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## Study Group - Bodhicharyavatara

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29 March 2005

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As usual please generate a virtuous motivation thinking, 'I have to attain complete enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings, and in order to do so I am now going to listen to this profound teaching. Then I am going to put it into practice as much as possible'.

### 2.1.2.2.2. Refuting the Mind Only position (cont)

We have finished the outline called The Concordant Debate<sup>1</sup>.

#### 2.1.2.2.2.2. Refuting the answer to that debate

This is in two outlines:

- 2.1.2.2.2.2.1. Expressing the position
- 2.1.2.2.2.2.2. The refutation

##### 2.1.2.2.2.2.1. Expressing the position

*Even though it exists differently from this very nature [16cd]  
Then this aspect is that very mind.*

The **Mind Only** opponent states, '*Even though* the object that appears to the mind does not exist in that *very nature* as it appears to the mind, it *exists differently* in another way, because *the aspect* of form and so forth *is* the substance of *that very mind*'.

The Mind Only position is that both the mind, and the object that it perceives, arise simultaneously from an imprint on the mental consciousness, and that both the mind and the object exist truly. They don't accept the position that the consciousness arises in dependence on the object, and that if the object and mind don't exist truly then they cannot exist at all.

The Mind Only don't posit external forms. Instead they say that the mind is of one nature with the aspect of the object. There is no object that is of a different nature from the mind that perceives it. And both the mind and its impermanent object exist truly.

##### 2.1.2.2.2.2.2. The refutation

There are two outlines:

- 2.1.2.2.2.2.2.1. It is not perceived by any type of non-dual awareness
- 2.1.2.2.2.2.2.2. The refutation of self-knowers

##### 2.1.2.2.2.2.2.1. It is not perceived by any type of non-dual awareness

*When the mere mind is like an illusion, [17ab]  
At that time what is seen by which?*

*When the mere mind* appears like an illusion but does not exist externally, then *at that time what* consciousness lacking external meaning *is seen by which* valid cognition?

The question is how is mind itself established? If there are no external objects, what type of mind could establish mind itself, since there is no object that is of a different substance from mind itself. If there is no external object then the object possessor itself also will not be perceived.

##### 2.1.2.2.2.2.2.2. The refutation of self-knower

This is done in four outlines:

- 2.1.2.2.2.2.2.2.1. Refuting the self-knower with a scriptural quotation
- 2.1.2.2.2.2.2.2.2. Refuting the self-knower with logic
- 2.1.2.2.2.2.2.2.3. Refuting other different types of proof for a self-knower
- 2.1.2.2.2.2.2.2.4. Refuting that imputed objects exist truly

##### 2.1.2.2.2.2.2.2.1. Refuting the self-knower with a scriptural quotation

*The protector of the worlds also said [17cd]  
That mind does not see mind.*

*The cutting edge of a knife does not cut itself [18ab]  
It is the same for mind.*

As a reply to the previous argument by the Madhyamaka, the **Mind Only** say that mind is not perceived by a mind different from it, but that it is perceived by a truly existent self-knower in a non-dual manner. The self-knower is really a part of the mind itself and that perceives the mind in a non-dual manner.

The Mind Only say that each mind has two parts. It has a part that is directed outwards and knows the object, and a part that is directed solely inwards and knows the mind itself. The part of the mind that knows mind itself is the self-knower. This self-knower perceives the rest of the mind in a non-dual manner. It is this self-knower that is being refuted.

The **Buddha** refuted the self-knower in a sutra. He said that mind can not see itself in the same way as the blade of a knife cannot cut itself. If one were to assert that mind could know itself, then that would be like saying that the blade of a knife could cut itself. There is also a quote from the *Journey to Lanka Sutra*, which states exactly what we have said, 'The blade of a knife cannot cut itself and it is likewise for the mind'.

In the **Mind Only** system, as we have said before, there is no external object in dependence on which the consciousness is generated. They don't assert that there is an object that is experienced by a different experiencer. They assert this self-knower, where one part of the mind knows the rest of the mind. So one has the situation where there is no object that is of different substance from the experiencer.

But for the **Prasangika** there is this dependence of the mind on the object, in that the mind arises in dependence upon the external object. You first have the external object and then, from the causal condition of that external object, the consciousness that perceives it arises. This causality is not accepted by the Mind Only.

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<sup>1</sup> Last time this was called 2.1.2.2.2.1. Offering a similar debate

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## 2.1.2.2.2.2.2.2. Refuting the self-knower with logic

2.1.2.2.2.2.2.2.1. Refutation of the example

2.1.2.2.2.2.2.2.2. Refutation of the meaning

### 2.1.2.2.2.2.2.2.1. Refutation of the examples

The first example:

*A candle light can perfectly illuminate its object,* [18cd]

*But can not illuminate itself likewise,* [19ab]  
*Because darkness does not obscure itself.*

The **Mind Only** use the example of candle-light, saying that similarly to the candle-light illuminating both itself as well as objects, the mind can know both objects and itself.

This is refuted by **Shantideva** with the reasoning of darkness not being able to obscure itself. If one were to say that light can illuminate itself then darkness should also be able to obscure itself. Because darkness does not obscure itself it follows that light does not illuminate itself. If darkness were to obscure itself then one should not be able to see the darkness. Since that it not the case then light does not illuminate itself.

If light were to illuminate itself then there would not be any doubt with regard to darkness obscuring itself. Therefore the reasoning by the Mind Only that used the example of light illuminating itself is not valid.

Light does of course have luminosity, but it does not illuminate itself. That is the distinction that is being made here. While it has luminosity it does not illuminate itself. If light were to illuminate itself, then the logical consequence would be that darkness would also obscure itself.

Refutation of the second example:

*Unlike a crystal, blue does not depend* [19cd]  
*On something else to be blue;*

*Likewise, some are seen to depend on others,* [20]  
*And yet some are also not.*  
*That which is not blue cannot produce itself*  
*As blue out of its own nature.*

The **Mind Only** say, 'When one places a white crystal on a blue surface, then the crystal becomes blue through the power of the blue surface it is standing on. It is not blue through its own nature, but in dependence on something else. On the other hand, the blue of a sapphire is generated out of its own nature, and not dependent on something else. Similarly, the knowing of forms and so forth depends on a consciousness different from them, while consciousness knows itself without depending on a knower different from itself'.

This is refuted by the **Madhyamaka**, who say that the blue of the sapphire is generated in dependence on causes and conditions, because the sapphire itself is generated in dependence on causes and conditions. Since the sapphire itself is generated in dependence on causes and conditions, the blue of the sapphire is likewise generated in dependence on causes and conditions. It doesn't just arise out of itself. If the blue of the sapphire were to arise just out of itself, then the sapphire should also exist independently of causes and conditions.

That which is not generated as blue from a cause does not have the power to generate itself as blue out of its own nature.

### Review

The Mind Only say there are no external objects and the Prasangika say that there are external objects. Can you tell me the reasons for these two different positions.

*Student: The Mind Only say that we experience things because the karmic imprint ripens into both the object and the mind perceiving the object.*

So in the Prasangika system the imprints don't have to ripen for the consciousness to see something?

*Student: They say that the object and the mind perceiving it arise simultaneously, and that is why they are both of the same nature.*

If form did not exist in such a way then why would it have to be an external object?

*Student: Because it wouldn't be in the nature of the mind. It would be external to the mind.*

If the mind and object are of different substance then why does the object have to be established as an external object?

*Student: Because it is not of the nature of consciousness.*

The **Sautrantika**, for example, say that the form is established as an external form, because it is based on an accumulation of partless particles. The **Mind Only** refute the position of the Sautrantika, so the refutation of external form by the Mind Only has to refute the point of the Sautrantika.

If the object exists, and if it is not of one substance with the mind, then it has to become an accumulation of partless particles. Then it has to become an external object. If the object and the mind are of different substance, then the mind is generated in dependence on the object and then the object has to re-establish externally. Then one would arrive at the accumulation of partless particles. That is the Sautrantika point of view. Why do the **Prasangika** say that there is an external object? Form is an external form because it is not contained within the continuum of the person. We went through the eight difficult points of the Prasangika previously<sup>2</sup>.

Then the text starts to talk about consciousness and self-knowers. What is the meaning of consciousness, and what is the meaning of self-knower?

One has to make good use of one's time and not just argue pointlessly back and forth. One has to get to the meaning, and thus progress from one discussion group to the next. But if one just pointlessly argues back and forth just to say something, then it is not very fruitful.

This type of arguing that arises from giving forth very personal opinions without having actually having studied the topic is not very fruitful. One has to study the topic very well, study what the topic is about, what the points are about, and then one has something available to

<sup>2</sup> This was covered as the Eight Uncommon Features of the Prasangika on 23 August 2003 and 2 September 2003.

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say on that basis. If one doesn't have that basis and just voices off one's own opinion then it is not very fruitful. There is a particular name for such a person in the monastery. It is said that such a person has no system to their argument. They will say this and they say that without any substance to their argument.

What is the meaning of consciousness? We have already mentioned this at least one hundred times?

*Student: Consciousness is the clear faculty of knowing to which an object can appear to be apprehended.*

What is the meaning of clear and knowing? One question that always arises is that if it is clear and knowing does it necessarily cognise the object? If it clear and knowing does it always realise?

If somebody was to assert that then you could posit true-grasping. 'It is a consciousness but it is not a cogniser, as it doesn't realise the object'. Or you could say, 'Then is there not a two-fold division of consciousness into valid cognition and non cognition?'. You have to go back to the text on awareness and knowers.

*Student: Is conscious awareness based on the aggregates?*

Yes. If you don't have the form aggregate then you don't have coarse consciousness. For example, in our case our consciousnesses are all primarily coarse consciousnesses, and they all depend on the form aggregate for their generation. When the form aggregate ceases then that consciousness also ceases - it goes into a non-manifest state. For example if one doesn't take care of one's body as one gets older (and sometimes even if one does take care of one's body) the consciousnesses lose power because the physical faculties lose power. If one's physical faculties remain strong then the consciousnesses also remain strong, even in old age. That is why it is important to look after one's physical health.

First of all clear and knowing doesn't mean that it is necessarily a cogniser. For example, self-grasping is clear and knowing, but it is not a cogniser. One explanation of the 'clear' is that it refers to the absence of shape, colour and so forth, and the 'knowing' part refers to the ability to reflect objects by arising in the aspect of objects. It doesn't really refer to realising or ascertaining something. Knowing refers to being able to arise in the aspect of the object. If it is consciousness there is no pervasion that it is a cognition. For example self-grasping is a consciousness but it is not a cogniser.

In the Prasangika system every consciousness does cognise itself, because every consciousness cognises the appearance that appears to it. It is a tenet of the Prasangika system that if it is consciousness then it cognises itself, because it cognises the appearance that appears to it.

But that doesn't make it a cogniser. True-grasping cognises itself but that doesn't make it a cogniser, because to be a cogniser it has to be incontrovertible with regard to the main object. There are different types of object, and to be a cogniser it has to be incontrovertible with regard to the main object.

Your debate topic for the next discussion is the difference between true-grasping and the wisdom that realises

selflessness.

- For example the wisdom realising selflessness is consciousness and it is incontrovertible and it is not a wrong consciousness - it is a valid cognition.
- True-grasping is also a consciousness, but it is a distorted, it is not a valid cognition, and it is a wrong consciousness.
- Then you should ascertain how the wisdom that realises selflessness harms true-grasping actually opposing or counteracting true-grasping.

If you can properly establish that then I will fold my hands and make prostrations to you

*Transcribed from tape by Jenny Brooks  
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Edited Version*

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