with their own karma, are sitting together and looking at a glass filled with something that is wet and flowing. The glass filled with something wet and flowing exists, at this point, as something with three distinct parts. Nonetheless, no one of the beings is able to see all three things there, for they are each at the mercy of the particular karma that they themselves have collected. Representatives of other viewpoints now come to attack this position.

One comes and makes the following claim:

Your position, as just explained, is mistaken, for it goes against a statement of the glorious Dharmakirti. This is quite surely the case, for in his major work [entitled *The Commentary on Valid Perception*] he says,

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Suppose you say that they don't see it, And circumstances cause another form.

What he's talking about here is a belief of the [non-Buddhist] Numerist School. They give the case of a single person whose physical form is looked upon at the same time by his enemy, and also by his friend. In reality, the person's physical form is both attractive and ugly at the same time. Something happens where yet another physical form, one from karma, grows up between the person's true physical form and the enemy and friend looking at it. Because of this neither the enemy nor the friend sees both the attractiveness and the ugliness together.

Master Dharmakirti uses logic to refute this concept, and this same logic can be used against the position you have taken, to prove that you are wrong.

Your reasoning here is though incorrect, for the belief you have expressed shows that you have failed to understand both the meaning of Master Dharmakirti's statement, and the whole position expressed above.

This is a fact, for the actual meaning of Master Dharmakirti's statement is as follows. The Numerist School is describing a situation where you are looking at a physical form either from far away, or from up close. They say that, depending on the distance between you and the object, another physical form which is the result of karma, and which stands between your visual consciousness and the original form, is either clear or not. This then determines whether the original form appears to you distinctly or not. It is not the case though, they say, that what determines whether the original form appears clearly or not is whether or not you have a clear impression of this form.

In reply then Master Dharmakirti is asking the Numerists:

Let's consider these two cases of some intermediate physical form that comes from karma. Do they, or do they not, function to obscure the two original forms, the one at a distance, and the other close by? If they were to obscure them, then your visual consciousness could never see the two original forms, since they would have been obscured by the others.

And suppose you say that they do not obscure them. Wouldn't your visual consciousness then see both the two intermediate forms created by karma, and the two original forms, the near one and the far one, all at the same time? They would have to because, according to you, the intermediate forms do not obscure the original ones.

This is the real point of the Master's statement, wherein he refutes that belief of the Numerists.

Our second point [that you have failed to comprehend the position we expressed above] is also quite true. Our original position was describing a situation where three different kinds of beings were sitting together and looking at a glass full of something wet and flowing. It is not our position that the glass full of something wet and flowing is one thing that is three different things. And it is not our position that there is such a thing as the physical appearance of a person which is at once both attractive and ugly.

It is furthermore not our position that the blood and pus represent some kind of physical form which results from karma and grows up between the visual consciousness of the craving spirit and the stream of water. And it is not our position that the craving spirit's eyes see both this blood and pus as some kind of physical form resulting from karma, and the river of water at the same time. It *is* our position that, by force of his karma, the craving spirit is not able to see the stream of water.

And anyway, maybe it's you who have contradicted a statement of the glorious Dharmakirti. You have taken the position that the five sicknesses, and the five elements, and the five demons are all the direct result of the five poisons—the five bad thoughts. But when the non-Buddhists take the position that phlegm and desire have a cause-and-effect relationship, and that bile and anger have the same kind of relationship, and so on, then Master Dharmakirti refutes them by showing that desire doesn't always come and go according to the phlegm, and anger doesn't always come and go according to the bile. To do so he makes the statement that says, "It's not a fact that wind and the rest are such, for the relationship doesn't always hold." We could twist around this statement too and say that it disproved your position; and add as well how wrong it is to assert that uncreated space could ever be the direct result of jealousy.

[Translator's note: The point seems to be that, although your position about the bad thoughts, and our original position on the nature of the three beings' perceptions, are both correct, you could always twist around some quotation by a master, take it out of context or misinterpret it, and try to show they were wrong.]

Someone else might come and make yet another claim:

Let's talk about that quotation above, where it said:

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Insofar as [these different beings] have differing perceptions Of a single thing, we say it has no reality.

The idea being expressed here is that a single object can be appearing in three different ways. This is incorrect because, according to you, what's happening is that three different objects are appearing in three different ways. And this certainly is your position; remember, you were describing a situation where three different kinds of beings sit down together and look at a glass full of something that's wet and flowing. You said that there were three different objects, each confirmed by a valid perception, and that they were appearing in three different ways.

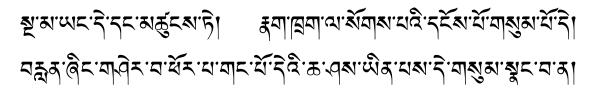
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Well now, suppose a person is using all four of his limbs, and his head, to perform five different actions. According to you, it wouldn't be one person performing five different actions, because five different protuberances of his body are performing five different actions.

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In response to this line of reasoning, someone responds:

No, there's no such problem here. The five protuberances are all parts of the one person, so we have to say that—when the five are performing some actions—the person is performing some actions.



Well the case above is exactly the same! The three things mentioned, the blood and pus and the other two, are all parts of the glass full of something wet and flowing. When the three appear then we can say that the glass full of a thing which is wet and flowing is acting as a basis, and that three different ways of appearing are being displayed upon it.

Someone else may come now and make yet another argument:

Let's talk about these three things: the pus and blood, and the other two. Are you implying then that these are not types of objects which would block each other from entering the space that each one occupies? After all, you were talking about a situation where those three types of beings, each with their own karma, sit down together and look at a glass full of water. And you said that your position was that it was possible for there to be three different objects there, each one confirmed by a valid perception.

This kind of reasoning, where you attempt to show that we are implying that the three objects are not the kinds that block each other from entering the space that each one occupies, cannot disprove our position. It is not our belief that in this situation the glass full of something which is wet and flowing is one thing which is three different things. Neither did we ever say that there definitely had to be identical valid perceptions here.

Someone might make the following claim:

In his *Commentary to the Twenty Verses*, Master Vinitadeva makes this statement—

If there was not a single drop of pus there, then how could there ever be a whole river of pus? They are forced to see it, through the ripening of their karma.

According to you, this statement would have to be mistaken, because when the three different kinds of beings sit down together and look at the glass full of something wet and flowing, the visual consciousness of the craving spirit is a valid perception, and the pus is real pus.

And yet there is no such problem. No matter how many arguments of this kind you want to present, they are all made from the point of view of denying the existence of external objects. The way these arguments go is as follows. If the color blue were to exist as an external object, then the following would occur when this color appeared directly to a sense perception grasping blue; that is, with such a perception found in the mental stream of one of those who "only sees this side" [which is another name for those who have not yet perceived emptiness directly].

When an earlier instance of the perception of blue ends, what actually happens is that it plants a mental seed which eventually grows into a later instance of the same perception of blue, when the seed ripens. Suppose the blue were not just this kind of appearance, but rather an appearance where blue as an outer object were transmitting a likeness of itself and thereby appearing to one's perceptions. Something else then would be happening when the three different beings sit down together and look at the glass full of something wet and flowing. The three different objects would be appearing to them because each of the objects was transmitting a likeness of itself to their perception. All of this would be happening independent of any process where each being's karma planted a mental seed, which later ripened and produced the appearance of the object.

# (केश्रानगामामदे: दिन)

If this were how the three objects were appearing, then they would not be appearing through a process where the specific and different karma that each of the three beings had collected had planted a seed in their mind which later ripened. As such each of the beings involved would have to be perceiving all three of the objects, whereas the fact is that they do not.

All this is an argument attempting to refute those who refuse to accept the denial of outer objects.

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The real meaning of the quotation by Master Vinitadeva is therefore the following:

Suppose there didn't exist a single drop of pus that existed as it appeared to exist to the craving spirit; that is, which existed as an outer object. How then could there exist a whole river full of pus which existed as an outer object? These beings do though see the pus and so on, for they are forced to do so by their karma.

And this is certainly the case, for later on in the text someone argues that—if the pus and blood did not exist as outer objects, and if they were only a part of the mind itself— then they could never provide the function of being something to eat or drink. And in response, Master Vinitadeva says "Actions and their objects are like an injury in a dream." He is saying that, even though the pus and blood do not exist as outer objects, nonetheless they can perform the function of being something to eat or drink. He proves his point by using a great many examples, such as a dream.

If this were not the case, then one would have to say that form and other such doorways through which perceptions grow did not even exist at all. Why? Because you would be saying that all the sutras which state that they do exist are sutras which do not mean what they say; sutras which you have to interpret to understand their true meaning. And this too is certainly the case, for the autocommentary to the *Twenty Verses* states that:

In the same way, statements by the victorious Buddha where He says that form and other such doors of perception do exist would be examples of His word that must be interpreted to establish their real meaning; statements that are only spoken figuratively, for the benefit of disciples who might require such explanations.

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In response to this someone might claim:

There's no problem; the point of this statement is to say that sutras which explain form and similar doors of perception as actually existing as outer objects are only spoken figuratively, and must be interpreted to establish their true meaning. Well then, the meaning of the original statement then is just the same: it is saying that "there does not exist even a drop of pus and blood which exists as an outer object."

Yet again, another argument might be made:

Let's take the case of one of those craving spirits that looks at a river of water, and sees it as a dry riverbed, genuinely so. Or consider one that looks at a tree loaded with fruit, but sees it as nothing but bare limbs, genuinely so. The visual consciousness of both of these beings then must be a valid perception. Why? Remember the case of the three different beings looking at a glass full of something wet and flowing; according to you, the pus and blood was actual pus and blood, and the perception of them by the craving spirit was genuine: his visual consciousness was a valid perception.

Just because we said that about the other case doesn't mean that it's true in every case. If the craving spirit hadn't seen any water in that area in the first place, it wouldn't have made any sense for him to go over in that direction to try to enjoy some of the water. Therefore what happened was that, at first, he saw some water. Later on, he was forced by his karma to stop seeing water and saw only bare, parched earth. Then he had an impression where he thought the water had dried up.

The case with the fruit tree is the same. Although at first the craving spirit sees a tree loaded with fruit, later on his karma forces him to stop seeing fruit, and all he sees is bare branches. Then he has an impression where he thinks that the tree has no fruit any more.

When all this is happening, the obstacle in the visual consciousness of the craving spirit prevents him from seeing the river of water, and so he sees a dry, parched riverbed. The same is true for the visual consciousness of a human: if the obstacle were there, it would prevent him from seeing the river of water, and then he would have to see a dry, parched riverbed.

From one point of view, the river of water hasn't dried up when the craving spirit looks at it; but there *is* a river which has dried up, if you're talking about a river of water *that the spirit can see*, or a river of water *that the spirit can drink from*. This follows because when the three different types of beings sit down together and look at a glass full of something wet and flowing, it is true that, due to the force of karma, three different kinds of objects exist there at the same time: the pus and blood, and the other two.

Given all this, consider craving spirits that have obstacles that relate to their food and drink itself. The food and drink there really *is* food and drink, until such time as the spirit starts trying to eat or drink it. When he does try to do so, then the continuum of the food into the next moment starts becoming pus and blood. It is not though that it is the simple appearance of something as pus and blood that could ever function as something to eat or drink. If this were the case, then the rules of karma and its consequences would have to be less than what they really are. And this is true, for if a craving spirit like this ever existed it would represent a failure of the laws of karma and its consequences.

Suppose moreover that there were no pus and blood out there to appear as the pus and blood, and suppose that the mere appearance of something looking like pus and blood could ever function as something to eat or drink. Well then, you would also have to be able to use a comb on the hair that appears to exist on a porcelain sink to a person with cataracts. And a horsefly that appeared to the same person would have to be able to give him a bite. And the water of a mirage would have to provide all the normal functions of water, and so on. Why so? Well because, according to you, there is no pus and blood out there to appear as pus and blood; according to you, the mere appearance of something looking like pus and blood can provide all the functions of things that you eat and drink.

And consider again this case where a pleasure being and a human and a craving spirit and an animal or the like all sit down together and look at a glass full of something wet and flowing. According to you, it would have to be genuine when something that just looked like ambrosia appeared to the pleasure being, and it would have to be genuine when something that just looked like pus and blood appeared to the craving spirit, but there couldn't be any pus and blood out there to appear as pus and blood. And if this were the case, then consider the visual consciousness of a being in the hells. It would then have to be a valid perception towards something appearing to it that just looked like the burning steel of the hells, and towards something that just looked like a mass of fire, and so on. Finally, this person would not have any valid perceptions at all towards any of these things as actual objects. Why would this all have to be so? If your idea were correct, it would have to be, for the logic here is identical to your own.

And suppose you agree that this hell being could have no valid perceptions of the type we mentioned. Well then, the burning steel and other objects could never perform any real actions: they could never burn the bodies of the people born there, they could never chop them up, and so on. Why? Well because of what you just agreed to. And suppose you agree to this; that they could never perform any real actions. Well then, the torment of the hells itself then must not even exist, by your own admission. And remember too that case where the beings all sit down and look at the same thing. You must be saying then that the actual water, the thing towards which the visual consciousness of the human is a valid perception, doesn't exist at all. Why? Well because, according to you, no actual pus and blood exists either in the same situation.

Someone might now make the following claim:

In this situation, there *does* exist some real water there. This is because the human can confirm the water with his own experience, as it performs all the functions of water—as he uses it to wash himself, or as he uses it to cook something.

Well then, in the same situation there must exist some real pus and blood there as well, because in this same situation the craving spirit can confirm the pus and blood with his own experience as they perform their functions—as he drinks them, and then as the sizzle in his throat and stomach, and so on.

Someone may respond to this argument with the following claim:

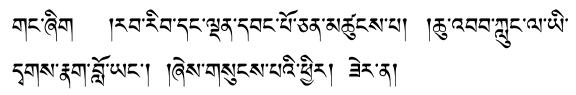
The two cases are not the same. When all this happens to the craving spirit, it's nothing more than his own imagination.

Well then, what happens to the human can't be happening to him either, because it's nothing more than *his* imagination.

Someone may respond to this with another claim:

When the human washes himself with the water and so on, it must not be something real, because it's nothing more than his own imagination.

Are you saying then that when the pus and blood sizzle in the stomach of the craving spirit, and so on, it can't be something real? For that too is nothing more than his own imagination. You agree? Well then, the suffering of craving spirits must not exist at all.

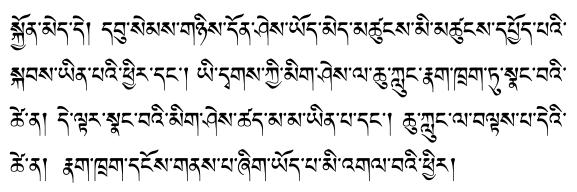


Someone might make the following claim:

Isn't it true that when all those beings sit down together and look at something, there isn't any actual pus and blood at all? Because isn't it true first of all that, when a person with cataracts looks into a porcelain basin, there is no strand of hair in the basin at all? And, secondly, doesn't [Master Dharmakirti's] text itself say,

Identical to the case of someone where his sense power has a cataract,

Is the mind of a craving spirit as well, which sees a stream of water as pus.



And yet there is no such problem, for this quotation appears in the section where we are examining the question of whether, in the schools of the Middle Way and the Mind-Only, an object and the perception of it must be equivalent in either both existing or both not existing. Moreover, there is another fact about this situation, where the stream of water appears as pus and blood to the visual consciousness of the craving spirit. It is no inconsistency to say that the visual consciousness that sees things this way is not a valid perception, and to say at the same time that—when the craving spirit looks at the stream of water—there does exist there actual pus and blood.

શુःગ્રુવપ્ય એન પરે છેના નેન જાણ ને વર્તરો છેન પાર્ય શુખ્ય સેન પરે છેન નેમ ક્યા ફ્રેંન વદ્યા બન્ના સુવાય સેવા યાવી સુખ્ય મારી છે. દ્વાય છે. દ્વાય છે. દ્વાય છે. દ્વાય છે. દ્વાય છે. દ รุฑาชิาณลาฏีนา ไว้เฉราวิเปลาสพลาชนามีนา ซึ่นเพลาพูสากนรเลือง યશ્ર યાસુદશ્યા લિશ્વ યાસુદશ્વ યવે સુરા કેર તા

Someone again may come and claim the following:

Let's consider once more this situation where three different types of beings sit down together and look at a glass full of something wet and flowing. Isn't it true that there is no actual pus and blood there? Because isn't it true that the burning steel and so on in the hells is only something that appears to a person who is born there, but that there is nothing there which actually is these objects? Because isn't it true that there is no one at all who went and made all these kinds of things? And isn't this a fact, because doesn't the text of *The Bodhisattva's Way of Life* say:

> Who made the burning steel that acts As the floor of the world of hell? Where did all the mass of flames You find there all come from?

The Able Ones have spoken that Everything there like this Is nothing at all other than The mind of what's non-virtue.

Yet there is no such problem. The point of this quotation is to say that the burning steel and so on are not something that was created by some unchanging creator being or something like that; by someone who thought it over first and then created them. The lines are meant to show us that what really made all these things is the non-virtuous states of mind had by the beings who have to take birth there.

Suppose this were not the case; consider then those holy people who lead their lives following the ten virtues, and who are then born into the higher realms, and then experience the pleasures of these realms. And consider too those miserable people who lead their lives following the ten non-virtues, and who are then born into the lower realms, and then experience the sufferings of these realms. Is the difference between them just that they are having some better or worse kind of misperception, and not whether they are experiencing pleasure or pain? This would have to be the case, if your reasoning were correct.

Suppose you agree that it is only a matter of better or worse misperceptions. Are you saying then that the pleasures of the higher realms don't even exist, and that the pains of the lower realms don't even exist? You must be, if you agree this way.

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In conclusion now, let us consider again these three kinds of beings, each with their different karma, as they sit down together and look at a glass full of something wet and flowing. It's not necessarily true that they must all have valid perceptions which are identical. If they did, then the three beings looking at the glass of water would have to think of the water as a place to live, in the way that a creature living in water would. The three beings as well would have to see the water in the same way that microscopic organisms living in the water, little beings imperceptible to normal visual consciousness, see it with their own visual consciousness. Then too the visual consciousness of microscopic organisms living in the depths of the ocean would have to be a valid perception towards the entire extent of the sea. And certain kinds of near-gods too would have to see weapons as glasses of water, and on and on; the problems raised would be many.

Again consider this same situation. Even though it is not necessarily true that the valid perceptions are identical, it is possible for there to be three valid perceptions here which happen to be identical. This is because, as we have already established logically, there can be a case where by the force of karma three different objects, each one confirmed by a valid perception, start to exist. And since this is possible, then it is equally possible that, by the force of karma, three equivalent valid perceptions of a vessel could start to exist as well.

Generally speaking, each of the three objects mentioned—the pus and the other two—are things of the type that block other objects from entering into the space which they themselves occupy. It is no contradiction though to say that, in this situation where the beings are looking this way, they are not objects such that they block other things from entering into the space they occupy. This is true for the following reason.

A central mountain of the world which is square in shape, and a central mountain of the world which is round in shape, and the like, are objects such that they block other things from entering the space they occupy. Nevertheless, it is possible for both these things to occupy the space taken up by a single central mountain of the world. A red-hot ball of steel is something that's hot, but consider what happens when a person touches it after he has used the mantra of steel on his hand. The sensation that he feels is not a sensation of heat; on the contrary, it is a sensation of something not heat.

[This concludes the section of the text entitled "The Stream."]

# When the text of the Essence of Eloquence was taught by Geshe Tupten Rinchen, he took great pains to point out that it is not correct—as some Western scholars have stated—that Je Tsongkapa himself adhered to the tenets of the Mind-Only School. The following selection to show that he follows, of course, the beliefs of the Consequence group is taken the concluding pages of our root text [ACIP electronic text S5396, ff. 112a-112b].

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Now suppose you come and ask the following:

We have a question for you. You have shown us how the systems of the two great innovators make the distinction between those parts of the highest of all spoken words which are figurative, and those which are literal. And there are a great variety of ways in which the different kings of all great thinkers have commented upon the true intent of these two. Tell us now—which of these master commentators do you follow; how is it that you yourself decide on what is literal, and what is it that you believe is the ultimate?

We answer with the following lines:

- I can't deny that I feel respect from the bottom of my heart
- For all the fine words ever taught by the jewels among this world's sages;
- The reasoning though of dependence, invariable, for the cycle and what's beyond
- Acts to destroy our tendency to see things to be by the features they have.

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- And when this pure white light of the Moon,\* this excellent explanation,
- Has opened wide the night-blooming lotus, the eyes of the intellect,
- And we finally see that path set before us by Buddhapalita,
- Who then would fail to hold as their core Nagarjuna's excellent way?

[\*Translator's note: The "Moon" here (chandra in Sanskrit) is an allusion to Master Chandrakirti.]

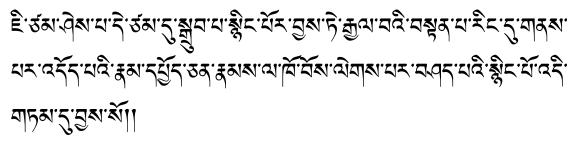
And so—in the context of the way of the perfections—it is the systems of the two great innovators that have spread widely; systems by which, in the ways we have described above, the meaning of that highest of spoken words is divided into the literal and the figurative, to determine what thusness really is. But it is also the case that those wise men who have commented upon the great works of the way of the secret word, and the eminent practitioners of this way, have set forth the meaning of thusness in keeping with one or the other of these very two systems; there is no third system between the two. You should understand then that this method is the path for determining the meaning of thusness for each and every one of the works of the highest of speech, whether we are talking of the open or the secret teachings.

And so imagine a person who tried to find the meaning of thusness without relying on a system taught by one of the great innovators of the two methods. They would be like a blind person without a guide for the blind, racing towards some very dangerous place.

And suppose that a person did want to rely on one of these systems, but had not spent a good deal of time acquanting themselves with their great books. Suppose, in particular, that they were relying only on a few short descriptions to determine the difference between those teachings of the Buddha which were figurative, and those which were literal—without having a proper understanding of the subtle, crucial points of reasoning involved. People like this would be taking refuge in words only; and even if they were to attempt to talk about thusness, it would be only words, without any essence.

ર્શુન સુર ર્સે ચ લેર |

Try to see how this is true, and never be satisfied with seeing even some great number of the more obvious crucial points on these questions. Make the effort to acquaint yourself well with both the gross and more subtle keys of reasoning that the two great innovators have given us as eyes to see into the Buddha's teaching. And then let your labors continue to flow, like some great stream, coming to an understanding of the profound points of the far-reaching traditions, and the profound traditions, and the more-profound-than-profound traditions, in the teachings of the Buddha.



Take then lastly whatever you have understood and make it the very heart of your own personal spiritual practice: it is for the likes of you, for those of intelligence who hope to see the teachings of the Victorious Ones remain long in our world, that I have set down into words this *Essence of Eloquence*.