
Study Group - *Bodhicharyavatara*

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As usual generate a good motivation thinking, 'I have to attain enlightenment to achieve the welfare of all sentient beings, and in order to achieve this aim I am now going to listen to this profound teaching. Then I am going to put it into practice'.

2.1.2.2.2. Refutation of the Mind Only position (cont.)

2.1.2.2.2.2.2. The refutation of self-knowers

2.1.2.2.2.2.2.2. Refuting the self-knower with logic

2.1.2.2.2.2.2.2.2. Refuting the actual meaning

*If the statement the candle flame illuminates [21]
Is made after it is known by consciousness,
Then the statement awareness is luminous
Is made after being known by what.*

*To state it is illuminating¹ or not illuminating, [22]
When it is not seen by anything
Is pointless even though expressed,
Like the airs of a barren woman's daughter.*

This obviously relates back to the example of the candle-flame that was posited by the Mind Only. In the first line of verse 22 there is a reference to the analysis of whether mind is illuminated by self, or by another mind. One has to relate this to the essence of the refutation of the self-knower, which is the refutation of inherent existence.

The **Mind Only** base their position of the self-knower on the assertion of inherent existence. The **Prasangikas** refutation of the self-knower is based on the refutation of inherent existence.

The assertion of inherent existence by the lower tenets is always based on the assumption that something is findable at the time of analysis. But for the Prasangika, the imputed meaning is not findable at the time of analysis, even though existing nominally. So for the Prasangika it is not really important whether or not the mind or the candle-flame are illuminating at the time of analysis.

For the **Mind Only** this becomes very relevant. It is good to relate the line, 'To state it is illuminating or not illuminating' to whether or not the imputed meaning is findable at the time of analysis, and not just relate it to the superficial analysis of whether the mind illuminates itself, or whether it is illuminated by another mind.

The point of verse 22 is that after the **Prasangika** have refuted the example of the candle-flame illuminating itself with the reasoning of darkness not obscuring itself, the **Mind Only** concede that point. But they still say that the statement 'the candle-flame illuminates' is only made after consciousness becomes aware that the candle-flame is illuminating. Again, they are trying to make their point

that there has to be some kind of knower that observes the object possessor. However, once they make this statement, they actually contradict themselves, and have moved away from their own position. When they say that another consciousness knows that the candle-flame illuminates (the candle-flame here being the example for a consciousness), then they contradict their own assertion that consciousness is not known by an other-knower different from itself.

Even though the Mind Only try here to rescue their position, what actually happens is they have already completely stepped out of their own position. They have already left behind the self-knower and since they actually don't accept consciousness being known by an other-knower, then there is really no consciousness that knows consciousness. That's how one arrives at these two lines:

*Then the statement awareness is luminous
Is made after being known by what.*

There is nothing left: there is no self-knower and there is no other-knower. Therefore then, to state that the mind is illuminating or not illuminating, when it is not actually observed by any consciousness, is completely pointless. These positions can be expressed, but that becomes meaningless, because the position cannot be verified by a valid cognition that can actually verify whether the consciousness is luminous or not. These positions become like the airs put on by a barren woman's daughter. The daughter is non-existent and her airs are also non-existent.

The Mind Only start out from the position that the consciousness has to be known, and it can only be known by either a self-knower or an other-knower.

The Mind Only say 'we don't accept consciousness being known by an other-knower' because then one would arrive at the absurdity of needing limitless other-knowers. In order to remember one instance of consciousness, that consciousness needs to be observed by a simultaneous instance of consciousness different from itself. But then logically, in order to remember the second consciousness you would need another instance of a consciousness that is again of different. So you would need a limitless number of different instances of consciousness just to have a memory of one instance of consciousness.

The only other possibility for consciousness to be known, in order to generate a memory of it, is that it is known by the self-knower. Here then, when they make this statement 'the candle-flame illuminates' which is known by a different consciousness, they have already gone away from the position of the self-knower and have actually gone to the position of an other-knower, which is actually not possible according to themselves. According to the Mind Only point of view, they have actually arrived at a position where their consciousness is not known by any knower - be it a self-knower or another knower.

That's why verse 22 says that since there is really no knower that knows consciousness, then to make a statement as to whether the consciousness is luminous or not is completely pointless. This is because it cannot be

¹ In this context the Tibetan word *sal*, which means clear, clarifying, illuminating, is synonymous with appear. An object is clarified by the mind by appearing to the mind.

verified by a self-knower or an other-knower. 'Now', say the **Prasangika**, 'you have given up both positions, and for you there are only those two possibilities'.

According to the **Mind Only** position are form and the valid cognition that apprehends form of one substance or not?

Students: They are of one substance.

Why are they of one substance?

Student: Because they both share generation from the same karmic seed.

That's why the Mind Only assert that all consciousnesses and their objects are of one substance. It is because both are generated from one karmic imprint on the mind-stream.

According to the **Madhyamaka** there is form, and the valid cognition perceiving form. Are they of one substance or not?

Students: No.

Why? Are they of a different substance?

Student: Form is external.

Student: The one that perceives the object is triggered by the object. The perception comes from seeing the object, not sharing the same karmic seed.

One can basically say that in the Madhyamaka system form and the valid cognition apprehending form are cause and effect, while for the **Mind Only**, they are not a cause and effect but simultaneous. Cause and effect always have to be of a different substance, while if two things are generated simultaneously from one primary cause, then they have to be of one substance.

In the **Prasangika** system, would one have to say that first form is established, and then the eye-consciousness apprehending form is established?

Students: Yes.

Then there is a blue that is not established by a eye-consciousness apprehending blue. That's an obvious debate that you arrive at. If there is a blue that is not established by the eye-consciousness apprehending blue then it is not an object of eye-consciousness, which is the definition of form.

Since there is a blue that is not the object of the eye-consciousness apprehending blue, then it is not that which is held by the eye-consciousness, which is the definition of visual stimuli. So the definition of form-source goes out of the window! There is lots of debate about that.

The **Mind Only's** need for a self-knower arises from their need to posit consciousness as something that is findable at the time of analysis. For the Mind Only everything, including the imputed meaning, has to be findable at the time of analysis.

For the **Prasangika**, the imputed meaning being findable at the time of analysis is the object of negation. The Prasangika assert that the imputed meaning is never findable at the time of analysis. That's why the Prasangika reject the self-knower and the Mind Only assert the self-knower.

The **Mind Only** feel very strongly that the definition of mind – clear and knowing – should be findable at the time of analysis. According to them, mind needs to be verified. Another mind needs to verify that the mind is clear, and for them, that's the self-knower. Through the self-knower they establish that the imputed meaning of mind is findable at the time of analysis, and they establish the inherent existence of mind.

The **Prasangika** reject this, and therefore the Prasangika also reject the self-knower. For the Prasangika there is no need for the self-knower, because for the Prasangika, the imputed meaning is not findable at the time of analysis. This rejection of the self-knower by the Prasangika should be related to the rejection of the object of negation. The eight profound points of the Prasangika are always related to the unfindability of the imputed meaning at the time of analysis.

2.1.2.2.2.2.2.3. Refuting reasons that show the existence of the self-knower²

2.1.2.2.2.2.2.3.1. The example

2.1.2.2.2.2.2.3.2. Refuting other reasons for the self-knower

2.1.2.2.2.2.2.3.3. Refuting that if there is no self-knower, there couldn't be an other-knower

2.1.2.2.2.2.2.3.1. The example

Actually, we already explained this point in lots of detail last year³, so it should be very easy.

*If there is no self-knower, [23]
How can one remember consciousness.
One remembers in relation
To the experience of something else,
Like the poison of a rat.*

The **Mind Only** position is that if there is no self-knower then it would not be possible to remember the object possessor. When something is perceived there are always two elements – there is the object and there is the object possessor. For example, when one thinks, 'I am seeing blue', there is the object blue and then there is oneself, or the object possessor. The Mind Only's position is that if there is no self-knower that is aware of the object possessor mind, like the eye-consciousness apprehending blue, then one could not remember that one has seen blue. This is because there would be no experience of the experience of blue.

For the Mind Only, that one actually can remember that one saw blue indicates that there is a self-knower. It would not be possible for one to remember that one saw blue if, at the time of seeing blue, there was not some experience of the experience of blue. That's why they say there has to be the self-knower. Logically for them it can only be a self-knower that is aware of the awareness of blue, because they don't accept (for the previously mentioned reasons), that the awareness of blue is experienced by an other-knower. For them there are two types of experience, the self experience, and the experience by the other.

² Listed on 29 March 2005 as Refuting other different types of proof for a self-knower.

³ On 10 February 2004.

The awareness of blue has to be experienced by a self-knower. Blue is experienced by the awareness apprehending blue, and the awareness apprehending blue is experienced by the self-knower. This explains the first two lines.

Then the **Prasangika** reply that one remembers in relation to the experience of something else. They say that even though there is no self-knower at the time of the experience, one can still remember the experience in relation to the experience of something else. The **Prasangika** say that in order to remember the eye-consciousness apprehending blue, it is not necessary to have a self-knower that experiences the eye-consciousness apprehending blue. This is because merely by remembering blue, one automatically also remembers the object possessor that apprehends blue. They are linked, so merely by remembering blue, one also remembers, 'I saw blue'. One remembers the object possessor in dependence on the relationship between the object possessor and the object.

The **Mind Only** position is that one can remember the object possessor. For example, one can remember the eye-consciousness through which one saw blue. One doesn't only remember blue, but one can remember that oneself saw blue. This comes about because of the relationship between the object and the object possessor, which is not a proof for a self-knower. Then they go on to state an example.

One remembers the object possessor in relation to the experience of something else. That something else is the object. There is no need to have a self-knower that experiences the object possessor in order to be able to remember the object. So it is not necessary to have a self-knower in order to remember the apprehension of blue, because, for example, by the virtue of remembering blue, one also remembers that one saw blue. The apprehension of blue is remembered through the force of remembering blue. So you have to think about the fact that one cannot remember the apprehension of blue without remembering blue.

The example is that of a hibernating animal, which is bitten by a rat while it is hibernating in winter. Although the animal does experience the pain of being bitten at that time, there is no experience of actually being poisoned by the bite.

When the animal is wakened out of its hibernation by the sound of thunder in spring or in summer, the poison, which is obviously a long-term poison, is activated. Once awake the animal becomes very sick because of the poison. Even though not really having the experience of being poisoned, it still has the experience of being bitten by the rat, and in such a way, it then remembers having been poisoned at the time when it was bitten, even though not having the actual experience of being poisoned when bitten.

Becoming aware in spring of being poisoned in winter is the example. The meaning of this is that one remembers the object possessor of blue. In the example we have the time the actual poison entered the body of the animal without having the actual experience of being poisoned. The meaning of this is the presence of the object possessor

at the time when the object is perceived, without that object possessor being experienced by a self-knower.

So in spring, the animal remembers being poisoned through the force of remembering being bitten. At the time when it was bitten, there was an experience of the pain. The experience of the pain signifies the experience of the object.

Being poisoned signifies the presence of the object possessor. When, in spring, the animal remembers being poisoned through remembering the pain of being bitten, that signifies the remembrance of the object possessor through the force of the remembrance of the object.

Without there being an actual experience of the object possessor, at the time of the object possessor one can still remember subsequently that one saw blue, merely through the fact of remembering blue. Through the force of remembering blue one remembers that one saw blue. Through the force of remembering blue the memory of having seen blue is induced. At the time of seeing blue, there is an experience of the object blue by the eye-consciousness apprehending blue. But there is no experience of the eye-consciousness apprehending blue itself.

Even though there is no experience of the eye-consciousness apprehending blue at the time when the eye-consciousness apprehends blue, one can subsequently still remember the apprehension of blue by remembering the object. So through the force of remembering the object blue, one then also remembers the apprehension of blue. For example, one can remember, 'I saw blue'.

Similarly, in the example there was an experience of the pain of being bitten, but there was no experience of the poison entering the body. But subsequently when the animal experiences the sickness that is induced through the poison, it thinks back and it remembers the pain of being bitten. It then also remembers that it was poisoned at that time, even though there was nothing that experienced the poisoning. Similarly with the eye-consciousness - there was nothing that experiences the eye-consciousness at that time.

2.1.2.2.2.2.2.2.3.2. Refuting other reasons for the self-knower

*If, the Mind Only say, since the mind [24]
Sees the condition of others,
It illuminates itself by applying the formulated eye
balm,
The vase is seen, but does not become the eye balm.*

Here in the first two lines the **Mind Only** make the argument that through the development of calm abiding the mind can illuminate the mind of others, meaning it can perceive the mind of others, i.e. it can develop the clairvoyance that perceives the mind of others. It can perceive the state of other people's minds which are further away. Therefore it also, of course, illuminates or perceives itself. If one can see something that is far away, then there is no question that one can see that which is close by.

Here it is talking about the clairvoyant who knows the mind of others. There are different levels of that type of clairvoyance, but here it talks about the common one that

is shared with non-Buddhist practitioners. So then you might argue, 'Well one's consciousness is able to perceive the minds of others who are further away'. Actually this is also literal. One can actually perceive the minds of others who are many hundreds of kilometres away.

If that is possible, then there is no question that the mind also perceives itself. The **refutation** of this is that just because one can see the treasure vase that is buried in the ground through the condition of applying eye-balm that has been made with mantras and other secret mantra practices, that does not mean that the vase actually becomes the eye-balm. Just because through some conditions one can see something else, it does not mean that something else becomes the eye-balm.

2.1.2.2.2.2.2.3.3. Refuting that if there is self-knower, that there couldn't be an other-knower

Just like the consciousness of seeing and listening,[25]

Should not be refuted here.

That which becomes the cause of suffering,

The formulation of true existence, is to be refuted.

We have the self-knower and the other-knower. The self-knower is called thus because it is directed only inwards. Its focus is solely inwards, directed to the consciousness, and that's why it's called a self-knower.

Other-knowers who are directed outwards, knowing other objects such as forms and so forth.

The self-knower has this characteristic as being solitary, because it is not concomitant with mental factors and so forth. It is solitary, it doesn't have any friends or acquaintances. Other-knowers always exist in relation to mental factors and so forth - they are more social.

The **Prasangika** say, 'There is no need to eliminate the nominal experience of having seen or listened to something. Seeing or listening to something is a conventional experience that does not cause any suffering. Therefore they should not be abandoned here. First of all, they don't generate any suffering. Not refuting nominal conventional existence is not the cause for any suffering. Secondly, even arhats, who have gone completely beyond suffering, have these experiences of seeing and listening. To refute or negate them completely would be a mistake and unnecessary.

'However, what should be negated is the mental creation of true existence, because that is the cause of all suffering. If you negate conventional nominal existence, then you will fall into the extreme of nihilism. What really should be negated is the formulation of true existence, which is the cause of suffering'.

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Edited Version

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