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## Study Group - *Madhyamakavatanama*

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Please generate a virtuous motivation for listening to the teaching thinking, 'I have to become enlightened for the benefit of all sentient beings, and in order to be able to do so I'm now going to listen to this profound teaching. Then I'm going to put it into practise as much as possible'.

### 3.5.1.1.1.2.2. Refuting the Mind Only in Particular (cont..)

Last time we completed the outlines that dealt with refuting the inherent existence of a consciousness that lacks external existence by refuting the example of a dream as a consciousness that exists inherently but which has no external object.

Next we come to the refutation of the example of the consciousness that sees falling hairs.

### 3.5.1.1.1.2.2.1.2.1.1.2. Refuting the Example of Seeing Falling Hairs

*Whatever awareness with defective faculties<sup>1</sup>,  
Whatever hairs it sees due to the defect,  
Both are true relative to that awareness, and  
Both are false for a perception of the actual  
situation.*

*Should awareness without object of knowledge  
exist*

*Then also that without defect subsequently  
Looking at the location of the hairs becomes  
awareness*

*Of hairs. It isn't that, therefore that doesn't exist.*

*Mirror:*

The Mind Only say the awareness to which transitory falling hairs appears is an example for an inherently existing consciousness without external object.

It follows that it isn't such an example - because **both** eye-consciousness **with faculties having a defect** and the **hairs it sees due to the** faculties with **defect** are **true relative to that awareness and both are false** relative to **a perception of the actual situation**, without the defect

It follows that the awareness to which falling hairs appear even though there are no hairs **doesn't exist** inherently - because **should** the **awareness** to which falling hairs appear **without** the **object of knowledge** hair being present **exist** inherently **then also** the awareness **without defect that subsequently looks at the location of the hairs**

would **become awareness of falling hairs, but it isn't that.**

The Mind Only say that an inherently existing consciousness that lacks an outer object exists, for example the eye-consciousness that perceives falling hairs that are not actually there. According to them such a distorted eye-consciousness is an inherently existing consciousness without outer object.

You can see that there is a heated debate going on between the Prasangika and the Mind Only. The **Mind Only** assert that there is an inherently existing consciousness without external objects, and the **Prasangika** say that consciousness doesn't exist inherently but does have outer external objects.

Both the distorted eye-consciousness that sees falling hairs and the hairs that it sees are true relative to that awareness. Saying that they 'are true relative to that awareness' means that they exist for that awareness.

But both the distorted eye-consciousness and the falling hairs are false for a perception that is not arising in dependence upon a defective faculty.

Here '**awareness without object of knowledge**' refers to the distorted eye-consciousness arising in dependence upon a defective faculty. The distorted eye-consciousness that perceives falling hairs is an awareness without objects of knowledge, because the falling hairs don't exist. The **Mind Only** posit that consciousness as an example of an awareness without external objects of knowledge that exists inherently. It follows that if the distorted eye-consciousness perceiving falling hairs were to exist inherently, then subsequently an undistorted eye-consciousness looking at the location where the distorted eye-consciousness perceived the hairs would also have to be an awareness of hairs. However since the subsequent undistorted eye-consciousness doesn't become an awareness of hairs when it is directed there, the first distorted eye-consciousness doesn't exist inherently.

The logic here is similar to what we said before when we said that if something is generated from an inherently existent other than one fallacy would be that everything would be generated from everything. Here the Mind Only say 'the distorted eye-consciousness to which the falling hairs appear exists inherently', which means that this distorted eye-consciousness is generated independently from anything else. So it is generated independently from the falling hairs because they are not there anyway, and it is also generated independently from the defective sense-power.

Likewise, according to the Mind Only, the subsequent undistorted eye-consciousness that looks where the falling hairs were perceived by the first eye-consciousness would also be an inherently existent consciousness. It would also be generated totally independently of the sense power and of the object. Therefore it would also become an eye-consciousness that perceives falling hairs.

Because both eye-consciousnesses are the same in being inherently existent, therefore both would have to be generated independently from the sense power, and therefore both would have to perceive the falling hairs. The first consciousness perceives the falling hairs

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<sup>1</sup> Trans: The Tibetan word here refers to a particular sickness, which might be the condition referred to in English as floaters. But since I haven't determined this yet 100% I just call it a defect.

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independently of any causes and conditions, and the other consciousness that is actually generated in dependence upon a non-defective sense-power, should also see the falling hairs, because it also exists inherently.

The **Prasangika** say here that in actuality whether or not the consciousness is a distorted one depends upon whether or not the sense power in dependence upon which it is generated is a defective sense power. In the first case, since the eye-consciousness is generated in dependence upon a defective sense power, it becomes a distorted eye-consciousness seeing falling hairs where none exist, and the non-distorted eye-consciousness is not distorted because it is generated in dependence upon a non-defective eye sense-power, and doesn't see any falling hairs where there are none. That is the conventional reality.

However then the **Mind Only** assert that the consciousness exists inherently. If consciousness exists inherently that means that it is generated completely independent of causes and conditions, so it is generated independently of a defective sense power. It perceives falling hairs independently of the sense power, and it doesn't depend upon the sense that sees falling hairs. Therefore, if consciousness exists inherently, the eye-consciousness that is actually non-defective should also see falling hairs, since the perception of falling hairs is not caused by a defective sense power.

The **Prasangika** say that the non-defective eye-consciousness doesn't perceive any falling hairs is proof that consciousness doesn't exist inherently.

### **3.5.1.1.1.2.2.2.1.2.1.2.2 Refuting the meaning (That Consciousness Lacking an External Object Is Being Generated from Karmic Potential)**

This outline has three sub-outlines,

3.5.1.1.1.2.2.2.1.2.1.2.1.1. Refuting the generation and non-generation of sense consciousness to which an outer object appears from the ripening and non-ripening of karmic potential;

3.5.1.1.1.2.2.2.1.2.1.2.2. Refuting again the existence of consciousness without external object;

3.5.1.1.1.2.2.2.1.2.1.2.3. Showing that the refutation of the Mind Only tenet isn't contradictory to the scriptures.

### **3.5.1.1.1.2.2.2.1.2.1.2.1.1. Refuting the Generation and Non-Generation of Sense Consciousness to which an Outer Object Appears from the Ripening and Non-Ripening of Karmic Potential**

This has again two sub-outlines,

3.5.1.1.1.2.2.2.1.2.1.2.1.1. Presentation of the view

3.5.1.1.1.2.2.2.1.2.1.2.1.2. Its refutation

#### **3.5.1.1.1.2.2.2.1.2.1.2.1.1. Presentation of the View**

*Since for those seeing, awareness' potential doesn't ripen,*

*Therefore they don't generate awareness. It isn't because of*

*Being separated from phenomena having objects of knowledge.*

Realists: 'The fault that someone without defective faculty would generate awareness to which hairs appear is non-existent. Why? Because *for those seeing* without defective faculty the *potential for awareness* to which hairs appear *doesn't ripen. Therefore they don't generate awareness* to which hairs appear and *not because of being separated from phenomena having the object of knowledge 'hairs'*."

This states the **Mind Only** position. The Prasangika had refuted the Mind Only by stating the fault that if the consciousness were to exist inherently, then also the consciousness that is actually undistorted would have to perceive the falling hairs. Now the Mind Only say that this is actually not the case. Just because the consciousness exists inherently doesn't mean that it would also have to perceive falling hairs similarly to the distorted consciousness.

'*Since for those seeing*', refers to those who see the actual situation, whose potential for distorted awareness doesn't ripen, and who therefore don't generate the awareness of the falling hairs.

The **Mind Only** say that the reason why the second consciousness doesn't perceive the falling hairs is because no karmic imprint has ripened on the universal mind foundation that would cause the perception of falling hairs. It is not because of being separated from phenomena having the object of knowledge hairs, but because of a lack of the ripening of the karmic potential. Therefore, that the later consciousness doesn't see the falling hairs is no proof that consciousness doesn't exist inherently.

### **3.5.1.1.1.2.2.2.1.2.1.2.2. Its refutation**

3.5.1.1.1.2.2.2.1.2.1.2.2.1. Short

3.5.1.1.1.2.2.2.1.2.1.2.2.2. Extensive

#### **3.5.1.1.1.2.2.2.1.2.1.2.2.1. Short**

*This isn't established due to lack of that potential.*

*Mirror:*

Take the subject 'The generation of awareness to which hairs appear from inherently existing potential' - it follows it *isn't established* - because that *potential* doesn't exist inherently.

Both consciousnesses exist inherently so they are also not generated from any potential. Since the Mind Only also say that the potential exists inherently it follows that the two types of consciousness, distorted and undistorted, don't arise from that potential, because it exists inherently.

#### **3.5.1.1.1.2.2.2.1.2.1.2.2.2. Extensive Refutation**

This has three sub-outlines,

3.5.1.1.1.2.2.2.1.2.1.2.2.2.1. Refuting potential to exist inherently in the present

3.5.1.1.1.2.2.2.1.2.1.2.2.2.2. Refuting potential to exist inherently in the future

3.5.1.1.1.2.2.2.1.2.1.2.2.2.3. Refuting potential to exist inherently in the past.

#### **3.5.1.1.1.2.2.2.1.2.1.2.2.2.1. Refuting Potential to Exist Inherently in the Present**

*It isn't possible for the generated to have potential.*

<sup>2</sup> The numbering in the *Mirror* booklet is incorrect for this and the remainder of headings in the second edition of the booklet.

*Mirror:*

Take the subject 'present **generated** consciousness' - it follows **it isn't possible** that it has inherently existing **potential** - because in that case there would be the faults of there being no cause of consciousness other from consciousness itself and so forth.

The **Mind Only** say that the distorted eye-consciousness to which falling hairs appears is generated from an inherently existent potential. If that were to be the case then the distorted eye-consciousness would have to be generated from potential that is related either to the present consciousness or to a past or future one.

If the distorted eye-consciousness to which falling hairs appear is generated from a presently existing inherently existent potential, then cause and effect would be simultaneous. If that were to be the case then there would be the faults that that consciousness would be generated from itself and not from a cause different from itself, and so forth.

If they are simultaneous then there are two possibilities - either they are of one nature or they are of a different nature. If the karmic imprint and the consciousness are of **one nature** then we would have the fallacy of cause and effect being of one nature, and we would have it being generated from itself. We would also have the fallacy that at the time of the eye-consciousness the karmic imprint wouldn't have dissipated. We would also have the fallacy that at the time of the karmic imprint the eye-consciousness would have to exist. Likewise the same logic says that it would follow that the seed wouldn't have disintegrated at the time of the sprout, and that at the time of the seed the sprout would have to exist. So you can see that that the reasoning that we were introduced to before is also applied here.

If the karmic imprint and its resultant eye-consciousness are of **different nature** and simultaneous then there is no need for the eye-consciousness to be generated again, because it has already generated at the time of the cause.

### **3.5.1.1.1.2.2.1.2.1.2.1.2.2.2. Refuting Potential to Exist Inherently in the Future**

*Likewise the non-generated identity doesn't possess potential.*

*Without characteristic that characterised is non-existent.*

*It follows that an infertile woman's child also holds that.*

*Likewise, the non-generated consciousness doesn't inherently possess that potential* because the future consciousness doesn't exist now in the present. There is a pervasion to the reason because **without characteristic that characterised is non-existent**. If 'reason is not established', then **it follows that an infertile woman's child also has that potential**.

Here 'non-generated identity' refers to the future consciousness that doesn't inherently possess the potential to generate, because the future consciousness doesn't exist in the present.

Should the non-generated consciousness have the potential that is referred to as potential of consciousness

then consciousness is the characteristic, and potential that characterised. For example if we talk about the head of a human then head is that characterised and human the characteristic and we can't have that characterised without its characteristic. Likewise when we talk about the potential of the future consciousness, potential becomes that which is characterised, and the future consciousness becomes the characteristic. However the future consciousness doesn't exist now so therefore the potential of the future consciousness also can't exist in the present.

If we talk about the human potential then the human becomes the characteristic and the potential becomes that characterised. If there is one then the other one also has to be present, as one cannot have that which is characterised without the characteristic. It is the same with the potential of the future consciousness. Future consciousness doesn't exist in the present. If we talk about the potential of the future consciousness then that can't exist in the present if the consciousness doesn't exist in the present. Here the potential is that which is being characterised and the consciousness is that which is the characteristic. Without having the characteristic then that which is being characterised, the potential, also doesn't exist in the present.

As it says in the root text,

***Without characteristic that characterised is non-existent.***

If something is characterised it needs the characteristics to also be present. In the present case when we talk about the potential of the future consciousness, then the future consciousness is the characteristic, and that which is being characterised is the potential. The potential cannot exist in the present because its characteristic, the future consciousness, doesn't exist in the present.

If we could have that which is being characterised existing without the characteristic then one could also actually have the situation of the potential of a child of an infertile woman and so forth.

***If asserted to be described by what will arise, Without potential its future arising doesn't exist.***

***'Existence of mutual dependence on each others nature***

***Is solely non-existent', teach the Noble Ones.***

The opponent objects, 'I **assert that** one speaks of 'the potential of consciousness' with the consciousness that **will arise** in mind.' This is refuted by saying, 'The **future arising** of this consciousness **doesn't exist** inherently - because the **potential** that generates the consciousness doesn't exist inherently.'

Then the opponents say, 'Consciousness and potential are posited in relation to each other.' To this the Prasangika say, 'It follows that consciousness and potential don't exist inherently precisely because of that. There is a pervasion because the Noble Ones teach 'Existence of mutual dependence on each others nature doesn't exist inherently.'

The **Mind Only** accept the point that you cannot have that which is characterised without the characteristic. However, the Mind Only object saying, 'I **assert that** the

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potential of *consciousness* is taught with the consciousness that *will arise* in mind'. This is refuted by the Prasangika saying, 'The *future arising* of this consciousness *doesn't exist* inherently - because the *potential* that generates the consciousness doesn't exist inherently.' Without an inherently existent potential then the future arising doesn't exist inherently.

To this the Mind Only reply that the future consciousness and the potential are posited in relation to each other. To which the Prasangika reply, 'It follows that consciousness and *potential don't exist* inherently precisely because of that. There is a pervasion because *the Noble Ones teach* that the *existence of mutual dependence on each other's nature* doesn't *exist inherently*.'

'Noble Ones' refers here to the *Root Wisdom* by Nagarjuna and the *Four Hundred Verses* by Aryadeva.

Next comes the refutation of potential to exist inherently in the past and we can do that next time.

### Summary

Here we have the refutation of the potential for the generation of the present consciousness to exist inherently, and the refutation of the potential for the generation of future consciousness to exist inherently.

Regarding the first we said that if the potential that generates the present consciousness exists inherently then it would also have to exist in the present, so cause and effect would become simultaneous. Other fallacies are that if they are of different nature then there are problems.

If the potential of a future consciousness exists inherently, then that is refuted with the reasoning of the relationship between the characteristic and that characterised. That which is characterised, the potential, cannot exist without that which characterises it, which is the future consciousness. So then the future consciousness would have to exist in the present at the same time as the potential. As that is not the case then the potential also doesn't exist now.

If the Mind Only reply that the future consciousness and the potential that causes it exist relative to each other, then the Prasangika say, 'Oh, if that's the case then they don't exist inherently, because as Aryadeva and Nagarjuna said, relative existence doesn't exist inherently'.

Next week is, I think, discussion group, so have a good discussion and also have a good exam.

It's important to exert a little bit of effort now because that will leave very good imprints on your mind. We have already gone through quite a lot of the text and already placed a great many good imprints.

It is very important to place those imprints on one's mind now when one has the opportunity to do so. Even if one is not able to comprehend the meaning, at least make some effort and place some imprints on the mind of having studied the Middle Way. Then that is a great potential to understand the Middle Way later.

If one wants to understand emptiness then at some point one has to start placing imprints on one's mental continuum, and the time to do so is now when there's the opportunity. Of course if one can actually understand emptiness, then it makes a great deal of difference to one's personal practice. When one starts self generation the very first words are always, 'Everything dissolves into emptiness'. With an understanding of emptiness one can actually meditate on something. Without any understanding of emptiness then they can just say, 'Oh everything dissolves into emptiness' but that will be it.

A geshe who was much more senior and learned than I came to Kopan. He told me that in his classes he didn't get much opportunity to debate *Madhyamaka* because he had become like a tourist while he was in Dharamsala. He said that his meditation was lacking something because of a lack of understanding of emptiness.

Lama Zopa Rinpoche had told him that there was nothing superior to emptiness and to come to come to me. I told this geshe that I didn't have anything special to say, but he grew insistent so I said, 'OK we will go through this commentary I am reading very informally, not adopting any of the usual etiquette of teacher and student'. So we went through the text. Now this was a geshe who had meditated quite a lot on Duma and was seeing seed syllables. I don't know what happened to him after that. If one doesn't make use an opportunity when it presents itself then one receives great loss like that geshe. If one doesn't study the text when there is the opportunity in a class, then one receives great loss.

It's the same in ordinary worldly terms - if we don't do something while we have the opportunity to do it then one has great loss, because later the opportunity has gone. If one doesn't make use of opportunities as they present themselves, or one procrastinates there will be a sense of loss later. That's why I always say, 'Make use of the opportunity'. If it is a matter of getting a better job, take the job. Sometimes people go to university and want to break off from their studies. I always advise them to finish their studies, because later on one can always say, 'I finished my course'

*Transcribed from tape by Mark Emerson  
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*Edited Version*

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