
Study Group - “Buddhist Tenets”

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

4 September 2001

As usual please establish a virtuous motivation.

Last week we explained what a proponent of the Madhyamaka tenets is, including the definition. We also said that a proponent of the Madhyamaka tenets is called a proponent of Identitylessness. Then we went into the divisions of a Madhyamika which are the Svatantrika Madhyamika and Prasangika Madhyamika. We explained the definition of the Svatantrika Madhyamika, the divisions of the Svatantrika Madhyamika and the etymology. We also we began the positing of objects.

7.4. Mode of Asserting Objects

At the fourth point, the positing of objects, the text says that inherent existence; existence from its own side and natural existence are synonymous.

Then the text divides objects of knowledge up into conventional truth and ultimate truth. Here the basis of division is objects of knowledge and on that basis a twofold division into conventional truth and ultimate truth is posited.

7.4.1. Types of Existence

As the text says, inherent existence, natural existence and existence from its own side are said to be synonymous. If it exists then it exists in those modes, but nothing exists truly. So while accepting inherent, natural and existence from its own side the Svatantrika Madhyamika don't accept true existence.

Here there is a difference from the Mind Only school, which says that true existence and inherent existence are synonymous, but that not all phenomena exist inherently. The Svatantrika Madhyamika say that all phenomena exist inherently, while the Mind Only school say that not all phenomena exist inherently. However the Mind Only say that inherent existence and true existence are synonymous, and natural existence and existence from its own side are also synonymous. While everything exists naturally, not everything exists inherently.

The Svatantrika Madhyamika distinguishes between inherent existence and true existence. The way they posit inherent existence is by saying 'Things are inherently existent, because at the time of analysis the imputed meaning can be found.' That is their interpretation of inherent existence.

7.4.1.1. Inherent Existence

So Inherent existence, existence from its own side and natural existence are synonymous. The meaning of *inherent existence* is ***the imputed meaning can be found at the time of analysis***. This meaning of inherent existence is posited by the Svatantrika Madhyamika, the Prasangika and also the Sautrantikas. The difference is that the Svatantrika Madhyamika asserts inherent existence, while the Prasangika don't assert inherent existence. That was the meaning of inherent existence.

When we go down to the Mind Only school there is a slightly different interpretation of inherent existence and true existence. The Mind Only say that inherent existence and true existence are synonymous, and the meaning of

true existence is ***that which is not labelled by conception and exists from it's own side out of its uncommon mode of abiding***. Not all phenomena exist inherently, because the category of wholly-labelled is empty of inherent and true existence.

7.4.1.2. True Existence

According to the Svatantrika Madhyamika the meaning of true existence is

Not being posited through appearing to a non-contradicted mind but

existing from it's own side out of its uncommon mode of abiding.

They say that everything is empty of true existence. We have already established that they don't even accept true existence conventionally or in mere name.

It is very important to understand the object of negation.

We have a the conceptual valid cogniser being non-mistaken with regard to the self-characterised determined object, and a non-conceptual valid cogniser being non-mistaken with regard to self-characterised appearing object.

If this conceptual valid cogniser is non-mistaken with regard to its determined object, which is a self-characterised phenomenon such as blue for example, then that valid cogniser is a non-contradicted awareness. It will not be contradicted by some other kind of awareness that says 'it's a wrong mind.'

There is also a non-conceptual valid cogniser that is non-mistaken with regard to the self-characterised appearing object such as blue. Again this valid cogniser is also a non-contradicted awareness, because it is not contradicted by some other kind of awareness that would say it is a wrong mind. So we have these two kinds of non-contradicted awarenesses. If something does not exist through the force of appearing to such a non-contradicted mind, then that phenomena would have to exist truly.

The self-characterised object becomes very important later in the Prasangika tenets, when one investigates if there is a discrepancy between appearance and abiding.

7.4.2. Conventional Truth

We said earlier that on the basis of division, which is objects of knowledge, then a twofold division into conventional truth and ultimate truth is posited.

The definition of conventional truth is ***that which is realised in a dualistic manner by a direct valid cogniser realising it directly.***

Ultimate truth is that which is realised in a non-dual manner by a direct valid cogniser realising it directly . So the definition here is the same as what was mentioned before¹.

The text gives the following examples of conventional truth: non-compounded space, truth of cessation, past, future and the subtle selflessness of a person. Here the subtle selflessness of a person is posited as conventional truth. In the lower Mind Only tenets subtle selflessness of a person is posited as an ultimate truth.

There is a twofold division of conventional truth, perfect conventionality and wrong conventionality. Here 'truth' is left out. One doesn't talk about wrong conventional truth, but one talks about wrong conventionality and perfect conventionality.

7.4.2.1. Wrong Conventionality

¹ 24 July 2001, sections 5.4.3 and 5.4.

The definition of wrong conventionality is *A conventionality as well as an ordinary being can realise it doesn't exist in the way it appears to the mind taking it as appearing object.*

When an ordinary person can realise a discrepancy between appearance and existence, then it is wrong conventionality.

7.4.2.2 Perfect Conventionality

A conventionality as well as an ordinary being can't realise it doesn't exist in the way it appears to the mind taking it as appearing object.

Here an example for **wrong conventionality** is the appearance of a mirage as water. 'Ordinary being' refers to a person who has not realised emptiness. An ordinary being can understand that there is a discrepancy between the appearance and existence of the mirage appearing as water. The mirage exists, and the appearance of the mirage as water exists, but obviously there is a discrepancy between what appears and how it really exists. We don't need to have realised emptiness in order to be able to understand that. Phenomena such as the appearance of a mirage as water or the reflection in a mirror as the actual form and so forth are called wrong conventionalities. That is because they are conventionalities, and an ordinary person can understand the discrepancy between appearance and existence.

Other conventional phenomena such as a vase and so forth are called **perfect conventionalities** because an ordinary person cannot realise the discrepancy between appearance and existence in relation to a vase. To understand the discrepancy between appearance and existence in relation to a vase one needs to have understood emptiness.

It says 'Being able to perform a function in the way the phenomena appears or not.' A mirage appears as water, but is not able to perform the function of water. A vase can perform the function of vase. It can perform the function of how it appears, while a mirage cannot perform the function of how it appears. So this is perfectly clear. (*Laughter*)

Rather than worrying about the long definition, we need to just look at it from the point of view of whether or not something is able to perform the function of the way it appears. We use The examples of the water of the mirage and water. Normal water can function in the way it appears. It appears to the mind as water, and it can function as water, and therefore it is a perfect conventionality.

The water of the mirage cannot perform the function in the way it appears because even though it appears as water to the eye consciousness perceiving the mirage, it cannot actually perform the function of water in the way it appears. Therefore it is called a wrong conventionality. If you follow the appearance of the mirage, thinking there is water there, and go to look for it then you find that there is nothing there. A mirage can appear as if there is a whole stream of water flowing there.

7.4.2.3. False and True Phenomena

Since vase is actually a false phenomenon doubt could arise about why a vase is called conventional truth? The meaning of false and true depends on whether or not there is a discrepancy between appearance and existence. If there is a discrepancy between appearance and existence then it is a **false phenomenon**. If there is no discrepancy between appearance and existence then it is a **true phenomenon**. A vase is a false phenomenon.

Then you might say 'Oh there's not a false phenomena

because it is true'. It is a true phenomenon because it is a conventional truth. Then one would have to say there is no pervasion. Even though it is a conventional truth, a vase is not a true phenomenon. It is called conventional truth because it is true to the conventional mind of the eye consciousness to which it appears. Because it is true to the conventional mind it is called a conventional truth. Does it have to be true phenomena because it is true to a conventional mind? No. A vase is a false phenomenon even though it is true to a conventional mind.

Here the meaning of conventional mind is *obscuring mind*. This might seem to be a new meaning but a conventional mind is obscuring in the sense that it is a mind that obscures the seeing of truth. The eye consciousness perceiving a vase is a mind that obscures seeing the truth and is therefore a conventional mind. The vase is conventional truth, because it is true to that obscuring conventional mind of eye consciousness.

7.4.3. Ultimate Truth

Next is ultimate truth. We have already mentioned the definition of *ultimate truth: it is that which is realised in a non-dualistic manner by a direct valid cogniser realising it directly*. There are various divisions of ultimate truth into the 20 emptinesses, 18 emptinesses, 16 emptinesses, 4 emptinesses that we already explained in a previous teaching² so I am not going to go through them again. If somebody asks, 'What are the divisions of ultimate truth?' it is good to remember them that there are various divisions into 20 emptinesses, 18 emptinesses and so forth. Those various emptinesses are differentiated not by nature, not by the object of negation but by the basis of negation.

What is the etymology of ultimate truth? Why is the emptiness of true existence of the vase called ultimate truth? Because it is true in the face of the ultimate mind of meditative transcendental wisdom equipoise of an Arya.

First of all the vase is a conventional truth, so it is the absence of true existence of the vase that is ultimate truth. being.

In talking about ultimate truth, the Tibetan word for 'ultimate' has two words *don-dam*. The syllable *don* means 'meaning'. The word *dam* has the meaning of holy or pure, correct and so forth. Then we add the word for 'truth'. So if you want to say 'ultimate truth' the Tibetan word is made up out of those three words - *don-dam dem-pa* that basically means 'meaning holy truth'.

The first two words *don-dam* refers here to the non-dualistic equipoise realising emptiness directly in the continuum of an Arya being. The absence of true existence appears to that ultimate mind as true and therefore it is ultimate truth.

Then the text says, 'ultimate truth and suchness and the subtle selflessness of phenomena are synonymous'. There is significance in why it says ultimate truth and subtle selflessness of phenomena are synonymous. Here it is good to remember this is according to the Yogacara Svatantrika Madhyamika, or the Mind Only Autonomist Madhyamika.

The Mind Only Autonomists assert two selflessnesses of phenomena - coarse selflessness of phenomena and subtle selflessness of phenomena. They assert that the absence of form and its valid cogniser being of different substance is the coarse selflessness of phenomena, and the absence of true existent form is the subtle selflessness of phenomena.

² 24 July 2001

So Here subtle selflessness of phenomena refers to the absence of true existence, and there is a difference here from the Sutrist Autonomists who don't assert the absence of form and its valid cogniser being of different substance.

7.4.4. Sutrist Autonomist View of Outer Objects

The text goes on to say that, 'from the point of view of the Sutrist Autonomist Madhyamika the five objects of form and so forth and the five consciousnesses are of a different entity'. As we said before, the Sutrist Autonomists accept that the focal condition of the sense consciousness and the sense consciousness have a cause-effect relationship, and are therefore of a different nature, or different identity. According to the Yogacara Autonomist school the object focal condition is just what we call the appearing focal condition, but is not the actual focal condition. According to the Yogacara Madhyamika, as with the Yogacara, the object and consciousness are of same nature or identity and don't have a cause-effect relationship.

The text goes on to say that objects and consciousnesses are of a different identity, and they are outer established coarse meaning in the form of a collection of partless particles. Sutrist Autonomists say that they are outer phenomena, which act as the causes for consciousness, and the way they exist is that they are a collection of partless particles. At the same time, however, the Autonomous Madhyamikas assert that everything that exists has parts. So if they say that everything, which exists, has parts, how can those outer objects be established as a collection of partless particles?

The reason is that here 'partless particles' doesn't refer to the same partless particles as were asserted in the lower tenets. Here a partless particle, as in a particle that can't be divided and doesn't have directions and so forth, is not asserted because everything is asserted to have parts. However, they do assert particles that are so small that they cannot be made the object of the eye consciousness. These particles that cannot be made the object of eye consciousness are referred to as partless particles. Because phenomena are a collection of those partless particles and act as the cause for the perceiving consciousness then they are asserted to be outer existence. This way of asserting outer existence is concordant with the Sutrist School. The Sutrist School also said that phenomena like forms and so forth are outer existence, because they are established as a collection of artless particles, and then act as a cause for the perceiving consciousness. So that point is completed.

7.4.5. Yogacara Autonomist View of Outer Objects

Next the text goes on to say that, according to the Yogacara Autonomist Madhyamika, forms and the five objects of forms and so forth are of the same identity with the consciousness apprehending it. So forms, smells, tastes and so forth are of the same identity with the consciousnesses apprehending them, according to the Yogacara Autonomist School. Non-compounded space and so forth are of the same identity with the consciousness apprehending them, but they are not of the same substance with the consciousness apprehending them. It is also good to know this difference.

There is one doubt with regard to the definition of ultimate truth (that which is realised in a non-dual manner by a direct valid cogniser realising it directly), and the assertion that the subtle selflessness of a person is not ultimate truth.

Does that wisdom realising the subtle selflessness of a person directly in the continuum of a practitioner, who is on the hearer's path of seeing, realises the subtle selflessness of

person non-dually or not? Here we say that even though there is no appearance of the object and subject as being different, and there is no true appearance, there is conventional appearance.

We said that if a mind realises something in a non-dualistic manner it has to be free from the three modes of dualistic appearance, which are object subject appearing as different, conventional appearance and true appearance. Here the path of seeing in the continuum of a hearer realising the selflessness of a person there is still conventional appearance. So there is no true appearance, and there is no appearance of object subject being different, but there is still conventional appearance. So because there is still conventional appearance that mind doesn't realise its object in a non-dual manner. In the same vein we said before that if one awareness realises another awareness in a non-dualistic manner, it doesn't mean that it is realised in a non-dualistic manner by the direct perception realising it directly. This has all been mentioned before. If you listened carefully you will realise that I went over all those subtle points before.

The debate in regard to the Mind Only point of view of subject and object being of the same substance is actually a point of view which seems to also be consistent with various scientific points of view. See the red and yellow flowers here. All our eye consciousnesses see the yellow colour of the flowers. Do you see it? So is that yellow colour of the flower of one substance with your eye consciousness or not?

(Inaudible)

According to the Mind Only, the yellow of the flower is not established from the object's side, but is established through concordant imprints on the mental continuum. Then through the ripening of concordant imprints on the mental continuum we perceive the yellow of the flower. We don't perceive the yellow of the flower because there is a yellow outside of our eye consciousness, which then acts back on our eye consciousness as a cause for that eye consciousness to arise. Rather the perception of the yellow flower is generated through the ripening of concordant imprints on the mental continuum.

We say that at the time of no-analysis there is common appearance of yellow, but at the time of analysis there is no longer any common appearance of yellow. At the time when we don't investigate, there is a common appearance of yellow to all your eye consciousnesses, but at the time of investigation and analysis that common appearance of yellow does not exist any more.

This point of view also seems to be concordant with the modern scientific point of view, which says that each perception of an object through the force of perceiving that object also has an effect on the object. There's always the subject that always has an effect on the object. I don't know this modern scientific point of view - you probably know it. Anyway science seems to have a very similar point of view about the subject having an influence on the object.

There are these various perceptions that different people can have of the same object. Even though different people perceive the same object each person perceives that one object in an individual, slightly different way. Of course modern science doesn't talk about awareness as the Mind Only does, but still there seems to be some similarity.

When a group of people view the same object simultaneously, then at the time of no-investigation and no-

analysis there is a common viewed object, or a shared viewed object. Then at the time of investigation and analysis there is no longer any shared viewed object. There is only the object that appears to the individual eye consciousnesses. So at the time of investigation and analysis there is an uncommon or unshared appearance of the object to the individual eye consciousness, which is generated through the ripening of the concordant karmic imprints on the mental continuum.

At the time of investigation and analysis there is no shared appearance. So the fault of all the various consciousnesses, viewing that one object at the same time, being of the same continuum, does not arise. Doubt could be generated as to whether all these various consciousnesses viewing the one object at the same time are of the same continuum, because they all generated from mental imprints, and the object is generated together with the consciousnesses apprehending from imprints on the mental continuum. That fault does not exist.

Transcribed from tape by Kathi Melnic
Edit 1: Adair Bunnett
Edit 2: Venerable Tenzin Dongak
Edit 3: Alan Molloy
Check and final edit: Venerable Tenzin Dongak
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