
Study Group - *Madhyamakavatanama*

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

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Generate a virtuous motivation as usual thinking, 'I have to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings, and in order to be able to accomplish that aim I am now going to listen to this profound Dharma and then I'm going to put it into practice'.

Previously we have been through the refutation of an inherently existing consciousness that lacks an external object and last time we completed the two lines dealing with a stream of water being perceived in different ways by three types of beings.

This example of the water stream being perceived in different ways by three types of beings shows that there is no definiteness with regard to what appears to our mind. It is not a valid reason to say that something exists in a certain way just because it appears as such to oneself. We can also relate that meaning to our practice of guru devotion.

When the great bodhisattva Shantideva was residing in Nalanda, most of the monks there had a very unflattering perception of him as being a monk engaged only in the three activities of eating, sleeping, and defecating. So they called him 'the monk of the three activities'. However they were not able to expel him because he was a prince, and the monastery did not want to run foul of the king. So they planned to request a teaching from him, thinking that he didn't know any Dharma and would embarrass himself and so leave from his own side. If it was possible even for those great scholars and pundits living in Nalanda at that time to have a mistaken perception of Shantideva, then there's no need to mention our mistaken perceptions.

3.5.1.1.1.2.2.2.2. Refuting Proof that Other-powered Phenomena Exist Inherently

Now we come to the part of the text that deals with refuting other-powered phenomena, and refuting the proof for other-powered phenomena. The 'other' in 'other-powered phenomena' refers to causes and conditions, so other-powered phenomena refers to phenomena that are powered by causes and conditions.

The **Mind Only** assert inherently existing other-powered phenomena, which are being refuted here, and as the ultimate proof for other-powered phenomena the Mind Only posit self-knowers, and therefore self-knowers are also being refuted here.

The Mind Only system roots its view of existence in the inherently existing nature of other-powered phenomena. Other-powered phenomena have to exist inherently for them, otherwise the suchness of other-powered phenomena couldn't exist inherently. Likewise they say

that other-powered phenomena have to exist truly, otherwise the suchness that exists in dependence upon that other-powered phenomenon could not exist truly. So for the Mind Only inherently existing, truly existing other-powered phenomena form the basis for all of samsara and nirvana.

The proof that is being refuted in this outline is self-knowers. By refuting the proof of 'self-knowers' then the premise, inherently existing other-powered phenomena, is also refuted. By refuting the proof one is also refuting the premise. If you become familiar with this type of logical thinking and understanding then it will be very beneficial for you.

The definition of a **self-knower is an unmistakable knower unmixed with conceptual thoughts that only focuses internally and stands apart**. A self-knower is a knower that only focuses on **internal** objects. A self-knower doesn't perceive any external objects but only perceives internal objects, which means that a self-knower only perceives consciousness. It is a knower that **stands apart**, because it is neither mind nor is it a mental factor. In a way it is without friends. There is no mental factor that is concomitant with it, and it is not concomitant with any primary mind. Therefore it is solitary, stands apart, and single. It is also **unmistaken** and **free from conception**.

This chapter has four primary outlines.

3.5.1.1.1.2.2.2.2.1. Refuting self-knowers, the proof for other-powered phenomena

3.5.1.1.1.2.2.2.2.2. Showing that the Mind Only system doesn't remain within the two truths

3.5.1.1.1.2.2.2.2.3. It is appropriate to follow Nagarjuna

3.5.1.1.1.2.2.2.2.4. Showing that refuting other-powered phenomena and worldly convention isn't the same

The first primary outline has four sub-outlines:

3.5.1.1.1.2.2.2.2.1.1. Refuting the proof for other-powered phenomena after having asked for it

3.5.1.1.1.2.2.2.2.1.2. Refuting the answer to that

3.5.1.1.1.2.2.2.2.1.3. Refuting self-knowers with other reasoning

3.5.1.1.1.2.2.2.2.1.4. Inherently existing other-powered phenomena are like the non-existent offspring of a female mule.

3.5.1.1.1.2.2.2.2.1. Refuting Self-knowers, the Proof for Other-powered Phenomena

Here the root text initially asks for the proof of inherently existent other-powered phenomena and then refutes that proof. Previously the example of an other-powered phenomena, an inherently existing consciousness lacking an external object, was refuted. Now the root text just deals with the subject, other-powered phenomena, itself.

*In case consciousness without object is devoid
And an other-powered phenomenon empty of both
exists,*

Through which can its existence be known?

*It is inappropriate to say 'It exists' even though
not grasping it.*

Such doesn't experientially establish that.

Mirror:

The Prasangika say to the Mind Only, '*In case the apprehender is without external object and devoid*

of other substance *and an other-powered phenomenon* that is *empty* of apprehender and object that are of different substance *exists*,

The first two lines of the root text say, 'In case the apprehender is without external object and devoid of other substance'. The **Prasangikas** say to the Mind Only, 'According to your point of view there is an apprehender that is without external object, which is devoid of an object that is of a substance, of a nature, other than itself. In case we have an other-powered phenomenon that is empty of apprehender and object that are of different substance, then it would be appropriate to state the proof through which the existence of such an other-powered phenomena can be known'. If we have an other-powered phenomenon that is the object of an apprehender, which is of one nature with that other-powered phenomenon, then it would be appropriate to state the proof through which the existence of such an other-powered phenomena can be known. This is because it is inappropriate to say it exists even though one does not grasp it with a valid cognition.

The Prasangika pose these questions to the Mind Only, 'What is your proof for the existence of other-powered phenomena? What is the valid cognisor that you posit as the proof for the existence of other-powered phenomena? Should you posit a valid cognisor of different substance from other-powered phenomena as the proof, then your own system would contradict itself and collapse. Likewise if you posit other types of proof that are of a different substance from the other-powered phenomena then that also contradicts your system.'

You also cannot just say other-powered phenomena exist because they are perceived by omniscient consciousness. Of course if something exists it has to be perceived by omniscient consciousness and it would be valid to say that something exists because it is perceived by omniscient consciousness. However we don't give that as the proof. If blue is perceived by an omniscient consciousness we can say blue exists because it is the object of omniscient consciousness, and that would be valid. But that's not what we say. What we posit as the valid cognisor that establishes the existence of blue is the eye-consciousness that apprehends blue. So here likewise now what type of valid cognisor do we posit that establishes the existence of other-powered phenomena?

This basic **Mind Only** tenet that object and object possessor are generated simultaneously from the ripening of karmic imprints is not like the other tenets where the object possessor arises in dependence upon the object. Until this line it is the **Prasangika** posing questions to the Mind Only.

Then the **Mind Only** reply to the Prasangika, 'Your premise is that there is no generation from self or other. I say 'not established' to that because it is generated from other'. The Mind Only have posited the self-knower as the proof, and as the valid cognisor that establishes other-powered phenomena.

Then the **Prasangika** then say, 'Such doesn't experientially establish that' and here 'such' refers to the self-knower.

Mirror:

Should the Mind Only reply, 'It is established through a self-knower', then it follows that *such* a self-knower *doesn't experientially establish that* consciousness

It doesn't experientially establish other-powered phenomena because self-knowers aren't themselves established for various reasons. Self-knowers don't exist in the same way as the sharp edge of a knife cannot cut itself and a light cannot illuminate itself, and so forth. That which is performing a function can't perform that function on itself.

3.5.1.1.1.2.2.2.1.2. Refuting the Answer to That

This outline refutes the answer to that refutation by the Prasangika, and has two sub-outlines.

3.5.1.1.1.2.2.2.1.2.1. Actual

3.5.1.1.1.2.2.2.1.2.2. How Memory Is Generated Even Without Self-Knower

3.5.1.1.1.2.2.2.1.2.1. Actual

Here we come to the refutation of self-knowers and the proof for self-knowers.

The root text says,

*In case established subsequently from memory,
That which isn't established stated to establish
The not established doesn't establish.*

*One may rely on self-knowing being established.
Even though, remembrance is unsuitable to recall
Because other, like generation in a continuum
unaware.*

This reason annihilates such features as well.

The **Mind Only** posit the following syllogism: take the perception of blue - it follows that it is the object of experience - because there is memory of it. The Mind Only think that the existence of a self-knower is established because there is something that experiences the apprehension of blue. The apprehension of blue can be either experienced by something else - other - or it can be experienced by self. So there are two possibilities, the experience by other, and the experience by self. The experience of the apprehension of blue by other is refuted by logic, and that leaves only the experience of the apprehension of blue by self, and that is how one then arrives at the existence of self-knowers.

We have this syllogism: take the subject the apprehension of blue - it is the object of experience - because it is the object of memory. The idea here is that one can say that something is the object of an experience because it is the object of memory. One can infer that one has previously experienced it because one remembers it. Here the experience can be either the experience by other or the experience by self. The experience by other is refuted through logical analysis, which then leaves the experience by self, and that means the experience of the self-knower.

The experience of the apprehension of blue being other is refuted with different types of logic such as needing a limitless number of experiences that are other. First of all you have the experience of the apprehension of blue. If this experience of the apprehension of blue is actually other from the apprehension of blue, then you also need

another experience that experiences the experience, and in such a way you would have the fault that you need a limitless number of experiences in order to be able to remember the apprehension of blue.

The experience of the apprehension of blue has to be of one nature with the apprehension of blue. It cannot be of a different nature from the apprehension of blue. The only way the Mind Only can explain the existence of memory of the apprehension of blue is with this self-knower that is actually a part of the apprehension of blue, because they are not able to establish the memory of the object possessor through the memory of the object. We have two types of experience, and two types of memory. There is the experience of the object and the experience of the object possessor - the experience of blue and the experience of the apprehension of blue - and the memory of blue and the memory of the apprehension of blue.

For the **Prasangika** the memory of the object possessor is generated through the memory of the object. However in the **Mind Only** system they are not able to do that, and therefore they establish the memory of the object possessor through the presence of the experience of the object possessor.

The first line reads,

In case established subsequently from memory,

In reply to the previous debate by the Prasangika, then the Mind Only say the existence of self-knowers is established through the existence of a subsequent memory. Then the **Prasangika** ask, 'Well does the memory that you posit as the proof for the existence of self-knowers exist inherently, or does it exist non-inherently?'

Mirror:

In case self-knowers are *established subsequently from* inherently existing *memory* - then take the subject 'the inherently existing memory stated to establish *the* self-knower [that is] *not established* - it *doesn't establish* the self-knower - because it *isn't established*.

So the inherently existent memory that you state as the proof does not establish the self-knower. Why? Because it isn't established itself.'

*That which isn't established stated to establish
The not established doesn't establish.*

It says here, 'If you, the Mind Only say, for example, 'take the eye-consciousness - it is the object of experience - because it is the object of inherent existing memory', then that is the same as saying, 'take sound - it is impermanent - because it is the object of the eye-consciousness', which is a completely unrelated invalid reason.

Is the syllogism 'take the subject sound - it is impermanent - because it is the object of the eye-consciousness' valid? Is sound the object of the eye-consciousness? Here the reason is not established. If the reason were established then sound would have to be the object of the eye-consciousness. Saying 'take the subject the eye-consciousness - it is the object of experience - because there's an inherently existent memory of it', is exactly at the same.

When you posit a memory as proof for the existence of self-knower do you posit a memory that is the effect of the self-knower? In that case of the first of the three modes of a valid reason, the directional property, is not established, so the whole syllogism doesn't work.

For example just having a lens doesn't mean that we have a fire, and just having what is called a water glass doesn't mean that we have water. Likewise the reasoning here doesn't establish the existence of a self-knower. If a self-knower doesn't exist then experience and memory are not a cause and effect. Even if a self-knower was established then experience and memory are still not suitable to be cause and effect.

Mirror:

One may rely on self-knowing being established. Even though, it follows that the remembering consciousness is unsuitable to recall the experience of the object - because the memory of the experience is inherently existing other.

This is the crux of the matter. Experience and memory are inherently other, they are mutually inherently different from each other and therefore cannot function as a cause and effect. Therefore one cannot posit a memory that is the result of a preceding experience, because the memory exists inherently.

Mirror:

For example, like the memory *generated* in the *continuum* of Maitrepa not recalling an experience Maitrepa is *unaware* of.

The memory that is generated in the continuum of Maitrepa can only be a memory of something that Maitrepa has previously experienced himself. He will not be able to remember something that someone else has experienced. Therefore an inherently existent memory cannot be generated from an inherently existent experience, because they are mutually intrinsically other.

Previously many reasons have been given with regard to that, when we discussed why there cannot be the generation of an inherently existent effect from an inherently existent cause. All those reasons also apply here.

3.5.1.1.1.2.2.2.1.2.2. How Memory Is Generated Even Without Self-Knower

The way memory is generated without a self-knower is first explained according to what is stated in *Introduction to the Middle Way*. Then it is explained according to *Introduction to the Bodhisattvas Way of Life*.

This is the quote relevant to the explanation of *Introduction to the Middle Way*,

*Therefore, from the experience of the object.
For me this memory doesn't exist as other.
Therefore one remembers, thinking 'I saw'.
This is also the conventional (worldly) way.
Therefore from the experience*

According to the **Mind Only** system one has the memory thinking, 'Oh I saw blue' because at that time there was the experience of oneself seeing blue, which verified the apprehension of blue. Through that one later has the memory. However that uses the presence of a self-

knower.

According to the **Prasangika** system memory of the object possessor is generated through the memory of the object.

When it says,

*Therefore, from the experience of the object.
For me this memory doesn't exist as other*

the memory arising from that which experiences the object doesn't exist for Madhyamikas as an inherently existent other. As we said before, having an inherently existing experience of the object, and generating an inherently existent memory of the object from this inherently existent other, doesn't exist in the Madhyamika system. In the Madhyamika system both the experience and the memory focus on the same object.

We have two types of memory, the memory of the object possessor and the memory of the object. When we remember that at such and such a time 'I' saw blue, we remember the object possessor, oneself, seeing blue. One can also remember 'I saw "blue"'. So one can have a memory of the object as well as the memory of the object possessor.

Through the memory of the object the memory of the object possessor can be generated in the mind. Where the memory focuses more on oneself, the object possessor, one remembers, "'I" saw blue'. In the other type of memory one focuses on the object thinking, 'I saw "blue"'. Although there are two different ways of focussing the memory they are really related. By remembering that one has seen blue one also remembers the object possessor, so by remembering the object one remembers the object possessor.

In Tibetan you switch the sequence of the words to give two separate meanings. In one, 'This blue was seen by me', the emphasis is on the object blue, and in the other, 'Oh I saw the blue', the emphasis is on the object possessor 'I', but I don't think it works that way for an English speaking person.

The memory of the object and the memory of the object possessor go hand in hand, so that the memory of the object possessor is generated through the memory of the object.

The first of the four paths of preparation is called *Jor-lam Tro*, which is usually translated as the heat level of the path of preparation. However one of the translations of *tro* is also 'warm'. At Chenrezig Institute it once happened that Geshe Tashi Tsering didn't know that you could also translate the word as heat, so he contradicted the translator insisting that the path of preparation would have to be called the warm path of preparation. I think that the translator got a little bit upset at that time.

This is also the conventional (worldly) way.

The conventional worldly way here refers to the **Prasangika** view that if something exists then it cannot be found at the time of analysis. The worldly way of positing existence is to posit existence without investigation and analysis. Here the Prasangika say, 'Our way of positing memory is the worldly way. It is posited without investigation and analysis.

This means that it is not an object findable under

investigation and analysis, which is contrary to the **Mind Only** way where everything is found at the time of analysis. The Mind Only system is very thoughtfully worked out with regard to the fact that everything has to have an intrinsic existence. First you have the object possessor, then you have the experience of the object possessor, and then you have the memory that results from the object possessor. The Mind Only have made very sure that those three can be found at the time of analysis, which is very important for them.

Here the **Prasangika** posit a way of remembering, where the generation of memory is not findable at the time of analysis. Therefore it is referred to here as the worldly way of positing the generation of memory, because normally the worldly way is a way without analysis and investigation.

We have already finished a good half of the root text, so next year, if you study well, we can go a good way I think and even finish. I want to start again on the 9 February 2004. Also next year I am going to think about whether to continue to follow the same system of four classes, discussion group and exam, or whether to will change the system in order to have more classes.

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Edited Version

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