



Here, close distant and central refers to the front, back and middle parts respectively of a vase. Any tangible object has different parts to it and is dependent on those different parts. When you look at the front of a clock, for example, you don't see the back, because the back is a different part, which is not obvious to you right now. Then if you turn it around and look at the back of the clock then you won't see the front, and there is also the middle part. This indicates that any given object is dependent on different parts, and is a composite of the different parts that make it up. So, as all visible forms have different parts to them, they are dependent on those different parts and thus any given visible form is imputed on the different parts that it has. As the commentary concludes:

There is not the slightest thing existent by way of its own entity that is directly perceptible to any kind of awareness.

There is no visible form existent anywhere that exists by the way of its own entity or inherently, or by its own characteristics, and it is this inherent existence that is being refuted. i.e. there is no inherent existence or existence by way of its own entity.

Thus from the Prasangika point of view all existent phenomena are imputed and are merely nominal. We can take another example, such as the Prime Minister. The label is merely imputed upon the person who has the characteristic of being nominated as a prime minister, which is determined by how many votes he has. When the required number of votes is reached, then the label of 'prime minister' is conferred, and from that day on, he is referred to as Prime Minister. This is an indication that a prime minister does not exist by way of its own entity or inherently. If that were to be the case then regardless of the number of votes there would have to be a prime minister. Thus as indicated in the text, 'There is not the slightest thing existent by way of its own entity that is directly perceptible to any kind of awareness'.

#### 1.1.1.1.5. Showing that the proof and what is to be proved are alike

*This also applies when one examines  
Whether particles have parts or not.  
Thus to prove a thesis by that  
Which must be proved is not feasible.* 305

As the commentary explains:

When all the parts are separated, that form is finally reduced to the smallest particles. An investigation of whether particles have parts or not applies to those particles too.

This is basically a refutation of those who assert that there are partless particles. The implication is that the same reasoning refuting whether visible forms have parts or not applies to those who assert that there are partless particles. If you go down to the smallest particle, then when you investigate and analyse further, you will find that it has parts as well. As it mentions in the text:

If they have parts like a front and a back, they are, like the pot, imputed in dependence upon many parts...

Using a coarser object such as the visible form of a pot, it was explained that a pot or a vase has parts to it – a front part, a back part and a middle part. Similarly, even the subtlest particle also has to have a front part and a back part, and directional points such as east and north and so forth. This logical reasoning then implies that there cannot be a partless particle. What is being established here is that even

the smallest particle is nominal and an imputed phenomena, just like all other phenomena.

In establishing that the smallest particle also has parts, such as the front, and back, and the eastern, southern, northern and western directional parts, it is shown that the smallest particle is dependent on its directional parts for its existence, and thus it is imputed and nominated in dependence of those parts. Thus, unlike those who assert the tiniest particle is partless, suggesting an inherent existence or existence from its own entity, from our Buddhist point of view, specifically the Prasangika point of view, the tiniest part cannot be inherently existent, because it is dependent on its parts. If it didn't have parts, you could not establish it to be existent, so it would be non-existent. But even though it is the tiniest particle it does have parts, and it is dependent on those parts. Thus, the conclusion is that there cannot be a partless particle, and thus an inherently existent particle.

What is mainly being established here is that all existence down to the tiniest particle is imputed upon the basis, which is a dependent arising. In other words all existence is dependent on its parts.

As the commentary concludes:

If they do not have parts, they cannot exist because of being inapprehensible. Thus it is not feasible to prove that the pot exists by way of its entity as a directly perceptible object of comprehension by means of that which must be proved, for things do not exist by way of their own character.

#### 1.1.1.1.2. SHOWING OTHER LINES OF REASONING

*Everything too is a component  
As well as being a composite.  
Thus even a spoken syllable  
Does not have existence here.* 306

As the commentary explains the verse:

Moreover when objects apprehended by the physical sense organs are examined, all are components in relation to their composites as well as composites in relation to their components and are therefore merely imputed in dependence upon their parts.

This is yet another way of looking at an interdependent relationship. Any given object is a composite that is made up of components. The components and the composite are interdependently related: the composite is dependent on its components, because without its components it cannot be a composite. Likewise, the components are dependent on the composite, because without a composite there would not be components of that object. Thus they are interdependently related, and are merely imputed in dependence upon their parts. Another way of understanding this is that the composite is dependent on the components, and the components themselves are dependent on the parts that make up the components, i.e. every part is further related to something else. Another way of understanding it is, for example, that the pot or vase is dependent on its components, which are the eight substances that make up the vase. Then each of the substances are further dependent on their components, which are the parts and so forth that make up each of the eight substances.

As with the analysis of the smallest particle, names, which are ultimately reduced to spoken syllables such as "a," are also just conventions in this world and do not exist by way of their own entity.

Just as is the case with visible forms, when we talk about the actual names of things, then what makes up our speech are

sounds. These too can be reduced to one syllable such as 'a', and that also does not exist by way of its own entity. It is also dependent on other factors for its existence and thus it is merely imputed upon its parts. So, as it mentions in the commentary:

Thus you must recognize all dependently arising phenomena as mere names and terms.

Here the 'mere' in 'mere names and terms' connotes that things do not exist independently, without depending on any other parts and so forth, and that they do not exist from their own entity. That is what is being negated here when you say 'mere'. Thus, when the Prasangika view relates to everything as being mere names and terms, merely nominated by the conceptual mind; that 'mere' negates phenomena as being truly existent or inherently existent, or existing by way of its own entity.

### 1.1.1.2. INDIVIDUAL REFUTATIONS

This is sub-divided into two:

1.1.1.2.1. Refuting that sense organs apprehend objects existing by way of their own entity

1.1.1.2.2. Refuting apprehension by mental consciousness

#### **1.1.1.2.1. REFUTING THAT SENSE ORGANS APPREHEND OBJECTS EXISTING BY WAY OF THEIR OWN ENTITY**

This is sub-divided into two:

1.1.1.2.1.1. Refuting truly existent visible objects

1.1.1.2.1.2. Refuting truly existent auditory objects

#### **1.1.1.2.1.1. Refuting truly existent visible objects**

This is sub-divided into two:

1.1.1.2.1.1.1. Refuting objects

1.1.1.2.1.1.2. Refuting that which perceives objects

#### **1.1.1.2.1.1.1. Refuting objects**

This heading is sub-divided into two:

1.1.1.2.1.1.1.1. Refuting our own sectarians' contentions (which refers to the Vaibashikas)

1.1.1.2.1.1.1.2. Refuting contentions of other sectarians

#### **1.1.1.2.1.1.1.1. Refuting our own sectarians' contentions**

This is divided into three:

1.1.1.2.1.1.1.1.1. Refutation by examining whether the colour and shape constituting a visible form existing by way of its own character taken as object of apprehension by a visual consciousness are inherently one or different

1.1.1.2.1.1.1.1.2. Refutation through the consequence that because the elements are present, a visual consciousness taking a visible form as its object would apprehend both

1.1.1.2.1.1.1.1.3. Showing what invalidates this contention

#### **1.1.1.2.1.1.1.1.1. Refutation by examining whether the colour and shape constituting a visible form existing by way of its own character taken as object of apprehension by a visual consciousness are inherently one or different**

*Assertion:* The pot is directly perceptible since visual consciousness sees the pot's visible form existent by way of its own character, consisting of color and shape.

*Answer:*

*If shape is distinct from color* 307  
*How is shape apprehended?*  
*If not distinct, why would the body*  
*Not also apprehend color?*

What the Vaibashika assert, as we also assert, is that visual forms consist of shapes and colours. That being the case, what they are saying is that because the colour and the shape are perceived as existing by way of their own

character, then as a consequence the vase itself has to be established as being existing by way of its own character, or by way of its own entity.

This is refuted in the following manner. First of all what has to be accepted by both sides is that if anything exists it has to exist either as one or as separate or distinct. Nothing can exist outside of the two categories of being either one or distinct. That being the case, the counter-question to their assertion is:

Are color and shape inherently one or distinct?

If colour and shape are distinct:

If shape such as length and so forth is inherently distinct from color, how can a visual consciousness take shape as its object of apprehension? It follows that it cannot because shape is an entity distinct from color.

If colour and shape are one then:

Alternatively, if they are not distinct but inherently one, why does touch not apprehend color in the dark just as it apprehends shape? It follows that it should because they are one.

What is being implied here is that if the colour and shape of a vase, for example, are inherently one, then when you perceive the shape you would have to also perceive the colour of the vase. However if you were in a dark room and you touched the vase, you would be able to distinguish its shape, but you would not be able to perceive its colour. If the shape and the colour were inherently one then, by default, by perceiving either colour or shape, one would be have to simultaneously perceive the other. When it has been refuted that colour and shape are neither inherently one nor distinct, then we have also refuted the inherent existence of the vase itself.

#### **1.1.1.2.1.1.1.1.2. Refutation through the consequence that because the elements are present, a visual consciousness taking a visible form as its object would apprehend both**

*Assertion:* The visible form source exists because the four great elements which are causal forms exist.

*Answer:*

*Only the form is visible* 308  
*But the form's causes are not seen*  
*If indeed it is thus,*  
*Why are both not also*  
*Perceived by just the eyes?'*

What they are asserting is that since the four elements are existent by way of their own entity, then that which arises from the four elements are also inherently existent. As the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

Only the resultant form is visible but the form's causes such as the earth element are not seen. Since causal form is imputed in dependence upon resultant form, they cannot be inherently different. If they are inherently one, they must be one. In that case why does just visual consciousness itself not apprehend both the causal and resultant forms? It follows that it should because they are one.

This is using the same logical reasoning of one and many that was used earlier, but here the example is that because the causes are seen as being existent by way of their own entity, then the result which is a visible form will also be inherently existent or existent by way of its own entity. If that was the case then, as mentioned in the commentary:

Since causal form is imputed in dependence upon resultant form, they cannot be inherently different.

Since cause and effect have an interdependent relationship they cannot be inherently different, but if they are inherently one then they have to be one and the same. However the elements and the resultant form cannot be one because they are perceived by separate consciousnesses. While the form is perceived by visual consciousness, the elements are not. The main point being establishment here is that the cause and effect are dependently arising phenomena. This means that the cause (the elements) is dependent on the effect (the visual form) for its existence. The cause is thus imputed in dependence on the result. Likewise the result is also imputed upon the dependence of a cause. Thus they are not inherently different because they have the mutual relationship of depending on each other.

If they were inherently distinct or separate, then that would imply that there is no relationship between the two and that they would have to exist without having to relate to each other. Whereas the fact is that a cause has to be dependent on an effect for it to be a cause, and an effect is also dependent on a cause for it to be an effect. That mutual relationship indicates that they are not inherently distinct or separate.

Neither can cause and effect be inherently one. If they were to be inherently one, then when either consciousness apprehends one, they would also have to apprehend the other. That which apprehends the effect (visual form) is apprehended by visual consciousness, but the causes (the elements) are not apprehended by visual consciousness. This indicates that they are not inherently one.

If cause and effect were inherently distinct then the fault that would arise is that cause and effect would not be mutually related. Rather they would be mutually exclusive, and not depend on each other, which is absurd. Whereas if they were actually inherently one, then the perception of one would have to automatically mean that the other is also perceived. But that also goes against our experience.

Thus the conclusion is that cause and effect are neither inherently distinct nor inherently one but are mutually dependent. What the other schools are attempting to do is to establish the cause as being inherently existent or existent by way of its own character and then proving that the result, is by default, also existent by way of its own character. However that cannot be established.

#### 1.1.1.2.1.1.1.3. Showing what invalidates this contention

*Earth is seen as firm and stable* 309  
*And is apprehended by the body.*  
*Only that which is tangible*  
*Is referred to as earth.*

This verse relates to the four elements, in particular the earth element. As the commentary explains:

Earth is seen as firm and stable and furthermore is apprehended by tactile consciousness. Thus only that which is tangible is referred to as earth. Therefore since visible forms are objects apprehended by visual consciousness and the four elements are objects apprehended by tactile consciousness, they are different. If one accepts them as truly existent, they are unrelated. It would thereby follow that visible form is causeless.

This is in relation to the earlier contention that by establishing the cause as being inherently existent or existent by way of its own character, the effect would also be established as existing by way of its own character or entity. That is being refuted again here, by saying that the earth, which is part of the causes is a tactile object that is

apprehended by the tactile consciousness, and not by the visual consciousness, because of its entity being firm and stable and so forth. Thus as mentioned here 'that which is tangible is referred to as earth'.

Therefore since visible forms are objects apprehended by visual consciousness and the four elements are objects apprehended by tactile consciousness, they are different.

What is being further established here is that the consciousnesses that perceive form and the elements are different, thus they cannot be established as being exactly the same or one. The Vaibashika said that by establishing the cause as being truly existent you can establish the effect as being truly existent, so what is being refuted here is that by establishing one you can establish the other. To begin with, they are separate and because they are separate you cannot establish one as being truly existent and thus establish the other as being truly existent.

As stated above the four elements are said to be perceived by the tactile consciousness but not by the visual consciousness. For beginning debate classes in the monastery young monks address this debate: Is the earth perceived by visual consciousness or not? Even though you are not beginners we can use that same formula. So does the visual consciousness perceive the earth element?

*Some students say yes. Other students say no.*

Does the visual consciousness perceive water or not?

*Students: Yes.*

Visual consciousness perceives fire doesn't it?

*Students: Yes.*

But the texts assert that the elements cannot be perceived by the visual consciousness. The implication then is that visual consciousness only perceives the colour of water, or fire, or the earth, but does not perceive earth, water or fire itself. That is what comes up in the debates. Of course saying that you don't see the earth or that you don't see water seems to go against normal conventions. The way to understand this, is rather tricky. According to the explanation here, earth is perceived by the tactile consciousness. We would accept that someone who is blind still perceives the firmness and so forth of the ground. When we move about in the dark, we can use our feeling sense of touch to try to find our way around. That is because we actually perceive what we feel. So that is how the ground or earth is asserted as being tactile consciousness. Yet if we say that we don't see the food that we eat or the water that we drink, then that also seems quite strange! However, according to the explanation in the teachings, food is actually perceived by the taste consciousness.

#### 1.1.1.2.1.1.1.2. Refuting contentions of other sectarians

*Vaisesika assertion:* A pot is not a visible object by way of its own entity but neither is it not a visible object since it is directly perceptible by virtue of possessing visibility, a separate generality.

*Since it was produced as something visible,* 310  
*It is of no use at all to the pot.*  
*As with the production of visibility,*  
*It lacks even the entity of existence.*

The Vaisesika assertion is basically that a pot is not a visible object by way of its own entity, but neither is it not a visible object. Their reasoning is that it is directly perceptible by virtue of possessing visibility, a separate generality.

They assert that a separate generality is the mere entity of that object such as a mere vase, or a mere form, or a mere existence. The mere existence of any given object is called a separate generality. It is that 'mereness' of a mere vase or a mere pot that is directly perceptible. Although it is not a visible object, its entity is basically perceived through its mere existence or 'mereness'. What they seem to be implying is that initially a pot is not a visible object by way of its own entity, but then through the 'mere existence' called the separate generality, then it becomes an object that is directly perceptible. What they seem to imply is that initially it is not a visual object by way of its own entity, but then it then transforms into something that is directly perceptible. As the commentary further explains, this too is unacceptable.

Has the pot come into existence as something visible through its own causes or not?

They distinguish between a pot not being a visible object by way of its own entity, but say that it is directly perceived later, by virtue of possessing a visibility which is a separate generality. The refutation is in the form of a question and a counter question: Has a pot come into existence as something visible by its own cause, or not?

In the first case it would follow that an association with the separate generality of visibility is of no use in making the pot directly perceptible, because it has come into existence as something visible through its own causes.

This is showing the absurdity of their second assertion.

For this reason the generality of visibility is not produced in relation to the pot.

Then furthermore as the commentary reads:

Further, a pot that has no connection with visibility and is not something visible lacks any inherently established entity of existence. Therefore the pot could not be either actually or imputedly directly perceptible as you contend.

Next Tuesday falls on the anniversary of Lama Tsong Khapa's passing away. Because of the significance of the day we won't have class that evening but a puja, which it would be good to attend.

As that day is a very auspicious day for making aspirations, many monks and nuns, in particular great teachers and beings, make special prayers on that day. So too do lay followers of this tradition.

Coming into contact with Lama Tsong Khapa's teachings, let alone understanding them is very rare, so we can consider ourselves fortunate to have met with the perfect teachings and the perfect teachers who expound the teachings. However it is essential that we make prayers to be able to continuously meet with these perfect conditions in lifetime after lifetime so that we can progress along the path. That's something that I personally do, and from my side I would advise you to follow suit.

In the old days this was one of two auspicious days celebrated in China. The other auspicious day called *shim-ju*, which is the anniversary of the passing away of the founder of the Sera Monastery, who was also a renowned teacher in China.

Lama Tsong Khapa was a very renowned teacher, and the Emperor of China sent letters written in gold requesting that Lama Tsong Khapa come and teach in China. Lama Tsong

Khapa ignored the first one, but when the second one arrived, Lama Tsong Khapa sent one of his disciples Jamchen Choje who was the founder of the Sera Monastery. Nowadays historians would say that by ignoring the Emperor's command Lama Tsong Khapa showed that he didn't have to abide by the commands of the Emperor, which is also an indication that Tibet was sovereign country.

In the old days there was hardly anyone within China who didn't know the name of Lama Tsong Khapa, because of the great contribution he made through his teachings and translations and so forth. It was traditional to offer butter lamps and light on that day, and at the Emperor's command the people had to offer a lamp on that day. But of course these days that tradition is not sustained any more.

There is a general belief that an ancient Emperor of China was actually a manifestation of Manjushri, so in Tibet it was taken as a bad omen when the last Emperor was not enthroned, and it was believed that a lot of disasters and calamities would befall China. In fact from that time on, many bad things did happen in China and also Mongolia and so forth.

Practitioners and followers of Buddhism, among others, found it difficult to stay in China and escaped to Taiwan. Many scholars and wealthy people came from Shanghai. They maintained the teachings and doctrines of Lama Tsong Khapa and to this day they have the translations of the *Lam Rim Chen Mo*, the graduated path of enlightenment. Thus it seems that that worldly wealth as well as the teachings and so forth were able to be preserved in Taiwan. Even though there was some decline, nevertheless a lot has been preserved and to this day there are many who still have strong faith and engage in practice.

*Transcribed from tape by Bernii Wright  
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnnett  
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe  
Edited Version*

© **Tara Institute**

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.